

WRISTCUTTERS
a love story

draft of 05/25/04
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based on the novella
"Kneller's Happy Campers"
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INT. ZIA'S APARTMENT (OPENING CREDITS) - EVENING

1

ZIA, a young man in his late twenties dressed in jeans and a T-shirt starts cleaning his messy apartment.

He vacuums, washes dishes and arranges stuff on the shelves. He's pretty meticulous about the whole thing.

Once he completes the cleaning, he double-checks whether he forgot something and then fixes a couple of last things.

Then, he goes to the bathroom, fills the sink with water, opens a new pack of razors and CUTS THE VEINS on his wrists.

Blood slowly pours out into the water, until the water becomes completely red. Zia drops to the bathroom floor.

Laying on the floor, his face snow-pale, his eyes half closed, he can see large dust-balls on the floor behind the door.

ZIA (VO)
(looking at the dust-balls)
Damn, I knew I could've done a better job.

As his eyes close, CAMERA PULLS out of the bathroom revealing most of the, now neatly arranged, apartment. Zia's dead body on the bathroom floor in the BACKGROUND, Desiree's (mid 20's) photograph on the shelf in the FOREGROUND.

ZIA (VO)
I think she cried at my funeral.
(more)

EXT. ZIA'S FUNERAL - DAY

2

POV from an open grave. Against the bright sky we can only see the silhouettes of the people, so we can't tell whether Desiree cries or not. Dirt falls on the CAMERA and slowly buries it.

ZIA (VO)(cont'd)
It's not that I'm egotistical or anything, but I'm pretty sure. Sometimes I can actually picture her...
(more)

INT. EATERY - DAY

3

Desiree and her FRIEND (we never see his face clearly, but we notice an unusual SILVER RING on his hand) are having lunch. Talking sadly, she shows him a picture of her and Zia.

ZIA (VO)(cont'd)
...talking about me to some guy she feels
close to. Talking about me dying.

EXT. CITY STREETS/DESIREE'S FRIEND'S CAR (MOVING) - EVENING 4

Desiree and her FRIEND drive through the city. She talks
even sadder now. Her Friend tenderly wipes a tear from her
face.

ZIA (VO)(cont'd)
About how they lowered me into the grave,
kind of shriveled up and pitiful, like an
old chocolate bar and all.
(more)

INT. DESIREE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 5

Desiree brings two cups of tea and sits on the couch next to
her FRIEND. Her dog lays on the floor. Desiree suddenly
bursts into tears and her friend hugs her and tries to calm
her down. As the two of them hug each other on the couch...

ZIA (VO)(cont'd)
About how we never really got a chance.
And afterwards the guy fucks her, a fuck
that's all about making her feel better.
(more)

...CAMERA PANS to the dog who starts barking in their
direction, not liking their sudden intimacy.

INT. "KAMIKAZE" SUSHI/BATHROOM (AFTER-LIFE) - DAY 6

Zia, in waiter's outfit and with scars on his wrists, pulls
his pants up and flushes the toilet. In front of a mirror he
fixes his outfit, his name tag and his tie featuring the
restaurant-chain logo: A kamikaze war-plane charging with
its nose down.

He is about to leave the bathroom without washing his hands
but then he notices the posting "EMPLOYEES MUST WASH HANDS",
and goes back to wash them.

INT. "KAMIKAZE" SUSHI/DINING AREA - DAY 7

Zia gets out of the bathroom and starts serving food.

ZIA (VO)
Soon after I killed myself I found a job
here waiting tables. The job's not a
winner but it'll do for a while.

ZIA (VO) (cont'd)
Paul, my shift manager was cool enough to
help me find a place to live...
(more)

(NOTE: This "after-world" is a bit uglier than the real world. Things are a little rusty and not very well maintained; the colors are different; there are fewer people around and they seem duller - no one ever laughs or smiles; most of them have scars depending on how they committed suicide.)

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

8

Zia reads a book in his scarcely furnished room.

ZIA (VO) (cont'd)
...with this German guy Erik who works at
"Kamikaze" too.

ERIK bursts into the room without knocking and furious. Loud techno music comes from his room. He has gunshot scars on both of his temples.

INT. ERIK'S OFFICE (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

9

INSERT (Erik's suicide): Erik dead in his high-tech office. He looks like he is sleeping in his chair, his head on the desk. Blood all over, the gun still in his hand.

On the computer monitor, sprinkled with blood, a screen saver runs idyllic images of the tropical islands.

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - DAY

10

BACK TO: Erik yells from the door of Zia's room.

ERIK
(German accent)
You did it again, Zia!

ZIA
What?

ERIK
Don't play dumb... you promised. If you want to live in this apartment you have to sit while you piss.

ZIA
Ah, that... Sorry, I forgot.

ERIK
How can you forget a thing like that?

Erik slams the door behind him, Zia lays the book on his chest and stares up at the ceiling. The title of the book is "JULIET - a Woman With No Scars".

ZIA (VO)

Yeah, I was missing Desiree. I even had a feeling that dying and all just made me love her more. But, who knows, maybe I'm just repressed.

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT

11

Zia sits at the bar and talks to a bartender who serves him a beer.

BARTENDER

...who knows, maybe you're just repressed.

As he says that, the bartender walks away to the other end of the bar. Zia keeps sipping his beer, alone and deep in his thoughts.

A teenage girl (TANYA, 17) approaches Zia.

TANYA

Hi.

ZIA

Hi.

TANYA

Listen, my friend Rachel and I play this game - we try to guess how people closed shop.

ZIA

Yeah?

TANYA

And... we were just guessing about you. How d'you do it?

Zia hesitates a little, but then he pulls his sleeves up and shows the scars.

TANYA

Yes!

(loud, to Rachel)

Three points for me!

RACHEL (19) shrugs in her seat.

Zia looks at Tanya trying to figure out how she did it, but he can't see any visible scars.

ZIA

That's an extremely rude question to ask, you know?

TANYA

Precisely, that's what the game is all about.

ZIA

Oh!? So... what about you?

INT. TANYA'S KITCHEN (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

12

INSERT (Tanya's suicide): Tanya dead, kneels next to a gas stove, her head in the oven. The SOUND of gas coming out. Next to her body is a suicide note: "Are you sorry now?"

INT. MOTEL ROOM (REAL LIFE)- DAY

13

INSERT (Rachel's suicide): Rachel laying dead on the carpet in a cheap motel room. The sound of sitcom LAUGHTER comes from the TV. A bottle with spilled sleeping pills, and a POSITIVE pregnancy test lay next to her.

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT. LITTLE LATER

14

BACK TO: Tanya, Rachel and Zia sit at the bar playing the guessing game. A bunch of empty beer bottles lay in front of them. They are all looking at a guy playing pin-ball.

ZIA

No, no, it's gotta be drowning. Look, he can't stop burping.

TANYA

I'm telling you. Look at that bluish face. It's gas.

RACHEL

Zia, it's your turn to go ask.

Zia hesitates looking at the guy resembling an ex-con.

ZIA

I don't know about this one, he seems... ill humored.

RACHEL

It's your turn, you gotta do it.

A voice comes from behind.

EUGENE (OS)

Why don't you try it with me?

Everybody turns towards EUGENE (late 20's) who's having a beer right next to them. He has an eccentric handlebar mustache, no visible scars and speaks with a Russian accent. He gives "the look" to the girls, barely paying attention to Zia.

EUGENE

(twisting his mustache)

I bet you girls a beer you won't guess.

RACHEL

(to Zia)

Do you know this guy?

Zia shakes his head "No". Suddenly, Tanya's attention gets diverted to something else.

TANYA

Rachel, look who's here.

They look at a beefy looking guy entering the bar.

RACHEL

(to Zia and Eugene)

We'll be right back.

Zia and Eugene watch the girls run towards the new guy. And then, they keep awkwardly looking at each other. Now that the girls are gone, it's hard to find a common subject. Zia tries the one they already have.

ZIA

So... what was it?

EUGENE

What was what?

ZIA

How did you OFF yourself?

EUGENE

Ah, that.

INT. ROCK CLUB (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

15

INSERT (Eugene's suicide): Eugene with his punk-band playing on the stage of a shady club.

Only five or six people are in the audience. Eugene is wild, he practically looks like he's been electrocuted.

EUGENE
(into the mic)
Fuck it all!

He pulls the switch on the guitar, and then he really gets fried.

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT

16

BACK TO: Zia is shocked.

ZIA
You offed with a guitar?!

EUGENE
Sure I did. On stage, man. It was wild.
Iggy Pop almost came to see that gig.

ZIA
That's pretty cool.

Tanya and Rachel wave to them as they leave the bar with their macho friend. Zia waves back.

EUGENE
I'll tell you something: Whenever a chick says "I'll be right back", write her off. They always leave with some retarded big-jaw guy.

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT. FOUR BEERS LATER

17

Eugene and Zia play pool and are already somewhat drunk.

ZIA
No way!

EUGENE
It's true, I live with my parents. And with my kid brother Kostya.

ZIA
Don't fuck with me Eugene.

EUGENE
I'm not fucking with you.

ZIA
(chalking the cue stick)
C'mon! What are you, twenty-nine, thirty?

EUGENE

So?

ZIA

Who lives with their parents at that age?
Or, is that some fucked up Russian thing?

EUGENE

Fucked up Russian thing? I bet you a
beer, your parents got divorced when you
were five, you left home at sixteen and
you've been seeing them separately every
other Thanks-giving.

ZIA

(aiming at the ball)
Isn't that... normal?

EUGENE

Sure thing. You ended up pretty normal.

ZIA

(misses the ball)
I'm just saying, I've never heard of a
whole family here.

EUGENE

(aiming)
Well, Mom offed cause she was missing
Russia a lot,
(hits a ball into a pocket)
and my father - he just didn't feel like
going on without her, but what really did
it for him was my little brother turning
out to be gay.

Another ball goes into a pocket and through the side window
we see it JOINING the first ball.

ZIA

And your... little brother?

EUGENE

Kostya? I guess...
(third ball goes in a pocket)
...he had it in his genes.

The third ball JOINS the first two balls. A colorful bunch.

ZIA

That's the craziest thing I've ever...

EUGENE

Yeah, when Kostya came here... you should've seen my dad, a guy who wouldn't blink if you dropped a ten-pound sledgehammer on his foot.

(turns after a busty girl)

He grabbed the kid and cried like a baby, no shit.

(aims at the eight-ball)

This is it man, watch!

Eugene hits the eight-ball in the pocket.

EUGENE

Another round on you.

INT. DESIREE'S AND ZIA'S KITCHEN (ZIA'S DREAM) - DAY

18

In a kitchen beautifully lit by the early morning sun, Zia and Desiree are having an idyllic breakfast for two. Just by the way they look at each other it's obvious they are in love.

DESIREE

You know, I wonder why we didn't move in together earlier.

ZIA

We didn't know it would be this fun.

She walks towards the cabinets looking for something.

ZIA

(looking at her legs)
I love those.

DESIREE

(smiles at him)
Those what?

She opens the cabinet.

DESIREE

Where is everything?

ZIA

What d'you mean?

DESIREE

Where is all the stuff?

Zia gets up and sees that the cabinet is empty. He opens another one and then another one. There is nothing in the cabinets. No dishes, no food, nothing.

DESIREE

Zia, what's going on?

ZIA

I don't know.

They check the fridge and the lower set of cabinets. Nothing anywhere! They look at each other, STUNNED AND SCARED. Desiree is on a verge of tears.

EUGENE'S VOICE

Wake up man!

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

19

Zia is woken up by Eugene. Surprised to see Eugene in his room, Zia sits up.

ZIA

How did you... Did Erik let you in?

EUGENE

I can't believe you sleep when there's so much to accomplish out there. Here's the strategy:

(more)

Eugene rolls out a map of the neighborhood and refers to it as he lays out his plan.

EUGENE (cont'd)

There are three bars in the neighborhood:

"Wrist Cutters", "Right Temple" and
"Stiff Drinks". According to Plan A,

(more)

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT

20

EXTREME FAST MOTION. Zia and Eugene sit at the bar drinking beers and checking out the hot girls, but nothing actually happens except empty beer bottles pile in front of them. Zia has an unhappy face pretty much the whole time.

EUGENE (VO) (cont'd)

...every night we'll start at "Stiff Drinks" 'cause the hottest babes are there. If we don't score,

(more)

INT. "RIGHT TEMPLE" STRIP BAR - NIGHT

21

A shady strip bar. Eugene and Zia sit next to the dance floor, drinking beers just like in the previous bar. NOTHING has changed but the scenery. A dance-girl offers Zia the chance to take her laced glove off, but Eugene does it instead.

EUGENE (VO) (cont'd)
...we'll advance towards the "Right Temple", regroup, recharge the batteries and refresh the eye...
(more)

INT. "WRIST CUTTERS" KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

22

More obscure than the other two bars. It's late and the bartender is already arranging stools on top of the bar.

Zia and Eugene sit in the same position as in the previous two bars. The only difference is -- they are pretty drunk now.

At the improvised stage, two transvestites sing "Suicide is Painless" while giving Eugene and Zia hot looks.

EUGENE (VO) (cont'd)
...and finally wind up at "Wrist Cutters" to make absolutely sure we don't miss out on any action.
(more)

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

23

Eugene is helping Zia who's barely able to walk. Zia is absolutely SMASHED and throws-up in the alley.

EUGENE V.O. (cont'd)
We'll cover each other's back and provide assistance according to the development in the field.
(more)

INT. CHARTS AND MAPS - DAY

24

DETAILS of DIFFERENT CHARTS Eugene refers to during his speech. The charts totally remind one of military battle or basketball match strategy charts. Maps, arrows, pins, etc.

EUGENE V.O. (cont'd)

In the case of Plan A failing, we're switching to a back-up plan, code name "Early-Ugly", meaning - early in the game we aim for the ugly babes,
(more)

INT. "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT

25

Finally, some change: Zia and Eugene play darts with two not-so-amazing-looking girls, VICKY and STEPHANIE.

EUGENE V.O.

... 'cause if we wait till the end of night, they'll think, and rightfully so, that we approached them only 'cause we didn't hit the jack-pot.

EXT. IN FRONT OF "STIFF DRINKS" BAR - NIGHT

26

Eugene and Zia leave the bar with Vicky and Stephanie. All four of them are a bit wobbly on their feet.

EUGENE

So, a nightcap at your place Vicky?

VICKY

Yeah, I've got the booze, but let's get some snacks here.

She points to the burger stand close by.

EUGENE

Good thinking, Vicky. Who's for a burger?

They all are. Zia and Eugene go to the window to place an order.

EUGENE

(twists his mustache)

We're scoring tonight, man. D'you mind if I get the tall one?

ZIA

That's fine.

EUGENE

The little one's got great tits, but she likes you.

ZIA

Think so?

EUGENE

It's obvious. And what's best, they are both Juliets -- no visible scars.

(to the burger guy)

Four burgers to go, please.

They wait for the food. Vicky obviously likes Zia, and Stephanie is into Eugene.

VICKY

(leaning flirtatiously on Zia)

Sorry, I think I had too much to drink.

ZIA

(cornered into hugging her)

It's all right, the food will help.

Eugene winks to Zia, and then puts his arm around Stephanie's shoulders.

EUGENE

See, in Russia where I come from, when people are hungry, they put a piece of raw meat under the saddle and ride around the whole day, until the meat becomes perfectly soft. You can't buy a steak like that here. Believe me, it melts in your mouth.

STEPHANIE

I think I'd still prefer burgers. They seem much... cleaner to me.

EUGENE

Cleaner? Do you know that there is up to 2% of rat meat perfectly legal in ground beef.

VICKY

That's not true.

EUGENE

I saw it in a documentary. Rats fall into those gigantic meat grinders like crazy. And nobody gives a fuck. It's legal.

INT. STEPHANIE'S KITCHEN (REAL LIFE) - DAY

27

INSERT (Stephanie's suicide): Stephanie's make-up melts down her cheeks, mixed with her tears. She eats RAT POISON with a large kitchen spoon. On TV is a Jerry Springer type of TALK SHOW, with Stephanie talking to the show host.

TV SHOW HOST

So, after you sat on your father's lap,
how exactly did he start caressing you?

INT. VICKY'S KITCHEN (REAL LIFE) - MORNING

28

INSERT (Vicky's suicide): Vicky dead in her kitchen. An empty jar of PEANUT BUTTER and a spoon lay next to her. A RASH caused by a peanut butter allergy is all over her face.

FEMALE VOICE

(from the answering machine)

Vicky, I didn't really mean what I said last night. I swear I didn't. It's just that I had a hard day, so...ya' know... We're still best friends, right?

EXT. BURGER STAND - NIGHT

29

BACK TO: Stephanie points to the writing on the burger stand.

STEPHANIE

It says 100% beef.

VICKY

Why's Zia getting into a cab?

Eugene turns and sees Zia getting into a taxicab.

EUGENE

Hey, where are you going?

But, the taxicab has already pulled away with Zia in it.

EUGENE

What the fuck is wrong with that guy?

EXT. CITY STREETS/TAXICAB - NIGHT

30

Zia in the taxicab. He looks through the window, his face deadpan.

ZIA's POV: Filthy city streets and late night drunks are passing by in SLOW MOTION.

INT. "KAMIKAZE" SUSHI/DINNING AREA - DAY

31

Zia finishes his shift, counts his tips and talks to Eugene who came to visit him at work.

EUGENE

Because of who? Ophelia?

ZIA

Desiree.

EUGENE

Whatever. An ex girlfriend from an ex life! And these babes were real, and they were right there on the plate.

ZIA

So? Your strategy's never gotten us anywhere.

EUGENE

It's not my strategy. It's 'cause you never try real hard. Cause you bring a bad vibe. Cause of your fucking Irma.

ZIA

Desiree.

(to other waiters)

See ya' guys tomorrow.

(to Eugene)

So, you'll give me a lift home?

EXT. CITY STREETS/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY. SAME

32

Eugene drives Zia home in his beat up spray-painted orange Datsun seventy-something fastback.

EUGENE

Listen, when we go out tonight, you...

ZIA

I'm not going anywhere tonight. Or any other night. I'm done with that shit. It just gets me... I don't know... depressed.

EUGENE

So what are you gonna do? Kill yourself?

ZIA

I don't know.

EUGENE

As though anything could make you happy.

ZIA

And what makes you so happy?

EUGENE

What makes me happy?

(thinks for a moment)

The first beer of the day, for instance.

ZIA

(confused)

The first beer of the day?

EUGENE

Yeah, definitely. You know when the taste kicks in, and you feel it right here? It only happens with the first beer, though.

ZIA

I don't know, man... the same blank faces... the same flat beer... every night. Nothing ever happens... nothing really matters... to anybody...

EUGENE

Dude, you're flipping. The fact that nothing ever happens is a given. But as long as nothing happens, at least let it be in a place with babes and music.

ZIA

Go for it. It's just not my thing.

EUGENE

And what's your thing? Vegging in front of TV every night like a baboon?

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

33

Zia watches some boring TV show in which people have to say why they offed but it has to be funny.

Bored to hell, Zia surfs through channels till he hits the one that shows the continuation of his PREVIOUS dream.

INT. DESIREE'S AND ZIA'S KITCHEN (TV PROGRAM) - DAY

34

The CONTINUATION of Zia's dream plays on TV: Zia and Desiree look at the empty cabinets, in a slight panic.

They both run to the bedroom and start opening all the closets and drawers. Everything is empty. Everything.

DESIREE

Zia, I'm scared... What's going on?

ZIA
(hugs her)
It's all right, I'll figure it out...

The phone RINGS and Zia quickly picks up, as though someone will explain the whole thing. To his surprise, nobody's on the line and the RINGING continues.

ZIA
(trying to stay calm)
It's all right, I'll fix it...

DESIREE
(hugs him)
I know you will.

Zia unplugs the phone but the phone keeps RINGING. It's too much for Zia. He smashes the phone, but the RINGING continues.

As Zia stomps on the RINGING phone --

-- The ANGLE WIDENS OUT and we figure out that this is actually a furniture shop, and that the kitchen, and the bedroom are just sections exhibited in a larger hall. Other customers are walking around the store as well.

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

35

The phone keeps RINGING. Zia wakes up in a panic but quickly figures out it was only a dream.

It's 3 a.m. The TV is still on, but there's only noise on the screen. Zia turns the TV off and picks up the phone.

INT. "LONELY DONUT"/ZIA'S APARTMENT (ON THE PHONE) - NIGHT 36

Eugene, pretty loaded, is on a pay-phone in a 24 hrs donut shop "Lonely Donut", a shady hang out for people who don't feel like going home after bars close.

As he talks into the phone, he simultaneously plays a game of chess with his friend JOSH (28, black) who's also drunk.

INTERCUT of Zia and Eugene talking on the phone.

EUGENE
(sipping espresso)
Hey, you crazy motherfucker. You still on your retreat?

ZIA
What's going on?

EUGENE

You're missing out on so many things these days. You know that blonde waitress at Wrist Cutters? She went crazy for me. And her sister...

ZIA

Eugene, it's 3 a.m.

As Eugene talks, he moves his queen. Josh is obviously troubled by this move.

EUGENE

Best time for a game of chess at "Lonely Donut". I need you man
(little quieter)
Josh is a lame player.

Josh gives him the finger and makes a move.

ZIA

I can't man, I think I'm getting the flu or something. And I'm working tomorrow morning.

EUGENE

(makes a move)
Check!
(to Zia)
All right, all right, no hard feelings.
But you have to promise something first.

Zia swallows a couple of flu pills with water.

ZIA

What?

EUGENE

(lights a cigarette)
That you'll come to dinner tomorrow at my place.

ZIA

Dinner? You mean with your family?

EUGENE

Yeah, they won't eat you. Just a nice and quiet evening with my folks.

To Eugene's surprise, Josh eats his piece and gives him best grin he can.

ZIA

I don't know Eugene, I'm not really into it. I never told you, but I've had really bad experiences meeting my friends parents. Last time I did it, it was...

Eugene doesn't listen, he concentrates on the game.

EUGENE

Gotta go man. So, my place tomorrow at seven, sharp.

Eugene hangs up.

ZIA

Wait... Hello, Hello... Shit.

INT. EUGENE'S PLACE - NIGHT

37

Zia, Eugene, Eugene's Mother and Father and his brother Kostya are in the middle of dinner. Mother pours another bowl of borsch (Russian red beat soup) into Zia's bowl. Father pours more vodka into Zia's glass.

ZIA

Thanks, that's more than enough.

EUGENE'S FATHER

(pouring more Vodka for Zia)
We have to kill those germs, Zia.

MOTHER

(pouring more borsch for Zia)
There is a saying in Russia: "How much you eat, that's how worthy you are." See Zia, my grandpa, before he'd hired people, he'd give them a free meal. And he'd hire only those who ate the most, cause those were best workers.

ZIA

Are you guys trying to hire me or something?

KOSTYA

How about doing the dishes after dinner?

MOTHER

Kostya...

KOSTYA

You know Zia, dish-washing was Eugene's first job in America.

ZIA

No way... Really?

EUGENE

I've done all kinds of shit. In fact, my last job before I offed was waiting tables.

ZIA

I thought you were in a band.

EUGENE

I had to eat too.

MOTHER

I wish we were there for you Jenya (Eugene). See Zia, all of us, we were always together. First in Russia, then in America, and now here. And, when the two of us...

(points at the father)

...came here and left our boys all alone, they just couldn't manage to keep...

EUGENE

(interrupts her by hugging her)

Mama, that's all over now.

FATHER

And what about your parents, Zia?

ZIA

It's a long story, but well... at the end I barely even talked to them. They barely talked to each other either.

MOTHER

That's a shame.

FATHER

Not every family is lucky like we are.

(raising the glass of vodka)

For all of us being together.

Nazdorovje!

INT. HOSPITAL (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

38

INSERT (Mother's suicide): Eugene's Mother sick in the hospital. She pulls out all the hoses sticking out of her veins and nose. A framed reproduction of a Russian Orthodox icon on her night cabinet.

INT. EUGENE'S PARENTS' BEDROOM (REAL LIFE) - DAY

39

INSERT (Father's suicide): Eugene's Father with a noose around his neck stands on a chair. An old wedding picture on the wall. A cat jumps on the chair and mingles around father's feet.

EXT. SUBWAY STOP (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

40

INSERT (Kostya's suicide): Kostya is at a subway stop. He looks messy like he's been on speed for days. Behind him a homeless guy plays a cheerful tune. Kostya jumps under the incoming train.

INT. EUGENE'S PLACE - NIGHT

41

BACK TO: Zia and Kostya talk in the kitchen while washing the dishes after the dinner. Kostya is washing, Zia is drying.

In the living room, Mother and Father watch a talk show about the economy and health-care going down the drain.

Father curses in Russian every once in a while at the politicians talking, and the few English words he uses explain his attitude: "Sure. Tell me more about it", "liars", "think I'm stupid", "bandits", etc.

Eugene is chilling on a bed in his room having a beer and watching a basketball game on a small B&W TV set. Every once in a while he gets excited about the game.

MOTHER

(yells from the living room)

Kostya, I'll wash it later. Let Zia watch the game.

ZIA

(washing dishes)

It's all right. I don't care about basketball.

EUGENE

(from his room)

That's a terrible mistake, Zia. You're missing out on the best things in life.

ZIA

(continues talking to Kostya)

So, you're getting better now?

KOSTYA

I am now, but when I first got here I was in shock, 'cause... first, I thought I'm really done once and for all, and second, (more)

EXT. SOMETHING LIKE CLOUDS - DAY

42

INSERT: Seven or eight people float among the clouds. Some read books, some chat having tea, some play the harp, some eat fruit or just don't do anything.

KOSTYA (OS) (cont'd)

...even when I did think there might be something out there, I'd always imagine these sounds like in a submarine, and people floating around in space and stuff... you know.

INT. EUGENE'S PLACE - NIGHT

43

BACK TO: Zia and Kostya talk while washing the dishes.

ZIA

Same here, I never expected anything like this. It's a lot like the old place, only a bit worse.

KOSTYA

Yeah, mom says even the dust balls are bigger here. But... I still don't get it... Why only suicides, why not regular dead people too? What's the point? It doesn't make any sense...

ZIA

Even if it's not that great, could be a lot worse, if you ask me.

KOSTYA

You know... I'd be here long time ago if it weren't for Jenya (Eugene).

ZIA

How come?

KOSTYA

I was about ten and we had these soccer finals. I was the goalie for my school...

INT. EUGENE'S FAMILY HOME (REAL LIFE) - DAY

44

KOSTYA'S STORY: Kostya in complete soccer outfit, dirty after the game, ten years old, totally pissed off, dried tears on his cheeks, walks into the house. From Eugene's room comes the sound of Eugene practicing the electric guitar.

Kostya takes the jump-rope, ties it up around the chandelier, makes a noose and steps on a chair. He calls Eugene a couple of times. Finally Eugene hears him and comes out of his room.

EUGENE

Don't you hear I'm jamming...
(notices the noose)
What's that?

KOSTYA

(almost in one breath)
We were on top of their goal the whole game, I mean all the time. The ball just wouldn't get in. The other team was so bad they didn't even get one shot at my goal. And then, like two minutes before the end, they scored an offside goal. It was such an obvious offside -- you know, like the replays they show on TV... I didn't even try to stop the ball. And the referee said it was a goal... And it wasn't... And they went into the finals.

Eugene doesn't say anything, he just lights a cigarette.

KOSTYA(cont'd)

How is it possible for the better team to lose? We didn't deserve to. What's the point of living when the world is so unfair and everything. I'm telling you this just because you are the smartest person I know and if... and if you don't give me one good reason to keep living... and tell me what's the meaning of life I'm gonna do this.

EUGENE

(calmly)
Step down from the chair.

KOSTYA

No, first tell me.

EUGENE

Step down from the chair and I'll tell you.

Kostya steps down from the chair. Eugene slaps him so hard that Kostya falls to the floor. And then Eugene goes back to his room, closes the door and continues playing the guitar.

The slap REPLAYS once more in slow motion, TV style.

INT. EUGENE'S PLACE - NIGHT

45

BACK TO: Kostya finishes the story.

KOSTYA

...I never talked to Jenya (Eugene) about the meaning of life any more.

ZIA

He just slapped you?

KOSTYA

Yeah, I don't exactly know what he was trying to tell me when he did it, but whatever it was it worked fine 'till a couple of months ago.

Through the half-open door of Eugene's room Zia can see Eugene passed out in his bed with a half drunken beer still in his hand. Mother takes the bottle, covers him and turns the light and TV off.

ZIA

(to Kostya)

You know, when I see you guys like this, I almost miss my own parents, even though before I offed, they used to freak me out.

INT. ZIA'S ROOM - DAY

46

Zia, unshaven and obviously unkept, lays in his messy bed staring blankly at the ceiling. Old leftover take out food and clothes are everywhere.

A record on the record player keeps turning even though the music's over, producing a repetitive sound of SCRATCHING, but Zia doesn't seem to notice.

Erik opens the door.

ERIK

Did you finish my cottage cheese?

Zia doesn't answer.

ERIK

Zia! Did you finish my cottage cheese?

ZIA

(not looking at him)

Calm down, I'll buy you another one.

ERIK

That's not the point. I was planing on having some right now.

ZIA

Don't you have a plan B?

ERIK

Zia, you do it all the time.

ZIA

(sits up)

All right, all right, I'll go get it.
Just stop yelling, please.

INT. SUPERMARKET "SUPER DEALS" - DAY. LITTLE LATER

47

Zia picks a cottage cheese and puts it in his basket, when he notices BRIAN (30) walking through the aisle.

Zia tries to stay unnoticed, hiding behind the magazine he quickly grabbed from the shelf (cover story: *The Secret Revealed -- Why is Marilyn Monroe not with us!*), but it's too late, Brian's already spotted him.

BRIAN

(shouts)

Is that you, Zia? I was hoping we'd meet up sooner or later.

ZIA

Brian? What're you doing here?

BRIAN

Same as everyone else. Same as everyone else. It's even got to do with you.

ZIA

What happened? Did you come all the way here to pick up that 200 I owe you?

BRIAN

Ha-ha. You were always a million laughs, Zia. No, it wasn't that.

BRIAN (cont'd)

But, I admit, you were always the smart one, I should've done it the way you did it. And not...

EXT. BRIAN'S BALCONY (REAL LIFE) - DAY

48

INSERT (Brian's suicide): Brian sits on the railing of his balcony on the eighth floor.

He takes the last drag of his cigarette and is about to flip the cigarette butt down, but then changes his mind and puts it out into an ashtray. Instead, he throws himself down.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

49

BACK TO: Zia and Brian talk in the supermarket.

BRIAN

...I thought it'd be over in a snap, but I had real bad luck.

(points at the pickles)

Have you tried these? They're real good.

(puts two jars in his cart)

You should've seen it. I fell somehow lopsided, half on that car... remember my neighbor Tim's olive green Mustang convertible? He must've lost it when he saw what was left of it - yeah, half on his car and half on that nasty barb wire that goes around my building, and God - it took hours till it was over.

ZIA

What does that have to do with me?

BRIAN

It doesn't really, but in a way it does.

ZIA

I don't get it...

BRIAN

You know how they say suicides always happen in threes. Well, there is something to it.

(notices cottage cheese in Zia's basket)

Is that cheese any good?

ZIA

My roommate likes it.

BRIAN

(checking the cheese label)

Yeah, people around start dying, and you begin to ask yourself what the hell makes you different, and what's keeping you alive anyway. It hit me like a mallet. I mean, I just didn't have the answers.

(returns the cheese)

Too much sodium.

(looks at Zia)

Actually it wasn't you so much, it was more Desiree.

ZIA

Desiree?

BRIAN

Yeah, Desiree. She offed about a month after you. I was sure you knew.

Zia, stunned and totally senseless stares through Brian. Brian turns to check what Zia is looking at.

Behind the counter, one of SuperDeal workers is whacking a wiggling carp on the head with a mallet. Brian turns back to Zia and sees tears rolling down Zia's cheeks.

BRIAN

Hey, don't take it so hard.

(pets Zia's shoulder)

The doctors said she didn't feel a thing. Lucky her. It was over right away.

Still with his tears rolling, Zia jumps up and hugs Brian.

ZIA

Who's taking it hard, man? She's here, get it?

Zia runs out of the store, dropping his shopping basket. The cottage cheese rolls away.

BRIAN

Hey, what about the 200 you owe me? I still want it back!

INT. ZIA'S PLACE - DAY

50

Zia and Eugene are in Zia's apartment. A half packed suitcase is on the couch. Zia keeps packing during the conversation.

EUGENE

(looking into the fridge)

You don't have a living chance of finding her. I'll bet you anything.

(takes a beer out)

I'll bet you a beer.

ZIA

(keeps packing)

Those aren't mine.

EUGENE

(opens the beer)

And even if you somehow find her, what in the world makes you think she won't wreck your life again?

ZIA

Cause I've learned from my mistakes.

EUGENE

Oh, really? So, where are you gonna start looking for this Genevieve of yours, you dickhead? In Kingdom Come?

ZIA

Her name is Desiree.

EUGENE

Just another rich piece of ass.

ZIA

(packing)

We planned to live somewhere... with a dog, yard and everything. Desiree always said she hated living in the city.

EUGENE

That doesn't mean shit. I always said I hated living with my folks, so what?

ZIA

(taking a sip of beer from Eugene's bottle)

I dunno. I got this really strong hunch that she's not in the city. Call it intuition. Worst could happen is we just take a ride.

EUGENE

We?

ZIA

Figure of speech. That's all. I never figured you'd come with me just to find some rich piece of ass. Besides, I know you've got lots of commitments.

EUGENE

It's not like I'm out to be a jerk or anything. Gimme one good reason and I will.

ZIA

How about that I love her.

EUGENE

No, you don't. It's just like your stupid suicide. You're all about filling your head with words.

ZIA

No shit. And I guess your suicide was a stroke of genius.

Erik comes out of his room. Techno music blasts from in there.

ERIK

Don't forget to leave the rent money.

ZIA

It's on the fridge.

ERIK

(notices Eugene's beer)
Is that my beer?

Eugene just burps and slams the door in front of Erik's nose.

EUGENE

(sits next to Zia)
Let me put it this way. Since you got here, how many times d'you get laid?

ZIA

Why?

EUGENE

Just because.

ZIA

Actually laid? None I think.

EUGENE
You think?

ZIA
None. But what's that got to do with it?

EUGENE
Plenty. Cause your sperm count's so high that you think you're having an out of body experience like nobody in the whole god damn universe ever had before.

ZIA
(gets up and continues packing)
Just lend me the car, OK? That's all I'm asking you for.

EUGENE
Don't get so touchy on me all off a sudden. All I said is - it's not a good enough reason for me to go. But maybe I just talk shit. Maybe this Irma really is something special.

ZIA
Desiree.

EUGENE
Right. Sorry.

ZIA
Know what? Forget about Desiree, and Irma and love, and all that shit. I have another reason for you to come.

EUGENE
(flips the bottle into a trash)
Give it a shot.

ZIA
You got anything better to do?

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY - DAY

51

Eugene's car speeds out of the city carrying Eugene and Zia away. They honk at the jaywalkers who curse at them as Eugene almost runs them over. Without slowing down, Eugene and Zia give them the finger.

As they leave frame, the smoggy city stays in the background.

EXT. SUBURBAN AREA/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY. LATER

52

Eugene drives, Zia is in the passenger seat. They both sip beer. Still well populated suburban area is around them.

ZIA

And you're telling me that now? I mean, this way we can't drive at night at all.

EUGENE

You wouldn't believe how many times I've tried to fix it. Once I left it at the mechanic for almost two weeks.

ZIA

What's the big deal? It's only the headlights. We'll stop somewhere and get them fixed before it gets dark. It's on me, all right?

EUGENE

If you insist, but I bet you a beer it can't be fixed.

ZIA

(takes CD holder)

Let's get some tunes going.

The CD holder drops under Zia's seat.

EUGENE

(seeing that)

Shit, that's another thing I forgot to tell you about.

ZIA

(trying to get the CD holder)

What?

EUGENE

Anything that goes under that seat, forget about it.

ZIA

Is there a hole?

EUGENE

Yes... No... Kind of... It's more like a... Black Hole, or the... Bermuda Triangle. It's not an actual hole.

ZIA

It's the Black Hole?

EUGENE
Sort of. You know, things just
disappear.

UNDEFINED SPACE. BLACK HOLE - UNDEFINED TIME OF DAY 53

INSERT: CD's disappear into the Black Hole.

EXT. SUBURBAN AREA/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY 54

BACK TO: Zia and Eugene in the car.

ZIA
(stops looking under the seat)
Is there anything else you wanna tell me
about this car?

EUGENE
Lemme think... No, that's about it.

Zia notices a tape in the glove compartment. He takes it.

EUGENE
It's not very good.

ZIA
What is it?

EUGENE
It's my old band. I had it in my pocket
when I offed.

Zia puts the tape in the car stereo and turns it on. It's
sort of Punk Rock with influences of Russian Folk.

EUGENE
God, it sounds worse than I remember.

ZIA
I kinda like it.

EUGENE
The best thing about being in a band is
that babes go crazy for you. Those were
the days, my friend.

ZIA
Why don't you play again?

EUGENE
You crazy? My fingers twitch when I even
look at a guitar.

They drive toward distant mountains listening to Eugene's music.

EXT. SCARCELY POPULATED AREA/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - SUNSET 55

They drive through the landscape which is now very scarcely populated. They eat burgers and fries from a fast food place.

EXT. IN FRONT OF MIKE'S SHOP/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DUSK 56

It's getting dark. Barely any houses around. They notice an auto repair shop next to the road.

ZIA
(pulling over)
Perfect timing.

EUGENE
(notices the pay-phone)
Pay-phone. Cool. Got any change?

ZIA
Who do you need to call?

EXT. MIKE'S CAR SHOP - NIGHT. SOMEWHAT LATER 57

Eugene is on the payphone next to the car-shop.

EUGENE
(in Russian w/subtitles)
No mom, I'm not eating only burgers and fries... yeah, his flu's gone... In a motel or something... Definitely, I'll call tomorrow.

He hangs up and joins Zia who stands next to their car parked at the shop.

The headlights are off the car. JIM, an apprentice mechanic, scars on his wrists, comes out from underneath the car.

JIM
I dunno. Something's wrong.

ZIA
We figured so much.

JIM
I'll go get the boss. Mike's a genius, you'll see. You're real lucky 'cause he just came back from the hospital today. You just wait here.

Jim disappears into the house.

ZIA
(to Eugene, in kid's voice)
Well, how's your mommy?

EUGENE
(gives him the finger)
Gimme a break.
(leans closer to Zia)
See that car? It's been cruising back
and forth since we got here. I saw it
five times already.

He points at a beat up Chevy, handwritten TAXI on it's door.

ZIA
It's a taxi.

EUGENE
Think man! Who the fuck would need a
taxi here?

ZIA
What are you saying?

EUGENE
Look at the driver.

ZIA
Yeah. What about him?

EUGENE
He's an Arab.

ZIA
You never saw an Arab taxi driver before?

EUGENE
Sure I did, but not since I offed.
Connect the dots... Arabs... suicides...
Doesn't that freak you out, at least a
little bit?

ZIA
Man, you talk like a Homeland Security
agent. Forgot where we are? He's dead
already, we're dead, everybody's dead
here. End of comedy. Nobody gives a fuck
any more. We're all immigrants now.

EUGENE
Then why is he looking at us that way?

ZIA

Cause you're staring at him like you need
a fucking taxi.

EUGENE

(notices Jim and Mike)

Shit, I bet you a beer we'll need one
soon.

Jim pushes Mike who is in a wheelchair. His left arm and his
right leg are in cast.

MIKE

How're ya' doin', pretty boys? You came
to the best car fuckin' service in the
whole god damn county. All makes,
domestic and foreign, Mike's done it all.

(to Jimmy)

Watchya' waitin' for Jimmy? Let's hear
that beauty moaning.

Jim turns the engine on.

ZIA

(to Mike)

It's only the...

Mike gestures to Zia to be quiet, closes his eyes and
concentrates on the engine sound.

ZIA

...the headlights.

Mike doesn't pay any attention to Zia.

MIKE

(his eyes still closed)

Hell, feels good to be at work again.

(listens and concentrates)

You boys need a new exhaust... change the
carburetor... adjust all the valves...

While Mike talks, Jimmy happily gestures to Zia and Eugene
something like "Mike is a genius". Eugene and Zia look at
each other, not knowing what to do.

MIKE (cont'd)

...clean that bitch of the fuel pump, get
new brakes - god knows how they still
work... rewire the whole damn thing...

ZIA

(louder)

We only need the headlights fixed.

Mike doesn't answer. His head is tilted now, his eyes still closed, and he starts snoring. They all look at one another. Suddenly happy, Jim turns off the engine.

JIM

(quiet, as not to wake up Mike)

Thank God, I knew work would help him.

I was getting real worried, he hasn't caught a wink ever since the accident.

Zia looks at Eugene who looks away not wanting to deal with the whole thing.

JIM

Don't you worry boys, we'll fix the headlights first thing in the morning.

ZIA

(thinks for a moment)

Is there a place around to spend the night?

JIM

(whistles to the taxicab)

Hassan, boys need a ride to Kate's place.

INT. BATHROOM IN SUBURBAN HOUSE (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT 58

INSERT (Jim's suicide): Jim, snow pale, naked in a hot tub. The blood pours from his wrists. Through steamy bright red water we can see another body in the hot tub too.

INT/EXT. TAXICAB (MOVING)- NIGHT 59

Eugene and Zia in the back sit of the taxicab, Hassan drives.

His face looks like a puzzle which someone tried to put together but gave up halfway through. Moustache on one side but not the other, one eyebrow missing, his nose crooked.

On the passenger's seat is a six pack (revolver drum shaped) of mini vodka bottles "Russian Roulette". Hassan opens one, empties it in one go and tosses it out the window.

EUGENE

(reads the name tag)

Hassan, I thought Arabs don't drink.

HASSAN
I thought so too.

Zia and Eugene exchange silent glances.

EUGENE
D'you mind if I have one of your bullets?

HASSAN
(nods "help yourself")
It's kinda warm, but hits the spot.

EUGENE
(takes the bottle)
Thanks, man.

Eugene empties the bottle and tosses it out the window too.

EUGENE
Any bars around Kate's place?

HASSAN
Yeah, Kate's Bar. It's part of the motel.

EUGENE
Perfect. Any cute girls?

HASSAN
If you get lucky.

ZIA
I'm actually looking for a girl. Blond, short hair, name's Desiree. Ring a bell?

HASSAN
Not many girls stop here. That's the trouble. I like girls too, but... see...

As he says that, Hassan turns back. For a moment he loses control of the car and slips off the road, but quickly gains control again. Zia and Eugene get well shaken.

HASSAN (cont'd)
(still facing them)
...I didn't end up very pretty to look at.

EUGENE
How did that happen?

HASSAN
How did what happen?

Zia elbows Eugene in the ribs, trying to signal not to insist on that question. But Eugene continues.

EUGENE

You know... how'd you close shop?

HASSAN doesn't seem to mind the question, or he's just simply too drunk to care.

HASSAN

Oh, that. Can't you tell?

Hassan wiggles his body a little, mimicking an explosion.

EXT. EXPLOSION - DAY

60

INSERT (Hassan's suicide): DETAIL of a large explosion.

INT. TAXICAB (MOVING) - NIGHT

61

BACK TO: Hassan stops wiggling his body. Eugene turns to Zia.

EUGENE

Did you hear that?

ZIA

C'mon, leave the man alone.

EUGENE

Why? He doesn't mind.

(takes another bottle)

I'm curious Hassan, how many did you take with you?

Zia rolls his eyes.

HASSAN

How should I know?

EUGENE

You never even asked? Somebody musta gotten here after you.

HASSAN

It's not the kind of thing you ask.

EUGENE

But...

HASSAN

(gets annoyed)

Drop it, man.

Zia looks at Eugene meaning "I told you."

EUGENE

All right, all right. No hard feelings
man, I was just curious.

EXT. IN FRONT OF KATE'S MOTEL/TAXICAB - NIGHT. LITTLE LATER62

Hassan pulls over in front of a lonely and cheap looking
bar/motel. Zia pays and they get out of the car. After a
couple of steps Eugene goes back and leans at Hassan's
window.

EUGENE (cont'd)

Tell me, Hassan. Is it true that when you
people go out on a job they promise you
seventy nymphomaniac virgins in Kingdom
Come? All for you, solo?

HASSAN

Sure, they promise,
(opens another bottle)
And look what it got me. Lukewarm vodka.

EUGENE

So, you're just a sucker in the end, huh,
Hassan?

HASSAN

Sure thing.
(empties the bottle)
And you, what did they promise to you?

EUGENE

(ponders the question)
Who, communists or capitalists?

But Hassan has already pulled away. Eugene hears Zia cursing
from behind him.

EUGENE

What's wrong now?

Zia points at the note posted at the door "CLOSED BY THE
ORDER OF THE P.I.C."

EUGENE

Shit. What the fuck is the P.I.C.?

They keep staring at the sign in complete silence, both of
them lit by the flashing neon light "COLD BEER AND WARM BED".

Frustrated, Eugene lights a cigarette and starts walking down the road.

ZIA

Where're you going?

Eugene doesn't answer and Zia runs after him. They both disappear in the darkness and we only hear their voices now.

EUGENE

You know what?

ZIA

What?

EUGENE

I haven't got a clue why I came on this stupid trip with you.

EXT. MIKE'S CAR SHOP/EUGENE'S CAR - MORNING

63

Zia and Eugene sleep in Eugene's car, the space is tight, the windows are all foggy. Both of them are tossing and turning, and seem extremely uncomfortable.

Zia wakes up and stretches his painful legs. The morning light is too much for his eyes so he takes Eugene's sunglasses, but accidentally drops them.

UNDEFINED SPACE. BLACK HOLE - UNDEFINED TIME OF DAY

64

INSERT: The sunglasses disappear into the Black Hole.

EXT. MIKE'S CAR SHOP/EUGENE'S CAR - DAWN

65

BACK TO: Zia tries to reach for the sunglasses but gives up. Eugene wakes up after hitting the stick shift with his kidney.

EUGENE

Fucking shift stick! This is the last time I sleep in the car. We gotta buy... What's that thing called... wigwam...no, igloo...

ZIA

You mean a tent.

EUGENE

Yeah, a tent. Where are my sunglasses?

ZIA

Well, they fell under the seat...

EUGENE

Man, I told you to be careful.

ZIA

Sorry.

(opens the door)

I gotta take a leak.

Instead of stepping on the ground, Zia steps into abyss. He manages to grab the door at the last moment.

ZIA

(hanging from the door)

What the fuck?

They both realize that the car is raised on a hydraulic stand and that Mike (in his wheelchair) and Jim are underneath checking the wiring. Electric wires are all over the place.

Zia finally drops to the ground, right next to Mike. Eugene looks from above.

MIKE

Mornin' boys. Nothing like a good night sleep, huh? Your god damn headlights are giving me a fuckin' headache. But, I'll tell you: gimme a day or two and I'll fix them once and for all.

JIM

Once and for all. That's how Mike does it.

EUGENE

(from above, to Zia)

Looks like you owe me a beer.

INT. BATHROOM IN SUBURBAN HOUSE (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

66

INSERT (Mike's suicide): Mike, snow pale, naked in the hot-tub. As the camera PULLS out, we realize that this was the body next to Jim's. The blood pours from their wrists into the red, steamy water.

We can hear the sound of the front DOOR OPENING and VOICES of MIKE'S WIFE and KIDS who just came home.

MIKE'S WIFE (OS)

Mike honey, you home?!

EXT. ON THE ROAD/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

67

Eugene driving, Zia looking through the window. Barely any houses around.

Zia lowers his seat and tries to take a nap. Eugene seems bored, he feels like talking.

EUGENE

How can anyone sleep in a car?

(no answer)

You asleep?

ZIA

Yeah man, I'm asleep.

EUGENE

(adjusting the sun-shade)

I can't believe you lost my shades.

Zia just keeps sleeping.

EUGENE

(loud)

Holy shit. What a piece of ass.

ZIA

(annoyed)

Man, I'm trying to...

EUGENE

Zia, you gotta see this.

(twists his mustache)

Juliet. A jewel of a Juliet.

ZIA

(not even opening his eyes)

Sure.

EUGENE

I swear. A chick like that, if we weren't seeing her here, I'd never guess she offed herself.

Zia sits up and looks at the girl just as they pass her.

ZIA

She does look like a Juliet.

He keeps looking in the rear-view mirror. Once they pass her, the girl sticks her thumb out. Eugene stops the car on the spot. The car behind them barely avoids hitting them.

They back up and the girl (MIKAL, late 20's) opens the door.

EUGENE
(trying to sound casual)
Hop on in sis'.

MIKAL
(suspiciously)
Where are you heading?

ZIA
East.

MIKAL
(tossing her backpack in)
East where?

Zia shrugs.

MIKAL
You got a clue where you're going?

EUGENE
You haven't been here long, I guess.

MIKAL
(getting in)
Why's that?

EUGENE
Cause if anybody here had a clue, they
wouldn't be here in the first place.

MIKAL
True, I am pretty new. Actually, I've
been hitchhiking ever since I got here.

ZIA
How come?

MIKAL
I'm looking for the people in charge.

EUGENE
The people in charge?

MIKAL
Exactly.

EUGENE

What do you think this is, a goddam country club, where you go to the main office? By the way, when you were still alive, d'you ever go looking for God?

MIKAL

No.

(offers some gum)

But I didn't really have any reason to.

Zia and Eugene take the gum.

EUGENE

And what reason do you have now? You're sorry you did it? 'Cause you know, if that's it, and you're just waiting for someone to hand you a visa back home...

Zia doesn't like Eugene's tone, and jumps in.

ZIA

What's your name?

MIKAL

Mikal. You guys?

They say their names.

ZIA

So, you don't like it here, huh?

MIKAL

Is that a trick question?

ZIA

No, why?

MIKAL

Why? Who likes being stuck forever in a place where people can't even smile? I just wanna go home.

EUGENE

C'mon, it's not that bad. At least some of us still have a sense of humor.

MIKAL

Well, you guys seem all right. Although when I saw you from far away, you looked a little...

ZIA

Mean?

MIKAL

No. Obnoxious. I guess... it had to be his mustache.

INT. A CAMPING GEAR SHOP - DAY. LATER

68

Zia, Eugene and Mikal are buying a tent. Half a dozen tents of different sizes are pitched inside the shop.

After checking out the price tags, the three of them lay down in the smallest and cheapest tent to test it. They barely fit inside, Eugene's feet even stick out.

EUGENE

I don't know...

MIKAL

C'mon, It's not bad. I like the color.

ZIA

Yeah, let's get it.

EUGENE

I guess... the price is right.

ZIA

Cool. I'll go get the sales person.

After Zia gets out of the tent, Eugene flirtatiously puts his arm around Mikal's shoulders.

EUGENE

You wanna try it out?

MIKAL

What do you mean?

EUGENE

You know what I mean.

MIKAL

(gets up)

I'll go see how Zia's doing.

Mikal gets out of the tent and walks towards Zia who is at the cash register. She stops near the sign "SHOPLIFTERS WILL BE SEVERELY PROSECUTED", checks if someone is looking at her and stashes the sign under her jacket.

EXT. CAMPING SPOT - NIGHT

69

The little tent is pitched next to the forest. Mikal, Zia and Eugene are having dinner, but it's not much of a meal -- "Cup o' Noodles" soups and cold cuts. The sign "SHOPLIFTERS WILL BE SEVERELY PROSECUTED" burns in a camp fire.

MIKAL

Threats and rules. They always try to get you with those. "KEEP AWAY", "WAIT BEHIND THE YELLOW LINE", "NO WHITE T-SHIRTS"... I don't know... It makes me kind of sad.

ZIA

Sad? Why sad?

MIKAL

Why? Cause it makes people dull. Especially here... Why can't they put up something more optimistic? Something...

EUGENE

You know why? Cause they don't want a bunch of happy people running around, it's much easier to rule a flock of scared sheep.

ZIA

And who are "they"? The KGB maybe?

EUGENE

Even if we were able to laugh, your jokes wouldn't do it for me, Zia.

MIKAL

(fixing the fire)

Look, they don't even burn very well.

They eat in silence. Zia looks at the sparkles fading into the STARLESS sky.

MIKAL

D'you guys think that people who die normally also end up with no stars at all? I really miss the stars.

EUGENE

You'll get used to it.

MIKAL

I don't wanna get used to it. I gotta find a way back.

MIKAL (cont'd)

This guy who gave me a ride the other day said he actually heard rumors about the people in charge. Apparently, they wear white outfits and..

EUGENE

That's a crock of shit. White outfits? The guy was just trying to get into your pants.

MIKAL

No, he wasn't. He also thought I had a very good case.

EUGENE

And what makes your case so special, if you don't mind me asking?

MIKAL

That I got here by mistake.

EUGENE

We all got here by some mistake, one way or another. And believe me: You have as much chance to find your folks in white, as Zia has to find his dead princess.

MIKAL

That's not true. I know he'll find her.

ZIA

Yeah, I have a hunch she's not that far.

EUGENE

(walking away to take a leak)
Wherever she is, I bet she's found someone by now. Probably some black guy who hanged himself by his dick.

Eugene takes a leak behind a nearby bush.

ZIA

(when Eugene can't hear)
Those Russians, they think happy endings are just Hollywood crap.

MIKAL

I guess that's what makes him so... cute.

ZIA

Cute?

MIKAL

Yeah, you know what I mean.

It's obvious on Zia's face that he's doubtful about what Mikal means. But he doesn't ask.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

70

The three of them sleep in the small tent, Mikal in the middle.

Zia has his back turned away from Mikal and Eugene, and can hear a slight commotion and whispering from their direction: "...your feet are so warm...", "...stop it...", "...c'mon, it'll be fun...", "...no...", "...why not?", "I'm tired..."etc.

As Zia falls asleep, Eugene and Mikal finally start MAKING OUT, touching and kissing each other, and then they disappear from the tent.

A little later, Zia wakes up all upset and suddenly sits up, but realizes that Eugene and Mikal are still sleeping. It was only his DREAM that they made out.

Zia lays down again, pensive. He looks at Mikal who sleeps with her thumb in her mouth.

INT. CAMPING SPOT - MORNING

71

Mikal packs their stuff into the car. Zia and Eugene fold the tent. Mikal brings the car closer.

MIKAL

D'you mind if I drive? I promise, I'll get us there in half the time.

EUGENE

Get us where?

Mikal points at the empty horizon.

MIKAL

Over there.

EUGENE

Oh, there. All right then.

Zia sits next to Mikal.

EUGENE

I'm not sitting in the back.

MIKAL

Why not?

EUGENE

Why not? Cause everybody knows that the guy in the back seat doesn't have a cock.

ZIA

What?

EUGENE

That's a fact. If the guy in the back seat had a cock, he wouldn't be sitting there in the first place.

ZIA

I have a cock. Do you have a cock, Mikal?

MIKAL

Of course I have a cock.

They look at each other, and it's obvious that if they could, they'd crack up laughing.

ZIA

I guess, we have a problem.

A minute later. They drive down the road, all three of them squeezed in the front.

INT/EXT. MONTAGE/VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY/NIGHT

72

A) They drive through different landscapes, farmland, towns etc, listening to Eugene's tape. THE SAME MUSIC continues over the entire montage.

B) They're buying supplies (canned food, beers etc) at a grocery store. Eugene buys a new pair of sunglasses.

C) They drive. Mikal looks at herself in the rearview mirror and with her fingers tries to stretch her mouth into a smile, but it doesn't look right. Zia and Eugene try too.

D) While driving, Zia looks at PARACHUTES falling in the distance.

E) Eugene is on a pay-phone talking to his mom while Zia and Mikal ask different people (a psychic, a priest, a fireman, a man in a WHITE OUTFIT) about Desiree and about the People in Charge, but everybody shakes their head "NO".

POLICE OFFICER

(to Mikal)

Ma'm, I'm not sure whether what you're trying to accomplish is completely legal.

F) The tent is pitched next to a lake and the three of them swim. Mikal floats in an inner tube which reads "NO SWIMMING".

While UNDERWATER, Zia sees Eugene's hands TOUCHING Mikal's body. Mikal pushes Eugene away and swims underwater, where she EXCHANGES LOOKS with Zia.

G) They drive. Various things (road-map, Mikal's lipstick, cigarette lighter) disappear into the Black Hole. At a sharp curve, Zia drops Eugene's new sunglasses, too.

EUGENE

Man, are you doing it intentionally? Why don't you buy your own shades?

ZIA

It's not my fault that your car...

MIKAL

Stop bickering guys. Look, food.

EUGENE

(pulling over at the diner)

Perfect timing.

(to Zia)

And you, don't touch my stuff any more.

They pull over at the diner.

INT. DINER "HUNGER STRIKE" - DAY. LITTLE LATER

73

Mikal and Zia sit in a booth sipping drinks and waiting for the food, Eugene is on a pay-phone.

MIKAL

(looking at Eugene)

Didn't he talk to his mom this morning?

ZIA

Supposedly that's normal in Russia.

MIKAL

What? That's not normal anywhere.

(gets up)

I'll go get some smokes. Need anything?

Zia nods "no", and Mikal walks towards a small cigarette stand inside the diner. As she walks by Eugene, he casually slaps her ass, still talking to his mom.

Mikal calmly turns and leans right into his face.

MIKAL

(loud in Eugene's face)

Next time you slap my ass, I'll tell your
mom, asshole!

As she says that, Mikal walks away leaving Eugene off guard.

EUGENE

(in Russian, w/subtitles)

...I don't know mom, some crazy woman...
You know I'd never do that, mom...

At the cigarette stand Mikal notices sunglasses on sale and tries them on. While she does that she notices a sign "NO SMOKING", and discretely writes "UNLESS YOU WANT TO" below.

Eugene is back at the table and talks to Zia. The waiter brings their food.

EUGENE

Neither of us will score with her,
y'know.

ZIA

I'm not that sure. The other day she
said you're cute.

Hiding three pairs of sunglasses behind her back, Mikal is about to join Zia and Eugene, but stops when she hears their conversation.

EUGENE

(biting into his burger)

Cute? That's what you say about a puppy.
The only thing worse is "a good friend"
or "a nice person". It means, in plain
English: "I'll leech on you as long as I
can, but don't even think about getting
into my pants."

Covered by the booth panelling, Mikal keeps listening to their conversation.

ZIA

We're only giving her a ride.

EUGENE

Yes, but for how long? We both know that
shooting the shit just isn't the same
when there's a chick around.

ZIA

(tries to avoid the topic)
The french fries are great.

EUGENE

(not giving up)
That's another thing: She doesn't even cook. And I'll tell you something else: She isn't even a Juliet.

ZIA

How d'you know?

EUGENE

Why d'you think she always wears long sleeves, even when she swims? I bet you a beer she slit her wrists.

ZIA

(thinks for a moment)
You might be right.

EUGENE

Off course I'm right. I say let's get rid of her while we still can. Look man, look what we're losing 'cause of her.

Eugene points at two sexy girls passing by their table. Zia leans to see their legs better, and he obviously likes them.

ZIA

Well, don't tell her I said so, but the whole "people in charge" thing is kind of weird, and...

EUGENE

See? That's what I'm talking about.

- Eugene stops short. He notices Mikal listening to their conversation. Zia turns to see what Eugene is staring at, and sees Mikal quickly leaving the diner.

ZIA

Shit, man. Did she hear us?

EUGENE

What did I tell you? She's even eavesdropping on her friends.

Through the window they can see Mikal taking her knapsack out of their car and talking to a guy who is just about to pull away from the parking lot.

ZIA
You happy now?

EUGENE
Too bad. You want half of her burger?

Zia doesn't listen, he gets up and runs out of the diner.

EXT. DINER "HUNGER STRIKE" - DAY

74

Zia runs out just in time to see the car with Mikal in it pull away. He stands there for a moment looking at the car driving away and then slowly walks back to the diner.

EXT. EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY. LATER

75

Zia and Eugene now drive alone in silence. Eugene puts his tape on, loud. Zia notices two pairs of sunglasses in the back seat.

ZIA
Did you get these shades?

EUGENE
What shades?

Zia shows him the two new pairs of sunglasses.

ZIA
She must've gotten them for us.

EUGENE
(putting on the shades)
Sweet of her, but it's good to be on our own again, huh?

ZIA
(lowers the volume)
You know, you can really be a jerk.

EUGENE
What do you care? We're looking for Irma, right?

ZIA
Yeah, we're looking for... Irma.

EUGENE
So, let's look for Irma.

Zia turns away, puts on his new shades and looks through the window. Eugene turns the volume up again.

The landscape becomes more and more bare. It almost looks like the surface of the Moon. An occasional junk-yard, a rusty car-body or a long stretch of power lines are the only signs of civilization.

EXT. GAS STOP - DAY. LATER

76

Zia and Eugene pull up at a lonely gas stop. Zia starts filling up and Eugene goes to pay.

While filling up, Zia notices Mikal and a COP arguing at the gas stop entrance. Zia realizes that Mikal is getting arrested, and he slowly approaches them.

MIKAL

On what charges, officer?

COP

(handcuffing her)

Ma'm, that's a clear case of vandalism.

MIKAL

I was just trying to make this place less depressing.

Zia notices a large broken sign nearby. It used to read "NO EXIT", but now the "NO" part lays on the ground and the sign only reads "EXIT".

ZIA

Excuse me, sir. That's my sister.

COP

(pushing Mikal into the car)

I'm afraid your sister's been arrested.

ZIA

Can I talk to you for a second?

COP

(closing the door)

What have you got to say?

Zia explains something to the COP. Cop's front teeth are made of gold. A bullet-exit scar on the back of his bald head.

EXT. ARMY CAMP (REAL LIFE) - DAY

77

INSERT (Cop's suicide): The Cop is a soldier in the middle of basic training. He puts the barrel of his assault rifle in his mouth.

His forehead drips with sweat while he looks at a large sign reading "NO EXIT". He slowly pulls the trigger...

EXT. GAS STOP - DAY. SAME

78

BACK TO: Zia finishes his explanation.

COP

I see.

ZIA

I swear, that's what it is.

COP

(thinks what to do)

Well, I'll turn my head away this once...

He lets Mikal out of the car and takes the handcuffs off.

COP

...but, Ma'm, you better watch your behavior.

MIKAL

You bet.

ZIA

Thanks officer.

The Cop drives away and Zia and Mikal stay alone.

MIKAL

(starts walking away)

Thanks, but you didn't have to do that.

ZIA

(follows her)

Can't I offer you a ride?

MIKAL

I think I'm headed the other way.

Mikal drops her knapsack onto the ground and starts hitchhiking.

ZIA

Mikal I'm sorry, we didn't mean it.

MIKAL

It doesn't matter, really.

Pause. A car passes by without stopping.

ZIA
Listen, I just wanted to...

MIKAL
(annoyed)
It's really hard for me to get a ride
with you standing here.

Zia stands there for another moment. Mikal keeps
hitchhiking.

ZIA
I hope you find who you're looking for.
I really do.

MIKAL
(sticks her thumb out)
Thanks man.

As Zia slowly walks away, Mikal discretely looks at him. Zia
gets back into the car. Eugene is already inside.

EUGENE
Where were you, man?

ZIA
You know who I just saw?

EUGENE
(pulling away)
Who?

As Eugene pulls away, a loud CRASH comes from the back of the
car. Eugene stops instantly and the two of them look back.
The nozzle is still in their tank and the hose with the
pieces of the pump is broken and pulled out.

EUGENE
Holy shit! You didn't take the nozzle
out.

ZIA
I thought you did it.

EUGENE
What d'you mean - me? I was paying.

They look at the ATTENDANT approaching. He's a tough looking
Native American, with a crooked neck.

EUGENE
You deal with this guy, I'm not into it.

EXT. AT THE HIGHWAY TOLL BOOTH (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

79

INSERT (Attendant's suicide): Late night, no traffic. It's hard to imagine a lonelier place in the world.

Attendant in a toll-booth worker's uniform, noose around his neck. The other end of the noose is tied up to the toll-bar which starts moving up.

INT. GAS STOP/COUNTER - DAY

80

BACK TO: Zia is at the desk with the Attendant who actually doesn't seem that angry, and is a nice guy.

Attendant pulls out a thick book titled "Incident Reports", and puts it on the counter. He browses through the pages looking for an empty one.

ATTENDANT

Happens all the time, at least twice a week. See, all these are already filled.

(finds an empty page)

Fill out this form.

Zia fills out the first couple of fields (Name, Date, Car Model etc.) but then he gets confused. There is a question "What were you thinking about when the incident occurred?"

ZIA

What's this "What were you thinking about?"

ATTENDANT

Exactly that. What were you thinking about when you demolished my pump?

Zia thinks for a moment about what he was thinking about and looks through the window -- at Mikal. She argues about something with Eugene.

Zia browses through a couple of pages to see previous answers. He reads:

INT. GAS STOP - NIGHT

81

INSERT (FIRST ANSWER): A middle-aged, overdressed woman with too much make-up on looks at a crumpled dry-cleaner receipt, then pulls away from the pump. A loud CRASH comes from behind.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (VO)

I found a dry cleaner receipt hidden in my wallet from the day I offed, and I was thinking "God, what bitch is wearing my mink coat now?"

INT. GAS STOP - DAY

82

INSERT (SECOND ANSWER): An extremely OVERWEIGHT man eats a large sandwich in his great looking convertible sport's car. He pulls away from the pump and a loud CRASH comes from behind. The pieces of the pump fly around.

FAT MAN (VO)

Wouldn't be great to be like my car:
Always be able to fill up to the max but
still stay sexy and never get fat.

INT. GAS STOP - MORNING

83

INSERT (THIRD ANSWER): A CORPORATE MAN, bullet-hole scars on his temples, sits in his expensive car. He looks desperate. He pulls away, and the pump breaks behind him.

CORPORATE MAN (VO)

Here I am again... buried in debt, just
got fired, and my wife's gonna leave me
tomorrow. If pulling the trigger didn't
solve my problems, what the Hell will?

INT. GAS STOP - NIGHT

84

INSERT (FOURTH ANSWER): A wasted guy sips from his flask and pulls away. A loud CRASH behind him.

WASTED GUY (VO)

I was wondering whether I am too drunk to
drive.

EXT. GAS STOP/EUGENE'S CAR - DAY

85

BACK TO: While Zia reads the forms, Eugene and Mikal argue.

EUGENE

No, you don't get it. I don't have
anything to apologize to you for. What
I'm saying is -- you shouldn't be
eavesdropping on your friends, and you
shouldn't be talking shit about me in
front of my mother. That's completely
fucked up.

MIKAL

But you don't think it's fucked up to
talk shit about...

Mikal stops when she sees Zia running towards them all
excited.

ZIA

I found her, I found her!!!

EUGENE

Calm down, man.

ZIA

I got her address and everything. Even
the phone number. Look at this.

Mikal and Eugene read the form Zia ripped out of the book.
It's all there: Desiree's name, address, phone number.

EXT. GAS STOP - DAY

86

INSERT (Desiree's answer): Desiree, pensive and sad in her
car. As she pulls away, a loud CRASH of the gas pump
breaking. Pieces of the pump fly around.

DESIREE (VO)

I spaced out because the man at pump #3
looked just like my ex-boyfriend. God,
will I ever find him, he feels so close.

EXT. GAS STOP/EUGENE'S CAR - DAY

87

BACK TO: Mikal and Eugene finish reading the form.

MIKAL

She's looking for you too.

EUGENE

You sure she didn't have other dudes
after you?

MIKAL

Stop being an asshole, asshole.

ZIA

I told you she was close. I knew it.

EUGENE

What're we doing now? You wanna call
her?

ZIA

(thinks for a bit)

Let's just go there. The guy said it's only a few miles away.

MIKAL

You should buy some flowers at least.

ZIA

That'd be nice, but... all the flowers here are... so brown.

MIKAL

True, true.

(thinks for a bit)

And... what's her favorite color?

EXT. ROAD TO DESIREE'S HOUSE/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY 88

Eugene drives, Mikal holds a bouquet of brown flowers, Zia reads the label on a can of spray-paint. Mikal sticks the flowers out the window and Zia starts spraying them a TURQUOISE color.

ZIA

Not bad, huh?

Mikal

(checking the paint job)

Interesting. Desiree's got some taste.

EUGENE

No shit. What other color could someone named Desiree like but "Turquoise"?

Eugene notices a butcher wearing a WHITE OUTFIT with blood stains, sharpening a knife in front of a butcher-shop.

EUGENE

(to Mikal)

Look, look. Looks like we found the person in charge, too.

Mikal just gives him a "killer look" and Eugene shuts up.

EXT. IN FRONT OF DESIREE'S HOUSE/EUGENE'S CAR - DAY 89

They park on the street in front of a large house with a nice garden and an expensive car.

EUGENE

This is it, man.

(looking at the house)

I'd say your madam's doing pretty good.

ZIA

I bet she's just renting a room here.

EUGENE

(slaps his back)

C'mon, be an optimist, Zia.

MIKAL

(pushing him)

Go, go Zia. It'll be all right.

Zia gets out.

EUGENE

Good luck, bro'.

Mikal shows him she's got her fingers crossed. Zia goes and buzzes at the door. A handsome man opens the door.

EUGENE

Holy Shit...

Eugene lights a cigarette, Mikal takes one too.

MIKAL

Maybe he's right, maybe she's just renting a room here.

Zia talks to the man for a while, and then comes back.

MIKAL

What happened?

ZIA

She moved.

EUGENE

Where?

ZIA

He doesn't know.

EUGENE

Any forwarding address?

Zia shakes his head "No", and gets into the car. They all look a bit shaken. Zia looks at the flowers in his hand and throws them in the back seat.

ZIA

At least we're getting closer.

EUGENE

Man, you deserve a drink.

Eugene pulls away. Mikal nudges the flowers discretely under Zia's seat, making sure nobody notices her move.

UNDEFINED SPACE. BLACK HOLE - UNDEFINED TIME OF DAY 90

INSERT: The flowers disappear into the Black Hole.

EXT. HILLY AREA/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY 91

BACK TO: They drive looking for a bar. The area is barely inhabited, and Eugene is getting frustrated.

EUGENE

No liquor store, no bars... How the fuck do people relax here?

MIKAL

What people?

They notice a lonely ice-cream store - a part of a chain - with a logo featuring a seal in a clown's uniform riding a unicycle out of a window, and the motto "Low in Price, High in Flavor".

EUGENE

Let's ask, I'm sure they know about the local bars.

He pulls over at the ice-cream store.

INT. ICE CREAM STORE - DAY 92

Eugene and Zia are at the counter, Mikal goes into the bathroom. Eugene talks to a sales-person, SANDRA, a voluptuous, busty Hispanic woman in her late thirties, dressed in an ice-cream company outfit, with the name tag featuring the seal logo.

Sandra is the only worker in the store, and there are no other customers.

EUGENE

What do you mean Sandra: "Dry county"?

SANDRA

(Spanish accent)

Means, no liquor in the whole county.

EUGENE
(to Zia)
Can you believe that?

ZIA
Let's at least get some ice-cream, now
that we're here.

EUGENE
(winks at Sandra)
What's the closest thing to alcohol
you've got here, Sandra?

SANDRA
Let's see... Cherry Liquor ice-cream, I'd
say. It's real good.

EUGENE
(glancing at her breasts)
How many cones d'you think we'd have to
have to get a fine buzz?

SANDRA
I don't know, I've never thought of it.

EUGENE
Give us ten pounds then. Just in case.

ZIA
Ten pounds?

SANDRA
Lemme see if I have that much.

She goes into the back-room.

EUGENE
(to Zia, twisting his mustache)
Did you see those boobs, man?
(slaps Zia's shoulder)
An old hen makes a tasty soup, ya' know.

SANDRA
(from the back-room)
Can you gimme a hand here?

EUGENE
Absolutely.

Eugene goes into the back-room. Mikal comes out of the
bathroom.

MIKAL
Where's Eugene?

ZIA
He's getting some ice-cream.

Mikal looks at a posting listing all the rules for the workers (being polite to customers, wearing hats and gloves, washing hands, keeping the place clean, giving receipts, etc).

INT. ICE CREAM STORE/BACK ROOM - DAY

93

Eugene macho-style, helps Sandra pick up a large ice-cream container.

SANDRA
That's a beautiful mustache you have.

EUGENE
I get that a lot.

Suddenly, Sandra takes his hand and puts it on her heart.

SANDRA
Feel my heart.

A LOUD sound of a quick HEART-BEAT. Eugene is taken aback a little. He tries to pull his hand away, but Sandra starts massaging her breasts with it.

EUGENE
(trying to pull his hand away)
I feel it.

SANDRA
I'm alive again. It's all 'cause of your mustache.

She jumps at him and starts kissing him wildly. Eugene is definitely not comfortable doing it that way, but it's hard to push Sandra away while holding a large ice-cream container in his hands.

INT. ICE CREAM STORE/COUNTER - DAY. SAME

94

Zia helps Mikal to switch the words on the posting.

ZIA
We had one of these in Kamikaze, right next to the can. I never liked it.

MIKAL

Really? By the way, what did you tell that cop at the gas station?

ZIA

The truth. Something about how sad the sign was making you... How it was actually ruining the landscape... How there's not enough good humor around...

MIKAL

Really? He bought that?

ZIA

Why not? I bought it.

They look at each other for an awkward moment. It almost seems they should kiss, but neither makes the move.

MIKAL

I'm glad you did, Zia.

Now we can see the new text on the posting: "KEEP CUSTOMERS CLEAN", "ALWAYS WASH RECEIPTS THOROUGHLY", "BE POLITE TO YOUR HATS" etc.

INT. ICE CREAM STORE/BACK ROOM - DAY

95

The unexpected is definitely happening for Eugene. He's still trying to defend himself from Sandra who's all over him.

SANDRA

What's wrong? You don't like me?

EUGENE

I do... but I'm actually...

SANDRA

What... Married?

EUGENE

(happy about the hint)
Y-e-e-s-s-s.

SANDRA

(continues the attack)
Me too.

EUGENE

Sandra...let me tell you... my wife is... very, very sick, and...

Sandra finally starts loosening her grip.

EXT. SANDRA'S BATHROOM (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

96

INSERT (Sandra's suicide): Sandra dead in a bathtub. Yellow rubber ducks and a TOASTER float in the foam. The light bulb is flashing with a slight ELECTRIC BUZZ.

MAN'S VOICE

(from the answering machine)

Good morning, I'm Jim Garret from the Millennium Bank Collection Department. Ms. Lopez, we did not receive your last eleven payments, so in order to collect the debt, we are forced to...

EXT. ICE CREAM STORE/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - SUNSET

97

BACK TO: Eugene, Zia and Mikal pull away carrying ten pounds of ice-cream with them. Sandra waves good-bye.

SANDRA

I hope your wife gets better.

ZIA

What's she talking about?

EUGENE

(driving away)

I have no idea.

MIKAL

I think she liked you.

EUGENE

Who, she? You never know with women. See... I always said women should have tails. Like, you are in a bar talking to a girl and she pretends she doesn't give a fuck about you. But, you take a quick look over her shoulder, and if she wiggles her tail - you know you're bound for something good, if she doesn't - you don't waste your time any more.

MIKAL

Very interesting.

ZIA

Maybe the world would be a better place if everyone had tails.

EXT. EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DUSK. A LITTLE LATER

98

They drive looking for a camping spot. Mikal notices a rusty button on the dashboard.

MIKAL
What's this button?

EUGENE
I don't think it works.

Mikal curiously pushes the button and suddenly their headlights turn on. Eugene shocked, stops the car.

EUGENE
Christ! Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

They all look at the working lights. Eugene hugs Mikal.

EUGENE
You're in-fuckin'-credible! You're a genius!

Eugene is so happy he grabs Mikal and gives her a long kiss on the mouth. Zia's not really happy about this sudden intimacy.

ZIA
It's only the headlights.

MIKAL
(finally gets free)
Yeah. Take it easy, Eugene.

EUGENE
(continues driving)
Only the headlights?! D'you know how many mechanics got under the hood of this old ride? Billions. And none one of them, so called "experts" could fix it... You are my hero.

MIKAL
Any time.

Eugene turns the headlights on and off a couple of times and flashes the high beams.

EUGENE
Look at that. Beautiful.

The moment Eugene says that, he notices a man lying in the middle of the road. He tries to avoid running over him and ends up SMASHING the car into a tree.

The front of the car is totalled, but nobody's injured. After the initial shock they all get out of the car and walk toward the guy laying on the road.

ZIA

Is he dead?

MIKAL

(bending towards the guy)
I think... he's sleeping.

Eugene furious, starts shaking the guy sleeping on the road. Within seconds the guy is awake.

EUGENE

Hey you! You crazy or something?

KNELLER

(calmly)
What about you?

The guy stands up and offers a handshake to Eugene.

KNELLER

I'm Raphael. Raphael Kneller. But you guys can call me Kneller.

Eugene refuses the handshake. KNELLER looks completely crazy, but somehow harmless.

KNELLER (cont'd)

You haven't seen a dog around here by any chance, have you?

The three stand around Kneller and look at him in awe. Kneller notices the smashed car.

KNELLER

What happened?

ZIA

This guy's completely insane.

MIKAL

(notices a cut on Zia's lip)
You're bleeding.

She pats dry Zia's lip with a napkin. Kneller realizes by their looks that everything is his fault.

KNELLER

I'm sorry, I'm terribly sorry. I'll take care of everything.

EUGENE

Off course you will. Towing, repair, rent-a-car, our wasted time and the psychological turbulence we went through.

KNELLER

I'm sorry. I was looking for my dog Freddie. He's lost. Have you seen him by any chance?

ZIA

You were looking for your dog by sleeping here?

KNELLER

What'd you expect? I need a break too.

EUGENE

But why in the middle of the fucking road, dammit? I mean, it's irresponsible, if you ask me.

KNELLER

(looking around)

It's just that all this peace and quiet got to me... ya' know what I mean.

Kneller winks, like he said a joke, but he realizes everybody is still pissed off.

KNELLER

Let's go to my place.

MIKAL

Your place?

Kneller looks at a stop-watch hanging around his neck.

KNELLER

Yeah, it's too late now to keep looking for Freddie.

(smells something)

Do I smell ice-cream?

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

99

The four of them enter something that looks like a trailer park, with a few silver Airstream type trailers scattered around an old house.

Above the gate is a crossed out sign "FOR RENT" and right on top of it is scribbled in blue paint "KNELLER'S HAPPY CAMPERS".

Seven or eight people, of different ages and races, are doing everyday things around the camp. They are a colorful crowd, ranging from older ex-cons to naive teenagers but they all seem to get along.

No one pays much attention to the newcomers, except giving a couple of quick "Hi's".

Kneller, who carries the ice-cream, talks the whole time like he's wound up.

KNELLER

(points at the sign)

Nothing is really for rent here, I mean it was once, but I rented the whole place a while ago. And it's not really a camp, that's just a joke a friend of mine thought would be funny. You think it's funny? I don't... Eh, just wait 'till they see all the ice-cream.

Zia, Mikal and Eugene look around while following Kneller, not really paying attention to what he's saying.

Zia notices a guy FLOATING a little bit above the ground while eating a can of beans. Zia can't believe his eyes. The guy nods politely at Zia and continues eating.

ZIA

Look, look at that!

Mikal, Eugene and Kneller turn, but it's too late to see it. The guy is now sitting on the ground, finishing his meal. He BURPS with satisfaction.

ZIA

That guy was floating in the air.

Eugene and Mikal look at Zia like he's crazy.

ZIA

I swear.

KNELLER

Don't pay any attention. Happens all the time here.

ZIA

What happens? Miracles?

KNELLER

Call it a miracle, but it doesn't count for anything. Strange you even noticed. Most people don't.

ZIA

Wait, wait, wait. What don't they notice?

KNELLER

I don't know... people floating in the air, turning stones into plants, changing colors of different objects, or...

MIKAL

...fixing the headlights?

KNELLER

Fixing the headlights?

ZIA

Yes. Nobody was able to fix our headlights for ages, and Mikal fixed them not that far from here.

KNELLER

Yes, that's a good example, small things like that. Nothing significant.

EUGENE

Fixing the headlights seems pretty significant to me.

KNELLER

Depends where you're going. If you wind up wrapping the car around a tree two minutes later, then not really.

A weird SOUND comes from somewhere in the camp, something like singing but not exactly.

ZIA

(listening)

Is that one of your... miracles, too?

KNELLER

(keeps walking)

No. That's Nanuk. She's mute, but she does this amazing throat singing. It's an Eskimo thing.

He points at Nanuk, a pretty Eskimo girl who sings while holding a hand on her throat.

When Nanuk sees them, she stops singing. Kneller starts explaining something to Nanuk, then turns to the newcomers.

KNELLER

She'll show you around. Make yourself at home, I have to take care of a couple of things.

Kneller leaves. Eugene yells after him.

EUGENE

Don't forget to take care of my car!

Our trio stands awkwardly now looking at Nanuk.

EUGENE

(twists his mustache)

All right Nanuk, you take care of us.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

100

Eugene is in the trailer holding a phone in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. He talks to his mom.

EUGENE

(in Russian w/subtitles)

No I wasn't drunk, mom, I just didn't feel like calling the cops... No, he's not gonna screw me, he'll fix it, he'll pay for my rental car, too... Because I'm coming back home... I'm serious. Yes, tomorrow, plus a few days to drive back.

(takes a sip of coffee)

Mom, the Eskimo girl I told you about, made a damn good coffee, almost beats yours.

Zia stands at the door talking to a kid (MAX, 11) who sits outside with a butterfly net and couple of brown butterflies in a plastic bag. He pins live butterflies into his album.

MAX

People come and go all the time, you know. I don't remember any Desiree, though. See... that's why I keep my butterflies here, so they never go away.

ZIA

I see.

MAX

Are you coming to the square?

ZIA

Why, what's there?

MAX

Kneller always fixes some fun stuff for us at eight at the square. Right there, behind the house.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM (REAL LIFE) - DAY

101

INSERT (Max's suicide): The SCHOOL BELL rings. Kids run out of their seats, and the teacher is about to open a small corner closet.

TEACHER

All right Max, you can get out of the closet now. I hope you've learned your lesson.

When the teacher opens the closet, she is terrified to see MAX hanging, electrical cable around his neck.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

102

BACK TO: Eugene hangs up the phone and notices a photograph on the shelf. It's Nanuk in a full Eskimo outfit in front of an igloo.

EUGENE

No way. You used to live in an igloo?

Nanuk nods "Yes". Eugene looks at another photograph of Nanuk on a dog-sled.

EUGENE

All this was before you offed, right?

Nanuk shakes her head "No". She pulls out a photo album from a drawer and brings it to Eugene. Eugene looks at the photos.

EUGENE

Look at this, Zia.

Zia comes and looks at the photographs: Nanuk fishing at an ice-hole, Eskimos drumming and dancing etc.

ZIA

(looking at the album)

Cool...

A pizza delivery guy enters the trailer bringing three pizzas and a six-pack.

ZIA

Right here. How much do we owe you?

DELIVERY GUY

You guys must be new. Kneller pays for everything in the camp.

ZIA

Oh, very nice.

EUGENE

Nice? He owes us, man.

Zia still tips the Pizza guy.

While they eat, through a window they see Mikal talking to Kneller. After Kneller answers Mikal's question, he continues running around giving instructions to people and organizing something.

Mikal comes into the trailer and joins the meal.

ZIA

What did he say?

MIKAL

Nothing. To forget about the people in charge and try to have a good time.

EUGENE

I guess he's not as crazy as he seems.

(looking at Kneller who waves
his hands all over the place)

What's his deal anyway?

(chewing a big bite of pizza)

Why's he running this place, paying for everything and stuff?

ZIA

Max says he's "independently wealthy".

EUGENE

He gave you that shit? That's always a cover up for like... who knows what. There just isn't such a thing.

ZIA

Of course there is.

EUGENE

Independent from who? Have you ever heard of someone "independently poor"?

Mikal

He seems all right to me. It's just that... I can't imagine that guy offing himself. He's so... completely...

ZIA

I know what you mean. He reminds me of that guy from my high school physics book, Mr. Magic they called him.

MIKAL

Mr. Magic?

EXT. ANIMATION - DAY

103

INSERT (ANIMATION): Mr. Magic, who looks just like Kneller but is dressed in a white jumpsuit, jumps off the building. As he falls, he keeps looking at his stop-watch. On the building in the background are graffiti with equations from physics.

ZIA VO (OS)

You know, Mr. Magic jumps off the roof of a building and uses a stopwatch to see how long it takes. It didn't say there what he looked like, but somehow I pictured him like Kneller. Really into it, but way out.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

104

BACK TO: Mikal taps Zia's shoulder and points at Eugene and Nanuk who browse through Nanuk's photo album. Nanuk leans over Eugene's shoulder and -a small miracle- she wiggles her white poodle-like TAIL.

EUGENE

(to Nanuk)

I just can't believe half of your family offed. I guess we have a lot in common.

Mikal and Zia exchange a silent glance "Good for Eugene".

EXT. CAMP/THE SQUARE - NIGHT

105

All the people (10-15 people) are at the square eating Cherry Liquor ice-cream, yelling, cheering and looking at something on the ground.

The "event" Kneller organized is frog racing. Six frogs with numbers on their backs are slowly jumping to the finish line. Some of the frogs are jumping in the wrong direction and people are going nuts; They bet, they yell, they curse.

Kneller waves a black-and-white checkerboard flag like crazy, looks at his stop-watch, and yells at the frogs as though they can understand him. Eugene is next to Nanuk, who in all the excitement grabs his arm.

Mikal stands next to Zia. Zia notices that a lit match Mikal has used to light her cigarette, FLIES into the air and ends up in the otherwise starless sky. An insignificant miracle.

TITLE CARD: "A WEEK LATER"

EXT. CAMP/MINIGOLF COURSE - DAY

106

Kneller and Zia construct a mini-golf course next to the camp. It's almost finished. The obstacles are made out of junk and look ridiculous. Zia tests one of the holes, Kneller holds a water-hose, filling one of the obstacle-ponds with water.

KNELLER

They'll love it.

Water running out of the hose briefly turns into SNOW, but Kneller doesn't pay any attention to it.

ZIA

Look, look!

KNELLER

Calm down, it's nothing.

ZIA

It's not nothing, everybody in the camp can do it, but me.

KNELLER

Give yourself a break, Zia.

ZIA

I'm dying to do one. Just a small one, even a really dumb one.

KNELLER

As long as you want it real bad it won't work. These things only happen if it doesn't really matter.

ZIA

That makes no sense to me.

Mikal comes on a motorbike with a side car.

MIKAL
(to Kneller)
Is it all right if I use your bike to
bring the logs?

KNELLER
You look great on it.

MIKAL
I know.
(to Zia)
You wanna go for a ride?

EXT. FOREST/MOTORCYCLE (MOVING) - DAY

107

Zia and Mikal drive through the forest. Zia's in the side
car.

ZIA
(looking at the trees)
It's nice here, huh?

MIKAL
Do you still miss the things from before
you offed?

ZIA
(thinks about it)
I don't remember much... I don't think I
miss anything except Desiree. And now
that she's here, I just have to find her.

MIKAL
Really? I miss everything. I miss my
bike, and my dog... my friends... I miss
the beach a lot. I loved going to the
beach. I even miss the things I hated.

ZIA
I mean, it's not like I wouldn't like to
go back, but... I had a dream the other
day: I woke up in a hospital 'cause my
suicide didn't work out and... and, I was
kind of missing... this place.

MIKAL
Really?

They look at each other, a look that would in the real world
definitely be accompanied with a smile. Mikal's hair waves
in the wind.

CLOSE IN on Zia looking at Mikal.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE (REAL LIFE) - DAY

108

ZIA'S FLASHBACK: Zia and Desiree lay next to a swimming pool
Zia puts sun-screen on Desiree's back.

DESIREE

I was thinking... If you ever cheat on
me, you should do it with someone who's
really pretty.

ZIA

What are you talking about? I'm not
gonna cheat on you.

DESIREE

I know baby... I'm just saying, if it
ever happens.

ZIA

All right.
(kisses her)
I'll keep it in mind.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

109

BACK TO: The motorbike is parked in the forest nearby the
river. Zia and Mikal are squatting behind a bush. They look
through binoculars at Eugene and Nanuk who are fishing at the
other side of the river.

Mikal holds binoculars.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

110

POV through Binoculars. While fishing, Eugene teaches Nanuk
how to open a beer bottle with a lighter.

MIKAL (OS)

He's teaching her how to open a beer with
a lighter.

ZIA (OS)

She doesn't even drink. Lemme see.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

111

Zia takes the binoculars and looks.

ZIA

You should've seen, the other day he was
teaching her the names of basketball
players, their position in the field and
everything.

MIKAL

They seem like a perfect couple. The secret is: She's from too far away to pick up on his character.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

112

POV through Binoculars. Nanuk finally manages to open the bottle. She's all happy about it. Eugene's fishing-rod starts moving. He jumps to get it.

ZIA (OS)

Wow, he got a fish. Small, but still a fish.

Eugene is trying to take the fish off the hook, but the fish wiggles like crazy. Nanuk shows Eugene how to take the fish off the hook, and he does it all proud of his catch.

While he is doing that, a little miracle happens. The fish CHANGES ITS COLOR to red, then green, then purple and then back to fish color. Eugene doesn't pay any attention to the miracle.

ZIA (OS)

He just did it.

MIKAL (OS)

What?

ZIA VO (OS)

He changed the color of the fish. No spray-paint. And he didn't even notice.

EXT. FOREST/MOTORCYCLE - DAY

113

Zia and Mikal get up and walk towards the motorcycle.

MIKAL

When're you gonna stop being obsessed with those stupid miracles Zia?

ZIA

When you stop being obsessed with those stupid people in charge.

The side car is now full with logs, so Zia sits behind Mikal, hugging her around the waist.

MIKAL

That's not the same.

ZIA

Sure. You're here by mistake.

MIKAL

Listen, you jerk:

(looks Zia right in the eye)

I never offed myself. I just OD'ed.

She starts off the bike so suddenly that Zia almost falls.

EXT. BEACH (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

114

INSERT (Mikal's suicide): Mikal dead on a sandy beach. Rubber band around her arm, a thin stream of blood from her vein, syringe and other paraphernalia are in the sand.

EXT. FOREST/MOTORCYCLE (MOVING) - DAY

115

BACK TO: Mikal and Zia driving on the motorcycle. Zia ponders this new revelation about Mikal.

ZIA

But... you probably knew the odds when you were shooting up.

MIKAL

It was my first time. And also, I was talked into it. Nobody mentioned dying or anything.

ZIA

I guess... it could count as a mistake.

MIKAL

Of course it's a mistake.

(looks at him)

You're not a leak, are you?

ZIA

You know I'm not.

MIKAL

Swear you won't tell... anyone.

ZIA

I swear.

EXT. CAMP/MINIGOLF COURSE - DAY

116

Zia and Eugene play minigolf.

EUGENE

OD'ed by mistake? You ever saw one of those prison movies where all the axe murderers claim they were jailed by mistake?

ZIA

It's not like she was a junkie or anything. It was her first time.

EUGENE

First time? Believe me Zia, nobody dies their first time, no matter of what, unless they want it real bad.

Eugene hits a golf ball which briefly turns into an EGG and then back into a golf ball. Zia looks at it jealously.

ZIA

If this place is so out there that a golf ball can turn into an egg, why couldn't it also be true that Mikal got here by mistake?

EUGENE

Listen to a friend for once: She's never going to find God and file her complaint, and you're never going to find your piece of dead ass. You're both stuck here on your own, so you might as well take the most of it. She's hot for you, that's for sure.

ZIA

(ironic)

God, you've become so smart since you and Nanuk have gotten chummy.

EUGENE

That's exactly my point. It's time for you to give it a shot too.

Eugene notices Yan, a totally uncoordinated guy in his forties passing by and holding Max's net.

EUGENE

Yan, I didn't know you were into the butterfly business too?

YAN

I'm not. I'm going to catch a new dog for Kneller.

Yan walks into the forest doing his weird movements.

EXT. IN FRONT OF CASINO (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT 117

INSERT (Yan's suicide): Yan comes out of the Casino. He looks devastated. Without even slowing down for a moment, he walks straight under the passing truck.

EXT. CAMP/MINIGOLF COURSE - DAY 118

BACK TO: Eugene and Zia look at Yan walk into the forest.

EUGENE

Look at him, how could he ever catch anything? He'll be lucky if he ever finds his way back.

ZIA

Well, we might never find out. We are leaving tomorrow, aren't we?

EUGENE

(continues playing golf)
Tomorrow? Why tomorrow?

ZIA

C'mon, you promised. Your car's been fixed for days.

EUGENE

Chill out man, what's the rush? We'll leave... soon.

As they talk, Eugene walks across the water in an obstacle-pond just like it's solid ground. He doesn't even notice, but Zia does. Zia tries to do the same but he gets all wet, up to his knees.

EUGENE

What are you doing, man? You're all wet.

ZIA

(standing in the pond)
I... I slipped.

INT. PRISON CELL (ZIA'S DREAM) - NIGHT 119

Zia, Eugene and Mikal are in a prison cell. Zia watches for the guard while Eugene takes out previously weakened window bars. Mikal sneaks out first.

EXT. PRISON YARD (ZIA'S DREAM) - NIGHT

120

The three of them sneak their way toward the wall surrounding the prison yard. As Zia's helping Mikal climb over, they get hit by the searchlight. Suddenly a SIREN goes off.

Mikal manages to climb over, and then Eugene does it with Zia's help too. But now there's no one to help Zia. He's trying, but to no avail.

MIKAL

(from the other side)

C'mon Zia, what are you waiting for?

Zia can't do it. Panic. SIRENS, DOGS BARKING, YELLING of the guards, searchlights. Suddenly Kneller appears from who knows where, running towards Zia.

KNELLER

C'mon, they'll be here in a second. Jump over. You don't wanna spend the rest of your life here, do you?

As he is saying that, Kneller easily floats across the wall. He has the wings just like an Angel.

EUGENE

(from the other side)

Shit Zia, what's wrong with you? Just float a little.

Zia tries to float but he can't. The sounds of the dogs, the guards and the sirens are louder and louder.

Kneller keeps floating back and forth across the wall doing all sort of loops and back-flips trying to show Zia how easy it is to float.

KNELLER

(flipping his wings)

C'mon Zia, it's easy. Look!

MIKAL

(from the other side)

Zia, why don't you wanna do it?

Zia's trying hard. The SOUNDS are getting closer.

EUGENE

(from the other side)

He's just too busy pondering his unhappy existence. Let's not get caught 'cause of the dickhead.

Zia hears them enter the car and drive away.

ZIA
(trying to float)
Wait, wait for me!

By this time the chasers are right behind Zia, and their flash-lights completely blind him. But, when they remove the lights, Zia realizes it's only his PARENTS.

ZIA
(shocked)
Mom... Dad...

ZIA'S MOTHER
Zia, where have you been all this time?

ZIA'S FATHER
Why don't you ever call us?

INT/EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

121

BACK TO: Zia WAKES UP disheveled, and realizes it was only a dream. He hears some MUSIC COMING from outside. He looks through the window and sees Eugene playing a GUITAR for Nanuk.

Zia lays back down, lights a cigarette and listens to the guitar tunes. Nanuk joins with her throat SINGING. An EMOTIONAL and MAGICAL tune.

Mikal, who sleeps in a bed above Zia, opens her eyes and listens.

MIKAL (OS)
Zia.

ZIA
You awake?

MIKAL
I've been thinking... The only way to find someone who can help me is to keep looking.

ZIA
You're right. I should pack up too, if I want to find Desiree.

MIKAL
We can't wait for Eugene forever.

ZIA
I figured.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT. SAME 122

Nanuk SINGING. Even Eugene is so amazed by her singing that he stops playing guitar and just listens.

INT. CAMP/TRAILER #2 - NIGHT. SAME 123

Max wakes up and listens to Nanuk SINGING. Many framed butterflies hang on the wall above his bed.

He notices Yan's bed is empty. Nina - their trailermate - stops reading a book and listens too.

MAX
(quietly)
Nina, has Yan come back yet?

Nina just shrugs "dunno" and signals Max to be quiet.

INT. CAMP/KNELLER'S TRAILER - NIGHT. SAME 124

Kneller in his bed fiddles with his stop-watch holding it next to his ear. He stops and listens to Nanuk SINGING.

INT. CAMP/HOUSE - NIGHT. SAME 125

Three campers who watch a movie, pause the tape and listen to Nanuk SINGING.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT. SAME 126

Nanuk SINGING, she's totally into it. Nothing else is to be heard in the whole camp. Eugene holds a cordless phone in the air for his mother to hear Nanuk.

EUGENE
(into the phone, quietly, in
Russian/w subtitles)
Mom, do you believe me now?

EXT. SNOWY ROAD (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT 127

INSERT (Nanuk's suicide): Nanuk dead, frozen on a snowy road, an almost empty bottle of booze next to her. She looks like she's sleeping. The sound of her THROAT SINGING continues until -- a LOUD SCREAM comes from somewhere!

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT. SAME

128

BACK TO: Nanuk who stopped in the middle of her song, now SCREAMS looking into the nearby forest. Eugene turns to see what scared her and notices -- a dark silhouette popping out from in between the trees.

Everybody runs out of their trailers alarmed by Nanuk's scream.

The dark SILHOUETTE turns out to be Yan, holding a broken butterfly net, all in panic, red and out of breath. A couple of bloody scratches on his face.

EUGENE

Yan, what happened to you?

YAN

(all in one breath)

Messiah King lives at the other side of the forest, and he's holding Kneller's dog hostage.

KNELLER

(running over)

What?

YAN

And so many people are there... like, hundreds... to witness the miracle he's gonna perform tomorrow.

KNELLER

Freddy's doing a miracle?

YAN

No, Messiah King - they also call him "J". But not like our miracles. A planned, significant miracle.

Kneller

What about Freddy? Is he all right?

Yan drinks up a glass of water Mikal brought him. Eugene calms down Nanuk still recovering from the shock.

Other campers are lined up around, some in their pajamas or just in underwear, trying to figure out what happened.

YAN

(empties the glass of water)

Freddy's fine.

YAN (cont'd)

They feed him T-bone steak, and he claims his name is Sir Charles.

MIKAL

(takes the empty glass)

He... claims?

YAN

Yeah, Messiah taught him to say a couple of words.

KNELLER

(furious)

Damn. They brain-washed my pet. Yan, we'll drive over there first thing in the morning, all right?

YAN

I only know how to get there on foot.

KNELLER

How far is it?

YAN

I'm not sure, I got lost on the way but... five-six hours I'd say.

Zia and Mikal look at each other.

MIKAL

(to Kneller)

Can we tag along with you guys?

EUGENE

Why? You're dying to see the miracle that asshole is gonna perform?

EXT. FOREST - DAY

129

Yan, Kneller, Mikal and Zia walk through the forest. Yan and Kneller lead.

ZIA

If there really are that many people over there, they might know something about Desiree and...

MIKAL

...the people in charge.

KNELLER

I never saw anybody as naive as you two guys. At least we know Freddy's there.

Yan stops for a moment deciding where to go, and then keeps walking in different directions doing his weird movements.

ZIA

You sure you know where you're going,
Yan? It's been five hours already.

YAN

Yes, we should be there soon... I think.

They all follow Yan. Mikal and Zia walk a little behind.
Mikal notices Kneller looking at his stop-watch.

MIKAL

(to Zia)

I never asked you, what happened to that
guy with the stop-watch.

ZIA

What guy?

MIKAL

The guy jumping off the roof. Did he
survive?

ZIA

Oh, Mr. Magic... I don't remember. I
guess he did cause you know, it was a
book for kids and everything.

MIKAL

Then... he had to be Kneller 'cause...
(more)

EXT. ANIMATION - DAY

130

INSERT (ANIMATION): Mr. Magic, looks just like Kneller but
wears a white jump-suit, is still falling from the building
in an extremely comfortable position. His legs crossed, one
arm under his head, another one holds his stop-watch.

MIKAL (OS) (CONT'D)

...ya' know, I could easily picture him
walking off the roof, but there is no way
I could see him hitting the ground.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

131

BACK TO: Kneller and Yan lay next to a small camp fire in
the middle of the forest.

YAN

I don't know what happened. I was sure we'd find it before dark...

KNELLER

You know, I think this is a good sign. Didn't you get lost the last time too?

YAN

Yeah, you're right. That's a really good sign.

Nearby, Mikal and Zia are picking up more twigs for the fire.

ZIA

I hope we at least find the way back to...

MIKAL

(interrupts him)
Shhhhh. Do you hear?

ZIA

(listening)
Hear what?

Mikal

Listen...

ZIA

(finally hears)
I think it's... No, it can't be.

Zia is about to ask Kneller about the sound, but both Kneller and Yan are already asleep.

MIKAL

Let's go see, it's coming from there.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

132

Mikal and Zia come out of the forest and surprisingly find themselves on a sandy beach. The sound they heard was really the sound of breaking waves.

MIKAL

Can you believe this?

ZIA

How come no one in the camp ever mentioned the beach was so close?

MIKAL

Maybe they don't know. Maybe we are the only ones who know.

Zia and Mikal walk in silence along the ocean with their shoes off. The breaking waves, the palm trees, the sandy beach... It all looks very romantic.

ZIA

You remember when you talked about missing the things from the world of the living... Wanting to go back? And I said I don't miss anything.

MIKAL

Yeah?

They slowly walk further and further down the beach. Mikal sticks her gum onto a sign "KEEP AWAY".

ZIA

Well, when I'm with you, what I miss a little is myself, how I was I mean. The way I used to be before I offed.

MIKAL

What were you like?

ZIA

I remember myself more like... I don't know... I can't even remember anymore.

The two of them are getting very small in the distance.

ZIA

But... somehow it was different back there. And here, well... most of the time it all seems fine, but then actually... we are half dead already.

MIKAL

Most of the people I knew even before I offed, were either half dead or completely dead already. And you, I think you're in pretty good shape actually.

ZIA

Think so?

MIKAL

Yeah. You know... if I could, I'd give you a smile right now.

ZIA

I'd love to see what your smile looks like.

In the distance we can see them start to MAKE OUT in the sand.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

133

Sunrise. Mikal and Zia sleep on the beach. They are covered with Zia's jacket and their bodies are intermingled. Idyllic image.

Kneller's VOICE comes from the forest, he's yelling their names. Zia and Mikal wake up as Kneller's voice comes closer.

ZIA

That's Kneller.

As they look around, they are stunned. The romantic beach is not romantic any more. As far as they can see, the beach is covered with used condoms and syringes. Zia barely manages not to puke.

They sit up like a couple of tourists stranded in a minefield. Finally, Kneller comes out of the woods.

KNELLER

There you are! I was getting real worried. Why don't you answer when people call you?

ZIA

(wiping off the nasty stuff)
We were sleeping.

KNELLER

Don't tell me you spent the night here.
(can't believe)
What the Hell for?

MIKAL

(wiping the stuff off her)
That's how it is when you love the beach.

KNELLER

That's how it is when you love diseases. This is where junkies and hookers used to hang out, but it became too disgusting for them. Let's get out of here.

They follow Kneller.

KNELLER

Let's just hope Yan doesn't get lost on
us now.

EXT. FOREST - MORNING. LITTLE LATER

134

The three of them stand in the forest calling Yan's name. No
answer.

ZIA

We'll never make it anywhere.

But, as Zia says that, Yan pops up from between the trees.

YAN

I found it, I found it.

KNELLER

You found it?

YAN

Yes. It's real close.

INT. LONELY RANCH (REAL LIFE) - MORNING

135

INSERT (mass suicide): A large room is set up like a
fanatics' cult headquarters. All the cult members, dressed
in some kind of gowns, lay dead around the room. A bowl of
deadly poison on the altar.

EXT. IN FRONT OF MESSIAH'S MANSION - DAY

136

BACK TO: At least a hundred people in the yard of a
luxurious mansion. Trance music is blasting, girls in thongs
are dancing on the diving board of a swimming pool.

Zia and Mikal help themselves to food and cocktails. A
middle-aged BLONDE (with a large vertical scar across her
face) eats next to Mikal and Zia.

MIKAL

(to the Blonde)

Excuse me, do you know who's in charge
here?

BLONDE

In charge? J, of course.

(chewing on liquorice)

Can you believe how privileged we are?

EXT. SAW MILL (REAL LIFE) - DAY

137

INSERT: The Blonde is tied up to a huge tree trunk which is moving on a conveyer belt towards a huge saw. She's wearing a T-shirt "Save the Trees".

EXT. IN FRONT OF MANSION - DAY

138

BACK TO: Mikal and Zia talk to the Blonde and nibble on the food.

MIKAL

Privileged because of what?

BLOND WOMAN

Because of the miracle. J will perform it any minute now. Can you believe he'll actually separate his soul from his body?

ZIA

We just came to pick up a dog.

Yan suddenly pops up.

YAN

Guys, I think you should come.

ZIA

Why, what's happening?

YAN

Kneller is with J and he's raising Hell.

EXT. DESERT (REAL LIFE) - NIGHT

139

INSERT (J's suicide): The sound of a large crowd CHEERING. With a single gesture of his hand holding a large dagger, J silences the crowd below. He stands on a large rock lit by torches, and is about to stab himself in the chest.

INT. MANSION/GUEST ROOM - DAY

140

Zia, Mikal and Yan walk into a room where Kneller yells furiously at Messiah. Next to Messiah, Freddy wiggles his tail and eats sushi from an expensive bowl.

KNELLER

You stole my dog! You brainwashed my pet! You abused my little puppy!

MESSIAH

Cool it, man, cool it.

Zia looks at the girl sitting next to Messiah. It's DESIREE. She recognizes Zia instantly and RUNS towards him. Zia notices that she runs somewhat lopsidedly.

DESIREE

Zia!!!

ZIA

Desiree!!!

Everybody stops short, even Freddy stops eating and looks up. Desiree hugs Zia and instantly starts crying.

DESIREE

I can't believe it's you. You look absolutely the same.

ZIA

Not really.

(points at his scars)

But you do. Even the haircut. I always loved that haircut.

DESIREE

I remember. How are you, Zia?

ZIA

(awkward)

I'm good. Pretty good. What about you?

DESIREE

Oh, Zia, Zia, so nice to see you. Let me introduce you. This is J, J this is Zia.

MESSIAH

(shaking hands)

My pleasure.

Zia notices a familiar SILVER RING on Messiah's hand.

ZIA

This is Mikal.

MIKAL

(shake hands with Desiree)

I can't believe you guys found each other.

While Mikal and Desiree handshake, Zia is a bit embarrassed.

KNELLER

(interrupts everybody)

Will you all stop handshaking.

KNELLER (cont'd)

Let's finish the business with Freddy first. That's gotta be cleared up right now!

Desiree pulls Zia to the terrace while the dog argument continues in the room. As Zia exits the room, he looks at Mikal who gives him a gesture of encouragement.

MESSIAH

All right, let's clear it up.
(to Freddy, petting him)
What's your name, honey-suckle?

FREDDY

(wiggling his tail)
Sir Charles.

KNELLER

(furious, to Freddy)
You ingrate. Don't you remember who saved you...
(more)

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

141

INSERT: Freddy as a puppy nearly drowning in a toilet bowl being flushed.

KNELLER (OS) (cont'd)

...when you were this small and fell into a toilet bowl? And...
(more)

EXT. DOG HOUSE - DAY

142

INSERT: Freddy looks helpless. Every time a CAR ALARM sounds, Freddy jumps up.

KNELLER (OS) (cont'd)

...when you swallowed that nasty car alarm... Who took care of you then? Not the Messiah King! No, no! Nor did he...
(more)

EXT. ROCKY DESERT - DAY

143

INSERT: Freddy is terrified, tied up to a balloon carried away by the wind. Kneller drives his motorcycle over the hard terrain following the balloon.

KNELLER (OS) (CONT'D)

...drive a hundred miles to get you off of the balloon those spoiled brats tied you to. And now...

KNELLER (OS) (CONT'D)
you'gonna sell out for a piece of sushi
and a T-bone steak???

EXT. MANSION/TERRACE - DAY

144

BACK TO: Zia and Desiree are on the terrace. From there,
it's possible to see all the people downstairs very well.

DESIREE
...and then, after you offed I just cried
and cried. And I had to leave town,
'cause everything reminded me of you.
(wipes her tears off)
Trust me, I never knew how much I hurt
you until you were gone. Thank God, I
can finally ask you to forgive me.
(hugs him)
J was a real friend, he got me out of
town and I started getting more and more
into his teachings, and something became
calmer inside of me. Not that I stopped
being sad, but I wasn't hysterical any
more. And I just stopped crying and...

Zia just looks at Desiree and nods his head. Her VOICE FADES
OUT as she keeps talking, and Zia's VOICE OVER KICKS IN as he
keeps nodding.

ZIA (VO)
I don't know how many times I had
pictured this moment. A million at
least. And...
(more)

EXT. MANSION/TERRACE (ZIA'S FANTASY) - DAY

145

ZIA'S FANTASY: Zia's and Desiree's encounter is completely
different. Zia fights passionately, very much like Kneller
fighting for Freddy.

The whole thing ends up with the two of them kissing, just
like in a cheesy Hollywood movie. In the BACKGROUND, J bites
his hat from jealousy.

ZIA (VO) (Cont'd)
...whenever I pictured us meeting, there
were plenty of times when I saw her with
someone else, but I always used to fight.
I'd tell her how much I love her, that
nobody could love her that way, and I'd
hug her and touch her till she gave in.

EXT. MANSION/TERRACE - DAY

146

BACK TO: Desiree and Zia in reality again. While Desiree talks as though wound up, Zia glances at the chaos downstairs:

Girls in thongs dancing, Beefy Guys organizing the crowd and the stage, people chatting and drinking cocktails, banners "We love you J", "Save us Messiah" etc. The whole thing seems extremely grotesque.

DESIREE

...and then, J was supposed to separate his body from his soul so he could discover the other, better world and return to show everyone the way.

(touches Zia's shoulder)

Cause you know, he believed that we're all trapped in the world of the living. But something got screwed up and his soul never made it back.

(sighs sadly)

And at the hospital, when they confirmed his death, I heard his soul calling me, and I just knew I had to be with him. And that's when I took the elevator up to the hospital roof and...

Zia notices Mikal, Kneller, Yan and Freddy blend into the crowd. Mikal changes the sign "J WILL SAVE YOU" into "J WILL SHAVE YOU".

Desiree's VOICE FADES OUT AGAIN and Zia's VOICE OVER KICKS IN.

ZIA VO

And now here on the terrace, when it was really happening, all I wanted was to get to the part where she gave me the friendly kiss on the cheek and it would be over.

We don't hear Desiree but by her gestures we can tell she's describing the way she jumped from the hospital roof.

EXT. SKY (LOOKS LIKE ZIA'S POV) - DAY

147

INSERT: EXTREME LOW ANGLE. It looks like Zia's POV. Desiree is falling from above. It's nothing like Mr. Magic falling, it's scary because it seems like she will fall on ZIA. As if to save Zia, the GONG sounds.

EXT. MANSION/TERRACE - DAY. SAME

148

BACK TO: A Beefy Guy on the stage hits the GONG. Everybody stops talking, even Desiree. Zia seems relieved.

DESIREE

My God, time flies with you Zia. Let's go, J is about to begin.

(holds his hand as they walk)

This time I know he'll make it.

(hugs him)

Oh, I'm so happy you are here. Now he can save you too and take you with us.

INT. MANSION (GUEST ROOM) - DAY

149

Zia and Desiree are back in J's Room. Everybody's gone except J who puts on a fancy gown with lots of embroidery. Desiree goes instantly to help him dress.

DESIREE

You ready darling?

MESSIAH

I've been ready since the beginning of time, baby.

(to Zia)

Your friends went downstairs.

DESIREE

You better rush Zia if you wanna grab a good spot.

EXT. IN FRONT OF MANSION - DAY

150

Zia comes out of the mansion and pushes his way through the crowd towards Kneller who holds Freddy in his arms.

ZIA

You two made up, huh?

KNELLER

(pets Freddy)

Well, I did forgive,

(pulls Freddy's ear)

but I'll never forget.

ZIA

I see. Where's Mikal?

KNELLER

I don't know. Last I saw her she was talking to that charlatan something about going back and the people in charge.

ZIA

And?

KNELLER

He told her not to bother cause he'll show everyone the way to a better world. Jack-ass!

J climbs onto the stage, followed by Desiree holding a long curvy knife. Just then, Zia notices Mikal on the other side of the pool. She sees him too. The music becomes much LOUDER.

Mikal makes signs as if asking Zia how it went between him and Desiree. Zia confused, doesn't know how to signal an answer.

KNELLER

Tell her.

ZIA

Tell her what?

KNELLER

That you love her.

Zia just looks at Kneller.

KNELLER

Well, don't you?

ZIA

(hesitates)

I do.

KNELLER

So tell her that. She'd like to know.

Zia looks back and forth at Mikal and at Kneller. Mikal is too far. On the stage Desiree hands the knife to J.

ZIA

She can't hear me from this far.

Zia signals Mikal that they'll talk later. She nods "OK".

J raises his hands, one of them holding a curved knife, and the music stops with a bang. Microphone noise kicks in.

MESSIAH

(into the mic)

Wait for me. I'll be back before you
know it.

The crowd cheers. J slowly prepares a bashing stab into his
chest right next to his old scar.

KNELLER

What the hell is he doing? The guy's
dead already. What's he want now, to be
double dead?

People nearby turn around to signal to Kneller to shut up.
Kneller doesn't care.

KNELLER

(to people around)

The brain-washer's bluffing.

(assures Zia)

You know exactly how much it hurts. No
one would do it twice.

The moment he says that, J bashes the knife straight into his
heart. The blood gushes out.

Everybody's shocked even though they all knew it was coming.
After a moment of dead silence, people start mumbling.
Desiree takes the microphone.

DESIREE

(into the mic)

Stay calm everyone, please. J will be
back in his body any minute now.

Still, people continue mumbling louder and louder.

Zia notices Kneller overly concerned. Something seems wrong.
To Zia's surprise, Kneller whispers something into his stop-
watch and looks into the sky. Within seconds three white
parachutes appear in the sky flying in their direction.

People noticing the parachutes start mumbling things like
"He's back, Messiah's back to take us with him!" etc. Even
Desiree looks hopeful.

The parachutists (two men and a woman, all wearing white jump-
suits with the P.I.C. logo) land just as a white van (with
two additional men in white jump-suits) pulls over next to
the pool. Kneller rushes towards them.

Kneller starts explaining the situation to the White Jumpsuit
folks, waving his hands all over the place.

At the same time he takes his clothes off, revealing an identical white jump-suit underneath.

Zia pushes through the crowd towards the spot where he previously spotted Mikal. He runs into Yan.

YAN

What the fuck is going on?

ZIA

Have you seen Mikal?

YAN

She was right here a second ago.

Zia continues to look for Mikal.

One of the men in white jumpsuits yells into the bullhorn.

MAN WITH BULLHORN

Please, disperse quietly. Please disperse immediately.

Another man in white gets on stage where Desiree cries while trying to pull the knife out of J's heart, but the man in white gets there and lifts J's body over his shoulder. He also signals to Kneller to take Desiree towards the van.

The man with the bullhorn finally manages to make the crowd slowly disperse, but most of them are still stunned.

Zia notices Mikal by the van talking to the driver, also in white. The driver keeps speaking into some kind of radio.

Mikal notices Zia who waves to her above the crowd, and she starts walking towards him, but the driver calls her over.

Zia pushes his way towards the van but by the time he gets close enough, the van pulls away taking Kneller, Freddy, Desiree, Mikal, dead J, and all the people in white.

Through the window, Mikal yells to Zia something like: "I'll be right back", but the van is already too far to hear it properly.

EXT. IN FRONT OF MESSIAH'S MANSION - DUSK

151

Hours later. All the people are gone except a few who are still standing around the white parachutes on the ground, discussing the morning events.

Alone, Zia sits next to the swimming pool and occasionally looks down the road.

Soon, the last few people leave, and Zia stays completely alone. It's getting darker and darker.

Finally, Zia notices a car approaching and gets excited, but it turns out it's Eugene's car with Eugene and Nanuk inside. Surprised, Zia walks to the car as it pulls up near the pool.

ZIA

What are you doing here?

EUGENE

We came to pick you up, man.

ZIA

Did Yan tell you what happened?

EUGENE

Kneller did.

ZIA

You saw Kneller? Was Mikal with him?

EUGENE

No.

ZIA

Did he mention anything about her?

EUGENE

Not to me. Jump in.

ZIA

I'm waiting for Mikal.

EUGENE

How long you gonna wait, man? She's an adult, she'll find her way back.

ZIA

(sees Kneller's dog in the car)
What's Freddy doing here?

EUGENE

Get in, dick-head, we have to make the train.

ZIA

The train?

INT. TRAIN STATION BAR - NIGHT

152

Zia and Eugene, already somewhat drunk, are in a bar at the train station. Nanuk drinks soda and plays with Freddy. Nanuk's and Eugene's luggage are next to them.

EUGENE

...and Kneller also said he doesn't envy J because, bad as this place is, the place for the ones who do it second time is a thousand times more gross 'cause there aren't that many people and everybody's totally fucked up.

ZIA

(all shaken)

And you believe that whole story? You of all people?

EUGENE

What can I tell you. It is what it is.

ZIA

So, Kneller never actually offed himself?

EUGENE

Of course not. He was working for people in charge, undercover.

ZIA

I always had a feeling he was an Angel or something.

EUGENE

An Angel? Oh God...

(rolls his eyes)

Man, are you listening to me or not? So, now that he blew his cover, he says, he'll be transferred from the undercover unit.

ZIA

Transferred where?

EUGENE

I don't know. Wherever the people in charge operate,
(more)

CLOSE IN on Zia.

EXT. SOMETHING LIKE CLOUDS - DAY

153

INSERT: Kneller is on a cloud and now he has WINGS and looks like an Angel.

EUGENE (OS) (cont'd)

...he only said he's not allowed to take Freddy over.

A couple of other Angels are on the cloud too. The atmosphere is just like in a boring office. The Angels are typing, filing documents and answering phones.

Kneller is obviously bored filing piles of documents. He stops at one of the files, examines it and HIDES IT under his wing, making sure that no one notices.

INT. TRAIN STATION BAR - NIGHT

154

BACK TO: Nanuk taps Eugene's shoulder and points at the coming train.

EUGENE

That's it. One for the road.

They drink up their shots, Nanuk joins with her soda. They pick up the luggage and walk to the tracks.

EXT. TRAIN STATION/TRACKS - NIGHT. SAME

155

They continue talking while they walk along the tracks.

ZIA

So, the camp is... totally over?

EUGENE

Yan and a couple of other hard-asses have a dream about turning it into a tourist attraction, but...you know very well those miracles won't work when you need them... Plus, Kneller's lease is about to run out. What are you gonna do?

ZIA

I don't know... I'll definitely go back to the camp 'till Mikal comes back. And then... I'll see.

EUGENE

You'll see?

They stop next to the train.

EUGENE

Listen... I didn't wanna tell you, but...

(lights a cigarette)

...according to Kneller... in the middle of that whole Messiah hassle, Mikal had gone to one of Kneller's people and asked him to check her file. I know it sounds crazy, but it turns out that there really was some kind of mix-up and there's a good chance they'll ship her back to life.

INT. CUSTOMS - DAY

156

INSERT: A hand stamps "APPROVED" in a passport. Mikal SMILES, takes her luggage and exits into a bright day.

EXT. TRAIN STATION/TRACKS - NIGHT. SAME

157

BACK TO: Zia is stunned by the news. Nanuk pretends she doesn't hear the conversation, but she's discretely checking Zia's reaction.

ZIA

Why didn't you tell me that?

EUGENE

I didn't want to bum you out, man. But it's good news after all, 'cause you know, she's going back.

ZIA

Yeah, definitely... that's what she always wanted.

EXT. TRAIN STATION/TRACKS - NIGHT. LITTLE LATER

158

Zia waves to Eugene and Nanuk who wave back from the departing train. Nanuk holds Freddy at the window too.

EUGENE

(yells)

And don't forget to give that package to my parents!

As the train leaves Zia sees Nanuk twisting Eugene's mustache. Zia's VOICE OVER KICKS IN.

ZIA (VO)

They went to the North Pole, or whatever the place Nanuk is from is called.

ZIA (VO) (cont'd)

Eugene was dying to get into that Inuit Eskimo music, throat singing, drum dancing and all that. It's a good thing he's back into music.

EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

159

The camp is empty now. Zia packs his stuff into the car.

He lights a cigarette and throws the match away, but a small MIRACLE happens... the match flies into the sky, just like Mikal's match did before. Zia FINALLY did it!

But, he doesn't care now, he just continues packing.

ZIA (VO)

And me... I finally understood what Kneller was trying to tell me... how it doesn't really matter... Maybe Eugene's right, maybe...

(more)

As Zia packs, CAMERA PANS at two lonely stars in the sky.

EXT. MONTAGE/EUGENE'S CAR (MOVING) - DIFFERENT TIMES OF DAY 160

MONTAGE: Zia drives back home passing through the PLACES THEY went through, this time in the reverse direction: The ice cream store, Desiree's former house, "Hunger Strike", their camping spots etc... He also listens to EUGENE'S TAPE.

ZIA (VO)(Cont'd)

...I only get stuck on girls I don't have any chance of being with. But then... Mikal did signal me that she'll be right back...

At dusk, Zia pushes the headlights button on and off but it doesn't work any more.

ZIA (VO)(Cont'd)

...and then again... Eugene's old wisdom is: When a girl says that, she never comes back. So, go figure it out...

162

Zia drives by the familiar gas stop and looks at the sign Mikal broke. It read "EXIT". The "NO" part is still missing.

ZIA (VO)

But, just to be sure, every time I start a shift in Kamikaze I'll do a little something - put my name tag upside down, mess up the specials on the menu, tie up my tie the wrong way, anything, so if she ever does come in, she won't be sad.

Eugene's MUSIC ends. Zia is about to flip the tape, but accidentally drops it under the seat.

ZIA

Shit!

Determined to get the tape back Zia stops the car, moves the passenger's seat as far back as possible, and then leans down to look for the tape.

At this point CAMERA is positioned outside the car, so once Zia leans down we can't see him any more. CAMERA slowly DOLLIES towards the car and once it gets close enough, we realize --

-- Zia is not in the car any more.

INT/EXT. BLACK HOLE - UNIDENTIFIED TIME OF DAY

161

In complete shock, Zia realizes he is falling through the Black Hole.

He looks around and notices the things -- previously disappeared under the car seat -- floating around the black hole: A cigarette lighter, a few turquoise flowers, Mikal's lip-stick, sun-glasses, road-map, Eugene's tape...

As Zia tries to reach the floating objects, he becomes aware he is rapidly moving towards a distant BRIGHT SPOT. Finally, the spot becomes so bright that it blinds Zia so he closes his eyes. Suddenly, he hears Kneller's voice.

KNELLER'S VOICE

You lucky sonofabitch! See what happens when you know people in high places...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM (REAL LIFE) - DAY

162

The BRIGHT LIGHT finally dims down and Zia opens his eyes again. He realizes he's in a hospital bed. His wrists are bandaged, he's snow pale, I.V. sticks from his arms.

Zia looks around the room and notices his PARENTS talking to a Doctor. He quickly closes his eyes, then slowly turns his head to the other side.

He opens his eyes again and sees Mikal laying in a nearby bed, her face pale-blue, I.V. in her arm. They look at each other.

Mikal gives him a SMILE and Zia returns it.

THE END