

P R I C E L E S S

An Original Screenplay By
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We hear footsteps on creaking stairs. The jangle of keys.
A lock turns and a rusty door opens.

FADE IN:

INT. ATTIC - MORNING

Rats scurry from the beam of a flashlight. A MAN enters and stirs up dust. Close behind, a WOMAN carries a Coleman lantern. They are brother and sister, middle-aged.

MAN

Man. Look at all this crap.

WOMAN

It's not crap.

The woman brushes away cobwebs. Boxes, furniture, and family relics are piled everywhere.

WOMAN

See, here's your old train set. And Mom's wedding dress!

MAN

Think we could just sell the place with all this junk up here?

WOMAN

What if we find something valuable? Don't you ever watch Antiques Roadshow?

MAN

C'mon. Dad was just a pack-rat.

She sorts through crooked frames.

WOMAN

Wow, look at these old paintings!

Something colorful catches her eye. It's a small portrait painted with thick, swirling brush strokes. The subject is a thin man with red hair and tortured eyes. She blows off the dust and wipes a corner of the canvas.

WOMAN

Omigod.

Her thumb reveals the name VINCENT.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight crawls over GEORGE O'NEIL'S face. He's an ordinary-looking college kid, sleeping with his mouth open. Drool stains his pillow. His eyes flutter open.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A record collection is stacked in pear crates. Weezer's Green Album is drawn from its sleeve and placed on a turntable. The needle drops on side A, cut 4: "Island in the Sun."

WEEZER

"Hep. Hep."

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Buck naked, George plays air guitar.

GEORGE

"Hep. Hep."

INT. SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

The shower rains on George's face as he sings along.

GEORGE

"On an island in the sun, we'll be
playin' and havin' fun, and it
makes me feel so fine I can't
control my brain!"

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

George rocks out with a toothbrush microphone.

GEORGE

"We'll run away together, we'll
spend some time forever, we'll
never feel bad anymore!" (Spits)

He's a happy-go-lucky kind of guy.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

There's a photo of George and his girlfriend on the refrigerator. George takes out the milk. He pours Captain Crunch into a SCOOPY DOO BOWL. The song winds down.

GEORGE

"Hep. Hep."

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

George shovels cereal into his mouth as JOE MORGAN talks over RICK SUTCLIFFE on SportsCenter.

MORGAN

He's gotta be there! What would they do without Ramone?

SUTCLIFFE

I'm not saying Hernandez shouldn't be there, but Jason Varitek is definitely *the* All-Star this season. I sat down with Pedro Martinez after last night's game against the Yankees and we talked about how good Varitek is. Trading him is way bigger than not having Hernandez on the club.

CLOSE on George. His chewing echoes loudly, overpowering the baseball chat. His face suddenly twitches. George looks worried.

We PUSH into his eyes and see the reflection of the television. The picture FRACTURES into a thousand pieces.

George drops his spoon. It CLINKS against the bowl. The clink keeps RINGING as the spoon cartwheels through the air.

The ringing gets louder, like a finger rimming crystal. George can't take it. The ringing peaks and then EXPLODES.

George's eyes dilate and shoot back into his skull. His head bounces off the coffee table and onto the floor. George rubs his face raw into the carpet.

FADE TO BLACK.

We hear GOLF on the television.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. The TV flickers across George's face, fixed to the floor. His lips are crusted in milky vomit. BLOOD VESSELS have popped in the unblinking whites of his eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - DAY

Japanese Sumi-e INK SPLATTERS.

A wealthy COUPLE without much style stares blankly at the painting. ALICE SINCLAIRE discusses the finer points of the genre. Alice is late 30s, chic and sexy, but with the hard edge of someone who's seen too much in one lifetime.

ALICE

Sumi-e is spontaneous. Similar to calligraphy as both strive to master control of the brush and yet allow the artist to let go of control altogether.

The husband is clearly more interested Alice's tits than the work of art.

HUSBAND

Wish I had this kind of spontaneity in my life. (re: his wife)

WIFE

Puh. I could do this. It doesn't look like anything. Especially not a chrysanthemum.

ALICE

It's non-representational.

They don't understand.

ALICE

(patiently)

The loose feel of the painting is derived from the artist's consideration of the subject's inner spirit.

Alice offers the husband a better view of her bosom.

ALICE

Sumi-e aims to be understated, to leave out superfluous elements. The artist isn't trying to paint a specific object, he strives to paint the eternal one.

Alice's phone rings. She checks the caller ID.

ALICE

Excuse me. I need to take this.

Her distaste for the couple shows the instant she turns away. Heels click on the marble floor as the husband watches her ass swish all the way to the office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Alice flips back her long raven hair and punches talk.

ALICE

(annoyed)

Markus. Yeah, I'm busy. No, just cramming art history into a woman who's never had an orgasm and her man who's about to prematurely Sumi-e his shorts. You know the type: looking for something that goes with their carpet.

Long pause. Despair slides onto her face.

ALICE

You're fucking kidding?

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - A MOMENT LATER

Forcing her smile back on, Alice returns to the couple.

HUSBAND

Who are the "Four Gentlemen" again?

ALICE

(composing herself)

Right. From old China. The "Four Gentlemen" refers to four specific subjects: the orchid, bamboo, the plum blossom and chrysanthemum. Each subject represents a season and...

WIFE

I don't care about that. Besides,
the color's all wrong. It won't go
with the couch.

Alice raises an eyebrow.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUNG FAR LO CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An Alpha Romeo Spider pulls recklessly into the parking lot.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - NIGHT

Alice dabs tears from her eyes with a tissue. When she sees
smeared mascara, she cries some more.

ALICE

Fuck you Markus. Fuck you, fuck
you, fuck you. YOU FUCK!

She takes a deep breath and slowly exhales, regaining her
composure. She puts on sunglasses.

INT. HUNG FAR LO CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

MRS. LO, a chubby Chinese lady, greets Alice with take-out
boxes.

MRS. LO

Miz Sinclair, you such movie stah.
You still wok for Mr. Tsukatani?

Alice chokes back her resentment.

ALICE

Always.

MRS. LO

Always hahd woking. That good. Hahd
wok bhing good fortune.

ALICE

Not always.

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - BEVERLY HILLS - NIGHT

The street is lifeless, except for the occasional BMW and a flock of cooing pigeons.

INT. ALICE'S FLAT - NIGHT

A stylish apartment above the gallery. High ceilings and sleek lines. The place is a complete wreck. Take-out boxes, shopping bags and high heels litter the floor. Houseplants wither from neglect.

Slouched on a leather sofa, Alice uses chopsticks to splatter shrimp sauce over the coffee table. CLOSE on a photo of Alice laughing at a party. Shrimp sauce SPLATTERS across it.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PRESIDENTIAL SUITE - NIGHT

SPLATTERED BLOOD on white sheets. A dead girl.

FLASH! POP! A police PHOTOGRAPHER documents the scene. Plain-clothed and uniformed COPS mill about, immune to the gore.

PHOTOGRAPHER

What's the story Sergeant?

SERGEANT

Dead hooker. Housekeeping found her.

PHOTOGRAPHER

The John's in custody?

SERGEANT

Yep. He was out cold. Couldn't remember a thing. Hear who it is?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Hard to believe, huh?

FLASH! POP! He photographs a mountain of drugs scattered over the coffee table: powder, pills, booze.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Looks like quite a party.

The sergeant kneels down to the dead girl. There's an intricate ASIAN TATTOO crawling up her forearm.

SERGEANT
Get a load'a this.

FLASH! POP!

EXT. BELLAGIO HOTEL - NIGHT

An ambulance and four police cruisers clog the driveway.

INT. BELLAGIO HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The cops emerge from the elevator and bump by paramedics with a gurney. Famous works of art hang on the walls: Cezanne, Matisse, Pollack, Rothko.

SERGEANT
Here's what I don't get. The guy's
rich. How come he's payin' for sex?

PHOTOGRAPHER
Because he can?

The Sergeant takes in a Picasso.

SERGEANT
Yeah, well, he's gonna hafta sell a
couple'a these babies to pay for
the army of lawyers he's gonna
need.

CUT TO:

INT. ALICE'S FLAT - MORNING

Alice is asleep on the couch. A beam of sunlight crawls into her eyes. She ducks under her pillow, depressed.

Alice surveys the mess. She clears a space, grabs a cushion, and sits down in the lotus position. She blows hair out of her face and closes her eyes.

ALICE
(chanting)
Auuuummmmm.

Her eyes peek open. She spots a spider crawling over a nearby ART IN AMERICA magazine. Cover story: "THE LOST VAN GOGH"
Alice jerks back, closes her eyes and tries again.

ALICE

Auuuummmmm.

The phone rings.

ALICE

Fuck.

She rummages for her phone. Punches talk.

ALICE

Ray. No, I'm meditating. (pause)
Yeah, but let's make it two, okay?
Good.

Alice hangs up, exasperated. She grabs the magazine and kills the spider.

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - DAY

In the daylight, it's clear the art gallery's once stylish facade needs a face lift. A window is cracked and the paint is peeling. A boisterous flock of pigeons has roosted above the sign and there's bird shit streaking down the building.

A Fed-Ex truck pulls up.

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY RECEPTION - DAY

Alice is online, sorting photos of girls, boys, men, women. She notes their imperfections: scars, acne, love handles. One woman is labeled "pregnant."

She pauses on the next photo: a beautiful girl with a BROKEN NOSE. Alice's hand drifts to her own face.

The FED-EX GUY enters with an overnight. Alice closes her laptop and rights herself, greeting him with her breasts more than her smile.

FED-EX GUY

Y'oughtta do somethin' about those pigeons. You can barely see the number on your building.

She signs for the package and gives him a cold stare.

ALICE

You telling me I'm not memorable enough for you?

FED-EX GUY

Um, no, I...

ALICE

Get the fuck outta here.

The FedEx guy drops the overnight and slinks off. Alice opens it and extracts a box printed with elegant JAPANESE SCRIPT. She sets it aside and grabs her keys.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - MOMENTS LATER

Alice's black Alpha Romeo Spider speeds down the palm-lined boulevards.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - DAY

Alice pulls recklessly into a parking garage.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - DAY

She enters the DOLCE & GABBANA boutique.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Alice squeezes into a skirt. She has a beautiful ASIAN TATTOO over her sacrum.

ALICE

(to her reflection)

Keep it together Ally. You're a plum blossom. Spring glory.

Alice touches up her make-up. She pauses to study the wrinkles around her eyes. Runs a finger along her once broken nose. Checks her ass in the mirror.

ALICE

Christ.

EXT. GARDEN CAFE - DAY

Alice downs a single malt scotch. She's sitting with RAY REYNOLDS a stylish attorney in his 50's. Ray specializes in making his clients look legitimate - on paper anyway.

ALICE

The curator in Amsterdam argued it should be displayed in public.

RAY

Shouldn't it?

ALICE

It's way too valuable. Only a handful of collectors could move that fast. The museums didn't have a chance.

Alice looks Ray right in the eye.

ALICE

Markus got that painting for a song. Donald West was his only serious competition. And since he's been...

Ray throws up his hands.

RAY

I don't wanna know!

The WAITER arrives with Alice's second scotch.

WAITER

Glenfiddich '67.

RAY

Thank you.

He takes away Alice's empty glass.

ALICE

Are you gonna help me?

Ray's worried.

RAY

Ally, he'd hunt down a dog for taking a stick out of his yard. And you're the crown jewel of his collection!

Desperation creeps into her voice.

ALICE

I can't take it anymore.

RAY

Maybe you could quietly move some money into a more reliable investment. Like a restaurant.

Alice gives him a look like he's got to be kidding.

ALICE

I want out, Ray. Now.

RAY

Okay, okay.

He thinks a minute.

RAY

How much is Markus involved in day-to-day operations?

ALICE

He's not.

RAY

Really? He's so... hands on.

ALICE

He trusts me.

RAY

That's it then. You've gotta get fired up.

ALICE

Fired up about what?

RAY

The Sinclaire Gallery.

ALICE

Gimme a fucking break. The gallery was over a long time ago. I've got window shoppers, not collectors.

RAY

The gallery's your best bet Ally. If you're serious about this you're gonna have to get off your ass and strut your stuff again.

ALICE

So you'll do it?

RAY

I'll set up the account. After that
you're on your own.

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - DAY

Alice is eyeing the side of the building. It's all cleaned up. An exterminator, BILL STRICKLER, is beside her. Strickler's a redneck in his 30's. Which makes him a real fish-out-of-water in Beverly Hills.

STRICKLER

I sealed-up the vent. Wasn't doin'
ya much good anyhow. Pigeons ain't
that hard to get ridda. They'll
find another spot ta roost in no
time.

ALICE

You cleaned it up too.

STRICKLER

(charming)

All part'a the deal.

ALICE

I appreciate that. You have no
idea.

STRICKLER

It's the little things that make
all the difference.

ALICE

I've been putting off getting rid
of those goddamn birds for so long.
(vulnerable) Sorry, I'm not usually
this easily impressed. The smallest
things have been so... *impossible*
lately.

STRICKLER

Kinda like them Sumi-e paintings in
there.

ALICE

You know about Sumi-e?

STRICKLER

Sure. Right after I came to L.A. I
was seein' a Japanese gal that
painted like that.

(MORE)

STRICKLER (cont'd)
 She said it was easy and impossible
 all at the same time.

Alice smiles into Strickler's eyes. She can feel his warmth.

ALICE
 She's right. She's exactly right.

EXT. SOTHEBY'S - DAY

A BBC REPORTER broadcasts live from a London street.

REPORTER
 A record 18 million pounds was paid
 at auction for a Vincent Van Gogh
 which was lost in the second World
 War and recently discovered by the
 family of a deceased American
 serviceman.

INT. ALICE'S FLAT - DAY

Alice is watching a plasma screen.

REPORTER (O.C.)
 Sotheby's declared it was the
 highest amount ever paid for a self-
 portrait of the Dutch master, but
 the price was much lower than
 originally predicted.

ALICE
 Fuck you Markus.

ON TV we see the Van Gogh being photographed with the man and
 woman who found it in their father's attic.

REPORTER (O.C.)
 The painting, which was found and
 authenticated last month, was
 purchased by an anonymous buyer.

CUT TO a sullen and handcuffed DONALD WEST, crushed by
 reporters, on his way into the Las Vegas courthouse.

REPORTER (O.C.)
 Notably absent from the bidding was
 American casino magnate Donald
 West, who was recently indicted for
 homicide.

The phone rings. Alice punches mute and picks it up.

ALICE

Hello? (laughs) No, the pigeons haven't come back.

We INTERCUT between Alice and Strickler calling from his van.

STRICKLER

Well damn Ally. I keep hopin' they will so I can come'n see ya.

ALICE

That's sweet Bill, but you don't have to shoo pigeons to swing by the gallery.

STRICKLER

Aw, I know. I jus' ain't into the "art" crowd.

ALICE

"Art" crowd?

STRICKLER

That's right.

ALICE

You're not smitten with me, are you mister?

STRICKLER

Who me? Nah, yer not my type.

ALICE

What's your type?

STRICKLER

I like smooth little boys.

ALICE

(laughs)

Liar.

STRICKLER

Say Ally, the reason I called was I was wonderin'...

ALICE

Hey, Bill, please don't ask me out. I don't do dates.

STRICKLER

I ain't askin' ya out. I wanna show ya somethin'.

ALICE

Oh yeah?

Strickler looks at the apartment complex outside his van window. The sign reads SOUTHGATE SUITES.

STRICKLER

Can ya meet me in Glendale?

ALICE

Glendale?

STRICKLER

Yeah. I dunno art from shinola, but I think you oughtta see this.

INT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - DAY

Alice is astonished by what she sees. The interior has undergone an amazing transformation. Strickler leans in the doorway, arms crossed.

Alice turns on a lamp. It's covered in little triangles made from baseball cards that have been meticulously cut, spaced and glued to the shade. Colors swirl in fantastic patterns.

We PULL BACK. Every inch of the apartment is covered in perfectly broken fragments that spiral into beautiful, organic mosaics.

EXT. MANAGER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Alice knocks on a door covered in yellow Post-it notes: complaints about leaking pipes and cockroach infestations. MRS. PERKINS peers out her window and scowls at Alice, then smiles at Strickler. The door cracks open.

MRS. PERKINS

Hiya Bill! How's m'favorite flea bomber?

STRICKLER

Jus' fine Miz Perkins.

MRS. PERKINS

Well bombs away then.

She starts to close the door but Alice stops her.

ALICE

Sorry to bother you Mrs. Perkins,
but can I ask about your tenant in
apartment sixteen?

MRS. PERKINS

The ghost?

Alice and Bill look at each other.

MRS. PERKINS

All I know's that boy's the best
tenant I got. (re: the complaints)

ALICE

Why's that?

MRS. PERKINS

Stays cooped-up in there pretty
much all day. Never makes a peep. I
think he's on drugs.

ALICE

Where is he now?

MRS. PERKINS

Beats the hell outta me. I ain't
his momma. Say, what'd he do? Is he
on drugs?

EXT. SOUTHGATE SUITES - MOMENTS LATER

Strickler follows Alice back to her car.

ALICE

I gotta find this guy.

STRICKLER

I know where you can start lookin'.

Alice stops in her tracks.

STRICKLER

He was there when I went to
fumigate his apartment. I told 'im
he had to vacate for 24-hours, but
he was real freaked out about
leavin' the place. So I took 'im to
a motel about two miles West'a
here.

She kisses him on the lips.

ALICE
Thanks. I owe you one.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - DAY

Alice is speeding and talking into her cell phone.

ALICE
Never seen anything like it. He
does mosaics. Yeah, a mosaicist.
Say that with a cock in your mouth.
One word? Unfuckingbelievable.

EXT. COMFORT INN - DAY

The Alpha Romeo zooms up to the run-down lobby.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Alice rings a bell and waits. She looks into the courtyard
and is drawn to a scruffy, long-haired guy lying face down by
the pool.

CLERK
Can I help you?

ALICE
(preoccupied)
Huh? Yeah, I'm looking for George
O'Neil.

The clerk runs his finger down a list of guests.

CLERK
George O'Neil. Yeah, room twelve. I
could buzz 'im for ya.

ALICE
Great.

Alice turns back to the guy by the pool. Suddenly she's out
the door. The clerk shrugs and hangs up the phone.

EXT. POOL - DAY

A scruffy, long-haired George skims his hand over the water,
content to barely touch the surface. He's absorbed in the
reflections dancing across the pool. They swirl together and
gather intensity until...

ALICE

Hello. Hello?

Someone's talking to him. George finds his way back to reality. He turns over to find Alice's skirt clinging to her thighs. He gives them a long hard stare.

He sits up. The tiles from the edge of the pool have made an impression across his chest. Alice ogles George's checkered pecs. She's suddenly a bit flustered.

ALICE

Are you George O'Neil?

GEORGE

Yeah.

ALICE

Hi. I'm Alice Sinclaire. Mind if I join you?

GEORGE

Okay.

George is overcome by the light bouncing off the water, sparkling in Alice's eyes, writhing across her body.

GEORGE

Look how beautiful it is.

Alice fidgets with an earring.

ALICE

The water? It's, um, beautiful.

GEORGE

You smell great.

ALICE

It's Gardenia.

GEORGE

My mom wore Gardenia.

Ouch. Alice tries not to let that sting.

GEORGE

You're single aren't you?

ALICE

It's the skirt, isn't it?

GEORGE

It's the shoes.

Alice rolls a foot self-consciously.

ALICE

What's wrong with my shoes?

GEORGE

Nothing. They just make you look...
lonely.

Alice spots a pair of worn down flip-flops next to George.

ALICE

What about your shoes?

GEORGE

What about 'em?

ALICE

I'd say whoever wore those flip-flops spent a lot of time not caring about their shoes.

GEORGE

I've worn these flip-flops every day for six years. You gotta care a lot about your flip-flops to have 'em last six years.

Alice takes another look at George's tattered flip-flops. She's intrigued.

EXT. R-23 - NIGHT

Hidden in a Warehouse, R-23 is a Little Tokyo eatery without much of an exterior presentation.

INT. R-23 - NIGHT

Chefs are lined-up making lightning quick sushi. It's a hip, noisy place. Alice and George are shown to the Sushi Bar.

HOST

WELCOME-THESE-PEOPLE-TO-THE-SUSHI-BAR!

SHUSHI CHEFS

IRASSHAIMASE!!!

RENO, one of the chefs, knows Alice.

RENO
Ally! Good to see you. This your
nephew?

Alice scowls.

ALICE
This is George. He's an artist.

It's as if George has never been out before. He's rapt,
taking in the smells, the sounds, the people, like it's all
brand new.

RENO
Ah, so. What kind of art you make?

GEORGE
Art?

ALICE
George is a mosaicist.

GEORGE
A what?

ALICE
His medium is mosaic.

RENO
Ah, mosaic. Tessellation?

ALICE
Yes, tessellation.

Reno sets two wooden blocks in front of George and Alice.

RENO
You like sushi?

GEORGE
I like to eat.

RENO
How about Ikura? Very fresh
tonight.

George looks to Alice. She smiles.

GEORGE
Sure.

CUT TO George gulping down the last bite of Ikura.

RENO
How about Ika?

GEORGE
(with a mouthful)
Mmm-hmm.

CUT TO Reno offering up another delicacy.

RENO
Some Toro?

GEORGE
What is it?

ALICE
Fatty tuna.

GEORGE
Fatty tuna? Sounds like a rock
band.

CUT TO Reno:

RENO
How about Uni?

GEORGE
Is it nasty?

RENO
Yes. Very nasty.

GEORGE
I've got a large appetite for the
nasty.

Alice grins and takes a sip of sake. She likes him. Reno keeps it coming.

RENO
Masago?

CUT TO:

RENO
Awabi?

CUT TO:

RENO
Monk fish liver paté?

CUT TO:

RENO
Shiroko?

The other sushi chefs pause and look over. Alice shakes her head "no" to George.

GEORGE
Yes! Shiroko!

Alice smiles at George's reaction as Reno carefully sets a bowl of Shiroko in front of him. It's white and brainy.

RENO
I warm it up for you.

GEORGE
And the brain thing?

RENO
Eat.

George slurps. Alice grimaces.

RENO
It cod sperm.

Alice nods with her nose crumpled. George's eyes bulge. She bursts out laughing. He swallows hard.

RENO
Ichi, ni, san SAKEBOMB!

Everyone turns to look as Reno hands George a pint of beer. Alice drops in a glass of sake.

EVERYONE
Ichi, ni, san SAKEBOMB!

ALICE
(whispers)
Stand up and chug it.

George raises his glass and happily chugs it down. Everyone goes wild.

RENO
Ally!

ALICE

No, no, no.

The crowd chants "Al-ly, Al-ly, Al-ly." Reno hands Alice a pint and George pours a sake. The sushi bar cheers:

EVERYONE

Ichi, ni, san SAKEBOMB!

ALICE

Fuck you all.

George drops the shot into her beer. Alice downs it.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - NIGHT

Alice is cracking-up as they cruise through downtown.

GEORGE

I can't believe you let me eat that!

ALICE

You're the one with an appetite for the nasty.

GEORGE

It's fish cum! Shiroko money-shot!
There's another rock band for you!

Alice is laughing so hard she's tearing up. She wipes at her smeared make-up in the rear-view mirror. Then suddenly doesn't care anymore.

GEORGE

And it was warm! Body temperature!
From a cold-blooded fish! Why'd he warm it up like that?!

Alice is about to pee her pants.

EXT. COMFORT INN - LATER

The Alpha Romeo is parked out front.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - LATER

It's crickets and traffic and silence between them as Alice avoids George's gaze. She runs a hand through her hair.

ALICE

I haven't laughed, I mean, really
laughed like that in a long time.

She looks into his eyes and smiles. He smiles back. The
moment lasts forever. Alice fidgets uncomfortably.

Alice

See ya tomorrow then?

GEORGE

Okay.

ALICE

Pick you up around eleven. Ray's
dying to meet you.

Alice makes herself available for a kiss. She doesn't get
one. George gets out of the car. He winks at her before
closing the door.

ALICE

(to herself)

Forget it Ally. You were banging
the All Blacks rugby team before he
was even born.

CUT TO:

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - MORNING

George is transfixed by the Sumi-e paintings. Alice and Ray
are transfixed by George.

ALICE

It's quite the opposite of what you
do. The busyness of your work. The
meticulousness.

Ray puts his arm around George's shoulder.

RAY

Do you have a girlfriend?

GEORGE

I used to.

RAY

Do you have a place to stay?

GEORGE

Yeah.

RAY
Besides your apartment, I mean?

GEORGE
No.

RAY
Do you have a car?

GEORGE
No.

RAY
Do you have a job?

GEORGE
No.

RAY
What do you do for money?

GEORGE
I don't need much.

Ray looks down at George's tattered flip-flops. George and Alice follow his gaze. Ray's got on a pair of pointy Pradas. Alice is wearing a different pair of lonely pumps.

ALICE
Let us put you up for a few days.
You can think about it.

RAY
Do it for the *lifestyle*, man.
You'll figure out what to do with
the real money later.

George shuffles his flip-flops.

INT. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Ray slumps onto the sofa as Alice flips through a file cabinet. George wanders about the gallery, out of earshot.

ALICE
(low)
He's in.

RAY
That's great.

ALICE
No, that's fan-fucking-tastic.

RAY
Have you slept with him yet?

ALICE
(swats him)
No!

RAY
Do you want to?

She's thought about it.

RAY
Well sleep with him for Chrissake.
Or I will.

Alice finds the papers she's looking for and flaps them.

ALICE
I just gotta make sure he brings
out the whales.

RAY
The whales?

ALICE
You know. People like Donald West.
Arthur Gaines. Fernando Fericano.
Whales.

RAY
Fernando Fericano? Isn't he...

ALICE
Businessmen Ray. Community leaders.
Good, old-fashioned, card-carrying
Republicans.

RAY
Organized criminals.

ALICE
Maybe. But when these people buy
work from a new artist, everything
else that artist ever did goes up
like sixty percent.

RAY
No shit?

ALICE

No one buys art anymore. They buy prestige. Credibility. The Sinclaire Gallery isn't in the art business. We sell status. Remember the 80's? I made a killing selling cans of Piero Manzoni's shit.

RAY

I remember.

ALICE

But George... (shaking her head)
George is a monster. At his opening, I'll have my motherfucking harpoon.

Ray gets serious.

RAY

You'd better play this just right.

ALICE

If I learned anything from you it's how to make money disappear. Is the account set up?

RAY

Yep. What's your exit strategy?

ALICE

I'm working on it.

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Ray enters with the papers.

RAY

Okay, this is our standard contract. We'll guarantee fifty-grand a year regardless of sales. You'll be able to showcase your work here and be represented by the gallery as your global commissioner.

George is overwhelmed.

ALICE

It's easy. You make the art. We handle the paperwork.

RAY

Ally will be your personal agent.
Of course I could "fill-in" from
time to time. (winks)

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - DAY

George stares vacantly at traffic on the curvy, fast moving
Pasadena freeway.

ALICE

We're really excited. You're a huge
talent.

Silence.

ALICE

You're gonna knock the art world
off its feet. Not even those flip-
flops'll stop you.

Nothing.

ALICE

What's up? You haven't said
anything all day.

GEORGE

Yesterday I felt something between
us and today it's all business. I'm
starting to think you've been
puttin' me on the whole time.

ALICE

This is my job. I sell art. You're
an artist.

George's voice cracks with insecurity.

GEORGE

So last night was just business?

ALICE

We barely know each other. So yeah,
last night was just business.

GEORGE

It was more than just business.

ALICE

You can't have a few laughs without
hearing wedding bells?

GEORGE

I can have a few laughs. But I looked in your eyes last night and we connected. We had a moment. And now you're not stepping up to the plate.

Alice screeches across four lanes of traffic and takes a 15 MPH off-ramp. She barely makes the corner doing 60.

GEORGE

Holy shit!

ALICE

Are you insane?

GEORGE

(terrified)

JESUS! Watch out!

Kids jump out of the street as Alice speeds recklessly through a neighborhood.

ALICE

We just met yesterday! What happened to patience?

GEORGE

Patience for what?

ALICE

The dating game.

GEORGE

Love isn't a game!

Alice punches it. A jogger hurdles a fence.

ALICE

It *is* a fucking game. And only the good players win. If you're not gonna play then forget it. Good luck with the ladies!

GEORGE

This isn't about George tryin' to get some pussy on his team. This is about meeting someone and *knowing* you're supposed to be with her!

Alice slams on the breaks and the Alpha Romeo careens to a screeching halt. Alice gets control of herself.

ALICE
What makes you so sure?

GEORGE
I dunno. I've never felt this way before.

ALICE
Uh-huh.

GEORGE
All I know is that most people go their whole lives like beggars living on table scraps. It keeps 'em alive, but that's about it. They never taste fresh strawberries. Bread right outta the oven. A thick juicy steak. You know, the real stuff.

Alice looks sharply into George's eye.

ALICE
Look. I'm not saying it can't happen. I think you're amazing and I'm all about taking risks. But...

She turns away, uneasy.

ALICE
I just don't feel it like you do.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ray slaps his hand over his face in disbelief.

RAY
(into the phone)
Whaddaya mean? He was in a half hour ago.

INTERCUT between Ray and Alice on her cell, parked in front of the Comfort Inn.

ALICE
He flipped out on the freeway. Apparently he's in love with me and he's not interested in signing anything.

RAY
For fifty-grand a year? C'mon!

ALICE

He doesn't care.

RAY

I told you someone should be
sleeping with him.

CUT TO:

INT. ALICE'S BED - A PREMONITION - NIGHT

Morcheeba's "Almost Done" throbs in the stereo. CLOSE on Alice, talking on her cell phone.

ALICE

Yeah, he's right here. George?

George is screwing her from behind.

GEORGE

(keeping his rhythm)
Omigod, omigod, omigod...

ALICE

Ray wants to know if you'll sign
the papers.

Alice hands the contract over her shoulder. George sets it on her ass, right over her TATTOO, and signs it.

GEORGE

Ohhh YEEAAAAH!

George collapses.

ALICE

(into the phone)
I think that's a yes.

BACK TO:

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - DAY

Alice snaps out of it and peels into traffic.

ALICE

Could you for once come up with a
solution that's in no way connected
to my libido?

EXT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Alice's car is parked out front, unsigned contract on the dashboard.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

The TELLER rings up a Gardenia Bonzai.

ALICE
Glendale Comfort Inn, Room #22.

INT. COMFORT INN - ROOM #12 - DAY

The Gardenia is on George's night stand. A cards reads, "NO BUSINESS, ALL PLEASURE. PICK YOU UP AT 4:00." George tucks a golf shirt into his jeans and cinches up a striped tie. A car horn honks twice.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - EVENING

Alice and George spar playfully as they speed down Sunset.

GEORGE
Lynyrd Skynyrd took their name from
a shop teacher named Leonard
Skinner who hated students with
long hair.

ALICE
Yeah, well, that was the 70s. I got
you in to see Jimi Angel and that's
hard to do.

GEORGE
It's hard to get a haircut?

ALICE
After that we're going shopping.

GEORGE
Shopping?

ALICE
You can't be seen in a golf shirt
and tie.

GEORGE
Why not?

ALICE
(laughing)
You just can't!

GEORGE
What's wrong with it?

ALICE
It's a pullover, George, with a
soft collar. You wear a tie with
long sleeves and buttons.

GEORGE
It has buttons.

ALICE
Only at the top.

GEORGE
The tie covers up where the rest of
the buttons would be.

ALICE
You're hopeless.

George picks up Alice's crocodile-skin purse.

GEORGE
Y'know they have ears now?

ALICE
What has ears?

GEORGE
Your bag did.

ALICE
Huh?

GEORGE
Your crocodile bag. Crocodiles have
ears now. They didn't used to.

ALICE
How the fuck did they grow ears?

GEORGE
Their jaws moved back over
thousands of years. The bones
compressed and shifted to form the
little hammer and arm bones that
make it possible to hear stuff.

ALICE

So?

GEORGE

Just thought you'd wanna know.

Alice can't help but smile.

INT. BROOKS BROTHERS - LATER

George has been given a close shave and a haircut. He's looking like the college kid from the opening scene, but with *much* more style: a classic dress shirt, a new pair of slacks and a pointy pair of Pradas, just like the ones Ray owns.

Alice likes what she sees.

GEORGE

This is ridiculous.

ALICE

Are we going out tonight or what?

The SALESMAN holds up George's old clothes.

SALESMAN

And what will you be doing with these?

ALICE

Burn them.

GEORGE

A bag. Please.

EXT. THE ALMOND - NIGHT

Alice and George enter a swanky Japanese restaurant in West Hollywood.

INT. THE ALMOND - NIGHT

It's busy, but Alice is well-known and well-liked. She's greeted warmly by a HOSTESS and escorted by waiting patrons. George looks like a deer caught in headlights.

Hot oil pops and pings in a copper cauldron at the center of the main room. The TEMPURA CHEF flicks battered vegetables into a sizzling crescendo.

CLOSE on a WOMAN dropping her CHOPSTICKS. The hostess stops mid-step. The staff freezes. Air sucks out of the room.

Feeling foolish, The woman picks up her chopsticks. The Tempura Chef springs back to life. The hostess continues on to their table.

GEORGE

What the heck was that?

ALICE

They serve fugu here.

GEORGE

Fugu?

ALICE

Blowfish. It's poison is 160 thousand times more potent than cocaine. When it hits, your fingers are the first to go.

GEORGE

You can eat it?

ALICE

Sure. It's really good.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

George and Alice are seated in a private room. Alice sits cross-legged, eating tempura with her chopsticks. George holds a piece up to the light.

GEORGE

3-D sumi-e.

A shoji screen slides open. Their WAITRESS slips out of her wooden shoes. She bows to Alice, holding a platter with a live lobster.

WAITRESS

Gomen nasai. Lobster desu.

ALICE

It's beautiful.

She exits with the lobster and the shoji screen closes.

GEORGE

So you've been to Japan?

ALICE

My father was a diplomat in Hong Kong. He sent me to study at the Geidai School of Fine Art in Tokyo.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVERSIDE AMPHITHEATER - 1960'S JAPAN - TWILIGHT

Children with sparklers buzz the grassy basin. A CHAPERONE sends a TEENAGE ALICE over to a group of girls sitting on a picnic blanket.

ALICE (V.O.)

One evening my chaperone left me with a group of girls.

Young Alice eyes an ASIAN TATTOO on the wrist on one of the girls. She notices another tattoo. And another. All the girls have them.

A notorious pimp named YOSHI hands the Chaperone a thick wad of cash.

TAIKO DRUMS thunder, startling Alice. The performers begin dancing, drumming, chanting. They leap back and forth from one drum to another, red bandanas and wooden sticks blur in a mosaic of rhythm and color.

ALICE (V.O.)

They were all so beautiful.

Alice tries to leave, but the girls gather around. They put her hair up in a bun. She looks like one of them.

Fireworks EXPLODE over the stage. They light up Yoshi walking toward Alice, licking his chops.

BACK TO:

INT. TATAMI ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The shoji screen slides open. Alice snaps out of a trance.

GEORGE

You okay?

ALICE

Um... yeah. More sake?

The waitress sets the lobster on the table. The tail has been shelled and sliced into sashimi. The lobster's claws and whips are still TWITCHING.

GEORGE

It's still alive!

WAITRESS

Doozo meshiagatte kudasai.

ALICE

Doomo arigatoo gozaimasu.

WAITRESS

Doo itashimashite.

The waitress exits. Alice puts a chopstick in the lobster's claw and it pinches it.

ALICE

Fresh as it gets.

George dips a piece into a dish of soy. He eats it with a goofy grin.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - LATER

The lobster's shell has been boiled into a soup. George and Alice sit close. Their faces are flush from the sake as they take turns filling each other's glasses.

GEORGE

My mom would take me to baseball games, but she'd never go in. She'd drop me off and leave me there for hours.

George picks up a claw and sucks out the steaming meat.

GEORGE

There's fifty-seven thousand seats in Dodger Stadium. I dreaded having to piss in that place. The troughs were an absolute nightmare. I was eye-level with rows and rows of all these hairy, beer-pissing...

Alice snorts. Awkward silence. George busts into laughter. Alice joins him, snorting freely.

ALICE
 (catching her breath)
 That's funny.

GEORGE
 Ever heard of Matthew Birchinger?

ALICE
 Who?

GEORGE
 He was the most famous stage
 magician of the 18th-century. He
 played four musical instruments
 including the bagpipes and he was
 an expert calligrapher.

ALICE
 So?

GEORGE
 He had no hands, no legs or thighs,
 and he was less than 29 inches
 tall.

ALICE
 Gimpy midgets turn you on?

GEORGE
 Just shows anything's possible.

Alice softens. George catches her eyes. He cracks the claw with his teeth, pulls out the meat and feeds it to her. She eats it, nibbling at the tip of his fingers.

George wipes his chin. The lobster shell has cut the corner of his mouth. A rivulet of blood leaks from the wound. Alice kisses him, licking the blood from his lips.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Alpha Romeo pulls up the drive. Alice tosses her keys to the VALET. George grabs a doggie bag and Alice escorts him inside.

INT. ELEVATOR - NIGHT

George and Alice make-out in the elevator. They're on fire.

DING! The car stops. They break apart, hair mussed. An elderly couple enters. Awkward silence.

George smiles. That's all it takes. Alice pounces. The elderly couple squirms.

INT. GEORGE'S SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Alice unbuttons her blouse as she backs down the hall to the bedroom. George drops the doggie bag on the coffee table and follows her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KING-SIZE BED - THE NEXT DAY

George adores Alice as she sleeps. Her eyes flutter open. He kisses her shoulder.

GEORGE
Hi.

ALICE
What time is it?

GEORGE
One-thirty.

ALICE
You're kidding?

GEORGE
Nope.

ALICE
I never sleep this much.

GEORGE
How much?

ALICE
I never sleep at all.

GEORGE
How come?

ALICE
A lot on my mind, I guess.

GEORGE
Told ya I was good for you.

Their eyes lock for a long, tender moment. But the connection is too intense.

ALICE

(turning away)

You see things in... a different way.

GEORGE

Yep.

She starts to get up, but George holds her back. Alice lies down again, tentative.

GEORGE

I read about these people who'd been blind since birth until this doctor figured out an experimental neuro-surgery that helped 'em see a little bit better than nothing at all. When it was done, most of 'em went crazy. Turns out they had no idea the world didn't have walls. Everything was huge and endless. I mean, how do you explain the horizon to a blind guy? After a few weeks, most of 'em begged to be blind again. But they couldn't go back. Even if they gouged their eyes out, they couldn't forget what they'd seen.

Alice doesn't get it.

GEORGE

Love's like that.

She pries herself away.

ALICE

I gotta call Ray.

George lets her go. He slumps onto the bed.

INT. GEORGE'S SUITE - LATER

Clothes, glasses and pillows are strewn everywhere. George picks up the clutter. He's not cleaning exactly, just organizing, stacking, creating order from chaos. Alice appears from the bathroom showered and dressed.

ALICE
What're you doing?

GEORGE
Picking up.

ALICE
The maids'll do it.

GEORGE
I feel better if I do it.

ALICE
Okay. So what're you gonna do today?

GEORGE
I dunno.

ALICE
I rented a car if you want. Valet has the keys.

GEORGE
Great.

ALICE
You have the credit card?

GEORGE
Yep.

ALICE
So we're all good then?

GEORGE
We're good.

ALICE
Great. See ya.

Alice opens the door. George intervenes, confronting her with his kind, honest eyes. Alice is in foreign territory. She's never allowed herself to feel like this before.

ALICE
Sorry. I just... I've never met anyone...

George shushes her. Alice surrenders.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - LATER

Alice kisses George goodbye. Then kisses him again before driving away. A black Hummer lumbers up. The Valet gets out and holds the door for George.

VALET

Here ya go, sir.

GEORGE

Um. Thanks.

The Valet waits for a tip that isn't coming. The door closes. George rolls down the window.

GEORGE

There a hardware store around here?

INT. HUMMER - DAY

Dwarfed by the Hummer, George peers over the steering wheel like a little old lady. He cautiously pulls into the street.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD - DAY

Drivers honk and swerve at George, swearing and flipping him off.

INT. HUMMER - DAY

George's vision PIXELLATES. Waves of heat rise from the asphalt and dance hypnotic sambas. They're just as real as pedestrians. He brakes suddenly.

George can't drive. It's too chaotic and disorienting. Cars whiz by at the speed of light. The radio station blares. Drivers honk. Traffic lights change. Everything blurs together and swallows his mind. George panics and pulls into a strip mall.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

George gets out, dizzy. He focuses on a sign that says "THRIFT STORE." There's a girl dressing a MANNEQUIN in the window.

INT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - DAY

Alice and Ray survey George's apartment.

RAY
Unfuckingbelievable.

ALICE
Told ya. How long will it take your contractor to dismantle this place?

RAY
Martin's guys do really great work, but they're booked...

ALICE
Pay 'em double.

EXT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

George walks through the parking lot. He's sweaty from hiking the hot streets.

INT. HOME DEPOT - DAY

The cashier rings up pliers, a file, epoxy, and a variety of other supplies. George pays with the Sinclaire Gallery MasterCard.

EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY

Mannequin legs stick out of the Hummer's back window. George walks up to the SUV, lugging bags from Home Depot.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - DAY

The Hummer lurches toward the Valet. George slams on the brakes. He unloads his bags and heads up the steps, frazzled.

GEORGE
(nodding at the mannequin)
Will you escort her up to room 219?

VALET
Sure thing, sir.

GEORGE
Thanks.

Again, no tip.

VALET
(under his breath)
Screw you, bro.

INT. GEORGE'S SUITE - DAY

The nude mannequin stands in the middle of the room, surrounded by tools. George dumps the contents of the doggie bag on the floor: LOBSTER SHELLS. He picks up a piece and examines it thoughtfully.

George meticulously cuts, files and glues bits and pieces of shell to the mannequin head. He's in a trance, marrying jagged shapes into fantastic swirls of red.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHGATE SUITES - DAY

Two WORKERS lift George's mosaic-encrusted dresser into a truck.

ALICE
Be fucking careful with that!

INT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - DAY

George's apartment has been sectioned off with blue tape. Large chunks of the wall and ceiling have been removed. A CARPENTER with a cement saw SQUEALS the blade into the linoleum floor.

Mrs. Perkins watches from the doorway, smoking a cigarette with her fingers in her ears.

PUBLICITY MONTAGE

The Sinclair Gallery publicity machine is in full swing. George's artwork is photographed. Graphic designers present mock-ups for Alice to approve. A website is launched. Postcards are delivered to mailboxes. Ads are printed in newspapers. Articles appear in magazines. A catalogue is published.

Alice is interviewed by reporters and talk show hosts. She is the personification of confidence.

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - NIGHT

The marquee says "GEORGE O'NEIL: MOSAICS." Music spills onto the street. There's a buzz in the air.

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - NIGHT

The gallery has been transformed. George's mannequin greets guests at the door. It's body is covered in a variety of tiled fragments that spiral around its contours. All of George's furniture is here: chairs, dressers, tables. His apartment's walls, ceilings and floors have been sectioned, hung and perfectly lit. The show is breathtaking.

Hollywood types and look-a-likes sip wine and ponder George's artwork. Critics circle. Caterer's ply everyone with champagne. The gallery is packed.

Alice looks like a million bucks in a black Versace dress. She's pointing to a mosaic of amazing size and intricacy. It's made of triangular record shards, arranged in clusters of six.

ALICE

This is a sphinx hexiamond. Six congruent shapes are joined to make an enlarged model of that shape, creating what's known as a reptile.

George and Ray watch Alice schmooze from afar. Decked out in Armani, George feels like a made man.

FLASH! POP! A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps his picture.

RAY

Love the mannequin.

GEORGE

Thanks.

RAY

Bidding has started high. Really high.

GEORGE

Huh?

RAY

Sheik al-Dhari there wants it for his wife. He's already bid two-hundred grand.

George watches Alice toast an attractive SAUDI COUPLE.

GEORGE

But I made it for her!

RAY

Make her another one. She's been getting the word out. There's quite a buzz on you.

George is devastated. Ray attempts damage control.

RAY

Don't worry. She's falling for you.

Alice smiles at George from across the room.

GEORGE

Yeah? So how come she's giving me that "don't blow our cover" smile.

RAY

She's working. It's unprofessional.

GEORGE

Bullshit.

RAY

Relax. Alice recommends art for her clients to invest in. How would it look if she's boning the same artist she's promoting? Now shut up and get out there. *Help* her for chrissake.

Ray shoos George. He bumps by Bill Strickler without recognizing him. He's wearing a bent-up cowboy hat that draws a lot of attention.

A crowd has gathered around Alice. She's in top form, working the room, getting everyone fired up.

ALICE

Each piece is self-similar, which is to say that within the whole of an object exists not just pieces of the whole, which is Newtonian reduction theory, but the same whole, only smaller.

Ray sidles up to an ACTOR and his BARBIE-DOLL girlfriend.

BARBIE

It looks like a big penis!

RAY

That's what it is.

Barbie squeals with delight.

CUT TO Alice schmoozing COLLECTOR #1:

ALICE

As the kite and dart pattern fills a plane, it creates certain local symmetries, but no specific patch is ever repeated. The system is aperiodic.

CUT TO COLLECTOR #2, absorbed by the layers of a particularly intricate piece.

COLLECTOR #2

This one appears to go on forever.

GEORGE

That's funny.

COLLECTOR #2

Why?

GEORGE

Because Hoagy Carmichael's 1943 album is in there somewhere. It has the longest song title ever recorded.

COLLECTOR #2

Really? What's the song?

GEORGE

"I'm a Cranky Old Yank in a Clanky
Old Tank on the Streets of Yokohama
with my Honolulu Mama Doin' Those
Beat-o, Beat-o, Flat-on-my-Seat-o,
Hirohito Blues."

CUT TO Alice:

ALICE

George's work is a visual form of
music. Each note doesn't express
the entire song, but the music
can't exist without the individual
notes.

CUT TO Ray:

RAY

It's like what a computer's pixels
do. But the pixels are bigger here
giving us that Neo-Impressionist
feel.

CUT TO George:

GEORGE

In 1976, Rodrigo's Guitar Concierto
de Aranjuez was number one in the
UK for fourteen days because of a
typo.

CUT TO Alice:

ALICE

Octiamonds are patterns of eight.

CUT TO Ray:

RAY

They seem to replicate infinitely.

CUT TO George:

GEORGE

Dark Side of The Moon was on the
Billboard charts for 741 weeks.

CUT TO Alice:

ALICE

Reptile parallelogram.

CUT TO Ray:

RAY
Isosceles trapezium.

CUT TO George at the toilet mosaic:

GEORGE
Most toilets flush in E-flat.

CUT TO Alice:

ALICE
Penrose.

CUT TO Ray:

RAY
M.C. Escher.

CUT TO George:

GEORGE
It's like jazz.

CUT TO Alice:

ALICE
Pointallism.

CUT TO Ray:

RAY
Mysticism.

CUT TO George:

GEORGE
I'm a romantic I guess.

CUT TO the Sheik:

AL-DHARI
This is the one.

CUT TO Barbie:

BARBIE
You should buy this one.

CUT TO the Actor:

ACTOR
What about this one?

CUT TO COLLECTOR #1's lips:

COLLECTOR #1
Two hundred thousand.

CUT TO COLLECTOR #2's lips:

COLLECTOR #2
Three hundred and fifty thousand.

CUT TO COLLECTOR #3's lips:

COLLECTOR #3
Five hundred thousand.

CUT TO Ray's lips:

RAY
One...

CUT TO Alice's lips:

ALICE
Million...

CUT TO George's lips:

GEORGE
Dollars?

Alice is on top of the world. She appears at George's side and whispers into his ear.

ALICE
You shot the fucking moon.

FLASH! POP! The photographer captures the moment.

A sudden chill blows through the gallery. People part like the Red Sea. An elegant man of indeterminate race steps into the void, followed by his hulking, well-dressed entourage. Alice goes white.

ALICE
Holy Fuck.

She scurries over to him as if pulled by an unknown force. They kiss. George scowls with jealousy. MARKUS TSUKATANI takes in the room.

Late 60s but impossibly well-preserved, his presence transforms the air itself, now as black as his impeccably tailored suit. Tsukatani has a frightening Zen quality, as if he's more tension than solid being.

A motion orders his entourage to stay put. He glides effortlessly to George, with Alice in tow.

ALICE

Markus Tsukatani, this is George O'Neil.

TSUKATANI

I'm quite pleased to have your work in our gallery.

George is devastated. Who is this guy? What's going on? Ray comes to the rescue.

RAY

Markus, you simply must see the sphinx hexiamond.

TSUKATANI

The guest register first.

RAY

Sure.

George looks at Alice, betrayed. She shoots "not now" back at him and follows Tsukatani.

Bill Strickler is browsing the Auction Register, where guests have been placing ever larger bids since Tsukatani's arrival. The two men make eye contact. Strickler's mouth goes bone dry. He tips his hat and steps aside.

George's head is about to explode. The gallery patrons PIXELLATE. Phony smiles slide from faces, hipster eyeglasses shatter, fake breasts burst. George sees them for what they are. They want to decorate their homes with his anguish. His tempest is a rung in their social ladder. An emptiness washes over George, drowning him.

He crashes into a waiter, spills a tray and stumbles toward the door. Strickler catches him.

STRICKLER

Whoa there. Let's git some air.

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - NIGHT

Strickler helps George outside.

STRICKLER
You okay?

GEORGE
(dazed)
No.

STRICKLER
You recognize me?

GEORGE
No.

STRICKLER
I flea-bombed your apartment. The
one that's all cut up in there.

GEORGE
Huh?

STRICKLER
I told Ally about you. She made ya
famous buddy!

George freaks out. His reality comes completely unhinged.
Strickler's cowboy hat springs to life and snaps at him.

GEORGE
(jumping back)
What do you want from me?

STRICKLER
Hey, now.

GEORGE
You're all... vampires!

STRICKLER
I ain't...

GEORGE
Go to hell!

George turns and vanishes into the night.

INT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - LATER

Alice slips away from Tsukatani and corners Ray.

ALICE
Where's George?

RAY

Don't know.

ALICE

Can we still do it?

RAY

Are you kidding?

ALICE

But the account's all set up. The auction's next week.

RAY

Ally, he's on this.**EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

Strickler smokes a cigarette against his van. Alice approaches cautiously.

STRICKLER

Hey beautiful.

ALICE

What the fuck're you doing here?

STRICKLER

Mixin' with the "art" crowd.

Alice scowls.

STRICKLER

So that's him?

ALICE

Yeah.

STRICKLER

Looks like a nice fella.

ALICE

(fearful)

Did he see you?

STRICKLER

Yeah. But nobody knows me around here.

ALICE

That hat's gonna be hard to forget.

STRICKLER
Everyone wears weird shit in L.A.

ALICE
Not everyone.

STRICKLER
What's the big deal?

ALICE
I've got a proposition for you.

Strickler sidles up to Alice.

STRICKLER
I like it when you proposition me.

KAZU, Tsukatani's gargantuan bodyguard, steps out of the gallery and spots them together. Alice slaps Strickler, hard.

ALICE
ARE YOU ON CRACK?!

Alice storms inside. Kazu stares coldly at a dumbfounded Bill Strickler, rubbing his jaw.

STRICKLER
Jeezus.

CUT TO:

INT. BROTHEL - JAPAN - NIGHT

Teenage Alice is wrestled onto a filthy mattress by Yoshi. She fights back, limbs flying. He STRIKES her. Blood streams from her NOSE. She's pinned face down. Her clothes are torn.

YOSHI
(in Japanese)
I own you.

Yoshi brandishes a hot iron and he brands Alice just above her sacrum. She screams.

CUT TO:

INT. ACUPUNCTURE ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a hand drawing an acupuncture needle from its casing. The needle is slowly inserted into a man's chest just above the heart. It slides into his flesh.

EXT. TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - DAY

Iron gates open onto immaculate grounds. Alice's Alpha Romeo motors through the sculpture garden to a spectacular villa.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Alice walks into the house like she owns it. The Foyer is home to a number of dark paintings: Bosch, Goya, Dali, all of them depicting the most abhorrent images of the human condition: inferno, torture, war, death.

INT. ACUPUNCTURE ROOM - DAY

Tsukatani lies on a sarcophagus at the center of the room. His eyes are closed. Dozens of acupuncture needles riddle his body, channeling down his arms, over his torso, sprouting from his feet. The needles keep his life-force moving, conducting his vile, black energy.

Kazu follows Alice into the room. She freezes. There it is! The lost Van Gogh. Vincent looks haunted, plagued by inner demons.

Tsukatani knows she's there without moving a muscle.

TSUKATANI

You see the anguish in his eyes?

Alice moves close, spellbound by the painting.

ALICE

It should be in a museum.

TSUKATANI

Or perhaps in a Las Vegas hotel?
For housewives and garbagemen to
leer on their way to the craps
table?

ALICE

Donald West shared his collection
with thousands of...

TSUKATANI

Donald West was my rival.

ALICE

Not after what you did to that
girl.

TSUKATANI

A genuine work of art is unique.
It's pure. Timeless. Indescribable
in it's beauty. Nearly impossible
to attain. A human life is none of
these things.

ALICE

You're a sick fuck.

TSUKATANI

One who is ruled by the heart wins
nothing.

ALICE

I'll try to remember that.

TSUKATANI

You should know that by now.

ALICE

I should.

TSUKATANI

You've done well with our new
artist. Mr. O'Neil's auction may
offset the price of the Van Gogh.

Alice's eyes blaze with defiance.

ALICE

I discovered George. I promoted his
art. I put on that reception. You
can't just take him away from me!

TSUKATANI

I provide everything you need.

ALICE

I want my own life, Markus!

TSUKATANI

Or do you want George O'Neil?

Alice is taken aback.

ALICE

What do you mean?

TSUKATANI

I saw you together. I sensed a
certain... intimacy.

ALICE

You're jealous?

Tsukatani's eyes snap open. Alice hesitates a split second, then walks to him. She bends close, as if some hidden force compels her.

TSUKATANI

If he ever touches you. Opens you.
You'll be worthless to me.

They engage in a long, deep kiss. A kiss that dislodges needles, a kiss that sucks the life from her.

TSUKATANI

Go to my bed.

Alice turns to do his bidding.

TSUKATANI

By the way, I just spoke with
Pierre Bernal. You know Mr. Bernal?

ALICE

No.

TSUKATANI

He's the new curator of the Musée
d'Orsay in Paris. Mr. Bernal wishes
to buy the sphinx hexiamond for 1.4
million euros.

He lets that sink in.

TSUKATANI

You've discovered a young man who's
created only twenty-two works of
art. Do you have any idea how much
George O'Neil is worth?

Alice is stone cold silent.

TSUKATANI

How much Kazu?

KAZU

Nineteen million dollars.

TSUKATANI

And counting. There is tremendous
interest in Mr. O'Neil.

She stares at him, speechless.

TSUKATANI

Twenty-two pieces. That's a very limited collection. Do you have any idea how much that collection would be worth if these were the only works ever produced?

ALICE

Markus. Be serious...

TSUKATANI

Kazu?

KAZU

Priceless.

CUT TO:

INT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - LIVING ROOM - DAY

George is slumped on the couch with a Pabst Blue Ribbon. He's sporting a Dodger cap and watching baseball. Kevin Brown is pitching a scoreless game. There's a man on third and Alex Rodriguez is at the plate.

GEORGE

Runner's going!

The man on third goes for home. Brown, already in his wind-up, throws the ball at Rodriguez, hitting him in the back. OUCH! A-Rod charges the mound. Dugouts clear.

GEORGE

OHHH!

George's girlfriend ANNA walks out of the bedroom.

ANNA

What? A fight?

GEORGE

You shoulda seen it! A-Rod got nailed.

ANNA

On purpose?

GEORGE

(slurping beer)

Yeah. To counter the squeeze you throw the ball at the batter's head.

ANNA

Why?

GEORGE

So he can't hit it.

The doorbell rings.

ANNA

But he gets to go to first.

GEORGE

Yeah, but they'll save the run.

George answers the door. BLOSSOM, 20'S, is all punk rock with a hooded sweatshirt, lip ring and black boots.

GEORGE

Hey Blossom. Wanna beer?

BLOSSOM

No thanks.

ANNA

Hey.

BLOSSOM

Hey Anna. You ready to roll?

ANNA

Almost. (to George) I can't believe you're not going.

George plops back on the couch, fixed on the game.

GEORGE

I got a mid-term tomorrow.

ANNA

(annoyed)

Ask him what time.

Blossom looks up from George's record collection.

BLOSSOM

What time?

GEORGE

Four.

ANNA

Four.

GEORGE

I gotta study. Besides, Vegas is just too damn far to drive for a party.

Anna rolls her eyes.

BLOSSOM

So you got it?

ANNA

I got it. Check it out.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Anna grabs a SCOOBY DOO BOWL from the cupboard. She dumps in chunks of crystal from an Altoids tin.

BLOSSOM

Wow. I thought there'd be more.

ANNA

Doesn't take much.

Anna pulverizes the crystals into a fine powder.

BLOSSOM

What's his deal?

ANNA

Math major. You know, logical as hell. Except when it comes to girls. He fell for me before I could tell him I wasn't his type.

Blossom looks around the kitchen at piles of art supplies: scissors, pliers, brushes, plaster, x-acto knives, epoxy.

BLOSSOM

Math major and art student, huh?

ANNA

Don't get me started.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

Anna and Blossom cruise the strip. Men holler at the two honeys in their pistachio '57 Chrysler convertible.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

A rave is in full swing. Mobs of costumed people bump and grind to the heavy beat. Strobes flash, lasers pulse, flame throwers explode into the night.

A LIZARD KING rides by on a unicycle with a sparkler in one hand and a bottle of Everclear in the other. He chugs and breathes fire into the sky.

Dozens of FIREDANCERS spin blazing arcs of light.

INT. CHRYSLER CONVERTIBLE - NIGHT

Music from the rave rocks the street. Anna and Blossom are dressed to the nines in outfits halfway between French Stripper and Road Warrior.

There's a flat of strawberries in Blossom's lap and a toothpick in her mouth. Anna opens the Altoids tin and shakes the POWDERED CRYSTALS to even-out the pile. She takes the toothpick from Blossom's mouth, dips it into the tin and punctures a strawberry.

EXT. ROOFTOP BAR - NIGHT

Anna carries a silver tray of tooth-picked strawberries. She stops and sells some to a SPOOKY CLOWN.

Blossom sells berries to the firedancers.

The Lizard King and his entourage buy berries from Anna.

Anna dances with a strawberry in her teeth. Blossom gyrates towards her. She eats the strawberry from Anna's lips and kisses her with lots of tongue.

They pull away. Eyes dilate. Motion becomes stroboscopic. The girls grin wide.

Thumping music. A fantastic light show. Gorgeous bodies. Fueled by the drugged strawberries, everyone is having the time of their lives.

INT. STAIRWELL - LATER

Blossom slides down the handrail. She crashes, gets back up and does it again. Anna is slouched in the corner, running her hands through her hair.

POV from Anna of Blossom sliding down the rail. The air swarms with colorful dots that ebb and flow through solid objects. It's an orgy of visual delights. Blossom's movements are jagged and off-register like a silent film. She's jabbering away, but all Anna hears is fuzzy radio static.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAWN

Drenched in sweat, the girls dance faster and faster. The music climaxes just as the sun breaks the horizon. The crowd cheers.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight crawls over George's face. He's sleeping with his mouth open. Drool stains his pillow. His eyes flutter open.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Weezer's Green Album is drawn from its sleeve and placed on a turntable. The needle drops on side A, cut #4: "Island in the Sun."

WEEZER

"Hep. Hep."

INT. HALLWAY - A SECOND LATER

Buck naked, George plays air guitar.

GEORGE

"Hep. Hep."

INT. SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

The shower rains on George's face as he sings along.

GEORGE

"On an island in the sun, we'll be
playin' and havin' fun, and it
makes me feel so fine I can't
control my brain!"

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

George rocks out with a toothbrush microphone.

GEORGE

"We'll run away together, we'll
spend some time forever, we'll
never feel bad anymore!" (Spits)

He's a happy-go-lucky kind of guy.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

George takes out the milk. He pours Captain Crunch into the
SCOOBY DOO BOWL.

GEORGE

"Hep. Hep."

CUT TO:

INT. CHRYSLER CONVERTIBLE - DAWN

Anna and Blossom are driving through the desert. Anna's
smoking a cigarette and counting money at the steering wheel.
Blossom floats her hand in the breeze, watching the sagebrush
fly by.

BLOSSOM

What if we never came down?

ANNA

What if we OD'd and this is our
afterlife?

BLOSSOM

I'm so in love with you.

ANNA

Enjoy it while it lasts. Reality
sets in soon enough.

BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

George shovels cereal into his mouth as JOE MORGAN talks over
RICK SUTCLIFFE on SportsCenter.

SUTCLIFFE

...and we talked about how good
Varitek is. Trading him is way
bigger than not having Hernandez on
the club.

CLOSE on George. His chewing echoes loudly, overpowering the
baseball chat. His face suddenly twitches. George looks
worried.

We PUSH into his eyes and see the reflection of the
television. The picture FRACTURES into a thousand pieces.

George drops his spoon. It CLINKS against the bowl. The clink
keeps RINGING as the spoon cartwheels through the air.

The ringing gets louder, like a finger rimming crystal.
George can't take it. The ringing peaks and then EXPLODES.

George's eyes dilate and shoot back into his skull. His head
bounces off the coffee table and onto the floor. George rubs
his face raw into the carpet.

FADE TO BLACK.

We hear GOLF on the television.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. The TV flickers across George's face, fixed
to the floor. His lips are crusted in milky vomit. BLOOD
VESSELS have popped in the unblinking whites of his eyes.

Anna and Blossom enter the apartment.

ANNA

Holy shit!

They crouch close to George.

BLOSSOM

What's wrong with him?

ANNA

Don't touch him.

Blossom picks up the Scooby bowl, terrified.

BLOSSOM

Omigod.

ANNA

Omigod.

BLOSSOM

Y-You said you can't OD.

ANNA

I didn't think you could.

BLOSSOM

Well can you!?

ANNA

Apparently.

BLOSSOM

OMIGOD!

Anna grabs her and looks her square in the eyes.

ANNA

Listen! This shit is Schedule one.
If we're caught just *thinking* about
selling we could get 20 years. If
we're caught with a dead body...

BLOSSOM

What're you gonna do?

ANNA

Whaddaya mean, what am *I* gonna do?

BLOSSOM

You live here!

Anna thinks for a moment, then turns her back.

ANNA

No I don't.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Anna tosses Blossom a pair of dish washing gloves.

ANNA

Put these on and get my stuff outta
the closet.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blossom frantically stuffs clothes into a garbage bag.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna scrubs the mirror, sink and fixtures.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blossom wipes down surfaces, paranoid as hell.

ANNA (O.S.)
Don't forget the stereo.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Anna rips the photo in half, leaving George alone on the fridge. Blossom crams dishes into the dishwasher. The Scooby bowl barely fits.

EXT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - NIGHT

Anna locks the door, wipes the knob and closes it without looking back.

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

We see a commercial on TV. Images of a HANDSOME MAN courting a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

VOICE-OVER
Steak and lobster: A day's wage.
Caribbean vacation: Three week's
pay. Diamond wedding ring: Two
month's salary.

Warm light pours into their bedroom as the woman snuggles up to her man.

VOICE-OVER
Waking up next to her every
morning: Priceless.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The TV glow bathes George's living room.

VOICE-OVER

There are some things money can't buy. For everything else, there's MasterCard.

We PAN to where George was lying. His body is gone.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

George stares at himself in the mirror. His dilated eyes are red and swollen. The side of his face is badly carpet-burned. Blood from a nasty cut has gelled his hair on one side. He's lost in the depths of his mind.

George raises his finger and touches his reflection. When he makes contact, the mirror ripples like liquid. He pulls back and waits for the mirror to settle, then touches it again. His hand goes through. George pushes up to his elbow, then his shoulder and then sticks his head in.

CUT TO BLACK:

We hear a HEARTBEAT. Voices fade in. People are whispering. George screams. His scream becomes higher and higher until it sounds like a baby wailing.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLUCINATION - DAY

A woman is giving birth. It's her final push.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

It's a headfirst slide to home
aaaaaaand he's... OUT!

A door SLAMS shut.

BACK TO:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

George throws himself into the corner with his hands over his ears. The sound of doors slamming gets louder and faster. The bathroom mirror is covered in fingerprints.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

George is sitting cross-legged the floor, rocking back and forth, cutting up a baseball card collection.

He puts a dot of glue on a section of baseball card and sticks it to the lamp. He continues obsessively.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

George eats cereal from the box. His hair is noticeably longer and a splotchy beard is growing in. He empties the bag into his mouth and stares at the box. He picks up the scissors, cuts up the box into small shapes and begins gluing them onto the kitchen table.

MOSAIC MONTAGE - DAY AND NIGHT

George pulls out a record and stares at the jacket. He slips the record out of it's sleeve, examines it, bends it, tests its breaking point. He picks up some pliers and carefully breaks off a section. He breaks another section exactly like the first. Then another section. And another.

He meticulously glues the pieces in repeating patterns on the wall. A beautiful mosaic made entirely of black vinyl record shards grows over the apartment. Byzantine, organic, as graceful as any Islamic mosque or Moorish palace.

George cuts up baseball cards, record jackets, book covers and six-pack holders. He breaks glasses and plates. He obsessively shapes the shards into perfect, symmetrical units before cementing them into place. He covers the walls, the ceiling, the kitchen cabinets, the television, the toilet.

EXT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - FRONT DOOR - DAY

POV through a peep hole. The breezeway is empty. George cracks the door and peeks outside, scared as hell.

POV from George: The breezeway is blurred by waves of jagged shapes and colors, all swimming like an ever-shifting M.C. Escher painting. He slams the door and slides the deadbolt in place.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

George retreats to the kitchen. He opens a cupboard. It's empty except for one can of corn. He's hungry.

INT. SOUTHGATE SUITES #16 - NIGHT

We TRACK DOWN the hallway to the living room. It's as if a strange and beautiful fungus has infested the apartment.

Every inch is covered by mosaics born from millions of precisely broken fragments. Tools are methodically organized at the center of the living room, surrounded by mounds of mosaic tiles.

POV from George peeking through the curtains. The world is choppy and pixellated. Speeding cars flit like fiber-optics along a boundless web of wires.

The doorbell rings. George creeps to the door and looks through the peep hole. It's a pizza DELIVERY GUY.

GEORGE

It's paid for.

The delivery guy puts his ear to the door.

DELIVERY GUY

Hello?

GEORGE

I paid for it over the phone!

DELIVERY GUY

Yeah, I know...

GEORGE

Just leave it!

DELIVERY GUY

What?

GEORGE

LEAVE IT!

DELIVERY GUY

Alright man, chill out.

The delivery guy squats down, lifts the lid and spits on the pizza.

DELIVERY GUY

Cheap ass mo'fo.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

George's hair and beard are much longer. He sits on the couch eating cold pizza from the box. He pauses to peel off his socks and scratch voraciously at his ankles.

The coffee table, the bookshelf and the walls have been transformed into ever more stunning MOSAICS. The ceiling is an ocean of tiny tiles.

There's a KNOCK at the door. George doesn't react. A slip of paper slides under the door. It's an exterminator's notice.

CUT TO:

EXT. SINCLAIRE GALLERY - DAY

Alice is eyeing the side of the building with Strickler. The bird shit's all cleaned up.

ALICE

I've been putting off getting rid of those goddamn birds for so long. (vulnerable) Sorry, I'm not usually this easily impressed. The smallest things have been so... *impossible* lately.

INT. OFFICE - AWHILE LATER

Alice and Strickler are sitting on the leather couch with a few empty beer bottles in front of them.

ALICE

So how'd you end up in L.A.?

STRICKLER

I got in my van one day and jus' headed for the horizon with nothin' but a bag'a clothes and an tank fulla gas. When I pulled into L.A. I liked the color of the air at night.

ALICE

The color of the air?

STRICKLER

Yeah. Women ain't bad either.

Strickler clicks his tongue.

ALICE

What's the biggest pest you've ever dealt with?

STRICKLER

The biggest? I'd hafta say Mrs. Lipinski's boa constrictor. This big ol' mama had an even bigger snake livin' under her house that was eatin' all the neighborhood cats.

Alice puts her hand on his arm.

ALICE

How'd you kill it?

STRICKLER

Well, at first I was afraid I was gonna end up lopping his head off with a shovel.

ALICE

Ew!

STRICKLER

But I didn't. I ain't afraid'a killin' but I'd rather move 'em along if I can. Trap 'em and set 'em loose where they can go about their business. So that's what I did. It's called the mechanical method.

Alice rises, slowly sliding off Strickler's arm. She swoons.

STRICKLER

Whoa there tipsy lady.

ALICE

Would you like another beer?

STRICKLER

Naw. One's enough to wet my whistle. Alcohol's a poison, y'know.

ALICE

I guess.

Alice looks at the empties on the table and grabs another cold one from the fridge.

ALICE

But I'm a big girl.

STRICKLER

Yes y'are.

On her way back, Alice stumbles and artfully lands in Strickler's lap. She hands the beer to him. He opens it. Alice takes a long, sexy drink.

ALICE

Tell me about... mechanical methods.

STRICKLER

Well, a firearm's usually the most efficient way to bring a situation to a close.

Alice puckers her nose.

STRICKLER

Unfortunately, firearms ain't allowed in most situations.

Alice takes a sip and blows cool air into Strickler's ear.

ALICE

You know how to take care of something... big?

STRICKLER

Well, yeah. There's nerve agents like Methyl Parathion. Got enough oomph t'take down an elephant. But like I said...

Alice runs her hands through his hair.

ALICE

You smell good.

STRICKLER

I don't kill unless I hafta.

Alice sets her beer down, straddles Strickler and kisses him on the lips. Strickler takes her tongue into his mouth.

We CUT TO the same scene, viewed from a small security camera mounted discreetly in the ceiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

George throws his Armani jacket into a dumpster. He took a wrong turn after leaving the reception and wandered into a bad neighborhood. A dog barks.

INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

George picks up some cheap tequila. He walks past the salty snacks and grabs a bag of Cheetos. A SCRUFFY GUY in a hooded sweatshirt steps into the store.

George heads for the counter, snatching three packages of Twinkies on the way. The Korean GROCER rings him up.

GROCER
(thick accent)
Twelve ninety-six.

George hands him a MasterCard.

GROCER
No. No take credit card.

The Grocer points to a sign in English and Spanish: NO CREDIT CARDS OR PERSONAL CHECKS.

GEORGE
You don't take credit cards?

GROCER
No. Cash only.

GEORGE
But this's all I got.

GROCER
Cash. Cash only.

GEORGE
Crap.

George puts the card in his pocket and looks down at his shoes. He slips them off and places them on the counter.

GEORGE
Here, look. I'll give you these.
They're Pradas, I think. I just
bought 'em a few days ago for \$300
bucks.

The Grocer checks out the shoes and thinks a minute. His face puckers.

GROCER
No. No shoes. Cash only.

GEORGE
C'mon man! This is a good deal for you.

GROCER
Cash only. Twelve ninety-six.

GEORGE
I don't have any cash! Take the shoes. They're worth way more than twelve...

Suddenly there's a gun at George's head.

SCRUFFY GUY
You. Outside.

George turns around. The gun is now in his face.

GEORGE
This a stick-up?

SCRUFFY GUY
That's right. Outside.

GEORGE
No way dude. All I want is this tequila and these Cheetos. I don't even care about the Twinkies. You can have 'em. Take whatever you want. Take the cash register for all I care.

George isn't scared. The guy's puzzled.

SCRUFFY GUY
Fuck you. Get movin', NOW!

GEORGE
Sorry, I'm outta here.

Barefoot, George heads for the door. Ca-LICK. The guy cocks his gun.

SCRUFFY GUY
You ain't goin' nowhere!

GEORGE

Look, take my shoes. And here's a credit card. It's all I got, okay?

KA-BOOM!!!

George is knocked back, covered in blood. He checks to make sure he's still alive. He is. He looks up. The Grocer is standing behind the counter with a smoking shotgun.

GEORGE

Holy shit!

GROCER

Twelve ninety-six. Cash only.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - LATER

Flashing squad cars are everywhere. George takes a swig of tequila and hands the bottle to the Grocer.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - DAWN

An LAPD cruiser pulls up the drive. George gets out of the passenger door.

GEORGE

Thanks for the lift.

The Valet raises an eyebrow at George and his blood-stained shirt.

CUT TO:

EXT. TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - MORNING

Bill Strickler's van is parked at the service entrance. A SERVANT opens the door as Strickler arrives with a clipboard.

SERVANT

Work order please.

STRICKLER

Sure thing.

Strickler shows him the work order: FUMIGATE ATTIC. It's signed by Alice Sinclair.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Strickler pauses to take in the dark paintings. The servant is pushy.

SERVANT

Access to attic at top of stair.

STRICKLER

Gotcha.

He lugs his equipment up the staircase.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - DAY

Strickler enters and clicks on the light. It's white and sterile like a pharmacy. Shelves are stocked with chinese herbs and other remedies.

Strickler opens a case and pulls out a box printed with elegant JAPANESE SCRIPT. He exchanges it with an identical box on the shelf and clicks off the light.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Strickler exits the small office and bumps into Kazu. His heart almost stops - but he plays it cool.

STRICKLER

I'm plumb lost. Can ya direct me
t'where the attic's at?

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - GEORGE'S SUITE - DAY

The room is dark. George is motionless on the bed, drool staining his pillow. Alice bursts into the room, her black Versace dress disheveled.

ALICE

Thank GOD! Get up. We gotta go.

She throws open the drapes and sees the blood stained shirt on the floor.

ALICE

George?

She shakes him. George opens his eyes.

GEORGE

What...?

Alice drops onto the bed and holds him tight.

ALICE

(relieved)

You're okay.

GEORGE

Yeah.

ALICE

What's all this blood on your shirt.

GEORGE

I got robbed.

ALICE

Where?

GEORGE

At a liquor store. I was so pissed-off. I was gonna get real drunk but this guy walked in with a Glock 47 and...

ALICE

A Glock 47?

GEORGE

That's what the cops said.

ALICE

Holy fucking shit.

GEORGE

They thought it was weird too.

ALICE

We gotta go.

GEORGE

Wait a sec. First you sell the mannequin I made for you and then you diss me all night and then you drop everything for that vampire guy and now you're...

ALICE

I love you.

GEORGE

Huh?

ALICE

I love you. And right now, you've gotta trust me.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Alice and a bedraggled George walk quickly through the crowded lobby. A hulking figure strides toward them. It's Kazu.

ALICE

Fuck.

Alice intentionally stumbles into a WELL-TO-DO WOMAN carrying a coiffed POMERANIAN. The little dog starts YAPPING.

WELL-TO-DO WOMAN

My god!

ALICE

Excuse me!

Everyone in the lobby stares. Kazu freezes. Alice shuffles the woman and her noisy dog toward the door, keeping her between them and Kazu.

ALICE

I'm so sorry!

They run for the door. The Pomeranian snaps at Kazu as he gets around the woman and follows them outside.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - DAY

Alice and George push by the Valet, hop into the waiting Alpha Romeo Spider and peel out onto the street.

VALET

Mother-FUCKER.

Kazu slips into a black Mercedes Benz that turns in quick pursuit.

INT. ALPHA ROMEO SPIDER - DAY

Alice speeds South on the 405, totally frazzled.

GEORGE
Who are those guys?!

ALICE
Goons.

She swerves through traffic. George whiteknuckles the dashboard, disoriented by the cars whizzing by.

GEORGE
What the hell is going on?

ALICE
I don't own the gallery. Markus Tsukatani does.

GEORGE
The vampire guy?

ALICE
Yeah. But collecting art is only his hobby. He's in the sex trade.

GEORGE
What, like hookers?

ALICE
Human trafficking. Girls, boys, women, men. Western, Eastern, African, whatever you want. He buys and sells people like sticks of gum. Markus is a supplier for the Yakuza, the Russian Mafia and a select clientele of senators, sheiks and CEOs.

Freeway traffic thickens slowing them down.

ALICE
Fuck.

GEORGE
How are you wrapped up in all this?

ALICE
I launder his money through the gallery. And he keeps me in a gilded cage.

GEORGE
So you're an accomplice.

ALICE
You have no idea what I am.

GEORGE
Why don't you just leave?

ALICE
Markus knows when I change my
fucking toothpaste. He'll never let
me go.

Alice checks her sideview mirror. She spots the black sedan.

ALICE
He's after you now.

GEORGE
Me?

ALICE
Let's say you were to die before
the auction. The price of your art
would skyrocket. You were lucky at
the liquor store, but he won't give
up that easy.

GEORGE
The liquor store?

ALICE
Yeah.

GEORGE
What about after the auction?

ALICE
Other collectors will own your
work. Any big shift in value will
profit them. Markus has to act now.

GEORGE
Let's call the cops!

Alice laughs.

ALICE
Markus is well-connected.
Especially with cops. He'd find us
even quicker.

George checks the side-view mirror. The Mercedes is right
behind them.

GEORGE
He already knows where we are!

ALICE
Yeah, but they can't touch us in a crowd.

Alice takes the Century Boulevard exit.

EXT. LAX - DAY

The Alpha Romeo pulls up to the International Terminal. They slip quickly inside.

The black Mercedes pulls in behind them. Kazu and his DRIVER jump out of the car, but airport SECURITY closes in.

SECURITY
Hey, you can't leave that car unattended!

Kazu scowls. They're getting away.

INT. LAX - DAY

Alice and George run through the airport.

INT. SECURITY GATE - DAY

They try to blend in at the end of a long line. A sign reads: TICKETED PASSENGERS ONLY. Alice pulls out two passports and two tickets and hands one set to George.

GEORGE
Where'd you get my passport?

ALICE
A worker found it in your dresser.
Do you see him?

GEORGE
Nope.

TSA OFFICERS take their time checking carry-on bags.

ALICE
Come on.

TSA OFFICER #1
Ticket and passport please.

GEORGE

Don't look now.

Kazu pushes his way toward the front of the line.

TSA OFFICER #1

No carry-on ma'am?

ALICE

No.

TSA OFFICER #2

Remove your shoes please ma'am.

Kazu's almost within reach.

ALICE

For chrissake.

TSA OFFICER #2

And your belt sir.

Their items pass through the scanner. Alice and George duck through the metal detector.

George waves at Kazu, now at the front of the line. He stands like a statue, radiating hate.

TSA OFFICER #1

Ticket and passport please.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

A Japanese Air Lines B777 pulls away from the terminal. The pilot is on the intercom.

PILOT

About 14 hours to Tokyo's Narita Airport and then on to Bangkok, arriving at 10:55 tomorrow morning.

INT. EMPEROR'S SUITE - DAY

A STEWARDESS brings champagne George. Their suite is a compact room with a plasma screen and two seats that fold into a double bed.

STEWARDESS

We'll be taking off shortly.

George and Alice collapse with relief.

ALICE
Jesus fucking Christ.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The jet taxis to the runway.

INT. EMPEROR'S SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The seat belt sign flashes, but George and Alice are under the sheets making love.

ALICE
Stop-stop-stop.

She runs her hand through George's hair.

ALICE
Don't move.

The engine WINDS UP. George's chest is heaving. The engine keeps winding and winding and then starts roaring. The plane blasts forward.

ALICE
Now!

They're at it again as the 777 accelerates down the runway.

ALICE
Yes... yes... yes...

George lets out a groan. They both climax as the plane lifts off.

ALICE
YES!

INT. EMPEROR'S SUITE - NIGHT

Alice is fast asleep. George lies in bed next to her slurping a bowl of udon. There's a Japanese game show on TV. The contestants wear mini-skirts and take turns jumping over a hurdle onto a mattress.

Turbulence shakes the plane, spilling George's noodles. He sets the bowl down and pulls back the soggy sheet, uncovering Alice's TATTOO. He runs his finger over it and discovers some scar tissue. The designs of the tattoo move and shift, as things do from George's eye.

Pieces fall away, and one element emerges: the KANJI SYMBOL for eternal bliss, scarred onto her skin.

INT. STUDY - TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - NIGHT

A silent black-and-white video crackles to life on a monitor. It's from a security surveillance camera. Two people are on a leather couch. A woman straddles a man, kissing him deeply. She pulls back and unbuttons her blouse. It's Alice. And the man she's stripping for is Bill Strickler.

Daggers fly from Tsukatani's eyes.

TSUKATANI

I saw this man at the reception. I do not wish to see him again.

KAZU

Understood.

TSUKATANI

Where is she?

KAZU

She bought tickets to Bangkok but never arrived. They must be in Tokyo.

Tsukatani's brow furrows.

TSUKATANI

The auction begins in less than 48 hours.

KAZU

Yoshi has been informed.

TSUKATANI

Find them. Carpet bomb Tokyo if you have to.

Tsukatani closes his eyes. He is the calm before the storm.

EST. TOKYO - THE NEXT DAY

The city is a zoo of taxis and street life. George is excited.

GEORGE
(rambling)

Did you know the Japanese national
anthem is expressed in only four
lines?

Alice smiles back, warmly.

EXT. TSUKIJI FISH MARKET - DAY

Alice and George wander through rows of bluefin tuna as big as oxen. Merchants with clipboards and rubber coveralls swarm the market, climbing over each other to bid on the freshest fish. A fisherman guts a mackerel with a large knife. Another scrapes the scales off a sea bass.

ALICE
The best sushi in the world passes
through Tsukiji.

GEORGE
We'll eat some tonight?

ALICE
I know a great place.

INT. SMALL OFFICE - TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - NIGHT

Tsukatani's ACUPUNCTURIST flicks on the light and turns to a shelf stocked with remedies. He selects a box printed with elegant JAPANESE SCRIPT and withdraws a number of sealed trays, each containing a dozen needles.

EXT. RIVERSIDE AMPHITHEATER - TWILIGHT

George and Alice stroll through the grassy basin, hand-in-hand. A boy with a kite runs by. The kite lifts into the air, then bounces in the grass.

GEORGE
We should have one of those.

ALICE
A kite?

GEORGE
A kid.

Alice looks as though she'd prefer a kite. TAIKO DRUMMERS take the stage, chanting quietly.

The riverbank is filled with people about to enjoy the concert. Alice pulls George away.

ALICE

Let's go eat.

EXT. THE NOOKIEKOOKIE - NIGHT

The club's door goes almost unnoticed in the neon glare of Tokyo at night. Alice opens it for George.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

A GEISHA leads them through a bar full of salary men and cigar smoke.

INT. PACHINKO ROOM - NIGHT

They proceed into a room erupting with pachinko balls raining off nails. George covers his ears.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

They continue down a sound-proof hallway. Taking quick little steps, the Geisha appears to be gliding on ice.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Attractive PARTY GIRLS whisper amongst themselves as Alice and George enter the room. The girls are Western, Asian, African. Beautiful, soft, perfect. George is mesmerized by all the attention.

Alice suggests one, a European girl with short raven hair. George smiles at her. She smiles back. He notices each of the girls has a TATTOO. Patterns shift and fall away, leaving a common element: the KANJI SYMBOL for eternal bliss. It's been branded onto each girl and camouflaged with elaborate body art.

INT. ACUPUNCTURE ROOM - TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - NIGHT

CLOSE on a needle being inserted into Tsukatani's forehead. He lies motionless on the table with over a hundred needles in his body. The acupuncturist exits, closing the door behind him.

EXT. RIVERSIDE STAGE - NIGHT

Taiko Drummers chant, building in momentum. They freeze and hold themselves motionless.

INT. KITCHEN - THE NOOKIEKOOKIE - NIGHT

A SUSHI CHEF frets fish in a huge saltwater tank. A blowfish swells into a ball and floats to the top. The chef snags it with a net.

EXT. RIVERSIDE STAGE - NIGHT

BOOM! The TAIKO DRUMS begin.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

THUNK! A knife pierces the blowfish's tail, pinning it to a chop-block. The chef kills and skillfully guts it.

INT. WALK-IN COOLER - NIGHT

Dressed in a silk robe, the raven-haired PARTY GIRL shivers as she opens a small bottle. She takes out four pills and washes them down with ice water.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

George and Alice are seated on the floor sipping sake.

Taiko drums BUILD.

EXT. WALK-IN COOLER - NIGHT

The party girl steps out of the cooler. She unties her robe and hands it to the Geisha. A KANJI TATTOO wraps around her upper arm.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The chef's scraper cleans off the chopblock. He carefully arranges slices of sashimi into two rows of six.

Taiko drumming gets FASTER.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Geisha pushes a cart with the semi-conscious party girl lying on it. Her nude body is smothered in fruit, flowers, and neatly placed rows of sashimi. The arrangement is breathtaking.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

The magnificent feast is placed before George and Alice. The Geisha exits. George is speechless. Alice initiates a cheers by taking a slice of fugu and raising her chopsticks. George follows her lead. He takes his first and last bite.

Taiko drums CRESCENDO.

A SWIRLING MOSAIC

At first it seems like another of George's hallucinations, but this time it's real. Everything pixellates and sucks into flashing moments of: the Geisha, the swirling tattoos on the Kanji girls, Alice's smile.

BOOM! Taiko drums come to a FULL STOP.

Tsukatani's eyes SHOOT OPEN.

CUT TO BLACK:

We hear an irregular heartbeat. Shallow breathing.

SMASH TO:

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on chopsticks, dropped on the floor. Sushi is strewn everywhere. A soft rap at the door. The Geisha peeks in, curious.

Alice is face down, motionless. George is slumped over the nude party girl. She groggily tries to free herself from under his weight.

EXT. TOKYO STREET - NIGHT

An ambulance speeds down the busy street.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

The staff tries to make sense of the scene. Two bodies are on the floor. The Geisha helps the nude girl into a silk robe and out of the room. There's no KANJI TATTOO on her arm.

INT. PACHINKO ROOM - NIGHT

Japanese officials have arrived. Patrons scurry aside as PARAMEDICS rush in and POLICE OFFICERS take charge.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The Geisha, the Sushi Chef and a few of the party girls have been sequestered for questioning.

INT. TATAMI ROOM - NIGHT

The room is scoured for evidence. Plastic bags are stuffed with sushi, flowers, and a lock of human hair.

Alice's body bag is zipped shut and hauled away. George's face peers from an unzipped body bag. His features are discolored and bloated almost beyond recognition.

INT. ACUPUNCTURE ROOM - TSUKATANI'S ESTATE - NIGHT

The acupuncturist leads Kazu into the room. Tsukatani lies motionless on the table. Each needle insertion point is swollen and oozing, the skin charred and cracked. Kazu bends close to check Tsukatani's breathing. He's dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. LONDON - DAY

It's drizzling on the street outside Sotheby's.

INT. SOTHEBY'S - DAY

A large video screen overlooks the wood-paneled auction room. It flickers to life as the AUCTIONEER steps on stage. She smiles politely at the audience.

AUCTIONEER

Good morning. Welcome to Sotheby's.

The screen displays a photo of George taken at the Sinclaire Gallery during his reception. He looks happy, carefree.

AUCTIONEER

Today we are featuring the work of the late George O'Neil. It's my obligation to remind you of the conditions of sale. Transactions will be transferred electronically and all purchases are final.

The screen displays one of George's mosaics.

AUCTIONEER

And now ladies and gentleman, Lot #1, the Sphinx Hexiamond, showing on the monitor at my left. The bidding starts at one million pounds.

A card goes up in the audience.

AUCTIONEER

One million. Thank you. Do I have one-point-five?

EXT. SOTHEBY'S WEBSITE - DAY

We watch the auction from a laptop monitor resting on a teak table. Each piece of George's work goes up and up and up. The Sinclaire Gallery rakes it in.

EXT. DINER - NIGHT

Glowing windows frame customers at the counter just like Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. A black Mercedes Benz pulls into the parking lot and continues around back.

INT. BOOTH - NIGHT

Strickler sops up the last bit of gravy with a biscuit. The WAITRESS brings his change. She's attractive and chatty.

WAITRESS

Oregon's nice. Good place to raise a family.

STRICKLER

Reckon so.

WAITRESS

More coffee?

STICKLER

I'm good.

WAITRESS

Okay then. You have a nice trip up North.

STRICKLER

Thanks. I will.

Strickler leaves her the change plus a twenty. He gets up, smiles, and leaves her another twenty.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Strickler climbs into his van. FLASH! FLASH! in the windows is followed by the muffled WHUMP! WHUMP! of a silencer.

The van's side door opens and Kazu steps out. His gloved hand removes the silencer. He throws the Glock 46 into the van. Closes the door. Walks away.

CUT TO:

EXT. MUMBAI, INDIA - DAY

Throngs of people jostle through the streets of India's capital. A five-star hotel rises over a potpourri of colorful shops and restaurants.

EXT. ROOFTOP POOL - DAY

Dark-skinned servants open umbrellas that shade a row of teak tables and lounge chairs. Wealthy tourists stroll onto the patio with towels and books, ready for a lazy day in the sun.

A WOMAN with a broad sun hat calmly closes her laptop. A BOY arrives at her side with a tall drink.

BOY

(thick accent)

Your cocktail madam.

She leans back, sipping.

BOY

Magazine madam?

He holds out a satchel of magazines. She flips through and spots a TIME MAGAZINE that grabs her attention. On the cover is the carefree picture of George from the auction. The headline reads: "PRICELESS"

She shuffles pages to find a full-page photo of a crowd gawking at two body bags being lifted into a Japanese ambulance. She's startled by something. She looks closer. We ZOOM in to a blurry woman in the crowd. It's ALICE wearing a silk robe, disguised as a Kanji party girl.

We PULL BACK and reveal ALICE under the sun hat. Her raven hair is CROPPED SHORT. She turns the page and reads the story of George O'Neil's rise and fall.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Most people go their whole lives
like beggars living on table
scraps. It keeps 'em alive, but
that's about it.

Another photo draws her in. It's George and Alice. The photographer caught a genuine moment between them, a nanosecond when her guard was down and she was in love.

GEORGE (V.O.)

They never taste fresh
strawberries. Bread right outta the
oven. A thick juicy steak. You
know, the real stuff.

Her face winces, but no tears come. Alice is rich and she's free, but she's also broken. She closes the magazine and steels her gaze over the city, wondering if it was worth it.

FADE TO BLACK.

The End.