

Terminal Illness

by Joe Keller

Registered WGA East
Joe Keller
2615 Shadow Pine Dr
Roswell, GA 30076
(404) 991-8807
joe@groundedpictures.com

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

A bustling hive of corporate Americana circa 1999. Various personnel squint into monitors and tap at computer keyboards. Cheap holiday decorations betray a half-hearted attempt to brighten the mood. We steadily navigate the cubicle jungle, holding a steady trajectory on...

A FIFTY-SOMETHING COMPUTER CONSULTANT. He sits in a cubicle, back to us, punching keys on a GATEWAY LAPTOP. He suddenly pauses. Stares through his reflection in the window at the snow flakes hanging outside, and exhales a long RATTLING breath.

IN AN INSTANT. The man topples over backwards - DEAD.

Workers continue to flitter about, unaware, until a thirty-something WORKER passes then back pedals into frame.

WORKER (O.S.)
Mr. Simmons? Mr. Simmons? Are you
okay?

The FIFTY-SOMETHING CONSULTANT doesn't move.

WORKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Mr. Simmons?

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
And so...we begin...

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

JACK FARR (28) lies in bed. Bulky mobile phone pressed to his ear. He is still half-asleep.

JACK
Karoshi?

SWISH PAN TO:

INT. AIRPORT BAR - NIGHT

PATRICK (42) spits chewed ice into an empty scotch glass as he talks. Jack sits across from him, fishing bar nuts from a bowl. Luggage crowds their table.

Christmas banners offer a stark contrast to the Y2K hysteria flashing across bar televisions, each broadcast featuring

renditions of armageddon coupled with variations on a GREEN Y2K BUG.

PATRICK
Karoshi. *Occupational sudden death.*
Can you fucking believe it?

JACK
(shaking head)
He just turned fifty.

PATRICK
No. That they have a word for it.
Fucking Japs. Always one step ahead.

JACK
Jesus, Patrick.

PATRICK
Hey, Bob fucked us here, Jack. We
were done. Ready to pack it in for a
little holiday fucking cheer. And
Bob has to off and die. I am not
spending the turn of the millennium
running another fucking migration.
Like any self-respecting human being
I've got plans. Fucking traitor.
(beat)
Barkeep. Another Walker Black.

Jack shoots Patrick an incredulous look.

A crescendo of JET ENGINES bridges to...

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

A PASSENGER JET races down a runway, angling skyward. The
TERMINAL looms large in the background glazed in dirty snow.

SUPER TITLE: '*TERMINAL ILLNESS*'

A MOBILE PHONE RINGS O.S.

JACK (V.O.)
Hello. This is Jack...

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Jack ambles through the terminal, computer satchel slung
over his shoulder. Travelers hurry past in stark contrast,
motivated by their destinations.

The FEMALE VOICE on the phone sounds like a chain saw cutting
through wet clay: FRANCINE WILLIS (63) attempts a saccharine
tone, fighting to soften forty years of chain smoking.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

I know it's a lot to ask. A young couple. New Years. Especially this New Years. But Bob's passing. Rest his soul. Bob's passing introduces a unique problem for me, Jack.

INT. INDUSTRIAL PARK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN ON OPEN OFFICE DOOR. Francine paces the minimalist office, speaking on a speaker phone. She smokes as she speaks, taut face evidence of a talented plastic surgeon. She wears a pantsuit as fiery red as her lipstick. A real ball-buster.

FRANCINE

You see, Jack. I'm going to let you in on a little secret. We're in talks with a very large corporate buyer to purchase - to outright purchase - our little old company. The little old company that I built.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Jack navigates a turnstile exiting the airport's secure area.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

Trouble is: This large corporate buyer. They're not convinced that our results are consistent. And consistency, you see. Consistency is their brand.

Jack descends the escalator, crowded by a BIRKENSTOCK TRAVELLER with an oversized camping backpack. Jack has to lean back to avoid getting hit by BIRKENSTOCK'S backpack as he shares in laughter with his GRANOLA GIRLFRIEND.

INT. INDUSTRIAL PARK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN CLOSER ON FRANCINE. A TWENTY-SOMETHING WORKER hands her a folder filled with papers. Francine turns, cigarette dangling from her lips and signs the stack of documents.

FRANCINE

So this is a very very important job for us, Jack. Possibly the most important job since we opened our doors. And for successfully accomplishing said important job I can guarantee you something special, Jack. Something very special...

(MORE)

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

(beat)

Bob's old position. A promotion!

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

DING DONG. A BELL announces arrival of an UNDERGROUND PASSENGER TRAM. Passengers rush the tram's opening doors. Jack gets lost in the current, straining to hear Francine's voice.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

Consider that. The position of a Forty Year corporate veteran in exchange for two days of good old fashion hard work. Two Days! Senior Computer Analyst. How does that sound?

(beat)

Jack?

JACK

Yeah. Yeah. That sounds great, Ms. Willis. But uh -

INT. INDUSTRIAL PARK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Francine finishes signing documents. Slaps the folder closed.

FRANCINE

Excellent! Excellent! But Jack...

JACK (O.S.)

(on phone)

Yes, Ms. Willis?

Francine sucks the life from her cigarette in one last fatal draw.

FRANCINE

Don't Fuck It Up.

Francine lifts and drops the receiver, hanging up the phone. CLICK!

INT. AIRPORT/BAGGAGE CLAIM - CONTINUOUS

Jack listens intently. He doesn't hear Francine on the other end. He laughs nervously.

JACK

No. Ha Ha. I would never...

(beat)

Ms. Willis?

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
 (beat/serious)
 Hello?

Jack checks the phone. BUZZ!

INT. AIRPORT/BAGGAGE CLAIM CAROUSEL - CONTINUOUS

ORANGE FLASHING LIGHTS. Impatient travelers rush a luggage carousel as it WHIRS to life. Jack emerges from the surging current, holding his ground at first, then relenting with a defeated look.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 For all that his job paid, Jack hated
 to travel.

EXT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS - DAY

Jack steps up to a Taxi Counter. A long line of fares wind down the sidewalk. Jack reluctantly takes his place in line.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 But his career, like so many other
 things, had come easy to Jack.

INT. TAXI CAB/MOVING - DUSK

Jack yawns, eyes tracing the movements of a murmuration of birds. A straggler performs its own acrobatics, struggling to keep up with the other birds' uniform movements.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 Like a river's course, the twists
 and turns of Jack's choices in life
 had taken the path of least
 resistance...leaving ample room for
 regret.

OFF JACK'S REFLECTION: In the cab's window. Transposed upon the straggler.

JACK (V.O.)
 Hello?

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: A KEY CHAIN tossed onto a kitchen counter. A LONG NECK pulled from an otherwise empty fridge.

Jack sweeps into the spartan one bedroom efficiency, throwing back a gulp of beer. He flips a light switch. Nothing happens.

Tries it again. Still dark.

JACK

Molly?

JACK'S POV: Passing headlights spill through the apartment windows, illuminating a maze of half-packed moving boxes, packing material, and disorganized furniture.

Jack throws back another gulp of beer, a futile attempt to drown his displeasure at the state of things. He carefully navigates the labyrinth of possessions, feeling his way. He stumbles upon a mattress, catching himself on a 32-inch television.

He sets the beer on top of the television. Flips it on, using it as a light source. He picks out the silhouette of a sofa. Tosses his travel-scarred *American Tourister* onto its cushions. CRASH! A teetering stack of CD's crashes to the floor.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jesus.

Jack bends over to collect the fallen CD's.

A LOCK TURNED. The front door opens, spilling light across the interior. Jack turns to the sound.

MOLLY BAILEY (30) enters, cradling an armful of mail, restaurant carry out bags, and a computer satchel. She HUMS off key to the music from her WALKMAN CD headphones. She is well put together; store catalogue perfect. She doesn't notice Jack.

JACK (CONT'D)

Molly?

Molly doesn't hear him. She flips on the lights. Sees Jack. SHE SCREAMS. Drops the carry out. Mail. Satchel. Tikka Masala BURSTS from broken containers, spraying her legs. A BEAT while the shock subsides. Then...

MOLLY

Jesus Christ, Jack! WHAT THE HELL?

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Jack scrubs Tikka Masala from the linoleum and baseboards with a wet rag. He wears a pair of running shorts and a faded PAVEMENT 'BRIGHTEN THE CORNERS' tour teeshirt. Molly supervises, cordless phone cradled to her ear.

MOLLY

I really had my mouth set on that.

JACK
Sorry. I couldn't find the lights.

MOLLY
They're right here, Jack. Right here.

She flips the lights on/off, on/off rapidly.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
I swear to God. You're a lovely person. You really are. But you're blind as a bat.
(into phone)
Hi. Yes. I want to order a large pizza with...
(covering mouthpiece/to Jack)
Olives? Mushrooms? What.

JACK
I don't like olives.

MOLLY
You can pick them off.
(into phone)
Olives and mushrooms.

Jack makes a face, wringing his towel into a bucket.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - LATER

ON PAPER PLATE. The television casts flickering light upon the plate revealing olives piled high beside half-eaten pizza crust.

REVEAL. Jack sits on the floor, scanning the 'For Rent' section of the newspaper. Molly sits atop the mattress, decked out in her nighttime comfy clothes. She eats pizza, mildly amused by a late night talk show.

JACK
Here's one in Glenn Rock: 'Spacious studio apartment with built in Murphy bed. Transform bedroom to sitting room in a snap. Only ten minutes from the Blue Line.'

Molly remains fixed on the television.

MOLLY
Not exactly a dream description.

JACK
Okay. I'll give you that.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

But this one: 'Charming Bronx one bedroom. Easy el access.'

MOLLY

'Charming'. That's code for out dated.

JACK

It might be nice.

MOLLY

...And 'easy el' probably means we'd be waking up to screeching train brakes every fifteen minutes.

JACK

Okay, then. What do you have in mind?

Molly grabs the paper, scanning the ads in search of...

ON PAPER: An advertisement for 'LUX SOHO APARTMENTS'. Photos of young professionals laughing. Drinking cocktails. Swimming in a roof top pool. The caption reads: '*You've Arrived!*'

She flashes the ad at Jack.

MOLLY

Terry and Lisa just moved in. They love it.

Jack scans the ad.

JACK

Rent for a studio is a month's pay, Molly. A studio.

MOLLY

Isn't that the whole point of living together? So we can afford more?

JACK

Not the whole point. No.

MOLLY

I am tired of just making do, Jack. We work hard. We deserve better.

JACK

The people in this ad look like a bunch of douchebags.

Molly shoots Jack a chiding look.

JACK (CONT'D)

What if I get sacked?

MOLLY

Why would you get sacked?

JACK

Isn't that what happens with these mergers and acquisitions? They keep their best and brightest and let all the riff-raff go?

MOLLY

Who's to say you're not their best and brightest?

JACK

I just don't know if I see myself doing this for the rest of my life, Mol.

MOLLY

Jesus Christ. This again.

Molly tosses the paper aside.

JACK

What?

MOLLY

Jack. You are so good at what you do. Why isn't that enough?

Jack contains his disappointment.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Let's just. Let's just enjoy the time we have together. Okay?

JACK

It's just a little hard to enjoy myself when I don't know where we're going to be living in a month.

MOLLY

Jack.

JACK

I'm sorry. You're right. We'll figure it out.

MOLLY

We will. I promise.

Jack sizes Molly up. She's put off. He digs deep, trying to shift the mood.

JACK

Yeah. Okay. Enjoy our time together.

(beat)

What could we maybe - Enjoy. Together.

Jack throws a grin laced with mischief. Molly catches his goofy grin and focuses back on the TV. Jack crawls toward her on all fours. She's not having it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Enjoy. Together. HMMMMM?

Molly does a double take. She can't help but smile. Jack burrows his face into her neck, kisses her making animal noises. She laughs, goes to push him away, then reconsiders. She takes his face in her hands and stares him in the eyes.

MOLLY

...You're crazy. You know that?

She brushes an errant hair from Jack's forehead.

JACK

Crazy for you.

Jack's smiles. He kisses Molly. They fall back onto the mattress, the light from the television flickering as they kiss one another.

ON TELEVISION. The audience LAUGHS at a COMEDIAN'S joke.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

We hear quiet, rhythmic BREATHING barely discernible over the LAUGHTER of the late night talk show. The lights have been doused so that only the television's flickering light illuminates the room.

Molly sits atop Jack, covered in sheets. She moves up and down in a rote sexual performance. Jack lies still on the mattress below her, caressing her shoulders. His eyes scan the ceiling...

ON CEILING: The television throws patterns of light.

CHLOE (V.O.)

(in French/subtitles)

At unexpected times, Jack would fall into a trance-like state. Removed from his surroundings. Hyper aware of his own mortality. Of the air moving in and out of his lungs...

Jack's eyes scan the ceiling. His parted mouth BREATHES deeply. His chest rises. Falls...

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (in French/subtitles)
 ...of the weight of his flesh and
 bones...

Jack's shoulder muscles tense.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (in French/subtitles)
 Of the thump thump thump of blood
 coursing through his veins...

The artery in Jack's neck pulsates with blood flow. His eyes close.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (in French/subtitles)
 ...and his mind would wander,
 retracing the causal pathway of
 choices that led him from his past
 to his present. From his distant
 youth to this precise moment.

CLOSE ON JACK'S EYES: Moving beneath their lids. Molly BREATHES HEAVY O.S. Her breathing crescendoes as we cut to...

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - LATER

Jack. Eyes wide open. He carefully rolls off the mattress. Stands. CRUNCH! A CD jewel case, cracked underfoot.

JACK
 (sotto)
 Shit.

Jack freezes. Checks the mattress. Molly rolls over. Still asleep.

Jack pads across the carpet to the adjacent bedroom. Carefully closes the door. Light spills from beneath the door.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT/BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jack strafes the room with a FLASHLIGHT, fumbling about towers of moving boxes. The beam lands upon a box labeled 'Jack's Art'. He opens the box, rifling through its contents, retrieving a forgotten lint-covered dress sock. He tosses it aside.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 But now, on the eve of his co-worker's
 death, Jack found himself confronted
 with an important decision.

Jack rummages through art supplies and frayed sketchbooks brimming with intricate pencil drawings. He spots an overused OUI magazine squirreled away amidst the artwork. He goes to throw it out...

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
What baggage to take with him...

...then reconsiders, peeking at the centerfold. He makes a 'why not' face and tosses it on top of a nearby box. He continues rummaging through the box's contents. Something holds his interest.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
...and what to leave behind.

ON ENVELOPE: A child's handwriting. BLUE CRAYON. The sender's name reads the same as the addressee: JACK FARR. The destination is written in more legible ink: an adult's doing. Jack unfolds the college rule contents, poring over a colorful series of stick person drawings. One of the figures wears a blue stevedore's jacket with an upturned collar. A SEA CAPTAIN. Imperfect penmanship states '*When I grow up...*'

OFF JACK. Nostalgic.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's dark. A coffee maker PERCOLATES loudly. Coffee SPLASHES into an '*I Hate Mondays*' GARFIELD MUG. A paper towel quickly sops up the overflow, accidentally knocking the mug to the floor. CRASH!

JACK
(sotto)
Shit.

Jack tries to pick up the mug pieces, feeling around on the linoleum floor in the darkness.

ON MOLLY: Wide awake. She stares at the ceiling, impatience building.

Jack rustles around the kitchen counter, feeling for the paper towels. He knocks over a salt shaker. TINK!

MOLLY
JACK!

Jack freezes.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
Just turn on the lights.

Jack tries the light switch. Nothing happens.

MOLLY (CONT'D)
ON THE RIGHT.

Jack flips the switch on the right. The lights flood the small apartment.

JACK
I was trying not to wake you.

MOLLY
What time is it?

JACK
One AM. Patrick booked us a red eye.

MOLLY
Jesus.

Jack picks up the rest of the fractured mug.

JACK
I was thinking. Maybe you could get a flight.

Molly blinks away sleep.

MOLLY
What?

JACK
You could fly out. We could celebrate the millennium together.

MOLLY
I don't know what the point would be, Jack. You'll be working. Right?

Jack navigates the labyrinth of moving boxes to the mattress.

JACK
Yeah. But we could celebrate on Pacific time. After I'm done.

MOLLY
I don't know.

JACK
It's the turn of the millennium, Mol. It's only gonna happen once in our lifetime.
(beat)
We work hard. We deserve better. You said so yourself.

MOLLY

Let's talk about it tonight. I'll call you. I need to go back to sleep.

Jack bends down and kisses Molly on the top of her head. He turns toward the door, grabbing his *American Tourister*. He tries the wrong light switch. The lights stay on.

He makes a face, then crosses and flips the proper switch. The room darkens. He opens the door, backlit by the hallway.

JACK

Bye.

Molly lies on the mattress. Eyes closed. She doesn't move.

MOLLY

Fly safe.

Jack hurries out the door.

OFF MOLLY. Her eyes open. She stares at the ceiling, something weighing on her.

INT. AIRPLANE/BUSINESS CLASS/FLYING - NIGHT

Patrick SNORES outfitted in the fatigues of a seasoned road warrior: Inflatable neck pillow. Sleeping mask. Ear plugs.

Jack shifts away from Patrick. He downs a plastic cup of ice. Repositions his napkin, applying the finishing touches to a doodle.

ON NAPKIN: A cartoon effigy of Patrick, sleeping in an airplane seat. Giant Z's emit from his mouth. The drawing is expertly executed. Something you'd expect to see in the *New Yorker*.

A shadow darkens the doodle. Jack looks up.

A STEWARDESS leans over Patrick's SNORING form. Gestures toward a trash bag. Jack quickly crumples the drawing, shoving it into the plastic cup. He places the cup into the trash bag, smiling sheepishly.

The ROAR of the PASSENGER JET LANDING bridges to...

INT. ST. LOUIS LINDBERGH AIRPORT/MOVING SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Jack rides a moving sidewalk, ball and chain *American Tourister* in tow. He wears travel like a hangover.

Patrick rides beside him, nonchalantly blocking the moving sidewalk with his luggage. Remarkably rested, Patrick GUFFAWS on his mobile.

A RUSHED BUSINESS TRAVELER rapidly closes in from behind, two bags in tow.

PATRICK

I know. I know. I don't want to be here either. But we don't need a party to have a good time. Come on, pussy cat. It's only a four hour flight.

Jack notices the approaching BUSINESS TRAVELER. He shrinks up against the railing. The TRAVELER steps around Patrick's luggage, lifting one bag over in a clumsy pirouette. Knocks Patrick's bags over.

BUSINESS TRAVELER

Asshole.

Patrick covers the mobile mouthpiece. Rights his bag...

PATRICK

Up yours, douchebag!

...then reverts to his saccharine radio voice.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Yeah. Well I've been working on my endurance and technique. There was this thing in *Playboy*...

Jack's suitcase catches on the glass wall of the moving sidewalk. SQUEALS as plastic rubs glass. He frowns, ineffectually jerking at the toppled luggage.

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

INT. HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Black painted nails dance across the antique keys of a REMINGTON TYPEWRITER. Hello Kitty stickers decorate the typewriter's face. Letters hammer onto manilla paper, FRENCH WORDS appearing in time to the fingers' rhythms. A puff of smoke billows.

ON BATH FAUCET: Black painted toes turn the faucet off. DRIP. DRIP. DRIP.

REVEAL: CHLOE MELVILLE (23) lies in a tub of steaming water, REMINGTON propped atop a bath caddy straddling the tub.

Petite. Cute. Chloe sits enveloped in suds, poring over her opus through horn rimmed glasses. She dries her right hand on a bath mat, then removes the sheet of paper, eyes all the while transfixed. She silently mouths every word as smoke dances from the JOINT precariously dangling on her lips.

A smile stretches across her face. She takes a long drag and holds it, eyes still locked on the paper and steps out of the tub donning a plush white robe, still careful not to get the paper wet. She tilts her head back, finally exhaling upwards into the WHIRRING blades of the bathroom exhaust fan. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

ALBERT (O.S.)
Hello? Ms. Melville?

CHLOE
(sotto)
Shit.

Panicked. Chloe snuffs out the joint in the sink.

ALBERT (O.S.)
Ms. Mellville? Can you open up please?

Chloe fans the smoke toward the exhaust.

CHLOE
Sure. One second!
(sotto)
Shit. And double shit.

Chloe frantically rummages through a cosmetics bag revealing a stick of incense. She flicks a lighter. The incense SIZZLES to life. Chloe fans it around the room.

ALBERT (O.S.)
Ms. Melville...

Chloe hurries from the bathroom and unchains the door. Opens it. ALBERT (30) stands at the door. He's dressed in a hotel uniform. Canted name badge. Wrinkled shirt poorly tucked. He's more college drop out than night desk attendant. Chloe greets him with familiarity.

CHLOE
Oh. Hey.

Albert discretely nods his head across the hall. He speaks loudly. An obvious performance for watchers on.

ALBERT
(loudly)
Hey there. Ms. Melville. Sorry to disturb. Some of the guests were complaining about a uh...a pot smell.

Chloe catches on. She plays her character.

CHLOE

(loudly)

Oh. Yeah. That's incense. I was taking
a little bath.

Chloe notices as a NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN peeks through the
chained gap in the door across the hallway. Chloe stifles a
full out laugh.

ALBERT

(loudly)

Incense. Ah right.

CHLOE

(loudly)

You want to come in and check it
out? I certainly wouldn't want other
guests to think I was smoking an
illegal substance in my room or
something.

ALBERT

(loudly)

If you don't mind. I think it would
give our guests a little piece of
mind.

Albert steps into the room, trying not to laugh. The door
closes behind him. MUFFLED LAUGHING emits from behind the
closed door.

OFF NOSEY MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN. She watches for a moment. Then
closes her door, unsure of what just happened.

INT. HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chloe sits in her robe on the edge of the draining bathtub.
Albert sits on the toilet, taking a long drag from the joint.

CHLOE

So what are you doing tomorrow?

ALBERT

(through held breath)

I've got to take my kid sister to
her tutor in the morning. But I'm
free in the afternoon.

CHLOE

Maybe you can take me for a spin?

ALBERT

Cool.

(MORE)

ALBERT (CONT'D)

(beat)

You know. Those people called for you again.

CHLOE

What did you tell them?

Albert passes the joint to Chloe. She inhales.

ALBERT

Nothing. I just said you didn't check in yet.

CHLOE

(through held breath)

Yeah. Thanks.

ALBERT

No probs.

Chloe exhales. Passes the joint back. Her thoughts drift, going some place serious.

CHLOE

You don't think it's weird, do you?

ALBERT

I mean. A little.

(beat)

But so what. We're all a little weird. Right?

Albert smiles.

CHLOE

Speak for yourself.

Albert fakes a punch on Chloe's shoulder. She laughs. He inhales again. Holds it. He passes the joint back to Chloe. He coughs wildly, billowing a cloud of smoke. Chloe laughs harder. Her fun-loving spirit is contagious.

EXT. HOTEL - MORNING

Pre-dawn blues silhouette a five story franchise situated on the town's main thoroughfare. A large power line tower BUZZES ominously in the adjacent field.

Patrick removes his luggage from a RENTAL SEDAN in the parking lot, still speaking on his mobile. Jack shuffles toward the entrance, *American Tourister* in tow.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Franchised cookie cutter opulence. The middle class affair boasts a predictable design and layout. Chloe sits at a table across the lobby hammering away at her Remington. Sunglasses. Beret. An unlit *Lucky Strike* dangles from her lips.

The relentless typing suddenly stops. Chloe stares across the lobby as...

BANG! Jack fights a revolving door. Trapped. His extended luggage handle stuck in the door with the luggage outside and Jack inside. Jack tries to reverse the door but slams his face into the glass, soliciting incredulous looks from Chloe.

Jack collapses the carry on handle then kicks the bag out the opening in the door to the outside. He pushes the door around. Steps past the lobby and back outside. Unceremoniously stoops, scoops up his bag, cradles it, and steps back into his revolving nightmare. He stumbles into the lobby.

An ELDERLY WOMAN and her TEENAGE GRAND DAUGHTER watch Jack from across the lobby, amused by his struggle.

Jack shuffles up to the desk. Drops his bag to the ground. Exasperated. He RINGS the bell. Scans the lobby. Spots Chloe.

Their eyes lock.

Jack shifts uncomfortably. He looks away. Then back again. Chloe suddenly perks up. Salutes. Jack hesitates. Then awkwardly salutes back as...

REVEAL: Albert behind Jack. He waves at Chloe.

ALBERT

Good morning.

Jack spins around. Startled. He knocks the bell off the counter. Albert catches it with a DING.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Checking in?

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: Jack unpacks. Shirts. Pants. Hung in the closet. Underwear. Socks. Shoved in the drawer. MOLESKIN SKETCH BOOK placed on the desk.

Jack opens the nightstand drawer to shove in the OUI magazine. Notices the BIBLE. Reconsiders. He closes the drawer, burrowing the OUI under his pillow instead. He notices the digital clock. 6:30 AM.

Jack whips the comforter onto the floor. Yawns, falling back onto the mattress. Eyes closed. He SIGHS. His eyes suddenly open. He sits up. Then abruptly pulls the OUI magazine from under his pillow. Shuffles to the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MORNING/DAY

ON DO NOT DISTURB SIGN: The hallway lighting shifts as time lapses. Incandescent washed out with daylight...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

A CLEANING CART SQUEAKS down the hallway rolling past the DO NOT DISTURB sign. The door opens, revealing Jack. Despite being spruced up, he looks worse for the wear.

Jack removes the DO NOT DISTURB SIGN and descends the hallway toward the elevator. FLASHES OF LIGHT emit from the open door of a hotel room.

CHLOE (O.S.)

Okay. Hold it there...

Chloe backs out of the room, blocking Jack's path. She is transfixed on the viewfinder of a POLAROID CAMERA. Intense. Focused. She angles the camera. Unleashes a FLASH.

REVEAL: The flash bathes NADJA (53), an ALBANIAN HOUSE KEEPER, as she reluctantly positions a worn pair of REEBOKS for the camera.

The POLAROID WHINES, spitting out the photo. Chloe waves it, attempting to speed up the developing process. She notices Jack.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Oh. Hi.

Chloe steps out of the way.

JACK

Good morning.

Jack passes, stealing a glance at the room.

JACK'S POV: Men's clothing stacked on the bed. A TOBACCO PIPE abandoned on the nightstand.

Jack reaches the elevator and presses the down button, stealing a glance at Chloe. A FLASH. Chloe snaps his photograph.

DING. The elevator arrives. Jack quickly jumps in. The doors remain open for a protracted BEAT.

Jack flashes an uncomfortable smile. Just as he reaches forward to press the 'door close' button the doors slide shut.

OFF CHLOE: She laughs. Then contemplates Jack's photo. Eyes narrow as she hatches a plot...

EXT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING - DAY

Nondescript concrete and glass architecture betrays *Petersen Power's* no frills promise to proudly power its customers' homes since 1964.

The salt-stained RENTAL SEDAN swerves into the snow capped parking lot. The car fish tails. The driver over-corrects. The car accelerates...VROOOM...slamming head on into a snowbank. CRUNCH!

Tail lights flash to white. The car jerks backwards, skidding to a stop. Jerks forward, hopping the parking block in an open spot. The engine REVS WILDLY then SHUDDERS to a stop.

Jack hops out of the passenger seat. He checks the front of the car.

ON HEADLIGHT: Shattered.

Jack shouts at Patrick through the windshield.

JACK
You broke the headlight!

Patrick mouths 'What?'

JACK (CONT'D)
YOU BROKE. THE. HEADLIGHT.

Patrick waves Jack off, nonchalantly hopping out of the car.

PATRICK
It's a fucking rental. Who gives a
shit?

Patrick grabs his briefcase. High steps through the knee high snowbank toward the building entrance. Jack shakes his head, following Patrick's lead.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/PETERSEN'S OFFICE - DAY

ON TELEVISION: A MOTHER and DAUGHTER interviewed in the snow covered street, bundled faces peer out from between winter caps and scarves.

MOTHER

We're staying home. Last thing we need is to be out and about when planes start falling outta the sky.

DAUGHTER

I think she's over reacting.

ON TELEVISION: The image cuts to a BEER BELLIED MAN in camouflage. He holds a rifle. A bushy white beard frames his face.

BEARDED GUY

We're holing up in the cabin. Got plenty o' provisions and ammunition. If things take a turn for the worse...Well. We're ready.

ON TELEVISION: The image cuts to PAUL PETERSEN (38) grinning from beneath a hard hat. He leads a REPORTER through a hydro-electric station, pointing out pipes, turbines, and gears.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Amidst all of the hysteria, I got a chance to catch up with Paul Petersen, recently appointed president of the family-owned local power company, *Petersen Power*.

Paul shouts over the HUM of a hydro-electric turbine.

PAUL

Here at Petersen Power we've kept the grid well maintained and performing for over fifty years. Our hydro-electric station is state of the art, harnessing our very own Lake Okatowee to power the tri-county area. We're taking all the necessary precautions to ensure our systems are up and operating through the turn of the millennium. You might say that we've *squashed* all those Y2K bugs. Heh Heh.

OFF PAUL: Exaggerated grin betraying forced confidence. The television image goes dark.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/PETERSEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paul paces, puffing on a cigarette. Frantic. Patrick and Jack sit across from his desk, seated in sinking cushions.

PAUL

What the fuck, gentlemen? What the actual fuck?

PATRICK

We've still got enough time to get the migration programmed and patched, Mr. Petersen.

PAUL

Do you? I mean DO YOU? What happened to the other guy? Bob was it? He's been out there working around the clock for three weeks and then BOOM he flops over dead? God rest his soul and all that... But one week before the New Year? What kind of fucking omen is that?

PATRICK

You've got nothing to worry about. Jack here and I could do this work in our sleep.

PAUL

Let me explain the gravity of the situation to you. Every blackout gets fined. That's hundreds of thousands in potential fines if we go dark. That's a PR nightmare Petersen won't come back from. I've got competition looking for any chance to buy us out. All they need is the Public Utility Commission to pass a vote of no confidence in our ability to deliver. You got me?

PATRICK

We got you.

JACK

Yes, sir.

PAUL

Now. Your boss tells me that my feedback on your performance is all that stands in the way of you earning a big pay day or being fired.

(beat)

Petersen Power has been in my family for over fifty years, boys. Make no mistake: We go dark, you go down.

Patrick and Jack exchange looks.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

The NOSEY MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN (that spied on Chloe the previous night), steps out of room 205, closing the door behind her. She rattles the handle, confirming it's locked. Then descends the hallway, approaching the cleaning cart now parked outside of Jack's room. POLAROID FLASHES emit from the open door.

The NOSEY MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN stops outside the room, peering through the open door. Nadja, the Albanian housekeeper, backs into view. Startled by the MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN, she flashes a nervous grin.

NADJA

Good morning.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Hmmm.

The NOSEY MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN crosses to the elevator.

Nadja steps into the hallway, checks for any more onlookers, then re-enters the room, closing the door behind her.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nadja watches uncomfortably as Chloe snaps polaroids: Discarded change. A phone charger. Crumpled boarding pass.

NADJA

You shouldn't be here. Snooping.

Chloe opens the nightstand. Spots the Bible. Closes it.

CHLOE

I'm harmless.

NADJA

Somehow I doubt.

CHLOE

Oh come on, Nadja. Consider it a scientific study. An anonymous examination of human nature, exploring each traveller's unique, hidden story through careful investigation of their habitat..

Chloe throws the tousled sheets aside. Spots the *Oui* magazine sandwiched between mattress and box spring.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Et Voila!

She liberates her discovery, pinched between thumb and forefinger.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Take exhibit A here.

(flips through magazine)

Perhaps our subject is lonely. Or in search of something a bit more... exotic. Or maybe he leads a life of repressed desires too taboo for the socially acceptable norms observed by his significant other...

Nadja just stares. Unconvinced.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

It's for my book.

Nadja shakes her head.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Oh. All right...

Chloe tosses the magazine onto the nightstand. Digs into her pocket, revealing a crumpled handful of dollar bills. She hands half to Nadja and pockets the other half. Nadja counts the money. Chloe throws open the closet door, spotting Jack's *American Tourister*.

NADJA

I risk my job for ten dollars?

Chloe makes a face. She pulls the remaining cash out of her pocket. Slaps it into Nadja's open palm.

CHLOE

You drive a hard bargain, lady.

Nadja counts the money, satisfied, and tucks it into her bra. She proceeds with her routine, scooping bath towels from the floor.

Chloe crosses to the desk. Pulls on headphones and presses play on a WALKMAN CD PLAYER. Unsnaps Jack's MOLESKIN SKETCHBOOK. She moves a clipping from the newspaper rental section aside: The LUX SOHO APARTMENT AD.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Whoa.

Chloe pores over skilled pencil etchings: Intricate studies in hands. Lips. A woman's wrist with a STAR TATTOO. Chloe considers her own wrist, devoid of any tattoo. She mentally takes note.

She turns back to the notebook, finding the loose sheet of college rule paper. Unfolds it, revealing crayon-scrawled stick figures. One of the figures wears a blue stevedore's jacket with an upturned collar. A SEA CAPTAIN. Imperfect penmanship states *'When I grow up...'*

OFF CHLOE. Intrigued.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A large conference table spans the length of the glass enclosed room. Dead Bob's GATEWAY LAPTOP sits atop the table.

Intensely focused, Jack scrolls through computer code displayed on the laptop. Patrick paces the perimeter of the room. Both listen to Francine on the SPEAKER PHONE. A TWENTY-SOMETHING worker hovers over Jack's shoulder.

PATRICK

It's shit code, Francine. There's not enough double espresso in the world to power through spaghetti code central here in one day.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

I recognize - I recognize that this is an exceptionally shitty situation, Patrick. I get that. I do. But I don't give two shits. Don't sleep. Don't eat. Don't care. Get it done. Or else.

PATRICK

Or else what?

The speaker phone extension light goes dark. Patrick picks up the phone and presses the extension light.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello?

Patrick slams the phone into its cradle. Jack looks at Patrick expectantly. Patrick hurries the TWENTY-SOMETHING out of the room. An INTERN approaches with a cardboard box.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Give us a second.

Patrick rudely shuts the glass door in the INTERN'S face. The intern shoots a glare. Waits outside, cradling the cardboard box.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What a bunch of bullshit.

JACK

I don't know how we're going to pull this off.

PATRICK

Fuck it, man. I've been top salesman for this rinky dink outfit for eighteen consecutive months. I don't need this shit.

KNOCK KNOCK. The intern knocks on the glass.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(loudly)

One second.

JACK

What does that mean? You're going to quit?

PATRICK

Hell no. I'm not walking away from a ten percent commission. But Willis is sure as shit gonna raise some eyebrows at my expense report.

Jack makes a face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Come on. How bad is it?

JACK

From what I can tell Bob wrote a migration that adds two digits for the century, but it looks like he also applied a repartitioning to three digit years. Doesn't make any sense. I think I've got that part working now, but the system patch is a hot mess.

KNOCK KNOCK.

PATRICK

One Second!

JACK

I don't know what to make of Bob's comments. There's some pretty standard stuff. Explanations about what a snippet of code is expected to do. But then there are some really crazy things.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

(reading)

*There is no choice. No free will.
It's all a facade. It doesn't matter.
We're just hamsters on a wheel.*

PATRICK

Great. So on top of dealing with
Captain Douchebag's criminal
incompetence we have to wade through
his fucking existential crisis.
Fucking Bob.

JACK

Maybe he had a stroke.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.

PATRICK

Jesus Christ! WHAT?

Patrick swings the door open. The intern steps into the room
with the box.

INTERN

I'm sorry. But I really need one of
you to sign for this.

Patrick takes the pen. Reviews the clipboard.

PATRICK

What is it?

The intern removes a plastic baggie with a wallet, keys, and
glasses from his pocket. Places them on top of the box.

INTERN

Your co-worker.

Patrick slaps the pen down on the clipboard, stepping back
from the box. He thrusts the clipboard toward Jack.

PATRICK

Jack. You sign.

OFF JACK. Surprised.

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

BOB'S BOX of cremains sits on the bar top. Jack turns the
plastic baggie over in his hands, contemplating Bob's glasses.
Patrick chews on ice from his scotch, preoccupied with the
lobby door.

JACK
What do we do with him?

PATRICK
Fuck if I know.

JACK
They said family was going to pick him up, but never showed. I don't know. Who would know?

PATRICK
HR could check his beneficiaries. He talked about this kid in Minnesota once. Showed me a picture.
(beat)
Fuckin' Jesus.

JACK
What?

PATRICK
The thought of Bob bumping uglies. Gonna take a real stiff drink to erase that.

Patrick spits chewed ice into his scotch glass. Jack shoots him a sideways look.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Barkeep.

Patrick pushes his glass toward the bar tender. He sizes up Jack's concern.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Fuck, man. What do you care? Bob was a weirdo. A whack-a-doo. Smelled like fucking moth balls. Remember how he refused to fly? Dip shit would pull all-nighters driving cross country to clients just to avoid the friendly skies. Drove that beat up piece of shit Buick with those - those tree hugger bumper stickers wallpapered across the back. Save the fucking whales and shit.

JACK
He was eccentric.

PATRICK
He was a freak show.
(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(beat)

You know it's pretty gross sitting
him up on the bar like that. Fucking
unsanitary.

Jack frowns. Moves the box to the seat beside him. He turns
to the bar tender.

JACK

Do you sell cigarettes?

The bar tender nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

Lights please.

PATRICK

What are you doing?

JACK

Putting a nail in my coffin.

PATRICK

Jesus Christ, Jack. Don't start
smoking. I couldn't handle it.

Jack does a slow burn at Patrick.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What?

JACK

I've never seen you display one iota
of concern about another living thing.

PATRICK

What? Hell no. If you have one I'm
gonna want one and I'm not supposed
to when I'm wearing this damn patch.

Patrick flashes a nicotine patch on his upper arm.

JACK

Jesus, Patrick.

Repeated FLICKS OF A LIGHTER bridge to...

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Jack attempts to light a cigarette. He adjusts the lighter
mixture. WOOSH! A brilliant stream of flame erupts in front
of him. He jumps back a bit, smacking at his eye brows.

Chloe extends a lighter with a more reasonable flame. Jack leans into the flame. Inhales, stifling a cough. Nods his thanks. Chloe lights her own. They lean against a wall facing an expansive blacktop parking lot.

BOB'S BOX sits on the salt-crusted sidewalk beside Jack. The plastic baggie with Bob's glasses, wallet, and keys rests on top. A BEAT. Then...

CHLOE

(in French/subtitles)

The night shimmered like a placid asphalt sea.

JACK

Excuse me?

CHLOE

I was just saying that it is pretty out tonight.

Chloe French inhales.

JACK

French?

Chloe nods. She eyes BOB'S BOX.

CHLOE

I'm double majoring in French Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Michigan.

JACK

Michigan. That's a long way from here.

CHLOE

Yeah...I'm here to uh - to help my Grandma. Water main broke and flooded her house. They have to gut it. Black mold. So I'm staying with her until the insurance check comes in.

JACK

That's horrible.

CHLOE

Eh. Way I see it everyone experiences equal measures of good and bad in their lives. Some get all of the good at once. Some get all the bad. But in the end it all evens out.

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)

(beat)

What about you? You a long way from home?

JACK

Not by choice.

CHLOE

Business?

Jack nods.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Let me guess. You are...

Chloe closes her eyes, scrunching her face as if trying to call upon some latent supernatural power. Her eyes suddenly pop open.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

...an underwater explorer!

Jack looks a bit rattled. Chloe laughs.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

What? I got it right?

JACK

No. Ha Ha. No. I mean, do I look like an underwater explorer?

CHLOE

You do kind of have this Jacques Cousteau thing going on.

JACK

No. No. I'm not an underwater explorer. But that is pretty amazing...

(beat/explaining)

Growing up I was pretty obsessed with Jacques Cousteau.

CHLOE

Pretty good. Huh? My friends say I have an uncanny knack for reading people.

JACK

Well. Truth be told. I may be the only thing that stands between the year 2000 and all out apocalypse.

Chloe smiles, intrigued.

CHLOE

Do tell.

JACK

I'm a computer analyst. I'm here to update computer systems for 'Petersen Power' and ensure they don't crash in the new year.

CHLOE

You believe all the hype? Planes falling out of the sky? Electrical grids melting down? The end of civilization as we know it?

Jack smiles.

JACK

Maybe.

CHLOE

There would be a kind of relief in that. You know?

JACK

What do you mean?

CHLOE

Like a big reset button. The opportunity to reinvent yourself. The world. I don't know - kind of appealing.

JACK

Certain disaster is appealing to you?

CHLOE

Not the disaster part. No. But the starting over part.

Jack considers this. She's got a point. Chloe eyes BOB'S BOX. The mood shifts.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Does that say Snyder Crematorium?

Jack drags on his cigarette. Solemnly considers the box.

JACK

Yeah. Cremains.

CHLOE

Wow. I'm sorry for your loss.

JACK

Thank you.

CHLOE

Who was it?

JACK

My co-worker. Rest his soul.

CHLOE

You must have been close.

JACK

Not really. He just. He doesn't have anyone else.

CHLOE

(serious)

No family?

JACK

No. I mean. I don't know. Bob pretty much kept to himself.

CHLOE

How did he...?

JACK

Karoshi. *Occupational sudden death.*

Chloe makes a 'what?' face.

JACK (CONT'D)

Heart attack. On the job.

Chloe takes a long drag off her cigarette. Exhales. Her eyes set.

CHLOE

Clearly he was a guy who didn't have his priorities straight.

JACK

What makes you say that?

CHLOE

No friends. No family. Sounds like he literally worked himself to death. And in the end what does he have to show for it? Just a co-worker guilted into handling his discarded remains.

The sound of a DIRT BIKE engine SPUTTERS in the distance.

JACK

I don't know. He seemed to enjoy his work.

CHLOE

He'd have to. Right? To throw away his life for it.

JACK

Maybe he needed the money.

CHLOE

For some frivolous goal like buying some fancy car or living in a luxury apartment in downtown Manhattan, right?

Jack seems rattled once again, the comments hitting close to home.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I bet he spent his life trying to make up for something.

(beat)

Whatever the case, seems like a pretty shitty existence. No offense. But hey. Yeah. Maybe you're right. I mean most people are getting sauced on egg nog with their friends this time of year, but here you are hundreds of miles from home, protecting the world from a computer bug. Guess that could be considered kind of heroic.

JACK

It pays.

The DIRT BIKE WHINES closer. Albert rides up, stopping across the parking lot. He REVS the engine LOUDLY. VROOM-VROOM-VROOM-VROOM. Chloe waves at him.

CHLOE

Well...I've gotta go. It's been a pleasure meeting you, uh -

JACK

Jack. Jack Farr.

Chloe shakes Jack's hand. Jack notices a STAR TATTOO on her wrist. (The wrist that was previously bare of any ink.) He seems startled.

CHLOE

Chloe Melville. Maybe I'll see you around.

JACK

Yeah. Maybe.

CHLOE

In the meantime, good luck saving the world.

(subtitles)

Bonne chance, Monsieur Jacques.

Chloe flicks her spent cigarette, hurrying across the parking lot.

A TAXI pulls up in front of the hotel entrance. RITA (43) steps out. Her low cut dress shows off her dual silicon investments. She's every bit a cougar, her movements dripping with sexuality.

Jack watches as she crosses into the hotel lobby and meets Patrick. The couple french kiss, groping each other in an overt public display of affection.

Jack makes a disgusted face.

ACROSS THE PARKING LOT

Chloe straddles the dirt bike, taking a battered football helmet from Albert. She secures the chin strap, throwing one last glance at Jack.

ALBERT

Is that him?

CHLOE

Yeah. That's him.

ALBERT

Why don't you...

CHLOE

Not now, Albert. Come on. Let's go.

VRRROOOM! VRRROOOM! VRRROOOM! And they are off.

Jack watches them speed off. He drags the cigarette down to a red hot cherry, burning his fingers.

JACK

Ow. Shit!

He tosses the cigarette away. Reflex. Then looks down at BOB'S BOX beside him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Well, Bob. Back to work.

OFF BOB'S BOX. The sound of a DOOR LOCK BRIDGES to...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jack enters the dark room. Flips the light switch. Nothing happens. He flips it again. Still nothing.

JACK
Jesus.

Jack navigates the darkness, hands trailing along the walls. And then...BANG! He hits his shin on the bed frame.

JACK (CONT'D)
Ow! Damn it!

He spins around reaching for his shin. Backpedals into the desk chair. Falls head over heels with a CRASH. Stillness. Then...

JACK (CONT'D)
GOD DAMN IT!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ON DESK. A light snaps to life. BOB'S BOX is set down.

Jack removes his laptop from its satchel, opens the lid, and powers it up. He pulls on a pair of WALKMAN CD headphones and presses play, waiting for his computer to boot up.

The synth progression of an 80's ALTERNATIVE BAND thunders to life...

Jack's eyes stray across the desktop, settling on his MOLESKIN NOTEBOOK. He opens it, revealing a clipping from the newspaper rental section, the AD FOR THE LUX SOHO APARTMENT. He moves the ad aside and flips through his sketches.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
The evening's interlude, however
brief, had sparked a long forgotten
feeling in the pit of Jack's stomach.

Jack stops on a pencil-sketched collage: the study of a young woman. Lips. Eyes. Wrist with a STAR TATTOO.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
The memory of an old friend he had
never met.

ON JACK'S EYES: Contemplating the sketch.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT/YESTERDAY - NIGHT

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: Molly's lips. Sleeping eyes. Wrist limp against her pillow. Images reminiscent of Jack's sketches.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 He recalled images sketched from
 what he romanticized as 'future
 memories'. Disassembled puzzled pieces
 hinting at the whole of a person...

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Jack traces the image of the tattooed wrist with a pencil.

ON JACK'S EYES: Contemplating the sketch.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT/EARLIER - NIGHT

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: Chloe's mouth, smiling. Chloe's eyes. Chloe's wrist with its star tattoo.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 Puzzle pieces that, once assembled
 would reveal his true soul mate. The
 love of his life.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A light brightens on Jack's face: the laptop's login screen displays. He longingly studies the images, as if pining for some lost love.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 But it had been a long time since
 he'd revisited those 'future
 memories'. A long time since he had
 taken the time to connect with his
 art.

Jack flips the notebook closed and pushes it away. He considers it for a long moment, then turns his attention to the laptop, logging in.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (in French/subtitles)
 And it suddenly occurred to Jack
 that all of the long nights, all of
 (MORE)

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 the compromise, all of the personal
 sacrifice hadn't been truly motivated
 by career ambition or financial
 stability.

Jack suddenly stops typing and sits up.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (in French/subtitles)
 They had been a distraction. A
 diversion to fill a life-sized hole.

OFF JACK. He faces the camera with a look of loss.

A MOBILE PHONE RINGS O.S.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ON LAPTOP MONITOR: A green status bar tagged with the word:
 COMPILING - 15% COMPLETE.

Jack's notebook flops open in an unexpected gust of wind.
 The LUX SOHO APARTMENT AD blows onto the floor, revealing a
 half-finished SKETCH OF CHLOE.

We follow the wind to its source: an opened sliding glass
 door. Jack stands opposite the door on the balcony.

EXT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM/BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Jack arches his back against the blowing snow. He smokes as
 he talks on his mobile phone. He's dressed for bed: boxer
 shorts and tee shirt covered by his thigh-length winter
 jacket. He traces a star on a snow capped balcony table with
 his lighter.

MOLLY (O.S.)
 (on phone)
 There's a ten PM. Or there is an
 eleven PM for two hundred dollars
 less.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Molly sits cross legged on a bar stool, reluctantly studying
 notes on a piece of paper: flight numbers and times.

MOLLY
 But that would make timing tight.
 And who knows if there would be a
 cab available so close to New Years.

No response.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Jack?

EXT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM/BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Jack exhales a cloud of smoke. His voice SHIVERS. WIND distorts his phone's mouthpiece.

JACK

Whatever one you think is best.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Molly tosses her pencil aside.

MOLLY

This is what you do, Jack. You talk me into doing something. And when I finally warm up to the idea, you leave it to me to sort out all the details.

(beat)

This is a bad idea.

EXT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM/BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Jack focuses.

JACK

Come on. It's a great idea.

MOLLY (O.S.)

(on phone)

You're not helping.

JACK

I am. I am helping. I'm sorry. I was distracted.

A gust of wind DISTORTS the phone's mouthpiece.

MOLLY (O.S.)

(on phone)

What are you doing? Are you outside?

JACK

Yeah. I'm just uh - I'm getting some fresh air.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Molly sits up. Her face sets.

MOLLY

You're smoking again. Aren't you.

EXT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM/BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Jack freezes for a moment. He takes one final long drag off his cigarette. Flicks it into the driving snow. The wind blows it back at him, landing in the gap between his coat and his neck.

JACK
No. I'm - Ow! Shit!

Jack quickly unzips his coat, brushing hot embers from his tee shirt.

MOLLY (O.S.)
(on phone)
What? Are you all right?

JACK
Yes fine. I'm fine.

Frustrated, Jack stomps on the cigarette.

Jack crunches through the snow, sliding open the door to his hotel room. He stomps his boots once inside, closing the door behind him.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack crosses to his laptop. He checks the progress bar and percentage complete - 25%.

MOLLY (O.S.)
(on phone)
I shouldn't come. We're just going to fight.

JACK
No. Molly. Please. I get the feeling that there has been this distance between us. And I really want us to be together for the New Year. It's an opportunity for a new start. A clean slate.

INT. MANHATTAN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Molly studies a picture of Jack and Molly pinned to a bulletin board. The couple beam with happiness. Multi-colored hot air balloons lift off from the ground behind them.

Molly relents.

MOLLY
Okay. I'll be on the ten o'clock.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The computer's green glow brightens in Jack's face. The computer screen flashes another percent complete - 26%.

JACK
It'll be fun, Molly.

MOLLY (O.S.)
(on phone)
I've got to get some sleep, Jack.

JACK
Okay. Good night.

Jack hangs up. He opens his MOLESKIN NOTEBOOK. Flips through the pages to the half-completed sketch of Chloe. He pores over the drawing for a moment, then continues flipping as if in search of something. Something he cannot find.

With each turn of a page, Jack becomes increasingly concerned, frantically flipping through the pages in search of his CHILDHOOD CRAYON SKETCH.

He spreads the notebook cover wide open, bouncing it from the spine as if the college rule might be somehow hidden inside.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: He quickly searches under the desk. Checks the trash bin. Lifts the mattress. Scours the nightstand drawers. The floor of the closet. The bathroom.

OFF JACK. Panicked.

BOOM! The sound of FIRECRACKERS BRIDGE to...

EXT. UNFINISHED HOME - NIGHT

B-BOOM! BLUE GREEN FIREWORKS brighten the night sky, casting shadows that lengthen as the sparkles descend. B-BOOM! REDS AND BLUES strobe, catching the edges of a half-constructed home's wooden frame.

Chloe sits atop a snow mound in the would be family room. Despite the celestial showcase she focuses on a singular piece of college rule paper.

ON CHILDHOOD CRAYON SKETCH: The now familiar crayon sketch of a Sea Captain. Multi-colored light splashes across the paper from the fireworks above.

Albert stands transfixed with the light show, a SPARKLER in hand. He lights a series of fireworks propped up against a stack of snow-covered lumber, then playfully jumps back as they rocket skyward through the rafters. WHIZ. B-BOOM! BOOM!

B-B-BOOM!

EXT. UNFINISHED SUBDIVISION - CONTINUOUS

The distant fireworks illuminate the silhouettes of unfinished homes and slumbering construction equipment. Pops of RAINBOW COLORED LIGHT in the otherwise tranquil rural night.

EXT. UNFINISHED HOME - NIGHT

GOLD SPARKS rain down with a SIZZLE.

Shadows stretch across Albert's face. He looks at Chloe.

ALBERT'S POV: Chloe studies Jack's drawing between color bursts, paying little attention to the heavenly kaleidoscope.

Albert's grin fades with the firework's dying embers. He thinks for a moment, then lights a pair of cigarettes with the sparkler, crunching across the snow toward Chloe.

ALBERT

Pretty awesome, huh?

CHLOE

Yeah, man. Really cool. Reminds me of New Years as a kid.

Albert hands Chloe a cigarette. She takes the cigarette, black polished finger nails poking from her fingerless gloves.

ALBERT

That was just a little taste of what's in store for us tomorrow night.

Albert slumps to a seat beside Chloe, stabbing the snow between them with the sparkler.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

They're super dangerous. I knew this guy, friend of mine in high school, who blew his big toe off with one of these babies. They tried to reattach it, but there was really nothing left. Just a little burnt stub and a piece of toe nail.

(beat)

You're supposed to have a special license to buy. But you know, my cousin knows a guy who knows a guy.

Chloe folds up Jack's drawing and places it in her pocket.

CHLOE

(distant)

There's always a guy who knows a
guy.

ALBERT

What's that?

CHLOE

For my book. Research.

ALBERT

And by research you mean something
you stole from that guy's room?

CHLOE

Stole has a such a derogatory tone
to it, Albert. Borrowed. I borrowed
this little artifact to further my
tireless exploration of the human
experience.

ALBERT

The human experience.

CHLOE

That's right. The meaning of life
and all that.

ALBERT

And so the ends justifies the means.

CHLOE

Something like that.

ALBERT

Fuck, man. You know what Harvey would
do if he found out that Nadja and I
had been letting you snoop around in
people's rooms?

CHLOE

I don't know...

Chloe mimics slitting her throat. She makes a juicy sound.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

...Maybe?

ALBERT

What are you going to do about him?

The mood shifts. Chloe takes a long drag off her cigarette.

CHLOE

I don't know yet. I need a little more time.

Chloe stands, brushing the snow from the seat of her jeans.

ALBERT

How much time you gonna take?

CHLOE

I feel like this is a chance to get to know him. You know? Like maybe by understanding Jack I'll get a better understanding of his motivations.

ALBERT

Whatever you do, count me out.

Chloe recovers her good humor.

CHLOE

What. Where's your sense of adventure?

ALBERT

I can't afford to move back into my mom's garage, Chloe.

CHLOE

Harvey's never going to find out.

ALBERT

You know what convincing it took for me to even get this job? I had to forge a letter of recommendation. I had to pay my uncle off to be a reference.

Chloe drops to her knees before Albert, clasping her hands in mock prayer. She really overdoes it, making Albert smile.

CHLOE

Please. Please, please, please, Sir Albert. Won't you help a poor maiden in distress?

ALBERT

Stop groveling.

Albert pulls her to her feet.

CHLOE

That's the spirit.

Chloe kisses Albert on the cheek. He smiles sheepishly.

DING. The hotel DESK BELL DINGS bridging to...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

ON BELL: DING DING DING.

Jack rings the bell, craning his neck to see over the counter into the back office. The NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN who spied on Chloe and Albert sips a cocktail in the adjacent bar. She 'people watches' like a cat watching birds, drawn to Jack's display of desperation.

HARVEY (52) steps out of the back office, slight paunch tarnishing his otherwise athletic frame.

HARVEY

Help you?

JACK

There's something missing from my room. An important piece of paper. And I - I don't know if the cleaning person threw it out. If she mistook it for trash or -
(beat)
I'd really like to check your garbage.

HARVEY

Okay. Um. What kind of piece of paper?

JACK

It was a - uh - a drawing. A drawing in crayon.

HARVEY

Oh. Something your kids drew for you. Little note or something?

JACK

Sure. Yeah. Just - can I check your trash? Where would that be? Your garbage bins or whatever.

Harvey makes a face.

OFF JACK: Desperate.

INT. GARBAGE DUMPSTER - MOMENTS LATER

DARKNESS. The dumpster's doors SQUEAL open, revealing Harvey and Jack. Harvey holds a handkerchief over his nose.

HARVEY

Here you go.

EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Jack steps back, overwhelmed by the smell.

HARVEY

Just make sure you clean up after
yourself.

Jack reluctantly approaches the dumpster. He pulls his shirt up over his nose, a futile attempt to bear the stench.

INT. GARBAGE DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack scans the garbage heap. He rolls his sleeves up and carefully frees a plastic bag from the refuse. He dumps the bag's contents, then slips it around his hand, forming a makeshift glove. He proceeds to pick through the mounds of tissues, cardboard boxes, food waste, and random filth.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The DIRT BIKE WHINES down the two lane black top.

Chloe holds tightly onto Albert's waist, adjusting the battle worn football helmet, too big for her head. Albert smiles as she holds him close. Chloe smiles back. She raises her chin into the chill winter wind and closes her eyes, enjoying the moment.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Albert pulls up outside the hotel, passing the garbage dumpsters.

CHLOE'S POV: Jack picks through the dumpster, transferring waste onto a shin-high pile on the salt-stained asphalt.

CHLOE

(over engine)

Hey stop.

Albert stops the DIRT BIKE. Chloe removes the football helmet and hands it to him.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Looks like he could use a little
help.

ALBERT

Exploration of human experience...

CHLOE

And all that.

Chloe smiles.

ALBERT

Yeah, well. My shift starts in thirty minutes anyway. See you later? Maybe after you take a shower?

Chloe smiles.

CHLOE

In the words of the immortal Friedrich Nietzsche:

(in French/subtitles)

That which does not kill you makes you stronger.

ALBERT

What?

CHLOE

A little trash never hurt anyone.

Albert smiles. He REVS the DIRT BIKE and streaks off around the building. Chloe crosses toward Jack. She lights a cigarette, stepping up beside him as he carefully unfolds a wet piece of paper.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I see you're valiant quest to save the world knows no bounds.

JACK

Ha Ha. Funny.

Jack frowns at the unfolded wet paper. A discarded hotel bill. Not the treasure he seeks. He turns to Chloe.

CHLOE

But seriously. What are you doing?

JACK

I lost something really important to me.

Chloe pokes at the pile of trash with her boot.

CHLOE

You want help?

JACK

You want to help me. With this.

CHLOE

Look. It's not the most appealing prospect. So I probably won't ask twice.

JACK

Be my guest.

Chloe takes off her jacket. Rolls up her sleeves.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: A carnal landscape of sweat beaded bodies. The bed rocks. Sheets pulled taut. BREATHING CRESCENDOS. Patrick lies on top of Rita in a missionary position, tangled in sheet. Her hand descends his back to his butt. He suddenly stiffens, releasing a BELLOWING LAUGH.

PATRICK

WHOA! That's new!

RITA

You like it?

PATRICK

Uh huh, Pussy Cat.

Patrick buries his face in Rita's bosom. RITA MOANS.

RITA

Oh, Daddy Bear!

BOTH MOAN in a synchronized staccato crescendo to release.

RITA (CONT'D)

OH OH OH OHHHH!

PATRICK

OH OH OH OHHHHH!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rita and Patrick lie naked on their backs. They stare at the ceiling, glistening in the twilight. Rita grabs a pack of cigarettes from the nightstand. Packs it against her palm.

RITA

Grab me a light, Daddy Bear?

Patrick sits up, dangling his legs over the edge of the bed. He passes Rita a lighter from his nightstand.

PATRICK

You're really going to do this to me.

RITA

You're the one who went on that stupid patch. I told you you wouldn't last.

PATRICK

Thanks for the encouragement.

(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

(beat)
Aw, fuck it.

Patrick rips the patch off his shoulder and throws it onto the nightstand. He grabs the cigarette pack, pulling a cigarette out with his mouth. Rita lights her cigarette. Patrick takes the lighter, breathing in a long, 'cleansing' drag.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Jesus, that's almost as good as what you just did there.

RITA

Nice surprise. Huh?

PATRICK

Almost as nice as the surprise I have for you.

Rita sits up.

RITA

What? Tell me.

PATRICK

I went ahead and made arrangements for Haiti. Beach front villa, baby. Figure the commission's in the bag.

RITA

Oh, Daddy Bear!

PATRICK

I'll have you know I spared no expense, Pussy Cat. Private masseuse. Butler. Chauffeur. The real deal. We leave New Years Day.

(beat)
Surprise!

Rita climbs back on top of Patrick, kissing him wildly.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Patrick shuffles into the bathroom. Throws on the lights. He blinks against their brightness, drops his boxers, and sits down on the toilet. He dials his mobile phone as he lets off a HUGE FART. He puts the phone to his ear, PISSING into the toilet.

PATRICK

Ahhhhhhhh.

The MOBILE PHONE RINGS, bridging to...

EXT. HOTEL/GARBAGE DUMPSTER - NIGHT

Jack lies halfway inside the dumpster, waist and legs dangling over the outside as he reaches deep inside to pick the dredges. The MOBILE PHONE RINGS in his coat pocket.

INT. GARBAGE DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Jack calls back to Chloe.

JACK
Is that me?

EXT. HOTEL/GARBAGE DUMPSTER - CONTINUOUS

Chloe sees the phone in Jack's coat pocket.

CHLOE
Yup.

JACK
Can you check it?

Chloe removes the phone from Jack's pocket. The plastic baggie with Bob's wallet, car keys, and glasses falls onto the pavement.

ON PHONE'S LED: PATRICK

CHLOE
Says 'Patrick'.

JACK
Shit.

Jack pulls himself out of the dumpster. The phone stops ringing. He removes the plastic bag from his hand and takes the phone. Chloe picks up Bob's baggie.

JACK (CONT'D)
He's probably calling to check on me. I need to get back in there.
This is a lost cause.

Chloe looks around for something to wipe her hands on. She crosses to a curb, rubbing them in a snowbank. Jack crosses beside her, following suit.

Chloe sits on the curb, placing Bob's baggie on her thigh. She lights two cigarettes. Hands one to Jack. He obliges, taking a seat beside her.

CHLOE

It's probably in some really obvious place. And you just didn't see it.

JACK

No. I think it's gone.

Chloe reads Jack's despair.

CHLOE

What is it?

JACK

What is what?

CHLOE

The thing you're looking for. What is it?

JACK

Something I drew in third grade. Was part of this time capsule project where we mailed drawings of what we wanted to be when we grew up to our future selves. Got mine as I was finishing up college.

CHLOE

What was it? Your drawing?

JACK

Underwater explorer.

(beat)

I had set out to be cartoonist, but that wasn't practical. I ended up shifting to a computer science major my junior year. It's not that I regret not being some sea captain, but - the idea of the thing. My third grade self reminding my college graduate self of my hopes and dreams. I lost track of that part of me.

Chloe removes Bob's glasses from the baggie, turning them over in her hands.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sometimes I just - I wish something would happen to really shake things up. You know? For the universe to give me some undeniable sign of what I'm supposed to do.

CHLOE

Are you happy?

JACK
Is anyone really happy?

CHLOE
I am...I think.

JACK
I don't know. I honestly don't know.

CHLOE
Why don't we get a drink?

JACK
I've gotta get back to work.

CHLOE
Yeah, but maybe this is the universe
giving you some 'undeniable sign'.

Jack considers.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Come on, Jack. Live a little before
you end up with complete strangers
toting around your post-humous
personal effects.

She holds up Bob's baggie. Jack takes it, considering its contents. (The discerning viewer will notice the glasses missing.)

JACK
Okay. One drink on one condition.

CHLOE
What?

JACK
I get to wash my hands first.

Chloe smiles.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Jack and Chloe move through the hallway. There is a subtle tension between them. Like two magnets being drawn toward one another. Jack moves toward the men's room.

CHLOE
I'll meet you outside the bar. Okay?

JACK
Yeah. Okay.

Jack watches Chloe move toward the women's room. She pauses at the door and looks at Jack. Jack smiles. Chloe smiles back. Jack enters the men's room.

Chloe steps into the women's room, then back pedals into the hallway, checking to ensure that Jack has gone inside. Satisfied, she turns and runs toward the lobby, checking over her shoulder as she goes.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Albert hands a key card to an arriving guest.

ALBERT
Enjoy your stay.

Chloe hurries up to the counter.

CHLOE
Hey.

ALBERT
Jesus. You smell like shit.

CHLOE
Yeah yeah. Okay. Okay. I need your help with something.

INT. HOTEL/BATHROOM - NIGHT

ON SINK: Hands scrubbed.

Jack looks up at his reflection in the mirror.

JACK
What are you doing? I mean, what the hell are you doing?

Jack studies his face as if expecting to find an answer there. A brief moment. Then...

STRANGER (O.S.)
I'm uh - I'm pooping.

Jack turns to see feet beneath the closed stall door behind him.

STRANGER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What are YOU doing?

JACK
Uh. Sorry. I was uh -

Jack hurries out of the bathroom. The TOILET FLUSHES.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Patrick shuffles down the hallway in a robe and slippers, bare chested. He is furious, grumbling to himself.

PATRICK

(sotto)

Fucking kid. Irresponsible.

Patrick steps up to the elevator. Impatiently presses the button over and over again until: DING! The doors slide open.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ON LAPTOP: COMPILING - 98%. The percentage flips to 99%.

We hear a door unlock o.s. The room's lights flip on. The laptop lid is closed by someone o.s. The laptop is taken. The door opens o.s. The room goes dark.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Patrick steps off the elevator, making a beeline for Jack's room. Nadja wheels her cart down the hallway. Patrick passes. The two lock eyes for a moment.

Patrick steps up to Jack's door and KNOCKS.

PATRICK

Jack. Jack! Open up!

Nadja watches from the end of the hallway. The elevator DINGS. She wheels the cart onboard. Patrick relentlessly beats on the door.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Jack! Son of a bitch.

The elevator doors close, Nadja's eyes fixed on Patrick.

Patrick pulls the mobile phone from his robe pocket and dials it again. He paces in front of Jack's room as it rings.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

ON BAR NAPKIN: A rapid execution of pen strokes. The subtle contours of a female face emerge.

BAR TENDER

Get you something?

JACK

Yeah. Uh -

Jack fishes into his coat pocket. Makes a face. He places his mobile phone on the bar counter. Bob's baggie. Finally retrieves his wallet.

JACK (CONT'D)

Two coffees.

Jack hands his credit card over. Turns his attention back to his sketch.

ON MOBILE PHONE: The LCD lights up. 'Patrick'. But the phone is set to SILENT MODE, facing away from Jack on the counter.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Chloe paces with excitement. The elevator DINGS. Albert emerges with a large paper bag.

CHLOE

You got it?

ALBERT

You owe me one. Big time.

Chloe snatches the bag. Takes a peek inside. She smiles, holding the bag to her heart.

CHLOE

You're a peach.

Chloe makes a beeline for the bar.

INT. HOTEL BAR - CONTINUOUS

Chloe navigates the crowded bar, scanning the merriment for Jack. She spots him, hunched over the bar top. His peculiar posture peaks her curiosity.

ON JACK: He sketches, applying the finishing touches to his masterpiece. Chloe steps up beside him.

CHLOE

What's that?

Jack quickly hides the drawing under his arm.

JACK

Nothing. Just doodling.

Chloe sets the paper bag on the bar.

CHLOE

Doodling what?

Jack smiles.

CHLOE

I don't know.

JACK

Being an artist is a gamble, Chloe.
And my work - this corporate life.
It's a sure thing. I just -

Jack conjures Molly's words.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm really good at what I do. That
should be enough. Right?

CHLOE

So that's it. You just surrender.

JACK

I'm just being practical.

Chloe grabs Jack's hand.

CHLOE

Come on.

JACK

What are you doing?

CHLOE

Showing you the art of the
impractical.

Jack feigns reluctance, but he's into the moment. The
adventure of it all. He stands. Chloe escorts him to a small
dance floor at the rear of the bar.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Now. Wait here.

Jack stands in the middle of the empty dance floor, bathed
in multi-colored flashing lights. He shifts awkwardly as bar
patrons watch expectantly.

Chloe punches numbers into a JUKE BOX. She turns and smiles,
crossing to Jack. She stops inches from his face, beaming
with excitement.

JACK

What are you - ?

The lighting shifts. A MIRROR BALL casts a constellation of
sparkling dots across the couple. A SYNTHESIZER BLASTS from
speakers. It's the song from Jack's CD WALKMAN.

JACK (CONT'D)
I love this song.

CHLOE
I know.

Chloe leans in close to Jack's ear.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Now go with it.

She takes his hands, throwing him into a dramatic pose as...

A catchy synth intro, followed by a cascade of drums and bass. Chloe pirouettes, holding Jack's hand over her head. He melts, breaking into a smile.

The couple lock eyes, mirroring one another's movements.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
He admired her like a scientist might
admire a newly discovered element.
She was not subject to the same laws
as the world around her, her hair
and spirit dancing free of the physics
that governed the rest of his
universe.

With each DRUM BEAT, Chloe performs an expressive movement. A kick. A flourish of the arms. Jack gyrates with awkward moves. Chloe laughs. They circle one another navigating the tiny dance floor.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
They watched as the world around
them dissipated, surrendering to the
alchemy of the moment.

WE SPIN AROUND Jack and Chloe, as if caught in their orbit.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(in French/subtitles)
They were a force of nature. Nothing
could stop them. Like the turning of
the seasons. The ocean's tides. The
orbit of the moon. The -

CRASH! Jack slams into a bar table, sending the table crashing to the floor. Glass shatters. Drinks splash.

Jack regains his footing. Looks at his Bloody Mary stained shirt.

A PISSED OFF COUPLE glare from around the toppled table.

JACK

Uh. Sorry...

OFF JACK'S MOBILE PHONE: On the bar. LCD lit up. 'Patrick'.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Chloe runs out of the side entrance, pulling Jack by the hand. Once outside they stop, catching their breath.

Jack daubs at his shirt with a napkin. Chloe lights two cigarettes. Hands one to Jack. She cradles the paper bag in her arms.

CHLOE

Admit it. That was fun.

JACK

Ha. Yeah. Yeah. It was. Although I think I sprained my back.

Chloe laughs. She steps toward the adjacent field.

CHLOE

Come on. I want to show you something.

JACK

Yeah. Okay.

Chloe crosses the parking lot. Jack limps, keeping pace.

CHLOE

When I was a little girl, this time of year - New Years - was so exciting for me.

Chloe high steps through a snow bank. She gets stuck. Jack crawls over the snow bank and takes her hand, helping her out. She laughs.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

My mom had read this article about how the Chinese - how they had this tradition of setting off fireworks as a way of scaring off evil spirits. Putting all the bad stuff that happened in the year behind them.

Chloe slumps to a seat on the snowbank. The power line tower BUZZES ominously overhead. Jack slumps to a seat beside her. She removes a massive firework from the paper bag, hands it to Jack.

JACK
What's this?

CHLOE
We would write down all the bad stuff
that we wanted to forget. All the
stuff that went wrong. And we'd tie
it to a firework.

Chloe reaches into the bag, handing Jack a hotel notepad and
a pen.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
And we'd shoot it off, blowing the
shit out of all the year's mistakes.
A clean slate.
(beat)
So...

JACK
So what?

CHLOE
So write it down. What do you want
to forget? What do you want to wipe
clean?

JACK
Serious?

CHLOE
...As a heart attack.

Jack picks up the pen, contemplating. Chloe scrawls a message
on her own hotel notepad. Jack finishes. He watches Chloe,
silently admiring her.

JACK
Where is your mom now?

CHLOE
She's dead. Passed away three years
ago.

JACK
And your dad?

Chloe pauses a moment. Somber.

CHLOE
Same.

JACK
I'm sorry. Seems like they meant a
lot to you.

Chloe's eyes well a little.

CHLOE

They did.

Jack squeezes Chloe's hand. Chloe stifles her tears and grins through it. She continues to write her note.

JACK

You know. This - tonight. This has been pretty amazing.

CHLOE

Yeah?

Chloe smiles, considering.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Yeah. It has.

Chloe and Jack exchange looks. A BEAT.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Okay. Now fold it.

Jack folds the piece of paper, handing it back to Chloe.

Chloe folds her own piece of paper and wraps both around the firework, snapping them into place with a rubber band.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

There. Now we just wait until tomorrow night and we nuke all the bullshit. All of it. Boom! Gone. We start over.

Chloe hands Jack the firework. He takes it. Their hands touch. Chloe doesn't let go. They look deep into one another's eyes.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

You know. You're pretty cool.

JACK

So are you.

The couple looks as if they might kiss. But then...

PATRICK (O.S.)

Jack! Jack! God Damn It!

Jack spins, peeking over the snow drift.

JACK

Oh shit.

JACK'S POV: Patrick scans the parking lot, still dressed in his robe and slippers. He's furious. Albert stands beside him, searching the horizon.

PATRICK
God Damn It, Jack!

Jack and Chloe duck back behind the snowdrift.

JACK
Shit. I've got to go.

Jack pulls the mobile phone from his coat pocket.

ON PHONE: Twenty One Missed Calls.

JACK (CONT'D)
Holy shit. I have twenty one missed calls!
(beat)
My phone is silenced. Did you silence my phone?

CHLOE
(sheepishly)
Yeah.

JACK
Jesus Christ, Chloe. What the hell?

Jack jumps up, brushing the snow off the seat of his pants. He climbs the snow drift, waving at Patrick.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm over here!

Chloe scrambles up the snowdrift after him.

CHLOE
Come on, Jack. Don't be mad.

JACK
This was a bad idea. I've got a lot riding on this job. A lot. And I'm here - what? Hanging out in a snow drift?

CHLOE
Jack. Come on.

JACK
I'll see you later, Chloe.

Patrick storms toward Jack. Jack breaks into a jog.

PATRICK
What the fuck, Jack?

Chloe steps up beside Albert.

ALBERT
Did you tell him?

CHLOE
No. Not yet.

Chloe thumbs the notes attached to the firework in her hands.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

DING. The elevator doors slide open. Jack steps out, Patrick in tow.

JACK
The code is compiling, Patrick.

PATRICK
How do you know it didn't error out?

JACK
If it did, I'll fix it.

PATRICK
Realize that I've got ten thousand dollars in commission riding on this job, Jack-Oh. That's a round trip luxury vacation for two to a remote island location carefully selected for seven days of unadulterated sex and debauchery.

JACK
I've got my own reasons, Patrick.

Jack hurries to his door. Scans his card key. CLICK CLICK.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN ON Jack and Patrick. Jack flips the light switch.

JACK
It's probably finished by now.

Jack crosses to the desk. The laptop is gone.

JACK (CONT'D)
What the - ?

PATRICK
What. Where is your laptop?

JACK
It was right here. Right -

Jack ducks under the desk. He checks under the bed.

PATRICK
Where The Fuck Is Your Computer,
Jack!

OFF JACK. Panicked.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Jack and Patrick rush across the lobby. Jack smacks the bell.
DING DING DING. Albert hurries over. He is shaky. Nervous.

ALBERT
Can I help you?

JACK
Someone stole my laptop. From my
room. Someone got in and stole my
laptop.

ALBERT
Are you sure?

PATRICK
Yes, Brady Bunch. We're fucking sure.
We need to see the manager.

ALBERT
Well - uh - he's gone for the night.

Patrick grabs the desk phone and slams it down in front of
Albert.

PATRICK
Then wake him up.

EXT. HOTEL - DAWN

Pre-dawn blues brighten a canvas of clear skies. The hotel
bustles with early morning activity. Departing guests scrape
windshields. Trucks unload deliveries. The power line tower
BUZZES ominously.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAWN

Jack nurses coffee at a table. Patrick paces, watching the
parking lot through steamy windows. Early risers mill about
the lobby as breakfast-goers clink silverware in the hotel
bar.

PATRICK

Maybe we can start over. You did it once. We do it again.

JACK

There's not enough time. We get my laptop back or we're screwed.

PATRICK

God damn it. Where the hell is this guy?

Patrick's mobile phone RINGS in his robe pocket. He checks it.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Oh Christ.

JACK

Willis?

Patrick nods. He collects himself, putting on a confident radio voice.

PATRICK

Francine. How you doing?

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAWN

Francine navigates a zombie-like throng of early morning travelers, phone cradled on her shoulder. She's a woman on a mission.

FRANCINE

You tell me. Where are we? Is the code done? Are we ready?

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Jack watches Patrick expectantly.

PATRICK

Of course we're ready.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

Good. Good. I want the two of you at the office in an hour. I want this done and dusted before noon. You got me? No room for failure here, Patrick. I've got a lot riding on this job.

PATRICK

An hour. Got it.

Jack shakes his head mouthing the words 'There's No Way'.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Francine cuts off a woman pushing a baby stroller as she hops onto a down escalator. She elbows her way down the escalator.

FRANCINE
How is Jack holding up?

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Patrick looks Jack over. Hair tousled. Eyes droopy with sleepless nights. Shirt stained with Bloody Mary mix. He looks miserable.

PATRICK
Great. He's doing great.

FRANCINE (O.S.)
(on phone)
Let me speak to him.

Patrick covers the mouthpiece.

PATRICK
She wants to speak to you.

Patrick holds out the phone, then pulls it back.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
(sotto)
Don't let on.

JACK
(sotto)
We should just tell her.

PATRICK
(sotto)
Don't let on, Jack.

JACK
(sotto)
There's no way we're going to -

FRANCINE (O.S.)
(on phone)
Patrick?

Patrick puts the phone to his ear.

PATRICK
Yeah. Yeah. Here he is, Francine.

Jack takes the phone.

JACK
Hello, Ms. Willis.

FRANCINE (O.S.)
(on phone)
Jack. You sound like shit.

JACK
It's been a long night.

FRANCINE (O.S.)
(on phone)
I'm sure it has. But no pain - no
gain. No pain - no gain, Jack. Words
to live by. Everything is ready?

Jack looks at Patrick. Patrick mouths 'Don't Tell Her'.

JACK
Everything is ready.

FRANCINE
(on phone)
Good. Good. But we're not out of the
woods yet. Not by a long shot. We've
got a long day ahead of us - Don't
Fuck it Up.

Jack listens as the line goes dead. He hands the phone back
to Patrick.

PATRICK
What did she say?

JACK
We're screwed.

Harvey steps through the revolving door and crosses behind
the counter. The NOSEY MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN stands at the counter
with her luggage, checking out.

Jack and Patrick hurry to the counter. Albert gestures to
Patrick and Jack.

HARVEY
What's this now?

JACK
Someone broke into my room last night
and stole my laptop.

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN
Someone broke into your room?

HARVEY

You think it was the staff?

JACK

There was no sign of forced entry.

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

It was that foreigner. That housekeeper. The little old lady with the accent.

HARVEY

Ma'am?

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

I saw her messing around in a room yesterday. She looked guilty. Very suspicious. It had to have been her.

JACK

What room?

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Second floor. 215?

JACK

That's my room.

PATRICK

Little old lady? About yay high? I saw her last night. On your floor.

Jack and Patrick look at Harvey.

ALBERT

Nadja would never steal a thing.

HARVEY

Guess we're gonna have to give her a call.

PATRICK

Damn right.

Harvey crosses to a BLACK BINDER. Flips it open, searching for Nadja's contact information. He picks up the phone and dials.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What kind of a fucking establishment are you running here?

HARVEY

We'll get this sorted out. Just - please. Lower your voice.

PATRICK
 (louder)
 The Hell I will!

The clinking silverware stops, hotel patrons turning to the commotion. Harvey makes a face. He listens to the phone ring. A BEAT. Then shakes his head side to side.

HARVEY
 No answer.

PATRICK
 Give me the phone! I'm calling the
 police!

Harvey places the phone on the counter. Patrick snatches the receiver, dialing 911.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 I want to report a theft.

The Nosey Middle-Aged Woman crowds Jack. Patrick continues on the phone in the b.g.

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN
 I knew there was something suspicious
 about her. She had this look.

PATRICK
 (on phone)
 Yeah. That dump on the main highway.
 (beat)
 Great. We'll be waiting in the lobby.

Patrick slams the phone back into its cradle, glaring at Harvey.

HARVEY
 I'm very sorry, sir. We'll keep trying
 the housekeeper. I'm sure this is
 all just a misunderstanding.

PATRICK
 I'm about to misunderstand a fist
 into your face, pal.

HARVEY
 I understand that you're upset. But
 please - There has to be something
 that I can do for you.

Patrick melts a little.

PATRICK
You got any more of those cookies?

Jack shoots Patrick daggers.

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Jack smokes a cigarette. He paces, scanning the highway for any sign of the police.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
With each passing moment, Jack found his anger building. The night's events yet another in a long line of interminable missteps and regrets.

Jack's bulky mobile RINGS.

JACK
Hello?

LUX SALES REP (O.S.)
(on phone)
Hello. Mr. Farr? This is Janice from Lux Soho. I wanted to call and let you know that your application has been approved.

Jack is disoriented.

JACK
Oh. Wow. That's great, Janice. Thank you.

LUX SALES REP (O.S.)
(on phone)
Now - I've sent you the lease. I'll just need you to fill that out and return it. We look forward to seeing you soon.

JACK
Thanks.

Jack pockets the phone. He check his watch, once again scanning the highway for any sign of the police.

EXT. CHLOE'S HOTEL ROOM/BALCONY - DAY

Chloe sits on a patio chair, puffing on the TOBACCO PIPE. She admires Jack's polaroid photo.

Chloe picks up the firework, unwrapping the notes. She looks surprised.

ON JACK'S HANDWRITING: '*No more regrets.*' Chloe moves the note aside, revealing her own note in French (subtitles). '*No regrets.*'

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
Jack had been swindled. Duped. Taken
advantage of and stolen from.

OFF CHLOE. Searching her feelings.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Jack's eyes set. He takes one last long drag off his cigarette and flicks it, pushing through the revolving doors with a renewed sense of purpose.

CHLOE
(in French/subtitles)
...And he had had enough.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

DING! WE PUSH IN ON THE ELEVATOR. Patrick hurries off, dressed in a Hawaiian shirt, shorts, and a winter jacket.

WE PUSH IN ON JACK. He meets Patrick mid-lobby.

JACK
What the hell are you wearing?

PATRICK
It's all I packed besides the work
clothes. Haiti.
(beat)
Cops here yet?

JACK
No. And we're running out of time.
You got the car keys?

PATRICK
Yeah. Right here. Why?

JACK
Just stay here and be ready to roll.

PATRICK
Wait. What are you doing?

Jack surveys the lobby. Albert vacuums. The Nosey Middle Aged Woman sits on a couch with her luggage awaiting a cab.

Jack hurries across the lobby to the counter. He cranes his neck, checking for any sign of Harvey in the back office, then awkwardly turns in his spot, trying to look inconspicuous. He surveys the lobby as he turns, then quickly races around the counter.

ON BLACK BINDER: Jack swipes it.

ON NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN.

NOSEY MIDDLE AGED WOMAN

Hey!

Harvey hurries from the back, cutting Jack off from the counter's exit. Jack looks back and forth for a way out.

HARVEY

What are you doing?

Jack leaps over the counter. Catches his leg. He smacks his face on the countertop, turning his movement into an awkward roll. He unceremoniously flops onto the lobby floor.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Albert! ALBERT!

Jack quickly scurries to his feet. Checks his nose. Bleeding. He makes a mad dash for the hallway, Patrick follows.

Albert stops vacuuming. Looks up, dumbfounded.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Stop him!

Jack hurries past. Albert steps in front of Patrick.

ALBERT

Whoa, man. Wait!

Patrick barrels into Albert, sending both men and the vacuum tumbling to the ground. Patrick scurries to his feet, untangles himself from the vacuum's cord, and hurries after Jack. Harvey dashes after the fugitives.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

Jack flies through a door making a mad dash toward the SALT-STAINED RENTAL SEDAN. Patrick races after him.

Jack hurries up beside the sedan.

JACK

Come on! Let's go!

Patrick slides the keys into the door lock. Opens it. Flips the lock switch. Jack jumps in.

INT. RENTAL SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Patrick fumbles the keys onto the floor boards.

PATRICK

Shit.

Jack cranes his neck to see...

JACK'S POV: Harvey runs from the hotel, on a beeline for the car.

JACK

Come on! COME ON!

Patrick starts the car. Throws it into reverse.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The SEDAN speeds backwards, RUNNING STRAIGHT INTO ANOTHER CAR THAT IS BACKING OUT. CRUNCH!

INT. RENTAL SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Patrick are thrown forward by the impact. Air bags deploy. Patrick checks the rearview.

PATRICK

Shit, Jack!

JACK'S POV: Harvey is cut off by the wrecked car, smoke pouring from its hood.

Jack's eyes dart back and forth. What now? He pulls the plastic baggie with Bob's wallet and car keys from his jacket pocket.

JACK

Come on! Let's go!

PATRICK

What?

Jack flashes Bob's car keys.

JACK

Bob's car!

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jack races across the parking lot, slipping on the ice as he goes. Patrick hurries after him.

PUSH IN ON PEA GREEN BUICK. The worn bumper sticker reads:
'Save the Whales'.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

ON LOCK: The lock pops up. The door yanked open.

Jack quickly hops into the driver's seat. Turns the ignition. The engine COUGHS like an old man. Patrick tries the passenger door. Locked.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Patrick frantically pulls at the door handle. He looks across the parking lot at...

HARVEY. He rounds the wrecked car, racing toward Patrick.

PATRICK
Jack! Open the door!

The BUICK's ENGINE catches. VROOOOOM!

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack throws the car into gear as his fingers find the door lock button. He presses it.

ON LOCK: It stays down. Patrick frantically knocks on the window outside.

PATRICK
Jack!

The car lunges backwards. Wrong gear. Jack hits the brake. throws the car into drive. VROOOM! He leans across the front seat, pulling up the passenger door lock. Patrick hops in.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The BUICK lunges forward as Harvey closes in, nearly catching it.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

BOB'S BUICK careens down the black top, wobbling at breakneck speed. The car speeds past, engine belt WHINING.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack white knuckles the steering wheel. Checks the rearview for any pursuit. Patrick turns, looking out the rear windshield.

PATRICK
Okay. Okay. You can slow down.

Patrick turns to see a POLICE CRUISER approaching from the opposite direction.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Slow down. SLOW DOWN!

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jack hits the brakes. The Buick skids a bit. The Police Cruiser passes, none the wiser.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack checks the rearview. Patrick glares at him. Incredulous.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
A striking change had come over Jack.

PATRICK
What the fuck was that?

JACK
We're supposed to be at the office in an hour, Patrick.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
With a renewed sense of purpose, he set out to pursue his dreams...

PATRICK
Sure. But Jesus Christ, Jack.

JACK
I'm tired of being pushed around. We're getting my computer back. We're running the migration. And I'm getting my damn promotion.

Patrick sits back, admiring the change coming over Jack. Almost proud of him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Find the address. Her name is Nadja.

Patrick smiles, flipping open the black binder.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(French/subtitles)
Unwavering in his conviction.
(MORE)

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Jack had at long last embraced his
 one true calling...

OFF JACK. Focused. Intense.

INT. CHLOE'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Black painted nails dance across the REMINGTON'S KEYS. Letters
 hammer onto manilla paper, FRENCH WORDS appearing in time to
 the fingers' rhythms.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 Jack had decided to abandon misguided
 objectives of financial stability
 and corporate ambition. To abolish
 dereliction of his one true mission
 in life....

REVEAL: CHLOE lies in the bathtub, hammering away at the
 Remington positioned on her bath caddy.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON ALBERT'S HAND. Frantically knocking on the door.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 Jack's decision to quit his job was
 a chiding rebuke of his former self,
 his encounter with Chloe a timely
 reminder of -

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

INT. CHLOE'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chloe makes a face at the interruption. Fingers pause over
 the keys. She tries to focus.

CHLOE
 (in French/subtitles)
 Reminder of -

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Albert frantically knocks on the door. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
 KNOCK! He looks up and down the hallway, checking for any
 onlookers. Then pulls a key card from his pocket. Unlocks
 the door.

INT. CHLOE'S HOTEL ROOM/BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chloe sits up at the sound of the door lock. A KNOCK on the bathroom door.

ALBERT (O.S.)

Chloe?

Chloe jumps, knee hitting the caddy. The typewriter SPLASHES into the water.

CHLOE

(in French/subtitles)

Shit! Shit-Shit-Shit!

ALBERT (O.S.)

Chloe?

Chloe heaves the suds-covered typewriter out of the tub, placing it on the bath mat. She gets out, suds covered, and pulls on her robe. Pissed as hell. She swings the door open.

CHLOE

Albert! What are you doing?

ALBERT

I'm sorry! I'm sorry! They think Nadja stole Jack's computer. They're on their way over there right now.

CHLOE

Nadja? Why?

ALBERT

205 saw Nadja in his room 'acting suspicious'. You know. That nosey lady?

Chloe slumps to a seat on the toilet, disappointed. She suddenly rips the water sprayed manilla paper from her typewriter, wads it into a ball, and tosses it into the trash.

CHLOE

I need to borrow your bike.

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

EXT. SUBDIVISION - DAY

BOB'S BUICK slowly descends a suburban street lined with rows of ranch style homes. The neighborhood betrays a taste of lower class kitsch. Pink flamingos. Plaster deer lawn ornaments.

PATRICK
Two twenty three. Two twenty five...

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Patrick's breath fogs the window. He wipes it clean.

PATRICK
Two twenty seven! There it is.

Jack hunches down in his seat for a better look.

JACK'S POV: A dingy white ranch. Christmas lights line the gutters. A discarded Christmas tree sits next to the driveway.

EXT. SUBDIVISION - CONTINUOUS

The BUICK slows with a glow of red taillights and a SQUEAK of brakes. Reverse lights shine for a brief moment as the transmission shifts to park. The engine SPUTTERS to a stop.

It's quiet.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Patrick hunch down, scanning the front of the home for a better look.

JACK
You think there's anyone home?

PATRICK
Car in the driveway.

JACK'S POV: There is a well-kept PLYMOUTH HORIZON HATCHBACK in the driveway. Curtains conceal the home's windows.

Patrick's MOBILE RINGS. He checks it.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Willis.

JACK
Don't answer it.

Patrick silences the phone and tosses it onto the dash.

PATRICK
So what's the plan?

JACK
We march right up there. Knock on the door. And we demand my laptop back.

PATRICK

Jesus.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - DAY

Jack and Patrick open the doors to the Buick in a synchronized exit, closing the doors with perfect timing.

FAINT MUSIC EMANATES from the home. Something EASTERN EUROPEAN.

The men crunch through the snow covered lawn, ascending the front step to the door. The MUSIC is a bit louder now. Jack and Patrick exchange looks. A BEAT. Jack presses the door bell.

It doesn't work. Jack knocks on the door instead. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

INT. NADJA'S HOME/BATHROOM - DAY

MUFFLED EASTERN EUROPEAN ROCK MUSIC emanates from somewhere in the home. ROMAN (54) sits on the toilet reading a foreign language news paper. He looks like a circus strongman, white sleeveless tank top displaying muscular tattoo-covered arms.

Roman pauses, canting his ear toward FAINT KNOCKING.

ROMAN

Nadja? Nadja....

He makes a face. Sets the newspaper on the floor. Reaches for the toilet paper.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - DAY

Jack and Patrick exchange looks.

PATRICK

Maybe nobody's home.

JACK

We're not leaving here without my laptop, Patrick.

PATRICK

So what are you going to do. Break in?

Jack throws Patrick a serious look.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Oh Christ.

JACK
Watch for any cars.

Jack steps into the holiday ornament cluttered flower bed, sneaking around the perimeter of the home. He rounds a corner to the house, Patrick checking up and down the street for any onlookers, close behind.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jack rounds the side of the home. He looks through a window.

JACK'S POV: The kitchen. A cat walks across the kitchen table. It turns and looks at Jack. MEOWS.

Jack moves on.

THROUGH KITCHEN WINDOW: Nadja stands up from checking the oven, coming into view. She is oblivious to her stalker.

ON JACK: He sneaks along the home's perimeter to another window. The MUSIC is a bit louder now.

JACK'S POV: Through opened venetian blinds. Posters of an EASTERN EUROPEAN ROCK BAND line the walls. A BOOMBOX sits atop a stack of milk crates. Across the room. On the desk - A CLOSED GATEWAY LAPTOP.

JACK
I see it. It's there. She stole it.

Patrick jockeys for a good look.

PATRICK
You sure that's it?

JACK
Positive. Come on. Let's try this window.

PATRICK
I'm not going in there.

JACK
I'll go in there. Let's just - we need to open the window.

Jack and Patrick check for any onlookers. Then try to lift the window. No luck. Patrick makes a face. Taps Jack on the shoulder, pointing to a clasped window lock.

PATRICK
It's locked.

JACK

Shit.

Jack scans the flower bed.

PATRICK

What are you doing?

Jack rounds the corner of the house to the front lawn. He picks up a small PLASTER DEER with a holiday wreath around its neck. He carries the deer back toward Patrick, wobbling off balance with the statue's weight.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that?

JACK

A reindeer.

PATRICK

I can see it's a reindeer. What the fuck are you going to do with it?

JACK

Go start the car. Keys are in my pocket.

PATRICK

I'm not putting my hand in your pocket.

JACK

Patrick. Get the keys from my pocket.

Patrick makes a face. He fishes around in Jack's pocket. Jack makes an uncomfortable face.

JACK (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, Patrick. Get the keys.

Patrick's face sets. He takes a deep breath and goes deeper into Jack's pocket.

PATRICK

Not a word about this.

Patrick retrieves the keys.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Jack - I don't know.

JACK

You want your commission or not?
Times wasting.

PATRICK

You got some balls. I'll give you that.

Patrick hurries off toward the car, checking all around as he goes. Jack breathes heavy, still holding the deer.

ON FRONT WINDOW: ROMAN opens the curtains, holding coffee. He smiles as he breathes in the aroma of his coffee and goes to take a sip. He freezes. Patrick's reflection is caught racing through the front yard.

INT. NADJA'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROMAN'S POV: Patrick suspiciously checks up and down the street. He high steps through a snowdrift and jumps into the BUICK.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

ON JACK: He hunches a moment, breathing heavy. He collects his strength and his nerve. Throws one last glance at Patrick.

JACK'S POV: Patrick gives him a thumbs up from the driver's seat. Jack turns back to the window. He lifts the deer up and...

INT. NADJA'S HOME/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

...CRASH! The deer slams through the bedroom window onto the floor.

INT. NADJA'S HOME/LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ROMAN spills the coffee onto his tank top, startled by the sound. Nadja steps from the kitchen with a baking sheet full of baklava in her hands.

NADJA

Roman?

Roman holds a finger up to Nadja. He makes a beeline for the bedroom.

INT. NADJA'S HOME/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack reaches in through the broken glass. Unlocks the window. Raises it. He climbs into the bedroom and quickly snatches the LAPTOP. The bedroom door swings open, revealing Roman. Roman GROWLS.

JACK

SHIT!

Jack dives through the open window, landing in the snow outside. Roman rushes after him. Too large to fit through the window. Roman dashes back toward the front of the home.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jack races toward the BUICK. Patrick REVS the engine, belt WHINING. Jack falls in the snow, laptop clasped close to his chest. Roman tears out of the front door with a baseball bat.

ROMAN
(Albanian)
Piece of shit! Break into my home!

Nadja emerges from the front door, horrified by the spectacle.

Jack clambers to his feet. He rushes toward the BUICK. Tries the door. LOCKED!

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack frantically pulls at the handle.

JACK
OPEN IT!

Patrick presses the lock button in his door.

PATRICK
I AM OPENING IT!

Jack turns to see Roman descending on him, bat raised.

JACK
OPEN THE FUCKING DOOR! THE LOCK!
PULL IT!

Patrick reaches over to pull up the lock. His foot slips off the brake. The car lunges forward.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

The BUICK lunges forward. Jack manages to grab the door handle, flipping open the door, but losing balance as the car glides forward.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Patrick slams on the brakes.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jack tries to regain his footing. Patrick yells at him through the open door.

PATRICK
JACK! Behind you!

Jack spins toward Roman. Roman brings the bat down with all his might. Jack raises the laptop as a shield. CRUNCH! The laptop splits into two pieces.

Jack stares at the computer in horror. This only makes Roman more angry. Roman lifts the bat again. Jack dives into the open car door.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack stares up at Patrick, legs dangling from the open door.

JACK
GO!

Patrick hits the accelerator, wildly tugging at the steering wheel.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Roman brings the bat crashing down against the swinging car door. It lands in the door's frame, then bounces off, caught by the door, and tumbles to the pavement. Roman runs after the car, fists clenched.

The BUICK careens wildly down the road, swerving as the door opens and closes smacking against Jack's dragging legs. The BUICK abruptly darts off the road at a right angle, rolling over a plastic SANTA CLAUS LAWN ORNAMENT, and SLAMS into a mighty OAK TREE.

The engine belt WHINES as the car SPUTTERS to a stop. The SOUND of a DIRT BIKE approaches.

ON DIRT BIKE. Chloe ascends the hill.

ON CHLOE. Her eyes widen.

CHLOE'S POV: Roman marches toward the BUICK.

CHLOE
(in French/subtitles)
Shit. Shit. And triple shit.

INT. BOB'S BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Jack lies on the floorboards, legs dangling from the door. Patrick rubs his head. The passenger door suddenly swings open. Roman reaches down, grabbing Jack's legs. Drags him out of the car into the snow.

EXT. NADJA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Chloe drives the DIRT BIKE into Nadja's yard.

CHLOE

WAIT! WAIT!

Chloe loses control and jumps off the bike. It rolls past Nadja who follows it with her eyes, baklava tray still held in her hands. The BIKE peters out, toppling over in the snow. Chloe runs toward Roman. Roman lifts Jack to his feet, recoiling his arm for a knock out punch.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

WAIT!

Roman turns to Chloe. Jack's eyes focus.

JACK

Chloe?

CHLOE

It was me, Jack! I stole your computer!

JACK

What?

Roman turns back to Jack. Their eyes lock.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. This was just a big misunderstanding-

Roman throws the punch. BOOM!

CUT TO:

BLACK.

MUFFLED SOUNDS begin to clear. The SOUND of KEYS. A PRISON DOOR SLIDING OPEN. SLAMMING SHUT. INMATES LAUGHING.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DUSK

Crimson dusk paints a canvas of darkening skies. A small town police station. Bob's Buick sits out front. The dirt bike parked alongside.

INT. JAIL CELL - DUSK

Jack sits on a prison bench, ice pack pressed to his face. Patrick paces opposite him.

PATRICK

You're a regular Magnum P.I., Jack.
You know that?

JACK

It looked like my computer.

PATRICK

You are aware that the Gateway laptop
is a mass produced consumer good.
Right?

Patrick kicks at the jail bars.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

It's gotta be - what nine o'clock?
We're never getting out of here in
time.

Patrick grabs the bars, pressing his mouth through the
opening.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I want my phone call!

PRISONER

Shut up!

PATRICK

YOU shut up, you fucking douchebag!

A POLICE OFFICER descends the hallway.

POLICE OFFICER

Farr. D'Antonio.

The OFFICER unlocks the cell door, rolls it back.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

Your bail's been posted.

Jack and Patrick exchange looks, hurrying out of the cell.

INT. POLICE STATION/PROCESSING COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

A BUZZER. Jack steps out, ice pack still pressed to his face.
Patrick follows. Something stops them in their tracks.

JACK'S POV: Chloe rises from a chair in the lobby. She looks
like the cat who ate the canary.

Patrick pats Jack on the shoulder and hurries toward the
processing counter. Jack lowers the eye pack, revealing a
swollen black and blue eye.

Chloe shrinks at the sight.

Jack makes a face and turns to the processing counter.

JACK

Jack Farr.

The OFFICER on the other side of the counter places Jack's wallet, mobile phone, Bob's car keys, and Bob's plastic baggie on the counter. Jack swipes them up.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The BUICK idles, engine belt WHINING. The DIRT BIKE's rear wheel sticks out of the opened trunk. The front hood is horribly dented by the accident.

Jack sits in the front passenger seat. Chloe sits in the back. Patrick tries to close the hood all the way, but it's no use. He slumps his shoulders and hurries into the car.

INT. BOB'S BUICK/MOVING - NIGHT

Jack broods in the passenger seat. Chloe sits in the back. Patrick drives, checking the voicemail on his mobile.

VOICEMAIL (O.S.)

You have forty five new messages.

PATRICK

Jesus Christ.

JACK

What?

VOICEMAIL (O.S.)

Message one.

FRANCINE (O.S.)

(on phone)

Where the fuck are you guys? You are -

Patrick silences the phone.

PATRICK

She's pissed.

CHLOE

Jack. I'm sorry.

Chloe reaches forward, touching Jack's shoulder. Jack pulls it away. He turns to Patrick.

JACK

What time is it?

Patrick checks his wristwatch.

PATRICK

Ten to ten. We're cutting it close.

Patrick steps on the accelerator. The belt WHINES.

JACK

Where is it? My laptop?

CHLOE

In my room.

JACK

Why would you do this?

CHLOE

You said you wanted the universe to shake things up. To give you a sign of what you're really supposed to do.

Jack turns to look at Chloe over the seat.

JACK

And who are you to play God. Huh?
What gives you the right?

CHLOE

No more regrets.

JACK

You read my note?

CHLOE

This isn't what you want. Don't you see that?

Jack turns around, defiant.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

Chloe looks down at the door panel. A peeling Hello Kitty sticker. She touches it with her fingers, eyes welling with tears.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

BOB'S BUICK turns into the parking lot. The trunk bounces against the dirt bike's wheels, the car's signature WHINE announcing its arrival.

INT. CHLOE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We navigate the darkness through the dim light of the alarm clock, passing over Chloe's things: the REMINGTON TYPEWRITER, an origami finger puzzle, a spiral bound notebook.

Photographs are taped to the wall behind the typewriter. A collage of personal effects organized in two columns on the wall. On the left, an older man's possessions. The TOBACCO PIPE. The REEBOK running shoes. BOB'S GLASSES. The BUICK'S BUMPER with its SAVE THE WHALES bumper sticker.

On the right, Jack's things. The OUI MAGAZINE. The MOLESKIN NOTEBOOK. The AMERICAN TOURISTER.

FRENCH NOTES are jotted on the photos in SHARPIE.

JACK'S computer satchel sits on the dresser. The corner of an envelope peeks out of the front pocket. The door unlocks and opens o.s., casting the hallway's light across the computer.

The lights flip on, illuminating the room. Chloe hurries to the computer. Jack enters behind her. He stops, taking in the typewriter, photos, and notes.

JACK

Where's your grandmother?

CHLOE

I overheard an old lady in the lobby telling that story.

JACK

So you lied.

CHLOE

I told a story.

Jack sees the photographs of his possessions side-by-side with BOB'S.

JACK

What is all this?

Jack sees the picture of himself captured outside the elevator. He picks it up. Notes the French writing and tosses it on the desk. His attention shifts to BOB'S GLASSES on the desk. He picks them up, puzzle pieces coming together.

CHLOE

I was supposed to pick up his ashes on Sunday. But then I found out you were taking his place.

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)

He left when I was eleven. So I never really got to know him. I thought maybe - just observing you - you know? Getting to know you. That maybe you would provide me some insight. That I'd get some sense of why he and my mom split up. Why work meant so much to him.

JACK

So you've been what - spying on me all this time?

CHLOE

At first. Yeah. But - Jack. Everything I've said to you. I meant it.

JACK

Jesus Christ.

CHLOE

He gave up, Jack. He gave up on everything he cared about and he ended up resenting his life and everyone who cared about him.

JACK

Look at you.

CHLOE

Don't you see? You're doing the same thing.

JACK

You can't just float through life doing whatever you want.

CHLOE

You're not meant for this, Jack. You're so talented.

Jack grabs the computer from Chloe. He turns her wrist over, exposing the STAR TATTOO.

JACK

I bet this isn't even real. Is it?

Jack steps toward the door, then stops. Backpedals, picking up his photo from the desk. He locks eyes with Chloe as he leaves the room.

Chloe grabs a photograph from the wall and slumps to a seat on the bed. She studies the photo with regret.

ON PHOTO: A worn photograph of a MIDDLE AGED MAN and TEENAGE DAUGHTER standing in front of a newer version of BOB'S BUICK with tell-tale 'Save the Whales' bumper sticker. This is BOB and CHLOE, much younger.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ON SINK: Chloe turns on the water.

She looks at herself in the mirror, then picks up a bar of soap, scrubbing the STAR TATTOO from her wrist.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

ON PATRICK'S WRIST WATCH: Ten Thirty. The seconds hand TICKS loudly.

Patrick looks up from his watch, exchanging dirty looks with Harvey behind the counter. NEW YEARS REVELERS have begun filling the lobby, now decorated with silver and gray balloons, streamers, and Happy New Year banners. A DJ spins 90's hits in a corner.

DING! We PUSH IN ON the elevator as the doors open. Jack rushes out, computer satchel slung over his shoulder. He navigates the party-goers toward Patrick. Patrick catches sight of Jack through the crowd.

PATRICK

You got it?

Jack pats the computer satchel.

JACK

Let's go.

Something catches Jack's attention, stopping him in his tracks.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

PATRICK

What?

SWISH PAN TO: Molly. Sitting at a lobby table. She looks miserable. Her luggage sits beside her. A PARTIER dances too close, making eyes at her.

Jack peels off from Patrick.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

God damn it, Jack.

Jack hurries up to Molly.

JACK

Molly.

Molly takes in Jack's sorry appearance. Black eye. Bloodied shirt. Tousled hair.

MOLLY

What happened to you?

JACK

I've had a really bad day.

MOLLY

I called like ten times. They won't let me into your room. They said you're in trouble with the police. What the hell, Jack? What did you do?

JACK

Take my room key. I'll be back.

MOLLY

Not until you tell me what is going on.

PATRICK

Jack.

JACK

I don't have time.

MOLLY

So now what - you have a police record?

PATRICK

Jack. We've got to go!

JACK

Room two fifteen. I've got to go.

MOLLY

No. This is serious. We don't get in trouble with the police, Jack. We don't get in fights or brawls or whatever else you've been up to.

JACK

Molly!

Molly shrinks back. New Years revelers turn heads toward the commotion.

JACK (CONT'D)

Just - take my key. Room 215. I'll explain everything when I'm back.

Jack hurries off after Patrick. Molly watches Jack leave, key card in hand. The partier dances a little closer, Molly glares at him.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Patrick dash for BOB'S BUICK.

PATRICK

How long you think this is going to take? To run the migration?

JACK

I don't know. Forty minutes? Maybe an hour.

PATRICK

Christ.

JACK

That's assuming the code compiled.

They hop into the BUICK, engine SPUTTERING to life. The car speeds through the parking lot, fishtailing onto the highway.

Albert watches as the car speeds by. He prepares a row of fireworks for the big night. He notices the trunk bouncing on his dirt bike's wheel.

ALBERT

Hey. That's my bike.

The power line tower BUZZES ominously overhead.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The BUICK GROANS down the highway, wobbling as it goes.

INT. BOB'S BUICK/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Jack hammers away at the laptop in the passenger's seat. Patrick fights the steering wheel, the BUICK's axle pulling to the side.

PATRICK

Well? Is it ready?

JACK

Code is ready to go. But we're almost out of battery.

ON LAPTOP: The battery shows 1%.

PATRICK
When it fucking rains -

EXT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

The BUICK swerves into the entrance, hopping the curb. The 'Save the Whales' bumper falls off, skidding across the icy asphalt.

INT. BOB'S BUICK/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Patrick fights the wheel. Jack holds the computer open on his lap.

JACK
Just drop me off in front!

PATRICK
Yeah. Yeah. Got it.

Patrick makes a face.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Oh shit.

JACK
What?

EXT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The BUICK starts to fishtail, sliding toward the building's entrance. Too fast. Brake lights flash repeatedly. It's no use. The car won't stop.

JACK (O.S.)
Patrick! Stop the car!

INT. BOB'S BUICK/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Patrick jerks the wheel to the side. Frantically pumps the brakes.

PATRICK
I Can't!

Jack cringes and braces for impact as the car slides sideways toward the building entrance. Patrick hunkers down, closing his eyes.

EXT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The BUICK slows, still sliding sideways toward the building. A SECURITY GUARD hurries from behind his desk inside, unsure

of what to do. A group of hard hat ON CALL TECHNICIANS turn to the commotion.

The BUICK inches closer to the floor to ceiling windows. Tires lock - closer. The GUARD puts his hand on his gun - CLOSER. Jack holds the laptop in one hand, braces himself with the other. CLOSER!

TINK. The car's passenger side mirror taps the glass. The car stops.

Jack and Patrick exchange a look of relief. Then...

CRASH! The entire window comes crashing down in a mosaic of glass shards. The GUARD stands frozen. The TECHNICIANS jump to their feet. Jack slumps back in his seat.

JACK
Son of a bitch.

Jack tries the door handle. Locked. He makes a face then pulls up the lock and swings open the door. He jumps out, laptop still open, and slips a little on the glass. He catches himself on the car, then hurries across the lobby, running past the GUARD.

JACK (CONT'D)
Sorry about that. Really sorry.

PATRICK
Go Jack!

Jack swings open a door to...

INT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING/STAIR WELL - CONTINUOUS

Jack hurries up the stairs, two at a time. He balances the open laptop in his hands. The battery icon reads 1%. He rounds another flight of stairs, chest heaving. And another flight. And another. Out of breath now.

INT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING/FOURTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

A door flies open. Heads pop out of cubicles as Jack rushes down the hallway.

JACK
(out of breath)
Pow-Power...I - uh huh...

Workers stand as he runs past, navigating the cubicle jungle on a beeline for the glass enclosed conference room.

Jack's pace slows. He holds up the laptop.

JACK (CONT'D)
 (out of breath)
 Pow-er! I - uh huh - I need - uh -
 power!

A WAR ROOM of COMPUTER ANALYSTS and EXECUTIVES expectantly rise to their feet. PETERSEN scowls at Jack, equal measures anger and panic. FRANCINE hurries toward the conference room door, throwing it open.

FRANCINE
 Where the hell have you been? I've
 been calling all night!

Jack huffs and puffs toward the conference room. He looks a mess. Black eye. Shirt blood stained and untucked. He stumbles a little, maintaining balance for the laptop.

JACK
 Power cable!

Francine spins, pointing at an ANALYST.

FRANCINE
 Get him a damn power cable!

The ANALYST dashes out of the war room. Jack shuffles into the war room and slumps to a seat in front of a large computer terminal set up on the conference room table. The ANALYST runs back in with a power cable. Jack plugs it into the computer as the analyst plugs it into the wall. Jack connects his laptop to the Terminal with a SCSI connector.

Francine and Petersen loom over Jack. Jack hammers away at the computer.

JACK
 Terminal set up?

ANALYST
 Everything is ready to go.

JACK
 Here goes nothing.

Jack hits the return key. A progress bar stretches across the screen. 2%... 3%...

PAUL
 This better work.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Chloe crosses the parking lot toward Albert. Albert continues preparing the fireworks. Chloe lights two cigarettes.

Hands one to Albert. He takes it, stands, admiring his work.

ALBERT
This is going to be epic.

Albert notices Chloe's somber mood.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
You okay?

Chloe nods...then starts to shake her head side to side, tears coming now. Albert embraces her.

CHLOE
Maybe I've been wrong all along.
Maybe you really can't do what you
want in this world. Maybe it's all
predestined. Mapped out for you.

ALBERT
You really believe that?

CHLOE
I don't know what I believe anymore.

Chloe hands Albert the massive firework with Jack and her notes rubber banded to it.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Set this off for me. Will you?

Albert takes the firework.

ALBERT
Yeah. Sure.

Chloe wipes her eyes. Takes a long drag off the cigarette.

CHLOE
It's time I put him to rest, Albert.

OFF CHLOE. Broken hearted.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

ON CLOCK: Eleven fifty eight. The seconds hand TICKS heavily. Petersen paces. Patrick sips coffee in the corner, gripped with concern. Francine looms over Jack, arms folded. Jack watches as the progress bar inches to 98%.

JACK
Almost there...

PAUL
You're cutting it close, Willis.

FRANCINE

Jack.

JACK

Almost there...

The clock ticks a minute closer to midnight. The TICKING of the seconds hand continues over...

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Chloe rides the elevator with laughing NEW YEARS REVELERS. She looks withdrawn. Sad. Her mascara is streaked with tears.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

ON LAPTOP: The progress bar holds at 99%.

Francine looms.

WILLIS

JACK.

The clock ticks to eleven fifty nine. The progress bar shows 99%.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Chloe descends the hallway, somber. Party-goers rush past her. She uses the card key on Jack's door.

INT. JACK'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Molly sits on the bed, watching the ball drop on the television. BOB'S BOX sits beside the television. The door opens, revealing Chloe. Molly stands, startled.

CHLOE

Oh. Sorry. I didn't know anyone was here.

MOLLY

Who are you?

CHLOE

A friend of Jack's. I'm here to get that box.

OFF BOB'S BOX.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

The clock's second hand ticks forward.

Jack leans in closer to the laptop. The progress bar holds at 99%.

The CLOCK's second hand passes the twelve. The minute hand switches to midnight.

The LAPTOP: Displays 100%. MIGRATION COMPLETE flashes across the screen.

Jack jumps from his seat.

JACK

Done!

Everyone watches the fluorescent lights in the ceiling, as if something is about to fall from the sky and squash them. Francine. Patrick. Jack.

Petersen checks his wristwatch. Francine remains transfixed on the lights above. The ANALYST checks his digital watch. A LONG SILENCE. And then...

ANALYST

That's one minute! We're clear!

The room explodes in APPLAUSE and LAUGHTER. Francine puts her hand on Jack's shoulder. Squeezes it.

FRANCINE

That was completely unorthodox, Jack. Completely. But nonetheless. You did it. Congratulations Senior Computer Analyst.

She pats Jack on the shoulder hard. As everyone else celebrates, Jack notices the envelope poking out of his computer satchel. He pulls it out. The envelope reads: *'Mon Ami, Monsieur Jacques'*.

Jack opens it. He removes the college rule and manilla paper contents. He unfolds the college rule, surprised to find his CHILDHOOD CRAYON SKETCH. The SEA CAPTAIN. Jack unfolds the manilla paper, poring over its contents in search of some explanation...

CHLOE (V.O.)

(in French/subtitles)

After all that they had been through, there had been one thing that Chloe wished for Jack. One thing that she had hoped he had learned...

OFF JACK: intently studying the letter.

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

B-BOOM! BAM! RED and GREEN fireworks splash across the night sky, casting shadows upon the ground below. The power line tower's shadow stretches across a crowd as they OOH and AHH at the canvass of colors sparkling across the night sky.

Albert grins. He looks across the parking lot at Chloe.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 ...That life should not be taken for
 granted. That life should be
 celebrated.

CHLOE stands outside of the hotel entrance, BOB'S BOX cradled in her arms. She wears her beret. Sunglasses. She salutes Albert, a somber look on her face.

CHLOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (French/subtitles)
 Every minute. Every moment. Cherished
 for the unique properties they
 possess...

ALBERT salutes back. He turns back to the fireworks, lighting another round.

A TAXI CAB pulls up. Chloe gets in.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jack continues to pore over the letter as others celebrate. He flips a page.

CHLOE (V.O.)
 (in French/subtitles)
 And Chloe realized that she had
 developed a fondness for Jack. For
 the unique hopes and dreams he held
 in his heart. The hopeful heart of a
 child, buried in the failures and
 experiences of a young man. And she
 couldn't help but think that maybe
 her father had been the same...

INT. TAXI CAB/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Passing streetlights illuminate BOB'S BOX, cradled in Chloe's lap. She caresses the top of the box as if it were her father himself.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
But she refused to believe that he
was right. That you can't follow
your heart. That you can't write
your own story...

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN ON JACK: He studies the letter closely.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
Chloe had felt herself falling for
Jack...or maybe for the thought of
what he could be...

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

ON CHLOE'S FIREWORK: Placed into its shooting tube. The rubber
banded notes catch on the side of the tube.

LIGHTER: The firework's fuse is lit, catching the notes on
fire.

ALBERT
Oh shit.

REVEAL: Albert slaps at the burning notes. The plastic
cylinder holding the firework flops over. Albert panics.
Quickly rights the pipe, but does so at a skewed angle. The
firework BLASTS OFF. Albert jumps back.

The FIREWORK arcs into the power line tower. B-BOOM! BOOM!
The transformer EXPLODES in a shower of sparks.

EVERYTHING GOES DARK.

INT. PETERSEN POWER/CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Jack flips the letter over, looking perplexed.

CHLOE (V.O.)
(in French/subtitles)
...But Jack had been as blind to
Chloe's affections as he had been to
his own desires.

THE LIGHTS GO OUT. Everyone reacts. GASPS. SIGHS. MOANS.
Jack looks up at the room.

JACK
Does anyone speak French?

The ANALYST sheepishly raises his hand.

INT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING/STAIR WELL - MOMENTS LATER

The door BURSTS open. Jack hurries down the stairs neck and neck with Patrick and the Analyst. Jack feeds the letter, page by manilla page to the Analyst who strains to decipher the courier font content, tilting the pages under the dim glow of emergency floods as the trio descend the stairs.

ANALYST

I'm a little rusty, but - uh - Yup.

This bit here.

(in French/subtitles)

Jack had been as blind to Chloe's affections as he had been to his own desires...

Patrick snatches the sheet of paper, scanning the words for any recognizable content.

PATRICK

Well 'Pierre' what does that mean?

Jack makes a face, snatching the page back from Patrick.

ANALYST

You're oblivious to how she feels about you. And, what's more, you're oblivious to how you feel about her.

Jack stops in his tracks. He pores over the letter. Then suddenly perks up, the revelation hitting him like a light switching on.

JACK

She's in love with me?

PATRICK

She's got s weird way of showing it.

Jack swipes the letter from the Analyst, barreling through the lobby stair well door. Patrick and the Analyst follow. The door at the top of the stairwell bursts open. Francine rushes out, looking down over the rails.

FRANCINE

Jack!

INT. PETERSON POWER BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

The lobby is illuminated by emergency flood lights. Jack hurries through the lobby toward BOB'S BUICK. Patrick follows. The Analyst just watches. Francine bursts through the lobby door in pursuit.

FRANCINE
You're making a big mistake, Jack!

JACK
The migration ran. It worked.

FRANCINE
The Hell it did! The power's out!

JACK
It worked.

FRANCINE
You can forget your promotion! You
can forget your job! You walk out of
here and you're fired!

JACK
I did my part.
(beat)
Patrick. Keys.

PATRICK
What about my commission?

FRANCINE
He walks then you can kiss your
commission goodbye.

JACK
Patrick! Keys!

PATRICK
Jack. Are you sure -

Paul breaks through the stairwell door, shouting at the group
of ON CALL TECHNICIANS standing in the lobby.

PAUL
Roll the trucks! Someone blew a
transformer.
(beat)
What the hell happened to my lobby?

Francine turns back to Jack.

JACK
You cant' fire me, Francine. I quit.
(beat)
Patrick!

PATRICK
Transformer blew. Transformer! I
expect my commission, Francine. In
full!

Patrick tosses Jack the keys and rushes toward the car.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Let's go, Jack!

Jack catches the keys. Hops into the BUICK. He starts the engine, backing into the building's lobby, nearly hitting Francine. Patrick jumps in. The Buick speeds off as the on-call technicians hop into their MAINTENANCE TRUCKS.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The BUICK streaks past, GROANING.

INT. BOB'S BUICK/MOVING - CONTINUOUS

Jack drives. Patrick studies the CHILDHOOD SKETCH, then attempts to read the letter, sounding out the French words.

PATRICK

(broken

French/subtitles)

But Jack's...greatest lift-off...er
challenge...still lay ahead...

Jack looks in the rearview mirror. A FIRE ENGINE's RED LIGHTS flash in the distance. Jack slams on the accelerator.

EXT. HOTEL/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

A FIRE ENGINE casts RED FLASHING LIGHTS across the hotel, the power line tower, and the adjacent field. A crowd watches. The BUICK turns into the parking lot, hopping the curb outside the entrance.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Battery powered emergency lights illuminate the otherwise dark interior. Party goers have vacated the lobby to investigate the commotion outside.

Molly watches the hotel entrance from a barstool. She sees Jack and Patrick hop out of the BUICK. She downs her drink, and makes for the exit.

EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Jack and Patrick jump out of the car. Jack catches sight of Albert in the crowd outside the hotel as he watches the FIRE FIGHTERS cordon off the power line tower.

Jack elbows his way through the crowd to Albert. Patrick follows.

JACK

Hey...

Albert turns to Jack.

ALBERT

Hey.

JACK

Have you seen Chloe?

ALBERT

She left for the airport. Where's my bike?

Jack gestures toward the Buick.

JACK

In the trunk. When did she leave?

ALBERT

In the trunk?

JACK

How long ago did she leave, Albert?

ALBERT

I don't know. About thirty minutes.

Jack grabs the letter from Patrick, flashing it at Albert.

JACK

Do you know what this is?

Albert looks at the letter.

ALBERT

French?

Jack makes a face. Snatches the letter back from Albert. He hurries back toward the BUICK, opening the car door as another FIRE ENGINE enters the parking lot. The FIRE ENGINE blocks the path that they came. Jack slams the door shut in frustration.

JACK

Shit.

PATRICK

Jack. The bike.

Jack hurries around to the trunk. He hands Patrick the letter and opens the trunk, revealing Albert's dirt bike. Molly hurries out of the lobby toward Jack and Patrick.

MOLLY

Jack.

JACK

Molly.

MOLLY

What is going on with you? You're a complete mess.

JACK

A lot has happened.

MOLLY

I applied for the apartment, Jack. I was going to surprise you. But you won't pass the background check. Not now. Not with a police record.

JACK

I applied too.

MOLLY

You did?

JACK

Before all of this went down.

MOLLY

You did?

JACK

And they accepted the application.

Molly beams with excitement.

MOLLY

They did?

JACK

But I'm not so sure that I want that, Molly. Any of it.

MOLLY

What are you talking about?

Jack just stares at Molly. The words sink in.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

You don't know what you want.

JACK

No. I do. For the first time in a long time, I know exactly what I want. And I'm going to go get it.

MOLLY

What are you saying?

JACK

We both know this isn't working out.

MOLLY

I met her you know. She came by your hotel room to pick up some box. Lectured me on what a great guy you were.

JACK

You can still have the apartment, Molly.

MOLLY

Fuck you, Jack.

JACK

Molly.

MOLLY

I thought we had a chance.

JACK

We want different things.

Jack steps forward, embracing Molly. She holds him tightly.

JACK (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Clean slate.

MOLLY

(sotto)

Well. Happy fucking New Year.

Jack and Molly release one another.

A SPARK ERUPTS from the power line tower. The crowd GASPS surging back. A party goer bumps into Patrick who loses grip on the letter. The wind blows the pages off into different directions.

PATRICK

Jack!

Patrick and Jack scramble to grab the sheets of paper as they blow in the wind. Jack snatches a page, then sees his CHILDHOOD SKETCH fluttering across the asphalt. He stomps his foot down trying to catch it, but misses, the college rule swirling off into the wind. He goes to chase after it then stops. Patrick scurries off across the parking lot after sheets of letter.

JACK
Forget it Patrick!

Patrick turns to him.

JACK (CONT'D)
Forget it! Help me with this!

Jack shoves the solitary letter page into his back pocket. He waves Patrick over, together pulling the DIRT BIKE from the trunk. Albert hurries over.

ALBERT
What are you doing with my bike?

JACK
I'm going after Chloe.

Jack secures the football helmet on his head. He turns the ignition and speeds off, running straight into a pillar for the guest drop off. The dirt bike bounces off the pillar, flopping onto its side. Albert runs up beside Jack.

ALBERT
Careful, man!

Albert takes the handle bars and rights the bike.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
Come on. Scoot back. I got it.

Albert jumps on the bike. Jack scoots to the back of the seat, holding onto Albert. Albert REVS the bike - VROOM VROOM VROOM. And they're off.

Molly watches Jack and Albert drive off. Harvey steps up next to her, eating a piece of cake.

HARVEY
Cake?

Molly makes a face at Harvey.

The DIRT BIKE speeds past the adjacent field as a PETERSEN POWER line truck arrives, YELLOW LIGHTS flashing as the transformer SPARKS again.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Albert accelerates through the night. Jack holds on for dear life. Both shout over the engine.

ALBERT
You finally figured out she was into you. Huh?

Jack doesn't answer.

JACK
Did she say where she was going?

ALBERT
To spread his ashes.

Jack looks surprised.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
You know that Chloe's not her real
name, right?

JACK
What? What is it?

ALBERT
Olivia. Olivia Simmons. Chloe Melville
is just a pseudonym.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

The end of the airport runway. The entire airport is dark from the power outage. Chloe pays the CAB DRIVER, then steps up to the fence with BOB'S BOX. She sets the box down and opens the lid.

She reaches her hand inside touching the plastic bag containing her father's ashes.

CHLOE
Bye, Dad.

The DIRT BIKE'S ENGINE approaches in the distance. The bike speeds to a stop behind Chloe as she holds the plastic bag with Bob's ashes in her hands. Jack jumps off the bike, running to Chloe, trying to get the football helmet off his head. He can't release the chin strap.

JACK
Hey.

CHLOE
Hey.

Jack wrestles with the strap.

JACK
Damn it.

CHLOE
Here. Let me.

Chloe sets Bob's ashes down. Undoes the strap. Jack drops the helmet to the ground. He takes a step closer to Chloe. He pulls the letter's solitary page from his back pocket.

JACK
I got your letter.

CHLOE
I can see that.

JACK
I don't know - exactly know what it says, but - I am told that it speaks pretty highly of me.

Jack indicates Albert who smokes a joint across the gravel lot. Albert salutes. Jack salutes back.

CHLOE
Yeah. You could say that.

Jack steps forward, he removes Chloe's sunglasses, hanging them in her collar, then takes Chloe's hands in his. Chloe's eyes shimmer in the moonlight. Jack moves forward as if to kiss her.

JACK
Okay?

Chloe smiles.

CHLOE
Okay.

Chloe and Jack kiss. The airport lights suddenly come alive, the flashing runway beacons lighting a path to them. Both laugh and smile. Jack notices BOB'S BOX on the ground.

JACK
What are you going to do with him?

CHLOE
He was always afraid to fly. He said it was unnatural. 'Four hundred tons of steel floating on air.' That meant weeks on the road away from me and my mom. It led to their divorce. I just felt like he should be put to rest in a place that represents what could have been...

JACK
That's really sad.

CHLOE

I don't know. If none of that had happened we wouldn't be standing here right now. Right?

Jack and Chloe embrace tightly. They both pull away, studying one another's faces with deep regard.

Chloe turns, admiring the shimmering multi-colored runway lights.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

It is kind of beautiful. You know? All the possibilities tied up in this place. All the people going places.

JACK

Yeah. All the possibilities.

Chloe picks up Bob's ashes. She dumps them. The ashes dance and swirl out toward the runway. Chloe reaches down and holds Jack's hand.

CHLOE

(in French/subtitles)
Good bye, Bob.

JACK

(in French/subtitles)
Good bye.

A REMINGTON TYPEWRITER's carriage return: *WOOSH! DING!*

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END