

HEART CLASS

Written by
Brett Walpole

EXT. LONDON PUBLIC SPACES - EARLY MORNING

TITLES

A handsome young man, CARL LLOYD-BROOKS (28), wearing a grey all-in-one boiler suit, is taking photographs at a Thames-side location in the great pulsing city of London. The mood music throughout the story is Jazz, by turns mellow, dry, and then lively and upbeat with lighthearted and humorous overtones. At first Carl is seen from a very high vantage point, far away as a lonely speck in the distance, then progressively closer, and closer until he is full frame.

INT. CARL'S ART STUDIO, HOXTON - DAY

Carl arrives home, and closes all the blinds and curtains in this large and sparsely furnished warehouse space. The room is thrown into virtual darkness. He attaches his camera to a projector, switches it on and an image is thrown onto a large canvass on an opposing wall. He scans through the images, chooses one then, rolling up his sleeves begins drawing on the canvass.

INT. "CASA NUEVA", FINE ART GALLERY, CHELSEA - DAY

A young woman, SUZIE RICHARDS, (26), is standing in the centre of a high class commercial gallery. She is immaculately dressed and speaks in an educated English accent to a JAPANESE CUSTOMER (Female, 40s). They are talking in front of, and about, one of Carl's paintings.

SUZIE

I see you are interested by this work.

CUSTOMER

Yes quite fascinated really.

SUZIE

It's Carl Lloyd-Brooks, as you can see he is clearly in love with his environment. He uses a photo-realistic style, with quite a flair.

CUSTOMER

The vibrancy he achieves with such muted colour, it's uncanny.

SUZIE

I love the character he captures,
perhaps it's obvious but I am quite
a fan of the man.

CUSTOMER

What kind of a person is he?

SUZIE

I haven't had the opportunity to
meet him personally but I
understand he has a very bright
future.

CUSTOMER

My husband was an artist, the
energy in our life because of it,
well, it's hard to describe.

SUZIE

I think everyone wishes for that
creativity in a relationship. If
you are serious about this piece,
it's the last in a series, we
aren't expecting any more from him
currently.

CUSTOMER

I'm not usually so impulsive,
but... there's something, mystical
about him. I'll take it.

A credit card is swiped.

SUZIE

It should be with you in three days
or less. You can track the
delivery here.

Suzie gives the customer a card.

CUSTOMER

Thank you, I must come here again.

She leaves.

EXT. CHELSEA STREET - DAY

CHLOE DE LA ROSA (52), dressed extravagantly in a flowing
dress, is walking along talking on a cell phone.

CHLOE

I need something more personal from you Carl, something authentic, something that shows your depth. I know you are capable of it.

EXT. CARL'S ART STUDIO - DAY

Carl is using a pay phone on the corner of the street outside his studio.

CARL

I can't just change my style, over night, just like that. What's the problem with the work of mine you already have?

CHLOE

I think it best if we discuss this in person. Can you come over to the gallery tomorrow? Say two o'clock?

CARL

O.K. I'll be there. You really need to explain this to me Chloe, it will require a whole different approach to the way I work.

CHLOE

You'll see darling, it will be a challenge, seize it with open arms. See you tomorrow.

Chloe hangs up and, continuing to walk, very soon approaches the gallery where she throws her pink feather boa over her shoulder and walks in through the large glass front doors.

INT. CASA NUEVA GALLERY - DAY

Suzie walks from the back of the gallery towards Chloe.

CHLOE

Suzie dear, can you make me a Gin and Tonic, I'm parched. Any action here?

SUZIE

I sold the last Carl Lloyd-Brooks.

CHLOE

Good. It's taken far too long to move his material.

SUZIE

I can't say that I was particularly endeared with it in the first place.

CHLOE

Don't bite the hand that feeds young Suzie, a sale is a sale. He may be stuck in the Stone Age, he doesn't even have a phone, doesn't believe in them, but he's the future, you mark my words. He's coming in tomorrow to discuss new avenues of expression. I know you've only been here two weeks, but I'd like to see whether that History of Art degree of yours might be of some practical use, a chance to show me what you're made of.

Chloe looks Suzie up and down, Suzie stands looking a little lost.

CHLOE

Well run along, G&T's don't make themselves.

Suzie returns to the back of the shop.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Carl is sitting in front of a huge screen playing an 80s retro game projected on to it. Music plays. There is a knock at the door. He pauses his game and walking to the door opens it. SEBASTIAN (30) stands there in a suit and overcoat holding aloft two large plain brown pizza boxes.

SEBASTIAN

Delivery!

CARL

You star. What flavours are we dealing with?

SEBASTIAN

One exotic Hawaiian honeymoon that will never happen for me, and one passionate jalapeño romance for you, equally unlikely.

CARL

I don't care what they represent metaphorically as long as they taste good.

They sit on large leather Chesterfield sofas in one area of the studio and begin to eat.

CARL

Looking good in the suit Seb, how's the advertising game treating you, you sell out.

SEBASTIAN

Very nicely thank you very much, money just rolling in. How much did you pay for all these, these toys?

CARL

Too much. The rent on this place is killing me. My inheritance seed money has all but dwindled to zero.

SEBASTIAN

We make our choices my friend, we make our choices. We could equally likely be in each other's shoes.

CARL

Your shoes are considerably better healed than mine, advantages of selling your soul to Smartie and Smartie, purveyors of the art of the instant gratification commercial.

SEBASTIAN

You were always the one fixed on the lifestyle of the hungry artist. I just find myself in the position of being able to offer the necessary nutrition.

CARL

And I'm very grateful. These are good pizzas, who's are they?

SEBASTIAN

We're doing an ad campaign for them, new company, they haven't even got a name yet, just experimental recipes. I thought I'd do some research. Seriously Carl, how's your finances?

CARL

Not good, however, I'm meeting my dealer tomorrow, she wants me to do some more work, something more 'personal', more 'authentic' whatever that means. If it doesn't work out it'll be game over.

SEBASTIAN

Well anything I can do to help, just let me know, got to support the artistic community.

CARL

Thanks man, I might well be forced to take you up on that, but you know the concept of this place was always to make it pay. It's not pride, I just want to make it on my own.

SEBASTIAN

Well good luck with that.

EXT. CHELSEA STREET - DAY

Carl is walking in his grey boiler suit, listening to music on some large white headphones from a vintage 80s Walkman clipped to his belt. As he enters the gallery he drops the headphones around his neck.

INT. CASA NUEVA GALLERY DAY

Suzie is dusting a painting in a large frame, Carl walks in looking Suzie up and down and she looks up.

CARL

Hi.

SUZIE

Oh, hello. You're an hour late.

Carl looks at his watch.

SUZIE

It doesn't matter, the painting's in the back, it's got the address label on it. You can leave by the back entrance, I suggest you come in that way next time.

CARL

Ah, I just wanted to see Chloe actually.

SUZIE

I'm afraid she's expecting someone any minute now...

CARL

I think I might be the person she's expecting, Carl, Carl Lloyd-Brooks.

Carl holds out his hand. Suzie hesitates then extends her hand to shake his.

SUZIE

I'm terribly sorry Carl, I thought, I thought you were the delivery man, he was supposed to be here...

CARL

An hour ago.

SUZIE

Well yes. I'm sorry.

CARL

Don't worry, it happens to me all the time.

SUZIE

It does?!

CARL

No, it's never happened before.

Chloe arrives from the back of the gallery.

CHLOE

Oh, Carl darling, you look very... modern. I see you've met Suzie, don't worry she's much more intelligent than she looks.

CARL

Ah yes, I'm sure, we were just getting acquainted.

Suzie is understandably a little embarrassed but Carl is already flirting with her, something that is noticed by Chloe in the moment.

CHLOE

Well, let's all have a coffee in my office. Suzie will you lock the doors just while we talk.

Suzie locks the front doors and the three of them walk to the back of the shop and into Chloe's office.

INT. CHLOE'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is large and minimally furnished with design classic furniture. They sit, Chloe behind a low desk and Carl and Suzie opposite.

CHLOE

Now, Carl my dear. The work of yours we selected has sold, in fact I have here a cheque for your troubles.

Chloe hands Carl a cheque, which Carl looks at with an agreeable smile and places in his top pocket.

CARL

Thank you.

CHLOE

No, thank you. You are the artist here, we are merely facilitating your sales. You are the star of this show, however, the pieces took a long time to move and I feel with the market being as it is at the moment that a slight readjustment is necessary, if you are on the same page.

SUZIE

We love your work and have had only positive feedback, even from those who did not actually buy.

CARL

But now you want something new, something more authentic, something personal.

CHLOE

Exactly my boy. Our international clients are all looking for the same thing in London. Not just description but reflection. They want to see the real you and your relationship with our great city.

SUZIE

If I may, there's a perceived desire to become close to the action and life of the artist as a means to enter what is often imagined as a rather closed world.

CARL

Ok, I'm getting the vibe, what sort of thing do you have in mind?

SUZIE

Nowadays the artist is becoming to be seen as the actor in their scene, not just the passive observer or the trend setter if you will but the instigator, the motivator and the re-imaginer of the life he, or she inhabits.

CHLOE

Honestly Suzie, where do you get this language, I was thinking something more along the lines of some tasteful nudes.

CARL

No, I think Suzie might have something here. Leave it with me, I'll do some preliminary sketches and get back to you to see if we're heading in the right direction together. We needn't go any further, I'm already getting some ideas.

Carl gets up from his chair.

CHLOE

Alright, well that was painless. Er, Suzie, would you like to show Carl to the door and... we'll see what transpires.

CARL

Thank you, be seeing you soon.

Carl and Suzie leave the office.

INT. CASA NUEVA GALLERY - DAY

Carl and Suzie walk through the gallery.

SUZIE

I hope you don't think I was being too presumptuous, creative freedom is paramount to me, they were just ideas.

CARL

Not at all, I'm interested, the artist as an actor, where does that come from in your life?

SUZIE

Well, actually, I'm taking some acting classes, I have been for quite a while, its really been illuminating for me.

CARL

Incredible, really. I have several friends in the entertainment industry. Is there perhaps a way we could talk further about this subject area? For mutual professional benefit of course.

SUZIE

What did you have in mind?

CARL

Are you free tomorrow evening?

SUZIE

Well, I was going to check out this little acting improv bar with a friend, why don't you come along?

CARL

Sounds great.

SUZIE

Cool, I have to work late, you could pick me up from here, say eight o'clock?

CARL

Perfect, I'll wear something a little less... neo-industrial...

SUZIE

Bye.

Suzie smiles and Carl leaves the gallery.

EXT. CHELSEA STREET - DAY

Carl walks down the street and puts on his headphones. Music plays and his knowing smile grows into a large happy grin.

INT. SUZIE'S HOUSE -DAY

Suzie walks through her front door and puts her coat on a hook.

SUZIE

Hi Iris, are you home?

IRIS (26), is sitting in the lounge eating ice-cream. She is small and talks in a timid manner.

IRIS

Hi Suze, yeah, I'm here. How was your day.

Suzie walks into the lounge.

SUZIE

It was interesting, most interesting. I met this guy at work.

IRIS

Mmm, intriguing tell me more, who is he?

SUZIE

Well he's really just a second rate painter, we've sold a few of his pieces, quite mediocre really.

Suzie is looking in the mirror playing with her hair.

IRIS

I'm sensing you really like him then.

SUZIE

The improv night tomorrow, would you mind terribly if I went with him, just the two of us?

IRIS

Oh, I suppose not, would have been fun, I could come along for support if you like?

SUZIE

Well it's just he says he's got loads of actor friends in the business. On my own I can play the 'hot new talent who just needs a foot in the door' approach. You don't mind do you?

IRIS

No, its cool, but you have to give me the move by move analysis when you get back. I want all the juicy details. He's an artist then.

SUZIE

We'll see how much of an artist he is, I've already got him eating out of the palm of my hand.

IRIS

Careful he doesn't eat your hand too then.

Suzie looks at both of her hands.

SUZIE

What shall I wear?

Suzie looks over to Iris.

SUZIE

He showed up at the gallery in a grey boiler suit! What kind of an artist wears a boiler suit?

IRIS

If I was an artist I'd wear exactly whatever I wanted to.

Suzie looks back at the mirror trying her hair in different ways. Iris continues eating her ice-cream.

SUZIE

Well you design clothes for puppets for a living, what do you know?

IRIS

Hey puppets have feelings too, and a dress sense. Why don't you see if you can carry off a boiler suit in public!

SUZIE

There are limits.

IRIS

Are we still Ok for acting class on Thursday? We have lines to learn.

SUZIE

I think we should pull out all the stops.

IRIS

Isn't that what we've been doing?

EXT. CHELSEA STREET - NIGHT

Carl is walking along, wearing a suit and carrying a small folder. He arrives outside the gallery, Suzie spots him, finishes talking to Chloe and comes out of the door to greet him. She is wearing a casual skirt and some complicated knitwear for a top.

SUZIE

Hi, you look great.

CARL

Oh I just threw this on this morning. Here, this is for you.

Carl hands Suzie the folder, she opens it to reveal a small colour drawing of a flower.

SUZIE

Wow, thanks, it's beautiful.

CARL

Well the real thing dies, this should stay fresh for life, and you don't have to water it.

SUZIE

That's so thoughtful, I'll frame it.

Suzie puts the picture back in the folder. They walk slowly through the night.

CARL

So where are we going?

SUZIE

It's not far, I've never been there before but, I've heard good things about it from some friends in my acting class.

CARL

I've got to ask right now, why on Earth do you want to be an actress? You seem to have a pretty good job already.

SUZIE

It's not the fame thing. It's the expression, every emotion, the meaning in every gesture, the life in the moment. I bet you think I'm the biggest flake.

CARL

In my humble opinion actors are the biggest fakers out there, you know its a whole industry made up of people pretending to be something, someone they're not. I mean some seem unable to be themselves at all and therefore are lacking in integrity altogether.

SUZIE

Well why don't you tell me what you really think!

CARL

Ah, don't listen to me, I'm always, what do they call it in the business, too 'on the nose'. I know a few actors and they're not all looney tunes.

SUZIE

You said you knew a few people yesterday, anyone I might of heard of?

CARL

Well, probably yes. Do you know Robin Tucker or Martin Stevens?

SUZIE

My god, of course, they're just about... right now I mean... they're like...

CARL

Famous, I know. Robin and I went to school together, she was crazy, she still is crazy but she hides it so well. We sort of stay in touch. And Martin was at Art College with me, we didn't get along so well back then but now, I guess I see him every month or so. He's, the best way to describe Martin is he's multi-faceted, a different person for every occasion, but he's cool once you get to know him.

SUZIE

It's so weird, you know these people. Doesn't it seem weird to you?

CARL

Not at all. I think if it was weird we wouldn't be friends. They need people around them who are relaxed and ok with the whole, you know, there's me on the big screen, again.

SUZIE

I'd love to meet them sometime.

CARL

We'll see where it all goes. Where is this place?

SUZIE

We're just about here, this is it actually, right here.

They arrive at a small door in a large wall of a large building and go in.

INT. IMPROV CLUB - NIGHT

In a cellar space, alive with small groups of people, variously sitting at tables and standing at a bar, there is a stage. The lighting is low key as a few players are acting out a scene on a stage.

CARL
What is this place?

SUZIE
They invite people to write and put
on sort of micro-plays.

CARL
How cool, I feel like I'm in
nineteenth century Paris.

SUZIE
Let's sit over there.

They walk to a couple of chairs at a table by a wall. A
jazz quartet play atmospheric mood music as two women and a
man act out a scene.

MAN
I've given you everything I have,
now I have to leave, it's the only
option you leave me with.

WOMAN 1
I can't say I'm surprised but you
see it's you that has taken
everything from me, and you know
that's ok because you leave me with
a kind of nothing that is better
than anything that you might have
had to give. What does concern me
is that you should choose her over
me. Good luck girl, you're gonna
need it.

WOMAN 2
Come on Tony let's get out of here,
there's no use in us drawing this
out. Have you got your stuff?

MAN
Yeah, it's best we go. It wasn't
all bad was it honey, we had some
good times right?

WOMAN 1
Not really, not as I recall.
Goodbye John, don't come back.

The couple leave and the first woman is left on her own.

WOMAN 1
The freedom of solitude.

The lights go down on the stage and the crowd applauds. Carl is wolf whistling. The lights come up again and all three players on the stage take a bow to more applause. Carl and Suzie order drinks which are brought to their table.

SUZIE

The stage is free...

CARL

What do you mean?

SUZIE

Well anyone can perform, anything they like.

CARL

Why don't you try something out?

SUZIE

Nah, not me, not yet. I'm not, I'm not confident enough.

CARL

Bah! Confidence is just feeling stupid enough not to care about the consequences.

SUZIE

Show me.

Carl looks at her then stands up.

CARL

Ok, be prepared for a disaster though.

He walks the short distance to the stage then steps up behind a microphone. He taps it.

CARL

Hi, my name is Carl and I'm a Sagittarius. I just wanted to say a few words about the world of Art, about which I know a little, maybe a little too much more than I'd care to.

The crowd has quietened and the majority are listening above a general murmur.

CARL

You know it's funny, being an artist. So you paint a few pictures, maybe you even sell a few, you're doing what you always wanted to do. Then you sell a few more and you make some real money and you're thinking this is the life. Then you find someone who'll do the selling for you and you keep painting and the work keeps selling.

The crowd are now quiet and fully concentrating. Carl who has started rather nervously seems to get a wave of energy and his confidence begins to climb.

CARL

I mean talk about being a victim of your own success! Where am I supposed to go from here! I'm feeling like a phoney up here. What does a successful artist aspire to be?! I guess I could refocus my energies and become a stand up comedian...

There is a ripple of laughter.

CARL

People, good people, maybe don't need art, or they can't afford it. But everyone needs to laugh every now and then. You look like good people, well most of you! Perhaps not you sir..

Carl gestures to a man sitting with his girlfriend in the front row.

CARL

...You're not an artist are you sir?

MAN IN AUDIENCE

No, no I'm not artist.

CARL

Thank god for that, one less soul to be worried about. What do you do?

MAN IN AUDIENCE

I'm a lawyer.

CARL

Well that's ok, at least you're not shy about everyone knowing you lie for a living, maybe you could become a professional actor.

Carl gets his first real laugh and it encourages him.

CARL

I'm not going to say too much more. I have this feeling that I might incriminate myself with my new lawyer friend, you're not recording this are you?

There is more laughter.

CARL

Well I've learned a couple of things in these short few minutes. First, it's not so difficult to commit professional suicide and Second you get more laughs making fun out of people who are... morally challenged. Maybe I should complete the circle, make a big mistake and become an actor.... Maybe not, goodbye and thank you.

The crowd laugh and clap and Carl walks back to join Suzie, he sits at their table.

SUZIE

That was crazy!

CARL

You didn't like it?

SUZIE

No, I mean yes I liked it, but how did you feel about it, I mean doing that?

CARL

I don't think I was thinking, I just, it felt a bit weird, I'm not sure I knew what I was saying actually. It felt good though, I felt alive.

SUZIE

You were good, but, I couldn't have done that.

CARL

Well, if you you want to be an actress, you going to have to try, at least something like that.

SUZIE

I don't know, I think I'll stick to the script...

They drink and the evening continues with other people taking to the stage. Soon they get up and leave the building.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

Carl and Suzie are walking slowly back towards the gallery.

SUZIE

You could, you know.

CARL

Could what?

SUZIE

Be a professional actor.

CARL

No way, they're the biggest fakers out there, charlatans all of them. Of course I'm sure you're getting into it for all the right reasons.

SUZIE

So we're all just con-artists?

CARL

Nah, it's not that, its just how do you know if someone, an actress in this case, is being themselves, or... just acting.

SUZIE

That's just it, you don't, that's half the fun of it.

CARL

And the other half?

SUZIE

Well that's all about fooling people and getting what you want.

CARL

You see what I mean, inherently
beyond trust.

SUZIE

Oh trust, if you want that get a
regular friend who tells the truth
all the time, if you can find one.

Carl is quiet, looking at his feet and at the buildings
around.

CARL

I'll think I'll stick to being a
second rate painter if its all the
same with you.

Suzie lifts up a hand, hesitates and then runs it through
her hair.

SUZIE

You're not second rate, whoever
told you that?

CARL

Hey, I'm under no illusions, I'm no
Picasso, I just do what I do and
it's been selling. As for really
making a mark, making a name for
myself... Well you heard Chloe, I
need a more original, unique
perspective, a way of seeing,
translating all of this from its
raw state into something specific
to me. Quite honestly I have no
idea where to start.

SUZIE

Chloe was hoping I might be able to
nudge you into a new, mode of work.

CARL

I need someone like you, someone
with an objective take on the whole
art market, if you could...

SUZIE

First thing is, you've got to stop
thinking about the market. It's
just a financially driven
narrative.

(MORE)

SUZIE (CONT'D)

What you have to do is look inside, create your own story and tell it in your own way. You do that, you create your own market, and control it from within.

CARL

This is what you were saying at the gallery about the artist as an actor.

SUZIE

Yep, it's the reason I want to act, it's the art of life.

They arrive outside the gallery and stop.

CARL

Hey, I really enjoyed that, maybe you'll make an actor out of me in the end.

SUZIE

Yeah it was cool, thanks for the drawing.

CARL

Oh, that's nothing. Look, I'd really like to continue this conversation. Would you like to drop by my studio some time, I'm in most days.

SUZIE

It's my day off on Friday, I could come by then.

CARL

Perfect. Ah, I've got a card here somewhere.

Carl finds his wallet and hands Suzie a business card. Suzie looks at it.

CARL

It's not hard to find, come around two, if you like, I'll make some lunch.

SUZIE

Two on Friday, for lunch. I'll be there.

CARL
Ok, great, well bye then.

SUZIE
Bye.

They turn and walk their separate ways into the night.

INT. CASA NUEVA GALLERY - DAY

A workman is attaching fittings to a wall in preparation to hang a picture. Suzie is standing watching him.

SUZIE
When you've finished with that one
there are just two more.

She walks to the back of the gallery and enters Chloe's office.

INT. CHLOE'S OFFICE - DAY

Chloe is sitting at her desk reading "Vogue" magazine, Suzie knocks and enters.

SUZIE
Would you like to supervise the
placing of the last two pictures?

CHLOE
No, that's fine, I'm sure you can
manage. Where we agreed early will
be perfect.

SUZIE
OK.

Suzie turns to leave.

CHLOE
How was your date with the
mysterious Mr. Lloyd-Brooks?

Suzie stops and turns.

SUZIE
Well I wouldn't exactly call it a
date. It was extremely
professional actually, I merely
gave him some pointers, avenues he
might care to explore to further
his career.

CHLOE

Mmm. That's just as well, I'd rather you didn't fraternise with our assets, apart from in a professional capacity of course.

SUZIE

Of course.

Suzie leaves the office. Chloe picks up her ultra modern phone and dials, waiting for a few moments. MILAN VAN DER BERG (56) answers from Amsterdam and speaks with a Dutch accent.

CHLOE

Milan my dear, it's Chloe. How's Amsterdam?

MILAN

How's it going my little London angel? Are you living well?

CHLOE

Yes, beautifully, naturally of course. Do let me know when you're in town, we have a lot of catching up to do.

MILAN

Do you have anything of interest for me this month?

CHLOE

No, not currently but there's always new works coming in. I'm sure there will be something of interest for you, there's someone I have my eye on.

MILAN

I'll call when I arrive.

CHLOE

As soon as you touch down.

MILAN

See you shortly.

CHLOE

Until then. Ciao.

She hangs up the phone and continues to read her magazine.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - EVENING

Sebastian is sitting on one of the large Chesterfield sofas, playing another retro video game on the huge screen at one end of the studio. Carl arrives from the kitchen area carrying coffees. There are two empty pizza boxes on a small table.

SEBASTIAN

Whatever you do, don't sell this video set up. If you're down to your last penny I'll buy it off you, for a reasonable price.

CARL

Don't even think like that, there's hope on the horizon.

SEBASTIAN

Hope! Most unlike you to be affiliating yourself with that concept. You must be talking about a lady.

CARL

I don't know, it's probably nothing. It's this woman who works at the gallery, we sort of went out the other night. Hard to tell what she was thinking. She's coming by here tomorrow.

SEBASTIAN

Do you want me to be here, I could suss her out for you, make sure you don't get taken in for a sucker.

CARL

That's very kind of you to offer but I'll be good. She wants to be an actress.

SEBASTIAN

I thought you had fairly strong opinions on that particular area of employment.

CARL

I do, I do, but I'm thinking she might be different, I might have caught her early enough before you know, she gets sucked in.

SEBASTIAN

Ah, give her a chance, she's probably not as crazy as you might imagine.

CARL

Yeah, you might be right.

INT. DISUSED WAREHOUSE SPACE - NIGHT

Suzie and her friend Iris are sitting together at their acting class, with ELEANOR (39), the tutor, and eight or so other students. Suzie gets up and is standing opposite FREDDY (20), a young man with long hair. They are close to each other and taking it in turns to make animal noises, increasing in volume.

SUZIE

Woof! Woof! Ruff! Ruff!

FREDDY

Moo!

Suzie then slaps Freddy hard in the face.

ELEANOR

Good, good! Now what have we learned?

FREDDY

That Suzie packs quite a right hander.

He is rubbing his face. All the group except Freddy laugh.

ELEANOR

We have learned that in order to act, react and interact we must, on some fundamental level be talking the same language and that this language does not have to be a spoken language. All dramatic tension comes from our ability or inability to do this. The meaning of the intention in acting is carried within our body language, and it is this which is universal. Thank you Freddy and Suzie. Nice slap Suzie, good action.

SUZIE

Thank you Eleanor.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

Music plays from a large Hi-Fi and speakers. Carl is vacuum cleaning everywhere. When he's done he checks a selection of food that he's laid out on a table, eating a few nibbles as he goes. He feeds his fish. He walks to one end of the studio where there is a large empty place on a wall and hangs a very large canvass. He steps back several steps from it, admiring the clean fresh white space.

CARL

Perfect!

INT. SUZIE AND IRIS' APARTMENT - DAY

Suzie is getting ready to leave the apartment. Iris sits on a sofa sewing together a large puppet which lays on her lap the length of the sofa.

IRIS

But what's he really like?

SUZIE

He's an adequate male. To be honest I don't think he's really serious about his art, fancies himself as a bit of a comedian. Did I tell you he knows both Robin Tucker AND Martin Stevens.

IRIS

Wow! I've always had a soft spot for that Martin Stevens, ever since he went American on that New York cop show. I mean it's the perfect accent don't you think. You'd never know he was from Basingstoke. Robin Tucker, I can take or leave, she should never have done those 'Eat, Go, and Blow' commercials, beneath her, shows a lack of class.

SUZIE

How do I look?

Iris looks up from her sewing.

IRIS

Available. You look like an actress, is that what you want me to say? No, you look fine really, especially for someone who's not that interested, knock him dead.

SUZIE
See you later.

Suzie turns and leaves.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

Carl is sitting reading a magazine, the door bell rings. He jumps up and readying himself opens the door. It is his landlord, GEORGE (68), a well dressed older gentleman who takes his hat off to talk with Carl.

CARL
Oh, Hi George, good to see you, how are things?

GEORGE
Oh, things are fine, just fine.

CARL
How can I help you? I'd ask you in but I'm expecting someone.

GEORGE
No need to worry, I'll only take a moment. It's just about the rent, the, er, last month's, it didn't, I mean it hasn't been paid.

CARL
Oh that, I know what that is, the bank has been playing around with some security issues, I've had a few other similar problems. I'll get it sorted, don't worry about it.

GEORGE
Thanks Carl, I thought it would be something along those lines. Is everything else going ok, I mean with you and the place?

CARL
Yeah, oh yeah, you know just painting and living, the usual.

GEORGE
Well that's good, I'll leave you be then.

CARL
Thanks George. See you around.

GEORGE

Bye then.

George walks away and Carl shuts the door. He walks back into the main area of the studio and stops. One by one he looks at his projector, his camera, his huge screen, games console and Hi-Fi. The door bell rings again. He walks to open it, this time its Suzie.

SUZIE

Hi, there Carl, I found it easy.

CARL

Hi Suzie, come in, come in.

SUZIE

Who was the old gentleman, just came out of your place?

CARL

Oh, that's my stockbroker, George, lovely guy.

SUZIE

Your pulling my leg right?

CARL

Yeah, he's just a guy lives near here, I think he gets lonely.

Suzie walks into the studio.

SUZIE

I love your place, it's huge...

Suzie comes across the table of food.

SUZIE

Oh, you didn't need to go to so much trouble.

CARL

Help yourself, would you like a glass of wine?

SUZIE

That would be, lovely.

Suzie picks at the food and Carl pours some wine. He hands a glass to Suzie.

SUZIE

Cheers.

CARL

Cheers. Hey, I don't want to be too pushy or anything, but I'm really keen to start working on some new pieces for the gallery. I'd love to hear your ideas for, a new direction.

Suzie moves a little closer to Carl.

SUZIE

Oh, that. I think your best bet is to move away from the photography based work and try something more, abstract, it's what people want at the moment.

CARL

That's good, I was looking towards more colour to show that kind of chaotic inner world.

SUZIE

I was wondering if maybe you'd like to help me out a little too.

CARL

Anything, what did you have in mind.

SUZIE

Would it be possible for you to introduce me to Martin Stevens. It's just I feel I could learn a lot from someone who's made it.

CARL

Certainly, I'll call him up, sort out a meeting.

Suzie puts her glass of wine down and moves closer to Carl.

SUZIE

Maybe the two of us could work together, a little more personally that is.

Carl puts his glass down, they embrace and kiss.

CARL

This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship...

They kiss again.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO BEDROOM - DAY

Carl and Suzie are lying in a great double bed in one area of the studio. Carl has a big smile on his face, Suzie lights up a cigarette.

CARL
That definitely wasn't acting.

SUZIE
There are some things you just
can't fake.

CARL
Sometimes you've just got to leave
work at a the office.

Carl stares at Suzie's partly covered body and her hair draped across the pillow.

CARL
You look beautiful.

SUZIE
Thank you.

CARL
Hey, do you mind if I make a few
photographs?

SUZIE
What?

CARL
It's just you look so relaxed and
cool, you can be my muse for a
while.

SUZIE
Oh, in that case, alright.

Carl jumps out of bed, putting on some pyjama bottoms and takes his camera which is on a table nearby. He shoots from a low level all around the bed, then into the light streaming from a window. He climbs up a ladder attached the wall, releasing the shutter at different heights, then he continues climbing up to a mezzanine floor and takes his photos from directly above Suzie who is now playing to the camera, revealing more and then less.

SUZIE
I've got a great idea.

Carl continues framing his shots.

SUZIE

We should definitely have a party,
invite everyone.

CARL

Sounds like an idea alright.

SUZIE

We can invite everyone we know,
it'll be so creative.

CARL

Yep, I think you're onto a winner.

SUZIE

We just need to choose a date.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - NIGHT

The studio is of half full of people eating and drinking, perhaps twenty or so, all dressed to impress in various classical and stylish fashions. More people are arriving all the while. Music creates an energy and a gold disco ball rotates slowly in the centre of the room it's reflections playing across the faces of the people at the party. Most of Suzie's acting class are there, Chloe and her friend Milan, Sebastian and Iris, Eleanor and Suzie and Carl plus assorted others. Carl is talking to a young man, MARTIN STEVENS (28), who has movie star looks and is perfectly attired.

CARL

Really it's great you could make it
Martin, bringing a bit of star
class. I know you're really busy at
the moment.

MARTIN

Hey, you're having a party Carl, I
want to be here.

Carl sees Suzie nearby.

CARL

There's someone I want you to meet
Mart, she's dying to meet you.
Suze! Suzie!

Suzie turns and walks over, she appears slightly overwhelmed but nevertheless in her element as she talks.

CARL

Suzie, this is Martin.

SUZE
Martin, hello.

They shake hands.

CARL
Watch out for this player Suzie,
he's a dangerous one alright.

SUZE
Oh, I do hope so. Carl's told me
next to nothing about your art
school days, so I only know you
from your films. Maybe you can
fill in the blanks.

MARTIN
Well Carl's the one who got all the
girls, I just got the lucky breaks.

SUZIE
I'm sure there was no luck
involved.

MARTIN
I was talking to Robin just
yesterday, she said she'll be here.
We're actually going to be working
together closely, very soon.
She'll be bringing some surprise
guests too but I'm not allowed to
tell you who.

CARL
Intriguing, that's cool, I haven't
actually seen her for quite a
while, since she started getting
stellar.

Sebastian walks up.

SEBASTIAN
Hey Martin you old dog, how's life?

They hug.

MARTIN
Seb, great to see you, still
selling your soul to anyone who'll
buy?

SEBASTIAN

Over and over again my friend, and
getting paid nicely every time.
You're looking trim, good to see
those business lunches aren't
taking a toll.

Sebastian gently hits Martin in the stomach. Eleanor is at
one end of the room talking to Iris.

IRIS

I'm not sure I'm cut out for it,
just being honest Eleanor. That's
the whole thing about my puppetry,
no one sees you, but you're totally
in control. You know like the
Director in a movie.

ELEANOR

But you're good, you know that, you
don't have to be extrovert or even
super confident to be an actor.

IRIS

Oh, I know I'm good, I'm a pretty
good cook too, but I don't want to
be a chef, you see? I'm really
there just for Suzie.

SUZIE

Yes, I understand. She does want
it so much, I wonder if there's
anything she won't do to get what
she wants. Some people have natural
talent, for others it's
determination, both work of course.

A young woman ROBIN TUCKER (28) is walking from the front
door talking with two identical twins ROGER RONSON and RUFUS
RONSON (33). They collect some drinks as they wind their
way through the crowd. A couple of people recognise them as
they do so. Robin sees Carl and walks through the party
with her friends up to Carl who is busying himself with the
music selection by the Hi-Fi.

ROBIN

Carl, I'm impressed.

Robin throws her arms around Carl. Carl holds her tight
then looks at her with his arms around her shoulders.

CARL

Hi, Robin, Robin, you look great.
Wow, really, I've been following
your career from afar.

ROBIN

Well, this is me close up!

CARL

You know you'll always be the girl
who sat at the back in Art Class
and flicked rolled up paper at me.

ROBIN

Yep that was me, and you were
always my favourite target. You
never asked me out though, I always
thought you would.

CARL

Well you kept flicking paper at me!
You always had stars in your eyes,
you were always heading for
something special.

ROBIN

Roger, Rupert, this is Carl Lloyd-
Brooks, painter and artist in
residence, it's his party.

The twins shake hands with Carl.

ROGER AND RUFUS

Please to me you.

CARL

My god! You're the Ronson brothers.
Wow, what are you doing here? I
mean you are very welcome here, I
mean welcome to the party.

Robin laughs.

SUZIE

Roger and Rupert are making a film
in London, we're well into pre-
production. "It's called Alter
Ego", it's a Noir Thriller.

ROGER

We're actually on then look out for
a few realistic extras right now.

CARL

Well ask anyone here and you'll get a positive response, I guarantee it. There's actors everywhere, throw an olive and you'll hit one, I doubt you'll even have to pay them!

ROBIN

Carl, just one moment, I can see Martin over there, I'm just going to have a word with him. Tell Rupert and Roger about yourself, I just want to say hello to him.

Robin walks towards Martin, Carl continues to talk to The Ronson brothers.

CARL

I've got to say I love your movies, especially "Double Shadows", but I've got to ask this, I expect you get it all the time, how do I tell which one of you is which?

The Ronsons laugh.

RUFUS

That's an industry secret, nobody knows!... I'll let you into it, Roger always wears a pen in his top pocket.

Carl looks at the pen in Roger's pocket.

CARL

So you're Rufus?

Rupert nods.

ROGER

And I'm Roger.

CARL

Is it true that you guys stood in for each other at each of your weddings?

Martin is still talking to Suzie.

MARTIN

You know Suzie, it's not what you know it's who you know.

SUZIE

Oh, I know, I know, the business is a well oiled machine. So you have my card, you promise me you'll let me know.

MARTIN

Of course, Suzanna, I really think I'll be able to find something for you.

Robin walks up to the two of them.

ROBIN

Martin honey.

She looks to Suzie.

ROBIN

Excuse me, sorry, I hope I wasn't interrupting anything.

SUZIE

No, not at all. I'm Suzie, Carl's girlfriend.

ROBIN

Oh hi, good to meet you.

MARTIN

Suzie's just starting out as an actress, I thought we could help her out.

ROBIN

Sure, I'll introduce you to the Ronsons. They're looking for people right now, I mean right now.

SUZIE

Thank you so much.

ROBIN

Do you mind if I borrow Martin for just a few moments?

SUZIE

No go ahead.

ROBIN

I think Carl's over there talking to Rupert and Roger, go over, introduce yourself. I'm Robin.

SUZIE

Ms. Tucker I'm very familiar with you and your work.

ROBIN

Thank you, we can talk later.

Suzie walks towards Carl and the Ronson twins.

ROBIN

Martin, have you had a look at the latest draft of the script?

MARTIN

Which draft are we on now?

ROBIN

Thirteen.

Suzie approaches Carl and when she reaches him puts her arm around him.

CARL

Suzie, this is Rufus and Roger Ronson. Guys, this is Suzie, the very special person I was telling you about.

SUZIE

Hi. A real surprise to have you here.

They shake hands.

RUFUS

Pleased to meet you, great party.

SUZIE

Oh, you know, just set the disco ball spinning and let the alcohol do the rest.

ROGER

Carl here tells us you're quite the actress in the making.

SUZIE

Well I'm all raw talent at the moment, looking for direction...

RUFUS

You're just the kind of person
we're looking for as a matter of
fact, really soon actually. Here's
a card, just call this in the
morning tomorrow and we'll be sure
to get you on board.

Roger hands Suzie a card which she holds onto with both
hands.

SUZIE

I hope I don't disappoint, I'm just
a beginner really.

ROGER

All the better, a blank canvass,
someone who doesn't have to unlearn
everything.

RUFUS

We're into the real performance, no
affectations.

SUZIE

Well thank you, I think I'll hardly
be able to sleep tonight.

CARL

I think we'll be clearing up all
night. Can I get you guys another
drink?

ROGER

Double Scotch if you've got it.

RUFUS

Same.

CARL

That's double doubles, right?

Carl looks a little confused but walks away. Sebastian has
met Iris and the two stand under the disco ball, drinking
wine, eating slices of pizza and making small talk.

IRIS

They're just puppets, I know
everyone thinks they're for kids
but I love them.

SEBASTIAN

Don't you think they represent the human condition so beautifully? The way we're all really being controlled by someone else?

IRIS

Well, yes! It doesn't matter who you are, someone is pulling on your strings.

SEBASTIAN

Usually from way up above.

IRIS

Well, yes!

SEBASTIAN

So what's Suzie like to live with?

IRIS

She's a pain in arse! Well she was, she's fully moved in with Carl now, so it's just me and my puppets, they're no trouble. I haven't got a chance to get to know Carl though. He seems to have his shit together.

SEBSATIAN

"Seems" is the right word, he's the king of appearances. This place, all of this, if he doesn't sell a whole load of work that he hasn't even started yet, he's going to have to say goodbye to this little piece of paradise.

IRIS

Really, Suzie seemed to think he was loaded.

SEBASTIAN

Well he was, now he's... unloaded. He'll pull it together though, he always does, usually at the last minute. Do you like the pizza?

IRIS

I love this pizza, it's so gooey and tomatoey, and crispy.

SEBASTIAN

I'm getting an idea, are you free tomorrow? I might have a new project for you, and a puppet.

IRIS

Have you got a card?

SEBASTIAN

Naturally.

Sebastian removes a card from his wallet and hands it to Iris who reads.

IRIS

Sebastian de la Croix. Campaign Manager UK. I'm impressed. What's the nature of this business?

SEBASTIAN

Advertising, I'm in advertising.

IRIS

How do you fancy being in a puppet?

Iris takes a big bite from her slice of pizza. Chloe and her friend Milan Van Der Berg, who speaks with a Dutch accent are standing facing the blank canvass that Carl had hung on the wall. They drink Champagne.

MILAN

It's obviously about memory. The sheer, vast expanse of the clear mind, free from all reference points, ready for all experience. The potential of anything to come.

CHLOE

Well I do hope so my dear Milan, this boy has talent, but no discipline. I fear he's going to blow his opportunity, however much potential he has. I mean look.

The turn around to face the party.

CHLOE

He's just living it up, he promised me sketches, he promised me new work, now he's shackled up with my newest gallery assistant, the one who's supposed to be giving him some kind of structure in his work, and I haven't had so much as splash of paint from him in a month.

MILAN

A man who has this much energy, this much life in his life must have at least as much inside of him to give. Maybe I should talk to the young pretender.

CHLOE

Would you, I'd hate to see him throw it all away.

Eleanor is talking to a small group of five or so of her students in a corner. They are surrounding her and listening intently.

ELEANOR

This is your world, this is where the acting brain is at home. You need to stop, absorb every moment, every movement. Really SEE the subtext of this situation.

Suddenly another one of the students runs over to the group.

STUDENT

Hey, the Ronson twins are here! They're hiring extras, now, right now!

All the students run off leaving Eleanor sitting on her own. She picks up a can of lager and drinks.

ELEANOR

Students!

JAMIE (18), a young man wearing jeans and a t-shirt comes up to her.

ELEANOR

Oh, Hi Jamie, don't you want to go and get a role as an extra with the others. You do know the Ronson brothers are here.

JAMIE

No, I'm more interested in becoming a real actor. That's if you think acting can truly be taught. Do you think you can teach me how to act?

Eleanor looks dejected and takes another swig of her beer. She looks at Jamie up and down.

ELEANOR

Probably not.

JAMIE

Well do you feel like a quick shag then? I've found a bed just around there.

He points. Eleanor looks at him in disbelief.

ELEANOR

Oh, fuck off...

People have livened up and the party is moving. Milan Van Der Berg approaches Carl who is dancing with Robin and taps him on the shoulder.

MILAN

Carl, could I have a quick few words with you.

CARL

Sure.

Milan takes him to a wall.

MILAN

You don't know me. I am Milan. I'm a special acquaintance of Chloe de la Rosa.

CARL

Ok, yes, hello.

MILAN

I'm here to tell you that unless you pull your finger out of your creative backside your life, certainly your professional life and arrangement at the Casa Nueva gallery will simply come to an end, and then where will you be?

CARL

I see, I understand.

MILAN

Do you? Very little lasting art work of any importance has originated in this kind of... hedonism, as funky and cool as it is. My advice to you is to look within yourself at the areas of your life where struggle, conflict and suffering reside and to reflect that upon your canvass.

Carl is understandably slightly intimidated by the larger man.

CARL

I can do that.

MILAN

Can you? I am currently in a position to be buying works from London, I herald from the Netherlands and Chloe's beautiful little shop and I are in close collaboration. I have seen your work and it is good, but simply put it is not good enough, not yet.

CARL

I can improve and am beginning to have some new ideas...

MILAN

Be silent. If you have the inner life to feed your talents you will go far, but if you cannot mine the caves of your soul you will end up as nothing but a puppet, on an island, surrounded by a sea of chaos, controlled by anyone who feels so inclined. Now work.

Milan turns and leaves disappearing into the people of the party. Carl is left stunned and remains so until Robin comes to his aid.

ROBIN

Are you alright? Who was that?

CARL

That was Milan.

ROBIN

What did he want?

CARL

Work.

The party continues with people mixing freely. The drink disappears and then, moment by moment, in the early hours, one by one and in couples, people say their goodbyes and leave. With one last song coming to an end the main area of the studio is left in a state of disarray and completely vacated. The gold disco ball continues to rotate...

EXT. LONDON CITY SCAPE - NIGHT

The full moon hangs high at it's zenith. London operates at its lowest energy with but a few cars trailing their lights along the road and through the streets.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - MORNING

Carl lies in bed. Stirring he recalls the last words spoken by Milan.

MILAN (V.O)

Now work...Now work...Now work...

He wakes with a start. The sunlight is coming through the window. He looks over to the other side of the bed to see Robin. She lies, beautiful and fast asleep, with hair tousled across the pillow in a similar way to the pose adopted by Suzie when he was photographing her. He gets out of bed, naked except for his watch and walks through to the main area of the studio. The first thing he does is switch off the disco ball which stops rotating and for a moment all is still in the room and with him. The place is in a terrible mess. He looks at his watch.

CARL

Now work.

He walks back to the bedroom and looks at Robin, then he wakes her.

CARL

Robin, Robin.

Robin stirs and looks up at him with a smile.

ROBIN

Hello party boy.

CARL

I hate to do this Robin, you don't know how much I hate to this but I've got to ask you to get up and go.

ROBIN

Oh, ok. I was going to help you tidy up and things.

CARL

I think I've got to do that.

Robin sits up.

ROBIN

Are you ok?

CARL

Yeah, I'm fine, I've just got to work. Are you good?

ROBIN

I don't know about good, but I'm alright really, I'm ok. What time is it?

CARL

It's eleven.

ROBIN

Oh, crumbs. I should go anyway, I've got bundles of stuff to do. Are we alright here, I mean us.

Carl sort of laughs a little.

CARL

I think we're great, I finally got together with the cute girl from Year Ten Art Class who kept flicking paper at me.

ROBIN

Is this going to go anywhere?

CARL

You know I don't know, I hope so, if we can work it out. But for now...

ROBIN

You've got to work.

CARL
Yeah, that's it exactly.

ROBIN
I totally understand.

Robin gets out of bed, Carl admires her naked form from behind and soon she is dressed and standing before him.

ROBIN
Are you going to put some clothes on or are you working naked these days?

CARL
Ha, yeah.

Carl pulls on his old grey boiler suit and they stand facing each other. Robin puts her arms around him, they kiss.

ROBIN
You will call, won't you?

CARL
I will, I don't know when but I will.

ROBIN
I've got a lot on, so if I'm busy, it's because...

CARL
You're busy. And if I take a while its because...

ROBIN
You're working. Ok, I'm just going to go. You will call.

CARL
I will.

They kiss and Robin turns to leave.

CARL
I know this is odd Robin, but what happened to Suzie?

ROBIN
Well... She was with Martin for most of the party, and now... she obviously ain't here! You might have more than just work to do...

CARL

Yeah, look out for yourself Robin,
it's supercool being with you.

ROBIN

Bye, thanks for the cool party.
She blows him a kiss.

CARL

Bye.

Robin leaves shutting the studio door behind her. Carl enters the main studio area, plays some mellow music on his Hi-Fi and begins to clean up the chaotic mess.

In a montage accelerating from slow motion to fast he tidies up, makes coffee, puts rubbish and recycling out, makes more coffee, cleans, takes the disco ball down and makes his bed. The sun comes through the windows and travel across the space. The whole studio is spotless.

Carl stands in front of the large blank canvass at one end of the space. He moves the projector, attaches his camera, closes the curtains and blinds, and scans through the photographs of Suzie then selects one and focusses it upon the canvass. He puts different music on his Hi-Fi, moves a rack of paints into place and begins to paint.

Time-lapse shows the evolution of an impressionistic version of the photograph, with a style clearly similar to his previous work only now with a broader, stronger and much more colourful dynamic. As soon as he has finished he takes another fresh canvass, projects another image and starts painting again.

INT. SEBASTIAN'S STUDY - DAY

Sebastian's work room is the epitome of minimalist cool. Central is the large tilted drawing board and some Danish designer furniture. Scattered around the room and especially on the walls are souvenirs and images of previous advertising campaigns. Sitting at the drawing board Sebastian and Iris are considering some sketches and ideas.

IRIS

How are we going to make this work?

SEBASTIAN

We can work on the wording later.
It's not like it has to be
philosophical or anything.

IRIS

But it has to be funny right?

SEBASTIAN

Funny sells, people remember funny.

IRIS

We have to narrow it down to one character, the face of Puppetelli's. I think we should go with this guy. He's cool, he's bonkers, he's memorable.

SEBASTIAN

Ok, I'm with you. Can you make up some kind of, I don't know what you call it, a prototype?

IRIS

A mock up, it might take a good couple of weeks or so.

SEBASTIAN

That's amazing, you're a natural. I think we might call it a day there, what do you think? We've done some really good work. Er, would you like to stay for dinner Iris?

IRIS

You bet, all this talk of pizza.

SEBASTIAN

How does a glass of wine sound?

IRIS

Let's get it on!

INT. SCREEN TEST ROOM - DAY

Suzie is standing in a film studio space, lit by a key light and fill. The Ronson twins sit next to each other beside a camera which is manned by a cameraman and a female assistant. There is a sound person and a boom operator and a couple of grips but otherwise the scene is quite close and personal.

RUFUS

Ok Suzanna, we'll take it from the beginning of scene eighteen, your monologue. Are you ok with that?

SUZIE

Yes, yes that's fine, just a moment.

She checks her script which is on a chair to one side then replaces it.

SUZIE

I'm ready.

ROGER

Ok. Camera.

CAMERA

Rolling.

RUFUS

Sound.

SOUND

Speed.

ROGER

Alright, Suzie, when you feel ready.

Suzie relaxes and takes her time for this her big break. After a moment she begins her piece, looking directly at Rufus and Roger she uses her whole body to put everything into the performance.

SUZIE

The foul look of his contorted face as though he'd had the last laugh, the unnatural way his broken limbs were twisted, twisted and gnarly like the roots of a tree. This man hadn't gone quietly but he'd taken two other men with him into the depths of death below the underworld. No one would shed a tear for him or his like, including me, but I couldn't help but wonder if this was his last effect on the world he'd left behind. There was that St.Christopher medallion gripped tightly in his dying hand. The patron saint of travellers. Was his journey over now or was he merely handing over the baton to me?

(MORE)

SUZIE (CONT'D)

I already knew one of his secrets
now I had to carry his legacy
towards another world, a world
where dead men speak and the living
have to listen. I had heard his
voice and it put the chill in me.
It was fearful cold running through
my very soul. I took another slug
of Scotch and felt the warmth to my
heart, vowing never to go to that
place again.

Suzie stops and comes out of the zone in which she has put herself. The Ronson brothers confer.

RUFUS

Cut. That's perfect Suzie. We need
to do some serious thinking now.
We've got your number. We'll get
back to you in a couple of days, no
longer.

SUZIE

Thank you so much, I really enjoyed
it.

Suzie leaves and when she's gone Rufus and Roger talk to each other.

ROGER

She is good.

RUFUS

She is.

ROGER

It's a risk though, don't you
think?

RUFUS

What did we say at the outset, new
talent, new direction.

ROGER

Robin will be cut up about it. We
haven't signed with her yet have
we?

RUFUS

No. She'll find something else very quickly. This girl, this Suzanna, I think she's made for the silver screen and we get to discover her, cast her in her first feature.

ROGER

There is something else. Martin has put in his preference. Seems he and Suzanna have developed quite a thing.

RUFUS

That kind of chemistry could work well in this story.

ROGER

So we're agreed then.

RUFUS

Looks like we've got a new leading lady.

EXT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

Carl is by the phone box outside his studio. He dials and waits. Chloe answers from her office at the gallery.

CHLOE

Hello.

CARL

Hi Chloe, it's Carl.

CHLOE

Carl, I've been hoping to hear from you, how have you been?

CARL

Busy, very busy. Listen I've got something for you.

CHLOE

Interesting, can I see it?

CARL

That's what I had in mind. Can I bring it over, if you like it there's more.

CHLOE

Wonderful, when were you thinking.

CARL
I've got it all boxed and wrapped
up, I can bring it over now.

CHLOE
You do that. I'll be here all
afternoon.

CARL
Fantastic see you soon.

CHLOE
Ciao Carl.

CARL
Yep, later.

Carl hangs up and, still in his grey boiler suit which has some paint on it now, jumps in his battered pick up truck, puts some music on and drives away.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY

Carl speeds through the city listening to music. He arrives at a place to park near the gallery and struggling with the size of his painting walks to the back door of the gallery.

EXT. GALLERY BACK DOOR - DAY

He pushes the buzzer. Chloe answers.

CHLOE
Hello.

CARL
Hi Chloe, it's Carl.

CHLOE
Come on in Carl.

Chloe pushes a button and the back door unlocks. Carl brings the painting in.

INT. GALLERY - DAY

Chloe meets Carl in the backroom where he opens the painting from its protection.

CHLOE
Great party the other week, I felt
like there was a lot going on.

CARL

Seems like a lot's come from it if truth be told.

CHLOE

Let's see what we've got here.

CARL

I hope you like it.

The complete painting is revealed as Carl stands it against a wall.

CHLOE

My, my. Mmm, is that... Is that who I think it is?

CARL

Yes, I believe it probably is. I'm not sure if she'll like it but do you?

CHLOE

I do, I do. However... I'm not sure I can... You know this may work... You know the lady depicted in this work no longer works here.

CARL

Oh, I see, does that make it easier or harder to...

CHLOE

She left yesterday, said she'd got a film job with the er... Ronson Brothers.

CARL

Well that's good for her, does this mean that's good for me too?

CHLOE

It might, it just might. You know what I'm going to do. I'm going to sit on this for a while and have a little chat with my friend Milan, you met him didn't you?

CARL

Yes, yes I did. He was quite... forthright with me... motivational in point of fact.

CHLOE

Give me some time with this Carl,
I'll see if I can work my magic.

CARL

Ok, Ok, but if you can... move
things along at some kind of pace,
ah time is a factor to be honest.

CHLOE

Ah, time, time and money, such
precious commodities, if we only
had more of the one we might have
more of the other. I'll do my
best.

CARL

Right, that's all I ask.

CHLOE

Do you have more of these?

CARL

I certainly do, there's a whole
series, along the same lines...
fifteen at the last count.

CHLOE

My you have been busy. Carl, you've
really turned a corner here, I
think we can make this work.

CARL

I hope so, so I'll be in touch, in
a few days.

CHLOE

Give me a little longer, I'll have
something for you.

CARL

Cool, see you in a while.

Carl leaves. Chloe goes to her office and calls Milan.

INT. CHLOE'S OFFICE - DAY

MILAN

Hello Chloe.

CHLOE

I don't know what you said to our young man but he's produced some new work that I think you should see.

MILAN

Do you have it at the gallery?

CHLOE

I do.

MILAN

I'll be over tomorrow afternoon.

CHLOE

See you then darling, Ciao!

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - MORNING

The studio is piling up with Carl's new paintings. He sits playing a video game, the door buzzer sounds, he answers it and lets in Sebastian. They sit on the sofa and play the video game.

CARL

Two player.

SEBASTIAN

There have been some developments my friend.

CARL

What kind?

SEBASTIAN

Maybe the kind you'd like to know about.

CARL

Ooh, come on out with it.

SEBASTIAN

First Martin and Suzie are now officially an item. There's even been a few photos of them in the papers.

CARL

Can't say I'm surprised, that girl's going to sleep her way to the top.

SEBASTIAN

Do you think you might have been the bottom rung?

CARL

Very classy Seb, very classy.

SEBASTIAN

Plus, Iris and Suzie have fallen out with each other and Suzie has moved out of their flat and moved in with Martin to his place in the Docklands.

CARL

Woah. Fast mover. Why is it that I'm starting to feel like the middle man here? I've been used like a disposable wet wipe, no like her taxi cab just to get from one location to the next.

SEBASTIAN

Don't beat yourself up buddy, it's happened to the best of us.

CARL

This has happened to you before?

SEBASTIAN

Well actually no.

CARL

Hey I'm not mad, I've come out of it all alright haven't I? I've got my art and...

SEBASTIAN

Yeah I was looking at that, that's the young lady in question isn't it?

CARL

Yeah that's her, just trying to make some money out of nothing I guess.

SEBASTIAN

But that's not all. Suzie had a screen test with the Ronson twins and she's now the leading lady in their new Noir Thriller, 'Alter Ego'.

CARL

Where are you getting all this from?

SEBASTIAN

I have an inside informant.

CARL

Who?

SEBASTIAN

Iris.

CARL

Hey are you and her...?

SEBASTIAN

Maybe, might be. Working relationships often develop into personal ones.

CARL

So you're working together now, to what degree of development?

SEBASTIAN

Watch this space, as they say in the advertising game. In fact she's moved in with me, well she was getting lonely in that flat all by herself, I had to do something.

CARL

Oh my god. Robin's going to be totally mad, she thought she had that part wrapped up, all signed and sealed.

SEBASTIAN

Well that's the film game isn't it.

CARL

I have to call her, I really do.

SEBASTIAN

You two looked pretty chummy at the party. You make an interesting couple, very aspirational with a certain aesthetic.

CARL

It was odd, she stayed after the party, I was a bit freaked when I woke if I'm honest. It was like someone had swapped one actress for another in the middle of the night.

SEBASTIAN

Maybe that's what happens if you sleep with people who make their living playing other people. Are you sure it was Robin?

CARL

Yes of course I'm sure you bozo.

SEBASTIAN

Well from my totally objective point of view you got the upgrade.

CARL

Don't. I've got to call her, I just want to get it right for her, for me. You know when you've got a thread that you're holding onto that leads to someone you care about and you just have to keep holding onto it and follow it for long enough.

SEBASTIAN

Don't let go brother. Hey when are you going to actually, finally get yourself a mobile phone anyway? It would be a whole lot easier for you, for me too. I wouldn't have to get the tube all the way over here to relay all this gossip and what not. Maybe you would have called Robin by now too.

CARL

You're right, I would have called her and I wouldn't have known what to say yet. My way it all happens in good time, at the right time.

SEBASTIAN

Just in time hopefully. Don't leave it too late, she's hot property right now.

CARL

Do you want to buy this video console? I need some quick cash.

SEBASTIAN

As long as it stays right here and I can use it whenever I want to.

CARL

Deal. How much have you got on you?

SEBASTIAN

Pause the game.

Sebastian looks in his wallet.

SEBASTIAN

Two Hundred and Eighty.

CARL

Sold. Ok hand it over.

Sebastian hands Carl the cash who puts it in his shirt pocket.

SEBASTIAN

Ok. Play the game.

They play the game as the music plays.

INT. MODERN PUBLIC ART GALLERY - DAY

Robin is walking through a modern art gallery on her own. She's relaxed and carefree, swinging a small bag and stopping at particular paintings that she likes. A YOUNG COUPLE (20s) notice her and walk up to her.

YOUNG WOMAN

Er, sorry to bother you. You're Robin Tucker aren't you.

ROBIN

Yes, that I am indeed.

YOUNG MAN

We noticed you from over there, and I thought we shouldn't bother you but...

YOUNG WOMAN

We're both such big fans, I feel
kind of foolish, I expect this
happens to you all the time.

ROBIN

Well actually not so often, I
think people just think I look like
someone they recognise.

YOUNG WOMAN

Could we get a selfie?

ROBIN

Sure.

They take a selfie with a famous painting for a background.

YOUNG MAN

Our friends aren't going to believe
this.

ROBIN

Well you've got proof now!

YOUNG WOMAN

Can you sign our programme?

ROBIN

No, problem.

Robin signs their programme with a pen they give her.

YOUNG WOMAN

You're even nicer in reality than
in your movies.

ROBIN

Well I've done some pretty lousy
movies, so I'm not so sure...

YOUNG MAN

We won't take up any more of your
time. Thank you so much.

ROBIN

It's my pleasure, really, a perk of
the job.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you. Thank you. Good bye.

The young couple walk away and Robin smiles to herself before carrying on to look at the exhibits. Other members of the public walk on by unaware of the star in their midst.

EXT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

TITLE : TUESDAY MORNING

George, the elderly landlord is walking towards Carl's studio door. With him is a huge hulking man, ALBERT (40), who towers over the old gentleman. They approach the door and George knocks on it. Carl opens it in his dressing gown.

CARL
Hello. Hello George.

GEORGE
Good-day.

CARL
What can I do for you George?

Carl looks nervously at the large man.

GEORGE
I'm so sorry to be such a pain Carl
but its the rent.

CARL
Ah yes, the rent. I was going to...

GEORGE
You are now three months in arrears
and I simply am unable to be any
more polite than I have been in
order to facilitate your payment.

CARL
Yes, I understand, I do, the thing
is...

GEORGE
This is Albert, he's my friend, and
he handles my financial matters, to
some degree. I'm afraid if you
can't put your hands upon the
necessary, Albert will have to
start taking things from you,
little things, big things, valuable
things. You see?

CARL
Yes, I see.

GEORGE
Albert, give Carl the piece of paper.

Albert gives Carl a piece of paper.

GEORGE
Thank you Albert. On the paper is the amount owing. We'll drop by on... Thursday, at 7pm precisely, for you to give Albert the exact sum written on the paper. Is this clear?

CARL
Perfectly, very clear indeed.

GEORGE
Excellent. We'll see you in three days. Come on Albert, it's lovely weather, I'll buy you an ice-cream.

ALBERT
That's very nice of you Mr. George.

GEORGE
Goodbye Carl.

CARL
Goodbye.

George and Albert turn and leave, Carl shuts the door.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO

Carl is pacing up and down holding onto the piece of paper. He points to his Hi-Fi

CARL
No.

He points to the game's console and the projector.

CARL
No. No.

Finally he points to the camera which is on a tripod.

CARL
It has to be you.

He finds a Yellow Pages and a pen and, still standing, leafs through the big book. He circles one company and rips out the page. Quickly he moves to a place where there are several cardboard boxes. He finds the camera box at the back and the bottom and spends the next few minutes packing all the cables, battery and instruction manual into the box. As he removes the camera from the tripod and prepares to put it into the box...

CARL

Ah..

He removes the memory card.

CARL

Might be worth something one day.

He puts the memory card into his pocket and the camera into the box, which he then closes. He puts it under his arm and walks to the door.

CARL

Ah...

He is still in his dressing gown. Leaving the box by the door he goes to his bedroom and soon emerges in his now paint covered boiler suit. He picks up the box, opens the door, closes it behind him and runs to the phone box on the corner. He dials.

EXT. PHONE BOX - DAY

CARL

Hello. Yes, Hi. I have a camera to sell. Yes, its a... DG40 Double X.. No, the one with a hundred megapixels. How much do you think you might be able to pay for it? It's mint condition. Is that all! Ok, Ok, I'm going to drop by soon. Thank you.

Carl dials again, this time to Chloe.

CARL

Hi Chloe, it's Carl. I just wondered about the painting.

CHLOE

I'm able to put it up for sale tomorrow and I have good news. Milan would like to look at the rest of the series if that's possible, can you bring them here?

CARL

Excellent. Yes! I'll wrap them up and bring them by this afternoon if that's ok.

CHLOE

Lovely. Are you ok darling, you appear to have high stress patterns in your voice, are you sleeping properly?

CARL

I'm fine really, I just find myself with rather a lot to do in rather a short time.

CHLOE

Oh, the rush of the youth, don't forget to slow down and take a breath every now and then, you'll only benefit from it.

CARL

Thanks Chloe, I've got to go, I'll see you later.

CHLOE

Ciao!

Carl jogs to his pick-up truck, puts the camera box on the passenger seat and drives off.

INT. CARL'S CAR - DAY

Carl is tapping the steering wheel in time to the music. Soon he arrives at the second hand camera store where he parks the car, runs in with the box and moments later walks out putting the cash in his wallet. Back in the car the music continues, Carl drives. At a hardware store he stops the car, he looks in his wallet. Jumping out of the car he rushes inside. Moments later he exits the store with an enormous, industrial sized roll of bubble wrap. He drives home and is soon inside.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

In a speeded up sequence similar to when Carl cleaned up his studio after the party, he wraps up about fifteen of the canvasses. They pile up.

EXT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

Continuing in quick motion. Carl loads all canvasses onto the back of his pick up and secures them safely with ropes and bungee chords. The finished load is high and quite impressive to Carl who stands looking at what he has done as the speed returns to normal. He gets in the car and drives to the gallery.

INT. CARL'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Carl listens to the same music, drumming his fingers once more. He parks at the back of the gallery as usual. Chloe buzzes him in and one by one he brings the paintings from his pick up into the gallery back room. Finally it is done.

CHLOE

Milan is very interested as I mentioned but he has to see all the work before he decides what he wishes.

CARL

When can you let me know what he thinks?

CHLOE

Well my dear, if you had a phone, it would be sooner rather than later. Call me tomorrow.

CARL

Ok, Ah there's one other thing Chloe. You don't think you could give me some kind of ah... advance on any future sales, it's just I'm experiencing a kind of cash flow problem right now.

CHLOE

Carl my boy, I can't do that through the company. I can lend you a little personally if that will help.

CARL
You know it really might.

Chloe looks through her bag.

CHLOE
Here's a couple of hundred. You know Suzie left only a few days ago now and it seems as if she's on the up and up in the film world.

CARL
Yeah, I heard as much. I guess people get what they deserve. Quiet truthfully, although she does have that certain something, I'm not sure she was every my... type.

CHLOE
She likes art, she knows about art, she can sell art, and now...

Chloe motions to the large pile of paintings...

CHLOE
...she IS art, but you know Carl, she'll never be a true artist, that's here, here in the heart.

Chloe taps Carl on the chest.

CARL
Thank you Chloe. Listen, I'll pay you back, soon, I promise. I've got to go now. Chloe, thank you.

CHLOE
Ciao!

Carl leaves via the back door.

EXT. GALLERY BACK ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

Carl talks to himself quietly.

CARL
Robin, Robin...

INT. GALLERY OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Chloe picks up the phone.

CHLOE

Milan, can you come right over, I have Carl Lloyd-Brooks' latest pieces. See you love, Ciao!

She hangs up.

INT. CLASSY BAR - NIGHT

Robin is having drinks with JOSH (35), a financial type in a quiet bar which is beautifully lit and tastefully decorated. The two are close and seem to be getting closer.

JOSH

I imagine all the guys in your life just want to be with you because you're famous right?

ROBIN

Not all of them, but yes, I get that a lot.

JOSH

You see with me, you've got someone from another world. It's funny, futures and commodities are probably so alien to you but to me they are bread and butter, meat and potatoes.

ROBIN

I must say I'm always interested in discovering the details of the lives of other microcosms. My life on the other hand is an open book, you see my films, you see me, what you see is what you get.

JOSH

There's no knowing how people's work life impacts on their private life but I feel with you, I already know you somewhat, perhaps because you put your own character into your film.

ROBIN

Ah, you'll find there's at least two of me, on screen and off, but to some extent you're right. All these little gestures and mannerisms you see in the films have to come from somewhere.

JOSH
May I ask you a personal question
Robin?

JOSH
Do you already have a stockbroker
to manage your financial portfolio?

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

TITLE : WEDNESDAY MORNING

With a coffee on the go, Carl is working on a new painting. In contrast to his earlier methods with curtains drawn, now sunlight is filling the studio, bursting over another large canvass hanging on the wall but now the evolving picture is horizontal and in the ratio of a widescreen film format. He has sketched in pencil a wide-angle shot. On the left is the back of a woman's head, with a drop-earring and necklace. Framed in the shape her arm makes as she runs her hand through her hair, is a man in a suit. Balancing the picture on the right is a parked motorcycle.

He stands back to look at the progress and talks to himself quietly.

CARL
Robin, Robin...

EXT. LONDON STREETS, CHELSEA - DAY

Martin and Suzie are walking along the pavement, wearing casual clothes and expensive sunglasses.

SUZIE
Hey, would you like to see where I
used to work?

MARTIN
Yeah, sure, is it far from here?

SUZIE
No, it's just around the corner.

They walk and turn the corner.

SUZIE
This is it.

They stop outside Casa Nueva. In the large front window is Carl's impressionistic interpretation of one of the nude photographs he took of Suzie.

MARTIN

I love that, that's so cool. It looks like a photo, but it's a painting. Weird. It kind of looks a bit like you.

Suzie puts her hand over her mouth then slowly removes it.

SUZIE

Mmm, I can see why you might see a resemblance.

MARTIN

I think it's beautiful.

Suzie looks closer at the signature in the bottom corner.

SUZIE

Would you believe it, it's one of Carl's.

MARTIN

Never, that's so cool. I love it. I didn't know he was so talented. Shall we go in, I wonder how much it is.

SUZIE

Should we.

MARTIN

Come on.

They go in.

INT. CASA NUEVA GALLERY - DAY

Suzie and Martin move around the fluid space. Martin in particular seems to be floating as he looks at the other paintings. Chloe emerges from behind the back counter.

CHLOE

Hello Suzie.

SUZIE

Hi Chloe. Just felt like seeing things from the other side.

CHLOE

Mmm. And you I also know, Mr. Martin Stevens, I'm a fan of all your movies, always the enigmatic character. Do you see anything you like?

MARTIN

Well as a matter of fact I was drawn in by the painting in a window.

CHLOE

'LIASON WITH A LADY', it's by Carl Lloyd-Brooks.

MARTIN

Yeah, I know it's crazy we were at art school together, he's so talented. I knew he was getting successful but this, I mean this is it, surely? How much is it?

EXT. LONDON BUS - DAY

Iris and Sebastian are on the top floor of an open top bus tour of the city. They are eating from a big bucket of popcorn listening to the guide who is pointing out the tourist spots. Sebastian's phone rings.

SEBASTIAN

Hello. Hi Carl. We were just talking about you. I'm with Iris.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH- DAY

CARL

Hey Seb, I'm really reluctant to do this but I need some money or I'm going to lose my studio.

EXT. LONDON BUS - DAY

SEBASTIAN

How much do you need? That's not so much. I tell you what I could do, I could throw some work your way, I know you don't like to borrow. Well it's kind of advertising work really. Yeah, it's the pizza company, they open their first shop tomorrow. No, no it wouldn't be making pizza. Just show up at 10am they'll have everything there. It's 400 Fulham High street, easy to remember. Yep, ten until six, 200 Cash. Glad to help out buddy, take it easy, enjoy tomorrow.

Sebastian hangs up.

IRIS

I can't believe you did that.

SEBASTIAN

He wants to work for a living, what can I say?

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - DAY

Carl is developing his 'cinema freeze frame' painting listening to gentle music. There is a knock at the door. He puts his brush down and walks towards the door opening it. It's Suzie.

CARL

Suzie, er how are you?

SUZIE

Can I come in?

CARL

Ok, I was working but... yeah.

They walk into the studio, Carl closes the door.

SUZIE

I just came to apologise... for the way I left here after your party.

CARL

Don't worry about it, I think we both know that perhaps we were both suited to other people. I hear you're with Martin now.

SUZIE

Yes, he's lovely really. But you, it looked like you and Robin were getting along... famously.

CARL

I can't really talk about that right now.

SUZIE

Oh really, why not?

CARL

Umm... I've got some personal stuff to sort out.

SUZIE

Oh, it's like that. I thought we might remain friends.

CARL

I don't think that's going to be possible Suzie, not with how things are, not at the moment.

SUZIE

You, know I'm flattered and everything but I didn't fully appreciate you putting my naked body for sale at the gallery.

CARL

Ah... Chloe's hung it now has she?

SUZIE

She's hung it, I was just there with Martin and he's bought it.

CARL

He has, wow, that's amazing.

SUZIE

It's not amazing, he wants to put it on the ceiling over the bed. He doesn't even know it's of me.

CARL

He wants one of my paintings on his bedroom ceiling! That's a bit weird. Are you going to tell him it's you?

SUZIE

I think he'll work it out eventually, I'm not sure what he'll do when he does. The point is you didn't ask me, or tell me at all.

CARL

I just have to paint, the photos were... a starting point.

SUZIE

What about the photos Carl, do you still have them? They could ruin my career, later down the line.

CARL

I don't know, maybe they could pick your career up a little, spice things up if things start, you know, flagging.

Suzie slaps Carl across the face.

SUZIE

Will you give me those photos?

CARL

Sure, I think I have them right here.

Carl puts his hand in his boiler suit pocket and removes the memory card which he hands to Suzie.

SUZIE

I never lied to you Carl.

CARL

Then why do I feel used, through me you got straight from my bed into Martin's pretty quick.

Suzie slaps Carl across the face again.

SUZIE

You need to grow up Carl, this is an adult world. Other people have dreams too you know, and some people have to go to extreme lengths to make them come true.

CARL

It's clear what you'll do to realise your dreams.

Suzie slaps Carl once more across the face.

CARL

Shit, would you stop doing that!

SUZIE

We have nothing more to say to each other Carl. You know what, I made you what you are today. And you know what you're biggest problem is, you're not funny, you don't even laugh out loud, I have to assume that you're laughing at everyone else, you know, on the inside. The best thing that you've got going for you, the only thing in fact, is that your life can only improve.

Suzie walks to the door and leaves the studio. Carl is left alone.

CARL

I don't believe it, Mark Stevens bought my painting.

Carl leaves the studio.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

As Suzie walks away Carl calls Chloe.

CARL

Hi, Chloe it's Carl. I know I just heard, from Suzie actually, I know, Mark, yes Mark Stevens. How much? Really! It's just... Can I have the money now. It's in my account, that's great!

(MORE)

CARL (CONT'D)

What do you mean three days! Ok, Ok, if it won't clear it won't clear. Don't fret, I might just be alright. Listen thank you for all your help, what with Milan and everything. He said what? For all of them, for each of them! That's fucking brilliant! I see, ok, I understand three days to clear.

Carl hangs up and shouts to the sky.

CARL

YES!!!

He calms down very quickly and talks to himself quietly

CARL

Robin, Robin...

INT. FILM AGENT'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Robin is sitting in a stylish office opposite her agent, FRANCIS (Female, 50s). The agent sits behind her desk and has a pile of printed screenplays next to her computer. Robin looks amazing and is entirely at ease in this environment.

ROBIN

What I'm really looking for is something with a lot more... soul, you know something I can really get my teeth into.

FRANCIS

Well there is this, it came in this morning and caught my eye.

The agent selects one of the screenplays from the pile.

FRANCIS

It's about an artist who get's caught up in a world of actors and against the odds finds true love with a childhood sweetheart.

ROBIN

Sounds interesting... May I?

The agent hands over the screenplay

ROBIN

Does it have a genre?

FRANCIS

That's a good question.

ROBIN

I was perhaps thinking of turning my focus to something more lighthearted, you know a story with humour and pathos, nothing madcap or crazy, you know something a bit more... happy than what I've done historically.

FRANCIS

This could be what you've been looking for. I'm not exactly sure whether it's looking to have deeper aspirations or whether it's simply a romantic comedy, leaning rather heavily on the comedy.

EXT. FULHAM HIGH STREET - MORNING

TITLE : THURSDAY MORNING

Carl is standing outside the first "Puppetelli's" pizza shop. He is wearing a huge foam puppet costume and is holding a large banner with the words "Opening Day Offer : Two Pizzas For The Price of One". He shouts out loud.

CARL

Puppetelli's, Perfect Pizza at
Perfect Prices. Free Delivery with
no strings attached.

Four young male teenagers walk by and easily push him over, one of them taunts him whilst he is down.

YOUTH

Why don't you get a real job!!!

Carl struggles in the costume to get back on his feet. In accelerated motion cars, buses and cyclists speed by, pedestrians flow this way and that and the sun moves across the sky. All the while Carl is shouting out his sales message. At six he hands over the enormous puppet suit to another person who continues the sales pitch. Carl collects his money from the shop and runs for the nearest tube station.

EXT. CARL'S STUDIO - EVENING

TITLE : 6.57pm THURSDAY EVENING

Carl runs into his studio and gathers together his cash. He has only just count it when there is a knock at the door. He opens the door, cash in his hand. George and his friend Albert are outside.

GEORGE
Good evening Carl.

CARL
Good evening George. Good evening
Albert.

ALBERT
Hello.

CARL
I have you money, it's all there.
Carl offers the pile of cash towards George.

GEORGE
Ah, Albert handles transactions.
Carl hands the money to George.

CARL
It's all there.

ALBERT
I like to count.

Albert counts the money very slowly and deliberately.

GEORGE
I hope we won't be having to resort
to this method of enabling payments
again.

CARL
No, as a matter of fact my
financial situation looks to have
improved just recently and I'm sure
my bank will have no issues with
relaying the er.. necessary to your
account, directly, at our usual,
regular, monthly date forthwith for
our mutual convenience.

GEORGE

Marvellous, really, see what you can do when you put your mind to it, good work my boy, good work indeed.

Albert finishes counting.

ALBERT

It's all here, just as he said it was Mr. George.

GEORGE

Lovely, so we're all happy without resorting to any funny business. Are you happy Carl?

CARL

I am happy.

GEORGE

Are you happy Albert?

ALBERT

I am happy.

GEORGE

Well, if you're happy, I'm happy and we can all get along with our strange and happy little lives. Come along Albert.

Albert and George leave and Carl shuts the door.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - EVENING

He collapses on his sofa and lets out a huge sigh of relief. Using a remote he puts some music on, it is mellow and soulful but melancholic too. He closes his eyes and goes into a dream state...

The very first shot in the story of Carl taking photographs, taken from a great height, looking tiny and insignificant, zooming in closer and closer, is repeated as voices from the last few weeks events drift through his mind.

SEBASTIAN : "You were always the one fixed on the lifestyle of the hungry artist..."

CHLOE : "Our clients want to see the real you..."

SUZIE : "Nowadays the artist is the actor in the scene... it's the expression, every emotion, the meaning in every gesture, the life in the moment... What you have to do is look inside, create your own story and tell it in your own way."

MILAN : "If you cannot mine the caves of your soul you will end up as nothing but a puppet."

ROBIN : "Is this going to go anywhere?... You will call won't you? Bye, thanks for the cool party..."

Carl opens his eyes suddenly and jumps off the sofa.

CARL

Robin!

He rushes over to the table and finds a piece of paper then leaves the studio.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Carl dials and Robin answers.

INT. ROBIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Robin is lying on a sofa with her cat curled up on her legs. She is drinking a cup of hot chocolate and watching the TV which she mutes.

ROBIN

Hello.

CARL

Hello Robin, it's Carl.

ROBIN

Hi Carl, perfect timing I was just getting bored with some stupid movie, I've seen like a gazillion times before.

CARL

How are you, I've been thinking about when I can.

ROBIN

Oh, I'm fine there's this new screenplay I've been reading, my agent thinks I might be really good for it. Have you been busy?

CARL

You could say that everything was a bit crazy for a while but I think I might be reaching a turning point of some sorts.

ROBIN

Sounds interesting, anything you can let me in on?

CARL

Well yes, to be honest it's not something I think I can do alone. I was thinking, hoping, actually that you might be able to help.

ROBIN

Well I'll do what I can. What did you have in mind?

CARL

Can we get together? Maybe for lunch?

ROBIN

Yeah, I'd love that, but only if we can call it a date.

CARL

Well that will make it even better.

ROBIN

Finally the cute guy from Year Ten Art asks me out on a date. You know I've had to wait a long time for this, it better be good.

CARL

Cool, do you want to choose a time and place?

ROBIN

Let me see. There's this little cafe bistro kind of thing in Covent Garden, it's called 'Yasmin's', I'll meet you there tomorrow at, say 2 o'clock. Good for you?

CARL

Perfect. I'll see you there. Oh, Robin I really want to apologise for the way, the morning after the party, I just kind of...

ROBIN

Kicked me out. Don't worry about it, I could see you were kind of stressing and very naked at the time. I'm just glad you called, really I am.

CARL

Thank you Robin for being so understanding about that I feel totally stupid.

ROBIN

Hey, stupid works sometimes. I'll see you tomorrow in Art class.

CARL

Hah! Bye then.

ROBIN

Toodle-loo.

They hang up.

EXT. COVENT GARDEN - DAY

It's sunny and Covent Garden bristles with a cool energy. Robin is sitting at a table outside the cafe, wearing sunglasses and looking beautiful. Carl approaches, wearing smart, clean clothes and Robin removes her glasses.

CARL

Hi Robin, I'm not late am I?

ROBIN

No, I'm early.

CARL

You look great.

ROBIN

Thanks you scrub up pretty well too.

CARL

You know, first date, got to try and impress.

ROBIN

My thoughts precisely.

Carl takes a seat. They relax.

ROBIN

So Picasso, what's the score?

CARL

Well on the face it, it's about five nil to me, I'm still trying to get over it.

ROBIN

Something good's happened then?

CARL

Very. I sold fifteen, very hastily made paintings, to an Amsterdam gallery for a small fortune. Apparently I'm going to be 'Big in Europe', according to the owner that is.

ROBIN

That's fantastic! Is this your big break?

CARL

Well it could be but there's this little wrinkle.

ROBIN

You want me to help iron it out for you?

CARL

Actually no, I'm beginning to feel it's sort of permanent. It's this, all my paintings are derivative, formulaic, uninspired... I have no originality, authenticity, integrity. I don't want to keep painting them anymore, I don't think I want to paint anymore, period. In my heart I feel like a fake and a phoney.

ROBIN

Oooh, this sounds like less of a wrinkle and more like some great tear in the fabric of space-time itself.

CARL

Well yeah, and it's not funny. And Apparently I'm not funny either.

ROBIN
Who told you that?

CARL
Suzie, just before she slapped me.

ROBIN
Could this be the same Suzie who
STOLE my part in the upcoming
Ronson Twins masterpiece?

CARL
The very same.

ROBIN
Well what does she know? She knows
how to get what she wants, that's
what she knows. I bet the last time
you saw her she wanted something.

CARL
She did.

ROBIN
And I bet you she got it.

CARL
She did.

ROBIN
What was it?

CARL
Er... naked photographs of her.

ROBIN
I see, and now she's got you
worried about just doing what you
do.

CARL
I started this new picture, it's
like a freeze-frame from a movie,
and I'm half way through and I
don't even want to finish it.

ROBIN
Oh shit. Well that's a bummer,
right there, so what are you going
to do instead?

CARL

Well don't laugh, or do laugh, I'm not sure what the appropriate reaction is, I was thinking of trying out as a... stand-up comedian.

ROBIN

You're joking?

CARL

Is that a trick question?

ROBIN

Might be. For how long have you wanted to be a stand-up comedian?

CARL

Since Year Ten Art class.

Robin sits back in her chair.

ROBIN

I think from your attitude you are serious and it's a very hard thing to be serious about being funny, in fact the only people who can manage that mysterious state of mind is a comedian.

CARL

So what are you saying.

ROBIN

I'm saying that if you're thinking about being a comedian, you might already be one!

Carl sits back in his chair and throws his hands up in the air.

CARL

Genius! This is way beyond Art class, you're like advanced mathematics or something!

ROBIN

Easy tiger.

CARL

Hey, I'm far less interested in me at this moment. I want to know all about you, we've got a lot of catching up to do. What about this screenplay you were talking about?

ROBIN

Oh, it's really far out. It's called 'Acting Up' and it's all about our scene, you know actors, artists and the like, but I haven't got a handle on it yet.

CARL

You know Robin, when we met at the party, we just jumped straight into who we are right now. Is it possible that we could arrive at that point via a more regular route?

Robin flicks a piece of rolled up paper at Carl.

ROBIN

Well that's how it started, what else do we need to know? We might have plenty of time to tell each other our life stories, of how we got to be the people we are, but for now I think we should just enjoy being those people.

CARL

You're saying all the kinds of things that I usually say to other people.

ROBIN

Creepy ain't it...

CARL

Bizarre.

ROBIN

Shall we get something to eat?

CARL

Yes! I'm ready to eat for my country.

ROBIN
If you still want to be stand-up
comedian after we've eaten I'll
back you up all the way...

A waiter comes over.

WAITER
Are you ready to order?

Carl and Robin look at each other, and in unison...

CARL AND ROBIN
We're ready.

EXT. LONDON COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

TITLE : THREE MONTHS LATER

Sebastian, Iris and Robin are walking along the pavement,
they arrive at a small door on a road somewhere in the West
End and go in.

INT. LONDON COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Sebastian, Iris and Robin have drinks and are standing
somewhere in the middle at the side of the main area talking
to each other. There is Jazz playing which fades as The
Compere takes the stage and the mike.

COMPERE
Alright then! Let's do this thing!
We have an exciting line up for you
this evening. I'm not going to
hang about because who cares about
what the Compere has to say anyway.
This guy is brand new and brave
enough to try to warm you good
people up this evening. He's been
making some waves in and around
town for just a couple of months
until one of our undercover agents
spotted him and signed him up. For
your pure entertainment give it up
for Carl Brooks!

Carl comes out from the side of the stage wearing a brand
new and clean grey boiler suit and takes the mike. He
launches straight into his routine.

CARL

So I was working on some super fresh material for this gig and it was so amazing I decided to turn it into a novel. I couldn't get an agent so I thought I'd adapt it for the screen. With the screenplay in hand I found a production company who said they'd make it into a film but then they needed a Director so I had to do that as well, thought I might as well cast myself in the lead role seeing as it was fairly autobiographical. That was six years ago. Anyway, I eventually made it here. However, as a result my fresh material isn't quite as fresh as it might be. So, re-elected, we've got another four years of Barack Obama! How bad can it get? I'm hoping the next guy will have some backbone, you know someone with a bit of style and grace, honesty and integrity. Anyone would be better than Obama surely!

The audience is laughing, everything seems fine until a drunk heckler shouts out loud from the back.

HECKLER

Trump is God!

Carl falters for just a few seconds.

CARL

Yes, yes he probably is, and that's the scary thing isn't it. Nice to see the Republican support network reaches this far from Washington.

The heckler shouts out again.

HECKLER

Tell us a joke!

CARL

Ok the man wants a joke. Here's one featuring another Demi-god, this time Julius Caesar. What did Caesar say to his men before they got in their boats?

HECKLER

What did he say?

CARL

He said "Men. Get in your boats!"

There is much needed laughter to aid Carl on.

CARL

Ah! The power one person can have over many. Whether they're a heckler or the ruler of the free world or even a stand-up for that matter. Something to keep a cautionary eye out for. So, now it's here in London are you all glued to the TV watching the Olympic Games?

There is laughter and the night carries on. Some time later Carl appears next to Robin, whom he kisses, and Iris and Sebastian.

CARL

I need a drink!

ROBIN

You were great, really great.

SEBASTIAN

Well done buddy, you did real good, I didn't think you had it in you but you were right on the money.

IRIS

Super cool Carl. Is there anything you can't do?

CARL

Well right now I can't stop my hands from shaking, look!

He holds out his hands as they tremble.

CARL

Boy that was incredible, the adrenaline. It's just the immediacy. How long was I on for?

SEBASTIAN

Eleven minutes, I timed you.

ROBIN

Did it feel like longer?

CARL

It felt like it was all compressed
into about thirty seconds.

ROBIN

Do you want to stay?

CARL

I think maybe skip the drink it's
time to get out of here. I feel
like running home.

IRIS

Did they pay you?

CARL

Yeah, in cash, but only after I'd
come off. This is a ruthless game,
I tell you. It was the waiting in
the wings that was the hard part, I
felt like I was just about to do a
bungee jump.

SEBASTIAN

Come on guys shall we see where our
feet take us.

They leave, walking together, with a couple of the audience
patting Carl's back as he exits the club.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Nice one mate! Keep up the good
work!

CARL

Cheers!

ROBIN

You'll have to watch out, you'll
start getting famous.

CARL

I've got you to teach me how to
deal with that.

ROBIN

It's easy, you wear a disguise.

As they go outside Robin puts a baseball cap and her
sunglasses on.

INT. CARL'S STUDIO - MORNING

Carl wakes up and rolls over. Robin is lying next to him asleep. He runs his hand over her shoulder and she stirs.

ROBIN

Mmm. What time is it?

CARL

Ten thirty. You wanted me to wake you.

ROBIN

Yeah.

She rolls over and looks at him. They kiss.

ROBIN

I need you to help me learn some lines.

CARL

Always thinking about work!

ROBIN

No, I've got to, rehearsals tomorrow.

CARL

No worries. I'll make some coffee.

Carl gets up and disappears to the kitchen. Robin slowly gets up and puts on a sweatshirt and jogging pants. There is a script by her bed, printed on the cover sheet is "Acting Up". She picks it up and going into the main studio throws the script on the sofa. Carl appears with coffee, they both look the worse for wear with Robin's hair everywhere. They sit on the couch and Robin picks ups the script.

ROBIN

Here, you read the scene description and all the parts except mine.

She gives the script to Carl.

CARL

You want to do this now?

ROBIN

Yep, I find I remember it better if I do it first thing in the morning while I'm still half sleepy and dreaming.

CARL

OK. Scene One. Exterior London street, day. A beautiful young woman, Caroline, walks through the crowds of early morning rush hour commuters. She carries a metal briefcase.

Time passes and the pages are turned, more coffee is made and drunk. Finally the task is complete and Carl closes the script.

CARL

You seem to have it pretty much perfect.

ROBIN

It has to be perfect.

CARL

Robin, I've got a question for you.

ROBIN

Shoot.

CARL

How do I know the difference between when you're acting and when you're just being yourself?

ROBIN

You don't, I'm too good at both.

CARL

Oh. I can live with that.

ROBIN

How do I know you're not acting all the time?

CARL

Well that's easy I'm a comedian, I'm permanently in love with just being a person.

ROBIN

I've got a present for you.

Robin goes to her bag and pulls out a small box that has been wrapped.

ROBIN
Here, you go.

CARL
What's this for?

ROBIN
Last night. I was going to give it to you after your gig. But you were already fairly psyched and we were both trolleyed when we got back last night. So here it is. Open it.

Carl opens the present, it's a mobile phone.

CARL
Oh, Robin. Thanks, it's great.

ROBIN
I've already opened it and set it up because I know you don't like that stuff. And it's got one number in the contacts at the moment. Mine. You can call me whenever you like.

CARL
I love you.

ROBIN
Now we can tell each other that, wherever we are, at any time.

CARL
Are you going to say I love back?

ROBIN
I love you, I've loved you since Year Ten Art Class.

They kiss for a long time.

CARL
That must be the happy ending I've been waiting for.

ROBIN
It's just the beginning.

The door buzzer sound. Carl gets up to open it and Sebastian and Iris come into the studio.

SEBASTIAN
Hurry, hurry, hurry. Put the TV
on, it's going to be on in...

Sebastian looks at his watch.

SEBASTIAN
Two minutes and thirty seconds.

Robin grabs the remote and turns the TV on.

SEBASTIAN
Channel 14. Turn the volume up.

The TV is on. All four just fit on the sofa squeezed together. They stare at the screen for a minute. Sebastian keeps looking at his watch.

SEBASTIAN
Any second now.

Finally the commercial for "Puppetelli's Pizza" bursts onto the screen. There is a Puppet on strings, a more detailed and smaller version of the outfit that Carl had to wear.

PUPPETELLI PUPPET
At Puppetelli's Pizza we don't lie
about the quality of our Pizza.
Delicious, rich, full flavoured
stone baked Pizza pies. Guaranteed
you won't be disappointed when you
open the box. Twice the topping,
double thickness crust and two
opportunities to bag a bargain. Two
for the price of one on Tuesdays
and Thursdays and if you buy two at
the weekend you'll get a third
free! With double fast delivery
you'll be doubly happy. Pinocchio
Pizza, don't let other companies
string you along!

It's over very quickly.

SEBASTIAN
What do you think? Iris made the
puppet and just about all of the
rest of it.

CARL
I think it's out of this world!

ROBIN

Iris you are incredible! How do
you feel?

IRIS

I think we should order in!!

THE END

CREDITS