Displaced

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EXT. DRAG STRIP - DAY

It's a beautiful, sunny day at a two-lane 1/4 mile dragstrip. There are a few people milling about, but the attention is on the two cars on the strip. CARTER THOMPSON, fit and in his mid-twenties, sits in a burnt orange 2002 Trans Am WS6. The car next to him is a black 2003 Mustang Cobra. Carter is very focused, not paying attention to PHILL, a young, handsome co-worker who tries to dissuade Carter from racing.

PHILL
Carter, you sure you're ready? We haven't really tested out the juice yet. Maybe you should--

CARTER
No, I'm good. Let's go.

Phill backs off and Carter puts his helmet on. Both cars do burnouts to heat their tires. Smoke plumes. They pull back up to the starting line and rev. The lights go from red to green, and they tear down the strip. Carter is a bit behind when he hits the nitrous button. It kicks in.

INT. CARTER'S TRANS AM

Carter, holding on for dear life, begins to lose control. He tries to steer and then brake, but to no avail. The car spins out of control.

INT. WEDDING HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Carter wakes in a jolt and sits up in bed, out of breath. Maya turns over and is also awake.

MAYA
You okay?

CARTER
Yeah. Just another one of those stress dreams.

MAYA
I wonder why. It's not like you're getting married today.

Carter rolls his eyes at her.

MAYA (cont'd)
Oh yeah, you are getting married today! I hope your new wife doesn't mind you slept with me the night before the wedding.

CARTER
I'm sure she'll understand that I deserve one last night of fun before the shackles go on.

Maya punches him in the arm.

CARTER (cont'd)
Ow! How about you? You sleep okay?

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Slept for like an hour. Between your kick boxing and my nerves...

CARTER
Got your vows down?

Maya concentrates as Carter stretches.

MAYA
Let us work together to develop physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Carter snuggles back down.

CARTER
I don't know how you memorized them so fast. I'm just glad I'll have a cheat sheet.

MAYA
I don't think it's a good idea to mention cheating when you're discussing your vows.

CARTER
Hmmm. So whose nuts do we step on?

MAYA
We step on beetle nuts to show that...

CARTER
A Beatle's nuts? Ringo or Paul?

MAYA
Just be happy I'm not making you do the whole three day formal Indian wedding.

CARTER
You know I wanted an Indian wedding as much as you. It'll be nice to have a ceremony that actually, you know, means something to us.

MAYA
I'm gonna kind of miss the whole white dress thing, though.

CARTER
Come on, your sari is a thousand times more beautiful than any white dress.

Carter gives Maya a smirk.

CARTER
Hey, isn't there a vow about giving each other pleasure?

MAYA
Yeah, it also mentions self-restraint.

CONTINUED: (2)

Carter is disappointed. Maya slides out of bed and stands in front of Carter wearing a sexy negligé.

CARTER
You are a cruel and evil woman.

Carter jumps out of bed and grabs her and throws her down on the bed, passionately. They both laugh.

CARTER (cont'd)
Let's focus on the pleasure part and worry about the self-restraint when we're older.

MAYA
How about if we never worry about the self-restraint?

They laugh a little more, and then kiss deeply.

INT./EXT. - CHURCH AND HOTEL - WEDDING MONTAGE

A montage of the events leading up to and including the wedding of Carter and Maya. It is set to moderately paced Indian music. The images and cuts are jumpy and frenetic.

A) Carter puts on his highly decorated maroon and gold Indian jacket with the help of his father, DENNIS.

B) Maya puts on her incredibly beautiful and ornate maroon and gold sari with the help of her mother, PRIYA. Priya also helps Maya with her gold jewelry.

C) Carter piles candles, rocks, rice, and lights into a box.

D) Maya, still putting on jewelry with her mom, struggles with a gold chain going from her ear to her nose. They get it in and Maya looks astonishing. VIJAY, Maya's father, watches on, very proud of his daughter.

E) Carter rushes into the church with two of his ushers, JOE and KEVIN. They are all carrying boxes. They enter the small church and go up to the front, which is slightly elevated by a step. They start unpacking the boxes as Carter gives Kevin a very worried and nervous glance.

H) The guests arrive, and the place fills up.

I) Once all the guests are seated, Carter steps out of a back room of the church. A set of doors separates them from the seated guests. Carter, very nervous, stands next to Joe. Maya, still in her dressing room, is very calm and collected. They still haven't seen each other. Dennis and NANCY, Carter's mother, step up to their son. Nancy has tears in her eyes.

NANCY
Oh, look at you. Just to think a few short years ago you were still sitting on my lap.

DENNIS
Come on, Nan, let's let him gather his thoughts. They may be the last ones he has of his own.

CONTINUED:

Dennis chuckles and Nancy, embarrassed by Dennis, smacks him on the arm. Dennis pats Carter on the back.

DENNIS (cont'd)
Just remember: they're as afraid of you as you are of them.

Dennis winks at him and he and Nancy go inside the church. Maya steps out of her dressing room. Carter's eyes get huge and all the nervousness falls out of him. He smiles broadly and a feeling of calm overtakes him. He feels that everything is going to be fine.

CARTER
(to Maya)
Hi. You look...

MAYA
You too.

Joe quickly steps up to them.

JOE
Okay, you can go now.

Carter steps through the main doors to the church.

J) A few various shots of the Indian wedding ceremony and audience as an INDIAN WOMAN officiates: water is poured from Vijay's hands, into Carter's, and then into Maya's; Carter and Maya step around candles; Carter and Maya exchange wreaths of flowers that they place around their necks. Maya and Carter kiss, and everyone claps.

INDIAN WOMAN
Now a very special surprise. Maya has composed a short piece that she wants to play for her new husband.

Carter is elated. Joe places a blanket on the carpeted floor, and Maya sits down. He then hands her her sitar. She begins to play a beautiful love song. Carter is very moved. She completes the song and looks up to Carter; both of them are gleaming.

RECEPTION MONTAGE

The wedding reception is in full swing. People dance, drink, and eat. It is all set to the song "I Know Something About Love."

FADE TO WHITE

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

CLOSE-UP of Maya's face as she lays sleeping on her side. A little curl of hair has fallen in her face. A hand reaches in and pushes it back. It is Carter, looking lovingly at Maya. Maya slowly wakes up and sees Carter staring at her. She smiles and becomes embarrassed.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
What?

Carter smiles into Maya's eyes.

MAYA (cont'd)
Don't look at me.

CARTER
Why not?

Carter keeps staring at her, and Maya covers her face with her hand. Carter moves her hand away from her face, and she becomes less embarrassed and smiles warmly. He caresses her face with his hand and then runs his fingers through her hair. She closes her eyes to take in his touch. He continues to caress her shoulder and arm, bringing his hand back to her face. He places his hand behind her head and brings her closer to him. He kisses her. Carter's ALARM clock goes off. He pulls away from Maya and turns it off. He sits up on the side of the bed. Maya hugs him from behind.

MAYA
You sure you have to go to work today?

CARTER
Yeah. Told Dave I'd be there.

MAYA
Oh.

CARTER
You've got work too, you know.

MAYA
Yeah, I'm not ready.

Carter gets up and Maya lays on her back.

CARTER
I know. Should've taken three weeks.

Carter starts to get clothes out of the closet.

MAYA
Should've taken a month. Just you and me.

CARTER
A month? You'd get sick of me.

MAYA
No, I'd be sick of pasta and second-hand smoke, but you, I'm sure you'd keep me entertained.

They share a seductive smile.

EXT. MARQUEE PRODUCTIONS - DAY

CLOSE-UP on Carter's feet as he struts out of his car. PAN UP to Carter, well-dressed, carrying a briefcase, looking clean and confident.

INT. MAYA'S OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY

Maya arrives at work, as well. Wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase, she enters a professional-looking office hallway. She unlocks the door to her office and goes in.

INT. MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

She tosses her briefcase onto her desk and falls into her chair. She sighs. Looking around the room, very disappointed to be there, she starts to unpack her briefcase.

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Carter enters a large room with two desks, a computer, and a TV with a VCR. DAVE, Carter's boss, is sitting behind one of the desks. Dave is average height with brown hair and in his late thirties. Dave perks up when he sees Carter.

DAVE
Carter! How ya doing?

CARTER
Great.

DAVE
Dude, you look tired.

CARTER
I'm beat. I just want to sleep.

DAVE
Didn't get much sleep on your honeymoon, huh? That's a good thing. You should've stayed home.

CARTER
No. I got too much to do here. And besides, we don't get paid for days off.

DAVE
Oh yeah. Well, we'll just take it easy. Maybe I'll kick your ass in ping-pong again. So besides exhausting, how was the trip?

INT. MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Maya is daydreaming when her friend and co-worker, ANNE, knocks on her partially open door and then enters. Anne is an African-American in her late thirties.

ANNE
Glad to see you're back from vacation and ready to work!

MAYA
Anne, hi! Come on in!

ANNE
You look exhausted! Poor thing. You should've stayed home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAYA
I wish. I've got way too much to do at home. At least here I can rest a little.

ANNE
So how was the honeymoon?

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE / MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

The two conversations are intercut together.

DAVE
Italy, right?

CARTER
Incredible. Great food, amazing, overwhelming.

MAYA
So much to take in. Breathtaking.

DAVE
You never left the hotel did you?

CARTER
Not really, no.

ANNE
Nothing like making love under the Italian stars.

MAYA
Anne! I didn't know you'd been there.

ANNE
I haven't. I made it in a Fiat once.

DAVE
So, the inevitable question...

CARTER
Did I bring you back Italian porn?

DAVE
No! But, did you? I mean, do you feel different, now that you're shackled?

CARTER
Not really.

Carter avoids the question and unpacks his briefcase some more. Dave gets up and sits on Carter's desk.

ANNE
Come on, I know it feels...

DAVE
Weird, huh?

CARTER
A little bit.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Yeah.

Carter sits down and faces Dave.

CARTER
I don't know. I feel anxious. I just want to be a good-.

MAYA
-Wife. You know?

ANNE
Come on, you couldn't be a bad wife even if you kicked your husband in the Jimmy every time you saw him.

Maya CHUCKLES.

MAYA
I'm not planning on doing that any time soon. But really, I want to make him happy. What if he stops being happy, then he might, I don't know--stray. Or worse.

ANNE
If he strays, I'll kick him in the Jimmy every time I see him. Just relax, nothing's really changed.

CARTER
Maybe, I kinda feel like I have to be all responsible now. Can't quit work and be a struggling writer. Gotta support the wife, especially if she goes to law school for three years.

DAVE
Yeah, but Maya will be making a mint after she graduates. Then you can retire and write.

MAYA
If he would sell one of his scripts I could.

CARTER
Anything exciting happen here?

DAVE
Yeah, they finished a new cut of The Perfect Man.

Dave clicks on the TV and hits play. A sex scene erupts on the screen.

CARTER
Gotta admit, this job does have its perks.

DAVE
Oh, this is the best part!

CONTINUED: (2)

A loud voice comes from the TV.

WOMAN'S VOICE
You can't do that with a cantaloupe!

Maya is putting a cantaloupe in a small fridge.

MAYA
Why not?

ANNE
If you put it in the fridge before it's ripe, it'll never ripen!

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Maya is busy slaving over a stove, cooking a very large meal. There are pots, dishes, and mixing bowls everywhere in this mess. Carter comes home and wanders into the kitchen carrying a large wrapped box. He just stops and grins at his wife cooking. Maya doesn't notice him come in.

CARTER
I have such a good housewife.

MAYA
(startled)
Geez. You scared me!

CARTER
Sorry. Didn't know you were in such deep concentration.

MAYA
What's that?

CARTER
Oh, this?

He steps closer to Maya and hands her the present. She is very excited to be getting a gift.

MAYA
What did you get? It's heavy.

CARTER
Unwrap it!

She tears through the wrapping and opens the box. It is a tabla (an Indian drum you play with your hands). She is confused.

MAYA
A tabla?

CARTER
(excited)
Yeah! I thought it would be nice, you know, if I learned to play and then we could play together.

Maya finds his excitement cute.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Carter, it takes years to learn how to play this. It's not something you just beat on.

CARTER
I know. But I gotta start somewhere. Besides, your parents are always trying to get me to learn more about your culture.

Carter starts banging on the tabla and it sounds horrible. Maya flinches and takes it away from him.

MAYA
Learn about the culture, yes, not decimate it.

CARTER
At least I'm trying.

MAYA
I know. And it's very sweet. Maybe you should have started out with something small, like cooking samosas.

CARTER
But this is something we can do together.

Maya steps over to him, seductively.

MAYA
I know something else we can do together.

CARTER
Aren't you cooking?

MAYA
Damn straight I am.

They kiss and Carter grabs Maya and plants her butt on the counter, right on top of some tomatoes. They continue to kiss passionately as they start shedding clothing. Vegetables and utensils fly as they make a very big mess.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP of an open mouth chewing some bread.

Carter stares into the mouth of RICK as he proceeds to eat and talk with his mouth open. Rick is in his mid-thirties, slightly overweight, and obnoxious. He sits next to his wife, CYNTHIA, a very attractive brunette.

CYNTHIA
I just can't tell you how many times I had to yell at the bagboy, "Don't squash my peach!"

She and Rick LAUGH loudly as Carter and Maya politely CHUCKLE along. Rick pulls something out of his mouth and looks at it. It is a hair.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Yeah, I know, it's so hard to get your fruit home safely.

RICK
Yeah, tell me about it.

Rick leans in very close and talks quietly.

RICK (cont'd)
I'm working on an invention that may solve that very problem.

CARTER
Really?

RICK
Yeah. It's a built-in container in your trunk that is designed to hold your fruit, bread, eggs or other delicates securely in place so they don't get crushed or mashed. Especially in an accident.

CARTER
Isn't there a Monty Python sketch based on something like that?

Rick becomes VERY defensive and looks over to Cynthia, who gives him a concerned look. Carter doesn't realize the gravity of what he has just said. Rick begins to work himself up.

RICK
I admit, inspiration comes from all over. But they described a fruit that would eject itself if in an accident. That's utterly preposterous! Fruit ejecting itself. Christ! Mine simply keeps the fruit in place, and I may have some sort of air bag deployed if there is an accident, but that hasn't been perfected yet.

Cynthia strokes Rick's back to calm him down.

CYNTHIA
It's okay, honey. It's okay. You're idea is much better.

CARTER
Yeah, yours makes a lot more sense.

MAYA
Yeah, I would definitely buy something like that.

RICK
It's not for you to buy! It comes with the vehicle! I need to use the bathroom!

Rick gets up and storms into the bathroom.

CONTINUED: (2)

CYNTHIA
I'm sorry about that. Ever since he lost his job, he's been on edge. But you know, artists and their creations. So, you liked your wedding gift?

CARTER
Oh, the automatic microwave toast maker.

INT. KITCHEN - FLASHBACK

The microwave is on fire. Carter and Maya frantically try to put it out.

RESUME SCENE

CARTER
Yeah, that worked out great.

Rick comes out of the bathroom and his hair and top of his shirt is soaked. They all look at him.

RICK
Much better.

CYNTHIA
So why law school, Maya? Figured you'd become a professional sitar player.

MAYA
Not a whole lot of jobs for sitar players out there.

RICK
What kind of law would you want to practice?

MAYA
(perking up)
Health law, maybe bioethics.

CYNTHIA
Oh, that's right. Didn't you want to go to med school for a while there?

MAYA
Yeah, but I decided law was more my thing: language and interpretations. Only thing is, when you're Indian, you grow up thinking you're either going to be a doctor or an engineer.

CYNTHIA
What did your parents think, changing gears like that?

MAYA
They weren't thrilled. My brother's a doctor so, you know.

RICK
What schools you looking at?

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Well, it looks like USC for now.

RICK
Helluva school.

CARTER
100,000 dollars, though. That's a lot of debt.

MAYA
Could go to U.T. for about $25,000.

CARTER
Yeah, that would be good; abandon my career.

MAYA
(getting upset)
Well, what do you propose? I stay at my crappy job for the rest of my life?

CARTER
No, I just think we should look at all the choices carefully.

RICK
Well hell, if you go to SC, you'll be making bank when you graduate. Pay off those loans in no time.

MAYA
That's the plan.

RICK
Oh, you two kids will be fine. Hell, maybe you'll even be as happy as Cindy and me!

They all chuckle and Carter and Maya share a worried glance.

RICK (cont'd)
Oh, I'm so full!

MAYA
Oh, have seconds. Please, you guys.

CYNTHIA
No, we're full. But can you pack it up for us? We'll take it home.

Carter and Maya, give each other a quick glance of surprise and smile.

MAYA
Sure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter sits on the couch watching TV. Maya sits next to him reading a script.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
I can't believe they took all our leftovers.

MAYA
I know. Weird.

Carter hits play on the VCR remote and a sex scene erupts on TV. They are dailies tapes from the film shoot his company did the day before. Maya hears the MOANING and looks up, grossed out.

MAYA
You could have warned me.

CARTER
Yeah, I didn't finish watching them at work and I have to turn in notes tomorrow if there are any problems.

MAYA
I don't like you watching this stuff at home.

CARTER
I know. I don't really like it either, but work is work.

MAYA
I wish you could find a job that doesn't involve people having sex.

CARTER
I'll start looking for something better once we slow down a bit and I have time.

MAYA
I would love to actually tell my parents where you work.

CARTER
Are they starting to get suspicious about the whole CIA spy assassin thing?

MAYA
No seriously, and you're not happy there. And when you're not happy you don't write as much.

CARTER
Don't worry Maya, I'll start looking for something new soon, okay?

MAYA
Okay, okay, I'm only thinking of you. And maybe a little of me.

Carter goes back to watching his dailies and Maya continues to read. She starts to write a lot on one of the pages and Carter notices.

CARTER
Everything okay over there?

CONTINUED: (2)

MAYA
Yeah, just making a couple of notes.

CARTER
Couple? Looks like you're transcribing the Magna Carta.

Maya stops writing and focuses on Carter.

MAYA
It's just that you have Priti's parents in this scene stay in the same room as her and her husband. I'm not sure you need that.

CARTER
I think it's a great scene. It shows how the parents want to be with their daughter all the time so they can keep their eyes on her.

MAYA
So it's a control thing?

CARTER
Yeah. Indian parents have a tendency to be controlling and I think this shows that.

MAYA
(annoyed)
So you're saying all Indian parents are controlling?

CARTER
(digging a deeper hole)
No, I'm just saying her parents are, in this script and this shows it.

MAYA
Or it shows that they love their daughter very much and don't want to spend a minute without her! Maybe they're doing it because they want to pay for the room and save Priti and her husband some money!

CARTER
Yeah, I guess that could be why.

MAYA
You shouldn't generalize a culture, especially one you just married into. How would you like it if I said all white people were bad dancers and obsessed with money.

CARTER
Well, you'd be right.

MAYA
Carter, I'm serious, you should be more open than that.

CONTINUED: (3)

CARTER
You're right, I'm sorry...

MAYA
That's okay.

Carter smiles and wonders how he got trapped in that landmine field.

INT. ADR STAGE - DAY

Carter is on a very small ADR stage. There is a mixer, PIERRE, a tall angry Frenchman, DOUG, his assistant, and BETTY, an incredibly beautiful blonde actress. Betty is sitting in a small attached room with glass separating her from the rest of the group. She has headphones on and a large microphone in front of her. She is facing a TV screen.

PIERRE
Damn it! We have to get it right this time!

CARTER
Calm down, Pierre. We're only on the second take. Let's go again.

Carter signals a thumbs-up to Betty. She replies with a smile and a thumbs-up. Pierre hits a button on the mixing console and the video screens in front of Pierre and Betty start playing. Betty tries to dub her line.

BETTY
I can't make love to you; I am marrying your father tomorrow.

CLOSE-UP on the TV as she reads. All her lines are completely out of sync. The TV stops. Pierre is over-the-top angry.

PIERRE
Damn it! We'll be here all day! Give me five minutes alone with her and I'll have her reading in sync!

CARTER
No, let me talk with her.

Carter steps into the booth to talk to her.

BETTY
Is everything okay?

CARTER
Just fine. Not quite getting the sync we want.

Outside Pierre is screaming and yelling at Doug. Because the booth is soundproof, all we see is him pantomiming like a bad mime.

CONTINUED:

CARTER (cont'd)
Just pretend you are there on the set, talking with the same actor and feeling the same emotions. Try not to worry about getting the sync right. Just go with how you feel.

BETTY
Okay. That sounds good. I'll try it.

Carter steps out of the booth and they give it another try. The TVs start up and she is silent. Pierre just turns to Carter and fumes. Carter goes back into the booth.

CARTER
Betty, what happened there?

BETTY
I didn't feel my character needed to say anything at that given moment.

Carter drops his head. Pierre comes in and SHOUTS obscenities at her in French.

INT. MAYA'S OFFICE - DAY

Maya is on her lunch break reading Carter's script. She laughs to herself as she turns the last page. She turns it back over and sees the "Dedication" on the second page. "To the woman whose love washes away all fear and breathes happiness into every second of my life. With her, I will always have an audience." She stares warmly at the page. She picks up her pen and scribbles something down.

INT. ADR STAGE - DAY

Doug is now operating the mixing console, and Betty is still in the booth. A love scene is playing on the TV. She makes the necessary GROANS and GRUNTS and seems very awkward. Carter just sits on the couch, ignoring the proceedings. He works on his script and smiles to himself.

CARTER
White guys can't dance...

INT. WHITE ROOM - DREAM

CHUCK, the twenty-five year-old, hip character in Carter's script, is standing in a completely empty, blank, white room. He looks bored. DANCE MUSIC starts pounding and Chuck starts to dance like crazy. The white in the room is replaced by hypnotic, multicolored spirals that pulse to the music.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Carter is sitting in front of the TV watching a poorly produced "how-to" video on playing the tabla. The host, MR. KUMUL, is a well dressed INDIAN man in his late forties.

MR. KUMUL
Now begin by cupping your hands like this.

CONTINUED:

Carter tries to follow the instructions but becomes lost even before the host starts to speak. A few beats of the tabla ring out from the TV, and Carter tries to follow with some very mis-timed hits on his tabla. It sounds terrible.

MR. KUMUL (cont'd)
That was wonderful. Perfect. You are almost an expert player. Now you are ready to begin learning how not to play the incorrect way of using the tabla.

Carter is confused.

EXT. DUPLEX - EVENING

Maya steps up to the front door and sees the mail still in the box. She grabs it and hears the tabla playing inside. She CHUCKLES. She sees a letter from the University of Texas at Austin. Excited, she quickly opens it and scans the writing. She enter the house, excited.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Carter stops playing when he sees Maya enter. She is wearing a huge grin.

CARTER
What?

MAYA
I got in! I got in!

CARTER
What? Where?

Carter is now next to Maya and very curious.

MAYA
UT! UT!

Carter is not really sure how to react.

CARTER
Really! That's great!

MAYA
I know! Now we don't have to get $100,000 in debt and it's a better school!

CARTER
Well, let's not jump the gun. You haven't even seen the school yet.

MAYA
I know, I know. But Austin's a great city and it would be much closer to Houston and my parents. So when can we visit?

CARTER
I don't know, a couple of weeks?

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Great! I'll call my parents!

Carter lets out a worried sigh.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya is sitting on the floor of the living room, practicing her sitar. It sounds amazing. She sees a stack of dailies tapes on the TV and frowns. Carter is sitting on the couch working on his script but is distracted by the beauty of her instrument. He puts his script down and wanders off camera. He comes back with his tabla and sits next to her. He begins batting at it and ruins everything. Maya stops playing and playfully glares at him. Carter, being a pain, keeps bopping it and smiles playfully at her. She grins back and lets him continue to make a fool of himself.

MAYA
I see you've been practicing.

CARTER
(stunned)
Really?

He stops playing.

MAYA
Yeah, you're getting very good at annoying me.

CARTER
Alright!

He starts playing again.

MAYA
So what do you think we should do?

CARTER
Go on tour.

MAYA
No really. About UT.

Carter stops playing.

CARTER
Let's decide after we visit.

MAYA
$20,000 less expensive a year. And I'll be back in Texas.

CARTER
I think you've already made up your mind.

MAYA
Can you blame me? And it's a better school!

CONTINUED:

CARTER
What am I supposed to do for three years?

MAYA
You said Austin is a booming film town.

CARTER
That's what I heard, but my skills are kinda specialized.

MAYA
I'm sure you can find a job doing something.

Carter gets irritated. He stands up and plops down on the couch.

CARTER
I don't want to do something. I worked my ass off to be where I am. If I take off for three years, I'll have to start over.

MAYA
Carter, you hate your job. You're like me, doing the same drivel every freakin' day. And you're not writing nearly as much as you used to.

CARTER
Yeah, I know.

MAYA
You want to be a writer, anyway. You can do that anywhere. Maybe a change of scenery will inspire you.

Carter now gets frustrated at Maya's lack of understanding of the film industry.

CARTER
You can write anywhere, but you can only sell your stuff in LA or New York. If you're out of the loop, you might as well be dead.

MAYA
I think you're exaggerating. If you have a good script you can still send it to people.

Carter becomes aggravated.

CARTER
It doesn't work like that. I don't really want to talk about this right now.

MAYA
If you really don't want to go, obviously we won't go.

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
Moving away from my friends. Can't even imagine what my parents would say. Let's just figure it out later.

Maya gets on the couch and sits next to him.

MAYA
Carter? We'll have to decide eventually.

Carter hits play on the VCR remote and some dailies sex start up. Maya is annoyed.

CARTER
I'm gonna work a little bit. You go on to bed. I'll be in soon.

MAYA
Don't be too long.

Maya goes into the bedroom. Carter is uncomfortable and still uneasy about the possible move to Austin but he continues to watch the dailies. He gets a little uncomfortable and holds his stomach. He jumps up, grabs a couple magazines from the coffee table and then disappears into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Carter plops down on the toilet and starts flipping through the magazines. One of them, he suddenly realizes, is a lingerie catalog. He starts to flip through it as he sits there.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maya crawls out of bed and comes to the bathroom door and stops just sort of entering. She listens and doesn't hear anything.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Suspicious, she steps over into the living room and sees the sex dailies still playing. She looks down a the coffee table and rustles some magazines around and notices one is missing. She gets upset.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

She walks back to the bathroom door.

MAYA
Carter? What are you doing?

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Carter is scared that his wife may suspect the wrong thing.

CARTER
Nothing, I'll be out in a second.

Stuffing the magazine in the toilet tank, he finishes cleaning up and flushes the toilet. He exits the bathroom.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maya is standing there very angry.

CARTER
What? Just taking a dump.

MAYA
Then why doesn't it smell?

CARTER
I couldn't really go.

MAYA
I can't believe you!

CARTER
What? I wasn't doing anything.

Maya grabs his right hand and feels it.

MAYA
Silky smooth?

CARTER
So I like to use lotion.

MAYA
You're supposed to save that part of yourself for me. Just me.

CARTER
I was, I promise! I wasn't doing anything. It was your curry, it made me sick, I promise.

MAYA
Oh, that's much better!

CARTER
No, I brought the magazine in by accident, it was under my Pontiac magazine.

MAYA
Then why did you try and hide it?

CARTER
'Cause I knew you would be mad if you saw me with it.

MAYA
Carter, you have to be honest with me. I'll be more upset if you can't tell me the truth.

CARTER
Yeah, I know. I just didn't want to risk it. I know how you feel about that sorta thing.

MAYA
And if I catch you?

CONTINUED:

CARTER
I'll be the best right wing the St. Andrews Girl's Hockey team ever had.

Maya CHUCKLES and kisses him.

INT. DANCE ROOM - DREAM/ INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Chuck is still dancing frantically and is drenched in sweat.

CARTER
Oh, sorry. You can stop now.

The music and colors disappear and Chuck is panting. He tries to walk off his cramps. He TALKS INTO the camera.

CHUCK
Christ, Carter, I've been going strong for like 2 days!

CARTER
Sorry. I've been thinking about this Austin move a lot.

CHUCK
Austin? What the hell would you do there?

CARTER
Hell if I know. Look for a job. Write.

CHUCK
Hey, that sounds good to me. I would love an actual STORY and PEOPLE to interact with. Maybe you should think about it, for your wife's sake.

CARTER
Yeah, maybe.

CHUCK
(still out of breath)
In the meantime, I need to sit, if you don't mind.

Carter smiles wickedly.

CARTER
No problem.

INT. RACE CAR - DAY

Chuck appears in a highly modified Trans Am. He looks around and sees another car next to him and they are about to race.

CHUCK
Damnit!

The race begins, and both cars peel out and shoot off into the distance.

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

MONTAGE of Carter getting the Austin production book, highlighting production companies, and faxing resumes.

INT. BATHROOM - EVENING

CLOSE-UP of the toilet bowl as it is flushed. Little pieces of lingerie-clad women come streaming out from the bowl. Carter, surprised, CHUCKLES and opens up the tank and pulls out the lingerie catalog he hid the night before.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Maya and Carter are sitting across from each other on the living room floor setting up the game Monopoly.

MAYA
You wanna be--?

Carter glares at her.

MAYA (cont'd)
Race car.

CARTER
So I had a busy day today.

MAYA
Let me guess: you and Dave played so much ping-pong that you got a blister?

Carter grins.

CARTER
No. I faxed about twenty-five resumes to Austin.

Maya looks stunned. A huge smile creeps onto her face.

CARTER (cont'd)
I figure, just in case we decide--

Maya jumps on top of Carter and starts to kiss him like crazy.

EXT. AUSTIN - DAY

MONTAGE of Carter and Maya driving around Austin set to David Garza ROCK MUSIC. It is a beautiful city: lakes, parks, tons of trees, pretty neighborhoods. It has a very unique small-town feel. Carter is enjoying it.

EXT. AUSTIN HOTEL ROOM - DAY

They arrive at their hotel room. Carter grins at Maya.

CARTER
Life imitating art?

She glares at Carter.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
I'm their daughter, where else would I stay but with them? Besides, we'll save some money.

They knock on the door. Vijay, Maya's father, answers.

VIJAY
Hello! You made it!

They all hug and go inside.

EXT. U.T. - DAY

Maya, Carter, and Maya's parents walk around the school. Maya is loving it.

EXT./INT. OFFICES - DAY

Carter, in a nice suit, walks around to several different Post Production facilities. He meets people and shakes their hands. Everyone wears a smile.

INT. AUSTIN HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Carter and Maya are sitting on the bed looking over different reading materials. She has papers from UT, and he is looking at brochures of the different facilities he has applied to. Priya is sitting on the other bed while Vijay is fiddling with the TV set; it isn't working.

MAYA
So you got a good feeling?

CARTER
Yeah, everyone seemed pretty cool. I've got some great experience, Roger Corman and all. I mean the guy is the father of independent film. He discovered Jack Nicholson, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese. People respect that.

MAYA
That's true.

VIJAY
Stupid thing. It's broken. We should switch rooms.

PRIYA
What do you want to watch TV for anyway? We came here to be with our daughter and her husband, not to watch reruns of the X-Files.

VIJAY
You're right. Too bad Maya doesn't have her sitar, then she could play for us.

PRIYA
And Carter could play his tabla.

CONTINUED:

They all chuckle, except for Carter.

CARTER
Hey, I'm learning.

MAYA
I know you're trying.

Vijay turns off the TV.

VIJAY (cont'd)
So you think you might move here?

CARTER
I don't know. It would be a nice change from LA. Pay wouldn't be as good but rent would also be half.

MAYA
And your career wouldn't suffer?

CARTER
I'll focus on my writing; I'll be fine. Go back to LA in a few years with a few scripts under my belt.

MAYA
That would be great.

PRIYA
The law school is very good.

VIJAY
Granted it's not medical school but hey, that's what you get, right?

MAYA
I don't want to go to medical school.

VIJAY
Right, okay.

Priya chimes in in MARATHI (an Indian dialect) and argues a bit with Vijay.

CARTER
So, did you get a chance to look at the courses?

MAYA
(getting excited)
Yes, there are so many classes I want to take here.

VIJAY
And it's so much cheaper, too. You would be considered a resident so it would only be around $7000 a year.

CONTINUED: (2)

PRIYA
And much closer to home, don't forget! You could visit us all the time. Get some good home cooked meals.

MAYA
That would be nice.

CARTER
So you want to move?

MAYA
I think so. How about you?

CARTER
(shrugs)
Leaving all my friends and family. What if I don't get a job? I don't know.

Maya is a little disappointed.

MAYA
USC is a great school, too. We don't have to decide right now.

CARTER
Let's sleep on it.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - DREAM

Chuck is sitting on the side of the road next to his Trans Am, flipping rocks at a cactus. As soon as he realizes he's being watched, he focuses his attention.

CHUCK
It's about time. Car ran out of gas a couple days ago.

INT. AUSTIN HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Carter is laying in bed next to Maya. Everyone is asleep except for him.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - DREAM

CARTER (V.O.)
Uh, I still can't decide.

CHUCK
You're still young. The adventure of moving might do you some good. Shake up your life a bit. Besides, your wife really wants it.

CARTER
You don't think my job--

CHUCK
Your job sucks, Carter. Don't kid yourself. Forget it. Have some fun, write some more, get me the hell out of here.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Okay. Thanks.

We start to pull out of Chuck's desert area.

CHUCK
Hey! What about the gas! And where am I supposed to go? What am I doing? Motivations?

A car drives up with a beautiful young Asian woman, LISA, driving. She grins at Chuck who smiles back and hops in.

CHUCK
Motivations.

INT. DENNY'S RESTAURANT - MORNING

The four of them sit having breakfast.

CARTER
Let's move.

MAYA
(shocked)
What?

CARTER
Why not?

VIJAY
This is a big decision, Carter. You sure you want to make it eating a super slam?

PRIYA
He said he wanted to move. Don't argue with him.

CARTER
No, I think it's a good thing. You know, who wants to be in debt and Maya really loves the school. I'm sure I'll find a job, and I can write while I'm looking.

Everyone seems very happy, except Carter, who is still a little unsure.

VIJAY
That's great! We should start looking for apartments after we finish.

MAYA
This is great!

CARTER
There's just one condition.

MAYA
What?

CONTINUED:

CARTER
(to Maya)
You have to tell my parents.

INT. CARTER'S PARENT'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Nancy, Dennis, Carter, and Maya all sit at the table with Carter's 21 year-old brother, BRANDON and his wife, DANIELLE.

DENNIS
So, how was your trip to Texas?

CARTER
Great.

NANCY
You went to Houston, right?

CARTER
Just for a couple of days. We were mostly in Austin.

DENNIS
Austin? Isn't that where that guy shot all those people from on top of that beef factory?

CARTER
It was actually a tower at the University.

NANCY
Why were you in Austin?

CARTER
We were checking out UT.

DENNIS
UT? What's that? Sounds like a bacteria.

CARTER
It's a really great law school that we're, umm, considering.

Everyone stops in their tracks and just stares at Carter, horrified.

CARTER (cont'd)
Maya really likes it.

Everyone changes their angry gaze to Maya.

MAYA
Carter really liked the city, too, though.

BRANDON
You're not going to go, though, are you?

CARTER
Actually, we are.

CONTINUED:

Everyone stops in their tracks again and stares at Carter, then at Maya, then back to Carter. Nancy puts down her utensils very slowly.

NANCY
You're going to leave?

CARTER
Just for a few years. And we'll spend Christmas, Easter and any other vacations here.

Nancy starts to tear up.

NANCY
Why would you do that? Why would you leave home?

CARTER
It's $60,000 cheaper to go to UT and it's a better school. It just makes more sense.

DENNIS
$60,000! Well, Christ, you damn well better go to Austin.

Nancy is still very sad and holding back tears. Dennis is also very sad and trying to hide it. He gets up.

DENNIS (cont'd)
I gotta...get my leaf blower. Neighbor, Jim, borrowed it.

He exits the house.

BRANDON
They have a great music scene in Austin.

Danielle nudges Brandon to be quiet.

BRANDON (cont'd)
What?

CARTER
We're leaving in a couple of weeks. This is the best for us.

NANCY
You sure your career will be okay in Austin?

CARTER
Oh yeah. There are lots of places for me to work. It will be great.

NANCY
Why anyone would move from Southern California is beyond me. Especially Texas. Do you know how hot it gets there? And it rains.

CONTINUED: (2)

MAYA
(defensive)
It's really not that bad, and it's only for three years.

NANCY
And then you're coming back to LA? Why would you go to school in Texas if you want to work in California?

Mom, worried that her baby may leave, gets up.

NANCY (cont'd)
Are you sure you've thought this through? It seems like a big decision.

Everyone is silent. Danielle nudges Brandon.

DANIELLE
Say something.

BRANDON
Will you be here for my birthday next month?

DANIELLE
Brandon!

BRANDON
What? I just wanna make sure they remember...

Dad comes back in and his eyes are all watery.

DENNIS
Who's ready for pie?

INT. PARENT'S HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carter and Maya are getting ready for bed. They are quiet.

MAYA
So that went pretty well.

CARTER
You're crazy. My dad cried! I've never seen him cry. Thought my mom was going to die.

Carter sits on the bed.

CARTER (cont'd)
I don't feel so good.

MAYA
Nerves.

CARTER
Or Mom's meatloaf.

Carter slides down into bed.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Do you not want to do this?

CARTER
(to himself)
Right, we don't have to go.

MAYA
What?

CARTER
Nothing, it's fine. Just having a little pre-move jitters.

Maya lays next to him and rubs her fingers though his hair.

MAYA
Really? If you don't want to move, we don't have to. It's not too late.

CARTER
No. I want to do this. It'll be good for both of us.

MAYA
Okay.

Maya clicks off the light. Carter, on his side, tears up.

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Carter is zoned out watching more dailies sex. His cell phone RINGS.

CARTER
This is Carter.

GEORGE (V.O.)
Hi Carter, this is George from Austin VideoWorks.

CARTER
(perks up)
Oh hey, George!

GEORGE
Just going over your resume again and we'd like to have you do some PA work for us, if that's okay?

CARTER
I would love it!

GEORGE
Great. If that goes well, we'll bring you in full time as a production coordinator. When are you coming out?

CARTER
In about three weeks.

CONTINUED:

GEORGE
Great. Give me a call when you get into town, and we'll set it all up.

CARTER
Fantastic, George! Thanks!

Carter hangs up the phone and is elated. He quickly dials Maya.

CARTER
Maya! I got a job in Austin!

We hear her SCREAM in happiness on the other end.

EXT. APARTMENT - DAY

Carter places his tabla and Maya's sitar in the back seat. Maya calls from the door.

MAYA
Be careful with my sitar!

CARTER
I bet you wouldn't mind if I smashed my tabla, though would you?

MAYA
Carter. I think it's so nice that you are trying to play. It actually means a lot to me.

CARTER
It does?

MAYA
Yes. And once you've been playing for 15 years, I would love to play a duet with you.

CARTER
15 years! You crazy?

Maya gets close to Carter.

MAYA
Well, a good tabla player has to practice until perfection is second nature, pass countless challenges, and only when the sitar player has approved, can he play a duet with her.

They are very close and Carter goes in for the kiss and Maya pulls back.

MAYA (cont'd)
So you'll just have to wait.

Maya steps back into the house and grabs another small box.

CARTER
You excited?

CONTINUED:

MAYA
I can't wait! Law school is going to be a pain in the ass, but I'll at least be challenged, be with people who are interested in the same stuff as me, and God willing, actually like what I'm doing. How about you?

CARTER
Yeah, I guess I am. It's a new beginning for us. I'll be doing production work, which I've been dying to do for a while, and hey, Austin's a great town.

Carter slams the trunk shut.

EXT. CAR - DAY

They're off to Texas, driving down various freeways.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Maya lays asleep on the bed and Carter lays restless. He gets up and begins to pace. He lays back down, asleep. Maya gets up and begins to pace. She lays back down, asleep.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - AUSTIN - DAY

Carter and Maya pull up into their new apartment complex. It is a very bright afternoon. Carter and Maya step out of the car and stretch off the last five hour drive. They are both taken back by the heat.

CARTER
God, it's hot.

MAYA
Welcome to Texas.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter and TWO MOVERS fill the room with boxes and furniture in FAST MOTION. The apartment quickly fills up, and the two movers leave. Carter and Maya survey all the unpacking they have to do.

MAYA
Now what?

CARTER
We eat.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

Carter and Maya are eating in a BBQ restaurant. Carter's hands and face are covered with BBQ sauce.

CARTER
The real reason I moved to Texas.

Carter indulges in his ribs.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
So, you're happy we moved?

CARTER
Besides the fact it's been 110 degrees everyday, sure.

MAYA
Good. I was worried.

Carter puts down his ribs.

CARTER
Don't be.

Carter grabs her hand, smearing BBQ sauce all over it. Maya looks at it.

MAYA
So how long until you think we'll be all unpacked?

CARTER
How long are you in law school again?

MAYA
That'll make moving back to LA easier.

CARTER
So classes start in two weeks?

MAYA
From tomorrow.

CARTER
Nervous?

MAYA
I don't know. Not nervous. Anxious maybe.

CARTER
You'll have fun.

MAYA
I'm sure. Kinda worried about that whole Socratic method thing.

CARTER
Getting called on.

MAYA
Yep. Having 175 people look on as the professor humiliates you.

CARTER
If he starts hassling you, just tell him to fuck off or your husband will break both his legs.

Carter smiles deviantly with BBQ sauce all over his mouth.

CONTINUED: (2)

MAYA
Yeah, I'm sure I'd get an 'A' in that class.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - NIGHT

They wander around looking for their car.

MAYA
That's great they are letting you start work when I start school.

CARTER
Yeah, it is. Gives us time to unpack and hang out a little. Where did I park?

MAYA
Over here, silly.

CARTER
I would have been here all night.

They find their car and get in.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

CARTER
I'm never gonna see you when you start class.

MAYA
It won't be that bad. You'll have me in the evenings.

CARTER
You'll have more homework than you'll know what to do with.

MAYA
Yeah.

CARTER
That's okay, I'm sure I'll be able to keep myself busy.

MAYA
As long as it doesn't involve a secret named Victoria.

Maya moves closer to Carter.

CARTER
I only have one secret, and it doesn't have anything to do with Victoria.

They are moving closer to kiss.

MAYA
Oh, yeah? What's your secret?

They are millimeters from each others lips.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Oregano.

Maya is very confused as Carter moves in and kisses her.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm clock BEEPS and the two of them roll out of bed.

CARTER
Just one more day. Can't we sleep in just one more day?

MAYA
I wish. You'll have fun at work.

CARTER
Yeah, I know. It'll be good to get out and do something.

EXT. GRASSY PARK - DAY

Carter walks up to a small group of people. There is a video camera on a tripod pointing at a couple of chairs and a table. He sees GEORGE, the owner of the video company where he interviewed.

CARTER
George! Hey, I'm not late am I?

GEORGE
No, no. We're going to start here pretty soon.

George points out everyone.

GEORGE (cont'd)
That's Stan, Parker, Angelo, and Micha. I gotta get to the talent so you'll have to introduce yourself.

STAN is an overweight, fifty-eight year-old angry guy, who is fiddling with the camera. PARKER is thirty-six and slim. He wears a hearing aide and is cleaning all his sound gear with perfection. ANGELO is a slim, young Italian and MICHA is an average looking twenty-four year old. Carter steps up to Micha.

CARTER
Hi, I'm Carter.

MICHA
(quietly)
Seventeen and thirty-one make the tower clock turn to the left.

Micha waits for a response from a confused Carter.

MICHA (cont'd)
Seventeen and thirty-one make the tower clock turn to the left...

CONTINUED:

CARTER
I don't follow.

Micha steps away after giving Carter a secret nod. Carter turns to Angelo.

CARTER (cont'd)
What was that all about?

ANGELO
Scusi? Capiche l'Italiano?

CARTER
Oh, this is good.

GEORGE
(to everyone)
Okay, we're getting ready to go!

George is standing next to Mr. Kumul, the Indian man who is in the how to play the tabla video Carter has been watching. Carter is surprised and then disappointed.

INT. LAW SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Maya, with a big grin on her face, carrying a backpack over her shoulders and a book in her arm, marches around the library admiring the artwook as well as the books. She stops in her tracks, seeing someone she knows.

MAYA
Jessica!

JESSICA, blonde, slightly overweight and young, sits with MARK, a twenty-two year-old, handsome Latino. Jessica jumps up and runs over to Maya.

JESSICA
Maya!

They hug.

JESSICA (cont'd)
I can't believe it! You're going here now?
I had no idea!

MAYA
I know, crazy, huh? Me, law school?

Mark also stands up and smiles, admiring Maya.

JESSICA
Would have figured you for medical school.

Mark clears his throat.

JESSICA (cont'd)
Oh, sorry. Maya, this is Mark. Mark, Maya.
Maya and I went to high school together.
She always talked about medical school, but
here she is.

CONTINUED:

MARK
Nice to meet you.

They shake hands.

JESSICA
Mark and I are in section 3. We just got out of Donaldson's civ pro class.

MAYA
So did I! I didn't see you there.

JESSICA
I was sitting in the back and you were--

MAYA
In the front row.

JESSICA
Some things never change.

They LAUGH some more.

EXT. GRASSY PARK - DAY

Carter is carrying a small table to be placed in front of the two chairs where they are shooting. As he walks it over, he bumps the table that has Parker's sound equipment on it. A little mic lapel clip falls to the ground. Parker sees this and freezes; he is horrified. Carter puts down the table and picks the mic clip off the ground and tries to hand it to Parker.

CARTER
Sorry, man. Here ya go.

Parker refuses it, recoiling in horror.

CARTER (cont'd)
Here, it's fine.

He wipes the dirt off on his shirt. Carter notices Parker is wearing a hearing aide so he SHOUTS.

CARTER (cont'd)
I said sorry. Here ya go.

PARKER
(also shouting)
That clip is dead to me!

He knocks it out of Carter's hand and steps on it, grinding it into the dirt.

Carter just backs away and pick up his table and continues on to the set. He places the table in front of the two chairs. He steps in front of the camera which Stan is looking through.

STAN
Get out of the way you stupid son-of-a-bitch!

CONTINUED:

Carter is shocked and jolts up.

CARTER
Me?

STAN
Yeah you, you idiot! Get the hell out of the shot!

Carter looks around and there is no shot being taken. He steps away. George steps up to him.

GEORGE
Don't worry about those two. They're an eclectic bunch, but they get the job done.

George takes Mr. Kumul's arm and leads him to the chair.

GEORGE (cont'd)
You're sitting right here, Mr. Kumul.

Mr. Kumul sits down on the chair. The chair has metal legs that are digging into the dirt. He notices that he is slowly sinking.

MR. KUMUL
Ummm. I think something is amiss.

Parker storms up, angrily shouting every word.

PARKER
Well, I don't know how we are going to clip on his lapel mic because some idiot ruined it!

STAN
Yeah, that stupid son-of-a-bitch.

CARTER
Well, you can probably just--

MR. KUMUL
Umm, the thing that might be amiss is my chair.

Mr. Kumul is sinking slowly into the ground. Angelo hears Mr. Kumul and he tries to respond in ITALIAN. Neither understand each other.

MICHA
This looks like a job for M-I-C-H-A.

Micha unravels about two feet of gaffer's tape with his teeth. Mr. Kumul's chair is sinking farther and farther, and he is YELLING at Angelo in Hindi, who is YELLING back in Italian. Parker also begins to YELL. Micha rips open Mr. Kumul's shirt, revealing a hairy chest. Micha grabs the mic, tapes it and presses it and the two feet of tape against Mr. Kumul's chest. Carter just watches in disbelief. The chair continues to sink into the ground. The YELLING in Hindi and Italian gets louder. George, rushing in, is utterly confused about what to do. Stan, trying to get his camera focused, becomes irate.

CONTINUED: (2)

STAN
Shut the hell up all you sons-of-bitches!

With this, Mr. Kumul's chair reaches the ground, all the screaming stops, and George rips the tape off of Mr. Kumul's chest whose eyes bulge open and he SCREAMS in pain. Parker sees his destroyed mic and wigs out.

PARKER
That mic is dead to me now!!!

CARTER
I'll be at the craft services table if anyone needs me.

Mr. Kumul makes a sound of pleasure as if he enjoyed the hair pulling stunt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Carter comes in and he is covered in orange paint. Maya sees him and tries to hide her laughter with concern.

MAYA
What happened?

CARTER
I won't be going back to work for that company again.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Later, Carter serves Maya a nice meal, complete with wine and candles.

MAYA
Wine? Trying to use all our money the first month?

CARTER
If I wanted to do that I would have bought two bottles. It was going to celebrate you starting school and my first day at work but...

MAYA
I'm sorry, sweety. I'm sure you'll find something again.

CARTER
Yeah, I know. How was your day?

MAYA
Good! It's such a great school. You should see all the art work in the library!

CARTER
I thought this was law school?

MAYA
Well, yeah, but who wants to look at a lot of law books?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MAYA (cont'd)
I also met someone I went to high school with. It's really cool, she's in my section, too.

CARTER
Good! I'm glad YOU had a good day.

MAYA
Hey, at least now you can get some writing done.

CARTER
If I'm not too busy cooking, cleaning, and making sweet love to you.

MAYA
We'll just cut out the sweet love part. Then again, that'll only give you about ten extra minutes.

CARTER
Ten minutes?! I'm good for at least fifteen!

MAYA
Fifteen, huh? Well, I guess I can use the rest of the time to do my share of the housework. Don't want to neglect my new wifely duties, now do I?

CARTER
Your only duty is to get good grades. Okay?

MAYA
If you insist. I just want to make sure I get good grades at home, too.

CARTER
Oh yeah?

Carter stands up and tosses his napkin down.

CARTER (cont'd)
I think it's time for a pop quiz!

MAYA
No, Carter, I'm eating.

He pulls her up and tosses her over his shoulder. She LAUGHS as she pleads with him to put her down.

CARTER
Sorry. Time to see if you make the grade.

They go into the bedroom.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter opens up his Texas production manual and flips to the Austin section. He runs his finger down to a few places that are highlighted. He picks up the phone and starts dialing.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Hi, My name is Carter Thompson. I faxed you a resume a few weeks ago and I was wondering if you have any positions open? (beat) No, well, please let me know if anything opens up. (beat) Oh, well thank you.

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
Hi, my name is Carter Thompson and I faxed you a resume a few weeks ago and-

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
No, please let me know if anything opens up.

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
Carter Thompson and I faxed--

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
No? Please let me know if anything--

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
Well, thank you.

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
Thank you.

CUT TO:

CARTER (cont'd)
Thanks.

CARTER (cont'd)
Shit! (beat) Oh, sorry.

Defeated, he hangs up the phone.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter is looking at his computer monitor trying to do a little writing. He sees Chuck.

EXT. DESERT - DAY - DREAM

Chuck and Lisa are sitting by the side of the road. They are tossing rocks at a cactus. Chuck notices that Carter is back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHUCK
Thank God! You have to give these cars bigger gas tanks! And since you haven't given this girl any dialog yet, she can't talk! It's been how many weeks, now!?

CARTER
I know, I know. Unlimited gas from now on. I've just been a little preoccupied.

CHUCK
I see that. I thought you were going to write more since you have all this free time.

CARTER
Once I get a little more settled I will. It's just been a little crazy.

CHUCK
I can understand that. That's fine. Just stop forgetting about us. Some minor story detail would be nice, like: where we are going, who we are, maybe a little character arch?

CARTER
Okay, I'll work on it. First, let's give your driver a name; "Lisa."

CHUCK
Good. Now a voice.

LISA
(screeching)
How ya doing Chuck?

Chuck flinches.

CHUCK
Dude, don't make me come over there.

LISA
(lyrical)
How ya doing Chuck?

CHUCK
Nice.

CARTER
Okay, you two are on the run from the cops for stealing...

Chuck and Lisa wait for Carter's response.

CARTER (cont'd)
Tamales...

Some tamales appear in Lisa's hand.

CHUCK
What?

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
Sorry, I haven't eaten yet. I'll catch you later.

Carter heads out to get some food.

CHUCK
Hey! Tamales? What the hell!

Police SIRENS start blaring in the distance and Chuck looks worried.

LISA
What's that noise?

CHUCK (cont'd)
Shut up and grab the tamales, honey, and get in the car. We gotta go!

They jump in the car and speed off.

INT. LAW SCHOOL LECTURE - DAY

Maya sits in a large lecture hall filled with students. They are listening to their PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR
And who can tell us the precedent used for this argument? Ms. Thompson?

Maya jolts up, concerned.

MAYA
I would have to say-- Palsgraf?

PROFESSOR
And why?

MAYA
The defendant's actions were not foreseeable. No one could have foreseen he would have flammable items in his suitcase.

PROFESSOR
Good.

Maya is relieved. Mark looks over to her, and they share a smile.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter has prepared a huge elaborate meal for Maya. There are candles and roses all over the place. It is very romantic. He is wearing a suit and pours a glass of wine at the table when he hears the front door opening. He rushes into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maya walks in and is speechless. She sees all the candles and roses.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Carter. This is amazing!

CARTER
I thought since you've been working so hard the last few weeks, you needed something special.

MAYA
I can't stay.

Carter, surprised, gets a little annoyed.

CARTER
What do you mean?

MAYA
It's my study group.

CARTER
Can't you skip it?

MAYA
Well, usually it would be okay, but tomorrow we have a presentation to give. I told you about it a couple of days ago.

CARTER
Oh, I didn't remember.

MAYA
I'm sorry. I wish I could. It looks so nice. I just have to grab a few books and run, though.

CARTER
Okay, I'll save some leftovers for you.

She grabs a couple of books off the coffee table and then goes to leave.

MAYA
I'm sorry. I'll try and come home early.

CARTER
Okay.

She kisses him and leaves. Carter, missing his wife, plops down on the couch. He flips on the TV.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter flips through the Austin Production manual some more. Frustrated, he throws it onto the floor. He starts to flip the TV channels. He starts watching a horror movie. He slowly zones out.

INT. CAR - DAY - DREAM

Chuck and Lisa are flying down the freeway with sirens blaring behind them.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK
Hey, welcome back, there. Don't know why we are still running. Lisa ate the damn evidence 2 days ago!

LISA
I love tamales.

CHUCK
Yeah, I'm sure you do. Unfortunately, they went bad 3 days ago so she's been puking up a storm and I can't get this damn car to stop so we can clean it out! What the hell's going on out there? You forget about us?

CARTER
No. Just been a little unfocused. Maybe I should just start from scratch.

CHUCK
(horrified)
Good God, no! Just try and relax, I'm sure you'll think of something we can do.

They all wait.

Suddenly, Lisa and Chuck are transported back to the dancing room. Lisa starts dancing and having a blast. Chuck is annoyed.

CHUCK (cont'd)
Oh, this is real original. I'm not dancing any more!

Chuck comes a little closer to the CAMERA to talk with Carter.

CHUCK (cont'd)
Are you okay, buddy? You sure you're up to this?

CARTER
Yeah.

CHUCK
Cause it's getting pretty boring here. We need a story, something to do, a life.

CARTER
Look, I've been busy with trying to find-

CHUCK
I don't want to hear it. If you're not into this, why do you even try? I mean, what's the point? What are you getting out of it? 'Cause we ain't getting jack.

CARTER
I'm not getting much out of this either, right now.

CHUCK
Well, what do you want to get out of this?

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
A finished script. Something with some meaning, purpose, a heart.

CHUCK
Ain't that great. With all this dancing and chasing around, my heart is going to explode!

CHUCK
Okay, okay. Don't get hostile. How about this?

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Lisa and Chuck find themselves on a sunny beach. Lisa is now in a bikini and Chuck is wearing a swim suit.

CHUCK
It's a start.

Chuck looks at Lisa.

CHUCK (cont'd)
Wooo! A good start!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Carter is outside fiddling under the hood of his car. Maya walks up to him, carrying her bookbag.

MAYA
What ya doing?

CARTER
Just messing around.

MAYA
Anything wrong?

CARTER
No, just wanted to see if I could squeeze some more ponies out of her.

MAYA
Yeah, that's all you need, to go faster.

CARTER
It's fun.

MAYA
Any job luck?

CARTER
Do you see me dancing around?

MAYA
Well, at least you're staying busy. I'll be home later.

EXT. PICNIC AREA - DAY

Maya is sitting outside at a picnic table with Jessica and Mark. LENA, an attractive Asian girl, has also joined them. They are discussing their classes while they eat lunch.

JESSICA
So you and Mark can't go out with us tonight because you both have a stupid Health Law Association meeting?

MAYA
(excited)
It's great. It's actually interesting.

JESSICA
You mean your classes aren't?

MARK
I think the whole bioethics debate is really exciting.

MAYA
Especially now, with all the debate on the human cloning and the Human Genome Project making such progress.

MARK
Totally, I mean we can debate 'til we're blue in the face about whether or not it's ethical and morally right to clone humans to harvest them for organs.

Jessica and Lena are not seeing the appeal of this conversation.

LENA
Do you mind, I'm trying to eat.

JESSICA
Yeah, why don't you two go off and have your own little organ harvest debate while the rest of us sane people talk about what we're going to do with all the money we're going to make after we graduate.

They all CHUCKLE. Mark and Maya share a common glance, excited they share the same interests.

JESSICA (cont'd)
So how pissed was Carter the other night for you ditching his dinner plans?

MAYA
Oh, he was okay. He's just having a tough time adjusting, you know. I should spend some more time with him. Maybe later I can try to catch up on some of the work.

LENA
I don't know. Law school isn't really the place to play catch-up.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Yeah, I know. I'll figure it out.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Maya is sitting up in bed reading a law book. Carter is in the next room playing his tabla. Maya is trying to concentrate but is getting very distracted by Carter's banging. She tries to concentrate more, but she just can't focus with the racket.

MAYA
Carter!

He doesn't hear.

MAYA (cont'd)
Carter!!

CARTER
Yeah?

MAYA
I'm trying to study. Do you mind giving it a rest?

CARTER
Okay.

Maya goes back to her books. Carter slides in to bed and stares at her, wanting attention. She stays focused on her book. He kisses her shoulder and a small smile creeps on her face. He moves up and starts to kiss her neck. Her smile grows and she looks up from her book.

MAYA
Carter. Stop.

CARTER
I don't think you really want me to stop.

MAYA
Yeah, I do. I still have to finish this case.

CARTER
Oh, you can finish it tomorrow.

He keeps kissing her neck. Maya gets angry.

MAYA
No, I really can't. I have to be prepared in case I get called on.

CARTER
You won't get called on.

MAYA
Carter. Stop. I really have to work.

Now Carter gets a little upset.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Okay, okay. I'll leave.

Carter storms away.

MAYA
Carter. Carter?

He doesn't respond. She HUFFS in frustration, but continues to read.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY - MONTAGE

Carter is flipping TV channels again.

He pulls out another frozen dinner from the freezer.

JUMP CUTS of Carter sitting on the couch in the exact same position drinking various sodas and wearing different shirts, watching horror films with loud SCREAMS filling the room. He digs into an oversized barrel of cheese balls and feeds his face while drinking beer. He is expressionless and immobile.

Carter puts his tabla tape into the VCR and it gets eaten.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Maya and Mark walk towards their next class. Maya is pensive and Mark notices.

MARK
You want to get together again to discuss the Health Association topics?

MAYA
Yeah, I would like that. It's fun.

MARK
Yeah, I think so. You okay?

MAYA
Yeah, it's just Carter.

Not really wanting to talk about her husband, but wanting to play the concerned friend, he responds.

MARK
What's going on?

MAYA
I don't know. Bored. He's just not all there. It's weird.

MARK
Just slug him, that'll bring him back.

MAYA
I'm serious. I'm starting to worry. He just sits around and watches TV and these creepy Italian horror films.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

MAYA (cont'd)
I was studying a few nights ago and I heard this blood-curdling scream come from the other room. I couldn't think!

MARK
Just study more at the library. That's where I'll be.

MAYA
No, I like studying at home and just being around.

Lena steps up to the two of them and Mark gets a bit annoyed.

LENA
Hey guys, off to crim law?

MAYA
Yeah.

Lena sees how sad Maya is. She puts her arm around her and slightly pushes Mark out of the way.

LENA
Oh honey, it'll get better.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

While surfing the net, Carter decides to look up some porn. A smile appears on his face.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY - DREAM

Carter hears something behind him. He quickly spins around and it is Maya. She is wearing a very sexy red dress. He grins. She comes over to him and sits on his lap. They make love.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter wakes from his dream with a jolt as his real wife comes home. He quickly pulls his pants up and fiddles with the computer.

CARTER
Deleting history...

MAYA
Carter?

CARTER
In here.

Maya enters the room. Maya sees that Carter is a little flustered.

MAYA
You okay?

CARTER
Yeah, fine. What's up?

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Just wanted to make sure you paid rent.

CARTER
Yeah, of course I paid rent. Got nothing else to do.

MAYA
If you're so bored, why don't you go out and DO something.

CARTER
Like?

MAYA
Jog, hike, go to the lake.

CARTER
How about an option that doesn't involve swarms of bugs.

Maya stares at him.

MAYA
Carter, I wish WE could spend time together, but I'm a little preoccupied with school right now. And I'm worried about you.

CARTER
I'm fine. I just have to find my niche, that's all. Don't worry. Just focus on your work, I'll be fine...

He spins around and goes back to the computer. Maya stands there for a few moments staring at him, waiting for more. She leaves, frustrated.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Carter opens up the freezer, and there are no frozen dinners left. He tosses another dozen in.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter is eating his meal and on the phone with his Texas production manual out in front of him. He is calling more production companies.

CARTER
Oh, I see. Thanks anyway. Bye.

Carter, angry, tosses the phone down.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Carter has his pad and pen out and stares into the distance. His eyes are glazed. BANG! A loud knock on the door jars him awake.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter opens the door and it is Chuck and Lisa. They are both sunburnt and in their bathing suits. Carter is shocked.

CHUCK
You mind if we come in seeing how the sun has nearly killed us!

They both enter the apartment.

CARTER
What are you doing?

CHUCK
We got bored so we decided to act on our own accord. And poor Lisa here almost drowned; she apparently can't swim. I had to write a "lifeguard saves Lisa" in the sand but I accidentally wrote shaves instead of saves and it became a whole different movie all of the sudden, let me tell ya. But now we're here. And we want some story.

CARTER
Okay, okay. I shouldn't have created you with so much anger. Geez. Story. It's like a drug with you people.

CHUCK
What is going on with you? We've written four or five scripts together without much trouble. Why now?

CARTER
I don't know. My writing seems to only progress when my life progresses and likewise. I'm so damn stagnant now. I just worry all the time about all this STUFF.

CHUCK
What stuff?

CARTER
Maya, rent, a job, my not having any friends...

CHUCK
Oh, boo hoo on you. You big whining baby. At least you have someone to share your problems with.

CARTER
You?

CHUCK
No, not me! Maya! Try talking to her about this stuff. See if you two can figure it out.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
I don't want to bother her. She is stressed enough about school.

CHUCK
You sure it's school?

CARTER
Why don't we just get back to this stupid story?

CHUCK
Stupid story? Why do you even want to be a writer?

CARTER
I don't want to be a writer. I just am a writer.

CHUCK
That's about as deep as the story you've immersed us in. Here's a tip. Write what you know. Okay? Let's start there.

CARTER
How about a horror movie?

Lisa, blood spitting out of her mouth, pulls out a knife and attacks Chuck. He tries to hold her off.

CHUCK
Little help, please.

CARTER
You don't like that? Then how about a love story?

Lisa smiles warmly at Chuck, the blood still oozing out.

CHUCK
Sounds promising. Just make sure she talks more.

CARTER
Chuck, you are driving on the freeway--

CHUCK
Always with the driving. I hope you know where I'll end up this time...

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Chuck is in his Trans Am speeding down the freeway.

CARTER
You're in your Trans Am and you see a tricked out Honda. So you pull up closer.

Chuck sees a light blue, lowered Accord with a spoiler on it. He pulls up to see the driver, and it is Lisa. She gives him a big "you wanna play" smile and takes off. They race a little as if they are dancing.

CONTINUED:

Chuck makes some nice moves and Lisa approves. They share many cute smiles until Lisa loses control of her car and it CRASHES. CHUCK is horrified. He pulls off the road and calls 911 from his cell phone.

CHUCK
Oh, that's a good love story. She's dead.

CARTER
No, she's not dead, just in a coma.

LISA
I thought I was going to talk more.

CHUCK
Yeah, this kinda sucks, Carter.

CARTER
Hey, one more word out of either of you, and you're going back to the beach.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

A sign reads "Welcome to Houston."

INT. MAYA'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

DOORBELL. Vijay and Priya, excited, open up the front door and see Maya and Carter.

VIJAY
Hello! You made it!

They all share hugs and HELLOS.

VIJAY (cont'd)
Come in, hurry. We have to leave.

MAYA
Leave? Where are we going?

PRIYA
Republic Day celebration!

Carter is confused.

CARTER
What's that?

They come in and put down their bags. Vijay opens up a closet and takes out a jacket.

MAYA
It's like July 4th but for India.

PRIYA
Actually, no. It was started by the Indian Nationalists before they got their independence. They picked January 26th to be a day that would be in honor of their constant struggle to gain independence. Their actual independence came 17 years later on August 14, 1947.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Wow. That's great. And there is a celebration?

EXT. LARGE PARK - DAY

On a stretched grassy mall, there are a few hundred people, mostly Indian, walking around. There are booths setup serving food and selling stuff. A band plays TRADITIONAL MUSIC, complete with sitar and tabla playing. Carter has two plates over-flowing with Indian food.

VIJAY
You should have brought your instruments, you could have done a battle of the bands!

MAYA
That's okay. I'm a little out of practice.

CARTER
Yeah, and I suck.

Maya's parents see someone and walk away for a second. Carter looks around and feels like the only non-Indian in the place.

CARTER (cont'd)
So is this how you feel all the time?

MAYA
What?

CARTER
Being the minority - feeling out of place?

MAYA
(annoyed)
You don't want to be here?

CARTER
No, not at all. I love this - learning about your culture.

MAYA
I'm comfortable with who I am. I'm okay with other cultures.

CARTER
I'm not saying I'm not. I'm just saying...

MAYA
What?

Carter takes a bite of food. A strong breeze blows the plates of food over and onto Carter's shirt. Maya and Carter pause and then start to LAUGH together.

INT. MAYA'S PARENT'S COMPUTER ROOM - EVENING

Carter is surfing the web and Vijay walks in and shuts the door behind him. Carter stops what he is doing and turns to him. Vijay sits across from Carter.

CONTINUED:

VIJAY
So how is everything going, Carter?

CARTER
Going pretty well.

VIJAY
Any luck on the job search?

CARTER
A little. Not much, though.

VIJAY
So, are you looking at jobs only in Austin?

CARTER
Pretty much.

VIJAY
San Antonio is only about an hour away. Maybe you should try looking there.

CARTER
I may. I'll give it a few more weeks, and then I'll probably branch out.

Vijay gets up and starts pacing.

VIJAY
How are you doing financially?

CARTER
Okay.

VIJAY
You have enough for rent and the bills for a while?

CARTER
Yeah, with my savings and the student loans, we're doing okay for now.

VIJAY
It may be a good idea to start looking for other kinds of jobs.

As Vijay talks, we SLOWLY DOLLY IN to a CLOSE-UP of Carter's face. He is very stressed.

VIJAY (cont'd)
I know it's hard, but you may want to consider jobs that are kind of related. Graphic arts, computer IT work, maybe working at one of the computer companies. I'm sure they have some kind of media department. I'm just saying you should keep your options and eyes open because you never know when something you like might come around. You have to make sure you take care of and support Maya. She has enough on her plate without having to worry about money.

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
I know. She won't.

VIJAY
We just want to make sure you two are okay.

CARTER
I know.

VIJAY
You two will be just fine.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter is back writing at home.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lisa is laying peacefully in a coma in a hospital bed. Chuck is pacing.

CHUCK
Christ, this is all my fault.

He pulls up a chair to her and sits. He gently holds her hand.

CHUCK (cont'd)
I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have raced like that. Or misspelled save.

Chuck tears up.

CHUCK (cont'd)
And you're not going to drown.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter is surfing the net and wanders to the HOME MOVIE NETWORK (HMN) website. He goes to their "Job Opportunities" section. He perks up. He picks up the phone and dials.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Maya and Mark sit in the library. Mark pulls out a CD from his backpack.

MARK
Oh, I burned you a copy of the Depeche Mode album you wanted.

MAYA
Oh.

MARK
You okay, Maya? You've been bugging me about this album for weeks.

MAYA
I'm sorry. I'm just out of it.

CONTINUED:

MARK
You look beat.

MAYA
Can't sleep. Worried about stuff.

MARK
Stuff?

MAYA
Carter, exams, money, lots of stuff.

MARK
I'm sorry, Maya.

MAYA
I feel like I don't know him anymore.

Maya starts to tear up.

MAYA
I was so happy when we moved here. Everything was going great. I was actually enjoying school. Carter was happy. I don't know what happened.

MARK
He's just confused.

MAYA
Is it me? Did I do something? Did I not do something? I want to help, but I don't know what to say.

MARK
Maybe just tell him how you feel.

MAYA
I tried, but he just says he needs a job or that he needs to figure it out. He won't tell me.

MARK
I'm sorry. It'll get better.

MAYA
I don't see it getting much worse. I just want my old Carter back. He was so much fun, had so much energy and life in him. Now it's like he's empty and I can't help but feel it's my fault.

Maya cries some and Mark rubs her back.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter grabs another frozen dinner out of the fridge. He sits in front of the TV and starts watching. His tabla is sitting on top of the set with papers on it. On the TV Carter sees:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Chuck enters the room bringing a large bunch of flowers. Lisa's parents, DON and VANESSA, are sitting there as well as her younger 19 year-old brother, REGGIE. Don and Vanessa become angry when they see Chuck.

DON
You! You're the one who did this?

CHUCK
What? No? I tried to save her! When she was drowning!

DON
Get out! Stay away from our daughter!

Chuck, very upset, lays the flowers on the chair and backs out of the room. Don grabs the flowers and crushes them in the trash.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maya comes home later that day. Carter is sitting on the couch. His script is on his lap; he is using it as a support on which to pay bills. She approaches him.

MAYA
Bills?

CARTER
Yeah.

MAYA
How we doing?

CARTER
Not too bad. I gotta look for anything pretty soon.

Maya sits on the couch, tossing her bookbag down.

MAYA
Get any writing done today?

Carter is frustrated with not being able to get much work done. He starts to take it out on Maya.

CARTER
A little. Story still needs some work.

MAYA
Everything okay?

CARTER
Yeah. Why wouldn't it be?

MAYA
You've been kinda distant.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Just been bored. Feel like Jack Torrance in The Shining. Not really doing much.

MAYA
Just don't smash through the door with an axe. We need our security deposit back.

CARTER
We don't own an axe.

MAYA
Well, maybe if you did something, wrote some more, you would feel a little better.

CARTER
I'm trying.

Getting angry, Carter looks up from paying bills.

CARTER (cont'd)
I wish you would stop asking me about it. It's just...

MAYA
What? I'm just trying to be encouraging... helpful.

CARTER
Don't.

MAYA
You don't want to talk about it?

Now Maya is frustrated.

CARTER
No. I mean, it's fine. I've just been... A lot's been going on.

Maya looks at Carter intently from across the room.

MAYA
A lot's been going on with me, too: school, money, you, us. Why don't you want to talk to me?

CARTER
Nothing to talk about. Don't worry. Once I start working, everything will be normal.

MAYA
Carter, I don't know what's going on with you, but this isn't good.

CARTER
What isn't?

MAYA
This! Us! Our marriage!

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
What's wrong with our marriage?

MAYA
Besides the fact that you're depressed all the time, you never talk to me about anything? It's like you don't want to be here with me.

CARTER
Of course I want to be with you.

MAYA
Then what is wrong? Do you hate me because I made you move?

CARTER
No, I don't hate you. I like the city.

MAYA
Is it about a job? You're very talented; you'll find something. I know you will.

CARTER
I know. It's just... I'm worried about the bills and I miss having friends and family and you to talk with. I feel like I'm marooned on some random planet where all they do is play country music and eat beef.

MAYA
You'll make friends; it just takes time. When you have a job it will be a lot easier.

CARTER
Well, speaking of jobs.

MAYA
What?

CARTER
I got an interview at HMN.

MAYA
That's great! I didn't even know they have an office out here.

CARTER
Um, no. I'd have to move back to LA.

Maya becomes very confused.

MAYA
What? Move back? Why didn't you talk to me about this first?

CARTER
Don't worry. It's just an interview.

MAYA
Move back without me?

CONTINUED: (3)

CARTER
But I would be able to make some money for us. I could live with my sister for next to nothing and send you enough for your rent and food. That would be good, right?

Maya doesn't like the sound of this at all, but she sees how excited Carter is.

MAYA
I don't even know how to react to this.

CARTER
(perking up)
It would be great to work for a place that puts out such good shows. I mean, to be a part of something like that would be incredible. Maybe then I wouldn't feel so useless.

Maya tries to understand her husband.

MAYA
Okay. If you think it's best.

CARTER
Let's see if I get the job, I mean, it's kind of a long shot anyway.

MAYA
Okay.

INT. HMN HALLWAY - DAY

Carter is being led down a hallway by RACHEL, an assistant in her late thirties.

RACHEL
So you found it okay?

CARTER
Yeah. It's kind of hard to miss.

RACHEL
You're interviewing with Kari, the Manager of post production.

CARTER
Okay.

They approach an office and go in.

INT. KARI'S OFFICE - DAY

KARI is the spitting image of the actor Karen Black: tall with long, curly brown hair, and in her early fifties. Carter sees this similarity instantly.

RACHEL
Kari, this is Carter. Carter, Kari.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Nice to meet you.

KARI
Likewise. Please sit.

They quickly shake hands and Carter sits across from her.

KARI (cont'd)
Rachel, hold my calls, and can you get us some water?

RACHEL
Sure.

Rachel leaves and closes the door behind her.

CARTER
You probably get this a lot, but you look just like Karen Black.

KARI
Who?

CARTER
Karen Black. The actress?

Kari shakes her head, confused.

CARTER (cont'd)
Five Easy Pieces, Trilogy of Terror, Last Tycoon?

KARI
Sorry, don't watch a lot of movies.

CARTER
Wow.

KARI
So why HMN?

CARTER
That's easy. You guys put out some of the best shows on TV. Just to be a part of that process would be amazing. To know that all your hard work and dedication goes for something you believe in. What's more important than that?

EXT. LAW SCHOOL WALKWAY - DAY

Maya and Mark are strolling to class. They pause to talk more seriously.

MAYA
I'm sorry about the other day. I didn't mean to fall apart on you like that.

MARK
That okay, Maya. Anytime you wanna talk, I'm here.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Thanks, I appreciate that. It's nice, you know.

They look into each other's eyes. Jessica steps up to them, knowing she is interrupting them.

JESSICA
What are you guys talking about?

They step apart and all walk together.

MAYA
Carter's thinking about moving back to LA.

JESSICA
He wouldn't, would he?

MAYA
I don't know. I guess eight months of being married to me is enough.

MARK
But you said there's a chance he may not go?

MAYA
I doubt it. If he wants to go, he'll go.

MARK
Maybe. And then if he's smart, he'll come crawling back to you.

MAYA
I'll settle for a plane ride back to me.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Carter sits in a busy LA restaurant with a few friends and family members: Rick, Cynthia, Brandon, Danielle, Dave, and Phill. They are all LAUGHING and having a great time. Carter's smile is wider then we have seen it in a long time.

DAVE
You think she would mind if you got a job out here?

CARTER
I doubt she would notice.

DAVE
That sucks, man. Reason I'm asking, I'm leaving Marquee in a month or so. You interested?

CARTER
What about Phill?

DAVE
He's just an intern now. We'll bump him up to a coordinator, but he's not ready for super yet.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
I'll think about it, let you know.

DAVE
Great.

EXT. AUSTIN AIRPORT - DAY

Carter walks out and sees Maya. They hug and we see a spark fly between them. They kiss.

CARTER
You miss me?

MAYA
You were gone?

CARTER
Very funny.

INSERT

Carter grabs another frozen dinner out of the fridge.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter sits focused on the computer screen.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EVENING - DREAM

Chuck quietly goes into the hotel room. He is carrying a small cooler. He sits next to Lisa and opens the cooler and pulls out some tamales.

CHUCK
I know how you love these. I'll just put them here in case you're hungry when you wake up.

He places them next to her bed. Reggie steps into the room.

REGGIE
They don't know if she'll ever wake up.

CHUCK
She'll fight. I know she'll fight.

REGGIE
Yeah, she will.

Reggie puts his hand on Chuck's shoulder.

REGGIE
Here, take this.

Reggie hands Chuck a small diamond pendant.

REGGIE (cont'd)
She always wore it.

Chuck clutches it.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

DISSOLVES of Carter sitting at the desk trying to write for a long time. He snaps out of it and then starts surfing the net. He finds some adult websites...

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Carter and Maya eat dinner in front of the TV. They are silent.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

That evening, Carter is laying on the couch, watching TV. Maya is in the computer room.

MAYA (O.S.)
Carter! What the hell is this!?

Carter becomes very alarmed.

CARTER
Uh-oh.

He gets up and goes into the computer room.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - EVENING

Maya has a porn site open on the computer. Carter's heart sinks.

MAYA
What is this?

CARTER
A website.

MAYA
I see that! What is it doing in the history list? What have you been doing?

Carter is silent. He feels terrible.

MAYA
Why?

CARTER
I don't know. Bored.

Maya is very upset. Carter doesn't want to look at her.

MAYA
You know how this makes me feel!

CARTER
Yeah.

MAYA
Like I'm not good enough! Is that what you'd rather have-- tall, blonde girls with fake boobs?

CONTINUED:

Carter shakes his head "no" and Maya starts to tear up.

CARTER
No, not at all. It's just that you're never here.

MAYA
I'm sorry but what else can I do? I'm in school 12 hours a day. I'm sorry I don't make dinner and take better care of you or our house. I'm sorry! I don't know how to do things any better. I can't believe we're still newlyweds and I've already driven my husband to porn.

CARTER
It's not your fault. I've been in a slump or something. Frustrated. My writing has gone nowhere. I'm just wasting everything.

MAYA
Can't even keep my husband happy.

CARTER
Hey, I'm the shitty husband who can't support his wife.

MAYA
You're not a shitty husband, but you have changed. You used to be so, I don't know, confident and fun to be with. Now you're...

CARTER (cont'd)
Is that why you don't want to make love anymore?

MAYA
You're not the same. I'm just not as attracted to this Carter as I was to the old Carter.

CARTER
I'm sorry, I'll try to make this better.

Maya cries a little more and they hug. Carter rubs Maya on the back, feeling terrible.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - DAY

Carter makes a phone call back to his old work.

DAVE (V.O.)
Marquee Productions, this is Dave.

CARTER
Hey Dave!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Chuck is standing, pacing while he looks and talks at the CAMERA. Carter emerges from behind the camera POV and comes into Chuck's world.

CHUCK
Are you crazy!

CARTER
I'll go crazy if I stay here!

CHUCK
But leaving your wife?

CARTER
It's just for a few months. She'll be able to focus more on her studies and not feel guilty about ignoring me. I think it's what I have to do to make things right.

CHUCK
Right? You think leaving your wife will make your marriage right?

CARTER
I have to do something. I can support her. I won't be stressed all the time about bills. And if I'm not stressed, I'll write more. I just want to feel passionate about something again.

CHUCK
Isn't that what your wife is for?

Carter hesitates, thinking about this.

CHUCK (cont'd)
I don't think this is such a good idea. But then again, I'm your idea so what do I know?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Maya and Carter sit across from each other eating a simple dinner. They are quiet. Carter's antsy and Maya notices.

MAYA
What? You got a job?

Maya is VERY excited.

MAYA
That's great! I'm so happy! With whom?

Carter gets a little more serious and swallows.

CARTER
Marquee.

MAYA
What?

CONTINUED:

CARTER
You know, the place I used to work in LA.

MAYA
I know who they are. I thought you didn't like your old job.

CARTER
At least it's in film and I can make pretty good money. Plus, I'll be a part of something again. You know, involved in the process. I just wanna feel something again.

MAYA
When would you leave?

CARTER
I start on the 3rd. So I've gotta be there in about three weeks. That gives me about two more weeks here.

MAYA
So this is a done deal?

Maya starts to tear up.

CARTER
It's only for a few months and you can visit me all the time. They always have cheap specials.

Maya looks away.

CARTER
Maya, it will go by fast. I promise. It's the best thing for us right now. I can support us. I'm useless here.

She is motionless.

MAYA
So you have to go, then.

CARTER
I think I do. If it doesn't work out, I'll quit and move back.

She nods slowly as she looks into him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Chuck is asleep in the hospital room. Don points out Chuck to two POLICE OFFICERS. They storm in and he wakes up. They grab him and start to drag him out.

CHUCK
What are you doing? Stop!

POLICE OFFICER #1
Illegal possession of tamales, sir.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK
But I love her!

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Carter stuffs the last suitcase into the car and closes the trunk. Maya is standing beside him, silent, a few tears start flowing. Carter gives her a big hug. He wipes a tear off her cheek.

MAYA
You have everything?

CARTER
Yeah. I'm sorry.

MAYA
It's okay, it's what's best for you.

CARTER
And us too.

Maya nods, not really believing that.

CARTER (cont'd)
If you don't want me to go, just tell me and I'll stay.

MAYA
You know I want you here, but you need to be there. Your career won't last if you stay here.

CARTER
Yeah. It's only for three months. Don't worry.

MAYA
Okay.

Carter hugs her again and they kiss.

CARTER
I love you.

MAYA
I love you.

CARTER
I'll call you from the road, okay?

Maya nods. Carter climbs into his car and starts it up.

CARTER (cont'd)
Bye, sweetie.

Maya is crying too much to say anything. Carter smiles sadly at her and begins to drive away. Radiohead's SONG: Exit Music (For A Film), starts.

INT. CAR - DAY

Carter watches her from his rearview mirror. He wipes a few tears from his eyes.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Maya looks around, not sure what to do next, as we PULL AWAY from her and see that she is very alone.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Carter's Trans Am darts down the road as the Radiohead song plays. Carter wipes off some more tears.

EXT. EL PASO MOTEL - NIGHT

Carter drives up to a dimly lit hotel at night.

INT. EL PASO MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Carter lugs in a suitcase into the dark room and tosses it on the bed. He closes the door and flicks on the lights. He is alone. He lays down in bed next to his suitcase and stares at the ceiling. He is not excited about returning to LA.

CARTER
What am I doing?

He dials Maya on his cell phone. When she answers, she appears in the room with him. They are both speaking into the phone as they look at each other.

CARTER (cont'd)
Hi, sweetie.

MAYA
(relieved to hear his voice)
Carter. How was your drive?

CARTER
Hot. Long. Boring.

MAYA
Sorta like your stay in Austin.

CARTER
God, I miss you.

MAYA
I know. I can't wait until we see each other again.

CARTER
Me too.

DISSOLVES showing time has passed as they talk. He hangs up the phone and lays in bed. Maya disappears and Carter is asleep in seconds.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

SLOW MOTION of Maya standing there, alone in the parking lot after Carter left for L.A., motionless, watching Carter drive away. The camera DOLLYS AWAY from her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DAY

Carter's car drives into Los Angeles and gets stuck in gobs of traffic. Now he is motionless.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Carter parks on a street next to a small apartment complex. He checks the address, 34875. This is the one. Carter exits the car and grabs his suitcase from the trunk and proceeds up the stairs.

EXT. SISTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Carter approaches an apartment door. He rings the BELL. No answer so he tries again. After a few seconds he reaches into a plant next to the door and brings out a key. He unlocks the door and goes in.

INT. SISTER'S APARTMENT - DAY

He steps into her apartment. A strange guy, STEVE, is sitting on the couch. He is in his late twenties, short and stocky, with a military buzz cut. He is LAUGHING very loudly as he watches a war on the History Channel. As soon as he sees Carter, he stops laughing.

STEVE
Hi, you must be Carter. I'm Steve.

SAM, Carter's blonde, attractive, thirty-something sister, comes in from the kitchen.

SAM
Carter!

She gives him a big hug.

CARTER
Hey, Sam.

SAM
How are you doing? You must be exhausted. You want anything to eat?

CARTER
No, I'm fine.

She sees his glum expression.

SAM
You miss Maya, huh?

CONTINUED:

Carter nods, not wanting to show too much emotion.

Steve gets up and struts over.

STEVE
I remember when I was apart from my loved one. It was hell. Seemed like eternity. I lost her in Granada. I got knocked over by some shelling and the next thing I know, she was gone. Luckily, I found her a few minutes later. Here, I got her picture.

He whips out a picture of a very large machine gun.

STEVE (cont'd)
Yeah, I had to give her up when I started on the meds.

Carter, not sure what to make of this, turns his focus back to Sam.

CARTER
I'm gonna be in my room for a while if you need me.

SAM
Okay. It's over there. I put some clean sheets and towels on the bed for you.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

He goes into his room. The small bed sits in the corner.

CARTER
Home.

INT. LIVING ROOM AUSTIN - NIGHT

Maya wanders around her apartment, dragging her feet. She plops down in front of the TV and starts to flip channels. She sees her sitar leaning against the wall near the TV.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

His room is now littered with his few boxes. He is arranging a few books and trinkets in a bookcase. He sees his tabla in one of the boxes and he takes it out. He taps on it a little.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maya grabs her sitar and plays a few notes.

INT. BEDROOM/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We CUT back and forth between Maya and Carter as they start to play their instruments. The sounds carries over between the cuts as if they are playing together.

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Carter arrives back to his old office. Nothing much has changed except Dave no longer works there. Phill is sitting in Carter's old desk.

CARTER
Phill!

PHILL
Carter!

PHILL
How ya been?

CARTER
Good enough.

PHILL
Sorry about being apart from Maya. It's gotta suck.

CARTER
Yeah. It's weird. You know that feeling you get when you leave the house and you KNOW you forgot something? That's how I feel all the time. Like I'm missing something.

PHILL
How's Maya holding up?

CARTER
Good. Studying hard. She has finals coming up so, you know.

PHILL
Yeah. It's gotta be hard for her too. Not just finals, I mean, being apart.

Carter doesn't really want to talk about it.

CARTER
Yeah. I just try and stay focused on work, you know. Not worry too much.

Carter sees Phill's guitar on his desk.

CARTER (cont'd)
You still play?

PHILL
Hell yeah. Here, check this out.

Phill grabs his guitar from behind his desk and plays a very sweet LOVE SONG. He then smashes his guitar on the wall.

CARTER
That was great.

CONTINUED:

PHILL
You think? The smashing sort of adds a physical urgency to the song.

CARTER
Why not?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Maya is grabbing some books out of her locker. Mark and Jessica step up to her.

JESSICA
Hey you! How you feeling?

MAYA
Like shit.

MARK
We gotta take your mind off this. Why don't we get some food or something?

MAYA
That's okay, not hungry.

JESSICA
You sure, we can dish about Lena.

MAYA
I'm not ready to be sociable quite yet.

Mark's eyes follow her closely as she walks off.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Carter is busy lifting heavy weights. He looks off into the distance.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Chuck, very upset, walks on the sidewalk, pining for Lisa.

CHUCK
Stupid tamale. Damn Carter getting hungry all the time and not knowing what he's doing. What am I going to do? What the fuck am I going to do? I have to see her.

INT. LIVING ROOM (AUSTIN)- EVENING

Maya is watching an episode of The Andy Griffith Show. AUNT BEA is talking about her recipe for spaghetti sauce and what her secret ingredient is. It's oregano. Maya remembers Carter's joke about oregano from before and sadly LAUGHS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter clicks on the TV and begins to surf. Landing on an adult film, he begins to perk up. Enjoying what he is seeing, he becomes aroused. He runs into the other room and quickly comes back with a bottle of lotion and some tissues.

CONTINUED:

Dropping his drawers, he lathers up his hands with lotion. As he is about to dive in, a cat jumps on his lap.

CARTER
Shit!

He grabs the cat and tosses him off. The cat is now covered in lotion. Carter hears SAM'S VOICE outside. Carter shoots his eyes at the door and becomes alarmed. He quickly pulls his pants up and wipes his hands off on some tissues, then stuffs them in his pants. He flips the channel. Sam and Steve walk in.

SAMANTHA
Carter! You're up!

She sees him all flustered and the cat covered in lotion. Turning toward the TV, she see "Wild Kingdom" on. Carter smiles.

CARTER
I'll be right back.

Carter runs into his room and shuts the door. They look at the TV.

SAM
He must really miss her.

STEVE
I have this tape!

He gives Sam a sexy smile.

LATER

The three of them are playing Monopoly.

SAM
So, I've been meaning to tell you. I'm moving down to San Diego with Steve.

CARTER
Really? When?

SAM
About three weeks. You should probably start looking for a new place unless you want to stay here, but it's $1000.

CARTER
Maybe I'll move closer to work.

STEVE
I don't know, Carter. Maybe you should just move back to Austin and be with your wife. You seem pretty miserable here. I mean, love is the only thing in life that really matters. Everything else is just, you know, by-products.

Carter and Sam stop and stare at Steve while he rolls the dice and becomes outraged.

CONTINUED:

STEVE
Shit! I'm not going to any goddamn jail!

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Carter sits there staring at the TV watching sex, as he has done many times before. He isn't very excited about it. His mind begins to wander.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Maya and Carter flirting.

INT. MARQUEE POST PRODUCTION OFFICE - DAY

Carter becomes unhappy. Phill comes into the office and sees this. Phill has another BEAUTY in his arms.

PHILL
You got plans tonight?

CARTER
Not really.

PHILL
Great. Be here at six.

CARTER
Six?

PHILL
Trust me, six.

Carter's cell phone RINGS and he answers.

CARTER
This is Carter.

Phill leaves the room.

KARI (V.O.)
Hi Carter, this is Rachel with HMN.

Carter's eyes widen.

INT. PICNIC AREA/INT. MARQUEE OFFICE - DAY

Carter is on the phone with Maya. We CUT BACK AND FORTH between the two of them. Carter is very happy.

CARTER
Maya, I got it.

MAYA
What?

CARTER
The job! I got the job at HMN!

MAYA
That's great!

CONTINUED:

Maya is very happy for Carter, but a few tears still stream down her face.

CARTER
I start in a couple of weeks. I can't believe this. Finally, after all the crap I've been through, a real job. And what an incredible company!

MAYA
So that means we'll be apart for two years?

CARTER
I don't know. I didn't really think of that.

MAYA
I noticed.

CARTER
But no more money problems. And the hours! It's really great.

MAYA
I don't doubt that. I guess I should re-apply to schools out there.

CARTER
You can do that?

MAYA
It's almost completely impossible to transfer, but I can try.

CARTER
How perfect would that be? A great job and you out here. Oh, I think I found a place to live in Playa del Rey. It's only two blocks from the beach.

Maya gives up.

MAYA
That's... Great.

CARTER
Maybe I'll be all moved in when you come to visit.

MAYA
Yeah.

CARTER
It's only in a couple of weeks. You excited?

MAYA
I can't wait.

Maya smiles.

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
I gotta call my parents. Hey, call yours and tell them the news. I'll see you soon!

MAYA
Love you.

Maya hangs up and begins to cry.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

A beautiful STRIPPER dances in front of Carter. His mouth hits the floor.

PHILL
What did I tell you?

They continue into the club and sit at a small table.

CARTER
My God! I forgot these places existed.

PHILL
And only five minutes from work.

CARTER
Unbelievable.

PHILL
Pick one.

CARTER
What?

PHILL
Pick one, my treat. A lap dance for the newest HMN post super.

CARTER
No, I'm purely a spectator at this event.

PHILL
No way man. Your wife ain't here, you got no choice!

CARTER
No, really. I wouldn't feel right.

NINA, a gorgeous stripper with long brown hair, a perfect body, and piercing eyes approaches the two of them. She leans into them, showing off her large breasts.

NINA
Either one of you like a dance?

PHILL
My friend here would love one but he's a little shy.

CARTER
No. That's okay.

CONTINUED:

Phill gets up and pulls Carter from his seat.

PHILL
You are going in back with that girl or I'll make you regret it.

CARTER
Come on, Phill.

Nina watches the two of them and grins. She grabs his hand and starts to pull him away. Carter resists.

PHILL
(yelling)
Hey buddy, get your hands off me. You're supposed to go after the girls at this place!

CARTER
Okay, okay, shut up! I'll go, but I won't enjoy it.

Phill nods and winks at Nina. She brings him to a back room.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

She takes him to a dimly lit, small room, with several large chairs lining the wall. There are a few other men getting lap dances. Carter scans the small room and then sits in one of the chairs. She stands in front of him.

NINA
First time here?

CARTER
(nervous)
Uhh, yeah.

She bends down over him and puts her mouth right by his ear.

NINA
Relax.

A NEW SONG starts to play and she begins to dance, rubbing her body all over his. He looks up to her but instead of Nina, it is Maya. Carter is in ecstacy. After a short while she stops.

NINA (cont'd)
Do you want another?

Carter just stares into her.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Phill looks at his watch; he is getting bored.

PHILL
What are they, raising a family in there?

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Nina finishes another dance and eyes Carter, who still sees Maya.

CARTER
I think that's my limit.

He pulls out his wallet and empties it to her.

NINA
That was fun.

CARTER
Yeah.

She hugs Carter and then leads him back out.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Phill sees Carter and he goes up to him.

PHILL
Jesus, how much did you spend?

CARTER
Rent.

Phill LAUGHS and pats him on the back.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter enjoys some porn on his TV.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carter lays in bed alone. He turns over and sees his wife sleeping there. He begins to play with a curl in her hair before she vanishes. Carter lays on his back, depressed. He gets back up and leaves the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter inserts a video tape into the VCR. It's sex. He sits and watches it and begins to pleasure himself.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Chuck wanders into a neighborhood bar. It is pretty empty except for a few RANDOM PEOPLE. Depressed, he sits at the bar. The BARTENDER, a slim man in his early fifties, sees Chuck.

BARTENDER
Can I get you something, buddy?

CHUCK
How about a girl who's not in a coma?

BARTENDER
Coma? That's rough.

CONTINUED:

CHUCK
Yeah, poor girl. We'd been racing and she got into an accident. Been through so much together, what with the shaving, tamales, and the whole mute thing.

BARTENDER
Hmm. Sounds like an interesting relationship.

CHUCK
Just get me a whisky. Straight-up. And leave the bottle.

The bartender pours him a drink.

INT. ELEVATOR LOBBY - DAY

Carter, in a rush and carrying his briefcase, exits the elevator on his way to work and passes someone he recognizes.

CARTER
Jenny?

JENNY, a beautiful brunette in her mid-twenties, turns towards Carter.

JENNY
Oh my God! Carter! What are you doing here?

CARTER
I work here now.

JENNY
No way!

CARTER
I didn't know you worked here.

JENNY
Yeah, for about a year now in media relations.

CARTER
That's great. Today's my first day in post.

JENNY
With Kari?

CARTER
Yeah.

Jenny checks her watch and then recoils.

JENNY
Fuck! I'm late for another meeting. I'll come by and say 'hi'.

Jenny smiles at Carter as she steps away. Carter shakes his head as he admires her stepping away.

INT. KARI'S OFFICE - DAY

Rachel leads Carter in to see his new boss. Kari is sitting behind her desk reading the book "THE GREAT GATSBY." Carter reads the title and is puzzled.

CARTER
Hey, Kari.

KARI
Hold on, this is my favorite part.

Carter sits down and waits. A couple of DISSOLVES show that Carter sits there for a while. Kari laughs and puts the book down.

KARI
Love this book! You've read it?

CARTER
In high school. Good movie, too.

KARI
Really? Hmmmmm.

She stares at him for a few moments.

KARI (cont'd)
So, let me get you something small to do while you get settled.

She scrambles around on her messy desk and pulls out a VHS tape.

KARI (cont'd)
Here.

She hands it to Carter.

KARI (cont'd)
Let's see how you are with quality control. Watch this and let me know how the quality is.

CARTER
How strict should I be?

Kari just stares at him blankly.

CARTER (cont'd)
Should I write down all the film dirt and scratches, audio dropouts, digital hits?

KARI
Sure. All of that.

CARTER
Okay.

Carter gets up to leave, and his boss picks back up her GREAT GATSBY book.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Rachel shows Carter his new office. It is a small office with no window. There is a computer and a TV with a VCR.

RACHEL
Here's your new home. Water is in the fridge under the desk. If you need anything, you know where my cube is!

CARTER
Thanks!

Carter sits in his desk chair and puts his briefcase on his desk. He looks around and is less than happy about his accommodations. He opens his briefcase and starts pulling out pictures of Maya. He looks at them and smiles. The more he stares, the sadder he gets. He shakes it off and starts tacking them up on the corkboard on the wall. He turns on his desk lamp and the bulb goes out. He sits down on his chair and pops the movie in that Kari gave him. The title comes up, "A Passion for Romance".

CARTER
Shit! This is a Marquee picture.

The sex starts right up.

EXT. CARPORT - DAY

Carter is busy working on his car. Frustrated, he stops to take a break. He rests in the driver's seat and takes a drink.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Chuck, still walking around, pining for Lisa, wanders into a dark alley. Two THUGS follow him in.

THUG #1
Hey, buddy. Turn around nice and slow.

Chuck, realizing what is happening, gets angry. He turns around slowly and faces the thugs.

THUG #2
Now your wallet.

Chuck tosses his wallet to them. Thug #1 sees the diamond pendant pinned to his shirt.

THUG #1
That, too.

CHUCK
No. Take my wallet, but not this.

THUG #2
This isn't a discussion.

He walks over to Chuck and rips it off his shirt. Furious, Chuck starts to fight with him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Thug #1 joins in and they are able to beat Chuck down. They run away, leaving Chuck on the ground, weeping.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Carter is working on his computer and Jenny knocks on his door. He spins around and his eyes widen when he sees her.

CARTER
Hey! Come in, come in.

Jenny comes in and sits down.

JENNY
So how's your first day going?

CARTER
Okay, not bad. Could be worse.

JENNY
I heard you got married.

CARTER
About nine months ago.

JENNY
How's that working out for you?

Jenny smiles at Carter.

CARTER
Contrary to popular belief, I can be committed to one woman.

JENNY
That's good. I guess things have changed since we were going out.

CARTER
A lot's changed since college, Jenny.

JENNY
I can see. I still haven't forgotten about that night. Tell me, was she worth it?

CARTER
Considering I married her, I'd say yes.

JENNY
Oh! So you made her an honest woman? Good for you.

CARTER
And now she's in Austin, in law school.

JENNY
What a great arrangement. You're married and the wife is 1000 miles away so she can't nag and watch over you.

CARTER
It's actually about 1600 miles, and she doesn't nag me.

CONTINUED:

JENNY
You wanna get lunch sometime?

CARTER
That probably isn't such a good idea.

JENNY
Your loss...

Jenny gives Carter a wicked smile and leaves the office. Carter grins back.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Maya stands alone with her bag, waiting for Carter.

Carter sees her from a distance and his heart fills. He runs up to her and they hug. Maya tears up.

CARTER
God, I miss you.

INT. PARKING STRUCTURE - DAY

They walk through a parking structure looking for their car.

CARTER
I know I parked it around here somewhere.

MAYA
We'll find it, don't worry.

CARTER
I'm glad your classes are going well.

MAYA
For the most part. I just wish I had someone there to rub my back when I got stressed.

Not listening to Maya, Carter becomes frustrated at not finding the car.

CARTER (cont'd)
What the hell!

MAYA
What level did you park it on?

CARTER
I thought this one.

MAYA
Let's keep looking.

Carter hits his alarm button and hears it CHIRP.

MAYA (cont'd)
Over here.

INT. CAR - DAY

They are quiet as Carter drives back to the apartment. He drives very angry and fast, scaring Maya.

MAYA
Slow down, Carter, what's the rush?

CARTER
Huh, oh. Sorry. Just getting use to the last mod I did. Gained me probably 15 horsepower. Pretty cool, huh?

MAYA
Yeah, I guess.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter and Maya enter his new apartment. It is sparsely furnished. She tries to stay positive.

MAYA
This is a nice place. This all Sam's stuff?

CARTER
Pretty much. Steve already had everything so she gave me hers.

MAYA
That was nice of her.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

They walk into the bedroom.

MAYA
Her bed, too?

CARTER
Yep.

Carter sits on the bed. They fall silent and just stare at each other.

CARTER
Come here.

Carter grins, and Maya reciprocates. She slowly approaches him. He puts his arms around her and they hold each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

They are undressed under the covers. Carter lays flat as Maya rests her head against his shoulder.

MAYA
Two years?

CARTER
Unless you get into school out here.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
You know I probably won't.

CARTER
You might, though.

MAYA
Maybe. I am glad you got that job.

CARTER
Now I can finally support us. It feels good to be a part of something again, too.

MAYA
You happy out here?

CARTER
It's okay. I miss you.

MAYA
Writing much?

CARTER
A little. Hopefully once I get settled I'll have some time.

MAYA
If it's really what you want to do...

CARTER
I know, I'll make the time. It's just been a little rough right now.

MAYA
I know.

CLOSE-UP of Maya's face.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

CLOSE-UP of Carter's face as he sadly watches Maya walk away to catch her plane.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Carter arrives back to his apartment, alone. He looks around and sees Maya's shirt she left behind. He picks it up and smiles. He lightly smells it and smiles wider. He quickly becomes sad, and his eyes start to water. He tosses the shirt down and sits in front of the TV. He sees a sex scene on a cable channel and his eyes widen.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY

Carter is warming up some food in the microwave when GUS enters. Gus is middle aged, yet very young at heart.

GUS
Hey, Carter.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Hey, Gus.

GUS
A few of us are getting together for a few drinks and to watch the Lakers game if you're interested.

CARTER
Oh, man. That sounds like fun, but I have to do some writing tonight. I promised myself.

GUS
Okay, maybe next time.

CARTER
Definitely, let me know.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Carter gets another lap dance. He is loving it. He still sees Nina as Maya.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Maya stands alone watching Carter drive away as the CAMERA DOLLYS away from her.

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

The lap dance ends. Carter is frowning.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mark, Jessica, Lena, and Maya are all studying. Mark is sitting across from Maya and barely takes his eyes off her. Jessica notices his attraction.

LENA
I don't get this stuff.

JESSICA
Yeah, I'm fried too. I think I'm gonna head home.

MARK
You sure, I can put some more coffee on. It's only 10. How about you, Maya?

MAYA
I don't really want to go home, so I'm game to stick around.

LENA
Well then you two are on your own.

Lena gets up to go. Jessica hesitates.

LENA (cont'd)
Jess, you coming? You're my ride.

CONTINUED:

Jessica looks at Mark and Maya and decides to deal with that later. She gets up and grabs her stuff.

JESSICA
Yeah, yeah. Let's go. I'm beat. We'll see you guys tomorrow?

MAYA
Yeah.

MARK
9 AM sharp!

Jessica and Lena leave. Mark looks over to Maya.

MARK
You really want to study?

MAYA
God, no. I'm sick of crim pro.

Mark gets up and sits next to her on the couch and grabs the remote control.

MARK
I've got last night's Angel on tape. I can make some popcorn.

MAYA
Cool, I missed it.

He gets up and she nuzzles comfortably into his couch.

CARTER'S MONTAGE

B) Carter is working hard at his desk, filling out forms.

C) Carter drives fast and tunes his car.

D) He is meeting with Kari and Rachel.

E) Carter is watching a graphic horror film and is bored.

F) Carter watches a movie on his TV at work. CAMERA PANS over to reveal less pictures of Maya on his board. They have been replaced by graphs and charts for work.

INT. KARI'S OFFICE - DAY

Carter comes in. Kari has a large knife and a cutting board out. She is slicing apples. She stabs the cutting board like at the end of TRILOGY OF TERROR. Carter is taken aback.

KARI
Apple?

CARTER
No, I'm good thanks. So I was able to get Second Wind Post to pay for most of the fixes to our masters.

CONTINUED:

KARI
Good! That's great. Any word on when your M&E is going to be?

CARTER
No, not yet. They're going to call.

KARI
Okay, I'm going to be out later today so if you need me, you can reach me on my cell.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter is sitting in front of the TV watching a porn tape. He stares into it. EXTREME CLOSE-UP of the TV as the graphic images look disgusting. Carter doesn't get the pleasure out of it he once did. He turns it off. He looks over to his left and sees Maya's shirt.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Jessica and Maya are re-adjusting their make-up in the mirror.

JESSICA
So what is the deal with you and Mark?

MAYA
What deal? There's no deal. We're friends.

JESSICA
Come on, Maya. I'm not blind. Both of you flirting, hanging out all the time. Just because your husband is away, doesn't mean you're not married.

MAYA
(surprised at the implication)
I know. It's just nice having someone to talk with who likes the same kinda stuff as me.

JESSICA
Just be careful. Mark is a nice guy. I should know, we dated a while back. But be careful, okay.

MAYA
Don't worry. It's harmless.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY / INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter is looking up nitrous oxide for his car on the internet. Jenny barges into Carter's office wearing a very low cut shirt.

JENNY
Hey Carter!

CARTER
Jenny, what's going on?

She sits across from Carter. She sees his internet fun.

CONTINUED:

JENNY
I see you're real busy.

CARTER
Yeah, just looking up car stuff.

JENNY
Oh, nitrous. How much faster do you wanna go in that car?

CARTER
I don't know. I was thinking a 125 horsepower shot would be nice.

JENNY
If you want, I have a friend who can get you a NOS setup pretty cheap.

CARTER
Really? That would be cool.

JENNY
We can talk about it over lunch next week.

CARTER
I told you before I didn't think that would be a good idea.

JENNY
Come on, it'd be fun.

CARTER
I'm married, remember.

Jenny leans over a bit onto Carter's desk showing off her cleavage, which Carter can't help but notice.

JENNY
It's just lunch. As old friends.

Jenny smiles and Carter grins back at Jenny.

CARTER
I guess I can do that.

JENNY
Great.

She walks away slowly so Carter has a chance to get a good view of her butt, which he does. She quickly turns around and catches him. He looks away as Jenny smiles.

EXT. PICNIC AREA- DAY

MARK
You got plans Saturday?

MAYA
Not really, why?

CONTINUED:

MARK
Well, David Garza is playing at Stubbs and I thought we could go check him out and grab a bite. Might take your mind off all this.

MAYA
Really, David Garza? Very tempting, I don't know. I have a lot of work to do.

MARK
Oh, come on. You have to have a little fun. Tell you what, it'll be my treat.

MAYA
Hey, I don't need your pity money.

MARK
Fine, pay your own damn way.

MAYA
Okay, I will!

MARK
Great, I'll see you around 8?

MAYA
Um, okay.

Maya is a little unsure of going out with Mark.

EXT. CARPORT - DAY

Carter and Phill are working on Carter's Trans Am. The hood is up and they are both leaning in.

PHILL
I don't know, Carter. I think we've done just about as much as you can do without going major. Ported everything, changed the gears.

CARTER
Yeah, looks like the next step is the nitrous.

PHILL
Shit, man. That's pretty serious stuff. You sure you wanna mess with it?

CARTER
Hell yeah. We'll take it to the track. It'll be a blast, man. Flipping that switch and boom, 125 horsepower shot of adrenaline!

Carter LAUGHS.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Maya and Mark are having a great time listening to the ROCK MUSIC being played by the band.

CONTINUED:

They are doing a little dancing and it's the first time we have seen Maya really enjoy herself in a while.

MARK
This is great!

MAYA
Yeah, it's been a while since I got out.

They continue to dance and get closer.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Carter is alone again in the strip club getting a dance from Nina. This time he doesn't see Nina as Maya, it's just Nina. Carter is pensive and isn't having the best time, but he is still enjoying himself.

INT. STRIP CLUB / NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The two previous scenes are intercut together. We see Maya and Mark dancing and getting closer as we see Nina getting closer to Carter.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Carter and Jenny sit eating lunch at a trendy outdoor cafe. They banter and bicker back and forth like an old married couple, but they enjoy it.

JENNY
So why did you cheat on me?

CARTER
I didn't cheat on you. We were just going out; we weren't exclusive.

JENNY
That's a lame excuse.

CARTER
It's true. You freaked out about me seeing someone else.

JENNY
Well, seeing how I walked in on you two having sex.

CARTER
We weren't having sex. And I never figured out how you got a key to my place!

JENNY
Trade secret.

CARTER
Bitch Mafia?

JENNY
Ha-ha.

CONTINUED:

JENNY
So you still trying to write all those scripts?

CARTER
Yeah.

JENNY
Have anything I could read?

CARTER
The last time you read something of mine, you almost died laughing.

JENNY
So it was funny.

CARTER
It was a movie about Stalin. It wasn't supposed to be funny.

JENNY
Hey, that's not my fault.

CARTER
If you really want to read something, I've got a script in my car.

JENNY
Cool.

INSERT CLOCK

11:00 PM.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter pours a little vodka into a glass. He drinks. Carter puts the porn tape in the VCR and starts watching it. It has no effect on him other then making him angry. He takes it out of the VCR and tosses it on the floor. He sits back down on the couch near Maya's shirt. He touches it, thinking of her. Frustrated, he slams his drink and puts the glass on the coffee table. He leans back and puts his feet up, staring at the ceiling.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE - DAY - DREAM

Carter sees several shots of Jenny looking very beautiful and seductive.

RESUME SCENE

Carter, sleepy, smiles and starts to nod off.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Carter and Maya make love, passionately. Carter lays on top of her and looks her in the eyes; it is now Jenny. He shakes his head quickly, and it is Maya again.

RESUME SCENE

Carter dozes off.

INT. BAR - EVENING

Chuck is now drunk and slurring his speech. MIRANDA, a thirty-something blonde, is next to him. Reggie, Lisa's little brother, comes in, frantic and a bit over-the-top.

REGGIE
Chuck.

Chuck turns to him and gets angry.

CHUCK
What the hell do you want?

REGGIE
You have to go back to the hospital.

CHUCK
Your parents will have me kicked out again.

REGGIE
It doesn't matter. Lisa loves you so much. You have to go back and stand up to them. Tell them how you feel about each other.

CHUCK
I don't need to do anything. How do I even know how she feels about me? We've barely even spoken. And I've got what I want right here.

He pulls the smoking Miranda closer to him.

MIRANDA
Yeah, you should probably go, kid.

REGGIE
If Lisa wakes up, she'll be heartbroken if you're not there.

CHUCK
Leave me alone, Reggie.

The bartender comes by.

BARTENDER
Hey, let's see some ID.

REGGIE
Just give me a second.

BARTENDER
No, no ID, you have to get out. Especially if you're annoying my customers.

CONTINUED:

REGGIE
Okay, okay, I'll leave. But Chuck, I'm telling you. You should come back and be there.

CHUCK
Yeah and get thrown in prison again. That's all I need.

EXT. DRAG STRIP - DAY

Carter is sitting in his car ready to do a run. Phill stands by it. The car shoots off into the distance, leaving a plume of smoke behind it.

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Maya and Mark sit studying. They LAUGH, but then Maya looks away and is distant as she remembers.

EXT. DRAG STRIP - DAY

Carter and Phill are standing by the car looking at the engine.

PHILL
That was a good run.

CARTER
Yeah, not too bad. Faster next time.

PHILL
You got plans tonight? Wanted to check out the new Jim Jarmusch flick.

CARTER
Na, I can't. I have to do some writing.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Carter is getting yet another dance, trying to feel something. He isn't enjoying himself. He is frustrated and Nina notices.

NINA
What's wrong? You not having fun?

CARTER
Um, no it's okay. Just been stressed a lot. Work and stuff.

NINA
But it's my job to relieve all that stress.

CARTER
I know. It's just that, you know. I need something a bit more.

Carter tries to have a good time.

INT. CARTER'S OFFICE/ INT. BEDROOM (AUSTIN)- DAY

Carter is sitting at his desk, dreaming, when the phone rings.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Umm. Hello, this is Carter. Honey! I'm so sorry I haven't called recently--

MAYA
I didn't get in. Anywhere.

CARTER
Not even USC? You got in there last year.

MAYA
I told you transferring was practically impossible.

Carter, silent, is crushed.

CARTER
So what do we do now?

MAYA
Well, you have your job there and I have school here.

A long pause. Maya waits for his response.

CARTER
I've got to go, got a meeting. I'll call you back later. Bye.

He hangs up the phone and rubs his face in disbelief.

Maya puts the phone down softly. She is frustrated by Carter's lack of response.

Carter fights back tears. JUMP CUTS: He gets up and tries to stay busy. He shuffles some papers around. He moves some books. Upset, he throws a bunch of papers on the ground. He collapses back down in his chair.

MONTAGE

Carter and Maya sleepwalk through a few more days. He is in a daze, thinking about his wife and future, unsure of what to do or what is going to come of this. Maya is the same. This is set to the "I Know Something About Love" song that played during their wedding reception.

A) Carter walking through the parking structure.

B) Maya alone in bed.

C) Jenny flirting with Carter.

H) Carter listing his tabla to sell on e-bay.

CARTER
Don't need this anymore.

D) Maya studying.

CONTINUED:

E) Carter is getting a lap dance from Nina. Frustrated, he leaves.

F) Mark flirts with Maya.

G)Carter and Phill install a nitrous setup into Carter's car.

H) Carter picks up Maya's shirt and embraces it, taking a deep breath in it. When he pulls it back his eyes are filled with tears. He quickly wipes them off and tosses the shirt into the clothes hamper.

INT. COPIER ROOM - DAY

SLOW DOLLY IN on Carter as he makes copies. With every flash of the copier, we see a quick flash of his wife. He hits cancel on the copier. Jenny walks in.

JENNY
Hey Carter.

Carter composes himself.

JENNY (cont'd)
You okay?

CARTER
Yeah, fine. What's up?

She comes in.

JENNY
I read your script.

CARTER
Really?

JENNY
I loved it.

CARTER
Really? You're not being sarcastic?

JENNY
No. I really liked it. Really. Got plans for lunch?

CARTER
Not yet.

JENNY
Great. I'll come by at one?

CARTER
Yeah, sure.

They share a smile.

INT. INDIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Carter and Jenny sit, eating an Indian food lunch. She is sitting pretty close to him and coming on very strong. She senses he is weak and wants to take advantage of this.

JENNY
So what's eating you?

CARTER
Oh, it's nothing.

JENNY
You sure?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maya sits with Mark in her living room; they are studying.

MARK
Ready for this final?

MAYA
Yeah, I guess.

MARK
Still upset?

MAYA
Yeah.

MARK
You think you'll be okay?

EXT. INDIAN RESTAURANT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

The two scenes are intercut.

CARTER
(reluctant)
Well, my wife called and... She was trying to transfer to a school out here so we could be together but she didn't get in. So now...

JENNY
You'll have to be apart.

Jenny feels bad for Carter, but at the same time happy that maybe she can have him now.

MAYA
For two years.

CARTER
Yeah. It sucks.

Carter shakes his head.

CONTINUED:

CARTER (cont'd)
I don't know, I always figured something would work out and we would be together again. Stupid.

MAYA
And since I don't feel like eating, I've lost 8 pounds!

MARK
Well, you still look great to me.

MAYA
Yeah, the 'starve cause your husband abandoned you diet.'

JENNY
So what are you going to do?

CARTER
What can I do? I can't go back, I'll be miserable there again. I couldn't support her, I couldn't write, I couldn't do anything. And if I stay out here I'll be miserable without her.

MAYA
And I have to finish up here since I didn't get into any school in LA.

CARTER
Not a whole lotta choices.

JENNY
You forgot--

MARK
One.

Mark smiles at Maya but she is a little taken aback by his suggestion.

MAYA
Mark.

Jenny smiles at Carter, and he is a little taken aback by her suggestion even though he knew it was coming.

CARTER
Jenny. We used to have a blast, you're really great and...

JENNY
Right--

MARK
Here.

Carter and Maya don't know what to make of this. Mark sees this and retreats a little, not wanting to scare Maya away. Jenny decides to wait and attack later.

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER
Jenny. I--I--don't know what to say.

MARK
I'm sorry, Maya. I shouldn't. This isn't a good time.

Mark gets up and Maya pulls him back down.

MAYA
No, no, it's okay. Don't go.

Mark smiles and Maya returns it.

JENNY
Why don't we have dinner Saturday. We can talk some more.

CARTER
Okay.

MARK
Great. Nine?

MAYA
Sure. See ya Sunday.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Carter is staring at the one remaining picture of Maya on his wall.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Chuck is in bed. He rolls over and feels another woman.

CHUCK
Lisa, oh Lisa, I had the worst dream. This lifeguard was coming after you with a--

He looks over and it is Miranda from the bar. Chuck freaks out.

CHUCK (cont'd)
What the hell are you doing here?

MIRANDA
My, how love clouds the mind.

She lights up a cigarette. He jumps up and throws some clothes on.

CHUCK
I want you out, now. What the hell have I done? I've gotta get to the hospital.

He frantically leaves his room.

INT. GROCERY STORE./INT. LIVING ROOM(AUSTIN) - EVENING

Carter is tossing some fruit into his basket when his cell phone rings.

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Hello?

MAYA
Hi, Carter. We need to talk.

CARTER
Can I call you back? I'm at the store.

MAYA
No. I need to talk now.

CARTER
Okay, hold on.

Carter drops his basket and exits the store.

EXT. GROCERY STORE/ INT. LIVING ROOM (AUSTIN) - EVENING

Carter is now outside the store. He sits on a bench.

CARTER
Okay, now I can talk.

MAYA
I need to know why.

CARTER
Why what?

MAYA
Why you left me?

CARTER
I told you, I needed to get a job to--

MAYA
I know what you told me. I need to know what I could've done?

CARTER
Done? I don't follow.

Maya gets a little frustrated by Carter's confusion.

MAYA
What should I have done to keep you here? Where did I go wrong?

CARTER
You didn't go wrong. It was just...

MAYA
What? Just what? You felt alone, miserable.

CARTER
Sweetie.

Maya starts to tear up.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
You left because I was a bad wife. I failed you. If I'd taken better care of you, you would have stayed.

CARTER
No, no. You weren't a bad wife. You had to study. I understood that. I don't know why I left. Sweetie, honestly, it wasn't you. I don't know what it was.

MAYA
I thought you said it was to find a job.

CARTER
That's part of it. I'm not sure. I do know I didn't leave because you were a bad wife. It was me. All me, I promise.

MAYA
I'm sorry. I should've been there more for you. Done something.

Carter feels really bad for Maya. He tears up a little.

CARTER
Maya...

MAYA
Okay. I should go. I'm sorry.

She hangs up the phone.

Carter closes his cell phone and hides his face in his hands. Revealing his teary face, he gets up and leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Chuck arrives at the hospital room and Lisa's family is there. They are all in tears as they look at Lisa. Chuck is horrified.

CHUCK
What happened?

Reggie comes over to him, furious.

REGGIE
She woke up about an hour ago asking for you. I said you weren't here and...

CHUCK
What are you saying?

Tears shoot out as he approaches the bed.

CHUCK (cont'd)
I should have been here.

Furious, he rushes out of the hospital room.

EXT. DRAG STRIP - DAY

Carter is sitting in his car REVVING the engine. Phill, standing next to the car, is worried about Carter. There is a black 2003 Mustang Cobra next to Carter's car, ready to race him.

PHILL
Carter, you sure you ready? We haven't really tested out the juice yet. Maybe you should--

CARTER
No, I'm good. Let's go.

Phill backs off and Carter puts his helmet on. They both do burnouts to heat their tires. Smoke plumes. Both cars pull back up to the line and rev. The lights go green and they tear down the strip. Carter is a bit behind when he hits the nitrous button. It kicks in. Carter tries to control the boost in power, but he can't. He starts to swerve.

INT. CAR - DAY

Carter tries to steer the car straight but can't. He swerves violently, heading straight for the guard rail. He pumps the brakes and luckily, is able to stop in time. Once stopped, he pulls his helmet off, panting and terrified.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

He enters his apartment and plops down on the couch. He is filled with conflicting emotions. Someone starts KNOCKING on his door. Carter, confused, gets up and answers. It is Jenny and she is carrying a bag of groceries.

CARTER
Jenny! What are you doing here? I thought we were meeting at the restaurant at 8?

JENNY
Yeah, but I thought I would surprise you and make you dinner.

She steps in past Carter and puts down the groceries on the kitchen table. Carter closes the door and follows her.

CARTER
That's nice, but I think we should call the whole thing off. It's just--

She puts her finger over his lips to shush him.

JENNY
No more talking, Carter.

She steps close to Carter, touching his body with hers.

CARTER
Jenny...

CONTINUED:

She opens her blouse, revealing a very sexy bra. She grabs his hand and puts it on her breast. Carter breathes deeply, enjoying her.

JENNY
You remember how good this feels, don't you?

She embraces him more and kisses him. He puts his arms around her and they get even closer. Suddenly, as if waking from a dream, Carter pulls back.

CARTER
Jenny, no.

He steps back.

CARTER (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I am so into you right now but I can't. I still--

JENNY
Love your wife. I know, I know.

She makes one more attempt at him, but he backs off again and looks away from her.

CARTER
Please, Jenny. This was all a bad idea. I should never had lead you on like this.

JENNY
I'll say.

She grabs her things and makes towards the door.

CARTER
I'll see ya.

JENNY
No, you won't.

She leaves.

Carter collapses to the couch, feeling terrible about what he just did. A loud BANG hits Carter's door. He jumps. BANG again. He gets up and opens it.

CARTER
Jenny, I said--

It's Chuck. He pushes his way in.

CARTER
Chuck. What the hell?

CHUCK
I can't believe you killed her.

CARTER
Killed who? What are you talking about?

CONTINUED: (2)

CHUCK
Lisa! I loved her, and you fucking killed her!

Chuck threatens to hit him.

CARTER
I didn't mean to. It was for the story.

CHUCK
Story? She was my life! Just 'cause your life is so fucked up doesn't mean you have to fuck up mine!

CARTER
It was you who slept with Miranda!

CHUCK
You got me drunk!

CARTER
You should have gone back there and told her how you really felt about her!

CHUCK
So it's MY fault!

CARTER
Yes! You were afraid!

CHUCK
You're the idiot who left YOUR wife because you were afraid.

CARTER
Afraid? Afraid of what?

CHUCK
Take a step back and look at everything you've done since you got married and you tell me what you're afraid of.

Carter steps away and tries to block Chuck out.

CARTER
(frustrated)
I love my wife. I love my wife.

CHUCK
I know you do. And that's why you were afraid. You never had something so good to lose.

CARTER
I was afraid of failing as a husband. And losing my wife.

CHUCK
So you left first before you had the chance to fail. If you just talked to her. That's all you had to do. Told her how you felt.

CONTINUED: (3)

CARTER
I know.

CHUCK
Do you think Maya could ever see you as a failure? She's the most important thing to you. You expected to substitute her with porn, strippers, cars. It's all empty.

Chuck tosses Carter's script to Carter.

CHUCK (cont'd)
Read the first page.

Carter opens it, and sees the dedication he wrote, "To the woman whose love washes away all fear and breathes happiness into every second of my life. With her, I will always have an audience." He smiles warmly at it. He sees a note that Maya wrote in reply, "And I will always give you a standing ovation." Tears begin to form as he holds the script close to him. He closes his eyes and takes in all the wonderful thoughts of his life with Maya in the form of dozens of quick one shot FLASHBACKS.

INT. MARK'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mark has made a nice meal for Maya, complete with flowers, candles, and wine. They are sitting at the table enjoying it.

MAYA
This is amazing. I had no idea you were such a great cook!

MARK
One of my many talents. So, any idea what you're going to do for the next two years?

MAYA
Rack up the frequent flyer miles, I guess.

Mark is a bit disappointed.

MARK
I thought you didn't like LA anyway.

MAYA
I don't, really. I'd rather stay here or in Houston.

MARK
Houston is where I'm headed after school.

Maya sees where this is leading.

MAYA
Mark, I've had such a great time with you: going to see music, watching movies, even studying has been fun but...

MARK
You're still married.

CONTINUED:

MAYA
Yeah.

MARK
Maybe you should ask your husband if you're still married.

MAYA
What do you mean?

MARK
He's the one who left you, right? What kind of husband does that?

MAYA
I don't know. He needed to find a job or something.

MARK
Why would he want a job when he could be here with you? Doesn't make sense.

MAYA
Have you been married, Mark?

MARK
Not that I remember.

MAYA
Then you have no idea what is going through his head. He probably feels obligated to take care of me, and he can't do that without a job.

MARK
He can't take care of you from 1500 miles away, either.

Mark moves in a bit closer to her.

MARK
Maya, you are so wonderful, beautiful, amazing. If he moved away that means he couldn't see it.

She smiles at him.

MAYA
You're so sweet, Mark.

MARK
Let me make YOU happy. I can't stop thinking about you.

This is the first time in a long time she has heard anyone say something like this to her.

He leans in and they share a brief kiss.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - AUSTIN - NIGHT

Chuck pulls his Trans Am up to the apartment complex. Carter is next to him.

CHUCK
So this is where I was going.

Carter hands Chuck something. Chuck looks closer; it is Lisa's diamond pendant that Reggie gave Chuck.

CARTER
Now go give Lisa a kiss for me.

INT. MARK'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Maya pulls away from Mark.

MAYA
Mark, no. I can't. I love Carter. I just have to wait through the bad time. He'll be back; I know he will.

MARK
For your sake, I hope so.

MAYA
I should probably be going.

MARK
Okay, I'll give you a ride.

MAYA
No, that's okay.

MARK
Maya, I'm not going to let you take the bus this late at night. I'll give you a ride.

MAYA
Okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Carter comes crashing in.

MAYA
Maya! Maya!

See that she isn't around he goes back outside.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Carter leaves the apartment, too excited to wait inside for her. He starts pacing around.

LATER

Carter is sitting on the doorstep, but still within viewing distance of the apartment complex driveway.

CONTINUED:

He sees a small blue Honda pull up with what appears to be Maya in the passenger seat.

INT. MARK'S CAR - NIGHT

MARK
Well, we're here.

Mark tries to kiss her again, and Maya backs off.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Carter watches intently. He sees the man's head go in for a kiss, but he can't see that the woman pulled back.

INT. MARK'S CAR - NIGHT

MARK
Just thought I would give it one last shot.

MAYA
Thanks for the ride. I'll see you in class, Mark.

Maya exits the car and Carter sees her. Mark sees Carter and quickly drives off. Carter, horrified, thinking his wife has been cheating on him approaches her. She still doesn't see him.

CARTER
You couldn't wait for me? Is that it?

MAYA
(shocked)
Carter? What are you doing here?

She realizes what that must have looked like.

MAYA (cont'd)
No. He's just a friend. I mean he tried--

CARTER
I can't believe it. All this time. Miserable in LA thinking of you. Being apart and you were here having a great time with that asshole.

MAYA
Having a great time? A great time?!

Maya starts to tear up.

MAYA (cont'd)
I've been depressed every single minute of every single day since you left. How dare you accuse me! How dare you leave me! Mark had the decency to show some affection, make me feel like I was important. When was the last time you did that for me?

CONTINUED:

CARTER
Me?! Me?! When I tried to do anything even remotely romantic when I was here I got zero from you. It was like I was a ghost.

MAYA
Is that why you left? To get back at me? For ignoring you?

CARTER
I left because I couldn't stand you seeing me that way - depressed, useless. What kind of husband stays home all day and eats cheese puffs and watches re-runs of The Golden Girls.

They both GRIN a little at that.

CARTER (cont'd)
I just wanted to take care of you and I couldn't.

MAYA
But at least you were trying.

CARTER
I thought if you kept seeing me like that, you wouldn't love me anymore.

Carter's eyes begin to water.

MAYA
Oh, Carter.

They get very close.

CARTER
I had to leave. I couldn't lose you. You're everything.

MAYA
But I would never stop loving you, ever. I wish you had just told me how you felt. I wish I had told you how I felt.

CARTER
I don't think I knew exactly how I felt until today. Everything is so empty without you. I thought when I got back to LA and was part of something again and working, I would feel better, more confident, passionate. But it was worse, much worse.

MAYA
I know. I know. But we're together again.

CARTER
I'm so sorry for making you feel like a bad wife. I couldn't have asked for a better wife. I don't want to be apart from you. I know now that all I need is you.
(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARTER (cont'd)
To trust in you. To love you. And everything else will fall into place.

MAYA
So you're back for good?

CARTER
Yeah, I just have my sister's stuff to worry about.

MAYA
You can't give up that job, Carter. It's incredible.

CARTER
So you don't want me to come back?

MAYA
With every inch of my being. But you have to think of your career, too.

CARTER
Fuck the job. It's not my career. Writing's my career and I can do it anywhere. I'll find a job out here or we'll just live off your student loans.

MAYA
Hey, I thought you were going to take care of me?

CARTER
I'll fill out the applications for you.

They both smile and hug for a long time.

CARTER (cont'd)
So should I have my sister's stuff shipped out?

MAYA
No, that's okay. Just get rid of it. Throw it away, I don't care.

CARTER
Yeah, it is crap isn't it?

MAYA
Yeah, it is. Let's go inside.

They start heading inside.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

They step inside and Maya almost trips over the box that Carter bought.

MAYA
Oh, don't tell me.

Carter grins wildly and opens the box to pull out his tabla.

CONTINUED:

MAYA (cont'd)
Ugh. You could have left THAT in LA too.

CARTER
I'm a little rusty, but I think I can still play.

MAYA
So you're saying there was a time when you actually COULD play it?

CARTER
Hell, yeah. What do you think I've been doing in LA those long lonely nights?

MAYA
Not beating your drum.

CARTER
Listen to this.

He starts to play and it doesn't sound half bad. Maya grabs her sitar and they play a few notes together.

MAYA
That's pretty good!

CARTER
We make a pretty good duet.

MAYA
Yes, we do.

The MUSIC escalates.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Chuck goes back in and Lisa's family is still crying for their loss. Chuck goes up to her and pins the diamond pendent to her gown, near her heart. Her eyes open and she sits up. Everyone gasps.

CHUCK
I love you!

LISA
(in the screeching voice)
I love you, too!

Chuck shrugs his should as if to say "who cares!"

CREDITS ROLL ON THE RIGHT HALF OF THE SCREEN

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Carter is sitting in his Austin apartment. He grabs the tabla off the top of the TV and puts in the "How To Play The Tabla" video tape. He sits back, excited to practice.

CONTINUED:

MR. KUMUL
Now you are ready for lesson four. First hit the tabla like this, and then follow like this.

He plays an extraordinarily complex series of notes.

MR. KUMUL (cont'd)
Now it is your turn.

Carter stares empty at the TV and then puts the tabla back.