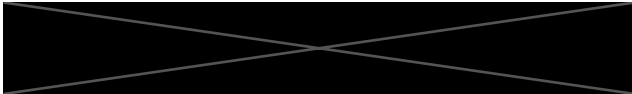


Questa

By

Victor Bumbalo

Copyright (c) by Victor Bumbalo



www.victorbumbalo.com

FADE IN:

BLACK POSTCARD - IT READS...

1991

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - CHELSEA - EVENING

A quiet, residential area. Brownstones and small apartment buildings. It's an hour after the rain. The street, fairly deserted, is glistening with colored lights reflecting off it. For a second the street sparkles with a make-believe look to it.

This image is interrupted as PAUL turns the corner. He is attractive, thin, and in his early thirties. He is running. Scared. He instantly slows down when he sees a WOMAN coming down the block towards him. He crosses the street, trying to control his heavy breathing. Paul and the Woman pass each other on opposite sides of the street. When he is sure she can no longer see him and no one else is on the street, he rips off his baseball-like jacket, wipes his shirt with it, and buries it in a street corner garbage bin that is already filled. He cleans his dirty hands on his jeans.

A car turns a corner. Paul shies away from it. He then turns another corner onto a heavily trafficked street and picks up his pace.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Paul passes a store window and sees his reflection. His face and shirt have blood on them. He stares at himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HEAD OF A YOUNG MAN - SAME TIME

The YOUNG MAN is perhaps twenty-one. Some blood drips from his mouth. His head lies in a pool of blood coming from the back of his skull. Red. Such a vivid red in contrast to the pale face and the dark concrete. The face is attractive. A face of an all-American boy. The eyes are still open. Startled.

Two old and worn shoes step into the frame.

DANIEL (O.S.)

Dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - A MOMENT LATER

Paul is running.

EXT. A DESERTED ALLEY - A SECOND LATER

DANIEL, early forties, is staring at the body. He is a Black street person. Very, very thin. Daniel is effeminate when he wants to be and ever so butch when he needs to be. The real Daniel disappeared years ago.

DANIEL
(to himself, almost in a sing-song voice)
Don't touch anything.

He slowly backs away from the body.

EXT. IN FRONT OF TRUCKING, A GAY BAR IN THE VILLAGE -
MOMENTS LATER

A few PEOPLE in front of the bar watch Daniel as he walks into Trucking.

INT. TRUCKING - CONTINUOUS

Daniel enters the bar. It is the weekend, so it is fairly crowded. Immediately a BARTENDER comes over to Daniel.

BARTENDER
I told you not to come in here again.

DANIEL
(loud and defiant)
Someone just got killed in the alley.
And I saw who did it.

That grabs the CUSTOMERS attention. Word spreads. Some laugh, like it might be a joke. Some folks leave, maybe to take a look. Some just study Daniel.

DANIEL (cont'd)
Shouldn't somebody call 911?

The Bartender just stands there.

DANIEL (cont'd)
If you want proof, go look for yourself.

The Bartender backs away from Daniel to do just that.

EXT. CHELSEA - A LITTLE LATER

Paul is hurrying down another street, trying to be invisible to a PASSERBY.

He turns a corner and runs up the steps of a brownstone and rings the intercom. The intercom answers.

SUSAN (O.S.)

Yes?

PAUL

It's me. Are you alone?

SUSAN (O.S.)

Yes. Why?

INT. ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT IN THE BROWNSTONE BUILDING -
MOMENTS LATER

SUSAN, mid-twenties, whose open heartedness can be intimidating, goes to answer the door. As soon as she opens the door, Paul pushes past her and starts ripping off his clothes.

SUSAN

What the hell!

Paul is half out of his mind, hyper, and desperate. His speech is rapid and disjointed.

PAUL

(referring to his clothes)
We've got to get rid of these.

SUSAN

(panicked, looking at the
bloodied clothes)
What happened?

PAUL

Get me something to wear! No, I better
shower first. When will Nicholas be
back?

SUSAN

In a few minutes.

PAUL

I don't want him to see this. Get me a
plastic bag.

Susan runs out of the room to get a plastic bag for his clothes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL (cont'd)
Then a drink. I need a drink!

SUSAN (O.S.)
You shouldn't.

PAUL
I need one!

Susan comes into the room with the plastic bag. Paul grabs it out of her hands and starts throwing his bloodied clothes into it.

SUSAN
(frightened)
What happened?

PAUL
The drink!

Paul is now down to his underwear. He checks his body for blood. Susan goes to a cabinet and pours Paul a drink.

PAUL (cont'd)
I think he's dead.

SUSAN
Who?

PAUL
The man in the alley. Oh, Jesus fucking Christ.

Paul grabs the drink out of Susan's hand and gulps it. He keeps aimlessly moving around the room.

SUSAN
What alley?!?

PAUL
I didn't mean it. You believe me? Don't you?

SUSAN
Paul, what are you talking about?

PAUL
I killed him.

SUSAN
What?!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL

I could have stopped. But I didn't. I kept hitting. Banging his head.

Susan, in shock, is just staring at Paul.

PAUL (cont'd)

We were in the alley near Trucking. Sex sometimes goes on there. Don't look at me like that. It's the only kind of sex I can handle these days. He was younger than me. Bigger. Drunk. He was finishing peeing. I looked at him and smiled. He started calling me names. Then he started hitting me. Hard. Somehow I tripped him, or he tripped. There was blood coming from his head. He must have fallen on a rock or something. I jumped on him, grabbed him by the shoulders, and kept banging. Then somebody came towards us, and I ran.

SUSAN

Maybe he's still alive.

PAUL

He's not.

SUSAN

(running to the phone)

We've got to call the police now. It was an accident. Self-defense.

Susan quickly goes over to the phone and picks it up.

PAUL

Didn't you hear me?!? I kept banging his head!

Susan looks at Paul's pleading body and puts down the phone.

INT. SHOWER - MINUTES LATER

Paul is scrubbing his skin violently.

INT. SUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Susan's husband, NICHOLAS, comes into the room with a grocery bag. He's an early thirties New Yorker man-on-the-move.

NICHOLAS

One grocery store and two delis later... natural cashews.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks over to his upset wife.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)
What's the matter?

SUSAN
It's my brother. He's in the shower.

NICHOLAS
Why is he in our shower?

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF TRUCKING - SAME TIME

The scene is lit from the lights of cop cars and an ambulance. The Young Man is now in a body bag. He's being placed in the ambulance. Daniel, holding court, is with DETECTIVES and some ONLOOKERS.

INT. SUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Susan is with her husband. Paul comes into the room and looks at them.

NICHOLAS
Paul, this is serious.

PAUL
You told him?!?

NICHOLAS
That you got here drunk and got sick all over yourself.

Paul is relieved that his sister has lied. They exchange a look.

PAUL
(to Nicholas, referring to
what he's wearing)
I'll bring your clothes back tomorrow.

NICHOLAS
You told us you weren't drinking anymore.
You said AA was working for you.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

DETECTIVE RALPH SALVADORI, a forty-five year old with a weight problem, and his younger partner, DETECTIVE BERNADETTE KRONICK, are with Daniel who is enjoying a cup of coffee and a doughnut. Daniel is giving instructions to the sketch artist, JASON.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SALVADORI

Aren't you being cooperative tonight.

DANIEL

It's a kinder, gentler me.

KRONICK

What were you doing back there?

DANIEL

Peeing. It's my pissoir. Anyway...the two boys were fighting. I thought I better take a look.

SALVADORI

(sarcastically)

What a good citizen.

DANIEL

I am.

(looking at the sketch)

His nose was wider.

The sketch looks nothing like Paul. In fact, it looks more like the dead Young Man.

DANIEL (cont'd)

(looking at the female
detective)

Do you think I can have another doughnut
and maybe a cigarette?

(to the sketch artist)

He had thick blond hair. Straight.

Paul's hair is not blond. Kronick hands Daniel a doughnut.

DANIEL (cont'd)

Many, many thanks, darling. What a cute
little body you have.

INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Susan and Nicholas are getting ready for bed. Susan looks out-of-it.

NICHOLAS

Your brother's using Kevin as an excuse
to drink. He's playing the widower
again.

SUSAN

Let's just go to bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLAS
It's been two years since Kevin died.

SUSAN
Have some compassion.

NICHOLAS
Kevin was my best friend. I lost someone too.

SUSAN
I know.

Susan goes into the bathroom to get away from her husband.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Susan closes the door and tries to control her shaking.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PAUL'S STUDIO APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Paul, looking like a frightened child, is sitting up in bed in his darkened apartment. He is dazed and clutching his pillow.

INT. CLOSE-UP OF LORI'S FACE - A FEW DAYS LATER

LORI is a sensual looking woman in her early to mid-forties. She looks tired and appears almost drugged. She is staring at something.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - A SECOND LATER

Lori, wearing black, is staring at the coffin holding her son. It is in the aisle next to her. Near the coffin is a smiling picture of a young man. It is the dead boy from the alley.

The muffled sounds of the Mass ending and the organ playing are heard. Next to Lori are her SISTER, her BROTHER-IN-LAW, and her uncomfortable teenage NEPHEW.

FATHER DUNN, in his late seventies, is blessing the coffin. He is assisted by FATHER JAMES, a younger priest in his forties.

Father Dunn and Father James lead the coffin, wheeled by the PALLBEARERS, down the aisle to the church's exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lori and her family take their place behind the coffin. The rest of the PEOPLE file behind the family. It's a very small group of mourners.

INT. LORI'S KITCHEN - LATE THAT EVENING

Lori is wandering around the room aimlessly. Father James sits at her kitchen table in a t-shirt and pants. He exudes too much sexuality for a priest.

LORI

Father Dunn's eulogy was ridiculous. It had nothing of Will in it.

FATHER JAMES

I should have done it. I'm sorry.

LORI

And his idea of angels...

FATHER JAMES

Father Dunn's spirituality has a touch of Disney to it.

LORI

How the hell did those people get my number?

FATHER JAMES

Your name was in the paper.

LORI

They called it another "gay" bashing. Well, I told them. They won't be calling here again. My son was not one of them. He wasn't gay. You know that. But I think some of the police think he was.

FATHER JAMES

No, they don't. The way his car was parked. The witness said he was just back there peeing.

LORI

Gay...my ass. How we would laugh whenever I made fun of my boss, Richard...

FATHER JAMES

You've got to get some sleep.

LORI

Why did God do this to me? Was it because of us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES

I doubt it.

LORI

(after a moment)

Can you stay all night?

FATHER JAMES

You know I can't do that. But I'll stay
a while.

LORI

(leaving the kitchen)

Your collar is very selective in what
kind of comfort it can give.

EXT. CHELSEA STREET - DAY

CELIA, a white drag queen whose name is CARL when he's not in
drag, is sitting on a stoop. Next to him is Daniel. They
are sharing a sandwich, watching the traffic, and giving the
once over to the various nannies wheeling their white babies.

CELIA

If I was the witness, I'd at least gotten
myself on television.

DANIEL

As what? The ugliest bitch around?

CELIA

As the cutest boy there ever was.

DANIEL

You were that once, darling.

CELIA

But I preferred a dress.

DANIEL

I lied. My murderer looked nothing like
the description I gave.

CELIA

I saw the flyers. He looks like Brad
Pitt.

DANIEL

You got it. That's who I was describin'.
Oooh, I love that white boy.

CELIA

I'm over him. I'm on to the Johnny Deep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL
Depp.

CELIA
Whatever.

DANIEL
You got no loyalty. It's a severe
character flaw.

CELIA
Why'd you lie?

DANIEL
Had my reasons.

CELIA
He give you money?

DANIEL
(indignant)
No! What do you think I am? A criminal?

Celia is watching a couple of nannies wheeling their babies.

CELIA
It's an explosion of babies.

DANIEL
Everybody's getting them these days. Old
people...gay people...lesbian people...

INT. PAUL'S STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Paul sits on a high stool near his kitchen counter. He is as
disheveled as his apartment is. The room is fairly large.
One can see what an attractive space this once was or could
be again.

Susan is straightening up the room.

PAUL
You don't have to do this.

Susan is not paying attention to him.

PAUL (cont'd)
Why do you think he did it?

SUSAN
Who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

The witness. His description. You've seen the flyers. They look nothing like me. Maybe he's going to blackmail me.

SUSAN

Maybe he wasn't a witness. Just somebody who's looking for attention.

PAUL

Maybe I should just go to the police.

SUSAN

No! It might be too late for that.

PAUL

(after a moment)

The mother...I read is a hairdresser in the Village. But the funeral was in Jersey at St. Anthony's...

SUSAN

Please! Stop it!

PAUL

I can't. I've been thinking, thinking. It's a blur to me. I was in such a rage. I need to know if he was dead when I jumped on him.

(after a moment)

Oh, what the hell difference would that make?

SUSAN

It was self defense.

PAUL

(quietly)

But I kept pounding.

Silence. Susan sits down holding in her tears.

PAUL (cont'd)

I should have gone right home after it happened. I should have never told you.

SUSAN

You had to. We've never kept secrets from each other. All we have is each other.

PAUL

You have Nicholas now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUSAN

I know. But I can't help it. I need you more. Remember all those dreams we had after Mommy and Daddy died. They were always so similar. When we used to tell them to each other some of our loneliness would disappear. Remember? Let's pretend we both had a similar nightmare. That what this was--a nightmare.

Paul sits at the edge of his bed holding his head. The phone starts ringing. The machine kicks in.

RON (O.S.)

Hi, it's me.

PAUL

Shit! Get it.

Susan, who is nearer to the phone, gets it. Paul stands up and tries to get himself together.

SUSAN

(into the phone, trying to
sound upbeat)

Hello. Oh hi Ron. How have you been?
Well...happy birthday to you.

PAUL

Tell him I'm dressing.

SUSAN

(into the phone)

He's dressing. I heard that restaurant is great.

Paul goes over to get the phone from Susan.

PAUL

(into the phone)

Sorry I'm running late. Great. I'll meet you there. Let me go. See you in a few.

He hangs up.

SUSAN

You're not in shape to go to a birthday party.

PAUL

I have to. Bradley's going to be there. He just got out of the hospital. And I have to talk to him. It's important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Paul starts rushing, looking for something to wear.

PAUL (cont'd)
Please don't worry about me. Okay? I'll figure out something. But I have to see Bradley. I do. I just wish it wasn't such a blur. Why can't I see it?

INT. AN UPSCALE TRIBECA RESTAURANT - EVENING

Ten gay men of various ethnic origins are seated at a table. Eight of them seem to be having a good time. The group includes RON who is in his thirties and seems to be its leader. Paul is sitting next to Bradley who obviously has AIDS given the lesions on his face. They are out of sync with the rest of their friends, having a serious conversation.

They get up and head for the men's room. The other men notice, pause for an instant, and then resume their conversations.

A MAN at the next table has been staring at Bradley.

Paul and Bradley enter the men's room.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PAUL
I'm sorry. I just couldn't walk into a hospital again.

BRADLEY
I know. I shouldn't be mad at you. But I felt like shit, and I was bored. And I thought we could distract ourselves by talking about old movies. Our gang wouldn't know the difference between Joan Crawford and Golda Meir.

PAUL
I didn't want to see you there.

BRADLEY
After Kevin died, you volunteered at GMHC. You were in the hospital all the time taking care of people. I thought it was so great given what you've been through.

PAUL
That great guy is gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADLEY

No, he's not. He's standing in front of me. But...

(hard for him to say)

I'm not the last person you love who's going to be in the hospital with this fucking disease. You do love me?

PAUL

(trying to make a joke)
Maybe?

BRADLEY

I should be more understanding. I'm sorry. I really am.

PAUL

No, no. I should have been there for you. I'm the one who's sorry.

BRADLEY

(jokingly)
Are we in a competition.

PAUL

Of course.

They look at each other and instantly hug. There is a knock on the door.

BRADLEY

We'll be right out.

Bradley opens the door. The GUY races in really having to go.

BRADLEY (cont'd)

Sorry.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Bradley and Paul head for their table. The MAN at the next table is again staring at Bradley.

BRADLEY

(going up to the Man)
Do I know you?

MAN

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADLEY

Well, you been staring at me all night.
(super friendly, extending his
hand)
I'm Bradley.

All Bradley's friends are watching. The MAN turns away from Bradley. The WOMAN at the table bends her head.

BRADLEY (cont'd)

You people aren't very friendly.

Paul proudly watches Bradley as some of the guys at their table begin laughing.

The MAN raises his hand.

MAN

Check!

INT. RICHARD'S BEAUTY SALON - THE NEXT DAY

It's the last hold out in the Village. An old-fashioned beauty salon in an area that is getting trendier. It's a favorite of local people. A mixed crowd.

RICHARD is the owner. He is a well-put-together gay man in his mid-forties. Shy and soft-spoken, he is a kind-hearted survivor. Lori is one of his employees. His other employee is BETH, a purple-haired girl in her twenties.

Lori is cleaning her station.

RICHARD

I went to the demonstration the other night.

LORI

It's ridiculous. My son was not gay.

RICHARD

But the killer thought he was.

LORI

Let's not talk about it.

RICHARD

(kindly)
I'll leave you alone.

LORI

I didn't say I wanted to be left alone, Richard. I just don't want to talk about my son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

Sorry.

ON Richard---not knowing what to say next.

LORI

Just distract me. Okay?

RICHARD

(after a moment)

I went to a club this weekend. The boys were so young. I bet I was the oldest guy there. You're either invisible to them or they resent you for taking up space. I'm at a loss. I don't know what I should do. Any ideas?

Lori has not been paying attention to him.

LORI

(walking away)

There's my next customer.

She leaves Richard...who is feeling helpless.

INT. STAIRWAY TO PAUL'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Paul is carrying a bag of groceries up the stairs. In front of him, also climbing the stairs, is MRS. MORENTE, a woman in her mid-seventies.

MRS. MORENTE

Damn that elevator. Honey, you look tired.

PAUL

Haven't been sleeping well lately.

MRS. MORENTE

Me either. Miss my Tony so much.

PAUL

I know.

MRS. MORENTE

I know you know, darling. It's a bitch being alone. But I've got my daughter. You've got your sister...your friends. We're lucky. So they say.

PAUL

So they say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They smile at each other. They are now standing in front of Mrs. Morente's apartment door. Mrs. Morente opens her door.

MRS. MORENTE

Give it here.

Mrs. Morente takes her grocery bag.

MRS. MORENTE (cont'd)

What would I do without you?

She kisses Paul on the cheek.

MRS. MORENTE (cont'd)

Come in for a cup of coffee?

PAUL

I'm just going to crash.

MRS. MORENTE

You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to make some of those almond paste cookies that you and Kevin liked so much. Knock on my door later. I'll have some for you.

PAUL

That would be great.

MRS. MORENTE

Tony could take them or leave them. He didn't have a sweet tooth.

PAUL

But I do.

MRS. MORENTE

I know, darling.

INT. BASEMENT OF A CHURCH - EVENING

The HOMELESS in the area are being fed. Three long tables are set up. About twelve people are eating. The food looks like the worst kind of cafeteria food. Daniel and Celia are being served. After they get their food, they head to an empty table.

CELIA

You like my new shoes?

DANIEL

Where'd you get them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CELIA

Robbed them off a cunt who called me a name.

DANIEL

(looking at the shoes)
Pretty.

They sit.

DANIEL (cont'd)

(whispering)
I have a confession to make.

CELIA

You want to do drag.

DANIEL

Never. I've seen my little killer before. In that alley. He's the kind of man I've always been a sucker for. You know the quiet, polite type. He used to smile when I said "hello." I offered myself to him a couple of times.

CELIA

Surprise, surprise.

DANIEL

He said, "No, thank you." Real polite though. I followed him home once.

CELIA

Girlfriend, you gotta get some help.

DANIEL

I've followed boys home before. It's just curiosity. I want to know something about their lives away from that alley. Don't know his name yet. But I'll find out.

CELIA

I don't want to hear anymore about him. I don't want to be one of those accessories.

DANIEL

(smiling, noticing Celia used the wrong word)
I bet he thinks about Will, the dead boy, all the time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CELIA

Are you going deaf? What did I just say?

DANIEL

I was just making conversation.

CELIA

(not pleased with her meal)

I wish they could find a goody-goody who
could cook.

Celia looks over to the smiling, kind-hearted overweight
WOMAN who stands behind the serving table. She is obviously
the cook. The Woman catches Celia looking at her and smiles.
Celia smiles back.

CELIA (cont'd)

Better yet...a fussy fag.

DANIEL

(referring to the food)

It's fuel, baby. Just fuel.

EXT. A STREET IN FRONT OF A LIBRARY IN WORKING CLASS QUEENS -
MORNING

It's a bright clear day. People on the streets seem to be
enjoying it.

INT. QUEENSBOROUGH HILL LIBRARY - A MOMENT LATER

Paul is picking books out from a shelf and putting them on a
cart. JOAN ZIFF, the head librarian and Paul's boss,
approaches him. She is a thin woman in her early sixties,
warm-hearted, and motherly.

JOAN

Okay kiddo, what's going on?

PAUL

Nothing.

JOAN

Are you mad at me?

PAUL

Of course not. It's just that I've been
sad lately. Another friend of mine is
back in the hospital.

JOAN

Let's sneak out and have lunch together.

INT. RESTAURANT - LUNCH TIME

Joan is sipping a glass of wine. Paul sits across from her.

JOAN

I'm sorry about your friend. I don't know how you guys do it. I don't know how you do it.

PAUL

(instantly)

Don't make me out to be a hero. Because I'm not.

JOAN

Well, excuse me.

PAUL

I'm sorry. I'm not myself. I shouldn't be around people right now.

JOAN

You want to talk about it?

PAUL

Not right now. But I do have a favor to ask.

JOAN

Anything, darling.

PAUL

You might take away that anything after I ask it.

JOAN

We'll see.

PAUL

I have some time coming. I'd like a few days off.

JOAN

You're going to leave me alone with Bill and Charlotte?

PAUL

I know that's a lot to ask. Just need some time to get myself together. I really do.

JOAN

(after a moment)

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joan takes another sip of her wine.

JOAN (cont'd)
I'm sorry. I'm having wine.

PAUL
That doesn't bother me at all. And I'm about to eat flesh. How long have you been a vegetarian?

JOAN
Oh...about ten years now.

PAUL
I wonder what it was like to eat in a restaurant in the old days.

JOAN
(smiling)
If you're expecting me to answer, I'll belt you.

PAUL
You know what I mean. When not every other person was in a program...when nobody knew what the hell cholesterol was...

JOAN
It was easier. But I'm sure they died earlier.

PAUL
So it's for health reasons.

JOAN
And spiritual.

PAUL
Tell me about that.

JOAN
Not when we're about to eat.

PAUL
Please. It won't bother me.

JOAN
Well...I read somewhere that when you eat flesh...not now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL

(jokingly)
That in your next life you become that
animal.

JOAN

No...that you digest the fear and horror
the animal experienced at the moment of
its death.

Paul takes a moment to take that in and then suddenly gets
up.

JOAN (cont'd)

Where you going?

PAUL

(manically)
To change my order. A salad. That's what
I'll have. It will be my good deed for
the day. I need to do good.

Joan, worried, watches Paul as he looks for the waiter.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Lori is getting out of the elevator and heading for her
apartment. She opens the door.

INT. LORI'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Father James, not in his priest gear, is in her kitchen
cooking supper. Lori is surprised to see him.

LORI

Well, hello.

FATHER JAMES

I got here about an hour ago. I thought
I'd surprise you with supper. I'm
counselling a couple tonight so I have to
leave early. Sweet kids. I'm marrying
them next week. It's great that you live
in this building.

LORI

Why?

FATHER JAMES

They're mostly Jewish. They have no idea
who I am.

Lori removes her shoes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORI
Lucky us.

FATHER JAMES
You look tired.

LORI
Can't sleep. Maybe I should see a
doctor. Get some pills.

FATHER JAMES
That wouldn't be a bad idea.

Lori notices Father James's gym bag.

LORI
Does Father Dunn really believe you go to
the gym every day?

FATHER JAMES
The poor old guy is getting so forgetful.

LORI
Lucky you. I called Detective Salvadori
today.

FATHER JAMES
And?

LORI
Nothing yet.
(sarcastically)
But they're working on it. They're never
going to find him.

Lori starts removing some of her clothes.

LORI (cont'd)
Do you feel guilty about our fucking?

FATHER JAMES
What brought that up?

LORI
I'm curious.

FATHER JAMES
Sometimes.

LORI
But not all the time?

FATHER JAMES
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lori leaves the kitchen.

INT. LORI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lori goes into her bedroom to finish changing her clothes.

LORI
I guess you don't take your vows too seriously.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)
Some would say that I don't.

LORI
But you think you do.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)
For the most part.

Lori stares at a photo of her son.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.) (cont'd)
You might not believe it, but I'm a good priest.

LORI
But by your own rules.

Lori tears herself away from the photo and leaves to join Father James.

INT. LORI'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Father James is now setting the table. Lori helps him.

LORI
I wonder where Will's father is.

FATHER JAMES
When was the last time you saw him?

LORI
Before Will was born. I wonder if you can grieve for a child you never met.

Lori opens a bottle of wine and pours herself a glass.

LORI (cont'd)
I broke a promise I made to you. I told Will about us. Don't worry. He's the only one I told. The scheduling was getting too complicated. I thought it would make it easier. Now, it's real easy, isn't it? He had a good laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES

He thought it was funny.

Lori is sipping her wine.

LORI

In a way it is.

(after a moment)

I used to enjoy my work. Now, I hate it. Pity vomits out of those boys. I know what they're thinking. "He was gay, and she just can't accept it." Such queer bullshit. I started calling them names under my breath.

FATHER JAMES

What can I do for you?

Lori walks over to Father James.

LORI

Forget dinner. Have sex with me before you go. It's the only time I feel something other than this pain.

Lori kisses Father James passionately as the evening light streams into the kitchen window.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The only lights in the apartment come from the television and a spill from the bathroom. Paul, who is alone, is pouring himself a cup of coffee. The phone rings. Paul does not go to answer it. The answering machine clicks on.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hi. It's Paul. You know what to do.

RON (O.S.)

Paul, it's Ron. I'm getting really pissed. Get off your ass and give me a call.

Paul picks up the phone.

PAUL

Hi.

RON (O.S.)

Where the hell have you been?

PAUL

I can't talk now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON (O.S.)
Why?

PAUL
(lying)
I've got company.

RON (O.S.)
Company? As in "company?"

PAUL
Yes.

RON (O.S.)
Holy shit. I'm calling Entertainment
Tonight.

PAUL
I'll talk to you later.

RON (O.S.)
I want details. Not the graphic ones.
Who the hell am I kidding. I want the
graphic ones.

PAUL
Later.

RON (O.S.)
Have a good one. Be safe.

Paul hangs up the phone.

PAUL
(quietly)
"Liar liar. Pants on fire."

EXT. SUSAN'S BUILDING - MORNING

It is a crisp, clear New York day.

INT. SUSAN'S SMALL KITCHEN

Susan is making coffee. Nicholas walks into the room in his
boxer shorts and t-shirt.

NICHOLAS
Morning mom.

He kisses her.

SUSAN
Paul will be over to dinner tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nicholas embraces her.

SUSAN (cont'd)
Do you think we can start thinking of
names?

NICHOLAS
No. I don't want to label the kid yet.
Let's just dream about being parents.

INT. SUSAN'S SMALL BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Susan and Nicholas are finishing dressing and can't help the
"naming" conversation.

NICHOLAS
Okay. No family names. Something special
and unique.

SUSAN
But nothing odd or trendy.

NICHOLAS
Or common. But a real name. Not Water,
River, Breeze, Peace, Ocean, Apple,
Pear...

They fall onto the bed together.

SUSAN
Can't wait to tell Paul.

NICHOLAS
Why haven't you told him yet?

Susan starts getting off the bed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Susan, Nicholas, and Paul are sitting around the table
finishing dinner. There is an awkward silence.

PAUL
That's great news. Really great. (after a
moment) Why'd you wait this long to tell
me that you were expecting?

NICHOLAS
(looking over at Susan)
I have no idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

It's only been a couple of weeks. I was just waiting for the right happy moment.

PAUL

I see.

NICHOLAS

(after moment)

How you doing?

PAUL

I'm back going to meetings.

NICHOLAS

That's great, and how's work?

PAUL

Haven't been there for a few days. Taking some personal time.

NICHOLAS

For what?

PAUL

Clearing my head. Taking care of some stuff.

NICHOLAS

Are you all right? You look tired.

PAUL

Haven't been sleeping too well. That's all.

(to Susan)

How long are you going to continue teaching?

SUSAN

Until the end of the semester. I don't want to desert my third graders. Then I'll be about seven months. It will be time.

NICHOLAS

I wish she would stop sooner.

SUSAN

That's soon enough.

PAUL

Have you thought of any names?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUSAN

Not yet. Any suggestions?

PAUL

If it's a boy, how about Kevin?

NICHOLAS

I don't want to name him after somebody who's dead.

PAUL

You're bound to. At least it would be somebody you knew. And he was your best friend.

SUSAN

Kevin is a lovely name. I hadn't thought of that.

PAUL

(mostly to Nicholas)
Consider it.

NICHOLAS

Is this some kind of test?

PAUL

Maybe.

SUSAN

Here we go again. The war of the widowers.

NICHOLAS

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

Your pissing contest. Who's grieving more. You've got to stop using Kevin to get at each other.

A "lid" has been put on both Nicholas and Paul.

NICHOLAS

(instantly)
We don't do that.

SUSAN

(sarcastically)
Right.

PAUL

(after an awkward moment)
Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

NICHOLAS
(after another moment)
Me too.
(to Paul)
I'm just looking for a new beginning.

PAUL
I'm not there yet, buddy.

NICHOLAS
(meaning it) I understand.

PAUL
I better go. Jesus...am I cranky.
Guys...forgive me.
(to Susan, trying to joke)
I bet Nicholas is worried that the kid
might inherit my moods.
(to Susan and Nicholas)
I am so happy for you guys.

NICHOLAS
And you. This baby is going to be a
blessing for all of us. Uncle Paulie.

Nicholas looks lovingly at Paul as he returns the look.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF SUSAN'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

Paul comes out of the building. Daniel emerges from the shadows and starts following him.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF RICHARD'S SALON - DAY

Paul is looking in the window. He catches glimpses of Lori.

INT. RICHARD'S BEAUTY SALON - MOMENTS LATER

Lori is dying the hair of a fifties or sixties, overweight man. His name is SAM, a wonderful queen who does have the tendency to talk too much. With each procedure, Lori's hostility seems to mount. She tries covering her feelings, but they are leaking.

While Sam is rambling on, Paul can be seen entering the salon, saying a few words to Beth, the other stylist, and then taking a seat.

Paul picks up a magazine, pretends to be thumbing through it, but keeps glancing at Lori.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAM

Oh, you have no idea what I've been through. No idea what-so-ever. They want me for this benefit. They always want me for benefits. But what can I say "no?" I should thank the Lord that I'm still popular. But I'm not sure what this benefit is for. I don't think it's for the plague. That I wouldn't mind. I think it's for another cause. Who knows? Gay boys with babies or lesbians with hula hoops. They make you feel like you're killing gay people if you don't say "yes." They don't give a shit that you have no money, and they are loaded... but you have to do it for free. For the cause. Just because you're a faggot entertainer. Ask these same people if they'll do your taxes for free...write your wills for free...clean your teeth... But if you're an entertainer...Do it for free or you're a sleaze bag. It is a bitch.

Paul, still in the background, looks uncomfortable. He gets up, seems to be saying a few apologetic words to Beth, and then leaves.

SAM (cont'd)

(suddenly changing the subject)

I'm so much happier as a blond. I really am. There is a hotness there when the color is right. But honey, I hate to criticize, the last time the color had too much white in it. Be careful. Please. Okay?

LORI

Okay.

SAM

You have no idea what it is like to be in my business. How difficult it is if your wig isn't right...if the color isn't perfect...if the dress isn't drop dead...if your song isn't a home run.

LORI

(suddenly)

Why don't you get yourself a real life?

SAM

I have a real life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORI

Do you really think that being a blond is going to make you more desirable?

SAM

(getting upset)

What are you getting at? Now...don't be mean.

LORI

That's what you want. You want to be younger so you can get laid. Like that's really going to happen.

SAM

(holding back his tears)

I don't need this. I don't need this today.

LORI

(walking away)

I don't give a shit if this dye makes you bald.

By this time, everyone in the salon is listening to Lori and Sam.

RICHARD

(to Lori)

What the hell are you doing?

All eyes are on Lori. She is gathering her things. Sam sits with his hair half-done, wanting to disappear.

RICHARD (cont'd)

Apologize!

Lori goes into the backroom.

RICHARD (cont'd)

Beth, take care of Sam.

Richard follows Lori as Beth tries to comfort Sam.

INT. BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lori is getting the rest of her things.

RICHARD

You hurt him.

LORI

That fat queen is as hard as nails.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

That's not true.

LORI

He's some pathetic throwback. Today, I couldn't stand looking at him. Couldn't stand listening to him. And I have to tell you, I hated touching him. Why a man would want to act like that...

RICHARD

He does a lot for our community.

LORI

So he's a fucking saint.

RICHARD

He's a beautiful guy.

LORI

Where's the beauty?

RICHARD

He's totally reinvented himself.

LORI

That's one useless invention.

RICHARD

Lori, I know you're very angry...

LORI

I shouldn't work here anymore. Stop booking me. I'll come back tomorrow, finish out the week... I hate coming here. And I'm beginning to hate you.

RICHARD

Please, don't say that.

LORI

Don't give me your martyred "I'm a good person" look.

(furious)

Why don't you call me a bitch? Why aren't you yelling at me? Are you frightened? Or are you consumed with so much pity for me that you can't think? What is it?

RICHARD

You're my friend, and you need help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORI
And that stupid, fat queen doesn't?

Lori leaves the room. Richard follows her.

INT. RICHARD'S BEAUTY SALON - CONTINUOUS

Beth is with Sam, who is truly upset, trying to finish his hair and calm him down. Lori rushes through the salon to the front door. Richard is following her.

SAM
(calling after Richard)
Is she going to say she's sorry? Are you firing her?

LORI
(to Sam)
Kiss my straight ass.

Richard suddenly stops following her.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - A MOMENT LATER

Lori begins descending the subway steps to the PATH train.

Paul runs across the street and follows Lori down into the subway.

EXT. PATH TRAIN EXIT - LATER

Lori exits onto the street. Paul is seen in a cluster of people also exiting onto the street.

EXT. JERSEY CITY STREET - LATER

Paul watches Lori entering her building.

INT. LORI'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Lori and Father James are in bed. They just had sex.

FATHER JAMES
You shouldn't have quit your job.

LORI
What I really wanted to do was scald his head with the dye.

FATHER JAMES
That's not like you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORI

I'm enjoying the hatred. It's giving me something else to feel. He wants to be a platinum blond this season. Useless and ugly in this frightening world.

FATHER JAMES

You don't know that.

LORI

He'll probably live to be a hundred. Bury us all.

FATHER JAMES

Please, see somebody.

LORI

Find me a therapist whose son was murdered. I'll see her.

Father James gets out of bed and starts dressing.

FATHER JAMES

What are you going to do?

LORI

Maybe move to Florida. Tampa. My sister is there.

FATHER JAMES

That might not be a bad idea.

LORI

So I'd leave here, and you wouldn't care?

FATHER JAMES

Of course I would. I'd visit. As often as I could.

LORI

You'll find somebody else to "take care of your priestly needs."

FATHER JAMES

(sarcastically)

Yeah. There's already a waiting list.

LORI

In a way, you're ideal for a middle-aged woman who is used to living alone. You're dependable. You stick to a schedule. And you're never around long enough to mess up an apartment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FATHER JAMES

Maybe you should write my ad for the church bulletin.

LORI

If I move to Florida, do you think, finally, you could spend the night?

FATHER JAMES

Most definitely.

INT. AA MEETING - EVENING

Some PEOPLE are taking their seats, but most are standing and chatting. A few people surround the coffee area. Paul is seated. Daniel nervously makes his way over to Paul.

DANIEL

Is anyone sitting here?

PAUL

No.

Daniel sits down.

DANIEL

I like this meeting.

PAUL

It's okay.

DANIEL

It's friendlier than most. I hope I'm not bothering you.

PAUL

I'm just not very talkative tonight.

DANIEL

You never are. You don't share. I've never seen you talking with anyone.

PAUL

What are you...the AA police?

Paul is uncomfortable with Daniel sitting next to him. It could be Daniel's clothes or perhaps his smell. Daniel is super aware of this and is equally uncomfortable.

DANIEL

Sorry. I'm bothering you. I just wanted to say hello and...and wanted you to know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Daniel is getting more and more nervous as he gets up.

DANIEL (cont'd)
...that...that I think you're very
beautiful.

Paul has no idea what to make of this.

A MAN is stepping up to the podium.

MAN
Hi. My name is Robert and I'm...

DANIEL
By the way, my name is Daniel.

Daniel quickly leaves.

INT. SHOWER - HOMELESS SHELTER - THAT EVENING

Daniel is in the shower.

MARTIN, a sixty-some-year-old, passes the shower stall.

MARTIN
Daniel, it's lights out in a couple of
minutes.

There is a ruckus at the front door.

MARTIN (O.S.) (cont'd)
You know the rules, Carl.

CELIA (O.S.)
It's Celia, bitch.

MARTIN (O.S.)
You can't come in here high.

The sound of Martin slamming the door is heard.

CELIA (O.S.)
(yelling)
And where the hell am I supposed to go
tonight?

Daniel, hearing all this, tries to shut out the sound of
Celia's voice.

INT. THE CANDLE - GAY BAR ON THE UPPER WESTSIDE - THAT EVENING

The bar is not very crowded. In the corner sipping a beer is Richard, Lori's ex-boss. Paul pauses at the bar. He has not seen Richard yet.

BARTENDER
(coming over to Paul)
What'll it be?

Paul wants a real drink, but can't decide if he's going to have one.

PAUL
(finally)
Water.

The Bartender hands Paul a small bottle of water. Paul pays and turns around and spots Richard. Should he walk over to him? He decides yes.

PAUL (cont'd)
Hi there.

RICHARD
Hello.

PAUL
You're Richard, right?

RICHARD
How did you know?

PAUL
I'm clairvoyant. I know people's names, ages...that's a real curse... and their favorite I LOVE LUCY episode. I've been to your salon.

RICHARD
Really?

PAUL
(lying)
I've been there. The woman who cut my hair...she's the one whose son was killed. How's she doing?

RICHARD
Not well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

(after a moment)

Does she have any other children?

RICHARD

I really don't want to talk about her.

PAUL

Sorry. You know...once upon a time people thought I was charming.

RICHARD

Once upon a time we all were. Another time. Another universe.

PAUL

Boy, it is empty in here tonight.

RICHARD

It's the times.

PAUL

And the boys are getting more efficient. There are the phone lines now... You're very attractive.

RICHARD

(jokingly)

For an older guy.

PAUL

You look married. I bet you've got a boyfriend.

RICHARD

I had one. He died.

PAUL

Oh, those dead boyfriends. They're all over the place these days. I've got one of them too.

RICHARD

Sorry. Let's not swap war stories.

Paul starts shaking and sweating.

RICHARD (cont'd)

You okay?

PAUL

I can't believe this. I'm not drinking anymore. And suddenly...all I want is a beer. Craving it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL (CONT'D)
I didn't think this would happen to me.
Let me give you my number.

RICHARD
Don't bother. I'm not ready to hook up.

Although Paul is slightly shaking, he goes into his pocket, pulls out a piece of paper and writes his number down.

PAUL
You never know. Some night you might be interested in war stories.

RICHARD
You okay?

PAUL
Or maybe some night you'll have an erotic dream about me.

RICHARD
I don't have them anymore.

PAUL
Please...take it. I can't believe how I'm shaking.

Richard takes the number.

PAUL (cont'd)
Thanks. You never know.

Paul rushes out of the bar. Richard is worried about this stranger.

EXT. JERSEY CITY - IN FRONT OF LORI'S BUILDING - DAY

Lori walks out of her building and heads for the coffee shop on the corner. Paul, looking tired, is not far behind and follows her into the shop.

INT. JERSEY CITY COFFEE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

It's a Starbucks-like coffee bar. Lori has gotten her coffee. She looks around the room and stops at the only empty table and sits. Paul is watching her. He has gotten his coffee. Lori pulls out a newspaper. Paul approaches her.

PAUL
(tentatively)
Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORI
(suspiciously)
Do I know you?

PAUL
Lori, right? You used to cut my hair.
In the Village.

LORI
Sorry, I don't remember you.

PAUL
Well, I'm not that memorable. Paul.

LORI
(shaking her head)
Sorry.

PAUL
May I?

Paul does not wait for her response and takes a seat at her table. This makes Lori uncomfortable.

PAUL (cont'd)
You're not there anymore, are you?

LORI
No.

PAUL
Are you at some other shop now?

LORI
A beauty parlor around here. It's just women.

PAUL
Is it easier than gay guys?

LORI
They're about the same.

PAUL
Fussy, right?

LORI
That's one way of putting it.
(taking Paul in)
I don't remember you. And I usually remember my clients.

PAUL
Maybe I wasn't that fussy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORI
Then I'd really remember you.

PAUL
It's nice seeing you again. I believe
there's a mass tonight at Saint
Anthony's.

Lori is getting more and more uncomfortable with this guy.
She is glad there are other people around.

PAUL (cont'd)
I think I need the church these days.

LORI
Why?

PAUL
I lost my lover. He died.

Lori softens a bit.

LORI
So you're looking for a reason?

PAUL
Maybe.

LORI
Or you're hoping you'll see him again?

PAUL
Oh, I don't know about that. That seems
too fairy tale-ish to me.

LORI
It is. Then don't you wonder...what's
the sense of believing any of it?

PAUL
It gives you the possibility.

LORI
I kind of like that.

PAUL
(after a moment)
Are you okay?

LORI
(suddenly angry)
You know about my son, don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PAUL

Yes.

LORI

Damn you! Are you from some activist group? Don't you people understand? I don't want to have anything to do with you.

PAUL

I'm not part of any group. Really I'm not. They should all leave you alone.

LORI

Like you're doing.

PAUL

I am so sorry.

Paul gets up.

PAUL (cont'd)

(about to burst into tears)

I'm sorry. I shouldn't be bothering you. We have to deal with our grief in our own way, don't we. Chip at it. Bit by bit.

LORI

How's your "chipping" going?

PAUL

Won't be over. Not in this lifetime. I better go.

Paul tries to smile at Lori, but he is now crying. For the first time since the "accident."

Lori grabs Paul's hand and pulls him back to his seat. A couple of CUSTOMERS glance their way. Lori hands him a napkin.

PAUL (cont'd)

Thank you.

LORI

I hate to see boys cry.

PAUL

But we do. I shouldn't have come over to you.

LORI

Why did you? We're you looking for someone sadder than yourself?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LORI (CONT'D)
I'm going to ask you what everyone is
asking me? Are you getting any help?

PAUL
There is no help.

LORI
I know what you mean.

PAUL
(after another awkward moment)
Would you like to come with me to mass?

LORI
What?

Paul starts pulling himself together.

PAUL
I don't know why I asked you that. I'm
acting crazy. I'm sorry.

LORI
(studying Paul)
I used to feel comfortable in church.
But not anymore.
(after a moment)
When you go there, where do you like to
sit?

PAUL
In the back.

LORI
Me too.

PAUL
The front for movies.

LORI
Absolutely.

PAUL
The back for church.

LORI
But no church for me right now.

PAUL
Why not?

LORI
Ever since my son was killed, I've become
paranoid. Afraid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Of what? PAUL

God. LORI

But he's love. PAUL

Is he? LORI

They sit silently for a moment looking away from each other. Then...Lori looks more and more uncomfortable. She looks away from him, and Paul notices.

Sorry. PAUL

He slowly gets up and leaves.

CONTINUOUS

EXT. STREET

Paul walks looking like life has been drained out of him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RON'S APARTMENT - EARLY THAT EVENING

Paul is sitting in Ron's small living room. It looks like a meeting has been held there. A few chairs are in a circle. Plates filled with the remains of snacks and popcorn are all over the room. As are water glasses and coffee cups.

RON (O.S.)
I thought you were coming to the team meeting tonight. The team was looking forward to it.

PAUL
(lying)
I forgot I had a meeting with this woman.

RON (O.S.)
From AA?

PAUL
(lying)
Yeah.

RON (O.S.)
Oh, well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ron comes out of the bathroom and starts straightening up his living room.

PAUL
How'd the meeting go?

RON
(sharply and not looking at
Paul)
It was a tough one.

PAUL
Are you okay?

RON
I'm sorry I'm not my perky positive self.

The two men just look at each other for a moment. Ron almost looks like he's shaking.

RON (cont'd)
I'm sorry. How'd your meeting go?

PAUL
Not well. She's suffering a great loss,
and I didn't help.

RON
How do you know?

PAUL
I know. What happened at your meeting?

RON
Two of my team members had clients that
are dying. And I kept thinking of
Bradley. He's going to die soon. I'm in a
rage.

PAUL
I know.

RON
At our government. At the churches that
tell us we're all going to hell. And
those comedians who still think it's okay
to tell a fag or AIDS joke.

PAUL
I remember when I was on your team.

RON
You make it sound like it was a century
ago. It's less than six months.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL

I've lost all consciousness of time. Some things feel like yesterday. And some yesterdays feel like a million years ago. Anyway, I was sitting with Joe in the hospital. You remember Joe?

RON

Of course.

Ron sits down.

PAUL

We were watching some talk show. And some comic made an AIDS joke. Joe said, "They hate us." All I could think was suppose some other guy in the hospital had the TV on and he was alone in his room and dying and that was the last thing he heard.

RON

I wish I could cry. I can't.

PAUL

I did today for the first time in a long time.

RON

With that woman?

PAUL

Yeah.

RON

How did it feel?

PAUL

It was all wrong.
(after a moment)
Do you feel like dinner?

RON

No.

PAUL

I know rage. It doesn't help. We have to try seeing the good.

RON

Where?

PAUL

In the work you're doing. How many on your team now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RON

Ten.

PAUL

And they each have a client?

RON

Yes.

PAUL

Well, you're giving comfort to ten--no--counting Bradley--eleven people. Maybe I should come back to the team.

RON

Do you think you're ready?

PAUL

No.

RON

Bradley and I are worried about you. Something is going on that you're not talking about. Be honest. Are you sick?

PAUL

No.

RON

Really?

PAUL

Really.

RON

Thank God.

PAUL

(after a moment)

I don't feel like being alone. And I don't feel like talking.

RON

Ditto. How about if we watch some bad TV. We might even have a laugh.

PAUL

Wouldn't that be something.

EXT. STREET NEAR RIVERSIDE DRIVE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Daniel and Celia are walking down a deserted street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CELIA

You heard me. Screamin'. Outside that horrible place. You were there. Why didn't you say nothin'?

DANIEL

There was nothin' I could do. You know that.

CELIA

You're smelling squeaky clean. What did they do? Lysol you at the shelter? I don't think he's goin' like that. He likes his tricks dirty.

DANIEL

I don't know if I'm in the mood for one of your jobs.

CELIA

This one's real easy. And it's twenty-five dollars for each of us and some nice pills. Oh...that's right. You're goin to that AA now.

DANIEL

I go there just to see him. And they have cookies.

CELIA

You don't even have to touch this guy. I don't even have to touch him. All you gotta do is pretend like I'm a real woman...

DANIEL

And you say that's easy?

CELIA

Twirl on it. And you're my mean-bastard-of-a-pimp.

INT. CAR ON A DESERTED STREET - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Celia is in the backseat with the JOHN. He's jerking off as he caresses her leg. Daniel sits in the front seat. Only now and then does the John notice what a bad actor Daniel is tonight.

DANIEL

You like that leg?

THE JOHN

Oh, I do sir. Can I touch her pussy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL
A piece of shit like you?

THE JOHN
What would you do to me if I touched it,
sir?

DANIEL
You wouldn't want to know.

CELIA
(leaning over to Daniel and
whispering him)
Slap him.

DANIEL
(in a whisper to Celia)
You said no fucking touching.

THE JOHN
You'd slap me, sir. Wouldn't you?!?
You'd slap my white scumbag face.

CELIA
(whispering)
Do it!

THE JOHN
(totally into it)
That's right. That's what you'd do.

Daniel is feeling that this is ridiculous, but he turns and looks at the John and suddenly gets truly angry. He lets the John have it with a real good, hard slap. And the John comes. Daniel instantly steps out of the car.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Daniel walks a few paces from the car. He is disgusted with himself and the John. Celia and the John can be heard.

CELIA (O.S.)
That's fifty plus the pills. You brought
the pills didn't you, Dr. MacPherson?

THE JOHN (O.S.)
Of course. Was he into it? I couldn't
really tell.

CELIA (O.S.)
Oh yeah. It's just that he's getting
over a cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE JOHN (O.S.)
I bet when he wants to...he can be a real
mean son-of-a-bitch.

CELIA (O.S.)
Oh yeah.

THE JOHN (O.S.)
Next time I want to see that side of him.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE BURGER BARN - LATER

From the street Daniel and Celia can be seen eating burgers
and french fries. Celia is laughing. She's high. Daniel gets
up and starts walking away from her.

CELIA
Where you going?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEAR PAUL'S BUILDING - LATER THAT NIGHT

It is pouring. Daniel is huddled in the doorway across the
street from Paul's building. He sees Paul run into the
building.

DANIEL
(quietly)
Night Paul. I know your name now.

He laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE-UP OF SUSAN'S FACE

She looks worried. She puts down the phone.

INT. SUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - LATE AFTERNOON

Susan gets a jacket and is about to leave her apartment.

SUSAN
Now, his answering machine is off.

NICHOLAS
I'm coming with you.

SUSAN
No. I better go alone.

Nicholas looks worried.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN (cont'd)
I'll be okay.

INT. PAUL'S FRONT DOOR - LATER

Susan is pounding on the door.

SUSAN
Paul, open the fucking door.

PAUL (O.S.)
I'm coming.

Paul slowly opens the door.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Susan enters. The apartment is neat except for the cartons of takeout food.

SUSAN
You're making me feel like a grade-B actress.

PAUL
Well, hello to you too.

SUSAN
I have to see you. Phone calls are not enough. And today, your machine was off.
(looking at him)
You look like you're losing weight.

PAUL
I've become a vegetarian.

SUSAN
Since when?

PAUL
A couple of weeks now. It's a way to curb violence. Not ingesting any more fear from the animals when they're slaughtered. Do you know how they kill the chickens we eat? They scream. They cry. They want to live as much as we do.

SUSAN
Shut up!

Silence for a moment. Then...

PAUL
I'm trying to be good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUSAN

You need help. Now, who are we going to call?

PAUL

I don't want any help. Not now.

SUSAN

Go back to work. It will be good for you.

PAUL

I can't. Not for a while.

SUSAN

This leave of absence was not a good idea. What are you doing for money?

PAUL

I've got some.

SUSAN

Oh for Chrissakes, you're really frightening me. What do you do all day?

PAUL

Think. I visit Bradley. And sometimes I go to church.

SUSAN

But you're an atheist.

PAUL

Don't remind me. I'm trying to believe. I so want to believe. I keep thinking ...keep praying. Keep praying. And maybe...maybe a miracle will occur. And suddenly I'll believe in a God. They say that can happen. A God whose arms are open to everyone. A God who's embracing all our dead.

SUSAN

Paul, look at what's happening to you. There has to be something or somebody that can help.

PAUL

If I could bring back that boy in the alley and make him love me. Make him love us all.

Susan is overwhelmed and has no answer for Paul's last statement. Brother and sister just look at each other. And then suddenly...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUSAN
(getting more and more upset)
It was self-defense! It was an accident!

PAUL
How do you know?

SUSAN
(breaking down)
Because you wouldn't kill anybody.

PAUL
Look what I've done to you.

SUSAN
You've taken care of me since I was six.
That's what you've done to me.

Paul embraces his sister. Silence for a moment. Then...

PAUL
I can see a baby bump. I want to be a
good uncle. I do. I'll find my way. I
promise. I'll do it for you.

Paul slowly lets go of Susan and heads to his answering
machine and turns it on.

PAUL (cont'd)
Look. It's on.

EXT. IN FRONT OF ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - DAY

Lori climbs the steps to the church.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Lori enters the church suspiciously. Almost afraid. A few
PEOPLE are in the church. Father James is hearing
confessions. A YOUNG MAN enters the confessional box. Lori
looks at him. She looks around as if she's never been in a
church before. She heads for the confessional box and
hovers near it waiting for the Young Man to come out. When
he does, she enters the confessional.

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOX - CONTINUOUS

Lori makes the sign of the cross.

LORI
Bless me Father for I have sinned. My
last confession...

Father James recognizes Lori's voice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES

Lori...I shouldn't be hearing your confession.

LORI

Why? Are you afraid that this will be more intimate than our fucking?

FATHER JAMES

Please...not here.

LORI

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Don't deny me my confession. And it's you that has to hear it.

FATHER JAMES

Why did you feel such a strong need to confess at this moment?

LORI

I feel our Lord has singled me out to suffer.

INT. AA MEETING - THE SAME TIME

An AA meeting is in process. Only the voices of Father James and Lori are heard. Paul is staring at the SPEAKER but not really paying attention. Daniel, a few rows behind, is looking longingly in Paul's direction.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)

I know it feels that way. But it's not true.

As Lori speaks, the CAMERA studies Paul's face and Daniel's face.

LORI (O.S.)

I met this stranger. I was convinced that God did not exist. I was comfortable with that idea. But then ...suddenly...there it was. God ...exists. And He sent this stranger to me as a punishment. Now, I'm frightened of Him. And frightened of my hate for Him.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)

Of this stranger?

LORI (O.S.)

Of God!

CLOSE-UP OF PAUL'S BLANK STARE

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

A silent scene. Again, only the voices of Father James and Lori are heard. A series of blurred, surreal images. Paul and Will. Will is laughing shouting at Paul. Pushing him, hitting him, slapping his face. Paul is trying to protect himself and is fighting back.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)

Now is the time you should take refuge in
His love.

LORI (O.S.)

All I see is His vengeance. His
punishment for all our sins, my sins.

FATHER JAMES (O.S.)

You were a wonderful mother. Our Lord
loves you.

BACK TO:

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOX - THE SAME TIME

LORI

You are arrogant. They should rip that
collar from your neck.

FATHER JAMES

I want you to see a therapist. I want
you to call one today.

LORI

I don't need a therapist. I want this
idea...this idea of Christ to forgive me.
I want to bathe in His light. That light
I'm always hearing about, but never
seeing. I want you to ask for His
forgiveness too.

FATHER JAMES

Our love did not kill your son.

LORI

What are you doing in the church!?

FATHER JAMES

Trying to do some of Christ's work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORI

This stranger...he's gay. He said God is love.

FATHER JAMES

If He exists, He is.

LORI

The night my son was killed...earlier that evening...how my boy and I laughed. I was making fun of Richard and the fussy little cookies he brought into the shop. I minced around the room. We roared. Richard doesn't mince. A few hours later my son gets murdered by somebody who hates gay people. What an enormous sense of humor Our Creator has. He sent me this stranger... He was like a razor blade slicing my fucking heart.

FATHER JAMES

Let me take you home. I'll pray with you. Hold you. Whatever you want.

LORI

Why am I talking to you? You can't deliver this God to me. Mary, she's a mother. She'll help me.

Lori pulls out a rosary and begins rocking back and forth.

LORI (cont'd)

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee..."

FATHER JAMES

Stop this!

Father James quickly gets out of the confessional.

INT. IN FRONT OF THE CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Father James is pulling Lori out of the confessional.

LORI

(getting more and more hysterical)

You must never touch me again! Never! "...blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...Jesus. Holy Mary mother of God pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The five PEOPLE now in the church all look towards the confessional. Two of the them run to help Father James.

FATHER JAMES
(calling to them, indicating
that they should back-off)
It's okay!

They stop. But continue to stare, riveted at the scene.

Lori screams. Then instantly she falls silent. She looks around. Almost not sure where she is. She is swimming in grief.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT EVENING

Richard, Lori's ex boss and the guy from the bar, are sitting on Paul's sofa. Paul is surprised that Richard called him. Richard is surprised that he called Paul. What to do? What to say? Paul hands him a glass.

PAUL
Sorry. I only have water.

RICHARD
(awkwardly, looking up at Paul)
That's okay.

Paul sits on the sofa.

RICHARD (cont'd)
I just took a chance calling you tonight.
I'm surprised you remembered me.

PAUL
It's only been a couple of weeks. I'm
glad I picked up the phone.

RICHARD
I don't usually do things like this.
Call up someone I hardly know and...you
know.

Paul is just smiling at Richard. Both guys are uncomfortable.

RICHARD (cont'd)
Nice place.

PAUL
(studying Richard)
You caught it on a good day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD
(after a moment)
What are you thinking?

PAUL
About you.

RICHARD
What about me?

PAUL
I'm wondering what you look like without
your clothes.

Paul goes to unbutton Richard's shirt.

RICHARD
(moving away, but not that far
away)
You move fast.

PAUL
I'm hoping you didn't come here to
discuss Proust.

RICHARD
Not Proust. But the use of irony in
Jackie Collins.

PAUL
Touché.

RICHARD
I haven't had sex in a long time.

PAUL
Neither have I.

RICHARD
That's hard to believe. You seem very
comfortable with the idea. And you're a
bit aggressive.

PAUL
Kevin would have roared if he heard you
say that. He thought of me as uptight
and shy.

RICHARD
Was he your lover?

PAUL
Yes. My dead one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD

Mine was John.

PAUL

We gay boys who have so much in common.
Our love of divas and dead boyfriends.

RICHARD

Let's not talk about that now.

After a moment, Paul gets up, and although also a bit nervous, he begins to undress himself.

PAUL

Should I?

RICHARD

I don't know if this is going to work.

PAUL

Don't you like sex?

Paul continues to undress as Richard watches him.

RICHARD

Obsessed with it. Masturbate way too much for somebody my age. Since John's death...that's three years... only had sex twice. Both disasters. But my fantasies...get more and more bizarre.

Paul is down to his underwear.

PAUL

Really?

RICHARD

Yeah.

PAUL

Let's go there tonight.

Richard turns away from Paul. Paul kneels near the sofa and puts his arms around Richard.

PAUL (cont'd)

(quietly)

Whisper one of your fantasies. I'll create it for you. I'll enter your mind and take it over. This way we can both stop thinking. For a while.

Richard starts responding to Paul.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PAUL (cont'd)
The darker...the better. Go there.

Richard, still slightly shaking, starts whispering in Paul's ear. The CAMERA gets closer and closer. They begin kissing passionately.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Daniel is following Paul. But he is quite a ways behind him.

The street is packed with PEOPLE running around with determination and purpose. Traffic noise.

Daniel appears almost to be in slow motion. He is strolling. He's in a different world. On something powerful. He may have even forgotten he has been following Paul.

He passes an attractive HETEROSEXUAL COUPLE in their twenties. He sizes up the MAN.

DANIEL
(to the woman)
Are you one lucky bitch.

The woman laughs. The man gives Daniel a contemptuous look. Daniel sees this.

DANIEL (cont'd)
(to the woman)
On second glance...

CLOSE on Daniel laughing....

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLOSE-UP on Paul's ANSWERING MACHINE

Paul's hand is erasing messages.

RON'S VOICE: Hey, it's me. Where the hell are you? By the way...(ERASED). JOAN'S VOICE: Paul, can you call me back? We have to talk about this leave of absence...(ERASED). RICHARD'S VOICE: It's Richard. Last night. What a night. I'm still...(ERASED). The sound of messages get louder and more garbled as we hear the messages being quickly erased.

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal Paul in his semi-lit apartment. It's night. All looks lonely and frozen.

EXT. A STREET IN NEW JERSEY - BRIGHT AFTERNOON

Lori comes out of a bank. Some distance from her Paul lurks near the entrance of a store. He begins to follow Lori. He stays about a half a block away from her. Lori abruptly turns as if she has forgotten something. She instantly spots Paul.

LORI

It is you. What are you doing?

PAUL

(acting surprised)
Why, hello.

LORI

Have you been following me?

PAUL

No. It's good to see you. It's been a while.

LORI

What are you doing here?

PAUL

Going to Saint Anthony's.

LORI

In the middle of a weekday afternoon? I thought I saw you last week.

PAUL

You couldn't have. I haven't come here for a while.

LORI

It was you.

PAUL

You're being silly. How about a coffee?

Lori stops. She stares at Paul really looking him over. Paul is terrified.

LORI

You know something about my son? You were never a client of mine. What do you know!

PAUL

Nothing. Really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LORI
Oh my God...do...do you know who killed
him?

PAUL
No!

LORI
Was he a friend of yours?

PAUL
I never met him.

LORI
I don't think that's true.

PAUL
I better go.

Lori grabs him and stops.

LORI
You move one step away from me, and I'll
start screaming. How did you know my
son?

Paul tries not to look at Lori as she holds on to him.

PAUL
I didn't know him.

LORI
Did you meet him in that bar? Had he
been there before?

PAUL
No!

A couple of PASSERSBY take notice of Paul and Lori.

LORI
Look at you. Look at the pain in your
eyes. Oh...it can't be that... You
didn't... Did you...did you love him?

PAUL
(stunned)
What?

LORI
You did. You loved him. How stupid.
How blind. I swear I didn't know. Oh
dear Jesus, my son...he was...gay, wasn't
he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Paul breaks away from Lori and starts walking. Lori aggressively follows him.

PAUL

You know he wasn't.

LORI

You're lying. Look at you. Wanting to be close to me. Following me. You loved my son. Was he in love too? Come home with me. Tell me about my son. Please.

PAUL

This is so wrong.

LORI

I'll beg. I'll get down on my knees. Right here on the street.

PAUL

I'll never bother you again. I swear it.

Lori grabs his shirt and clings to it. Paul is afraid to move. PEOPLE are looking at them.

LORI

(begging)
Please...please!

A MAN rushes up to Lori.

MAN

Are you all right?!?

LORI

(instantly, to the Man)
Get the hell away from me!

The Man backs away.

MAN

(to the other ONLOOKERS)
Crazies.

Paul gently releases Lori's hands from his shirt and takes her in his arms.

LORI

(relaxing into the embrace,
quietly
It's true.

CLOSE-UP PICTURE OF WILL...LOOKING YOUNG AND HAPPY

LORI (O.S.)
You can have that picture.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LORI'S KITCHEN - THE NEXT MOMENT

Paul is seated at Lori's kitchen table. Lori's handing him Will's picture. Paul looks frightened and totally out of it.

PAUL
I couldn't.

LORI
No, really. I want you to have it.

PAUL
No, thank you.

LORI
You sure I can't get you anything? A
little something to drink?

PAUL
No...no, thank you.

LORI
Did he have lots of gay friends?

PAUL
I don't think so.

LORI
He was new to it all, wasn't he? I had
no inkling. Not the slightest. Where
did you meet? Was it in that bar?

PAUL
(improvising as he goes)
No. In a coffee shop.

LORI
But you loved him?

Paul is desperately trying to hold himself together.

LORI (cont'd)
Please...tell me. Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL
(quietly, giving her the answer
she wants to hear)
Yes.

LORI
His smile. It was wonderful, wasn't it?
That picture captures it. Don't you
think so?

PAUL
Yes.

LORI
I took it about a month before... We
were in Atlantic City. Did a little
gambling. I'm sure he told you about it.
Please, don't be shy. Talk to me about
my son. You don't know what it means to
me. When I buried him, how I wished
there were more people there who loved
him. It's probably my fault. I'm not
too social. Too guarded. I have a small
family...just a few friends. He seemed
popular at school though. But only a few
of his friends came to the church. Young
people...they avoid funerals, don't they?
Were the two of you serious about each
other? Were you making plans for the
future?

PAUL
I don't know how serious he was. He was
younger than me. You're not upset to
find out he was gay?

LORI
I don't know. I'm just happy to talk to
someone else who loved him. It's a
comfort to me. Mothers want their
children to be loved.

Paul keeps staring at the picture.

LORI (cont'd)
We all think our children are geniuses.
When you guys are little and helpless, we
have such fantasies about your futures.
What were your mother's dreams about you?

PAUL
I wouldn't know. She died when I was
young.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LORI

How sad.

PAUL

Yes, it was.

LORI

What was she like? Do you remember?

PAUL

Vaguely. I was only nine. Every once in a while I wonder what my life would have been like if my mother had lived.

LORI

When Will was a baby, I was convinced that when he grew up he would discover the cure for cancer. Or be a senator. Or get hideously rich. But he turned out to be just a regular guy. But regular in so many wonderful ways. How I wish he would have been comfortable enough to tell me he was gay.

Paul can no longer hold himself together. He is shaking and barely holding back his tears.

PAUL

(from his soul)

I am so sorry.

Lori cradles Paul in her arms.

LORI

I'm glad he was loved. You don't have to follow me anymore. Because now I know.

PAUL

(still crying)

Forgive me. Please...forgive me.

LORI

There's nothing...nothing to forgive.

The CAMERA pulls out of Lori's kitchen window into the New Jersey Street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - EARLY EVENING - LATER

Paul is on his block heading towards his building. Daniel is on the block waiting for Paul. Daniel spots Paul and watches him.

INT. GROUND FLOOR ENTRANCE TO PAUL'S BUILDING - LATER

Paul enters his building. Mrs. Morente comes down the stairs. Spots Paul. He looks lost. Another NEIGHBOR enters the building soon after Paul. The Neighbor heads to the mailboxes.

MRS. MORENTE
(to both of them)
The elevator's out again.
(to Paul, concerned)
Honey, what's wrong?

PAUL
(with sudden energy)
I'm okay. I'm getting better.

MRS. MORENTE
Better from what?

Paul gives a tiny smile to Mrs. Morente and then bolts upstairs.

NEIGHBOR
Is it AIDS? Or drugs or alcohol?

MRS. MORENTE
(turning on the Neighbor)
Fuck you!

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - LATER

Paul is looking at himself in the mirror. Doesn't like what he sees. He begins scrubbing his face. Violently. As if he could scrub himself away.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Paul comes out of the bathroom all scrubbed up. Paul picks up a photo from the table near his bed and looks at it. It's a picture of four smiling people. Susan, Nicholas, Paul, and another man. Paul has his arm around the man. He then puts the photo down.

DISSOLVE TO FLASHBACK:

INT. CROWDED CHEAP RESTAURANT - DAY

Paul, Nicholas, and Susan are seated at a table. They are drinking and animated.

NICHOLAS
You'll like him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

If I knew this was a set-up, I never would have come.

NICHOLAS

It's not a set-up. I thought it was time you met my best friend. I just asked him to join us for a drink.

PAUL

A set-up. I have to tell you I don't think straight men know what is attractive to gay men. Especially, not after you set me up with Don.

SUSAN

Paul, you are going to be really grateful. Kevin is great and so cute.

NICHOLAS

I'm sorry about Don.

PAUL

He picked his nose. At dinner.

NICHOLAS

I wasn't aware of that fact. But I have to tell you Kevin is...

KEVIN

(stepping into the frame)
...is what?

KEVIN is beautiful, in a totally masculine way, and hot. He is the man in the photo in Paul's apartment.

Paul and Kevin's eyes lock in a most tender way. Paul gets up to greet Kevin and knocks over a couple of drinks.

NICHOLAS

(to Susan)
I think he likes him.

Nicholas and Susan laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Paul and Kevin are making love and giggling.

PAUL

(whispering)
Thank you Nicholas...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEVIN
(whispering)
Thank you Nicholas...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Paul and Kevin are surveying the apartment. Near the door are a few boxes and two large suitcases.

KEVIN
It's going to be real tight in here.

PAUL
It's going to be cozy.

Paul jumps on Kevin.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Kevin and Paul sit opposite DR. ANNA SCHWARTZ. She is giving Kevin very bad news-his AIDS diagnosis. The dialogue is not heard. Kevin looks like a child. He starts shaking and then breaks down. Paul embraces him. The doctor is hating her job.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - A BIT LATER

Paul and Kevin, holding hands, walk in a daze as the couple and the streets blur.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. LORI'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lori is seated at her kitchen table. Father James is at the kitchen counter adding milk and sugar to this coffee.

LORI
My son was gay.

FATHER JAMES
What are you talking about?

LORI
I've met his lover. He sat right here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES
(coming over to her)
He wasn't gay.

LORI
All my little fag jokes about Richard. I
didn't really mean them. But what did
they sound like to my son? His name is
Paul. See.

Lori tosses Father James a slip of paper. It holds Paul's
information.

LORI (cont'd)
I made him give me this. In case I want
to talk to him again.

FATHER JAMES
You can't see this man again.

LORI
I might have to. It's good to look into
the eyes of someone else who loved him.

FATHER JAMES
Move to Florida. Be with your sister.

LORI
God has other plans for me. Maybe this
boy is my penance.

FATHER JAMES
God has nothing to do with this.

They are both silent for a moment.

FATHER JAMES (cont'd)
You have no idea how much I love you.

LORI
But you love the idea of your God more.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Paul sits close by Bradley who is lying in bed. He looks
ravaged.

BRADLEY
This is it. They'll be no going home this
time. I've been worried about you. Ron
says you're not sick. Is that true.

PAUL
True.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRADLEY

Really?

PAUL

Really.

BRADLEY

Please don't get sick. Oh, and find yourself another old movie queen.

PAUL

No. I'm just going to keep playing our conversations in my head.

BRADLEY

Then I won't be forgotten.

PAUL

Never.

BRADLEY

(hardly paying attention)
I can't talk anymore. I'm so tired.

PAUL

Sleep.

Paul gets up and kisses him on the forehead.

BRADLEY

Don't leave until I'm asleep. When I used to go to sleep I used to think of the boys I like or what I would be doing the next day.

Paul sits on the bed and takes Bradley's hand.

BRADLEY (cont'd)

Stay with me until I fall asleep.

PAUL

Think about our time in P-town. That must be seven years ago. You, Ron, and me. How we danced. People thought we were a threesome. I think you told them that. But we were friends. Family. Every night we would walk along the beach and watch the sunset. Remember?

Bradley is asleep. Paul slowly puts Bradley's hand down and sits back in his chair. The sound of singing is heard.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DOORWAY - LATE NIGHT

Daniel and Celia are huddled sitting up on the ground. They are both very high. In their own worlds. It is Celia who is singing. Her voice is soft and lovely.

DANIEL

Please, don't sing.

CELIA

Why?

DANIEL

It makes me think of my mama. She used to sing until she married that bastard. Oooh, I miss her.

CELIA

Sorry.

DANIEL

Jesus, how he used to be beat me. Burned me. Tried to kill the queer in me. I was only twelve when I got the hell out of there. Worked the streets. I pray there is no God. Because if He exists He'd have to be a sick fuck wouldn't he? I mean to watch a boy being burned by his new daddy.

CELIA

Go to sleep, please. You are depressing tonight.

DANIEL

No, I'm not. I'm reflective.

CELIA

Excuse me.

DANIEL

(after a moment, suddenly
angry)
I hope he's dead or really suffering.

CELIA

Your stepdaddy?

DANIEL

No. That prick croaked years and years ago. Mr. Cory. Met him when I was seventeen. I thought he was kind. But what a bastard he turned out to be. Lived with him for two-and-a-half years.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Oh, you should have seen me. I made those gay boys drool. I was his project. He educated me. And I was a fast learner. You see, I'm smart. Just unlearned. And I've always had pretensions. But I was too fast a learner. Because...one morning Mr. Cory realized what he really wanted was a young black thug. The racist bastard.

CELIA

Don't need this tonight. Don't fucking need this.

Celia has difficulty getting up, but does. She stumbles away. Daniel hardly notices.

DANIEL

Bastards all over. And some of them get to be the lucky ones, don't they?

CELIA

Shut up!

DANIEL

Life can be brutal, but we cope. We cope.

ON Daniel. Celia can be heard picking up her tune as she goes down the street.

EXT. PAUL'S STREET - DAY

Father James is walking down Paul's block. He checks the address. As someone comes out of the building, he dashes in. The exiting tenant smiles at the priest.

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Paul looks tired. He hears the buzzer and peeks through the peephole to see who it is. He reluctantly opens the door.

PAUL

Hello.

FATHER JAMES

May I come in?

Paul opens the door wider and let's Father James enter.

FATHER JAMES (cont'd)

You've been to my church.

PAUL

Yes. What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES
We need to talk.

PAUL
About what?

FATHER JAMES
Lori.

PAUL
Is she all right?

FATHER JAMES
What's the game? You weren't lovers with
her son.

PAUL
Is that idea so repellent to you?

FATHER JAMES
No. It's just that he wasn't gay. I
know that for a fact. Why that absurd
lie?

PAUL
(getting nervous)
I think it best if you just go.

FATHER JAMES
Answer me!

PAUL
(after a moment, quietly)
To comfort her.

FATHER JAMES
Why you?

PAUL
Please go. You don't want to know.

Father James just stares at Paul.

PAUL (cont'd)
(beginning to spin out of
control)
I had to see what she was like.
Wanted to know what kind of home he came
from. At first I wanted to hate her.

FATHER JAMES
Why?

Paul is now losing it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL

Thought if I hated her, it would be easier for me. But I couldn't. I couldn't hate her.

Paul begins rocking himself. Pacing. He's getting more and more manic. Father James has no idea what is happening.

PAUL (cont'd)

I used to be a good person. I used to be happy. I was. People liked me. Wanted to be around me. My phone...it was always ringing. Then the losses began. All my friends. One on top of another and another and another... I just left one today. Bradley. He'll be dead by tonight. And my lover. We were supposed to be forever. I thought I was strong. Be the perfect little caregiver. And I thought I could sit in one hospital room after another and go to one funeral after another and still survive with love in my heart. But love gets eaten away by anger. Waves and waves of it. But that's no way to live, is it? I can't keep living that way. I have to do something good. I remember good. I thought... bring her comfort. Bring a fragment of relief to her day. Be of service to her.

FATHER JAMES

(jumping in)

But why to her?!?

PAUL

Maybe then...maybe...I would be granted a dreamless night. To be responsible for someone's lifelong suffering...Have you any idea what that's like?

FATHER JAMES

Oh my God. What are you talking about?

Paul falls to his knees.

PAUL

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned...

FATHER JAMES

Get up!

Father James pulls Paul to this feet. Paul is like a crumpled rag doll.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER JAMES (cont'd)
This is not a confessional!

PAUL
(holding himself against the
counter)
My last confession was...years and years
and years...

FATHER JAMES
Stop it!

PAUL
I killed him! I watched his blood...his
life...

They just stare at each other. Paul embraces himself as if
he is freezing. Father James finds a chair, sits, and looks
away from Paul. After a few moments...

FATHER JAMES
Oh dear Jesus.

PAUL
That alley...after Kevin died...I had to
go there. I just wanted to be touched
again. Held. There I could forget. For
a moment. You had no history there. You
were only a cute face...an inviting
mouth...

FATHER JAMES
Why did you kill that boy!!!

PAUL
The night I met him...

FATHER JAMES
(loudly, to both Paul and
himself)
Will! His name was Will.

PAUL
That alley was empty and way too real...

DISSOLVE TO FLASHBACK:

EXT. IN FRONT OF TRUCKING - NIGHT

Paul, looking lonely, is walking by Trucking. He stops.
Then walks back and around Trucking to the alley.

EXT. THE ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Razor-sharp images. Colors intense. Muted noise and music are heard coming from the bar. A young man, WILL, of twenty or twenty-one, is there peeing. Paul stands away from him, but tries to catch his eye. He does this awkwardly, almost shyly. Will gives him an almost smile. The young guy is drunk.

Will finishes peeing and zips up.

WILL
(grabbing his crotch)
You like this, fag?

PAUL
I'm sorry, I'm not into that, kid.

WILL
Not into what?

PAUL
S/M talk. Have a good night.

WILL
But you're into dick, aren't you? You'd
love mine in your fairy mouth, wouldn't
you?

Paul starts to head out. Will goes over and shoves him.

PAUL
Get away from me, please!

Will shoves him again...harder. Paul instantly slaps Will.
Will laughs.

WILL
The little girl slapped me. Oooh, how
that hurt. You fucking faggot!

Will gets in Paul's face. Paul pushes Will away. Will
violently grabs Paul.

WILL (cont'd)
This is how a man slaps.

Will gives Paul a couple of violent slaps. Will is still
laughing, still calling him names. Paul is defending
himself.

The CAMERA pulls away from them, but still remains on them.
Daniel is behind some trashcans and watching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Now from Daniel's POV.

Suddenly Paul flies into a rage and begins slapping and punching, taking Will totally by surprise. Will keeps laughing. Will is stronger. Bigger. However, Will is thrown off balance by one of Paul's attacks. He falls. The SOUND of his head falling on a rock is heard.

CLOSE-UP of Will's head. Blood is coming from beneath it. His nose is also bleeding. His eyes look vague. Paul does not notice and immediately jumps on him, grabs his shoulders, and bangs Will's head on the rock. Was he already dead before Paul jumped on him?

CLOSE-UP of both of them. Paul looks down at Will. Will is dead. Paul starts moaning like a wounded animal and begins rocking back and forth. He gently starts wiping the blood from Will's face as if by cleaning him up he will bring him back to life. He is treating the dead boy as if he were a lover.

PAUL

(quietly)

Wake up. Please. Wake up.

Daniel starts moving towards them. Paul hears him and suddenly runs.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. PAUL'S APARTMENT

Both Paul and Father James are totally silent. Then...after moment...

PAUL

I'm going to the police?

FATHER JAMES

No.

PAUL

Should I confess to Lori first?

FATHER JAMES

No. Please don't. You can't.

PAUL

Why not?

FATHER JAMES

It would only create more suffering for her. She'd blame herself even more.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER JAMES (CONT'D)
Let her keep the fantasy of a sweet son
and a boy who loved him.

PAUL
But I have to be punished.

FATHER JAMES
You already are.
(after a moment)
It might have been an accident.

PAUL
Maybe. Maybe not.
(really meaning it)
What should I do?

Silence. Then...

FATHER JAMES
You'll do what I say?

PAUL
Yes.

DISSOLVE TO:

FATHER JAMES (V.O.)
You'll see her one more time and...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EARLY EVENING

The coffee shop is sparsely populated. Paul is picking with his fork at a piece of an intensely chocolate cake. Lori is watching him. They are pretending to be comfortable with each other.

PAUL
It's good. Are you sure you wouldn't
like a bite?

LORI
Positive.

PAUL
I can get you a fork.

LORI
No thanks. Will loved his sweets.

Paul tries to smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL

(after an awkward moment)
You know, I was probably your son's only
experience. He was experimenting. Young
people do that. He might not have been
gay.

LORI

It doesn't matter, does it?

PAUL

No. It really doesn't. He said...if you
knew about us, you'd probably laugh.

LORI

(smiling)
Laugh?

PAUL

That it wouldn't be a problem.

LORI

No...it shouldn't be, should it?

PAUL

He said you were smart and loving.

LORI

Really?

PAUL

Oh yeah. I envied him being raised by
you. He loved you.

LORI

Thank you.

They sit in silence for a moment.

PAUL

I'm going to leave the city. Too many
sad memories.

LORI

I might be leaving too. Florida.
Another of life's absurd surprises.

PAUL

It might not be so bad.

LORI

You haven't been there, have you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

More people are entering the coffee shop. Lori is looking around. Then...

LORI (cont'd)

I'll miss you.

The CAMERA tracks back leaving Paul and Lori in a long-shot. They are awkwardly saying good-bye to each other.

EXT. JERSEY CITY STREET - ACROSS FROM THE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Daniel is watching them.

Paul comes out into the street. He looks a bit unsteady. Daniel crosses the street and starts following Paul at a distance. Paul turns a corner onto a quiet street.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUOUS

Paul, feeling weak, sits on a stoop in order to collect himself. Daniel is on the corner. He makes a decision and approaches Paul.

DANIEL

Hello.

PAUL

(getting up)

I don't have any money.

DANIEL

Did you hear me asking for any?

PAUL

Sorry.

Paul gets up and starts walking away. Daniel walks with him.

DANIEL

Don't you remember who I am? I'm Daniel.
From AA.

PAUL

(not really remembering)

Yes.

Paul walks a little faster trying to get away from Daniel.

DANIEL

I'm glad you remember.

PAUL

I really don't have time to talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

Give me a moment please. I deserve it.

Paul reaches into his pocket and hands Daniel some change.

PAUL

Here...take this.

Paul walks quickly ahead of Daniel.

DANIEL

I don't want this. How dare you?

Daniel throws the change at Paul. Paul picks up his pace.

DANIEL (cont'd)

(following Paul)

I've never asked much of you. Only that
you see me. That you look at me with
kindness. I'm not crazy. I'm your
witness!

Paul stops, turns, and faces Daniel.

DANIEL (cont'd)

(quietly)

I saw you kill the boy. I saw it all.
And I described you all wrong to the
police. And they believed me.

PAUL

Why'd you do that?!?

DANIEL

Because I decided to love you.

PAUL

What do you want?

DANIEL

Nothing. I love you.

PAUL

How could you love me? You don't even
know me.

DANIEL

I know you better than you think. I know
the dead boy haunts you. I know you
follow the mother. I've been following
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL
(defeated and meaning it)
Go to the police. Turn me in.

Paul turns from Daniel and starts walking away. Daniel follows him.

DANIEL
I'm not blackmailing you.

PAUL
Then what do you want?

DANIEL
You're lonely like I am. All I want from you is a thank you.

PAUL
It would have been better if I were caught.

DANIEL
That's not what I want to be thanked for.

PAUL
Then for what?

DANIEL
For my love. How many more times in your life will you be loved?

Three GUYS walk by. They are suspicious of Daniel.

ONE GUY
(to Paul)
Is he bothering you?

PAUL
No.

DANIEL
(angrily)
We're friends.

ANOTHER GUY
Really?

They continue on their way, chuckling to each other. Paul and Daniel are walking in the other direction.

PAUL
Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANIEL

I'm Daniel. A street person. Your witness. The man who loves you. We all need someone to love. And I chose you.

PAUL

But why?

DANIEL

Because you needed it. I used to see you in the alley and wonder what is a handsome boy like you was doing in a dark alley. If I were you, I'd be at parties. I'd be wanting to get me a boyfriend. Once in the alley I got so close to you that I could smell your skin. I loved the smell. This is nice...our talking like this.

They walk for a couple of moments in silence.

PAUL

How'd you end up on the street?

DANIEL

(sarcastically)

As a baby, I always dreamed of it. It's a "spontaneous" kind of life.

PAUL

How stupid! I'm sorry.

DANIEL

No, I am. It's just that nobody ever asked me before. Thank you. Things happen. A dead mother. A dead brother. An asshole stepfather. Lots and lots of pills. Wanting to disappear. Things happen.

Paul stops as does Daniel. Paul doesn't really know what to say.

PAUL

(after a moment)

Let me buy you dinner.

He reaches into his pocket.

DANIEL

(instantly)

You mean give me money for dinner or take me to a restaurant?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

PAUL
(after a moment)
Take you to a restaurant.

They start walking again.

DANIEL
Really?

PAUL
Really. What kind of food would you
like? Chinese, Thai, Italian, French...

DANIEL
Steak and fries! Is that okay?

PAUL
Sure. Daniel...

DANIEL
I like you saying my name.

PAUL
I've stopped following the mother.

DANIEL
(after a moment)
And you want me to stop following you.

PAUL
Please.

They walk in silence for a few moments.

DANIEL
I will. Jesus, I feel sad right now.

PAUL
So do I.

DANIEL
At dinner...let's just talk about happy
stuff.

PAUL
Whatever you say.

DANIEL
Tell stories from our lives...but only
happy ones.

INT. AN UPSCALE RESTAURANT - LATER

Paul and Daniel are seated at their table. Daniel is still looking around like a kid in a candy store. He is eating his steak slowly, cherishing it. However, he notices a few people staring at him. Paul seems somewhere else as he picks at his fish.

DANIEL

(looking around, to no one)
I bet these are the lucky people.

PAUL

What?

DANIEL

(to Paul)
I'm glad I went to the shelter last night. I was able to shower and spruce myself up. I wish I could do that every night. Sometimes it's too crowded or there's somebody there you don't want to see. I don't smell, do I?

PAUL

No.

DANIEL

It's my clothes. I just wish some of these people would stop looking at me.

PAUL

Fuck them.

DANIEL

You mean it?
(in a low whisper)
Fuck all of you.
(to Paul)
This is like going to the movies. A total vacation from life. I've only had one vacation. The awful Mr. Cory took me to Key West.

PAUL

Who was that?

DANIEL

Just a man I was with for a while. Ever been there?

PAUL

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

The place was pretty.

PAUL

My sister and I only had one vacation when we were kids. It was just before our parents were killed. Car accident. Five days in New Mexico. We ended up in Questa...a one-street town. It was surrounded by mountains. The Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The blood of Christ. It was sunset. I thought I was in a movie.

DANIEL

A movie man. I love it.

PAUL

I wonder if over the years I've made the place more special or more beautiful than it really is. But in my imagination there's nothing like it. The colors..the light. When I was a little boy and got scared, I used to close my eyes and picture it.

DANIEL

(not knowing what to say,
finally)

It sounds nice. This steak is wonderful.

They smile at each other.

DANIEL (cont'd)

I used to love the movies. My brother knew that. And whenever he had money ...he'd take me. He'd take me to movies I liked. Old ones. Musicals. Comedies. With Doris Day. Shit like that. I loved those movies. My brother never got it. But it was his gift. His gift to me. Sometimes he'd sleep through the movies. But he never criticized them. "Wasn't that great?" That's all he would ever say. "Wasn't that great?"

Paul looks at Daniel with so much warmth.

DANIEL (cont'd)

(after a moment)

What are you thinking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL

About you. And why after all these years I'm thinking about Questa. I wonder if it's still the same. It was so peaceful. Maybe I should go there. I told the mother I was leaving the city. I can't afford my apartment anymore since I gave up my job. I only have my sister here. And she's got her own family now. You know, I think I might just go there.

DANIEL

To do what?

PAUL

To find if there's any good left in me.

DANIEL

You're looking to be invisible.

PAUL

Is that bad?

DANIEL

It's sounding like the streets.

PAUL

Maybe. Maybe not.

DANIEL

Don't be enamored with the streets.

PAUL

Couldn't it be a beginning?

DANIEL

We were just supposed to be telling happy stories. Are we out of them?

PAUL

(after a moment)
I'll think of one.

DANIEL

Why don't we just sit here and be quiet.
Okay?

PAUL

Whatever you say. Quiet.

They sit. Paul puts his hand on top of Daniel's and leaves it there for a moment and then takes it away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Daniel then looks around the room. Indeed the patrons do look like the "lucky" ones...or perhaps, they are just enjoying being alive. They are chatting, drinking, eating.

As the CAMERA pulls away from Paul and Daniel the crowd seems to be swallowing them up as they sit quietly at their table.

THE END