

"DON'T TELL TO FRIEND"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - EARLY MORNING

A blue car moves along the highway. We follow it as it passes by a small town, woody hills and green meadows.

INT. BLUE CAR (MOVING) - EARLY MORNING

A rock 'n' roll song plays on the radio. The driver taps on the steering wheel in the rhythm of the drums. He's NIGEL SWINHAM, 25, white, athletic. The young man sitting next to him follows the rhythm by tapping his foot and playing an imaginary bass guitar. He is JAN FREDRIKSEN, 25, white and athletically built. Sitting on the back seat is TOMMY WORKINGHAUS, 25, white, athletic. He plays an imaginary solo on a guitar with grand passion, keeping his eyes closed. On the seat next to him we can see neatly folded pairs of pants, and hanging on the car door are three dress jackets.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MORNING

The blue car speeds up below the rising sun.

INT. BLUE CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Quiet. Nigel contemplatively stares straight ahead. Jan watches the scenery passing by. Tommy carefully caresses a jacket with one finger.

NIGEL

(pensive)

Unbelievable.

JAN

A silly situation.

TOMMY

These things happen.

JAN turns towards TOMMY and stares at him for a couple of seconds, then turns around again without uttering a word.

NIGEL

(pensive)

I feel... I don't know... I wasn't ready for this.

JAN

Understandable. The big stupid surprise.

(He takes a deep breath then cont'd)

CYDER...well, he doesn't know... luckily.

TOMMY  
 (naively)  
 True love can get past something  
 like this.

JAN turns towards TOMMY and stares at him.

JAN  
 (to TOMMY)  
 Just watch the jackets.

NIGEL  
 We should have a rule for  
 situations like these. A simple  
 rule... like... like...  
 (whack)  
 Don't tell a friend.

JAN  
 That's good!  
 (cont'd suspiciously)  
 Although...

NIGEL  
 Although what?

JAN  
 Although that's not all. We need  
 another rule.

NIGEL  
 What rule?

JAN  
 In case our friend ever finds  
 out...

NIGEL  
 Oh, that's simple. Refer to rule  
 number one.

JAN  
 Refer to rule number one?

NIGEL  
 Yeah. You shrug your shoulders  
 and explain that you can't tell  
 something like that to a friend.

JAN  
 That's good!  
 (quietly)  
 Don't tell a friend.

NIGEL  
 Don't tell a friend.

TOMMY

But...

JAN

But what?

TOMMY

But... if one of us should find himself in a similar situation...

JAN

(laughing self-  
confidently)

That could never happen to me.

NIGEL

Everything's possible...

JAN

Not with me, Dude!

NIGEL

If one of us should find himself in a situation like this, he should bite the bullet and remember rule number one.

JAN

So the same rule applies - Don't tell a friend?

NIGEL

Don't tell a friend!

TOMMY

Don't tell a friend!

EXT. JONES FAMILY HOME - DAY

Wedding party. In front of an affluent family home, there is a throng of well-dressed guests. There are rows of chairs and tables set on the lawn. The entire yard is decorated in flowers and balloons. The guests are talking and laughing, while the band at a small stage in the corner tunes up their instruments. Several boys and girls enthusiastically look at a large, partly cut wedding cake. The wind slowly blows away one of the balloons above them. The children spot the balloon and start running after it. A man, with grey mustache which make him resemble a walrus, holds a plate in his hand with a piece of cake on it. The children running after the balloon bump into him at the moment he brings the plate closer to his face to take a bite, splattering the cake all over his face.

INT. A ROOM WITH A BAR

Sitting at the bar, from left to right, are JAN, TOMMY and NIGEL. Through the window and the open doorway they watch the

children running after the balloon. Their eyes are drawn by a beautiful couple - a good looking young man and a lovely girl in a beautiful dress. The young man's hand is possessively wrapped around the girl's waist.

The young man is CYDER JONES, 25, white, athletic. The girl beside him is his bride Cynthia, 24, white, smiling happily. JAN raises his glass and waits for NIGEL and TOMMY to do the same.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
NIGEL was right. You can't tell  
something like that to a friend...  
Cynthia and I...

TOMMY remembers:

INT. TOMMY'S STUDENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Cynthia and TOMMY are lying on a bed, covered up to their chins.

CYNTHIA (22)  
(post-coitally)  
Mmmm... that was sweet.... mmm...

TOMMY (22) stares at the ceiling in confusion.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Cynthia... Cynthia and JAN...

TOMMY remembers:

INT. CHARLY'S BAR - NIGHT

Approximately two dozen boys and girls are talking, laughing, tapping on the bar in the rhythm of the music. Nigel, Tommy, Jan and Cynthia sit at one of the tables. NIGEL and TOMMY are engaged in a lively discussion about last night's game, while Cynthia and Jan keep exchanging glances and touching under the table. Abruptly, Jan gets up, followed by Cynthia.

JAN (22)  
O.K. gang, we're gonna take a walk.

NIGEL (22)  
(sweetly-ironic)  
Have fun.

Cynthia and JAN start to walk out, hip to hip. NIGEL and TOMMY are watching them, smiling knowingly.

NIGEL (22)

Wanna have another drink before we go to CYDER's place?

TOMMY (22)  
Sure.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Cynthia... Cynthia and NIGEL...

TOMMY remembers:

INT. BLOOMER'S APARTMENT - PARTY - NIGHT

Twenty boys and girls are gyrating on the dance floor. TOMMY and JAN are dancing next to a couple of girls, trying to steer them towards the corner of the room. In the opposite corner, NIGEL and Cynthia are dancing, bodies pressed closely together. Their dancing becomes increasingly passionate and sexual. Shortly thereafter they move to the next room holding hands. TOMMY and JAN notice and jovially wink at each other.

PRESENT

INT. ROOM WITH THE BAR

JAN, TOMMY and NIGEL finish their drinks in one gulp, slamming the empty glasses on the bar.

NIGEL

(sadly)

What nonsense...

(cont'd angrily)

...where the hell had he been  
those days?

JAN

That had to have been his solo  
hunter phase... his intimate phase,  
as he referred to it. Yeah, that  
was it. When you think about it,  
there was a time when each one of  
us had gone missing for a while.  
CYDER had his solo phase

(turning to NIGEL)

, as did you, TOMMY went to his  
cousin's funeral in Detroit and  
wasn't coming back for a while; I  
had my quadriceps operation which  
landed me in hospital for three  
weeks...

TOMMY

(pensive)

But when we were all together, we  
had us some good times...

TOMMY remembers:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Four shadows stagger down the street. It's JAN (21), NIGEL (21), TOMMY (21) and CYDER (21). They come across a few parked cars. They stop and look at one of the cars, exchanging a few words, then continue down the street.

They stop next to a car and we can see it's a European model.

CYDER (21)

That's the one!

(cont'd resolutely)

Yup, that's it. A European car.

Expensive as all hell, but drives for shit. Let's give it a shower, boys...

CYDER starts unzipping his fly.

NIGEL (21)

And I was just trying to figure out where to tank out all that beer.

NIGEL unzips his fly and TOMMY and JAN follow his example.

Diagonally across the street from them, at the crossroads, a policeman shows up and sees four shadows loitering around the parked car.

POLICEMAN

(silently into a communicator)

Cross of 5th and Washington, officer in need of assistance. Possible 420, four suspects, could be armed.

COMMUNICATOR

(a garish female voice)

420? A car theft in progress? We're on our way!

The policeman carefully but determinedly pulls out his weapon, and crosses the street slightly bent down, approaching the four boys from behind.

JAN (21)

(deep relief)

Ohhhh, what a great feeling...

NIGEL (21)

This is probably the most expensive car wash job ever. A 120 bucks worth of beer...

The policeman is just a couple of steps away from their backs now.

JAN (21)

The best thing about beer is the full spurt. You can't postpone or stop it...

POLICEMAN  
(loudly)  
Police! Let me see your hands!

JAN (21)  
Oh no, oh no... Fuck!

POLICEMAN  
Hands up. I'm armed. I want to see your hands right now!

NIGEL (21)  
Oh no, sir, not now...

POLICEMAN  
I said right now!

Four shadows, their backs to the cop, slowly hold their hands up.

POLICEMAN  
(nervously)  
All right, now turn slowly, hands still up.

The four shadows turn around. At the same moment a police car arrives on the scene, their car lights washing over the four boys. We see four boys with their backs turned, hands held high up in the air, and two black policewomen laughing their asses off at the sight.

PRESENT

INT. ROOM WITH THE BAR

JAN, TOMMY and NIGEL sit at the bar. Their glasses are full again.

NIGEL  
(optimistically)  
When this passes, we'll go up to the lake, have ourselves a nice weekend of fishing.

JAN  
Guys... I'm sorry, but I'm gonna have to pass. My company just opened the Boston office and...

NIGEL  
(interrupting)  
And they had to send you?

JAN  
(cont'd)  
...it's only for a couple of months, and then we go back to normal.

NIGEL

O.K. You got it. Let's have another and go congratulate the happy couple.

All three of them get up, finish their drinks in one gulp and bang the glasses onto the bar.

NIGEL

Let's go!

EXT. JONES FAMILY HOME - DAY

On the lawn, CYDER and Cynthia are accepting congratulations. JAN, TOMMY and NIGEL approach them, smiling. JAN reaches towards Cynthia and they share an understanding look. TOMMY shakes her hand and nods to her as if they are exchanging a secret. NIGEL hugs her and shares a knowing look.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And thus went the first member of our legendary 4x400 relay team.

TOMMY remembers:

EXT. TRACK FIELD - DAY

Four boys in track suits stand around after the race, a couple of them bent at the waist, resting their hands on their knees, breathing heavily. It's JAN (19), NIGEL (19) and TOMMY (19). Next to them is their coach, baseball cap on and a stop watch hanging around his neck, holding a piece of paper in his right hand.

COACH

(with disappointment)

Not good. We have to work on handing over the baton. We're losing a second per lap because of poor hand-over.

TOMMY (19)

(short-winded)

It would be better if...

PRESENT

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

I went on just like before CYDER's wedding. I was working...

INT. EXACTMARKETACT COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

We see a glass door with three names on it: Harvey Senton, Douglas Bloomefeld and TOMMY Workinghaus. Next to each name there is a sign saying «analyst».

The office is filled with shelves full of folders, three large desks with two monitors on each one, and a serious young man sitting behind each desk, seemingly deeply focused on what they are working on. One of the serious young men is TOMMY. We see that on one of his monitors there is a naked girl, and on the other the stock exchange report. In front of the monitor is a folded up newspaper with a crossword puzzle TOMMY is working on.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
...NIGEL and I hung out...

INT. CITY BAR - NIGHT

A raucous group of people is watching a basketball game. TOMMY and NIGEL are drinking beer, ties off, cheering. Sitting on a bar next to them is a number of empty beer bottles.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
And then came the envelope from  
Boston.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

TOMMY enters the apartment, untying his tie, lifting several envelopes from the floor. He opens one and takes out a card and reads it. A phone rings. TOMMY picks up the receiver.

TOMMY: HEY NIGEL...

NIGEL (PHONE)  
(excitedly)  
Did you get the invitation to  
JAN's wedding?

TOMMY  
I'm holding it in my hand as we  
speak.

NIGEL (PHONE)  
(excitedly)  
And do you find something odd?

TOMMY turns the card around in his hand, studying it.

TOMMY  
(uncertainly)  
It was printed on recycled paper?

NIGEL (PHONE)  
No, you idiot! The name! Look at  
the bride's name and read it out  
loud!

TOMMY  
(heavy spelling)  
L o r i n B a t e r s b y.

NIGEL (PHONE)  
Lorin! You remember Lorin?

TOMMY  
Lorin, Lorin...  
(cont'd shocked)  
the Lorin?

NIGEL (PHONE)  
Yes, the Lorin! This is a disaster.

TOMMY  
Lorin from your solo phase?

NIGEL (PHONE)  
Correction. First CYDER's, then  
mine. Unbelievable.

TOMMY  
These things happen.

EXT. FREDRIKSEN FAMILY HOME - DAY

Wedding party. In front of the house we see a number of well-dressed men and women. There are neat rows of chairs and tables set on the lawn. On a small plateau next to a white tent a band is tuning up their instruments. A mother is breastfeeding her baby. An older woman is showing her friend photos of her daughter's wedding. A man is explaining another gentleman the correct golf swing. He doesn't see a liveried waiter carrying a large tray filled with drinks. At the moment the waiter approaches, he swings his imaginary club, hitting the drink tray. One glass flies high in the air.

INT. AN IMPROVISED BAR IN THE TENT

Sitting at the bar from left to right are CYDER, TOMMY and NIGEL.

CYDER  
(gloomily)  
It happens. It's silly, but things  
like this happen from time to  
time... but you cannot tell  
something like that to a friend.  
That simply isn't done.

NIGEL and TOMMY nod in agreement, conspiratorially looking at each other, then lifting their glasses.

CYDER  
(repeating determinedly)  
You cannot tell something like  
that to a friend. It's not right.  
Don't tell a friend.

CYDER picks up his glass, the other two follow and they all drain them.

CYDER

Besides, where the hell had he  
been at the time to miss that?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Actually, it all happened that  
same night...

TOMMY remembers:

INT. CHARLY'S BAR - EVENING

Abruptly, JAN gets up, followed by Cynthia.

JAN (22)

O.K. gang, we're gonna take a walk.

NIGEL (22)

(sweetly-ironic)

Have fun.

Cynthia and JAN start to walk out, hip to hip. NIGEL and  
TOMMY are watching them, smiling knowingly.

NIGEL (22)

Wanna have another drink before  
we go to CYDER's place?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And so NIGEL and I left to go to  
CYDER's, who was in the middle of  
his solo hunter phase. That was  
like... well, if you ever saw  
«Frankie and... whatever-his-  
name-was»... it was kinda like  
that. CYDER would look wide-eyed,  
like that actor guy, Al De Niro...  
talking bullshit and then suddenly  
jumping into action. And it  
worked... at least on Lorin.

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF CYDER'S STUDENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

In the hallway in front of CYDER's apartment, NIGEL and TOMMY  
are crouching, peeping through the keyhole, elbowing each  
other and commenting on what they are seeing.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And so, while JAN was «walking»  
CYDER's future wife, CYDER was  
working on JAN's. Then NIGEL tried  
CYDER's solo hunter technique on  
Lorin while he was lying in the  
hospital after his surgery.

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF NIGEL'S STUDENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

In the hallway, CYDER and NIGEL are peeping through the keyhole, elbowing each other, commenting on what they see.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And me? I'm not part of this story.  
I'm not a big talker, nor can I  
put on the wide-eyed look like  
Robert Pacino. And frankly, Lorin  
wasn't exactly Michele Pfeiffer.

INT. IMPROVISED BAR IN THE TENT

Sitting at the bar from left to right are CYDER, TOMMY and NIGEL. CYDER stands up.

CYDER

Let's go, we should give our best  
wishes to the bride and groom.

EXT. FREDRIKSEN FAMILY HOME - DAY

On the lawn in front of the house, JAN Fredriksen and his bride Lorin are accepting congratulations from the wedding party. Lorin really doesn't look anything like Michelle Pfeiffer.

CYDER, TOMMY and NIGEL approach them and offer their best wishes.

NIGEL reaches towards Lorin and they share an understanding look. CYDER shakes her hand and nods to her as if they are exchanging a secret. TOMMY hugs her and shares a knowing look.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And thus went the second member  
of our legendary 4x400 relay team.

TOMMY remembers:

EXT. TRACK FIELD - DAY

Four boys in track suits stand around after the race, a couple of them bent at the waist, resting their hands on their knees, breathing heavily. It's JAN (19), NIGEL (19) and TOMMY (19). Next to them is their coach, baseball cap on and a stop watch hanging around his neck, holding a piece of paper in his right hand.

COACH (WITH DISAPPOINTMENT)

Not good.

(cont'd to TOMMY)

You hand over the baton as if you  
wanna ram it into his asshole!  
We're losing a second per lap on  
hand-over.

TOMMY (19)  
 (short-winded)  
 It would be better if...

Everybody looks at TOMMY.

TOMMY (19)  
 (cont'd)  
 : ...it would be better if each  
 had his own... baton?

PRESENT

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Life went on. I was working...

INT. EXACTMARKETACT COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

We see a glass door with three names on it: Harvey Senton, Douglas Bloomefeld and TOMMY Workinghaus. Next to each name there is a sign saying «analyst». The office is filled with shelves full of folders, three large desks with two monitors on each one, and a serious young man sitting behind each desk, seemingly deeply focused on what they are working on. One of the serious young men is TOMMY. We see that on one of his monitors there is a naked girl, and on the other the stock exchange report. In front of the monitor is a folded up newspaper with a crossword puzzle TOMMY is working on. Next to the monitor, there are a couple of banknotes under a plastic coffee cup. A phone rings.

TOMMY BOSS (PHONE)  
 Yes? What is your prediction  
 for next quarter's f.s.y. gains?

TOMMY hastily drops the newspapers and starts tapping on the keyboard. «Error system busy» appears on the monitor.

TOMMY  
 Just a second.

TOMMY raises the plastic cup and takes one of the banknotes. He looks at the last four digits on it. It's 1247.

TOMMY  
 (self-confidently)  
 12.47 percent.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 NIGEL and I hung out...

INT. MID-PRICED RESTAURANT - NIGHT

NIGEL, TOMMY and two girls are sitting at a table, talking and laughing.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
I was becoming familiar with the  
secrets of the job...

INT. EXACTMARKETACT COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

TOMMY is working on the crossword puzzle. A phone rings.

TOMMY BOSS (PHONE)  
Yes? What is your prediction  
for next quarter's f.s.y. gains?

TOMMY  
(cautiously)  
Between 0 and 30%... yes, I know  
that isn't exactly exact...

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
And then I met Shelly.

INT. MODERN ART GALLERY - EVENING

Large format paintings hang from the walls. TOMMY is looking around. A couple is engaged in a lively discussion about a painting. TOMMY stops in front of one particular painting. It is the biggest of those exhibited. One third of the canvas is painted lemon yellow, another one orange and the third part ultramarine. There are two sinuous lines drawn across the painting. TOMMY stares at the painting, spellbound.

From his right, a girl approaches him, stops next to him and starts examining the same painting. She is Shelly (25), a good looking blonde, a set designer at a nearby theater.

SHELLY  
(cordially to TOMMY)  
You like Laemon?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Shelly and I... we immediately  
understood each other...

TOMMY gingerly turns around and stares into her pretty eyes.

TOMMY  
Actually, I prefer this orange one.

Shelly looks at him for a couple of seconds.

SHELLY (WITH A SMILE)  
No, not lemon. I meant the artist,  
L a e m o n. This is his painting.

TOMMY  
Oh... Laemon  
(nods approvingly)  
Well, he certainly doesn't skimp  
on paint.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Shelly was a set designer at a theater. Her interests were varied... she enjoyed things like... philosophy and all that jazz...

INT. SHELLY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

We see a pleasantly furnished apartment with several colorful details. TOMMY sits on a couch with folded up newspapers in his lap, working on a crossword puzzle. Shelly is digging through the book shelf, picking up a book, looking at the title and then returning it on the shelf. She picks up the next one and we can tell by the expression on her face that is what she was looking for.

SHELLY

(satisfied)

There it is.

She sits in an armchair gracefully folding her legs next to her.

SHELLY

(to TOMMY)

So, what are your thoughts on Schwartzkoepfing's cyclical transcendence of the collective?

TOMMY

Errr...

SHELLY

(enigmatically)

Was he thinking about what Jung will later refer to as 'collective unconscious'?

TOMMY

(desperately)

Mmmm...ah...

SHELLY

(cont'd deepening)

Or was he simply building on Raidsttatpfulger's theory of mankind as an ascending coil... which represses its spirituality proportionally to its material ascension?

TOMMY

(desperately)

Errr... frankly...

SHELLY

What is his position?

TOMMY  
 (slight panic)  
 Well... you see... in my... in my world...

SHELLY  
 (suspiciously)  
 Yes?

TOMMY  
 In my world you just come out and  
 ask a person what he meant...  
 (with relief)  
 and then you know for sure.

SHELLY  
 (looking directly at  
 TOMMY)  
 Ask a person? Ask him?

TOMMY  
 Of course. He should know what he  
 meant.

SHELLY  
 (sarcastically)  
 I don't think that'll work.

TOMMY  
 Why not?

SHELLY  
 Well, he died more than a hundred  
 years ago.

TOMMY  
 (shrugs his shoulders)  
 Well, these things happen.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 What you certainly wouldn't hold  
 against Shelly was her body.

INT. SHELLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

TOMMY is lying on the bed, with Shelly sitting naked next to  
 him, about to get up.

SHELLY  
 (nervously)  
 Turn around, please.

TOMMY  
 But...

SHELLY  
 (persistently)  
 Turn around, please.

TOMMY

But we've just...

SHELLY

I know what we've just done, but dressing is something very intimate and I don't want you watching me while I do it.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

She'd gotten that from some movie and was very insistent. But...

INT. SHELLY'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER EVENING

TOMMY is lying on his back, Shelly sitting naked next to him, about to get up.

SHELLY

(nervously)

Turn around, please.

TOMMY

Right away, darling.

TOMMY turns around, lying on his stomach. When Shelly stands up, he pulls a small mirror from under the pillow. The mirror fits perfectly into his palm, and we can see a lovely female body in the mirror.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

But I saw the same movie...

(cont'd)

Life with Shelly consisted of many different activities.

INT. THEATER - EVENING

In the half-light of the theater, TOMMY sits, staring blankly at the stage. On his left, a young couple is enthusiastically commenting what is happening on stage. On his right, two girls are mesmerized by the same thing. In the row above TOMMY's, everybody is focused with rapt attention on the stage. The same with the row below his. TOMMY continues to stare blankly, and we can see total bewilderment in his eyes. At the end of the play, the audience jumps to their feet, applauding. They are commenting enthusiastically, and nodding approvingly. TOMMY sits, staring blankly at the stage, then turns around and stares with bewilderment at the enthusiastic crowd.

INT. SHELLY'S APARTMENT - DAY

TOMMY opens the door and enters the apartment. He has to step over the breadboard of a new set design. He looks around, trying to decide where to put his bag, but everything is full of fabric samples and cardboard pieces.

He sets his bag on the floor and takes off his coat, looking at the sketches hanging on the wall. They are full of surreal scenes. He takes his coat, steps over to the closet and tries to make room for it. A scary-looking puppet falls out of the closet, and hangs by its neck right in front of TOMMY's face. He recoils in shock, scared. The puppet looks eerily human. TOMMY knocks it down with disgust and steps all over it, shaking slightly.

TOMMY  
(nervously)  
Fucking hell!

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Who knows how long that would have lasted if... at that time, I adopted the habit of going out nights. I preferred 5 minutes of sleep in the morning to 5 minutes of smart advice in the evenings...

INT. SHELLY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Shelly sits on the couch in front of the TV and excitedly stares at it. On the screen we can see an older dark-skinned woman forcefully saying something sounding like the ultimate truth. This woman is Oprah Winfrey.

SHELLY  
(zealously)  
Hey, you have to hear this!

TV - OPRAH  
...don't forget, you have to drink 8 glasses of water each day...

In the bathroom, TOMMY is applying shaving cream.

SHELLY  
(imperatively)  
You have got to hear this...

TV-OPRAH  
Eight glasses of water is the daily minimum which protects your organism...

TOMMY  
(from the bathroom, shaving)  
Mmmm... puh...

SHELLY  
(disappointed)  
You really aren't interested in anything, are you?

TOMMY  
 (placatingly)  
 I'm just a grunt, Baby...

Sings softly to himself while shaving.

TOMMY  
 (cont'd)  
 ...just a grunt with a regular  
 job and a girl.

Shelly approaches the open bathroom door and watches TOMMY.

SHELLY  
 Sometimes you can really be a  
 jerk...  
 (angrily)  
 Look at me.

TOMMY  
 (watching is reflection  
 in the mirror)  
 You have to be thorough, that's  
 the secret to a good shave...

SHELLY  
 (angrily)  
 Look at me...

TOMMY turns around and faces her angry expression.

SHELLY  
 (angrily)  
 Is that what I am to you? A girl?  
 Just a girl? A skirt?

TOMMY  
 (placatingly)  
 No, honey, I didn't mean...

SHELLY  
 (furiously)  
 You self-absorbed bastard. Get out.

TOMMY  
 (surprised)  
 Why? I'm shaving.

SHELLY  
 (furiously)  
 Get out!

TOMMY unwillingly leaves the bathroom.

SHELLY  
 Not so fast.  
 (furiously)  
 Get out of the apartment.

Shelly opens the apartment door. TOMMY raises his palms questioningly.

TOMMY

Honey...

SHELLY

(nervously)

Just get out!

TOMMY

(reasonably)

Look, I...

SHELLY

(hysterically)

Get the hell out!

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF SHELLY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

TOMMY gets out of the apartment, still sporting a thick coating of shaving cream on his face. He's not wearing a shirt. The door slams behind him and we can see him standing there, staring at the closed door.

TOMMY

(desperately)

Honey, I didn't mean anything by it... nothing at all.

SHELLY (OFF STAGE)

(hysterically through closed door)

Go away, you... you stamped all over Bobo, you asshole!

TOMMY

Who the hell is Bobo?

SHELLY

(weepy)

Bobo... my doll...

TOMMY

(lying)

I don't know what you're talking about...

(cont'd desperately)

Honey. Honey, its December...

(pleading)

At least give me my coat. It's snowing out.

(cont'd after a couple of seconds)

Honey, can you hear me?

SHELLY (OFF STAGE)  
 (commanding through  
 the door)  
 Move away!

Frightened, TOMMY steps back. The door opens, and a burgundy winter coat and a red wool cap get thrown through it.

EXT. ENTRANCE INTO THE BUILDING - NIGHT

It's a cold December evening. It's snowing slightly. A few people walk down the street in front of Shelly's building. A middle-aged gentleman carries a large package. He's walking carefully on the frozen sidewalk. A lady with an angry expression walks across the street yanking her fat eight-year-old son by the hand. After crossing the street, they walk for a few steps behind the gentleman with the package.

The doorway to the building opens and TOMMY walks out, wearing the burgundy coat and the red wool cap. His face is covered in shaving cream. The fat eight-year-old sees him and stops abruptly, yanking his mother's hand. He points his finger at TOMMY.

FAT EIGHT-YEAR-OLD  
 (impressed)  
 Look Mom! It's Santa!

TOMMY turns around and stares at the boy with enmity. The Mother, made to stop by the yank on her hand, turns around and slaps her son. In the same moment, the man walking in front of them slips and falls, dropping the package. The Mother turns, dragging the boy by the hand and stepping forward, falling over the package lying on the floor.

TOMMY wraps himself more firmly in the coat and starts walking down the street, looking back to see the mother slapping her son.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Several passers-by carefully walk down the poorly lit street. It's still snowing slightly. TOMMY walks down the street, trying to remove the shaving creams from his face.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - NIGHT

TOMMY walks up to a building, climbing a few steps to the front door, going through the names written next to the buzzers.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Having friends is always nice.  
 Particularly in the big city..  
 especially in strange circumstances..  
 TOMMY pressed the buzzer next to  
 the name NIGEL Swinham.

NIGEL

Yes?

TOMMY

Hey, it's me, TOMMY.

NIGEL

What are you doing here at this time of night?

TOMMY

Let me in. I'm in trouble. Shelly threw me out.

NIGEL

(smiling)

Come up!

TOMMY opens the door and climbs up the stairs, still wiping the remains of the shaving cream off his face. Some of the cream dried up around his nostrils. He comes to the second floor.

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF NIGEL'S APARTMENT

NIGEL opens the door at the exact moment TOMMY steps onto the second floor. TOMMY spreads his hands and shrugs his shoulders. We can see his naked torso under the coat. NIGEL laughs.

NIGEL

Man, she got you good!

TOMMY walks up to him and NIGEL starts examining his friend's face. Some of the shaving cream has dried up around TOMMY's nostrils. NIGEL turns serious.

NIGEL

(worried)

Have you been sniffing coke?

TOMMY

(surprised)

Me? No!

TOMMY touches his cheek.

TOMMY

I was shaving. That's shaving cream.

NIGEL

(suspiciously)

Oh... Well, come on in.

INT. NIGEL'S APARTMENT

NIGEL

(quietly)

Listen, you've got the living room, so get comfortable... I've got someone here, a really smokin' chick, so we'll talk in the morning, OK?

Through the open door of the bedroom, TOMMY can glimpse a lovely pair of female legs and ass.

TOMMY

OK, Dude, no problem. You're a life-saver.

NIGEL

That's what friends are for. Have a drink and sleep tight, everything will seem better in the morning.

TOMMY walks into the living room, takes off his coat, gets a bottle, sits down on the couch and turns on the TV. He half-heartedly surfs the channels, and then stops. He wraps himself into a blanket and stares at the TV. Through the wall he can hear sounds of lovemaking and pre-orgasmic moans. TOMMY stares at the wall wide-eyed.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

That's how my relationship with Shelly ended. After that, I never shaved in the evening. Life went on. I worked...

INT. EXACTMARKETACT COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

TOMMY sits at his work desk. In front of him lies the folded-up newspaper with the crossword puzzle he is currently working on. The phone rings and TOMMY hastily picks up.

BOSS (PHONE)

BSI on PP for 2/3 is 4%?

TOMMY

Just a sec.

TOMMY goes through the data on his PC.

TOMMY

Yes, I just checked.

BOSS (PHONE)

You predicted 11%?

TOMMY

Mmmm... yes, but... less is better?

We can see TOMMY's colleagues looking at him strangely, and then exchanging sardonic looks.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
...NIGEL and I hung out...

INT. EXACTMARKETACT COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

TOMMY sits at his work desk and fills out the crossword puzzle. The phone rings. TOMMY hastily picks up the phone.

TOMMY  
Yes?

NIGEL (PHONE)  
Dude, it's springtime and the weather's supposed to be great this weekend. Are we going?

TOMMY  
To the lake?

NIGEL (PHONE)  
To the lake!

TOMMY  
(happily)  
Yes!

NIGEL (PHONE)  
I drive and you're taking care of the gear. Deal?

TOMMY  
Deal!

EXT. LAKE - MORNING

A blue car drives down the dusty road along the lake. It's a beautiful sunny day. The lakeshore is partly covered by overgrown shrubs and bushes, gradually turning into a forest. The car stops at the place where a trail connects the road with the lakeshore. A red car is parked nearby. TOMMY and NIGEL get out of the car, looking towards the lake and stretching.

TOMMY  
(happily)  
Check out that beauty!

He nods bright-eyed towards the lake. NIGEL starts pulling things out of the car - fishing gear, chairs, portable fridge, several packages of beer cans, a few more packages of beer and a final packet of beer.

NIGEL  
Get busy, we'll enjoy all this later!

TOMMY walks towards him and takes over part of the load, and they both walk through the bushes, down the trail, up to the shore. They put their stuff down and contentedly watch over the calm surface of the lake.

NIGEL  
(self-confidently)  
Watch out, fishies, for...

TOMMY  
(interrupts)  
Fish-death is here!

EXT. SHORELAKE - NOON

TOMMY and NIGEL are sitting in lawn chairs, both holding cans of beer. In front of them are fishing rods, the strings hanging into the lake. There's a bunch of empty beer cans under the chairs.

NIGEL  
(melancholically)  
This feels good. Really good.

NIGEL finishes the can, throws it under the chair and opens another one.

NIGEL  
How long does it take to form a  
nice beer belly?

NIGEL looks at TOMMY who also opens a new can.

NIGEL (TO TOMMY)  
Did your old man have a real beer  
belly?

TOMMY  
(thoughtfully)  
He used to drink the stuff like  
there was no tomorrow. He always  
said it was good for the kidneys.

NIGEL  
How did he die?

TOMMY  
(melancholically)  
His heart. He died healthy. The  
doctor said he'd never seen a  
dead man with healthier kidneys.

NIGEL  
(with respect)  
That's a good idea. Doing  
something for your kidneys.

They both drink out of their cans.

NIGEL  
 (tiredly)  
 I packed for four. I miss those  
 two airheads more than I expected.

NIGEL sighs, shakes his head and wiggles, searching for a  
 better position in his chair.

NIGEL  
 (cont'd sleepily)  
 It's stupid to feel guilty over  
 something you cannot control.  
 We'll drink their share for the  
 sake of good old times?

TOMMY  
 (sleepily)  
 Yes. For good old times and good  
 kidneys.

NIGEL  
 (sleepily)  
 I don't understand how people can  
 live outside the city. I always  
 experience a major energy loss  
 when I'm in the country.

TOMMY, with his eyes closed, tries to make himself more  
 comfortable in his chair, pushing empty cans around him.

TOMMY  
 (sleepily)  
 It's the fresh air, makes you  
 drowsy.

While getting comfortable, again pushes empty cans.

EXT. SHORELAKE - SUNSET

TOMMY and NIGEL are standing on the shore with fishing rods  
 in their hands.

NIGEL  
 (suspiciously)  
 If this lake has any fish...

TOMMY  
 We'll try other techniques tomorrow.

NIGEL  
 We have a tent and sleeping bags,  
 maybe we should try at night?

TOMMY  
 That would be great!

EXT. SHORELAKE NEXT DAY - NOON

TOMMY and NIGEL are standing on the edge of the lake, spinning. Behind them we see a little camp consisting of two tents, a little camp fire and two chairs. TOMMY pulls the rod and the string tightens.

NIGEL  
(excitedly)  
Yes! You got it!

TOMMY is reeling the string in, and then carefully pulls the rod. The rod is a bit twisted and it looks like TOMMY knows what he's doing.

NIGEL:  
We kick ass!

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
We met some interesting girls...

EXT. SHORELAKE - SUNSET

TOMMY and NIGEL are sitting in their chairs, drinking beer.

NIGEL  
I forgot the camera, of all things!

TOMMY  
This is worth a picture!

From the grove nearby you can hear voices and movement through the bushes. TOMMY and NIGEL look in that direction. Two girls dressed in fishing clothes come out into the open. They carry fishing rods, a portable fridge and a basket with a few large fish tales hanging out. When they see TOMMY and NIGEL, they stop.

TOMMY  
Hi!

GIRL #1  
Hi.

NIGEL  
(kindly)  
Hey girls, you don't happen to have a camera, not the mobile phone one, but quality stuff? I forgot mine, and we want a memento of today's catch.

GIRL #2  
Sure!

The girls come closer, put down their gear, and take the camera out of their backpacks.

GIRL #2  
It's digital, so I can e-mail it  
to you?

NIGEL  
Thanks. Let me just get my trophy.

TOMMY takes a few steps towards the net that's in the water.  
Girl #1 looks at what TOMMY takes out.

GIRL #1  
(with confusion)  
That's it?

TOMMY  
(proudly)  
That's it! Always complaining of  
size, huh?

Photo: NIGEL and TOMMY laughing, holding a fish. It's very  
small and you can barely see it from their fingers.

The girls laugh and approve. NIGEL and TOMMY proudly shake  
hands for the next photo. The girls find it amusing. TOMMY  
reaches down and takes a few beer cans out of the water. He  
hands them to the girls.

TOMMY  
(to the girls)  
Fisherman's friend? The girls  
accept, laughing.

EXT. SHORELAKE - NIGHT

A nice campfire sheds light on four shadows sitting around  
the fire, talking and laughing.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
We met some more interesting  
girls...

INT. BAR - NIGHT

TOMMY at the bar holding a large glass of beer and watching  
the scene in front of him. NIGEL is talking to two girls  
dressed in leather jackets and pants. The girls look  
aggressive and one of them gives NIGEL the finger. TOMMY  
spills beer all over his pants.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
And some more...

INT. ANOTHER BAR - NIGHT

TOMMY is sitting at the bar holding a large glass of beer  
and watching the scene in front of him.

NIGEL talks to two good looking girls with nice smiles. NIGEL turns to TOMMY.

NIGEL (TO THE GIRLS)  
My friend TOMMY. These are  
Elizabeth and Lora.

TOMMY leaves the glass at the bar and holds out his hand. He looks at Elizabeth with interest. She's plain, skinny, white, 25, with strong features.

TOMMY  
Nice to meet you.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
That's how I met Elizabeth.

NIGEL  
Want to grab a light dinner?

INT. MODERATELY EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cozy restaurant with a not so quiet clientele. TOMMY sits at the table, on his right is Laura, and across from them are NIGEL and Elizabeth. The table is full of food served in nice little containers, and wine. NIGEL and Lora converse quietly while TOMMY calmly looks at Elizabeth.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Elizabeth... Elizabeth and I...  
we immediately clicked.

ELIZABETH (TO TOMMY)  
You like Liszt?

TOMMY  
With parmesan and radicchio?

Elizabeth stares at TOMMY. NIGEL starts to laugh. Lora can't help it, she starts laughing too.

NIGEL  
Oh, what he can blunder out...

ELIZABETH (TO TOMMY)  
Liszt? The composer?

TOMMY  
I thought it was a salad.

TOMMY points his finger at the container on the table.

ELIZABETH  
I play the violin...

TOMMY  
 (interrupting  
 cheerfully)  
 A wonderful instrument!

TOMMY imagines: A little club with a cheerful crowd. A band is on stage. Banjo, acoustic guitar and violin. A blonde plays a solo on the violin. It's Alison Krauss performing "Will There Be Any Stars".

ELIZABETH  
 (continues)  
 ...I play at a symphony orchestra.

TOMMY  
 (cheerfully)  
 Great! I love music!

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Living with Elizabeth was...well,  
 it was music..

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TOMMY is preparing dinner in the kitchen. He chops vegetables and puts them into a bowl. We hear a creepy, high-pitched creek. TOMMY shudders and looks towards where it's coming from. It's Elizabeth, tuning her violin in the next room.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 ...and more music...

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - ANOTHER EVENING

TOMMY is preparing dinner. He chops vegetables and puts them into a bowl. We hear a multiple creepy, high-pitched tone. TOMMY shudders and looks towards where the tone is coming from. It's Elizabeth and her friend Ethel tuning their violin and cello.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Liszt was not a salad dish, but  
 still managed to become an  
 integral part of dinner..

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

TOMMY and Elizabeth are sitting at the table having dinner. The stereo is playing the beginning of Liszt's «Hungarian Rhapsody». We can see TOMMY, with a queasy expression on his face, holding his stomach.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 ...life with Elizabeth also included  
 various activities..

## INT. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

TOMMY sits in the half-light of the concert hall, staring intently at the stage. The orchestra is playing the last few measures of Ravel's "Bolero". Two girls sitting on TOMMY's right are listening in rapture, with their eyes closed. TOMMY looks around nervously. On his left, a gentleman and his wife are raptly listening to the variations of the theme. Something in TOMMY's eyes is clearly telling us that this kind of music and these reactions of the crowd make him suspicious and nervous. The music ends. Three seconds later, everyone's on their feet, applauding furiously. TOMMY still sits slightly bowed and nervously looks around.

## INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

TOMMY is chopping vegetables in the kitchen. We hear the sound of the violin playing.

ELIZABETH (OFF STAGE)  
(proudly)  
Hey! You've got to hear this!

Elizabeth continues to play the short, high-pitched notes.

ELIZABETH (OFF STAGE)  
Come on! Listen!

TOMMY  
(morosely)  
Right away, honey.

TOMMY grumpily wipes his hands on an apron and goes to the next room. He finds Elizabeth sitting with her violin in her lap, rifling through some sheet music. She raises her head and looks at him with pride shining in her eyes.

ELIZABETH  
Listen carefully!

She carefully sets her violin under her chin, looks TOMMY straight in the eyes, and starts playing a series of short, high-pitched but muffled notes. She lowers her violin and looks at TOMMY expectantly.

ELIZABETH  
(with contentment)  
This is it, isn't it? Staccato,  
but muffled like gentle raindrops...  
We can see a total lack of  
understanding in TOMMY's eyes.

TOMMY  
Listen, I...

ELIZABETH  
 (cont'd dreamily)  
 ...like a joyful heart of a secret  
 lover...

TOMMY  
 (insecurely)  
 ... well, more like...

ELIZABETH  
 (bright-eyed)  
 ...towards the culmination of  
 emotions...

TOMMY turns around, sniffing the air.

TOMMY  
 (not listening)  
 Fuck it! The peppers!

TOMMY hurries towards the kitchen. Elizabeth looks after him with disappointment, then puts her violin down and goes after him. She finds him pouring wine into the dish. He turns around and sees Elizabeth.

TOMMY  
 (gratified)  
 I managed to save dinner!

TOMMY is serving dinner while Elizabeth fusses around the stereo.

TOMMY  
 (triumphantly)  
 Here you are, my lady, a modest  
 but savory meal.

Elizabeth sits at the table holding the stereo remote control in her hand. She tries the dish and approvingly nods her head.

ELIZABETH  
 Should I put some music on?

She points the remote control towards the stereo and presses the play button.

TOMMY  
 (calmly)  
 Sure.

The music starts. We can distinctly hear a banjo, a guitar and a violin. Elizabeth looks at TOMMY in shock.

ELIZABETH  
 (angrily)  
 You've been messing with the CDs  
 again.

The music continues and we can hear the lyrics: One summer day a stranger walked up to me and said: Hey, little angel, would you please tell me your name... Elizabeth shudders and looks pointedly at TOMMY.

ELIZABETH  
What the hell is this?

TOMMY  
Little Angels? Rhonda Vincent, of course.

Elizabeth angrily turns the music off.

ELIZABETH  
You don't understand...

TOMMY  
Yes, I do. It's about a little girl and a stranger who approaches her and...

ELIZABETH  
(cont'd)  
...what the words «taste in music» mean... This... this is... not music. Elizabeth's posture shows that she is struggling to find a reasonable explanation. TOMMY reluctantly nods his head.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR  
The next day... the next day...

INT. ELIZABETH'S APARTMENT - THE FOLLOWING EVENING

TOMMY is cleaning the Brussels sprouts, rolling them in flour and putting them in a bowl. We hear the sounds of a violin. It is the same staccato tune we have heard before. TOMMY reacts to the sound by clutching his stomach. The sounds stop and we can now hear a woman crying. TOMMY wipes his hands and heads toward the next room. He finds Elizabeth crying theatrically.

ELIZABETH  
(drying her tears)  
I just cannot get it right...

TOMMY  
(interrupting)  
You're just as good as you were yesterday...

ELIZABETH  
(cont'd)  
... I sound awful...

TOMMY  
 (cont'd)  
 ... perhaps better than yesterday...

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
 ...and instead of supporting me,  
 you are talking rubbish.

TOMMY  
 (reconcilably)  
 Honey, you know I'm always there  
 for you.

TOMMY stops and starts sniffing the air.

TOMMY  
 (nervously)  
 Fuck! The Brussels sprouts!

He hurries towards the kitchen.

ELIZABETH  
 (coolly)  
 No, you're always there for the  
 vegetables.

In the kitchen, TOMMY takes the pan off the stove, blows into the dish, and then notices Elizabeth entering the kitchen.

TOMMY  
 (proudly)  
 I managed to save dinner.

TOMMY is setting the table while Elizabeth putters nervously around the stereo. She stops and looks at TOMMY who is whispering softly to the Brussels sprouts.

ELIZABETH  
 (nervously)  
 You really are something else. A  
 partner is supposed to support  
 you, show understanding in  
 difficult times... make you feel  
 better when things are going wrong...

TOMMY  
 (hasn't registered  
 anything she just said)  
 Shall we have dinner?

ELIZABETH  
 (morosely)  
 OK. I'll put some music on.

With a frown, TOMMY watches as Elizabeth points the remote control towards the stereo. The music starts. A violin solo is just finishing, and DOC WATSON starts singing: I killed the girl I love, you see, because she would not marry me...

ELIZABETH  
 (surprised)  
 You messed with the CDs again?

Tommy shrugs his shoulders.

ELIZABETH  
 (cont'd)  
 ...what the hell is that ... what  
 the ...

TOMMY  
 (interrupting  
 respectfully)  
 It's DOC WATSON.

ELIZABETH  
 (moderately hysterical)  
 You just don't understand!

TOMMY  
 I understand, she refused to marry  
 him and he drew a knife...

ELIZABETH  
 No, you don't understand, I don't  
 want to listen to this kind of  
 music, I don't want it in the  
 house, I don't ...

Tommy gets up and carefully approaches her. Reaches out to hug her.

TOMMY  
 (placating her)  
 It's no big deal, honey, it's all  
 just music...

Tommy tries to kiss her gently on the cheek.

ELIZABETH  
 (hysterical)  
 It's all just music! You're  
 completely insane, I...  
 (continues in a  
 commanding tone while  
 his cheek touches hers)  
 ... don't touch me with that itchy  
 beard of yours! Do you think women  
 take pleasure in being scratched  
 by a sharp haired monster?!

Tommy pulls back scared.

TOMMY  
 (scared)  
 You know I don't shave in the  
 evenings...

ELIZABETH

(cont'd raging)

Shave at once! And, oh, what kind of crazy ass shirt are you wearing?! Orange and black! It's disgusting!

TOMMY

(placating her)

OK, honey, I'll go shave right now.

Tommy goes to the bathroom, unbuttons his shirt, flips the collar inwards and starts foaming his face. It feels good and he starts humming: "The very next day at half past four the sheriff walked right to my door..."

ELIZABETH

(raging)

Would you stop that horror, stop it ...

(dry tears)

I can't take it anymore, get out, go, get lost!

TOMMY

(stunned)

Look, sweetie, I ...

ELIZABETH

(commanding)

Get out!

Tommy reluctantly exits the bathroom.

ELIZABETH

(decision is entered)

Not so fast, mister. Get out of my apartment!

Elizabeth opens the door.

TOMMY

(desperately)

Look, honey, I didn't mean ...

ELIZABETH

(screaming)

Get out!

Tommy, bewildered, steps out of the apartment backwards. The door slams with a horrific bang. Tommy absent-mindedly wipes off the shaving cream off his face.

TOMMY

(three seconds after)

Honey, it's cold outside, won't you open the door?

ELIZABETH  
 (cruelly through doors)  
 Get lost!

Tommy wipes the cream off of his face using his sleeve.

TOMMY  
 (miserable)  
 Sweetie, won't you give me a coat?  
 It's December and it's cold out.

ELIZABETH  
 (sardonic through  
 doors)  
 Why don't you let your love for  
 country music keep you warm!

EXT. STREET -ENTRANCE TO ELIZABETH'S BUILDING-NIGHT

Rare passers-by move carefully on icy curb. It's snowing slightly. Two policemen sitting in a parked squad car eating doughnuts and glancing at a poorly lit street through steamy car windows. The building door opens and out comes Tommy. He wraps his arms around his shoulders and rubs them faced with the cold. The policeman in the passenger seat spots Tommy staggering down the street wearing nothing but an orange shirt with black stripes, all clenched with his arms around his shoulders. Tommy looks like a drug addict in withdrawal. The policeman sitting in the passenger seat wipes the steamy window and points Tommy out to the fellow officer in the driver's seat. The policeman driver starts the car and drives slowly behind Tommy. Then he speeds up and pulls over in front of Tommy just before an intersection. Tommy stops. The policeman in the passenger seat steps in front of Tommy.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
 (commanding)  
 Hold it, there, pal!

Tommy had already stopped and is looking confusedly at the two officers. We can see a lady with an ugly fat 9-year-old boy approaching from another street. It's the same lady and boy who witnessed Tommy's first "eviction". The policeman signals Tommy to turn around. Tommy is reluctant to do thus, so the policeman pushes him forward and, using his foot, brings him in the position to search him. He pats him down according to police procedure. He finds nothing.

POLICEMAN PASSANGER  
 Alright, now turn around slowly.

Tommy turns around and looks straight at the policeman. The policeman notices the residue of dried shaving cream around Tommy's nostrils.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
 Lift your head up!

Tommy lifts up his head confusedly. The lady and her son approach from another street.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
(to Tommy)  
Have you been snorting cocaine?

Ugly-fat-9-yearold boy sees Tommy and the policemen.

UGLY-FAT-9-YEAROLD BOY  
(impressed)  
Look, mom! Look, mom, they caught  
a drug dealer!

Ugly-fat-9-yearold boy gets yanked by his mother, but turns and looks at Tommy who is looking at him hatefully.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
(cont'd)  
Blow, ha? Doing good, are we?

TOMMY  
(weary)  
That's shaving cream.

Both policemen burst into laughter.

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
Well, we've got a real kidder on  
our hands!

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
(to fellow officer)  
Pass the drug test.

Policeman in the driver's seat takes a trumpet like object from the squad car and hands it to his fellow officer. Tommy shivers with cold and rubs his shoulders with his palms.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
(to Tommy)  
Blow!

Tommy blows into the trumpet and hands it back to the policeman. He reads the scale.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
It's negative.

Policeman gazes suspiciously at Tommy's face.

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
(to Tommy)  
Would you mind turning your head  
just a bit?

Tommy turns his head and the policeman thoroughly inspects his neck. He points his finger and turns to his fellow officer.

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
 (to fellow officer)  
 See, there's some behind his ear,  
 too. It is shaving cream.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
 (to Tommy)  
 Dude, what the fuck are you doing  
 walking around at night dressed  
 like that in the middle of winter?

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
 (interrupting)  
 And why haven't you shaved, given  
 all that shaving cream?

TOMMY  
 (miserable)  
 My girlfriend kicked me out of  
 the apartment just when I had  
 started shaving.

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
 (man solidarity)  
 That bitch!

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
 (angry)  
 You wouldn't treat a dog that way  
 in this cold ...

Policeman driver spits on the street.

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
 (cont'd)  
 : ... Slut!

POLICEMAN PASSENGER  
 (friendly to Tommy)  
 Can we help you in any way?

POLICEMAN DRIVER  
 Yeah, tell us if there's anything  
 we could do for you. Can we drop  
 you off somewhere?

EXT. STREET - ENTRANCE TO NIGEL'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Squad car pulls over in front of Nigel's building and Tommy  
 gets out, emotionally saying good bye to the two officers.

TOMMY  
 (all touched)  
 Thanks, you guys!

He slams shut the car door, climbs the stairs to the building  
 entrance and presses the buzzer under the name of Nigel  
 Swinham.

INTERCOM (NIGEL)

Yes?

TOMMY

Hey, man, it's me, Tommy!

INTERCOM (NIGEL)

What brings you here at this hour?

TOMMY

Let me in, I'm in trouble.

INTERCOM (NIGEL)

What kind of trouble, old pal?

TOMMY

Elizabeth kicked me out ...

INTERCOM (NIGEL)

Come on up!

Tommy pushes the door open and climbs up to the second floor. Some of the shaving cream dried up around his nostrils.

INT. HALLWAY IN FRONT OF NIGEL'S APARTMENT

Nigel opens the door at the exact moment Tommy steps onto his floor. Tommy opens his arms and shrugs his shoulders. Nigel observes the miserable state Tommy is in and shakes his head in disbelief.

NIGEL

(shakes his head)

Nice! She got you good.

Tommy comes closer and Nigel sees the white spots around his nostrils.

NIGEL

(worried)

Have you been sniffing coke?

TOMMY

(surprised)

Who, me? No.

Tommy runs his hands over his face.

TOMMY

I was shaving.

NIGEL

(suspicious)

Ah, right. Come on in.

INT. NIGELS APARTMENT - NIGHT

NIGEL

(quietly)

Look, your room's over here,  
you're on your own. I've got a  
chick here, my steady-occasional  
chick. We'll talk in the morning,  
yeah?

Through the open bedroom door Tommy can glimpse a beautiful woman's back and a lock of hair falling down her shoulder.

TOMMY

OK, buddy. Not a problem, you're  
a real life saver.

NIGEL

That's what friends are for.  
There's some liquor over there  
for your consolation.

Tommy enters the living room, takes a bottle of liquor, sits on the couch and turns on the TV. Indifferently changes channels and finally stops on one channel. Wraps himself in a blanket and stares at the TV screen. From the next room he can hear lustful sounds and pre-orgasmic moaning. Tommy glares at the wall wide-eyed.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And that's how my relationship  
with Elizabeth ended. The next  
day I lost my job.

INT. EXACTMARKET ACT COMPANY - DAY

Tommy puts his belongings in a cardboard box. His colleagues watch him mockingly, making ironic faces of false pity behind his back. Tommy picks up the box and turns to his colleagues.

TOMMY

(sincere)

Well, guys, I'm sorry to have to  
part company with you.

HARWEI SENTON

(sardonic)

No tears, buddy. You'll be alright.

Tommy leaves the office trudging along, carrying the box.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

My grandma always used to say  
that bad things never come in  
singles, but in threes. I was  
just wondering what the third  
thing could be ...

Carrying the box Tommy reaches the door. The door opens wide hitting Tommy and giving him a bloody nose. An unfamiliar bewildered young man peeks behind the door.

UFAMILIAR YOUNG MAN

(desperately)

I'm sorry, man, I didn't see you there.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

I was relieved. The circle of three bad things was closed.

EXT. STREEET - DAY

Tommy walks down the street holding a few newspapers under his arm. Stops at some cheap restaurant.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

I wasn't worried much. Something would turn up. I had some money and some optimism. When you have a steady well-paid job you guzzle up seven-dollar beers in expensive bars. When you don't have a job, a diner where coffee and pie cost buck twenty five - total - works just fine.

INT. SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&WHATEVER FOOD - DAY

Tommy sits at a table and places his neatly folded newspapers in front of himself. Turns around and spots a waitress serving customers. She's a girl with a simple hair do, blond, blue-eyed, with a pleasant exterior. The girl is Claire, 25, waitress and an aspiring writer. She's just serving a young woman and her 5-yearold daughter. Claire strokes the girl's cheek and the girl gives her an angel-like smile. Claire says something to the girl and her mother at which they laugh merrily. At another table sit two grumpy pensioners calling for a waitress and Claire goes over to them. She reaches the table, says a few words to them and the two grumpy men become cheerful and upbeat. Tommy watches in fascination as Claire moves around the room spreading good mood in the diner which is getting more and more crowded. Claire approaches Tommy's table.

CLAIRE

(kindly)

Hi! What can I get you?

TOMMY

(his cheeks burning)

Coffee and apple pie.

CLAIRE  
 (quietly and  
 confidentially)  
 It's yesterday's pie, try the  
 lemon pie. It's fresh and really  
 good.

TOMMY  
 Sounds good, thanks.

Tommy watches her graceful moves as she fetches his order.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 In my crossword puzzles I never  
 found the words to describe Claire.  
 I became a regular.

INT. SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&HOWEVER FOOD - SOME OTHER DAY

Tommy sits at a table, going through the classifieds and  
 glancing at Claire over his newspapers. She approaches his  
 table. Tommy's cheeks get flushed with soft color.

CLAIRE  
 (kindly)  
 Hi! Your usual?

TOMMY  
 Yes!

Claire glances at the newspapers Tommy's holding.

CLAIRE  
 Looking for a job?

TOMMY  
 Yes.

Claire nods her head and goes to fetch his order. Tommy  
 glances at the other customers. It's a colorful crowd of  
 regular little people. Claire returns with his order.

CLAIRE  
 Here you go.

TOMMY  
 Thanks.

CLAIRE  
 What kind of job are you looking  
 for? What's your occupation, anyway?

TOMMY  
 I'm a market analyst so I'm  
 looking for something in that  
 field. My name is Tommy.

CLAIRE  
 (puts her finger on  
 her name tag)  
 Claire ...

Now she's looking straight at Tommy and notices he's blushing.

CLAIRE  
 (cont'd)  
 ... You know, if you don't find  
 anything in your profession, you  
 can always do something else.

TOMMY  
 (thoughtfully)  
 That must be hard.

CLAIRE  
 (comforting)  
 Oh, no ... I'm a writer, and I work  
 as a waitress.

TOMMY  
 (naively)  
 You write! What an exciting life  
 you lead!

CLAIRE  
 (smile for his naïve  
 face)  
 Well, I wouldn't call it exciting.  
 It's more like observing life,  
 than living itself.

A customer calls for a waitress and Claire leaves smiling.

INT SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&HOWEVER FOOD - ANOTHER DAY

Tommy enters the diner, looks around and gets giddy when he sees Claire. She points to an empty table and he gratefully nods his head. He sits down, goes through the newspapers. When Claire approaches his table he pretends to be concentrated on his newspapers.

CLAIRE  
 Hi! The usual?

TOMMY  
 Yeah, pie's really good here.

Claire goes to fetch his order and Tommy pensively picks up the papers. Claire comes back to serve him.

TOMMY  
 (unsettled)  
 Would you ...

CLAIRE  
 (interrupting)  
 No. I'm sorry, but I don't go out  
 with customers ...  
 (this is clear)  
 ... is that what you wanted to ask me?

TOMMY  
 (ashamed)  
 Yeah.

CLAIRE  
 (encouraging him)  
 Don't get me wrong, you're a cute  
 guy and everything, but I just  
 don't date customers.  
 (remembering suddenly)  
 Hey, a few guys from your  
 profession stop by here from time  
 to time. I talked to them just  
 yesterday and, apparently, they  
 have an opening. Do you want me  
 to hook you up?

TOMMY  
 (still ashamed)  
 Thanks, that would be nice ... and ...

A customer calls for a waitress and Claire leaves in haste.

CLAIRE  
 (over her shoulder)  
 I'll be back!

Tommy pensively keeps squashing a piece of pie. Two young men, 30-ish, enter the diner, wearing medium-priced suits, content and cheerful. One of them carrying some kind of catalogues under his arm. This is Martin O. Martin, analyst at "Stone and Son". The other young man is his co-worker Ralph Colter. Smiling, they sit at an empty table. Claire approaches them, exchanges a few jovial words with them and nods in Tommy's direction. The two of them nod approvingly. Claire walks up to Tommy just as he looks up from his pie.

CLAIRE  
 (encouragingly)  
 Let me introduce you to the guys  
 I told you about.

Tommy gets up insecurely and they go over to Martin and Ralph's table.

CLAIRE  
 (kindly)  
 Guys, this is Tommy.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 Sit over here. Claire tells me  
 you need a job. You're an analyst?  
 Where did you use to work? And  
 for how long?

Tommy sits down; his attention is drawn by the catalogues  
 sticking out of an envelope.

TOMMY  
 I used to work at "EXACTMARKET  
 ACT" until ten days ago. They  
 decided to make some cutbacks in  
 our department, so ...

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 That's a good company, but ... look,  
 we probably need someone with  
 more experience.

We can see Tommy staring at the catalogues, realizing that  
 everything that was just said went in the one ear, and out  
 the other.

TOMMY  
 (interrupts  
 enthusiastically  
 pointing his finger at  
 the envelope)  
 Is that Rappala? The Fat Duckling?

RALPH COLTER  
 (passionately)  
 Yeah, medium depth even, sinks  
 better than real fish, but it's  
 not really ...

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 (interrupting)  
 We went up to Porter's Lake and  
 it's not really ...

TOMMY  
 How did you tie it?

RALPH COLTER  
 What do you mean? Like a regular  
 knot and...

TOMMY  
 (authoritative)  
 You didn't do the eight knot?

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 What's an eight knot?

Tommy picks up a pen and doodles something on a napkin, Ralph  
 and Martin watch with interest.

TOMMY

(he knows how it's  
done)

First you pull through a small  
weight to additionally balance  
out the nose, say ... 8 grams, and  
then you make a noose ...

Tommy keeps drawing; ties an imaginary knot in the air. Ralph and Martin point to the paper, Tommy obviously keeps giving the right answers since we can see them nodding their heads contentedly, Claire watches the whole situation smiling and with affection.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And that's how I got the job.

EXT. STREET - ENTRANCE TO OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Delivery guy walks through the lobby, smiles cheerfully to the receptionist and takes the elevator. Gets off at one floor and walks down the corridor. On one office door in the corridor there is a sign saying: senior controller Dave Black. The delivery guy pushes open the next door using the boxes he's carrying. The sign on that door says: ANALYSTS: Martin O. Martin, Ralph Colter, Tommy Workinghaus.

DELIVERY GUY

Hi, guys! Here comes the grub!

Tommy, Ralph and Martin each sitting at their respective desk. Monitor on each desk, against the walls shelves full of folders. Martin is doing something behind his desk, Tommy's reading a book.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Claire switched shifts and I  
hardly ever saw her. I realized  
it was time to get ahead in  
business and I worked my ass off.

We see Tommy holding a book entitled "30 Advices for Successful Business". On the desk in front of him there are books entitled: "Trash Papers&Real Value of Index" and "Making Money quickly".

TOMMY

(subdued)

"Your worth lies not only in your  
achievements. If you lack ideas  
or concrete solutions the client  
must never notice. Any idea or  
advice given in a voice that  
reflects confidence and leaves no  
doubt in your evaluation is a  
good idea.

(MORE)

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Your client might lose money, but it is important to give out the impression that, without you, he could have lost an even bigger amount."

Tommy nods his head in approval. Phone rings. Tommy puts on the "hands free" and lies back in his chair.

TOMMY

(kindly)

Hi, Mr. Bridgstorm ... Yes, I've been going through your papers and I ... yes, I understand, you're interested in making a short-term profit, yes, well ... my advice is ... just a moment ...

Tommy picks up the book and starts going through it.

TOMMY

(for self)

Any advice given in a confident voice is good advice ...

(he takes a deep breath then cont'd)

Mr. Bridgstorm, I apologize for the interruption. My advice to you is oil ...

Martin and Ralph look up and stare at Tommy, and then look at each other in surprise.

TOMMY

(cont'd not trying to pull back)

... Oh, yes, oil ... top limit? You think the price has reached top limit? Well, we are your financial advisers and we believe that today this is the quickest short-term profit. Oh, yes, thank you, sir, it's a pleasure doing business with a client such as you.

Tommy triumphantly looks at the world around him. The clock on the wall says 1:30 pm.

RALPH COLTER

(carefully to Tommy)

Do you have some piece information we don't?

TOMMY

No.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(to Tommy)

You think this price hasn't reached top limit? Honestly, where's the profit at this price? Cause I don't see it.

TOMMY

(self confidence)

I think this is a good idea.

Ralph's phone is flashing and beeping, he answers.

RALPH COLTER

(kindly)

Stevensson! Hey, where've you been, old pal? Looking to score some quick dough, eh? Look ...

Looks around him and then with uncertainty looks at Tommy sitting back in his chair, triumphantly confident.

RALPH COLTER

(cont'd)

Look, if you're gonna make a transaction today, buying some oil is the way to go. Yes. No. Yes, I think it's a good idea. O.K. Always at your service.

Martin observes Tommy and Ralph. They both seem calm and confident. He dials a number.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

T.J.! Still looking for a place to invest all that loose money? I think it would be good for you to buy some oil today ... based on a detailed analysis? Hmm, yeah, oh yeah ... make the arrangements with our office.

Martin watches Tommy and Ralph making phone calls and giving everyone the exact same advice.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(for self)

This is contagious!

All three of them are now vigorously making phone calls, encouraging each other enthusiastically. The clock on the wall says 4:30 pm, office door opens, a furious young man, practically a boy, actually, storms inside. It's Dave Black, senior controller.

DAVE BLACK  
 (his voice still hasn't  
 started breaking)  
 Hang up!

Tommy, Martin and Ralph stop momentarily.

DAVE BLACK  
 (in a boy's voice)  
 All of today's transactions  
 involve oil and all our clients  
 refer to your analysis. You bunch  
 of idiots! Don't you understand  
 that the price has reached its  
 top limit? And you call yourselves  
 analysts?! You useless bastards,  
 your asses will be so out of here  
 tomorrow when we start losing  
 clients because of your stupidity!

The three of them sit dejectedly like children whose guilt  
 is unquestionable.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Tommy gets of the elevator trudging down the corridor and  
 enters his office. Inside, Martin and Ralph are watching  
 something on the screen with excitement. On screen we see a  
 slanted oil rig filmed from bird's eye view.

WOMAN VOICE ON SCREEN  
 The hurricane came out of nowhere,  
 without warning. Never has the  
 gulf suffered such rapid  
 destruction, seven out of nine of  
 the largest rigs are damaged with  
 no chance of quick repair.

MAN'S VOICE ON SCREEN  
 Thank you, Grace. Back to the  
 Studio. Nigerian rebels have made  
 a series of attacks on the main  
 oil transportation system in the  
 country. Along with the hurricane  
 that struck the gulf, this lead  
 to oil prices sky-rocketing. This  
 sudden sharp rise of oil prices  
 was also influenced by yesterday's  
 unusually high demand for oil on  
 the stock market ...

DAVE BLACK  
 (touched from the  
 bottom of his heart)  
 Guys, oh, guys! My god, the team  
 of analysts we have! You guys,  
 you kick ass in this business,  
 you kick ass!

Phones start ringing and Tommy rushes to his desk. Martin and Ralph quickly plug in their receivers.

TOMMY  
 (kindly)  
 Yes, MR. Bridgstrom!  
 (modestly)  
 thank You, sir ... that's the result  
 of the work of this analytical  
 team ... You think we should sell?  
 when? ummm ...

Tommy anxiously looks at Martin, Martin looks at Ralph, Ralph helplessly spreads his arms.

TOMMY  
 (cont'd)  
 ... well ...

Tommy looks at Martin again, asking for help with his eyes.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 (insecurely)  
 Around 90?

TOMMY  
 (cont'd 100% sure)  
 When it reaches 89.35. Yes. Thank  
 you for your confidence.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 (into receiver)  
 T.J.? Sell at 89.35. How do I  
 know? Just do as I tell you!

Dave Black, deeply moved, watches the developments in the office.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 We were given hefty bonuses.

In the office Tommy, Martin and Ralph hold their checks licking their lips in satisfaction.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 Look at all this dough! This calls  
 for a celebration!

RALPH COLTER  
 Getting wasted at an expensive  
 bar and then "Chez maitre des  
 poisons"?

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 (to Tommy)  
 That's a good idea, what d' you  
 think? "Chez maitre des poisons"?

TOMMY  
 (insecurely)  
 Canadian ballet?

Martin and Ralph burst into laughter.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 (to Tommy)  
 There's nothing like your blunders,  
 man!

Tommy shrugs his shoulders in confusion.

INT. EXPENSIVE BAR - NIGHT

Crowded bar. A bunch of well-dressed and obviously well-to-do young men and women. Tommy, Ralph and Martin sit at the bar sipping on their drinks and, using their eyes, communicating with some good looking girls. Ralph calls for the waiter and sends over drinks to the girls. They thank him by nodding and Ralph goes over to establish verbal contact. Martin and Tommy watch with interest. It seems to be working out well and Ralph returns to the bar accompanied by the girls.

RALPH COLTER  
 Guys, these are Pam, Ruth and  
 Tylia. Girls, these are my friends  
 Martin and Tommy.

Tommy smiles kindly at Tylia. She is a dark-haired white girl, 26, with a not particularly interesting figure, and high traced eyebrows.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 That's how I met Tylia.

RALPH COLTER  
 Do you wanna go get some light  
 dinner and then maybe go to a club?

INT. VERY EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT

The six of them are sitting at a full table. In the background we see a cook flambéing a dish and customers commenting on it with approval. Ralph holds Pam's hand and looks at her palm.

RALPH COLTER  
 (flirting)  
 It's totally obvious from these  
 lines.

PAM  
 (curious)  
 What is?

RALPH COLTER  
 (mysteriously)  
 It wouldn't be right for me to  
 tell you.

PAM  
 Tell me!

RALPH COLTER  
 Well ...

PAM  
 Tell me right now, I'm getting  
 worried!

RALPH COLTER  
 Well, if you insist  
 (spreads his arms and  
 continues)  
 ... You've just met the man you've  
 always been searching for!

PAM  
 I must've gotten tired of searching!

Everyone laughs, except Tommy. Tylia notices and tries to  
 include him in the conversation.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Tylia and I ... We clicked right away.

TYLIA  
 (to Tommy)  
 You like Stroganoff?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 This time I came prepared.

TOMMY  
 (self-confidence)  
 Symphony or piano concerto?

Martin starts laughing first, followed by Ralph and the girls.

MARTIN O. MARTIN  
 Can he put his foot in it or what!  
 And he keeps having this nad've  
 face of his!

TYLIA  
 I meant the steak, professional  
 deformation.

PAM  
 (interrupting)  
 Tylia is a culinary expert! She  
 even has her own newspaper column!

Tommy looks straight into Tylia's eyes.

TOMMY  
(sincerely enthusiastic)  
I love food!

A joyful atmosphere builds up at the table.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Living with Tylia ...

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy enters the apartment, puts down his brief case and goes into the kitchen. He finds Tylia making a meal. She's surrounded by different groceries and spices. Tommy approaches her from behind, kisses her softly on the neck, and then sticks his nose towards the pot the meal is being cooked in.

TOMMY  
Errr... that smell ...

TYLIA  
(contentedly)  
It'll be done in a few minutes.

Tommy opens the fridge and contentedly takes out a bottle of beer.

TYLIA  
(commanding)  
Oh, no. Not beer with this dish.  
Only wine, please.

TOMMY  
(morose)  
I don't see the connection. To me  
beer always hits the spot.

TYLIA  
(instructively)  
Some things just don't match.  
Believe me, I am an expert.

Tylia serves the meal and Tommy looks at the content of his plate with confusion, and then pensively stirs the food with his spoon.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
My grandma always used to say  
that the way to a man's heart is  
through his stomach.

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Opened bathroom door. Tommy kneeling with his head stuck in the toilette bow.

He's throwing up, holding his stomach with one hand, and the toilette seat in the other. The bedroom light gets turned on and Tylia, awoken by strange noises, looks around the room. She gets up, sees Tommy and approaches him with concern.

TYLIA  
(worried)  
Are you OK?

Tommy gets up slowly. His face is pale and tortured.

TOMMY  
(broken)  
I'm fine, honey. I'm just a little  
nauseous. What exactly was that  
dish we had today?

TYLIA  
(proudly)  
Brazilian black horn snail.

Tommy suddenly turns around and sticks his head back into the bowl.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Life with Tylia included a number  
of activities ...

INT. MARKET PLACE - DAY

Tylia and Tommy walk around stores at the market. Tylia stops at one place to pick out poultry. We can see that they are awfully small, miniature poorly-looking plucked birds. Tommy looks at the little plucked bodies with pity. They exit the store, Tommy carrying the grocery bags. They walk along the market passing a pet store. In the store window Tommy sees canaries cheerfully hopping around in their cages. He looks at the bag he's carrying and lowers his head in shame.

INT. STORE - DAY

A sign on the store wall saying: "Selected French Cheeses". On shelves and coolers a large number of amazing cheeses. Tylia is choosing cheeses while Tommy is staring at a cheese streaked with mold. Tylia shoves a piece of cheese under Tommy's nose and he covers it with his hand in disgust.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Ambitious women, just like  
ambitious men, are rarely content  
with their accomplishments.

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Door opens, and Tommy enters the apartment. Puts down his brief case and goes to the kitchen. He finds Tylia crying with her head laid on the kitchen table. Tommy approaches her with surprise.

TOMMY  
 (worried)  
 What happened, honey? What's the matter?

Tylia starts crying even harder.

TOMMY  
 (panic starting)  
 Has anyone attacked you? Where is he?

Tommy looks around, walks a few steps as if looking for something or someone. Tylia cries harder and harder.

TOMMY  
 (panicking)  
 Should I be calling someone? The police? An ambulance?

Tylia cries and shakes her head in denial.

TOMMY  
 Well, what happened? Why are you crying?

TYLIA  
 (dry tears)  
 It's so hard being a woman!

Tommy wavers and looks away confusedly.

TOMMY  
 (unconvincing)  
 I know, sweetie, it'll pass.

Tylia raises her head in surprise.

TYLIA  
 (sardonic)  
 And how exactly is it going to pass? Am I going to become a man?

TOMMY  
 No ... I mean, you are going to stop crying, aren't you?  
 (trying to find the right thing to say)  
 Nothing is worth your tears!

TYLIA  
 You're right. I'm just ... nothing's working out for me today. It's a cruel punishment for a woman not having anything in this civilization named after her, just thinking of that ... that ... "Sandwich" ...

TOMMY

Is he the one who made you cry?  
Is he some kind of a maniac?

TYLIA

Do you even know what a sandwich is?

TOMMY

(unsure)

Ah, you mean ... two slices of bread,  
and in between, in between them ...  
whatever?

TYLIA

Exactly. Pretty complicated, don't  
you think?

TOMMY

Not really.

TYLIA

Well, now you see why it's so  
hard being a woman.

TOMMY

(where is she going  
with this?)

I 'm not sure ...

TYLIA

This guy, Sandwich, was an  
incorrigible card player, I mean,  
that kind of a man, and spent all  
day at the card table, he even  
had some kind of title, duke, or  
something ...

TOMMY

(where is she going  
with this?)

I don't see it ...

TYLIA

(cont'd)

... a passionate gambler, get it? A  
guy who had no respect for food  
at all. And then what happens?

TOMMY

(with interest)

What happens?

TYLIA

So, there he was, sitting at the card table and, not to waste any time, he had the waiter bring him two slices of bread with a thin slice of ham and a pickle in between. And that's how much he appreciated food. And then what happens?

TOMMY

(anticipating  
intensely)  
What happens?

TYLIA

(bitter)  
This dish, if you can call it that, this primitive intervention with groceries gets named after him!

(continues in  
desperation)

It gets its name after a man who couldn't spare five minutes of his time to have a somewhat decent meal. And what dish was named after a woman? Is my effort not sufficient enough for a dish to get named after me?

(fury)

Was there ever a dish named after a woman?

(hysteria)

Are we less worthy? Can you name one dish that was named after a woman?

TOMMY

(ready to fix the  
situation)

Calm down, honey. That's not entirely true.

TYLIA

(coldly)

Well, come on, name one dish that's famous for a woman.

TOMMY

(placating her)

My grandma used to make a killer poppy-seed cake. We always used to call it grandma's cake. So, there you go.

Tylia stares at Tommy, shocked by the nonsense she had just heard.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
All things considered, Tylia was  
a nice girl.

INT. MALL

Tommy and Tylia walk around the mall, window shopping. They're mostly surrounded by family people and their children. Tylia sees a mother holding hands with two identically dressed girls with different hair dos, red-haired. The girls are obviously twins. Tylia stops and turns to Tommy.

TYLIA  
(tenderly to Tommy)  
Aren't they adorable, just look  
at them!

Tommy tries to look the other way.

TYLIA  
(enthusiastically)  
I want to see them up close, look  
at that red hair, they're like  
little wild angels!

Tylia tries to pull Tommy in the direction of the mother, but he stops dead.

TOMMY  
(resolute)  
I'll go check out the sports  
papers until you get back. Tylia,  
disappointed, goes towards the  
mother and her girls. Tommy makes  
a few steps in the opposite  
direction and bumps into Nigel.

TOMMY  
(cheerfully)  
Buddy!

NIGEL  
(cheerfully)  
Buddy! Are you lost?

TOMMY  
No, no, I'm here with my  
girlfriend, looking around. Come  
on, I'll introduce you.

Nigel sees Tylia talking to the little girl's mother.

NIGEL

(suddenly)

Hey look, I've only got ten minutes before an important meeting and if I don't hurry a lot will be at stake.

(in a hurry)

I'll talk to you in a couple of days, and we'll catch up. Sound good?

TOMMY

OK! I'll give you a call.

Nigel leaves in a hurry. Tylia returns with a big smile on her face.

TYLIA

Oh, they are so cute, you should see them, and what a cheerful woman, their mom! Amazing!

Without a word, Tommy grabs Tylia by the arm and drags her towards some store.

INT TYLIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy is sitting in an armchair doing a crossword puzzle. Tylia moves around the apartment carrying some kind of measure tape, pensively watching the armchairs.

TYLIA

If we move these chairs and put a couch over here, you would be able to lie back every evening and watch TV ...

(continues, all chirpy)

the wall would thus be free so we could put a nice painting there, making this look like a lovely home.

Tommy stiffly looks up. Something in the word "home" makes him cautious.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Tylia's voice began resembling the chirping of a bird which decided to build itself a nest.

INT. MALL - DAY

Tylia and Tommy sit in a patisserie. Tommy's going through a newspaper. Tylia observes the world around her. At one table sits a lady with her son, an ugly fat 9-yearold boy. We've seen this boy before on two occasions. In front of him there is a plate of cakes and a large glass of juice. The boy greedily eats large chunks of cake with his spoon. Tylia sees the boy and gives Tommy a nudge.

TYLIA  
 (chirpy)  
 Look! What a nice little boy!

Tommy puts down the papers and looks at the boy. He recognizes him and his face drops. The boy looks at Tommy, recognizes him and turns to his mother wide-eyed.

UGLY FAT 9-YEAROLD BOY  
 (astonished)  
 Mom, look, it's ...

The boy points in Tommy's direction, grazing the glass which falls down and breaks. His mother slaps him on the face pretty hard.

TYLIA  
 (bitter)  
 The way some people treat their children! That's just awful! We won't treat our children that way, won't we?

Tommy's already gotten up, looking in another direction.

TOMMY  
 (to Tylia)  
 Hey, look over there, they've got a new fishing gear department!

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 The chirping continued ...

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy sits in an armchair doing a crossword puzzle. Enters Tylia from the kitchen.

TYLIA  
 (chirpy)  
 Would you like me to make you something special for dinner?

TOMMY  
 (morose)  
 No, thanks, I'll just have a piece of cheese and a beer later.

TYLIA  
 (melting with kindness)  
 You are really no trouble at all! We really get along nicely, don't we? That's always a good foundation for a long, I mean, permanent relationship.

Tommy looks up carefully and then looks back down on his crossword.

TYLIA

It's nice when partners appreciate and respect each other and have understanding for one another ...

TOMMY

(interrupting)

What's correct? Abecedarian or Abecedirian?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

So it continued ...

INT. TYLIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bedroom. Tylia slowly undresses and sits on the bed. Tommy has his back turned to her and is polishing his shoes. Tylia strokes her night gown and then turns to Tommy.

TYLIA

I love it that you're neat. It's nice to have a man who appreciates order. We really complete each other nicely. Tommy contentedly puts down his shoes and pick up another pair.

TYLIA

(cont'd pensive)

You are nothing like my ex. You're considerate and you choose your company. Tommy blows onto his shoe and keeps polishing.

TYLIA

My ex had these ... weird friends ... sometimes a friend of his would come in the middle of the night ... Tommy looks up ...

TYLIA

(cont'd)

--- actually, this friend of his showed up two times, always before Christmas, and my ex would laugh at him because he came over with cocaine residue on his nose ...

Tommy, astonished, looks at Tylia in the mirror.

TYLIA

(cont'd)

: ... but, that's not funny, you know, I don't approve of that kind of stuff.

Tommy, in shock, with eyes wide open, watches Tylia in the mirror while she's getting undressed.

Tommy remembers:

INT. NIGEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

NIGEL  
(quietly)  
Listen, you've got the living  
room, so get comfortable... I've  
got someone here, a really smokin'  
chick, so we'll talk in the  
morning, OK?

Through the open door of the bedroom, Tommy can glimpse a lovely pair of female legs and ass.

Present

Tommy stares at the mirror and recognizes Tylia's legs and ass.

Tommy remembers:

INT. NIGEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

NIGEL  
(quietly)  
Look, you've got the living room,  
you're on your own ... I've got a  
chick here, a really hot chick,  
my steady occasional chick. I'll  
see you in the morning, yeah?

Through the open bedroom door Tommy can see a beautiful female back.

Present

Tommy stares at the mirror and recognizes Tylia's back.

Tommy remembers:

INT. NIGEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy sits on the couch and stares at the TV. From Nigel's room, through the wall, he can hear lustful sounds and pre-orgasmic moaning. Tommy, astonished, glares at the wall.

Present

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM -NIGHT

Tylia and Tommy lying in bed. Tylia is sound asleep on her side, her back turned to Tommy. Tommy's awake and IS staring at the ceiling wide-eyed.

INT TOMMY'S OFFICE

Tommy sits at his desk. He's pale, drowsy, his hair all messed up.

He's holding a phone receiver and insecurely holds it up to his ear.

TOMMY

(reserved)

Hi, Nigel. You wanna get together during lunch break, if you haven't made any plans? ... I was thinking somewhere half way ...like ... "Samy's fast, slow&however food" ... that's on ...

INT. SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&HOWEVER FOOD - DAY

Tommy and Nigel sitting at a table, opposite one another, staring into each other's eyes.

TOMMY

(seriously)

You should've told me.

NIGEL

(feeling no guilt)

No! We established the rule! If things were getting serious, I mean, likely to end in marriage and stuff, no, really, no. That would really be mean and it would destroy the friendship. "Never tell a friend!" "Don't tell a friend!", remember?

Claire approaches their table. She's delighted to see Tommy.

CLAIRE

Hi. You're back again.

TOMMY

(his face blushing)

You got your old shift back?

Claire and Nigel notice Tommy's blushed and confused.

CLAIRE

(affectionately)

Yeah, I switched shifts with a colleague who has little kids so she couldn't work the evening shift. That's how I end up working double shifts. So, coffee?

TOMMY

Yeah.

NIGEL  
 Nothing for me, I gotta run and ...  
 (cont'd interested)  
 You really are an amazing creature,  
 what time do you get off?

TOMMY  
 (jealously)  
 Claire doesn't go out with  
 customers.

NIGEL  
 I'm not a customer, I didn't order  
 anything, did I?

CLAIRE  
 (evidently trying to  
 make Tommy jealous)  
 At 11. Maybe a few minutes after.

NIGEL  
 OK. 11 Then?

Claire leaves the table smiling and without giving him an  
 answer.

NIGEL  
 Look, this thing with Tylia. We're  
 both adults, we both have a past.  
 If it's really love and living  
 together then ... besides, being  
 mature means accepting this kind  
 of stuff, compromise and stuff ...

Tommy searches for Claire.

NIGEL  
 (cont'd)  
 : ... you just look at a person ...

Tommy sees Claire's beautiful face.

NIGEL  
 (cont'd)  
 ... and if you mean to her as much  
 as she means to you ...

Tommy melancholically lowers his eyes.

Nigel keeps talking, but his words aren't reaching Tommy.

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tylia and Tommy lying in bed. Tylia sleeps peacefully on her  
 side, her back turned to Tommy. Tommy's awake and restless.  
 He gets up, makes a few steps, goes back to bed and stares  
 at the ceiling.

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy sits at his desk. So are Ralph and Martin. The door opens and enters a pair of perfect legs. The owner of the legs is Marianne (26), white, exceptionally built, one of department's secretaries. The look with which Ralph and Martin greet her entrance tells us she definitely works up a certain sexual appetite for a man.

MARIANNE

Hi, guys!

She approaches Tommy's desk carrying papers.

MARIANNE

(to Tommy)

Here are the papers for the monthly report. Fill them out or fill out an e-form and mail it. Whatever works for you.

She notices Tommy's pale and tormented expression. She gently leans towards him.

MARIANNE

(quietly to Tommy)

You're pale, you know that? For days now. Something on your mind? Do you want an aspirin? Can I get you anything?

TOMMY

(honestly grateful)

No, thank you. I'll be fine.

She gives him a sad and compassionate look and moves towards the door.

MARIANNE

(coldly)

And turn in your filled out forms by the end of the week!

She exits followed by Ralph and Martin's greedy gazes.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(hungry)

The noises she would make under me!

RALPH COLTER

The same as under any other superior. What do you think, Tommy?

TOMMY

(protective)

Leave the girl be, she's not causing any trouble.

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tylia and Tommy lying in bed. Tylia sleeps peacefully on her side, her back turned to Tommy. Tommy's awake and restless. He gets up, makes a few steps, comes back to bed and stares at the ceiling.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Nigel was right. Everyone has a  
past and if it's really love,  
then ...

Tommy closes his eyes.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
... but, when thinking of the word,  
I would see a different face.  
With his eyes closed Tommy sees  
Claire's face.

Tommy opens his eyes.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
... and Nigel had to bud in once  
again. Did she have to agree to  
meet him?

Tommy closes his eyes.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
How many people even find a person  
that ... a person that ... I mean,  
how many people even find their  
true love?

Tommy opens his eyes.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
Nigel was right. Maturity means  
accepting compromise. I decided  
to stay.

Tommy closes his eyes.

INT. TYLIA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Tommy, pale and drowsy, standing at the door, holding a fairly large suitcase in each hand.

TOMMY  
(desperately)  
I'm leaving!

EXT. STREET - MORNING

A grey car "glides" down the street. Tommy sits behind the wheel. His look is directed towards a distant nonexistent point. His look reveals that Tommy is unaware of the jam he caused

with his slow driving. Behind Tommy's car there are now about 30 vehicles whose angry drivers are swearing and honking like crazy. Tommy's car stopped at the stop light and even though the light is green, he is not moving. One of the drivers in the long line of vehicles behind Tommy furiously gets out of his car and goes over to Tommy. Tommy has his hands stretched over the wheel and has on a distant look. We can see a big crooked bruise on his forehead. The man furiously bangs on the side-door window and Tommy shakes in panic.

MAN

(furiously)

The green light has been on and off for three times already. Are you blind? Has your car broken down or are you just fucking with us?

The man notices the bruise on Tommy's forehead.

MAN

Man, you're hurt! Do you need help?

TOMMY

No, thank you ... I sometimes bang my head on the wheel ... when I'm desperate.

MAN

Just keep driving!

Tommy starts the car and drives away.

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Martin and Ralph sit at their desks, going over some papers. Tommy stares through the window.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

However things work out, Nigel was still my only friend in the City. Tommy picks up the phone and dials.

TOMMY

Nigel? Look ... you're in Dallas? ... for another ten days ... no, no, just checking in ... OK, bye!

Tommy looks at the computer screen, opens the Google page and writes in "lodging".

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(to Tommy)

Hey, are you going to lunch with us?

TOMMY

No, I'm going to take a walk.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy walks aimlessly. A few steps ahead of him a couple in love gently holding hands. A young man exits a flower shop carrying a beautiful bouquet. He is happy and does not notice the world around him. Tommy watches these examples of being in love. He walks further down the street. He finds himself in front of "Samy's fast, slow&however food". He stops confusedly, extends his hand towards the door, but pulls back immediately. An older gentleman behind him spreads his arms in despair. Tommy looks at him over his shoulder and decides to go in.

INT. SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&HOWEVER FOOD - DAY

Tommy sits at his table and stares out the window. Claire approaches him from behind.

CLAIRE

(cheerfully)

Hi!

TOMMY

(his cheeks blushing)

Still working two shifts?

CLAIRE

Just one, starting tomorrow.

She notices his tortured face and the pale bruise on his forehead.

CLAIRE

(worried)

Are you alright? Is there something wrong? Have you hurt your head?

TOMMY

(half-lie, half-truth)

I lost my apartment this morning so I'm trying to find a place to stay ... I banged my head on the wheel a bit ... and so.

CLAIRE

Uh, finding a place in this town is a real gamble. What are you going to do until then?

TOMMY

I was thinking of going to a decent hotel.

CLAIRE

(pity)

I know hardship ...

(determined)

You can stay at my place until you find something. A lot of people go through here so you can always get some useful information.

TOMMY

Thank you, but I wouldn't like to impose.

CLAIRE

Don't worry about it, pick me up here at 11.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

And that's how I moved in with Claire. I didn't mention Nigel, neither did she, he was in Dallas, anyway. The apartment looked like Claire - cute, charming, warm and lovely.

INT. CLAIR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy sits in an armchair doing a crossword puzzle. Claire sits at the computer desk. She writes a few words, pauses, looks at the screen and shakes her head. She turns and watches Tommy silently studying his crossword puzzle.

CLAIRE

You really are something.

Tommy turns in surprise.

TOMMY

Why?

CLAIRE

Anyone else would bore me with questions about what I'm writing and would ask me to read it to them. But not you.

TOMMY

Well ...

CLAIRE

Not a big fan of the written word, are you?

TOMMY

Well ... I don't actually read much.

CLAIRE

What was the last novel you read?

TOMMY

It was a long time ago. Real long time.

CLAIRE

Do you remember the title?

TOMMY

No, it was really confusing.

CLAIRE

What was it about?

TOMMY

Some guy attacking a wind mill. Gibberish.

Claire pensively studies his naive face.

CLAIRE

Don Quixote?

TOMMY

Yeah, that's it!

CLAIRE

(instructively)

You know, he's not actually attacking a wind mill. It's a metaphor.

TOMMY

The teacher said, that, too.

CLAIRE

And you?

TOMMY

(naive)

That's even dumber. Why would he attack a metaphor with a spear?

Claire bursts into laughter. Tommy shrugs his shoulders.

CLAIRE

(smile of apology)

I'm sorry, this really made me laugh.

Tommy looks at Claire and sees affection in her eyes.

TOMMY

You see, I ... Sometimes I ...

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

I'm no brilliant mind. I've known that for quite some time now. I simply told her a couple of things.

Tommy recalls:

INT. MEDIUM-PRICED RESTAURANT - NIGHT

ELIZABETH  
(to Tommy)  
You like Liszt?

Tommy looks down for a second and then calmly looks at Elizabeth.

TOMMY  
(to Elizabeth)  
With parmesan and radicchio?

Present

Claire laughs with amazement.

Tommy remembers:

INT. VERY EXPECIVE RESTAURANT

TYLIA  
(to Tommy)  
You like Stroganoff?

TOMMY  
(confident voice)  
Symphony or piano concerto?

Present

Claire laughs and shakes her head. Catches her breath.

CLAIRE  
That's amazing. Can I have it?

TOMMY  
The crossword?

CLAIRE  
The events you just told me. It really made me laugh. I'd like to use it in some of my stories.

TOMMY  
(enthusiastically)  
You wanna use that in your book?

Tommy imagines:

INT. EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT - DAY

At a table three pretty young women holding books, laughing. We can see the title on the cover - "Characters form my Diner". Women laugh even harder and put down their books.

YOUNG WOMAN #1  
This is so good ... this guy is ...

YOUNG WOMAN #2  
(interrupting)  
My husband's a dentist, but being  
this stupid ... the three of them  
laugh, finishing off in a terrible  
crescendo.

Present

Tommy's face looks sad. He looks at Claire's pleading eyes.

TOMMY  
(sadly)  
Why not?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
It was nice spending time with  
Claire.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy is sitting in an armchair doing a crossword puzzle.  
Claire leans over him, points to a line in the crossword and  
they both laugh.

Claire is sitting at her computer, writing. Tommy's standing  
next to her, points to a line in the text on the monitor,  
obviously giving some remark. Claire tries to explain, Tommy  
waves his hands and they both laugh.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
It was so nice, in fact, that I...  
I... well, I...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - ANOTHER EVENING

Claire enters the apartment. Tommy gets up from his chair.  
Claire looks at the table.

CLAIRE  
(enthusiastic)  
You bought roses!

Tommy stands stiffly, proudly, all flushed. Claire approaches  
the table and gently picks up the roses.

CLAIRE  
(sweetly)  
Come, my pretty ones! I'll give  
you fresh water and plenty of light.

Amazed, Tommy watches her graceful moves and the joy she  
displays.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
It was snowing heavily the next day.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tommy's standing in front of the window worriedly watching snow cover cars and streets. He picks up his cell phone and dials. The sound coming from the phone is monotonous crackle and, clearly, the connection cannot be established. Tommy paces up and down the room. The door opens and enters Claire with her shoulders all clenched, her nose red and a feverish look in her eyes.

TOMMY  
I was so worried. The network  
crashed and I couldn't get through  
to you...

Claire sits on the couch, curls up and starts shaking with fever.

CLAIRE  
(miserably)  
I'm so cold.

Tommy kneels next to the couch and takes off her boots. He takes the boots away and comes back carrying blankets which he then hurriedly wraps around her.

TOMMY  
I'm getting a doctor!

CLAIRE  
(weakly)  
No!

TOMMY  
I'm calling for an ambulance.

CLAIRE  
The streets are blocked and  
hospitals full of people with  
fractures. My god, the number of  
people in need of help right now...

Claire drifts off into a feverish sleep. Tommy nervously glances through the window. It's snowing harder and harder.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
My grandma used to call this  
"children's fever". A strong and  
severe chill accompanied by high  
temperature.

Tommy goes into the bathroom and rummages through the medicine cabinet. He looks at all the boxes with confusion and shakes his head.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 My grandma had her own remedy for  
 lowering temperature. I had to  
 act immediately.

Tommy closes the medicine cabinet, goes to the living room, gently picks up Claire who is shaking with fever and carries her into the bedroom. He opens the closet, gets more blankets, gently sits Claire up and undresses her. Then he lays her down and covers her with blankets. Claire is delirious. Tommy lays his hand on her fore head, shakes his head worriedly and goes into the kitchen. He finds a couple of potatoes, a bottle of vinegar and a bottle of wine. He pours wine into a pot on the stove. He goes back into the bedroom, uncovers Claire's legs and puts chopped potatoes on her feet, and wraps them up with a cloth soaked in vinegar. Claire turns feverishly.

CLAIRE  
 (weak)  
 What are you doing?

TOMMY  
 Don't worry, it's a remedy.

Tommy sits her up and brings a cup up to her lips dried of fever.

CLAIRE  
 What's this?

TOMMY  
 Mulled wine. Drink up, you have  
 to sweat it out. This is used to  
 lower temperature.

Claire drinks up the wine and lies down on her side. She curls up into the fetal position. Tommy sits next to her wiping her sweaty fore head.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Claire lies in bed with her eyes open, watching Tommy sleeping in the armchair next to her. Her face is tortured, her hair all messed up, but her eyes are clear and curious. She looks around and sees some of her clothes lying around.

CLAIRE  
 (quietly)  
 Who changed me?

Tommy flinches at the sound of her voice and tries to get up, but is prevented by the pain in his stiff back.

TOMMY  
 Upf!

CLAIRE  
 (worried)  
 Poor Tommy. Did you sleep in that  
 chair?

Tommy manages to get up and carefully stretches out. He realizes that Claire really is awake.

TOMMY  
 You're awake! Thank god! I was  
 worried sick.

CLAIRE  
 (bashfully)  
 Did you change my clothes?

TOMMY  
 Three times! You were sweating  
 like a fighter in a ring. That's  
 the way to break a fever!  
 (realizes she's  
 embarrassed so he  
 continues)  
 Don't worry, I've seen naked girls  
 before ... not this beautiful,  
 though, but ...  
 (smile)  
 Tommy lays his hand on her fore  
 head.

TOMMY  
 Excellent. Are you in any pain?

CLAIRE  
 No, but I'm so hungry, I could  
 eat a horse!

TOMMY  
 (exhilarated)  
 That's great! Now, that's a good  
 sign. I'll go make a real farmer's  
 breakfast right away.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Claire is sitting at the kitchen table having breakfast with great pleasure. Tommy watches contentedly and puts more food on her plate. He looks out the window. Everything is covered in a thick layer of snow.

TOMMY  
 There are big piles of snow  
 everywhere. I'm calling your work  
 to let them know you won't be  
 coming in today.

CLAIRE  
 (resolutely)  
 You can't make my decision for me!

TOMMY  
 No, I mean, everything's covered  
 in snow, you can't pass through  
 anywhere. I'm not going to work,  
 either.

Claire runs her hand through her ruffled hair.

CLAIRE  
 (acting like a typical  
 woman)  
 Oh, my god, I must look awful!

Tommy looks at her tormented face and her curious cheerful  
 eyes.

TOMMY  
 (his cheeks rapidly  
 blushing)  
 You are a very pretty girl...  
 (in a hurry while  
 getting up)  
 ...I'll go look for a shovel and  
 help clear the way in front of  
 the building. You go back to bed  
 and I'll get you a cup of tea  
 when I come back.

Claire, smiling, watches him leave the apartment.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 The next day Claire looked healthy  
 and invigorated so she decided to  
 go to work. I wish I had been  
 able to persuade her not to do so  
 because when she came home that  
 evening...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire enters the apartment. Tommy sees her and gets up from  
 his chair, putting down his crossword puzzle.

CLAIRE  
 (talking very fast)  
 Hi! Martens from DVPM got  
 transferred to L.A. If you take  
 over his lease tomorrow, you will  
 have gotten yourself an apartment!

TOMMY  
 (miserable)  
 Great.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 And that's how I moved to a new  
 apartment ... or worse ... that's  
 how I moved out of Claire's...

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy paces around his apartment. The walls seem gray. The furniture is dark. Tommy looks at the pale spots on the wall where paintings use to be. He stops in front of the window. On the window seat there is a pot containing a half-dried miserably looking plant. Tommy sadly caresses its leaves.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Work sort of took care of itself...

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy is sitting at his desk, watching a web site on the monitor in front of him with interest. We can see that the site title says "Chinese Pyramids".

TOMMY  
 (for self)  
 Hm. I thought the pyramids were  
 in ... in ... wherever.

A pair of magnificent legs enters the office. Those legs belong to Marianne who a few days ago became the chief departmental secretary. She's carrying two cups of coffee in her hands and papers under her arm. Her appearance somewhat agitates Martin and Ralph. Marianne puts the papers on Martins desk.

MARIANNE  
 (to everyone)  
 These are the papers for your  
 monthly reports. Fill them out or  
 fill out the e-form. And please,  
 if you decide to hand write them,  
 make it legible, will you? The  
 last time was hideous. Those  
 hearts you drew on last month's  
 report looked like peanuts ... Oh,  
 and another thing. I've also  
 brought forms for the prediction  
 of market development for two  
 quarters. The management would  
 like to know which segment,  
 according to your opinion, could  
 be showing the highest growth.

Marianne approaches Tommy's desk and puts down one of the two coffee cups on his desk.

MARIANNE

(to Tommy)

I brought you coffee. A bit sweeter. Is that how you like it?

Tommy looks at the coffee cup on his desk with gratitude.

TOMMY

Thanks. That's nice of you.

Marianne leaves the office followed by Tommy's co-workers' hungry looks.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(with relish)

Who did she ... I mean, what did she have to do to get so quickly ahead? Can you believe this! Chief departmental secretary!

RALPH COLTER

From mail delivery girl to chief departmental secretary in three months! She really must've worked hard on...

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(to Tommy)

What do you think?

TOMMY

(protective)

Leave the girl alone. She's not causing you any trouble.

Tommy gets up and approaches Martin's desk. Picks up a paper and starts reading.

TOMMY

(for self)

Which segment of the market do you expect to be potentially the most propulsive in the next 6 months?

Tommy thinks briefly and then looks at the monitor.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

All indices have shown a slight stable growth. This would mean that people are going to start traveling. For some reason pyramids attract tourists and they travel to see them in ... in...

We can see Tommy writing down in the form "tourism in China".

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy sits in his chair and watches the plant on the window seat.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 It was not nice returning from work into a gray and miserable single life. I missed Claire. Her relationship with Nigel made me miserable. The choice is ... it was her choice. It's not nice to be envious of a friend. Tommy gets up, picks up a basin filled with water and waters the plant.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Loneliness is a bitch. I decided to get a pet.

INT. PET STORE - DAY

Tommy walks along the store. He sees a pretty dog. The dog is friendly and lovable.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Dogs require attention and walks. That's not for me.

Tommy approaches the cage with a cat in it. With infatuation he watches that egotistical smug fur minx licking her paw.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Cats are extremely interesting, but they shed hair.

Tommy goes towards the fish tank. Its color is beautiful and the lovely moves of exotic little fish impress him for a brief moment. Still, he shakes his head.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 A fish is not much of a companion. It can hardly return a kind word.

Tommy turns around and sees a big bird on a perch. The bird's chest is yellow and the wings red. Tommy examines the bird with amazement.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Now, that's what a guy needs, a clever good-natured, kind bird!

A saleswoman, a plain brunette (22) wearing ugly glasses notices Tommy and approaches him.

SAILSWOMAN  
 Can I help you, sir?

TOMMY  
This is one amazing parrot!

SAILSWOMAN  
(scornfully)  
It's a cockatoo.

TOMMY  
What a great name  
(cont'd says "cockatoo"  
with enthusiasm)  
Hi, birdie!

RED COCKATOO  
Rrrr ... asshole ... asshole ...  
asshole...

TOMMY  
(shocked)  
What?!

RED COCKATOO  
Err ... aura ... asshole ...  
rrrraaassshooooole...

TOMMY  
(he has an answer to  
any situation)  
Actually, I don't like the ones  
with red wings. Do you have those  
with blue feathers?

The saleswoman stares at Tommy. Something occurs to her.

SAILSWOMAN  
Follow me, I think I have just  
what you need.

Tommy follows the saleswoman and enters the next room. In the corner a bird with yellow chest and blue wings is sitting on a perch.

TOMMY  
(thrilled)  
What a gorgeous parrot!

SAILSWOMAN  
(insisting)  
It's a cockatoo!

TOMMY  
This one's also called Cockatoo?  
(he keeps repeating  
the word "cockatoo"  
with amazement)  
Hi, birdie!

BLUE COCKATOO  
 Rrrrrsssstrrrrrroonzoooo  
 (asshole in Italian)  
 aaasssstrrrrrroonzzzzoo

TOMMY  
 What?!  
 (concludes)  
 It speaks French!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy exits the pet store. He is carrying the bird cage and a big box of bird food under one arm, and clasping two smaller boxes in the other. He walks along the sidewalk towards his car. From a restaurant above which there's a sign "Italian Restaurant" exit two young men with black slicked-down hair. One of them contentedly rubs his stomach, the other one is playing with a toothpick in his mouth. They see Tommy approaching them. Tommy's car is parked directly in front of the restaurant. Tommy reaches his car, clumsily tries to find his car keys, strongly rocking the cage in the process. The bird in the cage does not like it and it makes a sound.

BLUE COCKATOO  
 Rrrrrsssstrrrrrroonzzzzooooooo...

The young men in front of the restaurant burst into laughter. Tommy kindly nods in their direction while opening the car door.

TOMMY  
 (proudly)  
 It speaks French.

Hearing this, the young men burst out laughing. Above their heads we can clearly see the sign "Italian Restaurant".

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The blue cockatoo is in his cage swinging on the perch. It won't stop speaking in its shrieking voice.

BLUE COCKATOO  
 Rrrrrsssstrrrrrroonzzzzooooooo...

Tommy is sitting in his chair. His eyebrows are clenched and he's concentrating on studying the book he's holding in his hand. We can see the title of the book "French Dictionary". The blue cockatoo is tireless.

BLUE COCKATOO  
 Rrrrrsssstrrrrrroonzzzzooooooo...

Tommy puts down the book and goes to the book shelf. There are about thirty books on the shelf.

Tommy picks up the one with the title "French Dictionary" and goes through it. Dissatisfied, puts it back on the shelf. He reaches out for the book entitled "German Dictionary", but changes his mind and picks up the one entitled "Italian Dictionary with Pronunciation". He goes through it looking for the word. He stops in shock and looks at the bird with his mouth open.

BLUE COCKATOO

Rrrrrsssstrrrrrrrroooooonzzzoooo...

TOMMY

(furiously)

You!

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Tommy exits his building, carrying the bird in its cage and a big box of bird food in one hand, and two smaller boxes, strenuously clenched under his other arm. He clumsily tries to find his car keys.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

They agreed to take the bird back,  
the rest of the stuff I had to keep.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy is pensively pushing the cage and it swings on its stand.

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Tommy is sitting alone in his office staring at the monitor. Marianne shows up at the door.

MARIANNE

Hi! You're not on your break?

TOMMY

No, I brought a sandwich.

Marianne pulls up a chair and sits next to Tommy. Tommy pays no attention to her and keeps staring at the monitor.

MARIANNE

You know, I hate it when your  
colleagues are here. They're  
giving me ... you know ... "the  
look", probably making mean  
comments.

Tommy is now looking straight at Marianne, but in his eyes we don't find understanding for what she's saying.

MARIANNE

(cont'd)

No matter how you put it, it's a  
classical example of mobbing, right?

Tommy looks straight at Marianne and spins a pencil between his fingers.

MARIANNE

(cont'd)

I get male solidarity, but don't tell me that's not what we're dealing with here! Classical harassment with elements of sexual discrimination in the work place, mobbing, right?

TOMMY

Oh, mobbing...?

(continues completely sincerely)

I thought it was a hokey expression.

Marianne stares at Tommy.

MARIANNE

Really, when I think about it, it seems just like it.

TOMMY

Look, you're a pretty girl, it's normal that men are looking at you like that... and comment, it doesn't necessarily have to be this... bullying.

MARIANNE

Are you single? I mean, you're not in a relationship, or anything?

TOMMY

(honestly)

No. I'm going through a weird phase right now.

MARIANNE

I'm in a similar situation. Would you like to go to a movie sometime, no strings attached, just a friendly night out?

TOMMY

I'd love to.

Ralph and Martin appear at the door. They pause when they see Marianne sitting at Tommy's desk. Marianne gives them an indifferent look and gets up.

MARIANNE

O.K. I'll be going now.

Marianne exits accompanied by lustful looks glued to her figure.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(to Tommy)

You are totally doing her! He's just playing dumb. We are so on to you!

RALPH COLTER

Still waters run deep!

TOMMY

(sincerely)

Guys, I'm not involved with her. Leave the girl alone, she's not causing any trouble. And she just might. What you're doing is kind of ...

(pauses looking for the right word)

... bowling.

EXT. STREET - ENTRANCE TO MOVIE THEATRE

Contented crowd exits the movie theatre. We can see Tommy and Marianne laughing, waving their arms around, obviously commenting on some scenes from the movie. They start walking down the street, side by side, when they get stuck in a crowd. One of the people coming their way is Nigel. He sees Tommy and steps in front of him.

NIGEL

Hi there, old pal!

TOMMY

(surprised)

Hi!

Nigel looks at Marianne and his nostrils flare slightly.

TOMMY

(to Nigel)

Meet my friend from work.

Marianne reservedly extends her arm, but we can see the hidden satisfaction of a woman aware of the interest she aroused.

TOMMY

(to Nigel)

We just saw a movie and we were thinking of going for a drink, wanna join us?

NIGEL

I'd love to some other time, but not tonight. I was at work until 15 minutes ago, it's pretty hectic over there.

TOMMY: OK, make sure you stay in touch.

NIGEL  
 (looking at Marianne)  
 I'll see you around, buddy!

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - ONE HOUR LATER

Marianne and Tommy are walking down the street. Marianne stops in front of a building.

MARIANNE  
 This is me ...  
 (cont'd coyly)  
 : You wanna come up for a drink?

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - DAY

Ralph, Martin and Tommy each sitting at their respective desks, working. Enters Dave Black carrying a large pile of papers under his arm. Above the door there's a clock saying 11:30 am.

DAVE BLACK  
 (in a boy's voice)  
 OK, guys, this is urgent.

He puts the papers on the desk while three pairs of eyes watch him with zero interest.

DAVE BLACK  
 (in a boy's voice)  
 An important client wants to get into the wood industry. He's interested in "Woodie's Wood". Here's all the paperwork on the fluctuation of stock value and attempts of takeovers. I need your evaluation and opinion by the end of the day.

He significantly taps the papers with his fingers, looking at the uninterested faces.

RALPH COLTER  
 (resolutely)  
 I'm working on DP's auditing report. I can't take over that.

DAVE BLACK  
 (attempting to make a threat)  
 I repeat. an extremely important client!

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(uninterested)

I'm working on the analysis of the chocolate market for "Sister's Cookies", I don't want to hear about anything else in the next 15 days.

Dave turns towards Tommy.

DAVE BLACK

(desperately)

I haven't done this often, but here it is ...

(to Tommy)

would you take care of this today ... please!

TOMMY

There's no need to beg, just tell me what you want to know.

DAVE BLACK

(with fake emotion)

Thanks buddy! Thanks a million! Look, the client doesn't want to enter a company with no perspective. I've gone through this and a lot has been going on. They tried to take over two smaller companies, then someone tried to take them over and so on and so forth. This has been going on for five years without concrete profit and the client would like to know whether he can expect stock growth. So, yes or no. Just a simple "yes" or "no".

Tommy gets up and superficially goes through the papers.

TOMMY

OK. I'll get right on it.

DAVE BLACK

(he got rid of the papers and is anxious to get away)

Thanks! Thanks a bunch!

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF "STONE&SON" BUILDING - LATE IN THE AFTERNOON

The street is getting busy. Street lights are coming on and people are getting off work. Clearly, the work day is over.

INT. TOMMY'S OFFICE - LATE IN THE AFTERNOON

Tommy is sitting at his desk doing a crossword puzzle. Martin and Ralph each sitting at their desk, evidently focusing on the work in front of them. We can see that the clock on the wall shows 16:50 pm.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

It's been a long day.

Martin gets up, stretches out, steps towards the middle of the office and looks at Tommy. When he sees Tommy doing a crossword puzzle he bursts out laughing.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(mockingly)

"I'll get right on it"!

(to Tommy)

that's what you told him! Exactly that!

Tommy looks at the clock indifferently.

TOMMY

(to Martin)

I'm no genius, but the man only wants a "yes or "no" answer, right?

MARTIN O. MARTIN

Exactly.

TOMMY

(concentrating)

Therefore, the odds that the answer is yes are 50%, right?

MARTIN O. MARTIN

It's not about the answer, but the analysis leading you to the answer.

TOMMY

(interrupting)

Once you've analyzed everything, you still have to answer "yes" or "no"?

MARTIN O. MARTIN

(confusedly concludes)

Oh! You think that Dave the asshole had already done the analysis himself and then dumped this on us so one of us would take the heat?

TOMMY

Something like that. He didn't have the balls to make the decision.

MARTIN O. MARTIN

That does sound like him. But,  
how are you going to handle this,  
you haven't even looked at the  
paperwork?

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Decision making is a complicated  
process. Let's say that I've...  
well... simplified it.

Tommy takes a coin out of his pocket and tosses it in the  
air. The coin spins in the air and falls into Tommy's open  
palm. Tommy looks at the coin and picks up the phone. Martin  
slaps himself hard on the forehead.

TOMMY

(confidently into the  
receiver)

Dave? About that urgent analysis,  
the answer is "yes"! ...Of course  
I'm sure! You owe me a couple of  
days off...

(he continues while  
looking at his  
crossword puzzle)

...this completely exhausted me.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy is putting books on the shelf. He steps back to have a  
look. He moves the bird cage and moves a couple of books to  
the other side of the shelf, as if looking for a special  
place to put them. Phone rings and Tommy answers, still  
concentrated on the books.

TOMMY

Yes! Nigel, it's you...

Tommy looks at the book shelf and pensively pushes the  
birdcage which is now swinging on its stand. The cage swings  
back and Tommy pushes it back again.

TOMMY

...just a co-worker... no, we're  
not involved ... Marianne is  
available...

Tommy pushes the cage which returns to its previous position.

TOMMY

I don't know if it's right for me  
to give you her phone number...  
anyway... ah, what the hell, I'll  
give it you... I have it written  
down here somewhere...

Tommy leans towards the shelf and the cage which he had pushed a moment ago swings back, hitting him on the head.

TOMMY  
 (in pain, holding his  
 hand on his head)  
 Ouch!  
 (continues into the  
 receiver)  
 No, it's nothing, I got hit by a  
 bird cage... no, I don't have a  
 bird... Hold on for just a second.

Tommy leans towards the book shelf and picks up a note book, hatefully looking at the cage.

TOMMY  
 Yeah, Nigel? Here's the number...

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Is it alright to give out a  
 person's phone number to a third  
 person, just like that?

INT. "STONE AND SON" BUILDING - LOBBY - MORNING

Tommy walks towards the elevator. On the left side of his fore head is a band aid. He hears the sound of women's heels behind him and turns around. Marianne is standing behind him. Tommy carefully searches her face for signs of disapproval, but doesn't find any.

MARIANNE  
 (cheerfully)  
 Morning!

TOMMY  
 (carefully)  
 Morning.

Marianne notices the band aid.

MARIANNE  
 (worried)  
 Did you hurt yourself?

TOMMY  
 No big deal. I got hit by a bird  
 cage.

MARIANNE  
 (affectionately)  
 You have a bird?

TOMMY  
 No, I don't have a bird.

Elevator door opens, they get on.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 There was no reaction on her part,  
 so I did what I do best.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Tommy's sitting in his chair staring at the book shelf. Phone rings. Tommy reluctantly goes towards the phone. He pauses. The phone rings again. Tommy decides to answer it.

TOMMY  
 Yes?

CLAIRE  
 Hi!

TOMMY  
 Hey, girl!

CLAIRE  
 So, you leave and I don't hear  
 from you for a month? Have I done  
 something to make you mad?

TOMMY  
 (ashamed)  
 No, no, everything's fine, I've  
 just been busy, that's all, and...

CLAIRE  
 (interrupting)  
 So, you're not mad at me or  
 something?

TOMMY  
 No, no... I was just...

CLAIRE  
 That's nice, 'cause I need to ask  
 you a favor...

TOMMY  
 I'd be happy to help. What is it?

CLAIRE  
 It's hard to explain over the  
 phone, can you come over...  
 tomorrow or...?

TOMMY  
 (interrupting)  
 : Are you at work?

CLAIRE  
 Well, yeah...

TOMMY  
 (interrupting)  
 I'll come over right now!

CLAIRE  
 Great!

INT. SAMY'S FAST, SLOW&HOWEVER FOOD - EVENING

Tommy enters the diner and looks around. He sees Claire across the room and his cheeks slightly blush. Claire nods in the direction of a free table and he sits down. Tommy carefully watches the customers. One of them, a poor man, judging by his clothes, puts his coffee cup under the table and pours liquor disguised in a paper bag into his coffee. Claire also notices this and gives him a smile. The man gives her a grateful look. Claire puts down her tray and looks at the cook, a grumpy 50-yearold.

CLAIRE  
 (to cook)  
 Hey, Sammy! Time out!

Sammy mumbles something while Claire sits down at Tommy's table. She notices a band aid on his fore head.

CLAIRE  
 (worried)  
 Were you injured?

TOMMY  
 No big deal, I got hit by a bird cage.

CLAIRE  
 You have a bird?

TOMMY  
 No, I don't have a bird.

CLAIRE  
 (cheerfully laughing)  
 There's a story in there somewhere.  
 You'll tell me some time?

TOMMY  
 (embarrassed)  
 Hmm...

CLAIRE  
 (suddenly turning serious)  
 Look...  
 (pauses briefly and continues)  
 Actually, I need a favor.

TOMMY  
 (confident)  
 I'm here for you.

CLAIRE  
 My sister Rebecca is getting  
 married next weekend.

TOMMY  
 (simplemindedly)  
 Oh, that's nice!

CLAIRE  
 I have to be there and I want to  
 be there. If I take the bus, I'll  
 mess up my dress, I won't be able  
 to bring the present with me and...  
 and... I'll show up alone.  
 (gets confused for a  
 second, then continues)  
 I guess what I'm trying to say am  
 I needed a ride and a date 'cause  
 this is a wedding... and...

TOMMY  
 (interrupting)  
 I'd be honored!

CLAIRE  
 (cheerfully)  
 Really, you'd do that? I mean,  
 you don't hate weddings or  
 something?

TOMMY  
 (simplemindedly)  
 Marriage is a sacred vow shared  
 between man and woman. It's nice  
 to be able to witness such an act.

CLAIRE  
 (she's enjoying this)  
 You really think so?

TOMMY  
 (confident)  
 That's the way it should be,  
 shouldn't it?

CLAIRE  
 (infatuated)  
 That sounds really lovely.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A grey car speeds by on the highway.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Tommy is driving the car and singing along with the singer we hear from the car radio. It's Tim McGraw singing "The Cowboy in me".

"... the things I've done for foolish pride, the me that's never satisfied the face that's in the mirror when I don't like what I see I guess that's just the cowboy in me"...

Claire is sitting next to Tommy cheerfully bobbing her head in the rhythm of the music. The song continues and now she is singing along with Tommy.

"Girl I know there's times you must have thought there ain't a line you've drawn I haven't crossed but you set your mind to see this love on through I guess that's just the cowboy in you"... They both laugh contentedly and continue singing.

"... We ride and never worry about the fall I guess that's just the cowboy in us all"...

CLAIRE

(laughing)

This is delightful!

(pauses for a moment,  
then continues)

I've never told this to anyone ...  
but, it's so hard holding in some  
of the good things. Tommy gets  
careful.

CLAIRE

(cont'd)

I have... I mean, a publisher...  
a publisher accepted my book and...

TOMMY

(interrupts excitedly)

You're getting published!

Tommy drops the wheel and turns to Claire with joy in his eyes.

CLAIRE

(terrified)

Grab the wheel!

Tommy quickly grabs the wheel, but turns his eyes back to Claire.

TOMMY

(with sincere  
enthusiasm)

Your book is getting published? A  
real hard-cover book?

CLAIRE  
 (laughter and joy)  
 I hope it's hard-covered!

TOMMY  
 (excitedly)  
 That's wonderful, my god, that's  
 so great!

He turns back to Claire. Her eyes are full of affection towards his boyish enthusiasm.

TOMMY  
 I'm so happy for you!

CLAIRE  
 (laughing)  
 I had to tell someone!  
 (enthusiastically)  
 It's great to be able to share  
 good and bad with someone.

Tommy is thrilled and his eyes are glowing.

TOMMY  
 It's hard to keep good feelings  
 to yourself... I know how it is  
 (nods his head in  
 confirmation)  
 ... Here's an example, I'm in  
 love with you.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A gray car speeds by on the highway.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Tommy is driving the car and rigidly stares at the road. In his eyes we can see guilt and insecurity. Claire is sitting next to him, also looking straight ahead. They are both dead silent. A gas station emerging in the distance.

CLAIRE  
 (indifferently)  
 Pull over at the gas station, I  
 forgot to buy something.

Tommy does not show to have registered what she had said, but makes a turn after a few seconds and parks the car at the empty gas station.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Claire gets out of the car.

CLAIRE  
 (indifferently over  
 her shoulder)  
 I'll be right back.

Tommy watches Claire walk towards the store. He turns and hits his head on the wheel really hard. He lifts his head and a pale bruise emerges on his fore head. He gets out of the car. An old man (70) with neatly groomed gray mustache approaches him.

OLD MAN  
 (kindly)  
 Shall I fill 'er up?

TOMMY  
 (weakly)  
 Yeah.

Through the store window Tommy can see Claire talking to the saleswoman, a neat nice old lady (70). Claire exits the store and Tommy hesitatingly steps in front of her. Claire looks away and unsteadily opens a pack of tissues.

TOMMY  
 (insecurely)  
 Look I...

Claire manages to pull out a tissue from the pack and looks straight at Tommy. She sees the bruise on his fore head and gently touches it.

CLAIRE  
 (with care)  
 You knocked out the wheel again?

TOMMY  
 (cont'd)  
 ... you know I didn't...

Claire brings the tissue to her face and tears come rolling immediately.

CLAIRE  
 (real tears)  
 No one has ever treated me this  
 nice ... no one has ever taken  
 such good care of me like you did.

Tommy steps forward and picks her up in his arms. Claire cries on his chest, and then looks up and their lips collide in a long, somewhat clumsy kiss. The old man standing next to the car looks at the scene and searches for his wife with his eyes. He sees her crying and wiping her tears away. The old man smiles. Claire touches the bruise on Tommy's fore head and smiles and then stands on her toes and they kiss again, this time more "skillfully".

INT. CAR - DAY

Tommy is driving. From time to time, he glances at Claire, slightly quizzically, but nonetheless with contentment. The car is moving slowly, and judging from the landscape streaming by through the car windows, we can hardly tell it is moving.

CLAIRE

(laughing)

The way we're going, we could have taken the bike!

TOMMY

(sincerely)

I'm sorry, I'm slightly shocked. You want me to speed up?

CLAIRE

No, we'll get there eventually  
(considers for a moment,  
then continues)

. Look, I haven't had the chance to tell you this, but I should warn you... my parents are a bit... well, strange. Don't let certain things surprise you. It's like this. My father is in construction and one day, a brick fell on his head. He sued the firm, but the company lawyer claimed that he hadn't been wearing a helmet and was drunk to boot.

TOMMY

(with empathy)

That happens all the time. Damn lawyers!

CLAIRE

Well, to tell you the truth, he was probably right.

TOMMY

(cautiously)

Did the impact have lasting effects upon your father?

CLAIRE

Frankly, I cannot really see the difference.

TOMMY

Than what?

CLAIRE  
 (laughing)  
 The lawyer who called my Dad a  
 drunk is now marrying my sister  
 Rebecca!

TOMMY  
 (enthusiastically)  
 Wow! That's something!

Claire laughs heartily and contentedly watches Tommy's enthusiasm.

CLAIRE  
 And my Mom is a little... well,  
 you'll see!

EXT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

In front of a lower middle-class home there are parked cars and elegantly dressed men and women milling around, entering and exiting the house.

Claire and Tommy get out of the car and walk towards the house. Claire's hand is wrapped around Tommy's. Out of a group of people standing by the entrance a man (60) separates and starts towards them. His face is red, his nose covered in capillaries inherent for an alcoholic, and he is obviously furious. It's Claire's father. He stops in front of Tommy.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 Claire's parents spoke in simple  
 and comprehensible language.

CLAIRE'S FATHER  
 (angry, drunk, looking  
 for a fight)  
 That son of a bitch... that cheap-  
 skate devil of a lawyer... that  
 fucking asshole...

Startled, Tommy looks around, and Claire squeezes his hand encouragingly.

CLAIRE  
 (interrupting)  
 Dad, this is my boyfriend.

CLAIRE'S FATHER  
 (churlishly)  
 Are you a lawyer as well? Or a  
 broker, or some other kind of  
 troublemaker?

TOMMY  
 (confused)  
 I'm an analyst.

CLAIRE'S FATHER

(crossly)

What the hell do you analyze?  
Horse shit?

Tommy pleadingly looks around, searching for help. Claire starts laughing contagiously, followed by Tommy and Claire's father.

CLAIRE'S FATHER

(genuinely)

Sorry, sonny... I'm not angry at you. You seem like a decent kind of a fellow... sorry.

The father extends his hand towards Claire and pulls her into a hug, with her head resting on his shoulder.

CLAIRE'S FATHER

(with drunken gentleness)

My daughter!

(continues with tears in his eyes)

Go on, go eat something, and then we'll leave for the church.

CLAIRE

(to Tommy)

Let's go check in with Mom, and then we'll change.

INT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Claire and Tommy are slowly getting through the crowd inside the house. Claire stops every once in a while to say hello to her relatives and friends. A chubby woman (60) walks towards them. It's Claire's mother, slightly drunk and lost in the crowd. She hugs Claire tightly.

CLAIRE'S MOM

(drunk, emotional, with tears in her eyes)

My daughter... my daughter... it's a wonderful feeling having your daughter marry...

CLAIRE

(interrupting)

Mom... Mom, I'm not the one getting married. Rebecca is!

Tommy stares completely transfixed by this scene.

CLAIRE'S MOM

Oh...  
 (continues through  
 tears)  
 well, you'll get married one of  
 these days as well.

CLAIRE

(resolutely)  
 Mom, this is my boyfriend Tommy.

Claire's mother takes a look at Tommy.

CLAIRE'S MOM

(to Tommy)  
 Son, do you have a temper?

TOMMY

(honestly)  
 No, Ma'am.

CLAIRE

Mom, let's go get dressed, we are  
 leaving for church soon.

EXT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

People are exiting the house, getting into their cars. One by one, the cars start off, leaving the empty space in front of the house.

EXT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Street lights shed some light on the street. A grey car slowly comes to a stop in front of the house. Claire and Tommy get out of it and walk towards the house, holding hands.

INT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Claire and Tommy walk into the house. Claire's father sleeps on one of the sofas. Claire's mother claimed the other one. Claire laughs at the scene, then brings the covers from the next room, gently covering both of her parents.

CLAIRE

(to Tommy)  
 My parents are... well, you know... a  
 bit strange.

TOMMY

They are a perfectly normal  
 American family.

Claire laughs and walks towards him.

CLAIRE

This wasn't so bad, considering.  
I think I'm slightly drunk as  
well. We can stay at a motel, if  
you'd like? Tommy wraps his hands  
around her waist.

TOMMY

Am I really your boyfriend?

CLAIRE

(sweetly)  
Uh-huh.

TOMMY

Then I don't care where I am, as  
long as it's with you.

Claire stands on her tiptoes and kisses him, long and gently.  
They climb upstairs holding hands.

INT. CLAIRE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - MORNING

Claire is in the kitchen, preparing breakfast. Her mother  
appears, holding her head, with clear traces of a hangover  
on her face.

CLAIRE'S MOM

(aghast)  
My God, what a nightmare! I dreamt  
that my daughter was getting  
married!

Claire turns around towards her.

CLAIRE

(laughing)  
Mom, Rebecca got married yesterday,  
have you forgotten already?

CLAIRE'S MOM

So, it's true? Oh dear.  
(sadly shakes her head)  
Her poor husband.

Tommy comes down the stairs.

TOMMY

Morning!

Claire's mother holds her head painfully.

CLAIRE'S MOM

Pipe down, young man, my head is  
about to explode.

TOMMY

Excuse me, Ma'am.

CLAIRE'S MOM

(to Claire)

Who is this boy and why is he so cheerful so early in the morning?

Tommy is slightly embarrassed by the question, but Claire laughs, taking him by the hand.

CLAIRE

(to Mom)

Mom, this is my boyfriend Tommy. You've met yesterday, remember?

CLAIRE'S MOM

Son, do you have a temper?

TOMMY

No, Ma'am, I really don't.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - DAY

Claire and Tommy get into a car, with her parents waving at them from the front porch. The car slowly starts down the street.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

That was the best weekend I could ever have imagined... oh, right... I forgot about Claire's sister... She was...

Tommy remembers:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

A girl in a wedding dress - Rebecca (24) - is receiving congratulations. She watches the people around her with disdain, lips firmly pressed together into a thin line. Her eyes are ice cold and full of contempt for the world around her.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

Well, they say lawyers go to hell... life with Rebecca could be a good trail-run for that.

INT. TOMMY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tommy's apartment now looks fresh and cheerful. The walls are painted in bright colors, the books on the shelves finally arranged in some semblance of order. The plant on the windowsill is in full blossom and we can see Claire watering it and talking softly to it. Tommy approaches her, hugging her around the waist from behind. She twists and sprays him with water. They kiss laughing.

Tommy suddenly becomes very serious.

TOMMY

(sheepishly)

You know, real love... I mean, true love... it can surmount anything. Any obstacle. And people's past... it doesn't matter because...

CLAIRE

(interrupting  
worriedly)

Have you done something you shouldn't have in the past?

TOMMY

No! No, I just meant...

CLAIRE

(interrupts with  
intensity)

: Have you done something terrible?

TOMMY

No, I...

CLAIRE

(encouragingly)

You can tell me, you know I'll support you no matter what.

TOMMY

(nervously)

That's not what I meant...  
(continues with slight  
desperation)  
My God, how can I say this?

CLAIRE

(interrupts  
encouragingly)

Something is eating at you. You should get it out, you'll feel better.

TOMMY

(rushes through it  
desperately)

: I just wanted to say that it's not easy for a man to be with his friend's ex-girlfriend and that I don't mind

(loudly and  
determinedly)

because this is true love  
(bright-eyed and full  
of conviction)

, strong and wonderful  
(loud and honest  
relief)

and I don't give a damn about you and Nigel!

Claire stares at Tommy for a moment, then determinedly holds her chin up.

CLAIRE  
 (suspiciously)  
 It seems you do have a temper  
 after all.  
 (Pauses then continues  
 with interest.)  
 Who's Nigel?

Tommy just stands there, confused, noticing the genuine interest in her expression.

TOMMY  
 (confused)  
 Nigel? A friend of mine who asked  
 you out... and...

CLAIRE  
 (laughs)  
 Oh, him!  
 (She studies his naive  
 expression for a  
 moment.)  
 You didn't get it, did you?

TOMMY  
 What was I supposed to get?

CLAIRE  
 You were so full of jealousy that  
 day it was completely natural for  
 him to ask me out...  
 (laughing)  
 It's OK to tease jealous people,  
 you know. You should have seen  
 yourself.

TOMMY  
 So, you haven't... with him... I mean...

CLAIRE  
 (interrupting)  
 I never even saw him again.

Tommy's face gets flushed with obvious relief and happiness.

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 It is nice to forgive. Forgiving  
 is a wonderful feeling, especially  
 when there's actually nothing to  
 forgive. I'm not particularly  
 bright, I've known that for a  
 very long time.  
 (MORE)

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER; CONT'D)

The world is full of unusual things and crossword puzzles of senseless words. Whatever I do, whatever I learn, it seems that without... I'm not quite sure what I actually wanted to say. I'm no good with protracted thoughts. I will only say that life and things went on... more than well.

ON THE SCREEN:

We see a spacious ballroom with 20.000 people applauding. They are all Chinese and are now singing the Communist hymn. They are at the convention of the Chinese Communist Party.

VOICE OF THE TV JOURNALIST (ON THE SCREEN):

...this is one more in a series of moves opening this country towards the rest of the world. The conclusions of the Party leadership are encouraging for all those looking to invest and travel to China. All previously prohibited areas are now open, making certain places accessible to foreigners after nearly 90 years...

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)

This is how my prediction on the rise of tourism in China came true... people are just fond of pharaohs and these things. Claire's book got published.

INT. BOOK STORE:

Approximately twenty people are standing in line, waiting for Claire to sign their copy of the book. Claire is sitting and signing the books, pleasantly exchanging several sentences with each fan. In the corner of the bookshop three young women are talking and occasionally looking in Tommy's direction. These are the same three women we were able to see in Tommy's fantasy when Claire suggested to him she would like to include his experiences into her book. One of them finally gathers the courage to approach him. The other two follow behind.

YOUNG WOMAN #1

(to Tommy)

Excuse me, but my friends and I... we were wondering if you were one of the characters in the book?

TOMMY  
 (self-consciously)  
 Well, you see..  
 (thinks on it for a  
 moment)  
 ... which character did you have in  
 mind?

YOUNG WOMAN #2  
 The one who always draws the wrong  
 conclusion. Tommy or..  
 (opens the book in  
 order to make sure)  
 ... yes, Tommy.

TOMMY  
 (checking)  
 He's pretty clueless, isn't he?

YOUNG WOMAN #3  
 (enthusiastically)  
 No! He's awfully cute, totally  
 harmless and fun!

TOMMY  
 (with false-modesty)  
 Well... I think I might have a few  
 things in common with him and..  
 some of my adventures really are  
 part of the book.

YOUNG WOMAN #1  
 Would you sign my book?

YOUNG WOMAN #2  
 (interrupts)  
 Mine as well, please!

YOUNG WOMAN #3  
 Me first!

Tommy carefully takes the books and signs them.

YOUNG WOMAN #1  
 Oh, thank you. It's so rare to  
 actually have the author's and  
 the main character's signatures!

TOMMY THE NARRATOR (VOICE OVER)  
 This is how I ended up in  
 literature. This would have been  
 my happy end - the kind I like  
 best... actually... The bookstore  
 door opens and Marianne and Nigel  
 walk in. They notice Tommy and  
 start towards him.

NIGEL

Hi!  
 (takes another, careful  
 look of him)  
 . Dude, you seem so happy you're  
 glowing.

TOMMY

(sheepishly)  
 Oh...

Marianne takes Tommy by the hand in a friendly gesture.

MARIANNE

I'm going to collect my copy of  
 the book  
 (looking around)  
 , cause as things are going I  
 might otherwise have to wait for  
 the second edition.

She walks away towards the shelves.

NIGEL

(carefully)  
 Listen...  
 (quietly and intimately)  
 this has turned serious  
 (nods in Marianne's  
 direction)  
 I mean, this is something special...

From the corner of the shop, smiling prettily, Marianne waves  
 to Nigel.

NIGEL

(cont'd to Tommy)  
 ...and I'd like to know... you  
 understand?

TOMMY

No, I don't.

NIGEL

(patiently)  
 Did you and Marianne... you know...?

TOMMY

(lying)  
 What?

NIGEL

(quietly)  
 Were you intim...  
 (desperately, looking  
 straight into Tommy's  
 eyes)  
 Have you slept with my girlfriend?

TOMMY  
Marianne and I just work together.

NIGEL  
If it happened, you'd have told me?

TOMMY  
(decidedly)  
It didn't happen.

NIGEL  
But if it did, you'd have told me?

TOMMY  
Don't tell a friend. Remember?

NIGEL  
Yes. But how am I to know then?

TOMMY  
Don't worry, true love abates all  
doubt.

NIGEL  
Bullshit! But I'll give you points  
for style.

From the corner of the room, Marianne again waves at Nigel.

NIGEL  
(to Tommy)  
I'll be right back.

Nigel walks towards Marianne who happily shows him a book sitting on the shelf. Tommy watches Marianne browsing through the book.

Tommy remembers:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Marianne and Tommy walk down the street. Marianne stops in front of a building.

MARIANNE  
This is me.  
(flirting)  
You wanna come up for a drink?

PRESENT

Tommy looks through the shop window. An ugly ten-year-old boy holding his mother's hand looks straight at Tommy, surprised. Tommy's brows lower, but he stops, breaking into a smile. The ugly ten-year-old returns his smile and they both shrug their shoulders.

FADE OUT: THE END