

Carina

by

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FADE IN:

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

JENNIFER (21), a beautiful young woman, moves around her apartment and picks up select objects -- a t-shirt here, an eyeglass case there -- to put in a box she's carrying.

INSERT VHS HOME VIDEO

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

A school dance is in full swing and pre-teens are slow dancing in rhythmic circles. The camera person approaches DANNY VEGA (12) who is sitting alone against a wall.

DANNY
(to camera)
Hi Ms. Bloom.

MS. BLOOM (O.S.)
Danny, why aren't you dancing?
(Danny shrugs)
That girl over there isn't dancing.
(Danny hesitates)
Go on, ask her.

Danny walks over to a GIRL across the way and asks her something. She runs to a group of girls and they all turn and erupt in disgust when they see Danny. He sits back down.

END HOME VIDEO

INSERT CARINA'S FAMILY'S VHS HOME VIDEO

In another part of the world CARINA RAY (12) is practicing the violin. She strikes sour notes, but the parent behind the camera is encouraging. Carina flashes a smile and continues.

END HOME VIDEO

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer pulls a framed, hand-drawn portrait of herself from off the wall and digs some socks out of a dresser and places the items in the box. She hears a knock at the front door and hurries to the bathroom.

INSERT VHS HOME VIDEO

EXT. BALLROOM - BALCONY - PROM NIGHT

A video camera follows a teenage HOST outside where Danny (18) and SARAH (18) look like they're arguing. They're both dressed in formal wear. When the Host and cameraman arrive, Danny turns away.

HOST

Hey, Danny and Sarah! You've been voted as the Best Couple of the night. How about a few words for the school video?

SARAH

(to Host, beat)
We're not together anymore.

Danny turns around, revealing his tears.

DANNY

I can't believe you waited until tonight to break up with me!

SARAH

I wanted to go to Prom!

HOST

(to cameraman)
Cut. Cut!

END HOME VIDEO

INSERT CARINA'S FAMILY'S VHS HOME VIDEO

Carina (18) has taken up the guitar and is practicing with her all-female rock band. She strikes an over-the-top rocker pose and laughs to herself.

END HOME VIDEO

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer puts the facial razor into the box. From the medicine cabinet she pulls the one prescription bottle. She grabs the condoms and is about to put them in the box, but changes her mind. *Another knock at the door.* She hurries out.

INSERT VHS HOME VIDEO

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's completely black, but the sounds of people trying to stay quiet fill the air. Footsteps approach and keys are inserted into a lock. A door opens, spilling moonlight into the room and revealing the outline of a woman and a man.

The man suddenly grabs the woman and kisses her passionately; their hands grope each other in their urgency. The woman finally turns on the light. The room is decorated with birthday balloons and is full of people wearing party hats.

A banner on the wall reads: "Happy 20th Birthday!" People mutter a tepid "Surprise!" Danny (20) steps out of the crowd, holding roses. He throws the flowers at the woman's feet and attacks the man. The camera falls over as people scramble.

END HOME VIDEO

INSERT CARINA'S VHS HOME VIDEO

The camera moves around JASON (20) as he plays a melody on his saxophone. He looks up at the camera and stifles a smile. When he finishes, the camera is set down and Carina (20) runs into frame to hug him. *Another knock at the door.*

END HOME VIDEO

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer opens the front door to reveal Danny Vega (21) dressed in his work uniform: a garish red polo and navy blue khakis. His eyes are red behind his glasses from crying. Jennifer holds the BOX out for him to take. He does.

Jennifer remembers something and runs to the coffee table to pick up a movie script. She puts it in the box with a sigh.

DANNY

All it takes is one script.

JENNIFER

You keep saying that. You've only written one. I'm graduating soon. You're 21 and you still work at Chuck E. Cheese's. I need someone with more direction.

DANNY
But you said you loved me.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - LATER

The BOX is sitting on a bench table. Danny and BRIAN (28) are sitting across from each other. Brian wears a manager's hat.

Behind them on the stage are life-size PUPPETS of the Chuck E. Cheese's cast, holding instruments and performing a song in cartoony, goofy voices for children and their parents.

BRIAN
What did she say?

INSERT JENNIFER AT THE DOOR OF HER APARTMENT

JENNIFER
I meant it in a different way.

She closes the door firmly.

BACK TO SCENE

BRIAN
That's harsh. How *did* she mean it?

DANNY
You know how people say they love taking a good shit?

BRIAN
Yeah.

DANNY
That's how she loved me: like taking a good shit.

BRIAN
She said that?

DANNY
No. I didn't ask. What would have been the point? You know, it used to be that love meant something. Now people use it for everything. Does it even mean anything anymore? Man, I'm done with this.

BRIAN
With what?

DANNY
Women. Relationships. Love.

BRIAN
(smiles compassionately)
I'll tell you what: clock in. I'll
cut you first and you can hang out
with me and Sandra tonight.

DANNY
I think I'm just gonna go home.
Sorry to leave you hanging.
(gets up to leave)

BRIAN
What about the box?

Danny looks at it for a moment and sees the FRAMED PORTRAIT
he drew of Jennifer.

DANNY
Throw it away.

On his way out he passes the Chuck E. Cheese's puppets who
continue to perform their silly song.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #1 - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Danny sits at his computer and brings up his day planner.

INSERT CLOSE UP OF COMPUTER SCREEN

The to-do list is displayed prominently. The tasks read:
"Finish School", "Contact Joel Silver", "Buy Engagement
Ring". Danny marks the last one complete then adds a new
task: "Return Engagement Ring".

Danny pulls up his website deadlinedanny.com and begins to
blog. The title of the entry is: "Love R.I.P." He begins to
type, starting with: "It's time for a change."

BACK TO SCENE

He continues typing.

DANNY (V.O.)
I have been alone longer than
anyone I know.

INSERT WEDDING VIDEO OF CARINA AND JASON

Carina (21) and Jason look as happy as two people can be. The
bond between them is undeniable and unbreakable.

DANNY (V.O.)

When you've gone this long, people love to throw platitudes at you, like "it'll happen when you stop looking." What they don't tell you is that even when you stop looking you have to keep looking or it will never happen.

END WEDDING VIDEO

INSERT TITLE CARD

7 Years Later

BACK TO SCENE

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - VALENTINE'S DAY - NIGHT

DANNY (V.O.)

It's been almost a decade since I stopped looking.

Danny (28) is driving down an urban street and every shop is decorated in heart-shaped mylar balloons and teddy bears.

DANNY (V.O.)

I never planned on this; it just happened over time, like credit card debt or gaining weight. At first, it was scary. Everyone I knew was in a relationship. They were getting married. Having kids. I wasn't sure if I'd cope, but when you've been alone for as long as I have, you learn to survive.

He stops for a couple slowly crossing the street. They hold hands and are affectionate.

DANNY

(to himself)

Let's go lovebirds. Take your time. Take my time too.

(they kiss after crossing)

Die.

EXT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Danny passes the valet by the door and self-parks.

INT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The swanky inside is geared for romance, but not gaudy. The lighting is soft and dim and the tables are covered in linen.

Danny is dressed in smart, casual, dark attire and is furiously texting on his phone. He glances up to see Brian and SANDRA (35) dressed in evening wear and heads over to their table. When he gets there, Danny shakes their hands.

DANNY

Brian. Sandra. Sorry I'm late.

Danny sits, still texting.

BRIAN

No worries. We've already ordered.
This is Rebecca: Sandra's sister.

Danny glances up to see REBECCA (30): a beautiful woman wearing a cocktail dress, sitting to his right at the table.

DANNY

I'm Danny Vega. How're you doing?

REBECCA

Good, how are you?

DANNY

(still texting, beat)
Fine. Just let me finish this e-mail. I'm confirming an interview.

BRIAN

Danny's an entertainment
journalist.

REBECCA

Oh. How exciting. And Los Angeles
is the perfect city for that.

They wait for Danny to add something. He doesn't.

BRIAN

He converted his blog into a
webzine. It's pretty slick.

Danny finishes with his phone and puts it away.

DANNY

I'm actually trying to be a screenwriter.

SANDRA

But he keeps getting rejected.

Brian looks at her pointedly.

DANNY

She's right. No agent wanted to talk to me. So I decided that there had to be another way to get in front of actors and producers.

REBECCA

And entertainment journalism will allow you to do that?

DANNY

Hopefully.

REBECCA

Interview anyone famous?

DANNY

Not yet. Tomorrow's my big chance, but all I really want is five minutes with Joel Silver so I can pitch him my movie.

REBECCA

Who's Joel Silver?

DANNY

A big Hollywood producer at Warner Brothers. That's why I'm really trying to get on their list, but I hear they're really picky about who they invite to cover their films.

BRIAN

Tell her about your movie.

(Danny makes a face)

It's great. Blows away anything in the theaters right now. I remember when Danny was first working on it. Like, what, eight years ago?

(Danny nods, reads menu)

We had just met. This guy comes up to me and says he's gonna be a Hollywood screenwriter. I was like, "Sure. Sure, Danny." But now he's Mr. Hollywood.

REBECCA

What's your site called?

Danny stops reading the menu and really looks at Rebecca for the first time then at Sandra's disapproving expression. Danny leans over to Brian just as the WAITER approaches--

WAITER

Would you like to hear the specials?

DANNY

Give us a second.
(to Brian, quietly)
Are you trying to set me up?

BRIAN

I thought you'd appreciate a little female company tonight.
(Danny grumbles)

SANDRA

I told you this wouldn't work.

DANNY

OK, let's get this over with.
(to Rebecca)
It's Deadline Danny dot com.

REBECCA

Do you mind if I read it?

DANNY

How tall are you?

REBECCA

(beat)
Five-five.
(Danny looks at Brian)
But I don't usually wear heels.

Danny makes an impressed face at Rebecca.

DANNY

Do you find me attractive?

REBECCA

(smiles nervously)
Sure. You're cute.

Danny looks at Brian who looks back with raised eyebrows.

DANNY
(to Rebecca)
What's your favorite movie?

The blood drains from Brian's face. Sandra closes her eyes.

REBECCA
(pause)
The Notebook.

Danny grins and waves at the Waiter who's busy at a table.

DANNY
I think I'm ready.

The Waiter signals that he'll be over soon.

REBECCA
What's wrong with The Notebook?

SANDRA
Nothing.

DANNY
Everything! It's movies like The
Notebook that are ruining love
lives everywhere.

REBECCA
What?

DANNY
The Notebook. Ryan Gosling. Rachel
McAdams. Old lady with Alzheimer's?

REBECCA
Yeah...?

DANNY
The same movie where teenage Allie
falls in love with teenage Noah
over the summer? They don't see
each other for seven years and
Allie falls in love with another
guy? Agrees to marry him? And then
cheats on him with Noah the day
before her wedding day. That movie?

REBECCA
(beat)
Yes, that happened, but that wasn't
the point--

DANNY

And who is her fiancé?

SANDRA

Lon. His name is Lon.

DANNY

Yes, Lon. Who is Lon? He's a great guy. Has a good job. Good looking. Charming. Brings stability into the relationship. And lets not forget: he absolutely loves Allie! He's even willing to take her back after she cheats on him. But what does Allie do? She leaves Lon for Noah: a guy she only knew for three months, hadn't seen in seven years and has no identifiable source of income.

Brian can't help but laugh. Sandra makes a face at him.

REBECCA

OK, but I don't see how it's ruining love lives.

DANNY

The Notebook tells women that even if you're in a committed relationship with a great guy that you love enough to marry that you should be willing to break it off at any moment for a chance at passion.

(beat)

And that's just the female side of the problem. The Notebook also tells guys that they should be as controlling as possible because simply being a great guy, like Lon was a great guy, just isn't enough.

SANDRA

Noah and Allie were meant to be together.

REBECCA

Exactly!

DANNY

Why? Because he knew she painted? Is that the criteria for relationships these days?

The Waiter approaches.

WAITER
Have you decided?

DANNY
What's your name?

WAITER
Carter.

DANNY
Hi Carter. Do you have a
girlfriend?

WAITER/CARTER
Yes.

DANNY
So, you've seen The Notebook?

CARTER
Yeah, it's her favorite movie.

DANNY
Naturally. Would you ever let your
girlfriend hang out with an ex-
boyfriend? Even one she hadn't seen
in seven years.

CARTER
(thinks)
No. I don't think so. I mean look
at what happened to Lon.

DANNY
(beat)
I'll take the Chilean Sea Bass with
garlic whipped potatoes and
asparagus tips. Thank you. I'll be
fine with water.

Carter takes the menu and leaves.

REBECCA
(to Sandra)
You were right.

DANNY
Right about what?

REBECCA
That you're a pessimist.

BRIAN
You told her that?

DANNY
I'm not a pessimist. I'm a realist.
It's not my fault reality sucks.

REBECCA
She also told me that you haven't
had a girlfriend in ten years.

Brian looks incredulously at Sandra who rolls her eyes.

DANNY
Seven, but it feels like ten.

REBECCA
What did your last girlfriend say?
She loved you in a different way?

Danny's face goes stiff for a moment.

BRIAN
OK, that's enough.

SANDRA
No, let her finish.

DANNY
Yes, Brian. Let her finish.

REBECCA
If she meant it in a different way,
then maybe your other girlfriends --
if you've had any that is -- meant
it in a different way too.

(Sandra laughs)
Maybe no one's ever really loved
you.

DANNY
Oh, please. Like you know anything
about love.

REBECCA
And you do?

DANNY
Love. Real love. Is loving someone
when it's hard. When they don't
deserve it. When they've hurt you
in the worst way. Real love is
what's left after all the warm and
fuzzy feelings melt away.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

And that's called commitment --
that's the real love that keeps
 people together. Now I don't care
 how many boyfriends you've had in
 the past. I'm sure there have been
 many. The fact that you're single
 right now means that no one's ever
 really loved you either.

Sandra and Rebecca look at Danny in awed disgust. Brian hangs
 his head. Bread is set on the table. Danny takes a piece and
 starts buttering it then turns to Rebecca--

DANNY (CONT'D)

(friendly)

So, what do you do for a living?

EXT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - LATER

Danny, Brian, Sandra and Rebecca stand in that order out
 front waiting for valet. Danny looks bemused. When Brian's
 car arrives, Sandra and Rebecca immediately get in.

BRIAN

You should have at least tried.

DANNY

She liked *The Notebook*. What was I
 going to do? Compromise my ideals?

BRIAN

You didn't have to be a dick.

Sandra honks the horn and Brian moves to the driver's side.

DANNY

You're right. I'm sorry. I just
 don't understand why people can't
 accept my reality the way I have.

BRIAN

Danny, it's unnatural. No one your
 age goes this long without a date.

DANNY

Brian, I appreciate everything. I
 do. But you have to consider the
 possibility that there's no one out
 there for me. Or if there is I'll
 never meet her.

Sandra honks again.

BRIAN

Fine, but only if you accept the possibility that she *does* exist and that this one of a kind, amazing woman is going to come into your life and sweep you off your feet. And you'll look back wondering how you ever got through life without--

Sandra lays on the horn. Danny grins stupidly.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

NEVER MIND! STAY SINGLE! IT'S NOT WORTH IT! SAVE YOURSELF!

He gets in and they drive off.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Danny drives and turns on the radio, flipping stations. Pop music. Traffic. Weather. It's KAREN SHARP on KOST 103.5--

KAREN

(filtered)

And it's 65 degrees along...the coast. Tonight's lovethought comes from Al who's KOSTing with us in LA. Al, who's your lovethought for?

AL

(filtered)

Diana.

KAREN

(filtered)

And what would you like to say to Diana tonight.

AL

(filtered)

I want her to know that I miss her.

KAREN

(filtered)

What do you miss about her?

AL

(filtered)

Her eyes. Her voice. The way the corners of her mouth wrinkle.

DANNY
(grimacing)
Die.

KAREN
(filtered)
How long have you two been apart?

AL
(filtered)
Two months. It's been so
tough. She's all I think
about.

DANNY
(beat)
Give it up brother! She's
probably screwing some other
dude right now!

KAREN
(filtered)
Aw, what happened Al?

DANNY
She moved on with her life!

AL
(filtered)
She passed away in a car accident.

Danny turns off the radio. He's silent for a moment and then--

DANNY
No! No one misses her. More air for
the rest of us!

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - MINUTES LATER

Danny approaches his unit when he sees two Hispanic men
moving furniture into the next door unit. They talk in
Spanish. Danny almost runs into the younger man, PEDRO (25).

PEDRO
Hola.

Danny nods and then enters his own apartment.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

As Danny works on his site, he hears dull thumping against
his wall. After a moment, the thumping is followed by male
sexual groaning. Danny shakes his head and keeps working. He
gets a text message:

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE ON PHONE

The text reads "Danny you are confirmed for tomorrow."

BACK TO SCENE

Danny is stunned for a moment and then steps outside.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Danny lights a cigarette and breathes in deeply, giddy with anticipation. After a moment, Pedro steps out on his adjacent balcony, which is close enough that the two men could touch each other if they both reached out. Pedro is in a bathrobe.

DANNY

Hola.

PEDRO

Hola.

DANNY

Buenos dias!

PEDRO

(shakes his head)

Buenos noches.

The other Hispanic man JULIO (35) from earlier joins Pedro. Julio wears only a towel around his waist and his arm is sleeved in a unique TATOO. He kisses Pedro affectionately on the neck. Danny quickly finishes his cigarette and goes in.

JULIO

Quien es?

PEDRO

No se.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Danny's alarm goes off and he hops out of bed. He claps his hands and blasts his radio as he disrobes for the shower.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - SHOWER - MINUTES LATER

As he begins his shower, Danny hears Queen's *We Will Rock You* on the radio. The music is perfect for his mood and he begins stomping and slapping the shower wall in time with the drums. Then he sings along with committed out-of-tune gusto.

INT. PEDRO'S APARTMENT - SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

Pedro is standing in the shower, clinging to the curtains and staring at the wall from where Danny's loud thumping and shrill singing are emanating.

EXT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - AN HOUR LATER

Danny pulls his car up to valet.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - PRESS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Carrying his messenger bag and following signs, Danny finds the press hospitality suite where he picks up credentials from a publicist. She barely looks up from her phone. Danny walks into the adjoining room where a buffet has been set up.

DANNY

I could get used to this.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - MINUTES LATER

Danny enters the small interview room early and finds a MAN already there, facing away and talking on his cell phone.

MAN

Honey, you know why I can't come home tonight. I've got another junket tomorrow morning. It doesn't make sense for me to fight traffic.

(beat)

I'm just going to get a room here.

The chair closest to the door is tilted forward and leaning against the table. Danny grabs it and is about to sit. The Man hears Danny and turns around.

MAN (CONT'D)

Honey, I gotta go. We'll talk about this later.

(hangs up)

What are you doing?

DANNY

I'm here for the interviews.

MAN

OK, but what are you doing?

DANNY

Sitting down?

MAN
Not there you're not.

DANNY
Why?

MAN
That's for the talent.

DANNY
Oh.

He takes another seat facing the talent.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Sorry, this is my first time.

The Man gives Danny a disdainful look before sitting himself.

DANNY (CONT'D)
So, who do you write for?

MAN
Rolling Stone. You?

DANNY
Deadline Danny.

MAN/ROLLING STONE
Never heard of you.

DANNY
It's a new publication.

ROLLING STONE
It sounds like a rag.

DANNY
It's a webzine.

ROLLING STONE
It sounds like an online rag.

DANNY
(beat)
Well, you gotta start somewhere.

Rolling Stone rolls his eyes. A female HOT JOURNALIST enters.

HOT JOURNALIST
Is this the roundtable?

ROLLING STONE
Yes it is.

HOT JOURNALIST
Sorry, it's my first time.

ROLLING STONE
Then please, sit right here. I love
new writers.

He pats the seat next to him. As the Hot Journalist heads over, Danny notices Rolling Stone slyly slip off his wedding ring and put it in his pocket.

EXT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME - EVENING

Danny approaches the screen door and sees ADRIAN (29) inside.

DANNY
Adrian!

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cardboard boxes are everywhere. People are moving out.

ADRIAN
Danny!
(letting Danny in)

Danny and Adrian hug then Danny looks sadly at the boxes.

DANNY
So this is it? Calling it quits?

ADRIAN
Yeah, we're going back to PA. But
we'll be back to visit before you
have a chance to miss us. Angela!

ANGELA (29) enters from the kitchen with a mug of tea.

ANGELA
Hey Mr. Journalist. How'd it go?

DANNY
I don't know if this is for me.

ANGELA
Why? What happened?

ADRIAN
Sit down. Tell us the story.

Danny drops his bag and pulls up a chair. Angela and Adrian sit on the sofa and lean forward.

DANNY

So I'm sitting at this roundtable
with the other journalists and
everyone's talking about the movie
when Gwyneth Paltrow walks in.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - THAT MORNING

Journalists converse as Gwyneth Paltrow enters, taking the
seat Rolling Stone reserved for her.

DANNY (V.O.)

And this woman looked stunning.

The interview commences while Danny narrates.

DANNY (V.O.)

Since this is my first roundtable,
I just sit there and I absorb.
Besides, some jerk from Rolling
Stone appointed himself as the
moderator so Gwyneth mostly talked
to him. But then she notices me
staring. So she looks right at me.

The characteristics of the room take on dreamlike properties
as Danny describes them.

DANNY (V.O.)

Suddenly, the full weight of her
gaze was upon me. Time slowed down
and it was like we were the only
two people in the room. And then
she smiled at me.

Gwyneth gives the most heart-melting smile a human face can
make and all Danny can do is look back wide-eyed.

DANNY (V.O.)

I wanted to say something. But all
I could think of doing was--

Danny winks, points and gives a one-sided smile, making a
sucking noise with his cheek the way one makes horses move.

BACK TO SCENE

Adrian and Angela groan in empathy and laugh.

ANGELA
What did she do?

DANNY
She kept smiling, but there was
something different about it now.

BACK TO FLASHBACK

Gwyneth's smile is now a little too tight and her eyes too wide, like she's just seen her friend's dad step out of the shower. Everyone stares at Danny and Rolling Stone gives him condescending and exaggerated shakes of his head.

END FLASHBACK

Angela and Adrian burst into laughter and lean back, giggling. Danny can't help but laugh as well. After a bit--

DANNY (CONT'D)
It's my own fault. I've got an
overactive imagination.

ADRIAN
But that's good for writing.

ANGELA
And other things...

Adrian pulls Angela close. The couple doesn't exactly kiss, but they cuddle in a very saccharine way. Danny looks on and his face suddenly fills with embarrassment and envy.

DANNY
(standing)
I'm gonna take off, guys.

Adrian and Angela catch the very tail end of Danny's expression before it returns to something inscrutable. They immediately part in an understanding and accommodating way.

ADRIAN
Oh, no. Stay. It's movie night.

ANGELA
Yeah, c'mon. I'll make tea.

DANNY
(walking towards door)
I appreciate that, but I've got to
get started on these interviews.

Angela gives Adrian a look and he follows Danny. At the door--

ADRIAN
We didn't mean anything by that.

DANNY
You don't have to apologize.

ADRIAN
Well we'd like it if you stayed. We
won't do the couple thing.

Danny, unsure if he's offended, looks at Adrian, and wants to say something, but can't find the words. Instead--

DANNY
I gotta go.
(he leaves)

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Danny drives in silence, squashing emotions. Then he turns on the radio, which is still tuned to KOST 103.5. Danny's mouth curls into a sneer and it's unclear if he's pleased or not.

KAREN
(filtered)
And where are you KOSTing tonight,
Michael?

MICHAEL
(filtered)
Pasadena.

KAREN
(filtered)
And who's your lovethought for?

MICHAEL
(filtered)
Lisa. I just want her to know that
I love her and that I'm always
thinking about her.

DANNY
Die.

KAREN
(filtered)
Is there a song you want to share?

MICHAEL
(filtered)
Could you pick one?

DANNY
Personal.

KAREN
(filtered)
Of course. Lisa, wherever you are,
this song is for you from Michael
in Pasadena. This one's from Carina
Ray.

DANNY
Who...?

The music starts and Danny prepares to hate whatever it is. As soon as the first beat hits, however, his expression loosens and after a measure he bobs his head in time. At the chorus Danny taps the beat on the steering wheel, grinning.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

Carina's song plays over the scene as Danny rushes in and jumps onto his computer to search for Carina Ray online. He finds her MySpace page. He previews her songs and leans back to take them in, searching the air with his eyes.

INT. CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

Carina (28) is performing the same song with her band.

INT. MUSIC STORE - THE NEXT DAY

Danny is searching the racks for Carina's CD. He finds it, reads the tracks on the back and takes it to the register.

INT. CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

Carina and her band continue to perform and are really getting into the song as they near the last few measures.

INT. DANNY'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Danny slides Carina's CD into his stereo and after a moment he shakes his head in disbelief that music can be this good.

INT. CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

The roar and applause of the crowd is overwhelming.

CARINA

Thank you so much. You've been a great audience. Good night!

END MONTAGE

EXT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - LATE NIGHT

Danny's car is parked alone out front after hours.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

Danny is sitting alone next to an open pizza box and a half-filled pitcher of root beer on one of the bench tables near the stage. The Chuck E. Cheese's puppets are inanimate.

On stage is just a handful of the cast. The lead singer is a lion dressed like a greaser. The drummer is a gorilla with a headband. The bass player is a giraffe. The guitarist is a zebra with a bandana.

They look goofy in their frozen postures and their shapes are worn where their bodies articulate, like the arms and jaws.

DANNY

Have you heard of Carina Ray?

BRIAN (O.S.)

(filtered)

What?

Brian is in the operator's booth that runs the music program for the puppets. Danny has to speak louder so Brian can hear him through the window. Brian responds through the overhead speaker system. He sounds distracted.

DANNY

Carina Ray. Have you heard of her?

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Yeah. She won a Grammy, right?

DANNY
I guess so. I didn't actually
research her.

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Uh huh.

DANNY
What are you doing?

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Hang on. You'll see.
(beat)
Why'd you bring her up?

DANNY
I just discovered her music.

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Uh huh.

DANNY
And I didn't know music could
affect me like this.

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Uh huh.

DANNY
When I listen to her I feel like
she's singing to *me*. But more than
that, it's her words that really
get me. It's like she's telling a
story with each song. She doesn't
just jump to the chorus, because
her choruses are worth waiting for.
And if you listen to the entire
album straight through it's like
experiencing someone's entire love
life. It's amazing!

Brian is quiet until he realizes Danny has stopped talking.

BRIAN (O.S.)
(filtered)
Uh huh.

DANNY

What the hell are you doing up there? Goddammit, I'm trying to tell you something!

Brian comes out of the booth and jogs towards Danny's table.

BRIAN

I heard you. Her album is like a love life. It's amazing.

DANNY

Perfect.

Brian and Danny sit on the tabletop and face the stage.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What am I looking at?

BRIAN

Hang on. It'll start in a second.

The house lights dim and the puppets come to life, playing Queen's *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*. It's really just the original song being piped through the speakers and the puppets moving in time with the music.

Still, it's ironic and Danny and Brian laugh at the stiff puppets rocking out as much as their designs will let them.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

The setup here is pretty cool. You can separate the tracks and assign them to individual puppets. The system is state of the art.

Half way through the song something goes wrong and it speeds up. The puppets make a valiant effort to keep time, but their machine parts fail as arms pop off, jaws literally drop and one puppet launches off the stage from frenetic rocking!

DANNY

State of the art.

BRIAN

That usually doesn't happen.

Danny helps Brian pick up the puppets and reassemble them.

DANNY

What are you doing here, man?

BRIAN

What? I'm just having a little fun.

DANNY

No, I mean what are you doing *here*?
It's almost 11. Shouldn't you be
home with your wife?
(Brian doesn't answer)
Trouble in paradise?

BRIAN

Something like that.

DANNY

I can't imagine a problem that
would keep you away from your home.

BRIAN

Well, you're not in a relationship.
You don't understand why you need
to avoid it sometimes.

They finish straightening up in silence.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - AFTERNOON

People stream in and out of this multi-plex.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Danny and a crowd of journalists come pouring out of a movie
theater past one-sheet posters on easels. Danny bumps into
Rolling Stone at the parking validation machine.

ROLLING STONE

Deadline Danny.

DANNY

Rolling Stone.

ROLLING STONE

You actually got an invite?

DANNY

Yeah, I know the publicist.

ROLLING STONE

Two movies in a row! Looks like
you're moving up in the world. Keep
up the good work.

He points and winks, mocking Danny's behavior with Gwyneth
Paltrow. Danny watches Rolling Stone walk off pleased with
himself to then join Hot Journalist who's waiting for him.

EXT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - LATER

Carrying a laptop bag and a cup of coffee, Danny comes out, sits down at a table and sets up his computer. The foot traffic is light and there is a woman at an adjacent table having a loud conversation on her cell phone.

Danny sips his coffee. It's too hot so he pops off the lid to let it cool. The woman next to him laughs annoyingly and Danny stares at her before lighting a cigarette. Then he fishes out his headphones and plugs them into his laptop.

INTERCUT LAPTOP SCREEN AND SCENE

Danny goes to Carina's MySpace page. On the music player, he picks something melancholy and relaxes as the music soothes him. Danny takes a satisfied drag off his cigarette before scrolling down the page. Something catches his attention.

The latest comment on the page reads: "I'm so sorry for your loss." Danny urgently Googles "Carina Ray" and returns results like "Husband of British Singer Dies in Tragic Accident" and "Carina Ray Grieves Over Death of Husband".

Danny is stunned, but people around him go about their lives. The woman next to him laughs. People walk by. Danny almost tells everyone to "stop". Instead, he leaves a comment on Carina's MySpace page: "Please don't stop making music."

Then he slumps in his chair, closes his eyes and thinks of what Carina must be going through.

BEGIN MONTAGE

The melancholy song plays over the following scenes.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

England. It's overcast as mourners disperse from around a fresh grave. The thinning crowd reveals Carina staying behind. NICKY (30), a woman with a friendly face, walks with her boyfriend PAUL (31) and they stop to look back.

A stiff breeze ripples Carina's black clothes and tussles her hair and she looks fragile enough to break. It starts to rain, driving the lingering mourners to their cars.

Nicky and Paul also run to their car, but Nicky grabs an umbrella and runs back to join Carina. Paul sighs. As the rain plays a staccato dirge on the umbrella, Nicky wraps an arm around her best friend and Carina weeps.

INT. CARINA'S HOME - LATER

Carina stares out a window. She closes her eyes, squeezing out tears too weak to fall on their own and draws the curtains. Nicky ushers out the last of the guests, including Paul who doesn't look happy that Nicky is staying.

Carina takes her guitar off a nearby stand and places it in its case. Then she places the case in the closet. Nicky watches this happen, but doesn't say anything.

INT. CARINA'S HOME - KITCHEN - MIDNIGHT

Carina and Nicky, dressed in sleeping attire, are hunched over a small kitchen table, sipping English tea in silence, lost in their own thoughts. Carina's mug has a small chip in the lip and she runs her thumb across it over and over again.

Carina recalls some insignificant memory that suddenly means the world to her. The bottom drops out from her stomach and Carina's eyes well up. Too exhausted to sob, she simply lays her head down on her arm and surrenders to the sadness.

Nicky rests her hand and head on Carina's, wishing she could take the pain away as the song ends...

END MONTAGE

FADE OUT.

INSERT TITLE CARD

2 Years Later

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - DAY

Danny (30) walks toward a terminal for arrivals with coffee in one hand and talking on a cell phone with the other.

DANNY

Jenny, I'm on every major studio's
list except for Warner Brothers.
I'd love to cover your films.

JENNY

(filtered)

I appreciate that, but Warner Brothers is very selective about the media we invite. Your site looks nice, but your audience is a little small. Contact me again when you grow your readership and we'll invite you to screen our films.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Danny looks leaner and more seasoned. He's dressed in black paramilitary couture, wearing a watch cap and his clothes have pockets everywhere for sundry journalistic peripherals. It's winter and everyone around is wearing a heavy coat.

As Danny passes the public restroom, a woman comes rushing out and runs into him, nearly splashing his coffee on him.

CARINA

Oh, I'm so sorry!

Her hair has grown out and cascades exotically down one side of her face. Danny doesn't recognize her. He only notices that she's attractive. After inspecting his clothes--

DANNY

You almost owed me a date.

Carina wants to reply, but can't think of anything pithy.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You still can you know. I could spill this on myself right now.

He pulls off his coffee cup lid and tilts the steaming drink at a threatening angle towards his chest. Carina grins, taken aback by the boldness. She's about to reply--

NICKY

(approaching)

There you are! C'mon, the car's waiting and we're late!

She grabs Carina and they dash outside without giving Danny a second look. He watches them and smiles as he walks in the opposite direction. Then a sense of familiarity washes over him and he strains to place Carina's face. Before he can--

ADRIAN (O.S.)

Danny!

Walking down the terminal, pulling their luggage behind them is Angela and Adrian. When Danny sees them his face brightens and he walks up to meet them. After hugging and greeting each other, Danny takes Angela's luggage and leads the couple out.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Angela is in the passenger seat and Adrian sits behind her.

DANNY

So how long are you guys in town?

ANGELA

Through January. Adrian has some meetings and then we go back.

She loosens up her coat and reclines the seat.

ADRIAN

Somebody wants a massage.

Adrian begins rubbing Angela's shoulders.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

(to Danny)

So what's new? How's journalism?

ANGELA

Yeah, tell us stuff.

DANNY

It has its ups and downs. I've been doing this long enough that no one's impressed anymore.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Danny watches Brian as he works on a puppet with some tools.

DANNY

I interviewed Anthony Hopkins today.

BRIAN

Oh!

(beat)

Could you hand me that ratchet?

Danny does so and Brian continues his work in silence.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

A panel of celebrities fields questions from journalists, including Danny, who sit in neat rows in front of the panel.

DANNY (V.O.)

I also enjoy listening to A-list talent speak, but sometimes it feels like they all say the same thing to the same old questions.

Danny's eyes are heavy and his blinks last longer each time until they shut completely and he pitches forward alarmingly, knocking his head against the seat back in front of him. He wakes with a start and looks around, embarrassed.

He sees Rolling Stone shaking his head at him.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

Danny walks into a theater crowded with journalists, waiting for a screening to begin. When he sees people he recognizes he shakes their hands and engages them in small talk.

DANNY (V.O.)

I'm also very impressed by the people I get to work with. These guys have an encyclopedic knowledge of the entertainment industry and perfect recall whenever they talk about it. But sometimes they can be annoying as hell.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ANGELA

Why?

DANNY

Imagine being in a room with a hundred people who think that having an opinion is the same thing as having a personality.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - EVENING

Danny takes a seat behind two chatty journalists. His eyes dart back and forth between them with a pained expression.

DANNY (V.O.)

No one's really listening to each other. They're just waiting for the opportunity to use a clever quote from something they wrote. Despite that, journalists make for the best movie audience.

The movie is now playing and the journalists watch intently.

DANNY (V.O.)

They laugh when something's funny, jump when they're startled. They don't talk. They keep their cell phones off. It's everything you wish you got from regular people.

EXT. ANGELA'S PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Danny's car pulls up to the suburban home and parks. Everyone gets out and begins to haul luggage out of the trunk and towards the front door. Angela lets Adrian and herself in, but Danny stops at the threshold.

ANGELA

Come on in.

DANNY

I can't. I've got an interview in LA. Maybe later in the week?

ANGELA

Sure. Who are you interviewing?

INT. RED CORNER THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

BAI LING

I'm totally not in this world. And I feel like I'm not really existing as a human being, but part of me is. I have eight little spirits living inside of me. They're all different personalities.

Danny and Bai are sitting at a booth eating Thai food. The table is full of ala carte dishes mostly pushed towards Bai's side. The entrees are almost finished and the beverages are drained. Danny listens attentively.

BAI

Most people only know the crazy party girl. She's fire.

(MORE)

BAI (CONT'D)

She's a burning fire. That passion
is so...for me is so magical.

(beat)

Kozuki!

DANNY

Is that your fire spirit's name?

BAI

(pointing)

No, it's the name of that
restaurant. Sounds Japanese.

DANNY

I think I have everything I need.

BAI

OK, let me go pee and then we go.

When Bai leaves she reveals the couple sitting behind her with their backs to Danny. They snuggle and steal kisses. The man drapes his arm across the shared seat back of the booths. Danny's pocket buzzes and he reaches in to produce his phone.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE

Brian writes: "carina ray has a new album. check her myspace."

BACK TO SCENE

Danny slams his fist on the table.

DANNY

YES!

The man across from him turns. Danny mouths an apology, but the man just stares and the two men search each others faces for recognition. Turning has raised the man's sleeve to reveal the unique tattoo Danny's neighbor's boyfriend has.

The man is Julio and he gets up from the booth threateningly. Before Danny can rise, something catches Julio's attention. Danny turns to see Pedro standing outside of the restaurant incredulously looking at Julio and then the girl.

Pedro runs off and Julio chases after, running past--

BAI

Kozuki! Sounds so good. Ready?

Danny nods and stands up.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

Danny rushes to his computer and loads Carina's MySpace page. There's a new video and Danny plays it.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

INT. CARINA'S HOME - RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Carina is sitting on a chair with a guitar in her lap. As she speaks, the video becomes a montage of Carina singing and performing, then returns to her speaking to the camera.

CARINA

(to camera)

Hi everyone. Thank you for visiting and checking up on me. I've been keeping busy, puttering around the house and writing new music. My new album is called *The Tide* and it will be available soon. You've all been so supportive and I'd like to thank you by inviting you to one of the many free mini-concerts I'll be playing here in England and abroad. Hopefully I'll see you there.

Danny scrolls down and sees Carina's tour schedule. He notices that Carina is playing *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* on January 29. The date on his computer reads: "January 28". Danny clicks a link that reads: "Reserve Tickets Now".

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Danny steps outside and lights a cigarette. He exhales contentedly. A door slams and then his neighbor's balcony sliding door opens. Pedro steps out. He doesn't notice Danny and stares off into the distance for a moment before crying.

Danny wants to say something, but doesn't know the Spanish.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

With his cigarette dangling from his mouth Danny runs inside to his computer and brings up Google Translator.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

He selects English to Spanish and types: "I'm so sorry. Are you OK?"

BACK TO SCENE

Danny writes down the translation and goes back outside.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Unfortunately, Pedro has gone inside and his sliding door closes. Danny stuffs the paper in his pocket and finishes his cigarette before flicking it off somewhere.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny comes back inside, kicks off his boots, drapes his coat over a chair, switches off the light and piles into bed. In the darkness he listens to Pedro's sobs through the wall.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD & HIGHLAND CENTER - PRE-SUNSET - THE NEXT DAY

Danny pulls his car into the garage.

I/E. HOLLYWOOD & HIGHLAND CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Danny emerges up an escalator. In the courtyard he lights a cigarette and exits by where people dressed like movie characters are charging tourists \$5 for photos. Danny crosses the street and heads toward the El Capitan theater.

EXT. EL CAPITAN THEATER - BACK LOT - MOMENTS LATER

A tall chain-link fence surrounds the concert area and a green tarp covers the inner side. Still, curious onlookers peer through breaches to see Carina and her band perform soundcheck. The concert line is short and Danny joins it.

Time passes. The sun sets. The line lengthens.

EXT. EL CAPITAN THEATER - BACK LOT - BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Carina stands in the wings with Nicky.

CARINA
I'm a little nervous.

NICKY
Why?

CARINA
It's been a while, you know?

NICKY
Don't worry. You're fantastic.

Her phone buzzes and she checks the text message then sighs.

CARINA
Who is it?

NICKY
Paul.

CARINA
What? I thought that was over.

NICKY
It was.

CARINA
Was?

NICKY
He's been calling lately. He sounds
so sad and lonely.

CARINA
He should be! He deserves it!

NICKY
I know...

A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT approaches, holding a clipboard and wearing headphones around his neck. He's sexy in a chiseled, masculine way. Nicky's pupils dilate when he comes close.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
(to Carina)
Excuse me, but we'll be letting the
crowd in now.

CARINA
Thank you.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
You're welcome.
(beat)
I'd just like to say that I'm a
very big fan.

CARINA
I appreciate that. Thank you.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
Some of the crew were thinking of getting drinks after the show. If you're free later I was wondering if you'd like to go. With me.

Nicky's mouth falls open. Carina smiles pleasantly.

CARINA
Thank you, but no.

The Production Assistant looks awkward as he leaves, wrestling with being rejected for the first time in his life.

Carina fingers her wedding ring as she looks off at the crowd slowly filtering through security at the lot gates. Nicky watches Carina understandingly. The WARM-UP COMEDIAN -- a bald man with a comic face -- approaches.

WARM-UP COMEDIAN
Carina. Looks like we're about to start and I just wanted to go over the details of this contest.

CARINA
Sure.
(Nicky starts to leave)
Nicky! Where are you going?

NICKY
I want to get a good spot in the crowd before it's full up.

CARINA
Why?

NICKY
It's the best place to watch you from. Don't worry, you'll see me.

EXT. EL CAPITAN THEATER - BACK LOT - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Nicky comes out from around the side of the stage at ground level. Looking for a way to get into the pit section she decides to hop the barricade, but has a little trouble doing so and slips. Hands reach out to steady her. It's--

DANNY
Whoa. I got you!

Nicky collapses into him, knocking his glasses off.

NICKY
Oh, thank you!

DANNY
No problem.

He looks around himself for his glasses. Nicky finds them, picks them up and puts them on Danny's face.

NICKY
I love your glasses. Are they prescription?

DANNY
Yeah.
(adjusting frames)
So, are you a big fan of Carina's?

NICKY
You could say that. You?

DANNY
I love her music. So powerful.
Sometimes I can't do anything else
until the song is over.
(beat)
I know. I need help.

Nicky laughs. The Warm-Up Comedian walks out on stage as Carina's band takes their positions.

WARM-UP COMEDIAN
How's everyone doing tonight?!
(the audience cheers)
You're in for a great show, but
first, Carina wants you all to know
about a raffle where one lucky fan
will be flown out to London for a
private concert and be Carina's
special guest at a live interview.
Visit her site for details.
(the audience applauds)
Are you ready for some music?!
(the audience cheers)
Now I need you to keep the noise
going until Carina starts singing.
Can you do that? OK! Ladies and
gentlemen, Carina Ray!

Carina strides on stage with a confident smile and stands behind her microphone.

She gives a friendly wave and then looks to her right for a cue. The Production Assistant counts down with his fingers and Carina launches into a sexy song.

Carina is pure sexiness and elegance wrapped in one lithe and liquid figure and the entire crowd is mesmerized. Danny stares with child-like awe. While performing, Carina glances down for Nicky who stands just behind Danny's shoulder.

Nicky smiles and waves. Carina smiles and gives a small wave back, but Danny thinks she's smiling at *him*. He smiles back and suddenly there's no one else around. Even the band is gone, leaving Carina singing directly to Danny.

Only when the song ends and the crowd cheers does Danny realize there are still people around him. Nicky nudges him and it takes Danny a second to peel his eyes off Carina before turning. Nicky laughs at his expression.

NICKY

Amazing, right?

Danny nods weakly.

CARINA

We'd like to play a few more songs for you.

INT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The coffee house is nearly empty. Danny floats through the doorway with a lazy smile permanently etched on his face. He orders his drink. While waiting, Nicky comes out of the restroom. Nicky and Danny smile big when they see each other.

Nicky mouths "Hi" and gives a small wave as she passes. Danny watches her walk to a corner table and his eyes grow big when he sees her join Carina. He begins to move towards them.

HUGE MAN

Excuse me. Ms. Ray doesn't want to be disturbed.

He's a head and a half taller than Danny with shoulders as broad as the horizon and fingers thicker than bratwurst. From his curt, yet professional tone and his black suit and tight-fitting crewneck shirt, he's obviously Carina's security.

DANNY

I just wanted to let her know that she was great tonight.

HUGE MAN
She appreciates that.

DANNY
(beat)
Let's start again. Hi, I'm Danny.

Danny extends his hand, but the Huge Man only looks at him with a hint of a professional smile.

DANNY (CONT'D)
And you are...?

HUGE MAN
Ser.

DANNY
Sir?

HUGE MAN/MR. SER
Mr. Ser to you.

DANNY
OK, Mr. Sir. I'm actually a
journalist and I'm interested in
doing a piece on Carina.

He produces his business card from a nifty dispenser. Mr. Ser takes it after a moment and reads it.

MR. SER
Ms. Ray is unavailable for
interviews currently. Please
contact her management for an
appointment. Good night.

He tucks the card into his coat. Danny sighs resignedly at this impasse before looking longingly at Carina, then he turns away to grab his drink and leaves.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny looks serious, but not angry. He takes a swig of his coffee and then plays Carina's CD, skipping to a song about fighting off love. The song plays over the following montage.

BEGIN MONTAGE

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - 1 A.M.

Danny puts the finishing touches on an article.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

It's titled: "Carina Ray @ Jimmy Kimmel Live!"

BACK TO SCENE

He turns out the lights and crawls into bed, but his eyes never close as he relives the night's events. Every time he smiles he shakes it away and changes positions until he finally gives up and goes back to his computer.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

Danny goes to Carina's website. He sees the sweepstakes for the private concert in London and enters his information. Then he browses through her images.

BACK TO SCENE

When he's had enough he walks over to his drafting table and turns on the lamp. He blows the inch of dust off the table and lays down an oversized sketch pad and begins to draw.

Hours pass, but Danny only stops to stretch. He finally steps away from the table to reveal a portrait of Carina. Danny snaps off the lamp and collapses in bed as the brightening sky peeks through the window, illuminating the portrait.

END MONTAGE

INT. ANGELA'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

DANNY

I think I'm in love.

Adrian is on the couch while Angela is doing dishes in the kitchen. They're both stunned at the news.

ADRIAN

That's great. Who is she?

Danny isn't sure if he should say and then--

DANNY

Carina Ray.

ANGELA

Oh.

She goes back to doing dishes.

ADRIAN
Who's Carina Ray?

DANNY
(to Angela)
See, I knew you'd react this way.

ANGELA
It's not love; you're infatuated.

ADRIAN
Who's Carina Ray?

ANGELA
She's a singer.

DANNY
The most fantastic singer you'll
ever hear.

Adrian grabs his laptop and types.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(to Angela)
Look, I know how crazy this sounds.

ANGELA
When I was 17 I thought I was in
love with Johnny Depp. I bought all
of his movies, got all of his
posters. I was just star-struck.

ADRIAN
(looking at laptop)
Oh, she's very pretty.

ANGELA
(to Danny)
She's a celebrity. She doesn't even
know you exist. You don't really
have a chance with her.

Danny looks away, gathering his thoughts. Angela continues to wash dishes. Sensing there's something more important here--

ADRIAN
Hey Danny, let's have a smoke.

EXT. ANGELA'S PARENTS' HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Danny and Adrian sit on the patio furniture and light up.

DANNY

I really like this girl.

ADRIAN

Man, that's great. What we should really take away from this is what's going on with you.

DANNY

What do you mean?

ADRIAN

You're feeling emotions like the rest of us again.

(Danny smirks)

But let's not call it love.

DANNY

Why not?

ADRIAN

For it to be love -- *real love* -- it has to be mutual. Right now she doesn't even know who you are.

(Danny looks away)

No one wants you to fall in love more than Angela and me, believe me, but I think you'd agree that when it happens it should be real.

DANNY

(beat)

You're right.

ADRIAN

The best thing to do is to take what you're feeling and channel it towards someone in your life.

DANNY

But I don't want anyone else.

ADRIAN

OK, I get that you have these emotions, but Angela made a good point. Carina doesn't know you exist. Don't you think it's a little unrealistic?

DANNY

Look, I know I haven't been in the dating game for a while, but isn't this how attraction works?

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

You see someone you like and you meet them. Then they know you exist.

ADRIAN

Yeah, but you're talking about regular people. Celebrities usually date celebrities. Or people with money. When a regular person like you tries to meet a celebrity it's called stalking.

DANNY

I agree, however, I'm also an entertainment journalist. That basically makes me kind of like a coworker to celebrities. So in that sense it's not so far fetched for me to meet one.

ADRIAN

And ask them out on a date?

DANNY

Precisely.

(Adrian thinks it over)

What do you think? Am I crazy?

ADRIAN

Yes.

DANNY

I don't care! I'm still doing it!

ADRIAN

Good for you, man. Go for it. Learn your lesson.

Danny does a double take and then smiles. Adrian finishes his cigarette and puts it out.

ADRIAN (CONT'D)

What if she doesn't smoke?

Danny looks at the cigarette in his hand. He puts it out.

INT. SUPERMARKET - THE NEXT DAY

Danny slowly walks down an aisle, scanning the shelves.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

Danny empties a grocery bag on his desk and BOXES OF TOOTHPICKS topple out. He opens a box, puts a toothpick in his mouth and sits down at his computer to Google something. He clicks the first result and picks up his phone and dials.

BEGIN MONTAGE

DANNY

Is this press media? Hi, I'm interested in interviewing one of your artists.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - DAY

Danny is exiting a screening. Another call.

DANNY

Hi, I got this number from Sally over at Capitol Records.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Danny is stuck in traffic. Another call.

DANNY

Hi, this is Danny Vega and this message is for Mark.
(consults notes)
Sorry, Matt.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX #2 - SUNSET

Danny is walking from his car. Another call.

DANNY

That's Deadline Danny dot com.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Another call. Danny has his phone on speaker with hold music playing while he rests his head on his desk. He hangs up after he's had enough. He takes the toothpick in his mouth and tosses it into the trash next to dozens of toothpicks.

END MONTAGE

Danny collapses into bed, demoralized.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - DAY

JOE PESCI is drinking coffee and finishing a funny story to the journalists, including Danny who is chewing a toothpick.

JOE

So I told him he could take his
Oscar and shove it up his ass.

Everyone at the table laughs and Danny accidentally exhales his toothpick into Joe's coffee. He looks pointedly at Danny who heroically holds his gaze with a deadpan expression. Rolling Stone leans into view to shake his head at Danny.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The journalists filter out of the roundtable interview. Rolling Stone walks out with Hot Journalist. They embrace.

ROLLING STONE

I'll call you later.

Hot Journalist looks lovingly at him before they walk off in different directions. Danny walks down the hall by himself. His phone rings. He's slow to answer it.

DANNY

Hello.

WOMAN

(filtered)

Hi, is this Danny Vega?

DANNY

Speaking.

WOMAN

(filtered)

My name is Erin. I'm Carina Ray's
LA management.

DANNY

(stops walking)

Hi. How did you get my number?

WOMAN/ERIN

(filtered)

Ronald gave me your card.

DANNY
I don't know who that is.

ERIN
(filtered)
Ronald Ser. Carina's personal
security.

DANNY
Mr. Sir?

ERIN
(filtered)
Yes, he said you wanted to
interview Carina.

DANNY
I do.

ERIN
(filtered)
She's doing one-on-ones tomorrow at
the Four Seasons. We're on a tight
schedule, but we might be able to
fit you in at one o'clock.

DANNY
I'll make that work.
(writing on arm)
One o'clock at the Four Seasons.
Thank you so much!

As Danny eagerly walks down the hall he passes Rolling Stone standing around the corner within earshot with a female HOT PUBLICIST who's writing something down. Rolling Stone gives Danny a long look as he passes.

The Hot Publicist hands him her number and motions for him to call her before walking off. Rolling Stone's phone rings.

ROLLING STONE
(answering)
Hey honey, I won't be home tonight.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Danny rushes in and drops his bag.

BEGIN MONTAGE

An upbeat song by Carina Ray plays over the scenes. Danny sits at his computer and immediately starts researching Carina. He periodically writes notes down on a notepad.

INT. SALON - LATER

Danny admires his new haircut before turning to the stylist and giving her a smile and a nod.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Danny goes over his questions, scratching out and rewriting them as necessary.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

Danny tries on different outfits, ranging from casual to business, and discarding them in a pile on his bed.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - NIGHT

Danny paces, chewing a toothpick, rehearsing his questions.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - LIVINGROOM - LATER

Danny sits on a chair and talks to the air.

DANNY

Just one last question: would you like to get some coffee?

Another take--

DANNY (CONT'D)

Would you like to continue this conversation over dinner?

Another take--

DANNY (CONT'D)

I love you! Do you love me?!

Danny looks at himself in a hand mirror and practices smiles. They're all very fake. He sighs and looks away, lowering the mirror, revealing Carina sitting in front of him. She looks at Danny adoringly, empathizing with his nervousness.

As Danny imagines her sitting there a genuine smile overcomes him. Then, as if in response to Danny's questions earlier--

CARINA
(disgusted)
No...

Another take--

CARINA (CONT'D)
(derisive laughter)
No!

Another take--

Carina looks shocked, then angry. Then she slaps Danny hard across the face, ending his fantasy. When he stands Carina is no longer there. Danny grabs his toothpicks and exits to the balcony with wide eyes at the thought of rejection.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

A handful of paparazzi mill about the sidewalk as expensive cars and a few taxis drive in and out of the front courtyard.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - HOSPITALITY FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Elevator doors open and Danny steps out dressed in a smart-looking suit and shoes that have been spit polished to a high shine. He stands tall and confident and has every look of a man ready to take care of business.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - CHECK-IN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Only a handful of journalists are left here, either packing up to leave or grabbing a final plate of food before going. ERIN, an officious-looking woman, approaches Danny.

ERIN
Hello, may I help you?

DANNY
(shaking hands with Erin)
Hi, I'm Danny Vega. I have a tentative one o'clock with Carina.

ERIN
Oh, hi! Thank you for coming.

They begin walking back down the hallway toward the other end where the talent room is.

The door opens as a journalist exits, revealing Carina, sitting by a window. Danny is absolutely mesmerized by Carina who hasn't noticed him.

ERIN (CONT'D)

You're in luck. We had a no-show and we have just enough time for one more interview before Carina goes back to England. Can you wrap up in ten minutes?

DANNY

That's more than enough time.

As they pass the elevator lobby, an elevator opens and Rolling Stone exits in a hurry. He sees Erin--

ROLLING STONE

I'm sorry I'm late. Can you still fit me in?

ERIN

I'm sorry sir, we just gave away the last slot.

ROLLING STONE

My junket across town ran long and there's construction on Doheny.

ERIN

I'm sorry, but we're on a schedule.

She looks back at the check-in room and beckons someone. It's Mr. Ser. Danny moves behind Erin so that he's in Rolling Stone's view and mimics his condescending headshakes.

ROLLING STONE

Look, I'm with Rolling Stone.

Erin's interest is suddenly piqued and the hostility leaves her body language. She turns to Danny who braces himself.

ERIN

Who do you write for?

DANNY

(beat)

Deadline Danny.

(beat)

Dot com.

Erin slowly nods and looks away just as Mr. Ser arrives.

MR. SER
How can I help?

ERIN
(RE: Rolling Stone)
Could you show this man to the
interview room?

MR. SER
Right this way, sir.

Mr. Ser and Rolling Stone walk down the hallway. Danny shuts his eyes, crumpled by disappointment.

ERIN
This is a really important time for
Carina and she needs to reach the
widest audience possible. You
understand.

When Danny opens his eyes he sees Carina smile big for Rolling Stone. They shake hands and then Rolling Stone turns to shut the door. He sees Danny and nods victoriously with a self-satisfied look on his face. The door closes.

ERIN (CONT'D)
If we're still doing press when
Carina's back for the US leg of her
tour I'll keep you mind.

DANNY
Thanks...

Erin turns and nods at an approaching Mr. Ser. Erin leaves and Mr. Ser stands in front of Danny, wearing his subtle professional smile on an otherwise expressionless face.

There's nothing left for Danny to do, but go back to the elevator, which he does. Just as the doors close--

DANNY (CONT'D)
FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK!

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Waiting for valet, Danny notices JACK NICHOLSON standing next to him, smoking a cigarette. Danny stares at the cigarette and it looks like he might snatch it and smoke it. Then Jack notices him staring and Danny looks away morosely.

JACK
Cheer up, pal. You still got your
health.

DANNY
Yeah, but today I'm not feeling so hot.

Jack's car pulls up.

JACK
(laughing)
Well, you gotta die someday. So don't waste your time feeling like shit.

He gets in his car and drives off.

EXT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - LATE NIGHT

Danny parks next to Brian's car in the empty lot.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL

As Danny enters--

DANNY
I hate my life.

He slows his approach when he takes in the scene. Then he breaks into a sprint.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Brian. Brian!

Brian is lying facedown in front of the short stage, with one foot still hanging on the lip of the stage. It's obvious that he must have tripped and fallen off. Danny rolls him over, revealing a nasty bump on his forehead. Brian groans softly.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Brian is lying on a hospital bed that has been inclined so that he's more or less sitting up. He's holding an ice pack against his forehead. Danny is sitting on an adjacent bed. A DOCTOR approaches with a clipboard.

DOCTOR
Well, it looks like you've suffered a mild concussion, but otherwise you're OK. No fractures. Do you remember what happened before you fell?

BRIAN

I was working...and my vision got blurry. I panicked and I must have tripped on something, because I remember falling. Next thing I remember is Danny waking me up.

DOCTOR

The blurry vision and disorientation makes sense. Your blood pressure is dangerously high. Are you under a lot of stress at work? You were there pretty late.

BRIAN

No. I just work weird hours.

Danny clears his throat and Brian shoots him a look.

DOCTOR

What's your diet like?

BRIAN

Lately it's pizza and root beer.

DANNY

Sandra isn't cooking anymore?

Brian doesn't answer.

DOCTOR

I'm going to prescribe something for your head, but I'd like to keep you overnight for observation. And then we should talk about putting you on medication for your blood pressure. Is there anyone you'd like us to contact for you?

BRIAN

No. No one.

The doctor leaves.

DANNY

What am I missing?

BRIAN

Sandra's gone. She's divorcing me.

DANNY

(beat)
When did this happen?

BRIAN

About three months ago.
 (Danny stays quiet)
 What are you thinking?

DANNY

I'm thinking that you're not obligated to tell me anything. I just thought you'd tell me this.

BRIAN

I couldn't talk about it. Maybe I still can't. A part of me thought she'd come back. A part of me still does. I don't know.

DANNY

I wish I had advice to give, but you know me and relationships.

Brian opens his eyes and pulls the ice pack away from his face. He looks at Danny who is staring at the floor.

BRIAN

It didn't go well today, did it?

DANNY

Right now she's on a plane back home. I didn't even get a chance to talk to her.

Danny's eyes stare into another time and place.

BRIAN

How'd she look?

Danny suddenly jumps off the hospital bed and bursts into an animated speech, gesticulating wildly--

DANNY

Stunning! You know, people...they splash words around and they exaggerate until everything means the same thing. But you know I don't. So when I say she looked stunning...I was literally stunned. It took every ounce of my strength to keep walking towards her. She is...you know how most people function on a scale of 1 to 10 for looks? Carina...is a 15! If you haven't seen her in real life, you can't even conceptualize how phenomenal she looks.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Her beauty stands beyond the threshold of imagination. Yes, you can look at pictures or watch videos, but until you can feel her presence...bask in her aura...you're just getting a shoddy facsimile.

(beat)

She looked good.

He crawls back inside of himself.

BRIAN

Are you going to be OK?

DANNY

Sure. Of course. Why wouldn't I be? I just missed a once in a lifetime opportunity to talk to the one woman who has actually made me feel something in ten years.

(beat)

Don't worry about me. I'm used to being alone. You, on the other hand, obviously need looking after. I've got some events and screenings to go to this week, but I'll make time to show you how to cope with being single.

He starts to leave, but Brian senses an act.

BRIAN

Danny. Seriously. Are you OK?

DANNY

Brian. Seriously. I'm fine.

He flashes a reassuring smile. Brian searches Danny's face for sincerity before closing his eyes and placing the ice pack back on his forehead.

BRIAN

OK. I'll call you later.

Danny turns to leave and his smile wilts on his face.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - FREEWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

Danny is in the fast lane, but stuck in traffic and is obviously late for something by how fidgety he is. The traffic loosens up and Danny cheers as he begins cruising at 70mph. Unfortunately, a woman changes lanes in front of him.

DANNY

No. No! NO!

She maintains a speed of 50mph, leaving a vast empty space in front of her. Danny's knuckles turn white on the steering wheel and he thrashes wildly in frustration. He catches the woman's fear-stricken eyes in her rearview mirror.

The woman switches back to her previous lane and Danny cheers. As he passes, he looks over at the woman who is deliberately staring straight ahead. Danny grins to himself and he drives off toward the looming skyline of Los Angeles.

INSERT TIME PASSING SEQUENCE

Danny pulls into a parking garage and parks. Once he's walking, the world around him changes frenetically, zipping through the different places he has to be in one week: film screening, hotel lobby, concert, movie premiere and so on.

Danny passes Rolling Stone who also appears to be caught in this surreal journalist time warp. He's talking to a hot girl who changes with the venue. Rolling Stone shakes his head at Danny as he passes.

The only time Danny snaps out of the time warp is when a woman walks by smoking a cigarette. Danny follows closely behind, relishing the smell before returning to the time warp until he reaches his car at the end of his walk.

END TIME PASSING SEQUENCE

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - FREEWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Danny is in a middle lane, cruising in light traffic. A man inexplicably changes lanes in front of Danny.

DANNY

Keep going! One more lane!

The man stays in front of Danny and drives irritatingly slow. Danny's shoulders slump, but then he remembers and thrashes around angrily. When he's done he looks into the man's rearview mirror. The man looks back and flips Danny the bird.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

Danny and Brian are waiting in line for the pharmacist. Danny is texting while they talk.

Brian's forehead looks mostly healed. A blood pressure machine is just to their left and a radio station is piped in through the overhead speakers.

DANNY

How're you feeling? How's your head?

BRIAN

Better. The headaches are gone. How are you doing?

DANNY

Fine. Just busy.

BRIAN

No, I mean how are you *doing*?

Danny puts his phone away. The line moves forward.

DANNY

I'm good! I'm good. You know, I've had time to think about this whole thing and...you know...it really was silly. I mean, I don't even know her. What if she chews with her mouth open. Or what if she has a really annoying laugh?

BRIAN

You think her laugh might be annoying?

DANNY

I don't know. That's the point. She might like *The Notebook*! Here I am getting worked up over a stranger.

BRIAN

OK. So you're over her?

DANNY

(beat)

I think so. It wasn't *real*.

BRIAN

Are you sure? Because you had me fooled. You looked...happy.

DANNY

You know what I think it was? It was just me being lonely.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

I've gone ten years without so much
as a date. A moment of weakness
should have been expected.

His phone buzzes and he reads a text. The line moves forward.

BRIAN

It had nothing to do with Carina?

DANNY

(putting phone away)
It could have been any girl.

BRIAN

(chuckles)
I don't believe a word of what you
just said, but OK.

DANNY

C'mon. Before Carina it was Gwyneth
Paltrow. Tomorrow it'll be...Rachel
McAdams.

BRIAN

Anne Hathaway.

DANNY

Anne Hathaway is good. I'll hit on
her next time just for you.
(beat)
So, what are we picking up?

BRIAN

Pills for my cholesterol.

DANNY

How long do you have to take them?

His phone buzzes and Danny reads a text and starts replying.

BRIAN

Life.

DANNY

(busy texting)
Ugh. That sucks.

BRIAN

Yeah. You better be careful.

DANNY

(busy texting)
Oh? Why is that?

BRIAN
You might end up like me.

DANNY
(busy texting)
What? Divorced?

BRIAN
Hardy har.

DANNY
(putting phone away)
C'mon, do I look like I have high
blood pressure?

BRIAN
You used to smoke, you eat garbage
and you don't sleep.

DANNY
Yes, but I'm also awesome!

Brian smiles and shakes his head before being called to the counter. Danny steps out of line and sits at the blood pressure machine. He rolls up his sleeves and slips his arm into the band and starts the test.

Danny looks bemused at the machine which features a colored meter ranging from green to red. The LIGHT is green. While Danny waits, he bobs his head to the music filtering through the overhead speakers. It's a Carina Ray song.

Danny's gaze is drawn to the nearest speaker until it's all he can focus on. The song seamlessly transitions out of the speaker and plays over the scene while Danny stares with the same expression he had seeing Carina for the first time.

He's so enthralled that he doesn't realize his blood pressure is rising as noted by the machine.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Are you ready?

Danny snaps out of his reverie to see Brian standing over him with a white paper bag in his hand.

DANNY
Yeah. Let's boogie.

They walk away not realizing the machine is blinking red.

INT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - LATER

Danny cuts into a thick, juicy steak and puts a savory morsel in his mouth. His eyes involuntarily close as soon as he starts chewing -- it's a little taste of heaven.

Brian, sitting on the other side of the table, stares at Danny from underneath his eyebrows. After a moment he stabs a fork into his salad and puts some dry lettuce in his mouth.

CARTER
(approaching)
How is everything?

DANNY
Absolutely wonderful. Compliments
to the chef!

BRIAN
Delicious.

Carter leaves.

DANNY
(wiping his mouth)
OK Brian. I can't give you any
relationship advice, but I *can* give
you pointers on being single.

BRIAN
I need pointers?

DANNY
Of course you do. No one who's been
in a relationship for as long as
you have can just go back to being
single without any problems.
(beat)
Let me guess, coming home to a
dark, empty house is the worst part
of your day.

BRIAN
(slightly surprised)
Yeah.

DANNY
I bet you leave a TV on in the
other room because hearing voices
gives you comfort.

BRIAN
(smiles)
Yeah.

DANNY

And the loneliest you'll ever feel is when you call your friends and none of them can hang out with you because they're busy with their girlfriends or wives.

(Brian laughs)

I've been there, brother. It all comes down to being comfortable with yourself. Learn to embrace the silence and the solitude. So here's your first pointer to ease you back into society as a free man: Don't be afraid to eat alone at a sitdown restaurant.

BRIAN

I'm not afraid.

DANNY

OK, well maybe afraid is the wrong word, but you probably avoid doing it. Am I right?

BRIAN

Well...

DANNY

It's OK. I understand. People always take dining companions for granted until they have to eat alone. When you do, no matter how good the service is, it always seems too slow. And it's easy to feel trapped at the table. See that guy over there?

Danny subtly motions with his eyebrows to an OLDER MAN graying at the temples, sitting alone at an adjacent table. Brian casually glances over. The man is straining his neck, looking for the server to return his credit card.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Don't be that guy. Antsy, awkward, fidgety. He can't wait to get out of here. The trick is to bring something to distract you while you eat. A magazine. A newspaper. Whatever it is. Just don't do *that*.

The older man at the next table starts talking loudly on his cell phone. A few patrons shoot him annoyed looks.

BRIAN
Seems easy enough.

DANNY
That's your homework assignment:
Eat at a sitdown restaurant by
yourself this week. Next week,
we'll go to the mall and practice
sneering at young couples in love
and then you're ready to be single.
That's all there is to it.

BRIAN
(laughing)
That's it, huh?

DANNY
Well, there is one more thing.
Don't stay single for too long. You
might get used to it.

The mirth drains from Brian's face. Danny's phone vibrates in his pocket and he pulls it out. The number is unknown.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Excuse me, I have to take this.
(answering)
Hello?

PHONE RECORDING
(filtered)
This message is for...
(computerized voice)
Danny Vega.
(back to recording)
If this is you, please press 1.

Danny does so, making a face, and Brian mouths, "Who is it?"

PHONE RECORDING (CONT'D)
(filtered)
Please hold for an important
message.

DANNY
Bill collector.

CARINA
(filtered)
Hi there! This is Carina Ray.

Danny's mouth falls open and his gaze fixes on something a thousand miles away.

CARINA (CONT'D)

(filtered)

You recently visited my website and entered a drawing to attend a private concert in London. I'm calling to let you know that I chose you. Congratulations. Thank you so much for your support and I look forward to meeting you.

PHONE RECORDING

(filtered)

Please check your e-mail for more information.

The recording disconnects. Brian is busy over-salting his salad and he looks at Danny expectantly.

DANNY

I need to pack.

EXT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - MINUTES LATER

An upbeat Carina Ray song plays over the following montage.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Danny and Brian rush out of the restaurant with to-go boxes. Brian grabs Danny by the shoulders and gives him a reassuring shake, saying something encouraging. Danny shakes Brian's hand and gives him his to-go box with his steak and runs off.

After a moment of deliberation, Brian pries off the lid and grabs the steak with his bare hand to take a meaty bite out of it before throwing the rest into the trash.

I/E. TAXI CAB - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina sits in the backseat with Nicky, staring out the window at the people who walk by in the drizzle.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - MORNING

Carryon luggage is splayed out on Danny's bed and he's hastily packing it with too much stuff.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky are shopping for clothes. Carina emerges from the dressing room in something form-fitting. Nicky emerges wearing something scandalously revealing. Carina's mouth falls open and she slaps Nicky's ass playfully.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - TERMINAL - DAY

Danny rushes with his carryon luggage to get in line at the metal detector and is singled out for enhanced screening. Danny stands in front of the full-body scan machine that is currently occupied by a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN with a healthy bosom.

A handful of male TSA agents watch her closely. After she's finished and begins gathering her things, another male TSA agent runs out from a back room with a smartphone in hand to show the other male agents something on the screen.

The men leer at the phone and then at the woman as she leaves. A TSA agent beckons Danny to step into the machine.

Danny considers his options. He looks to his right where an OLD MAN is receiving an enhanced pat down. The man visibly convulses when the agent's hands drift across the man's crotch and again when hands slide inside his waistband.

Danny gets scanned by the machine.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - TSA BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A TSA agent photographs Danny's body scan with his phone.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

As Danny gathers his things the TSA agent comes out of the back room to show the other agents. They all laugh at Danny.

INT. PLANE - LATER

Danny is in an uncomfortable aisle seat next to the restroom, working on his laptop. A portly man exits the restroom and Danny is paralyzed by an alarming stench. He retches.

Later, when meals are being served, a food cart smashes into Danny's elbow then stops by his row. Danny looks up at the stewardess with horrified pain contorting his face as she drops off something warm and sad, barely resembling chicken.

It's night and dark in the plane. While Danny tries to sleep, resting his head on a tiny pillow, a line of fidgety people has formed for the restroom. Turbulence makes people constantly grab Danny's chair -- sometimes grabbing his head.

It's morning and light streams through windows. Passengers wake refreshed with smiles on their faces. Danny sits rigidly in his seat, staring straight ahead with bloodshot eyes. He slowly turns to look out the window at Heathrow airport.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL - AFTERNOON

Danny stands looking up at the beautiful building as his driver pulls away. BOB MILLS, an older gentleman with a perfect tan and wide grin, is out front, talking with journalists. He excuses himself when he sees Danny.

BOB

You must be our lucky winner. I'm
Bob Mills, Carina's manager.
Pleased to meet you.

He shakes Danny's hand and they start walking inside.

BOB (CONT'D)

Any trouble getting here?

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - PRESS SUITE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The hallways are bustling with publicists and assistants. Journalists line the walls, chatting, texting or having phone conversations. Danny and Bob work their way through. Bob's female HOT ASSISTANT approaches with a grave expression.

BOB

(to Hot Assistant)

I take it he's not here. Get me as
soon as he arrives.

(to Danny)

I apologize for all this. Carina's
press conference is running late.
There should still be an empty room
somewhere. Ah, here's one.

They enter a small room with a couch, a chair and a table.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - PRESS SUITE - SMALL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands and waits politely while Bob closes the door behind them and then motions for Danny to sit as Bob does the same. Danny takes the seat with his back to the door. He closes his eyes and massages his temples.

BOB

First time in London?

Danny manages a weak nod, but doesn't open his eyes.

BOB (CONT'D)

(beat)

So, you're a big fan of Carina's?

Danny's eyes open and the tension leaves his face. As he speaks, someone silently enters the room behind him.

DANNY

I love her...music. Carina is the kind of artist that makes you understand why people wrote songs in the first place. Her music is the perfect expression of her emotions. And while I may not have experienced everything she has, I still think I understand her because her songs are the purest form of communication between two souls.

Bob looks overwhelmed so Danny deflates the moment with--

DANNY (CONT'D)

And her beauty is a close second.

BOB

(laughing politely)

Well, are you ready to meet her?

DANNY

Uh...right now?

BOB

Part of the prize is a meet and greet and we have some time before her press conference.

DANNY

I didn't have a very good flight. I haven't slept in close to 24 hours. My hair's a mess.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
I haven't brushed my teeth. And I'm
starting to smell. Can we do this
later?

Bob smiles embarrassedly and looks over Danny's shoulder.

DANNY (CONT'D)
She's standing behind me isn't she?

Bob laughs and Danny shuts his eyes and slowly stands and turns. He opens his eyes to Carina smiling compassionately.

CARINA
Hello. I'm Carina Ray.

DANNY
(pained smile)
Hi. Danny Vega. Please join us.

He motions and Carina sits next to Bob. As she passes, Danny licks his hand and flattens his hair inconspicuously as he sits. Once everyone settles the room falls silent as they wait on Danny to say something. He doesn't.

INSERT DANNY'S POV

The room is made of clouds and Carina has angel wings.

BACK TO SCENE

BOB
Danny is a big fan of your music.

CARINA
I heard when I came in. Thank you
for the compliments.

The room falls silent again until Danny realizes they're waiting on him.

DANNY
Um...so what now?

CARINA
People normally ask questions.

DANNY
You mean like an interview.

Someone knocks on the door and Danny turns to see Hot Assistant poke her head inside. She waves Bob over. Danny turns back to Carina.

CARINA

Not quite. Nothing professional at least. More like "what's my favorite color" or "would I mind taking a picture with them?"

DANNY

Would you mind taking a picture with me?

CARINA

Of course not. I would love to.
(begins to stand)

DANNY

I'm kidding. Please. Sit.

Carina laughs politely and Bob exits.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I've actually been trying to get an interview with you for a long time.

CARINA

You have?

DANNY

I'm actually a journalist. I was *this* close to interviewing you about a week ago at the Four Seasons. Here's my card.

He produces his card from a nifty card holder and Carina takes it. She reads it.

CARINA

Deadline Danny. You were there? Why didn't you talk to me?

DANNY

I got bumped at the last second by Rolling Stone.

CARINA

Oh! He's going to be here tonight. He's interviewing me for the streamcast.

DANNY

(through his teeth)
Fantastic.

CARINA
(smirking)
Sorry. Did I take the Mickey?

DANNY
Mickey...Mouse?

CARINA
Right.

DANNY
It's not the best news I've heard.

CARINA
Well, you have me all to yourself
now. Do your worst.

DANNY
(pause)
I really only have one question. I
wish this was under different
circumstances, but this is probably
the only chance I'll get.

CARINA
Alright.
(tenses with anticipation)

DANNY
(working up the nerve)
I was wondering...

CARINA
Yes...?

DANNY
I was wondering if you--

The door opens and Mr. Ser walks in and stands by the door.

CARINA
You were wondering if I...

DANNY
(beat)
I was wondering if you...ever
considered acting.

CARINA
(surprised)
What, like in a movie?

DANNY
...Yes.

CARINA

No one's ever asked me that. Do you make movies?

With Mr. Ser there, Danny gives up and moves on.

DANNY

I happen to be a screenwriter. Aspiring.

CARINA

Oh! A journalist and screenwriter.

DANNY

Sort of. I only do the journalist thing to get in front of actors, producers and anyone else who can do something with my scripts.

CARINA

Wouldn't it be easier just to get an agent?

DANNY

You'd think that. But I have a pile of rejection letters *this* high. I couldn't pay an agent to meet me. But last week I interviewed Steven Spielberg. What does that tell you?

CARINA

I had no idea it was so difficult.

DANNY

Well agents are a necessary filter. I come from LA where everybody wants to be an actor. *I* wanted to be an actor once. But as saturated as Hollywood is with wannabe actors, the competition for writers is even more saturated.

CARINA

I find that hard to believe.

DANNY

Well, I think the average person watches TV or movies and they think "Yeah, I could do that!" But then they go home and look in the mirror and realize "Oh, I don't really have the look."

CARINA

But aren't there roles for people who aren't pretty?

DANNY

Absolutely, but those aren't the roles that inspire people to get into acting. No one is going to uproot their lives and move to Hollywood to play the quirky-but-not-as-cute best friend or the guy who gets pushed during a chase sequence and yells "Hey!"

(Carina laughs)

So unless a person is convinced that they could get a lead role, they typically don't pursue acting. Whereas everybody thinks they can write and they don't even have to be in Hollywood. Everybody thinks they have a story to tell and that other people will actually be interested in it. Sometimes you just have to step back and marvel at the overinflated sense of ego.

(beat)

And that's me! I'm one of those people!

(Carina laughs again)

CARINA

Well what about people who can't be an actor and can't be a writer, but still want to be in entertainment?

DANNY

Oh that's easy. They develop a horrible personality and do reality television.

(they both laugh)

CARINA

Oh you're terrible.

Someone knocks on the door and Mr. Ser opens it. Nicky and Bob walk in and Bob nods meaningfully at Carina. Carina stands and so does Danny.

CARINA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to cut this short, but I have to go. Will you be at the reception tonight?

DANNY

I don't know what the schedule is.

BOB

Absolutely he'll be there.

DANNY

Yes, I'll be there.

CARINA

Wonderful. I'll see you then.

They shake hands then Carina heads for the door, but pauses--

CARINA (CONT'D)

This has been...interesting.

Carina smiles and walks by. Danny turns to watch her go. Nicky is surprised to see Danny and he returns the surprise. As Mr. Ser, Carina and Nicky exit--

CARINA (CONT'D)

(to Nicky)

Do you know him?

NICKY

Sort of.

They leave. Bob beckons Danny to follow him out.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - PRESS SUITE - CONTINUOUS

They walk down the hall together as journalists walk in the opposite direction, presumably toward a press conference.

BOB

We've booked you a very nice suite.
The room service here is exquisite
so order what you fancy.

As they walk, they pass Rolling Stone who is following Hot Assistant to the press conference. He looks surprised at Danny who glares back. Rolling Stone moves on.

BOB (CONT'D)

You're invited to the cocktail
reception before the show. Then
we'll migrate to the concert hall
and then it's Carina's interview.
We'll have a seat for you up close.
And then that's it.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

Tomorrow is yours and we've arranged for a pleasant tour of the city before your flight back to America. How does that sound?

DANNY

Will I get to talk to Carina again?

BOB

She'll be at the reception.

DANNY

Wonderful.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 14TH FLOOR - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Danny slowly walks the hallway with his luggage in tow.

DANNY

(to himself)

You ever think about acting? I'm a screenwriter. Did I mention I'm a moron? That's attractive right?

He finds his room -- 1421 -- and enters.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - CONTINUOUS

The room is magnificent to behold with luxurious furnishings, plush carpet and an inspiring view of London. For a moment, Danny just stares out the window in awe. Then he moves to the bedroom, kicks off his boots and collapses on the bed.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 14TH FLOOR - HALLWAY - EVENING

A BELL HOP pushes a room service cart in front of Danny's room. Danny can be heard having a conversation inside. The bell hop knocks and waits then something catches his eye.

He makes himself as thin as possible as Carina, Nicky and Mr. Ser walk by just as Danny opens the door. Carina and Nicky smile and wave at Danny as they pass. The bell hop pushes the cart into Danny's room and Danny shuts the door.

Carina and Nicky enter the suite next to Danny's -- 1423.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - CONTINUOUS

The bell hop sets up the cart for dining while Danny video chats on his laptop. On the screen is Adrian.

ADRIAN
(filtered)
I still can't believe you're there.

DANNY
I know. I've never believed in
destiny before, but this has to
mean something, right?

ADRIAN
(filtered)
Let's not get ahead of ourselves
here. So what's the next step?

DANNY
I'm not sure. Hang on.

Danny turns to face the bell hop who is waiting respectfully,
but expectantly by the door. Danny fishes out his wallet and
pulls out a US ten dollar bill. Danny's expression asks if
that's alright and the bell hop's expression says yes.

When the bell hop leaves, Danny returns to the laptop.

DANNY (CONT'D)
You would have been so
disappointed. I totally blew my
chance to ask her out.

ADRIAN
(filtered)
What happened?

DANNY
We weren't alone. I looked
horrible. I was babbling. I
couldn't present the right package.

ANGELA (O.S.)
(filtered)
Let me talk to him.

ADRIAN
(filtered)
Angela wants to talk to you.

Angela's face replaces Adrian's on the screen.

ANGELA
(filtered)
Hey there handsome.

DANNY
Hey Angela.

ANGELA

(filtered)

Listen, there are rarely any perfect situations. If you keep waiting for one you might miss the opportunity of a lifetime. Just be yourself. When you are, you're irresistibly charming.

ADRIAN (O.S.)

(filtered)

Hey!

ANGELA

(filtered)

Be yourself. And if she says no at least you'll know she's rejecting you and not some package you created because you thought that's what she'd like. Give Danny a try. He's awesome.

(Danny is moved)

I still think this is crazy, but I hope she says yes. Good luck.

She leaves and Adrian takes her place.

ADRIAN

(filtered)

OK buddy. What's the next move?

DANNY

I have no idea. All I can think is don't embarrass myself.

(checks time)

I gotta get ready. I still have to take a shower. Don't forget to watch the streamcast.

ADRIAN

(filtered)

Good luck.

Danny disconnects and undresses. He scarfs a few bites of food from room service and heads to the bathroom. The room radio catches his eye and he turns it on to the first station that comes through -- Radio 1. A commercial is ending.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands in the shower with the water pouring down his back.

His face is tense and his eyes stare into the future at a thousand different possibilities. They all seem terrible. From the other room the radio can be heard--

SCOTT MILLS

(filtered)

This next song goes out to all of
you just starting your night on
this fine London evening.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky are both applying makeup in the mirror. Room 1423 is the exact mirror image of 1421 so that the showers share a wall. The radio is turned on in the bedroom tuned to the same station.

SCOTT

(filtered)

Get into as much trouble as you can
because you only live once and
regret is a second ex-wife you
don't need.

Carina and Nicky giggle.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny also smiles to himself and he looks more relaxed.

SCOTT

(filtered)

Not that you need the first one
either. So here's something from
the Queen with Don't Stop Me Now.

Danny shuts his eyes and as soon as the song starts, Danny starts singing with it.

DANNY

Tonight I'm gonna have myself a
real good time/I feel alive and the
world it's turning inside out
yeah!/I'm floating around in
ecstasy.

He lets the backup vocals come in.

QUEEN

(filtered)

So don't stop me now don't stop
me...

Danny opens his eyes!

DANNY
'Cause I'm having a good time,
having a good time!

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

Danny is no longer in the shower. He's on a large, empty stage dressed in a white suit with bell bottoms. He's singing into a white microphone. The environment is surreal with the sky above exploding in shooting stars every so often.

Danny moves around the stage and performs like a trained professional. When he sings, his voice is Freddy Mercury's.

DANNY
I'm a shooting star leaping through
the skies/Like a tiger defying the
laws of gravity...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back in the shower, however, Danny's voice is his own and it's as off-key, pitchy and screechy as ever as he moves around the shower with his made-up choreography.

DANNY
I'm a racing car passing by like
Lady Godiva/I'm gonna go go go...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky are still listening to the same station, applying makeup, but they both pause momentarily when they realize that Danny's voice is coming through the thin wall.

DANNY
(muffled)
There's no stopping me!

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
I'm burning through the skies
yeah!/Two hundred degrees/That's
why they call me Mister Fahrenheit/
I'm trav'ling at the speed of
light/I wanna make a supersonic man
of you...

The reverse angle reveals an immense crowd large enough to fill a stadium, but they're all shrouded in darkness. They're on their feet, waving their arms and moving with the music.

QUEEN

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

I'm having such a good time/I'm
having a ball...

QUEEN

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

If you wanna have a good time just
give me a call!

QUEEN

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

'Cause I'm having a good time...

QUEEN

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

Yes I'm having a good time/I don't
want to stop at all...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky are sitting on the lip of the bathtub with their ears pressed against the wall. Their mouths hang agape and they look at each other with wide-eyed glee.

DANNY

(muffled)

I'm a rocket ship on my way to
Mars/On a collision course...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

I am a satellite I'm out of
control/I am a sex machine ready to
reload...

He pumps his hips forward like an exotic dancer.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky giggle.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

Like an atom bomb about to/
Oh oh oh oh oh explode!

His expression is utter seriousness.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky burst into laughter, but try to stifle themselves.

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

I'm burning through the skies
yeah!/Two hundred degrees/That's
why they call me Mister Fahrenheit/
I'm trav'ling at the speed of
light/I wanna make a supersonic
woman out of you...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As soon as the bridge starts, Danny begins pounding the drumbeat on the shower wall.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A grin spreads across Nicky's face as she looks at Carina.

NICKY

(singing)
Don't stop me don't stop me don't
stop me...

Carina's eyes widen, worried that Danny might hear them.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

But Danny is too lost in his own imagination--

DANNY
Hey hey hey!

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

CARINA AND NICKY
Don't stop me don't stop me/Ooh ooh
ooh...

DANNY
(muffled)
I like it!

CARINA AND NICKY
Don't stop me...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
Have a good time good time...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

CARINA AND NICKY
Don't stop me don't stop me...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
Oooooohhhhhhhh!

He pounds out the rest of the bridge on the shower wall.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky, caught up in Danny's imagination, yell and come running out of the bathroom.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - CONTINUOUS

Carina jumps on top of the bed and plays air guitar as the solo begins. Nicky runs to the radio and turns up the volume.

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

When Nicky turns around, she finds Carina is no longer on the bed, but on a similar stage as Danny's. In fact, the environment has taken on the same properties.

Carina is dressed in a tight-fitting, black sleeveless jumpsuit. Her hair is done up like Jimi Hendrix and she wears a scarf tied around her forehead. She performs the rest of the guitar solo on an actual guitar.

Danny walks into the shared imagination--

DANNY

I'm burning through the skies
yeah!/Two hundred degrees/That's
why they call me Mister Fahrenheit/
I'm trav'ling at the speed of
light/I wanna make a supersonic
woman of you...

Nicky, dressed in a tight-fitting, burgundy outfit moves into view, playing a tambourine. Even though they share the same microphone, moving in and out for their parts, only Carina and Nicky are really performing together.

CARINA AND NICKY

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

I'm having such a good time/I'm
having a ball...

CARINA AND NICKY

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

If you wanna have a good time just
give me a call!

CARINA AND NICKY

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

'Cause I'm having a good time...

CARINA AND NICKY

Don't stop me now!

DANNY

Yes I'm having a good time/I don't
want to stop at all...

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the song ends with Freddy Mercury la-la-ing into oblivion, the imaginary concert fades around Danny and he finds himself in the shower again. He smiles with renewed confidence.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - CONTINUOUS

The girls perform fake ballet and act silly as the song ends.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - 14TH FLOOR - HALLWAY - LATER

Danny comes out of his room freshly showered, dressed and coiffed. He closes the door behind him and when he turns around again he comes face to chest with Mr. Ser.

MR. SER

Excuse me. Please wait a moment.

Danny sees Carina and Nicky approaching on their way to the elevators. As the girls pass, they cast fisheye looks at Danny. Nicky giggles then Carina sings the "la-la" ending to *Don't Stop Me Now* as she walks by.

Mr. Ser follows behind them and Carina and Nicky peer around him as they walk backwards to see Danny's confused and curious expression. He slowly gathers his surroundings and realizes that Carina and Nicky have the next suite.

He puts two and two together and looks back at the girls in horror who are now standing in the elevator. They burst into empathetic laughter and the elevator doors close just late enough to see the embarrassment wash over Danny's face.

INT. COCKTAIL RECEPTION - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The large room is full with music industry types and guests dressed in business attire and evening wear. Bartenders serve drinks from the brightly lit bar that dominates a wall. Danny sits at the end of the bar watching Carina wistfully.

She's glad-handing people and posing for photos with them against a giant backdrop of her new album cover.

BARTENDER

Liquid courage mate?

He motions to Carina and Danny nods after a moment.

DANNY

Gin and tonic. Two limes.

The bartender whips it up and slides it over.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Cheers.

He sips as Nicky approaches and sits next to him.

NICKY

You put on quite a show.

DANNY

(grimacing)

Perfect. This is what I need.

NICKY

Oh don't be that way. We had a fabulous time.

DANNY

I bet. Can I get you something?

NICKY

Sure. Apple martini.

Danny waves the bartender over.

DANNY

Apple martini for the lady.

The bartender leaves to make the drink.

NICKY

I'm Nicky, by the way. I don't think I ever introduced myself.

DANNY

Danny. Have you been friends with Carina long?

NICKY

A very long time. It never feels like it though.

DANNY

You never seem to leave her side.

NICKY

She doesn't like being alone. It's still hard for her, you know?

DANNY

What is?

NICKY

Being without Jason. Everyone thinks she's being so brave by soldiering on like this, but she still cries over him sometimes.

(beat)

It's kind of a sweet thought though, isn't it? You don't see that kind of devotion in relationships anymore.

Danny catches his reflection in the bar mirror and for a moment he recognizes that he may have made a huge mistake. He wants to say something, but the bartender returns with the cocktail and Nicky sips it.

NICKY (CONT'D)

So, Carina tells me you're a journalist.

DANNY

Yeah. Sort of.

NICKY

What d'you mean?

DANNY

A real journalist gets to write honestly; I don't. If I did, then no one would invite anywhere.

NICKY

Have you at least interviewed anyone famous?

DANNY

(beat)

Do you know who Gwyneth Paltrow is?

NICKY

(beat)

Yes. I'm from a different country not a different planet.

Carina is still taking pictures and speaking with guests when she hears Nicky's unmistakable laugh. She looks in the direction of the bar to see Danny winking and pointing at an imaginary Gwyneth Paltrow much to Nicky's delight.

Carina smiles at the sight, delighted at her friend's happiness. After Nicky regains her composure--

DANNY

But I'm only doing it until I sell that first screenplay. And then it's goodbye journalism.

NICKY

Are you close?

DANNY

That's hard to say, but probably not.

NICKY

Just promise me you'll invite me to your first movie premiere.

She holds her drink up for a toast.

DANNY

It's a date.

He clinks his glass against hers and they down their drinks. Nicky's phone buzzes and she reads a text.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Who loves you?

NICKY

(sighs)

My boyfriend. Ex-boyfriend. We split up, but he wants to have another go. It's complicated.

Carina approaches.

CARINA

Well you two certainly look like you're having fun.

NICKY

You're finally free!

CARINA

Sadly, no. I have to do soundcheck.
(to Danny)
Do you mind if I steal her away?

DANNY

You're leaving?

CARINA

I have to. I'm sorry.

DANNY

I thought we'd have time to talk.

The disappointment on Danny's face almost convinces Carina--

BOB

Carina, you're needed on stage.

CARINA

(to Danny)

I'm sorry. I have to go. Maybe we can talk later.

NICKY

(to Danny)

I'll see you at the concert.

Danny watches helplessly as they go. Defeated, he pops a toothpick into his mouth and turns around to face the bar. The bartender places a fresh cocktail in front of him and gives him a commiserating nod.

I/E. TAXI CAB #2 - A FEW MINUTES LATER

When Carina and Nicky are finally alone--

CARINA

What was that about?

NICKY

What?

CARINA

You and him.

NICKY

We were just talking.

CARINA

And laughing.

NICKY

So?

Carina just smiles.

INT. PRIVATE CONCERT - LATER

The intimate venue can hold maybe 200 people, which includes a small balcony. Guests from the cocktail reception crowd the floor while others sit in booths that line the walls. The stage is dark and the instruments are waiting for musicians.

Danny enters the VIP section on the balcony. He looks down sullenly at the stage. After a moment, Nicky joins him followed by Bob. Nicky forces a smile out of Danny with a friendly jab in the ribs.

The stage lights up and the crowd claps as all attention is drawn to the musicians walking on to man their instruments. The guitarist, clears his throat--

GUITARIST

Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to Carina Ray!

The crowd cheers as Carina approaches her microphone.

CARINA

Wow. Thank you. It's great to be here. What a good looking crowd!

(the crowd cheers)

Before we start playing I'd just like to say thank you for all of your support. I don't know that I'd be standing here without your kind thoughts. So thank you.

The crowd claps. Some people shout "We love you!" Others shout "You're beautiful!"

CARINA (CONT'D)

(smiling big)

Thank you. This first song is the first single on the new album. It's a love song, but it's about loving someone when it's hard. When they don't deserve it. When your pride has been hurt.

Hearing Carina speak Danny's words takes his breath away. Unconsciously, he starts to nod, finally feeling understood.

CARINA (CONT'D)

I hope you like it.

Carina and her band play the entirety of the song. She's vulnerable and fragile and for a moment it seems like the song might be too much for her emotionally. But then a reassuring smile at the chorus seems to brace her spirits.

The crowd explodes into applause. On the balcony, Nicky is clapping and shouting words of encouragement. Danny stands motionless, staring across the great and insurmountable divide of the short distance between Carina and him.

Carina moves on to her next song. Danny can't bear to look any longer and turns away just in time to see Bob called inside by Mr. Ser. His body language is stiff and urgent. Danny moves toward the balcony door to eavesdrop.

BOB

No, no, no. This is disastrous! You have to find him!

MR. SER

There's no answer at his room, but he hasn't checked out.

BOB

(sighs)

See if he's been taken to hospital. I'll call my assistant.

Mr. Ser leaves and Bob pulls out his phone and dials.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL - DARK BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A CELL PHONE screen displays "Bob Mills", but the phone is set to silent. It lights up the dark room where Hot Assistant and Rolling Stone are both asleep and naked on the bed.

INT. PRIVATE CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

BOB

Where the bloody hell is she?
(he hangs up)
Shit!

Danny appears in the balcony doorway.

DANNY

Bob.

Bob slowly turns around to face Danny. Bob forces a smile, but his face is a deep color of homicidal intent.

BOB

Danny! Are you enjoying the concert?

DANNY

Very much so. Thank you. Do you need someone to interview Carina?

Bob looks at Danny long and hard.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Danny is in a makeup chair, sitting in front of a lit mirror. A makeup artist and hair stylist are getting Danny camera-ready while he stares straight ahead, relaxing his face.

BOB

You're sure you've done this before.

DANNY

Several times. Here's my card.
(gives his card)
Just not in front of a camera.

Bob takes the card and reads it apprehensively. He looks back at Danny one last time before waving someone over. An older gentleman with a pinched look about him joins Bob.

BOB

This is Peter, the director. He'll run you through the process. Don't mess this up and don't ask anything that might upset Carina.

Bob leaves.

PETER

It's simple really. There are three cameras. A producer will point to which camera to talk into, A, B or C. At the beginning and the end just read the teleprompter. When you see the producer signal "wrap up" ask Carina if there's anything she'd like to say to her fans so she can cap off the interview. Any questions so far?

DANNY

Nope. Sounds easy enough.

PETER

Good. One more thing: since this is a live streamcast over the Internet, viewers will be able to send in questions and you can read them from a monitor. Try not to get too caught up in reading. Just pick a good question and ask it. You'll have to fill about twenty minutes. Ready?

DANNY
As I'll ever be.

PETER
Very well. You're seat number two.

He leaves and stylists finish up with Danny.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - LATER

The set is simple with two tall chairs in front of a backdrop of Carina's new album cover. Danny takes the seat with a "2" painted on the back while the production crew scurries about. Danny takes a deep breath to steel his nerves.

CARINA (O.S.)
There you are!

Carina approaches Danny from behind and then takes her seat across from him. She's immediately accosted by makeup crew.

DANNY
You noticed I wasn't there?

CARINA
Well, I didn't see you leave, but I looked for you after the show.

DANNY
You did?

CARINA
I felt bad that we didn't get to talk earlier. But now it looks like we'll talk as much as you like.
(beat)
I'm glad it's you. That other guy is a bit of a prick.

Danny smiles and the makeup crew finishes up.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Peter dons headphones with a mike boom. He and his assistants look into monitors and manipulate control boards.

PETER
OK people! Get ready! We're going live.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

Camera men take their places behind their equipment and the lights dim. People rush into places and the size of the moment suddenly hits Danny as he starts breathing heavily.

CARINA

You're going to be smashing.

Danny gives her a nervous smile. Bob and Nicky stand off-camera to the side behind Danny and in clear view of Carina.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL - DARK BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rolling Stone comes to and sleepily looks over at the CLOCK on the nightstand. He's suddenly jolted to life.

ROLLING STONE

Shit. Shit. Shit!

He clambers over Hot Assistant on his way to his laptop, spilling her out of bed in a cascade of sheets. She quickly understands the situation and lets out a small cry when she checks her phone. As Rolling Stone brings up Carina's site--

ROLLING STONE (CONT'D)

Tell me there's still time...

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian sits down at his computer and places his beverage on a coaster on his desk. He navigates to Carina's website.

INSERT WEB PAGE

A placeholder video is playing in lieu of the streamcast.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Angela and Adrian are sitting on the couch looking at Carina's page as well, but on a laptop on the coffee table.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

A PRODUCER, wearing a headset, stands by one of the cameras.

PRODUCER

OK everyone! We're live in five,
four...

She counts down the rest with her fingers -- three, two...

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The video ends on the Web page and the streamcast begins. It fades in to Danny's face, staring straight into the camera.

BRIAN

Oh...

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Angela and Adrian are just as surprised.

ANGELA AND ADRIAN

...my...

INT. CHEAP HOTEL - DARK BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Half dressed, Rolling Stone looks up from pulling up a sock.

ROLLING STONE

(through his teeth)

...god dammit.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Peter and the crew cringe as they stare into the monitors filled with Danny's frozen face.

PETER

Please say something...

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

The faces of the crew grow more tense with each second and the producer points hard at the teleprompter. Danny gulps.

Nicky shoots Carina a worried look while Bob shuts his eyes tight and cringes, tilting his head back in defeat. Carina kicks Danny in the shin, snapping him into action.

DANNY
 (reading flatly)
 Hello and thank you for joining
 this live streamcast made possible
 by Livestream.

Bob and Nicky suddenly look hopeful. The teleprompter scrolls up and Danny takes a breath before continuing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 Tonight celebrates Carina Ray's
 triumphant return to the studio and
 stage, following her smash hit,
 self-titled debut album that has
 garnered her several accolades and
 millions of fans the world over. In
 just a moment she'll talk about her
 new album, which is available in
 stores and online on February 15,
 and will be happy to entertain your
 questions during this interview.
 Just type your question on the
 website and she'll receive it here
 in the studio. Without further ado,
 it's my honor to present to you
 Carina Ray.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Camera C is focused on Carina's smiling face. Everyone in the booth seems to breathe a sigh of relief.

PETER
 Thank God. OK, everyone stay sharp.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the monitor--

DANNY
 (filtered)
 Carina, how are you?

CARINA
 (filtered)
 I'm fine, thank you. How are you?

DANNY
 (filtered)
 I'm good, now that my mouth is
 working again.

They chuckle politely and Brian smiles proudly.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

But enough about me! So, how does it feel to be performing again?

CARINA

Absolutely wonderful. Playing in front of crowds again is such a great experience...I didn't know how much I missed it. I really am over the moon.

DANNY

What's the support been like from your fans?

CARINA

They're the best. Really. So supportive! I can't express how grateful I am for their patience.

DANNY

Some would say good things are worth waiting for.

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the laptop--

CARINA

(filtered)

Thank you. That's very kind.

Angela and Adrian smile.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

It's easy to be kind when it's the truth. Your debut album is my favorite album of all time.

CARINA

Really?

DANNY

Oh yes. And I'm sure I'm not alone in that regard.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

That album received international awards and nominations, it debuted at number one in the UK and entered the top 10 of the US Billboard 200. And most prestigiously, it has never left my CD player.

(Carina laughs)

For me it's the definitive love song album. Why do you sing so much about love?

CARINA

Oh I don't know. It's one of the strongest emotions that everyone shares. It's an important emotion. It definitely deserves a few songs. And not just the extremes of love. There are plenty of songs about finding love and losing love. But what about all of the times in between? Those confusing moments early on when you're not sure if you should let your guard down. Or those hard times in the middle when you're fighting, but fighting to stay together not break apart. I love singing about those complexities.

DANNY

Wow. I think I love you.

Carina is surprised as is everyone watching. Then Danny grins playfully, dispelling the shock. Carina plays along, fanning herself with her hand.

CARINA

Why thank you. I'm flattered.

DANNY

So, tell us about the new album!

CARINA

It's called The Tide...

Time passes.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

On his monitor, Carina is in the middle of answering a viewer's question.

CARINA

(filtered)

So my advice is to keep practicing.
Practice every day. And learn as
many instruments as you can. Oh,
and make friends with other
musicians. They're the best
inspiration you'll ever find.

Brian impatiently types a question on his computer.

INSERT WEBSITE

Brian's question is: "What do you look for in a guy?"

BACK TO SCENE

DANNY

(filtered)

Thank you Martha from Cork,
Ireland. Let's take another
question.

(he scans the monitor)

PizzaGuy from Los Angeles,
California asks, "What do you--"

Danny catches himself and makes a face into the camera.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

PETER

What is he doing?

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

The producer next to the camera makes a blade out of her
fingers and waves them frantically across her neck at Danny.
Carina looks at Danny expectantly.

DANNY

PizzaGuy wants to know...what do
you...like on your pizza?

CARINA

Um...anything I guess. I'm not
picky. What an odd question!

DANNY

You're right. Let's move on.
(he scans the monitor)

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
A+A in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
wants to know how you get such
healthy hair.

CARINA
Conditioner. Lots and lots of
conditioner.

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the laptop--

DANNY
(filtered)
I bet your showers take forever.

CARINA
(filtered)
And drying!

ADRIAN
(to Angela)
That's your question?

ANGELA
Her hair is gorgeous!

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
Let's take another question.
(he scans the monitor)

INSERT MONITOR

Among the stream of flowing text Danny focuses on: "Rolling
Stone: Worst.Interview.Ever."

BACK TO SCENE

Danny glares at the camera and notices the producer making
the "wrap up" signal.

DANNY (CONT'D)
It looks like we only have time for
one more.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN
C'mon...

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ADRIAN
This is it...

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
I'd like to use this question to
get your advice on a personal
matter.

CARINA
Alright...

Bob and Nicky suddenly look very curious.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

PETER
What...what's happening?

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
(clears throat)
I met a girl. She's here in London.
And she's amazing. I mean, really.

Carina smiles and leans her head slightly to look past Danny
at Nicky. Nicky's mouth falls open in surprise.

CARINA
I bet she's pretty, too.

DANNY
(beat)
When poets and painters create
beautiful masterpieces they think
of her for inspiration.

Nicky turns bright red and Carina grins.

CARINA
So what's the problem?

Danny speaks very deliberately to ensure he's understood.

DANNY

I think there might be another man who's still in her life. And I don't want to get in between that.

CARINA

That's very considerate, but I think you should leave the choice up to her. She might be ready to move on. With you.

DANNY

You think so?

CARINA

You'll never find out unless you ask. Take her out for drinks. There's a pub down the road that I go to every time I play here. It's quiet and you can talk and get to know each other. Go get her.

Nicky shakes her head playfully and smiles.

DANNY

(deep breath)
OK. Carina?

CARINA

Yes...?

DANNY

I was wondering if you'd like to have a drink with me.

Carina looks puzzled at Danny for a moment and then inhales sharply when she realizes.

DANNY (CONT'D)

There's a pub down the road where we can go. I've never been there myself, but I have it on good authority that it's quiet and we can talk and get to know each other. What do you say...?

CARINA

...It's me?

Danny swallows hard and it takes all his strength to nod hesitantly. Nicky raises a hand to her mouth, shocked. Bob takes a step forward with concern all over his face.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Peter and company all stare at Carina through the monitor. Her expression betrays nothing of what she's thinking.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Brian is on his feet, but transfixed on his monitor.

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Angela and Adrian's faces are glued to the screen.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

Everyone on the set is completely absorbed in the moment. Nothing moves. Cameramen peek out from behind their equipment and look at Carina. For the first time in a long time it seems like her answer could go either way.

Instinctively, she fingers her wedding ring and decides--

CARINA

I can't...

Danny's hopeful expression shatters on his face. The entire room seems to exhale as everyone regains their senses.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTROL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

PETER

Cut the feed! Now!

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The feed goes black on the website and Brian hangs his head.

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The couple falls back into their couch, disappointed.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

Carina's expression slowly morphs into confusion as she mulls over the last few moments. Bob approaches angrily--

BOB

What the bloody hell was that?!
 (to someone offscreen)
 Get him on the next flight home! I
 want him gone, now!
 (to Carina)
 Are you alright?

CARINA

I'd like to leave.

She stands and turns away. Danny stands to snatch her wrist.

DANNY

Carina. Please.

She turns to face him and her expression is a mixture of hurt, disgust and embarrassment. Danny recoils and lets go of her. As heavy, running footsteps approach, Danny turns just in time to see Mr. Ser's fist smash into his face.

INT. PLANE #2 - MORNING

A Carina Ray song plays over and under the following scenes as needed. Danny looks out the window. A stewardess taps him on the shoulder and he turns, revealing a BLACK EYE. He nods and looks out the window again.

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Carina walks out of the lobby, wearing big frame sunglasses and is accosted by journalists. Bob appears at Carina's side and gently guides her into the waiting LIVERY SERVICE.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny drops his luggage and checks his e-mail.

INSERT COMPUTER MONITOR

His inbox is flooded with e-mails and the subject lines are all variations of "You suck!" and "I Hope You Die!" Danny checks his website and is greeted by an error page: "The bandwidth for this site has been exceeded."

BACK TO SCENE

Danny searches his drawers for something. Unable to find it, he goes to his drafting table, which is littered with various SKETCHES OF Carina. He sifts through the papers and finds a pack of toothpicks. He puts one in his mouth and steps out.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE #2 - CONTINUOUS

In some large room in another part of the world, Carina is holding a press conference. Bob and she are sitting behind a table in front of a group of journalists.

JOURNALIST

Carina, we all saw your streamcast and we're curious to know more about your relationship with Mr. Vega and if you'd be interested in dating anyone else.

The press pool laughs quietly.

CARINA

(softly)

He's just a fan who won a giveaway. I'm flattered by the attention, but right now my only interest is ensuring this album is a success.

She smiles but it doesn't reach her eyes. Bob jumps in--

BOB

Carina is absolutely right. So lets stay focused on the album. Next question!

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Danny enters the hospitality suite for a film's press day. Journalists eyeball Danny as he approaches the publicist. She hands him his credentials with an embarrassed smile.

When Danny turns around, the journalists look away. Danny takes an empty seat by the window and looks outside.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - LATER

Danny, Rolling Stone and other journalists sit at a table with ROBERT DOWNEY JR. who is finishing an answer--

ROBERT

You can actually tell which days we used in the film because in some shots I'm taller than her. In others she's taller than me.

The journalists nod contemplatively.

DANNY

I have a question--

ROBERT

Sure thing sport. You're not going to ask me out on a date are you? Because I'm married.

He points and winks, mimicking Danny's faux pas with Gwyneth. Danny gives a pained smile as the journalists laugh. Ironically, Rolling Stone looks at Danny expressionlessly.

INT. CONCERT #2 - CONTINUOUS

Carina and her band are playing in front of an audience that is completely enthralled by her performance. Carina looks like her old self again and is in top form.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Danny replaces the nozzle on the pump and walks inside.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The CASHIER counts change and prints a receipt for someone in line in front of Danny. There's a small TV behind the counter tuned to KEITH OLBERMANN and his show *Countdown*.

INSERT TV

Keith sits behind his desk and is in the middle of his "Worst Person in the World" segment. The onscreen graphic displays the faces of Ann Coulter and Rush Limbaugh who have taken third and second place. Then DANNY'S FACE joins them.

KEITH

And the Worst Person in the World is Daniel Vega -- a blogger turned self-proclaimed entertainment journalist who runs the ramshackle site Deadline Danny dot com.

(MORE)

KEITH (CONT'D)

Recently he finagled his way into interviewing British soul revivalist sensation Carina Ray during a live streamcast where he proceeded to make a fool of himself by asking the songstress out on a date. Mr. Vega was rejected and rightfully so.

(takes of glasses)

Mr. Vega, you sir are not a journalist. *I* am a journalist. You are a glorified celebrity stalker. And you are a blemish on the title of this proud profession held by so many people far better than you. How dare you sir! Whatever horrible fate befalls you is certainly deserved and I hope you die angry.

BACK TO SCENE

The cashier hands Danny a receipt.

CASHIER

Anything else?

Danny looks at the cashier and everything dims except for the CARTONS OF CIGARETTES lining the wall behind the counter.

INSERT CIGARETTE PACK

A pack of cigarettes are quickly packed and unwrapped. One cigarette is plucked and placed in a mouth.

BACK TO SCENE

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands outside with a cigarette in his mouth and a lighter held in front of it, ready to go. As the song ends, Danny lights the cigarette, takes a deep drag and exhales an impressive stream of smoke.

Time passes.

Danny hunches against the rail with a cigarette burning down to its stub. He takes a final drag, then flicks the cigarette away. He looks into his pack and sees two cigarettes left. Pedro steps out on his balcony next door. He sees Danny.

PEDRO
Buenos noches.

DANNY
Hola. Quiere...fumar?

He motions with his pack.

PEDRO
(considers and then...)
Si.

Danny places both cigarettes in his mouth and lights them. He takes one out and reaches out to Pedro with it. Pedro reaches across the gap and takes it.

PEDRO (CONT'D)
Gracias.

DANNY
De nada.

Both men enjoy their cigarettes in silence for a moment.

PEDRO
(perfect English)
You know...if I had been her...I
would have said yes.

DANNY
Thanks. I appreciate that.

Realizing, Danny suddenly turns to look at Pedro who simply enjoys his cigarette, looking off in the distance. Danny can't help but grin as he looks off as well.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Danny can be heard coughing and clearing his throat and sinuses in the bathroom. His cell phone rings and he comes out after a moment to answer. He looks terrible.

DANNY
Danny Vega.

JENNY
(filtered)
Hi Danny, this is Jenny.

DANNY
I'm sorry, Jenny who?

JENNY
 (filtered)
 Jenny Camacho with Warner Brothers.

DANNY
 Oh, hi Jenny. How can I help you?

JENNY
 (filtered)
 I've been visiting your site, but
 it looks like it's been down.

DANNY
 Yeah, I'm getting killed by traffic
 right now. I'm sure you know why.
 Once I get more bandwidth I'll be
 back up.

JENNY
 (filtered)
 That's good to hear, because I've
 got a couple of screenings I'd love
 for you to attend.

A lazy smile curls Danny's lips. He lets his hand holding the phone fall to his side and is instantly transported into the journalist time warp he experienced earlier. When the time warp ends Danny finds himself--

EXT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - ONE MONTH LATER

Danny raises his hand to his face again, but instead of a phone he's holding a cigarette that he puts back in his mouth. He's sitting out front, enjoying a cup of coffee. His laptop is closed on the table in front of him.

Of the many passersby, one of them stops in front of Danny and he drags his eyes up the man's body. It's--

ROLLING STONE
 Deadline Danny.

DANNY
 Rolling Stone.

ROLLING STONE
 I never did get a chance to talk to
 you about that shit you pulled.

DANNY
 I really don't need this right now.

ROLLING STONE

(laughing)

From the very first day I met you I knew you were a piss poor journalist. You never came prepared to roundtables. Your knowledge of film is spotty at best. And you don't respect the profession.

DANNY

If you have any sense of self-preservation you'll walk away.

ROLLING STONE

But even though I never thought you deserved to be in the same room as the rest of us, you're still a great writer.

All Danny can do is stare as Rolling Stone takes a seat.

ROLLING STONE (CONT'D)

No one knows why you did what you did, but everyone has been more than happy to speculate. This story has been covered from every angle. Except yours. Write this article and a lot of people will read it.

(beat)

Including me.

He stands, then points and winks without the usual malice. Danny watches him go then opens his laptop. Cigarette hanging from his lips Danny stares at the blinking cursor on the desolate page of arctic white. He slowly types.

INSERT LAPTOP

"Carina" is all that appears.

BACK TO SCENE

Danny's shoulders slump and for a moment it looks like that's all he can type, but then he straightens up, puts the cigarette out and begins typing at speed.

DANNY (V.O.)

I have been alone longer than anyone I know.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - LATER

Working on his desktop at home, Danny continues typing. He pauses occasionally to think, but overall he flows.

DANNY (V.O.)

When you've gone this long, people love to throw platitudes at you, like "it'll happen when you stop looking." What they don't tell you is that even when you stop looking you have to keep looking or it will never happen. It's been almost a decade since I stopped looking.

After a night of writing, Danny publishes a lengthy article, turns off the light and goes to sleep.

INT. ROLLING STONE'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Sleepily, Rolling Stone turns on his computer with coffee in hand. He perks up when he sees Danny's article.

DANNY (V.O.)

I never planned on this; it just happened over time, like credit card debt or gaining weight. At first, it was scary.

INT. ANGELA AND ADRIAN'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Adrian is on the couch with the laptop on his lap and he beckons Angela over excitedly. She sits down and they read.

DANNY (V.O.)

Everyone I knew was in a relationship. They were getting married. Having kids.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Brian is eating a salad and a server approaches to check on him. He smiles and nods the server away and continues reading Danny's article on his phone.

DANNY (V.O.)

I wasn't sure if I'd cope, but when you've been alone for as long as I have, you learn to survive.

INT. CARINA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Nicky is finishing reading Danny's article on a laptop while Carina is at the sink drying a dish.

DANNY (V.O.)

I'll admit it was empowering. People marveled when I told them about my lifestyle. It was like breathing under water or living without sleep. But I wasn't trying to make a statement. I just didn't think there was anyone out there for me.

Nicky beckons Carina over, but Carina is reluctant until Nicky stands and gently touches Carina's shoulder. Carina finally sits down, but it takes her a moment before she raises her eyes to the screen.

DANNY (V.O.)

I was prepared to live the rest of my life alone and be content. And then I discovered Carina Ray's music. For the first time in a long time I felt understood. It also didn't hurt that her music is absolutely phenomenal.

Carina's expression softens.

INT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny is watching a YouTube video of his interview with Carina. The video is labeled "Loser Gets Rejected in Front of Internet". This segment shows Danny making Carina laugh.

DANNY (V.O.)

I didn't expect to develop feelings for her. How do you predict that? But there it was happening before my eyes. Emotions that should have been dead came surging back to the surface.

Danny can't stand to watch much more and pauses the video on a close-up of Carina looking as radiant as ever. He grabs a cigarette and heads out to the balcony.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Danny smokes.

DANNY (V.O.)
 I don't know Carina. Not in the way
 a person should know someone else
 before claiming to feel anything
 true.

INT. CARINA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DANNY (V.O.)
 I do know that she still wears her
 wedding ring.

Carina, still reading, reflexively fingers her ring.

INT. PEDRO'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Pedro is reading Danny's article on his computer.

DANNY (V.O.)
 And while I am surrounded by
 failing relationships...

INT. ROLLING STONE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rolling Stone's attention is drawn to a framed picture of
 himself with his wife as he reads.

DANNY (V.O.)
 ...and people who do everything
 they can to destroy the one good
 thing they have...

ROLLING STONE'S WIFE walks by with coffee in hand to enjoy
 the morning sun by the window. Rolling Stone looks at her.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Brian is still reading on his phone.

DANNY (V.O.)
 ...and while the divorce rate is
 unbelievably high...

INT. CARINA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DANNY (V.O.)
 ...here's Carina Ray's love and
 commitment to her husband
 transcending death itself.

(MORE)

DANNY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Who wouldn't want a woman that
 devoted by his side?

Carina's expression is inscrutable and Nicky places a reassuring hand on her shoulder. Carina shuts the laptop and walks into the other room to look out the window.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT #2 - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

DANNY (V.O.)
 But I realize now that I took the
 wrong approach and what I did was
 selfish. I apologize to Carina and
 her fans. Hurting her was never my
 intention. I'm sorry.

Danny stares off into the distance for a moment before his shoulders finally slump and he hangs in head in shame.

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - MONTHS LATER - EVENING

Rolling Stone is waiting for valet to fetch his car. He notices a familiar face in the corner of his eye. It's Danny.

ROLLING STONE
 Hey!

DANNY
 Hey.

ROLLING STONE
 I didn't know you were here today.

DANNY
 I was in the back.

ROLLING STONE
 I haven't seen you around in a
 couple of months.

DANNY
 I've been laying low, working with
 some new writers to help take some
 of the load off my shoulders. Then
 I can focus on my non-existent
 screenwriting career.

ROLLING STONE
 Oh. Well are you going to be at the
 Greek tonight?

DANNY

No. Why? What's going on?

ROLLING STONE

Carina Ray is playing. I'm covering. I can get you in if you want to go.

DANNY

I'm busy. I've got to bring my writers up to speed. You know.

ROLLING STONE

Yeah. I know.

His car arrives and he heads toward it. The driver gets out, but it isn't valet; it's ROLLING STONE'S WIFE. She smiles.

ROLLING STONE (CONT'D)

(to Danny)

Great article, by the way.

He holds Danny's gaze a bit longer to make a point then gets in the passenger side of the car and leaves.

EXT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - HOURS LATER

Danny is finishing editing his writers' articles. A cigarette has burned down to the butt on Danny's lips. He's so engrossed that he doesn't notice Carina, Nicky and Mr. Ser walk by.

They're about to enter the coffee house when Carina recognizes Danny and stops. Nicky sees what she's looking at then pulls Carina inside. Danny finishes and puts his cigarette out. He drinks his coffee but finds his cup empty.

Danny puts his laptop away and heads inside for a refill.

INT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Inside, he instructs the barista--

DANNY

Just half.

He hands over the cup and he looks around while he waits. In the far corner of the room he sees Carina and Nicky. A flood of mixed emotions washes over him and it looks like he might walk over and say something, but he thinks better of it.

The barista hands Danny his half-filled drink and he turns to go. Mr. Ser appears in front of him to block his path.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (sighing)
 I wasn't going to bother her, OK?

MR. SER
 Ms. Ray would like a word.

He motions and Danny hesitates for a moment then finds his strength. As he approaches Carina, Nicky stands and walks by, giving Danny a friendly nod before sitting at a nearby table. Danny takes her seat. Carina is sipping tea.

They can't seem to look each other in the eye. Danny takes the lid off his coffee to let it cool. Finally--

DANNY
 Hi.

CARINA
 Hi.

They look past each other's shoulders uncomfortably.

CARINA (CONT'D)
 I read your article.

Danny nods contemplatively.

DANNY
 Carina...

She shuts her eyes painfully and looks away, shaking her head slightly. She obviously has something important to say and Danny shuts up to let her finish.

CARINA
 When Jason was alive I couldn't believe how happy he could make me. We used to dance all night and have long, meaningful talks in the kitchen. And we used to laugh until we were in tears.

(she smiles at the memory)
 But even when we fought over something trivial and said awful things to each other, I could still feel good knowing that there was real commitment underneath all the hurt. And when he told me he loved me, even after the most horrific fight, I felt loved.

(MORE)

CARINA (CONT'D)

I felt so lucky to have found someone so special at such an early age.

(pause)

And then he was gone. And I was devastated. I didn't hear music anymore. Nothing reached me. And I just wanted to destroy everything, which was frightening because I've never felt that way before. I couldn't leave the house. I couldn't be alone. He was everything to me.

(beat)

Jason is my favorite person in the whole world and it is supremely difficult to be away from him.

(looks Danny in the eye)

You can't replace him.

Danny can't hold her gaze, so he looks down at the table.

DANNY

I don't know what to say. All I can think of are clichés. So I'll just say I'm sorry and go.

He starts to leave, but stops.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I never wanted to replace him, you know? I had no illusions that I could. He's the luckiest guy in the world. I wish I could have met him. I'd probably like him.

(beat)

See? Clichés. I just thought one day you might move on and that you might find room in your heart for someone like me.

(he shakes his head)

For me. You're the best thing that's happened to me in a very long time. Before you, I couldn't remember what it was like to lie awake at night thinking about another person and wondering what they'd feel like lying next to you. You make me feel alive again.

(beat)

I'm so sorry for what I did. I spent so much time hoping you'd go on a date with me and now I just hope you forgive me.

It takes Danny a moment before he can look at Carina again. She's breathing heavily, but slowly, obviously affected by Danny's words. It's unclear if she's upset.

CARINA

Come here.

Danny apprehensively leans closer. Carina picks up his warm coffee and splashes it on his chest. He's completely stunned. Nicky turns to see what happened. Mr. Ser looks on with curiosity. Danny understands and begins to leave.

CARINA (CONT'D)

Wait.

(Danny does)

It looks like I've spilled your coffee. I guess I owe you a date.

Carina has trouble stifling a smile that slowly crosses her lips as Danny looks back with surprise. Then suddenly--

DANNY

I knew that was you!

Carina's smile blooms into a tired grin. She sighs.

CARINA

So, where are you taking me?

DANNY

(he thinks)

What do you like on your pizza?

Carina looks back puzzled.

INT. CHUCK E. CHEESE'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - MINUTES LATER

Danny is making last minute preparations with Brian in the control booth. Danny hurries out and jogs down the aisle, stopping at where Nicky is sitting alone on a bench table.

DANNY

Are you comfortable?

NICKY

(smiles)

I'll be fine.

Danny looks up and yells across the room--

DANNY

Mr. Sir! Everything good?

Mr. Ser is devouring whole slices of pizza and guzzling root beer from a pitcher. He grunts his approval. Danny hurries on to where Carina is sitting on the table by the stage. He joins Carina and they stare at the curtain.

CARINA

What now?

The house lights go dark and the curtain rises. A spotlight illuminates center stage. The greaser lion slides on rails under the spotlight, with a microphone. Queen's *Somebody to Love* plays and the lion "sings" with Freddy Mercury's voice.

LION

Can...

As the background singers come in, vibrant lights illuminate them, section by section. Animatronic birds on branches. Critters poking out of holes in the ground. Giant sunflowers with smiling faces. Happy little clouds.

QUEEN

...anybody find me somebody to love?

Carina smiles as more lights slowly come in over the rest of the band: the gorilla drummer, giraffe bassist, zebra guitarist and two squirrels with outlandish sunglasses who jump up and down on a keyboard.

LION

Each morning I get up I die a little/Can barely stand on my feet/Take a look in the mirror and cry/Lord what you're doing to me/I have spent all my years in believing you/But I just can't get no relief, Lord!/Somebody!

QUEEN

Somebody!

LION

Ooh somebody!

QUEEN

Somebody!

LION

Can anybody find me somebody to love?

The spot light over the lion dims to black and the puppet slides off the stage.

The lights over a side stage illuminate and the lion, dressed in a striped prisoner uniform, slides out to join other characters similarly dressed.

The puppets are all using mallets to break rocks.

LION (CONT'D)

I work hard every day of my life/I
work till I ache my bones/At the
end I take home my hard earned pay
all on my own/I get down on my
knees/And I start to pray/Till the
tears run down from my eyes/Lord,
somebody!

QUEEN

Somebody!

LION

Ooh somebody!

QUEEN

Please!

LION

Can anybody find me somebody to
love?

Brian comes out of the booth and stands next to Nicky. She turns to face him and mouths "Hi". Brian smiles back then they both return to the show, watching Danny and Carina as much as the puppets.

QUEEN

He works hard!

LION

Everyday/I try and I try and I
try/But everybody wants to put me
down/They say I'm goin' crazy/They
say I got a lot of water in my
brain/Got no common sense/I got
nobody left to believe...

QUEEN

Yeah yeah yeah yeah!

The lion slides away from the smaller stage as those lights dim. The zebra guitarist slides away from the main stage and Danny directs Carina to the large tree trunk where the zebra suddenly emerges from to play the guitar solo.

Carina laughs and Danny is just as amazed at the spectacle.

DANNY

You know, you could have just agreed to go on a date. You didn't have to throw coffee on me.

CARINA

I know, but you deserved it.

Danny smirks and nods and Carina scoots closer to elbow him in the ribs. The lion appears on the main stage dressed in his original outfit.

QUEEN

Oh Lord!

LION

Ooh somebody/Ooh...

QUEEN

Somebody!

LION

Can anybody find me somebody to love?

Pride is written all over Danny's face at Brian's excellent work. For a moment he puts aside the fact that Carina is sitting next to him. She capitalizes on Danny's unguarded moment and steals long looks his way.

LION (CONT'D)

Got no feel, I got no rhythm/I just keep losing my beat/I'm ok, I'm alright/Ain't gonna face no defeat/I just gotta get out of this prison cell...

Danny smiles as his eyes dart around the stage, drinking in the show. Carina smiles in turn, happy the two of them can just enjoy the moment without the complications of romance, but something magical is happening here.

LION (CONT'D)

Someday I'm gonna be free, Lord!

Danny feels Carina's gaze on him and he turns to face her.

As soon as his eyes leave the stage, the puppets come to life, moving in impossible, lifelike ways. Birds flutter off. Critters hop out of holes. The zebra guitarist strikes a rocker pose. The lion arches back to belt out "Lord!"

FADE TO BLACK.