

Carina

by

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FADE IN:

I/E. CAR - VALENTINE'S DAY 2010 - NIGHT

MARK (30) drives with his disapproving wife, SANDRA (30). DANNY VEGA (28) sits in the backseat. He looks out the window at shops filled with heart-shaped Mylar balloons. Mark stops at a red light for a couple waiting to cross the street.

Danny watches the couple kiss after crossing.

DANNY

Die.

SANDRA

I told you this was a bad idea.

MARK

Can we just give it a chance?

(to Danny)

Danny, Sandra's friend is feeling a little lonely tonight, and she could use good company.

DANNY

Mark, c'mon. It's me. I'll play along. I'll be nice.

MARK

Just be yourself.

SANDRA

No, be nice.

DANNY

Have I told you how much I enjoy your company, Sandra?

SANDRA

No, you haven't.

DANNY

There's a reason for that.

MARK

(to Sandra)

Babe, can you two not fight for one night? It's Valentine's Day.

DANNY

(looks out the window)

It's just another night to me.

EXT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Mark's car pulls up to valet at this high-end restaurant.

INT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

The posh interior is geared for romance, but not gaudy. Everyone is dressed for a nice evening. Danny, Mark, and Sandra are seated, reading menus.

DANNY

Are we early or is she late?

SANDRA

Relax, Prince Charming; she's on her way.

DANNY

What's with the attitude? It's your friend who's lonely. *I'm doing you a favor.*

REBECCA (30), a beautiful woman wearing a cocktail dress, approaches the table.

MARK

Are you sure about that?

REBECCA

Hi everyone. Thanks for waiting.

MARK

(stands)

Danny, this is Rebecca.

DANNY

(doesn't stand)

Hi.

REBECCA

It's nice to meet you. Sandra's told me all about you.

Everyone sits.

DANNY

And you *still* wanted to come out?
(winks at Sandra)

Rebecca laughs in an attractive genuine way.

MARK

Danny's a movie reviewer.

REBECCA

Oh. How exciting. And LA is perfect for that. How did you get into it?

DANNY

Well, I blogged a lot about movies. It made sense that I'd try to do it professionally. I'm actually trying to be a screenwriter.

SANDRA

How's that going for you?

Mark looks at her pointedly.

DANNY

So, I decided that there had to be another way to get in front of actors and producers.

REBECCA

And movie reviewing will allow you to do that?

DANNY

Well, maybe not movie reviewing, per se, but now that I'm being invited by studios to screen their movies, I also get to interview the actors and filmmakers.

REBECCA

Interview anyone famous?

DANNY

No, not yet. But I might tomorrow.

MARK

You have someone lined up?

DANNY

Remember that screening I went to?

MARK

Yeah, the indie flick with, um...

DANNY

Starts with a "G". Ends in "wyneth Paltrow"...?

SANDRA

They're letting you interview her?

DANNY

I've finally impressed you. And it only took seven years!

Sandra rolls her eyes.

REBECCA

What's your site called? Do you mind if I read it?

Danny gives Rebecca a good look for the first time. Then he sees Sandra's disapproving expression. Danny leans over to Mark just as the WAITER approaches--

WAITER

Would you like to hear the specials?

DANNY

Give us a second.
(to Mark, quietly)
I'm not here for her, am I? She's here for me. You're setting *me* up.

MARK

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)
Do you find me attractive?

REBECCA

(smiles nervously)
Sure. You're cute.

DANNY

I mean could you have sex with me.

MARK

Dude!

REBECCA

Wow. Don't you think that's a little inappropriate?

Danny looks at everyone in partial mock confusion.

DANNY
 (to Rebecca)
 When you're on dating sites, and
 you're passing on guys after one
 second of looking at their picture,
 what criteria are you using to
 reject these guys?

Rebecca makes an unamused face at Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 That wasn't rhetorical. I am
 expecting an answer.

Danny looks at Rebecca patiently. After seconds of silence--

REBECCA
 Fine! Yes, you are good looking
 enough to have sex with.

SANDRA
 If you say so.

DANNY
 (to Rebecca)
 OK. You look tall for a woman. I'm
 five-nine. Is that a problem?

REBECCA
 No. I don't wear heels often.

Danny looks at Mark who looks back with raised eyebrows.

DANNY
 (to Mark)
 You've prepped her well. Let's see
 how well.
 (to Rebecca)
 What's your favorite movie?

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

REBECCA
 The Notebook...?

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

REBECCA (CONT'D)
 What's wrong with The Notebook?

Nothing.

SANDRA

DANNY
 Everything!

DANNY (CONT'D)

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 nods, confused)

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

Yes, but that wasn't the point--

DANNY

And who is her fiancé?

SANDRA

Lon. His name is Lon.

DANNY

Yes! Who is Lon? He's a good guy. Good job. Good looking. Brings stability into the relationship. And let's 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.

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

REBECCA

But how is that ruining love lives?

DANNY

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

(beat)

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

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 good guy, like Lon was a good 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?

WAITER

(approaching)
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 think we need a few more minutes.

Can we get some bread?

(Carter leaves)

REBECCA

(to Sandra)

You were right.

DANNY

Right about what?

REBECCA

That you're a lost cause, and that
you deserve to be alone.

MARK

(to Sandra)

You said that to her?

DANNY

(to Rebecca)

She *did* tell you all about me.

REBECCA

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

Mark looks incredulously at Sandra who makes a face.

DANNY

Seven, but it feels like ten.

REBECCA

What did your last girlfriend say
when she dumped you?

Danny's face goes stiff for a moment.

INSERT FLASHBACK

EXT. APARTMENT - SEVEN YEARS AGO - DAY

Danny is standing outside his soon-to-be-ex-girlfriend's
apartment. He's holding a box of his stuff.

DANNY

But you said you loved me.

YOUNG WOMAN
I meant it in a different way.
(shuts door firmly)

DANNY
What the hell does that mean?!

BACK TO SCENE

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

DANNY
You want to talk about 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 butterflies go away. 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 no one's committed to you
means that no one's ever really
loved you, either.

Bread is set on the table. Danny takes a piece and starts
buttering it. He turns to Rebecca--

DANNY (CONT'D)
(friendly)
So, what do you do for a living?

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mark parks his car on the street in front of Danny's car.
Danny gets out and starts walking to his car. Mark gets out.

MARK
You could have at least tried.

He follows Danny to his car.

DANNY
She liked *The Notebook*.

MARK

You didn't have to be a dick.

Sandra honks the horn to call Mark back to the car.

DANNY

And you didn't have to trick me.

MARK

I was trying to help you.

DANNY

Mark, I don't need a relationship.
I don't *want* a relationship.

MARK

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

DANNY

Look, I appreciate you trying. I
do. But I'm fine. I'm more than
fine. I know who I am, and I know
my place in the world. Most people
never know that. Or if they do,
they never accept it. I have.

Sandra honks again.

MARK

Why? Because you had a bad breakup
seven years ago?

DANNY

What about all the girls who stood
me up? Or who cheated on me? You're
just going to conveniently omit
that from this pep talk?

MARK

Dating sucks. We all know this.
Some dating lives suck more than
most. That doesn't mean you stop.

Danny pauses at his car door, mulling over Mark's words.

DANNY

The truth is, I just don't feel the
desire anymore. It's been so long
since I've felt love that I don't
have a need to chase it. You could
say I'm sober. I'm clean.

MARK

Just promise me you'll be open to the idea that there's a girl out there for you. And she'll sweep you off your feet. Because having someone in your life is wonderful.

Sandra lays on the horn, and Danny grins.

MARK (CONT'D)

NEVER MIND! IT'S NOT WORTH IT!

Mark goes back to the car, gets in, and they drive off.

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

Danny drives, flipping radio stations. Danny catches the tail end of a catchy tune. The chorus gets him nodding. The DJ comes back in. It's KAREN SHARP on KOST 103.5.

KAREN

(filtered)

That was the latest single from British sensation, Carina Ray and her debut album Chasing Love.

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 smiles politely then enters his own apartment.

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

As Danny works on his site, deadlinedanny.com, he hears dull thumping against his wall. After a moment, the thumping is followed by male sexual groaning. Danny shakes his head and grabs a pen and notepad. He steps out to his balcony.

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

Danny goes over questions on his notepad for his interview with Gwyneth Paltrow. 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
Buenos dias!

PEDRO
(shakes his head)
Buenos noches.

The other Hispanic man from earlier, JULIO (35), joins Pedro. Julio's arm is sleeved in a unique TATOO. He kisses Pedro on the neck. Danny smiles awkwardly before going back inside.

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 a rock song on the radio, and he begins stomping and slapping the shower wall in time with the drums. Then he sings along, out-of-tune.

INT. PEDRO'S APARTMENT - SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

Pedro is standing in the shower, 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 - MINUTES LATER

Danny picks up credentials from a publicist. Promotional art for Gwyneth's film sits on easels.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - MINUTES LATER

Danny enters the small interview room early and finds a MAN already there, facing away, and having a heated conversation on his cell phone. Danny grabs a chair and is about to sit. The man hears Danny and turns around.

MAN
 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
 (takes a different seat)
 Sorry, this is my first time.

The man gives Danny a disdainful look before sitting.

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

EXT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME - EVENING

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

DANNY
Adam!

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cardboard boxes are everywhere. People are moving out.

ADAM
Danny!
(letting Danny in)

Danny and Adam hug, then Danny looks sadly at the boxes.

DANNY
So, this is it? Calling it quits?

ADAM
Yeah, back to Pennsylvania. But at least I got to make my movie. And we'll visit before you have a chance to miss us. Ana!

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

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

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

ANA
Why? What happened?

Everyone sits.

DANNY

So, I'm sitting at this roundtable
with the other journalists when
Gwyneth Paltrow walks in.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - THAT MORNING

Journalists converse as Gwyneth Paltrow enters and sits. The
interview commences while Danny narrates.

DANNY (V.O.)

It's my first roundtable, so I just
sit and observe. Besides, Gwyneth
mostly talked to some guy from
Rolling Stone.

GWYNETH

Actors need to find the truth in
every role they take. Here, I think
the truth is that we're all just
trying to make a lasting meaningful
connection. Whether it's a parent
and child, siblings, friends.
Lovers. We're trying to find each
other, because connection is
everything.

The journalists nod their heads contemplatively.

DANNY (V.O.)

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 smiles, 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. Everyone stops and stares at Danny, and Rolling Stone gives him condescending and exaggerated shakes of his head.

END FLASHBACK

Ana and Adam groan and lean back, giggling. Danny can't help but laugh as well. After a bit--

DANNY

One day I'll put that in a movie.

ADAM

Humiliation makes for good story.

ANA

Yeah, like when I caught you looking at porn last night.

(mocking Adam)

Oh, honey, I gotta stay up to research something.

ADAM

What's wrong with porn?

ANA

It's gross!

ADAM

You didn't complain afterward.

Ana goes red with embarrassment. Adam pulls her close and tickles her. 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

I'm gonna take off, guys.

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

ADAM

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

ANA

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

DANNY

(walking towards door)

I've got to write this interview.

Ana gives Adam a look and he follows Danny. At the door--

ADAM
We didn't mean anything by that.

DANNY
You don't have to apologize.

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

Danny, offended and embarrassed at the same time, leaves.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Danny drives in silence. Then he turns on the radio, which is still tuned to KOST 103.5. Danny's mouth curls into a sneer.

KAREN
(filtered)
Where are you KOSTing tonight, Al?

AL
(filtered)
Pasadena.

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

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

DANNY
Die.

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

AL
(filtered)
Could you pick one?

DANNY
Personal.

KAREN
(filtered)
Of course.

(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

Lisa, this song is for you from Al
in Pasadena. It's the latest single
from Carina Ray.

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. He previews her songs and leans back to take them in, searching the air with his eyes.

INT. CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

CARINA RAY (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.

INT. CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

Carina and her band near the last few measures of the song.

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. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - LATE NIGHT

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

INT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - CONTINUOUS

The family restaurant is empty. The arcade and children's games are off. And the life-sized anthropomorphized puppets stand on the stage lifeless, holding music instruments. Danny is sitting alone on a bench table near the stage.

DANNY

Have you heard of Carina Ray?

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

What?

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

DANNY

Carina Ray. Have you heard of her?

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

Yeah. She won a Grammy, right?

DANNY

I guess so. What are you doing?

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

You'll see. What about Carina Ray?

DANNY

I just discovered her music.

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

Uh huh.

DANNY

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

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

Uh huh.

DANNY

When I listen to her I feel like she's singing to *me*. Like she's telling me a story with each song. And 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 living someone's entire love life. It's amazing!

Mark is quiet until he realizes Danny has stopped talking.

MARK (O.S.)

(filtered)

Uh huh.

DANNY

Man, I'm trying to share something!

Mark comes out of the booth and jogs towards Danny's table. Mark is wearing his Ricky Ratt's manager's uniform.

MARK

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

DANNY

Perfect.

Mark joins Danny. Nothing happens on stage, and Danny shrugs.

MARK

Hang on. It'll start in a second.

The house lights dim and the puppets come to life, playing a popular rock song. It's really just the original song piped through the speakers and the puppets moving in time. Mark and Danny laugh at the stiff puppets rocking out.

MARK (CONT'D)

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!

MARK (CONT'D)

That usually doesn't happen.

Danny helps Mark pick up the puppets and reassemble them.

DANNY

What are you doing here, man?

MARK

What? I'm just having a little fun.

DANNY

No, what are you doing *here*?
Shouldn't you be with your wife?

MARK

Not tonight.

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

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

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

Danny sits down with a fresh cup of coffee and opens his laptop. Danny pops off the lid of his coffee to let it cool. Then he plugs his headphones into his laptop.

INTERCUT LAPTOP SCREEN AND SCENE

Danny goes to Carina's MySpace page. On the music player, he picks something melancholy. When Danny scrolls down, 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. 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 loses himself in Carina's song.

BEGIN MONTAGE

The melancholy song plays over the following scenes.

EXT. CEMETERY - ENGLAND - DAY

It's overcast. Mourners disperse from around a fresh grave. The thinning crowd reveals Carina staying behind. NICKY (30), Carina's friend, walks with her boyfriend. Nicky looks 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 her boyfriend also run to their car, but Nicky grabs an umbrella and runs back to join Carina. Her boyfriend frowns. As the rain plays a staccato dirge on the umbrella, Nicky wraps an arm around her best friend. 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 her boyfriend, 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

EXT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - TWO YEARS LATER - 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 yours. Why is that?

JENNY

(filtered)

Warner Brothers is very selective about the media we invite. Your site looks nice, but your audience is a little small. Call me again when you grow your readership.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Danny hangs up. He looks leaner and more seasoned. It's winter and everyone is wearing a heavy coat. Danny pops the lid on his coffee to let it cool. A rushing woman runs into him, nearly splashing Danny's 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 looks surprised)
You still can you know. I could spill this on myself right now.

He tilts the steaming drink at a threatening angle towards his chest. Carina grins. 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--

ADAM (O.S.)

Danny!

Ana and Adam are walking down the terminal, pulling their luggage. When Danny sees them his face brightens and he walks up to meet them. After hugging and greeting each other, Danny takes Ana's luggage and leads the couple out.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Ana is in the passenger seat and Adam sits behind her.

DANNY

So how long are you guys in town?

ANA

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

She loosens up her coat and reclines the seat.

ADAM

Somebody wants a massage.

Adam begins rubbing Ana's shoulders.

ADAM (CONT'D)

(to Danny)

So what's new? How's journalism?

DANNY

It's OK. I've been doing it long enough, no one's impressed anymore.

INT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

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

DANNY

I met Anthony Hopkins today.

MARK

Oh! Could you hand me that ratchet?

Danny does so, and Mark 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.)
And A-listers sometimes all say the same things.

Danny, bored, dozes off and pitches forward alarmingly. He wakes with a start, 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 also like the people I work with, but they can be annoying, too.

I/E. DANNY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ANA
Annoying how?

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

ANA
(she laughs)
Hey, after we're settled, do you want to come by for dinner?

DANNY
I've got an interview. Maybe later?

ANA
Sure. Who are you interviewing?

INT. RED CORNER THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

BAI LING
I feel like I'm not existing as a human being, but part of me is.
(MORE)

BAI LING (CONT'D)

I have little spirits inside me.
They're different personalities.

Danny and Bai are sitting at a booth eating Thai food. The entrees are finished and the beverages are drained.

BAI

Most people only know the crazy party girl. She's fire. She's a burning fire. I long to find that same fire in someone else. 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

Mark writes: "carina ray has a new album. check 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. Turning has raised the man's sleeve to reveal a unique tattoo. The man is Julio. He gets up from the booth threateningly, but something catches his attention.

Danny turns to see Pedro standing outside of the restaurant looking at Julio and then the girl incredulously. 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

Danny kicks off his boots, drapes his coat over a chair, switches off the light, and piles into bed. He closes his eyes. In the darkness he hears Pedro come home, and Danny listens to Pedro's sobs through the wall. Danny's eyes open.

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

The sun is quickly setting.

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

Carina fidgets in the wings, standing with Nicky.

NICKY

Relax.

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 frowns back)

What? I thought that was over.

NICKY

It was.

CARINA

Was? He's rubbish!

NICKY

But he sounds so sad and lonely.

(Carina shakes her head)

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

Excuse me Ms. Ray, but we'll be letting the audience in now.

CARINA

Thank you.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Also, some of the crew are 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. Carina fingers her wedding ring as she looks off at the crowd slowly filtering in. Nicky watches Carina understandingly. The WARM-UP, a bald man with a comic face, approaches.

WARM-UP

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

CARINA

(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 off his cap.

NICKY

Oh, thank you!

DANNY

No problem.

He looks around himself for his hat. Nicky finds it, picks it up, and puts it back on Danny's head playfully crooked.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Thanks.

NICKY

So, big fan?

DANNY

I love Carina's music. So powerful.
When her music is on, I can't do
anything else but listen. Does that
make me crazy? I'm crazy, right?

Nicky laughs. The WARM-UP walks out on stage as Carina's band
takes their positions.

WARM-UP

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 giveaway 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 website for details. Now,
are you ready for some music?!
(the audience cheers)
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 smile and stands behind her
microphone. She gives a friendly wave and then looks to her
right for a cue. Carina launches into a sexy song. The entire
crowd is mesmerized, and Danny stares with child-like awe.

Carina glances down for Nicky who stands just behind Danny's
shoulder. Carina smiles and gives a small wave, but Danny
thinks she's smiling at *him*. Suddenly, there's no one else
around. Even the band is gone. Just Carina singing 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.

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

Can I help you?

He's a head and a half taller than Danny with shoulders as broad as the horizon and fingers thicker than bratwurst. He's obviously Carina's personal security.

DANNY

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

HUGE MAN

I'm sure she appreciates that.

DANNY

(beat)

Let's start again. Hi, I'm Danny.

Danny extends his hand, but the huge man doesn't take it.

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 leave.

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

Danny finishes his article about Carina's concert. He turns out the lights and crawls into bed, but his eyes never close. He finally gives up and goes back to his computer.

INSERT COMPUTER SCREEN

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

BACK TO SCENE

INT. ANA'S PARENTS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT NIGHT

DANNY

I think I'm in love.

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

ADAM

That's great. Who is she?

DANNY

Carina Ray.

Ana scoffs and goes back to doing dishes.

ADAM

Who's Carina Ray?

DANNY

(to Ana)

See, I knew you'd react this way.

ANA

It's not love; it's infatuation.

ADAM

Who's Carina Ray?

ANA

She's a singer.

Adam grabs his laptop and types.

DANNY

Look, I know how crazy this sounds.

ANA

When I was 17 I thought I was in love with Johnny Depp. I wasn't.

ADAM

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

ANA

(to Danny)
She's a celebrity. She doesn't even know you exist. C'mon Danny.

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

ADAM

Hey Danny, let's talk outside.

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

Danny and Adam sit on the patio.

DANNY

I really like this girl.

ADAM

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

DANNY

What do you mean?

ADAM

You're feeling emotions like the rest of us again. But let's not call it love.

DANNY

Why not?

ADAM

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)

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

No one wants you to fall in love more than Ana and me, believe me, but I think you'd agree that when it happens it should be real. And how can it be real if Carina doesn't know you exist?

DANNY

Isn't this how attraction works, though? You see someone you like and you meet them. Then they know you exist.

ADAM

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

But, I'm also an entertainment journalist. That basically makes me a coworker to celebrities. So, it makes sense for me to meet one.

ADAM

And ask them out on a date?

DANNY

Precisely.

ADAM

Go for it. Learn your lesson.

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

Danny 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 - MORNING

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 Mike.

(consults notes)

Sorry, Matt.

EXT. DANNY'S APARTMENT COMPLEX #2 - SUNSET

Danny is walking from his car. Another call.

DANNY

No, 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. Danny collapses into bed, demoralized.

END MONTAGE

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - ROUNDTABLE - DAY

JOE PESCI is talking to journalists, including Danny. Art for
Joe's film "American Pimp" sits on easels.

JOE

I interviewed a lot of sex workers
to find out how they cope. And, you
know, they told me that they try to
find something about their client
that they can love. Like their
eyes, their sense of humor.

Whatever. But one lady said that
she looks for the thing that her
client thinks is loveable about
themselves. And that blew my mind
because with all of our faults, I
think we sometimes feel like we're
unlovable.

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

The way she said it was so profound, I had to write it down on a napkin so I'd never forget it.

Joe fishes into his pocket and produces a paper napkin with handwriting on it and places it on the table. Danny leans in to read it and accidentally knocks his coffee cup over, spilling coffee towards Joe.

DANNY

Oh! I'm so sorry!

In his haste to clean up the spill, Danny grabs Joe's napkin and dabs at the coffee. When he realizes what he's done, he lifts the napkin to show the handwriting is smeared. Joe looks pointedly at Danny who heroically holds his gaze.

Rolling Stone leans into view to shake his head at Danny.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Danny walks down the hall by himself. His phone rings.

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 can fit you in
at one o'clock.

DANNY
I'll make that work. One o'clock at
the Four Seasons. Thank you!

Danny passes Rolling Stone standing around the corner. He's 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 in the mirror with a nod.

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

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

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?!

END MONTAGE

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - THE NEXT AFTERNOON

A handful of paparazzi mill about the sidewalk.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - HOSPITALITY FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Elevator doors open, and Danny steps out dressed in a suit and polished shoes. He stands tall and confident.

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

Only a handful of journalists are left here. ERIN, an officious-looking woman, approaches Danny.

ERIN

Hello, may I help you?

DANNY

Hi, I'm Danny Vega. I have a 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 have just enough
 time for one more interview before
 Carina goes back to the UK. 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
 Deadline Danny. 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 gentleman in?

MR. SER
 Right this way, sir.

Danny watches helplessly as Mr. Ser and Rolling Stone walk down the hallway.

ERIN

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

Danny 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. 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 in mind.

Erin turns and nods at an approaching Mr. Ser. Erin leaves, and Mr. Ser blocks Danny from anything but returning to the elevator. Defeated, Danny does so. Just as the doors close--

DANNY

FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK!

EXT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Waiting for valet, Danny stands next to JACK NICHOLSON. Danny loosens his tie and sighs. Jack notices Danny's frown.

JACK

Buck up. It's a tough business.

DANNY

What is?

JACK

Movies. Not every pitch goes well.

DANNY

Oh. That's not it.

JACK

Ah, then it must be a girl.

(Danny smiles, surprised)

That's an even tougher business.

Jack's car pulls up. As he gets in--

JACK (CONT'D)

Just like pitching a movie, love is a numbers game. Someone will say yes eventually. Don't give up.

EXT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - LATE NIGHT

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

INT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL

Danny enters, ready to recount the day to Mark. Then he slows as he takes in the scene. He starts running.

DANNY

Mark. Mark!

Mark is lying facedown in front of the short stage. It's obvious that he tripped and fell off. Danny rolls him over, revealing a nasty bump on his forehead. Mark groans softly.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Mark is lying back on a hospital bed. He's holding an ice pack against his forehead. Danny is sitting on an adjacent bed. A DOCTOR approaches with a clipboard.

DOCTOR

It looks like you've suffered a mild concussion, but otherwise no fractures. Do you remember what happened before you fell?

MARK

I was working...and my vision got blurry. I must have tripped on something. I remember falling. Next thing I knew Danny woke me up.

DOCTOR

The blurriness and disorientation make sense. Your blood pressure is dangerously high. Are you under a lot of stress at work? You were working late.

MARK

No. I just have weird hours.

Danny clears his throat and Mark shoots him a look.

DOCTOR

What's your diet like?

MARK

Lately it's pizza and root beer.

DANNY
Sandra isn't cooking anymore?

Mark doesn't answer.

DOCTOR
I'm going to prescribe something
for your head, but I'd like to keep
you overnight for observation. Is
there anyone you'd like us to
contact for you?

Mark shakes his head. The doctor leaves.

DANNY
What am I missing?

MARK
Sandra's gone. She's divorcing me.

DANNY
When did this happen?

MARK
About three months ago.

DANNY
Wow. I knew you guys were in
trouble, but I didn't expect this.

MARK
It's been bad for a while, Danny.

DANNY
I guess things aren't going well
for anybody these days.

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

MARK
What happened?

DANNY
She's on a plane back home. I
didn't even get to talk to her.

MARK
How'd she look?

DANNY
She looked--
(pause)
(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

I can't even describe it. And I'm a writer. She looked good.

MARK

Are you going to be OK?

DANNY

Of course. I just missed a once in a lifetime opportunity. No biggie.

(beat)

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

MARK

Cope with what?

DANNY

Being single.

Danny gives a fake laugh and turns to leave.

MARK

Danny. Seriously. Are you OK?

DANNY

Mark. Seriously. I'm fine.

He flashes a smile. Mark searches Danny's face for sincerity before placing the ice pack back on his forehead.

MARK

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 clenches his jaw as he drives 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 is also 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. Danny reaches his car at the end of his walk.

END TIME PASSING SEQUENCE

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

Danny looks back at the Los Angeles skyline silhouette in his rearview mirror and grins.

INT. PARIS NIGHTS RESTAURANT - LATER

Danny cuts into a thick, juicy steak and puts a savory morsel in his mouth -- it's a little taste of heaven.

Mark sits at the other side of the table and stares at Danny. Mark stabs a fork into his salad and eats dry lettuce.

CARTER
(approaching)
How is everything?

MARK
Delicious.

Carter leaves. Mark pops a pill from a bottle.

DANNY
What's that for?

MARK
My blood pressure.

DANNY
How long do you have to take it?

MARK
The rest of my life.

DANNY
That sucks.

MARK
Yeah, it sucks. How are you?

DANNY
I'm fine. I can eat whatever.

MARK
Hardy har. You know what I mean.

DANNY

I'm over it. I was...being silly.

MARK

Silly? Well, you had me fooled.

DANNY

C'mon, it was unrealistic. Besides, what do I really know about her? She might be annoying. She might chew with her mouth open.

MARK

She might like *The Notebook*.

DANNY

What's wrong with *The Notebook*?

(Mark and Danny laugh)

Look, it's behind me now. I hope we never talk about it again.

Mark makes a "zipped lips" gesture.

DANNY (CONT'D)

OK, down to business. I can't give you relationship advice, but I can give you pointers on being single.

MARK

I need pointers?

DANNY

You can't just go back to being single without any problems. Let me guess, going home to an empty house is the worst part of your day.

(Mark nods hesitantly)

I bet you leave a TV on in the other room just to hear another human voice.

(Mark smiles knowingly)

And the loneliest you feel is when you call your friends and none of them can hang out because they're busy with their significant others.

(Mark laughs)

I've been there. It all comes down to being comfortable with yourself. You'll learn that solitude can be a gift. So, here's your first assignment: Don't be afraid to eat alone at a sitdown restaurant.

MARK
I'm not afraid.

DANNY
But you probably avoid doing it. I
get it. No matter how good the
service is it's always too slow.
And it's easy to feel trapped at
the table. See that guy over there?

Danny subtly motions to a man sitting alone at an adjacent
table. Mark casually glances over. The man is straining his
neck, looking for the server to return his credit card.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Antsy, awkward. He can't wait to
get out of here. Be calm. You're on
your own schedule now.

MARK
Seems easy enough.

DANNY
Great! Next week, we'll go to the
mall and sneer at young couples in
love, and then you're all set.

MARK
(laughing)
That's all there is to 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 Mark's face. Danny's phone vibrates in
his pocket and he pulls it out. The number is unknown.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Let me just see who this is.
(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 Mark mouths, "Who is it?"

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

CARINA
(filtered)
Hi there! This is Carina Ray.
(Danny stares wide-eyed)
You recently 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. Mark is busy over-salting his
salad and he looks at Danny expectantly.

BEGIN MONTAGE

An upbeat Carina Ray song plays over the following montage.

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

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, laughing together
at Nicky's scandalous wardrobe choices.

INT. LOS ANGELES INTL AIRPORT - TERMINAL - NIGHT

Danny rushes with his carryon luggage to catch his plane.

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. PLANE - LATER

As meals are being served, a stewardess drops off something warm and sad, barely resembling chicken.

EXT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky are enjoying delicious breakfast alfresco.

INT. PLANE - LATER

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

INT. CARINA'S HOME - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina is reading a book. Her eyes get droopy and she sets the book down on her bosom and takes a late morning nap.

INT. PLANE - LATER

It's morning and light streams through windows. Passengers are waking. Danny sits rigidly in his seat, eyes bloodshot. He slowly turns to look out the window at Heathrow airport.

INT. CARINA'S HOME - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina wakes. She takes in her surroundings and smiles.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL - LONDON - AFTERNOON

Danny stands looking up at the beautiful building as his driver pulls away. BOB MILLS (55), 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. Any trouble
getting here?

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

The hallways are alive with rushing publicists and note-taking journalists. Danny and Bob walk through. Bob's female HOT ASSISTANT approaches with a grave expression.

BOB

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 rubs his aching temples.

BOB

First time in London?

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

BOB (CONT'D)

Ah, I grew up here. My family's lived in the city for generations, if you can believe it.

Bob waits for Danny to say something. He doesn't.

BOB (CONT'D)

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

It's Bob, right? You know, I'm a writer. Trying to be, anyway. And when I started out, I thought I was just writing to entertain people, to make them feel something or think differently. But as I kept doing it, I discovered it's more than that. Do you know what I mean?

BOB

Yes, of course. I work with artists all over the world. Everyone's got an idea to share.

DANNY

Right, but the point I'm making is that it goes beyond sharing ideas. We create because we want to be understood. And I think I understand Carina. Through her music. It's the purest communication two people can have.

(beat)

Yeah, I'm a big fan.

Bob looks overwhelmed.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Was that too much?

BOB

I just wasn't expecting that.

DANNY

I think she's really pretty, too.

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

Listen, I didn't have a very good flight. I haven't slept. My hair's a mess. I haven't brushed my teeth. Can we do this later?

Bob smiles embarrassedly and looks over Danny's shoulder. 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 tries to groom himself as he sits. Once everyone settles the room falls silent as they wait on Danny to say something.

BOB
Danny is a big fan of your music.

CARINA
I heard. You're too kind.

The room falls silent. 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 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 your favorite color" or "can I take a picture with you?"

DANNY
Can I take a picture with you?

CARINA
Of course.
(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...a journalist. I was *this* close to interviewing you about a week ago at the Four Seasons.

He produces his card, and Carina takes it. She reads it.

CARINA

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

DANNY

I got bumped by Rolling Stone.

CARINA

Oh! He's interviewing me for the streamcast.

(Danny grimaces)

Not what you wanted to hear?

DANNY

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

CARINA

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

DANNY

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.

DANNY

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 no one is going to uproot their lives and move to Hollywood to play the quirky-but-not-as-cute best friend.

(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 I'm one of those people!

(Carina laughs again)

CARINA

I sympathize with you, Danny. I have probably close to a hundred songs that I've written that no one will ever hear except me. Not "radio-friendly" enough the label says. And that's so difficult for me, because those songs are me.

She's lost in thought for a moment, and then--

CARINA (CONT'D)

Being an artist is hard. I don't have to tell you that. But it looks like you're resourceful. I mean, you found a way to get to me.

DANNY

What do you mean?

CARINA

I mean, don't give up. Even if Hollywood won't let you be an actor or a writer, I'm sure there's still a place for you.

DANNY

Of course. I have a backup plan. I'm going to develop a horrible personality and do reality TV.
(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?

BOB

Absolutely he'll be there.

CARINA

Wonderful. I'll see you then.

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

CARINA (CONT'D)

I'm so glad we met.

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.

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

The cocktail reception is before the show. Don't be late. Then we'll migrate to the concert hall and then it's Carina's interview. We'll have a seat for you up close. Tomorrow we've arranged for a 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, mocking)
You ever think about acting? I'm a screenwriter. Stupid.

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

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - CONTINUOUS

The room is magnificent to behold with an inspiring view of London. Danny doesn't care. He moves to the bedroom, kicks off his boots, and collapses on the bed.

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

A BELLHOP pushes a room service cart in front of Danny's room. The bellhop knocks, then something catches his eye. He steps aside to let Carina, Nicky, and Mr. Ser walk by just as Danny opens the door.

Carina and Nicky smile and wave at Danny as they pass. Danny waves back. The bellhop 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

Danny tips the bellhop who exits. Danny returns to his laptop. On the screen is Adam.

ADAM
(filtered)
Danny, forget the food! Tell me
what happened!

DANNY
I blew my chance to ask her out. We
weren't alone. I looked awful. I
was babbling. I couldn't present
the right version of me.

ANA (O.S.)
(filtered)
Let me talk to him.
(Ana replaces Adam)
Hey there handsome.

DANNY
Hey Ana.

ANA
(filtered)
Listen, there are no 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. And if she says no at
least she's rejecting you and not
some version you created because
you thought that's what she'd like.
I still think this is crazy, but I
hope she says yes. Good luck.

She leaves and Adam takes her place.

ADAM
(filtered)
OK buddy. What's the next move?

DANNY
We have a cocktail thing before the
concert. That's probably my best
shot. After that, I'll have to
tackle her in the parking lot.

ADAM
(filtered)
Don't do that.

DANNY

Look, I don't really have a next move. I'm just trying to not embarrass myself. Hey, I gotta get ready. Don't forget to watch the streamcast.

ADAM

(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. He turns it on.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny stands in the shower, facing away from the water. His face is tense and his eyes are distant. From the other room the radio can be heard. A rock ballad begins to play.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The music, a song Danny knows, relaxes him. Danny shuts his eyes, and as soon as the vocals begin, he starts singing.

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, 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 exploding in shooting stars.

Danny moves and performs like a professional. When he sings, his voice is the singer of the song on the radio.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back in the shower, however, Danny's voice is his own, and it's off-key as he performs his made-up choreography.

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.

INT. DANNY'S IMAGINARY CONCERT - CONTINUOUS

The large crowd fills a stadium, but they're all shrouded in darkness. They're on their feet, moving with the music.

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. They burst into good-natured laughter but try to stifle themselves.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny pounds the drumbeat on the shower wall during a chorus.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A grin spreads across Nicky's face as she looks at Carina. Nicky begins singing the backup singers' part. 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 to hear them.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1423 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carina and Nicky, caught up in Danny's imagination as well, 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 the stage in Danny's imagination.

Carina is dressed in a black sleeveless jumpsuit. She performs the rest of the guitar solo on an actual guitar. Danny approaches, singing.

Nicky, dressed in a tight-fitting, burgundy outfit moves into view, playing a tambourine. They share the same microphone, moving in and out for their parts.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As the song ends, the imaginary concert fades, and Danny finds himself in the shower again. He smiles, confident.

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

Danny comes out of his room 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 and hum the chorus to the song they just performed.

Mr. Ser follows behind them, and the girls peek around him to see Danny's confusion. He slowly gathers his surroundings and realizes that Carina and Nicky have the next suite.

Realizing, Danny looks back at the girls in horror who are now standing in the elevator. They burst into 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 dressed in business attire and evening wear. Drinks are served from the bar that dominates a wall. Danny sits at the bar, sipping a drink, and watching Carina wistfully as she works the room.

NICKY

(approaching)

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.

The bartender leaves to make the drink.

NICKY (CONT'D)

I'm Nicky, by the way.

DANNY

Danny. Have you been friends with Carina long? 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. It's kind of a sweet thought though, isn't it? You don't see that kind of devotion anymore.

DANNY

Oh. So, she's not dating.

NICKY

God no. I'd love for her to, but if you asked her, she'd tell you that she already has a man in her life.

Danny catches his reflection in the bar mirror and for a moment he recognizes that he may have made a huge mistake. 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

It's not really want I want to do.

NICKY

Have you at least interviewed anyone famous?

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 my first screenplay.

NICKY

Are you close?

DANNY

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

(approaching)

You two 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. The bartender makes a
 fresh cocktail and gives him a commiserating nod.

I/E. LIVERY - 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 includes a small balcony. Guests from the cocktail reception crowd the floor or sit in booths. 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.

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, I'd just like to say thank you for all of your support. I don't know that I'd be standing here without you.

The crowd claps. Some people shout "We love you!"

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. I hope you like it.

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

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

When the song ends, the crowd explodes into applause. On the balcony, Nicky claps and shouts words of encouragement. Danny stands motionless, trapped by lack of action.

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

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. LUXURY 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

(he hangs up)

Shit!

Danny appears in the balcony doorway. Bob notices and slowly turns around to face Danny. Bob forces a smile.

BOB (CONT'D)

Danny! Can I help you?

DANNY

Maybe I can help 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. Stylist are getting Danny camera-ready.

BOB

You sure you've done this before.

DANNY

Several times. Here's my card.

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.

PETER

It's simple really. There are three cameras. A producer will point to which camera to talk into. 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. Good to go.

PETER

Good. One more thing: since this is live over the Internet, viewers will be able to send in questions and you can read them from a monitor. Try not to get 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.

BOB

Thank you, Peter. Can everyone give us a moment?

(the staff walk off)

Danny, I cannot stress enough how important this time is for Carina. She's been through a lot. And we need this interview to go over well. So, don't embarrass her. Don't make her emotional. Just be the professional I know you are. And who knows? This could be a great story for you and your site.

Danny nods. Bob 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 were looking for me?

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 Al boom. He and his assistants look into monitors and manipulate control boards.

PETER
OK people! 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. LUXURY HOTEL - DARK BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rolling Stone 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. Rolling Stone brings up Carina's site.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mark 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. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ana and Adam 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! We're live in five, four...

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

INT. MARK'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.

MARK
Oh...

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ana and Adam are just as surprised.

ANA AND ADAM
...my...

INT. LUXURY 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 cringes. 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. I'm Danny Vega.

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. In just a
moment she'll talk about her new
album, which is available 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 breathes a sigh of relief.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the monitor--

DANNY
(filtered)
Carina, how are you?

CARINA
(filtered)
Doing well, thank you. How are you?

They chuckle politely and Mark smiles proudly.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY
Doing better, now that my tongue is
untied. So, how does it feel to be
performing again?

CARINA
Wonderful. Playing for people 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
Good things are worth waiting for.

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the laptop--

CARINA
(filtered)
Thank you. That's very kind.

Ana and Adam smile.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

Kind? I'm not alone when I say that I love your music. Your debut album is my favorite of all time.

CARINA

Really?

DANNY

Oh yes. That album may have won international awards and debuted at number one in the UK, but 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

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 doesn't reply. He just looks at Carina, spellbound.

CARINA (CONT'D)

Are you OK, Danny? You're not tongue tied again, are you?

DANNY

No. I just wanted this moment to last a little longer.

Carina smiles big.

DANNY (CONT'D)

OK, tell us about the new album!

CARINA
It's called The Tide...

Time passes.

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

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

CARINA
(filtered)
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.

Mark impatiently types a question on his computer.

INSERT WEBSITE

Mark'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 - 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)
 A+A in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
 wants to know how you get such
 healthy hair.

CARINA

Lots and lots of conditioner.

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the laptop--

DANNY

(filtered)
 I bet your showers take forever.

CARINA

(filtered)
 And drying!

ADAM

(to Ana)
 That's your question?

ANA

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

MARK

C'mon...

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ADAM

This is it...

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

I'd like 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 is he doing?

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

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

Is your girl pretty?

DANNY

(beat)

She's the kind of woman who inspires poets and painters to create masterpieces.

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's a man from her past 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

OK. Carina?

CARINA

Yes...?

DANNY

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

Carina looks puzzled 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 nods. 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. MARK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ana and Adam's faces are glued to the screen.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - DARK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hot Assistant sits behind Rolling Stone as they both watch the livestream, fascinated.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

Everyone on-set is completely absorbed in the moment. Cameramen peek out from behind their equipment. It seems like Carina's 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. MARK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. ANA AND ADAM'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?! Do you know what you've done?
(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, snatches 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

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 shuts his eyes in defeat.

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)

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 right. So let's stay
focused on the album please.

INT. BEVERLY WILSHIRE HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Danny enters the hospitality suite for a film's press day. Journalists eyeball Danny. A publicist hands him his credentials with an embarrassed smile. When Danny turns around, the journalists look away. Danny sits by the window.

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

I relate to this character because
I also believe that love is more
pain than pleasure more often than
not. We chase it because the
pleasure is so strong that it
outweighs all the pain. It
transcends physical feeling.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It's almost spiritual. That's why we're always associating love as coming from above. That and it rhymes.

The journalists laugh, but Danny's mind is somewhere else.

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 local news by muted.

INSERT TV

The anchors silently speak, then suddenly a video of his streamcast with Carina is inserted. It's a clip of Carina rejecting him. The clip ends, returning to the anchors who laugh uproariously.

BACK TO SCENE

The cashier hands Danny a receipt.

CASHIER

Anything else?

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

Danny hunches against the rail with a half-empty bottle of liquor. Pedro steps out on his balcony next door. He sees Danny.

PEDRO

Buenos noches.

DANNY
Hola. Quiere...tomar?
(motions to bottle)

PEDRO
Si.

Danny reaches out with the bottle, and Pedro takes it.

PEDRO (CONT'D)
Gracias.

DANNY
De nada.

They pass the bottle back and forth in silence.

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

Realizing, Danny laughs. Pedro grins and laughs as well.

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

Danny can be heard puking in the bathroom. His cell phone rings and he comes out 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.

JENNY

(filtered)

I'm sorry to hear that. Let me know when you're back up, because I'd like to invite you to something.

A lazy smile curls Danny's lips.

EXT. NEW YORK MORNINGS COFFEE HOUSE - ONE MONTH LATER

Danny is 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. 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 didn't give you a chance.

ROLLING STONE

(laughing)

From the very first day I met you I knew you were a piss poor movie reviewer. You never came prepared to roundtables. Your knowledge of film is spotty at best. And your interviewing skills are terrible.

DANNY

Just go away please.

ROLLING STONE

Your one saving grace is that you're 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.

(MORE)

ROLLING STONE (CONT'D)

This story has been covered from every angle. Except yours. Write this article and a lot of people will read it. Including me.

He stands, then points and winks without the usual malice. Danny watches him go then opens his laptop. He stares at the blinking cursor on the desolate page of arctic white.

INSERT LAPTOP

"Carina" is all he types.

BACK TO SCENE

Danny's shoulders slump, but then he straightens up 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. ANA AND ADAM'S HOME #2 - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Adam is on the couch with the laptop on his lap and he beckons Ana 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

Mark eats a salad, 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.)
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 to read.

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.

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. 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 exits.

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

DANNY (V.O.)
 I don't know Carina. Not in the way
 a person should know someone 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

Mark 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. 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.)
 I realize now that I took the wrong
 approach. It was too public. Too
 sudden. Too 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 his 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! 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.

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. Got a lot to do still.

ROLLING STONE
Yeah. I get it.

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. He doesn't
notice Carina, Nicky, and Mr. Ser walk by.

They're about to enter the coffee shop when Carina recognizes
Danny and stops. Nicky sees what she's looking at then pulls
Carina inside. 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)
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.

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. 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.

(MORE)

CARINA (CONT'D)

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. 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.

(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. 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. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL - MINUTES LATER

Danny is making last minute preparations with Mark 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

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. A lion with a microphone slides on rails under the spotlight. A rock ballad about love plays over the speakers, so the puppets can perform it.

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.

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. The performance continues.

Mark comes out of the booth and stands next to Nicky. She turns to face him and mouths "Hi". Mark smiles back then they both return to the show, watching Danny and Carina as much as the puppets.

As the guitar solo begins, the zebra guitarist slides away from the main stage, and Danny directs Carina to the large tree trunk where the zebra suddenly emerges. Carina laughs.

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 Carina scoots closer to elbow him in the ribs. The lion returns to the main stage to finish the song.

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.

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.

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 a word.

FADE TO BLACK.