

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

MR. SER
How can I help?

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

MR. SER
Right this way, sir.

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

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

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

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

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
FUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUCK!

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?

JACK
Movies. Not every pitch goes well.

DANNY

Oh. I didn't pitch a movie.

JACK

Ah, then it must be a girl.
 (Danny smiles, surprised)
 That's an even tougher business.
 Love is better than winning an
 Oscar and worse than a bad review
 from your favorite critic.

DANNY

I guess so.

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

JACK

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

He gets in his car and drives off.

EXT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - LATE NIGHT

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

INT. RICKY RATT'S PIZZA - BANQUET HALL

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

DANNY

Brian. Brian!

Brian 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. Brian groans softly.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Brian 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?

BRIAN

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? You work late.

BRIAN

No. I just have weird hours.

Danny clears his throat and Brian shoots him a look.

DOCTOR

What's your diet like?

BRIAN

Lately it's pizza and root beer.

DANNY

Sandra isn't cooking anymore?

Brian doesn't answer.

DOCTOR

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

Brian shakes his head. The doctor leaves.

DANNY

What am I missing?

BRIAN

Sandra's gone. She's divorcing me.

DANNY

When did this happen?

BRIAN

About three months ago.

DANNY

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

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

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

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

BRIAN
It didn't go well today, did it?

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

Danny's eyes stare into another time and place.

BRIAN
How'd she look?

DANNY
She looked--
(pause)
I can't even describe it. And I'm a
writer. She looked good.

BRIAN
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.

BRIAN
Cope with what?

DANNY
Being single.

Danny gives a fake laugh and turns to leave.

BRIAN
Danny. Seriously. Are you OK?

DANNY
Brian. Seriously. I'm fine.

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

BRIAN

OK. I'll call you later.

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

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

Danny 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. His eyes involuntarily close as soon as he starts chewing -- it's a little taste of heaven.

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

CARTER

(approaching)

How is everything?

DANNY

Compliments to the chef!

BRIAN
Delicious.

Carter leaves. Brian pops a pill from a bottle.

DANNY
What's that for?

BRIAN
My blood pressure.

DANNY
How long do you have to take it?

BRIAN
The rest of my life.

DANNY
That sucks.

BRIAN
Yeah, it sucks. Thanks for reminding me. How are you?

DANNY
(joyfully eating steak)
I'm fine. I can eat whatever.

BRIAN
Hardy har. You know what I mean.

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

BRIAN
Silly? Well, you had me fooled.

DANNY
C'mon. It was a nice idea, but unrealistic. Besides, what do I really know about her? She might be annoying. She might chew with her mouth open.

BRIAN
She might like *The Notebook*.

DANNY
That's a big one for me.
(laughs)
Look, it's behind me now. And I hope we never talk about it again.

Brian 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.

BRIAN

I need pointers?

DANNY

Of course you do. No one who's been in a relationship for as long as you have can just go back to being single without any problems.

(beat)

Let me guess, coming home to a dark, empty house is the worst part of your day.

(Brian nods hesitantly)

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

(Brian 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.

(Brian 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 to ease you back into society as a single man: Don't be afraid to eat alone at a sitdown restaurant.

BRIAN

I'm not afraid.

DANNY

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

(Brian nods)

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. Brian 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.

BRIAN
 Seems easy enough.

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

BRIAN
 (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 Brian'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 Brian mouths, "Who is it?"

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

DANNY
 Bill collector.

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

Danny's mouth falls open and his eyes go wide.

CARINA (CONT'D)

(filtered)

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

An upbeat Carina Ray song plays over the following montage.

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

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 FLAT - 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 FLAT - LONDON - CONTINUOUS

Carina wakes from her nap. She takes in her surroundings and smiles to herself.

END MONTAGE

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL - LONDON - AFTERNOON

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

BOB

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

(to Hot Assistant)

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

(to Danny)

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

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

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

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

(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

Well, if it puts you at ease, 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.

DANNY (CONT'D)

She's standing behind me isn't she?

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

CARINA

Hello. I'm Carina Ray.

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

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

INSERT DANNY'S POV

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

BACK TO SCENE

BOB
Danny is a big fan of your music.

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

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

DANNY
Um...so what now?

CARINA
People normally ask questions.

DANNY
You mean like an interview.

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

CARINA
Not quite. Nothing professional at
least. More like "what's 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. Here's my card.

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 at the last second by Rolling Stone.

CARINA

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

DANNY

(through his teeth)
Fantastic.

CARINA

(smirking)
Sorry. Did I take the Mickey?

DANNY

Mickey...Mouse?

CARINA

Right.

DANNY

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

CARINA

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

DANNY

(pause)
I really only have one question.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)
I wish this was under different
circumstances, but this is probably
the only chance I'll get.

CARINA
Alright.
(tenses with anticipation)

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

CARINA
Yes...?

DANNY
I was wondering if you--

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

CARINA
You were wondering if I...

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

CARINA
(surprised)
What, like in a movie?

DANNY
...Yes.

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

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

DANNY
I happen to be a screenwriter.
Aspiring.

CARINA
Oh! A journalist and screenwriter.

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

CARINA

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

DANNY

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

CARINA

I had no idea it was so difficult.

DANNY

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

CARINA

I find that hard to believe.

DANNY

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

CARINA

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

DANNY

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

(Carina laughs)

So unless a person is convinced that they could get a lead role, they typically don't pursue acting. Whereas everybody thinks they can write and they don't even have to be in Hollywood.

(MORE)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Everybody thinks they have a story to tell and that other people will actually be interested in it. Sometimes you just have to step back and marvel at the overinflated sense of ego.

(beat)

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

(Carina laughs again)

CARINA

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 to hear because those songs are me. And why wouldn't people want to hear 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

The interview you lost to Rolling Stone.

DANNY

Right. The interview.

CARINA

What I'm saying is. 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?

DANNY
I don't know what the schedule is.

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.

BOB
We've booked you a very nice suite.
The room service here is exquisite.

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

BOB (CONT'D)
You're invited to the cocktail reception before the show.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

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

DANNY

Will I get to talk to Carina again?

BOB

She'll be at the reception.

DANNY

Wonderful.

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

Danny slowly walks the hallway with his luggage in tow.

DANNY

(to himself)

You ever think about acting? I'm a screenwriter. 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 BELL HOP pushes a room service cart in front of Danny's room. The bell hop knocks, then something catches his eye.

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

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

INT. LUXURY HOTEL - ROOM 1421 - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

ADRIAN
 (filtered)
 Let's not bring destiny into this
 yet. So what's the next step?

DANNY
 I'm not sure. Hang on.

Danny turns to face the bell hop who is waiting respectfully,
 but expectantly by the door. Danny tips him. When the bell
 hop leaves, Danny returns to the laptop.

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

ADRIAN
 (filtered)
 What happened?

DANNY
 We weren't alone. I looked awful. I
 was babbling. I couldn't present
 the right version of me.

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

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

ANGELA (CONT'D)
 (filtered)
 Hey there handsome.

DANNY
 Hey Angela.

ANGELA
 (filtered)
 Listen, there are no perfect
 situations. If you keep waiting for
 one you might miss the opportunity
 of a lifetime. Just be yourself.

(MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

When you are, you're irresistibly charming. Be yourself. 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.

(Danny is moved)

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

She leaves and Adrian takes her place.

ADRIAN

(filtered)

OK buddy. What's the next move?

DANNY

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.

ADRIAN

(filtered)

Don't do that.

DANNY

I'm kidding. 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.

ADRIAN

(filtered)

Good luck.

Danny disconnects and undresses. He scarfs a few bites of food from room service and heads to the bathroom. The room radio catches his eye. 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 radio is turned on in the bedroom 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, Danny 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 as 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 singer 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. Her hair is done up like Jimi Hendrix, and she wears a scarf tied around her forehead. She performs the rest of the guitar solo on an actual guitar. Danny approaches, singing.

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

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

MR. SER

Excuse me. Please wait a moment.

Danny sees Carina and Nicky approaching on their way to the elevators. As the girls pass, they cast fisheye looks at Danny and hum the chorus to the song they just performed.

Mr. Ser follows behind them, and Carina and Nicky peek around him to see Danny's confused expression.

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 end of the bar watching Carina wistfully.

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

BARTENDER

Liquid courage mate?

He motions to Carina and Danny nods after a moment.

DANNY

Gin and tonic. Two limes.

The bartender whips it up and slides it over. He sips as Nicky approaches and sits next to him.

NICKY

You put on quite a show.

DANNY

(grimacing)

Perfect. This is what I need.

NICKY

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

DANNY

I bet. Can I get you something?

NICKY

Sure. Apple martini.

The bartender leaves to make the drink.

NICKY (CONT'D)

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

DANNY

Danny. Have you been friends with Carina long?

NICKY

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

DANNY

You never seem to leave her side.

NICKY

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

DANNY

What is?

NICKY

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

(beat)

It's kind of a sweet thought though, isn't it? You don't see that kind of devotion 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 what I want to do.

NICKY

Have you at least interviewed anyone famous?

DANNY

Do you know who Gwyneth Paltrow is?

NICKY

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

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

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

DANNY

But I'm only doing it until I sell 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 can hold maybe 200 people, which includes a small balcony. Guests from the cocktail reception crowd the floor while others sit in booths that line the walls. The stage is dark and the instruments are waiting for musicians.

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

The stage lights up and the crowd claps as all attention is drawn to the musicians walking on to man their instruments.

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 your kind thoughts. So, thank 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.

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

CARINA (CONT'D)

I hope you like it.

Carina and her band play. 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

(sighs)

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

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

INT. 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. He'll run you through the process. Don't mess this up and don't ask anything that might upset Carina.

(walks off)

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.

PETER

Very well. You're seat number two.

He leaves and stylists finish up with Danny.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - LATER

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

CARINA (O.S.)

There you are!

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

DANNY

You 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 mike 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. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

INSERT WEB PAGE

A placeholder video is playing in lieu of the streamcast.

BACK TO SCENE

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

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

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

BRIAN
Oh...

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

Angela and Adrian are just as surprised.

ANGELA AND ADRIAN
...my...

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

On the laptop--

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

Angela and Adrian smile.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

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, 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 with a hint of a longing.

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. BRIAN'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.

Brian impatiently types a question on his computer.

INSERT WEBSITE

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

BACK TO SCENE

DANNY
(filtered)
Thank you Martha from Cork, Ireland. Let's take another question.
(he scans the monitor)
PizzaGuy from Los Angeles, California asks, "What do you--"

Danny catches himself and makes a face into the camera.

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

On the laptop--

DANNY

(filtered)
I bet your showers take forever.

CARINA

(filtered)
And drying!

ADRIAN

(to Angela)
That's your question?

ANGELA

Her hair is gorgeous!

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

DANNY

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

INSERT MONITOR

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

BACK TO SCENE

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

DANNY (CONT'D)

It looks like we only have time for
one more.

INT. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN
C'mon...

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

ADRIAN
This is it...

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

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

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

CARINA
I bet she's pretty, too.

DANNY
(beat)
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

(deep breath)
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. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

INT. 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. BRIAN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

The couple falls back into their couch, disappointed.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - CONTINUOUS

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

BOB

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

CARINA

I'd like to leave.

She stands and turns away. Danny stands, 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)

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

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

BOB

Carina is 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

This character believes what I believe. And that's 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.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

It transcends physical feeling.
It's almost spiritual. That's why
we're always associating love as
coming from above.

(beat)

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

There's a reason for that.

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

Adrian is on the couch with the laptop on his lap and he beckons Angela over excitedly. She sits down and they read.

DANNY (V.O.)
Everyone I knew was in a
relationship. They were getting
married. Having kids.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Brian 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 drinks a bottle of beer.

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

Brian is still reading on his phone.

DANNY (V.O.)
 ...and while the divorce rate is
 unbelievably high...

INT. CARINA'S HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DANNY (V.O.)
 ...here's Carina Ray's love and
 commitment to her husband
 transcending death itself. 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.

(MORE)

CARINA (CONT'D)

And I just wanted to destroy everything, which was frightening because I've never felt that way before. I couldn't leave the house. I couldn't be alone. He was everything to me.

(beat)

Jason is my favorite person in the whole world and it is supremely difficult to be away from him.

(looks Danny in the eye)

You can't replace him.

Danny can't hold her gaze, so he looks down at the table.

DANNY

I don't know what to say. All I can think of are clichés. So, I'll just say I'm sorry and go.

He starts to leave, but stops.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I never wanted to replace him, you know? I had no illusions that I could. He's the luckiest guy in the world. I wish I could have met him. I'd probably like him.

(beat)

See? Clichés. I just thought one day you might move on and that you might find room in your heart for someone like me.

(he shakes his head)

For me. 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 Brian in the control booth. Danny hurries out and jogs down the aisle, stopping at where Nicky is sitting alone on a bench table.

DANNY

Are you comfortable?

NICKY

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.

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

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 "Lord!"

FADE TO BLACK.