

MEMORIAL DAY

By

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FADE IN

EXT. SEATTLE -- DAY

The city sparkles under the warm afternoon sun. The mountains west and east, still snow-capped, are crisply defined against the deep blue sky. Clusters of sailboats, like so many little white shark teeth, cut across Lake Union and Lake Washington. It is one of those rare, perfect days when everybody on the streets seems happy.

EXT. DUSTIN'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- DAY

Dustin, 33, a disheveled, unshaven, unsuccessful writer, leaves his low-rent apartment building and climbs onto his weather-beaten Vespa. His mood is grim. He puts on sunglasses and speeds away. He doesn't wear a helmet.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

I'm not speaking to you from the grave, like William Holden in Sunset Boulevard. But I did plan to shoot myself that day.

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON BOULEVARD -- DAY

He drives north. Bike riders are everywhere along the road going both directions, a continuous stream of brightly colored helmets and cycling garb.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

It seemed like a good idea. I would never have to pay my staggering credit card debt...

FLASHBACK: INT. DUSTIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

MONTAGE

--He pours a drawer full of bills into the kitchen sink.

--Sprays them with lighter fluid.

--Lights a stick match, throws it on the pile, and gravely watches the huge flames rise up almost to the ceiling.

END MONTAGE

DUSTIN (V.O.)

...go through another divorce...

FLASHBACK: INT. DUSTIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

His wife, GRETCHEN, stands in the open doorway. She is 27, very attractive, dressed in a business suit and an overcoat. She carries a small suitcase.

She takes one last look at the room. Dustin sits in his overstuffed chair, following her gaze.

The apartment is beautifully furnished. Framed artwork on the walls, little sculptures decorating the well organized bookshelf, etc.

An old guitar hangs on the wall near him. A gorgeous bouquet of flowers blossoms out of the sound hole, adding color and a festive quality to the room.

GRETCHEN

I'll send movers for my stuff.

She walks out and shuts the door quietly. He throws a book at the door. It slams hard against it and bounces onto the floor, right side up.

INSERT -- THE BOOK

It's a copy of "Passionate Marriage," by David Schnarch.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

...or lose another, um, "career opportunity"...

END FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK: INT. SALLY AND MO'S ICE CREAM PALACE -- DAY

MO, about 70, with the yellowy-gray face of a lifelong smoker, looks into the camera, cigarette bouncing on his lip.

MO

We don't have you on the schedule,
Dustin. In fact, we'll never have
you on the schedule.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. LAKE WASHINGTON BOULEVARD -- DAY

Dustin continues his Vespa ride.

DUSTIN

But I couldn't pull the trigger.
Not without Hunter Thompson's help.

(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

(beat)

I had about an hour and a half to kill. I thought about calling Alyssa, my ex, but decided it would be too self-destructive.

(beat)

The irony took its time, arriving about eight seconds later.

EXT. SEATTLE STREET -- CAPITOL HILL -- DAY

He rides up a hill in a neighborhood of huge houses and tree-lined streets. As he reaches the crest of the hill he hits something that blows his front tire.

He pulls over. The tire looks like it exploded.

EXT. HILLTOP SERVICE STATION -- DAY

He pushes the Vespa into the service station but the place is totally empty. There's a note on the door: "Closed for Memorial Day."

DUSTIN

Memorial Day? What the fuck?

He locks up the Vespa and leaves it near the garage.

EXT. 15TH AVENUE EAST -- DAY

He walks slowly up the street, weary, depleted.

EXT. VICTROLA CAFE -- DAY

He sits outside with a big cup of espresso, talking on the phone.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

I don't understand why you're calling me.

DUSTIN

Alyssa, it's so good to hear your voice, even if you're mad. I was just wondering if you wanted to go see a movie with me.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

Dustin, we haven't talked in years!

DUSTIN

There's this documentary about Hunter Thompson that I need to see. It's at the Egyptian, seven o'clock.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

Tonight? That's an hour from now. Have you totally lost it?

DUSTIN

I thought we'd go together. As pals.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

As "pals"? You know I'm married now, right? You know I have a life?

DUSTIN

I didn't know you were married. Or maybe I forgot. Who'd you marry? Boris?

ALYSSA

Nobody you know.

(beat)

What's the matter with you? You don't sound very good.

DUSTIN

My life is a fucking catastrophe. I'm dying.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

Well, you're never on Facebook anymore. Nobody's seen you in I don't know how long.

DUSTIN

Life was so much better when we were together.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

You think? You threw me over for Gretchen, remember?

DUSTIN

A huge mistake. Huge.

ALYSSA (V.O.)

Yeah. Huge. Well, thanks a lot for telling me now, six years later.

(beat)

(MORE)

ALYSSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Look, I gotta go. We're having some
 friends over for a barbecue.

DUSTIN
 Barbecue. Wow. OK.
 (beat)
 I'm sorry, Alyssa.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
 Ancient history at this point,
 dude.

DUSTIN
 Sorry for calling I mean. In
 addition to being sorry sorry.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
 I suppose it's good to know you're
 still alive.

EXT. SEATTLE STREET -- CAPITOL HILL -- DAY

He walks down the hill. Apartment buildings -- much better
 than the one he lives in -- line both sides of the street.

The view west -- Space Needle, Puget Sound, islands in the
 Sound, the Olympic Mountains -- is spectacular.

DUSTIN (V.O.)
 Two years ago I cast Facebook out
 of my life; I ceased to exist. I
 just couldn't take it anymore. The
 turning point came when the word
 "Like" became the ultimate, insipid
 banality, the generic affirmation
 of everything, from the miracle of
 birth to a cupcake.

DUSTIN'S VISION

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Dustin's sister LISA holds her newborn. She is surrounded by
 FAMILY.

DUSTIN (V.O.)
 That's my sister, Lisa, her
 husband, Derek, and his family.
 The little chipmunk is my niece,
 Cleopatra.

They all look into the camera with exaggerated smiles and simultaneously give the thumbs-up sign. The images FREEZES and DISSOLVES into a posting on

DUSTIN'S FACEBOOK PAGE

The picture has received 154 "Likes."

DUSTIN (V.O.)

This was my Facebook page. As you see, Cleopatra scored 154 "Likes."

Just below this, a posted photo of JEREMY, Dustin's brother-in-law, immediately COMES TO LIFE.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

This is Jeremy, my brother Ed's husband. They own Cupcake Delish, a very successful shop across the street from Facebook Headquarters.

INT. CUPCAKE DELISH -- DAY

Jeremy stands behind the counter. He has the same exaggerated smile on his face that Lisa and the others had. He holds up a chocolate cupcake with pride. He tilts the cupcake up to the camera so the top is visible.

In pink frosting there is a perfect, exact replica of the Facebook thumbs-up "Like" icon. Jeremy gives an exaggerated thumbs-up sign with his other hand.

Behind him a vast array of cupcakes -- in an explosion of delightful colors -- all have the same icon frosted on top.

The shot of Jeremy FREEZES and DISSOLVES back into its place as a photo on

DUSTIN'S FACEBOOK PAGE

The image has received 371 "Likes."

DUSTIN (V.O.)

The cupcakes scored 371 "Likes." A humiliating defeat for tiny Cleopatra. I asked myself, 'Do I really want to live in a world like this?'

END DUSTIN'S VISION

EXT. BROADWAY -- DAY

He reaches Broadway, takes a moment to stop and look around. People are out enjoying the day. Many of them are hipsters, tattooed guys in leather, women with multicolored hair, half-naked girls in tiny shorts, people smoking dope, etc.

Dustin absentmindedly starts across the street. A convertible full of drunk sorority girls careens around the corner. The tires screech. The horn blows. Dustin jumps out of the way and falls on his ass.

The car slows down; they look to see if he's dead. The girl nearest to him stands up in the back seat as they pull away. Other girls hold her in place.

While flashing her big tits she yells at Dustin in a terrible squeaky voice.

GIRL
DREAM ON, MOTHERFUCKER!

The cackles of all the girls make him wince as he gets up and checks himself for injuries.

DUSTIN (V.O.)
(shouting first line)
IT'S NOT THE TITS, IT'S WHO'S
WEARING THEM!! That's what I wanted
to yell but I didn't think of it
until it was too late. The French
have a term for that. *L'esprit de
l'escalier*. The wit on the
staircase. The gem you think of
after you've already left the
party.

He continues checking, making sure he's OK, didn't drop anything, etc. Then he very carefully crosses Broadway.

DUSTIN (V.O.)
A while earlier, just before I left
my place, I was having lots of
trouble killing myself. So I asked -
- rhetorically, I thought -- for
advice from the experts. And they
actually showed up!

FLASHBACK: INT. DUSTIN'S APARTMENT -- DAY

The apartment looks naked, devoid of any trace of Gretchen. The flowers still reside in the guitar's sound hole, but they wilted and died a long, long time ago.

He is standing up, gun in hand, speaking to the cosmos.

DUSTIN
 (more than a little
 desperate)
 Papa? Virginia? Sylvia? David?
 Where the fuck are you guys? What
 the fuck should I do?

ANIMATION

Ernest Hemingway, Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath and David
 Foster Wallace appear simultaneously in front of him,
 animated in black and white ink.

VIRGINIA WOOLF
 (to the others)
 Today it's my turn to talk!

She stares them down, making sure they stay quiet. They are
 all cowed by her. She turns to Dustin and smiles.

VIRGINIA WOOLF (CONT'D)
 Dustin, if you're jumping, make
 sure you pick the right number of
 stories. Otherwise you could end up
not dead. Bad poetry can help with
 those last-minute butterflies.
 Choose any contemporary poem that
 references Icarus or any other
 mythological figure. They're
 everywhere. Throw a stick and
 you'll hit one. Then read it while
 you're standing on the ledge /
 Rolling your eyes will send you
 right over the edge.

The others nod vigorously, applaud, mumble agreement, etc...

DUSTIN (O.S.)
 Thank you. But I'm trying to shoot
 myself.

VIRGINIA WOOLF
 (annoyed)
 Then you'd better try harder.

The others mumble their agreement while they all disappear.

END ANIMATION

BACK TO SCENE

DUSTIN

Where the fuck did they come from?
And why did she give me such
terrible advice?

Dustin mumbles to himself in frustration, sits back down,
exhausted. He hears a woman's voice outside his window.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...so I sympathy-fucked John last
night. The poor bastard really
needed it. It cheered him up.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Well, you know, I've been feeling a
little down lately too, so...

The voices begin to fade.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Nice try. Hey, there's that Hunter
Thompson documentary at the
Egyptian. Seven o'clock. You
interested?

Dustin looks toward the window; he's found the answer.

EXT. DUSTIN'S APARTMENT -- DAY -- (REPEAT OF FIRST SCENE)

Dustin walks out of his apartment building, climbs on his
Vespa, puts on sunglasses, and rides away.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BROADWAY -- DAY

He arrives across the street, still wiping his pants, and
heads south toward the Egyptian Theater.

About one hundred feet ahead, TRACEY walks down the street in
the same direction he is heading. He notices her immediately.

She is almost ageless -- she could be twenty-five or forty --
and has an inexplicable magnetism, as if the sunlight on her
is just a little brighter than on anyone else. She wears cute
glasses, an old red T-shirt, jeans with holes in the knees,
and red Converse All-Stars. She is carrying a take-out
container.

The wild, hysterical SOUND of a siren causes her to stop and
turn around.

She and Dustin watch as a police car recklessly speeds down the street. There are many flashing emergency lights down where the cop is headed.

She sees Dustin and smiles. He smiles back.

She picks up her pace and he keeps up with her.

Dustin sees that five police cars and a firetruck are parked across the street in front of a mortuary. The firetruck's ladder is extended to the roof.

A small crowd has gathered to watch. Tracey walks up to a stranger, says something, then laughs and walks on.

Dustin catches up with her.

EXT. BROADWAY ACROSS FROM THE MORTUARY -- DAY

DUSTIN

What's all that about?

TRACEY

There's a dog on the mortuary roof.
A dog. That's why they need five
police cars.

EXT. MORTUARY -- DAY

The cops move in on the dog. The dog runs away, barking at them.

EXT. BROADWAY ACROSS FROM THE MORTUARY -- DAY

TRACEY

How many cops does it take to get a
dog off the roof of a mortuary?

DUSTIN

I don't know. Five? One to Taser
it and four to shoot it.

TRACEY

Good one!

They start walking together. They can still hear the dog barking.

EXT. BROADWAY -- DAY

DUSTIN
 (indicating the take-out
 container)
 Late lunch?

TRACEY
 You know Wheelchair Lady? It's for
 her.

DUSTIN
 Oh yeah. She's quite the comedian.

TRACEY
 She is! There isn't any rubber on
 one of her wheels anymore, so she
 can't get around very well.

DUSTIN
 So you went and got this. That's
 very Florence Nightingale of you.

TRACEY
 I guess so. But you know what?
 Freud said everything you do, you
 do out of self interest. And if
 that's true, I think it makes
 Florence Nightingale some kind of a
 ho, don't you?

He looks at her and laughs, totally taken off guard.

DUSTIN
 I like the way you think.

TRACEY
 You look like you could use a good
 laugh. Something about you.
 (beat)
 Can you hold this for a minute?

She hands him the take-out container and rubs her hands on
 her jeans. Then she takes the container back.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
 Thanks. Wheelchair Lady asked me
 to fold her blanket. Whew! I think
 she sleeps in it and I gotta tell
 you, it was awful to touch it. And
 the smell! Damn near killed me.

DUSTIN

The perilous plight of the philanthropist.

They walk by an OLD HIPPIE who's playing an embarrassing version of "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall." His guitar case is open. Nobody is paying any attention except to avoid him.

Dustin and Tracey exchange "What's up with that guy?" looks.

Tracey examines her hands again.

TRACEY

I should have worn surgical gloves.
But in this neighborhood people
might get the wrong idea, you know
what I mean?

He laughs. She laughs with him.

DUSTIN

Surgical gloves around here give
the phrase "fist bump" a whole new
wrinkle.

TRACEY

Don't make me laugh so hard.

DUSTIN

You started it.

TRACEY

I can be that way sometimes.

They hear what sounds like the Southern Pacific midnight train roaring down the sidewalk behind them and turn to see a herd of skateboarders zoom by.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Maybe we should get Wheelchair Lady
one of those.

DUSTIN

Then she'd have to be called
Skateboard Lady...

TRACEY

Well then, put the kibosh on that
idea. 'Wheelchair Lady' sounds a
million times better.

DUSTIN

Yeah. I mean, I'd rather be called
Wheelchair Lady.

TRACEY

Oh really?

They laugh.

DUSTIN

So anyway. You folded her blanket
and then what?

TRACEY

She said, 'Darling, I'm famished.'

DUSTIN

And since you were no longer breast
feeding you decided to spring for
take-out?

TRACEY

You're pretty silly, mister.

They pass Dick's Drive-In where several young, dirty homeless
kids sit on the street with a couple of sleeping dogs next to
them.

HOMELESS KID

Buy me and my dog some beer and a
burger?

They ignore him and keep on walking.

TRACEY

I never give people like that
money. My single criterion is, if
you look like you could never get a
job in a thousand years, I'll give
you something if I can. Otherwise,
I can't afford it.

DUSTIN

You are so much a better person
than I am. Too bad there's no
chance I'll run into you in hell.

TRACEY

Don't be so sure. I'll probably be
the concierge.

DUSTIN

That would be so great.

She laughs.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)
(getting a wiff of the
food)

Man, that smells like good Mexican.

TRACEY

Yeah. But I think I made a mistake
by asking her what she wanted.

DUSTIN

What do you mean?

TRACEY

I asked her and she said -- and I
swear to god, this is verbatim --
'Tell me what my culinary options
are, dear.' And when I did, she
orders Mexican. Seven blocks away!

DUSTIN

I can't think of anyone more wily
and cunning.

TRACEY

She'd be a threat to all we hold
sacred if she didn't live in a
doorway. And here I am keeping her
alive. I don't know I'm thinking.

A guy walks by whose every square inch of skin is covered by
tattoos. He looks frightening.

DUSTIN

Wow. Wow. Wow.

TRACEY

A walking metaphor for all of us,
don't you think? Trapped inside
your own skin, no escape.

DUSTIN

If I woke up looking like that I'd
have a lifelong panic attack.

TRACEY

Me too.

DUSTIN

So I was gonna tell you, once a
homeless dude asked me to buy him a
'tall drip coffee with room.' So I
buy him one. And I felt so proud.

(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

For about nine seconds I felt like applying for a job at the Gates Foundation. I bet you're feeling a sort of blossoming humanity coming on pretty strong right about now, aren't you?

TRACEY

Blossoming? It's springtime in my heart!

DUSTIN

I can see that! So I bring the dude his coffee. He takes a sip and grimaces like it's poison. He yells at me! 'You forgot the goddamn cream!!' I say, 'But you didn't ask for cream.' And he says, 'What the fuck do you think "with room" means?'

They both laugh.

EXT. BROADWAY & PINE -- DAY

They walk up to the corner. The light is red. He is nervous. He looks across the street at the theater. The marquee advertises the Seattle International Film Festival. A line leads down the block and around the corner.

DUSTIN

So, Mother Teresa, what's your name?

TRACEY

Tracey.

DUSTIN

I'm Dustin.

TRACEY

Better not shake my hand -- I still haven't washed after, you know...

DUSTIN

I'm not shaking your hand until you've been water-cannoned by a Mississippi cop.

TRACEY

That's bound to be effective.

The light changes and they cross the street, stopping at the corner. She points down Broadway.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Well, I'm going down to Wheelchair Lady. Where are you headed?

DUSTIN

I'm going to the movie.

TRACEY

Oh yeah? What are you going to see?

DUSTIN

"Gonzo" -- a documentary about Hunter Thompson.

TRACEY

Oh wow! I really wanted to see that!

He looks at the theater, then at her.

DUSTIN

(nothing to lose)

Do you wanna go with me? It starts in about twenty minutes.

TRACEY

Yes, I'll go with you! I'll meet you in line.

DUSTIN

OK!

She walks away. He watches her in utter fascination and disbelief.

Dustin looks down Broadway and is surprised to see his ex-wife, Gretchen, passing Tracey, coming up the street. She walks toward him in SLOW MOTION.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Holy shit. Gretchen!

She's braless in a tank top, with an exposed midriff. Her belly button is pierced and so is her lower lip. She exudes a smoldering sexuality. She's with a new boyfriend, a tattooed hipster.

She doesn't see Dustin as she walks by, not more than three feet away.

GRETCHEN (V.O.)

When the sex dies, the relationship dies, Dustin. There is no tunnel of white light, no divine redemption. There is only misery and divorce.

FLASHBACK: EXT. BABELAND -- NIGHT

Dustin and Gretchen leave the store. This is the Dustin and Gretchen of a couple of years ago. He has shorter hair, is clean shaven, and wears cleaner clothes. Gretchen is dressed like a graduate student. She carries a small store bag.

GRETCHEN

(emphatic)

And if this Wee-Vibe doesn't help, we're through. You know that, don't you?

DUSTIN

It's getting rave reviews.

A very happy couple exits the store with a large bag full of stuff.

WOMAN NO. 1

Happy anniversary, Boo-Boo.

WOMAN NO. 2

Happy anniversary, honey. I can't wait to get home!

WOMAN NO. 1

Me neither, baby.

They head up the street holding hands. Dustin and Gretchen watch them go.

DUSTIN

See? Maybe we should go back in there and buy more toys.

She shakes her head.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

(now gravely serious)

OK. I think we need couples counseling.

GRETCHEN

Going to couples counseling is like flying in a marriage kamikaze. And your Wee-Vibe costs a lot less.

DUSTIN
Our Wee-Vibe.

Gretchen shows her extreme frustration.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Fuck. We need to think about this differently, Gretch.

GRETCHEN
 Differently how? Our sex life has been reduced to a cartoon-magnet-shaped piece of silicone!

DUSTIN
 No! Our sex life has been elevated to a cartoon-magnet-shaped piece of silicone!

GRETCHEN
 (almost a whisper)
 Holy fuck. So this is what profound disappointment feels like.

She turns and walks away. Dustin looks into the store and gazes at a lovely woman comparing two brightly colored vibrators with her boyfriend.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- DAY

He watches Gretchen and her new man, now in real time, as they head up the street. He moves only when someone bumps into him.

INT. EGYPTIAN THEATER LOBBY -- DAY

At the box office Dustin waits behind a customer, then buys one ticket.

EXT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- DAY

He leaves the theater and follows the line around the corner.

EXT. MOVIE LINE -- DAY

The line is long. He sees Tracey near the end, waving, holding two tickets. Lots of conversations come in and out of earshot as the crowd waits.

TRACEY
What's that look?

DUSTIN
I can't believe you're here.

TRACEY
You didn't think I would be?

DUSTIN
I was sure I'd never see you again.

TRACEY
Why not? We agreed we'd go to the movie.

DUSTIN
Well, I'm a pessimist. People flake.

TRACEY
Well, I'm an optimist. And a very reliable flake.

He laughs and looks at her funny.

DUSTIN
Where have I been all your life?

TRACEY
You've been here the whole time.
You just don't remember.

DUSTIN
(singing it well)
I don't remember/I don't recall/I
got no memory of anything at all.
(beat)
Wheelchair Lady happily munching
her Mexican?

TRACEY
That sounds oddly obscene.

DUSTIN
Oh, thanks for planting that image
in my mind. Holy Christ!

TRACEY
You did it, not me, Mr. Pervo.

DUSTIN
Miss Pervette.
(beat)

(MORE)

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Anyway, it's goddamn sweet of you, seriously. It kills me. And then you got me a ticket.

TRACEY

Yeah. I guess I thought that's what we planned.

DUSTIN

But I just left you five minutes ago.... What are you, some kind of Ninja?

TRACEY

Maybe. I'm just as much a mystery to myself as I am to you.

She hands him his ticket.

DUSTIN

Thank you. Hey do you wanna go "Eat, Drink, Man, Woman" after the movie? My treat.

She laughs.

TRACEY

Yeah, that would be great.

(beat)

So here's a 'what's my line' question: how do you spend your days? And I'm not talking about work.

DUSTIN

My days. Hmmm. I write stories. I read books, magazines, soup can labels.

(beat)

I contemplate my existence a lot.

TRACEY

Which explains the haggard, existentially-angsty writer persona?

DUSTIN

Exactly. Every time I take a shower I lose the best idea I ever had.

TRACEY

Well, it looks like you have plenty left.

He laughs.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
What kind of stories do you write?

DUSTIN
(deadpan)
They're mostly about lonesome
cowboys.

TRACEY
Really?

She pauses, realizes it's a joke and laughs.

DUSTIN
No. They're stories nobody wants to
read. Edgy, weird people who want
edgy, weird things, relationships,
experiences, very badly.

TRACEY
I'm interested.

He smiles and she smiles back and they hold that for a
second.

DUSTIN
So what's up with you besides
keeping Wheelchair Lady alive?

TRACEY
That was just today. And maybe a
couple of other times.

DUSTIN
Well, so what else is up with you?

TRACEY
Oh, this and that.

DUSTIN
Sorry, all that detail is hard for
me to process.

She punches him in the arm.

TRACEY
You're one to talk, Mr. Lonesome
Cowboy.
(beat)
I guess I've got a lot going on.

DUSTIN

Like what? I would really like to know.

The line begins slowly moving forward.

TRACEY

Yay, the line's moving!

(beat)

Umm, for now, let's just say things are a little crazy. Not that I don't want to tell you about it. I do. It's just that...you know, the movie and everything.

DUSTIN

OK. You know, I've spent about ten thousand days in this neighborhood and I've never seen you around.

TRACEY

I've never seen you either. Looks like we got lucky today.

DUSTIN

I'm embarrassed I didn't buy you a ticket.

TRACEY

You shouldn't be. And anyway, you're taking me to dinner.

They are silent for a few seconds as they walk toward the corner. The line is moving steadily.

DUSTIN

You know, I really don't like the word "hero." I think it's way overused. I mean, these days everybody wearing a uniform is a fucking "hero."

TRACEY

I know. Those cops on the roof will probably get a medal. For bravery.

DUSTIN

Exactly! Anyway, Hunter Thompson is one of my heroes. You know he killed himself? Blew his brains out.

She looks right at him.

TRACEY

I tried that once. But not with a gun.

(beat)

I don't know why I just told you that.

DUSTIN

It's really OK. If it--

TRACEY

--You don't have to say anything. It's alright. It was a while ago. I've finally managed to make peace with my demons.

DUSTIN

Thank god.

He looks at her with great affection. She returns the look. It is one of those moments when the rest of the world ceases to exist.

INT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- LATER

They are settled comfortably into their seats.

DUSTIN

...so she flashes her big tits at me!

TRACEY

I suppose they're the two things she's actually "accomplished" in her life.

DUSTIN

Yeah! And you know what she said?

TRACEY

I have no idea what someone who does that would say.

DUSTIN

'Dream on, motherfucker!'

She laughs in disbelief.

TRACEY

What if Miss Sorority Queen becomes ... I don't know, like a dentist someday?

DUSTIN
You'd never open your mouth the
same way again.

TRACEY
(as if shouting to the
dentist)
'Hey! Dr. Lovelace! I need your
help! I think I broke a tooth when
you flashed your tits at me!'

Dustin laughs hard at this.

DUSTIN
'I broke a tooth when you flashed
your tits at me'? That makes
absolutely no sense! And 'Dr.
Lovelace'? That's priceless.

He keeps laughing; she laughs harder.

TRACEY
We're living in a world of weirdos,
Dustin. I'm one of 'em and so are
you. We wouldn't be sitting here
together if we weren't!

Their laughter dies down and there is a short pause. Dustin
turns to her.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
What?

DUSTIN
You think we've known each other
before?

TRACEY
(with understated
certainty)
Don't you remember? We first met in
1931 at the New York premiere of
"City Lights."

He is intrigued. The lights go down.

INT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- LATER

They watch the movie, turning to share a look. They are as
close to each other as can be without touching.

EXT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- NIGHT

Tracey and Dustin exit the theater. A few stragglers exit with them.

TRACEY
...not only that, he's like the Beatles of American journalism.

DUSTIN
Yeah, fuck Edgar R. Murrow.

TRACEY
He should always be called a 'fucking genius' -- never just a genius.

DUSTIN
I think you're an astounding world-class fucking genius for saying that.

TRACEY
And you're an amazing mega-tornado of a fucking genius for recognizing the fucking genius in what I just said. Now where are we going to eat, you fucking genius?

Her phone rings. She takes it out and looks at who's calling.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
Oh shit. Sorry, I have to take this. I'll be right back.

She walks off down the street. He watches her walk away but he doesn't hear anything. She's quite animated as she disappears around the corner.

EXT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- LATER

A couple of people stand outside smoking. A few more exit and walk down the street.

Dustin looks up the street. There's no sign of Tracey.

EXT. EGYPTIAN THEATER -- LATER

The theater is closed. Nobody around. Dustin is looking up the street again. Ghost town. Frustrated and angry, he shakes his head and walks away toward downtown.

TRACEY (O.S.)

Hey! Dustin!

He turns around and there she is coming down the street.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Where are you going? I wouldn't disappear on you.

DUSTIN

I thought you left. I've been waiting for you for ten minutes.

TRACEY

But why would I leave?

DUSTIN

You got a phone call, you disappeared, I'm waiting. Finally I'm like, what the fuck, she left.

Her expression tells him she's sorry.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Look, half the time I'm full of fear and loathing. It's my *metier*.

TRACEY

It's been the other half of the time tonight, hasn't it?

DUSTIN

Yeah, up until a few minutes ago.

TRACEY

For me too. I would never leave you like that. I'm really, really sorry. OK?

He nods.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

Remember I said that things were crazy? Well, they are. It's very unpleasant and confusing.

DUSTIN

Do you wanna talk about it?

TRACEY

No! I want to finish our evening by having fun, goddamn it.

DUSTIN

You got my vote.

TRACEY

Yay! So where should we go eat?

DUSTIN

I think Six Arms is the only place still open.

TRACEY

Oh good. I have to stop by my apartment and get a sweater. It's right on the way.

EXT. TRACEY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

They walk up to the entrance gate.

TRACEY

Do you mind waiting outside? My grandmother, god rest her pilgrim soul, wouldn't want me bringing a strange man into my apartment.

He smiles. The building swallows her up. He watches for a light to go on somewhere or the sound of a door closing, but nothing.

EXT. TRACEY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT -- LATER

He's pacing, examining the topography of the sidewalk. Finally Tracey comes out of the building, opens the gate.

She's let her hair down, put on a tight-but-not-too-tight white blouse, a subtle silver necklace, newer, tighter jeans, and a little black velvet jacket. She's wearing black flats. She looks spectacular.

He can barely speak at first.

DUSTIN

My god. You look fantastic.

TRACEY

Thank you. I clean up pretty well, don't I?

He nods very deliberately and smiles.

TRACEY (CONT'D)

(a little sad)

I thought it would be fun to jazz
it up a little for our dinner.

Dustin is too enamored to catch her tone.

DUSTIN

You went from gorgeous to uber-
gorgeous.

TRACEY

Geez, you're so sweet. Sorry that
took so long. I keep making you
wait. I don't mean to.

DUSTIN

If I'd have known this afternoon
that I'd be going to the movies
with such a beautiful, smart, fun,
Gonzo-loving woman, and then I'd be
taking her to dinner at the most
greasy cheap-ass restaurant around,
my whole day would have been
different.

TRACEY

Oh damn! Damn!

DUSTIN

What?

TRACEY

That's the thing. I can't go.

DUSTIN

You can't go? But, but...look at
you.

TRACEY

That phone call after the movie? It
was my boyfriend. And he called
again just now when I was on my way
out.

He walks away about about five or six paces and then comes
back to stand in front of her.

DUSTIN

Of course! How could you not have a
boyfriend? You're the world's
longest list of synonyms for
'wonderful'!

TRACEY

I'm in trouble for going to the movies with you. I feel like I'm twelve.

DUSTIN

(with unabashed lust)
You sure don't look twelve.

She smiles at that, becomes a little flustered.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, Tracey. You know what? I don't know anything about you.

TRACEY

I know. It's like we're living in some kind of Gonzo time-warp.

(beat)

Everything is suddenly all fucked up. I wish I could go. You know that, right?

He nods. They stand in silence for a minute.

DUSTIN

Why don't we just go anyway? Think of it as if we're both Catholic.

TRACEY

We're both Catholic. OK. Please explain.

DUSTIN

Catholics believe that the thought is as bad as the act. We've both thought about this dinner since before the movie, right?

TRACEY

Right.

DUSTIN

So if we think of ourselves as Catholic, we can go.

TRACEY

Yes, that's pretty solid logic.

DUSTIN

And this whole 'thought is as bad as the act' thing?

TRACEY

Yeah?

DUSTIN

It's how most Catholic boys and girls learn how to masturbate.

TRACEY

That's hilarious!

DUSTIN

Now if you ever become a Catholic, you'll know how to get around that one.

She laughs, a laugh at the joke and one of relief after the tension.

TRACEY

I'm eternally grateful.

DUSTIN

So what'll we do? I owe you a dinner and...and nothing bad would happen -- unless you order the fish!

(beat)

I promise not to try to make it more than this.

She pauses, thinking carefully.

TRACEY

When was the last time something like this happened to you?

DUSTIN

Something like this? Never.

TRACEY

Me neither. That's what I'm saying. I think it's already more than this.

Dustin is flabbergasted about the whole thing.

DUSTIN

(suddenly alarmed)

But what -- this guy's gonna come after you with a crowbar or something?

TRACEY

(shakes her head no)
Right now he's in Lincoln,
Nebraska. And I don't think they'd
let him take his crowbar on the
plane. For one thing, it's about
three feet longer than a box
cutter.

A long moment of silence. Dustin deeply mulls something over.
She watches him carefully. Finally...

DUSTIN

Did you ever see "Forrest Gump"?

TRACEY

(completely baffled)
Yeah.

DUSTIN

What did you think of it?

TRACEY

I despised it. I'd rather stick
pins in my eyes than see that movie
again.

He nods like he's just won a bet with himself. He smiles at
her as if he is proud of her or himself or both of them.

DUSTIN

(a tinge of sadness mixed
with delight)
You're right. It is already more
than this. Goddamn.

They stand there letting this trivial and yet important fact
sink in.

TRACEY

(reluctantly)
Oh shit. Let's not make this any
more difficult. Thank you so much
for today.

DUSTIN

Jesus, Tracey. I've gotta say,
these last three hours have been
for me...I wish I could put it into
words. You have no idea.

TRACEY

Oh, I think I do. I definitely
think I do.

DUSTIN
 (rallying some humor)
 Plenty of jungle-strength pesticide
 on your hands now?

She smiles and offers her hand. He kisses it tenderly.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)
 You are an angel.

He walks away. Then he stops and comes back to her.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Do you...do you want to exchange
 numbers? I mean, it's possible,
 sometime down the road...

TRACEY
 We'd better not. It wouldn't help
 my case.

He nods, turns and walks away. He is completely devastated.
 She stays where she is, watching him.

EXT. TRACEY'S BLOCK -- NIGHT

He stops near the end of the block, turns and looks at her
 standing outside the gate, still looking at him.

She very softly blows him a kiss.

He watches her blowing the kiss. He blows a kiss to her.

She smiles and looks at him, as if memorizing him.

He walks backward to the corner, never taking his eyes off
 her, and she never takes her eyes off him.

When he reaches the corner they look at each other for the
 last time, holding the moment. She opens the gate and walks
 through as he walks around the corner. He hears the SOUND of
 the gate closing.

EXT. PIKE STREET -- NIGHT

He comes around the corner and when he's certain he's out of
 sight, he puts his finger in his mouth and "shoots" himself.

He leans backward against the wall of a building and "dies."

A moment later he checks to see if he has bus fare, then
 slowly begins the long walk down Pike St.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

Hard as I tried not to, I couldn't help thinking of Grandpa Ian's story.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

ANIMATION -- BLACK AND WHITE DRAWING -- EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY -- 1987

GRANDPA IAN, somewhere in his late 80s, sits on a bench with 10-year-old Dustin. It is a warm spring day. Grandpa Ian smokes a cigar. He is very relaxed.

DUSTIN

It's been so good to see you, Grandpa. I'm so sorry it had to be because of Grandma.

GRANDPA IAN

Good to see you too, Dusty. I'm sorry you can't stay. Now, I want to tell you something before you go. Before I follow your Grandmother into the abyss.

He laughs at himself.

DUSTIN

What's an abyss?

GRANDPA IAN

It's like the subway except you can never get out.

DUSTIN

Grandma's stuck in the subway? I thought she was in Heaven.

GRANDPA IAN

She's fine. Never mind. Now listen. In 1931, January 30th to be exact, my friend Julian was leaving for Lisbon. I went with him down to the dock. That's the way it was then. You wanted to go to Europe you took a boat. Julian was deaf and he couldn't speak very well, so I wanted to help him get situated. We were late, but...

Fade in ambient SOUNDS of the dock, the harbor, the crowd, gulls, etc.

EXT. DOCK IN NEW YORK HARBOR -- DAY -- 1931

GRANDPA IAN (V.O.)

...it didn't matter. A few hundred people were still boarding the boat. Once Julian was all set, we said goodbye. I started to walk away, but first I turned towards the boat...

Julian takes his suitcase from Ian, hugs him heartily, and starts off, disappearing into the crowd.

GRANDPA IAN (V.O.)

...and there she was.

Ian turns around and faces the ship. He is immediately drawn to a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, the most beautiful woman he's ever seen, who is looking right at him from up on the deck.

They lock eyes and smile at each other. There is something different, something almost mystical about the experience. The entire crowd literally disappears. Simultaneous thought balloons appear over their heads: "It's him." "It's her."

Their thought balloons join together, the words intermingle and become fish swimming together in a beautiful ocean full of other fish, just like them.

The dual thought balloon expands and fills the screen. A photo album appears, entitled "Our Life," and pages turn with each new moving image:

(NOTE: THE VOYAGE (ON EARTH) IS DEPICTED BY THE OLD FASHIONED METHOD OF MAPPING THEIR PROGRESS VIA ARROWS ON A GLOBE -- e.g. THE OPENING OF CASABLANCA.)

They dine out near the Eiffel Tower; parachute into the Sahara, land on camels and ride away; climb Mt. Everest; levitate at an ashram in South India; surf giant waves in Australia; one wave takes them all the way to Hollywood; they sail from L.A. to the Bahamas....

In the Bahamas, they scuba dive with sharks and a stunning variety of fish and sea life. They swim to Rio.

In Rio they go ballooning. The balloon takes them to the Moon, where they sit on a moon hill having a picnic, marvelling at the Earth rise.

They fly from the moon to NYC, get married in St. Patrick's Cathedral, have babies, fight, make up playfully, and grow very old together.

When they're very old each one of them holds a pill taken from a bottle marked "Cyanide." The last joint thought balloon appears over their heads: "May we always be together!" They kiss and feed each other the poison.

They die together like a very old Romeo and Juliet. They are buried together.

The daydream ends: their two ghosts rise up and dance on their grave.

SOUNDS of the crowd fade in quickly. The crowd reappears. The last person boards the boat.

The boat begins to pull away, sounding its horn. Ian and the woman continue to look at each other knowing the end is near.

Both of their hearts rise up together and create one big heart that grows and expands as the boat moves away from the dock. They never stop looking at each other.

They each raise a hand in a silent, almost motionless wave. At the instant they lose sight of each other the heart breaks in two.

Ian stands alone on the dock, a few gulls swooping down at the food left around him.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

GRANDPA IAN

I still think of her every day,
Dusty. Every day. Makes you wonder
what to believe in.

DUSTIN

But where is she?

GRANDPA IAN

I never saw her again.
(to himself)
I'm like old man Bernstein in
"Citizen Kane." Except mine was the
real thing.

Grandpa Ian gives Dustin an affectionate one-arm hug and kisses him on the top of the head.

END ANIMATION

INT. BUS -- NIGHT

Dustin rides in the back of the bus, stunned.

INT. DUSTIN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

He sits in the same chair he sat in earlier that day, the gun to his temple. He closes his eyes and sees Tracey...

MONTAGE -- TRACEY AND DUSTIN

--Laughing as they watch the cops on the roof.

--Tracey waving at him with the tickets.

--Laughing together in the movie.

--Tracey decked out for dinner.

--Tracey blowing him a kiss.

END MONTAGE

BACK TO SCENE

He takes the gun away. He couldn't be more frustrated.

ANIMATION

Hunter Thompson appears. He holds a huge, menacing pistol that looks as though it could blow the roof off the building. He turns and aims it at Dustin, pulls the trigger.

There is an incredibly loud, violent blast.

END ANIMATION

BACK TO SCENE

DUSTIN (V.O.)

That was just the inspiration I
needed.

He places the gun against his temple; he is calm, sure of himself. His trigger finger is steady.

Tracey appears, semitransparent, dressed as she was when they met. She holds a photo of Hunter Thompson, identical to the image that just appeared as animation, and sets it on fire.

TRACEY
(in charge)
Hunter's gone, Dustin. Gonzo's
over.

She walks to the kitchen, drops the burning photo into the sink, and takes note of the many remnants of burned bills and the badly charred wall.

TRACEY (CONT'D)
(amused)
Are you really this bad with
matches?

She returns to stand in front of him.

DUSTIN
Tracey, what are you doing here?

TRACEY
I've made peace with my demons.
Remember I told you that? I needed
to come and remind you.

DUSTIN
(desperate for an answer)
OK. But are you happy? Really
happy?

TRACEY
Come on, Dusty. Who's happy?

She smiles a what-else-can-you-do? smile, blows him a little kiss and slowly fades away.

The apartment is suddenly very quiet, very empty. He begins to cry. In a moment he dries his tears.

DUSTIN
(total resignation)
OK. OK.

He empties the gun, throws it down, puts his head in his hands. He pulls his ticket stub from the movie out of his pocket and looks at it for a while, turns it over a few times, then carefully puts it back.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

EXT. AROUND THE CORNER FROM TRACEY'S APARTMENT BUILDING --
LATE AFTERNOON -- CHRISTMAS EVE

Snow falls on white streets. Dustin stands in a doorway smoking hash out of a pipe. When he finishes he walks around the corner to Tracey's building.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

When summer ended, I brought a new blanket and some Mexican food to Wheelchair Lady. I asked about Tracey but she hadn't seen her in months. I told myself to let the whole thing go. Wheelchair Lady agreed that was the best idea. But when it snowed on Christmas Eve, which never happens, I got all "George Bailey'd" out and went to her apartment, just to see.

EXT. TRACEY'S APARTMENT BUILDING -- LATE AFTERNOON --
CHRISTMAS EVE

He comes around the corner. There are Christmas lights on in about half the windows in the building. Various people come in and out of the gate. He asks as many as he can catch up with about Tracey. We don't hear any of this.

A older woman comes out of the gate.

APARTMENT MANAGER

Is there something I can do for you? I saw you smoking dope outside my building.

DUSTIN

Yeah, I've always needed a drug to survive. Does someone named Tracey live here? A beautiful woman, kind of mysterious, about 5'5"...

APARTMENT MANAGER

I don't have a clue what "mysterious" would look like. But there's no Tracey here. Never has been.

DUSTIN

But what about around Memorial Day?

APARTMENT MANAGER

Not in sixteen years. I'm sorry.

She walks away. Dustin stands outside the building while the snow keeps falling.

A car horn blows, there is the sound of screeching tires, and the horn blows again, louder and longer. Dustin turns toward the noise.

EXT. MARINA GREEN PARK -- SAN FRANCISCO -- LATE AFTERNOON

Overlapping with the car horn is a boat's horn as the boat passes by. Dustin walks a dog along the waterfront path. The sun is setting. The light is such that everything glows, from the Golden Gate Bridge to Alcatraz to downtown and the Bay Bridge. Soothing SOUNDS of the harbor, gulls, etc., are in the air.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

A few weeks later I moved in with Lisa, Derek and Cleopatra in San Francisco. I live in their attic. I take care of Cleo during the day and every morning and afternoon I walk Buster Posey.

INT. THE ATTIC

The attic is clean, cozy. Buster Posey is asleep in a dog bed next to Dustin, who is working on a screenplay. Tacked to a corkboard on the wall next to the desk, among other things, is the stub from the ticket Tracey gave him.

DUSTIN (V.O.)

As you might have guessed, I never saw Tracey again. Even now, there's not a day goes by without my thinking of her. Maybe that'll end when I'm finished writing this script. It opens with this guy waiting in line for the New York premiere of "City Lights." It's the dead of winter. He meets a beautiful girl who's bringing hot food and a blanket to a homeless woman just around the corner from the theater. You get the idea. I'm still working on the first draft, so... Anyway, however it turns out, I like to imagine that Tracey will see it someday. And hey, if she does, I hope she'll think of me, too.

There is a knock at the door.

DUSTIN
Sieg Heil!

LISA
(coming in)
What's with you and the Nazi
schtick?

She carries a small plate of food and a cup of coffee.

LISA (CONT'D)
How's it going?

DUSTIN
It's going. Trying to avoid the
inevitable horror.

Taking the plate and the coffee.

DUSTIN (CONT'D)
Wow! Thanks. It's a long way up
from the kitchen and you didn't
have to--

LISA
I'm happy you're here. We were
worried about you.

DUSTIN
Well, it's good to be here.

You know what, though? I still
can't believe that Derek works for
Facebook now.

LISA
Don't get started on that again or
I'll poison you. I'll stab you in
your sleep.

Dustin takes a drink of coffee and examines the plate. In addition to a couple of mints, one of Jeremy and Ed's Facebook cupcakes stares up at him. Dustin looks at Lisa, points to it, and cringes.

DUSTIN
Why not just feed me one of these?

She smiles, makes a face and leaves. Dustin looks at the cupcake and pretends to shoot himself. He examines it again for a few seconds. Finally, he picks it up, smells it, takes a bite, and goes back to work.

FADE OUT