

THE LOBSTER

Written by

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30 April 2013

Element Pictures
Limp
Scarlet Films

1

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A WOMAN drives. She is on a country road, with fields on either side. She reaches a deserted spot where three donkeys stand on the right side of the road. The woman pulls over, puts on a pair of gloves, gets out of the car, checks to see if there is anyone nearby or if she is being watched, runs towards the donkeys, shoots one of them many times over, runs back to the car and drives away.

OPENING CREDITS.

I. THE TOWN

2

INT. TOWN HOUSE SITTING ROOM - MORNING

A MAN around 45 years old, DAVID, sits on a sofa. His WIFE, around 40 years old, stands and leans against a bookcase. David is shortsighted and wears glasses. His wife also wears glasses. Next to David lies a DOG, an Alsatian. David is crying. The woman is not.

DAVID'S WIFE
I'm really sorry.

(Pause)

DAVID
Does he wear glasses or contact lenses?

DAVID'S WIFE
Glasses.

(Pause)

David doesn't look at her. He stares at the floor. He swivels a glass of grapefruit juice on the table with his hand. David's wife seems sad. She looks at her watch a couple of times. She hesitates, but finally talks.

DAVID'S WIFE (CONT'D)
You'll have to hurry up. They'll be here quite soon.

David leaves the room. As he goes up the stairs to the bedroom, his wife keeps talking to him.

DAVID'S WIFE (CONT'D)
Don't worry. I'm sure you'll find the right woman really soon. A woman of average shortsightedness, just like you.

3

INT. TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - MORNING

David picks out clothes from the wardrobe and gets dressed. His movements are slow and unhurried, as if he doesn't want these final preparations to end. He stares at his slippers next to the bed. He decides not to take them with him.

FEMALE V.O.

He decided that his brown leather shoes were the best pair to wear. He went down the stairs into the sitting room. There he saw the other man for the first and last time. He was very handsome.

4

INT. TOWN HOUSE SITTING ROOM - MORNING

David goes down the stairs that lead to the sitting room. In the sitting room sits a MAN who is not handsome. He too is shortsighted and wears glasses. He eats a tuna-mayonnaise sandwich.

FEMALE V.O.

He was eating a tuna-mayonnaise sandwich and wearing a pair of black lace-up shoes. She was in the kitchen. David sat in the armchair and looked at his watch. His wife entered the room and left a glass of Coca-Cola Light for the man eating the sandwich and then went to the window.

5

INT. TOWN HOUSE SITTING ROOM - MORNING

David sits in the armchair. The two men do not look at or talk to each other. The woman enters holding a glass of Coca-Cola with ice and a slice of lemon. She leaves the glass in front of the man eating the sandwich and then goes over to David. She looks at her watch and then out the window. Everyone waits in silence. They all avoid making eye contact. David grabs a coffee table book from the coffee table next to him. He flicks through the pages quickly, looking at the pictures without any real interest. He just goes through the motions. The dog sits next to him.

FEMALE V.O.

David picked up a book called "The Most Famous Lighthouses in the World" and pretended to read. He was thinking his wife didn't love him at all anymore. He didn't burst into tears and he didn't stop to think that the first thing most people do when they realise someone doesn't love them anymore is cry.

The doorbell rings. The woman gets up and answers the door. Two men dressed as WAITERS enter.

50-YEAR-OLD WAITER
Good afternoon.

DAVID'S WIFE
Good afternoon.

50-YEAR-OLD WAITER
Which of these two gentlemen is the one you're breaking up with?

DAVID'S WIFE
Not the man eating the sandwich.
The man with the brown shoes.

David gets up. His wife goes over to him. He closes the book and leaves it on the table.

DAVID'S WIFE (CONT'D)
You can take the book with you, if you like.

DAVID
No, that's okay.

He buttons up his jacket and fixes his hair with his hands.

DAVID'S WIFE
Are you ready? Did you pack that pain relief cream for your back?

DAVID
Yes.

DAVID'S WIFE
You're healthy, you have many interests, you have good taste. Everything will be fine.

David looks at the waiters.

DAVID
I'm ready.

6 **EXT. TOWN ROAD - MORNING**

The waiters lead David to a coach. The dog follows them and gets into the vehicle with David.

7 **EXT. HOTEL COACH - MORNING**

There are another four people sitting on the coach. Two WOMEN, a BALD MAN and a BLOND MAN. They all sit in different parts of the coach. David takes a window seat.

The waiters sit together behind the WAITER-DRIVER. One of the two women gets up from her seat and goes over to where David sits. She looks at the dog and smiles at him but does not stroke him. She looks a little afraid of him. She strokes the dog above his hind legs, as far from the animal's mouth as possible.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Your dog is so beautiful. What's his name?

DAVID

Bob.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Hello, Bob. I'm Anna. I love dogs so much. I'm sure Bob senses this and knows that we're going to get along famously. I've heard the journey takes over an hour. I've got butter biscuits and hazelnuts in my bag. I can give you some if you're hungry. I mean, we can share them. I can give the dog some hazelnuts too, or a biscuit.

One of the waiters gets up from his seat and goes over to the woman.

30-YEAR-OLD WAITER

I'm afraid you'll have to return to your seat until we reach our destination.

BISCUIT WOMAN

I see. How long will that be, roughly?

50-YEAR-OLD WAITER

The journey lasts a little over an hour.

The woman goes back to her seat. She opens her bag and eats a butter biscuit. She takes a quick look around at the other people in the vehicle.

8

INT. HOTEL COACH - MORNING

David looks out the window. They have left the town and there are some woods beside the road. Suddenly a rock hits the window. David is a little shocked. He notices that the waiters do not react. David sees some people wearing ponchos running alongside the coach. They are shouting but we cannot hear what they are saying. More rocks strike the vehicle. The driver speeds up and gets away. He is completely unfazed by the incident.

9

EXT. HOTEL CARPARK - MORNING

The coach goes through the hotel gates and comes to a stop. The gates are opened by TWO WAITER-GUARDS, who wave to the driver. The waiters have automatic rifles slung across their backs. The hotel is a large building surrounded by a tall fence. It looks quite well-maintained and clean. The plants are in excellent condition and it is immediately clear that this is one of those large hotel complexes that can accommodate a large number of guests. At the entrance, the flags of various countries fly on tall poles. A number of people stand and watch from the room balconies. One of them waves. Biscuit Woman, filled with optimism, waves back. The passengers get off the coach. The two waiters lead them to the entrance in a line. Blond Man is slow and falls behind because of his limp. We will call him LIMPING MAN from now on.

II. THE HOTEL NEAR THE TOWN

10

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

The hotel lobby is empty. There is nobody around apart from the RECEPTIONIST. On the walls are various classic-looking paintings, all of which show couples in a characteristic pose: the man seated in an armchair with the woman standing by his side. There are also some paintings, again in a classic style, of animals, such as a horse, a duck or some other bird. The receptionist is a young woman with a friendly face and a calm voice. Biscuit Woman and the other woman, David, Limping Man and the Bald Man stand in front of the reception desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome. Have any of you stayed in the hotel before?

BISCUIT WOMAN

I have.

RECEPTIONIST

Excellent. Then you know the rules. If you like, you can wait in the lobby. You'll find today's papers, and we can bring you tea or coffee or a soft drink.

BISCUIT WOMAN

I'd like to hear the rules again, if you don't mind. I mean, it's been ten years since I was last here and I've forgotten a number of things. Like the bit with the days where you hunt the people in the woods with a bow and arrow, the night of the slaughter and so on.

RECEPTIONIST

Some things have changed. We use tranquilliser guns now instead of bows and arrows and the night of the slaughter has been done away with. I'll go over everything again with you. I don't mind at all.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Does Toby still work here?

RECEPTIONIST

Who's Toby?

BISCUIT WOMAN

Toby. The outdoor bar waiter.

RECEPTIONIST

I don't know. You'll have to ask one of the outdoor bar staff. I'd like you all to form a line. I suggest the gentlemen allow the ladies to go first, although this isn't compulsory. You can sort this out amongst yourselves.

The gentlemen allow the ladies to go first.

11 **INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING**

David is the last to be served. He keeps hold of the Alsatian with one hand and rests his other hand on the reception desk. The dog seems anxious, and barks. David tries to calm it down but doesn't succeed. The dog barks throughout the exchange that follows.

RECEPTIONIST

Well, sir, you said you've never been on your own before, correct?

DAVID

No, never.

The receptionist fills in a form.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you allergic to any foods?

DAVID

No.

RECEPTIONIST

Your last relationship lasted how many years?

DAVID

Around twelve.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you remember how long exactly?

David tries to calm and quieten the dog but fails.

DAVID

Eleven years and one month.

RECEPTIONIST

Any children?

DAVID

No.

RECEPTIONIST

And the dog?

DAVID

My brother. He was here a couple of years ago but he didn't make it. You might remember him. Medium build, 48 years old, bald patch, blond.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid not, sir. Okay, now I'd like you to write your name clearly on this form.

She hands him the form to fill in.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

In capital letters.

We see the golf course and squash courts, empty. On a basketball court we see a MAN and a WOMAN playing one on one.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You're not allowed to use the basketball or volleyball courts, these are only for the couples. You can use the facilities for individual sports, such as squash and golf.

At the hotel bar, the BARMAN mixes a cocktail. Someone is drinking alone.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You can stay in the hotel for up to 45 days. You'll be staying in a single room. If everything goes well and you make it, you'll be moved to a double room. Every Saturday there's a dance in the main hall. You're in luck, because tomorrow's Saturday. Here's a leaflet with the hotel rules.

(MORE)

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I'd like you to read it carefully
 and if you have any questions,
 don't hesitate to ask me for help.

In the hotel kitchen, WAITERS wash the dishes. They then lay out a buffet. One of the waiters has dirtied his shirt. Another sprays his shirt with stain-removal fluid, waits for it to dry and then wipes at the stain with a cloth.

DAVID
 Thank you.

RECEPTIONIST
 You're in Room 101. You should
 always keep the dog there. You're
 excused from today's programme, so
 you can spend the rest of the day
 however you like.

12

INT. HOTEL RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

A large room, most of which is empty. In one corner of the room are four desks arranged in a row with some chairs. David gets undressed. He leaves his clothes with a WAITER and a MAID, who store them in a box. Sitting on chairs in just their underwear are the rest of the people who arrived with David on the coach.

MAID
 Shoe size?

DAVID
 44 and a half.

MAID
 44 or 45. There are no half sizes.

DAVID
 45.

They give him a pair of black shoes, a pair of brown shoes and a pair of flip flops.

MAID
 Please pick a CD for the sound
 system in your room.

There are four CDs to choose from, their titles handwritten on their cases: BEST EVER LOVE SONGS VOL. I, BEST EVER LOVE SONGS VOL. II, BEST EVER LOVE SONGS VOL. III, and BEST EVER LOVE SONGS VOL. IV. David pauses to think.

DAVID
 Volume three, please.

MAID

If you need a haircut, call reception one day ahead. Smoking is not allowed. That way you'll be able to run for longer during the hunt without getting tired and your breath won't smell when you kiss. Enjoy your stay.

DAVID

Thank you.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Excuse me, if we need a haircut we must call reception for an appointment the day before?

MAID

That's right.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Great.

13

INT. ROOM 101 - MORNING

The room is typical of a nice hotel. It has a single bed, a single chair beside a small table and a teacup upturned on its saucer on the table. The floor is carpeted.

FEMALE V.O.

His room number was 101. A tranquilliser gun was hanging on the wall above his bed. On the bedside table were 20 tranquilliser darts.

We watch David enter the room in just his underwear. He holds the dog by its leash. David looks around the room: a single bed and a wardrobe beside it. Hanging on the wall above the bed is a tranquilliser gun. There are tranquilliser darts on the bedside table. David takes the leash off the dog and looks around.

FEMALE V.O. (CONT'D)

Inside the wardrobe were four identical khaki chino trousers, four identical claret polo shirts, a belt, socks, underwear, a blazer, four sky-blue shirts, a striped tie, a black plastic watch, a pair of sunglasses, a white bathrobe and Acqua di Parma cologne for men. He thought they most probably give the women the same cologne but for women. Maybe the man with the bad leg could become his friend.

(MORE)

FEMALE V.O. (CONT'D)

But not if he was courting the same woman he was. Then they'd surely fight, he thought. He'd never reach the point where he'd kill him but they'd fight, that's for sure.

David opens the wardrobe. Inside the wardrobe are four identical khaki chino trousers, four identical polo shirts, a belt, socks, underwear, a blazer, four sky-blue shirts, a striped tie, a black plastic watch, a pair of sunglasses, a white bathrobe and Acqua di Parma cologne for men. David sits down on the edge of the bed. He reads the leaflet. The dog looks out the window.

14

INT. ROOM 101 - MORNING

David looks out the window. The coach pulls up outside the hotel entrance. Men and women, residents of the hotel, climb out of the coach carrying unconscious people. They dump the limp bodies next to a WAITER, who counts them, and the Maid takes notes in a folder. The phone rings. David answers it.

DAVID

Yes?

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

Good afternoon.

DAVID

Good afternoon.

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

I'm calling from Room 180. I'm 45 years old but I look 40 because I follow a healthy diet and I've worked out ever since I was young. How about you?

David answers, but hasn't yet figured out who he's talking to.

DAVID

I'm 45 years old too.

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

How was your day?

DAVID

Fine.

The dog barks.

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

You have a dog?

DAVID

Yes.

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

I love dogs very much and they take to me right away. I think we're going to get along famously. Do you like butter biscuits?

Now he gets it.

DAVID

Yes.

BISCUIT WOMAN (O.S.)

I don't just like them, I like them a lot. Let's have tea or coffee sometime with biscuits. You sound like a very interesting person. Feel free to call me whenever you like, morning or night, until 10 o'clock. If I don't answer, try again. I take these pills for my thyroid gland, they told me they might make me drowsy. My room number is 180, so my phone number is 180. I have to go now because I'm feeling sleepy. We'll talk later. Goodbye.

DAVID

Goodbye.

He hangs up and stands there staring at the phone for a minute.

15

INT. ROOM 101 - EVENING

David sleeps in his clothes on the bed. The dog sleeps on the floor. There is a knock at the door. David wakes up, fixes his hair a little and answers the door. The HOTEL MANAGER and her HUSBAND enter. The Waiter and the Maid who were handing out shoes to the new guests follow them in. The Hotel Manager is a woman of around 55. She is dressed formally and her hair is carefully styled. Almost like a sculpture.

HOTEL MANAGER

Welcome. I am the Hotel Manager and this gentleman is my partner. You're one of the lucky ones because your room is one of our superior rooms. That means it has a view.

The Hotel Manager sits on the only chair and her partner stands beside her. They resemble the paintings on the lobby wall, only in reverse.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Did you read the leaflet?

DAVID

I did, yes.

HOTEL MANAGER

Very good. The fact that you'll turn into an animal if you don't manage to fall in love with another person during your stay here is not something that should upset you, or get you down. Just think, as an animal you'll have a second chance to find a companion. But even then you must be very careful. You'll need to find a companion who is the same type of animal as you are. A wolf and a penguin could never live together, nor could a camel with a hippopotamus. That would be absurd. Think about it. But there are certain combinations in particular that are worst of all - for example a bear with a fish, or a lion with an antelope, or a fox with a chicken. I realise that this discussion is a little unpleasant for you but I have a duty to prepare you psychologically for every possible outcome. Have you decided what animal you would like to be if you end up alone?

DAVID

A lobster.

HOTEL MANAGER

Why a lobster?

David seems to have thought this through rather well.

DAVID

Because a lobster lives to be over 100 years old, has blue blood just like an aristocrat and stays fertile all its life. And I like the sea very much. I water-ski and swim quite well, ever since I was a teenager.

HOTEL MANAGER

I must congratulate you. Usually the first thing people think of is a dog and that's why the world is full of dogs. Very few choose to become unusual animals, which is why they are endangered.

(MORE)

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Rarely does someone choose to be a tuna fish, due to the dangers it faces, or a polar bear, due to its adverse living conditions. A lobster is an excellent choice. One more thing, before we leave.

The Hotel Manager signals to the Waiter and the Maid. They take David's arm, twist it behind his back and bring out a special leather accessory consisting of a belt and a bracelet linked together. They fasten the belt around his waist and the bracelet around his wrist, so that his hand is held tight behind his back and he cannot move his arm. The belt buckle in front is then locked with a small key, so that he cannot take it off.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

This is so you see how easy life is when there are two of something instead of just one. We forget this from time to time. The handcuff will be removed at the same time tomorrow. But that's enough for today. I imagine it was a trying day. Good evening and enjoy your stay.

They leave and close the door behind them. David looks down at the belt and bracelet.

16 **INT. ROOM 101 - NIGHT**

David has placed his toothbrush on the bathroom sink and tries to squeeze toothpaste onto it. He then tries to screw the plastic cap back onto the toothpaste tube, and fails over and over again. He finally brushes his teeth.

17 **INT. ROOM 101 - NIGHT**

David stands beside his bed. He tries to pull off his trousers with the belt still on in order to free his hand. He struggles. He lies down, sucks in his belly and pushes his trousers down. After much effort, he manages to free one leg.

18 **INT. ROOM 101 - MORNING**

David sleeps in his underwear. He has managed to take his trousers off, which are still attached to his wrist by the bracelet. He is woken up by the music of a very well-known love song, "A Groovy Kind of Love" by Phil Collins. He looks at his watch. David gets up and sits on the side of the bed. He fixes his hair with both hands, lifting up the trousers on his wrist as he does so. He puts some water in a plate for the dog.

INT. BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

David enters the breakfast room wearing his trousers as normal. The breakfast room is very tidy and clean. David walks quickly, trying to find an empty table to sit at. Everybody looks at him as he walks by. He looks straight ahead the whole time. All the men wear the same clothes. All the women do too. They all sit alone. There is only one chair at each table in the room. He sees Limping Man, who was with him on the coach. He too has his arm tied behind his back. All the new arrivals wear this same accessory.

FEMALE V.O.

His first day was one he would never forget so long as he lived. Beside the window opposite his table at breakfast sat a young woman with her head tilted back. Later he would learn that she often got nosebleeds. Next to her sat her best friend. Near the door, the woman who was with him on the coach offered a biscuit to a man drinking a Campari and soda for breakfast. He then looked behind him and saw a man and a woman he would meet in due course, and some others he would never meet during his stay at the hotel.

We see NOSEBLEED WOMAN, her BEST FRIEND who stares at her, Biscuit Woman (with one hand tied behind her back), CAMPARI MAN, LISPING MAN and HEARTLESS WOMAN, characters we will get to know later. Lisping Man is around 50 years old and Heartless Woman is around 35 and very beautiful. David spreads butter and marmalade on a slice of bread with one hand and eats. Limping Man and Lisping Man come up to his table.

LIMPING MAN

I've decided to go for a walk outside with my new friend. Let me introduce you. This is Robert, he stays in the room next to mine and has a lisp.

David puts down his cup of coffee and offers his hand to Lisping Man. They shake hands.

DAVID

Pleased to meet you. I'm staying in Room 101.

LIMPING MAN

Would you like to join us?

DAVID

Why not.

20

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Limping Man, David and LISPING Man sit on the beach. Three yachts are moored at the pier in front of them. The pier is guarded by TWO ARMED WAITERS.

LISPING MAN

She's much older than he is, you know that right?

DAVID

Yes.

LIMPING MAN

Yes.

LISPING MAN

When Melanie was with Don, I could understand what brought them together clearly. He was more her age and their hair colour really matched as they were both strawberry blond. But now with Antonio it's really strange, it doesn't really make sense. I mean, he's much darker than she is and, as you know, much younger.

LIMPING MAN

Maybe there's something we don't know. I've heard he has his own business, he sells this aftershave, you know, named after himself.

DAVID

Maybe she has an aftershave or a cologne named after her too.

LISPING MAN

Maybe. I don't know. What I do know is that these two are a shining example to us all. Whenever I feel down, I think of these two and tell myself that I'm going to make it, that everything's going to be alright. I keep hold of this thought and I know that my days at this place are numbered. One of these days it's going to be me on one of those three yachts.

21

INT. LECTURE HALL - MIDDAY

The new arrivals at the hotel sit on four chairs on stage. David sits last in line. There is a wireless microphone which they each take to speak. Behind the podium stands the Hotel Manager. Her husband stands beside, and a little behind her.

All the residents attending the event are sitting very quietly. The hall is half empty. Waiters and Maids stand randomly around the room, in pairs.

HOTEL MANAGER
Room 206, Day 2.

LIMPING MAN
Hello, everyone.

LIMPING MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My mother was left on her own when my father fell in love with a woman who was better at maths than she was. She had a postgraduate degree I think, whereas my mother was only a graduate.

22

EXT. ZOO - DAY

We see Limping Man walking normally, without a limp, in a zoo and holding a carrier bag. He passes various caged animals and reaches the wolf enclosure. He takes pieces of raw meat out of the bag and throws them into the enclosure at various places. The wolves draw close.

LIMPING MAN (V.O.)
I was sixteen at the time. My mother entered the hotel but didn't make it and was turned into a wolf. I really missed her. I found out she'd been moved to a zoo. I often went there to see her. I'd give her raw meat, I knew wolves liked raw meat but I couldn't figure out which of the wolves was my mother, so I used to give a little bit to each of them.

Limping Man climbs up the enclosure fence. The wolves come over to where the man is. Only two wolves stand motionless and watch from a corner of the enclosure.

LIMPING MAN (V.O.)
One day I decided to enter the enclosure. I really missed her and I wanted a hug. I climbed the fence and jumped in. All the wolves charged at once and attacked me. All but two, who stood motionless. My guess is that one of those two must have been my mother. The zoo guards got to me quite quickly and took me to the hospital. Thankfully I didn't lose my leg, I just have this limp, which is also my defining characteristic.

(MORE)

LIMPING MAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 My wife died six days ago. She was
 very beautiful and I loved her very
 much. She had a limp too.

We see a zoo guard hosing down the blood in the wolf enclosure. A tiger sleeps in the next cage.

23 INT. LECTURE HALL - MIDDAY

The audience applauds. Some stand. The waiters also clap. The Hotel Manager waits for the applause to peter out.

HOTEL MANAGER
 Reference letters. 1 - "He is very sensitive and a very good friend. I lent him money in 1989 and he paid me back before the repayment date."
 2 - "John is wonderful. He loves kids and is a first-class conversationalist." Let's move on to our next guest. Room 104, Day 2.

GUEST FROM ROOM 104
 Hello, everyone. This is only my second day here but already I feel like a member of a wonderful group. My defining characteristic is that I have a very beautiful face.

The guest from Room 104 does not have a very beautiful face.

24 INT. BALLROOM - EVENING

A big room, cheerfully decorated. Instrumental music plays. Some strobe lights hang from the ceiling and there are two tables laden with sandwiches and refreshments. Couples dance. Two women sit at a table: Nosebleed Woman and her Best Friend. A woman sits on her own at the next table. She is the Heartless Woman we saw at breakfast. Biscuit Woman enters and goes over to her table.

BISCUIT WOMAN
 May I join you?

HEARTLESS WOMAN
 No, you may not. And don't you dare come near my table again.

BISCUIT WOMAN
 I'm sorry.

Biscuit Woman goes to the table where Nosebleed Woman and her Best Friend sit.

BISCUIT WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Can I sit with you?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

Of course. You are third in line.
I'm first, then it's my best
friend, then you.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Thank you very much.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

She has no feelings whatsoever.
Feels nothing at all. Just be
careful around her, keep your
distance. Understood?

BISCUIT WOMAN

Okay.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

She's the best hunter in the hotel.
Silent and very fast. She's the
women's record holder. 192
captives.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Who's the men's record holder?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

An assistant university professor.
He's not at the hotel any more. He
left in 2009 after a year here. 282
captives.

David approaches their table.

DAVID

Who's first?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

I am.

They go to dance. Romantic instrumental music plays. There are around ten couples on the dance floor. Limping Man dances with a woman next to them and Limping Man dances towards the back. Next to them, the Hotel Manager dances with her partner. She smiles at him. He smiles back at her, trying to be polite. Nosebleed Woman's nose starts to bleed, staining David's shirt.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I've got blood on you.
But don't worry. There are many
ways to remove blood stains from
clothes quite easily. One is to
wash the item in cold water and
then rub it with sea salt. Another
is to scrub the stains with cotton
wool dipped in ammonia.

(MORE)

NOSEBLEED WOMAN (CONT'D)

The third way is to use water and flour mixed into a paste, like toothpaste, especially if the clothes are delicate or brightly coloured. But never use hot water on blood. Ever.

David doesn't seem to mind much. An alarm goes off. They all run from the ballroom.

25 **INT. ROOM 101 - EVENING**

David quickly enters his room. He takes the tranquilliser gun off the wall and loads it. He leaves the room. The dog looks at him but doesn't react.

26 **INT. HOTEL COACH - EVENING**

David gets into the coach with the others and sits next to Limping Man, who seems very nervous.

LIMPING MAN

I wish I didn't have this limp. I used to be very good at running but not anymore. I'm sure I'll be slower than them.

DAVID

If I were you, I'd think of some tricks that use the element of surprise instead of speed.

LIMPING MAN

You're right. That's what I'll do.

A glimmer of hope lights his face.

27 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

We see male and female residents of the hotel get off the coach armed with their tranquilliser guns. They run off, holding powerful torches, in different directions to hunt LONERS who live in the woods. Some seem really excited. Others look bored. The waiters get off the coach and stand in front of the vehicle. The driver switches off the coach headlights.

28 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

Limping Man struggles to run. He tries to climb some rocks but doesn't manage it.

29 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

Heartless Woman spots a YOUNG LONER WOMAN picking and eating nuts off a tree. The Young Loner Woman notices her and starts to run. Heartless Woman chases after her. After a hard chase she catches her and beats her into unconsciousness, then gets up and shoots her with the tranquilliser gun as well.

30 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

TWO HOTEL GUESTS stand over the UNCONSCIOUS BODY of a loner. They both start to drag the body away in different directions. They then stop and hit each other.

31 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

David spots a LONER MAN in the distance trying to hide. He takes aim with his gun, shoots and misses. The Loner Man notices him and starts to run. David starts shooting over and over again. He misses and runs after him. After a while David stops, out of breath. He realises he's also out of tranquilliser darts. He sits on a rock. He looks at his watch.

32 **EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - EVENING**

The hotel guests are lined up in front of the coach. Some of them have unconscious bodies of loners beside them. The Maid holding a folder goes to each hotel guest in turn and announces to them how many extra days' stay at the hotel they have earned based on the number of loners they have captured. She first shines a light in their faces and then on the bodies beside each guest. She comes first to Limping Man.

MAID

Room 186, one loner, one extra day.
38 days' stay left, plus one, 39.

She then goes to Heartless Woman.

MAID (CONT'D)

Room 290, four loners, four extra days. 154 days' stay left, plus four, 158.

Next is Limping Man.

MAID (CONT'D)

Room 206. The days of your stay remain unchanged.

She then goes to David. He has taken no prisoners.

MAID (CONT'D)
 Room 101. The days of your stay
 remain unchanged.

The Maid moves on.

MAID (CONT'D)
 Room 302?

One of the waiters who escorted the hotel guests to the hunt
 answers her.

WARDEN WAITER
 He never returned. Either he was
 lost in the woods, was captured or...
 he escaped.

MAID
 If he doesn't show up by noon
 tomorrow, arrange for Room 302 to
 be cleaned and prepared.

WARDEN WAITER
 Alright.

33

EXT. BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

David sits alone at a table. He drinks milk. Behind him the
 Hotel Manager, a waiter and the Maid are speaking with
 Lispig Man. We cannot see him. We can only hear him.

HOTEL MANAGER
 Are you the man in Room 186?

LISPING MAN
 I am, yes.

HOTEL MANAGER
 I imagine you know that
 masturbation is not permitted in
 the rooms or in any other area of
 the hotel.

LISPING MAN
 Yes.

HOTEL MANAGER
 And yet it has been brought to my
 attention that you continue to do
 it. [*To the Maid*] Had he ejaculated
 when you found him?

MAID
 We don't know. There was water
 everywhere in the bathroom because
 he'd just had a shower, so we
 couldn't tell.

HOTEL MANAGER

Were you looking at a photograph while you were masturbating?

LISPING MAN

Yes.

HOTEL MANAGER

What did the photograph show?

LISPING MAN

A naked woman on a horse in the country.

HOTEL MANAGER

Do you have it with you?

LISPING MAN

No. It's in my room.

HOTEL MANAGER

If I were in your shoes I wouldn't be ogling the naked woman but the horse. I'm sure that horse used to be a weak and cowardly man, just like you.

Lispington Man does not reply. We then hear screams.

LISPING MAN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

David pours some more milk from the bottle into his glass. His eyes don't move. He doesn't glance back. He looks down at his hand. He stares at it, trying to see if it's trembling. He looks up and then back down at his hand again.

34

INT. LECTURE HALL - EVENING

The Maid and the 50-Year-Old Waiter stand in the middle of the stage. The hotel guests sit and watch. The Hotel Manager talks to the audience with a microphone. Besides her stands her partner, as usual.

HOTEL MANAGER

Good evening, everyone. With the help of this reenactment, we'd like to show you what it's like when someone lives on their own and what it's like when they live with someone else.
One. Man eats alone.

The 50-Year-Old Waiter opens a folding table on stage and places a plate on it. He pretends to eat and then suddenly chokes, falls off his chair and pretends to die.

He then gets up and sits back down on his chair. This time the Maid sits opposite him.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Two. Man eats with woman.

The 50-Year-Old Waiter again pretends to eat and choke but this time the Maid gets up, performs the Heimlich manoeuver on him and he recovers. They then hug.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Three. Woman walks alone.

The Maid walks across the stage. A WAITER-EXTRA stands in the middle of the stage, blocks her path, pulls down his trousers and pretends to rape her.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Four. Woman walks with man.

The 50-Year-Old Waiter and the Maid walk together across the stage and pass in front of the rapist waiter. Nothing happens. The audience applauds.

35

INT. ROOM 101 - MIDDAY

David throws a ball for his dog to fetch. The dog looks very happy. David doesn't praise the dog when it brings the ball back. The phone rings.

DAVID

Hello? Yes, send them up. Thank you.

David goes to the bathroom and looks at himself in the mirror. He washes his face and brushes his teeth in a rush. Someone knocks on the door. David opens the door. An ELDERLY COUPLE stand outside. They are his parents. He is hugged first by his father, then by his mother. His mother then hugs the dog.

DAVID'S MOTHER

Easy now, darling. Look at how he wags his tail when he looks at his father. Where's your father? Go to your father.

The dog doesn't move. His father goes to him and strokes him.

DAVID'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

Look at him. He's wagging his tail. That's what dogs do when they're happy.

They sit on the edge of the bed.

DAVID'S FATHER

This is a very nice room.

DAVID

It's one of their superior rooms.
It has a very nice view. Go to the
window and take a look.

DAVID'S FATHER

It's really a very nice view.

DAVID

Mother, go and take a look too.

DAVID'S MOTHER

Really very nice.

DAVID

Would you like something to drink?
I can call room service and order
anything you like.

DAVID'S MOTHER

I'd like a glass of sparkling
water.

DAVID'S FATHER

The same for me. That's a lovely
idea.

They sit back down. David calls room service and orders the
water.

DAVID'S FATHER (CONT'D)

It's tragic what's happened to you
but I think everything will be
alright in the end. We're both very
optimistic. You have another 26
days. That's three weeks. What am I
talking about, that's more than
three weeks. You should get a
haircut as soon as you can. You're
much more handsome with your hair
short. Your sister sends her
regards. She said she'd visit you
the first chance she gets. She's in
Switzerland with Mark. They're
having a wonderful time. Skiing all
day. Mark didn't know how to ski
but he's doing very well. He
managed to ski down the whole piste
all by himself on Monday. Your
mother told them that they have to
be careful though. Skiing's no
laughing matter. You can easily get
hurt.

His parents drink the sparkling water they ordered, down in one go. They then get up and put on their coats. They say their goodbyes at the door.

DAVID'S FATHER (CONT'D)
We'll come again soon.

DAVID'S MOTHER
We'll come again soon. Give this to your brother. It's sirloin steak.

DAVID
Okay.

David closes the door and continues to play with the dog and the small ball.

36 **INT. BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING**

Limping Man and David sit alone but at adjacent tables and eat their breakfast. Limping Man looks a little sad. David tries to cheer him up.

DAVID
New guests arrived yesterday.

LIMPING MAN
Yes, I saw that.

DAVID
I think I saw a woman with a limp.

LIMPING MAN
It's only a sprained ankle. She'll be walking normally again in a few days. I asked her.

DAVID
That's a shame.

Limping Man looks back down at his plate and plays with some butter and his knife. David tries to find something to say but can't. They sit silently. The alarm bell goes off. They all get up and leave the room.

37 **INT. HOTEL COACH - MORNING**

David sits in a seat and looks out the window.

FEMALE V.O.
One day he sat next to the woman with the biscuits on the coach. He gazed out the window, not looking at anything in particular, just trying to avoid talking to her.

Biscuit Woman sits beside him.

BISCUIT WOMAN

How's Bob?

DAVID

He's fine.

David tries to be polite but the pretence is obvious. Although she bores him, he feels sorry for her for some reason.

BISCUIT WOMAN

I'd give anything to go for a walk with you and Bob one afternoon.

DAVID

The dog's not allowed out of the room, I'm afraid.

FEMALE V.O.

There are some excuses that no-one can argue with, he thought. Some excuses are without doubt better than others. And that was a really good one.

BISCUIT WOMAN

These biscuits are for Bob. I want you to give them to him whenever you want to reward him for something and tell him they're from me.

DAVID

Thank you.

He looks out the window again. She doesn't give up though.

BISCUIT WOMAN

Can I come to your room sometime for a chat? I could give you a blow job or you could fuck me. I always swallow after fellatio and I have absolutely no problem with anal sex, if that's your thing. My ex-husband always used to say I had the most beautiful thighs he'd ever seen in his life but let's not talk about him. I'm in Room 180. My telephone extension number is 180. I hope I catch some loners today because I didn't catch any the last few times. I hope you catch lots too.

DAVID

Thank you very much.

BISCUIT WOMAN

If I don't find a suitable partner soon I'm going to kill myself by jumping from one of the room balconies. I want you to know that. My room is on the first floor. Room numbers that start with a "1" are on the first floor, those starting with a "2" are on the second floor and so on. So 140 is on the first floor and 308 is on the third floor and 190 is also on the first floor. So I'll have to jump from some room that's high up. 380, for example, or 420, that would be even better.

FEMALE V.O.

When she stopped talking, he stared at her blankly, not knowing what to say. He then opened the window, looked out at the woods and thought once more about how good his excuse had been.

38

EXT. THE WOODS - MIDDAY

Lisping Man walks carefully through the woods. In the background we see a few hotel residents firing their tranquilliser guns and some loners running away. The animals in the woods do not react, as if they are used to the procedure, as if it is something that happens often and is not terribly interesting. On the other hand, something really exciting happens to Lisping Man. He notices a YOUNG LONER WOMAN hiding behind a tree. He stealthily approaches her and the woman, realising there's no escape, starts pleading with him to let her go. The young woman has a lisp. Lisping man notices it as soon as she starts speaking. His eyes sparkle.

LISPING YOUNG WOMAN

Please don't shoot me. I'll give you this rabbit. It'll make a great supper.

Lisping Man shoots her. He smiles and leans over her unconscious body, pushing her hair away from her face so that he can take a better look at her.

39

INT. COACH - MIDDAY

David and Lisping Man sit together. We hear the cries of a hotel guest injured during the hunt throughout their conversation.

DAVID

If you two are so well suited, I'm sure they'll make an exception.

LISPING MAN

I hope so. It's not just that she can't pronounce her s's, she's also blonde. Her hair is the exact same colour as mine. We'd make a perfect couple.

DAVID

If you're so well suited, I'm sure they'll make an exception.

40

INT. INDOOR SHOOTING RANGE - MORNING

Hotel guests are shooting at targets, so the room is really noisy. David, Limping Man and Lispering Man sit on a bench waiting their turn to shoot at a training target with a gun. Lispering Man looks excited. Limping Man does not look at Lispering Man, but is listening to what he says. David seems more involved in the conversation.

LISPING MAN

I spoke with the Hotel Manager and she said that no one should get involved with a loner. She said it's dangerous and suggested that if I really love her that much, the right thing to do is to keep her in my room as a pet. She suggested I turn her into a parrot and I agreed. The only problem is I can't open the windows in my room anymore, or when I open them I can only open them a little. Yesterday she flew around the room and around the ceiling light and hit against the walls and windows, and when I turned the light off she kept on flying for a little bit and then stopped. I guess she fell asleep. Have you thought what animal you want to be if you don't make it?

DAVID

A lobster.

Lispering Man takes a plastic bag out of his jacket pocket. Inside are various coloured feathers he has plucked from the bird. His eyes are full of joy as he opens the bag and shows the feathers to David and Limping Man.

LISPING MAN

It's such a beautiful parrot. It has green, blue, yellow and red feathers. Take a look.

Limping Man stands up and doesn't even bother to look at the contents of the bag. He puts his hands into his trouser pockets and his face turns very serious.

LISPING MAN (CONT'D)

If I don't make it, I'm going to become a parrot. We'll live together. That's for sure. Why don't you become parrots too? Then we'll all be together.

LIMPING MAN

You're a complete idiot, picking one of the few animals that can talk when you have a speech impediment. You'll lisp, even as an animal. *[To David]* As for you, they'll catch you and throw you into a pot of boiling water until you die and then they'll crack open your claws with a tool like pliers and they'll suck out what little flesh you have with their mouths. You're pathetic, both of you. I'm not going to be turned into some animal. I'll come visit you though with my partner when we're walking together in some park or when we're swimming in the sea or when we're on one of our trips.

Lisping Man punches him in the stomach. Limping Man has his hands into his pockets, and so doesn't have time to react. David separates them. The waiters do not interfere, they just watch the fight. As soon as David manages to calm them down, it's his turn to take a shot at the range.

TRAINER WAITER

Room 101, please.

David goes and stands beside the waiter. The waiter hands him the gun.

TRAINER WAITER (CONT'D)

It's no coincidence that the targets are always shaped like a single person and not a couple. Kill the loner. Shoot him through the heart.

41 **INT. ROOM 101 - MORNING**

There's a knock on the door and the Maid enters. She makes the bed. David watches her every move. He seems on edge. He keeps out of her way while she does what she has to do.

MAID
How many darts did you use
yesterday?

DAVID
Twelve.

The Maid leaves twelve tranquilliser darts on the bedside table. She notes something down in a folder.

MAID
Please take off your trousers and
sit on the bed.

DAVID
Can we not do this today? It's
awful.

MAID
I know. But I'm afraid we have to
do it. And you have no idea how
much it helps you psychologically
in your search for a partner.

David takes off his trousers and sits on the edge of the bed. The Maid sits in his lap and jiggles about. She reaches down to grab his cock every so often. David looks like he is enjoying it against his will. He closes his eyes and lays back. Suddenly she gets up.

MAID (CONT'D)
Today you became erect quicker than
on other days. That's good. Have a
nice day.

DAVID
Please, just a little bit longer.

The Maid takes her trolley and leaves. David gets up and runs after the maid. He's pathetic and desperate.

DAVID (CONT'D)
That's awful. Just awful.

42 **INT. HOTEL POOL - MORNING**

Nosebleed Woman is swimming. Limping Man limps up to the pool's edge and dives into the water. He swims up to her. David lies on a lounge by the pool and watches them chat.

LIMPING MAN
Hello.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN
Hello.

LIMPING MAN

Do you like to swim breast stroke, front crawl, butterfly or back stroke?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

I like all the strokes equally. I perhaps like back stroke a little less because I can't see where I'm going. I'm always afraid I'm going to hit a rock or bump into someone.

LIMPING MAN

You're absolutely right. You know, I love breast stroke. No, really, my friends often tease me and say, "Stop swimming breast stroke all the time!" and then they laugh.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

Breast stroke is great. Excellent exercise for the back.

Nosebleed Woman turns her head away to the left. When Limping Man is certain she can't see him, he purposely knocks his head on the side of the pool and his nose starts to bleed. He acts as if nothing has happened.

LIMPING MAN

When swimming breast stroke, men shouldn't wear swim shorts as it really limits movement in the buttocks. But you knew that, didn't you?

He shows her his breast stroke kick.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

I think your nose is bleeding.

LIMPING MAN

Really? Oh no, not again. This happens to me all the time. It's very, very annoying.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

I know. I have a nosebleed problem too.

43

INT. ROOM 101 - EVENING

David is sleeping. The dog is sleeping too. There's a knock at the door. David gets up and answers it. Limping Man stands outside.

DAVID

What's the matter?

LIMPING MAN
I want to talk to you.

DAVID
Have a seat.

LIMPING MAN
I came to say goodbye.

DAVID
I saw what you did. It must have hurt.

The man bangs his nose against the wall and it bleeds.

LIMPING MAN
I'm going to ask you a question and I want you to answer me honestly. What's worse, to die of cold and hunger in the woods, to become an animal that will be killed and eaten by some bigger animal, or to have a nosebleed from time to time?

DAVID
To become an animal that will be killed and eaten by some bigger animal.

LIMPING MAN
Exactly.

DAVID
She doesn't suspect that you're lying?

LIMPING MAN
No.

Limping Man hugs David. He stains his shirt with blood.

LIMPING MAN (CONT'D)
Don't worry about your shirt. Rub it with salt or scrub it with ammonia and it'll come out right away but whatever you do, don't use hot water. Goodnight.

44 **INT. HOTEL RECEPTION - NIGHT**

All the residents are dressed up - black tie and gowns. This is obviously a special occasion. The Hotel Manager is presenting the new couple: Limping Man and Nosebleed Woman. They are now formally together, a confirmed couple.

Their life together will begin with everyone's blessing. It's like an instant wedding, a non-ritual ceremony.

HOTEL MANAGER

I'm very happy because we have a new couple. They met just two days ago but they are very much in love and perfectly suited. They both have the same problem with their noses. They bleed quite suddenly.

The rest of the hotel guests clap. Nosebleed Woman's Best Friend cries. She realises she is losing her best friend forever and feels abandoned. David hesitates at first, but after a while he claps too. But he doesn't smile, and seems worried. A WAITER holds a velvet cushion with tassels, with a room key on it. The Hotel Manager hands the couple the room key.

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

Tomorrow they will be transferred to a double room with a larger wardrobe and a larger bathroom. They will be allowed to use the group sports facilities and to eat together in the restaurant. They will stay in a double room for two weeks and then their final test awaits. The pier.

The rest of the guests clap once more. Limping Man takes the microphone. He speaks loudly, with excitement and joy.

LIMPING MAN

I'm very happy.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

Me too.

HOTEL MANAGER

What are your thoughts on paedophilia?

LIMPING MAN

I'm against it.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

I'm against it.

HOTEL MANAGER

Good. Do either of you have a serious illness that could prove fatal within the next five years?

LIMPING MAN

No.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

No.

HOTEL MANAGER

Very good. The course of your relationship will be monitored closely by our staff and by me personally. If we notice any problems, any fighting or tension between you which you cannot resolve yourselves for whatever reason, you will be assigned children. That usually helps. A lot.

The couple leaves the room, waving the audience goodbye.

45

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

David, Nosebleed Woman, her Best Friend and Limping Man are looking at some children locked behind some railings in a large enclosure. They all wear identical clothes, tracksuits. Most of them are playing. One of the children comes up to them.

CHILD

Hello. My parents split up two years ago. They are both animals now. I'm ten years old. I'm very good at algebra and even better at geometry. If you choose me, I'm 100% sure you won't be disappointed. I'm seriously thinking of going to study at the university. Come closer.

Limping Man goes closer. The child strokes Limping Man's cheek and hair.

CHILD (CONT'D)

I love you so much, daddy. Don't be sad, daddy, everything will be fine, you'll see. I love you so much. You're so strong, stronger than any of my classmates' dads. Here you are, daddy, here's that cold beer you asked for.

David, Nosebleed Woman, her Best Friend and Limping Man leave. The child can be heard from afar.

CHILD (CONT'D)

Look, daddy, I can ride my bike with no hands. If you don't pick me I hope you die alone and that they find your body days after you die.

DAVID

I'm sure you won't need a child.
You'll get on just fine.

46

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

Nosebleed Woman's Best Friend and David are walking back to their rooms, side by side. David looks at her, notices her figure, the way she walks, her hands, her necklace, her hair. David's voice grows softer. His tone changes.

DAVID

You have really nice hair.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

I know. Look.

Nosebleed Woman's Best Friend flicks her head to show David how smoothly her hair moves.

DAVID

How do you like mine?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

Well, I think you have quite dry hair. It's also quite obvious you'll be bald in a few years.

DAVID

There are ways that you can get your hair back. You can get hair transplants nowadays.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

They are rarely successful. You can always tell when someone has had a hair transplant. Nice hair is not something you can get, it's something you're born with. And something that needs lifelong care.

Her strictness on the hair issue ends their conversation and David can't muster the courage to have another try. Disappointed, he now walks behind her and not next to her.

47

INT. HOTEL BAR - MORNING

The Hotel Manager, Nosebleed Woman and her Best Friend sit at a table. The Best Friend is crying. Nosebleed Woman is not.

HOTEL MANAGER

Today is your last day. As is customary, you can choose how you would like to spend your last night.

(MORE)

HOTEL MANAGER (CONT'D)

What I always say in these situations is that it would be wise to choose something you cannot do as an animal, like read a work of classic literature or sing a song you really like. It would be silly if you chose, for example, a walk in the grounds or to have sexual intercourse with someone because these are things you can also do as an animal. But first, your best friend would like to read something she wrote for you that is really very touching.

Nosebleed Woman unfolds a sheet of paper.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

We always sat together at school and whenever I had a problem I talked to you about it because you always gave the best advice. When we didn't manage to find dance partners at the school prom, the fact that we were together at that difficult moment gave me strength. I'm sorry things have come to this. I'm sure that if you had a few more days you'd find someone, just like I did, because you're an admirable person and you have very beautiful hair and very nice breasts. I was always jealous of your hair, you know that. You were, are, and always will be my best friend and I'll think of you often and I'll always wear those silver earrings you gave me for my birthday. I'll miss you and however many new girlfriends I make in a few days when I move back into town, I don't think I'll find another as true or as beautiful as you.

Nosebleed Woman's Best Friend gets up and slaps her. The Hotel Manager separates them. Nosebleed Woman's nose is bleeding from the blows.

NOSEBLEED WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

I'd like to watch the film "Stand By Me" with River Phoenix, Kiefer Sutherland and Richard Dreyfuss. Alone.

48 **INT. ROOM 101 - DAY**

David looks out of his room window. The Maid holds a pony by its reins. She opens the gate to the hotel grounds and sets the pony free. Nosebleed Woman and Limping Man hug in the hotel entrance and wave goodbye to the pony. The pony doesn't run off. It just stands there, swishing its beautiful tail. The room phone rings. The display reads 180. He doesn't pick up.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Room 101. Please leave a message
after the tone.

49 **EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY**

David holds a bag of golf clubs and watches a couple playing basketball one on one in the court from behind the wire fence. They're having fun, they yell and kiss. David is fixated by them.

FEMALE V.O.

When I was at the hotel, I never
much left my room. Hardly ever. I
went there around four years ago.
From the very first day I knew
there was no one there who
interested me. I used to listen to
a lot of French music back then,
and no one else listened to French
music there. I stayed for 19 days.
I let a waiter fuck me in order to
help me escape. After he'd fucked
me he said that he wouldn't let me
go and that I'd better just go back
to my room and quick. I killed him
and left. I also killed a resident
who tried to stop me leaving
because he said he liked me.

50 **EXT. HOTEL GROUNDS - DAY**

David heads back towards his room carrying golf equipment. He sees a crowd of people. Biscuit Woman lies on the ground, covered in blood. She isn't dead and is screaming in pain. David runs towards the crowd. He sees the injured woman lying on the ground and shuts his eyes. He turns away as he can't stand to see her suffer. He spots Heartless Woman and instantly changes his facial expression. He tries hard to look calm and indifferent.

DAVID

What happened?

HEARTLESS WOMAN

She jumped from the balcony of Room 180.

DAVID

I hope she dies right away. On second thought, I hope she suffers quite a bit before she dies. I just hope her pathetic screams can't be heard from my room because I'm thinking about having a lie down and I need peace and quiet. I was playing golf and I'm quite tired and the last thing I need is a women dying slowly and loudly.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

I can't hear you with all this screaming. We'll talk some other time when it's quieter. Bye.

Heartless Woman leaves. David turns and watches her leave. TWO WAITERS arrive with a stretcher.

51 **INT. ROOM 101 - AFTERNOON**

David plays the message Biscuit Woman left on his answering machine before she committed suicide. The incident has obviously upset him. There's a hint of regret in his face. The dog stands beside him, as if listening to the message too.

BISCUIT WOMAN (MESSAGE ON ANSWERING MACHINE)

Hello. You're probably in the bathroom, that's why you can't hear the phone ring. There's nothing better than a cold shower in the morning.

(pause)

I'll call again a little later when you've finished your shower so we can chat.

He pushes play to hear it again. The dog wanders off.

52 **INT. BALLROOM - EVENING**

Heartless Woman sits alone at a table. David goes up to her. He now seems confident.

DAVID

May I join you?

Heartless Woman looks at him and doesn't answer right away.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

I don't care. Sit if you like.

Heartless Woman looks at him. They don't talk, they just watch the other couples dancing on the dance floor. He takes his jacket off and stirs the ice cubes in his glass with his index finger. She takes a cherry from a bowl and pops it in her mouth. She chokes. Her face turns red. She slumps over the table and her body jolts about in the chair. David does not react. After a while she stops her charade.

HEARTLESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

I think we're a match.

DAVID

Yes, I think so too. Would you like for us to live as a couple from now on?

HEARTLESS WOMAN

Yes. We'll inform the reception desk in the morning.

DAVID

Great.

53

INT. DOUBLE ROOM 202 - EVENING

David, Heartless Woman and the dog enter the room. This room isn't much bigger than the old one but there is a double bed and two bathrobes in the closet. Heartless Woman gives the dog a plate with water. The dog laps up the water. David looks happy. He checks the bed and the sheets, he takes his clothes off and sits on the chair.

DAVID

Do you normally sleep on the left or the right side of the bed?

HEARTLESS WOMAN

The left. You?

DAVID

The right. Perfect.

They sit down on their respective sides of the bed. David takes off his trousers. Heartless Woman sits on his lap and jiggles about, just like the Maid used to do. She reaches down to grab his cock every so often. Eventually they fuck. David is behind her. During intercourse he whispers "mmm" and Heartless Woman stops and turns to look at him.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

What was that sound? Did you say something?

DAVID

No.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

Do you mind if we fuck in a position where I can see your face?

DAVID

Sure.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

Turn the light on please, so I can see you better.

David turns the light on and they carry on having sex, during which he tries desperately not to grimace or show signs of overexcitement. She looks him straight in the eye to see if he makes any facial expressions. During his orgasm, David tries hard to remain cold. This is the most difficult part of the process. His face is sweaty, his eyes wide open. Heartless Woman, on the other hand, is naturally expressionless. As soon as they are done, they get dressed.

DAVID

Should I turn off the light or would you like to read?

HEARTLESS WOMAN

I'd like to read. Does the light bother you?

DAVID

No. I'm not bothered by light or noise. I'm a deep sleeper.

Heartless Woman reads. David gets under the covers and turns his back to her. He then turns again and he puts his arm around her waist. He closes his eyes and sleeps. Heartless Woman eyes him suspiciously.

54

EXT. HOTEL GARDENS - MORNING

David, Heartless Woman and the dog are out for a walk. The couple walk hand in hand. They meet Limping Man, who is out walking with Nosebleed Woman and a LITTLE GIRL.

LIMPING MAN

Good morning.

DAVID

Good morning.

LIMPING MAN

Congratulations.

DAVID

Thank you.

LIMPING MAN

This is our daughter. Her name is Elizabeth. Elizabeth, give the nice man a kiss. He's a friend of mine.

The girl goes up to David. He does not bend down to be kissed.

DAVID

The last thing I want right now is a kiss from a silly little girl.

They stand there a little, motionless and then David kicks the child on her shin. She bursts into tears and Nosebleed Woman takes her into her arms.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Elizabeth. You should thank me, now you'll have a limp and be more like your father.

David and Heartless Woman leave with the dog.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

You should have punched her in the face too and bloodied her nose and then said, "Don't cry, Elizabeth. You should thank me, now your nose is bloody and you'll be even more like your father."

DAVID

You're right. Why didn't I think of that.

55 INT. DOUBLE ROOM 202 - DAY

David wakes up. Heartless Woman stands over him in a quite a threatening way.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

Good morning.

DAVID

Good morning.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

I killed your brother. I left him to die very slowly. He may not be dead yet, even as we speak. I was kicking him for ages.

She shows him her leg. Her shoe is covered in blood. David tries very hard not to show his true feelings - he's devastated but pretends that he's indifferent to what's happened.

DAVID

It doesn't matter.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

He whined a little. A strange kind of bark. Something like this. Woof ow-woof. It must've been from the pain. You didn't hear anything?

DAVID

No.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

You really are a deep sleeper. Would you like some coffee?

DAVID

I'd love some.

David goes to the bathroom.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

Right. I can't wait to hear the story you promised to tell me last night, about that student of yours at the university and his awful final project.

DAVID

It's really a very funny story. His name was Ryess. R-Y-E-S-S. Ryess.

David splashes water on his face and then finally bursts into tears. Heartless Woman enters the bathroom and slaps him.

DAVID (CONT'D)

These aren't tears. It's just water.

HEARTLESS WOMAN

I knew you were lying. I can't understand why you did it when you know as well as anyone that a relationship cannot be built on a lie. We're going to the Hotel Manager right now and you'll get the punishment you deserve.

DAVID

What's the punishment for this?

HEARTLESS WOMAN

They turn you into the animal no one wants to be. You know which one.

DAVID

Yes. I know.

56 **INT. HOTEL CORRIDORS - EVENING**

David and Heartless Woman are walking around to find the Hotel Manager. She holds him by the hair. The pain is visible on his face. David suddenly kicks her in the stomach and gets away. He takes the lift. She runs up the stairs.

57 **INT. HOTEL FIRST-FLOOR CORRIDOR - EVENING**

Heartless Woman reaches the first-floor corridor and tries each door one by one. She sees a door slightly ajar. She pushes it open and enters. She sees a WOMAN giving a WAITER a blow job. A second waiter, the 30-year-old waiter, is fucking her while a third, the 50-year-old waiter, sits watching in a chair and wanks off.

58 **INT. HOTEL STAIRS - EVENING**

Heartless Woman exits the room, walks down the corridor and goes up to the second floor. She is absolutely cool, she doesn't look angry or nervous, just determined.

59 **INT. HOTEL SECOND-FLOOR CORRIDOR - EVENING**

Heartless Woman sees the Maid in the middle of the corridor holding a tray with a glass of Campari and soda.

MAID

I saw a man running back that way.
He looked frantic.

As soon as Heartless Woman turns back, David emerges from one of the rooms with a tranquilliser gun and shoots her. The Maid leaves the glass of Campari next to Campari Man, who is also unconscious inside the room, and then helps David lift Heartless Woman.

FEMALE V.O.

At first he wanted to kill her in some horrible and painful way, like the death she had inflicted on his brother. He thought about kicking her in the stomach over and over again and then stabbing her in the same spot, in the stomach. But then he thought that there wouldn't be much point because she was already unconscious and so she wouldn't feel any pain from the kicks or the knife.

David carefully carries Heartless Woman through the hotel with the help of the Maid. They meet no one in the corridors. He takes her to the room where they transform people into animals. The Maid unlocks the door.

60 **INT. ANIMAL TRANSFORMATION ROOM - EVENING**

The Maid asks David to shoot her with the tranquilliser gun too, so that no one will suspect her of helping him. He shoots her and she falls down unconscious. David shuts the door behind him.

FEMALE V.O.

And so he decided to turn her into an animal. A hotel maid helped him and he never understood why she did it. I asked him many times what sort of animal he turned her into, but he always gave the same answer. "That's none of your concern". That night he left the hotel, once and for all.

61 **INT. ROOM 101 - EVENING**

The Hotel Manager runs to the couple's room with two waiters. She sees the dead dog. She signals to the waiters to set off the alarm. "You Give Love A Bad Name" by Bon Jovi plays loudly throughout the building.

FEMALE V.O.

He began to run without knowing where he was headed but he was headed towards us. This was the start of his new life and back then, he didn't know how much it hurts to be alone, how much it hurts when you cannot reach to rub tiger balm on your upper back and you are constantly in pain.

62 **INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - EVENING**

David cautiously disappears down the end of the corridor.

III. THE WOODS NEAR THE HOTEL63 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

David walks very quickly, almost at a jog, as if he is too tired to run but too scared to walk. He stops beside a river. He washes his face and drinks some water. He steams up his glasses with his breath and rubs them clean with his t-shirt. He continues to walk quickly. He gets tired. The woods are quiet and the only thing you can hear is the birds and the sound of water. Everything is still and there are no animals around that he can actually see. He lies down on the ground but doesn't close his eyes.

He just rests but it's obvious that he isn't relaxed at all. He used to visit these woods as a hunter but now he is the prey.

64

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

David washes his hair in the river with little bottles of shampoo he stole from the hotel. Suddenly, he hears a noise. A LONER MAN is swimming. David goes towards him.

DAVID

Hello.

LONER SWIMMER

Don't shoot. I can tell you where the others are hiding. What would you prefer, one extra day or a whole extra week, maybe even two weeks?

DAVID

I'm alone. I just escaped from the hotel.

LONER SWIMMER

Did your time run out or did you lie and get caught?

DAVID

My time ran out.

LONER SWIMMER

Okay. I got away about a year ago. Don't worry. There's nothing to be afraid of now. So long as they don't catch you.

65

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

Loner Swimmer takes David to the LONER LEADER, a woman of around 30. She and the rest of the LONERS wear the same waterproof capes and carry backpacks with their personal belongings. David seems a little bit lost as he tries to adapt to the current situation which he wasn't prepared for. He looks around amazed at all these loners who form this autonomous community in the forest.

LONER SWIMMER

I found him out in the woods. He escaped from the hotel. He didn't lie, his time ran out.

LONER LEADER

Are you a doctor, by any chance?

DAVID

No.

LONER LEADER

That's a pity, we need a doctor. We had one but they caught him a couple of months ago.

DAVID

I'm an architect.

LONER LEADER

That's okay. Are you on any medication these days we should know of?

DAVID

Well, not really. I have pain in my upper back and I often put some heat rub cream on it, but that's all. Nothing important, really.

LONER LEADER

Alright. So, welcome. You can stay with us for as long as you like. You can be a loner until the day you die, there's no time limit.

DAVID

Thank you very much.

David smiles. Loner Leader gives him an awkward hug.

LONER LEADER

By the way, any romantic or sexual relations between loners are not permitted and any such acts are punished. Is that clear?

DAVID

Can I have a conversation with someone?

LONER LEADER

Of course you can, so long as there is no touching or flirting or anything like that. That applies at dance nights too. We all dance by ourselves, that's why we only play electronic music. We have dance nights every now and then.

DAVID

That's nice.

66

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

Loner Swimmer, aided by a BANDAGED LONER with bloodied bandages over his mouth, gives David a waterproof cape, a portable CD player, a pocket-sized game of solitaire, the book "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck and a knife. David realizes that he's going to be a proper member of this group. As these changes are taking place David acts in a mechanical way, without really thinking where all this will lead him. He looks at Bandaged Loner. There's fresh blood on his bandages.

DAVID

What's wrong with your mouth?

LONER SWIMMER

He can't talk. He was given the Red Kiss.

DAVID

What's the Red Kiss?

LONER SWIMMER

We slashed his lips with a razor and the lips of another loner and we forced them to kiss each other. That was a few days ago now but the cuts were deep and they're still in pain. They were flirting, you know. Check if the portable CD player works properly otherwise I'll have to find you some new batteries.

Davis presses play on the CD player. Music plays. He pushes the stop button.

DAVID

It works just fine.

67

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

David takes off his t-shirt and rubs Tiger Balm cream onto his upper back, as far as he can reach. He cannot reach most of his upper back properly.

68

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

Loner Leader watches a pig eating some weeds. She creeps up without making a sound and slips a lead around its neck. They start walking in the woods. Wherever the animal stops, the leader digs into the ground with her hands as if looking for something. She then gets up, wipes the soil off her hands and continues walking the pig.

69

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

The loners stand in rows and exercise. Loner Leader checks their technique, corrects them whenever necessary, and yells at the lazy ones.

FEMALE V.O.

That was the first time I saw him. He was exercising three rows behind me but because I'm shortsighted, I couldn't see him clearly. In any case, he seemed quite presentable.

We see a woman, whom we'll soon get to know as SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN, exercising and looking at David. David does what the others do, a little confused but determined at the same time.

FEMALE V.O. (CONT'D)

The next day, in town, I found out that he was shortsighted too, just like me and I knew for sure that he liked me. That night, in my sleep, I dreamt that we lived in a big house together in the town with a large, well-lit kitchen and I was wearing dark blue trousers and a tight cream blouse and he took my clothes off and fucked me up the arse and as he was fucking me a thug came into the kitchen and took the steak knives from the second drawer and attacked us, stabbing the knives into our bellies one by one. I woke up terrified.

The loners then form a line and start jogging through the woods. A LONER gets caught in a foothold trap. He screams. The others stop but don't help him. They talk amongst themselves and give him advice on how to free himself. David watches. Shortsighted Woman stands behind him.

LONER LEADER

Try harder. Pull the trap open with your hands. Positive thinking is everything at times like this. Don't give up. You know, you should've been more careful. Try harder. Or they'll find you and you'll be turned into an animal. A weak one.

The other loners laugh.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

We must get a move on now. It's really too dangerous to stay here. The hotel guests could be here any minute.

(MORE)

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

If you manage to free yourself, run as fast as you can and come find us. If you manage to free yourself but think that you'll die from the bleeding, go straight to your grave. Have you dug your own grave?

TRAPPED LONER

Yes.

LONER LEADER

Very good. That's enough for now. Let's split up and spread out. We'll rendezvous tonight at meeting point four.

70

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

David hides and hears the sound of people running and guns firing. He tries to cover himself with leaves, moving slowly and quietly, and smears mud on his face. Silly little things out of inexperience and despair. Despite his efforts, he is quickly discovered by LISPING MAN, who takes aim at David with his tranquilliser gun. David puts his hands up.

LISPING MAN

What you did to that woman was dreadful. I can't understand why you would turn her into a dog and then kick her to death.

DAVID

She killed my brother. I would have done the same thing if she'd killed you. You're like a brother to me. You're my best friend in the whole world.

LISPING MAN

I don't believe I'm your best friend in the whole world. You used to spend a lot more time with the man with the limp.

DAVID

That doesn't matter. We didn't speak much but we both knew that in a pinch we'd be at each other's side. Did the man with the limp make it?

David is not very convincing. But LISPING MAN mellows.

LISPING MAN

They're getting ready for the pier. It all begins next week.

(MORE)

LISPING MAN (CONT'D)

Everyone says they're going to make it as they're very well suited and the child will help them get past the fighting. What time do you get up in the morning?

DAVID

Whenever we like. And we eat whatever we like.

LISPING MAN

You're not thinking of coming back? You know, if you told the Hotel Manager about your brother she'd probably forgive you.

DAVID

No. It's really nice being on your own. There's no one tying you down. You listen to music whenever you like, go for walks whenever you like, have a chat whenever you like. I don't miss companionship at all. I only miss you because you were my one true friend. Are you going to shoot me?

LISPING MAN

I'm afraid I have to. I only have two days left.

David becomes aggressive all of a sudden.

DAVID

What did you say? I can't understand you, the way you speak.

LISPING MAN

I'm going to shoot you. I only have two days left and I need more time.

DAVID

You really believe another day will make a difference? Have you seen how ugly you are? You haven't got a chance. If I were a woman, I'd...

Lisping Man prepares to shoot him. Shortsighted Woman jumps out from behind a bush and stabs a knife into Lisping Man's leg, then David grabs Lisping Man's tranquilliser gun and shoots him.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Thank you.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Don't tell anyone I helped you. If you want to repay me, there is a way. If you kill a rabbit, bring it to me to eat. Do you promise?

DAVID

Yes.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Bye.

Shortsighted Woman leaves. David stands still and watches her walk off through the trees until she disappears. As soon as he realizes what has just happened he searches through the still-unconscious Lispering Man's pockets. He finds some bird feathers, which he throws away. He strips off Lispering Man's clothes and takes them with him, along with his gun and shoes.

71 **EXT. A CLEARING IN THE WOODS - MORNING**

The waiter-driver and the Maid, who joined him for the journey, sit outside the coach. The Maid is the one who helped David escape. She picks up a bag and slings it over her back.

MAID

I'm going to go hunting for truffles. They're delicious and quite rare. A kilo can fetch up to 2,000 pounds.

DRIVER WAITER

You're going to need a pig. They're impossible to find, otherwise.

MAID

I know.

DRIVER WAITER

Don't be long. We have to take them back in 50 minutes.

MAID

Okay.

72 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

The Maid walks and stops under a tree. She looks left and right, as if she's waiting for someone. She then looks at her watch. Loner Leader appears. She kisses the Maid's hand.

MAID

Good morning.

LONER LEADER

Morning. Did you bring the stuff I asked for?

MAID

The gun is in the bag, as is the key to the small door. The numbers of the double rooms are in this blue folder. Try not to lose the key, I have to put it back where I found it. I suggest Saturday because after the dance everyone is quite tired and many of the staff are off work on weekends.

LONER LEADER

What about the shampoo?

MAID

I forgot it. I'll bring you two bottles next time.

LONER LEADER

You're terrific, you know that?

MAID

I don't know how much longer I can take living in that horrible house with that fat dentist. He's always asking whether I've flossed and forces me to brush my teeth after every meal, however small. The other day he kissed me on the cheek. When all this is over I'm going to kill him in his dentist's chair. I'm going to shove the drill into his belly.

The Maid sits on a rock and covers her face with her hands. It looks like she's crying, but she's not.

LONER LEADER

It'll all be over soon. Be patient and don't forget to take your birth-control pills. I'll say it again, it's terrific what you're doing.

Loner Leader hugs the Maid.

73

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

Loners sit around the woods and rest after the hunt. Loner Swimmer eats fruit, Shortsighted Woman listens to music on her headphones, Bandaged Loner reads a book. Beside him sits a female loner who also has bandages on her mouth - she's probably the other loner punished with the Red Kiss torture. David sits next to Loner Leader.

She rubs a hydrating cream onto her hands and face. She offers some to David but he declines with a shake of his head.

LONER LEADER

Tomorrow we're going into town. We're going to buy some new books as some people have been complaining that they've read the same book two or three times over. Also, someone lost the second volume of "Crime and Punishment" during a chase and lots of people have read the first part and are waiting to see what happened next. You can come, if you like.

DAVID

I'll come.

LONER LEADER

Excellent. Then you should clean up. We must look like very decent, presentable couples tomorrow. Make sure you cut your nails and comb your hair.

DAVID

Should I put some aftershave on?

LONER LEADER

No, that won't be necessary.

74

EXT. THE WOODS, TREE HOLLOW - EVENING

Loner Leader pulls a plastic bag out of a tree hollow and takes some "civilian" clothes from inside. She hands David a suit.

LONER LEADER

Hope it fits.

DAVID

Thank you.

The suit actually fits.

75

EXT. THE TOWN - MORNING

A typical urban environment. Couples, cars, buses, kids, shops. David has his arm around Shortsighted Woman and Loner Leader has her arm around Loner Swimmer. They're dressed like office workers. They walk through the town and enter a shopping centre. They seem happy. They stare at the shop windows, then browse random things like nail polish, paint brushes, cotton sheets and wooden frames.

76 **INT. SHOP - MORNING**

They buy knives, a pair of trainers, bandages, a wrist watch and small individual cartons of orange juice.

77 **EXT. SHOP - MORNING**

David waits for the others. Next to him are three police officers and a woman on her knees. The head officer talks into a mobile CB Radio. The other is checking the woman's nails and asks her to show him the soles of her shoes.

POLICE OFFICER

Woman. Blonde. Approximately 30-35 years old. Certificate expired two months ago.

WOMAN ARRESTED

My husband is a lawyer. You're all going to be sued.

The police officer with the CB looks to the officer who was been checking the woman and gives him a nod.

POLICE OFFICER

No dirt under her nails or mud on her shoes. 9 Belsize Road.

One of the police officers approaches David.

POLICE OFFICER 2

Good morning, sir.

DAVID

Good morning, officer.

David tries to remain calm. Shortsighted Woman comes out of the store and hugs David.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I'm sorry, darling. They had such a huge variety of knives. I bought this one, it's ideal for meat.

DAVID

That's wonderful, dear. Excuse me a moment. How can I help you, officer?

Shortsighted Woman kisses him on the cheek.

POLICE OFFICER 2

Do you know this woman, by any chance?

DAVID
Actually I've never seen her
before.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Thank you, sir. You have a nice
day.

DAVID
You're welcome, officer.

The officer leaves. Shortsighted Woman hugs David again with
the knife in her hands.

78

EXT. THE TOWN - MORNING

Out on the street again. David holds Shortsighted Woman's
hand. They don't look at each other, but if anyone took a
look at them they'd swear they were a real couple.

DAVID
If I'm walking too slowly just say
and I'll up my pace.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
This pace is fine. Maybe don't
squeeze my hand so tight, my palm's
getting a little sweaty.

DAVID
Better?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
Yes, much better.

DAVID
Are you planning on buying anything
for yourself in town?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
Yes, contact lens solution and a
Parker Rollerball.

DAVID
I didn't know you were
shortsighted. I'm shortsighted too.

They stop talking knowingly, as if there's nothing more to be
said.

79

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The four loners stand outside the front door of a house.
Loner Leader rings the doorbell. An elderly gentleman opens
the door.

LONER LEADER

Dad?

The gentleman hugs her.

80

EXT. HOUSE GARDEN - DAY

Loner Leader talks to a dog near a kennel, but we can't hear what's being said. The rest sit around a large table and drink orange squash. The couples are very tender with each other. David checks on Loner Leader from time to time. We don't know what connects her to the animal; if it was her brother, sister, uncle or just some normal dog. She comes back to the table and sits down.

LONER LEADER'S FATHER

Will you stay a few days?

LONER LEADER

I'm afraid not, Dad. We're heading back again today. Tomorrow I'm going away on a business trip. You know how demanding my job is, don't ask if I can stay a few days every time I come.

LONER LEADER'S FATHER

Do you all work for the same company?

DAVID

Yes.

LONER LEADER'S FATHER

My daughter tells me it's a very fine company. Do you agree?

David struggles to keep things vague but consistent.

DAVID

It's a rather good company, yes. One of the best, I'd say. The only problem with the job is that I don't have enough time for my wife and kids. We have four beautiful, healthy children.

LONER LEADER'S FATHER

Congratulations.

DAVID

But even if we'd never had children, I'd never dream of leaving my wife.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

Even if it was just the two of us, on our own, we'd go on trips, we'd go to Portofino in Italy or to a Greek island for the summer and so our relationship would be as intense as it was at the start. I love her so much I could die for her. That's how much I love her.

He takes Shortsighted Woman's hand and kisses her on the lips in front of everyone for quite some time.

81 **EXT. TOWN STREET - DAY**

The two supposed couples walk down the street. David and Shortsighted Woman walk in perfect sync.

LONER LEADER

Well done. For your first day in town, you did great. That bit about holiday destinations in the Mediterranean was brilliant.

DAVID

Thank you very much.

They feel proud. Shortsighted Woman tightens her grip on David's hand.

82 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

David prepares to hunt rabbits. He sets up rabbit traps using three wooden sticks and a big stone. He joins the sticks together to form the shape of a 4 and then places the stone on the biggest stick. When the rabbit tries to take the bait under the rock, the trigger stick moves and the stone falls on the animal.

FEMALE V.O.

You carefully flay the rabbit with a sharp knife and cut off its head. You then slice open its belly and stuff it with well-washed red and green peppers, not too spicy, and a little garlic and mint.

We see that David has caught three rabbits. His hands are covered in blood from the slaughtered animals. He puts the dead rabbits in a large sack, dripping with blood.

FEMALE V.O. (CONT'D)

You then soak it in lemon juice and leave it a while to marinate the flesh, skewer it on a stick and roast it over the fire for about an hour. That's my favourite food, rabbit.

He leaves two of the rabbits beside the sleeping Shortsighted Woman.

83 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

David sleeps. His digital wristwatch alarm beeps and wakes him up. He turns off the alarm, gets up and goes to the river's edge to wash his face. As he pulls up his shirt sleeves, he sees a phrase written on his hand in biro: "River bank, beside the tree, 11 a.m." He rubs the note off with water, looking round to see if anyone is watching.

84 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

David and Shortsighted Woman sit side by side. In front of them sprawls a seal. It's the first time they are alone together, so they are both a bit tense. At first they avoid making eye contact and talk with long pauses. He is more shy than she is.

DAVID

When did you become shortsighted?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

When I was 16. You?

DAVID

When I was 12.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

What make were your first pair of glasses?

DAVID

I don't remember.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Do you have astigmatism too?

DAVID

Yes.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Would you like me to rub some balm on your back, on the bits you can't reach on your own?

DAVID
I'd like that.

Shortsighted Woman takes the jar of Tiger Balm from his bag and rubs it onto his back.

85 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

Loner Leader gives the other loners clothes like the ones worn by the hotel guests and a few pistols. She opens the blue folder the Maid gave her. The loners pay close attention. They are silent and highly disciplined.

LONER LEADER
Good evening everyone and good luck. I hope you can read my handwriting without any trouble. The room numbers are as follows. Room 206, couple with nice voices. Room 240, couple who both love to ski. Room 282, couple who both studied, I'm sorry, I can't quite make it out, couple who both studied.. I think it's social sciences. Pier, couple prone to nosebleeds.

David waits in line. He also takes a set of clothes.

86 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

The loners walk through the woods with flashlights. They don't talk, or if they do they whisper. First in line is Loner Leader. Shortsighted Woman follows. David is last in line. He looks slightly worried.

87 **EXT. HOTEL - EVENING**

The loners open a small gate using the key the maid gave them and enter the hotel gardens. They check to see if there are any waiter guards around and hide behind some bushes. David goes up to Loner Leader.

LONER LEADER
You and you take 206, you and you take 240, you, you and you take 282, you take the pier.

David jumps in.

DAVID
Can I go to the pier?

LONER LEADER

Okay then, you go to the pier and you go to 282. We have half an hour.

The loners split up and head off in different directions.

88

INT. ROOM 206 - EVENING

Loner Leader, Loner Swimmer and Shortsighted Woman stand over a couple naked in bed. Loner Leader speaks to the couple, aiming her gun at them. She takes a look at the note the Maid gave her.

LONER LEADER

So, you both have nice voices, is that right?

MAN WITH A NICE VOICE

Yes.

LONER LEADER

Do you prefer singing duets or when one of you sings the lead and the other does backing vocals?

MAN WITH A NICE VOICE

Duets, mostly.

As the dialogue plays out, Shortsighted Woman picks up a pen, a notebook and two CDs marked BEST LOVE SONGS EVER: VOL. III and slips them into her bag without anyone noticing. Loner Leader addresses the Man With a Nice Voice.

LONER LEADER

You, if we kill this woman, do you think you'll manage on your own or will you get involved with someone else?

MAN WITH A NICE VOICE

I don't know.

LONER LEADER

Do you think this woman can survive on her own, or not? What's your opinion?

MAN WITH A NICE VOICE

If you're going to kill someone, kill me. I love her more than anything in the world. If you're going to kill someone, kill me. I love her more than anything.

Loner Leader now aims her gun at the Woman With a Nice Voice.

LONER LEADER

If we kill this man, do you think you'll manage on your own or will you get involved with someone else?

WOMAN WITH A NICE VOICE

No, I wouldn't get involved with anyone else, I'd live alone. Without a shadow of a doubt.

LONER LEADER

Do you believe this man can make it on his own?

WOMAN WITH A NICE VOICE

No. I can live alone, but he can't. I'm on my own for hours while he's at the pool or at the bar. I like sitting in the room, it relaxes me, calms me, I like it a lot. I think you should kill him. I won't disappoint you.

Loner Leader hands the Woman With a Nice Voice the pistol. She's startled at first. Then she looks at the Man With a Nice Voice in the eyes and mercilessly pulls the trigger. The gun doesn't fire. It isn't loaded. The three loners leave them alone together.

89 **EXT. HOTEL GROUNDS - EVENING**

David walks quickly. He holds a tranquilliser gun. He spots hotel signage pointing towards various locations. He stops in front of a sign. It reads "BEACH/PIER/MINI GOLF".

90 **EXT. PIER - EVENING**

Two waiters guard the yachts moored at the pier. Automatic rifles are slung across their backs. But they seem relaxed and not very alert. The light is on in one of the three yachts.

30-YEAR-OLD WAITER

The only thing that troubles me is when someone orders something and then they insist they ordered something else. For example, someone says they want an espresso and then say they didn't order an espresso but a cappuccino and get all rude about it and annoyed. I find that quite troubling.

50-YEAR-OLD WAITER

In situations like that you need to be polite and make them realise their mistake. If this gets you nowhere then take back their espresso and bring them a cappuccino, that way you avoid any hassle. If the problem doesn't go away, if they use physical violence or if they continue to change what they asked you for, you just have to speak with the manager. Understood?

30-YEAR-OLD WAITER

Yes.

David walks towards them. He hides the tranquilliser gun behind his back.

50-YEAR-OLD WAITER

Room number and reason for being out, please.

David swiftly shoots them both with the tranquilliser gun. They fall down unconscious.

91

INT. YACHT - EVENING

David climbs aboard the yacht. He carefully looks through the cabin window. Limping Man and Nosebleed Woman wear identical nautical striped outfits. His is stained with blood. Their child, Elizabeth, also sits with them.

LIMPING MAN

A basketball weighs between 550 and 650 grams. Did you know that?

NOSEBLEED WOMAN

No, I didn't know that.

LIMPING MAN

Yes. It's weight is different for men's and women's games, but that's roughly how much they weigh. Do you know how much a volleyball weighs?

ELIZABETH

No, but I'd love to find out.

David startles them, appearing behind the little girl. He sits down beside them at the table and places the gun next to him.

DAVID

Good evening.

He takes a glass from in front of Limping Man and the knife from next to the little girl's plate and taps the glass with the knife.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I have an announcement to make. His nose doesn't really bleed on its own. He bangs it against a wall or a piece of wood or some other hard surface, or else he cuts it with a pen knife while you aren't looking. So the answer to the question "Are you suited?" is 100% "No, you're not".

ELIZABETH

Shut up. Dad, tell him to leave. I'm sleepy.

DAVID

I'm sure that the stain on his t-shirt is not blood but cherry juice or tomato ketchup or red watercolour paint or something like that.

Limping Man and Nosebleed Woman get up and start to hit him. One holds him down while the other kicks him. David drops the knife.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Or beetroot juice.

Elizabeth grabs the knife from the floor.

ELIZABETH

Kill him. Mum, here's the knife. Kill him.

Limping man pushes David out of the cabin.

LIMPING MAN

Get out of here while you still can.

David looks at them with a weird mix of shame and contempt and then leaves. The hotel alarm sounds from the yacht's speakers. He jumps to the pier and starts to run towards the fence where the others are waiting for him. Shortsighted Woman smiles slightly the moment she sees him returning safe.

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

The loners dance, everyone on their own. Electronic music plays. David does not dance. He tries to find Shortsighted Woman amongst the others. He sees her but before he has time to approach her, Loner Leader goes up to David.

LONER LEADER
Why aren't you dancing?

DAVID
My leg hurts a little.

LONER LEADER
Did you dig your own grave?

DAVID
Not yet.

LONER LEADER
I don't mean to pressure you, or to ruin the mood now that we're celebrating, but at some point you'll have to do it. Don't expect anyone else to dig your grave for you, or to carry your corpse. We'll throw some dirt over you but that's about it. Tomorrow find a spot you like where the ground isn't too rocky and make a start. Enjoy the rest of your evening.

93

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

David spies another loner taking rabbits to Shortsighted Woman. She smiles and says something to RABBIT LONER, who then says something back. It must have been something very funny because he laughs loudly then waves her goodbye and leaves. As soon as Rabbit Loner is gone, David goes up to her. He's obviously upset but tries to hide it.

DAVID
Did you catch rabbits?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
No, someone brought me them.

DAVID
Who?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
A friend of mine. You want one?

DAVID
No.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
You're jealous?

DAVID
No, I'm not jealous. It's just you don't need to accept rabbits from other people.

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

If you need more rabbits, just tell me and I'll bring you more. Catching a rabbit is difficult, but I'll try harder. There's no need for you to be indebted to the others.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Thank you very much.

DAVID

That man who brought you the rabbits, is he shortsighted?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I don't know. I don't think so.

94

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

David goes up to Rabbit Loner who's shaving his face in the river. He stares at him for a while then speaks loudly.

DAVID

Afternoon. Is that a sparrow up in that tree?

RABBIT LONER

I can't really see that far, but I don't think so.

DAVID

Are you shortsighted?

RABBIT LONER

No.

DAVID

You're lying.

RABBIT LONER

It's the truth.

DAVID

What does it say here?

David shows him the zip on his jacket.

RABBIT LONER

YKK.

DAVID

You knew that already. All zips say the same thing.

RABBIT LONER

I'm not shortsighted. I don't understand why you won't believe me. I can see very clearly. I used to be a pilot.

DAVID

You're wearing contact lenses.

RABBIT LONER

I'm not wearing contact lenses. I'm not shortsighted, I swear.

DAVID

You are. You think I'm an idiot and can't tell.

David hits him, kicks him and pins him down. He pulls open his eyelids.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Look up. I said, look up.

Rabbit Loner obeys. David fingers his eyeballs to check whether he's wearing contact lenses or not.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Now down. Left and right.

David gets up. Rabbit Loner stays down on the ground.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I thought you were trying to fool me. I'm sorry.

95 **EXT. THE WOODS - DAY**

David and Shortsighted Woman put CDs into their portable players. Beside them stands a pony, it might be that girl from the hotel.

DAVID

We need to concentrate, we both have to press play at the same time. I'll count down from five and we'll push the button on zero. Five, four, three, two, one, zero.

The both push their buttons and dance in each other's arms. We hear the same song playing twice, overlaid, the two streams a little out of sync.

96 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

During the voice over, we see various scenes from the lives of the loners.

Loners watching a dog attacking a seal in the middle of the woods, a loner fighting with another loner, a loner lying dead, loners washing themselves in the river, Loner Leader feeding the pig.

FEMALE V.O.

We've developed a code so that we can communicate with each other, even in front of the others, without them knowing what we are saying. A handstand means "I miss you so much". When we turn our heads to the left it means "I love you more than anything in the world" and when we turn our heads to the right it means "Watch out, we're in danger." We had to be very careful in the beginning not to mix up "I love you more than anything in the world" with "Watch out, we're in danger." When we raise our left arm it means "I want to dance in your arms". When we make a fist and put it behind our backs it means "Let's fuck, I'm horny". The code grew more and more as time went by and within a few weeks we could talk about almost anything without even opening our mouths. About history, music, our childhood, everything.

97

INT. LONER LEADER'S PARENTS' HOUSE - MORNING

Loner Leader, Loner Swimmer (her supposed husband), her father and her mother, sit on the sofa. They all seem relaxed, they've been drinking and they're enjoying the stories told by the elderly couple. David and Shortsighted Woman sit in a corner.

LONER LEADER'S FATHER

I met your mother when we were at school. We were both top of the class in music. I was a little better than her on the guitar because my fingers are longer and stronger, which is very important when playing chords. She was better at singing. We began meeting to study together. We became a couple just a month before leaving school. If we'd waited one more month, we'd have been sent to the hotel. Can you imagine?

LONER SWIMMER

Let's not talk about unpleasant things. I can't wait for you both to play us some music.

Loner Leader's father begins to play the guitar. Her mother, sitting beside him, begins to sing. David kisses Shortsighted Woman on the hand. She begins to stroke his hair and then french kisses him for a long time. Loner Leader, annoyed, slaps them.

LONER LEADER

That's enough. Show my parents some respect, they're playing you music.

LONER LEADER'S MOTHER

That's okay.

LONER LEADER

No mother, it is not okay. Please, continue.

LONER LEADER'S MOTHER

Do you want us to perform the same song, or something else?

LONER LEADER

Something else.

98 **EXT. TOWN STREET - MORNING**

Loner Leader and Loner Swimmer go on ahead. David and Shortsighted Woman follow behind. They regret being so intimate at the gathering. David tries to read Loner Leader, to figure out if she suspects them or not.

DAVID

We were great today, weren't we? Maybe even better than last time.

Loner Leader says nothing. They walk quickly.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Didn't her parents sing and play beautifully?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

It was wonderful.

David and Shortsighted Woman smile but seem worried.

99 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

The loners eat fruit together. Loner Leader hands out bananas. They sit around a tree trunk. David covers his left eye with his hand. Shortsighted Woman does a handstand.

All part of their secret code that nobody else understands. A pink flamingo stands in the distance.

100

EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING

A LONER WOMAN reads from a notebook. Her voice is that of the female V.O. we've heard throughout the story. Loner Leader listens beside her.

LONER NARRATOR

"We love each other and we suit each other. That's the reason why we've decided to leave and stay together forever in the town. Tomorrow, during the hunt, we're going to disappear and everyone will think we've been captured and that we're going to be turned into dogs or canaries or something. I think the first thing I'm going to do when I get into town is buy a bathrobe and then we'll go to a pool with a high diving board perfect for diving. And we'll do lots of different things together, serious things not silly ones, like go for walks in the park or play the guitar together". That's where it ends. There are some notes at the back but I don't think they're important.

Loner Leader stands perfectly still. She seems shocked and enraged even though she kind of suspected it.

LONER LEADER

Read me the notes.

LONER NARRATOR

"Portofino: Italian fishing village and upmarket resort famous for its picturesque harbour. Population: 439. Beaches nearby: Paraggi Beach, Camogli, Chiavari and Lavagna. Serifos: Greek island located in the western Cyclades. Population: 1,414. The Miners' Strike of 1916. In the 20th century, the mines of Serifos were exploited by the mining company "Société minière Sérifos-Spiliazeza" under the direction of the German mineralogist A. Grohmann, who died in 1905".

LONER LEADER

That's enough. Where did you find it?

LONER NARRATOR

In the woods. Someone probably dropped it during the hunt. Do you think it belongs to one of us?

LONER LEADER

No. One of the hotel guests must have dropped it. None of us would have written such drivel.

She takes the notebook and leaves.

101 **EXT. THE WOODS - EVENING**

Loner Leader goes up to Shortsighted Woman. She's reading a book by torchlight. Loner Leader sits next to her and talks to her in a really friendly tone of voice.

LONER LEADER

You're reading?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Yes.

LONER LEADER

Wouldn't it be amazing if you could read without the help of glasses or contacts?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Yes.

LONER LEADER

I'd like to ask you a favour.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

What sort of favour?

LONER LEADER

Do you have a sheet of white paper, by any chance? I want to make a list of the stuff we need from town and there's no paper left in my notebook.

Shortsighted Woman looks in her backpack for her notebook. She starts rummaging, distressed.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

It's fine if you don't have any. I'll ask someone else.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

But I do. I'm sure I have a notebook with white pages, it's in here somewhere, I'm sure of it.

LONER LEADER

Don't worry. It doesn't matter. Tomorrow when we go into town I'll make a note to buy you a new one.

Loner Leader tenderly touches Shortsighted Woman on her shoulder and leaves.

102

INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Loner Leader, Loner Narrator and Shortsighted Woman are in a waiting room. The three women are seated on a sofa. There is a coffee table with past issues of various magazines in front of them. Loner Narrator reads one of these magazines.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

It's very dangerous for three women to be alone in town together. It's highly likely the doctor will suspect us. I suggest we leave the first chance we get. Right now, in fact.

LONER LEADER

Don't be afraid. No-one will suspect a thing. I bet you weren't expecting this surprise. Isn't it wonderful?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Yes, it is. Still, I'd like to think it over for a few days, and maybe I'll have the surgery done when we're next in town.

LONER LEADER

What's there to think about? If it's better to see clearly or to be shortsighted, is that it? That's absurd, you know that. Anyway, this doctor is the best there is, it's really very difficult to get an appointment. I called him months ago to get him to see you today.

A SECRETARY goes up to them and shows them the door to the doctor's office.

103 **INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - MORNING**

The DOCTOR sits behind his desk. Loner Leader and Shortsighted Woman sit in two chairs opposite him. This is a typical doctor's office: big wooden bookcase, a mix of old-fashioned and modern furniture, some framed prints of famous paintings. The doctor's hands are shiny and clean, like the hands of most doctors.

DOCTOR

This operation is what we call "routine surgery". It has a 90% success rate, so there's no need to worry. There are no scalpels involved, the entire procedure is done by laser. There's no reason why you shouldn't see clearly when you're swimming in the sea or when you first wake up in the morning. Contact lens solution, contact lens cases, eyeglasses, all that will be a thing of the past.

LONER LEADER

Thank you very much, doctor.

Shortsighted woman doesn't speak. She makes quite an effort to appear happy but doesn't make a very good job of it.

104 **INT. OPERATING THEATRE - MORNING**

Shortsighted Woman lies frightened on an operating table. She looks around, sweating. The Doctor anaesthetises her by intravenous injection. He then lays out various scalpels on a metal tray.

105 **INT. DOCTOR'S SURGERY WAITING ROOM - DAY**

Loner Leader sits and waits. The Doctor brings out Shortsighted Woman, whose eyes are bandaged up. Loner Narrator approaches Shortsighted Woman and gives her a hug. She then puts her jacket over Shortsighted Woman's shoulders and fixes her hair with her hands. Loner Leader pays the Doctor. He has a quiet word with Loner Leader but we cannot hear what he says very clearly.

DOCTOR

(whispers)

She is blind, as you wished.

106 **EXT. THE WOODS - DAY**

Shortsighted Woman, kneeling on the ground, holds a knife. It looks like there's just been a fight. She's flushed red.

Unable to see, her eyes still bandaged up, Shortsighted Woman threatens anyone who might be close to her with her knife. Loner Leader and Loner Narrator keep their distance.

LONER LEADER

Throw down your knife and stand up.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

LONER LEADER

You're being completely irrational. I understand you're upset by the unexpected results but to accuse me is very insulting to say the least. The doctor said there were some unforeseen complications after your surgery. That is all. Who would have guessed such a simple procedure could have such catastrophic results? No one. Anyway, what reason could I possibly have had to do such a hideous thing on purpose?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Why did you have to blind me? You could have blinded him.

LONER LEADER

I have no idea what you're talking about. The drugs are messing with your head. If I were you, I'd try and be a little braver about the whole thing. Now get up and give me the knife, or I'll hit you and take it by force.

Shortsighted Woman says nothing. She's still holding the knife in a threatening manner.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

Here I come.

Loner Leader signals to Loner Narrator, who goes over to Shortsighted Woman. She grabs the hand holding the knife and they begin to fight. Loner Leader speaks close to Loner Narrator's head, so that the Shortsighted Woman, who is now blind, thinks she's wrestling with Loner Leader.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I swear I'm going to kill you.

LONER LEADER

No, don't, please. Let go of my hair, you're hurting me.

Shortsighted Woman has grabbed Loner Narrator by the hair and now stabs her in the stomach. Loner Leader stays close so that it seems it's really her fighting Shortsighted Woman and groans in pain with each stab.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)
 Have mercy, please, [groans] don't kill me. Just think [groans] that when someone [groans] goes blind, one of their other senses [groans] is heightened. Touch, hearing, smell [groans]. You'll smell better, hear better. You'll feel things with your fingers and know what it is you're touching [groans].

Silence. Loner Narrator has been dead some time now. Shortsighted Woman raises herself up a little. She feels out the dead woman's body with her hands and takes her pulse. She puts down the bloody knife, wipes her hands and gets up. That is when Loner Leader begins her monologue again. Shortsighted Woman jumps in fear.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)
 You could also catch a dog in the woods and train it to guide you. Dogs can do that, you know. I'll help you catch a dog myself. Now that I think of it, your sense of touch may already be heightened. Let's find out right now. I'll put something in your hand and you tell me what it is. Okay?

Loner Leader gives her something and closes her hand around it tight.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)
 Make a fist. Feel what it is, feel its shape. It's not difficult.

Shortsighted Woman falls down and screams. Loner Leader continues to squeeze her fist.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)
 What is it? What is it? I'll give you a little more time to guess but I can't wait much longer. What is it?

Shortsighted Woman screams. Loner Leader lets go of her hand. She opens her fist and her palm is covered blood.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)
 Time's up. It's a small razor blade.

(MORE)

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

It seems your sense of touch hasn't improved yet but it'll happen, you'll see. Now get up. If you carry on acting like this I'm going to leave you here and I don't think you'll manage to find meeting point two on your own.

107

EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

David meets with Shortsighted Woman. She sits on a rock. She has taken the bandages off and wears sunglasses. She tries to act calm.

DAVID

Did you have a nice time in town?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Sure.

DAVID

What happened to your hand?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I was cutting a tree branch with a knife, and cut myself by accident. You look handsome today. Did you get your hair cut?

DAVID

Thank you. No, I didn't get a haircut, I'm going to have my hair cut today. Look what I brought you.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Thank you very much. I'm so hungry, I'll eat it right away.

David is momentarily puzzled.

DAVID

It's a bigger flashlight.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I'm sorry, it's so big I thought it was a rabbit. It's the biggest flashlight I've ever seen.

DAVID

Are you ready for tonight?

Shortsighted Woman decides to drop her act.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Of course I am. I want to tell you something but please don't get angry.

DAVID

What happened?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I can't see a thing. I'm blind.

DAVID

What do you mean?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

There's no point lying to you,
you'll find out sooner or later.
I've lost my sight. Loner Leader
blinded me this morning, in town.
She must have realised that I love
you and you love me and that we
were going to leave for the town.

DAVID

How did she find out?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I don't know. I think she found my
notebook.

DAVID

What notebook?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

My notebook. I had a notebook,
where I'd write my thoughts about
us, about how suited we are. I'm
sorry.

DAVID

You can't see at all?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No, not at all.

DAVID

And when you asked if I'd had a
haircut?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I said it so you wouldn't realise I
can't see. I'm sorry.

David kicks some dirt. He seems frustrated and disappointed.
He turns towards Shortsighted Woman.

DAVID

Don't cry. Crying will make your
eyes hurt even more. We'll find a
way.

108 **EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT**

Some loners sleep, others listen to music around a battery-operated lantern. David lies on the ground and seems very sad. Loner Leader goes up to David, holding a pig on a leash.

LONER LEADER

I'm going to hunt for truffles. Do you want to come and keep me company?

DAVID

I'm a little sleepy.

LONER LEADER

We won't be long. I've found a spot where there are lots of them. We won't be long, I promise. Come on.

David gets up.

109 **EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT**

David and Loner Leader walk through the woods holding flashlights. David looks scared. He doesn't know if he's about to be punished as well.

LONER LEADER

Thanks for coming with me. Something terrible happened today and I needed some company.

DAVID

What happened?

LONER LEADER

Didn't you hear what happened in town?

DAVID

No.

LONER LEADER

Shortsighted Woman had an operation and went blind. It's so very sad. And then my deputy leader was killed on our way back. She was attacked by a jaguar. I'm really very upset because I was thinking of making Shortsighted Woman deputy leader as she's very capable and loyal. But then I gave it some thought and realised that now it will be difficult for her to command so many people. The next person I thought could take on such a responsibility is you.

DAVID

Thank you very much.

LONER LEADER

Don't thank me. I trust you completely and I consider you one of the best loners I've seen in years. I know you won't disappoint me in any way. If something happens to me, you will take over. Take a few days to think about it and let me know when you're ready. Here's the place with the truffles. You can't imagine how many there are. I wanted you to come with me and see it for yourself. If you become deputy leader, you'll need to know where in the woods you can find lots of truffles.

110

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

Shortsighted Woman lies under a tree. David stands beside her holding four carrots and a fish. Apparently he's decided not to give up yet.

DAVID

What blood type are you?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

B.

David thinks some more.

DAVID

Do you like berries? Blueberries?
Blackberries?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No, no.

DAVID

Can you play the piano?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

DAVID

Do you speak German?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

DAVID

I could teach you German but it would take at least a year for you to be able to speak the basics, not fluently. So there's no point. You know, German is one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn because its grammar is very complicated.

David wakes up, terrified.

111 **EXT. THE WOODS, MIDDAY**

Shortsighted Woman lies under a tree. David goes up to her holding four carrots and a fish. He looks at her, a little lost in thought.

DAVID

What blood type are you?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

B.

David thinks some more.

DAVID

Do you like berries? Blueberries? Blackberries?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No, no.

DAVID

Can you play the piano?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

DAVID

Do you speak German?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

DAVID

I could teach you German but it would take at least a year for you to be able to speak the basics, not fluently. So there's no point. You know, German is one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn because its grammar is very complicated.

112 **EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING**

David hands Shortsighted Woman a plastic cup. She feels it with her fingers.

 SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
A plastic cup.

 DAVID
That's right. Very good.

He then hands her a tennis ball.

 SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
A kiwi.

 DAVID
That's right. Ten out of ten,
again.

She smiles.

 DAVID (CONT'D)
I'm making a fist behind my back.

Shortsighted Woman now becomes serious.

 SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
That can't happen. I can't thank
you enough for keeping me company,
for the games and activities but
you know we can't do that any more.
Do you want to play another round
of "touch-think-guess-win"?

 DAVID
No, that's enough for today. In any
case, I've run out of things to
test you with. Maybe tomorrow, or
one of these days.

 SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN
Tomorrow morning?

 DAVID
We'll see.

113 **EXT. THE WOODS - DAY**

David sings a duet written for a man and a woman all on his own. He only sings the male part and leaves out the female part. A rabbit comes up close to him. David looks at it but does not kill it. He has no reason to hunt rabbits anymore. The rabbit hops off.

114 **EXT. THE WOODS - DAY**

David walks through the woods with Loner Leader. He stops at some point and looks around.

LONER LEADER

How do you like this place here?

DAVID

It's nice.

LONER LEADER

It is nice, and more importantly very quiet because of the rocks you have to climb to get here. Can you imagine why I brought you to such a quiet place today?

DAVID

No.

LONER LEADER

Because I think it's the perfect spot for your grave. It was my second choice for my own grave, but in the end I decided on a place a little to the north of here because there are fewer dogs around there, digging all the time for bones.

She takes a small pickaxe from her pocket and gives it to him. David starts to dig. After a while he gets tired and stops. He's only managed to dig a small hole. He climbs into it but his whole body won't fit. He tries to fit as best he can.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

You have to make it bigger so you'll fit better. As I said, there are a lot of dogs around here. Now cover yourself with soil. Use your hands.

He scoops some soil onto his body and sits there a little, motionless.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

Over your face too. You wouldn't want your face to get eaten, would you?

David puts more soil over his face and body. He seems terrified.

LONER LEADER (CONT'D)

Can you see how great this spot is?

DAVID

Yes. Thank you very much.

Loner leader cuts a flower and puts it on David's grave.

LONER LEADER

If you die before me, I'll visit
you as often I can. I promise.

David stays motionless.

115 **EXT. WOODS - MORNING**

David walks in the forest and comes across a pony. The animal is probably the woman with the nice hair at the hotel, Nosebleed Woman's Best Friend. David stares at the pony with a mixture of confusion and anger. His face is still full of dirt.

DAVID

Hi, how are you? It's very nice
meeting you again.

He cuts the pony's mane with a pair of scissors. The animal stands still. He then looks the pony in the eye and hits it across the face.

DAVID (CONT'D)

How do you like my hair now?

116 **EXT. THE WOODS, MORNING**

Shortsighted Woman and two other loners are down on their knees trying to set a rabbit trap. David approaches them.

DAVID

Good afternoon.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

How are you?

DAVID

Fine.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I'm hungry. You haven't brought me
a rabbit in days. Or things for me
to touch and guess.

DAVID

I've got good news. I've had a
great idea. Have you got a minute?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

What sort of idea?

David takes Shortsighted Woman aside and describes his idea to her using the physical code they've developed between them, but now describing the movements to her orally.

DAVID

I raise my left foot. I bring my elbow to my knee and tap it twice. I bring my foot to my knee and tap it three times. I lie face down. I kneel down. I touch my left cheek and then lie face up.

Shortsighted Woman thinks for a minute.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Are you sure you are prepared to do that?

DAVID

It's the only way.

She doesn't speak.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Yes, of course I am. I wouldn't propose it if I wasn't.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

When?

DAVID

Tomorrow morning?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Tomorrow morning.

David leaves. Shortsighted woman smiles but seems unsure at the same time.

117 **EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT**

David attacks a woman in the dark. He hits her. She falls unconscious and we see the face of Loner Leader. He takes a roll of gaffer tape from his pocket, ties her up and gags her mouth. He then drags her away.

118 **EXT. THE WOODS - NIGHT**

Loner Leader, tied up, lies in David's freshly dug grave. Dogs circle the shallow pit. Loner Leader tries in vain to cut herself loose.

119

EXT. THE WOODS - MORNING

David and Shortsighted Woman walk quickly, as if running with very small steps. David walks a little ahead, and Shortsighted Woman holds his hand and follows behind. They are wearing their civilian clothes but David's suit doesn't fit him very well. It's a little tight. They talk as they walk.

DAVID

Are you thirsty?

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

No.

DAVID

It's not much farther. I can already see the buildings.

There are no buildings in sight yet.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

That's perfect.

Shortsighted Woman continues to walk, a little faster now.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN (CONT'D)

We should speed up a little bit.

DAVID

These trousers are too tight. I'm sorry. It was dark and I couldn't see clearly and I didn't have the time to try them on. I'm sorry.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Never mind.

120

EXT. MAIN ROAD - MIDDAY

David and Shortsighted Woman come out of the woods and onto the road. They walk more slowly now. David hears a noise. He turns and sees a vehicle coming in the distance. He pulls Shortsighted Woman off the road and they hide in some bushes. The vehicle passes them. It is the hotel coach heading into town.

DAVID

It's gone. They didn't see us.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

I'm a little hungry. If you see a rabbit, kill it and we'll eat.

DAVID

We don't have time to hunt. We'll eat when we get into town. Everything has to happen as we said, without delay, without wasting time for no reason. We have to reach the restaurant before rush hour. It'll be much easier if there aren't lots of people coming and going in the toilets.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Have you decided how you're going to do it?

DAVID

No.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Alright. Let's not waste any more time talking. Let's go.

They get up and head off again down the road.

121 **IV. THE TOWN**

122 **INT. TOWN RESTAURANT - DAY**

David and Shortsighted Woman sit at a table. There aren't many people in the restaurant, just another couple sitting a few tables further back. In front of them are two glasses of water. They are silent.

DAVID

Profile.

Shortsighted Woman turns her head to the left, holds it there, then turns it to the right and holds it there.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Fingers.

Shortsighted Woman shows him her fingers. David looks at them carefully.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Elbows.

Shortsighted Woman pulls up her sleeves and shows him her elbows.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Would you like me to show you my belly?

DAVID

No, I remember your belly very well. Smile.

Shortsighted Woman smiles. She holds the smile for a long time. David signals to a RESTAURANT WAITER. The waiter comes to their table.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Can I have a knife and fork, please? Not a butter knife. A steak knife.

RESTAURANT WAITER

Certainly.

The waiter brings him a knife and fork wrapped in a napkin. David examines both pieces of cutlery. He takes the knife and wraps the fork back up in the napkin.

DAVID

I'm going to do it with a knife.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Do you want me to come with you?

DAVID

I'd rather you didn't.

SHORTSIGHTED WOMAN

Don't worry. It's strange at first but you get used to it. And your other senses are heightened. Touch, for example. Your hearing.

DAVID

I know.

David gets up from his chair. He heads towards the toilets.

123 **INT. TOWN RESTAURANT TOILETS - DAY**

David pulls lots of paper towels out of the dispenser. He tucks them into his shirt collar and lays them over his shoulders to keep the blood off. He looks at himself in the mirror, checks to see if his hands are trembling and then raises the knife, bringing it close to his eye. Closer and closer. He can't do it, and lowers the knife again. He then takes a few deep breaths and tries again.

124 **INT. TOWN RESTAURANT - DAY**

Shortsighted Woman sits on her own at the table and waits. The waiter fills her glass with water and leaves. We hear many different voices and a door opening and closing. A couple sits down at the table next to her.

Shortsighted Woman takes a small sip of water and puts her glass back down on the table. Beside her is the restaurant front window, which looks onto a main road. Cars go by. Various couples walk past, some of them have kids, others a dog. The scene lasts some time.

THE END.