

THEFT: Screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

INT. RYDER TRUCK - DAY

Rush hour on the Santa Monica Freeway.

INSERT: VENICE, CALIFORNIA JANUARY 1984

Painter PERRIS ROMANO (mid-30s) taps his paint-smearred fingers on the steering wheel.

PERRIS
Fucking traffic!

Perris looks to his right, on the front seat, at a BIRD CAGE, in which a COCKATIEL hops from perch to perch, ultimately hanging upside down.

PERRIS (cont'd)
Hang on, Jose.

Perris switches on the radio.

RADIO
...since 1948. So bundle up. Here's
Roxy Music, gonna turn you on. (A
smooth song fades in) "I could show
you in a word / If I wanted to. / A
window on a world/ With a lovely
view. / From close up inside a
single room/ With an open book
aside / Like you read in school..."

INT. PERRIS' VENICE WAREHOUSE STUDIO - DAY

As Roxy Music's song continues, we pan around the painter's studio as late afternoon sun pours in through high windows.

OPENING CREDITS flash in the alternating lower corners of the frame.

SONG
"It's so easy, believe me / When
you need fun / I do anything to
turn you on / Anything to turn you
on..."

The studio: REINDEER ANTLERS attached to a wall serve as a coat rack; Francis Bacon-influenced PAINTINGS hang everywhere, along with others, stacked in a corner; one painting is a beautiful NUDE OF A YOUNG WOMAN, featuring the signature "P. Romano," enclosed within an ORNATE FRAME; there's a RECORD PLAYER and HUGE SPEAKERS; a DINING TABLE; a

MORE

KITCHEN; and hanging upside-down from a rafter is a LIFE-SIZED MANNEQUIN of A.E. Waite's The Hanged Man, based on the tarot cards.

SONG (cont'd)

"I could leave you as you were / If
I wanted to / Then I wonder is it
fair / Now you're on your own / Who
cares about you..."

The camera moves up a stairway toward the sleeping loft.

JENNIFER ROMANO (30ish) and PENELOPE (mid-30s) have just made love. They meet the camera at the top of the stairs. As they descend (Jennifer in a t-shirt and running shorts, Penelope in a silk kimono, a towel over an arm), the camera backs down the stairs, as though intimidated by the pair.

"Except me. God help me / When
things go wrong / I do anything to
turn you / Must phone me, you know
me / When things go wrong / I do
anything to turn you on..."

As the song fades, Penelope tosses her robe aside. She lays the towel on the dining room table. She climbs onto the table, and lays face up on the towel.

Jennifer fishes a bottle of olive oil from a kitchen shelf. A skilled masseuse, Jennifer begins the massage.

Jennifer is clearly the woman in the painting of the nude.

JENNIFER

God, I don't know when I've ever
felt so...I dunno...I just...You're
coming?

PENELOPE

I already...(She trails off,
chuckling) Shit, New Mexico?

JENNIFER

You're always talking about leaving
LA. Think of all the midwives and
healers there. You'd never want for
work.

PENELOPE

(Speaking with a feathery
Oklahoma twang)
Don't crack my joints. You know I
hate that.

JENNIFER

The move's already in motion.

PENELOPE

(on one elbow, stroking
Jennifer's cheek)

Jennifer. Luv. I'm your first. It's
just that.

JENNIFER

A woman knows when it's for real.
You always say so.

PENELOPE

(laying back down)

You love your husband. Own your
feelings.

JENNIFER

(massaging)

My heart's big enough for both.

PENELOPE

You'll have his baby in seven
months.

JENNIFER

Our baby. You could deliver it.
We'd be an extended family.

PENELOPE

Threesomes are such a bitch.

JENNIFER

Perris wants you to come.

PENELOPE

Ever ask yourself why?

JENNIFER

He loves me and supports my needs.

PENELOPE

(purring)

Perris and I don't like each other.
We're still hot together, but...all
that rage, poured into sex...and
that weird business deal he's
got...what's that guy's name?
LaVey? Oy vey?

MORE

JENNIFER

La Faye. We end it tonight.
Tomorrow, it's Santa Fe and a fresh
start.

PENELOPE

There are no fresh starts. Not even
at birth. (Beat) Look. Your
husband's a criminal. I can't get
mixed up in this.

JENNIFER

He's not intentionally a criminal.
It's a joke, got carried away. La
Faye made it serious. Serious
money.

PENELOPE

(Feigning casual)
How serious?

JENNIFER

I don't know exactly. Perris says
we got enough for a ranch and five
years of serious painting.

PENELOPE

He keeps you ignorant. (Beat)
Perris is a failure. Nobody'll
touch his real work.

JENNIFER

Lotsa talented people struggle.

PENELOPE

It's made him vengeful.

JENNIFER

Against the insiders. The academy
that expelled him. Gallery owners.
The whole corrupt network. (Beat)
La Faye says the forgeries are
works of art in themselves. (As her
hands move up Penelope's thigh...)
They give esthetic bliss.

PENELOPE

Cowboys? Esthetic bliss?

JENNIFER

Charles M. Russell is the
acknowledged master. (Beat) You
always said you like the criminal
type.

MORE

PENELOPE

Perris isn't the criminal *type*.
He's just a criminal. There's a
difference.

As Penelope turns over onto her stomach...

JENNIFER

Whoa. Okay. Perris paints this
cowboy thing, signs Russell's name,
rolls it in dirt and rainwater,
flies to Tucson, tells a dealer he
found it in his dead grandfather's
trunk. Next thing I know, rent's
paid, car's fixed, we're in a
French restaurant, me in a new
dress. He tells me to quit my job
at the med center.

PENELOPE

Don't quit! I learned the hard way.
No matter who the guy is, *don't*
quit the job.

Jennifer continues with the massage.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

That doesn't make Perris the
criminal type.

JENNIFER

Hang on.

BACK TO PAST

INT. STUDIO - DAY

JENNIFER

(VO)

So one day La Faye shows up, asking
for Perris.

Jennifer, wearing casual summer clothes, opens the door.

HECTOR LA FAYE (50ish), in Bermuda shorts, jogging shoes (no
socks), a tank top and sunglasses, smiles broadly,
proffering a business card. He sweats profusely.

LA FAYE

(With a cultured accent)

Good afternoon. Mrs. Perris Romano?
I am Hector La Faye.

Jennifer takes the card, studies it.

MORE

La Faye pushes his sunglasses up his forehead, into his hair, where they rest atop his head.

JENNIFER

This is very impressive, Mr. La Faye.

LA FAYE

I believe I have potential buyers for your husband's work.

JENNIFER

How'd you hear about it?

LA FAYE

L.A. WEEKLY.

JENNIFER

Oh, yes! Perris's friend Jeffrey!

LA FAYE

(One foot in the door)

May I?

JENNIFER

(With mild panic at the studio's disheveled state)

Of course. I apologize for the disorder.

LA FAYE

Oh, you should see Mapplethorpe's digs. Bullwhips and flowers, strewn everywhere.

Jennifer, hoping not to be seen, palms a dildo.

La Faye, pretending not to see, strolls around the studio, examining Perris's mounted paintings.

La Faye pulls out a small bottle of Cointreau, sips at it while clucking his tongue.

The paintings have a Francis Bacon feel: snarling dogs, decomposing bodies.

LA FAYE (cont'd)

These are very strong.

Perris, wearing a track suit, sweating from the heat, jogs in.

MORE

PERRIS
(Calling out)
Mrs. Cleaver! Ward's home! We're
goin' out tonight! Bring your
beaver!

Perris sees La Faye. Stops in his tracks.

JENNIFER
(Crossing the room, handing
Perris La Faye's business
card)
Darling, this is Mr. Hector La
Faye.

Perris eyes La Faye suspiciously.

PERRIS
You look familiar, sir.

LA FAYE
I saw you at True West Gallery. The
Russell masterpiece.

Perris studies the business card.

PERRIS
Monte Carlo?

LA FAYE
For tax purposes. London is my
domicile.

PERRIS
You dress like a narc.

LA FAYE
(Sighing)
I am a gift horse. I suggest you
not examine my teeth.

JENNIFER
Your friend at the WEEKLY.

PERRIS
(Perking up; to Jennifer)
Jeffrey! He promised results! (To
La Faye, while dismissing the
paintings on the walls) I'm moving
to a more personal style.

LA FAYE

Did you inherit anymore Russells
from your grandfather?

PERRIS

Well, I, uh...

LA FAYE

I understand. You adored your
grandfather, fishing for bonito off
San Pedro, fish and chips at the
pier...the Russells have great
sentimental value to you, and
you're loathe to part with them for
mere pennies.

La Faye removes a CLIP OF BILLS from a pocket.

LA FAYE (cont'd)

I'm prepared to make a cash
advance. Search that trunk. Find
five more Russells, I'll give you
twenty thousand dollars apiece. One
hundred grand, painter. Tax free.

PERRIS

(His pride keeping him from
naked pleading)

I've made real breakthroughs with
my personal style.

LA FAYE

Your Bacon knock-offs show real
potential. "Find" some more of
those Russells, and I might
represent your serious work.

PENELOPE

(VO)

Ouch!

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Penelope winces.

JENNIFER

Sorry.

PENELOPE

Strained it at racquetball.

MORE

JENNIFER

You play racquetball?

PENELOPE

I partner with the public relations guy for Rubiks Cube. (Beat) Yeah, so?

JENNIFER

Perris hesitated.

PENELOPE

The criminal type wouldn't hesitate.

JENNIFER

"Young man," says la Faye. "You have the gift of parody. Exploit it." That hurt Perris.

PENELOPE

(Mock pouting)

Poor Perris.

JENNIFER

La Faye said he's raising money for a serious project. Perris threw La Faye's card out. I saved it.

Jennifer, starting at the base of Penelope's skull, strokes her spine, down to the top of the buttocks.

PENELOPE

Prudent Jenny.

JENNIFER

Point is, Perris eventually jumped on the deal. Now you tell me. Perris had the balls to go for it. La Faye picks up the last batch tonight and we're gone by morning.

PENELOPE

Very Bonnie and Clyde. (Sitting up) I think I dated a guy once, lives in Santa Fe. Claims he invented the earth shoe. (Beat) Tightwad.

JENNIFER

Perris says he's on the verge of a real stylistic breakthrough.

MORE

PENELOPE

(Pulling on her kimono,
regarding the paintings on the
walls)

I don't know painting. I guess he's
pretty good. (Beat) You know of
course that according to California
law half the money is yours.

JENNIFER

(Putting the oil bottle back)
Huh?

PENELOPE

A woman with a baby on the way owes
it to herself to cover her ass.

JENNIFER

We're solid. Only a really secure
guy would permit us this.

PENELOPE

Or a guy who can't commit a hundred
percent. Or a guy who needs
variety. Or a guy desperate to keep
you. Or a guy insecure about his
masculinity.

JENNIFER

Hey! We got a deal. We don't allow
women into our bed who're hostile
to our marriage.

PENELOPE

You are either very loyal. Or very
stupid.

Pause.

JENNIFER

Come to New Mexico.

PENELOPE

I got other irons in the fire.

JENNIFER

Like?

PENELOPE

Other irons. (Beat) Lemme think on
it. Hell, maybe I'll come out and
visit. Don't push. Keep it loose.
Spontaneous.

MORE

Penelope kisses Jennifer.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
If it doesn't work out you can
always contact me through the
clinic.

JENNIFER
(Walking away)
You say the darndest things.

PENELOPE
All men carry the cancer of
violence. Perris is a man.

JENNIFER
You're forcing me to make a choice.

PENELOPE
I'm not forcing you to do anything.
That's Perris's game.

JENNIFER
I think we should make a rule not
to discuss my marriage.

PENELOPE
More rules, Jennifer?

JENNIFER
Relationships are a real trap for
you, aren't they?

PENELOPE
You got a blind spot. Your chains
are silk. They're still chains.

Pause.

JENNIFER
Shit! It's Perris's birthday!

Penelope's beeper scrawks. She starts up the stairs.

PENELOPE
I got an overdue women in Santa
Monica.

JENNIFER
(Thinking aloud)
Maybe I can get to the record store
before he gets home. (To the coat
rack. Calling out as she dons her

MORE

JENNIFER
coat) Check in with us before we
leave? Perris'll wanna talk to you
about coming.

PENELOPE
(Descending the stairs,
dressed)
If it's another false alarm, sure.
I might be tied up for another 18
hours.

Penelope strides up to Jennifer, impulsively embraces her.

They kiss. Penelope withdraws--too soon for Jennifer--who swoons.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
I'll pencil you in. Anyway...I
wanna meet this guy La Faye.

As they move toward the door, Perris enters, carrying the cockatiel in the cage.

Perris, Penelope and Jennifer stop and regard each other.

Perris walks over to a hook, and hangs the cage from it.

Perris coos to the cockatiel.

PERRIS
Jenny, we got any sunflower seeds?

JENNIFER
Uh...no.

PERRIS
You got a thing for sunflower
seeds, doncha? (To Penelope) This
woman, check the ashtrays in the
car, they're overflowing with
husks. (Beat) You two goin'
somewhere?

JENNIFER
Yeah. I mean no. Not together.

PERRIS
I was just gonna say, bundle up.
Weatherman's predicting snow.

PENELOPE

In LA?

PERRIS

First since 1948. What the weatherman said. Bodacious.

PENELOPE

We're too close to the ocean.

PERRIS

Bundle up's all I'm sayin'.

JENNIFER

(Crossing to Perris)

Happy birthday, darling. (She kisses him)

PERRIS

Don't bother with a gift. Bought myself a cockatiel. Meet Jose. Him, plus the end of my, my arrangement with La Faye's all I need. (He looks at Penelope) One other thing'd make my night complete.

PENELOPE

Yeah?

PERRIS

That's it. That word.

PENELOPE

"Yeah"?

PERRIS

Good. Say that word in about ten seconds. Make my night complete. (Beat) Comin' to Santa Fe with us?

PENELOPE

I got a pregnant woman in Santa Monica.

Penelope moves to leave. Perris grabs her by the arm.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Don't touch me like that.

PERRIS

Like what?

MORE

PENELOPE
 (Looking at Jennifer)
 Like that.

PERRIS
 (Removing his hand)
 There's room in the Ryder truck for
 your things. Plastic tubes for your
 political posters. A felt-lined box
 for your crystals.

PENELOPE
 Perris, how thoughtful. (Beat)
 Gotta run. Ciao!

The telephone rings. Penelope stops. Jennifer answers it.

JENNIFER
 Hello? Hi, Mr. La Faye. How are
 you? (Beat) He's here. (Cupping her
 hand over the mouthpiece) Mr. La
 Faye wants to know if he can bring
 a friend with him. Some English
 guy. A, uh... (Back into the phone)
 What's he do again? (Back to
 Perris) A performance artist.

PERRIS
 (Looking at Penelope)
 Just as long's he brings the cash.

JENNIFER
 No problem, Mr. La Faye. Okay. See
 you later. (She hangs up the phone)
 They'll be right over.

PENELOPE
 (Registering this)
 Gotta run!

As Penelope exits, Jennifer coos to the cockatiel.

PERRIS
 I thought you were going out.

JENNIFER
 I was gonna buy you a tape. You
 said no gifts.

PERRIS
 What kind of tape? Anything but
 Kate Bush.

JENNIFER

A meditation tape. "Creative Visualization."

PERRIS

Painting's my meditation. That's pretty visual. What I need's sunflower seeds. (He is struck by his wife's beauty. He kisses her ardently) Jeeze, you're lovely.

Perris crosses to his painting zone, and the Hanged Man.

PERRIS (cont'd)

Ever notice how we always end up giving more on our own birthday? (He picks up a knife) Add to that ruminating on how our life went into the crapper while lamenting how far we've still got to go. You gotta appreciate the fuss people make just because you've survived. And then the gifts! (He carves a wrinkle into the face of the Hanged Man) 'Nother year, 'nother setta lines. Each crevice a dream gone bad. Let's be subtle. Crow's feet. Hardening of the mouth. Not too much to destroy the illusion of compassion. There!

JENNIFER

I think I'll get out the good wine.

PERRIS

No! Courvoisier! The end of my devil's bargain with Scumbag!

Perris gestures with his knife toward the effigy.

PERRIS (cont'd)

Well?

JENNIFER

You're a perverse S.O.B...with a certain amount of charm.

PERRIS

A realist, darling.

JENNIFER

(Setting the table with cognac and glasses)

MORE

JENNIFER

Same thing to you, Perris.

PERRIS

Get out the Camembert. In honor of our European guest.

JENNIFER

England's not part of Europe. (She goes to the refrigerator) Just ask the French.

PERRIS

I never ask the French anything. They're intolerant of ignorance, and only respect you in direct proportion to the hysteria of your opinions. (Beat) So what's with Penelope?

JENNIFER

She calls New Mexico the Land of Entrapment.

PERRIS

And what's Venice, Paradise Lust? Gurus on skates, chainsaw jugglers. A Bazaar of the Bizarre.

JENNIFER

She's a rising star in local politics.

PERRIS

Ah, yes, the career. What do New Mexicans know about Nicaragua? They're too busy channeling entities.

JENNIFER

What's a performance artist?

PERRIS

Helluva segue. (Beat) A performance artist is a painter who can't paint, an actor who can't act, a musician who can't play, and he throws it all together into a hip concept called a performance piece, where, "speaking truth to power," he makes sweeping generalizations about art, religion and philosophy before an audience of fellow

MORE

PERRIS

cretins, endorsed by America's arts foundations, so they can justify their existence through the support of progressive and socially relevant entertainment, to the wild applause of cheese-nibbling, wine-swilling critics.

JENNIFER

Well, I asked.

PERRIS

Self-protective sarcasm. The armadillo has his armor. The horned toad, his horn. Jeeze, I sound like a Cole Porter song.

JENNIFER

Oh, Perris.

PERRIS

And I, Perris Romano, have only my sarcasm and my paint brush to combat a hostile planet!

JENNIFER

Perris...

PERRIS

What?

JENNIFER

We're going to be parents.

PERRIS

Great! With my gift for parody, I'll just imitate fatherhood. Kid'll never know the difference. I didn't.

JENNIFER

Could you cut it for a minute? Something's out of kilter.

PERRIS

Nothin' that leavin' LA won't fix. C'mon, let's get dressed for La Faye.

Perris starts kissing and undressing Jennifer.

MORE

PERRIS (cont'd)
Come upstairs. We'll make mad love
and watch the stars through the
skylight. Maybe snow.

JENNIFER
(Holding Perris off)
Gonna pacify me with an orgasm?

Pause.

PERRIS
Pacify you with an orgasm? That's a
new one. Do you know how many
lonely women in this city are dying
for pacification? (Beat) Penelope
put a bug in your ear.

JENNIFER
I can come up with my own insights.
Something's off. We're gonna be
parents and things have to be
straight.

PERRIS
Leaving LA's the first step. I
mean, here I've gone and
prostituted my talent, not to
mention breaking some pretty heavy
laws, to get us "straight." (Beat)
I got my hands dirty. For us. Given
you a woman. For us. A Sapphic
interlude before the rigors of
motherhood! Now get your sweet
pregnant ass up those stairs before
that swine La Faye shows up!

JENNIFER
You didn't give me a woman.

PERRIS
Repeating the history lesson: You
were up in Marin County at a
wellness seminar, and I--

JENNIFER
All right! You're a generous man!
Who'll do anything for his wife!
That the official version?

PERRIS
(Whispering)
Hey. Don't say it like that. Yes.
I'll do anything to keep you happy.

MORE

PERRIS
How many other guys would allow
what's been going on around here?
You wanted experimentation. I set
it up.

Pause.

Jennifer wants to end the "history lesson." Treating Perris like an artist always brings him around.

JENNIFER
(Stroking Perris's cheek)
Hey, Picasso.

PERRIS
We gonna play artist and his model?
Great!

They start up the stairs, kissing.

JENNIFER
And when La Faye leaves, we'll
strip naked and roll around in the
cash like hogs in a wallow!

As they reach the top of the stairs, the doorbell rings.

PERRIS
Let 'em wait.

JENNIFER
(Pushing Perris away)
Don't be rude, Perris.

PERRIS
What a woman I married. "Don't be
rude, Perris." Okay Mother Theresa,
you change while I entertain the
troops. (Beat) Coming!

Perris goes to the door while Jennifer disappears into the loft.

Hector La Faye and PETER GUERRE (black, mid-20s) enter.

La Faye wears a hat and coat over an expensive suit.

Guerre is attired in the latest British art rock plumage.

La Faye hands Perris his hat and coat. Perris hangs them on the deer antler hat rack.

MORE

LA FAYE

Perris! How are you this chilly evening? (He brings Perris and Peter face-to-face) Perris Romano, parodist extraordinaire, meet Peter Guerre, the Next Big Thing.

Perris extends his right hand to Peter, who drapes his velvet coat over Perris's forearm, revealing an expensive walking stick in his other hand.

Perris notices the walking stick, then tosses the coat on the table.

PETER

Howdy, padnah!

PERRIS

(To La Faye)

What's this guy's story?

LA FAYE

I took the liberty of informing my protege of your migratory intentions. He's getting into the spirit of things.

PETER

Let's not neglect the subject matter of your...your monetary endeavors. Purple mountains' majesties, that sort of thing.

PERRIS

Hey! Let's get this straight. You are a guest in my home. Got it?

PETER

I am properly rebuked.

PERRIS

You wanna see my serious work, fine. I won't discuss the contraband.

PETER

Fair enough.

Peter strolls over to the Hanged Man and studies the effigy.

LA FAYE

Where's the lovely wife?

MORE

JENNIFER

(Off screen, from the loft)
Up here, Mr. La Faye.

PETER

What a droll adaptation of A.E.
Waite's Hanged Man!

PERRIS

You know the Tarot?

PETER

I designed my own deck once.
Limited edition, sold out in a
month. I believe I was... (To La
Faye) What, thirteen? (La Faye
nods) This is your self-image? Life
in suspension?

PERRIS

My work speaks for itself.

Peter strolls around, looking at Perris's paintings.

PETER

Some of these are quite good. In a
derivative sort of way. I see
you've studied our Francis Bacon.

Peter stops in front of the nude of Jennifer and studies it
up close.

Jennifer, looking smashing, descends the stairs.

JENNIFER

Perris is on the verge of a
stylistic breakthrough.

PETER

This nude hardly does you justice.

Jennifer is not immune to the compliment.

LA FAYE

Greetings, *ma cherie!*

JENNIFER

Hello, Mr. La Faye.

LA FAYE

Hector. *Hector*. And greetings to
the embryonic Romanette. All's
well, gestationally? (Jennifer

LA FAYE
beams) Jennifer Romano, may I
present Peter Guerre?

Peter bows regally.

JENNIFER
We have some excellent cognac.
(Pouring) And European cheese. In
honor of Mr. Guerre.

PETER
Ah, but I am British. And Hecky is
of mixed heritage.

LA FAYE
I've found my merchandise commands
a higher price if I affect a
Continental demeanor. (He takes a
glass from Jennifer, who then
serves Peter) Remember: In the
world of art, as in commerce and
politics, appearances are
everything.

PERRIS
I didn't know there was a
difference.

LA FAYE
Between appearances and reality? Or
art and politics?

PERRIS
Between what I do for you and
crime.

LA FAYE
Crime? O, you poor lambkin. Life is
crime! The living feeds on the
living, while rotting within. We
steal the lives of pigs and cows
and chickens, who have in their
turn destroyed green things. We
crunch them in our teeth and thrill
to the taste and smell, the
texture, of dead protoplasm. So
that we may live. And take more.
The theft goes on. I steal your
energy. Someone else takes credit
for it. Then he or she is sued by a
crooked attorney hired by a man who
made his fortune building a missile

MORE

LA FAYE
 base on land stolen from the
 Indians. The very essence of life
 is crime. Crime and the life urge
 are one and the same! You got it, I
 want it, I take it. (To
 everyone) You think you're exempt.
 You're crazy. We're all implicated.

JENNIFER
 I'm no criminal.

PETER
 You're an accessory.

LA FAYE
 Ignorance is no defense. No matter.
 My money is American, which as we
 speak still flexes its muscles
 worldwide.

Perris picks up a rolled-up batch of paintings, covered by
 butcher paper and taped shut.

PERRIS
 The stuff's all here, Hector. The
 final batch.

La Faye takes the package. He flicks off the tape and
 unrolls the canvases.

LA FAYE
 Executed with your usual panache.
 Ahhh...you've improved the
 signatures.

PERRIS
 Charlie Russell himself wouldn't
 know the difference.

LA FAYE
 It's the signature that counts.

PETER
 Hecky, you *are* the cynic!

PERRIS
Hecky?

LA FAYE

A trifling endearment between... friends.

PETER

May I? (Hector hands him the canvases) How utterly quaint! Let's see...some anecdotal titles. "Prairie Courtship." And this one: "The Last Stage From tulsa." And... Oh yes! A bit of cowpoke erotica: "A Boy and His Horse!" Russell was a wise choice, Perris. Remington is clearly beyond your talents.

PERRIS

Okay, Hector, show's over. The money.

Peter hands the paintings back to La Faye.

PETER

(To Perris)

You have an unusual name. After the city?

PERRIS

The one in France, Arkansas, Texas, or Idaho?

PETER

The one named after the mythical figure who absconded with Helen of Troy.

PERRIS

(Indicating his wife)

That a threat?

PETER

I don't understand.

PERRIS

You haven't made one statement since entering my home that isn't laced with innuendo.

Pause.

PETER

(Exaggerating "getting it")

Ahhh...No, Perris, she's hardly my type. Lovely, but hardly my type. Your name is somewhat unusual.

MORE

PERRIS

It's spelled P-E-R-R-I-S. A town about 90 miles east of here, by Lake Elsinore, where they hold motorcycle races every fall. Or did, until the city council banned them.

PETER

But why?

PERRIS

Because of the undesirables that rode in with the decent folk.

LA FAYE

It's always the criminal element that ruins things for the decent folk.

PERRIS

Hector. The money.

PETER

What the devil is there in Santa Fe? Except for bored European royalty and outcast celebrities?

PERRIS

Real people. Like us hayseeds. Primitive folk.

PETER

Good Lord, you can go to Venice Boardwalk for that. I mean, why Santa Fe?

LA FAYE

Peter sang soprano with the Opera there during his teen-age years.

JENNIFER

We were walking in Westwood one night. We passed a travel agency. There was a poster in the window. A white cross on a hilltop. Framed by a rainbow. New Mexico's a whole other world! So we flew there on a gamble.

PETER

Heavens, I'd've preferred a plane.

MORE

PERRIS

(Ignoring Peter)

The Sangre de Cristo Mountains.
Penitentes. Brilliant sun and
ravishing rains that clear the dust
outta the air and move on. Across
miles and miles of *nothing*.

JENNIFER

It's another world. Really!

PERRIS

A great violet nothing.

JENNIFER

Clean.

PERRIS

Bleached bone clean. Not like this
muck here.

JENNIFER

We bought a ranch. Not like with
cattle or anything. Just ten acres.

PERRIS

A passive solar adobe home.

JENNIFER

With a detached guest house. Where
friends can stay when they visit.

PERRIS

Or live.

JENNIFER

And a studio. Where Perris can hone
his personal style.

PERRIS

I've already honed my personal
style.

PETER

Gaugin among the savages. Sounds
like a hoot!

LA FAYE

Leaving the entrapment of freeways
and TV behind, getting to the
essence of it all.

MORE

PETER
Nature at her most majestic!

PERRIS
You got it.

PETER
What a bore.

JENNIFER
Pardon me?

PETER
All that...nature. It's the human touch that reveals essence, that builds upon nature, rearranging her randomness. Civilizing her.

PERRIS
The human touch has done nothing but defile this earth.

LA FAYE
What Peter is saying is that he thinks you're running away.

PERRIS
From LA? Damn right.

PETER
From the competition. From yourself.

LA FAYE
It's all happening in the cities, Perris. New York, Rome, London, Tokyo. Even, God help us, San Francisco. I've often joked about your serious work. As a kind of motivating ploy. To ensure your output of the units. But I'll be sincere now. Now that our arrangement is concluded.

PERRIS
It'll be concluded when you hand me the money.

LA FAYE
YOU'RE THAT FAR FROM A REAL *BREAKTHROUGH!* A young artist needs the jostling of the art shows, the all-night discussions, the

LA FAYE
 in-fighting, the animosities!
 You're relegating yourself to
oblivion.

Long pause.

PERRIS
 I'd think playing Professor Higgins
 to one protege would be enough.

Pause.

PETER
 (Gesturing with his walking
 stick)
 I'm curious about the influence of
 our Francis Bacon on your work.
 Your serious work. The snarling
 dogs and putrefying bodies.

Perris grabs La Faye by his collar.

PERRIS
 I've delivered the units. Give me
 the cash and you can both continue
 your climb to global fame.

LA FAYE
 (Releasing himself)
 I have no desire for global fame.

PERRIS
 You and the performance artist.

PETER
 Envy is the tribute mediocrity pays
 to genius.

LA FAYE
 I don't think you're aware of
 exactly who it is I've brought with
 me tonight.

PERRIS
 Your next counterfeit joke on the
 art world. What did you say the
 first night you polluted my home?
 (Imitating La Faye) "With a quarter
 million dollars and a good press
 agent, I could turn a garbage
 collector into an international
 star."

PETER

Hecky, you've been shooting off at the mouth again.

PERRIS

(To Peter)

He's using you for your freak value.

Peter ignores Perris. He spots a blue scarf draped over the back of a chair. He picks up the scarf and sniffs it.

PETER

Hmmmm... (To Jennifer) Yours?

JENNIFER

No.

PERRIS

Yes.

PETER (cont'd)

A dispute between the happily marrieds? (To Perris) At least we're sure it's not yours. Blue's not your color, eh, painter?

Peter offers the scarf to Perris, who just stares at him. Peter slides the scarf into his pocket.

PETER (cont'd)

I'd like to meet her.

LA FAYE

Peter is blessed with an exaggerated sense of smell. Some read the human soul through the voice. Or the eyes. For Peter, it's the nose.

PETER

Let's not slight my visual sense.

PERRIS

Put it back where you found it.

Peter stares at Perris, testing him. Then he drapes the scarf over a deer antler.

PERRIS (cont'd)

(Deadly serious)

You've approved the units. Give me my cash. Leave us to our packing.

A knock at the door. Jennifer answers. Penelope, dressed to kill, enters.

MORE

PENELOPE

False alarm. She's gonna need a C-section. Baby looks to weigh nine pounds. (She looks around, sizing up the guests) You okay I'm here?

PERRIS

(Paraphrasing the popular 70s mantra)
We're okay, you're okay.

JENNIFER

Hector La Faye and Peter Guerre?
Meet our...our good friend,
Penelope.

La Faye bows.

Peter takes the blue scarf from the antlers and drapes it around Penelope's neck. Penelope is bewildered.

PERRIS

It's his highly-attuned olfactory sense.

PETER

You deliver *babies*? (To the group)
We men expend our energies on monuments to our phalli, yet women...women are in touch with Primal Forces! Mrs. Romano! Cognac all around! A toast to fertility!

Jennifer pours more drinks, including one for Penelope.

PERRIS

My wife here is two months preggers.

PETER

How perfect! Penelope can deliver Mrs. Romano's child. It's so... so...symmetrical!

Peter raises his glass, followed by everyone except Perris.

JENNIFER

Here's to new habits!

They all drink, except Perris.

MORE

PERRIS

Hector. The money.

PETER

Excuse me. I've presumed. (To Perris) You are going to Santa Fe. Penelope remains here. For her career.

PERRIS

You've presumed wrong.

PENELOPE

(To Perris)

Jennifer said you want to talk with me.

PERRIS

After the transaction.

PETER

Transaction! Such a clinical term, such sublime work!

PERRIS

THAT'S ENOUGH! I don't give a fuck who you're going to be, right now you're a limey crypto-faggot *artiste manque* asshole! (To La Faye) Gimme the money or the deal's off. I'll sell this shit elsewhere. (La Faye laughs) I know your clientele. *Nouveau riche* movie stars. Drug dealers. Texas oil men.

La Faye dismisses Perris.

PETER

(To Penelope)

I am a mixed-media sculptor. I want you to pose for me. In the nude. You are the Incarnation of the Feminine Ideal. Hector's given me a studio on his Malibu estate.

PERRIS

(To La Faye)

THE MONEY!

PENELOPE

(To Peter)

Who the fuck are you?

MORE

PETER

A multi-dimensional performance artist. From London. My father is Jamaican, educated at Oxford, where he teaches Quantum Physics. I intend--with my mentor's help--to be an international household word within five years. At the end of the sixth year, I shall give my farewell performance on the Fourth of July from the edge of your Grand Canyon, after which I shall pen my all-too-candid memoirs. Royalty shall bribe me just to see their names in the index! Every decade thereafter, I shall stage a retrospective, a Grand Summing Up of my life's work, beamed by satellite to the world's major cities, accompanied by cover stories in *GQ* and *Vanity Fair*.

Pause.

PERRIS

You're awfully sure of yourself.

PETER

Hector knows all the right people.

PERRIS

Maybe the timing won't be right.

LA FAYE

They'll love him! The public always does as it's told. (Beat) I envision, one day, Peter in the White House.

PERRIS

As a butler, maybe.

LA FAYE

Don't be small, Perris. It's Andy Warhol's idea.

PERRIS

He's not an American citizen.

LA FAYE

Andy Warhol was born in Pittsburgh.

MORE

PERRIS
I'm referring to Wonder Boy.

PETER
(To Penelope, in a Cockney
accent)
How d'you see it, luv?

PENELOPE
So you're a sculptor.

PETER
In four dimensions. Five, as soon
as technology catches up with me.

PENELOPE
I'm kinda partial to painters. The
way I see it, sculpture is what you
bump into when you're backing up
for a better view of the paintings.

Perris gloats.

PETER
My work appeals to all the senses.
Including the ears.

PENELOPE
I hear the wind blowing, but I
ain't seen the trees move.

Pause.

PERRIS
(To Peter)
Your move.

PETER
May I use your space here? Stereo,
lights, stairway? As long as
nothing's damaged?

PERRIS
What's on your mind?

PETER
A demonstration. Impromptu.

PERRIS
Long's your keeper pays for
anything you break.

MORE

PETER

There is no compensation for a
shattered ego, Perris.

Peter surveys the room from several vantage points.

Peter's movements grow progressively more feline.

Peter removes the clothing from his upper body, revealing a
chiseled physique.

The transformation from effete dandy to graceful animal is
stunning and total.

PETER (cont'd)

(To Penelope)

Select a record.

Penelope, at random, pulls out Roxy Music's FLESH + BLOOD.

PETER (cont'd)

Place the LP on the turntable.

As Penelope follows Peter's directions, Peter adjust the
studio lights to create a stark, interrogatory effect, with
him standing in the brightest spot.

PETER (cont'd)

Please, everyone, stretch
yourselves. But don't fall into
comfort.

Peter places the stylus in the record's groove, then shouts
over the pounding music.

SONG

My friend's flesh and blood / She
lies overtime. / You'd nail her if
you could / But she says, "Love me
for my mind / In my time." / I'm
not that kind.

PETER

Hey, Painter! You want a showdown?
With what shall we do battle? Can
you squeeze bullets from that tube
of paint?

Peter strides over to Perris's palette, scoops some paint on
his fingers, then smears it on his face and body.

MORE

PETER (cont'd)

Your work cannot draw blood! You're as bloodless as your Hanged Man! (He picks up Perris's knife) Oh, but you try to draw blood! (He throws the knife into the floor, where it sticks) Maybe I should draw first! Exhibit my rough trade and erase your ignorance!

Peter lifts the stylus from the record and plunges the room into silence.

PETER (cont'd)

Art lays limp on canvas, trapped in celluloid sitcoms, elevated above the audience on a clapboard stage, collecting dust on shelves. Please come a little closer. (All come closer, except for Perris) There is tension here. We'll make no effort to alleviate it. Let's explore it. (He vaults up the staircase) And you want to see my art! FUCK ART! FUCK YOUR PAINTINGS! FUCK PERFORMANCE ART! LET'S PLAY A GAME! (He leaps to the floor, picks up a sketch pad, writes while he speaks) Okay, friends. I am the Quizz-Master. You're the contestants. The winner--decided by me--takes whatever he or she wants. I am writing down five random occupations. Yes, this game is called Occupation! (He rips the paper into five pieces) I want each of you to take one. (He hands each person a piece of paper. Perris refuses his. Peter plunges the last piece of paper into Perris's pants pocket) Look them over. Good. Now, everyone is to act out his occupation. We are to guess what it is. All right? Everybody ready? (To Hector) You play this game exceedingly well. You start!

La Faye takes his time.

PERRIS

You're stalling.

MORE

LA FAYE

Aye, sure, this is most brave
That I...The live son of a dead
father / Doomed by my living breath
itself to die, / Must, like a
whore, unpack my heart with words.
/ Why must I speak of it? Why must
I always / Stoop from this decent
posture to this phrase / That makes
a posture of my hurt? Why must I /
Say I suffer? / (Searching for the
words)Something, something, eyes to
stare, something...Oh yes: And like
a barking ape betray us all / For
itch of notice. Oh be still, be
still, / Be dumb, be silent only.
Seal your mouth. / Take place upon
this edge of shadow where / The
stale scene's acted to the empty
skies. / Observe the
constellations. Watch the face / Of
heaven if it change to what it
sees. / Spy on the moon. Be
cunning. And be still.

Everyone applauds, except for Perris.

PENELOPE

You're some kind of public person.

JENNIFER

A politician?

LA FAYE

Close.

PENELOPE

An actor?

PETER

Yes!

LA FAYE

That was from *The Hamlet of A.
MacLeish*. 1928.

PETER

The date of your birth. (La Faye
frowns at him) Give or take a few
years.

MORE

LA FAYE

Archie MacLeish was a good friend
of mine, you know.

PERRIS

Ah, but of course.

JENNIFER

I wanna go next.

PETER

Ah, but of course.

Jennifer climbs the stairway. As she sings Billie Holiday's
"Strange Fruit," she descends, ending up face-to-face with
Peter.

JENNIFER

Southern trees bear a strange
fruit. / Blood on the trees and
blood at the root. / Black bodies
swingin' in the southern breeze. /
Strange fruit hangin' from the
poplar trees.

Peter stands there, shocked.

PERRIS

Didn't know you had it in you,
kiddo.

PETER

(Regaining his poise)
Very good! You're in the running!
(To Perris) Now it's your turn.

PERRIS

Not till we guess what my wife's
occupation is.

PETER

Of course.

PERRIS

Uh...something to do with the
Chamber of Commerce?

JENNIFER

Nope.

PENELOPE

You're a singer?

MORE

JENNIFER

Too obvious.

LA FAYE

Has it something to do with your
legal system?

JENNIFER

Close enough. "Bringer of Justice."

PENELOPE

(To Peter)

You sure you passed these out
randomly?

PETER

Scout's honor. (To Perris) You're
next.

PERRIS

Randomly? You gave these to us
randomly? It's just a coincidence
my paper reads "Fraud"?

PETER

You weren't supposed to tell! Maybe
it should've said "Spoilsport"!

PERRIS

This is bullshit.

PETER

Guess you're out of the running,
Perris.

PERRIS

Game's over.

PENELOPE

Hold on. I haven't had my turn.

PETER

Fair's fair. Give the lady her
chance.

PENELOPE

I'll need help on this. (To Peter)
You.

PETER

Moi?

MORE

PENELOPE

Take a record from the rack.

Peter selects *The Guitar Genius of the Ventures*.

PETER

The Guitar Genius of the Ventures.
Perris, your sense of *kitsch*
continues to astound.

PENELOPE

Pick a cut and play it.

Peter looks over the song list while appraising Penelope.

PETER

"Love Goddess of Venus." Perfect.

Peter lays the stylus in the groove of a gloriously cheesy waltz.

Following Penelope's lead, he engages in a comic, lewd, provocative mating dance.

When the dance concludes, the pair is clearly aroused.

Everyone is stunned.

JENNIFER

Wow.

LA FAYE

What did your paper say?

PETER

Tell him.

PENELOPE

"Secretary of Health, Education and
Warfare." I mean "Welfare."

Pause.

PERRIS

(To Peter)

Guess it'd down to you, mate.

PETER

(Handing his paper to
Jennifer)

I've already done mine.

MORE

JENNIFER

"Spoiler."

PETER

(Pouring himself a cognac)
I declare myself the winner.
Hector, give the loser his money.
Let's go. (To Penelope) Don't
forget your scarf.

No one moves.

PETER (cont'd)

Waiting for permission?

PENELOPE

This is all kind of sudden. You
don't understand the situation
here.

PETER

(With a Cockney accent, while
he readjusts the lights)
Yer bangin' the pinter, right? The
li'l woman knows all about it. Very
modern, if you's askin' me. Yankee
decadence. A bit o' novelty to
spice up a humdrum homelife. The
pinter thought o' keepin' it a
secret, but he's got enough guilt
wi' this forgery thing. Might even
mike 'im a bit slow t' rise, if you
get me drift.

PERRIS

That's enough.

PETER

An' when he's feelin' specially
bitter about the world's rejection
of his *serious* work, he punishes
loyal wifey with a salacious tidbit
or two. Slips o' the tongue.
Callin' her *Penny*. Or askin' for
some new move he could've only
picked up some stolen afternoon in
some Coast Highway motel.

JENNIFER

You got it all wrong, mister. (To
La Faye) Give my husband his money.
Now.

MORE

LA FAYE
Of course.

La Faye counts out several bills, places them on the table, then gathers up the role of forgeries.

Peter has sidled up to Penelope.

PETER
I am a gentleman. We'll be in the Rolls. All night if need be. Step out when you're ready. There'll be no obligations. I'll be done with my preliminary sketches in a week or two.

Peter kisses Penelope tenderly on her cheek.

LA FAYE
(To Jennifer)
I wish you all the best in your new life. (To Perris, extending his hand) If ever you find yourself in need of spare change...

Perris has neither picked up the cash nor even looked at it. He ignores La Faye's extended hand.

PERRIS
(To Jennifer)
Pick up the money.

Jennifer picks up the money.

Perris walks over to Peter.

Perris spits in Peter's face.

PETER
You're a sore--

Perris decks Peter with an uppercut to the jaw.

JENNIFER
Perris!

Jennifer, Penelope and La Faye rush to Peter's aid.

Perris, unseen by anyone, hides Peter's walking stick.

PENELOPE
(To Jennifer)
See what I mean?

JENNIFER

About what?

PENELOPE

What we talked about earlier. The cancer.

JENNIFER

Oh, yes. Yes.

LA FAYE

Peter. Peter!

PETER

(Groggy)

I...where? (He laughs)

JENNIFER

(Bringing Peter some water)

We'll pay for any damage.

PERRIS

The hell we will.

JENNIFER

You had no right to hit him.

PERRIS

He asked for it.

JENNIFER

I will not allow violence in my life.

PERRIS

Are you that thick? What about *emotional* violence? This prick insults me right and left and only got away with it as long as they had my money. Now I'm gonna pay his doctor's bills?

JENNIFER

You hit a man. You must take responsibility.

PERRIS

I'd hit him again! Next time, I'd kill him!

PENELOPE

You see? No remorse. It's this kind of sociopathic behavior--

MORE

PERRIS
You can all go to hell.

JENNIFER
(To Peter)
You okay?

LA FAYE
His nose is broken.

Jennifer goes to the freezer for ice.

LA FAYE (cont'd)
(To Perris)
A performer's face is his fortune,
young man. Our attorney will be
interested.

Jennifer hands Peter a towel full of ice.

PERRIS
Sure, La Faye. Press charges. The
cops'll be real sympathetic when
they hear the whole story.

LA FAYE
(Helping Peter to his feet)
Come on, old man.

The forgeries beneath one arm, La Faye escorts Peter toward
the door.

PETER
(To Penelope)
We'll be in the Rolls.

Peter and La Faye exit.

PENELOPE
(To Perris)
Well?

PERRIS
Well?

JENNIFER
(Exhaling)
Well.

PENELOPE
Well, whaddya wanna talk to me
about?

PERRIS

What did I wanna talk to you about?

PENELOPE

Yeah.

PERRIS

Well.

Penelope pulls out a piece of paper from a packet. She lays the paper on the table.

PENELOPE

I didn't know what to buy you for your birthday. So I got a gift certificate from a sweater store. I hear it snows in New Mexico.

PERRIS

I guess that means you, uh...

PENELOPE

Yeah.

JENNIFER

Why?

PENELOPE

It's not obvious?

PERRIS

He had it coming.

PENELOPE

No one ever "has it coming." You're just jealous.

PERRIS

Of what?

PENELOPE

His talent. His future. He really had you.

JENNIFER

Penny, look. Perris has been under a lot of stress. It just all came to a head. I-we--still want you to come to Santa Fe.

PENELOPE

Santa Fe's a joke.

Penelope picks up a POSTER from Perris's painting area table and unrolls it.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

You guys brought this back from your trip. (Reading from the poster) WITH LOVE FOUNDATION PRESENTS AN EVENING WITH OFF-PLANET BEINGS, CHANNELED BY REGINALD PRESTON. PLEASE BRING QUESTIONS FOR OUR PLEIADIAN AND OTHER OFF-PLANET ALLIES. This is a joke, right?

JENNIFER

This guy gets into sorta like a trance state, and an ally named Pitlar, from the Planet Xlactu, talks *through* him, and for fifteen bucks you can--

PENELOPE

I'M NOT GOING TO SANTA FE! (Pause)
I'm going to Central America.

PERRIS

Central America?

PENELOPE

With a Red Cross mission. A man down there's delivering babies. He's doing brave, *important* work.

PERRIS

You're fucking him.

PENELOPE

Why do you always assume I'm fucking any man I work with?

PERRIS

Answer my question.

Penelope stares at Perris.

JENNIFER

Gee, that's...great. Aren't you scared? Remember those nuns?

PERRIS

(Doing John Wayne)

A woman's gotta do what a woman's gotta do, eh, pilgrim?

MORE

PENELOPE

Actually, I'm excited. I can give my life real meaning. Serving others.

PERRIS

Excited? Of course she's excited. Sounds like an orgy of selfless compassion.

PENELOPE

What did you wanna talk about?

PERRIS

We've been doing it.

PENELOPE

I didn't tell you my agenda until just now.

PERRIS

It all fits. It's of a piece.

JENNIFER

Let's not bicker.

PENELOPE

What do you mean, it's all of a piece?

PERRIS

A liberal activist can only love in the abstract. Or from a superior position. You think by embracing the right cause or fucking the right people, you'll be righteous. Secondhand virtue. Lobotomized liberals, sloganeering their way to heaven.

PENELOPE

You're upset I'm withdrawing.

PERRIS

That's your postmodern way of putting it. Yeah. I'm angry at myself. I overestimated you.

JENNIFER

Perris, please.

MORE

PERRIS

(To Jennifer)

You love her, don't you? (Jennifer is uncomfortable) Go ahead. Proclaim it.

PENELOPE

Don't tell her what to do.

PERRIS

She's my wife, not yours.

PENELOPE

You don't own her.

PERRIS

You don't get it, lady. Jennifer here, in her desire to be likable--or is that lickable--resists the more dangerous forms of love. It upsets the sociable flow of things.

PENELOPE

I see. She's cast as the nice girl. I'm the slut. Her lesson.

PERRIS

Life is the lesson. What you learn is what counts. Not how many sweet-sounding slogans you can parrot.

JENNIFER

(Softly)

I love you. Don't leave us--me.

PENELOPE

Pardon me?

JENNIFER

(Embracing and stroking Penelope)

I love you.

PENELOPE

(Kindly)

I don't love you. Not in that way.

PERRIS

Why not? I adore her. In that way.

MORE

PENELOPE

You're a younger sister. You respect me too much. Your marriage has sheltered you. You're not your own woman.

PERRIS

New Age twaddle.

PENELOPE

Fuck off.

PERRIS

Liberation twaddle straight out of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Ultimate orgasms. Total fulfillment.

PENELOPE

FUCK OFF.

PERRIS

You think it's terrifically noble to trot down to some jungle, delivering brown babies, all because of your egomaniacal guilt over our foreign policy...while rejecting my wife for insufficient life experience?

PENELOPE

Non-acceptance is not rejection.

PERRIS

New Age twaddle. You want credentials? Jennifer is an underpaid receptionist in a ghetto medical clinic, for godsake.

JENNIFER

I can speak for myself. (To Penelope) I love you. No matter where you go or how you feel about me. I'll always love you.

PENELOPE

We're always blinder in first love. It wasn't as if we met on our own, by chance.

PERRIS

What does it matter how you met? You met.

MORE

PENELOPE

It was contrived. (Beat) I'd been celibate for eighteen fucking months! I meet this married guy at a party, says his wife's at some wellness seminar and they've got an open marriage. We do it, you get back, I like you, and Cupid here says wouldn't it be great for you to fulfill a suppressed desire and erase your bitch of a mother. A chance to embrace your womanhood. Right?

PERRIS

Right.

PENELOPE

I was skin-starved. You two seemed to know how to do it.

JENNIFER

It?

PENELOPE

Love.

PERRIS

Seemed?

PENELOPE

Whatever's goin' down around here, it ain't love.

JENNIFER

Maybe you can't see it.

PENELOPE

Either you deny yourself for the pleasure of someone's company. (To Perris) Or you become a tyrant.

JENNIFER

You just haven't found the right guy. Then, compromise is a door, not a wall.

Jennifer and Penelope are drowning in each others' eyes.

PERRIS

Know what I got out of it? Total release. Like running amok in a palace of pussy. Penelope--that

MORE

PERRIS
trick you do with your cunt and
that little bottle of hand lotion--

Outside, the Rolls Royce horn sounds.

PERRIS (cont'd)
Stay. Tonight. Even if we never see
you again.

PENELOPE
You just don't want *him* to win.

PERRIS
Oh, please.

PENELOPE
Peter Guerre's gonna be rich and
famous. You're not. So for me to go
to Malibu to pose--

PERRIS
Pose?

PENELOPE
Oh, there'll be more than that. Who
knows what tricks a black. English.
Man. Genius might know? You think
you're kinky, having us wear each
others' panties and moaning swear
words. Imagine what a
sophisticated. Third. Worlder with
a swank education might come up
with! Admit it, Perris.

PENELOPE (CONT)
You wanna come along. You might
learn something. With your gift for
parody.

PERRIS
I never go where I'm not invited.
It's degrading.

PENELOPE
(Moving toward the door)
I'll go ask.

PERRIS
Sit down.

Penelope arrives at the door. Perris grabs her.

PENELOPE

Scared? Afraid he might say yes?
Make you confront your...you
know...

Perris slaps Penelope.

PERRIS

White trash whore.

Penelope struggles free.

PENELOPE

(To Jennifer)

I got news for you, Miss Happily
Married. Wanna know why Faithful
Hubby stepped out? He was bored!

The Rolls Royce horn, again.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

(Yanking the door open)

HANG ON, ASSHOLES! (She slams the
door shut) You little white saint.
The Perfect Helpmate.

PERRIS

That's enough.

PENELOPE

Devoted hubby here was that close
to jumping ship, but he doesn't
have the balls to be alone, so he
asked me to go to New Mexico. A
fresh start. With you rotting at
that receptionist's desk!

PERRIS

Jenny. It's not true.

PENELOPE

So here's the scoop. I pose for the
black Brit. In between sessions, I
snort, shoot up or swallow whatever
his Sugar Daddy hands me, and while
he videotapes the black Brit
sodomizing me for posterity, I'll
be sure to smile. Wanna know the
best part? I won't be thinkin' of
you two lovebirds. You'll both be
erased.

Long pause.

MORE

PERRIS
I've always hated sentimental
farewells.

PENELOPE
FUCK YOU, WIMP!

Penelope moves to leave. Perris gets to the door first.

PERRIS
Gotta get my head straight.

JENNIFER
(As Perris exits)
Stay away from that Rolls Royce!

Beat.

JENNIFER (cont'd)
You didn't have to say that.

PENELOPE
What?

JENNIFER
(Pulling the cash out of a
pocket)
Is it true?

As Penelope watches Jennifer count the cash, she picks up
some cheese from the table and nibbles at it.

PENELOPE
(The wheels in her head
spinning)
Is what true?

JENNIFER
He was gonna...gonna...

PENELOPE
No.

Jennifer counts the cash.

JENNIFER
Then why'd you say it?

PENELOPE
I was angry.

JENNIFER

You being kind now? Did he say he'd leave me for you?

PENELOPE

No.

Jennifer finishes counting, puts the bills back in her pocket.

JENNIFER

Then why'd you say it?

PENELOPE

Just fuckin' with his head. Got rid of him, didn't I? That's what you want, isn't it?

JENNIFER

(Bewildered by a new thought)

I don't know.

PENELOPE

Well, you can "not know" with him or you can "not know" with me.

Jennifer stares at Penelope with new realizations.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

My father used to talk a lot about the main chance.

JENNIFER

Huh?

PENELOPE

The main chance. He told my brothers that maybe only once in a man's life, he can seize the main chance. (Beat) Applies to women, too. (Beat) This is your main chance.

JENNIFER

You don't mean...

PENELOPE

You're in a very strong position right now. (Beat) I know of a rich man in Hong Kong. Owns his own island. Get this. His living room floor is made out of glass. And just below that, a huge pool full of goldfish.

MORE

JENNIFER

Koi?

PENELOPE

Yeah, specially-bred koi. Huge brilliant multi-colored koi. You can stand in his living room, look down, and see fish.

JENNIFER

(Giddy)

Or you can swim with 'em, and look up the dresses of Asian women!

Jennifer and Penelope collapse into hysterics, falling into each others' arms.

PENELOPE

You slut! That's such a male trip!

Jennifer and Penelope catch their breaths.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Listen. I got a serious proposal. Just hear me out.

JENNIFER

What?

PENELOPE

It's outrageous. Check it out. When Perris gets back--

Perris comes through the door, wet from the outdoor drizzle.

Jennifer and Penelope stiffen with guilt.

JENNIFER

Feeling better?

PERRIS

Yeah. (Beat) Hey, whatever you're doing, don't stop on my account.

PENELOPE

What makes you assume we would?

PERRIS

Just bein' polite.

PENELOPE

Like when you slapped me?

MORE

PERRIS

Hey, sorry about that.

PENELOPE

That's it? You assault me and you're just "sorry"?

PERRIS

I wouldn't call it an assault.

PENELOPE

In less than a quarter hour, you broke a man's nose and slapped a lover. (To Jennifer) Look, I can't justify being here any longer. (Moving to the door) Drop a card from Santa Fe. Or whatever.

Penelope leaves.

JENNIFER

You ruined it. She was my friend.

PERRIS

That's right. Blame me. I'm the husband. That's what I'm here for.

Penelope, her hair wet, returns.

Penelope whispers in Jennifer's ear.

PERRIS (cont'd)

What's going on?

PENELOPE

(to Perris)

What is this, your *domain*?

Penelope continues whispering to Jennifer. They embrace. Penelope pulls back.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Maybe if things get...simplified.

JENNIFER

I understand. I love you.

Penelope leaves.

PERRIS

What's going on?

JENNIFER
None of your business.

PERRIS
WHAT DID SHE SAY?

JENNIFER
She said I have a baby to consider.

PERRIS
What's that supposed to mean?

JENNIFER
That I have a baby to consider.

PERRIS
You just said that.

JENNIFER
Well, that's what she said. She said--

PERRIS
ALL RIGHT!

JENNIFER
Perris, you're going to have to calm down and grow up.

PERRIS
(Agitated)
You're implying cause and effect?

JENNIFER
If you're gonna be hyper, do some chin-ups.

PERRIS
Okay. Then we pack. Okay? I got the boxes in the car.

Jennifer begins straightening up the place.

Perris goes to the chin-up bar, near the Hanged Man, and performs one-armed chin-ups, mirroring the Hanged Man, as he speaks.

PERRIS (cont'd)
You know about cockatiels?

JENNIFER
You mean whatsisname, Jose?

PERRIS

Guy at the pet store told me, as part of their mating ritual, they hang upside down. I mean, even animals'll do anything for love. (Beat) It's an upside down world, ain't it? Course, up and down are determined by gravity. (He switches arms) Gravity, an accumulation of matter. Which is an accumulation of energy. You resist gravity--energy--it hurts. But the pain makes you strong. By going against it. Like temptation.

JENNIFER

Temptation?

PERRIS

It's a kind of energy. Resist it, you suffer. Give in, you're weakened. (Continues with the chin-ups) A woman is an uncharted island. A man's adrift. Lured by the siren's call, he staggers ashore. He tames the fauna, cultivates the flora. Once he was a sailor and a hunter. Now he's a farmer, terrified of the weather.

Perris drops from the bar, crosses to Jennifer, kisses her with extreme passion.

PERRIS (cont'd)

I needed to suffer the unknown again. Too soon, Penelope became the known.

JENNIFER

Were you really going to leave me?

PERRIS

I can't say I *knew* her. I knew her mask. I could have shown her something. She knew that would've bound us together. She chose distance and ignorance and called it virtue. (Beat) Hurt me. Confess some secret sin.

JENNIFER

You want penance?

MORE

PERRIS

I need to tingle again. With insecurity.

JENNIFER

God, you're insecure enough.

PERRIS

Not with you. Guy on the radio, said you can stretch true love forever, it'll never break. What you and I've been through, our bond is unbreakable.

JENNIFER

We've been through something.

PERRIS

C'mon, baby. We've come so far tonight. Let's let all the secrets out. Purge ourselves and really start fresh.

Pause.

PERRIS (cont'd)

I'm losing you, aren't I?

Pause.

JENNIFER

There was this famous therapist at the wellness seminar. About your age. Dynamic. Assertive. We met for drinks, then walked down to the hot springs.

PERRIS

Give me the money.

JENNIFER

Huh?

PERRIS

From La Faye.

Jennifer hesitates, then pulls some bills from her pocket. She hands them to Perris, who counts them as he listens.

JENNIFER

We undressed, under the mountain moon. We'd already confirmed our mutual specialness. We were past

MORE

JENNIFER

the aren't-we-so-much-alike stage.
The other-people-are-so-phony
stage. The
I-don't-do-this-all-the-time stage.
We were past all that. The sulphur
fumes...they aroused me. They
confirmed my sense of sin.

PERRIS

(Loving it)

A touch of the demonic!

JENNIFER

We slid into the pool. He was
good-looking, in that conventional
way you hate. He wasn't in a hurry.
I liked that. Then I was invaded
by...not guilt, just thoughts. I
wished you were there. He had a lot
of hair, in strange black whorls,
on his shoulders and neck. I
remembered that joke you told about
hairy men and I laughed out loud.
He thought I was laughing at him.
Then I thought what you'd say about
this eminent man. I laughed again.
What could I say?

Perris stops counting the money.

PERRIS

You're not pregnant by him?

JENNIFER

I tried to relate to the situation
...Gothically. I imagined him stiff
and hulking and...brooding. Like
Laurence Olivier in *Wuthering
Heights*.

PERRIS

(Counting the money again)

Get to the good part.

JENNIFER

We started touching. He was all
technique. I felt like a
paint-by-numbers piece of
cardboard.

Pause.

MORE

PERRIS

And?

JENNIFER

It all turned ugly. The stench. This self-important hairy man. Then he reached up into his Banana Republic khakis and pulled out a joint.

PERRIS

Fucking cliché monger. (Beat) So did you or didn't you?

JENNIFER

I really tried. If I'd've been angry with you, I might've used him to spite you. But suddenly the thought of that man's penis inside me...(Beat) Funny. I bet that was when you and Penelope first--

PERRIS

Did he know you were married?

JENNIFER

My womb, contoured to your exact dimensions. (Beat) I'd left my ring in my overnight bag.

PERRIS

He saw the tan line.

JENNIFER

Yeah. So he kinda backed off, too.

PERRIS

Jeeze.

JENNIFER

He was such a success. In public. The opposite of you.

PERRIS

You mean you didn't do it?

JENNIFER

No.

PERRIS

So you get the titillation, the taste of temptation. With no actual guilt. Brilliant! Jennifer, you always manage to stay so clean!

MORE

JENNIFER

You'd prefer I'd fucked him? You are perverse. Penny was right. She said--

PERRIS

(Holding up the money)
Some of it's missing.

JENNIFER

How much is there?

PERRIS

(Snapping his fingers)
Gimme.

JENNIFER

Are you accusing me of--

Penelope enters. Jennifer and Perris stare at her. Penelope eyes her blue scarf where she forgot it.

PENELOPE

(To Perris)
I'm sorry for all that happened.

PERRIS

Change your mind?

PENELOPE

No.

PERRIS

Just stay the night.

PENELOPE

I don't wanna have to live, knowing that somewhere in America, some guy hates me.

PERRIS

I don't hate you.

PENELOPE

They're waiting for me. Just tell me you don't hate me.

PERRIS

I love you.

PENELOPE

Just as long's you don't hate me.

MORE

Penelope walks over to the nude of Jennifer. She caresses the ornate frame, then makes as though to lift it off the wall.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
May I? As a memento?

PERRIS
No.

PENELOPE
(Picking up her scarf)
Well, keep in touch.

PERRIS
Hold on. There's ten thousand dollars missing.

PENELOPE
Hey man, don't look at *me*.

PERRIS
When you were out in the Rolls. Did La Faye act funny, like he'd put one over on me?

PENELOPE
If you're thinking of going after La Faye, forget it. Guy's got a pearl-handled revolver in his glove compartment. You shoulda counted the money when he paid you. Let it go. You did well for yourself. Write it off. Umkay?

JENNIFER
Let it go, darling. Just be glad you're through with the guy. Letting go is a sign of maturity.

Pause.

PERRIS
Okay.

PENELOPE
Friends?

PERRIS
Friends.

Penelope blows Perris a big kiss, then exits.

MORE

PERRIS (cont'd)

Jeeze, what you gotta do to get outta this town. (Beat) The mountains! I am just not a sea level creature. Garbage settles in the lowlands. These canals are rife with rotting fish. Jenny...I'll never understand the glamor of trash.

JENNIFER

People into trash, it's just their low self-esteem.

PERRIS

Gimme the mountains! When I'm up on high, I see everything for the first time. Nothing has a name. Everything, strange and miraculous. Pure shape and color. (Looking at Jennifer as though for the first time) You are so beautiful. Sit for a sketch?

JENNIFER

(Flustered)

Perris!

Perris crosses to his painting table, picks up a sketch pad and pencil.

PERRIS

Just a quick study.

Perris circles Jennifer, studying her from various angles, as she speaks.

JENNIFER

You want all the hidden truths tonight. I have two more.

PERRIS

And then we'll be clean.

JENNIFER

You're the only man I'll ever love.

PERRIS

(Smug)

Hmmm.

MORE

JENNIFER

I'm leaving you.

Perris stops sketching.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

I'm terrified. But I gotta go for it.

PERRIS

What about, what about, the, the, baby? N-New Mex...the ranch? Our dreams?

JENNIFER

I'm gonna need money.

PERRIS

You're carryin' my kid! You can't just walk outta my life!

JENNIFER

It's not "your" kid. We don't own children. They come *through* us.

PERRIS

Don't gimme that New Age crap! You ain't walkin' outta here with my kid! Where the hell you gonna raise it?

JENNIFER

There's a feminist commune in the Northwest I thought I'd check out.

PERRIS

I'm not gonna have a buncha dykes raise my kid!

Perris paces the studio in barely controlled fury.

JENNIFER

You can't force me to stay with you. Stay away from me. You hit me, I call the cops! That's three assaults in one night!

PERRIS

Hit you? I'm not gonna hit you. I'M GONNA RAM A RED HOT POKER UP YOUR CUNT!

JENNIFER

And kill "your" kid? Just like you,
killing what you claim to love.
Look, Perris, as of now, I'm a
woman alone in the world, with a
baby to care for next year. I need
ten thousand dollars. Gimme ten
thousand dollars, I'm outta your
life.

Perris sinks to his knees.

PERRIS

NO! (Sobbing shamelessly) Jenny,
no! No! O God!

JENNIFER

Calm down. We gotta make a clean
break.

Perris throws some bills at Jennifer. She counts them as
Perris sobs.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

There's only eight thousand, seven
hundred here.

Perris throws some more bills at Jennifer, who counts them.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

Good.

Jennifer goes up the stairs to the loft and throws clothes
into a suitcase.

Perris wanders the studio in a fog.

PERRIS

I just...It's...Why can't I
ever...? (He stops) Jennifer!
Where's this commune?

JENNIFER

(From the loft, offscreen)
I told you. The Pacific Northwest.

PERRIS

But where?

JENNIFER

Penny thought it would be better
if--nothing.

MORE

PERRIS

What's Penelope got to do with this?

JENNIFER

Nothing.

PERRIS

When you two were whispering... (He figures it out) Jesus. So that's your game.

Jennifer comes down the stairway with her suitcase.

Perris blocks her at the bottom.

JENNIFER

Let me by.

PERRIS

Is that bitch behind this?

JENNIFER

Hey, man! I can think for myself! Now get outta my way. I am a pregnant woman. You lay one paint-smear'd finger on me, I charge you with assault. And I'll tell the cops about the forgeries.

Mexican stand-off.

Perris caves, steps aside.

Halfway to the door, Jennifer stops.

JENNIFER (cont'd)

I'm gonna need the car. You got the rental truck. Buy a Jeep or something when you get to New Mexico.

PERRIS

I thought I knew you.

Lightning flashes through the windows, followed by thunder and steady rain drumming on the roof.

JENNIFER

You'd send a pregnant woman out in the rain?

Perris pulls CAR KEYS out of a pocket.

MORE

PERRIS

You have the mailing address in
Santa Fe. Get straight, drop me a
line. This can't be the end of us.

Perris waits for a commitment from his wife.

JENNIFER

(Anything to get the keys)
Sure. Maybe I just need time.

Perris tosses Jennifer the car keys.

Jennifer exits, leaving the door ajar.

Perris sinks to the floor, moaning, into a fetal position.

As though reborn, Peeris rises and walks around, looking at
the place where he lived and loved. Memories lurk in every
corner.

Perris picks up Peter's walking stick, then absentmindedly
twirls it as though strolling down a promenade.

Perris ends up at Jose's cage.

PERRIS

It's you and me, Jose. Ready for
the Glorieta Mesa? Fidgety
lightning in a cobalt sky? Blood of
Fucking Christ Mountains. Ready for
the high holy ground?

Unseen by Perris, Peter Guerre appears in the doorway. His
nose is battered and swollen, his face blue and bruised.

PERRIS (cont'd)

Think I'll put on a record. Let's
dance to the Morning After and the
Great Unknown.

PETER

(Using a Brooklyn homeboy
accent for the rest of the
play)
Hey man. Yo. (Perris turns) Thass
m' stick. I want m' stick.

PERRIS

I have something you want?

PETER

Lissen. Dude. Thass m' stick.
Bought it from an old Jew in
Queens.

PERRIS

Bought it?

PETER

La Faye an' me're clearin' out.
Gimme m' stick.

PERRIS

Love your new accent. Keep at it.
Don't quit the, uh, *day job*.

PETER

This here be m' reg'lar talk. I'm a
actor, man. Now gimme m' stick.

PERRIS

After I get some answers.

PETER

Shit. Gimme a cigaret. La Faye don'
lemme smoke.

PERRIS

This is a no smoking household.
We're very health conscious around
here. Or hadn't you noticed?

Peter sighs. Advances toward a chair.

Perris raises the walking stick.

PERRIS (cont'd)

Stay back!

PETER

I'm gon' siddown, man. (Sits)
Whatchoo wanna know?

PERRIS

One. La Faye got a pearl-handled
revolver in his glove compartment?

PETER

Who da hell tol' you dat?

PERRIS

Two. Did La Faye fuck me with the
money?

MORE

PETER

Hector may be a asshole, but he be a honest asshole.

PERRIS

Three. Who the hell are you?

PETER

I done tol' you. I'm a actor. From Brooklyn. Got fed up wid dat East Coast shit. Hopped a Greyhound wid twenny seven dollars in my pocket. Passed through New Mexico, by the way. Friend in Albuquerque said I should check out the regional theater there. Rode that ski tram up the Sandia Crest. Looked all the way into Colorado, Texas, Arizona, on down to Mexico. Shit, I dunno what it is wid white people and wastelands. (Beat) Landed here four months ago. Hector picked me up while I was sleepin' on da beach, eatin' outta trash cans. Said he liked the way I held m' cigaret. Called it a *fag*. Set me up wid actin' lessons from some Hollywood fruit, bought me the weird threads, paid for a nose job. Thanks t' yew, I gots to get another one. This time, La Faye says I'm also gon' get a cleft in m' chin. Ever hear somethin' so stupid? A nigger wid a cleft in his chin? There's gon' be a wardrobe change, too. Black leather, wid silver buckles all over. Next thing, chump's gonna wanna *whiten* m' *skin*.

PERRIS

Four. You lovers?

PETER

Fuck no. Sometimes I lead him on, jus' t' keep da balance o' power straight. I suck 'im off ever now 'n' then. But I ain't no *fag*. (Beat) Can I have m' stick?

PERRIS

Five. Where's Penelope?

MORE

PETER

Dat bitch? Why you wan' know 'bout her?

PERRIS

I have reason to believe she has ten grand of mine.

PETER

No way. (Beat) Don' shoot da messenger, man, but yer wife just came out to da Rolls, jus' as da bitch an' I're 'bout t' git it on, she taps on da window. Pisses Hector off, 'cuz he be videotapin' us. He roll da window down. Drops o' rain, you unnerstan', they be fallin' on Hector's wood and leather interior. Your wife leans in. Says, "Penny, I got the money." Bitch say, "How much?" Wifey say, "Twenny grand."

PERRIS

I only gave her ten!

PETER

Nex' thing I knows, they be talkin' 'bout buyin' a condo in Santa Monica.

PERRIS

Impossible. You can't have a kid in a Santa Monica condo.

PETER

What kid? Tomorrow mornin', da bitch is arrangin' yer wife's abortion. Like I said, don' shoot da messenger.

PERRIS

Where is my wife?

PETER

They took off in yer car.

Perris erupts, swinging the walking stick, breaking things.

PETER (cont'd)

You crazy white muthafucker! Don' break m' stick!

MORE

Perris works his way toward the Hanged Man. Peter thinks Perris is coming for him.

PETER (cont'd)
Stay da fuck away!

Perris helicopters his way around Peter.

Perris smashes the Hanged Man in a hellacious rage.

Like a pinata, candy, small brightly-colored toys and cigarettes in flashy imported packages fly across the studio, onto the floor.

Peter falls over the cigarettes as Perris's rage is finally spent.

PETER (cont'd)
Hey, man, smokes! Hoo-wee! Imports!
Turkish Specials! Ramses Twos!
Gitanes!

Snow begins to fall in the studio, slowly at first, then more thickly. Only Perris can see it.

PERRIS
What's this? Snow!

PETER
Whatchoo talkin' 'bout?

PERRIS
It's snowing! I love it!

PETER
It don' snow indoors. Even a
Brooklyn nigga know dat.

Outside, another flash of lightning, followed pealing thunder.

Perris lowers the lighting level as he speaks.

PERRIS
Peter. That is your name?

PETER
Actually, man, it's Billy. Billy
Blast. Hey, man, you got a match?

PERRIS
(Collapsing into hysterics)
Not since my wife left!

PETER
 (Patting his pockets for a
 lighter)
 You West Coast white folks is
 strange.

PERRIS
 You just caught us on a bad night.

PETER
 Bad *night*?

Peter finds a LIGHTER in his pocket. Fingers it while he
 speaks.

PERRIS
 I love her very much.

PETER
 You call that love, palmin' 'er off
 on some bitch? You one confused,
 needy muthafuckah, Perris. You don'
 spend some serious time alone, you
 gon' kill somebody.

PERRIS
 I got a ranch and thirty grand in
 the bank.

PETER
 Good. You go t' yer wasteland an'
 get yerself together. Man like you
 got no business bein' married.

Perris picks up some paintings from a corner of the studio.
 He rips them to shreds and tosses them in a pile on the
 floor.

PERRIS
 Lend me your lighter. Please.

Peter tosses his lighter to Perris.

Perris sets fire to the pile of canvases and broken frames.

PETER
 Yeah!

Perris tosses the lighter back to Peter.

Peter lights a cigarette.

Perris removes a handful of paper money from a pocket.
 He tosses the money onto the growing conflagration.

PETER (cont'd)
 Hey, man. Them's serious Ben
 Franklins!

As the snow continues to fall, Perris drops the last of his bills into the fire.

Perris crosses over to the nude of Jennifer. He lifts it from the wall, and carries it toward the pyre.

Perris stands over the flames, studies the portrait.

Perris moves to toss the portrait onto the fire.

Perris catches himself.

Perris walks over to Peter.

PERRIS
 Please see Penelope gets this.

Peter leans the painting against his chair. He blows plumes of blue smoke.

Perris crosses to Jose's cage, brings the cockatiel out on his finger.

Perris lays the Roxy Music LP, AVALON, on the turntable.

PERRIS (cont'd)
 You ain't so pure yourself.

PETER
 I'm jus' like yew, man. Cat wid a
 dream, payin' some serious dues
 till I gets some deep fuck you
 money. Soon's I get some exposure,
 I'm dumpin' La Faye.

PERRIS
 (Dropping the stylus in the
 groove)
 You're a user.

PETER
 Thass showbiz, man. Don' let no one
 tell yew diff'rent.

The song "Avalon" begins. Perris dances a samba with Jose as the snow continues to fall.

Peter drags happily on his cigarette, blowing plumes of smoke.

SONG

Now the party's over / I'm so
tired. / Then I see you coming out
of nowhere. / Much communication in
a motion / Without conversation or
a notion. / Avalon.

Perris and Jose swing by Peter. Perris hands Peter his walking stick and passes on, dancing in the litter-ridden studio as the snow falls.

A cloud of rich blue smoke hovers over Peter's head.

SONG

Where the samba takes you out of
nowhere, / And the background's
fading out of focus, / Yes, the
picture's changing every moment. /
And your destination you don't know
it. / Avalon. / Dancing, dancing,
dancing, dancing.

As the screen fades to black, we focus on Perris, dancing with Jose.

Then we focus on the nude of Jennifer as Peter absentmindedly caresses the ornate frame.

SONG (cont'd)

When you bossa nova there's no
holding. / Would you have me
dancing out of nowhere? / Avalon...

THE END