

If Not Now

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN

We hear the quite recognizable theme music from THE GODFATHER playing.

OPEN ON:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS the inside of this one-bedroom New York apartment. We see it is messy, but just shy of being disgusting. Standing out is a framed poster from the film RAGING BULL. It's the shot of De Niro's face (as Jake LaMotta) all sweaty. It is hung perfectly, especially in contrast to the rest of the place. The camera finally comes to rest on CHARLIE DONNELL, sitting on the couch, watching THE GODFATHER. Charlie is 29 years old, though he looks younger, and otherwise has a very ordinary appearance. We watch him watching the movie intensely. A naked woman, whom we see from the neck down only, walks in front of Charlie. He gives a slightly annoyed look at this minor interruption in his viewing. We continue to watch him watching the film, as we:

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

We once again see Charlie sitting on the couch, watching a movie. This time it's SOME LIKE IT HOT. In the background a few things have subliminally changed, as has Charlie's appearance, but only very slightly.

CHYRON: FIVE YEARS LATER. (then) MAYBE SIX.

We stay on Charlie for a few moments, as we hear the movie end with the infamous lines: "Damn it, Osgood. I'm a man." "Well, nobody's perfect." Charlie laughs as if he's heard this for the first time. He closes his eyes as he lets the movie watching experience engulf him. He finally gives a huge sigh, opens his eyes and shuts off the DVD.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ready?

Charlie looks to his left. The Camera WIDENS to reveal a sexy woman in her late twenties, wearing a football jersey, on the couch next to Charlie. Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE  
Thanks for waiting.

He leans in for a kiss, but then sticks his head up inside her jersey. She giggles.

A BLACKENED SCREEN

FEMALE (V.O.)  
Lay it on us, Charlie.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Well, this one goes back a ways.

OPEN ON:

EXT. THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Chyron: Thomas Jefferson Junior High School, 1968.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Just another ordinary day at school. Afraid for my life and pretty sure I would never get laid.

JOSH (V.O.)  
Kind of like me now.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Yeah, Josh. Anyway...

INT. SCHOOL - LARGE CLASSROOM

We see a large classroom filling with a variety of 8th grade students. Some have long hair and brandish peace signs. Others are oblivious to the Vietnam War as is evidenced by their fashion and their youthful nerdiness.

Angle On: Two teachers talking: one male, one female.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
The serious looking guy, that's Mr. Roman. He's half Cherokee Indian. A fact he somehow lets you know at least once a day. The babe? She's Mrs. Onder. She's married to Mr. Onder, another teacher, so everyone pictures them having sex.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)  
Very mature.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
I was thirteen, for crying out  
loud.

Angle On: A pleasant looking soldier, plenty of medals on his  
chest, staring out into space.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
The dude? Well, he's the star of  
this particular story. Oh, there's  
me!

Angle On: Two rather nondescript 13 year-olds walking up the  
steps, smiling at friends, avoiding eye contact with  
potential killers.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
I'm the dweeb on the left. The  
other guy's Rob, my best friend  
that day.

Young Charlie looks around, then reports back to Rob.

CHARLIE  
She's not here yet.

ROB  
No kidding. So...wanna know who  
likes you?

CHARLIE  
Besides your mother?

ROB  
Ronnie Balon.

CHARLIE  
Liar.

ROB  
I heard it.

CHARLIE  
From who?

ROB  
Whom.

CHARLIE  
Fuck you. Who? Whom?

ROB  
I don't remember. I just heard it.

CHARLIE  
What exactly did you hear?  
Verbatim.

ROB  
Ooooo. Big word.

CHARLIE  
So is Motherfuckercocksucker.

FEMALE (V.O.)  
Nice detail, Charlie.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Thanks. So, anyway, Mr. Roman says:

MR. ROMAN  
All right, class! We have a special  
treat today.

Just then the classroom door opens and in walks the  
spectacular DONNA SANTANGELO. And time stands still. She is  
wearing bright pink short shorts to complement her dazzling  
red hair, and is one phenomenally sexy looking fourteen-year-  
old, who you'd swear is twenty.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Ladies and gentlemen: I give you  
Donna Santangelo.

She starts to walk up the steep steps and every guy curses  
himself for not saving an empty seat next to him. Even Mr.  
Roman stares at her until Mrs. Onder elbows him and laughs.  
The Army Captain follows her with his eyes only, a slight  
smile forming on his otherwise expressionless face. Donna  
walks slowly and deliberately. As she walks behind Charlie he  
(IN SLOW MOTION) leans back slightly and is able to brush his  
neck against her naked calf.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
Best moment of my pathetic life.

Finally, Donna sits next to a girl and the whole class  
relaxes as one.

MR. ROMAN  
As I was saying, Captain Hart has  
just returned from serving his  
country in Vietnam.

The class reacts.

MR. ROMAN

Well, this brave soldier has been kind enough to come and tell us what it's like over there. And I'll bet he had it almost as rough as my Cherokee ancestors did.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

See?

MR. ROMAN

Captain?

Captain Hart takes a moment before rising, then he stands, looks over the entire class, and walks over to Mr. Roman, who has his hand out. The captain stares at it for a moment then shakes it, uncertainly. He turns to face the class.

CAPTAIN HART

Class. I am Captain Ronald Hart. Army Special Forces. An elite fighting squad sent into the hellacious jungles of Vietnam to help protect America's vital interests and to kill as many gooks as humanly possible.

Angle On: Mr. Roman and Mrs. Onder look alarmed.

Angle On: Young Charlie and Rob.

CHARLIE

Here we go.

ROB

Buckle up.

CAPTAIN HART

Charlie is very sneaky, boys and girls. He'll send an 8-year-old kid running toward you and too late you realize he is weighed down with detonated grenades and he blows up himself and as many of you as he can. I lost three men that way, close friends. Fucking zipperheads. Know why we call them zipperheads? Anybody? That's right.

CAPTAIN HART(cont'd)

Because when you shoot them in the forehead their head splits wide open as if you opened it with a zipper.

MR. ROMAN

Excuse me, Captain.

CAPTAIN HART

You there!!

He points and everyone looks to see that his target is Donna Santangelo. She meets his gaze.

DONNA SANTANGELO

Yes, Captain.

CAPTAIN HART

If I had met you and all your legs there before I went in-country I could have used your image to help me get through those seven days I was buried under ten dead bodies.

DONNA SANTANGELO

Sorry.

The captain stares at her for a moment. Then:

CAPTAIN HART

Now, students, let me instruct you on the best way to slit a gook's throat so he won't be able to scream out...

MALE (V.O.)

No fucking way.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I swear on this scone.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBUCKS COFFEE SHOP

Charlie is sitting on top of a chair back, eating a raspberry scone, as he looks down on his four listeners, JOSH, VICTOR, CARMEN and SAMANTHA, all around 24 years of age -- ten years younger than Charlie.

CHARLIE

I mean, he was just like that guy in THE DEER HUNTER.

JOSH  
At the wedding?

CHARLIE  
That's the guy.

VICTOR  
Man, I've got to see that movie.

It suddenly gets very quiet. Josh, Carmen and Samantha look nervously from Victor to Charlie. Charlie just stares at Victor as if trying to identify what species he is.

VICTOR  
What?

Charlie gets off his chair in a menacing fashion.

JOSH  
Come on, Charlie. He's new.

VICTOR  
What is it, Charlie? You're upset I never saw THE DEER HUNTER?

CHARLIE  
I am, Victor. I know it sounds crazy, but I tend to surround myself with people whom I don't have to explain everything. That's why I'm still friends with my childhood buddies. It's not that they're so great. It's just simpler. I don't want to work too hard at anything, especially relationships. I'm like that guy in WEEKEND AT BERNIE'S.

Victor doesn't say anything. Charlie just stares at him. Finally, Victor confesses:

VICTOR  
I, uh, never saw that either.

CHARLIE  
And that's okay. It's a piece of shit movie. I wouldn't be mad if you did see it, but I don't judge you for not.

VICTOR  
Do you have a list?

CHARLIE

I do. Samantha? Will you make him a copy later?

SAMANTHA

Sure, Charlie.

VICTOR

I'm sorry.

CHARLIE

Hey, man. I'm just fucking with you.

VICTOR

Really?

Charlie just shrugs.

JOSH

Hey, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Yeah?

JOSH

Your story took place in 1968.

CHARLIE

Shit. You caught that, huh?

JOSH

Yeah. Sorry.

CHARLIE

Hey, my bad, Kid.

SAMANTHA

What? You made the whole thing up?

CHARLIE

Samantha! Come on. The story is totally, unabashedly true.

SAMANTHA

No one says "unabashedly."

CHARLIE

Sorry.

VICTOR

I don't get it.

CARMEN  
Charlie sometimes borrows stories.

CHARLIE  
All great writers do. And Chazz  
Palminteyri.

SAMANTHA  
So whose story is it?

CHARLIE  
My Uncle Pete's. Fuckers forty-  
nine tomorrow, can you believe  
that?

VICTOR  
So, why pretend...

CHARLIE  
People like 'em better if they  
think the story's about you.

CARMEN  
I love your stories, Charlie.

SAMANTHA  
Me, too.

CHARLIE  
I did, however, throw in Donna  
Santangelo. God, she was hot.

JOSH  
What ever happened to her?

CHARLIE  
No idea. I just hope I never run  
into her. Because if she's put on  
some serious poundage I don't think  
I could take it.

SAMANTHA  
You're so deep, Charlie.

CARMEN  
Ass.

CHARLIE  
Ass? You calling me an ass?

CARMEN

I did, but now my anger's gone. See you at the office tomorrow.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I gotta get home.

JOSH

What's on?

CHARLIE

BLACK ORPHEUS. On the Sundance Channel. You guys should check this one out. Never been another movie like it. Later.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie is on the couch with Carmen (though she is not the girl we saw on the couch earlier). They are snuggled up next to one another, watching the movie. Occasionally she looks over at him, but knows better than to talk. As always, Charlie is totally immersed in his movie.

INT. BLOCKBUSTER STORE

Charlie, wearing his Blockbuster uniform, is loading his buddy, BRETT, up with Sno-Caps and Blockbuster popcorn. Brett is in a wheelchair. In the background we see Charlie's four minions from the night before. They all work there.

CHARLIE

There's nine boxes of Sno-Caps there.

BRETT

Yeah, yeah. Don't fucking touch 'em or you'll cripple me.

CHARLIE

More than you already are.

BRETT

Real nice.

CHARLIE

See you tonight?

BRETT

When's show time?

CHARLIE

Nine-fifteen sharp. The running time is 120 minutes, which'll give me 15 minutes to cleanse the palette before "The Hustler," which starts at 11:30 on AMC.

BRETT

It must be totally gratifying to be such a productive human being.

CHARLIE

Look who's talking.

BRETT

I help feed the homeless on weekends, I campaigned for Congressman Dickhead, I shouted down the anti-war protestors...

CHARLIE

Damn your eyes!

BRETT

Too late.

They exchange smiles and Brett starts to exit. A customer holds the door open for him. Brett glares at the guy.

BRETT

What am I, a chick?

MAN

What? Sorry, I...

BRETT

Nah, I appreciate it.

Brett wheels adeptly out the door, saluting the man as he goes. The poor guy goes about his business.

Victor approaches Charlie.

VICTOR

Can I ask you something?

CHARLIE

About my buddy, there?

VICTOR

Yeah.

CHARLIE

I mean...  
(laughs)  
it's a ridiculous story.

VICTOR

You're laughing?

CHARLIE

Hey, funny is funny. I guess it's  
been about five years now. Brett  
and I went to see "Gosford Park" at  
the Ziegfeld.

VICTOR

Ooooo. Slow film.

CHARLIE

Just listen.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATER

We see Charlie and Brett seated in the movie theater,  
watching the screen intently.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

So we're sitting there. I've got my  
popcorn, Sno-Caps and large Coke.  
Brett has nachos with extra  
jalapenos, Milk Duds and a cherry  
Icee.

VICTOR (V.O.)

Nice.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

We sit through some decent foreign  
movie trailers, then "Gosford"  
starts and after only a minute  
Brett nods off.

Brett is out; his head dangling down in front of him. He  
starts to snore. Charlie gently nudges him and suddenly Brett  
violently whips his head back. In C.S.I. fashion, the CAMERA  
ZOOMS inside Brett's body where we see and hear his spine  
snap.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. BLOCKBUSTER STORE

VICTOR  
No fucking way.

CHARLIE  
Damnedest thing ever.

VICTOR  
Holy shit. And he was paralyzed?

CHARLIE  
From the waist down. Not that he  
got that much action there anyway.

VICTOR  
What a tough break.

CHARLIE  
Hey, I'm the one who had to leave  
in the middle of the movie.

VICTOR  
You didn't go for help right away?

CHARLIE  
He didn't wake up 'till half way  
through. That's when he realized he  
was paralyzed. Poor guy hates  
Robert Altman with such a passion  
it's frightening.

VICTOR  
Never leave my life, okay?

CHARLIE  
Where the fuck am I gonna go?

A customer walks up to Charlie, holding a DVD in his hand.

CUSTOMER  
Hey, is this supposed to be good?

Charlie takes the DVD out of the guy's hand, looks at it,  
smiles at the guy, then viciously throws it on the floor,  
startling the man, but none of his co-workers.

CUSTOMER  
What are you doing?!

CHARLIE  
I just did you a big favor.

CUSTOMER  
But I like Madonna.

CHARLIE  
Hey, you know what? So, do I. I like her singing. I liked that she kissed Britney. I'd bang her from here to Boston. But she can't act for shit and this film never should have been made.

CUSTOMER  
Come on! I read the back. Sounded like a great idea for a movie.

CHARLIE  
Oh, it is. Don't move!

Charlie moves off. The man, unsure and not just a little afraid, doesn't move. Charlie returns with another DVD, shows it to the guy.

CHARLIE  
This is the original. "Swept Away..." The full title is "Swept Away ..By An Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August." It is a gem, starring Giancarlo Giannini and Mariangela Melato, directed by Lina Wertmuller.

CUSTOMER  
Sounds foreign.

CHARLIE  
That's right, my friend. It's an Italian piece of art.

CUSTOMER  
I'd rather see the English version with Madonna.

CHARLIE  
Get the fuck out of here.

CUSTOMER  
What?

CHARLIE  
(slowly enunciating)  
Get. The. Fuck. Out. Of. Here.

The customer stares at Charlie, angrily. Charlie is calm, but meets the guy's stare. Finally:

CUSTOMER  
I'll take the Italian one.

CHARLIE  
Attaboy.

Charlie hands it to him.

CHARLIE  
Watch it and let me know. You don't like it, you don't pay.

CUSTOMER  
I like you.

CHARLIE  
I like you, too.

The guy leaves. Charlie stares after him, then whirls around and stomps the Madonna DVD once more.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER

Charlie walks up to the ticket booth and without any words being exchanged, he hands the woman some money, she hands him a ticket.

TICKET GIRL  
Enjoy it, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Always do, Lori. Always do.

He enters the movie theater.

INT. MOVIE THEATER

Charlie is sitting by himself in a sparsely populated theater, hypnotically eating his popcorn and Sno-Caps. He is totally lost into the movie. Forget Disneyland. For Charlie, this is the happiest place on earth.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie is sitting at a barrel that serves as his table. He is mindlessly eating a bowl of cereal and staring at the cereal box. He heaves a huge sigh, then, with effort, he gets up and walks over to his computer.

He sits down and stares at the screen. From his P.O.V. we see the screen and written on it is this and only this:

?????????????  
An original screenplay by  
Charlie Donnell

Angle Back On: Charlie who just stares at the screen the way he's obviously done day after day for who knows how long.

There is a KNOCK on the door. He gets up and opens the door. It is ALLISON, his not terribly attractive neighbor, around 40 years of age. She holds a package.

ALLISON  
This is New York, Charlie. You don't just open a door without asking who it is.

CHARLIE  
Sorry.

ALLISON  
It's okay. I brought you something.

She hands the package to him.

CHARLIE  
Jesus, Allison. What is this, five pounds?

ALLISON  
Virginia Ham. Your favorite.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, it's my favorite, but five pounds of the stuff?

ALLISON  
Sorry.

CHARLIE  
It's all right.

ALLISON  
So?

CHARLIE  
Oh, I don't know, Allison. I'm kind of tired.

ALLISON  
I want to.

CHARLIE  
Really?

ALLISON  
Yes.

CHARLIE  
Okay then.

He lets her in. They walk over to the couch as if they have done this hundreds of times. They have. He sits on the couch, she kneels down in front of him and starts to unzip him. We CLOSE on Charlie's face. It is an ambiguous mixture of pleasure and anguish. He opens the package and mindlessly eats some of the ham while she gives him a blow job.

EXT. PARK - DAY

It is a perfect Fall day. Charlie and a bunch of friends are playing football. We hear someone yelp in pain.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Time.

Charlie, bleeding from a cut over his eye, walks off the field, where a buddy of his, STAN, has been watching. Stan is wearing a suit, which is in dramatic contrast to the slobs playing ball.

STAN  
That you who screamed?

CHARLIE  
No. It was that pussy Tim. I mean his elbow bangs into my head and he screams. How's that okay?

STAN  
Nasty cut. So... five pounds of ham, huh?

CHARLIE  
Honey ham, my friend. All the way from Virginia.

STAN  
I still don't get it.

CHARLIE

Give it a rest, will you.

STAN

The woman gives you blow jobs and deli meats, Charlie. What more could you want?

CHARLIE

Oh, I don't know. A sense of attraction, love, stuff like that.

STAN

Maybe if you did something for her. You know, like kiss her, grab her boobies. Something.

CHARLIE

Stan, that's not the kind of relationship my Allison and I have. We share a thoroughly unhealthy, depressing, self-loathing relationship that has thrived for ten years now. Why would you shit on that? Hold on a minute.

Charlie rushes onto the field just after a play begins. He runs into the End Zone and catches a pass for a touchdown. We see high fives all around. Stan just smiles and shakes his head. TOMMY, another childhood friend, arrives. He is dressed like the other slobs. He kisses Stan on the cheek.

STAN

You know I hate that, right?

TOMMY

Thus my pleasure. What's the score?

STAN

No idea. Charlie just ran the play.

TOMMY

Ah, the infamous Blackout play. I invented that play, you know?

STAN

I know, Tommy. Everyone knows.

TOMMY

Okay. Just wanted to make that clear.

STAN

You've been making it clear for  
twenty years now, okay, COCK?!

TOMMY

(laughing)

Whoa, Stanley, what the fuck's got  
you?

STAN

Sorry. It's just, you know...  
Charlie.

TOMMY

Ah yes. (Irish brogue) The laddie  
can get to you, can't he?

STAN

You're German.

Charlie approaches slowly, then suddenly tackles Tommy.

TOMMY

Get the fuck off me!

They get up off the ground.

CHARLIE

I've missed you, Man. You haven't  
been by the store in a while.

TOMMY

I can't go in there anymore,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE

Why not? Is it that smell?

TOMMY

It depresses me seeing you working  
at a Blockbuster.

CHARLIE

But I love working there.

TOMMY

That's what depresses me.

CHARLIE

I don't get depressed that you're a  
happily married, successful lawyer.

Tommy just stares hard at Charlie for a moment, then:

TOMMY  
I love you, Man.

CHARLIE  
Fag.

STAN  
Game almost over, Charlie? I'm  
starving.

CHARLIE  
You are? All right.  
(calls out)  
Next touchdown wins!

We hear a bunch of "What?!"s and "Fuck that"s. Charlie waits  
them out, then they cave. Charlie smiles, satisfied.

CHARLIE  
Where do you want to eat?

TOMMY  
Charlie Mom's.

CHARLIE  
Oh yeah! Diced chicken with honey  
walnuts. Um, I may be a little  
light.

STAN  
I got you covered.

CHARLIE  
You the Man, Stan.

Charlie runs back onto the field.

TOMMY  
Has he ever not been light?

STAN  
Not since I've known him.

TOMMY  
I got a surprise for our friend  
here.

STAN  
Yeah?

TOMMY

Yeah.

INT. CHARLIE MOM'S CHINESE RESTAURANT

Charlie, Stan and Tommy enter. Charlie looks even worse than we last saw him. Tommy kisses the gracefully old hostess, MAY.

MAY

You cheat like always, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Just the one play.

MAY

Ah. Blackout play always work.

TOMMY

I invented that, you know.

MAY

I know, Tommy. Everyone know.

CHARLIE

You up for some sex tonight, May?

MAY

Sure. But will probably kill you.

CHARLIE

Nah, I'll just eat, then.

MAY

May always here for when you ready, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Thank you, darlin'.

She escorts them to a table, where six other friends are already waiting. They're all happy to see one another. Stan turns to Tommy.

STAN

This the surprise?

TOMMY

Nope.

The friends at the table are CHUCK and DIANA (they're the Kevin Kline/Glenn Close of the bunch);

RACHEL, Charlie's ex-girlfriend, but still best friend;  
BILLY, a great guy but missing the chip in his brain that  
says "no, don't do that;" Tommy's wife SARAH, she doesn't  
smile much but has a mean, wicked sense of humor; KENDRICK,  
black and the best looking one of the bunch; and of course,  
Brett.

CHARLIE

Hey, Brett! How come you didn't  
come play, you pussy.

BRETT

What can I say? Your mom was  
insatiable.

Charlie laughs.

CHARLIE

Good one. Let's order.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. CHARLIE MOM'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATER

The group is finishing up their meal. As always, they have  
over-ordered and over-ate. Several conversations go on at one  
time. We cut back and forth between them.

Angle On: Kendrick and Brett

KENDRICK

I'm telling you, Man, she's cute as  
hell.

BRETT

Like the last one you set me up  
with.

KENDRICK

What was wrong with her?

BRETT

(a la Austin Powers)  
Mole-y, mole-y, mole-y, mole-y!  
Plus, you didn't tell her about the  
wheelchair.

KENDRICK

You mean that it squeaks?

Angle On: Chuck and Stan

CHUCK  
I'm nauseous.

STAN  
You say that after every meal.

CHUCK  
That's because I'm nauseous after every meal.

STAN  
Well, then Chuck, how about don't eat that much.

CHUCK  
But getting nauseous is the only way I know when to stop eating.

STAN  
Ah.

Angle On: Sarah and Billy

SARAH  
No. I mean the dumbest ever.

BILLY  
Oh. That's easy. I was ten and riding my bike. I was coasting fast down a hill and I wondered to myself, "What would happen if I stuck my foot in the front wheel?"

SARAH  
You didn't.

BILLY  
Did. Stuck the foot right in there and went flying over the handle bars and landed hard, my foot mangled and the bike all twisted.

SARAH  
How incredibly fucking stupid!

BILLY  
No shit. I lay there half laughing, half crying. And I yelled out, "Of course that's what would happen!"

SARAH  
Marry me.

BILLY  
I ain't that stupid.

Angle On: Diana and Tommy

DIANA  
I kind of wish you hadn't told me  
about it.

TOMMY  
It's just a dream, Diana.

DIANA  
Yeah, where you have five penises  
and you're having sex with me with  
all five of them.

TOMMY  
It doesn't mean anything.

DIANA  
Oh, so then we can tell Sarah about  
this?

TOMMY  
Please no! Look, are you mad about  
the dream?

DIANA  
Just don't tell me about them,  
okay?

TOMMY  
'Kay.

We now focus on Charlie and Rachel. They're in each other's  
space, as if they were still lovers. They're just that  
comfortable with each other.

CHARLIE  
So, he's not a total asshole?

RACHEL  
Not this one, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Give him time. We're all assholes.

RACHEL  
You being the biggest, of course.

CHARLIE

And damn proud of it. Isn't that why you married me?

RACHEL

We were never married.

CHARLIE

Listen, about Allison...

RACHEL

You get me so mad with that. She's in love with you, you know.

CHARLIE

She never said the "L" word.

RACHEL

She's not going to tell you she loves you, you dope. She knows you don't love her. I can't even talk about this. It's too sad.

CHARLIE

What? You think I like it?

RACHEL

You two have been.. whatever the fuck it is you are.. for over ten years now. Even while we were going out! Yeah, I think you like it.

CHARLIE

I don't. I don't like it, Rach. I just can't seem to end it. I know it's sick, but it's the longest relationship with a girl I've ever had.

RACHEL

Triples us.

CHARLIE

Hey, speaking of us, you want to, maybe later, you know...

RACHEL

No.

CHARLIE

Let me finish. Have sex.

RACHEL

Still no.

Tommy gets everyone's attention by clanging a chopstick on a bottle of Tsing-tao beer.

TOMMY

First of all, Stan, thanks for treating.

EVERYONE

Stan!!

STAN

What?! No!

TOMMY

I am so fucking full I don't know what to do.

Murmurs of agreement.

TOMMY

But what I really want to say is this: Charlie.

Charlie sits up.

CHARLIE

I'm a bit buzzed, Tommy, so take it easy, okay?

TOMMY

You know we're all disgusted with what you've done with your life, right?

CHARLIE

Sure. You each take turns telling me individually, which I really appreciate. Especially you, Rachel Magilicutty.

RACHEL

That's not my name.

TOMMY

And we've all given you advice over the years which you've ignored.

CHARLIE

Weighed. Then, ignored.

TOMMY

And so now, I'm going to offer you something, which again you may ignore. But if you do, I will never ever again try to help you.

CHARLIE

I'm not feeling so good.

KENDRICK

I'm starting to feel a little tense here, myself, Tommy. Get to it.

Just then Billy breaks off two chopsticks in each of his nostrils.

BILLY

Owww!

CHUCK

Billy, for Christ's sake.

BILLY

Sorry, Tommy. Go on. Ow.

TOMMY

Charlie, this Friday, five days from now, I have arranged for you, a... job interview.

All motion and sound stop as we CLOSE on Charlie's face. We see him try to comprehend. His mouth slowly forms the words: "job interview." After about ten seconds, it seems to dawn on him and we see a tiny tear form in his left eye. The camera zooms out again. And noise and action return. Finally, Charlie utters:

CHARLIE

Why?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR PARKED ON STREET

Tommy and Charlie are sitting in a parked, compact car.

CHARLIE

And in front of everybody?

TOMMY

That was intentional.

CHARLIE  
Why you doing this, Tommy? Why now?

TOMMY  
It's called opportunity, Charlie.  
There's an opportunity for you  
right now. And I believe it will be  
the last chance you ever get.

CHARLIE  
You're a dramatic fuck, you know  
that?

TOMMY  
(dramatically a la Jon  
Lovitz)  
Am I?

CHARLIE  
So, what do I do?

TOMMY  
Well, for starters, you could ask  
me what the job is.

CHARLIE  
I haven't done that yet?

TOMMY  
Nope.

CHARLIE  
And you haven't volunteered it?

TOMMY  
Don't think so.

The two just stare at each other, until finally:

TOMMY  
All right. Fuck. It's assistant to  
the head of development for Lions  
Gate Films.

This sinks in.

CHARLIE  
I love Lions Gate.

TOMMY  
I know this.

CHARLIE  
One of my all time favorite  
movies...

TOMMY  
"The Cooler."

CHARLIE  
...is a Lions Gate film.

TOMMY  
His name is Bob Denmark. I lied to  
him all about you. He can't wait to  
meet you.

CHARLIE  
I'm not committing to nothing,  
here.

TOMMY  
I know. I know. This is a lot for  
you to digest.

CHARLIE  
Can I ask you something?

TOMMY  
Anything.

CHARLIE  
Okay. Do I drink?

TOMMY  
On occasion.

CHARLIE  
Great. Then I'm gonna go home and  
get fucking drunk. Then I'm going  
to watch a DVD, I don't know which  
one yet, that's the beauty of me.

TOMMY  
Yes, it is.

CHARLIE  
Then I'm going to wake up tomorrow  
and we'll see what I do.

TOMMY  
I look forward to it.

CHARLIE

You of course realize that if I don't go for this all my friends will despise me and abandon me.

TOMMY

Being one of your friends I do indeed realize this.

CHARLIE

Well, thanks a lot, you piece of shit.

TOMMY

Let's go.

They both get out of the car, which we now see is a run-down, old Honda Civic.

TOMMY

How long's it been?

CHARLIE

Going on six years now.

TOMMY

And you'll never take her out?

CHARLIE

It's the best parking spot in the city, Tommy Boy.

TOMMY

You're a lucky man.

CHARLIE

Yeah, that's me.

They walk off.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie is sitting on his couch, drinking a beer and smoking a joint. He is contemplating his current situation, something he prefers not to do. He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes and rests his head back on the couch. The CAMERA moves in on his face and seemingly enters his nose, taking us on a journey up to his brain, where we see four CGI mini-characters sitting at a card table, playing poker. In the corner, sleeping in a bed is a dust covered little man. We close in on him and see his little T-shirt says "Initiative."

Angle On: the other four guys playing poker. Their four T-shirts individually say: "BREATHING," "EATING," "SEX," and "SLEEP."

BREATHING

What do you guys think?

SEX

No way. Sure, Charlie loves movies, but come on, it's Charlie. God, I'm horny.

EATING

You gonna finish that sandwich?

SLEEP

(yawns)

What time is it? Feels late. Is it late?

Suddenly Initiative bolts up and shouts.

INITIATIVE

What??!!

The others jump.

BREATHING

Wow. It's like that grandfather finally getting out of bed in "Willie Wonka."

SEX

Kiss-ass.

INITIATIVE

How long I been out?

SLEEP

About thirty years, give or  
(yawn)  
take.

INITIATIVE

So, what's this about a job?

He scratches his crotch and the others turn away from his horrendous breath.

BREATHING

It involves movies.

INITIATIVE  
Charlie loves movies, right?

SEX  
And sex. Let's not forget sex.

INITIATIVE  
HMMMMMMM.

The others watch to see what he's going to do. As he ponders it, the camera now exits the brain the way it came in and we're back in Charlie's apartment, now looking at Charlie with his head still back. He sits up.

CHARLIE  
Fuck.

INT. AIRPLANE

A pretty flight attendant is flirting with Charlie.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
I've a got a two day layover.

CHARLIE  
I like the way you say that.

She hands him a piece of paper.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Here's my cell phone number. You call me, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
I'd rather call you Alice.

She laughs and moves off. Charlie looks at his seat mate, who smiles and gives Charlie a thumbs up. Charlie smiles back, then takes the phone off the seat back in front of him, swipes his credit card and then dials. We ALTERNATE back and forth between him and Rachel, at her place of work (she works in a kids clothing store).

CHARLIE  
Rach? It's me.

RACHEL  
Hey, Hon. You okay?

CHARLIE  
Yeah. I was a bit shook last night, but now I'm okay.

RACHEL

And?

CHARLIE

And... I'm going to give it a shot.

RACHEL

YOU ARE?! Charlie, that is so great. I am so, so proud of you.

CHARLIE

I know you are.

RACHEL

Let's meet right now so I can see what you look like right now.

CHARLIE

I'd love to, but, uh, you see, I'm kind of, uh, on a plane.

RACHEL

What?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I figured this interview is pretty damn important, so I need a really good haircut.

RACHEL

Charlie. Fuck. Charlie, there are other barbers in this city.

CHARLIE

I need Sam.

RACHEL

No. You don't. I love Sam. But you don't need him.

CHARLIE

I'm already in the air, Rach.

She takes a deep breath and calms herself.

RACHEL

Give him a kiss for me.

CHARLIE

Will do. Oh, and Rach, if a pool gets started on how I'm going to fuck this up, I want in.

RACHEL  
I love you, you maniac.

CHARLIE  
Hey, so does the flight attendant.

EXT. SAM'S BARBER SHOP

Charlie stands outside an old-fashioned looking barber shop. He smiles as he looks through the window and sees a barber sitting in his chair watching television. Charlie enters.

INT. SAM'S BARBER SHOP

It is a time warp, as if stepping back into the sixties. The barber, SAM, is in his sixties, but looks forty-five. He has a rich shock of white hair and you can feel the benevolence emanating from him. Sam stands, turns off the TV, turns and takes a look at this unannounced visitor. His eyes light up.

SAM  
Charlie!

Before Charlie can say anything, Sam has him in a bear hug.

SAM  
So? What's new?

CHARLIE  
(laughs)  
You mean since I last saw you?  
Well, let's see. I've pretty much  
wasted my life, but I've seen some  
great movies. How 'bout you?

SAM  
I like Florida. But I miss the  
city.

CHARLIE  
Move back. Please.

SAM  
No can do, Pally. The wife loves it  
here and I love the wife.

CHARLIE  
She's a good woman.

SAM  
The best. Charlie. So great to see  
you. What brings you here?

CHARLIE  
It's a long story.

Sam gestures to the barber chair.

SAM  
Just so happens I have an opening.  
And nothing but time.

Charlie climbs into the chair.

SAM  
So... You still seeing the deli  
girl?

CHARLIE  
(laughs)  
It's great to see you, Sam.

SAM  
I know.

Sam starts to cut Charlie's hair.

INT. AIRPLANE

Charlie is sitting happily, with a spiffy haircut to boot. He looks very content. He again picks up the phone and dials. This time he's calling Tommy. Cut back and forth between the two. Tommy is walking on the street on his cell phone.

TOMMY  
This is Tommy.

CHARLIE  
I know who it is, you fuck.

TOMMY  
Charlie! I'm going to kill you.  
Slowly.

CHARLIE  
Relax. I'm already on my way back  
with a fantastic haircut and a  
spiritual calmness thanks to Sam.

TOMMY  
You can't keep doing this, okay?

CHARLIE  
Look, this was important to me. But  
now, no more nuttiness.

TOMMY  
Promise?

CHARLIE  
Honest Native American.

TOMMY  
I hate political correctness.

CHARLIE  
Me, too.

TOMMY  
So what time do you land? You need  
me to pick you up?

CHARLIE  
Could you? That would be great.  
Hold on, let me find out what time?

He turns to the guy sitting next to him, a young dude wearing  
headphones.

CHARLIE  
Hey, Pal. What time we land?

PASSENGER  
East coast time or west coast time?

CHARLIE  
Why would I want west coast time?

We cut back to Tommy, who stops walking, a look of dismayed  
amazement on his face.

TOMMY  
You're fucking with me, right?

CUT TO:

INT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT

Chyron: LOS ANGELES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Charlie is talking to an American Airlines counter person.

CHARLIE  
Yes, of course, I can see the  
humor. I'd be laughing my ass off  
too if this was about someone else.

COUNTER WOMAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to laugh.

CHARLIE

No problem. Just get me on a plane  
back to New York.

COUNTER WOMAN

Well, it's a little complicated. I  
know you didn't mean to get on the  
wrong plane, but you're still  
responsible for the ticket fare  
back.

CHARLIE

Listen, Lady, I don't have time to  
star in "Planes, Trains and  
Automobiles." I'm thirty five years  
old and I'm a complete fuck-up.

COUNTER WOMAN

No, you're...

CHARLIE

All my friends know it, my parents  
know it, if I had a brother or  
sister they'd know it and I finally  
know it. But I have a chance to fix  
this. One final chance. Now, I  
don't have any money. But I need to  
get back to New York and I need to  
do it now. Can you help me? Please.

She looks at his pleading face and makes a decision.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM STALL

Charlie and the counter woman are having loud, upright sex.

INT. AIRPLANE

A dishevelled looking Charlie taps the passenger next to him  
who is reading a book.

CHARLIE

Where are we going?

PASSENGER

To J.F.K airport in New York. Now  
please don't ask me again.

CHARLIE

Okay. Sorry.

Charlie leans his head back, closes his eyes, and laughs.

BLACK SCREEN

CHARLIE (V.O.)

This one's so good I can't even pretend it happened to me. But it's true. Every word of it.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

Just tell it, Charlie.

INT. KITCHEN

We see a rather large man enter his kitchen.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

The guy's name is Francis. And one thing about Francis, the man likes to eat. So one day he comes home and he has this donut with him. And boys and girls, let me tell you, this was no ordinary donut.

Francis sets the donut down on the counter. It's a large glazed chocolate frosted with a dollop of raspberry jam laying in the middle. It looks damn good.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

We see Francis eating an enormous hamburger while sneaking glances at the donut he's saving for dessert.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Now Francis isn't known for his restraint, but today the big man is determined to save this donut for dessert.

He finishes the burger, says to the donut:

FRANCIS

I'm coming, darlin'.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
But as he goes to place his burger  
plate, licked clean by the way, in  
the sink, he accidentally knocks  
the donut to the ground.

This happens in SLOW MOTION, but the donut lands perfectly,  
undisturbed.

CHARLIE (V.O.)  
But the donut lands perfectly,  
undisturbed. Francis lets out the  
breath he had been holding.

Francis leans down to get the donut, when from out of nowhere  
a small dog (a hyper Pekinese or something) zooms into frame,  
grabs the donut and tears out of there. Francis is horrified.

FRANCIS  
Nooooo!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

JOSH (V.O.)  
Wait a minute. You didn't mention  
any dog.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBUCKS

Samantha, Josh, Carmen and Victor are there.

CHARLIE  
Come on, if I mentioned a dog  
earlier you'd see it coming that he  
would grab the donut.

SAMANTHA  
Yeah, I guess.

CHARLIE  
Anyway...

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Francis enters the living room and sees his dog happily  
licking his chops. A tiny squeal escapes Francis's mouth. He  
walks slowly toward the dog.

FRANCIS  
Come here, Buzz. Come here.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

But the dog, being playful, runs up  
the steps.

Francis follows the dog up the steps. The dog stands at the top of the landing wagging its tail at Francis. From the dog's P.O.V. we see a crazed looking Francis coming toward it with his hands in a strangling position.

FRANCIS

It's okay, Buzz. Come to papa.  
Come. Buzz.

Francis looks incredibly scary.

Cut to Francis's P.O.V. now as he approaches the frightened dog. The dog's tail stops wagging as he sniffs the malevolence coming off Francis, and he turns and leaps over the railing. Francis freezes, then goes to look over the railing.

We see the dog is dead, splayed out in comic fashion.

CUT TO:

INT. STARBUCKS

Samantha, Josh, Carmen and Victor's collective mouths are wide open.

JOSH

The dog committed suicide?

CHARLIE

Francis claimed he never really was going to hurt the little fella, but the look in his eyes convinced the dog otherwise. The guy's now a pariah in his neighborhood. Even the friendliest mutts keep their distance.

CARMEN

Poor doggie.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but I kind of understand how Francis felt about that donut.

VICTOR

Yeah.

They all sit and think about that.

INT. BANK

Charlie and Brett are being escorted into the safety deposit box vault. The bank officer takes his and Charlie's keys and unlocks a drawer, pulls it out and hands it to Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Thank you, Constable.

BANK OFFICER  
Call me when you're ready.

BRETT  
You called me a cripple?!

BANK OFFICER  
(stunned)  
No! What?! I would never...

BRETT  
Just... just get out of here.

The poor guy exits the room, not knowing what to do.

CHARLIE  
You're a mean cripple, you know that?

BRETT  
Hey, I got to entertain myself, don't I? Come on, let's see the goods.

Charlie opens the box slowly, looks inside and smiles a big smile. He reaches in and pulls out a beautiful, mint condition tie. Brett nods appreciatively.

BRETT  
So that's the famous lucky tie, huh?

CHARLIE  
That it is, my son.

BRETT  
And refresh my memory. What luck has it ever brought you?

CHARLIE

Well, I've never actually worn it  
before.

BRETT

Interesting. Soooooo how do you  
know it's lucky?

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. PARK

We see a young Charlie walking with his grandfather. As we  
hear Charlie tell the tale, we see exactly what he says,  
ending with the old man getting hit in the head with a small  
meteor rock.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

I was with my grandfather one day  
and he was wearing this tie. And he  
said, "Charlie, this tie is  
magical. I've had nothing but good  
luck since I put it on years ago.  
And now I want you to have it." He  
then took it off and put it around  
my tiny neck and a small meteor at  
that exact moment hit him in the  
head and killed him.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. BANK SAFETY DEPOSIT ROOM

Brett is actually stunned by this story. Charlie feels bad.

CHARLIE

Okay. I made that one up.

BRETT

Asshole!

From outside the room, we hear the bank officer:

BANK OFFICER (O.S.)

Sorry.

CHARLIE

I just saw this tie in the store a  
few years back and something made  
me go in there and buy it. I've  
never had a need for it until now.

BRETT

You know, Charlie, you've always been a fuck-up. But to see you really go for this, well, I think I'm proud of you.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Brother.

BRETT

Think you'll even make it to the interview?

CHARLIE

Odds are against.

Brett nods with understanding.

EXT. BANK

Charlie and Brett exit the bank. Charlie is carrying the tie like it is a fragile child, when suddenly a guy on a bike swoops past and grabs the tie right out of Charlie's hand. Charlie is stunned. Brett practically eats his whole arm in a vain attempt not to laugh hysterically. Charlie looks at him, hurt.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR

Charlie, Brett, Tommy, Stan and Kendrick are there. Charlie is almost crying.

KENDRICK

Charlie. Why does this stuff always happen to you?

CHARLIE

Very helpful, Kendrick. Thank you.

STAN

Come on, Man. Kendrick's right. I mean, flying to Florida? I guess I understand that. Sam was special to you.

CHARLIE

Still is.

STAN

Yeah, the man's Jesus, I get it.  
But getting on the wrong fucking  
plane?

CHARLIE

Hey, it happened!

STAN

Come on! You're not I Love Lucy.  
And now the thing with the tie...

Brett starts laughing hard, then coughing.

CHARLIE

Good. Die.

TOMMY

The tie doesn't matter.

CHARLIE

It's my lucky tie!

TOMMY

'Cause you say it is? Fuck that.  
Don't be looking for excuses here,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'm not. At least I don't think I  
am. I don't know. I'm just off to a  
rocky start. I mean, I haven't  
tried to actually do anything in a  
long, long time.

KENDRICK

No shit.

TOMMY

All right, look. You've got your  
haircut. Looks nice, by the way.

The others murmur agreement.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

TOMMY

But now you're here in town, where  
the interview actually is. You're  
not getting on anymore planes, are  
you?

Charlie musters a weak smile.

CHARLIE  
Wasn't planning on it.

TOMMY  
Okay, great. You got three days  
before the most important day of  
your so-far wasted life.

CHARLIE  
No pressure, though, right?

TOMMY  
None. So, Charlie, what, do I gotta  
put one of these guys on you, to  
keep you in line, make sure you  
don't screw this whole thing up?

CHARLIE  
I don't want any of these mutts on  
me.

BRETT  
Nice.

CHARLIE  
Everything's going to be okay,  
Tommy. I'll go to my job at  
Blockbuster, then straight home for  
the next few days. Then on Friday,  
I'll get up early to make sure that  
I'm at the all important interview  
by eleven a.m. sharp.

TOMMY  
Ten o' clock!! It's ten, Charlie!

CHARLIE  
I know.

TOMMY  
You mother fucker.

CHARLIE  
Only your mother. And she was  
fooiine!

STAN  
Okay, so is this emergency meeting  
over? Can I get back to my normal  
life?

KENDRICK

Yeah, like that's so great.

STAN

You got a point. Who wants another  
drink?

They all raise their hands.

INT. BLOCKBUSTER STORE

Charlie is re-arranging the shelves to highlight certain  
films. He's actually quite good at this. A customer walks  
over, places a DVD cover in front of Charlie's face.

CUSTOMER #2

Charlie?

Charlie takes a quick glance, then:

CHARLIE

Great. You'll love it.

The customer happily walks off. Charlie continues what he's  
doing, like an artist rearranging mannequins in Macy's front  
window. Another patron, Jimmy, comes over.

JIMMY

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey, Jimmy. What's up?

Jimmy shows Charlie a DVD. He looks very proud.

JIMMY

You recommended this to me six  
months ago and I finally have the  
time to watch it.

Charlie grabs the DVD from him.

CHARLIE

Can't have it.

JIMMY

What? Why the hell not?

CHARLIE

Because it's playing this weekend  
at The Strand. They're having a  
Bogart festival.

(MORE)

IF NOT NOW Jeff Menell filmmeat@aol.com  
47.

JIMMY

Come on, I don't want to go to a theater. I just want to sit at home in my underwear and watch this puppy.

CHARLIE

Jimmy?

JIMMY

Uh-oh.

Charlie now turns and gives Jimmy his full attention. As he talks, his anger grows.

CHARLIE

You have an opportunity to see THE MALTESE FALCON on the large screen, the way it was intended by its genius director/writer John Huston. Do you actually think there's a chance in fucking hell that I'll let you rent this DVD so you can sit at home in your holey, smelly underwear? Do you think that?!

JIMMY

Save me a seat?

CHARLIE

(totally calm now)  
Fifth row center, my friend.

Jimmy walks off. Charlie assesses his work. He's pleased. He turns and finds Josh standing there.

CHARLIE

Josh?

JOSH

So?

CHARLIE

So what?

JOSH

You know. Did you read my script?

CHARLIE

Yeah, right. You give me a script around 10:30 last night, then I rush home and read it.

CHARLIE(cont'd)

Or maybe... Party Charlie here, gets invited to an all night rave, where he meets this wild chick that takes him on the sex ride of his life. Things get a little out of control and I accidentally kill her. I drive out to the Pine Barrens to bury her...

JOSH

Come on, Charlie!

CHARLIE

I liked it. A lot. I got thoughts, though. We'll talk during the break.

JOSH

Thanks, Charlie. Thanks, Pal. You're the best.

CHARLIE

I know.

Josh smiles and moves off. Charlie watches him go with a strange look on his face.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Charlie is sound asleep in bed. His sheets are a disaster. Rough night. The phone RINGS. After about three rings, Charlie is awake. But he's not answering it. After each ring, and in a different way each time, he responds "Fuck you."

CHARLIE

(sweet)

Fuck you.

(menacing)

Fuck you.

(laughing)

Fuck you.

(crying)

Fuck you.

Finally, he picks it up.

CHARLIE

Good morning.

SPLIT SCREEN between Charlie and Rachel on phone.

RACHEL

Fuck you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Nice mouth.

RACHEL

I knew you were going to do this.

CHARLIE

Rach, easy. I'm sure I did something wrong. Just let me know what it is, so I know which apology to use.

RACHEL

Dr. Kauffman, Charlie. Name ring a bell? You're supposed to be there in fifteen minutes.

CHARLIE

Was that today?

RACHEL

I hate you!

CHARLIE

Honest, Rach, I forgot.

RACHEL

No one forgets things, Charlie. Everything is on purpose.

CHARLIE

Everything?

RACHEL

You promised.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Why did I promise?

RACHEL

To get me off your ass.

CHARLIE

And how's that working out for me?

RACHEL

Because you broke your promise.

CHARLIE

Not yet I haven't.

(MORE)

IF NOT NOW Jeff Menell filmmeat@aol.com  
50.

RACHEL

You'll never make it now. I woke  
you, didn't I?

Charlie considers lying, but then:

CHARLIE

Yes.

RACHEL

I hate you even more.

CHARLIE

Rachel McGillicutty...

RACHEL

That's not my name!

CHARLIE

It takes 23 minutes to get to Dr.  
Kauffman's office. I will be there  
in ten. Goodbye.

He quickly hangs up. He takes a deep breath, then to himself:

CHARLIE

Okay, Mr. Wolf. Let's go.

He just sits there.

INT. DR. KAUFFMAN'S OFFICE - LATER

Charlie is sitting in a chair opposite the female  
psychologist. She's in her forties, kind of plain looking.  
She and Charlie stare at each other, each seeming like they  
can out wait the other. Finally, the doctor speaks.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Tell me about Allison.

CHARLIE

You know about her?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Yes. Rachel told me.

CHARLIE

Hey! Isn't that unethical?

DR. KAUFFMAN

No. Rachel can tell me anything she  
wants about you.

DR. KAUFFMAN(cont'd)

I, on the other hand, will never  
tell anyone anything you tell me.

CHARLIE

What if I told you...  
(as Sean Connery)  
I've found a cure for cancer.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I'd say "Why are you doing a line  
from 'Medicine Man'?"

Charlie's face lights up.

CHARLIE

You've seen "Medicine Man"?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Worst movie ever.

CHARLIE

Horrible.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Sean Connery should be ashamed.  
Tell me about Allison.

CHARLIE

You're good.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I know. Now talk.

CHARLIE

Okay. Okay. I'm going to make this  
easy on you. I'm an introspective  
guy. I do a lot of thinking about  
my life and how I live it.

DR. KAUFFMAN

That's not what Rachel thinks.

CHARLIE

(angry)

Well, fuck Rachel, okay? I don't  
even want to be here. Did she tell  
you that?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Yes.

CHARLIE

Damn her! I'm only here, Doctor, because my big mouth friend decided I needed to see a shrink and I finally said okay after about a year of her nagging me just to shut her the hell up. But apparently you can't shut her up because her mouth is too fucking big!

DR. KAUFFMAN

Feel better?

CHARLIE

Not really.

DR. KAUFFMAN

You were saying about your introspective analysis of your relationship with Allison?

CHARLIE

I hear your cynicism and I choose to ignore it. Okay. Ready? Because I'm going to be crude and succinct to save time.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I can handle it.

CHARLIE

You might think less of me.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I doubt it.

CHARLIE

Hmmmm. Anyway. Allison's not all that good looking. Okay? In fact, some might say she's downright... how do I put this...

DR. KAUFFMAN

Go ahead.

CHARLIE

Beastly.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I see.

CHARLIE

And yet I have a perpetual hard-on  
around her.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I'm waiting for the crude part.

CHARLIE

(smiles)

So I figured out it's because I  
feel I don't deserve a beautiful  
girl. That I'm not worthy. See?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Allison sounds to me like a very  
beautiful person.

CHARLIE

Yeah, she's a sweet kid. But I'm  
not attracted.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Your penis is.

CHARLIE

That's the problem.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Why? Why is that a problem? Maybe  
you should listen to your penis.

CHARLIE

You mean instead of you.

DR. KAUFFMAN

No. I mean instead of you.

CHARLIE

You don't get it, Doc. I feel for  
Allison. I feel for all the  
Allisons of the world.

DR. KAUFFMAN

What the fuck does that mean?

CHARLIE

Nice mouth. It means that when I'm  
watching a movie and I see a guy  
dump the ugly girl for the  
beautiful one, it kills me. Okay?  
It kills me.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Yet that's what you want to do.

CHARLIE

In a heartbeat. And I hate myself  
for that.

DR. KAUFFMAN

You should.

CHARLIE

Jesus, what kind of fucking doctor  
are you? I thought you were  
supposed to make me feel better  
about stuff.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I don't care if you feel "better."  
I just want you to be honest.

CHARLIE

You want honest? Here ya go: I like  
getting laid.

DR. KAUFFMAN

WELL SO DO I!!

That hangs in the air for a moment. Charlie is stunned, the  
doctor embarrassed. Finally, in an effort to move past this,  
Charlie starts to speak:

CHARLIE

Look, Doc...

Dr. Kauffman leaps off her seat onto Charlie and locks her  
mouth over his. Charlie responds with a released passion he  
didn't know he possessed. They start ripping each other's  
clothes off while rolling almost violently around the floor.  
No words are uttered, only guttural sounds. This sex is  
primal. They are in the throes of it when suddenly we hear an  
alarm clock go off. They both freeze.

CHARLIE

What is that?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Your time's up.

CHARLIE

Oh. So... You want me to stop?

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Actually, no.

CHARLIE  
Good.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
You realize I can't be your  
therapist after this.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, I know. And it really sucks  
because I like what you have to  
say. Now shut up.

She laughs, an unbridled, throatily sexy laugh.

CHARLIE  
Wait!

DR. KAUFFMAN  
What?!

CHARLIE  
Is this covered by insurance?

INT. CHARLIE DONNELL'S APARTMENT

We hear a LOUD KNOCKING on Charlie's door. Charlie rushes out  
of the bathroom in a towel.

CHARLIE  
I'm coming, I'm coming.

The KNOCKING continues. He looks through the peephole, then  
pulls away, nervously.

CHARLIE  
Oh shit.

RACHEL (O.S.)  
You better believe "oh shit"! Open  
up.

Charlie gingerly opens the door. Rachel shoves it open,  
knocking Charlie back.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry. She jumped me.

(MORE)

IF NOT NOW Jeff Menell filmmeat@aol.com  
56.

RACHEL

Is there anything you don't fuck  
up?

CHARLIE

(thinks)

Ummmmmmmm...

RACHEL

She's the best in town, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You don't have to tell me.

RACHEL

I don't mean that!!

She looks at him like she wants to kill him. Then suddenly  
she sits on his couch covering her eyes with her hands.

RACHEL

Damn you, Charlie. You don't make  
it easy, you know that?

CHARLIE

I know, Rach. I know.

RACHEL

I love you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

But?

RACHEL

But I think I'm done.

CHARLIE

No. Don't say that.

RACHEL

I can't watch you ruin your life  
anymore. It's too exhausting.

CHARLIE

What are you talking about? I'm  
turning things around here.

RACHEL

No, you're not. It's just another  
huge jerk-off. You don't want the  
job. You don't want to take any  
chances.

RACHEL(cont'd)

You don't want to put any effort into living. So, then why am I wasting my time?

CHARLIE

Sheesh, Rach. That's pretty heavy.

RACHEL

You know why we didn't work out, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sure. Because I accidentally fucked your sister.

RACHEL

No, that's actually not the reason.

CHARLIE

(stunned)

It's not?

RACHEL

It's because you couldn't put any effort into us.

CHARLIE

What effort? We were good as we were.

RACHEL

Maybe. But I just knew that you could never go to the next level, whatever it was going to be.

CHARLIE

I might have.

RACHEL

No. That's not what you do.

CHARLIE

I can change, Rach. I feel me changing. Don't give up on me. Please. Don't do that.

RACHEL

You're so draining, you know that? You drain me.

CHARLIE

You had me at hello.

RACHEL

Fuck you.

CHARLIE

Too tired. The shrink and all that.

RACHEL

How could you have sex with her?

CHARLIE

Well, I put my penis inside her...

RACHEL

Charlie!!!

CHARLIE

Rach, I don't know what happened.  
But, man I gotta tell you, that  
woman, she's... she's a dynamo.

RACHEL

No one uses that word.

CHARLIE

Sorry.

RACHEL

She could have helped you.

CHARLIE

Yeah. She was good.

RACHEL

And now you've ruined it.

CHARLIE

Hey, blame the penis.

RACHEL

Ah yes, the infamous Mr. Penis.

CHARLIE

No need to be so formal.

RACHEL

(laughs)

Don't make me laugh right now.

CHARLIE

Okay. When's a good time?

RACHEL

Shut up.

They sit in silence for a minute.

CHARLIE

I want that job, Rachel. I'm afraid, but I want it. That's the truth.

RACHEL

I hope so, Charlie. I just don't want you to get in your own way.

CHARLIE

I'm working on that.

RACHEL

Good.

CHARLIE

Can I ask you something?

RACHEL

Sure.

CHARLIE

Can I call your sister?

Suddenly, Rachel turns into a female Samurai a la Uma Thurman in KILL BILL and severs Charlie's head with a Samurai sword.

Back to reality.

RACHEL

Well... what did you want to ask me?

CHARLIE

Just... how do you keep your skin so smooth?

RACHEL

Leave me alone.

CHARLIE

So? Still love me?

She looks at him, shakes her head sadly, then gets up and heads out. Charlie watches her go, suddenly unsure of himself.

CHARLIE

Rach?

INT. CHUCK AND DIANA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chuck and Diana are scrambling to get ready to go out. They have three children, nine-year-old twin girls DARA and EMMA, and a seven-year-old boy, AIDAN. The kids are in the living room watching TV as mom and dad get ready.

DIANA

Where is he, Chuck?

CHUCK

He'll be here. He's always on time.

DIANA

I need to go out tonight. You hear me? I need a break.

CHUCK

I know, I know. Chill out, will ya?  
You look nice.

She stops and smiles, then kisses her husband.

DIANA

So, what do you think?

CHUCK

About the interview?

DIANA

Yup.

CHUCK

I think Charlie may surprise us.

DIANA

You're such a sap, you know that.

CHUCK

And you're such a cynic.

DIANA

You mean realist.

CHUCK

I mean bitch.

DARA

We're in the room, Daddy.

CHUCK  
Oh, sorry, Honey.

The kids giggle. The DOORBELL rings. Chuck gives Diana an "I told you he'd be here" look. She smiles. Chuck goes to get the door. It is indeed Charlie, holding three pizza boxes.

CHARLIE  
This Apartment 3-B?

CHUCK  
Hey, Charlie. Smells good.

Charlie walks in. The kids rush over, hug him, then rush back to watching TV.

CHARLIE  
Two double-pepperonis and a double-pepperoni with meatball and sausage.

CHUCK  
Give me a slice. Quick.

He sneaks a slice, takes a bite, but then shoves the whole thing in his mouth when Diana enters.

DIANA  
Hey, Charlie.

She kisses Charlie. Chuck almost chokes on the slice in his mouth. Diana says to Charlie:

DIANA  
Why does he think he needs to sneak a slice?

CHARLIE  
No idea.

DIANA  
Got one for me?

CHARLIE  
Absolutely.

She takes one, takes a bite, makes yummy noises and moves off.

CHUCK  
Why do I do that?

CHARLIE  
I do not know. How's your mouth?

CHUCK  
Look, all the skin's hanging.

He shows Charlie, who looks impressed.

CHUCK  
No movies tonight?

CHARLIE  
Nah. I figured we'd just watch  
Nickelodeon or something.

CHUCK  
Wow. You are a changed man. So, you  
ready for the interview?

CHARLIE  
I'm going to do it, Chuck.

CHUCK  
Hey, I'm on your side.

Diana enters.

CHARLIE  
You guys in the pool?

DIANA  
Yeah. Sorry.

CHARLIE  
No problem. You Chuck?

CHUCK  
Aw, Man, it's a big pot, you know?

CHARLIE  
Don't blame you at all. I might  
surprise you though.

CHUCK  
I know you will. But if you don't,  
woo hoo, I could win a lot of  
money! Sorry.

CHARLIE  
All right. Now get out of here. I  
need a huge dose of your kids.

Chuck and Diana kiss the kids good-bye.

DIANA  
You be good, kids.

KIDS/CHARLIE  
We will.

Chuck and Diana exit. Charlie and the kids look at each other expectantly.

AIDAN  
Let's see 'em, Uncle Charlie.

Charlie smiles and pulls out some DVDs he's been hiding under his shirt.

CHARLIE  
Now we got a deal, right?

EMMA  
Not a word to our parents.

CHARLIE  
Okay, because I don't think they'd approve. There's one or two bad words.

DARA  
We've heard them all.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, your mom's got quite the mouth on her.  
(weird southern accent)  
She sure has purty lips, though!

EMMA  
Shut up!

CHARLIE  
Okay, Aidan, paper plates for the pizza. Emma, get cracking on the popcorn. Dara, put the pillows on the floor. Let the festivities begin!

The kids laugh, but scramble off to perform their duties. Charlie looks at them lovingly, a hint of sadness in his eyes.

INT. CHUCK AND DIANA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Chuck and a tipsy Diana enter the apartment. She shushes Chuck who hasn't made a sound and gestures as such. It's quiet except for the sound of the movie on the DVD player. We quickly recognize it as RAGING BULL. Dialogue:

JOEY (O.S.)  
Whadda ya mean?

JAKE (O.S.)  
Did you ever fuck my wife?

JOEY (O.S.)  
Whatsa matter with you?

JAKE (O.S.)  
You're very smart, Joey, very smart. Nobody gives me a straight answer around here. You're givin' me these answers, but you still didn't answer my question. Did you fuck Vickie?

Chuck and Diana walk in and find the kids awake, but Charlie asleep. The kids are glued to the movie. Diana turns it off.

DARA  
What the fuck are you doing?

They all freeze as they realize what Dara just said.

DIANA  
Bed!

All three kids scramble for their rooms. Chuck is trying not to laugh, but failing miserably.

DIANA  
Oh, you think this is funny?

CHUCK  
No. Never. Sorry.

He breaks into fits of uncontrollable laughter.

DIANA  
And I'm going to kill your friend here.

CHUCK

Ahh, wait till morning. He looks so  
cute sleeping.

DIANA

He's not sleeping, you idiot. He's  
pretending because he knows I'm  
pissed.

Charlie jumps up off the couch, startling Chuck.

CHARLIE

Hey, she's good, Man. This one's a  
keeper. Look, Diana, sure there's a  
bad word here and there...

DIANA

"Raging Bull," Charlie?! Fucking  
"Raging Bull"!

CHARLIE

Best damn movie ever.

DIANA

That's not the point.

CHARLIE

Hey, you knew what I was when you  
asked me to babysit.

CHUCK

He's got you there, Hon.

She looks at him, scaring him.

DIANA

How stupid are you?

CHUCK

Pretty fucking stupid. Once  
again... Sorry.

EXT. STREET - EARLY EVENING

Charlie is standing on the street staring at his car. He  
stays like this for a minute, then nods his head in  
determination. He puts the key in the door, unlocks it, gets  
in and starts it up. Before he can change his mind, he pulls  
the car out of its spot. Locals stare after him with  
incredulity. A bum who has been living under his car cries  
out:

BUM  
Tornado!!!!

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR

Charlie drives in a daze. He pushes in the cassette tape and the Bon Jovi song LIVING ON A PRAYER plays. Now Charlie smiles as he starts to badly sing along, loudly. This is a big moment for him. He is so lost in the moment that he almost doesn't realize that the car in front of him has stopped at a light. At the last moment he sees it, slams on the brakes and stops frighteningly close to the car. He takes a deep breath to calm himself. At that moment the passenger door opens and a pretty woman gets in and says nothing. She just stares out the windshield. Charlie stares at her but says nothing. The light changes, the car in front of him moves off. Immediately, horns behind Charlie start blaring. Charlie drives off. They drive for a while, neither saying anything. The song is still playing. Finally, Charlie just shrugs and starts singing along again. The woman smiles and joins in. They're not half bad together. The song ends.

CHARLIE  
I guess it can only go downhill  
from here.

WOMAN  
Nice attitude.

CHARLIE  
See?

Now she laughs. It's a great laugh.

CHARLIE  
That's a great laugh.

She stares at him for a moment, sneaking a furtive, nervous glance behind them.

CHARLIE  
On the lam?

WOMAN  
And if I was?

CHARLIE  
Then you picked the right man and  
the right car.

WOMAN  
Did I now?

CHARLIE

Look, a lot of this is out of your control. See, my life is changing all over the place. Things are happening to me that never happen. So of course this.

WOMAN

I like you already.

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE

I'm Charlie.

WOMAN

Stephanie.

CHARLIE

Steph okay?

STEPHANIE

Not usually, but...

CHARLIE

Thanks, Steph. I won't abuse it.

STEPHANIE

So, Charlie. What are all these changes you're going through?

CHARLIE

I haven't taken this car out of its parking spot for six years. I just did. And now you're here. Cool, huh?

She stares at him curiously. He looks at her.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Charlie rolls off Stephanie. They are both sweaty and breathing hard, staring at the ceiling.

CHARLIE

Steph?

STEPHANIE

Yeah?

CHARLIE  
That was awesome!

She laughs.

STEPHANIE  
Who are you, Chris Farley?

He quickly rolls back on top of her and puts his face in hers.

CHARLIE  
Where the fuck have you been?

STEPHANIE  
You mean as in your whole life?

CHARLIE  
Yes! You're too good to be true. Oh no.

STEPHANIE  
What?

CHARLIE  
Look, if one of my friends put you up to this, just tell me. I'll pay you double what they're paying you if you just tell me.

STEPHANIE  
Double?

CHARLIE  
Okay, triple. I swear. Even if I have to borrow which I probably will because I'm far from well off which you should be made aware of, out of all fairness.

STEPH  
You're a decent guy.

CHARLIE  
To my detriment.

STEPH  
No one put me up to it.

CHARLIE  
Then marry me.

She explodes with laughter.

CHARLIE  
I'll take that as a maybe. See ya.

He smiles, then starts to get out of bed.

STEPH  
Where the hell are you going?

CHARLIE  
I gots to get to me job.

STEPH  
Oh. What do you do?

Charlie stops, hesitates.

STEPH  
It's okay. You don't have to tell me.

CHARLIE  
I work at a Blockbuster store.

He waits for her to react, but she doesn't.

CHARLIE  
(quickly)  
I'm 35 and I've worked at a Blockbuster store for five years. I've never aspired to anything bigger, but now my buddy Tommy set up an interview with Lions Gate Films without telling me and even though I was upset and scared at first I decided to go for it, although I've been trying to fuck it up even though I don't want to. I thought I didn't really care but it turns out I really do and I care what you think about all this and I haven't really cared what a woman thinks before this and...

STEPH  
Okay, slow down, Tiger. Catch your breath.

Charlie sits back down on the bed. He can't look at her.

STEPH

I like you, Charlie. I like you a lot. And that opening up thing you just did. Well... I've never had a guy do that for me. And I know it wasn't for me, but I don't care. It makes me want to open up to you, but I can't right now.

CHARLIE

That's okay...

STEPH

Shut up.

CHARLIE

Gotcha.

STEPH

Now go to work. I love men who work. I'm going to stay here until you come home from work. I'm going to watch one or two of your DVDs and when you get home we'll fuck and then eat dinner and then we'll talk. How's that sound?

CHARLIE

Like Ella Fitzgerald on a sunny day.

She gives him a huge smile, then kisses him.

STEPH

Bye Honey. Have a great day.

Charlie kisses her again, looks at her long and hard to make sure she's for real, then leaves. Stephanie falls back onto her pillow and smiles, then laughs to herself, then puts the pillow over her head, muffling her scream of delight.

EXT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie steps out of his building. It is a beautiful day. He sucks in the cool, crisp air; smiles up at the sun and laughs at his good fortune. He spreads his arms and shouts:

CHARLIE

Thank you!!

Just then two plain clothes cops come up to him.

COP 1  
Charlie Donnell?

Charlie looks skyward with an "Are you kidding me with Your timing?" look.

CHARLIE  
Is that with one "1" or two?

COP 2  
Don't screw with us, Kid.

CHARLIE  
Sorry, Detective. I am Charlie  
Donnell. How do you two fit into my  
life?

Cop 1 and Cop 2 smile at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM

Charlie is sitting at the table. Cop 1 leans against a wall. Charlie sits there calmly, whistling a non-tune. Cop 2 enters carrying a bag from McDonald's. Charlie's face lights up. Cop 2 places the bag in front of Charlie. Charlie reaches in and pulls out a quarter pounder with cheese and sniffs it. He is in heaven. He looks inquisitively at Cop 2, who nods his head.

COP 2  
Yup. Extra pickles.

CHARLIE  
You the man.

COP 1  
All right, Donnell, you said if we  
feed you you'll talk. So talk.

Charlie holds his finger up signaling for them to wait a moment, while he takes two huge bites, nearly devouring the whole thing.

CHARLIE  
Fair enough. You ready? Here it is:  
I don't know nothing about any  
jewelry store heist.

COP 2  
But you said...

COP 1

Shut up. Look, kid, you've obviously figured out who is the good cop and who is the bad cop in this routine.

CHARLIE

It's kind of a no-brainer.

COP 1

Except this ain't no routine. I'm a mean, mother fucker, badass cop, who will happily kick the living shit out of you if you fuck with me.

CHARLIE

Briscoe never talks like that.

COP 2

Greene would.

CHARLIE

Yeah, if they allowed the "F" word on network television.

COP 2

Yeah.

COP 1

(to his partner)

You done? Because I'll kick your ass, along with his.

COP 2

Go for it, Pussy.

COP 1

What did you...?!

Cop 1 leaps onto Cop 2 and they go at it, crazily - furniture flying, etc. Now Charlie is scared and screams for help. No one comes and he doesn't know what to do. Suddenly the two cops stop fighting, look at Charlie, and start laughing. Charlie is incredulous, but slowly smiles.

CHARLIE

You're fucking with me?

COP 1

Don't take it personally, Kid. We do it to all the white breads.

CHARLIE

I gotta tell you, you guys are good. I mean you really had me going.

COP 2

Yeah, that was fun. Okay, Charlie, a witness saw your car drive away from the scene of the crime.

CHARLIE

What?

COP 1

Yeah. Oh, and he saw the perp get into your car. So that kind of makes you involved, you see what we're saying?

CHARLIE

I see what you're saying.

COP 2

So, Charlie, let's not do the back and forth thing. Let's just do it. What do you say?

CHARLIE

Look, I like you guys. And I don't want you to get mad at me. But I honestly don't know what the fuck you're talking about. Was I driving today? Yup. First time in six years, by the way. Did I drive by the store in question? Who the hell knows. But I did not rob any jewelry store nor do I have any knowledge of said robbery. I'm not a robber. I'm a loser piece of shit, but not a robber. That is the truth.

COP 1

You willing to be polygraphed?

CHARLIE

(excited)

Polygraphed?!

COP 2

Okay, hold on here. You want to call a lawyer, Charlie?

COP 1  
What the fuck are you doing?

COP 2  
Come on. I don't want to jack this  
kid up. Do you?

COP 1  
Fine. Charlie, you want a lawyer?

CHARLIE  
And have him stop all this? No way,  
Joselito. Hook me up to the wires.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie walks in, all excited. He calls out:

CHARLIE  
Steph?

There's no answer. He looks around, sees that she has two DVD  
sleeves out. He checks to see what she watched. He smiles.

CHARLIE  
"Heat" and "Diner." That's my kind  
of girl.

Charlie calls out again, this time a bit tentative.

CHARLIE  
Steph? You there?

He sits down on the couch, kind of a sad smile on his face.  
He sighs deeply, then says softly:

CHARLIE  
Fuck.

He sits there, fighting misery when he hears the front door  
open. Stephanie walks in carrying cartons of Chinese food.  
Charlie tries to keep relief off his face, but she's sharp.

STEPH  
Oh, poor baby. Did you think I was  
gone for good?

Charlie gives her an "Are you kidding me?" look, but then  
pounces on her and puts her in a bear hug and fake cries:

CHARLIE  
YES!

She laughs but hugs him back, tightly.

STEPH

I was hungry. You got shit in your fridge.

CHARLIE

Sorry.

STEPH

I figured you're a Chinese kind of guy.

CHARLIE

In more ways than one, if you know what I mean.

STEPH

No, what do you mean?

CHARLIE

I have no idea.

STEPH

You hungry?

CHARLIE

Starving, but I thought you said fuck, then eat.

STEPH

We can still do that.

CHARLIE

Are you nuts? I can't fuck when there's cold sesame noodles nearby. We eat then we do that other thing.

STEPH

What? Suddenly you can't say "fuck"?

CHARLIE

Suddenly, I don't want to.

She smiles.

STEPH

I'll get the plates.

CHARLIE

I have plates?

STEPH  
I bought some beer, too.

CHARLIE  
Why, Mrs. Robinson. I think you're  
trying to seduce me.

STEPH  
Yeah, like that would be hard?

CHARLIE  
I don't like your tone. Now, get my  
beer and be quick about it.

She gives him a look.

CHARLIE  
Please.

She smiles, grabs a cold beer, twist opens it effortlessly,  
walks over to him, takes a long sip from his beer, downing  
half of it, then hands it to him. He's impressed. She kisses  
him, hard, then sashays away.

CHARLIE  
This is going to be a fun night. Oh  
shit, you got me so worked up I  
almost forgot to tell you about  
what happened to me with these two  
cops.

Steph, suddenly very interested, stops what she was doing.

STEPH  
Cops?

Just then there's a knock on the door. Charlie, oblivious to  
Stephanie's mood change, moves toward the door.

CHARLIE  
Hold on. It's a good story.

He opens the door. It's Allison. Charlie is caught off-guard.

ALLISON  
Hey, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Hey. Hey, Allison. Um, what's up?

ALLISON  
Just brought you some smoked  
turkey. I know you love it.

CHARLIE  
I do? I never noticed. But I guess  
you did. How 'bout that?

STEPH (O.S.)  
Open the door, Charlie.

Now Allison's caught off-guard. Charlie opens the door wide.  
He looks embarrassed. So does Allison.

ALLISON  
Oh. I didn't know someone was here.

STEPH  
Come on in. We got plenty of food.

CHARLIE  
(weakly)  
Yeah.

ALLISON  
I just ate.  
(regaining composure)  
Hi. I'm Allison.

STEPH  
Hi, Allison. I'm Stephanie. You can  
call me Steph.

Charlie gives her a weird look. He's not sure how to play  
this. Allison makes it easy.

ALLISON  
Smells good, though. You kids  
enjoy. I'll catch you later. Nice  
meeting you, Steph.

STEPH  
Same here.

Charlie escorts Allison out.

CHARLIE  
Thanks, Allison. I'll pay you  
later. For the turkey.

Allison gives him a disappointed, if not quite hurt look.

ALLISON  
Bye, Charlie.

She leaves. Charlie closes the door. He hesitates before turning to face Stephanie. He looks at her, guiltily.

STEPH  
Look, Pal, you don't owe me any explanations about anything. We just met today. Remember.

CHARLIE  
I know. And I'm not worried about you being jealous or anything. It's just... it's a hard thing to explain.

STEPH  
Charlie, my dear Charlie. Suddenly things have gotten weird and they don't need to.

CHARLIE  
It's just something I'm not proud of. It's weird and hard to explain and it involves deli meats...

STEPH  
I do not care. And even if you slept with her...

CHARLIE  
I never did that exactly.

STEPH  
Do you love her?

CHARLIE  
No.

STEPH  
Well, she sure loves you.

CHARLIE  
Why does everyone say that? She does not.

STEPH  
You know what they say about denial?

CHARLIE

No, please. You're not going to do that horrible joke that I hate, are you?

STEPH

Ucchhh! I hate that, too. I was going to say "Denial is not just a river in Africa."

CHARLIE

That's it! That's the joke I hate.

Steph laughs.

STEPH

Look, I have no desire to analyze you. I just want to eat and make love.

CHARLIE

No.

STEPH

No?

CHARLIE

No. Let's eat second.

STEPH

That's my boy. Come here.

Charlie moves to her and kisses her. He pulls back and looks at her, sheepishly.

CHARLIE

Actually, could we, maybe, eat first?

STEPH

Fine! You child.

CHARLIE

Thank you!!

Charlie pumps his fists in victory. Steph laughs and looks lovingly at this strange guy.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Steph is lying on the bed on her side, just wearing panties and a T-shirt.

STEPH  
Come on. What are you doing?

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Just a sec.

From off screen we hear Charlie putting on a CD. We hear the first few beats of Bob Seeger's OLD TIME ROCK AND ROLL.

ANGLE ON: Bedroom doorway. Charlie, in just his jockey briefs, slides into view a la Tom Cruise in RISKY BUSINESS, except he slides past the door.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Damn!

Stephanie laughs hard.

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Shut up! Hold on.

Charlie scurries past the doorway. The music stops, then starts up again. Again Charlie slides into view, this time grabbing the door frame to stop him, but his forward motion propels him into the bedroom and he goes crashing into a lamp.

CHARLIE  
Shit!!

STEPH  
Stop! Please, you're killing me!

CHARLIE  
You can't die on me. I just found you.

He jumps on the bed, but she moves off quickly and they play cat and mouse around the bed. Steph laughing the entire time.

EXT. STREET

Charlie, Tommy, Billy, and Brett in his wheelchair are walking down the street.

CHARLIE  
Yes, Tommy. I know it's tomorrow.

TOMMY

Well, have you fucking done anything to prepare for this not-so-small thing?

CHARLIE

First of all, I resent your tone.

TOMMY

You should.

CHARLIE

Second of all, ummmm... anybody got anything?

BRETT

What a loser.

Without missing a beat, Charlie and the others leave Brett in his wheelchair and keep walking. Brett knowing Charlie's level of commitment calls out:

BRETT

I'M SORRY!!

CHARLIE

(without stopping or looking)

Mean it more.

BRETT

I am so so very very sorry, Charlie.

Charlie and the others look at each other, agree that sounded sincere. Charlie goes back and retrieves his friend.

BRETT

You would have left me there, right?

CHARLIE

And slept like a baby.

BRETT

I guess I respect that.

CHARLIE

Besides, you don't need me to push you.

BRETT

Oh yeah.

BILLY

You ever wonder what it would feel  
like to fall out of a plane and  
land on the tip of the Empire State  
Building on your eye?

THE OTHERS

No!

BILLY

Just wondering. Sheesh.

CHARLIE

(strangely serious)  
I'm not a loser.

They all look at him.

BRETT

I know you're not, Man. I didn't  
mean it.

CHARLIE

I know you didn't. What the fuck's  
wrong with me? I can't take a joke  
anymore?

TOMMY

Look, Charlie. I know we're all  
expecting a lot of you.

CHARLIE

Isn't that sad?

TOMMY

What?

CHARLIE

That this is a lot for me.

BRETT

Hey man, you are who you are.

CHARLIE

I've been using that cop-out for  
years now. Suddenly it sounds  
ridiculous.

BRETT

That's just my voice. It's better  
when you say it.

BILLY

It really is.

TOMMY

Look, Man, don't worry about the  
stupid interview, okay? I shouldn't  
have made such a big deal about it.  
Doesn't matter.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Tommy. It's just...

Charlie stops, his eyes go wide and he tears off after  
something. The others are a bit stunned.

TOMMY

Some might consider that rude.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION

Charlie is once again with his old pals, Cop 1 and Cop 2.

COP 1

You scared the shit out of that  
poor guy.

CHARLIE

I know. I know I did. I feel bad.  
Is he pressing charges?

COP 2

Don't know. We've got him cooling  
off in the coffee room right now.

CHARLIE

Thanks, guys.

COP 1

Hey! Our pleasure. You're vastly  
more entertaining than the usual  
perp.

COP 2

Kiss-ass.

COP 1

Fuck you.

CHARLIE

Man, you should have seen his face.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT STREET

We see what happened: A man wearing a white shirt and a tie similar to the one Charlie lost is walking down the street. Suddenly he hears:

CHARLIE (O.S.)

HEY!!!!

The man turns just as he is tackled by Charlie. The guy is on his back, Charlie on top of him. Charlie looks crazed, the poor victim, terrified.

CHARLIE

Did you actually think you'd get away with it?! Stealing a man's lucky tie?!

The petrified man can't even talk. He tries to say something, but then looks curiously at Charlie, and says:

MAN

Hey! Didn't you force me to rent "Midnight Run"?

END FLASHBACK:

INT. POLICE STATION

Charlie is smiling at the story.

CHARLIE

He loved the movie, by the way.

COP2

I'm going to come to your Blockbuster.

CHARLIE

That's harassment

COP 2

I meant, so you can recommend movies for me to rent.

CHARLIE  
Oh. Come down any... oh shit!

COP 2  
What is it?

CHARLIE  
I just remembered. I might not be  
there much longer.

COP 1  
Getting canned?

CHARLIE  
(all dejected)  
Nah. I have an interview for the  
job of my dreams.

COP 1  
And you're depressed over this why?

CHARLIE  
I'm not what you would call big on  
change.

COP 2  
Now you sound like my nephew.

COP 1  
The loser?

COP 2  
No, the other one.

CHARLIE  
See, I don't want to leave where I  
am. But I don't want to miss out on  
this opportunity. And I'm afraid  
I'm going to fuck it up because  
that's pretty much what I do.

COP 1  
You know what, Charlie? Just  
fucking do it, okay? Stop thinking  
about it. Don't analyze it. Don't  
make predictions. Just fucking do  
it.

COP 2  
(sarcastic)  
Thank you, Detective Nike.

CHARLIE  
(sincere)  
Yeah. Thanks, Detective.

COP 1  
No sweat. Now, go home. But stay  
close. You may be going to jail.

INT. STARBUCKS

Charlie is enjoying a rare moment by himself at Starbucks.  
He's reading the paper and drinking coffee. He lowers the  
paper and finds Josh sitting across from him. Charlie sighs.

JOSH  
(contained excitement)  
Thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
You're welcome.

JOSH  
Don't you want to know for what?

CHARLIE  
Not really. I'm trying to enjoy my  
alone-ness.

JOSH  
Oh. Sorry.

Josh gets up as if to move off. He moves real slow, waiting  
for Charlie to stop him, but he doesn't.

JOSH  
Damn it, Charlie! I got an agent.

CHARLIE  
What?

JOSH  
(excited)  
Yeah! I made your script changes,  
submitted it to this agent who's my  
mom's college roommate's nephew  
through marriage. He loved it.  
Wants to sign me. I have to fly out  
to L.A. to meet him. Can you  
fucking believe this?!

CHARLIE

Josh, this is extraordinary. It's fantastic. I'm so proud of you.

JOSH

Couldn't have done it without you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Sure you could.

JOSH

No way, Man. Thank you. I mean it. Thank you.

CHARLIE

Just mention me when you win on one of those many awards shows I watch.

JOSH

And you are?

Charlie laughs, pats Josh paternally on the shoulder.

INT. DR. KAUFFMAN'S APARTMENT

We hear a loud knocking on the door. The doctor comes to the door wearing a robe with a towel on her head. She looks through the peep hole, smiles a little, then talks through the door:

DR. KAUFFMAN

You can't be here.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

I know. I'm sorry.

DR. KAUFFMAN

How'd you find out where I live?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Let me in and I'll tell you.

DR. KAUFFMAN

No sex, okay?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Promise. I'm not here for that.

She opens the door. Charlie enters and looks at her.

CHARLIE  
Not a great outfit for no sex.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Why are you here, Charlie and how  
did you find out...

CHARLIE  
It was that blabbermouth Rachel.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
She would never tell you.

CHARLIE  
I sat on her and tickled her  
mercilessly.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Very mature.

CHARLIE  
You know me.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
More than I intended to.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, that was something. But  
listen I don't have time for our  
world-famous banter. I need help.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Okay, just let me...

CHARLIE  
Too much is happening to me!

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Calm down. You mean the job  
interview?

CHARLIE  
I mean Josh has an agent! He's  
twelve. And I haven't written a  
word in... Oh my god, I haven't done  
a damn thing for the first thirty-  
five years of my worthless life.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Oh boy. I better get a bottle of  
wine.

CHARLIE  
And in the midst of all this I just  
met this girl and...

DR. KAUFFMAN  
I'm jealous.

CHARLIE  
I'm serious here, Doc.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
So am I.

CHARLIE  
Oh.

He stops his rant and looks at her.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
It's okay.

CHARLIE  
No, I mean it. I'm really sorry.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
I'll be okay.

CHARLIE  
See, that's part of my problem. I  
have sex without thinking about any  
repercussions or how it affects you  
or anybody.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
And that impulsiveness is part of  
your eternal charm, Charlie  
Donnell.

CHARLIE  
Thanks, Doc, but can you help me?  
Can you take an hour and fix me up  
for good?

DR. KAUFFMAN  
In one session?

CHARLIE  
YES!! I can't wait another second.  
Please.

She stares at him for a moment.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Okay, Charlie. Okay. First, let me  
do one thing.

The good doctor drops her robe. Charlie stares at her  
nakedness, uncertain.

CHARLIE  
Your robe fell.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
I know.

CHARLIE  
Is this a test?

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Nope.

CHARLIE  
So am I supposed to...

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Shut up and grab my ass.

CHARLIE  
Grabbing.

He reaches for her ample ass.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. DOCTOR'S APARTMENT - LATER

They are both fully dressed. Charlie sits on the couch,  
looking miserable.

CHARLIE  
I mean, why would I do that?! I'm  
madly in love with someone else.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Someone you met today.

CHARLIE  
That doesn't matter. You did  
something, you.

DR. KAUFFMAN  
Sorry.

CHARLIE

Are you?

DR. KAUFFMAN

Hell no! All's fair and all that.  
Besides, you could have said no.

CHARLIE

I never say no.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Well, that makes me feel special.

CHARLIE

You know what I mean.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Yes, I do. Now, please leave.

CHARLIE

What about curing me?

DR. KAUFFMAN

You're fine. Just mind-bogglingly  
lazy.

CHARLIE

That's it? That's your professional  
opinion?

DR. KAUFFMAN

That's why I get the big bucks.

CHARLIE

Look, Doc...I'm sorry if I hurt  
you. I care for you.

DR. KAUFFMAN

I know. We had fun. Now go to  
Allison.

CHARLIE

Allison? I'm in love with Steph.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Whatever. Goodbye.

CHARLIE

Bill me.

DR. KAUFFMAN

Yeah, right.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

Charlie is finishing giving Stephanie a pedicure.

STEPH  
My hunch? You've done this before.

CHARLIE  
Maybe once or twice.

STEPH  
Why aren't you further along?

Charlie smiles.

CHARLIE  
"Three Days of the Condor"?

She nods her head and smiles back.

STEPH  
One of my faves.

CHARLIE  
You said "faves."

STEPH  
Live with it.

CHARLIE  
I'd love to.

Now Stephanie's smile fades. Charlie tries to joke it off.

CHARLIE  
Too brazen?

STEPH  
Charlie, ask me what I've never  
been good at.

CHARLIE  
Okay, what have you...

STEPH  
Timing.

Charlie laughs, weakly.

CHARLIE  
Funny. But I've already heard it as  
an ethnic joke about 20 years ago.

STEPH

Twenty years ago life was much simpler.

CHARLIE

Why? Because you didn't steal back then?

She just looks at him, then does the dramatic music sting:

STEPH

Dum dum dum!

Now Charlie laughs genuinely, and she joins him.

STEPH

I guess that's what the cop story was about.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but Sherlock Fucking Holmes here didn't put it together until about an hour ago.

STEPH

I don't make any apologies about who I am or what I do, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Don't want any. You're perfect, Steph. And I'm ready for you.

STEPH

Timing, Charlie. Remember?

CHARLIE

Fuck timing. We make our own timing. Anything else is just a lame excuse.

STEPH

You talking to me or you?

CHARLIE

I DON'T KNOW!!

He falls back onto the couch.

CHARLIE

This whole week, Man. It's just one fucking jumbled up ball of shit.

STEPH

Nice image.

CHARLIE

I've had sex with six women, got on a wrong plane, I've been polygraphed, had my lucky tie stolen, given a chance to turn my life around, and I lost my six year old parking space.

STEPH

So what am I in all this?

CHARLIE

You kidding? You're the woman I'm fated to be with. All this other stuff? It was just to lead me to you. Like Mel Gibson's wife dying in "SIGNS."

STEPH

Never saw it.

CHARLIE

Oh shit! Oh shit! Now I've ruined the movie for you!

STEPH

Relax. Of course, I saw it. Loved it.

CHARLIE

See? See how perfect we are together.

STEPH

I never said we weren't.

CHARLIE

Then how can you pull this timing crap on me? I see happiness with you.

STEPH

I see the same thing.

CHARLIE

So?

STEPH

So... I can't hang around. Don't feel like going to jail, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I'll go with you. You can be Bonnie, I'll be your Clyde.

STEPH

Remember how that turned out?

CHARLIE

I don't care.

STEPH

Well, call me shallow, but I don't look good all shot up.

CHARLIE

But this is the great love that every classic character has longed for in every classic romance movie.

STEPH

Life ain't a movie, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Don't say that. Please don't say that.

STEPH

I wish life were a movie. And that we could ride off into the sunset.

CHARLIE

Personally, I'd rather ride away from the sunset. I don't wear sunglasses and the glare, you know?

STEPH

God, I'm going to miss you.

CHARLIE

What if I can't go on without you? I mean, my chest is hurting right now. What if I die? Wow, what if that happens?

STEPH

Then you'd be more of a legend than you already are.

CHARLIE  
(smiles)  
I am kind of a legend, aren't I?

STEPH  
Yup.

She takes his hand.

CHARLIE  
I can't believe this is happening.

STEPH  
Do you regret meeting me?

CHARLIE  
Hell no.

STEPH  
I love you, Charlie Donnell.

CHARLIE  
I love you, Stephanie I-don't-even-know-your-last-name.

STEPH  
Powers.

CHARLIE  
You're killing me here.

STEPH  
Then I better go.

CHARLIE  
Yeah.

He leans in and gives her a passionate kiss the likes of which neither has ever experienced. They pull apart and look at one another.

CHARLIE  
Quickie for the road?

STEPH  
Abso-fucking-lutely!

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY

Charlie is standing outside Apartment 3-C. He just stares at the door without making a move. The door opens. Allison sees him, gently shakes her head, then steps out into the hallway, closing the door behind her. Charlie smiles weakly.

CHARLIE

Did I knock?

ALLISON

Nope. Heard you breathing out here.  
Why didn't you knock?

CHARLIE

I was waiting for the right moment.

ALLISON

That's what you do, Charlie. Wait.

CHARLIE

Yeah. But all that's changing now,  
you see...

ALLISON

Look, Charlie...

She stops. Charlie senses something's wrong.

CHARLIE

Oh no.

ALLISON

I'm sorry.

Charlie just looks down and shakes his head.

ALLISON

I'm so sorry, Charlie.

CHARLIE

No. No, Allison. You have nothing  
to be sorry about. I'm an idiot. Is  
he in there now?

She can only nod her head.

CHARLIE

When?

ALLISON

We met the other night.

CHARLIE  
Do you love him?

ALLISON  
No. Of course not. Not yet. I don't  
know. Why are you doing this now,  
Charlie? Why now?

CHARLIE  
Like a friend of mine, timing's  
never been my thing.

ALLISON  
I loved you, Charlie. I loved you  
for so long.

CHARLIE  
Why didn't you tell me?

Allison just looks at him until he looks away.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, I knew. I've always known.

ALLISON  
Why didn't you love me back?

CHARLIE  
I think maybe I did.

ALLISON  
Think? Maybe? That's not good  
enough.

CHARLIE  
I know. You deserve better.

They just stare at each other for a moment.

CHARLIE  
Well...

ALLISON  
Well...

CHARLIE  
I hope... good luck, Allison.

ALLISON  
You too, Charlie.

Charlie leans in for a hug. They hug, awkwardly. Charlie draws her in, tightly. She lets him. They embrace for a while. We actually see Charlie well up. While still hugging:

CHARLIE  
Maybe it's not too late. Maybe...

ALLISON  
Shhhh. Shhh, Charlie.

Now she hugs him tighter. After a few more moments, she lets go and pulls back. They look into each other's eyes.

ALLISON  
See you around, Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Yeah. See you around.

She quickly enters her apartment and closes the door. Charlie remains there, staring at the door the same as he did at the beginning of the scene.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Charlie is sitting on his couch, staring at his big screen TV, but it is not on. No DVD. Nothing. He is staring into the chasm that is his life. Finally, he gets up and walks over to the always-on computer. He gets a look of determination on his face.

CHARLIE  
Okay, Motherfucker.

He looks like he's about to start typing, but nothing happens. He gets up, all the emotion welling up inside of him and suddenly he lets out a primal scream, like when Superman found Lois Lane dead.

CHARLIE  
Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)  
Shut up, Charlie!

CHARLIE  
Sorry, Stu!

Charlie tries to shake it off. He stands up, shakes his head, then his whole body.

CHARLIE

Okay, shake it off, man, shake it off! That was then, this is now, move on, move forward, a stitch in time..

The PHONE RINGS.

CHARLIE

Thank, God.

He picks it up.

CHARLIE

Good news only, please. Oh, hey, Rach. I'm glad it's you... What?

Charlie tears out of the apartment.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Rachel, Tommy, a couple others are there when Charlie comes running in. He practically doubles over from running all the way. He tries to ask what happened, but can't. Holds his hand up to signal give him a minute. They wait patiently. Finally, he looks as if he's about to speak, but then passes out.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Charlie is unconscious, hooked up to the usual machines. He slowly comes to, wipes the sleep from his eyes.

BRETT (O.S.)

Fucking spotlight hog.

Charlie looks over and sees Brett in the bed next to him.

CHARLIE

You okay?

BRETT

Yeah, Man. Just took a tumble down the subway steps.

CHARLIE

This ain't the first time.

BRETT

I still sometimes forget I'm in a wheelchair.

Charlie looks away.

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry, Brett.

BRETT  
Knock it off, Charlie. Wasn't your  
fault and you know it.

CHARLIE  
Yeah, but you wanted to see "The  
Fast and the Furious." But no, I  
had to insist on us going to the  
artsy fartsy gay flick instead.

BRETT  
Hey if I was gay I could do a hell  
of a lot better than you.

Charlie doesn't laugh. He looks somber.

BRETT  
Let me ask you something. When we  
went to see "GOSFORD PARK," did you  
think I would fall asleep, and then  
jerk my head so violently that I  
would paralyze myself?

Charlie looks at him, near tears. Then suddenly he CRACKS UP  
LAUGHING.

BRETT  
Fuck you, okay? Fu-uck you!

CHARLIE  
I'm sorry. It's just...

He laughs harder and now Brett joins in. They can't stop.  
After about a full minute, they calm down.

BRETT  
I heard you ran the whole way here.

CHARLIE  
Seriously, thought I was having a  
heart attack.

BRETT  
Thanks.

CHARLIE  
Shut up.

BRETT  
I mean it. Thanks.

CHARLIE  
I love you, Man.

BRETT  
See? You are a fag.

CHARLIE  
The biggest.  
(then)  
Maybe I'll stay here a while.

BRETT  
Yeah, it's a great place to escape.  
And the candy stripers? They give  
awesome massages.

CHARLIE  
They do not.

BRETT  
Well, they might.

CHARLIE  
For me maybe, but not for your lame  
ass.

BRETT  
You can't hide out anymore,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE  
I know.

BRETT  
You need to go on that interview.

CHARLIE  
I know.

BRETT  
And move on with your life.

CHARLIE  
You can stop drilling now, Jed, you  
struck oil.

They're silent for a moment.

BRETT

Hey, by the way, Tommy's throwing you a surprise "Do well on your interview" party tonight.

CHARLIE

You're fucking kidding, right?

BRETT

Nope. Hey, don't tell I told you, okay?

CHARLIE

Jesus, I can't believe that guy. Thanks for the heads up. You going?

BRETT

Hell no. Why do you think I threw myself down the subway steps?

Charlie looks at his best friend.

CHARLIE

Please don't do that anymore, okay?

BRETT

Okay.

CHARLIE

Okay.

Charlie pushes the call button.

NURSE (O.S.)

You awake, Mr. Donnell?

CHARLIE

And starving. I'd like to order some food for me and my pal here.

NURSE (O.S.)

Your friend, Ms. McGillicutty I believe was her name, ordered you boys a large double pepperoni pizza.

They both are so happy.

BRETT

How did you ever let that one get away?

CHARLIE

Oh, that? That's called pure  
stupidity.

BRETT

Right.

EXT. STREET

It's night time. Charlie walks down the street and is about to enter a bar when something down the street catches his eye, stopping him. He starts to walk toward that direction.

From Charlie's P.O.V. we see a pretty woman in the distance looking through a store window. After a moment, we see it's Stephanie. She senses Charlie and turns to face him and she can't help but smile.

Now she starts walking toward Charlie. He quickens his pace, but suddenly we see her wave him off with her eyes. He stops and in that instant, his two police buddies approach her out of nowhere. She doesn't resist. In fact, she puts her hands out in front so they can cuff her. Charlie, meanwhile, ducks into an alley while surveying this.

COP 1

You gave us quite a chase there,  
little lady.

STEPHANIE

You're too smart for me, Handsome.

COP2

Tell you what. I'll leave my wife  
right now. You and I go down to  
Mexico and live a nice, quiet life  
together. What'd'ya say?

STEPHANIE

I appreciate the offer, but I  
couldn't do that to your nice wife.

COP1

She ain't so nice. Let's go, Doll.

COP 2

One quick question. You know a  
Charlie Donnell?

STEPHANIE

Nope. I had a dog named Charlie once. He was one of a kind. And I loved him. Very, very much.

COP 1

That's sweet. Now into the car.

She sneaks a glance at Charlie, who can only stare helplessly. The cops put her in an unmarked car and drive off. Charlie, stunned, heads back to where he started and enters the bar.

INT. BAR

A dazed Charlie enters and is suddenly deluged with:

EVERYONE

SURPRISE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CHARLIE

Oh fuck.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARLIE'S CAR

Charlie and Rachel sit in his parked car.

CHARLIE

It was that moment from "HEAT," Rach. Remember? When Ashley Judd waved off Val Kilmer. Great fucking moment. And Steph did that for me!

RACHEL

I'm sorry, Charlie. I really am.

CHARLIE

Yeah. It's crazy. Just crazy. So, is Tommy pissed?

RACHEL

You mean 'cause you ruined his surprise? Nah. He's too busy helping Billy get the four shot glasses out of his mouth.

CHARLIE

I think she might have been the one, Rach.

RACHEL

And you've said that how many  
times?

CHARLIE

This time it's different.

RACHEL

Charlie. Do you think maybe her  
being a felon, and therefore a  
genuine flight risk and therefore  
someone who would never settle down  
had something to do with her  
appeal?

Charlie starts to get angry, but then stops and stares at  
Rachel for a long time.

CHARLIE

You think?

RACHEL

I don't know. And now I regret  
saying it.

CHARLIE

No. Of course, you're right. I mean  
I didn't even tell you guys about  
her? Why? Why didn't I?

RACHEL

You know why we're so hard on you,  
Charlie?

CHARLIE

(by rote)

Yeah, yeah, you love me.

RACHEL

Well, yeah. We do. We do love you.  
But mostly it's because you piss  
each and every one of us off so  
badly that we want to kill you.

CHARLIE

Real nice.

RACHEL

You're wasting your life, Charlie.  
You have so much...

CHARLIE  
Don't say potential!

RACHEL  
Potential! And your wasting it is  
so... so selfish.

CHARLIE  
Selfish?

RACHEL  
Yes. Selfish. You deprive the world  
of what God has given you. That's  
selfish.

CHARLIE  
Wow. You flatter me.

RACHEL  
Believe me, if I could have made my  
point without flattering you I  
would have.

CHARLIE  
I know that. Which is why I enjoyed  
it so much.

RACHEL  
Fuck you, Charlie. And I'd also  
like you to know that I don't curse  
EVER except when I'm with you. And  
fuck you for that, too.

CHARLIE  
I didn't know that. I always  
thought you just had a trash mouth.

RACHEL  
You bring that out in me...

CHARLIE  
(finishing for her)  
You bastard.

RACHEL  
You bastard. Thank you.

CHARLIE  
Sure.

They sit in silence for a minute.

CHARLIE  
Listen, Rach?

RACHEL  
Yeah?

CHARLIE  
Could I, um, I was thinking...can I  
spend the night with you? No sex. I  
mean it. It's not a ploy. I'm only  
asking because...

RACHEL  
Shut up, Dope. You had me on "no  
sex."

CHARLIE  
What's that from?

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Charlie is asleep in bed, alone. Suddenly, an alarm clock  
BLARES loudly. Charlie bolts up in bed.

CHARLIE  
FUCK!

He turns off the alarm, then a clock radio GOES OFF, the  
volume at full strength. He jumps out of bed, but can't find  
it. The PHONE RINGS. He can't find that either. Then there's  
a LOUD KNOCKING on the door, which doesn't stop. He runs to  
the door and yanks it open. Standing there are Rachel, Tommy,  
Chuck, Diane and Brett.

TOMMY  
Didn't want you to oversleep.

CHARLIE  
Guys. I have an internal clock that  
would have woken me.

BRETT  
Yeah. After winter ends.

DIANE  
Good luck, Charlie.

CHUCK  
Yeah. Good luck.

RACHEL  
Thanks for last night, Sunshine.

The others look from her to Charlie.

RACHEL  
Here's your coffee.

She hands him a coffee.

TOMMY  
Call me after.

BRETT  
Don't fuck it up, Hoss.

They all leave. Charlie watches them go with more emotion than he knew he had.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING

Charlie, dressed nicer than we've seen him so far, stands outside the revolving door, not quite able to enter the building. Suddenly a distraught woman comes up to him.

WOMAN  
Please! You have to help me.

CHARLIE  
What is it?

WOMAN  
I'm in trouble and I need you to help me.

CHARLIE  
Look, Lady. I've got an important interview right now.

WOMAN  
Yeah, but I'm a great excuse for you not to go in. I'm a woman in distress. Your friends will understand.

CHARLIE  
I don't need you right now. Okay? Now go away.

WOMAN  
You'll just fuck it up, Charlie. That's what you do.

CHARLIE  
Fuck you.

Charlie enters the revolving door, looking back, uncertainly, at the imaginary woman, who flips him the bird. He flips her one back, harder.

INT. LIONS GATE FILMS OFFICE

Charlie is seated, reading a magazine and looking rather composed. There is an attractive, red-headed receptionist at her desk typing on the computer. Her intercom rings, she answers it:

RECEPTIONIST  
Yes, Sir. I'll tell him.

She turns to Charlie.

RECEPTIONIST  
Mr. Platt will be just a few more minutes.

CHARLIE  
No problem.

RECEPTIONIST  
You sure I can't get you something to drink?

CHARLIE  
I am thirsty, but chances are I'd have some unfortunate mishap, like spilling it all over me and my friends would assume I did it on purpose to mess up my interview when in fact it would have been just an accident. So, thank you but... no.

He smiles at her, then goes back to reading his magazine. She stares at him, amused.

RECEPTIONIST  
Listen. I never do this, but... are you free tonight?

Charlie looks up at her. And as he stares at her we see images of all the women that have passed through his life these past few days:

Image 1: girl from Blockbuster

Image 2: Allison

Image 3: the shrink

Image 4: Stephanie

Image 5: Rachel

All five images hang in the air over his head, until they all evaporate except for Steph's and Rachel's. After a moment, Steph's disappears. Rachel's hangs there for a long moment, then also vanishes. Charlie smiles at this.

CHARLIE

I would love to go out with you,  
except it seems I'm head over heels  
in love with a woman named Rachel,  
so I don't think I can.

RECEPTIONIST

My god, I even like the way you let  
me down.

CHARLIE

Good. I'm glad.

RECEPTIONIST

So how long have you and Rachel...

CHARLIE

Not long at all. Actually, not at  
all. But it will be long. Maybe  
forever long. Wow. I can't believe  
I just said that.

RECEPTIONIST

She's lucky.

CHARLIE

No, she's... she's amazing. Shit.  
I've got to tell her.

Charlie stands up.

RECEPTIONIST

Where are you going?

CHARLIE

I have to tell her. She doesn't  
know.

RECEPTIONIST

But what about your interview?

CHARLIE

What? Oh yeah. No! This can't wait.

RECEPTIONIST

Listen, Charlie. It's Charlie, right?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST

Okay, Charlie. In the short time I've known you, I've learned a lot about you. And I bet this Rachel loves you as much as you love her. But if you leave now to tell her, she'll believe you only did that so as to avoid this interview which apparently has monumental importance to you. So my advice, and I really think you should listen to me, is to take the interview, do your best, then go tell Rachel how you feel. Okay?

CHARLIE

Want to know how I now know that I love Rachel so much?

RECEPTIONIST

How?

CHARLIE

Because otherwise you and I would be having fantastic sex right now.

RECEPTIONIST

I know.

CHARLIE

You do? Listen... hey, I don't even know your name.

RECEPTIONIST

It's Donna. Donna Santangelo.

Charlie stares at her for a long moment.

CHARLIE

Donna Santangelo?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. THOMAS JEFFERSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM

It's that moment where Donna walks slowly and deliberately. As she walks behind Charlie he (IN SLOW MOTION) leans back slightly and brushes his neck against her naked calf.

END FLASHBACK:

INT. LIONS GATE FILMS OFFICE

CHARLIE

Do you know how long I've fantasized about you?

RECEPTIONIST

What?

Charlie rushes to her, grabs her and kisses her - long and hard. We actually see SPFX: FIREWORKS exploding around them.

Back to reality. Charlie is still staring at her.

CHARLIE

Donna Santangelo?

RECEPTIONIST

Yes.

CHARLIE

That's...

RECEPTIONIST

What?

CHARLIE

A fantastic name.

She smiles. Her intercom buzzes. She answers it.

RECEPTIONIST

Right away, Sir.

She looks at Charlie.

RECEPTIONIST

You're up, Slugger.

Charlie just stares at her.

INT. CHARLIE'S APARTMENT

We hear the tail end of a message being left on Charlie's phone machine. It's Tommy.

TOMMY (O.S.)

...by now, dammit!! I've left you ten messages. Call me, asshole!

We hear a key in the lock, and the door opens. A very drained-looking Charlie enters. He walks over to his phone machine, sees the flashing light and pushes the button.

PHONE MACHINE

You have 33 new messages.

Charlie laughs.

CHARLIE

Of course I do.

The messages start to play:

MESSAGE 1

Hi, Honey, it's Mom. Just calling to say hi. See how you're doing. Nothing else.

(man's voice in background)

For Christ's sake, Mary, ask him how the interview went. Why do you always pussyfoot around?

(mom's voice again)

Shut up, Frank. I swear I'll stab you with this fork! Sorry, Charlie, sweetie. Call me, okay.

Charlie can't help but smile, shakes his head.

BEEP!

TOMMY (O.S.)

Well?! Call me.

BEEP!

BRETT (O.S.)

On a scale of one to ten, how bad was it? One being that time you dropped that cinder block on your big toe. Remember that? That was funny. Ten being you're shot from a super catapult that launches you directly at the sun, your skin burning away as your horrific screams are not heard in space. Call me. Oh, it's Brett.

BEEP!

RACHEL (O.S.)

Hi. Are you okay? Call me. I'm at work.

Charlie smiles.

BEEP!

CHUCK (O.S.)

This isn't me saying this. Okay? Diana wanted me to tell you that we love you no matter what. Diana, not me. Later.

Charlie stops the machine, picks up the phone and dials.

CHARLIE

Hey, Rach, it's me. I know you're at work, I just wanted to say this: I'll be at your place tonight at 7:00. There's a lot I want to tell you. Please be there. Thanks.

He hangs up the phone, then gets up and walks over to his computer. He sits down and actually starts typing. We CLOSE on the computer screen as we see these words typed:

BETTER LATE

An original screenplay by  
Charlie Donnell

Those words hang on the screen for a moment. Then the camera pans around so we see Charlie's proud, smiling face.

CHARLIE  
That looks good.

We hear the phone RING. The machine picks up. It's Tommy.

TOMMY (O.S.)  
You have half an hour. If I don't  
hear from you within thirty minutes  
I will come there and kick your  
door in, and if you're there I will  
kick in your lungs. Half hour. Your  
life depends on it. Love you.

Charlie laughs, then goes back to his computer. He types  
something more:

We CLOSE on what he typed: Fade In:

We pull back to see Charlie looking at the screen with a very  
satisfied look.

CHARLIE  
All right. Break time.

He stands up and heads off screen.

AND WE, FADE TO BLACK.

The End

KID (O.S.)  
Wait a minute. So, you never went  
out with the sumptuous Donna  
Santangelo?

OPEN ON:

INT. SOME LIVING ROOM

We see Charlie, looking the same, and a seven year-old girl.

CHARLIE  
That's right. I chose your mommy  
over the sumptuous Donna  
Santangelo. Biggest mistake of my  
life.

KID

Daddy!!

Charlie smiles and grabs her.

Rachel walks in, kisses them both.

RACHEL

Bed in ten minutes, you.

CHARLIE

Which one of us?

RACHEL

Both of you.

CHARLIE

Grrrrrrrrr...

KID

Yuck.

Rachel laughs and exits.

KID

Was that story true, Daddy?

CHARLIE

Every word of it, kid. Every word  
of it.

Charlie smiles at it all.

FADE TO BLACK

CHARLIE (V.O.)

That's it for real this time. You  
can leave now. Thanks.

THE END