

Second Chance

an original screenplay  
by Ron Sasso

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"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" - Mark 8:36

INT. NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY -- DAY

The RUSH of a subway car fills the air. People are everywhere, coming and going in all directions.

A few people wait in line at a token booth.

LANCE SAGER, thirties and usually patient, sits inside the token booth assisting a clueless male CUSTOMER in his forties. Clearly from out of town, the customer wears a Colorado Rockies jacket.

LANCE

You want to take the "A" train to 31st Street, then switch to the "M" and take that to 62nd Street.

CUSTOMER

How do you know which is which? I was down there and they all look the same to me.

Lance avoids rolling his eyes, but it's a struggle.

LANCE

As I explained to you five minutes ago, look on the walls. It'll tell you which is which.

The customer turns and looks at the walls.

CUSTOMER

I don't see anything.

LANCE

(deep breath)

Downstairs, when you get near the trains look on the walls. But make sure you don't fall on the tracks while you're doing that.

(pauses)

Enjoy your ride. Next!

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- NIGHT

Lance dressed in running clothes happily runs along a city sidewalk. The Empire State Building is illuminated in the background.

An elderly HOMELESS MAN sifts through some garbage looking for treasures. He looks up and notices Lance.

HOMELESS MAN

Hey! Sir Lancelot, you trainin' for the marathon?

Startled, Lance pauses then recognizes him. He stops running but keeps running in place.

LANCE

Hey Fred! Yeah, not much training left. What're you doing down here?

HOMELESS MAN

Explorin' a different part of town. But don't you worry, I'll see you at work tomorrow.

LANCE

I'll count on it.

Lance smiles and resumes running on his way.

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A bright and cheery apartment. Tastefully decorated and so immaculate it could be featured in an advertisement for "Better Homes".

Lance, still in his running clothes, takes a critical look at a painting on a lone easel in the living room. The painting isn't finished but it's clearly exceptional. He grabs a brush from nearby and does some quick blending touch up work.

He steps back and looks at it. It's fine for the moment. He puts his brush down and walks back toward the kitchen, pausing at a bedroom to look in.

INT. BRIANA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

LANCE

(cheery)

Hi, sweetie.

BRIANA is a precocious six-year-old. She seems less than excited to see him as she looks at the pictures in a book.

BRIANA

(barely looking up)

Hi, Daddy.

Lance walks in and kisses Briana's head.

LANCE

Did you have a good day?

BRIANA

No.

LANCE

Want to tell me about it?

BRIANA

No.

LANCE

You sure?

BRIANA

Yeah. Mommy will tell you.

Lance decides to leave her alone. He gives her another quick kiss on the head and walks out feeling dejected.

INT. APARTMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Lance continues on to the kitchen, where his wife, MELISSA, is cooking dinner. She has a nervous energy about her, straightening items around her in between stirring a pot on the stove.

LANCE

She doesn't want to talk to me about it.

(pauses)

That's why *you* should go.

Melissa stirs the pot a little faster, her nervous energy spilling over.

MELISSA

You can't expect me to go in late on my first day at a new job.

Lance starts helping with dinner preparations. He takes some plates out to set the table.

LANCE

I wouldn't expect to have to meet with the principal in her first week of school. She's only in first grade! I didn't get sent to the principal's office until at least third grade.

MELISSA

And probably every week after that.

They pause for a moment. Melissa looks at him seriously.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Before you know it she's gonna be a teenager and we'll never see her.

LANCE

(joking)

Yeah, except on visiting day in jail.

MELISSA

Stop that!

Melissa playfully hits him with a dish towel. Lance moves toward her and puts his arms around her waist. They're face to face.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

There's gonna come a time when she won't want anything to do with us.

LANCE

Too late. She already doesn't want anything to do with *me*.

MELISSA

That's because you've been working a lot. Then when you're painting and she interrupts, you nearly tear her head off.

Lance drops his hands from her waist and becomes very animated as he speaks.

LANCE

I need to concentrate when I paint. I don't think Renoir had to deal with countless interruptions of 'Daddy, can you make me chocolate milk' or 'Daddy, what are you painting?' Or 'Daddy, you should use brighter colors'---I need to concentrate.

Lance picks up some mail that's sitting on the counter. He flips through it---just bills. He suddenly feels very inadequate.

LANCE (CONT'D)

I spent the last six years working two jobs so you could stay home with her and we could make ends meet---barely. I've had one day a week with her---divorced fathers get more than that.

Melissa moves toward him, caringly.

MELISSA

We can't change what we did.

LANCE

(resigned)  
I know.

Melissa puts a dish in the sink. She takes a deep breath and lets out a sigh.

MELISSA

I'll talk to my boss and see if I can go. But you're not getting out of it. If he says yes, we're going together.

Listening from the doorway of her room, Briana smiles. She likes that arrangement.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN -- DAY

It's early the next morning. Melissa is smartly dressed in a black mini-dress and ready for work. She reads from a small two-tone leather Bible.

CLOSE UP: The Bible. It looks like it's been well used. Hand-written notes fill the margins.

Melissa finishes the verse, closes the Bible then she spies a packet of pictures on the counter. She opens it and flips through the photos until she comes to one that really gets her attention.

CLOSE UP: A photo of the three of them in the basket of a hot air balloon.

Melissa smiles thinking of the memory. She puts the picture inside the cover of her Bible, then puts the Bible into her purse.

She takes a deep breath as she nervously picks up the phone to call her new boss.

Lance rushes in, interrupting her.

LANCE  
Wait! I'll do it. I'll go.

MELISSA  
(surprised)  
By yourself?

LANCE  
Yeah.

MELISSA  
You sure?

LANCE  
No. But I'll do it anyway.  
(pauses)  
Going back to work is hard enough for you. Besides, it'll be good for me to get some time with Briana.

Briana runs up.

BRIANA  
I want Mommy to come!

MELISSA  
Sweetie, it's my first day of work.

BRIANA  
Why can't you stay home and Daddy keep working?

MELISSA  
Daddy's still working but I'm working too. You're in school now. I don't need to stay home.

BRIANA  
I hate school!

Briana runs off to her room, crying.

LANCE  
(anything but)  
Fantastic.

Lance shakes his head. Not a good start to the day.

Melissa follows Briana into her room. Lance follows behind hoping to learn from his wife.

INT. BRIANA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Briana has her face buried in her pillow on her bed.

Melissa sits on the bed and hugs Briana tightly. As Briana's sobs gradually stop, they pull apart but remain face to face and close together.

MELISSA  
Don't cry. Even though I'll be at  
work you'll be able to see where I  
am from almost anywhere.

Melissa wipes her tears.

BRIANA  
Which one is it?

MELISSA  
It's the one with the big antennae  
on it. I'm just a few windows from  
the top.

LANCE  
You're mother will be the princess  
in the tall tower.

Lance moves forward and kisses Briana's head.

MELISSA  
I'd better get going.

Melissa gives hugs and kisses to Briana and Lance.

LANCE  
Have a good day.

Briana runs into her room and SLAMS THE DOOR.

Lance rolls his eyes.

Melissa stops at the door.

MELISSA  
Are you sure you can handle the  
principal?

LANCE  
Yeah, I'll kick his butt if there  
are any problems.  
(pauses)  
You sure you can handle work?

MELISSA

No.

(she starts crying)

You weren't supposed to ask me that.

LANCE

I'm sorry, hon.

He gives her a hug.

MELISSA

I don't know why I feel like this.  
I feel like I did on her first day  
of school.

LANCE

It'll be okay. Once you're at work  
and you get busy you won't even think  
about it. Besides, it's only a couple  
of hours a day you won't be seeing  
her.

MELISSA

(between tears and  
laughter)

Yeah, but that's ten hours a week.

Melissa pulls herself together. She takes a deep breath and  
lets it out slowly.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Okay. I'm ready.

SLOW MOTION: She gives Lance one more kiss from the door and  
exits.

On screen: That was the morning of September 11, 2001.

Black screen. The sound of a jet accelerating and then  
CRASHING.

On screen: Two years later.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

It's raining outside. The sound of the rain steadily pelting  
the window is a constant reminder. The weather outside  
reflects Lance's mood.

The once bright and cheery apartment has been transformed.  
The living room is now a total art studio with several easels  
with partially finished art on each. Most of the furniture  
is gone, except for an old recliner.

Lance sits emotionless in the recliner holding a mostly empty  
glass of wine and staring at a mostly blank canvas. He looks  
like a man stranded on an island who has given up all hope  
of ever being found. He continues living out of habit.

A KNOCK on the door doesn't get Lance's attention.



Another KNOCK, this one LOUDER. Still no response from Lance.

The sound of a KEY BEING INSERTED and the door BEING UNLOCKED.

NATALIE, late twenties and bearing a strong resemblance to Melissa, enters carrying a small Christmas tree. Briana follows quietly behind her carrying a Christmas wreath that's nearly as tall as she is.

NATALIE

Hello! We're here to bring some Christmas cheer, then rob the place blind.

Lance doesn't change his gaze as he talks.

LANCE

Keep the Christmas stuff out of here and take what you want. Just don't forget to shoot me on the way out.

Natalie rolls her eyes at his comment. She's heard this type of talk a lot from him. She begins setting up the tree in a corner. As she does, she sees an empty bottle of wine on the counter sitting next to it's mostly full twin.

NATALIE

Hittin' it kind of hard tonight.

Briana hasn't removed her coat and hasn't moved far into the apartment. She turns to Natalie.

BRIANA

Can I stay with you tonight?

Lance responds as though she directed the comment to him.

LANCE

What, you don't want to stay with Aunt Natalie tonight?

Briana gives a 'duh!' look and is about to speak but Natalie quickly puts her hand over Briana's mouth before she has a chance to respond.

NATALIE

If you want me to, I think I can convince her.

(pauses)

But I'm sure she'll be disappointed.

Natalie removes her hand from Briana's mouth.

BRIANA

(shouting out)

You convinced me Aunt Natalie!

Natalie shoots her a slight scolding look.

NATALIE

Good thing neither of us has much of a social life. But I should warn you that I plan on asking Santa for one this Christmas.

LANCE

You deserve it.

Natalie turns to Briana.

NATALIE

Why don't you go and pick out some jammies and clothes for tomorrow.

Briana runs off to her room.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Something nice! Remember we've got church tomorrow.

BRIANA O.S.

Yeah.

Natalie walks over to Lance as though she was approaching a wounded animal that could strike at any moment.

NATALIE

Lance, please get some help.

LANCE

I don't want it.

NATALIE

Why don't you come to church with us tomorrow?

(bribing)

I'll make you breakfast---French toast and scrambled eggs.

LANCE

I'm not hungry.

NATALIE

You might be tomorrow.

LANCE

Doubt it.

NATALIE

How about church then?

Lance laughs. It's a hollow laugh that is full of scorn for the idea.

LANCE

I'll die before I set foot in a church.

Natalie is tired and angry.

NATALIE

(raising her voice)

You know, you're not the only one who misses her. She was my only sister! But I don't blame God for what happened. It was damn terrorists!

LANCE

And God let it happen.

Natalie turns and walks away. She stops and turns back to Lance.

NATALIE

I don't care what you do to yourself, but you're ripping Briana apart.

LANCE

She blames me for what happened to Melissa and she's right. She should'a gone to Briana's school and I should'a kept working two jobs.

NATALIE

For the ten thousandth time, it's not your fault.

LANCE

No, you're right, it's God's.

Briana is at the front door clutching her clothes.

BRIANA

Daddy, it's your fault too!

She opens the door and runs out into the hallway, SLAMMING THE DOOR behind her.

NATALIE

If you paid a little more attention to her instead of living in your own little depressed world she wouldn't be saying those kind of things.

LANCE

I prefer her candid honesty.

Natalie can't find the words she needs. She holds back the tears.

NATALIE

We'll be by in the afternoon. Unless you want to think about letting me adopt her.

She grabs her things and heads toward the door.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

She's a wonderful girl and you're missing out.

Lance just stares at his painting.

Natalie leaves, SLAMMING THE DOOR behind her as Briana had.

Lance stares at the canvas for a moment, then hurls his mostly empty glass of wine at it. The GLASS SHATTERS.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

The rain continues to fall as an older Toyota Corolla drives past St. Patrick's Cathedral with Natalie and Briana inside.

INT. NATALIE'S CAR -- DAY

Briana sits in the back in her own quiet world.

NATALIE

I know what we're going to do.

BRIANA

(indifferent)

What?

NATALIE

We're gonna get to work on a prayer request for your father.

BRIANA

I stopped praying for him.

Natalie looks visibly disappointed.

NATALIE

Why?

BRIANA

God wasn't listening.

NATALIE

Sweetie, God's always listening. He just might not give us an answer right away. God's plan is bigger than we can imagine. Everything happens for a reason, but we might not see it until later.

INT. NATALIE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A modest apartment that seems like a home. Family photos line the walls along with lots of Briana's artwork and projects. Natalie has clearly taken on the role of a parent.

Natalie and Briana sit at a small dining table working on something.

NATALIE

(confidently)

This is going to work.

BRIANA

Have you done prayer quests before?

NATALIE

Prayer request.

BRIANA

Oh.

(not hopeful)

So we're gonna ask God to help Daddy  
again?

Natalie gets up and brings the paper with her over to a notebook computer. Briana follows.

NATALIE

Yes, but it won't be just us. We're gonna e-mail it to a bunch of people and try to have everyone at church pray for him too.

Briana looks really skeptical. Natalie notices.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

If you were God, would you help someone that only one person is praying for or would you help a person who has a thousand people praying for them?

BRIANA

If I was God I'd help them all.

Natalie frowns and gives her a hug and a kiss.

NATALIE

Your father isn't praying for help so everyone else needs to get God's attention for him.

Natalie begins typing on the computer.

BRIANA

(skeptical)

This better work.

INT. LANCE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

There's a KNOCK on the door.

Lance is surprised. He's not expecting anyone.

He looks at the shattered wine glass on the floor. He'll have to deal with that later.

The KNOCK is changed to "a haircut and a shave" knock.

Lance gets up and walks over to the bottle of wine on the counter to pour himself another drink only to realize he'll need another glass. It can wait. He continues to the door.

He reaches it and stands ready to open it. The HAIRCUT AND A SHAVE KNOCK comes yet again. It stops without completing the last two beats.

Lance opens the door to reveal MICK, a slick looking executive in his thirties. Mick stands there smiling warmly.

RAP, RAP. The final two beats are completed by two heel clicks from Mick.

MICK  
Hi, Lance. How's it going?

Lance looks perplexed. He has no clue who this person is.

LANCE  
(anything but)  
Fantastic.  
(pauses)  
Who are you?

MICK  
My name's Mick.

Mick extends a hand to shake. Lance reluctantly shakes it.

MICK (CONT'D)  
I'm here to help you. Can I come in  
for a moment?

Lance doesn't seem to care either way. He lets Mick in.

Mick seems at home and relaxed. He has a light mood.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Hey, how about a glass of wine?

Lance glances over toward his painting where the broken glass is---or was. It's clean without any evidence of the shattered glass.

Lance then looks over at the bottle of wine. It's full and two full glasses sit next to the bottle.

LANCE  
What the?

MICK  
Relax. It's cool. You're not going  
crazy.

Lance isn't so sure.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Parlor tricks. Just for fun.  
(pauses)  
How about that wine.

Lance grabs the glasses and offers one to Mick.

LANCE  
Who are you?

MICK  
A friend. I help people with their  
problems.

Lance wants to escort Mick out.

LANCE  
Oh, you're a shrink. Tell Natalie I  
appreciate the offer but, no thanks.

MICK  
I'm not a shrink and Natalie didn't  
send me. She doesn't have a clue  
what you need. You know what you  
need.

Mick pulls out some folded papers from his jacket pocket.  
He hands them to Lance.

Lance opens the papers and looks at them. His eyes are drawn  
to a few highlighted areas.

LANCE  
Insurance.  
(he pauses, reading)  
No suicide clause?

Lance suddenly looks surprised.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
Sixty million dollars?

MICK  
Enough to set up Briana for life and  
her children as well. You know  
Natalie would take good care of her---  
she's practically raising her right  
now.  
(pauses)  
Briana would be able to have anything  
she wants. You'd be her hero.

Lance is uncertain.

LANCE  
You mean after I'm dead?

MICK  
Yeah, how else? You know she doesn't  
want anything to do with you now.

Though Lance has thought about death, he's never been keen  
on the idea because of Briana.

LANCE  
Briana might blame herself for it.

MICK  
You worried about that?

LANCE

Yes. She's been through enough already.

MICK

She's a resilient kid. She's flourished in spite of losing her mother and I hate to say it, but you wouldn't be as big of a loss for her. She'd get over it.

Lance ponders this seriously.

Mick has an idea and becomes very animated and enthusiastic.

MICK (CONT'D)

What if you were to do something remarkable for her just before you died. She'd relish that last memory of you forever. You'd be able to become a tragic, yet heroic figure in her life.

(pauses)

Imagine, you die saving her life but surrender yours in the process.

(pauses)

MICK (CONT'D)

Then she'll surely remember you fondly, like her mother.

Lance walks around. He can't believe he's thinking about this.

LANCE

I don't know.

MICK

What do you mean, you don't know? Can you think of a day that's gone by since Melissa died that you haven't thought about killing yourself?

Lance thinks briefly, then shakes his head "no".

MICK (CONT'D)

I'm offering you a glorious way out.

Mick raises his glass to toast Lance.

MICK (CONT'D)

Consider this assisted suicide.

Their glasses CLINK, then they drink.

MICK (CONT'D)

Hey, I haven't told you the best part yet.

LANCE

What?



MICK  
When you die you're gonna go to the  
world of your dreams.

LANCE  
Heaven?

MICK  
No, better.

LANCE  
Who are you?

MICK  
A friend who knows what you need.

Mick finishes his glass of wine.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Hey, think about it and I'll be back  
tomorrow. Maybe we'll have breakfast---  
on me.

Lance looks at the insurance policy.

LANCE  
(holding it up)  
This can't be real.

MICK  
It's as real as it gets. Call and  
check on it if you like.

Lance is perplexed. Mick walks to the door.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Think about it. She'll be set for  
life.

Mick flashes a smile.

MICK (CONT'D)  
I'll see you tomorrow.

EXT. OFFICE -- DAY

Through a window we see a beautiful woman waiting impatiently.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The woman is ANGELA FREEMAN, twenties and beautiful enough to give Helen of Troy a run for her money. She fidgets as she sits in a waiting room just outside a closed door. She hates waiting. There are better things she could be doing with her time.

She looks at GRACE, a meticulously groomed secretary who exudes calmness and programmed efficiency. If the room was on fire she would remember to turn out the lights.

Angela can't stand her.

ANGELA  
Grace, do you know how much longer  
Gabriel will be?

GRACE  
No, I'm sorry I don't.

Angela expected that response but she's not happy with it.

ANGELA  
Do you have a clue what this is about?

GRACE  
No, I'm sorry I don't.

ANGELA  
(sarcastic)  
No, you don't have a clue.

Grace begins straightening her already meticulous desk.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
What is it you do here?

GRACE  
I beg your pardon?

ANGELA  
What do you do, Grace? Do you  
actually do something or do you just  
wait for him to give you an order.

Grace calmly and blankly stares at Angela. Then her intercom  
BUZZES.

VOICE  
(through intercom)  
Grace, send Angela in.

GRACE  
Angela, you may go in now.

ANGELA  
You could take the day off and leave  
(gestures to intercom)  
that box here and you wouldn't be  
missed. Actually, the box may have  
more personality.

INT. EXECUTIVE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Angela walks in and looks around to see if there have been  
any changes. She'd rather do anything than be here. She  
finally looks at the figure behind the desk...

If the secretary seemed meticulously groomed, GABRIEL, the  
"man" behind the desk, could be in the midst of a shoot for  
GQ. Not a hair is out of place. He's forties, stylish and  
overly friendly.

GABRIEL

Angela, how nice of you to come.

ANGELA

I didn't have a choice.

(impatiently)

You pull me off my first vacation in nearly a thousand years. This better be good.

They sit down. Gabriel is direct.

GABRIEL

I've got two reasons for you to be here. First of all, I'm a little disappointed that you've been falling off on your conversions lately.

ANGELA

Oh, come on! I've been stuck working in New Jersey for the last hundred years. It's the hardest territory.

Gabriel looks at Angela doubtfully. She picks up on it.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

The last person I worked with thought he made a significant change when he yielded to someone in traffic!

(she takes a breath)

Did you ever take a good look at that place? Anyone with a glimmer of hope moves out of that state.

GABRIEL

(upbeat)

Then you'll be pleased to know you're next assignment is in New York.

Angela is surprised and somewhat pleased about the news.

ANGELA

New York?

GABRIEL

We've just started getting some digital requests on a Lance Sager.

ANGELA

(annoyed)

Digital requests? That internet is one of the worst things God ever let them create. This better not be like the one for the missing kid who never existed.

GABRIEL

No, Grace ran a check on this one.

ANGELA

Oh, she does do something.

GABRIEL

What?

ANGELA

Never mind.

Gabriel opens up a file and looks at it.

GABRIEL

Lance Sager. An artist. His wife died in the nine-eleven attacks. He's lost faith and is considering suicide.

ANGELA

That's it? You call me off vacation for that!

GABRIEL

No. He has a daughter---age nine. She's in danger of losing faith. She's stopped praying for him.

ANGELA

Why not just set up supports for her if he offs himself? Bring her back to the faith?

Gabriel stands up. He begins walking around the office slowly. Not quite pacing, but it's close to it.

GABRIEL

There's competition on this one.

Angela doesn't seem concerned.

ANGELA

(so what)

It can't be anyone good, otherwise you'd be giving it to Mick.

Gabriel doesn't say anything but he doesn't look happy.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

So who is it? Tyrone, Wanda, who?

Gabriel stops walking. He looks directly at Angela.

GABRIEL

Mick.

Angela looks as though she's been gut punched.

ANGELA

Mick? When did this happen?

Gabriel returns to walking around his office.

GABRIEL

Last week.  
(pauses)  
He lost sight of the mission.

ANGELA

I don't get it. Even if it looks like evil is winning out we all know the final outcome.

GABRIEL

Yes, but no one knows the day or hour. Mick is betting it's not coming any time soon.

Angela is still stunned by the news.

ANGELA

Mick. Wow. I can't believe it. He's been at the top of the conversion charts forever. I remember one time we were working with a life-long atheist and Mick convinced him...

GABRIEL

(cutting her off)  
No reveling in his exploits. He's with the competition now.

Gabriel shoots Angela a stern look. Mick is a particularly sore subject with him.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Mick left a resignation letter saying he was tired of the hard work.  
(pauses)  
Judging from where you've been on the conversion charts you must be well rested.

Angela rolls her eyes and bites her tongue as Gabriel hands her a file.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Angela, you need to keep your heart pure. There's a lot riding on this one.

ANGELA

(annoyed)  
There is on every one.

GABRIEL

I don't want anyone to think for a moment that Mick made the right move.

ANGELA

Who would do that?

GABRIEL

Of all angels, I didn't think Mick would ever change sides.

ANGELA

You score a point for that one.

GABRIEL

Angela, be quick on this one. Mick's gonna go in for the kill.

Gabriel walks to the window and looks out with his back to Angela.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Times are changing. We need to do the job and move on quickly. No time to lounge in the sun, so to speak.

ANGELA

What's this have to do with me?

GABRIEL

To put it bluntly, your conversion rates have been horrible lately.

Knowing Gabriel's back is turned toward her, Angela sticks her tongue out at him.

Gabriel turns back to face Angela---she quickly makes believe she's got food stuck between her teeth.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(very upbeat)

But I think this is just what you need to get back on track. There will be more structure to enhance your focus.

ANGELA

(what???)

More structure to enhance my focus?

Gabriel pulls out another folder and hands it to Angela. She opens it and looks at it while he continues explaining.

GABRIEL

Precisely. We've structured the conversion process to make it quick and simple. Two solar revolutions and the job should be done. If not, it's time to move on.

Angela thinks he's asking the impossible.

ANGELA

Two days for a conversion?!

GABRIEL

(calmly)

Yes. In case you haven't noticed most of this department has been completing their jobs in half that time.

Angela looks down at the file in her hand.

ANGELA

What happened to him?

GABRIEL

Read the file. That's what it's for.

Gabriel looks out the window for a moment. Angela sticks her finger in her mouth and mocks vomiting, unseen.

Gabriel turns back and she's almost nailed. She coughs and then makes believe she's got something stuck in between her teeth again.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Angela, this challenge gives you fantastic opportunity to become a more productive team member. I have all the confidence in the world that you'll regain your old form.

Gabriel stands up signaling the end of the meeting. Angela breathes a sigh of relief.

Gabriel escorts Angela to the door.

ANGELA

You know, when you called me in here I thought you were going to put me on probation again and take away my vacation time or something ridiculous like that.

GABRIEL

(upbeat)

I'm sorry if I didn't make that clear. You *are* on probation. No vacations for the next decade.

Angela looks intensely annoyed.

DISSOLVE TO:

Black. Nothing more is visible, just black.

Moving back slowly the black seems to change into woven material. Pulling back further, it gradually becomes clear that it is a painted section of a rather dark painting.

Lance's VOICE can be heard in the background, but it's tough to understand what he is saying.

Pulling back further still, the entire painting is revealed...it's of the destruction of the Twin Towers and the black is the smoke from the fire. Technically it is fantastic and powerful, but dark and depressing.

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

Lance is in the middle of a phone call. He holds the insurance policy that Mick gave him in his hand.

LANCE  
(into phone)  
And I'm insured for sixty million dollars?

FEMALE VOICE O.S.  
(through phone)  
That's correct Mr. Sager.

LANCE  
Are there any clauses in which I wouldn't be covered?

FEMALE VOICE O.S.  
No. This is a comprehensive policy with no exclusions.

Lance puts the policy down. He opens up a kitchen drawer revealing an assortment of knives.

LANCE  
So any way I die is fine?

He runs his hand over the steak knives, then pulls out a butter knife. He examines its blade. It would never be lethal.

FEMALE VOICE O.S.  
That's correct. You are fully covered.

LANCE  
What if I decide to kill myself?  
Then what?

FEMALE VOICE O.S.  
We hope that won't happen, but if it does we will make a sixty million dollar payment to...  
(pauses)  
Your daughter, Briana Sager.

LANCE  
Thank you.

Lance is satisfied.



EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK, NYC -- DAY

Lance walks through the busy park looking as though a great weight has been lifted from him. He enjoys all the sights and sounds as though this may be one of his last times here.

He sees an open bench and decides to sit and take everything in.

A person in a Fed Ex uniform and hat approaches Lance.

Lance's POV: A woman's hands holding a small package. Her head is looking down so her face is shielded by the bill of her cap as she logs her delivery. She turns her gaze to Lance. It's Angela.

ANGELA

Lance Sager?

LANCE

(what the?)

Yeah?

ANGELA

Message for you.

Lance is confused.

LANCE

How'd you find me?

ANGELA

You'd be surprised how much tracking we have.

LANCE

What is this, Big Brother at work?

ANGELA

No, the Father and the Son.

Lance apprehensively takes the package.

LANCE

You have to excuse me. My last twenty-four hours have been strange.

Angela smiles, almost deviously.

ANGELA

Fasten your seat belt. You have no idea how strange it can get.

Lance chalks her up as another eccentric New Yorker.

LANCE

Thanks. I'll keep that in mind.

Angela turns and slowly walks away.

Curious, Lance opens the package and pulls out the contents.

It's a two-tone Bible that looks exactly like the one Melissa had---but it can't be.

Lance opens up the cover and finds the photo of the three of them in the hot air balloon. He rifles through the pages. He sees the scores of notes. He feels he's just entered the Twilight Zone. There's no mistaking it---it's Melissa's Bible. But how?

Lance stands up and looks in the direction Angela walked off into.

Lance's POV: People enjoying the day, but no sign of Angela. He checks several directions but she's vanished. He checks the Bible in his hand to see if he was hallucinating, but it's still there.

Lance walks off, not necessarily sure of where he's headed. He occasionally looks at the cover of the Bible as he walks.

His cell phone RINGS, ripping him from his thoughts.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
(answering phone)  
Hello?

INT. NATALIE'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Natalie makes batter for French toast as she talks on the phone.

NATALIE  
Did you change your mind? Are you  
coming for breakfast?

INTERCUT

LANCE  
Uhm, I don't know. Things have been  
kind of weird since you left last  
night.

He looks at the Bible.

NATALIE  
You were getting pretty drunk so  
anything might seem a little weird.

LANCE  
No. This is a whole new level of  
weirdness.

NATALIE  
If you want to keep going with the  
weirdness, why not come for breakfast?  
Or church afterwards?

Lance is about to agree to it, but...

Mick suddenly walks into view.

He smiles a friendly smile to Lance then gestures they are supposed to go have breakfast.

                          LANCE  
                          (into phone)  
                          I would, but I've got other plans.

Mick gestures there's no hurry.

                          NATALIE  
                          (surprised)  
                          You? Plans?

                          LANCE  
                          I know it's hard to believe, but  
                          true.  
                          (pauses)  
                          Can I call you later?

                          NATALIE  
                          Sure, sure.

CLICK. DIAL TONE.

Natalie looks bewildered.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK, NYC -- CONTINUOUS

Lance looks at Mick, not sure what to expect.

                          MICK  
                          Breakfast?

                          LANCE  
                          Yeah, sure.

INT. TAVERN ON THE GREEN -- DAY

Lance and Mick sit down in the posh restaurant. They look at menus.

                          MICK  
                          Have you decided?

                          LANCE  
                          About the offer?

                          MICK  
                          No---breakfast.

Mick gestures toward the menu.

                          LANCE  
                          Yeah, I think I'm ready to order.

Mick smiles.

                          MICK  
                          I'll have them bring it out.

Lance looks at him like he's nuts.

A moment later a waiter shows up with breakfast.

WAITER  
(picks up menus)  
Sorry, let me get those out of the  
way.

He puts food in front of Lance.

Surprised, Lance stares at the waiter.

WAITER (CONT'D)  
That is what you wanted. Correct?

LANCE  
How'd you know?

WAITER  
(gestures to Mick)  
The gentleman told me.

Lance is ready to ask another question, but Mick puts his hand up to stop him.

MICK  
Thanks.

Mick pauses, then looks at Lance directly.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Getting the perfect meal is nothing  
compared to what you'll have.  
(takes a bite)  
But we'll talk about that later.  
(pauses)  
Perhaps from somewhere with a view.  
Bon appetite.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- DAY

A view of the skyline on a clear day. The Empire State Building grandly stands above all the other buildings.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Lance and Mick emerge from the elevators onto the observation deck of the Empire State Building.

MICK  
You don't get many days like this.

Lance is amazed by the view. Nostalgia hits him.

LANCE  
I haven't been up here since I was a  
kid. My dad took me up before a  
Yankees game.  
(he pauses, remembering)  
Wow, that was a great day.

MICK  
Yanks win or lose?

LANCE  
Great game, but they lost.

MICK  
So it wasn't a perfect day.

Lance concedes.

LANCE  
But it was close.

They both look out at the city admiring the view.

MICK  
What do you think about the offer?

Lance turns to Mick with a serious look.

LANCE  
Briana will be taken care of, right?

MICK  
She'll be financially set for life  
and Natalie will take care of her.  
She'll have the stability she doesn't  
have now. She'll be fine.

Lance struggles with the thought of death.

LANCE  
I don't know. Death seems so---  
permanent.

MICK  
By dying you become one of the lucky  
ones. Socrates chose death over  
banishment because he knew what  
banishment meant, but death was an  
unknown. You're living in misery---  
you know what that feels like.

Lance looks out at the horizon. He's uncertain what the  
future holds and what he should choose.

LANCE  
Yeah, I've thought about killing  
myself a thousand times and a thousand  
different ways, but I haven't done  
it yet.

Mick puts his arm around Lance.

MICK  
You're thinking it's kind of like  
buying a car without test driving  
it.

LANCE  
 (laughs a bit)  
 Yeah, sort of.

MICK  
 I'll make you a deal. I'll give you  
 a test drive.

LANCE  
 (confused)  
 Huh?

MICK  
 I'll give you a taste of death. A  
 chance to experience the world of  
 your dreams.  
 (pauses)  
 If you don't like it, you can leave  
 and return to your miserable life.

LANCE  
 How can you do that?

MICK  
 People once thought the world was  
 flat. Death is a mansion with many  
 rooms. I'll take you to one you'll  
 enjoy.

Mick flashes a smile that could sell ice to an Eskimo.

LANCE  
 Is this going to hurt?

MICK  
 It'll be mostly painless. Less  
 painful than going to the dentist.

Lance thinks about it for a moment.

LANCE  
 Are you sure I can come back if I  
 want to?

MICK  
 Yeah, but trust me, I don't think  
 you'd want to. No one has ever wanted  
 to come back once they try it.  
 (he raises a warning  
 finger)  
 And that would void the insurance  
 policy.

Lance is silent for a few seconds.

LANCE  
 Okay.

Mick grins.

MICK  
I knew you'd come to your senses.  
We have a deal.

They shake hands to seal the deal.

LANCE  
So, when?

MICK  
Soon.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Lance walks toward the cathedral, apprehensive. He holds Melissa's Bible in his hand---to him it is a foreign book. Mass has already started but he feels his time is limited.

He walks up the steps to the front door.

He stops short of the door, almost as though an unseen force holds him back.

Lance turns and walks back down a few steps and decides to sit there. He looks at the Bible in his hands, the worn leather speaks volumes about how often Melissa used it. But just like the door, he seems unable to open the Bible.

Lance looks as though he might be swallowed up whole by his own thoughts. He stares off at a billboard across the street.

Lance's POV: A vodka add featuring a beautiful and seductive blonde woman in an expensive short black dress lounged on a red Ferrari F-40. It is practically an advertisement for sin, lust and greed.

Unseen, Angela walks up from behind Lance and sits down next to him. He's startled. She stares out across the street in the same direction he was looking.

LANCE  
You're the Fed Ex woman.

ANGELA  
I prefer the term "messenger".

LANCE  
(references Bible)  
Where'd you get this?

Angela ignores his question.

ANGELA  
(referring to the Bible)  
It doesn't do any good if you don't read it.

LANCE  
(cynically)  
It didn't help my wife. She died  
in...

ANGELA  
(cutting him off)  
I know about Melissa.

Lance stops short.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
It did her more good than you can  
possibly imagine.

LANCE  
Who are you?

Angela turns and looks directly at Lance.

ANGELA  
(extends to shake)  
Angela. I'm here to help save you  
and your daughter from eternal  
anguish.

LANCE  
You could start by leaving.

Angela smiles.

ANGELA  
(sarcastic)  
Your file neglected to mention that  
you have a sense of humor.

LANCE  
Did it mention that I'm a born again  
atheist?

ANGELA  
(dry)  
There you go again with that humor.  
You just crack me up.

LANCE  
Listen, if you're trying to sell me  
on some religion or God thing, forget  
it. It's too late for me.

ANGELA  
Jesus gave the reward of heaven to a  
criminal dying on the cross next to  
him. So, until you feel flames and  
pain, it ain't over.

Lance starts getting agitated.

LANCE  
Don't you have some packages to  
deliver or something?



Angela smiles at him.

ANGELA  
No, I just deliver messages.

LANCE  
Did Natalie put you up to this?

ANGELA  
She had a hand in it, but...

Mick strolls up. He looks cool and ready to take control of the situation. He interrupts her.

MICK  
Hey, Angie!

Angela turns and is surprised to see Mick. She gets up.

ANGELA  
Mick.

Lance shakes his head.

LANCE  
You two know each other?

MICK  
We're old friends.

ANGELA  
Who've had a falling out.

Angela wants to avoid this confrontation. She liked Mick but now she acts as though he's an ex-boyfriend who dumped her who she's still in love with.

MICK  
I wouldn't say that. I'm still the same being I was when we last saw each other.  
(pauses, grins)  
Only I'm allowed to have more fun now.

Mick turns to Lance.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Speaking of fun, you ready for some?

Angela interrupts before Lance has a chance to respond.

ANGELA  
It's not what you think.

MICK  
He's capable of thinking for himself---  
it's called free will.

A pretzel cart positions itself in front of the cathedral.

LANCE

You two have fun. I'm gonna go get a pretzel.

Lance walks down the stairs toward the pretzel cart.

INT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

The mass has just ended and Natalie and Briana, who are in the last pew, get up and head for the exit.

Briana looks sad.

BRIANA

I don't think Daddy is ever going to be okay. He doesn't love me.

NATALIE

No, he loves you. He just still really misses your mom.

(pauses)

Hey, you want a pretzel?

Briana loves pretzels and her excitement shows.

BRIANA

Yeah! Pretzels!

Natalie puts her arm around Briana.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Lance is at the pretzel cart. The PRETZEL VENDOR is a heavy set Italian from the Bronx.

PRETZEL VENDOR

One?

LANCE

No, three.

PRETZEL VENDOR

Deez all for you?

LANCE

No, my daughter loves pretzels.

The vendor hands the pretzels to Lance.

PRETZEL VENDOR

You brought her up right den.

Lance hands the vendor money.

LANCE

Keep the change.

PRETZEL VENDOR

You have a Merry Christmas.

Lance thinks more about the statement than he normally would. Will he even be around for Christmas?

LANCE

Thanks.

Lance turns and walks back toward St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Lance's POV: Briana and Natalie walk down the steps.

Lance smiles broadly when he sees them. They represent a piece of normalcy and comfort in a strange day. In this moment it is clear that he really loves Briana.

Lance raises the pretzels high above his head.

LANCE (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Free pretzels to pretty girls!

Briana spies him first.

BRIANA

Daddy!

In this brief moment she believes in miracles and runs to him. When she reaches him she gives him a powerful embrace only children can give. It's a hug of true love.

They hold each other for a long time. The world around them is irrelevant. Lance holds on to her tightly, worried that he may never see her again. Briana holds on to him with the hope that her prayers worked and that he will love her.

Natalie looks on and smiles. There is hope.

On the steps slightly removed from the situation, Mick and Angela continue talking.

ANGELA

(matter of fact)

Look at them. You can't take him.

Mick's POV: Lance and Briana finally end their embrace. Lance hands Natalie a pretzel and the three of them begin walking down the sidewalk.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

He has love and hope. You can't take him.

Mick smiles warmly, but his tone is not as warm.

MICK

(menacing)

I already cut a deal with him. So you can snap a picture of that Kodak moment if it thrills you. Just like all of those sappy moments, they fade and are gone faster than you can say "goodbye".

Mick looks out on the street.

Mick's POV: A horse trots along, pulling a carriage with a young couple in love inside.

Mick smiles devilishly.

The horse WHINNIES and suddenly bolts!

The horse and carriage head toward the sidewalk totally out of control!

The driver pulls at the reigns in vain. The young lovers hold on for their life.

People scatter quickly but everything happens so fast. From the sidewalk it's tough to tell what is really going on.

Suddenly the horse and carriage are upon Lance, Briana and Natalie!

Lance quickly pushes Briana and Natalie out of the way. They both tumble to the ground!

THUD!!! THUD!!! Lance gets slammed by the galloping horse and then by the carriage wheel!

The horse suddenly stops and calms down.

PEOPLE SCREAM! The young woman who was in the carriage starts crying and YELLING at her boyfriend.

Mick appears confident and proud of his flair for the dramatic.

MICK (CONT'D)

(to Angela)

You were saying?

Angela's POV: Briana crying. Her moment of love has been quickly shattered, seemingly along with her hope.

ANGELA

(resolute)

You're not taking him.

MICK

Angie, don't bet your wings on it.

Lance lies on the ground, his head bleeding. He looks hurt but not as bad as it could have been.

Grinning, Mick strolls over to the chaos as though he was walking through a flower garden on a warm, sunny day.

Angela hurries over to Lance.

Lance tries to sit up. He grabs his head.

LANCE

Ow!

(he sees Briana crying)  
Sorry, sweetie. Are you okay?

Natalie hugs her. She nods between her tears.

NATALIE

Someone call 9-1-1!

LANCE

No, I'll be okay.

Lance sees Mick smiling in the crowd. Suddenly, Lance isn't so sure he'll be okay. He's scared.

Mick smiles at him and winks.

SIRENS sound in the distance and quickly grow louder as they approach.

Angela stands behind Briana and Natalie. Between sobs Briana notices her. Angela smiles warmly at her. The warmth of her smiles seems to stop the flow of Briana's tears.

DOORS SLAM. The ambulance has arrived.

Briana wants to go to Daddy. Natalie lets go of her, but just as quickly as she moves toward Lance, the PARAMEDICS are on top of him.

MALE PARAMEDIC

Everyone move back! Give him some room!

Briana sadly backs up. Natalie hugs her briefly, then moves toward Lance and the paramedics.

The paramedics focus on Lance, quickly assessing the situation and getting his vital signs.

Angela touches Briana's arm.

Briana looks up at her, seeming to sense something.

BRIANA

Is my Daddy going to be alright?

ANGELA

Yeah, I think so.

Mick sees the two of them interacting. His demeanor seems kind when he interrupts.

MICK

Sorry about your Dad.

(pauses)

I don't think he's gonna make it. I don't think he really cares if he lives or dies.

His words hit Briana hard. She suddenly looks hopeless.

Angela shoots a hard look at Mick, then she kneels down to talk to Briana.

ANGELA

Don't listen to what he said. Put it out of your mind. You need to pray for your Daddy.

Briana doesn't appear moved by Angela's words.

BRIANA

It never works.

ANGELA

Yes, it does. You need to pray hard. Pray like you never have before. I know God listens.

Briana looks distraught. She is overwhelmed and doesn't know what to believe.

The paramedics prepare to transport Lance. Natalie tries to get their attention but they barely acknowledge her.

NATALIE

What hospital are you taking him to?

FEMALE PARAMEDIC

Riverside.

The commotion briefly escalates as Lance is whisked off into the ambulance. The DOOR SLAMS.

The disturbance quickly dissolves as people melt away into the streets, no longer interested in the event. It's just a blip on the screen in a day in New York City.

SIRENS WAIL and red lights flash as the ambulance pulls away.

The cloudy day seems darker and almost oppressive now.

Natalie grabs Briana by the hand and whisks her off.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

The ambulance pulls up quickly, coming to a halt. A moment later the paramedics pull the stretcher from the back of the ambulance and quickly wheel Lance inside.

INT. HOSPITAL -- CONTINUOUS

Lance seems panicked as he's hurriedly wheeled into the emergency room.

Lance's POV: He sees Mick smiling at him as he's pushed through the emergency room. *Real* panic sets in.

LANCE

I'm okay. Really, I'm okay. I don't want to die. I'm not ready.

Lance's POV: He sees the paramedics above him as they move through the emergency room.

FEMALE PARAMEDIC

Calm down. It's gonna be alright.

LANCE

That's what you think. Easy for you to say! You're up there and I'm down here!

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

Natalie and Briana hurriedly arrive at the hospital. Natalie rushes to the check-in desk.

NATALIE

(out of breath)

We're looking for Lance Sager. He would've just gotten here.

The twenty-two year old PUNKED OUT FEMALE HOSPITAL CLERK does not share the same sense of urgency.

HOSPITAL CLERK

Last name?

NATALIE

Sager. S-A-G-E-R.

She types slowly into the computer, chewing gum at the same time.

HOSPITAL CLERK

Not here.

Natalie feels confused.

NATALIE

We couldn't have beaten the ambulance here. Is it possible that he wouldn't have been checked in?

HOSPITAL CLERK

No.

NATALIE

Are you sure?

HOSPITAL CLERK

Yeah. We don't have any Sabers in the hospital.

Natalie looks like she's about to blow a gasket.

NATALIE

Sager!! S-A-G-E-R!! Sager!! Not  
Saber!

HOSPITAL CLERK

Oh.

Briana stares at the hospital clerk.

The clerk looks at her computer again.

HOSPITAL CLERK (CONT'D)

Lance, right?

NATALIE

(impatient)

Yes!

The clerk looks at Briana, then fingers a rather large face  
piercing.

HOSPITAL CLERK

Lance is a cool name.

Natalie would go through the glass for the clerk's throat if  
she thought it would expedite things.

HOSPITAL CLERK (CONT'D)

Yeah, he's here. Room A-7.

The clerk glares at Briana for a second. Briana boldly glares  
back at her.

HOSPITAL CLERK (CONT'D)

I'll buzz you through.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Lance lies on a bed. He's hooked up to an assortment of  
monitors. A NURSE works on cleaning the blood off his head  
which appears to have significant swelling. She talks to  
Lance while she cleans him up.

NURSE

We're going to get a CT scan of your  
head. How are you feeling now?

LANCE

(getting agitated)

I feel sick to my stomach, I have a  
splitting headache and I want to get  
out of here! Other than that I feel  
great.

The nurse tries to comfort him.

NURSE

Calm down.

(MORE)



NURSE (CONT'D)

It appears you've had a minor brain injury but we want to make sure that there isn't any bleeding we can't see. It's best if you stay calm.

LANCE

(yelling)

You're telling me *my brain might be bleeding* but stay calm?!

NURSE

Excuse me.

A DOCTOR comes in. He visits with the nurse in the corner of the room. They speak in hushed tones that are still loud enough for Lance to hear.

NURSE (CONT'D)

He just came in. He sustained a head injury and has been agitated. I'm worried because his blood pressure is high and his heart beat has been irregular.

DOCTOR

His brain stem could have been affected.

(pauses)

Get an MRI stat.

NURSE

Yes, doctor.

Lance looks terrified. The doctor abruptly leaves at the same time that Mick is on his way in. The doctor does not appear to see him. Mick walks right in front of the nurse but she does not notice him or seem to hear him.

MICK

How're you doing, Lance?

LANCE

I'm doin' crappy.

NURSE

Oh, did you soil yourself?

LANCE

No!

NURSE

Do you need a bed pan?

LANCE

No! I was talking to him.

The nurse looks around the room. She sees no one.

NURSE

Who?

LANCE  
 (pointing)  
 Him. Mick.

Nurse's POV: No one is in that direction.

MICK  
 She can't see me right now.

LANCE  
 Great, so she thinks I'm a nut case.

NURSE  
 (patronizing)  
 No, I didn't say that.

She picks up the phone.

NURSE (CONT'D)  
 (into phone)  
 Can you get someone down here  
 immediately, I have a situation.

She hangs up the phone.

MICK  
 Don't worry about her. Let her think  
 you're a nut case. I'm getting you  
 out of here.

LANCE  
 Good.

Lance goes to get up. The nurse rushes over to him as a  
 MALE NURSE comes into the room.

NURSE  
 No, you need to lay down.

The male nurse helps hold him down. As the two nurses are  
 holding Lance down...

Angela walks into the room.

MICK  
 Lance, relax. I'm not taking you  
 out of here that way.

ANGELA  
 You're not taking him at all. He  
 doesn't want to go.

Mick feels mildly annoyed by Angela. She's not going to  
 change anything.

MICK  
 We already shook hands to seal the  
 deal.

Mick grins.

MICK (CONT'D)

Lance, you're gonna love this.

Natalie and Briana enter the room.

NURSE

You two have to leave.

BRIANA

Daddy!

Suddenly the monitor ALARMS begin to go off. Lance's heart rate monitor is going very erratic---fast, then slow, then fast again.

MICK

(turns to Angela)

See you later, Angie.

Lance appears to be convulsing.

Mick walks out the door as the doctor and an intern come in.

DOCTOR

(referring to Natalie  
and Briana)

Get them out of here!

BRIANA

(screams)

Daddy!!!

Lance stops convulsing and lays still suddenly.

BLACKNESS.

An echo of Briana's last scream "Daddy" fades, seeming more distant.

The scream is gradually replaced by the sound of RUSHING WIND, which melts into the sound of a RAGING RIVER, then gradually morphing into the sound of a SUBWAY CAR RUSHING PAST.

A pin prick of LIGHT in the darkness. The light gets bigger and bigger.

The sound of SUBWAY BRAKES SCREECHING---it's a long drawn out stop as the light continues to fill our view.

The light becomes the light of the sun high in the sky.

MICK O.S.

Wild ride, huh?

Lance's POV: He sees Mick above him. Mick extends a hand to help him up.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK, NYC -- DAY

Mick helps Lance get up off the ground. The two of them are beneath the Washington Square Arch. It's a perfectly beautiful summer day.

Lance looks around.

LANCE  
What the?

MICK  
Relax. It's cool.

Lance seems a little stiff at first, but gradually seems to feel better. He's just incredibly confused.

LANCE  
How'd I get here?

MICK  
Better question, do you know where "here" is?

LANCE  
I'm in the Village.

MICK  
That's one way of looking at it.

Mick puts his arm around Lance.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Remember when I promised you the world of your dreams?

LANCE  
Yeah?

MICK  
You're here.

Lance looks at Mick like he's nuts. He also feels as though he's caught up in a bad dream. He couldn't have died because the Village seems real.

LANCE  
I must've hit my head harder than I thought.

Lance rubs his head---no bruise or swelling---strange.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
I'm going home.

Lance starts walking.

MICK  
Fine. Mind if I come along?

LANCE  
Suit yourself. I'm taking the subway.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

The hospital staff frantically begin working on Lance. Angela stares at Lance as though she's looking for something. She looks up and down. Nothing. Then she looks at Lance again.

The answer hits her. She sees something no human in the room can see.

Angela's POV: She sees a shimmering florescent light near Lance. It gradually changes to a translucent neon sign that reads: "Are you coming, Angela?"

ANGELA  
Mick, you little rat.

Suddenly she's gone from the room.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY -- DAY

Lance and Mick head down a flight of stairs into the subway.

INT. NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The people who walk past them are unusually friendly. They smile and some say, "hi" as they pass by. Lance seems a little perplexed.

LANCE  
What's this, "let's be friendly day"?

Mick ignores Lance's comment. He just grins to himself.

They pass through a more open area of the subway system. FIVE MEN sing in a fifties doo-wop style. The LEAD SINGER has a voice reminiscent of Dion.

LEAD SINGER  
SO MANY PEOPLE TO GET YOU DOWN, BUT  
LANCE IS THE ONE YOU WANT AROUND.  
OH YEAH, LANCE. HE MAKES THE WOMEN  
WANT TO GET UP AND DANCE. LANCE  
SAGER, YEAH, HE'S THE ONE. HE'S GOT  
STYLE, YEAH, HE'S GOT CLASS, AN' I'M  
TELLING YOU HE'S GONNA HAVE A BLAST!

Lance walks into a pole as he watches them sing. It rips him from his trance.

LANCE  
(to Mick)  
You paid them to do that. You're  
just trying to mess with my head.

Mick doesn't respond either way.

Lance decides to just walk away. Mick follows him, casually observing.

Lance approaches a subway token booth and pulls out some cash. A male African American BOOTH WORKER in his fifties politely interrupts him.

BOOTH WORKER  
Excuse me, Mr. Sager. No need for  
you to pay. Just go on through.

Lance is surprised but not shocked.

LANCE  
That's against regulations.

BOOTH WORKER  
Not here it ain't.

Lance doesn't get it.

BOOTH WORKER (CONT'D)  
You know what train you're gonna  
take?

LANCE  
The D train.

The booth worker smiles.

BOOTH WORKER  
Have a good day, Mr. Sager.

Lance walks through the turnstiles that turn effortlessly for him but people ahead and behind him pay. Mick follows him.

Lance goes down the stairs to his train. There are lots of people milling around on the platform but the train doors are open and no one is inside.

LANCE  
(disgusted)  
Great.

Mick comes up behind him.

MICK  
Are you gonna take the train?

Lance is annoyed.

LANCE  
I would if it was running.

MICK  
It runs. It's just waiting for you.

Lance knows Mick is crazy now.

LANCE  
Okay, fine. Why don't you come along  
for the ride, no one else is riding.

The two of them approach the train. Lance steps on with Mick.

Lance looks around the empty train.

MICK  
You're not going to ride standing up, are you?

LANCE  
(sarcastic)  
Oh, you're so right! Not with all these empty seats! I didn't realize that they're probably waiting for *me* to sit down---then they can serve the hour d'oeuvres.

Lance dramatically plops down on a seat. Mick sits as well.

The SUBWAY DOORS CLOSE.

The train begins moving.

Lance's eyes go wide. He doesn't know what to make of it. Mick savors the moment.

A WOMAN in a cocktail dress holds out a plate of hour d'oeuvres to Lance.

WOMAN  
Hour d'oeuvre, Mr. Sager?

Startled, Lance stares at the tray for a moment and then takes something. The woman walks away.

MICK  
Instead of riding all the way home, how about we get off at the next stop?

Lance is skeptical. He has no idea what is really going on.

LANCE  
Why?

MICK  
There's something I want to show you. I promise you it'll be worth your while.

Lance sits quietly. He's unsure.

The subway comes to a halt and the doors open up. Lance's curiosity wins out. He looks at Mick and gets up.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Wise choice. The subway is so primitive.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- DAY

Lance and Mick emerge from the subway and back into the beautiful sunny day.

It seems like New York. People moving to and fro, only people look and smile at Lance as they pass him.

A bright red Ferrari F-40 sits at the curb. Lance notices it and appreciates its beauty.

LANCE

Nice car.

MICK

Catch!

Mick tosses a set of keys to Lance. He catches them.

MICK (CONT'D)

Better than the subway.

Lance looks at the Ferrari keys in his hand.

MICK (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

Lance presses the remote button. BEEP BEEP, the lights flash on the Ferrari and the doors unlock.

Lance feels suddenly uneasy. It doesn't seem right. He hasn't done anything to deserve this fine automobile, so it can't possibly be legal.

Lance tosses the keys back to Mick.

LANCE

I'm not getting busted with this.

MICK

It's yours.

Lance laughs and shakes his head.

LANCE

No, I don't think so. My brain can't even dream that expensive.

MICK

Yeah, it does.

Lance feels as though he's been found out.

LANCE

So what if I do. A lot of people dream about nice cars, it doesn't mean that if they see one it's theirs.

Mick speaks slowly. He's patient.



MICK

Lance, it's your car. I'm giving you the keys.

LANCE

Yeah, and I have no idea *who* you got them from.

Mick opens up the passenger door of the car and opens the glove box. He pulls out the registration and hands it to Lance.

CLOSE UP: Registration with Lance's name on it.

Lance reads it, unfazed.

LANCE (CONT'D)

This can't be legit.

Mick grins at him.

MICK

Lance, you've had it so bad for so long you're a total cynic.

A SIREN chirps as a police car pulls up and double parks next to the Ferrari.

A POLICE OFFICER, forties and clean shaven gets out.

Lance feels certain the car is stolen.

POLICE OFFICER

What seems to be the problem here?

Lance looks at Mick who doesn't flinch.

LANCE

I think this is a stolen car.

The officer looks at Lance as though he's speaking another language.

POLICE OFFICER

It's your car. Whadda you mean? It's here, isn't it?

Lance stammers.

LANCE

This isn't my car. I could never afford it.

The officer looks him up and down, then starts laughing.

POLICE OFFICER

You've been drinking, right?

LANCE

(wide-eyed)

No, but I'm thinking it's about time to start.

(pauses)

This can't be my car.

POLICE OFFICER

You are Lance Sager, right?

LANCE

Yeah?

POLICE OFFICER

It's *your* car in *your* parking space.

Lance runs a hand through his hair. He's not getting it.

LANCE

I've never parked this car---I've never even driven it!

The officer directs his attention to a sign at the curb that reads, "LANCE SAGER PARKING ONLY".

LANCE (CONT'D)

What the?

Mick slaps the keys in Lance's hand.

MICK

Let's go for a ride and I'll give you the low down on everything.

The officer looks at Lance.

POLICE OFFICER

If it was my car, I'd be takin' it for a spin to see what it can do.

Dazed and confused, Lance gets into the Ferrari and Mick hops in the passenger seat.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance puts the key in the ignition and starts the car. The ENGINE ROARS to life. Lance smiles for a brief moment. He still doesn't understand what is going on but he enjoyed starting a Ferrari.

Cars buzz by them as they talk.

LANCE

Where to?

MICK

How about the Empire State Building?

LANCE

Whatever.

MICK

Let's see how fast you can get us there. I bet you can do it in under three minutes.

Lance looks at him like he's crazy.

LANCE

Not in this traffic.

Lance's POV: Cars zipping past them without a break in the traffic.

Lance gets ready to pull out. He puts his directional on.

CRASH!!!

Lance's POV: A car that immediately stopped to let him out is rear-ended. Much to Lance's surprise the driver isn't flipping him off, instead the driver smiles and waves him on.

MICK

Are you gonna go or what?

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- CONTINUOUS

The Ferrari pulls out smoothly.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance's POV: The left lane seems completely open.

LANCE

Is there construction in that lane?

MICK

No. Move over.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- CONTINUOUS

The Ferrari changes lanes. The lane is completely empty.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance is incredulous.

LANCE

I can't believe this. Tons of traffic and no one's in this lane.

Lance's POV: Open road ahead of him, then he sees writing on the pavement---LANCE SAGER ONLY LANE.

Lance's jaw drops.

MICK

As I was saying before, you can get to the Empire State Building in a couple of minutes.

Mick hands Lance a pair of sleek looking Oakley sunglasses.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Cuts down glare---with style.

Lance takes them and puts them on. He looks in the rear view mirror.

Lance's POV: He looks slick.

MICK (CONT'D)  
This is the world of your dreams,  
Lance. You don't have to worry about  
traffic or speeding tickets. It's  
all for you.

Lance starts buying into this. Hell, if it's a dream he might as well enjoy it.

LANCE  
Really?

Lance looks to Mick for the answer.

MICK  
Yeah.

Lance smiles at him. It's an uncontrollable smile, giddy, almost ready to burst out laughing. Suddenly...

He pushes the pedal to the floor! Mick is thrown back in his seat.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- CONTINUOUS

The Ferrari's ENGINE ROARS as it flies past all the other cars, just a moving red streak. The lights in its path all turn green as though it is the Red Sea parting.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, STREET LEVEL -- DAY

Lance pulls the Ferrari up to the Empire State Building. A "Lance Sager Only" parking space awaits him.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance appreciatively turns to Mick.

LANCE  
(about the Ferrari)  
Wow! What a ride!

MICK  
Shall we go up?

LANCE  
What the hell.

MICK  
Hell, yeah.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Lance and Mick are once again on top of the Empire State Building. This time it is a perfectly clear and sunny day.

Mick extends his arms.

MICK  
I'm giving you all this. This is  
your world, Lance.

Lance looks out at the city. It seems surreal to him.

Mick leans back and smiles, almost laughing.

MICK (CONT'D)  
This is the test drive I promised  
you.

LANCE  
You mean I'm dead?

MICK  
For now. It's a free sample.  
(pauses)  
Better than you thought, huh?

Lance is impressed. What a test drive.

LANCE  
I love what I've seen so far. How  
do I keep it?

MICK  
Simple. When the sun sets, this  
endless summer is yours. Permanently.

LANCE  
After sunset I'm here forever?

Mick gestures Lance to follow him to another part of the observation deck, facing north. Lance does.

MICK  
Yeah. If for any weird reason your  
mind snaps and you decide you want  
to go back to the pathetic, miserable  
life you had before. All you need  
to do is go in there.

Mick points somewhere down at 5th Avenue far below them.

LANCE  
Where?

MICK  
St. Pat's Cathedral. That's the  
exit door from this paradise back  
into the hellish world you came from.

Lance's POV: He spots St. Patrick's Cathedral below. It's architecture stands out among the many office buildings.

MICK (CONT'D)

You step foot in there and this beautiful world is gone from you forever.

Lance laughs to himself.

LANCE

After my wife's funeral, I vowed to never set foot in it again.

Mick shrugs, satisfied.

MICK

I can't see any reason why you would. And I don't think anyone here would argue with you.

Lance's POV: He looks at the sun high in the sky. It is now his clock for this world.

INT. GABRIEL'S OFFICE -- DAY

Angela paces through the office. She's passionately making a point.

ANGELA

Let me go get him.

GABRIEL

No. It's too risky.

Angela looks like she's ready to blow a gasket.

ANGELA

Too risky! What's this garbage?

Gabriel remains calm as he speaks. He leans back in his chair.

GABRIEL

The last time I let an agent go in after someone they never came out.

ANGELA

Adam was incompetent! He couldn't save a saint if he had to.

GABRIEL

Angela, his conversion rates were just as high as yours.

Gabriel taps a computer screen on his desk and looks at some information.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

No. Let me correct myself, they were *higher* than yours.

ANGELA

He didn't work in New Jersey!

GABRIEL

Angela, the answer is no.

ANGELA

(not fine)

Fine. Fine.

Angela turns and walks toward the door to leave. She stops before opening it.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Just remember what we're supposed to be fighting against. You're giving up on two, maybe three souls.

(pauses)

His daughter is only nine years old. We're supposed to be guiding her to embrace God, not turning our backs on her.

Gabriel knows she's right but he doesn't want to give in.

GABRIEL

In the world Mick created you have no power. If you got stuck there, you would be lost along with Lance Sager's soul. We can't risk that.

ANGELA

If it got tight I'd leave.

GABRIEL

We're talking about the balance of powers.

ANGELA

What do you mean? We all know the outcome.

GABRIEL

When I said there was a lot riding on this one, I meant it. You know Revelation 20?

ANGELA

Yeah, "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain."

GABRIEL

(continuing)

"He seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him..."

ANGELA

Yeah, so?

GABRIEL

Mick has the key.

ANGELA

What?! I always thought you had it.

GABRIEL

No, Mick was assigned the key. He can choose not to lock up Satan.

ANGELA

But we still know how everything will end.

GABRIEL

Yes, but without the key to the Abyss to lock up Satan there will be a thousand years of needless suffering for Christians.

Angela sits down. She looks like she might throw up.

ANGELA

Oh, my.

There's a long silence, then Angela gets up and starts pacing. She's getting fired up. She's an idealist at heart, as every angel should be.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Mick and Satan are gaining ground while we're losing it! What are we to do---just surrender the world even though it's not time?

Gabriel is about to speak but Angela isn't through.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You're letting the apathy of the human world suck you into it. There was a time when you were fearless---when we wouldn't even be having this conversation---I would've been going in there whether I liked it or not.

Angela has hit a home run. Gabriel's eyes flare. He no longer appears as the relaxed business executive. There is a fire in his eye, literally.

Gabriel stands up. He appears larger than he did sitting down. He seems to be back in command.

GABRIEL

This is not a rational decision, Angela. This is a risk that I believe you should not take, but I know in my soul you must take it.



Angela nods.

ANGELA

I'm ready.

GABRIEL

You cannot fail, Angela. The scales are tipping out of balance. Your heart, your faith and your hope must keep you strong.

(he pauses)

Only God knows what awaits you. May He be with you.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, STREET LEVEL -- DAY

Lance and Mick emerge from the Empire State Building. Lance is confident and happy as they head to the Ferrari.

LANCE

Now what?

MICK

Did you ever get a chance to run a marathon?

Lance shrugs.

LANCE

I trained for one just before nine-eleven. I never...with what happened.

MICK

That's water under the bridge. The New York City Marathon is running today.

Once again, Lance thinks Mick must be out of his mind.

LANCE

What are you nuts?!

MICK

You're already registered.

(pauses)

If you don't think you can do it you can just drop out after you've crossed the Verrazano Narrows Bridge.

LANCE

I haven't run twenty-six miles in the past two years.

Mick's air of confidence is overpowering.

MICK

A couple of years ago you were in the best shape of your life.

(MORE)

MICK (CONT'D)

You were primed and ready to run but didn't. You're underestimating yourself. Come on. It'll be fun to run across the bridge. Who knows, you might do better than you think.

Lance considers this. It sounds crazy but so far everything that has seemed crazy has worked out.

LANCE

Okay. I'll run the first few miles. What the hell.

Mick smiles. Overhead the sun is still high in the sky.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK, NYC -- DAY

A bright light bursts forth and Angela is suddenly underneath the Washington Square Arch in the Village.

She looks around to get her bearings. She's surprised at the depth and detail of the world around her. She looks up at the sun high in the sky. There is plenty of time---for now.

She looks for clues as to where she should go. It's not the busy place it was before. It almost seems deserted.

Angela looks down 5th Avenue to the south.

Angela's POV: The road is empty and void of activity.

She turns and looks down 5th Avenue to the north.

Angela's POV: In the distance she can see activity. She heads in that direction.

EXT. VERRAZANO NARROWS BRIDGE, NYC -- DAY

Hordes of people are lined up in Staten Island at the starting line of what appears to be the New York City Marathon.

The Ferrari pulls up and parks. Lance and Mick emerge. Lance wears particularly flashy running clothes.

LANCE

I can't start up here. These are the elite runners. I'll be trampled.

MICK

Don't sweat it. Trust me. You're not going to be trampled. Besides, you'll get a great view going across the bridge.

Lance shakes his head but decides to give it a try. He makes his way to the starting line with the elite runners. Lance feels out of place and looks out of place with his flashy outfit. Though he's in good shape, he's surrounded by the best runners in the world.

With Lance in position, the STARTING GUN GOES OFF.

The runners rush forward like a wave washing upon a seemingly endless shore. The elite runners in front--with Lance right there with them.

Though the runners around Lance seem to move effortlessly, their legs seem to be pumping much faster than Lance's.

EXT. VERRAZANO NARROWS BRIDGE, NYC -- MOMENTS LATER

A view from the Brooklyn side of the bridge with the runners approaching...

And Lance with a commanding lead!

The crowd that lines the street CHEERS!

He continues to stride casually, but makes amazing progress with each stride!

MONTAGE: Lance at various points during the marathon. In each shot he cruises effortlessly in the lead with a couple of elite runners in the distance behind him. The crowd CHEERS loudly for him. Lance seems amazed by his own ability but beams with each cheer he hears. He gives high fives to people in the crowd.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- DAY

Angela walks past the majestic cathedral. The front doors are closed with a notice pinned on them.

She runs up to the door and stops to read the notice.

MICK V.O.

Lance, this is the doorway back to the miserable world you came from. If you want pain and suffering, go right on in. Otherwise, enjoy your stay in paradise. Mick.

Angela shakes her head in disbelief. She rips the note from the door, crumples it up and tosses it.

ANGELA

Paradise. Who's he kidding?

She looks up at the sun that is now just a little lower in the sky, then she turns and resumes her trek uptown.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

Enthralled crowds line the marathon route along Central Park. They begin to chant "GO LANCE!" As he makes his way past them.

Further up and closer to the finish line, Angela makes her way to the front of the crowd to view the race. The crowd chants as he approaches. Angela looks at him running easily. Then she looks down at the ground he's running on.

Angela's POV: The strip of ground that Lance runs on moves forward like a conveyor belt or a treadmill in reverse---moving Lance much further forward with every step.

As Lance cruises past, he notices Angela because she stands out in the crowd---she's the only person not cheering him wildly.

A moment later he breaks the tape---crossing the finish line in less than two hours and shattering the world record!

The CROWD ERUPTS IN APPLAUSE and CHEERS!

Mick greets Lance at the finish line and congratulates him. Angela watches them from a distance.

MICK

That was amazing!

Lance is breathing heavy but not too hard.

LANCE

That was so cool! Did you see me cruising, no one was close to me! I thought running a marathon would be hard. This was easy. I don't know how I did it.

MICK

Anything is possible here.

LANCE

Man, the crowd just kept me going---that was great! What I can't believe is I feel like I only ran about ten miles. I don't know how I got that fast either.

MICK

You were pretty quick in high school, weren't you?

LANCE

Yeah, but not *that* fast.

MICK

You're like a wine that gets better with age.

Angela continues to watch them from a short distance away. She slowly approaches them.

ANGELA

(to herself)

Remember, you're in Mick's world. Tread lightly. Be polite and calm and try not to make him angry. Maybe even compliment him.

(pauses)

You can do this.

Mick does a double take when he sees Angela approaching. Her presence does not bother him in the least.

MICK

Angie, what a nice surprise to see you!

Angela smiles cordially.

ANGELA

(while smiling)

Hi, Mick. You low life scum.

(her smile fades)

What a scam job. You create this world of lies just to trap him and take his soul?

Lance shows some concern. He's been enjoying himself so far and wouldn't mind if it would continue.

MICK

(smiling)

When God created man, he made him with free will. I am just giving him a taste of the Garden of Eden.

ANGELA

I always thought you were a snake at heart.

Mick turns to Lance for a moment.

MICK

Would you excuse us for a moment?

LANCE

Yeah, sure.

Mick escorts Angela a short distance away, out of earshot.

MICK

I don't think I need to remind you that you better watch your step. I can keep you here till eternity.

Mick smiles menacingly.

ANGELA

I know you can, but you won't.

MICK

You think I care what happens to you, Angie? We're not on the same side anymore.

Angela smiles.

ANGELA

(challenging him)

You might not miss me, but you'd miss the competition.

Mick laughs out loud. She knows him well.

MICK

I might, but then again, I might not.

ANGELA

I'm willing to face off with you on your turf because I know I'm right about him.

MICK

You only *think* you're right.

ANGELA

Do you care to up the ante?

MICK

What do you have in mind?

ANGELA

The key to the Abyss.

Mick grins broadly.

MICK

I'm surprised Gabe told you. I thought he'd be concerned about a panic.

ANGELA

(a little nervous)

What about it? Lance's soul and the key.

MICK

On one condition. You can't leave without him.

Angela looks up at the sun, then back at Mick.

ANGELA

You've got a deal.

They shake on it. Angela wipes her hand off after shaking.

MICK

I'll play along with you. As long as you don't try to drag him out of here kicking and screaming.

ANGELA

I won't need to. He'll go willingly.

Mick raises a hand of caution.

MICK

And you can't interfere with what I will be showing him.

(MORE)

MICK (CONT'D)

He's just like any human---he loves to have his ego stroked and believe he's the center of the universe. In a world that revolves around Lance, God won't be part of the equation for him.

ANGELA

We'll see.

MICK

Angie, here's the deal, if you mess with him and interfere---you *will* stay here.

Angela shudders at the thought.

MICK (CONT'D)

Just as I thought---you have your doubts because you know I'm right. I expect you'll be pleading with him to go with you to St. Pat's Cathedral long before sunset.

ANGELA

He'll go willingly.

MICK

You always were an optimist.

They turn and walk back toward Lance. He's still thrilled with his accomplishment.

MICK (CONT'D)

(to Angela)

How'd you convince Gabe to let you come here?

ANGELA

(to Mick)

He liked my odds against you.

Mick switches to "buddy mode" with Lance.

MICK

Amazing! Just amazing!

(pauses)

If you don't mind, Angela's gonna tag along with us for a bit to watch you have fun.

LANCE

Okay.

(pauses, excited)

It was so easy I didn't even break a sweat!

ANGELA

You're dead. Dead people don't sweat.

Lance sniffs his armpits---nothing. He shrugs his shoulders.

LANCE  
There's a bonus.

Lance sees someone in the crowd with a Yankees cap on.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
Hey, are the Yankee's home today?

MICK  
Yeah, game starts in twenty minutes.

LANCE  
Forget it, we'll miss half of it.

Lance looks disappointed, but there will be other games.

MICK  
You forget, you don't have to deal  
with traffic here. Oh, and they're  
playing Boston.

LANCE  
(excited)  
Boston?!

EXT. HARLEM -- DAY

The Ferrari flies down a street and zips around a corner  
without slowing down.

EXT. MACCOMES DAM BRIDGE -- DAY

We see the Ferrari before we hear it. Its ENGINE SCREAMS as  
it bolts over the bridge, the car briefly gets airborne at  
the peak---just a red blur on an urgent mission. The Lance  
Only Lane is being put to good use.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, OUTSIDE -- DAY

The Ferrari races up to Yankee Stadium. The way is clear.  
A police officer directs the car to continue on the sidewalk  
toward one of the stadium gates.

It pulls up on the sidewalk and comes to an abrupt stop just  
outside the entry gate.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance beams excitedly and pumps his fist in the air.

LANCE  
Yes!!! I love this car!!!

MICK  
Helluva ride! That was great!  
(turns to the back)  
Wasn't that fun, Angie?



Angela, who is squished in the non-existent back seat looks ill. She glares at Mick.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, OUTSIDE -- DAY

Lance, Mick and Angela emerge from the Ferrari. They're greeted by a STADIUM SECURITY GUARD.

STADIUM SECURITY GUARD  
 Good to see you Mr. Sager. We've  
 got your seats ready for you and  
 your guests.

Lance is pleasantly surprised yet again.

LANCE  
 Great. Where are they?

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE -- DAY

The stadium is packed and rocking with excited fans. It has the feel of a playoff game.

Lance, Mick and Angela sit in box seats right behind the Yankee's dugout.

LANCE  
 (understating)  
 Good seats.

Angela looks up at the sun. The clock is ticking.

ANGELA  
 You're going to waste your time  
 watching a baseball game?

Lance is astounded at her lack of understanding of the situation, meanwhile Mick smiles at Angela's mistake.

LANCE  
 Waste? This is the greatest rivalry  
 in sports!

ANGELA  
 It's a baseball game, it isn't life.

Lance shakes his head in disbelief.

LANCE  
 I've got news for you, life is going  
 to be on hold until the game is over.

Mick feels vindicated.

MICK  
 Grab a seat, Angie. Enjoy the action.

Angela flops down in her seat, dejected. She doesn't know what to do. Already things aren't working out as planned.

Mick turns to Angela and Lance.

MICK (CONT'D)  
 Want some dogs? Beer?

LANCE  
 Yeah, cool.

ANGELA  
 (monotone)  
 Sure.

Mick waves his hand to get the attention of a VENDOR.

A moment later, the heavy-set VENDOR waits for their order. Though his back is turned to the camera, the voice seems oddly familiar.

VENDOR  
 What can I get for you?

Lance looks up at the vendor, surprised.

LANCE  
 Three dogs.  
 (pauses)  
 Can you also get us three beers?

VENDOR  
 Certainly. Anything else, Mr. Sager?

Lance looks perplexed as he stares at the vendor.

LANCE  
 No, no. That's fine.

The vendor obediently hurries off to get their beers.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
 (laughs)  
 Did you get a load of him. He looked just like George Steinbrenner.

Mick takes a bite out of his hot dog.

MICK  
 He *is* George Steinbrenner.

Lance doesn't buy it.

LANCE  
 No way.

Mick shrugs.

A moment later the vendor arrives with the beers.

Lance looks at the vendor's tag, it says: "George Steinbrenner (former owner)."

VENDOR  
 Your beer, Mr. Sager.

LANCE

You're George Steinbrenner. What are you doing bringing me beer?

VENDOR

*You're the owner* and you asked for it.

Lance is in overload.

VENDOR (CONT'D)

I really appreciate you keeping me on the payroll. Is there anything else I can get you?

LANCE

(jokingly)

Yeah, how about a World Series ring?

VENDOR

How many?

LANCE

(nonchalant)

Oh, one is fine.

He removes a ring from his finger and hands it to Lance.

VENDOR

This one's from the subway series of 2000. I loved beating the Mets.

The vendor walks off.

Lance stares at the ring, transfixed. It's real.

Angela tries to bring him back.

ANGELA

Lance, it's just a ring.

Mick answers for Lance so he can continue to savor the moment.

MICK

Angie, that's more than a ring. That's history.

LANCE

Right you are, Mick.

Angela gets up.

ANGELA

Where are the rest rooms?

MICK

(turns and points)

Up to the left.

ANGELA

Thanks. I'll be back when I'm done puking.

Lance couldn't care less.

INT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE -- DAY

Angela walks quickly down a corridor past a series of merchandise stands. Her stress level is high, she's overflowing with nervous energy.

ANGELA

(to herself)

Think. Think. Think.

Angela's POV: she sees a booth with an assortment of clothing.

She walks back past, deftly grabbing a Yankee's mini-dress that's on display. An obese booth worker notices.

OBEASE BOOTH WORKER

Hey!

Angela takes off running!

OBEASE BOOTH WORKER (CONT'D)

Stop her! Security!

A SECURITY GUARD runs up.

OBEASE BOOTH WORKER (CONT'D)

She stole a dress!

The security guard runs after Angela.

Angela runs down a corridor and makes a sharp turn. She sees a spiral walkway. She heads in that direction and begins ascending.

The guard takes off in the same direction.

Angela reaches the top floor. She briefly looks over the cement railing. She staggers for a moment.

ANGELA

(scared)

Oh, my.

She pulls herself away from the railing and the view.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

I hate being afraid of heights.

She looks both ways down the walkway.

Angela's POV: She sees a ladies rest room.

She quickly heads in that direction and ducks inside.

The security guard reaches the top and looks around.

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

Angela gets changed into the dress in a bathroom stall. She emerges from the stall looking radiant. She was beautiful before, but the change of clothing has given her a new, sexier look.

She notices a baseball cap on the floor of the bathroom. She picks it up, dusts it off and puts it on her head. She glances in the mirror and likes what she sees. She has reinvented herself.

Pleased and confident, she walks out of the bathroom.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE -- CONTINUOUS

Angela walks out of the bathroom and bumps into the security guard!

STADIUM SECURITY GUARD

Hey!

The guard grabs Angela's arm.

Angela shakes her arm free, offended.

ANGELA

What is your problem?

STADIUM SECURITY GUARD

You stole that dress.

ANGELA

Excuse me? Is this how you proposition women? Sorry, you can't strip search me.

At that moment a woman walks out of the bathroom wearing the same dress.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Why don't you try that line on her and see if it works.

Angela walks off with a surprisingly sexy swagger.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE -- DAY

The Yankees lead 2-0 in the top of the ninth inning. Lance is wrapped up in the game and chatting with Mick.

Lance is completely caught up in the moment, having a fantastic time, oblivious to the time that is being lost.

Angela comes into view from behind them, strutting down the stairs to her seat.

LANCE  
 (to Mick)  
 Where'd Steinbrenner go? I could  
 use another beer.

Angela deftly grabs a cup from cup holder in front of a spectator who is looking in the other direction. She glances inside the cup to check the contents.

ANGELA  
 How about a Coke for a change of  
 pace?

Lance turns to see Angela. He's very pleasantly surprised. She is a vision in the white pinstriped minidress.

LANCE  
 Yeah, thanks. That'll work.

Angela hands him the cup.

Mick notices how Lance looks at Angela. He doesn't like it.

MICK  
 Angie, why don't you get me one too?

ANGELA  
 You can get your own.

Lance turns to Angela. He is truly distracted by her, for the moment he forgets there's a game going on.

LANCE  
 Wow! That dress looks great on you.

Mick looks at the two of them, then turns his gaze to the field.

MICK  
 (hitting Lance on the  
 arm)  
 Hey, look! Rivera's hurt!

Suddenly Lance turns to observe the events on the baseball diamond.

Lance's POV: The manager, trainer, pitching coach, and catcher surround the pitcher, examining his arm.

Mick glances over at Lance and sees that the game has his attention again. Mick smiles to himself.

The MANAGER, pitching coach, and trainer escort the injured pitcher to the dugout. The MANAGER stops before entering the dugout. He looks up at Lance.

MANAGER  
 Lance, we need you to pitch. We  
 need you to close this one out.

Lance looks around. Surely he must be talking to someone else.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Can you get down here and suit up?

LANCE

Me?!

The manager nods.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE -- MOMENTS LATER

Lance runs out of the dugout dressed in a Yankees uniform as ROCK MUSIC blares over the stadium's PA system (possibly AC/DC's "Hells Bells"). The CROWD CHEERS WILDLY!

Standing on top of the mound Lance looks around the packed stadium. He looks more like he's standing on top of the world. He's thrilled as he begins warming up.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE, BOX SEATS -- DAY

Angela glares at Mick. She's boiling inside.

Mick knows it and enjoys every moment.

MICK

The human ego is amazing. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve couldn't resist the temptation of becoming like God. No human can. That sin is inside each one like a seed, and all it needs is a little water to grow. I'm just watering Lance.

ANGELA

(disgusted)

Yeah, by peeing on him. Do me a favor. Put a cork in it.

MICK

Truth hurts, doesn't it Angie?

ANGELA

My elbow against the bridge of your nose would hurt too.

(pauses)

He's the type of guy you would have wanted to save.

Mick leans back and looks smug.

MICK

I traded teams, Angie. I was on a last place loser and now I'm on a pennant winner.

(pauses)

It may be another ten or twenty thousand years until the end.

ANGELA

No one knows the time or the hour  
when it will all come down.

(smiles)

It may be tomorrow.

Mick loses his composure for a moment and looks a little unnerved. However, he quickly regains his form.

MICK

I may be going to hell but I'm gonna  
enjoy the ride.

(pauses)

And I've got the key to the Abyss to  
escape.

Both Angela and Mick turn their attention to the game as it is ready to resume.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, INSIDE, ON THE FIELD -- DAY

Lance stands atop the pitcher's mound. He can't believe he's there. He's nervous and excited.

A BATTER steps up to the plate. Lance looks at the catcher for the sign. He goes into his wind up and throws a pitch...

The pitch is about two feet outside.

UMPIRE

Strike!!!!

The CROWD CHEERS!

Lance is pumped up and quickly gets ready to pitch again. He winds up and fires...

The ball hits the dirt several feet in front of home plate, but the batter swings at the pitch as though it was close. The CROWD CHEERS!

Lance walks around the mound for a moment. The crowd begins to CLAP, urging him for a strike out.

Lance looks determined as he steps on the rubber and goes into his wind up. He throws harder than before...

The ball sails ten feet over the head of the catcher and into the stands but the batter swings wildly at the ball.

UMPIRE (CONT'D)

Strike three!!! You're out!!

The CROWD CHEERS even louder!

MONTAGE: A series of pitches thrown wildly, with the batter swinging or the umpire calling bad pitches strikes.

The scoreboard shows that it's the ninth inning and there are two outs and two strikes on the batter.



Lance walks around the mound, gathering his energy and concentration. He walks on top of the mound and looks toward home plate. Boston's best hitter is at the plate.

Lance winds up and fires. The ball nearly hits the batter as he hits the dirt!

UMPIRE (CONT'D)  
Strike three! You're out!

The CROWD ROARS---a standing ovation. Lance's Yankee teammates rush to him and lift him up. He's their hero and Lance is swept away by the drama of it all.

Angela watches him, she's deeply worried.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM, OUTSIDE -- DAY

Lance confidently walks out of the stadium toward Angela, Mick and the Ferrari. The world he's in may not be real but Lance has become a believer. He's on top of the world and is manic about what has happened.

LANCE  
Can you believe that?! It was  
incredible.

MICK  
You were unhittable.

Lance makes a pitching motion as he recounts his exploits.

LANCE  
My pitches had so much movement no  
one could touch them!

ANGELA  
Including the catcher.

Angela clearly doesn't share the same level of enthusiasm. Her comment brings Lance back to reality for a second, deflating his ego.

MICK  
Who are you kidding, he was great.

Lance smiles. His ego is easily re-inflated.

ANGELA  
I could have struck out the side  
with the way the hitters were swinging  
and the way the umpire was calling  
strikes.

She pauses and looks at Lance.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
It's not real. This is all an  
illusion to feed your ego.

Lance seriously considers this for a moment.

LANCE  
I like the illusion. It's fun as  
hell.

ANGELA  
Hell isn't fun.

INT. FERRARI -- DAY

Lance drives with an uncontrollable grin on his face. He quick shifts into fifth gear and punches the gas. The ENGINE ROARS as Angela gets squished in the back.

LANCE  
I love this car!

He turns a sharp corner, throwing Angela again.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- DAY

The Ferrari blows past sluggish traffic as it moves unhindered in the "Lance Only Lane."

The car cruises at incredible speeds, then suddenly...the BRAKES SCREECH and it skids to a halt.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Angela is thrown in between the front seats.

ANGELA  
What the?

Lance appears to be in a trance. He stares out the window of the car.

LANCE  
Is that for real?

MICK  
Why don't you go check it out.

Angela looks out the window of the car. She sighs and rolls her eyes.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, MANHATTAN -- CONTINUOUS

Lance steps out of the Ferrari.

From behind him we see he is looking at a huge banner of one of his paintings. The banner hangs in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It reads, "LANCE SAGER: THE GREATEST AMERICAN ARTIST OF ALL TIME."

Lance walks toward the museum---slowly at first, then he becomes more and more excited, picking up speed as he goes until he's running up the steps.

Mick stands outside the Ferrari.

MICK  
Coming Angie?

Angela crawls out of the car and falls onto the ground.

ANGELA  
You have no morals.

MICK  
I'm just giving him what he wants in  
real life.

Angela slowly stands up, brushes off her dress, and begins walking toward the museum.

MICK (CONT'D)  
Beautiful day, isn't it?

Angela looks up at the sky and sees that the sun is a little lower in the sky. She's worried.

She begins walking more quickly, then starts jogging toward the museum as Mick LAUGHS at her.

MICK (CONT'D)  
(shouting after her)  
It doesn't matter how fast you run.  
You're gonna lose.

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART -- DAY

Lance is thrilled as he looks around the lobby of the museum. Displays and posters that focus on Lance's artwork tastefully grace the lobby.

Angela catches up to Lance. He doesn't realize she is next to him as he is still too enthralled by his environment.

A handsome man in his forties scurries up to Lance---he is WILBUR THOMAS, the museum director. He's British.

WILBUR  
(shaking Lance's hand  
vigorously)  
Mr. Sager! Wilbur Thomas, Museum  
Director. How wonderful to see you.  
It's amazing enough to be surrounded  
by your magnificent work but to also  
be graced by your presence---that is  
truly an honor.

LANCE  
What can I say---thanks, Wilbur.

WILBUR  
Your work is so incredible! Full of  
light, full of passion!

Angela rolls her eyes.

ANGELA

Full of it.

The museum director is angry.

WILBUR

(offended)

Madam, Mr. Sager's work is far superior to all American artists, so much so that the American Collection is practically the Sager Collection.

Lance proudly grins at Angela.

LANCE

Did you hear that?

Angela looks at the front door. Mick is just walking up the stairs toward it.

ANGELA

(sarcastically)

Well then, what are we waiting for? Why don't we go look at this incredible collection?

They quickly walk off as Mick enters. He sees them but doesn't bother following them. Things are under control.

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, SAGER WING -- DAY

Wilbur the museum director leads Lance and Angela into a wing filled with Lance's artwork. Wilbur is flamboyant in his presentation of the wing.

WILBUR

This is my favorite place in the whole world! I can spend hours here just admiring the pieces.

Many pieces portray the Twin Towers and their destruction and would not lend themselves to hours worth of admiring, unless you were very,very depressed.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

I love this one!

Wilbur points out a striking piece that is clearly very dark and depressing.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

When I look at this I can feel your pain. It must have been so--- overwhelming.

LANCE

It was. I painted my pain on the canvas.

Angela looks at Lance.

ANGELA

Come on now. How corny can you get?

WILBUR

Madam, you are mocking a true artist.

LANCE

You tell her, Wilbur.

Angela spies a substandard painting. She walks over to it.

ANGELA

Can you tell me about this one?

Wilbur looks at it for a moment, gathering his thoughts.

WILBUR

It has a certain---raw quality to it---  
the artist exposed to the world in a  
pure form.

It sounds good to Lance. He nods in agreement. Angela shakes her head.

ANGELA

Technically this is total trash.  
For starters your perspective is  
off. You also don't have any true  
focal point or real structure in the  
painting.

Lance knows she's right.

WILBUR

Madam you're missing the whole point  
of the piece.

ANGELA

I don't think there is a point to  
the piece. It's just angry and lost,  
(she looks at Lance)  
Like the artist himself.

Again, Lance knows she's right.

LANCE

(a little defensive)  
I'm not always angry and lost.

ANGELA

No---not always. Sometimes you're  
momentarily happy and lost---like  
now.

Lance shrugs.

WILBUR

(changing the subject)

Our lost and found is down by the front desk. It's amazing how many things have been lost throughout the years that never get claimed.

Wilbur directs them to a portrait of a homeless man on the street. It is Fred, the homeless man who Lance spoke to earlier.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

This is a marvelous portrait.

Lance smiles, remembering.

LANCE

Fred. He was a great guy.

Angela looks and nods. It is an excellent portrait.

Angela sees a painting that catches her attention in the far corner of the gallery, almost as though it was meant to be ignored.

Angela is transfixed and walks off quietly toward it.

Lance and Wilbur speak among themselves about the portrait of Fred---how it was done, the setting chosen and so forth, as Angela makes her way to the far corner of the gallery.

Seen from across the gallery she stands there, admiring it.

ANGELA

(shouts to Lance)

Hey! How about this one?

Lance and Wilbur walk toward Angela and the painting.

Lance stops and looks at it. He looks sullen---almost tearful. He tries to compose himself. He rubs his watering eyes.

LANCE

That one was special.

Lance's POV: It is a beautiful portrait of Briana, painted before she had experienced any tragedy in her life.

Angela turns to Lance.

ANGELA

She *is* very special.

Again, Wilbur tries to distract them. He begins walking away toward another painting.

WILBUR

That's a fine piece of work but it is not nearly as spectacular as this one over here.

Lance does not move or acknowledge Wilbur.

ANGELA  
 (quietly to Lance)  
 Why don't we go for a walk outside.

Lance takes a deep breath, taking in the image of Briana.

LANCE  
 (nodding)  
 Yeah.

Angela notices an emergency exit nearby.

ANGELA  
 Hey, Wilbur. Can you get us some  
 coffee or some water to drink?

WILBUR  
 We don't allow any food or beverages  
 in the gallery.

ANGELA  
 (gesturing to Lance)  
 But this *is* Lance Sager. I'm sure  
 you can make an exception.

Lance perks up.

LANCE  
 Come on, Wilbur. Snap to it.

WILBUR  
 Yes sir, Mr. Sager. I'll be back in  
 a jiffy.

Wilbur turns quickly and heads off.

Angela grabs Lance by the arm.

ANGELA  
 Let's take the back way out.

They head for the emergency exit.

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, STAIRWAY -- DAY

Lance and Angela descend the stairs as an ALARM sounds.

At the sound of the alarm they scurry down the stairs as  
 quickly as they can.

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART -- DAY

Slightly out of breath, Lance and Angela burst out of an  
 emergency exit on the south side of the building.

They look around at the commotion near the front of the  
 museum, but fortunately they are yet unnoticed. The museum  
 sits at the edge of Central Park.

LANCE

This way!

Lance leads Angela as they take off running together through the woods of Central Park.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

Central Park is magical in many ways, beautiful park land sitting in the midst of some of the world's most expensive real estate.

As Lance and Angela run through the park, they spy Belvedere Castle. Surprisingly, there are very few people around.

They head toward the castle, staying off the paths and roads, running through the trees as fast as they can.

Out of breath, they stop at a tree near the castle---both of them lean against it, embracing each other for support.

ANGELA

I'm not used to this.

LANCE

Hey, I ran a marathon earlier and it was easier than this.

ANGELA

This might be harder, but you still didn't sweat.

Lance laughs a little.

LANCE

That's right. Dead men don't sweat.

Angela looks up at the sky. The sun continues to drop. Suddenly, all lightness is gone from her mood.

ANGELA

We don't have much time.

LANCE

What do you mean?

ANGELA

When the sun sets you're stuck here. No going back.

LANCE

I'm not going back.

ANGELA

Could you look Briana in the eye and say that?

Lance nearly flinches at the sound of Briana's name.



LANCE

She's better off without me. I'm no good for her. I'll just cause her more pain.

Angela gets fired up.

ANGELA

Do you think she doesn't care? Do you think she's better off having lost *both* her parents?

LANCE

(defensive)

Hey, I died saving her life. She can live with that memory---it's probably the only good one she has of me since her mother died.

Angela moves closer to him, getting within a few inches of his face.

ANGELA

I've got news for you. When you got her the pretzel she had hope that you actually closed down your self-pity party and started to care for her.

LANCE

We've had a few moments like that over the years. None lasted.

ANGELA

(yells)

But she prayed for *that* one!!!

(pauses)

I've got some more news for you. I'm not here for you, I'm here for her. Her soul is at risk as much as yours. I don't think she ever recovers from this. She'll never trust, never love, never pray, never have faith or hope, because she had hope for a moment and it was ripped from her little fingers and you don't seem to care enough to give it back to her.

Lance is silent for a moment. He weighs this seriously.

LANCE

She'll never have hope again?

ANGELA

No, I don't think so.

Her answer stops Lance.

LANCE  
 (incredulous)  
 You're not certain?

Angela looks away from him for a moment---she can't lie to him.

ANGELA  
 Only God can say anything for sure.

LANCE  
 (enthusiastically  
 believing he's right)  
 Aha! So she may still be better off  
 without me!

ANGELA  
 I've seen things like this millions  
 of times and it usually turns out  
 bad.

LANCE  
 But not always.

ANGELA  
 Let me put it in human terms for you---  
 it's the odds equivalent of winning  
 the lottery. You've got a better  
 chance of dying than winning.

LANCE  
 I've already died, maybe she can  
 win.

Angela looks up to the sky.

ANGELA  
 (looking up)  
 I need a little help here.

INT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART -- DAY

A furious Mick puts Wilbur up against a wall.

MICK  
 You brainless, spineless creation!

WILBUR  
 I'm sorry!

Mick takes out a walkie talkie out of his jacket while keeping  
 a hand on Wilbur.

MICK  
 (into walkie talkie)  
 I want everyone who is not scheduled  
 for the next stage to find Lance and  
 Angela and report their position to  
 me immediately. Do not intervene on  
 your own.

Mick puts his walkie talkie away, then turns to Wilbur. He grabs Wilbur with both his hands, squeezing him hard.

Wilbur vanishes as though he was crushed into oblivion.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

Lance and Angela are now near the statue of William Shakespeare.

LANCE  
I appreciate your help but why don't you go back and keep an eye on Briana.

ANGELA  
If you don't go, I can't go.

Lance smiles.

LANCE  
So you'd be stuck here with me for eternity.

ANGELA  
No, not exactly.

Angela turns away from him. She's really scared and she doesn't want him to see her fear.

She turns back to him, almost looking teary eyed.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
What happens to me doesn't matter.  
What happens to you and Briana does.  
(pauses)  
Your wife understood that.

Lance becomes very serious and drawn to Angela.

LANCE  
You knew Melissa?

ANGELA  
Yes. She was braver than me---I'm afraid of heights.

LANCE  
You're afraid of heights?

ANGELA  
(sheepishly)  
Yes. There's one other angel who's afraid, but that's about it.  
(pauses)  
Anyway, I was working with a woman from Jersey who worked with her. We stayed in the middle of her office and she prayed for everyone else but herself.

LANCE  
(expectantly)  
Where is she now?

ANGELA  
Heaven.

LANCE  
Is heaven better than here?

ANGELA  
(absolutely)  
Oh, yeah.

LANCE  
What's it like?

ANGELA  
(are you kidding!?)  
I can't explain it to you.

LANCE  
Try.

Angela shakes her head and thinks hard for a few seconds.

ANGELA  
Okay. Take your best moment in your  
life. Your absolute best memory.  
(pauses)  
You got it in your head?

Lance smiles thinking of the memory.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
Okay, if you've got some others that  
are nearly as great, put those in  
your mind as well.

LANCE  
At the same time?

ANGELA  
Yeah.

LANCE  
I can't do that.

ANGELA  
Then I can't explain what heaven's  
like.

LANCE  
Why not?

ANGELA  
If you can't put a dozen or so of  
your best memories together and then  
multiply that feeling exponentially,  
you can't grasp it.

LANCE

It's impossible. My head would explode.

ANGELA

No, with God all things are possible. You might think your heart's about to explode, but it's amazing how much love a person can hold when they give up all their bitterness.

A pre-teen BOY spies them talking. Both Lance and Angela notice him as well. Without a word, the boy turns and runs away.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Your wife was an amazing woman.

LANCE

Yeah, she was.

ANGELA

Her faith was strong. She prayed until the last moment. Even though she didn't want to die, she was calm. In her prayers she glimpsed what was waiting for her on the other side.

Angela shows some emotion. Tears actually form.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

And you know what? She would've given that up in a heartbeat to stay with you and Briana.

LANCE

(raises his voice)  
Why did God do that?! Why didn't He let her stay?!

ANGELA

It's trials and pain that make people appreciate what God has given them.

LANCE

(frustrated)  
I don't get it.

Angela moves away from Lance.

ANGELA

When things go well for people they begin to take everything for granted. They begin to believe they deserve more and it's all theirs for the taking---they eliminate God from the picture.

(gestures around her)

That's what this world is all about. It's so you forget about God and what He's given you.

LANCE

God gave me a life of pain when he took away Melissa.

ANGELA

God never turns away. He's kind and forgiving. His hand is in all that He created---including you, Melissa and Briana. He's not turning away from you, you're turning away from Him.

LANCE

(shaking his head)

No. I prayed and he didn't help.

ANGELA

Think about what your prayers were. They were all about what you wanted.

LANCE

Was it so wrong to want her back?!

ANGELA

No. But it was wrong to blame God for giving her something more beautiful than you can ever imagine.

Lance looks at Angela, then seems to look past her. He is looking past the pond.

LANCE

Look! Balloons!

Lance's POV: Hot air balloons are being inflated on the Great Lawn of Central Park. There's an assortment of colors.

Angela throws up her hands in frustration.

ANGELA

More distractions to get you further away from God.

LANCE

Come on. I want to check out the distraction.

Lance moves a few steps around the tree to get a better look at the balloons. He's excited.

LANCE (CONT'D)

I used to fly balloons. I love them! They're great!

Angela looks up toward the sky for help.

ANGELA

(almost pleading)

Please.

Angela stretches her arms out wide as she continues to look up into the blue sky. She closes her eyes but keeps her head turned toward the sky. The wind begins to pick up, blowing through her hair and tossing the skirt of her dress. Some leaves float past her.

Angela once again has Lance's attention. He looks at her, amazed by her beauty. She almost seems to radiate light.

Lance moves toward her, fascinated.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(still looking up)  
Thank you.

With her eyes still closed, Angela lowers her head so she is facing Lance. She reaches toward him with her eyes still closed and takes his hands. It's difficult to tell if she willed his hands into hers or if she instinctively knew his hands would be there.

Holding Lance's hands, she stretches her arms out again, making Lance move toward her. Slowly, their bodies connect and she kisses him. It is a simple kiss, not one of lust but one of love. He glows with the same light that illuminates her.

Angela slowly pulls her lips back from him. She opens her eyes. He opens his. It was far more than a kiss---it was a glimpse into heaven itself.

They remain silent for a moment as the wind dies down. Lance searches for words. His lips move but nothing comes out.

LANCE  
(soft)  
Wow.

A moment of quiet reflection.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
(unsure)  
Was that from you?

Angela smiles.

ANGELA  
No. That was from God. That was a taste of what heaven is like.

Lance is floored.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
Regardless what happens, you won't remember me or any of this after sunset.

LANCE  
That's not something I'd easily forget.

ANGELA

You will. But depending on what path you take you may get to experience it again.

LANCE

If I would have known it would be like that, I would have killed myself a long time ago.

This brings up Angela short.

ANGELA

No, no. It doesn't work like that. You need faith, love and hope to get there. There aren't any short cuts.

Angela pauses.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Ready to go back?

LANCE

Through St. Pat's Cathedral?

Angela nods.

ANGELA

Time's running out.

MICK O.S.

Who are you kidding, Angie?

Lance and Angela turn to see Mick approaching them. Angela is frightened. Mick appears calm but there is a certain edge to his demeanor, and that edge is directed at Angela.

MICK

He's got all the time in the world--- so do you.

ANGELA

Until sunset.

MICK

He can stay here after that. It's his choice. I think he's been enjoying himself.

Mick flashes a smile that seems genuine.

MICK (CONT'D)

We got some really cool things to do yet.

(gestures)

You like balloons, don't you?

LANCE

Yeah.



MICK

Why don't you start heading over there. I want to show Angie some things that she might appreciate. We'll catch up with you in a bit.

Mick takes Angela by the arm. It seems friendly but Angela knows it's not. She complies.

LANCE

How will you find me?

MICK

Not a problem. You're the most popular guy here!

Lance shrugs, knowing it's true. He's not quite as floored by it as he was before.

Mick leads Angela away as Lance heads toward the balloon rally.

Angela turns back to Lance.

ANGELA

Don't forget what I told you!

Lance turns, looks back and waves an acknowledgement.

Mick squeezes Angela's elbow. A BURNING SOUND is heard. He quickly puts his hand over her mouth so she can't scream and ushers her out of sight behind a tree.

She is in pain as Mick gets in her face.

MICK

You should have been more careful to follow the rules of the game. I could vanquish you right now but I'd rather give you a birds-eye view of your own demise as well as that worthless human's.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Mick pulls a terrified Angela out of the elevator. Her fear of heights is even more powerful now. She struggles to stay near the elevator but Mick is far stronger than she is.

MICK

Oh, that's right, you're afraid of heights. I'm sorry about that, Angie.

He grabs her and drags her toward the edge of the observation deck.

MICK (CONT'D)

(pointing)

Look! You can see it coming!

Angela's POV: The magnificent view from the top of the Empire State Building---but the horizon is slowly vanishing into nothingness. Like a slow wave erasing the world and covering it with blackness.

MICK (CONT'D)

Just a little more daylight left.  
Lance will be entertained with the balloons when he finally grasps the horror of his end.

Mick cruelly throws Angela to the ground.

MICK (CONT'D)

You lose. I won't see you around.  
Later, Angie.

Mick walks out the door to the observation deck. He locks the door behind him.

Angela curls up into a fetal position.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK, GREAT LAWN -- DAY

The balloon rally is nearly in full force. Balloons of varying shapes and sizes fill the Great Lawn. Some are inflated, others are still in the process of getting ready. The whole area is filled with astounding colors. A PA system plays some rock music.

Lance walks through the field as though he's intoxicated by the colors of the balloons and the carnival atmosphere. He's happy for the moment, soaking it all in.

As he walks through, people turn to look at him---some smile, others say "hi".

Lance looks out at the sun, now sitting low in the sky. His smile falters for a moment, unsure of what is real.

TIRES SCREECH behind him. Lance turns and sees Mick emerging from the Ferrari. He smiles broadly as he approaches.

MICK

This is one helluva vehicle! I hope you don't mind I took it for a spin. I thought you might want to cruise later.

Lance looks at Mick and then back at the car.

LANCE

Where's Angela?

Mick hesitates for the slightest of moments.

MICK

Oh, Angie! She wanted to watch the balloons from higher up---thought it would be cool. She's lounging on top of the Empire State Building.

Lance doesn't believe it.

LANCE

She said she's afraid of heights.

Mick scratches his head.

MICK

She told you that? She must've been pulling your leg.

Lance looks at Mick critically. Mick shrugs his shoulders.

The ROAR of a hot air balloon being inflated near them distracts Lance for a moment.

Mick turns in the other direction and waves someone to come near.

A beautiful woman in a black dress comes into view and sits down on the Ferrari. She's the MODEL who was seen on a billboard earlier. She is elegant and seems more beautiful than she looked on the billboard.

MICK (CONT'D)

Lance, here's someone I'd like you to meet.

Lance turns and sees the woman on the Ferrari. He's surprised because she looks so familiar to him.

MICK (CONT'D)

This is Jade.

She waves to Lance.

JADE

Hi! Wow, I'm so happy to meet you!

LANCE

Have I met you before---no, that's stupid. I definitely would've remembered meeting you.

Jade smiles flirtatiously.

JADE

You may have seen me around.

Lance still can't place where he's seen her.

MICK

Ever look at billboards?

Jade lays back and pulls up one side of her dress, exposing a perfectly luscious leg and reproducing the pose from the billboard.

A look of realization comes over Lance.

LANCE  
You're *that* woman?

JADE  
(smiling seductively)  
In the flesh.

MICK  
And you thought the billboard was  
good.

Lance looks at Jade. She is better than the billboard.

Jade shows off her magnificent figure as she slides off the Ferrari and struts over to Lance.

She reaches him and puts her arms around his waist. He instinctively puts his arms around her. To him this may be the most surreal moment of the day.

JADE  
Lance Sager. Wow!

A strange thing happens to Lance. Her words hit him as phony. Jade fails to notice the change in his face.

JADE (CONT'D)  
I've always wanted to meet you. And  
I've always wanted to do this.

Jade kisses Lance passionately. It is a kiss full of lust and everything physical. It lasts for a few seconds until Lance breaks away. He feels the emptiness inside her.

LANCE  
You're not real.

JADE  
(undaunted)  
Honey, I'm as real as you want me to  
be!

She moves forward to kiss him again.

As Jade moves toward him, Lance backs up and bumps into a table, RIPPING the rear pocket of his pants where his wallet is. His wallet falls to the ground.

LANCE  
Fantastic.

JADE  
Don't worry about it.

With Lance backed against the table, Jade tries to kiss him again.

Mick watches, slightly concerned.

Again, Lance stops the kiss.

LANCE  
No! This isn't right!

MICK  
Lance, chill out. What's the problem?  
(light-hearted)  
Would you rather have a brunette?

JADE  
I would hope not, blondes have more fun.

LANCE  
No. She's...  
(searching for the  
right word)  
Hollow.

JADE  
(slightly offended)  
Hollow? My body's solid.

Lance bends over to pick up his wallet that fell out of his torn pocket.

Lance's POV: His wallet lies open on the ground. A photo of Briana smiles up at him.

Lance slowly picks up the wallet and stares at the photo. Briana's smiling face causes him to smile in return for a moment. He loves and misses her.

Lance suddenly looks very serious. He turns his head up to the sky. The sun is low on the horizon.

LANCE  
Where's Angela?

MICK  
I told you. On top of the Empire State Building. Why?

LANCE  
I'm leaving.

MICK  
You don't want to do that.

LANCE  
I do. I'm out of here.

Lance moves quickly to the Ferrari and hops in.

INT. FERRARI -- CONTINUOUS

Lance takes the key out and goes to put it in the ignition but the ignition is gone! It's just smooth dashboard. He frantically looks for a place to put the key in. There is none.

Lance jumps out of the car.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK, GREAT LAWN -- CONTINUOUS

He looks at Mick, who is smiling like a Cheshire cat.

LANCE  
The ignition's gone!

Mick strolls toward him.

MICK  
Did you think this was all free?  
You have to pay to play.

LANCE  
Come on. Put the ignition back.

Mick sits on the hood of the Ferrari. Jade struts over to join him. He puts his arm around her.

MICK  
Lance, you told me you don't want to be here. But you know what? I'm betting that you and Angie will be here---forever.

Lance looks up at the sun. Panic washes over him.

MICK (CONT'D)  
If you run fast enough you *might* be able to get yourself out---but Angie will be history.

Lance looks around for other options. He sees a taxi with a driver leaning against it reading a newspaper.

Lance runs toward the taxi. The DRIVER looks up from his paper.

LANCE  
I need a ride.

DRIVER  
I got news for you. I'm not takin' you nowhere.

LANCE  
I'll give you whatever you want for the ride.

DRIVER  
It ain't gonna happen, Lance.

Mick starts laughing. It's a loud, hearty laugh of victory.

Lance knows the world where he was worshipped is suddenly antagonistic toward him.

Lance glances around for other options. He doesn't see any.

He looks off in the distance at the Empire State Building. He quickly bends over, picks up a handful of grass and drops it, watching the direction it blows in the wind.

Suddenly Lance takes off running.

He's running as fast as he can. He races toward a balloon and leaps into the basket.

A SHORT MAN is already in the basket. He is not pleased by Lance's unexpected arrival.

SHORT MAN  
What are you doing?!

LANCE  
I need your balloon. Get out.

SHORT MAN  
No!

Lance picks up the man and dumps him out of the basket.

LANCE  
Yes.

Lance pulls the lever to the burner to increase the amount of hot air in the balloon.

He quickly begins untying the ropes that hold it to the ground.

Beneath him confusion over what to do sets in. He tosses the ropes overboard and holds the burner to begin a rapid ascent.

As the ropes fall to the ground, Mick realizes what Lance is doing. He shakes his head in disbelief. It is an impossible scheme.

Mick chuckles to himself and saunters over to a mostly black balloon.

He climbs into the basket and hits the burner. He's not in a rush. He just wants to get a better look at Lance and Angela's demise.

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance expertly handles the controls of the balloon. He keeps his eye on his destination---the Empire State Building.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE -- DAY

The wind carries Lance's balloon down Fifth Avenue like a float in the Macy's Parade with Mick's balloon trailing a little ways behind.

The two balloons move in the direction of the Empire State Building.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Angela hugs the wall of the observation deck nearest the elevators on her hands and knees. Her fear of heights rules over all her actions.

She slowly tries to pull herself to a standing position while hugging the wall.

ANGELA  
(to herself)  
You can do this.

She looks over her shoulder is frightened and suddenly goes back to a kneeling position.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
Don't do that!

Angela's POV: She looks down at the floor of the observation deck and notices some spare change. It seems to comfort her.

She faces the wall and puts a hand on it, and then another a little higher. She slowly brings herself to a standing position as she stares at the wall.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(takes a deep breath)  
Okay.

She slides her feet back from the wall, perhaps a small step back.

With a hand on the wall she slowly turns around to face out but she has her eyes closed.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
Okay. Open them.

Angela moves her eyebrows without opening her eyes.

She covers her closed eyes with her hand that isn't touching the wall. She slowly spreads her fingers apart, exposing one eye---it's still closed.

She opens it briefly for a split second---almost a blink. She seems okay.

Angela pulls her hand away from her closed eyes, then slowly she opens them.

She's fine.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(screams)  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

A millisecond later she is once again pinned to the floor and the wall.



EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance hits the burner again---it ROARS as he ascends higher as he passes Rockefeller Center. The balloon briefly bumps into the building as the wind currents shift.

Lance looks inside the balloon envelope---there's a small tear in the fabric.

LANCE

Fantastic.

Lance's POV: He looks down and sees the spires of St. Patrick's Cathedral beneath him. Then he looks toward the Empire State Building.

EXT. MICK'S BALLOON -- DAY

Mick hits his burner to ascend. His confidence is evident as he seems to be enjoying his balloon ride.

Mick's POV: Lance's balloon is a ways ahead of him. Beyond it he sees the Empire State Building.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Angela stands with her eyes closed but this time her back is pressed firmly against the wall.

ANGELA

(to herself)

Just to see him make it out. To know everything wasn't in vain.

Angela slowly opens her eyes. She shuts them tightly again. There's no scream, just a small scared sound escapes her.

She opens her eyes again. She's still scared but she keeps her eyes open.

Angela's POV: She scans the horizon. It is dissolving into blackness as the sun sinks lower in the sky. Slowly she turns her gaze and sees the approaching balloons.

Angela looks down at the floor of the observation deck to where she saw the spare change earlier.

She moves towards it and picks up a couple of quarters. Angela tentatively makes her way toward the binoculars.

She holds onto the binoculars as though they might fly away. Slowly she puts the change in and looks through the glasses.

Angela's POV: Through the binoculars she sees Lance in the balloon. She also sees that he has passed St. Patrick's Cathedral. She looks behind him and sees Mick in the basket of the trailing balloon.

Angela lifts her head and looks at the sinking sun. More and more of the horizon is vanishing.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
 (shouting to Lance)  
 Go to St. Pat's!!! Get out of here!!!  
 Hurry!!!

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance continues raising his balloon. He skillfully gauges his ascent.

He hears faint sounds.

Lance's POV: He sees a lone figure on top of the Empire State Building. He knows it's Angela.

Lance breathes a sigh of relief.

As his balloon climbs higher, Lance's view of the world around him is greatly improved.

Lance's POV: He looks out at the distance and watches the Statue of Liberty get swallowed up by blackness. The world around him is vanishing.

Lance suddenly grasps the finality of his decisions. He looks down at St. Patrick's Cathedral. If he was to lower his balloon now, he knows he would have plenty of time to make it out.

Nervously, he grasps the vent and releases some of the hot air, causing the balloon to descend.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Angela watches as the balloon starts to descend. She breathes a sigh of relief. Lance will be saved.

EXT. MICK'S BALLOON -- DAY

Mick sees the balloon descend.

Though he's still out of ear shot he shouts to Lance.

MICK  
 Wimp!

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance looks down at the Cathedral, then up at Angela. He looks back and forth between them again.

LANCE  
 Fantastic.

He grabs the burner lever. The burner ROARS as the balloon climbs once again.

Lance intensely tries to judge his speed and distance to the top of the Empire State Building. Every second is crucial.

The balloon drifts slightly faster as he gains altitude. Lance hits the burner some more. It ROARS as the flames shoot up.

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Angela looks at Lance approaching.

ANGELA  
(shouting)  
Go!!! Get out of here!!! The sun's  
going down!!! Hurry!!!

Lance's balloon continues coming toward her. From twenty floors below it continues rising as a gust of wind causes it to collide into the building.

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

The balloon strikes the Empire State Building, giving Lance a shudder in the basket. Lance takes a look inside the balloon's envelope.

Lance's POV: A large hole has been torn in the lining.

LANCE  
Fantastic.

He looks up to the sky for a moment, considering something, then he hits the burner.

The balloon rises a little more slowly than it did before it had the gash in it.

The sky turns more foreboding. The once endless summer-like day is vanishing as the blackness continues to swallow the world around them. Everything the blackness touches vanishes completely into nothingness. The world is collapsing in on itself---like a ripple on a pond in reverse. It continues to collapse around a point somewhere in Lower Manhattan.

Lance looks around at the horizon. The Hudson River is now completely gone and the East River is quickly disappearing!

EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Angela watches the balloon rise past her on the observation deck---the torn fabric FLAPPING in the wind.

The basket carrying Lance nearly reaches the level of the observation deck---though he is several feet out.

ANGELA  
You need to get out of here! Don't  
worry about me!

LANCE  
(shouting)  
Angela, I'm not leaving without you!  
Climb up on the ledge!

Angela looks terrified.

ANGELA  
I can't do that!

LANCE  
Yes, you can. You have to!

Lance looks at the floor of the basket. A rope sits there. He grabs it.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
(tossing the rope)  
Take this.

Angela catches it, but the basket moves in the wind. Terrified of being pulled over the edge, Angela lets go.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
You need to hold on to the rope!

ANGELA  
It was gonna pull me over!

Lance quickly pulls in the rope, preparing to throw it again.

LANCE  
You need to catch it and tie it to something---anything. Can you do that?

ANGELA  
I'll try.

Lance throws the rope. Angela catches it. She nervously wraps it around the fence.

Lance ties his end of the rope securely to the basket. He attempts to pull the balloon closer to the building.

He grunts and yells as he attempts to get it closer. He moves it a couple of feet closer but that's it. It's impossible in the increasing wind.

Lance quickly ties down the rope.

LANCE  
I can't get it any closer. You've got to jump.

ANGELA  
No!

LANCE  
It's the only way---you have to.

Fear covers Angela's face.

ANGELA  
Get out of here. Go!

LANCE

I'm not leaving without you.

ANGELA

You won't remember me once you're out of here. You'll forget that I was even here---so go!

LANCE

No!

Lance looks at her.

LANCE (CONT'D)

You've made me want to live---and I'll be damned if I'm leaving you here.

ANGELA

You'll be damned if you don't get out of here!

LANCE

Please! For me. For Briana. Please!

Angela stops for a moment, looks up to the sky, asking God for strength.

Nervously she starts climbing the fence. She looks down for a moment and freezes. She closes her eyes.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Don't look down!

ANGELA

You tell me that now!

LANCE

You can do it! I know you can.

With her eyes closed, Angela climbs up to the top of the fence. She opens her eyes.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Just don't look down.

Angela tentatively makes her way to the top of the fence. The ground is over one thousand feet below!

LANCE (CONT'D)

Keep your eyes on me---don't look anywhere else. Got it?

Angela nods.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Okay, now jump toward me.

Angela doesn't move. It would be terrifying from fifty feet---from a thousand it seems impossible.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Please. Just jump. I'll catch you.

Scared, Angela takes a deep breath and then launches herself toward Lance! He desperately tries to grab her and misses--- the sleeve of her dress rips off in his hand. Angela screams!

Amazingly she manages to catch a rope attached to the side of the basket! She dangles from the basket, screaming!

LANCE (CONT'D)

Hold on!

ANGELA

What do you think I'm doing?!

Lance leans over the basket and grabs her wrist.

LANCE

Let go of the rope. I've got you.

ANGELA

Yeah, you also said you'd catch me!

LANCE

I expected you to jump toward me---  
not fall past me!

Above them they hear the sound of RIPPING FABRIC as the gash in the balloon gets bigger! The balloon starts going down.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Let go! Now!

Angela lets go and Lance struggles to pull her up. He gets her into the basket.

LANCE (CONT'D)

You okay?

ANGELA

Were you trying to do immersion  
therapy to get me over my fear of  
heights?

LANCE

No.  
(pauses)  
Did it help?

Angela takes a peak over the basket at the ground below. She grabs Lance.

ANGELA

No, not much.

With Angela holding on to him, Lance releases the rope that holds the balloon to the Empire State Building.

The balloon has some difficulty breaking free as the wind seems to be holding it against the building.

Lance begins working feverishly---pulling on the vent, then hitting the burner. Finally, the balloon breaks free.

The distance to St. Patrick's Cathedral looks vast.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

There's no way we're gonna make it!

LANCE

Just because we're a thousand feet in the air above Fifth Avenue in a seriously damaged balloon doesn't mean you should lose hope.

Lance pauses and smiles at her.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Panic---yes. But don't lose hope. I finally want to live and I'm not gonna give up that easily!

Angela forces a smile. She's skeptical about their chances.

The balloon continues on its way down but the wind pushes it further away from the Cathedral.

ANGELA

We're going the wrong way!

LANCE

I know that! This is not an exact science. It took just short of a miracle to get here.

He hits the burner briefly.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Wind currents move in different directions at different altitudes. I'm trying to find the right current.

ANGELA

(panicked)

Can you do it faster?

Lance looks up into the tumultuous sky. He's pensive, searching the sky or himself for an answer.

Lance reverently speaks to someone unseen in the sky.

LANCE

God, I don't deserve any of the good things you've given me. I've been sad and bitter and blamed you for taking Melissa to heaven when I should've been thanking you for the wonderful time I had with her. I've hurt all the people who loved me the most.

(MORE)

LANCE (CONT'D)

Please, Lord, forgive me for all my sins.

(pauses)

And God, please, please help me now and I promise you I won't waste my second chance. Please. For Briana's sake.

For a moment they continue drifting in the wrong direction, then suddenly the wind picks up and changes their course.

Angela looks up to the sky.

ANGELA

Thanks!

Their damaged balloon heads toward St. Patrick's Cathedral.

EXT. MICK'S BALLOON -- DAY

Mick's balloon approaches the air space above St. Pat's Cathedral. The change of wind direction suddenly slows his progress.

Mick has been watching the events unfold from a distance. He still appears confident of success but his posture indicates he is far more engaged than he had been previously.

Mick springs into action. He opens the vent and begins lowering his balloon.

He takes out his walkie-talkie.

MICK

Get here. Now. I'm taking this down.

He abruptly cuts off the walkie-talkie.

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance and Angela's balloon travels three or four hundred feet above Fifth Avenue.

St. Patrick's Cathedral is only a few blocks away but the blackness follows the moving balloon like an ocean wave that is slowly gaining on them.

ANGELA

I don't think we're gonna make it!

LANCE

I'm gonna keep us at this altitude as long as I can. When we drop lower the wind may not be as strong.

A GUN SHOT sounds and a bullet rips through their balloon!

ANGELA

What was that?!



Both Lance and Angela look around. Lance looks up and sees the new hole.

Another GUN SHOT and another bullet rips through the balloon's nylon. Both Lance and Angela duck as more SHOTS are rapidly fired---all of them poking holes in the balloon.

Angela looks over the edge of the basket.

Angela's POV: In front of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Mick sits on the hood of a police car in the center of Fifth Avenue holding a 9mm. He fires a few more rounds. BANG! BANG! BANG!

ANGELA (CONT'D)

It's Mick.

LANCE

What happened to the "you can leave any time you want"?

ANGELA

(matter of fact)

Sore loser.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE -- DAY

Mick changes the clip in the gun. He puts it down for a moment and reaches down to pick up a rocket launcher. He grins like a kid in a candy store as he puts it on his shoulder and takes aim.

BANG! Mick fires!

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

A SCREECH is heard above Lance and Angela. They both look up.

Lance's POV: The rocket propelled grenade has ripped a three foot hole in the balloon's fabric.

The balloon begins losing altitude! Lance hits the burner.

Lance keeps the ROAR of the burner going steady in hopes of maintaining altitude.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE -- DAY

Mick beams as they struggle to keep altitude as the wave of blackness approaches.

Mick's POV: The balloon's fabric is clearly torn. The balloon is only a half block away and still several hundred feet up.

Mick reloads the rocket launcher, aims and fires. BANG!

MICK

I love this weapon!

Grinning, he reloads again.

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- DAY

Lance and Angela are huddled together on the basket floor.  
Lance holds the burner.

The sky above them is dark.

LANCE  
How's this work? We have to get  
inside St. Pat's and then we're safe?

ANGELA  
Basically.

LANCE  
Does it matter what door?

ANGELA  
No.

Lance and Angela look over the top of the basket.

Lance's POV: Almost everything around them has been swallowed  
by the blackness. They are nearly directly over St. Patrick's  
Cathedral.

Lance turns to Angela.

LANCE  
Thanks for trying.

Angela smiles back at him.

ANGELA  
Thanks for changing.

Horrified, Angela looks into the blackness.

ANGELA (CONT'D)  
(under her breath)  
God help us both.

Lance looks down again. He looks up at the large rip in the  
balloon. He's suddenly enthusiastic.

LANCE  
Maybe He will!  
(pauses)  
Hold on.

Angela tightens her grip on Lance.

Lance lets go of the burner. He grabs the vent and pulls at  
it with all his might, letting as much of the hot air out of  
the balloon as quickly as possible. The additional bullet  
holes and rips cause it to fall like a bird that's been shot.

It falls quickly through the sky at a slight angle because  
of the huge rip in the balloon.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE -- DAY

Mick watches the balloon as it falls quickly.

He begins laughing. He's victorious.

EXT. LANCE'S BALLOON -- CONTINUOUS

Lance and Angela embrace tightly. The WIND rushes by them.

LANCE  
I'll never forget you.

ANGELA  
Yes, you will.

Lance hits the burner for a few seconds, trying to direct their fall.

Everything is collapsing around them. They fall through a funnel of space that remains in the world. They can hear Mick's mocking laugh.

EXT. ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL -- CONTINUOUS

Not much more than the cathedral remains as the balloon rapidly approaches the front of it at a slight angle.

As the whole world collapses on itself, the basket of the balloon CRASHES through the rose window of the cathedral!

The sound of SHATTERING GLASS ECHOES in the complete blackness.

The blackness holds for a few moments as the echo fades.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

The bright light of the hospital room and the sound of monitor ALARMS going off. Lance's heart rate monitor is flat-line.

Lance lies still on the table. A doctor, an intern, and a nurse surround him.

The intern quickly pulls out the defibrillator. He turns it on to charge and prepares to shock Lance.

Suddenly Lance takes in a deep, gasping breath of air as his heart beat returns.

The doctor looks at Lance's monitors. Everything seems normal.

Lance looks up at the intern with the defibrillator paddles in his hands.

LANCE  
I'm alive.  
(MORE)

LANCE (CONT'D)

(confused)  
What happened? Why do you have those things?

The doctor hesitates slightly.

DOCTOR

(slightly unsure)  
You were in an accident. We lost you for a few seconds.

LANCE

Where's my daughter?

NURSE

She's in the waiting room.

LANCE

Can I see her?  
(pauses)  
Please.

NURSE

It's not a good idea right now.  
We'll bring her in later.

LANCE

If you're worried I might die, I should see her *now*, not later.

The nurse looks at the doctor. He looks at Lance's monitors.

DOCTOR

Just for a minute.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Natalie holds Briana trying to comfort her and slow her tears.

NATALIE

It's okay, it's okay. We need to pray for him.

The nurse enters the waiting room and turns to them. She is all business.

NURSE

He's stable for the moment. You can see him just for a minute.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Briana and Natalie cautiously enter the room.

LANCE

Hey sweetie!

BRIANA

Daddy!!!

Briana runs up to him and gives him a hug. She doesn't want to let go---and he doesn't want her to let go.

Lance kisses her repeatedly.

LANCE  
I love you, I love you, I love you!  
Whatever happens to me, always  
remember that, sweetie.

Briana is crying, partly because she is happy.

LANCE (CONT'D)  
And you know what else you always  
need to remember?

BRIANA  
What?

LANCE  
God loves you too! Whether or not  
I'm here, God loves you. Never forget  
that.

Natalie holds Lance's hand. She begins to cry tears of joy.

The nurse enters the room.

NURSE  
Okay, you need to leave now. We  
need to get some more tests.

Briana doesn't want to let go of him. The nurse touches her shoulder and she pulls back from him.

BRIANA  
I love you, Daddy!

Natalie leans down and kisses Lance on the cheek.

NATALIE  
(whispers)  
Thank you.

Lance smiles at her.

LANCE  
Thanks for not giving up on me. I  
love you.

Natalie smiles back at him.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM -- NIGHT

It's much later---it's night now. Natalie and Briana are back in the waiting room. Briana sits on Natalie's lap as she strokes her hair.

BRIANA  
When can we see Daddy?

NATALIE

They were just waiting for one last test result, then they'll see if he can come home with us.

Briana looks up at her.

BRIANA

Can you ask if we can see him?  
Please?

NATALIE

Sure.

Natalie gets up and walks over to the nurse's station.

Briana sits and folds her hands silently in prayer.

Angela walks into view. She spins a large golden key on her finger. She walks up to Briana and gives her a warm smile. She kneels down so she is at eye level with Briana.

ANGELA

Your Daddy's going to be alright.

BRIANA

I hope so.

ANGELA

He will be. Do you know why?

Briana isn't too sure if she understands the question.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

You prayed for him and God answered your prayer. Sometimes He doesn't give us the answer we want, but He's always listening.

(pauses)

This time He gave you the answer you wanted.

(pauses)

Your Daddy is very special.

Briana wants to ask her something. She hesitates.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Go ahead. You can ask.

BRIANA

Are you an angel?

ANGELA

What do you think?

BRIANA

You look real to me.

Angela smiles and gives Briana a kiss on her forehead. She starts to walk off.

BRIANA (CONT'D)

Can you make it snow?

Angela stops and turns back to Briana.

ANGELA

Pray real hard.

Angela smiles, turns and walks away. She turns a corner out of sight. There is the sound of an elevator door opening.

Briana jumps up and runs to see her one last time. She turns the corner and the elevator is open but it is empty.

Briana turns and walks back as Lance and Natalie are walking out. Lance looks better. He has some stitches but appears fine.

BRIANA

Daddy!!!

Briana runs up to Lance. He grabs her in a powerful hug and spins her around. He nearly loses his balance.

Natalie grabs his arm to steady him.

NATALIE

Take it easy.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

Lance, Natalie and Briana hold hands as they walk out of the hospital.

Briana looks up at the sky. A snow flake lands on her nose. Briana giggles as the snow begins to fall all around them.

INT. LANCE'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A Christmas tree holds a prominent place in Lance's studio.

Lance puts the finishing touches on a painting. He steps back from it.

CLOSE UP of the painting. It is of an angel with wings carrying Melissa away from the twin towers. The angel is Angela.

BRIANA

(excited, pointing)

That's the woman I saw at the hospital!

LANCE

The one who disappeared?

BRIANA

Yeah! You saw her too!

LANCE

I made her up from my head.

(pauses)

Maybe I saw her in a dream.

Lance gives Briana a hug and a kiss.

NATALIE O.S.

Dinner's ready if you are!

Lance and Briana hold hands as they walk over to the dining room table.

Lance walks up to Natalie and gives her a kiss on the lips. There is the slightest hesitation as they part.

They both smile. Something has begun between them.

The three of them sit down at the table.

LANCE

Who wants to say grace?

BRIANA

Me!

LANCE

Okay.

They all fold their hands.

BRIANA

Thank you, God for this food, for our health, and for bringing Daddy back to us---and for the snow! Amen.

LANCE AND NATALIE

Amen.

FADE OUT.

THE END