

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

A Screenplay

by

PETER GARTNER

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INT – BEDROOM – DAY

Morning.

KIMBERLY, known as KIM, mid-twenties, looks at herself in the dressing table mirror. She puts on some lipstick and blots it with a tissue. She opens her compact, and takes out the powder-puff, then applies some powder to her cheeks. She picks up an eye-lash stick and draws her eye-lashes with some mascara.

She looks in the mirror and smiles.

She takes out a pack of cigarettes, puts one in her mouth and lights it.

She smokes.

Some of the smoke blocks the view of her reflection in the mirror, but some minor wrinkles are visible on Kim's forehead.

CUT TO:

INT – OFFICE – DAY

ROSALYN, known as ROS, Kim's agent, seated at her desk, with a pile of photos to the side, looking at some fashion shots of Kim.

Kim is seated in front of the desk.

Ros puts the photos of Kim down on the desk and looks straight ahead to speak to Kim.

ROS

You are..beautiful...

Kim smiles a little.

ROS

You know that, don't you ?

KIM

People say I am..beautiful, but a girl should not be vain. When I look in the mirror, I see a pleasing appearance...

ROS

A beautiful woman...

KIM

Thanks.

ROS

You are...

A beat.

ROS

If you are particularly beautiful, you have a duty and a responsibility to maintain that beauty for as long as possible. You own your face, your body, your skin, but your beauty is in the perception of other people, in the eye of the beholder, the world in general. You have an obligation to be beautiful, not for your own sake, but for the appreciation of the multitude, the opinion of the majority, the eye of the world. Consider that a single entity, made up of millions of eyes, each with the same view, you are beautiful. That is not by accident, but by design, you meet the criteria of what is considered beautiful; as such, you do not possess that beauty, though it is composed of your skin, your face, your body, your complexion. You must maintain that gift for the benefit of the entire world.

KIM

I do not consider myself particularly beautiful.

ROS

But everyone else does, and that is what matters. You cannot sacrifice your beauty to the demands of everyday living. Your beauty should be transcendent, enough to be immortal.

KIM

My beauty is not mine...?

ROS

No.

KIM

Whose is it then ?

ROS

The world's, not yours.

KIM

Whose - ?

ROS

No-one's in particular.

KIM

Do I have a share in my beauty ?

ROS

You don't own it.

KIM

I don't - ? I thought it was part of me.
Surely, I do own my beauty...I possess it...

ROS (shaking her head)

No...

KIM

I might dispossess my beauty, since it
depends on me.

ROS

That's the point. You should be more
careful. What you should never do, is
anything that might damage your beauty.

KIM

What about my health ? Doesn't that
matter at all ?

ROS

Of course it does, but...

KIM

But what ?

ROS

You gotta look good.

KIM

I do look good.

ROS

You gotta look ya best.

KIM

I do..look my best.

ROS

No, you don't.

KIM

Yes, I do.

ROS

Trust me, you don't.

KIM

What's wrong with me ? What's wrong with the way I look ?

ROS

You got wrinkles.

KIM

No, I don't.

ROS

Yes, you do ! Look in the mirror, look closely at your face, your forehead...you got wrinkles. Take out your compact and take a good long look at yourself, at your face, and you will see..wrinkles.

She takes out her compact and opens it up.

She takes a look at her face and forehead, and shudders a little as she sees some wrinkles beginning to emerge.

She closes her compact.

KIM

Ain't that bad.

ROS

It's the start of a noticeable decline.

KIM

I'm young. I shouldn't have wrinkles

ROS

But you do, you do have wrinkles.

KIM

Why ?

ROS

Because you smoke !

KIM

Shit !

ROS

Smoking damages the skin. Smoking causes wrinkles and premature ageing.

KIM

Shit.

ROS

You should quit.

KIM

Of course I should. I don't smoke that much.

ROS

You smoke enough. It is a seriously bad idea to smoke, if you wanna look good.

KIM

I know, I know, but most girls in the business smoke to keep their weight down. That's why I do it.

ROS

It is addictive...

KIM

But it does keep my weight down.

ROS

Eat less. Go on a diet.

KIM

I eat little as it is.

ROS

Eat less.

KIM

I hardly eat anything. I smoke, when I should eat.

ROS

You do know about lung cancer - ?

KIM

Yes...

ROS

It is associated with smoking.

KIM

I know that.

ROS

So, ain't you afraid you might catch lung cancer ?

KIM

I might, but...

ROS

But what ?

KIM

I'm too young to get lung cancer. That is for older people.

ROS

I heard o' someone died from lung cancer at the relatively young age of thirty-eight. She was a smoker. That's less than half a normal life span. She lost more than half her life, because she smoked.

KIM

That's just dreadful.

ROS

Cigarettes are much more lethal than most people think. One in two long-term smokers will die as a result of smoking.

KIM

One in two...?

ROS

One in two. Don't be the one.

Kim ponders what Ros has said.

CUT TO:

INT – BEDROOM – DAY

Kim's apartment. Kim seated on the bed.

Her girlfriend, EMMA, early thirties, seated on a chair, near the dressing table, with its mirror.

Emma takes out a cigarette from a packet, and puts it in her mouth.

Kim watches her closely.

Emma catches Kim looking at her. She takes the cigarette out of her mouth.

EMMA

What - ?

KIM

You were gonna smoke...

EMMA

Yes, I smoke, You smoke.

Emma puts the cigarette back in her mouth and lights it. She smokes.

EMMA

That's better. You want one ?

Kim thinks for a while.

KIM

Yeah. Okay.

Emma gets up and hands Kim a cigarette. Kim slowly puts it in her mouth, with some noticeable hesitation.

Emma lights Kim's cigarette for her, and Kim begins to smoke.

Emma goes back to her chair.

EMMA

You feel better now ?

KIM

Yeah...

They both smoke.

KIM

You know, I was talking to Ros, my agent,
and she said, I should quit.

EMMA

What – smoking ?

KIM

Yes. She said I should quit.

EMMA

Maybe you should.

They both take a drag on their cigarettes and exhale smoke.

KIM
Should I...?

EMMA
It's up to you. It's your choice.

KIM
Is it...up to me ?

EMMA
Of course it is. You decide to smoke
You can decide not to smoke.

KIM
It's not that easy. You know that. It is
an addiction.

EMMA
If you really wanted to quit, you would
quit.

A beat.

They smoke.

KIM
What about you ?

EMMA
What about me...?

KIM
You smoke.

EMMA
You noticed. I choose to smoke. If I wanted,
I could quit. But, at the moment, I don't
want to quit.

KIM
She said, I was getting wrinkles.

Emma stands, goes over to look at Kim's face. She closes inspects Kim's face.

EMMA
Maybe, you are, just a little.

Emma goes back to her chair, sits down and smokes.

KIM

She says, smoking causes premature skin ageing.

Emma looks at her own face in the dressing-table mirror.

EMMA

I got more wrinkles than you.

KIM

You're not a model.

EMMA

They can airbrush your wrinkles out.

KIM

Yes, they can.

EMMA

Ask her to do that.

KIM

Okay...

They both smoke and exhale.

KIM

She said, one in two long-term smokers will die from smoking.

EMMA

One in two ?

KIM

One in two.

EMMA

Ain't gonna be me.

KIM

I hope it's not gonna be me.

EMMA

We'd better quit then.

Emma smokes, Kim smokes.

KIM

If we don't quit, one of us will die from smoking.

EMMA

Can you quit ?

KIM

Maybe, I can. How about you ?

EMMA

I reckon you gotta want to quit. Do you want to quit ?

KIM

I'm thinking about that.

They both smoke.

KIM

If I did quit, I might have weight gain, no good for a model. I might get fat.

EMMA

Fat ?! You ! At the moment, you are on the thin side of slim.

KIM

That's because I smoke...to keep my weight down. That's why most models smoke.

EMMA

You should only smoke if you enjoy it.

KIM

Do you..enjoy it ?

EMMA

Yes, I do.

Emma takes another drag on her cigarette and exhales smoke.

EMMA

Do you enjoy it ?

KIM

Not that much.

EMMA

Why do you smoke ?

KIM

Well, you've got to, haven't you ?

EMMA

You don't have to.

Emma takes a last drag on her cigarette and puts it out in the ashtray.

Kim takes a last drag on her cigarette and puts it out on an ashtray on a bedside cabinet.

EMMA

I do feel better, after that. How about you - ?

KIM

I don't know. I don't know how I feel. I guess I smoke to keep my weight and because it's so addictive. I don't really enjoy it, though.

EMMA

Then, you might be able to quit.

KIM

I might, mightn't I ?

EMMA

You can quit.

A beat.

KIM

What about you ?

EMMA

I'll quit when I don't enjoy it no more.
I ain't gonna smoke 'cause I'm addicted.
That is not a good reason, and you can
always eat less to lose weight.

KIM

I don't eat much as it is.

EMMA

Eat less. - Are you gonna try to quit ?

KIM

I'll try.

They both look at the opened packet of cigarettes on the dressing room table.

CUT TO:

INT – TOBACCONISTS – DAY

Kim and Emma come into the shop.

The PROPRIETOR recognises Emma.

PROPRIETOR

The usual - ?

EMMA

Please.

The proprietor goes into a sliding-door cupboard and takes out a packet of Emma's brand, and puts it down on the counter, showing the anti-smoking warning saying "Smoking Kills" and a picture of an emaciated dying man on a hospital bed with his wife and child at his bedside.

Emma sees the picture and squirms.

EMMA

Not him.

PROPRIETOR

That's all we got left of your brand.

EMMA

I don't want him !

PROPRIETOR

Nobody wants him – that's why we got so many of them left.

The proprietor points to a shelf full of packets with the picture of the dying man and the slogan, "Smoking Kills".

Kim comes forward and picks up the packet. She looks at the picture of the dying man. She holds the packet up in front of Emma.

KIM

Smoking kills. Says so on the packet.

EMMA

I can read.

KIM

Are you gonna take any notice o' what it says ?

EMMA

Are you ?

Kim puts the packet back down on the counter.

Emma puts her hand on the packet and turns it over, so she can no longer see the picture

of the dying man.

She then stands the packet upright on the counter and taps it down on the counter a few times.

She picks up the packet.

EMMA

Okay.

She takes out a note and pays for the cigarettes.

She carefully puts the packet in her bag, trying not to see the picture side at all.

She zips her bag shut.

EMMA

Let's go.

They go outside.

The proprietor looks at the shelf full of cigarette packets with the dying man picture, and closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Emma and Kim walking out of the shop and down the street a little.

Emma stops, and Kim stops.

Emma opens her bag, takes out the packet of cigarettes, trying not to look at the picture of the dying man.

She takes out a cigarette and puts it in her mouth, then puts the packet back away in her bag. She takes out a lighter and lights her cigarette. She smokes.

EMMA

That's better. I know that guy's story, the man dying in that picture, on the packet.

KIM

Yeah...?

EMMA

Died at thirty-four from lung cancer. Started smoking at thirteen, Twenty years' smoking caused lung cancer. I have been smoking for nineteen.

KIM
Nineteen years - ?

EMMA
Nineteen.

KIM
You got lung cancer ?

EMMA
I certainly hope not.

Emma takes a drag on her cigarette and exhales.

EMMA
You want one ?

KIM
Not now, thanks. Maybe later.

Emma smokes.

EMMA
No-one wants the picture of that man
dying on their pack of cigarettes. It
puts people off.

KIM
That's the idea.

EMMA
It's too close to home.

KIM
It is a warning, telling you to quit.

Emma smokes.

EMMA
It's harrowing. It's too effective.

KIM
You gonna quit ?

Emma smokes.

EMMA
Not at the moment. One day, maybe.

Emma smokes.

KIM
He did not die in vain.

EMMA
I hope not.

They continue walking down the street, with Emma smoking.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Kim's place.

Living room.

Kim and Emma have just come in.

They sit down.

KIM
I think I will quit.

EMMA
Good.

KIM
How about you ?

EMMA
I should, and I will, but not now. I don't
feel any urgency, to quit.

A beat.

KIM
You know, there's more to life than
smoking...

EMMA
Of course.

KIM
There's love.

EMMA
Love...

KIM
Love.

EMMA

Well, I don't love smoking. It's something I do.

Kim stands and goes over to Emma.

KIM

I love you.

Kim bends her head down to kiss Emma on the lips.

They hold the kiss until Kim moves to release it.

KIM

You smell of tobacco.

EMMA

So do you.

KIM

Not as much as you.

EMMA

I smoke more than you. Does the smell repel you ?

KIM

I...don't know...

EMMA

You're becoming a non0-smoker already !

KIM

Maybe, I am. I have the mindset of a non-smoker, like, I'm beginning to reject the notion of smoking.

EMMA

I don't think smoking has a notion. You either do it, or you don't.

KIM

Your body tells you to reject smoking, but your brain tells you to smoke. Your brain has to tell you not to smoke, then you can quit. I'm at that stage now.

EMMA

I'm not. I will continue to smoke until I decide to quit.

KIM

Good for you.

EMMA

I'm not so sure about that. I'm a stupid weak-willed tobacco addict. I should quit. Any sane person would quit. I'm just not at that stage yet.

KIM

You will judge that perfectly, the time for you to quit. I think I'm there, now.

EMMA

Smokers and non-smokers should be able to live together in harmony.

KIM

I hope we can.

EMMA

I'm sure, we will.

Kin goes back to her chair and sits down.

Later:

EMMA

Can I have a cigarette ?

KIM

Of course, you can.

EMMA

I mean, do you mind if I smoke ?

KIM

Of course not.

EMMA

Thanks.

Emma takes a cigarette out of the packet, and hides the picture of the dying man by putting the packet flat down on the table.

She lights her cigarette and smokes.

EMMA

That's better.

When the second-hand smoke reaches Kim, she has a curious reaction, a mixture of desire and appreciation, with disdain and dislike.

EMMA

You want one ?

KIM

No, thanks.

EMMA

You sure ?

KIM

I'm sure.

EMMA

Okay.

Emma smokes.

EMMA

I reckon, when you see your hopes dashed, you need a little consolation, and sometimes, a cigarette will make you feel better, but, you gotta tell yourself, each cigarette you smoke is doing you harm.

Emma smokes.

EMMA

Sometimes, you're not sure of yourself. You doubt what your purpose is. You need doubt to make sure you don't intentionally harm other people; but, sometimes, you doubt yourself too much, and you need to return to a state of equilibrium. A cigarette at the right time can do that for you; but, you have to remember, even one cigarette us doing you harm, causing damage.

Emma smokes.

EMMA

I cannot really justify smoking. I know it's wrong. I cannot imagine all the damage I've done to myself, over time, through smoking. I don't like to imagine how much damage has accumulated over the years; but, then I tell myself, a single cigarette can't do me much more harm, since I'm already damaged. So,

EMMA (cont'd)

I light a cigarette and smoke.

She smokes.

EMMA

Then, I realise, I am just being stupid, how dumb I was to start smoking in the first place, how much more stupid it is to continue smoking. I know it's bad for me, but I still smoke.

KIM

It's an addiction. It's hard to overcome an addiction.

EMMA

Then, the question arises; does smoking define who I am, what I am ? At the moment, I am a smoker. Does that make me the person I am ?

KIM

It's something you do, not who you are.

EMMA

Am I a person, or a type ?

KIM

You're a type of person.

EMMA

I guess I am.

Emma takes a final drag on her cigarette and then puts it out.

EMMA

Umm, that was good. I enjoyed that, but the first cigarette, when get up in the morning, tastes horrible.

KIM

What about the second cigarette ?

EMMA

That tastes a little better. By the tenth, it starts to taste good, it starts to feel good, or maybe, I just don't notice how it tastes no more.

KIM

Well, you ain't got no smoking-related illness...

EMMA

As of yet...

KIM

Yes, as of yet.

EMMA

Symptoms, symptoms...

KIM

You ain't got none...

EMMA

As of yet...

KIM

As of yet.

EMMA

You know, we used to joke in high school about catching lung cancer. I wonder how many of our little group of smokers got lung cancer, as of yet...

KIM

Your class mates - ?

EMMA

Yes...

KIM

They're too young to get lung cancer...

EMMA

As of yet...

KIM

As of yet. You're too young, to get lung cancer...

EMMA

But, if I don't quit soon, I might catch it.

KIM

You can't catch it, like a cold. You develop lung cancer.

EMMA

Well, I might develop lung cancer, if I don't quit..soon.

KIM

Then, quit, quit.

EMMA

That is..a good idea.

Kim gets up and goes out, leaving Emma to ponder her future.

CUT TO:

EXT – FIELD – DAY

An anti-smoking rally in progress, with slogans, “Quit Before Smoking Kills You”, and “Smoking Kills” hung across a stage, on which there is a lectern for speakers. Some people in the field, attending, but there are spacious gaps between huddled groups of people, with overall sparse attendance.

Kim and Emma standing together, apart from the other people, in one of the spacious gaps in the field between the few groups of people.

CRAIG, an anti-smoking activist, speaking from the lectern.

CRAIG

Life is precious, life is a gift, but often we are so careless, we disrespect this wonderful gift we’ve been given. We should honour our bodies and our minds. But some of us smoke, the worst most dangerous thing we could possibly do to ourselves. We have holes in our lungs from smoking, inhaling toxic poisons into our beautiful pink delicate tissues, turning them black with tar. We give ourselves lung cancer and throat cancer, we give ourselves chronic heart disease, we just ignore the damage we’re doing to our bodies with each cigarette we smoke. If you don’t wanna die, years before you should, your natural life span, quit, just quit, now, today, quit.

Some applause as he steps away from the lectern and comes down from the stage, to speak to groups of people.

Emma goes towards Craig, followed by Kim.

Emma waits out of politeness until Craig has finished speaking to some people.

He then spots Emma’s eagerness to speak to him, and turns towards her. He walks up to her.

She composes herself by taking a few deep breaths.

CRAIG

You can still breathe a little. That's good.

EMMA

I still got some lung left.

CRAIG

How much, you reckon ?

EMMA

Er...?

CRAIG

How many years have you been smoking ?

EMMA

Nineteen.

CRAIG

Nineteen...How many packs a day ?

EMMA

One, and a half.

CRAIG

Thirty a day, for nineteen years...let's call that twenty, for convenience' sake...twenty by one-and-a-half pack years, that's about thirty pack years, approximately.

EMMA

Is that enough to get lung cancer ?

CRAIG

It might be. It depends on the individual.

EMMA

I should quit now, shouldn't I ?

CRAIG

Yes, you should. No time like the present.

Craig spots Kim.

CRAIG (to Kim)

How about you ?

KIM

I've already quit.

EMMA

Have you ?

KIM

Yes, I have.

EMMA

Since when ?

KIM

Since today. I woke up this morning,
and I did not reach for a cigarette.

CRAIG

That's great.

KIM

I simply could not be bothered.

CRAIG

That is an excellent attitude.

EMMA

What about withdrawal symptoms ?

KIM

None so far. I was inclining to quit some
time now, smoking a little less each day,
and then, I just quit altogether.

CRAIG

Good for you.

EMMA

I still smoke.

CRAIG

Not good for you.

EMMA

I know that. I'm not stupid, or maybe,
I am.

CRAIG

Smoking is stupid, but you gotta really
wanna quit, if you're gonna quit. You
gotta make the decision, to quit.

KIM

I have made that decision.

EMMA

I'm not there yet, but I'm getting there.
I don't want lung cancer.

CRAIG

No-one wants lung cancer.

EMMA

Can you help me to quit ?

CRAIG

I'll try. You have to do the rest.

EMMA

I know.

CRAIG

Good. - Excuse me.

Craig goes off to speak to some other people.

KIM

He's right, you know, you gotta do it
yourself.

EMMA

I know.

Emma watches Craig talking to another group of people.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

Craig, Kim and Emma, seated.

EMMA

Sometimes, the cravings get the better
of me, and I still smoke.

CRAIG

You're getting there.

EMMA

I am cutting down.

KIM

I quit. I'm smoke-free, and, once you
get past the first week, you feel the real

KIM (cont'd)

benefits of quitting. You can breathe, you can smell, you can taste food. It's amazing when you give up smoking.

A beat.

CRAIG (to Emma)

But, you do it out of addiction, not for pleasure, not because you enjoy it any more; merely because nicotine has a hold over you. There can be no joy in yielding to an addiction, no happiness, no comfort even. What you need is a certain solemn stillness. Stillness is a quality, a state of mind, you must achieve. Stillness and tranquillity, overcomes your stubborn addiction to tobacco. Stillness – no more fidgeting. Keep yourself smoke-free. Live a better more complete independent life. You gotta start, to live a life, not controlled by tobacco.

EMMA

You got a point there. I am still too dependent on nicotine for modulating my mood.

CRAIG

You go out, nervous, have you got enough cigarettes ? You could run out, then, where would you be ? No cigarettes...a nightmare... or a blessing, an opportunity, a chance..to quit. When you run out, don't run to the nearest shop selling that evil cancer-causing poison.

EMMA

That's what I need ta do. Maybe, one day, I will do exactly that.

KIM

It's your life.

CRAIG

You only get freedom when you get free from smoking.

EMMA

I will do it.

Emma looks towards the window.

KIM
You gotta be strong.

EMMA
I wanna be free, free to make my own
decisions, freedom to choose, freedom
to live a better life, smoke-free and happy.

She looks towards the window.

CUT TO:

INT – BEDROOM – DAY

Emma looks at a packet of cigarettes. She briefly looks at the underside, showing the picture of the dying man. She sees that there are only three cigarettes left. She smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Emma smoking, looking in a jewellery shop window.

She finishes her cigarette and stubs it out with her shoe.

She walks away down the street a little way, then takes a few deep breaths. She smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT – PARK – DAY

Emma, seated on a bench, smoking. There is a trash bin at the end of the bench.

Emma finishes her cigarette, and stubs it out against the side of the trash bin, then drops the stub into the bin.

She stands, looks around, then walks towards a small lake in the middle of the park.

She stands close to the lake, and takes some deep breaths, then smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Emma takes her last cigarette out of the packet, and lights it.

She smokes.

This time she takes a good long look at the picture of the dying man on the other side of the packet.

She ponders, and weighs things up.

She smokes, walking towards a trash bin.

She smokes the cigarette down, but before it reaches the stub, she finishes, and stubs it out on the side of the trash bin, with about a quarter of the cigarette left.

She then drops the empty packet into the trash bin.

She steps away from the bin, takes a few deep breaths, and smiles.

She walks down the street.

She approaches a shop which sells cigarettes, with “Tobacco” on a closed cupboard door. She looks in through the window. She ponders, then smiles, and turns away from the shop and walks down the street.

CUT TO:

INT – LIVING ROOM – DAY

Kim seated, reading a magazine.

Emma comes in. Kim puts her magazine down.

EMMA

Just ran out of cigarettes. Am I bothered ?

KIM

Are you ?

EMMA

I’m a little nervous, but...I don’t feel too bad. Two hours since I had a cigarette.

KIM

That’s very good. Keep it up.

EMMA

I will.

Emma goes into the kitchen. Kim picks up her magazine.

CUT TO:

INT – KITCHEN – DAY

Emma picks up a carrot and puts it on the chopping board.

She takes a sharp knife out of a drawer.

She starts chopping the carrot, but stops after a short way, two-thirds of the carrot left.

She sweats and some perspiration drips down her forehead onto her eyes.

She shakes her head and picks up a tissue, to wipe away her sweat.

She looks again at the carrot. Her eyesight becomes blurred and hazy.

She moves to pick up the knife, lifts it a little off the chopping board, then puts it down again.

EMMA (shouts)

Kim !

KIM (O.S.)

What ?

Emma goes to the door.

EMMA

I don't feel safe.

Kim comes in and sees the chopping board.

EMMA

I was...trying to chop up a carrot.

KIM

You shouldn't do that, not when you're quitting smoking.

EMMA

I don't feel too good.

KIM

I'll finish this. You go and sit down. I'll get you a glass of water.

EMMA

Okay.

Emma goes out of the kitchen, into the living room. She sits down.

Kim comes through from the kitchen with a glass of water.

Emma sips the water.

Kim goes back into the kitchen and finishes chopping the carrot.

Later:

Emma and Kim have just finished eating. They are seated at the kitchen table.

Kim picks up the plates and scrapes any left-overs into the bin, and then puts the plates into the sink.

EMMA

I don't feel too good.

KIM

You don't look too good.

Kim leaves the dishes in the sink and sits down opposite to Emma.

Kim offers her hand to Emma, who grabs it.

KIM

I'm here for you.

EMMA

What's wrong with me ?

KIM

Withdrawal symptoms.

EMMA

I feel..depressed.

KIM

You will do, for a time. It gets better.

EMMA

Thanks.

Kim releases Emma's hand.

KIM

I gotta go to a show tomorrow. I hope I'm not too fat. When I quit, I did put on some weight.

EMMA

You look amazing.

KIM

I look healthy – that's because I stopped smoking, so my health has improved, but I did put on weight. I just hope that does not disqualify me as a model.

EMMA

You look beautiful. Your skin is luminous.

Emma touches Kim's cheek.

Kim smiles a little at the touch.

EMMA

It's like velvet, so smooth.

Emma then touches her own cheek, and shudders.

EMMA

My skin is like leather.

KIM

That's because you smoke.

EMMA

I'm trying to quit. Three hours since my last cigarette.

KIM

Keep it up.

EMMA

I will. - Even the wrinkles, on your forehead, are, in the process of, disappearing. You gotta appreciate beauty, when you see it, and you are beautiful.

KIM

I hope I am.

EMMA

You most certainly are, beautiful.

KIM

Thanks. That does do something for my confidence.

EMMA

Beauty is a commodity, but of course, it shouldn't be, but it is. Beauty should be aloof, untouchable, pristine, secure; such a goddess, nothing should endanger this precious jewel, her lovely essence. You possess this beauty for a little time, like a statue on a pedestal, bits fall off, it gets chipped, until one day, it all falls down, and smashes on the floor. You sweep up the bits, but cannot recover that beauty.

KIM

That is so deep, it is positively unreal. Are you a poet now ?

EMMA

I appreciate your friendship. I am so lucky to have you.

Emma gets up and leans over the table to kiss Kim on the lips. They hold the kiss for a few seconds, then break off.

KIM

Umm, that was nice. I enjoyed that.

EMMA

I really enjoyed that. Maybe, if I quit - I will quit – it will get even better, the feeling of pleasure when our lips meet.

Emma sits back in her chair.

KIM

I hope I am not too fat.

EMMA

You are just perfect.

KIM

Thanks.

They look at each other. Kim looks serious, anticipating tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT – STUDIO – DAY

A fashion-shoot in a large studio.

STEVE, a photographer, talking with a group of models.

FIONA, the shoot organiser, talking to Kim.

Fiona looks disapprovingly at Kim.

FIONA

You're fat.

KIM

I am not.

FIONA

You're huge, you're enormous.

KIM

I most definitely am not – fat.

FIONA

Yes, you are.

KIM

I am on the slim side of thin.

FIONA

You should be on the thin side of slim.
You're fat !

KIM

That's ridiculous. I have a healthy BMI.

FIONA

You know the camera puts a stone and a half on you. To look good, you have to be a stone and a half underweight, or you will look fat, the camera makes you look fat – you know that.

KIM

I put on a little weight recently, when I gave up smoking.

FIONA

Well done. It takes some willpower to do that. But, the unfortunate consequence is, you have gotten fat, too fat to photograph, too fat to be seen on a catwalk.

KIM

That is just stupid.

FIONA

A model has to be thin.

KIM

So, you gotta sacrifice your health to look good ? I am not taking up smoking again, to look thin. I care for my health more than my career.

FIONA

You're right to do that, of course, but, I can't employ you, looking like that.

KIM

Fat, fat ! Fucking ridiculous ! I want a second opinion.

FIONA (shouting)

Steve !

Steve comes over from the group of models at the shoot.

Steve surveys Kim.

FIONA

What do you think ?

STEVE

She's fat !

(to Kim)

What happened to you ? You're fat !

KIM

I gave up smoking.

STEVE

Well done.

KIM

I put on a stone. I feel great. I feel healthy. I feel real. I feel the real me.

STEVE

Good for you.

(to Fiona)

We can't use her like that. She's fat !

KIM

The ridiculous standards in this industry !

FIONA

Models have to be thin, not slim, not fat.

KIM

Fuck off ! I am not gonna give you the satisfaction of sacking me – I resign ! You can stick your shoot, your stick-insect dolls up your ass ! I resign.

Kim storms off.

Fiona and Steve watch Kim's exit, then turn and look at each other.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

Kim and Emma, seated.

EMMA

It shouldn't be, your health or your career.

KIM

But it is, it is.

EMMA

That is, unfair.

KIM

Of course it is. I'm not gonna get much work,
and now I've complained, I will get the reputation
I am difficult, which I most certainly am not !

EMMA

They don't deserve you.

KIM

I don't deserve them.

Kim looks dejected.

CUT TO:

INT – OFFICE - DAY

Ros and Kim.

ROS

You're fat !

KIM

I am not !

ROS

You are !

A beat.

KIM

You told me to quit smoking. I got no
wrinkles no more, on my forehead.

Kim tightens her expression and the skin on her forehead is flattened. She takes out her compact and looks in the mirror.

KIM

See ! No creases. My skin is smooth as silk. I have regained my intrinsic beauty.

ROS

Kim, you never lost it.

KIM

Thanks.

Kim closes the compact shut and puts it away.

KIM

I am beautiful. Even I can see that, now.

ROS

You are, but, you're fat.

KIM

Fuck off !

Kim gets up.

ROS

Kim, Kimberly, just calm down.

KIM

Fuck off.

Kim paces around the room. She leans over the desk at Ros.

KIM

Am I finished ?

ROS

Effectively, you are.

KIM

Fuck !

She stands upright.

KIM

This industry, this modelling business, is seriously flawed !

ROS

You have complained, People will complain about you. In this business, you gotta do what

ROS (cont'd)
people tell you. You cannot be independently-
minded. You gotta be, compliant.

Kim sits down.

KIM
I'm not sure I have a future in this business.

ROS
I concur with that. I am reluctant to do so.

KIM
Well, I'll just have to live on my savings.

ROS
I'm sorry.

Kim stands and walks towards the door.

ROS
I always liked you.

Kim opens the door.

KIM
Thanks.

Kim goes out and the door closes.

Ros sighs.

CUT TO:

INT – BEDROOM – DAY

Emma seated, looking at herself in the mirror.

She wipes her eyes, and taps her fingers on the dressing table.

She sighs and takes some deep breaths.

She looks in the mirror and sees some sweat on her forehead.

She opens a drawer to find an empty cigarette pack. She throws the pack into the waste bin at the side of the dressing table.

She sighs, then gets up and goes out.

The mirror is empty of her shape.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

Emma walking down the street with some urgency.

She stops outside a shop that sells cigarettes.

She goes inside.

A little later, she comes out, holding a packet of cigarettes.

She puts one in her mouth, hurriedly, and lights it.

She smokes.

She seems at first relieved, then takes another drag, then looks more doubtful.

She walks down the street to find a bench to sit on.

She sits down and smokes.

She looks around and continues smoking.

A little later, she gets to the end of her cigarette, takes a last puff, then stubs it out on the side-walk.

She gets up and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

Kim, seated.

Emma comes in and quietly sits down.

KIM

I smell tobacco. You stink !

EMMA

Is it that noticeable ?

KIM

Yes, it is, to a non-smoker, or ex-smoker.
You can't smell yourself when you smoke.

EMMA

I..relapsed.

Kim sniffs with disdain.

KIM

That's a shame.

EMMA

I'm sorry.

KIM

Apologise to yourself, not to me. You let yourself down, not me.

EMMA

I let myself down, and I let everyone else down. It is an on-going battle with addiction, which I must win. I gotta get free of this poison.

KIM

I did, but it takes time and commitment.

EMMA

That's what I need. How did you do it ?

KIM

I wanted to quit.

A beat.

EMMA

You mean, I don't wanna quit ?

KIM

Ask yourself, truly, if that's what you want.

EMMA

I do, I do wanna quit.

KIM

Then, you should be able to achieve that.

A beat.

EMMA

Are you disappointed in me ?

KIM

A little.

EMMA

I am disappointed in myself.

KIM

I'm sorry about that.

EMMA

It's just that, sometimes, you need something to console you, when you feel bad. A cigarette can do that.

KIM

You should not be dependent on nicotine to alter your mood.

EMMA

But I am, I am dependent on..cigarettes, to comfort me.

A beat.

KIM

I don't mind, you know, you stinking of tobacco, I don't mind at all. I still love you.

EMMA

Thanks.

KIM

You gotta take control of your life. You gotta decide, to quit.

EMMA

I did decide to quit, and I did exactly that, but, I relapsed. It can happen.

KIM

Of course it can.

EMMA

Don't be too hard on me.

KIM

Don't be too hard on yourself.

EMMA

With you support, I'm convinced I can quit, for good.

KIM

I just hope you can.

Kim smiles at Emma.

EMMA

I'm sure I can.

KIM (quietly)

Okay.

Emma looks thoughtful.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – NIGHT

Bedroom.

Emma and Kim in bed, asleep.

Emma wakes and gets out of bed.

She goes to the bathroom, and turns on the light, closing the door.

She coughs.

She looks in the mirror.

She coughs again and spits out a little blood with her saliva into the bowl of the washbasin.

She shakes her head.

Kim comes in.

KIM

What's up ?

EMMA

I coughed up..some blood.

KIM

What !?

EMMA

I said, I coughed up, some blood.

KIM

Shit !

EMMA

Don't be afraid...

KIM

You should be afraid.

EMMA

You mean -

KIM

I don't know – you cannot just ignore blood, you gotta get checked out...

EMMA

What ? For -

KIM

Something serious...

EMMA

You mean - ?

KIM

Cancer...

EMMA

Lung cancer...?

KIM

You are a smoker.

EMMA

I was a smoker.

KIM

You still are...a smoker.

EMMA

I guess I am. The last cigarette I had was, yesterday.

KIM

Then, you gotta admit there is a possibility you might have, lung cancer...

EMMA

At my age ?! At thirty-three ?!

KIM

It's possible.

EMMA

I guess it is.

KIM

Coughing up blood can be a symptom of,

KIM (cont'd)
lung cancer.

EMMA
I'm too young to get lung cancer.

KIM
You smoked for -

EMMA
Twenty years...

KIM
And you started young.

EMMA
I guess I did...at thirteen.

KIM
You gotta get it checked out.

EMMA
You're right.

Emma goes out of the bathroom, through the living room, into the kitchen. She gets herself a glass of water and drinks, near the kitchen sink.

Kim follows Emma through to the kitchen.

KIM
Will you go, get it checked out ?

EMMA
Yes, I will.

KIM
We'll start off at the doctor's.

EMMA
Okay.

Emma drinks some more water.

CUT TO:

INT – DOCTOR'S OFFICE – DAY

The DOCTOR, Kim and Emma.

DOCTOR
Preliminary tests indicate...further tests

DOCTOR (cont'd)
at the hospital are needed.

EMMA
What is it ?

DOCTOR
At the moment, based on the test results,
considering you are a smoker...

EMMA
Lung cancer - ?

DOCTOR
That is, a possibility. The specialist at
the hospital should make a definitive
diagnosis.

EMMA
If it is, lung cancer, what can be done
about it ?

DOCTOR
It depends, what stage it's at. Lung cancer
is treatable, unless it's Stage Four, which
indicates it has spread to the rest of the body.
Let's hope it's at an earlier stage, and there
is some hope of recovery.

EMMA
Stage Four...

DOCTOR
Means, it's too late. Your chances of survival
at Stage Four are, minimal. You will still have
palliative treatment, but cures at Stage Four are
rare...

KIM
Let's hope it's not Stage Four.

EMMA
I might have a chance...

DOCTOR
If we can it early enough. You did the right thing,
getting checked out.

EMMA
Thanks.

Emma and Kim stand up and go out.

The doctor looks at the notes and sighs.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

KIM

You got a chance.

EMMA

I hope so.

KIM

You gotta have hope.

EMMA

You sure do. Damn, I need a cigarette.

KIM

You don't need a cigarette.

EMMA

I do.

KIM

You seriously do not need a cigarette.

EMMA

Kim, I need ta smoke, for my nerves.

KIM

That is just plain stupid. You intend to smoke, to help you with the trauma, the worry you might've gotten lung cancer, from smoking...

EMMA

I know, it sounds stupid, but I just need one, now.

KIM

Well, go outside and smoke, if you have to. Don't smoke in here where I can smell it. Don't smoke where I can see you smoking.

EMMA

Okay.

Emma goes out.

Kim looks distraught. She takes out a photograph album and looks at some pictures of herself and Emma, together, smiling and holding hands. Kim sighs.

CUT TO:

EXT – ALLEYWAY – DAY

Emma walks some way down the alleyway, and then stops.

She takes out a packet of cigarettes, puts one in her mouth and lights it.

She smokes.

She looks around to see if anyone is watching her, but she is the only person there.

She continues to smoke.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

Kim looking at the photograph album.

Emma comes in.

Kim looks up.

KIM

I'm looking at our pictures.

Emma comes over to Kim, to look at the album.

EMMA

We look good together.

KIM

We sure do.

EMMA

We got something special.

A beat.

KIM

You know, this is emotionally draining,
already.

Kim closes the album and looks directly at Emma.

KIM

You can't just reach for a cigarette
each time you get upset.

EMMA

I know that. - I am trying to quit.

KIM

But not succeeding...

EMMA

Not yet. You have to be patient with me.

KIM

I have been patient with you.

EMMA

Don't turn into an anti-smoking Nazi,
just because you managed to quit.

KIM

It's not like that.

EMMA

Yes, it is. You are so superior now...

Kim shakes her head.

EMMA

You are a super-moralistic ex-smoker.

KIM

No, I'm not.

EMMA

It's so true, former smokers are the most
intolerant.

KIM

I want you to quit for your sake, not mine !
I don't want to lose you.

EMMA

Don't look down on me !

KIM

I assure you, that's not what I'm doing.

EMMA

What are you doing, then ?

KIM

Giving you some good advice.

Emma sits.

KIM

You gotta make good choices in life. If you make good choices, everything will turn out alright; if you make poor choices, things will turn out...shit. So, your best advice is, to make only good choices, to make only good decisions.

EMMA

I don't know what's good and what's bad any more.

KIM

I do. I know what's good and what most definitely is not.

EMMA

Then, teach me, show me...

KIM

I will, but...

EMMA

What ?

KIM

I'm worried.

Emma looks at Kim.

KIM

I'm worried...about you. I need ta know, you're gonna be okay.

EMMA

We don't know that, yet. I need more tests, at the hospital.

KIM

You know, you're the only person I ever really loved.

EMMA

That's good to know.

KIM

It's true.

EMMA

That is like, I gotta be okay, for you.

KIM

For yourself, not me.

EMMA

If I'm sick, it's my illness, not yours.

KIM

But it affects other people as well, the foremost being me.

EMMA

Okay. Let's get the tests done. I guess you're better off once you know what you're dealing with, good or bad.

KIM

I hope it's good.

Kim re-opens the album and puts the tip of her forefinger on a photo of Emma, near her lips.

She traces around the lips on the photo of Emma.

Kim sighs.

CUT TO:

INT – HOSPITAL CONSULTING ROOM – DAY

The specialist CONSULTANT is looking at Emma's file on his desk.

Emma and Kim are seated.

The consultant looks at an X-ray of Emma's lungs with white patches on the lungs themselves.

He looks up to see Emma and Kim waiting for him to speak.

CONSULTANT

Well, it definitely is, lung cancer.

Emma gasps.

EMMA

I...got..lung cancer - ?

CONSULTANT

Yes, you do have lung cancer, tumours in both lungs.

KIM

Lung..cancer...?

CONSULTANT

Yes, inoperable, incurable lung cancer... in both lungs...

EMMA

You mean...I'm gonna die ?

CONSULTANT

That's it. That is the prognosis, I'm afraid.

EMMA

How..is this possible ?

CONSULTANT

You are a smoker ?

EMMA

Yes, I was...I still am.

KIM

You gotta give up now.

EMMA

I will, I will quit. If I quit, would I live ?

CONSULTANT

No. It's too late for that.

EMMA

If I quit -

CONSULTANT

It would just buy you some more time, a few weeks, extra life.

EMMA

How did this happen to me ? Why me ?

CONSULTANT

You smoked. Smoking causes lung cancer. "Smoking kills" - It says so on the packet.

Emma looks pained.

EMMA

I'm too young to get lung cancer. I'm too young to die.

CONSULTANT

I'm sorry.

EMMA

I don't want this. I don't understand how this is possible. What about the filter ?

CONSULTANT

It's useless. It does not filter out the cancer-causing chemicals.

EMMA

I don't deserve this.

KIM

You gotta accept it.

EMMA

It's alright for you – you don't have lung cancer. I'm gonna die.

Emma cries.

Kim tries to comfort her by putting her arm around her, but Emma rejects her.

EMMA

Get off me !

Kim backs away.

KIM

Sorry.

EMMA

You're not sorry.

KIM

Yes, I am, I am !

EMMA

Not sorry enough.

KIM

Emma, believe me, I am so sorry.

EMMA
Not as sorry as me !

Emma gets up and goes out.

KIM
She's upset.

CONSULTANT
It's understandable.

KIM
I'll go after her.

Kim goes out.

The consultant closes the file on his desk.

CUT TO:

INT – HOSPITAL CORRIDOR – DAY

Kim finds Emma seated on a bench, crying. Kim sits down next to her.

KIM
Em...

EMMA
What ?!

KIM
I don't really know what to say.

EMMA
Don't say anything.

KIM
Okay.

A beat.

EMMA
They say, it's never too late to quit.
It was for me.

KIM
I'm sorry.

EMMA
You're sorry. I needed to quit earlier,
by the time I was thirty, not forty. That

EMMA (cont'd)
 was the plan, my calculation, which was
 all wrong. Too late. God, I hate smoking.
 I hate cigarettes. I quit. I quit for good.

Emma stands up and walks away with some pace. Kim follows her, trying to keep up.

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room.

Emma, distraught.

Kim seated.

EMMA
 I can't cope with this.

KIM
 You gotta cope, with it.

EMMA
 I can't, I just can't !

KIM
 You gotta, you just gotta.

EMMA
 It's alright for you, you're not gonna die.

KIM
 It's bad enough for me, worse for you.

EMMA
 What am I gonna do, huh ? Inoperable,
 incurable, lung cancer. What am I gonna
 do about it ? I'm dying.

Emma sits down.

KIM
 You're not dead yet.

EMMA
 It is a death sentence. Fatal lung cancer.
 It's something you never think about when
 you're at school.

A beat.

KIM

Is that where you started, at school ?

EMMA

That's where most people start...

Emma, with a pained face, recalls her school days.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK. EXT – SCHOOL YARD – DAY.

Young Emma, thirteen, observes a group of school children, boys and girls, lighting up and smoking.

A GIRL notices Emma watching them.

She goes over to speak to her.

GIRL

You been watching us, smoke ?

EMMA

I was a little curious.

GIRL

You want one ?

The girl offers Emma a cigarette, which she takes.

GIRL

You put it in your mouth, you light it,
and smoke.

EMMA

Okay.

The girl lights the cigarette for Emma.

GIRL

Now, inhale.

Emma inhales and coughs.

EMMA

It tastes horrible.

GIRL

Try another puff.

Emma inhales and coughs again.

GIRL

Again.

Emma inhales, but this time blows the smoke out.

GIRL

That's it. You're learning how to smoke.

Emma smokes.

GIRL

You'll soon be a hardened smoker.

EMMA

Hardened ?

GIRL

Against the warnings on the packet and the cancerous lungs in the biology lab.

The girl walks away from Emma, who smokes.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK. INT – SCHOOL BIOLOGY LAB – DAY

Emma looks at a cancerous lung in a jar of medical alcohol. It is shrunken, has black holes and black areas, a huge area of white, with a label pointing to the white, saying, "Lung cancer".

CUT TO:

INT – APARTMENT – DAY

Living room, as before.

Emma and Kim, seated.

EMMA

Now I got it, lung cancer. I hate the girl taught me how to smoke. I don't even know her name. I hope she's got lung cancer. She deserves it, I don't. I never taught no-one how to smoke. She did ! I hope she dies. That would be justice. This ain't fair, doing this to me, giving me lung cancer. I am an innocent soul. She's guilty as Hell, that evil bitch ! I hope she gets lung cancer and dies. My life has been curtailed, all my potential wasted. Those damn cigarettes. That girl, evil, evil ! Both of them.

KIM

Why are you so angry ?

EMMA

I'm dying, God-dammit ! You don't understand, do you ?

KIM

I'm trying to understand...

EMMA

I'm dying...I am gonna die.

A beat.

KIM

You know, you gotta...I don't know.

EMMA

No, you don't know. You don't know what it's like to get a death sentence so young ! I'm gonna lose more than half my life, all because I smoked. I hate myself for that.

KIM

You should not blame yourself.

EMMA

I don't. I blame that girl, I blame the tobacco companies, I blame the foul stinking cigarette, that fucking useless filter ! I blame myself, a little, of course, I can't completely absolve myself of guilt. I chose to smoke. That was the worst mistake of my life. Once you start, it's hard to quit.

Emma gets up and goes out.

Kim hears the sound of a drawer being slammed shut.

Emma comes back in, holding a packet of cigarettes.

EMMA

I'm gonna flush them down the john.

KIM

Good for you.

Emma goes into the bathroom and drops the cigarettes into the bowl of the toilet, one by

one. Emma closes the bathroom door.

Kim hears the flushing of the toilet.

Emma opens the bathroom door, and comes back into the living.

EMMA

They're gone. Out of my life, for good.

KIM (quietly)

That's great.

Emma sits.

EMMA

Tell ya what, I ain't gonna die in no hospital bed, hooked up to the oxygen, with tubes in my body. If I gotta die, I'm gonna die out in the desert, with the sun beating down on me.

KIM

The desert...?

EMMA

Not actually in the desert, in your car, in the back of your car, I'm gonna die there. I'm gonna get my own little can of oxygen, with a cap for my face, so's I can breathe my last, expire on my own terms, in the back of your car.

KIM

What about chemo ?

EMMA

I'll take them with me. - You'll do that for me ?

KIM

Okay, if that's what you want.

EMMA

That is what I want. I need ta go on an adventure. I'm gonna enjoy my last few weeks.

KIM

That's..the right attitude.

EMMA

It sure is. I wanna go on a road trip.
It will be like a vacation. I wanna be
happy when I die, I wanna be content.

KIM

Okay...

EMMA

I am gonna die with dignity, on my own
terms, where I want...

KIM

That's the way.

Emma looks happy, but Kim is uncertain.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Kim driving, Emma in the back seat, with a box full of small oxygen cans, with face caps to inhale. She also has a big box tissues.

Emma looks happy. Kim is concentrating on the road, but looks uncertain and worried.

They are on a free-way passing through a desert landscape.

Emma puts the face cap over her nose and attaches it to an oxygen can. She presses it to inhale oxygen. She takes in some deep breaths and smiles.

EMMA

Man, that oxygen really gets you high.

Kim drives as they pass through the desert.

CUT TO:

EXT – DESERT – DAY

The car passes through several location along the free-way amid the desert landscape.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Kim sees through the front window ahead a diner in the desert.

KIM

Hey, a diner in the desert. Let's get
something to eat.

Emma looks out through the side window.

EMMA

Yeah. Let's get a nice cold beer.

Emma smiles in anticipation.

CUT TO:

EXT – DINER – DAY

The car parks in the car-park.

Kim gets out of the car, followed by Emma.

Kim locks the car.

They walk towards the diner entrance.

Outside the diner, a few people are smoking.

Emma goes over to them.

EMMA

Hey -

A MALE SMOKER looks up.

MALE SMOKER

What ?

EMMA

Don't smoke.

A FEMALE SMOKER interjects.

FEMALE SMOKER

Don't tell us what to do.

MALE SMOKER

Why do you care ?

EMMA

I used ta be a smoker. I get lung cancer, and I'm gonna die. I'm warning you, don't smoke.

FEMALE SMOKER

You got lung cancer, at your age ? You look too young.

EMMA

I got it, from smoking, and I'm gonna die.

MALE SMOKER

I'm sorry.

EMMA

Do it for me. Quit.

The female smoker finishes her cigarette with a last puff and stubs it out.

EMMA

You gonna quit.

FEMALE SMOKER

I'll try, for you.

EMMA

Thanks. Don't let me see you smoking when we come out.

FEMALE SMOKER

Okay.

Emma and Kim go inside the diner.

The female smoker looks at the male smoker sheepishly and smiles.

He finishes his cigarette and stubs it out.

CUT TO:

INT – DINER – DAY

Kim and Emma have just come in.

EMMA

I don't want any reminders of my past life as a smoker.

KIM

I understand.

Emma goes to a table and sits down. Kim looks around, to see people seated at tables, a pool table, with some people playing pool, two one-armed bandits, being pulled, and the counter. Kim sits down.

A WAITRESS approaches them.

EMMA

I can't eat much. I have lost weight since my diagnosis. I might manage half a burger and half a beer.

KIM

I'll have the other half of your burger and half your beer, plus a salad. That's one burger, two plates, one beer, two glasses, and a salad, on its own plate.

The waitress writes down the order.

WAITRESS

One burger, one beer and one salad.

KIM

That's correct.

WAITRESS

Two plates, two glasses and one plate for the salad.

EMMA

That's it.

The waitress goes to the counter and pins the order.

Emma spots the one-armed bandits.

EMMA

You got some change ?

KIM

Sure.

Kim takes out a money bag with some change and gives it to Emma.

Emma gets up and goes over to one of the one-armed bandits.

She puts the money in and tries to pull the lever, but is not strong enough, and has to use both arms to pull the lever down. She has not won.

She puts in some more money and uses both arms to pull the lever down. She does not win. She continues until she sees the waitress return with a tray, which is put down on the table. Emma abandons the one-armed bandit and goes back to the table. She sits down.

The waitress has left a burger cut in two, with each half on a separate plate, an opened beer bottle and two glasses, and a plate of salad.

Emma pours some cool beer into a glass and drinks.

EMMA

That feels so good, a nice cool beer. I didn't win once. What's wrong with

EMMA (cont'd)
that machine ?

KIM
Nothing wrong with it. They're designed
to take your money. Gamblers always lose.

EMMA
Don't I know it.

Emma eats her half burger.

Kim eats her half burger, drinks a little beer and eats some of her salad.

EMMA
Umm, nice, tasty burger.

They eat their half burgers.

Kim puts the remains of her burger down on her plate.

KIM
I'm tired.

EMMA
We can't sleep here. We can't sleep
in the car.

KIM
We gotta us find a motel.

Kim catches the eye of the waitress and gestures for her to come over to their table,
which the waitress does.

KIM
We need a motel.

WAITRESS
There's one about five miles up the highway.

EMMA
What's it like ?

WAITRESS
It's okay, I guess. Three stars.

KIM
That's good enough.

The waitress moves away from their table, to resume her duties.

Emma and Kim continue eating and drinking.

When she has finished her half burger, and her half beer, Emma gets up.

EMMA

I'm gonna give that machine another go.

KIM

Okay.

Emma goes over to the one-armed bandit and puts some money in the machine. She uses both hands to pull the lever down. She does not win.

She tries it again, and does not win.

Once more, but this time the fruits line up, and coins shoot out of the bottom of the one-armed bandit.

A smile flashes across Emma's face as she shovels up her winnings.

She goes back over to the table and sits down.

EMMA

I got back most of what I lost.

KIM

Good.

EMMA

Maybe my luck has turned.

KIM

Maybe.

Kim finishes her salad.

KIM

Let's go find that motel.

Kim and Emma get up and go out, Kim paying at the counter on their way out.

CUT TO:

EXT – DINER – DAY

Kim and Emma come out of the diner, to find the group of smokers still there, with the female smoker and male smoker seen before still smoking.

Emma approaches the female smoker.

Emma sees red.

EMMA

I thought I told you to quit.

FEMALE SMOKER

You did.

EMMA

Then why are you still smoking ?

FEMALE SMOKER

I don't know.

EMMA

Don't do it out of defiance.

FEMALE SMOKER

That's not it.

EMMA

What is it, then ?

FEMALE SMOKER

I gotta choose when I wanna quit.

EMMA

Do it soon. I waited too long before I quit,
and that's why I'm gonna die of lung cancer.
Don't hesitate. Don't put it off. Do it, today !

FEMALE SMOKER

I'll try.

EMMA

Do.

Emma turns away from the female smoker, who takes her last drag out of her cigarette and drops the stub to the ground, then flattens it with her shoe.

Emma goes to the car, where Kim is waiting for her.

Emma turns to look at the female smoker, who smiles at her.

Emma then gets in the car.

Kim gets in the car.

The car drives off.

The female smoker shrugs and looks at the stub on the ground.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Kim driving.

Emma on the back seat, takes some oxygen, then speaks.

EMMA

I got a strange moral authority, to speak on this subject...

KIM

Not strange. You tell it as it is.

EMMA

Experience has taught me to speak out. Maybe I saved her. If she obeys me, she should quit.

KIM

Let's hope she does.

A beat.

EMMA

I feel, I have to speak out. I can't keep quiet if I see someone suffer.

Kim looks curious about that, seen by Emma in the mirror.

EMMA

I mean, they might suffer, in the future, the way I do. If I can save a single soul from getting lung cancer, I should do it.

KIM

Of course you should.

EMMA

I needed someone to do that for me.

KIM

I tried...

EMMA

But you didn't have the moral authority that goes with a diagnosis of lung cancer, to frighten someone into quitting.

KIM

That might've made the difference, to make

KIM (cont'd)
you quit in time.

EMMA
I enjoyed telling her to quit. I enjoyed
that moral authority.

KIM
Good for you.

Kim pays attention to the road.

Later:

Kim spots the motel through the front window.

KIM
That looks like three stars.

EMMA
I might die there, but I would prefer
to die in the desert, with the setting
sun. That would make a good death.

KIM
You still got some time left.

EMMA
And I am gonna enjoy it.

Kim drives into the parking lot of the motel, which has several cars and trucks already
parked.

CUT TO:

INT – CABIN – DAY

Bedroom.

KIM, seated on the bed.

Emma near the window. She puts her fingers in the Venetian blind, and draws them apart
enough to see a little more.

She looks at the desert landscape, with the sun just above the horizon.

She turns back to speak to Kim, releasing the blind.

EMMA
You ever thought about it, where you
came from, what you're gonna return

EMMA (cont'd)

to ? The colossal cosmos itself, the sun, the planets, the stars out there, the galaxy, the universe; we are all star dust, created in the gigantic engine of a super-nova. We live our little life, and we only think about it, when we know we're gonna die, how it all came about. I was born in a star, and I will become dust again...and there's some happiness to know, I am ready. I am just a piece of matter. I gotta remember, matter cannot be created or destroyed. It merely changes from one form to another. Once the spark of life is gone, I will be changed into ashes.

KIM

You wanna be cremated ?

EMMA

Better than rotting and decomposing. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. No-one wants to die, but, if you're gonna die, and you know it, you gotta make the best of it.

Emma goes over to the bed and sits down at Kim's side.

EMMA

There is a purity in being superheated to a thousand degrees, and leaving nothing but ashes behind.

KIM

You're so brave.

EMMA

I cannot be afraid of death. I must be resolute. Nature is a marvellous thing, to create such a complex living being as a woman, or a man, for that matter. The greatest wonder of all, is how life is created from organic chemicals, just by adding a little energy. Of course, we lose all that when we die. E equals mc squared. I will release that energy and return to simple lifeless matter. I will fulfil Einstein's resolution of matter and energy. Think of it; I will become part of that cycle, the cycle of life and death. That is bigger than you, or me,

EMMA (cont'd)

or any individual that has ever lived,
or will ever live.

KIM

But what you will lose is the personality
of the individual, all the qualities I love
in you, your kindness, your generosity,
your empathy, as well as your beautiful
face. I love all of you.

EMMA

You will have my ashes and some photos,
to remember me by.

KIM

But you will be gone.

EMMA

People have died, from time to time, in
the past. People will die in the future. I
am just one cog in the machine.

KIM

The cog I love.

EMMA

Your love for me will not die when I die.
It will live on in you.

KIM

Not as good as having you here, alive.

EMMA

You got me now.

Emma leans into a kiss with Kim. They hold the kiss for a few seconds, until Emma releases the kiss, so she can breathe.

EMMA

There's only so much I can do. I gotta
breathe.

KIM

Let me kiss your neck.

EMMA

Okay.

Kim kisses up and down Emma's neck. Emma smiles.

EMMA

I like that.

KIM

You are an exquisite example of the female of our species.

EMMA

I don't think I can manage sex.

KIM

I wouldn't ask you -

EMMA

We could sleep together, that is, sleep in the same bed, but not have sex.

KIM

That would be sleeping with me, but not sleeping with me.

EMMA

Exactly.

KIM

Okay. Let's do that.

Emma stands up, goes over to her box of oxygen cans and takes some oxygen. She then goes back to the bed, and sits next to Kim.

EMMA

I love you.

KIM

I love you.

They recline onto the bed, kissing.

At the window, through the blind, the sun starts to set by the bottom of its disc falling below the line of the horizon.

CUT TO:

EXT – DESERT – DAY/NIGHT

The sun sets, its disc slowly falling below the line of the horizon.

CUT TO:

INT – CABIN – NIGHT

Kim and Emma asleep in the bed, under the covers.

Emma's eyes open for a moment.

She reaches for her oxygen can and takes some oxygen, then closes her eyes and goes back to sleep.

CUT TO:

INT – CABIN – DAY

Kitchen.

Morning.

At the kitchen table, Emma and Kim, seated with cups of coffee. Emma takes some oxygen.

EMMA

I needed that.

KIM

How are you feeling today ?

EMMA

Not bad, not bad at all. In fact, I feel quite good, surprisingly. Maybe, it's the oxygen, gets me high. I feel almost euphoric.

KIM

Oh, that's good.

EMMA

I am happy, despite it all.

A beat.

KIM

What should we do today ?

EMMA

Drive in the desert.

KIM

Okay.

Kim looks resigned to having to drive Emma across the desert, again.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Kim driving. Emma on the back seat, taking some oxygen.

CUT TO:

EXT – DESERT – DAY

The car drives past various location on the free-way through the desert.

At the last location, the car stops.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Kim in the driver's seat, Emma on the back seat.

EMMA

This looks interesting.

KIM

Does it ?

EMMA

I reckon it does.

KIM

I find it hard to tell the difference.

EMMA

I could soak up the sun all day.

KIM

Is that what you wanna do ?

Emma reclines on the back seat.

EMMA

I think so. To feel the sun on your skin,
it's radiation, I guess, but it makes me
feel..alive.

KIM

Okay.

Kim tips her chair back a little, and watches Emma in the mirror.

Emma closes her eyes and sleeps.

Later:

Kim has fallen asleep, in the front seat.

Emma's eyes open. She wakes and reaches for her oxygen can. She takes some oxygen.

Kim awakens as she hears Emma's deep inhalation of oxygen. Kim tips her chair forwards

into the usual driving position.

KIM
Have a good sleep ?

EMMA
Yep. You - ?

KIM
I feel okay. I could tolerate the heat today, because it was not too hot. I could sleep.

EMMA
It can get hot in the desert, but today, it was more gentle, somehow, it did not burn. The sun was sympathetic.

KIM
I guess it was.

A beat.

EMMA
Sometimes, I feel moments of real regret, when I get glimpses of my life, when I see things I would prefer not to see. The day I started to smoke. Then, the day I relapsed when I tried to quit. It all goes round and round in my head, and I can't escape from this revolving prison of the mind. Then, I reach for some oxygen and I feel better. It clears my brain.

Emma starts to cough, and takes out a tissue from the box, and applies it to her mouth and nose. Some blood comes out of her mouth and a little from her nose. She takes out another tissue and wipes away the blood.

EMMA
This illness, when I can't breathe, I get deprived of oxygen, and then I remember all the things I don't wanna remember. I am getting a little weaker each day, both physically and mentally.

KIM
You have lost some weight.

EMMA
You noticed ?

KIM

Of course I did.

EMMA

I get pain, but I can cope with it. I take pain-killers.

KIM

I don't want to see you suffer. If it gets too much, you gotta go to hospital for morphine injections.

EMMA

I hope I die before the pain becomes unbearable. I can't eat much.

KIM

Are you keeping up the chemo ?

EMMA

Yes, I take them. Don't know if they're gonna do me any good.

KIM

They might buy you some more time.

EMMA

But they won't cure me. I have terminal cancer. I might eat some ice cream, when it gets soft.

KIM

Let's get you some.

EMMA

I would like that.

KIM

They don't sell ice cream in the middle of the desert.

Kim turns the engine on and puts her hands on the steering wheel. Emma sits up straight on the back seat.

CUT TO:

EXT – DESERT – DAY

The car drives off and continues down the free-way. The car travels across various locations on the free-way until it enters a small town.

CUT TO:

EXT – STREET – DAY

The car stops outside a general store on the street.
Kim gets out and goes into the store.

CUT TO:

INT – CAR – DAY

Emma watches through the side window as she sees Kim enter the store.

She takes some oxygen and then some pills, with some water from a bottle.

She looks around the town through each of the windows, somewhat curious.

She then sits back on the back seat.

She waits and waits...

Later:

Emma has closed her eyes and is sleeping by the time Kim comes back out of the store carrying a cardboard box.

Kim opens the door and gets into the car, waking Emma in the process.

KIM

Got you some nice, ice cream.

Kim hands Emma a tub of ice cream, with a plastic desert spoon.

EMMA

Thanks.

Emma opens the vanilla ice cream tub and starts to eat.

EMMA

What if I had the whole tub ?

KIM

That's up to you.

Emma eats.

CUT TO:

INT – MOTEL – NIGHT

Bedroom.

Emma and Kim on the bed.

EMMA

I am tired. I enjoyed that ice cream.

Emma gets into bed and closes her eyes.

Kim looks down at Emma asleep.

KIM

You beautiful, beautiful girl.

Kim kisses Emma's forehead, then gets up and looks at Emma asleep in the bed.

CUT TO:

INT – CABIN – DAY

Morning.

Bedroom.

Kim watches Emma as she wakes up.

KIM

You look so serene and at ease.

EMMA

Not at peace -

KIM

No...

EMMA

Not yet. I am still alive, still living, still breathing, but I am at ease with my fate, which is to die, young. I still got some time left, which I will spend..carefully.

Emma gets out of bed.

Kim watches as Emma goes through to the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT – CABIN – DAY

A few weeks later.

In the kitchen, Emma is seated, looking emaciated, and using oxygen almost continuously, with some blood-stained tissues around, which Emma collects in a bag, and ties up.

Kim comes through into the kitchen.

EMMA

I think I might die today.

KIM

Why today ?

EMMA

I'm just worn out. I think I might die here, today.

KIM

Don't you wanna go to the desert, to die there ?

EMMA

I don't think I can make it to the car today. I feel so weak. I can hardly breathe and I'm coughing up blood all the time. I don't have long left.

Emma gets up and makes her way slowly through to the bedroom.

She lies down on the bed.

Kim comes in and covers Emma up to her neck with the sheets and blankets.

EMMA

If I die here today, I wanna be cremated. Scatter my ashes over the desert, please.

KIM

I will, I promise you.

Emma closes her eyes.

Kim sits and watches over Emma.

She observes as Emma's breathing deteriorates.

Emma dies.

Kim stands over her and checks for signs of life. There are none.

Kim pulls the sheets over Emma's body.

CUT TO:

EXT – DESERT – DAY.

Kim's car stops.

Kim gets out, holding a box containing Emma's ashes.

She opens the box and disperses Emma's ashes into the wind, which blows them into the sand.

When the box is empty, Kim looks to where the ashes have landed, and sees them blend with the sand of the desert.

Kim looks towards the horizon.

THE END

