

A Love Down Under

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(110 pages)

FADE IN

EXT. VENICE, CA — THE MIDDLE OF OCTOBER — MORNING

CG: ROLL CAST AND TITLE TYPE

Open with VIEW OF THE OCEAN, with sitar music and the voice of RAJI NEWMAN, an Indian guru, on the Blissful Affirmations CD.

RAJI (V.O.)

Ask yourself, "Have I found bliss,  
or have I been bamboozled?" If I am you  
and you are me, and we are all together,  
then is my pain not also your pain? I  
am about to be telling you about love.  
As the prophetess, Midler, said, "Love is  
like a flower, and you its only seed."

Show a series of images; the carnival that is Venice Beach.

EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE — VENICE — AT THAT MOMENT

View of a pale turquoise blue flat-roofed beach house located next to the boardwalk. It is a stellar fall day in Southern California.

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

There is room for bliss in the Hotel  
California. You are stardust, you are golden.

INT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE

DONOVAN SKIRKIN, age thirty-nine, a lean surfer dude with shaggy hair, sits with HIS EYES CLOSED in a yoga position, on a worn, 1960s era couch. His guitar and surfboard are in a corner. He is dressed in a tee shirt, surfer shorts, and flip-flops. The CD Donovan is listening to: BLISSFUL AFFIRMATIONS, TWELVE STEPS TO HAPPINESS AND LOVE sits on a second-hand coffee table.

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

Put the lime in the coconut. Get yourself  
back to the garden. The First Affirmation  
is: Be true to your word. As the prophet,  
Bacharach, said: "What the world needs now,  
is love, sweet love. No not just for some,  
but for everyone." Truer words could not  
be spoken.

DONOVAN

Whoa. . .right on.

RAJI (V.O.)  
 All you need is love. Inhale. Exhale.  
 End of BLISSFUL AFFIRMATIONS, Disk One.  
 Please to be inserting Disk Two.

DONOVAN'S CELL PHONE RINGS, BUT DONOVAN STILL HAS HIS EYES CLOSED.

THE PHONE RINGTONE is an instrumental version of the Bob Marley song that goes: "Don't worry, 'bout a thing, 'cause every little thing, gonna be all right. . . ."

SHOW AN EVICTION NOTICE TAPED TO DONOVAN'S REFRIGERATOR.

DONOVAN'S VOICEMAIL  
 Mahalo, you've reached Donovan Skirkin.  
 I'm not home right now, so. . .

Donovan hears his voicemail greeting. HE OPENS HIS EYES, AND STANDS, unsure where he left his phone. He looks under papers, pillows, and a pile of empty beer cans.

DONOVAN'S VOICEMAIL (CONT'D)  
 . . .please leave a message, and time you called, and I'll totally get back to you. Remember the words of Confucius: "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day of your life."

Donovan finds his phone under a pizza box on a Papasan chair. The pizza box has a large graphic on it: 'Organicville Pizza'.

CARL ROJAS, a middle-aged Hispanic man, owner of an employment agency in Venice, named MUY GIGS, INC., is calling.

DONOVAN  
 Hello?

CARL (V.O.)  
 Donovan, this is Carl. Hey, are you looking for construction work?

Donovan shuts off the CD, scratches his rear, and stretches.

DONOVAN  
 Oh, hey, Carl. Uh, yeah, totally.

INT. CARL ROJAS'S OFFICE - MUY GIGS, INC. - VENICE

Carl rests his sandaled feet on his desk. His office décor makes

it appear as if it's located in Latin America. A Scarlet Macaw is in a wooden cage. Carl has an 80s haircut and wardrobe.

CARL

Great! A gallery needs displays built for a hotshot painter from New York. They've already bought all the materials, and they have power tools you can use.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVINGROOM

Donovan sips a half-empty beer, and grimaces from its flat, bitter taste. He shivers, finds a slice of pizza in the pizza box, and takes a bite of it. It is his breakfast.

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

Donovan? So can you do it?

DONOVAN

Totally. My fridge is so empty, dude, it echoes like the Grand Canyon.

CARL (V.O.)

Yeah, been there, bro. Here is the address. You ready?

Donovan scribbles with a pen on the pizza box to get it to write.

DONOVAN

Yeah, lay it on me.

CARL (V.O.)

It's the Fandango Gallery at 72 Market Street. They need you to be there at one p.m. today. Is that cool?

DONOVAN

Yeah, totally. I'll be there, bro. Uh, how much does this gig pay, Carl?

INT. CARL ROJAS'S OFFICE — MUY GIGS, INC. — VENICE BEACH

CARL

Six hundred plus expenses. And you get a free pass to the opening party, where there will be caviar, an open bar, and muy mondo chick-er-ree-nos to stimulate your mojo. Like, way mucho eye candy. You'll get calluses from their lap dances, bro.

## INT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE

DONOVAN

Actually, Carl, I've taken a vow of celibacy until I figure out what I'm all about. I'm on a journey to find my bliss, and place in the universe.

CARL (V.O.)

If I get lost I ask Siri for direction.

DONOVAN

I'm trying to follow my path. It's not easy; there are a lot of cul de sacs.

CARL (V.O.)

Uh-huh. Maybe you just need laid. But I'll let them know you'll take the job.

Carl hangs up. Donovan takes the EVICTION NOTICE off the funky refrigerator. He's stoked about his turn of fortune.

DONOVAN

(to himself)

DUDE! YOU ARE THE MAN! Who's the man?  
YOU'RE THE MAN! HE FADES BACK, AND, SCORE!

Donovan does a jump shot and tosses the notice in a trashcan. He turns and heads toward the bathroom to take a shower. He pauses in his hallway, where there is a NICHE IN THE WALL. A SHRINE.

## INT. DONOVAN'S HALLWAY SHRINE

Donovan lights a stick of incense in his two-foot-wide hallway shrine. Tiny red Christmas lights surround the shrine.

In the center of the shrine is a Mexican ceramic statue of Jesus. By the statue are photos of movie stars, sports legends, Gandhi, Koko, and Mister Rogers. Two small figurines of Mickey Mouse, and a golden Buddha, are by large amethyst geodes.

Taped to the back wall of the niche is a yellowed paper, which shows a Chinese drawing of Confucius. Donovan bows with his hands together and does a Hawaiian shaka sign.

DONOVAN

Thank you, dudes, for the work. You totally rock! Oh, and like, feel free to send more moola.

Donovan goes into the bathroom, which is directly opposite the shrine, and there is the sound of the shower starting.

EXT. PACIFIC AVENUE – VENICE – A QUARTER UNTIL ONE P.M.

Donovan rides his festively decorated, neon lime-green bicycle. He waves at two pretty women as he passes the Venice Farmers Market.

DONOVAN  
HOW YOU DOIN'? LOOKIN' GOOD! WHOA!

EXT. BY A MINI-MALL – MINUTES LATER

Donovan is riding past a mini-mall in the bike lane. A Mercedes sedan, driven by YOICHI KIROKOWA, an elderly Japanese-American man, suddenly turns into him at an entrance of the mini-mall.

DONOVAN COLLIDES WITH THE RIGHT FRONT OF THE CAR. HE FLIPS OVER HIS HANDLEBARS onto the car's front hood, into the windshield.

DONOVAN  
AAAAAAH!

YOICHI ACCELERATES FOR FIFTY FEET AND SLAMS ON THE BRAKES. DONOVAN IS CATAPULTED ONTO THE PARKING LOT. He smiles dizzily at a gull passing overhead. THERE ARE AMBULANCE AND POLICE SIRENS.

MINUTES LATER, TWO PARAMEDICS rush to Donovan.

FIRST PARAMEDIC  
How many fingers do you see, sir?

DONOVAN  
Whoa, hold still. Ugh. . .six?

In the background, YOICHI, is being interviewed by a POLICEMAN.

DONOVAN PASSES OUT.

YOICHI  
(to a policeman)  
I DIDN'T SEE HIM! HE CAME FROM NOWHERE  
AND JUMPED INTO MY WINDSHIELD LIKE A  
CRAZY MAN! LOOK WHAT HE DID TO MY CAR!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE AMBULANCE – MINUTES LATER

From Donovan's POV show surreal images of the EMTs. They are speaking but their words are distorted. For a moment, Donovan sees CONFUCIUS, in an ornate, red silk Chinese robe, sitting in the ambulance, smiling at him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UCLA MEDICAL CENTER — OPERATING ROOM — A HALF HOUR LATER

DONOVAN WAKES. He is in an operating room beneath an operating light. A MALE ANESTHESIOLOGIST sedates him. Donovan sees Confucius smiling at him, then he passes out.

INT. DONOVAN'S ROOM — UCLA MEDICAL CENTER — THE NEXT MORNING

Morning sunlight comes through the half-open blinds of the window by Donovan's bed. DONOVAN IS ASLEEP. He has a bandage on his head, his left leg is in traction, and his left arm is in a cast. CARL SITS IN A CHAIR, reading the morning paper.

DONOVAN OPENS HIS EYES and squints, due to the sunlight coming in the half open blinds. Carl smiles at Donovan.

CARL

Buenos dias, señor. I was hoping you were going to wake up while I was here.

DONOVAN

Whoa. Carl? Where am I?

CARL

The UCLA Medical Center. They did surgery on your leg to set it. You're held together with staples, screws, and Gorilla Glue.

DONOVAN

Whoa. Sorry Carl. I've broken the first affirmation; to be true to my word.

CARL

No problemo. If you're out of here in two weeks you can hobble down to the rockin' opening party at the gallery.

DONOVAN

Oh, yeah, totally. So you got someone to build the walls and junk?

CARL

I hired three Hispanics. They had it done in five hours. Oh, and my cousin, Murray, the ambulance chaser, said he can get you sixteen grand for pain and suffering.

DONOVAN

Sixteen thousand? I can barely conjugate my vowels, Carl. I'll never achieve my dreams of being an astronaut, or pro surfer.

CARL

Didn't you flunk out of college? Weren't you the guy who couldn't do math, and thought calculus was a Roman general?

Donovan shrugs. Carl sets Donovan's shaving kit bag on the bed.

CARL (CONT'D)

You could use a shave, bro. I picked this up from your house. Your aunt let me in. If not for a cop coming by your house I wouldn't have known what happened to you. I sent you ten texts.

DONOVAN

Thanks for tracking me down, Carl. You're doing God's work, bro.

CARL

Yeah? Well, somebody has to. Hey, your doc said you'd recover in six weeks.

Donovan takes a hand mirror from his kit and looks at himself.

DONOVAN

Look at my ear, dude! It's like I boxed twelve rounds with a heavyweight. Not to mention, my custom bike is totally trashed. That bums me out.

CARL

Wasn't it a used Huffy mountain bike?

DONOVAN

Dude, it had a custom metalflake paint job, with a righteous surfboard rack. Not to mention, Wi-Fi, and a Blu-ray player. It was a tribute to modern art, dude.



CARL

Sorry man, we'll get you another one. Well, I gotta go, bro. Oh; I explained things to your aunt. She wanted the rent money, so I paid her. She said she'd swing by tomorrow.

DONOVAN

Ah, geez, thanks, Carl. My aunt is always on me about paying rent. I'll pay you back.

CARL

Whenever. Get well. The driver's insurance will cover your care.

Carl sets Donovan's laptop on the bed tray.

CARL (CONT'D)

Here; kick back and surf the net.

INT. DONOVAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM — NOON

ANGELEE, A FORTY-SOMETHING BLACK NURSE comes in to see how Donovan is doing. Donovan is online, checking his emails. Angelee adjusts the tension on Donovan's left leg.

ANGELEE

My name is Angelee, I'll be your nurse today. Can I get you something for lunch?

DONOVAN

I could totally nosh on a green smoothie. My guru, Raji, says bliss is found in small things. That's the way to Nirvana.

ANGELEE

Uh-huh. I doubt we have green smoothies. How about fries, and spicy chicken wings?

DONOVAN

Okay, cool. As long as it's organic.

ANGELEE

This is a hospital, not a health resort.

ANGELEE LEAVES THE ROOM. DONOVAN FOCUSES ON HIS LAPTOP SCREEN.

DONOVAN IS OPENING EMAILS FROM UKRAINIAN WOMEN. The women are all luscious, and perfect. He is dazzled.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, ANGELEE RETURNS WITH A TRAY OF FOOD.

ANGELEE

They didn't have the green smoothie,  
but they had a breakfast burrito with  
soy sausage, and a vanilla latte.

DONOVAN

Cool. I can eat soy in small quantities,  
though my testosterone level will suffer.

ANGELEE

In your condition, broken like you are,  
there's no chance you'll be getting laid.  
So don't worry about your testosterone.

DONOVAN

Exactly. The Third Affirmation is to be  
at peace with the disappointments of  
life. You have to be like water that  
flows around a boulder, and like a  
ninja in a Bruce Lee film.

ANGELEE

Uh-huh. I like Bruce Lee, and how he be  
doing those chop-chop moves. He was cute.

ANGELEE RECORDS THE DATA FROM THE MONITOR DONOVAN IS HOOKED TO.

DONOVAN

I'm catching up on my emails. But the  
emails aren't what is important. What  
is important is being in the NOW, and  
present in the moment like Derek Jeter  
in his prime.

ANGELEE

Yeah, well, if you got to take a leak,  
or a BM, NOW would be a good time 'cause  
I can help you with that.

DONOVAN

I'm okay. Geez, I have a billion emails  
from Ukrainian girls. They're so perfect!

ANGELEE stands by Donovan and checks out his laptop screen.

Show photo of a gorgeous blonde from the Ukraine, SVETLANA  
LENOVANICH, AGE 26, HEIGHT 170 CENTIMETERS, WEIGHT: 65 KILOGRAMS.

ANGELEE

Yeah, she's pretty fine all right,  
if you like skinny white chicks with  
perky boobs. Those can't be real.

DONOVAN

Right; who wants to wake up to THAT?  
I need a loofah scrub every morning.

ANGELEE

(She adjusts his I.V.)

Mmm-hmm. It would be hard, all right.

DONOVAN

Seventeen years ago I fell for an Aussie  
lady in London, at a Talking Heads concert.

ANGELEE

Yeah? So what happened to this 'Wonder  
from Down Under'?

DONOVAN

My letters circumnavigated the globe. By  
the time they reached Darlene she'd MARRIED  
ANOTHER GUY. It wasn't meant to be.

ANGELEE

Google search her and see if she's single.

DONOVAN

Oh, she's probably fat by now. I know that's  
shallow, but the Ukrainian women raised the  
bar into the stratosphere. They're awesome!

ANGELEE

Uh-huh. Maybe the universe wants you to  
boogie out of the Hotel California to find  
that Aussie and live happily ever after.

DONOVAN

The Hotel California?

ANGELEE

Yeah, it's an old Eagles song.

DONOVAN

That's the exact phrase on my meditation  
CD! It's like the universe has spoken  
to me, a mere mortal! Whoa!

ANGELEE

Glad to help. Now eat and take a nap.

ANGELEE LEAVES THE ROOM. DONOVAN BEGINS EATING HIS LUNCH.

DONOVAN

The Hotel California. That blows my mind.  
It's like, synchronicity-ville.

DONOVAN YAWNS, FALLS ASLEEP, AND DREAMS. CLOSE IN ON DONOVAN.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. A MYSTICAL LANDSCAPE IN CHINA — 500 B.C. — DUSK

Donovan, without casts or bandages, meditates in a lotus position, on a hill. He is looking at a star field. CONFUCIUS FLOATS ON A CLOUD, dressed in a red silk robe with ornate gold embroidery.

DONOVAN

WHOA. Confucius? Is this a dream?

CONFUCIUS

Life is but a dream. There is no awakening until you open your eyes. When a goose senses its enlightenment, it flies up until it dies. Thus, one must die to begin a life of bliss.

DONOVAN

You're tripping me out with riddles. Should I find Darlene, the Greek lady?

CONFUCIUS

A man who is unwilling to leap a river is unworthy of love. To try and fail is honorable. To not try is cowardly.

DONOVAN

But to get to Australia, I'd have to travel 8,000 miles, and most of that is ocean, filled with man-eating sharks, and highly toxic stinging jellies.

CONFUCIUS

A fish can drown in air, but it leaps to catch an insect. A fat wife is like a contented cow who never strays far from her master's pasture. (MORE)

CONFUCIUS (CONT'D)

A thin cow breaks her master's fences  
and spreads discord in the herd.

DONOVAN

So what you're saying is, fat is good,  
and skinny is evil?

CONFUCIUS

A fat hen makes better soup.

DONOVAN

So it's okay if Darlene is fat?

CONFUCIUS

A fat wife happily seeks to patch a  
leaky roof, and thus preserve a home.  
A thin, difficult wife floods a village.

DONOVAN

So you're saying I should go to Australia?

CONFUCIUS

Go or stay, stay or go. Diggy, Liggy,  
Li, Diggy, Liggy Lo. Nobody else could  
ever show, so much love for Diggy Liggy Lo.

END DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. DONOVAN'S ROOM IN THE HOSPITAL — MID-AFTERNOON

DONOVAN WAKES. He sits up and turns on his laptop.

DONOVAN

Whoa. Wisdom from the Nitty Gritty  
Dirt Band.

DONOVAN TYPES: DARLENE POPPISOGLOU IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA. Ten listings come up. None of them link to Darlene. He retypes Darlene Poppi, in Melbourne, Australia. A listing for a HOME-STAY place seems promising, and he types a message to them.

INT. DONOVAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM — THE FOLLOWING DAY — MORNING

AUNT VIOLET, Donovan's aunt, and landlady, is visiting. She is a slight woman, with white hair, about seventy-five-years-old.

AUNT VIOLET

Your friend, Carl, paid me your rent. (MORE)

AUNT VIOLET (CONT'D)

That was sweet of him, wasn't it?  
You know, Walmart is hiring greeters.  
They pay fifteen dollars an hour!

DONOVAN

I can't be a greeter, Aunt Violet.  
I'm moving to Australia. I think I  
found my soulmate. It's kismet!

AUNT VIOLET

You know, criminals founded Australia.  
They've got a hole in their ozone as  
big as Texas. Who wants to be around  
sunburned criminals? Not to mention,  
Australia's full of snakes and spiders.

DONOVAN

Australia gave us Russell Crowe, Toni  
Collette, and Errol Flynn! It rocks!

AUNT VIOLET

Yes, and that nasty vegemite. Listen:  
Marry a giver, not a taker. And hold  
doors for your lady. Girls like that,  
especially girls with no arms. And,  
don't talk about yourself. Ask what she  
thinks of The Sound of Music. If she  
hates it, tell her to shove off.

DONOVAN

I'm still going to Australia, Aunt Violet.

AUNT VIOLET

Well, you really must be in love. Here,  
this may help you find your soulmate.

Aunt Violet stands and puts a wad of cash in Donovan's hand.

DONOVAN

Five-hundred dollars? Aunt Violet,  
you can't afford to give me this!

AUNT VIOLET

Just give it your best shot. When I  
was a young woman I let my soulmate  
get away because I was afraid to take  
a train to New Jersey. I couldn't fly  
because of my vertigo, and agoraphobia.

DONOVAN

Whoa, whoa, whoa. YOU had a soulmate?

AUNT VIOLET

Oh yes. Moishe Lipkowitz. He was in the cheese business. I let him kiss my neck because I was oversexed.

INT. DONOVAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM – THREE DAYS LATER

Donovan Skypes on his laptop with DARLENE. Show screen from Donovan's point of view. DARLENE POPPISOGLU is in bed. It is ten in the evening in Melbourne. Darlene has shoulder length medium brown hair, good teeth, and sparkly brown eyes.

DONOVAN

I'm so glad I found you, Darlene.  
How did your husband die?

DARLENE

From stomach cancer, three years ago. It was hardest on the girls. The principal of Phoebe's school said she scratches her arms and legs with scissors.

DONOVAN

Oh my god. Why?

DARLENE

The school psychiatrist said Phoebe blames me for her dad's death.

DONOVAN

It's probably just a teenage girl thing. Girls need dads. Maybe you should remarry.

DARLENE

Yeah, like marriage fixes everything. I have dated a few men. The girls call them all 'Bob,' because I rarely date anyone more than once. Lately, I've been dating one man exclusively.

DONOVAN

Are you in love with him?

DARLENE

No, but the sex is great. He's an atheist, and rich. I wish he'd leave his wife.

DONOVAN

You're having an affair with a married atheist? Careful, God might smite you.

DARLENE

My husband believed in God. Look what that got him. Stomach cancer. God went on a walkabout. Too bad you're so religious.

DONOVAN

I'm not religious. I'm on a quest to find my bliss. I'm into random acts of kindness, and in the NOW, like Buddha.

DARLENE

Yeah, I'm nice to people. Maybe I'm an agnostic and not an atheist.

DONOVAN

Cool. The Fifth Affirmation is to emulate enlightened beings, like Mister Rogers.

DARLENE

Religion is mumbo jumbo hokum, Don-O. Work hard, get rich, and be happy, eh? Surely God wants us to be happy.

DONOVAN

After I was hit by a car, I imagined God had shape-shifted into a seagull. He was like hovering over me, like, saying, 'Yo little dude, everything's gonna be cool.'

DARLENE

I guess I'm too grounded in reality. If you ever make it to Australia, you can meet my girls, and my Mum and Dad.

DONOVAN

I would like to, but I've got to heal. Plus, I'm broke. I can't afford it.

DARLENE

How can you be broke, you're almost forty!

DONOVAN

Money isn't a big priority for me. Look at Greece! They went broke, and they're five thousand years old!



DARLENE

Okay, you got me there. Goodnight.  
Good luck finding your bliss.

DONOVAN

Thanks. Goodnight, I forgot about  
the time difference. Sweet dreams.

INT. DONOVAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM — THE NEXT DAY — MORNING

Carl, and his cousin, MURRAY MENDES, are seated in chairs next to Donovan's bed. Murray is forty-something years old, short and paunchy, dressed in a gray suit, and black retro glasses.

MURRAY

Uh, you do realize this claim will take  
time to be resolved? It won't be like a  
Mega Millions payday.

DONOVAN

It's cool. Confucius said it'll work out.

MURRAY

Confucius, the Chinese philosopher?

DONOVAN

Totally. Granted, he's hard to understand,  
especially since my brain is like damaged  
Jell-O in a 70s Tupperware container.

CARL

Because he speaks Mandarin Chinese?

DONOVAN

No, he spoke English, but he teaches in  
parables, like Jesus, and Mohammed Ali.

MURRAY

No subtitles?

DONOVAN

My point is, Confucius said I should go to  
Australia to be with Darlene, my soulmate!

CARL

To Australia? That's completely crazy!

DONOVAN

I put it all on MasterCard. (MORE)

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

I didn't tell Darlene because she might tell me not to come because she's having an adulterous affair.

CARL

Your soulmate is screwing someone? What if you arrive and she dumps you? You'll be stranded halfway around the world! And look, you've got a patch of gray hair by your right ear!

DONOVAN

It's not gray, it's sun bleached! Besides, Darlene and I are like two star-crossed lovers. Like Ms. Piggy and Kermit. She wants me to meet her parents!

MURRAY

That's serious when a woman asks you to meet her parents, dude.

CARL

Donovan, as your friend, I suggest you have the nurse lower your pain medication. You've had a hallucination.

DONOVAN

Seriously, Carl, I found my soulmate! We're like Abbott and Costello, and Bogie and Bacall. It's as if I'm driving on the Harbor Freeway at rush hour and suddenly cars part like the Red Sea to let me pass!

CARL

Yeah, they're letting you through 'cause you're a nut-job and waving an Uzi.

MURRAY

Do me, and my bank account, a personal favor, Donovan, and don't heal too fast, or we'll not get a dime out of that psycho driver's insurance company.

DONOVAN

Sorry, I can't help it! I'M IN LOVE!

EXT. THE FANDANGO GALLERY - VENICE - NIGHT - MID-NOVEMBER

PETER MACLEOD explains one of his paintings to a group of people. PETER is in his forties, with wild, curly brown hair. Across the room, Donovan and Carl stare at one of Macleod's abstract paintings, titled 'Number 33.' Donovan wears a walking cast on his left leg, and leans on a cane.

DONOVAN

Even Picasso couldn't figure this out.

CARL

Yeah. But few have your artistic eye. What am I supposed to do if you move to Australia? Are you still going?

DONOVAN

Of course I'm going! Are you kidding me?

CARL

Yeah, okay. So, do you have a photo of this femme fatale? I want to be able to give the cops a description of her after her Great White eats you.

DONOVAN

Don't be so negative. Negativity will give you colon cancer, Carl.

Donovan takes out his wallet and gives a photo of Darlene to Carl.

CARL

Cancer is the least of my worries. After three failed marriages, my soul looks like a mutant alien spawn.

SHOW CLOSE UP OF DARLENE. She stands by her two teenage daughters, Zoey, and Phoebe.

CARL (CONT'D)

You didn't mention she's a midget.

Donovan snatches the photo back. He scowls at Carl.

DONOVAN

Be careful, Carl. This is the woman I love. I take offense when you insult her with random comments.

CARL

What? I didn't say anything!

DONOVAN

You just called Darlene a midget!

CARL

Don't take it personal. I like short chicks as much as the next guy. Hey, let's ask this artist to explain his painting.

They walk up to Peter Macleod.

CARL

Hi, Peter, I'm Carl, and this is Donovan. We're wondering if you can explain that painting over there. Number 33?

PETER

(Australian accent)

Ah yes, well, it's about marsupials, amphibians, and the urbanization of. . .

DONOVAN

(interrupts)

You're Australian? I thought you were from New York! Whoa!

PETER

Uh, well, I did a Crocodile Dundee thing. I went to New York and fell in love. I'm originally from Melbourne.

DONOVAN

MELBOURNE! OF COURSE! You see, Carl? NOW do you believe in synchronicity?

PETER

What's that, mate?

DONOVAN

I know an architect in Melbourne. I'm flying there in three weeks. I've heard it's very cosmopolitan.

PETER

Very much so. My niece lives in Melbourne. She does fine art, and works at the Anita Traverso Gallery in Richmond. You should pop in and say hi to her. Here's her card.

Peter hands Donovan one of his niece's business cards.

DONOVAN  
Lucy Macleod. Cool. Thanks!

EXT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT – A MONTH LATER – DECEMBER 20 – NIGHT

Donovan gets out of a cab and enters the airport, walking with a slight limp, and favoring his right leg.

INT. LOS ANGELES AIRPORT – TSA AREA – TEN MINUTES LATER

Donovan puts his shoes, watch, belt, keys, wallet, and laptop in tubs at the TSA check station. The LADY TSA AGENT signals for him to walk through the scanner. It beeps.

LADY TSA AGENT  
You must have forgotten something.

DONOVAN  
I was in an accident. I'm full of screws.

Another MALE TSA AGENT runs a wand type scanner over Donovan. It beeps when it nears Donovan's left leg.

SFX: WAND SCANNER BEEPS MULTIPLE TIMES.

MALE TSA AGENT  
Please step over there, sir.

DONOVAN  
Seriously? Do you think I have a bomb on me? I'm telling you, dude, I was hit by a car. I don't have a bomb!

MALE TSA AGENT  
We've had bomb threats here, sir. Please lower your voice about a bomb. It upsets everyone.

DONOVAN  
I'm sorry. I'm excited to be going to Australia, the Land Down Under. Where they toss shrimps on barbies.

MALE TSA AGENT  
Uh, okay. No worries.

The TSA workers shake their heads. Donovan undresses. His boxers

have Warner Brothers cartoons on them. Passengers are laughing at his goofy boxers. A ten-year-old GIRL points at Donovan's boxers.

GIRL

Look, Dad, he has the Tasmanian Devil  
on his boxers! Gross!

DONOVAN

Yeah, I got them on sale at Target.

Donovan shows Tweety Bird. The DAD covers his daughter's eyes.

LITTLE GIRL'S DAD

Weirdo. Put your pants on!

A SECOND MALE TSA AGENT frisks Donovan's rear and around Donovan's crotch. He runs a wand over Donovan's body again. It beeps.

SECOND MALE TSA AGENT

Okay. You can walk through, sir.

INT. QUANTAS AIRLINES JET — A HALF-HOUR LATER

Donovan sits by the window. SUMMER, a pretty twenty-something year old woman, with blonde hair, comes and sits next to him.

DONOVAN

(offers his hand)

Donovan Skirkin. Pleased to meet you.

THE BUCKLE SEATBELT LIGHT comes on. They shake hands.

SUMMER

Summer English. Likewise.

DONOVAN

Cool. Are you Australian?

SUMMER

Actually, I'm from New Zealand.

DONOVAN

New Zealand? Whoa, like Lord of the  
Rings, with Ents, and Hobbits?

SUMMER

Uh, yeah, something like that.

Summer has opened her laptop and started work on a project.

DONOVAN

This is only my second time flying. I'm meeting a lady I knew in London, a long time ago. I'm going to the Land Down Under.

SUMMER

Oh, that sounds romantic.

DONOVAN

I could tell you about it if you like.

SUMMER

Actually, I have some work I need to do. But good luck.

Summer puts headphones on. Donovan seems oblivious.

DONOVAN

When Confucius tells you junk, you totally have to listen. It's like, whoa, I'm sitting in my hospital bed, and, like, there's Confucius in his ornate robe floating on a cloud talking to me, and. . .whoa!

The plane taxis to take-off position. Donovan stops talking and looks with terror out the window.

EXT. THE RUNWAY – NIGHT

The plane accelerates and in a few seconds it lifts off.

INT. THE PLANE – DONOVAN'S SEAT

DONOVAN GRIPS HIS ARM-REST, petrified at being off the ground. He fumbles with the shutter on his window, and slams it down. Summer notices his behavior, and takes her headphones off.

SUMMER

Are you okay?

DONOVAN

Whoa. . .I'm a little woozy.

Donovan opens a bottle of pills, takes six, and swallows them with a gulp of carrot juice he has brought with him. Summer looks concerned as she watches Donovan take the pills.

SUMMER

Should you be taking so many pills?

DONOVAN

No worries. They're high potency, organic melatonin, and ganja harvested by ancient Mayan temples. They're fast acting. Like, totally fast, like Superman fast.

DONOVAN FALLS ASLEEP. Summer shrugs and goes back to studying.

BEGIN DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. THE WING OF THE AIRPLANE – DAY

Confucius and Donovan drink tea. Confucius fills Donovan's teacup. Confucius is dressed in his opulent red robe; Donovan wears his usual Venice Beach attire, with flip-flops and shorts.

DONOVAN

For some unknown reason, sitting on this wing doesn't bother me. Normally, I'd be puking my guts out, if not for the fact I have major munchies.

CONFUCIUS

A scholar must elevate himself so he can see where he is going. If you don't respect yourself, ain't nobody gonna give a hoot for you. Nah-nah-nah-nah-nah.

DONOVAN

Intellectually, I know we're 20,000 feet up, but I'm totally okay with that.

CONFUCIUS

More tea?

DONOVAN

Yeah, thanks. It's way minty good.

Confucius fills Donovan's teacup. Donovan takes a sip, and smiles.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

So, why am I having these dreams of you? Are you actually God, and not Confucius?

CONFUCIUS

Perhaps yes, perhaps no. What the superior man seeks is in himself. What the small man seeks is in others.



DONOVAN

Yeah, I guess I'm worried about rejection.  
Darlene is a fox, and I'm an overgrown gnome.

CONFUCIUS

If a man takes no thought about what is  
distant, he will find sorrow near at hand.

DONOVAN

Right on, I get that. Like, when I'm out  
waiting for a wave, and I see a swell  
forming, I turn my board and paddle hard.  
Because, like, you snooze, you lose.

CONFUCIUS

(takes sip of tea)

To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short.

DONOVAN

If I'd stayed in California, I would be  
playing it safe. Not that Darlene needs me.

CONFUCIUS

A man with a sweet tooth wants to rule  
over a woman who owns a candy store. Yet,  
a woman without a man is like a fish with  
no surfboard. They do not need us, but we  
must have them. Without women, we perish.

END DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. MELBOURNE AIRPORT — DUSK — DECEMBER 21

Donovan exits the plane. Summer hastens off as quickly as she can  
walk. Donovan waves with his free arm.

DONOVAN

(CALLING)

SEE YA! SORRY I BLABBED SO MUCH!

Summer, walking away quickly, holds up her left hand and flips  
Donovan off. Donovan shrugs.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Whoa, that's mature. AND THANKS FOR NOT  
WAKING ME UP WHEN WE LANDED IN TAHITI!

EXT. A SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE MELBOURNE AIRPORT TERMINAL

Donovan hails a cab. NICK DINKUM, a forty-something aboriginal driver, stops by the curb, and speaks through his open window.

NICK  
G'day, mate. Where to?

DONOVAN  
The Blackman Hotel, at 452 Kilda Road.

NICK  
Oh yeah, right. Nothing bodgy there, eh?  
Here, mate, let me get those.

Nick gets out and puts Donovan's luggage in the trunk. Donovan opens the back door of the cab. Nick turns to him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
My name is Nick. You can ride in the front if you like. Excuse the stench. A bloody Pommy chundered this afternoon.

DONOVAN  
Oh. Uh, my name's Donovan. What's chundered?

NICK  
He puked, mate. Knocked back plonk, I reckon. What we affectionately call chateau cardboard. Cheap wine. I was gobsmacked.

Donovan gets in the front seat. Donovan hands Nick his MasterCard.

DONOVAN  
I hope you take MasterCard.

NICK  
No worries, Don-O. Your first time in Oz?

DONOVAN  
Totally. I'm on a mission of true love.

NICK  
Right. Hey, are you, by chance, an artist?

DONOVAN  
What makes you ask that?

NICK  
Your luggage is covered with blobs of paint, and weird philosophical stickers.

DONOVAN

Actually I'm trying to find my bliss.  
Like, the thing I was meant to do.  
I play guitar and surf but perhaps  
those are window dressings on my path.

NICK PULLS THE CAB FROM THE CURB AND THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY.

NICK

Ah, I hear what you're saying, mate.  
I wanted to make it in the music biz.  
One day I looked in the mirror and I was  
forty years old. I missed out by not  
going to Boyland, in Queensland. That's  
where the boy bands come from down here.

DONOVAN

The Tenth Affirmation is to never say  
never. You have to ask the universe in your  
most sincere voice. The universe has enormous  
ears. It hears the murmur of our longings.

NICK

The universe, eh? I'll give it a go.

DONOVAN

May I give you some advice I learned  
from the great Yogi Berra?

NICK

Yogi Berra? Is he an eastern mystic?

DONOVAN

Actually he was a famous baseball player,  
and manager. Anyway, he said, "When you  
come to a fork in the road, take it."

NICK

What does that mean?

DONOVAN

I think he meant, SEIZE THE DAY.

NICK

Right, mate. What position did he play?

DONOVAN

He was a catcher for the Yankees, and  
then he was their manager.

NICK

My son plays baseball. It's quite popular here. Even the banana benders play it. That's slang for Queenlanders.

DONOVAN

Surfing makes me happy. I surfed until two months ago, when I was hit by a car.

NICK

Hit by a car? Whoa. You look pretty fit. Where in the States are you from? L.A.?

DONOVAN

Venice, California. It's as far west as you can go and still be in L.A.

EXT. ON A FREEWAY FROM THE AIRPORT — DUSK

View of their cab on a freeway against a dramatic sunset.

NICK (V.O.)

You know a Sheila down here?

DONOVAN (V.O.)

A Sheila? Oh yeah, right. Yeah. I've come covertly to surprise her. It might be hard; she's a successful architect.

NICK (V.O.)

Eh? Maybe she'll wake up and realize what a show pony you are, eh? Want to go for a pint, and meet my mates?

DONOVAN (V.O.)

Sure, that sounds cool.

INT. A BAR IN MELBOURNE

Donovan and Nick sit at a table drinking beers, surrounded by boisterous Australians. Nick's friend, SAM, sits with them.

DONOVAN

You Aussies sure know how to party.

NICK

Right. We work hard and party harder. Sam, here, besides being a keg on legs, crafts ape hangers during the day.

SAM

Yeah, I got six ankle biters to feed.

NICK

Speak English, Sam-O! What Sam means is that he customizes motorcycles as a day job, to feed his six bratty kids. Sam is a regular ocker. A true-blue Aussie.

DONOVAN

Cool. I need to get rich so I can woo Darlene, my Australian soulmate.

SAM

Get a sports car, mate. Chicks love 'em. I drive a fart-mobile cause my bitchy wife won't let me drive the good car.

NICK

Nah, Sam! Don-O should do a billboard! See, I make billboards, Don-O. Driving a cab is my second job. Here's my card.

Nick hands Donovan his business card. Sam swigs down a stein of beer and staggers off down a hallway.

DONOVAN

Where's he going?

NICK

Back of beyond, or the dunny, I suppose. The restroom. Listen Don-O, you're no fruit loop, your Sheila will come around. Me, I got lucky in love. My wife gives me an earbashing sometimes, but she's aces, generally.

DONOVAN

I'd be willing to try a billboard, Nick. The Sixth Affirmation says if bliss is your guide, there are no wrong choices, or regrets.

NICK

Yeah? You're a bit of a philosopher, Don-O. You could be a motivational speaker.

EXT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL PARKING LOT — HOURS LATER — NIGHT

Donovan, a bit tipsy, steps out of the cab. He leans on his door.

DONOVAN

I'm totally stoked about doing a billboard, Nick. Out of the box thinking like that may help me woo Darlene!

NICK

Right, mate. Might be just the ticket. Ladies want to be wooed in public ways. Goodnight. Give me a jingle, eh?

DONOVAN

Totally, dude. Goodnight, Nick.

INT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL – NIGHT

Donovan notices the paintings in the foyer of the hotel. He checks in and goes into the gallery on the ground floor, which display art by local artists, and works by the hotel's namesake, Charles Blackman. A gallery employee, CLIVE OWEN, comes alongside Donovan. Donovan is staring at a Charles Blackman painting.

CLIVE

The gallery closes in ten minutes, sir.

DONOVAN

Is this painting based on Alice in Wonderland?

CLIVE

Yes. Reproductions of Mr. Blackman's paintings are throughout the hotel.

DONOVAN

I love his use of color. Wow. It majorly inspires me to paint something.

CLIVE

Ah, you're a fine artist?

DONOVAN

Well, maybe. Mostly I paint walls.

CLIVE

So, you're a muralist, then?

DONOVAN

I'm a two-coat type of painter. I've got a really steady hand. Most lefties do. I don't mask anything. During Covid I hated wearing a mask.

CLIVE

Ah. Perhaps Melbourne will inspire you.

EXT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARD COMPANY — DECEMBER 22 — DAY

Donovan is across the street from Nick's business. The first floor is a dry-cleaning business. The second floor has a graphic on the outside wall, showing a brain with lightning bolts shooting out of it. Donovan crosses the street and goes in the building.

INT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARD COMPANY — A HALF HOUR LATER

The office is spacious, but not entirely sheet-rocked. Donovan and Nick are coming up with ideas. Nick's desk is a door mounted on two sawhorses. Donovan has spread out a map of Melbourne on the desktop. He has drawn an 'x' in red marker, where Darlene works, an 'x' where she possibly lives, and driving routes.

DONOVAN

Darlene's office is here. I am guessing she takes this highway to get to work.

NICK

Yeah; the Maroondah Highway. Actually, my uncle owns three billboards along that highway. I reckon we could try them.

DONOVAN

So, like, I could do a sequential message, like, "Roses are red, violets are blue. Who loves you more than Donovan do?"

NICK

You'd need a face on that one, Don-O.

DONOVAN

Oh yeah. How big would my face be?

NICK

I reckon it would be six meters tall.

DONOVAN

Geez. My pores would be huge. What do you think of my poem? Be honest.

NICK

A bit bodgy. Be more ballsy. Think of it like an advertising campaign, but instead of selling widgets, you're selling yourself.

DONOVAN

What would it cost to do three billboards?

NICK

Costs a grand per week, and then there's the setup fee, so about four thousand.

DONOVAN

Whoa, I can't afford that.

NICK

Um, I'm not trying to talk you out of this idea, but, if you don't mind my asking, why not just go to wherever your lady lives and knock on her door? Or go to wherever she works, with a bouquet of flowers, and a card in hand, and tell her how you feel?

DONOVAN

I don't know. That seems so ordinary.

NICK

Look, if she's going to reject you, at least she would do it to your face. Obviously you're not a no-hoper. I reckon she'd give you a fair go.

DONOVAN

Yeah, you're right. I'm being dumb. But aren't you the one who suggested I do a billboard?

NICK

Yeah, but I've had an epiphany.

DONOVAN

Well, now I'm confused. Should I just stalk her and K.O. her boyfriend in some dark alley?

NICK

Nah, he might be a big fella who'd sock ya. Make a big banner. It's much cheaper, and less risky. Then if she rejects you, jump off her building.

DONOVAN

Jump off a building? Are you nuts?



NICK

I'm just trying to help, Don-O.

DONOVAN

Well, that's a bonkers idea, dude.

NICK

What I mean is, be more direct. Go to a pub, down a pot, and ask her out. Better than running around like a galah, insecure about rejection. But dress spiffy, like James Bond. Ladies like tuxedos.

DONOVAN

Are these your best ideas?

NICK

Or get a job as a window washer, and show up at her window when she's doing a fancy presentation to the bigwigs in their bags of fruit.

DONOVAN

Bags of fruit? What?

NICK

Ah, that means their suits. Eh, I wasn't serious. Personally, I'd go with the banner. Then she'd have to stare at your message all day. It might pay to find out what part of the building her office is in. Otherwise, you'll be flushing your money down the dunny.

DONOVAN

Yeah. What's it cost to make a banner?

NICK

It'll run you fifteen-hundred. But I'll tell you what; I'm in a bit of a bind. I need help putting up billboards. If you help, I'll only charge a grand.

DONOVAN

Deal! But I'm afraid of heights.

Nick slides Donovan's MasterCard through his card reader.

NICK  
(winks, and smiles)  
Eh? Ah, better not fall then. I'll  
rig you with a rope. You'll be safe as  
a joey in its mum's pouch.

EXT. MAROONDAH HIGHWAY 34 - MELBOURNE - DECEMBER 23 - MORNING

Donovan and Nick are on the platform of the billboard, secured by  
harnesses, putting up a billboard.

DONOVAN  
This is a lot easier than I figured  
it would be. Easier than bungee jumping.

NICK  
Yeah, that's an idea. You could bungee  
jump off her building! Great idea, mate!

DONOVAN  
I'd crack a window and get deported.

INT. DARLENE'S CAR - MAROONDAH HIGHWAY - AN HOUR LATER

Darlene carpools with VIVIAN, a coworker. They pass the billboard  
Donovan and Nick are putting up that shows an image of a kangaroo  
leaping. The billboard is for the MELBOURNE ZOO. The kangaroo has  
a joey in its pouch. The headline is, "THINGS ARE HOPPING HERE!"  
Darlene sees Donovan and chokes on her morning coffee.

VIVIAN  
Are you all right?

DARLENE  
We just passed a guy putting up a  
billboard who looked like an old  
boyfriend of mine in America.

VIVIAN  
Really? What's his name?

DARLENE  
Donovan. But it couldn't be him. He's  
in California recuperating from an auto  
accident. He must have a double.

VIVIAN  
They say everyone has a doppelganger.  
So, what happened to that Donovan fella?

DARLENE

We quit writing. I told him about Alec.  
It was a boil over. He's religious.

VIVIAN

Ah. How's it going with Alec? Is he  
going to divorce his wife?

DARLENE

I have no idea, Viv. He drives me mad.  
We go to look at houses and he makes  
excuses for why the timing's wrong.  
His kids are sick, or his wife had  
a bad day. I hate it. If I don't  
nag him to death he'll never do it.

VIVIAN

Is he seeing someone else, I mean,  
besides you, and his wife?

DARLENE

If he is I'll whack his donger off.

Vivian and Darlene laugh.

EXT. MAROONDAH HIGHWAY 34 — MELBOURNE — DECEMBER 23 — NOON

Donovan and Nick eat lunch. Nick spreads vegemite on a cracker,  
and hands it to Donovan. They have put up a billboard showing a  
leopard in profile. The headline is: "BIG CAT SPOTTED!"

NICK

Give this a try, mate.

DONOVAN

What is it? Looks like tar.

NICK

Yeah, pure gooey goodness. It packs  
a punch. It's vegemite, mate.

DONOVAN

It looks gnarly. What's it made of?

NICK

Fermented yeast, I think. It's our  
national snack. My kids love it. Might  
even work as sunscreen when the sun is  
baking your brain, on a day like today.

Nick lifts his cracker, and Donovan lifts his and they each take a bite. Donovan's face contorts. He spits out the vegemite.

DONOVAN  
PLAGHHH! Ugh, it's totally nasty!

Donovan swigs his beer. Nick laughs.

NICK  
It takes a bit of getting used to.

DONOVAN  
It's like eating poison!

NICK  
Heh, heh. You crack me up, Don-O!

DONOVAN  
This billboard is kind of mysterious.

NICK  
Yeah, people like mysterious rubbish.

Show a wide shot of the finished billboard. It shows a giraffe leaning over a zoo fence. A boy and girl are feeding it hay. The headline is: Here's Looking at You, Kid!"

EXT. NICK'S TRUCK — MAROONDAH HIGHWAY — AFTERNOON

A view of Nick and Donovan, through the front windshield.

DONOVAN  
You know, I don't have a work permit.  
I'd hate for you to get busted.

NICK  
Me? Nah, I got myself a lucky charm from  
my Wurundjeri brother-in-law at a corroboree.

Nick shows Donovan an opal on a cord he wears around his neck.

DONOVAN  
Whoa; cool. Is it an angel wing?

NICK  
Yeah, he carved it from an opal he found  
while fossicking. I'm superstitious, I reckon.  
I wear it for protection. He's half Wurundjeri  
tribe, and I'm half Bunurong.

DONOVAN

Awesome. Does it work?

NICK

Yeah, of course. Mind over matter.

DONOVAN

Exactly! Visualize your bliss, and do not doubt, and the universe will make it appear.

NICK

By believing I make it flat out happen?

DONOVAN

Exactly! Believe it and receive it. The universe has everything you need.

NICK

Like my own personal Woolworths, eh? But, if that's true, why can't you get this lady, Darlene, by meditating?

DONOVAN

You're right, I need more faith. I'm totally bogus in following my path!

NICK

Eat more vegemite, mate!

DONOVAN

No thanks. So, I'll see you tomorrow?

NICK

Yeah. I'll pick you up at your hotel at six a.m., bright and early like.

DONOVAN

How can we get access to the roof?

NICK

The president of the Bank of Melbourne owes me a favor. His bank owns the Bourke Place building.

DONOVAN

Who don't you know in Melbourne?

NICK

One of the perks of driving a cab, mate.

DONOVAN

Why does the banker owe you a favor?

NICK

I taxied him around town one night. He got off his face, and picked up a couple of Sheila's. I took a snapshot of them in the nuddy, in the back of my cab. Later, I saw a photo of him in a newspaper with his wife. Those photos were like money in the bank. Naturally, he was mad as a cut snake. But you got to trim the tall poppies to help true-blues like us get a fair go, eh?

DONOVAN

That's serious leverage, Nick.

NICK

It got me quick approval on a loan. I gave the banker all the photos but one. It's like having credit, forever like.

EXT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL — DECEMBER 23 — DUSK

WE HEAR AN INDIAN SITAR PLAYING ON THE BLISSFUL AFFIRMATIONS CD.

RAJI (V.O.)

The Seventh Affirmation is: If you can't speak a word of kindness, be silent. A word of love is like a sip of cold water in the parched desert of life.

A view of the hotel from across the street. Holiday lights are on, though it is summer in Australia. Holiday shoppers pass by.

INT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL — DONOVAN'S ROOM

Donovan is doing the 'eagle' Bikram yoga pose.

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

It has been said, if your eyes cause you to sin, pluck them out. And if your hands, or ears cause you to sin, cut them off. But this is too much cutting. Is it not better to sit quietly and do nothing, and keep your eyes, hands, and ears? Be like a mouse lost in a wedge of cheese. Nibble until you find the light.

Donovan shuts off the CD player and picks up his guitar and starts strumming it. He has decorated his room with strings of lights and hung stockings for Darlene and her daughters on the fireplace hearth, and there are wrapped presents under a small artificial tree. A platter for appetizers sits on a counter.

THE OVEN TIMER GOES OFF.

Donovan sets his guitar down, puts on an oven mitt, takes a casserole dish of lasagna from the oven. He peels back the aluminum foil from the casserole dish.

DONOVAN'S CELL PHONE RINGS

DONOVAN

Hello?

SHOW SPLIT SCREEN

CARL

Hey, Donovan! How are things Down Under? You coming back anytime soon?

DONOVAN

Oh, hey, Carl! Everything's great! I've rented this hotel room for a week.

CARL

You're broke, aren't you, dude?

DONOVAN

It's all an illusion, Carl. Ouch!

Donovan cuts the lasagna. He has singed a finger and blows on it.

CARL

Are you okay, bro?

DONOVAN

Yeah, I'm fine. I singed my finger. I'm doing a dry run on baking dinner for Darlene and her girls.

CARL

So have you and Darlene hooked up?

DONOVAN

No, not yet. I'm strategizing. I'll only get one shot to do this right.

CARL

You're clueless about love, bro.  
Women don't want perfection; they  
want to be romanced! Don't text her;  
just show up at her house! Be a man!

DONOVAN

But what if she rejects me?

CARL

Don't be such a wuss! Go get her, man!

DONOVAN

I don't know where she lives. I only  
know where she works, dude.

CARL

Then go to her office. And take  
a big honkin' diamond ring, bro!  
Blow her away with a grand gesture.

DONOVAN

Putting up romantic signage is one  
thing, but giving her a ring is like  
a marriage proposal, Carl.

CARL

Are you kidding me? You've traveled  
halfway around the world and now you  
want a middle-school romance?

DONOVAN

I can't afford a big diamond ring,  
Carl. I'm living on my MasterCard.

CARL

Well, that's why I've called, bro.  
The insurance company made an offer.

DONOVAN

Cool. How much did they offer?

CARL

Sixteen thousand. Which means you'll  
get about eight thousand bucks after  
lawyer fees and such.

DONOVAN

Eight thousand? Only eight thousand?



CARL

Sorry, bro. My cousin can email you the settlement paperwork. What room are you in?

DONOVAN

Room 1975. Is eight grand all I'll get?

CARL

He tried, bro. They're rip-offs.

DONOVAN

Let's hold out for more.

CARL

Okay, it's your call, bro. So are you eating? Do you have money for food?

DONOVAN

Sure. I've got a thousand bucks in credit left on my MasterCard. And my aunt gave me five-hundred bucks.

CARL

Okay. I don't want to have to worry about you. What day is it in Melbourne?

DONOVAN

It's about six o'clock, Wednesday night. Melbourne is many hours ahead of us.

CARL

That's trippy. Well, Merry Christmas.

DONOVAN

You too, Carl.

EXT. A JEWELRY STORE - MELBOURNE - DECEMBER 23 - NIGHT

Donovan is window-shopping near his hotel. He has no idea what he is doing. He has a boyish grin on his face. A window display catches his eye. There are many pieces of jewelry in the window. A gold necklace with rubies captivates him. Donovan sees the smiling face of Confucius reflected in the window display glass.

DONOVAN

I don't know what I'm doing. I can't afford a necklace or a ring. Am I totally losing it? Maybe I need a psychiatrist.

CONFUCIUS

To admit your ignorance is wisdom.

DONOVAN

Am I veering off the path? How can  
I know if I'm going too fast or slow?

CONFUCIUS

It does not matter how slowly you go  
as long as you do not stop.

DONOVAN

Money is so important to Darlene.  
I don't know how else to impress her.  
I'm confused about how to woo her.

CONFUCIUS

Coarse rice, water, and a bent elbow for  
a pillow is all that is needed.

DONOVAN

For you maybe, but Darlene expects more.  
I mean, look where she works! Geez!

VINCE THE SWAGMAN, in his fifties, dressed in rags, with stringy,  
long graying hair, listens to Donovan. Donovan sees the man  
reflected in the window. He turns and faces Vince.

VINCE THE SWAGMAN

Oi, mate, you all right? I heard you  
talking to somebody. Are you talking to  
God, mate? I talk to God all the time.

DONOVAN

God? No, just to myself. It's a habit.  
I'm deliberating about buying that.

Donovan points to the ruby necklace in the window display.

VINCE THE SWAGMAN

I'm sure he'd like it.

DONOVAN

It's not for a guy; it's for a lady.

VINCE THE SWAGMAN

Buy it for me and I'll wear it with pride.  
It is Christmas, after all.

DONOVAN

It's for my woman, dude! Not you!

VINCE THE SWAGMAN

Yeah? She'll go all clucky about it.  
Uh, maternal like, you know. And she'd  
want to get married so she can boss you  
around once you fertilize her eggs.

Vince suddenly pumps his right hand in the air and walks away.

VINCE THE SWAGMAN (CONT'D)

KILL THE MUTANT! BURN THE HERETIC! PURGE  
THE UNCLEAR! SUFFER NOT THE ALIEN TO LIVE!

Donovan realizes Vince is crazy. He enters the jewelry store.

EXT. BOURKE PLACE ROOF — MELBOURNE — DECEMBER 24 — MORNING

The Bourke Place building is adjacent to Darlene's office in the sleek, modernistic, Tower Melbourne building.

Donovan and Nick attach the horizontal banner, with ropes, to the short wall on the perimeter of the building's rooftop. They roll the banner off the side of the roof. It unrolls to reveal the words: "DARLENE! MEET ME AT THE BLACKMAN HOTEL AT 7PM TONIGHT — DEC. 24TH — I HAVE AN IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ASK YOU — LOVE, DONOVAN." It shows Donovan wearing a Santa Claus hat.

NICK

Uh, Don-O, is your architect lady's  
office on this side of the building?

DONOVAN

I don't know. I never checked.

NICK

Are you bonkers, mate? It's not  
bloody hard yakka to find out!

DONOVAN

Talk English!

NICK

I'm saying, it's a bodgy business. I  
worked past midnight to output this.  
I didn't even charge you for taking the  
photo of you in that silly Santa hat.

DONOVAN

It's cool. I have a good vibe about this.

NICK

Yeah? You might just piss her off.

DONOVAN

No, it'll blow her mind and she'll love me!

NICK

You're a bloody wacko. You should go into her building and talk to her. Now that the banner's up, you should just. . .ah, BLOODY HELL - A CHOPPER!

A CHANNEL 7 TRAFFIC HELICOPTER HAS SPOTTED DONOVAN'S BANNER. A traffic newsman, STU BRUMBY, talks to his pilot, TIM WIGGINS.

STU (V.O.)

What do you make of that, Tim-O?

TIM (V.O.)

Looks like a holiday love story, mate.

STU (V.O.)

(via headset to his boss)

Hey, Stu here. There's a love note atop the Bourke Place building by the Tower Melbourne. There are two guys on the roof. Can we set the chopper down and find out what it's about? Yeah, there's a heliport on the roof.

THE HELICOPTER CIRCLES THE BOURKE TOWER ROOF.

NICK

Now you've done it mate. Bloody Oath!

DONOVAN

(waves at helicopter)

It's perfect! I'll be on the news!

NICK

Or locked up, mate. Let's rack off!

DONOVAN

NO! COME ON, IT'LL BE GREAT!

THE HELICOPTER LANDS. Stu and Tim walk up to Nick and Donovan.

STU

(to Tim)

On me, mate. On three. . .

(to viewers)

G'day, Melbourne! There's love in the air in Melbourne this morning, as if Santa Claus has come early! We're talking live from the roof of the Bourke Place building in downtown, where two guys have hung a gigantic love note.

(camera frames Nick and Donovan)

G'day mates! Nice banner! I'm Stu Brumby, Channel 7 News. My cameraman and pilot is Tim Wiggins. So what's this all about, eh?

Donovan faces the camera, and we see him from the camera POV.

DONOVAN

Hi! My name is Donovan, and this is Nick. I'm trying to woo my lady! She works in that shiny office building over there.

STU

In the Tower Melbourne? Yeah? You mean, Darlene, the lady mentioned on the big banner you just hung?

DONOVAN

YES! Darlene Poppisoglou, an architect in the Tower Melbourne over there!

STU

So, Donovan, you're obviously a Yank. Did you fly from the States just to do this? Seems a bit extreme. Any chance she'll reject this grand gesture of yours? Any chance she'll be the Grinch?

DONOVAN

I don't know. I'm following my bliss. But Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, made it clear I had to go Down Under. I last saw Darlene seventeen years ago, in London.

STU

Whoa, seventeen years ago? Wow! So, Don-O, how did you find her?

DONOVAN

I found her online, back in L.A.

STU

So you're from Los Angeles?

DONOVAN

Venice, actually. GO DODGERS!

STU

Right. Take a breath there, mate.  
Tell viewers why you're trespassing.

Nick leans in front of Donovan, and speaks into the microphone.

NICK

We're not trespassing, dipshit. We  
have permission to be up here. So  
go stuff yourself and buzz off.

STU

Ah, okay. Steady, mate, there may be  
kids watching. And your name is, Nick?

NICK

Nick Dinkum. Bunurong tribe. I made  
this here banner in my shop.

STU

Perfect! You're like Saint Nick, eh?

DONOVAN

Nick is awesome. His banker friend  
gave us permission to be up here.

Nick signals to Donovan to shut up about the banker.

STU

What's the banker's name, Don-O?

NICK

Don-O's mistaken. We have permission to  
be up here. We're not loonies. Don-O here  
is on a romantic crusade to woo a lady.

STU

Right, like a couple of Crusaders, eh?  
(faces camera)  
These guys are men on a mission. (MORE)

STU (CONT'D)

They got up at the crack of dawn to lug this banner up here on Christmas Eve. Must weigh two-hundred kilos, eh? Vinyl, isn't it?

DONOVAN SUDDENLY WALKS TO THE EDGE OF THE ROOF AND LIFTS HIS HANDS. Tim, Stu, and Nick follow. Tim frames Donovan on camera.

STU (CONT'D)

(to Nick)

What's he doing? Is he a jumper?

NICK

No, he's just a bit overexcited.  
Hey, Don-O, step away from the edge!

Donovan lifts his arms in the air, facing the gleaming Tower Melbourne, that is illuminated by the morning sunrise. Nick is in a panic. He is trying to pull Donovan away from the edge.

DONOVAN

I LOVE YOU, DARLENE! I LOVE YOU!

Nick begins to untie the banner, but Stu interrupts him.

STU

Donovan? Nick? Step over here a sec?

Donovan lowers his arms and faces the camera. Stu puts his hand on Donovan's shoulder. Nick tries to stand off camera.

STU (CONT'D)

Hey, Nick? Gather round!

Nick reluctantly joins Stu and Donovan on camera.

STU (CONT'D)

Nick, will the banker be ropeable when he learns of your shenanigans?

NICK

We have permission, shit-for-brains.

STU

Sure you do, mate. So Don-O, are you going to leave this banner up all day?

NICK

None of your business, you bodgy cactus.

DONOVAN  
THAT'S RIGHT, ALL FREAKIN' DAY!

STU  
That's the spirit, mate. So, Don-O  
how'd you like us to film Darlene and  
you tonight at your hotel? You're at  
The Blackman on St. Kilda?

DONOVAN  
YEAH! That would be awesome! I'm in  
Room 1975. But don't come until eight.

NICK  
Why don't you and fly-boy buzz off?

STU  
Sorry Nick, didn't mean to offend you.

NICK  
Rack off, or get the once-over, mate.

STU  
You did a beautiful job on the banner.  
Don-O's lucky to have a mate like you,  
giving him a proper Oz welcome. Tell  
us a bit about your business, mate.

NICK  
Uh, I run Brainstorm Billboards. Open  
seven days a week, located at. . .

STU  
Hold on, Nick, did you just put up a  
billboard on the Maroondah Highway?  
The Melbourne Zoo billboards?

NICK  
Yeah, Don-O here volunteered to help.  
Actually my rates are quite low. . .

STU  
(interrupts)  
Sorry, no time for a sales pitch.  
Right. Mystery solved. If you're  
watching, Darlene, this is your  
holiday miracle. Your boy, Don-O, and  
Nick, here, have been busy as Santa's  
elves. So don't let them down.



Donovan is framed by Tim. He is jubilant and crowds the lens.

DONOVAN

I LOVE YOU, DARLENE! Bring your girls!  
I'll fix dinner! We'll open gifts and  
drink cider! You don't have to buy me  
anything! See you at seven tonight at  
the Blackman Hotel. Room 1975!

STU

All right, good luck to you Don-O.  
I think your idea is brilliant. So  
Darlene, your man is waiting for  
you, and will be grinning like a shot  
fox if you don't show up. This is Stu  
Brumby, Channel 7 News, reporting live  
from the Bourke Place roof.

EXT. THE BOURKE PLACE ROOF — MOMENTS LATER

The helicopter takes off. Donovan and Nick wave goodbye.

NICK

That was a bloody disaster.

DONOVAN

I thought it went pretty well.

NICK

We're either heroes or dumb bastards.  
But my business just got a shot in  
the arm. I hope they don't lock us up.  
Bollocks! I didn't say hi to my wife on  
camera. I'll get an earful for that.

EXT. EVANS & WHITEHALL ARCHITECTURE — TOWER MELBOURNE — MORNING

Darlene works on the fortieth floor of the Tower Melbourne. The building has an undulating shape, like a wedge of bright burnished steel in an otherwise average looking city skyline.

INT. EVANS & WHITEHALL ARCHITECTURE — MEETING ROOM

Clients representing a hospital in Melbourne, THREE MEN AND ONE WOMAN, along with Darlene, her design assistant, MARISSA LAKE, and a partner in the firm, IAN WHITEHALL, sit around a long, sleek, meeting table. The lights are down low. They are watching a large LCD monitor, which is showing a computer simulation, a virtual tour, of the new hospital the architectural firm has designed.

A scale model sits at the end of the table near the front of the room. GEOFFREY BANES, the hospital administrator, looks pleased.

Darlene, the senior architect on the project, presses a stop button on a video remote, once the animation concludes. She nods, and MARISSA, Darlene's assistant, turns up the lights.

DARLENE

As you can see, the new Sunshine Memorial Hospital will completely capture the spirit of its location, with lots of open space and light. The solar array on the building's roof will reduce your operating costs by thousands of dollars per year. And, to further accentuate your green footprint, there will be a small garden on the roof where organic fruits and vegetables can be grown for the hospital kitchen.

GEOFFREY

It's lovely! Bravo!

THE GROUP APPLAUDS.

IAN

Darlene and her team have done a topnotch job. Darlene, would you take a moment to explain how we solved the hospital's need for a maternity ward with a larger ICU?

Darlene steps up to the model of the hospital and removes its roof. The hospital clients gather around the model. Darlene signals to Marissa to open the blinds.

MARISSA OPENS THE BLINDS. Darlene, obsessed with the project, doesn't notice the banner hanging from the roof of the Bourke Place building. Marissa, however, stares at the banner.

MARISSA

(whispers to herself)

Oh my god. . . .

DARLENE

As you can see, gentlemen, the ICU has double the space you asked for.

MARISSA

EXCUSE ME, DARLENE? There's a banner addressed to you on a building.

Everyone turns to Marissa. Everyone rushes to the windows.

IAN

Bloody hell, what's that?

GEOFFREY

A love note to a lady named Darlene.

The group turns in unison to Darlene. She is speechless.

DARLENE

I'm sure it's all a big mistake.

Suddenly, LINDSAY, Mr. Whitehall's secretary, rushes in.

LINDSAY

Mr. Whitehall! Channel 7 says an architect named Darlene is the subject of the banner hanging off Bourke Place!

Ian Whitehall grabs the remote and flips to Channel 7. The TV shows Stu Brumby interviewing Donovan.

DONOVAN

I LOVE YOU, DARLENE! Bring your girls! I'll fix dinner! We'll open gifts and drink cider! You don't have to buy me anything! See you at seven tonight at the Blackman Hotel. Room 1975!

STU

(to viewers)

All right, good luck to you Don-O. I think your idea is bloody brilliant! Darlene, your man is waiting for you, and will be grinning like a shot fox if you don't show up. This is Stu Brumby, Channel 7 News, reporting live from the Bourke Place roof.

INT. EVANS & WHITEHALL — A FEW MINUTES LATER

Darlene walks swiftly towards us, from the meeting room. Her assistant, Marissa, catches up to her.

MARISSA

Darlene? Are you okay? Can I get you anything? An aspirin? A cup of tea?

Darlene and Marissa walk toward us, past banks of office cubicles. People are poking their heads from their cubicles to see what is going on. Darlene has unwittingly become a celebrity. In the background, in the doorway of the meeting room, Ian Whitehall, and Geoffrey Banes stand, baffled by the turn of events. Darlene gestures with her meeting notes as she storms forward, toward her posh office on the opposite side of the building.

DARLENE

HOW DARE HIM! THE NERVE! HE RUINED MY PRESENTATION! MY GOD! A LOVE NOTE!

MARISSA

How do you know him? What's his name?

DARLENE

DONOVAN! DONOVAN SKIRKIN! UGH!

MARISSA

I wish a guy would be romantic to me.

DARLENE

ROMANTIC? ROMANTIC? UGHHHHH! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? HE'S A LUNATIC. OBVIOUSLY!

They have arrived in Darlene's modern, opulent office. The décor is post-modern: black leather and chrome furniture, chic clean lines, with a Bauhaus feel.

Darlene goes behind her huge desk and punches a button on her phone, to dial her secretary, JANE WINSOME. Marissa is fidgety, and watches Darlene.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

JANE, GET THE BLACKMAN HOTEL ON THE PHONE!

(to Marissa)

I'll set him straight. He can't just show up and write LOVE NOTES!

Marissa looks on her iPhone for the Blackman Hotel phone number.

MARISSA

I've got it. The Blackman Hotel, 9039-1444.

Darlene dials the phone number. She hears their phone ringing. A MALE CONCIERGE at the hotel, PHILLIP ABERNATHY, answers the phone.

PHILLIP (V.O.)  
G'day, The Blackman Hotel, Phillip speaking.

DARLENE  
I want to speak to Donovan Skirkin,  
in room, um, what room, Marissa?

MARISSA  
Uh. . .I. . .

IAN WHITEHALL has stepped into the doorway of Darlene's office. He is smiling. He raps on the doorframe.

IAN  
(to Darlene)  
Room 1975.

DARLENE  
(to Phillip)  
Room 1975. Yes, I'll hold.

Ian enters, and Marissa timidly scoots out the door. Ian sits in the chair nearest Darlene's desk. Darlene watches him warily.

IAN  
Tell him you'll be there with  
bells on. It's brilliant!

DARLENE  
What do you mean?

There is the sound of the phone ringing in Donovan's room, from Darlene's POV. She has a nervous, puzzled look on her face. Ian is pleased by the turn of events. Darlene stares quizzically at him.

INT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL - CONCIERGE STATION

PHILLIP  
I am sorry, Mr. Skirkin is out.  
Would you like to leave a message?

INT. DARLENE'S OFFICE

DARLENE  
No, thanks, I'll ring him later.

She hangs up the phone, and looks at Ian, who is smiling broadly.

IAN

That was a brilliant turn of events!

DARLENE

Are you serious? I was mortified.

IAN

Mortified? Why? The client loved it. It shows we're human. They signed off on the design a few minutes ago. You've done it, Darlene! That'll win you that bonus!

DARLENE

A bonus? What?

IAN

Now you just have to follow through! The news media is all over this story. It's brilliant public relations! We could never afford it. Everyone in Australia is talking about our firm! We're going to be swamped with orders. Now, you go get dolled up and take your girls to The Blackman Hotel.

DARLENE

I can't go down there to see. . .HIM!

IAN

It's too late to get cold feet. I'm not asking you to marry him, Darlene. It's all about appearances! It's all for show! People love this kind of crazy, romantic drivel! Do it for the firm!

DARLENE

Ian! You're MAKING ME go there?

IAN

YES! I expect you to go. SO, GO!

DARLENE

Mister Whitehall; Ian; please. This guy, is obviously, madly, in love with me!

IAN

So what's the problem?

DARLENE

I'm not in love with him, for starters!  
He's just a beach bum from California I  
met seventeen years ago, in London. He's  
a stalker! You ought to phone the police!

IAN

Nonsense! This is great publicity!  
I'll have Martin in marketing do a  
press release. I can see the newspaper  
headline now: 'A Love Down Under – How  
a California beach bum won the heart of  
Melbourne's most eligible architect!'

Ian snatches Darlene's purse and jacket from the coat rack, and  
leads her out of her office. The office staff gathers outside  
their cubicles, to offer congratulations as Ian and Darlene walk  
past. AN ARCHITECT, OWEN, pats Darlene on the shoulder.

OWEN

GOOD LUCK, DARLENE! WAY TO GO!

Vivian comes from a cubicle and wishes Darlene well.

VIVIAN

I'LL BE YOUR BRIDESMAID!

Darlene is shell-shocked. She offers a weak smile to Vivian.

DARLENE

Gawd! I'm not going to marry him, Viv!

IAN

Just play along, dear. Fair dinkum!  
It's all for show! Do it as a favor  
to me, and the firm. Martin and me will  
handle the publicity. MARISSA! MARISSA!

Marissa comes from the crowd and Ian hands her a credit card.

IAN (CONT'D)

Take Darlene to the very best salon  
in Melbourne. Charge it on my account.  
Buy her a new dress, and high heels.  
Her shoes look shabby. Buy lots of  
bling. She needs to wow the media.

DARLENE

But, Mister Whitehall! Ian? PLEASE?

INT. AT THE ELEVATORS – MOMENTS LATER

Ian delivers Darlene to the elevator. She steps in and faces the crowd of coworkers. Ian holds the door and beams at her. Darlene looks like a schoolgirl with an overwhelmed, defeated look.

IAN

Good luck, dear. Have a good time!  
We'll chat tomorrow.

(to Lindsay)

LINDSAY! Phone Roger Evans in Sydney,  
and tell him our company stock is about  
to rise! And have Martin in marketing  
come to my office, straight away!

THE ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSES.

EXT. ST. KILDA STREET – CHRISTMAS EVE – NIGHT

DARLENE is driving with her two daughters to The Blackman Hotel,  
in a late model blue Volvo.

INT. DARLENE'S VOLVO

Darlene has had the full salon treatment: her hair is up, her nails are perfect, she wears a designer outfit, and ruby earrings. Her makeup is flawless. Her daughters, PHOEBE, AGE 13, and ZOEY, AGE 15, are wearing their best dresses. Darlene wears a sparkly short red jacket, and black dress. PHOEBE sits in the rear seat. She is looking at a city map. ZOEY, sits in the passenger seat.

ZOEY

I think we're lost, Mum.

PHOEBE

Find directions on your phone, Mum.

DARLENE

The Siri isn't bloody working.  
I'm pretty sure I know where The  
Blackman Hotel is. My god, it's  
like a landmark. It's just that my  
head is spinning. I can't think  
straight. Probably due to the toxins  
the salon applied to my body.

PHOEBE

Mum, you put like a liter of perfume on.  
You're like gassing us out here.



DARLENE

My boss told me I had to go. Donovan better be there after all this. I couldn't reach him all afternoon. Phoebe, turn on the dome light, and find The Blackman Hotel.

PHOEBE

Approaching destination. Turn left at the corner of St. Kilda and whatever that street was.

ZOEY

That was Barfly Street or something.

PHOEBE

TURN, MUM! TURN! GOD, YOU ARE THE WORLD'S WORST DRIVER! GEEZ!

DARLENE

OH SHUT UP, PHOEBE.

Darlene pulls to the curb. JACK, a twenty-year-old handsome young man with curly black hair, is walking by them on the sidewalk, juggling three colored wooden balls.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Zoey, ask that juggler where the stupid Blackman Hotel is.

Zoey leans her head out the passenger window.

ZOEY

EXCUSE ME, SIR? SIR?

Jack comes beside the car. He leans close to Zoey's face. Zoey smiles, because Jack is so handsome and young.

JACK

G'day! How can I help you, miss?

ZOEY

Hi, I'm Zoey, we're looking for The Blackman Hotel, at 452 Kilda Road.

JACK

Oh, that's easy, Zoey. Go three lights straight ahead, and take a left. You can't miss it. My name is Jack, by the way.

PHOEBE  
I like your balls, Jack!

Jack smiles and holds up his colorful juggling balls.

ZOEY  
(laughing)  
Thanks, Jack! See you later!

JACK  
No worries. Good night!

Darlene pulls the car from the curb and they continue.

PHOEBE  
That guy was cute. He liked Zoey.

ZOEY  
Oh shut up, Phoebe.

DARLENE  
Phoebe, probably you shouldn't have mentioned you liked his balls.

ZOEY  
Really, Phoebe, that was gross!

PHOEBE  
But he had enormous balls. Geez,  
I meant for juggling, Mum.

DARLENE  
Yes, we get it. It's crude.

ZOEY  
You can't talk about a man's  
balls, Phoebe. It's very rude.

PHOEBE  
I didn't mean it that way. Duh.  
You two have such dirty minds.

ZOEY  
Mum, how old is this Donovan? Does he  
wear dentures, and walk with a cane?

DARLENE  
He's only thirty-nine!

PHOEBE

Whoa, he's freaking ancient!

ZOEY

There's the hotel, on the left, Mum!  
Yep, 452 St. Kilda Road.

DARLENE

Okay.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF THE BLACKMAN HOTEL – NIGHT

Darlene pulls into the hotel parking lot, finds a spot, and parks.  
We see the Volvo, lit by a solo parking lot light.  
They don't get out of the car immediately.

ZOEY (V.O.)

This is the darkest parking lot, ever!

PHOEBE (V.O.)

It's dark 'cause this hotel is gross.

DARLENE (V.O.)

Okay, you two; be on your best behaviors.

PHOEBE (V.O.)

C'mon, let's go! Open the door, Zoey.

INT. DARLENE'S CAR

ZOEY

Wait. Is your boyfriend broke, Mum?

PHOEBE

He's not her boyfriend, Zoey.

ZOEY

He used to be. Right, Mum?

DARLENE

Oh, I don't know. It's yonks ago.  
And yes, he's a broke beach bum.

ZOEY

Everyone at school was talking  
about that banner, Mum.

DARLENE

It's just talk, Zoey.

ZOEY

But it's embarrassing, Mum.

DARLENE

My boss is making me go. We'll be out of there in an hour. I promise.

PHOEBE

Did you mention all your 'Bobs?' to this Donovan guy?

DARLENE

No. I said I was dating someone. But obviously, he doesn't take hints. He's madly in love with me over our fling ages ago in London, which I've forgotten almost entirely. And he remembers all of it!

PHOEBE

Honk the horn, Mum! He's old. He probably has to put his teeth in.

ZOEY

Gross!

DARLENE

Just be nice, or I swear. . . .

PHOEBE

Are we just going to sit here, Mum?

DARLENE

Let me touch up my lipstick.

Darlene looks in the mirror on her visor and applies lipstick.

ZOEY

You expect him to kiss you? Ugh! Mum! Now you're grossing me out! Maybe you actually do like him.

DARLENE

No, I don't, Zoey. This is for the news media if they show up. Gawd!

PHOEBE

His dentures will fall out on TV while you're kissing him. That would be funny.

DARLENE

Stop with the denture jokes Phoebe,  
before I smack you. HE HAS TEETH!

ZOEY

We're going to be on TV? GEEZ, MUM!

DARLENE

If the TV people show up, you can hide.

They get out of the car.

EXT. BLACKMAN HOTEL PARKING LOT — MOMENTS LATER

ZOEY

We'll hide in Donovan's bathroom.  
Mum, I thought you were dating Alec?

DARLENE

I am dating Alec.

PHOEBE

Mum, do you love Alec?

DARLENE

I am fond of him.

ZOEY

But isn't he married, Mum?

DARLENE

Not happily. Let's not talk about it.

PHOEBE

If he's married, Mum, isn't it wrong?

INT. THE LOBBY OF THE BLACKMAN HOTEL

Darlene, Zoey, and Phoebe, walk towards the elevators.

DARLENE

When you're older you'll realize  
morality, and religion, were invented  
to control people.

ZOEY

My best friend, Sue, goes to church.  
Her parents got religion. Now they're  
born again. What's 'born again,' Mum?

DARLENE

Please, girls, let's just get through this. No more questions, PLEASE!

PHOEBE

I want to be born again, Mum!

DARLENE

Phoebe, PLEASE shut up.

PHOEBE

WHEEEEEEE! I'M BORN AGAIN!

Phoebe does a sort of fairy dance on their way to the elevators. Zoey and Darlene bust up laughing.

INT. DONOVAN'S ROOM – THE BLACKMAN HOTEL

Donovan has spent hours getting everything perfect. He has oven mitts on, and is taking a tray of lasagna from his oven. The camera pans to show the stockings, a variety of appetizers resting on a platter, bottles of sparking cider on a counter, the cheery lights wrapped on ledges which make the room seem enchanted, the artificial Christmas tree with a dozen gifts beneath it, and three stuffed stockings hung on the fireplace mantel.

THE 'CHRISTMAS SONG' PLAYS ON DONOVAN'S CD PLAYER. DONOVAN IS BEAMING WITH EXCITEMENT AS HE LETS THE STEAM RISE OFF THE LASAGNA.

INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE DONOVAN'S ROOM

SFX: THE BELL SOUND OF THE ELEVATOR HAVING ARRIVED

The elevator opens and Darlene and her daughters step out.

PHOEBE

I miss Dad. Nobody can take his place. Promise me, Mum? Not even Alec.

DARLENE

Phoebe, no one is taking Dad's place.

ZOEY

Alec has kids doesn't he? I wonder what his kids think about him seeing you.

PHOEBE

Yeah, Mum, what about Alec's kids?

DARLENE

What is up with you two tonight?  
Let's just have a nice time and  
that'll be the end of this.

PHOEBE

The end of what, Mum?

DARLENE

Of love. I'm bloody sick of it. I'm  
stressed to the max. I feel like my  
head is about to explode, and you two  
won't shut up about your Dad, Alec,  
and this kooky Donovan. Ugh!

ZOEY

Sorry, Mum. We'll shut up, won't  
we Phoebe?

PHOEBE

Yes, sorry Mum. We'll shut up.

DARLENE

GOOD. Thank you. Here's his room.

Darlene knocks hard upon the door.

INT. DONOVAN'S ROOM

Donovan moves left and right, sort of like a caged rat. He starts to go to the door and realizes he still has his apron on. He unties his apron and throws it on the counter. He opens the door, and there are Darlene, Zoey, and Phoebe standing together like Christmas carolers. He waves his hand to usher them in. They come in and are taken aback by the festive look of the room.

DONOVAN

WELCOME! Please, come in! Oh my God,  
Darlene, you haven't changed at all!  
(he kisses her cheek)  
And these are your daughters? Whoa;  
they're so grown up! And you must be Zoey?

ZOEY

Yes. Hello.

DONOVAN

And Phoebe? Welcome to my humble  
abode. Let me take your hats and goats.

PHOEBE GIGGLES. She likes Donovan's whimsical personality. Zoey is reserved and shy, as if Zoey is observing Donovan to see his faults. Zoey and Phoebe go immediately to the appetizer tray and start eating appetizers. Darlene notes their boldness.

DARLENE

GIRLS! Donovan hasn't said you can do that! MIND YOUR MANNERS!

The girls turn to their Mum and Donovan for approval.

DONOVAN

It's fine. REALLY! Eat all you want! But save room for dinner! I made lasagna. Do you girls like lasagna!

PHOEBE

YUM! Mum, can we look in our stockings?

DONOVAN

YES! You look all you want!

Darlene turns to the girls to put a stop to their nosiness.

DARLENE

NO, GIRLS! WE'RE EATING DINNER! JUST BEHAVE! DON'T BE NOSY!

Donovan comes up behind Darlene and hugs her. He nuzzles her neck. Zoey and Phoebe notice, and giggle. Darlene pulls free of him and walks to the sink area. The girls have moved from the appetizer table to the tree, where there are several presents.

ZOEY

Mum, Donovan bought us presents!

PHOEBE

What did we buy, Donovan, Mum?

DARLENE

We'll buy him something tomorrow. Donovan, can we eat now?

Darlene lifts the foil on the lasagna. He stands to the side and smiles at her. Darlene looks up and sees Donovan smiling at her.

DARLENE

Why are you grinning like the Cheshire Cat?



DONOVAN

I was just thinking of the first time I saw you. It's like déjà vu seeing you. Let's go out on the balcony. I wrote you a love song on my guitar.

DARLENE

A love song? No, I'm here because of your banner, and nothing more. My boss forced me to come. So don't get any wild ideas about us. I'm still seeing Alec Hopper.

Donovan is vexed by her reserve.

DONOVAN

Alec Hopper? That's such a dumb name. Do you really want to be Mrs. Hopper?

DARLENE

And MRS. SKIRKIN is better? You might have announced your arrival more quietly like a normal person.

DONOVAN

I'm following the advice of Confucius. You see, I'm in love with you. People do crazy things like this all the time. I guess I have totally retro, archaic ideas about romance. Don't you?

DARLENE

I do. But it takes two to tango, and right now my dance card is quite full. Um, we should go ahead and eat. I'd like to avoid the news media.

DONOVAN

I seriously doubt they'll show up.

DARLENE

Oh, they'll show up all right. My boss will make sure of that.

DONOVAN

Because he wants us to be together?

DARLENE

Because it's free publicity. (MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Your signage has done what our marketing department has consistently failed doing. GIRLS, COME FILL YOUR PLATES!

Donovan takes a green salad, and a Greek salad from the refrigerator, and sets them on the kitchen counter.

DONOVAN

I made salads. This one is Greek.  
I forgot to buy tongs.

Donovan uses a spatula to put lasagna on everyone's plates. The girls, and Darlene get salad, and sit at a sleek oak dining table. Donovan has put place settings on the table for everyone. He pours everyone glasses of sparkling cider.

AT THE DINING TABLE – MINUTES LATER

Everyone is busy eating.

PHOEBE

This is the best lasagna EVER.  
Mum, can I have seconds?

DARLENE

(she nods)

This salad is really great. I should hire you to feed the kids at my home-stay. They'd love it. So, how long are you staying, Don-O? It looks like you're planning on being here long-term.

DONOVAN

I'm paid up until January 3rd.  
Then I suppose I'll be homeless.

PHOEBE

Homeless? Really? Mum, let Donovan live with us! PLEASE! And look mum, he has a guitar!

ZOEY

Yeah, Mum, Donovan can live in the room above our garage, and be our cook.

PHOEBE

Seriously, Mum, he's a good cook!

DARLENE

No, no, no. Donovan needs to go home,  
back to Los Angeles. I'm sure he has  
lots to do back there, right Donovan?  
He has to go home, girls.

DONOVAN

Actually, no, I have no reason to go  
back. My aunt doesn't expect me. I  
could be here for a thousand years and  
no one would miss me.

PHOEBE

See, Mum? Donovan can stay!

DARLENE

Sorry, we're not doing that, girls.

SFX: THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

Darlene has a deer in the headlights look on her face.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

OH NO! What time is it?

DONOVAN

(looks at his wristwatch)  
It's about a quarter 'til eight.

DARLENE

Girls, quick - hide in the bathroom!  
AND LOCK THE DOOR, ZOHEY!

Phoebe and Zoey giggle, stand, and run to the bathroom.

PHOEBE

WEE-OOH!, WEE-OOH!, WEE-OOH!

ZOHEY

(laughing)  
SHUT UP, YOU KOOK!

ZOHEY SLAMS AND LOCKS THE BATHROOM DOOR.

DONOVAN STANDS. He picks up the girls' plates and sets them in the  
dishwasher.

SFX: ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

DARLENE

Are you going to answer that?

DONOVAN

Do you want me to?

DARLENE

I'll get in trouble if you don't.

Donovan shrugs and goes to the door. He opens it, and a news photographer, and two members of the film crew come rushing in. Tim Wiggins, the helicopter cameraman, has a camera with him, and he begins filming. Stu Brumby walks up to Donovan and Darlene.

STU

Hi Don-O! Thanks for inviting us!  
COME ON TIM, FRAME US UP, EH?  
So you must be Darlene?

Stu shakes Darlene's hand.

STU

Ah, she's a beauty, Don-O.

Tim aims the camera at Stu. The lighting guy holds a soft-box over Darlene and Donovan. The sound guy rigs up wireless microphones.

STU (CONT'D)

You love-birds sit on that couch, eh?

Darlene is uptight; she sits with her arms crossed, a meter away from Donovan. Donovan scoots closer to her. She is like a rock.

STU (CONT'D)

Don-O, put your arm around Darlene.  
Do a sound check, Tim. Test, test. Good.

Donovan puts his arm around Darlene's shoulder. She is trying not to enjoy it, and squirms a bit. Tim raises his thumb to say okay.

STU (CONT'D)

Stu Brumby here, from Channel 7 News.  
I'm at the famous Blackman Hotel, with  
Donovan Skirkin and Darlene Poppisoglou,  
who found each other online, after seventeen  
years! Donovan, how did you two meet?

DONOVAN

At a Talking Heads concert. (MORE)

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

It was love at first sight for me.

STU

Right. So how'd you come up with the idea for the signage, Don-O?

DONOVAN

I'd like to take the credit, but the truth is, it was Nick's idea.

STU

You mean, Saint Nick? Mr. Dinkum?

DONOVAN

Yeah. Nick is my guardian angel.

STU

I hope he gave you a good rate. Must have set you back a bit. Are you one of those rich Yanks?

DONOVAN

Me? No way, man. I'm flat broke.

STU

Ah, too bad. Darlene, what did you think when you first saw Donovan's banner?

DARLENE

I was gobsmacked. I mean, who does that?

STU

Looks like a match made in Heaven. The surfer and the architect, eh? What is the firm you work for?

DARLENE

Evans and Whitehall Architecture.

STU

So, what does the future hold for you two? Will there be wedding bells?

DARLENE

Very funny, Stu. Don't count on it. Donovan has to go back to America, and I live here. I swore to myself after my husband died I'd never support a man.

STU

Ah, you're a widow? So Don-O, looks like you've hit a speed bump. How do you plan to negotiate it?

DONOVAN

I have no idea. BUT IT'S AWESOME!

Donovan gets down on one knee. Tim frames him with the camera.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Darlene, I came to Melbourne to see if the feelings I had seventeen years ago were real. They are.

DARLENE

Oh, god, Donovan, please don't.

Donovan takes a black velvet jewelry box from his jacket.

DONOVAN

I went in a jewelry store to buy a necklace, but then I realized I have to go all the way. So I bought this.

He opens the box, and there is a diamond and ruby ring. Darlene is shell-shocked.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

It represents a priceless commitment. I love you, Darlene. Will you marry me?

STU

(to viewers)

Oh my goodness, ladies and gentlemen, our love story has taken a turn! Get a close-up of the ring, Tim-O!

Tim zooms in on the ring. It sparkles in the light.

DARLENE

OKAY THAT'S IT! I CAN'T DO THIS!  
THIS IS COMPLETELY BIZARRE!

Darlene stands, brushes past Stu and Tim, goes to the hallway, and knocks loudly on the bathroom door.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

GIRLS? COME OUT, WE'RE LEAVING!

Donovan follows Darlene to the bathroom door.

DONOVAN

I don't mean to pressure you, Darlene.

DARLENE

OH, RIGHT! GEEZ, DONOVAN! Like asking me to marry you isn't pressuring me? Are you completely bonkers?

DONOVAN

Forget I asked you, Darlene. We'll kick these jerks out of here, and you and the girls can open your gifts.

DARLENE

GIRLS! WE'RE LEAVING! COME ON!

Donovan fetches the stockings. Phoebe and Zoey come out of the bathroom. Darlene, and her daughters go to the front door, and begin to put on their jackets.

PHOEBE

But we haven't had dessert, Mum!

DARLENE

Put your jacket on, Phoebe.

STU

Hey, what is the future with you two? What are your daughters' names? Don-O! Are you staying in Australia? Tell viewers your grand plan!

DONOVAN

I don't know. Excuse me. And frankly, you're being annoying, bro. And another thing, Stu, as The Eighth Affirmation says: Love means never butting into people's lives. I'm just saying. . . .

Darlene and her girls have put on their jackets, and are walking out the front door. Donovan follows, carrying their stockings.

TIM

(to Stu)

Do you want me to film them in the hallway, Stu? Might be a good ending.

STU

Yeah, why not. They've bloody well blown my moving up the ladder. But the ring scene was nice.

TIM

Right. Okay guys, we're rolling!

The film crew follows Donovan, Darlene, Zoey, and Phoebe.

INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE DONOVAN'S ROOM

Darlene, and her daughters walk to the elevators. Donovan catches up with them and hands Darlene, Zoey, and Phoebe their stockings.

DONOVAN

That dude was totally annoying.  
I'm sorry our dinner was spoiled.  
Here's your stockings. I'll bring the presents to your house tomorrow.  
What is your street address?

Darlene pushes the down button on the elevator control panel.

DARLENE

Please don't continue this charade.  
I'm sure you can return the presents.  
People do it all the time. I don't need a psycho stalker in my life.

DONOVAN

If this is about the ring, let's forget I did that. It was dumb.

PHOEBE

He gave you a ring, Mum? Geez!

DARLENE

He tried to.

DONOVAN

Just tell me what street you live on. Throw me a bone here!

DARLENE

Don't tell him, Phoebe.

PHOEBE

But I like him, Mum! He's funny!



DARLENE

Say one word and you're grounded.

Darlene, Zoey, and Phoebe get in the elevator. Zoey and Phoebe look sad. The door is closing.

PHOEBE

1186 Agnes Street!

THE ELEVATOR DOOR CLOSES.

Donovan turns around and sees Tim has been filming them.

DONOVAN

Seriously? Dudes? Knock it off!

TIM

Okay boys, let's go.

Tim, the sound and the lighting guys, turn off their equipment.

DONOVAN

(to the film crew)

Promise me you won't go to her house.

TIM

That's up to Stu, mate.

STU

Love to, but frankly, looks like your proposal fizzled out. Better catch the first jet to L.A. Oz will eat you alive.

INT. DONOVAN'S ROOM — THE BLACKMAN HOTEL — AN HOUR LATER

Donovan washes the dishes, and drinks wine from a bottle.

DONOVAN

(to himself)

She isn't into you, dude.

Donovan imagines he sees a small Confucius floating in the air.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Why am I such a fool for love?

CONFUCIUS

The stallion does not doubt when it approaches a fertile mare.

DONOVAN

I'm not exactly a frickin' stallion.

CONFUCIUS

With small steps, a mountain is climbed.  
Yet water erodes great mountains. The  
softest thing overpowers the hardest.

DONOVAN

So Darlene wants me to try?

CONFUCIUS

Wine softens the will of a scholar.

Donovan takes a beer from the fridge and opens it. He drinks.

DONOVAN

Yeah, we'll I'm no scholar, dude.

The vision of Confucius fades out. Donovan sits on the couch, drinking beers. He takes out the ring and admires it.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

I'm no frickin' stallion, but if  
Confucius wouldn't give up, I won't.

He stands, unsteadily. He goes out of his room and shuts the door.

INT. A TRAIN TO FAIRFIELD – NIGHT

Donovan sees Confucius and Raji sitting across from him. RAJI is a small rotund man, dressed in the traditional clothes of India.

RAJI

I tried to raise his consciousness.

CONFUCIUS

Bliss is sunshine after a hangover.

Donovan plugs his ears. Confucius and Raji keep watching him.

RAJI

He has forgotten The Ninth Affirmation.

DONOVAN

Yeah! I remember it. LOVE SUCKS!

TWO SKATEBOARDERS, who are standing nearby, turn to Donovan.

TRAIN STOP ANNOUNCER (V.O)  
Fairfield station. Exit doors to my right.

SKATEBOARDER  
Hey, keep it down, mate.

DONOVAN  
YOU KEEP IT DOWN, YOU BODGY BASTARDS!

The train stops at the Fairfield station. When the doors open, the skateboarder and his buddy grab hold of Donovan.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)  
HEY, MELLOW OUT, DUDES!

EXT. A RAIL PLATFORM NEAR FAIRFIELD – SECONDS LATER

The skateboarders toss Donovan onto the platform. Donovan is muddled and rolls onto his back. People ignore him.

The door of the train closes and the train proceeds onward. Donovan gets to his feet and goes down the stairs from the platform. He has no idea where he is and wanders down a street.

EXT. A STREET IN FAIRFIELD – AN HOUR LATER

Donovan is still drunk. Confucius and Raji walk alongside him.

DONOVAN  
Please, no philosophical lectures, dudes.

CONFUCIUS  
Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler.  
Those who consume them are not wise.

RAJI  
He is confused about his path.

DONOVAN  
YOU'RE DAMN STRAIGHT ABOUT THAT  
DUDE! GEEZ! I'M NOT EXACTLY STOKED  
ABOUT THE WAY THINGS ARE GOIN' HERE!

Donovan stops for a second to get his bearings. It is quiet. A DOG BARKS SOMEWHERE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD.

CONFUCIUS AND RAJI HAVE DISAPPEARED.

It begins to rain. Soon Donovan is soaked. He appears muddled.

DONOVAN  
 PERFECT! What was their dang address?  
 (remembers)  
 1186 Agnes Street. YEAH! I ROCK!

INT. DARLENE'S HOUSE - FAIRFIELD - NIGHT

Zoey and Phoebe are going through the stockings Donovan gave them. They find feather type masks that cover their eyes and cheeks. The long feathers of the masks curl over their heads.

PHOEBE  
 Look, Mum! Donovan gave us masks!

DARLENE  
 Yes, very nice. Now go get washed up.  
 Did you do your homework, Phoebe?  
 And don't forget, you're grounded!

ZOEY  
 What are you talking about, Mum?  
 Tomorrow's Christmas. We're going  
 to your Mum and Dad's house.

DARLENE  
 Oh, right. Sorry. I'm tired.

ZOEY  
 What was it with the news media?  
 What did Donovan's ring look like?

DARLENE  
 Please, Zoey. I have a headache.

PHOEBE  
 Can we pick up Don-O's presents tomorrow?

Darlene takes two gifts from beneath their small, fake tree, and hands them to Zoey and Phoebe.

DARLENE  
 No. Here, open these. Okay?

Phoebe and Zoey begin tearing open their presents.

PHOEBE  
 Thanks for the blouse, Mum! Um. . .  
 Mum, why don't you like Donovan?

DARLENE

I am not going to support a man.

ZOEY

He seems nice to me. Mum, ugh,  
you bought me socks, again? Gawd.

DARLENE

I'm going out for a bit. We can't  
go to Mum and Dad's empty-handed.  
You girls wrap their presents.

ZOEY

But it's Christmas Eve, Mum!  
We were going to watch a flick.

DARLENE

Watch it after you wrap presents.  
I have to buy groceries, and shop.

PHOEBE

Just open one gift with us, Mum?

DARLENE

After I get home. I'll be back by  
eleven. Tell the home-stay kids  
there's stew in the fridge.

EXT. A STREET IN FAIRFIELD — NIGHT

Donovan is lost. His shoes squeak. A MAN in a window watches him.

DONOVAN

DARLENE! DARLENE? WHERE ARE YOU?

MAN

SHE'S NOT HERE, MATE! RACK OFF!

DONOVAN

HAS ANYBODY SEEN DARLENE?

MAN

YEAH, SHE'S SHAGGING ME, MATE!

He bends to tie his shoelace and falls over. He gets to his feet.

EXT. AGNES STREET — MOMENTS LATER

Donovan sits on a curb. He rubs his eyes; his vision is blurred.

He looks up, and his vision clears. He focuses on the street sign. He has found Agnes Street. He springs to his feet and starts jogging down the street. He realizes the street numbers are getting too big and does an about face and runs back.

EXT. THE DRIVEWAY OF DARLENE'S HOUSE – TEN MINUTES LATER

Donovan is out of breath. He stops and leans against the front bumper of a car. Darlene comes from her house. She is dressed up, ready to meet Alec at their hotel rendezvous for Christmas Eve. Her car is parked in the driveway of her house. As she approaches her car she pushes the door unlock button on her keychain. She turns at the sound of Donovan's footsteps.

DARLENE

OH! DONOVAN, YOU SCARED ME! What are you doing here? Are you stalking me?

DONOVAN

Stalking you? Why, just because I show up drunk, and soaking wet, with a crazy look in my eyes at your house?

DARLENE

There are no fairy tale endings, Donovan. I'm sure your parents must think you're bonkers. Go home to California.

DONOVAN

My parents are dead, and my aunt said I shouldn't let my soul mate get away. There's nothing for me in California!

DARLENE

Look, I'll drive you to the airport.

DONOVAN

(to Darlene's neighbors)

SHE WANTS ME TO LEAVE! I CAN'T LEAVE!  
I can't leave because everyone I care about is here. YOU, DARLENE! I SACRIFICED EVERYTHING TO COME TO AUSTRALIA!

Darlene sighs, and leans against her car door, watching Donovan.

DARLENE

YOU'RE DRUNK. Go back to the hotel. How did you get here, anyway?

DONOVAN

I rode a train, and ran, and here I am.

DARLENE

You ran here, in the rain, with your bad leg? For me? That's insane.

DONOVAN

Yeah. I know you think I'm a loser, but I love you. My lawyer is mailing me cashola. Cash-o-la. I'll learn to speak Greek. I'll help raise your girls.

DARLENE

You don't have to learn Greek, and I don't need your help in raising my girls. We're polar opposites, Don-O. But never mind that now. Do you need a ride to the train station?

DONOVAN

I have a ticket, thank you. Somewhere in my pocket. CRAP! Must be in my other coat. Hey, hey, hey. What about your presents?

DARLENE

Give them away, or take them back. Look, I'm fond of Alec. He's Greek, like me. When he leaves his wife, we'll. . . .

DONOVAN

MARRIED! DARLENE! Do you hear yourself? 'When he leaves his wife.' How did you get so mixed up? Didn't anyone ever tell you marriages have boundaries! But I'm the fool. I flew 8,000 miles just to hear you tell me you are having an affair with a married man? WHOA! So what is he, an architect, doctor, or a frickin' lawyer?

DARLENE

He's a psychiatrist. A very rich one. Not that it is any of your business.

DONOVAN

He should have his own head examined. But, I'm sure his kids want you two to be happy. Not to mention, HIS WIFE!

DARLENE

Please, Donovan. Alec and I are discreet.

DONOVAN

DISCREET? Well, let me tell you a thing or two about discreet. Y'know, there's a place for discreet people! You probably have heard of it. H-E-L-L. Ugh. . .which way to the train station?

Darlene opens the passenger door. She helps Donovan into the car. He gets in, and she closes his door. She gets behind the wheel, starts the engine, and they drive off.

EXT. THE BLACKMAN HOTEL — A HALF AN HOUR LATER — NIGHT

Darlene pulls into the parking lot. Donovan has fallen asleep.

INT. DARLENE'S CAR

DARLENE

Donovan? Wake up. We're here.

Donovan opens his eyes, glances at her, and gets out of the car.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Do you need help getting to your room?

DONOVAN

No, I'm not that wasted. Goodnight.

EXT. THE PARKING LOT

Darlene drives off. Donovan staggers into the hotel entrance.

INT. ALEC'S APARTMENT IN MELBOURNE — NIGHT

Darlene and Alec Hopper have made love. Alec turns the TV on with a remote. He flips through a dozen channels. ALEC is forty-something, with graying hair; muscular; and tall.

DARLENE

Alec, do you have to watch TV, now? We just made love ten seconds ago.

ALEC

I like TV. It's a diversion that allows me to live vicariously through people whose lives are more ruined than my own.



DARLENE

Your life is not ruined. Can we talk?

ALEC

What are we doing now? I'm a psychiatrist, I spend all day talking to crazy people. When I get home I don't feel like talking. Not that this box is my home. This is what you bullied me into buying.

DARLENE

Sorry. I just want more of you.

ALEC

You want more of me? My kids and wife hate me. What more do you want?

DARLENE

I want things to be civil and discreet.

ALEC

Civil? Discreet? Fine. No one is throwing dinner plates. Yet. But stay tuned.

DARLENE

You said you'd divorce your wife. That was eight months ago.

ALEC

Oh, here we go. Look, divorce was your idea, not mine. Jennifer could wipe me out. And when I am broke, what then?

DARLENE

I'd still be very fond of you.

ALEC

Fond is a word you're rather fond of, but I've grown weary of it. Not long ago marathon sex was enough. Now you want the whole Greek menu. The others never wanted anything more.

DARLENE

Ah, GREAT! Mention your other girls after we've made love! PERFECT!

She gets up and begins to dress.

ALEC

Oi! Where are you going? It's only ten forty-five, Darlene.

DARLENE

I told the girls I'd be home by eleven.

Alec flips to Channel 7 and watches a story about the banner.

ALEC

AH HELL, THEY'RE STILL TALKING ABOUT THAT STUPID BANNER THE CRAZY YANK PUT UP!

DARLENE

At least there's one guy in Melbourne who's crazy about me.

ALEC

Yeah, and he needs to see a shrink.

DARLENE

He's crazy in a good way. He loves me. You could learn a few things from him.

ALEC

Could I? Well, here's a news flash: only crazy people hang love notes on buildings!

DARLENE

It was highly flattering in a weird way.

ALEC

I thought it pissed you off? Maybe you're the one who needs a shrink. If I didn't know better, I'd say you kind of like that whacker.

She buttons her blouse and puts on her coat.

DARLENE

I'm here, aren't I? I'm not with 'the crazy Yank' as you put it.

ALEC

Yeah. C'mere. I'm a jealous bastard. I'm just a little worked up. (MORE)

She goes to the edge of the bed. Alec takes her hand.

ALEC (CONT'D)

You're just confused. I love you.

DARLENE

Donovan asked me to marry him.

ALEC

What? When?

DARLENE

Earlier tonight. At his hotel.

ALEC

When Channel 7 was there? Bloody hell.

DARLENE

I said no, of course.

ALEC

Yeah, and that was the right answer.

DARLENE

I'm not so sure.

ALEC

I'll bash his bloody head in.

EXT. A CAFÉ IN MEBOURNE — ST. KILA STREET — CHRISTMAS — MORNING

It's a balmy Christmas morning. Donovan wears his surfer clothes. He sips on a latte. He looks at Lucy Macleod's business card.

SHOW CLOSEUP OF LUCY MACLEOD'S BUSINESS CARD.

An Australian HUSBAND and his WIFE approach Donovan.

HUSBAND

G'day, my wife and I are wondering if you're the guy on the news who made that love banner. Are you?

DONOVAN

Yes, I'm the fool in love.

WIFE

It was delightfully romantic. Could we get your autograph?

The wife gives Donovan a piece of paper. Donovan autographs it.

DONOVAN

It was all for naught.

WIFE

Aren't you two going to get hitched?

DONOVAN

I'd say it's unlikely.

HUSBAND

Women are unpredictable, and hormonal. They're mean as cat's piss one minute, and sweet as roses the next. But I reckon I got a sweet one, here, eh?

The wife smiles at her husband, and playfully pinches his cheek. The Australian couple walks away.

DONOVAN'S CELL PHONE RINGS

DONOVAN

Hello?

CARL (V.O.)

Hey, Donovan, you're all over the news!

DONOVAN

Yeah, it's quite the scene.

CARL (V.O.)

Did your Aussie gal say no?

DONOVAN

Yep. I'm coming home. As soon as I get the settlement check. Has Murray received it yet?

CARL (V.O.)

Yesterday. He got you eighty more bucks.

DONOVAN

I get eight thousand eighty dollars?

CARL (V.O.)

Yeah. It's better than nothing, bro.

DONOVAN

Fine. FedEx the check. I'm broke.

CARL (V.O.)

Sure thing. Merry Christmas, bro.

DONOVAN

Yeah, Merry Christmas, Carl.

INT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARDS – TWO DAYS LATER

Donovan assists Nick in outputting a vinyl banner from a machine.

NICK

Sorry things didn't work out, mate.  
It may be no consolation, but there are  
a lot of fish in the pond.

DONOVAN

Yeah, but I only wanted to catch her.

NICK

A man has to suck up his pride and  
admit he's been a dumb bastard. God  
knows I've been one more than once.

DONOVAN

I am a dumb bastard. I'm so dumb I'm  
being booted out of my hotel.

NICK

No worries. You can bed down here if you  
like. Stay awhile and mull things over.

DONOVAN

Whoa. Thanks. Hey, Nick, what's that  
roll of canvas back by that wall?

NICK

Ah, the people before me left it.  
They were fine artists or something.

DONOVAN

Perfect! I feel like painting again.  
Can I use some of the canvas and paint  
in the shop?

NICK

Sure. Paint me a picture, eh? I'll be  
in Sydney next week, with my assistant.  
I landed a big sign job, thanks to the  
publicity from hanging the banner. (MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

I should send that idiot reporter from Channel 7 a thank you card. Give me a hand with this banner, mate, eh?

Donovan and Nick roll the banner and carry it out the door.

INT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARDS — DAYS LATER — AFTERNOON

IMAGES OF DONOVAN BUILDING CANVAS FRAMES AND STRETCHING CANVAS.

EXT. THE GREAT COAST HIGHWAY — A BEACH PARK — LATE MORNING

Donovan is walking with his guitar. HE APPROACHES THREE TWENTY-SOMETHING AUSSIE SURFERS SITTING ON THE BEACH. MACK, ROB, AND DANNY. DANNY IS AN ABORIGINE. The Aussies are smoking a joint.

DONOVAN

HEY, DUDES! Could I use one of your boards?

MACK, a tousled-haired twenty-one-year-old, smiles.

MACK

Yeah, sure, mate. Want a toke, first?

DONOVAN

Normally, I'd totally say yes, but I'm on a spiritual journey.

ROB

Yeah? Like a walkabout, eh? You can wear Danny's wet suit because the water is bloody cold. He's done for the day. Right, Danny?

DANNY

Yeah, no worries mate.

Danny hands Donovan his wetsuit. Donovan puts it on.

ROB (CONT'D)

What's your name, mate? Mine's Rob. That's Mack. And Danny of course.

DONOVAN

Donovan. You may have seen me on TV. I'm the guy who did the love banner.

MACK

YEAH? Ah, yeah, on Channel 7! (MORE)

MACK (CONT'D)

Did your lady like the love note, mate?  
I thought it was bloody brilliant.

DONOVAN

Apparently, not. She shot me down.

MACK

That's bodgy. You ready, Don-O?

DONOVAN

LET'S HIT IT! YEEEE-HAW!

Mack, Rob, and Donovan take their boards and wade into the surf.

EXT. ON THE OCEAN — MINUTES LATER

Show clips of Donovan, Mack, and Rob riding big waves. Donovan is smiling. MACK GIVES HIM A THUMBS UP SIGN.

EXT. ON THE BEACH — A HOUR LATER

MACK

Hey, mate, you're a bloody good surfer.

Mack opens a beer and hands it to Donovan. Donovan takes a swig.

DONOVAN

Thanks. This is just what I needed.

THE AUSSIES, AND DONOVAN, SWIG BEERS. DONOVAN PLAYS HIS GUITAR.

INT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARDS — LATE AFTERNOON

DONOVAN DIPS HIS PAINTBRUSH IN A BUCKET AND STROKES A BOLD BLACK DIAGONAL SWASH ON THE CANVAS. He tosses and drips paint on the canvases, and uses squeegees, rollers, brushes, and his bare hands. His work is like a fusion of Caravaggio and aborigine X-ray style rock art. Show scenes of DONOVAN TOSSING PAINT AT A CANVAS, TAKING BREAKS TO EAT, PLAYING GUITAR, AND SMILING as he stares at a completed painting. HE HAS FOUND HIS TRUE CALLING.

INT. BRAINSTORM BILLBOARDS — A WEEK LATER — MORNING

Nick enters the studio with his dog, MAX. Donovan is busy painting and doesn't see Nick until Nick steps into his peripheral view.

NICK

WOW! THAT'S BLOODY BRILLIANT, DON-O!

DONOVAN

WHOA, HI NICK! WELCOME BACK! Nice dog.

NICK

Yeah, this here is Max. He's a bluey, and a bitzer. He can sniff out bodgy types in two seconds. Looks like he likes you, so you must be all right. Eh, how'd you make these canvases? They're nicely crafted, mate.

DONOVAN

There was lumber in a dusty back room.

NICK

YEAH? Ah, no worries. It was going to waste anyway.

DONOVAN

Most of these canvases are huge, except that smaller one for you, over there.

Donovan shows Nick a two-meter-long painting. Nick is astounded.

NICK

My wife will go gaga over this one, mate. I wish I knew a gallery owner to help you.

Donovan takes Lucy Macleod's business card from his wallet.

DONOVAN

I might know of someone.

INT. ANITA TRAVERSO GALLERY — RICHMOND — DECEMBER 30 — MORNING

Richmond, suburb of Melbourne, is a hip area of town, with galleries, restaurants, and shopping. Donovan, dressed in paint stained shorts, flip-flops, and tee, enters the gallery. It is a large space with high ceilings, white walls, and hardwood floors. A variety of works are displayed. Most are modern styles of art, from sculpture to paintings.

Vince, who Donovan saw by the jewelry store, passes by.

VINCE THE SWAGMAN

OI, MATE! LOVED YOUR LOVE NOTE BANNER! THE ROCKS, HILLS, AND TREES OF THE FIELD CLAP THEIR HANDS WITH JOY! HEY MATE, you got any change, mate? I need some booze.



Donovan gives Vince a handful of change and enters the gallery. He approaches a man named ZACK, a solemn looking man, about age 30, with punk rock spiked hair, seated behind a counter.

DONOVAN

Hey, bro, there's a homeless dude panhandling outside your gallery.

ZACK

Oh yeah, Vince the Swagman. He's harmless.

DONOVAN

Right. Uh, does Lucy Macleod work here?

ZACK

Part-time. She may be here, or not. Existentially, none of us are here. We're just illusions of light. We could be made of cheese for all I know.

DONOVAN

Uh, right. Her uncle in California said I should look her up. I'm an artist.

ZACK

You have my condolences, mate. But never fear, the weather's nice; you can live on the streets. Get yourself a cardboard sign.

DONOVAN

I'm not going to be homeless, bro.

ZACK

Ah, too good to be homeless, eh?

DONOVAN

NO. So, are you an artist, or what?

ZACK

Do I look like an artist?

DONOVAN

I don't know, dude. Maybe.

ZACK

If punching numbers is an art, I'm Michelangelo. I'm an accountant. I do the gallery's books. Lately, it's been creative accounting.

DONOVAN

Uh huh. That must be interesting.

ZACK

That shows what you know. Ah, I see Lucy standing by her painting. But she's too young for you, mate.

DONOVAN

I'm not trying to pick her up.

ZACK

So you're into young men, then, eh?

DONOVAN

No, dude. How old do I look?

ZACK

A young fifty for all I know.

DONOVAN

I'm only thirty-nine, bro.

ZACK

Right. Your secret's safe with me. She's single, by the way. In case you're trying to pick her up.

Donovan shrugs. He turns and proceeds into the gallery.

DONOVAN

I'm not trying to pick her up.

LUCY MACLEOD is a pretty, twenty-something brunette with shoulder length hair, green eyes, high cheekbones, perfect teeth, and a svelte figure. She is talking to an OLD COUPLE about her painting.

LUCY

This painting has to do with my angst of not being able to bear children; thus its overall blue-ness. Indigo blue, like my barren womb. Abandoned, like after my boyfriend dumped me for a fertile blonde whore.

OLD WIFE

It reminds me of my hysterectomy.

The couple walks away. Donovan approaches Lucy.

DONOVAN

Excuse me, ma'am. Are you Lucy?

LUCY

Yeah, Lucy in the sky with diamonds.

DONOVAN

Oh yeah, cool, like I am the walrus.  
Koo-koo-kachoo and cellophane flowers.  
Uh, my name is Donovan Skirkin. I met  
your uncle, Peter, in California.

LUCY

Oh yeah? Awesome. How is Peter?

DONOVAN

He's cool. I was supposed to get the  
gallery ready for his opening show,  
but I was hit by a car.

LUCY

Ooh, how terrible for you, mate!

DONOVAN

Yeah, I'm much better now, thanks.  
Um, can you tell me how to get my  
paintings displayed here?

LUCY

It took me months, and my cousin owns  
this gallery. It's a bitch, really.  
Hey, you look familiar. Have you been  
on a commercial, or TV show? Oh yeah,  
you're that guy from the States who did  
the lovely love note banner! WOW! OI,  
GEOFFREY! THIS IS THE YANK WHO DID THE  
LOVE NOTE BANNER ON THAT BUILDING!

GEOFFREY, and gallery patrons surround Donovan for autographs.

LUCY (CONT'D)

What sort of painting do you do, Don-O?

DONOVAN

I guess it's abstract expressionism.

LUCY

(to Geoffrey)

We should do a special show for Don-O.

GEOFFREY

Ah, yeah, no worries. His would sell like mad. How many works do you have?

DONOVAN

Fifteen acrylic paintings. Like, I had a breakthrough. Maybe it's the light Down Under, or surfing, or something.

GEOFFREY

Yeah, they're all influences, for sure. Lucy, can you go with me to see Don-O's paintings during lunch?

LUCY

LOVE TO! Where do you live, Don-O?

DONOVAN

Actually they're in a truck, out front.

INT. EVANS & WHITEHALL OFFICE — MELBOURNE — DECEMBER 31 — DAY

Darlene is on break, reading The Age newspaper. In the Arts section, there is a photo of Donovan and his paintings. The headline reads, "Love Note Artist wows Melbourne with masterful modernist paintings." Marissa notices the headline and leans over Darlene's shoulder to read the story.

MARISSA

Wow, looks like the guy you rejected is making a grand entrance again. Maybe you should have hooked up with him instead of Mr. X.

DARLENE

Alec. Not Mr. X. Don't be snippy.

MARISSA

You better hide that section of the paper. If Mr. Whitehall sees it he'll make you attend Don-O's gallery opening.

DARLENE

I'd rather swallow poison.

MARISSA

You should take Alec with you. Maybe it will make him jealous, and heat up your next soirée rendezvous.

DARLENE

You're being intrusive, Marissa.  
Go double-check the CAD drawings for  
the Sunshine Memorial Hospital.

MARISSA

But those were checked a month ago.

DARLENE

Yeah, well, go check them again.

EXT. DEMITRI'S FEAST RESTAURANT — RICHMOND — NEW YEAR'S EVE

GREEK MUSIC PLAYS ON THE SOUND SYSTEM.

Donovan and Lucy eat dinner. The soft light from a red candle in a glass holder, in the center of their round table, illuminates Lucy's lovely features. Her leopard print blouse shows her ample cleavage. Donovan wears a white jacket, and black shirt. He has shaved, and his hair is combed. He rests on his elbows, with wine glass in hand, captivated by Lucy's beauty.

DONOVAN

This place is great. Whoa.

LUCY

Yeah, my dad owns this restaurant.

DONOVAN

You're Greek?

LUCY

Half Greek. My Mum is Greek, and my  
Dad is from England. Mum was a Loukas.

DONOVAN

I only fall for Greek women. It  
makes me believe in reincarnation.

LUCY TAKES A SIP OF HER WINE.

LUCY

So you're falling for me, are you?

DONOVAN

Any guy would. You're young and beautiful.  
Your future is paved with gold. Me, I'm  
like that Greek dude who rolled the boulder.

LUCY

King Sisyphus. He was a bad man, and nothing like you. You know, every woman in Melbourne wants to bed you.

DONOVAN

You're putting me on. Whoa. Why?

LUCY

You're handsome, romantic, confident, and brave. Everything women want in a man.

DONOVAN

And broke. You forgot broke.

LUCY

Not for long. Gosh, Don-O, each of your wonderful paintings is worth at least \$10,000. You could have \$100,000 in sales a month from now, even with a fifty-percent gallery commission. You'll be absolutely, ridiculously rich in no time.

DONOVAN

Whoa, thanks for the affirmation.

LUCY

We already have ten of our most wealthy patrons coming to your show. You're on your way. Let's go to a club and celebrate.

DONOVAN

Sure, why not? But no booze for me, thanks.

LUCY

Then I'll do the drinking for both of us.

INT. THE BILLABONG CLUB – MELBOURNE – AN HOUR LATER

Lucy and Donovan dance on the lit dance floor. Lucy is plowed. The song is "I Get Knocked Down" by Chumbawamba. The song ends and they sit in a booth. Lucy is all over him. She kisses his neck.

LUCY

Don-O, take me home and make wild love to me a dozen times. I want you so bad.

DONOVAN

Lucy, you know I can't do that.

LUCY

Don't worry, I have Viagra, and condoms.

DONOVAN

No. I mean I can't be an appetizer on a menu, like at that Greek restaurant.

LUCY

Guzaria. Greek tapas. Well, will you make sure I get home okay? Here's my car keys. I live at 14157 Swan Street.

She passes out on Donovan's lap. The PEOPLE IN THE CLUB do a New Year's countdown. We see a close up of Donovan's glum expression.

PEOPLE IN THE CLUB

THREE, TWO, ONE. . .HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Paper streamers and confetti land on Donovan and Lucy.

EXT. LUCY'S HOUSE — JANUARY 1 — EARLY MORNING

Donovan comes around the passenger side of the car and lifts Lucy out. He carries her to the porch of her bungalow-style house, and lays her temporarily on the pillows of a porch swing.

LUCY

You can undress me, or whatever you want to do. It's all good. . .Don-O.

Donovan unlocks the door and carries Lucy inside her house.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE

Donovan switches on a light and carries Lucy down a hallway to a bedroom. He lays her on the bed and takes her shoes off.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Happy New Year, Don-O. . . .

Donovan puts a comforter on her. She smiles, and sleeps.

DONOVAN

The old me would have undressed you in ten seconds. But the Eleventh Affirmation is to hurt no one, including inanimate objects, like rocks, and women under age twenty-five with stellar bodies.

INT. ANITA TRAVERSO GALLERY — JANUARY 2 — AFTERNOON

IT IS DONOVAN'S GALLERY OPENING. Donovan mingles with the crowd. His demeanor is more confident. He wears a white silk jacket and dark tee shirt, designer jeans, and new casual shoes. Lucy Macleod walks up to Donovan, wraps her arms around him, and kisses him.

LUCY

A woman bought one of your paintings for \$11,000, Don-O!

DONOVAN

Whoa! How is that even possible?

LUCY

People are gaga for you. Didn't you know? Me too. Hey, did we do it last night? It would be okay if we did.

DONOVAN

Nah, sorry, Lucy. I just tucked you in. I was a total gentleman.

LUCY

Ugh. Gawd. I really needed it too. Well, fine. We're just mates then. I knew you still loved that architect.

DONOVAN

Sorry, Lucy. I know it makes no sense. Any guy would be hot for you. You rock.

LUCY

Thanks, Don-O. Um, I almost forgot. Channel 7 phoned. They want you on the Sunrise Show tomorrow.

DONOVAN

Seriously? That's totally surreal. It must be my destiny.

LUCY

Yeah, so I'll swing by and pick you up tomorrow morning. About eight-thirty? You're still at Nick's studio?

DONOVAN

Cool. I hope I don't say something dumb.

LUCY

Don't worry; you'll be great. I'll be in the audience as your cheerleader. (MORE)



LUCY (CONT'D)

After the show you're welcome to hang out with me at my house if you like. I'll make dinner, and daiquiris, and we can sit in the hot tub and make out.

DONOVAN

Ah-ah, Lucy. Be good. We're mates.

They turn, and Darlene is standing there, looking at them.

DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Oh. . .hi. Lucy, this is. . .

Lucy steps forward and shakes Darlene's hand.

LUCY

Ah, you must be Darlene. I'm Lucy. My god, you're so pretty!

DARLENE

Thanks, you too. Are you his date?

LUCY

No, not at all. I just work here. I'm helping him. Um, excuse me.

Lucy walks away. Darlene and Donovan stare at each other.

DARLENE

She's beautiful. Rather young, too. Have you slept with her?

DONOVAN

Whoa, seriously? I can't believe you! On New Year's Eve she wanted me, but I turned her down. That's how dumb I am. All while you were with Alec, so don't lay a guilt trip on me.

DARLENE

Sorry. I'm breaking up with Alec. He was a foolish mistake.

DONOVAN

You're breaking up? Well let me know when it's official, and we'll have a parade. Maybe Nick would even make a banner to announce it to everyone in Melbourne.

DARLENE

I'm sorry; I've been horrible. I didn't deserve your romantic gestures. I don't blame you if you hate me now.

DONOVAN

How could I possibly hate you? You've only squashed my heart like a bug.

DARLENE

I know; I am a terrible person. But, I came to tell you your art is stunning.

DONOVAN

Unlucky in love; lucky with paint.

DARLENE

I just bought one of your paintings.

DONOVAN

YOU bought it? YOU? Why?

She steps closer to him. She reaches out and takes his hand.

DARLENE

I'm going to hang it in my office. Look, Donovan, after Darren died, I swore I wouldn't get tangled up in a relationship. I was emotionally drained.

DONOVAN

That doesn't completely explain Alec.

DARLENE

I was lonely; I needed sex. Alec gave me passion. He made me feel something.

DONOVAN

I might need hypnotherapy to forget that.

DARLENE

I didn't know I had any love to give. I panicked when you came on so strong, with the banner and ring. Let me make it up to you. I'll show you around Melbourne.

DONOVAN

I get it. Your boss made you come here. London meant nothing to you.

DARLENE

I honestly don't remember. We could try dating. Seventeen years is a lot of time to make up. What are you doing tomorrow afternoon?

DONOVAN

Tomorrow I'm on the Sunrise Show.

DARLENE

Really? You need a publicist. I could really use a hug, right now, Don-O.

Donovan relents. He hugs Darlene. She has tears in her eyes.

DONOVAN

You're crying? What's that about?

DARLENE

I feel like I'm falling apart.

DONOVAN

Here. C'mere. It's all cool.

DARLENE

Thanks. Good luck with the show. I'll pick you up afterwards. Okay?

DONOVAN

Sure.

INT. SUNRISE SHOW SET AT CHANNEL 7 IN MELBOURNE — MORNING

The hosts, SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE and DAVID KOCH, face the camera.

DAVID

Our next guest is Donovan Skirkin, A Yank whose Christmas banner titillated the hearts of women in Melbourne.

SAMANTHA

Titillated? Mmm, are we allowed to say that word, David?

DAVID

Yes, I checked with the sensors. So, without further adieu, let's bring on the mysterious, talented, young man from California, Mr. Donovan Skirkin.

MUSIC: 'DURAN, DURAN' SUNRISE SHOW THEME MUSIC PLAYS.

Donovan enters the set, shakes Samantha's and David's hands, and sits between them on the wide couch.

SAMANTHA

G'day! Gosh, you're so handsome!

DAVID

Down girl. He's taken. Right, Don-O?

DONOVAN

Actually, until yesterday afternoon I thought I had totally bombed, but then my lady came around.

SAMANTHA

Oh? And by "my lady," you mean, Darlene?

DONOVAN

Yeah, she came to my gallery opening.

DAVID

So will you be staying on a bit, in Oz?

DONOVAN

I'd like to. The Ninth Affirmation is, "Go with the flow; be the feather."

SAMANTHA

So which way is the wind blowing with your artistic endeavor? We understand your gallery opening was a smash hit. That was at the Anita Traverso Gallery?

DONOVAN

Yes, and Lucy Macleod, from the gallery is in the audience. LUCY? STAND UP!

Lucy stands, and the studio audience applauds.

SAMANTHA

My goodness, Don-O, you certainly attract the beautiful people.

DONOVAN

Yeah, and she's single! She rocks!

Lucy smiles and sits down.

DAVID

How many paintings did you sell?

DONOVAN

Fifteen! I'm totally stoked. It's all part of my recovery since my accident. And I want to thank Nick, who made the signage. THANKS, BRO!

SAMANTHA

Ah, I bet he's a cutie too! Hi Nick!

DAVID

Ah, right. Steady, girl. So, Don-O, tell us about the accident, eh?

DONOVAN

I was struck by a car in Venice, California while riding my bicycle. I found Darlene online.

SAMANTHA

God bless the internet, eh, ladies? How many bones did you break, Don-O?

DONOVAN

Six, including my ribs. And I cracked my head a bit. I think that actually helped my diction, and I.Q.

SAMATHA

Maybe I need to bonk my head a bit. You've got me tongue-tied.

DAVID

Take your pill, dear, and lie down. Ah, we have a few photos of Don-O from that time. Show the pics, Jim-O. (MORE)

Monitor shows images of Donovan in the hospital, on the beach in Venice, CA, at the gallery beside one of his paintings, and one of Donovan with Aunt Violet.

DAVID (O.S) (CONT'D)

And who is this?

DONOVAN (O.S.)

That's my Aunt Violet. And she's single.

INT. THE KITCHEN IN ALEC'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Alec Hopper is dressed for work. The Sunrise Show is on TV, but Alec does not immediately realize Donovan is a guest on the show. Alec pours coffee from a French press in a cup and takes a sip. His tie is halfway tied. He puts on his sports coat, and tightens his tie, but FREEZES, AND TURNS TOWARD THE TV, upon hearing Donovan's surfer dude way of talking. FRAME THE TV SCREEN.

SAMANTHA (V.O.)

So have you surfed yet in Melbourne?

DONOVAN (V.O.)

Totally. I caught some righteously big waves with three awesome Aussie dudes.

ALEC

YOU DUMB WHACKER!

DAVID (V.O.)

Before the show you mentioned Confucius.

DONOVAN (V.O.)

Maybe because I hit my head, but I've seen him a lot. He's a very wise dude. He gave me the confidence to paint. Like Van Gogh said, "I dream my painting, and then I paint my dream." Surfing is like painting. My brush is, like, surfing the canvas. It's awesome.

DAVID (V.O.)

What else has the universe told you?

DONOVAN (V.O.)

To not worry about Darlene and me.

ALEC

I'LL FLAT OUT FLATTEN HIM!

EXT. CHANNEL 7 BUILDING - MELBOURNE - MORNING

Donovan waits on the front curb. Darlene pulls up in a red Nissan 370z Roadmaster convertible. Donovan gets in the passenger seat.

INT. DARLENE'S CONVERTIBLE

DONOVAN

Whoa, nice car!

DARLENE

The Volvo is the family car. I bought this one for me. It's sexier.

SHOW SHOTS OF DARLENE AND DONOVAN: Spotting Fairy Penguins at the ST. KILDA PIER, walking in the ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, the SHRINE OF REMEMBRANCE, and in the town of SORRENTO.

EXT. MORNINGTON PENINSULA - LATE AFTERNOON

WE SEE A WIDE SHOT of Darlene's red Nissan 370z Roadmaster convertible traveling east from Sorrento along the coast highway.

EXT. AT THE CAPE SCHANCK ROCK POOLS.

Darlene and Donovan carry beach towels, and a picnic basket, down the slope from the parking area. They walk on a trail around boulders and dunes to Darlene's favorite swimming area. They arrive at two azure pools, hidden by boulders.

DARLENE

It's lovely, isn't it?

DONOVAN

Yeah, these pools are totally awesome.

Darlene squats to feel how warm the water is.

DARLENE

Ah, perfect.

Darlene turns to Donovan, and smiles. She undresses and is in her underwear. She takes her bra off and hops into the pool.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

Come on in, the water's fine. Drop your daks, Don-O! Nobody will see you out here.

DONOVAN

My what?

DARLENE

Your pants, Don-O. Swim in the nuddy.

DONOVAN

I'll leave my shorts on, thanks.

EXT. A BLUFF ABOVE THE POOL

QUICK IMAGES OF TWO ABORIGINE MEN, A KOALA, AND A PASSING KANGAROO STOPPING TO LOOK AT DONOVAN AND DARLENE AT THE SAME TIME. They smile at Darlene's comment. Donovan undresses, but leaves his shorts on, and hops in the pool. Darlene puts her arms around him.

DARLENE

You've got a nice body, Don-O.

DONOVAN

I feel like we're being watched. Besides, I'm still getting used to your liking me.

DARLENE

Yeah? I like you, Don-O. Didn't we do it in London seventeen years ago?

DONOVAN

You see? You don't even remember! Whoa.

DARLENE

No, but you still have a donger, right?

DONOVAN

I don't know what that means. Look, I know this may be hard to understand, but I'm on a spiritual quest, Darlene.

DARLENE

A spiritual quest? So you don't want a bangaroo? Nobody cares what we do!

DONOVAN

No one but God, and I don't want to piss him off. Sorry, Darlene, no one is going to ride my baloney pony today. So put your top back on, though I do like your boobs in an artistic, wholesome way.

DARLENE

Wow, you're serious about this God stuff.

EXT. CAPE SCHANCK ROCK POOLS — HOURS LATER

Donovan and Darlene lie on beach towels by the tide pool.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

So, I was thinking. . .



DONOVAN

Yeah?

DARLENE

Since you're rich now, maybe you'd be in the market to buy my neighbor's house.

DONOVAN

Whoa, I've never bought a house before.

DARLENE

It's cheap. Only six-hundred thousand. Then I could pop in on you whenever, and we could see whether we have a future.

DONOVAN

Tell me something, if I wasn't successful would you have come around?

DARLENE

I don't know. Eventually, I reckon I would. I'm growing fond of you.

DONOVAN

But you're not in love with me?

DARLENE

Well, I'm moving in that direction.

DONOVAN

I have to be sure you're not toying with my heart. That would totally bum me out.

DARLENE

I'm not toying with you, Don-O.

INT. EUREKA SKYDECK 88 — MELBOURNE — DUSK

Darlene is in "The Edge" on the 88th floor of the building, in a structure that hangs three meters from the building, that provides a breathtaking view of the city. There are windows on all sides of the structure, even the floor. Donovan, freaked out by being so high, realizes he must pass this final test. He is woozy. Darlene is talking to him, but it is as if he is underwater. He sees Confucius and Raji standing on both sides of Darlene.

CONFUCIUS

(to Raji)

I think he's going to wuss out.

RAJI  
I lay money he yacks.

DARLENE  
DON-O? WHAT'S THE MATTER? COME ON!

Donovan grips the sides of the entrance to the room.

DONOVAN  
I can't. It's too freaking high.

DARLENE  
You're afraid of heights?

DONOVAN  
TOTALLY!

She walks back to him and takes his hand.

DARLENE  
Take my hand and close your eyes.

He closes his eyes and she leads him into the compartment.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
Now open your eyes. It's beautiful.

DONOVAN  
Oh, god. Can we go? I feel sick.

Darlene laughs at Donovan's reaction. She kisses him.

EXT. BY DARLENE'S HOUSE — AGNES STREET — FAIRFIELD — NIGHT

Alec's BMW is parked on the street, opposite Darlene's driveway.

INT. ALEC'S CAR

Alec drinks a beer. The car is littered with empty bottles.

EXT. DARLENE'S DRIVEWAY

Darlene parks in her driveway. Darlene and Donovan get out.

DARLENE  
You can stay in the apartment over  
my garage. In the morning I'll fix  
you breakfast, and we can have a look  
at that house across from mine.

DONOVAN SHUTS HIS CAR DOOR AND TURNS. ALEC SMILES AT DONOVAN.

ALEC

G'DAY, YANK!

Alec punches Donovan, and Donovan falls to the ground. Darlene comes around the car and slugs Alec in the chest. Alec takes a step back, surprised she is angry.

DARLENE

ALEC! MY GOD — WHY DID YOU HIT HIM?  
WHAT ARE YOU, A TEENAGER? DONOVAN?

ALEC

AH, LET HIM BE! HE'S A SHONKY BASTARD.

DARLENE

IT'S OVER ALEC! BUGGER OFF!

ALEC

FINE, YOU CAN HAVE HIM. YOU RUINED MY  
LIFE. HAVE FUN RUINING HIS!

Nick has pulled up in his car in time to see Alec hit Donovan. Alec turns, and walks unsteadily to his car. Nick is standing there, smiling. Darlene helps Donovan to his feet.

DONOVAN

Ugh. What happened?

DARLENE

Alec hit you. My god, are you okay?  
He and I are through, Don-O.

Donovan follows Alec. He is pissed off and clenches his fists.

ALEC

(to Nick)

Get the hell off my car, you dick!

NICK

Name's not Dick, mate. It's Nick.

Nick does a roundhouse kick and Alec spins and faces Donovan.

Donovan punches Alec in the chin and knocks him out. Donovan and Nick high five each other. Donovan rubs his right hand.

DONOVAN

(to Nick)

THANKS, BRO! You Kung-Fu'ed him.  
How did you know to show up?

NICK

Ah, just used that philosophy stuff you  
taught me. Felt you were in trouble.

(glances at Alec)

The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

(beat)

You've got a hell of a right hook, mate!  
Well, I best push off. Happy New Year!  
Nice to meet you, Darlene! I'm Nick!

DARLENE

Hi Nick, and thanks! Good night!

INT. DARLENE'S LIVING ROOM – TEN MINUTES LATER

Donovan sits in a wingback type chair. Darlene and the girls hover  
around him. He holds a bag of frozen peas to his cheek.

DONOVAN

Your boyfriend has quite a punch.

DARLENE

You're not so bad yourself, Don-O. But  
Alec's not my boyfriend anymore. I'm  
so done with him. You were right.

PHOEBE

You're gonna have a shiner, Don-O!

ZOEY

Is Don-O living with us, Mum?

DARLENE

Temporarily. If he wants to, he can move  
across the street into Sophie's old house.

ZOEY

Cool, Mum! Then Donovan can visit us!

DARLENE

Yeah, he's going to be a famous painter.  
Just relax, Don-O, the girls and I will  
make you something to eat. I expect my  
home-stay kids devoured the stew.

Darlene, Phoebe, and Zoey go into the kitchen. Donovan takes the bag of peas off his eye and watches them go. CONFUCIUS AND RAJI APPEAR seated on the couch across from Donovan.

DONOVAN  
 (to Confucius and Raji)  
 DUDES! What are you doing here?

RAJI  
 We're just figments of your imagination, mate. You're on your own now. You have found Affirmation Number Twelve.

DONOVAN  
 Help me out. What is that one?

CONFUCIUS  
 Be like a willow planted by a gentle steam. There you will find bliss.

DONOVAN  
 Yeah. Apparently, finding bliss is painful.

CONFUCIUS AND RAJI DISAPPEAR. Darlene enters the room.

DARLENE  
 Are you okay? I heard you talking.

DONOVAN  
 Uh, just talking to myself. I do that.

Darlene feels Donovan's forehead, and kisses his cheek.

DARLENE  
 Sorry about your eye, Don-O.

DONOVAN  
 I'll survive. I love you, Darlene.

DARLENE  
 I'm falling for you too, Don-O, but let's take our time about us getting married, okay? But I did like the ring. Can you play me that song you wrote me?

DONOVAN  
 Totally. I'll play it for you tomorrow. It isn't finished, but I have a title.

DARLENE  
Oh yeah? What's that?

DONOVAN  
I'm A Fool For You.

DARLENE  
Funny title. So you feel like a fool?  
Because you thought I'd rejected you?

DONOVAN  
Yeah. I thought I'd lost you again.

DARLENE  
Well now you've found me, Don-O.  
And we can give it another go.

Darlene and Donovan kiss. Phoebe and Zoey spy on Darlene and Donovan from the archway to the kitchen and giggle.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AN AERIAL VIEW OF DARLENE'S HOUSE — FAIRFIELD — NIGHT

CONFUCIUS AND RAJI float upwards toward camera. Alec drives off. Nick starts his car, and notices the ghostly apparitions floating away. He hangs his head out his open car window to watch them.

CONFUCIUS  
Will Donovan be happy?

RAJI  
Hard to say. Happiness is all in the  
mind. I was married twelve times and  
finally I gave up. Then I was happy.

CONFUCIUS  
Twelve? Geez, no wonder you're a mystic.

EXT. BY NICK'S CAR

Nick watches Confucius and Raji float up and disappear into the night sky.

NICK  
Whoa. I got to cut back on the plonk.

Nick starts his car and drives away.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF MELBOURNE — NIGHT

POV circling Prince Phillip Bay. The sparkling lights of the city fill the frame.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CREDITS

MUSIC: "A Land Down Under" by Men at Work.

THE END