

WAYFARER

Written by

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OPEN ON:

A WIDESCREEN TV.

On screen -- LOU BALABAN -- 60, thick, boorish -- holds a constipated expression that could send tremors through a rabid polar bear in heat. Then:

BALABAN (ON TV)
Get real, Deutsch.

LARRY DEUTSCH -- 30, sarcastic, with an air of conceited confidence -- appears on screen with his retort:

LARRY (ON TV)
That's the report, Lou. Your Emanuel Gower's the --

BALABAN
-- Stop!

LARRY
We still on? Many apologies. A moment. OK. I'm good. Discretion is necessary at this time.

BALABAN
Deutsch, you're a piece of --

LARRY
-- Stop! Our viewership, man! Go easy, Lou. The look of constipation isn't what the masses wish to absorb.

The TV screen scans the vast studio room of THE CLASSIFIED and its casually dressed, young staff.

THE CLASSIFIED is a Los Angeles based, tabloid news show.

The young, exuberant staff snickers and giggles at the exchange between their executives.

Pull back from the TV screen -- What is taken is a nicely furnished den of a comfortable home. It all stops on a glass-top coffee table where there lies an issue of a tabloid magazine.

The titles on the tabloid magazine read:

Boom or Bust: Implants Save Star from Impact!
Congressman's Intern Speaks Out!
Death Brings Pop Star New Life!

Collector's editions of Friedrich Nietzsche's "Beyond Good & Evil" and Ayn Rand's "The Future of Selfishness" are thrown on top. They lie askew over a tabloid magazine.

A Rugged Hand slaps a copy of a sports magazine over the literature.

A Man's Well-Manicured, Long-fingered Hand slides the tabloid magazine out from under all of the creative chronicles.

An unexpected struggle ensues between the Rugged Hand and Long-Fingered Hand over the copy of the tabloid magazine. The Rugged Hand snaps the magazine away. It wins outright.

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

A bungalow -- encompassed by a plush, man-made sod -- sits, isolated, surrounded by a vast emptiness.

TITLE: Mojave Desert

Embedded in marble on the front door of the bungalow -- a Christian Cross.

The mahogany door bursts open!

A BIG BODYGUARD (JEFF) -- clad in black and wrap-around shades -- storms out. He moves to --

A Black Limousine parked out front.

Jeff gives a nod of assurance back to the bungalow.

A SHORT BODYGUARD (MUTT) -- clad in same -- rushes out from the bungalow and wastes no time with a Tall, Lean Man in cargo pants and white sneakers in tow. Oddly, this man has a blanket draped over him. It is a sight.

The Blanketed Man is shoved through the open door of the limousine. A copy of the tabloid magazine is seen under his arm.

Mutt jumps in after him.

The Black Limousine bolts into motion --

EXT. MEXICO DESERT - DAY

The Black Limousine streaks along the blacktop road. It makes an unexpected turn onto a dirt road. A cloud of dust in its wake --

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

The Black Limousine races along the coastline on Palos Verdes Drive. It streaks past a concrete cross hidden behind trees.

A CROSS stands on top of a concrete pillar comes into view. It is behind brush and trees, but towers like a beacon.

The Black Limousine races past a bronzed sign --

WAYFARERS CHAPEL

In the distance, a haze envelops a spectacular skyline.

The Black Limousine hones in on the distant metropolis.

The HOLLYWOOD sign comes into view. We move onto --

EXT. NORTH LOS ANGELES/ BEL AIR ESTATES - DAY

From Sunset Boulevard, the Black Limousine makes a hard turn onto Stone Canyon Road --

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - CONTINUOUS

A posh resort surrounded by a wooded landscape and exclusivity. A sight to behold.

The Black Limousine pulls up to the entrance.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

Immaculate ambience.

DENIS -- 25, slight, is the desk clerk. He is taken aback at the sight of --

Mutt and Jeff who bolt through the lobby with the Tall, Lean Man, in tow. The blanket still over his head. He moves casually.

The Housemaids question this as well. They look to Denis for an explanation.

The VALET (LUCAS) arrives before Denis with his own curiosity.

Denis is already on the phone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

Wilshire Boulevard traffic moves smoothly.

A three-level relic, that is an eye-sore to the modern structures that surround it, stands. THE CLASSIFIED offices.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED OFFICES - DAY

It is the third floor.

Scrolled like graffiti, boldly across the far wall:

Controversy Breeds Interest!

Nondescript chatter is scattered throughout the newsroom. Typical office ambience.

An iPhone rings, and vibrates, at a desk covered with magazines and two laptops. A hand reaches to pick up the iPhone --

Larry -- Bluetooth in one ear and with a smartphone in hand, bites into a bagel. He holds himself well despite the chaos:

LARRY

(into Bluetooth)

-- I'm the Executive Producer.

That's it! I am of sound mind and hold my abnormal behaviors behind social escape pods like every other perverted compulsive.

(into iPhone)

-- Denis! How goes it, cuz? Hold on a minute.

(into smartphone)

Make an appointment.

(into Bluetooth)

We're done.

(into iPhone)

Go ahead, Den.

(listens)

Yeah? Really? Nice work, cuz. I'm honored to know you, again.

(shouts across the newsroom)

Lou!

INT. LOU BALABAN'S OFFICE - SAME

A confined space with a glass partition for a wall that looks out to a diminutive staff that move out of desperation.

Balaban leans back with his feet propped up on a worn desk. He's asleep. A man in complete control who trusts no one. His is the only office with three walls that shield him from the madness the world has to offer.

Larry opens the glass door and sticks his head in:

LARRY

Yo, Lou...

Balaban doesn't move. Eyes still shut.

BALABAN

Get the fuck out of my office,
Deutsch.

LARRY

Emanuel Gower has arrived. Break
wind.

This opens Balaban's eyes.

BALABAN

Get Eddie in here!

LARRY

No can do. He's in traction. Body
cast. Bought a snowboard last week.
Tripped on his way out of the
store.

BALABAN

Talarico. Is he alive?

LARRY

You had me fire him last month.
He's now the Creative Director of
Programming on a reality TV
network.

BALABAN

Lawson?

LARRY

Found God. I think. He's shackled
away somewhere waiting for the
apocalypse.

BALABAN

You causing me grief for a reason?

LARRY

Piccolo's available.

CUT TO:

A COMPUTER SCREEN.

Shaky footage of some starlet pursued by paparazzi. She runs out of sheer fear and desperation.

A woman's soft fingers work the keyboard with efficiency.

PAULA (V.O.)
You see... it simplifies it for the viewer if you bridge the two footages together.

BALABAN (O.S.)
Piccolo!

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

Two daunted faces peer out from behind the laptop:

DAVE -- a young, naive intern.

PAULA PICCOLO -- 30, amiable and soft on the eyes.

DAVE
You better go see what he wants, Paula.

PAULA
OK.

Paula stands, braces herself, and takes the long walk to Balaban's office.

VIC -- 35, bald, rugged copy boy, and BEATRICE -- late twenties, red-headed and intrusive as a receptionist, watch Paula walk by.

BEATRICE
There goes another one.

VIC
Sad.

Paula arrives at Balaban's door.

Etched on Balaban's glass door: LOU BALABAN (CEO). Scratched under his name, on duct tape: Cold Even Offensive. Under that: Hey, he's DA BOSS!

Paula taps on the glass ever so gently.

BALABAN (O.S.)
Get in here!

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Balaban has to spin his chair around to see Paula. He's clearly taken aback. A hint of disappointment.

BALABAN
Who the fuck are you?

PAULA
Paula Piccolo.

Balaban has to get up and have a look out into the newsroom, as if to make sure if there might be anyone else. He turns his stern eyes back on Paula.

BALABAN
(disgruntled sigh)
Shit.

Paula has no response.

Balaban turns back to his chair.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
Nobody tells me anything.
(beat)
All right -- Gower's in town.

Paula is at a loss to this. She doesn't understand.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
-- Problem?

PAULA
I don't... No. No! None --

BALABAN
I want that face on my show!

He slaps the back cover of Gower's book on his desk for Paula to see. Paula eyes zero in on --

EMANUEL GOWER'S disturbed face on the book cover. An homage to Boris Karloff.

Paula is still confused.

PAULA
OK.

BALABAN

No. Not "OK." Listen to me, Emanuel Gower is a fucked up being traveling along as a human. He's screwed up beyond human comprehension. He's been described as being hard to digest from most media circles. The government has kept him hidden long enough. Hear me? He's now out! The lunatic is a clothing designer's nightmare. He's pissed off presidents and prima donnas world wide. Two years ago he made a Himalayan hierarchy's wardrobe designer jump out of a forty-story window because he insulted the designer's color schemes.

PAULA

That doesn't make sense.

BALABAN

-- It's not suppose to. Get him!

He now has to get up and pace his confined office, incensed by all that he has exposed.

BALABAN (CONT'D)

Hell, the Eastern Bloc wanted to re-erect The Berlin Wall after this maniac -- allegedly -- dangled some German Chancellor's tailor from a tenth-story balcony, and that was because he thought the pate was stale from the appetizers served. He's fucked up!

Balaban takes a beat and considers the thought. Then:

BALABAN (CONT'D)

I like that.

PAULA

So, you want Gower's story --

BALABAN

-- Damn straight. He's sick! I want this fucking hard-on on my show before anybody else in any market. I want a purpose for my next aneurysm.

PAULA

I think an aneurysm would be the
least of your problems.

She notes Balaban's eyes harden on her.

Balaban's massiveness gets up from behind the desk.

Paula's eyes widen. She's at a loss as this behemoth closes
in, then buffers past her.

Balaban opens his office door and points with affirmation --

BALABAN

See that?

Paula's eyes peer out the office.

PAULA

(nods)

Dino.

Balaban is stumped and turns to see --

DINO -- 60, slim, short-tempered -- holds a large paper bag
in hand. His t-shirt reads: DINO'S PLACE -- DATS ITALIA!

Balaban snatches the large paper bag (Balaban's lunch) from
Dino's fragile hands.

BALABAN

(to Paula)

The wall. The fucking wall!

PAULA & BALABAN

(in unison)

Controversy Breeds Interest!

BALABAN

-- Yes!

(beat)

You've got 24 hours.

Paula steps out from Balaban's office.

He slams the door on Dino.

Paula shrugs at Dino. Her only response.

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - SAME

Balaban is seated behind his desk. He struggles to open the delivery bag. It's sealed tight. He calls out for Dino to hear:

BALABAN
This is food, for Christ's sake!
Food! Not my kid's chastity belt!

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dino's now infuriated.

DINO
It's a stapled for freshness! I no
like this. I'm no violent, but I'm
a close.
(under his breath)
Deficiente!

(Translation: "Deficiente" is Italian for "Moron".)

Balaban glares at Dino, then slams the door on him -- again.

DINO (CONT'D)
What's the matter with you people?
He keep this up, Dino gonna cut him
off!

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX NEAR USC - NIGHT

A few residents wander through.

INT. PAULA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Darkness.

The door opens. A light haze gleams in as Paula enters, flips on the switch and lights up the cozy abode.

Paula's apartment emits her essence: soft decor, Earth tones and furnished immaculately with contemporary artworks.

The laptop sits near the window which overlooks a terrace, garden and mini pool below. The iPad is picked up --

Paula takes a seat on her couch, laptop before her. She quickly keys in --

Laptop screen -- Emanuel Gower appears. What comes up is: "We did not find results."

Paula is perplexed by this. She takes Gower's book in hand which lies at her side. She types:

Insert -- 1000 Ways To Kill A Designer (Gower's book title).

Paula waits.

The laptop screen:

"1000 Ways To Kill A Designer" pops up. "Not Available" shows up. Amazon is keyed in. "Not Available" once again.

Paula takes Gower's book in hand and flips it open. Suspicious now.

Inside Gower's book cover is written:

"I would like to thank all those souls who
have passed through the doors of Wayfarers
Chapel.

Thank you Father David Byrne!

Paula pauses, then:

Paula's fingers type on the keyboard: Wayfarers Chapel.

Wayfarers Chapel website appears. An impressive picture of the structure and its history in words under it.

Paula begins to read.

EXT. USC CAMPUS - DAY

Paula is on her dawn run. She turns off of Hoover Street onto W. Jefferson Boulevard --

Paula nears her apartment complex. Her eyes keen in on a --

Green Cab that sits parked directly ahead of her. It is in the other side of the road.

Paula stands there, curious. A moment passes. She gives in and approaches the Green Cab --

Suddenly -- like a frightened animal -- the Green Cab takes off -- in reverse. A car comes in from behind it -- tires squeal to prevent a run-in.

The Green Cab doesn't let up until it hits the intersection -- practically has another run-in -- this time traffic BLARE THEIR HORNS! The Green Cab spins and quickly disappears.

Paula, as a witness, is at a loss to this sight.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

A large, circular clock on the wall reads: 10:17

Balaban makes his appearance and beelines to his office.

Paula sees him, jumps up from behind her desk and moves in on him --

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - SAME

No sooner Balaban enters --

Paula bursts in.

BALABAN

-- What-what?

PAULA

Emanuel Gower --

BALABAN

Issues are Deutsch's department.

PAULA

-- He's non-existent. No passport, no driver's license, no social security, no place of residence --

BALABAN

-- Don't want to hear this --

PAULA

-- No birth certificate. Google won't acknowledge him --

BALABAN

-- I'm talking to mutes --

PAULA

-- This is an impossible assignment!

BALABAN

I hear pity. I hate pity.

PAULA
I think I'm being stalked.

BALABAN
You whine, too? Deutsch!

PAULA
I want more time.

BALABAN
No. Deutsch!

PAULA
I need it.

BALABAN
I gave you this assignment for a
reason --

PAULA
-- You couldn't find anybody else.
I know.

Balaban has a pregnant pause.

BALABAN
Deutsch!

PAULA
Please.

Her plea is sincere.

BALABAN
Listen to me, you get me Gower's
story, or you're fired. You got
that?

Paula has no response.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
What?

Balaban is at a loss to her blank expression.

PAULA
I've never been threatened
before... at least not
professionally.

BALABAN
Move your ass -- get me my story! I
don't care how you do it.
(MORE)

BALABAN (CONT'D)

I'm giving you one chance to prove to me that you've got what it take to be in this business. You're killing your chances! You fuck this up and I'll banish you from every journalistic medium known and unknown. Your responsibility is to me -- The Classified -- in that order! Oh, yeah, and that unknown entity we call a viewership. That is who we feed this shit to, and that shit keeps me alive here, and you from being unemployed!

(beat)

That reminds me, we're taping in 30 minutes.

He has to check on his thick, hairy forearms.

BALABAN (CONT'D)

Look at this shit. Hives! You're causing me grief. You irritate me, Piccolo. Get out of my sight! Deutsch!

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paula snatches her purse up from her desk. Turns, bumps into Larry. She is slightly startled.

Larry notes Paula's frazzled state.

LARRY

(calmly)

Where's the fire?

PAULA

I can't get a fix on somebody who doesn't exist, but who everybody's looking for and my boss has no faith in my abilities and I have no credibility.

LARRY

And you're short of an amalgamation. Impressive.

Paula is overwhelmed.

LARRY (CONT'D)

C'mere...

INT. MEN'S WASHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Larry stands before the mirror and checks his face and hair. Paula casually leans up against the tiled wall.

LARRY

Don't worry. Lou's anxiety surfaces when he gets nervous... paranoid... pissed... or hungry. Self-control is not his greatest attribute.

Shrugs.

PAULA

I don't want to get in the way of myself on this.

LARRY

You won't. You're problem is you use rational thought. You're trying to make sense of a chaotic situation. Can't be done.

PAULA

I don't know if I'm meant to do this.

LARRY

Non of us are.

A toilet flushes.

Vic steps out from one of the two stalls, casually moves to the sink and washes his hands. He, too, checks himself out in the mirror.

LARRY (CONT'D)

It doesn't help we only have one washroom on this entire floor. But we adapt.

VIC

Hey, Lou's fired me three times, and we were both in the stalls at he time.

He gives Paula an errand shrug.

VIC (CONT'D)

(to Larry)

We're on in twenty.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - LATER

Paula's iPhone rings inside her purse.

LARRY

(to Paula)

Answer that. It might be life-affirming.

It's a struggle for Paula to get to her iPhone that continues to ring:

PAULA

(into iPhone)

-- Yes.

GOWER (ON PHONE)

Ahh, the runner.

PAULA

Who's this?

GOWER (ON PHONE)

The Emanuel Gower!

PAULA

Emanuel Gower? How'd you get my number?

GOWER (ON PHONE)

You live a lonely existence, creature. You want some advice?

PAULA

-- Listen, buddy --

She's now agitated.

GOWER (ON PHONE)

-- I'll help you to aspire, if you help me.

PAULA

Aspire yourself... go pull a muscle.

GOWER (ON PHONE)

Take your place among the Gower Express and I'll show you the true meaning of what life has to offer.

PAULA

You're a human handicap.

GOWER (ON PHONE)
 Twelve o'clock. Wayfarers Chapel.
 I'll be waiting.

Click. Gower's hung up.

Paula checks her iPhone for the time, then the large clock on the wall for confirmation.

The large clock says: 10:33 --

EXT. A CONCRETE PLAQUE - DAY

It reads:

WAYFARERS
 CHAPEL
 A
 NATIONAL MEMORIAL
 TO EMANUEL SWEDENBORG
 OPEN DAILY
 FOR
 MEDITATION

Paula takes in the engraved words before her.

A WOMAN'S VOICE
 Impressive, isn't it.

Paula turns --

An ORIENTAL WOMAN -- 70, petite -- with a pleasant disposition.

ORIENTAL WOMAN
 Are you spiritual inclined?

Paula has no response.

ORIENTAL WOMAN (CONT'D)
 That's all right, sweetie. I was the same way my first time here. Wayfarers Chapel is open for all of us.

PAULA
 I don't... I'm not...

ORIENTAL WOMAN
 It doesn't matter here. That's its beauty... its simplicity.

Offers Paula a warm smile.

ORIENTAL WOMAN (CONT'D)
(subtle encouragement)
Go on in. Don't be afraid. You
won't walk away the same... I
guarantee it.

Paula's trepidation is obvious. She holds up her iPhone and films the archway before her --

INT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - SAME

Paula stands by the entrance and takes in the sight before her. Lowers her iPhone...

The geometric forms constructed of glass, laminated redwood and stone are enhanced by the beams of sunlight that emanate throughout the sanctuary.

Paula observes the worshipers before her, they appear tranquil. Some pray, some meditate.

There is discomfort on Paula's behalf.

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - DAY

At the top of the concrete steps Paula sits, quietly, on a bench. She glares at her iPhone, then places it back in her purse. She is pensive.

EXT. BEL AIR - DAY

A gentle breeze buffers through. Trees sway.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR - SAME

The Porter (TOMMY) is at the front desk. Denis hands him the day's LA Times.

TOMMY
People still read?

Denis can only shrug.

Tommy places the newspaper on a luncheon cart beside a large, silver-plated food tray. Tommy pushes the cart across the lobby --

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITES - DAY

Tommy pushes the luncheon cart to the far end of the corridor where Mutt stands guard by a suite door.

Mutt inspects the tray.

Rock music reverberates from within the suite --

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The Rock music is as loud as it can be.

Mutt makes his way through, past a widescreen TV and state-of-the-art sound system and wet-bar. He enters the bathroom --

Mutt reemerges, perplexed. Not sure what to make of it. He enters the bedroom --

Tommy stands by the luncheon cart. Patient. Takes in the room for himself.

Mutt reemerges, again. He now stands in the middle of the emptiness that surrounds him. Though he's at a loss to it, he gives Tommy a hardened glare.

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - DAY

The Oriental Woman walks by Paula, this time with her husband. Her husband is an affable fellow as tall as she is. He offers Paula a benevolent smile.

Paula returns the gesture.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Mutt paces in frenetic motion.

Tommy just watch him go back-and-forth...

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Mutt is distressed as he races through and mumbles into his side-mic. Tommy stays with him throughout --

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - DAY

Paula is frustrated as she stands atop of the stair. She turns to leave --

The Oriental Couple stand in her path. Paula is caught off-guard by them.

ORIENTAL WOMAN

You're so dear.

She hands Paula a beaded rosary.

Paula is taken aback by the gift. She reluctantly takes it in hand.

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL/ CAR LOT - CONTINUOUS

Paula races to her Volkswagen. Mumbles in her frustration:

PAULA

It's over. It's over. I'm fired.
That's that. Stupid, stupid!

Paula starts her car and takes off --

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - DAY

Mutt and Jeff are in a secret caucus near the entrance.

Denis and Tommy watch them from the front desk. Amused.

Mutt and Jeff's anxiety and fears are at an apex:

MUTT

-- I don't know, I don't know!

JEFF

OK, OK... let's not lose control.
We got this. We got this. Breathe.
Breathe. Remain calm.

(beat)

We're going to have to call this
in.

MUTT

-- No. Don't. Don't do it. Maybe
he's still here. Did you see him
leave? I didn't see him leave.

JEFF

Get a grip, man.

MUTT

He's gone. He's gone. Shit!

JEFF

Hey, we never lost him before.
He;'s always come back Remember?

MUTT

What if he doesn't come back? Then
what?

JEFF

We have no choice. We have to call
it in.

MUTT

-- Shit. Shit! Shit-shit-shit!

JEFF

All right then, we're in
agreement... we call it in.

MUTT

Fuck! Fuck-fuck-fuck!

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

Paula's Volkswagen races on through --

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - DAY

Tommy tries not to be too obvious as he eavesdrops in on Mutt and Jeff's conversation. Mutt and Jeff take note of Tommy's presence and respond with hardened glares. Tommy smiles and backs away.

Lucas saunters over to Denis at the front desk. He sees Denis is focused on Mutt and Jeff and so he does the same.

Jeff is now on his smartphone.

Lucas is about to ask Denis, but Denis raises his hand and stops him. Denis gets on his iPhone.

Tommy arrives at Lucas' side.

TOMMY

The Freak popped!

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Paula drops in her chair, behind the desk.

Larry notes this from his station. He finishes with a staffer on a laptop.

LARRY
(about Paula)
Here we go.

Keys in an edit on the computer.

LARRY (CONT'D)
(to staffer)
Keep that.

He turns away --

Larry arrives before Paula. Paula is exasperated.

PAULA
I got stood up.

LARRY
Deal with it.

PAULA
Lou's going to banish me from every
media outlet... "Known and
unknown."

LARRY
He can't. He's not that well known.

PAULA
I was used. Gower set me up. He
baited me and I bought it! I'm a
poor excuse for a TV reporter.

LARRY
Get over it, woman. Disappointment
is part of the vernacular.
Especially in this business. Be
proactive. Do it, or it does you.

PAULA
Lou's going to fire me.

LARRY
He can't. It's a media code of
ethics that CEO's of tabloid
programming can't fire any of their
staff. That's the executive
producer's job.

He gives her a big, smug smile. Toys with Paula's emotions.

Paula smirks. Welcomes the gesture, but is still at a loss to it all.

PAULA
I have to get this, Larry. I want this!

Her iPhone RINGS.

LARRY
Then get it.
(to staffer)
Send that copy to the techies downstairs.

The staffer nods and does just that.

PAULA
(into iPhone)
Hello.

BEATRICE (ON PHONE)
I've got the perfect guy!

PAULA
(perplexed)
Huh?

BEATRICE (ON PHONE)
He's ideal. He's got a job... benefits -- no kids!

PAULA
Beatrice?

Her eyes span across the newsroom to where --
Beatrice waves.

BEATRICE (ON PHONE)
It's my brother-in-law's best friend's cousin. He's not from here, so there's a good chance he might be normal.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

A seasoned TV NEWS ANCHOR with a perfect coif is seen on the TV screen:

TV NEWS ANCHOR

... It has been confirmed, anarchist and controversial author Emanuel Gower is missing. He was reported to have been incognito at The Hotel Bel Air, though reports are still sketchy at this point. There is no confirmation of any nefarious involvement from authorities even though Gower's recent expose book: "1000 Ways To Kill A Designer!" has not done as well in the publishing world. Insiders are saying that this may be a way to bring attention to it...

PAULA

(bemoans)

That's my story!

VIC

Not anymore.

Paula gives Vic a perturbed expression.

TV NEWS ANCHOR

In other news: German Chancellor Rudolf Schmitt is said to be considering a visit in a couple of weeks --

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

A nondescript Black Sedan weaves through traffic. Two other Black Sedans follow. All three take the next off-ramp --

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

The three Black Sedans pull in.

Two FBI agents emerge from each car.

The calvary is led into the Bel Air by SPECIAL AGENT-IN-CHARGE DEAN DICK -- square-jawed and stanchued.

Two FBI agents take positions at he front doors while the three other agents walk in with Dick --

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

One FBI agents takes position by the entrance.

Dick leads the two other FBI agents to the front desk. The two agents stand as pillars at Dick's side.

Mutt and Jeff are both in a state of indecision as Dick arrives before them.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

Traffic is light.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Interns and staffers scramble around, randomly.

Pauls beelines to Balaban's office. She runs in to Dino who is about to make another delivery for Balaban. They lock eyes.

Instantaneously -- both race to Balaban's office to see who gets there first --

Dino has a step on Paula when -- suddenly -- Paula horse-collars Dino and slams the fragile Italian to the floor hard.

Paula composes herself, then enters Balaban's office --

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PAULA
I gotta talk to you, Lou.

BALABAN
Busy.

Outside of the office, Dino jumps back on his feet, takes a step to Balaban's office door --

Paula SLAMS the door on him. She, unexpectedly, leans over Balaban's desk. This makes Balaban uncomfortable.

PAULA
This is important.

BALABAN
Your grief is my beef.

A retort that doesn't stop Paula.

PAULA

First, you have to promise not to fire me.

BALABAN

You lost him, didn't you.

PAULA

No! I didn't lose him... per se...

BALABAN

Get him back.

PAULA

I'll get him back.

(beat)

You won't fire me?

BALABAN

Now you're reaching. You irritate me and it's close to pandemic.

PAULA

So you'll back me on this.

BALABAN

-- No. Forget it. You're up shit's creek as far as I'm concerned.

PAULA

That's OK. That's good.

BALABAN

No, it's not good. You still fucked up, Piccolo. You're on line for this.

PAULA

Being on line is good.

BALABAN

Let's get this straight... this isn't one of those touchy-feely moments, so forget about it. You fucked up. You do it again and I'll have you ostracized from every English-speaking media outlet in the western hemisphere.

PAULA

My odds are improving.

BALABAN

Don't mock me, Piccolo.

PAULA
Don't lose faith in me, Lou.

BALABAN
I had to have it to lose in the
first place.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

Dave has helped Dino back to his feet.

Paula bolts from Balaban's office and storms past them.

Dino is knocked ass-backwards to the floor again. Clearly infuriated.

DINO
I run a legitimate business! This
is harassment. This is America. I'm
gonna sue!

Dave extends his hand to him. Dino slaps Dave's hand away out of frustration. Dino curses, in Italian, about this whole ordeal.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITES - DAY

Dick, along with for FBI agents and Tommy, march down a corridor --

INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Dick goes and stands by the patio door.

FBI agents scour the suite for evidence.

Dick turns and takes note of Tommy as if for the first time. His scowl on Tommy is hot.

DICK
Who are you?

Tommy is taken off-guard by this.

TOMMY
Me? Tommy. The porter.

DICK
(to a Big Agent)
Phil...

The Big Agent (PHIL) turns on command.

DICK (CONT'D)

Take him.

Phil taps a Short Agent on the shoulder. Both move in on Tommy, pick him up off his feet, and carry him away.

DICK (CONT'D)

Body-cavity search and background check.

Tommy is stunned. His eyes agape.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Paula scours his desk.

DAVE

What are you looking for, Paula?

PAULA

I had a rosary here.

Dave turns and sees --

ALPHONSE JACOBS -- a tall, strong, athletic-shaped man in a one hundred thousand dollar designer suit. He carries a Valextra "Diplomatico" briefcase. He makes a beeline to Balaban's office.

DAVE

Who's that?

Larry steps in. His eyes glued in on Alphonse as well.

LARRY

Alphonse Jacobs. Esquire. Louis Balaban's legal representation.

(beat)

Something scares our lovable leader.

Turns his eyes to Paula.

LARRY (CONT'D)

It can't be you...

Paula questions his stare.

LARRY (CONT'D)

It's something big though.

DAVE
Somebody's suing "The Classified"?

Larry clarifies it.

LARRY
Somebody's suing Louis Balaban.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

Two rugged FBI agents assail down the corridor of penthouse suites.

Denis emerges from behind RUGGED AGENT #1.
Tommy emerges from behind RUGGED AGENT #2.

Denis and Tommy both hold pass-keys, ready on-hand.

RUGGED AGENT #1
Move.

Tommy and Rugged Agent #2 jackknife down another corridor --

INT. A SEPARATE PENTHOUSE SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Denis is ready with the pass-key.

Rugged Agent #1 is ready for the assault.

DENIS
Shouldn't we knock first? It's only
ethical.

Rugged Agent #1 is stone-face. He won't have it.

Denis takes a deep, apprehensive sigh.

Impatient -- Rugged Agent #1 kicks the penthouse suite door open. He bolts in.

Denis is startled by this. He leans to one side to look in.

A woman's SCREAM shrills the silence.
Thumps and thuds follow.

A MAN'S DISGRUNTLED VOICE
(yells)
What the fuck?

INT. ANOTHER PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Tommy is perversely anxious to open the door.

TOMMY

Ready?

Rugged Agent #2 is focused on the door.

Tommy, suddenly, opens the door.

Rugged Agent #2 storms in to the penthouse suite.

Tommy watches from the safe corridor. He flinches with every grunt and thump heard. His interest is obvious from what he sees.

A TEXAN MAN'S VOICE

Hey, you!

There is a sudden CRASH!

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ CORRIDORS - DAY

Housemaids scramble for cover.
Disturbed screams echo.

Agitated patrons, some half-clad in their clothes, scramble from their lives.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

Denis emerges from a suite, aghast at what he has witnessed.

Rugged Agent #1 bolts past him to his next destination.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - DAY

PAOLO -- 25, lean -- manages the front desk. A phone receiver glued to his ear as he does his best to manage the infuriated calls that come in.

PAOLO

(into receiver)

-- Yes, yes, sir. I understand. No, the hotel is not under attack by terrorists.

(beat)

They're government, sir.

TEXAN MAN (O.S.)
 (yells)
 Back-off, boy!

Paola does his best and stays focused with his callers.

PAOLO
 (into receiver)
 Can you please hold on, sir? Thank
 you. I'll see if I can locate her
 for you. Now, Cher, is a Chihuahua?

The Texan Man's voice bellows from across the lobby.

TEXAN MAN (O.S.)
 Hey!

Paolo looks up.

A PORTLY TEXAN -- 60, attired in only his undershirt, boxers
 and boots --storms the front desk. He has a tough,
 compassionate disposition.

PORTLY TEXAN
 Say, son, ya know there's a bunch a
 pree-verts loose on your premises?

Another man's DISTRESSED VOICE echoes out through the lobby
 corridors.

The Portly Texan is startled by the sound.

PORTLY TEXAN (CONT'D)
 Sweet Jesus!
 (to Paolo)
 Get me the manager -- pronto!

PAOLO
 Yes, sir.

Paolo and the Portly Texan are dismayed as a housemaid races
 past them -- a meat cleaver clenched in both hands.

PORTLY TEXAN
 That just gave me the heebie-
 geebies.

A woman's SCREAM shrieks from out of nowhere.

PORTLY TEXAN (CONT'D)
 That's the missus. Hang on, baby!
 Baby-Back's comin'!

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DAY

The Classified's three-level relic appears tranquil.

Traffic is sparse.

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

A GUIDE, who speaks by rote, leads a handful of tourists down the corridor.

GUIDE

On this level we have "The Classified", our infamous, ground-breaking, media-making, twenty-four hour news outlet. They don't create the news, then enhance it.

The tourists are all intrigued. Most hold up their cellphones to take pictures and selfies.

Unexpectedly, Paula steps out from The Classified newsroom right into the midst of the group of tourists. Her eyes catch sight of --

Balaban who emerges from the washroom at the far end of the corridor.

Paula struggles through the eddy of tourists who surround her.

PAULA

Lou!

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Balaban ignores, or doesn't see, Paula as he slides past the tourists to get to his office.

Paula is trapped. She has to fight her to get back to The Classified newsroom --

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Balaban no sooner takes his seat when --

Paula bursts in.

Balaban isn't the least bit startled by the intrusion.

BALABAN
(calm, but pissed)
What?

Paula has to gather her composure. She's exasperated.

PAULA
Give me s second.

BALABAN
Not interested.

PAULA
-- Wait. The Gower story... doesn't
make sense.

Beat. Then --

BALABAN
Can't tell you how relieved I am to
hear it.

PAULA
I just thought of something.

BALABAN
(points to his face)
Does this face look like it cares?

PAULA
The FBI had Gower incognito.

BALABAN
Get to the point.

PAULA
Gower's has to be a pawn.

BALABAN
You're killing me with this.

PAULA
Nothing else makes sense.

BALABAN
That's what you came up with?

PAULA
You told me, two years ago Gower
made a Himalayan hierarchy's
designer jump from forty stories
because he insulted the man's color
schemes.

BALABAN
That you remember?

PAULA
I think Gower was/is a spy for the feds. They sent him on these meet-and-greets to schmooze with world dignitaries. For what? To find out what's what, but he was erratic. So they pulled him obviously.

BALABAN
You on meds?

PAULA
No!

BALABAN
You have an ending to this?

PAULA
(hesitates)
No. I don't know. I'm still working on it.

BALABAN
Work harder. Go the meds route, but you didn't hear that from me.

Balaban's stomach grumbles. His jaw clenches. It aggravates him.

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - dAY

A police helicopter hovers over the trees as FBI agents mill about the entranceway of the establishment.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Dick is on the terrace. He keenly watches the police helicopter in the distance.

An array of laptops, photos and cell phones are scattered across various countertops and tables.

EDUARDO MARTINI (The Hotel Bel Air Manager) -- 60, experienced, graceful, good-natured -- wanders through the maze of FBI agents scattered throughout the suite.

Dick beholds him with suspicion.

EDUARDO MARTINI
(To Dick)
You called me? You Dick?

DICK
Special Agent-In-Charge Dick. You?

EDUARDO MARTINI
Eduardo Martini. I'm the hotel
manager.

DICK
German Chancellor Rudolf Schmitt is
set to arrive here in two hours.

Martini already knows.

EDUARDO MARTINI
Yes.

DICK
Circumstances have been
compromised. I have an American
missing from your establishment.
This has become a highly sensitive
matter.

EDUARDO MARTINI
We are a very well regarded
establishment. I must inform you,
our guests privacy --

DICK
-- Listen, Martinez --

EDUARDO MARTINI
(corrects)
-- Martini. Mr. Martini --

DICK
(agitated now)
-- Mr. Martini -- I have a missing
American as well as a Head-of-State
set to arrive here.
(beat)
I want you out of here.

Eduardo Martini is taken aback by Dick's forwardness.

EDUARDO MARTINI
I'm the General Manager --

DICK
End of discussion.

EDUARDO MARTINI
Excuse me, but this isn't ethically
or morally proper to conduct --

Dick waves two FBI agents over.

DICK
(to both agents)
-- Escort Mr. Martini to a secure
location --

The two FBI agents take hold of Eduardo Martini and lead him
away. Eduardo Martini is at a loss to this.

EDUARDO MARTINI
-- This is reprehensible, inhumane,
nihilistic...
(beat)
You can't do this! This is America!

DICK
Hell, yeah!

A sense of satisfaction.

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

The police helicopter makes a pass over the premises.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - SAME

Denis is behind the front desk as Dick arrives.

DICK
I want security surveillance video
from the last forty-eight hours.

Lucas strolls past Dick in his t-shirt and baggy jeans. His
uniform slung over his shoulder, on a hanger.

Dick does not this kindly.

DICK (CONT'D)
Hey, you!

This stops Lucas dead in his tracks.

Dick saunters over to him.

DICK (CONT'D)
Who are you?

LUCAS
What's it to you?

Attitude for attitude.

Without notice -- Lucas is grabbed by two FBI agents and carried away.

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

Paula's Volkswagen drives past a motorcade made of four police motorcycles that encircle a stretch limousine.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Lucas sits in the interrogation chair. Flabbergasted.

Two FBI agents tower over him like human pillars.

Dick is seated across from Lucas. He stares Lucas down.

LUCAS
Ok.

DICK
OK, what?

LUCAS
Where's Eduardo? He called me in for a double today.

DICK
Eduardo's busy. I'd be more worried about you. You got a name, wiseass?

LUCAS
Lucas Sands.

Does his best to keep his composure though the situation is odd to him.

DICK
You're a piece of work, you know that, Lucas Sands?

LUCAS
Thanks. I'm only a valet -- for now -- but I'm working my way up.

DICK
Interesting.

LUCAS
Who are you guys?

DICK
You ask a lot of questions for a
valet, Lucas Sands.

LUCAS
My mom calls it a birth defect --

DICK
Get him out of here.

The two FBI agents startle Lucas when they pick him up off
the chair.

LUCAS
-- Hey, whoa... whoa! Wait-wait!
Wait a minute!

Dick raises his hand to stop the FBI agents on their take
away.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
-- I'll give ya a name.

Beat.

LUCAS (CONT'D)
Tommy. Tommy Patt. Talk to him. He
knows. He was here last night.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Paula pumps gas into her Volkswagen as the stretch limousine
pulls in with the police motorcycles. This holds her
curiosity.

The driver jumps out from the limousine and beelines into the
convenience store.

Paula takes a moment to take in the stretch limousine before
her.

The driver reemerges from the convenience store with a carton
of super-sized coffees and a goody-bag.

The rear window of the stretch limousine slides open halfway.
The goody-bag and carton of super-sized coffees are passed
over to hands from an unknown passenger.

All Paula can do is watch the stretch limousine pull away.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

DICK

All right now...

Tommy now sits in the interrogation chair. The same two FBI agents that were with Lucas now hover over him.

Tommy does his best to remain calm. He smiles. Ignorant and naive about all that surrounds him.

Dick is still the ominous presence.

TOMMY

Hey...

DICK

So, Tommy... your friend, Lucas, tells me you were here yesterday.

TOMMY

Yeah, I worked a double for him yesterday. He said he'd do that for me today. We help each other out around here.

DICK

You like it here?

TOMMY

Uh huh. Eduardo is the shits around here.

DICK

"The shits" is good I take it.

TOMMY

He's sick -- he's the shits -- I mean he's good. Yeah, good man.

DICK

That's good to know. You can help me out, then.

TOMMY

Ohh... it's The Freak, isn't it? He up and pulled off a Harry. Am I right?

DICK

A Harry?

TOMMY

Yeah. A Harry Houdini. Mr. Magic.

DICK
So you know.

TOMMY
Sure. Poof! The Freak went into
twilight.

All Dick can do is stare at Tommy as he carries on.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
The Freak asked me if there was any
nice places to check out. You
know... tourist shit. You know?

DICK
So you two talked.

TOMMY
Absolutely.

DICK
What did you tell him?

TOMMY
A few places. But I told him, if he
wanted to decompress -- Knotts
Berry Farm. Now that's a fucking-A
facility!

Dick's patience has waned. He gets to his feet and starts to
pace.

Tommy's now on a roll.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
He looked convinced, but all he
could talk about was this girl he
met.

Dick stops.

DICK
-- Girl? What girl?

TOMMY
He said some woman hit on him. He
says women hit on him all the time.

DICK
What woman hit on him?

TOMMY

I dunno... some woman. He said she chased after him. Stalker-like. He had to wave a cab down to get away.

DICK

What cab?

EXT. SANTA MONICA - DAY

The FBI Black Sedan makes a rushed stop before a rundown garage.

The sign above the garage door reads: GREEN CABS.

INT. GREEN CABS GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Dick and three of his agents hover around a Manager seated in stain-induced cubical of an office. The Manager points to where they need to go --

ANDRE SUAVEZ -- middle-aged, husky -- looks up from his Green Cab and takes in Dick, and his agents, stares. He is perplexed.

EXT. BEL AIR ESTATES - DAY

The Stretch Limousine is guided by the motorcade turns from Sunset Boulevard onto Stone Canyon Road.

Paula's Volkswagen is not far behind.

INT. GREEN CABS GARAGE - DAY

Andre is seated at the rustic lunch table and eats his lunch. The FBI agents surround him. He doesn't appear nervous, but his eyes skitter from one agent to the next.

Dick stands in command.

DICK

You took a tall man for a ride this morning.

ANDRE

Yeah.

He smirks. Disinterested.

DICK

Well...

Andre takes note of Dick's snarky tone and look. Knows he has something Dick is interested in.

ANDRE

Uh huh. Who is he?

DICK

What business is it of yours?

ANDRE

It's not, but you sure as hell see it different. You Narc or Fed?

DICK

He's an important government official.

ANDRE

(in answer)

Fed huh? What's he done?

DICK

He's missing.

ANDRE

What's wrong with that? More government officials should go missing.

DICK

We're talking about the national security of this country.

ANDRE

Deal with it. You got issues, that's your problem.

DICK

Listen, Andre, I can charge you with obstruction of justice... and treason. Put you away for a long time.

ANDRE

House me, feed me... I'm yours.

DICK

Where did you take him?

Andre leans back and makes the best of the situation.

ANDRE

All he wanted to do was find out where this woman lived. He could of been a stalker for all I care, but the world is a lonely place. Fucked up, but lonely. I see the good before I see the bad...

Dick just glares at Andre. It's a deep pause.

Beat.

Andre ponders. Then:

ANDRE (CONT'D)

He gave me a name... Paula something...

Ponders a moment.

Dick grows impatient.

ANDRE (CONT'D)

... Paula -- Paula -- Piccolo! That's it! Paula Piccolo. Pretty. He said she worked for some TV show -- The Classified! Ever see that show? It's funny... sometimes. They show a lot of fucked up people who think they're important. It's good for a laugh... sometimes...

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

The Stretch Limousine pulls in with the motorcade.

FBI agents encircle the Stretch Limousine --

EXT. BEL AIR ESTATES - SAME

Paula parks her Volkswagen along Stone Canyon Road.

A few onlookers have gathered before a barricade erected to prevent any curiosity.

Paula's curiosity is held along with the onlookers.

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

Bodyguards along with FBI agents surround German Chancellor Schmitt and his entourage: a couple of receptionists, a chef and a SLENDER MAN -- the tailor.

They are all escorted into the hotel.

EXT. DOWNTOWN/ THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

The FBI Sedan pulls in to an abrupt halt.

Dick and three FBI agents storm into the three-level relic --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

Larry and Vic go over video footage on the laptop at Larry's desk. Larry looks up and sees --

LARRY

Oh, joy.

Dick and the FBI agents walk in.

LARRY (CONT'D)

(to Dick)

Yes.

Dick and the FBI agents beeline to him.

DICK

Paula Piccolo.

LARRY

Who?

DICK

Don't jazz me, mister. I'll have you de-humanized.

LARRY

(miss-reads him)

I like harmony, but I'm more of a soul man. Now Blues --

DICK

I said de-humanize not de-harmonize.

(flashes his FBI badge in Larry's face)

Special Agent-In-Charge Dean Dick.

(MORE)

DICK (CONT'D)

FBI. You're gonna be a challenge,
aren't you?

LARRY

And you said that with a straight
face. Not even a twitch.

DICK

You lie to me, you lie to your
country.

LARRY

That's reaching. You lost me on
that one. Look, I don't know where
she is. Maybe she was fired. They
do that here... consistently.

A FEMALE AGENT steps away --

The Female Agent arrives at Paula's desk.

Among the papers and magazines -- neatly stacked -- and
laptop lies a copy of "1000 Ways To Kill A Designer."

The Female Agent takes Gower's book in hand. A Sticky Note is
posted on the laptop which reads: "Paula's stuff -- Take
note!"

At Larry's desk -- Larry has droned Dick and the FBI agents
into submission.

LARRY (CONT'D)

-- "The Classified" is a reputable
news-slash-tabloid program which
complies with FCC regulations...
most of the time. We don't create
the news -- we enhance it! We also
fire people... a lot.

(beat)

If we have time, we'll throw in
journalistic integrity, but don't
hold your breath.

Dick catches a "signal" given to him by the Female Agent.

DAVE

(to Larry)

Enough.

Gestures to his agents to move out.

LARRY
Keep in touch.

CUT TO:

Gower's book is held in Dick's hand. Gower's back photo in clear view.

FEMALE AGENT (O.S.)
It's her all right.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

Dick and the FBI agents are on the sidewalk.

DICK
This Piccolo is a manipulator.
She's beyond reprehensible. She's
toxic.
(beat)
She can only elude us for so long.
(beat)
This is our accomplice. Piccolo's
our link to get our missing link
back.

FEMALE AGENT
And if she resists?

DICK
She resists, it's her downfall. We
bring her in and we have our man.
(beat)
Let's move!

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - DAY

Paula's Volkswagen races through.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

The Black Sedan makes a U-turn across traffic.
Squeals from cars that have to break from any collisions.
Just as the Black Sedan disappears --
Paula's Volkswagen pulls in --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Paula bolts in.

PAULA
-- Larry. Larry!

LARRY
Well, well, well, looks who decided
to make an appearance.

PAULA
I need to find Lou.

LARRY
I think Lou's the least of your
concerns.

Balaban makes his entrance. He staggers back to his office.

LARRY (CONT'D)
You know...

Paula makes a beeline to Balaban's office.

Larry is shunned.

LARRY (CONT'D)
That's all right. I'll just sit
here and reflect...

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - SAME

Balaban has to take his seat behind the desk very delicately.
He is clearly in discomfort.

Paula rushes in --

PAULA
-- I was right!

Balaban is in no condition to deal with her.

BALABAN
-- Goddamnit! Why are you still
here? Deutsch!

PAULA
This has nothing to do with Gower.
It's about the German Chancellor.

BALABAN
What?

PAULA
You want to know what I think?

BALABAN

No.

He reaches into his desk and pulls out a bottle of antacid.

PAULA

Emanuel Gower is a decoy. You see --

BALABAN

Deutsch!

As he gulps down big swigs of the antacid.

PAULA

-- The heavy security... deep surveillance... it's a ruse. The FBI wants us to believe Gower's what they're after. It's to distract attention away from German Chancellor Schmitt.

BALABAN

(about antacid)
This is worth shit.

PAULA

Nobody kidnapped Gower. He's a decoy.
(beat)
Look, Chancellor Schmitt arrived today without so much as a hiccup.

BALABAN

Notice was given of him coming.

PAULA

-- But he arrived today. Today! They said he was considering a visit. He's here now!
(beat)
The FBI lost Gower for a reason.

BALABAN

I thought you were just irrational, but you're more -- you're fucked up!

PAULA

The FBI used Gower as surveillance on various reconnaissance missions, but... something happened this time... maybe Gower's cover was blown.

(MORE)

PAULA (CONT'D)
 You said it yourself: Gower's
 unstable. He goes off unexpectedly
 all the time.

Balaban's phone RINGS. He has to pick up:

BALABAN
 (into receiver)
 -- Save me!
 (listens)
 Put him on. What is it, Carlos? No
 grief, Carlos, I'm dealing with
 enough as is.
 (listens)
 Absolutely. The footage with him
 naked with the horse stays. He's
 high profile.
 (listens)
 Politics has nothing to do with it!
 Is the footage legit?... Then it
 stays. It sells! That's why I'm in
 charge and you're paparazzi.
 (beat)
 OK, "photo-journalist." Listen to
 me, Carlos, I don't pay you to
 think. That's why you have me...
 (beat)
 Then get a real fucking job!

He holds out the receiver as Carlo's VOICE goes off on him
 with CURSES and SCREAMS.

Balaban speaks into the receiver at arm's length from him.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
 I'm hanging up now, Carlos. I'm
 hanging up! I'm... ah, fuck!

Slams the receiver down.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
 (about phone on desk)
 Now I know why these things still
 exist.
 (to Paula)
 Why you still here?

Paula remains composed.

PAULA
 Didn't you tell me Emanuel Gower
 once threatened the German
 Chancellor?

BALABAN
Are we still there?

Takes a deep breath. Now exasperated.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
(clarifies)
He almost killed the Chancellor's
tailor... but it was petty.

PAULA
Killing a man is petty?

BALABAN
Get out of my office.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paula races past Larry and Beatrice.

BEATRICE
That girl's in need of love.

LARRY
That girl's in need of herself.

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

Paula stands by her parked Volkswagen and digs into her
purse. Frustrated.

PAULA
(sotto voce)
Where are you...

She spills her purse upside down -- her car keys, finally,
spill out. She reaches down to pick them up.

A FBI Black Sedan breaks to a hard stop before her.

Paula is perplexed by this.

FBI agents jump out -- grab Paula -- then shove her into the
Black Sedan. It takes off --

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DAY

Paula sits in the back seat sandwiched between two, stoic,
FBI agents.

Dick is seated in the passenger seat before her. A young FBI agent drives --

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

The FBI Black Sedan pulls in.

The FBI agents have a firm hold of Paula as she is lead into the hotel --

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Dick leads the FBI agents through. Paula is barely visible within the FBI bodies.

Dick stops cold in his tracks. His eyes harden on what he sees.

Paula does her best to peer over the FBI agents that encircle her.

DETECTIVE ED FREELY -- late fifties, stout, savvy -- -- leans against the front desk. A man in wait.

Two uniformed police officers at Freely side.

Freely takes a casual approach toward Dick.

Animosity is clearly evident between the two counterparts.

FREELY

Dean.

DICK

Ed.

FREELY

You look fit.

DICK

As always.

Freely responds with a sardonic smile. He leans slightly to one side to take sight of Paula, shrouded by the FBI agents.

FREELY

Suspect-in-arms I see.

DICK

Strictly government jurisdiction,
Detective Freely.

Freely steps around Dick and confronts Paula. His eyes glare at her.

FREELY
Detective Freely... Government
jurisdiction...
(beat)
Epic.

He turns back to face Dick.

FREELY (CONT'D)
Still at it, huh, Dean.

DICK
This is my show, Ed.

FREELY
Your show... my stage... L.A.'s my
jurisdiction, Dean.

DICK
I didn't get the memo, Ed.

FREELY
You're getting it now.

DICK
This is Federal. You can't touch
this.

FREELY
Your eloquence has stated already,
Dean, but this is me.
(chagrins)
Dean, Dean, Dean... are we not
going to be amicable?

DICK
I got this.

FREELY
How long has it been?

DICK
Not long enough.

FREELY
Hard feelings still linger, huh.

DICK
Stop pining, Ed, I'm over it.

FREELY

Pining? I digress. If my memory serves me correctly --

DICK

-- Listen... the guy was an arsonist with multiples...
 (explains his version)
 We had him under surveillance for six months. You and your faculty weren't able to complete what you were assigned to do. Simple.

FREELY

(his version)

Tch-tch-tch... Let me refresh your memory... We had the suspect wrapped up and in custody. We had him corralled and hogtied. We caught him red-handed. He was ready to talk. Out of nowhere, you and your fraternity, in nicely-pressed collars and indelible ignorance had him walk.

DICK

We had him detained as an informant. He was ready to talk about who he worked for --

FREELY

He fled.

DICK

-- Your department was responsible for losing him -- and the money! It's in the report. Read it.

FREELY

-- Read it? I wrote it! We didn't release him! You --

Paula WHISTLES and gets everyone's attention.

PAULA

Hi. I hate to throw a wet blanket on this mutual admiration society reunion, but... does this story have an ending?

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ CORRIDOR - DAY

Dick and Freely lead Paula -- flanked by FBI agents and police officers through.

DICK
This one's ours.

FREELY
Still the idealist.

DICK
I'm as real as they come.

FREELY
Cliched without substance.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

Paula sits in the interrogation chair. Curious. Calm.

Freely takes Dick's seat across from Paula.

Dick is agitated by this. He has to stand.

FREELY
(to Paula)
Let's have it.

PAULA
Have what?

FREELY
All that you know. Talk.

Paula is at a loss to this.

PAULA
Talk...

FREELY
Talk. You're a loner. Neglected as
a kid --

DICK
Seeking attention.

FREELY
Blinded by the light.

PAULA
That's a song.

DICK

We have witnesses and correlative evidence linking you and Gower.

FREELY

You had a tryst?

PAULA

Come again?

DICK

You made contact with him early this morning.

PAULA

He contacted me.

DICK

Then he disappeared.

FREELY

We have witnesses that say you stalked him.

PAULA

(echos for clarification)

Me.

DICK

A cabbie from the Green Cabs Company says you chased down his cab. Gower was in the back seat.

PAULA

I'm confused.

DICK

It's clear to us.

FREELY

You were too sheltered as a child. Now you blame the harsh world for your meaningless banality.

PAULA

You watch too much Reality TV.

DICK

You had a thing for him. He wanted to leave you. You wanted more. You climaxed. It scared him. He told you to walk. You couldn't take it. You stalked him.

PAULA
Too much social media for you.

DICK
An official government operative is missing and you were the last to have contact with him.

PAULA
I was right!

FREELY
That is admission of guilt.

PAULA
Gower's a ruse. You set him up to move in on the German Chancellor.

DICK
You don't know that.

PAULA
That's an admission.

FREELY
Wait-wait-wait... The German Chancellor's in L.A.?

DICK
Federal jurisdiction.

FREELY
Again with this federal jurisdiction. What the hell does that mean?

Freely's eyes are on Paula.

PAULA
Don't look at me.

DICK
The FBI's taking you in, Piccolo.

PAULA
You have no grounds. Your accusations are suspect -- at best.

FREELY
So, you're saying, Gower's connected with the Chancellor?

PAULA
They're both here.

FREELY
Here? Here, here? In this hotel?

Paula shrugs.

FREELY (CONT'D)
What the fuck's going on around
here?

He wheezes. A loss of breath. He has to reach into his coat pocket and pull out an inhaler and puts it to use.

Freely has to take a few puffs to get his breath back.

PAULA
Asthma?

FREELY
Keep talking.

His composure returns.

Dick carries on.

DICK
You are the prime suspect, Piccolo.
Don't try and plea bargain. I see
what you're reaching for.

PAULA
I have nothing to grab on to.

DICK
The shit has hit the turbines now.

PAULA
Nice euphemism.

FREELY
(to Paula)
It's over.

DICK
You're an amateur manipulator,
Piccolo. You distorted Gower's mind
to get your way.

PAULA
He's already distorted.

FREELY
You're going down, Piccolo.

PAULA

If I knew half of what you think I know you'd need a GPS system.

FREELY

You knew about the Chancellor's arrival... Gower's disappearance... There's a connection.

A Stout FBI Agent steps in and hands a dossier to a Tall FBI Agent who relays the dossier to a Young FBI Agent, who relays the dossier over to Dick.

Dick opens the dossier and reads. His cold eyes shift to Paula.

Paula doesn't know what to make of this.

Dick hands the dossier back to the Young FBI Agent --

Freely snatches it out of the Young FBI Agent's hand and has a look for himself.

DICK

You've bullshitted your way far enough, Piccolo. You have no alibi. No witnesses.

Freely's eyes hold on the pages of the dossier.

Insert of dossier -- shows blank pages.

DICK (CONT'D)

It all comes down to one thing, Piccolo, and you know what I'm talking about.

PAULA

Can't say that I do.

DICK

You know more than what you think you know. You know?

PAULA

No.

DICK

You're tampering with the federal authorities... espionage... the American flag...

(beat)

Don't even try to undermine us.

PAULA

You don't need my help. You do great on your own.

DICK

I read you like a fortune cookie. You're dealing with forces greater than you could ever fathom. You've threatened the national security and public safety of this great country. Deeper minds than yours have tried to undermine us, and we always come out on top. We're beyond comprehension. We're so deep, we can hide things from ourselves and not know it.

The Stout FBI Agent steps in.

STOUT FBI AGENT

Special Agent Dick?

Dick shoots the Stout FBI Agent a stern glare.

STOUT FBI AGENT (CONT'D)

The buffet's ready, sir.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

The FBI Black Sedan pulls in. Paula gets out. The FBI Black Sedan drives off.

Paula stands alone on the sidewalk.

INT. POSH BEDROOM - DAY

A gray handbag opens. A Large-Barrel Handgun is removed.

The person is not seen.

Cookie crumbs and cellophane wrappers are strewn across the bed.

The long-barrel handgun is examined with delicate hands. It is then replaced into the gray handbag which is zipped shut.

EXT. POSH HOTEL - DAY

An Audi is parked on the lot.

A Shadowy, Slender Figure nears the Audi, gray handbag in hand. The Slender Figure gets in the Audi.

The Audi, hastily, drive off.

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

FBI agents, and now police officers, encompass the premises. The police helicopter makes a pass overhead.

INT. HOTEL BEL AIR/ PENTHOUSE SUITE - DAY

FBI agents and police officers mingle around the now, almost devoured, luncheon tray.

Dick and Freely watch an episode of "The Classified" on the TV.

There is interest.

DICK

We had her.

FREELY

We have to find a way to make it stick.

Remote in hand. Changes stations.

DICK

She knows. That's a fact.

(beat)

What are you doing?

Freely watches the local newscast on TV. He gets on his iPhone.

FREELY

(to Dick)

Let's see what happens.

DICK

We need to make things happen!

Watches the German Chancellor on TV speak with the Mayor of Los Angeles.

DICK (CONT'D)

Where's Gower? Shit!

He checks on the luncheon tray on the table and finds it desolate of even a nibble. This leaves him exasperated.

FREELY

(into iPhone)

Ken? Ed. How's the news business?

(listens)

Yeah, you can say that, again. I'm watching your boy as we speak.

(listens)

Very impressed. He reads like a pro.

(listens)

I'll keep that in mind next time you plea bargain me for a handicap on the back nine.

(smiles, amused with himself)

Ken, listen, would you and that big network of yours be interested in an exclusive?

(listens)

I know you too well, Ken.

(listens)

That's right, I called you first. What are friends for?

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ BACK LOT - DAY

Paula arrives at her Volkswagen. Her iPhone rings, inside her purse. She has to dig dip in order to get it.

PAULA

(into iPhone)

Yes.

MAN'S VOICE ON PHONE

Hello... are..

The reception is poor. The Man's Voice cracks and there is static.

PAULA

Wait a minute.

She moves to a different position.

PAULA (CONT'D)

I can barely hear you.

MAN'S VOICE ON PHONE

I can't... 'ear you. Can you... 'ear me... ? It's diff'...

PAULA
 -- Gower, let me talk. We're still
 on. Wayfarers Chapel. Be there! You
 have a lot of explaining to do!

The connection is lost.

PAULA (CONT'D)
 (to iPhone)
 The art of technology.

EXT. HOTEL BEL AIR - DAY

Dick and Freely get in to their cars.

Dick into his FBI Black Sedan.
 Freely into a Black-and-White.

FBI agents and uniformed police officers follow suit.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Paula drops into her chair and bemoans a sigh.

LARRY
 Ahh, another day-in-the-life?

PAULA
 If I knew this way going to be my
 day I would of called in sick.

LARRY
 C'mere...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD INTERSECTION - DAY

FBI Black Sedans and Black-and-Whites surge through a red
 light --

Traffic has to come to an abrupt halt --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

The staff has gathered around the TV.

LARRY
 Turn it up, Vic.

With remote in hand, Vic turns up the volume.

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION

... Insiders are now saying that the disappearance of controversial author and anarchist, Emanuel Gower, is leading the media to believe that this might be all a hoax brought about by the self-proclaimed activist of truth to promote his scathing book: "1000 Ways To Kill A Designer!"

(beat)

In the pages, Gower turns the fashion industry on its ear with unsubstantiated claims of unoriginality and plagiarism by esteemed fashion designers: Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, just to name a few --

On the large-screen television -- a microphone is shoved before Vera Wang, by a reporter. She's clearly pissed:

VERA WANG ON TELEVISION

-- He's an idiot.

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION

One insider, not wanting to be named, called the book a "travesty" and a "vulgar injustice to mankind." Ms. Wang had this to say...

VERA WANG ON TELEVISION

I'll castrate the fu --

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION

-- To see the full interview, you can stream our CKLA web site.

LARRY

You gotta give the man his due, he sure as hell knows how to distort the ethics and morality of people. Elite shit has now been raised.

A news clip on television:

A New York book store signing and there's bedlam. Security do their best to hold back a hostile crowd. Gower is in the midst of it all.

Sudden shock as Gower's eyes lock on what scares the shit out of him. He has to jump up from his chair, knock the table over, and run for his life.

Vera Wang and Donna Karan both hurdle the toppled table and tackle Gower to the floor.

LARRY (CONT'D)
Who says Reality Television is
cliched?

Most of the staff has gotten bored and wandered back to their duties.

Larry notes he's by himself. He chagrins.

Paula is slumped in her chair.

Larry arrives at her desk.

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION
-- This just in... CKLA has
received word that the Los Angeles
Sheriff's Department, along with
the FBI, have apprehended a suspect
in the Emanuel Gower
disappearance...

Paula is in her own misery to even bother to react.

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION (CONT'D)
Paula Piccolo, a local tabloid
reporter...

Paula isn't sure she heard him right.

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION (CONT'D)
... for "The Classified", a local,
third-rate, tabloid news magazine --

LARRY
-- Hey, we've raised our status!
We're a "tabloid magazine" --

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION
-- has been charged in the
conspiracy to kidnap Emanuel Gower.

VIC
He said we're "third-rate."

LARRY
It's a moot point. We're now
recognized!

He beams with pride at Paula.

LARRY (CONT'D)

My girl!

NEWS ANCHOR ON TELEVISION

In other news... early this morning, our Mayor took Chancellor Schmitt through Knotts Berry Farm. They were heard discussing party affiliations while buying corn-dogs.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - DAY

FBI Black Sedans, along with Black-and-Whites, break hard before the entrance doors.

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ THIRD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Paula bolts from The Classified Newsroom and scrambles to the elevator. She frantically presses the button --

PAULA

C'mon-c'mon --

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ ELEVATOR - SAME

Dick, Freely, along with a pair of FBI agents and a pair of police officers ride up.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

Larry checks out the window to the street below.

From the window -- FBI agents and police officers stand by their cars.

LARRY

Shit!

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Larry stick his head out of The Classified Newsroom door --

LARRY

(to Paula)

-- Psst!

Paula is still at the elevator, impatient and desperate.

Larry waves at Paula.

Paula is oblivious to Larry's callout.

Now frustrated, Larry sprints to Paula --

Paula is grabbed, abruptly, by Larry and dragged away --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vic watches as Larry pulls Paula across through the office floor.

VIC
 (to Larry and Paula)
 The keys are in my van --

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ FIRE ESCAPE - DAY

The rustic door to the back lot swings open.

Larry and Paula stand atop the fire escape.

Vic steps out, calm about the whole ordeal.

PAULA
 (to Vic)
 Why am I taking your van?
 (to Larry)
 Why am I taking his van?

Larry takes hold of Paula's face with both hands and steers her eyes to what await her back in the newsroom --

Dick, Freely, FRBI agents and police officers make their arrival.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ BACK LOT - DAY

Paula scurries down the corroded fire escape.
 Jumps onto the chipped concrete and runs to --

Vic's, beat-up, 60's Pop Art deco, van sits by a dumpster.

INT. VIC'S VAN - DAY

Paula jumps in. The keys are in the ignition.

PAULA
 Convenient.

Paula suddenly takes note of a pungent aroma. From her reaction -- it's ghastly! Not sure from where it comes from. She checks over her shoulder --

The back of the van holds office supplies.

A leather chair.

Computers.

A box of cellphones.

Parts of a toilet seat.

Paula turns back around. She checks down by her feet --

A metallic box.

Paula takes the metallic box in hand. Curious, she opens it --

The metallic box is stuffed with rolled joints and a few bags of a "white substance."

Paula has to roll down the window to breathe.

EXT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC/ BACK LOT - CONTINUOUS

Paula has to stick her head out the open window as she hits the gas --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Dick and Freely walk to the exit door to the fire escape.

Freely goes to open the steel door -- but finds it sealed shut.

Dick steps in. Gives the door a once-over, takes a step back and with one kick -- the steel door pops open.

Larry and Vic pass a joint between them. Vic pulls out a lighter and ignites both rolls.

Dick and Freely both glare at them.

Larry raises his joint to them and smiles.

LARRY
(wheezes)
What kept you?

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - DAY

Vic's van cuts off an Audi.

The Audi swerves and crashes into a lamppost.
Vic's van vanishes from sight.

The Audi doesn't move.

The Driver, clad in black, but never really seen -- lifts his head out of the air bag. He's clearly dazed from the impact.

INT. CRASHED AUDI - SAME

The now dazed Driver takes hold of his gray handbag (the same one noted earlier with the Long-Barrel Handgun), from the passenger seat and gets out --

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - CONTINUOUS

The dazed Driver staggers away from the crash site.

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - DAY

Balaban returns, nauseous. Dysentery has gotten the better of him.

Dick and Freely hone in on Balaban and head directly to his office --

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Balaban is about to take his seat behind his desk when --

Dick and Freely storm in.

Dick a warrant on Balaban's desk with distain.

DICK

That's a warrant for Paula
Piccolo's arrest.

Balaban is worn, but relieved.

BALABAN

Can you make it stick?

DICK

She's conspired in the kidnapping
of Emanuel Gower.

BALABAN

It's about fucking time.

FREELY
She's a menace, Balaban.

BALABAN
(to Freely)
Who the fuck are you?

DICK
Piccolo's a prime suspect, Balaban.

BALABAN
Are you here to make me feel good?

FREELY
You can't stop us.

BALABAN
How's about speeding it up, then.

FREELY
Piccolo's going down in flames.

BALABAN
(to Dick, re: Freely)
You haven't said who the fuck he
is? It would help if I knew who the
fuck you are, too.

DICK
Piccolo's copped herself a plea,
but she's too far deep now.

BALABAN
She couldn't cop herself an
attitude.

EXT. WILSHIRE BOULEVARD - DAY

Vic's van streaks past traffic and commuters in its way --

INT. VIC'S VAN - SAME

Both of Paula's hands are clenched on the steering wheel.

Paula's iPhone rings.

PAULA
(to iPhone)
Now?

She answers.

PAULA (CONT'D)
(into iPhone)
What?

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - SAME

Vic speaks with the two police officers and two FBN agents that encircle him. He keeps them occupied while --

Larry sits at his desk, iPhone in hand.

LARRY
(into iPhone)
-- Hey, Sparky.

INTERCUT:

Paula has her iPhone on speaker. Her terrified eyes locked on the road before her.

PAULA
Shit!

LARRY
Having terrorized fun I see.

PAULA
Between moments of sheer horror.

LARRY
Listen, Vic says there's a 450
under the hood. It only runs on
premium.

PAULA
That's good to know.

LARRY
They're all here, kid. Enjoy the
limelight.

PAULA
It's a gift.

LARRY
Need anything?

PAULA
I want my monotonous life back!

LARRY
We'll do what we can on this end.
Vic is impressive in action.

(MORE)

LARRY (CONT'D)
He's already convinced authorities
not to take us in on cannabis
charges.

PAULA
Purgatory can use him.

LARRY
Where are you headed?

PAULA
I have to get to Gower.

FBI agents arrive at Larry's desk. Hardened eyes all around.

LARRY
(into iPhone)
Gotta go. The Happy Boys are here.

EXT. WILSHIRE AND LA BREA - DAY

Vic's van tears through the intersection.

Crash! Bang!

A few vehicles have to veer avoid Vic's van, but collide with
each other in the process --

INT. VIC'S VAN - SAME

Paula cringes in her defense.

INT. BALABAN'S OFFICE - DAY

BALABAN
What the hell are you talking
about?

DICK
Piccolo's a coercive.

BALABAN
Now that's funny.

FREELY
It's funny how Gower mysteriously
disappears after their tryst.

BALABAN
We're still talking about her,
right?

FREELY
Piccolo even knew about the German
Chancellor's visit.

DICK
Where is she, Balaban?

BALABAN
You'd think I'd know, wouldn't you.

His stomach releases a hideous growl.

BALABAN (CONT'D)
-- Look out!

He jumps out of his chair --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Balaban bolts to the entrance door.
Dick and Freely are right behind him.
FBI agents and police officers quickly join in on the
pursuit.

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - CONTINUOUS

Balaban rushes down the corridor to the washrooms at the far
end.

Dick and Freely on his heels --

DICK
She's a fugitive, Balaban!

Balaban shoves the washroom door open.

Dick, Freely and their posse charge into the washroom --

Beat.

Dick, Freely and their posse make a retreat back into the
corridor.

It's more than they can take. Exasperated sighs all around.

Freely checks his iPhone. He reads a text message.

FREELY
(indirectly to Dick)
Forget about him.
(ponders a moment)
(MORE)

FREELY (CONT'D)
We've got her. She's got nowhere to go. She's got nowhere to go.

DICK
Let's go get her.

EXT. OUTLET MALL - DAY

Vic's van is parked at the furthest point of the lot.

EXT. VIC'S VAN - DAY

Paula has her head propped up against the door frame. Sound asleep.

A white van pulls up beside her.

INT. VIC'S VAN - SAME

Paula awakens.

A MAN FROM THE WHITE VAN is heard at her side.

MAN FROM WHITE VAN
I gotta pick up some cigarettes.
I'll be right back.

Paula's eyes widen as she sees --

The White Van out her window --

EXT. BETWEEN BOTH VAN'S - SAME

Along the side of the White Van reads: CKLA NEWS - WE MAKE NEWS MATTER TO YOU!

MANNY -- husky, shaved head -- sits in the White Van's driver's seat. He doesn't acknowledge Paula. Too busy with the new Panasonic TZ 100/SZ100 handheld camera.

Paula slowly sinks down her seat, out from sight.

EXT. OUTLET MALL LOT - DAY

An OLD MAN walks his bloodhound, on a leash.

The blood hound stops by Vic's van. His scent has picked up something by the passenger door.

The Old Man tries to pull the canine along, but the bloodhound won't have it. The canine has picked up an aroma it finds odd.

OLD MAN
(to bloodhound)
C'mon, Coot.

Coot sticks by Vic's van.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
(aggravated now)
What is it?

INT. VIC'S VAN - SAME

Paula is crouched down in the driver's seat. Her eyes lock on the box that contains the marijuana joints. Trepidation holds her.

EXT. OUTLET MALL LOT - DAY

Paula, quietly, opens the driver's door. She squeezes out and does her best to be inconspicuous and slip away.

OLD MAN (O.S.)
Miss. Oh, miss!

Paula stops. Her shoulders drop out of defeat.

The Old Man and Coot step up to her. He has Paula's purse in hand.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
It fell out of your car. You know
you left your door open?

Paula takes her purse in hand. Feigns a smile. She turns to leave and unexpectedly --

Bumps into the Man From the White Van (STEVE TICE -- 30's, a driven, but faulty news reporter).

Something drops out from Paula's purse in the collision.

Paula chagrins, but continues on her way.

Steve takes a few steps to his news van. His eyes turn down and catches sight at what is at his feet. He is about to call out to Paula, but stops himself short. He reaches down --

In Steve's grasp is Paula's driver's license:

Paula Piccolo is the name and her photo confirms it.

STEVE

Jee-zus!

Jackpot!

Paula does her best not to draw attention when --

STEVE (CONT'D)

Paula Piccolo!

Paula has put some distance on him. She doesn't look back and takes off in a sprint.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Holy shit. It's you!

Darts back to the CKLA News Van --

INT. CKLA NEWS VAN - DAY

Manny continues to fidget with his Panasonic TZ/100.

Steve jumps in.

MANNY

(about camera)

This is fucking awesome.

STEVE

-- Hit the gas!

EXT. OUTLET MALL LOT - SAME

The CKLA News Van tires burn rubber as it takes off --

EXT. OUTLET MALL/ GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Paula shoves people aside as she runs inside --

INT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Paula darts past a STOUT SECURITY GUARD.

STOUT SECURITY GUARD

-- Hey! Check your bag!

No use. Paula is gone from sight.

Customers take notice.

Paula's purse is dropped.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Paula bursts out the opposite end, exit door. She bumps into a couple of delivery men in the process --

EXT. OUTLET MALL - CONTINUOUS

Paula makes like the wind to the street ahead.

The CKLA News Van tears around the corner and homes in on her.

INT. CKLA NEWS VAN - SAME

Manny and Steve have their prey in sight.

MANNY
She's fast.

STEVE
Drive!

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

A bus pulls up to the stop. Passengers disembark.

Paula closes in.

The bus pulls away.

Paula now has to chase after the bus --

PAULA
(to bus)
Hey, wait!

The CKLA News Van closes on her.

The bus, Paula and the CKLA News Van all pass a police cruiser parked on a side street.

The police cruiser's lights FLASH ON. It takes off after them.

EXT. CKLA NEWS VAN - DAY

MANNY
(looks to his camera)
I think I should be shooting this.
Huh?

Steve shoots Manny a look of disdain.

On the rear view mirror -- lights flash.

Steve cannot believe what he sees.

STEVE
Seriously? Shit!

Manny is at a loss to all of this.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Manny is seen through the CKLA News Van windshield with one hand on the steering wheel, the other hand has the camera lens planted on his eye as he shoots footage of Paula.

Paula has not let up. Still focused on the bud directly ahead.

EXT. BUS STOP - DUSK

The bus pulls in. Passengers disembark. The bus pulls away.

Paula has caught up to the bus. She slams her hand on the side door --

INT. BUS - SAME

The BUS DRIVER -- a quaint fellow -- observes Paula for the first time as she runs along side the bus. He's perplexed by this as he opens the door, but still moves --

BUS DRIVER
You crazy, lady?

Paula is practically out of breath.

PAULA
I can use... a ride...

BUS DRIVER
You gotta pass?

Paula can only shrug a response.

BUS DRIVER (CONT'D)
 (clarifies)
 A pass or correct change.

PAULA
 C'mon...

Her plea goes unheralded.

The Bus Driver shakes his head at her. He closes the door on Paula --

EXT. STREET - DUSK

The bus pulls away on Paula.

Paula's exhausted. Out of breath. Out of luck. She stops.

The CKLA News Van comes to a hard stop behind Paula.
 Steve jumps out, microphone ready, and bolts in on Paula.

Manny hangs back, and out the open window, of the news van.
 The Panasonic TZ 100 zeroed in on his target -- Paula.

The police cruiser pulls in behind the CKLA News Van. Both officers get out --

Steve jumps in front of Manny's camera --

From the Panasonic TZ 100 lens:

STEVE
 This is Steve Tice -- CKLA News --
 here in Westwood, after a high-
 speed pursuit. An exclusive --

POLICE OFFICER #1 steps in front of the camera --

EXT. STREET - DUSK

POLICE OFFICER #!
 The exclusive is over.
 (to Manny)
 Shut off the camera.

STEVE
 Steve Tice. CKLA News...

This is said out of reflex and attention.

POLICE OFFICER #!
LAPD. Not interested.

STEVE
-- Wait!
(points to Paula)
She's the one you should take into
custody -- that's Paula Piccolo!

Paula, arms raised, is ready to surrender.

POLICE OFFICER #2 is at her side.

POLICE OFFICER #!
Let's find out who's who here. Over
there.

Points Steve over to the side of the road.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DUSK

Police Officer #1 has Steve place his hands on the guardrail.

STEVE
There's really no need for this,
Officer. Really...

POLICE OFFICER #!
Don't move.

Police Officer #2 stands with Paula by the CKLA News Van.
Paula still holds her hands up.

POLICE OFFICER #2
You can put your hands down, miss.

Paula lowers her hands down.

Police Officer #1 goes through an array of Steve's
identifications.

All the while, Manny records Steve's interrogation with his
Panasonic TZ 100.

Paula is at a loss with Police Officer #2.

POLICE OFFICER #2 (CONT'D)
You have no identification on you?

All Paula can do is shrug.

Police Officer #1 hands Steve's wallet.

Police Officer #2 steps in.

POLICE OFFICER #2 (CONT'D)
 (to partner)
 She has no identification. Says she
 lost her purse in the chase.

STEVE
 -- See? See? What are you going to
 do about her? Huh?

Police Officer #1 is congenial.

POLICE OFFICER #!
 I guess everybody's going in.

STEVE
 I'm not the criminal -- she is!
 She's Paula Piccolo! A conspirator
 in a federal kidnapping.

Manny captures all this on film.

MANNY
 This is good. This is good.

EXT. SANTA MONICA FREEWAY - DUSK

The police cruiser moves through traffic.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - SAME

It is cramped for those in the back seat:

Manny and his camera, aimed at Paula.
 Steve beside him, a moment of satisfaction.
 Paula, sullen.

Steve goes to light one of the cigarettes he purchased
 recently.

POLICE OFFICER #2
 -- No smoking!

Calls out to Steve.

Steve can only toss the cigarette to one side, disgusted.

POLICE OFFICER #2 (CONT'D)
 Pick that up.

Steve reaches down, picks up the broken cigarette, then stuffs it in his pocket. He scowls at Paula.

STEVE

Paula Piccolo. The official story.

Shakes his head at her and scoffs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Media darling. Government conspirator.

(beat)

You think you're smug, don't you? Just wait... the media will tear you apart.

Beat. Then:

STEVE (CONT'D)

(rueful)

I wish I had thought of it.

INT. THREE-LEVEL RELIC - NIGHT

It's the lobby and there is mass hysteria.

Media from all walks of life are jammed in a confined area.

The elevator door opens --

Balaban and Larry step out into a tsunami of antsy, collective, journalistic frenzy.

The camera LIGHTS blind them.

Reporters converge on Balaban and Larry as both do their best to fight their way to the exit --

BALABAN

-- Ah, hell!

LARRY

Hell, yeah! You wanted to controversy, Lou, you got it.

Reporters shout out:

REPORTER #1

-- Lou! What's it like to have one of your own people be the story?

BALABAN

She wasn't suppose to be the story.
She was assigned to get me the
story!

(beat)

Deutsch!

Larry is lost in his own whirlpool of media hysteria.

REPORTER #1

Lou, rumor has it Piccolo plans to
leave the country. Any comment?

BALABAN

Deutsch!

Now comes a rapid-fire questions:

- Is it true that Gower and Piccolo are lovers?
- Is it true that Piccolo jilted Gower for a story?
- Any truth that Piccolo was bought off?
- Is it true the FBI and Sheriff's Department had
Piccolo under surveillance?
- Does that mean Piccolo is a double agent?

REPORTER #3

Are you going to fire her, Lou?

BALABAN

It's the thing to do now!

He notes Larry across from him for the first time.

BALABAN (CONT'D)

Deutsch, what are you doing?

Larry is surrounded, but his thumbs work, feverishly, on his
iPhone.

LARRY

I'm texting.

Dino enters the lobby.

BALABAN

(to Dino)

-- You!

Dino is taken aback by what he has walked into. He holds a
guileful smile.

DINO

(to Balaban)

Ha!

BALABAN

You poisoned me -- you Italian!

DINO

You the poison, Balaban! You! I run a legitimate business. You fuck me... I fuck you back!

BALABAN

You're fucking insane! Can't you sue like normal people?

(beat)

I've been shitting tsunamis out of my ass all day for Christ's sake! You'll hear from my lawyer. He'll shred you and your business to piss-dust.

(neat)

That's the American way!

DINO

Fuck you -- I cleanse you!

BALABAN

Cleanse me? My ass!

DINO

-- Yes!

Reporter #3 turns to Dino.

REPORTER #3

Who are you?

DINO

Dino Carpentieri. I'm a proprietor of "Dino's Place." See... ?

Shows Reporter #3 the t-shirt he wears for clarity.

Reporter #3 holds his smartphone out to take a picture.

Dino beams with pride.

EXT. LINCOLN BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The police cruiser streaks through --

INT. POLICE CRUISER - SAME

Steve has his face pressed up against the rear door window, lost in thought.

Manny stays busy with his new Panasonic TZ 100.
Paula stares, blankly, out the windshield ahead.

STEVE
They're using him you know.

This acknowledgement draws Paula's attention.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(continues)
My snitch says the feds need Gower
as an informant. They've been using
him to seek out information on
world leaders and visiting
diplomats.
(beat)
He's a spy, whether he realizes it
or not.

Paula's eyes hold on him.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(to Pauls)
But you didn't hear that from me.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Media has amassed.

The police cruiser pulls in and the amassed media converge on them.

The police officers get out of the cruiser and have to push their way through the eager mob.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - SAME

Steve is overwhelmed at the sight.

STEVE
Oh, God!

Dread envelops him.

Paula takes note of Steve's anxiety.

Steve looks down and has to close his eyes.

STEVE (CONT'D)
(to himself)
It's good, it's good, it's good...

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Police Officer #2 opens the rear door of the police cruiser.

Manny is the first to emerge. He uses his camera as a protective shield against the cameras focused on him.

Steve does his best as he is guided by Police Officer #1 through all who have converged on him.

Paula, on the other hand, appears composed, though it is she who the manic media hone in on.

REPORTER #4

What do you say, Paula?

PAULA

Slow news day.

REPORTER #5

Hey, Paula, how'd you pull it off?

PAULA

Instinct, I guess.

REPORTER #6

Was there anyone else involved?

PAULA

Your guess is as good as mine.

REPORTER #7

Was it a conspiracy?

PAULA

Anything's possible.

REPORTER #8

What do you attribute your success to?

PAULA

Pure coincidence.

REPORTER #9

Do you believe justice will prevail?

PAULA

I wouldn't be here without it.

Police officer #1 leads Paula, Steve and Manny into the Sheriff's Department --

INT. THE CLASSIFIED NEWSROOM - NIGHT

Larry and Vic are alone.

Larry's iPhone rings. He picks up.

Beatrice wanders in through the dimly lit offices to them.

BEATRICE
(to Vic)
Is Lou all right?

VIC
Yeah. Alphonse came and picked him
up.

BEATRICE
Where's the girl?

Vic shrugs.

Larry hangs up.

LARRY
(to Vic)
A black-and-white just brought
Paula in.

VIC
(to Larry)
Anybody you don't know?

BEATRICE
Poor kid.

LARRY
They're holding her at the
Sheriff's Department.

BEATRICE
And that's safe for who?

LARRY
Let's go, people, our hero needs
help.

VIC
We won't get in.

LARRY
Of course we will.

Larry questions Vic and Beatrice's glare of skepticism.

LARRY (CONT'D)
 Seriously?

VIC
 Hey, just another day-in-the-life.

LARRY
 I thought you went home, Beatrice.

BEATRICE
 I got bored watching all this
 unfold on TV at home. Besides, I've
 gone all-out to set this woman up
 on a blind date, and goddamnit,
 she's going to keep it! This
 woman's ass is on the line!

LARRY
 Touching.

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Police officers stand guard by the entrance.

The media horde stand await.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Paula, Steve and Manny are led through a back corridor by
 Police Officer #1. They arrive before an office door --

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/ BACK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Paula, Steve and Manny enter along with Police Officer #1.

Freely turns away from an espresso machine to them.

FREELY
 You got her. Good.
 (beat)
 Who are these two?

POLICE OFFICER #!
 They were with her, Lieutenant. We
 had no choice but to bring them in
 with her.

FREELY
 (to Paula)
 We have to hide you.

STEVE
 What? The public has a right to
 know you have her.

Freely's eyes harden on Steve.

FREELY
 You look familiar.

STEVE
 Steve Tice CKLA 5 News --

FREELY
 -- Get him out of here. Get both of
 these schmucks out of here.
 (to Paula)
 You come with me.

He takes Paula by the hand and leads her out of the office.

Police Officer #1 stands before Steve and Manny.

Steve is obviously intimidated by the officer's stance, but
 leans around him and calls out to Paula and Freely:

STEVE
 I'm Steve Tice -- CKLA 5 News. I
 was nominated for an honorable
 mention in last year's Media
 Monument Awards! You can't keep
 anything from us, or the public!
 The media will know about this!

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/ BACK CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Freely leads Paula through. He suddenly has to stop. A
 shortness of breath. He has to lean up against the wall.

Paula catches him before he slides down and hits the floor.
 She eases over so that he sits up against the wall.

It is awkward for Freely as he searches himself.

FREELY
 ... In-haler...

He can't get to it.

Paula reaches inside his coat pocket and pulls out his in
 haler. She helps him take his medication.

PAULA
 OK... you're OK...

The inhaler is removed. Paula steadies Freely a moment as Freely regains himself.

Freely has his breath back. He locks eyes with Paula.

Freely's POV -- Paula is serene and composed as she looks at him.

Freely's eyes soon harden on Paula. Back to reality.

Paula stands.

FREELY

Piccolo...

PAULA

Don't worry, I'll let them know where you are.

She leaves.

Freely is aggravated with himself.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/ LOBBY - NIGHT

The atmosphere is subdued. The media that is jammed across the room lie in wait.

Paula emerges from a back door and makes her way to a YOUNG POLICE OFFICER who stands to one side.

No one has taken note of Paula's appearance, yet. Paula taps the Young Police Officer on the shoulder.

PAULA

Lieutenant Freely needs help in the back. He had an asthmatic episode.

The Young Police Officer turns and smiles.

YOUNG POLICE OFFICER

Thanks.

Oblivious, he turns bak to the media, then suddenly gives Paula a double-take.

YOUNG POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)

-- What? Call an ambulance!

PAULA

No -- wait --

She does her best to keep it on the low-key, but --

The Young Police Officer's call out stirs the lobby.

Media eyes lock on Paula

Paula can only offer a smile and reluctant wave.
She makes a mad dash to the front doors.

Media cameras and personnel suddenly kick into motion.

Paula finds herself in an obstacle course of bodies. She has to shove her way through. She comes to a halt as she bumps into --

Larry. He chagrins at her.

PAULA (CONT'D)
(shocked and relieved)
Larry!

They embrace.

LARRY
Haul ass, woman!

He takes Paula by the hand and charges to the front doors --

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Larry and Paula race out and around the corner --

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/ BACK LOT - CONTINUOUS

Larry and Paula close in on Vic and Beatrice.

LARRY
(to Vic)
Keys.

Vic hesitates.

VIC
(to Paula)
Where's my van?

LARRY
(now pissed)
Give-her-your-keys!

Disgruntled, Vic slaps a massive ring-of-keys into Paula's hand.

PAULA
 (to Vic)
 What are you doing to me?

Vic points to --

His Harley-Davidson Fat Boy that stands in the distance.

QUICK CUT TO:

Paula is now straddled on the Harley-Davidson -- donned with Vic's mini-helmet and leather bomber. A-typical biker-chick.

VIC
 -- That's the clutch. That's the
 brake --

PAULA
 I can't remember this.

Paula looks to Larry. Desperation at an apex.

PAULA (CONT'D)
 I can't do this. I can't do this!

Vic's eyes hone in on what is behind her.

VIC
 They're coming.

Dick, along with a dozen FBI agents, races in.

LARRY
 -- Go!

The Harley-Davidson takes off --

VIC
 (bemoans)
 My bike.

The Harley-Davidson streaks past Dick and his agents.

DICK
 Son-of-a-bitch!

EXT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/ FRONT LOT - NIGHT

FBI sedans take off.

Police cruisers take off after the FBI sedans.

The masses of media quickly jump into their vans and cars.
The convoy race after the police cruisers.

EXT. HAWTHORNE/ 105 FREEWAY - NIGHT

Paula's hands are strict on the Harley-Davidson's handlebars
as the bike speeds along.

EXT. FBI BLACK SEDAN - NIGHT

Dick is seen through the windshield as the car races along.
Determination is evident on his face.

INT. POLICE CRUISER - NIGHT

Freely gets on his iPhone as the car picks up speed --

INT. FBI BLACK SEDAN - SAME

Dick's iPhone rings. He picks up:

FREELY (ON PHONE)
She's going to Gower.

DICK
And we're going with her. He's ours
now.

He takes mic in hand:

DICK (CONT'D)
(into mic)
Mama Bird, this is Home Boy. Come
in.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The Police Helicopter streaks across the Los Angeles skyline.

PILOT (ON RADIO)
This is Mama Bird. Over.

DICK (ON RADIO)
We have a 1969 Harley-Davidson
headed southbound on the 105. Let's
find it.

PILOT (ON RADIO)
Proceeding to 105, southbound, Home
Boy. Over.

The Police Helicopter banks away from the city lights below --

EXT. PALOS VERDES BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The Harley-Davidson comes in and starts to sputter.

Paula is at a loss. Checks the fuel gauge.

The fuel gauge is empty.

PAULA
(bemoans)
Vic...

The Harley-Davidson pulls to the shoulder of the road. It stops. It is placed on its kick-stand.

Paula steps away. She takes in the road ahead.

A faint glimmer of light is seen in the distance. A beacon.

Paula takes a few steps toward the light when --

The Harley-Davidson kick-stand slips out from underneath. The motorcycle hits the pavement with a metallic CLANG.

Paula glares at the downed, mechanical beast on the tarmac. She turns her eyes back to the beacon.

Paula starts her journey to the DIM LIGHT in the distance: Wayfarers Chapel.

EXT. RANCHO PALOS VERDES - NIGHT

Paula arrives before the entranceway to Wayfarers Chapel. She braces herself.

THUNDER is heard in the distant sky from where she came.

EXT. PALOS VERDES BOULEVARD - NIGHT

The thunder is from the Police Helicopter's rotors. It has located the downed Harley-Davidson. It hovers over it. It's search light scans the downed mechanical beast.

EXT. RANCHO PALOS VERDES - SAME

Paula is daunted by this. She races up the drive to Wayfarers Chapel --

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - NIGHT

Serene in its isolation. A breeze wisps through the flora. A faint roar from the distant shore. Glimmers of light emanate throughout the darkened structure.

Paula arrives at the entrance. Checks the time on her iPhone.

PAULA
(sotto voce)
Midnight. You better be here.

She places her hand on the chapel door. Surprisingly, the door gently opens. Paula steadies herself, then cautiously enters --

INT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Paula is tentative as she walks down the aisle. She stops halfway. Her eyes fixated on the altar before her.

The altar is a vision to behold.

Paula is calm. A mysterious hand, with long fingers, reaches out from behind her and rests on her shoulder.

Paula is shocked, but doesn't move. She slowly spins around --

Gower stands behind her with a congenial smile.

GOWER
Hey, how are ya?

Paula SCREAMS.

This shocks Gower -- he SCREAMS.

Both screams boom! Eardrums could shatter.

Out of nowhere -- Gower slaps Paula across the face.

The screams cease.

Stunned -- Paula freezes.

Silence looms.

GOWER (CONT'D)
OK. OK? OK.

Paula is wide-eyed as her shock seeps to ire.

Gower sigh. Relieved.

GOWER (CONT'D)
You're good.

SMACK!

Gower's jaw cracks like a sonic boom when Paula's fist spins his head around 180 degrees. He is knocked back off his feet and lands hard into a pew.

Gower slowly rises out of the pew and gives his head a shake. He checks his jaw, it seems out of alignment.

Paula seethes.

PAULA
Where were you?

GOWER
What do you mean, where was I? I was here!

PAULA
No, you weren't. You weren't here.
You stood me up!

It's a struggle, but Gower gets back to his feet and composes himself.

GOWER
You have anger management issues.

Paula's had it -- she jumps on him. With her force she throws Gower off balance. Both, now, hit the floor hard.

Paula pins Gower in the middle of the aisle.

PAULA
Do you have any idea what you have done -- to-my-life!

GOWER
I'm choking. Con-trol... con-trol...

Paula's grip on Gower's collar tightens. She squeezes her grip on his collar and rattles hi head off the solid floor.

PAULA
Where-were-you? Where-were-you?

GOWER
(along with her)
Knotts-Berry-Farm. Knotts-Berry-
Farm.

Paula suddenly stops. Slowly composes herself.

PAULA
What?

GOWER
It came highly recommended.

Gower is relieved that Paula has released his collar.

GOWER (CONT'D)
Can you remove yourself from my
chest? I'm about to lose
consciousness.

Paula gets up off his chest and steps away. She now paces to
regain her calm.

Gower gets to his feet. He does his best to keep a safe,
buffer-zone between him and Paula.

GOWER (CONT'D)
This is a place of meditation. Need
I remind you to use some decorum.

PAULA
You... you said "Wayfarers Chapel.
Twelve o'clock!"

GOWER
((corrects)
Twelve midnight.

PAULA
-- No, no! No "twelve midnight." I
didn't hear any twelve midnight!

Gower reflects on the thought.

GOWER
Didn't I? Human error. It happens.
What does it matter -- you're here!

Paula's ire resurfaces. She has to take deep, methodical
breaths to keep her control.

Gower sees this. He takes a few steps away from her. In case.

GOWER (CONT'D)
 (encourages)
 That's it. Deep breaths. Deep
 breaths. That's good.

Paula inhales-exhales. Inhales-exhales...

GOWER (CONT'D)
 Better, huh?

Paula's irritation is still evident, but she remains still.

Gower goes off on some tangent of serenity like some preacher:

GOWER (CONT'D)
 "All religion relates to life, and
 the life of religion is to do
 good." Emanuel Swedenborg.

PAULA
 I'm not there.

Gower shrugs nonetheless. He continues:

GOWER
 What is a man, but a man...
 (beat)
 I haven't figured the rest of it
 out, yet.

PAULA
 Quit while you're at it.

GOWER
 May I ask you a question?

PAULA
 Sure, but then I'll have to kill
 you.

GOWER
 What's with this? It's abysmal.

Gestures Paula's attire: the bomber jacket and helmet.

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - NIGHT

Paula and Gower stand before the concrete sign.

The name etched: EMANUEL SWEDENBORG is evident before them.

Gower beams with pride:

GOWER
 My mother named me after him.
 Emanuel Swedenborg Gower. She did
 her thesis on him. Loyola
 University.

Paula is exhausted. No apparent interest. Contains any
 comment.

Gower takes in Wayfarers Chapel's ambiance as he leads Paula
 back inside.

GOWER (CONT'D)
 Did you know this structure was
 officially opened in 1949.

PAULA
 (corrects him)
 1951.

GOWER
 Excuse me?

PAULA
 It opened in 1951. It was dedicated
 in July, 1949. Check the webpage.

Gower continues, more out of spite now.

GOWER
 The New Jerusalem Church
 commissioned Wayfarers Chapel as a
 place for all faiths.

Said as an attempt to impress Paula. Futile.

INT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Paula and Gower wander down the aisle.

GOWER
 Emanuel Swedenborg was a great
 theologian and scientist --

PAULA
 -- Look, let's cut the second-hand
 guide spiel. I've got a predicament
 here.

GOWER

There are no predicaments here.
It's Wayfarers Chapel --

Paula instantly grabs him by the lapels, again. She's had enough.

PAULA

-- Get this, you Fruit Loop. I woke up this morning feeling pretty good about myself, all things considered. I was given my first assignment at my third-rated tabloid magazine that I labored on for over a year. I deserved it! It was overdo!

(cringes)

And for my sins -- I was given you!

(holds back tears)

Now I'm a criminal, accused in the kidnapping of a lunatic with emotional management issues!

Gower is awed by her verve.

GOWER

Really? Who'd you kidnap?

Paula's hands clamp onto Gower's collar and squeeze down. He emotions spew out like a volcano eruption. She curses under her breath.

Gower is taken aback by Paula's outburst.

GOWER (CONT'D)

Whoa...

(beat)

You're all right here.

Paula's grip on him tightens.

GOWER (CONT'D)

(cringes)

You're pulling hairs.

Paula's grip on him slowly ease.

Gower slowly tears Paula away.

Paula collapses into a pew. Weary and tear-filled.

Gower holds a moment of empathy for her.

PAULA
My life is over.

Gower takes a seat down beside her, wraps his arm around her shoulder and pats her gently.

GOWER
There, there. There, there...

He notes the rosary around Paula's neck for the first time.

GOWER (CONT'D)
Hey, a rosary! That's nice.

He also takes note of cookie crumbs on the floor before them.

GOWER (CONT'D)
Strange. This place is usually
immaculate.

A MAN'S VOICE
(calls out)
Emanuel Gower!

Paula and Gower turn to the altar --

The Slender Man, attired in black from head-to-toe, points a Long-Barrel handgun at them. He's in a fragile and disheveled state and could snap at any moment.

PAULA
Now what?

Gower is perplexed as well. He can only shrug.

The Slender Man wanders down the aisle toward them. He holds a hint of a German accent.

SLENDER MAN
Your time has come, Emanuel Gower.
Stand!

Paula and Gower stand, simultaneously. Gower is intimidated as he squirms behind Paula and uses her as a shield.

SLENDER MAN (CONT'D)
Didn't think I would find you, did
you?

Paula gives Gower a suspicious glance.

Gower shrugs, again.

SLENDER MAN (CONT'D)
 You don't remember me? How can you
 not remember me?

Gower chagrins.

SLENDER MAN (CONT'D)
 (clarifies it for Gower)
 You were invited to Chancellor
 Schmitt's party... You insulted my
 designs! My clothing that I labored
 over! I offered you pate, then you
 hung me out of a ten-story balcony!

It finally dons on Gower.

GOWER
 Oh, yeah. Right...
 (to Paula)
 The pate was stale.

SLENDER MAN
 You ruined me! Now, I am going to
 kill you.

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - NIGHT

The Police Helicopter thunders in overhead. It beams its
 search light down on the structure --

INT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - SAME

The Slender Man is instantly blinded by the beam of light.
 Shields his eyes with his arm, then loses his balance, slips,
 then --

THUMP -- he drops into a pew.

Suddenly -- Dick and Freely, along with a team of
 FBI agents and police officers, charge in. All armed and
 ready to fire.

Paula is at a loss to this. Out of reflex -- she grabs Gower
 and uses him as a human shield.

Dick and Freely freeze, ready to shoot.

DICK
 It's over, Piccolo.

Paula puts Gower in a full nelson headlock. Gower is clearly
 taken off-guard by this.

PAULA

Back off!

Gower plays along, though he doesn't know why.

PAULA (CONT'D)

He's mine!

Dick and Freely gesture their teams to stand down.

FREELY

Easy, Piccolo. Cool heads prevail.

DAVE

I didn't think you had it in you,
Piccolo.

PAULA

You and me both.

Paula's grip on Gower's head tightens.

GOWER

Too tight.

PAULA

How'd you find me?

DAVE

We're good. We can find anybody.

FREELY

For Christ's sake, we can take you
out, Piccolo!

Gower points an accusatory finger at Freely.

GOWER

Watch your mouth!

DICK

You won't get away with this,
Piccolo. You're surrounded.

PAULA

You set me up!

DICK

We had to.

PAULA

I have rights!

DICK
Who cares?

PAULA
I'll take him out. I will!

FREELY
She's bluffing. She won't do it.

GOWER
Do what?

He's about to lose consciousness.

GOWER (CONT'D)
Can I say something?

The words are garbled. Not sure anybody knows he spoke.

DICK
He's ours.

GOWER
(to Paula)
You can let go of me now.

Words are still garbled, but Paula does as he requests.

Gower drops on his ass like a dead weight. Relieved. Takes a breath, then rises to his feet. Composes himself, then steps away from Paula.

Paula is now vulnerable. It makes her uncomfortable to be exposed.

Gower follows through on his Show Stopper:

GOWER (CONT'D)
Now that everyone has said their
peace, I believe there's a lot to
take into account here...

He now weaves his way through the FBI agents and police officers that encompass him.

GOWER (CONT'D)
(to a FBI agent)
It's not your color.
(back his spiel)
All right, people, show's over.
This is a place of sanctuary.
You've all turned into idolatrous
pagans. We are a civilized species
with barbaric tendencies, though.

Paula has eased her way to the far end of a pew.

Freely nudges Dick to keep an eye on her.

The Slender Man emerges from the pew he fell into. Rubs his eyes. Long-Barrel Handgun still in his grasp.

A POLICE OFFICER

-- Gun!

The entire team of FBI agents and police officer take instant aim at the Slender Man.

Gower jumps in to the rescue -- wraps his long arm around the Slender Man who is befuddled by the commotion around him. Gower raises him up onto a pew for all to see.

GOWER

Here-here!

Spans his arms out like a preacher at a sermon.

This stills his audience.

GOWER (CONT'D)

(to Paula)

I got 'em now.

Paula doesn't know where to turn now.

GOWER (CONT'D)

(to his audience)

What is this? What is this?

(re: Slender Man)

This, this is my friend.

He jumps down from the pew, exposes the Slender Man to all, then saunters his way through the maze of FBI agents and police officers.

GOWER (CONT'D)

Who are we? What are we doing to ourselves? Are we not human beings with souls, or merely animals in the revolutionary scheme of things?

(an aside to paula)

I'll get you out of this, kid.

(continues)

I am ashamed of what I am a witness to here. Are we beyond ourselves to compromise? How far is too far? We are what life is! We are here to set precedence.

(MORE)

GOWER (CONT'D)

Not only for ourselves, but for those who will follow. Emanuel Swedenborg, a prolific theologian and scientist said, "All people who live good lives, no matter what their religion, have a place in heaven."

(beat)

Huh?

(beat)

We-can-do-it! Let's hear it.

(beat)

We-can-do-it!

The chants starts as a murmur, but gradually intensifies as everyone joins in.

EVERYONE IN UNISON

We-can-do-it! We-can-d--it!

Dick and Freely are aghast to their teams. It sounds like pep rally mixed with a church session.

FREELY

(to Dick)

He's as fucked as the sky is blue.

GOWER

(Freely)

I said, watch your mouth!

DICK

(to Freely)

Maybe, but he's ours.

FREELY

(to two police officers)

Grab her!

The harmonious chant suddenly ceases --

The police officers quickly take hold of Paula.

Gower jumps back up on the pew to protect the Slender Man.

GOWER

-- Release her! Release her, I say!
Return that woman!

FREELY

Preach the heathens, for Christ's sake.

GOWER
(to Freely)
I've had it with you!

Freely gestures for the police officers to take Paula away.

GOWER (CONT'D)
If you take her I will tell the
world what was done! The world will
know of your actions!

DICK
She's going in.

GOWER
I am a force to be reckoned with!

Reporters with cameras and a rabid hunger surge in and
scramble over each other --

FREELY
What in hell... ?

The frenzy and calamity sieges in like a tsunami.

REPORTER #1
Hey... it's Emanuel Gower.

Reporters push and shove their way through the FBI agents and
police officers to get to him.

REPORTER #2
Look, they got Paula Piccolo, too.
Hey, Paula, how's it feel like to
be famous?

PAULA
I'm not famous.

REPORTER #3
How about infamous?

PAULA
It's not normal.

REPORTER #3
It is now.

Reporter #1 shoves his smartphone in Gower's face.

REPORTER #1
How'd they find you?

REPORTER #2

Were you here the whole time?

The reporters knock the police officers who have a hold of Paula to one side. Paula quickly slips away --

EXT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - NIGHT

A white-haired man -- FATHER (FR.) DAVID BYRNE -- gets out of his sedan and is overwhelmed at the sight of every known media vehicle, police cruisers and amass of cars that are jammed on the lot.

FR. DAVID BYRNE

Oh, my...

Balaban and his attorney -- Alphonse Jacobs -- walk past the padre and make their way through --

BALABAN

(to Alphonse)

Stay close. This could get messy.

Paula bursts outside, bumps into Fr. David Byrne, but she doesn't stop.

Balaban and Alphonse see Paula race away in her escape.

BALABAN (CONT'D)

Hopeless.

INT. WAYFARERS CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Dick takes in the madness. A perverse sense of enjoyment about it.

DICK

Priceless.

Fr. David Byrne steps inside. He cannot believe what he sees.

Gower catches sight of Fr. David Byrne.

GOWER

Padre! Come...

Fr. David Byrne weaves his way through the melee and arrives at the pew. Gower helps him up. Gower wraps his arms around both him and the Slender Man.

GOWER (CONT'D)
 Everyone, this is Father David
 Byrne. Pastor and keeper of
 Wayfarers Chapel.

Fr. David Byrne doesn't know how to respond.

Reporters fire away questions, as in:

- 1) What was it like, Gower?
- 2) Did you ever lose hope?
- 3) Were you aware of what was happening?
- 4) What did you do?
- 5) Any accomplices?

Gower raises his hand to regain control.

GOWER (CONT'D)
 Whoa, whoa... I'll get to all of
 you. First, let me say... I am
 happy to be here. Now, in answer to
 your first question: It wasn't
 easy. No. Sir. It all comes down to
 one thing -- character. I'm
 fortunate to be blessed that way. I
 can go on, but do you want to know
 the real tragedy here?
 (beat)
 Misunderstanding. Our
 misunderstanding of one another.

REPORTER #2
 How bad was it? Really?

Gower scoffs at the question.

GOWER
 Bad doesn't even begin to describe
 it.

Freely and Dick stand back and watch the show with Gower and
 the reporters.

FREELY
 They're eating him up.

DICK
 Democracy in action. He's back...
 and we got him.

FREELY
 OK, Dean... what's on your mind?

DICK

He's our marionnette, compatriot.
He's our show... and we hold the
strings.

Gower is in his element.

REPORTER #1

(to Gower)

You see yourself as an anomaly?

GOWER

Anomaly? More like alchemy in
action! Please... I'm offended.

REPORTER #1

Was there a purpose for all this?
Who's responsible?

GOWER

Listen, I don't want to say
anything right now.

REPORTER #3

Why not?

GOWER

Right now, I know I am the better
man for what has happened.

REPORTER #4

Were you ever scared?

GOWER

Fear is what you make of it.

REPORTER #5

We talking spirituality? The masses
going to accept that?

GOWER

You know, the human spirit is a
funny thing, whenever it's the
bleakest your true self shows.

REPORTER #1

What's next for Emanuel Gower?

GOWER

I don't know... world diplomat...
philanthropist... Reality
Television!

EXT. PALOS VERDES BOULEVARD - NIGHT

Paula stands in the middle of the road and stares at the glass structure before her.

A Man -- 30, clean-cut, in a FBI jacket -- SEAN -- walks towards Paula from one end of Palos Verdes Boulevard. He stops at Paula's side.

Paula notes him for the first time. She's not startled, but curious.

SEAN
Hi.

PAULA
Hi.

SEAN
Hell of a sight, huh?

PAULA
(suspicious of him)
OK.

SEAN
I'm Sean.

Extends his hand.

Paula shakes his hand questionably.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Beatrice's brother-in-law's
friend's cousin. She said you
wouldn't be too hard to find.

Paula can only smile.

PAULA
Beatrice.

SEAN
When I called you, the connection
was bad. My battery was dying.

PAULA
(taken aback)
That was you.

Sean acknowledges this with a chagrin.

SEAN
You know, I haven't been here a day
and it's been... interesting.

All Paula can do is shrug.

SEAN (CONT'D)
You hungry?

PAULA
Not really.

SEAN
OK. C'mon...

Paula gives in and starts to walk with him back up Palos
Verdes Boulevard.

SEAN (CONT'D)
You know, you're not what Beatrice
described.

Paula giggles.

SEAN (CONT'D)
What's so funny?

PAULA
Everything.

FADE OUT:

THE END