

BEING HUMAN

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"... and as he stared at the sky and listened to a cow mooing almost dreamily in a distant village, he tried to understand what it all meant -- the sky, and the fields, and the humming telegraph pole; he felt that he was just at the point of understanding it when his head started to spin and the lucid languor of the moment became intolerable..."

Vladimir Nabokov

In this script there are six main characters who inhabit different periods of time, from pre-history to the present day. But there is just one story. Because we blend into one developing narrative the lives that we show.

There is no suggestion of time travel or re-incarnation or any other tricky or mystic device. We can do in real time and with real characters what other movies strive to do with immortal time travellers and ghosts. Our story is thoroughly based in reality and the magic we are dealing with is real, human magic.

In moving from one character to the next everything will change; supporting characters, setting, period. But the essential situation of our hero of the moment will relate to the one before and the one following.

The magic will be in the transitions, in leaving one character and advancing the film through hundreds or thousands of years to find our next hero in tantalizingly similar human circumstances. The effect of these transitions across space and time, will let the audience grasp the simple truth behind our story; that we are all in it together.

The key to allowing the audience to enjoy this human connection at the heart of the film is that one actor will play the six individuals. The feeling will be of the endless, glorious playing and replaying of the simple drama of being alive.

We end the film with a present-day hero, but by that time we will be seeing this modern man in an entirely fresh light, feeling his kinship with the caveman and the slave and the others who have gone before. The resolution of his contemporary story is theirs also. By then perhaps, we will be able to see ourselves in this novel perspective, too.

And the structure of the film itself has the thrill of novelty. It has never before been used in cinema. Never. Our six characters and their stories connect in many different ways, some obvious, others vague, tantalizing threads. Even global connections are made, as the planet itself and all its people, come and go in the story. For the audience the game of making the connections, feeling the bonds, even inventing or discovering associations of their own, will be endless in this biggest of stories, smallest of stories. It is truly a new cinematic experience.

BEING HUMAN

Hector is a family man. He and his woman and two children live near the ocean in a sheltered fold on a hillside, a shallow cave given protection at its entrance by a covering of branches and brush. Just inside a small fire smoulders permanently, a few times a day encouraged into life for cooking or warmth. If it ever went out it would be a catastrophe, so it remains a smouldering comfort and a constant preoccupation for the whole family.

Hector doesn't know that his name is Hector. It is simply a convenience to help us tell his story. The idea of individual names is an imaginative leap that has not yet been made by mankind when we first meet him. Hector is living out his life 4000 years before the birth of Christ, in a reasonably temperate zone of the planet. In his entire life Hector will traverse no more than ten square miles of it.

FADE IN:

FIRST IMAGE

is the reflection of Hector's face in a rock pool. The image suddenly fragments. Hector is enjoying himself, deflecting his stream of pee now and then so that his image reforms itself and then is disrupted again. When he is finished, a trace of vanity makes him bend down closer to his reflection. He strokes his long hair and fingers a blemish on his cheek.

Then he is aware of another presence. He sharply turns. Some way off a solitary figure stands on the rise of some rocks, not afraid to show itself. Hector calls out.

HECTOR

Go back home... leave me alone...

We see that the figure is a young BOY, Hector's son. The Boy thinks about it for a moment, before turning and disappearing behind the rocks.

1-4 TITLE SCENES

1-4

The small fire that never goes out has been enlarged to cook the day's meal. Beyond the fire on a rock shelf HECTOR plays with his children, a GIRL of six and Boy of eight. It is the usual rough romp that fathers indulge in, but in 4000 BC possibly rougher than normal. Hector is acting the part of some trapped wild animal, lashing out at the hunters surrounding him. But in his act of wild rage he gets carried away. He picks up his son and throws him hard, much too hard, on his back.

(CONTINUED)

1-4 CONTINUED:

1-4

The Boy tumbles down from the shelf to the cave floor at his mother, DEIRDRE's feet, howling in pain. Deidre scowls at Hector. If the gesture had been invented he would probably shrug his shoulders. The Boy howls on.

Hector kneels beside his daughter, absorbed in her antics as she sleeps. She is a vivid dreamer. Her whole little form wriggles and contorts in response to the fantasy unspooling in her head. She emits unearthly nighttime noises, squeals and giggles and moans. Hector is fascinated. Where has his daughter gone? Who is this strange wild creature that has taken her form, lying beside him? Hector's daughter delights him. And while Hector watches his daughter, Deirdre from their bed watches Hector.

It is almost dawn, the cave is quiet and the fire has diminished. By its light we see Deirdre and Hector making love, on their bed of dried grass and skins. It's difficult to say what their lovemaking might look like. What has 6000 years done to that art? We will think about it. On the far side of the cave we see the sleeping children. As we MOVE CLOSER we see that they are far from sleep. Two sets of bright eyes peek out from under their cover. We CUT BETWEEN them, the loving parents and the watching, learning children.

Hector is arguing with his son, just outside their cave. The Boy wants to go foraging with him again.

HECTOR

No... stay here... stay!

Hector takes a few steps. The Boy follows.

HECTOR

No... go back... go away...

Hector walks on again, taking big, angry father strides. The Boy stubbornly tags along at a safe distance. Hector walks on for some time before turning on him.

HECTOR

Leave me alone! Stay here...
Stay!

There is real anger in his voice. The Boy wisely retreats to the cave. As Hector turns to continue his walk alone he see Deirdre looking at him accusingly from the entrance. She holds out her arms ready to comfort the Boy rejected by his father. Hector is in the classic, timeless, no-win situation and he knows it. With a sigh of frustration he heads for the beach.

5 EXT. SHORE - DAY

5

Hector is foraging on the shoreline, gathering cockles, seaweeds, mussels, crabs, anything edible. He splashes in the shallows, hoarding the food in a roughly-woven bag. Every now and then he will suck a cockle from its shell or crunch on a particularly tasty piece of seaweed. Hector looks about 30 years old. This is advanced middle age for his times and it shows. He has a heavy cold and an irritating hack in his throat. In a similar condition a modern individual would spend two or three pleasantly drugged days in bed, perhaps attempting a little light paperwork propped up on some pillows.

The sun is warming the day. Hector sits on a rock, surveying his world. He seems very much a part of it. He watches some wading seabirds nearby. Like him they are nosing around the margins of low tide for food. He smiles. In another season they or their eggs will provide a meal or two. There is a strange atmosphere of appropriateness in the scene, Hector seems such an integral part of it. The easy fit of the man in his landscape strikes us. Hector belongs to it in ways that a present-day hunter or holiday maker, or even naturalist, never could. Also, there is an odd sense of the world being rather empty.

Whether the larger world is round or flat, spinning or orbiting, Hector neither knows nor cares. He knows simple things. Cold and hunger. He knows warmth, rough comfort and companionship. His family and the safety of their cave.

Further along the shore Hector drops his bag and straightens himself, easing the ache in his back. Then something disturbs him. From behind a distant headland a smudge of smoke trails into the sky. Hector picks up his bag and runs. He knows where he is going. He reaches a vantage point on some rocks. He steadies himself and gazes hard out to sea. We can feel the strain in his eyes as he tries to detect any hint of threat in the glinting water. Then his jaw drops in fear. Around the edge of the headland two dark shapes proceed in regular motion. Their steady progress is full of menace. Oar-driven boats, slowly, insistently making their way into Hector's bay. He jumps from the rocks and runs up the beach toward the cave. One thing else that Hector knows is fear, blind, gut-turning fear.

6 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

6

Hector is a small figure in the landscape now, racing up the steep slope in the direction of his home.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

He stops for breath and to look back on the bay. The shapes are distinct now, two large open boats, roughly made but menacingly adequate for their purpose, coastal raiding. The boats are nearing the beach now and figures can be seen preparing to land. Hector gathers enough of his wits and strength to continue his race up the hillside.

7 INT. HECTOR'S CAVE - DAY

7

Inside, his family are in a state of panic. They seem to have prepared for this moment. Through their agitation there is purpose. They gather bits and pieces to carry with them in their flight. Hector's children are attempting to take too much. Hector shouts instructions to them as he puts more wood on the fire. It must stay burning in their absence.

Hector gathers his family together and they leave the cave.

8 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

8

Hector shoves his children in one direction up the slope further into the hills. His woman runs off the other way. A hasty, confused argument takes place.

HECTOR

Up the hill!

DEIRDRE

No, down onto the other beach.
The little ones can't take the
hill. Neither can I.

HECTOR

Up the hill! They're down there
already. I saw them!

DEIRDRE

You're wrong!

She runs off down the slope. Hector has no choice but to follow her, herding the children in front of him.

Deirdre runs on, heading for the lower slope and the cover of some trees. Then from these same trees she sees the figures of the RAIDERS coming toward her. She turns, running back up the hill. Hector and the children also turn and run back the way they have come, by now dropping precious bits of food and other possessions. The Raiders are running strongly, five or six of them.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

The little Girl starts to go back for a precious toy she has dropped. Hector picks her up and carries her off over his shoulder. The Boy follows.

Deirdre is trailing behind them. She was right. She doesn't have the stamina for the hill. Hector looks back and sees the Raiders gaining on her. His face is a confusion of fear and indecision. He almost stops, as if to go back and help her, but then changes his mind and runs off once again with the children. Deirdre is by now throwing the things she is carrying at her pursuers, hoping that they will stop to retrieve them and allow her to gain some ground. But they don't stop and the effort tires her even more.

She attempts one final dash and then, all of her energy gone, she stops in her tracks and waits for her pursuers. The Raiders break their run also and trot and finally walk, the distance between them and Deirdre.

Hector is watching all of this over his shoulder, still running. He stops for a moment to watch Deirdre being finally surrounded by the Raiders. Then he runs on.

9 EXT. VALLEY - DAY

9

Hector is tiring, too. With the Girl still awkwardly clinging to his neck he is picking his way up a steep slope, half-dragging the Boy up behind him. He stops for a breath and sees the raiders moving into the valley below. In a moment of utter panic he lets go of his son, drops the Girl from his shoulder, and runs on alone. We can sense the moment of release in his unburdened flight. But it doesn't last long. Some way up the slope he stops and turns. He sees his children, only now beginning to work out what has happened, and the raiders below. He can't do it. Even as the Girl calls to him he is running back down the hill, feeling the first stab of a guilt that will never leave him.

GIRL

Come back, Dada...

10 EXT. VALLEY - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

10

Hector and the children have reached the safety of a small valley higher up in the hills. The raiders have been slowed down by their capture of Deirdre. Hector is hoisting his two children into the lower branches of a solitary tree on the hillside. He coaxes them up into the higher branches.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

BOY

I'm hungry.

HECTOR

Don't move from here. I'll come for you in the morning. There's no food. Try and sleep in the branches. Don't cry. Don't make a noise.

Hector moves off, looking back to his children in the tree. They too gaze anxiously at him. They don't wave. Maybe waving hasn't been invented yet. Hector heads off alone, higher into the hills.

11 EXT. ROCKS - DUSK

11

It is dusk now. We find Hector waking from a fitful sleep behind some rocks. He sits up and takes in his surroundings. His face hardens as awareness of his predicament returns. He stands up and then crouching low, moves off down the hill.

12 EXT. VALLEY - DUSK

12

Hector has returned to the area of the tree. He slows down some distance away and just in time. He sees a figure standing beneath the tree. He moves forward to the protection of some rocks, and watches. He is close enough to hear the voice of the solitary Raider, although he doesn't understand the words. The Raider looks up into the branches and talks in a friendly, persuasive way.

RAIDER

It's too cold to spend all night up there. We've got a fire at the beach. Food, too.

There is no response from the tree. The Raider coaxes again.

RAIDER

Come on! Your mother's down there. She's happy... she's warm, too... and full... she wants to see you... she sent me...

His friendly tone of voice has an effect. There is movement in the branches. Hector can see the dark shapes of his two children clambering down. The Raider stretches out his arms and helps the Boy to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

Then he reaches up for the Girl, catches her as she drops and keeps her in his arms. He laughs in a comforting way.

RAIDER

That was easy, eh? You're half asleep already, little girl. I'll carry you.

Hector watches the Raider and his children move slowly off, down the hillside, the Raider carrying the Girl in one arm and holding the Boy's hand. They almost look like a family.

13 EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

13

It is fully dark now. On the beach the Raiders have set up a comfortable camp with a large fire. We are still with Hector. He has come down from his bleak hiding place in the hills. The smell of fire and food and concern for his family, have drawn him here. He is hiding somewhere way off from the camp, but close enough to observe it.

What he sees disturbs him, but for odd reasons. His family appear to be happily integrated with the Raiders. His two children have become fast friends with the man who coaxed them from the tree. His woman is with a larger group closer to the fire. They are playfully attempting to communicate with her, and although still a little timid, she is smiling. There is no hint of barbarity, rape or abuse. That was not the intention of the Raiders. To them, a fertile woman and two healthy children are as gold will be to plunderers of later ages. For their part, the family have to accept the situation. Food and shelter are the best that life can offer.

*

Painfully, Hector takes in the reality of the scene. His family have been stolen from him, plain and simple. In the morning they will be gone, out to sea and round the headland forever. He watches them for a while longer, then it becomes too painful. He retreats into the darkness and up into the empty hills again.

14 EXT. ROCK SHELTER - NIGHT

14

Hector spends a long, cold night alone, squatting in a narrow crevice in the rocks. He doesn't sleep, or even attempt to close his eyes. He stares into the darkness. There is nothing in the world to comfort him, no philosophy or religion, no friend to run to. This night he is utterly alone.

15 EXT. ROCKS - MORNING

15

In the morning it is lightly raining. Hector stands in the drizzle outside the shelter. It seems to revive him, refresh him, even comfort him. A sign, however meager, that life goes on. Then Hector trots off in the direction of the shore. There is not much else that he can do.

16 EXT. BEACH - DAY

16

The Raiders are loading up their boats, wading back and forth from the shoreline. Hector watches from cover. His family are already on one of the boats, awaiting whatever lies ahead, too afraid to betray real emotion.

*
*

The last of the Raiders on shore wade out the short distance to the boats. Hector watches these moments of departure, watches the faces of his family.

Hector makes his move. In a mad act he breaks cover and runs down toward the departing boats. The last Raiders are climbing aboard. Hector charges at full speed to the water's edge. He screams agonizingly at the Raiders and impotently starts throwing stones at them. The Raiders all look at him. The LEADER is impudently brushing Hector's missiles aside, like so many flies and smiling.

*

Suddenly Hector's rage and energy leave him. He stands looking at the Raiders and they look at him, for a long moment. The Raiders are all young men, hardly into their twenties, and nowadays might resemble something like a motorcycle gang. But in Hector's time they are men in the full prime of life. They begin to laugh and exchange remarks about Hector. He returns their looks fiercely. His woman and children sit on the boat, frozen in fear.

*

*

The Leader eventually turns from Hector, still smiling and gives an order. The men lift their oars and prepare to leave. Then an older man stands up in the other boat. He calls over to the Leader, nodding in the direction of Hector. Hector doesn't know what they are saying, but they have an intense exchange, obviously centered on him. The older man seems to be an adviser, a priest or wise man, although he's still only about thirty years old. The Leader listens to him intently. The PRIEST talks and points to the cliffs. The Leader looks there and nods his head. He gives some instructions to his men. Hector stands, bemused. Six or so of the Raiders leave the boats, wade ashore and without any resistance from him, take hold of Hector. Hector's children instinctively rise as if to defend their father, but Deirdre, despite her own feelings, wisely holds them back.

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*

17 EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

17

Hector's hands have been bound with rope. He is being led up to the top of the cliffs. The Priest and the Leader walk on ahead, still talking intensely.

At the top of the cliff the bay and the boats and the wide sea are stretched out beneath them. The Priest, as they arrive, becomes excited. He points to a pile of large stones at the very summit of the headland. The mound of stones is obviously man-made.

PRIEST

I told you! I knew they did it around here! Ask him...

The Leader moves closer to Hector and talks to him in a friendly, reasoning tone.

LEADER

What do we do? Do we throw you over, is that the idea?

Hector doesn't understand. He looks at him blankly.

LEADER

He wants me to throw you over. What does it do? Does it help the sun? Should I throw you over?

The Leader tries to help Hector understand by miming the act of throwing him off the cliff. Hector doesn't know how to respond.

PRIEST

I tell you, it's one man, one stone. It'll help the voyage.

The Leader is unsure. He walks around the pile of stones, checking it out from all sides as if it was some infernal machine that he didn't know the workings of. He squats down and squints through it to the watery sun emerging from the clouds far out to sea. He looks across to Hector, now sitting on the grass. The Leader sits down beside him. They sit together like friends. The ageless intimacy of sacrificer and victim.

LEADER

What's it got to do with the sun?

PRIEST

I don't know, yet.

The Leader looks at Hector. Then he makes up his mind.

(CONTINUED)

LEADER

No. It's too much of a risk.
Just add a stone to the pile. Let
him go. That's the best we can
do. Let's go.

With that, he stands up. The Priest, with some sense of ceremony, looks around for a large stone, picks one up and places it on top of the pile. He waits for a moment, almost as if he expects some consequence of his action.

PRIEST

It's meaningless, without him
going over the cliff.

The Leader strides off back toward the beach. The others follow him, giving a final look or smile to Hector, apart from the Priest, who looks him up and down, regretting that he is not by now a corpse in the ocean. Hector watches them go, too shocked still to react in any meaningful way. He stands alone, trying to unpick the rope that binds his hands.

When they are some distance from him, Hector starts to follow them, at first running to catch up and then simply trotting after them. The Raiders are aware of him behind them. The Leader eventually stops and calls to Hector.

LEADER

Off you go. We don't want you.

He turns from Hector and moves on. Hector persists in following them. They are his only connection now with anything that thinks or feels in the world. His link with them is all that is left. Again and again the Leader stops to shoo Hector away, but Hector dumbly tags along behind.

The Raiders wade out to the waiting boats. Hector follows to the very water's edge, then stands and bleakly watches them. The Raiders prepare to move off. Hector is an embarrassment to them now. At the last moment the Leader gives a brusque order to one of his men. The man clambers out of the boat and wades ashore again, carrying a large flint-bladed knife. He comes out of the water and walks up to Hector. Hector is beyond any form of reaction. He will take whatever is offered to him. The man comes close, the knife held ready. He stands in front of Hector for a moment. On the boat, Hector's family are tense with fear for his life.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

Then the tense moment passes, as the man grunts and nods at Hector's hands, still bound with rope. Hector understands. He lifts his hands and the man with some effort hacks through the rough hemp. Then he turns and wades back to the boat.

As the man clambers aboard the Leader speaks to him. The man stops, drops back into the water, and returns to Hector on the shore. He offers Hector the cut piece of rope, a weird gesture of conciliation. He even smiles. Hector refuses the gift. The man stands sheepishly for a moment, then drops the rope at Hector's feet and wades back to the boat. A piece of rope in exchange for a family.

Hector watches them for some time, his family and the strange Raiders, as they, aching slowly, retreat from his view and his life.

At last he turns and moves up from the shoreline. He goes some distance then stops, thinks for a moment, then retraces his steps. He goes back to the water's edge, picks up the piece of rope that bound him, and walks off with it. It might be of some use to him.

19 INT. CAVE - DAY

19

Hector has returned to his cave home, now cold and empty of life. He is working on his instincts now, still emotionally in shock. He digs around in the embers of the fire. Some of the larger bits of wood still hold some life. Hector bends low and starts to waft expertly and blow at the fire's remains.

*

We leave our first Hector squatting at his fire, in the simplest act of physical survival. For him the problems of emotional survival without his family lie ahead.

20 INT. BATHHOUSE FURNACE - DAY

20

This is another, bigger fire. In fact we might be in hell. A crude furnace blazes. Filthy, sweat-covered men feed it with wood and charcoal, an endless task given the ferocity of the fire. To one side of the oppressive, low-ceilinged furnace room, some small boys endlessly toil at two large bellows, feeding the flames with jets of air. OVER the NOISE of the FURNACE someone is WHISTLING, an odd human sound in an inhuman setting. Shadowy figures come and go with barrow loads of wood. We TILT UP TO the space above the furnace to see a mass of dangerously crude clay pipes, oozing water and steam at every joint.

21 INT. BATHHOUSE - DAY

21

Above the heat and filth there is a different world. A clean, beautifully tiled world of lazing figures, droning conversations and resonant laughter. It is the hot room of a bathhouse somewhere in the Roman Empire. We have advanced 4000 years into the future and it shows in the technology. It is men's day at the bathhouse. All of the people relaxing in the water look prosperous and comfortable with themselves. Slaves wait in attendance, some around the edge of the pool, others in the water rubbing backs and massaging shoulders. There are three or four times as many slaves as bathers, and the proprietorial way that they look after their masters gives the place the odd atmosphere of a kindergarten for over-indulged grown-ups.

And then we find our Hector. He stands against the wall, holding a large towel. Although clean-shaven and more healthy-looking we can still recognize Hector, more so by the look in his eyes. There is a set to his face that tells us he is a man alone, emotionally detached from his surroundings. He is a personal body slave. He watches his master in the pool, alert to any hint of need that he might have.

*

Hector's master LUCINNIUS is not as relaxed as the others around him. He is in anxious conversation with an older man wading beside him. We don't hear what they are saying but there is enough body language to detect Lucinnius' pleading and the older man's cool distraction. The older man gives a final dismissive shake of his head. Hector immediately moves to the side of the pool with the towel as Lucinnius climbs out of the water.

*

*

LUCINNIUS

I'm going to the cool room.

22 INT. BATHHOUSE - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

22

*

Hector wraps the towel around his master and follows him, a look of concern on his face. Lucinnius' worries are Hector's also.

Hector walks a pace behind Lucinnius through various chambers of the bathhouse, passing the games area and the massage room as they go. All around them slaves attend to their pampered masters.

23 INT. BATHHOUSE - COOL ROOM - DAY

23

*

After an anxious scan of the cool room, Lucinnius goes towards three men occupying a marble bench.

(CONTINUED)

Hector as if by magic produces a small wooden stool for his master to sit on as he joins the others. Hector then moves out of earshot, but still alert to his master's behavior. Lucinnius is nervous as he attempts to casually join his friends. The eldest of the three gives off as much of the aura of a Godfather as a naked man in a towel can. The other two are deferential to the older man, and treat Lucinnius with apparent contempt. Hector watches the older man put a paternal hand on Luccinius's shoulder and speak with a calm smile on his face. Hector almost winces to see his master submit to this patronizing treatment. Slave and master exist so closely together that many of their feelings are shared. More precisely, Lucinnius's feelings are shared by Hector. It is a one-way exchange. From morning until night, and probably in his dreams too, Hector is living two lives, his own and his master's. Here in ancient Rome is this what they call classic schizophrenia?

As Luccinius stands to leave we can tell by their expressions that the THREE MEN are open in their contempt for him. Hector is quickly on his feet and by Lucinnius's side as he goes. A final sarcastic remark comes from one of the three.

MAN #1

Well washed, Lucinnius.

Lucinnius tries to muster his dignity as they leave.

*

This is not the grandeur of Rome, but the dusty main street of a provincial capital in Greece or Spain or North Africa. It is difficult to tell from the people because they are such a cosmopolitan crowd, faces from every corner of the Mediterranean world. It has something of the atmosphere of a frontier town in a western, except that here the half-finished buildings are made of brick and stone.

Lucinnius leaves the bathhouse. Hector follows three paces behind him, loaded down with the large towel, the scrubber, robe, and the wooden stool. The stool goes with them everywhere, in case Lucinnius has to stop in the street and converse with a friend. Other notables are among the street throng, their own slaves tagging along behind with their little wooden stools. Some have whole trains of slaves shadowing them. Human status symbols. Lucinnius stops near some street stalls. Hector stops beside him.

(CONTINUED)

LUCINNIUS

Bad omens, Hector. Bad omens.
Get me something to eat. Just
a mouse or two.

HECTOR

Yes.

Hector places the stool at Lucinnius's feet and moves off.
Lucinnius sits down, still absorbed in his problems.

Hector keeps an eye on Lucinnius as he orders the food.

HECTOR

Two mice... and some bread...

STALLHOLDER

No mice.

HECTOR

Two chicken legs, then, cold, and
the bread.

As Hector is given the food and pays for it, he sees another man, JULIAN, approach Lucinnius, trailed by TWO SLAVES. One of them is carrying a folding chair much more substantial than Lucinnius's. Julian and Lucinnius greet one another and sit down to talk, Lucinnius at something of a height disadvantage. The Two Slaves move off to one side. Lucinnius's mood has brightened since the arrival of his friend. Their conversation seems open and friendly.

Hector gives his master his food, and then moves to join the Two Slaves, hearing a snatch of the conversation as he goes.

JULIAN

Of course you're free to call at my
house at anytime, but I was
receiving Nepos... how could I
admit you?

Hector offers to share his bread with the other Two Slaves. They easily fall into conversation, inevitably, about their masters.

SLAVE #1

Spoiled his day, meeting your man...
he's been avoiding him all week.

SLAVE #2

His ships have gone too, we heard.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

This is news to Hector.

HECTOR
When did you hear?

SLAVE #2
Last night. Nepos knew. Pirates.
They're sunk, he reckons. That
could finish him, eh?

HECTOR
This is the worst it's been. *

SLAVE #1
You'll be up for sale before you
know it!

This makes them laugh, Hector less so than the other
two.

HECTOR
He's finished... you reckon?

The other two nod their heads.

SLAVE #1
Yes... at the baths... I could
tell... they smelled blood...

HECTOR
Well... if he'd pulled it off he'd
be in Rome by now...

SLAVE #1
And you with him...

Hector nods his head thoughtfully.

HECTOR
And me with him... half way home...

Lucinnius and his friend stand and exchange their final
words, unaware of the scrutiny they have been under, or
so used to it that they are oblivious to it. Hector
and the Slaves hurry to gather up the seats and take their
positions behind their masters. The casualness of their
conversation has gone, and they resume the formality of
their roles. *

25 EXT. STREET - DAY

25

Lucinnius is eager to talk, and tosses his words over his
shoulder to Hector.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

LUCINNIUS

He's a true friend, probably the only one I have left.

Hector obligingly trots a step or two closer to Lucinnius to aid their conversation.

HECTOR

Will he lend you the money?

LUCINNIUS

He was honest about it. He said so, plain and simple. No.

HECTOR

That's a problem.

Lucinnius unburdens himself.

LUCINNIUS

And the ships have gone... did I tell you that?

HECTOR

Have they?

LUCINNIUS

Cyprian knows already. He'll want his money back too...

We can see the concentration on Hector's face as he concocts appropriate responses.

He has a tough occupation, being the alter ego to an ambitious loser in one of the most competitive and dangerous societies ever to exist. And he has to carry the stool and the towel as well.

LUCINNIUS

When we get home I want you to get some chickens... and fetch Hermas, the diviner.

HECTOR

Yes.

26 INT. HOUSE - DAY

26

At home, we find Lucinnius and Hector with the diviner HERMAS. They are gathered around a shrine in the large public room. The entrails of a chicken lie on a slab of marble. Hermas prods them with a knife. He makes much of the mysteries of his craft, as if it were a skill beyond ordinary men.

(CONTINUED)

The other two peer over his shoulders. Suitably mystified, Lucinnius talks in a reverent low voice.

LUCINNIUS

Are my ships from Sicily still
afloat...?

Hermas tetchily stops him.

HERMAS

No, no... offer the grain first...
sprinkle it on the altar...

Lucinnius obeys.

HERMAS

... and we can't ask the Gods
specific questions like that...
it's a gentle, probing enquiry...
general questions... but let's
see.

He cuts into the chicken liver and prods around the inside. The other two wait in silence.

HERMAS

General answer... no...

*

LUCINNIUS

What do you mean?

HERMAS

I mean, no. The liver says no...

Lucinnius objects.

LUCINNIUS

Do it again... I want you to do it
again... Is it the Gods' will...
that Cyprian... be well disposed
towards me... in the future?

*

*

*

HERMAS

If you want to do it again, you
need another chicken and another
fifteen sesterces... and I'd like
the first fifteen now please.

Hector looks at Lucinnius, who nods reluctantly. Hector opens his purse and counts out the coins for Hermas.

27 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

27

Hector is giving Lucinnius a soothing shoulder massage.

Lucinnius is still in a talking mood. His troubles won't allow him to relax.

LUCINNIUS

Cyprian loaned me half a million to fit out these ships... I'm finished. Just when things were going well... I had plans for you too, Hector... in four or five years I was going to make you a free man... and then in ten years you'd be a citizen... you... you could've found your family... brought them here... everything...

*

*

*

Hector smiles ruefully.

HECTOR

It sounds good.

Lucinnius misses the irony in Hector's voice and enthuses about his own future generosity.

LUCINNIUS

It does, doesn't it!

Lucinnius is silent for a while as Hector continues to rub his shoulders.

*

LUCINNIUS

I shouldn't give up. I can't... I'll visit Cyprian, first thing tomorrow... before the others can get to him... he's got to see reason... I can pay him back... sometime. It's the only chance we have, Hector. Should I do it?

HECTOR

You must.

LUCINNIUS

You're right. I must.

This burst of resolve has relaxed Lucinnius. His tense muscles yield more to Hector's fingers.

THALIA enters the room. She is a household slave, a Nubian from Africa. She carries a lighted torch and moves around the room lighting the wall lamps. Lucinnius watches her.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

LUCINNIUS

Thalia, I think I need one of
your massages. Hector, you can
finish the lamps.

*

Hector does as he is told. He takes the torch from
Thalia and discreetly leaves the room, hearing Lucinnius
as he closes the door.

LUCINNIUS

Lower, Thalia.

28 INT. HECTOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

28

Late at night, Hector is still awake. He rises from his
bed and quietly moves out of the room. He is careful
not to disturb the sleeping forms lying all around him,
some of them sprawled on the floor. He shares his bed-
room with at least eight other slaves. Privacy is a
master's privilege.

29 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

29

In the darkened house, Hector makes his way up some
stairs and along a passage. The only sound is a crack
or two of far-away THUNDER. At the end of the passage,
Hector finds a small ladder propped against the wall.
He climbs this, and lifts open the trap door above his
head.

30 EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

30

Odd flashes of lightning far out to sea are the only
source of light as Hector moves across the flat roof.
In one corner he sees what he is looking for, the outline
of a figure resting against the low parapet wall. He
moves towards it. The figure speaks.

FIGURE

I missed you last night.

It is Thalia. We can tell that they are close. Hector
sits down beside her.

HECTOR

He kept me working until morning.

THALIA

What's happening?

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

He has no money and a lot of enemies. If he's very clever he'll survive... but the omens are bad... and he's not very clever.

THALIA

She doesn't like him.

HECTOR

Nobody does. He's unfortunate. You get people like that. Clumsy and sad.

Thalia looks out towards the sea.

THALIA

Why does the thunder always stay out on the ocean?

Hector puts an arm around Thalia. At first it feels strange, their physical intimacy alongside their matter-of-fact conversation, but gradually we understand it, the giving and taking of comfort where it can be found, and the realness of their friendship. Their stroking and touching and holding becomes good to watch. We get a feeling for what they have given one another, in stolen hours and half hours, up here on the roof, the only place where they can be themselves. *

HECTOR

It's the Gods arguing. They're working out what to do with Lucinnius... he'll be lying awake down there... wondering what they're saying about him.

They laugh. Far away some street DOGS BARK.

HECTOR

If he goes down I'll ask for my freedom... he owes it to me... he said as much... you too... we could be free...

THALIA

Then what?

HECTOR

What we talk about.

By now he is kissing her.

(CONTINUED)

THALIA

We talk about going home. Yours is that way and mine is that way... your family is that way.

HECTOR

I just made that up... I don't know which way they are... anyway ... you can't think like that. Not after so many years...

*
*
*
*

THALIA

It's what you talk about.

HECTOR

We talk about it because it can never happen. What we do is you and me...

*
*

THALIA

I don't understand. I think you'll leave. You're going to leave me here.

HECTOR

Never. It's you and me now. That's all.

THALIA

Well. We stay here. He'll survive.

*

Hector is silent, still kissing her. He yawns as he speaks.

*

HECTOR

Then I can see you every night. I'm tired.

Hector is back in his bed. A figure enters the room, steps over the sleeping bodies on the floor and shakes him awake. Hector comes to. Lucinnius stands over him, whispering.

LUCINNIUS

I can't sleep. Get me a chicken. I want to make another sacrifice. We'll do it ourselves.

Hector wearily takes himself out of bed and follows Lucinnius out of the room.

32 INT. HENHOUSE - NIGHT

32

Hector is in the henhouse, in the dark, selecting a chicken for sacrifice. He is about to leave when he sees a MAN and WOMAN, arms around each other, sitting in a corner. The Man looks at the white hen Hector is holding.

MAN

Can't you find a woman, Hector...

Hector smiles. He isn't surprised to see them. They are only doing what he and Thalia do on the roof. The Slaves have their meeting places scattered all over the house.

HECTOR

Sorry to trouble you... just
fetching a chicken... good night
... the roof's free...

The Man shakes his head with a smile. Hector leaves, the sleepy chicken going to meet her fate in his arms.

HECTOR

Come on, miss, you can tell
Lucinnius his future.

33 EXT. STREET - MORNING

33

Hector and Lucinnius are approaching the home of Cyprian. Hector as usual is walking some paces behind his master, and he carries a large satchel of documents. Cyprian's home is a street palace. It is early in the morning, but there is already activity around the house, visitors coming and going, messengers, petitioners. A few important callers arrive in litters, carried by slaves. Lucinnius and Hector even have to join a line at the door and are checked in by the gateman. Lucinnius's hopes of quietly bending Cyprian's ear are dashed. It seems as if the whole world owes allegiance to this provincial Mr. Big.

34 EXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

34

The slaves gather on one side of the courtyard, gossiping and playing games of chance on the ground. Their masters wait on the other side of the courtyard, seated on benches along the wall. Cyprian's aides usher the visitors into his presence in a regular flow, some have an audience of a few minutes, others last merely seconds.

Hector keeps an eye on Lucinnius, like a mother watching her child from a distance on its first day at school.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

Lucinnius, sitting expectantly in line, does look a little pathetic, even ridiculous. Straight-backed, hands on knees, alert, worried, he looks a bit like a sacrificial offering himself.

Hector plays a game of five-stone with some other slaves as he watches Lucinnius shuffling up the bench place by place to the front of the line. We almost expect Hector to give him a little wave of encouragement as he is finally summoned into the inner office. Hector waits. The first signs seem good. Lucinnius doesn't emerge within the first minute. Cyprian is at least giving him the time of day. More minutes pass. Hector watches a game of handball while keeping an eye on the office door. One or two others, familiar to us from the bathhouse, go into the office. So does Lucinnius' friend Julian.

Eventually Lucinnius emerges into the sunlight, a broad smile on his face. Hector relaxes and leaves the ball game to join him.

HECTOR

You look happier.

LUCINNIUS

Relieved anyway... relieved that it's over at last.

Lucinnius strides out of the courtyard with Hector following after him.

35 EXT. STREETS - DAY

35

Lucinnius and Hector are walking home in their usual formation. Hector is closer than normal, so that they can talk.

HECTOR

Will he help you?

LUCINNIUS

I have to kill myself by tomorrow morning. He has all my letters to Titinius, none of them got through. He says it's like treason... and he says I should want to die for owing him half a million anyway...

Hector is shocked.

HECTOR

What if you don't...

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

LUCINNIUS

Then he will... and that wouldn't be pleasant... he would drag me to Rome... those letters...

Lucinnius shivers to think of them.

LUCINNIUS

I'm done for, Hector... but it's strange... I feel kind of good about it... the struggle is over... we've seen it through together, eh?

HECTOR

I don't know what to say.

LUCINNIUS

Let's get home. We have a lot to do.

Lucinnius quickens his pace.

LUCINNIUS

Tonight... peace at last...

Lucinnius is obviously in a state of shock.

36 INT. HOUSE - DAY

36

Hector and Lucinnius are in his study. Lucinnius is busy clearing up his papers. He is less hysterical than in the previous scene, more aware of the reality of what he has to do.

LUCINNIUS

We'll do it with a knife, Hector. When everyone has gone to bed. The two of us, to the end...

HECTOR

I don't understand. What do you want me to do... I don't think I can help you...

LUCINNIUS

We'll help each other, Hector. We must. We've been through this whole mess together... we must die together.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

I don't know what you mean. What mess?

*

LUCINNIUS

You don't understand do you? I'm asking you to die with me... you're my closest, my dearest slave... what would they say about me if you refused to die with me? This is honor... we're choosing death... we're not going to submit to the humiliations that Cyprian can heap on us, are we?

*

HECTOR

You say we... I don't know... what is we? I've done nothing... I know nothing...

*

Lucinnius changes his tone, becomes more, in his own mind, frank, man-to-man.

LUCINNIUS

Hector... at Cyprian's this morning ... I had to sign certain papers ... tell a bit of a story...

*

HECTOR

What kind of story?

LUCINNIUS

A confession. That we were plotting against Cyprian and the provincial senate... we were short of names... most of the people I know were in the room... people I thought were my friends... so I mentioned you... I had to...

Hector is stunned with shock...

HECTOR

So I'm a conspirator?

LUCINNIUS

Yes. So you see, I don't want you to die with me just because of my honor... it's more complicated... I'm sorry, Hector. I would be honored... if you would die with me... I mean it...

Hector manages to speak.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (2)

36

HECTOR

Can I sit down?

LUCINNIUS

Of course.

HECTOR

This is the worst it's been.

37 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

37

Hector is in the inner courtyard of the house, beside the kitchen. He is talking to GALLUS, who is Lucinnius's ten-year-old son. Hector has a close friendship with him. As we listen to their conversation it becomes clear that Hector finds comfort in the boy, for the family that he lost.

Today there is an air of distraction about Hector. Understandable, considering his scheduled death.

The kitchen slaves come and go as they talk.

HECTOR

But even if it's round you can still fall off the edge.

Hector has picked up a large metal plate to help him make his point.

GALLUS

No... it's not round like that... it's round like this.

Gallus sees his playball. He picks it up.

HECTOR

Do you believe everything that Greek tells you...?

Gallus ignores this tease, intent on the ball.

GALLUS

Rome must be right in the middle... here... and we must be out here somewhere...

Hector becomes more interested.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

HECTOR

So, where is my home?

GALLUS

How many months did they march you here?

HECTOR

Seven.

Gallus walks out the distance from Rome with his fingers, as if there is serious calculation.

*
*

GALLUS

It must be about here.

*

His fingers stop on the other side of the ball.

GALLUS

But then you'd be upside down...

HECTOR

I wasn't upside down... and how could you see the sun round there ... I saw the sun at home... every day...

*

Gallus is stumped for answers.

*

GALLUS

I'll ask him tomorrow...

*

Hector remembers that he and the boy's father are supposed to die that night. He looks on Gallus with a new tenderness.

*
*

HECTOR

Yes, tell me tomorrow... I'd like to know... because my children are round there and I want to know that they're getting the sun... ask him something else, too... where are the gods if the whole thing is round?

GALLUS

I think I know that... they're out here, and all around... that's how they can look down and see everything...

38 INT. ALTAR - NIGHT

38

Lucinnius is at it again. In the lamplight, a live chicken stands on the altar.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

Hector and Lucinnius watch it as if their lives depended on it. Perhaps they do.

LUCINNIUS

If he eats the grain it means yes.

He scatters some grain on the table. The chicken at once begins to peck them up.

HECTOR

It's saying yes... there's a way...

LUCINNIUS

No, it's saying yes, we should die.

HECTOR

But you asked it if we had to die, or if there was another way... it's saying yes, there is...

LUCINNIUS

No, it's saying yes, we should die.

The bird is certainly enjoying his food.

HECTOR

Maybe it's just hungry...

The chicken is inscrutable, as they are prone to be.

39 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

39

A dead chicken adorns Lucinnius's table. He and his wife, DALMIA, and their son are lying on their couches picking at the food with their fingers. Lucinnius is drinking more wine than usual. Hector and the other household slaves are in attendance. Thalia is also there, serving her mistress.

Dalmia knows something is up, but she doesn't know what. She attempts to break the silence. She calls on the cook from the kitchen.

DALMIA

Solus!

The kitchen slave quickly appears.

DALMIA

Solus... I'm eating chicken again. I ate chicken yesterday and the day before... will I be eating chicken again tomorrow? Why am I always eating chicken?

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED:

39

SOLUS looks up at Lucinnius and Hector, but they offer him no help.

SOLUS

It's what we have to hand in the kitchen, ma'am... I always try to use the fresh stuff... the chickens have just been turning up...

He looks again at Lucinnius and Hector. They look at each other. Thalia looks at Hector. Dalmia looks at them all looking at each other, more intrigued than she was before.

A SLAVE interrupts them.

SLAVE

Two men have come to see you. From Cyprian.

Lucinnius and Hector look at each other and share a moment of hope. They might be coming with good news, perhaps a softening of Cyprian's heart.

40 INT. RECEPTION ROOM - NIGHT

40

The two VISITORS that await Lucinnius and Hector are an unpromising sight. They are big men, unsophisticated and look uncomfortable in their well-cut togas. A couple of the godfather's foot soldiers.

They greet Lucinnius deferentially, but he knows that they would break his back at the whim of their master.

VISITOR

Good evening, Lucinnius. Cyprian asked us if we could be of any assistance... in the business that you have to conduct tonight... to make that business as... comfortable... as you could wish...

*

*

Lucinnius sighs, as his last hope expires.

LUCINNIUS

Thank you, gentlemen... But I feel that I will be capable of taking care of my affairs tonight without your help... Thank Cyprian for his kind thought...

The heavies metaphorically keep their foot in the door.

(CONTINUED)

VISITOR

We're spending the night at the house of Nepos, not far from here. Don't hesitate to send your man for us... at any time... We're anxious that things should go well for you.

LUCINNIUS

Thank you. Good night.

VISITOR

We'll call in the morning at any rate... just to make sure.

LUCINNIUS

Thank you.

Hector is closing the door when one of the Visitors talks roughly to him.

VISITOR

You. Come here.

Hector instinctively looks to his master. Lucinnius doesn't protest, but retreats into the house. Hector is left alone with the Visitors.

VISITOR

He looks like the kind that'll want some help. Have you ever killed before?

HECTOR

Only chickens.

VISITOR

He's not much different. Use a thin blade, but long. Get it in deep... the heart... feel for a space between the ribs...

He prods at Hector's body freely, showing him what to do. If it is ticklish, Hector doesn't let on.

VISITOR

... or go in from the back... any place he'll let you...

We leave Hector nodding obediently as this weirdest of coaching lessons continues.

VISITOR

Getting it out's not as easy as you might think... you have to twist a bit... to get over the stickiness...

Late at night in Lucinnius's study, an oil lamp and a candle cast their shadowy light, adding to the tension in the room. Hector stands beside Lucinnius, who is counting out coins and other valuables on his table.

LUCINNIUS

Eight hundred sesterces... cash
... that's all that's left... what
a failure... my father left me
three farms and forty thousand...

Lucinnius places the money in a box on his table. He is quite drunk, resigned now to his fate. Hector however is cold sober, grim-faced. Lucinnius looks up at him.

LUCINNIUS

Nothing else to be done. Don't
you want some wine?

HECTOR

No... but I want something...

LUCINNIUS

What is it?

HECTOR

I want to die a free man... I
don't want to die a slave...

Lucinnius looks at him grimly and manages a smile. He clears his throat and attempts to put a note of ceremony into his voice. *

LUCINNIUS

Hector, by this proclamation, I
make you a freed man... I don't
know the exact words... I've never
done it before... But you're free,
Hector.

HECTOR

In writing... so that when they
find me... they know I died a free
man... please...

Lucinnius looks at him for a moment, then reaches out for his paper and pen.

LUCINNIUS

Very well...

He scratches out a few words on the paper, Hector looking over his shoulder, keenly watching what he writes. Lucinnius finishes writing and lays down the pen.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

LUCINNIUS

They'll find it in the morning.
It's a nice thought, Hector... you
were right to ask.

HECTOR

Thank you.

LUCINNIUS

Well... freed man, let's do it.

*

Lucinnius picks up a large kitchen knife which lies on
the table. He fingers its blade.

*

A trickle of fear passes across Hector's face. Will the
half-drunk Lucinnius want to kill him first?

HECTOR

What do you want me to do?

LUCINNIUS

Nothing... I mean, not to me... I
have to do it first... you
understand that... and then you...
if I don't succeed... then you
must help me...

HECTOR

I understand.

LUCINNIUS

No point in messing up the room.
Let's go downstairs.

Lucinnius stands and leaves the room. Hector follows
with the oil lamp.

42 INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

42

The house is quiet and in darkness as they walk along the
passage and down the stairs to the washing room. Hector
walks behind, casting the light on Lucinnius's crumpled,
defeated form. Lucinnius begins to sob, at first
quietly, then more loudly and more pathetically. Hector
looks around and behind him, afraid, or perhaps hoping,
that Lucinnius's moans will wake the household.

43 INT. WASH ROOM - NIGHT

43

Lucinnius has worked himself into a dramatic state of
distress, with drink and terror and self pity.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED:

43

He runs into the tiled washing room, wails loudly and makes a stabbing motion at his stomach. Hector sees all of this from behind as he enters the room. Lucinnius crumples to the floor and squats on his knees. He calls out in pain.

LUCINNIUS

Oh, that hurts, that stings!

Lucinnius sits back on the step of the washing pool, holding his stomach. Hector sits down beside him. They both look down at the blade, still in Lucinnius' body.

LUCINNIUS

This is hopeless.

They sit absurdly like this for a long moment, neither of them knowing what to do next. It's awkward, like in a waiting room. Then Lucinnius speaks.

LUCINNIUS

Help me, Hector...

HECTOR

You've done it... you've done it
... lie down...

Hector speaks gently, like coaxing a frightened animal. He helps Lucinnius lie out on the marble floor.

HECTOR

Close your eyes... you did it...

LUCINNIUS

Thank you, thank you.

The movement has increased the spread of blood over Lucinnius' clothing. He raises his head.

LUCINNIUS

You do it now, Hector... hurry...

HECTOR

Lie still... lie still...

LUCINNIUS

Do it Hector... do it... you
promised...

It looks as if Hector is playing for time.

HECTOR

Shush... I'll need the knife...

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

43

LUCINNIUS

Take it... do it...

Lucinnius' voice is fading now. Hector waits, then reaches down for the knife in Lucinnius' stomach. We see on his face the effort as he pulls at it, and do we detect a subtle twisting of the blade to speed Lucinnius on his way? Lucinnius sighs and twitches a little. It's as if the life flows out of him as the knife is released from the wound. His voice is even more faint.

LUCINNIUS

Do it, Hector... do it... do it...

Hector has the knife in his hand, but still he waits, looking at Lucinnius, willing the last dregs of life from him.

LUCINNIUS

Do it... do it... do it...

The whispers fade to a croak. Lucinnius lies still. Hector has won this final battle of wills. He stands up, suddenly repulsed by what has happened. But quickly he gathers his wits. He makes his decision. He throws the knife down. It clatters along the hard shiny floor. Hector has run out of the room before it has come to rest against the wall.

44 INT. STUDY - NIGHT

44

Hector runs into the study and makes for the box containing the coins. He puts most of them into a leather money bag and ties it to his waist. Then he pulls on Lucinnius's cloak and rushes out of the room. He returns quickly to pick up his certificate of freedom from the table. Then just as he is leaving, he again stops, sits down on the chair, pulls off his worn shoes and places on his feet a pair of Lucinnius's stout street sandals.

45 EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

45

Hector is walking quickly from the kitchen across the courtyard to the street gate. Near the gate he stops and looks back at the house. He makes a decision and retraces his steps across the courtyard and back into the house.

46 INT. THALIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

46

Thalia is sleeping in a large pallet bed on the floor with two other women. Hector gently shakes her shoulder, trying not to wake the others. After a moment or two Thalia opens her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: 46

Hector whispers to her before she has time to open her mouth.

HECTOR

I'm leaving... come now if you
want to... but we must hurry...
I'm a free man... I'm free.
Will you come?

47 EXT. HARBOR - NIGHT 47

The shadowy cloaked figures making their way down to the harbor are Hector and Thalia. *

Nearer the harbor we sense the nighttime work of loading and preparing ships for the morning tide. By the light of oil lamps cargos are manhandled aboard, voices shout, WINCHES CREAK. Hector encounters a night WATCHMAN, but diverts his suspicion by boldly addressing him.

HECTOR

I have some mail for Tyre... where
are the east-bound ships?

WATCHMAN

Ask at the harbor. *

With an authoritative nod, Hector strides off in the direction of the noise and lights, Thalia at his heels.

Hector talks when the Watchman is out of earshot.

HECTOR

We want a timber ship... they go
west... straight to Rome...

THALIA

And then? Then you go home? *

Hector hurries on, noncommittal in his reply.

HECTOR

You can go to anywhere from Rome.

48 EXT. QUAY - NIGHT 48

Hector and Thalia approach a ship heavily laden with timber. Final supplies are being carried aboard, supervised by two men on the quay. Hector approaches them.

HECTOR

Where is the Captain?

(CONTINUED)

CREWMAN

He's on the ship.

He indicates a man standing on the rear deck. Hector and Thalia climb up the gangplank and approach him.

HECTOR

Good morning, Captain... I'm looking for passage to Rome, for both of us...

CAPTAIN

And who might you be?

HECTOR

I'm the steward of Lucinnius the merchant... we have business in Rome... I need an immediate passage...

CAPTAIN

It's five or six days... to Brundisium... you can walk or ride from there... you have money? *

HECTOR

Of course. *

CAPTAIN

Well, let's see... passage for two... food for two... six days... what were you thinking of offering?

HECTOR

When do you leave?

CAPTAIN

Anxious to leave, are you?

HECTOR

Keen to start, yes.

Hector and Thalia are asleep, huddled together in a corner of the ship that they have claimed as their quarters.

A CREWMAN comes and shakes Hector awake. He stirs himself to the sounds of a SHIP UNDERWAY, the sounds of the SEA-WASH, the WIND in the CANVAS, the MOANS of the TIMBERS.

CREWMAN

Captain says to come on deck.

Hector wakes Thalia and they clamber out of the darkness of the hold onto the brightest, freshest of days at sea.

There is no sign of land behind them. The ship is moving swiftly in a strong, clean breeze and a light sea. We can tell from Thalia's reactions that she has never been out at sea before, at least never above deck. Everything is novel to her and it shows, even the movement of the ship. Her excitement is childlike.

*

THALIA

Where's the land gone?

*

Hector, too, is taken by the novelty of it all but is less prepared to admit it. He waves his hands around the empty horizon noncommittally.

THALIA

Have you been on a ship before?

HECTOR

Yes, of course.

We can tell he is lying.

THALIA

Me, too, but they kept us down there.

She points down into the lower depths of the hold. Then she gets even more excited.

THALIA

Tonight... we'll be where the thunder is!

They look at each other and then all around them. The freshness of the day and on an overwhelming feeling of freedom, exhilarate them. Their senses and their feelings, are in new territory. They are like children in a brand-new world.

The Captain on the other side of the ship, beckons them.

*

CAPTAIN

Thought you would like to see them.

He points to three shapes in the mid-distance, ships heading for the port they have left. There is a thrill in their glamor, their fine progress under full sail.

*

CAPTAIN

Your master's ships... going home...

*

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

HECTOR

No... they can't be... they're
lost...

CAPTAIN

No they're not... I know these
ships... my brother-in-law's the
master of the big one with the
brown sail...

Hector and Thalia look at each other. The Captain smiles
at them and looks back to the ships, coursing healthily
on their way.

CAPTAIN

Somebody been putting the wind up
Lucinnius? That's an old one...
didn't think anybody'd fall for
that...

51 EXT. SHIP - DAY

51

Later, the ship is still making brisk progress. Thalia
and Hector are sitting on deck, some distance from one
another. They are quieter now, more thoughtful. Hector
catches her eye. Hector is drawn by her smile and moves
to join her. They sit quietly, absorbed in thought,
thoughts of each other, their looks and smiles tell us
that. As if they are talking without words. Hector
looks around him. A sailor on the forward deck is
sorting out some rope, an echo of a previous time and
place. The wind catches the sailor's hat. He grabs it
from the air and spends time arranging it once more on
his head, just so. A tiny human moment.

*

*

*

*

52 EXT. WAGON - DAY

52

A man is driving a heavy two-horse wagon. The wind has
just lifted his hat from his head. He spends some time
replacing it carefully, just so. Watching him from the
back of the wagon is Hector.

The drama of the lives of Thalia and Hector has played
itself out long ago. Between the breath of sea breeze
that lifted the hat of the Roman sailor and the gust of
mountain wind that snatches the hat of the wagoner, lies
1400 years.

*

Hector sits in the wagon beside a woman. There are
tantalizing similarities between their situation and the
one we left Thalia and Hector in on the boat a few
moments ago, 1400 years ago.

*

(CONTINUED)

The woman and Hector exchange glances now and then, delicate signals of mutual awareness. Talking without words.

They are not alone in the wagon, perched on its half load of timber. With them is a NUN accompanying a GIRL of about eight. The Girl is tearful. A man, his face unseen, is snoring underneath his hat. A younger man, gaunt and hungry-looking, is dressed in the rough travelling clothes of a monk or PRIEST. Even without his habit we would know he was a holy man. His incessant talk tells us.

PRIEST

We want to praise God because we live in this ultimate age, when all things are done, all is known, all the wonders of his creation revealed to us... nothing more for man to see or do... all that is left is the hope of salvation... even for our humbler sisters...

The Girl is sobbing through all of this.

PRIEST

Yes weep, child, weep for joy... you are a glorious example to us all... already a child of God's... blessed to spend your earthly days within his church as Christ's servant... what generous parents you have... giving you to the sisters... What a sacrifice. *

There is an Irish lilt to his voice which colors what he is saying with a tinge of mischief. He is a difficult fellow to pin down. Hector looks at him amusedly, still sharing his thoughts silently with the woman, BEATRICE. *

The Nun interrupts the Priest cheerfully.

NUN

She's already received the last rites, before she left her family. She belongs to God now... Don't you? *

The child sobs more noisily. *

PRIEST

Fortunate child, destined for paradise. Untouched by the abiding curse of carnal lust. I struggle against it...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I will not join myself carnally
with any woman...

He looks accusingly at Beatrice.

*

PRIEST

... I will carry my unspilt seed
from this world to the next... as
should every man...

Now Hector is getting the hard looks from the Priest.

PRIEST

... If all men forsook forever the
fleshy temptations... and held
womankind to barrenness... think
how much the sooner would come the
day of judgement... all God's
chosen gathered in paradise... I've
written a small treatise in favor
of virginity, sister. We could
discuss it later if you like...

*
*
*
*

The DRIVER of the wagon turns his head briefly to the
Priest.

DRIVER

What are you talking about?

Hector gestures to Beatrice that he is leaving the wagon
to walk for a while and asks her to join him. She shakes
her head with a smile. Hector smiles, too, then jumps
down from the wagon and, walking slowly, allows it to
gain ground in front of him. The ramblings of the Priest
fade away.

PRIEST

It's simple, brother... if we
cease carnal union entirely then
in fifty or so years we'll all be
rid of our earthly lives and God
can proceed with His reign over
His heavenly kingdom... that same
paradise that God gave to man
before, but which man was so unfit
to inhabit that within seven hours
Eve was already tempting her
master and mate, and within nine
hours the Lord had to expel the
both of them! Just think, they
messed it up in nine hours!

*
*

53 EXT. MOUNTAIN TRACK - DAY

53

Hector smiles as the Priest's VOICE FADES into the distance. It is a cold fresh day of early summer. They are travelling high in the mountains. Hector dawdles on his way, eating a hard biscuit he takes from his pocket.

*

The last sound he hears from the wagon is the renewed WAILING OF the GIRL. Hector lays himself down at the side of the road. His eyes begin to close. Then a SOUND in the distance makes him open them again. He listens. MORE SOUNDS drift up to him from the floor of the valley. He stands up and crosses the track. At first he can see nothing. He walks back along the rim of the road. Then he sees where the noise is coming from. A mounted skirmish is in progress, just where a wooden bridge crosses the small river, at the very bottom of the valley. There are no more than 30 knights in full armor, with twice as many foot soldiers and squires. Even from such a distance Hector can see and hear that the fighting is ferocious, almost insane in its intensity. From this distance it is like a puppet show, except the violence is real. The scene places Hector in his time and for us there is a strange feeling to it, almost as if Hector has awoken from sleep and found himself transported to some distant age. But this is not the case. Hector is where he belongs, in Medieval Europe.

*

Hector makes his decision. With a last look behind him he runs off in the direction of the wagon. Like any wise citizen of a violent age, Hector knows when to leg it.

*

54 EXT. WAGON - DAY

54

Hector catches up with the moving wagon and jumps onto it, happily back in the security of his fellow travellers. He smiles at Beatrice.

*

*

HECTOR

A bit cold... walking...

She smiles at him. He sits opposite her in the wagon, and allows his foot to touch hers. She doesn't move away. Hector calls to the Driver.

HECTOR

How long to get there?

DRIVER

When it gets dark, we'll be there.

*

Hector looks at Beatrice.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

54

HECTOR

I thought I heard fighting... back there...

Beatrice replies, but in a language that Hector doesn't understand.

BEATRICE

I don't know what you're saying...
I haven't understood anything
you've said all day...

Hector talks back to her.

HECTOR

I don't know what you're saying...

They both smile. It doesn't seem to disturb them too much that they don't share a language. They repeat their incomprehensible statements, just for the fun of it. *

BEATRICE

I don't know what you're saying.

HECTOR

I don't understand.

Beside Hector the Girl has stopped sobbing but she is still troubled. She turns to him and speaks quietly but with determination.

GIRL

I want to go home to my mother.

Hector doesn't know how to respond. He can do nothing to help her, and anyway, is more interested in Beatrice. *

55 EXT. FARMYARD - NIGHT

55

It is almost dark when the wagon finally turns into the yard of the farm where they will spend the night.

56 INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

56

The Farmer and his Wife have laid out a table with simple food, a stew, bread and wine. The travellers settle down to eat. The Priest, however makes a performance out of his more modest needs. He calls loudly to the wife working at the open fire.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

56

PRIEST

Just bread and water for me,
Mistress. I have no need of wine
or meat.

She brings him a jug of water and he makes much of giving thanks to God for his simple meal, muttering his grace quietly to himself, excluding all others from his conversation with the Almighty.

57 INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

57

In the dark, sleeping bodies lie all over the floor of an upstairs room. Gentle snores and regular breathing lay a blanket of soft sound over the human forms.

One of the forms stirs and sits up on one elbow. Hector, in another corner of the room, sleeping lightly, becomes aware of this. He watches as the figure stands up and picks its way between the bodies to the door. The figure pauses and crouches over Beatrice. Hector can hear the distinct sounds of the figure sniffing her, from head to toe, and then a deep, long sigh. The figure stands up and moves quietly to the door, disappearing downstairs.

Hector rouses himself and follows the other.

58 INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

58

Hector creeps cautiously into the dark kitchen. The figure has gone to the pantry and can be heard RUMMAGING there. Hector creeps closer and sees that it is the Priest. He already has a chicken leg between his teeth as he hunts for a cup for the jar of wine tucked under his arm. He emerges from the pantry. He sees Hector standing by the table. They recognize one another and relax. The Priest doesn't re-enter his holy act. He speaks normally, cheekily.

*

PRIEST

God, I'm starving. Do you think
I dare heat that up on the fire?

He indicates the large pot containing the remains of the stew.

PRIEST

No... I'll eat it cold... I
deserve to suffer.

He pours some wine into the cup and slides it across the table to Hector.

(CONTINUED)

Then he digs his hands into the cold stew and eats chunks of meat as they talk.

PRIEST

Have some wine.

Hector takes a drink.

HECTOR

I saw some fighting today... back up the road...

PRIEST

So, the mad knights are at it again... what were they, Swiss or English?

HECTOR

I don't know. They all look the same to me.

PRIEST

It might help us get through... if there's a bit of confusion... we'll still travel separately though, for now.

The Priest changes his tone of voice, mocking his own holy act.

PRIEST

But, Hector, you must keep out of the way of temptation... I saw the way you were eyeing up that widow... now stay away from that... although she is beautiful, is she not... but we're going home, remember.

Hector is smiling.

HECTOR

How do you know she's a widow?

PRIEST

Look at her eyes... hungry eyes... she could lead you into trouble... she smells like paradise, though.

He changes his tone yet again. He talks straight.

(CONTINUED)

PRIEST

Listen, Hector, let's get this clear... if anyone's going to dally with that widow it'll be me... you couldn't handle her... she'd bewitch you... at any rate, you're not a sinning kind of fellow, are you... why don't you get off up the road tomorrow, and I'll catch you up, in five or so days...

Hector doesn't answer, but smiles. The Priest has stirred thoughts that he had intended to dampen entirely.

PRIEST

You're not a sinning fellow, remember... another month and we'll be at the channel, then home... the little ones you only talk about when you're drunk... don't forget them...

Hector still remains silent. The Priest is worried.

PRIEST

Why do I always talk so much... you weren't even thinking of her 'til I opened my mouth... but I trust you... don't worry. I know you wouldn't do anything to anger your God, or me. Get me some bread.

Hector obeys the Priest without thought. The Priest is happier now that he is in control again. *

PRIEST

Who saved your neck in Venice?

HECTOR

You did, Ronald.

Hector approaches the Priest with the bread.

PRIEST

And don't you forget it.

He raises his cup to Hector.

PRIEST

May the Lord forgive us our sins, those we have committed and those we as yet only dream of. She's a glory of a woman.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (3) 58

For all his wit and endless talk we can sense a trace of vulnerability in Ronald. For all his bluster, there is the feeling that he needs Hector as much as he claims Hector needs him.

59 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY 59

Overnight, the remnants of a company of soldiers, fresh from battle, have collected in the courtyard. Some are tired, dispirited, others are wounded. Our Travellers watch from the farm window. A few mounted knights come into the yard, herding in front of them a small group of prisoners, well-dressed knights and squires.

*
*

60 INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY 60

The travellers look out on the exciting scene, and talk as they eat their breakfast of bread and milk.

PEDLAR

Hostages, too, they've got... they
only take the rich ones...

He turns to the forlorn Girl.

PEDLAR

Have you ever seen so many fine,
rich men, my girl?

Hector talks to the company, but means his words for the Priest.

HECTOR

I won't be travelling today.

The Priest looks him straight in the eye.

PRIEST

The fighting's behind us, brother
... you'll be safe enough.

Hector shakes his head, catching Beatrice's eye.

HECTOR

I'll stay.

PRIEST

You should go.

The Nun puts an arm around the Girl.

(CONTINUED)

NUN

We're going. God will protect
his ewe lambs.

*

Suddenly the door is thrown open and four SOLDIERS man-handle an inert body, dressed in full armor, into the room. They scatter the food from the table and lay out the MOANING suit of armor on it. A young SQUIRE follows them in and kneels by the knight in the suit. The MOANS are MUFFLED because the knight's helmet has been battered out of shape in the battle and can't be removed. The ugly dent suggests an equally ugly wound inflicted on the head inside. The Soldiers gingerly try to remove the helmet. Their efforts are useless. Blood oozes from the joints of the helmet. The MOANING suit of armor seems inhuman, robot-like.

SOLDIER

Must be sore in there. Is it your
dada?

The Squire looks at him and nods his head. Hector looks with sympathy at the boy.

*

*

SOLDIER #2

If he's got a little head it might
be alright. Has your dada got a
big head?

An OFFICER comes into the room.

OFFICER

Is there a blacksmith here?
Where's the smith?

FARM WOMAN

In the village, sir, half a day
away.

The Officer looks at the moaning suit of armor, then at the astonished group of Travellers. He picks on the Priest.

OFFICER

You, Priest, come here... get to
work on him... he's not ready for
heaven yet... there's a hundred
thousand livres on his head if I
get him to Paris alive... Start
praying... there's fifteen livres
in it for you if he lives...

*

The Priest obediently goes up to the knight and starts to pray earnestly. The Officer turns to the Soldiers.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (2)

60

OFFICER

Get that helmet off... get
hammers, anything you can find...
and one of you get back down into
the valley and fetch an armorer.

*

The Soldiers scatter to carry out their orders. Hector takes time to watch the Squire still kneeling beside his father, quietly stroking the helmet. Ronald the Priest mutters every prayer he can remember. The suit of armor twitches and MOANS.

*

*

Hector looks at Beatrice and motions for her to follow him outside. The Priest looks on helplessly as they slide past the table and head for the door.

61 EXT. FARM - DAY

61

More soldiers have continued to make their way to the shelter of the farm. Everywhere is the chaos of war. Wounded men lie awaiting the attentions of either the medicos or the priest. Prisoners huddle in cowed groups. Everyone looks for food. Individual soldiers, like lost souls, run here and there trying to regroup with their comrades. The youngest are squires of twelve or thirteen, the oldest are red-faced, overweight knights in expensive armor.

Hector and Beatrice have found a quiet corner where they can sit and talk. Behind them is a group of soldiers, reserves who have not yet joined the battle. They are much fresher than the rest and are drilling as a disciplined unit.

Their movements are a strange cross between parade ground drill and battle training. To the BEAT of DRUMS they perform rhythmic, hypnotic movements, repeating the same pattern over and over again. A deadly dance, thrusting their pikes in unison. They become like one evil, inhuman machine. It is mesmerizing to watch, all the more so in relation to the coy seduction scene that Hector and Beatrice are acting out. They have the problem of not sharing a language, but, resourceful as lovers are, they soon employ this as another titillating element in their love-play.

*

HECTOR

I think you know what I'm saying
... a little...

(CONTINUED)

BEATRICE

No, I don't, I don't understand a word.

HECTOR

How come you don't speak like anyone else? Are you far from home? Home? Where you sleep and live?

BEATRICE

I think I know what you mean... home.

HECTOR

I'm far from home, too... way, way over there... then across the sea... *

BEATRICE

You're losing me again.

HECTOR

Have you ever seen the sea? Water everywhere... right to the end of the world... I come from the other side of the little water, then there's the big, big water... I had a friend who sailed on that... went too far... fell right over the edge... into nothing. They never came back... they fell off the world... *

Hector smiles, pleased with himself. Beatrice laughs.

HECTOR

You think that's funny? It's true... it's a sad story... you shouldn't laugh.

BEATRICE

Talk about home again... remember you said home? *

HECTOR

I'm not making sense, am I? Well, let's go back to homes. That's where I'm going... I've been away for too long... Some people locked me up... I had to run away. *

BEATRICE

Tell me something else. *

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

We have to learn to talk the same... try it like me, say it... home...

BEATRICE

I know what you're saying... you're saying home... say something else.

HECTOR

Home... home... try it... home...

BEATRICE

You want the word for home? It's home... say it... home... home...

HECTOR

I don't want your word for home, I want you to say mine... home... home...

BEATRICE

Come on, you can do it... home... home...

Beatrice has her way, turning the tables on Hector. He says it in her language.

HECTOR

Home... home...

Beatrice smiles. In this tiny victory the dynamic of their relationship is set.

BEATRICE

That's it... clever boy!

They fall silent, suddenly shy. Beatrice breaks this moment by reaching out to Hector's neck, very delicately, like a caress. Hector smiles. Their first touch. Then it changes. Beatrice completes her movement with a sharp grab at Hector's hair, and pinches her fingers on something. Triumphantly she shows him the flea she has caught.

*

*

BEATRICE

Tick... it's a tick.

HECTOR

Flea... a flea... thanks.

Beatrice looks at him directly now, their intimacy well under way.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: (3)

61

BEATRICE

Bet there's more in there. You need a good going over... nobody's been looking after you.

She ruffles his hair, in a motherly but then again sexually provocative way. He understands her well now. *

HECTOR

Why don't we go somewhere and have a good session... I could do you... I'd like to give you a good grooming...

They understand each other perfectly now. They look around for a more private spot.

62 INT. FARM - DAY

62

Ronald the Priest still kneels by the inert knight in armor. The boy Squire still sits by his father's head. Ronald mumbles quietly to himself in prayer. The knight is deathly still, no sight or sound of breathing or moaning. The suit of armor seems to grow even more rigid as we look at it. There is no sense of it containing life. The Officer re-enters the room from outside.

OFFICER

How is he?

PRIEST

Sleeping now... at peace, for the moment.

OFFICER

Leave him for a while. There are a few souls out here you can help on their way to heaven. Ten sous a soul to you... come on. *

The Officer leaves. Ronald quickly follows him outside. *

RONALD

Twenty sous is normal. How many are there? *

When they have gone the Squire gives his father a nudge, but there is no response from the knight, just the impression of lifeless bulk. *

Hector and Beatrice have found some privacy, near the trees and by a low wall. Some bushes hide them from full view of the farm yard. Hector is sitting cross-legged and Beatrice kneels behind him, giving his head a thorough going over. Mutual grooming is the original, and perhaps the best, form of foreplay. Hector certainly likes it.

BEATRICE

That's four.

HECTOR

Yes, it does feel good.

She gives his scalp a final delicious rub, and then stops.

BEATRICE

You can do me now.

Beatrice loosens her clothing to bare her neck and shoulders. Hector begins to probe her hair and scalp. She arches her back under the first touch of his fingers. Hector laps it up, inspired to caress ever more tenderly her scalp and neck, still with the outward purpose of looking for fleas. *

HECTOR

Got one... a tiny little one...
yours are so small... and fair... *

To Hector even her fleas are a delight. He seems to want to keep it as a pet. There is no hope for this man. Beatrice moans softly, happily. Hector still kneading her scalp. *

HECTOR

I don't know your name. I'm
Hector... who are you? I'm
Hector. *

Beatrice replies with a hint of breathlessness.

BEATRICE

Hector... yes... I'm Beatrice...

HECTOR

Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Yes. Hector... I think you'll
have to do under my arms... I'm
a little itchy there...

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

HECTOR

Yes, I think Beatrice is a good name.

*

Beatrice is sighing contentedly now.

BEATRICE

Maybe we should find the river, and have a proper wash...

In between parting the hairs on her scalp Hector is kissing her on the neck now. At first it is small, snatched kisses amongst the grooming, but soon the kisses become longer and the grooming less.

BEATRICE

I'm still itchy lots of places, Hector.

64 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

64

The Priest is with some seriously wounded soldiers, laid out in a corner of the farmyard. Whether he is a bogus priest or not, Ronald is taking his duties seriously. There is a little of the rogue about him now. He sees the Nun and the little Girl preparing to leave. They have acquired a mule. They mount up, the Girl behind the Nun, and plod off through the farmyard. They stop briefly beside the Priest to say their farewells.

PRIEST

Goodbye, little girl... the Lord will bless you, I know, in his house.

He talks to the Nun as they move off.

PRIEST

How long for you on the road?

NUN

Three or four days.

PRIEST

Good luck to you.

NUN

They're not killing nuns, yet.

PRIEST

The Saxon, won't he go with you?

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

64

NUN

He's nowhere to be seen.

The Priest watches them go, and then returns to his duties with the wounded.

65 EXT. TRACK - DAY

65

The Nun's mule turns out of the farmyard and heads off along the track. A few Soldiers are burying some of their dead nearby. The Nun watches this and doesn't see what the Girl sees on the other side, the mingled bodies of Hector and Beatrice, all pretence at grooming now gone, engaged in fervent lovemaking. It's probably the first and last that the Girl will see. A smile flickers across her face before she turns away forever. Ahead of her there might be many a bleak night in her convent when she will remember the image, and that same smile will return to her lips.

66 EXT. FARMYARD - DAY

66

The Priest is kneeling beside a young wounded Soldier. He is close to death, but in his youth is fighting it. He is frightened, and clings to the presence of Ronald.

SOLDIER

My name is Peter... don't forget
... tell everybody that was my
name... Peter...

Ronald is mumbling his prayers.

PRIEST

Lie still, Peter...

SOLDIER

That's it, Peter... tell everybody
... write it... don't forget it...
Peter... tell them Peter died here
... my name is Peter... Peter...
say it again.

Ronald stays with the boy as he struggles against his own annihilation.

PRIEST

Peter...

Ronald behaves well with the dying boy.

67 INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

67

The Priest makes his way upstairs in the darkness. He yawns, a long, contented yawn. He has completed the hardest day's work that he has undertaken as a priest, if he really is a priest. If he is not, then the pretence has been just as exhausting. He wants to sleep.

68 INT. FARMHOUSE - ANOTHER ANGLE - NIGHT

68

In the room sleeping forms lie here and there in the darkness. Some officers have moved in and the place is more crowded than before. The Priest makes his way to his corner, but on the way he pauses by Beatrice. She snores lightly. The Priest bends over and takes a long sniff at her, then he sighs out his admiration.

He steps over her and settles into his own space by the window. He suddenly misses the presence of Hector. He looks again at Beatrice, still and sleeping. What the Priest doesn't see is the extra pair of hands massaging her neck and head. She moans softly in her pretence of sleep.

The Priest is troubled, suspicious, but he doesn't know why. He sniffs again, in the general direction of Beatrice. The mingled smells that his sensitive nose detects perplex him, but he settles down, pulling his cloak over his head. *

Across the room, Hector's head emerges from the covering beside Beatrice. They make love quietly in the dark, also enjoying the thrill of confounding the Priest.

69 INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

69

The Priest wakes up. Outside he can hear the first sounds of the day, the murmuring VOICES of Soldiers in the yard, the CLATTER OF MILK PAILS. In the room it is still semi-dark. The Priest sits up. The others have already left, but Beatrice is there, stretching herself and fixing her hair. Hector is not with her. She smiles at the Priest. Then, in another part of the room, Hector emerges from what looks like a pile of clothing, sits up and smiles too.

HECTOR

Good morning.

Hector and Beatrice look at each other. The Priest looks at them in turn. Their cheeky act of innocence mocks him.

Hector is washing himself by the stream that flows close by the yard. He drinks a handful of water for breakfast. The Priest sees him from the farmyard and comes to join him.

*

Hector is in a cheerful mood, pleased with himself and his success with Beatrice. The Priest is sullen, reproachful.

HECTOR

You're a busy man, what with all these souls departing.

PRIEST

There's nothing wrong with helping someone to die in peace. They want me to go with them.

HECTOR

Nothing at all.

PRIEST

Are you staying here?

HECTOR

Moving on, as you told me to... we'll meet up, like you said. I'll wait for you at the channel.

*

PRIEST

She'll do you harm. I told you. She might be a witch. Wait for me. I still have the money from Venice. We can be home in a month.

HECTOR

Witch my arse. Stop giving me orders.

Both of them are unhappy now, confusing one another, spoiling their friendship.

HECTOR

You're a strange fellow. Are you a priest? Are you jealous?

The Priest is silent. They are saved from hurting each other more. A Soldier shouts down to them from the farm.

SOLDIER

We're moving soon, Father.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

The Priest turns to Hector for what might be the last time.

PRIEST
So, you're leaving?

HECTOR
You have work to do here.

The Priest walks back up to the farm. Hector calls out what might be an attempt at an apology or simply another taunt.

*
*

HECTOR
I don't understand you.

The Priest looks back at him briefly, then walks on.

71 EXT. TRACK - DAY

71

Hector and Beatrice have packed their few belongings into a shoulder bag. They turn out of the farmyard and walk down the main track.

Hector catches a last glimpse of the Priest being helped onto the back of a horse, behind a Soldier. He is ridden off in the opposite direction with the rest of the troop. Other battles lie ahead to be blessed, and more battered bodies requiring comfort.

Hector and Beatrice are enjoying the first pulse-quickenning flush of their intimacy, and the thrill of knowing it will go further. They chatter freely, despite not sharing a language.

*

HECTOR
I'm glad we're going the same way.

BEATRICE
We'll have to sleep in the hills tonight. Will you keep me warm?

The damp greyness of the early morning has lifted and the sun is shining as they step out onto the higher hills.

72 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

72

Hector and Beatrice have stopped to eat. They shelter in the fold of a hillside, with a wide stream running some way below. Hector feeds Beatrice a piece of cheese from his knife.

(CONTINUED)

BEATRICE

Hurry up and finish your wine and then we can make love.

Hector seems to know what she is saying. He throws down his knife and cheese, lying down with her on the grass. He kisses her breasts and her body eagerly. He lifts her skirts and caresses and kisses her naked legs and thighs. She stretches herself out happily, arms spread wide on the grass. Hector talks through his kisses.

HECTOR

Why do you smell so wonderful?

He lifts his head to let her see him sniffing. *

BEATRICE

Oh, you like my smell, do you? I make it from the flowers. I put it here, and there, and there. *

Hector kisses her more. She smiles and turns her head to the sky. Then she starts to giggle.

BEATRICE

I don't believe it... someone's watching us, the dirty devil... don't look... he's down by the water, by the rocks...

Hector doesn't understand, and keeps on with his kissing. Only her persistent giggling makes him stop and look up. Hector sees him too. Down by the stream a head peering over the top of a rock, not even attempting to hide. *

BEATRICE

Cheeky devil. *

HECTOR

He's not moving. He must've seen us, though. *

She sits up and straightens her clothing, suddenly anxious.

BEATRICE

Don't look at him anymore. Let's go... down the other side of the hill.

But Hector still looks at the figure in the distance. There is an uneasy silence while Hector works it out. Then he speaks.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: (2)

72

HECTOR

It's a dead man.

Beatrice doesn't understand. Hector stands up, still looking at the figure.

HECTOR

Come on, we're going that way at any rate.

They move cautiously. When they are closer to it, and can see it for what is is, they walk straight for the dead body.

*

73 EXT. HILLSIDE - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

73

*

It is the body of a young squire, handsomely dressed in the livery of his master. Such a squire would follow his knight into battle, guiding him through the chaos. But this boy seems to have died a less public, more furtive death. He lies leaning against a rock, eyes open, an expression something like a smile on his face. There is no sign of a wound.

*

Hector looks around at the ground.

HECTOR

No sign of a battle... only a few horses... or just one. He wasn't killed in a fight.

BEATRICE

Poor boy. Isn't he fine-looking. Look at his shoes.

There is a sadness about this young death in such a lonely place. Hector and Beatrice are open to this sadness, but in their age sentiment was of a tougher strain.

*

BEATRICE

We'll cover his eyes at least... so the crows don't get him. Look at these shoes, though.

She is already gathering stones. Hector sees what Beatrice is doing.

HECTOR

That's good of you.

As he lays him down Hector sees a small, dry wound on the boy's side. Beatrice brings her armful of stones and starts to build a mound around the squire's head.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

73

Hector helps her by gathering stones from the stream. Soon they have covered his head completely with stones, his body lying exposed.

HECTOR

It's all we can do. It won't keep the wolves away though.

Beatrice is still taken by the boy's shoes.

BEATRICE

His feet are like mine, you know. I'll give you mine, poor boy, and I'll have yours. I have more walking to do.

She looks at Hector.

BEATRICE

It's not stealing if I give him mine, is it?

Hector watches as Beatrice exchanges her old shoes for the squire's. They fit her well, and she proudly shows them off to Hector. He smiles at her.

74 EXT. STREAM - DAY

74

Later, Hector and Beatrice are enjoying each other immensely, making love by the stream. Beatrice hasn't removed her new shoes, she likes them so much. She is dabbing Hector with her perfume which, he has discovered, she keeps in a small bottle kept in a pouch on a chain around her neck.

Nearby the corpse of the squire still lies, its head shrouded in stones, as if absurdly hiding its eyes from the antics of Hector and Beatrice. The old shoes Beatrice has placed on its feet look odd compared to the fine uniform.

Hector and Beatrice seem unaware of the strangeness of their situation, but perhaps it only looks strange to our modern eyes.

Hector continues to bask in her wonderful aroma.

HECTOR

You've put magic in this stuff, haven't you, you're bewitching me...

They appear to get the gist of one another's love talk.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED:

74

BEATRICE

You're eager today, Hector, aren't you? Is it all this death?

HECTOR

I don't know what you're saying but I like you when you talk.

75 EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

75

Hector is watching Beatrice conduct some kind of ceremony over the corpse of the squire. She takes a handful of dried flowers or herbs from a pouch in her bag. Mumbling strangely and quickly to herself, she walks around the corpse three times, scattering the leaves over the body.

Hector is fascinated, but a little uneasy. He watches from a safe distance. During the few moments that it takes, Beatrice seems like a different person.

Then, all of a sudden, the familiar, friendly Beatrice returns. She completes her ceremony by throwing a few drops of her perfume over the body. She smiles.

*

BEATRICE

That should help him a little.

HECTOR

We should go now. We've been here too long.

BEATRICE

I wonder if his mama will ever know what happened.

HECTOR

You said mama. I know what that is... mama... We can talk the same...

BEATRICE

Mama... that's right... mama...

76 EXT. HILLSIDE - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

76

*

They have reached the summit of the hills. It is like the roof of the world. Below them lies the valley. The air is clean. The landscape looks untouched by man, but a few smudges of smoke in the distance suggest farms or villages. There might be the glimpse of a castle on a hill.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

If it all feels oddly familiar to us, then perhaps it is the memory of a picture in a forgotten story book, or an ancient landscape on a gallery wall. Once again in the film there is the tantalizing feeling of awaking not from a dream, but in a dream.

The moment passes in the more down to earth concerns of Hector and Beatrice.

HECTOR

I have to keep the sun on my back,
that's what Ronald said... the
sun on my back all the way home...
I'll stay on this side of the
river...

BEATRICE

Yes, of course... we stay on this
side of the river, all the way
down... until tomorrow...

HECTOR

I stay on this side...

BEATRICE

Yes... On this side. Then the
other.

They move off, each thinking that they have reached agreement. Beatrice starts to sing as they make a gentle descent into the forests below.

*

77 EXT. FOREST - DAY

77

Beatrice is milking a stray cow they have found in the forest. Hector is watching her, especially her hands. She manipulates the udders of the cow deftly, sexily. Her hands seem to have sensual personalities all of their own. She is chattering non-stop, explaining the subtleties of milking to Hector. But he can't take his eyes or his mind off her thrilling hands. He responds distractedly.

*

*

HECTOR

Oh yes... oh yes.

78 EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

78

Hector lies by their small fire, watching Beatrice, who sleeps by his side. She is dreaming. She mumbles in her sleep, whole sentences. She turns this way and that. Hector watches in fascination.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

We feel the echo of another night when a man watched someone sleep and dream.

He handles some of the things spilling from her bag, lying beside him. Her dried flowers and herbs, which he sniffs, her little bottles and phials. Witches brew? Or simply an early version of a cluttered handbag?

We don't know what is passing through Hector's mind. Perhaps he is trying to work out how he came to be lying with the strange, wonderful, unknowable creature by his side. And how many people have done that through the ages, in caves or by campfires, or in suburban bedrooms?

There are many ways in which we will be able to connect with this perplexed, flea-ridden man, far away from home, huddling by a fire in the forest, trapped in his time, as we all are.

79 EXT. FOREST - MORNING

79

Hector and Beatrice are on the move again. They make their way down into the thickening forest. Beatrice walks ahead, light-footed and humming to herself. She seems to be in comfortably familiar territory now. The mist swirls about him as Hector follows on behind, tagging along as if caught in her sexual wake.

80 EXT. BOAT - DAY

80

Hector and Beatrice have reached the river, broad and slow-moving. Beatrice has hailed a boatman from the far side. He maneuvers his small boat to them and they clamber aboard. Beatrice and the boatman greet each other familiarly. They gossip amiably as the ferry makes its way across the river. Hector sits quietly with a smile on his face, their chatter incomprehensible to him.

81 EXT. SHORE - DAY

81

As they climb out of the ferry Hector is suddenly unsure of what he is doing.

HECTOR

I think we're going the wrong way.
I want the sun on my back. We
should have stayed on the other
side.

He mimes what he means.

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

81

BEATRICE

Don't worry... we're nearly there.
I'll fix your back for you... give
you a good rub.

Before he can protest she has moved off. So he follows
her.

82 EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

82

They have reached the outskirts of a village. Beatrice
turns off the main track and up a narrow path. Hector
follows her. Soon she stops at a small house close to
an orchard. The house sits in the mess of a run-down
farm yard, chickens and goats running here and there.

Beatrice opens the door of the house and goes inside.
Hector hesitates before following her.

83 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

83

Beatrice turns to him when they are inside.

BEATRICE

Here we are... home... you want
some food... and then I'll show
you everything. We have a spring
... you can wash...

Hector stands looking around the small dark room.
Beatrice suddenly seems shy and awkward.

BEATRICE

This is when I wish you could
understand me. You'll have to
learn, you know... I want you to
stay here. You want to, don't
you?

Hector looks at her in silence.

BEATRICE

I look after the hens, and I make
dyes from the plants, and perfumes
too. I'm good at that. But I'm
no good with the sheep and the
goats. I wish you could
understand... Arnaud's been dead
two years...

*

*

*

She crosses the room to a wooden chest under the window.

(CONTINUED)

83 CONTINUED:

83

She lifts the lid and removes some men's clothing, rough working trousers and a hide jacket.

BEATRICE

I still have his clothes. I'll make them fit you...

She holds the jacket up against Hector to measure it. Hector's reaction to a dead man's clothing is predictable.

*
*

HECTOR

What did he die of?

*
*

BEATRICE

I'm getting shy. Imagine me being shy with you... I made this for him... tonight we'll try them on. You're the same height as Arnaud, but a little thinner. I'll make them fit. I'm a good sewer. And we have a big bed upstairs for you and me, in the rafters... You and me... sleep...

Hector is beginning to understand what she means, but he keeps his feelings to himself. Beatrice talks on. Now that she has started, she wants to say it all.

BEATRICE

I like you. You like me too, don't you? We were lucky to meet the way we did. All the men around here are old.

*

Beatrice falls silent, overtaken by her shyness. Hector understands fully what she means now, but his mind is a confusion. He can't respond. She tries to direct his thoughts to the one area she is sure about.

BEATRICE

Come up and I'll show you the bed...

She climbs a ladder nearby and lifts open a trapdoor on the wooden ceiling. Hector climbs up to join her and together they stand on the ladder with their heads poking into the tiny space above.

84 INT. COTTAGE - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

84

*

Beatrice is proud of her bed, a rough mattress on the floor covered in some blankets she has probably made herself.

(CONTINUED)

84 CONTINUED:

84

The bed takes up most of the space of the small attic. They look at it together.

BEATRICE

A good bed, eh? For you and me.
We can have fun up here... better
than a ditch...

She laughs. Hector's expression lightens a little too. It occurs to him to take up her offer immediately. She catches his thought, and the moment tingles happily. Then from outside they hear voices. Firstly a young Boy calling.

*
*

BOY (O.S.)

Mama, are you home?

85 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

85

Beatrice and Hector descend back in the room. A BOY of about eight and a GIRL of ten are coming in from the garden. They have been working outside. Beatrice goes to embrace each of them. Hector's face is a confusion once again.

*

GIRL

You were gone a long time. Who's
this?

The Girl eyes Hector up and down.

BEATRICE

This is Hector.

Beatrice pronounces his name with care. She stands proudly by her children.

BEATRICE

These are my children...

The CREAK of a door makes Hector turn his head.

BEATRICE

... and this is my mother....

An OLD WOMAN stands in the main doorway, smiling at Hector and nodding her head. She speaks to her daughter.

MOTHER (OLD WOMAN)

So... you found one, eh?

Hector stands, surrounded by instant family, and doesn't know what to do. Eventually he speaks.

*

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

85

HECTOR

Is there water... to drink... to wash?

He mimes with his hands. Beatrice understands that he wants some breathing space. She talks to her son.

BEATRICE

Take Hector to the well... but come here first.

She takes off the dead Squire's shoes and puts them on the Boy's bare feet. He is delighted. He does a little dance in them before leaving with Hector.

86 EXT. WELL - DAY

86

Hector stands at the well some way from the house. Beatrice's garden is a madness of wild flowers, harvested by her for scents and powders. She is a remarkable woman, living as she does in the harsh male world of her time. The scented air and the dizzy SOUNDS OF the BEES almost make Hector swoon. He is experiencing the full, heady impact of Beatrice, and it is summed up in a full-blown pollen-filled sneeze.

He drinks at her well. The Boy is beside him, still engrossed in his new shoes. Hector splashes some water on his face and looks back at the house. He has some decisions to make.

87 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

87

The Mother sits by the window in the nearest thing to a comfortable chair that the house has to offer. She is working on some lace. Hector enters the room to watch her. He smiles and stands shyly at the door. The Mother thinks he wants her chair for himself. In a flurry of apology she rises, drops her work and motions for Hector to have the good seat. He is full of embarrassment.

HECTOR

No, no... sit down... I just came to watch... please... sit...

He guides the Mother back to the good chair. They struggle comically for a while, but eventually she allows Hector to settle her there. She mumbles unhappily.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

MOTHER

We can't have this... this was
Arnaud's seat... it's yours
now... I can sit on the box...

Hector gently pacifies her.

HECTOR

You must sit there... look...
you need the light from the
window... it's your
seat... I don't want it... it's
yours... I can sit on the box.

The old woman allows herself a shy smile. Whether in innocence or mischief, she has secured the best seat in the house for herself. If he stays, Hector will never dare rest his bones in it.

88 EXT. YARD - DAY

88

Hector has retreated to the yard. The Girl is boiling some dyes in a cauldron over an open fire. The Boy is working at a basketful of flower heads, pulling petals and separating the hearts, putting them in a large jar of colored liquid.

Hector is aware of Beatrice watching him. She is returning to the kitchen, firmly holding a struggling chicken, wings flapping and feathers flying everywhere. This chicken is making the supreme sacrifice in Beatrice's final effort at total seduction, a wonderful meal. Hector is guiltily aware of this as their eyes meet briefly.

Hector takes in what the Boy is doing and joins in the work. The Boy smiles at Hector's initial clumsiness. He motions for Hector to have a sniff of the jar of liquid. Hector does so. The smell is heady and pleasant.

HECTOR

Ah...

The Boy says something and points towards his sister. She stands by her cauldron, stirring the bubbling liquid. Hector goes to watch her work. He looks in the cauldron.

HECTOR

Good color... for cloth?

Without thinking, Hector leans over the cauldron to sniff. A hideous odor assaults him. He backs off.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

HECTOR

Ugh...

The Girl says something to him, and points to a bucket of liquid at her feet. Hector makes out something like the word "peepee."

HECTOR

Peepee?

The Girl nods enthusiastically. The Boy is sniggering.

89 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

89

Hector sits at the table with Beatrice and her family. There is an air of awkward silence, although the Boy and Girl look openly at Hector, perhaps assessing him as a future father.

The meal has been served in a communal pot. In Beatrice's house there is the luxury of small individual plates. The others wait for Hector to begin, but he indicates to the old Mother to help herself first. She does, and she doesn't stop until her plate is heaped high with food. There is definitely some power play going on in the old woman's mind, although her face is all innocence.

Hector submits, taking only a modest portion of food. The old Mother's appetite is prodigious. It is comical to watch her little frame consume so much, quietly and methodically. She is an eating machine.

During the meal Beatrice and Hector exchange glances. But this time their talking without words is a serious affair.

HECTOR

Mmmm... good food....

90 EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

90

From the kitchen Beatrice watches Hector in the garden. he is making an effort to appear relaxed, but as he paces here and there Beatrice knows that he is unhappy. She leaves the kitchen to join him.

BEATRICE

Take a walk to the village if
you want... you look as if you
need a walk...

Hector opens his heart to her, knowing she will understand his feelings if not his words.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED: 90

HECTOR

I have to leave soon. I can't stay... it would be wrong to stay for just a while...

91 EXT. COTTAGE - DAY 91

It is awkward for Hector to say goodbye.

HECTOR

I have to go... have to keep the sun on my back... I have to get home... I have a family, just like you... I like you... you smell good... wonderful...

*

Hector fumbles awkwardly with his bag and then walks off down the track. He turns to look at Beatrice. She stands outside her house for a long time, watching him until he turns onto the main road and OUT OF SIGHT.

The pain and the awkwardness in Beatrice and Hector are specific, but the scene of parting is timeless. Is this the ten millionth such parting, or the billionth? It is one of them at any rate, and a sad one.

92 EXT. RIVER - DUSK 92

Hector has reached the river, but it is already growing dark and the boatman has gone for the night. Hector sees the boat, dragged out of the water.

He sits down against the trunk of a large tree. His eyes begin to close.

*

*

93 EXT. RAFT - MORNING 93

Hector awakes. He looks around him. He is on a huge raft, made of ship's timbers. We have left our previous Hector sitting under his tree 400 years ago. This Hector is awakening into what might be a nightmare. The huge raft is many smaller rafts lashed together. There are over a hundred and fifty people perched on them, lying or squatting in sleep. It is early morning. The sea is calm around them, but the deep ocean swell is still there to remind them of their predicament, menacing, like a controlled anger.

*

Hector is fully awake now, sitting against some boxes. He speaks to ANDRE sitting close by.

(CONTINUED)

Andre is Hector's slave, still bound to him in service through shipwreck and disaster. Our Hector is now a master. Andre is a young Asian. A quiet, capable, intelligent man, but with that same lost look in his eyes that Hector had as a slave. He too is far from home.

HECTOR

I had a wonderful dream. I was lying under a tree, beside a river. I was dozing. I heard the water... beautiful clear water. I got up and drank some. I think I ate some raspberries too.

*

*

ANDRE

I would like some water.

Hector looks around him at the squalid mass of distressed humanity.

HECTOR

God, this is the worst, the worst.

*

*

Some figures rise and an argument takes place, like a domestic squabble. We can hear some of their exchanges.

WOMAN

Let me keep him... they said we'll find land in a day or so... you're evil...

MAN

When they're dead they go over the side... The place stinks enough as it is...

There is a flurry of movement amongst the figures, then a splash, then a cry of a Woman. The noise has awakened others. All over the raft figures are coming awake, sitting up, taking in the new day, and the dreadful reality of their situation.

Andre speaks to Hector.

ANDRE

Do you think I'll still see Europe?

HECTOR

I think there's more chance of me eating you, Andre.

(CONTINUED)

The more we see of the people, their costumes, weapons, mannerisms, the easier we will place them in their time. They are survivors of a foundered ship some time at the height of the great colonial empires. The year could be 1590. The place is the Indian Ocean.

Hector turns his eyes to another part of the raft, closer to him. He watches a man and woman. The woman, URSULA, still has her eyes closed, sleeping on a pile of canvas. The man, FRANCISCO, stands beside her holding a cloak over her to protect her from sea spray. His eye catches Hector's, and they hold each other's gaze for a long time. There is antipathy but also pain in their look.

*

A man, DOM PAULO, moves among the waking wretches. He speaks with authority.

DOM PAULO

I think today will be the day,
my friends. We've been in the
inshore currents since yesterday.
Three crowns to the first one to
sight the coast. God preserve us
all.

Someone speaks from under a crude canvas shelter.

SAILOR

Never mind the three crowns... a
side of beef would do... or a drink
of clean water.

Dom Paulo strides off to his station by the makeshift rudder.

DOM PAULO

Don't worry, there'll be food for
all ashore. Africa's full of
meat and drink.

SAILOR

It's full of Africans too.

The sun is up, and Dom Paulo was right. The raft is now standing off-shore riding out the heavy ocean surf before finally beaching. The strong are helping to row ashore, under the shouted instructions of the NAVIGATOR. Those too weak to help are huddled beside their possessions, hoping to survive this final trial of the sea.

(CONTINUED)

Hector works his oar with the rest. He has time to cast a glance at Ursula and Francisco. Francisco in his manic-heroic way manages to row while at the same time trying to offer a steadying arm to Ursula.

If Hector had time or energy to laugh, he would.

The raft is in the full rage of the surf. The sense behind its loose construction is obvious now. Snake-like it rides the waves, one half up, the other down. The beaching isn't easy. A few people are washed overboard with no way of saving them. Finally the raft makes it through the barrier of the outer surf. They are in a long curving bay. Up from the beach lies an area of dunes, and beyond that a thick belt of jungle. *

The raft scrapes onto the sand. Those near the beach scramble ashore, immediately prostrating themselves in prayers of thanks while those at the back jump into the water and clumsily wade the last few feet to safety.

Hector's attention is never far from Ursula. She is struggling in the water with some of her baggage. A youth, NUNO, goes to help her. Hector overtakes him and nudges him out of the way, offering to take Ursula's load from her shoulders. She refuses his help. Waist-deep in water they tussle over her bundle of possessions. Hector overpowers her, wrestles her load from her grasp, angrily wades to the shore and dumps it on the sand. In amongst the drama of their situation their little battle of wills seems petty and pathetic, but it reveals much about their past. *

Soon the survivors are dragging their possessions from the raft. They have managed to hoard a surprising amount from their doomed ship. Carpets, chests, chairs, all are dragged ashore. *

Civilization has taken hold quickly in this little corner of Africa. Dom Paulo, the leader, already has a table and chair set up in the sand, and behind him SAILORS are erectig a tent-like house, made from timbers and rich tapestries and carpets. The others are making their own shelters all along the beach. A regular little community is taking shape, a crazy, rich-textured village decked out in all the colors of the East. The silks and gingham that were destined for the finest halls in Europe now give shelter to sick slaves, starving sailors, ruined traders and grieving mothers.

(CONTINUED)

Some of the survivors have recovered sufficiently from the trauma of near death to mark out the boundaries of their new beach homes with lines of stones. The habits of ownership die hardest of all.

Although Dom Paulo is the man in authority he is also a man in deep shock. Most of what he has earned or plundered in his colonial years now lies at the bottom of the ocean. Since he is socially superior to anyone else on the ship he assumes responsibility and command. There are probably fifty men among the survivors more suited to lead them to safety.

By Dom Paulo's side always is his SON. A quiet boy of about eleven. He is like a little miniature of his father, dressed in the same style of clothes. He is a constant, silent witness to everything that Dom Paulo does, good or bad, wise or foolish. He and his father are a continuing fascination for Hector, and we can enjoy Hector watching the boy watching his father. Some of the absurdities and comedies of the situation can be highlighted in this way. There can be sadness in it too however, the pain of a son witnessing his father's compromises or failures all too closely, and Dom Paulo's sad awareness of his image slowly tarnishing in his son's eyes.

Amidst the construction work, Dom Paulo is talking with some of his OFFICERS.

DOM PAULO

How many made it?

OFFICER

Eighty men. Ten women. Eighteen children and forty-five slaves.

DOM PAULO

Two parties of ten men each... one to the north and one to the south... bring back what you can... game, fruit, anything... and send someone back as soon as you find fresh water. Any trouble, discharge three shots.

The Officer leaves to carry out his orders. Dom Paulo addresses another of his men, Da Cunha.

(CONTINUED)

95 CONTINUED: (2)

95

DOM PAULO

Have the carpenter start immediately on a cross, a big one... Father Diogo wants a place of worship by this time tomorrow. We'll look for a spot later. We've all got a lot of praying to do. And where's Dias... tell him I want to see him.

96 EXT. CAMP - DAY

96

Hector and Andre are walking through the half-built village. Andre is carrying Hector's possessions, a rolled-up carpet and a bolt of colorful cloth. We feel an echo of the days when Hector was a slave, walking two paces behind with his master's possessions.

Hector finds what he is looking for. Francisco is working on a shelter for himself and Ursula, with the help of some slaves. Hector approaches him, making another attempt to heal wounds from his past.

HECTOR

I have a carpet and some cloth... I thought if we worked together we could make a better shelter...

Francisco barely stops his work to reply.

FRANCISCO

If it's a joke it's a poor one.

*

HECTOR

At least ask Dona Ursula...

FRANCISCO

I don't have to ask her... I know she would agree with me... leave us alone.

His stubborn rejection of Hector reveals just how strong their friendship once was.

HECTOR

Well... would you take my cloth, at least?

FRANCISCO

Keep it and build your own hovel somewhere else... leave us alone...!

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED:

96

Then from along the beach the sound of RAISED VOICES distracts them. They see some figures, laden with supplies, running off into the forest. Others are following them, discharging MUSKETS, shouting for the DESERTERS to stop. Hector and Francisco walk briskly in the direction of the trouble. They see two of the Deserters being overtaken by their pursuers. The rest make their escape into the jungle.

97 EXT. CAMP - DAY

97

Hector and Francisco reach Dom Paulo's office in the sand. The leading citizens are gathering there as the two captured Deserters are brought in.

SAILOR

They ran off with the dry bread...
about eight of them, sir...

*
*

Dom Paulo looks at the two prisoners.

DOM PAULO

You men are deserters. You will
die tomorrow.

He speaks again to the Sailor.

DOM PAULO

Chain them on the raft for tonight,
and watch them...

Francisco steps forward, outraged.

FRANCISCO

I must object... these sentences
can't be lawful...

Dom Paulo's authoritative manner vanishes in an instant. He becomes hesitant, unsure of himself. As always, his Son watches every detail of the exchange.

*
*

DOM PAULO

Do you think so?

FRANCISCO

Of course... we can't allow
ourselves to fall into terror
and violence...

DOM PAULO

You're right... but then how can
we punish them? We can't lock them
up...

(CONTINUED)

Dom Paulo looks around at the assembled notables, confused, out of his depth. Other opinions are voiced.

SALGADO

You were right the first time, sir... they must hang... they were stealing the bread from our mouths...

The captured Deserters look on helplessly as their lives are argued over.

YOUNG DESERTER

I didn't steal any bread... Gomes had the bread... he's off, in the forest...

DOM PAULO

Oh dear...

Dom Paulo turns to the Priest.

DOM PAULO

What do you think, Father?

The Priest throws open his arms noncommittally.

PRIEST

I'll comfort them whether they live or die, now or later, any of you, all of you... I'll comfort you all.

SALGADO

Hang them... you have to set an example...

Dom Paulo is deeply confused.

DOM PAULO

So I was right the first time?

Francisco confuses him even more.

FRANCISCO

No, sir... there must be proper justice...

DOM PAULO

What's proper justice?

DESERTER

I didn't steal any bread...

*

(CONTINUED)

SALGADO

You have to make a decision, sir.

DESERTER

It was Gomes... he told us to run.

DOM PAULO

I'll decide... no I won't... we'll all decide... most of the people that matter are here... we'll have a vote... who agrees with Salgado... and me... that they should die?

A lot of hands go up. Hector hesitates, his instincts are not for killing. But the force of the majority weighs on him. He starts to raise his hand. At that moment, as he scans the crowd, he meets the eyes of the Deserter whose death they are voting on. For a moment they communicate. Hector is thrown. He drops his hand, only to find in the next instant the stern gaze of Salgado on him. He hesitates again, then starts to raise his hand. Then the eyes of the Deserter find him once more. This comic pantomime goes on while a solid majority of the crowd firmly raise their hands.

DOM PAULO

... and those against death...

One of the Deserters raises his own hand meekly.

DOM PAULO

You can't vote...

Then he looks to Salgado.

DOM PAULO

Can he?

SALGADO

It doesn't matter.

Then the other Deserter raises his hand too.

SALGADO

I don't think this is working, Dom Paulo... we need authority... you must decide...

Dom Paulo thinks.

DOM PAULO

Very well... Da Cunha?

(CONTINUED)

DA CUNHA steps forward.

DOM PAULO
The cross the carpenter is
working on... tell him to turn
it into a scaffold... have it
erected along the beach, away
from the women... the executions
will be at sunrise tomorrow. Tell
Father Diogo.

He turns to the Sailors holding the Deserters.

DOM PAULO
Take them to the raft.

The dazed Deserters are led off. Dom Paulo's face clouds
in doubt again.

DOM PAULO
Everyone in agreement with hanging? *
Or should we shoot them... or what?

DA CUNHA
Hanging is fine, sir. *

DOM PAULO
Very well... now... who's going
to conduct the executions... should
we pick someone, or have a
volunteer...

Dom Paulo looks over the faces of the men. He stops at
Hector.

DOM PAULO
Hector?

Hector doesn't have the will to accept or the courage to *
refuse. He is saved by another young man, ALVAREZ, eager
to prove himself.

ALVAREZ
I'll do it, Dom Paulo.

DOM PAULO
Thank you, Alvarez. Sunrise
tomorrow. Send the Priest to
them tonight.

We can sense the feeling of relief in Hector. Dom *
Paulo's son has been a silent witness to everything that *
has happened, but his blank face reveals nothing of his *
feelings. *

98 EXT. CAMP - EVENING

98

It is growing dark. Fires are being lit outside the shelters. Andre is building Hector's tent while Hector watches him. The tent is only large enough for one person, and somehow looks mean compared with the others.

HECTOR

Good work, Andre.

He looks across to the well-made shelter of Ursula and Francisco. Ursula herself works at the fire.

Hector turns to Andre.

HECTOR

You go and sleep by the big fire, Andre. Keep warm.

Andre leaves.

99 INT. CAMP - NIGHT

99

Hector goes inside his little house. He puts his back to the entrance and opens the canvas sack which contains all his possessions. He pulls out his prize, a sizeable chunk of bread and some dried fruit. He guiltily gnaws at the hard bread.

He is surprised by the sound of the boy, Nuno outside.

NUNO

Senor Hector?

Hector quickly stows his food back into his sack, and with a grunt of irritation sticks his head out of the shelter.

Nuno is holding four fruits, about the size of large apples, but green and thick-skinned.

NUNO

This was all they found in the forest. Four for each of us. They taste kind of milky, but sour.

HECTOR

Thank you, Nuno.

NUNO

My mother ate three and she was sick. So try two... but she's sick anyway... maybe you can try three...

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

I'll start with two.

Nuno makes to leave, but then hesitates.

NUNO

Hector, will you help me?

Nuno is looking down the beach to the remains of the raft on the shoreline. The shapes of the two Deserters chained there can just be seen.

NUNO

Lopo... the boy they're going to hang tomorrow... he was cook's cabin boy... I was going to take him something to eat... I thought, perhaps, one of yours and one of mine...

*

He looks at the fruit he has just given Hector.

NUNO

You said you might just eat two...

HECTOR

But there's tomorrow, Nuno... we must eat tomorrow too...

Nuno looks disappointed. His eyes turn again to his playmate tied to the raft.

HECTOR

Dom Paulo would call it a waste. You must keep yourself strong, Nuno, that's what he'd say... so that you can help the others... God knows what we have ahead of us... we'll need strong people like you...

Nuno is silent, unconvinced.

HECTOR

Try not to think about Lopo any more... The guards wouldn't let you near him anyway.

Nuno stomps away in silence. Hector shouts after him cheerily.

HECTOR

Goodnight!

100 INT. CAMP - NIGHT

100

In the privacy of their tent Dom Paulo and his son are engaged in their nightly ritual, practicing on their recorders. Dom Paulo leads the young boy through an intricate, pretty tune. They sit formally and there is an air of stoicism about them, determined as they are to maintain their civilized habits in these bleakest of circumstances. But there is also a feeling of madness about it. The madness of a man who has lost a grip of what is going on about him. Down on the beach men are waiting to die in the morning on his orders. The blend of formality and madness make the scene comic.

101 EXT. CAMP - DAWN

101

The sun has risen sharply, soaring out of the ocean. It blinds the eyes of those in the little execution party making their way along the beach.

The cross-cum-scaffold has been erected some way from the camp. Most people are attending to their morning chores with one eye on the grim act of justice being carried out along the shore.

Our view of the hangings will be from the distance of the camp; marionette figures, men dancing on ropes, the formality of legal death. The priest and the executioners.

It takes a while for the people in the camp to become aware of the other observers up on the dunes. Three figures stand in full view, boldly, silently, watching the camp and the pantomime at the scaffold.

The word passes around the camp. Eyes pass between the executions and the tall natives watching. The first man is already dangling on the rope by the time that Dom Paulo and his officers are discussing the appearance of the natives.

DA CUNHA

Some gunpowder would scatter them, sir.

DOM PAULO

No, they might want to be friendly... they'll have food too... get one of our African slaves... we must try and talk to them... If they think we're timid we're dead.

102 EXT. DUNES - DAWN

102

A solitary SLAVE makes his way up from the camp to the natives on the dunes. Everyone in the camp watches as he approaches them. There is tension. Will the natives run or fight or talk. They begin to talk. The natives seem most interested in the hangings, and point in that direction, asking questions. The Slave makes an attempt at explaining what is happening, but the natives seem baffled. They start laughing and shaking their heads. By now the second figure is dangling on the rope, the cross making an efficient double-gallows.

103 EXT. CAMP - DAWN

103

While Francisco's attention has been on the natives, Hector has sidled up to him, still hoping to ingratiate himself. He talks while they watch the two events, the hanging and the meeting.

HECTOR

I hate it when people have to die. *

FRANCISCO

It's foolishness. Killing our own men when we have the whole of Africa to face.

HECTOR

It's foolish squabbling at all. We should be friends.

Francisco looks at him for the meaning in what he is saying. Hector shrugs. He takes a small bundle from his jacket and gives it to Francisco.

FRANCISCO

What's this?

HECTOR

Some bread and raisins.

FRANCISCO

I thought everything was shared out on the raft...

HECTOR

Well this wasn't. It's for her... and you.

Francisco looks Hector straight in the eye, looking for his angle. But this time there is none. Hector is simply a lonely man seeking to retrieve lost friendship. There is a glimmer of sympathy in Francisco's face.

(CONTINUED)

103 CONTINUED:

103

On the high dunes the Slave and the natives have now parted company. The Deserters still spin at the end of their ropes, the Priest praying at their feet.

Francisco walks away from him. Hector calls out.

HECTOR

I must speak to her!

104 EXT. CAMP - DAY

104

The Slave approaches Dom Paulo outside his tent.

SLAVE

They want to make a visit here...
with their King... he will bring
gifts, and will receive gifts.
They said not to sacrifice anymore
men for them... they don't like
that...

*

Dom Paulo and the others laugh.

105 EXT. BAY - DAY

105

The tide is sweeping more wreckage into the bay. Barrels and boxes and timber bob in the waves. People make their way to the shoreline to retrieve these new gifts from the sea.

*

The whole of the camp is eager and shouting. They bring in the boxes and barrels. A whole harmonium is man-handled ashore. Some boys drag it up onto dry sand and start to work its bellows. At first only water spurts from it, but then a watery note or two is emitted. The mood soon becomes festive. Dom Paulo makes his way down to the shore to make the celebrations official.

*

*

*

By now the first of the newly-arrived crates are being opened. Inside are eggs, many, many large eggs, in crate after crate.

An OFFICER brings the first of the eggs to Dom Paulo.

OFFICER

Turtles' eggs, sir... Doctor Correa was shipping them to the Royal Zoo... I think they hoped some of them would hatch.

DOM PAULO

Well... it's eggs for supper tonight... for everyone...

*

106 EXT. CAMP - DUSK 106

That night everyone does eat turtles' eggs. At their fires in the dusk they fry them, boil them, scramble them. Some eat them raw. The abundant green fruits make a tolerable side dish. The happy mood of the afternoon has survived into the night. For once there is enough to eat, and the hangings are a thing of the past. Above the ROAR of the constantly rolling SURF the CROAKY sounds of the waterlogged HARMONIUM can be heard.

*

107 INT. HECTOR'S TENT - DUSK 107

Sadly for Hector, the harmonium enthusiast is very close to his shelter. The JANGLY MUSIC is loud and insistent. Hector removes six large eggs from a bag and takes them outside to his fire.

108 EXT. CAMP - DUSK 108

Andre is there eating the last of his omelette.

HECTOR

How are they?

ANDRE

Good.

Hector cracks one of his eggs into a copper pan. Inside is a brown smudge of dried yoke and some dust. Hector grunts in annoyance and cracks another egg. The yoke is discolored and the smell is rank. Hector looks at Andre, rapidly finishing his omelette before Hector can demand it.

*

*

*

HECTOR

Yours were fine?

ANDRE

Yes.

Hector picks up a third egg and shakes it close to his ear. It seems as empty as the other two. He picks up a fourth egg and cracks it open. A small dried-up, half-formed baby turtle RATTLES into the pan. Andre is quietly enjoying Hector's frustration. He stands up to leave.

ANDRE

Good night.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Have you any eggs left?

ANDRE

The slaves only got three. I want to ask you something.

HECTOR

You were lucky. What?

ANDRE

I want my real name back.

HECTOR

You don't like Andre anymore?

ANDRE

I think of my home all the time. I want to hear the name they call me. We should die with our real names.

HECTOR

We're not going to die, Andre...

Hector smiles at his own insensitivity.

HECTOR

I've forgotten your name...

ANDRE

Ketabomago Pululo.

HECTOR

Now I remember why we called you Andre.

Andre looks at him expectantly.

HECTOR

I will, Andre... I promise... I'll call you that... when I remember...

Andre is satisfied, and leaves. Hector calls to him.

HECTOR

Good night... Keta...

ANDRE

Ketabomago Pululo...

HECTOR

Yes... good night...

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED: (2)

108

Hector is alone. Hector gives up on the eggs and pulls out his store of bread and fruit from the tent. The next source of annoyance is the continuing noise of the HARMONIUM.

*
*

He shouts across to the musical enthusiast, a YOUTH with a few older children by his side.

HECTOR

Hey! Stop that, will you? Think of the older people, and the sick... I'll give you an egg if you stop... here...

*
*

109 EXT. CAMP - NEXT MORNING

109

The Officers and Dom Paulo are selecting items for barter from their crates and boxes of valuables. Hector and other notables are also there.

*

Cheap goods, a box of rosaries and crucifixes made of common beads, for example, are being gone through and suitable junk selected for gifts.

*

They talk as they work.

DOM PAULO

How many are sick?

DA CUNHA

About fifty, sir, some of them very sick indeed. It's the eggs. A couple of the crates were full of rotten ones, but eaten just the same. Others just ate too many. It would have been better to ration them, I suppose.

*
*

DOM PAULO

How wise of you to think of that now. Any deaths?

DA CUNHA

Six.

DOM PAULO

How many eggs did you have?

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

DA CUNHA

Three. I had them boiled.

DOM PAULO

I had four. I don't feel well now...

DA CUNHA

Four's all right... the really ill ones had eaten eight, ten...

DOM PAULO

Let's not think about it... what have you got?

*
*

Salgado comes forward with a handful of the broken remains of a kettle. Copper is a useful currency.

SALGADO

It worked well... they'll go for this... and nails... Luis cleaned up a sackful from the crates...

Salgado shows a handful of nails from a small sack in his hand.

DOM PAULO

Organize some men to gather all the nails they can find. We have to keep control of that particular currency.

*

Dom Paulo rummages in a box of cheap rosaries, selects a couple, and then retires to his tent. The others work on at the table. Hector drifts off down to the beach.

110 INT. DOM PAULO'S TENT - MORNING

110

Inside his tent Dom Paulo goes to his small mirror. He takes off the heavy silver chain and medallion from around his neck, and a valuable brooch from his coat. He stows them safely in a locked box and replaces it in its hiding place in the sand floor. Then he adorns himself in the cheap rosary and other trashy items. Dom Paulo, catching sight of his watching Son in the mirror, holds a silencing finger to his mouth.

*
*
*

111 EXT. BEACH - MORNING

111

Hector is walking along the beach, close to a pile of discarded boxes and crates.

*

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

He quickly searches through them. He soon finds what he is looking for, a piece of wood with some nails still attached to it. He pulls out the nails and pockets them, then continues to rummage amongst the wood for more. Hector is a survivor. And not the first Hector to scavenge on a beach, in a world that feels big and empty.

*

112 EXT. DUNES - MORNING

112

Hector is enjoying the freshness of the day. We see him climb over a dune and then as he nears the summit duck and retreat down the slope again. Cautiously he crawls up the dune and looks over to the other side.

*

He is watching a young Girl and the boy Nuno. They are twelve or thirteen years old. They are coyly in the early stages of making love, the Boy lying close to the Girl, kissing her, beginning to caress her. Their love-making is poised oddly between child's play and eroticism. It's their day of discovery and it is like a dream of love.

*
*

The Boy is just about to discover some more and is fumbling with the Girl's clothing, when he looks up and catches sight of Hector. Hector ducks down but knows he has been seen and decides to brazen it out. He stands up in full view of them.

HECTOR

Stop that... leave her alone...
get back to the camp... or I'll tell
your mother... how can you play like
this when there are people needing
your help back there...?

The Boy is standing now and fixing his clothing. He walks off back to the camp. The Girl remains sitting in the sand, buttoning her dress, too embarrassed even to raise her head to Hector.

Then Hector is touched by something, perhaps the sad stoop in the Boy's shoulder or the Girl's lowered head. Hector realizes he has broken something precious and in their circumstances infinitely fragile and irretrievable. He feels like an oaf. He calls after the Boy.

HECTOR

Come back... I didn't mean it...
it was a joke... you come back...
she's still here... I won't say
anything...

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED:

112

But the Boy walks on, turning around now and then to look at Hector, who feels foolish and mean. Hector calls down to the Girl.

HECTOR

I'm sorry.

But she doesn't look up, still fumbling with her buttons.

Hector curses quietly and looks out across the dunes, angry with himself. Then he sees the procession of the Native King and his people, some cattle, and porters carrying baskets.

*

Hector runs off towards the camp.

113 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

113

The meeting of the two leaders is weird and wonderful to see. The ragged Europeans, already scanning the baskets of the Natives for signs of solid food, somehow still muster an absurd sense of their own importance for the occasion. The Natives, excited and curious, trying to contain their exuberance so that they don't miss a single detail of this most significant day. Many of the Natives have climbed into the trees, either out of timidity or to get a better view

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*

The trees around the meeting place are dripping with bodies, like human fruit.

Hector slips into the crowd as the NATIVE KING is in mid-speech. When he has stopped talking the Slave begins to haltingly translate.

SLAVE

He was excited when he heard you had come, but he wants to know if you are real people... he didn't think you would be such a strange color... so he wants to see your...

He points repeatedly at his navel.

*

SLAVE

... so that he will know that you were born like real people...

(CONTINUED)

Dom Paulo won't suffer the indignity alone. He talks to the Officers standing closest to him.

DOM PAULO

Right... you four as well...

He begins to open up his coat and shirt. The four Officers do the same. The King and a few of his attendants take a step or two forward and peer at the exposed white European bellies. They look at one another and mumble solemnly. Then they step back. Dom Paulo and the Officers fix their clothing and re-muster their dignity.

The King is enjoying himself. He speaks again to the Slave, who then translates.

SLAVE

He wants to see you breathe.

The King takes a deep breath, then nods to Dom Paulo. Dom Paulo and the Officers do as they are told. The King joins them, and for a few moments there is a kind of communion between them. Then everyone joins in. It is a strange, poignant moment, all the Natives and all the Europeans united in the simple act of breathing. *

Dom Paulo regains his composure. He speaks to the Slave.

DOM PAULO

Tell him that we want to trade with him, to buy food... and we want him to guide us out of here... we have a long way to travel... to where the white men have their big ships...

The Slave speaks to the King. The King listens and talks back for a long time. Then the Slave translates again.

SLAVE

He has heard of white men very, very far away... this way... but you have to cross many rivers... twenty big rivers... *

DOM PAULO

Tell him I want to give him these... *

Dom Paulo steps forward to the King. An Officer brings a wrapped cloth. Dom Paulo opens it, letting the King see the pieces of broken copper inside. *

(CONTINUED)

The Officer produces a handful of large nails and gives them directly to the King. The King nods his head in approval and shows the nails to his attendants. They are impressed.

DOM PAULO

... and tell him that I want to make him a very special gift as one King to another...

Various Officers raise their eyebrows at this.

DOM PAULO

Of these precious things, which my fathers and forefathers have worn for many long years before...

Dom Paulo solemnly and without a blush removes the cheap rosary from around his neck and offers it to the King.

DOM PAULO

I shouldn't do this, but it is such a special occasion, and he is such a great and worthy King...

This is translated. The King refuses to accept the rosary. Instead he is pointing to a couple of chunky and valuable-looking rings on Dom Paulo's fingers which he has forgotten to remove. *

SLAVE

He says he could not accept such a treasured gift, something of such value to your family... instead he would be happy to take one or two of the old rings you have on your fingers... but please do not insist that he take your necklace...

It is impossible to know if the King is being naively polite or hugely clever. Dom Paulo's Officers enjoy a muted titter as he peels off his precious rings and gives them to the King, replacing the worthless baubles around his own neck. The King begins talking again. The Slave translates.

SLAVE

He will give you guides to help you across the first of the big rivers... it is ten days from here... *

(CONTINUED)

113 CONTINUED: (3)

113

DOM PAULO

Thank you, thank you...

The Slave continues.

SLAVE

... and he asks you to be ready to leave the beach in two days time... he cannot permit you to stay longer...

Dom Paulo looks shocked.

SLAVE

Because with the new moon the turtles will arrive and lay their eggs... you may frighten them... you must be gone...

The mention of turtles' eggs almost turns the stomachs of most of the survivors, even the fit ones.

The King and his followers walk back into the forest. Soon the survivors are alone again, with the lost-looking cow the Natives have left. A doomed cow if ever there was.

*

114 EXT. BEACH - EVENING

114

The remains of the cow hang on the spit over the large fire the survivors have made on the beach. Small groups of people sit around it, gnawing on the roasted flesh. The image is once again timeless, the elements of it simple; man, fire, flesh, food.

One cow doesn't go far between a hundred starving people. Some are still on their feet by the large fire. Now and then a hand will dart out over the flames to snatch a bone hanging loose or a tasty-looking piece of gristle. They are the survivors of the pack, if any will be.

Hector is, of course, among them. He risks the searing heat to pull at a couple of blackened bones. He sees Nuno, the boy he chased away from the Girl earlier in the day. Nuno is sitting by himself, staring vacantly at the fire, licking his fingers.

Hector sits down in the sand beside him. Nuno hardly notices him until Hector offers him one of his bones. Nuno grabs it.

NUNO

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Suck out the marrow... it's the best bit.

Nuno follows Hector's example. Hector allows him to feel the benefit of his gift before he starts to talk.

HECTOR

I'm sorry about today...

NUNO

It doesn't matter...

HECTOR

But it does... it was mean of me... I was upset at something... I wasn't really angry at you...

NUNO

I know.

Nuno is taking it rather well. Hector regains his natural self-confidence.

*
*

HECTOR

You don't think too badly of me?

NUNO

No...

HECTOR

You still like me?

Nuno shyly nods his head.

*

HECTOR

You do?

NUNO

Yes.

Hector is satisfied now.

HECTOR

Well, that makes me feel better... we all have to like each other... and respect each other... that's important too.

They are silent for a moment.

HECTOR

If you don't respect me, just say so...

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED: (2)

114

Nuno looks at him, smiling weakly. Then he turns away in silence. Hector tries another approach to win the Boy over.

HECTOR

I have a boy like you... maybe
you could meet him when we get
home...

*

This doesn't produce much of a response. Hector tries again. He starts to chuckle to himself and nudges Nuno in the ribs.

HECTOR

You can take her back there
tomorrow, eh?

Nuno shakes his head.

NUNO

No... she's sick now...

115 EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

115

Dom Paulo and the Priest and some of the Officers are having a more formal meal at Dom Paulo's table outside his shelter. An argument is in progress between Dom Paulo and GASPARD DIAS, the navigator.

Gasper Dias has drawn a rough map which lies on the table.

DOM PAULO

Can't you be more accurate?

*

Hector comes to the meeting. He sits down on a box near the table and watches and listens, his expression changing with the shifts in mood of the others. This is Hector the social animal, our Hector with his pockets full of stolen nails and his tent full of stashes of food.

*

*

DIAS

How can I be accurate without
instruments? As it is I'm
sighting the sun with two pieces
of wood... Call it five hundred
and be done with it... he said
twenty rivers.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

DOM PAULO

We just want you to be as accurate as we know you can be, Dias. After all, the ship did manage to find that rock with admirable precision.

DIAS

Confound you, Dom Paulo, that's an insult... she hit that rock because she was taking water and unsteerable... She was overloaded before she left India and you know it....

Dias pounds his fist on the table.

DIAS

I've told you... we vote for a leader or you can walk into the jungle on your own... it should have been done days ago...

*

DA CUNHA

Calm down, Dias... you can't stay here forever, living on turtles' eggs...

There are mock groans and laughter at the thought of it. The tension for the moment is broken.

*

DA CUNHA

What about the sick and the injured, Dom Paulo...?

Dom Paulo lets out a heavy sigh.

DOM PAULO

I've discussed it with Father Diogo... I don't see how a hundred of us can carry seventy sick...

FATHER DIOGO

I'm going to search the scriptures tonight. I'm sure that God has an answer to it.

DIAS

An excuse, you mean... we'll be leaving them here to die...

SALGADO

Oh, so you're coming with us now, Dias!

(CONTINUED)

115 CONTINUED: (2)

115

Dias mumbles to himself.

DIAS

After the vote...

FATHER DIOGO

It might be the best we can offer them now... the chance to die a good Christian death here, and set an example to the heathens...

116 EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

116

Hector is making his way in the dark back to his shelter. He passes close to the tent of Francisco and Ursula. Francisco is outside, by the fire. An impulse takes Hector to join him.

HECTOR

I'll be glad when we're on the move... the sound of the sea is driving me mad.

FRANCISCO

Good night, Hector...

Hector lingers.

HECTOR

Where is Ursula? Sleeping?

FRANCISCO

Sick. She hasn't been able to rise since yesterday.

Hector's face expresses his shock. From what he has heard at the meeting this is serious news. He makes a decision. He speaks to Francisco, willing their old friendship back into existence in the urgency of the moment.

HECTOR

Will you share a bottle of wine with me? I've had it since we left the ship... I want to drink it tonight, with you.

This offer has found a chink in Francisco's armor.

FRANCISCO

You have a bottle of wine?

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

HECTOR

Yes.

FRANCISCO

Well, fetch it.

117 EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

117

Hector has returned with his precious bottle. Francisco by some miracle has two fine crystal glasses. As they drink they begin to reveal a hint of their old intimacy.

FRANCISCO

You should hang for this. Some people on the raft might have lived with a glass of this in their stomach...

Francisco sips the wine with the relish of long abstinence.

HECTOR

I know. I feel very guilty. I brought this too...

Hector pulls a cotton bag from under his coat.

HECTOR

Honeyed fruit. The last I have.

Francisco can't believe such food still exists. He smiles in anticipation.

FRANCISCO

You rogue... give it here...

Francisco grabs at the bag and stuffs two or three sweets into his mouth, not so much the gentleman now.

HECTOR

I brought it for Ursula...

Francisco talks through his munching.

FRANCISCO

Much too rich for her... do you want to kill her?

HECTOR

Surely... some fruit couldn't...

(CONTINUED)

117 CONTINUED:

117

FRANCISCO

Don't argue with me, old friend...
you're the guilty one around here,
and don't you forget it.

HECTOR

Why is it always me? Why am I
always guilty, always sorry... am
I so bad?

FRANCISCO

With Ursula you weren't bad, you
were stupid... you did the one thing
you can't do to a strong woman...
you took away her pride... what else
can she do but hate you?

Hector is silent.

FRANCISCO

And then you get on the same ship...
what a fool...

HECTOR

I had to get home... just like you...

FRANCISCO

And when the ship went down... why
did you have to get on the same
raft... it was as if you were trying
to torment her...

HECTOR

But... the other raft was sinking...

FRANCISCO

So?

HECTOR

Francisco... please...

Francisco's face breaks into a smile. They drink the
rest of the bottle in silence, the complexity of their
friendship having gone beyond words.

118 EXT. MASS - DAY

118

On a headland overlooking the bay, Father Diogo's mass is
in progress. Every fit member of the camp is there, and
a good many of the sick have been carried in litters to
take part. The harmonium has been carried up the hill
and is in full voice, some youths dissipating their
precious energy on its bellows. The younger boys have
been organized into a choir.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: 118

The large cross stands behind Father Diogo, held in place by a cairn of piled stones at its base. When we FIND Hector there is something tantalizingly familiar about it all; the cliffs, the ocean, the kneeling Hector, a pile of stones, the offering to a god.

119 EXT. CLEARING - DAY 119

The natives have gathered nearby. They have been moved, perhaps by the music, or perhaps by the simple, universal posture of worship itself. They begin to sing, a low, rhythmic, compelling chant. It mingles with the distant voice of Father Diogo, and then with the chanting voices of all the Europeans, until it seems that the whole world is praying.

120 EXT. CAMP - MORNING 120

Next morning the camp on the beach is being broken up. The place is like a junkyard. The amount of damage that a hundred and fifty people can do to a beach in two days is impressive. Dom Paulo and the officers watch the work. With them are some messengers from the king, and the Slave translator.

One of the messengers is talking. When he finishes, the Slave translates.

SLAVE

Yes... they will look after the sick... but the King would like one thing... the machine that makes music...

DOM PAULO

We need food as well... ten cows... to take with us... then the King can have the music.

121 EXT. CAMP - ANOTHER ANGLE - MORNING 121 *

Hector is sitting beside Nuno on a box, talking earnestly to him. Andre stands beside them.

HECTOR

You must come with us.

NUNO

No.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED:

121

ANDRE

Your mother might not get well...
do you understand that?

NUNO

That's why I have to stay.

HECTOR

And afterwards... what will you
do then?

NUNO

Follow you and the others.

HECTOR

Alone?

Nuno remains silent.

ANDRE

Let him be.

122 EXT. CAMP - DAY

122

Dom Paulo and Father Diogo are standing beside Dom
Paulo's table, all that remains of his headquarters on
the beach.

*
*

FATHER DIOGO

I'll comfort them as best as I
can.

DOM PAULO

You're staying with them?

Father Diogo hastens to correct this misunderstanding.

FATHER DIOGO

No, no, I'll comfort them before
we leave. I think my place is
with you...

Two sailors, like stagehands, enter and remove the table,
leaving Dom Paulo and Father Diogo propless on the beach.

123 EXT. JUNGLE PATH - DAY

123

The trek from the beach to the village has started. A
long line of people, including some local natives, carry
the sick in crudely-made litters. Even this short trip
is hard. Somewhere in the line six sailors manhandle the
harmonium up the jungle path.

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

123

Just behind them Hector is helping Nuno to carry his Mother in a litter. It is like a civilization on the move. In a day or two the wind and the sea will have rubbed out all evidence of their stay, and the bay will welcome its regular tenants, the turtles.

124 EXT. NATIVE VILLAGE - DAY

124

There is a sense of bustle in the native village as the European sick are settled into their huts and the others prepare to depart. Emotional farewells take place in dark corners of the small huts. A group of unmoved sailors are playing cards in the dirt.

*

*

In amongst the bustle Hector is looking for Francisco. He finds him taking some of his possessions into a hut.

*

HECTOR

Francisco... I have to see her before we leave.

*

FRANCISCO

I'll ask her.

Francisco goes into the hut. Hector waits outside, watching the small human dramas all around him. Soon Francisco emerges from the hut.

FRANCISCO

In you go.

Hector goes into the hut, stooping low at the small entrance.

125 INT. HUT - DAY

125

Ursula is lying in a darkened corner. Hector is shaken by the sight of her, ashen and fevered, but tries not to show it. He kneels beside her.

HECTOR

Ursula... it's Hector.

She turns her eyes to him but doesn't speak.

HECTOR

We're leaving soon. I've come to say goodbye...

Her voice is a whisper.

(CONTINUED)

125 CONTINUED:

125

URSULA

Goodbye.

HECTOR

I won't forget you... I won't
forget India... I can't forget
how I hurt you...

She looks at him but doesn't or cannot speak.

HECTOR

We should have talked... I could
have explained... many things...

She manages a whispered word.

URSULA

Lisbon...

HECTOR

Yes... I'll pray for you in
Lisbon... at the Cathedral...

She lies still. Hector lingers for a moment. Then he
speaks again.

HECTOR

I'm sorry I hurt your pride...

Hector has blown it. Ursula pulls herself up on an
elbow, finding wells of energy from sheer indignation.
Hector is astonished, almost jumping out of his skin.

URSULA

What? What did you say? What are
you talking about?

HECTOR

Nothing, nothing...

Ursula speaks one word, and then falls back into a dead
faint.

URSULA

Idiot!

She lies still. Hector leans over her to make sure she
is still breathing. He whispers nervously.

HECTOR

Ursula?

126 EXT. HUT - DAY

126

Outside the hut, Dom Paulo is talking with Francisco.

DOM PAULO

We won't forget you, or what you
are doing for these poor people...

FRANCISCO

I'm not staying here with the
intention of dying, Dom Paulo...
we'll be following you... when we
are fit and well...

DOM PAULO

Yes, of course...

FRANCISCO

... and good luck to you... *

They make what they both know is their final parting. *

DOM PAULO

God protect you... it breaks my
heart to leave you all here, but
I don't know what else I can do. *

They shake hands.

DOM PAULO

We're leaving the cross with
you...

FRANCISCO

Oh, thank you...

DOM PAULO

It's too heavy to carry... and who
knows... it might make some
impression on the heathens.

Hector comes out of the hut, solemn-faced. *

HECTOR

Francisco, I must talk to you
alone...

127 EXT. HUT - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

127

Hector takes Francisco by the arm and leads him behind
the hut.

FRANCISCO

You've made your peace with her?

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Yes. I think so...

*

FRANCISCO

Thank, God... Well, goodbye.

*

HECTOR

Is there anything that I can do for you? A letter... a message?

*

Francisco laughs softly.

FRANCISCO

No... if you were carrying something for me I would have to worry about you... if you go empty-handed I can put you out of my mind!

*

Hector smiles uncertainly, unsure if Francisco is making a joke. Then he becomes more serious.

HECTOR

I want to ask you something. There's no easy way to do it...

*

FRANCISCO

Go on, Hector...

HECTOR

Your boots...

Francisco looks down at his boots.

FRANCISCO

What about them?

HECTOR

Can I have them? You can have mine... they'll be fine for here... but I have to walk six hundred miles...

Hector lifts a foot to show Francisco his boot. Francisco is stunned into silence. But then a smile comes to his face.

*

FRANCISCO

Yes, you're right... I daresay my boots would take you six hundred miles... I look after them...

*

*

Hector becomes almost poetic in his pleading.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

HECTOR
I'll walk all the way home,
Francisco... I'll pray for your
soul in the Cathedral in Lisbon...

FRANCISCO
... In my boots...

HECTOR
Yes.

Francisco starts to laugh out loud.

FRANCISCO
Hector, you have surpassed
yourself... sit down and take my
boots!

Francisco starts to take off his boots. Hector does the
same. He can't believe his luck. At this moment, he
loves Francisco. He makes nonsensical small talk,
hopping around on one foot. *

HECTOR
They were made by Da Fosca,
weren't they?

Francisco is giggling now.

FRANCISCO
The best bootmaker in Goa... pray
for my soul in Lisbon, Hector...
and pray for your own...

Francisco is laughing, but Hector doesn't get the joke. *

128 EXT. FOREST - DAY

128

A different forest. A wilderness of giant pines, ranging
through the mountains for hundred of miles. It is late
in the year. There is one human sound in the cold still-
ness, a voice singing. *

BOBBY, the owner of the voice, has a pack on his back.
He is making his way up a steep slope to an area of flat
ground. He stops singing, looks around, and calls out
in a powerful voice. *

BOBBY
They've gone... long gone!

Bobby looks around the abandoned camp, the dead fires,
cleared areas for tents. *

(CONTINUED)

128 CONTINUED:

128

Up the slope and INTO VIEW comes his companion, leading a laden pack horse. It is Hector.

HECTOR

How long?

BOBBY

They've been gone a week, at least.

HECTOR

Damn them...

BOBBY

We're ten days late...

They look at each other. They are in trouble, and now they know it.

BOBBY

Cheer up. Have a look around. I'll start on a fire...

129 EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

129

Hector has scoured the campsite. He holds up a canteen he has found.

HECTOR

It's Sandy's... whiskey...

BOBBY

Well done, my lad!

Hector walks to the fire, pleased with himself. Bobby unfolds his fist and looks at what he has found, an Indian arrowhead with a few inches of broken shaft. He folds his hand over it again, keeping his secret.

Behind them, nailed to a tree, is a plaque their companions have left. It reads, "Pennsylvania Boundary Expedition 1761, Marker 152." Also on the plaque someone has written, "We left here, 20th October."

130 EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

130

Hector and Bobby sit by the fire with their supper. They are both anxious, but pretend not to be.

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

BOBBY

Even if we lose their track, we'll still hit the river... we can't miss that.

HECTOR

It's too high for Indians?

BOBBY

Much too high. You won't find an Indian up here. We just have to keep our heads... no panic.

HECTOR

If you did find an Indian, what would he be?

BOBBY

You wouldn't... but he might be a Delaware if you did.

HECTOR

We keep working?

BOBBY

Why not. We can log the peaks on the far side, just a couple of sightings a day... keep us busy...

Their forced tone of matter-of-factness only serves to heighten the growing feeling of doom.

HECTOR

You think we'll get out?

BOBBY

If we keep our heads. I wish I had some tobacco.

131 EXT. CAMP - ANOTHER ANGLE - NIGHT

131

Hector is lying awake, watching Bobby's sleeping form on the ground at the other side of the dying fire. Behind Bobby is a wolf, sniffing and edging his way closer to them. Hector isn't anxious. He knows the wolf will soon become aware of them and move off. He is worried about something else. From under the pack that makes his pillow he pulls a piece of broken arrow, a shaft and some feathers, the other end of Bobby's find. He looks at it, then looks back to Bobby and the wolf.

132 EXT. CAMP - MORNING

132

In the morning Hector and Bobby are taking readings from the instruments they have hung on a large tree, maintaining the disciplines of their work. It gives some shape and meaning to their predicament.

BOBBY

Barometer... twenty-eight and
three-eighths... temperature...
low... thirty-four... high...
forty-two and a half... time...

*

Hector writes it in the log book. Bobby goes to the horse and takes a brass chronometer from a box strapped to the saddle. Hector takes out a smaller chronometer from his own pack. They compare readings. There is a difference of some four or five minutes in the time.

*

BOBBY

It's getting worse... you're
nearly five minutes fast now...

HECTOR

I'm not fast... you're slowing
down.

They obviously have this tiff every morning.

HECTOR

What's the point of having two
chronometers when you don't take
the average?

BOBBY

Exactly... you should throw yours
away.

HECTOR

You're unscientific, Bobby... at
heart...

Hector writes in the book. He speaks pointedly.

HECTOR

Seven twenty-five...

Bobby mocks him with a laugh.

*

133 EXT. FOREST - DAY

133

Bobby is leading the horse and Hector walks on ahead. The going is easy through the ferns and grasses. Bobby for a moment forgets his apprehensions and starts to sing loudly.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

BOBBY

I see her in the dewy flowers
I see her sweet and fair...

His voice rings sharply around the forest. Hector far ahead turns around, taken by surprise. Bobby has frightened himself too. He eyes the forest all around as the echo of his voice fades. Chastened, he begins to sing again, quietly this time, under his breath.

BOBBY

There's not a bonny bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean...

134 EXT. CLEARING - DAY

134

Hector and Bobby have stopped at a point of bare rock looking out across the broad valley.

They are building a pile of stones, a cairn. They work quietly, methodically. The only sounds are of their breathing and the CLICK-CLACK of the stones. We feel the echoes of our many previous Hectors and their piles of stones, built for this or that purpose. Our doomed surveyors are acting out the same ritual, this time in the name of science.

They finish the cairn and erect their heavy tripod over it, and dangle a plumb line from the tripod. Bobby scratches the center point on the top stone of the cairn. They are establishing a survey point. They talk as they work.

When they anchor their tripod, the cold hard sound of their CHISELS STRIKING ROCK ECHOES all through the forest. It unnerves them. They stop hammering and listen to the ECHO BOUNCING down the valley.

HECTOR

Sure this is a good idea.

BOBBY

Let's get out of here.

They hastily dismantle the equipment and load up the horse, in an atmosphere of controlled panic.

135 EXT. FOREST - DAY

135

They are travelling together now, on either side of the horse's nose, finding comfort in the closeness of each other. They stop for Bobby to consult his compass.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

He indicates a slight change of direction, and they move off again. Still they don't talk. We can feel their anxiety breeding in the silence. Why don't they talk?

They proceed in this weighty silence, but even the CRIES of the BIRDS now seem to mock them.

The route takes them downhill. The slopes are more dense with undergrowth now and the going isn't so easy. Sometimes they are reduced to an undignified scramble, hanging onto the bulk of the horse between them. They no longer look much like conquerors of the wilderness.

136 EXT. FOREST - DAY

136

They are on the valley floor now. The trees are more openly spaced and the grass is richer. They are moving quickly but they have a hard time keeping the horse on the trot. It hasn't seen grass this good in weeks.

137 EXT. FOREST - DAY

137

They are moving more slowly, the ground is rockier and the trees are thickening. They take the easy way up the hillside, a natural path made by deer or bear.

It is difficult to know who is more shaken by their encounter, the Indian or Hector and Bobby.

The INDIAN is sitting behind a tree as they pass, dozing or deep in reverie. They almost pass without noticing him, but Hector gives a turn of his head and there is the Indian four feet from him. At the same instant the Indian comes to his senses and sits bolt upright. The encounter is high comedy but full of terror for all of them.

The Indian stands up. Hector absurdly greets him.

HECTOR

Hi! Hello!

The Indian backs off from them, holding his hands up and smiling crazily, as if to say, "Don't mind me, boys, I'm just leaving..." Hector and Bobby are equally silly in their response.

HECTOR

Hey, come back... we're just moving through... don't apologize... we all got a fright... goodbye...

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED:

137

The Indian is in full retreat now, waving his hands about apologetically, but making good distance from them. Suddenly, he is gone. It has happened so quickly that Hector and Bobby scarcely believe it has happened. Then they realize that in their fright they have let go of the horse. It has headed back down to the tastier pastures in the valley. They see it disappearing into the trees below them.

BOBBY

That was stupid...

HECTOR

Did you see him?

BOBBY

Sure I saw him.

HECTOR

Was he a Delaware?

BOBBY

How the fuck should I know? He was an Indian... and Indians don't come in ones...

HECTOR

Yeah... I think he was an Indian too... What about the horse?

BOBBY

I'm not going back down there.

HECTOR

Don't panic, Bobby...

BOBBY

Why not?

He runs off into the forest. Then he turns and shouts to Hector.

BOBBY

Come on!

Hector follows him, a mad race through the forest.

138 EXT. FOREST - DAY

138

Hector and Bobby are sitting on a rock, gathering their wits. It is odd how they talk so matter-of-factly.

HECTOR

What did you see?

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

BOBBY

Same as you.

HECTOR

An Indian... with long hair...

BOBBY

That's it... kind of short...

HECTOR

Yeah... he was't tall...

BOBBY

That's the one.

Hector scans the hills above them.

HECTOR

Let's get a bit further up.

They move off. Bobby looks at Hector's backpack.

BOBBY

What've you got in there?

HECTOR

Some food, the logbooks, my letters, a candle...

BOBBY

A gun?

HECTOR

No.

139 EXT. CAMP - DAY

139

They have stopped to make camp. It is late afternoon, the sky just darkening, sharp shadows on the far peaks, a purple glow in the air.

BOBBY

We won't have a fire tonight. We should make a shelter though, in case it snows.

HECTOR

What about bears, without a fire?

Bobby laughs quietly.

BOBBY

Don't even think about bears, Hector.

140 EXT. CAMP - NIGHT

140

They are making a round frame of bent branches and covering it with foliage. Half-hidden in the undergrowth, it is big enough for two men to huddle in. Tonight they feel the most basic of urges, to curl up in a ball and hide.

141 INT. CAMP - NIGHT

141

They are safe and snug in their hideaway. Hector has lit his candle. He is reading his letters, holding them close to his eyes in the dimness. He has the air of someone putting his affairs in order. Bobby is thinking aloud.

BOBBY

Maybe he's lost too... on his own... must be Delaware... they were chased up here years ago... everybody thought they'd cleared off west... the other side of Ohio... they were an angry lot... no wonder... they used to farm on the coast.

He looks up at Hector, and allows himself a small smile.

BOBBY

Go on, read it out...

Hector looks up.

HECTOR

What? No... not tonight...

BOBBY

I've had to listen to it every night since April... why not now?

Hector gives in. He holds a scrap of paper close to the candle and reads.

HECTOR

Dear, Father, I miss you. Three frogs are dead. Everybody misses you. Bring me a bear's head and claws and a gun. School is good. Miss White has married a fireman. Come back soon. Do not worry about the frogs, they did not have names. Nathaniel.

Hector looks up at Bobby.

HECTOR

It's not so funny now as it was.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

BOBBY

It wasn't funny then.

HECTOR

If you knew him... if you could picture him saying it... it would be funnier.

BOBBY

I had a father like you... nine months on a whaler and then three weeks at home telling us all how much he missed us...

HECTOR

I'm going home, for the winter...

Bobby doesn't pursue his argument. He tenses, then sniffs the air vigorously.

BOBBY

Smell it?

HECTOR

No.

BOBBY

Goddam it... smell it?

Hector sniffs some more.

HECTOR

Tobacco?

They whisper.

BOBBY

Where the hell is it coming from?

He puts his head out of the shelter.

BOBBY

I can't tell... a night like this it could carry for miles...

He huddles back inside the shelter.

BOBBY

I wish I had a smoke.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (2)

141

After a tense silence, Hector takes a small package from an inside pocket. He hands it to Bobby.

HECTOR

I was saving it... you have it...

It is a wedge of tobacco. Bobby takes it.

BOBBY

What do you mean, you were saving it? You know the rules... no hoarding, tobacco or food... you've listened to me for a month, day and night... wanting a smoke...

HECTOR

Well have it now... I don't smoke... take it...

BOBBY

You've kept it from me, and you don't even use it...

HECTOR

I was saving it for my birthday... I was going to give it to you then...

BOBBY

I have to wait until your birthday for a smoke? Who are you... the fucking king?

HECTOR

Go on, smoke it... have it now...

BOBBY

I bloody won't... I'm not smoking on your command... I bloody won't.

There is a brooding silence.

BOBBY

God, your poor children... what do they have to do for a piece of candy in your house? It's very hard to like you sometimes... d'you know that?

HECTOR

I know, Bobby... but that's how I feel about you, too... that's why we're friends... we try hard... come on... smoke your pipe...

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (3)

141

Hector is neatly turning the tables on Bobby, who now appears churlish, childish.

BOBBY

No... I'll have it in the morning.

HECTOR

Come on... tell me... who would you rather be sitting here with... have a think...

Bobby does, and then breaks into a smile.

BOBBY

Daniel Boone?

Hector smiles, too.

HECTOR

Yeah. He would be a help... but after Daniel Boone...

BOBBY

I can't think of anyone else... but you're impossible to like sometimes.

Suddenly Bobby grows shy of their growing intimacy.

BOBBY

We should sleep. We've got a lot of running to do in the morning.

But Hector has other plans. He is in control of their friendship now.

HECTOR

No we're not... we're going to talk... all night...

Bobby yields to this with the softest, most vulnerable smile we have yet seen on his face.

HECTOR

So... where do you want to start?

Bobby is silent, but still smiles his acquiescent smile. Hector reads the silence well.

HECTOR

I know where you want to start...

Bobby is still silent.

HECTOR

Alicia...

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED: (4)

141

Bobby's smile breaks into a boyish laugh.

BOBBY
Well... what about Alicia?

HECTOR
I'm sorry...

BOBBY
No... I'm sorry...

HECTOR
What do you mean, you're sorry...
I'm the one that has to apologize...

Bobby is mischievous now.

BOBBY
Oh no you're not...

It will be a worthwhile night for both of them.

142 EXT. FOREST - DAWN

142

It is a glorious dawn. Bobby sits looking out on the valley, smoking his pipe. Behind him Hector is busy writing in his log book.

BOBBY
Isn't it a beautiful day?

Hector finishes his writing, tears out the page from his book. He offers it to Bobby.

HECTOR
I've said who we are and where we're headed. Want to sign it, write anything?

BOBBY
No.

HECTOR
The peak we logged yesterday... I've named it Nathaniel Mountain. After my boy... is that fine with you?

BOBBY
I was going to call it Tobacco Mountain... or Mount Alicia... but Nathaniel's fine...

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

Hector smiles. He puts the paper in a small leather pouch, puts the pouch on the ground near the shelter, and starts to build a small pile of protective stones on top of it.

Bobby stands, and turns to watch him.

BOBBY
Let's get away from here.

HECTOR
North?

BOBBY
Yeah. Keep the sun on our backs.

Bobby walks off with great clouds of tobacco smoke billowing defiantly around him, as if to challenge their night-time tormentor.

Hector takes a last look at their shelter and its little memorial cairn and then runs to catch up with Bobby.

143 EXT. FOREST - DAY

143

Hector and Bobby look vulnerable as they walk through the open forest with their meager packs on their backs.

BOBBY
We can move quicker without the horse... we just have to keep moving... we have to get away from here.

Behind them they don't see the figure moving from the cover of one tree to another, and then another figure following the first. They move like ghosts.

144 EXT. FOREST - DAY

144

Bobby is a few steps ahead of Hector. He dips down over a rise, and instantly returns. He throws himself and Hector to the ground. Hector tries to struggle free.

HECTOR
What's wrong?

BOBBY
Quiet. They're on the other side...

Hector ducks lower, hugging the ground. Bobby is already sliding up the slope to look over the rise. Hector follows him.

(CONTINUED)

On the other side, they see the women and children of a small group of Indians at the edge of a stream. The women are washing clothes, the children are splashing and playing. We are close enough to hear their laughter.

BOBBY

We're right in the middle of them...

HECTOR

Does it have to be bad? They might be friendly...

BOBBY

They were chased here... They should be on the coast growing corn...

Bobby turns to Hector to make his point. That is when he sees the first of the figures, just the ghost of a shadow moving from tree to rock. His eyes flick across the forest behind them. He sees another figure caught in the act of seeking cover, looking absurdly embarrassed for the fleeting moment that we see it. Then Bobby sees another. Are they teasing them? It looks so much like a game children would play.

BOBBY

Oh-oh...

*

HECTOR

What's wrong?

*

BOBBY

They're behind us. They must think we're stalking the women...

Hector looks and sees nothing. Fifty Indians hold their breath. The forest seems empty. But Hector looks at Bobby. He is grey-faced, a man who is looking at death. Hector knows they are doomed.

BOBBY

Do you want to run?

HECTOR

I'll do what you do.

*

They leap to their feet and run. There is only one way to go, over the rise, through the women and children and across the stream. To the watching Indians it looks like a direct attack on their families. From behind trees and rocks they emerge and begin the chase. A tragedy of misunderstanding.

(CONTINUED)

144 CONTINUED: (2)

144

Hector and Bobby scatter the women and children and splash across the stream, burning all their energy in this mad life-or-death race. Although their families are safe, the Indians keep up the chase, the moment of confusion compounded in action. They lope easily after them, waiting for the white men to tire. There are no whoops or shouts. They follow Hector and Bobby into the trees, spreading out on either side, shaping the human net that will soon engulf them.

*

*

It is a menacing spectacle. Death is near. Hector and Bobby stay close together as they run.

BOBBY

When they catch up... fight...
it'll be quicker... fight like
hell...

HECTOR

They're not going to catch us.
We're going home.

Hector stretches out an arm to Bobby.

HECTOR

Hold my hand, Bobby...

They hold hands and run.

145 EXT. BUILDING - DAY

145

A war party of media people surround Hector as he exits a Yellow Cab. He forces his way through the yelling crowd of REPORTERS and camera crews. Hector is trying to make his way into a crumbling apartment building in Queens. Policemen help Hector through the barrage of shouted questions.

*

REPORTER #1

Do you know the lady, Mr. Troup?

REPORTER #2

Think you'll go to jail again?

CAMERAMAN

Look here for a second, will you,
Mr. Troup?

REPORTER #1

Will you talk to us when you come
out?

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED: 145

Hector enters the building. The media mob immediately switch off their energy. They light cigarettes, fiddle with cameras, stare into space, as if someone has shouted "Cut."

*

146 INT. BUILDING - DAY 146

Hector climbs to the fourth floor. A POLICEMAN goes with him.

Two paramedics come up the stairs behind them, carrying a stretcher. The Policeman stops.

POLICEMAN

You guys are downstairs... third floor... thirty-eight...

The paramedics turn around and head back down the stairs. Hector looks at the Policeman curiously.

POLICEMAN

You're forty-eight.

They continue climbing.

147 INT. APARTMENT - DAY 147

Hector and the Policeman squeeze past a cluster of people at the door and enter the apartment.

POLICEMAN

This is Troup!

A DETECTIVE is with another man who looks like a city official.

DETECTIVE

Come here, Troup. I'm Cobb.

Hector joins them.

DETECTIVE

You bring everything?

HECTOR

What?

DETECTIVE

Building warrant, license, fire certificate, sanitation certificate... I want them all... This is Mr. Santiago, from the city... insurance...

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

This isn't really my building...
it's my partner's... I just took
the call and came right over...
I have to leave town in an hour
or so anyway...

*

DETECTIVE

Slow down, Troup... so it's 3:15
on a Friday... you're staying here
'til Mr. Santiago gets the
paperwork... get your partner over
here, with everything... this is
serious...

Hector looks at his watch.

HECTOR

3:35...

MR. SANTIAGO

I might have to close the place
down.

HECTOR

Where is she?

The Detective and Hector walk down the hall. They stop at the door of the bathroom. Hector looks inside. There is a large ragged hole in the floor. At the far side of it the toilet unit dangles at a dangerous angle into the hole, held only by its plumbing. Firemen are working to secure it and what is left of the floor with metal props and hydraulic jacks. Lying on the floor below, surrounded by rubble, and being attended by the paramedics, is an old lady, MRS. PHILIPPOPOLIS. She tries to sit up when she sees Hector peering at her over the rim of the hole. She looks angry.

MR. PHILIPPOPOLIS

I phoned you Monday... I told you
the floor was making noises...

HECTOR

Not me, Mrs. Philippopolis... my
ex-partner... I think you spoke
to him... How are you feeling?

*

Hector says this clearly, for the benefit of the Detective and Mr. Santiago. The Detective is unimpressed.

DETECTIVE

Come back from there, Troup, the
floor's still moving...

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED: (2)

147

HECTOR

I'll make a couple of calls... I'll straighten it out... is she bad? Why don't they move her?

DETECTIVE

They waited for a portable X-Ray machine... they can move her now.

HECTOR

She seems in good spirits...

As if in response, Mrs. Philippopolis shouts up to Hector as she sees him leaving the bathroom above her.

MRS. PHILIPPOPOLIS

Wait 'til my son sees his mother lying here like this... he's gonna sue you... you're a lousy landlord... you should be ashamed... to let old people live like this... I phoned you Monday... I have a witness! I was dancing with a prince on my eighteenth birthday, and now look at me... you have me falling down a toilet!

148 INT. BUILDING - DAY

148

Hector retreats into the hallway. Takes out his mobile phone and dials, while watching the ominous Mr. Santiago making copius notes in his book. Hector gets connected.

HECTOR

Boris... why did you do this to me? Get down here now... they want all kinds of certificates... They won't let me leave the building... I have my kids tonight, I haven't seen them in four years... I did tell you, I've been talking about it all week... how come they phoned me, this isn't my building? What? Don't tell me anymore... I want you here, now... and on your knee... I'll phone the lawyer... but you move. My weekend's ruined before it's started.

Hector quickly dials another number.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Anna... thank God... you have to help me... I'm still in Queens... I've got cops here and everything ... I need your car... I don't have time to pick up the rental now... they won't let me leave the building... you come down here... and put my bag in the car... no... I have to pick the kids up by six, otherwise I fuck up her weekend too... she'll kill me... this is an emergency... what can I say? Please... right... okay...

*
*

*

He finishes the call just as Santiago approaches, waving his notebook now full of incriminating notes.

SANTIAGO

It looks like water rotted the floor... You have any plumbing maintenance records?

HECTOR

At the office... I might have some bills... it's not my building.

*

Santiago is talking almost to himself now, absorbed in the mundane mechanics of Hector's building.

SANTIAGO

It's a weird one... I don't know how water could sit in there for so long without somebody noticing ... you didn't use water-resistant paint on the ceilings did you?

Hector shakes his head wearily.

HECTOR

I don't really know...

SANTIAGO

You're going to have to check out the whole building... you know that, don't you?

*

HECTOR

Can I do it Monday?

SANTIAGO

Good joke... it'll take you a month.

(CONTINUED)

148 CONTINUED: (2)

148

Hector is already dialing another number as Santiago wanders off in search of further fascinating discoveries.

HECTOR

Can I speak with Leonard, please...
Mr. Deutsch? My name is Hector
Troup, Borlonski and Troup, Real
Estate...

There is a moment's pause.

HECTOR

Leonard... it's Hector... Borlonski
and Troup... yes... listen, we've
had a domestic accident at our
Eighth Street building... a floor *
... and an old lady... she did
mention the word sue, but it might
have been hysterics... what I need
to know is what certificates you
have on file for the building... I *
know it's Friday... just do one *
thing... let me know if the
insurance is current... I need to
know that... I'm on my mobile...
anything you have... before five
... thank you...

During the call Hector has walked down the hall and back to the hole in the floor. He sees Mrs. Philippopolis, now strapped in a stretcher, being carried out of the room below. At the sight of him, she tries to sit up, straining on her straps.

MRS. PHILIPPOPOLIS

My son's downstairs... when he
sees me like this he'll kill you...
go on... jump through the hole...
see what it feels like! Break both
legs!

Hector is almost tempted to do what she says.

149 INT. BUILDING - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

149

Hector is following the paramedics as they negotiate Mrs. Philippopolis down the three flights of stairs. He is on the phone again. This time to his former wife.

(CONTINUED)

149 CONTINUED:

149

HECTOR

I'll be on the way in thirty minutes at the outside... I can't say... Queens to New Jersey, on a Friday... what do you think? I'll be there... it's important to me too, I've been trying to put this weekend together for years... I'll be there... I won't take it out on the kids, I can walk away from problems... as soon as I get the car... I'll be there...

All the while Mrs. Philippopolis issues a non-stop torrent of Greek expletives -- calmly and in a considered tone, but obviously obscene. Hector is shocked.

*
*
*

150 EXT. BUILDING - DAY

150

On a street Hector stands with a Policeman watching Mrs. Philippopolis being loaded into the ambulance. Her SON is with her. When she is safely inside he walks towards Hector. Fortunately he is of modest build, and a head shorter than Hector, and he seems to be saving his wrath for the Courthouse.

*

SON

Mr. Troup, I'm George Philippopolis.

They shake hands.

HECTOR

I'm sorry about your mother...

SON

Well... it's happened... you want to travel with us, or do you have a car?

HECTOR

What?

SON

To the hospital...

HECTOR

Well, I wasn't planning to...

SON

You're not making a visit to the hospital?

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

HECTOR

I've talked to your mother, given her my best wishes... she wants her family with her now... Any other Friday but this one.

The Son addresses the Policeman.

SON

He's not coming to the hospital...

The Policeman looks at Hector.

POLICEMAN

That could look bad...

The cop is enjoying his role as straight man to these two. Hector takes out his diary.

HECTOR

Look, George... here's what I can do... I'll visit her on Tuesday, I'll organize some flowers... lots...

*

SON

Screw the flowers... who's gonna check her into the hospital... who's gonna pay? It's your building that fell down...

*

He nods his head to the Policeman.

HECTOR

They won't let me leave here...

The Policeman this time backs him up.

POLICEMAN

That's true.

The Son backs off to the waiting ambulance reluctantly.

SON

Wait 'til they hear this in court ... he wouldn't even make a trip to the hospital... Can't you even give me a credit card number?

*

*

*

*

151 EXT. BUILDING - ANOTHER ANGLE - DAY

151

The ambulance drives off just as BORIS arrives. Hector runs to the car.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED:

151

HECTOR

It's never been this bad, Boris.
Deutsch is checking the
insurance... did you bring the
rest?

BORIS

Yeah... we're covered for most
things... the license is current,
the inspection certificate is
okay...

HECTOR

What's with the we... it's your
problem.

BORIS

How is she?

HECTOR

She's a witch... her bones must be
made of steel... she didn't break
a thing... it might help if you
make a visit to the hospital...
why did you do this to me?

BORIS

I'm sorry, Hector... I just put
your name on the lousy forms... I
didn't plan this... I just
borrowed your name on the titles.

Hector doesn't let up on his anger.

HECTOR

I told you to stop doing that...
why does this keep happening to
me... my name is mine... use your
own name, Boris Borlonski... will
you remember that?
Boris Borlonski!

Boris is conciliatory.

BORIS

Hector... forgive me... I'll take
care of it... don't let it spoil
your weekend... four years, huh?
You make the most of it... and
don't worry, you'll walk away
from this... I'm sorry...

Hector is calm now. We can sense real depth in their
relationship, despite Boris's pranks.

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: (2)

151

HECTOR

Yeah, I'm sorry too... you have to get out of this business... I thought I had...

BORIS

Go on... have a great weekend... I'll talk to you on Monday... we'll straighten everything out...

HECTOR

This is the worst it's been.

BORIS

Everything can be fixed... always.

Then Hector's girl friend ANNA arrives in her car. It is a bright pink station wagon, highly decorated with flower motifs and slogans like "ANNA'S ARRANGEMENTS," and "FRESH OR DRY, WE'LL PLEASE THE EYE." Anna is a florist.

Hector brightens when he sees her. Everything is falling into place. All he has to do now is cross two rivers and Manhattan Island in under an hour, in Anna's pink car. He runs to meet her.

ANNA

Get in... you can drop me at the shop.

Hector gets into the car, smiling broadly.

152 INT. CAR - DAY

152

Anna drives skilfully through the busy Friday streets.

HECTOR

You bring my bag?

ANNA

Yeah. Your camera's in there too. Take some photographs of the kids...

HECTOR

Sure. Thanks.

ANNA

Nervous?

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Not much... just like I'm being
executed...

ANNA

Well you deserve to suffer.

Our Hectors have been hearing this for centuries, but at
least Anna smiles when she says it.

ANNA

Don't worry... this is the
beginning of something... not the
end... you can start being a
father again.

HECTOR

I'm glad you talked me into it.

ANNA

I didn't do much... you were
ready...

HECTOR

You're right... you're absolutely
right... I was ready... I am
ready, for everything... I'm
fixing all that shit with Boris...
I told him... it can't go on...
I want my freedom.

Anna is looking at him amusedly, nodding her head with
every earnest pronouncement that he makes.

HECTOR

... and the kids... that'll work
out... we can have them over
sometimes... Yeah?

ANNA

Sure... that was the plan... when
we have the space...

HECTOR

Right, when we have the space...
when we get the bigger apartment...
together...

ANNA

There you go... you said it...
the bigger apartment together...

Hector is pleased with himself.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

Yeah... I said it, didn't I?

ANNA

You're a man of decision,
Hector...

Hector is high on his optimism now, and cheeky with it.

HECTOR

Yes I am... Together... I said it
... and get out of my car at the
corner here... I don't have the
time to go 'round the block.

Anna pulls into the curb. Hector leans over to embrace
her before she has stopped the car.

HECTOR

Thanks... for the car...
everything...

ANNA

Do the best you can with them,
Hector... and one more thing...
deliver these...

She indicates a massive bouquet of flowers wrapped in
cellophane, taking up the whole of the luggage space in
the car.

HECTOR

What? Anna, I can't...

ANNA

Here's the address... just two
blocks before the bridge... a
five minute detour. It's a
golden wedding... you have to...

She looks him straight in the eye.

ANNA

We have to help each other...

Hector accepts this.

ANNA

Oh, you'll need gas too... Go to
it, Hector...

She kisses him quickly, but lovingly.

(CONTINUED)

152 CONTINUED: (3)

152

ANNA

Phone if there's any disasters...
don't suffer alone...

Hector watches Anna stride, in her business-like way, around the corner OUT OF SIGHT. He is almost home.

153 INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

153

A trip from Queens to New Jersey at five o'clock on a Friday afternoon is going to look like a dream sequence whatever you do with it, and that's fine.

Hector's trip to his children has more meaning for us than a simple journey from A to B. We will be aware of our other Hectors, and the journeys home that they did or didn't manage to make. This car trip will pull the threads together.

And after so many images of the natural world, a world little altered by man, the PANORAMIC SHOTS of New York in all its mad glory will place our Hector in a new dimension. If there is a breathtaking moment in this film, when everything comes together, when all the pieces fit, then it will be somewhere around here that it happens. Six thousand years ago we left Hector on a beach, aching for his family. If the traffic allows, tonight in New Jersey Hector will complete his journey.

We will GO WITH Hector OVER the bridge, ACROSS the avenues of Manhattan and THROUGH the tunnel. His PHONE RINGS ONCE.

HECTOR

Hello... Leonard, hello... yes...
we're insured... thank God... yes
now I know God's a lawyer...
thanks...

On the outskirts of Jersey City he finds the suburban street he is looking for. If the last crosslight holds on green then he might even make it on time.

Hector stops the car outside Janet's house and lets out a sigh of relief.

154 EXT. HOUSE - EVENING

154

Hector's former wife, JANET, and her new husband, DONALD, come out of the house as Hector walks up to the door. Donald is carrying luggage and heads straight for their car in the driveway.

(CONTINUED)

DONALD

Hi, Hector.

He starts loading up the car. Janet talks to Hector.

JANET

You made it. The kids are just coming. They're not over the moon about going to the beach house. I ought to warn you.

HECTOR

Why didn't you say? I could have fixed up something else. I thought it would be a good place to get to know them again...

JANET

Well, I figured you should be allowed to make your own mistakes. It's only for a couple of nights, they can take it... and you'll learn... Check into a hotel if it gets too much... they like hotels.

*

She shouts into the house.

JANET

Come on, you two... your father's ready to go...

She hands Hector a piece of paper.

JANET

This is where we'll be, if anything crops up... thanks for the break...

Hector gets a little scared about what he has taken on.

HECTOR

Maybe this is a bit sudden for them... Maybe I should have come over a couple of nights and got to know them...

Janet doesn't let him off the hook.

JANET

By Monday, you'll know them...

Then the children come out of the house, BETSY, who is about thirteen, and TOM, who is eleven.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED: (2)

154

JANET

Here he is, the invisible dad.

She turns to Hector.

JANET

That's what they call you.

Hector is daunted by how grown up they are, not any more the little kids in the photograph in his wallet.

HECTOR

Hi.

They hardly lift their heads to him.

BETSY

Hi.

TOM

Hi.

Janet takes control of the farewells.

JANET

You three have a good weekend.
If it's too miserable at the
house your father said he'll
take you to a hotel.

Hector nods his head obediently. He always did with Janet. The children let their mother pat them and follow Hector to his car, eyes to the ground.

JANET

Good luck, Hector.

Donald shouts from behind the wheel of his car, where he has been hiding.

DONALD

See you Monday, Hector.

The kids load themselves into the back of Hector's car.

Betsy notices the huge arrangement of flowers, wrapped in cellophane and red ribbon. It seems to have grown even larger than before.

BETSY

Are those for mom?

Hector looks at the flowers. His face contorts in guilt and anxiety.

(CONTINUED)

154 CONTINUED: (3)

154

HECTOR

Oh no... Jesus save me... what
have I done...

BETSY

What's wrong?

He picks up his mobile phone and is about to dial Anna's
number, then he stops.

HECTOR

No... I can't face it, not just
now...

He looks at the kids.

HECTOR

Let's go.

155 INT./EXT. CAR - DUSK

155

They are driving on the freeway. It is dusk. Hector is
on the telephone again. He can't let go of business.

HECTOR

Excuse me, kids... I have to
consult the oracle...

He gets connected.

HECTOR

Hello... God? No, Leonard, it's
Hector... just a joke... sorry to
phone you at home, did Boris call
you? The insurance is fine? Good
... but she could claim negligence
... oh, she's got a lawyer
already? That's a bad omen...

Betsy and Tom are listening in the back seat, eager for
clues about this virtual stranger in front of them.

HECTOR

Is there anything we can do right
now... make her an offer... Sure,
with the insurance company... sure...
you're right... me, too... I have
the kids in the car with me right
now... sorry to bother you...
'bye...

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

Hector throws the phone onto the passenger seat, lets out a sigh, and catches sight of the kids in the mirror. Their perplexed expressions make them look younger than they are, and vulnerable. Hector's heart aches for them. He smiles and puts on an act of brightness.

HECTOR

That's it! The last call... the weekend starts right now... we have things to do... look out for a Safeway... we need some supplies... and gas... oh my God, gas... soon...

They return his look with blank expressions. He picks up the phone and offers it to them.

HECTOR

Want to make any calls? Betsy?

She shakes her head.

HECTOR

Tom?

TOM

No... and it's Thomas...

HECTOR

But we called you Tom... that's what it says on your birth certificate...

THOMAS (TOM)

I changed it.

Hector wisely lets it go.

HECTOR

Right... it's your name... you can do that... Safeway... keep your eyes skinned... and I could murder a Chicken McNugget.

*
*
*
*

156 INT. SAFEWAY - NIGHT

156

Hector is pushing a cart around a large Safeway. The place is almost deserted. Betsy and Thomas are tagging along.

(CONTINUED)

For every four items Hector puts in his cart Betsy removes three and returns them to the shelf. Hector notices and puts up with it for a while. But when Betsy returns the rolls of kitchen towel he has selected he makes a stand. He turns to face her.

HECTOR

What's wrong with that? It's a kitchen roll... why can't I pick a kitchen roll?

Betsy is defiant.

BETSY

It's bleached... and it isn't recycled... you don't care... you just buy junk...

She picks up a more friendly brand of kitchen towel from the shelf and throws it into the cart. Hector has the sense to back down.

HECTOR

Good point, Betsy...

Betsy keeps on the attack.

BETSY

Everything you buy is junk... I don't eat steak... and what's this...

She prods a packet of frozen hamburgers.

BETSY

Ugh! Why don't you ask us what we like... it'll save you money... you buy junk, we won't eat it...

A trace of girlish common sense has crept into her voice. Hector warms to her.

HECTOR

You're right.

Hector pushes the cart to her.

HECTOR

Well, get to it... I'll just tag along...

Betsy moves off with the cart.

BETSY

I do it every week anyway.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: (2)

156

Thomas backs her up.

THOMAS

She does. She tells us what to eat. We let her.

Hector follows them up the aisle.

HECTOR

Can I just keep a couple of those steaks? We can't live on chicken.

*

157 EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

157

Hector is filling up the car in a gas station close to the Safeway. An attractive woman is filling her car in the next line. Her eyes and Hector's meet. For some reason they exchange the smallest smile. For a few brief moments they are talking without words as their tanks fill. The ten billionth romance in the history of the planet sparks into life and fizzles out again in the twinkling of an eye. By the time their credit cards are back in their pockets their love is a memory. From the back of the car the kids have watched it all.

Betsy gives Hector a withering look of disapproval as he climbs back into the car.

158 INT./EXT. CAR - NIGHT

158

Back on the road, it is later. The kids have fallen asleep. Hector relaxes. He watches them in their sleep, searching for some traces of the little children that have haunted his thoughts for so many years, the tots he abandoned.

159 EXT. HOLIDAY HOUSE - NIGHT

159

The car pulls up at the holiday house. Hector gets out. It is dark, but we can hear the sound of the SEA and there is sand underfoot. Hector walks to the house and unlocks the door. He puts on a couple of exterior lights. He carries Thomas, still sleeping, from the car and into the house. Betsy follows him, still half-asleep, groaning fussily. She talks through her yawns.

BETSY

Are you going to bring the flowers in?

HECTOR

Don't mention the flowers.

160 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

160

Later, Hector can't sleep. It has been too eventful a day. He sits bleary-eyed watching a late-night TV SHOW. A man sits cross-legged on a studio floor and is talking to a phone-in viewer. The TV man has five small stones which he regularly scatters on the floor.

TV MAN (V.O.)

This is good, Tony, the stones are talking to me already... now here's something... travel... movement... Tony, are you planning a move... travel... anything?

TONY (V.O.)

Yes I am... I've been thinking about a move to California...

TV MAN (V.O.)

The big one, eh, Tony? These stones are really talking here... what are you planning for yourself in California?

TONY (V.O.)

I'm hoping for an acting career, Mel...

TV MAN (V.O.)

Tony, these stones really like what you're planning... there is no doubt in my mind about that... now listen... you have to be specific... these stones really want to tell you something, be it love, money or the purpose of your life... but I want a specific question from you... think about it... what do you want to know... love... or your income level next year? Be as specific as you can, Tony...

Perhaps this might have enthralled one of our earlier Hectors, but our modern one is simply restless. He stands up and leaves the room.

161 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

161

Next door, he watches the kids sleeping in their little holiday beds. Hector watches them. We've seen our Hectors do this before, and we feel the echo. But as he turns to leave the room Hector gets a fright.

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

161

Betsy starts talking loudly. At first Hector thinks she is awake, giving him into trouble, but she is fast asleep.

BETSY

Get me the books... all the books...
all of the books... no, no, no...
not the pancakes... not the
pancakes... no...

She changes in an instant from a bossy adolescent to a tearful, crumpled little girl. She sobs pitifully.

BETSY

... not the pancakes...

Hector is a confusion of feelings: frightened, fascinated, impotent. How can he help her? How could he possibly unravel the secret of the pancakes, what comfort could he offer his stranger daughter if he did? It is a spooky, mystical moment for Hector, more mystical than the mumbo-jumbo still issuing from the TV next door.

TV WOMAN (V.O.)

... find your true cosmic partner
first time around... every weekday
morning at three here on the Psychic
Network... Lucinda's Horoscope Dating
Show... remember there is an answer,
and there is a special partner out
there for you...

Hector moves quietly out of the room, Betsy's sobs having subsided. Just as he is closing the door he gets another surprise, this time from the sleeping Thomas.

THOMAS

... don't let the oil run out...
yes you did... watch the oil...
why... why?

Hector closes the bedroom door. He is one spooked, moved human being.

162 INT. HOUSE - MORNING

162

In the morning, they are making breakfast in the kitchen. The kids are having juice and cereal. Hector is scrambling some eggs.

HECTOR

How about some eggs?

They shake their heads.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

HECTOR
You don't eat eggs?

BETSY
How many have you got in there?

HECTOR
Three. Is that all right?

BETSY
For a week, maybe.

Hector does a little probing.

HECTOR
How about pancakes, Betsy... d'you like pancakes?

BETSY
Not much... why?

HECTOR
I just wondered. Pancakes don't mean much to you?

BETSY
They don't mean a thing. Why?

HECTOR
Nothing.

The mystery of Betsy's pancake dream is evidently lost in infinity. Hector changes the subject.

HECTOR
I thought we could walk into town this morning. I saw the Funfair when we came through last night.

THOMAS
We don't go to Funfairs.

HECTOR
Let's take the walk anyway.

THOMAS
I brought some books. I want to stay home and read.

Hector is determined to make it work.

HECTOR
No. We're taking a walk.

163 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

163

They are preparing to leave the house. Thomas is still reluctant to go.

THOMAS

It's going to rain... we should stay.

HECTOR

Here's an umbrella... and there must be some old coats in here... and shoes... I only have these I'm wearing...

THOMAS

Donald has some shoes...

Thomas is already in the cupboard under the stairs. He emerges with a pair of sturdy walking shoes.

HECTOR

I don't know if I want to wear Donald's shoes.

THOMAS

Why not?

Hector declines to explain the complex reasons that he might have for not wanting to wear the shoes of his children's replacement father. He sits down on the stairs to put them on. Then something on the wall catches his eye. *

HECTOR

Wow. Look at this.

The kids' heights have been marked on the wall on some long-ago holiday. The dates are beside them.

HECTOR

Six years ago. Look at that... What's this?

He points to a mark and a date lower down on the wall.

THOMAS

That was the flood. The sea came right up. Donald says it's the icecap melting. It's going to get worse. That's why Mom's selling the place.

(CONTINUED)

163 CONTINUED:

163

HECTOR

It comes up every year?

BETSY

The last two.

164 EXT. BEACH - DAY

164

They are on the beach, walking in the direction of town. Hector strides ahead in a show of enthusiasm, although awkward in Donald's big shoes. The kids trail behind. He calls back to them.

HECTOR

Where are the birds? Is it the wrong time of year?

BETSY

They don't come over so much. The shellfish have gone... that's what...

HECTOR

That's what Donald says?

BETSY

Yes... and it happens to be true.

Hector looks at the sky. He speaks quietly to himself.

HECTOR

Please don't rain... please...

165 EXT. FUNFAIR - DAY

165

The light DRIZZLE now falling is keeping away what few fun-seekers there are left in town. The Funfair is not much fun. It is the end of the season. Hector and the kids are a sorry sight parading the empty alleys. The kids seem to glory in the misery of it all, getting back at Hector for four years of neglect. Heavy-hearted, Hector still tries to make a go of it.

*

*

HECTOR

Let's have a ride...

He has stopped at some dated space rockets.

BETSY

The seats are wet.

Hector triumphs. He pulls a wad of kitchen roll from his pocket and starts to wipe the seats.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR
 Kitchen roll, unbleached,
 re-cycled, biodegradable... dry
 seats...

Betsy has the grace to smile as the three of them climb aboard the rockets.

As the attendant releases the brakes and cranks them up into the drizzle, 'round and 'round, Hector knows that he has to do something to break the awful distance between him and his kids. He looks at them. They sit grimly in their rockets, one in front of him and one behind. Their faces are set in expressions of what? Boredom? Resignation? Patience? Expectancy? Then he realizes what is going on. They are waiting for him to open up to them, talk to them seriously, explain himself. He looks at Betsy's face and sees in it the years of his absence, her stoicism, her patience, her courage. It moves him. He leans over to her.

HECTOR
 This is ridiculous. Let's go
 somewhere and talk.

Betsy smiles her small patient smile.

BETSY
 All right, if you want to...

Hector looks to Thomas. Thomas vigorously nods his agreement. Hector is happier. He looks down on the decrepit fairground.

HECTOR
 How do we land these things?

The only place the small town has to offer is a deserted coffee shop on the shorefront. Hector, Betsy and Thomas sit at a corner table, beyond them through the window is the beach and the ocean.

HECTOR
 Sure you won't have a pancake,
 Betsy?

Betsy gets impatient.

BETSY
 No!

*
 *
 *
 *

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR
Okay, first question?

*

The kids are ready for this. There is no coyness now.

THOMAS
Where have you been?

BETSY
What he means is why did you stay
away?

Hector begins like a story-teller embarking on a long
saga.

HECTOR
Well, that's a fair question...
your mother and I got divorced...
you're big enough to remember...
she must have told you all that?

BETSY
Sure she has... but lots of people
get divorced... that doesn't mean
they disappear...

HECTOR
You're right... what can I tell
you... I went kind of crazy after
that, for a good while... I came
around a few times... remember?

THOMAS
Not really.

HECTOR
Well, it wasn't easy... everything
with her and Donald happened
pretty quickly. I missed you both
really badly... but for a while I
thought I should stay away, until
your mother got settled... no,
that's not really true... I missed
you... but I was kind of crazy at
the same time... your mother and I
married young... I wasn't used to
the freedom... it went to my head
... then you moved to New Jersey.

(CONTINUED)

BETSY

It's forty minutes away on a slow bus...

HECTOR

You're right, you're right. I don't have too many excuses for the first year... the second year is easier... I was in jail.

Hector is pleased with this. A solid excuse.

THOMAS

What for?

HECTOR

We were doing government work, big contracts... there were some temptations... my boss asked me to shuffle a few papers... there was a lot of money in it... I had to testify against him... it was like killing somebody.

Hector thinks about this, remembering the pain. For us there is the echo of the real killing that was done long ago.

BETSY

Thomas wanted to visit you in jail, but Mom wouldn't let him.

*

Hector looks at Thomas.

HECTOR

You did?

Thomas nods proudly.

HECTOR

Well I appreciate that... but I'm glad your mother didn't let you. I'll tell you all about it some day. It was no fun. One year and eight months.

THOMAS

We didn't even know when you got out.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

I wasn't in great shape... I sure didn't want you to see me then... so I got back to work... in real estate... found a partner, we met in jail...

*
*

The kids look shocked at this.

*

HECTOR

No. He's a good man, a good man. I like him. I mean it. He's my friend.

*
*
*
*

BETSY

That's what you do now?

HECTOR

Yes. We rent apartments... but we want to get into commercial property... people are a nuisance... does that sound bad?

Betsy shrugs her shoulders.

BETSY

How should I know?

Hector carries on with his story.

HECTOR

Just recently I've been feeling good, things have been going well... and I missed you two... so here we are...

BETSY

What about your girl friend?

HECTOR

Who told you about her?

BETSY

Nobody.

HECTOR

Anna... she's nice... she wants to meet you, real soon... she sells flowers... well, you know that... and on Monday she's probably going to kill me...

The kids smile.

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED: (4)

166

THOMAS

Betsy thinks that was her at the gas station...

BETSY

Shut up, Tom...

Hector has to think to remember.

HECTOR

No... heck... no... did you think she was following us?

THOMAS

She's always thinking up stories like that... she never stops...

BETSY

Well, if people don't tell you things...

HECTOR

She's right, Thomas... people should talk more.

THOMAS

So you haven't been staying away because of us?

HECTOR

What do you mean? Is that what you thought? I was avoiding you two? No... you mustn't think that... that's terrible...

They have almost exhausted themselves in this first bout of talking. Hector looks out at the sea.

HECTOR

The rain's off. Let's go.

167 EXT. BEACH - DAY

167

Betsy and Hector are sitting on the sea wall, watching Thomas play on the beach. The sun is emerging.

BETSY

I have to ask you something else.

HECTOR

Go on.

(CONTINUED)

BETSY

Why did you leave just two days
before my swimming test?

Hector is moved by the depth of her memory, her pain.

HECTOR

I didn't leave because it was two
days before your test... it was
just what your mother and I
decided... I taught you how to
swim... we went to the pool twice
a week... why would I leave?

BETSY

I know... that's what I mean...
why did you leave just then?

Hector looks at Betsy. She is beginning to cry silently.
He puts a tentative arm around her shoulder.

HECTOR

Oh, God, Betsy. I'm sorry.

Betsy is still crying.

BETSY

It doesn't matter.

HECTOR

How did you do, in the test?

BETSY

I passed.

Hector leaves his limp arm on her shoulder. It is too
soon for gestures of emotion. After a long moment she
speaks. *

BETSY

I'm a life-saver now.

Hector doesn't make the obvious comment. His emotions
are full. He hides his feelings in a gruff call to
Thomas.

HECTOR

Hey, Thomas! We're going home...
we're having a barbecue... Betsy
said she'll even let me eat a
steak!

BETSY

Hurry up, Tom!

*
*

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED: (2)

167

Thomas breaks off from his play and runs towards them.

HECTOR

Don't call him Tom, he doesn't like it.

BETSY

I'm allowed.

Somehow Hector is touched by this.

HECTOR

Your mother said it, when we split up... don't lose the children... didn't mean much at the time. But she was right.

BETSY

Who said I'd let you eat a steak?

There is a silence. Then Hector speaks.

HECTOR

Betsy. On Monday will you come with me when I take the flowers back to Anna? I can't face her alone. She wants to meet you anyway.

BETSY

Sure.

HECTOR

You'll be there, right beside me?

BETSY

I'd have to take the morning off school.

HECTOR

Is that bad?

BETSY

No, that could be good...

Betsy and Hector are quite close now.

HECTOR

Just tell them you were with your invisible dad.

168 EXT. BEACH - DAY

168

Hector and Betsy are walking on the shore. Thomas tags along behind them.

BETSY

What's she like? How did you meet her?

HECTOR

The funny thing is I fell in love with her before I ever saw her... I smelled her... It was the day I got out of jail... I was on the train and she was sitting behind me... it was just this incredible perfume... remember I'd been inside for nearly two years with four hundred sweating males... She got off the train and I followed her... I couldn't help it... that's how good she is... she listened to a bum who followed her off a train...

Betsy looks at him kindly.

HECTOR

... but she's still going to kill me on Monday...

They share a laugh. Betsy looks out to the ocean.

BETSY

I think I'll paint the sunset tonight.

HECTOR

It's just like a big pancake up there, isn't it?

Betsy doesn't take the bait. There is a silence.

HECTOR

I remember when you two were tiny.. I used to watch you sleeping... it was like now... I felt close to you, could touch you... but you weren't there... you were gone... dreamland ... just when I was closest to you, you weren't there... I felt it last night, too.

BETSY

That's what it's like... you should know that.

(CONTINUED)

168 CONTINUED:

168

HECTOR

I'm not smart about things like that, usually.

BETSY

Don't be so tough on yourself. You seem to want to be... you don't have to...

HECTOR

No?

BETSY

No... we can do that...

She smiles. Hector is out of his depth with this daughter of his.

HECTOR

Is that a joke?

BETSY

No, I mean it... look out for yourself...

Hector looks at her in wonderment. One of those moments when another human being stands before you and is an utter mystery.

HECTOR

Who are you? Who's inside there?

BETSY

You'll never know.

Future generations of women are going to be just as unknowable to our Hectors as past ones were. Betsy moves off briskly along the beach. Hector trails after her, hooked.

169 EXT. BOAT - DAY

169

Betsy and Thomas are in a small fragile rowboat, some distance from the shore. They are watching Hector who is collecting a pile of large stones on the beach. Another Hector and another pile of stones. This one is making a fire for the barbecue. These human rituals never stop.

BETSY

I thought he was taller.

(CONTINUED)

169 CONTINUED:

169

THOMAS

Well, it's been a while... you're bigger.

BETSY

I suppose so. He's getting fat, too. I bet I could beat him at the breast-stroke now.

170 EXT. BEACH - DAY

170

Hector turns from his work. Out at sea the kids look small and vulnerable. Hector is more anxious than he should be, out of practice at fatherhood. He calls to them.

HECTOR

Come on in, kids... that boat doesn't look too safe...

They call back to him.

BETSY

We're fine!

Hector tries to relax, but he doesn't have the confidence yet, or something. He is edgy.

HECTOR

I've just found you... I don't want to lose you. What would I tell your mother... come on in...

He walks down to the water. The kids reluctantly pull on the oars and bring the little boat in. A few feet from the beach they hit some sand. The boat sticks. Hector wades out in his shoes so far. Then he calls to Thomas.

HECTOR

Throw me the rope, Thomas, I'll pull you in.

Thomas throws the mooring rope to Hector. It isn't attached to the boat. Hector ends up with all of the rope in his hands. He stands there, and they all laugh.

HECTOR

This is one useless piece of rope, Thomas...

Just for a moment we have the image of our Hector standing on the shoreline with a length of rope. An image with an echo from six thousand years ago. But this time Hector is laughing, and his kids are safe.

171 EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

171

At the very moment of sunset Betsy is trying to capture it in a watercolor sketch. She has set up an easel on the beach. It's like action painting. She works frantically on the picture, racing the sun as it dips into the ocean. Tough little Betsy can even lose patience with the sun.

BETSY

Why does it always go so fast...?

Thomas is laughing at her. He has seen her attempt this before. Hector has other concerns. He is trying to light his barbecue. Match after match disappears into his elaborate stone structure, only to fizzle out.

The sun finally vanishes, and Betsy goes limp at her easel. The sun has won the race again. She and Thomas watch Hector trying to light the fire. After a while he is conscious of their amused attention on him, then he becomes a little self-conscious.

HECTOR

I used to know how to do this...

They laugh a little.

HECTOR

I did... I used to be really good at this...

He wafts and blows ineffectually at a flicker of flame. There's not much of the caveman about him now.

172 EXT. BEACH - DUSK

172

It is a calm dusk. Hector is turning the meat on the barbecue. He is in a splendid frame of mind.

HECTOR

Ah... smell it... the smell of civilization... scorched meat...

Hector serves the chicken onto their plates. He sits down beside them with his steak, and a glass of wine. He watches Thomas attack his chicken, and smiles.

HECTOR

I'd forgotten that... how you eat... dedicated... like it's your religion!

THOMAS

Things I like.

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

You used to hum to yourself too,
when you ate... like everything
was fine with the world.

Thomas tries it out, eating and humming. It feels good
to him. His head nods with the chewing and the tune.

THOMAS

Hey, so I did... I'd forgotten
about that...

The early stars are appearing in the sky. Hector lifts
his eyes to a bright point low on the horizon.

HECTOR

There she is... old Mercury...

THOMAS

No... Mercury doesn't rise 'til
after midnight... that's Jupiter...

Hector is impressed by his son.

HECTOR

I'd forgotten... we used to watch
the stars... you could tell me the
names of all the planets... you
could recite them like a poem...
remember... at the tiny window
upstairs in the old house?

*
*
*

THOMAS

No.

HECTOR

Oh well, not to worry. I'm glad
you still like astronomy though.

THOMAS

I'm not into star-gazing so much
... we're working on computer
modelling... we're trying to make
a biosphere...

HECTOR

Uh-huh?

THOMAS

A self-sustaining life system...
for inter-stellar travel. But we
always get a methane build up, it
doesn't matter what we do...

(CONTINUED)

HECTOR

This is at school?

THOMAS

Yeah. We're making such a mess of the world, one day we're going to have to take off for somewhere else...

HECTOR

Sounds like Donald said that...

Hector realizes how far his kids have travelled from him. He looks at them.

HECTOR

Well, I'm glad you two are thinking about the old planet. I'm proud of you. Look how beautiful everything is. Sometimes I think it's people that make it all wrong... we walk around with all our problems...

Betsy chimes in.

BETSY

I don't know. If it wasn't for us there'd be nobody around to see it all.

Hector stands to fetch another baked potato from the fire. We see the three of them in a WIDE SHOT, the evening sky now pulsing with more and more points of light. Hector's voice and laughter carry to us.

HECTOR

Don't worry, you two... I'll tell you... it's just a big, black sheet up there with holes in it so the light comes through... that's the truth... the very latest...

Hector has come to rest, and found peace at last, however temporary, here on the beach, beneath the same stars that our first Hector wailed at six thousand years ago.

On Monday he will face the music. The kids will go back home, Mrs. Philippopolis will have to be dealt with, and the wilting three hundred dollar bouquet of flowers. In general, life will take over, on Monday. But at this moment of calm on the beach, let's leave him while he's ahead.

(CONTINUED)

Their voices ring out playfully across the expanse of darkening beach and light-laden sky.

BETSY

Wait a minute... I know... the whole universe is inside a speck of dust that's lying in a ball of fluff in the cuff of a pair of pants hanging over the back of a chair...

HECTOR

No... I'll tell you... the whole thing... stars and everything... is sitting on the skin of a bubble of milk in a bowl of cornflakes... and somebody's just about to eat it...

The three of them are laughing now.

BETSY

Skimmed milk...

THOMAS

You don't get bubbles in skimmed milk...

HECTOR

Okay... it's half-and-half...

Perhaps that's just about as close as Hector and his tribe of humans will ever come to working it all out. But they try.

*

*

BETSY

I've got a better one... we're all inside a speck of pollen that's stuck to the wing of a bee while it sits on a flower...

HECTOR

Don't mention flowers, Betsy... please, not tonight.

And then, after a long, long pause.

*

HECTOR

I have an idea, Betsy... we're inside a pancake... what d'you think?

*

*

*

*

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED: (4)

172

BETSY

Why are you always talking about
pancakes... what's wrong with you?

*
*
*

THOMAS

You've got pancakes on the brain.

*
*

FADE OUT.

THE END