

Human Nature

by

Charlie Kaufman

May 20, 1995

first draft

BLACKNESS.

There is a gunshot. A crow screams. A fluttering of wings.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Bird's-eye view. We circle lazily above the forest. Through a break in the trees, we catch an occasional glimpse of a prostrate form on the ground. As the circling camera gets closer we see that the form is a human body.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF LILA TALKING TO THE CAMERA

LILA

I'm not sorry.

A bead of sweat trickles down her cheek. Then: a blinding flash of light obliterates her face.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF PUFF TALKING TO THE CAMERA

PUFF

I am sorry.

A tear wells in Puff's eye and runs down his face. Another blinding flash of light.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE-UP OF NATHAN TALKING TO THE CAMERA

NATHAN

I don't even know what sorry means anymore.

As Nathan speaks, a trickle of blood drips down his face from his out-of-frame forehead. Another blinding flash of light.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

It's a frenetic hand-held shot as Lila is pulled from a police car and dragged into the precinct house. Cameras

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

flash. Reporters shout questions. Lila attempts to shield her face from view, but she is handcuffed and can only manage to hunch her shoulders.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A ratty interrogation room. Institutional green walls. Beat-up file cabinets. Dark. A bit of fluorescent light spills in through the frosted glass door. Lila, thirties, sits at the end of a long table. A reel-to-reel tape recorder whirs in front of her. She is smoking. Three fat, mean-looking cops sit in shadows at the other end of the table. One of the cops eyes her lasciviously. Lila's hand shakes as she brings the cigarette to her mouth.

LILA

I'm not sorry. So I spend the rest of my life in jail. So what? I've been in jail my whole life anyway. A jail of blood and tissue and coursing hormones ...

One of the cops sighs and massages the bridge of his nose. It's going to be a long night.

LILA (CONT'D)

... a jail called the human body.

The lascivious cop smiles lasciviously at Lila's reference to "human body."

LILA (CONT'D)

My soul held prisoner in this reeking, stench-ridden bag of bones and entrails. A bag of feces and piss and fibroid cysts in my tits and pre-cancerous moles on my sun-damaged back...

The lascivious cop gags, then vomits on the floor. Lila drags on her cigarette, calmer now.

LILA (CONT'D)

At least now I'll be able to blame the state, not God, for my incarceration.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff, thirties, dirty, scraggly hair and beard but in a crisp business suit, testifies before a congressional committee. The auditorium is filled with reporters and spectators. Puff sits in front of a microphone, counsel at his side. He pours himself a glass of water, drinks, clears his throat, then speaks: stentorian, confident.

PUFF

I am sorry, gentlemen, sorry for all of us. Your's is a complicated, sad world.

This is a revelation to the assembled crowd. People whisper to each other.

PUFF (CONT'D)

And I never knew that. I was living a life of simplicity, of purity, when I was ripped out of my Eden and immersed in this harshness. Some would argue that the life I was living was not a human life at all. And, gentlemen, I don't have any clever retort. I am not a philosopher. The only thing I know is that I am sorry, sorry for my expulsion from Eden, sorry for my Lila rotting in her jail cell, and sorry for Nathan ... rotting in his grave.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan, thirties, in a white robe, sits alone at a white table. Everything is white except for an oozing bullet wound in Nathan's temple.

NATHAN

I don't even know what sorry means anymore. It's odd. When I was alive I knew -- maybe it was all I knew -- but here *sorry* is meaningless. Love is meaningless. Jealousy is meaningless. Ambition is meaningless. Everything that motivated my every breath while I was alive is meaningless now.

(beat)

I guess that's how I can be sure I'm really dead.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila watches the slowly churning tape recorder reels, fixated. The cop who vomited is mopping it up. The other two are sipping coffee. Lila talks.

LILA

My story begins when I was twelve.

COP

(checks watch)

Jesus.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

It's got that faded, "memory" look. Twelve year old Lila hurries home from school, books clutched to her chest. Other kids walk along the street in pairs or groups, laughing and chatting. Lila walks alone, a worried scowl on her face.

LILA (V.O.)

Something terrible happened when I was twelve.

CUT TO:

INT. LITTLE GIRL'S ROOM - DAY

Colors are still muted. It looks to be somewhere in the early 70's based on the preponderance of Bay City Rollers posters on the wall. Twelve year old Lila enters the room, closes the door, locks it, rattles the doorknob to make sure that the door is really locked. She draws the shades. She pulls some t-shirts from her dresser drawer and stuffs them into the space between the bottom of the door and the floor.

KID BROTHER (O.S.)

(muffled)

Hey, no fair!

TWELVE YEAR OLD LILA

Drop dead, Eric.

Lila stands nervously in front of the full-length mirror on her closet door. She takes a deep breath and begins to unbutton her shirt, watching herself carefully in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADULT LILA (V.O.)

Something terrible started to happen to my body when I was twelve. My mother said because of it I would never be able to get a man, so I should get used to the idea of dedicating my life to the pursuit of knowledge, or religion ... or whatever.

Lila's shirt is now unbuttoned. She pulls it open. She is wearing a training bra over the very beginning of breast buds. On the chest above the bra, and on her stomach below it, is hair. Dark curly hair. She stares at it, touches it cautiously. Then she starts to cry. She crouches into a ball and weeps.

ADULT LILA (V.O.)

The doctor said ...

CUT TO:

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Old fashioned office. Twelve year old Lila sits on the examination table, her shirt off. An elderly male doctor touches the hair, fingers it. Her mother looks on.

DOCTOR

(to the mother)

It's hormonal. Nature is a funny and complex thing. It could get worse with time.

Young Lila turns to the camera.

TWELVE YEAR OLD LILA

By the time I was twenty I looked like an ape.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The cop who vomited, gags again. Lila stares at him. Her face is hard, blank. She stubs out her cigarette.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies before the committee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF

I don't think there's anyone in the world who doesn't know by now that I was raised in the wilderness by an ape. Well, to be fair, by a man who thought himself an ape, but it amounts to the same thing gentlemen, does it not?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY.

This has a faded, "memory" look also. A naked, bearded, dirty middle-aged man and a naked, dirty ten year old Puff walk along like apes, crouched over and dragging their knuckles.

PUFF (V.O.)

My father escaped from a New Jersey mental institution in 1963.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

It's raining and deserted. Puff's father, in pajamas, comes tearing around the corner. He runs crazily towards the camera, waving his arms, puffing out his cheeks.

PUFF (V.O.)

He had been committed the previous year after applying one too many times at our local zoo for the job of "apprentice ape."

Puff's father passes a newspaper vending machine, stops, goes back and examines the headline. It reads: *President Kennedy Assassinated*. Puff's father looks heavenward and clutches at his temples in despair.

PUFF (V.O.)

My father saw what the human race had come to while he was ... in captivity. He felt something had to be done to create a better world.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Puff's father climbs out a second story window with a small bundle in his arms. He runs off into the night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF (V.O.)

He stole little me from my mother, his ex-wife, and raised me, with love and tenderness and respect, as an ape like himself.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff looks pointedly at the congressman.

PUFF

Apes don't assassinate their presidents, gentlemen.

The congressmen are shamed: they look down, they take notes, they mumble instructions to the assistants seated behind them.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

An adult Puff and his now older father sit on the forest floor and pick bugs off each other and eat them.

PUFF (V.O.)

Until quite recently I believed myself to be an ape, although I didn't know specifically what type. Apes don't think in terms of type.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies.

PUFF

It might be argued, gentlemen, that apes don't even know that they are apes. In retrospect, however, I'd say that I was a pygmy chimp.

Puff holds up an illustration of a pygmy chimp. Several reporters run from the room: a scoop!

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan talks to nobody inparticular.

NATHAN

I have to say I always hated apes. Of course I don't any longer. I don't even know what hate means now. But while alive, I hated apes. I blame my parents. I mean, I don't blame them. I don't know what blame is, really, anymore, but I think they influenced me in my ape-hating tendencies.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ZOO - DAY

Faded colors. Ten year old Nathan in a bow tie and short-panted suit walks along with his uptight, British parents. They arrive at the ape pen. Nathan is excited. He jumps up and down. The apes jump up and down also.

NATHAN AS A BOY

Monkeys! Look, mama, monkeys!

MOTHER

(clamping down on his
shoulder)

Nathan, those are not monkeys. Those are apes. Mountain Gorillas to be precise.

There is a commotion off screen. Two uniformed attendants drag Puff's father, straitjacketed and kicking and screaming like an ape, past Nathan and his parents.

PUFF'S FATHER

I am not a human being! I am an animal!

Nathan, his father, and the other zoo patrons look on curiously, a little frightened. Nathan's mother chooses to ignore it.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

And furthermore ... Tell him, Harold.

FATHER

(distracted)

Uh ...

(then by rote)

We must never act like apes, son. For

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER (cont'd)
 you see, The ape is our closest
 biological relative -- specifically the
 pygmy chimp.

(holds up the same
 illustration of a pygmy
 chimp that Puff showed the
 congressional committee)

A single chromosome separates us. But
 you know what truly separates us from
 the apes, what makes us better than
 apes?

NATHAN AS A BOY

No, papa. What?

FATHER

Culture. Civilization. Refinement.
 If we do not have these as humans,
 then we might as well be living in
 pens and throwing our feces about,
 masturbating in public ...

(beat, a reverie
 ...sniffing red swollen female rump ...)

MOTHER

Enough, Harold.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila lights a new cigarette with her spent one. She drags.

LILA

Oh, I had sexual urges. I had the
 urge to merge, officers. Inside I was
 100 % Grade A female.

(laughs derisively)

But what self-loathing I felt! Who
 would have someone as repulsive, as
 unladylike as me? I did everything I
 could to shield the world from this
 repulsiveness.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLLEGE DORM BATHROOM - DAY

Stockings hang over the shower curtain rod. The window
 shade is drawn. Towels are stuffed in the space under the
 door. A twenty year old naked Lila is covered with shaving

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

cream, face to feet. She is shaving. There is a pounding on the door.

FEMALE ROOMMATE (O.S.)
Lila, what are you doing in there? I need to get ready for my date.

LILA
Nothing! I'll be out in a minute!

The door opens. Lila freezes.

FEMALE ROOMMATE
Look, I'll just ...
(stops in her tracks when she sees Lila)
What the ... ?

Lila is mortified.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DORM ROOM - A BIT LATER

Lila is sitting in her bathrobe on her bed and staring out the window. There is a bit of shaving cream behind her ear. Her roommate runs back and forth getting ready for her date.

FEMALE ROOMMATE
I don't know why you didn't tell me about this.

LILA
It's embarrassing, okay?

FEMALE ROOMMATE
It's not so bad.
(beat)
So, it just keeps growing?

LILA
Yeah, Natalie. It's hair. It grows.

FEMALE ROOMMATE
Well, don't jump down my throat. I'm just trying to help.

LILA
How is that helping, Natalie? How exactly?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FEMALE ROOMMATE

Look, if you're going to be like that ... You should be appreciative that I'm interested.

LILA

Why, because I'm a freak and you are beautiful, and you are being nice enough to come down to my freak, non-beautiful level and act concerned about my repulsive troubles?

FEMALE ROOMMATE

(pegged)

You're fucked up, Lila.

(out the door)

Why don't you fucking try electrolysis or something? Figure it out for chrissake.

The door slams. Lila hugs her knees to her chest.

LILA (V.O.)

At sixty dollars an hour, electrolysis was not a feasible solution. I explored my alternatives.

CUT TO:

INT. ART MUSEUM - DAY

Twelve year old Lila walks sadly through an art museum. she looks at various old portraits of men. She studies their facial hair. When she turns a corner, she is shocked to see a large Renaissance painting of a naked woman entirely covered with fur. She hurries to it. She looks at the placard next to the painting. It is a painting of Mary Magdalene.

LILA (V.O.)

I remember once coming across a painting of Mary Magdalene entirely covered with fur. I guess that's where I got the idea that maybe the Catholic Church might be a place that encouraged excessive hair growth in its women.

INT. CONVENT - DAY

Lila, in a nun's habit, is on her knees praying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (V.O.)
So I became a nun.

LILA
Heavenly Father ...
(sighs)
... please let this hair go away.

LILA (V.O.)
But my prayers were always so selfish.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

A bunch of naked women dance and chat around a campfire. Lila is there, pretty hairy. So are many of the other women.

LILA (V.O.)
I tried being a lesbian separatist.

LESBIANS
(chanting)
A woman without a man / Is like a fish
without a bicycle.

LILA (V.O.)
But I guess I just wasn't attracted to women, even hostile, man-hating, hairy ones who wore sensible shoes.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - DAY

Lila, in a full beard, sits on a throne before a crowd of gawking, dumb-looking, mouth-breathing children. Next to her on a separate stage is a sour-looking, middle-aged midget man sitting on a throne, staring blankly into space.

LILA (V.O.)
For a while I was a professional circus freak.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TENT - DAY

Lila, in a Santa suit, with beard sprayed white, sits on a throne in front of a crowd of gawking, dumb-looking, mouth-breathing children. One of them is on her lap. Next to her sits the sour midget, dressed in an elf suit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (V.O.)

During the holiday season, they made us wear costumes.

LILA

(depressed)

Ho ho ho.

KID ON HER LAP

That's not real.

The kid pulls Lila's beard.

LILA

Ow! You little fuck.

LILA (V.O.)

Aside from the great dental, this occupation was not pleasant.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Lila walks home. She's wrapped in winter clothing, but we can still see a bit of her white beard. It's snowing. The street is deserted. She spots a lighted window, she peers in. It's a warm family scene. Large group of chatting, laughing people. Fire in the fireplace. Big turkey on the table.

LILA (V.O.)

They say the holidays are difficult for a lot of people.

Lila looks down the street and sees dozens of loney-looking people peering forlornly in warmly lit windows. Some on ladders to peer in second-floor windows. Lila sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The room is lit with candles. Lila finishes shaving herself all over. Then she takes the double-edged blade out of the razor and climbs into the a bathtub filled with warm water. She is about to slice her wrists.

LILA (V.O.)

I decided there was something poetic about killing myself with a razor blade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the shelf next to the tub a little gray mouse watches her intently. At first she is startled, but then she and the creature seem to be communing. His little black beady eyes reflect the light. Lila starts to cry. She puts down the blade.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila wipes a tear from her eye.

LILA

The way that mouse looked at me.
There was no judgement. It didn't care
if I had hair all over my body. I was
just what I was. I felt so free. Do
you understand what I'm saying?

The cops look up, on the spot. It seems their minds were elsewhere.

COP

Something about a mouse, right?

Lila sighs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - EARLY MORNING

We see a tent in a clearing. A smoking campfire. There is a rustling inside the tent. Lila steps out naked. She is covered with fur. She pours a cup of coffee, and stands, comfortable in her skin, watching the world around her. Squirrels jump from tree to tree, birds look down at her. She smiles.

LILA (V.O.)

Birds and squirrels and rocks and
trees didn't seem to judge my hair. I
felt at peace when there were no
humans around. I figured out a way to
spend as much time as possible with
no people around. I became a nature
writer.

Lila picks up a pad and pen from a rock, sits on the rock and writes.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY

A woman under a hair drier reads a book intently. We see the first sentence of the chapter: "Last night I almost died on this mountain top." We hear Lila's dramatic reading competing with the very loud sound of the hair drier.

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

Last night I almost died on this mountain top, and the irony is I had never felt more alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

There is a violent, violent storm. The hair drier drone has turned into the explosive noise of rain beating down in sheets and wind howling at fifty miles an hour. Branches crack. Lila's tent blows over, revealing her huddled there with a sleeping bag wrapped around her like a blanket.

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

I knew it was coming when in late afternoon, a thunderhead drifted over, sneaking in like kids through the back door of a movie theater, forced casual. It turned the sky a queer shade of green. A green that said "watch out, baby, this is gonna hurt like hell." I could've hightailed, but that would be cheating. Part of the Nature experience is recognizing its mastery over you, your smallness in the face of it.

Lightning hits a tree nearby. It falls with a smack practically on top of Lila. She screams, then defiantly stands, throwing off the sleeping bag. The wind and rain whip her hair around her head. She laughs with amazing gusto and raise her arms like a runner winning a marathon.

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

As Nietzsche said, what does not kill me makes me stronger, and that goes double if you're a woman.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOK STORE WINDOW - DAY

We see many copies of a book entitled "*Wind in my Hair*" by *Lila Jute*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (V.O.)

I became a *successful* nature writer.

CUT TO:

INT. BEAUTY PARLOR - DAY

We see a woman under a hair drier reading "Wind in my Hair". We pull back to see that a long row of women under hair driers are reading Lila's book. They all stand defiantly, proudly, knocking their hair driers up and back as they do. The blowing hair driers whip the women's wet hair around their heads. The blowing hair drier drone is unbearably loud.

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

Then I became a *famous* nature writer.
I said to myself, *fuck humanity* ...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE WINDOW - DAY

A big display of the book "Fuck Humanity" by Lila Jute. A long line of women with beautifully coiffured hair snakes out of the store.

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

... and I became a recluse. I had a menagerie of animals at my house. They loved me because I was me. They loved me on the days I shaved. They loved me on the days I didn't. For a while this was enough.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LOG HOUSE - DAY

Lila lies in bed tapping on a lap top. A dog lies with her and licks her knee. She seems to enjoy it, and gets lost in a reverie. The dog morphs into a handsome man, kissing her knee and working his way up her thigh and under her nightgown. Lila is getting seriously hot and bothered. Her head lolls. But the reverie dissipates and the man turns back into a dog rooting around her crotch with his cold nose. She pushes him away. The dejected dog gets off the bed.

LILA (V.O.)

By the time I was thirty I was very,
very horny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Lila gets out of bed and studies herself in the mirror. She brushes her hands against her hairy body.

LILA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I had to have a man in my ... life.
 At any cost. I would become what I
 needed to become to achieve this. I
 would become a hairless lie.

The mirror image of Lila shimmers and turns into Lila with no body hair. Lila all made-up and with a smart new hairstyle. She assumes a coquettish pose and smiles cutely at herself.

LILA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I was rich enough for electrolysis by
 this time, so I began the long arduous
 process of having each inappropriate
 hair burned out of my body at the root.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila talks. One of the cops is doodling. One is picking wax from his ear with a pencil. One is reading a paperback novel under the table.

LILA
 This is when everything changed, and
 this is where my confession really
 begins.

The cops look up.

CUT TO:

INT. ELECTROLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Lila lies shirtless on a table while Rose, her fifty year old electrologist, works on her back.

ROSE
 Progress!

LILA
 Ouch. Yeah?

ROSE
 Oh yes, honey. Getting to be smooth
 smooth smooth all over. Smooth as a
 baby's butt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

I love it, Rose. I'm getting to be a real girl.

ROSE

You still in the market for a real boy?

LILA

Always. Ow.

ROSE

(beat)

Cause there's this guy. My brother knows him. Might be right up your alley.

LILA

Tell me. I could use someone up my alley.

ROSE

(playing dumb)

I don't get that. Is that sexual?

LILA

Shut up and tell me.

ROSE

Handsome, thirties, psychologist ...

LILA

Loves animals? Ouch. Must love animals, Rose.

ROSE

Loves animals. Loves *you*.

LILA

What do you mean?

ROSE

Somehow it came up that you were a friend of mine. Mr. handsome, animal-loving psychologist said he would *love* to meet you.

LILA

Holy shit. Your brother didn't tell him about the *nature* of our relationship, did he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

My brother is discreet.

LILA

(rubbing her hand over her
jaw)

Won't he be able to tell?

ROSE

My brother says the guy's a thirty-five year old virgin, so maybe he won't know how women usually feel. Plus he's got bad eyesight, almost legally blind, which is helpful in this situation. Plus he's got an extremely small penis, of which he is "mortifyingly ashamed", so chances are he'll be so grateful for any non-judgmental attention, that he'll be yours forever.

LILA

God, he must be really close to your brother to tell him such personal stuff.

ROSE

Yeah, well my brother is his shrink.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

It's a chi-chi place. Lila sits at a table with Nathan, fastidious in dress and manner. There is an awkward first-date silence. She sneaks a glance at his crotch. Then:

NATHAN

Meditations on a Banana Slug was a delightful read.

LILA

Thank you so much. I love slugs. All slugs, not just banana slugs.

NATHAN

As do I.

LILA

They're so even keel. They forge ahead with slow determination. They don't get distracted or side-tracked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (cont'd)

They don't care what they look like.
They don't care that people look at
them and go, "Ewww. A slug."

NATHAN

They don't seem to be especially ego
driven, this is true.

LILA

You've got to respect that.

NATHAN

I have to say that I'm not there yet.

LILA

Where?

NATHAN

Sluggdom. Sluggishness. Whatever
you'd call it. I'm not there yet. I
still have many human characteristics.

LILA

That's not necessarily a bad thing.

NATHAN

Yes. I suppose not. But still. One
would like to move along. To move
beyond.

LILA

I'm not sure we can escape our
natures. Believe me I've tried. I'm
not even so sure anymore that we
should want to.

NATHAN

I love that you said that. It makes
me feel a bit lighter. I've been
rather heavy lately. Thinking about my
childhood. Realizing how much a
product I am of my upbringing.

(beat, cautiously)

I've been seeing someone. A therapist.

LILA

(feigning surprise)

You *are* a therapist, right?

NATHAN

No no. I'm a *psychologist*, but I do
research. I'm a behaviorist. I work
with animals. Mice at the moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

I hope you don't perform any of those dreadful torture experiments, Nathan.

NATHAN

Heavens no. My work now is ... Right now I'm teaching mice ... well, table manners, to be candid.

LILA

(beat. doesn't know what to say)
How's it going?

NATHAN

Quite well, really. It's a lot of work. A lot of reinforcement, mostly positive. Right now I've gotten two of my subjects to use napkins. Tiny napkins of course.

LILA

Paper or cloth?

NATHAN

I hope you don't think me daft. It's important work. It's part of a larger sociological experiment. I'm federally funded.

LILA

What's the larger experiment?

NATHAN

It's my thesis that if table manners can be taught to mice, they can be taught to humans.

LILA

Going out on a limb, aren't you, Nathan?

NATHAN

(speech)
The truth is most people don't have table manners today. And when the foundations of civilized society crumble and disappear, civilized society in its entirety follows closely at its heels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

I'm not sure.

NATHAN

(stridently)

Courtesy, decorum, manners, are all
sadly lacking from our daily
intercourse. Rudeness, vulgarity,
meanness are the norm.

LILA

We are animals after all.

NATHAN

Ergo if I can teach table manners to
mice, I can teach them to humans. If
I can teach table manners to humans, I
can save the world.

Nathan blushes. Lila stares at him for a long moment. Her
thoughts are unreadable.

CUT TO:

INT. ELECTROLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Lila lies on her back. Rose works on her breasts.

ROSE

So?

LILA

I really like him, Rose. He's so ...
(searching)
... *passionate* about his work.

ROSE

My brother says he likes you, too.

LILA

(pleased)
Really?

ROSE

Yeah. Says he likes you even more
than he likes his own mother. And
according to my brother Nathan's
abnormally close with his mother.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan talks.

NATHAN

I began going to a therapist when I was in my thirties, because I felt that I wasn't enjoying life the way my friends were.

(beat)

After a time my childhood came up.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

It is another sepia scene. Nathan as a ten year old sits at the table with his parents. There is a bowl of salad in front of each of them. Everyone's head is bowed in prayer.

FATHER

Lord, we thank you for this bountiful gift we are about to receive.

ALL

Amen.

Eyes open, and young Nathan reaches for a fork to eat the salad. He grabs the wrong fork. Mother's eyes widen in horror.

MOTHER

My God, no! My God!

(disappointed)

Oh, Nathan.

Nathan looks up.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

That is the wrong fork, young man.

(to father)

Harold, tell the boy.

FATHER

That is the wrong fork, young man.

NATHAN AS A BOY

(panicky)

I'll use the right one. I'm sorry. I forgot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

Harold, tell the boy more.

FATHER

Too late. Go to your room.

NATHAN AS A BOY

But ...

MOTHER

Harold! Tell the boy again.

FATHER

(looking at mother)
No "buts." Go to your room now.

MOTHER

(looking at father)
And?

FATHER

And think about what you've done.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Adult Nathan sits on the couch, dabbing at his eyes. Wendall, his therapist sits across from him and writes something in his notebook.

WENDALL

And do you think maybe this early childhood indoctrination has something to do with your interest in table manners in the present.

Nathan thinks long and hard about this. He seems to be really straining, squinting his eyes. Finally:

NATHAN

I don't think so. No.

Wendall nods and scribbles something on his pad.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Why do you ask?

Wendall looks up.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Everything's white. People in lab coats hustle back and forth. Nathan, also in a lab coat, is hovering over a Lucite encasement. Inside we see two white mice, both attached to electrodes. They sit in little chairs at a little table. In front of each of them is a little plate of salad and three forks of varying size under Lucite domes. Nathan nods to his pretty French assistant, Gabrielle, who presses a button. The Lucite domes over the salads lift. Tentatively both mice reach for a fork. there is a tiny piece of velcro on each mouse's paw and a tiny piece of velcro on each of the forks. The first mouse picks the correct fork, and stabs it into the salad and eats happily, relieved. The second mouse picks the wrong fork. Nathan presses a button, which sends the mouse flying off his chair with an electric shock. The correct mouse keeps eating, unconcerned. Nathan makes a note in his notebook. Gabrielle watches Nathan as he writes, enchanted.

CUT TO:

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The table is elegantly set, candlelit. Lila sits at it while Nathan fusses in the kitchenette. Something classical wafts over from the stereo in the living room. Nathan places a salad in front of Lila and sits across from her with his own salad.

LILA

It looks wonderful.

NATHAN

You look wonderful. I'm on top of the world tonight, Lila. Work is going splendidly and my personal life is ...

Lila picks up a fork from the inside of her setting, not the outside. Nathan blinks. Lila tastes the salad.

LILA

Um-mmm. Oh Nathan, this salad is delish ...

NATHAN

(clenched teeth)
My God! The fork! The fork!

LILA

I'm sorry?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

(strangely)

Tell her, Harold ...

(stops himself)

It's just that ... It's nothing. It's just that the outside fork is the salad fork. One goes from the outside *in* as the dinner progresses.

LILA

Oh, I'm sorry.

(picks up correct fork)

I'm sorry, Nathan. I never really learned those things.

NATHAN

(forced casual)

No biggie.

There is a long silence as they both eat the salad.

LILA

Boy, this is good!

NATHAN

I'm sorry that I became so upset.

LILA

No, I'm sorry. I'm really backward in certain areas.

NATHAN

(beat, blurting)

It's only that I really enjoy your company and ...

LILA

You do?

NATHAN

Yes, and ...

LILA

You really enjoy my company?

NATHAN

Yes.

(beat, blurting)

Please don't talk with food in your mouth, Lila. Please. You're so pretty and it only mars your ... I'm sorry. I'm being critical.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nathan pounds his forehead with his fist. Lila waves her hand to indicate that it's fine. She doesn't say anything because she's chewing.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

It's just that I have some peculiarities, and ...

LILA

I like you, too, Nathan.

NATHAN

You do?

LILA

Yeah

(beat)

But I have some peculiarities also.

NATHAN

(happily)

I don't care. I don't care!

(then, concerned)

Like what, for example?

Lila takes a deep breath, about to go into it, thinks better of it.

LILA

Like nothing.

Nathan smiles, relieved. Lila smiles back. Nathan recoils slightly, skittishly half-points to his bared teeth. Apparently there's a piece of food stuck in Lila's teeth. She closes her mouth, runs her tongue over her teeth, smiles again, mouth closed.

CUT TO:

INT. ELECTROLOGIST'S OFFICE -DAY

Rose is doing Lila's feet.

ROSE

My brother says things are going really well between you and Nathan.

LILA

I cannot believe how in love I am with this man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

Yeah?

LILA

He's so cute. I even like his cute little penis. It's like a little pig's penis or something.

(beat)

Rose, we connect on every level. I've finally found someone I can feel completely safe with.

ROSE

Don't throw that away. I had that once with a guy. But I threw it away for a cheap thrill.

LILA

One night stand?

ROSE

No. I married a midget.

LILA

Marrying a midget was a cheap thrill?

ROSE

Well he wasn't really a midget. He was on the cusp of midgethood. That's what made it cheap. Had he been an actual midget, there would've been nothing cheap about it, my dear.

LILA

I didn't know you were into that sort of thing.

ROSE

Let me tell you, honey, midgets are the best kept secret in male companionship. They're portable. They're controllable. They're eager. And they're exactly the right height for a little covert oral fun on the dance floor.

LILA

(screams with delight,
then:)

I have a friend you might like to meet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

Oh?

LILA

Three foot one.

ROSE

Be still my crotch.

LILA

Rose, Nathan's no midget, but he's asked me to move in with him.

ROSE

Yeah. My brother told me.

LILA

And I think I'm going to.

ROSE

(mulling it over)
Stand on a stepladder sometimes.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan talks.

NATHAN

Lila moved in with me. Did I love her? I thought so. But from my new vantage point I realize that love is nothing more than a messy conglomeration of need, desperation, fear of death, insecurity about penis size, and the self-involved, ego-driven need to collect other people's hearts. Not that I judge it.

(puts head in hands. beat.
looks up)

Listen, I don't want to be dead yet.
Is there any way to ...

Nathan looks around for some sign of another person. There is nobody.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

No I suppose not.
(beat)

No biggie. Anyway, Lila moved in. We had our problems, but we both wanted love so badly, we turned a blind eye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (cont'd)

INT. NATHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nathan, Lila, and Nathan's parents (looking very, very old) sit at the dining room table. Salad is about to be eaten, and everyone glances sideways over at Lila, waiting for her to make her move. She reaches for the wrong fork, corrects herself and picks the salad fork. Nathan breathes a sigh of relief. His mother looks disappointed, clucks. They eat in silence. Finally:

LILA

It's lovely to finally meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Bronfman. I've heard so much about you and I've seen you in photographs from Nathan's childhood, but it's nice to meet you in the flesh. I must say, you look exactly the same as in the photographs.

MOTHER

Thank you, dear.

NATHAN

Actually, Mother and Father, you look very, very old. You look terrible.

LILA

Nathan!

His mother and father touch their faces reflexively, then look at each other and laugh.

MOTHER

Tell him, Harold.

FATHER

Son, your mother and I are doing a production of *The Gin Game* at the local community theater. We forgot to take off our make-up.

The mother and father laugh again. Then they pull at their latex faces. The wrinkles come off. And they look exactly as they did in the flashback scene, albeit a bit pink-faced. There is another pause.

LILA

(awkward)

Goodness, you two look exactly as you did in those old photos.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

(cold)
Yes, so you mentioned earlier, dear.

NATHAN

(changing the subject)
Lila's a nature writer, mother.

MOTHER

I love nature. As long as it stays in
the zoo where it belongs.

The father and Nathan laugh at mother's joke. Lila joins in weakly, against her better judgment.

MOTHER

(to Lila)
Don't you agree, dear?

Lila hesitates.

NATHAN

Of course she does, mother.

CUT TO:

INT. NATHAN AND LILA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Nathan is in bed, in starched pajamas. He lies on his back under perfect covers and stares straight up at the ceiling.

NATHAN

What are you doing in there?

LILA (O.S.)

(pissy)
I'll be out in a minute.

NATHAN

I'm sorry about my parents.

LILA (O.S.)

You didn't seem sorry when you were laughing at all your mother's stupid, tasteless, cruel animal jokes.

NATHAN

I was simply attempting to keep the evening light. You know that I feel similarly to you about nature.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (O.S.)

Do you?

NATHAN

Of course.

(beat)

I simply love the ... *naturalness* of it all.

Lila emerges from the bathroom, radiant, hopeful.

LILA

Do you? Oh do you, darling?

NATHAN

Why certainly!

Lila happily leaps into bed. She smothers Nathan with kisses.

LILA

Oh, darling. I'm so relieved. Let's celebrate with a long hike in the woods tomorrow!

NATHAN

(oh shit)

That's a great idea.

Nathan kisses her.

LILA

It'll be wonderful! I'll show you my old stomping grounds!

NATHAN

Teriffic. Can't wait!

Nathan kisses her ear. He looks confused, sticks his finger behind her ear, and pulls it out with a dab of shaving cream on it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Shaving cream?

LILA

I don't think so.

(beat)

Why?

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - MORNING

Nathan drives. He's dressed in spanking new, freshly starched safari clothes, big shiny new hiking boots. Lila sits in the front passenger seat. She is dressed in a costume identical to Nathan's, but, as opposed to Nathan, she seems awkward in it. She fidgets in it, straightens it, sighs, comes to terms with it, and looks dreamily out the window at the passing trees. She is home. That's all that matters.

NATHAN

Darling, did you bring the insect repellent lotion?

LILA

Yes, darling.

NATHAN

(beat)
Oh, and the sun block?

LILA

Of course.

NATHAN

What SPF, sweetie?

LILA

Fifteen.

NATHAN

Perfectomundo! We are ready!

(beat)
Say, wouldn't it be wonderful to have an insect repellent lotion that also worked as a sun block? Think of all the time one would save.

LILA

Yes, darling.

NATHAN

I think I'll get Johannsen in chemistry on that.

(beat)
Oh! Did you bring the first aid kit?

LILA

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Flares?

LILA

Absolutely.

NATHAN

We could call it "Quit Bugging Me,
Sunny."

(laughs a lot)

Get it? Sunny. S-u-n-n-y.

LILA

(laughs appreciatively)

That's very funny.

NATHAN

I love you so much.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies.

PUFF

Then, gentlemen, one day I saw something I hadn't seen since my father died in a freak accident involving a rotted log and four thousand bees stinging his head ... I saw other human beings. They chattered away at each other in what appeared to be gibberish. Later I learned it was English. Now I wonder if perhaps my initial assessment hadn't been correct.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Puff's POV: Through some brush we watch Nathan and Lila hiking. We hear Puff's loud heavy breathing and, in the distance, the relentless gibberish chatter of Nathan and Lila. Puff moves. Lila glances over.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila talks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

It was a flash of white. I ruled out deer immediately. Too ... upright.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREST - DAY

We're with Lila and Nathan now. Lila has stopped and is peering into the distance.

LILA

Did you see that?

NATHAN

What?

LILA

I don't know. Something.

NATHAN

A deer?

LILA

No. Too ... upright. Might've been a person.

NATHAN

(nervously)

It might behoove us to turn back at this point.

Lila walks in the direction of the sighting.

LILA

Come on.

NATHAN

(not budging)

If it's a person, why should we go see it? It's not like it's nature or anything. It's just a person.

(beat)

Sometimes people who live in the woods don't want to be seen. They live in the woods because they're anti-social, Lila. We have to respect that.

Lila trudges through the brush. Nathan follows. Better than being left behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (CONT'D)

This is the way to get ticks, Lila.
This is it. Bingo! Lyme Disease!
You've hit the nail on the head here.

Lila is in her element. Her whole demeanor has changed. She is tracking. She sniffs the breeze, cocks her head, moves stealthily. Then she sheds her clothes, almost shaking them off, like a dog shaking off some cute costume his owner had dressed him in.

NATHAN

Oh for God's sa ...

Lila turns her head and glares at Nathan. There is an animal fierceness in her eye that shuts him up instantly. She turns back to pursue her prey.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies.

PUFF

I had never seen anything like it.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Puff's POV: We see a naked Lila looking in our general direction, but not seeing us. The sun dapples her body. She moves closer and closer.

PUFF (V.O.)

It was an ape as I had never seen before. Like me, yet different in certain essential details. And all at once I felt a heat pass through me. My heart raced. Gentlemen, I wanted to *touch* her, to caress her, to be one with her. I had urges and desires I could not explain. I felt overwhelmed by the power this strange creature had over me, and so I did what any animal would do when it comes across an animal of superior strength ...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The cops are transfixed.

LILA

He bolted.

CUT TO:

INT. FOREST - DAY

We are with Lila. She creeps along, when suddenly a tan, muscular figure tears out from behind a tree and runs, practically on all fours, through the dense underbrush. Lila follows, almost as agile as the forest creature. Nathan just stands there. The chase continues. There is a great deal of heaving and panting. Puff shimmies up a large tree. Lila follows. Puff leaps from branch to branch. Lila follows easily. Puff swings from a vine. So does Lila. Finally they come to the end of the trees, a clearing. There is no nowhere for Puff to leap. Lila is with him in the tree. They are crouched, bloody, heaving, on separate branches, staring at each other. After a long moment, Lila speaks.

LILA

Who are you?

Puff cocks his head. The high timbre of her voice surprises him, pleases him, but he doesn't understand the words.

LILA (CONT'D)

You don't understand my language, do you?

Puff looks at his crotch. Apparently there is some activity down there. Lila, following his eyes, glances down there also.

LILA (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I take it back, you do understand my language.

Puff grabs for his crotch and begins to play with himself distractedly, looking at her all the while. He falls out of the tree. Lila gasps. Branches crack and snap as he passes through them and then there is an unpleasant thud when he hits the forest floor. Lila shimmies down the tree, and kneels by Puff. He is unconscious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

Oh God.

Nathan comes limping through the brush. Somehow his safari suit and boots are as clean and pressed as they were in the car. He is carrying Lila's clothes. Somehow he has had time to neatly fold them.

NATHAN

Oh my God! Is he dead? Please put something on.

Lila looks up at icily at Nathan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You'll catch cold. It's cold.

(beat)

What do you suppose he is, a survivalist?

LILA

I think he's feral.

NATHAN

(jumping back)

Feral? Don't touch him! He might be diseased! He might ... My God, rabies!

LILA

He looks perfectly fine.

NATHAN

I think we should go. Please. Before he wakes up and, I don't know, eats us, or whatever feral things do.

LILA

I don't understand you. This is fascinating and you just want to run away. I mean, here we have a human being totally uncontaminated by civilization, totally free, and all you want to do is run back to your ...

NATHAN

(thinking)

Actually, I just had an amusing thought.

LILA

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

(musing)

Feral, huh? Totally uncontaminated?

LILA

Look at him. He doesn't understand English. He moves like an animal.

NATHAN

It's perfect!

LILA

Nathan, what the hell are you talking about?

NATHAN

(doing a little dance)

Forget mice! Actually forget guinea pigs, cats, monkeys, and chimps also. I'm on to stage five: The human subject.

LILA

Oh no. You can't take him from his home, Nathan.

NATHAN

(ranting)

Don't you see? He's my Tabula Rasa, my Eliza Dolittle. He's my ticket to the top of the Behaviorist food chain. He's going to make me famous.

LILA

I won't allow you. It's wrong. He's happy here.

NATHAN

Is he, Lila? Is he happy living filthy and naked alone in this tick-infested wilderness? Never to know the love of a good woman, never to revel in the pitter-patter of little feet, never to read Moby Dick, or marvel at a Monet, or just sit back after a day of hard but rewarding work, smoke a pipe, and wonder about the nature of reality.

LILA

(weakening resolve)

You'd be taking away his freedom, Nathan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose, Lila, to quote Janet Jackson.

Lila looks off into the distance, her eyes brimming with tears. As Nathan continues his speech, we move closer and closer into Lila's eyes. Nathan's voice fades into nothing by the time we dissolve.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Belonging to something, a person or a society, is a basic human craving. We are communal creatures. This poor soul has no one, nothing ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFF - SUNSET

A naked, very hairy Lila sits by herself on the cliff and watches the sunset. There's a chill in the air and she shivers and hugs herself.

LILA

Oh God, I have no one. Nothing. You give me this beautiful gift, this glorious sunset. But with no one to say "isn't that a beautiful sunset" to, it becomes meaningless, just another stupid sunset. They happen everyday. So what?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lila is hovering over the unconscious Puff. Nathan's voice comes back into focus. He is still speechifying.

NATHAN

... what is it that makes us human, if not the knowledge that we are indeed human? Think of this poor soul's education as the greatest gift we could bestow upon ...

LILA

All right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Great. Grab his feet. We'll throw him in the trunk.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Nathan hovers over the Lucite case with the tiny dinner table in it. His assistant, Gabrielle, presses a button, a door opens, and two white mice scurry in. The male pulls out a chair for the female. The female climbs up on the chair, and the male pushes the chair in, then scurries around to the other side of the table and climbs onto his own chair. The Lucite lid over the silverware and salads lifts and both mice pick up the proper forks and begin eating. Nathan scribbles in his notebook.

GABRIELLE

Doctor ...

Nathan looks up. Gabrielle jerks her head in the direction of a very large Lucite case. Inside, Puff, now dressed in a diaper and connected to all sorts of electrodes, is stirring. Nathan and Gabrielle hurry over.

NATHAN

Good morning.

Puff groggily takes in his surroundings. This is quite a lot to take in. The white room, the strange apes in strange suits, his own clothing, the wires. After surveying the scene for a moment, Puff becomes frightened and agitated. He tries to escape. Not understanding Lucite, he smashes into it, again and again. He tears at his diaper. Nathan gives a nod to Gabrielle, who presses a button on a panel. An electric shock sends Puff flying. He lies on the floor confused and dazed. After a moment, he gets up and again crashes into the Lucite. Nathan gives the signal to Gabrielle and once again she shocks Puff. He once again gets up and crashes against the Lucite. Again he is shocked. He gets up again, and is about to crash against the Lucite, but he thinks better of it, and squats in place, immobilized.

NATHAN

(to Gabrielle)

Only three shocks. A chimp takes fifteen. This is going to be *tres* simple, no, Gabrielle?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

(in love with Nathan)

Oui, doctor, oui.

NATHAN

(to Puff)

Good morning ...

(to Gabrielle)

We need a name for him, don't we?

GABRIELLE

Oui.

NATHAN

You decide. Today is your day.

GABRIELLE

Really? My day? Well, I had a sweet little mongrel puppie named Puff when I was a girl. This one reminds me of my dog, all shaggy! So cute!

(giggles girlishly)

I loved my doggie very much, *monsieur*.

NATHAN

(charmed)

Puff it is then. Puff Bronfman. Is that okay?

GABRIELLE

Oui. Perfect!

NATHAN

(to Puff)

Good morning, Puff Bronfman. I'm Dr. Bronfman and this is my assistant Gabrielle. We're your mommy and daddy while you are here.

Gabrielle likes this concept a great deal. She smiles and moves closer to Nathan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(to Puff)

How about some salad, son?

Gabrielle poises her finger above the button. She winks at Nathan. He blushes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

Nathan, carrying a brief case, is walking to his car. Gabrielle hurries to catch up to him. Her high heels click on the pavement.

GABRIELLE

Dr. Bronfman! Dr. Bronfman!

Nathan turns.

NATHAN

Oh, Hi, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

(out of breath)

Hi. I just wanted to tell you that I very much enjoy working with you.

(blushes)

Now I'm embarrassed that I say this.

They walk along.

NATHAN

No. Don't be. I really enjoy hearing that. You're a terrific assistant.

GABRIELLE

Merci. I ... Do you ... would you like to go get a cup of coffee, perhaps?

NATHAN

Well, I don't know. I'm actually on my way to ...

GABRIELLE

Now I am truly embarrassed. Forgive me. I should not have asked such a stupid question. I know you are a very important man and ...

NATHAN

No. Don't be silly. It's just ...

GABRIELLE

I am a foolish little thing. I am pink in my face, no? It is only that I have been so lonely lately and ... I am ashamed. I'll see you tomorrow, okay? Unless ... Am I fired now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gabrielle pouts. Nathan is charmed.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Nathan and Gabrielle sit at a romantic little table in a trendy coffee shop.

GABRIELLE

Thank you so much for accompanying me.

NATHAN

Not at all.

GABRIELLE

I have had such a difficult time in my personal life and you seem to be such a nice man ... but I'm talking too much again, no?

NATHAN

Of course not.

GABRIELLE

You're so sweet. Oh, why are there not more men out there like you?

Gabrielle starts to cry softly. Nathan doesn't know what to do. His eyes dart around, then:

NATHAN

There there.

Gabrielle looks up at him appreciatively. She sniffs.

GABRIELLE

You know just the right thing to say.

She reaches across the table and touches his hand lightly for a moment.

NATHAN

Listen, you're the best assistant I've ever had ... Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

(smiles)

I like it when you say my name. Is that stupid?

CUT TO:

INT. NATHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan, in his pajamas, lies in bed reading. He looks up.

NATHAN
What are you doing in there?

LILA (O.S.)
Nothing. Be right out.

The phone rings. Nathan picks it up.

NATHAN
Hello?
(beat, happily)
Oh, hi ... *Gabrielle!*

Nathan sits up in bed.

LILA (O.S.)
Who is it?

NATHAN
Uh-huh. Right, *Gabrielle*. Right.

Nathan laughs.

LILA (O.S.)
Who is it?

NATHAN
(into phone)
Absolutely, *Gabrielle*.
(covering phone, testily)
Someone from work!
(into phone)
Sorry about that, *Gabrielle*. Uh-huh.
Exactly.

Nathan laughs.

LILA (O.S.)
Who from work?

NATHAN
(into phone)
Excuse me one second, would you,
...*Gabrielle?*

Nathan puts down the phone and heads to the bathroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (O.S.)
Who is it, Nathan?

Nathan opens the bathroom door.

NATHAN
Look, Lila, when I'm on a work ...

Lila turns with a gasp. She has shaving cream all over her chest. Nathan looks stunned. He backs away.

LILA
Nathan, I ...

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lights are low. The room is peppered with lit candles. Gabrielle, in a slip, lies on her bed, eating cherries from a bowl, and listening to Nathan and Lila's conversation on speaker.

LILA (O.S.)
It's hormonal, Nathan. I can't help it. I'm sorry.

NATHAN (O.S.)
Your entire body?

LILA (O.S.)
I'm getting electrolysis. It's working, but it takes time. So meanwhile I have to ...

NATHAN (O.S.)
You have to shave? Like an ape?

LILA (O.S.)
(crying)
Apes don't shave, you son of a bitch!

NATHAN (O.S.)
Don't quibble. You know what I mean.

LILA (O.S.)
I'm sorry. Please don't be mad at me for this.

NATHAN (O.S.)
Mad? I'm I'm ... disgusted!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (O.S.)

I'm the same person I was before you
knew, damn it! Oh God!

NATHAN (O.S.)

I have to think! I have to think!

Footsteps and a door slam. Lila is near the phone now and
crying in desperate heaves.

LILA (O.S.)

Oh God, why ... do ... I ... have ...
to ... be ... like ... Oh, no! Oh,
shit!

(rustling sound, then into
phone)

Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?
Who's there?

Gabrielle calmly pops another cherry in her mouth and hangs
up the phone.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Nathan, in his pajamas, drives. His face is set in a
furious scowl and he drives fast.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER CAR - NIGHT

Gabrielle drives leisurely. She is calm, a slight smile on
her face.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - NIGHT

Nathan paces in front of Puff's Lucite case. Puff watches
suspiciously from the corner where he is huddled. The lights
are off. But there is a green glow from a couple of exit
signs.

NATHAN

I don't get it. I don't get it. I
don't get it. How could I find myself
in this mess? This is a mess. This
is not a situation I understand. This
is a mess. How do I extricate myself
from this mess? Is my girlfriend a

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (cont'd)

man? I don't understand. This is not part of any plan. She deceived me. She has hair.

(beat)

But am I being fair? So what if she has hair? Who am I to judge? I have hair.

(beat)

But I'm supposed to have hair. I am a man. Men are supposed to have hair.

(beat)

But poor Lila. Think of what she's had to go through. The courage she's had to have in the face of this abomination of nature. I should love her all the more. I should love every hair on her body. I mean, she doesn't mind that I have a mortifyingly small...

The lights flick on. Nathan turns with a start. It's Gabrielle. She's in an overcoat. She gasps.

GABRIELLE

Oh, Doctor. I did not know. I'm sorry to disturb you. I just came for some papers I left.

NATHAN

Gabrielle. No, I'm sorry if I startled you. I came to think.

(beat, remembering)

God, Did I hang up on you?

GABRIELLE

Oui. Perhaps I called at a bad time. I am sorry.

NATHAN

No. I just got distracted. I'm so sorry.

GABRIELLE

Is everything fine?

NATHAN

Oui.

(laughs)

Now you've got me talking French.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

(laughs)

I was in my p.j.'s when I remembered I left some papers I need to go over.

(opens overcoat to reveal lingerie)

See? I rushed right out of the house. I must look a mess. I'm so embarrassed

NATHAN

(taken)

No. Not at all.

Puff is taken also. His eyes are wide.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I'm in my p.j.'s, too. Funny, huh?

GABRIELLE

Coincidence, yes?

(beat)

And how is our son?

NATHAN

Our ...? Oh!

(laughs, out of control)

He seems fine. I guess we woke him. The lights and all.

GABRIELLE

I should turn them off.

(she does)

Maybe I sing him a lullaby my mama sang to me when I was a little girl.

NATHAN

(a little giddy)

When you were a little French girl?

GABRIELLE

Oui.

NATHAN

(back in control)

That would be good.

Gabrielle kneels by Puff's case. Puff crawls over, tries to touch her through the Lucite. Gabrielle sings a French lullaby. It's very sweet. Nathan watches her, looks at her thigh, her hair, the delicate way the tip of her nose moves when she sings. Puff gets drowsy. He curls up on the floor and sleeps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE
(quietly to Nathan)
There.

Nathan stares at her, transfixed. She pretends not to notice.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)
Shall we close up, then?

NATHAN
Maybe we should just sit for a while.
It's very peaceful.

GABRIELLE
It's nice, yes. I'm glad I ran into you, both in our silly pajamas. It is two happy coincidences, no?

NATHAN
Yes. Happy happy.

GABRIELLE
Yet you look so sad. A great man like you should not be sad.

NATHAN
I'm fine. Life is funny, that's all.

Gabrielle stands. She stretches languorously, revealing a lot of leg.

GABRIELLE
I am sleepy.

NATHAN
I shouldn't say this, but you're pretty, Gabrielle. It's unprofessional, I know.

GABRIELLE
Really? I always think myself so ugly. No, not ugly, but plain. A wallflower.

NATHAN
(buying her line)
Really? No. Not at all. You're a very pretty girl. You should know that. You should be confident.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

Thank you so much. *Merci*. It's very wonderful to hear a man say such a nice compliment.

NATHAN

It's true. I wouldn't lie.

GABRIELLE

You are sweet.

Gabrielle walks slowly by Nathan. He inhales deeply, breathing her in. She smiles to herself. He reaches out touches her leg.

GABRIELLE (CONT'D)

(vaguely protesting)

Doctor.

She moves into Nathan. She presses her thigh against his shoulder. Nathan leans forward, kisses her exposed thigh.

NATHAN

So soft. So smooth.

(back to reality)

I'm sorry. It's just ...

GABRIELLE

(soothing)

Shh.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lila is shaving herself all over. Shaving and weeping. There are nicks all over her body. She has no eyebrows any more. The hair on her head is hacked off.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - NIGHT

Nathan and Gabrielle are lying naked on the floor. Gabrielle rests her head on Nathan's chest.

NATHAN

Was that okay? I mean, was I able to ... satisfy you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

You are an animal.

NATHAN

Really? Wow! That's that's terrific to hear from someone so ... feminine, so female.

LILA

I love being female because it, how do you say, allows me to be close to men.

NATHAN

I'm glad you're female.

(beat)

Do you think our boy witnessed the primal scene?

GABRIELLE

Anyway it's time he grew up. *N'est-ce pa?*

(sighing, running her fingers along his chest)

I love chest hair on a man. I know it isn't fashionable now, hairy men. But to me it is the very sign of masculinity.

Nathan tenses. Gabrielle looks up innocently at him.

GABRIELLE

What is wrong, my darling?

NATHAN

Nothing, my darling. All is right with the world.

Puff watches from his case. Gabrielle smiles to herself.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies.

PUFF

I saw it, gentlemen. I saw the whole sweaty, passionate, ugly, beautiful act, and to use the vernacular, I wanted me some of that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The congressmen laugh appreciatively. The laughter is a little too enthusiastic and goes on a little too long. It stops abruptly.

PUFF (CONT'D)

And I think I understood from that moment, that in order to get some, I would have to do what they said. In order to experience this primal, basic, animal thing, I would first have to become a civilized, prissy, uptight human. I would have to become Nathan.

The congressmen nod sadly, in recognition of this reality.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Puff, in his Lucite case, sits behind a set dinner table. He seems attentive, calm, interested as Nathan teaches him table manners. Gabrielle stands very close, almost possessively close, to Nathan. She wears a lab coat, but it is unbuttoned, and underneath she is wearing a skin-tight black minidress. She strokes the back of Nathan's head as he works with Puff.

NATHAN

(slow. talking to an idiot)
Excellent, Puff. Now, the lady you're with excuses herself to go powder her nose.

The wheels turn in Puff's head. He thinks hard. Then he stands. Gabrielle shrieks and claps happily.

NATHAN

Perfect. Perfect, Puff!

Nathan leans over and kisses Gabrielle. Puff watches. He makes an exaggerated kissy-face, pursing his lips, trying to imitate Nathan. The phone rings. Gabrielle pulls herself away, giggles as Nathan tries to keep her from going, and picks up the phone.

GABRIELLE

(still giggling)
Dr. Bronfman's line. Yes. One moment please.
(puts it on hold)
Lila.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Shit.
(takes phone)
Hi, honey.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lila sits on the couch. Eyebrows are attractively drawn onto her face. She wears a very femme blonde wig. Lots of make-up.

LILA

So, how's it going today?

NATHAN (O.S.)

Good. Making progress.

LILA

Honey, can we talk tonight? You know, about stuff? Things have been so strained for the past three weeks, since *you know*, and I just want to talk.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Nathan, phone cradled between shoulder and ear, puts his face in his hand. Gabrielle rests a hand on his shoulder.

NATHAN

Everything's fine, honey. We don't need to talk. Besides I have to work late.

LILA (O.S.)

Please, Nathan. I really need this. You've been working late a lot.

Nathan looks up helplessly at Gabrielle.

NATHAN

Okay, we'll have dinner tonight.

Gabrielle gets mad, exhales sharply, pulls her hand away. Nathan gives her a pleading look, grabs for her. She moves away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Yeah. Okay. Be home around seven.
Bye.

(hangs up)

What? I'm sorry. What was I supposed
to do?

GABRIELLE

(disgusted)

I don't know, Nathan. What are you
supposed to do?

NATHAN

You don't abandon somebody because they
have a physical problem.

GABRIELLE

Funny. I thought that's exactly what
you did. You just don't have the
courage to admit it to yourself.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan talks. A tear runs down his face, mingles with the
blood.

NATHAN

Funny. I still feel guilt. Even
dead. One would've hoped ... But
alas. You know, I really did love
Lila. But with her ... *problem* ...
and then when Gabrielle revealed her
feelings. And Gabrielle was so ...
conventionally female. *And* she had an
accent. I was lost from that moment
on. But Gabrielle was right. I
couldn't admit it to myself, this
shallowness of character, let alone to
Lila.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Lila and Nathan eat. Lila is in her new, very feminine
make-up, wig, and dress. Her table manners are impeccable,
almost robotic. There is an awkward silence

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

Are you seeing somebody else, Nathan?
I just have to know.

NATHAN

Of course not.

LILA

It would just be helpful to know.

NATHAN

No.

LILA

Because, you know, you seem so
distant. And you work late every
night. And we hardly ever have sex,
and when we do, it's ... I don't know.
It feels different.

NATHAN

I'm just preoccupied.

LILA

Do you like my new look?

NATHAN

Yeah. It's nice. It's really good.

LILA

I'm trying, you know.

(starting to cry)

I'm trying to be what you want. I
want to be what you want, Nathan. All
I want is to be what you want.

NATHAN

(embarrassed)

Shh. It's okay.

(takes her hand)

It's okay, Lila. You're what I want.
You know that. You're exactly what I
want.

LILA

(hopefully, sniffing)

Really?

NATHAN

Sure. Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

Because I'm really trying, you know.
Rosie says maybe only another two years
of the elctrolysis.

NATHAN

(hard to stomach)
That's great.

LILA

I've signed up for a ballet class.
And look at my nails! A real girl!

Lila holds out her hands. Her finger nails are polished
fire engine red.

NATHAN

That's great. It's a great color for
you.

LILA

Oh, Nathan, let's have a baby!

CUT TO:

INT. NURSERY - DAY

Lila holds and rocks a swaddled baby. She passes it to
Nathan, who looks at it and sees that it's a baby monkey.
Nathan shudders. Lila looks on lovingly, oblivious.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THERAPIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Nathan sits with his head in his hands. Wendall listens
attentively.

NATHAN

So anyway, that's the nightmare I've
been having lately.

WENDALL

Do you suppose it has anything to do
with Lila's unusually hairy body?

NATHAN

(beat)
No, why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WENDALL

Well, it seems that since Lila broached the subject of children, you've been on edge and I know you have an issue with the, uh, body hair.

NATHAN

(revelation)

Oh, I see. Yes, that's something to think about. That's very good. That's what you get the big bucks, right? Ha ha.

WENDALL

I just think it might be important to explore your feelings for Lila.

NATHAN

I love Lila. I mean, she's a wonderful person. And ... she loves me! That's no small potatoes. I mean she really loves me. She's sacrificed so much to be in this relationship with me. And she's a good person. A truly good person. How rare is that in this world, eh? And how could I stop loving somebody because of a little physical imperfection, if it can even be called that. I mean, God knows I'm not perfect! What about my eyesight? It's lousy, that's what! Lila's not going to leave me because of my eyesight. What about my penis?

WENDALL

And how do you feel about Gabrielle?

Nathan puts his head in his hands and sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Nathan is holding flash cards up to Puff. Puff tentatively reads aloud from the cards. Gabrielle sits nearby on a stool, fish-netted legs crossed, arms crossed, and an angry expression on her face.

PUFF

Good-eve-n-ing-lay-dees-and-gent-el-men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Bravo, Puff! Bravo!

Puff smiles happily. Nathan and Puff both look over at Gabrielle for her approval. None is forthcoming.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Isn't Puff doing spectacularly, honey?

GABRIELLE

Hmmph.

NATHAN

Gabby, what is it?

GABRIELLE

Hmmph. Hmmph.

(beat)

Nathan, we have to talk, you and I.

NATHAN

Fine.

GABRIELLE

Not in front of the boy.

NATHAN

Very well.

Gabrielle stands, turns, and stomps across the room. Nathan follows her angry, switching hips with his eyes, as does Puff. She exits into the hall. Nathan looks at Puff and shrugs. Puff returns the shrug. Nathan follows Gabrielle into the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle stands there waiting, a troubled look on her face, her eyes brimming. Nathan emerges, tries to embrace her.

NATHAN

My little French.

GABRIELLE

(pushing him away)

Stop. Get away.

NATHAN

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

You have to choose Nathan. It's like Sophie's choice. Only it is Nathan's choice. Did you ever see that movie, Sophie's Choice? It is like that. Only it is this.

NATHAN

Gabby, you know I'm trying to sort things out.

GABRIELLE

(hard)

No! It is now that you must decide.

(soft)

I love you, Doctor Nathan ...

(hard)

... but I will not wait. I will not be your chippy. I will not be your little *Mademoiselle Parlez-vous* side dish.

(soft)

My love. I want to have a sweet tiny baby inside my belly ... from you.

Nathan gets a faraway look in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Nathan and Gabrielle sit on a blanket on this otherwise empty beach. There is a light breeze. Gabrielle has one of her breasts exposed and is nursing an infant. Nathan looks at the baby's face. It is angelic. He looks up and smiles at Gabrielle. She smiles back. They kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALL - DAY

Nathan snaps out of his reverie, looks pleadingly at the waiting Gabrielle.

NATHAN

I love you so much, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

But? ... But? There is a "but," Nathan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

But I don't know how to leave Lila.

Gabrielle tears off her lab coat. Underneath she is wearing practically nothing, a skimpy black dress. She throws the lab coat at Nathan, turns and storms down the hall. Nathan watches until she disappears around the corner.

NATHAN

(quietly)

Now *there's* a butt, Nathan.

He brings the lab coat up to his face and breathes in her fragrance.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S - NIGHT

Lila, all prettied up and civilized and manicured, is setting the table for dinner. She is humming. Nathan walks in the door. Lila doesn't hear him. He stands in the doorway for a moment, watching Lila from behind. His face is blank. Lila catches sight of him. She's startled.

LILA

Oh!

(laughs)

I didn't see you there, sneaky boy!

(runs over and kisses him)

You're like a boy sneaking in ...

NATHAN

(so bored)

... the back door of a movie theater.

Yes, indeed.

LILA

You remember that from my book? I'm touched!

(kisses him again)

What's wrong?

NATHAN

Nothing. Hard day. Gonna have a drink.

LILA

I'll make it.

(beats him to the portable bar)

I'm so happy, Nathan! Everything's going to be so great! Scotch on the rocks, right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (CONT'D)

(giggles)
 Just kidding. I know what you drink,
 mister. I know what you drink.
 (pours and blends and
 shakes, etc.)
Voila!

Lila hands Nathan a frothy pink concoction with a pineapple wedge sticking out of it.

NATHAN

Thanks.

Nathan stares contemplatively out the window and sips his drink. Lila watches him, comes up behind him, puts her arms around him. Nathan cringes, but tries to cover it. Lila feels the cringe, but pretends not to have. She keeps her arms around him for a moment longer, then casually removes them.

LILA

(fishing)
 How's work?

NATHAN

Cruddy, okay? Are you satisfied?

LILA

(pouty)
 No. I don't want your work to be
 cruddy.

NATHAN

My assistant quit today. Okay? He
 was highly valuable to the project.

LILA

Oh, baby. I'm sorry. Can't you hire
 somebody else?

NATHAN

I guess.

Lila screws up her face in concentration, trying to come with a viable solution to Nathan's problem.

LILA

Hey! I could come work for you! I
 know I haven't been all that
 supportive of this project, but I've
 come around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Have you?

LILA

Oh yes, baby! I think that this is a wonderful project you're doing, taking this poor unfortunate, uncivilized creature and turning him into a human being! What a wonderful wonderful compassionate man you are!

NATHAN

Really?

LILA

Yes! And I want to help. You won't have to pay me, and I was thinking of giving up that crazy nature writing anyway.

NATHAN

How come?

LILA

Who needs it? I have you and I have being a woman and I have thinking about womanly things! I love being a woman because ...

NATHAN

Such as what womanly things?

LILA

Such as my man and how to please him!

(kisses him)

Such as making wonderful dinners for my man!

(kisses him again, leads him to the table, sits him down)

Such as looking pretty for my man!

(kisses him again)

And I'm writing an article on quilting for the Ladies Home Journal!

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

LILA

I had sold my fucking soul.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

NATHAN

I let her sell her soul. I stood by as she did it. It's inexcusable.

(beat)

At the time though I thought it might help.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

PUFF

When she came to work with Nathan, she seemed different, gentlemen, I don't know, somehow soulless.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Puff is in his case in formal evening wear in a makeshift opera box. There is a mannequin woman sitting next to him and a boom box pumping out Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Puff seems attentive, refined, occasionally bringing a pair of opera glasses up to his eyes, pinky extended. Outside the case, Nathan and Lila look on. The opera is over. Puff stands, applauds, yells "Bravo", and tosses a rose in the direction of the imaginary stage. The rose hits the Lucite wall and falls to the floor. Nathan and Lila stand and applaud Puff.

NATHAN

Bravo to *you*, Puff!

LILA

That was wonderful!

Puff smiles and performs a foppish bow, almost a curtsy. He picks up the rose, sniffs it, dramatically savoring its scent.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan and Gabrielle are having sex. They are focused and intent, although Gabrielle keeps chatting.

GABRIELLE

You were wonderful today, darling. Such authority with the ape-man boy. It made me so hot for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Unnhh.

GABRIELLE

The way you are taming him, it sends chills down my girlish spine and ... *everywhere* else, too.

NATHAN

Urgh.

GABRIELLE

Take me, darling! Tame your little monkey of love!

There is a mutual climax. A moment of silence, then a spent Nathan rolls off onto his side of the bed. We see that it is really Lila in bed with him, not Gabrielle.

LILA

(sighing)

Well, I'm tamed, Dr. Bronfman.

Nathan stares up at the ceiling.

NATHAN

I'm glad ... my assistant.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

We see a montage of interactions between Nathan, Puff, and Lila.

- 1) Nathan demonstrates the proper way to taste wine: sniffing the cork, swishing the wine around in the glass, sipping, nodding in the affirmative to the waiter. Puff, inside his case, imitates it perfectly.
- 2) Nathan shows Puff a flashcard which reads: "I'll start tonight with the foie gras."
- 3) Puff is holding up a small hand mirror and trimming nose hairs. Lila applauds.
- 4) Puff juggles three balls while riding a unicycle.
- 5) Puff, dressed as Peter Pan, stands with legs spread and hands on hips. He is singing "I Gotta Crow."
- 6) Puff, dressed in an apron and chef's hat, is tossing a salad. There are two types of vinegar to choose from. He

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

hesitates, then chooses the balsamic. Nathan and Lila applaud.

7) Puff, in a smoking jacket and smoking a pipe, is sitting in an easy chair, next to a fake fire and a fake sleeping dog, and reading a book of poems by Yeats. Lila and Nathan, outside the case, applaud and embrace.

NATHAN

I think he's ready.

LILA

Oh boy!

PUFF

(jumping up)

Oh boy!

NATHAN

Now, Puff, we're leaving on the electronic collar. I don't think we'll need to shock you, but just in case.

PUFF

Okay. That's fair.

Nathan unlocks the case. Puff tentatively steps out into the world. He hugs Nathan. It's a grateful, obsequious, slightly pathetic hug. Nathan hugs him back, but he's keeping him at a distance. Puff pulls himself out of the hug, but still rests his hands on Nathan's shoulders and looks him in the eye, almost like a lover. Then he parts with Nathan and goes over to embrace Lila. She graciously receives him. After a moment in the embrace, Puff starts dry-humping Lila. Lila can't get out of his clutches.

NATHAN

No, Puff! Bad!

Nathan presses a button, which shocks Puff and sends him flying. Puff appears disoriented, then gets up off the floor, brushes himself off, and turns to Lila with a bow of his head.

PUFF

My apologies, madam.

LILA

It's okay, Puff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF
Shan't happen again.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Lila, Nathan, and Puff walk along. Puff is astounded by everything he sees. He looks with wonderment at the tall buildings, the cars, the many different types of people. He looks like an idiot.

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

Puff, Lila, and Nathan are eating lunch. Everything is very proper. Puff is doing wonderfully.

NATHAN
This is great, Puff. You're doing fine.

PUFF
I'm loving this. It's such a treat to be out and about. What a wonderful invention a city is. The immense buildings of glass and steel glinting in the afternoon sun, the smartly dressed women in their best summer frocks, the colorful street vendors.

The waitress comes by.

WAITRESS
How is everything?

PUFF
Just spectacular. Great salmon. Fantastico! You've got to give me the recipe! My compliments to the chef!

WAITRESS
I'm glad you ...

Puff stands and grabs her and starts humping her.

NATHAN
Puff, no!

Nathan presses a button on a small black box. Puff falls to the floor. The waitress looks on, sort of confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WAITRESS

And will that be all today?

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - DAY

Lila, Nathan, and Puff are in the back seat of the moving taxi.

PUFF

It shan't happen again. I swear it.
I'm just getting my sea legs, you know.

LILA

(patting Puff on the back)
It's an animal urge, Puff. It's
nothing to be ashamed of.

NATHAN

Lila! Tell him.

Lila looks at Nathan, amends her statement.

LILA

(to Puff)
You just have to control it. We're
not apes.

NATHAN

Thank you very much for that.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Puff is sitting in a chair and facing a screen. The collar is around his neck. Nathan and Lila stand behind him at a slide projector.

PUFF

I don't think this averson therapy is
really necessary, doctor. I
understand the problem.

NATHAN

Humor me, Puff. It's essential that I
am able to trust you to function
independently in the world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF

I bow to your expertise in these matters.

NATHAN

Lila?

Lila dims the lights and switches on the projector. An image of a pretty, fully clothed woman appears on the screen. Puff's eyes widen, but he remains seated.

NATHAN

Good. You're doing fine.

The slide changes to a naked woman standing in a neutral position, no expression on her face. Puff twitches, but stays seated.

NATHAN

Excellent.

The slide changes to another photo of the same woman in the same position, but with a seductive smile on her face. Puff clutches the arms of the chairs.

NATHAN

You're doing very nicely, Puff. I'm pleased.

The slide changes to another picture of the same woman, this time she is naked, has her back to the camera, is sticking her butt out, and looking over her shoulder at the viewer with shiny, heavily lipsticked, pursed lips. Puff is shaking.

NATHAN

Great ...

Puff leaps out of his chair screaming and lunges for the screen. Nathan grabs the black box and jolts him. Puff goes flying in the air and lands with a crack. He heaves for a while, then leaps up and runs for the screen again. Again Nathan shocks him. Again he lands on the floor. He heaves, stands, lunges for the screen again. Nathan shocks him. This happens seven more times. Smoke is pouring out from the collar. Puff struggles to his feet. Looks at the screen. He shrugs.

PUFF

(unimpressed)

Eh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Puff sits down in his chair, and studies his finger nails.
Nathan switches off the projector.

NATHAN
Excellent work, Puff. Extra desert
tonight.

PUFF
Yahoo!

NATHAN
Tomorrow, the acid test.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

This is a *Hooters*-type establishment called "Chester's."
The waitresses are very busty and in tight t-shirts which
are emblazoned with the name of the restaurant. Lila,
Nathan, and Puff sit at a table. Puff studies his menu
intently, not daring to look up. Lila looks around
uncomfortably. A waitress approaches.

CHESTER'S WAITRESS
How you all doin' today?

NATHAN
(cheerily)
Very well.

LILA
(awkwardly)
Very well.

PUFF
(looking down)
Very well.

CHESTER'S WAITRESS
Good enough! What can I get for you?

NATHAN
Puff, why don't you order first?

PUFF
(looking at menu)
Uh, what's a Reuben, please?

The waitress leans over to study the menu. Her breasts are
in Puff's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHESTER'S WAITRESS

The what, honey? Oh, the Reuben?
That's a sandwich with corned beef and
sauer ...

PUFF

That's fine. That's what I'll have.
Corned beef is a good food.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Lila, Nathan, and Puff walk along.

NATHAN

Puff, I'm proud of you! You did
remarkably well under difficult
circumstances.

LILA

Absolutely!

Puff jumps up and down excitedly.

PUFF

Did I? I tried so hard! I really
concentrated! Oh, I'm so happy!

NATHAN

And because you did so well, we have a
little surprise for you.

PUFF

(happily)
Extra dessert?

NATHAN

Even better.

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Lila, Nathan, and Puff enter. Puff sees his Lucite case.
It has been transformed into a bachelor pad. Inside is a
king-size bed, a TV, a couch, coffee table, shelves lined
with books, a small kitchenette. There is a curtain which
can be drawn for privacy. Puff is taken aback.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN AND LILA

Surprise!

Puff gasps and runs into the room. He is thrilled. Nathan holds up a key.

NATHAN

Free to come and go as you please.
There's some "mad money" in the night
table drawer.

PUFF

(taking the key, hugging
Nathan)

It's wonderful! Do you think I'm
ready? Do you really?

NATHAN

I trust that you'll make good, mature
decisions. I trust that you'll do the
proper thing.

PUFF

Oh, I will!
(gravely)
Your very trust has instilled an
enormous sense of responsibility in
me. I don't want to disappoint you.

NATHAN

Good. Remember, when in doubt: Don't
ever do what you really want to do.

PUFF

(taking it in)
Got it.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lila and Nathan sit as far as possible from each other and
read books. Nathan looks at his watch.

CUT TO:

INT. PUFF'S CASE - NIGHT

Puff, dressed identically to Nathan, reads Moby Dick and
smokes a pipe. He distractedly taps his foot, stands and
studies a Monet print on the wall. His foot is still
nervously tapping. He checks his watch.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nathan stands.

NATHAN

I'm going to go down and check on Puff. See how he's holding up.

LILA

(stretching)
Should I come with?

NATHAN

Nah. You just relax. How's the book?

LILA

(lazily, happily)
Ummm. It's good.

Nathan kisses Lila on the forehead.

NATHAN

I won't be long.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Nathan drives with a determined look on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is a mess. Every single light is on. Gabrielle is lounging in a stained nightshirt with a dopey cartoon bear on the front. She's got some sort of pimple medication dabbed on her face. She unconsciously but ferociously bites her nails as she watches TV and talks on the phone. There is no trace of a French accent.

GABRIELLE

(into phone)
You're kidding! Holy shit.
(beat)
Yeah, no duh! I had a wild hair up my ass over that for a month.

There's a knock at the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

Yeah? What?

NATHAN (O.S.)

Hi. It's Nathan.

Gabrielle's eyes widen. She jumps up from the couch and starts straightening.

GABRIELLE

(into phone)

Call you back.

(hangs up, assumes French
accent)

You bastard! What do *you* want?

NATHAN (O.S.)

I just want to talk.

GABRIELLE

(ripping off her nightshirt)

We have nothing to say! You are a rotten bastard, that's what!

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nathan stands there leaning against the door.

NATHAN

Please. Just one minute of your time.

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

Why? You've made your decision, Mister Stinky American! Now I hate you! No, I don't hate you; I don't even think about you!

NATHAN

I've got some things to tell you.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Gabrielle is standing in front of a mirror, holding different sexy outfits up to herself, trying to decide.

GABRIELLE

Like what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (O.S.)

Well, I think it would be easier if I could talk to you in person.

GABRIELLE

What for?

CUT TO:

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We hear banging and rustling and arranging coming from inside the apartment.

NATHAN

Well, I think ...

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

You think too much. I need a man who doesn't think so much but acts more than he thinks ... is what I need!

NATHAN

What?

GABRIELLE

You heard me! You make me sick when you pretend to not understand what I am saying to you! Go away from here!

NATHAN

(turning away)

Well, look, I'm sorry to have bothered you.

He starts to head down the hall.

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

(beat, then screaming)

All right, already! Come in if you must! The door's open, you son of a bitch!

Nathan heads back to the apartment, tries the knob. The door's open. He enters.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The lights are low. The place is neat. Cool jazz plays quietly in the background. Candles are lit. Gabrielle is nowhere to be found. Nathan takes it all in. It's quite seductive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE (O.S.)

In here, you lousy piece of *merde*.

Nathan follows her voice. He exits into the bedroom.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Candles in here also. Gabrielle, now made up and in a satin teddy, lounges in bed, eating cherries from a bowl. Nathan just stares. She is slightly out of breath, but trying to conceal it. A film of perspiration glistens on her brow.

GABRIELLE

(testy)

Well?

NATHAN

God, you're beautiful.

GABRIELLE

Please. I look a mess.

NATHAN

No. You look so beautiful.

GABRIELLE

Anyway. Come already to the point.

NATHAN

I'm ... I'm going to leave Lila. I can't stop thinking about you.

GABRIELLE

I've moved on.

NATHAN

No!

GABRIELLE

I've been seeing Johannsen in chemistry.

NATHAN

(raging)

That goddamn Neanderthal? I'm the one who gave him the idea for the combination bug spray-sun screen! Did you know that?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE
(calm, dismissive)
That's not how he tells it.

NATHAN
Of course not, that Swedish thief!
He's a thief of hearts!
(beat)
I love you, Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE
(dismissive)
Hunh.

NATHAN
Just give me some time to let Lila
down easily. She's a really nice girl
and I don't want to hurt her more than
is necessary.

GABRIELLE
(beat)
You hurt me, you know, when you made
Nathan's Choice. Does that not even
matter to you, you pig?

Gabrielle cries quietly. Nathan moves closer to her. He strokes her hair.

NATHAN
Can you ever forgive me?

Gabrielle looks up at him. Her expression is noncommittal and pouty, but she grabs his arm and pulls him down on top of her.

CUT TO:

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Puff, dressed a bit like he's a Victorian dandy, sits in the front row and watches a naked woman on stage dancing. A topless cocktail waitress comes by with a fresh drink for him. She takes away his empty glass. He is horribly drunk and holding himself with exaggerated rigidity -- an amateur drinker's attempt to look sober.

CUT TO:

INT. LILA AND NATHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nathan enters. Lila sits on the couch still reading. She looks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Hey.

Nathan kisses her on the forehead.

LILA

You were gone a long time.

NATHAN

(sits down next to her)

Yeah. Puff and I got into a big, philosophical discussion. He's really quite well read, considering he's only been literate for a month now. He's going to make us famous, Lila.

LILA

So he's doing okay?

NATHAN

Seemed fine. Quiet evening enjoying his new digs.

LILA

That's funny because, you know, I just went and picked him up at some flophouse on the lower eastside. He called here when he ran out of his "mad" money after spending an entire evening drinking, watching strippers, and *fucking a whore!*

(then casually)

Oh, and what did you do tonight, honey?

NATHAN

Shit.

LILA

And what did you do tonight, honey?

NATHAN

I've fallen in love with somebody else, Lila.

LILA

(pointedly)

And what did you do tonight, honey?

NATHAN

I fucked her! Okay? I fucked her. I'm sorry. But that's what the hell I did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA
(standing)
Do you know what I gave up to be with
you?

NATHAN
Yes.

LILA
I gave up my soul, my beliefs. I gave
up my body hair!

NATHAN
Yeah, well, I'm sorry. The human
heart is a strange thing.

LILA
How the hell would you know anything
about the human heart?

NATHAN
(moving to her)
Lila ...

Lila turns around and slugs him, square on the jaw, hard,
knocking him to the floor.

LILA
How's that for ladylike, Nathan.

Lila opens up the hall closet and pulls out a suitcase.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila looks pale and shaken. She smokes.

LILA
For two weeks I holed myself up in a
motel room. I didn't even know who I
was. My world had crumbled. There is
nothing that makes you feel dirtier
than finally deciding to sell your soul
and finding no buyers.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Lila lies in bed watching TV. She is a mess. The room is a
mess. The wig is off. There's hair sprouting on her face.
The curtains are drawn. There is a knock at the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

No maid service! For God's sake,
can't you read the fucking "do not
disturb" sign on the fucking doorknob?

ROSE (O.S.)

Lila, it's Rosie.

LILA

(beat)
Go the fuck away, Rosie.

ROSE (O.S.)

Please, honey, let me in.

LILA

Rose, please go away.

ROSE (O.S.)

Lila, I want to help you.

Lila gets up, drags herself to the door, and opens it. Rose stands there trying not to let it show how lousy Lila looks.

LILA

How'd you know where I was?

ROSE

Nathan told my brother.

LILA

Your brother should have his license
revoked.

ROSE

Yeah, although I'm not going to turn
him in. I like hearing the dirt.

LILA

(suddenly crying)
Why didn't your brother tell you that
Nathan was having an affair?

Rose holds Lila, who hangs on her as she weeps.

ROSE

I don't know, honey. I don't know.
Maybe he just didn't want to get
involved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

Oh, Rosie.

ROSE

Let's get you out of here. Come stay with me until you get your strength back.

(cheerily)

Free electrolysis, if you want it! We'll get that face of yours cleared up in no time.

Lila mulls it over. She looks back at the hotel room. It's depressing. She sniffs in her snot.

LILA

Yeah. I gotta get myself together. I want to look good. If I'm gonna fuck with Nathan, and I am, I want him to want to fuck me when I do it.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

This sequence is Lila getting her strength back, both emotional and physical. It is intercut with scenes of Nathan and Gabrielle taking Puff on the lecture circuit.

- 1) Lila eating a good breakfast.
- 2) Lila struggling to do push-ups.
- 3) Lila getting electrolysis on her face.
- 4) Lila reading Nietzsche.
- 5) Lila jogging.

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

A bearded psychologist addresses a crowd of bearded psychologists.

BEARDED PSYCHOLOGIST

... and so without further ado, I give you Dr. Nathan Bronfman and Puff.

The room bursts into applause as Nathan and Puff walk out onstage, both in tuxes. Nathan stands behind a podium, Puff sits casually, legs crossed, in a chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Thank you. Let's get right to it.
Here we have Puff the day of his
capture.

A video of Puff naked in his Lucite case, clawing at it, shrieking like a banshee, and neurotically hopping up and down, is projected onto a screen behind Nathan. There is a collective gasp from the audience. Puff watches the video with amused detachment. The video stops.

NATHAN

And here he is today, a scant three
months later.

Puff stands, bows slightly to the audience. They burst into vigorous applause.

NATHAN

Puff, why don't you say a few words to
the assemblage.

PUFF

It would be my pleasure, doctor.
(behind podium)
Distinguished gentlemen and ladies of
the psychological community, I stand
before you today, a living testament
to the amazing skill of Dr. Nathan
Bronfman. To say that he took me from
crayons to perfume would be a vast
understatement. Dr. Bronfman took me
from playing with my own feces, then
to crayons, and then to an
appreciation of the complex works of
Franz Kline, Joseph Beuys, and Marcel
Duchamp. From compulsive masturbation
to ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - A BIT LATER

Gabrielle waits in the wings.

PUFF (O.S.)

And, so, goodnight, *adieu*, until we
meet again, *au revoir*.

The audience bursts into thunderous applause. Gabrielle joins in. Nathan and Puff hurry off stage. Gabrielle embraces Nathan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

You were wonderful!

NATHAN

Was I? I wasn't a tad stiff?

GABRIELLE

Don't be silly!

(hugs Puff)

And you were wonderful, too! I loved
the way you said "*au revoir*."

Puff and Gabrielle exchange a look. She discreetly pinches Puff's butt, smiles, winks. Nathan doesn't see this. He puts his arm around Gabrielle.

NATHAN

Come on, you two. Let's go celebrate!

Nathan and Gabrielle walk on ahead. Puff tags behind, watching Gabrielle's delightful walk.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Puff sits up on his bed, looking dejected. He listens to the sounds of Nathan and Gabrielle having sex in the adjoining room. He looks at his watch, gets up, gets dressed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. X RATED BOOKSTORE - LATER

A sweaty, sick-looking Puff watches a porno film in a little booth. It ends. He steps out into the fluorescent glare of the store. He walks out past several skulking degenerates.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Puff exits the bookstore, walks down the street checking out the tawdry hookers. He chooses one. She leads him into a dark alley.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

6) Lila in a Tai Chi class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- 7) Lila doing jumping jacks.
- 8) Lila reading *The Art of War*.
- 9) Lila doing stomach crunches.
- 10) Lila doing chin ups.
- 11) Lila swimming laps.
- 12) Lila getting more electrolysis.

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Puff is on stage demonstrating his ballroom dancing technique. He is waltzing with Gabrielle. Nathan stops the music, and picks up a microphone.

NATHAN

Now the tango.

Nathan puts a tango record on. Gabrielle and Puff perform expertly. The audience applauds.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Gabrielle, Nathan, and Puff are eating dinner.

NATHAN

I think it went swimmingly today. You two make an excellent team.

Gabrielle and Puff look at each other. She touches Puff's knee under the table. Nathan is busy eating.

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Puff paces as he listens to sex noises from the next room.

CUT TO:

EXT. BAD NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Puff walks along checking out the prostitutes. He signals to one with a nonchalant jerk of his head.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

- 13) Lila doing one-handed push-ups.
- 14) Lila rolling on the ground with a rifle.
- 15) Lila, in boxing gloves, punching a bag.
- 16) Lila reading the Kama Sutra.
- 17) Lila getting electrolysis.

CUT TO:

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Puff addresses the crowd. Lila and Nathan look on adoringly from the wings.

PUFF

To be taken from the depths of
ignorance and depravity and raised to
heights of culture and refinement!
This is the priceless gift bestowed
upon me by Dr. Nathan Bronfman.

Thunderous applause.

CUT TO:

INT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Puff leans against the wall drinking whiskey from a bottle, as a prostitute, down on her knees in front of him, does her business. The look on his face is not one of pleasure or even release. It is a look of decay.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

- 18) Lila does chin ups. Her sweaty, muscular arms glisten in the sun.
- 19) Lila wind sprinting.
- 20) Lila getting electrolysis. Rose moves away from her.

ROSE

Done!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA
 (standing triumphantly)
 Ready!

CUT TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Nathan and Gabrielle, in lab coats, sit chatting with Puff. Puff sneaks glances at Gabrielle's legs and cleavage. She makes his viewing possible.

GABRIELLE
 (off clipboard)
 So we've got seventeen new bookings for speaking engagements, my wonderful men.

NATHAN
 Terrific. We're all going to be rich and famous.

Nathan kisses Gabrielle.

PUFF
 Thanks to you, Nate.

NATHAN
 Thanks to you, Buddy. And your diligence and intelligence. And Perseverance

Puff blushes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
 (to Gabrielle)
 And of course to you, my sweet, for your ... moral support.

PUFF
 (applauding)
 here, here.

Gabrielle kisses Nathan while glancing at Puff. A midget in a business suit enters. It's the sour-looking guy from the freak show.

MIDGET
 Excuse me, are you Dr. Bronfman?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF

Is that a little boy?

NATHAN

(teaching)

No, Puff. This man is a midget. In actuality, they prefer to be called "Little People." Isn't that correct, my good man?

MIDGET

Yes sir. Little People.

NATHAN

This Little Person is actually a fully grown adult man, Puff, believe it or not, who, due to a genetic anomaly, is miniature but perfectly proportioned.

(to midget)

Turn, please.

The midget turns.

PUFF

(jotting in notebook)

Interesting.

NATHAN

Now, my diminutive friend, what can I do for you?

The midget pulls out a gun.

MIDGET

You can get into that goddamn Lucite bachelor pad for starters, Goliath.

Nathan, Gabrielle, and Puff look frightened. They stand and back into the case.

MIDGET

(to Puff)

Not you, Joyboy.

Puff stops in his tracks. Nathan and Gabrielle continue to back into the case.

NATHAN

What is this about? We have no money on these premises. Please if you are from some little person terrorist fringe group ...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIDGET
(loud and scary)
Shut up!

Nathan and Gabrielle hurry into the case. The midget closes and locks the door behind them. Puff is frozen with fear. Lila enters. She looks different now. Savage. Strong. Kind of sexy. She wears guerilla-like black clothing and a beret over her closely hacked-off hair. She also carries a gun.

NATHAN
Lila?

GABRIELLE
That's Lila?

LILA
Shut up! Yeah, this is Lila, cunt. And don't let the hirsutism fool you. I know more about being a woman, and more about the black hearts of men than you, in your pretty little powdered, bullshit fantasy world, can ever imagine. I know the darkness and cruelty of nature, sweetie pie.

NATHAN
Lila, you don't intend to hurt us, do you?

LILA
Eat shit, thumbtack dick!
(to Midget)
Thank you, Frank. You're the best.

Lila kisses the midget on the top of the head.

MIDGET
Anything for you, Lila.

LILA
See, Frank and I are kindred spirits. We both know what it's like to be shunned because of our appearance. We both know how easily that turns into self-hatred.

MIDGET
Amen. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rose enters hurriedly, carrying rope. She bends over and kisses Frank hard on the mouth for a long moment, then:

ROSE
 (to Lila)
 Sorry I'm late, parking is a bitch at
 this place.

Lila looks over and sees the two trained mice in the Lucite case sitting at a tiny table and very politely eating their lunch. One of the mice makes eye contact with Lila.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lila is naked in the bathroom and about to kill herself when she makes eye contact with the mouse on the shelf next to the tub.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LAB - DAY

Lila brings her focus back to the room. Everyone is watching her, waiting for some direction.

LILA
 Uh, tie them up, Rosie. If you will.

ROSE
 With pleasure.

Frank keeps the gun on Gabrielle and Nathan. Rose enters the case and begins to tie them up and gag them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Puff is sitting in the car. The electronic collar is back around his neck. Lila holds the black control box, and the Lucite case with the two mice in it. She stands outside the car with Frank and Rose.

ROSE
 I'm going to miss you.

LILA
 Oh, Rosie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSE

And I'm going to miss the lifestyle
having you as a client has afforded me.

LILA

Shut up, you.

Lila laughs and hugs her.

ROSE

I like you so much, with or without
hair.

(confidentially)

But don't spread that around. Bad for
business.

LILA

I'm really glad you two found each
other.

Frank and Rose put their arms around each other. Frank is
exactly crotch-high to Rose.

MIDGET

We're soul mates.

ROSE

Souls have nothing to do with it, babe.

LILA

I'll be in touch.

ROSE

No you won't. But it's okay. You have
stuff you gotta do.

Lila tears up. So does Rose. They just stand there for a
moment, then:

LILA

(choked)

Gotta go.

Lila hurries around the car, gets in, and drives off. Rose
and Frank embrace. Frank nestles. Rose sighs contentedly.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Lila's car drives along. Puff looks nervously out the
window.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - EVENING

Lila and Puff are driving in silence on a dirt road through the woods. Lila pulls off the road, drives to a place where the car will be camouflaged, and parks.

LILA

Stay.

Puff stays in the car. Lila gets out, pulls the Lucite mouse case from the back seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Lila puts the case on the ground and unlatches it. The mice looks confused at first. Then the male mouse pushes the door open and holds it for the female mouse, who exits. The male mouse follows her, and closes the door behind him. He turns to Lila, nods, then extends his arm for the female mouse to hold on to. She does, and they walk off together on their hind legs into the woods. Lila sighs, and turns to Puff.

LILA

Out.

Puff gets out casually, then makes a mad dash for the road. Lila calmly presses the button on her black box. Puff spasms and falls to the ground.

LILA (CONT'D)

Bad.

Puff stays on the ground, breathing hard.

LILA (CONT'D)

Get up.

Puff does.

LILA (CONT'D)

Take off your clothes.

Puff does. So does Lila. She is covered with hair, except for her face. But whereas Puff is now white and soft-looking, Lila is tan and taut and muscular. This is a reversal of the way both of them were when they first met. Puff seems taken with her body.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA (CONT'D)

We're going back to nature, you and I.
I'm going to retrain you. I'm going
to make you free again if I have to
kill you doing it.

PUFF

But I like being human now.

Lila shocks Puff. He falls to the ground.

LILA

You *what*?

PUFF

I want to be the way I was before.

LILA

(sweet)

Good. I'll show you how, apey.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - A BIT LATER

Puff and Lila have built makeshift shelter out of leaves and twigs. They are sitting around a campfire, naked and dirty, roasting a couple of skinned squirrels on sticks. The black box rests in Lila's lap. Puff looks at the roasting squirrel, is repulsed.

PUFF

Nice night.

LILA

Talking is to be kept to a minimum.
Eventually, when we are ready, there
will be none. Language was invented
so that people could lie to each other
and to themselves. There is no other
reason.

Puff begins to disagree. Lila's hand hovers over the button. He stops himself.

PUFF

(confused)

I agree?

Lila shocks Puff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

You lose. Any answer is the wrong answer.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAKESHIFT SHELTER - NIGHT

Puff and Lila lie separately under blankets of moss. The breathing is heavy. Both seem to be sleeping. Puff opens his eyes and tries to extricate himself from the moss without making any noise. Lila presses the button and Puff falls in a quivering mess.

LILA

(whisper)

You'll thank me eventually, Puff. Welll, you won't thank me, because we won't be speaking, but you'll sort of thank me with a special look, the look a dog gives you to let you know he loves you.

PUFF

What an enchanting picture you paint of our future together.

Lila shocks Puff once again. As he spasms, we:

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff testifies.

PUFF

And so commenced my reeducation, gentlemen. Lila taught me so much. She was a stern but fair teacher. And over time, I began to remember the carefree joy of living in a pure state of being. But something else happened as well, something perhaps distinctly human ... I began to fall in love with Lila.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Lila and Puff are naked and collecting mushrooms and berries. Time has passed. Both Lila and Puff are dirtier and hairier. Puff still wears his collar. Lila bends over to pick a mushroom. Puff looks at her from behind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF

Boy, you look so good from this ang...

Lila turns, puts her finger to her lips in a gentle "no talking" reminder, then shocks the hell out of Puff. He spasms and falls on top of her, knocking her to the ground. He regains his composure, finds himself on top of Lila. They look at each other for a moment. Then they kiss. It's a violent kiss. They grope each other. This is primal sex now. In the dirt. Sweaty. Loud grunting. Lila even presses the shock button at the right moment. Puff seems to like it in this context.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nathan and Gabrielle are in bed, making love. It is gentle, romantic, in good taste -- in direct contrast to the animal, violent sex Puff and Lila are having. They finish. Nathan pulls himself off of Gabrielle and falls onto his back, staring up at the ceiling.

GABRIELLE

A penny for your thoughts, *mon cheri*.

NATHAN

I don't know. Something's missing.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Gabrielle, Nathan, and Nathan's parents eat dinner. Nathan's parents are in clown make-up. There is a long silence. Nathan is still sad. Gabrielle steals glances at Nathan's parents. Finally Nathan speaks.

NATHAN

(uninterested)

So, Mother and Father, how's *Godspell* going?

MOTHER

How did you know we ...

The parents look at each other burst out laughing.

MOTHER

Tell him, Harold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER

It's going famously, son, famously!

NATHAN

(despondent)

I'm glad.

MOTHER

Harold, ask Nathan what's wrong.

GABRIELLE

Yes, please, somebody ask him what is wrong.

NATHAN

I don't know.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nathan and Gabrielle are in bed. Nathan stares up at the ceiling. Finally:

NATHAN

I want our boy back.

GABRIELLE

(sadly)

Oui.

NATHAN

That bitch. I worked so hard. *We* worked so hard, you and I. He would've made us famous.

GABRIELLE

We still have you and I.

NATHAN

I know. And that's great. But it would be great in a better way, not a better way but a different way, if I could find him and bring him back.

GABRIELLE

Where do we look for little lost Puff?

NATHAN

I have some thoughts. I think that hairy bitch is somewhere trying to turn him back into an ape.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABRIELLE

That is horrible. Apes are dirty. No?

NATHAN

You better believe they're dirty! And smelly! And messy! And they don't know their forks from their assholes!

Nathan, seemingly in the grips of a sudden horrific migraine, scrunches his face and holds his ears. He relaxes a bit, and gets out of bed. He walks across the room, pulls on some pants, and picks up a container called "Stop Buggin' Me, Sunny."

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I'm going alone. This could be dangerous.

GABRIELLE

(pulling covers up and turning away from him onto her side)

Okay, my sweet. Good night.

NATHAN

A little resistance would be nice, damn it.

GABRIELLE

(without opening her eyes)
Please let me go with you.

NATHAN

No.

GABRIELLE

Okay.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Nathan is driving along a wooded dirt road. He's in his immaculate safari suit. He looks tired. He stops the car, pulls out a gun, and gets out.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Nathan gets out of the car and runs into the woods. We follow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN
(yelling)
Aha!

He looks around there is no one there. He sighs and walks back to his car, pulls out a map and marks an area with a red X.

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Nathan is in his underwear. He is ironing his safari suit as he talks on the phone.

NATHAN
No luck yet, my sweet.

We see an unfolded map on the bed. There are red X's in almost all the state parks along the east coast.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

Lila and puff are having sex again next to a campfire. Now Lila is wearing the collar, and Puff is giving her well timed shocks. They giggle and kiss after they finish. Puff sits up. He holds his stomach and grunts hungrily. Lila grunts back. She stands and retrieves a sack of berries. Puff and Lila greedily, gluttonously stuff their faces. Lila takes some berries and smashes them against Puff's face. She laughs heartily. He looks annoyed for a second, but then grabs a handful and squishes them against Lila's face. Pretty soon they are having a berry war and are covered in purple stains. They hug each other, out of breath and laughing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila smiles.

LILA
It was paradise.
(beat, sadly)
At least for a tiny little while.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lila and Puff lie naked in a tree, lazily soaking up the mid-day sun. There is a rustling in the bushes. They both look up, alert but calm. Nathan, immaculate in his safari suit, appears in the clearing. He holds a gun.

NATHAN

Aha! Finally. I've covered almost the entire seaboard and parts of eastern Ohio.

LILA

Ugnh.

PUFF

Ugnh.

NATHAN

Oh please, is that as articulate as you can be after all the time I spent teaching you? We've discussed Wittgenstein, for Christ's sake. Not that you ever had anything very original or challenging to say on the subject.

PUFF

Unn.

NATHAN

Down from the tree. Both of you. Keep your hands where I can see them. Don't want you pulling any weapons out of your fur.

Nathan laughs heartily, haughtily, at his joke as Lila and Puff climb down from the tree.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Look at you two. You both disgust me.

LILA

Oook. Oook.

NATHAN

Shut up!

(to Puff)

I gave you ... *life*. I created you in my image, Puff. I took you from this primordial ooze and brought you into the world of culture and art and manners. And this is how you repay

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN (cont'd)

me? By heading back to the ooze first chance you get? I should leave you here with Lila the ape woman. It would serve you right, you ungrateful piece of crap. But I'm not going to. You're too valuable to me. Totally selfish of me. You serve my purpose. But if you had any smarts you would realize that I serve your purpose as well. Life is so much more delightful when lived in a silk suit.

LILA

Ooka.

NATHAN

Don't worry, Lila. You can stay. I don't have any interest in you anymore.
(to Puff)
C'mon, monkey boy.

Puff looks at Lila. Lila shrugs helplessly. Puff reaches out to touch her hand.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Now!

Puff looks at Lila again. She jerks her head in the direction of Nathan. Puff sighs and moves to Nathan. Nathan prods Puff, and they head off through the trees. Suddenly Puff elbows Nathan. Nathan grunts, doubles over. Puff turns, lunges, and the two wrestle on the ground. Puff pries the gun from Nathan's hand, and jumps up. Nathan stands also, backing away. Puff has the gun trained on Nathan. Lila runs to Puff, stands behind him.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Puff, put the gun down.

PUFF

Ounpoo. Ungh.

NATHAN

Let's be reasonable human beings here. We're all reasonable human beings, aren't we?

PUFF

(jumping up and down like a chimp)

Unka unka unka unka unka.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATHAN

Look, why don't you and Lila stay here and have your natural life. I'll just go on my way. You'll never see me again.

PUFF

(to Lila, guiltily)

I have to talk. Is that okay?

Lila nods.

PUFF (CONT'D)

(to Nathan)

You did create me in your image, Nathan. Before you I was a simple, happy, complete being, in harmony with the world around me. After you I became duplicitous, cynical, angry, anal, totally out of touch with my surroundings. In a word, Nathan, I became you. Lila has reintroduced me to myself. And, incidentally, what I'm about to do, kill you, is something that would never have occurred to me to do as a creature of the Earth. Before when I killed, it was for food or in self-defense. Now I will kill for revenge. Revenge is an abstract concept, Nathan. And I learned abstract thinking from you.

NATHAN

No.

LILA

Puff, don't.

Puff shoots. A crow screams. The fluttering of wings. The bullet hits Nathan in the head. He falls.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Lila sobs.

LILA

Then I shot Nathan.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Puff dabs his eye.

PUFF

Then Lila shot Nathan.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - DAY

Nathan talks.

NATHAN

Then Puff shot me. Then I died.
That's all I know. That's the end of
my story. Do I get to go to heaven
now?

(beat)

Or is it ... hell?

(beat)

Or ... what?

(beat)

I just stay here, is it? I just stay
here and tell it again? And after
that? Again? And after ...

(sighs)

Yes. Yes, of course.

(sighs, clears his throat)

We move into an extreme close-up.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(beginning again)

I don't even know what sorry means
anymore. It's odd. When I was alive
I knew -- maybe it was all I knew ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Lila runs to Nathan. She kneels beside him.

LILA

He's dead.

PUFF

(calmly)

We bury the body. We disappear into
the woods. Nobody knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

(beat, then quietly)

No. This is the end of the road. There's a dead human being here. For all of his faults, he was a human being, and certainly a victim of his culture as much as anybody.

PUFF

Forget him, Lila. We'll disappear. We'll never talk about it again. We'll never talk again period. I love you.

LILA

Puff, what happened to you is as much my fault as Nathan's. Maybe more so, because I knew it was wrong and I went along with it anyway. I'm taking responsibility for the murder. I want you to go back to your old life.

PUFF

I won't let you do that. I shot the bastard. And I'm glad.

LILA

No. Go back to the woods. This is a sacrifice I need to make. In my world we have something called penance. It's another abstraction, but I had the concept drummed into my head during my years in the convent. It doesn't exist for you, and it shouldn't. See, I could never be free again anyway, so I might as well be in jail.

PUFF

(beat)

Then I'll live for both of us, Lila. I'll be the most free, truest animal in the whole forest. For both of us.

LILA

(tearing up)

That's what I'm counting on.

PUFF

(an idea)

But first I'll live among them, just long enough to testify before congress about the waywardness of humankind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILA

(shrugs)

Okay. If you think it will help.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL - DAY

Lila, now in prison coveralls, sits in a dayroom with other women convicts. She is watching a TV mounted on the wall. Puff is testifying.

PUFF

And so, gentlemen, that is my story. I agreed to testify before this committee because I hoped to convey to the American public that there is indeed a paradise lost. Human beings have become so enamored of their technologies and their intellectual prowess and their fancy gourmet foods, that they've forgotten to look to the Earth as a teacher. This is hubris, my friends. And my story of destruction and betrayal is proof of that. I will keep my promise to Lila. I will shed this suit and go back into the wilderness. I will live out my days naked and free.

CONGRESSMAN

Thank you, sir. Your story has touched us all deeply. We will pass some legislation addressing this problem.

PUFF

Thank you. That is all I ask.

(to camera)

Good-bye, Lila. I take you with me in my untamed heart.

Puff stands and exits the auditorium. Flashbulbs flash.

In the prison common room, Lila wipes a tear from her eye. She seems genuinely happy. She looks out a small barred window and sees a bluebird light there, then fly away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON STREET - DAY

Puff walks along, a man on a mission. As he walks he sheds articles of clothing. He is followed by reporters and cameramen and celebrity hounds. Soon he is naked.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Puff walks along, naked. People cheer from porches.

CUT TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DUSK

Puff walks along. He is still followed by reporters. Cows watch the parade.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

Puff walks along a dirt road. He is about to disappear into the forest. An older woman rushes out from the crowd.

OLDER WOMAN

Wait!

PUFF

(turning)

Yes?

OLDER WOMAN

I saw you on C-Span. I've been looking for you for thirty years. Then there you were, such a beautiful, beautiful grown man.

The older woman starts to cry.

PUFF

Mother?

OLDER WOMAN

Yes ... Derek.

Puff holds out his hand for her to shake. Flashbulbs flash.

PUFF

(formally)

It's a pleasure to meet you, mother. But I'm an ape like dad was

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF (cont'd)
 (checks watch)
 And I have to go back into the woods
 now ... forever.

OLDER WOMAN
 (resigned)
 Yes, I suppose so. I suppose I knew
 that was going to be what you would
 say. It's good to see you again
 though.

PUFF
 Yes.

OLDER WOMAN
 I'm in the book, if you ever want to
 drop me a line or something.

PUFF
 I'm an ape, mom. I'm an ape. And
 apes don't drop lines.

His mother weeps. Puff gently rests his hand on her
 shoulder for a moment, then he turns and waves to the
 reporters. The crowd bursts into applause. Flashbulbs
 flash. Puff jogs into the woods. There is a collective
 sigh, and then everyone turns and heads back in the
 direction from which they came. We hold on the woods for a
 moment. A car pulls up. Puff hurries out of the woods and
 jumps in the passenger side of the car.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Puff leans over and kisses Gabrielle, who is driving the
 car.

GABRIELLE
 Hello, my little boy.

PUFF
 Hey, ma. Did you bring any clothes?
 I'm freezing my ass off.

GABRIELLE
 Oui. Nathan's silk suit, just like
 you asked.

PUFF
 Great.
 (putting on suit)
 God, I've wanted you forever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gabrielle giggles. Puff kisses her.

GABRIELLE

Say my name.

PUFF

Gabrielle.

GABRIELLE

(eyes glistening)

You remind me so much of Nathan.

PUFF

Like father, like son.

GABRIELLE

(stroking his face)

You remind me so much of Nathan plus so much of my little mongrel doggie.

PUFF

Woof.

This turns Gabrielle on. She kisses him passionately. When the kiss runs its course, Puff speaks.

PUFF (CONT'D)

Arf.

Gabrielle kisses him again, even more passionately this time

PUFF (CONT'D)

As much as I loved Nathan, I'm not sorry she killed him, if it means I can have you. Is that a terrible thing to say, my sweet?

GABRIELLE

(putting her finger to his lips)

Hush. No, it is never terrible to be in love. Nathan's memory lives on in our sacred union.

(beat)

I'm not sorry she killed him either. Nathan was wonderful. He was erudite and sophisticated and charming. You are all that, too. But you have something more. You have a bit of the animal in you.

They smile flirtatiously at each other. Puff leans over and kisses Gabrielle's neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUFF

Let's go eat, I'm starved.

GABRIELLE

French?

PUFF

Oui.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

The car makes a screeching u-turn. It disappears in the direction of the city. When the dust clears, we see the two white mice standing there on the side of the road, shivering and emaciated. The male holds out his the thumb and the female holds a tiny little sign which reads: *New York*. There is a look of hopelessness in their beady black eyes.

FADE OUT.

THE END