

RUST AND BONE

Written by

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Based on Craig Davidson's short story collection

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1. THE CHILD

Gradually more and more visible in the darkness, the face of a child, Sam. He is 6 years old, blond, pale and miserably thin. As we move in on his eyes, we see his lids quickly contracting.

Under his eyelids: vestiges of the day's lights and shadows, of the day's noise.

2. EXT. - NORTHWEST LANDSCAPES. DAY

A grim region where the sky hangs low and the wind can knock a man off his feet.

On the side of the highway, a large, muscular man with spiked blond hair: Ali Van Versh, 25.

He has a big bag in one hand and a cell phone in the other. He talks on the phone as he continues walking:

ALI

It's me. It's Ali... I left. I took the kid with me. She can't take care of him anymore. I got into a fight with the guy she's with. I don't know where to go. What do I do with the kid? I can't talk. I don't have any more credit... Call me back!

He hangs up quickly and turns to Sam.

ALI

Move it!

His phone rings. He immediately answers.

ALI

Yeah! Where is it? Shit! It's so far! How do I get there? I don't know. Today or

tomorrow. Yeah...

Ali lifts Sam onto his shoulders with one arm. Sam is tiny, he looks like a squirrel on his father's back.

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3. INT. TRAIN. DAY

There is a map of the French rail system near the toilets in a regional train. While Sam pees, Ali examines it. He follows the lines to plot out their trip. He arrives where France ends, at the Mediterranean. Sam comes out of the bathroom, straightening his pants.

SAM

I'm thirsty.

ALI

We don't have any money.

SAM

I'm thirsty!

4. INT. TGV. DAY

A different speed, different countryside. Ali notices a half-empty bottle of Evian water left on a tray. He takes it. He searches through the garbage under other empty seats. Ali and Sam eat leftover sandwiches and fruit, and finish off abandoned bottles of water.

5. INT. TGV. DAY

Another TGV. Rain evaporates off the windows. Ali has fallen asleep. He's too big for his seat. Sam watches the landscape go by and bangs his feet against his seat. Ali opens one eye.

ALI

Stop it.

Sam's Mickey Mouse sandals pause, then go back to their banging.

ALI

I said to stop it.
The sandals freeze.
Cut.

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6. THE CHILD

All of a sudden, Sam is asleep, his eyelids blinking quickly.

7. EXT. CANNES STREET. DAY

Ali's face is turned toward the orange heat of an afternoon sun.

Ali and Sam look at the sea, the beaches and hotels. It's hot and beautiful. They walk by tanned people in shorts, short skirts, sandals...

In their shapeless grey track pants, they look like hoboes. Ali drags his sport bag with one hand and Sam with the other.

Ali is on the phone:

ALI

I don't know. A big street that started at the station. Yeah, by the beach. Behind? We just came from there!

Ali pulls Sam away from one of the stairways that lead to the beach...

SAM

I'm tired.

ALI

So am I. He's coming to pick us up. Come on!
Sam is extenuated. Ali has to heave him up onto a shoulder.

8. EXT. CANNES STREET. DAY

A four-lane avenue near the outskirts of town. Ali is walking on the shoulder of the road, with Sam piggy-back. A horn beeps. A refrigerated truck, blinking to get to the side of the road. The window rolls down to reveal a moustache and a cap: Richard.

9. INT. RICHARD'S TRUCK. DAY

While driving...

RICHARD

(Southern accent)... A couple miles back I saw a blond guy. (Imitates screeching brakes) I stop short! "You Ali?" I ask. He says "No, me Kurt". Another few hundred feet, another big blond guy! (Screech) I ask "You Ali?" again. This time I didn't even understand what he answered. Another few hundred feet... Ten of them! Ten! Every Kraut and Flemish guy on the coast! So I go call your sister...
Ali is thrown for a loop.

ALI

(uncertain) You kidding?

RICHARD

A little.

SAM

(to Ali) Is he a little crazy?

RICHARD

(to Sam) What? You don't like my truck?

SAM

Yeah I do.

RICHARD

(pretending to be shocked) He doesn't like my truck!

SAM

I do too like it!
Worked up, Sam shrieks, holding his hands over his ears:

SAM

(screaming) I like your truck!
The road hugs the seashore. Ali watches beaches, homes, a
railway line pass by... Voice over, we hear Richard's

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distant voice.

10. EXT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN. DAY

A kitchen with mismatched furnishings. China and cheesy
wallpaper. Sam devours the cookies and Coke that Richard
gives him.

RICHARD

We all got fired after some Spanish guy
bought out the trucking company... Eight
truckers. I thought it over, discussed it
with your sister and figured I could do it
on my own. So I bought this truck with my
severance pay...

Ali has finished his cream cheese sandwiches. He gets up
and opens the old fridge.

RICHARD

Oops, poor man, not those! She'll kill you!
Start with the expired ones, on the top
shelf! They're organized by date. First the
top shelf, then move down.... Anna brings it
home from the supermarket where she works.
As soon as they reach their expiration date,
those idiots throw it all away, even if you
can still eat it for a week! (to Sam) You
want some more?

11. INT. SUBURBAN HOME. DAY

Anna empties Sam's Spiderman bag onto the table, spilling
out old, dirty, crumpled clothes.

ANNA

(with a hint of Southern accent) Is this all
you have for him?

Anna Van Versh, Ali's sister, is in her thirties. She is a
huge woman, very tall with a pretty face. She wears

leggings that make her ass look like a workhorse's and a pair of flip flops. At the bottom of the bag, Anna finds a passport and opens it. It is Sam's.

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ANNA

She remembered his passport!

ALI

She didn't remember anything. It was already in there. She forgot about it, that's all. When they went to Amsterdam, they'd use the kid to smuggle dope...

ANNA

You got to be kidding!

ALI

That's what she told me.
Anna shakes her head in disbelief. A beat.

ANNA

How will you tend to the kid? I won't be able to all the time. I work, and so does Richard... Was he in school there?

ALI

I don't know.

ANNA

You don't know if your kid's in school?

ALI

Um, no. (turns to Sam) You in school?
No answer. Sam is watching TV.

ANNA

Back at your mom's place, did you go to school?

SAM

Yes.

ANNA

I can try to enroll him at the school. I'll see... We also need to get him some clothes. He can't go like that... I'll ask the neighbors.
(gives the child her hand) Come with me to

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the backyard. I have to feed my babies.

12. EXT. GARDEN. EVENING

Evening is falling. At the back of the garden are a home-made pen and doghouse. Four puppies come running. Sam touches them through the chicken wire.

ANNA

You want to pet them?
She lifts Sam up over the wire mesh.

ANNA

Careful. Don't step on their tiny paws. They're just babies.
Anna shows him how to feed puppies, then stands back up.

ANNA

(to Ali) The breeder's picking them up next month. Brings in some money. Otherwise, Richard and I were thinking 300 a month for you and the kid... That okay?

ALI

Yeah.

ANNA

"Yeah" what? Is that too much?

ALI

It's not too much, but I don't have it. I had to pay for the train...

ANNA

So what are you going to do?

ALI

I don't know. Find a job. Whatever.

ANNA

Yeah, whatever... You think there's any work around here? You think there's any more here than there? Where has that ever been the case? When you told me you were coming down,

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I said we couldn't afford houseguests!

ALI

What should I have done with the kid? Where should I have gone?

ANNA

I have no idea, but if you stay here you have to pay your share, or else go somewhere else. As far as we're concerned, it's easy: we can't! How long were you thinking of staying?

ALI

I don't know.

She makes a tired gesture and goes back toward the house, calling Richard on the way. Ali hears Sam in the kennel, giggling in delight. He looks around: the seedy garden, a metal shed leaning to one side, what's left of an engine, an old, orange Special 50 moped, plastic junk, etc. Overhead, a plane descends on Nice, its landing lights shining.

13. INT. BASEMENT. NIGHT

In the cluttered basement, Sam is rolled up in a sleeping bag arranged on a pallet and watches his father repair the antique Special 50 moped by the light of a flashlight.

14. INT. ELECTRONIC GOODS SHOP. DAY

Ali wanders through an electronic goods shop, pretending to be interested in cameras. Through the shop window, he can

see Sam waiting outside in the sun.

15. EXT. ANTIBES STREETS. DAY

Suddenly, Sam sees his father run out of the shop, trying to shake a security guard hot on his tail. Sam watches them disappear into a tiny lane.
Sam looks around a bit frightened.

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Farther off, in a busy shopping district
Ali forces his way through hordes of tourists. The security guard grabs him by the hood and forces him up against a wall. They are both dripping with sweat and out of breath.

SECURITY GUARD

Unzip your jacket! Empty your pockets!
Ali keeps his cool.

ALI

Unzip it yourself!
Ali struggles free and smiles at the guy invitingly. The guard tries to punch him. Ali dodges:
The guard hesitates a moment, until Ali lets fly a right hook. The guard stumbles. A kick in the face sends him flying into a stall. Ali lifts his arms in victory for the benefit of the few, stunned passersby. He kisses his own biceps, does three steps of a moonwalk and saunters off.

16. EXT. ANTIBES STREETS. DAY

Sam is walking along the street by the beach amid the terraces and ice-cream stores, looking for his father. Then he sees the moped at the far side of the parking lot where they had left it chained up. He walks toward it. A voice calls out.

ALI

Hey! Here I am!
Ali crosses the street and kneels down in front of Sam who is sniffing, tears in his eyes.

ALI

No need to cry. I wouldn't have left you all

alone.
Ali unlocks the moped.

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17. EXT. ALLEYWAY. DAY

In a small side street, Sam watches Ali sell a camera for a few 20 Euro notes.

18. EXT. ANTIBES - BEACH. DAY

On the beach, Ali and Sam eat some McDonald's.

ALI

Are you happy here?
Sam nods.

SAM

Mm.

ALI

What do you like the most at Auntie's?

SAM

The dogs.

ALI

Is that all? Nothing else besides the dogs?

SAM

The truck.

ALI

The dogs and the truck. The house? Auntie?
The ocean?

SAM

The dogs and the truck.
Ali nods. Sam watches his Dad's fat fingers assemble the plastic toy from his Happy Meal.

ALI

We have it good here...

Ali's fingers stop. Sam looks up to find his father watching some girls in swimsuits go by. They go for a swim, horsing around and making noise.

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19. INT. OFFICE - THE ALTA SECU COMPANY. DAY

The logo is in the shape of a sheriff's badge and hangs over some filing cabinets on the wall of a modest office: "ALTA Securite".

OWNER

No criminal record? You never fucked up?

ALI

No.
The boss is in his fifties. He sits behind some files. His hair is short and white, it looks like he's wearing a helmet. He is squeezed into a cheap suit and wearing a tie. He stares at Ali.

OWNER

Is that the truth? We'll be checking anyway...
Ali nods. The owner reaches out.

OWNER

Your papers...
Ali hands him his tattered paper ID. The owner writes down the number. Ali is 13-14 on the picture.

OWNER

What was your last job?

ALI

I worked in a slaughterhouse. Not for long. It closed.

OWNER

Ever work in security?

ALI

Yeah. I was a night watchman in a stadium

for 6 months. Working for the city. In a parking lot too. I did replacements.

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OWNER

Ever do any combat sports?

ALI

Karate, for 6 years. I even won Junior Division. And two years of boxing. Thai.

OWNER

You gave it up?

ALI

It was my trainer who gave up.

OWNER

Why?

ALI

He died.
A beat.

OWNER

And how are you physically? You stay in shape?

ALI

Yeah.

OWNER

You don't smoke?

ALI

No.

OWNER

Drink?
He shakes his head "no". The boss notes something in a file.

20. INT. ALTA SECURITY OFFICE. DAY.

Anna and Sam are waiting outside the office. The owner kisses Anna on the cheek. He asks how Richard is doing, then shows them to the door. Anna looks proud to know him.

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21. EXT. FEVER RAY. NIGHT

Saturday evening. The door to the Fever Ray night club. Patrons wait, bouncers pick and choose. An imposing Caucasian maneuvers the red rope. Behind him, Ali Van Versch and Foued Latahoui, who looks like a lightweight boxer, guard the door.

Ali wears a faded blue "ALTA Secu" jacket and stiff, matching pants. Looking well-groomed, Foued is wearing a white shirt and tie. Well-groomed.

A group of girls passes through the security barrier. Foued acts like he's hesitating:

FOUED

Okay, I'll let you through because I'm outnumbered. Four against one, I don't stand a chance!

The girls smile and disappear inside. Ali watches them vanish.

FOUED

You say something nice, anything. That way, when they leave, they remember you and you can hit on them. If they're a little plastered, if things didn't go too well for them, you're there with a nice thing to say...

ALI

And it works?

FOUED

Sometimes. But you can't be dressed like that. Like a parking lot attendant... They are interrupted by the bouncer.

THE CAUCASIAN

(pointing) Fight!
They go running. Three guys are fighting like savages. Ali and Foued clean house. Foued gets rid of gawkers. Ali delivers a few random punches, lifts one of the guys off

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his feet and grabs another by the collar.
While Foued chases the rowdy men toward the parking lot, Ali helps a girl back to her feet. She's a pretty blond, must be about 27 or 28, who has taken a punch in the face. It is Stephanie.

ALI

Are you okay? Breathe out of your mouth. In and out. Put your head back. Walk a little. Walk and breathe...
He demonstrates how and takes her by the arm, forcing her to walk. She looks groggy.

STEPHANIE

I have to go home...

ALI

You have friends here?

STEPHANIE

No, I came alone. I have my car in the lot. I'll be fine.

ALI

You can't drive like that.

STEPHANIE

I'm fine. I'm fine, I said. Thanks.

ALI

You can't drive like that. I'll call you a cab.

STEPHANIE

How do I get my car afterwards? Seriously, I'll be fine. Trust me!
We hear a voice from the parking lot.

ANGRY MAN

Bitch!
Stephanie looks back.

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ANGRY MAN

Yeah... you, you cunt. Bitch!
She ignores him, pretending not to see him. She then notices the blood stains on her T-shirt.

STEPHANIE

Shit.

ALI

Where's your car?

22. INT. STEPHANIE'S CAR. NIGHT

Ali drives. His head seems to touch the roof of the little Fiat and his thighs are too thick for the seat. He glances over at Stephanie.

ALI

Still bleeding? Keep your head back. Wait...
He manipulates the knob to push her seat back. He grimaces in pain.

ALI

Shit!

STEPHANIE

Did you hurt yourself?
He shows her his right wrist.

STEPHANIE

It's swelling up.
He rests his hand on the wheel. After a beat:

ALI

You often go to the Fever?

STEPHANIE

No.

ALI

Why do you go alone?
No answer.

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ALI

To dance?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

ALI

To find a guy?
She turns and looks down her nose at him:

STEPHANIE

Oh yeah?

ALI

You're dressed like that just for dancing?

STEPHANIE

How am I dressed?

ALI

I don't know... Look.
He points to her skirt, riding up her thighs.

STEPHANIE

Yeah, so what?

ALI

You look like a hooker.

STEPHANIE

Excuse me?

ALI

How would you call it?

STEPHANIE

I don't believe this. Pull over here!

ALI

What?

STEPHANIE

Stop this car on the double!

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No reaction.

STEPHANIE

It's MY car! If I tell you to stop, you stop!

Still no reaction, as if she hadn't said a thing. She is about to scream again, but remains silent, although open-mouthed. She finally settles back down on the back of her seat and looks elsewhere.

A beat.

ALI

Dressed like that, it's no surprise that...

STEPHANIE

That's enough now!
They ride in silence.

23. EXT. SIMON & STEPHANIE'S BUILDING. NIGHT

The Fiat stops in front of a small building in a flowery residential neighborhood. They climb out.

STEPHANIE

How will you get back?

ALI

I don't know.
She takes out her wallet.

ALI

No, stop!

STEPHANIE

For a taxi.

ALI

Don't worry. Got any ice at your place?
He shows her his wrist.

ALI

Ice cubes.

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STEPHANIE

Wait, I'll go check.

ALI

I can come up.

STEPHANIE

No!
Even she is surprised by the brusqueness of her response.

STEPHANIE

(embarrassed) Someone's up there.

ALI

So what?

STEPHANIE

Wait here. I'll be right back.
She takes a few steps, fumbling for her keys. She
hesitates, then looks back.

STEPHANIE

Okay, come on up.

24. INT. SIMON & STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT

They enter the apartment. The light is on. Simon comes out of the bedroom in his boxer shorts and a T-shirt. He's thirty, blond, and there is something commanding about his look that could be thought to resemble Stephanie's. He discovers Ali and the blood stains on Stephanie's T-

SHIRT:

SIMON

What the hell? What's going on?

STEPHANIE

Nothing. A fight...

SIMON

Are you okay?

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STEPHANIE

Yeah, I'm fine.

SIMON

(pointing to Ali) Who's he?

STEPHANIE

The bouncer from the Fever. He drove me home.

ALI

(introducing himself)... Ali.

SIMON

The Fever? What the hell were you doing there?
Ali opens the refrigerator.

SIMON

What are you looking for?

ALI

Ice cubes.

STEPHANIE

He hurt his hand...
Simon pulls Stephanie into the bedroom.
Ice cubes in a Plexiglas salad bowl. Ali's hand in the bowl. He looks around.
There are photos on the wall: Stephanie surfing on the back of a killer whale, Stephanie posing with a group of young people in diving suits in front of the Marineland logo, Stephanie rising out of the water on Niska's rostrum, etc.
From the nearby bedroom, he hears snatches of Simon's

REPROACHES :

SIMON (OFF)

If you decide to go out, call me. That's all! Who were you with there?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Philippe and Christine.

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SIMON (OFF)

I thought you went out to dinner.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

We decided to go out for a drink after.

SIMON (OFF)

You get my text messages? Why didn't you answer me?

Stephanie comes back into the kitchen. She has changed her T-shirt. She seems tense.

STEPHANIE

Feeling better?

ALI

Is that you in the picture with the orcas?

STEPHANIE

Not orcas. Just one orca. Her name is Niska.

ALI

Is that your job?

STEPHANIE

Yep...

Ali nods vaguely admiringly.

ALI

Fuck... I didn't think that...

STEPHANIE

That what? A whore could train whales? Well,
you see...
Simon is at the door. He is wearing a jean.

SIMON

(To Ali) Okay, are you done now? Can you
leave us alone?
Ali stares him down.

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ALI

You talking to me?
It's as if Ali's calm, peremptory tone suddenly let Simon
know who he was dealing with.

SIMON

Yes, but...

ALI

But what?

SIMON

Nothing, forget it...
In one second, Stephanie sees Simon's face undergo a
metamorphosis, his nervous authority suddenly disappear.
She glances at Ali as if to say "Please go now."
He gets up and wipes his hands on a dish rag.

ALI

Okay, I'm going. So long. (pointing to a
piece of paper on the table) I left you my
number if ever you need it...

25. INT. SIMON & STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

She dissolves an aspirin in a toothbrush glass. She checks
her lip in the medicine chest mirror. She notices Simon
watching her from the bathroom doorway.

SIMON

Are you okay? Are you upset?

STEPHANIE

No, I'm not upset.
She drinks the aspirin.

STEPHANIE

I saw your face before...

SIMON

Before?

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STEPHANIE

With that guy who dropped me off. I saw your face. I saw how you piped down.

SIMON

I piped down? Me?

STEPHANIE

Yes, you piped down... (pause) Don't tell me what I should do, how I should live my life. Don't give me any more orders, Simon.

SIMON

What does that mean?

STEPHANIE

Don't give me any more orders, that's all. She turns on the faucet and runs her lips under the water.

CUT TO:

26. INT. MARINELAND. TRAINERS' OFFICE. DAY

Two rooms adjoining the locker room. Two desks, and on the walls pictures of the trainers with their orcas, laminated posters of various training methods, files for each animal. Stephanie is in her diving suit, sitting in front of Louise, a 23-year-old woman who is reading a document about her internship.

A trainer leaves the locker room, his backpack slung over his shoulder.

TRAINER

Coming?

No answer. Tension. He leaves without a word.

Louise looks up. She has been crying. Stephanie looks at her, impassive. Louise swallows her tears.

LOUISE

Really... this isn't fair.

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STEPHANIE

No, Louise, there are lots of things you can say but not that. The pools are my responsibility and all I care about are the animals. I have to see to their environment and that starts with their trainers. Do you understand?

LOUISE

What are you trying to make me believe, that I wasn't up to par?

STEPHANIE

No, listen.

LOUISE

Lacking in maturity? Skills?

STEPHANIE

You're not consistent. We've already discussed that. The foundation of the relationship with the orcas is stability. During your internship you've had your ups and downs. It's not your competence that...

LOUISE

You know this has nothing to do with my internship. You couldn't care less if I was competent or not! It has to do with that I fucked Michael. Just say so.

STEPHANIE

Oh, please...

LOUISE

And in fact what really bothers you is not that we fucked, but that he told me about you. How you think you're so... How you've become such a bitch. That's why you're firing me. That's what you should write in your report.

STEPHANIE

Okay, are you done? We can stop here. No need to spoil the rest of your internship. Louise stands up.

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27. EXT. MARINELAND. POOL - DAY

The empty stadium above the pool. The trainers walk along the gangplanks busily.

In her diving suit, Stephanie leans over the "beach" of pool 3. She taps on the surface of the water. A wave forms, whirling around the pool.

The whale washes up on the "beach" beside her. She performs what looks like a daily ritual. She examines the whale, caresses it. The whale responds with uncanny gurgles.

28. EXT. MARINELAND. DAY

Stock shots of a show at Marineland, or images which we will film to resemble stock shots: wide-angle shots from the stadium.

The sound equipment blares "Jump" by Van Halen, orcas shoot out of the water, the audience applauds; Little kids

clutch

electric-blue dolphin balloons, getting splashed by the orcas; Images of the show are relayed on giant video screens, orcas shoot by like torpedoes behind the plastic protective wall in front of the main pool, etc;

CUT TO:

29. INT. MARINELAND POOL. DAY

All at once, silence. Then surface noise, but muted by the

cubic meters of waterâ€¦
Underwater shots from pool number 3.
Overhead, the surface shines like a mirror. In pool number 3, a five-ton black shadow bides its time: it is Niska. Behind the grate in pool number 3, Niska watches her mates diving and surfacing in a spray of bubbles. A mechanical creak, then the grate slowly begins to lift. It's about to be her turn.

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Niska swims into the big pool, slowly at first, but then picks up speed. She surfaces, disappears for a long beat, then again reappears, churning up a whirlpool of bubbles. On the other side of the mirror, the music blares and the crowd cheers.

What looks like a small black and white arrow dives into the pool. We recognize Stephanie. She caresses Niska's rostrum, then kisses it, hanging onto her fins, waltzing with her up to the surface. Her hands look ridiculously tiny on the huge black fins. We see her face mirrored in one of the orca's huge black, gentle eyes. A liquid world of greens and blues whirls around them.

Now, with her legs slightly arched on the rostrum, Stephanie has Niska swim around the pool, accelerating the water pressure and speed. The plastic wall rushes by, a rush of adrenalineâ€¦ clouds of sediment are lifted as if by a gust of wind.

A young male, Tom, joins Niska in pool number 1. Niska immediately rushes him, as if riled by the intrusion, and flattens him against the plastic wall.

In the shifting reflections at the water's surface, we can make out Stephanie and two other trainers' faces on the â€˜beach'. Their palms beat on the water, summoning the

orcas

for their next number.

Tom gathers some momentum, then shoots around Niska to jump into first place. He disappears a moment, then is back into the water after a dozen meters of aquaplaning.

Niska then gets into place and takes a running start, but just as she is about to shoot out of the water, Tom appears out of nowhere and forces the huge female to leap over him. We sense chaos up above. Then we see Niska crash back into the water, with, one after the other, a piece of the huge video screen that towered over the stage, bits of scenery,

and all kinds of random objects, as if Niska had carried away half the platform in her wake. It all seems to fall in slow motion, like flecks of snow in a snow globe. Something sinks toward us; a body, floating weightless and disjointed in a cloud of red.

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30. EXT. MARINELAND - WHALE POOL. DAY

Stephanie is on the rim of the pool. All around her: the audience panics, a loudspeaker orders evacuation, Louise leans over her.

STEPHANIE

What... What happened?

LOUISE

Tom and Niska... They got in each other's way.

Then Louise sees blood spurting from the rips in her diving suit. She tries to find a pressure point.

Stephanie sees Louise's face wet with tears:

STEPHANIE

Stop it, calm down. I'm fine!

Her hand searches for something at thigh level, without finding it.

She faints.

31. EXT. ROAD TO THE BEACH. DAY

Ali is wearing his MP3 headset. He runs down the road to the beach, sweat dripping into his eyes.

32. EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE. DAY

Sam's toys are lying scattered in the garden, his half-eaten snack is on the table. Ali takes off his headset.

ALI

Sam!

No answer. There is some noise over at the kennel. He goes and finds Sam in the kennel, talking to the puppies.

ALI

What are you doing here?

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Sam jumps and scuttles to the back of the kennel, but Ali reaches in and grabs him by the arm. Sam is covered in mud, straw and dog shit.

ALI

You're gross! You stink! Who's taking care of you?

Ali drags him over to the garage to hose him down. The water is freezing cold. Sam hops from one foot to the other and screams.

SAM

Stop it, Dad! It's cold. Stop!
Sam shrieks. An 18 year old tomboy wearing a skimpy tee-shirt comes out of a neighboring house: Joelle, the neighbors' daughter.

ALI

Aren't you supposed to be taking care of him? What the fuck are you up to?

JOELLE

I was next doing the laundry.

ALI

Take a look at him!

JOELLE

I'll put him in the shower.

ALI

(to Sam, crying) Don't go in there. It's disgusting. You hear?

Joelle takes Sam and disappears inside.

Ali is drawn to the living room, when through the half-open door he notices the flat screen turned onto a news channel. Onscreen and behind the anchorwoman, he recognizes an inset photo of Stephanie, the same he saw at her place, riding on

the back of a killer whale.
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eŠie`ies

Il manque une phrase

28

JOELLE

There was an accident at Marineland.
Ali answers without taking his eyes off the screen.

ALI

I know her.
Sam pulls off his towel. He watches his father who is
riveted to the screen, glued to the looping footage of the
accident.

33. INT. HOSPITAL - NURSES' LOUNGE. NIGHT

Silence.
The silence of an on-duty nurses' lounge: a table, a
microwave on a mini-fridge, and Louise, standing by the
window sipping coffee.
She is wearing a fleece jacket, her hair messily pulled
back. She hasn't had any sleep.
She hears a scream. She rushes into the corridor.

34. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. NIGHT

Chaos. Louise rushes into the room. She finds Stephanie
crawling on the floor, dragging her IVs.
She hesitates, overwhelmed, then calls for help.

LOUISE

Help! Help! Please!
On the linoleum, two stumps stick out of Stephanie's
nightshirt: two thick bandages surround her thighs that
look like two wrapped hams.

STEPHANIE

My legs! What did you do with my legs?
Two nurses arrive.
Stephanie is back in bed, the IVs in her arms. Louise rocks
her gently. Stephanie's eyes struggle against sleep. She

wants to scream again, but doesn't have the strength. She

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falls asleep in Louise's arms. She feels eight years old.
Black.

35. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY/NIGHT

A series of scenes, day and night, fade into one another, always from the same POV.

In the foreground, looking our way, is Stephanie's face and, behind, the visitors who succeed one another.

Stephanie's eyes are shut.

She opens them:

- The other trainers from Marineland, holding bouquets. They are silent and look devastated. They occasionally speak to each other in whispers.

Stephanie closes her eyes.

Black.

Stephanie opens her eyes:

- Louise is seated nearby

LOUISE

I stopped by your place. I saw the cleaning woman. She didn't want me to pay her. She was... in shock. She's scared to come here. She sends her regards.

She closes her eyes.

Black.

She opens them.

- A blonde, pretty woman in her fifties is sitting behind Stephanie, her face is close to hers. It is her mother. She speaks with a slight accent.

MOTHER

I spoke to your brothers. They wanted to talk to you but I didn't think it was the right time. We'll all come with Hugo during the next school break... I was afraid I might lose you. I don't know what I'd have

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done... It may seem selfish. In any case,
you've always done whatever you wanted. But
this time I was so scared that I don't think
I'll ever be scared again.

Her eyes close.

Black.

Her eyes reopen.

The surgeon and his assistants.

The orthopedist and his assistants.

Her eyes close.

Black.

Her eyes open.

- Simon is there, looking stiff and ill at ease.

He tries not to make any noise as he puts a bunch of keys
on the night stand. He leans over and kisses her hair.

Her eyes close.

Black.

It's her mother again, but this time accompanied by a tall,
uncomfortable looking blond teenage boy. She leans over to
kiss her.

MOTHER

(in German) Hugo wanted to say goodbye to
you. We're leaving tomorrow but we'll pray
for you, honey.

Her eyes remain open.

Black.

36. EXT. MARINELAND. NIGHT

The bluish light at the bottom the main pool at Marineland.
A diver is raking its bottom, wiping away sludge composed
of micro algae, paint chips and fish bones. He examines the
replacement mud and then, inside the drain, the mud being
replaced. He digs his hand into the sediment and feels
something there. He surfaces and deposits his find on the
rim of the pool: It is one of Stephanie's diving flippers,
with her foot cut off at the ankle.

CUT TO:

37. INT. STEPHANIE'S NEW APARTMENT - BATHROOM. NIGHT

Stephanie wakes up with a start in her handicapped bathtub. She tries to grab the bars but can't find them. She rolls over on herself like a floating log. She panics.

CUT TO:

38. INT. HOSPITAL - PHYSICAL THERAPY ROOM - EVENING

There are several rows of parallel bars, with amputees hanging on to them as they relearn to walk with their prosthetics. Most of them are old. Nurses help them along. From her wheelchair, Stephanie watches, looking glum and as if at a great distance. Her hair is greasy and her face swollen by her medication and induced sleep. She looks through the big window that opens onto the exterior. Outside, amputees smoke and chat. She notices one group, livelier than the rest. At its center, a guy is smoking a cigarette he holds in a pincer in the place of his hand. His name is Gilles.

39. INT. GILLES' CAR. EVENING

Four of them are smoking a joint in Gilles' Megane. Outside, evening is falling over the convalescent center's parking lot. Stephanie is sitting up front. She passes the joint to Gilles, who takes it in his chrome pincer. She notices the scar that deforms his face and one side of his mouth. There is a couple in the backseat, making out: Raphael (his arms are missing and his sleeves are pinned up at his shoulders) and Julia.

GILLES

(to Stephanie) Want me to tell you something?

STEPHANIE

Â€!

GILLES

You haven't finished mourning, that's all!

STEPHANIE

Really? Mourning who?

GILLES

Your legs.

STEPHANIE

Mourning my legs?

GILLES

Yes.

He sounds as serious as a civics teacher. She looks at him, incredulous. Raphael sticks his head up front.

RAPHAEL

Pass me the joint...

Gilles' pincer and joint go for Raphael's lips. He takes a long hit.

GILLES

They were a part of you. When a man dies, he gets buried. There's a ceremony, a prayer... Now a piece of you ended up in a hospital trashcan without a prayer, without any time for meditation.

A beat. She is dumbstruck. She cannot believe what she's hearing. In the backseat, Raphael exhales some smoke into Julia's open mouth.

GILLES (cont'd)

You have to think about it symbolically...

STEPHANIE

Yeah, it's really symbolic...

GILLES

I know where my arm is. We buried it under a nice oak tree behind my house in the scrubland. My wife and kids came and we sang...
Stephanie has a fit of the giggles.

GILLES

(a bit vexed) You think I'm kidding?

STEPHANIE

No, it's the grass. I'll stop...
She laughs so hard she cries.

RAPHAEL

Shit, it's a laugh riot up there. (to Gilles) Can you take us home?
She looks back and, between the seats, notices the girl toying with Raphael's fly.

GILLES

I'm too beat. I'll take a nap, then go. (to Stephanie) How are you getting home?

40. EXT/INT. HYPERBRICO. NIGHT

A HyperBrico DIY store in an industrial zone in Cannes. Its windows shine in the night like an aquarium.

41. INT. HYPERBRICO. NIGHT

Ali and Kadhi, a huge guard accompanied by a dog, make their rounds. They open doors with a magnetic key, each time recording their passage on electronic terminals. A bit before midnight, someone knocks at the main entrance. Ali goes to look. It's a guy in a leather jacket and baseball cap, with a backpack and a shoulder bag.

ALI

What do you want?

To come in.
The guy takes out a card and presses it against the glass door: it's the business card of ALTA SECU, the security agency.

ALI

Hey, Kadhi, come here!
Kadhi comes over and looks at the guy.

KADHI

Okay, okay... Are you Martial?

MARTIAL

Yeah.

KADHI

Give me your keys.

ALI

Who's he?

KADHI

It's fine. The boss told me he was coming.
He works for the company.
Ali hands him the bunch of keys.

42. INT. HYPERBRICO - AISLES. NIGHT

Ali goes down an aisle looking for something and finally finds what he was looking for: a folding ladder.

43. INT. HYPERBRICO - STOCK ROOM. NIGHT

Martial has spread out his material in a stock room at the back of the store at the end of a corridor formed by palettes: precision tools, drills, electronic mini-cameras still in their wrapping, cases equipped with antennae, packs of batteries... A small radio is playing a night program on Radio Monte Carlo.
Equipped with a small headlamp, Martial carefully cuts a hole in a cardboard box with his Leatherman scissors. He conceals a tiny camera inside.

Ali arrives with the ladder over his shoulder.

ALI

Will this do?

MARTIAL

Perfect. Put it down there.

Martial climbs the ladder to place the box high on a shelf.

MARTIAL

Imagine you're the manager of a big store like this and the union reps have been busting your balls. What do you do?

ALI

Fire them.

MARTIAL

You think that's how it works? What do you do before you fire them?

He checks to make sure the lens is aligned with the hole, then checks the screen and reception on a small pocket monitor.

MARTIAL

Well, beforehand you try to see how long they spend in the restroom, if they take extra-long coffee breaks, smoke on the premises, steal from the stockroom, rip customers off with the sales receipts... When you know all that, you put the pressure on them and you fire the ones who don't leave.

Can you give me a stroll down the aisle?

ALI

A stroll?

MARTIAL

Walk down the aisle. No, further down, like you came out of that door there. Good, perfect...

Ali twice passes within the camera's field of vision. Martial climbs down his ladder.

MARTIAL

That's it.

ALI

Okay, then I'll be getting back.

MARTIAL

Hold on!

Martial pulls a 10 Euro bill from a jacket pocket.

ALI

It's fine.

MARTIAL

Take it.

Angle on the bill in Ali's hand.

44. INT. SUPERMARKET - SECURITY ROOM. NIGHT

Ali is in the security room reading a kickboxing magazine. A small radio is playing a late evening program. Outside in the parking lot, Kadhi smokes while walking his dog. The dog takes its time. Ali watches Kadhi pull on the leash. Ali's cell phone rings. The screen reads 'unknown'.

ALI

Hello?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

It's Stephanie. Remember me? We met at the Fever.

Ali is taken by surprise.

ALI

Yeah... How are you doing?

She sniggers. Her speech sounds slow and thick.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

You know what happened to me?

ALI

Yeah... I saw the papersâ€¦ the news on TVâ€¦
How are you?

STEPHANIE

(sniggering) How do you think I am?
A beat. Ali is at a loss to answer.

STEPHANIE

How are you?

ALI

Okay... normal.

STEPHANIE

Still a bouncer?

ALI

No, not really.

STEPHANIE

You want to get together?

ALI

Yeah, but nights are tough. I'm a security
guard now. Three nights a week.

STEPHANIE

I'm... crazy busy too. Every day and every
night. I don't know how to manage...
A beat.

STEPHANIE

Now.

ALI

Huh?

STEPHANIE

Come now.

45. EXT. ANTIBES - INDUSTRIAL ZONE AND STREETS - DAWN

The Speciale 50 putt-putts in the early morning light. Ali
drives through a neighborhood of chain stores, Conforama,

Courtepaille, Leroy-Merlin...

46. EXT. STEPHANIE'S RESIDENCE - DAY

A gated community made up of four story buildings, lawns, bougainvillea and lavender. It looks pretty as a picture and squeaky clean.

47. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. DAY

The door opens automatically. He is surprised. He hears a tired voice from inside.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Come in.

She is waiting in her wheelchair, holding the remote control. She activates it and the door closes behind Ali. Her hair is mid-length, her face has thickened and there are bags under her eyes. She is wearing a baggy Nike T-shirt with burn marks here and there and a pajama bottom whose legs hang limp.

STEPHANIE

Have you been waiting long?

ALI

No... I just got here.

STEPHANIE

Was that you who rang before?
She looks exhausted but feverish.

ALI

No.

STEPHANIE

Come in. Sit down.
He sits down on a small couch.

STEPHANIE

Want something to drink? A coffee?

ALI

Yes.

STEPHANIE

I only have instant.

ALI

That's fine.

It takes two tries to activate the wheels on her wheelchair.

ALI

Need any help?

She answers with a growl, as much for him as for her wheelchair, then goes into the kitchen. He sees her pajama legs flap like rags, he hears the noise of the tap.

ALI

Have you been living here long?

STEPHANIE

I don't know... Three or four months.

ALI

(looking around)... It's nice.
She comes back.

ALI

Are you alone? You got no one to help you?

STEPHANIE

Help me what? Walk?

ALI

No, for the cleaning and everything...

STEPHANIE

Yeah there are people. They come and go.
Hold on.

She manages to navigate from the living room into her bedroom. He stays in the living room. He hears a kettle whistle in the kitchen. He goes into the kitchen and pours water into the glass/mug. He finds her hunched over in her

wheelchair. She is nodding off, high on her medication.

ALI

Hey, are you okay?

STEPHANIE

I'm fine.

He opens the window.

STEPHANIE

Does it stink here?

ALI

Yeah, a little.

STEPHANIE

It's me.

He opens the curtains and looks outside. It is getting hot out. The automatic sprinklers have gone on.

ALI

Let's go out. (No answer) Hey, you hear me?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

ALI

Let's go out.

STEPHANIE

No.

ALI

Get dressed.

STEPHANIE

Leave me alone.

ALI

Where are your clothes?

He opens the closet.

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48. EXT. STEPHANIE'S RESIDENCE - DAY

When they come out of the building's lobby, the sun hits him on the head like a bad hangover.

ALI

Here.

Ali hands her a pair of sunglasses.

ALI

Where should we go?

STEPHANIE

I don't know. You're the one who wanted to go out...

ALI

Should we go to the ocean?

STEPHANIE

I don't care.

He tries to push the wheelchair, but she stops him:

STEPHANIE

Stop it. I want to puke.

He notices that his moped is attached in the middle of a sprinkler area. He goes to free it and gets splashed... Heavy chain, padlock... he comes back with soiled hands. When he comes back, she's gone. He sees the wheelchair moving toward the seafront avenue. He goes to join her.

49. EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

They are sitting at a table on a terrace facing the beach. They remain silent. She looks at his huge fists, black with axle grease.

ALI

I want to go in.

STEPHANIE

â€¦ ?

ALI

I feel like swimming!

STEPHANIE

Go ahead.

ALI

You don't want to?

STEPHANIE

Huh?

ALI

You don't feel like swimming?
She looks daggers at him.

ALI

You don't have a bathing suit?

STEPHANIE

Do you realize what you're saying?

ALI

Who the fuck cares? There's no one here!

STEPHANIE

Forget it.

He wavers a moment, then finally crosses the seafront
avenue.

50. EXT. PRIVATE BEACH. DAY

Stephanie is at the top of the steps in her wheelchair. Ali is talking with the beach boy when he notices her. Ali and the beach boy carry her to the deck chair area. Ali rents the whole shebang: parasol, beach towel, deck chair and a small tube of sunscreen 50. Sheltered under a parasol, she pancakes her face with cream and watches him dive in, wearing his boxers, and noisily and clumsily crawl some laps. His body is pink and white. Huge and buff. Then she looks out to sea, the listless waves washing in and out. The fresh feel of it all makes

her want to drink it all in.
He comes back, enthusiastic and dripping wet.
She looks around. The beach is deserted, other than for a far off, elderly couple broiling in the sun.

STEPHANIE

Actually I think I will go in.
He looks at her. She covers herself with a towel and wiggles out of her pants, revealing what remains of her legs. Her stumps are white, with terrible scars at their extremities.

STEPHANIE

You have to carry me. Help me...

ALI

(makes a gesture)... How, like this?

STEPHANIE

Yes.
He lifts her up and carries her to the water. He takes her far enough in until she begins to float.

ALI

You okay?

STEPHANIE

Don't let me go! Not right away... Do it gently.
She feels unsure of herself. He lets go of her gradually. She starts to sink, then crawls forward, with power and grace. She stops but has to paddle like a dog to tread water. He joins her. She grabs onto him.

ALI

So?

STEPHANIE

I can't stop. If I do, I sink. Wait...
She gesticulates...

STEPHANIE

This is bothering me!
She takes off her T-shirt and hands it to him. Her breasts press against Ali's chest.

STEPHANIE

Okay, you can let go.
She lets herself go and crawls like a pro. He stays put, holding her t-shirt.
Twenty-five meters later, her head emerges. He hears a burst of laughter.
Half asleep in a deck chair, he looks up from time to time to see how she's doing.
She calls out to him. She is sitting in the water. She motions for him to come and get her.
He helps her out and takes her into his arms. She hangs on to him, still out of breath.

ALI

You swim like a real pro!...
She shuts her eyes.

STEPHANIE

Fuck that's good!
The beach is crowded now. Ali carries her back to the deck chairs. Some bathers watch them go by, others look away. They are stretched out in their chairs. She has wrapped her lower body in a beach towel. They sunbathe.

STEPHANIE

Thanks.

ALI

Huh?

STEPHANIE

Thanks.

She rolls onto her back. He sees her breasts pointed heavenward.

51. INT. GYM. DAY

A decrepit, simple, functional, but reasonably clean workout room. Guys of every color work the punching bags, lift weights, do chin-ups... From the gym next door, we hear the booming music of an aerobics class. In a small ring at floor level, Ali and Foued, loaded down with protective gear, pound each other. Each of their blows lands right on target. They repeat the same series of moves several times at varying speeds.

52. INT. GYM - CORRIDOR. DAY

Ali and Foued are dripping wet. They have towels around their necks. They fill their small plastic bottles at a faucet in the workout room. Through a large window in the corridor, Ali watches the aerobic class going on in the gym: legs and feet moving in rhythm, red faces, sweaty underarms, butts, boobs and the braid of the instructor, who uses it to beat the measure, as she swings it from one shoulder to the other.

FOUED

I have to get back. I need to train.
Ali nods, without actually looking at him.

53. EXT. GYM - STREET. DAY

Outside, Ali has unwrapped the sandwich his sister had prepared for him. A bit farther off, the aerobics instructor is smoking in the sun. She has a short, buff body. She smokes her cigarette like someone who counts them out sparingly. They remain like that a while, he chewing and she smoking.

CUT TO

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54. INT. GYM - EQUIPMENT ROOM. DAY

A cell phone vibrates. Through a narrow transom, a ray of sun slices through the dark equipment room. They haven't bothered undressing. Ali and the aerobics instructor are making love on a pile of workout mats. Ali's cell phone continues to vibrate, goes silent, vibrates again. He answers. We hear a crackling voice.

ALI

I'm still at the gym. I'm leaving... I said I'm leaving!
He hangs up. They continue.

55. EXT. NUSERY SCHOOL - SCHOOLYARD. DAY

Sam is playing alone, perched up on monkey bars in the schoolyard. Through a wide window, he sees his father racing down a corridor that runs alongside the schoolyard. The principal is waiting for him at the door. Ali spurts out some quick apologies. Sam slowly slides off the structure. We hear the noise of his hands skidding on metal.

56. EXT ANTIBES EVENING

The moped wheezes and sputters. Ali and Sam are heading back home along the beach. Ali is so big, the moped looks like a kid's bike. Behind him on the luggage rack, he can feel Sam leaning into him. Sam's hand rummages in his coat pocket for a box of Choco-BN cookies. Ali takes one too. To their left, a train noisily speeds by.

57. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. DAY

Louise has a set of keys. She enters Stephanie's apartment with the mail.

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LOUISE

Steph!
Made up and well-groomed, she looks older than she actually is.

Stephanie answers from the bathroom.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

I'm in here!

Louise puts the mail on the living room table and enters the bedroom. Stephanie wheels herself out of the bathroom, her hair wet and her body wrapped in a towel.

LOUISE

Shit, you're not ready! The appointment is in a half hour!

STEPHANIE

It's fine!

LOUISE

What do you mean? You're a freaking pain! I have to get back to work. Come on, let me help you.

She grabs the arms of the wheelchair and pushes Stephanie toward the closet.

STEPHANIE

Let go of me! Stop, I can manage alone.

LOUISE

Oh yeah? Okay, so manage then!

She lets go of the wheelchair and leaves the bedroom.

58. EXT. STEPHANIE'S RESIDENCE. DAY

Louise briskly pushes Stephanie's wheelchair across the residence garden. The warning lights on her 205 are blinking in front of the gate.

Stephanie hangs onto Louise's neck. Louise lifts her out of her wheelchair as best she can and into the passenger seat.

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Louise bends down to buckle Stephanie's seat belt.

STEPHANIE

(annoyed) I can do the seat belt!

In front of the open trunk, Louise struggles to fold the wheelchair.

LOUISE

Can't you call them to tell them we're going to be late?

59. INT. PROTHESIST'S OFFICE. DAY

In CU: the brochures of prosthetic manufacturers we see pictures of the various models go by. Stephanie is in the doctor's office with Doctor Vitias. He is in his fifties and is wearing a white jacket.

VITIAS

We'll order two pairs of prosthetic devices, one for everyday life and one for the sport you do. Stephanie pages through the various brochures.

STEPHANIE

Don't you have something simpler, classier?

VITIAS

What do you mean by classier?

STEPHANIE

I don't know... like a wooden leg with a piece of rubber at the end?

VITIAS

(smiling) No, sorry. We don't make those models anymore. Louise shuts her eyes, visibly exasperated.

STEPHANIE

Or just a plank. A plank with wheels and straps. And irons to move forward with.

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LOUISE

(furious) Can you cut it out?

STEPHANIE

What? If I want...

LOUISE

I've had enough of your schtick, you hear me?

STEPHANIE

Come on...

LOUISE

Shut up!
Stephanie shuts up. Vitias still looks patient as Job.

60. INT. PROTHESIST'S OFFICE. DAY

Sitting on an examination table, Stephanie waits for the resin bands wrapped around her stumps to dry. Louise is sitting on a stool across from Stephanie. Their eyes meet.

STEPHANIE

Go if you wantâ€¦ I'll take a taxi.

LOUISE

I told them I was with you.

STEPHANIE

And that works? If you tell them you're with me, do they let you do what you want?

LOUISE

Well...

STEPHANIE

Cool. If ever you want a day off, just tell me. I'll write you a note.
Louise looks at her. She's not going to let her get on her nerves.
There is a knock at the door. A nurse enters.
She checks the resin bands, looks at her watch.

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NURSE

10 more minutes, just to make sure. Then

Doctor Vitias will come for you.
She smiles and closes the door.
The two young women are again left alone. Stephanie
stretches out her hand. Louise takes it.
And they remain like that.

61. INT. HYPERBRICO - SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

In close up on the screen of a small DVD player: amateur
images of two bare-chested guys fighting in the garden of a
suburban house. It looks like a wild boxing match, free-
for-all vale tudo in which anything goes.
In the Bricorama security room, Ali, Kadhi and Martial,
excited, are bent over the screen.
A few blows to the face have one of the combatants KO on
the lawn.

KADHI

Look at the next one! Watch how he whacks
him.
A change of scene on the small screen: a courtyard between
two tower blocks, with new combatants, but with the same
amateur images and the same violence.

KADHI

(pointing to the screen)... I know him. I
fought him twice in Nationals. He's not bad.
He was at the boxing club in Marseille.
Martial watches Ali, fascinated by the images, as if he
were sizing him up.

62. INT. PROJECTS. DAY

An apartment in a Golfe Juan housing project. After-dinner
time. Kids are playing, women doing the dishes.
On the living room couch, under a tapestry of a lion hunt
in Technicolor, Martial blows on his glass of tea. His

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cousin is sitting across from him. Ali is on a stool at the
end of the table.

MARTIAL

He says he's done Thai boxing. He can fight.

He's enormous. He's not afraid of taking punches, and he's white.

COUSIN

I see.

The cousin turns to Ali. He takes his time sizing him up.

COUSIN

Is that true? You like to fight?

ALI

Yeah.

COUSIN

Okay, so I organize the fights. I pick the fighters. I see if the money's there. I ref. I collect the dough... I take a third of the bets. The rest goes to the winner...

MARTIAL

A third of how much?

COUSIN

We don't fight for less than 800.
Ali does the division in his head.

MARTIAL

So?

Ali hesitates.

ALI

(to Martial) There's something I don't get:
how much do you take?

MARTIAL

I don't know. You tell me. How much do you need? I'll take 20% of what you win. How's that?

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ALI

And how much does your cousin give you?

MARTIAL

Oh, I introduced you to him, didn't I? How's that?

ALI

Okay.
The cousin stands up. They all shake on it.

63. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Ali is in a corner of the living room, sitting in front of Anna's old PC and watching some fight videos he's found. Anna rushes into the room.

ANNA

Keep Sam with you for 5 minutes!
She hurries to find some papers in the drawer of a commode. Ali hasn't budged.

ANNA

Oh! Hear me? I don't want your son in the garden.

ALI

Yeah, I heard.
He gets up and goes to get Sam who is playing behind the house. Anna finds her papers and leaves in another direction.

ALI

Sam! Come here! I want to show you some stuff!
He lifts Sam up with one arm and goes back to the computer.

ALI

Look how they fight...
He clicks on an image and the fight continues... the audience's noise as well. Sam watches, intrigued. Ali

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commentates, pointing to guys onscreen.

ALI

Look at him, in red. See how strong he is?

SAM

Is he the good guy?

ALI

No, he's the bad guy. Look how he tries to grab his legs. Wait. His phone vibrates. He takes it from his pocket. It's Martial. He answers.

ALI

Hello? Yeah...

SAM

Why is the red one the bad guy? Daddy?

ALI

I don't know. Look and tell me who wins. He turns down the sound, settles Sam on the stool and gets up to go speak.

ALI

(into the phone) So? What did he say? Which others? How many? Sam watches the fight in silence. Dogs bark in the garden. Sam feels something coming. He looks out the window, then goes running. Ali hasn't noticed a thing and continues his phone conversation.

ALI

What is this bullshit? What do you mean, a tournament?

64. INT. ARAB CAFÉ%. DAY

Martial is leaning on the bar of a noisy Arab cafe/betting office, talking into his phone.

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MARTIAL

Last one standing gets the money. I know, but he says it's better that way. Do you

think you're in a position to negotiate a percentage? Where did you get that idea from? He gave me a website if you want to see the others.

He takes out a small spiral notebook.

65. INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

From the living room, Ali hears Sam screaming in the garden.

ALI

Tell him to give the website to his mother.

All I see is me doing more fights and him making more dough.

Ali goes to the window.

Outside, near the kennel, Sam has lunged at a guy in a jumpsuit who is helping Anna get the puppies into a metal cage. Sam is screaming. Anna tries to take him into her arms. Sam clutches the bars of the cage. The puppies bark. Anna finally manages to rip Sam free and drag him back into the house.

ALI

(into the phone) He's changing the rules and so am I... I couldn't care less.

Anna storms into the living room. Sam is shrieking, having a tantrum. He kicks and bites.

ALI

I'm on the phone!

ANNA

What the hell? I asked you to watch him for 5 minutes!

ALI

(into the phone) I'll call you back.

Ali hangs up.

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Outside, the kennel keeper rolls the cage across the garden. Anna hugs Sam in her arms.

ANNA

(to Sam) He's taking them to the country.
They'll be so happy there.

SAM

Leave me alone. They're my babies!
Sam refuses to calm down. Anna looks at her brother.

ANNA

What are you doing? Are you his father or
not?

ALI

You're such a pain in the ass.

ANNA

Don't talk to me like that!
Ali rips the child from his sister's grip. Sam struggles.

ALI

Stop it now! I said stop! Calm the fuck
down!

SAM

Let go of me! Let go!
Sam kicks out. Ali shakes him.

ALI

Cut it out, dammit! You're such a pain!
He flings the child away. Sam's head hits the coffee table.
Silence.
Anna rushes over and picks up Sam, who has stopped crying.
He's been knocked out. Anna is frightened. She examines his
scalp, she strokes his head. She trembles. A cut on his
head begins to bleed. She kisses the wound. Ali comes over,
upset.

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ANNA

Don't touch him! Don't touch him I said! You
know what? You're... you're a bad person.
Huddled against Anna's breasts, Sam opens his eyes.

66. EXT. BEACH. DAY

The day is over. The beach boy has already packed away most of his paraphernalia. In the water, Ali and Stephanie are out with some of the last swimmers.

Faithful to what by now seems to have become a habit, he carries her piggyback to their lounge chairs. They come out of the water in the middle of a discussion.

STEPHANIE

What kind of boxing? Thai? Do you use your feet?

ALI

No, just fists I think. We bash each other's faces and whoever's still standing at the end wins. Hey, you're strangling me! He puts her down on her chair.

STEPHANIE

Is it the first time you're doing this?

ALI

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

And you're not scared?

ALI

Of what?

STEPHANIE

How much do they pay you for this?

ALI

I don't know. About 500, 1000 maybe.

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STEPHANIE

You're doing that for 500 euros?

ALI

Um, yeah.

STEPHANIE

You're going to get whacked on the face and risk your health for 500 euros?

ALI

Risk my health? What are you talking about? Why are you getting so worked up?

STEPHANIE

I'll give you the 500! Cancel it and I'll give it to you tomorrow.

ALI

You can give it to me if you have too much money, but I said I was doing it and I am. That's all.

STEPHANIE

If it's not for money, why then?

ALI

I didn't say it's not for the money!

STEPHANIE

Why are you doing it?

ALI

Oh, stop driving me crazy! I'm doing it to fight. For fun. Why did you clown around on your fish? For the fun of it, right? She grins.

STEPHANIE

Yeah and look how I ended up.

ALI

Spare me. You turn on the waterworks when you feel like it.

58

She dries her eyes. He begins to pack things up.

STEPHANIE

Your fight, if you do it...

ALI

Mm?

STEPHANIE

You think I can come along?

67. EXT/INT. MARTIAL'S MERCEDES. DAY

A narrow road. Down below, a town. The Mercedes Vito with the tinted windows lifts a cloud of dust. Stephanie is in the back seat and has to hold on to the overhead strap to avoid hurting herself. At the end of the road is a gate guarded by two huge homies. They signal Martial to over. He rolls down his window and the two homies peer inside. They see Ali and Stephanie in the back.

HOMEBOY 1

Who's she?

MARTIAL

His girlfriend.

Surprised, Stephanie looks at Ali, watching for his reaction. He looks elsewhere. The gate opens. Martial drives in.

68. EXT / INT. MARTIAL'S MERCEDES. DAY

Ali and Stephanie are alone in the car. Through the tinted windows, they can see a concrete yard with boats dry-docked around it and buildings with satellite dishes studding every balcony. Some men are over in one corner, discussing: Martial, his cousin and some other mean looking guys.

In the shade, a bit to one side and surrounded by his fans, is a bare-chested, muscle-bound North African. He warms up,

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wagging his head from left to right.

ALI

(under his breath) Motherfucker's acting

like he's on Canal Plus.

STEPHANIE

Who are the other guys?

ALI

I don't know. Guys with money. Dealers.
A beat.

STEPHANIE

You okay?

ALI

Great.
Martial comes back with a wad of banknotes and slides into
the passenger seat.

MARTIAL

It's okay. Let's go. Fall against the big
one in black shorts. I told you. They're big
guys.

ALI

Okay. And the bets? How much is there?

MARTIAL

A little over 2000 for the time being. But
it'll go up during the final match.

STEPHANIE

What do I do?

MARTIAL

No girls. Stay in the car. (To Ali) You
ready?
Ali nods.

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69. EXT. PROJECTS COURTYARD. DAY

The blazing sun is melting the asphalt. A coin bounces
between pairs of basketball shoes.
The cousin picks it up. He points to Ali and the guy in the

black shorts.

COUSIN

You and you.
Ali pulls off his T-shirt, staring down his adversary.
Martial takes the T shirt and leans over to Ali.

MARTIAL

If you get into trouble, don't insist, just fall.
Ali doesn't flinch. The cousin, the bettors and the other fighters move away.

70. INT. MARTIAL'S MERCEDES. DAY

Stephanie watches the faces leaning over the balconies overhead. She hears the spectators' hostility and cheers. A circle has formed around the fighters. She sees the shadow, and only the shadow, of his opponent's fist barely miss Ali's face. Then things speed up. Ali uses his feet, knees and fists. When his opponent begins to totter to one side, Ali hangs onto him like a pit bull. When he falls, Ali pounds on his face with his fists and elbows. The "ref" has to enlist Cousin's help to pull Ali away. Ali returns to his place in the car. Stephanie looks at him: he can't sit still.

ALI

I have to go.
Another combat begins, while Ali jogs around the hangar. Stephanie watches other combats, whether featuring Ali or not.

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She sees feet dancing on the concrete.
She sees the banknotes in people's hands.
She sees heads leaning over balconies.
She sees an opponent's fist hit Ali behind the ear.
She sees another of Ali's opponents get back to his feet, and Ali's fist split open his nose like a ripe fig.
She sees another opponent's head bounce off the concrete.
She sees a tooth roll across the concrete, like dice in a crap game.

She sees Ali perform three steps of a moonwalk and kiss his own biceps.

71. EXT. ROAD. DAY

A cloud of dust, a narrow, bumpy road. Martial's car is headed for the town below.

72. INT. MARTIAL'S MERCEDES. DAY

CU on a long cut behind Ali's ear. Stephanie's fingers use a Kleenex instead of cotton.

Bare-chested with a towel around his neck, Ali leans forward to make his wound more easily accessible.

STEPHANIE

It's nothing, just a cut. (to Martial) Got anything to disinfect it with?

MARTIAL

(driving) No.

STEPHANIE

(to Ali) Keep this on it. It's the only one I have.

Ali looks up at her.

ALI

You liked it.

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STEPHANIE

Yes.

ALI

Me too.
He again lowers his head.

STEPHANIE

Put this on it. It's the only one I have.
Ali straightens up, covers himself with the towel and remains like that: invisible, out of breath, clearing his throat and spitting out the window... Stephanie observes

the welts on his body.
A big service station appears a bit farther down the road.
Ali sits back up.

ALI

Pull over here. I'll go rinse off my face.
(puts out his hand) Give me 50.
Martial uses his turn signal.

73. INT. MARTIAL'S MERCEDES. DAY

Behind the wheel of his stopped car, Martial counts the bills spread out on his lap.

MARTIAL

Have you known him for long?

STEPHANIE

No, not very.
Alone in the back seat, Stephanie looks out at the service station.

STEPHANIE

What do you want to know? If I knew him before the accident?
Martial looks back.

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MARTIAL

What?

STEPHANIE

You find it weird that we're together? You wonder what he's doing with me?

MARTIAL

No, since you know him, I just wanted to know if you've seen him like that before?

STEPHANIE

No.
Martial finishes counting the bills.

MARTIAL

He freaks me out.
He takes his share and hands Stephanie the envelope.

MARTIAL

1200 for him.
She looks at the envelope without taking it.

STEPHANIE

Why are you giving me that?

MARTIAL

It's for Ali.

STEPHANIE

Exactly. So why give it to me?
He looks at her, suddenly surprised.

MARTIAL

Hey, you make it complicated. Either you
take it or you don't. And either I talk or I
keep my mouth shut.
He tosses the envelope at her. She looks away. Ali finally
gets back into the car with a big box. It's a toy: a green
John Deere tractor with all the accessories.

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ALI

For my kid.

STEPHANIE

You have a kid?

ALI

Yep.

74. EXT. BEACH - ROAD. DAY

The afternoon sun has the entire coast sparkling. Ali is on
his moped, with the box between his knees, driving up the
coastal road. He looks splendid, wearing new clothes.
He finally sees what he was looking for: a group on the
beach, Anna, Richard and their neighbors, having a picnic.

CUT TO:

75. EXT. BEACH. DAY

CU Ali and Anna are off to one side, talking.

ANNA

You see what you're like with him? You're not around and when you are, you scream at him. Damn, you hit him! Why did you take him along if you act like that? You should have left him.

ALI

Cut the shit. He's not dead. I didn't do it on purpose. I'm sorry about it.
Anna avoids his glance. He rummages in his pocket, pulls out the envelope of money and hands it to her.

ALI

Here.

ANNA

What's that?

ALI

Money. What I owe you plus the next few

65

months. You can count it.
She looks at the bills.

ANNA

Where did you get this? (pointing to his new clothes) Same place?

ALI

I won a fight.

ANNA

A fight? What kind of fight? Is that the only job you could find?
Is that why you have marks on your face?

ALI

Hey, will you take the money or not? Why are you looking at me that way?

ANNA

Nothing.

He leaves her with the envelope and trots over to the rest of the group.

They are packing away ice chests and folding things up. Sam and his little friends are playing in the sand with the John Deere tractor. Sam has a bandage on his forehead. Ali sits down in the sand next to him.

ALI

(pointing to the tractor) You like it?

Sam continues to play, ignoring him. Behind them, Richard is folding up parasols with the help of Che, a bearded neighbor who is also there with all his family.

RICHARD

Have you eaten?

ALI

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.

CHÃ

You don't want to drink something before I

66

pack up?

Ali shakes his head "no". He looks at Joelle, Che's daughter: a tomboy with boobs.

ALI

(to Sam) You want to go for a swim?

76. EXT. BEACH. DAY

Ali and Joelle take turns tossing Sam into the waves. The child laughs so hard, he swallows water. Ali takes Sam into his arms.

ALI

Give me a kiss.

SAM

I don't want to.

ALI

Give Daddy a kiss!

SAM

No.

ALI

(using a deep voice) Give Daddy a kiss!

SAM

(deep voice too)... No!
Ali kisses him and hugs him tight.

77. INT. JOELLE'S ROOM. EVENING

A nearby house. Evening is falling. Ali and Joëlle make love in her bedroom. His cell phone rings. The screen reads: "Stef". He doesn't answer. Joëlle comes noisily. Ali puts his hand over her mouth. Through the window, we see Sam in Anna's garden, playing with his new tractor. Richard is hanging towels and swim suits on the line to dry.

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78. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. EVENING

Sitting on the couch in a T-shirt and boxers, Stephanie finishes her dinner, watching TV distractedly. Balancing on her stumps, she puts her plate in the dishwasher. Then, supporting herself on her hands, she leaves the kitchen, wiggling her way into the bedroom. She lifts herself into bed as best she can. Evening falls over the bougainvilleas. Stephanie watches old people coming home in their wheelchairs or hanging on to their Zimmer frames.

79. INT. FORMULE 1 - HOTEL ROOM. DAY

Ali walks up a long standard hotel corridor lined with numbered doors. He stops and knocks at room 429. No answer. He knocks again. Finally, room 431 opens behind him. Martial looks out.

MARTIAL

Hey! I'm here.

ALI

They told me 429.
Martial motions him in.

MARTIAL

Normal. This one is for the equipment. Boxes of equipment are piled up under the window and the small table has been converted into a work surface. A camera is plugged into the TV set. It shows a still picture: an empty location, one sector of an industrial site filmed from above.

MARTIAL

I have to watch this. Have a seat.
You wanted to see me.
Ali sits on the edge of the bed. Martial watches the screen out of the corner of his eye.

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ALI

I need to find a coach. A real one. Someone who has me work on my takedowns.

MARTIAL

Foued?

ALI

Foued doesn't know jackshit. Just jiu-jitsu and rap stuff. You need to ask Cousin. His guys must train somewhere.

MARTIAL

Think so?

ALI

Yeah. And I'll need some time to train.

MARTIAL

I'll talk with Alta Secu. We'll be able to work something out.

ALI

Work it out how?

MARTIAL

I'll have my company pay you and I'll bill them what you cost me. They'll keep paying you but now you'll work directly for me. You won't have to spend your nights there. There is some movement on the screen. He interrupts himself. Gray silhouettes cross the screen, open a door and disappear before coming back to cross the screen once again.

ALI

Where's that?

MARTIAL

At the Mousquetaires.
Martial rewinds and zooms in on some faces.

MARTIAL

I'll make a copy and you'll take it to the

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owner. Ask for Steve at Security. He'll tell you what to do.

80. INT. RICHARD'S TRUCK. DAY

Sam is on Richard's lap, â€˜driving' the truck. He is in seventh heaven. In front of them, a man is running down the shoulder of the road.

RICHARD

Look who it is! Go on, honk!

81. EXT. ROAD. DAY

The horn beeps. Out of breath, in a sweat, Ali looks back and sees Richard and Sam in the truck. They slow down and pull up to him. Richard lowers his window.

RICHARD

We're going to school. Want to come along?
Ali shakes his head and continues jogging. The truck disappears.

82. INT. NEW GYM. DAY

This new gym is large, clean and light. In one corner there is a genuine ring, and on the other side, a piece of tatami.

Ali is working out with Joao, a Brazilian in a kimono. They try out some foot-fist series. On the mat, Ali shadows and deconstructs Joao's gestures.

83. EXT. ANTIBES. STREET. DAY

A street near the beach. The weekend is beginning. The streets are crowded. Ali is on the phone.

ALI

Where are you? I can't see you. Where?
He looks every which way until he sees her, a few feet away. She is standing upright, in a light pair of pants, with her canes hidden behind her back. It takes some time to register. She smiles at him.

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ALI

That's fucking amazing! I was looking for a wheelchair...

STEPHANIE

Stop looking. No more wheelchairs!

ALI

Since when?

STEPHANIE

Two days.

ALI

You could have told me!

STEPHANIE

Why? Is it a problem?

ALI

No, I don't know. You're like before.

STEPHANIE

Well, not exactly.

ALI

Go on, let's see.

She takes a few steps forward, leaning on her canes. He whistles in admiration.

STEPHANIE

I need to get my balance but supposedly that doesn't take long.

ALI

It must be like walking on stilts...

STEPHANIE

I don't know. I've never walked on stilts before.

ALI

You look taller. Does it hurt?

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STEPHANIE

A little, but it feels good too.

ALI

Want to go for a swim?
She stops.

STEPHANIE

The beach... pff, I don't know... It's different today... I don't think I want to

get undressed.

84. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN. DAY

They are at the kitchen table, eating salad. Stephanie is in her wheelchair. Ali has finished his plate.

ALI

Is this all you have?

STEPHANIE

Look in the fridge. There must be some cheese left.

ALI

You don't have any pate?

STEPHANIE

No, I don't have any pate.
He gets up and opens the fridge. He takes the cheese, sniffs it, then takes some yoghurt too. He notices a box of cereal on a shelf and takes it. He returns to the fridge for some milk. She watches, her mouth open in suspense.

STEPHANIE

You're a good eater, aren't you?

ALI

I'm hungry.
He begins with the cheese.

ALI

No bread?

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She shakes her head "no" and points to a box of biscuits on the shelf.

STEPHANIE

There are crackers up there. Do you have a girlfriend?
He shakes his head.

STEPHANIE

You don't have anyone?

ALI

Yes, but they're not girlfriends.

STEPHANIE

What are they? Quick fucks?

ALI

Yeah.
She hesitates.

STEPHANIE

A lot?
He looks at her.

STEPHANIE

You mind talking about this?

ALI

No, I don't care. (pause) How about you? Did you have a lot of boyfriends?

STEPHANIE

When, before?

ALI

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

I was with Simon...

ALI

That's all?

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STEPHANIE

No, there were others. But not a lot either. I... I wasn't very... In fact, I liked it when guys looked at me... I liked to feel that I turned them on... Afterwards, I don't know... they bored me.
Ali looks at her, strangely attentive, as if he didn't

understand, or didn't believe her.

ALI

And now?

STEPHANIE

Um, nothing. I don't even know what it looks like anymore... I don't even know if it still works...

ALI

You don't want to?

STEPHANIE

Did I say I didn't want to anymore? Of course I still want to...

ALI

How do you go about it?

STEPHANIE

How do you think I go about it? If I were a guy I'd say I jerk off to a porn video... I'm a girl.
Ali is dumbstruck.

STEPHANIE

Okay, let's change the subject...
She begins piling up plates and silverware.

ALI

You want to fuck?
She is thrown for a loop.

STEPHANIE

Huh?

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ALI

You want to know if it still works, so let's fuck and that way you'll know.
He looks at her, simply, naturally. She has a nervous laugh.

STEPHANIE

Just like that?

ALI

Um, yeah. Give me that.

He takes the plates, gets up and puts them in the dishwasher.

STEPHANIE

I... I don't know if I can like that...

ALI

Whatever you want... You tell me...

She hesitates.

STEPHANIE

Wait.

She wheels herself away from the table and into the bedroom. He remains alone, quickly cleaning the table.

ALI

What do I do?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Wait!

He waits. Then:

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Come here.

85. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM. DAY

He enters the room. The shutters are closed. She is in bed, under the covers. She watches him sit down on the bed, undo

75

his pants and turn toward her.

ALI

Okay? Ready?

Unsure of herself, she pulls a face.

STEPHANIE

Let's try.
He slips under the covers, spontaneously tries to kiss her,
but she pushes him away gently.

STEPHANIE

(a little nervous) Do you mind if we don't
kiss?

ALI

No. Your breasts... can I?

STEPHANIE

Yes.
He licks her breasts, then lies on top of her, covering
her. She tries to wriggle herself free.

STEPHANIE

You're crushing me!

ALI

Maybe you should stop talking now...

STEPHANIE

Okay, I'll stop.
His hands caress her, they grab onto what remains of her
thighs. He enters her. She is about to scream, but lets
herself go.
She grabs hold of him.

STEPHANIE

Gently!

76

86. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN. DAY

Ali opens the fridge. He is dressed again. Stephanie
appears in a robe, sitting in her wheelchair. We can tell
she feels too shy to look at him.

ALI

Are you okay? How was it?
She blushes.

ALI

Is it still working?

STEPHANIE

Um, yes... no... I don't really know. It's different... It's hard to tell after just one try...

ALI

Yeah but I don't have time right now. I have to go!

STEPHANIE

(blushing) No, no! That's not what I meant... I just meant that it's too soon to tell... like too many things are happening at once...
Ali doesn't understand.

ALI

But did you enjoy it or not?

STEPHANIE

I did.
A beat.

ALI

When you're up for it and you can't find anyone, ask me. If I'm oper, we'll do it.

STEPHANIE

What's "oper"?

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ALI

Operational... If I'm available. If I can, I mean!

STEPHANIE

If you're "oper" we...

ALI

Yeah.

She sketches a vague gesture.

ALI

What?

Her throat is constricted, she is unable to answer.

STEPHANIE

Nothing. Great.

87. EXT. MARINELAND - STAFFROOM. DAY

Stephanie uses one of her canes to push open the door to the staff room. The room is apparently empty.

STEPHANIE

Louise? Louise, are you here? Is anyone here?

No answer.

She looks over the office she once knew so well and that hasn't seen again since her accident: the photos on the wall, the diagrams, the case histories, the animals' names, etc...

88. EXT. MARINELAND - BLEACHERS. DAY

Up in the bleachers, Stephanie looks over all the pools, the big one as well as the others... suddenly, in nÂ° 3, a huge but limp black dorsal fin appears.

89. EXT. POOL N3. DAY

Weighed down by her prostheses, Stephanie has to lie down on the rim of pool nÂ° 3 to reach the water. She reaches out and slaps the water with the palm of her hand. Nothing

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really happens, a black mass just keeps circling at the bottom of the pool... She slaps again and the black mass swims faster and faster... a wave is formed around the sides of the pool, a wave that swells higher and higher... Stephanie's hand again slaps the water and, suddenly, Niska emerges.

CUT TO:

90. EXT. POOL N3 - DAY

Niska washes up. Stephanie caresses her and weeps softly, like someone caught unawares.

LOUISE (OFF)

(gently) Stephanie?

Stephanie looks back to discover Louise and three other ex-colleagues. They have been there a moment, surprised, unsettled and ill at ease.

STEPHANIE

I stopped by the office but there wasn't anyone.

Stephanie stands up with the help of her canes. The guys rush over to help her. They hug and kiss. All four remain like that for a moment.

91. EXT. MARINELAND - CAFETERIA. DAY

Sun and music. The public is beginning to invade the lanes and paths.

Stephanie, Louise and the other keepers are on the terrace of the employees' cafeteria. They are thrilled and reassured to see her again. At times a hand touches her arm or shoulder. Sometimes an acquaintance comes over and kisses her.

Under the table, Stephanie types 'oper?' into her cell phone, then looks up and returns to her surroundings.

We can imagine the "How are you?" "And you?" "Great". The "Let me get a look at you... You look wonderful!"...all a

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bit strained, but friendly. Louise, who is sitting next to her, leans over to her:

LOUISE

(softly) See? It wasn't hard!

They smile at each other and return to the conversation in progress. Stephanie's cell phone vibrates on the table. She discreetly checks the answer, and when she looks up, exchanges a glance with Louise.

From that glance, we cut to:

92. INT. SUPERMARKET. DAY

Stephanie and Louise are out shopping. Stephanie holds herself up thanks to the shopping cart she is pushing. We join their conversation already in progress.

STEPHANIE

When I feel like it, I send him a text message and ask if he's oper. If he is, we hook up.
Louise reacts.

LOUISE

What's oper?

STEPHANIE

If he's up for it. If he's free. If he is, we fuck.

LOUISE

Is that all?

STEPHANIE

Yes, that's all. What else do you want?

LOUISE

I don't know. Is that enough?

STEPHANIE

For me it is.

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LOUISE

What does he do?
Stephanie hesitates a moment, as if worried about how Louise will react.

STEPHANIE

He fights.

LOUISE

What kind? MMA?

STEPHANIE

No. Illicit fights in the projects.
Louise reacts.

STEPHANIE

Whatever I say, you make a face.

LOUISE

Just give me a second to react... Are you in
love?
She hesitates.

STEPHANIE

He does me good.

93. EXT. PARKING LOT. MARINELAND. DAY

The group of trainers has accompanied Stephanie to a taxi.

94. INT. TAXI/PARKING LOT - MARINELAND. DAY

Stephanie waves good-bye. They return her wave.
The taxi drives away. The group scatters.

CUT TO:

95. INT. BASEMENT. DAY

A dark cellar. We hear Ali and Stephanie labor and sigh. A
door suddenly opens above and we hear voices.

81

ALI

Shit!

STEPHANIE

Who is it?
He looks for his clothes...

96. EXT. GARDEN. DAY

... then goes to the garden where he startles Anna:

ANNA

I didn't know you were here. You scared me.
What were you up to?

ALI

I was talking?

ANNA

You're not alone?

ALI

I'm with a friend.

ANNA

You bring girls back to my place now?

ALI

She's a friend, I said.

Just then, the basement door opens and Stephanie appears on her crutches. Anna is dismayed. Ali motions to Stephanie:

ALI

(to Stephanie) Let me introduce you to my
sister! (to Anna) This is Stephanie. You
know the girl from Marineland.
Stephanie offers her hand to Anna who takes it, then
realizing what she's doing, puts the other to her mouth:

ANNA

Oh, my God. Poor thing!

82

Sam arrives with his snack. Stephanie looks at him.

STEPHANIE

So that's him?

They are sitting around the garden table. Anna comes
carrying a tray.

ANNA

They were out of grapefruit. I took tropical
fruit.

She puts some glasses and two tetra packs of fruit juice on

the table. Through a hole in the oilcloth, Stephanie can watch Sam playing under the table.

ANNA

I'll make tea. I have some cookies. You drink tea, don't you?

STEPHANIE

Don't bother. This is perfect, I swear. Thanks.

Before Stephanie can even finish, Anna is already on the way back to the kitchen.

ALI

You don't want to get going?

STEPH

Wait, your sister...

ALI

You freak her out. Can't you see? She feels like a cashier with you. Pathetic with her tea and cookies. It's a pain. Stephanie leans on a cane to stand up.

ALI

What are you doing?

STEPH

I'm going to help her.

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ALI

No need to overdo it.

97. INT. ANNA'S HOUSE. DAY

Later, Sam guides Stephanie up the narrow stairs of the house. She has a hard time with her "legs" and canes.

98. INT. SAM'S ROOM. DAY

A child's room with cheap wall paper depicting dolphins.

Stephanie is sitting on the edge of the bed.

STEPHANIE

So this is where you sleep? It's a nice room.

Sam nods in agreement. He gives her a strange look.

STEPHANIE

Why are you looking at me like that? Does it scare you? You want to see them, is that it? He nods.

She lifts one of her pant legs to show the prosthesis underneath. Sam looks attentively, stretches out his hand, touches it carefully.

SAM

Does it hurt?

Stephanie smiles at him.

STEPHANIE

No... Want to touch it?

Sam reaches out his hand.

99. INT. MARTIAL'S CAR. DAY

In CU through the tinted windows of Martial's Mercedes Vito: the face of a boxer who is lying on the ground and being pummeled.

Ali is sitting bare-chested in the back seat, a towel around his neck and a bottle of water between his knees.

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Ali watches the fight. Sitting next to him, Stephanie fills a plastic bag with ice cubes. She hands it to him.

STEPHANIE

Here.

He applies it to his eyebrow. She displaces a bloody strand of hair and replaces it with another.

We see Martial return to the car and open the front door.

MARTIAL

You okay?

He puts a wad of money in the glove compartment.

MARTIAL

You ready?

Ali nods "yes". He opens his door, gets half out and empties the bottle of water over his head.

Stephanie is left alone in the car. She hears the spectators' cheers. She closes the window and turns on the air conditioning full blast.

100. EXT. PROJECTS - COURTYARD. DAY

His opponent's guard is up, closed tighter than a safe. Behind his fists, Ali can see the guy's frozen stare. And then suddenly he breaks loose: a series of feints and a kick behind the ear.

He hears himself growl, the light becomes electrifying. He is on the ground, protecting himself as best he can. He tries to block his opponent's arm. He hears himself wheezing and panting like a pair of bellows. He sees his blood splatter his opponent.

ALI (OFF)

... All of a sudden, in your mouth, it's like it tasted like bone. A taste of rust and bone.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Because you think bone has a taste?

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ALI (OFF)

Yeah, there I did.

Then, through the spectators' legs, he sees something: sunlight reflected off the Mercedes door that has just opened on a pair of shoes attached to two prostheses, a pair of shorts. He also sees the heads of the tough guys who turn back to look.

He breaks free, struggles to his feet, spits up a clot of blood and returns to the task at hand.

His opponent tries to get up. Ali jumps on him to finish

HIM OFF!

101. INT. MARTIAL'S CAR. DAY

The car is driving back into town. Martial is driving. The windows are open. Ali holds a bag of ice against his cheek bone, while Stephanie applies her Band-Aids to a cut over his eyebrows. They are talking, but we can not hear what they say. All we hear is the noise of the wind against the open windows. Ali suddenly breaks out laughing. Martial does too in the rear view mirror. Stephanie follows suit!

102. INT. MOUSQUETAIRES. DAY

Muzak.

Ali and Martial follow the head of security into the store. Some of the personnel are near the cash registers, silent, hostile and immobile. The morning customers wonder what's happening.

The head of security elbows his way through.

HEAD OF SECURITY

Let them through, please!

The personnel reluctantly make way.

103. INT. MOUSQUETAIRES - STOCKROOM. DAY

Red graffiti on the wall: "A SPYING BOSS IS A CRIMINAL
BOSS!"

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Ali recognizes the place with the palettes up to the ceiling. In the back, he also recognizes the manager, protected by two guards and being harangued by union representatives.

MARTIAL

(to Ali, pointing to the manager) Go get the equipment. I need to see him.

Ali obeys.

UNION REP

Don't bother. We're the ones who will call the police. The police and the press. That way they'll know you spy on your workers!

The manager looks away, accompanied by his two guards.

UNION REP

At least have the courage to look at me when
I talk to you!

CUT TO:

The cameras, the ripped out cables, the phony boxes have
been piled up on the floor. It looks more like the crime
squad has been at work. Ali opens a garbage bag and bends
over to retrieve the equipment.

WOMAN (OFF)

What are you doing there?
She's a young employee in the store uniform.

ALI

(suspicious) Packing up.

WOMAN

Is it your stuff?

ALI

No.
He notices that she's taken out her cell phone to take a
picture.

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ALI

Don't you take a picture!

WOMAN

You work for them?
She continues to manipulate her phone.

ALI

I said no picture!

WOMAN

Why shouldn't I? You film us!
He straightens up menacingly.

ALI

I'm going to slap you!
A hand grabs his arm. It's Martial.

MARTIAL

Forget it. Let's get out of here!

ALI

And the equipment?

MARTIAL

Forget about it. We're fucked here. The cops are going to question the managers and the managers will turn us in. They leave.

104. INT. MARTIAL'S FORMULE 1 ROOM. NIGHT

Martial's fingers slowly play with the hair on his chest. He is lying nude on the bed of his Formule 1 hotel room. He smokes and stares at the ceiling. His suitcases and bags are packed, all he has to do is close them. He hears knocks next door. He gets up with a sigh, pulls on his pants and opens the door. Stephanie is waiting in front of room 429.

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MARTIAL

In here.
Stephanie looks back, surprised. Martial motions her in.

MARTIAL

I have to go away for work. 3 or 4 months, I don't know yet... Since Ali wants to keep fighting, I thought maybe you tend to that while I'm not here...
She is thunderstruck.

STEPHANIE

Is he okay with that?

MARTIAL

He's the one who asked me to call you.

STEPHANIE

Why me?

MARTIAL

I guess he trusts you.

STEPHANIE

(laughs, thrown for a loop) Yes, sure but.... I don't know anything about that scene... I don't know those guys!
He hands her an old spiral notebook.

MARTIAL

I wrote it all down here. As for the rest, ask me your questions and I'll answer them.

STEPHANIE

How do I do the bets?

MARTIAL

You can count on your fingers, can't you?

STEPHANIE

Honestly, can you see me dealing with those beasts?

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MARTIAL

Yeah.
A beat.

MARTIAL

And you need money to cover the bets, and you have money.
She looks at him.

MARTIAL

What? You're not rich? What did the insurance company give you for your legs? 200,000? 300,000? Those jobs must have good health plans. Am I wrong?

STEPHANIE

No.

A shadow crosses Stephanie's mind. She looks at the open bags and suitcases, without really seeing them. The place looks like it's expecting a police raid.

STEPHANIE

Where are you going?

MARTIAL

Grenoble, then Vienne.

STEPHANIE

Austria?

MARTIAL

No, in the Isère.

STEPHANIE

Was the insurance money your idea?

MARTIAL

Yes.

A beat. He gives her time to wrap her head around that one. Then, since she still looks troubled, he taps her on the hand.

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MARTIAL

It's me, I said. Don't worry. I'm the bad guy.

105. EXT. FEVER RAY. NIGHT

Through the door of the club, we hear snatches of the introduction to Thunderstruck. People are sweating and trying to get into the Fever. Foued lets Martial, Ali, Stephanie and Khadi through. Virile bear hugs and handshakes.

FOUED

The Cousin's waiting for you inside. Table to the left of the bar.

Ali knows and greets everyone. Stephanie is in the middle

of the group. She holds herself up on the shoulders of these big, caring guys and lets herself be carried along. She feels good

106. INT. FEVER RAY. NIGHT

The club is hot as a steam bath. Loud music blares out of loudspeakers. Bodies dance and eyes shine bright. At the table "left of the bar": Cousin and three friends who are with him. Another round of bear hugs and handshakes. Martial, Stephanie and Cousin regroup face to face. Martial speaks, Cousin listens and at times looks over at Stephanie, who looks at him too. She notices one of the tattoos on his arm: a green and red snake that seems to be slithering out his sleeve. The barman brings two bottles of champagne.

Ali leans toward her:

ALI

Want to boogie?
She doesn't understand.

ALI

(loud) You want to dance?

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She looks frightened, but then smiles when she sees what he's up to.

ALI

Come on!

STEPHANIE

No, no!

ALI

Whatever you say.
He goes to the dance floor and begins to rock. He dances badly, clumsily. Martial pours champagne.

107. EXT. FEVER RAY. NIGHT

The smoking area is located outside, and a bit farther off, the dope smoking area. Behind the smokers, we hear noise

from the club. Cousin is puffing on a spliff. Stephanie watches, holding her champagne goblet. He offers it to her. She accepts and takes a drag.

COUSIN

Can I talk to you?
She nods "yes".

COUSIN

There's something I'd like to know... The fish that ate your legs... She wasn't expecting that.

STEPHANIE

Yes?

COUSIN

Is it true it's still there?

STEPHANIE

Yeah... where else would it be?

COUSIN

They didn't shoot it? Or put it down, whatever?

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STEPHANIE

Why would they do that?

COUSIN

I don't know... when a dog attacks you, they kill it. And the fish gets off. Don't you mind that the thing that ate your legs is living it up in its shitty fucking aquarium?

STEPHANIE

No. And I don't want anything to happen to it. Now more than ever!
He looks at her, incredulous, but with admiration.

COUSIN

(imitating her) "Now more than ever". Listen

to you!
He takes another drag.

COUSIN

(imitating her) Tututu-tu-tutu...
They laugh.

STEPHANIE

Do I sound like that?

COUSIN

Tututu...

108. INT. FEVER RAY. NIGHT

We are back inside. Ali is working on a girl a bit farther off on the dance floor. Stephanie follows Cousin through the noise and sticky heat. When she next looks at the dance floor, Ali is no longer there.

Ali and the girl are on their way to the exit. Ali looks for a friendly face, meets Stephanie's glance and motions that he's leaving. She waves: "Yeah, ok, I get it."

Ali disappears with the girl.

Stephanie is at the bar, drinking. She types an SMS into her cell phone: "operational?" She hesitates, then puts

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away her cell phone. She hadn't noticed a guy sitting next to her. She also failed to notice that he's been speaking to her for a while now.

STEPHANIE

(loud) Huh? I can't hear you...

GUY

(loud) No problem. What are you drinking?

STEPHANIE

(loud) Champagne?

The guy orders. He is blond, lean and athletic-looking. He might be thought to resemble Simon.

GUY

What's your name? I'm Pierre.

STEPHANIE

Hey there. I'm Marie.

GUY

Come here often?

Stephanie is on automatic pilot. When she turns to the room, she feels the blond guy's eyes locked onto her. She can pretty much tell what he's thinking about the breasts under her T-shirt. She answers his questions, she returns his smiles. When she finishes her glass and puts it down on the counter, he kisses her. She doesn't push him away immediately, like a frightened virgin, she takes the time to put a good face on it.

STEPHANIE

No... No, please. I don't feel like it. Not tonight. I can't...

The guy looks disappointed, then manages a "good loser's" smile.

GUY

Okay, no problem...

STEPHANIE

It's best I go. Good night and thanks.

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He sees her lean over to retrieve her canes and then hobble away.

GUY

Sorry. I couldn't know.
Stephanie freezes.

STEPHANIE

You couldn't know what?

GUY

Huh?

STEPHANIE

You couldn't know what, asshole?
Foued runs to warn Martial, Khadi and Cousin that something

is wrong.

When Martial arrives, he sees Stephanie collared by a bouncer three times her size. She lashes out with one of her canes, while under the bar, another bouncer tries to help the blond guy back to his feet. There's a deep gash on his skull.

Cousin comes to give the bouncer a hand.

109. EXT. ANTIBES - BEACH -CAFÃ%. DAY

Early morning. The shrill screech of the sea gulls and the milky light of a day that looks like it's going to be sunless.

Stephanie drinks her coffee at the only table on the terrace. Behind her, chairs are still piled up and the waiter is slowly getting to work.

A silhouette appears on the sidewalk. It's Ali, in the same clothes as last night. He joins her and takes a seat.

ALI

You okay?

STEPHANIE

Fine.

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ALI

Did you stay late?

STEPHANIE

I can't remember. Afterwards the cousin took us to a club at la Colle sur Loup... It sucked and it was 5 a.m. And you?

ALI

Normal. (to the waiter) A large coffee with milk and bread with butter!
A beat.

STEPHANIE

You think it's good that we're having this conversation?

ALI

What conversation?

STEPHANIE

That I ask how it was with the girl last night and you answer normal.

ALI

What do you want me to say?

STEPHANIE

Nothing.
He grimaces at her mood.

ALI

Oh la!

STEPHANIE

"Oh la" what? You think it's normal leaving with that bimbo in front of me? What would you say if I did the same thing?

ALI

Nothing.

STEPHANIE

Oh yeah? You wouldn't care?

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ALI

You're pissing me off. What's your problem?

STEPHANIE

Wait, let me put it differently. What I am for you? A friend? A pal?
Sort of a buddy, like Foued and the others?

ALI

STEPHANIE

Tell me something: do you and your buddies fuck every now and then?
He snickers.

STEPHANIE

No? Really? Never?
That's the difference.
Her looks at her.

STEPHANIE

Dammit, stop looking at me that way!

ALI

How am I looking at you?
The waiter arrives with Ali's order. She tones her voice
down a notch.

STEPHANIE

You wanted us to continue... Isn't that what
you told Martial?

ALI

What are you talking about, fucking or
fighting?

STEPHANIE

Well, we have to go about it well. We have
to show each other manners, and
consideration...

ALI

Manners?

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STEPHANIE

Hey! Stop acting like an idiot. Do the words
bother you? You know what I mean.... Tact...
You've never stopped being tactful with me.
A beat. He looks away.

STEPHANIE

So... is that a plan?
She waits for his mind to come back before continuing.

STEPHANIE

We'll continue... but not like animals.

He smirks, with a flick of the chin.

STEPHANIE

Cat got your tongue?

Ali stirs his cup without answering. He feels her eyes on him. He smiles.

ALI

I'm oper now.

STEPHANIE

What?

ALI

You made me oper. It's you! It's because it's all you're talking about!

STEPHANIE

(softly) You are really a dog.
He stands up.

STEPHANIE

What are you doing?

ALI

I'm getting out of here.

STEPHANIE

Why?

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ALI

I'm fed up.

STEPHANIE

You're bored?

ALI

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

What I'm saying bores you?

ALI

Yeah.

STEPHANIE

Are you acting like a jackass on purpose?

ALI

Aren't you being an ass by putting words everywhere?

He sits back down. She watches him eat his sandwiches.

STEPHANIE

I'm the one who's leaving.

She gets up.

Ali finishes his coffee.

110. INT. TATTOO PARLOR. DAY

The buzz of a small electric compressor.

In extreme close up: the needle of a tattoo machine pricking skin. Ink flows, a cotton swab wipes... a tattoo slowly appears.

Lying on a table, Stephanie is having what remains of her legs tattooed.

CUT TO:

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111. EXT/INT. BANK. DAY

Stephanie is at a teller's window, withdrawing a rather large amount of cash.

A machine counts out the bills, while the employee stuffs wads of them into an envelope.

112. EXT/INT USED CAR DEALERSHIP. DAY

Pennants flap in the wind, the pennants of a used car dealership.

CU: car doors opening, automatic gearboxes, Stephanie's "feet" testing pedals, bucket seats, backseats, tinted windows opening and closing, etc.

113. INT. PROJECTS - APARTMENT. DAY

A painting of a lion hunt and, under it, Stephanie and Cousin on a couch, talking shop. Leaning over a computer and a cell phone, they go over potential adversaries. Some kids stick their heads in to see what Stephanie looks like.

114. INT. NEW GYM. DAY

Foued, wearing protective gear, spars with a black cruiserweight. The fight is close, the sound of flesh on flesh resounds. Outside the ring, Ali cheers Foued on. He notices on the other side of the ring a young thin, bearded guy in a Lacoste polo shirt buttoned up to his neck - Leonardini - who is following the fight with the eye of a pro.

When Ali and Joao are later working out on their bit of tatami, Ali sees Foued sitting on a bench, with a towel around his neck and talking with Leonardini.

FOUED

He saw me at la Ciotat. We spoke a few times on the phone. When he has it in for you, he never lets up. Leonardini is well-known.

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He was a club in Strasbourg with a training center. He's taking me on a trial basis for three months. If it works out, he'll make challenger in the nationals.

115. INT. LOCKER ROOM - NEW GYM. DAY

Ali and Foued are off to one side in the locker room.

ALI

So are you going to Strasbourg?

FOUED

What do you think? I'd be an idiot...

ALI

And when are you leaving?

Leonardini enters the locker room.

FOUED

Mr. Leonardini, this is my buddy Ali. Ali
Van Versh.
Leonardini shakes his hand.

ALI

Pleased to meet you.

116. EXT. PROJECTS - COURTYARD. DAY

Through the tinted windshield of a Nissan Pathfinder SUV,
Ali watches Stephanie, wearing a tight T shirt and leaning
on her cane, talking with Cousin and some bettors. The
discussion looks intense.
Stephanie returns to the car. Below her pedal pushers, her
prostheses sparkle in the sunlight. We hear salacious jibes
from the surrounding buildings.
She opens the car door.

ALI

How much is there?

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STEPHANIE

3400. Are you ready?
Walking with a slow, deliberate sway - aware of the effect
she's having - she ceremonially opens the passenger door.
The remarks cease.

117. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. NIGHT / DAWN

CU: a black and red arrow with, in industrial characters:

"RIGHT".

It's the tattoo on Stephanie's right thigh. Ali's hand
grips and squeezes the thigh. They are making love.
The room is half-lit. Ali growls and grinds his teeth in
his sleep. Stephanie slowly and noiselessly rolls over to
her side of the bed. She gets up and, using her hands,
drags herself toward the bathroom.
Suddenly, feeling like he's suffocating, Ali awakens. It

takes a few seconds for him to realize where he is. His hand sweeps across the bed.

ALI

Where are you?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

Here.

He sits up. She is embarrassed.

STEPHANIE

No, don't look!

ALI

What are you doing?

STEPHANIE

I'm going to pee.

ALI

Is it early?

STEPHANIE

Five.

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ALI

Shit, I collapsed...

Ali slips out of bed, naked, yawning and groggy. He comes and leans over her...

STEPHANIE

I don't like it when you see me like this...

ALI

Hold on.

She hangs onto his neck. He lifts her up and, both naked, he carries her into the bathroom.

118. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM. DAWN

Stephanie is sitting on the toilet, while Ali pees in the shower.

STEPHANIE

I called the numbers they gave me at the gym. I spoke to an organizer, G lanther Bower. She yawns.

STEPHANIE

There's a gala in Turin next week. He told me that we'd have time to meet there. I'm going to go.

ALI

Yeah. And when do I see him?

STEPHANIE

Later, in his gym in Dortmund. He wants to organize a test match, to see what you're worth. To see if you've got the "G ttlicher Zorn"...

Ali comes out of the shower.

STEPHANIE

Turn on the water.

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ALI

Huh?

STEPHANIE

Turn on the water when you pee. It's disgusting.
He runs some water.

119. INT. STEPHANIE'S APARTMENT. DAWN

He carries her back into the bedroom. She looks at his face, the scar on his forehead, the scar over his nose.

STEPHANIE

How's your nose?

ALI

Mm.

STEPHANIE

It doesn't seem broken.

ALI

No.

They look at each other.

He puts her down on the bed and lies down next to her.

Stephanie slides over to him. He lifts her up and places her on her stomach. They remain like that, without moving.

She looks like a mermaid lolling on a rock.

She leans over and kisses him on the mouth. He pulls away, surprised.

ALI

Now we're allowed?

No answer.

They make love.

In CU: the tattoo on Stephanie's left thigh. A red and black arrow with, in industrial characters: "LEFT".

120. EXT/INT. NISSAN SUV. DAY

Music.

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The road speeds by. Sun. Road signs with the names of Italian cities. The landscape has changed. Wearing her baseball cap and sunglasses, Stephanie drives with her elbow out the window. On the radio, we hear the voice of an Italian DJ.

121. EXT. COASTAL ROAD. DAY

Ali jogs along the sea shore. He sweats, huffing and puffing. He stops, takes a few steps, then continues, but soon stops again. It looks as if his feet are weighing him down. Traffic speeds by. He stands still and stares into the near distance.

Nothing.

122. INT. TURIN - HOTEL. EVENING

A standard hotel lobby.

Curious, Stephanie looks at the crowd of fighters the day before the 'Ultimate' tournament: muscle-bound giants squeezed into tight jackets, with bashed in eyebrows, collapsed nostrils, cauliflower ears... Every language can be heard, some greet each other, some hug, they all size each other up...

CUT TO:

Propped up on her cane, she heads for a table in a corner of the bar where a man is consulting his cell phone.

STEPHANIE

(in German) Mr. Bower?

GÄNTHER

(in German) Yes?

STEPHANIE

(in German) I'm Stephanie Granget.
GÄnther looks about fifty and has obviously spent many of those years in the ring.

CUT TO:

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Settled in a corner in front of their open PCs, Stephanie and GÄnther talk shop.

CUT TO:

They are about to separate.

STEPHANIE

(in German) Can you get me a ticket for tonight?

GÄNTHER

(in German) I don't know. I'll see what I can do. (pointing to her legs) What happened to your legs?

STEPHANIE

An accident. In another life. I was an animal trainer. I worked with orcas... The show took a turn for the worse.

GÄENTHER

(it dawns on him) Oh, of course! In France!
The accident! It was you?! I'm talking to a
star!
Stephanie makes a face.

GÄENTHER

Yes, I am... Amazing. What courage! Bravo!
I'm very honored, really. I was an idiot
before!

STEPHANIE

Why?

GÄENTHER

I acted like an arrogant business man. I'm
so ashamed. Will you forgive me?

STEPHANIE

Of course, Mr. Bower.

GÄENTHER

Call me GÄ^hanther. Of course you can come
tonight. As my guest!

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123. INT. TURIN - GYM. NIGHT

Bleachers have been set up in a gym, surrounding a cage-
like, fenced-in ring. Inside, combatants fight, no rules,
no holds barred.
On the floor, two wrestlers clasp and elbow each other.
One is bleeding from the forehead.
Below the ring, Stephanie is mesmerized by this carnival of
violence.
GÄ^hanther leans toward her:

GÄENTHER

(in German) Funny, huh?

STEPHANIE

(in German) What? That?

GÄENTHER

That... and you!

124. INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. NIGHT

Stephanie walks down a corridor. She stops in front of a door and knocks. GÄnther opens. He looks surprised. He is barefoot, in a pair of trousers and an unbuttoned shirt. He looks at her inquisitively, and when she still doesn't

SAY ANYTHING:

GÄENTHER (in German)

Are you okay? Do you need anything?

She hesitates.

STEPHANIE (in German)

I... I came to see if I got it wrong, or not.

He knits his brow.

GÄENTHER (in German)

Got what wrong?

STEPHANIE (in German)

You don't understand?

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GÄENTHER (in German)

Excuse me?

STEPHANIE (in German)

I got the impression, the way you were looking at me before... Try to understand because this is getting hard for me...

GÄENTHER (in German)

No, you didn't get it wrong.

He smiles and opens the door.

GÄENTHER (in German)

I have someone in my life, you know.

STEPHANIE

So do I.

He draws her inside. The door closes.

125. INT. SUPERMARKET. DAY

Anna is about to open her cash register, when a West Indian

in a security uniform whispers into her ear, apparently asking her to follow him. Another cashier is already waiting to take her place.

Anna joins three other employees waiting in a corridor. They exchange a few words under their breath.

126. INT. SUPERMARKET - CORRIDOR - ADMINISTRATION. DAY

Anna comes out of an office, looking distraught. She has to lean against the wall to hold herself up. A colleague comes to help.

COLLEAGUE

So?

ANNA

I got fired.

COLLEAGUE

Come on. There's something we want to show you.

108

In the locker room, we recognize the girl who had photographed Ali while he was trying to reclaim Martial's camera equipment. The girl says something to Anna. When it seems that Anna can not believe her ears, the girl takes out her cell phone and confronts her with the evidence. Anna needs to sit down.

127. EXT. HOUSE. DAY

Out of breath, Ali pushes open the gate and climbs the stairs.

128. INT. KITCHEN. DAY

In the kitchen, Anna and Richard are sitting at the table in front of a meal they haven't had the appetite to start.

ALI

You okay?

No answer.

ALI

You don't seem it.
He goes to open the fridge.

ANNA

What are you doing?

ALI

I'm hungry.

ANNA

Close it! Don't eat here.
Ali stares at her, stunned.

ANNA

Don't eat here.

ALI

What the hell is going on?

ANNA

I was fired this morning. I'm unemployed.

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ALI

Shit... But what's the problem if I eat
here?
Anna stands up.

ANNA

They had cameras in the storeroom... They
filmed us when we took the expired food.
They fired us.
Ali's head spins.

ANNA

You had your sister fired. How does it feel?
How much did you get for that? You get paid
per person or a flat rate? Nothing to say? I
take you in, I take care of your son and you
have nothing to say?

ALI

I couldn't know...

ANNA

You couldn't know? You couldn't know what?
That you were screwing us out of jobs? That
you were hurting people?
Ali tries to find something to say, but his sister's hand
delivers a resounding slap.
He takes it like a man. A moment passes. Ali is red from
the slap, red with shame until he suddenly straightens up
and knocks over the table.

RICHARD

Calm down. Calm down, I said!
Ali looks back. He sees Richard's grim face at the other
end of a hunting rifle.

RICHARD

Take your stuff and get out of here. We
don't want to see you around here anymore.

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A sudden noise draws their attention: Sam is watching from
the top of the stairs.

ANNA

Go to your room. Go upstairs immediately.

129. INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - BASEMENT. DAY

An SMS arrives from Stephanie: "Almost there. I miss
you."

Ali is lying on his mattress. He puts down the phone. He
hears Anna and Richard's voices upstairs. He sits up and
begins to stuff things into a bag.
A new message arrives: "I'm home. Oper?" Ali hesitates,
then turns off his phone and clicks his bag closed.

130. INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - SAM'S ROOM. EVENING

Night has fallen. Sam's nose is stuck to his bedroom
window. He sees his aunt sitting at the plastic table in
the garden downstairs with her face in her hands.
A door slams. Sam rushes to the bathroom window. He sees

his father stomp down the street, never once looking back. Sam remains glued to the window pane. Ali's silhouette moves through the halo of a streetlight before again disappearing into the dark. Sam watches him for as far as he can. Fade to black.

131. INT/ EXT. BASEMENT. DAY

In the half-light of the basement, a rectangle of light has formed where the door opens onto the street. Stephanie looks over Ali's mess: his magazines, body building equipment, dirty T-shirts, track suits hanging over a trestle... Anna is standing against the light at the door and, a bit farther off, Sam is sitting on the stairs watching them.

ANNA

In his message he said he was in Strasbourg. No news since. I don't know what he's doing

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there, or even if he's still there. Has he called you? She shakes her head "no".

ANNA

Did you try the gym?

STEPHANIE

Yeah. They don't know.

ANNA

If I had an address or a number, I'd give it to you... Even if I think it's dumb. Do you believe me?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

ANNA

After what he did to me... Sam sees Stephanie join Anna near the door. She's about to leave.

ANNA

He abandoned his kid. He doesn't give a fuck about anything. All he ever cared about was himself. He's totally selfish.
Sam watches the two women swallowed up by the light.

STEPHANIE (OFF)

You don't know him.

ANNA (OFF)

Me? What did you expect with him?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

I don't know. Not this.
Fade to black.
Black.

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132. EXT. ALSATIAN COUNTRYSIDE. MORNING

A frosty landscape with trees that look like they've been engraved in ink... A group of twelve joggers in blue track suits run across a landscape of gray sky and snow. Some shadowbox while running.
Ali is wearing a wool cap pulled down around his ears. He runs alongside Foued.

133. INT. HOLIDAY VILLAGE. GYM. DAY

A ring has been set up in the middle of the gym. A few guys have gathered round to watch Ali rhythmically pound on his trainer's bear-like paws.
Leonardini sets the pace.

LEONARDINI

1,2... 1,2,3,4... Faster! 1,2,3. Yes.
Faster! Move! You're stepping back!
Ali pounds harder and harder. He times his respiration to match the movement of his fists.

134. INT. HOLIDAY VILLAGE REC ROOM. EVENING

Young athletes, some tall, some short, some heavyset, some not, are sitting on refectory chairs to watch TV. Ali does too. His hair is cut short and his face is closely shaven. He looks younger. He could be a student.

135. EXT. RICHARD'S TRUCK. NIGHT/DAY

A truck rushes headlong through the countryside. First it is day, then night.

136. INT. HOLIDAY VILLAGE. DAY

Through the window, Ali sees a twelve-ton Scania pull to a stop at the entrance to the parking lot and beep its horn. Ali runs out to meet it.

137. EXT. HOLIDAY VILLAGE - PARKING LOT. DAY

Richard lowers his window.

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RICHARD

I can't come in any further or I won't be able to get back out!
Ali checks out the huge semi.

ALI

Looks like you changed trucks!

RICHARD

Bosses, in fact. I'm back to being exploited.
Ali doesn't insist. Richard opens his door to let out Sam who is already trampling him, trying to get out.

RICHARD

(to Sam) Got everything? Your bag, your coat, your hat, your mittens? You haven't forgotten anything? Now give me a kiss.
Sam gives him a kiss. Richard slips him out and into Ali's arms.

ALI

How are things there?

RICHARD

They're okay.

ALI

My sister?

RICHARD

She found a job at a school cafeteria. She seems to enjoy it.

ALI

Does she know about today?

RICHARD

Yes. She says it's good for the kid.

ALI

Tell her I can't help out for the time being but that as soon as I have a little money...

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RICHARD

Don't worry. When's your fight?

ALI

Next month. On the 9th.
Richard smiles admiringly.

RICHARD

Keep us posted if you win.

ALI

Sure I will.

RICHARD

Yeah, right... Okay, I'm off. I'll deliver my load in Colmar and pick up the kid at around 7, okay?

ALI

Okay.

RICHARD

No later, because I have to be back tomorrow at 11.

The two men say good-bye. Sam waves good-bye.

138. EXT. ALSATIAN COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

A path runs through fields and into a clump of fir trees. Ali pulls a plastic sled with Sam on top. Whenever there is a slope, he lets Sam glide down it and runs after him. Snow falls from the trees. He looks up and sees a couple of squirrels jump from branch to branch. Sam has never seen any before. Ali neither. Sunlight filters through the branches. A group of cross-country skiers trudges by.

SAM

I want to skate too!

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ALI

They're not skating. They're skiing.

SAM

No, they're skating.

ALI

They're skiing, I said!

SAM

Skating.
A few steps on:

ALI

Skiing.

SAM

You're annoying me.
They take a break at a picnic area, where they eat some sandwiches and drink orange soda.

ALI

(his mouth full) Does Auntie still have dogs?

SAM

No, now it's chickens.

ALI

In the garden?

SAM

Yeah, in the cage. They lay eggs.

ALI

That's good.

SAM

But Auntie doesn't want me to take the chicks in my room.

ALI

She's right. They're disgusting. (pointing to his sandwich) Finished? You want some

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applesauce?

Afternoon.

On the way back, they find a frozen pond. Ali carefully advances on the ice. He tests it. Jumps on it. Then he lets himself go and glides across the ice.

ALI

You can go. But not too far!

Sam starts slipping and sliding. He falls down. He lies on the sled and lets it glide.

Ali pees behind a tree.

Sam is far away.

ALI

Come on, we have to head back!

SAM

5 minutes.

ALI

Now!

SAM

(showing his fingers) 5 minutes!

ALI

5 minutes.

And then suddenly, instead of gliding, the child sinks. He tries to climb out and sinks again. A thin layer of ice is forming over him.

SAM

Daddy! Daddy!

ALI

Shit!

Ali rushes to the pond, but Sam is already iced over. He kneels down and then crawls on his stomach toward the hole. Sam has disappeared. Ali shoves aside snow. He looks everywhere, but sees nothing. And then he hears a noise, blows like signals coming from under the ice. Ali crawls

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over and clears away snow as best he can. Under the ice, he sees Sam's face, staring wide-eyed. Ali begins to pound both his fists on the ice, like pistons or pestles... As if pounding on his punching bag.

139. UNDER THE ICE. DAY

Underwater, we hear the sound of dull thuds. Sam sees his father's fists pound on the ice. He sees bloodstains. The ice cracks, a bloody fist searches the water for him. Sam closes his eyes.

140. EXT. POND. EVENING

Evening is falling. Ali has stretched Sam out on the rim of the pond. The child has turned blue. He tries mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, he massages his heart and rubs him down.

141. EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. EVENING

Ali's respiration has become a grunt, then a groan.

He runs. He has stowed Sam behind the front of his parka and runs as fast as he can. He slips, gets back up and runs again... he again breathes into Sam's mouth... while still running...

142. INT. STRASBOURG - HOSPITAL - ICU. DAY

Leaning against the window of the Intensive Care Unit, Ali sees Sam's nude, tiny body being worked on by doctors... his skin is blue from the cold... there is a tube in his mouth... his ribs rise and fall to the rhythm of a respirator... his mouth spits out brackish water brutally...

A door opens and a nurse appears. Ali straightens up.

NURSE

We'll take care of you. Come with me.

He doesn't understand. Then he notices the blood prints his hands have left on the ICU window. He looks at his scarred fingers, his broken, bloodied hands.

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143. INT. SAM'S HOSPITAL ROOM. EVENING

Sam is lying in a hospital bed. His eyes are closed and coils of tubes attach him to control apparatus.

Ali is at his side. His hands are now wrapped in thick bandages. The disinfectant makes him look like he is wearing yellow gloves halfway up his arms.

Richard is standing behind him, near the window.

Ali takes Sam's fingers, places them in the palm of his bandaged hand and looks at them.

Sam's eyes begin to dart wildly under his eyelids... his fingers quiver... his eyes open.

144. INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR. NIGHT

There are not many people in the corridor at this late hour. Richard is bent over a coffee machine. A cup slowly fills up. Farther off, Ali is KO, leaning against a wall. Richard brings him a coffee. Ali takes it clumsily into his damaged hands.

Richard's cell phone rings. He moves away to answer and

speaks into it softly. A few moments later, he returns to Ali and hands him the phone.

RICHARD

Here. She wants to talk to you.

ALI

Anna?

Richard shakes his head.

ALI

Hello?

STEPHANIE (OFF)

It's me. (pause) Do you mind?

ALI

No.

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STEPHANIE

How is he?

ALI

Okay. He woke up an hour ago.

STEPHANIE

Is he injured?

ALI

No, I don't think so.

STEPHANIE

And how are you?

ALI

I fucked up my hands on the ice.

STEPHANIE

Is it serious?

ALI

They're broken.

A beat.

ALI

How are you?

STEPHANIE

I'm okay.

ALI

What are you up to?

STEPHANIE

You mean in general? In my life?

ALI

I wanted to say that...

STEPHANIE

I'm not asking for anything. I'll be going.
I'll call you back to see how Sam's doing.
Give him a kiss from me...

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ALI

Don't hang up.

STEPHANIE

ALI

Don't hang up!

STEPHANIE

I won't hang up...

ALI

He was in a coma for 3 hours... Three
hours... For three hours he was dead... I
was scared to lose him.
His eyes well with tears.

ALI

Don't leave me.

STEPHANIE

I won't leave you.
Black.

ALI

I love you.

145. INT. POLAND. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

A child sleeps.

His eyes are darting under his eyelids: vestiges of light and shadow, of noise.

Sam opens his eyes: he is in a hotel room. At the foot of the bed, a TV with the sound turned down low is broadcasting a cartoon of mice fighting in Polish.

Stephanie comes and goes, picking up things littering the floor and packing their bags.

Over these images, we hear Ali's voice:

The human hand contains 27 bones. Some monkeys have more: gorillas have 32, five in

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each thumb. For humans, it's 27.

If you break an arm or a leg, after a while calcium gathers around the bone and joins it together. In the end, it's stronger than before. But if you break a bone in your hand, you know it'll never fully heal.

You'll think about it before every fight.

You'll pay attention... And even if you pay attention, the pain will come back... like needles, like broken glass...

Ali is wearing a T-shirt. He still bears the marks of yesterday's fight. His eyebrows and hands are bandaged.

ALI

Wake up, kiddo. It's over. We're going home.

SAM

Did you win?

He smiles and kisses his biceps.

146. INT. POLAND. HOTEL - LOBBY. DAY

The lobby of a Holiday Inn, the day after an Ultimate tournament... (much the same ambience as in Turin) The fighters, winners and losers, are about to leave. They greet each other, pose for photographers, answer interviewers, sign autographs... Ali's hands are still bandaged. He is being interviewed along with a kind of Viking with a closed eye and broken arm.

Ali goes to join Stephanie and Sam outside the hotel, where a taxi driver is loading their luggage. A young Polish fan calls out: "Ali! Ali!" He wants a photo.

Ali lifts Sam into his arms and pulls Stephanie closer. They pose.

THE END