

The title 'Busted' is rendered in a stylized, black-and-white font. The letter 'B' is highly decorative, featuring a cluster of five solid black hearts to its upper left and a flowing, calligraphic flourish that loops around the top and left sides of the letter. The remaining letters 'usted' are in a simpler, rounded, sans-serif style. Each letter in 'usted' has a small, solid black heart shape integrated into its design: a heart on the 'u', a heart on the 's', a heart on the 't', and a heart on the 'e'.

# Busted

An Original Comedy

by

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FADE IN

EXT. CITY - DAY

It is a crisp, Fall day. Camera pans modern skyscraper city, then passes seamlessly into a Five Star Hotel bedroom..

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - SUITE BEDROOM - DAY

We see an indistinct couple making passionate love.

The camera pans under the bed. MAX CARTER (late thirties, handsome, fit), is hiding there, his head resting on one hand. The NOISE above gets louder. He rolls his eyes, checks his watch impatiently and shakes his head. He spots the camera and does a double-take. He looks straight at the audience. He has all the effortless natural charm of a Cary Grant or George Clooney.

MAX  
(whispering)  
Now, you may well be wondering why..

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Different hotel. Max is in bed with a stunning, exhausted and very disheveled woman.

MAX  
(to camera)  
Not so shabby, eh?

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Another hotel. Max nods towards ZOE, attractive, mid-thirties. She is lying back, exhausted, a very satisfied look on her face. A flight attendant uniform lies discarded on the floor.

ZOE  
Oh, Max. That was awesome. I'm gonna be so bow-legged, I ain't gonna fit in the aisle.

Max looks at the camera, pleased with himself.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max slides into bed next to his beautiful wife, ERIKA, early thirties. He starts to get frisky. Initially, she tries to respond, but falls back exhausted.

ERIKA  
(disappointed)  
Sorry, Max. The spirit is willing,  
but the flesh is weak.

She gives him a big kiss, then rolls back over to her side of the bed.

ERIKA (CONT'D)  
Can't keep my eyes open another  
minute. Your devil spawn will be up  
in six hours. Critters waiteth for  
no man. Love you!

Max leans over and kisses the back of her head. He is about to talk to the camera, looks back at Erika, already sleeping, then puts his finger to his mouth.

He grabs his robe and quietly heads for the door.

MAX  
(whispering)  
I'm a very lucky man.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Max helps himself to juice from the fridge.

MAX  
That's my wonderful wife, Erika. One  
in a million. The only woman I've ever  
really loved. Everything a man could  
ask for - a saint by day, and a devil  
at night.

He picks up a family photo and beams with pride. It is a family straight from central casting - 4 year-old cherubic twin girls, CHLOE and LUCY, and a handsome elder brother, ALEX (6 years old).

MAX (CONT'D)  
(sighing)  
Well, maybe once upon a time it was  
like that. Now, not so much.  
Honestly, before the sprogs, we  
were at it like rabbits.  
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

There were so many sparks, we were  
a veritable fire hazard.

He points to the photo.

MAX (CONT'D)

But now we are five. And, short of  
sedating the kids...

He puts the photo back down and shrugs.

MAX (CONT'D)

You parents out there understand  
what I'm talking about.

MONTAGE

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Max is on top of Erika, making love.

CHLOE (O.S.)

Mommy, I'm thirsty.

Fumble, fumble, fumble.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE UP ON MAX IN BED

Camera pulls back to reveal Erika on the other side of the  
bed, and the twins fast asleep in the middle.

END MONTAGE

He shrugs to the camera with a smile.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Architect's office, with several stands supporting detailed  
building plans. An agitated JERRY PETERSON, same age as Max  
but already starting to go to seed, brings in some plans and  
clips them to a board.

JERRY

Are you crazy, Max? I saw you at  
the Ritz again yesterday with that  
stewardess.

MAX

Good morning to you too, Jerry. And I believe they prefer to be called Flight Attendants now.

JERRY

(voice rising slightly)  
What?! I don't care if they're called... Aardvarks. What difference does it make? That's not the point.

MAX

You know my philosophy, Jerry.

JERRY

Which one, Kemosahbee? They tend to be a bit, shall we say, fluid.

MAX

Biology.

JERRY

Well, that narrows it down.

MAX

Jerry, do I detect a note of cynicism there?

JERRY

No, Max, not a note - a whole damn symphony!

MAX

You can't argue with the fact that Nature has programmed us this way. Women are born with all the eggs they will ever have. We, on the other hand, are working overtime, churning out billions and billions of our little swimmers. We ain't got room for them, so we gotta set them free - regularly.

JERRY

Beautifully put, Max, as always, but that's what your right hand's for. You may be able to rationalize it to yourself. I just hope it's some consolation to you when the doctors are trying to sew your dick back on.

MAX

Given how hard Erika works, it would be unfair to expect her to step up to the plate every time I need... you know. So, I'm doing HER a favor, by being less demanding.

Jerry looks at him incredulously.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's the least I can do.

Jerry shakes his head in disbelief and makes the exploding head gesture.

JERRY

Unfucking believable! Look, you've got everything - the perfect Norman Rockwell life. Shit! You've even got the goddam picket fence, for fuck's sake! I just don't get why you'd risk all that for... for... nothing.

He calms himself down with a karmic gesture.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Look, we've been friends since we were in short pants, and I'm afraid, the way you're going, you're gonna get caught with them round your ankles.

MAX

You worry too much, Jerry.

JERRY

There's more to life, you know, than bumping uglies.

MAX

So says the guy not getting any.

JERRY

Maybe. Maybe not. But there comes a time... when you prefer a beer.

MAX

If that ever happens to me, please do not resuscitate!

JERRY

(firmly)

Listen to me, Max.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

You're playing with fire. This is going to bite you in the ass.

Jerry leaves, shaking his head.

EXT. HOME - GARDEN - DAY

A kid's birthday party. A piñata hangs from a branch. The whole family is there, plus selected friends and parents.

Max has one of his twins under each arm, and is being chased by Alex (6 years old that day). The boy catches his dad and they all fall in a heap on the ground, with SQUEALS of delight. The kids clearly adore their father. They have a group hug. Max gives them each a kiss then gets back onto his feet.

MAX

Let me check how Uncle Jerry's doing. Go see if your mommy needs any help.

They run off to find their mother. Max picks up 2 beers and takes one to Jerry minding the barbecue. They clink bottles. They watch Erika running around with the twins.

JERRY

You struck gold there, Max. One in a million.

MAX

(proudly)

So true. A fantastic mother. And the kids are actually turning out quite bearable, even if I say so myself.

He nods towards a particularly awful looking kid throwing a tantrum while his poor harassed mother tries to remove breadsticks from his nose.

JERRY

Couldn't agree more, but, remember, those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad.

MAX

(puzzled)

Eh? Did you get that from a fortune cookie?

INT. HOME - GARDEN - LATER

Max holds up Alex, so he can get a better swipe at the piñata. It breaks and all the goodies CRASH out. Mayhem as the kids SHRIEK and dive in to get their loot. Alex wriggles out of his dad's arms fast to join the fray.

Erika comes over and puts her arm around him.

ERIKA

Locusts!

They hold each other affectionately, kiss, then mingle amongst the guests, refilling people's drinks, serving food, helping kids blow their noses, etc etc.

INT. HOME - DEN - NIGHT

He stops walking and looks sternly at the camera.

MAX

I know I'm not perfect, but I do my best for my family. I care and provide for them - which is more than a lot of bums do!

He sits down on a sofa, and takes a swig of beer. An exhausted Erika trudges in and PLONKS on the sofa next to him.

ERIKA

There better be some left in that bottle, mister, or I'm gonna have to hurt you.

She takes a swig of his beer.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

Thanks. I needed that.

She cuddles up and falls asleep instantly in his arms.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max and Jerry are working at the big drawing board to one side. The phone RINGS.

MAX

Oh, hi, Lydia. Back in town already? Where?

He checks his watch. Jerry looks disapproving.



MAX (CONT'D)

Say, an hour? Okay, ciao.

Max SLAMS down the phone and throws on his jacket with a flourish.

JERRY

Again!? If your dick got air-miles, it'd be platinum by now. You're gonna wear it out at this rate.

MAX

Use it, or lose it, Jerry.

JERRY

I wouldn't know. Mine's hibernating. I still don't get it, though - why not hookers, Max? Surely that would be a helluva lot safer.

Max shakes his head with disapproval.

MAX

Hookers? Seriously? Hookers are for guys who are too lazy to masturbate. No, only women interested in some harmless consensual fun.

JERRY

You're crazy, man. One day, you're gonna come knocking on my door, suitcase in hand, and I'm the one who's gonna have to pick up the pieces.

MAX

(laughing)

It's not as dangerous as you think. There are zillions of Lydias out there, happily married, looking for a little adventure. No emotional entanglements.

He looks thoughtful for a moment.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's really a form of community service.

Jerry looks at him incredulously.

JERRY

You're so full of shit, sometimes.

MAX

Am I? You look in the internet. We are spoiled for choice. Do we really need so many different designs for every damn thing under the sun? Variety is the spice of life.

JERRY

Salt 'n' pepper is as spicy as mine gets.

MAX

You gotta mix it up a bit, Jerry. Even the most loving relationships go stale eventually.

JERRY

(sadly)

Some sooner than others.

MAX

(a little embarrassed)

Oh, yea. Sorry about that.

Max points to the board.

MAX (CONT'D)

You can finish this, right? Only the bathrooms left to do.

Max rushes out, a spring in his step.

INT. THELMA'S OFFICE - DAY

He breezes past the desk of his assistant THELMA, late fifties, with a seen-it-all-before attitude.

MAX

Popping out. Back after lunch.

Jerry comes out and leans in the doorway. He SHOUTS out to Max as he disappears.

JERRY

Memento mori, Max!

Thelma looks at him quizzically.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
"Remember you are mortal".

THELMA  
Are you sure about that?

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

A very satisfied LYDIA is asleep beside him on the bed.

MAX  
(to camera)  
I have certain rules, of course.  
Firstly, be a gentleman - the lady  
always comes first. But the most  
important thing is safety. No  
affairs. Out-of-towners wherever  
possible - much safer.

He points to her suitcase.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Safety Third - Business traveler -  
perfect!

He picks up the discarded condom sachet from the bedside  
table.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Safety Second.

He picks up her hand and points to her wedding ring.

MAX (CONT'D)  
And this, ladies and gentlemen, is  
Safety First. No one gets hurt.  
Only married women, preferably with  
kids. It's like that Cold War MAD  
philosophy - Mutually Assured  
Divorce.

INT. HOME - DEN - NIGHT

Erika is watching an episode of Sex and the City, while Max  
is reading the newspaper.

ERIKA  
Why don't you put the paper down  
and relax?

MAX  
I am relaxing.

ERIKA

I mean, watch the show. Chillax totally.

Max reluctantly puts the paper down. She cuddles up to him.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

I love this show. It's such a refreshing change to see empowered, liberated women on TV.

MAX

Huh.

ERIKA

What do you mean "huh"?

He points to the screen. Carrie is making love with Mr Big.

MAX

If she's such a liberated hottie, why on earth is she having sex with her bra on?

Erika looks up at him with disapproval.

ERIKA

You can be such a philistine, sometimes.

MAX

(indignant)

Really? Then tell me I'm wrong.

Erika is about to speak, changes her mind, and turns her attention back to the TV.

MAX (CONT'D)

Exactly.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Max walking with his coffee and bagel.

MAX

Now, I know what some of you are thinking - especially the women with beards. He's a Neanderthal, a misogynist. That couldn't be further from the truth, my friends. I love women.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Max is sitting on a bench, eating his bagel and coffee.

MAX

Sure, they can be catty with one another, but, you gotta admit, they're gentler than we are, kinder, more sympathetic, less belligerent - in other words, basically nicer!

He gestures towards a gaggle of mothers with their young kids.

MAX (CONT'D)

Honestly, I don't know how they do it, but they do, this amazing juggling act. They work so hard. I mean, our bit is over in a few minutes. They go through the horrors of pregnancy, then, if we're honest, do the lion's share of raising the kids.

He sees a woman breast-feeding her baby.

MAX (CONT'D)

And God gave us men the ultimate Get-Out-of-Jail Free Card - milk-free nipples!

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Max gets dressed, as Zoe watches him longingly, a very satisfied look on her face. Her clothes are strewn all the way from the door to the bed.

ZOE

(sighing)

I'm going to miss this.

MAX

(surprised)

Qué?

ZOE

(sadly)

Yeah. Next week, they're moving me onto the Tokyo route.

MAX

(disappointed)

Oh, that's a shame. We had a good run while it lasted.

Zoe jumps out of bed naked.

ZOE

Time for one more? For old time's sake.

Max is tempted, but resists.

MAX

I wish I could. Another time?  
You've got my number.

He kisses her on the forehead and leaves.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Max waits pensively for the elevator. It PINGS and the door opens.

MAX

(to himself)

Hmmm. Looks like a free slot just opened up in my dance card.

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BLOCK - NIGHT

Party to celebrate the opening of a new building. Max and Erika are part of the Meet & Greet, welcoming guests.

MAX

Thanks for doing this, Sweetie. I know it's a bit of a drag.

ERIKA

Are you kidding me? I get to play with the grown-ups!

A particularly ugly guy, with buck teeth, shakes their hands and enters the party. Erika looks Max up and down.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

I guess I didn't get such a bad deal, after all.

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BLOCK - NIGHT

Max, Erika, and Jerry are mixing. Max is approached by HILDEGUND KRUGER, a formidable Nordic-looking woman in her late thirties.

HILDEGUND  
Hi. Hildegund - Hildy.

MAX  
Max. That's a new one. German?

HILDEGUND  
Idaho.

MAX  
Po-tay-toe, po-tah-toe

HILDEGUND  
To-may-toe, to-mah-toe

MAX  
(musically)  
Ah, let's call the whole thing off.

They both CHUCKLE. The body language is flirtatious. In a movement we will see a lot of...

P.O.V. MAX

The camera pans rapidly down and zooms in on Hildegund's ring finger. A wedding ring and an engagement ring. A big green TICK appears on the screen. There is a Ka-CHING sound.

MAX (V.O.)  
Check!

Max switches on the charm.

MAX  
Idaho, eh?  
(talking v-e-r-y slowly,  
as if to a foreigner)  
How... do... you... like... it... here?

HILDEGUND  
(playing along)  
Very... frightening... horseless  
carriages. Gun, must get.

NORMAN KRUGER (nerdy, early forties) comes up. He looks suspiciously at Max. They shake hands.

Norman takes out some Purell and disinfects himself (he does this after every contact).

NORMAN

Hi, Max. Good turn out.

MAX

Hi, Norman. How do you like your new building? Sorry, where are my manners? Have you met Hildy?

Norman makes a point of kissing Hildegund on the mouth. Hildegund looks less than thrilled.

MAX (CONT'D)

(surprised)

I guess so.

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BLOCK - DAY

Jerry comes over to Erika and mwah, mwahs. She looks surprised.

ERIKA

Hey, what're you doing here? I thought you hated these things.

JERRY

Yea. Max usually does all this schmoozing shit, but, I gotta do my bit, take one for the team.

Erika looks at him suspiciously.

ERIKA

No, really?

JERRY

Okay, you got me. The fridge is bare. Just a sad old fart looking for free booze and crappy canapés.

ERIKA

When's your court case come up?

JERRY

Couple of weeks. As Robin Williams said, Divorce is from the Latin for ripping a man's balls out through his wallet.

Erika gives him a reassuring squeeze.



ERIKA

Cheer up. We'll be there to support you.

JERRY

My lawyer isn't very optimistic. I might need to move into your doghouse.

ERIKA

You couldn't afford it. Look on the bright side - you're footloose and fancy free again.

JERRY

Huh. I don't think I was ever footloose or fancy free. Even the internet has written me off now. Instead of all those penis enlargement spams, I now get pitches for erectile dysfunction and incontinence pads. Actually, you can get some good deals on those pads - I'm thinking of stocking up.

(Sighs)

I'm obviously a lost cause.

ERIKA

No, you're not.

(reassuringly)

You're still a great dancer.

Jerry is flattered.

JERRY

You can thank my mother for that.

INT. DINING-ROOM - DAY

A family with three young boys are dining. The MOTHER stares at one of the boys. She stops eating.

MOTHER

Jerry, my son. I love you dearly, but, let's face it, you ain't a looker. You'd better learn to dance if you want to get a girl, and give me grandchildren.

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BLOCK - DAY

ERIKA  
(smiling)  
Wise woman.

JERRY  
Indeed. And it worked - even if  
only temporarily.

ERIKA  
That was just bad luck. It'll work  
again, you'll see.

JERRY  
What's the point? It'll be like  
Sandy all over again - she'll be  
watching the Tonight Show over my  
shoulder, while I make all the  
moves.

Erika squeezes him again.

ERIKA  
You hang in there, tiger!

Jerry sees Max and Hildegund, and rolls his eyes. Norman  
steers Hildegund reluctantly away.

ERIKA (CONT'D)  
There's bound to be someone  
desperate enough-

JERRY  
(laughs)  
But you're already taken.

Erika nods appreciatively.

ERIKA  
Ah, sweet.

Another woman comes up to Max, again flirtatiously.

P.O.V. MAX - The camera zooms in on the woman's ring finger.  
No rings. A big red CROSS appears on the screen, and a KLAXON  
sounds.

MAX (V.O.)  
Danger, Will Robinson!

INT. LOBBY OF OFFICE BLOCK - LATER

Max meets MAYA, 30ish, a beautiful French woman, with, naturally, an irresistible sexy French accent.

MAX  
Paris, eh? Beats Idaho!

MAYA  
*Monsieur?*

MAX  
Do you work for Norman?

MAYA  
No, no, *monsieur*. I am visiting for a few days. I came here with a friend.

P.O.V. MAX - The camera zooms in on Maya's ring finger. A wedding ring and an engagement ring. A big tick appears on the screen.

MAX (V.O.)  
Bingo!

Max smiles warmly at her.

MAX  
Business or pleasure?

MAYA  
Both. My company wants to open an office here.

Max throws his hands out, indicating the new building.

MAX  
Voilà. Problem solved.

MAYA  
(mock disappointment)  
You want me to leave already? Let me at least pretend to look.

MAX  
(laughing)  
What business are you in?

Maya looks at him slyly.

MAYA

We make XXL Condoms, but the market here in America is soooo small, compared to France.

MAX

(feigning interest)  
Really?  
(then the penny drops)  
What!? Oh, and the French market is-

MAYA

Getting bigger all the time.

MAX

Of course, it is. Well, I'm sure, if they sent more reps like you, you could stimulate a LOT of growth here in America.

Maya smiles, flattered. Erika and Jerry join them. Erika points towards the front.

ERIKA

Norman's looking for you, Max.

JERRY

Time for your oration.

MAX

(pompously)  
Four score and seven years ago...  
(coughs)  
Nailed it.

He suddenly remembers Maya.

MAX (CONT'D)

Sorry. Manners. Jerry, Erika, this is Maya. Looking for office space for her company.

They all shake hands.

ERIKA

Nice to meet you.

JERRY

Look no further... Maya, was it?

MAYA

*Oui.* Maya.

JERRY  
(staring straight into her  
eyes)  
Lovely name.

MAX  
Please excuse me. Duty calls.  
(shaking hands)  
Nice to meet you, Maya.

Maya's gaze follows Max heading towards Norman at the front.  
Erika and Maya strike up a conversation.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

Max and Jerry are playing doubles tennis against a couple of  
guys, similar age.

MAX  
Nice girl, that Maya.

JERRY  
Leave some for the rest of us, Max.

He SLAMS the ball to win a point. He looks pleased with  
himself.

MAX  
You're on fire today, sport.

JERRY  
This damn court case has got me all  
pumped up. Can you believe how much  
she's asking for?

MAX  
I bet it's not her, really. More  
likely to be her man-hating lawyer.

JERRY  
How'd you know her lawyer was a  
woman?

MAX  
Educated guess.

The other side is about to serve when two beautiful young  
women walk past to another court. One of them is considerably  
top-heavy. Jerry waves.

JERRY  
Ladies!

They smile back with a little wave.

JERRY (CONT'D)

(to Max)

My God! How on earth does she stay upright?

MAX

She wouldn't fall far if she did topple over.

They get back in position, Max waiting to receive the serve.

JERRY

You realize this sort of talk is why women think we're sexist.

MAX

Come on! You think *they* don't do it? Give me a break! We admire their... attributes; they talk about our asses. Well, maybe not yours.

JERRY

I don't see why not. It's been getting MUCH tighter, these last few weeks.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max stands in front of his board pensively. Thelma comes in.

THELMA

Did you arrange a meeting for this morning, Max, and not tell me - again?

MAX

No, why?

THELMA

Brigitte Bardot says otherwise.

Max looks puzzled. Maya walks in behind Thelma.

MAX

Oh, yes. Slipped my mind. Come in, please. Thanks, Thelma.

Thelma closes the door behind her. Maya looks at Max's drawing.

MAYA

Sorry to come unannounced. I hope I'm not interrupting. I was passing by and thought-

MAX

How did you know where-?

MAYA

Your wife was kind enough to give me your card.

MAX

My best salesman! Look...  
(checking his watch)  
... why don't we grab lunch and you can tell me what you're looking for?

MAYA

Okay. But my invitation. Shall we eat, or would you prefer McDonald's?

Max smiles sarcastically as he grabs his jacket. He heads for the door, but Maya stays in front of the board.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I don't want to be rude, but wouldn't it be better if this...  
(pointing to one spot on the board)  
... was moved...  
(pointing to another)  
... over here?

Max pauses for thought, then looks at her with increased respect.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Lunch is over. They are nursing coffees.

MAX

A pity, but that's not the sort of work we do. But, if you give me the specs, I might be able to recommend someone who can help you.

MAYA

That's very kind. They're in my hotel room.

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

I don't want to impose, but if you have a little more time, it's close by.

MAX

I suppose I could.

As they leave, Max turns to the camera with a quizzical look.

INT. MAYA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Max sees the papers on the desk, and picks them up.

MAX

Are these-?

Maya takes them out of his hand and thrusts them back on the table. She kisses him, and starts to undo his tie. He undoes her blouse.

He breaks away.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm married.

MAYA

I know.

MAX

I will never leave my wife.

MAYA

I know.

MAX

So-

She breaks away for a moment.

MAYA

I'm French. If a man doesn't have a mistress, he must be gay. Now, if that works for you, stop talking.

Max turns to camera and shrugs.

MAX (V.O.)

What can I say? She wants me. The ground rules are clear. Nobody gets hurt. Everybody's happy. What could possibly go wrong?



INT. THELMA'S OFFICE - DAY

Jerry paces up and down.

JERRY

We're due in court in half an hour.  
We're gonna piss off the judge if  
we're late.

THELMA

He's nearly finished.

BEAT

THELMA (CONT'D)

It's none of my business, but you  
do know he's an architect, not a  
lawyer?

Jerry feigns shock.

JERRY

Oh my God. Now you tell me!

THELMA

It's your funeral. Just because  
he's watched Law & Order, doesn't  
make him a-

JERRY

I've already got a lawyer. What I  
need is a salesman. This ship is  
sinking fast, and I need someone to  
pull a rabbit out of the hat.  
Besides, he did a semester of law  
at College.

Max comes out and overhears.

THELMA

Yes, but that was contract law, not-

MAX

I'm disappointed, Thelma. Oh ye of  
little faith! Marriage is a  
contract, is it not?

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Max, Jerry and a MALE LAWYER sit at one desk in front of the  
JUDGE. SANDY PETERSON sits at the other with her FEMALE  
LAWYER.

FEMALE LAWYER

So, Your Honor, given the disparities in income, it is only just that the plaintiff be granted alimony to maintain her lifestyle.

JUDGE

Thank you, Joyce - I mean, counsellor. Mr Peterson, do you have anything further to add before I retire to consider my verdict.

Max stands up.

MAX

I am here to speak on behalf of Mr Peterson, Your Honor.

JUDGE

And who may you be?

MAX

Max Carter, Your Honor.

JUDGE

I haven't seen you before, have I?

MAX

No, Your Honor. First time in this court.

JUDGE

Very well, proceed.

MAX

Thank you, Your Honor.

Max moves to the front of the court and paces as he declaims.

MAX (CONT'D)

I would first like to remind the court that it was Sandy - Mrs Peterson - who decided to leave my client, and not the other way around - despite the very comfortable life he gave her. Nor has there been any suggestion that my client mistreated or cheated on her. He has also made a very reasonable offer - especially given the fact the marriage only lasted three years.

JUDGE

Mr Carter, where is this going? I do not need to hear the whole case again. The issue at hand is a fair settlement.

MAX

My apologies, Your Honor.

Max takes a sip of water. All eyes are on him.

MAX (CONT'D)

It seems to me that marriage is really a lottery, and should therefore be governed by Gaming Laws. The nature of a gaming transaction is that someone sacrifices something in the hope of a greater benefit. However, getting this benefit is dependent much more on chance, fate, kismet, rather than skill.

JUDGE

Mr Carter-

MAX

If the court may indulge me a little longer, Your Honor. You see, my point is that everything was governed by chance. Their first encounter on holiday in the Bahamas. Their being teamed together by the tiresome, jolly, Animators at the resort. And their mutual overindulgence in alcoholic beverages that led to lower inhibitions, and overly rapid consummation. They then tied the knot, with unseemly haste, a month later. They hardly knew each other. They took a gamble. Their actions were clearly governed by reckless abandon, not by judgement or skill. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here today.

Max turns to the gallery.

MAX (CONT'D)

That said, however, given the relative disparity in incomes and assets, it is clear my client was wagering far more than the plaintiff. Indeed, one could argue that the plaintiff had very little to lose. Before the marriage, as she herself has testified, her finances were in a parlous state.

He picks up a random sheet of paper to allow that point to sink in.

MAX (CONT'D)

Furthermore, we must look at their relationship in more detail. To begin with, to quote my client, they were "at it like rabbits". But once the paper was signed, she basically pulled up the drawbridge. Before marriage, the plaintiff portrayed herself as a sexy, witty woman, with a wide range of intellectual interests which appealed to my client. After marriage, these magically shrunk to soap operas and, to my client's utter dismay, the Kardashians.

It is my contention, therefore, that my client, in good faith, staked his freedom and his fortune, based on misleading information. Like a gambler on the roulette table, he acted with what turned out to be nothing better than a hunch.

Furthermore, it is my contention that this short-lived marriage was, by nature, a gambling transaction. My client and the plaintiff both bet on this marriage, and lost. The courts should not make good either party in this transaction, just as they would not restore losses to a Las Vegas gambler.

The court erupts in wild cheering. The men stand up and clap. Most women remain seated, stoney-faced. The judge also starts to clap, then stops himself. He BANGS his gavel on the desk.

JUDGE

Order! Order in the court!

Max spots Erika sitting at the back.

MAX

(to himself)

Oh, oh!

INT. HOME - NIGHT

ERIKA

I'm amazed. The judge actually bought all your spurious sophistry. He reduced Sandy's deal to next to nothing.

MAX

(proudly)

Jerry owes me a very nice case of champagne, I think.

ERIKA

You know he's still going to give her the one-off payment he originally offered?

MAX

Not surprised. An officer and a gentleman, our Jerry. Always has been.

ERIKA

Do you believe all that stuff you said?

MAX

Depends which bit. There *may* have been a rhetorical flourish or two.

ERIKA

The bit about marriage being a gamble?

MAX

Be honest. It's always a leap of faith. But some of us throw the dice and win the jackpot.

She gives a big smile and rubs his chin with her finger.

ERIKA

Oooh, you're good!

She kisses him and leads him to the bedroom by the hand.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

I guess the secret is to leave the table when you're still winning.

Max initially smiles, then looks puzzled.

INT. MAYA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Max and Maya are shagged out. Max breathlessly sips some water, and passes the glass to Maya.

MAYA

(rubbing her belly)

Max, I nearly forgot - I have some news, some great news.

Max looks scared shitless.

MAX

You're not-?

MAYA

*Crétin.* Of course not. *Ils sont fous, ces américains.*

MAX

Okay, okay, okay.

MAYA

No, my company wants me to move here permanently. Isn't that great?

Max looks even more stunned.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Max?

MAX

Sorry. Still trying to get over the first shock. Yes, of course, that would be... grrrrrrreat.

She smiles radiantly and hugs him. He smiles weakly back.

MAYA

These last few weeks have been wonderful. Do you like having me as your mistress?

MAX

Mistress?

MAYA

Yea, mistress. What else?

MAX

I don't know. I guess I just never linked you and that rather quaint word together for some reason.

MAYA

Well, I fit the definition of a mistress, *n'est-ce pas*? Something between a Mister and a mattress.

Max allows himself a CHUCKLE,

MAYA (CONT'D)

That's better. Just think - we'll be able to see each other more often.

MAX

Don't forget my wife!

MAYA

In France, the wife and mistress sometimes become great friends.

Max looks alarmed. He makes a slow-down gesture with his hands.

MAX

Whoa! Slow down there, cowboy. This isn't France.

MAYA

I know that. I can't wait to get my own place. Where do you live?

MAX

(gulps)  
What!?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Max and Jerry are having lunch. Jerry is laughing.

MAX

I don't see what's so funny.

JERRY

Come on, Max. This is priceless. All your precautions and-

MAX

I don't know why I told you.

JERRY

Because you know I'm a sad sod who lives vicariously through you.

MAX

It's only been a few weeks. She'll understand.

Jerry GRUNTS.

JERRY

(sarcastically)  
Of course she will!

MAX

I'll let her down gently.

Jerry rolls his eyes.

JERRY

You really are full of it sometimes, you know that? You're an idiot. It would serve you right if Erika did the same thing.

MAX

Don't be stupid.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - ENTRANCE - DAY

They put on their coats. Jerry looks out the window, then back at Max.

JERRY

Speaking of your good lady, why didn't you invite her for lunch?

MAX

(puzzled)  
What brought that on? She's at home. She'd never get back in time to pick up the kids. Why?

Jerry points across the street.

They see Erika in a restaurant, having lunch with an impossibly handsome Scandinavian, ROGER.

Max is momentarily stunned.



JERRY

So?

MAX

(irritated)

What do you mean "so"?

JERRY

What about the kids?

MAX

(unconvincingly)

Oh, yea, I forgot. She's got a thing here in town today. Er... Carol's picking up the critters.

JERRY

That's one helluva "thing" she's lurching with over there. Are we importing our "things" from Sweden now?

Jerry opens the door, and leads the way out...

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

... into the street. They brace themselves against the cold.

JERRY

Let's go and say "hi".

Max visibly hesitates.

MAX

No. We shouldn't intrude.

JERRY

Problem?

MAX

Of course not. She's busy.

JERRY

(disappointed)

O-k-a-y. Back to the grindstone.

He walks a couple of steps, but Max doesn't follow.

MAX

You go ahead. I just remembered, I gotta go to the bank.

JERRY

I'll come with you.

MAX

No, you're busy. You go ahead.  
I'll see you back at Base Camp  
later.

Jerry shrugs and leaves. Max walks in the opposite direction, furtively looking back until he sees Jerry disappear around the corner. He turns straight onto the road. There is a SQUEAL of tires as a car narrowly misses him. The DRIVER SHOUTS obscenities at Max.

Erika and Roger look out at the commotion. Max ducks down behind the car.

DRIVER

What the fuck are you doing now,  
asshole? No fucking way you're  
gonna scam me. I never touched you,  
capisce?

MAX

Quiet! I'm okay.

DRIVER

Well get off the fucking road then!

Max sneaks a peek above the hood of the car. Erika and Roger are ignoring the commotion. Max tip-toes ridiculously to the other side of the street. The car ROARS away impatiently.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Asshole!

We see Jerry peeking round the corner, watching everything with interest. He chuckles, shakes his head, turns and leaves.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Max creeps up to get a closer look. The door is on the other side. Erika has her back to him, but he can see Roger is a ridiculously handsome, athletic guy. He looks on with consternation as they laugh together.

MAX

(frustrated)  
Who is this guy?

He looks around. How to get closer? Nothing.

Two burly DELIVERYMEN carrying a mattress walk by. Perfect cover. He crouches behind it, walking like an Egyptian.

DELIVERYMAN 1  
Oy - what's your game?

Max SHUSHES them.

DELIVERYMAN 2  
Are you taking the piss?

MAX  
(whispering)  
No, of course not.

As they pass in front of the restaurant, he holds his smartphone down low and we hear repeated CLICKS as he takes pictures.

DELIVERYMAN 1  
(laughing)  
Got a real 007 here, Dave.

DELIVERYMAN 2  
Licensed to thrill, I'll be damned.

DELIVERYMAN 1  
Okay, you've had your fun. Now,  
fuck off!

When they get to the door, he falls back, only to see Erika and Roger approaching the door.

MAX  
Oh, shit!

He makes a rapid turn, bumping into a little OLD LADY, knocking her over.

OLD LADY  
What the...!

He grabs her unceremoniously back onto her feet before she has time to think. He rushes back to the cover of the mattress, but trips and falls head first into it, causing it and the deliverymen to topple to the ground. Now they are far from amused at his faffing around.

DELIVERYMAN 2  
I said f-

Max puts his hands up as if to surrender.

MAX

Sorry. Sorry. Here...

He thrusts some money into the hand of one of them, and dashes round the corner. The deliveryman looks at the wad of notes, very pleased.

DELIVERYMAN 1

(shouting to Max)

Any time, guvnor, any time.

Max peers back round the corner, ignoring the friendly waves from the deliverymen.

Erika and Roger are saying their goodbyes, then they kiss on the cheek and go their separate ways. Max is stunned.

When Erika is out of sight, he goes back to the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Nobody is at reception. He checks no one is looking, then takes a picture of the reservation page.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max looks at the pictures he took. The ones under the mattress are useless - pictures of wall, window, people's legs.

The screen shows the reservation page.

MAX

Shit. Which one is he?

INT. HOME - DEN - NIGHT

The kids are already in their pajamas, watching TV in the den with Erika, when Max comes in.

MAX

Sorry, traffic.

(to the kids)

Hi, horrors.

The kids all start talking at once. Max kisses them in turn, then Erika. He is gauging her behavior but it is normal.

ERIKA

Your dinner's ready. Just got to nuke it.

INT. HOME - DEN - LATER

Max has finished eating in front of the TV. Erika comes in with 2 glasses of wine, and hands him one.

ERIKA  
Thought you might like-

MAX  
Thanks. Cheers.

They CLINK glasses.

MAX (CONT'D)  
How was your day?

ERIKA  
Fine. Same ole', same ole'.

MAX  
Do anything interesting?

ERIKA  
Not really. Just the usual pottering around. Why? You?

MAX  
Nah.

ERIKA  
(laughing)  
We've become quite a couple of boring old farts, haven't we? Only one thing for it...

Max' eyes widen. Erika CLINKS her glass to his again.

ERIKA (CONT'D)  
Nature's anesthesia.

She smiles, sips, then snuggles up and closes her eyes. He sits there, gently stroking her, lost in thought.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max sits behind his desk, pensively rubbing his chin, trying to sort his jumbled thoughts out loud.

MAX  
So, what just happened? I don't get it. She behaved normally, no? But why didn't she tell me about her *tryst* with Thor?

He gets up and paces.

MAX (CONT'D)

No, let's be fair. Can't call it a tryst - at least, not yet. A date? No. No. No. What's the word?

He raises his hands in frustration.

MAX (CONT'D)

Meeting. That's the word. Meeting. An innocent meeting. But why?

His expression gradually morphs into dread.

MAX (CONT'D)

Is she... you know? No, of course not. She wouldn't, would she? Why would she? Because then I wouldn't need to-

The phone RINGS.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hello? Oh, Maya, hi... yes... yes... What? ... That would be great, but things are a bit complicated at the moment. Rain check?... When?... Look, I'm snowed under right now. I'll let you know, okay? Ciao.

He puts the phone down slowly. Perplexed, he strokes his chin.

MAX (CONT'D)

I don't get it. What is she up to? Why wouldn't she tell me?

He puts his coat on.

MAX (CONT'D)

I gotta find out who this schmuck is.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The same restaurant. It is empty. Max goes to the table where Erika was sitting.

WAITER

Can I help you?

MAX  
What table number is this?

WAITER  
(puzzled)  
Eight. Why?

MAX  
What sort of question is that?

He shakes his head incredulously, and leaves.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Max runs his finger down the reservation page on his smartphone.

MAX  
Table 8. Johansson. I knew it. A  
bloody Viking.

He looks up.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Now what?

He looks at his watch.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Ah, why not?

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Max getting dressed with another stewardess.

MAX  
(to camera)  
It helps me think.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

As he casually leaves the hotel, he sees Maya in the street.

MAX  
Oh, shit! The last thing I need now  
is a jealous mistress.

He rushes back in and leaves through the back.

EXT. HOTEL - BACK ALLEY - DAY

He heads down the alley, and on to the main street. He bumps into Maya, who has clearly changed direction. He looks stunned and embarrassed.

MAYA

Max! What a pleasant surprise!

She looks behind him down the alley.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(puzzled)

What were you doing in the alley?

MAX

(recovering)

Lovely to see you, Maya. Sorry, running late. Can't stop.

He gives her a quick peck on the cheek, then dashes off.

MAX (CONT'D)

Later!

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Erika and Max are sitting over the remains of dinner, glasses of wine in hand.

ERIKA

Oh, nearly forgot to mention. Maya called. Remember her? The French girl at the party.

Max is stunned. He GULPS.

MAX

Maya? Oh, yes. Her company was looking for office space.

ERIKA

Had a long chat with her at the party. Very nice girl, even if she is French!

MAX

Ouch!

ERIKA

Just kidding.

Max tries very hard to be nonchalant.



MAX

What did she want?

ERIKA

She's moving here and wanted to invite me for lunch to get advice.

MAX

(nervously)

Advice!? Advice on what?

ERIKA

(confused)

On moving here, of course. What else?

MAX

But how could you help? You're married with children. Isn't she gonna want a more-

ERIKA

What? A more what?

MAX

I dunno. A more... youthful perspective, perhaps?

ERIKA

What's the matter with you? I'm not into thermal underwear and false teeth just yet. Besides, she's not that much younger than me.

MAX

I never... What I meant to say was, maybe she'd be better speaking with some singles - you know, people more acquainted with where the action is.

ERIKA

Too late now. I told her we'd go one better.

MAX

We?

ERIKA

Yea. We're gonna hold a party for her so she can meet some people.

MAX

What!?

ERIKA

Yea. You know we haven't had an adult party here since the twins were born. It'll be fun.

She looks at Max's dumbfounded face.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

MAX

(recovering)

But our friends are all domesticated house pets like us. She's gonna be bored stiff by-

ERIKA

Forget it, Max. It's all arranged. Friday. If you're not up to it, you can take your slippers, cardigan and mug of cocoa upstairs for the evening.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Erika is applying the final layers of make-up. Max is pacing up and down. They are both dressed very smart.

ERIKA

What's the matter?

MAX

(surprised)

What do you mean, what's the matter?

ERIKA

You look like you're waiting for the jury to come back.

MAX

What?!

ERIKA

Relax. It's just a small party.

Max stops pacing.

MAX

Yea, you're right. Out of practice, I guess.

ERIKA

What?! Mr Smoothy himself, nervous?

She gets up and twirls.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

How do I look?

Max takes a very appreciative look.

MAX

(singing to Eric Clapton's  
song)

My darling, you look wonderful  
tonight.

Erika smiles and gives him a kiss.

ERIKA

Oh, you just got yourself some  
serious brownie points there,  
mister.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A very nice, polite suburban cocktail party, about 20 people  
dressed smart-casual. Max is clearly ill at ease.

JERRY

I gotta admire your balls, squire.  
Even for you this is-

MAX

You gotta help me out here, Jerry.  
This was not my idea.

JERRY

You don't say? You gotta admit,  
there's something nicely... bohemian  
about it all.

MAX

Jerry, focus! You gotta help me keep  
her away from Erika, okay?

Jerry bursts out LAUGHING.

JERRY

This just gets better and better.

Max is confused. He turns to see what Jerry is looking at.

Maya comes in carrying a cage with a plump white rabbit. The camera ZOOMS in on the rabbit very fast.

MAX (O.S.)

Holy shit!

Max imagines the rabbit cooking scene from Fatal Attraction, with the MUSIC from the Psycho shower scene.

He breaks into a sweat.

Pure innocence incarnate, she comes up to Max and kisses him on the cheek.

MAYA

A present for the kids. When they get bored with it, you can have it for dinner.

Max is stunned. Jerry LAUGHS out loud. She breaks into a big smile and gently pokes Max.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I am - how you say? - just kidding.

BEAT

MAYA (CONT'D)

They are way too boney.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The party is in full swing. Maya is quite the hit, with most of the men buzzing around her like bees around a honey pot. She clearly gets on very well with Jerry, touching his arm when she laughs at one of his jokes. Max and Erika are busy making sure hired waiters keep everyone plied with drinks and finger food.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jerry is talking animatedly with Maya. Max pulls him aside.

MAX

Excuse me, Maya. Can I borrow him for a moment?

Maya looks him straight in the eye with a seductive smile. She raises her glass and turns to mingle.

MAX (CONT'D)

Don't over do it, sport.

JERRY

What's the matter? Jealous?

MAX

Of course not.

JERRY

What? You think she couldn't fall for my charm, style and panache?

MAX

Come to think of it, that would solve our problem.

JERRY

OUR problem?!?

Max notices Erika going up to Maya.

MAX

Oh, oh. Two hens a-clucking. Time to turn on the charm offensive again.

They head towards the women, with occasional polite small talk to guests on the way. They get close enough to eavesdrop on their conversation.

ERIKA

When will your husband be coming over?

MAYA

Husband?

Erika points to the wedding ring.

MAYA (CONT'D)

(coolly)

Oh, Pierre. He died in an accident last year.

Max and Jerry stop in their tracks, shocked. Max mouths "What the fuck!" They compose themselves.

ERIKA

I'm so sorry. I didn't know. I-

MAYA

That's okay. Not a gentleman like your Max. He was a *cochon*, a pig. We were already separated.

ERIKA

But still...

Maya shrugs coldly.

The men swerve towards the kitchen.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Max paces up and down.

MAX

Holy shit!

JERRY

Holy shit indeed, Batman! Didn't you ask her about her husband?

MAX

It didn't seem polite.

JERRY

(sputtering)  
Polite?!

MAX

I never ask. It's such a passion killer.

Jerry LAUGHS.

JERRY

So careful, and yet so careless. This day had to come eventually.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maya has managed to corral Max in a corner.

MAYA

You have a lovely home and family, Max. And nice friends.

MAX

Even Jerry?

MAYA

(laughing)  
The exception that proves the rule.

MAX

(impressed)  
Your English really is amazing.

MAYA

Thank you. Yours isn't so bad either.

MAX

I didn't mean-

MAYA

Relax, Max. When can I see you again?

MAX

(evasive)

I don't know. My schedule's a bit-

Maya waves to Erika, who excuses herself to her friends and heads towards them.

MAX (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. Tuesday?

MAYA

What's the matter with you? You didn't think I...? So *gauche*! But Tuesday's good.

Erika comes up, joined by Jerry.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thank you for a lovely party, Erika. This was very kind of you. It's getting late and I should be getting back to the city now. Can I call a taxi.

JERRY

No need. I'll take you.

Max eyes Jerry nervously. Jerry enjoys his friend's discomfort.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max and Jerry are working at the board.

JERRY

Kudos, Max. Those changes you made really speeded this shit up. We're gonna be way ahead of schedule. Coffee?

Jerry goes to the thermos at the side and pours a cup.

MAX

Sure.

(to himself)

Damn me, she was right.

Jerry pours another cup, while Max stares at the board. They hear voices through the open door.

THELMA (O.S.)

Can I help you?

HILDEGUND (O.S.)

Yes. I'm looking for Mr Carter. I'm Hildegund Kruger.

Max freezes, then looks around for an escape.

THELMA (O.S.)

Do you have an appointment?

HILDEGUND (O.S.)

I only need a minute. I'm sure he'll see me. My husband is his client.

Max dives under his desk.

THELMA (O.S.)

Of course, Mrs Kruger. Follow me.

Thelma and Hildy enter. Jerry is standing in the middle of the room with two cups of coffee. Thelma looks around for Max. Hildy looks disappointed.

THELMA (CONT'D)

(puzzled)

Mrs Kruger here to see Max.

Jerry positions himself in front of the desk to help shield Max.

JERRY

He stepped out.

Thelma looks suspiciously behind Jerry and catches a slight glimpse of Max. In her world-weary way, she turns to Hildy.

THELMA

I must have missed him when I went to the bathroom.

HILDEGUND

(to Jerry)

But you're expecting him back any minute, no? You've got two fresh coffees there.



Max retreats further under the desk.

MAX  
(under his breath)  
Jesus wept. Nancy Fuckin' Drew!

Jerry hesitates, then hands one of the cups to Thelma.

JERRY  
You've saved me the trouble of  
bringing it out.

THELMA  
(sarcastically)  
Thank you, sir.

HILDEGUND  
(now really disappointed)  
Not having much luck, am I?

THELMA  
He's a busy bee, our Max.

HILDEGUND  
Obviously. Could you ask him to give  
me a call? I have a... proposal I'd like  
to discuss with him.

She hands Thelma her card.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

As the door closes, Max comes out from under the desk.

JERRY  
What's the matter with you, Max? We do  
shitloads of work for her husband.  
Don't piss her off.

MAX  
That's what I'm worried about. I'm  
pretty sure I know what her proposal  
is - and we ain't gonna keep that  
business if he finds out.

Jerry looks surprised.

MAX (CONT'D)  
She's been stalking me since the  
opening.

JERRY  
Handle with care!

MAX

Don't you think I know that? I ain't got a clue how-

The door opens again. Max dives back under the desk. Thelma comes back in - alone. Max raises his head above the desk.

THELMA

About that raise you were going to offer me...

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Max sips coffee, intently watching Erika in the restaurant across the street as Roger enters and kisses her on the cheek.

MAX

(under his breath)  
Shit. Same guy.

Suddenly, Hildy slides into the seat opposite him.

MAX (CONT'D)

(startled)  
Hildy!

She loosens the top of her blouse, and blatantly flirts.

HILDEGUND

Max, if I didn't know better, I would think you were avoiding me.

MAX

Of course not. Your husband's keeping us very busy.

HILDEGUND

I think there was a spark there at the opening, don't you?

Max is taken aback by her boldness. He stops glancing furtively across the street and looks at Hildy.

MAX

Hildy. We're both married. I-

HILDEGUND

Come on, Max. You don't fool me. I'm a good judge of people.

MAX

What?!

HILDEGUND

Your body language gives you away,  
Max.

MAX

But your husband is one of our biggest  
clients. You don't shit on your own  
front-door step.

HILDEGUND

I'm flattered by the analogy.

MAX

You know what I mean.

HILDEGUND

He'll never find out. We've got three  
young kids. I need some excitement in  
my life. I want to feel alive again.

Max is conflicted. He's never been such blatant prey before.

MAX

I never thought of Norman  
(wrings his hands as if  
disinfecting them)  
having any kids, let alone three.

HILDEGUND

He's not a bad man, but you've got no  
idea what it's like being married to  
him.

INT. NORMAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Norman is lying in bed, disinfecting his hands with Purell as  
Hildegund comes in wearing a sexy nightgown. She walks  
seductively over to him. She gets into bed next to him.

NORMAN

Have you...?

She purells her hands in front of him and smiles. She moves down  
towards his midriff, off-camera.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Have you...?

HILDEGUND (O.S.)

Aw, for Heaven's sake!

She gets up, goes back to the bathroom. We hear a cabinet being  
SLAMMED shut, then a GARGLING sound.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Max' eyebrows nearly fly off the top of his head.

MAX  
You know, Hildy, under normal  
circumstances-

HILDEGUND  
Great! Let's say Tuesday at the-

MAX  
Whoa! Whoa! I can't. I just can't. My  
life may be falling apart here.

Hildy looks confused. Suddenly, he sees Erika leaving the  
restaurant with the stud.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Sorry, Hildy. Got to go. Urgent  
business.

Hildy pushes her card into his hand.

HILDEGUND  
I'll expect your call.

Max takes the card, hesitates, then rushes out. She watches him  
leave, clearly turned on.

HILDEGUND (CONT'D)  
If you don't push my buttons, I'm  
gonna push yours.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Max follows Erika and Roger at a discrete distance. They get to  
a skyscraper, kiss each other on the cheek, then Roger enters,  
while Erika carries on.

MAX  
So, Hagar the Horrible works here.

He looks up. It's a fifty storey building. His heart sinks. He  
sees her go into a Department Store.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Max is about to enter when he bumps into Maya.

MAYA

Ah, the elusive Maxwell Smart. Are you avoiding me?

MAX

(to himself)

Why didn't this happen when I was sixteen?

MAYA

What?

MAX

Nothing. Of course I'm not avoiding you.

MAYA

Good. Let's have a drink Monday, after work. Okay?

She gives him a big hug. He looks anxiously towards the store, just in case. He turns the charm back on.

MAX

Great. Love to.

MAYA

The Copacabana? Seven?

He nods reassuringly. She looks happy again, and gives him a big wet kiss on the cheek.

EXT. HOME - GARDEN - DAY

Max and Jerry are sitting at a garden table, nursing a couple of beers.

MAX

Do you want another?

JERRY

Is the Pope a Catholic?

Max gets up and heads for the kitchen. His phone PINGS.

MAX

Can you get that for me, Jerry?  
MoonCorp should be confirming today.

He goes into the house. Jerry picks up Max' phone. He looks surprised. Max comes back with a couple of beers.

MAX (CONT'D)

What?

Jerry shows him the phone screen. It is a very suggestive selfie of a beautifully proportioned woman in a see-through negligee from the neck down.

MAX (CONT'D)

Not funny, Jerry. Pack it in.

JERRY

Hey, your phone, not mine. You asked me to check it.

Max grabs the phone.

MAX

The number's blocked.

JERRY

Who is it? Doesn't look like Maya? Is it one of your stewardesses?

MAX

Flight... Oh, never mind. How do you know it's not Maya?

They both look at the picture carefully.

ERIKA

What are you two up to?

They nearly jump out of their skins. Jerry snorts some beer through his nose. He grabs a handkerchief and wipes himself.

JERRY

Sorry about that. You made me jump.

ERIKA

What's the matter with you two? You look like you've been caught with your hand in the cookie jar. Dinner'll be ready in five.

She goes back in the house. They look at each other.

JERRY

Do you think she saw-?

MAX

Lord knows. They have a seventh sense we'll never comprehend.

JERRY

Speaking of Maya, did you ever check her out, find out what other dark secrets she might be hiding?

MAX

OTHER secrets?! What secrets?

JERRY

Why so jumpy, all of a sudden? The dead husband, for starters.

MAX

Oh, yea. Sorry. Lot on my mind right now. Well, I haven't been in touch with the FBI, if that's what you mean?

JERRY

No, you idiot. The internet. Everyone leaves a trail of slime like a snail on the internet. You know, Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram - Tinder, even. You should check yourself some day - find out what you've been up to - you'll be surprised! There's gotta be something.

MAX

Never thought about it.

JERRY

Don't you have ANY curiosity about the women you sleep with?

MAX

Who sleeps?!

JERRY

Very funny. But you're seeing her again tomorrow. Don't you think-?

MAX

Why the sudden paranoia?

Jerry shrugs.

JERRY

Your funeral.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

A worried Max is on his computer when Jerry comes in.

MAX  
Close the door.

Without turning, Jerry goes into reverse and closes the door.

JERRY  
What's-?

MAX  
You were right. About the internet.

JERRY  
What? You've only just found the porn sites?

MAX  
No, you Wally. Maya. Can't find her anywhere.

JERRY  
Really? Let me have a go. What's her last name?

MAX  
Maurier.

JERRY  
I'm impressed you know THAT much.

Jerry types in her name.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Hmmm. Nada.

Max paces up and down.

JERRY (CONT'D)  
Is that her maiden name or her married name?

MAX  
Never thought to ask.

JERRY  
Actually, makes eff all difference. Either way it should show up. Huh. How does a beautiful woman like that have no internet footprint? We got ourselves a real mystery here.

Max looks perplexed and nervous.



INT. BAR - NIGHT

Max and Maya sit in a discrete booth, holding hands across the table, much to Max' discomfort. He is very ill at ease.

MAX

How'd you find this place?

MAYA

Recommended by a friend. You don't like it?

MAX

It's okay. Came here once with Jerry. He likes this noisy Latin stuff. Not my cup of tea.

MAYA

You should have said.

MAX

No problem. No problem.

He takes a sip.

MAX (CONT'D)

You know, Maya, it occurs to me, you know everything about me, but I know nothing about you.

MAYA

You never asked.

MAX

(nodding)

True. True. Usually I don't. It's best not to get too involved.

MAYA

(excitedly)

Ah, ha! But you DO want to know about ME? Aah, that's nice.

MAX

Well, yes. Of course, I do.

(laughing nervously)

I want to know what I'm up against!

Maya smiles benignly. She squeezes his hand.

MAYA

*Bien.* It's very boring, really. I was born in Toulouse. No brothers, no sisters, no divorces.

(MORE)

MAYA (CONT'D)

My father was a chef, and my mother was a serial killer.

MAX

What?!

MAYA

Just checking you're listening, and not just being polite. No, she was a teacher. I was - what do you call it? - someone who always comes top at school?

MAX

A nerd? A swot? A dork?

MAYA

A prodigy.

MAX

Ah! That too.

MAYA

I went to the Sorbonne in Paris when I was 17.

MAX

Is that good?

MAYA

Most people thought so.

MAX

Well, good for you! What did you major in?

MAYA

The system is different. Literature. I studied European literature.

MAX

Clever stuff.

MAYA

Are you making fun of me?

MAX

No, of course not. Not really my thing, though - some of those guys wrote massive doorstoppers!

MAYA

You certainly get bang for your buck - especially with the Russkies.

MAX

Your English never fails to amaze me.  
Maybe I should send my kids to the...  
Sorbonne, was it?

MAYA

I bet their vocabulary is already  
bigger than you think!

MAX

And probably "fruitier" than mine!

MAYA

That's the internet for you. Now, did  
I pass the interrogation? Do you still  
trust me with your loins?

Max is caught off guard. He laughs nervously.

MAX

Loins?! Of course I-

MAYA

Good. I think I've deserved a little  
reward now, don't you?

She gets up, and pulls him to his feet.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Let's get out of here.

Max tosses back the rest of his drink, and is virtually dragged  
out.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max and Jerry are shooting the breeze in his office.

JERRY

I thought you were trying to get out  
of this?

MAX

But she was so nice. And, my god, is  
she hot! Believe me. Wow!

JERRY

You're thinking with your dick again.

Max shrugs thoughtfully for a moment.

MAX

You know, the strangest thing is that it felt like she was *expecting* me to question her about her past.

JERRY

Weird. How could she? So, go on, what did you find out?

MAX

Besides liking your type of bar, she's one helluva smart cookie. Genius, apparently.

JERRY

So she says. Did you ask why there's nothing on the internet?

MAX

You want her to think I'm a stalker?

JERRY

Max, she's stalking you, remember?

MAX

Maybe we've got it wrong.

Jerry throws his hands up.

JERRY

I give up. Be careful, my friend.  
Caveat Fornicator.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Max is trailing Erika, while Maya and Hildegund are separately trailing him. They are all painfully bad at this, ducking into store fronts, suddenly lifting up newspapers, ducking behind cabs.

INT. CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION - DAY

Still following. We see Erika exit one end just as a Flash Mob suddenly starts up in the central concourse. A woman starts singing an aria. Gradually, a chorus and a small orchestra appear out of the crowd. All foot traffic stops as people are spellbound by the spectacle.

Max turns and falls over a double bass with a loud THUNK. People frown at him disapprovingly. The noise points his pursuers in his direction. Max scrambles away.

They come out the other side of the station and right into the middle of...

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

... a Gay Pride Parade. Max ends up in the middle of it. He is pulled onto one of the floats. A bare-topped REVELER takes off Max' top, puts a garland around his neck, and eggs him on to join in the singing.

MAX

Are you crazy? It's freezing!

REVELER

Love will keep you warm.

Max SCOFFS. He sees Erika turn round and look his way. He grabs a banner and waves it to hide his face. He starts to revel and dance with gusto. TV and press cameras are getting all of this.

INT. THELMA'S OFFICE - DAY

Thelma and Jerry are looking at internet pictures of Max in the parade.

They stare incredulously at Max when he passes through to his office.

MAX

What?

Jerry follows him in.

THELMA

Never a dull moment!

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

JERRY

Really, Max? You've gone through all the women, now you gotta go for the other side?

Max arches an eyebrow and gives him a sarcastic smile.

MAX

What can I say? I'm an equal opportunity lover.

Max checks his watch nervously.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's nearly chucking out time. Why don't we go and hit a few balls?

EXT. DRIVING RANGE - EVENING

We can see their breath in the cold air as Max and Jerry hit practice balls. They are alone. Jerry rubs his hands together, and blows on them.

JERRY

Silly me for thinking we were going to a nice warm indoor tennis court. I mean, I should have known better - if it's the middle of winter, OF COURSE, it's only natural we'd be freezing our balls off on an outdoor driving range.

MAX

Stop whining, you pussy. We can talk privately here.

JERRY

Duh! Wonder why!

MAX

Jerry. Focus. I... I think Erika may be having an affair.

Jerry drops his golf club. He is genuinely shocked to the core.

JERRY

What?!?

Max looks utterly crest-fallen.

MAX

Yea. With Thor.

JERRY

Thor, eh? Oooh, that's not good. Even I would yes to him. Are you sure? It's not just your over-fertile imagination going into overdrive?

MAX

No. She keeps meeting him.

JERRY

So?

MAX

She's never even mentioned him.

JERRY

It's not like you share about your...  
liaisons.

MAX

That's different.

JERRY

Is it though? Maybe she's like your  
usual partners in crime - a bored  
mother looking for a bit of harmless  
fun and distraction from the daily  
drudge. Exhibit 1: Hildy.

MAX

What!?! Why would she be bored?

Jerry rolls his eyes.

JERRY

Maybe Thor graduated from the same  
College of Moral Relativism as you? No  
one gets harmed, right? It's all  
"consensual". Isn't that what you keep  
telling me?

MAX

You're not getting the big picture  
here, Jerry.

JERRY

Apparently not. What am I missing?

MAX

Thor is fucking MY wife!!

EXT. ROGER'S OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Roger enters the building, followed by Max.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

Roger gets into an elevator. Max goes up to the young, pretty  
RECEPTIONIST. He turns on the charm.

MAX

Sorry to bother you like this...  
(reading her ID)  
... Angela, but I just missed Mr  
Johansson. Which floor is he on?

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, Mr Johansson's office is 2105. Do you have an appointment?

She grabs the phone.

MAX

No, that's all right. He left something at our office.

The receptionist brightens up and leaps to her feet.

RECEPTIONIST

I'll take it up to him.

MAX

I don't have it with me right now. I'll have to come back. Thanks anyway. Very kind.

She looks very disappointed.

He goes over to the building register and checks the tenants.

MAX (CONT'D)

Viking Press. That figures!

INT. THELMA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Thelma puts away some documents and heads for the door.

THELMA

'Night, then, Max. The papers for your morning meeting are in the top of the filing cabinet.

MAX (O.S.)

Okay. Thanks, Thelma. 'Night.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - NIGHT

Max stands up and gets something out of his drawer. It is a codpiece. He loosens the top of his pants and starts to insert it.

THELMA

One more thing. I...

She stops dead when she sees what he's doing. Max jumps out of his skin. He drops the codpiece, and his pants fall down.

BEAT



They stare at each other, embarrassed.

THELMA (CONT'D)

I wondered when you'd get round to me.

Max is shocked.

THELMA (CONT'D)

You don't have to look so horrified.

MAX

Thelma-

THELMA

I don't want to know. Plausible deniability has always been my guiding principle.

She turns and exits.

THELMA (CONT'D)

Good night, Max - and good luck.

She passes Jerry in the doorway.

THELMA (CONT'D)

I would give him a moment of... personal time, if I were you.

JERRY

Eh?

He goes in nevertheless, just as Max is trying again to insert the codpiece.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Ah. The break-up! Wise man.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Lots of pedestrians. It starts to snow. Max and Maya are under a tree.

MAYA

What's the mystery, Max? It's freezing.

MAX

Sorry about that. Look, Maya, I don't know how best to say this, so I'll just come straight out with it, okay?

MAYA

That sounds ominous.

MAX

These last few weeks have been really great, but I think we should stop seeing each other.

MAYA

(stunned)

Why? Has it not been  
(in French)  
*formidable?*

MAX

That it has.

He grabs her hands.

MAX (CONT'D)

You're a wonderful woman, and, maybe in another life... Maya, I am married with three kids I adore and-

MAYA

I know that. I've always known that. You've always been very honest with me, Max. I don't expect you to-

MAX

Amazingly, I believe you. But, don't you see, if we keep seeing each other, it'll make it harder for you to find yourself someone... more permanent.

MAYA

Oh! So this is for MY benefit?

She looks at him sarcastically.

MAX

(hesitantly)

Well, yes, and, okay, also for mine.

MAYA

Is it that blonde woman?

MAX

(taken aback)

Blonde woman? Oh, Hildy.

MAYA

Are you cheating on me?

MAX  
(surprised)  
Cheating on YOU? You've got that all wrong. I'm trying to *escape* from her.

MAYA  
What is it then? Don't I please you any more?

Max can't stop himself exclaiming.

MAX  
No, Maya, no. I promise you, that is *definitely* not the problem! You are a wonderful...

He waves his hand in the air trying to think of the word.

MAYA  
Mistress?

MAX  
I was going to say "lover", or "companion".

MAYA  
Companion!? You hot-blooded Anglo-Saxon!

MAX  
Lover. Lover is the word. A quite fantastic, and incredibly supple, lover. Indeed.

Maya smiles and moves in closer.

MAYA  
Exactly. And you're not bad yourself. We make a great team, Max. I know where I stand, and I don't expect anything more from you. Stop worrying. I am happy. Very happy.

Max can't believe how this conversation is going.

MAX  
Maya. It's getting too risky.

MAYA  
We are careful, Max.

MAX

(getting exasperated)

Much as I'd love this to be France, it's still puritanical U S of A. We can't hide it forever. The world is too small.

MAYA

Max, you are tired and stressed. I understand. We can take a little break, if you want. I get it.

She gives him a hug and a kiss. His resolve is weakening. He closes his eyes.

His phone RINGING wakes him from his reverie. He pulls it out from his pocket. It is Erika calling. He rejects the call, then takes a step back. He looks Maya deep in the eyes.

MAX

I'm sorry, Maya. It has to be this way. I can't do this any more.

He kisses her on the forehead and leaves. Maya calls after him.

MAYA

MAX! MAX! Come back! Let's...

Her shoulders slump.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You don't mean it, Max. I know you.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Christmas decorations everywhere. Snow on the ground.

INT. HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Erika is pushing the bundled-up kids out to the car.

ERIKA

It's only snow. It won't kill you.

Max pulls her back before she can leave. He puts his finger over her mouth.

MAX

(quietly)

Hey, I was wondering whether you'd like to come in for lunch today, then we can go and...

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)  
(mouthing the words very  
quietly)  
... do the Santa shopping.

She looks genuinely happy for a moment, then frowns.

ERIKA  
Rats. That would be lovely, but I  
can't, not at such short notice.  
Aren't you busy?

MAX  
No, things are pretty quiet right now.

ERIKA  
Tomorrow would be good. Unless this  
offer expires at midnight.

MAX  
I'm sure I can use my influence-

ERIKA  
Great. That's settled then. Now, I  
gotta get the critters to school or  
they'll be late.

Erika gives him a big kiss.

ERIKA (CONT'D)  
Love you.

She rushes out. Max looks pleased.

MAX  
(to himself)  
Well, that's a positive sign, I guess.

Then he frowns.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Hang on a minute. What's she got today  
that's so important?

MONTAGE

Max follows Erika's car to the school, then the supermarket,  
then back home.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HOME - DAY

Max is sitting in his car at a discrete distance, watching the house. He looks at his watch. He shakes his head.

MAX  
(muttering to himself)  
Is this sad, or what? This is getting  
ridiculous. I'm just being paranoid.  
Erika would never...

He sees the garage door open again.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Oh! Oh!

Erika drives out and heads down the road. Max starts the engine and follows.

MONTAGE

Max weaves in and out of traffic, trying to tail Erika without being seen. He gets shouted and honked at by motorists he cuts in front of, or when he suddenly breaks. He very nearly sends a motorcyclist flying.

MOTORCYCLIST  
Watch where you're going, jerk!

They get into the city. It becomes harder to follow.

He loses her.

MAX  
Shit!

END MONTAGE

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max googles Viking Press and finds Johansson.

MAX  
(to himself)  
There you are... Roger, eh? What sort of  
name is "Roger"?  
(shouting)  
Thelma!

Thelma comes in.

THELMA  
You hollered, sire?

MAX

Indeed, I did. I'd like you to do something.

INT. MAX' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Thelma comes back in.

MAX

Well? Any luck?

THELMA

Give me a minute, Max. What's the hurry?

She lifts her notepad.

THELMA (CONT'D)

Mr Johansson has a meeting at the Valhalla Hotel this afternoon. He's not expected back today.

Max looks worried.

THELMA (CONT'D)

Are you supposed to be at that meeting? You gotta let me know these things, Max. I can't do my job and keep your diary if you don't-

MAX

Sorry, Thelma. It slipped my mind. Mad cow, I guess.

THELMA

You or me?

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max paces up and down. He looks worried.

MAX

Calm down, Max. He could just be meeting someone in the lobby, coffee shop, or some such. Not everyone's like you.

He dials a number from the computer screen.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hello? Valhalla Hotel? Yes, I'd like to confirm a reservation in the name of Mr Johansson... yes, two "s"es... that's right... oh, tonight - one night only?

Panic crosses his face.

MAX (CONT'D)

What? No - one night's correct... Yes, thank you. Oh, one more thing. Has he checked in yet?... No. I see. Thank you.

He looks confused and indecisive as he resumes pacing up and down. He stops for a moment, then grabs his coat and flies out of the office.

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Max goes to the concierge. No one there. He looks around. No one is watching. He goes behind the counter and scours the computer screen until he finds the room number. The Concierge returns.

CONCIERGE

Can I help you?

MAX

I don't know. Can you?

The concierge is dumbfounded. Max heads for the elevators.

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - CORRIDOR - DAY

Max is outside Roger's room. He looks around.

MAX

Now what? I really haven't thought this through.

A chambermaid comes out of a service elevator with her cart.

MAX (CONT'D)

Ah, thank goodness. I've left my key inside. Could you open the door for me?

The chambermaid hesitates.



MAX (CONT'D)

Please?

CHAMBERMAID

You must go to reception, mister.

MAX

I know I should, but I'm really in a hurry. Check your list. Mr Johansson.

The name checks out on her list. She still hesitates. Max pulls out a \$20 bill.

CHAMBERMAID

I guess it okay.

She opens the door. Max slips her the bill as he goes in.

MAX

You're a lifesaver. Thank you.

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - SUITE LIVING ROOM - DAY

It is a very nice room with separate bedroom.

MAX

At least he's not a cheap bastard. What a smoothie!

He sniffily checks the label of some Champagne on ice. Max addresses the camera as he walks about.

MAX (CONT'D)

What am I doing here? What if he gets violent? He's built like Thor. He'll eat me for breakfast.

He stares out the window, then back to the camera.

MAX (CONT'D)

What would you do? Not easy, eh? If I catch them, that's the end of my marriage? Do I really want that? Can I still fix it?

BEAT

MAX (CONT'D)

This is crazy. This is not the way to do it. I've been a self-absorbed fool. I don't want to lose her. I'm outta here.

He heads for the door when he hears voices outside.

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh, shit!

He looks around for somewhere to hide. Nowhere.

He hears the door open and rushes into...

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - SUITE BEDROOM - DAY

... and hides under the bed. Roger comes in amorously with a woman. We can't make out who she is. They start thrashing about on the bed.

MAX

(to camera)

So, now you know how I ended up here. So undignified.

He sees the woman's discarded clothes landing on the floor near him. He suddenly looks excited.

MAX (CONT'D)

Those aren't Erika's clothes.

He listens hard to the woman's groans.

MAX (CONT'D)

Those aren't Erika's groans!

He breathes a huge SIGH of relief, then hurriedly slaps his hand over his mouth.

The couple pause for a second. Max looks nervous.

The lovemaking resumes. Max looks relieved.

Then he realizes he can't move. He looks bored and restless.

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - SUITE BEDROOM - DAY

The couple are dozing.

MAX

(whispering disdainfully)

Huh! Amateur. That didn't take long!

He crawls out from under the bed, back into...

INT. VALHALLA HOTEL - SUITE LIVING ROOM - DAY

... the living room part of the suite. The man stirs.

ROGER (O.S.)  
Who's there?

MAX  
(Mexican accent)  
Housekeeping, señor. Checking the  
mini bar. We can come back later,  
if you want.

ROGER (O.S.)  
No, go ahead.

Max opens the mini bar, then closes it again loudly. He starts to leave, then goes back and takes a handful of miniatures from the fridge.

MAX  
(to himself)  
That's for wasting my time.

He closes the fridge again, catching his jacket in the door. He heads for the main door, but is yanked back by the caught jacket. He loses his balance and CRASHES to the floor.

ROGER (O.S.)  
What's going on?

MAX  
Sorry, señor. Have a nice day.

He rushes out of the room, closing the door just as a semi-naked Roger comes in.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Forget him, Roger. Come back here.  
Let's try again.

ROGER  
It... it's never happened to me  
before.

EXT. VALHALLA HOTEL - DAY

Max exits onto the street. He paces angrily up and down, not sure what to do.

MAX  
That asshole! He's cheating on my  
wife!

INT. MAX' OFFICE - DAY

Max sits pensively at his desk. Thelma brings him a coffee.

THELMA  
Oh, Erika called.

MAX  
What did she want?

THELMA  
She said you should check your voicemail.

After she leaves, Max checks his cellphone. He sees lots of missed calls and messages. He calls his voicemail box.

ERIKA (O.S.)  
Max. Where are you? I've been calling all afternoon. Can you try to be back early today? Maya's coming to the house with some big news.

Max WHIMPERS.

He sits for a second, like a rabbit caught in the headlights. He grabs his jacket, and SHOUTS to Thelma.

MAX  
Got to go home, Thelma. Family issue. Can you get Jerry to call me urgently? He's on the Harlander construction site.

He rushes out.

INT. MAX' CAR - DAY

Max' car pulls out onto the street. His phone rings.

INTERCUT PHONE CALL WITH JERRY IN HOTEL ROOM

JERRY  
You rang, sire.

MAX  
Jerry. You gotta get to the house - fast!

JERRY

(worried)

What's happened? Is Erika okay? The kids?

MAX

Worse. Maya's on her way there to break some big news.

JERRY

What news? Ooooh! Have you finally been busted?

He tries to stifle a CHUCKLE, but without success.

MAX

Not helpful, Jerry. It could be bad. I dunno. She didn't take the break up well.

JERRY

You broke up with her? When? I just spoke with her this morning. She never mentioned it.

MAX

You spoke with her?

JERRY

Yea. She wanted some advice. Sorry to bruise your ego, but it was nothing to do with you.

MAX

Doesn't matter. You're wasting time. Please get to the house and manage the crisis until I get there.

JERRY

You got it. This could be interesting.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Jerry closes his phone and leaps out of bed. He gets dressed rapidly.

JERRY

Sorry, hun. Gotta go. That was great. I'll call you.

He bends over and kisses a sleepy woman. She turns to kiss him back. It is Hildy.

HILDEGUND

I can't wait.

She SIGHS contentedly.

EXT. STREET - EVENING

It is getting dark, and snow is falling. Max lane hops, but to little avail. A car pulls in front of him and he is blocked.

MAX

Goddam it! Not Murphy's Fucking Law! Not today!

He manages to move just when the lights turn red.

MAX (CONT'D)

Are you fucking kidding me?  
Whenever you're in a hurry, every damn light is red.

The lights change to green.

MAX (CONT'D)

Finally!

Nobody moves.

MAX (CONT'D)

Come on! Come on!

Still no one moves.

MAX (CONT'D)

What the...?

He gets out of the car to see what's happening.

At the front is a cop controlling the traffic.

MAX (CONT'D)

Perfect! Murphy's Law, Number 327:  
if you truly wanna snarl up the traffic, put a wally with a whistle in charge.

A very grumpy Max shivers from the cold. He is startled by a motorcycle VROOMING past, as it weaves in and out of the cars. He jumps back into the car.

MAX (CONT'D)

The lowest form of life.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The traffic crawls through the junction. Max glares at the cop.

Another motorcycle flashes past on the other side and clips his wing mirror off.

MAX

HEY!

He PEEPS his horn. The motorcyclist, without missing a beat, raises his middle finger.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Visibility is terrible. Max sits hunched forward, concentrating.

Another motorcycle overtakes, then skids on the ice and loses control. Max swerves to miss him.

MAX

Shiiiiiiiiiiit!

He loses control of the car. It leaves the highway, drops down an embankment, and crashes into a tree. The airbags deploy. Max is knocked out.

INT. HELL - NIGHT

Yes, THAT Hell. Fire and Brimstone everywhere. A stunned Max looks around.

MAX

What awful decor!

The DEVIL, still quite handsome for someone of his advanced years, sits on a giant throne, surrounded by sycophantic demons. A dragon sleeps in the corner, exhaling puffs of smoke through his nostrils with each breath.

The LORD CHANCELLOR, built like a fussy blimp, ushers a line of gorgeous naked women in front of him.

THE DEVIL

(yawns)

No, no, no, Lord Chancellor.

(Sighs)

Sex. Is that all you think of?  
After the millionth time it starts  
to get a little dull. I warned you,  
something new, or...

He claps his hands.

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)

Fluffy!

The dragon wakes. The Devil raises his arm regally and points  
his finger at the Lord Chancellor.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

(panicking)

But, My Lord. You've always been  
partial to some nookie -

(pointing hopefully at the  
girls)

- especially, a twentysome!

The dragon flaps his wings, rises up to the heights, then  
swoops down towards the hapless Lord Chancellor.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)

My Lord. This isn't fair!

The dragon swallows him whole.

The Devil SCOFFS.

THE DEVIL

Fair!?! You came to the wrong place  
for fair, sunshine.

He notices Max. His face lights up.

THE DEVIL (CONT'D)

Maxwell! Welcome to my humble  
abode. I wasn't expecting you so  
soon.

MAX

(horrified)

You were expecting *me*? Why? I've  
lived a good life.

The Devil and demons burst out LAUGHING.



THE DEVIL

Ah, that one never gets old. Can you imagine how many millions of times I've heard that one?

He points to the far corner. Locked in chains are Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, several Catholic priests, traffic cops, and a whole gaggle of TV talking heads.

MAX

But... but I don't belong here. I swear. I'm never going to cheat on-

THE DEVIL

Max. Max. Max. They *all* say that. Besides, I got dibs on you *years* ago. And, you know something? The other team never even bid. They even took a Wall Street Banker over you.

The Devil puts his arm around Max' shoulder.

MAX

Not... Goldman Sachs!?

THE DEVIL

'Fraid so, Maxwell.

MAX

Ouch!

THE DEVIL

Now you're mine.

Suddenly, the screen washes out into a bright white light.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The light fades to reveal a GUY shining a torch in his face.

GUY

You all right, buddy?

MAX

Thank God. I knew He'd never forsake me.

The guy pulls him out of the car just before it goes up in flames. He leans him against a tree and checks his vitals.

MAX (CONT'D)

My phone!

GUY

Your phone!?! Fuck your phone. You had a lucky escape there, buddy.

Max takes stock of his situation. He pats himself down to reassure himself he's still alive.

MAX

You don't know the half of it. What're you doing?

GUY

Calling 911. You better go to hospital, get checked up.

Max grabs him by the hand.

MAX

Thank you. Thank you. You've saved me. But now I need to save my life.

GUY

Eh?

Max runs back up the embankment and puts his thumb out. Almost immediately, a Mercedes coupe stops. Inside is a gorgeous 30 year old BLONDE. Max looks heavenwards.

MAX

Really? You're testing me already?

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls up outside his home. Max opens the door, then hesitates.

MAX

Thank you. I don't know-

She hands him a card.

BLONDE

Call me!

INT. HOME - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Max arrives, very bedraggled.

ERIKA (O.S.)

Max! Is that you? Where've you been? We've been worried about you.

Erika comes around the corner and stops dead in her tracks.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

Good god. What happened to you? You look terrible. Are you okay?

MAX

You should see the other guy.

ERIKA

You were in a fight!?

MAX

No. Of course not. Sorry. Car accident. But everything's okay.

ERIKA

Why didn't you call?

MAX

My phone's toast, just like the car.

ERIKA

Thank God you're okay.

Erika gives him a big hug.

MAX

You're not angry?

ERIKA

(puzzled)

Why would I be angry?

MAX

I'm late.

ERIKA

You just totaled the car and you're worried about being late!? What's the matter with you?

She starts to head for the living room, but Max holds her back.

MAX

Erika. I had the most amazing experience - one of those near-death thingies. And all I could think of was you and the critters. I was so scared I was going to lose you.

He gives her a big hug and a kiss.

MAX (CONT'D)

I am going to be the best husband  
and father in the world from now  
on, I promise.

ERIKA

Wow, Max! What's come over you?

MAX

I had an Epiphany, Erika.

ERIKA

You're not going all God Squad on  
me, are you?

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Max nearly trips over his own feet when he sees Maya and  
Jerry sitting convivially with Roger.

ROGER

... and this asshole raided my  
minibar and stiffed me with the  
bill.

JERRY

Shocking, the types you get in  
hotels these days.

They see Max, and all EXCLAIM shock at his appearance. They  
rush towards him. Maya has to stop herself at the last minute  
from getting too intimate, but still consoles him.

ERIKA

He's fine. Thanks. Excuse us for a  
minute.

INT. HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Erika sits him down on the edge of the bed and starts to  
undress him.

ERIKA

Look, if you're not up to it, you  
stay here and I'll get rid of them.  
I'm sure they'll understand.

MAX

No, I'll be fine.

He clears his throat.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Did I miss anything?

ERIKA  
Miss what? Oh, the big  
announcement? No, she wanted to  
wait for you - insisted on it,  
actually.

MAX  
And the Viking?

ERIKA  
How did you know he works for  
Viking?

MAX  
He does? Come on, Erika - put a  
horned helmet on him and what have  
you got?

She LAUGHS.

ERIKA  
I never thought of that.

Max looks in disbelief.

ERIKA (CONT'D)  
If you're sure you're up to it,  
I'll go downstairs and make sure  
Jerry doesn't give away all our  
booze. Come down when you're ready.

INT. HOME - NIGHT

Max has changed. He hesitates. He turns to the camera.

MAX  
Awkward, no? Everything SEEMS okay,  
or was that the calm before the  
storm.

He rubs his neck, then makes a hanging from the rafters  
gesture.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Still, I can't help feeling like a  
condemned prisoner.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Max comes in nervously. He looks carefully at Maya.

MAX  
(to camera)  
What is she up to?

She moves over to make space for him next to her, but he purposefully sits far away from her. He and Roger introduce themselves.

MAX (CONT'D)  
(to camera, rolling his eyes)  
Of course, he has to have the firmest handshake in Christendom.

ERIKA  
Okay, Maya. The suspense is killing me. What's the big news?

MAYA  
Originally, I was only gonna be in the States for a short time, but then I met someone...

She glances at Max, who nearly has a heart attack.

MAYA (CONT'D)  
... wonderful and loving. He transformed my life.

ERIKA  
(excited)  
You're getting married!?

MAYA  
I wish I could.

Again she flashes a surreptitious glance at Max. He looks nervously at Erika.

ERIKA  
Why not?

MAYA  
Let's just say, bad timing.

ROGER  
That's your news?

Erika puts her hand on Roger's knee and SHUSHES him. This informality and intimacy are not lost on Max.

MAYA

No, I'm moving to LA.

Max goes wide-eyed, then looks relieved.

ERIKA

You don't have to leave because of that. There are plenty of other fish in the sea. Jerry's available!

JERRY

Thank you, Erika. I'm sure Maya would find me a very poor consolation prize. What do you think, Max?

Max gives him an "are you crazy?" look.

MAYA

Any girl would be lucky, Jerry. No, I'm leaving because...

She waves her hands excitedly in the air.

MAYA (CONT'D)

... I've sold a screenplay!! The producer loves it, and wants me to star in it as well.

They all get very excited.

MAX

I didn't know you were a writer.

ERIKA

That's fantastic! What's it about?

MAYA

It's a Disney Princess movie.

ERIKA

Aw, sweet.

MAYA

Well, not really. It's called "Infidelity".

Both Max and Jerry nearly choke on their wines.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Since moving here, I've been inspired like never before. Don't know why.

She smiles at Max.

The doorbell RINGS. Maya gets up.

MAYA (CONT'D)

That must be my taxi. Got an early flight in the morning.

She hugs Erika.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Thanks for everything. You've been SO generous.

She looks at Max over Erika's shoulder.

ERIKA

Nonsense. It's been a pleasure. And we all get tickets to the premiere, right!

MAYA

Of course. That's a promise.

Maya hugs Max and whispers in his ear.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Have you figured out yet where I got my inspiration?

MAX

Very funny.

She squeezes him tight.

MAYA

I'm going to miss you. I never meant to fall in-

Jerry touches Maya's arm.

JERRY

Save some for me. I'll see you out.

EXT. HOME - NIGHT

Jerry waves to the taxi driver to wait a minute.

JERRY

You were brilliant, Erin, brilliant. You deserve an Oscar for this.



Her French accent completely disappears - she now speaks like an American.

MAYA

Thanks, Jerry. This was a lot of fun. You were right - he's basically a decent guy who's, well, got his head up his ass.

JERRY

(chuckling)

You put the fear of God into him, Erin, you really did.

MAYA

I hope so. He really loves his family. If this doesn't force him onto the straight and narrow, nothing will.

JERRY

If he looks like straying, I'll ask you to give him a call.

She LAUGHS.

MAYA

I'd love to see his face! Anyway, the bonus, I got a screenplay out of this.

JERRY

That should be worth a producer credit, right?

MAYA

Fat chance. I'll call you from LA. Give my love to your mom. Oh...

She takes off the wedding ring and hands it to Jerry.

JERRY

(wistfully)

The only thing I got back from Sandy in the divorce. Keep it if you want.

He hands it back, but she politely refuses.

MAYA

Thanks, that's very kind, Jerry, but seeing as a wedding ring NORMALLY puts men off women, probably better you keep it.

They hug and mwah mwah.

MAYA (CONT'D)

Nice guy, your friend Max. If Erika ever kicks him out, let me know.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ERIKA

Lovely girl. I shall miss her.

Max nods discretely in Roger's direction.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

Oh, yes. Maya isn't the only one with news. Roger has been courting me for weeks...

Max is horrified at her choice of words.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

... and he's offered me a job. Part-time editor, and I can work from home.

BEAT

Max says nothing. Erika is surprised and disappointed at his silence.

ERIKA (CONT'D)

I didn't want to say anything until it was definite, and I was sure I wanted it. The critters are still-

MAX

That's it? That's the mystery?

ERIKA

(puzzled)  
What mystery?

Max gets emotional.

MAX

This is GREAT news! I'm so happy for you.

He kisses a very relieved Erika, then hugs Roger.

MAX (CONT'D)

Thank you. Thank you.

ERIKA

You don't think it's too soon.

MAX  
(happy as a sandboy)  
No, no. This is great.

Erika looks surprised, but happy by his reaction.

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Erika sees Roger to the door.

Jerry and Max are alone.

JERRY  
That was close.

MAX  
Too close. Thanks. Thanks for  
everything.

JERRY  
What are friends for?

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

INSERT TITLE:

"A Year Later"

Max is with his whole family, enjoying the park. Max addresses  
the camera.

MAX  
I learned my lesson. I've got the  
perfect family. Why risk it? The best  
laid plans of mice and Max. No, this  
is how it should be. Spending quality  
time with my family.

He throws the ball to Alex.

MAX (CONT'D)  
Erika loves her job, and now that  
we've got a full-time housekeeper,  
isn't so tired any more - if you get  
my drift.

He catches the ball and throws it back.

MAX (CONT'D)

As for all that biological horse-shit,  
it's amazing what you can do to  
overcome it. Bromide in the tea. A  
hammer. A pin up of Thelma.

He runs to the side to catch Alex' return ball. Behind him is a movie poster for a film called "Infidelity", with a picture of Maya on it.

He sees a gorgeous woman, walking her dog. She smiles flirtatiously at him. He smiles back.

The camera zooms in on her ring finger. A wedding ring and an engagement ring. There is a Ka-CHING sound.

He looks at the camera. With a wry smile, he shakes his head and a big red cross covers the screen.

FADE OUT.