

Shifting Sands



Original story & screenplay

by

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FADE IN FROM BLACK: EXT. DESERT - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE

A bleak horizon stretches out before us - miles and miles of sand and sky in every direction, whistling wind. If there were an image symbolizing being in the middle of nowhere, this is it!

TITLES as we study the play of wind against sand - patterns emerge, only to be swallowed back up, forgotten. This is a sea of constant motion, with no beginning, and no end. Suddenly, the wail of an Arab singer slices the monotonous lull. PAN to discover a road, reaching out to meet the horizon.

DISSOLVE TO **COLOR:**

INT. CAR - DAY

Pull back through the window of a car driving across the desert, narrowing in on a hand adjusting a radio dial, clearing the fuzz from the airwaves.

Pull back to reveal ANNA HAMILTON (Polish characters call her Ania). In her late thirties, brunette, she's got the kind of looks that are variable, dependent on self-esteem not bone-structure - right now, one would hardly call her beautiful.

ANNA (VO)

If you're wondering how I ended up
smack in the middle of the Sahara,
don't expect an easy answer. Maybe I
was crazy ...

Noticing a heap of bleached camel bones slowly being buried by sprays of sand, she chuckles and echoes out loud ...

ANNA

I must be crazy!

She drives on, wiping the sweat from her brow. The D.J. comes on the radio, talking a mile a minute in Arabic. Anna looks for another station. She finds one with a plaintiff love song that rips right to the heart. She grows suddenly serious.

ANNA (VO)

Or maybe it's cause there's a key to
every person's life, and if you can
find it hidden within the shifting
sands of time, you can unlock the
logic behind their actions.

ANGLE out the window towards the blue expanse of sky until it fills the screen, then ...

PAN DOWN:

EXT. BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE NILE - DAY

PAN to reveal a POV from above of the River Nile with its narrow trim of green, as it snakes through a sea of golden sand.

ANNA (VO)
The key to my life lay buried here,
in Egypt.

PAN to reveal Anna's hand writing in a big black journal. She is pregnant, glowing, relaxed. A deep contrast to the woman in the car months ago. She looks out at the river, smiling to herself.

MAN (OS)
(calling from inside)
Are you alright out there?

ANNA
(calling back)
Just perfect!

She watches the *Faluccas* float by, ancient in design - it could be now, it could be hundreds of years ago, and still, the river remains the same.

She returns to her journal ...

ANNA (VO)
It seems so simple, looking back.
But I had no clue until the bottom
fell out of my life ...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN: INT. RENOVATED TOWNHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE DIRECTLY FROM ABOVE on a dark, endless, deep blue plain - actually, a navy bedspread. PAN to reveal Anna, lying under the covers, flat on her back, and staring at the ceiling ...

ANNA (VO)
... and the hidden forces that
possessed me, started to surface.

She looks at the clock - 4 AM. PULL BACK, revealing a dark bedroom and an open window. We hear a car approach on the street outside ... Anna sits up, alert. Hearing the engine switch off, she leaps out of bed and runs to the window.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

On the street below, Anna sees a parked car, in it are a FEMALE DRIVER and one MALE PASSENGER. The man kisses the woman for what seems like an eternity ...

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON the couple, wet lips, a hand on a thigh, moans ...

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anna looks away, her face frozen in a contorted expression of pain and disbelief, her breathing rapid, the tears flowing.

She looks again. Then, with sudden decisiveness, she reaches and grabs a statuette from a shelf - the Egyptian Jackal God. She studies it, grinning to herself.

ANNA
Anubis! God of death! How
appropriate.

Taking careful aim, she hurls it at the car parked below.

ANNA (VO)
Who knows, maybe there's a time
limit on denial, cause that night,
mine expired.

The sculptured rock lands with a thud, denting the roof of the brand new Be-Mer (BMW).

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

GREG HAMILTON, early forties, with those classic Casanova features that can effectively mask even the most vile intentions, swaggers into the bedroom. He looks like he's just come from a fancy gala - well dressed would be an

understatement. He places the Anubis statuette back on the shelf - unharmed, Betraying a slight post-cocktail sway, he takes a threatening stance at the foot of the bed, and launches his performance - disguising the slur with articulate skill.

GREG

Would you like to explain ...

But he stops in mid-sentence when he sees his suitcase waiting at the end of the bed - open. Anna, his wife, is in bed calmly reading - pretending to - a book about mummification, and other exotic burial rites. She's wearing a long tee-shirt with an environmental-slogan printed across the front - 'save the amazon so it can save you', or something like that. She doesn't bother to look up.

ANNA

(icy, a tone lower)

Don't slam the door on your way out.

This is definitely a sobering sight for him. In order to save face, with lightening speed, he jumps into action.

GREG

If that's the way you want it to
end, fine!

But instead of clothes, he starts throwing in little artifacts - selectively, only the rare, priceless looking ones that is. Anna's veneer of calm fades rapidly.

ANNA

(a hint of panic)

Those are mine!

He grins: Aha! a reaction! Now we're in business. He strides out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - STUDY - NIGHT

A dark room, full of ominous looking shadows ...

GREG (OS)

(righteous)

I paid for the trips!

The door flies open, partially illuminating the room - a study, full of books, exotic masks, pottery, sculptures and other objects testifying to extensive travel.

Greg flies in, grabbing an ancient-looking, Balinese *Barong* mask from the wall - a wide-eyed, toothy scowl in vivid reds and yellows. Anna follows him in, switching the light on.

ANNA
I paid with malaria!

She grabs hold of the bottom of the mask. They both start pulling. Predictably, the thing breaks. He holds the top teeth, she's got the lower jaw.

ANNA
(furious)
Look what you did!

GREG
(it's his game now)
Me?

ANNA
(genuinely upset)
You! Goddamn you ...

She's focusing on the mask, not him. This bothers him. He look around.

GREG
It's always my fault! And you're
perfect! So fine, here!

He grabs another artifact - an Egyptian frieze - a king and his queen - made of fragile plaster. This time he stares at her hard, right up close to her face, and smashes it.

Her eyes narrow: Yep, this is deliberate, and personal. But the all-out declaration of war calms her down. She crosses her arms and stares. He can't handle 'no reaction', it only revs him up more.

ANNA (VO)

Ours was a hopeless union. Once we got started, it's like we were on automatic. The thing is, our batteries always ran out before the end of the scene. Except this time. Maybe the dress rehearsals were over and it was time to play it to the finish.

Anna watches as he becomes a raving lunatic, systematically destroying the things that hold sentimental value for her. She follows him with her gaze, a sarcastic smile on her face.

ANNA

Enjoying yourself?

This drives him mad!

GREG

Goddamn ice-queen! You get off on judging me, don't you ...

Eye contact. She smirks. Tense pause. And then he pounces. Throwing her on the ground, he looms over her, his face nearly touching hers as if preparing for a kiss. Instead, he grabs her by the neck in a dysfunctional display of intimacy. She responds as if he were air - just a gust of wind having knocked her down instead of this menacing six foot terror.

GREG

Think you're better than me, huh?
Huh?

Each 'huh' brings added pressure to the neck. She turns her head as best she can and looks away. She sees the two of them reflected in a mirror, motionless, like a monument - a sick twist on Auguste Rodin's famous "*The Kiss*".

ANNA (VO)

I should have felt something - fear, anger maybe? But all I could feel was nothing, absolutely nothing.

He sees her looking away, follows her gaze, and sees their reflection too. He releases her neck with horror, then with the mournful cry of a fatally wounded animal, he grabs a nearby carved figure and throws it at the mirror, smashing the image to smithereens.

In SLOW-MOTION, close in on the shards of glass coming to rest on the floor.

Anna remains frozen. She stares at the wall where the mirror used to be. Her oblivion as to his presence signals more than words ever could. In a desperate finale, smashing what remains of the contents of the room, cutting himself in the process, he leaves.

Anna continues to lie immobile except for a smile which slowly curls her lips. She is triumphant. A strange victory, but a victory nonetheless.

ANNA (VO)
So I was alone again.
(a beat)
Alone. Again.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER - SAME ROOM - DAY

Anna is dressed in practical chic, GAP style clothes - like you're ready for a safari even if it's to the mall. She has a huge mug of coffee in one hand, and a glossy coffee-table book about North Africa in the other.

She watches over the edge of the book as three elderly SALVATION ARMY GUYS move things out of the apartment - whole pieces of furniture, paintings, everything. One of the men ponders the removal of a beautiful leather couch. He looks up at Anna ...

SALVATION ARMY GUY
Are you sure M'am?

Anna meets his gaze, smiles, then focuses back on her book.

ANNA
Take it all, whatever you need.

She studies the open page in her book - a glossy color picture of jackals devouring a carcass - then drops the book on a pile of others and walks out of the room.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN: INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

We find Anna sitting on the floor. Beside her, a gallon of wine, Styrofoam cups, a cardboard box, and a CD walkman with one disk - *"The Tibetan Book of the Dead"* set to music.

ANNA (VO)
This wasn't the first time I'd hit
bottom. But I'd be damned if I did
it again.

She pours herself a glass of wine, downs it, then throws the
cup back over her shoulder.

ANNA (VO)
I decided to sift through the past
for clues ...

She puts the CD on - a bizarre cacophony of new age music, a
droning baritone voice invoking liberation, and Tibetan
horns. She listens, pleased ...

She then opens the box and pulls out stacks of photographs
which she lets spill onto the floor. She spreads them out,
uncovering the ones that are face down, creating an intricate
mosaic.

A smile appears as she seems to discover something in the sea
of pictures. She reaches down and selects a dozen or so, then
clears a section of the floor, and lays them out in a row.
The sound of the music dies, slashed by sudden silence.

ANNA (VO)
Maybe the truth is always there, but
you have to choose to see it. There
certainly was a pattern ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAFE - NIGHT - 10 YEARS EARLIER

A YOUNGER ANNA, looking like a 'tweedy' intellectual, with an
older ACADEMIC TYPE - bearded, somewhat nerdy, smoking a pipe
with pompous aplomb. Anna is upset - she gulps her wine. He
is attentive, but somehow patronizing in his manner.

ANNA
(her voice trembling)
So ... what are you saying, exactly.

THE PROFESSOR
(British accent)
It's not possible, just yet, there's
my children to consider.

Despite her efforts, the tears start rolling down her cheeks,
smudging the mascara.

ANNA (VO)
Okay. There's the unavailable guy.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN: EXT. AFRICAN SAVANNA - NIGHT - 15 YEARS EARLIER

Wearing hiking boots, Anna treads through the tall grasses of the African savanna under a moon-lit sky. A voice sounds behind her - deep, melodious, but in fractured English. She turns to face the speaker, a Bororo man in semi-native garb - handsome, manly, but worlds apart despite her ignoring it.

AFRICAN MAN
Why? Canada good for Mazundé ...

With innocent pride, he pounds on his chest as he utters his own name.

ANNA
It would never work!

He looks down at the ground and shakes his head, not understanding.

ANNA (VO)
Before that? The handsome foreigner
- we're talking major foreign here.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

She pours more wine, spilling most, laughing, truly amused.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDENT APARTMENT - NIGHT - 20 YEARS EARLIER

Anna and a YOUNG STUDENT sit cross-legged facing each other on a carpet in the middle of a candle-lit student pad. Tibetan chants drone in the background and various bits of Buddhist paraphernalia decorate the place - mandalas, meditating figurines, incense and the like.

Both Anna and the guy have that 'broke student' look, and wear long, clunky, wooden *Malas* (strings of sandalwood Buddhist prayer beads) around their necks. The young man, soft-spoken, gentle - okay, effeminate, let's face it - lifts her chin and looks into her eyes lovingly ...

STUDENT
I thought you knew ...

ANNA
I thought we were being celibate,
like monks! I mean why would I fall
in love with you if I knew you were

Close on her confused face as she mouths the next word ...

ANNA
... gay!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

Anna's face, convulsed with laughter.

ANNA
Hopeless! Totally hopeless!

She drinks some more, then falls back out of frame laughing.
Still chuckling, she picks up another picture, and lying on
her back, holds it up and stares at it.

ANNA (VO)
Greg was part of a 'hopeless choice'
collection I didn't even know I had!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY

Greg and Anna in wedding attire, fitting to this dream-come-true event, stand behind a stone pillar. However, as they huddle out of sight, these are hardly dream-come-true emotions we are witnessing. Anna is crying and angry, Greg is distracted but trying to mask it as best he can.

He holds her hands, kissing them, while at the same time expertly pulling her away from where she might be seen crying by the other GUESTS, who are busy posing for pictures on the top of the church steps.

ANNA
I saw you, Greg! I mean she's, was,
my best friend!

GREG
(between kisses)
Anna, my love, my sunshine, my wife,
you're my life! Why would I want
anyone but you!

He assesses the effect of his pretty words: Good! She looks up at him, soothed by the purring voice, and leans in towards him, wanting to believe, needing to. He pulls her into his arms, cradling her.

GREG
There. Now let's clean that pretty
face ...

Anna and Greg emerge from behind the pillar - smiling, radiant, not a trace of a problem. They pose with the rest of the BRIDESMAIDS. Greg is totally attentive to Anna, but just at the last minute, as the camera CLICKS, he looks over at the prettiest girl and devours her with his gaze as if she were a bonbon. She responds by lowering her head demurely and smiling - a willing conquest this former best-friend!

FREEZE-FRAME on the picture which says it all: Greg's roaming eyes are caught, while his arm rests reassuringly on Anna's oblivious shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Anna is on her back, staring at the picture ...

ANNA (VO)
I know what you're thinking. Why?
Good question!

She rips the picture with a swift motion, then convulsing with drunk laughter, turns over and rolls in the pictures like an animal rolling in a scent.

ANNA (VO)
Maybe it's an occupational hazard! I
collect anything!

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK & WHITE: LATER

Anna, still on her back on the floor, stares up at the ceiling. The pictures, ripped in tiny shreds, are strewn all

around her. No trace of humor left, only a sort of frozen, angry panic remains, contorting her face.

Her eyes study the ceiling, like a huge flat plain. Her eyes travel down the wall, then along the floor, close on the grain of wood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The desert - blowing wind the only sign of life. A blazing sun directly up above, erasing all shadows. Turning 180° - every direction looks exactly the same.

ANNA (VO)

I was lost.

She drops to her knees, then sits on her heels and stares at the sand in front of her. Her hands reach into it ...

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON ANNA'S HAND AS SHE REACHES FOR A BOTTLE OF WINE ...

INT. 24 HOUR SUPERMARKET - NIGHT - STRANGE TINTED COLORS

Anna, wearing dark glasses, pays for more Styrofoam cups and wine bottles. A BLACK CASHIER grins as he takes her money, obviously recognizing her.

CASHIER

That must be some party you all are havin', lady!

ANNA

It's a wake.

CASHIER

Hey, I'm sorry ... so who died?

ANNA

I did.

He doesn't quite get the joke. He watches as she picks up one of the chocolate easter eggs displayed near the cash.

CASHIER

They're great! Swiss chocolate!

She examines the egg, a frown spreading across her face.

ANNA

I hate Easter.

CUT TO:

BLACK & WHITE - THE PAST

CLOSE on a little girl's hands arranging painted eggs in an Easter basket, plates of food all around. We hear voices in a foreign language - anxious voices.

CUT TO:

INT. 24 HOUR SUPERMARKET - NIGHT - STRANGE TINTED COLORS

Anna crushes the hollow chocolate egg between her fingers. This breaks her reverie. Without a word, she throws another dollar on the counter and hurries out of the store, bottle of wine under her arm. The cashier unwraps the broken egg left on the counter and eats the chocolate.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE STORAGE ATTIC - NIGHT

Light floods into an attic as Anna throws open the trap door in the ceiling below and climbs up. In the soft light, the room looks cozy, cramped with objects and boxes as it is.

Sifting past forgotten or broken artifacts, she finds a box of old Super-8 movies. She examines the tiny reels - names of various exotic locations written on them. One catches her eye: Easter, Hourghada, 1965.

She digs through the rest of the stuff in the attic until she finds what she's looking for - an old Super-8 movie projector.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jumpy Super-8 footage appears on a blank wall.

Inside a car as it snakes through a crowd on a street in Egypt. A man driving (ROMAN, Anna's father), an attractive woman in the front seat beside him (BASIA, her mother). A little girl (Anna at age 8) in the backseat beside the person filming - she ignores the camera.

The exterior of a hotel as a car is unloaded by EGYPTIAN PORTERS dressed in crisp khaki uniforms.

A hotel room. Low ivory inlaid tables and leather stools, a double bed, the bedspread rolled-up and placed as a divider in the middle, dust balls under the bed, and feet on the other side, busy moving back and forth, unpacking.

A hotel dining room. Anna and her parents, an easter basket before them, the same scene she remembered while at the store.

Anna stares at the image, she freeze frames it. Suddenly, the film melts.

ANNA (OS)

Shit!

She tears off a whole section of the tiny film, fragile with age, and manages to thread the projector again.

The film resumes ... now we see a beach spread out before us, and blue sea. Young Anna kneels on the sand, building an elaborate sandcastle. She motions for the cameraman to leave her alone, speaking but all we hear is the whir of the projector ...

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK AND WHITE - THE PAST - THE SAME SCENE

Anna glares at her brother (ALEX, eleven), the one with the Super-8 camera in her face.

ANNA

Go away!

BOY (OS)

Why? Let's see what your boyfriend thinks!

He points his camera across the sand to a boy (MAREK), maybe nine, and homes in on his face.

CUT TO:

FILM IMAGE PROJECTED ON THE WALL - COLOR - THE PRESENT

The expression on Marek's face is an ambiguous mix of pain and pleasure - a smile, forced, exaggerated, desperate. We hear the whir of the projector, which grows louder as Anna FREEZE-FRAMES ...

She drinks her wine in the dark, and stares at the film image of Marek projected on the wall

FADE OUT:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE - THE PAST

From the POV of view of someone running, then turning to look behind them. The SOUND of their heart thunders.

Marek chases young Anna. She looks terrified, while on the other hand, he is grinning.

SLOW-MOTION as she falls. He jumps on her, pinning her to the sand.

His face towers over her, obscuring the light - the expression determined, sadistic.

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN COLOR - INT. TOWNHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

ANNA'S POV AS SHE OPENS HER EYES TO FACE BRIGHT SUNLIGHT

Shielding her eyes, she sits up on the floor in the dusty, littered living room. She gets her bearings, realizing she fell asleep watching the film. The projector is still on, although the film ended hours ago and the end flaps around and around. She switches it off then stumbles to her feet.

CUT TO:

INT. TOWNHOUSE STORAGE ATTIC - DAY

In the morning, the attic looks different. Dustballs, persian carpets with moth holes, we find all the evidence of an abandoned space housing the past, rather than the cozy collection of memorabilia from last night.

With a new vitality in her eyes, she searches until she finds a box with "Ania Kowalska" written on it in childish letters.

She opens it and digs among the letters, ribbons, plastic rubies and other objects a little girl might collect. Finally, she finds something way at the bottom. Pleased, she pulls it out.

NARROW IN on her hand and the object in it: a worn, gold-plated chain bracelet, 'I LOVE YOU' etched across a scratched flat plaque at the center ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

CLOSE on the same bracelet on Anna's hand as she stares out the window into the black of night.

PULL BACK to reveal Anna in a plane full of sleeping PASSENGERS, frozen in contorted, neck wrenching positions. SNORES here and there, and the sounds of bodies shifting in futile attempts to fit into the narrow seats.

ANNA (VO)

So there I was, in mid-air, on the way to Egypt. I don't know what I was looking for exactly. A pivotal moment perhaps, something to explain why the sight of that boy filled me with disgust ...

The head of the snoring man in the next seat, an ACCOUNTANT type in glasses, falls onto her shoulder. Somewhat disgusted, she moves it, propping it back up within the parameters of his seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - PYRAMIDS OF GIZA - SUNSET

Faint echoes of a MUEZZIN calling to God, as a blazing orange sun touches the horizon, and sinks below the endless plain with unnatural speed.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DESERT - NIGHT

Anna drives, deep in thought. The desert stretches out before her - ink black, with only the headlights to warm her way. Suddenly, across the dunes, a shimmer of lights suspended in space ... She stops the car and smiles to herself.

ANNA (VO)

The drive was endless, when suddenly, after hours of black, the city rose above the horizon like a shimmering necklace of light, each bead a keyhole into the past!

CUT TO:

EXT. HURGHADA STREETS - NIGHT

Anna drives through the streets of Hurghada. Once a simple Egyptian fishing village, thirty years later, the overwhelming tourist presence is impossible to ignore.

ANNA

All that's missing is MacDonalds,
and I'd be in Florida!

We explore the main streets of the town, where fancy hotels, clubs and restaurants flaunt their wealth against a backdrop of poverty. A little further, we approach an intersection. The car slows, then pulls to a stop at the side of the road.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

With a portable flashlight to light her way, Anna sorts through a stack of pamphlets until she finds an old hotel brochure. Inside, there is a picture ...

CLOSE ON THE PICTURE

of an intersection, then pull up and out the window to reveal the same corner today, but with a major westernizing face-lift. She closes the brochure revealing the cover, graced by a picture of a regal looking building with an elaborate sign - 'Palace Hotel'. Below, there is an address.

She looks at a map, trying to figure out where she is. Unable to, she switches the flashlight off and drives on a few feet at a snails pace. She notices an ARAB woman walking along the side of the road, shrouded in a black *ubaya*, a *hijáb* across her face

Pulling up ahead of the woman, Anna consults a tiny pocketbook of Arabic expressions.

ANNA

where ... where ... here it is ...
Faa .. yyy ...nnn. Fay-nnn.

She moves to the passenger seat and leans out the window as the woman approaches. The woman notices her ...

ANNA

Fayn (where) Hotel Palace?

The woman motions no with her hand and keeps walking.

ANNA
min-FADH-lik! (please)

No response. Anna slides back in her seat and drives alongside while still searching in her expression book. The woman inches away, walking closer and closer to the wall.

ANNA
(loud)
Lokandah (hotel) Paa-laa-sss ...

In a desperate effort to get away, the Arab woman darts into an alley, leaving Anna so close to the wall that she scrapes the side of her car.

ANNA
Damn!

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Anna drives on. She passes a side road which seems to lead away from the tourist strip and down a hill. She brings her car to a screeching halt, backs up, and turns.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK STREETS - NIGHT

The car veers down a hill into a poorly lit congested neighborhood.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The surrounding buildings get more poor and 'authentic' with each block. She drives slowly, taking in the sights, the sounds, the smells ...

ANNA
Now this is more like it ...

Distracted, Anna doesn't notice she is heading for a dead end. By the time she does, it is too late as her car stalls behind various carts and rusty motorbikes, where a GROUP OF BOYS is playing.

She notices a local Café past the crowd of boys, where an ASSORTMENT OF MEN in *galabias* smoke *nargèlahs* (pipes) and

drink mint tea from clear glasses. The men take notice of her and exchange what are apparently jokes in Arabic.

ANNA

Yeah. Yeah. Go ahead and laugh!

Within seconds, the car is surrounded by boys. They lean in the window, touch her hair, her shoulders ... groping for whatever they can reach. They babble on in Arabic, with only a word or two of English mixed in for flavor - words like 'hello', 'America', or 'good'.

Two of the men from the Café get up and approach, in a gesture of help. But Anna panics. She struggles to restart the car, while trying to say something to the boys which will be both polite and firmly understood as 'back off' ... but nothing works!

ANNA

Hello! Good-bye! ... Good-bye! Thank
you ... very nice ... NOW GO AWAY
... SHOOO ... Leave me alone! Okay!?

One man reaches the car and leans in to open the door from the inside. But just then, Anna manages to restart the engine. With a screech of tires, she backs up, turns around, and makes a jerky getaway.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The sound of male LAUGHTER follows her as she speeds away.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN ROAD - WITH VIEW OVERLOOKING THE TOWN - NIGHT

Anna finally stops the car, letting the engine stall. She rummages in the glove compartment. Among some empty gum and candy wrappers, she finds one broken cigarette. Breaking off the loose piece, she lights the end with a shaky hand.

ANNA

Sorry boys, no meat today.

She chuckles, then coughing intermittently, she smokes the butt and composes herself.

The view is magnificent. The entire town spreads before her eyes - shimmering, magical, like something straight out of 1001 Arabian nights.

DISSOLVE TO:

BLACK AND WHITE - 30 YEARS AGO

The same view, but this time from the back seat of the car. An angry woman's voice is heard, rambling on in Polish. The viewer, young Anna, looks right, taking note of her father Roman in the driver's seat, her mother Basia in the front passenger seat, and beside her in the backseat, her brother Alex who is systematically building a partition between them using bits of luggage. The sibling wall is unstable and starts to tumble down onto Anna.

YOUNG ANNA (OS)

Stop it!

ALEX

(smirking)

I don't want you touching me.

YOUNG ANNA (OS)

I'm not!

ALEX

Well just in case, here's the wall
... so don't cross it!

He pushes the wall further in her direction, making more room for himself. It squeezes her against the door.

YOUNG ANNA (OS)

You're hurting me!

ALEX

(leaning over, whispering)

I don't want my gross little sister
touching me, okay?

Anna looks towards the adults.

YOUNG ANNA (OS)

Mommy!

Basia turns around, although she seems too distracted to deal with this right now. She is a beautiful woman - indeed - beautiful except for the large swollen goitre (pathological enlargement of the thyroid gland) at the base of her neck.

BASIA

Now both of you, stop fighting!

ALEX
(smirking)
We're not fighting. She's just being
a pest.

ANNA (OS)
I am not! He's the one being mean!

BASIA
If you don't stop, I'll throw you
both out of the car.

She turns back to the front and starts talking in Polish to her husband with that scary, angry voice. Anna looks over at her brother who smirks with his victory, giving one of the bags another shove towards her.

REVERSE ANGLE FROM THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Young Anna looks towards the driver's seat - sad, forlorn.

DISSOLVE TO **COLOR:**

SAME ANGLE - THE PRESENT

An empty car seat as the memory of young Anna vanishes.

Anna turns to face the front of the car, puts the cigarette out, glances at the view once more, then restarts the engine.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO 5-STAR HOTEL - NIGHT

Anna, her car dusty and somewhat damaged, drives up to the fancy entrance. She gets out, leaving the car with a DOORMAN.

ANNA
I'll just be a minute ...

He gives her a parking stub, and she goes inside.

CUT TO:

INT. 5-STAR HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Within the splendor of a Middle Eastern Five-star hotel, she locates the front desk and heads in that direction.

CUT TO:

INT. 5-STAR HOTEL LOBBY - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Anna waits for the DESK CLERK to look up ... Finally!

ANNA

Hello!

A throw back from the British Empire, dramatically polite, he gives her a beaming Cheshire cat smile.

DESK CLERK

Good evening, Madame ...

ANNA

I wonder if you can help me.

(shows the pamphlet)

I'm looking for the 'Palace Hotel'.

He glances at the pamphlet, a perplexed frown growing on his face. He hands it back to her.

DESK CLERK

This is a very old brochure, Madame.
There is no Palace Hotel in Hurghada today.

ANNA

There must be!

An ELDERLY HOTEL MAID in a crisp uniform ambles by, wiping dust from the counter. She glances at the brochure.

DESK CLERK

Many buildings were destroyed in the war of '67. You know about this war ... between Egypt and Israel?

ANNA

Yes, yes, I know. But are you sure about the Palace? Can't you check? In some listings? Some records? Somewhere?

DESK CLERK

I'm very sorry. Maybe you would like a room here? We have magnificent rooms - the very best!

ANNA

I don't know ... I need to think.

She moves away from the counter and notices a herd of well-dressed people - TOURISTS and Hurghada's ARAB ELITE. They traverse the lobby towards the SOUND of ARABIC MUSIC playing in the adjoining nightclub. Anna follows.

CUT TO:

INT. 5-STAR HOTEL NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Feeling totally alienated, Anna surveys the scene. A BELLY DANCER (NADIA) weaves through the audience, captivating all with the speed of her swaying belly.

She seems to give extra attention to a man - JACK - sitting alone at one of the front tables. Late thirties, keen eyed, somewhat disheveled yet handsome, he grins up at Nadia as she spins around and around him, much to his delight.

Anna watches it all swim by in SLOW-MOTION. The noise dies down while her own breathing and heartbeat grow in volume. Snatches of eye contact - the audience, the dancer, it seems everyone is watching her. Seeing a waiter swim by with a tray of drinks, she follows.

ANNA

Excuse me! I'd like to order something! Waiter?

Then, feeling a hand on her shoulder, she turns ...

ELDERLY MAID

Madame?

ANNA

(surprised)

Oh ... hello.

Somewhat furtively, the maid shoves a piece of paper in Anna's hand.

ELDERLY MAID

No Paa-lass. Hurghada City Hotel.
Add-ress ...

The maid hurries away as Anna looks at the sheet of paper, where something is scribbled in Arabic.

She rushes to catch up with the maid, and manages to corner her near the entrance to the nightclub.

ANNA
(slowly)
I can't read it. Will you show me?

The woman smiles politely but backs away. Anna grabs her arm, holds her in place, and consults the Arabic expression book.

ANNA
wadeenee henak ... min-FADH-lik.
(take me there ... please)

The woman is reluctant ... she looks around nervously, then points to her watch. Anna nods, understanding.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S CAR - NIGHT

Anna is parked in the shadows outside the 5-star hotel. A woman draped in the traditional black *ubaya* and *hijàab* suddenly opens the passenger door. She pulls aside her *hijàab* - it is the maid.

ANNA
You scared me!

Anna grabs the maid's hand and shoves some money in it.

ANNA
I want to thank you for doing this!
I really, really appreciate it.

The woman shakes her head, saying something to the effect of 'it's okay, I don't need any money' in Arabic. She shoves the money back in Anna's hand, then without a word, somewhat furtively, she points out a direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. HURGHADA STREETS - NIGHT

The two women drive in silence through the dark streets. We track their eye movements as they secretly study one another - worlds apart but both prisoners in a way, except one is shrouded against the outside, the other against her inner voice. They drive through a somewhat crowded section of town.

INTERSECTION

The car stops at an intersection.

A PASSING MAN peers at Anna through the windshield. She looks away, avoiding his gaze, taking note of the protection that her companion is offered in her prison of black cloth.

A few streets later, the maid grabs Anna's arm and points at a driveway leading into darkness.

MAID

He-nah! He-nah!

Before Anna can stop her, she gets out of the car.

ANNA

Wait!

But the woman disappears in a sea of cloaked figures. Anna turns to look in the direction she had pointed out. She sees a faded sign - "*Hurghada City Hotel*".

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Anna's car makes it's way down a bumpy road. Suddenly, a LOUD BANG. The car veers towards the side of the road and stops.

She leans out the window and sees a very flat back tire ...

ANNA

Oh, great!

Then, noticing what's straight ahead - her mouth drops open. It's the former "*Palace Hotel*", with cracked, fading walls, and an assortment of beat-up vehicles parked outside.

ANNA (OS)

The Palace!

She begins to smile ... a glimmer of recognition.

ANNA

(full of awe)

I can't believe it!

She shifts gears and drives on to the rhythmic THUMP THUMP of the dying tire.

CUT TO:

EXT. HURGHADA CITY HOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The doorman, HASSAN, in a grimy, thread-bare uniform, sits near the main door watching a video on a small ancient TV. CLOSE ON THE SCREEN, as Omar Sharif, Dr. Zhivago, comes into a bookshop and sees Julie Christie, Lara.

DR. ZHIVAGO

How are you ...

FREEZE FRAME, ROLL BACK ... while we hear ...

HASSAN (OS)

(practicing)

How are you, how are you ...

Then HEARING the THUMP THUMP of Anna's car approaching, he FREEZE FRAMES on Zhivago's intense, tearful, pleading eyes, and rushes up to the car, opening the door before Anna has a chance to bring the car to a full stop.

HASSAN

Ha-llo!"How are you!"

Anna steps out of the car. Hassan is already stationed near the trunk - waiting for her to open it.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY - HURGHADA CITY HOTEL - NIGHT

Followed by Hassan carrying her bags, Anna walks into what was once a plush lobby - now a parody of itself. She looks around - thrilled.

CUT TO:

INT. HURGHADA CITY HOTEL - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

She arrives at the front desk just as the clerk, AHMED, swats a fly on the counter. Seeing her, he quickly sweeps it onto the floor.

AHMED

Ha-llo!

She grins at him - friendly. Hassan lays her bags on the floor around her.

ANNA

Hi there! I'd like to see your rooms please.

AHMED
No problem ... no problem ...

Somewhat agitated, Ahmed hands a ring of keys to Hassan ...

AHMED
(in Arabic)
Here, hurry ... and no Omar Sharif
thing, got it?!

HASSAN
(in Arabic)
Will you lay off!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM #1 - NIGHT

A decent room - all things considered. Hassan runs in, eager.

HASSAN
Come, you see bath, hot and cold, 24
hours!

ANNA
That's good ...

He disappears into the bathroom, we hear water running ...

HASSAN (OS)
Come, you see!

Anna simply stands in the middle of the room, feeling more
than looking. Hassan comes back in, drying his hands. She
heads for the door ...

ANNA
(decisive)
Not this room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM #2 - NIGHT

Hassan and Anna walk into another room. She knows
immediately, shakes her head, and walks out.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - HALL OUTSIDE ROOM #3 - NIGHT

He unlocks the door, switches on the light, and looks at her.
She shakes her head - no.

CUT TO:

INT. HURGHADA CITY HOTEL - FRONT DESK - NIGHT

Ahmed eagerly awaits. But Hassan's glum face spells bad news.

AHMED

(to Hassan in Arabic)

You did the Sharif thing!

HASSAN

(protesting in Arabic)

I did not! She's strange - she
didn't even look at the bath!

Anna sighs - tired.

ANNA

They're not quite right.

AHMED

You don't like? You say, we fix!
Whatever, we fix!

ANNA

It's not that.

She hesitates, then divulges her secret.

ANNA

Look, this may sound strange, but I
was here thirty years ago.

AHMED

Thirty years! You were little girl!

He indicates a child's height with his hand. She judges his
estimate ...

ANNA

Yeah, just about ...

He grows serious.

AHMED

That was before war ...

(worried)
Much change. This hotel? Not same.

ANNA
It's not that. It's just that I'd
like the same room.

Ahmed and Hassan consult each other in Arabic. As we watch their faces, we can assume the gist of their exchange is as follows: They think - what to do. Hassan has an idea. Ahmed is skeptical at first, but then agrees.

AHMED
No problem! You come!

He motions for Anna to follow, and the three march towards the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - NIGHT

The swinging doors fly open, and Anna and Hassan follow Ahmed into a messy kitchen. Anna comes face-to-face with the carcass of an entire goat, lying across a marble table. It's eyes - glassy, pleading - seem to stare at her as it's skin is being peeled off by MUSTAFA, an elderly cook in a bloody apron.

Ahmed talks to the cook in Arabic with lots of accompanying gestures and emotion. The cook nods, then disappears through a thick metal door into a second room. Anna looks around, narrowing in on the metal door which is slightly ajar, but one can hardly see anything of the room on the other side. Only various NOISES offer clues as to what the cook is doing. She scans back along the floor, stained with traces of blood, to the goat - a disturbing sight which attracts her for some reason.

AHMED (OS)
No problem, you see ...

Suddenly, an old box appears in the frame, pushing aside the animal's head. The cook's hands retreat, leaving bloody smears on the sides of the box.

Ahmed opens the box.

AHMED
There. You see?

Inside, are many inscribed "*Palace Hotel*" registration books. He rummages through, taking note of the dates on the covers.

AHMED (OS)
... 62, 63, 64 ... Aha! 1965!

He pulls out a dusty tome, calling for Anna to follow him.

AHMED
(proud of himself)
Come ...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - SEATING AREA - NIGHT

Ahmed, Hassan, Mustafa and Anna crowd around the coffee table as Ahmed ceremoniously opens the book, then looks at Anna.

AHMED
Name please?

ANNA
(excited)
Kowalski ... at Easter time. End of
March, maybe early April ...

Confused expressions on the faces of the men ...

ANNA
(slowly)
Kowalski. K. O. W. A. L. S. K. I ...

Tension as Ahmed scans the rows of handwritten entries. Finally, thrilled, he points to 'Kowalski' on the page.

AHMED
I find it! Two adjoining room, one
bath. Two adult, two children.

ANNA
I can't believe it! What's the room
number, let me look.

But Ahmed shuts the book. The frown on his face spells trouble again.

ANNA
What's wrong?

AHMED
Problem.

ANNA
Why? Is it occupied?

AHMED
Not exactly.

ANNA
Was it torn down? Destroyed in the war?

AHMED
Room not available.

ANNA
(near tears)
At least let me see it! I've come so far!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ahmed unlocks a door. As he throws it open, the light reveals a cluttered storage room full of unused furniture. He turns to Anna.

AHMED
There. You see? Not possible.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anna walks in, spellbound - a girl in wonderland. She walks between the furniture as if it were not there.

ANNA
Wow! I can't believe I'm here!

Ahmed enters the room as well, puts on more lights, then watches her. But something else distracts him. He sees a scorpion crawling along the floor, nearing Anna's foot.

He manages to stomp on it just as it is about to strike her foot. Anna turns, not noticing as Ahmed kicks the crushed creature out of sight.

ANNA
I guess I'm just not very lucky.

She soaks in the room some more.

AHMED
Madame, how long you want stay?

ANNA
It all depends ...

Ahmed studies her for a moment, deciding. Then, with resolve, he slams his hand on a table.

AHMED
Okay, okay. We fix.

She turns to him in disbelief.

ANNA
Really?

AHMED
I hate to see woman unhappy. My heart? It breaks!

She takes his hand and holds it in hers, truly grateful.

AHMED
(uncomfortable)
No problem, really. You excuse me one minute, okay?

He steps out of the room leaving Anna to explore. Suddenly, she hears him yelling in Arabic in the corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Anna leans out, wondering what's going in. She sees THREE MAIDS come running, their mouths full of food, their dinner interrupted.

Ahmed yells directions at the maids in Arabic. They disappear into the room and in seconds furniture is being carried out.

Jack, the man we saw in the nightclub earlier, appears in the corridor on his way to the stairs. His glance darts back and forth, taking note of the proceedings, and in particular, taking note of Anna. Their eyes meet and hold for an instant, then hers dart away.

Ahmed does not seem to like this guy. He ignores him. But Jack, a confrontational type, doesn't let him ...

JACK
(mocking)

Ha-llo Ahmed!

AHMED
(hating to be polite)
Ha-llo sir ...

Jack disappears down the corridor, glancing back one last time, only to catch Anna - much to her dismay - glancing at him too. Ahmed gives some last minute instructions, then gestures for Anna to follow him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - BAR - NIGHT

Ahmed seats Anna at a table and gives her a menu.

AHMED
There. You relax. Eat. We fix everything!

ANNA
You're so kind. I can't tell you what this means to me.

AHMED
No problem, no problem. I call you when room ready, okay?

ANNA
Okay!

She orders something from a WAITER. Then, taking a deep breath, she takes out the big black journal from her purse.

She notices Jack, seated at the bar, drinking vodka shots. He is already quite drunk. He glances over at her.

She looks down quickly. She opens her journal and rummages for a pen. Then, feeling it is safe, she looks up again.

Jack has a voluptuous Arabic woman in western dress with him - it's Nadia, the belly dancer from the 5-Star hotel. She too seems drunk. He rubs her thigh as she leans towards him from her bar stool, giggling like a schoolgirl.

The BARTENDER glares at them both, reluctantly pouring more drinks. Jack starts to turn towards Anna again. Her eyes return to the notebook.

She starts writing ...

ANNA (VO)

Hurghada. Good Friday. Funny, but now that I'm here, I'm overcome with dread. Adrift towards the edge of a waterfall with no hope of rescue ...

Suddenly, her hand slips, drawing a line across the page.

Anna looks up to find a grinning Jack, up close, his face looming over hers.

JACK

I don't know, I've been coming here for years and I never got the red carpet treatment!

Before you know, his hand is on her shoulder. She removes it.

ANNA

I wonder why.

He sits at her table ...

JACK

May I?

She just watches - not quite believing how audacious he is. He fishes for a silver cigarette case in his shirt pocket, flips it open, and offers her one. She declines, so he lights up. All this in silence, with her staring at him, her arms crossed against her chest as if for self-protection.

The sound of ARABIC MUSIC suddenly fills the air. Then whoops! A glitch in the music as the record - yes, a real record! - skips.

JACK

Don't tell me, you're some sort of celebrity, right?

ANNA

Hate to disappoint you. I'm an anthropologist.

JACK

Really! Some of my best friends are intellectuals.

ANNA

Amazing.

She leans forward, almost seductive.

ANNA

I hate to break this up, but I think
your friend is calling.

He turns slowly and looks across the room where Nadia goes
through the motions of a belly dance - in Jack's direction of
course - calling him with her finger.

NADIA

Oh Ja-aackk!

Jack leans towards Anna, inches from her face.

JACK

What can I tell you, she's crazy
about me.

He stands, extending his hand. She takes it. He holds it -
long.

JACK

Jack's the name ... and I'm sure
we'll meet again.

She retracts her hand.

ANNA

I'm sure.

Calling out across the room, Jack returns towards his Arabic
lady-friend.

JACK

Nadia ... *habib-tee* (my loved one)

Anna watches him walk away. Ahmed brings the food himself.

ANNA

Oh my, thank you. You really
shouldn't go to so much trouble.

AHMED

Is no trouble Madame. You remember
hotel one time, I make sure you
remember hotel second time!

Ahmed notices Anna glancing over at Jack and Nadia, sharing a loud laugh at the bar.

AHMED

She is belly-dancer from Hilton Hotel. Not typical Arabic woman.

ANNA

Maybe it's the company she keeps!

AHMED

You smart woman, Madame. That is Mister Jack. He come every year. Always drink too much. He problem for you, you say, okay?

ANNA

Thanks.

AHMED

Now eat! Cook make it special for you. Real Arabic food.

ANNA

Thank you Ahmed.

AHMED

My pleasure Madame. Enjoy.

Ahmed takes his leave and Anna eats, still spying on Jack, and writing intermittently in her diary.

ANNA (VO)

There's another Western guest here, a man named Jack. Amazing. To come thousands of miles and find the same seductive charmer I'm fleeing. But the real joke is, he draws me. Your classic case of a callous flame, impersonating the moon ... and me, with fluttering wings, circling in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ahmed leads the way, visibly proud. The maids, sweaty and dirty, wait outside the door to the room - beaming smiles on their faces. Bits of furniture stand in the hall, now having no place to be stored! The door to the room is thrown open.

The room which has undergone a complete transformation! Glowing, Anna presses her palms together, prayer style, and looks at Ahmed and then the maids ...

ANNA

Thank you so much!

Ahmed beams - his smile like a bright headlight.

AHMED

My pleasure Madame. No one ever love
this hotel like you!

Hassan comes barreling down the hall, Anna's bags in tow.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hassan places the bags on the bed.

ANNA

Thanks ...

HASSAN

(Omar Sharif like)

Good-night.

He leaves her alone. Once the door is closed, she crosses her arms as if cradling herself, closes her eyes, and takes it all in for a moment - the smells, the sounds.

Then she explores. The room has been done in authentic Egyptian style - inlaid furniture, round leather cushion-like stools, a brass tea set with tiny cups on a low round coffee table. Anna runs her finger along the inlaid ivory pattern.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE - 30 YEARS EARLIER

Young Anna kneels beside the inlaid table. Two traditional Polish dolls - identical, with long blond braids, red dresses, and striped tights on cloth legs - sit at the table. Anna pours imaginary tea for them.

ANNA

Some for Mona, and some for Lisa.

We HEAR voices off screen, her parents. They speak Polish. As usual, there is great alarm in Basia's voice. Anna looks up, uneasy.

The door to the adjoining room is ajar. We see Basia pacing back and forth. Anna's eyes veer back to the table, where the Lisa doll is now lying flat, having slipped.

ANNA

Sit up Lisa! I told you to SIT! UP!

She pulls the doll upright - forcefully.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - COLOR - THE PRESENT

Anna gets up and walks to the door leading to the second room. She tries to open it. It is locked. She attempts to force it, but finally gives up. She puts her suitcase away, then starts undressing. Noticing the bracelet on her wrist, she takes it off and ceremoniously lays it on a table.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN: EXT. DESERT - NIGHT - BLACK AND WHITE

Sand blowing, wind HOWLING, we watch the light of the moon caress the sea of shifting sand. PULL UP to an ANGLE FROM ABOVE ... then PULL BACK revealing Anna, asleep, lying flat on her back on the sand. The sand caresses her face, piling up on one side of her body. Suddenly, a LOUD BANG ... her eyes open.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - COLOR

Anna sits up in bed, hearing a loud man's voice.

JACK (OS)

Don't play games with me! Open the damn door!

He bangs on the door some more.

JACK (OS)

Don't push me Nadia! I'm warning you!

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR NEAR ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anna leans out of her room. Down the hall, Jack, wearing a bathrobe, tries to regain access to his room. We hear the Arab woman's muffled voice from behind the door.

NADIA (OS)
(angry)

No! Go away!

Other SLEEPY FACES lean out of their doors. A LARGE ARAB MAN bursts out of his room, turns to Jack and starts yelling in Arabic. Jack sees, grins ...

JACK
If you're planning to let me back in
darlin', now would be a good time!

The door flies opens and Nadia storms out.

NADIA
You go in? I go out! Good-BYE!

She marches off talking a mile a minute in Arabic, with various hotel guests adding their two cents worth as she passes. Doors slam along the corridor, leaving Jack alone.

JACK
Okay! You made your point. I can
respect that.

He stumbles into his room and shuts the door softly.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN: EXT. DESERT - DAWN

An enormous sun inches above the horizon. Suddenly, the wail of a *muezzin* (crier) fills the air, praising God and inviting the faithful to prayer in Arabic.

CUT TO:

INT. MINARET TOWER - DAWN

The MUEZZIN atop the minaret tower - Hurghada unfolding at his feet in the warm morning light.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL BEACH - DAWN

A GARDENER puts aside his rake, having groomed half the beach, and kneels down to pray.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAWN

In the dark room, with only strips of light coming through wooden horizontal shutters on the window, Anna sits cross legged on the floor in meditation. The crier's voice makes her smile as it wafts through the space, the heartfelt pleas an inspiration.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - DINING ROOM - MORNING

An ample, old-fashioned dining room - something from the old Railway hotels of the British Empire - uniformed WAITERS, white table cloths, heavy matte silver cutlery, glass bowls full of jam, dry toast in silver vertical holders which seem more appropriate for memo pads than bread.

Anna, seated at a table close to the door leading to the kitchen, has a huge breakfast spread out before her. She samples a bit of everything.

Various ARAB FAMILIES sit at the other tables. The women and children are silent while the men boss the waiters around - requesting this or that in authoritarian voices.

Ahmed comes over to Anna's table.

AHMED

Good morning, Madame. How you sleep, good?

ANNA

Like a baby!

Jack walks in - unshaven, hung-over, glum. Several of the Arabs react to his entrance, whispering among themselves. Ahmed sees him, and wants to avoid a confrontation.

AHMED

You enjoy breakfast, okay?

ANNA

Okay.

Ahmed walks away, glaring towards Jack, who is on his way to the kitchen, trying to pass by Anna's table unnoticed. She grins ... this is surely not to be missed. Without looking up, she calls out as he passes beside her.

ANNA
(feeling superior)
Rough night I take it?

JACK
(grumbling)
Yeah ...

He stops - looks at her heavily laden table.

JACK
(preparing for the punch)
Wow ... that's quite a spread.

ANNA
Courtesy of the chef ... I guess it
would be rude to refuse.

JACK
Yeah ... but you are a bit scrawny
by Arab standards. Looks like
Mustafa will have that fixed in no
time ... so enjoy!

Touché. She glares after him as he disappears through the swinging doors to the kitchen. She wipes her mouth with her napkin, then pushes away her plate with a scowl.

Jack re-emerges, tomato juice and a bucket of ice in his hands. Shifty eyed, he hurries out of the restaurant - but without failing to notice his little nudge bugged her.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Anna settles down on a lounge chair on the beach, in what appears to be a quiet spot away from the hotel beach. She takes out her journal and starts writing.

ANNA (VO)
Saturday Morning. I'm ready to
start. But how to begin? And how to
sift truth from fiction?

She stares off into space, only then realizing that a semicircle of BOYS has gathered around her lounge chair. They sit there staring at her as if she were a spectacle.

Hassan appears and chases them away.

HASSAN
(in Arabic)
Off with you! This is private hotel property!

A BOY
(in Arabic)
Since when?

HASSAN
(in Arabic)
Since now!

Pleased with himself, he lies back on the sand near Anna and takes over the staring all by himself.

HASSAN
(Sharif-like)
How are you?

ANNA
Great, thanks!

She smiles at him, he smiles at her. It's clear he has no intention on leaving. Anna sighs and looks out at the sea straight ahead. The water shimmers as it reflects the light of a blazing sun already high above the horizon. It draws one in - mesmerizing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE - 30 YEARS EARLIER

Someone's POV as they stand at the water's edge looking out at sea. They then look down at their feet - a little girl's toes wiggling in the sand. Young Anna turns to look at the beach which devoid of the touristy extras of the present, is emptier, more rugged. The Palace hotel stands alone, without neighbors, and exudes an air of elegant confidence that is gone thirty years later.

She canters along the sand, does a series of cartwheels, then ambles up to her mother who is sitting on a lounge chair reading a book - this time she has the entourage of BOYS.

YOUNG ANNA

Hello Mommy!

She climbs onto her mother's lap and hugs her. The boys giggle and point.

YOUNG ANNA

Why won't they go away?

Her mother laughs and kisses her.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MORNING - COLOR - THE PRESENT

Anna, smiling to herself, opens her eyes and looks over at Hassan. He sits up and smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Anna, wearing a dress over her bathing suit, sits in an old armchair in the lobby with her journal. At least here, there is some privacy.

ANNA (VO)

One thing was for sure, I wouldn't get skin cancer on this trip! Too much of an audience for that!

An ARABIC FAMILY walks through the lobby, the children chasing each other and giggling. One of the kids falls to their knees and scampers behind a couch.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY - THE PAST - BLACK AND WHITE

Young Anna crawls through the lobby, hiding behind one chair after another, playing hide-and-seek - but is anyone 'seeking'? Her parents and brother stand near the door, somewhat annoyed.

BASIA

(angry - in Polish)

Gdzie jest Ania?! (where's Anna)

She crawls up right behind them, staring at their legs towering over her. We hear GIGGLES. Alex spots her.

ALEX

There!

Her father grabs her, more hostile than the situation deserves.

ROMAN

Everyone's waiting for you!

Play turns to fear in an instant.

ROMAN

(privately to Anna)

Mama's angry ...

Anna sizes up her mother's face expression ...

YOUNG ANNA

Sorry ...

Her mother, visibly annoyed, brushes the dirt off her daughter's dress with brusque strokes.

BASIA

Look what a mess you made ...

YOUNG ANNA

I'll fix it ...

Her mother lets the girl take over the hopeless cleaning while she adjusts her own dress, catching sight of herself in a mirror.

BASIA

Well, it can't be fixed. It's a mess. But that's the way you want it I guess. Instead of listening to your parents, and sitting quietly, you chose to crawl around on the dirty floor. So now, your dress is ruined. Look at it, just look ...

Aggressively, Basia grabs the dress, making the situation worse by wrinkling the cloth with her clenched fist.

BASIA

You see?

Roman takes her arm and tries to distract her.

ROMAN

Basiu, it's too late, just leave it.

She pulls away, and now lays into him ...

BASIA

Well, I know you don't mind if your family look like slobs!

(continuing in Polish)

You'd look like a peasant if it weren't for me!

As her tirade drags on, Basia heads towards the door. Anna catches up and grabs her mother's hand, walking in step as close as she can get without tripping her. Roman walks behind, not saying a word. Alex just ignores the whole thing, tinkering with the switches on his brand new super-8 camera.

ANNA (VO)

I'd learnt long ago: If you live with a dragon, stay very close to it, so when it decides to spew fire, it won't aim at you for fear of burning itself!

The family leaves the hotel.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF HURGHADA - DAY - THE PAST

They walk along a crowded street - noise, activity, unexpected sights at every corner.

ANNA (VO)

But usually, there was more to fear than my mother. Weird, scary things - life and death equidistant - excitement and danger all mixed up. But mostly, danger, as the firm grip of her hand telegraphed without words.

FROM A CHILD'S POV ... a sinister glance from a strange MAN scratching his private parts, then a harsh, toothless cackle. A few more steps, then

a pile of NEWBORN KITTENS on a piece of newspaper on the sidewalk, one lying dangerously far from the rest, screaming. Anna's feet miss it by inches, only then noticing one already dead in the gutter among bits of garbage. Then ...

an OLD MAN with a pale blue diseased eye, its gaze fixed towards the sky, and a scarred face to match. As a group of street kids throw rocks at him, he lets out the garbled cries of a madman. The kids laugh as they chase him away. Then ...

FLIES buzz around the head of a dead cow, its eyes intact, glassy, its tongue hanging out ... they land on it, creating an undulating gray mass, then rise as the vendor chases them away with a fly swatter ...

and always, the ARAB WOMEN in black, like phantoms, glancing at her from behind those cloaks as big as night ... hiding mysteries within. Their gaze is sharp, quick - angry?

and finally, the reassuring sight of her own hand in that of her mother's.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT - THE PAST

Basia, Anna and Alex sit at a table in the hotel dining room which is now in the main Act of dinner - an orchestra plays soothing melodies to enhance the guests' pleasure as they consume their lavish meals. Everyone seated is foreign - as evident from the snatches of conversation that waft through the room, adding even more spice to the Middle Eastern music. And, of course, everyone working is native.

ANNA (VO)

What followed was hardly the danger expected. I suppose we were dining when the call came ... and I was chained to my plate, as always.

Young Anna, the Easter basket in front of her (same scene as earlier), plays with the food remaining on her plate. Everyone else is finished - Alex eats desert, while Basia drinks mint tea.

YOUNG ANNA

I can't ... I'm full!

BASIA

All of it! You're not moving until you eat every last bit!

Roman returns to the table, he is visibly shaken. An exchange in Polish between the two adults, then Basia gets up ...

BASIA

We have to go ...

Alex and Anna get up to follow. Anna realizes she forgot the Easter eggs - she turns back towards the table, reaching for them, but her mother grabs her by the hand and pulls her away brusquely.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - STAIRS LEADING UP - NIGHT - THE PAST

Basia tells Alex something. He listens with a frown. She gives him a key and leaves.

ANNA (VO)

We were sent to bed before they arrived ...

ALEX

Come on. And I get the shower first!

He climbs the stairs by twos, making sure she can't catch up to him - which predictably, she tries, her failure giving him great pleasure.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - THE PAST

Alex rolls up the white cover, creating a long log of sorts, which he uses to divide the bed.

ANNA (VO)

Actually, maybe we stayed in the lobby until they arrived.

DISSOLVE TO **WHITE:**

FADE IN FROM WHITE: INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT - THE PAST

Anna is asleep on a couch in the lobby. Alex dozes in an armchair. Suddenly, the door to the hotel bursts open and a tall, thin man in his thirties, JAN, comes in, his eyes searching the room frantically. Holding his hand is ISABELLA - his daughter, age four - and following them is Marek - the nine-year-old boy from Anna's memories.

Basia and Roman jump up from their seats to greet the man. They embrace, talking to each other in Polish. Jan starts weeping, his head on Roman's shoulder. Isabella won't let go of her father's hand, moving even closer and now hugging his

leg. Marek just stands there, not moving, not smiling, just staring straight ahead. Basia and Roman greet him, which he barely acknowledges.

Alex and Anna wake up, hearing the commotion.

ANNA (VO)

And that's when I first saw him.

Marek's eyes move slowly across the lobby, ending up on Anna. Still half asleep, rubbing her eyes, she smiles at him. An open, genuine smile.

ANNA (VO)

He noticed me, and didn't look away.
No boy had ever done that before.

DISSOLVE TO **COLOR:**

YOUNG ANNA'S POV

Without a word, keeping their eye contact, he approaches and sits down on the couch beside her, close enough so their thighs are touching. He then turns his head to look at the adults. Anna studies him - curious.

MAREK

Do you understand them?

ANNA (OS)

No. Do you?

MAREK

No.

Both Anna and Marek stare at the adults. Meanwhile, Alex is busy playing with a lamp - switching it on, and off, on, and off, on, and off ...

ANNA

Is that your dad?

MAREK

My mom left dad in Poland. That's the husband of my mom's best friend. And that's his daughter.

ANNA

Where are the moms?

MAREK

Isabella's mom is in the car. She won't wake up.

ANNA

And yours?

MAREK

She's in the car too.

ANNA

They're not staying here?

MAREK

I don't know.

Roman walks over to the kids.

ROMAN

Marek and Ania, I want you to stay with Alex until we take ... until we come back. Alex, are you listening? Watch them!

ANNA

I want to go with you.

ROMAN

No. You stay here.

ANNA

(pointing to Isabella)
Why can she go?

ROMAN

You can't, and that's the end of it.

ANNA

(anxious)
But where are you going?

ROMAN

We'll just be in the kitchen, so stay here! I mean it!

MAREK

I'll watch Ania ...

ROMAN

That's very nice Marek. You see what a polite boy? Alex! Come here ...

ALEX

Okay, okay, I'll watch them.

The adults and Isabella exit, leaving Marek and Anna on the couch. Alex leans forward.

ALEX

So, Marek ... were you scared?

Marek turns to look at Alex - his eyes narrow.

ANNA

Scared of what?

ALEX

You know ... was it gory?

The boy continues to stare at Alex in silence, making a point. Then he turns away to look at Anna.

ALEX

You can't talk about it. That's understandable.

ANNA

(to her brother)

I don't think he likes you. I wonder why ...

Marek reaches over and strokes Anna's long hair. She is surprised.

MAREK

Your hair is beautiful ...

He is so lost in admiring her hair that it scares her ...

ANNA

Don't ...

MAREK

I just want to touch it.

ANNA

No!

ALEX

I see you like my little sister? My gross little sister?

MAREK

She's not gross ...

ALEX
That's cause she's not your sister!

Anna jumps up and runs towards the dining room before Alex can get her.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - NIGHT - THE PAST

Anna runs in through the swinging doors from the dining room. There is no one there except Isabella, sitting on a chair and waiting patiently.

ANNA
Have you seen my mother?

ISABELLA
(pointing)
They're in there.

Anna moves towards the heavy metal door indicated by Isabella.

ISABELLA
We're not allowed!

Anna disregards the comment, but just then, the door opens and the three adults emerge in a mist of refrigerated air.

BASIA
(to Anna, alarmed)
What are you doing here?

JAN
Where's Marek?

ANNA
He's with my brother ...

Roman hurries to shut the door to the cold storage room. But he's not fast enough as Anna manages to sneak a peek of the interior of the refrigerated room ... where she catches a glimpse of a woman's hand, lying on a bed of ice, with a trickle of red across the white skin like a dry thorny vine.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - COLOR - THE PRESENT

As the door leading to the dining room swings open, the adult Anna marches in. Mustafa looks up.

MUSTAFA
Ha-llo Madame! Breakfast good?

ANNA
Wonderful! A bit much, but
wonderful. Mustafa, I need to ask
you something ...

She talks fast - he strains to follow. She moves towards the
door to the second room ...

ANNA
... about this room, it was a fridge
before, right? A Re-fri-ge-ra-tor?

Mustafa shakes his head, not understanding.

MUSTAFA
I call Ahmed?

ANNA
No, no, it's okay ...
(miming)
Can I see ... the room?

MUSTAFA
(understanding)
Go ... you see!

CUT TO:

INT. REFRIGERATION ROOM - DAY

Anna enters the room. It is now used to store boxes of
documents and other records. The only evidence that it was
once a fridge is in the stains of blood on the floor,
permanent like tattoos, and the meat hooks hanging from the
ceiling.

Anna stands in the middle of the room, trying to figure out
what went on in there. She runs her hand along a metal shelf,
leaving a row of finger marks through the dust.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Anna re-emerges in the kitchen. Mustafa goes about his
business, chopping meat as usual. But around him, oblivious
to his presence, are Jan, Basia, Roman and Isabella. They
address Anna, the adult, remembering a scene from the past.

JAN
You shouldn't have left Marek ...

Just then Marek comes in ...

BASIA
Marek ... are you alright?

ROMAN
He'll be alright. Just let him be.

Basia hugs him, patting him on the back. He doesn't respond. Once she lets him go, he walks up to Anna, taking her hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SAME SCENE

except everyone is gone but for Anna and Mustafa. Anna stares at her hand, the one Marek was holding. Mustafa looks up ...

MUSTAFA
Everything good Madame?

ANNA
Fine, thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Anna walks along the beach ... head down, deep in thought.

ANNA (VO)
I was starting to think this was a bad idea. What if we forget for a reason. What if I was digging for the key to my doom?

She stops near a LITTLE GIRL building an intricate sand castle. She kneels down to get a closer look - the child don't seem to mind. Anna starts helping her build ...

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE - THE PAST

Young Anna shapes a tower with her hands, using water to firm up the sand.

MAREK (OS)
(a touch of hostility)
I've been looking for you all
morning. Where were you?

Anna looks up at Marek - her face in the shadow of his body.

ANNA
Here.

She goes back to building but is uneasy - she keeps glancing
up to see what emotion his face harbors.

ANNA
Where's Isabella and Alex?

MAREK (OS)
Isabella went to see her mom, and
Alex is somewhere, I don't know.

ANNA
(suspicious)
Where's your Mom?

MAREK
Gone ...

She looks up at him ...

ANNA
Where?

He shrugs, his face expression tightening.

MAREK
You know Ania, when I get older,
I'll build you a real castle.

Anna looks away, uncomfortable.

ANNA
Oh yeah?

He crouches down on her level.

MAREK
Yeah.

He helps her build.

MAREK

And I'll keep you locked in it so no one can hurt you.

ANNA

You will not!

MAREK

I will. We'll be together forever, you'll see!

Anna gets up, getting scared at the way he stares at her.

ANNA

I won't be with you.

She backs away from him. He rises to follow her, stepping forward and destroying the castle without even noticing.

MAREK

You will. I already asked your mother and she said I could marry you when you're older.

She starts running, but he catches her by the hand a short distance away.

ANNA

Let me go!

MAREK

(menacing)

Don't you ever run away from me!

He pulls her back away from the hotel. She resists but he is too strong.

ANNA

You're hurting me Marek! Stop!

MAREK

So stop fighting!

He drags her down the beach. Crying, she stumbles after him.

ANNA

Let me go! ... Mommy!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - COLOR - THE PRESENT

Anna stands staring at the sand, digging in it with her foot. The sound of her cries in the past overlaps with the little girl calling her mother ...

LITTLE GIRL

Maman!

Suddenly, a hand lands on Anna's shoulder. She responds by letting out a startled cry. She turns ... it is Jack.

JACK

Looking for something?

ANNA

You startled me! ...

He looks out at sea, taking a deep breath.

JACK

Beautiful day, isn't it? Perfect for swimming. How about it?

ANNA

No, not right now.

JACK

Come on, take that thing off, don't be shy.

ANNA

I'm not shy. I just don't want to.

He takes her hand in both of his and pulls her gently towards the water.

JACK

(teasing)

I'll protect you from hungry-eyes and sharks ...

She pulls her hand back, annoyed.

ANNA

You know, you have a lot of nerve. I said no! No means no, haven't you heard?!

(a hint of a grin)

Besides, what would your exotic lady friend say ...

She mimes a little belly dance and heads back to the hotel.

JACK

That was my sister. Half-sister,
same father, different mother, you
know the story, kind of complicated.

She waves back at him without turning.

JACK

(yelling to be heard)

But I'd be happy to tell you about
it sometime!

He shrugs, then runs and dives into the sea, disappearing
under the foaming surf.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

Anna comes out of the bathroom, wrapped in a white towel,
fluffing her hair dry with another ... a KNOCK at the door.

ANNA

Just a minute ...

She gives her hair a brush, then opens the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

It is Jack, in his bathing suit, dripping wet. The door
swings open revealing Anna, also dripping wet.

JACK

I see you went swimming in the bath!

ANNA

Yeah, well ...

He leans against the door frame and stares at her, grinning.

JACK

You're dripping.

ANNA

And you ...

He changes position - shy under all that pretense.

JACK

So. I just stopped by to apologize,
for grabbing your hand and all that.
I don't know what made me do it -
pure impulse, I guess.

ANNA

Yeah, well, we don't really know
each other, you know?

JACK

(renewed confidence)

Exactly. Now that's what I wanted to
straighten out ... see, if you had
dinner with me, that would no longer
be a problem, right?

ANNA

You're impossible ...

JACK

Yeah, but hey, we're the only two
loonies who wouldn't pass on this
dump when we could stay at one of
those Taj Mahals down the beach!
That's gotta mean we're compatible,
at least.

ANNA

Jack ...

JACK

Oouuh, it has that special ring when
you say it.

ANNA

I can't ...

JACK

You mean you don't want to.

ANNA

No ... really, I just can't.

JACK

Okay. I'll respect that. I won't ask
why. But if you change your mind,
you know where to find me!

ANNA

Yeah ... but someone else might have
found you by then.

Walking away ...

JACK
(earnest)

That was my sister I tell you! Why
won't you believe me?

ANNA
Your sister. I hear you.

She shuts the door to her room, smiling to herself. Then, on
second thought ...

ANNA
But thanks for asking ...

But he is already gone - kind of to her disappointment.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL PARKING - DAY

Anna emerges from the hotel. Hassan greets her and walks her
to her car, where he points to the previously flat tire.

ANNA (VO)
I decided to go for a drive - forget
for a minute!

She smiles, admiring the new tire.

ANNA
Thanks! And so fast!

HASSAN
My pleasure Madame.

She gets in. He shuts her door but instead of moving away, he
leans in the window ...

Here they come: the Omar Sharif bedroom eyes - the deep stare
from beneath rows of thick lashes, and the definitely
suggestive yet 'innocent' little boy smile.

HASSAN
I was thinking, maybe if I fix car
very fast, I take you for tour of my
city?

Anna measures her words with caution ...

ANNA

That's very sweet, but what about your job?

HASSAN

Job can wait. But love, it has no patience.

ANNA

Gee, that's too bad. With me, it's the other way around.

HASSAN

No! Such a waste, Madame! Beautiful woman like you?

ANNA

(leveling)

Hassan ... give it up! I'm going. Just let me go, alright?

HASSAN

(soliciting regret)

You miss a lot Madame ...

ANNA

I know. I'm a masochist.

He moves away as she drives off.

HASSAN

Mass-o-gist? You do massage? Wait ... Madame! Hey! Come!

But she drives away.

CUT TO:

EXT. HURGHADA STREET - DAY

Particles of dust suspended in mid-air, glistening in the mid-day sun, seem to connect all the chaos of downtown Hurghada in full swing.

Ancient cars, overflowing buses, and motorcycles spewing black fumes of exhaust fill the road ... while sidewalks are alive with PEOPLE - some wandering aimlessly, others with fixed paths - CATS weaving through their legs looking for luck, and stands brimming with goods, their VENDORS announcing their wares in repetitive melodic patterns.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - DAY

Anna drives, grinning to herself, hardly looking around.

ANNA (VO)

I must have victim written in neon
across my forehead!

CUT TO:

INT. SOOQ (MARKET) - DAY

Anna walks through the narrow passages of a huge maze of a market. The VENDORS solicit business as she passes, bargaining with themselves since she doesn't offer any prices as she looks at the items they display before her - everything from brass jugs, pipes, chess sets, fabrics, spices, crystal, gold and other jewels, glasses made from turquoise recycled glass, and on and on.

ANGLE ON STAND SELLING WOMEN'S CLOTHES

A SALESLADY thrusts various Bedouin embroidered dresses at Anna. But she notices something more interesting - rows of *ubayas* and *hijáabs* - the traditional black cover-alls for women.

Anna picks one out ... the saleslady is kind of surprised at her interest in it. She holds up her hand, indicating a price with her fingers. Anna tries to figure it out, the saleslady misinterprets her face expression and lowers the price by bending one finger.

ANNA

Good. I take ...

She pays for it as a woman's voice sounds behind her ...

SUSAN

You're actually gonna wear it?

Anna turns and sees a middle-aged woman - wearing cut-off reading glasses balanced at the tip of her nose, dusty men's working clothes, and no make-up. Smiling, she continues deepening the fantastic laugh lines which etch her face.

ANNA

I don't know. I'm beginning to see
the advantages.

SUSAN
(laughing)
The advantages of ritualized
oppression?

ANNA
Ritualized protection seems more
like it!

The women take note of the small gathering of MEN around
them.

SUSAN
Maybe you're right.
(extending her hand)
I'm Susan, Susan Barnard.

ANNA
Anna Hamilton.

SUSAN
Are you on vacation?

ANNA
Yes and no. I'm doing some digging
into the past.

SUSAN
Really? I'm on a dig just north of
Hurghada. We're finding some
fabulous early Christian artifacts.

ANNA
I'm not actually digging ...

SUSAN
(interrupting)
You should visit! We're having a
little party tonight. Why don't you
come?

ANNA
That's very sweet, but ...

SUSAN
(interrupting)
Are you traveling alone?

ANNA
Yes ...

SUSAN
Fabulous! It's settled then. We'll
even introduce you to a dear friend
of ours. Wonderful fellow.

Anna is a little stunned, but follows Susan through the
market as she continues her monologue.

SUSAN
I love this place. Isn't it a dream?
Look at this stuff. The tourist
presence is having an impact no
doubt, but still ...

CUT TO:

EXT. SOOQ (MARKET) - DAY

Anna, carrying most of the parcels, follows Susan.

ANNA (VO)
I know what you're thinking. Victim,
right? In neon, smack in the middle
of the forehead!

Arriving at an open Jeep, she helps load the parcels.

ANNA
Susan, maybe I could come another
time.

SUSAN
Absolutely not! You have a car?

ANNA
Just over there.

Susan jumps in her Jeep.

SUSAN
I'll wait. You follow, but stay
close.

CUT TO:

EXT. HURGHADA BACK STREETS - DAY

Anna follows Susan's car through crowded back streets. This
is definitely a short cut - more like a rough cut!

ANNA (VO)
I decided a little distraction from
this self-obsession couldn't be all
bad!

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DUSK

The two cars turn off from the main road and head into the sand towards a collection of tents back lit against the setting sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE - DUSK

Susan parks her Jeep near a few Land Rovers, while Anna's car barely escapes getting stuck in the sand.

Nimbly, she jumps out and directs Anna to a parking spot.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE - THE DIG - DUSK

The two women near an opening dug out in the sand. At a lower level, a middle aged man, HERBERT BARNARD, Susan's husband and co-investigator, lies on his stomach and with a tiny brush, painstakingly sweeps tiny bits of sand off of an exposed piece of engraved rock. THREE ASSISTANTS, graduate student types, follow suit.

CLOSE on their hands, and the painstaking removal of layers of time.

Susan leans over and yells at her husband.

SUSAN
Herbert! Give it up! It's almost
dark!

HERBERT
In a minute. Just let me finish this
section.

SUSAN
(enticing)
There's someone I'd like you to
meet.

HERBERT

That's good.

Frustrated, she looks over at Anna.

SUSAN

For thirty five years I've been putting up with this!

ANNA

There's no hurry. I know how he feels - once I start digging for something, I can't stop either.

A seventeen year old girl, MIA, Susan and Herbert's daughter, ambles over.

MIA

He'll be up when it's too dark to see, so stop obsessing.

SUSAN

Anna, this is my daughter, Mia. She decided to spend her vacation with her parents - now is that a brave thing to do for a seventeen year old, or what!

MIA

Don't rub it in Mom ...

ANNA

Yeah ... that's brave.

MIA

If only you knew!

More of that hysterical face wrinkling laugh from Susan.

SUSAN

Come, let me get you a drink.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - NIGHT

A fabulous spread of exotic food under a multicolored tent sheltering the GUESTS from a cold desert night. Assembled are: the Barnard family, Herbert, Susan and Mia; an Egyptian couple - the wife a historian, ZAHRA NASREEN, and her husband, ISMAIL, a soft spoken poet and scholar of Islam; and three graduate students of various nationalities, one

Peruvian guy, PABLO, with a particular interest in Mia, your brilliant and obnoxiously opinionated American, BRENT, and AMBIKA, a quiet East Indian girl with long black tresses falling across her dusty dungarees.

Everyone helps themselves to food. Three MUSICIANS play soft Arabic music. Anna looks around, drinking red wine. She checks out what's on the food table, but is more interested in watching the students interact than eating.

Pablo helps Mia with her plate, totally at her beck and call, piling her plate with this, that, and the other as per her instructions.

PABLO

And this?

MIA

Mmm ... okay.

In the last minute, she pushes his hand away.

MIA

No, wait, I changed my mind. What's that over there?

BRENT

It looks kind of revolting. I'm really a meat and potatoes kind of guy. This is too tramontane for me. I'm sure Ambika likes it though! You Indians like all these beans and things, don't you?

AMBIKA

Sort of like you American people like greasy junk food, eh Brent?

Ambika walks off - insulted. Brent walks away in the opposite direction - unscathed.

MIA

Brent, you're a jerk.

PABLO

A child of privilege - they're all the same. In Mexico ...

Anna decides to forego food, and heads for the wine.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - NEAR MUSICIANS - NIGHT

Ambika comes out from behind a curtain, fully transformed. She has replaced her working clothes with an ornate *sari*. Her loose, long black hair flows down her back like a waterfall.

She sits beside the musicians and starts singing. Her voice is mournful, reverent - one fragile life asking for the blessings of heaven.

Susan stands near Anna, still monopolizing her presence, not yet satiated with her new find.

SUSAN

We have quite a cultural mish-mash,
as you can see. Ambika does this
every night. It's fabulous, just
listen ...

(pause)

I think our Muslim friends are
slowly warming up to her Hindu ways!

ANNA

The desert night seems to invoke
transformation, doesn't it.

SUSAN

Absolutely. Herbert and I would live
here all year if we could.

Susan looks over, noticing Zahra and Ismail talking quietly in the corner.

SUSAN

Come. Meet some dear friends ...

Susan takes Anna by the hand like a little girl and leads her over to where Zahra and Ismail are sitting.

SUSAN

Anna, this is Dr. Zahra Nasreen who
is a historian rewriting his-story
to include hers ...

Zahra gives a weak smile - this is obviously an overused introduction line from Susan.

ZAHRA

A pleasure to meet you.

ANNA

And you!

SUSAN

And this is Ismail, poet and scholar
he says, prophet, mystic and genius,
I say.

Ismail looks up, his blues eyes veer off upward, blind, or
seeing another dimension since his face expression is so
evocative and changeable in response to apparently nothing!

ISMAIL

If Susan had her way, she'd declare
half of the world's people geniuses!

Anna shakes his hand.

ANNA

Hello ...

He holds her hand ... feeling it.

ISMAIL

Ah, the hands of one on a quest!

ZAHRA

Don't mind him, he's always picking
up on something.

ANNA

It's quite alright!

SUSAN

Interesting you should say that!
That's how I met Anna - she was on a
quest to become Muslim. I caught her
buying an *ubaya* and that other
thing, you know ...

ZAHRA

... *hijáb*

SUSAN

That's it ...

ISMAIL

Is that right?

ANNA

I was curious I guess ...

SUSAN

So there she was, this western woman, in the middle of the *sooq*, and instead of getting souvenirs, she's buying an *ubaya*!

Susan continues describing the encounter to Zahra, while Ismail leans in closer towards Anna and they have a private exchange.

ISMAIL

Is there a reason?

ANNA

I feel cloaked as it is, what difference would cloth make?

ISMAIL

You know Anna, in the Sufi tradition of Islam, it is said that what we seek cannot be found in the world of appearances. What we fear, what we love, in effect, what we are is not manifest in the world of phenomena. It is hidden beneath a thousand veils, some giving pleasure, others pain, but both mean nothing, and only mask the face of the truth, perhaps it is this you seek?

ANNA

Yes ... but how to find it?

ISMAIL

The pearl lies at the heart of the pain. And inside, there is a single grain of sand. That is what you seek. But it is also what you fear.

Anna, near tears, stares at him, his eyes upward, his face smiling. Zahra leans in ...

ZAHRA

Ismail ... are you scaring her?

ISMAIL

How can I scare one who is already filled with dread?

ANNA

He's right.

Suddenly, Susan calls out, getting everyone's attention.

SUSAN (OS)
Jack! It's about time.

Susan bounds over to greet Jack, Zahra behind her.

SUSAN
And where's this fabulous
anthropologist that you've been
raving about?

Jack kisses Susan on both cheeks.

JACK
My favorite archeologist ...
(kissing Zahra)
My favorite her-storyan!

ZAHRA
(giggling)
You are bad, Jack ...

Jack scans the tables for booze ...

JACK
You know, in the last minute, she
was called back to Cairo. Can you
believe that?

SUSAN
Well, how fabulous can she be if she
chose the smogs of Cairo over you.

JACK
You're right. I kind of didn't see
it that way, but thanks for pointing
that out.

Herbert's hello consists of handing him one of two shot
glasses brimming with Vodka.

HERBERT
On the count of three?

JACK
One, two, three ...

They gulp it down in one shot. Herbert walks off leaving Jack
all to Susan. She takes him by the arm and leads him towards
Anna and Ismail.

SUSAN

Personally, I'm thrilled you're alone because I have someone for you to meet. She's beautiful, charming, funny, ah! What can I say. Now we kind of found each other in the *sooq* and I dragged her over here to keep you company.

JACK

God ... what an intro. Is she a goddess or what!

He looks down and there she is - his would-be dinner date herself.

SUSAN

Anna, this is the charming man I told you about. Jack, introduce yourself, go on.

They both blush and shake hands.

JACK

(awkward)

Jack ... how are ya.

ANNA

Fine. You?

Susan takes Ismail by the hand and leads him away.

SUSAN

Now ... you must explain this Sufi business to me again. I can't seem to get a handle on it.

Jack sits down beside Anna, not quite knowing what to do next.

JACK

So, I guess you're having dinner with me after all.

ANNA

No. I'm in Cairo, remember?

JACK

Give me a break! I raved about you to them and you stand me up!

ANNA

You were raving before you even asked?

JACK

Before, after, details. We're here.

ANNA

So we are.

JACK

And, I wasn't lying when I told you some of my best friends are intellectuals.

ANNA

But then you also told me about your sister ...

JACK

Yeah, I did.

Caught and liking it, Jack puts on the charm.

JACK

You know Anna, there's something intensely familiar about you. It's like I'm drawn to you by instinct. Can you explain that?

ANNA

A death wish perhaps?

JACK

I'm serious ...

ANNA

Well, maybe it's this 'caught in the headlights' look I've been told I have ...

JACK

You mean like road kill?

ANNA

Something like that ...

JACK

Interesting ... so what do you want me to do, kill you, or save you?

Already a bit tipsy, she hands him her glass with a provocative smile.

ANNA
How about getting me some more red wine.

He smirks, takes her glass, making sure to touch her hand in the process, and backs away not breaking the eye contact.

JACK
Now you stay right there and keep those peepers on the headlights till I get back.

As soon as he turns she gets up, rather flushed.

ANNA (VO)
I must be crazy! Air! I need air.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENT - DESERT - NIGHT

A monumental expanse of stars opens up above. Anna is blown away, her mouth gaping. She takes it in, letting out a huge relaxed sigh.

A hand reaches around her - a glass of wine in it. It is Jack. She takes the glass without turning. They remain so, him behind her, intimately close.

ANNA
Thanks ...

JACK
Breathtaking, isn't it? I live for these night skies. They make me feel anything is possible - absolutely anything.

ANNA
Don't get any ideas!

He points up at a particular constellation of stars ...

JACK
You see that pattern up there?

ANNA
You're not going to try and impress me with the constellation run down are you?

JACK

Hey ... it's a male thing. We come from a long line of star gazers. Columbus, Copernicus, you know. It's part of our discover and dominate impulse.

ANNA

I see ...

JACK

Yeah! Star gazing and fishing. The fishing bit relates to our hunting instinct.

ANNA

What about women, what copyrights do we hold?

JACK

Seduction and submission. What else?

She turns to face him ... staying close.

ANNA

And which of those Fine Arts am I practicing now?

JACK

Now that all depends on whose we define as the first move ...

They stare into each other's eyes ... as her hand travels around his waist and slides lower and lower along the curve of his body ... and his hand reaches under her chin, delicately grasping her neck and turning her head up by a twist of his wrist, just so that their lips meet at the perfect angle.

ANNA (VO)

I knew it was madness but maybe sanity's overrated ... for at that moment the earth fell away and we were one with the stars.

Forgetting time and place, their bodies press together ... Suddenly, a voice from afar ...

SUSAN (OS)

Anna?

Jack and Anna break apart like lightening, one smoothing their hair, the other their face. Anna hurries towards Susan. Jack lights a cigarette and stays outside.

CUT TO:

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Susan leads Anna over to Ismail, Zahra and Herbert.

SUSAN

Ismail and Zahra are trying to explain the logic behind women being cloaked. Now it makes absolutely no sense to me. I need your help on this ...

(to Zahra)

Zahra, repeat what you just said.

ZAHRA

Let Ismail explain ...

HERBERT

Why do you defer to him! Isn't that inconsistent with your feminist views?

ZAHRA

It's because he does it better. And besides, feminist views have no place in marriage. Our marriage is a space for spiritual growth, not political expression.

Anna tunes out. She glances over to where Jack is standing near the entrance to the tent.

Jack smokes, luxuriously, slowly blowing a steady stream of smoke in her direction. Their eyes are fixed on one another.

SUSAN (OS)

So you would go cloaked? That was the original question.

Mia approaches Jack. He breaks the eye contact with Anna. Mia whispers something to him. He grins mischievously, then leads her out of the tent by the hand.

ISMAIL (OS)

We are all cloaked, it is only a question of degree, isn't that right Anna?

Anna blushes, overcome with emotion.

SUSAN
Is that what you believe Anna?

ANNA
(distracted)
I haven't really given it much
thought. Will you excuse me for a
moment?

She makes her way to the exit from the tent and peers out.

She sees Jack and Mia laughing, their backs turned to her.
Mia leans over close to him, as if they are kissing.

Anna's face spells furious panic.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - PARKING NEAR TENT - NIGHT

Anna jumps in her car and drives off, her wheels digging
dangerously deep in the sand.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR DRIVING ALONG DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Anna drives.

ANNA
You stupid fool!
(mimicking Jack)
Anything is possible, absolutely
anything.
(back to her fury)
Damn right!

She reaches in the glove compartment, finds another broken
cigarette and lights it.

Suddenly, her car screeches out of control ...

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The entire back tire (that dear Hassan fixed) falls away from
the car. The vehicle skids to a halt with an awful GRINDING
SOUND.

Anna climbs out of the car and stares at where the back wheel should be. She is quite shaken. She looks around - nothing but pitch black in all directions.

ANNA

Now what ...

But then, she sees something. In the distance, headlights worm their way through the black of night towards her.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

From the POV of the driver, Anna stands in the middle of the road: yes, like road kill.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

The ancient pick-up truck screeches to a stop inches away from her and stalls, not before spewing a cloud of black smoke.

ANNA

Hi! Can you give me a ride?

She takes in the truck ... eyes painted on the hood, numerous tassels, pompoms and other bright colorful decorations hanging inside obscuring the face of ALI, the driver, but then who cares about him, as half a dozen ARAB WORKERS pile out of the back and spill onto the road.

Ali, clearly the leader of the pack, is the first to approach. He throws down his lit cigarette without bothering to put it out, and gives Anna the once over. He then turns to his friends and says something in Arabic. Laughter and whistles, and strange hissing sounds follow from the group.

ANNA (VO)

I didn't need a Ph.D. to know this spelled trouble!

Anna backs away, pointing to her car in a last ditch investment of hope from the condemned.

ANNA

Tire. Fall off?

She points to the tire. They don't bother to look, having found what they seek, or so it seems to her.

Ali sniffs near her face, like a dog on a hunt ...

ANNA

What ...

Ah, the fatal flaw - the breath smelling of alcohol. Ali takes this to heart. He turns to his army and yells in Arabic, miming her drinking. The effect is like pouring gasoline on a burning match.

Suddenly, Anna leaps into the darkness across the sand. The men roar with laughter at her attempt to flee. Some hold their abdomen, to ease the pain of their convulsions of glee. Ali motions for the others to wait, then takes off in her direction - slowly.

ALI

Madame! psssst ... psssst ...

He hisses and whistles, as if calling a runaway cat.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Anna crouches down on the sand, crawling towards a rock.

ANNA (VO)

It's at times like this you wonder,
how can bra-burning, topless bathing
advocates co-exist with this?!

Anna watches as Ali approaches ...

ALI

Oh, Madame! You come, we give drink!

Meanwhile, one of the more enlightened of the pack has taken the time to turn the truck so that the headlights are facing onto the sand. Suddenly, Ali is back lit, looking even more like an apparition from hell.

Anna digs into the sand behind the rock in a futile effort to bury herself.

Suddenly, she lets out a whimper, as a snake rears its head on top of the rock. She freezes, now facing two poised

opponents ... no, wait, the numbers keep growing as a distance away, a second beat-up pick-up truck approaches.

ANNA (VO)
Great. Now it's a goddamn convention

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND TRUCK ON ROAD - NIGHT

POV of the driver as he smokes, approaches the parked truck, sees the car with no wheel, then stops. He switches off his engine, the radio blaring Arabic music with it.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Still from the driver of the second truck's POV, he gets out of his vehicle. The workers acknowledge him, but their faces spell suspicion.

MAN (OS)
(in Arabic)
(Car trouble?)

They relax a bit - hearing Arabic being spoken.

ALI
(Not me ...)

Ali points in Anna's direction, then using both hands he draws Anna's figure in mid-air.

ALI
(Seems a stray lamb lost her tire though!)

MAN (OS)
(Really ... and where is she?)

ALI
(Hiding. Seems she mistook us for jackals)

The man laughs. They all join him.

MAN (OS)
(Aren't you?)

ALI
(Could be, could be. You?)

The man flicks his cigarette butt towards the sand.

MAN (OS)
(I've been known to enjoy a little
hunt, given the right prey ...)

ALI
(testing him)
(It's a white lamb ...)

MAN (OS)
(All the better ...)

Ali grins - instant understanding.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Anna watches as the man from the second truck reaches into his vehicle and pulls out a GAS-LIGHT. He is greeted with a loud, happy reaction from the rest of the guys.

Gaslight in hand, he approaches Anna, calling out like Ali had done.

MAN
(loud)
Madame! Psssst ...
(softly)
Anna ... Anna?

It's Jack!

Jack catches sight of Anna as she rises up from the sand, like a hunted fox trusting an animal-loving child while the hound dogs zero in - what can he do in the face of this!

But then Jack swings the light up, revealing Anna to the others!

She backs away ready to bolt ...

ANNA
You son of a bitch!

He catches her by the arm and drags her back to the others.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Jack releases Anna near Ali, then lights himself a cigarette and leans on his truck.

ALI
(That was easy. Now what? Do we fix
the tire, or ...)

Ali puts his hand on Anna's bottom and gives it a squeeze. She slaps him. Shocked, he grabs her hand and twists it back.

ALI
(I was gonna be nice, but you just
won't let me, will you!)

The other men lurch forward, making comments in Arabic. Ali calms them down, trying to save face.

ALI
(It's alright. Everybody calm down.)

Jack ignores what goes on, smoking luxuriously.

JACK
(Hey, how old is your truck?)

Ali, clearly an 'engine man', loosens his grip on Anna's arm.

ALI
(Old! very old!)

JACK
(Looks like it's in great shape!)

Anna glares at Jack.

ANNA
I can't believe you! You must be the
lowest piece of scum that ever
walked!

Jack veers towards Anna, threatening her with his fist.

JACK
(loud)
You? Shut up! Okay?

Anna leans away from him, surprised. The others laugh.

ALI
(My engine? Like a cat in heat!)

JACK
(You ever work on trucks?)

ALI
(Why d'you think this baby runs so good?)

JACK
(How much would you charge to fix my starter?)

ALI
(It all depends on how much work.)

Jack fishes in his pocket and retrieves some keys. He throws them to Ali, who catches them.

JACK
(You tell me ...)

Ali throws another set of keys to Jack.

ALI
(Mine's lightening - check it out)
(to another guy)
(Hold on to her, or she'll try to run all the way to Cairo!)

JACK
(Here. Let me. I'll talk to her - watch!)

JACK
So, Anna, he says you can take your clothes off now.

ANNA
(livid)
Burn in hell, son of a bitch!

Jack looks at the men - proud.

JACK
(grinning)
(She likes me already ...)

The men roar with laughter. Ali starts walking towards Jack's truck. Some of the other men follow, except for two who stay close to Anna and Jack.

JACK
Maybe I can help with the buttons.

ANNA

You wouldn't ...

He comes up to her, close, and starts on the top one.

JACK

Watch me ...

ANNA

Go ahead! But once you sober up
you'll never forgive yourself!

JACK

Guilt! Oooh. That's good. Guilt's
always a good defense.

(to the two men in Arabic)

(She's so scared, don't you love
it?)

She stares him down - totally defiant. While Jack apparently
fiddles with her buttons, his eyes steal across the road and
he watches Ali climb in his truck and fumble for the key
hole, while another guy opens the hood and looks in.

ANNA

Well? What's the matter, can't get
them open all by yourself?

JACK

(in a rough angry tone)

On my signal, jump in their truck!

Eye contact ... and trust re-established with one wink.

ANNA

(playing along)

No ... please!

(whisper)

... why?

JACK

(whisper)

Cause I said so ... NOW!

Anna and Jack bolt for the truck.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Ali looks up and sees the two foreigners running for his
truck. A slight panic ...

ALI
(What's he doing?)

CLOSE on ALI's hand as the key breaks in the ignition ...

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Jack and Anna reach the worker's truck. The other men are not far behind.

CUT TO:

INT. WORKER'S TRUCK - NIGHT

They climb in. Jack tries the ignition. It is slow, but starts with a coughing sound and black smoke. One of the men manages to open Anna's door, but Jack veers away before he can grab anyone.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Jack maneouvers the truck around the second guy on the road, then leans out and yells before driving off into the night.

JACK
(Once you get it started, you'll
thank me!)

The men follow on foot, yelling furiously.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

They drive off. Anna looks back.

ANNA
Why aren't they following?

JACK
That's cause you can't start a truck
with house keys, that's why!

He holds up his real truck keys, grinning.

ANNA
I guess I should thank you.

JACK

Naah, I should thank you! I haven't had so much fun in years!

ANNA

Fun?

JACK

Hell, yeah. I mean you don't seriously think those guys would have tried something, do you?

ANNA

Oh really!

JACK

Anna. You overreacted! The poor jerks couldn't figure out how to keep you from running away!

ANNA

You're an unbelievable piece of work, you know that Jack?

JACK

You think so?

ANNA

So why did you run off with their truck and do the key switch and all that!

JACK

Gallant, don't you think?

ANNA

If I wasn't hearing this with my own ears, I wouldn't believe it!

JACK

Ah, come on. Give me some credit! I mean to save your honor I got the raw end of the deal. At least they got the better truck!

ANNA

Don't talk to me. Just pretend I'm not here until we get back to the hotel, alright?

JACK

Sure.

He glances over at her, noticing her in detail, as she wipes the sweat off her brow, her neck, inside her slightly unbuttoned blouse.

JACK (OS)
Hey, under different circumstances,
that was a pretty hot scene!
Especially after that kiss! Whoa!
What a kiss! I'm still reeling.

Anna ignores him, and looks out the window in silence.

JACK (OS)
What, you didn't like the kiss?

She looks over at him - glaring.

JACK
Oh! I'm not supposed to talk to you.
Is that it? Okay, okay. It's just
hard to ignore you but I'll try
harder this time.

She looks back out the window. A moment, then he looks over at her again.

JACK
Just one question, okay?

ANNA
What!

JACK
Why did you leave like that?

ANNA
Leave? I left you for thirty seconds
and you went nibbling on that
child's earlobe!

JACK
Mia? She bummed a cigarette off me -
and we had to sneak out cause her
parents watch her like hawks. You
must have seen when I was lighting
it ...

(increasingly happy)
I'm her Godfather, for God's sake.

ANNA

Yeah, right. Well damn you and your
goddamn sisters and God daughters,
okay?

JACK

(triumphant)

You're jealous!

ANNA

You conceited self-centered bastard!

JACK

Hey! Let's not get carried away!

ANNA

I call it like I see it Jack! You
expect the whole world to revolve
around your goddamn instincts! Like
some goddamn mama's boy.

JACK

(livid)

You leave my mother out of this!

He grabs her arm with unexpected fury.

ANNA

Let go of me!

JACK

Listen! I'll drive you to the hotel
then you get the hell away from me,
got it!

ANNA

Fine! How about I get the hell away
from you right now! Stop the car!

Her hand is already on the door knob.

JACK

You're crazy ...

But then, suddenly, he sees something up ahead ... the
glistening eyes of a JACKAL caught in the headlights -
paralyzed with fear.

JACK

Oh my God!

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

ANGLE on the truck as it screeches to a sudden halt, hitting the animal, but worse, throwing Anna out of the door.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Dumbfounded, Jack watches as Anna rolls away out of sight onto the sand.

JACK

ANNA!

CUT TO:

INT. CAR ON DESERT ROAD - DAY - 30 YEARS EARLIER

Jack is the little boy, Marek. Overlap the sound of Jack, the man, calling 'Anna' and Marek, the boy, calling ...

MAREK

MAMA!

In SLOW MOTION from Marek's POV, we see ANGELA, his mother, fly out the door of a speeding, spinning car onto the sizzling desert road. Her head hits the pavement again and again before coming to a standstill.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

The black dusty car comes to a dead stop, upside down. Suddenly, everything is still and silent - as if frozen. The only sign of life is a HUBCAP spinning to a crescendo before it too lies dead still.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSIDE-DOWN CAR - DAY

Nobody moves. The driver, Jan, lies against the front windshield. Isabella and Marek are in in a heap in the back, the roof under them. ISABELLA'S MOTHER lies unconscious, pressed into what remains of the passenger side of the car, blood flowing in a steady stream from her forehead.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

ANGLE FROM ABOVE on the black car, like a carcass lying prone on the sand. The driver's door opens - the SOUND OF METAL GRINDING, then TOTAL SILENCE.

Marek stares through the back window of the upside down car. He watches as Jan manages to open the trunk, obscuring Marek's view.

Marek crawls out of the car and stands beside Jan, looking for cues as what to do. He sees the man get a suitcase out of the back and throw it open on the hot asphalt. He finds a white shirt, removes his blood stained one, and puts the starched crisp cotton one on.

Marek he follows Jan who walks around to the other side of the car, opens the crushed door, and drags his wife out. He lays her flat on the sand in the shade of the car. Seeing her mother being moved brings Isabella out of her shock - the girl starts SCREAMING at full volume.

ISABELLA

Mama! MAMA! Mama ...

Jan does not react. So neither does Marek. Isabella manages to crawl out of the car. She nudges her mother, trying to get her to wake up, still calling out hysterically.

The two 'men' wander over to the body of Marek's mother. They stop and stand over her, speechless. They stare for what seems like an eternity. Judging from the red hole at the side of her head, she is dead. But her eyes stare up, open, her mouth almost smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

Jack stands over Anna, holding the gas lamp over her, like a beacon of hope. He starts weeping, drops to his knees - limp - letting the lamp fall onto the sand.

Anna opens her eyes. She sees Jack sobbing, not even looking at her.

ANNA (OS)

Hey, rain cloud!

He looks at her ... a faint smile.

JACK

Anna ...

She sits up ...

ANNA

You seem disappointed. Should I play dead?

JACK

Don't joke ...

ANNA

Humor's a defense mechanism, haven't you heard?

She feels the bump on her head.

ANNA

Oww! That hurts.

Gently, he parts her hair to look at her head.

JACK

Let me look at that ...

ANNA

So, you're a doctor now!

JACK

Actually, I am.

ANNA

Really?

JACK

You'll live. Now come on, let's get out of here.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Anna looks over at the jackal lying prone on the road. There is blood on one side of the front bumper.

ANNA

Is it dead?

JACK

Yeah ...

She giggles. Applying that favorite defense mechanism.

ANNA
(with mock accent)
Dr. Jack, now that Jekyll dead, what
we do with Hyde?

He doesn't answer, just moves the animal off the road, then
gets in the truck. She follows.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Thoughtfully, he wipes the blood off his hands, then starts
the engine. They drive in silence for a while - the road
ahead somewhat eerie due to only one headlight working.

ANNA
Gee, aren't we serious.

No response from him. She studies him, his silence making her
apprehensive.

ANNA
Okay. What is it.

JACK
Nothing.

ANNA
I'm the one with the bump, so why
are you mad?

JACK
I'm not mad.

ANNA
Is it something I said?

JACK
No.

ANNA
What then!

He stops the truck. Looks at her ...

ANNA
Well?

JACK
Anna, my mother was killed on this
desert. The way you fell out of the
car brought it all back. So please,
just let me be.

ANNA
I'm sorry. I had no idea.

She watches him, not knowing what to say. He notices.

JACK
Hey, it's not your fault! It was
years ago.

He veers the truck around ...

JACK
Here, I'll show you.

They head in the other direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - ALONG A ROAD OVERLOOKING THE SEA - NIGHT

Jack, carrying the gaslight, holds Anna by the hand and leads her to a modest monument by the side of the road - a stone angel reaching up to the stars with outstretched arms. Below, a plaque with an inscription covered by sand.

JACK
My dad built this for her.

ANNA
Wow ...

He runs his hands along the wings of the angel.

JACK
She'd just left him for good ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EAST EUROPEAN APARTMENT COMPLEX - CORRIDOR - THE PAST

BLACK AND WHITE - CLOSE ON DOOR KNOCKER - AN ANGEL

The door flies open and Angela bursts out, pulling a startled Marek with one hand, and carrying numerous bags in the other.

ANNA (VO)
Why would she go to Egypt of all
places!

JACK (VO)
Her best friend was on vacation
here.

ARTUR, Marek's father, runs out of the meager apartment following them. In Polish, he begs her to stay. She yells at him as she walks away - in Polish, with a thick accent, and bursts of English - like 'I've had it', or 'It's over' ...

ARTUR
(thick accent)
No, Angela! Is not over! Marek,
come, Marek!

Marek watches as the elevator door closes on the sight of his father, pleading, calling out to him.

JACK (VO)
I didn't understand what they fought
about.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - OVERLOOKING OCEAN - NIGHT - THE PRESENT - COLOR

Jack and Anna sit on the sand, underneath the angel.

JACK
All I understood was I'd never see
him again.

He cradles her in his arms.

ANNA
What happened then ...

JACK
So we're crossing this eternity of
sand ... it's hot, I'm car sick, and
mom is having a ball ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAR - DESERT - THIRTY YEARS AGO - BLACK AND WHITE

Marek scowls at his mother as she sits beside him, talking in broken Polish to Isabella's parents sitting in front.

Isabella, sitting between Angela and Marek, slowly eats a banana. Marek stares at the fruit - it's obvious the smell is turning his stomach.

MAREK

Mama, I'm sick ...

ANGELA

One minute, Marek (more in Polish)

MAREK

Mama, I'm gonna throw up again!

ANGELA

(angry, not registering)

In a minute, Marek!

JACK (VO)

I was sick like you wouldn't believe.

ANNA (VO)

I get that too.

JACK (VO)

So I'm trying to get her to hear me so they can stop the car before I throw up, and she's not listening.

Marek's eyes narrow as he stares at his mother talking away, laughing.

JACK (VO)

At that moment, this wave of hate swept over me. I could have killed her ...

MAREK (VO)

Mama! I'm sick!

His mother reaches for the knob to open the window.

ANGELA

(impatient)

Here, I'll open another window!

Without looking, her hand grabs the door handle instead. Just then, a loud BANG as one of the tires blows. Suddenly, the car careens out of control. Angela's hand pulls the door knob - the door flies open.

ANGELA

MAREK!

But she is pulled away by the centrifugal force of the car spinning ...

DISSOLVE TO WHITE:

JACK (VO)

... and then she was dead.

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT OVERLOOKING OCEAN - NIGHT - COLOR - THE PRESENT

CLOSE ON the flame in the gas light then PULL BACK revealing Anna, still in Jack's arms, not saying anything - what is there to say? They remain silent for a while, both staring at the flame and listening to the sound of the SURF below.

ANNA

Why do you keep coming back?

JACK

I don't know. It's like I'm a prisoner of this place ...

Anna starts scrapping the sand away from the plaque.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TAXI - EASTERN EUROPE - BLACK & WHITE - THE PAST

Marek sits beside Angela in a taxi. They are caught in traffic, in the drizzling gray rain, on their way to the airport. She is busy fastening the "I Love You" bracelet onto his wrist.

ANGELA

Just because I leave your father,
Marek, doesn't mean I ever leave
you. A mother's love is forever ...

The little boy stares at the 'I love you' engraved on the cheap tinny metal. He looks up at her - his eyes betray his confusion.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT - COLOR - THE PRESENT

CLOSE ON the metal plaque then PULL BACK to reveal Anna straining to read the writing ...

ANNA

What language is that?

JACK

Polish.

Anna looks at Jack, growing pale. He continues, hardly aware.

JACK

Dad was Polish, mom Spanish - what a lethal mix!

Anna sits up - alert. He lies back on the sand and continues.

ANNA

What happened then ...

JACK

It's a blur. I remember arriving at the hotel - the same one we're in actually, it was called the Palace then.

Anna grows increasingly tense.

JACK (VO)

And there was this girl in the lobby - she smiled at me. God, that smile was a lifeline ...

Pale, hardly aware, she slowly moves away from him.

ANNA

What happened to her?

Jack smiles as he remembers.

JACK

I don't know. I gave her this 'I love you' bracelet, and I think I kissed her.

ANNA (OS)

You just kissed her?

JACK

I guess.

She stands up, crossing her arms defensively.

ANNA (VO)

That familiar nausea swept over me.

He is not sure why her attitude has changed. He sits up and looks at her, open and innocent.

JACK

What - do you find that strange?

She shifts from foot to foot nervously.

ANNA (VO)

Don't you?

JACK

I guess it is kind of weird. I mean
so soon after ...

Unexpectedly, she rushes behind the angel and throws up. Jack comes around, grabbing her forehead to offer support

JACK

(genuinely alarmed)

Are you alright?

She pulls away from him ... eyes down.

ANNA

I want to go back to the hotel. Now!

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - HURGHADA STREETS - NIGHT

Anna looks sick. Jack is confused ...

JACK

I didn't mean to make you sick!

ANNA

Let's just drive ...

They drive in silence. He looks at her, worried.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO HOTEL - NIGHT

Anna jumps out of the truck ...

ANNA

I'm sorry ...

Jack, still in the truck, leans over towards her ...

JACK

Wait!

But she's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - NEAR DOOR - NIGHT

Hassan watches TV. Jack stands behind him, catching a glimpse of the screen ...

CLOSE on the TV screen as Dr. Zhivago walks into his deserted, frozen house, and remembers ...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT - BLACK AND WHITE

We re-enter the lobby as if 30 years ago, from Marek's POV.

Jack stands where Marek once stood and stares straight ahead at the couch.

DISSOLVE TO **COLOR**

as little Anna materializes before his eyes, smiling at him.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Anna has a shower.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

She stares at the bracelet on the dresser - as if she's afraid of it. Then, she climbs in bed.

ANNA (VO)

All I could think of was drowning in
sleep ...

She pulls the covers over her head, leaving us in darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The door to the dark kitchen swings open. Jack walks in and throws open the heavy metal door to the storage room, and switches on the light.

THE PAST ...

We see the metal table in the middle of the room. On it, is the corpse of his mother on ice, surrounded by goat carcasses hanging from hooks.

Marek walks into frame. He stares at his mother. She looks peaceful, asleep - her eyes have been closed shut, but the hole in her head and the blood stains all around don't let one forget that this is the sleep of death.

MAREK (VO)

We all die, mother. Why be scared?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT SAND - NIGHT

Anna lies prone, just like the body of Marek's mother - a still figure on an eternal bed of sand. The sound of WIND.

The breeze picks up, blowing harder across her body. With increasing force, the wind pelts her skin with grains of sand. And with each grain of sand, go layers of flesh, till only bones remain. As a dramatic finale, they crumble in a limp heap.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anna sits up in bed, in a sweat, yelling. She feels her face, her chest. Relieved, she falls back on the bed, exhausted.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

The SINGING of the muezzin and BLACK, then PAN aside revealing Anna, dressed in her *ubaya* and *hijáab*, with only her eyes staring out. PULL BACK revealing this is a reflection in a full length mirror.

ANNA (VO)

Knowing the reasons for Marek's obsessive behavior robbed me of my right to blame him, but didn't release me from the anger. Now the fixation was mine, and I wasn't about to set him free.

Hearing the sound of a DOOR SLAMMING in the corridor outside her room, she freezes, like an lioness on a hunt. She darts to the door and peers out. She sees Jack making his way towards the stairs.

ANNA (VO)

There was no sense to it. Some primitive instinct possessed me. I become the hunter, Jack, the prey.

Anna steals out of her room and follows, a deathly figure all swathed in black.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jack emerges, moments later followed by Anna - his shadow.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NEAR MAIN ROAD - DAY

Jack takes a swig from a bottle of vodka he has hidden in his pocket. He notices the cloaked woman a few steps behind. Embarrassed, he hides the bottle.

ANNA (VO)

I reveled in the fact that my tormentor was as tormented as me.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Anna waits beside Jack, eyes fixed on him, making him uncomfortable. He is relieved as an overcrowded bus appears.

CUT TO:

INT. CROWDED BUS - DAY

People, baggage, chickens - total mayhem as the contents of the jam-packed bus swing from side to side on their way along the succession of pot-holes leading to Hurghada.

Anna and Jack stand close, bumping into each other.

JACK
(in Arabic)
(Sorry!) *Anah Assef!*

She just stares at him ... not answering. Women staring men in the eye is not common practice in these parts. Jack backs away, a little alarmed.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN HURGHADA - DAY

Jack and Anna climb out of the bus. He heads down an alley, leading to a Café. She follows, not far behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFÉ - DAY

Jack walks in, greeted by a few Arab BACKGAMMON PLAYERS.

Anna follows, but is shooed away - women are not allowed in. She stations herself across the road - near a stand selling *nargèelah* pipes.

She watches Jack playing backgammon with the men. He loses game after game. Finding this hilarious in his inebriated state, he roars with laughter.

JACK
You win some, you lose some, what
the fuck! Life goes on, right?

The men don't like his attitude. They take this all very seriously. One stands, offended by Jack's behavior.

PLAYER
Mister, you drunk!

JACK
No, no no! Alcohol scented mints.
Very good ... see?

He flashes some Roloids. The guys find him pretty disgusting. They get up and move to another table.

JACK

Okay! Next time I'll brush my teeth!

Suddenly, the PIPE VENDOR starts yelling at Anna, telling her to stop blocking his stand. Taken off guard, she trips and falls to the ground.

JACK

(yelling)

Hey!

Jack comes over and helps her up, yelling at the vendor.

JACK

(What is your problem! No one wants your stinky pipes anyway. They're overpriced!)

The vendor just waves him away, not even bothering to answer. A little CROWD consisting mostly of kids gathers around them. They laugh as Anna struggles to pull away.

JACK

(to Anna in Arabic)

(It's okay! You're safe!)

Anna mumbles, using whatever Arabic words she can remember,

ANNA

(anxious)

(please) min-FADH-lik! Good-bye!

JACK

(surprised)

Good-bye?

He stares at her up close, then pulls the cloth off her face.

JACK

Anna!?

She pulls away from him and runs off. He chases after her, but she disappears in a sea of black cloaked figures.

ANNA (VO)

Who was I running from? Him, or me?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Anna hails a taxi and jumps in.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Anna jumps out of the taxi - a daytime, Muslim Cinderella.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Anna runs through the lobby towards the stairs. Jack comes in moments later and follows.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - DAY

Anna struggles to open her door. She does just as Jack catches up to her.

JACK

What's going on?

ANNA

Let me go!

JACK

Not till you explain!

She rips the bracelet off her hand and throws it at him.

ANNA

There! You figure it out, Jack! Or should I say Marek! Isn't that your real name?

She disappears in her room, slamming the door after herself.

Jack picks up the bracelet. He feels it between his fingers. Then clutches it in his fist, drawing it towards his heart. He knocks on her door, softly.

JACK

Anna ... Ania?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - THIRTY YEARS AGO

STRANGE ANGLES on young Anna - she freezes hearing Marek calling from behind the door. She stares at the door, terrified.

MAREK (OS)

Ania! Ania?

Alex has his eye glued to the Super-8 movie camera and travels through the room staring at everything from strange angles. He gets down on the ground and peers up Anna's dress. She pulls the dress down.

ANNA

Leave me alone!

ALEX

Your boyfriend is waiting - hurry, hurry!

MAREK (OS)

(sing song)

Ania! I miss you!

Basia comes in from the second room.

BASIA

Go play with him, don't be rude.

ANNA

Why can't Alex?

BASIA

Can't you see your brother is busy?
Now go! Marek is waiting.

ANNA

No!

BASIA

He's alone, he's scared, and all you
can think about is yourself!

ANNA

Please mommy. I don't want to!

BASIA

(angry)

You should be ashamed of yourself,
Ania! How selfish! Now go, before I
get really angry!

Basia pushes Anna out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - THE PAST

Marek drags Anna down the beach.

MAREK

(angry)

You will never lock me out like that
again!

She manages to pull away from him.

Anna's POV (same as at the beginning - p. 14) as she runs
away along the sand, looking back, seeing him gaining on her.
The SOUND of her HEART thunders.

She looks terrified ... SLOW MOTION as she falls. Marek jumps
on her, pinning her to the sand.

His face towers over her, obscuring the light, the expression
determined, sadistic.

MAREK

You're mine! You'll always be mine!

Marek grinds on top of Anna as if they're making love. She
turns her head away - just like when Greg was strangling her
years later.

Finally, imitating what a man would do, Marek gets off her.
He sweeps his hair back, then takes off the bracelet his
mother gave him and puts it on Anna's wrist. She just lies
there, resigned.

ANNA (VO)

Something inside me died just then.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - THE PAST

Anna runs down the beach, as fast as her legs will carry her.

MAREK (OS)

Ania! Come back! Ania!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - THE PAST

Anna runs through the lobby, dodging adults ...

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - CORRIDOR - THE PAST

Anna rushes down the corridor ...

ANNA

Mommy ...

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - THE PAST

She stumbles into the room, eyes filled with tears, and makes her way straight to her parents room.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENT'S ROOM - THE PAST

Anna walks in and sees Basia pacing, and ranting and raving in Polish. Roman sits on the bed, writing something, almost ignoring his wife - not fazed at all!

ANNA

Mommy ... Marek ...

BASIA

Not now Ania, and why aren't you
with Marek?

Anna runs to her mother and tries to hug her. Roman says something in Polish, and Basia, hardly noticing her daughter, lays into him again. Anna stares at them, her face pleading for attention.

ANNA (VO)

I didn't understand what they fought
about, all I understood was - I was
alone.

ANNA

Mommy!

Roman says another word or two which set Basia off totally. She grabs Ania by the hand ...

BASIA
You insensitive son-of-a-bitch!
She'll rot before you do something!
Come Aniu, if he won't listen to me,
let him figure out what to do all by
himself!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - THE PAST

Basia drags Anna down the corridor. Anna is sick, she pulls away from her mother, and starts throwing up on the carpet. This was certainly not on Basia's agenda.

BASIA
For God's sake. I don't have time
for this! ROMAN!

Anna stares up at her mother's face, contorted with anger, monstrous - her words garbled, distorted. She seems to be trying to console the girl, but affection mixed with fury is hardly soothing. Her angry face ...

DISSOLVES TO:

MAREK'S FACE LOOMING OVER ANNA - BLACK AND WHITE

as he "makes love" to her. His expression is mean, like Basia, but then ...

DISSOLVE TO **COLOR:**

Unexpectedly, his expression softens - now tender, loving, his tears flowing ...

MAREK
I love you Ania ...

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

Anna, lying on her bed, sits up suddenly.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY - THE PAST

Marek fastens the bracelet onto young Anna's wrist ...

MAREK
This is so you always know ...

He kisses her tenderly. She sits up, numb. He puts his arms around her and hugs her tight.

MAREK
I'm so glad I found you! If it weren't for you, I think I'd die!

To her, these words are like poison. She pulls away from him, and struggles to her feet, while he still tries to hold her.

MAREK
(genuine panic)
Where are you going?

She stares down at him - her face spells disgust. Then, she bolts, running away down the beach. He calls after her, desperation in his voice.

MAREK
Don't leave me! Please, Ania!

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

Anna turns her head to look at the locked door leading to what had been her parent's room.

ANNA (VO)
And then I found it ... the key ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS EARLIER

ABSTRACT MONSTROUS SOUNDS - inciting fear and terror in a primordial sort of way.

A door creaks open, revealing a semi-lit room. The shot is reminiscent of the open door leading to the refrigeration room off the hotel kitchen.

Gradually the monster sounds grow less distorted, revealing the sounds of a WOMAN IN PAIN. She moans, weeps, and yells in Polish - there seems to be little logic to the sequence of emotions expressed, pain and fury back to back, oscillating in a totally unpredictable rhythm.

PAN around to reveal a little girl sitting up in bed - terrified. The little girl, ANNA at AGE FOUR, climbs out of the bed and slowly walks towards the door. Roman leans in, his face obscured by shadows.

ROMAN
(heated whisper)
Ania? Aniu!

He sees the little girl, serious and wise beyond her years, approaching.

ANNA
I'm coming.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The noise emanates from the kitchen. As Anna walks across the living room, she sees her brother Alex. One furtive glance at her reveals his fear, and his guilt, but then he resumes what he is doing - which is scaring a parakeet trying to sleep in its cage. He gets that familiar sadistic grin as he withdraws into himself.

Anna nears the door to the kitchen. A sudden burst of SOUND of OBJECTS BREAKING as they are THROWN, and LIQUIDS being POURED startle her. She reacts to every blow with a start. Roman, helpless, stands beside his daughter.

ROMAN
I'm afraid if I go in, it will only
get worse.

ANNA
Did you hide the knives, daddy?

ROMAN
Not yet ...

He thrusts a bottle of bright yellow pills in his daughter's hands.

ROMAN
Give mommy these. Make sure she
takes one.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT - THE PAST

STRANGE LIGHTING AND ANGLES as Anna appears in the doorway, a miniature woman in a little girl's nightgown. She approaches on bare feet, walking around the pots and pans, the puddle of spilled tomato juice and milk, mixing together in a pinkish mess, and the broken dishes ... a child in the monster's den.

Basia, totally spent, leans over the sink weeping. There is a cut on her wrist - the blood leaving a vine-like pattern. With unexpected fury, she grabs a rolling pin and flings it towards the door, just over Anna's head. But then, seeing her daughter, she undergoes a sudden transformation.

BASIA

Aniu! come here, come here baby.

The mother throws her arms around her little girl, and they drop to the floor in a passionate hug.

ANNA

It's okay mommy, don't worry.

Little Anna scans the room for knives. She reaches for them with little hands, and shoves them away. One already had blood on it.

BASIA

He doesn't understand me! I'm all alone!

ANNA

Don't worry, mommy. Think about nice things. Candy, sunflowers, big, sunflowers ...

Anna strokes her mother's hair as she leans her head on the little girl's chest, her sobs dying down into soft whimpers.

ANNA

Bright and yellow ...

The little girl manages to get one of the yellow pills out of the bottle, and tries to put it in her mother's mouth.

ANNA (VO)

Was this love? Or death?

The little girl has that detached look on her face - like the body is there, but the person is absent.

ANNA (VO)
For me, there was no difference.

PULL BACK to an ANGLE FROM ABOVE on the little girl, staring up to where open sky should be, dreaming of an unattainable freedom.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT - THE PRESENT

ANGLE from ABOVE on Anna, sitting on her bed, looking up, sobbing. PAN DOWN till facing her at ground level. She sees her own reflection in the mirror, as if for the first time. She hugs herself, the mother embracing the little girl within.

Then, suddenly, as if freed from invisible bonds, she leaps off the bed and runs out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Anna knocks on the door to Jack's room.

ANNA
Jack! Jack?

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Anna scans the room on the way to the bar.

ANNA
(to bartender)
Have you seen Mr. Jack?

BARTENDER
No, not tonight, Madame.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Anna walks along the beach. She reaches the spot where Jack had kissed her. There is no one there. But then, in the shadows, she sees a figure.

ANNA
Jack ... Marek?

He looks up ...

JACK

Ania ...

She approaches him. He looks up at her, not knowing what to expect. Without a word, she leans down and climbs into his arms. He grabs her - tight.

JACK

I'm so sorry ... I never realized. I was so numb, I don't think I knew what I was doing. I blocked it all out and replaced it with you.

ANNA

I didn't know. If only I'd known what happened, maybe I would have understood. Maybe I would have been there for you. Your need made no sense. It was so intense it swallowed me up. That's where the nausea came from. I was choking on your panic! Why didn't they just tell me about the accident?

JACK

Half the world's madness revolves around protecting someone. They were protecting you.

ANNA

Why didn't you tell me?

JACK

I was pretending it never happened. Your not knowing made it perfect.

They hold each other in silence for a while.

ANNA

Fate's a strange force Jack. Without the childhood I'd had, nothing you did would have bothered me.

JACK

What do you mean?

ANNA

Just that. We're all walking around and reacting to what happens to us, defending ourselves against assumed assaults, when maybe the only danger out there is our own perception.

JACK

What do you see now?

ANNA

Two fragile people, who've both wasted a lifetime running away from a hurt that is buried deep in the past.

JACK

That's pretty stupid, no?

ANNA

Hell, yeah!

They laugh. He grows serious.

JACK

Thank you.

ANNA

What for?

JACK

Coming back ...

ANNA

Thank you for waiting ...

They stare at each other, then lips meet - gently, like two children experiencing their first kiss. Gradually, as passion sweeps over them, they fall back in the sand.

Their lovemaking is tender, without pretense ... each wave brings the release of emotion, until in unison, they arrive at a simple, gentle peace.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

The MUEZZIN announces morning, as a blazing golden disk rises above the ocean, surrounded by sweeping ribbons of crimson and orange reaching to meet the midnight blue of night.

HIGH ANGLE on the naked, inter-twined bodies of the two lovers. There is something primordial about the sight of them, as if they've just climbed out of the sea, or emerged from the sand - dust to dust, and all that.

CLOSE ON Anna and Jack as they smile at each other, loving, in harmony, and healed.

ANNA
I'll leave today.

JACK
I expected you would.

ANNA
You'll let me go?

A gentle kiss is his answer.

ANNA
What about you?

JACK
I don't know. I think I'll find
another spot to vacation at Easter!

She laughs, harder and harder. He joins in, till tears flow.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

She packs while he watches. Lots of deep eye contact, impromptu kisses, but no words, and no sadness in their faces.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - DAY

A TAXI DRIVER loads Anna's bags in his taxi while she bids adieu to Hassan and Ahmed. She gives both of them hugs, which they are not too comfortable with, but hey, why not.

Hassan and Ahmed return to the hotel as Jack comes out. Jack and Anna embrace - long, lingering, genuine. He hands her a thermos.

JACK
Here. It's some kind of tea that
keeps you from being car sick.

ANNA
That's so sweet ...

JACK
Think of it as first payment for all
those years of nausea in the face of
love you've suffered on account of
me!

ANNA
God, be careful how you use that
'Love' word around me ... I'm
feeling faint already!

JACK
Oh yeah, right! Sorry!

They both grin ear to ear. A final hug, then she climbs in
the car, and leans out the window.

ANNA
Will you stay on?

JACK
Just till noon.

They sink into silence - eyes locked.

JACK
No good-byes Ania ...

ANNA
No good-byes.

He waves as she drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The taxi speeds along the desert road.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Jack comes out of the ocean. The way he holds himself is
totally different - no more slouch and resigned self-pity,
this is a man bursting with hope.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Anna, bags in hand, walks down the long passage to her gate.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Jack is at the counter with Ahmed.

JACK

Look, we both know I've been a total jerk over the years, so I can't take that back, but maybe what you can buy for your family with this, will make up for it?

He hands Ahmed a wad of Egyptian money.

AHMED

No, sir. No need for this. Please.

JACK

Please, Ahmed. If not for you, then take it to ease my conscience.

Ahmed comes around the counter and gives Jack one of those Arabic man-to-man hugs.

AHMED

May Allah bless you, sir.

JACK

And you, Ahmed. And you.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - GATE - DAY

Anna hands her passport to the STEWARD. But something falls out of it - an envelope. She moves out of line and opens it. Inside, she finds a letter, and the bracelet. She reads.

JACK (VO)

Ania, I didn't give you this before you left, so you wouldn't think it was an attempt to hold you. This bracelet is truly yours. And since I let you go, I know my love is finally real. Yours, Marek.

Anna looks up, that certain smile on her face ...

ANNA
What, am I crazy?

She leaves her bags right there and runs back down the long passage. The STEWARD calls after her, but it is futile.

CUT TO:

INT. JACK'S TRUCK - DAY

Jack drives along the desert road, a big smile on his face. Suddenly, he stops, decides, then does a sloppy U-turn.

JACK
Ah, what the hell ...

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - CAR RENTALS - DAY

Anna bounds up to the car rental counter. There is a line-up but worse: there, first in line, is Greg!

GREG
Anna?

ANNA
Greg! How did you find me?

GREG
Our joint credit card, remember? Lucky for me, you haven't paid your bills! Naughty girl! And what bills! Cairo? Hourghada? My, my. If you're spending our money, at the very least, I should share the expenditure, no?

ANNA
You came all this way because of money?

She notices Greg's car rental contract and keys. She grabs them off the counter while Greg launches his rehearsed performance ...

GREG
Oh Anna! Stop playing games. I followed you half way around the world because I've missed you so much. I knew you wouldn't come back this time, so I came for you ...

She starts walking away while he follows, like an obedient lamb. They pass by a set-up with COIN OPERATED TELEVISIONS. We hear LARA'S THEME from Dr. Zhivago ...

CLOSE ON A TELEVISION SCREEN

the climactic scene from Dr. Zhivago. He chases after Lara, his arm limp at his side as he goes through the melodramatic heart attack. Lara keeps walking, oblivious ...

ANGLE ON ANNA AND GREG

ANNA

You shouldn't have come Greg.

GREG

What do you mean?

ANNA

I left for good. Like you said.

Pleading turns to threats - so smoothly, one hardly notices the transition.

GREG

You can't be serious! Do you know how much it cost me to get here?

ANNA

I don't care!

Checking the time on her watch ...

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT ROAD - DAY

Jack's truck is stuck waiting for BEDOUINS on CAMELS to cross the road - the whole caravan, several dozen strong.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUCK - DAY

Jack checks his watch. He taps the steering wheel impatiently. Then, on impulse, he takes off across the sand, trying to drive around the tail end of the procession.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

Anna starts running away from Greg. He chases after her.

GREG

Don't you run away from me!

He grabs her by the arm roughly.

GREG

I wanna talk to you!

She sees a ladies bathroom ahead.

ANNA

Okay, fine, we'll talk. But first,
let me go to the bathroom.

GREG

How do I know I can trust you?

ANNA

What am I gonna do, Greg, flush
myself down the toilet?

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - OUTSIDE LADIES WASHROOM - DAY

Greg waits outside the door, blocking the way in or out.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - LADIES BATHROOM - DAY

Anna climbs out a window ...

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Ania emerges onto a road, near a wire fence surrounding the runways. A truck passes her. In it, is Jack! They fail to notice one another.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR RENTAL PARKING - DAY

Anna drives through the gate in a rented car.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Anna passes by the open window to the ladies bathroom - where Greg leans out, furious.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPORT - TELEVISION VIEWING AREA - DAY

Dr. Zhivago continues ... from the POV of someone on the upper floor of a building across a bleak, gray street, we see Lara walk away, waving good-bye ...

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - ANNA'S POV IN REARVIEW MIRROR

of Greg in the window ...

ANNA (OS)

Go find yourself another victim!

He disappears inside. Her eyes return to the road up ahead as she continues driving. She passes Jack's truck, now parked by the side of the fence.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NEAR FENCE - DAY

Jack, holding the metal link fence, stares up at a plane taking off overhead. Once it's gone, he looks down, beaten.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - ANNA'S POV IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR - DAY

of the truck and the man. A sudden SCREECH of brakes ...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - NEAR FENCE - DAY

Jack sits in the shade of his truck, smoking a cigarette.

ANNA (OS)

Excuse me, it's not like I'm trying
to save you or anything, but do you
happen to be going my way?

Jack looks up and sees Anna beaming down at him. Back lit, she is like an angel, the sunlight casting a glow around her.

JACK (OS)

Anna!

ANGLE ON JACK AND ANNA as they embrace ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY - BLACK AND WHITE

FAST FORWARD as sand covers the black car from the accident, erasing the metal body till only the bare frame remains, bone like.

ANNA (VO)

This journey ends on the eve of your birth. I now know that the sands of time can erase pain, but first, you have to find where it's hidden, and expose it to the light of day.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE NILE - DUSK - COLOR

The same shot as at the opening of the story (p. 2). *Faluccas* float by, ancient in design - it could be now, it could be hundreds of years ago, and still, the river remains the same. The sun sets in the distance ...

ANNA

If I ever hurt you child, forgive me, as I've forgiven my parents for their dangerous sleep, and what it did to me.

Anna, sitting in a lounge chair, very pregnant, holds her stomach while she finishes writing in her big black journal.

She closes her journal slowly, holds it to her chest and hugs it for a moment, then puts it aside.

Marek appears with two huge glasses, complete with little umbrellas, stir sticks, and other fancy extras standing in the greenish mix.

ANNA

Mmm! That looks lethal. What is it?

MAREK

Celery and apple, with some grape.

They drink, watching the setting sun. CLOSE on both their hands on Anna's protruding stomach - registering a kick.

JACK (OS)
Oh! I think she likes it!

ROLL CREDITS ...