

THE STILL LIFE OF CORNELIUS

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VANDEKORPUT MANSION - MORNING

An imposing prewar luxury New York building with a spectacular view of Central Park.

 LOUISE (V.O.)
Is he awake, that futile lad
my son?

 CORNELIUS (V.O.)
 (loudly)
I'm awake, Mother and I'm
practicing my sixteenth-century
Italian with the Torquato Tasso's
"Gerusalemme Liberata."

 LOUISE (V.O.)
Big deal!

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

CORNELIUS VANDEKORPUT, 47, aristocratic and vintage, in silk kimono, book in his hands, lands in the living room.

He looks around.

In the room, a decrepit butler, FRED, 80 or more, with gigantic glasses and opaque lenses, cleans furnishings.

 FRED
I demand permission to go to the
wunderkammer to dust your
collection of rock crystal.

 CORNELIUS
I will be glad if, for once, you
would not break or misplace any.

Fred composes another tray for the breakfast of Lady Louise Vandekorput.

 CORNELIUS
The other day you put one of them
in the bathtub instead of the
sponge; luckily Mary Ann realized
it just in time, otherwise she
would have scratched my back
with a rock.

Instead of a tea pot, Fred sets the watering can on the tray.

 FRED
I'm bringing the breakfast to
your mother at the penthouse.
Why don't you join her?

CORNELIUS

Please bring the rest of my
victuals to the swimming pool,
I will finish them in my
mother's company.

Cornelius replaces the watering can with the tea pot.

INT.PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

LOUISE VANDEKORPUT, 75, in a wheelchair, observes New
York morning traffic.

"Us Weekly" is on her knees.

Cornelius gets to the penthouse and sits down in a lazyboy
chair next to a swimming pool.

He opens his book.

CORNELIUS

Canto l'arme pietose e'l capitano.

LOUISE

What are you doing here, son? The
house is not big enough for you?

CORNELIUS

I'm reading some of the most
beautiful verses mankind has
created.

LOUISE

Oh what a load of horse droppings.

Fred deposits tea and fine pastries on the coffee table.

Cornelius mumbles some verses to himself.

Fred uses a pole to clean the swimming pool.

Louise thumbs through the magazine.

LOUISE

Kim Kardashian dresses like a
slutty clown, look, look at this
picture.

With a big splash, Fred slips and falls into the pool.

Cornelius continues to mumble.

Louise rustles the magazine pages.

LOUISE

Come on, son. Walk me in the
park, I'm too fed up to stay here.

CORNELIUS

Jacques Callot lived only forty three years, but he was able to produce at least fourteen thousands engravings, giving an enormous influence to Baroque painting.

Fred flounders not at ease in the water.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I wonder if my lesson about Arcimboldo will be ready for tomorrow if I have to waste all my time. Why don't you ask Fred?

LOUISE

He's such a schmuck; I walk with him every morning, he's deaf as a post, he never understands what I'm saying. I'd like you to come with me for once.

Fred resurfaces with some efforts, soaked through.

LOUISE

You're born in front of this park, the envy of the city, and you've never been there, not even when you were a kid, to play baseball. Are you afraid to get lost, Kiki?

CORNELIUS

The park is a maze, mother. Do you know that amongst many Native American tribes, the labyrinth symbolizes relationship between mother and son. Do you mean to imply that I'm afraid of you?

LOUISE

You are afraid to lose me.

Cornelius suppresses a chuckle.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Cornelius pushes Louise wheelchair on Central Park Avenue.

LOUISE

Gosh, go inside the bloody park, it's fresh, full of people, frankfurter vendors, squirrels!

CORNELIUS

I never had a proclivity for the countryside. My personal balance has its center of gravity in the urban environment.

LOUISE

You're stubborn like your father.
Let's go to Barney's Greengrass,
I crave sturgeon bagel.

The traffic light is green. Cornelius pushes the wheelchair faster to cross the street.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Louise converses with ANNIE, 40, a rich Upper East Side socialite.

Fred speaks to a big plant with large leaves.

FRED

Lovely young lady favors a cup
of tea?

LOUISE

Oh Moses smells the roses! Fred...
Fred?...Fred, for Christ sake, we
are here!

Fred, imperturbable, moves towards the ladies.

LOUISE

(in a whisper)
Go and nail that loafer of my
son, bring him here by the scruff
of the neck...
(to Annie)
Sorry, baby doll, you were saying?

Fred doesn't move an inch.

ANNIE

The committee of the American
Foundation of Savoy Orders wants
to organize a gala. We auction
some marvelous paintings from the
Savoy collections.

LOUISE

(to Fred)
Giddyup cowboy, bring me
the doofus!

Fred zips away.

ANNIE

He's one of the utmost experts in
the world about Mannerism and
Baroque art. He needs to have a
look at those paintings...

LOUISE

Do you know what he needs?
(MORE)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

A good wife, for when, God forbid,
I will not be here anymore. And
you, could be a perfect bimbo
bride for him.

Annie blushes and chuckles.

ANNIE

Oh my Golly...Cornelius...he's just
the kind of man that every woman
would like to marry.

LOUISE

But he is so shy, so discreet,
sometimes it seems he doesn't
want to be noticed.

Cornelius shows up in seventeenth century dress, he
looks like Albrecht Durer in his famous self-portrait.

CORNELIUS

Good evening ladies, did you ask
for my companionship?

LOUISE

There you are, Kiki.

CORNELIUS

I don't appreciate you calling me
by my family nickname in front of
strangers, Mother.

He taps his baton twice, annoyed.

LOUISE

This was also the nickname of
your great-grand-father, Percy
'Kiki' Antoine Vandekorput
Lafontaine, who started the rubber
business that gave this family an
immense fortune; don't forget. A
great man of big accomplishments,
something you should keep in mind.

Annie drinks and hems in order to hide her embarrassment.

He taps his baton twice.

CORNELIUS

But...

LOUISE

And don't forget your father, God
rest his soul, who launched the
media empire, the outcome of which
we are still enjoying; don't forget
that, son, don't forget it.

CORNELIUS

My memory, Mother, is elephantine.
But I can read the subtle meaning
of your ill-concealed charade.

Cornelius taps his baton, his irritation is clear.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

If you put it in these terms, I
promise in front of this esteemed
lady, that I will discover
something completely new in the
cantankerous world of art history.

ANNIE

Oh my heavenly days! It's so
exciting, and what is it all about?

Cornelius taps his baton twice.

CORNELIUS

I promise, Mother, I will put all
my energy and skills to discover
the paternity and the genesis of
Still Life in the Mannerism and
Baroque Age...

Louise sips the tea.

LOUISE

Big deal! But let's do it my way.
I want to put a little bit of
spice. If you don't accomplish
your mission about the Still Wife...

CORNELIUS

Life. Still Life.

LOUISE

Whatever. If you don't do it, you
lose everything. I'm going to
change my will tomorrow. If, a
month after my departure, at the
latest possible...

She touches the wood of the chair.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

If a month after my departure you
didn't have the certified genesis
of this damn Bill Life, you will

LOUISE

marry this young lady or whoever you
want, just must to be human, or...

CORNELIUS

Or...

LOUISE

Or all our vast fortune will be
donate to her committee. Capisce?

Cornelius' baton falls down to the floor.

Annie cracks a smile.

INT. DINNER ROOM - DAY

Cornelius' face is deep in the plate.

He devours mashed potatoes and bratwurst.

LOUISE

(with full mouth)

Face up, young man! Good manners,
remember you are a Vanderkorput,
part of the best society in Western
civilization! Don't eat like a
hog in the trough.

CORNELIUS

My enthusiasm for this sort of
culinary art is certainly
hyperbolized and my behavior is
inexcusable, but as it often
happens I lose my sangfroid in
front of those sausages of
German tradition.

LOUISE

How old are you?

CORNELIUS

Don't you know my age, Mother?

LOUISE

Just tell me.

CORNELIUS

Forty six, Mom; why?

LOUISE

Do you know your father, at your
age, what he'd already
accomplished? And your grandfather,
how much money he'd already earned?

The domestics, Fred and an elderly maid, MARY ANN, 80 or
more, sing "Happy Birthday," to Kiki.

They arrive with a cake and a bottle of champagne, two
candles, one shaped like a 4, the other like a 7.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

You're forty seven. Today.

CORNELIUS

Now I understand the enigmatic
behavior that surrounded me since
this morning.

Fred puts a small present on the table, Mary Ann lights
the candles.

LOUISE

I almost forgot.

She puts on the table an American Express credit card.

LOUISE

It's a disposable card, it's full
of cash, so you can buy whatever
you want till it's empty. Fred,
push me to the my room, The Bold
and the Beautiful starts right
now. I don't want to miss it.

Fred pushes the food trolley instead of the wheelchair.

LOUISE

For the Lord's sake, I'm here!
Get a new pair of spectacles!

FRED

Sorry, I was just absent-minded..

Fred pushes Louise to the living room

Cornelius unwraps the present: CDs of Monteverdi madrigals.

CORNELIUS

Nifty! Contrappunto never bears
contraindications, thank you.

Cornelius turns the credit card over in his hand,
incredulous.

Cornelius leaves the dinner room.

The wax of the candles melts over the cake.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

Cornelius strolls like a dandy, in front of a strip of
luxury stores.

Wealthy people storm boutiques.

On the side-walk, a HOBO with a dog asks for money.

Cornelius walks past him without a glance.

He sets foot inside an antique boutique.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

A thin and patrician merchant, MARTIN, 78, comes out from a dark grotto.

He salutes Cornelius with a marked German accent.

MARTIN

How are you today, young fella?

CORNELIUS

I need to accelerate the speed of my researches. Mother tries to coerce me to marriage Do you have any new acquisitions?

MARTIN

Something just arrived from Hamburg. Come with me.

Cornelius passes through a gallery of marvels of the past and Nazi memorabilia.

INT. WAREHOUSE ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius and Martin walk through a collection of pieces of art.

MARTIN

Here's a Caravaggio, never been in a museum before; it belonged to a wealthy family in Munich.

Cornelius approves.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

This is a splendid landscape of Venice in the seventeenth century, a probable Tintoretto.

CORNELIUS

Magnificent. I wonder where you get this precious art.

MARTIN

I've been in this business more than fifty years and I have my sources, old European school.

CORNELIUS

I'm looking for something that could help me to corroborate my quest about the genesis of Still Life. I need you to find for me two books as soon as possible.

Cornelius browses around.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

They are rare, I concede, but it occurs to me the word impossible is not in your vocabulary.

MARTIN

I will try my best.

CORNELIUS

"Ornithologiae" by Ulysses Aldrovandi and "Drosologiae" by Ovidio Montalbani.

Martin takes notes in a small notebook.

In a corner, Cornelius spots a series of small paintings, the subject of each one is a natural object.

CORNELIUS

And this one? And this other one? Where did you find them?

MARTIN

Just small oils from an obscure sixteenth century painter from the Bologna school.

CORNELIUS

These are extremely valuable for the purpose of my research. I will buy the series. What is the cost?

MARTIN

Not much, really; I can do ten thousand for the series.

Cornelius notices some disappointment.

He seizes the first object near his hand.

CORNELIUS

And also this one.

MARTIN

This is actually an original Cellini salt shaker, very unique and expensive.

They return in the grotto.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Martin hands the invoice to Cornelius.

MARTIN
Now the total is...

CORNELIUS
This cut of plastic is the birthday
present from my mother, I still
have difficulty believing it.

He shows the disposable credit card.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)
I don't know the amount of money
loaded inside, probably a fortune.
But is that a present? It's more
a corporate benefit. With cold
nonchalance she put it on the
table, and she went to watch TV..

Cornelius passes the credit card to Martin.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)
But I'll show her, I'll show her.
Do you still have a mother?

MARTIN
I'm seventy-eight years old.

CORNELIUS
I didn't ask your age; my only
interest is whether your mother
is still in this world.

Martin swipes the credit card.

MARTIN
She died when the Allies
bombed Dresden.

CORNELIUS
In that case, I can assume you
don't have any more afflictions
coming from her.

The transaction is successful.

MARTIN
I hope to see you soon.

CORNELIUS
I nurture the same hope.

Cornelius leaves with the paintings under his arm and a
salt shaker in his hand.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

The Hobo crouches besides his dog and smokes the butt of a cigarette.

Cornelius scrutinizes him.

CORNELIUS

Today is your lucky day, I want to help you. I donate to you this apparatus. Be very careful, it can change your life.

Cornelius deposits the Cellini salt shaker in the Hobo's hands and leaves.

The Hobo lowers his sunglasses and inspects the object.

HOBO

I don't have anything to eat and you give me a fucking fancy salt shaker.

He flings the salt shaker to his dog, who plays with it.

INT. WAREHOUSE ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

In a dark corner, the slim silhouette of Martin broadcasts a message with a long range radio transmitter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fred, in a driver uniform, gathers some luggage.

MARTIN (V.O.)

To *alles kameraden* the fish is at the hook, repeat at the hook...

Mary Ann runs, overburdened, to complete the preparations for an imminent trip.

Cornelius comes out of the elevator with the paintings.

LOUISE

Oh my days, here you are Kiki. Get ready lickety-split, we're going to the Hamptons, we were waiting for you.

Cornelius' grimace shows his surprise.

CORNELIUS

I beg your pardon?

LOUISE

Did you forget that you have promised to make a speech for the gala for that Savoy committee?

CORNELIUS

My memory never fails me. It was supposed to be next week at the public library and, I never promised my prolegomenon.

LOUISE

The program has changed and we'll do a charity auction at our house in South Hampton, so put down your bloody canvas and be ready to leave as soon as possible.

CORNELIUS

I'm happy to see that at least you detect what I'm carrying.

Fred appears with two suitcases; he wears a pirate costume.

Louise pays no attention.

CORNELIUS

Those oils can lead me to the genesis... and, I cannot abide to that lady Annie, and I don't want to marry her, so even if you live one hundreds years, and I strongly hope so, I don't want to lose your doltish bet.

Cornelius peeks at Fred without interest.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

Now if you want to excuse me, Mother, I need to knit a mental arabesque about Arcimboldo and his Still Life contribution.

Cornelius disappears.

LOUISE

Oh baloney, leave the nest spoiled brat, brute, Neanderthal, lubber!

Mary Ann comes back, she carries a ponderous chest of Halloween costumes.

MARY ANN

Here are the costumes for the charity; I don't find the one your husband wore at the Halloween party when Jimmy Carter defeated Gerald Ford.

She notices Fred with the pirate costume.

MARY ANN

Here it is!

(MORE)

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

What are you doing dressed with
that costume, you old tomfool?

FRED

As you said, wear the pirate
costume, wear the pirate costume
and I wore it!

MARY ANN

I said where's the pirate costume!
What a wally!

EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

The Rolls Royce moves slowly down the highway, buffeted
by torrential rain, backlit by intermittent lightning,
and rocked by deafening claps of thunder.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nobody speaks.

Fred presses his head against the windshield because of
his poor eyesight.

He misses the intersection.

He stops, looks behind.

Moves the car to reverse.

CRASH

A semi trailer rear ends the Rolls Royce.

The car cartwheels and overturns several times before
coming to rest.

Annie from the cabin of the semi trailer sneers.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Louise is in agony in a hospital bed, all sorts of tubes
around her face.

Outside the glass wall of Louise's room, Cornelius confabs
with a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR

They arrived half an hour ago,
there was nothing we could do for
the driver and the other passenger.

Cornelius holds a cup of coffee and nervously stirs the
white plastic spoon.

DOCTOR

Your mother... I'm sorry, but I'm afraid there is nothing we can do; we can only pray. And be careful, any effort could be fatal.

Cornelius enters the intensive care room.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - NIGHT

Louise is awake.

Her eyes, wide open, light up when her son shows up.

CORNELIUS

Your healthy complexion seems to fade away inexorably. Shakespeare said in sonnet seventy three, you look like: 'Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.'

Louise first raises her eyes up and then closes them; it is a way to huff.

Cornelius sees her eyes closed and starts to sob.

He gesticulates with the plastic spoon in his hand.

CORNELIUS

Why, Mother, why? You cannot terminate in this guise.

With despair, he turns his face away from her.

She opens her eyes, surprised of this burst. With a feeble voice, she tries to call him.

LOUISE

Cornelius...

He boohoos without interruption.

CORNELIUS

Why, why?! Why?! Oh cruel Fate, why are you doing this to me? I cannot accept your measly games, your picayune cabal. I will fight back and I will descend to Hades..

LOUISE

Cornelius...I'm still, I'm still..

CORNELIUS

Why, Mother, why? Now you are dead...What am I supposed to do, all alone in this world, just an orphan, without family and friends?

LOUISE

I'm still alive, son of a dummy!

CORNELIUS

Why, Mother, why? Now I have only one month for my Still Life or I will have to marry... Mama!

Louise, as the last resort, tries to grab his arm to prove she's alive.

All of her tubes and IV tripods fall down.

Cornelius doesn't stop blubbering.

CORNELIUS

Oh dear Mother, I promise you, on your death bed, that I will discover the genesis of Still Life...in Baroque Age, of course..

LOUISE

(the last gasp)

Big deal..

Louise, at the end of her tether, exhales.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Cornelius walks alone under the rain in the middle of the night, in Times Square.

CORNELIUS (V.O.)

...I promise you, because I don't want to become penniless or even worse, marry that girl because of your doltish bet.

He wears a black raincoat, a white plastic spoon hangs from his mouth like a cigarette, his body is reflected in a puddle, shoulders hunched.

He's the image of the lonesome outsider in the "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," James Dean's famous photo.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - DAY

The new paintings are in several trestles.

He sits in front of them with a pad and a pen.

He analyzes and writes notes.

The telephone rings.

He tries to not pay attention.

The telephone rings again and again.

Cornelius annoyed runs into the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Cornelius picks up the phone.

CORNELIUS

Hello?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

We're calling from Vophone, a new operator in the market, we have a fantastic opportunity. Do you have a minute to answer a couple of questions?

CORNELIUS

What is this all about?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

How many people live in the house?

CORNELIUS

Can I ask why a gentleman like you is interested in such pointless questions?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Please, just answer.

CORNELIUS

Let's imagine you're hungry, where would you buy, let's say, some mashed potatoes?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

What are you talking about? I'm the one asking questions. How much do you pay in phone bills per month?

CORNELIUS

I've just asked you something simple and practical and you try to inquire into my private matters. Do we have to pay telephone bills?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Are you serious?

CORNELIUS

Now it's my turn, let's imagine nobody is in your house to wash your body, how can you manage to clean yourself?

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Very funny, sir.

(MORE)

VOICE OPERATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I see what you are trying to do.
I know, everybody hates
telemarketers, but I'm just trying
to do my work, no need to humiliate
me. We are people too!

The operator hangs up.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - DAY

Cornelius stands in front of the paintings with a pad and pen and writes.

The telephone rings.

He ignores it.

LIVING ROOM

After few rings, he runs into the living room.

Cornelius picks up, an OLD LADY voice screams.

OLD LADY (V.O.)

Hello Louise, how are you? It's
been a long time, hasn't it? You
never call me, it's always me who
takes the damn phone.

CORNELIUS

Miss Salysbarry, I don't really
want to drop a dime but...

OLD LADY (V.O.)

How's this layabout of your son,
or how do you call him? Your good-
for-nothing-son, still the same
slugabed with crazy ideas?

CORNELIUS

I'm afraid to announce that my
mother, Louise Vandekorput de La
Cerde, passed away a week ago,
and even if I'm sorry to give you
such bad news, I'm nevertheless
glad to give you the opportunity
to spare you another *faux pas*.

OLD LADY (V.O.)

You still have such a young voice;
what is your secret? Do you still
get some solace from that toy boy
of yours, what is his name again,
Fred? Oh what a beefcake! You
have to lend him to me one of
these days. I'm feeling so lonely.
Do you remember when we were
shoplifting at Saks Fifth Avenue?

CORNELIUS

Miss Salysbarry, please...

OLD LADY (V.O.)

Do you remember your badminton coach? You always said that maybe he was Cornelius' real father as far as you knew. You don't hold a grudge against me for stealing him, do you? Do I have to refresh your Alzheimer memory?

CORNELIUS

No, I don't; and now if you don't mind our conversation is starting to get unpleasant...

He hangs up.

INT. CORNELIUS STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

He stands before the paintings, ready to write notes.

After the first words, the telephone rings.

And rings.

LIVING ROOM

And rings.

CORNELIUS

Hello?

DODGY MAN (V.O.)

Don't say a word now, but when I finish you can say "not enough milk for my breakfast," as we agreed with the Old Brother and I will refill as you need. Otherwise, just say "I have enough milk" and I will send my courier for the payment.

Cornelius scratches his head.

He struggles to find an answer.

DODGY MAN

You have to say something, otherwise how can I know if I have to supply you? Come on, man, quickly; telephones can be under surveillance by the flatfoots.

CORNELIUS

I don't drink milk, I like tea. Actually, I would like to drink a cup of tea in this moment, but I don't know where I can find it; I don't even know how to buy it. Any idea on your part? You sound like a sagacious person.

DODGY MAN (V.O.)

What the hell, are you a cop?

The conversation breaks off.

Cornelius scratches his head.

INT. BANK-DIRECTOR OFFICE - DAY

Cornelius sports a new beard, he sinks in a deep armchair at the bureau of the director.

JOSEPH

As soon as we received the dispositions of the will, we called you. As the only beneficiary of a vast fortune, we received the clear order to help you to administer your massive wealth.

The nameplate on the desk is Joseph Goeber.

JOSEPH

Let me first read you a list of some ventures and some estates you have recently inherited.

Cornelius tries to pay attention.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Forty percent of the Vandekorput industries. These holding have ramifications in the entertainment industry, specifically controlling sixty percent of SEGA enterprise.

Right behind the director's head, a popular Still Life print reproduction hangs on the wall. It is the famous Caravaggio bucket of fruit. Cornelius stares at it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Vandekorput industries run several major music labels and manage the revenues of a large number of Broadway theaters.

Cornelius is lost in admiration of the print.

CORNELIUS (V.O.)

(to himself)

What is the spark? Why did Caravaggio decides to stop painting holy representations and draws such trivial subjects?

JOSEPH

We can count several enterprises active in the New York Stock Exchange, investment banks and hedge funds...

CORNELIUS (V.O.)

(to himself)

Look at this basket of fruit, the typical Caravaggio form of naturalism applied to Still Life canons.

Cornelius giggles. The bank director stops and looks at Cornelius, then reads again.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

(to himself)

If you think that for Andrea Sacchi Still Life painting was the style of women. Tell this to Caravaggio.

Cornelius giggles again.

JOSEPH

Mr. Vandekorput, are you following me? I'm reading too fast, perhaps?

CORNELIUS

No, no, the pace of your reading is perfect; you can carry on, I'm sure this is important information.

JOSEPH

We can continue with the list of estates, like obviously a mansion in the South Hamptons, the Dakota condominium in its entirety, but...there is this exclusion clause..

Cornelius puts his hands on his head, desperate.

CORNELIUS

I know, the doltish bet!

JOSEPH

The goods will be now frozen, you have a month to prove the genesis of Still Life, or you will marry Annie Birch, or a person you chose, or the inheritance will go to the committee of The Savoy Orders.

Joseph signs the papers with a fountain pen with an eagle and a swastika on the top.

INT. BANK - DAY

Cornelius, at the doorstep of the office, shakes hands with the director.

He walks away and looks perplexed.

Martin waits for him in the lounge.

CORNELIUS

Too many words and numbers,
but...this Caravaggio print in his
office...do you have or can you
find somewhere a painting from
Giovanna Garzoni or at least from
Laura Bernasconi?

MARTIN

I'll try, let's go outside, I
want to offer you a coffee.
I have an idea for you.

CORNELIUS

Do you have any recollection of
what Andrea Sacchi once said about
Still Life?

They leave the bank.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

In a crowded bistro, Martin and Cornelius sit at a corner table.

CORNELIUS

Housekeeper? Do you mean
chambermaid, domestic, butler,
femme de chamber, servitress?

MARTIN

Someone who lives in the apartment
with you and looks after your
immediate needs while you are
busy studying.

Cornelius nods and grabs a donut from the table.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

How could you do it alone by
yourself, now that you don't have
your mom and your maid and the
butler anymore?

CORNELIUS

It's set with thorns, I'm compelled
to confess, arduous, Herculean.

Cornelius tries to dunk the donut in his tea, but the cup
is too narrow.

MARTIN

Let's write an advertisement and
place it in the New York Times.
What are the essential requisites
for your housekeeper?

CORNELIUS

I will be cheery if she loves
figurative arts and madrigals, or
at least a penchant for sixteenth
century music.

Cornelius tries harder to dunk his donut, and he fails.

MARTIN

I don't think that's very important
for a maid.

CORNELIUS

It's important for me.

Cornelius fails again to dunk the donut.

MARTIN

I don't think you will find anybody
with these characteristics. Let's
be more practical. What do you
need from her? She'll have to
cook, I presume?

CORNELIUS

Mashed potatoes, every Monday,
Thursday and Friday mashed potatoes
and Shaller and Weber bratwurst...

MARTIN

And she'll have to wash, to clean.

Cornelius puts the donut down on the table and pushes it
away, as if it doesn't belong to him.

CORNELIUS

She will have to wake me up
everyday and give me a bath
with a sponge number eight
from South Pacific.

MARTIN

Maybe it is better to be less
specific and instruct her when
she starts to work for you, don't
you agree?

Cornelius looks outside of the window lost in his thoughts.
He looks back at his donut.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cornelius searches for something to eat.

He open all the cabinets.

He finds crackers and sliced cheese and a bottle of soda
water in the fridge.

He gulps down a drop of soda and displays his disgust.

The telephone rings.

He mulls it over, then he picks up the phone.

CORNELIUS

Vandekorput residence, who's
speaking?

(to himself)

I'm getting good at this.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

It's Joseph Goebert, the bank
director speaking. I just called
to inform you that I found a
reliable housekeeper.

CORNELIUS

I will be glad if you send her to
me, first thing in the morning.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

She's right next to me, do you
want to speak with her?

INGRID (V.O.)

Halo?

CORNELIUS

I will be extremely grateful if,
given your availability, you could
come to my residence tomorrow
morning at eight o'clock.

INGRID (V.O.)

Ja.

Cornelius jumps with his fist in the air for the joy.

INT. CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - MORNING

The bedroom is pitch-dark.

The bell rings.

Cornelius opens one eye.

The bell rings and rings without interruptions.

He jumps out of the bed, bumps into things, and grumbles when he bumps everywhere.

From the floor, he plucks up the same clothes from the day before.

Uneasy, he puts them on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cornelius opens the door.

A stocky woman in her sixties stands in front of him with outdated luggage in her hands.

She has fake blonde hair with plaits, the partition in the middle shows dark roots and the blonde fades out.

She looks at Cornelius with dull and cold blue eyes. She speaks with a strong German accent.

INGRID

Halo, I'm Ingrid.

CORNELIUS

Welcome to my house, gentle Ingrid, I hope we will have a long and special relationship.

INGRID

Hum.

She crosses the threshold and scans everywhere, speechless before the splendor of the mansion.

INGRID (CONT'D)

Wunderbar!

CORNELIUS

Before starting, I would like to instruct you about a couple of duties that are quite a priority for my well-being. Please follow me.

He goes to the bedroom.

INT. CORNELIUS BEDROOM - DAY

Ingrid follows him.

CORNELIUS

Here's my quarter. I would like to inform you about the daily operations you are required to perform in order to wake me up in the morning.

Ingrid jumps over the bed and lies down.

Cornelius hops over, surprised.

CORNELIUS

Can I ask you the reason of this initiative, please?

INGRID

Just I don't want to make mistakes. If I pretend to be you, I know better what I have to do. It's like in theater a rehearsal, *ja*.

CORNELIUS

I don't think it is necessary.

INGRID

Ja wohl, like you command.

She doesn't move.

He goes out of the room.

INGRID

Oh mein Got, it's comfy!

Cornelius is back with a tray.

He drops the tray over a console.

And opens the curtain.

CORNELIUS

It's my long-time habit to wear a sleeping mask. After the curtains, you shall gently remove it from my eyes and delicately whisper 'it's time to wake up,' then you will serve my breakfast.

He performs the actions on Ingrid.

CORNELIUS

I don't drink coffee but only tea. Lapsang souchong is my choice, a juice of fresh orange and fresh minion pastry, this is my everyday breakfast. Please follow me.

He enters the bathroom.

Ingrid doesn't leave the bed.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

(from the bathroom)

Please, come inside the bath.

BATHROOM

Ingrid enters and jumps down into the bathtub.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)
I said it's not important that
you mimick my actions.

INGRID
You said to come inside.

CORNELIUS
Not inside the bathtub.

Ingrid stays in the tub.

CORNELIUS
I want a hot bath with a very
large amount of froth. After two
stanze of Torquato Tasso's
Gerusalemme Liberata, I will enter
the bathtub and you will gently
wash my back and head with this
natural French sponge Lerevenu.

INGRID
One moment, *enshuldigun*, do you
ask me to wash your ass?

CORNELIUS
It has been a couple of years
that I've washed my intimate parts
myself, I can exempt you from
that delicate duty. Back and head
are your responsibility.

INGRID
Oh danke, mein lieben Got, I don't
want to do that. Much better if
you can do it yourself.

CORNELIUS
How can I perform this chore for
myself? I possess only two hands!

In the bathtub, Ingrid pantomimes all gestures necessary
to wash the head and the back.

Cornelius shows a grim look of deep disappointment.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cornelius and Ingrid stand at the table.

CORNELIUS
It's consequential to keep a strict
schedule for my meals. I prepared
a calendar to follow scrupulously.
(MORE)

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

Lunch is the easy part because three days per week, Monday, Thursday and Friday, I teach and I'm not at home.

Ingrid writes notes about her tasks.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

For lunch a tuna sandwich; the bread has to be the baguette from Rive Gauche at eighty- six and Amsterdam, the tuna, not chunks, has to be an Italian or Portuguese brand. About dinner: Monday I will have Shaller und Weber bratwurst and mashed potatoes, the same Wednesday and Friday.

The pen doesn't write, she scribbles.

She blows the edge of the pen.

She scribbles again and the pen restarts.

INGRID

Enschuldigung, what bratwurst? Which day?

CORNELIUS

Tuesday night is roast chicken night with tots, and Thursday night is vegetable lasagna. Did you miss anything? Do I run too fleet for your limited understanding of the English language?

INGRID

Ja, the pen doesn't write; I ask again, what bratwurst and day?

CORNELIUS

Shaller und Weber. Saturday, hamburger and french fries. Sunday night a surprise, but you can choose only from hamburger, bratwurst and mashed potatoes and sometimes, but I tend to discourage it, pizza. Is everything clear?

INGRID

What kind of pizza?

Cornelius ponders the answer.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ingrid follows Cornelius through the house.

They climb to the penthouse.

HOUSEKEEPER APARTMENT

They reach a wing in the mansion where there are a couple of rooms and a bathroom.

CORNELIUS

You are allowed to settle here.
Any question?

Ingrid shrugs off.

Cornelius leaves.

Ingrid sits on the bed.

From her luggage, she takes out a complete long range radio transmitter.

INT. CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Ingrid enters and opens the curtains, moves up the sleeping mask and whispers.

INGRID

Herr Vandekorput, Herr Vandekorput,
wake up, it's eight o'clock.

Cornelius sits on the bed.

Ingrid carries out the instructions to the letter and hands him the tray with breakfast.

CORNELIUS

Oh golly, another day today. "To
the clear day with thy much clearer
light, When to unseeing eyes thy
shade shines so!" Shakespeare
could say, sonnet forty-three.

He takes the Tasso tome from his bedside table.

Ingrid reaches the bathroom.

Runs the water for the bath.

CORNELIUS

*Seguia la gente poi candida
e bionda...*

Cornelius drinks few sips of tea, eats some pastries, leaves the bed and goes to the bathroom.

BATHROOM

The bathtub is full of froth.

Cornelius takes off his kimono and goes inside.

Ingrid gives him a scrubbing brush and passes him a little bottle of shampoo.

INGRID

With this you brush your back;
you can put a little in your hand
and scratch the head; after, you
can rinse with your shower, simple.

Cornelius washes his head for the first time in his life, he's uncoordinated and soap goes in his eyes.

CORNELIUS

Hey, it burns like a liquid hell!

EXT. BRYANT PARK - DAY

Cornelius promenades.

From Sixth avenue he passes through Bryant Park and observes the people in the park.

Students, tourists, hobos and weird chess players turn their heads to watch this black vintage suit with his precious walking stick and a messenger leather bag who strolls in the park.

Annie pretends to play chess with a derelict BLACK PLAYER. She observes Cornelius, as soon as he is close enough

She jumps to cut his way.

ANNIE

Hello Mr. Vandekorput! What a coincidence to meet you here!

CORNELIUS

Oh! Nice to see you. Regretfully I'm in a hurry, my students wait for my lesson.

ANNIE

But you were walking slow!

CORNELIUS

The month is not finished yet. I still have chances to complete my research.

ANNIE

Sure. But why don't have a cup of coffee and maybe we can settle this thing between us?

CORNELIUS

What do you allude to?

She grabs his bag and pulls his hand.

ANNIE

Don't be afraid, my apartment is
just a few blocks.

Cornelius puts his foot down and tries to resist, but she is strong and he gives up.

INT. ANNIE APARTMENT - DAY

Annie in a quick move with the feet, throws away her shoes. In a second she takes off her coat and frees her hair.

ANNIE

What do you drink? Coffee, tea,
vodka, hot chocolate?

Cornelius is rigid in his position, still at the door. The walking stick and the bag in his hand.

CORNELIUS

(softly mutters)

Tea.

ANNIE

Don't be shy. Have a seat, the
couch is warm and cozy. Like me.

She tries to take the stick and the bag, but he resists. They struggle over the bag, and she prevails.

She drags Cornelius from the hands and pulls him on to the couch.

Annie darts in the

BEDROOM

She takes everything off from the bag, the books and the Arcimboldo prints.

From a drawer she takes a pile of pornographic magazines and some explicit erotic prints and puts inside the bag.

LIVING ROOM

Cornelius rigid sits at the edge of the couch. His eyeballs scans around.

Annie comes back from the kitchen. She carries a tray with a teapot, bananas, hot dogs, baguettes and butter.

She wears a sexy baby-doll and everything is in plain sight. She takes a banana and suggestive eats it.

Cornelius puzzled, stares at her and without pays attention, uses a knife to spreads butter on his hand instead of the bread.

She sensual gnaws a hot-dog. A droplet of mayonnaise voluptuously leaks from her mouth.

Cornelius' stomach sounds hungry.

He takes a hot-dog from the tray.

Annie jumps over and gropes him.

Cornelius fights like he's fighting for his life.

They wallow and stumble over the tray, the bananas and the hot-dogs. Annie tries to kiss him, Cornelius tries to bite the hot-dog.

Till they stop and stare each other.

CORNELIUS

Thank you for the tea, I'm afraid
I have to go now.

She gets close to him with a bitter grimace.

ANNIE

I will have a crown with your
jewels. Like my mum used to say:
diamonds are forever!

And she firmly grabs his crotch.

INT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - DAY

A group of ATTRACTIVE GIRLS waits outside of a classroom.

Cornelius arrives, breathless; his garments are stained all over, he looks in shambles, tousled hair.

All the girls come near, greet and surround him.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

He drags himself to the chalkboard and writes "Mannerism and Still Life."

Students line up their dictaphones over the professor table. The first row handles their pens.

CORNELIUS

A Still Life is a work of art
depicting inanimate subject matter,
which may be either natural --
think of bananas, melons, flowers,
plants, rocks or shells -- or man
made -- think of vases, bags
jewelry, coins, pipes and so on.

The first row jots down notes without a pause.

Cornelius fishes out from his bag, without hesitation he shows a print with an explicit sexual act.

A big "Ooh!" from the audience.

CORNELIUS
I'm so glad you like it. This
has been my favorite since I
was fifteen.

A CUTE BRUNETTE from the first row raises her hand.

Cornelius gestures to encourage her to speak.

CUTE BRUNETTE
It is that the typically
Baroque obsession with symbols
and metaphors?

CORNELIUS
There is also something else.
Personally, I spent hours alone
in my room staring at this image.
I know every detail.

A big "Bleah!" from the audience.

CORNELIUS
I know it seems outdated. You
have access to very different
experiences and it sounds archaic
being satisfied just with an old
print. Nevertheless I urge you to
give it a try. You can feel like
the man in the past...

The girls in the first row jots down every word, but from the back, students hurl pens, erasers, balls of paper, shoes, underpants, bras.

The class is a noisy, wild arena.

CORNELIUS
The world, the entire universe,
and even the same concept of the
soul will deeply change.

He stops for a couple of seconds, not sure why the class is such a riot.

CORNELIUS
We'll discuss it later in the
seminar. But now I want to show
you something else.

Cornelius shows in a rapid sequence, all the prints. Those are explicit close ups of various intercourses.

CORNELIUS

I want you to recognize the symbols
and metaphor of Mannerism in
those exquisite effigies.

The audience boos him merciless. The riot is absolute.
Some people leaves, some throws things, some makes love,
some smokes marijuana, some dances, some drinks beer.

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY - DAY

STUDENTS take the steps into a building two at a time.

INT. CORNELIUS OFFICE - DAY

Cornelius walks in still puzzled.

Annie with a wig of long and curly black hairs, ambushes
him in a dark corner.

Cornelius doesn't notice her.

He sits at his desk and take one of the porn magazine
from the bag.

CORNELIUS

Holy Grail!

ANNIE

Is that for the seminar?

Cornelius blushes and tries to hide the publications,
under the bag, but more porn material comes out.

CORNELIUS

It's not mine...

She is gorgeous and wears a tank top, wide open in front,
to flaunt her cleavage.

Cornelius doesn't recognize her.

ANNIE

(flirting)

I have the impulse for a question,
about the seminal...

CORNELIUS

The seminar will start in thirty
minutes, but if you have some
urgent matters about your
intercourse...I mean your course of
study, we can talk about it.

She goes closer.

Cornelius remains cold, professional and distant.

ANNIE

I'm really eager to complete my education with you, if you know what I mean. On this subject I have my theory about the genesis. Can I expose everything to you?

CORNELIUS

I encourage you to reveal your studies during the seminar, thus the other participants can benefit.

Annie advances towards him and caresses his suit.

ANNIE

But I have something special only for you.

She lunges for his face and deeply kisses him.

The DEAN, 75 or more, an aggressive, insipid man of ruddy complexion, pops up in the office.

DEAN

Excuse me, Professor, I was thinking... oh my...

Then the Dean notices the pornographic material on his desk and on the floor.

DEAN

Oh jeez...Mister Vandekorput, this behavior is unacceptable!

Cornelius rejects the girl and catches sight of the Dean.

CORNELIUS

This is not like it seems... oh... what am I saying?

Annie runs away.

The Dean, at the door, points his finger at him.

DEAN

You're fired! And you're banned from the faculty and all the premises, including the Library. And you're lucky if I don't report the incident to the police.

CORNELIUS

No, the Library, no! My research...

Cornelius faints and collapses at the floor.

INT. CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Ingrid enters the room and opens the curtains

Moves up the mask and whispers.

INGRID

Herr Vandekorput, wake up, it's
eight o'clock.

Cornelius sits on the bed.

Ingrid hands him the breakfast.

He gains the Tasso tome from his bedside table.

Ingrid goes to the bathroom and runs the water.

Cornelius enjoys his tea, mumbles some verses, nibbles
some pastries, and goes to the bathroom.

Ingrid returns to the bedroom and arranges the bed.

CORNELIUS

(from the bathroom)

After my bath, please meet me in
the living room; I want to finalize
your position.

Ingrid sneers.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cornelius is at the table. Ingrid slips a contract.

CORNELIUS

Please explain the presence of
this opus?

INGRID

I have a copy of a precedent
contract. I will be happy to keep
the same conditions.

CORNELIUS

There is no sum for your salary.

INGRID

Ja.

CORNELIUS

How much do you think will be
fair for your services?

INGRID

Fifty thousands?

CORNELIUS

Is it enough?

INGRID

Enough.

Cornelius writes down the figure and passes the papers.

INGRID

Per month?

CORNELIUS

Is it not enough? Sixty thousand?

He tries to take the contract, but Ingrid stops him.

INGRID

Enough, very good, only surprised.

CORNELIUS

Do you prefer per week?

INGRID

This is ok, don't change.

She mulls.

INGRID

One more thing.

CORNELIUS

Yes?

INGRID

I want to bring my daughter to live with me; she can help.

CORNELIUS

I'm more than glad if you do it.

INGRID

Thank you, Herr Vandekorput, you are a generous man.

She signs the contract.

Cornelius smiles, satisfied; his life is on track again.

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - MORNING

Cornelius settles at one of the big tables in the main room of the library.

He opens an ancient tome on his book rest.

It shows dried leaves and the Latin words "*Horti sicci*."

Cornelius jots some notes in a notebook.

Next to him, a BIG BLACK MAN watches a porn movie at full screen on his laptop.

In front, an ADOLESCENT makes out with his tween GIRLFRIEND. Cornelius tries to focus on his book, but his eyes roam between movie and teenager.

A MAN bolts through the aisle.

Two big SECURITY GUARDS tackle him.

When he is on the floor, they handcuff him.

SECURITY GUARD

Two months late! Two months late!
That book was supposed to be
returned two months ago!

They drag him away.

Cornelius dives his nose into his book.

Along the aisle Annie flounces in.

She flaunts her bosom and her long legs.

She sits next to Cornelius, but he doesn't pay attention.

She takes a small purse from her bag, full of nails color.
She choose two different shade of red.

ANNIE

Which one: red passion or
scarlet seduction?

CORNELIUS

Uh?

She leans forward him, her lips hot red lipstick.

CORNELIUS

I'm red of wrath and you are a
scarlet woman.

She places her mouth over his ear and whispers.

ANNIE

You can't beat me.

She licks his earlobe sensually.

Cornelius closes his eyes, in a moment of rapture.

At the same time, she tears off some pages from the ancient
tome and puts them in his jacket pockets.

Cornelius restores his focus and shows his anger.

CORNELIUS

Stop at once, or I call security!

ANNIE

(screaming)
Security!

The two big security guards quickly arrive.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I saw this gentleman tear off
pages from that precious book and
hide them in his jacket.

CORNELIUS

This is simply ridiculous!

One of the guards pulls out a rolled into a ball page
from his pocket.

SECURITY GUARD

You're banned!

They drag him away.

ANNIE

Let's see how you'll find your
"genesis"! I will wait for you at
the altar!

She opens the scarlet phial and colors her nails.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The elevator's door opens.

A gorgeous teenager, SUNSHINE appears.

A STOCKY SHORT DOORMAN and a SKINNY TALL DOORMAN with
carts full of luggage follow her.

The doormen drop the luggage in the middle of the room
and disappears back into the elevator.

Sunshine looks around with astonishment.

INGRID

Welcome home.

SUNSHINE

Wow, amazing, it's a royal palace.

INGRID

And go to see upstairs.

Sunshine runs upstairs.

She runs back.

SUNSHINE

A swimming pool. I can't believe
it! Are you kidding me?

She jumps to hug Ingrid.

SUNSHINE

Thank you for bringing me here.

The elevator door opens.

Another doorman enters with a drum set on a cart.

SUNSHINE

You can leave it here, thank you.

Cornelius, in a kimono with his Tasso tome, shows up in the living room, he points to luggage.

CORNELIUS

How many daughters do you have?

Sunshine steps to Cornelius.

SUNSHINE

Can I use the pool? Maybe invite some friends over? Hey, you can adopt me! Or is that inappropriate? I can never tell.

Cornelius points to the drums.

CORNELIUS

Please, fulfill my curiosity, I never saw such an ensemble. I am wondering what is its purpose?

SUNSHINE

It's a musical instrument. Do you like music?

CORNELIUS

Music is one of my favorite artistic expressions of humanity. I have a deep passion for sixteenth century elaborate contrappunto. Can you play madrigals?

SUNSHINE

I don't know what a madrigal is, but I doubt it.

CORNELIUS

I see, if you want to excuse me.

Before he disappears, he gives another look at Sunshine.

INT. CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - MORNING

Ingrid storms the room and turns on the light.

INGRID

(loudly)

Wake up! Wake up! Oh boy, this
room stinks very much, too much!

She clears the curtains, flings open the window.

Her face shows all her disgust at the smell.

She goes close to Cornelius and tears off the mask from
his face.

INGRID

Wake up! Wake up!

Cornelius opens his eyes wide, in shock.

He sits up in the bed and looks around for breakfast.

CORNELIUS

I'm trying to locate my breakfast.

INGRID

From today in the kitchen, where
people usually eat.

CORNELIUS

This is unsatisfactory, unsuitable,
untenable, unpardonable...

Ingrid is already out of the room.

CORNELIUS

And the water in the bathtub!?

He takes the book from the bedside table, and puts it
back immediately. He shivers with cold.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - DAY

Cornelius scrawls notes on his pad and contemplates the
new paintings.

A series of high-pitched noises break concentration.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Beside the drum set, huge speakers diffuse high-pitched
noises with a surrounding sound system.

A gigantic plasma tv irradiates everything.

Sunshine in a wet, tiny white bikini lies down on
the sofa.

She watches a Wile E. Coyote cartoon.

When Cornelius arrives, The Coyote has just painted a fake tunnel on the wall.

Cornelius stares, hypnotized by the TV.

Road Runner passes the fake tunnel.

Cornelius smiles.

CORNELIUS

Anamorphoses.

The Coyote tries to pass the same tunnel and he smashes against the wall.

Sunshine guffaws.

CORNELIUS

I can see it's amusing;
nevertheless, I have to ask you
to put the volume down because it
is hard to work with this noise.

She jumps up, runs in to the kitchen, then returns with a Coca-Cola can.

She approaches Cornelius and fondles his face.

SUNSHINE

You are so lovely, sir. But do
you see those big speakers, how
can I lower the volume with such
big speakers? I can't. Right?

She opens the can and takes a sip of Coca-Cola.

Some liquid falls down onto her breast.

SUNSHINE

Oops...

She rubs her hand on her breast to clean it, outside and inside the bikini, in a provocative move.

Cornelius stands, mouth wide open.

He points at the can.

CORNELIUS

What is this small kettle?

SUNSHINE

What?

She looks around for something special.

Cornelius points at the can again.

CORNELIUS

This.

SUNSHINE

(laughs)

Coca-Cola, haven't you ever seen
this... oh boy... well, try it.

She hands the can to Cornelius, he drinks without question.

His face manifests distaste.

CORNELIUS

It's so sweet.

SUNSHINE

So are you.

Sunshine, with her finger, cleans a drop of Coca-Cola
from Cornelius' lips.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - DAY

Cornelius dwells in front of several different prints
from the seventeenth century.

Cornelius records his notes with a dictaphone.

CORNELIUS

The symbolism of flowers had
evolved since early Christian
days: the rose: allegory of Virgin
Mary, transience, Venus, love.

Cornelius lines up some illustrations of the Virgin Mary,
Venus and roses.

CORNELIUS

The lily: allegory of Virgin Mary,
virginity, female breasts, purity
of mind or justice.

Again, he piles up illustrations of lilies and paintings
of Madonnas with exposed breasts.

He clicks the dictaphone and watches the clock. He looks
at the calendar.

CORNELIUS

Friday, is an allegory for
frankfurter and mashed potatoes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cornelius stops, looks around, and notices a lot
of changes.

Beside the plasma TV and drum set, a series of new posters.

The black and white picture known as "Le baiser de l'hotel de ville".

A picture of a monkey dressed like a man who smokes and plays poker.

A detail of the two little angels of Raffaello.

There's an ashtray on the coffee table: a miniature toilet.

Sunshine, in a bikini runs; NATHANIEL, a young man in a Speedo swimming suit and long hair, chases her.

SUNSHINE

Hey, here's the guy, really cool.
He's the owner of all this stuff.
Can you believe it? Mister Vandt,
can I call you like this, Vandt?
I don't know, but calling you
Corn or Corny sounds weird...this
is... my friend Nathaniel.

TAL, another boy in Speedo and long hair, appears in the room.

ZACHARY, also in Speedo and long hair, follows.

SUNSHINE

And this is Tal. And the blonde
one is Zachary.

The guys shake their hand with Cornelius.

SUNSHINE

It's my band; we have a rehearsal
tonight. It will be incredibly
noisy. Better if you go out, like,
I mean, a movie with your girl.
We play hard rock, heavy metal,
this kind of stuff, you know.

CORNELIUS

No, I don't know.

He blushes.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I don't have a girlfriend, but I
presume I could survive a little
music, even if it's not my genre.

He moves to the

DINNER ROOM

Cornelius at the table, pulls a cord over his head; a
buzz in the kitchen informs the maid that he's there.

Ingrid pops up with a tray, a cigarette in her mouth.

She deposits a can of Spam and a can of baked beans.

CORNELIUS

What is this?

INGRID

Your dinner.

CORNELIUS

Tonight is Friday, I'm supposed to eat Shaller und Weber bratwurst with mashed potatoes.

INGRID

I had no time to cook.
You hungry, you eat.

She leaves; a canopy of smoke follows her.

Cornelius eats from the cans.

The food nauseates him.

From the living room, a noisy heavy metal music resounds.

CORNELIUS

How do they dare to call this cacophony, music? It's evil, a sonic Beelzebub!

Cornelius puts his head under the tablecloth.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Martin, at the counter, shows Nazi memorabilia to Joseph.

MARTIN

Do you see this? Goering's iron cross first class; it was confiscated the day he surrendered himself to the Allies.

JOSEPH

I see, for how much do you sell this rarity?

MARTIN

I won't sell it; this is the most precious thing I have.

JOSEPH

I have his uniform, the one from the day of his surrender.

MARTIN

The khaki one?

JOSEPH

The khaki one.

Cornelius enters the shop.

MARTIN

Here's our professor, I guess
he's uncomfortable with those
memorabilia, but fully immersed
in his quest for his personal
holy grail.

JOSEPH

Who's he? Indiana Jones?

MARTIN

Good morning, my young friend.

Cornelius scrutinizes Joseph; he looks familiar, but he
doesn't recognize him.

CORNELIUS

Good morning.

JOSEPH

I was leaving anyway; have a good
one, companions.

Joseph leaves.

MARTIN

The things you asked me have not
arrived yet.

CORNELIUS

I just have the desire to spend
few moments with someone who shares
my same *weltanshaung* and passion
for the grace of the world and
the pulchritude of the arts.

MARTIN

Something wrong at home?
Are you getting along with the
new housekeeper?

Martin with a damp cloth polishes the memorabilia.

CORNELIUS

I've been pampered and over-
indulged all my life; I'm not
used to living with someone who
is so different from everything I
was accustomed to.

Martin buffs a Nazi officer's cap.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I'm discombobulated, she
metamorphosed like the moth of
the allegory, but the other way
(MORE)

CORNELIUS (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 around, from butterfly to
 chrysalis. I heard that sometimes
 women behave in a bizarre fashion
 because something mysterious
 happens to them, once a month.

Martin carefully folds the old swastika German flag.

MARTIN
 Things will change. I want to
 tell you a story, just to show
 how important is to be ready, and
 to wait for the moment when the
 situation becomes favorable.

Martin takes and cleans an original Lueger.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
 I've been in love all my life
 with the same woman, we met very
 young in Germany, at the end of
 the war. I had to escape for my
 life, fast-- very fast-- and I
 found refuge here in America, but
 I lost touch with her.

CORNELIUS
 You're right, I shouldn't complain.

MARTIN
 Let me finish. I never stopped to
 think about her; I thought she
 was dead in the aftermath of the
 Russian invasion. After many years,
 she found me and sent a letter.

In full rapture, he gesticulates with the pistol in
 his hand.

MARTIN
 She wasn't allowed to enter
 America; we exchanged love letters
 for twenty years, waiting for the
 right moment. Eventually, thanks
 to some friends in high places,
 she came here.

Cornelius moves out of range of the gun.

CORNELIUS
 You're finally reunited.

MARTIN
 We have something to accomplish,
 but we are almost there. Just
 patience and perseverance and
 you can get what you want, sooner
 or later.

CORNELIUS

You are a magnet for my optimism,
I'm grateful. A friend is the
most valuable thing in this world.

MARTIN

Sure it is.

He puts the Lueger back.

INT. CONDOMINIUM LOBBY - DAY

An OLD LADY, 80s, with a chihuahua dog, waits for the
elevator. The doors open and the lady goes inside.

Cornelius runs from the entrance.

CORNELIUS

Hold on.

Cornelius enters and presses the button.

CORNELIUS

Good evening Miss Garret.

MISS GARRET

Good evening Mr. Vandekorput.

The elevator's doors slowly closes.

At the last moment a foot and a lovely woman's leg stop
the closing doors.

Annie partially reopens the elevator with her hands.

Cornelius frantically presses all the buttons and manually
tries to close the doors. With no success.

The dog barks.

CORNELIUS

Go. Go away, please.

ANNIE

What a chode!

She doubles her efforts to open the elevator.

Cornelius takes off her shoe and tickles the bottom of
her foot.

CORNELIUS

The Chinese Torment.

She relaxes, she seems to enjoy it.

The dog barks and bites Cornelius' trousers.

ANNIE

That's nice, but upstairs you can give me a full body massage.

Cornelius loses his temper and bites Annie's calf.

She pulls her leg away, hits Cornelius on the chin, and pulls on his tie, until his head is between the doors.

ANNIE

Now listen and listen good. You have now one week only and then you will marry me. Capisce?

She presses a button from inside and the elevator opens the doors, Cornelius falls down; the elevator closes the doors and goes up.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Cornelius stands up, slightly kicks the dog still attached to his trousers.

MISS GARRET

Uh, lovebirds!

Cornelius tries to regain his composure.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cornelius arrives from the elevator.

Ingrid bivouacs at the table with one liter beer mug.

She smokes and burps, her eyes full of tears.

From the sound system, at full volume, comes an old German song "*Jawoll, das Stimmt, Jawoll.*"

Ingrid trims her nails.

She finishes one hand and puts one foot to trim on the table.

Cornelius takes off his coat.

Ingrid stops her activity and turns off the music.

She gulps, in one single sip, half of her beer mug.

She takes the coat from the couch and puts it away.

From the kitchen, Sunshine blows in.

In bikini, her long hair loose and fluffed, a bottle of Corona beer in her hand.

Cornelius is entranced by the young body of Sunshine.

SUNSHINE

Next week is my eighteenth
birthday, it will be so cool to
have the party here, at the
swimming pool, please...
please...please...

CORNELIUS

(raucous)

I have no reasons to...deny...now I
have to go...please.

Sunshine, in rapture, throws her arms around Cornelius'
neck; she hugs him and spontaneously kisses his lips.

Cornelius runs away.

STUDIO

Cornelius gazes at the Parmigianino's masterpiece, "Madonna
with Long Neck."

The Virgin Mary's metamorphoses into Sunshine's profile.

She winks at him, caresses her long neck, and takes the
blue shawl off.

INT. DINNER ROOM - NIGHT

Sunshine sets up the table.

Cornelius waits for dinner.

She huddles on Cornelius' lap with a glass of wine.

SUNSHINE

Now it is time to spoil this lovely
man, isn't it?

Cornelius nods twice.

She offers her wine to Cornelius.

She ruffles his hair and kisses his forehead.

SUNSHINE

Wait for me here, I'll come back.

She disappears into the kitchen.

KITCHEN

Ingrid stirs mashed potatoes, smashes a green pill and
stirs again. On the table few empty blisters of NyQuil.

Sunshine stands next to Ingrid.

SUNSHINE

Ready?

INGRID

Not yet. I didn't find Lorazepam,
I put NyQuil, a lot, no problem.

SUNSHINE

A little bit of fun?

She takes a pill from her pocket and splits it.

She swallows half and gives the other half to Ingrid.

SUNSHINE

Add this.

INGRID

What is that?

SUNSHINE

X, mdma, Ecstasy.

INGRID

You are a bad, bad girl.

She mixes the mashed potatoes with more energy to
incorporate the ecstasy.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Funky music fills up the night.

Cornelius wiggles sensually under the ecstasy's effects.

Sunshine dances and videotapes with a small camera.

A grumpy Ingrid on the sofa drinks a big mug of beer.

Sunshine approaches Cornelius.

The two dance Bachata.

She whispers and licks his ears.

Cornelius spins, swirls and giggles until he collapses on
the couch.

INGRID

At last, what a bulldog! Bring
him to the room.

The two women drag him toward his room.

BEDROOM

Cornelius in his bed, hugs his pillow and burbles.

CORNELIUS

Sunshine...Sunshine...

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY (DREAM)

Sunshine runs and coquets.

SUNSHINE

Come... catch me if you can...

Cornelius gambols after her.

He catches her.

The two roll about. They kiss each other.

INT. CORNELIUS BEDROOM - MORNING

Cornelius hugs his pillow.

CORNELIUS

Oh Sunshine, Sunshine...

He kisses the pillow.

INT. OUTSIDE CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sunshine in bathrobe and Ingrid wait behind a door.

INGRID

Go now. Five minute and
me too.

She shows the Polaroid camera.

BEDROOM

Sunshine strips off her bathrobe, completely naked, slips
inside the bed.

Cornelius hugs and kiss the real Sunshine.

CORNELIUS

Sunshine...

He wakes up.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

Sunshine?

He shows a huge erection; scared and embarrassed, he tries
to cover it. He pulls the sheet but strips Sunshine naked.

He tries to give her the sheet back, but gets entangled.

Sunshine pulls the sheet and drags him.

Cornelius ends up with his face between her legs.

Ingrid bursts into the room and snaps a photo
with the Polaroid.

INT. DINNER ROOM - DAY

Ingrid spreads out the instant photos on the table.
On another chair, Sunshine plays and text messages.
Cornelius darts out in his kimono.

CORNELIUS

The entire sense of the situation
evades my comprehension, it slips
away like sand from my fingers.

INGRID

Save your breath, mister. Just
look at the photos. I call the
police, Sunshine is underage and
you are in big, big trouble.

Ingrid takes the phone from the table.

CORNELIUS

Bide...bide...bide the issue. I can
accommodate, compensate. I'm a
man of means, of substance.

INGRID

What do you think we are? We're
simple but honest folk; where I
come from for that there is only
one remedy...a wedding.

She composes the number.

CORNELIUS

Agreed, whatsoever and whenever.
Please, arrange this thing for me
and once the epithalamic knot is
tied, I will expect the pictures
will be burned.

INGRID

Promised.

He closes his fist in a gesture of triumph.

CORNELIUS

(to Sunshine)

I will be a devout and venerative
consort and I promise to make you
a happy spouse.

Cornelius runs away, excited and happy.

EXT. CITY HALL - DAY

A limousine drops an enthusiastic Cornelius and an
indifferent Martin, elegant in their morning suit.

INT. CITY HALL - DAY

In the waiting room, Sunshine plays with her Polaroid.

Ingrid stretches her elegant cream vest and fingers her cute hairstyle.

Cornelius looks confused.

Martin approaches Ingrid and kisses her hand.

MARTIN

Sweet lady, how charming, today.

Cornelius approaches Sunshine.

She looks at the Brooklyn Bridge outside the window.

CORNELIUS

Greetings, my lovely darling, how do you feel on this day that people say is the most crucial of life?

SUNSHINE

You still don't understand.

CORNELIUS

Your dress is quite unconventional for this kind of ceremony. I have to confess, but I respect your style. What didn't I understand?

SUNSHINE

Don't you grasp you're going to marry her?

CORNELIUS

Who?

Ingrid sucks in on a cigarette and furtive spits a ball of saliva in the ashtray.

A MUSLIM WOMAN JANITOR, with a scarf around her head, mops the floor and the officiating CLERK comes out.

A newlywed KOREAN COUPLE exits the office, relatives and friends toss rice.

CLERK

Next...

Sunshine, Martin, Ingrid and Cornelius approach the door of the room.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Groom and bride and two witnesses.

The caravan enters.

Cornelius the last, his grimace better fit for a funeral.

The janitor drops out her disguise. She removes the scarf: it's Annie.

ANNIE

It's not over.

I swear, it's not over

Annie livid, teeth-grinding, cracks the mop.

INT. CORNELIUS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cornelius, in bed with the Tasso tome, looks at his finger, adorned with a wedding ring.

Ingrid appears from the bathroom, pajamas and thick, short-sighted glasses. Cornelius frowns as he sees a green alien who emerges right there.

She enters into bed with "Weekly World News" magazine.

CORNELIUS

What the fuzzy duck do you think
are you doing here?

INGRID

I'm coming to bed.

CORNELIUS

In my bed?

INGRID

Our bed, dear.

She shows the ring.

He grunts, closes the book, switches off his bed-side light and turns his back to Ingrid.

She shuts off her light and sneaks under the sheets.

Cornelius jumps on the spot.

CORNELIUS

What arbitrary silliness are you
performing?!

He switches on the light, takes the pillow and the book and jumps off the bed.

INGRID

Come on, it's our first night.

CORNELIUS

And also the last one!

Cornelius runs away.

Ingrid takes out a packet of cigarettes from her pocket.
She lights one, puffs on it with anger and leafs through her "Weekly World News" magazine.

INGRID

Idiot!

She throws ash on the floor.

INT. BANK-DIRECTOR OFFICE - DAY

Joseph, at his desk leaps to his feet and speeds towards Ingrid who marches in.

He kisses her hand.

They speak German.

JOSEPH

Fraulein Gudrun...

INGRID

Easy. Is everything ready?

JOSEPH

Of course, *Fraulein* Gudrun...

INGRID

Not this name.

Ingrid plunges into a leather chair in front of the desk.

Joseph passes her a pack of papers.

JOSEPH

Please *Fraulein* Gud...Mrs. Ingrid, sign every page and two signatures here on this paper. To put the account under joint names.

Ingrid signs every page.

JOSEPH

Now you have full access to the Vandekorput's fortune.

INGRID

And the will?

From a drawer, Joseph takes out another bunch of paper.

JOSEPH

This has to be signed by Mr. Vandekorput to have legal validity. Once signed, in case of death you will become beneficiary of all the Vandekorput property.

INGRID
Stay put, waiting for orders.

Joseph leaps to his feet.

JOSEPH
Heil...

INGRID
Restrain yourself for the moment.

He raises the right arm, but immediately his left arm puts the right down.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A delivery boy pops up, Ingrid gives him money and grabs the pizza boxes.

DINING ROOM

Cornelius waits for dinner.

Ingrid arrives with the boxes.

CORNELIUS
What is that?

INGRID
Dinner.

Ingrid opens a box and eats a slice with her hands.

Cornelius shows scorn and disgust.

INGRID
Eat, it's good; and don't have
this face all time, life is short!

CORNELIUS
Where is Sunshine?

INGRID
(with full mouth)
Friends. Sleep over.

Cornelius puts a slice of pizza on his plate and eats with knife and fork.

CORNELIUS
What about the photos? You promised
to burn them.

INGRID
One last thing.

From a bag she collects the will and the envelope with the instant photos.

INGRID

Sign the documents and I will
burn the pictures.

CORNELIUS

What is this?

INGRID

Precaution. If anything happens
to you, I have a safety net.

CORNELIUS

Like an insurance?

INGRID

Like insurance.

Cornelius gets the will, gives a quick look and signs it.

CORNELIUS

I expect the bonfire.

She gathers the photos from the envelope and burns them
in a big ashtray.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - NIGHT

Cornelius lies down in a chaise longue.

The book is open, but he doesn't read.

The reproduction of the Parmigianino's "Madonna with Long
Neck" painting morphs into Sunshine.

She winks and kisses him goodbye.

He turns to another painting, the Pontormo's "Portrait of
a Lady in Red."

He sees his mother, who scowls at him.

LOUISE

What a fool! You let the other
fellow piss on your back and tell
you it's raining!

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius touches the paintings, he enjoys the feel of
the layers of colors, smells the canvas and smiles.

In a dark corner the collection of Nazi memorabilia,
swastika flags, iron crosses, decorations, the Lueger
pistol, a first edition of Mein Kampf.

Martin materializes from the warehouse.

He speaks on his cell phone.

MARTIN

Sehr gut. Sehr gut. Auf wie dersen.
Cornelius! How are you?

CORNELIUS

I would love to say everything is great but I'm afraid I would be a mere fabulist.

MARTIN

How about your research, did you make any progress about the origin of Still Life?

CORNELIUS

Now I'm a married man, I'm not in a rush anymore, but I found the *fil rouge*. Do you know anything about Ulysses Aldrovandi?

MARTIN

Aldrovandi?

CORNELIUS

He established the first Botanical gardens in Europe, in Bologna.

Martin picks up some old books, paintings and rarities.

MARTIN

But he's not a painter.

Cornelius sizzling, walks up and down.

CORNELIUS

He assembled one of the most spectacular cabinets of curiosities, with seven thousand specimens of natural objects.

Martin puts the books in a good display in the window.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

He organized several expeditions to collect plants. His *herbarium* contains about four thousand seven hundred sixty dried specimens.

Martin moves back and forth between the shop and the window. He leaves the paintings on the floor.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

And he used various artists, Jacopo Ligozzi, no less, and Giovanni Neri and Cornelio Schwindt, to make illustrations of specimens. Do you see the point? Still Life was born there.

Cornelius walks and moves his hands.

CORNELIUS

In order to give evidence of my theory, I need one of his books, like the *herbarium* or "*Dendrologiae naturalis*." Do you think you can trace them?

Cornelius crashes against the paintings on the floor.

EXT. NEW YORK UPPER WEST SIDE - DAY

Cornelius strolls a few meters and steps in a dog poo.

CORNELIUS

Oh, feces!

He stops in front of a sleazy dive to clean his shoe.

He reads the handwritten sign on the window: "Tony's: The best sandwich in the world. Come and eat here or we will both starve."

INT. KITCHEN SLEAZY TAVERN - DAY

The kitchen is a dark grotto where nobody cooks, but there is a table where there is an electronic scale and ziplocs full of different drugs.

In the grotto, TONY, 50, an enormous hairy man in an undershirt, smokes a hand-made cigarette with a strange aroma.

TONY

Quickly; what you want pal?

With his huge hand, he points to the merchandise on the table.

CORNELIUS

I yearn to taste the famous best sandwich in the world.

TONY

What?

CORNELIUS

I yearn to taste the famous best sandwich in the world.

TONY

What?

CORNELIUS

I yearn to taste the famous best sandwich in the world.

TONY
The sandwich?

CORNELIUS
Yes, the sandwich.

TONY
Sure, sure, grab a seat.
I'll bring you the sandwich.

Cornelius exits the kitchen, but seconds later he returns.

CORNELIUS
And a Pellegrino, please.

Tony scratches his head, opens the fridge, and looks for something to put inside the sandwich.

The fridge is empty except for, an open can with a grey tuna, an open can of Spam, and beans that seem to have been there for a couple of decades.

He finds a half baguette; an army of cockroaches comes out when he cuts the baguette in half.

He takes a spoon of mayonnaise from a jar full of ants, he spreads it on the bread. Some ash from his cigarette falls down over the bread and the mayonnaise.

INT. SLEAZY TAVERN - DAY

Tony comes out from the kitchen, and brings the sandwich on a plate to Cornelius.

Cornelius looks at the plate; there are insects all around the sandwich.

CORNELIUS
I will be grateful if you could
graciously bring me a small bottle
of Pellegrino. Thank you.

He disappears in the kitchen.

CORNELIUS
Ok, let's try the best sandwich
in the world.

He bites the stale bread, chews with effort, and takes off his mouth something that looks like a mouse tail.

His facial expression shows all of his disgust.

Annie enters the tavern. She sits at the same table.

ANNIE
How's my newlywed dumb bunny?

He sneers at her.

CORNELIUS

I deceived you. You have to admit,
I am not born yesterday, I'm acute.

He winks and gives another bite, cockroaches flee out from the bread.

ANNIE

Really, smart-ass? I wasn't good enough for you, oh no! Look who's your lovely bride.

She hands him a newspaper cutoff, an old article.

CORNELIUS

"Gudrun Borowitz, the dark dahlia of the Nazi legacy." What is that?

ANNIE

Please, just read.

She smiles with satisfaction.

CORNELIUS

"Gudrun Borowitz, daughter of one of the most prominent Nazi officials...yada yada ya...head of a network dedicated to protecting Nazi war criminals, has been charged with poisoning her husband, Hermann Borowitz, with the intent of securing his rich inheritance..."

He pales and drops the paper, his tummy produces strange rumbles and noises.

The picture of Gudrun Borowitz in a blurred photo strikes Cornelius as Ingrid.

The effects of the sandwich hit him; he vomits on Annie.

INT. CORNELIUS MANSION-DINNER ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark, only a small lamp illuminates Ingrid.

At the dinner table, Cornelius faces his meal: frankfurters and mashed potatoes.

Cornelius steals a peep at Ingrid, who puts one leg on the chair and proceeds with her depilatory wax.

Cornelius looks at her again, uncomfortable.

He doesn't touch the mashed potatoes, just a couple of bites of frankfurter.

Ingrid looks more and more sinister.

Cornelius drops the napkin.

CORNELIUS

I lost my appetite.

He zips away.

INT. CORNELIUS' STUDIO - NIGHT

Cornelius packs an overnight case.

He puts pajamas, pillow, Tasso's tome, prints of Still Life paintings, toothbrush and tooth paste in the case.

LIVING ROOM

Furtively, Cornelius passes in front of the kitchen.

Ingrid waxes her legs to the sound of "Lore Lore," a popular Nazi song. A one liter mug of beer is on the table and a cigarette burns in the ashtray.

He sneaks inside the elevator.

EXT./INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA - NIGHT

Cornelius checks-in to the presidential suite.

INT. INGRID'S ROOM - DAY

Ingrid speaks German with the long range radio transmitter.

Subtitled in English

INGRID

I think he escaped. Over.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Hello? Who's speaking? Over.

INGRID

Who do you think you're speaking to, idiot, Eva Braun? Over.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

Ingrid, is that you? Who's Eva Braun? Over.

INGRID

Yes, it's me, imbecile! Cornelius escaped, he didn't spend the night here. Over.

JOSEPH (V.O.)

I can't hear you, the transmission is very disturbed. I'll call your phone. Out.

INGRID

Copy that. What a piece of crap, this old Gestapo radio!

Ingrid's cell phone rings.

INGRID
Cornelius escaped.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
So?

INGRID
So?! He can screw up the plan.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
Did you call the boss?

INGRID
Of course not, he will be mad. We
have to find him before he knows.

JOSEPH (V.O.)
I can block his credit card; the
bank is closed for the weekend.
Without money he will be forced
to show up at the bank Monday.

END OF SUBTITLES.

Ingrid smashes the radio against the wall.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE - DAY

Cornelius wanders around the avenue.

He stops in front of the Mario Caldi boutique.

He checks the windows and goes inside the shop.

INT. BOUTIQUE - DAY

Cornelius browses suits, shirts and ties.

He scans shoes, cuff links and leather bags.

He tries out a suit and a pair of moccasins.

He buys the cashmere suit, shoes and a leather bag.

The bill is a four-digits figure.

He opens his wallet, sees the disposable credit card.

CORNELIUS
Thank you, Mom.

He decides to use it.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius, with shopping bags, enters the antique shop.

Martin welcomes him.

MARTIN

I have a surprise for you.

He hands him an ancient book.

CORNELIUS

Is this... ?

MARTIN

The only copy in the world, the Aldrovandi's "*Herbarium*"; it comes from the private Hermann Goering library. It's a rare privilege.

Cornelius squeezes Martin in a hug.

CORNELIUS

Thank you, thank you, my friend, you make me happy.

MARTIN

It's just a bit expensive, considering it's the only copy.

CORNELIUS

It doesn't matter, it's incalculable for me. How much?

Martin writes something in a notebook.

He shows it to Cornelius.

CORNELIUS

Considerable.

He opens his wallet and takes out the disposable.

CORNELIUS

It will be another gift from my mum. I hope there are still some funds. Try it.

Martin swipes the card in the device.

Nothing happens.

He tries again.

Nothing again.

CORNELIUS

Too bad, I thought I had enough.

He chooses the other credit card from his wallet.

MARTIN

Sometimes it's just the connection.

Martin tries again with the disposable card.

The device makes a noise.

The transaction has been successful.

EXT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius strolls in a sunny bright New York day.

INT. WALDORF-ASTORIA - DAY

Cornelius enters the lounge and proceeds to the reception desk.

RECEPTIONIST

May I help you?

CORNELIUS

I would like to extend my sojourn
for a couple of nights.

RECEPTIONIST

Very well. Room?

CORNELIUS

Seven-oh-six. I would love to
keep it.

RECEPTIONIST

Let's see... sure you can. Can I
have a credit card, please.

Cornelius passes him the disposable card.

The receptionist swipes the card.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, sir. It says
insufficient funds. Do you have
another card?

CORNELIUS

Indeedy I have. I've probably
extinguished this one today.
A gift from my poor mother, God
rest her soul. I suggest to process
this, my veritable, daily basis,
verified, bona fide card.

RECEPTIONIST

We'll see.

The clerk swipes the card, some noise comes out from the machine, a little piece of paper shows up.

The receptionist observes the paper and sneers.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

You can read yourself, this is an invalid card; it must be cut and destroyed. I'm afraid your stay here has to end right now.

CORNELIUS

Do you have the faintest idea of my wealth? I could buy this dormitory, use it as a *pied-à-terre*, and put you out to sell hot dogs in Central Park.

RECEPTIONIST

From what I see, you're just a bum who cannot pay his bill, and if you don't leave this lobby immediately, I will call security.

CORNELIUS

Can I just abide here until Monday when the bank opens? I would spare you the humiliation of selling hot dogs.

RECEPTIONIST

Good bye, *adieu*, aloha.

Cornelius steps back and pretends to go to the exit.

All of a sudden he runs toward the elevators.

TWO SECURITY MEN block him and throw him out.

EXT. WALDORF-ASTORIA - DAY

Cornelius, on Park Avenue, flaunts a brand new cashmere suit, shining shoes and a new leather bag.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - EVENING

Cornelius walks on the sidewalk in front of the Dakota, undecided.

He crosses the street and enters Central Park.

CORNELIUS

What an irony, I'm feeling safer in the Park than in my house.

First he walks timidly, then strolls comfortably.

He finds a nice spot, a vacant bench, from where he can see the Dakota.

He recognizes the windows of his penthouse, all lights are on, he sees the profile of different people.

On the bench next to him a Hobo with a dog inspects him.

Cornelius waves a greeting, then takes the Aldrovandi book from his bag.

He leafs through the book.

Every page carries an illustration of a plant, a tree, a leaf, a fruit.

He stops.

He sees an illustration of some fruits that are the same as the small paintings from Martin's shop.

Cornelius perspires.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

This is the one.

With a tissue, he dries his sweat, then opens the last button of his shirt and loosen his tie.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

This is the one.

(loud)

This is the one! Mum, I found it!

This is the genesis!

He jumps to his feet and dances.

He shows the illustration to the Hobo.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

This is the genesis!

He hugs the bum.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I's something incredibly precious.

HOBO

Tell me about it.

His dog plays with a Cellini salt shaker.

CORNELIUS

This book is gold. No, more, it is worth more than gold. It is the only copy in the world and now it is in my hands.

Cornelius wiggles up and down.

He jumps over the bench and looks towards the skyline.

The dog observes the erratic behavior of Cornelius.

CORNELIUS

I want to reveal you a secret.

Cornelius points to the bright penthouse in the luxury building in front of the park.

CORNELIUS

That is my house.

HOBO

Why don't you go then?

CORNELIUS

Good question. I cannot go there because, because

(whispering)

My wife wants to kill me

HOBO

Oh, I see.

CORNELIUS

She is an old, ugly German Nazi who wants to kill me because of my money. But I have to go back... I need to compare that painting with this illustration, to corroborate my theory. Can you help me to go there?

HOBO

Sure, fella. I'm an FBI agent, undercover. I just pretend to be a bum, when something happens-- zac!-- I intervene. That's my job.

The Hobo puts a pile of old newspapers on Cornelius' bench.

CORNELIUS

Let's use this circumstance to intervene! I will ring the bell and when she opens the door, you will arrest her.

HOBO

Slow down, how can we go inside the building? We are beggars, for sure the doorman will stop us.

From a big plastic bag, the Hobo picks old newspapers and covers himself.

CORNELIUS

No large cow, my friend. The condominium is my property, and with all due respect, you are the only beggar. I'm a Croesus, rolling in money. The doormen know me, I am their boss.

HOBO

I have to inform my office, we need backup. Tomorrow morning, we'll act. Use the newspapers like a blanket. The night is cold in the park.

CORNELIUS

I'd rather go now and sleep in my bed. I never slept in the park...if you say there is no alternative..

Clumsy, Cornelius covers himself with the blankets.

HOBO

There is no alternative.

The penthouse is animated, a party seems in progress.

CORNELIUS

Promise to arrest her.

HOBO

I will arrest her, I promise.

Silhouettes of people dance, music comes from the building.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - MORNING

Cornelius opens his eyes. He's on a bench in the park, he scratches his head and sits up.

He looks all around, the Hobo is gone and the bag with the book too.

CORNELIUS

No, no, no!

Cornelius stands in his bench, head between his hands.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Cornelius circles around the park. He wants to get out but he moves in a loop.

He meets a SKINNY BOXER and a BALD TOOTHLESS BOXER. They are old and derelict; they run so slow that barely move.

One of them punches the air, like a mummylike boxer of the past who performs his training routine.

CORNELIUS

Good morning gentlemen, can you
be so kind to display for me the
exit of this maze?

The two men look at Cornelius with a bullying look.

OLD BOXER

Yo man, if you want to go out, just
follow the road.

CORNELIUS

God bless you.

He circles around and around under the scorching heat.

Again he is in the same place where he met the boxers.

He lies down in the lawn, exhausted.

All around him, young people play frisbee and soccer.

Couples kiss.

Half naked girls sunbathe.

A FAT TEENAGER walks and bites a hamburger.

FAT TEENAGER

No, it's with onion!

He throws his hamburger in a garbage bin.

Cornelius hurls himself to it and recovers the sandwich.

A group of people skates fast, someone jogs.

After few meters, the jogger stops, and goes back
to Cornelius.

SUNSHINE

Hey!

CORNELIUS

You are you, not the product of
my oversensitive imagination.

SUNSHINE

I guess. Are you ok?

Cornelius tries to be cool, speaks with the mouth full.

CORNELIUS

Perfect. I'm good; pretty pretty
good, seriously.

SUNSHINE

Are you sure everything is cool?

CORNELIUS

Pretty good. Perfect, no need to be worried, you can go. Perfect!

SUNSHINE

Ok I gotta hit the road, later!

She's ready to jog again.

CORNELIUS

Can you tell me how to get out from this Daedalian park? I've tried and tried since this morning. I'm afraid I'm lost.

She looks carefully at him. He's a complete mess: the expensive suit is all crinkly; he holds junk food in his hand; he's all sweaty and stained.

Desperation in his eyes and he's lost, really really lost.

Sunshine closes in and very gently, brushes his chin.

SUNSHINE

You are cute with the beard.

She goes even closer and kisses him on the cheek.

It's a slow kiss and on impulse her lips move on his lips.

The moment seems to last forever. Cornelius' sandwich falls down from his hand.

Eventually, she recovers.

SUNSHINE

Follow me.

CORNELIUS

Please, don't run.

They arrow down till they reach the exit, right in front of the Dakota.

CORNELIUS

I'm so grateful for your assistance in finding the passage out of this labyrinth.

She ruffles his hair.

SUNSHINE

Please, take care of yourself. I mean it.

Then she runs away.

Cornelius waves his hand.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Dirty and ruffled, Cornelius enters.

Martin embraces him.

MARTIN

Where have you been, everybody
was worried about you.

Cornelius hesitates, but dispels his doubts.

CORNELIUS

Eureka, my friend!

He hugs Martin with enthusiasm.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I wish my mother were alive to
see me in this moment. I did it;
I'm not that wastrel, malingerer,
good- for-nothing son she thought.
I've succeeded, even if I
discovered that the maid Ingrid
was plotting to kill me.

MARTIN

You're fantasizing, I know you're
an artist, always in your world,
come on...that lovely woman, kill
you? And why?

CORNELIUS

For my fortune, can you believe
it? But I have been incredibly
sagacious and I ran away. But
something went wrong with my credit
card. I knew I shouldn't trust
that piece of plastic; better to
carry around large sums of money.

MARTIN

So, what happened?

CORNELIUS

I slept in the park; my mother
would be so proud of me! And
there, in the book, I found it!
The origin of Still Life.

MARTIN

You don't say...

CORNELIUS

An illustration in the book,
it's a Jacopo Ligozzi, the same
as the anonymous painting I bought
from you.

(MORE)

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

That means the painting it's a Ligozzi, and he's the father, if you allow me the expression, of Still Life.

MARTIN

Show me the illustration.

CORNELIUS

A vagabond stole my bag; He deceived me, and at this point I don't think my mother would be very proud of me.

Martin takes out his cell phone, ready to make a call.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

I need to go back to my house to prove that the painting is a Ligozzi and we have to find the book, the bag, the hobo, the dog who was playing with a salt shaker.

MARTIN

Let me make a couple of calls. You can go to the warehouse; there is a bathroom where you can freshen up and rest.

Martin makes a call, speaks German, and sounds agitated and upset.

He closes the communication; Cornelius is still there.

MARTIN

Go, now, go.

Cornelius, intimidated, disappears.

Martin makes another call in German, even more agitated and upset.

Joseph pops up in the shop.

MARTIN

Finally you are here. The plutocrat imperialist American Jew is in the warehouse; get rid of him.

JOSEPH

As you command, *kamerad*.

Joseph moves to the Nazi memorabilia corner.

He gets the Lueger.

MARTIN

Kamerad Kappel!

JOSEPH

Command.

MARTIN

Be sure it looks like a suicide.
Don't jeopardize our plan at last.

Joseph goes into the warehouse.

INT. WAREHOUSE ANTIQUE SHOP-BATHROOM - DAY

Cornelius freshens up.

He hears the noise of a door.

INT. WAREHOUSE ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius comes out of the bathroom in undershirt.

He sees Joseph and stalls before he recognizes him.

CORNELIUS

If I recall, rather correctly,
you are the director of the bank.
Responsible for part of my
misfortune has been the wretched
decision to block my credit card.

Cornelius dries his face with a towel.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

Consequently, I have been forced
to leave the Waldorf-Astoria and
to spend the night in the park
where a dishonest hobo robbed me.
Why it has been blocked with all
these funds?

JOSEPH

I'm sure it's a misunderstanding
and can be fixed very quickly.
Monday, as soon as possible.

CORNELIUS

I'm glad to hear that. What is
leading you here? Are you also a
passionate collector?

JOSEPH

I'm so passionate. Martin told me
you are an expert and could guide
me to buy something valuable.

CORNELIUS

I'm flattered to be asked. What
are you looking for precisely?

Joseph points at a dark, low corner in the room.

JOSEPH

Over there, that small painting,
do you see it? I think it's the
best painting in the world.

FLASHBACK to the sleazy tavern "The best sandwich in the
world."

CORNELIUS

Really? Where is it?

JOSEPH

Over there, at the bottom.

CORNELIUS

Can you please get it for me, I
don't have my glasses.

Joseph gives him a quite incredulous look.

Joseph bends over with his back to Cornelius.

Cornelius hits him on the head with a Ming fashion
big vase.

Joseph falls down, the Lueger slips away.

Cornelius collects the gun.

CORNELIUS

Really, the best in the world,
this piece of crap?

Cornelius points the gun on him.

INT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

The shop's bell rings. The Hobo enters.

He puts the Aldrovandi book on the counter.

HOBO

How much do you give me for this
rare, ancient book?

Martin examines the book.

MARTIN

Nothing. Because it doesn't worth
a dime. It's fake.

Cornelius brings Joseph in the shop at gunpoint.

The Hobo sees a gun and an hostage and automatically pulls
his weapon and points it at Cornelius.

HOBO

FBI. Drop the gun!

Cornelius terrified drops the Lueger.

CORNELIUS
You are truly FBI!

Martin collect the Lueger and points it at the Hobo.

When Sunshine enters, the door hits and knocks out Martin, who drops the Lueger.

The Hobo points the gun at her.

Ingrid appears from the warehouse and with her own gun takes Cornelius hostage.

Joseph picks up the Lueger and points it at the Hobo, who shifts his attention to Joseph.

Sunshine pulls out her own weapon and points it at Ingrid.

SUNSHINE
I'm Rachel Silverstein, agent of
Israeli task force who chases
Nazis and war criminals. Gudrun
Borowitz, you are under arrest.

Sunshine's band enters with their instrument cases.

The band opens the cases and picks up machine guns, they point them at everybody except Sunshine and Cornelius.

The FBI SWAT crew enters and they point their guns at everybody except the Hobo.

CORNELIUS
What in the world is happening
here? Hey that is my book!

HOBO
The book is counterfeited. We
were following an investigation
about a gang of forgers. This is
the evidence I was looking for.
Everything here is fake, except
for the Nazi memorabilia, maybe.

SUNSHINE
They wanted your money to fund a
Nazi revolution.

Cornelius kneels down.

INGRID
What are you think you're doing?

CORNELIUS
I did something I'm still ashamed
of...and you were underage, so please
let me amend..

SUNSHINE

I was undercover not underage,
even if definitely in good shape.

CORNELIUS

Please, do you want to marry me?

Annie bursts into the shop triumphantly.

ANNIE

Nobody marries nobody. Only me...and
Cornelius...together.

She waves a piece of paper.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

This is the proof that your wedding
to Ingrid is invalid. It's a
wedding certificate, sure, but...with
Martin. How many hubbies do you
want, uh? You Nazi bitch!

Joseph drops his gun.

JOSEPH

What the *Heil!* You were already
married? What a couple of
amateurs. Enough! Do you know
what? I will testify against you
guys, I can even get some leniency
and start over a new life, once I
go out of prison.

Ingrid points her gun to Martin.

INGRID

You didn't destroy the
certificate, dummy?

Martin opens his arms in affliction.

MARTIN

But darling, how can I destroy
this sweet memory?

INGRID

What a jellyfish you are! My mother
was right, I shouldn't never have
married you!

She throws her arms up in rage. Cornelius grabs her wrist
and they fight for the gun.

A shot explodes.

CORNELIUS

I conquer it!

Ingrid falls down, unconscious.

Martin flings at her.

MARTIN

Ingrid...

He lifts her up, eyes full of tears.

MARTIN

Ingrid, *mein liebe*...

Ingrid opens her eyes.

INGRID

I'm not dead, dumbass.

The Hobo's crew handcuffs Martin. Sunshine's band handcuffs Ingrid and Joseph.

EXT. ANTIQUE SHOP - DAY

Cornelius, Annie and Sunshine are in front of the shop, sealed with the 'scene of crime' yellow tape.

CORNELIUS

My dreams are adrift in the black sea of disappointment.

ANNIE

Hey my gummybear, I'm going to buy the wedding dress, now. I suggest you to go to find the ring. A big one, lover boy.

She kisses him and leaves.

CORNELIUS

I have my mother's ring, it's big and adorned with diamonds bonanza, but it's old, very old. My dad bought it.

SUNSHINE

I'm sure it's just fine.

CORNELIUS

I don't know. I don't know what to do.

The music of the ice-cream truck approaches. The truck stops right there.

SUNSHINE

What about ice-cream?

CORNELIUS

Vanilla...

SUNSHINE

My treat.

CORNELIUS
And pistachio.

They get closer to the truck.

INT. CORNELIUS BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm clock buzzes.

Cornelius opens his eyes and stops the alarm clock.

He gets out and opens the curtains, stretches in front of the window with a views of Manhattan and the park.

He identifies the bench of his homeless night.

He walks, depressed, to the bathroom.

He whistles a sad madrigale in the shower.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Cornelius, in kimono, toasts two loaves of bread.

He spreads butter and pours a glass of milk, turns the sound system on.

A Monteverdi madrigale resounds in the kitchen.

He eats his breakfast, his book on the table.

With his book and the glass of milk, he moves to the living room.

LIVING ROOM

Cornelius sips the milk and reads from his book.

He envisions Sunshine.

She comes down from the penthouse, with a wet white bikini.

She laughs like a happy teenager.

CORNELIUS
Sunshine, are you here?

He looks again, Sunshine has vanished.

He nosedives again into his book.

Sunshine sneaks into his studio.

He drops his book and follows his vision.

STUDIO

The studio is empty.

He notices the paintings.

He focuses on the supposed revelation of the genesis of Still Life, the one with the same illustration of the Aldrovandi book.

With anger, he collects all the paintings.

He notices the "Gerusalemme Liberata", he breathes deeply and picks the book too.

And goes out of the apartment.

INT. CONDOMINIUM BASEMENT - MORNING

Cornelius, in kimono, comes out of the freight elevator, with the book and the paintings under his arm.

Several workers with condominium uniforms stare at this strange character.

He goes to the dump room, tons of rubbish is amassed.

He throws the paintings.

CORNELIUS

Big deal!

And the Tasso's tome.

INT. OUTSIDE CORNELIUS' APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Cornelius comes from the the freight elevator.

He notices Annie in front of his door, she rings the bell.

CORNELIUS

Are you looking for someone?

She laughs hysterical.

ANNIE

Oh, you scared me.

CORNELIUS

Really? Me?

ANNIE

You are always so brainy, so firm, so fully, fully packed! Every turn so hard to handle.

CORNELIUS

I can imagine. I would like to invite you inside, for a tea, but I don't have anything at all. The apartment is a mess and I cannot even buy grocery by myself.

(MORE)

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

You see, what I really, really need is a sweet, lovely wife.

Annie smiles.

ANNIE

That's why I'm here.

Cornelius shows a flirting mode.

CORNELIUS

You didn't give up.

ANNIE

Not so easy, cowboy. Let's start again. You're inheritance is frozen, now. But, you know, if you marry me, you will have an enchanting wife and tons of lettuce. Otherwise nothing, nada, nix, zero.

CORNELIUS

Just like that, uh?

ANNIE

Just like that.

Cornelius presses the elevator button. The doors open, with his hand he invites Annie to go inside.

She enters and smiles.

Cornelius presses the ground floor button inside.

CORNELIUS

So long, farewell, adieu.

The door closes, Cornelius enters his apartment.

INT. CORNELIUS STUDIO - EVENING

Cornelius sits at his desk.

He writes in a note pad: "A New Life in the Baroque Age: A Theory."

He puts the pen in his mouth and looks around, he reviews all the precious objects in the room, the paintings, the prints. He dwells on the Parmigianino self-portrait in a convex mirror.

PARMIGIANINO

Do you understand, in the end?

He continues to look.

Parmigianino waves his hand in the foreground.

PARMIGIANINO

Hallo?! Can you see me, can you hear me?

CORNELIUS

Are you talking to me?

PARMIGIANINO

Listen to me. And first, look at me again. Do you want to be like me, trapped in this convex mirror?

CORNELIUS

I don't know. I don't understand.

PARMIGIANINO

Drop the mirror. The mirror. Drop it.

Parmigianino fades away.

Cornelius flinches.

INT. CORNELIUS BEDROOM - MORNING

Deep dark. The bell rings and rings, again and again.

Cornelius in his pajamas opens the door.

A MAN IN A SUIT, two POLICEMEN and Annie at the door. Annie waves a paper.

ANNIE

Here we are, my darling, I'm at home. Unfortunately you are not.

Cornelius rubs his eyes.

CORNELIUS

I was waiting for you.

From a corner next to the door, he lifts up a Louis Vuitton suitcase and exits the apartment.

CORNELIUS

Bye bye.

He walks into the elevators in slippers and he doesn't look back.

EXT. DAKOTA CONDOMINIUM - CONTINUOUS

Cornelius strolls aimlessly.

People stare at him.

He imagines Sunshine again, in the sidewalk who comes toward him.

He decides to ignore the vision; she stops as he passes her by, her jaw drops.

SUNSHINE

Are you shunning me now?

CORNELIUS

Are you the real Sunshine?

SUNSHINE

Yes, I mean no. I'm Rachel...but call me as you like. Can I ask you a question?

Cornelius smiles and nods.

SUNSHINE

Are you out of your mind?

Cornelius, happy, hugs her.

CORNELIUS

Do you mind to promenade with me?

He doesn't stops, he crosses the road.

SUNSHINE

What are you up to?

Sunshine follows him.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

They enter in the Park.

CORNELIUS

I lost everything. I'm looking for a spot to spend the night.

They continue to walk. Finally they stop, it's the same bench where he spent the night.

CORNELIUS

This looks like a suitable spot.

SUNSHINE

Tell me about it.

They sit at the bench. Cornelius looks at the Dakota.

CORNELIUS

This terrible woman, she possesses my residence and my riches now.

Birds chirp and tweet and follow the couple.

CORNELIUS (CONT'D)

She wants to marry me, but I can't.

SUNSHINE

Why?

CORNELIUS

My heart doesn't belong to her.

Sunshine smiles.

SUNSHINE

I remember when I met you in this park and you were hopelessly lost.

Cornelius giggles.

CORNELIUS

It's my new home now.

SUNSHINE

That day I made a promise to myself. Don't let this man gets lost anymore. Never.

CORNELIUS

But now I know the exit.

He places his hand on the bench.

SUNSHINE

And I will.

Her hand goes to the bench, looking for Cornelius' hand, but he suddenly stands up, excited.

CORNELIUS

Hey this is it! I found the opposite of still life.

SUNSHINE

What?

CORNELIUS

Love. I was looking for the genesis of Still Life and I found the opposite: the genesis of happiness. Love.

SUNSHINE

Do you?

CORNELIUS

Like Columbus' quest for India led him to America.

Cornelius kneels down.

SUNSHINE

Oh boy, this is not the first time.

CORNELIUS

I know, but this time is for real.

SUNSHINE

Let me ask you something...

CORNELIUS

Sunshine, Ingrid's daughter or
Rachel, Mossad Nazi hunter, whoever
you are, do you want to...

Cornelius picks up from the pocket his big mother ring
and puts on Sunshine finger.

SUNSHINE

Oh, sure it's a diamond bonanza!

CORNELIUS

I told you! So, do you want to...

SUNSHINE

What do you think, if we hurry up
and we marry today, there is a
chance that it's not too late and
you can have everything back?

The sun comes out of the trees, lovers walk holding hands,
mothers push strollers, an OLD MAN pushes an OLD WOMAN's
wheelchair. They eat ice-creams.

FADE TO BLACK.