

VISA

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FIRST DRAFT

EXT. EMPTY HIGHWAY - DUSK

A figure watches a spectacular sunset that stretches across to the horizon, the sky an amazing pallet of orange and pink. This is RAYMOND MARSHALL, a young man in his mid-twenties, disheveled and dirty, covered in scratches and bruises. Congealing blood runs down the side of his face from a nasty gash on his temple. He is defeated, deflated, having been through a great ordeal.

Broken glass lies strewn across the road. Dozens of MISSING PERSON posters float about in the breeze, the subject a beautiful girl around Raymond's age. Approaching sirens can be heard in the distance, the red and blue lights flashing out of focus behind him. Raymond turns to look at the police drawing nearer and smirks, revealing blood-smearred teeth.

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS

The title -

VISA

- is displayed onscreen.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Raymond waits at a bus stop for his morning ride to university. He sits in a defensive posture, bent forward, cigarette between his lips, busily scribbling in a large sketchbook, backpack on the ground between his legs.

A pretty young mother with her infant take a seat beside him. Raymond freezes, quickly slamming the sketchbook shut. Not wanting to smoke near the baby but worried if he gets up the girl will take offense, he ultimately throws the cigarette away.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC BUS - MORNING

Raymond rides the bus, keeping to himself and staring out the window. A snooty woman prattles away loudly on her mobile phone a couple of seats ahead of him.

WOMAN

So this morning I forced myself
to jump on the scales, first time

WOMAN
 since I started the whole
 weight-loss program. I was
 skeptical Diane, I tell you. I
 really thought it had to be a
 scam.

The pretty young mother and her infant sit nearby, the
 baby eyeing Raymond off inquisitively. Raymond smiles and
 pulls a silly expression at the child, who giggles.

WOMAN
 But you won't believe what
 happened next... (high-pitched
 laughter) you're horrible! When I
 finally forced myself to look, I
 noticed I had lost seventeen
 kilos. I'm serious, seventeen
 kilos - in less than a month!

The mother notices the baby's reaction and grins. She
 leans over to Raymond.

YOUNG MOTHER
 I wish that loudmouth would lose
 seventeen kilos off her tongue.

This sudden interaction startles Raymond. He glances over
 at her.

RAYMOND
 (shyly)
 Heh, yeah.

Raymond returns his gaze to the window. The mother appears
 a little taken aback by his basic response.

WOMAN
 I tell you what Diane, it made my
 day! I'll be a yummy mummy back
 on the beach in my bikini in no
 time! (more high-pitched
 laughter)

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Raymond climbs off at his stop and watches as the bus
 pulls out, disappearing from view. He sighs and adjusts
 his backpack, before crossing the road towards his
 destination.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIVERSITY ART ROOM - MORNING

Raymond enters the classroom and takes a seat beside his best friend JON, early twenties. A handful of students go about their business but the room is fairly empty. A plaster-cast statue of a naked woman's head and torso sits on a table in the center of the room. Jon is shaping something out of clay.

JON

Hey-hey Ray.

RAYMOND

What's gone on, Jon?

Raymond produces the sketchbook from his backpack. He looks over at his friend, who seems to be struggling with his replication of the model.

RAYMOND

It's looking good.

JON

Oh, nah, it's not meant to be her. I'm making a present for you. It's going to be a big cock.

RAYMOND

(smirking)

Thanks.

Raymond turns to a blank page and begins sketching the statue. He works fast, expertly. He is no stranger, nor amateur, to art. Jon glances over at his friend's handiwork, then looks down at his own project and frowns.

JON

How was your weekend, man?

RAYMOND

Yeah, alright. Just stayed at home. Watched TV. Worked on some sketches. How was yours?

JON

You heard of Club Peach?

RAYMOND

I don't go to clubs.

JON

(laughs)

I know you don't, that's why I didn't ask you to come. I decided I'd check it out Saturday night.

RAYMOND

How was it?

JON

Wasn't too bad. Decent music, nice layout. Drink prices were a bit steep. One thing I thought was a bit odd though, there were hardly any girls. A few here and there, but male to female ratio was completely uneven. Anyway, I thought I'd give it a chance. Bought a drink, sat down. Next minute, this really flowery-looking dude walked up to me. Sparkly singlet, jeans so tight he almost poked me in the eye. He started talking to me, not about football and stuff either.

Raymond pauses to look over at his friend.

RAYMOND

You had a gay guy come on to you?

JON

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against that kind of thing. I guess in a way I was kind of flattered. I made friendly small-talk with him, you know, so I didn't hurt his feelings. But then he slid closer to me and I had to put him in his place.

RAYMOND

What did he do?

JON

He asked me what I was doing in a gay bar if I wasn't interested in guys.

Raymond stops drawing again.

RAYMOND

You went to a gay bar?

JON

Hey, I had no idea! Though now I think of it, with a name like Club Peach... I guess all the dicks in my mouth was a good indication too.

The two friends laugh.

JON

Hope you have more girl gossip than I do, man.

RAYMOND

No, no, not really. Well, there was this one girl on the bus this morning...

Jon puts his clay down and turns to his friend, poking and prodding him, excited.

JON

Yeah? Spill the beans, what happened? Did you get her number?

RAYMOND

No, nothing happened. She talked to me, and I froze. Same old story.

Jon sits back, disappointed.

JON

Man, you really need to-

RAYMOND

I know, I know. It's just that... I don't know. I'd be way better talking to girls, if I didn't have to... talk to them.

JON

Well, just don't give up man, okay? You'll get there. Which reminds me, you still up for Hog's tomorrow night?

RAYMOND

Yeah, yeah. Of course.

JON

Great. I've got a surprise for you.

Raymond turns to his friend.

RAYMOND

Jon, if you-

JON

Hey, hey, trust me. You'll like it.

RAYMOND

You know how I feel about your surprises.

JON

Hey, you'll like this one, relax.

Raymond sighs, and returns to his drawing. Jon continues mucking about with his clay.

JON

So, if you had to suck a cock, or get fucked in the arse, what would you choose?

RAYMOND

What?

JON

Pick one. If you absolutely had no choice, would you suck a cock or get fucked in the arse?

Raymond doesn't seem as startled by this question as one should be, having grown accustomed to Jon's crude sense of humour.

RAYMOND

I don't know, I'd do an arse I guess.

JON

No, no, that's not an option. It's got to be your arse.

RAYMOND

Then I guess I'd suck a cock.

Jon plonks his finished work down in front of Raymond, a crudely-sculptured penis.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

Raymond and Jon exit the building.

JON

You want a ride home, man?

RAYMOND

Nah that's okay. Thanks anyway.

JON

Alright. Don't forget tomorrow night, okay?

RAYMOND

I won't. So long, Jon.

JON
Another day, Ray!

Jon walks off toward his car. Raymond digs his hands into his pockets and heads off in the opposite direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - EVENING

As Raymond heads down the street he spots a CD on the footpath. It is a homemade compilation with an incredibly detailed hand-drawn cover, a track listing, and personal messages written inside. The case is shattered and the disc is scratched beyond repair. This makes Raymond's heart sink, the fact that somebody went to so much trouble for a loved one and wasn't appreciated.

He reaches his destination, a grassy hill that overlooks the city (a place he often visits to reflect). He sits down to admire the view, pulling out his sketchbook again as the sun begins to set.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Raymond arrives home at his father's house. He enters the lounge room and finds his dad VANCE passed out in his armchair with a half-empty bottle of bourbon beside him. Raymond puts a blanket over his father and heads into the kitchen. Family photos seen briefly in the background around the house only contain Raymond and Vance; no siblings, no mother.

Raymond takes his dinner from the fridge, microwaves it and carries it to his room. He closes the door, switches the radio on softly and retires to his desk. Dozens of amazing sketches and drawings cover the desktop and walls. He eats his dinner quietly and when finished he lights up a cigarette as he continues working on an unfinished picture. This whole routine seems all too familiar to him.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Raymond eats breakfast with his dad at the kitchen table. We see Vance clearly for the first time, wearing navy-blue work overalls, in his late forties but appearing much older due to worry lines from stress and alcohol. The two sit quietly, eating their cereal, until Vance breaks the silence.

VANCE
Got much planned today Ray?

RAYMOND
No, not really. Might go for a walk later. Meeting Jon at Mahogany's tonight.

VANCE
Oh, great. How's he doing?

RAYMOND
Yeah, he's good.

VANCE
How's school?

RAYMOND
There's talk of Irma Bruges coming in to speak to us about her paintings.

VANCE
Oh, cool. That's the artist who's been in the paper recently, yeah?

RAYMOND
Yeah, that's her.

VANCE
Wasn't she the one who did that three hour video of a guy sitting at a table eating chicken wings?

RAYMOND
(smiling)
It was more like five hours I think. But yeah, that was her.

VANCE
Can't understand how that's art. Don't get me wrong, I can appreciate a good Mona Lisa. But watching someone stuffing their face for that long... beats me.

Raymond laughs.

RAYMOND
Nothing's definite yet, the teacher's still trying to organize it.

The two eat in silence for a moment longer.

RAYMOND

How's work?

VANCE

Good, good. I only have a couple of shifts this week, but Jack's put in for a couple of days off next weekend so I'll be taking his place, getting paid double-time. I thought maybe when that pay comes through we could go away for a couple of days, head down the coast or something, spend a bit of time together?

RAYMOND

Yeah, that'd be cool, dad.

Vance smiles. Another short silence follows.

VANCE

So, you doing okay Raymond?

RAYMOND

Yeah, sure. I guess. You?

Vance nods.

VANCE

Do you need any money? For art supplies, or...

RAYMOND

No, I'm okay. Thanks dad.

Vance finishes his breakfast and gets up from the table.

VANCE

I better get going. Have a good day, buddy. I'll see you tonight.

RAYMOND

Alright, dad.

Vance leaves the room. Raymond stares after his dad before returning to his breakfast.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND MAHOGANY BAR - NIGHT

Raymond sits alone at a corner couch. The place is crowded and loud. Drunken sleazy guys surround him, noisy and vulgar as they try and seduce girls, but Raymond is silent with his fingers crossed in his lap, head lowered. He watches people out of the corner of his eye nervously;

worried they might approach him, not having consumed enough alcohol to cloud his insecurity.

His eyes fall upon an attractive girl's arse crack and feels embarrassed when he realizes he has probably been staring for too long.

Jon walks up carrying a jug of beer and two glasses, and Raymond raises his head.

JON
Sorry for the wait, man.

Jon hands him his drink and takes a seat. Raymond takes a sip of his beer. Jon glances at his friend.

JON
You okay Ray?

RAYMOND
Yeah. Sorry.

JON
What's on your mind?

Raymond shakes his head.

JON
Go on, man.

Raymond sighs.

RAYMOND
Just annoyed at myself. There's so many gorgeous girls here. Look at these guys, they're naturals when it comes to female interaction.

JON
You realise that most of these guys are desperate douche bags who'll take some poor girl home, have their fun, sneak out in the morning, and repeat the whole cycle next time? What kind of cruel, lonely existence is that?

RAYMOND
I know. I just wish I had a shot with someone.

JON
Hey mate, any girl would be lucky to have you. You're far better than anyone in this bar. You just need to let that be known.

RAYMOND
Easier said than done. I'm going
out for a smoke.

Two attractive girls enter and approach the bar. Jon spots them.

JON
Hold up for a sec, your surprise
is here. Hey, I'll be right back,
okay?

Raymond watches as Jon advances toward the girls, making small talk before gesturing in his direction. Raymond freezes.

RAYMOND
(under his breath)
Oh shit. Jon, what are you doing?

Jon stays at the bar with the first girl as the second strolls up to Raymond. Jon gives him a wink and a thumbs-up, and Raymond, unsure what else to do, quickly sculls his beer for liquid courage.

GIRL
Hey, I'm Michelle. You must be
Raymond.

RAYMOND
(smiling nervously)
Hi.

Michelle sits down next to him. Their faces are uncomfortably close for eye-contact. Raymond looks around desperately.

MICHELLE
So, what do you do?

RAYMOND
Sorry?

MICHELLE
(yelling over the loud
music)
What do you do?

RAYMOND
Art... I study art. With Jon.

MICHELLE
That's great. I love art.

Having found common ground, combined with the sculled beer, Raymond relaxes a little.

RAYMOND

Do you draw?

MICHELLE

I paint. All kinds of things.
Still life, abstract,
self-portraits, whatever feels
right at the time. I'm pretty
crappy at it, but I enjoy it
anyway. It relaxes me. Do you
have a favourite artist?

Raymond misses all of this due to all the noise. He nods and smiles. Michelle awaits an answer, and Raymond starts to panic.

MICHELLE

Who is it?

Raymond panics.

RAYMOND

I- I'm sorry, I...

Raymond hurries outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jon exits the bar to find Raymond sitting against a wall smoking a cigarette, angry and frustrated with himself.

JON

What's up man?

RAYMOND

What the fuck did you do that
for, Jon?

JON

What?

RAYMOND

Sending her over like that. Loud
bar, no warning. Didn't even give
me a chance to get drunk.

JON

I'm sorry, I knew if I told you,
you wouldn't have wanted to come.
I figured if I dropped it on you,
no warning, you'd have no chance
to get all flustered.

Ray sighs and throws his cigarette away.

JON

Look mate, I'm not superior to you in any way. Hell, you're better-looking than me. Smarter. Funnier. Way more talented. You know the only thing I have that you don't?

Raymond looks at his friend.

JON

I'm not talking about a big dick. Mine's pretty pathetic.

Raymond laughs.

JON

You got to have confidence. Some faith in yourself. And a dash of just not giving a shit. If you meet a girl, you talk to her and you make a fool of yourself, who cares? If she's a decent person she won't. You just got to relax, be yourself. And believe in yourself, man. You shouldn't be stressing that you're not good enough. You should be standing tall, wondering if they're good enough for you.

Raymond smiles.

JON

I'm being serious now, dickhead.

RAYMOND

I know. Thanks Jon.

JON

I don't know, man. You should... I don't know... You ever thought of trying to meet someone on the net?

RAYMOND

What?

JON

Online dating. Might be perfect for you. You wouldn't need to worry about the initial face to face interaction so you'd probably be more relaxed and make a better first impression. Everyone's a keyboard warrior.

RAYMOND

I don't know. Seems kind of weird, not knowing who you're talking to. Could be anybody.

JON

Yeah, well, just a thought... So what do you want to do now?

RAYMOND

I think I might head home, sorry man. Not really in the drinking mood anymore. You should head back inside though, it's still early and I don't want to mess up your night.

JON

You sure? Want me to come with you? Or we can head to my place, drink some more there, listen to music or something?

RAYMOND

Nah, thanks anyway. Go and have fun.

JON

Alright mate. Only if you're sure.

RAYMOND

So long, Jon.

JON

Another day, Ray!

Jon makes his way back to the bar. Raymond sighs and heads down the street, lighting up another cigarette.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Raymond arrives home and finds Vance passed out with his bottle of bourbon again. He carries out the usual routine and heads to his room to work on his drawing. When finished he sits back to analyze the end product: A powerful barbarian fights off mythical beasts with his mighty sword while shielding a beautiful woman clad in a leopard skin bikini behind him.

RAYMOND

Keyboard warrior, eh?

He turns on his laptop and opens up a search engine. Typing in INTERNET DATING and clicking on the top result leads him to a dating website, CYBERCUPID.COM. Raymond frowns but continues on, clicking on CREATE A PROFILE. The site asks for a recent, clear photo. Raymond checks photos of himself on the computer but all are unsuitable. He tries to capture a decent photo with his phone's camera. After many unsuccessful attempts, he finally succeeds, and uploads it to the website.

The next thing the site asks for is a description of Raymond; Name, Age, Height, Weight, Occupation, Smoker/Drinker, Hobbies, Partner Preferences, First Date Preferences... The list goes on and on. Raymond looks at the list dauntingly but takes a deep breath and begins typing.

When finally done, he clicks SUBMIT. The site now allows him to view female profiles. Raymond types in some Search Preferences; Female, between 20 and 30 years of age. Thousands of search results appear in summary view, and Raymond begins studying them. After the first 20 pages none have really appealed to him. He rubs his eyes and sighs, skipping thousands of results by clicking on LAST PAGE. His eyes widen as he spots a particular photo and profile summary. He clicks on it to get the full details.

The photo of OLENA KOVALENKO, 22 years old, from Kharkiv, Ukraine, stares back at him. Long dark flowing hair, deep green eyes you could drown in, a beautiful innocent smile. Raymond can't take his eyes off her. He reads over her profile thoroughly and stares at her again. He hovers the mouse arrow over SEND CONTACT REQUEST, before finally clicking. He leans back in his chair with an optimistic smile.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Raymond has passed out on his bed, computer in his lap. A chiming sound wakes him. He opens his eyes, still groggy from sleep and stares at the bedside clock: 1:22AM. Turning to his computer, he notices the words "CONTACT REQUEST ACCEPTED" onscreen. A chat window appears; Olena is talking to him. Raymond freezes in disbelief.

RAYMOND

Oh shit.

OLENA

(typing)

HELLO RAYMOND, THANKS FOR
DROPPING ME A LINE. I HAD A READ
OF YOUR PROFILE AND YOU SOUND
LIKE AN INTERESTING PERSON!

Raymond sits up sharply and rubs his hands through his hair, taking a deep breath before typing a response.

RAYMOND

(typing)

HEY OLENA! YOU'RE VERY WELCOME,
THANKS FOR CHOOSING TO TALK TO
ME! I THINK YOU SOUND LIKE AN
INTERESTING PERSON TOO, AND IF
YOU DON'T MIND ME SAYING, YOU ARE
VERY PRETTY.

Raymond hits the enter key, and winces.

RAYMOND

Shit.

He averts his eyes from the screen. The computer chimes again. Heart pounding, he reluctantly looks up.

OLENA

(typing)

THANK YOU, YOU'RE VERY SWEET!
PLEASE, TELL ME MORE ABOUT
YOURSELF? JUDGING BY YOUR PROFILE
I THINK WE MIGHT HAVE A LOT IN
COMMON!

Raymond smiles, relaxing.

FADE TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Raymond is typing away confidently, smiling to himself from Olena's responses.

OLENA

(typing)

WELL I BETTER GO SORRY RAY. I'VE
REALLY ENJOYED CHATTING WITH YOU,
LET'S DO IT AGAIN SOON!

RAYMOND

(typing)

THAT'S OKAY OLENA. I'VE HAD A
GREAT TIME TOO. I WOULD LOVE TO
CHAT WITH YOU AGAIN SOON.

OLENA

(typing)

UNTIL NEXT TIME THEN! GOODBYE RAY
XXX

Olena disappears from Raymond's screen, and he sits back, sighing happily.

RAYMOND

Raymond, you're a keyboard warrior.

He glances at the window; the sun is rising. The bedside clock reads 6:18am. Raymond frowns.

CUT TO:

INT. VANCE'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Raymond is awoken by a knocking on the front door. He looks at the clock and groans when he realizes it is past midday. Groggily he makes his way to the front door and opens it to reveal Jon standing there.

JON

Hey sorry man, did I wake you?

RAYMOND

Yeah, I ended up having a late one.

JON

Oh yeah? Did you go somewhere?

RAYMOND

Nah, I just came back here. Come in.

The two friends make their way to the lounge room and sit down.

JON

Just wanted to make sure you were okay after last night. I felt bad abandoning you.

RAYMOND

Don't worry about it Jon, it's all good. I was the one who left anyway. What did you get up? Catch up with the two girls?

JON

Yeah, they were still there. We sat down and had a few more drinks.

RAYMOND

Anything happen?

JON

Nah, they headed home pretty soon after. I sat there alone for a little while like some pathetic

JON
asshole, then I made tracks
myself. What about you though
mate, why are you looking so damn
pleased with yourself?

Raymond laughs.

RAYMOND
I... I may have met someone.

Jon sits up sharply.

JON
What?

RAYMOND
When I got home I decided to take
your advice. I signed up to a
dating site and I think I might
have met someone.

JON
Really? I was joking about that,
man. But hey, if you met
someone... Who is she?

RAYMOND
Her name is Olena. She's 22,
really beautiful, sweet, kind,
very easy to talk to. We chatted
all night.

JON
No shit?

RAYMOND
She works in her dad's
convenience store, a 24 hour
place. She loves movies,
traveling, reading, dancing. She
thought it was really cool that I
liked to draw, she wants to see
some of my work. She's never
really had a serious boyfriend
before, she said a lot of guys
she's met have been real jerks,
but I sounded sweet, funny,
sincere, honest. She seemed
really interested in me.

JON
That's fucking awesome man! You
got a photo or something?

RAYMOND

Oh, yeah.

Raymond shows Olena's profile picture to Jon, who looks dumbfounded.

JON

Fuck off, mate. She's model material.

RAYMOND

(laughs)

That's her.

JON

What did you say her name was?

RAYMOND

Olena. Olena Kovalenko. She's Ukrainian. Did you know Milla Jovovich is Ukrainian? I had no idea. I mean, she has a bit of an accent, but-

JON

Whoa, whoa, what? Ukrainian?

RAYMOND

Yeah.

JON

She's Ukrainian?

RAYMOND

(laughs)

Yes.

JON

From Ukriane?

RAYMOND

I'll think you'll find most Ukrainians are, Jon.

JON

I mean, she's in Ukraine right now? Not over here studying, or on a working holiday, or something like that?

RAYMOND

No, she's over there. Lives in a city called... Kharkiv. Why? What's wrong with that?

JON

Well, nothing. But that's on the other side of the world, man. You couldn't get further away if you tried.

RAYMOND

I know. But...

JON

First off, how do you know she is who she says she is? She could be anybody. A scam artist, a serial killer, a Russian Mail Order Bride-

RAYMOND

She's not Russian, Jon, she's Ukrainian.

JON

Whatever. She could be a refugee wanting money and a place to live for herself and her family and thirty cousins.

RAYMOND

I don't think she's like that. She sounded really genuine. I've got a feeling that she's someone special.

JON

Okay. Say she is, and things take off. How are you going to cope with the long distance?

RAYMOND

I don't know, man. I- I haven't thought about that. We only met last night.

JON

Maybe you should try finding someone closer to home? Someone you can meet in person after a couple of conversations.

RAYMOND

I looked at heaps of profiles. Dozens. Hers was the only one that stood out to me.

Jon sighs.

JON

Well, just be careful, yeah?
Don't get your hopes too high.
Not yet, just in case.

Raymond looks a tad disappointed at his friend's reaction.
Jon notices this.

JON

Don't get me wrong, I think it's
awesome. I'm happy for you mate,
I just don't want to see you get
hurt, that's all.

Raymond nods, unconvinced.