

DOWNSIZING

by

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&

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1

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

1

The rustic yet comfortable dwelling of a 16-PERSON CLAN. All are dressed in fur and leather, their hair long and braided. Small fires burn for warmth and cooking.

Women clean up after a meal. Men smoke pipes and converse in a language at once foreign and familiar, a blend of Nordic tongues and English. Children chase one another and play with simple wooden toys.

A young BOY intrudes on the adults to tug on the arm of TERGEHL, an elder of the clan.

BOY

Come, grandfather, tell us a story.

A weary Tergehl gently declines.

BOY (CONT'D)

Please. Please tell us a story.

Tergehl soon finds himself surrounded by a riot of begging faces. The adults look on with amusement, quietly sharing the children's eagerness.

MAN

Yes, Tergehl, it has been many lochnars since we have heard one.

(to all)

Shall we hear a story?

All chime in vigorously -- "Yes! Yes! A story!"

TERGEHL

All right. I will tell a story. But then you must all promise to go to bed.

The adults chuckle, the children shriek in delight, and all vow to be good.

2

LATER --- The clan have gathered around Tergehl, the children at his feet, eyes glimmering. 2

Grasping a gnarled staff, Tergehl scratches his chin as if the story he knows so well were difficult to recall.

TERGEHL (CONT'D)

Long, long ago, the world was very different. Giants walked the land. There were so many giants that you could not count them all even if you counted for your entire life.

(MORE)

TERGEHL (CONT'D)

These giants had enormous brains. They could speak to one another across great distances. They taught themselves to fly and traveled wherever they wished, even to the moon and the stars. Yet despite these great powers, the giants were not happy. They spoke in different tongues, worshipped different gods, and fought bitterly against one another. No matter how much they ate, the giants always wanted more. They killed all the animals, chopped down all the forests, fished all the seas. And their fires warmed the entire world, making it unbearably hot.

As Tergehl continues, we are transported to --

3 **EXT. EDVARSDEN INSTITUTE - DAY**

3

A small, tranquil "campus" of buildings.

**EDVARSDEN INSTITUTE
Bergen, Norway**

TERGEHL (V.O.)

But in one of their lands, there lived a clever wizard named Asborgön.

4 **INT. LABORATORY - DAY**

4

DR. JORGEN ASBJØRNSEN -- fifties, balding, closely trimmed beard -- works in his private lab, weary and alone.

TERGEHL (V.O.)

Saddened by his greedy fellow giants, Asborgön wished to change their harmful ways and end their needless suffering. For years he labored with his powders and potions until one day...

Dr. Asbjørnsen sedates a rat, then gives it an injection before placing it inside a stainless steel device the size of a microwave.

He makes notes, flips a switch, and watches a timer count down to zero. DING!

Dr. Asbjørnsen nods slightly. Summoning confidence, he takes Anne-Helene's hand and leads her outside.

10 **EXT. ASBJØRNSEN BACKYARD - DAY**

10

Standing on the deck, Dr. Asbjørnsen clinks a knife to a glass and speaks now in English.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Thank you, everyone. Thank you for coming today, but more importantly I want to thank you for your dedication and hard work these past many months.

Smiles and applause.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

Now then. You have probably guessed that I have something very exciting to announce -- very exciting, indeed.
(then --)
It is time.

A moment of hushed jubilation.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

No doubt the generations to come -- perhaps all of humanity -- will thank you for your bravery and commitment. But today each of you must ask whether you are truly ready to enter this new world, for there will be no turning back. So I ask you -- are you ready?

THE GROUP

Yes! Yes! We are ready!

PAN around the eager faces of all gathered.

11 **INT. CAVE - NIGHT**

11

MATCHING PAN of the troglodytes.

TERGEHL

So Asborgön cast a spell over his brave young warriors, and together they set out to live as none of them had ever lived before. These were the first of our kind.

The children look up at the elders, who nod knowingly.

Dr. Jacobsen emerges carrying a wooden box which he sets atop the podium.

DR. JACOBSEN

Thank you, Dr. Pereira. Seventy-five years ago, Mrs. Nellie Edvardsen, overcome with guilt by the fortune her late husband's family had amassed producing mustard gas during World War I, founded our institute so that the wonders of science could instead be used to help mankind. Our mission is to combat poverty, disease, natural disasters and other calamities that arise over time. In the 1950s, the institute identified over-population as mankind's single greatest long-term threat, the source of all the catastrophes we are seeing today -- extreme climate and weather events, and the devastating impact on food and water security. Among the many solutions we conceived so many years ago, one which seemed then so ambitious, so outside our grasp, has at last borne fruit. Today we are proud to unveil what we fervently believe to be the only practical, humane and inclusive remedy to humanity's gravest problem. Dr. Jorgen Asbjørnsen will now present his findings. Are you ready, doctor?

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (O.S.)

(muffled, distant)

I am ready.

Jacobsen opens the front of the box to reveal --

DR. ASBJØRNSEN, NOW JUST FIVE INCHES TALL.

As this miniature human walks out onto the podium, gasps of astonishment ripple throughout the room. Many stand to get a better look.

DR. JACOBSEN

Everyone, please take your seats.
Please!

As the audience quiets, Dr. Asbjørnsen takes his place behind a tiny podium, dons reading glasses, and removes a speech from his jacket pocket.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Dr. Pereira, esteemed colleagues.
Five years ago, building on the
research of our predecessors at the
institute, my team and I discovered a
process by which all organic material
can be reduced at the cellular level
by a ratio of approximately 2,744 to
one. Such a process converts a man
of 1.8 meters to just 12.9
centimeters. A wide array of flora
and fauna were subjected to this
process and, with the exception of
some fish and shellfish, absolutely
no side effects were detected.
Please lights.

The room dims. A GROUP PORTRAIT of the gathering at the
Asbjørnsen home appears on a screen above the stage -- the
first image in a PowerPoint presentation.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

Once the safety of the procedure was
confirmed, thirty-six brave
volunteers joined my wife Anne-Helene
and me as the very first humans to
undergo cellular reduction.

A NAKED SUBJECT poses before reduction, arms extended like Da
Vinci's Vitruvian man. Next he shows off his new TINY BODY
beside a metric ruler held by enormous fingers.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

The exact science behind reduction
itself falls outside of our
discussion today, but the process is
short and painless, with only the
mild discomfort of removal and
replacement of dental and other
prosthetics.

Now we see a RECOVERY ROOM where, wrapped in blankets,
volunteers recline on miniature Le Corbusier lounges. One
tiny man drinks from an enormous eye-dropper.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

Subjects are placed under light
sedation, and after a brief rest,
perhaps some crackers and *applesäft*,
fully recover within an hour or two.

Now a normal-sized SHORT-HAIRED DOG on a leash. The next
slide shows the same dog standing next to the ruler while a
GIANT HAND restrains him with a tiny leash.

DR. JACOBSEN

I hold in my hand all of the
uncompostable waste produced by 36
people over four years!

(holding for applause)

In this afternoon's session, we will
outline our proposal for a two- to
three-hundred year transition for the
world to transform from big to small.
We believe that with a timely embrace
of miniaturization, our seemingly
unconquerable problems of over-
population, climate change, and
insufficient food and water can
become a thing of the past, and human
life may safely thrive for millennia
to come.

(motioning off-stage)

Now we'd like you to meet some very
special people.

As the *pièce de résistance*, a cart is wheeled out carrying the
ENTIRE SMALL COMMUNITY smiling and waving. Among them, a
MOTHER nurses an infant, while at her side stands her four-
year-old son RONNI.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

And look -- there's little Ronni, the
first small baby ever born, and his
new little sister Ulrikke.

All stand, applaud, and stamp their feet in unison -- an
astounding reception.

A MONTAGE as the news travels throughout the globe --

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 17 | EXT. SRI LANKAN VILLAGE - DAY | 17 |
| | A small crowd watches the communal television. | |
| 18 | EXT. BURKINA FASO VILLAGE - DAY | 18 |
| | Brightly-attired, barefoot locals watch the report. | |
| 19 | EXT. BERING STRAITS - DAY | 19 |
| | Aleuts pause in fish-drying to catch the news. | |

TERGEHL (V.O.)
*Safrapül was not like the other
 giants. He was possessed of a kind
 and generous nature. Our tale
 tonight is the saga of Safrapül --
 his search for love, and the quest to
 fulfill his destiny.*

24

INT. DUPLEX KITCHEN - DUSK

24

Over the sound of a TV from the living room comes the voice of Paul's mother KAY.

KAY (O.S.)
 Is that you?

PAUL
 Yeah.

KAY (O.S.)
 Oh, goody.

Paul begins putting spaghetti onto a plate.

PAUL
 You hungry?

KAY (O.S.)
 I had a Healthy Choice about an hour ago.

PAUL
 You knew I was bringing you food.
 I called and asked you
 specifically --

KAY (O.S.)
 -- I know --

PAUL
 -- and then you go and eat?

KAY (O.S.)
 Just a Sesame Chicken. I'm still
 hungry. Don't make me holler.

25

INT. DUPLEX LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

25

Tethered to an oxygen tank, Kay Safranek sits in a recliner. Paul clears off a TV tray before setting down her food.

PAUL
Did you see the news today?

KAY
You mean about the little Swedish
man?

PAUL
Norwegian.

KAY
Helen called to tell me to turn on
the TV. What won't they think of
next?

PAUL
Unbelievable, isn't it? Biggest
thing since landing on the moon.
Bigger.

KAY
Well, I don't get it. Why would
anybody want to do that to himself?

PAUL
I don't know, I think plenty of
people will want to do it. You know,
the world's in pretty tough shape.

KAY
Bullshit.

Kay focuses on eating and watching TV.

PAUL
(smelling)
Did you have a cigarette?

KAY
No.

PAUL
You know, with that oxygen tank,
you're going to burn the place down.
At least you'll save me the cost of
cremation.

KAY
That's an awful thing to say. You
shut up.

26 **INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT**

26

Kay wheezes upstairs. Paul follows, toting her oxygen.

KAY

They can shrink people down and fly
to Mars, but they can't cure my
fibromyalgia?

27 **INT. KAY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

27

Kay lies bent over the bed. Paul prepares a syringe and administers a shot.

KAY

And all this fuss about the
environment. As though the world's
going to end tomorrow. I'm in pain.
I can't breathe. Doesn't that
matter?

PAUL

Lots of people are in pain, Mom. In
all sorts of ways.

28 **EXT. DUPLEX FRONT PORCH - NIGHT**

28

Paul exits one side of the duplex and enters the other.

29 **INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

29

Paul watches TV in a recliner of his own. The phone rings, and the machine picks up. It's Paul's on-again-off-again girlfriend AUDREY.

AUDREY (ON MACHINE)

*Paul, it's Audrey. I know we're not
supposed to be talking, but I thought
you should know I had to put Bodie
down today. His seizures came back a
couple months ago, and I could have
had him operated on, but they cut
back my hours at work, and he was
getting really old, and...*

(weepy)

*...I just feel so bad. Are you
there, Paul? I really need to talk.
I know you're there. Please, Paul.
Please. I miss you so much.
Pleeeeeease.*

PAUL

Fuck.

Paul picks up the phone but does not speak.

AUDREY (ON PHONE)

Paul?

PAUL

I'm here.

TERGEHL (V.O.)

And so it was that Safrapül wooed the maiden Oodreh and took her as his wife.

FADE OUT.

30 **EXT. LA CASA RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

30

This is the same establishment where we first met Paul. It's now --

NINE YEARS LATER

TALKING HEAD #1 (PRE-LAP)

Look, I'm worried about global warming as much as the next fellow, but let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

31 **INT. LA CASA RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

31

The TV over the bar shows a Fox News-style debate.

TALKING HEAD #1

This whole downsizing thing is another example of runaway-train technology leading us down a blind alley. With all the holier-than-thou talk about saving the planet, we can't ignore the devastating economic impact that'll lead to more poverty, which'll lead to more downsizing, and then more poverty, and the whole world economy going right down the toilet. Billions of dollars in consumer spending are already starting to vanish -- construction and housing, the automobile industry, the airline industry, defense.

(MORE)

TALKING HEAD #1 (CONT'D)
*And then all the political abuses --
 Israelis shrinking Palestinians,
 African dictators shrinking rival
 ethnic groups --*

As the opposing speaker interrupts, we realize he's SMALL.

TALKING HEAD #2
*Look, Ron. Ron. In any major
 transformation of society, are there
 serious growing pains? You bet. But
 we have to focus on the long term.
 The fact is that at current mass and
 volume, human life on Earth just
 isn't sustainable, and dealing with
 that head-on makes good economic
 sense, no matter how you cut it.*

We find a balder, paunchier Paul seated in a booth, enjoying
 happy hour with buddies KEVIN and TIM.

KEVIN
 The one guy's got a point. This
 family on my block just moved away to
 get small, and their house is just
 sitting there. Making everybody's
 value take a dive is what they're
 doing. Just when I'm trying to
 refinance.

TIM
 I don't know. Marlene thinks I
 should do it just to lose the weight.

Paul laughs politely, then gets a waitress's attention.

PAUL
 Say, Dee, is that take-out order
 about ready?

DEE
 Coming right up.

32

EXT. DUPLEX DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

32

Paul again emerges from his car with take-out food and climbs
 the back porch steps. The place has been spruced up a bit
 since we last saw it.

Graduate student RICH CHAVEZ pokes his head out from what used
 to be Paul's side of the duplex.

RICH
Hi, Mr. Safranek. How's it going?

PAUL
Good, good. What's up?

RICH
Hate to say it, but that toilet's
still running all the time.

PAUL
Okay, I'll call the plumber again.
Oh, and Rich, try to get your rent in
on time, okay? I hate being the bad
guy.

RICH
You got it.

Paul continues into what used to be his mother's side --

33 **INT. DUPLEX KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

33

-- and we notice it has been redecorated.

PAUL
Hey, honey, I brought food!

AUDREY (O.S.)
I'm not hungry.

34 **INT. DUPLEX LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

34

Paul enters to find Audrey lying on the sofa.

PAUL
What's wrong?

AUDREY
I have a splitting headache. It was
a super busy day at the store, and
Carla was being a total bitch on
wheels. I feel like I'm going to
throw up.

PAUL
Here, let me do the neck thing.

AUDREY
Yeah, do your little neck thing.

He stands at the end of the sofa, slips his hands underneath Audrey's head, rolls it from side to side.

PAUL

Just relax, honey. Let me take all the weight.

35 **INT. CON-AGRA FACTORY FLOOR - DAY**

35

Food boxes emerge from a packaging machine. Paul approaches factory worker SANDY, who follows him away.

TERGEHL (V.O.)

*Safrapül was a compassionate giant
and worked hard in service to others.*

36 **INT. FACTORY OFFICE - DAY**

36

Paul manipulates Sandy's hand and forearm.

PAUL

Okay, Sandy, now make a fist for me. I'm going to pull your arm down, and you try to stop me, okay? Still hurt?

SANDY

More like tingling.

PAUL

You've been icing and doing the exercises, right?

SANDY

(lying)
Yeah.

PAUL

I notice you're not wearing your brace.

SANDY

Could I get another one? I think I left it in my ex's car.

37 **INT. SHOE STORE - DAY**

37

Audrey comes out of the back carrying an armful of SHOEBOXES and heads toward a fussy CUSTOMER surrounded by many rejected options.

TERGEHL (V.O.)
*Oodreh was a hard worker, too,
 helping the local cobbler provide
 shoes for the village.*

AUDREY
 Okay, I wasn't able to find a 6-1/2
 in the plum, so I brought out black
 and brown.

CUSTOMER
 But I want plum. Do you have it in a
 seven?

Manager CARLA approaches.

CARLA
 Say, Audrey, can you stay late
 tonight? Jill's kid is sick again.

AUDREY
 (tight smile)
 How late?

38 **EXT. MCMANSION FOR SALE - DAY**

38

The Safraneks' car is parked outside.

TERGEHL
*But life was difficult for Safrapül
 and Oodreh. Like many dedicated to
 service, they were taken for granted
 and poorly rewarded.*

39 **INT. MCMANSION FOR SALE - DAY**

39

A REALTOR leads Paul and Audrey on a tour.

TERGEHL (V.O.)
*And their great sadness was that
 their dwelling was too small and
 unfit for offspring.*

IN THE KITCHEN --

Audrey admires the high-end appliances, the skylight, the view
 to the backyard. Paul hangs back, painfully aware the home is
 out of reach. Audrey turns to him, hope in her eyes.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST'S WIFE

He uses that joke like twice a week.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

So what's your field, Paul?

PAUL

Occupational therapy.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST'S WIFE

Oh, like career counseling?

PAUL

No, it's just like physical therapy, just focused on workplace injuries and rehab -- repetitive stress, lower-back, stuff like that. A lot of shoulder problems. I'm in-house at a Con-Agra plant over in Council Bluffs.

AUDREY

Mostly he does paperwork.

PAUL

Yeah, I get a little carpal-tunnel of my own sometimes.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Tell me about it. Medicine's all about covering your ass these days. Say, weren't you pre-med down in Lincoln?

PAUL

Good memory. I got two years in, but my mom got real sick and I had to move back to Omaha. Plus, Organic Chemistry.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Yeah, that gets a lot of people.

PAUL

I wanted to be a surgeon, actually. I have small hands, which they say is a real plus. Hey, we might have wound up working together. You could've been my anesthesiologist!

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Hey, how about that?

PAUL
Yeah. Wild.

44 LATER -- Dinner has not yet begun. There's still a fair amount of mingling, but many are finding their chairs. 44

Seated at his table, Paul takes a moment to look around, and his eyes fall upon felt banners with inspirational sayings -- "The door to happiness opens outward" and "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in service to others."

NEAR THE ENTRANCE a flurry of excitement suggests someone special has arrived. It's just a GUY in his mid-20s, but judging from reactions -- gasps, pointing -- it's the ACRYLIC BOX he carries that's causing the commotion.

The guy passes Paul and Audrey's table and, like everyone else, they gawk at what's inside the box --

A TINY COUPLE smiling and waving at old friends.

PAUL (CONT'D)
That's Dave! Dave Johnson. And Carol. I heard he was coming but I had no idea... Man, I never would have pegged him for someone who'd go get small. Did you see that?

AT A TABLE

The guy carrying the box -- Dave Johnson's younger brother ANDY -- sets it down and removes the top and front.

Paul and Audrey join the onlookers, many of whom are taking photos with their phones.

Dave and Carol walk out onto the table and speak through little hand-held MEGAPHONES.

DAVE
Hey, everybody! Hope we're not intruding!

Warm greetings all around. Dave places two tiny glasses where his brother can retrieve them.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Andy, could you get Carol a...
Honey, what're you having?

CAROL
Gin and tonic.

DAVE

A gin and tonic, and for me... You know what? That sounds good. I'll have a gin and tonic, too.

Andy slides the impossibly small tumblers onto his palm and heads toward the bar.

DAVE (CONT'D)

With lime!

ANDY

How am I supposed to do that?

DAVE

Just figure it out, okay?

As many migrate toward the new arrivals, a JESUIT turns on a mic at the podium.

JESUIT

Don't mean to break up the party, but the silent auction closes in fifteen minutes, and there are still some very attractive items with no takers.

45 **EXT. FRIENDS' HOUSE - NIGHT** 45

A nice, middle-class home.

46 **INT. FRIENDS' HOUSE - NIGHT** 46

At this informal after-party for an extended group of old friends, the camera makes its way through the living room, where little Carol Johnson holds court, standing on a coffee table. Friends lean in to hear better.

CAROL

We weren't going to come at first, but then we started getting all the e-mails, plus my sister was having a lump removed. She's fine, thank God, but I still needed to see her.

SOME FRIEND

So what's traveling like? How'd you get up here from New Mexico?

CAROL

Oh, we flew. Airlines are getting more and more small-friendly.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

They make it really easy, and all the seats are first class...

We continue on to --

47

THE KITCHEN

47

-- where Paul is amid a heart-to-heart with Dave, seated atop a box of Ak-Mak Crackers.

DAVE

So after a couple years in Florida, I moved out to Vegas and --

PAUL

I remember. I think that's about the last time we talked.

DAVE

Yeah. Vegas wasn't such a good choice for me, as it turns out. Got into some real bad habits. Pretty much hit rock bottom.

PAUL

Sorry to hear that.

DAVE

Any other woman would have run for the hills, but Carol, man, she's a saint. She stuck with me. But I really had to come clean about everything. And I mean everything. You know, almost.

PAUL

And the decision to...
(makes a shrinking motion)

DAVE

Well, that's the thing. We both needed a change. You know, start all over.

PAUL

It must feel good knowing you're making a real difference, too.

DAVE

You mean all that crap about saving the planet? Downsizing is about saving yourself. Takes the pressure right off, especially money pressure.

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm just not, you know, driven and ambitious like the rest of my family. It's not who I am. Now Carol and I, we live like kings -- a hell of a lot better than my brothers and my sister, I'll tell you that. I send them pictures all the time, but they never respond.

PAUL

Well, I'm still living in the same house I grew up in. Audrey's dying for us to move, but we're pretty strapped. Plus, my mom's end-of-life care really took a toll. I mean, shit, I just finished paying off my student loans.

DAVE

Well, listen, if you ever start thinking about it seriously, here's my two cents. There are lots of small communities cropping up out there, but don't mess around. Leisureland's where you want to be. They are a little pricier, but they were the first, and they're still way ahead of the curve.

PAUL

They've sure got a big marketing budget.

DAVE

Lots to brag about. Best houses, best appliances, best doctors, they book all the big concert tours, got all the great restaurants. The kids love Cheesecake Factory and Leisureland's got three of them. And I'm not just saying all this for the referral credit.

(off Paul's laugh)

Hey, sorry, could you back up a little? I think there's too much garlic in that salsa.

PAUL

Oh, right.

DAVE

Or floss or something. I don't know.

Suddenly a child's SCREAM. Alarmed, Paul heads into the living room, where he finds the HOSTS comforting their four-year-old DAUGHTER, who has wandered downstairs and is scared out of her wits by the sight of little Carol.

HOST MOM

It's okay, Katie. It's okay. She's a friend. She's just smaller than we are, that's all.

CAROL

Hi, Katie! Hi! I won't bite.

48

INT. DUPLEX - NIGHT

48

Paul and Audrey come in the door, exhausted but still buzzing about their unusual evening.

AUDREY

Well, that was sure interesting.

PAUL

I'll say.

AUDREY

I liked little Carol. She's got a lot on the ball. She's reading all the books she always wanted to, and she's learning Italian. And she says she's never been fitter.

PAUL

They sure seem happy. Dave says he's getting pretty good on the drums.

AUDREY

Next year they're pulling the kids out of school to spend six months at a sister city in Tuscany. Cooking classes, yoga, wine-tasting, the whole nine yards.

PAUL

(checking his phone)
Uh-oh. Honey?

Paul plays a message on speakerphone.

VOICEMAIL

Hi, guys. Milo here from Goodman Mortgage.

(MORE)

VOICEMAIL (CONT'D)

Hate to say it, but your application at First National bounced back. The underwriter didn't like the adjustments in the appraisal. Like I said, the market for a hundred-year-old duplex with structural issues is pretty soft, and there are red flags from an underwriter's perspective. I can try somewhere else, but frankly I think you're going to need more cash up front if we want to get approved on the type of property you're looking at.

Paul and Audrey share a weighty, defeated look.

49 **EXT. STATE LINE - DAY**

49

The Safraneks' car zooms by a sign -- WELCOME TO NEW MEXICO, LAND OF ENCHANTMENT.

A50 **INT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY**

A50

As they drive --

PAUL

I bet we'll be able to tell right away if it's for us or not.

AUDREY

Yeah, so let's not waste time. Maybe could get to Santa Fe earlier and get a massage.

PAUL

Sounds good to me. Like we said, we're just checking it out. No harm, no foul.

50 **EXT. PAUL'S CAR - NEW MEXICO HIGHWAY - DAY**

50

Paul and Audrey's car continues through the desert and passes a huge BILLBOARD.

NEXT EXIT!

**Tony Dale's
LEISURELAND ESTATES**

GET READY FOR MORE!

TONY DALE (CONT'D)

Each and every one of you can be among the lucky ones to take this great leap forward, enjoy the prosperity you deserve, and, most importantly, help protect our precious planet. Join me, won't you, as we take a look at the creation of the world's first luxury community designed entirely to make anyone's biggest dreams come true -- Leisureland Estates.

55 **INT. SMALL PLANE - DAY**

55

In the copilot's seat, Tony turns around and speaks as though we're in the back.

TONY DALE

The first order of business was to find the perfect location -- not too cold in the winter, not too hot in the summer. No earthquakes, no tornados, no hurricanes. And no pesky mosquitoes. Yep, everything had to be just right.

The pilot points out something below, and Tony raises binoculars to take a look.

56 **INSERT - A MAP OF THE UNITED STATES**

56

ZOOM in on New Mexico.

TONY DALE (V.O.)

Our search led us to the ideal spot -- where we are right now -- ten square miles of high desert on New Mexico's Vasquez Plateau.

57 **EXT. VASQUEZ PLATEAU - DAY**

57

Twine on surveyor's stakes winds through cacti and scrub.

In work clothes and sun hat, Tony paces out a distance, then stops and points broadly at the ground, giving confident directions to offscreen crew.

58 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY**

58

ACADEMICS give a presentation with charts and graphs. Tony sits up front nodding thoughtfully.

TONY DALE (V.O.)

Next I gathered a team of top urban planners, architects and engineers from around the world to answer a simple question, "How can we design the most efficient and innovative city the world has ever known?"

59 **INT. LEISURELAND DESIGN BULLPEN - DAY**

59

ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS work at computers and drafting tables. Others build maquettes.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Wielding a pointer and surrounded by his team, Tony reviews an enormous tabletop model of Leisureland.

TONY DALE (V.O.)

Each dwelling would be a dream house, a genuine estate within anyone's reach. Mass transit would be free and efficient. The streets would be neat and orderly, offering easy access to shops, schools, parks, medical services, and of course all the recreation and entertainment you can imagine.

Now RENDERINGS of different neighborhoods -- Alpine Village, New Orleans Quartier, Fairway Manors, The Marina.

TONY DALE (V.O.)

Each neighborhood would accent our residents' interests, diverse lifestyles and hobbies.

60 **INT. TONY DALE'S OFFICE - DAY**

60

Tony addresses us from behind his desk.

TONY DALE

But no matter how much care we put into designing Leisureland, it's really the people who make our community so special. So now I'd like to introduce you to some actual residents who are eager to tell you more.

As the movie ends, the screen begins to rise and Tony turns his gaze vaguely downward...

TONY DALE (CONT'D)
Okay, folks, take it away!

..returning us to --

61 **INT. LEISURELAND THEATER - DAY**

61

Stage lights illuminate, theme music begins, and a platform thrusts past the rising screen. On the platform sits a downsized MANSION with swimming pool and tennis court.

Tanned sales professional JEFF LONOWSKI steps out of the front door wearing a headset mic, trailed by a tiny CAMERAMAN who transmits Jeff's image onto a large screen.

JEFF
 Thanks, Mr. Dale. Welcome, everybody. I'm Jeff Lonowski, Senior Product Specialist and happy homeowner here at Leisureland Estates. Are you having a good time?
 (off initial response)
 Come on, guys. You're a heck of a lot bigger than I am. Make some noise! Are you having a good time?

Paul and Audrey join the enthusiastic response. "Yes!"

JEFF (CONT'D)
 That's more like it. So what do you think of my place? Pretty nifty, huh? It's the house of my dreams. Heck, I'd say it's the house of anybody's dreams. Why, an average guy like me might have to work twenty, thirty, even forty years to be able to afford a spread like this. And just wait until you see what's inside.

The house splits open to reveal the massive family room, enormous bedrooms, airy kitchen. In the master suite upstairs, and with a CAMERA GUY all her own, Jeff's "wife" LAURA sits in a bubble bath.

LAURA
 (headset mic)
 Jeff, you've got to stop inviting guests over without telling me!

JEFF

Sorry, Laura. I was only --

LAURA

I mean, I finally got in the tub to relax after such a busy day.

JEFF

Busy doing what, sweetheart?

LAURA

Oh, no end of things. First I took a tennis lesson and had a massage. Then after a gourmet lunch with the girls, we just couldn't help ourselves and popped into that new Loget's store downtown.

JEFF

Uh-oh, Loget's. What's that going to cost me?

LAURA

Now, Jeff, you hush. I was really good. Just a diamond bracelet.

The cameraman zooms in for a close-up of the sparkling jewelry, eliciting admiring "oohs" from audience members.

JEFF

Just a diamond bracelet? That doesn't sound like you.

LAURA

(pulling her hair back)
And matching diamond earrings. And the matching diamond necklace.
(as Jeff crosses his arms)
Oh, Jeff, they look so good on me. Wait till you --

JEFF

How much, Laura?

LAURA

Now, Jeff --

JEFF

I said how much?

LAURA

(sheepish)
Sixty-two dollars.

JEFF

Sixty-two dollars? Are you crazy?
Why, that's practically our food
budget for two whole months!

62 **INT. VIEWING CORRIDOR - DAY**

62

The exit doors of the theater snap open.

Along with the rest of the audience, Paul and Audrey step onto a wide walkway. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer a first glimpse at the actual city of Leisureland.

The initial impression is both impressive and banal. It's partially like a miniature theme park and partially like any other mid-sized city.

But a couple of unusual features stand out. One is a giant FERRIS WHEEL. Another is the CENTRAL TOWER, which functions both as a "tent pole" for the overhead netting and as the transfer station for an innovative and fanciful mass transit system -- GONDOLAS traveling on cables above the city.

63 MOMENTS LATER -- Paul and Audrey peruse model homes ranging from one-story ranches through three-story McMansions -- "The Regency," "The Barrington," "The Aristocrat," "The Mediterranean," "The Sportsman."

63

At the top end, like a sumptuous Bel-Air estate, is "The Versailles," boasting a sticker price of \$129,999.

64 **INT. SALES AREA - DAY**

64

A tracking shot through an ocean of sales desks ends on Paul and Audrey, where a chipper SALESPERSON walks them through a print-out of their finances.

SALESPERSON

So putting it all together, if you liquidate your current home, vehicles and other assets, and purchase a Regency-level estate -- that's a 12,000-square-foot-equivalent home on a 1.5-acre-equivalent lot -- at the base price of \$63,000. Plus \$4,500 for the Health and Fitness package. That's the gym, pool, sauna/steam, hot tub, and tennis court. Then the medical procedure for two adults. That's \$15,000.

PAUL

Does insurance cover any of that?

SALESPERSON

No, but at Regency level you're already qualifying for a substantial discount. And don't forget the federal tax credit. So, figuring in your current debt, your retirement accounts and your savings, you're looking at approximately \$152,000 in equity, which is a very comfortable number.

AUDREY

Comfortable? That doesn't sound like nearly enough.

SALESPERSON

You have to look at this column, Audrey. Equivalent value. You're solidly inside the Blue Chip zone. In Leisureland your \$152,000 translates into around \$12.5 million -
- to live on, for life.

AUDREY

Hold on. If this is such a great thing, how come you haven't done it?

SALESPERSON

I would in a heartbeat, but my husband had a hip replacement, so he's ineligible. But look around you. If you come back in a month, you won't see most of my co-workers still here. People take jobs just for the discount. Did you see Jeff's little show upstairs -- the house that opens up? He used to sit right over there. Of course, he doesn't have to work anymore, but he's a real ham -- just loves the attention. Anyway, how's all this sounding? Would the Regency be your first choice? Or should we be looking at something a little more deluxe?

Audrey looks at Paul.

PAUL

Honey, pick anything you like. I just want you to be happy.

She beams.

65 **EXT. DUPLEX FRONT YARD - DAY**

65

Paul and Audrey oversee a RUMMAGE SALE of their belongings.
Downsizing! Everything Must Go!

 SOME OLD GUY
How much for the hot dog cooker?

 PAUL
Four dollars.

 SOME OLD GUY
I'll give you a dollar.

 AUDREY
Sold.

66 **INT. CON-AGRA PLANT - DAY**

66

Paul finishes working with a FACTORY WORKER with a bad arm.

 PAUL
Keep up those exercises. Don't get
lazy. I laminated everything for
you, so no excuses.

 FACTORY WORKER
Thank you, Paul. Thank you so much.
My wife and me, maybe someday we'll
get small too and we'll visit you.

 PAUL
That'd be great, but in the
meantime...

Paul squeezes and unsqueezes his hand, reinforcing an
exercise.

67 **INT. CON-AGRA BREAK ROOM - DAY**

67

CO-WORKERS throw Paul a small goodbye party. Atop the cake is
a joke design in frosting about getting small.

68 **EXT. CON-AGRA PARKING LOT - DAY**

68

An emotional Paul walks to his car carrying a box of
belongings. It's the last time he'll ever see the place he's
spent so many years.

69 **EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

69

A perennially "hip" restaurant for the middle-aged.

70 **INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT**

70

A farewell party occupies the back. Friends and family gather around four or five reserved tables. We catch snippets of conversations with different FRIENDS -- first up is GINA.

AUDREY

I mean, sure, I was on the fence about it for most of the year. It's pretty scary when you think about it at first. But then when my college roommate Patty Loomis called to say she and her husband were doing it, and all the reasons why, I turned to Paul and said okay, you win. Let's go for it.

GINA

(hugging her)

I'm just going to miss you so much.

AUDREY

Oh, Gina, I'm going to miss you too. But, you know, it's not like we're dying. We're just relocating and changing things up a bit. We'll be back at least once a year. And you and Tim can come down and stay with us anytime. We have like five guest rooms. Open invitation. Stay as long as you like.

Gina laughs through tears at this joke.

71 **LATER -- BARRY talks with Paul and Audrey.**

71

BARRY

And you guys didn't consider Treasure Island out in Palm Desert?

PAUL

Yeah, we checked it out, but...

(looking at Audrey)

I mean, I liked it all right, but Audrey thought they were a little stingy with the amenities, especially for what they charge in monthly maintenance.

AUDREY

And too hot. And really provincial -- everything is golf, golf, golf. And almost no diversity. Super white bread.

PAUL

Yeah, no diversity.

72 LATER -- Audrey's father LARRY LUSTIG walks in. Audrey greets 72 him with a big hug.

AUDREY

Hi, Dad.

LARRY LUSTIG

Your mother couldn't bring herself to come, but she sends her love. We're still expecting you tomorrow afternoon at the house.

Paul arrives, and the men exchange a respectful handshake.

PAUL

Glad you made it, Larry.

AUDREY

What can I get you, Dad?

PAUL

Let me. You guys visit.

LARRY LUSTIG

Oh, just a beer. Any beer.

PAUL

(exiting)
Comin' right up.

AUDREY

I wish Mom weren't taking it so hard.

LARRY LUSTIG

Well, you know your mother. To tell you the truth, I was pretty skeptical myself at first. You remember Jerry Gross. Well, I called him up the other day. He and Bev retired down there, did the whole shrinking thing you kids are doing. He says they're getting along just fine, never better. Says he feels younger every day, says one dollar buys a thousand dollars worth of stuff.

(MORE)

LARRY LUSTIG (CONT'D)

Of course they need that with all the medication Bev takes. But yeah, they play nine holes every morning. Even taking a two-week cruise up to Alaska next month. First class stateroom, gourmet food, whole nine yards. Says the whole thing's costing around \$150. No, I see the appeal. And apparently there's zero crime. That's what I keep telling your mother.

73

LATER -- The party has wound down, and Paul and Audrey enjoy a final nightcap with close friends, including Tim, a friend of Paul's we've met before. A DRUNK GUY wanders over.

73

DRUNK GUY

Hey, you guys are getting small, right?

PAUL

That's right. My wife and I.

DRUNK GUY

My friend over there has a question. No offense, but do you think if you're that small, you should still have all the same rights as the rest of us? Same right to vote?

PAUL

Why wouldn't we?

DRUNK GUY

Well, let's see. You're not buying as many products, you're not paying as much income tax, not really participating in our economy. In fact, you're costing us money. And jobs.

TIM

Hey, hey. That's enough. We're all just having a good time here.

DRUNK GUY

I'm just asking a simple academic question. If anything, a quarter-vote. At most.

TIM

(dragging him away)

Come on, buddy. Let's take a hike.

DRUNK GUY

I'm going. Or maybe an eighth!

74 **EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

74

Standing by their cars in the nearly deserted lot, Audrey and Paul give their friends a final farewell hug.

75 **INT. PAUL AND AUDREY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

75

All that remains is a mattress on the floor. Audrey sleeps as Paul reads by the dreary light of a sconce. Without warning, she begins to cry.

PAUL

Oh, honey.

Her shoulders convulse. Paul pulls off his reading glasses.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Honey, honey, I know. I know this is a big step. It's the biggest thing we'll do in our lives. I know, I know.

AUDREY

You don't know anything! You did this! Why did you have to choose such a stupid career? Why did you have to be so... unambitious? Helping people? What about helping yourself? What about helping me? You're so goddamned stubborn! You did this!

PAUL

Hey, hey, hey, that's completely unfair. You're the one who's never satisfied with anything. You're the one who says I spend too much time at work. You're the one who wants to live in a palace. You're the one who says we can't have kids until we're better off. You're the one who hates her job and hates the cold weather and --

AUDREY

I know! Don't you think I know? Shut up! Shut up!

MOTHER
Where you from?

PAUL
Omaha.

MOTHER
Spokane. Nervous?

PAUL
A little. You know.

MOTHER
Don't be. It's the best thing you'll ever do. And the medical part is no big deal. Completely painless. Except if you have a lot of dental re-dos like my Dougie here. He had to keep going back because he'd waited too long to get a root canal while he was still big. I said, Dougie, those are your teeth. You only get one set. Anyway, you don't want to hear about that. We just got back from Turks and Caicos. Have you ever been to Turks and Caicos?

PAUL AND AUDREY
No.

MOTHER
It's so pretty. Back in Spokane, we never went anywhere. But now it's so easy and so cheap. You get in this contraption down at the travel center, and you don't have to budge until you arrive at the hotel. And the best part is you don't have to take your shoes off in security. I don't like taking my shoes off once I have them on.

80 **EXT. LEISURELAND PARKING LOT - DAY**

80

The shuttle heads toward the TRANSITIONS CENTER, a building not far from the Visitors' Center.

81 **INT. COUNSELING ROOM - DAY**

81

Audrey and Paul sit across a desk from a pleasant and efficient "final step" ADMINISTRATOR.

She sorts Audrey and Paul's papers, occasionally checking her computer screen to verify information.

ADMINISTRATOR

Okay. And your medical records are up to date. Very good. And you've had no food or water for at least twelve hours, right?

PAUL

Right.

AUDREY

We're starving.

ADMINISTRATOR

Oh, Audrey, you forgot to indicate if you want the clothes you're wearing sent to someone you know or donated to charity.

AUDREY

Charity.

ADMINISTRATOR

Great. Just one last thing we need to take care of.

The Administrator adjusts a camera mounted to the top of her computer monitor.

ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)

Paul, could you scoot over a little? That's it. Perfect. With your permission I'm going to record your answers to the following questions. May I begin recording?

PAUL

Sure.

AUDREY

Of course.

ADMINISTRATOR

Please state your full legal names.

AUDREY

Audrey Lustig Safranek

PAUL

Paul Norris Safranek.

ADMINISTRATOR

Do you, Paul Norris Safranek, and you, Audrey Lustig Safranek, understand that, of your own free will, you will undergo the permanent and irreversible medical procedure commonly known as "downsizing?" And that following this procedure your bodies will be approximately .0364% of their current mass and volume?

It's getting very real now.

PAUL

Yes.

AUDREY

Yes.

ADMINISTRATOR

And do you give full consent to Gateway Medical Services, a wholly owned subsidiary of TD Enterprises, to administer the medical procedure commonly known as "downsizing?"

They check in with each other again and join hands.

PAUL

Yes.

AUDREY

Yes.

ADMINISTRATOR

Do you understand that there exists an approximately one in 225,000 chance that the procedure could result in injury, permanent disability or death?

PAUL AND AUDREY

Yes.

82

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

82

Surrounded by other nervous CLIENTS, Paul and Audrey sit holding hands. A NURSE approaches.

NURSE

Paul Safranek?

PAUL

Yes?

NURSE

Come with me, please.

AUDREY

We're together.

NURSE

Someone will escort you to the Women's Facility shortly. You will be separated for approximately five hours, and following the procedure you'll be reunited in the recovery room.

PAUL

Okay. Well, honey, I guess this is it. I'll see you tonight. On the other side.

Audrey is so emotional she can barely speak. Paul takes her in his arms.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I love you.

AUDREY

I love you, too.

Paul gives her one last squeeze. The nurse leads him away.

83 **INT. TREATMENT ROOM - DAY**

83

Along with other men, Paul is shaved -- legs, back and shoulders, scalp and eyebrows.

LATER -- Paul is now completely HAIRLESS in a hospital gown and lying on a gurney. An IV is inserted into his arm.

CLOSE on Paul as the anaesthetic takes effect.

85 **INT. COLONIC THEATER - DAY**

85

Paul is wheeled into a large, bright room with rows of colon-cleansing stations.

A TECHNICIAN rolls Paul onto one side, lubricates a tapered nozzle, and lifts the back of his gown.

PAUL
Is this... Is it over?

CHEERY NURSE
Welcome to Leisureland. Hungry?

She lugs in a normal-size two-pack of SALTINES, now comically large.

PAUL
Oh, my God.

CHEERY NURSE
Isn't that cute? People just love that.
(setting it aside)
I'll bring you a little snack in a moment.

PAUL
Thanks. Um, I think my wife was supposed to be here with me.

CHEERY NURSE
What's her name?

PAUL
Audrey Safranek.

CHEERY NURSE
(consulting a chart)
Safranek, just like yours. Let me see. We do have an Audrey Safranek scheduled for today, but I don't show her transferred over yet.

PAUL
Is something wrong?

CHEERY NURSE
No, no. She's probably just held up in dental. I'll go check.

95 **LATER --**

95

Paul sits up nervously jiggling one leg. The nurse comes back inside and offers him a telephone.

CHEERY NURSE
Mr. Safranek, you've got a call.

PAUL
 Oh.
 (answering)
 Hello?

AUDREY (ON PHONE)
 Paul.

PAUL
 Audrey, thank God. Where are you,
 honey?

AUDREY (ON PHONE)
 Don't be mad at me. Please don't be
 mad. It's hard enough as it is.

PAUL
 What's hard? What are you talking
 about?

AUDREY (ON PHONE)
 Oh, Paul, they shaved my head, then
 they started shaving off my eyebrows,
 and I just thought, what am I doing? I
 can't leave my family, all my friends.
 I can't do it. I'm sorry, Paul. I
 just can't. I'm not like you.

PAUL
 Where are you?

Silence. Then Paul overhears what sounds like a boarding
 announcement.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Are you at the airport?

96

INT. ALBUQUERQUE AIRPORT - NIGHT - INTERCUT

96

Audrey is at a PAY PHONE, her bald head hidden under a hat,
 one eyebrow desperately drawn in with mascara.

AUDREY
 (beginning to sob)
 Don't hate me. Don't hate me.

PAUL
 Okay, okay. Take it easy. Just
 get in a taxi and come back so we
 can talk about this. Okay? We'll
 go back to Omaha and think this
 through together.
 (MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)
 (an ominous silence)
 Wait. You're not leaving me here.

AUDREY
 Can't you understand how I feel? I feel terrible, Paul. I let you down, and I feel awful about it. But I realized I was just trying to make you happy. I should have been thinking more about myself.

PAUL
 Thinking about yourself? That's all you ever do! You know, you haven't even asked me how I am!

AUDREY
 Don't yell. Don't yell at me, or I'll hang up.

PAUL
 (lower)
 Do you have any idea what I've just been through? Audrey, if you don't come back here right now --

AUDREY
 And see you all small? I'm upset enough already.

PAUL
 (losing it)
 You're upset? You're upset? I'm the one who's four fucking inches tall!

Click.

97

INT. TRANSITIONS CENTER LOBBY - DAY

97

A combination of a hospital lobby and the arrivals area of an international airport. FAMILY MEMBERS wait with balloons and flowers, squealing when reunited with hairless loved ones.

A gloomy, bald Paul walks toward the exit accompanied by sunny orientation volunteer MATT.

MATT
 I was sorry to hear Mrs. Safranek couldn't make it today.

PAUL
 (correcting his pronunciation)
 Safranek.

MATT
Safranek. Well, it's not a half-
bad idea to scout things out and
get everything ready for her.

98 **EXT. TRANSITIONS CENTER - DAY**

98

Paul and Matt walk out into the sunlight, and Paul takes his first look at his new city of residence.

MATT
The net blocks a lot of UV rays, but
you still might want to put your hat
on.

They head toward a cluster of "Ride-Share" vehicles that resemble a cross between a golf cart and a Smart car.

MATT (CONT'D)
Any time you need to get somewhere,
just hop in one these bad boys. And
if they're in short supply, it's fun
to share. I've met some super people
that way. Just super.

99 **INT. RIDE-SHARE CAR - DAY**

99

Paul looks blankly out the window, absorbed in his own private agony.

MATT
Over to your right there, that
big white oval building is one of
our seven Sports Centers and the
one that houses the largest
indoor skiing facility in the
world -- you know, relatively
speaking. And over there is Lake
Chester, named for Mr. Dale's
dog.

100 **EXT. PAUL'S BLOCK - DAY**

100

The car rolls down a street and stops in front of a house eerily like the one Paul and Audrey toured back in Omaha.

MATT
Look familiar?

PAUL
That's the one.

MATT

The Barrington. Good call. My sister's got one. Loves it. Loves it. Basically like the Regency but a lot more bells and whistles. I like the colors you picked out, too. Snazzy.

(handing over a fob)

Well, sir, here's the key to your kingdom. Welcome to the good life. They stock the kitchen with some standard items, but one thing I should warn you about is the dairy -- it takes a while for your stomach to adjust to milk and cheese, so go easy. Something about the bacteria. And careful with the hot water. It's all on one central system, and they keep it cranked up pretty high. I'm surprised they haven't had a lawsuit yet.

PAUL

Thanks, Matt. You're a nice guy.

Paul gets out and trudges toward his new house.

MATT

You need anything, you call me. Anything at all. And Paul?

PAUL

Yes.

MATT

Thanks for helping the planet.

Paul gives a little wave and closes the front door as if sealing himself inside a tomb.

101 **INT. PAUL'S LEISURELAND HOUSE - DAY**

101

Walking across the foyer and into the "great room," Paul spots a bouquet, an oversized bottle of champagne, and a card.

Paul and Audrey, Welcome Home! -- Tony Dale

He walks to the windows and surveys his palatial back yard.

102 **EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY**

102

Paul wanders across.

NEWS ANCHOR

For years both the Department of Homeland Security and the INS have been warning about the ease with which downsized persons -- from illegal immigrants to potential terrorists -- could penetrate U.S. borders. Last week's discovery in Eugene, Oregon provided tragic new evidence to support that claim. Brian Fakler brings us up to date.

107B **EXT. COSTCO - DAY**

107B

BRIAN FAKLER

This Costco is just one of thousands of big-box stores around the country that import almost a million tons of goods weekly, most of it from Asia. Last week workers here in Eugene opened a suspicious TV box and discovered seventeen downsized stowaways from Vietnam, fourteen of them already dead, two more dying hours later at a local hospital.

107C **INSERT - RECYCLED PRESS CONFERENCE FOOTAGE**

107C

POLICE display the BOX in question. One stained bottom corner is perforated with tiny holes punched out for air.

BRIAN FAKLER (V.O.)

On Friday, the lone survivor, a 45-year-old woman named Ngoc Lan Tran, was transferred to a hospital at Leisureland Estates in New Mexico, widely considered the country's top medical center for the small. Doctors were forced to amputate a portion of an infected leg, and today her condition is described as fair but stable.

107D **INSERT - "B-ROLL" FOOTAGE**

107D

Ngoc Lan Tran is transferred from a helicopter to a medical team outside Leisureland.

BRIAN FAKLER (V.O.)

Yesterday, U.S. officials were able to question the woman for the first time. According to a statement from the Department of Homeland Security, Ms. Tran claims to have been jailed for her environmental and political activism and, along with dozens of other dissidents, was miniaturized against her will in a Vietnamese prison facility. If true, this would bolster accusations by human rights groups that repressive governments around the world are forcibly downsizing scores of prisoners and political undesirables.

107E DOLLY IN on Paul. PAN to reveal the wedding rings leaning against a wall. 107E

108 **INT. CAVE - NIGHT** 108

Tergehl continues his tale.

TERGEHL

Yes, Oodreh's mind was so bedeviled that she abandoned poor Safrapül.

Some of the women in the clan dry their eyes.

TERGEHL (CONT'D)

Can you imagine wishing to remain among the giants? With all of their fighting and all of their hunger? Trampling the ground with their huge feet?

To the children's squeals of delight, Tergehl mocks how a giant may have walked with unwieldy limbs.

TERGEHL (CONT'D)

Yet, incredible as it seems, more and more of the giants began to fear and despise their smaller brethren. They already hated one another. Why would they not hate us even more?

- 113 **EXT. STREET - DAY** 113
- OLDER GUY
- All those people used to put in an honest day's work, and now they're running off to get little and sip their piña coladas. I went into a Target the other day, and wasn't nobody to help me. It was like a ghost town in there.
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- In a way, the giants were right. There was much to fear from such a rapid exodus.*
- 114 **EXT. ARMY BASE - STOCK FOOTAGE** 114
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- Soldiers would abandon their posts.*
- 115 **EXT. WHEAT FIELD - STOCK FOOTAGE** 115
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- Crops would be left to rot.*
- 116 **INT. FACTORY - STOCK FOOTAGE** 116
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- Workshops would be abandoned and overrun by wolves.*
- 117 **EXT. COAL FURNACE - STOCK FOOTAGE** 117
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- Who would tend their fires?*
- 118 **EXT. WOMEN AT A RIVER - STOCK FOOTAGE** 118
- TERGEHL (V.O.)
- Who would wash their robes?*
- 119 **INT. LEISURELAND CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY** 119
- CLOSE on Paul two years later. His hair and eyebrows have grown back.

TERGEHL (V.O.)

But what of Safrapül? Far removed from the troubles of the world, he was leading a monastic life of poverty and chastity, purging himself of the past and unaware of the adventures that lay ahead.

WIDE -- Paul stands atop a table, pen in hand.

LAWYER (O.S.)

Do we need to review any of the terms of the settlement?

PAUL

No, it's all pretty clear.

LAWYER (O.S.)

I really wish you'd taken her first offer.

PAUL

I know.

LAWYER (O.S.)

All right. Please step back a little. Don't want you to get hurt.

The LAWYER lays down a thick stack of normal-sized documents bristling with "Sign Here" flags. Paul steps up onto them.

LAWYER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sorry, would you mind removing your shoes?

Paul dutifully slips off his shoes, walks to the signature line, kneels, and begins to sign.

LAWYER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

As large as you can, please.

WIDER -- The normal-size lawyer watches Paul laboriously produce a deformed, oversized signature.

LAWYER (CONT'D)

Nice weather down here. Turned real cold back in Omaha.

PAUL

Uh-huh.

LAWYER

Wind chill.

Kids take pony rides and a magician performs.

FROM A DISTANCE we watch Paul approach Dave and Carol, hearing only --

CAROL
Ciao, bello!

They exchange pleasantries, and Paul is instructed to place his present atop an obscene mountain of other gifts.

126 LATER -- Paul observes the lavish goings-on. Dave wanders 126
by.

DAVE
Hey, pal. Why the long face?
(off Paul's shrug)
Look around you, buddy. Life is good.

PAUL
I made a mistake, Dave. Biggest mistake of my life. Should have stayed where I was.

DAVE
Hey, hey, hey. I know divorce puts a pretty big dent in anybody's self-esteem, and what Audrey did to you was beyond the pale. I hate her. I barely know her, and you may not hate her, but I hate her. You just have to get back in the saddle, that's all.

PAUL
Maybe some day.

DAVE
If you want my advice, single moms are the way to go. They've got the whole kid thing out of their system, and they just want to party. A few of 'em here today.

PAUL
That's okay, I'm --

DAVE
And if you're not ready for emotional connection, there're plenty of good times to be had down here, no strings attached. Just put it on your credit card.

PAUL
Thanks, but I'm good. Really. In fact, I've started seeing someone.

DAVE
Oh, yeah?

PAUL
Single mom, actually.

DAVE
Ho, ho. Now we're talking. Well, if that doesn't work out, or even if it does, there's this one chick, Stacy? Ouch. Like a Victoria's Secret model, only sluttier. The tricks she knows -- man, oh, man. Hey, first time's on me.

Paul's gaze drifts to Madison, giggling atop a pony.

127

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DUSK

127

The doorbell rings. Wiping his hands, Paul hurries from the kitchen and greets pleasant but stiff KRISTEN SWANSON, who holds a pie.

PAUL
Hi, Kristen.

KRISTEN
Hi. I brought dessert. Apple-blueberry.

PAUL
You didn't have to do that.

She spots a huge yellow ROSE in a vase.

KRISTEN
Wow, is that a real flower? Where'd you get that?

PAUL
Full-Sized Flower Mart. Just opened. It's like you've never seen a flower before.

KRISTEN
It's beautiful.

PAUL

I was tempted to get a lily, but, you know, it'd smell up the whole apartment. Plus the pollen.

128

INT. PAUL'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

128

Paul and Kristen enjoy dinner.

KRISTEN

Paul, this is so good.

PAUL

Thanks. The recipe called for chervil, but you can't get chervil here yet. I used dill.

KRISTEN

Well, whatever it is, it's super-yummy.

PAUL

It's the little things. I mean, except for no birds and insects you'd almost think we're in the normal world. Then something happens, and you realize we're not. Not that substituting dill for chervil's a big thing, but you know.

They smile and shake their heads. Life sure is strange.

KRISTEN

Like last month when my parents came down to visit Jonah and me --

PAUL

Uh-huh.

KRISTEN

-- and it's like this whole production with the carrying boxes, and Jonah gets freaked out by Grandma and Grandpa being so huge and scary. One night they took us for dinner at Fleming's, you know, real nice, and of course Jonah and I are sitting on the table in those special seats, and the big people wouldn't stop staring at us.

(MORE)

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

Plus, the restaurant brags about how small people are welcome, but then they charge a huge minimum.

PAUL

They should be charging big people extra. They're the ones dragging the world down.

KRISTEN

I know. Big people look at us like we're the freaks. They're the freaks. I mean, sure, I brought Jonah here mostly for the schools, but I also know I'm at least *trying* to do something good. Oh, did you hear about all that gas being released in Antarctica? From the ice?

PAUL

Haven't really been following the news much lately.

KRISTEN

Yeah, apparently it's a big deal. A lot of scientists are saying we're already way beyond --

Kristen is interrupted by a blast of EURO-DISCO thumping through the ceiling, followed by raucous LAUGHTER. Paul offers an apologetic grimace.

PAUL

My upstairs neighbor. For months I don't hear a peep -- I guess he wasn't even here -- then suddenly it's party, party, party. The other night I had to call Security.

He wipes his mouth and heads toward his balcony.

KRISTEN

Who is he?

PAUL

Some Serbian guy. Businessman or something.

PAUL

Paul. And Kristen.

DUSAN

Hello, Kristen. Like I was saying, I'm having one more, you know, little party at my place tonight. Just a few friends. Not big like last time. Very small.

(noticing)

No! Is that a rose? A real rose? From where you get a real rose?

PAUL

New store. Full-Sized Flower Mart.

DUSAN

Here in Leisureland? Why did I not have such a brilliant idea? How much they are charging for this?

MARIETTE (O.S.)

Dusan!

Dusan steps out onto Paul's balcony and looks up.

DUSAN

Quoi, ma cherie?

MARIETTE (O.S.)

(French)

Dusan, what are you doing down there? The caterers just arrived with the food and are asking where to put everything. I told them in the kitchen. Now they're asking to be paid.

DUSAN

Oui, ma cherie. J'arrive.

(back inside)

Anyway, Paul, listen, if tonight noise disturbs you, just come upstairs and talk to me. Don't make big show like last time yelling like crazy man. We are neighbors. And neighbors are friends. What's better, come to the party.

PAUL

Thanks, but like I said, we're just trying to have a nice, quiet dinner. So try to keep it down, okay?

DUSAN
Yes, darling. Of course.

Dusan puts a finger to his lips and makes a point of tip-toeing to the door, closing it without a sound.

PAUL
Kind of a jerk, right?

KRISTEN
What's he even doing here? Aren't there like a ton of small cities in Europe?

131 **INT. PAUL'S HALLWAY - NIGHT**

131

Their date at an end, Paul walks Kristen down the hallway. Booming bass notes penetrate through the ceiling.

PAUL
Yeah, small party.
(imitating)
Just a few friends.

Arriving at the elevator --

KRISTEN
Well, thanks for a really nice time. Plus, cooking and all. Sorry I have to leave so early, but, you know, the sitter.

The elevator opens, and drunken SPANIARDS spill out.

PAUL
One floor up.

They disappear back into the elevator.

PAUL (CONT'D)
So... Sunday. I was hoping we could bring Jonah. I'd like to meet him.

KRISTEN
Yeah. Maybe.

Paul leans in for a kiss. Kristen allows it, but her heart's not in it.

PAUL
Is something wrong?

KRISTEN

No. I mean, you're a wonderful guy,
Paul, and I've really enjoyed hanging
out with you...

PAUL

(face darkening)
Uh-huh.

KRISTEN

...but if I'm honest about how I'm
feeling, I just, well, I think it's
still a little early for me to --

PAUL

Fine. I get it. Fine.

Paul smacks the "down" button and walks away.

KRISTEN

No, Paul, listen, I only meant, if
we're bringing Jonah into it --

PAUL

Have a good night.

132 **INT. PAUL'S CONDOMINIUM - NIGHT**

132

Paul slams the door behind him and surveys the remnants of
dinner. He picks up the leftover pie and throws it away,
plate and all.

Music and laughter crescendo upstairs. Paul looks at the
ceiling.

!33 **INT. DUSAN'S HALLWAY - NIGHT**

!33

Now lugging the huge rose, Paul exits the elevator and heads
toward the party.

134 **INT. DUSAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

134

Paul steps inside to find DOZENS OF PEOPLE -- various
languages, fashionable eyewear, distinctive shoes.

Dusan's chic apartment could not be more different from Paul's
with its double-high ceilings, wide doorways, fireplaces, hip
furnishings.

Feeling instantly out of place, Paul is about to leave.

DUSAN

Paul! You came. And you bring the rose.

PAUL

Peace offering.

DUSAN

Look, everybody. This is Paul, my neighbor. Look at what he brings me -
- a real rose. A real fucking rose!
(to Paul)

Do you think any of these other ungrateful sons of bitches think to bring something to Dusan? Only you. I like you. What about your blonde American friend?

Paul shakes his head. Dusan nods in approval.

DUSAN (CONT'D)

Why bring sand to the beach?
(escorting Paul)

Look, I know I said it was going to be a small party, but it's not my fault. I make two or three phone calls to close friends, and look what happens. Everyone comes. Nothing else to do in this fucking city after 10 o'clock. This I do not understand. It's not as if so many people have work in the morning. Is the worst trait of small people -- they are lazy. Not all, but most. Like this lazy guy. Konrad!

KONRAD is an older German in nautical attire -- turtleneck, double-breasted blazer -- helping himself to a splendid buffet of both normal-sized and small gourmet foods.

KONRAD

What's that you say about me? What lies are you telling?

DUSAN

Just that in the small world no one wants to work.

KONRAD

What did you expect? That is the wonderful thing about becoming small. You are immediately rich. Unless you are very poor. Then you are only small.

PAUL

Actually, I wouldn't call myself poor, but I have a job --

DUSAN

Konrad is sea captain. Never more than ten meters from his boat.

KONRAD

I do like my boat. Come, I'll show you.

Locking arms with Paul and speaking with sudden intimacy, Konrad leads him onto --

A135 **EXT. DECK - NIGHT**

A135

Konrad points out a YACHT in the marina below.

KONRAD

There she is -- Sonja, my beauty. An exact replica of an English yacht from 1927. You see, I am from many generations, all the way to my grandfathers and my father -- all sea captains. I remember very well I was seven years old when my grandfather took me for the first time on his boat. I will never forget the rocking of the waves, the sound of the wind, the blackness of the water. From that moment I knew I would be a sea captain too.

PAUL

What brings you to Leisureland?

KONRAD

Dusan. He even convinced me to become small, mostly for the women and the parties. And, frankly, my wife had all the money, so after she left, things became, let's say, tricky.

PAUL

I can relate.

KONRAD

It's really quite wonderful to be small, don't you think?

PAUL

I'd say it has its pluses and minuses.

KONRAD

I am here in your city about once a year, always with Dusan. Next week I will be in the Seychelles, and two weeks after that I'll meet friends for a month of sailing on Lake Titicaca. Can you believe I've never been to Lake Titicaca?

PAUL

Wait, how do you get your boat from place to place? You can't sail it.

KONRAD

Fed-Ex, my boy. Sonja travels faster than I do.

135

INT. SITTING ROOM/BILLIARD AREA - NIGHT

135

Paul wanders around the party, an amiable smile on his face. He moseys into another room, where a handsome YOUNG MAN holds court.

A small group of party-goers surround him, hanging onto his every word and laughing at his jokes. Paul joins them, standing at the back.

PAUL

(to a guy)
Who is that?

GUY

Who's that? That's Little Ronni.

PAUL

Little Ronni?

GUY

The first small baby ever born. You know, back in Norway.

PAUL

Little Ronni? Holy shit. That's Little Ronni?

Paul gathers his courage and makes his way over to Ronni.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to interrupt, but are you really Little Ronni?

LITTLE RONNI

Well, maybe not so little anymore,
but yes, that's me.

PAUL

Wow. Would you mind if I got a
picture?

Paul holds out his phone for a selfie. Little Ronni gamely puts an arm around Paul and pulls him hard into his chest. Big smiles.

136

INT. INDOOR SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

136

Paul wanders down the steps toward the pool area, where revelers DANCE. There he watches Dusan dancing with complete abandon, king of the party, sandwiched between Mariette, whom he kisses open-mouthed, and another woman.

Paul is approached by a hippie-ish YOUNG WOMAN, like one might meet at a jam-band concert. Paul returns her enigmatic smile. She hugs him and whispers in his ear.

PAUL

(above the music)

Thanks. So are you.

The woman begins dancing. Paul gamely joins in.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm Paul. I live downstairs.

She removes a pill from a tiny case and offers it to him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What is it?

She wiggles her eyebrows suggestively.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I need to know what it is.
Allergies.

She places the pill on her extended tongue, sweetening the offer. Paul demurs. She shrugs and turns away.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Wait.

Paul turns her around and kisses her, sucking her tongue and the pill deeply into his mouth. He assumes there's more fun in store, but she just nods approvingly, strokes his cheek and dances away.

137 **INT. DUSAN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT** 137

Locking the door, Paul sticks his finger down his throat in an unsuccessful attempt to induce vomiting.

138 **INT. DUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT** 138

A circle of people converse in Greek. Paul wanders by, eyes wide, smiling, just enjoying the sounds.

PAUL
(interrupting)
I'm going to take off my shoes.

139 **INT. INDOOR SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT** 139

Paul is peaking -- eyes shut, arms overhead, dancing to a rhythm only vaguely related to the music. Dusan wanders by.

DUSAN
Having a good time?

PAUL
I just realized... There's no reason to be unhappy. I mean, I'm here in Leisureland, but really I'm everywhere. I'm connected to everybody. Everything's... just the way it's supposed to be.

PAUL'S DRUG-INDUCED POV -- streaked and vibrant. Dusan laughs, looking directly into camera.

DUSAN
Yes, baby! As long as the world is going to shit, let's make a little money and let's have a good time.
(in Serbian)
You're about to enter whole new world!

FADE OUT.

140 **UNDER BLACK --** 140

The sound of a DOORBELL.

INT. DUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on Paul passed out on the floor, wedged between a sofa and a coffee table. The doorbell rings again, startling him awake.

PAUL'S POV -- Dusan's hairy legs stagger toward the door, stop short, then approach him.

DUSAN (O.S.)
Who is that? Who is down there?

PAUL
It's me, Paul.

DUSAN (O.S.)
Paul who? Who is Paul?

PAUL
From downstairs. You know, Paul.

The doorbell again.

DUSAN
Enough with the fucking doorbell!

He opens the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE
(unusual Asian accent)
Good morning, Mr. Dusan. We come
clean for you.

Paul watches the legs of a small cleaning crew enter, his interest piqued by one person's crude PROSTHETIC FOOT.

141 **INT. DUSAN'S KITCHEN - DAY**

141

Paul shuffles in to find Dusan rooting around.

DUSAN
Fucking hyenas ate everything. I am
surprised there is even still water
when I turn on the sink.

Paul sits on a stool, and Dusan pours him coffee. From the next room comes the sound of vacuuming.

DUSAN (CONT'D)
So you had fun last night, yes? You
did not know you were so lucky to
have exciting neighbor such as me.

PAUL
Never been to a party like that. So
many Europeans. Did you know Little
Ronni was here? I mean, he's
historic.

DUSAN

And boring. Good looking dumb Norwegian guy goes around the world having sex with everybody -- women, men, hermaphrodites, dogs, goats, monkeys. He'll be the first small baby to die of syphilis. But yes, okay, historic.

Glancing into the next room, Paul notices that the one-legged woman is the one steering the vacuum cleaner.

PAUL

Apparently he still lives in the original colony, you know, over in Norway. I've always wanted to see that.

DUSAN

It's all right.

PAUL

You've been there?

DUSAN

I go once or twice a year. Konrad, too. We make business there. Good business.

PAUL

Man, that really must be something to see. You can't even find pictures of it online.

Dusan studies Paul.

DUSAN

Yes, my friend. The world is filled with things to see. I don't know you, Paul, but I like you. I like you very much. And my advice is to get out of your disgusting little fucking apartment and open your eyes. Don't be so American. Why you even are small if you live like that, like a rat in a cage? And that ugly woman.

PAUL

Kristen? She's not ugly.

DUSAN

Only your furniture is more ugly.
You are nice guy, Paul, but little
bit pathetic guy. You need help --
you know, how to think about life.
Last night you dance and you laugh,
but inside you cry.

PAUL

Hey, who are you to talk to me like
that?

DUSAN

I am your neighbor, Dusan Mirkovic.
And neighbors are friends. And
friends tell friends the truth.
Okay, maybe sometimes I'm a little
bit asshole, but the world needs
assholes. Otherwise where would shit
come out?

142 **INT. DUSAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY**

142

Paul sits with Dusan on the sofa. Dusan smokes a cigar. At
some point Konrad wanders by on his way to get coffee.

DUSAN

When I see big people becoming small,
all the new small cities, I see
opportunity. I ask myself, Dusan,
why the people they become small? To
help the environment? Please. They
become small to have the things which
until now were only for the rich,
which, by the way, is the genius of
the concept. So I say to my brother
Srdjan -- I work with my brother.
He's still big.

(low)

My wife, too, by the way.

PAUL

(also low)

Your wife? How does that work?

Dusan gives a quick, furtive "thumbs-up" sign accompanied by a
satisfied nod.

DUSAN

So I say, why not bring very special
items, luxury items, to the small
consumer? The things no one else is
thinking to bring?

PAUL

Such as?

Dusan holds up his cigar.

DUSAN

Cohiba Espléndido. Cuba. The best cigar in the world. How much you pay for this when you are big?

(Paul shrugs)

Forty-five, fifty dollars. But when you are small, I will sell you this cigar for one dollar.

PAUL

Still seems like a lot. I mean, a pack of cigarettes is what, twenty cents, most of it tax?

DUSAN

Not if you remember paying fifty dollars for the same cigar. If now you pay only one dollar, you say, I am so happy to be small! And from one Cohiba, we make more than 2000 cigars. Okay, maybe the cigars are not actually made in Cuba. Maybe they are rolled by little Albanians in Podgorica, but who cares? And this is just the one thing. Also perfumes and colognes, wines Bordeaux and Burgundy, brandies and Port and Calvados, caviar, jamón ibérico, truffles. My brother and I are now in seven small cities. All around the world. Seven.

PAUL

Is all that legal?

DUSAN

Baby, this is Wild West time. Who has time to chase after some fucking Serbian guy five inches tall over a few cigars and some wine? And listen, Paul, anything you want, I can get for you. Anything, anytime.

Again Paul notices with concern the one-legged cleaning woman as she hobbles upstairs on her way to another room.

PAUL

(rising)

Excuse me a minute.

143

INT. DUSAN'S BATHROOM - DAY

143

Paul appears in the doorway and finds the woman rummaging through Dusan's medicine cabinet and putting some items into her smock.

PAUL

Hello.

She spins around, startled. We may recognize her from the news report -- Vietnamese dissident NGOC LAN TRAN. Her green cap reads "Jade Palace Cleansing Service."

PAUL (CONT'D)

Can I talk to you for a minute?

NGOC LAN

These medicine too old. Too old. I clean, take away for you.

(holding out a bottle)

Na-pro-shien. What this do?

PAUL

Naproxen. That's an anti-inflammatory.

(off her blank stare)

It helps with pain and swelling.

She pockets the bottle and picks up another.

NGOC LAN

And this one, what this one do?

PAUL

That's... Vicodin. That's also a pain killer, but it's, well, you want to be careful with that one.

NGOC LAN

(pocketing it)

Pain killer? Pain killer good.

PAUL

You know, this isn't my apartment, and I know you're probably in a lot of pain, but I don't think you should be stealing pills.

NGOC LAN

I no steal. They too old, no good. Mr. Dusan, he say me okay I take away things. Pills for sick friend.

(closing the cabinet)

Okay, I finish now. Bathroom clean.

She pushes past Paul, and he follows her into --

A144 **INT. DUSAN'S SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

A144

PAUL

Well, whatever's wrong with your "friend," I see you have a really, really bad prosthetic foot. I'm sure it's causing pain in your right hip and knee, probably both knees. Lower back.

NGOC LAN

How you know these things? You doctor?

PAUL

I'm an occupational therapist. Wait a second. I know you. You're that -- Oh, my God, you're that woman from a couple years ago, the dissident. From Thailand or someplace. What's your name?

NGOC LAN

Tran Ngoc Lan. Vietnam.

PAUL

Yeah, right, I remember you lost your leg below the knee. That's you? Wow.
(to Dusan and Konrad
downstairs)
Hey, Dusan, do you know who this is?

DUSAN

Yes, of course, the famous Ngoc Lan Tran. Dramatic escape from Vietnamese prison and almost died so that now she can clean my house. America, big land of opportunity!

Dusan and Konrad share a big laugh.

144 **INT. DUSAN'S DINING ROOM - DAY**

144

Ngoc Lan sits in a chair while Paul cups a kneecap and manipulates the foreleg, then repeats the process with the other leg. Dusan and Konrad watch, as do, from afar, the rest of the cleaning crew.

Ngoc Lan submits to the exam but seems more interested in Paul himself than in what he's saying.

PAUL

Okay, I'm going to push down and you try to push up. Mm-hm. You've got some pretty severe asymmetrical muscle compensation.

DUSAN

Paul, you are full of surprises. You can do this but you work shit job answering phones?

PAUL

When I moved here, I didn't think I'd be working, so I let my license expire. And to get a license now in a different state... it's a boring story.

NGOC LAN

(to the other cleaners)

Hey, you no look me! You work now.
Trabajo! Trabajo!

As they scatter, Paul places Ngoc Lan's hand on her own knee and moves her foreleg up and down.

PAUL

You feel that crunching? That's arthritis. It's already pretty bad.

(releasing it)

I hate to say it, but if you don't take care of it, pretty soon you're going to need a new knee. And that's just for starters. Maybe a new hip too. You should see a specialist as soon as you can and get a whole new foot.

Ngoc Lan says nothing. Does she understand?

PAUL (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I could make a few adjustments to your existing prosthetic and give you some pointers on how to walk better. I hate to see you suffer needlessly after all you've been through.

NGOC LAN

Okay, I finish work you come with me.

PAUL
Great. I'll just grab some tools and we can do it right here.

NGOC LAN
No. I say you before my friend sick, need pills. You come with me my house help her. You help her.

This situation is getting confusing and weird.

PAUL
I'm sorry, I guess I wasn't clear. See, I can help you with this, but I'm not a doctor. Your friend, whatever's wrong with her, should go to a clinic or hospital.

NGOC LAN
Clinic no good! I take her clinic wait too long time. Stupid doctor say no help for her, no do nothing. He no good stupid doctor in big world, now he small. You come with me! You come with me now!

Paul looks to Dusan for help, but Dusan just shrugs.

145 **INT. GONDOLA - DAY**

145

Paul, now cleaned up, rides with Ngoc Lan in a crowded car. The other PASSENGERS, many in work uniforms, are mostly Latino.

146 **EXT. GONDOLA STATION - DAY**

146

Ngoc Lan and Paul exit the station amid a flow of humanity.

PAUL
You live near here?

NGOC LAN
Still far.

PAUL
Maybe we should grab a car.

NGOC LAN
No car. This way.

Ngoc Lan limps past him, pointing toward a shuttle stop where three BUSES are taking on passengers.

147 **EXT. FAR SIDE OF LEISURELAND - DAY**

147

The bus drives away from central Leisureland and enters a very modest section of town -- smallish houses, LATINO CHILDREN playing in the streets.

148 **INT. BUS - DAY**

148

Ngoc Lan and Paul have found a seat, but the aisle is packed. Buoyant RANCHERA MUSIC on the speakers contrasts with the weary faces of the passengers.

PAUL

If you don't mind my asking, you were so famous a couple years ago. Everybody was talking about you. I would've thought you'd be writing books and making speeches. I mean, how'd you wind up cleaning houses?

NGOC LAN

Need money for live. After TV box I stay hospital so long time, almost die. Then three host family, but too much problems. Leisureland peoples too selfish. Better I live only me, work job make money.

PAUL

But after all you've been through, I would have thought for sure Tony Dale would have been happy to --

NGOC LAN

Don't say me Tony Dale!

(mocking)

Tony Dale. Tony Dale.

(a sudden tirade)

Everybody say *Tony Dale* so nice guy, help people. I say he bad man, make Leisureland people selfish. I say you why Tony Dale still big? Be careful you ask him this. He no like this question. I ask him, he say me, "You go back Vietnam TV box, you talk like this." He say me, "I save your life my hospital, make you better, now why you make bad PR for me." He say me ungrateful. He say me selfish. He say me female dog!

(MORE)

Ngoc Lan leads Paul up the entrance ramp to one particular trailer named ALONDRA, dodging Spanish-speaking CHILDREN tobogganing past on normal-size bottle caps.

154 **INT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - DAY**

154

Stepping inside, Paul pauses to absorb the extraordinary interior view. Like inside an Embassy Suites or a high-security prison, walkways on every floor surround an ATRIUM.

On the ground floor, RESIDENTS watch a 26" television, which in this context rises three stories tall. The sound of a garish Spanish-language program echoes throughout.

Ngoc Lan heads toward a staircase and begins to climb, her speed impressive.

PAUL
(catching up)
Can I ask how high we're going?

NGOC LAN
Seven floor.

PAUL
Isn't there an elevator?

NGOC LAN
Elevator broken. You walk with me.

155 **INT. ALONDRA SEVENTH FLOOR - DAY**

155

Paul arrives out of breath, but Ngoc Lan seems fine.

As they proceed down the walkway, Paul and Ngoc Lan navigate around chatting NEIGHBORS and CHILDREN at play. Murals and graffiti adorn the walls, and the rickety railings are reinforced with dental floss.

156 **INT. NGOC LAN'S APARTMENT - DAY**

156

Ngoc Lan and Paul enter this tiny apartment decorated with improvised furnishings -- a table made from a spray can lid, chairs carved out of champagne corks, curtains fashioned from old handkerchiefs.

Most striking are the images of BUTTERFLIES cut from normal-size magazines used to cover the walls.

Ngoc Lan pulls back a curtain to reveal GLADYS, a barely conscious Salvadoran woman lying on a piece of foam.

NGOC LAN

This lady Gladys. Gladys my friend.
She very sick.

(loudly)

Gladys, how you feel? *¿Cómo está?*
¿Cómo está? I bring food for you. I
bring doctor. This man doctor.
Hombre médico. Médico.

Gladys offers Paul a weak, hopeful smile.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

This lady Gladys alone, no have
nobody. Husband die Mexico when they
make small. Stupid people forget
take out gold from teeth, head
explode.

PAUL

What?

NGOC LAN

Husband head explode. Head explode.
From teeth. She come here alone, no
money. I meet her she work maid
first host family, rich Leisureland
people. Now she sick, no more work.
(pointing)
Okay you take care for her.

As Ngoc Lan goes to fill a pail from a crude faucet, Paul has
a wave of panic and pulls her aside.

PAUL

I can't do anything for her. That
woman is really sick. She looks like
she might die.

NGOC LAN

Oh yes she die soon. Cancer. Cancer
all over stomach. I be with her die.
Most bad thing die alone.

Ngoc Lan kneels at Gladys's side and gives her water.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

(loud whisper)

Come on, be like doctor. Make her
feel good.

(to Gladys)

Hombre médico.

Paul draws a deep breath and assumes the role he's been asked
to play, squatting down and dredging up his medical Spanish.

PAUL
Hola, señora. ¿Dónde le duele?

GLADYS
Ay, doctor, me duele todo, todo. Ya no me queda mucho tiempo en esta vida.

Ngoc Lan reaches into her sack and begins placing bottle after bottle of drugs onto a table.

NGOC LAN
 Which pill good for her? How much she take?

PAUL
 I have no idea.

NGOC LAN
 But you know things. One, two, five, what? Which one most strong?

PAUL
 That one. Percocet.

NGOC LAN
 (opening it)
 Yes, Percocet. Very good for pain.

PAUL
 Try two.

NGOC LAN
 Two? This lady very sick. Pills old. Give four.

Paul helps her administer the pills.

PAUL
These are for the pain.

GLADYS
Gracias, doctor.

PAUL
You rest now.

Gladys closes her eyes.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Have you been moving her around? You know, like every few hours? You don't want her to get bed sores.

Ngoc Lan shakes her head.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Here. Let's move her.

He instructs Ngoc Lan with gestures, and they begin to roll Gladys onto her side.

NGOC LAN
See? You know things.

157 LATER -- Gladys now lies in a narcotized state.

157

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)
Thank you Mr. Dusan friend. You help Gladys good.

PAUL
Now let's make those adjustments for you.
(reaching for his tools)
I'll just need you to remove your foot.

NGOC LAN
Not now. I very tired. You go away. I stay with Gladys. You go away now.

With no further ceremony, Ngoc Lan goes and busies herself in the kitchen.

PAUL
Well. Some other time, I guess. I just don't know when I'm going to see you again.

NGOC LAN
You come Thursday, okay? Thursday morning you fix leg. You come ten o'clock.

At a loss, Paul opens the front door.

PAUL
My name's Paul, by the way. Paul Safranek.

Ngoc Lan glances up and gives a little nod. Paul takes a last look at this strange creature, then leaves.

158 **EXT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - NIGHT**

158

It's dark now. As Paul exits the building, his attention is drawn by whooping and shouting.

A jubilant GROUP OF MEN have just rolled up a normal-sized can of TECATE BEER. On the count of "Uno, dos, tres," they hoist it up and begin to spin it and shake it.

Finally, they drop it on the ground, and with practiced ease one of them punctures the can with a screwdriver, sending a geyser of beer high into the air.

They roll the can this way and that to guide the spray into their mouths. Others laugh as they are hosed down with beer.

Paul watches, wistful at the spectacle of this simple pleasure.

159 **INT. TOLL-FREE CALL CENTER - DAY**

159

Paul squints at his monitor, painfully aware of the senselessness of his job.

PAUL

Let's see. Extra Large is still available in glacier, pebble, tulip, cayenne, moss and aubergine.

WOMAN (ON PHONE)

Cayenne, is that like red?

PAUL

More of a brownish red. Like brick.

WOMAN (ON PHONE)

I don't like brick. Do you think moss is pretty?

PAUL

You know, I don't know, lady. Could you please just pick a color?

WOMAN (ON PHONE)

Don't be short with me.

PAUL

What did you say?

WOMAN (ON PHONE)

Oooh, I see. You're small. You're one of those disgusting little small people.

PAUL

That's right. And you're extra large.

Paul tosses his headset on his desk and walks away.

160 **INT. ALONDRA SEVENTH FLOOR - DAY** 160

Carrying a small canvas bag, Paul knocks on Ngoc Lan's door. Soon Ngoc Lan opens it and invites Paul in.

161 **INT. NGOC LAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS** 161

Upon entering Paul notices that Gladys is gone.

PAUL

Where's Gladys?

NGOC LAN

She die.

PAUL

Oh, no. I'm so sorry.

NGOC LAN

I think maybe I give her too much pills. Anyway, she die very happy smiling.

Appalled, Paul musters a strained smile. Ngoc Lan sits and loosens her leg.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

Okay, you fix my foot quick. You do quick. One hour. Must clean house soon.

PAUL

I can't exactly fix it, but I can make a few adjustments, and I can give you some pointers on how to walk better. It's a process. And I think I found the right orthopedist for you.

Ngoc Lan slides the prosthesis off and hands it over.

162 LATER -- Paul works on the crudely constructed foot, pushing 162
and pulling on the hinges and springs. Now on CRUTCHES, Ngoc
Lan manages to bring him a cup of tea.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Oh, thank you. Very nice.

NGOC LAN
 You finish soon okay? I very busy.
 Go work soon.

PAUL
 I'm getting there.

Ngoc Lan sits.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 I guess you like butterflies.
 (pointing at the walls)
 Butterflies.

NGOC LAN
 Yes I like very much. When I little
 girl my father she take with my
 sister see butterfly. Near my
 village they come live trees. You
 know, fly from cold place to hot
 place every year. Live trees near
 village then go away come back.

PAUL
 Oh, migrating butterflies. Sounds
 beautiful.

NGOC LAN
 Yes so many butterfly in tree very
 beautiful. I no forget. So many
 color.

PAUL
 How do you say butterfly in
 Vietnamese?

NGOC LAN
Con bu'ô'm.

PAUL
 Kon booyem.

NGOC LAN
 (amused)
Con bu'ô'm.

PAUL
 You must miss your village.

NGOC LAN
 No more village. Government make
 people go away put water all over
 village, all over everywhere. Too
 much water.

PAUL
Too much water?

NGOC LAN
Big water make electricity.

PAUL
A dam.

NGOC LAN
Yes, dam. They make dam. Many
villages no more. This why I go
prison. Me my sister make big
protest.

PAUL
Huh. What happened to your sister?

NGOC LAN
She die prison. Too much cold.
Chest fill up bad. She die.

A solemn moment passes. Then Paul applies extra force to a stubborn coupling and -- KKRCH! -- the joint pops apart and the entire prosthetic collapses in his hands.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)
What happen?

Paul tries awkwardly to shield the broken foot from view.

PAUL
Nothing, I think I just --

A spring and a bolt or two drop noisily onto the floor.

163

INT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - DAY

163

Paul carries Ngoc Lan piggy-back down the stairs. She clutches her crutches.

NGOC LAN
You stupid man! You say help me.
This no help! You break my foot!

PAUL
You're just lucky it didn't fail
while you were walking down these
stairs. You could've broken your
neck!

NGOC LAN

Many people depend for me! I okay before, walk around good. Even I forget I have no foot. Now you come, make my life more harder!

PAUL

You needed a new foot anyway. We're going to get you a good one. Is that so hard to understand? Jesus!

NGOC LAN

No say Jesus bad way!

PAUL

Now I'm supposed to watch my language? What am I, twelve? You're worse than my mother.

NGOC LAN

I feel sorry for your mother! I sure she suffer too much for your fault.

164 **INT. LUXURIOUS HOUSE LIVING ROOM - DAY**

164

CLOSE on a vacuum cleaner.

WIDE -- Paul is the one guiding it, now wearing a "Jade Palace Cleansing Service" cap. Ngoc Lan sits nearby.

NGOC LAN

No do so fast! Vacuum cleaner need time same direction clean good.

He shoots her a resentful glance, then notices other CREW MEMBERS whispering to each other and laughing.

165 **INT. LUXURIOUS HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY**

165

Paul cleans the stove. Ngoc Lan sits on a chair helping the LADY OF THE HOUSE go through the refrigerator as they pull out leftovers and stack them in a box.

LADY OF THE HOUSE

And you can take this -- that's turkey casserole from a couple days ago. These avocados are a bit soft, but --

NGOC LAN
Thank you, yes. I take all these.

LADY OF THE HOUSE
(a Tupperware container)
I think this one's leftover pasta. It
might be a little too old.

Ngoc Lan peels open the lid and peers inside.

NGOC LAN
In prison we die for such food.

166 **EXT. T.G.I. FRIDAYS - DAY**

166

Ngoc Lan waits in a car outside this downsized version of the familiar franchise.

Accompanied by the manager ROGER, Paul exits the front door and heads toward the car. Both carry take-out food containers. Paul opens the trunk.

ROGER
(to Ngoc Lan)
Not too many leftover entrées today,
but I threw in lots of baked potato
soup.

NGOC LAN
Thank you, Roger.

ROGER
Finally got yourself a helper, huh,
Ngoc Lan?

NGOC LAN
This Paul. He break my foot.

ROGER
How'd you manage that, buddy?

NGOC LAN
He stupid.

PAUL
Long story. We're sorting it out.

167 **INT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS LOBBY - NIGHT**

167

Ngoc Lan threads her way on crutches through TV VIEWERS in the atrium. Some call out warm greetings. Paul follows with trays of left-over food.

They reach SEÑOR CARDENAS, a frail old man dozing in a wheelchair. Ngoc Lan gives him a gentle nudge.

NGOC LAN
Hola, Señor Cárdenas. ¿Hambre?

SEÑOR CÁRDENAS
Ay, sí, chinita. Gracias.

She places food from Paul's stack on the old man's lap.

SEÑOR CÁRDENAS (CONT'D)
God will repay you.

NGOC LAN
How's your lung? How's your lung?

SEÑOR CARDENAS
A little better today, gracias.

Ngoc Lan nods approvingly.

NGOC LAN
Okay over here next. This way.

168

INT. ANOTHER APARTMENT - NIGHT

168

A MOTHER lifts her nine-year-old SON's shirt to reveal red circles on his chest and back. The woman's HUSBAND looks on. Ngoc Lan looks to Paul for a verdict.

PAUL
*Ouch. Okay. That looks painful.
Mucho dolor, verdad?*

SON
Sí.

MOTHER
*I give him baths and scrub him and
put herbs, but nothing helps.*

PAUL
*I bet that's ringworm. I don't know
how to say that in Spanish.
(thinking)
Ringworm's a fungus, so... No baño.
No baño. No agua. Seco. Seco.
(to Ngoc Lan)
Maybe I can find something at the
drugstore and bring it for him
tomorrow.*

NGOC LAN
 Yes, you bring.
 (to the woman)
Mañana medicina.

PAUL
Mañana medicina.

169 **INT. ALONDRA SECOND-FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT** 169

Ngoc Lan and Paul stand at an open door, distributing the last of the food to unseen recipients.

PAUL
 That's it, right? Ready to go home?

NGOC LAN
 Now we go church pray Jesus.

170 **INT. PENTECOSTALIST CHURCH - NIGHT** 170

PARISHIONERS sing a hymn. Some shake tambourines. Trying to be a good sport, Paul stands next to Ngoc Lan, but he has never been more out of his element.

HYMN (V.O.)
*Jesucristo es el Señor. Jesucristo
 es el Señor...*

171 LATER -- The Spanish-speaking MINISTER shouts into a 171
 microphone, his words distorted by a cheap amp. The faithful
 sway back and forth, eyes closed, one hand raised, Ngoc Lan
 among them.

172 **INT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - NIGHT** 172

Paul carries Ngoc Lan piggy-back upstairs.

NGOC LAN
 You come back tomorrow morning pick
 me up. Eight o'clock.

PAUL
 Yeah, okay. I'll be there.

Paul loses his balance for a moment.

NGOC LAN
 Careful!

PAUL
I got you. Stop shifting around!

DISSOLVE TO:

173 **INT. DUSAN'S HALLWAY - DAY**

173

CLOSE on a door and the sound of a familiar doorbell.

DUSAN (O.S.)
Okay, okay! I'm coming!

The door is opened by an unshaven, hungover Dusan, who looks into camera and dissolves into laughter.

REVERSE ANGLE -- It's Ngoc Lan and her cleaning crew, among them a fully uniformed and humiliated Paul.

NGOC LAN
Good morning, Mr. Dusan. We come clean for you.

174 **INT. DUSAN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

174

As the crew enter and disperse to clean up the post-party mess, we see that Ngoc Lan now sports a PEG LEG.

Dusan puts his arm around Paul's shoulder.

DUSAN
Answering phones was not dignified enough for you, I see. Now you progress to cleaning toilets. I love you, Paul. I really love you. You are such a funny guy.

PAUL
Yeah. Hilarious.

DUSAN
Like I said, Paul, you are too much nice guy and little bit pathetic guy.

PAUL
Well, I broke her damn foot! What am I supposed to do?

DUSAN
This is absolutely fantastic.
(yelling)
(MORE)

DUSAN (CONT'D)
Konrad, Konrad! You must come see something! This is so fucking funny!

PAUL
It's just until she gets a new foot.

DUSAN
And how long will that be?

PAUL
I don't know. The doctor said a month, maybe six weeks.

DUSAN
That's an eternity.

PAUL
Meantime she's stuck with a peg leg, which is almost worse than nothing at all. She's waddling around like a goddamned pirate!

NGOC LAN (O.S.)
Paul! No talk with Mr. Dusan! You go upstairs with Verónica!

Paul is trained to obey but hesitates under Dusan's gaze.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)
Paul!

PAUL
I heard you!

As Paul trots off, Dusan doubles over.

DUSAN
Don't worry, Paul. Dusan will save you.

175 **INT. DUSAN'S KITCHEN - DAY**

175

Ngoc Lan sorts through leftovers, muttering to herself.

NGOC LAN
This good... I take this...
(smelling a box)
Ooh, this throw away... This, I don't know what this is.

Dusan and Konrad enter behind her.

DUSAN

Yes, please, Miss Tran, take everything. Mr. Konrad and I are leaving day after tomorrow and don't know when we will be back.

NGOC LAN

Okay good. Thank you.

Dusan motions for Paul to join them.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

Paul, Mr. Dusan say I take food. You go find big box.

DUSAN

Yes, in a minute. First there's something very important to discuss.

NGOC LAN

(turning around)

Yes?

176

INT. DUSAN'S KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

176

The four have gathered for a talk around the table.

DUSAN

Listen, here is the situation. I don't know exactly what, but something big -- very big -- is happening at the original small colony. You know, the one in Norway. They want me to go there right away with a very important delivery. Too complicated to explain. Top secret and very urgent. Most important they are offering us very big money.

KONRAD

Very big.

DUSAN

This means we need extra help to do this quickly and make them happy. And I'm sorry to say, we need the same excellent helper who is currently helping you.
(pointing at Paul)

Him.

The room falls silent as Ngoc Lan lets this sink in.

PAUL
Yes, Ngoc Lan, I have to go to Norway
with these guys.

NGOC LAN
So... you say... Paul go with you
Norway?

DUSAN
Yes, that is the situation.
Emergency situation.

KONRAD
And deeply humanitarian.

Instead of arguing, Ngoc Lan remains subdued.

NGOC LAN
Paul, you want go Mr. Dusan Norway?

PAUL
That's what I just said. I mean,
look, Ngoc Lan, I'll still be able to
help one-hundred-percent when I get
home and when you get your new foot,
and --

NGOC LAN
You leave Wednesday?

PAUL
Yes.

NGOC LAN
And how long you go?

Paul looks to the men for help.

KONRAD
At least ten days. Maybe more.

Ngoc Lan performs mental calculations, then smiles.

NGOC LAN
Yes, okay, Norway. I go Norway too.

DUSAN
No, no, no, not you. Only Paul.

NGOC LAN
I go Norway too. Paul, you help me
during trip.

DUSAN

But you're very busy here with humanitarian activities of your own. And your cleaning business.

NGOC LAN

Verónica and other ladies know every place. They do for me, I pay them good. No problem I go.

(cheery now)

Norway colony peoples invite me so many time but I never go. Feel so, so guilty. They so nice peoples.

DUSAN

What? Who invited you?

NGOC LAN

When I hospital so long time after TV box, people all over world send me happy card, flower, candy, make me feel good. So many letter. One letter very special I never forget. From Jorgen Asbjørnsen.

Tears well up in her eyes. The men exchange panicked looks.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

Dr. Asbjørnsen she write me say he feel so, so bad I suffer for his fault. He say he painful, he never think make small so bad for people. Dr. Asbjørnsen letter make me feel so better. I write letter too, say now first time I proud be small. So good man. He say me make trip go Norway any day. But I too busy, always too busy. Now Jesus give me beautiful gift, go Norway. Thank you Mr. Dusan, thank you Mr. Konrad. Yes, yes, I go Norway. So happy.

(crying)

Thank you special time.

177

EXT. NORWEGIAN FJORD - DAY

177

Stunning views of the lush valley of an ocean inlet. Radiant colors reflect off high, verdant cliffs.

Konrad's yacht cruises up the fjord towing a barge loaded with cargo, including huge, normal-sized bottles of VODKA.

178 **EXT. KONRAD'S YACHT - DAY**

178

Paul stands at the prow, the wind in his hair, Ngoc Lan beside him.

Paul looks up at the wheel house, where Konrad is at the helm chatting with Dusan. Then he looks down at Ngoc Lan's PEG LEG. It's all so odd, so unexpected.

179 **EXT. REAR DECK - SUNSET**

179

From a distance, we see Paul, Ngoc Lan, Dusan and Konrad dining together, enjoying the splendid view. Dusan clowns to the delight of the others, and Ngoc Lan seems unusually relaxed and happy.

180 **INT. CABIN HALLWAY - NIGHT**

180

Paul helps Ngoc Lan down the steps to the sleeping area, and she opens the door to her cabin.

NGOC LAN

Good night, Paul. I'm sure you have very much work to do with Dusan Konrad. Very important job only you can do.

PAUL

Um, yeah. Well --

NGOC LAN

I know you no like cleaning. I too big boss, you try run away from me.

PAUL

No, no. That's not --

NGOC LAN

No good lie me. Jesus my friend. He always say me truth.

Paul squints at her. Is she for real? Then Ngoc Lan laughs -- an endearing honk.

PAUL

Do you want help with your leg?

NGOC LAN

I take care myself. Good night, Paul.

PAUL
 Good night. Sleep well.

Paul watches her go, surprised by sudden pangs of longing.

181 **INT. PAUL'S CABIN - NIGHT**

181

Paul awakens when the engine suddenly cuts, and the boat slows to a stop. Voices and footsteps follow.

Paul rises to peer out his tiny porthole. In the moonlight he makes out a SKIFF pulling alongside the yacht and TWO NEW PASSENGERS helped off the skiff and onto the yacht.

182 **EXT. KONRAD'S YACHT - DAY**

182

An unshaven Paul emerges onto the deck and is about to head to the wheelhouse when he notices --

NGOC LAN and an ELDERLY MAN AND WOMAN seated on the rear deck, conversing. The woman leans forward to clasp one of Ngoc Lan's hands in empathy and consolation.

Paul makes his way astern.

NGOC LAN
 Look, Paul. This Jorgen Asbjørnsen.
 And her wife.

Upon meeting the Asbjørnsens again, we see that the years of stress have not been kind.

PAUL
 Oh, my God. Jorgen Asbjørnsen.
 Hello. This is such an honor.

NGOC LAN
 See, Paul? Jesus smile for me.
 (to the Asbjørnsens)
 I say Paul I want visit Norway only
 meet you.

ANNE-HELENE
 I'm Anne-Helene. Please, sit. Join
 us. We're watching the world go by.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN
 You've no idea how terribly grief-
 stricken we were by Miss Tran's case.

ANNE-HELENE

Yes. Jorgen has lost so much sleep
over all the abuses.

(to Ngoc Lan)

It's such a pleasure to meet you at
last. I just can't tell you.

A few moments of quiet as all take in the surroundings.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

It's humbling, no? Nature is such a
patient sculptor -- grinding a tiny
bit each day slowly, slowly for
thousands of years to make such a
supremely beautiful thing.

(overcome with sadness)

What a waste. What a dreadful waste.

Dr. Asbjørnsen rises and shuffles away, muttering to himself
in Norwegian.

ANNE-HELENE

You'll have to excuse Jorgen. These
past few days have been especially
hard. Such a big decision to make.
And so quickly. Normally when we
visit the Colony, we like to take the
train and spend a few days in Narvik.
But then the news came and, well,
here we are, suddenly imposing on
you. We scarcely had time to pack.

PAUL

I'm sorry, but what news?

ANNE-HELENE

Why, the methane release. In
Antarctica. You must know about the
methane.

PAUL

Sure... But that's not new, right? I
mean --

ANNE-HELENE

New or old, it's the end. The end of
everything.

(rising)

I'm sorry, I should check on
Jorgen.

183

INT. GALLEY - DUSK

183

All aboard have gathered for dinner around a table and listen intently to the great man in their midst.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

The Earth has already seen five major extinctions, and now there will be another. I didn't want to believe it, none of us did. But there we were in Helsinki, big and small -- climatologists, biologists, physicists, demographers, immunologists, 26 Nobel Prize winners among us. We built all the models, did all the math, and the conclusion was consistent. Homo Sapiens will soon vanish from the Earth. The only question is when. Some say 500 years. Some say sixty. Now with the terrible spike in methane release, it's out of our grasp. Regardless how the end will come -- unbreathable air, impotable water, incurable disease, environmental catastrophe, nuclear winter, likely a combination of them all -- relatively soon the Earth will indeed purge itself of human life, and God knows how many other species. It is now an actuarial certainty.

His mind reeling, Paul looks at Ngoc Lan. She has been listening quietly, but tears flow down her face.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

(pouring himself a drink)

Not a very successful species, these Homo Sapiens, even with such great intelligence. Barely 200 thousand years. Alligator has survived 200 million years with a brain the size of a walnut.

PAUL

Do you really mean extinction? What about downsizing?

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Yeah, yeah, too little too late. Only 3% of the world has miniaturized. There simply isn't enough time. Yes, extinction is exactly the correct word.

184 **EXT. DECK - DUSK**

184

Paul and Ngoc Lan lean against the railing, soothed by the stars and the wind.

PAUL

People have been predicting the end of the world for thousands of years, and now it's really happening. I guess somebody had to be right someday.

NGOC LAN

So sad. Very sad.

They gaze at the moonlit landscape. The moment is ripe for love. Ngoc Lan looks at Paul, hoping he'll sense her need, but he seems oblivious, and she starts to walk away.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

Sleep now. Good night, Paul.

PAUL

Good night, Ngoc Lan.

Surprised by her abrupt departure, Paul watches her go. Then she pauses, emitting a barely audible grunt of pain.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You okay?

NGOC LAN

I fine.

PAUL

Maybe I should take a look.

NGOC LAN

Okay. Yes. You look.

185 **INT. NGOC LAN'S CABIN - NIGHT**

185

Ngoc Lan lies on the bed with one pant leg rolled up.

PAUL

Yeah, that peg's making the socket chafe a little.

Paul squeezes lotion into his palm and begins to massage the tender skin of Ngoc Lan's stump.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You know, if someone had told me five years ago that one day I'd be four inches tall, divorced, helping a famous Vietnamese dissident get a new foot, and cruising up a fjord in Norway discussing the end of the world with Jorgen Asbjørnsen, I would have said he was crazy.

Paul notices she hasn't been listening. Her eyes are closed, and her head is tipped back. She moans slightly.

Paul stops massaging. Ngoc Lan opens her eyes just enough to give him a look, then closes them again. Summoning his courage, he lies down next to her and plants his lips on hers. She's stiff and unresponsive, so he stops.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I thought... Jesus, I'm such an idiot.

Ngoc Lan opens her eyes and gives Paul a look at once fierce and vulnerable.

NGOC LAN

No. Please. I want.

Paul draws a deep breath, eases his way close again and gives her a few gentle kisses. Ever so slowly, she reciprocates.

FADE OUT.

186 **UNDER BLACK --**

186

A STRANGE SOUND -- OOOEEEEEOOOOO.

EXT. KONRAD'S YACHT - MORNING

Zippering up parkas as they emerge onto the deck, Ngoc Lan and Paul discover a different landscape. The walls of the fjord are narrower, the terrain even lusher.

187 **INT. WHEEL HOUSE - MORNING**

187

As Paul and Ngoc Lan enter, Konrad and Dusan exchange a knowing look. There are no secrets on a boat.

OOEEEEEOOOOOO!

PAUL

What's that sound?

KONRAD

A greeting.

Konrad blasts the foghorn in response. When Ngoc Lan looks away, Dusan gives Paul a wink and makes a crude gesture. Paul responds with a glare that says, "Cool it."

188 **EXT. ISLAND IN THE FJORD - MORNING** 188

A tiny BEARDED MAN in rustic clothing stands on a cliff blowing into a lacquered SNAIL SHELL. *OOEEEEEOOOOOO!*

189 **EXT. PORT - DAY** 189

Motoring into a bay, the boat approaches a loading dock. A few downsized fishing boats are moored in the harbor, their prows carved into dragon heads as an homage to Viking heritage.

No dwellings are in sight -- just the dock, two cargo cranes, and a road leading away from port. HORSE-DRAWN CARTS with DRIVERS await the yacht's arrival.

190 **EXT. KONRAD'S YACHT - DAY** 190

Dusan stands with Paul and Ngoc Lan at the railing.

191 **EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD - DAY** 191

Harnessed horses pull a wooden cart up a steep series of switchbacks. Paul, Ngoc Lan, Dusan and the Asbjørnsens ride together in back. In the distance below, cranes unload the yacht's cargo.

192 **EXT. CART - DAY** 192

Ngoc Lan is staggered by the immediacy and immensity of nature from a small perspective -- trees tall as mountains, leaves broad as sails. Paul shares the feeling but even more delights in watching Ngoc Lan.

NGOC LAN

I think never in my life I will see
some place so beautiful again.

193

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

193

The cart crests a hill and pauses to enjoy the remarkable view. A lush valley cradles a village surrounded by tiered fields. Near the village are larger, more modern buildings.

ANNE-HELENE

All this land -- everything you see -- belonged for centuries to the Edvardsen family. It was Nellie Edvardsen's granddaughter Solveig who arranged for us to use this place for our settlement.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Solveig will remind you of this many times.

ANNE-HELENE

Jorgen.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

(with distaste)
Solveig.

PAUL

So that's it. The colony. And that's the original dome. Wow.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

We use it now as a social hall and fitness center, but yes, this is where we started.

ANNE-HELENE

It was a wonderful time. Remember, Jorgen?

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

(wistful)
I remember.

194

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

194

The cart passes through a gate and into the settlement, a marriage between a traditional Scandinavian village and a modern eco-commune.

The residents' appearance suggests a life of communal values and harmony with nature -- long hair, sandals, beards, ruddy cheeks, rustic garments. ALL RACES are represented.

There's a sense of urgency among the villagers as they bustle about, but they're not too busy to cheer the Asbjørnsens as they pass. The couple respond humbly with smiles and waves.

CROWD

Papa Jorgen! Mama Anne-Helene!

195

EXT. THE SHED - DAY

195

The cart stops near a large, weathered SHED built into the side of a hill. A small welcoming party of SCIENTISTS and ENGINEERS greet the new arrivals.

SOLVEIG (O.S.)

Jorgen, Anne-Helene! Oh, thank God you've arrived! Why didn't anyone tell me?

All turn to see SOLVEIG EDVARDESEN running toward them. A plus-sized Norwegian woman in her 60s, she's hiking up the hem of her long, flowing garments to avoid the mud.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

(smiling stiffly)

Solveig.

Solveig makes a big show of embracing the Asbjørnsens, drawing them into her ample bosom.

SOLVEIG

I love you. I love you both so much. Ever since the decision, I didn't feel right without you here. And you know how I am when I worry. I can't eat. I can't sleep. Ask anyone here, they'll tell you. My stomach has been so upset, like I want to throw up all the time, but can't. And I've had an awful headache that just won't go away. I know you know about my headaches. I love you so much. Thank God you're here -- I feel so much better now, like a big release.

A FELLOW SCIENTIST comes to the rescue.

FELLOW SCIENTIST

Sorry to interrupt, Jorgen, but we need your advice immediately.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Yes, yes. Excuse us, Solveig.

SOLVEIG

Of course, darling. You've got important things to do. I love you. You're a genius.

ANNE-HELENE

(heading away too)
You look wonderful, Solveig.

SOLVEIG

Really? I do? You really think so?

ANNE-HELENE

Wonderful.

SOLVEIG

(grateful)
Oh, honey.

Unplugged from the attention she craves, Solveig latches onto the other new arrivals.

SOLVEIG (CONT'D)

Dusan, Dusan, dear Dusan. Bless you for coming so quickly. I love you.

DUSAN

(kissing her cheeks)
Solveig, my darling, I am always happy to help -- in difficult times, in easy times, in happy times. Is always a pleasure to visit you and your lovely village.

SOLVEIG

It is lovely, isn't it? I can't bear to think I won't see it again.

(to Paul and Ngoc Lan)

You know, I'm the one who made this colony possible in the first place. I've been coming since I was just a baby. Papa used to fly us here every summer in his float plane. I remember one time --

(to Paul)

Wait. I know you.

PAUL

Me?

SOLVEIG

(gripping his arm)
I'm sure of it.

(MORE)

SOLVEIG (CONT'D)

You were in my dream last night. I was a little girl, and I was afraid and lonely, but there you were, walking beside me.

PAUL

Are you sure it was me? Because we've never --

SOLVEIG

You were a horse or a pony -- something very strong -- and I instantly felt better. Then I mounted you and rode you through a dangerous forest. And here you are. Right before we leave. Another miracle. You are coming with us, aren't you?

DUSAN

(jumping in)

Solveig, darling, listen, we love you, but my friends and I are just here for the delivery, and then we must go home.

SOLVEIG

That's really so sad. We'd love it if you'd join us.

PAUL

I'm sorry, did you say you're leaving?

SOLVEIG

Oh. Yes. All of us. Didn't anyone tell you?

PAUL

Where are you going?

Solveig points at the shed -- isn't it obvious?

SOLVEIG

In there. Would you like to see?
(leading them, to Dusan)
You did remember my hand cream, didn't you? I couldn't survive without it.

196

INT. THE SHED - DAY

196

Solveig escorts the group inside. To Paul and Ngoc Lan's surprise, they find that the rustic shelter conceals the entrance to --

A LARGE TUNNEL, disappearing into the mountain like a mine shaft.

NGOC LAN

Where it go?

SOLVEIG

To China!

(giggling)

I'm sorry, forgive me. Sometimes I'm so silly. No, to the vault.

PAUL

The vault?

SOLVEIG

Oh, yes. We've been working on it almost since the very beginning. Actually, not many people know this, but it was my idea

DUSAN

Of course it was. You're always thinking ahead.

SOLVEIG

When Jorgen made his big discovery, I said, look, Jorgen, you're a genius, and downsizing is a genius idea. No one's questioning that. No one. But what if people don't accept it? What if it doesn't catch on in time? Look at me -- you know, it took me years before I did it. I had to sell my antiques and find homes for my cats. They're very old and one of them is diabetic, needs two shots every day. It was a complete nightmare. Anyway, this is what they came up with. On my suggestion.

Solveig leads Ngoc Lan and Paul toward TORVALD, an engineer seated at a control panel.

SOLVEIG (CONT'D)

Torvald, be a sweetheart and give our friends a little tour.

TORVALD

The tunnel leads to a vault 1.6 kilometers inside the Earth's lithosphere and encased in a double layer of Inconel 625.

Torvald points at an array of MONITORS displaying high-angle views of streets, homes, farms and pastures.

TORVALD (CONT'D)

In addition to maintaining a broad spectrum of biodiversity, the vault is equipped with fields for growing foods, forests for lumber, livestock for animal husbandry. The residential areas are spacious and easily expandable to provide for future generations.

PAUL

Wait, that's not underground.

SOLVEIG

Of course it is! Our new size makes it possible. Otherwise we never could have dreamed of preserving so much of the world in a single safe place.

PAUL

This is brilliant.
(to Ngoc Lan)
Isn't this brilliant? Like Noah's Ark.

SOLVEIG

That's exactly what I told Jorgen.
It's Noah's Ark!

PAUL

What kind of power are you using, nuclear?

TORVALD

No, no, 100% geothermal.
Interoperable organic systems manage production of artificial sunlight, oxygen, CO2 elimination, water purification, and so forth.

As Paul soaks everything up, Ngoc Lan takes his hand.

PAUL

So how long will you stay down there?

SOLVEIG

What is it, Torvald? Eight thousand years?

TORVALD

(lips pursed)

Something like that. Until the surface environment stabilizes.

197

INT. COMMUNITY DINING HALL - NIGHT

197

All the villagers -- perhaps 250 -- dine together at long wooden tables. Tonight the atmosphere is electric.

Paul and Ngoc Lan sit near the Asbjørnsens and other SCIENTISTS who, between chews, dispassionately explain the project at hand. Konrad and Dusan sit nearby.

ONE SCIENTIST

You know, it's not unprecedented what we are doing. Less than a hundred thousand years ago humans experienced a near-extinction. Maybe 2,000 survived. And from that handful came all the billions of people you see today.

ANOTHER SCIENTIST

Rebooting the species. Nothing new.

Glasses clink. Dr. Asbjørnsen rises. Never a comfortable public speaker, he scans the faces turned his way.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

My friends. Many years ago, when we discovered cellular miniaturization, the world which had seemed so doomed felt suddenly so full of possibilities. We knew we had found the portal to the next stage of man's evolution. So until very recently, I maintained hope that the contingency plan we embark upon tomorrow could remain simply that -- a plan.

He pauses, reigning in his emotions.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN (CONT'D)

But history has spoken, and this is our final dinner in the place we've called home for so many years. And here, on this beautiful little island

--

(MORE)

DR. ASBJØRNSSEN (CONT'D)
 (noticing Solveig's look)
 -- this island which Solveig
 Edvardsen had the vision and
 generosity to provide us...

Solveig nods proudly.

DR. ASBJØRNSSEN (CONT'D)
 ...the very survival of mankind rests
 in our hands. Yes, we are sad to
 leave, and terribly sad for the
 reasons why, but man is too beautiful,
 too improbable a life form to be
 allowed to disappear forever from the
 cosmos.
 (Norwegian)
*It is no shame to look into the warm
 spring sun and regret a lost limb.*

The Norwegians present nod and murmur in agreement. Someone
 uses the moment to hand Asbjørnsen a note.

DR. ASBJØRNSSEN (CONT'D)
 Ah, yes. The kitchen staff wishes to
 remind everyone that after you scrape
 your plates, you should place them in
 the stacking carts, not the dish
 washing belts.
 (clearing his throat)
 Now then, I would like to ask the
 surviving members of the original
 colony to stand.

Twenty people solemnly rise. Most are in their fifties or
 older, but among them we recognize one handsome young man.

DR. ASBJØRNSSEN (CONT'D)
 Look at him -- Little Ronni, how he's
 grown.

As Ronni smiles, we note a herpes sore on his upper lip.

DR. ASBJØRNSSEN (CONT'D)
 (addressing the originals)
 I ask you again as I asked you so
 many years ago. Generations to come -
 - perhaps all of humanity -- will
 thank you for your bravery and
 commitment. But you must ask
 yourself whether you are truly ready
 to enter a new world. For there will
 be no turning back. Are you ready?

LITTLE RONNI

I am ready!

ORIGINAL COLONY MEMBERS

Yes! I am ready! Yes!

Tears and embraces throughout the room.

DR. ASBJØRNSEN

Is everyone ready?

Shouts of "I am ready!" coalesce into an ebullient group chant of "We are ready."

Konrad, Ngoc Lan and Dusan are moved to witness these momentous proceedings, but Paul's reaction is even more profound. Something deep inside him is awakening.

198 **EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT**

198

Residents throw furniture into a BONFIRE. Drunken men sing Viking songs. A hypnotic drum beat inspires dancing.

DUSAN

Konrad, what do you think? Is the end of civilization really coming so soon?

KONRAD

Look here. My uncle used to say he was born during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then outlived both the Third Reich and Communism, all three of which were supposed to last forever. In the 1930s they discovered a pyramid in Egypt -- a pyramid! -- when a camel stubbed its toe. How does one lose a pyramid? Or look up at the sky. So many of those bright, bright stars went dark before humans even existed -- we just don't know it yet. All things come to an end. Why shouldn't we? But look at the positive side -- if our world really is coming to an end, it's fascinating to be watching.

199 **EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE VILLAGE - NIGHT**

199

Paul sits alone, deep in thought, looking down at the tunnel entrance.

The shed has been dismantled, and work lights illuminate a parade of carts heading inside loaded with supplies.

Ngoc Lan approaches, struggling up the hill.

NGOC LAN

Where you go? I look many place for you.

PAUL

I've been here.

NGOC LAN

(sitting)

I talk with Dusan, he say fat lady pay, he ready go back. I happy for that. Too long time away from Señor Cárdenas and Mrs. López. I worry too much for them.

PAUL

Ngoc Lan, you can't just be worried about a few little people thousands of miles away. You have to look at the big picture.

NGOC LAN

Why you say like this?

PAUL

Because Mr. Cárdenas, Mrs. López, they don't stand a chance, none of us do!

(gesturing)

All of this -- it's over. Can't you see what's going on? This is a defining moment in human history. More than that -- in the history of the universe. And for *some reason* you and I are here.

NGOC LAN

You want go with them.

PAUL

And I want you to come with me.

NGOC LAN

You crazy man! Always I know you stupid. Now I see you crazy too.

PAUL

How am I crazy? You heard them.
This is the only chance for the
survival of our species -- that's
huge! You want to help people?
These are the people you should be
helping. The future of humanity is
down that hole!

NGOC LAN

Who you help down there? People here
needs help, not down stupid hole!

200

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

200

Ngoc Lan pulls Paul by the hand toward Dusan and Konrad, by
now quite drunk.

NGOC LAN

Dusan, Konrad, talk to crazy Paul.
He say he want go down hole, me go
with him.

DUSAN

Paul, Paul, Paul, Paul... Why would
you do such a silly thing?

PAUL

Why not?

DUSAN

Because you will live the rest of
your life in a hole in the ground.
Like a worm.

PAUL

These people are saving the human
race, and I want to help.

DUSAN

Okay, fine, you want to help. Then
do what I did -- give them a semen
sample.

KONRAD

I did, too. That's a much more
pleasant way to help.

PAUL

If I'm not supposed to be a part of
this thing, then why am I here? I
look at my life and I... I'm a nobody.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

But now I connect the dots and see it's all been leading me here. Why didn't I become a doctor? Why did I downsize? Why did my wife abandon me? Dusan, how did you just happen to be my neighbor? Ngoc Lan, why were you the only one to survive that box and just happen to be cleaning Dusan's place that day? And if you hadn't lost your leg, I wouldn't have tried to help you -- which, as usual, I screwed up. And why did I screw up? So I could wind up here at exactly the right time to go into that tunnel! I finally have the chance to do something that matters.

DUSAN

Paul, come on, you really are talking crazy. These people, they're wonderful, but --

KONRAD

It's like a cult.

DUSAN

It's like a cult. And the extinction's not happening for, you know, maybe few hundred years. Has nothing to do with you. Forget it. Have a drink. Besides, you think they won't behave as people always behave? They're all going to go insane down there and kill each other. They will go extinct long before we do.

Paul searches the faces of his three friends, seeing them as both allies and enemies. Then he turns and marches off into the night. Ngoc Lan watches him go, her heart breaking.

DUSAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry, darling. He said it himself. Nothing he ever wants to do works out.

201

EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE VILLAGE - DAY

201

The Bacchanal continues on a beautiful, sunny day. Around a pond, villagers sunbathe, picnic and skinny dip. Others siphon vodka from a bottle lying on its side.

Now dressed in "native" loose-fitting clothes and clogs, Paul dances with a group near the drum circle.

Ngoc Lan approaches shyly, stopping a few feet away. Paul notices and heads over.

PAUL

Beautiful day, huh? Knowing it's the last time I'll see the real sun makes it so... vibrant.

NGOC LAN

I ask you question. You say me truth. Okay?

(he nods)

Other night on boat... what kind of fuck you give me?

PAUL

What?

NGOC LAN

What kind of fuck you give me?

PAUL

What kind? I don't... I have no idea what you're talking about.

NGOC LAN

American peoples, eight kind of fuck.

(counting on fingers)

Love fuck, hate fuck, sex-only fuck, break-up fuck, make-up fuck, buddy fuck, drunk fuck, pity fuck.

PAUL

Look, I don't know where you heard that, but --

NGOC LAN

Third host family.

PAUL

That's just stupid. There's a whole spectrum of... emotions and... motivations. And you shouldn't say "fuck." It's vulgar. Say "make love" or something. I don't know.

NGOC LAN

So... was love fuck?

PAUL

No, I mean... What's this all about?

NGOC LAN

You look for me, you want help me,
you make fuck with me, now you go
down stupid hole. So I try to think
what kind fuck you give me. I think
maybe pity fuck. For leg.

PAUL

No, no, Ngoc Lan, I care about you
deeply. You are an extraordinary
human being, and I admire you so
much. More than anything I want
you to come with me.

NGOC LAN

Peoples always say me I strong.
Okay, maybe Vietnam I organize many
protest, survive two year prison and
punish me make small. I only person
survive TV box, everybody die. I
walk around no foot, take care for
other peoples. But I woman.
Feelings.

PAUL

I'm sorry. I really am. It's so
easy for me to see who you are. But
if I don't do this, who am I? I
mean, really. Who am I?

NGOC LAN

You Paul Safranek. You good man.

VILLAGERS (O.S.)

Look! Look!

BUTTERFLIES, big as kites, flutter overhead.

PAUL

Look, Ngoc Lan! Butterflies! *Kon
booyem! Kon booyem!*

Even this miraculous sight cannot lift her sadness.

202

LATER -- The villagers have amassed to watch the SUNSET. No one moves. No one speaks. 202

A WOMAN atop a rock sings a haunting Viking song of farewell.

SOLEMN FACES, many streaked by tears, are lit by the golden setting sun. Among them we see the Asbjørnsens standing with great dignity, and Solveig, sobbing a bit too loudly.

Despite wounded feelings, Ngoc Lan recognizes it's the last time she will see Paul, and she allows herself to slip her arm around his waist. He places an arm over her shoulder.

The sun vanishes, its amber light now streaked by pinks, greens and blues. Spontaneous applause. Now the residents turn to walk slowly toward the tunnel.

203

EXT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

203

The departure nears completion. The last of the carts disappear inside, the final residents following on foot. Torvald waits nearby, preparing to seal the tunnel.

Ngoc Lan, Dusan, and Konrad stand with Paul.

PAUL
I guess this is it.

DUSAN
It seems so.

PAUL
Konrad? Very nice to have met you.

KONRAD
Pleasure was mine. Good luck in there, Paul.

Paul turns to Dusan and pulls him into a firm embrace.

DUSAN
Take care of yourself.

PAUL
I will. You too.

DUSAN
I will miss my funny neighbor.

Paul nods, then turns to face Ngoc Lan. At a loss, he tries hugging her, but she remains limp in his arms.

PAUL
Ngoc Lan.

She places something into his hands.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Your bible.
(off her nod)
But it's in Vietnamese.

NGOC LAN
Words not matter. Remember me.

Paul leans in to kiss her, but she offers only her cheek. He looks at the tunnel, then back at Ngoc Lan, her eyes downcast.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)
You go now.

Paul turns and heads resolutely toward the tunnel, clutching the bible and dragging his wheelie suitcase.

204 **INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT**

204

Lit by lights strung along the walls, a stream of villagers march silently and steadily toward their destiny.

At the rear, Paul walks with an erect, dignified bearing. Nothing in his life approaches the magnitude of this moment. He feels many things at once -- pride, fear, excitement, regret.

Soon the tunnel begins an incline, and Paul trots forward to speak with a fit Nigerian guy named TUNDE.

PAUL
Excuse me. Why are we going up? I thought the vault was --

TUNDE
Prevents flooding.
(offering his hand)
Tunde.

PAUL
Paul.

TUNDE
Just a few hours climb before we begin the descent to the vault.

PAUL
And how long is the whole walk?

TUNDE
Eleven hours. Something like that.
(pulling ahead)
See you down there. Stay hydrated.

Paul slows to a stop as the last villagers pass him by.

Suddenly he hears a SIREN and senses a flashing RED LIGHT. He turns to look back at the tunnel opening, now 100 meters behind. Torvald is there, cranking the tunnel door shut.

205 **EXT. NEARBY HILL - NIGHT** 205

From a vantage point atop an incline, Dusan, Konrad and Ngoc Lan somberly watch the door closing.

206 **EXT. TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS** 206

The door is nearly shut, when from behind it comes a muffled, panicked cry.

PAUL (O.S.)

WAIT!

The door stops, then reopens slightly. Paul squeezes out.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thanks, Torvald. Thanks.

(jerking something)

My bag. Do you think you could --?

TORVALD (O.S.)

Leave it.

PAUL

But --

TORVALD (O.S.)

You need to get away from here!

PAUL

Okay, sure. Yeah.

TORVALD (O.S.)

Run!

Paul releases the bag and sprints away.

207 **EXT. NEARBY HILL - NIGHT** 207

Dusan, Konrad and Ngoc Lan have taken cover behind rocks. Dusan peeks out and, breaking into a smile, invites the others to witness Paul scrambling up the hill in a panicked zig-zag.

DUSAN

What did I tell you? Nothing ever works out for this guy.

NGOC LAN

Paul!

Paul spots his friends runs straight into Ngoc Lan's arms.

PAUL

(out of breath)

I was thinking about what you said,
and I... realized... you're right.
I *am* Paul Safranek. And... what
you were asking... It was a love
fuck.

Ngoc Lan bursts into tears of happiness and embraces him tightly.

KA-BOOM! An EXPLOSION above the tunnel entrance creates a landslide which tumbles down to conceal it forever. Our friends take cover, but they needn't have -- it's all small scale, so the dirt falls pathetically.

Soon they emerge from behind the rocks.

NGOC LAN

Okay, now we go back Leisureland.
Okay, Dusan Konrad Paul? You
promise. Nothing more here. We go
now.

The three men stare at her, reminded once again what a monomaniac she can be.

208 **EXT. KONRAD'S REAR DECK - DAYBREAK**

208

Paul, Dusan and Ngoc Lan watch the island recede as the yacht sails out of the harbor amid the rising sun.

TERGEHL (V.O.)

*And so it was that Safrapül the
Good forsook salvation in order to
return to Lohserlund with Princess
Noc, to care for the sick and
crippled of our ancestors.*

209 **INT. CAVE - NIGHT**

209

Tergehl has reached the end of the story and sits back to gauge its effect on his listeners.

LITTLE BOY

Then what happened?

TERGEHL

*That is the end, little ones.
There is nothing more to tell.
(MORE)*

TERGEHL (CONT'D)

*We know nothing more of Safrapül,
nor of Princess Noc, nor of
Drooshan the Cunning, nor of the
sacrifices they made.*

210 **EXT. CAVE - NIGHT**

210

Across a moonlit desolate landscape, we see the cave, high on a hill, illuminated by the fire within.

TERGEHL (O.S.)

*But that is why, each year at the
feast commemorating the Great Exodus,
we leave an empty seat for Safrapül,
so that we remember all those who
remained behind and suffered through
the hell to come.*

211 **INT. AIRPLANE - DAY**

211

Paul looks out the window. He seems now genuinely clear-headed, aware, awake.

PAUL

To think, one day, all of this --

NGOC LAN

Now maybe you understand little bit
how I feel after survive TV box.

Paul looks at her, takes her hand.

NGOC LAN (CONT'D)

When you know death come soon, you
look around things more close.

212 **INT. LEISURELAND SHUTTLE - DAY**

212

A PORTER slides Ngoc Lan and Paul's carrier into place and locks it down.

Paul glances over at MELANIE and CJ, a normal-size couple seated exactly where he and Audrey sat so many lifetimes ago. They look like nice people, honest and bright-eyed.

PAUL

Hi there.

MELANIE

What?

PAUL

Hi there!

MELANIE

Hi back.

PAUL

Moving to Leisureland, huh?

The woman exchanges a shy smile with her husband.

MELANIE

Yep. We're going for it.

PAUL

Where you guys from?

MELANIE

Upstate New York.

PAUL

Oh yeah?

CJ

East Aurora. Just outside Buffalo.
How about you?

PAUL

Omaha. Nervous?

CJ

Oh, a little skittish.

PAUL

I can understand that.

MELANIE

We got cold feet and almost
bailed out once or twice. But we
sure like the idea of buying our
first house. And starting a
family... And it didn't feel
right to stay big much longer. I
guess we just want to help out,
if we can.

CJ

Plus, you know, we didn't want to
lose that deposit.

PAUL

I hear you.

MELANIE
You only live once.

PAUL
Yeah, you only live once.

Paul smiles, moved by these nice folks and the glimmer of hope they offer.

213 **EXT. LEISURELAND - DAY** 213

A MONTAGE of the city in the RAIN.

214 **EXT. WORKERS' CITY - DAY** 214

The montage ends on a shot of water pooled in a slack part of the overhead netting. TILT DOWN to reveal the converted trailers many call home.

215 **EXT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - DAY** 215

Paul and Ngoc Lan pull up in a car, both wearing rain slickers.

PAUL
Wait here. I'll be right back.

Paul hurries to the rear, where he retrieves food containers.

NGOC LAN
I want go too. I want see Rosa new baby.

PAUL
You can see the baby tomorrow.

NGOC LAN
Hurry. Don't forget we still need go Filipino man, take care for his arm!

PAUL
I know. Stop obsessing about it, will you?

216 **INT. ALONDRA APARTMENTS - NIGHT** 216

Paul comes down the stairs with one last container. He trots toward Mr. Cárdenas, parked as usual in front of the TV.

PAUL
Buenas tardes, señor Cárdenas.

SEÑOR CÁRDENAS
Hola, Paul.

PAUL
¿Hambre?

SEÑOR CÁRDENAS
Mucha. ¿Qué me traes hoy?

PAUL
Creo que es pollo.
 (opening it)
Sí, pollo.

SEÑOR CÁRDENAS
Gracias, Paul.

PAUL
Hasta mañana, señor Cárdenas.

Paul hustles toward the door and pauses.

CLOSE on Paul turning to look back at the hunched figure in a wheelchair eating his only hot meal of the day.

TERGEHL (V.O.)
*Perhaps one day we will learn the
 fate of Safrapül the Good and
 Princess Noc. But for now, we can
 only hope they lived the rest of
 their days richly and in happiness.*

Paul hears a honk, and, pulling the slicker over his head, dashes back out into the rain.

THE END