

TASTE
by
Benjamin Brand

Aperture Entertainment
323.848.4069
Adam@Aperture-Ent.com

ACT I

The New York apartment of Terry Lavery. We can see the sun setting through the window. Occasional traffic sounds and passing lights gliding over the walls and ceiling indicate a city.

The apartment is a large, open place -- loft like. It's neatly decorated, masculine but not overly so, and handsomely lit. The color scheme is muted, off-white. Nothing is brash or overstated. On one side, a table is crowded with nicely framed photos.

An open kitchen is the center of the home -- it's extremely well appointed with high-end pots and pans, cooking oils, etc. It could be a Williams-Sonoma catalogue.

TERRY LAVERY is busy in this area. He is physically fit, neatly dressed, pleasant looking. Under his cooking apron, his clothes suggest an attention to detail, but they are not showy in the least.

He is preparing food. He is a skilled cook, chopping in neat, rhythmic fashion, while keeping an eye on simmering skillets, monitoring what's in the oven, etc. He stops working for a moment, abruptly, almost freezing in place. A change comes over his face -- and he begins to cry. Tears drip down his cheeks, and he makes no move to wipe them away. In fact, he seems to luxuriate in them.

At first, it would appear that something is troubling him, but that something is just freshly chopped onions. He takes a handful of them and tosses them into a pan. They sizzle.

A buzzing sound interrupts him. Terry wipes his tears away, heads over to a speaker unit, hits a button.

TERRY

Yes?

VIC's voice

Hi. It -- it's me. Sorry I'm late.

TERRY

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Terry hits another button, unlocks the deadbolt on his door, takes off his apron, hangs it on a hook, and heads over to a large media cabinet.

A small videocamera with a wide angle adapter is mounted on a tripod. Terry powers the camera on, hits record. A red light clicks on.

Terry looks directly into the camera and turns on the nearby TV monitor, using it as a mirror. He fixes his appearance while mumbling to himself.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Okay...very nice...good. And now, dear viewers, our evening commences.

Satisfied, he turns the TV off, makes some adjustments to the camera as he hears a KNOCK on the door. He heads toward it.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's open.

The door opens cautiously, revealing Victor "Vic" Harmon. He is less stylish than Terry, not as comfortable with himself. He smiles awkwardly, takes a tentative step in.

VIC

Hi. I'm Victor.

TERRY

Victor. I'm Terry.

VIC

You can call me -- Just Vic is fine.

TERRY

It's nice to finally meet you, Vic.

Terry and Vic shake hands, pumping a few beats too many. Then Terry leans forward, close to Vic, and Vic opens his arms, anticipating some kind of hug. But that is not Terry's intention. He reaches around Vic, bolting the door lock behind him.

Vic takes this in, nervous still, then turns to find Terry looking him over, assessing him. Vic is uncomfortable.

TERRY

Can I take your coat?

Vic slides his coat off, revealing a somewhat caved-in posture. Nothing about him -- haircut, clothes, speech -- suggests much in the way of style. Terry takes Vic's coat over to a nearby closet, hangs it on a wooden hanger.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You don't quite look like your photograph.

VIC

I don't? I'm sorry.

TERRY

Here. Sit. Sit.

Responding to the gesture, Vic sits in a comfortable looking chair.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Would you like something to drink?

Vic starts to stand up again.

VIC

Sure.

TERRY

Really. (gestures -- sit) Please.

Vic sits, as told.

TERRY (CONT'D)

How's vodka sound?

VIC

Great.

As Terry prepares drinks at a little bar area, he continues to talk.

TERRY

You know what it is. It's your hair. It's different from what I was expecting. It's much shorter than in the photograph you sent.

Vic touches his close-cropped hair.

VIC

Oh. Right. I just got it cut.

TERRY

It's quite short.

VIC

I like it that way. Well, I like getting my hair cut so much, and so it usually ends up like this.

TERRY

You like getting your hair cut?

VIC

Mostly the shampooing part. That's why I go so often. It's different than when I do it at home.

TERRY

What, like they have special conditioner or something?

VIC

No, I just like the feeling. Of someone's hands. Someone else's hands. In my hair. It feels...different from when I do it myself.

Vic sees that the drink is ready. He gets up. Terry hands him a drink.

VIC (CONT'D)

I guess it's kind of like, for a while, I tried to figure out a way to tickle myself. And I could never quite do it. I kept trying to surprise me, you know. To catch myself off guard. So I could be tickled. It never worked.

Vic starts to take a drink. As he has some of the vodka in his mouth, Terry interjects:

TERRY

What do you like to say before a drink?

Embarrassed by his "mistake," of drinking too soon, Vic releases the vodka from his mouth, letting it dribble back into his glass.

VIC

Umm...Cheers?

TERRY

Functional but adequate. Cheers.

They clink glasses and drink.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Oh, shit.

Terry rushes back to the kitchen area where one of the pans is smoking. It's the onions. Terry quickly turns down the flame, gives them a toss, very professional.

TERRY (CONT'D)

They say caramelized. I say slightly charred. I hope you're hungry. I've been cooking all day. A nice way to spend a Sunday. I wish the whole week was just one long Sunday after another. That's a calendar I'd like.

VIC

Is there a lot of onions?

TERRY

Why?

VIC

I don't eat them. I can't digest them properly.

TERRY

How awful. Sometimes, I just saute onions for the fun of it.

VIC

I try not to eat garlic either.

TERRY

I can just chop away until my eyes burn. Until I start to cry. It's a great feeling. But what I really like is when I'm in bed that night, I'll feel like I had an intense day. That something big must've happened to make me cry. Of course, eventually I remember the onions, but for a few seconds, it feels like I really felt something. And I enjoy that.

Vic seems unconnected to this whole line of thought.

VIC

And scallions.

TERRY

Excuse me?

VIC

I don't eat them either. Scallions. Plus I try to avoid night shade vegetables too. Tomatoes. Potatoes. Eggplant.

TERRY

But you're not a vegetarian.

VIC

No.

TERRY

Okay. I can adjust. That's the difference between a cook and a chef.

VIC

Excuse me. Do you have a bathroom?

TERRY

No. I hate them. Filthy places.

For a minute, Vic doesn't know what to do. Terry is content to let the moment hang. Then, finally:

TERRY (CONT'D)

Vic, I'm kidding. Just down there.

He motions offstage. Vic heads out to use the bathroom.

Terry pours himself another vodka and drinks it down.

He is surprised when Vic returns so quickly.

VIC

False alarm.

TERRY

Are you alright?

VIC

Just...nerves I guess.

TERRY

Me too. I have all this energy. I feel like I'm really running off at the mouth.

Vic looks awkwardly down at his vodka, has another gulp.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Is everything okay with you?

VIC

Yeah. It's just...

TERRY

You seem uncomfortable.

VIC

You were easier to talk to on the computer.

TERRY

Really? I'm sorry.

VIC

No no no. For me, I mean. I mean that it's my fault. It was just easier for me on the computer. I just -- you can take your time that way. You can say things that are more like how you want them to come out more. You know.

He sort of smiles, twisted up in this awkward sentence.

TERRY

We...could...talk...more...slowly. (back to normal speed) You know, I saved some of our chats. Most of them, actually.

VIC

Really?

Terry lowers the temperature on a burner, then heads out of the kitchen area and back to the laptop. Vic follows, looking over his shoulder.

TERRY

Let's see...This is from...two weeks ago. Why don't we read it together? Like a play.

Vic looks hesitant.

TERRY (CONT'D)

C'mon. Give it a try. You said it's easier. Now you have your lines already written.

VIC

Where should I start?

TERRY

Good. Great. How about...

Terry points to a spot. Vic clears his throat, reads from the laptop.

VIC

"I wanted to mention the whole drug thing."

TERRY

"Sure."

VIC

"I think I should take something before we do it."

TERRY

"How come?"

VIC

"Just to relax me I guess."

TERRY

"Of course. Any ideas?"

VIC

"Nothing too strong. Because -- (to Terry, off the page)
Oops. Sorry. Typo. (reading again) "Because I want to feel
it. At least mostly."

TERRY

"Right. We could use vicodin. I have some from when my wisdom
teeth were pulled. Real strong stuff. Pain killer."

VIC

"Or maybe the kind of cold medicine."

TERRY

"Right."

VIC

"That you take at night."

TERRY

"Makes you drowsy."

VIC

"Probably won't soften the pain."

TERRY

"Sounds perfect. I'm getting excited. Kind of makes it feel
real, to talk about it this way. To type it."

VIC

"There's lots of over-the-counter stuff to choose from."

TERRY

"Excuse me a moment. Phone ringing."

VIC

Then it's just, "Conversation ended."

Terry puts the laptop down.

TERRY
How was that?

VIC
Easier. I guess.

TERRY
I have others.

VIC
That's okay.

TERRY
You sure? We can read those too.

VIC
(waving this off)
It's okay.

TERRY
Well, I have something else.

He heads over to the kitchen, takes out a nicely wrapped gift box, smaller than a bread basket. Vic smiles when he sees it, a bit taken aback, so honored to have a gift.

VIC
For me? (Terry nods, yes) Should I open it?

TERRY
No. I want you to save it for later.

VIC
Oh. Okay.

TERRY
Vic. I'm just kidding. Go ahead.

Vic hesitates, then opens it. He smiles when he sees a bottle of medicine.

TERRY (CONT'D)
It says it takes up to an hour for the effects to be felt. But I bet it's probably a bit faster on an empty stomach. You haven't eaten, right?

Vic nods -- right. He takes a look at the label, then opens the box. He starts to crack open the bottle cap.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You're taking it now?

VIC

Uhm-hm.

TERRY

(trying to slow things down,
suddenly not in control)

Don't you want anything to drink? Maybe water or --

VIC

No.

TERRY

I have bottled. Flat and with gas.

VIC

Don't bother.

TERRY

Are you sure you're ready? Maybe first we should go over how --

But before Terry can lodge his protest, Vic twists open the cap and drinks the entire bottle. He doesn't chug it -- just slowly empties the contents into his mouth, swallowing. Finished, he makes a face -- it tastes awful. Terry seems a bit stunned.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Wow.

VIC

Are you okay?

TERRY

That was just -- huh. I guess this means we're really starting.

Vic suddenly seems to be the one running the show. Terry is thrown off.

VIC

You're not changing your mind, are you? Because you promised.

TERRY

No, I'm just...I need to sort of... mentally catch up to you. I guess -- I guess I just had a different sort of timeline in mind. Do you want to sit?

VIC

I'm fine. Just a little sick. From the taste.

TERRY

Are you -- do you feel like you're going to pass out?

VIC

You're going to slap me if I do, right? I want to be awake.

TERRY

Of course. I won't do anything without your consent.

VIC

Good.

TERRY

I don't want to make you into a victim here.

VIC

Right.

TERRY

I hate that about our society.

VIC

What?

TERRY

The desire to be a victim. The cachet it has.

VIC

Cachet?

TERRY

You know. That it gives them a sense of self-worth.

Vic looks unsteady, placing a hand on a counter to balance himself.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Are you sure you're okay?

VIC

Yeah. I just...I had one of those sort of flashes. Not really a black out, more like...

He takes a moment to put this into words.

VIC (CONT'D)

You know how sometimes, you want to cross the street? So you wait for a break in the traffic, and then you go across. But sometimes, I think, "What if some part of my brain just stopped working? What if I'm about to get hit by a car right now?" Because maybe something didn't go right in my head. And then -- (snaps his fingers) -- bang.

TERRY

Maybe you should sit.

VIC

Or as I'm crossing, I'll wonder if maybe I've already been hit. And I'm already dead. Like in that Bruce Willis movie.

TERRY

Which one?

VIC

With that little boy. The one who can see dead people.

TERRY

Oh, yeah. I didn't go to that one.

VIC

I might have ruined it for you.

TERRY

That's okay. It doesn't sound like my kind of movie. (beat)
Why don't we sit down.

Vic sits. Then, with a new thought, he suddenly pops out of his seat again.

VIC

You know what I was thinking? The onion thing doesn't really matter.

TERRY

What do you mean?

VIC

Well, it's not like I have to digest them anyway.

TERRY

But I don't want you to get sick from them.

VIC

It usually takes a while for it to be a problem. Overnight or something like that. Sometimes a whole day.

TERRY

Oh. So I guess it becomes my problem then. But it'll be better anyway. The food. With the onions. So I'm glad.

Terry checks his watch. Vic motions toward the kitchen.

VIC

Everything's ready?

TERRY

Just some last minute details.

VIC

Could I help?

TERRY

I'd be honored. C'mon. It's fun to cook with someone else.

Vic follows Terry over to the kitchen. Terry puts his apron on Vic, looping it around his neck and tying it for him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Do you know how to chop?

VIC

I guess.

TERRY

Here. (hands Vic a knife) You can do the parsley.

Terry checks a few items on the stovetop as Vic picks up the knife, starts to chop at a bunch of parsley on a cutting board. Terry notes his poor technique -- his fingertips stick out to guide the knife, vulnerable.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Try it like this.

He takes Vic's hand, demonstrating.

TERRY (CONT'D)

If you fold your fingers back, you can use your knuckles as a guide. And that way you won't cut yourself either. Try it.

Vic chops in this manner, slowly, but more technically correct.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Excellent. Isn't that better? You don't even have to look while you're doing it. A blind person could chop beautifully if he was properly taught.

Vic starts to look up while chopping, showing off his new skill, but Terry turns his head back into place.

VIC

(re: the knife)

This is really sharp.

TERRY

Of course it is. The worst accidents in the kitchen come from dull knives.

As Vic chops, Terry checks some items on the stovetop.

Vic stops chopping, pressing the knife point into the pad of his finger, testing its sharpness. After a moment, he winces, stops. He goes back to chopping.

The two men work side by side, in silent domesticity, then:

TERRY (CONT'D)

(re: the chopped parsley)

Looks like you're all set.

Terry takes Vic's knife and chops the parsley more finely -- fast and clean.

VIC

Is that all I can do?

TERRY

We're pretty much done. I'd like to serve you if I could.

Terry takes off Vic's apron, gestures at a table with two settings laid out. Vic goes to the table as Terry prepares the plates.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You can ready the table.

At the table, Vic looks to Terry for approval, then pours two full glasses of wine, lights candles. Terry dims the lights, brings two elegant looking plates of food to the table, sits down.

VIC

So what are we having?

TERRY (CONT'D)

(happy to explain)

Nothing fancy. Just a few amuse-bouches. A treviso and Gorgonzola tartelette. Butter-poached black radishes. And a Maryland blue crab cake.

VIC

Oh. I don't eat shellfish.

TERRY

Another allergy?

VIC

No. I just...don't like fishy things.

TERRY

It's not fishy at all.

VIC

(raising a glass)

Cheers.

TERRY

To seeing things through.

VIC

To the end.

They clink glasses and drink.

Terry looks down at his plate and his wine glass, suddenly a bit flustered.

TERRY

I should've chosen a different wine to pair with these. It's a Cru Beaujolais. Bright. Berry-like. It's really better for meat. For our main course. For later.

Vic picks at his food.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Try the crab cake. C'mon. Bon appetit.

Terry takes a forkful of crab cake from Vic's plate, holds it up to his mouth, as if feeding a child. A little pushy even. Vic takes a bite.

VIC

Oh. That's...nice.

TERRY

See? I'm glad you like it.

VIC

How did you learn to cook?

TERRY

Mostly from TV. I probably taped every episode of Jacques Pepin. I played them so many times they became unwatchable. That's the problem with video. I have most of it on DVD now. It's all online, but I like to be able to hold something, you know? I'm kind of a compulsive collector. But it's important to have a hobby. Do you collect anything?

VIC

Nothing really. Well...When I was a kid, I guess. I collected baseball cards.

TERRY

Do you still have them?

VIC

My mom threw them out when I went to college.

TERRY

Too bad. Bet they're worth a lot of money.

VIC

Well, she didn't probably know.

TERRY

Stupid cunt.

Vic seems uneasy with this language,
and Terry tries to soften his comment.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Well, ignorant at least.

VIC

How many DVDs do you have?

TERRY

Well over two thousand. Probably more like three. It wasn't so bad until my video store went out of business. At the end, they were offering everything they had for five bucks each. I just bought them out.

VIC

Everything?

TERRY

It seemed like too much of a hassle to pick and choose. Plus with porn, it's so hard to tell from the cover. And I found a few surprises that way.

VIC

Like what?

TERRY

You wanna see?

VIC

(re: his food)

I don't want it to get cold.

TERRY

Stay there. You can watch while you eat. (smiling) A TV dinner.

Terry gets up and heads over to the media center, rotates the TV on its swivel arm so Vic can see it.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I'll start with something kind of typical.

He locates a DVD, pops it into a player. The TV is angled so we don't see what he's showing, but we hear lo-fi porn audio. Terry sort of narrates for Vic, who eats as he watches.

TERRY (CONT'D)

So look at the guy here that's getting fisted. Okay, fine, he's into it, but he's sort of too into it, you know what I mean? It's like he's doing it in order to be watched.

VIC

Like he's...

TERRY

Performing. For us. Exactly right. You can tell he knows precisely where the camera is at every second, and he knows how it's making him look. And how we're reacting to him as a result. It's a total lie. There's nothing real about it at all. And that's what we've come to expect from porn. Fakery. It's pathetic really, the way they've just lowered our standards.

He aims a remote and removes the DVD. He takes out another disc and pops it in. He waits a moment, scans forward.

TERRY (CONT'D)

But with her, it's a completely different story. And I think this is much more common in the straight stuff. Watch this part. This right here.

He hits the remote control again -- the sound goes off.

TERRY (CONT'D)

If you look at it in slo-mo, look at her body. Look at the way she takes him in. See what she does there? The way she just sort of...

Terry slouches, as if the woman were expiring.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Gives up. Just completely yields. Because he's totally overwhelming her with his force. That's real. That's just her being her. Totally alone in the moment. It's something private that we get to see. Something she shares with us almost in spite of herself. You see it -- Oh, wait for this. This is fantastic.

He hits the remote again and the sound returns. Some deep MOAN, perhaps pain. It's ugly sounding. Vic winces a bit.

TERRY (CONT'D)

See what I mean? That's the dynamic I'm looking for. It's not just realism. It's real.

Finished with his "lecture", Terry turns the TV off with his remote and sits back down at the table. He has a look at Vic's plate, pleased.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You finished your crab cake.

VIC

It was good.

TERRY

How are you feeling now?

VIC

A little woozy, I guess.

TERRY

Are you numb at all?

VIC

No.

TERRY

I'm glad.

VIC

You?

Excited.

TERRY

Vic smiles at this -- the biggest, most sincere smile we've seen from him so far. He even tears up a little.

VIC

I'm glad for you.

His speech is getting a bit slurred, but he sounds totally sincere.

VIC (CONT'D)

Terry, I want you to know how much I appreciate this.

He reaches out, taking Terry's hand. Terry looks a bit uncomfortable with this gesture.

TERRY

I could say the same to you.

VIC

And I feel very, very connected to you right now.

TERRY

Same. Same here.

VIC

I feel closer to you than I've ever felt to anyone.

TERRY

I can't believe we waited this long.

VIC

I feel like I'm about to burst.

TERRY

Me too.

VIC

I mean that I can't eat anymore. It could be the medicine. Or maybe I'm just too excited. I'm sorry. I don't think I can finish all of this.

TERRY

That's okay. We need to save room for our entrée.

VIC

Oh. Okay. Actually...

Vic is going pale, getting woozy.

TERRY

Vic?

VIC

I just...I think I need the bathroom.

He gets up and hurries offstage. We hear a door opening, then the sound of vomiting.

TERRY

There's washcloths under the sink!

Terry, looking worried, walks closer to the bathroom. He stops, listening.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything? Vic?

VIC

I'm okay.

TERRY

You sure?

VIC

Maybe a glass of water?

Terry hurries off to the kitchen, pours water from a filter in the sink, and hurries back toward the bathroom. By the time he does, we hear a toilet flush. Vic returns to the stage, takes the glass of water. He takes a sip, then a bigger drink.

VIC (CONT'D)

I'm okay. I think the medicine...

TERRY

Do you want to rest?

VIC

No. I'm okay.

Vic sits down. Terry looks him over, making sure. Then:

TERRY

So did everything go smoothly on Friday?

VIC

They gave me a going away party.

TERRY

How sweet.

Terry begins cleaning up at the table, taking dishes to the kitchen area as the men continue to talk.

VIC

Well, not a party really, but there was cake.

TERRY

That's still something. From scratch?

VIC

I didn't ask.

TERRY

Did you tell them to take this job and shove it?

VIC

I told them I was going travelling.

TERRY

Oh. Right, right, right. Where did you say you were going?

VIC

I told them I got a round-the-world fare. They actually sell them. You pick one direction you want to fly in. Neat, huh?

TERRY

Sounds fun.

VIC

Do you travel a lot?

TERRY

When I get the chance. Not as much as I'd like to.

VIC

Are those pictures of your trips?

Vic gestures at the table of photos.

TERRY

Some. Mostly they're just friends.

VIC

You took them?

TERRY

The photos? Yes. I prefer it that way. To not be in them, I mean. I never understood why people would want to look at pictures of themselves.

Vic gets up from his seat -- he's definitely a bit woozy -- and heads to the table for a look.

VIC

You have a lot of friends.

TERRY

Do you?

Vic shrugs. Not really.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's better to have a few close friends than lots of acquaintances.

VIC

I guess. I don't really feel close to anybody. Usually when I'm talking with someone, at work or in a store, I just feel like I'm watching. Like it's on television or something. I hear my voice but I'm not in my head. I'm listening from the outside. Does that make sense?

TERRY

Is that how you feel with me?

Vic gets up, standing next to Terry.
They're close.

VIC

No. But this isn't what friends normally do together, right?

TERRY

But they could. If they really cared about one another.

VIC

So maybe I don't have any friends at all.

TERRY

You have me.

Vic smiles at this.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And I know what you mean. Friends aren't usually this close.

VIC

I guess we're pretty unique that way.

Terry seems bothered by this -- his face suddenly drops.

VIC (CONT'D)

What? You don't think so?

TERRY

No. I would say that we're unique.

VIC

Okay.

TERRY

You said we're pretty unique.

VIC

Yeah...?

Annoyed, Terry gets up and goes over to a bookshelf. He removes a dictionary from the shelf.

TERRY

I have this page marked.

The dictionary has many post-its sticking out like bookmarks. Terry reads aloud:

TERRY (CONT'D)

"Unique. Adjective. Being the only one of its kind. Being without an equal or equivalent, unparalleled."

He closes the dictionary a bit more firmly than needed.

VIC

I don't -- I'm sorry. So we are unique? Is that what you're saying?

TERRY

Yes. Unique. Unmodified. Not somewhat unique. Not fairly unique. Not very unique. Just unique. It's either one-of-a-kind, or it isn't.

VIC

Okay. Just unique. We're unique.

TERRY

Yes. Thank you.

Terry has lost his temper here -- the first time we have seen this.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Why don't we choose our knife.

Perhaps this outburst was a way for Terry to build up his courage. It's a significant shift in gears and tone for him. Vic sounds a little worried.

VIC

You want to start now?

TERRY

Can you tell me some reason to wait?

VIC

I...guess not.

Terry heads over to the kitchen area. He opens a drawer and starts to remove knives, explaining them.

TERRY

You really only need three knives in the kitchen. (one) This is a chef's knife for chopping and slicing. (two) And then a utility knife for dealing with bones and tough sinew. (three) Finally a paring knife for vegetables, fruits. (smiling at Vic, teasing a bit) And garlic.

Having laid these on the counter, Terry goes back to the drawer.

TERRY (CONT'D)

But as I already mentioned, I have something of a collecting problem. Look at all these.

One by one, he begins to pull out lots of knives -- more than a dozen in all.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Excessive, but fun to have around.

Vic comes closer for a look.

VIC

I think we should pick the sharpest.

TERRY

They're all sharp.

VIC

But which one is best?

TERRY

Depends on where we start cutting.

VIC

I thought we'd already decided.

TERRY

I wasn't sure if you'd changed your mind. About the whole thing. The plan.

VIC

I didn't like it when you raised your voice.

TERRY

I'm kind of a grammar fascist.

VIC

I don't like it when people yell.

TERRY

I'm sorry. I think precision matters. In speech as well as action.

VIC

My boss yells.

TERRY

Oh, you're breaking my heart, Vic.

VIC

He yells a lot.

TERRY

Great. Another perpetrator and another victim. Are you ready or aren't you?

Terry gestures at the knives. Vic hesitates, then picks up a knife, looks to Terry for an evaluation.

TERRY (CONT'D)

That's more of a boning knife.

Vic picks a second knife.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Absolutely, positively (beat) wrong.

VIC

Well, you know this stuff better than I do.

Terry looks at the selection for a moment, then picks up a heavy chopping knife, balances it in his hand.

TERRY

This is ideal. Good grip. Nice balance. German manufacture.

VIC

I don't think I can do it...on my own.

TERRY

Were you planning to?

VIC

I'd been considering it.

TERRY

Like trying to tickle yourself? No. I thought we agreed I could do it much better than you could. And faster too.

VIC

No. We did.

TERRY

Like a kosher butcher. They have all these rules about how you want to inflict as little pain as possible.

VIC

But it'll still hurt.

TERRY

I think so. And I have the stuff I told you about. To slow the bleeding if it gets to be a problem.

Terry begins to wash his hands at the sink -- more than wash them. He scrubs them, like a doctor, up to the elbows.

VIC

You're very careful.

TERRY

Habit, I guess.

VIC

I thought you said you'd never done this before?

TERRY

No. No. I haven't. I mean just dealing with food in general. I once got Hepatitis A from a restaurant in Bolivia. A very clean looking restaurant, by the way. A hotel buffet.

VIC

But you've worked it all out, right?

TERRY

Well...I've been using rabbit mostly. As a model.

VIC

Because of the flavor?

TERRY

No. Just where I should cut.

Terry goes over to the kitchen and looks into the fridge. He takes out a paper-wrapped package, no bigger than a bread loaf.

He sets it out on a cutting board, demonstrates for Vic as if he were hosting his own cooking show. He unwraps the package, revealing a five-pound skinned rabbit.

TERRY (CONT'D)

This is a five pound rabbit. Obviously you're much bigger, but there's some structural similarities. Like...

He holds the rabbit up by the front legs --

TERRY (CONT'D)

The shank. This would be like the arm. And there's a natural break here.

He grabs a knife and removes the two front shanks, simple and efficient.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I was looking at an anatomy book. Humans aren't that different. And there's another articulation here. Pretty similar.

He holds the rabbit up by the rear legs, indicates another cutting point.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Where the butt meets the lower spine. A tiny bit of cartilage, but if you wanted to, even a butter knife could probably handle the job.

Another quick pair of cuts. We are left with the torso.

TERRY (CONT'D)

The ribs and shoulder are a bit trickier. You can split it down the middle.

A few quick cuts --

TERRY (CONT'D)

And then, we just apply a little pressure...

He leans down on the torso from above, applying the knife to the spine. It crunches through the bone.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And voila. Six pieces. You're ready to go. Plus plenty left over for stock.

VIC

I think I'd like to be over before that last part. The ribs.

TERRY

Oh, of course.

VIC

And the shanks too. My legs, I mean. And my arms. I don't want to be here for that.

TERRY

Whatever you say.

Terry begins to put the pieces of rabbit away in a plastic bag, which he then puts in the refrigerator. He washes his hands after.

VIC

I just want to be stabbed. Right here. (points to his belly) Until...well, until the end.

TERRY

We could do it in the bathtub.

VIC

Can't we do it here?

TERRY

It'll be more to clean up.

VIC

But the tub seems so cold. Please?

TERRY

Ugh, it's going to be a wreck in here. I wonder if I have enough plastic to do it properly.

VIC

If you think the bathroom is cleaner...

TERRY

No. I can always straighten up later.

VIC

I think...I think I need to sit down a bit.

TERRY

Of course.

Terry helps lead Vic to the chair -- the one he sat in when he first arrived. As Vic sits, he notices the video camera with the red light, motions to it.

VIC

Is that on?

TERRY

Yes.

VIC

How long can it go for? What happens if the battery dies out?

TERRY

Not a problem. I'm running through the AC. Right into the wall.

VIC

Are you worried about it?

TERRY

I have a surge protector.

VIC

I mean having a tape. Of it.

TERRY

Should I be?

VIC

Well, just...if someone found it. That's all.

TERRY

I'm going to keep it somewhere safe. Protected. It's under control. And besides, no one knows you're here.

Vic looks away, slightly guilty. This worries Terry.

Right? No one?

TERRY (CONT'D)

Vic is silent, chews his lip.

TERRY (CONT'D)

What? What did you say?

VIC

Nothing important.

TERRY

Vic.

VIC

Really.

TERRY

This matters.

VIC

My boss.

TERRY

For Chrissakes.

VIC

It just -- forget about it.

TERRY

Tell me what you said.

VIC

Really, Terry.

TERRY

What did you say?

VIC

Just -- he asked me when I was leaving. For my trip. And I said I was spending the weekend in the city.

TERRY

What in the world made you say that?

VIC

It popped out.

TERRY
Anything else?

VIC
He asked what for.

TERRY
And?

VIC
I said I might visit a friend. And that I was leaving on Monday. My flight. I'm sure he wasn't even listening.

TERRY
(heading for the phone)
What's the name?

VIC
He didn't ask. I just said it was a friend.

TERRY
No. Your boss.

VIC
Mr. Feininger?

TERRY
Call him.

VIC
What for?

TERRY
Call him now and tell him you're in London. That you left early.

VIC
Why would I call him from London?

TERRY
Something work-related. Something he needs to know.

VIC
No, I mean...My around-the-world ticket. You can only go in one direction. I told them I was going westerly. They asked. So I couldn't be calling him from London.

TERRY

Fine. Then Los Angeles then. You're at the airport.

VIC

I don't have his number.

Terry zips over to his computer.

TERRY

Spell it for me. The name.

VIC

But then they'll be a record of the search. On your computer.
And they can --

TERRY

Oh. Suddenly you're a security expert? I have a scrubber.
Wrote the code myself, actually. So Feininger.

VIC

(very slow to spell it)

F-e-i-n-i-n-g-e-r. Lewis. With a "W."

Terry starts to type.

TERRY

Lewis...Lewis...Lewis. (to Vic) 26 Bay Road? (Vic nods) Got
it. Now what are you going to say?

VIC

I've never called him at home before.

TERRY

Well, think of a reason.

VIC

I could tell him the thing about my internet password.

TERRY

What about it?

VIC

You need to put it in quotes. It has something to do with the
encryption.

TERRY

And he doesn't know about this?

VIC

Well, I'm sure the I.T. guys do...

TERRY

But he wouldn't?

VIC

Mr. Feininger? I doubt it. Do you have caller ID blocked?

TERRY

That's for pussies. I route through an anonymous third-party line.

Terry dials the number and hands the phone over to Vic, who waits. Then:

VIC

Hi, Mr. Feininger? (beat) Oh, sorry.

He hangs up quickly.

TERRY

Wrong number?

Terry heads back to the computer to check it again.

VIC

It was his son.

TERRY

Oh. There must be two Lewis Feingers.

VIC

No, I just -- I screwed up. That was his son. He's a kid. He sounded like a kid.

TERRY

So is his daddy home?

VIC

I forgot to ask. Sorry. I panicked, I guess.

TERRY

You guess? Call him back. Hit redial.

Vic swallows nervously, does as told.

VIC

Hi, Mr. Feininger? (beat) Sorry, I got dis -- (beat) Oh, it's Vic. Victor. From work. (beat) Yeah, no, I'm in Los Angeles. At the airport. I decided to leave -- (beat) Celebrating? (beat) Oh. No. I'm not drunk. A little jetlagged or something. (beat) Listen, I realize I didn't explain -- I have this thing with my internet connection that -- (beat) No, I think Tech Support -- (beat) Right. Sorry to bother you at home. I -- (beat) I'll send a postcard to the whole department. (beat) Bye.

He hangs up. Vic looks unsettled throughout the phone call.

VIC (CONT'D)

Was that okay?

TERRY

I wonder if we should call it off.

VIC

What for?

TERRY

And there's no plane ticket either, is there? You didn't buy one.

VIC

Well, so what?

TERRY

Anybody who checks into it, they'll know.

VIC

I said I'm going away for six months.

TERRY

Well, what happens then? What happens after the six months is over?

VIC

Nobody's waiting for me to come home.

TERRY

What about your family?

VIC

I told you, it's just my mom. And we haven't talked in years. I don't even think she has my address.

TERRY

Or your landlord...

VIC

He's probably showing my apartment to new tenants as we speak. Really. You need to relax, Terry. We've gone through all of this over and over again.

Terry tries to calm himself down.

TERRY

I guess...

VIC

(gestures to the video camera)

But maybe it's not so smart to tape it.

TERRY

Well, how will I be able to see it again?

VIC

In your memory. Isn't that good enough?

Terry thinks about this for a while.

TERRY

No.

Vic stares at the red light, unnerved.

VIC

I don't really like it.

TERRY

Just act like it isn't there. No. Be like it isn't there. Like that woman in the porno. Don't pretend. Just be real. Can you be real for me?

VIC

I'll try.

TERRY

That's all I want.

VIC

I don't think -- I don't know if I'll be able to get...you know. Do you have anything that I can use?

TERRY

Viagra? It can take a while. Plus, who knows how the cough medicine might affect things.

VIC

Oh. Then could you put something on? A video, I mean. Or something. To...(still embarrassed) help me out.

TERRY

Oh. Of course. What would you like?

VIC

Doesn't matter. Anything. Well, not that thing with the woman.

TERRY

Whatever you can think of, I have. Amateur, Asian, Cumshots, Gangbangs, Spanking, Twinks, Water --

VIC

Just whatever's fine.

A bit surprised by this, Terry goes over to a cabinet, opens a drawer. Vic gets up, looks over his shoulder at the selections. Terry holds one up.

TERRY

How's this?

Vic nods indifferently -- it's fine. Terry slips the DVD into the player, hits play. As he does, Vic unbuckles his belt, pulls down his pants. His shirttails hang over his middle, but we can see that he is trying to arouse himself with his hand while standing up, watching the video.

Terry can see this isn't quite working.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Would you be more comfortable sitting?

Vic nods, hobbles over to the couch. He watches for a while, still trying to get aroused.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Do you need some help?

Vic sort of shrugs -- why not?

Terry washes his hands at the sink again. He sits down on the couch next to Vic. The moment he reaches out for Vic's penis --

VIC

Cold!

TERRY

Sorry.

Terry rubs his hands together, then reaches out for Vic again. He starts jerking Vic off. There is nothing especially sexual about the way he does it. It's mechanical.

VIC

It's better if it's hard, don't you figure?

TERRY

I do.

VIC

That way it'll bleed more.

TERRY

(disappointed with the results)

You're...getting there.

VIC

I'm trying.

TERRY

You'll tell me when to stop.

VIC

Yeah.

TERRY

Because you shouldn't come.

VIC

Right.

Terry continues to jerk Vic off as they watch the porno. Terry still looks disappointed with the results.

TERRY

This isn't really working.

VIC

Would you -- (gets embarrassed) Could you put your finger in my mouth?

Terry does -- nothing erotic about it at all. More like he's taking Vic's temperature with his index finger.

VIC (CONT'D)

Anfewmore.

TERRY

(takes his finger out)

What?

VIC

Could you put a few more in? Sort of -- so it's hard for me to breathe?

This is awkward for Terry, physically.

TERRY

Well, I should change...

He switches hands, jerking Vic off with the other hand, stuffing as much of his other hand as he can into Vic's mouth. Vic moans a little with pleasure.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Very good. Yes. Excellent.

This goes on for a bit longer, then:

VIC

Shuhwesit?

TERRY

(fingers out again)

Should we what?

VIC

Should we sit and do it?

TERRY

(very practical re: the
erection)

You're ready? Is this good enough?

VIC

We do it here?

TERRY

The kitchen. It's going to make an absolute mess.

VIC

Okay. Let's.

Vic stands. Terry heads back over to the counter area. Vic -- pants at his ankles, shirt over his crotch -- hobbles after him. There is a frantic quality to this. It's finally about to happen.

TERRY

Put it on this.

Terry grabs hands a plastic cutting board, shoves it at Vic. They're behind the kitchen counter now, so we can't see as Vic takes the board, puts it under his penis.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You ready?

Vic nods. Terry picks up the cutting knife, sharpens it with a steel, excited. But his face drops as he Vic suddenly GASPS in excitement. Terry looks back at Vic's penis.

He slams the knife back down on the counter, frustrated.

VIC

I'm sorry. I just --

TERRY

For godssakes.

VIC

I couldn't help myself.

Annoyed, Terry grabs a few paper towels, flings them at Vic.

TERRY

Here.

VIC

(re: his flaccid penis)

We can still do it this way, can't we?

TERRY

I thought we agreed.

VIC

It doesn't have to be hard.

TERRY

Just clean yourself up.

As Vic cleans himself up, Terry searches for something in a drawer, accidentally bangs his finger in the drawer as he closes it.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Goddamnit!

He loses his temper, does his best to stay in control.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I knew I -- I should've stopped sooner.

VIC

It's okay.

TERRY

No. It's not okay.

VIC

Sorry.

TERRY

No. You were fine. I just -- it was my fault. Fuck. I knew it.

VIC

I can try again.

TERRY

And how long is that going to take?

VIC

I'm really sorry.

TERRY

I already said. It's not your fault. I'm the one to blame.

VIC

I don't think you should touch me. Next time.

TERRY

(sarcastic)

You think?

VIC

It got me too excited.

TERRY

Like a fucking teenager.

Vic zips his pants back up, looks around for a place to put his messy paper towels.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Under the sink.

Vic finds the garbage, chucks the paper towels away.

VIC

Why don't we go over that part.

TERRY

What?

VIC

(motioning to the camera)

Can we just rewind past that bit and record over it?

TERRY

Leave it.

VIC

I don't want that on tape.

Vic heads over to the camera, and Terry follows closely behind.

TERRY

Well, tough.

VIC

Seriously, Terry. It's embarrassing.

TERRY

It's my tape.

VIC

It's our tape.

TERRY

Well, then even more reason for you to leave it alone.

Vic looks confused by this logic.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Didn't you listen to anything I said? I want the tape to be real. I'm not going to record over something just because you can't handle reality.

But Vic still heads over to the camera, and Terry rushes over, blocking him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Don't. Fucking. Touch it.

VIC

Jesus Christ.

TERRY

Leave it alone.

Vic relaxes for a moment, then, when he thinks Terry is off-guard, he makes a move for it again.

This time, Terry physically stops him. They scrap for a bit. Terry manages to get Vic's arm wrenched behind his back, shoving him up against the wall.

VIC

Okay. Okay. Fine. Fine. You win.

Terry lets Vic go, and then Vic immediately dives for the camera.

Terry throws himself against Vic, tackling him down to the floor, right behind the kitchen counter. He pins him to the ground, his knees on his shoulders. He puts his hands on Vic's throat, threatening to choke him.

TERRY

Don't you dare fucking touch my fucking camera. It's my tape. Mine.

VIC

Now.

TERRY

I swear, I will kill you.

VIC

Now.

TERRY

What?

VIC

Feel it. NOW!

Terry reaches between Vic's legs, feels that he is erect.

TERRY

(impressed)

You're like a rock.

VIC

Do it. Please.

Terry reaches up to the top of the kitchen counter, grabs the knife.

We watch the next few moments from behind the kitchen counter. It is made of glass bricks, distorting our view of what's happening.

But the sound is clear enough. Vic stifles a groan, lets out a gasp.

The sudden burst of red that hits the glass stands out in a room full of otherwise muted colors. It's the first time we've seen anything so bright.

Terry remains on top of Vic for an extended moment in this strange, vaguely post-coital embrace. They are both a bit winded, fatigued.

TERRY

Was that good?

Vic manages a nod -- he looks somewhere between blissed-out and terrified.

Finally, still breathing heavily from the fighting, Terry looks up at the video camera.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Fuck. I don't know if I got it.

Terry stands up -- we see that his shirt is stained with blood -- and looks into the video camera viewfinder.

TERRY (CONT'D)

There's blood on it.

He takes out a handkerchief and carefully wipes the lens.

Vic remains on the ground, mostly out of view.

Terry looks through the viewfinder again, focusing on Vic, who is quiet. No sound or movement from him, then:

VIC

(very quietly)

The stuff. (beat) Terry?

TERRY

You sure?

Vic nods. Terry opens a kitchen drawer, takes out a paper bag and a white towel. He kneels down, gives the towel to Vic, who really struggles to talk.

TERRY (CONT'D)

We got it. On tape. Barely.

VIC

I'm dying.

TERRY

No you're not. Direct pressure.

Terry presses the towel into Vic's groin. He cries in pain.

VIC

Did you take it all off?

TERRY

Yeah.

VIC

The balls too?

TERRY

We never said the balls.

VIC

But...it feels...

TERRY

I didn't touch them. I promise. It's okay.

He opens the paper bag.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Here. This'll stop the bleeding. It's what the military uses. In battle. You're a war hero.

Terry takes out the tube, applies the material to Vic's crotch.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I got it on-line.

Terry looks Vic over, almost clinical. He seems satisfied.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It works.

VIC

I want to stand.

TERRY

You sure? (Vic nods) Okay.

VIC

Help me.

Terry leans down to help Vic up. He's very sensitive about it, cautiously and slowly bringing Vic to a standing position. It's our first good look at Vic since the cutting. His face is pale, and his groin area is a bloody mess. But he is standing steady.

TERRY

Hold on a sec.

Terry helps him lean onto the counter, then Terry grabs two sheets of clear plastic from under the sink. He spreads it out on the floor while Vic remains at the counter, holding himself up.

Terry puts a chair directly on top of the plastic, then puts another sheet around the chair.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Do you want anything?

VIC

Maybe something to cover me.

TERRY

Cover you?

VIC

I don't think I want to see it.

Terry hurries back to the kitchen, reaches under the sink again, takes out a green garbage bag. He tears it down the seam, then covers Vic's groin with it, tying it around him like a makeshift skirt. It hurts whenever it brushes against his exposed flesh, especially as Terry helps Vic walk over to -- and sit in -- the plastic covered chair. Vic finally settles into it.

TERRY

We should look at the tape. To make sure we got it. You wanna see?

VIC

Okay.

Terry goes over to the video camera, hits stop, then rewinds the tape a bit.

TERRY

I'd hate for us to have to do it all over again.

VIC

What?

TERRY

Just kidding.

Even Vic smiles at this. Terry takes the camera down off the tripod, and they watch the footage together on the camera monitor.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's a good thing I have that wide angle adapter. You're barely in the shot.

We can't see what they see, but it's clear when it gets to the moment of cutting. Both men look delighted.

VIC

It looks real! I look real.

TERRY

You did terrific.

Terry puts a satisfied hand on Vic's shoulder, continues to watch, silenced by it.

VIC

It felt...Oh my God. We did it.

Vic is almost in tears.

VIC (CONT'D)

Thank you, Terry. Thank you with everything that I have.

From the video camera monitor, we hear white noise. Terry gets up, puts the camera back on the tripod, starts to record again. The red light comes back on. He turns the TV off, returns to Vic, squats down to talk to him, face to face. A sort of post-game analysis between the two men:

TERRY

You feel okay?

VIC

It was great.

TERRY

It was. I just --

VIC

Just what?

TERRY

No. I don't want to complain.

VIC

Tell me. I want to know. If there was something I could've done better.

TERRY

It's not you. It's my fault.

VIC

Tell me.

TERRY

I wish I'd been closer.

VIC

No. You were right on top of me. I could feel your breath. It was perfect.

TERRY

I mean the camera. For a better shot. I really wanted to see it.

VIC

I'm sorry.

TERRY

It's not your fault. We'll do better on the next part. You really caught me off guard. You spend all this time planning...

VIC

I didn't think I could get hard again. At least not so fast. And I didn't want to lose it.

TERRY

(getting upset)

Look, I'm not blaming you. Stop making excuses.

VIC

Please don't yell.

TERRY

(louder still)

I wasn't yelling.

VIC

I could play it back. Then you'd see. You were yelling.

TERRY

Don't get funny with me. I was emphasizing. There's a difference.

VIC

Well, I'm sorry.

TERRY

Apologize one more time, and I'm calling the whole thing off.

Vic doesn't answer, bothered. A quiet pause, then:

TERRY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if it sounded like I was yelling.

VIC

I accept your apology.

Terry lifts up the green garbage bag cover on Vic, checks out what's underneath it.

TERRY

It's amazing. The bleeding's really stopped. I think we should keep on going. Unless you want to wait.

VIC

No.

TERRY

Good. You feel okay?

VIC

Yeah, it's...weird. I'm totally alert.

TERRY

You hungry?

VIC

Tell me how you're going to do it.

Terry talks as he heads over to the kitchen, takes a pan from the oven, puts it on the stovetop and turns on the flame. He adds just a splash of oil.

TERRY

Just like we said. Sear it in a little oil. Thirty seconds per side, tops. Like a scallop. Salt and pepper. Nothing else. You want to help?

VIC

Maybe I'll just watch. From here.

TERRY

You need really high temperature to caramelize the sugars in meat. That's why I pre-heated the cast iron. Just to give us a little head start. Here we go.

Terry tongs the penis into the pan. We hear it SIZZLE right away.

TERRY (CONT'D)

(smiles, teasing a bit)

No onions.

VIC

I...can't smell it yet.

TERRY

Give it a moment. It's a funny thing, smell. Basically, the molecules from the food -- or whatever it is -- they have to travel to your nose. Into your nose. You're basically smelling evaporation. And it turns out that the part of your brain that understands smell, the part that says "This is a banana." Or "this is a rotting fish." That's the part of your brain that also processes emotion. Isn't that curious?

VIC

I smell it now.

TERRY

I can too. Good.

Terry nods, then tongs the penis, turning it over.

TERRY (CONT'D)

And there's some flavor crystals left behind. Excellent. Means we're searing properly. It's gonna be pretty pink on the insides. Might even be a bit raw. But I want to taste the full range of it. (beat) Here we go.

Finished with cooking both sides now, Terry tongs the penis onto a plate and brings it over on a tray to Vic, who is curled up in the chair, looking very pale but eager.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I want you to have the first bite.

VIC

Could you feed it to me?

TERRY

It would be my honor.

Terry cuts off a piece and feeds it to Vic, a kind of romantic gesture. Vic chews deliberately, satisfied.

VIC

Now you.

Terry takes a bite himself, savoring it for a moment in silence, closing his eyes as he chews.

VIC (CONT'D)

How am I?

TERRY

The most wonderful thing I've ever tasted. Don't you think?

VIC

Yes. I do. It's everything I imagined.

They are both still chewing as they talk -- it appears that the meat is very rubbery.

VIC (CONT'D)

Actually, it's kind of tough.

TERRY

I wonder if I should braise it.

VIC

(smiling finally)

I don't taste very good.

TERRY

(laughing now)

It's...like a rubber tire.

They both laugh together. Real, hearty, genuine laughs. It almost takes the wind out of them. They finally recover.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You want another bite?

VIC

No way. You?

TERRY

I think I will braise it. Later.

They laugh some more, then it subsides. A more serious tone settles in.

VIC

Are you going to show your friends?

TERRY

Show them...?

Vic gestures over at the video camera, still impassively recording them.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's just for you and me.

VIC

I think now's a good time, actually.

TERRY

For the final talk?

Vic nods, yes. Terry gets up, goes to the camera.

He lifts it up along with the tripod and sets it down in front of Vic.

VIC

Can I see it? While I do it, I mean?

Terry rotates the on-camera monitor so it faces Vic as he talks.

Terry remains behind the camera.

There is something stiff -- rehearsed even -- in the way Vic talks, checking himself in the monitor.

VIC

My name is Victor Phillip Harmon. I am here of my own free will. This is my final statement. (beat) People should try to help each other. And to be nice. I think -- I think it's important for people to work together. And to not think that the world just resolves around them. Revolves. Because it doesn't. I don't think it's good to judge other people. Unless you've walked in their shoes. Which I don't really think you can do. So that's why you shouldn't judge. (beat) Thank you.

This apparently completes his statement. The camera still rolls. Terry comes around from behind the camera and looks directly into it -- at us once again.

VIC (CONT'D)

That wasn't so good.

Terry breathes on the lens, wipes it clean with his shirt.

TERRY

Sorry, viewers. Just a little dust or something.

VIC

I didn't like the way it came out.

TERRY

What do you mean?

VIC

I'd thought about it too much. In advance.

TERRY

Plus there was that crap on the lens.

VIC

I was so real before. When you cut me. I was as good as that woman.

TERRY

You want to try again?

VIC

But I don't want to tape over it.

TERRY

(smiles, pleased)

Okay.

Terry goes back to the camera, reframes. He then closes the monitor so Vic can't see it. It helps.

VIC

I'm Victor Phillip Harmon. I am here of my own free will. This is my final statement.

Vic really takes his time, and the effect is genuine, even emotional.

VIC (CONT'D)

Before I go, I just want to say...

He chokes up, takes a moment.

VIC (CONT'D)

Terry, I'm so grateful to you. For helping me. And I'm ready. Still there's a few things I'm going to miss. I'd like to share them with you, okay?

Terry nods -- go ahead.

VIC (CONT'D)

The way brick looks when the sun is low. The sound a pebble makes when you drop it in a pond. Ploop! Paper supply stores. And coffee ice cream. In a paper cup. I don't like cones. (beat) I've never hurt anyone in my entire life.

(MORE)

VIC (CONT'D)

Never on purpose. And if I did by accident, I'm sorry. (beat)
If I had the chance to do it all over again, I wouldn't
change a thing. This is exactly where I want to be. Where I
would want to end up. Thank you.

Vic begins to cry. It starts out
manageably, just a few tears, but
eventually, he is sobbing.

Terry comes from behind the camera and
puts an arm on Vic. Eventually, Vic is
able to stop crying.

VIC (CONT'D)

This is what friends do, right?

TERRY

Exactly.

VIC

Thank you.

Vic hugs Terry, who pats Vic on the
back, a little stiff.

VIC (CONT'D)

Now you tell me something.

TERRY

What do you mean?

VIC

Before we finish. Like we're friends. Because I just told you
something.

TERRY

(hesitant)

Okay...

VIC

Something real.

This is not so easy for Terry. Nothing
seems to come to mind. A long silence.

VIC (CONT'D)

(prompting)

Maybe something about one of your friends? Who's that?

Vic points to a black and white photograph of a young man on a beach.

TERRY

Richard.

VIC

It's a great picture. He looks so...healthy.

TERRY

I met him when I was travelling. That was taken in Portugal. This was...wow. Almost fifteen years ago. We took a train together from Vienna. All the way to Lisbon. A long ride. Somehow we didn't have the right currency or something, and we didn't have anything to eat. Except I had bought these candy bars somewhere. They were just awful, filled with some kind of fruit liqueur. And he had instant espresso, but we didn't have a cup, so we made coffee with warm tap water and drank it out of the top of a can of shaving cream. God, we were so wired from all the caffeine and sugar. My teeth were practically vibrating.

He is quiet for a moment, smiling, remembering.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I lost touch with him after that. Maybe we wrote a few letters, but it kind of petered out. (beat) And then last year, I was at O'Hare Airport, travelling on business. And I felt this hand on my shoulder. I looked up and there he was. He had a wife. Two kids. We didn't really have much to say, but when he walked away, he handed me a chocolate bar. It's in my freezer. I still haven't opened it.

VIC

Do you miss him?

TERRY

I only knew him for a few days. Maybe it was a week. But certain people...They leave their mark. Oh, Richard.

VIC

Thank you, Terry.

His speech sounds very labored, fatigued. He's worn out.

TERRY

You're welcome. Friend.

VIC

How will you prepare me?

TERRY (CONT'D)

I wrote some notes and things.

Terry heads to his computer.

VIC

Recipes?

TERRY

(typing now on his laptop)

It's ideas more than anything else. I'm sure I'll learn as I go. But I have a few recipes, yeah. You want to see them?

Vic doesn't reply. In fact, his eyes have closed.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Vic?

Still no response. Terry looks worried. He gets up, tentatively walking back toward Vic in the chair. He's scared.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Vic?

He slaps him on the cheek, not too hard. Still no response, then he hits him harder.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Vic. Vic!

Vic suddenly opens his eyes.

TERRY (CONT'D)

You there?

VIC

Oh. Yeah. Thanks. Just...What were we talking about again?

TERRY

You're not going anywhere, are you?

VIC
Were we talking about recipes?

TERRY
Yeah. We were.

VIC
Tell me.

TERRY
You sure you're okay?

VIC
C'mon. Tell me how you're going to prepare me.

TERRY
I'm not going to lose you, am I?

VIC
Talk. Tell me.

TERRY
It really depends on which part we're talking about.

VIC
But you said you'd eat everything, right? You promised.

TERRY
And I meant it. I will.

VIC
I think I'm ready.

TERRY
Don't you want to see what I've written? My notes?

VIC
No. I trust you. Let's do it.

TERRY
Okay. You know what. I need to use the bathroom. All that wine. Please excuse me for just a moment.

Terry heads offstage to use the bathroom. While he is away, Vic hobbles out of his chair, picking up the photo of Richard. His hands are kind of unsteady and he drops it on the floor.

It lands on an area rug, muting the sound of the glass breaking.

Vic leans down to pick it up. The photo has loosened itself from the frame. Vic carefully picks the glass away, bothered by what he sees.

He plucks the photo out, turns it over. On the back, we see printed text. It's not a photo at all, but something likely clipped out of a magazine.

Vic picks up another photo, this one of two smiling WOMEN at a picnic. He opens the back of the frame, revealing another magazine cut out. He opens a third photo -- the same thing.

Vic is so busy looking at the photos that he doesn't hear the sound of a door opening, followed by Terry approaching.

TERRY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

VIC

What is this?

TERRY

Put those back.

VIC

Why did you lie to me?

TERRY

I didn't.

VIC

Terry.

He holds up the magazine cutouts.

VIC (CONT'D)

These aren't your friends.

TERRY

Seriously. Stop it.

VIC

I trusted you. These are just --

TERRY

(more emphatic)

Put them back.

VIC

From a magazine or something. These aren't real photos. Have you ever been to Portugal?

TERRY

I think I should choose a knife.

VIC

I don't think so, Terry.

TERRY

Or we can choose together.

Terry heads to the kitchen. Vic heads to Terry's desk. More framed photos. More fakes.

VIC

You don't know anything about friends.

TERRY

You don't know what you're talking about.

VIC

Friends don't lie to each other. I know that much.

TERRY

I never lied to you.

VIC

How can you say that?

TERRY

You asked for someone to kill you and eat you. And I promised to do it. End of story.

Vic begins to open more of the photos, wrecking them as he does.

TERRY (CONT'D)
Stop it, Vic.

VIC
This is all lies.

TERRY
Vic. Stop. Now!

Vic continues to rip through them, prompting Terry to run at him, wielding a knife. Vic blocks Terry, and the two of them are thrown to the ground. Terry has Vic pinned in an instant, the knife pressed into Vic's neck.

VIC
This isn't the way. This isn't how we said. You said you were my friend. You said so. You promised me.

Terry slowly lets up, eventually dropping the knife to the floor. He remains on top of Vic, straddling him.

TERRY
We need to finish this.

VIC
Not like this, we don't.

TERRY
Well, how then?

VIC
Can you get off me? Terry?

Terry finally stands, then helps Vic up, allowing him to get back into his chair. Between getting cut and the struggle, Vic is exhausted. He takes a few moments to talk.

VIC (CONT'D)
How many friends do you really have, Terry?

TERRY
A few of them are real.

VIC

How many?

Terry looks down. It's clear that none of them are real.

TERRY

Well, one I guess.

VIC

Which one?

Terry is quiet for a moment. He looks directly at Vic.

VIC (CONT'D)

Me?

TERRY

That's all I need. And that's what we agreed on. That I could be closer to you than any other person on earth could ever be.

VIC

Have you even been to Europe? Or Bolivia?

TERRY

Yes.

VIC

Really?

TERRY

Why does it matter?

VIC

I need to know that I can trust you. I need to know you're a man of your word.

TERRY

I am.

VIC

I don't want my body to go to waste, you know. Picked at by fish at the bottom of some river somewhere. Or thrown into a dumpster like those babies that you hear about on the news.

TERRY

You won't.

VIC

I want to be...I want to be part of something. I wanted to be part of you. To be inside you. Forever.

TERRY

You will, Vic. Every last bit.

VIC

I just don't know now.

TERRY

Vic, on my honor. I promise you. I'll crush your bones down into flour. I'll grind your liver into pate and use your intestines for sausage. I'll make jewelry from your teeth. Nothing will go to waste. Not a single speck.

Vic tries to take all of this in, then:

VIC

I think I should go home.

TERRY

What?

VIC

To think this over.

Vic struggles to lean forward and pull up his pants.

TERRY

You said you gave up your apartment.

VIC

I'll go to a hotel.

TERRY

You didn't move out of your place. You lied.

VIC

Don't try to turn this around on me.

TERRY

You're the one who said you were going to go "home."

VIC

It just --

TERRY

What?

VIC

It was just a figure of speech. Anyway, I don't have to justify myself. I didn't lie to you. Ever. I need -- I want to re-think this.

TERRY

Did you or did you not you move out of your apartment?

VIC

Terry, my apartment is blank. My bank account is zeroed out. I've quit my job. I have nothing. And now that I can't trust anything you've said to me, I have even less than I thought.

TERRY

You can trust me.

VIC

Where's my coat?

TERRY

You can't go.

Vic stands, pulling up his pants.

VIC

I sold all of my books for cash. I can go anywhere I want.

TERRY

What books?

VIC

Terry.

TERRY

Really. What books?

VIC

Biographies.

TERRY

I thought you said you didn't collect anything.

VIC

I don't. I just like to read biographies.

TERRY

Which ones? Which people?

VIC

It doesn't matter. I just -- I like to know how other people live. I find it...

TERRY

Interesting?

VIC

Yes. And helpful. To know what other people do. Or have done. Look, it doesn't matter. The point of it is that I am free to go as I please. Nothing is holding me back.

By now, Vic is standing, his pants up. He hobbles in the general direction of the door.

TERRY

(gesturing to his groin)

What are you going to do about that? It's probably already infected.

VIC

So I'll go to a doctor.

TERRY

And tell him what?

VIC

That it was an accident.

TERRY

Really. You just happened to cut your penis off with a seven inch high carbon stainless steel knife with a Granton edge?

VIC

Why not?

TERRY

I'll kill you before I let you leave.

Terry holds out the bloody knife.

VIC

No, you won't.

TERRY

Make one move for that door, and I'll stick you like a pig and incinerate you in the basement. You'll be nothing but ash and smoke.

VIC

That's not funny, Terry.

TERRY

You go out that door, and a doctor sees what we've done, then the cops are next. I know you, Vic. You'll tell them everything. I'm terribly sorry, but I can't let you leave me.

Vic takes this in. He walks right up to the tip of Terry's knife, testing him. Then, he passes by, over to the rack where his jacket hangs.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I lied to you Vic. I'm sorry. And I'd like to explain.

Vic stops for a moment. Terry stands in front of the door. Blocking him.

TERRY (CONT'D)

It's not so easy for me to make friends either. It's not easy for anybody, as far as I can tell. But you asked me -- You asked me to tell you a story. About Richard. And that's...that's who he is to me. And he's real. He's real to me. And I could tell you stories about every person in every picture if you wanted. (pointing to different photos) Katy. And Eugene. Gloria. Tom and Martha.

Terry seems genuinely upset here as he talks.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I told you the truth. What's true to me. And that's what friends do. They open up the most personal -- the most private -- things about themselves. I was nothing without you, Vic. You gave my life value and meaning. And we made a plan. And we followed through on it. Together. The two of us. No one else paid even the slightest attention. We might as well have been the only two people on this planet.

Vic seems to be going along with this analysis.

TERRY (CONT'D)

I couldn't do this alone. We couldn't do this alone. We need each other. Otherwise, apart, we're nothing. (beat) It's your call. (he gestures) The door. (another gesture) Or the kitchen.

Vic takes a moment, then heads to the door. Terry is startled, frozen.

Vic reaches for the door knob --

VIC

Thank you for being honest with me, Terry.

-- but instead of opening the door, he flips the bolt, locking it once again. Terry exhales, relieved and exhausted.

VIC (CONT'D)

May I choose?

TERRY

It would be an honor.

Vic hobbles back over to the kitchen, looking over the array of knives. He eventually picks one up. Terry nods, barely visible.

VIC

What is it?

TERRY

Eleven inches. Three layers of laminated powder steel. Thin but strong. Elegant. It's a perfect choice.

VIC

Can we do it in the chair?

TERRY

Of course. It will be your throne. Your Excellency. Wait here.

Terry heads over to the chair, yanks off the plastic with a flourish.

VIC

Oh, Terry, you don't have to --

TERRY

No. I insist.

Terry helps Vic over to the chair, gets him settled in it.

Terry goes to the camera, makes sure it is properly set up, then starts to rotate the in-camera monitor so Vic can see it.

VIC

No. I just want to look at you. You can always watch it later.

Terry closes the monitor, then heads over to Vic.

VIC (CONT'D)

Will you look at me? Don't look away.

TERRY

(staring right at Vic)

I won't.

He leans in very close -- their physical relationship has a seduction to it. They whisper to one another.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Tell me when you're ready.

VIC

I'm almost there.

TERRY

I don't want to go in too fast.

VIC

No. Take your time.

TERRY

I don't want to rush you.

VIC

You're very kind.

TERRY

I want it to be together.

VIC

Yes.

TERRY

Yes.

VIC & Terry

Now.

On "now", Terry gently moves forward. Vic's head tilts back, almost ecstatic.

Terry leans into Vic, so that his face is in Vic's neck, almost buried there.

We see the repeated, rhythmic movements of the stabbing as their bodies undulate together.

The only sign of blood is the trickle that emerges from the corner of Vic's mouth. Seeing it, Terry impulsively licks it as if falls.

Terry smiles at Vic, his mouth now red with blood. For a moment, there is no movement.

VIC

(running out of breath)

Don't stop. I'm still here.

The movement continues -- more stabbing.

Finally, a GASP from Vic. He isn't moving. His eyes remain open, his face frozen in an odd half-smile.

Terry slumps into Vic, not moving for a while. A long, motionless embrace. Like lovers.

Terry fully pulls himself up, places a finger against Vic's neck, feeling for a pulse. Nothing.

Terry looks back at the video camera. It is still rolling.

Terry closes Vic's eyelids. He kisses each one.

Terry stands up. He has blood all over himself.

He goes to the kitchen and washes up. Then, he starts to sharpen a knife.

He looks out at Vic, trying to summon up some emotion, but he's not feeling anything.

He takes an onion out. He is about to start chopping it, to help him cry.

But discovers that he doesn't need it.

He puts the onion back down, startled to discover that tears are falling down his cheeks.

He does nothing to stop them.

Terry is actually crying.

FADE TO BLACK