



Côte d'Azur

(French Riviera, "Sky-Blue Coast")

Screenplay by

Alan C. Baird

based on his book

v9

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"Côte d'Azur"

FADE IN:

EXT. GRANDE CORNICHE, FRENCH RIVIERA - DAY, 1978

A 20-something American man, ERIC, is walking along the twisting, scenic cliff road between Nice and Monaco in southern France. He's carrying a small knapsack.

ERIC (V.O.)

There's nothing quite so romantic
as spending one's youth in a
foreign land.

He sees a sports car approaching, and sticks out his thumb. The DRIVER, a 60-something American man, stops to give him a lift.

DRIVER

Where ya headed?

ERIC

Monaco, just a few minutes' drive.

DRIVER

(to his passenger)

What do you think, Doudou? Are we
going that far?

The PASSENGER, a 20-something French woman, smiles at Eric and makes room for him in the jump seat behind her.

DOUDOU

Further. Much further. Or is it
"farther"?

DRIVER

(offers his hand to
Eric)

I'm Eric. Just like you.

ERIC

(surprised)

Do I know you?

DRIVER

Not yet. But I know you.

Eric stares intently at the older man.

ERIC

You look strangely familiar.

DRIVER

Look closer. This face will be yours someday. See this pale circle on my neck?

ERIC

I have a mole in that spot.

DRIVER

I know. I had it removed 30 years ago. The skin pigment never really comes back.

ERIC

Now you're freaking me out.

DRIVER

No worries. You're in good hands.

He eases the car into gear and slowly ACCELERATES into the first curve. Eric is still wary, but he calms down a bit, as the breeze WHISPERS through his hair.

ERIC

It's such a gorgeous day.

DRIVER

(to himself)

This is where I came in.

The Driver suddenly jerks the steering wheel to the right, sending the car CRASHING over the cliff. The car rolls over several times and finally comes to rest. Eric is thrown free, and he's miraculously unhurt. He crawls over to the wreck. Doudou is only slightly injured, but the Driver is dead.

EXT. MARINA BAIE DES ANGES BALCONY - SUNNY DAY, 2020

It's 4 decades later. Some say this serpentine luxury condominium complex near Nice is a sinuous combination of the Egyptian Pyramids and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. JENS and OLDER ERIC, two 60-something men, relax on chaise lounges while sipping absinthes.

OLDER ERIC

So we begin with a traumatic crash, and let the young couple get acquainted during the aftermath?

He SPEAKS into a handheld voice recorder. He's the spitting image of the Driver from the previous scene.

JENS

Why are you killing yourself off so soon?

OLDER ERIC

Trust me. It'll become crystal clear at the end.

JENS

Is this based on something that happened to you?

OLDER ERIC

A little bit. This weird couple picked me up, 40-odd years ago. The young girl was obviously attracted to the older guy, but I couldn't figure out why.

JENS

Money. Fast car. Or maybe they were trying to interest you in a 3-way.

OLDER ERIC

HA! We could take the story in that direction...

EXT. GRANDE CORNICHE, FRENCH RIVIERA - DAY, 1978

Back to the Seventies. The car is just beginning to accelerate. Doudou leans over the back of her seat and kisses the younger version of Eric.

EXT. MARINA BAIE DES ANGES BALCONY - SUNNY DAY, 2020

Back to the present. Jens and the older version of Eric thoughtfully sip their absinthes, giving careful consideration to this alternate version of the script. Sugar cubes, absinthe spoons, and a carafe of iced water are strewn about.

JENS/OLDER ERIC

(simultaneously)

Nah. Car crash! Car crash!!

They both GIGGLE.

EXT. GRANDE CORNICHE, FRENCH RIVIERA - DAY, 1978

Seventies again. Doudou clings tightly to the younger version of Eric, while he hitchhikes back towards Nice. He smirks at no-one in particular, as a car picks them up.

ERIC (V.O.)

It looked like this gal would need a lot of comforting, during the night ahead. And I was just the man for the job. It was dirty work, but someone had to do it.

EXT. CARLONE CAMPUS CAFETERIA - NEXT MORNING, 1978

Eric and Doudou walk over to a bench outside this dining hall at the University of Nice. DR. KURT and BRUCE, two 20-something American men, are sitting on the bench. They're obviously trying to hide something.

DOUDOU

See you tonight, mon chéri!

She kisses Eric, who reciprocates reluctantly. After she walks away, Eric asks Dr. Kurt:

ERIC

Do you mind if I crash at your place for a few nights? This one will need to be scraped off with a stick.

DR. KURT

Lemme check my calendar. (Opens up an imaginary book.)

BRUCE

(high-pitched lisp)
Ooo, you can stay with me, Eric!

ERIC

Give it a rest, Bruce. Ain't gonna happen.

BRUCE

(pouting)
Dr. Kurt is definitely NOT your type.

ERIC

And that's why I love him sooo much. (He puckers up and wraps his arms around Dr. Kurt, who looks at him with a jaundiced eye.)

DR. KURT

That's probably treatable. We might be able to nip it in the bud, but only if I prescribe a hit of this.

He lights up a Gauloise cigarette and carefully places a small chunk of hash on the glowing tip. He offers 2 small straws to Bruce and Eric, who start sucking on the thin wisp of rising smoke. Dr. Kurt inhales the leftover fumes, which are considerable.

ERIC

Stuff that was good fuckin' pretty.

BRUCE

Eric's dope dyslexia strikes again.

DR. KURT

(ignoring Bruce)

I think we can safely up the dosage.

He drops another chunk of hash on the glowing tip, and the 2 straws head straight for the resulting smoke.

ERIC

I've had it with these French classes. I'm sick of trying to figure out why "desk" is masculine but "chair" is feminine. I'm sick of conjugating irregular verbs. I'm sick of conjugating REGULAR verbs. I'm sick of conjugating. Period.

BRUCE

But Sweetie, you're our conjugating expert. The local girls won't know what to do with themselves at night. (GIGGLES.)

THALIA, a spectacular specimen of young American womanhood, walks by. Her proportions - bust, waist, and hips - are comparable to Barbie's, and the package is topped off by an iridescent head of blonde hair. The jaws on all three bozos drop significantly.

DR. KURT/ERIC/BRUCE
(simultaneous
singsong)
Hi, Thalia...

ERIC
Thalia, marry me. (She looks at him askance.) Just for one night?

THALIA
Give it a rest, Eric. Ain't gonna happen.

ERIC
Thalia, let me ask you something. You're here on one of those Junior Year Abroad programs, right?

THALIA
Semester Abroad.

ERIC
So everything is pre-arranged by your home university? Room, board, classes?

THALIA
Yessir.

ERIC
How do you put up with the regimen? Isn't it boring? The three of us are scrambling for food, wondering where we'll sleep, competing for the leftover professors... and we're nearly fed up with this routine.

DR. KURT
(to Thalia)
Eric is practicing his bi-weekly "toaster in the tub" rant.

THALIA
Fascinating. Unfortunately, I'm late for one of my "pre-arranged" classes.

ERIC
I'm sorry, Thalia. Let me make it up to you. Marry me. Just for the next ten minutes.

As Thalia strolls off into the distance, she tosses a COMMENT over her shoulder:

THALIA

I saw what you did, there. Mixing it up a bit. Nicely done.

ERIC

(to Dr. Kurt)

I'd give my left nut...

DR. KURT

Save your gonads, m'boy. The Golden Girl would never end up with the likes of you. Or me, for that matter. Some rich dickhead will take care of her, roll out the red carpet, and buy her all the shiny things her little heart desires.

ERIC

Her Golden Life is unfolding, right in front of her.

They watch Thalia's perfect butt, swaying back and forth as she walks away.

DR. KURT

Behind her, too.

EXT./INT. MARINA BAIE DES ANGES - DAY, 2020

Back to the present. Jens and the older version of Eric pick up their absinthes and stroll inside, from the sun-drenched balcony. They look at the plaster cast of a woman's full breasts, hanging on the wall.

OLDER ERIC

I've been wondering about that. It's an odd... artifact to have on display.

JENS

Thalia did this casting on the night before her double mastectomy.

Eric is shocked.

OLDER ERIC

She chopped 'em off?

JENS

Yes.

OLDER ERIC

When?

JENS

Couple of months ago.

OLDER ERIC

Well, fuck me and the horse I rode
in on.

They silently stare at the magnificent plaster breasts. Eric moves his hand as if to touch one, but Jens SLAPS it away.

EXT. GROUP OF PUBLIC PHONES, NICE - NEXT DAY, 1978

Seventies. The younger Eric pulls out a short length of electrical wire, and wraps one end around the phone cord, while inserting the other end into the mouthpiece. He POPS a small coin into the receptacle and DIALS a number.

ERIC

Jens? It's Eric. You remember - the
guy from that Akvavit "Death Tour"?

ERIC (CONT'D)

Yeah, we made a mighty effort to
drink up all the snaps in
Copenhagen, but we just couldn't
quite pull it off. (CHUCKLES.)

ERIC (CONT'D)

You know, I feel like we bonded,
that night.

ERIC (CONT'D)

No, no, I'm not coming on to you.
(LAUGHS.) But I do have a crazy
proposition, and I fully expect you
to say "no," so please be honest.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Come down to Nice and we'll sell
imported American t-shirts
together. (Long silence.) Jens, are
you still there?

ERIC (CONT'D)

Of course you need time to think about it. Frankly, I'm surprised you'd even consider it.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Well, since you're a citizen of a Common Market country, the paperwork would be easier.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Yes, you'd be an equal partner. I've got enough money to get us started...

ERIC (CONT'D)

What do you mean, you'll do it? Don't you need some time...?

ERIC (CONT'D)

Wait a minute. You say your dissertation is making you insane, but that's no reason to jump into a harebrained scheme like this...

ERIC (CONT'D)

Of course, I'd love for you to come! But I don't want you to regret it. Look, why don't I call you tomorrow...

ERIC (CONT'D)

To tell the truth, the routine down here is driving me nuts, too. I spend too much time in classes, learning the finer points of French, when I should be out practicing, using the language to actually *DO* something.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Two weeks?! Wow! OK, I look forward to seeing you again!

EXT. CARLONE CAMPUS CAFETERIA - NEXT MORNING, 1978

Dr. Kurt and Bruce sit on a bench with Eric, who is putting some last-minute items into a large backpack.

DR. KURT

So this Danish guy you met JUST ONCE in Copenhagen is coming down here to help you run a t-shirt business?

ERIC

Yeah. Sounds kinda goofy, right?

Dr. Kurt and Bruce nod their heads vigorously.

BRUCE

You're either very brave or very stupid. Still adorable, though.

ERIC

I just feel like I don't belong here. The French Riviera is a long way from where I grew up.

BRUCE

Where was that?

ERIC

The backwoods of Maine.

BRUCE

A hick from the sticks?

ERIC

Not only that, but we were Trailer Trash, too. When I stand on the steps of the Casino in Monte Carlo, it's like being on a different planet. I wonder what my relatives back home would think.

DR. KURT

So you want to start a business to plant your flag... prove that you're worthy to be here?

ERIC

Very perceptive. You should be a shrink.

DR. KURT

I'm already halfway there.

ERIC

Oh yeah, I always forget. You're just slumming with us peons. (They all LAUGH.) Alright, Jens will arrive in two weeks, so I've got some time to kill. I'll be back from Morocco in thirteen days.

Dr. Kurt shakes his hand, then Bruce embraces him. Eric rolls his eyes, but Bruce holds up two fingers. Eric reluctantly nods, and Bruce plants two kisses, one on each cheek.

BRUCE

We'll miss you, sweet boy.

Eric shakes his head ruefully, shoulders his backpack, and walks off down the street.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE MONTPELLIER - LATER THAT DAY, 1978

Eric is hitchhiking beside the road, when an old, beat-up Citroën Deux Chevaux stops to pick him up. He climbs in and meets MARIE, a 20-something French woman. He smiles.

EXT. SAGRADA FAMÍLIA, BARCELONA - THAT EVENING, 1978

Marie parks the Citroën just outside this impressive cathedral-like church, designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí, and under construction since 1882. They get out to admire the convoluted spires and façade.

MARIE

It's getting late. We should probably check in to a hotel.

ERIC

Sounds like a plan.

EXT. HOTEL, BARCELONA - LATER THAT EVENING, 1978

MARIE

Is this okay? I don't have a lot of money.

ERIC

Neither do I.

MARIE

We could share a room...

ERIC

I was just about to suggest that.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BARCELONA - MINUTES LATER, 1978

The room has one bed. Marie takes off her shirt and jeans. She crawls under the covers, and looks up at Eric expectantly. Eric strips down and slides in beside her. They embrace.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, BARCELONA - NEXT MORNING, 1978

Marie is still half-naked, BRUSHING her teeth. Eric admires the view.

MARIE

You're going to Morocco? What's there?

ERIC

Maghrebi mint tea. Zero-Zero hash. Adventure. (They both LAUGH.) And you said you're headed to a place that's a few hundred clicks south of here. What's waiting for you?

MARIE

My... boyfriend.

ERIC

Lucky guy! What do you do for work?

MARIE

I teach small children at a school in Montpellier.

ERIC

Good for you. That's a very noble calling. (Pause.) I'm hoping to set up a new business in Nice.

MARIE

How exciting!

ERIC

And pretty damn scary.

MARIE

I'm sure it will be a big success.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE TORTOSA, SPAIN - HOURS LATER, 1978

Marie stops the car and looks at Eric with trepidation.

ERIC

Is this where your boyfriend lives?

MARIE

Eric, there is no boyfriend.

ERIC

Um... what?

MARIE

I had just met you, then. This is where my aunt lives. She's gone for the week, and I'm staying in her cottage, down by the ocean. You and I... we could... get to know each other better.

There's a long silence, before Eric slowly gets out of the car.

ERIC

Thanks for the ride, Marie.

He walks away.

EXT. ALGECIRAS FERRY TERMINAL - THAT EVENING, 1978

Eric waits in line to get on the Tangier ferry, and strikes up a conversation with EMILY and OLIVER, two 20-something Brits.

OLIVER

Looks a bit stormy on the Strait of Gibraltar tonight.

ERIC

Don't worry, we'll be safe.

EMILY

I just hope I don't get seasick.

INT. ALGECIRAS-TANGIER FERRY - ONE HOUR LATER, 1978

Eric sits at a table in the ferry's empty lounge, watching his beer slide back and forth. The table has one-inch sides, so the beer doesn't fall off. Whenever the beer BUMPS into the side nearest Eric, he takes a swig.

Emily and Oliver are also sitting at the table, and they seem mesmerized by the movement of the beer. Suddenly, Oliver gets up and rushes outside to lean over the deck railing and RETCH. Eric smirks.

Emily reaches for Eric's hand, and leads him to the other side of the boat. She leans over the deck railing and lifts up the back of her skirt, revealing... an attractive bare bottom.

ERIC

But what about...? (He points his thumb back in Oliver's direction.)

EMILY

Him? He's a bloody cheating wanker. D'you fancy a go, or not?

ERIC

Tab A into Slot B.

Eric quickly UNZIPS, grabs her hips and starts THRUSTING. They both MOAN, but Emily's SIGHS eventually turn into RETCHES. Eric tries to let go of her hips, but Emily reaches back and pulls him closer.

EMILY

Where do you think you're going?

ERIC

Shouldn't we stop?

EMILY

Nah, I feel better already. How were the abdominal contractions?

ERIC

I have to admit they made me excited!

EMILY

Me, too! Shall I try to...? (She puts two fingers in her mouth.)

ERIC

No, no, that's quite all right. I appreciate the offer, though.

After more HUMPING, Emily RETCHES again. It's obviously involuntary, but it leaves both of them GROANING with pleasure.

INT. CASABLANCA CAFE - NEXT EVENING, 1978

Eric drinks a beer, sitting in a cafe where many locals are smoking hash. A YOUNG MAN approaches his table.

YOUNG MAN

Do you want to buy some Zero-Zero?

ERIC

Why, yes I would.

The Young Man leads him over to a corner table where an OLDER MAN is sitting.

OLDER MAN

How much do you want?

ERIC

Just enough for one or two nights.

The Older Man pulls out a small package and puts it on the table.

OLDER MAN

Twenty dirhams.

Eric opens the package and smells the hash. He puts twenty dirhams on the table, pockets the package, and gets up to leave. The Older Man pulls out an official looking badge-and-ID.

ERIC

What is this?

OLDER MAN

You're under arrest.

Eric looks at the ID. It's written in Arabic script, which he doesn't understand. He SCOFFS.

ERIC

You probably printed this up yourself.

OLDER MAN

We can make this all go away, for
another one-hundred dirhams.

ERIC

Oh, I see. I'll bet you got that
badge from a cereal box!

The Older Man seems too wasted to argue. Eric hurries out of the cafe. He keeps looking back, to see if anyone is following, but the coast is clear. He stops in front of a deserted garden and hides the hash package between two stones. He looks around furtively, then hustles down the street to his fleabag hotel.

EXT. CASABLANCA HOTEL - NEXT MORNING, 1978

Eric walks out, carrying his backpack. He strolls nonchalantly down the street to the deserted garden, and looks around carefully. He pulls out the hidden hash package and scurries away.

INT. MARRAKESH TRAIN - SAME MORNING, 1978

Eric buys a mint tea from an OLD WOMAN who moves up the aisle with her tea-service pot and cups. Later, as the train pulls into the Marrakesh station, Eric is deep in CONVERSATION with a 20-something Dutch couple, LARS and FAMKE.

FAMKE

I'd like to see the Djemaa el-Fnaa
market. I hear it's one of the
oldest souks in North Africa.

ERIC

That sounds like lots of fun. Oh
look, we've arrived!

LARS

I just want to try some of the
local hash. Everyone says it's
amazing.

ERIC

Be careful, Lars... last night,
I...

LARS

Collect your stuff, Famke. We should try to beat the crowds. Eric, maybe we'll see each other in the market!

ERIC

Okay, I'd like that! Good luck, and watch out for...

But the Dutch couple rushes off, before Eric can finish his warning. He shrugs.

EXT. DJEMAA EL-FNAA MARKET - LATER THAT EVENING, 1978

Eric bumps into Lars and Famke in the open-air souk. They seem a little sad.

FAMKE

Hi, Eric.

ERIC

Hi, guys - it's good to see you again! But what's wrong?

LARS

We lost the money we were going to spend on a hotel. I guess we'll be sleeping in the street tonight.

ERIC

Does this have something to do with hash?

FAMKE

How did you know?

ERIC

Just a hunch. Look, I have a hotel room. It's not very fancy, but the bed is big enough for four or five people. If you don't mind...

Famke SQUEALS and plants several kisses on his cheek. Lars embraces Eric warmly.

LARS

You're a very good friend.

ERIC

I'm sure you would have done the same for me.

INT. MARRAKESH HOTEL - MINUTES LATER, 1978

It truly **IS** an enormous bed. Eric clings to one side, his back to the Dutch couple. When the bed starts SQUEAKING, Eric looks back over his shoulder. Lars is behind Famke, and they are RUTTING like rabbits. Famke stares at Eric with bright eyes, while Lars peeks over her neck.

LARS

We saved the front for you.

Eric is surprised, but that doesn't stop him from joining the fun.

EXT. DJEMAA EL-FNAA MARKET - NEXT EVENING, 1978

Eric asks a VENDOR about his wares:

ERIC

Is this real soapstone?

VENDOR

Hand-carved.

ERIC

No kidding? This is exquisite work!

The Vendor comments on the Star Wars t-shirt that Eric is wearing:

VENDOR

They say part of that movie was shot in Morocco, you know.

ERIC

Really?! Where?

VENDOR

About 200 kilometers up into the high desert. We have a workshop out there. You should come join us.

ERIC

Yeah, right.

VENDOR

No, I'm serious. A Canadian guy has been working with us for a couple of months. I think you would enjoy talking to him. Come and have dinner with us.

ERIC

Will the Canadian be there?

VENDOR

Yes, he just came in from the workshop for a few days.

The Vendor turns over responsibility for the shop to his PARTNER, and motions for Eric to follow him. Eric is wary, but follows the Vendor into the maze of alleyways leading away from the souk.

ERIC

I could never find my way out of here.

VENDOR

Don't worry, I will bring you back when you're ready to leave.

Eric is not really convinced. He thinks it may be another scam, until the Vendor opens a decrepit-looking door on the alleyway... that leads to a charming two-story courtyard. The contrast between the run-down looking alley and the meticulously-maintained courtyard is stunning.

ERIC

Wow! This place is beautiful!

VENDOR

Thank you. My family lives here.

INT. MARRAKESH COURTYARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS, 1978

The Vendor takes Eric up to one of the many rooms on the second level. FOUR YOUNG MEN are smoking from a hookah. They GREET Eric, shake hands, and invite him to partake. He PUFFS on the offered hose, while the Vendor introduces the Canadian.

BEN

Hi, I'm Ben. I understand you might consider joining the workshop?

ERIC

To tell the truth, this all seems very sudden. A few minutes ago, I was shopping for gifts in the souk, and now - boom - I'm here!

BEN

(LAUGHING)

The same thing happened to me. These guys make snap decisions about a person's character, and they're never wrong. Your Star Wars t-shirt might have tipped the scales, though.

ERIC

So what do you guys do, out there in the desert?

BEN

Mostly leatherwork and soapstone carving. It's a beautiful oasis, and the hash is plentiful.

He holds up his hookah hose, and Eric "toasts" him with his own hose.

ERIC

And you've been there for two months?

BEN

Hm. I'm not really sure. It might be three. The days merge together quite pleasantly. You should feel honored. It's a golden opportunity. They don't invite many people.

ERIC

What was most attractive to you?

BEN

The desert. It's so pure, so spiritual. They say everyone finds their own path to enlightenment in the desert sands.

Dinner is served by two veiled WOMEN, who quickly leave. CONVERSATION flows freely, over couscous and wine. Eric eventually leans back on some pillows and falls asleep.

INT. MARRAKESH COURTYARD ROOM - NEXT MORNING, 1978

Eric awakes with a start, and immediately checks his small rucksack for his passport and wallet. Everything seems okay. No-one else is in the room, but after a few moments, the Vendor KNOCKS at the door.

VENDOR

Did you sleep well?

ERIC

I did, thank you. Sorry for being such a slug.

VENDOR

Please. You are welcome here, anytime.

ERIC

I still don't understand why you offered to let me join your workshop so quickly.

VENDOR

You are obviously a good person, and you fit into our group very well. You saw that, last night.

ERIC

I was enjoying myself, it's true.

VENDOR

You were even relaxed enough to fall asleep in the company of relative strangers. (Pause.) Have you given any more thought to my offer?

ERIC

Well... unfortunately... I don't think I can accept your gracious invitation. I would lose track of time in such pleasant surroundings.

VENDOR

That might not be a bad thing, for you. But I understand. Shall I show you the way back to the souk?

Eric nods, relieved. They walk out into the alleyway.

EXT. MARRAKESH ALLEY - CONTINUOUS, 1978

ERIC

I hope I didn't offend you. I just think I would wake up in 20 years, and wonder what I had done with my life.

VENDOR

But the 20 years would have been spent pleasantly, no? With good fellowship and useful work?

ERIC

I dunno. Maybe I need something more. (He notices the Vendor admiring his t-shirt.) Would you like to have this?

VENDOR

Are you sure? Oh, that would be very kind!

Eric takes off the shirt and hands it to the Vendor, then pulls a different t-shirt out of his small rucksack and puts it on.

INT. HOTEL, BARCELONA - SEVERAL DAYS LATER, 1978

Eric has taken a room in the same hotel where he watched Marie brush her teeth. In fact, it's the same room. He stares at the bed for a long time... then he takes a bottle of Absenta (Spanish absinthe) out of his knapsack and SPEAKS to it:

ERIC

Let's see what what kind of trouble we can stir up together, pardner.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY, BARCELONA - SOMEWHAT LATER, 1978

Eric is unshaven and bleary-eyed. The FRONT DESK CLERK smiles as he approaches.

CLERK

May I help you, sir?

ERIC

This might seem like a strange question, but what day is it?

CLERK

Thursday.

ERIC

(mumbles to himself)
Holy shit, I lost a day.

CLERK

Sir?

ERIC

I'll be checking out tomorrow morning.

EXT. LAS RAMBLAS, BARCELONA - LATER THAT NIGHT, 1978

Eric and a beautiful SPANISH WOMAN wander in and out of several tapas bars, having a small bite to eat at each one. They kiss and fondle each other.

INT. CENTRE HÉLIO MARIN, VALLAURIS - NEXT DAY, 1978

Eric sees LANA, a 20-something American, across the lobby of this French physical rehab facility. She's limping, with a foot-and-ankle cast. Eric DROPS his knapsack on the floor and runs over to embrace her.

LANA

Oh, Eric - I'm sooo glad to see you! I didn't think anyone would come to visit. I missed you.

ERIC

I missed you, too. It really seemed like we were hitting it off, just before your accident.

LANA

I know exactly what you mean. I felt the same way.

ERIC

Then, when I heard you had broken your ankle, I suddenly realized...

A 30-something French man, CLAUDE, limps into the lobby.

LANA

Eric, let me introduce Claude.

Claude puts one arm around Lana, and holds out his other hand to Eric.

ERIC

Ah, excellent timing again, I see. Bonjour, monsieur.

EXT. PROMENADE DES ANGLAIS - TWO NIGHTS LATER, 1978

Eric and a YOUNGER JENS are sitting on a bench near the beach, and have several bottles of vin ordinaire lined up around them. Most of the wine bottles are empty, but the younger Jens takes a swig out of the nearest one.

JENS

I take you out for Akvavit in Copenhagen, and this... this... CRAP wine is the best you can offer in return?!

ERIC

(LAUGHS)

Yeah! And what have you got to say about it?

Jens FARTS. Loudly. Both guys CRACK UP.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Was that a PUN?! Well played, my friend, well played.

JENS

Thankyewverymuch. I gave it a lot of thought.

ERIC

I can't believe you came all the way down here from Denmark, just to become a partner in this half-baked business.

JENS

When you spoke about needing to *DO* something, to have an effect on the real world, that really struck a chord with me. I've been writing a dissertation. Do you know what that means?

ERIC

Not really.

JENS

I spend weeks locked inside my head, comparing and contrasting various economic theories. I need to break out of this boring prison. (He KNOCKS his head.)

ERIC

So you want to get out here and play with the rest of us, in this so-called "reality"?

JENS

(LAUGHING)

You joke, but that's EXACTLY what I want. Most of all, I'm looking for adventure. I hope you'll alter the course of my life.

ERIC

Yikes! No pressure.

JENS

Not for you, no. You live your life at a headlong pace. You pay no attention to the gatekeepers who keep saying you can't do something. You just go ahead and do it anyway.

ERIC

You need to take off those rose-colored glasses, Jens. I don't walk on water. And this project could easily go belly-up at any moment.

JENS

I'm well aware of that. But whatever happens here, we'll be left with some powerful memories. I hope most of them will be happy, but I'm sure a few will be chalked up as "learning moments." I can't help but think that all of them will last a lifetime.

ERIC

You've just said a mouthful, Jens.

They embrace, in a supportive hug. There's a long SILENCE.

JENS

From what I understand, there was a crystal casino on stilts out there in the bay, up until World War Two.

ERIC

That must've been quite a sight.
(Another long SILENCE.)

JENS

Well, shall we hit the Mayor's office tomorrow, to get our carte de commerçant?

ERIC

Sounds good to me!

EXT. NICE MAIRIE - NEXT DAY, 1978

Jens and Eric sit on the steps of the Nice Mayor's office. Eric is sorting through a stack of papers.

JENS

So the Mayor's office tells us to go to the Préfecture, and the police send us back here.

ERIC

This is the same runaround I got three weeks ago. After a few round trips, these flunkies finally let me in on the secret: that I needed to be a citizen of the Common Market.

JENS

Which *I* *AM*! What more do they want?

ERIC

Wait a minute, wait a minute. There has to be a loophole in here somewhere. (Shuffling through the papers.)

JENS

Did you hear that last guy? (Mocking official's tone.) "You cannot do this, monsieur. It is not PERMITTED, monsieur."

ERIC

That's their standard response to everything. We just need to show them where it *IS* permitted, in their own rules.

JENS

How do you put up with the frustration?

ERIC

Part Zen Buddhism, part sheer stubbornness.

JENS

The Dalai Lama should give you a medal. (LAUGHING.)

ERIC

His Holiness flies in tomorrow. Look, this may help our cause. (He underlines a piece of text with a pen.)

JENS

Really? Didn't we try that, the last time around?

ERIC

Nope, we used the line *ABOVE* that. (Pointing.)

JENS

You think this will work?

ERIC

If it doesn't, we'll just keep throwing shit against the wall, until something sticks. Did you see how they pushed that little guy around?

JENS

The one who wanted a building permit?

ERIC

Yeah. The officials said it couldn't be done, and he just went away. Meekly. When French people hear the Voice Of Authority, they give up. Come on. We're gonna get this thing, dammit.

They MARCH up the steps, into the Mairie.

EXT. NICE MAIRIE - AN HOUR LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens come out, with big smiles on their faces. Jens waves a piece of paper in the air, and they both JUMP up and down.

JENS

We're in business!

ERIC

So fuck Claude and fuck Lana, too -
here comes the Danish-American
International T-Shirt Conglomerate!

EXT. NICE STREET - NEXT DAY, 1978

Jens and Eric are HAGGLING with YVES, a 30-something
Frenchman, over a blue Citroën Deux Chevaux automobile.

YVES

Cinq cents francs.

ERIC

500?! That's highway robbery. I'll
give you 450.

YVES

Cinq cents francs.

ERIC

Playing hardball, eh? Okay, here's
475. (He counts out the bills.)

YVES

Cinq cents francs.

ERIC

Not even budging? How about 490?

YVES

Cinq cents francs.

ERIC

You drive a hard bargain, monsieur.

He pays the money. Yves hands over the keys and leaves.

JENS

Did I understand that transaction
correctly?

ERIC

Don't be a smartass.

JENS

He set a price, and you tried to
haggle with him...

ERIC

I'm warning you.

JENS

...and you ended up giving him exactly what he wanted.

ERIC

It's because I have - how you say? - "ze head for business." (He TAPS his forehead.)

JENS

I'm not sure I believe that.

ERIC

I checked the prices of other Deux Chevaux for sale around here, and they range from 800 to 1200. And some of them don't even run!

JENS

But this one will get us where we want to go?

ERIC

Gawd, I hope so.

JENS

Shall we name it?

ERIC

Hm. How about Blueballs? (He caresses one of the twin blue globular headlamps protruding from the fenders.)

JENS

Okay, but why?

ERIC

It's slang for the pain that teenage boys get, when their girlfriends tease them sexually, then refuse to put out.

JENS

(shaking his head)

Leave it to Americans to actually invent a word for that. You people are sick puppies.

ERIC

I couldn't agree with you more.

They each SLAP a headlamp.

JENS/ERIC

(simultaneously)

TO BLUEBALLS!

One headlamp FALLS off.

EXT. CUSTOMS HANGAR, NICE AIRPORT - NEXT DAY, 1978

Eric walks out of the customs hangar into the bright Riviera sunshine, to talk with Jens. Two CUSTOMS OFFICERS wait inside the wide door of the hangar.

ERIC

They say we owe 600 francs.

JENS

That's highway robbery! 600 francs for that box of t-shirt transfers?!

ERIC

And... get this... they refuse to show me a bill, or an invoice. When I asked for one, they simply shook their heads.

JENS

What do you think - is this a shakeup?

ERIC

(smiling)

Shakedown. You've been watching too many cop shows. (Pause.) Or maybe too few.

JENS

So they want a bribe?

ERIC

You betcha. They see a couple of young guys, here to pick up a box from America, and they think we have tons of money. They want a piece of the action. Typical French attitude.

JENS

(shaking his head)

Maybe you're right. We're just easy marks to them.

ERIC

(face lights up)

I have an idea... but we need to hop in Blueballs and drive away.

JENS

Hopping.

EXT. CUSTOMS HANGAR, NICE - 20 MINUTES LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens return, in Blueballs. The two Customs Officers are sitting inside the customs hangar, smoking.

ERIC

Okay, we've stashed most of our cash under the back seat, right?

JENS

Yup.

ERIC

When we get out of the car, follow my lead and make sure those guys see what you're doing. You're gonna reach inside your pockets and pull out all the money you find there.

JENS

I don't have very much left.

ERIC

Neither do I. When I hold out my hands, dump all your money on top of mine.

They get out, and Eric walks around the car. He takes out his own money, and holds it in his hands. Jens drops his cash on top of Eric's. Eric walks over to the Customs Officers, and offers them the small pile of money. They look outraged. Much gesticulation, lots of YELLING. They KICK the box filled with t-shirt transfers.

Eric pulls his pockets inside out, and motions for Jens to do the same. The Customs Officers eventually take the money and walk away, waving at the box dismissively. Eric rushes over to Jens.

JENS

What happened?

ERIC

Hop in the car.

JENS

Hopping.

ERIC

They think we're con artists.

JENS

We are. But they were trying to con us, too.

ERIC

No shit, Sherlock. And now they can see they got beat at their own game. But we have to load that box into our car, before they change their minds.

Eric and Jens drive inside the customs hangar, put the box in the back of Blueballs, and drive away in a hurry.

EXT. MONTE CARLO T-SHIRT SHOP - NEXT DAY, 1978

Jens and Eric drive down a Monte Carlo street which has many fancy shops. They stop in front of one of the clothing stores.

JENS

So this guy has a heat press?

ERIC

Yep. He says he'll charge us one franc per t-shirt for the first 200 transfers.

JENS

That should be enough to jump-start The Biz.

ERIC

Hopefully! Okay, let's unload. These boxes contain the blank t-shirts we just bought, and that box has the 200 transfers we selected.

EXT. MONTE CARLO T-SHIRT SHOP - AN HOUR LATER, 1978

Jens and Eric carry the t-shirts out to the car. The shirts are now on hangers with colorful designs attached.

JENS

They look great!

ERIC

Yeah, he did a nice job. Our American t-shirts are gonna take the Côte d'Azur by storm!

EXT. ANTIBES MARCHÉ - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, 1978

Eric rents a space from the MARKET ORGANIZER, while Jens drives Blueballs over to the chosen space. OTHER VENDORS are already setting up stalls with kitchen utensils, small plants, brooms and various other household items. Jens looks surprised.

JENS

Are you sure we're in the right market?

ERIC

It's the only one in town.

JENS

I feel like we're posing for a photo that's captioned, "What's Wrong With This Picture?"

ERIC

Don't worry, it's still early. The tourists will come later, after they sleep off last night's drinking. Then they'll spend all their extra money on our fabulous t-shirts! Help me unload the racks.

EXT. ANTIBES MARCHÉ - SEVERAL HOURS LATER, 1978

Jens tries to sell a t-shirt to a CUSTOMER, while Eric watches.

JENS

These t-shirts are of the finest quality. And these are the latest designs, direct from...

CUSTOMER

(interrupts)

But those transfers will wash right off!

JENS

Not at all. Look at the t-shirt I'm wearing. It's been through the washer five times, and it still looks like new!

CUSTOMER

It ain't worth the risk.

The Customer walks away. It's early afternoon, and the Other Vendors are packing up their stalls. Eric checks the day's receipts.

ERIC

Huh. We sold a grand total of... three t-shirts.

JENS

Holy crap. That doesn't even cover the rental of this stall!

ERIC

Don't get your panties in a twist. The next market is bound to be better.

EXT. MOTOCROSS VENUE ROAD - NEXT WEEK, 1978

Eric and Jens have set up a makeshift t-shirt stall beside the road. The sign posted a small distance away announces a competition: "Concurrence De Motocross." The wind is strong, and it's BLOWING steadily.

ERIC

Good day for the Mistral to kick up. Man-oh-man, we've tried so many markets this week: Monday in Nice, Tuesday in Vallauris, Wednesday in Beaulieu, Thursday in Antibes, Friday in Biot, Saturday in Valbonne. Now it's Sunday, and I have no idea where the fuck we are.

JENS

Cheer up, Eric! These Motocross fans loove their t-shirts. I'm sure we'll make a ton of money today!

ERIC

Really? Take a look around.

The rocky terrain looks like a bombed-out wasteland.

ERIC (CONT'D)

We've got to take a photo of this place. It looks like we're trying to sell t-shirts after a nuclear apocalypse.

JENS

Hm. This area DOES look a bit barren. (GIGGLES.)

ERIC

A bit? A BIT?! This place makes the Sahara look like the Garden of Eden!

Suddenly, the wind KNOCKS OVER the t-shirt racks.

EXT. VENTIMIGLIA CAFE - EVENING, 3 WEEKS LATER, 1978

There's a bottle of grappa on the table in this Italian cafe. Eric and Jens pour themselves shots at regular intervals. They appear to be relentless in their pursuit of total intoxication.

JENS

This stuff is 120 proof?! (He squints at the bottle's label.)

ERIC

(professorial tone)

50 percent higher than Akvavit. Did you know that grappa is distilled from the leftovers of winemaking?

JENS

Do tell.

ERIC

And that it's called a "pomace" brandy?

JENS

What the hell is "pomace"?

ERIC

It's the stuff that remains after the vintners squeeze their own grapes.

JENS

Wow. That shows a real dedication to the craft.

ERIC

What?

JENS

Squeezing your own grapes.

Both guys cross their legs and grimace.

ERIC

But grappa makers also squeeze the skins, pulp, seeds and stems.

JENS

I think I just tasted a squeezed stem.

Bleary-eyed, he holds up his glass and squints at it.

ERIC

Savor it, my friend. Savor it. Not many people can say they've tasted a squeezed stem.

They both sit in silence for a few moments, then Jens pours two more shots. They down them quickly.

JENS

Thalia's going back to America next week. She wants me to drive her to the airport.

Eric gives him a long, appraising look. Then they rapidly down two more shots.

JENS (CONT'D)

You know, we've sold 11 whole t-shirts this week.

ERIC

And 12 last week.

JENS

And 13 the week before that.

ERIC

I think we're headed in a good direction.

Two more shots.

JENS

I particularly enjoyed it when we walked up and down the plage, holding t-shirts in our hands.

ERIC

Our outreach program to the beachgoing public. Gave the sunbathers a chance to sample our wares.

JENS

That was humiliating.

ERIC

It was your idea.

They knock back two more shots.

JENS

Well, at least we sold three more t-shirts at the beach.

ERIC

A blockbuster day.

They down the last two shots in the bottle.

JENS

We'd better get out of here while
we can still walk.

ERIC

You can still walk?

INT. VENTIMIGLIA-NICE TRAIN - THAT NIGHT, 1978

Eric and Jens are sitting in a crowded train car, when the TICKET SELLER walks up to them. They both offer 100-franc bills. The Ticket Seller doesn't have change, so he indicates that he will come back later, and continues down the aisle.

JENS

It's a good thing we didn't bring
Blueballs. I can barely see
straight. (HICCUPS.) So what's the
plan?

ERIC

The ticket guy will go to the end
of the train before he loops back,
in about 55 minutes. The train
pulls into Nice in 56 minutes.

JENS

So I'll keep a lookout, and when he
enters this car again...

ERIC

...we'll move to the next car.
Easy-peasy. With a little luck and
good timing, this train ride is
FREE!

Their SEATMATES CHUCKLE at the two drunks.

EXT. NICE TRAIN STATION - 56 MINUTES LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens stumble toward the exit. The Ticket Seller is leaning against the door.

JENS

Busted.

Eric offers his 100-franc bill, but the Ticket Seller waves him off.

TICKET SELLER
Vous êtes Hollandais?

ERIC
Américain et Danois.

The Ticket Seller smiles to himself, and walks away.

JENS
He asked if we were Dutch?

ERIC
Yup.

JENS
I'm surprised.

ERIC
Why?

JENS
I thought you Americans had the
worst reputation on the planet.

They both CHUCKLE.

EXT. FAYENCE-TOURRETTES AIRPORT - NEXT DAY, 1978

Eric, Jens and Dr. Kurt are standing around and chatting. This small airfield is home to a gliding club, the Association Aéronautique Provence Côte d'Azur. An airplane is towing a glider down the tarmac runway, and LIFTS OFF during this conversation:

DR. KURT
Oh, wow! I'm so glad you guys let
me tag along. This is VERY cool -
I've always wanted to visit a
gliderport!

ERIC
(smiling)
And Fayence is a hotbed of soaring
activity. Tons of glider records
have been set or broken here.

DR. KURT
Why is it so popular?

ERIC

Because it offers several different kinds of lift: ridge, thermal, sea breeze...

DR. KURT

Lift?

ERIC

Yeah, if you fly your glider into a mass of rising air, you go up with it. Lift. For example, a thermal is created by a patch of ground that gets heated quickly. It's just a bubble of hot air. Like me.

DR. KURT

Ha!

ERIC

Case in point: why is this hand (holds up right hand) the only one that knows how to fly gliders, while this hand (holds up left hand) can fly only airplanes?

DR. KURT

Muscle memory?

ERIC

Ah doctor, you're too smart for your own good. (They all CHUCKLE.)

DR. KURT

You said you're here to get some instruction?

ERIC

No, I'm here to talk to an instructor. I've already earned my American license. Since we don't have a lot of money...

JENS

...and less all the time...

ERIC

(CHUCKLES)

...exactly... I just want to be able to say that I flew here once and took the controls for a few minutes. Impress my buddies back home.

DR. KURT

I think it would have impressed
your Dad, too.

ERIC

Yeah. He always dreamed of flying
here. Too bad he didn't live long
enough to do it.

Dr. Kurt and Jens both PAT Eric on the back. Eric
squares his shoulders, MARCHES over to an INSTRUCTOR,
and pulls a slip of paper out of his wallet. They have
an animated conversation, which ends when the
Instructor shakes his head. Eric walks back to his
friends, dejected.

DR. KURT

What's wrong?

ERIC

He says I need to get a French
license equivalence. Here in
Fayence, my American license ain't
worth shit.

JENS

Really?

ERIC

AND he says I need to learn the
specialized vocabulary, which means
I've got to read a soaring book
written in French.

DR. KURT

But your knowledge of the language
is still pretty basic...

ERIC

...as you well know. Okay, let's
get outta here. This project is
gonna take awhile.

EXT. FAYENCE-TOURRETTES AIRPORT - 2 WEEKS LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens stand around, talking. Eric holds a book,
"le vol à voile," and a small square of paper.

JENS

Promise me that we'll schedule more
breaks like this.

ERIC

I promise. Two weeks of failure in those markets, and we're both ready to suck on a pistol.

They LAUGH.

JENS

So... you went to the Cannes Aérodrôme and got your French equivalence?

ERIC

...AND I struggled through this fucking book, cover to cover. Let's see what he has to say now.

Eric walks over to the Instructor. Their conversation becomes quite HEATED, with Eric shaking the book in the Instructor's face. Finally, Eric THROWS the book on the ground, and STOMPS over to Jens.

JENS

Are you okay?

ERIC

Take me home, dammit. I don't trust myself to drive.

JENS

The equivalence and the book weren't enough?

ERIC

Evidently not. Now he says I need to take an expensive series of ground instruction lessons. (YELLS at the distant Instructor.) I ALREADY KNOW HOW TO FLY, DICKWAD! (Quietly, to Jens.) All I wanted - all I EVER wanted - was a chance to soar with those guys.

He points to several hawks, circling in a thermal overhead.

INT. CANNES MOVIE THEATER - NEXT WEEK, 1978

Jens, Eric, Bruce and Bruce's new Italian boyfriend, GIANNI, are sitting in a movie theater. They're the only ones in the auditorium, and they're each reading postcard-sized invitations.

JENS

That is a first for me.

ERIC

What do you mean?

JENS

Receiving a screening invitation
from a nude model standing on the
beach.

BRUCE

Welcome to the Cannes Film
Festival!

ERIC

I must say I'm a big fan of the way
they promote films here.

BRUCE

You're a big fan of anything that
involves naked women.

ERIC

True. But people who live in glass
jockstraps...

BRUCE

Alright, alright. I *DO* like to
munch on a slice of naked beefcake
every now and then.

He bites Gianni's shoulder.

ERIC

Gianni, I've been meaning to thank
you for showing up just in time to
absorb Bruce's neurotic attentions.

GIANNI

He can be a bit much, sometimes.

BRUCE

Hey! I'm sitting right here,
y'know.

ERIC

Tell us we're wrong.

Bruce shrugs, and they all LAUGH.

JENS

So what brings you to the south of France, Gianni?

GIANNI

I needed a break from the flight attendant grind.

JENS

So you have the same job as Bruce?

GIANNI

Exactly. He works at Delta, while I'm an Alitalia boy.

Bruce hugs Gianni, while Jens looks around at the empty movie theater.

JENS

Nobody else wanted to see this film?

ERIC

Didn't they notice the naked models outside?

The lights go down and the movie STARTS.

EXT. CENTRE HÉLIO MARIN, VALLAURIS - NEXT DAY, 1978

Eric is back at this physical rehab facility, visiting Lana. They lounge outside, on the grass.

LANA

I'm so glad you came to visit!

ERIC

Again!

LANA

I have to apologize for Claude. He gets so possessive. He was just helping me with my French.

ERIC

That looked like a lot more than language lessons.

LANA

He had a crush on me, but they released him last week. I'll probably never see him again.

ERIC

You look well. When do you get out of here?

LANA

Next week! I'm so excited!!

ERIC

Me, too!

They hug... and the hug turns into a passionate kiss.

LANA

Oh, I've really missed you. And after that last visit, I thought I'd wrecked my chances.

Just as they kiss again, Bruce walks in and PLOPS down on the grass next to them.

ERIC

Bruce? Didn't I tell you that I was going to visit Lana today?

BRUCE

Yup. I figured you wanted company.

ERIC

Well, you figured wrong. I wanted some privacy. And I made that very clear in my note.

LANA

Oh well, now that he's here, we can have a nice chat.

ERIC

(stands, frosty)

Bruce, I've had it with your slimy lies and bullshit.

BRUCE

Oh, stop being such a diva. Sit down and socialize.

ERIC

If I ever see your face again, I'm gonna beat the crap out of you.

Eric leaves. Lana is shocked, but Bruce just shrugs.

EXT. MONTE CARLO CASINO - NEXT WEEK, 1978

Jens and Eric are wandering around Monte Carlo, during the Monaco Grand Prix. Fences are everywhere.

JENS

I guess they don't want poor foreigners like us sneaking in.

ERIC

Lana said that guy Claude owns a business that puts up these fences and the safety rail barriers.

JENS

So he works for two months a year?! Must be nice.

ERIC

Evidently his family has been doing it for decades.

JENS

My God, this is loud! It's like the engines are constantly screaming. The whole country is vibrating with Formula One energy.

ERIC

A country that's only half the size of Central Park.

JENS

Wow, look at that. Right in front of the Casino.

ERIC

JESUS! Those cars jump a foot off the ground, after they go around the corner and up over that slope.

JENS

I shudder to think what would happen if a driver lost control.

ERIC

Yeah, the grandstands are only ten feet away from the cars.

JENS

Do you think Claude's safety barriers can stop a half-ton of jet fuel and metal?

ERIC

Probably not. C'mon, let's go down to the Port. My ears are starting to hurt.

EXT. MONACO PORT - A HALF-HOUR LATER, 1978

As Eric and Jens walk around, they see a disturbing sight: a GERMAN SHEPHERD has been tied inside the fence. He's stretched out on the ground, with his front paws covering his ears. The cars WHIZ BY, just a few feet away.

JENS

Oh, poor Doggie!

ERIC

The owner should have his eardrums jabbed with ice picks.

JENS

They say a dog's hearing is four times better than ours.

ERIC

Plus, his ears pick up a bigger chunk of the audio spectrum. I'm sure those engines pump out a shitload of high frequencies.

Eric climbs the fence and DROPS down next to the dog. He caresses the pooch, and unties him. He throws the leash over to Jens and encourages the dog to jump and SCRAMBLE up the fence. When the dog is high enough, Eric pushes his hind legs. He's over! Eric follows him, after leaving a note for the owner.

JENS

We'll probably go to jail for doing this.

ERIC

We'll definitely go to Hell if we don't.

EXT. MONTE CARLO STREET - A HALF-HOUR LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens tie the dog to a garden fence, and give him some of their water. Jens TALKS to the pup:

JENS

It's still noisy here, but it's a lot quieter than where you were. Your owner will eventually find you, after the race. And when you see him, you should use your teeth to rip his balls off.

ERIC

Another one of your many languages? You speak fluent "German-Shepherd," too?!

Jens FARTS, and they both LAUGH.

EXT. MONTE CARLO CASINO - AN HOUR LATER, 1978

The race is over and the fences are down now. PEOPLE, including Jens and Eric, are walking around on the course. Eric stares thoughtfully at the street, with its new skid marks.

ERIC (CONT'D)

This was a killing zone, an hour ago.

JENS

I expect to see a racing car fly around that corner, any second.

ERIC

Those machines were *THIS* far off the ground!

He indicates a height near his knees, and shakes his head. Eric looks up at the Casino.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I remember when I first tried to visit this place, several months ago.

JENS

The doorman stopped you?

ERIC

Yeah. I was wearing jeans and carrying a small knapsack. He crushed me with just one snotty remark: "Vous n'êtes pas à la campagne ici, monsieur."

JENS

Meaning?

ERIC

"You're not in the countryside here, sir." Smooth.

JENS

You didn't measure up to his Double-Oh-Seven standards.

ERIC

I'm sure he also hated my flannel shirt. (Pauses.) Anyway, that was my Trailer Trash moment. Standing in front of this fancy-schmancy place, I felt like shit.

JENS

I'm so sorry, Eric.

ERIC

It's not important, now. Look, I know the business is not doing as well as we'd hoped, and our marketing efforts often look silly, but since you arrived, I don't feel like Trailer Trash anymore.

JENS

(smiling)

I know what you mean. After all that we've been through together, I feel like we can achieve almost anything.

They hug.

EXT. LA TURBIE - NEXT WEEK, 1978

Gianni, Jens and Eric stare up at the partially-reconstructed ruins of the "Alpine Trophy."

GIANNI

The Emperor Augustus built this, nearly two thousand years ago.

ERIC

Okay, good. Great. What the hell is it?

GIANNI

It's called the "Trophy of the Alps." Augustus had it made to commemorate his nine-year campaign to conquer the 45 tribes in this area.

JENS

Why is it in such bad shape?

GIANNI

When a war broke out in 1705, all the fortresses around here were destroyed.

ERIC

But this isn't a fortress, it's a trophy. You just said so.

GIANNI

Ah, you were paying attention!

ERIC

Your Italian accent is sooo hypnotic. We're under your spell. Teach us, professor!

GIANNI

As you wish, my charming student! After the fortress surrounding the Trophy was destroyed, some of the remaining stones were used to build the church of Saint-Michel, over there.

JENS

The Michelin guide says the Trophy is still more than 110 feet high.

GIANNI

Not many people know this, but back at the turn of the century, a cog railway used to bring sightseers up here from Monaco. (Pause.) And if you find the right vantage point, you can see the lights of Monte Carlo at night.

ERIC

How old is this thing, again?

GIANNI

Twenty centuries.

JENS

Two millennia.

ERIC

You did that calculation in your head?

JENS

(TAPS his head)

It's like a Univac in here.

ERIC

Impressive. You must've been a Mathlete in school.

JENS

What's that?

ERIC

It's like a Univac, without the blinking lights.

GIANNI

Eric, I don't want to bug you, but Bruce really wanted to come along on this outing.

ERIC

He was afraid I'd beat him up?

GIANNI

Something like that.

ERIC

Good. I want him to fear me.

GIANNI

But you will forgive him soon, yes?

ERIC

Yeah, I guess so. When you ask me in that enchanting Italian accent, how can I say no?! But you have to promise me that you will use that accent only for good, and never for evil.

They all LAUGH, and Gianni kisses Eric on the cheek.

EXT. RUE PIÉTONNE, NICE - NEXT MORNING, 1978

It's early, just after dawn. Jens and Eric are already out jogging through the town's pedestrian street, a shopping district where cars are banned. An attractive young HOOKER is standing on the street corner, holding a small poodle on a leash. She's wearing short-shorts, with leggings from ankle to thigh.

ERIC

(to Jens)

Ooo, she's new. Cute!

HOOKER

Voulez-vous faire du sport avec moi?

ERIC

(LAUGHING heartily)

Peut-être une autre fois? (to Jens)
She's clever, too!

JENS

What did she say?

ERIC

"Would you like to 'play some sports' with me?"

JENS

And you said, "Perhaps another time?"

ERIC

Your French is improving, my friend!

EXT. PÂTISSERIE, NICE - NEXT AFTERNOON, 1978

Gianni is strolling down the street, when he sees Eric walking out of a bakery shop, holding two pastries.

GIANNI

I caught you!

ERIC

You certainly did. We just got back from the marché in Biot. I measure my frustration level by the number of pastries I need to consume afterwards.

GIANNI

Two pastries today? Is that bad, or good?

ERIC

A two-pastry day would ordinarily be pretty good. In fact, three wouldn't be all that bad. But this is the second pâtisserie I've been in, today.

GIANNI

A FOUR-pastry day? Oh, I'm so sorry, Eric.

Eric walks away and GOBBLES down one of the pastries, without offering the other one to Gianni.

ERIC

Thanglepoo.

EXT. PROMENADE DES ANGLAIS - LATE THAT NIGHT, 1978

Eric and Jens are sitting on a bench, drinking beer.

ERIC

The Biz is failing. It's time to join the Foreign Legion. (He BURPS for emphasis.)

JENS

It's true, our business is not doing too well, but we're "having the time of our lives on the Côte d'Azur!" (GIGGLES.)

ERIC

Stop quoting that damn travel ad! Your droll Nordic sense of humor is starting to try my patience. You can pun in four languages, but I can understand only two of them. And the last time we were out here, you let out an OLFACTORY pun...

JENS/ERIC

(simultaneously)

...by farting! (They both LAUGH.)

ERIC

That suave multilingual wit and sophistication is getting to be damned irritating. (He CHUCKLES.)

JENS

The Biz is going down the tubes, but not because of us. Everybody says this has been the worst year for tourists in the last two decades.

ERIC

I don't know how much more I can take. We roll out of bed at 5 a.m., load up Blueballs, and head off to an outdoor market...

JENS

...which is geared more toward the locals, rather than tourists. And our hands are tied, because the French bureaucracy says these marchés are the only place we can sell stuff.

ERIC

We invariably set up our t-shirt racks next to someone selling pots and pans, or brooms and mops...

JENS

...and hope that a few adventurous tourists will find us before the market breaks up at noon.

ERIC

We repeat this pointless exercise an average of six days per week...

JENS

...which means approximately six days of failure per week.

ERIC

We're getting cynical.

JENS

Jaded.

ERIC

And we've been keeping up a brave front by talking about the Foreign Legion.

JENS

You really think it's time?

ERIC

According to Hollywood movies, the Legion is a place to hide from one's past.

JENS

You know, we've been making jokes for a long time, daring each other to join...

ERIC

...and escape our financial woes.

JENS

So... tomorrow?

ERIC

Tomorrow! Actually... (checking his watch) today.

EXT. FOREIGN LEGION OFFICE, NICE - THAT MORNING, 1978

Eric and Jens square back their shoulders and MARCH into the Nice recruiting office of the French Foreign Legion. The garrison is light and airy, with Legion posters plastered all over the walls.

JENS

Are you sure we want to do this?

ERIC

No. (Pause.) Let me rephrase that:
Hell, no.

Eric shakes hands with the ADJUTANT, a mysterious man in dark sunglasses. He's dressed in the typical Legionnaire uniform: khaki fatigues and a kepi, the Corps' trademark hat, with a flat circular top and a visor. He SPEAKS in a lethargic cadence with an exotic accent.

ADJUTANT

What can I do for you gentlemen?

ERIC

We'd like to learn about joining the Legion.

ADJUTANT

Well... first, you might want to take a look at our scrapbook. Then I can answer any questions you might have.

He puts the scrapbook on a table for them, and walks across the room to sit at his desk.

JENS

Oh, look. It's in seven languages!

ERIC

And check out these colorful pictures of high adventure!

JENS

"La Légion Étrangère - Un Métier d'Homme!"

ERIC

A *MAN'S* work - but notice that it's *LA* Légion Étrangère. This screwy language classifies the Legion as feminine! (They LAUGH.)

JENS

"No identification papers will be required."

ERIC

I'll bet that's a big selling point.

JENS

What's this about a "faux nom" system?

ERIC

Hm. It says every recruit is forced to accept a "false name," a new name that corresponds to the name you put on the application only in the same initial letters.

JENS

So I could say that I was Clint Eastwood, and they might give me a name like Calvin Etterbaum?

ERIC

Or vice versa.

JENS

Didn't Clint make a Foreign Legion movie?

ERIC

No, you're thinking of the monkey movie.

JENS

Dirty Harry?

ERIC

Play Misty For Me.

Jens gives him a strange look. They suddenly get interested in a trophy case containing Legion paraphernalia.

JENS

Ooo, Legion tie tacks!

ERIC

Money clips!

JENS

Mugs!

ERIC

Jugs!

JENS

T-shirts!!!

ERIC

We *NEED* some Legion t-shirts!

JENS

Twist my arm.

The Adjutant strolls over, from his desk.

ADJUTANT

Do you have any questions?

ERIC

You know, I've been trying to place your accent ever since we walked in. Where are you from?

The Adjutant makes a zipping motion across his lips, with his fingers.

JENS

Ah, that infamous Legion secrecy.

ADJUTANT

Here, let me give you some posters to take home. You can put them on your walls, and prepare for the glorious day when you decide to become a Legionnaire!

ERIC

Sounds insanely glorious. Oh, and we'd also like to buy a few items from your display case.

EXT. FOREIGN LEGION OFFICE - TEN MINUTES LATER, 1978

Eric and Jens walk out with armloads of Foreign Legion posters and gimcracks, grinning like madmen. They hop in Blueballs.

EXT. ROAD TO MARSEILLE - 15 MINUTES LATER, 1978

While driving down the road, Jens and Eric see a HITCHHIKER, a 50-something man standing beside the road. Jens stops the car.

JENS

Hi! Hop in!

HITCHHIKER

Sprechen sie Deutsch?

JENS

Ja!

Jens' German is fluent, and he has a CONVERSATION with the Hitchhiker. Eric just sits back, mesmerized by the tone poetry and throaty gutturals of a language which makes no sense to him. But a few minutes later:

HITCHHIKER

...Heil Hitler!

Eric is shocked by this EXCLAMATION, and he snaps his head around to look at the passenger in the back. The Hitchhiker smiles broadly at Jens in the rear-view mirror, and casually watches Eric from the corner of his eye. Jens grins nervously in the driver's seat. Sweat is beading on his upper lip. He looks for a place to pull over, and finally stops. The Hitchhiker gets out, and they drive away.

ERIC

What the hell was that?

JENS

Give me a minute.

ERIC

C'mon, man! Heil fucking Hitler?!

JENS

I still can't breathe. Just let me shake it off.

ERIC

Oh, this better be good.

After a few minutes, Jens stops the car to let Eric drive.

JENS

He was in the Foreign Legion for nineteen years.

ERIC

When was he discharged?

JENS

Mid-sixties.

ERIC

(doing the math)

So he was on the run from the Allies.

JENS

He made some allusions to "dark deeds" done during the war. He also mentioned that the Legion hadn't really satisfied his "appetites."

ERIC

So you think his "appetites" had nothing to do with eating, drinking, or sex?

JENS

Exactly. And his defiant "Heil" told me that he's not even slightly remorseful about the war crimes he committed. The Legion meat grinder has cranked out another model French citizen.

ERIC

So what have we learned today?

JENS

If you can get to the Legion before the pursuing authorities close in, you can literally disappear.

ERIC

Put in your five years...

JENS

...or nineteen...

ERIC

...and you can emerge, like a butterfly from a cocoon, with a shiny new French passport and a brand new name.

JENS

(reading from
pamphlet)

"Since 1831, the Legion has been the only organization of its kind in the world..."

ERIC

...taking in misfits and criminals of any nationality, and turning them into the next Charles Manson.

INT. COTTAGE, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NEXT DAY, 1978

Lana and Eric are in bed, inside this mountainside ski lodge. It's a beautiful summer's day, and the sheets are well-mussed.

LANA

So what do you think of Frabosa Sottana?

Eric pulls up the sheet and examines her breasts.

ERIC

Is that what you call them?

LANA

Barbarian.

They both LAUGH.

ERIC

When you invited me up here, you didn't mention that the cottage was owned by Claude's family.

LANA

I didn't?

ERIC

Or that half the townspeople are his relatives.

LANA

Is there a problem?

ERIC

When the butcher gave me the beef this morning, he nearly hacked off my thumb.

LANA

Oh, Luigi. He's a sweetheart.

ERIC

I suspect he'll be leading the pitchforks-and-flaming-torches parade up to our door tonight.

LANA

He wouldn't hurt a fly.

ERIC

Unless the fly was fucking his cousin's girlfriend.

Lana rolls over and shuts him up with her breasts.

EXT. COTTAGE, ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NEXT DAY, 1978

Lana and Eric walk down the road, hand-in-hand. People are staring at them from the nearby cottages. Eric seems nervous.

LANA

You're not still worried, are you?

ERIC

Didn't that Getty kid get his ear sliced off near here?

A passing car HONKS its horn, and Eric DIVES in the bushes while Lana LAUGHS.

EXT. VALROSE CAMPUS - TWO DAYS LATER, 1978

This luxuriant, nearly-overgrown 19th-century park and château has been converted into the University of Nice science department. The lush greenery hides the entrance to a "secret" path leading up from Avenue Valrose into the foliage. A circular stairway through the dense undergrowth ascends the hill to the student cafeteria, the "Resto U." Eric and Jens are sitting at an outdoor table, and they're each drinking a beer.

JENS

How was your visit to the mountains of Italy?

ERIC

Let me set the scene for you: there we are, hiking up Mount Moro. Beautiful sunny day. We break a light sweat. We catch a whiff of each other.

JENS

The hormones kick in.

ERIC

Exactly. We scramble onto a rock outcropping. Knockout view of the whole fuckin' valley. I kneel, and pull down her shorts and panties. She leans back, taking it all in.

JENS

Working on her tan...

ERIC

During the festivities, my finger accidentally slips inside. Her eyes roll back. She's making guttural noises, animal yelps. I mean, these are not sounds normally produced by a human being.

JENS

So you figure things are going well.

ERIC

You know that change, when the feeling inside goes from slippery slide-y to rough and sandpaper-y?

JENS

It's like rubbing your tongue.

ERIC

Yeah, that's it. So we're getting dangerously close to the jackpot. Plus, the sounds coming out of her mouth are louder and louder. She's like a yodeler, with the echoes coming back across the valley 20 seconds later.

JENS

(shakes his head)

Yodeler?! You're shameless.

ERIC

That's when I see something from the corner of my eye: an old man with a cane is walking up the trail behind the outcropping.

JENS

Holy crap. What did you do?

ERIC

I kept going. I wasn't about to be the guy who cheated her out of an "O." Plus, the old geezer didn't notice us.

JENS

He didn't hear the... noises?

ERIC

Nope. Come to think of it, he must've been deaf. The decibel level of her yodeling was ramping up every second.

JENS

Which meant the echoes were also getting louder.

ERIC

So, as she reached The Promised Land, I tried to turn her away from the old man. But it was no use. She opened her eyes and immediately curled up into the fetal position.

JENS

Oh, no.

ERIC

I pointed out that he never noticed us, but she didn't buy it. I felt bad for her. That afterglow lasted for about one millisecond.

JENS

You know, you've ruined yodeling for me.

They LAUGH.

EXT. CIMIEZ ROMAN RUINS, NICE - THREE DAYS LATER, 1978

Jens and Eric wander through the amphitheater ruins of Cemenelum, the first-century Roman town that eventually became part of Nice.

ERIC

I'm bummed about Lana. Before I visited her in Italy, she evidently heard a rumor that my American girlfriend was coming over.

JENS

And that's why she kept throwing Claude in your face.

ERIC

It looks that way. I also took a great photo of her on that rock outcropping, and she gave it to him.

JENS

Ouch.

ERIC

Women! I'm done with them.

JENS

Yeah, right. We'll see how long that lasts.

They both CHUCKLE.

ERIC

Well, I guess it's time to divvy up the money. After we decided to liquidate the business, I sold Blueballs and the last of the t-shirts. Here's your half of the proceeds.

He holds out an envelope of cash.

JENS

No, you keep it. You invested your life savings in that stuff, and you should get back at least part of your investment.

ERIC

But you need to earn something for your time and effort...

JENS

Nope, I insist.

ERIC

Wow. That's really generous.

JENS

It's been a great adventure, my friend.

He holds out his hand, but Eric wraps him in a hug instead.

ERIC

They'll make a movie out of this someday: The Year Of Failing Miserably.

JENS

But it wasn't really a failure. And we both know that.

INT. MARINA BAIE DES ANGES - AFTERNOON, 2020

Present day. While standing in the living room, the older Jens shows a cell phone photo to the older Eric.

ERIC

That's your wife? You married Lana?!

JENS

Yup. Seventeen happy years... but then she passed away, 5 years ago.

ERIC

Omigod. I'm so sorry. We really haven't kept in touch very well, have we?

JENS

You and I had a good 20 years of letters and phone calls. Then I ran into Lana, and I didn't know how to tell you. The decades slipped away like minutes. But now, after all this time, I'm so happy you called again!

They hug.

ERIC

So am I. So am I. When Thalia offered to let me use this place for a week, I couldn't decide what to do. I agonized for days. I should have called you sooner. (Pause.) Do you have any more pictures?

JENS

This is our daughter, Bridget.

Eric looks at the photo, then enlarges the screen with his fingers. He's shocked, but hides his face from Jens. It's the same young woman we know as Doudou, from the first scene. Remember Doudou?

ERIC

So this is your daughter. Lana's daughter. (Pause.) She's a very pretty girl.

JENS

Growing into a pretty young woman. A pretty STUBBORN young woman.

ERIC

Trouble?

JENS

She and I had a big fight
yesterday, and she didn't come home
last night. I'm worried about her.

A KEY TURNS in the lock, and an OLDER THALIA walks in.
She's in her sixties now, but the years have been very
kind to her. She's a bit tipsy as she gives Eric a hug
and two cheek kisses.

ERIC

How was your flight?

THALIA

They ran out of Rémy. Bastards.
Jens! I didn't expect to see you
here. (They hug and double-kiss.)

JENS

I just came over to help Eric with
some writing.

ERIC

Thalia, I thought Steve would be
with you.

THALIA

Steve? Ha! That bastard split,
after THIS fiasco.

She waves at the plaster cast of her own breasts,
hanging on the wall.

ERIC

He didn't like the plaster cast?

THALIA

After the botched operation, he
didn't like THESE. What man would?

With booze-fueled bravado, she RIPS open her blouse,
exposing breasts that have some significant scars.
There's a long silence, but finally Jens walks over and
kisses one of the scars. Thalia collapses into his
arms. Jens enfolds her in a hug, while wrapping the
blouse back around her torso.

JENS

C'mon Thalia, let's get some air
and talk about where the future
will lead us. (To Eric:) We'll be
back in an hour or so.

After Jens and Thalia walk out, Eric opens the door to a back bedroom. Doudou (Bridget) is asleep in the bed.

ERIC

Hey, Sleepyhead.

DOUDOU

Good morning.

ERIC

Good AFTERNOON.

He opens the window shades, to let in the blinding Riviera sunshine.

DOUDOU

Wow. I lost some time.

ERIC

Absinthe often has that effect. I should have warned you.

DOUDOU

Did we...?

ERIC

No. But I can't say I wasn't tempted.

DOUDOU

Then let's make up for the lost time!

She throws her arms around him. He smiles, and kisses her cheek.

ERIC

You didn't tell me you had a fight with your Dad.

DOUDOU

How did you find out about that?

ERIC

I have my ways. C'mon, get dressed. Let's take a ride!

DOUDOU

(trills with
delight)

Ooo, I love that car!

ERIC

Any guy who hears that sound is the luckiest man in the world.

She nibbles his ear, pulls on her jeans, and they walk out.

EXT. GRANDE CORNICHE, RIVIERA - MINUTES LATER, 2020

We're still in the present day, but the younger Eric is walking along the road, carrying a small knapsack. He sees a sports car approaching, and sticks out his thumb. The older Eric stops to give him a lift.

OLDER ERIC

Where ya headed?

YOUNGER ERIC

Monaco, just a few minutes' drive.

OLDER ERIC

(to his passenger)

What do you think, Doudou? Are we going that far?

Doudou smiles at the younger Eric and makes room for him in the jump seat behind her.

DOUDOU

Further. Much further. Or is it "farther"?

OLDER ERIC

(offers his hand to the younger Eric)

I'm Eric. Just like you.

YOUNGER ERIC

(surprised)

Do I know you?

OLDER ERIC

Not yet. But I know you.

The younger Eric stares intently at the older Eric.

YOUNGER ERIC

You look strangely familiar.

OLDER ERIC

Look closer. This face will be yours someday. See this pale circle on my neck?

YOUNGER ERIC

I have a mole in that spot.

OLDER ERIC

I know. I had it removed 30 years ago. The skin pigment never really comes back.

YOUNGER ERIC

Now you're freaking me out.

OLDER ERIC

No worries. You're in good hands.

He eases the car into gear, and slowly ACCELERATES into the first curve. The younger Eric is still wary, but he calms down, as the breeze WHISPERS through his hair.

YOUNGER ERIC

It's such a gorgeous day.

OLDER ERIC

(to himself)

This is where I came in.

The older Eric suddenly jerks the steering wheel to the right, sending the car CRASHING over the cliff. The car rolls over several times, and finally comes to rest. The younger Eric is thrown free, and is miraculously unhurt. He crawls over to the wreck. Doudou is only slightly injured, but the older Eric is dead.

EXT. GRANDE CORNICHE, RIVIERA - MINUTES LATER, 2020

Still in the present day. Doudou clings tightly to the younger Eric, while he hitchhikes back towards Nice. He smirks at no-one in particular. Suddenly, the older Eric walks up behind him, giving him a start.

YOUNGER ERIC

I thought you were dead!

OLDER ERIC

To all intents and purposes, I am. For example, she can't see me nor hear either of us, when we're talking.

They both look at Doudou, who hasn't noticed anything out of the ordinary.

YOUNGER ERIC

Tell me: why was she with you?

OLDER ERIC

To punish her Dad.

YOUNGER ERIC

Ahhh, that makes sense.

OLDER ERIC

A more interesting question is: why is she with you?

YOUNGER ERIC

She's not with me. I'm just comforting her, after a traumatic experience.

OLDER ERIC

Yeah, but aren't you currently planning to get in her pants?

YOUNGER ERIC

She's cute. And she seems willing.

OLDER ERIC

She's confused and alone. You can't possibly hope to have anything meaningful with her until she fixes the problem with her Dad.

YOUNGER ERIC

What makes you so sure?

OLDER ERIC

I've had four divorces and countless empty affairs.

YOUNGER ERIC

Is that what's in store for me?

OLDER ERIC

I don't know. Probably. I was walking down this road once, with her glued to my hip.

YOUNGER ERIC

What did you do?

OLDER ERIC

I took her home and fucked her silly. Then I scraped her off with a stick. Probably messed up her head for a year or two.

YOUNGER ERIC

So why can't I do that?

OLDER ERIC

You really want to end up as lonely as me?

YOUNGER ERIC

Maybe the outcome for me will be different.

OLDER ERIC

Maybe. Anything can happen.

YOUNGER ERIC

But you don't think so?

OLDER ERIC

I don't have all the answers. But I do know this: the guy who can make her trill is the luckiest man on earth.

YOUNGER ERIC

And how do you know that?

OLDER ERIC

Get your mind out of the gutter. She liked the car.

YOUNGER ERIC

Any tips for when I get her into bed?

OLDER ERIC

Look, the trail of human destruction you're leaving behind you is truly horrifying. Do you really want to be that guy?

YOUNGER ERIC

So this is my fork in the road, huh?

OLDER ERIC

She may not be the absolute best match that you could make, but there's nothing better coming around the corner. She's beautiful. She's smart. She's funny. She comes from a good family, and she was raised right.

YOUNGER ERIC

What do I do with her, if I don't take her to bed?

OLDER ERIC

Take her out for some ice cream. She needs comfort food, not a comfort fuck. (Pause.) And that's all I got. I'm out.

The older Eric disappears. The younger Eric looks pensive for awhile, then finally SPEAKS to Doudou:

YOUNGER ERIC

I know this place on the rue piétonne in Nice. They have delicious Italian ices.

DOUDOU

(trills with
delight)

Ooo, that sounds fantastique!

INT. MARINA BAIE DES ANGES - A YEAR LATER, 2021

The older Jens has just taken a selfie with his cell phone. He shows it to the older Thalia and kisses her. In the photo, they are playing with a baby, while the proud parents look on: Doudou and the younger Eric.

THE END