

Ashes to Ashes: Screenplay

Wayne Gerard Trotman

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For my wife Sherrie Trotman

Without whom there would be no screenplay and no movie.

Preface

So, why did I write this screenplay? One word answer: rebellion. Short answer: it seemed like a good idea at the time. Long answer: I'm quite nostalgic; and the crude, lurid and sensational movies of the 1970s and 80s left a lasting impression on me. *Ashes to Ashes* draws heavily from the martial arts movies of Hong Kong, American gangster movies and so-called blaxploitation movies. It contains black humour (no pun intended), clichés, racism, sexism, violence, profanity, purple prose, stereotypes, and a complete disregard for political correctness. My aim was to write a script, which could be sold as *Pulp Fiction* meets *Enter the Dragon*. In 1995, nothing quite like this had ever been undertaken in Britain and *Ashes to Ashes* (the micro-budget film, which I co-produced and directed in 1998/1999) is the first British homegrown martial arts movie and one of the first feature films shot entirely on digital video (thanks to Sony's Digital Betacam).

On the following pages, you will find the original screenplay with none of the cheese removed. There are a few surprises, even if you have seen the movie. It is worth reiterating that this is not a novel. Screenplays are quite different to novels and can be confusing if you have not read one before. In a screenplay, if it's not on the page, it's not on the screen. Screenplays feature a minimal use of words and, if correctly formatted, each page represents one minute of film. I opted not to go down that particular route, since in many digital formats actual pages lose their significance.

So that you don't get completely lost, it is worth noting some of the abbreviations used:

INT.	Interior
EXT.	Exterior
O.S.	Off screen
CONT'D	Continued
C.U.	Close up

Here it is, with only the scene numbers removed. Escape and enjoy!

Ashes to Ashes

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We move slowly away from a close-up of a heavy metal rock video on a television screen to find a young Chinese man lying half awake in bed. His name is DONNY LAU. Donny stares without emotion at the screen.

On the bedside table is an almost empty bottle of whisky, a packet of cigarettes, travel documents and a .45 automatic pistol. He grabs the bottle and takes a swig.

Suddenly Donny lets out a yell as if he has just swallowed acid and hurls the bottle out of shot towards the doorway.

A hand covered in a black glove reaches out and catches the flying bottle. In a blur of motion Donny reaches desperately for his .45 on the bedside table.

From out of nowhere a throwing star sinks into the back of Donny's hand. He reacts knocking the gun off the table as he screams in pain and looks with horror at the shiny blades embedded in his trembling flesh.

Then, from off screen, we hear an ominous American voice.

VOICE (O.S.)

You're not gonna make that flight to Hong Kong, Donny.

Donny grabs a meat cleaver from under his pillow with his good hand. He brandishes it threateningly at the two intruders: MUHAMMED ARMEN (African American) and NELSON KONG (Chinese). Their faces remain obscured as they confidently enter the room.

Both men are wearing black polo-neck shirts and black suits. Muhammed has the whisky bottle in his hand.

MUHAMMED

Where's your uncle, Donny?

Donny who is quite drunk becomes hysterical in the extreme. He slashes thin air with the meat cleaver as he swears at the intruders in an unintelligible mixture of English and Cantonese.

MUHAMMED

Drop the chopper, mutherfucker.

Donny persists with his over-the-top behaviour. Nelson loses patience and pulls out a .45 Automatic pistol equipped with a silencer. He aims the gun at Donny's head. For a tense moment the three men remain motionless as Donny stares at the firearm.

Without warning, Donny begins to laugh hysterically. Nelson is about to blow Donny away when the meat cleaver suddenly falls out of Donny's hand to the floor. Donny slowly sits on the bed. For a moment the intruders do not move, then Nelson lowers his gun to his side as Muhammed calmly walks towards Donny. We still cannot see their faces.

Muhammed casually puts the whisky bottle on the bedside table. Noticing the packet of cigarettes he pulls one out and lights it using an unusually large flame from his cigarette lighter. Finally we see the face of the American as he turns to Donny and drags on the cigarette.

Muhammed reaches into his jacket as if about to pull out a gun. Donny reacts fearfully but to our surprise Muhammed produces a small teddy bear.

MUHAMMED

Recognise this? That's right, your sister May's friend. You don't? Well, what about this?

Muhammed again reaches into his pocket. This time he reveals a gold necklace with a jade pendant.

MUHAMMED

A birthday gift to your loving mother. Now Donny, if you don't give us the information we need, Mr Kong and I will be forced to do very bad things to your mother and sister.

Tears begin streaming down Donny's face as he realises that he has no choice. Almost inaudibly he speaks.

DONNY

The Red Lantern.

MUHAMMED

Excuse me?

Donny makes sure that Muhammed hears this time.

DONNY

The Red Lantern! I'm supposed to meet Uncle Cheng there, tomorrow night.

MUHAMMED (to Nelson)

The Red Lantern.

We now see Nelson's face. Muhammed nods at his Chinese accomplice who responds by putting his gun away. With snake-like speed Muhammed grabs a pillow off the bed and smothers Donny with it. Donny tries to put up a fight but he is small, weak and quite drunk. Having successfully suffocated Donny, Muhammed arranges the body to make it appear that Donny is lying in bed watching TV. His casual manner cannot hide the evil sadism, which is very much a part of his persona.

Muhammed picks up the whisky bottle and pours the remaining contents over Donny's chest. The empty bottle is gently put on the bed next to the corpse. The American gangster puffs smoke into the face of the dead man. Casually, Muhammed takes the lighted end of his cigarette and places it on the bed next to Donny's alcohol drenched body.

MUHAMMED (to himself)

Earth to earth. Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes.

As the sheets ignite Muhammed steps back and calmly whips out a pair of designer sunglasses.

We cannot see his eyes as he puts them on, just the reflected blaze of the burning corpse.

CUT TO:

CREDIT SEQUENCE

ASHES TO ASHES

FADE TO BLACK

INT. DEREPLIC FACTORY – NIGHT

We fade in to see another black man in his mid twenties running in a dark and eerie factory. His name is GABRIEL DARBEAUX.

Gabriel is running for his life from six sinister-looking men in black suits.

They are hot on his trail and no doubt intend to inflict serious bodily harm with the martial arts weapons they are carrying. We never see their obscured faces.

Gabriel runs until he finds himself confronted with a dead end. He now has no alternative but to face his assailants. He turns.

The leader of the pack steps forward motioning to the others to fall back. He remains obscured by shadows and the gloom within the deserted factory.

Suddenly the leader begins an impressive display using the two-piece rod or nunchaku.

CUT TO:

Gabriel as a kill or be killed expression replaces his terror and he assumes a karate fighting stance. Suddenly, there is a blood-curdling war cry from his nunchaku-wielding opponent.

Note: Shot in slow motion. The mysterious martial artist swings at Gabriel with the weapon. It barely misses Gabriel's head as he ducks and turns knocking the obscured assassin off his feet with a fluid foot sweep.

Still in slow motion, Gabriel leaps onto his opponent and delivers a karate-style reverse punch.

CUT TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S FLAT - MORNING (9:29 AM)

Gabriel suddenly wakes out of his dream, punching straight at us. He is in his dark bedroom. Realising that there is no real danger, he slumps back into his bed with a sigh.

The flat is filled with posters, books, and videos establishing Gabriel's interest in films. He has a particular interest in martial arts.

A karate championship trophy adorns his mantelpiece and a Samurai sword hangs in its lacquered sheath on the wall together with Chinese opera masks and large colourful fans. Also adorning the walls are framed photos of Muhammed Ali and Bruce Lee.

After a moment, the alarm on the digital clock next to his bed goes off. It is now 9:30 AM.

GABRIEL (to himself)

I know, I know.

The alarm is abruptly switched off.

Gabriel rolls out of his double bed, which is a mattress on the ground, covered in black Japanese print sheets. He is wearing a large sweatshirt and jockey shorts.

The interior of the flat is dimly lit as the drapes are all drawn.

Still half asleep, Gabriel makes his way to the refrigerator in the kitchen and takes out a bottle of fresh milk. He takes a swig from the bottle, places it on the counter, and opens a cupboard.

We follow his hand as he takes out a large plastic bottle. The label reads: 'Olympian Crash Weight Gain'. Gabriel pours the milk into an electric blender and begins putting large teaspoons of the Dutch chocolate flavoured calorie rich drink with added amino acids, vitamins and minerals.

There's a fruit bowl on the counter. Gabriel picks up a banana. He absent-mindedly peels and bites. While he chomps on his mouthful, he peels the remaining banana completely and drops it into the blender. Gabriel flips the switch.

CUT TO:

INT. MICHAEL'S FLAT - MORNING (9:35 AM)

We are in the West London flat of MICHAEL TRENT.

From off screen we can hear Michael grunt loudly from time to time, above the sound of 'Prince Charming' by Adam and the Ants. We move through the living area towards his bedroom.

We enter the bedroom and find Michael pumpin' iron.

He wears only trunks and observes his progress in the mirrors which are everywhere in the room. Michael, who is white and in his mid-twenties, appears to have a distinct fondness for himself.

He finishes his morning exercises with a loud sigh and makes his way to the bathroom.

BACK TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S FLAT - MORNING

Gabriel is now sipping his health drink as he sits at his desk. He taps on the keyboard of a portable PC. We see on the PC screen: 'Ashes to Ashes' by Gabriel Darbeaux. Gabriel is writing a screenplay. His recent dream gives him ideas for an action sequence.

We move away from the PC screen to a telephone on the desk. It rings. Gabriel tries to ignore it. It rings four times. He answers just before the outgoing message on his answering machine begins.

We hear only Gabriel's voice. The caller remains a mystery. As he speaks, he scribbles on a piece of paper.

GABRIEL (into phone)

Hello. Good morning. Yes, where?

I've been there before. Eight sharp. I'll be there. You know what a careful guy I am. OK. Bye.

Gabriel hangs up and continues his typing.

BACK TO:

INT. MICHAEL'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Michael has finished his shower and is now dressed in a bathrobe and is using a hairdryer. We can vaguely hear music in the background coming from (off screen) outside the room. Having finished his drying, Michael pauses a moment looking at his reflection in the mirror. As he looks closely at the reflected image, his expression is transformed into one of abject horror.

MICHAEL (to himself)

Shit. A spot!

A horrified Michael puts on skin cleanser, followed by toner, then moisturiser as he looks at his face in the mirror. He expertly covers the spot on his chin with make-up. Michael seems relieved and is about to apply eyeliner when the phone rings off screen.

Even though Michael looks prettier he is not overtly feminine. In fact, he looks somewhat like a pale Chippendale. He opens the bathroom door and moves out of shot.

LIVING ROOM

C.U. *Michael as he looks down at his answer-phone which suddenly stops ringing. After a cheerful beep, it begins speaking with his very upper class voice.*

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(answering machine)

Hello, this is Michael, I'm indisposed. Please leave a message after the beep.

We hear the beep. Suddenly a woman's voice begins speaking. She sounds like Alexis Carrington. Her name is ROSE SPENCER.

ROSE (O.S.)

(answering machine)

Michael Darling, I know you're there.

Michael cuts her short by picking up the receiver.

MICHAEL (into phone)

Rose, how pleasant hearing your voice this early in the morning. Yes, I'll drop by the office when I'm finished. If I'm not there by three, send Gabriel to rescue me. Come on Rose, I'm a professional. You worry too much.

BACK TO:

INT. GABRIEL'S FLAT - DAY

Gabriel dressed in sweatshirt and jockey shorts is performing a martial arts routine with a stick in front of a full-length mirror. He looks like he knows what he's doing. From time to time he does high kicks and lunges appearing to have a fierce battle with an imaginary opponent. Suddenly he strikes where his invisible opponent's head should be and freezes with a Bruce Lee-type fighting face. The stick vibrates in his hand.

As we've guessed by now, Gabriel is as fond of martial arts as Michael is fond of himself. He leans the stick up against a wall and moves to the drapes. He pulls them back and the room is suddenly flooded in bright sunlight. Gabriel squints.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - MORNING

We are somewhere in the vicinity of Sloane Square in Chelsea, London. Our surroundings tell us that the inhabitants of this building have money and lots of it. Two men wearing black polo-neck shirts and black suits, are on guard duty outside a door numbered: '06'.

They are Nelson Kong (Chinese), and Muhammed Armen (African American). We recognise the men as being Donny Lau's killers. Muhammed scans a newspaper. Its headline reads: 'Fire claims nephew of missing businessman'.

A deep conversation is in progress. The topic: Bruce Lee versus Muhammed Ali. Nelson is speaking about his hero. He has a strong Chinese accent which when added to his rapid-fire delivery is at times unintentionally humorous. During the conversation we get glimpses of key words from the newspaper as Muhammed tries in vain to read the article.

Newspaper type: 'Was Donny Lau a victim of misadventure? Or was his death another brutal example of the work of gangland assassins? Donny Lau's uncle, Dennis Cheng is rumoured to be an active member of the oldest criminal organisation in the world - the Chinese Triads'.

NELSON

Even today, in parts of Asia, Bruce Lee is still worshipped as a god. He was the perfect martial artist. That's why they used a woman to poison him. No one else could touch him.

A mildly annoyed Muhammed stops reading the newspaper.

MUHAMMED

Bullshit Nelson. Even the best fighter is only the best for a while. Sooner or later someone younger, faster, or stronger is gonna come along and fuck him up. It happened to Ali, and it would have happened to Lee eventually.

NELSON

Get the fuck outta here. There are Chinese men alive today, seventy years old and they could still bury you.

MUHAMMED

Bury me? No-no-no-no-no I don't think so. You've been watching too much of that chop-suey-drunken-master-bullshit. Men jumping eighteen feet in the air and kicking each other ten times in the head before they touch the ground and shit. And you believe that shit.

Muhammed tries to read, but is again interrupted.

NELSON

Because of bad kung fu films, people think martial arts are no good. That's why when those big hamburger-eatin' Americans went to Vietnam they got fucked up. Even grandfathers fucked them up. Little guys like me buried them.

MUHAMMED

Buried who? Anyway, those guys didn't have to deal with brothers like Holyfield, Foreman, Frazier or the greatest boxer to ever walk the earth - Muhammed Ali.

NELSON

Bruce Lee would bury him.

MUHAMMED

I've read about Bruce Lee and there's no way I'm gonna swallow that shit. Bruce Lee only weighed about 135 pounds, right? If Ali hit a guy that small, the fucker would be living on the moon. He wouldn't need a rocket. Heavyweight champions like Ali could hit guys like you or me in the stomach and snap our spines in two.

NELSON

There are parts of a man's body that no amount of muscle could protect. A tap and he's seriously fucked.

MUHAMMED

I know all about Wing Chun. I even started to do that jeet kune-do shit in LA. I respect all that shit but...

NELSON (interrupting)

Then you should know a bit about chi - internal power. By mastering his chi even the smallest man could defeat a giant. Bruce Lee could turn Ali's physical strength against him and fuck him up. He was the master of disaster.

MUHAMMED

Listen Nellie, Lee even copied Ali's shuffle...

In a flash, Nelson whips out a .45 Automatic and points it at Muhammed. Muhammed is surprised but does not lose his cool.

NELSON (deadly serious)

Don't call me Nellie, fuckin'-muther.

MUHAMMED

Nelson, how many times do I have to tell you? It's mutherfucker
not fuckin'-muther...

NELSON

Don't call me Nellie, mutherfucker.

MUHAMMED

OK-OK-OK. I'm fuckin' sorry. Put the gun away.

NELSON

You better show some respect.

MUHAMMED

Nelson that temper of yours is gonna get you killed. If I didn't love
your little yellow ass like a brother I'd be forced to buss a cap in it
out of sheer principle.

NELSON

Don't fuckin' call me Nellie, Black Bean. I don't like that shit.

MUHAMMED

We've been partners for over a year, that's long enough for you to
know when I'm only fuckin' with you. You know I respect you like
a brother. That's what brothers do. They fuck with each other. So
put the fuckin' gun away. Alright? I'm sorry.

Smiling, Nelson puts the .45 Automatic away.

NELSON

OK, brother. But I still think you're a fuckin'-muther.

Muhammed laughs with Nelson and takes this opportunity to continue reading the newspaper.

Newspaper type: 'A close associate of Dennis Cheng, who cannot be named, has been recorded by the FBI attempting to sell stolen bank certificates to the New York Mafia. It has also been suggested that Dennis Cheng went into hiding after a deal involving the Mafia went sour.'

Increasing instances of co-operation between rival British gangs and foreign syndicates such as the Mafia and Triads is a source of serious concern to law enforcement authorities'.

Just then the door to the flat opens. The two men are no longer the jokers of only a few moments ago. They assume the posture of professional henchmen as an impeccably dressed man steps out of the flat.

The man is their boss. The boss. His name is VALENTINO TARONTOLA known as the tarantula. He is 45 years old and speaks with an Italian American accent.

TARANTULA

Gentlemen, I have some business I want taken care of.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

We are in a very expensive hotel somewhere in the Park Lane area. We can hear the sound of, as yet unseen, persons having sex. We move to find the action. Michael is on top of FELICITY WOOD, an attractive woman in her late forties. He buries his head in a pillow as he thrusts violently into Felicity who is completely out of control.

FELICITY

Ahhh! Fill-me-fill-me-fill-me!

The woman tenses up, her face looks really weird and she has a violent orgasm. After a moment she speaks.

FELICITY

Oh Michael, Michael, Michael, why didn't I marry a man like you, instead of a boring banker? I never come with Richard - that limp willy of his. Not like you Michael, you fill the hole in my life.

MICHAEL

I'm here to please you, Felicity.

Michael's wealthy, well-spoken partner looks lovingly at him and smiles as he strokes her hair.

FELICITY

Kiss me.

(Michael leans forward)

No. I mean... Here...

(meaning to her crotch)

Kiss me, until I come again.

Being a professional, Michael expertly conceals his utter revulsion at the thought of performing oral sex. He continues gazing lovingly at Felicity. Within a few seconds he seems to have a brainstorm.

MICHAEL

I have an idea. A game.

FELICITY

No games, I'm too old for games.

MICHAEL

You're never too old for pleasure. Excuse me a moment.

We can see the anticipation on Felicity's face as Michael gets out of bed and moves to his Armani suit, which is draped over a chair. He puts his hand into the inside pocket of the jacket. We cannot see what he takes out.

Felicity begins to look mildly confused and concerned as Michael returns to the bed. We still cannot see what he has taken from his suit pocket. A tense moment passes and suddenly Michael opens his hand like a magician performing a trick. A black silk handkerchief is revealed.

FELICITY

Oh Michael, you naughty, naughty boy.

Trying not to burst out laughing, Michael begins lightly pulling the kerchief over Felicity's torso. She moans and sighs appreciatively.

Michael then begins to blindfold her.

FELICITY

What are you doing? I'm scared.

MICHAEL

Shhh, shhhh. Trust me.

Michael raises his left hand revealing a vibrator. He puts his other hand over his mouth to prevent himself from laughing at the same time putting the vibrator under his armpit.

FELICITY

Oh yes Michael, do me now. Make me come.

We see only Felicity's blindfolded face as she reacts to Michael's attention off screen. She groans and moans in ecstasy. The blindfold cannot hide her intense pleasure.

We pull away to see Michael very amused by her reactions and moaning and groaning pretending to be experiencing sexual pleasure.

FELICITY

Yess, yess, Ohhhhhh God! I'm-gonna-come-I'm-gonna-come-I'm-gonna-aahhhhhhhhh...

As she has another orgasm Michael can barely contain himself.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

From the spine of a book entitled 'Sex Crimes', we follow the pointed finger of Gabriel Darbeaux as it lightly runs along the crammed bookshelves.

The titles tell us we are in the crime section. Gabriel dressed in smart casual clothes, quickly picks out three books: 'The Mafia', 'The Underworld of Organised Crime', and 'Gang Warfare'.

BACK TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

About two hours later we find Michael standing next to the bed, buttoning up his white shirt. He is almost fully dressed except for his suit jacket, which remains on the chair as before.

There are no signs of life from Felicity who lies in bed naked and partially covered by the sheets. She no longer wears a blindfold. Her eyes remain closed.

Michael turns to a mirror as he puts his jacket on. He fusses with his hair a bit and makes certain that he looks perfect. As he admires himself in the mirror the silence is broken by Felicity's voice. Her eyes remain closed as she speaks.

FELICITY

Four times. I came four times. God that was good. You are truly gifted Michael. You're an angel. My angel.

(opening her eyes)

If only we could meet like this everyday. If only...

MICHAEL

All you have to do is call.

Felicity lazily gets out of bed as she speaks.

FELICITY

Richard must never know. I must see you at least twice a week. We'll just be careful.

(putting on her dress)

There's no reason for me to feel guilty.

(modelling her dress)

Do you really think it suits me?

The dress suits her.

MICHAEL

Yes, of course. You look beautiful.

Felicity smiles and tears well in her eyes.

FELICITY

I'm sure you say that to all the women. I was beautiful once. Soon, I'll be a grandmother. Time passes so quickly. You wake up one morning and you realise that most of your life is over.

Michael holds Felicity tenderly in his arms then kisses her on the forehead.

MICHAEL

I'll always see you whenever you want, for as long as you want.

FELICITY

You're an angel.

The moment passes and Felicity goes to her handbag, which is on a dressing table. She takes out ten fifty-pound notes. She places the money into Michael's hand clasping it as she kisses him on the cheek.

MICHAEL

Thank you. Call me.

CUT TO:

INT. PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Gabriel sits alone at a table in a quiet corner of the library, surrounded by a pile of crime related books. He is engrossed. EMMA PARKER, a young, attractive librarian, interrupts his deep concentration. She has a newspaper in her hand.

EMMA

I hope you remember me when you're rich and famous, Gabriel.

Surprised, Gabriel looks up to be greeted by Emma's warm smile.

GABRIEL

Hello Emma. Thanks for saving me those books last week.

EMMA

More research?

GABRIEL

Yes. I'm slowly getting there.

EMMA

Have you read this morning's paper?

GABRIEL

No. Why?

Emma leans over to give Gabriel the newspaper. Her low cut blouse and her Wonderbra-enhanced cleavage briefly distracts him. Then, he reads the caption: 'Hotel fire claims Donny Lau'.

EMMA

Perhaps you'll get a few ideas... For 'Ashes to Ashes' I mean.

GABRIEL

Yes. Thanks a lot.

There is an uncomfortable moment of silence, then...

EMMA

I have to get back to work. I'd really like to talk to you, about your script. You're welcome to have tea with Harry and me. This evening? Er... Harry's my cat.

GABRIEL

Sorry Emma, I can't. What about tomorrow?

EMMA

Tomorrow's fine. Is seven o'clock too late?

GABRIEL

No, not at all.

EMMA

Smashing. Here's my address and phone number.

(writing on a blank library card)

See you tomorrow at seven...

She gives the card to Gabriel with a smile.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

A Spanish Restaurant, somewhere in West London. It is now about 4:00 PM. A flamenco dancer provides rich entertainment, which is intercut throughout the scene as the tension rises.

Even though the place is far from busy, several people can be seen enjoying dinner and light conversation.

Two of these people are Michael and Gabriel. Gabriel is dressed in smart casual clothes. Michael is dressed as before and has a toothpick in the corner of his mouth as he speaks. The well-spoken gentleman we thought we knew is now quite at ease with profanity. His dialogue is like California meets Oxford.

MICHAEL

She does it every time, I'm beginning to run out of tricks. There's no way I'm gonna stick my tongue in her thing. No fucking way.

GABRIEL

Tell her you're allergic to cats. You seem to enjoy deceiving women. Just tell her you don't eat out.

Michael laughs. Gabriel grins broadly. The conversation is obviously tongue-in-cheek.

MICHAEL

The bigger the lie the more they want to hear it. Bullshit makes the world go 'round.

GABRIEL

And you're the king of bullshit.

MICHAEL

The bitch I saw today is married to some limp dick. He works for the Bank of England. She's devious, bored, and lazy. She pays me, with her husband's money. Well, you never know, it might be the

bank's money. She pays people to serve her. I'm just one of those people providing a service. I tell her she's beautiful, listen to her bitchin', help her pick new dresses, and make sure she comes at least twice a week. She's happy, I'm happy.

GABRIEL

Yes from the stories you've told me it's obvious you're happy. Your sexual partners for this month include a widow who believes she was abducted by aliens from Alpha Centauri. I swear Michael, it's like something out of a Japanese Manga film. One of these days one of these women is gonna sprout tentacles.

MICHAEL

You sound just like I did a year ago, Gabriel. The right woman, the right price and you'd be doing the horizontal dance for a fee.

GABRIEL

Not in this lifetime.

A young CHINESE WAITER who never smiles suddenly interrupts the in-depth conversation.

WAITER

Is everything all right gentlemen?

MICHAEL

Er... Yes.

GABRIEL

I'd like a cappuccino please.

WAITER

Thank you.

The Waiter takes away the used plates and leaves. Michael takes a sip of his sparkling water as Gabriel speaks.

GABRIEL

Rose called me this morning. She sounded a bit concerned.

MICHAEL

Yes, I also received a call from Rose this morning. What happened to Raj really freaked her out.

GABRIEL

Who's Raj?

MICHAEL

The big Indian guy.

GABRIEL

What happened to him?

MICHAEL

The poor sod has Aids. Thinks he got it from some accountant. God knows how he came to that conclusion.

GABRIEL

Well, if you wanna play Russian roulette with your dick, it's up to you.

MICHAEL

I guess you never know what's waiting for you under a woman's dress. That's why I never go diving without a rubber suit.

GABRIEL

Look at what happened to Eric. His ex-girlfriend's husband caught him. Now he looks like the Elephant man except his head isn't quite as large.

MICHAEL

Maybe you ought to show me a few kung fu moves. Hisaa! Hwarr!
You Bastard!

The Chinese Waiter again interrupts the conversation. This time he brings a cappuccino. He places it on the table. He is not impressed by Michael's portrayal. Michael laughs. Gabriel tries to be serious.

WAITER

One cappuccino.

The waiter walks out of shot. Gabriel continues speaking between sips of his cappuccino.

GABRIEL

Come along to the gym.

MICHAEL

Husbands aren't the only ones who get jealous. Boyfriends, fathers, brothers, can all get on your case. I'm not gonna start worrying. I'd end up with too many wrinkles.

GABRIEL

Whoa-whoa-whoa, it's no big deal, all I'm saying is be careful.

MICHAEL

Find another way to earn extra money if you're that worried.

GABRIEL

Violence doesn't bother me.

MICHAEL

So, who are you meeting tonight?

GABRIEL

A lady named Tara.

A pretty SPANISH WAITRESS walks by. She smiles at Gabriel. He smiles back. Michael notices this and stares at her bottom as it waves goodbye.

MICHAEL

Interesting name. Tara might want to hear a bedtime story.

GABRIEL

Most women just want company. You sleep with them because it boosts your ego.

Michael smiles with guilt and chews his toothpick.

MICHAEL

They love every minute of it. It's not healthy spending all your time dreaming about being a rich and famous writer.

GABRIEL

At least I have a dream. You're content to be a gigolo for the rest of your life.

MICHAEL

A couple years from now I'll be running my own agency. Just you wait and see.

The Waiter returns.

WAITER

Would that be all gentlemen? Should I bring the bill?

GABRIEL

Yes, please.

Over Gabriel's shoulder, we can see two familiar men enter the restaurant. They are Muhammed and Nelson. Muhammed carries a black briefcase. They look like men on a mission. Noticing them, the Waiter is suddenly petrified but does a good job of trying to hide this fact.

Michael notices the waiter's reaction and looks in the direction of the two men. From his point of view we see only their backs, as they disappear through a door with a 'Staff Only' sign on it. The Waiter suddenly cuts in.

WAITER

(suddenly smiling)

Thank you.

As the Waiter walks away, Gabriel turns curiously. From Gabriel's point of view there is now nothing to see. Everything in the restaurant seems normal.

GABRIEL (to Michael)

What's up?

MICHAEL

Two men just walked in. So what time are you supposed to meet this Clara?

GABRIEL

Eight, and her name is Tara. Tara Renton.

MICHAEL

Remember to put a jiffi on your willy.

Gabriel jokingly makes a dick sign with his hand.

GABRIEL (blushing)

Piss off.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - AFTERNOON

We are in a small room, which has a few health inspection certificates on the wall and paperwork on an old wooden desk. Next to the desk there is an office chair.

Note: As the scene develops we intercut with close-ups of the flamenco dancer's performance.

From off screen we hear the sharp aggressive voice of Nelson Kong.

NELSON (O.S.)

Sit down and shut the fuck up!

Suddenly a balding Spaniard is violently shoved into shot and onto the chair. Man and chair wheel backwards and loudly slam into a wall. The man looks as if he is about to have a heart attack. He is THE MANAGER and owner of the restaurant.

MANAGER

I'll have the money by the end of the week...

A briefcase is violently slammed onto the desk. We now see Muhammed as he speaks to (us) the Manager. Nelson can be seen hanging tough in the background.

MUHAMMED

The end of the week is in the future, and right now you don't have a future. My name is Muhammed Armen, the gent behind me is my associate Mr Kong. We kill people.

Nelson takes out his .45 Automatic which now has a silencer. The Manager begins to hyperventilate.

Intercut: The flamenco dancer violently stomps her feet to the rhythm of the Manager's escalating heartbeat.

MUHAMMED

Mr Kong takes his job very seriously.

Nelson lifts the gun slowly and aims at the man who is now shaking uncontrollably in the chair. Suddenly the Manager grabs his chest in agony.

Intercut: The flamenco dancer approaches the climax of her performance.

To the utter amazement of Muhammed and Nelson, the Manager actually has a massive heart attack and suddenly dies with his eyes open in a lifeless stare.

The gangsters look at each other in disbelief, then at the Manager's corpse. Nelson still has his gun pointed at the dead Spaniard.

MUHAMMED (shocked)

What the fuck? He's dead.

NELSON (disbelieving)

Maybe he's just sleepin'. Fuckin' unconscious.

MUHAMMED

Nelson, can't you see the fucker's dead?

NELSON

Make sure.

MUHAMMED

Well let's see... He's not breathing, and there's a fucking fly walking on his eyeball. Call it a wild guess, but I think this man is dead.

NELSON (lowers the gun)

Shit.

MUHAMMED

You just had to point the fucking gun at him, didn't you?

Nelson uses his gun as a pointer.

NELSON

Don't blame me. Weak heart innit?

(to the corpse)

Piece-o'-shit...

MUHAMMED

Nelson. My brother. Put the gun away, before we have an unfortunate accident.

Nelson puts the gun away.

NELSON

This is no joke, no joke at all.

MUHAMMED

I think we'd better get the fuck outta here right now.

NELSON

The spider will shit boulders.

MUHAMMED

Who's gonna tell Valentino? Valentino had his first cousin, Nicola Viterelli, hung from a meat hook. The hook was up the poor bugger's ass. Now try to imagine how painful it would be to have a fuckin' meat hook shoved up your ass. If our valentine could do shit like that to his own family, there's no tellin' what he'd do to us.

NELSON

Yeah-yeah-yeah.

MUHAMMED

Time to book. We're just gonna walk out of here as if nothing happened. The rest of the money comes out of our wallets. Fifty-fifty. Deal?

NELSON

Shit.

MUHAMMED

Deal?

NELSON

Yeah-yeah-yeah.

MUHAMMED

Prop him up as if he's reading a book or papers or something...

BACK TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - AFTERNOON

We return to Gabriel and Michael at their table. Gabriel has finished his cappuccino.

GABRIEL

Time to make a move.

Both men place money in a little stainless steel plate on the table. Over Michael's shoulder we see Nelson and Muhammed as they leave. Seconds later, the Chinese Waiter returns and picks up the plate.

WAITER

Thank you.

GABRIEL

De nada.

The Waiter leaves.

MICHAEL (to Gabriel)

I think I'll go have a little lie down now. Felicity was particularly energetic today.

Gabriel does not respond. Both men stand and make their way to the exit as we pick up the Waiter. We follow close behind the Waiter as he walks toward the Manager's office. The Waiter opens the office door and from his point of view we see the Manager sitting behind his desk.

The man is as before, dead with his eyes open in a stare. On the desk we see an open magazine. It is Escort Magazine. The naked centrefold is in a classic legs opened wide pose.

CUT TO:

C.U. *The shocked, horrified Chinese Waiter. Mouth open, eyes in a wide stare.*

FADE TO BLACK

INT. GROVE SNOR COURT HOTEL - NIGHT (7:45 PM)

We fade up on Gabriel as he enters the opulent dining room of the hotel wearing his Armani suit. The French HEAD WAITER greets him with a strong accent.

HEAD WAITER

Good evening Sir. Have you made a reservation?

GABRIEL

Yes. Gabriel Darbeaux.

There is a pause as the Waiter checks his list twice.

HEAD WAITER

I'm sorry I cannot find your name, did you make the reservation yourself?

GABRIEL

I'm sorry, try Tara Renton.

The Head Waiter looks at his list again.

HEAD WAITER

Ah yes, Miss Tara Renton. Table for two. Miss Renton is not here?

GABRIEL

She'll be joining me shortly.

HEAD WAITER

Very well, if you follow me Monsieur Darbeaux, I will take you to your table.

Gabriel follows the waiter out of shot.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

We see Gabriel's wristwatch establishing the time as 8:20 PM. He sits alone at the table for two awaiting the arrival of Tara Renton, the woman he intends to escort. The room is sparsely filled with middle-aged diners.

As Gabriel takes a sip from his Southern Comfort and orange, an absolutely stunning, 23-year-old woman of mixed origin quickly and nervously enters the room, unnoticed by anyone except Gabriel. This woman's name is ARABELLA SIMONE.

Arabella wears a seductive evening dress, which hugs her supermodel form. She appears to be very scared and is looking around the room for a possible escape route or a place to hide. She nervously glances outside the room and is seized by panic.

It would be inconceivable for most normal, healthy men, to resist Arabella's charm. Gabriel is impressed but keeps cool.

Turning to him with a look of desperation on her face, she puts a finger to her lips signalling Gabriel to keep quiet. Arabella then proceeds to crawl under his table. Gabriel has a 'What the hell is happening?' look on his face.

Suddenly the disreputable Muhammed Armen walks ominously into the room. It is clear he is looking for Arabella. Not finding any trace of her he turns to Gabriel who appears to be calmly enjoying his drink.

MUHAMMED

Hey bro, did a honey come by here?

Gabriel pretends not to understand.

GABRIEL

Sorry?

MUHAMMED

A lady? A woman? Did you see a woman come by here?

GABRIEL

No man. Nobody's been in here.

Muhammed and Gabriel stare at each other for a tense moment. Muhammed breaks the stare. He looks around the room at the patrons enjoying conversation with their meals. After a tense moment Muhammed joins his partner Nelson Kong, just outside the open door to the dining room.

MUHAMMED (to Nelson)

I'm sure she came in here.

NELSON (rapid fire)

You're seeing things. Come on lets go man.

MUHAMMED

I could've sworn it was her.

Nelson leads the way as the men make their exit.

BACK TO:

Gabriel as he takes another sip of his drink.

GABRIEL

(to the hiding woman)

I think it's safe to come up now. Honeybear just left.

Arabella lifts a corner of the long tablecloth and peers out like a cautious rabbit. Clearly embarrassed, she gets up from under the table and sits in the available chair.

As Arabella speaks we are surprised to find that she is very well spoken.

ARABELLA

Thank you, you saved my life.

GABRIEL

You're welcome. Any time.

Preoccupied with scanning for her pursuers, Arabella gets up and is about to leave. This surprises Gabriel.

Her exit is prevented by the arrival of the Head Waiter.

HEAD WAITER

Ah, Madame, you have arrived.

Arabella looks puzzled.

ARABELLA

You're expecting me?

The headwaiter is confused.

HEAD WAITER

You made a reservation.

Suddenly over Arabella's shoulder we see Muhammed looking around in the distance. He does not look in (our) Gabriel's direction.

ARABELLA

Reservation?

Realising the impending danger, Gabriel suddenly cuts in before the Head Waiter can respond. He uses his eyes to draw Arabella's attention to Muhammed.

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