

**The Power in Words**

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based on the "angelic colloquies" by  
Edgar Allan Poe

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## THE POWER IN WORDS

### Introduction

"The Power in Words" was developed for the Middle Mind Project (Chicago) over the course of 2009.

The title of the screenplay is a take on "The Power of Words," the third of three stories by Edgar Allan Poe that inform the basis of this adaptation. The difference is meant as a reflection on the ways in which context and the subtleties of meaning, whether conscious or not, inform the narratives of our lives and our relationships within them.

Together, these three of Poe's works ("The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion," "The Colloquy of Monos and Una," and "The Power of Words"), loosely referenced as the "angelic colloquies," were written in the period from 1841 to 1849, and represent an ongoing internal conversation with Poe's philosophical beliefs. As such, this dramatization lends an ear to these discussions and explores the overarching thematic elements to develop a through line connecting all three scenes.

One element in particular, love (requited, thwarted and separated by death) permeates the original pieces - whether it be in the quotes or the dialogue or the names of the characters themselves. Death and rebirth, knowledge and temptation (presented through the symbols of the Eden myth), also played their parts.

Here, sleep returns as 'the little death.' Books stand in for knowledge. The snake for that of Eden. Light to convey the passage of time.

In the first act, a man awakens to the aftermath of a party; surrounded in smoke and ashes. The darkness of the hour and the debris around him suggest the end of the world that followed mankind's obsession with earthly pleasures. The snake tattoo, temptation in the garden of Eden.

In the second act, we arrive at a scene around dawn, symbol of rebirth. A woman, now, travels on a train, the act of movement or commuting conveying transformation and moving from one life to the next. Like her counterpart in

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Antigone, she goes to rejoin her lover (which, like the characters in the Classic play, were separated by death). Theirs is a pure, idyllic love. The dreams are warm and attempt to convey this mood. In her lap is a book, 'The snake charmer,' to convey the triumph over Satan, the snake and earthly pleasures.

In the third act, a man wakes from sleep, but into the bright light of day. The end of the world was a personal one. An end that had occurred as a result of an unfortunate and unforeseen accident involving his lover after a quarrel. He remains at home, motionless, afraid of further consequences of his actions. Ultimately, a friend (playing the part of Agathos) draws him towards reason. On the anniversary of her death, they travel to the cemetery to lay red flowers on her grave.

The dialogue of the third act is purposefully stilted in order to evoke a sense of Poe's original dialogues. In doing so, some of these idyllic themes live on in the afterlife of this adaptation.

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Twilight gathers over the city and with it the light of the day retreats into night. Cool blue light washes over the deepening grays of the City. The advance of evening is heralded by a light wind, marshalling cloud formations that move across the open sky.

INT. CLEO'S LIVING ROOM TWILIGHT

The interior is still and cool in the light of the hour. The silence in the room is haunting, clinging to everything with a veneer of cooling tensions. A heavy curtain flowing in the evening wind breaks the silence a bit with its flapping; a quiet breeze blows through the open window as we hear the ambient sounds of the city and the faint sound of an eL train going by in the distance.

DAVID [a record store employee in his mid-twenties] lies on an old couch in the living room, looking disheveled as if having slept for days. He's bundled in a raggedy sweater, his hair in disarray and his clothes more than slept in. His tall, lanky form is sprawled out, partially on and off the couch. One foot is planted on the ground, the other half bent on the cushions. He seems half in this world, half in the next, caught between sleep and dream.

David's demeanor betrays his outwardly streetwise and tough façade, the current moment showing him at his most open.

For a long time, he remains nearly motionless, his left arm pillowed behind his head. He looks towards the window, watching the clouds revealed intermittently by the billowing curtain. His thoughts drift...

FLASHBACK - INT. GALLERY SPACE AT A SIMILAR TIME OF DAY AS CLEO'S APARTMENT IN THE MAIN SCENE.

David and Cleo are in an exhibition space. David is looking up at the skylight [or a high window] as Cleo is gathering photographs and setting up. Cleo pauses and moves beside him.

Cleo:  
You have to get goin'?

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David: [turning to face Cleo]  
Yeah. Soon. You know how my old man gets... hates to be kept waiting when there's a chance at telling me how much of a loser I am...

Cleo:  
Why do you keep doing this to yourself?

David: [shrugging]  
He's family... crazy, fucked up family, but it's all I've got left... and... I think it's almost like he's trying to help in some twisted way. Yeah... I dunno. Anyway, let's finish up..

Cleo:  
[Cleo lays her hand on David's arm consolingly and smiles.]  
Well, see if you can sneak away from your 'therapy' session and come back to my place afterwards.

David: [laughing slightly]  
For more 'therapy?'

Cleo: [grinning and swatting at David playfully.]  
No. [Leadingly] You know... the party? After the opening?

David: [nods, laughing a bit]  
Yeah. I know.  
I'll get there as soon as I can.

Cleo: [grins]  
Good.

They both start assembling the exhibit and we see it begin to unfold: many b&w images, some color. Scenes of urban and human decay, but with a twist of hope. Studies of David [a picture taken of him jamming on his guitar on a patio; a close-up of his hands]

Cleo:  
[Showing the candid picture of him playing on the porch]

Remember this one?

David:  
Ha. Yeah... that was some crazy night.

[Cleo nods and hangs it. David sets up the photo of his hands next to it.]

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[On the photo of his hands we cut back to the apartment. David has his arm resting on the back of the couch, hand on his knee. As he turns his head from the window, he catches sight of his hand, segueing into another flashback. Cleo is sitting on the same couch with David setting up for a shot with her camera.]

David:  
Aren't you done yet?

Cleo:  
Remember? Models don't talk. [Sound of camera]  
Now I'm done.

[She grins and sets the camera on the table beside the couch. Cleo leans in affectionately and glances down at David's hand, taking it up again thoughtfully. She grins again.]

I knew you were in there somewhere...

[Her thumb running over his palm, tracing out the lines.  
She speaks slowly.]  
Hands... they're like those old parchments monks used to use...  
everything... everyone... we've touched written on them over  
and over again.

[Cleo looks up at David and David smiles.]

FADE BACK INTO MAIN SCENE

As David wakes and surveys his surroundings to get his mental and emotional bearings, we see him more as the vulnerable man that he is [one who, because of his rough upbringing and loss, finds himself seeking a motherly figure of sorts].

David looks around trying to focus.

David's surroundings are as equally disheveled as he. Empty bottles and cans, ashtrays full of cigarette butts clutter the living room; what seems to be the remains or aftermath of a party linger in the space.

David, sleepily, continues looking around until a glass on the coffee table in front of him catches his attention. The glass is half full of liquor with a single, almost, glowing

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red lipstick stain on the top. He gazes at the cup as he begins to remember...

FLASHBACK - INT.APARTMENT.EVENING

The loud noise of rock music envelops an apartment crowded with people everywhere. The people are laughing and drinking as they mingle about the apartment. From amongst the crowd a young woman makes her way through the clutter of drinking friends, she carefully makes her way through as she greets and smiles at some of them as she passes them by. One of the couples is Anne and Stan, the characters from act III.

The young woman is CLEO, an attractive gallery clerk turn photographer with a passion for the arts. Strong, grounded with a definite rebellious side, Cleo moved to the city to nurture her passions.

Cleo makes her way from through the apartment and to the back patio where she seemed to have found who she was looking for. She stands at the backdoor of the house watching David, who has his back to her, looking out at the evening sky.

CLEO:

Hey.

DAVID (LOOKING BACK):

Hey.

CLEO STOPS JUST OUTSIDE OF THE DOOR, HER ARMS FOLDED, BACKLIT BY THE INTERIOR. SHE GRINS SLIGHTLY -

CLEO:

Trying to count all the stars again?

(BEAT)

TURNING FULLY AROUND AND LEANING AGAINST THE RAILING OF THE PATIO -

DAVID:

It got kinda stuffy in there.

CLEO:

Yeah...it's a good turnout.



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DAVID SLOWLY KNODS HIS HEAD-

CLEO:  
You guys were awesome.

DAVID:  
Thanks. Messed up a couple of  
times, but yeah I think we sounded  
pretty good.

CLEO:  
Yeah, you sounded great.

(BEAT)  
Cleo swirls the ice in her glass and looks down at it  
briefly.

DAVID:  
I heard it started hailing when  
we started to play.

Cleo begins to walk towards David slowly.

CLEO:  
Yeah, that was weird...just out of  
nowhere, it started coming down.  
big chunks too.

DAVID:  
That's crazy.

Cleo walks out on to the patio, and stands at the wooden  
railing next to David.

Both are looking out over the railing into the darkness,  
the city ... whatever lies beyond the patio - they do not  
face each other as they speak, continuing a contemplative  
mood.

CLEO:  
Sign of the times, I guess.

DAVID:  
Yeah.

(BEAT)

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David walks over and stands closer to Cleo.

DAVID (DISTANT):  
Things are coming to an end.

CLEO:  
Na.

DAVID (TURNING TOWARDS CLEO  
SLIGHTLY):  
No?

CLEO (KNODDING HER HEAD):  
The world's just shifting...making  
some room. Washing away the old  
and dirty...allowing for all the new  
and beautiful to grow.

David and Cleo stare at each other for a moment.

David then begins to crack a smile, followed by a slight  
snicker from Cleo.

DAVID (laughing):  
Enough of this crap, can we get  
the hell out of here now?

Cleo grins back and sets the glass down on the table,  
leaving it in the position David will observe at a later  
time.

LATER THAT NIGHT - INT. APARTMENT. NIGHT

David and Cleo lay on her bed talking, kissing and  
embracing.

DAVID (LOW TONE, ALMOST  
WHISPERING):  
I like this...feels right.

CLEO (SAME TONE):  
Yeah...

DAVID:  
So right...can't be real.

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CLEO:

It is real, that's why it's  
right.

DAVID:

Right here, right now...I want this  
forever.

CLEO:

It will be...it is.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. APARTMENT. EVENING

Faint static resolves into the sound of running water as we  
come back into the scene. The water is distant, emanating  
from the kitchen.

David lights a cigarette as he sits on Cleo's couch,  
contemplating his environment. His surroundings in disarray  
but for some reason a feeling of calm comforts him.

At that moment Cleo, who's been in the kitchen trying to  
pick up the remains, walks into the living room where David  
sits contemplative.

CLEO:

Hey.

DAVID:

Hey.

Cleo is grinning as she walks around the sofa.

CLEO:

You slept like the dead.

David stretches and begins to lay down again, putting one  
arm behind his head.

DAVID:

Yeah, I feel like a new man

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though.

David stares at his cigarette after taking another drag from it.

Cleo sits at the center of the sofa by David's stomach. She leans over, grabs a cigarette and lighter from the coffee table and lights it. As she does so, the tattoo of snake is visible on her arm.

Cleo sits in silence, wrapped in thought.

DAVID (Breaking the silence):  
Hey...

Cleo turns towards David.

DAVID (cont'd):  
Sorry, I guess I missed the party  
huh?

CLEO (understanding, calm):  
It's Ok...it's not the end of  
the world.

Cleo stubs her cigarette out, moves closer to David, adjusting herself next to him with her head on his chest. With a tender vigilance David stares at her as he wraps one arm around her, the couple embrace on the couch devotedly.

CUT TO.

Cloud formations passing by in the twilight of the sky-

The sound of the eL train in the distance is heard as we see the city skyline at dusk.

MOMENTS LATER - INT. TRAIN. EVENING

ROSE sits window side on the train with a pensive, sullen expression on her face. She stares out the window contemplative only moving her eyes to look around the train.

Rose is a young social worker in her mid-twenties with a loving heart and ideals that sometime blind the reality of life. But she's ok with this, and continues on with the

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cycle of a young Midwestern girl who embraces the thoughts of raising a family.

The train is nearly empty with the exception of 3 other passengers that are rising to get off the train at the next stop. The 3 passengers, 2 that are together, walk off the train, leaving Rose alone still lost in thought as the doors shut ones again.

In Rose's lap is a program from Cleo's gallery opening. We slowly zoom in on it.

FLASHBACK - INT. CLEO'S APARTMENT EARLIER THAT EVENING. The after-party for her gallery opening is underway.

Anne [VO]:  
That's awesome!

Cleo:  
Isn't it?

[Rose is standing on the periphery of the conversation. Not having anything to add she moves on, touring the apartment, looking at Cleo's work.]

Rose has stopped in front of a group of photos in a small gallery set off to one side of Cleo's apartment.

Cleo eventually comes to join her.

Cleo:  
Hey. Too bad Renzo couldn't make it. But I'm really glad you came.

Rose:  
[Not offering any explanation to Renzo's absence]  
Yeah. I'm glad I came too.

[Glancing at photos.]

You have such great work. How did find all those places?  
They're really all in the City?

Cleo: [smiling]  
I'm sure you'd recognize them. They're actually really familiar places. [beat] I feel like Mother Teresa

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sometimes... all those back alleys are like little orphan kids. I just want to take them all in.

Rose: [laughing a bit]  
I can kinda see that. Yeah... there's almost a god-like view in all of them. Like seeing into all these places, we overlook... and finding all those things in us we never see.

[turning to a specific photo]

Like this one... there's so much hope...

[Cleo is about to respond when movement catches her attention out of the corner of her eye: it's David. Rose and the others begin to get a sense it may be time to leave. It's early morning in any case and tact is winning out over free alcohol... Rose leaves and we go back to the main scene.]

MAIN SCENE - INT. TRAIN - early morning

Rose is glancing out of the window, her eyes focused not on the slowly-revealing scenery beyond, but on memories. She rests her cheek against the cold glass, bridging the warmth of the train with the chill morning air.

FLASHBACK - INT. BEDROOM DAY

The bedroom is cold. Even with sunlight radiating through the windows Rose still feels the cold of her white pillow sheet as she lays her head on it. She lies there, awake, trying to focus on RENZO, her lover, who is moving about the room packing.

Renzo is an English teacher with a background in criminal justice. He's assertive, takes his time making decisions, but when he does, he embraces them tenaciously. He comes from a working-class Midwestern family, which he embraces immensely.

Rose lies there watching Renzo as he leaves the room.

Rose [VO]:  
Do you really have to go?

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FLASHBACK - INT. KITCHEN LATE AFTERNOON/EARY EVENING

The two are sitting at opposite ends of the kitchen table seemingly at odds with each other. Echoes of the just-spoken question hang in the there. A wan light falls across the infinite distance of the table which separates the pair right then. Their plates contain the remnants of their dinner. Rose's plate is only picked at while Renzo's meal is at least mostly finished.

Renzo:

You know it's what I always wanted. It's a great opportunity for me.

[Long pause. Rose barely looks up.]

Rose:

There's nothing here...?

Renzo:

Nothing like out there.

Rose:

But it's so far.

Renzo:

But it's a real chance. A real chance to get to where I want to be...

[And at that Renzo pauses, at least half-sensing what he's said. He sits back in his chair for a long moment.]

Renzo, sensing the awkwardness in the kitchen, clears off the remnants of their meal and sets them in the sink. He moves beside Rose and sets his hand on her, which sits placidly on the table.

RENZO (LOW, BUT SINCERE AND  
CARING TONE):

We'll see each other again, soon.

TRANSITION INTO TRAIN - FLASHBACK CONTINUES

Renzo and Rose both sit in the train quietly. Renzo still with his hand on Roses' stares out the window of the train casually. Rose, obviously confused by the situation stares

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at him waiting for some sort of acknowledgement from him, but does not get it. This takes some time before the events of the kitchen; at a time when Renzo has yet to reveal his intentions of moving. In fact, he's barely aware of the idea on a conscious level himself.

Rose:

You looked like you were a million miles away.

Renzo: [half-smiling]

Just thinking... [Changing subject]

Hey, we should go to Cleo's opening next week.

Rose: [smiling and clasping Renzo's hand tighter]

Yeah

Rose slowly looks away and notices herself sitting several seats away from her, staring right back at herself. Not confused or alarmed by this, she merely looks to herself for some sort of sign, some sort of hope and ultimately some sort of closure to the experience this memory has caused her to relive.

For one last moment Rose sees herself next to Renzo, before the memory is completely gone, and she finds herself alone, back on the train.

We see cloud formations passing by in the early sunrise sky and as we focus in on the sun, it's light washes out all details filling the screen with white light.

INT. BEDROOM. MORNING

STANLEY, startled, lets out a scream and abruptly sits up on his bed.

Stanley has been sleeping for some time. He sits there, disorientated, gasping for a breath, breathing heavily. After a moment, Stanley turns and sits on the edge of his bed.

An aspiring writer in his mid-twenties, Stanley is child at heart. He can't seem to grow up, nor does he want to. He's a collector...odds and ends, anachronistic pieces around his home. Despite his desire to be an author, his single frustration is the hang up of the resent experience of



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losing his lover, ANN. He can't let himself live, to experience life, as he should.

Stanley's face, looking disheveled, pale with black under his eyes; he exhaustingly investigates his surroundings that appear to be as equally disheveled as he is.

Stanley hasn't left his apartment in a year. He, barely, lives off the small amounts of money that he managed to save as writer. Since the death of Ann he can't function properly, he spends his entire days sitting at his writing desk staring at the calendar that marks the exact date of Anne's death. Amidst the clutter of his bulletin board is a program from Cleo's opening, mostly buried by layers of detritus.

### INT. KITCHEN. DAY

Stanley sits at his desk. He slowly turns, taking a moment to acknowledge the sound - as if trying to remember when he set the kettle to boil. He moves into the kitchen turning off the stove. He slowly staggers about the kitchen mumbling to himself as he prepares himself a cup of tea.

STANLEY:

[LAUGHS TO HIMSELF, MUMBLING]

She always used to give me hell about how much tea I drank...

After pouring himself a cup of tea Stanley picks up a newspaper from his kitchen counter, stares at it for a moment then rips an article out. He places the rest of the paper on the counter, picks up a bottle of liquor that's also on the counter amongst other half empty bottles and walks out of the kitchen staring at the article he ripped out.

In a drunken stupor, Stanley staggers into his living room and collapses onto the couch.

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### INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

Stan man lays asleep on his couch, the empty bottle of liquor on the floor next to him, the torn article still in his hand.

Stan is awoken by the sound of his telephone, which he'd normally let ring until whoever it was hung up; but this time, for some reason, was different.

Stanley crawls out of his couch and follows the phone cord into his hallway, where his phone continues ringing on the floor. Exhaustedly he lays his back on the wall and answers his phone but does not say a word.

VINCENT (CALM, FILTERED):  
Hello?

Stanley does not answer.

VINCENT (CONT'D):  
You there?

Stanley struggles to say something but is only able to let out a sigh.

VINCENT:  
Listen, you need to get out of there...it's time.

Stanley mumbles incoherent words.

VINCENT:  
We're gonna go see her.

Stanley stares at a book that sits under his bed.

VINCENT (CONT'D):  
This'll be a good opportunity  
for you to get out.  
I'm gonna pick you up.

Stanley begins to slightly sob.

VINCENT (CONT'D):  
It's been long enough Stanley.  
(BEAT)

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It's been long enough.

FLASHBACK - INT. BOOKSTORE. DAY

Stanley and Anne walk down the aisle of a bookstore, laughing and talking.

ANNE (CONTENT):  
That night I accidentally blurted out how much fun I was having with you.

STANLEY (ALSO CONTENT):  
Yeah?

ANNE:  
Yeah, that was kinda embarrassing, I didn't even really know you.

STANLEY (KNODDING HIS HEAD):  
I know, you even let me drive your car that night.

ANNE:  
I know, geez.

STANLEY:  
I think we were both pretty drunk too.

ANNE:  
Yeah, you were...!

STANLEY:  
Me...!?

ANNE (LAUGHING):  
Yeah, that's the night you professed your love for me.

STANLEY (LAUGHING):  
What...!? I didn't profess my love...

ANNE (STILL LAUGHING):  
Yeah you did.

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Anne notices a book on the shelf, as they're walking by, that catches her attention.

ANNE (INTRIGUED):  
Oooohh!

Anne takes the book off the shelf (knitting book), and begins flipping through it and stopping at pages that attract her.

ANNE:  
I think I'm gonna start knitting.  
(BEAT)  
Maybe some scarf's, hats...

STANLEY (LOOKING OVER HER  
SHOULDER):  
Knitting? You *do* have old lady  
tendencies.

ANNE (SARCASTIC, COMICAL):  
Shut up!

STANLEY:  
Will you knit me a scarf?

ANNE:  
Maybe.  
(BEAT)  
Are you coming back home with me?

STANLEY:  
To your families? I don't know.

ANNE:  
You've already met them once.

STANLEY (HESITANT):  
I know, but...I'll be at their place,  
and..

ANNE:  
And?

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ANNE (CONT'D):  
They have a nice cottage.

(BEAT)

ANNE (CONT'D):  
On the lake.

STANLEY:  
I know, its sounds great...

(BEAT)

ANNE:  
Oh lovey.

BACK TO SCENE - INT. APARTMENT. DAY

VINCENT, an old friend of both Stanley's and Anne has come over to try and help Stanley come out of his guilt filled living.

VINCENT (VERY CALM):  
When I was kid, I used to sit  
for hours staring at this old  
fountain pen my father gave me.  
I thought that if I concentrate  
hard enough I'd make it move.

(BEAT)  
It never happened.

Stanley sits on his couch, smoking a cigarette, listening.  
VINCENT walks over to Stanley.

VINCENT (CONT'D, STILL CALM):  
At times I find myself doing that  
now. I think about things long enough...  
hoping that something will happen.

VINCENT sits next to Stanley on the sofa.

VINCENT (TO STANLEY):  
You can't stay locked up in  
your apartment forever.

Stanley doesn't look at VINCENT, he continues smoking his  
cigarette then attempts to reply.

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STANLEY (STRUGGLING FOR WORDS):  
I...can't move.  
I...can't breathe.  
I think...  
I'm...scared.

VINCENT quietly contemplates, giving Stanley time and waits for an explanation.

VINCENT:  
You're breathing now.

STANLEY:  
Yeah.  
(BEAT)  
What I touch goes to hell...  
everything gets fucked up...  
it's fucked up.

(BEAT)

Stanley gets choked up, becoming harder for him to speak.

STANLEY (STRUGGLING):  
If I'd never begged her to  
come out...If I'd gone...

VINCENT (CALM):  
It's not your fault.

STANLEY:  
If we'd never had that argument.

VINCENT:  
Neither is that.  
(BEAT)  
Stop blaming yourself.  
There was no way for you to have  
known what was going to happen.  
You can't see how things will end up.  
(BEAT)  
You're not God.  
(BEAT)  
Heck, some days I'm not sure *He* has  
any clue which way is up.

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(BEAT)

STANLEY (SHAKING HIS HEAD  
CONFUSED):

Why?

VINCENT shifts his eyes down, almost looking for a good answer, something to soothe Stanley's pain and confusion. VINCENT looks at Stanley.

VINCENT (CALM, WITH A CONFORTING  
SMILE):

I don't know.

Stanley smirks at his friend, not content but almost satisfied with the answer.

EXT. HALLWAY. DAY

Stanley shuts the door to his apartment and locks it, as his friend stares and waits for him.

FRIEND (vo):

Come on, we got somewhere to be.  
You want to get yourself cleaned  
up...?

They both then walk down the hall of his apartment building.

CUT TO.

Low angle WS of both men walking up the stairs of Stanley's apartment building. At the top of the stairs the door is blown out from the sunlight that awaits them outside.

CUT TO.

EXT. STREETS. DAY

Both men walk up to the Friend's car that's parked on the side of the road. Camera tracks across following both men to the car.

Stanley opens the passenger side door and notices flowers on the seat.

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STANLEY:  
Flowers?

FRIEND (STANDING AT THE DRIVERS  
SIDE DOOR):  
A promise... (?)

Both men get into the car.

CUT TO. MOMENTS LATER.

Different shots of the streets going by-

FRIEND (VO):  
We don't get much choice, you  
know? We get by with what we  
can see around us, make do with  
what we've got...

FRIEND (VO, CONT'D):  
...we can usually see the consequences  
right in front of our noses, but  
that's about it. We don't get much  
chance beyond that.  
(BEAT)  
Even if we can see how things are  
going to play out...would we even  
want that? We'd be so caught up  
by maybes...we'd never do anything.

EXT. CEMETARY. DAY

Shots of different cloud formations in the sky-

FRIEND (VO, CONT'D):  
We don't want to be constantly  
second-guessing ourselves.

Finally, at the cemetery, Stan exits the car and walks to  
the gravesite alone.



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The sound of the eL can be heard in the background as Stan stands for a long moment.

Stan is back in the car, the day is fully upon them now, bright and full of promise. At long last, Stan lies back against the seat, relaxed. He watches the clouds float by for a moment as if looking for something...someone... and closes his eyes, content.

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Character Bios

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## ACT I

**Character:** David

**Age:** mid- to late-twenties

**Occupation:** record store/guitar shop employee; indie band member

**Hobbies:** exploring, travelling

**Interests:** composing, movies, music

**Parents:** Father (John), mother (Karyn, Deceased)

**Siblings:** none

**Birthplace:** City

*Quick character sketch:*

Outwardly streetwise and tough, but this veneer masks a vulnerable man who seeks a motherly figure.

His mother died of an illness when he was an early teen. His father picked up the slack financially, but not emotionally. The young man gave up some of his dreams to get a job and help his dad. Still, at some level he resented it, his father now a void filling another one. Consequently, he spent time with his friends or hanging out on the street. He's more of a dreamer, a drifter, ungrounded, untethered, moving from place to place. That is, until he meets the 'woman' of this piece. She is the earth and rain to his fire and smoke - not quite balancing or completing him, but almost neutralizing him. Together they are some alchemical formula solving a complex equation that produces something else.

*Happiest memory:* both his mother and father showing up at talent competition when he was in junior high.

*Saddest memory:* hearing from his dad that he'll have to sell the family house - not his mother's death since she'd been sick for some time and he'd been prepared for it even if he hadn't been aware of it consciously.

Tucked into the frame of his mirror in his apartment is a picture of him and his mother on a day out together.

He moved out as early as he could so that his dad wouldn't have to take care of him.

Flopped at friends' places for a year, maybe two, then finally got an apartment of his own. Trying to make ends

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meet, sending a few bucks to his dad when he can. He meets his father once a month for an awkward dinner and some beers (a ritual of ever-decreasing frequency; when they first started it was once a week).

He's the talker, the dreamer. He wants to hitchhike and camp his way across Europe, but has never gotten around to it. He has a drawer full of maps and guidebooks, even a few maps tacked to his walls with different routes. Maps fascinate him, both real and imagined. He used to sit up late at night when he was a small boy, navigating the geography of the back yard transformed in his imagination. Maybe he's thought of joining the urban spelunkers of France and Russia.

The woman has managed to get him to attend a few classes in the community college. He's been a part of two failed bands. He occasionally plays his bass late at night. Perhaps that figured into his courtship of Cleo. They've started talking and making plans to go to Europe together. He's actually saving money in a bank for the first time.

He doesn't wear a watch. Always losing track of time. 'David time' his friends call it. Which usually means his 15 minutes to 2 hours late.

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**Name:** Cleo

**Age:** mid-twenties

**Occupation:** gallery clerk, photographer

**Hobbies:** Reading

**Interests:** music, dancing, movies, writing

**Parents:** both alive

**Siblings:** (all older) two brothers, Ethan and Mike

**Best friend:** Sarah, Matt (who's like another brother to her) (More than likely Cleo has more male friends than female)

**Favorite song** (of the moment): Christmas in New York  
(Pogues)

**Birthplace:** suburbs

**Tattoo:** upper right arm

### *Quick character sketch:*

Strong, grounded. Definitely more than a little rebellious, particularly in her youth. Especially growing up as the youngest child she wasn't given as much close attention by her parents, so she was able to develop more of her own distinctive personality. Also, having two older brothers she can take care of herself. She quickly proved to her siblings that she didn't need them to look after her. Despite her independence she still has a warm relationship with them. She's more nurturing than altruistic. She'll raise plants and nurse them back to health, but she won't collect every last stray on the street. In that regard, David is like a plant. A spider plant perhaps, long of limb, feelers everywhere looking for a place to anchor itself... and she sees the potential in him.

*Apartment...* a loft or an open studio with windows. She has many of her photos up on the wall. A lot of portraits, both in color and black and white. Her 'rogues' gallery. Many of David. There's even one of them together, taken by her best friend (Sarah), on the night that they met.

She's blunt, speaks her mind. Definitely the tomboy. Many feel intimidated by her, though she's direct and upfront with everyone; a characteristic that a lot find off-putting. She's always herself. Always passionate. Very in the moment.

She'd had her eye on David since even before the party, though she'd never manipulated situations to get them to meet; preferring to let things flow where they needed. Finally, she found him at the party, out for a smoke. She'd asked him to dance. And they did. Then they parted for a while during the party. Before leaving with her friends she

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stops to find David on the way out and asks him to call her, delivering a subtle smile.

She keeps a journal/sketchbook, filled with photos, found items, various bits and pieces given and discovered. Also, drawings and commentary.

Her photographs reveal a truer world to her, one that's purer, primal. There's a glimpse of the soul, a more accurate snapshot of reality. She tries to photograph David when he's sleeping or unawares, as if trying to capture a glimpse of his soul.

Sometimes, David goes along with her on her 'missions,' though the adventure is more of what appeals to him. More often than not, Cleo often goes off on her own, taking pictures.

*Why did Cleo come to the City?*

For college (photography). She stayed in the City afterwards.

*How did Cleo get her job?*

Through her friend Sarah. Sarah works at an indie coffee shop part-time where a nearby gallery owner often displays local artwork. A collection of photographs makes Sarah think of mentioning it to Cleo.

*How does Cleo know Sarah?*

They met in college.

*How did Cleo and David meet?*

Cleo's first boyfriend after moving into the City was a musician (Dave). While with him she acted as the band's photographer and promoter, developing material for their CD's and posters. Through the band she met quite a few other people, including part of a social group to which David belonged. They'd crossed paths at a couple of random parties and she actually caught part of a set that David's (former) band was playing.

At the party at which they finally meet, David's friend Justin had convinced him to bring along his bass. Cleo had caught up with David out on the porch, smoking and when David mentions he has his guitar with him, asks him to play some more of the set she'd missed.

*How long have they been together?*

As long as 6 months, maybe approaching a year.

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*What is the nature of their relationship?*

Their relationship is very comfortable... there is no urgency about it. They don't feel the need to talk incessantly, the silence that falls upon them is no uncomfortable. Yet there is still a vibrancy, a passion about their relationship.

*What kind of beverages/foods do they like?*

Cleo:

Coffee, yes; tea, occasionally... when she's trying to sleep or is stressed

Beer: likes Guinness as well as American beers

Hard liquor: yes

Food: Enjoys Indian and middle eastern food occasionally

David:

Coffee/tea: no. soda, yes

Beer: MGD kinda guy

Hard liquor: yes

Food: American food sort of appetite

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### Act II

**Character (man):** Renzo

**Age:** late-twenties

**Occupation:** English professor at a local community college, but interested in pursuing a legal career. Currently taking night classes.

**Parents:** both alive, still married, though not particularly happily

**Siblings:** younger sister

**Birthplace:** City

*Quick character sketch:*

Clean cut. He takes his time in making decisions, but when he does, he embraces them tenaciously. Came from a working-class Midwest family, something that he is trying to put behind him. He is currently working as a clerk in a small law firm in the City.

He's someone who likes to keep his life simple, uncomplicated. A pragmatist and a materialist.

Of the two, he tends to be the more dominant in the relationship.

He too wants to change the world, at least after his own fashion.

I can almost see him being a fan of Ayn Rand

**Character (woman):** Rose

**Age:** early twenties

**Occupation:** social worker

**Parents:** both alive, both happily married

**Siblings:** none

**Birthplace:** suburbs

*Quick character sketch:*

Living the life-cycle of a Midwest girl. Grew up in the 'burbs, moved to the City. Eventually looking to get married and have a family.

Has a good relationship with her family. Still seem them once a month. Speaks to her mom once a week, her dad less frequently. Christian, somewhat practicing. Trying to help the world through charitable and social work.

*Plot background:*

The two had been in a relationship for some time. When he decides to accept a job offer at a law firm in Boston, they



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decide to take a step back. In truth, the decision itself was never a thing that they declared, no treaty drawn up between them; they just found themselves there one day, distant, on the other sides of a table. As the days passed, she'd grown somewhat withdrawn when it became clear that he would go through with the move. She'd always been supportive of his following his aspirations, but yet, there was some part of her that didn't wish to actively deal with losing with both a lover as well as such a close friend. The withdrawal was mostly subconscious... and when he finally called her on it, she'd agreed that this was the case. To Renzo in the end, Rose was too much of a reminder of his roots. Although he cares for her at some level, it's not enough to override his goals. The book that he alludes to is part of his reconstructionist scheme: he's been trying to share his ideas of the world with her, show her a broader picture. Perhaps in some not so small ways elevate her above her own upbringing.

### *The apartment:*

A studio perhaps or even a small loft. Belonging to the male lead in the story. Like his nature it is Spartan, filled with mostly the necessities. What he does have - and the few extras that he has allowed himself - are his nods to the finer things in life, things that he is aspiring to. The apartment is also the spot where the two almost exclusively met. The woman shares her place with a friend and although they get on well together, she still seems to tend to wind up spending the majority of time at his place.

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### ACT III

**Character:** Stan

**Age:** late-twenties

**Occupation:** aspiring writer

**Parents:** like the Keaton family ... socio-politically conscious members of the 60's revolution

**Siblings:** younger brother (by 10 years)

**Birthplace:** Michigan

*Quick character sketch:*

Bibliophile. Likes collecting odds and ends, cultural flotsam and jetsam. His apartment tends to have a lot of anachronistic pieces, like a land line phone. Despite his desire to be an author, his singular frustration is the hang up he has had over his lover's death, even a year later. He can't let himself live, to experience life.

But this is emblematic of his existence. He feels that he can know life better by collecting bits of it and discerning its hidden motivations like reading tea leaves. As such, he tends to be a bit of a collector, a man with a small spiral-bound notebook, maybe a camera. Recording snippets of conversation, ideas for stories. Saving the world in bits and pieces, mashed up in his Noah's ark of an apartment. He is also consequently somewhat overprotective and is particularly so with the woman he had been involved - probably one of the reasons he is particularly hard on himself after the car accident which led to her death.

This sense of overprotectiveness could have started with his younger brother. Being 10 years apart he was often asked by his parents to look after him on a regular basis. Perhaps there was an incident at some point that his little brother was hurt while he was babysitting.

Considering his penchant for cultural castoffs, it would almost make sense for him to write on a typewriter.

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**Character:** Vincent  
**Age:** early thirties  
**Occupation:** publisher/editor of a small magazine  
**Parents:** both alive, still married  
**Siblings:** brother, younger  
**Birthplace:** Illinois

*Quick character sketch:*

Long-time friend of male lead. An almost brotherly/fatherly figure. Met in college and have been friends ever since. Assumed the roll early on of taking care of Stan. A man of reason; educated, rational, mature on all levels.

**Character:** (woman, deceased): Anne  
**Age:** early twenties  
**Occupation:** part-time waitress and clerk at small organic produce market/café independent bookstore  
**Parents:** 2<sup>nd</sup>-gen hippies  
**Siblings:** brother, 2 years older  
**Birthplace:** Michigan  
**Interests:** painting, music, spirituality, dj-ing, yoga, organic gardening... volunteers at a small, local organic market (perhaps as part of her job at the food co-op) in a reclaimed abandoned lot

*Quick character sketch:*

Outgoing, vivacious, free spirited, loved to experience everything, wholly and honestly. Very trusting. Emotionally secure. Went where she wanted, having faith that things would work out as they needed to. Died in a car crash nearly one year ago to the day of Act III. Found Stan's quirks endearing. Not religious per se, but spiritual. Reformed Catholic, probably flirted with Buddhism. At the moment, doesn't practice any particular religion. She drags him along a lot. Sneaking onto the beach at night to run along the dunes and waves. Sitting on the breakwaters. She feels the flow of things in the moment. She understands things on a more intuitive, fundamental level than Stan. In one of Stan's notebooks there are several sketches of Anne when they first met. He felt compelled to do something while she lay in the sun.

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*Background material:*

The two met in late spring/early summer. The weather is warm, not overly hot or muggy. There is no chill to the air.

On one languid summer evening, she leads him somewhere secret with a knowing, playful smile. Be it a rooftop or a hidden park in the middle of the city, it's she that takes him there. The exact location itself is not so important as it is a place that's set apart, removed from the flow of the City; a place where one can observe and see things from a different perspective.

Their first meeting is a little awkward and abrupt in its ending, yet still they connected enough to see each other again.

He's sitting with his notebook, observing people in a café (perhaps the one at which she sometimes works). She has seen him in the same spot on a regular basis and she approaches him, wondering what he has been writing all this time