

BEING JOHN MALKOVICH

by

Charlie Kaufman

FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

INT. CHEERLESS ROOM - DAY

The room is bare, dusty. A ceiling fan turns. The wall clock ticks. Craig, 30 years old and small, sits at a collapsible card table. The only item on the table is a book. Craig picks it up, looks at the jacket. It's entitled "Sit." Craig opens the book. It reads: "sit sit sit sit sit..." over and over, page after page. Craig closes the book. He begins to stand, but thinks better of it, sighs. He looks at the book again. It is now entitled "Die." He opens it up. "die die die die die..." A rooster crows.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Craig jolts awake. A rooster stands on Craig's chest, crowing. Lotte, also 30, in the middle of dressing for work, hurries in and pulls the bird from Craig's chest.

LOTTE

Sorry, hon. I didn't know Orrin Hatch was out of his pen. Good morning.

Lotte leans down and kisses Craig on the forehead.

CRAIG

Morning.

LOTTE

Gotta run. Shipment of grub worms coming in first thing.

CRAIG

Enjoy.

LOTTE

Craig, listen, honey, I've been thinking... maybe you'd feel better if you got, you know, a job or something.

CRAIG

We've been over this. Nobody's looking for a puppeteer in today's wintry economic climate.

LOTTE

Well, you know, maybe something else until this whole puppet thing turns around.

CRAIG
(bitterly)
The Great Mantini doesn't need a day
job.

LOTTE
(sighs)
Craig, everyone can't be Derek
Mantini.
(beat)
Well, grub worms are waiting. Do me
a favor?

CRAIG
What?

LOTTE
Would you check in on Elijah? He
seems to be a little under the weather
this morning.

CRAIG
Which one is Elijah again?

LOTTE
The monkey.

CRAIG
Yeah. Okay.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S GARAGE - MORNING

The place is a mess. Vivaldi blasts through cheap speakers. A small marionette stage stands in the back of the garage. The stage is lit and on it is a finely sculpted puppet version of Craig. The "Craig" puppet paces back and forth, wringing its hands with incredible subtlety. We see Craig, above and behind the stage. He is manipulating the puppet. His fingers move fast and furious. The puppet breaks into a dance, a beautiful and intricate balletic piece. Soon the puppet is leaping and tumbling through space, moves that one would think impossible for a marionette. Sweat appears on the real Craig's brow. His fingers move like lightning. The puppet moves faster and faster. Sweat appears on the puppet's brow. We see that the sweat is being piped from a special device that the real Craig controls. The Craig puppet collapses on the floor of the stage. It puts its hands up to its face and weeps. Craig hangs the puppet, and comes down around the front of the stage. He is heaving. He switches off the music, picks up a beer and takes a swig.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is filled with penned and unpenned animals of all kinds: snakes, lizards, birds, a dog, cats, etc. Craig sits on the couch and looks at the want ads, the TV is on in the background. Elijah, the monkey, sits next to Craig holding his stomach and moaning weakly. On the TV, Derek Mantini is working a 60 foot high marionette from the top of a water tower. The assembled crowd is enthralled.

TV ANNOUNCER

The crowd is enthralled as Derek Mantini, arguably the greatest puppeteer in the history of the world, performs "The Belle of Amherst" with his 60 foot Emily Dickinson puppet, directed by the inimitable Charles Nelson Reilly.

Charles Nelson Reilly floats by in a hot air balloon.

CHARLES NELSON REILLY

Beautiful, beautiful! Nyong-nyong.

CRAIG

Gimmicky bastard.

Craig switches off the TV. He comes across an ad for a female puppeteer to teach at a girls school. Craig rubs his chin in thought, then stands with great determination.

MUSIC IN: TRIUMPHANT

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Craig searches through Lotte's closet, looking for the right dress.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Craig waxes his body, shaves his face.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Craig paints his nails while he chats on the phone. Craig pulls stockings and underwear from Lotte's drawer. Craig picks a wig from a mannequin head on Lotte's dressing table.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Craig, at the sewing machine, is sewing padding to go onto his chest and around his hips.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Craig applies make up in the bathroom mirror.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Craig, now looking very much like a woman, admires himself in the full length mirror.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Craig hails a taxi in his get-up. Men on the street turn and leer at him.

CUT TO:

INT. HEADMISTRESS'S OFFICE - DAY

Craig and the headmistress chat over tea. Craig is quite animated and charming. The admiring headmistress smiles and nods her head in approval.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Craig instructs a class of uniformed girls. He draws complex diagrams of puppets on the blackboard. The students are transfixed, except for one troubled girl who eyes Craig sullenly from the back of the room as she plays with a switchblade.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER - DAY

Craig guides the hands of the troubled teenage girl, who is trying to manipulate a marionette. The girl looks up at Craig. Her tough facade crumbles and she smiles. Craig smiles back.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

The girls carry Craig on their shoulders. Everyone is joyous.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Craig leads the girls in a bike race. Everyone is laughing and screaming. One of the girls notices that Craig is riding a man's bike.

MUSIC OUT.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Craig sits in a holding cell with several other men. He is still in the dress, but the wig is in his lap and the make-up is smeared off. Lotte appears with a cop outside Craig's cell. The door is opened, and Craig, Lotte, and the cop head down the hall.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Lotte drives. Craig looks out the window. Both are silent.

LOTTE
(finally)
Is the trial date set?

CRAIG
May 11th.

More silence.

LOTTE
Why'd you do it, Craig?

CRAIG
I'm a puppeteer.

They drive in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Craig sits on the couch in his bathrobe and studies the want ads. He sees an ad for a company called "WOMYN-TEERS", looking for "an African-American, Lesbian Separatist Puppeteer for Community Outreach."

Craig rubs his chin in thought, stands with determination.

MUSIC IN: SAME AS BEFORE.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Craig applies a dark pancake make-up to his face.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Craig pulls an afro-style wig off a mannequin head on Lotte's dressing table.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Craig, now made up to look like a black, lesbian separatist, hails a cab. Women look at him longingly.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Craig, dressed as the black lesbian and beaten to a pulp, sits in the passenger seat. Lotte drives.

LOTTE
(finally)
Why, Craig. why?

CRAIG
(through fat lip)
I... puppeteer.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Craig reads the paper. He comes across an ad: "Female puppeteer wanted for nudist colony marionette staging of 'Oh, Calcutta!'" Craig rubs his chin.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Craig sits in the passenger seat. He is made up as a woman and wears a full-body rubber "naked woman" suit. Lotte drives.

LOTTE
 (finally)
 You know, maybe you should speak to
 someone about this.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE' S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Craig sees a personal ad: "Male puppeteer looking for attractive female puppeteer for friendship, travel, and much much more." Craig rubs his chin, then thinks better of it and sighs. He finds a want ad calling for a "short-statured file clerk with unusually nimble and dexterous fingers needed for speed filing." Craig writes down the address.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - DAY

Craig, in sport coat and tie, studies the business listings board. He finds LesterCorp, and sees that it is located on floor 7 1/2. Craig presses the elevator button and waits. Another man comes and waits next to him. The doors open, and Craig and the other man get in.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

The other man presses "9." Craig studies the buttons. There is no "7 1/2."

MAN #1
 Seven and a half, right?

CRAIG
 Uh. yeah.

MAN #1
 I'll take you through it.

The man picks up a crowbar leaning in the corner. He watches the floor numbers light up in succession. After "7" and before "8", the man hits the emergency stop button. The elevator slams to a halt. The man pries open the doors with the crowbar. Revealed is a standard office building hallway, except that from floor to ceiling it is only about four feet high. Everything is scaled down accordingly. The number on the wall across from the elevator is 7 1/2.

MAN #1
 Seven and a half.

CRAIG

Thank you.

Craig climbs out onto the 7 1/2 floor.

CUT TO:

INT. SEVEN AND A HALF FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Craig, hunched-over, makes his way down the hallway looking for LesterCorp. He passes a hunched-over man walking in the other direction. They nod to each other. Craig finds a door marked "LesterCorp - Meeting America's Filing Needs Since 1922." He enters.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTERCORP RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

All furniture is scaled down to fit into this low-ceilinged space. A few other short men sit reading tiny magazines. Craig approaches Floris, the receptionist.

FLORIS

Welcome to LesterCorp. May we meet your filing needs?

CRAIG

No, uh, my name is Craig Schwartz. I have an interview with Mr. Lester.

FLORIS

Please have a seat, Mr. Juarez...

CRAIG

Schwartz.

FLORIS

Pardon?

CRAIG

Schwartz.

FLORIS

I'm sorry, I'm afraid I have no idea what you're saying right now.

CRAIG

My name is Schwartz.

FLORIS

Money, Miss Warts?

CRAIG

Forget it.

Craig takes a seat next to the other applicants.

FLORIS
 (calling across the
 room)
 Fork ah did?

The intercom buzzes. Floris picks it up.

FLORIS
 (to Craig)
 Mr. Juarez?

CRAIG
 Yes?

FLORIS
 Yex?

CRAIG
 I said "yes."

FLORIS
 You suggest what? I have no time for
 piddling suggestions from mumbling
 job applicants, my good man. Besides,
 Dr. Lester will see you now. I think
 that's what he said.

Craig stands, opens Lester's door, and enters.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Craig enters. Lester, a giant of an old man, sits hunched
 behind his tiny desk.

LESTER
 Come in, Mr. Juarez. I'd stand, but,
 well, you know.

CRAIG
 (extending his hand)
 Actually, my name is Craig Schwartz,
 Dr. Lester.

Lester flips an intercom switch.

LESTER
 Security.

CRAIG
 No, it's okay, sir. Just a mixup
 with your secretary.

LESTER

She's not my secretary. She's what they call an executive liaison, and I'm not banging her, if that's what you're implying.

CRAIG

Not at all, Dr. Lester. I simply misspoke.

LESTER

Tell me, Dr. Schwartz, what do you feel you can bring to LesterCorp?

CRAIG

Well, sir, I'm an excellent filer.

LESTER

(crafty)
You think so, eh? Which comes first, L or... Glooph?

CRAIG

Glooph is not a letter, sir.

LESTER

Damn, you are good. I tried to trick you. Okay, put these in order.

Lester hands Craig a bunch of index cards. Craig orders them with amazing speed and dexterity. Lester watches, eyes wide.

LESTER

(flips intercom switch)
Floris, get Guinness on the phone.

FLORIS (O.S.)

Gehginnis ondah foam?

LESTER

Forget it.

FLORIS

Fork ah did?

LESTER

(flips off switch)
Fine woman, Floris. I don't know how she puts up with this damn speech impediment of mine.

CRAIG

You don't have a speech impediment, Dr. Lester.

LESTER

Flattery will get you everywhere, my boy. But I'm afraid I have to trust Floris on this one. You see, she has her doctorate in speech impedimentology from Case Western. Perhaps you've read her memoirs, "I can't understand a word any of you are saying."

CRAIG

No.

LESTER

Pity, it tells it like it is. That's why the eastern, read Jewish, publishing establishment won't touch it. That's a quote from the book jacket. George Will, I think.

(beat)

I apologize if you can't understand a word I'm saying, Dr. Schwartz.

CRAIG

No. I understand perfectly.

LESTER

(choking up)

Thank you for being kind enough to lie. You see, I've been very lonely in my isolated tower of indecipherable speech. You're hired. Any questions?

CRAIG

Just one. Why is this floor so short?

LESTER

Low overhead, m'boy. We pass the savings on to you.

(laughs heartily)

But seriously, that's all covered in orientation.

CUT TO:

INT. ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

It's a small screening room with red velvet seats. There are a few people scattered about the squat theater. Craig is among them. He looks around the room and his eyes rest momentarily on Maxine. She is in her late 20's with close cropped black hair. Her eyes are opaque, her face expressionless, her countenance trance-like.

She glances over at Craig, then turns back to the screen. The lights dim. A projector whirs and the screen is illuminated.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

We tilt up the building.

MUSIC: Perky Industrial Film Music.

TITLE: THE 7 1/2 FLOOR

NARRATOR (O.S.)

Welcome to the 7 1/2 floor of the Mertin-Flemmer building. As you will now be spending your work day here, it is important that you learn a bit about the history of this famous floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

Don and Wendy, two office workers, crouch in the hall and chat. Both hold cups of coffee.

WENDY

Hello, Don.

DON

Hello. Wendy.

WENDY

Don, I was wondering, do you know why our workplace has such low ceilings?

DON

It's an interesting story, Wendy. Many years ago in the late 1800's, James Mertin, an Irish ship captain looking to invest in the future of our great country, came to this town and decided to erect an office building.

CUT TO:

OLD FOOTAGE OF CONSTRUCTION CREW WORKING.

DON

He would call this building the Mertin-Flemmer Building, after himself and someone else, who, local legend has it, was named Flemmer.

CUT TO:

INT. 19TH CENTURY OFFICE - DAY

An actor playing Mertin sits at a desk and writes with a quill. He appears very stern and has mutton chop sideburns.

DON

One day. Captain Mertin received an unexpected visitor.

There is a knock at the door.

MERTIN

Enter ye, if ye dare enter.

A tiny woman enters.

TINY WOMAN

Captain Mertin?

MERTIN

What want ye, girl child?

TINY WOMAN

I am not a child, Captain Mertin, but rather an adult lady of miniature proportions.

MERTIN

(taken aback)

I see. Well, it is not my fault that thou art tiny. So if it is charity yer after, then be gone with ye, ye foul demon.

TINY WOMAN

I am not asking for alms, but rather the ear of a kind man with a noble heart.

MERTIN

(sighs)

Aye. Speak then if ye must.

TINY WOMAN

Captain Mertin, surely I am a God-fearing Christian woman like yourself, but alas, I am afraid that the world

TINY WOMAN

was not built with me in mind. Door knobs are too high, chairs are unwieldy, high-ceilinged rooms mock my stature. Nor am I a married lady, Captain. after all, who would marry a person of my diminutiveness? So I am forced to work for my few pennies a week as an optometrist. Why cannot there be a place for me to work safe and comfortable?

Mertin wipes a tear from his eye.

MERTIN

Woman, your story moves me like n other. Me own sister was tiny and then died. Therefore, I shall make ye me wife. And I shall build a floor in my building, between the 7th and 8th, which will be scaled down, so from now on there shall be at least one place on God's green Earth that you and your accursed kind can live in peace...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

Don And Wendy crouch and talk.

DON

So that's the story of 7 1/2. Since the rents are considerably lower this floor has been adopted by businesses which for one reason or another are forced to cut corners. After all... the overhead is low!
Ha ha ha!

WENDY

Ha ha ha!

TITLE: The End

CUT TO:

INT. ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

The screen goes dark. The lights go up. Craig looks over at Maxine. She stands and walks past him.

CRAIG

Moving story.

MAXINE

Yes. Unfortunately it's bullshit.
The real story of 7 1/2 is so evil
that it could never be revealed to
Americans raised on sitcoms and happy
news anchors.

CRAIG

Is that true?

MAXINE

Well, truth is for suckers, isn't
it?.

CRAIG

Listen. I'm Craig Schwartz, just
starting out at LesterCorp.

MAXINE

How dreary - to be - Somebody / How
public - like a Frog / To tell one's
name - the livelong June / To an
admiring Bog!

CRAIG

(proudly)
Emily Dickinson.

MAXINE

I wouldn't know.

Maxine walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE' S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Lotte chops onions. A parrot sits on her head. Craig stirs a
pot on the stove. A monkey leaps from the top of the cabinet
to the top of the refrigerator to the kitchen table. A dog
watches the monkey and barks at it.

PARROT

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

CRAIG

Shut up!

LOTTE

(to Craig)
Sorry, honey.

The dog continues to bark.

PARROT

Sorry honey. Sorry honey.

An offscreen neighbor pounds the wall.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

Shut up!

LOTTE

(yelling)

Sorry!

Lotte grabs the parrot off her head and leaves the room.

PARROT (O.S.)

Help! She's locking me in a cage!

Lotte reenters.

LOTTE

Isn't that cute? I just taught her that.

CRAIG

Adorable. What time are they supposed to be here?

LOTTE

Seven-ish

CRAIG

We have to make it an early night.

LOTTE

They'll understand. Besides I've got a morning appointment tomorrow with Elijah's shrink. We're getting to the bottom of this acid stomach.

CRAIG

(not paying attention)

Hmmm.

LOTTE

Some sort of childhood trauma, she thinks. Possible feelings of inadequacy as a chimp. Interesting, huh?

CRAIG

Hmmm.

The doorbell rings. The dog barks. The parrot screams. The neighbor pounds on the wall.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The dining room table is set up. Craig and Lotte and their friends Peter and Gloria are seated and eating dinner. There is an obvious lull in the conversation.

PETER

Good food, Lotte.

LOTTE

Thanks. Craig helped, too, by the way.

PETER

Vegetarian, right?

LOTTE

Yes. All vegetable. all the time.

PETER

Amazing.

There is another lull. Everyone eats.

PETER

No kidding about that 7 1/2 floor. Craig?

CRAIG

No kidding, Peter.

GLORIA

That's great. It almost sounds like make-believe.

(beat)

Like a storybook.

(beat)

like a fairy tale.

(beat)

It's really great.

(beat)

So Lotte, when you say all vegetable, do you mean all vegetable entirely?

CUT TO:

INT. PETER AND GLORIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Gloria and Peter drive in silence.

GLORIA
Lotte told me that Eskimos have a
lot of words for snow.

PETER
How many?

GLORIA
Ten, I think.

PETER
I wonder why so many.

GLORIA
Because they have a lot of snow.
Isn't that interesting?

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Craig washes the dishes. Lotte dries them. They don't look
at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTERCORP FILE ROOM - MORNING

Craig in a cream colored suit, pours over the file cabinets.
Floris watches from the doorway.

FLORIS
You're good.

Craig turns.

CRAIG
(over-enunciating)
Thank you, Floris.

Floris shrugs, shakes her head.

FLORIS
You're not like the other boys we've
had here. Granted, I can't understand
what you're saying either, but your
soft palette resonates tremendously
well and you never ever constrict
your epiglottis.

CRAIG
I am a trained performer.

FLORIS
(swooning)
Music to my ears! Whatever you said.
Speak, speak, speak, my magnificent
friend, speak!

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

Craig pours himself a cup of coffee. Maxine approaches with an empty cup.

CRAIG
Hello again.

Craig fills her cup.

MAXINE
Yes, well...

CRAIG
You know, I've been thinking about what you said yesterday, about the orientation film being a cover-up. I think you're on to something.

MAXINE
And fifty other lines to get into a girl's pants.

CRAIG
No, really.

MAXINE
You know, if you ever got me, you wouldn't have a clue what to do with me. That's the thing, Romeo.

Maxine walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Craig is at his workbench, painting the finishing touches on a new puppet. It is beautiful. It is Maxine. Lotte watches quietly from the door. A Lotte puppet hangs from a hook, tangled and dusty.

LOTTE
New puppet?

Craig is surprised, caught.

CRAIG
Yeah, just an idea I had.

LOTTE
She's very beautiful.

CRAIG
(shrugging)
Just an idea I had.

Craig hangs the puppet, stands, and switches off the light.

CRAIG
C'mon, let's go to bed.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. Lotte snores lightly. Craig lies there with his eyes open. Quietly, he gets up and leaves the bedroom. Lotte watches him go.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Craig stands above the puppet stage. He is working both the Craig puppet and the Maxine puppet at the same time. The two perform a beautiful and graceful pas de deux. They finish in a passionate embrace.

CRAIG
(quietly)
I would too know what to do with
you.

CUT TO:

INT. FILE ROOM - MORNING

Craig files. Floris watches him from the doorway. Dr. Lester watches Floris from behind a cabinet.

FLORIS
Oh, what magic those fingers could
work on the right "cabinet."
(strokes Craig's neck)
Alphabetize me, baby. And don't
forget, I comes before U.

Floris laughs long and hard. Too long and too hard.

CRAIG

Floris, you're very nice, but I'm afraid I'm in love with somebody else.

FLORIS

(upset)

I'm afraid I... have no idea what you are saying... you bastard!

Floris runs from the room. Lester pokes his head out from behind the cabinet.

LESTER

Don't toy with Floris, Schwartz. Why, if I were eighty years younger, I'd box your ears.

CRAIG

I wasn't toying with her, sir. I was just... How old are you?

LESTER

One hundred and five. Carrot juice.

(beat)

Lot's of it. I swear, it's almost not worth it. I piss orange. Oh, and I, have to piss sitting down... like a godamn girly... every fifteen minutes. But nobody wants to die, Schwartz.

CRAIG

I'll keep that in mind, sir.

LESTER

No sir-e-bob, I don't die. But what I do is get older, wrinkled like a former plum that's become the wrinkled prune you see before you. Oh, to be a young man again, maybe then Floris would care for me.

CRAIG

The elderly have so much to offer, sir. They are our link with history.

LESTER

I don't want to be your godamn link, damn you. I want to feel Floris' naked thighs against my own. I want to know passion. I want my body to inspire lust in that beautiful, complex woman. I want her to shiver in a spasm of ecstasy when I penetrate

LESTER

her. Oh, God, the agony of the flesh,
Schwartz.

CRAIG

Dr. Lester, while I am flattered
that you share your feelings with
me, I believe perhaps the workplace
is not the most suitable environment
for this type of discussion.

LESTER

All right. Meet me at the Juicy-Juice
Juice Bar after work today and I'll
spill my goddamn guts for you.

Lester exits.

CRAIG

Shit.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

Craig squats next to a payphone.

CRAIG

(into phone)

I won't be late. I just have to listen
to Lester's sexual fantasies and
drink carrot juice for a little while.
It's a job thing.

Maxine walks by. Craig grabs her arm, signals for her to
wait a minute. She waits.

CRAIG

(into phone)

I gotta go back to work. Yeah, okay.
You too. Okay. Bye.

Craig hangs up.

MAXINE

What?

CRAIG

I just wanted to say "hi." Did you
know I still don't know your name or
where you work?

MAXINE

Yeah.

CRAIG

How about this, if I can guess your first name within three tries, you have to come out for a drink with me tonight.

MAXINE

Why not?

CRAIG

Great.

(watches her face as
he guesses)

Buuuhppaahhhnnn. . . .
Muhhhahhhh. . . . ahhhnnnaaa. .
nollltuuukkkaaaarallll. . .
tashabararassssssuuuuusaaaaaaa. . .
nnnnnnnaaaaaannnnnnnnccccceeeeeee
Mwaaaaaa. . . .Mahhhhhkkkkk. . .
sssseeeeeen. Maxine?

MAXINE

Who told you?

CRAIG

I'm right?

MAXINE

Who told you?

CRAIG

That's incredible! Nobody told me!
I swear! It's kismet. Maxine! It's
a beautiful name. There's a psychic
connection. Don't you see? It was
meant to be! Maxine! Maxine! Maxine!
I will shout it from the rooftops!

MAXINE

Somebody told you.

CRAIG

Oh, Maxine, nobody told me. Maxine,
Maxine. It just came out of me like
a song, Maxine. A beautiful crazy,
song, Maxine. Maxine. Maxine!

MAXINE

I am dubious, but I don't welsh.
Meet me at The Stuck Pig. Seven
o'clock. You're late, I walk. So
help me, if I find out you cheated.

CRAIG
 (in heaven)
 Maxine.

Craig walks down the hall. A tiny smile flits across Maxine's face.

CUT TO:

INT. JUICY JUICE BAR - EVENING

Lester and Craig sit at a table. There are several emptied glasses of carrot juice in front of Lester. Craig nurses one glass, and keeps checking his watch.

LESTER
 Imagine a room full of women. Nubile, blonde, wet with desire, Schwartz. A harem, if you will. Me in leather. A harness, if you like. I am the object of this desire, and all eyes are on me as I speak. "Ladies," I begin. "I am the love god, Eros. I intoxicate you. My spunk is to you manna from heaven..."

CRAIG
 (standing)
 Dr. Lester, it's been really fascinating, but I'm afraid I have to get home to my wife now.

LESTER
 Wife, huh? I'd love to meet her, Craig.

CRAIG
 Yessir.

LESTER
 Shall we say dinner on Friday. Just the two of us?
 (afterthought)
 You can come too if you like, Schwartz.

CRAIG
 (checking watch)
 That's sounds fine, sir. Gotta run.

Craig hurries to the door. Lester downs Craig's juice, signals the waiter for more.

CUT TO:

INT. THE STUCK PIG - NIGHT

Maxine sits at the bar, watching her watch. Craig rushes into the room, frantic, out of breath. He spots Maxine and plops himself next to her.

CRAIG

Made it. Maxine. Maxine, Maxine,
Maxine.

MAXINE

Just.

CRAIG

Buy you a drink, Maxine?

MAXINE

You married?

CRAIG

Yeah. But enough about me.

Maxine laughs. The bartender approaches.

CRAIG

What'll you have?

MAXINE

(to bartender)
The usual, Barry.

CRAIG

(to bartender)
I'll have, like, a beer. Like a
Budweiser, or something.

The bartender walks away.

CRAIG

I like you. I don't know what it is
exactly.

MAXINE

My tits?

CRAIG

No, no, it's your energy or your
attitude or the way you carry yourself
or...

MAXINE

Christ, you're not a fag are you?
Because I don't want to be wasting
my time.

The drinks arrive. Maxine's is in an enormous fishbowl of a glass. It's bright blue, with fruit and marshmallows swimming in it. Paper umbrellas stick out of it, and plastic monkeys hang from the rim.

CRAIG
That's the usual?

MAXINE
Don't let the girly shit fool you.
It'd blow your shorts off.

Maxine downs it like a shot of whiskey. She pushes the empty glass to the bartender.

MAXINE
Set me up again, Barry.

The bartender walks away with the empty glass.

CRAIG
I'm not a homosexual. I just like women for more than their bodies. I guess you could say I'm the new American male.

MAXINE
You're a fag or a liar.

CRAIG
(backpedaling)
I mean, I am really attracted to you.

MAXINE
(mocking)
I mean, I am really attracted to you. Jesus, you are a fag. We can share recipes, if you like, Darlene.

Maxine gets up.

CRAIG
(at a loss)
No, wait! I like your tits.
(beat)
I love your tits. I want to fuck you.

MAXINE
(sitting)
Good. Now we're getting somewhere.
(beat)
Not a chance.

Maxine's second drink comes. She downs it, pushes the glass toward the bartender.

MAXINE

So, tell me about yourself. If you can get your mind out of the gutter long enough, dog-boy.

CRAIG

Well, I'm a puppeteer...

The bartender comes back with Maxine's drink.

MAXINE

(to bartender)
Check.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lotte is combing Elijah. Craig enters.

CRAIG

Hi.

LOTTE

Hi.

CRAIG

(nervous, talking too much)

Sorry, I'm so late. Lester just wouldn't let me go. We're supposed to have dinner with him on Friday. I can get us out of it if you want. He's really amazing, this insane old lech. It's actually sort of amusing when you get past just how disgusting it is.

There is a silence. Lotte continues to comb out Elijah. Finally:

LOTTE

Did you eat?

CRAIG

Nah. I'm not hungry. I'm sorry I didn't call. It was just, you know, hard to get away.

LOTTE

I was worried.

CRAIG
I'm sorry. How was your evening?

LOTTE
Tom-Tom's puncture wound is infected.

CRAIG
The ferret?

LOTTE
The iguana.

CRAIG
Right.

LOTTE
I dressed the wound. Then I've just been feeding everyone, putting everyone to bed.

CRAIG
Yeah. You want a beer?

LOTTE
No thanks. I'm going to turn in.

CRAIG
All right. I'll be in my workshop for a little while. I'll be in in a little while. I need to unwind a little.
(beat)
I'll be in soon. A little while.

LOTTE
'kay.

Lotte exits.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Craig works the Craig and Maxine puppets. The puppets sit on the edge of the small stage and chat. Craig does a pretty fair impersonation of Maxine's voice.

CRAIG
(as Maxine, fascinated)
Tell me, Craig, why do you love puppeteering?
(as Craig)
Well, Maxine, I'm not sure exactly. Perhaps it's the idea of becoming someone else for a little while.

CRAIG

Being inside another skin. Moving differently, thinking differently, feeling differently.

(as Maxine)

Interesting. Would you like to be inside my skin, Craig? Think what I think? Feel what I feel?

(as Craig)

More than anything. Maxine.

(as Maxine)

It's good in here, Craig. Better than your wildest dreams.

The puppets kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

Craig waits at the coffee machine. Checks his watch. Finally Maxine approaches.

CRAIG

Hi.

MAXINE

You're not someone I could get interested in. Craig. You play with dolls.

CRAIG

(rehearsed)

Puppets. Maxine. It's the idea of being inside someone else, feeling what they feel, seeing what they see...

MAXINE

Yikes.

CRAIG

Please, let me explain.

Craig grabs Maxine's hand and drags her into an empty office.

CUT TO:

INT. EMPTY OFFICE - DAY

Craig pulls Maxine in closes the door.

CRAIG

It's just, and I've never done this before, Maxine, but it's just that I

CRAIG
 feel something for you. I've never
 felt this before for anyone, not
 even my wife. My future is with you,
 Maxine.

MAXINE
 You might want to check those tarot
 cards one more time.

Maxine heads for the door. Craig sits on a box. He puts his
 head in his hands and sighs. Across the room he notices a
 very small door with a two by four nailed across it.

CRAIG
 Another evil secret of the 7 1/2
 floor.

Craig pries the two-by-four off and opens the door. It's a
 dark and wet membranous tunnel inside.

CRAIG
 Holy shit. Maxine is gonna love this.

Craig lets go of the door and it slams shut.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Lester sits at his desk studying an instruction manual for a
 juicer. The spanking new juicer sits on his desk. There is
 an urgent knocking at the door.

LESTER
 Yes?

Craig rushes in.

CRAIG
 Dr. Lester. . .

LESTER
 Ah, Craig. Just the fellow I wanted
 to see.
 (proudly spreading
 his arms)
 Juicer! Easy as pie. Just keep your
 fingers clear of the blade, and never,
 never use it while bathing in a tub
 full of water.

CRAIG
 Dr. Lester, I have a question. I was
 in that vacant office down the hall

CRAIG
and I stumbled upon a little door
and....

LESTER
Ah. yes, the little door.
(checks watch)
There is a short film on the little
door in the orientation room in
exactly two minutes. If you hurry,
you'll just make it.

CRAIG
Thank you, sir.

Craig exits. Lester waits a moment. then dials the phone.

LESTER
Put up reel 752.

CUT TO:

INT. ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

Craig sits in the otherwise empty screening room. The lights
dim, the film begins.

TITLE: THE LITTLE DOOR IN THE VACANT OFFICE

CUT TO:

INT. VACANT OFFICE - DAY

Wendy crouches in the vacant office and studies the closed
little door. Don enters. smiling.

DON
Hi. Wendy! What're you up to in this
vacant office.

WENDY
Well, Don, I peeked in here, even
though I know it's against floor
policy. and I discovered that there's
a little tiny door in here. Isn't
it cute? It's almost like a little
dolly's door. I wonder what it's
for.

DON
(laughing)
That's right, Wendy, it is against
floor policy, but as long as you're
here, let me tell you what I know
about our cute little door friend.

DON

Many years ago, this very office was occupied by a kindly old watchmaker named Mr. White.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WATCHMAKER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

An old man toils away in the dusty office.

WHITE

Hmmm. I must have a small store room to store my merchandise when I am through working on it. I know, I will build a tiny store room. How cute!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VACANT OFFICE - DAY

WENDY

Wow! That's some story, Don.

DON

Truth is stranger than fiction, Wendy!

They laugh.

TITLE: THE END

CUT TO:

INT. ORIENTATION ROOM - DAY

The lights go up. Craig sits there for a moment. An usher pushes a broom down the aisle.

CRAIG

Bullshit.

Craig exits. The usher mumbles something into a walkie-talkie.

CUT TO:

INT. VACANT ROOM - DAY

Craig opens the little door and climbs into the membranous hallway. The door slams shut behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

It's dark and wet. The walls are soft and membranous. There is a dripping sound. Craig crawls along. Soon something starts to pull Craig as if he is being sucked through a straw. There is a flash of light.

CUT TO:

INT. FANCY DINING ROOM - MORNING

The POV of someone reading a newspaper. The person lifts a cup of coffee to his mouth. There is a slurping sound. The person puts down the coffee cup and the newspaper, and stands up.

CRAIG
(losing his balance)
Whoa! What the hell? Where am I?

We're still in POV. The person walks across the room, picks up his wallet from a coffee table. looks in a mirror and checks his teeth for food. It's John Malkovich.

CRAIG
Holy shit! It's that actor guy.
Shit! What's his name? That actor
guy! What's happening? Am I inside
him? Am I in his brain? Am I him?
Is he me? Does he know I'm here? My
brain is reeling! Is his brain
reeling?

Malkovich walks to the front door, opens it, exits his apartment.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Maxine sits at her desk, eats a sandwich. looks at a fashion magazine, and chats on the phone.

MAXINE
The puppeteer told me he loves me
today.
(laughs)
I know. I can't think of anything
more pathetic.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - CONTINUOUS

John Malkovich's POV from the back seat of the cab. The cab pulls away from the curb.

MALKOVICH (V.O.)
(resonant throughout)
The Broadhurst Theater, please.

The cabbie studies Malkovich in his rearview mirror as he drives.

CABBIE
Say, aren't you that actor guy?

MALKOVICH
Yeah.

CABBIE
John Makel...

CRAIG (V.O.)
John Malkovich! Of course!

CABBIE
Mapplethorpe?

MALKOVICH (V.O.)
Malkovich.

CABBIE
Malkovich!

CRAIG (V.O.)
John fucking Malkovich!

CABBIE
Yeah. I liked you in that one movie.

MALKOVICH (V.O.)
Thank you.

CABBIE
The one where you're that jewel thief.

MALKOVICH
I never played a jewel thief.

CABBIE
Who am I thinking of?

MALKOVICH
I don't know.

CABBIE

I'm pretty sure it was you. Hey,
could I get your autograph now?
It's for oh, what the hell,
it's for me! I'm your biggest fan!

MALKOVICH

Yeah, okay.

The cabbie hands a pad back over the seat. Malkovich reaches for it. There is a slurping sound.

CRAIG (V.O.)

(panicky)
Ahhhh!

The image starts to fade, then suddenly goes black.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - DAY

It's on the side of Jersey Turnpike. There is a "pop" and Craig falls from nowhere into the ditch. He is soaking wet, and now dirty from the ditch. He stands, looks confusedly around, sees a N.J. Turnpike sign. After a moment, he goes to the side of the road and sticks out his thumb.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S OFFICE - LATER

Maxine sits behind her desk with her feet up, and talks on the phone.

MAXINE

Absolutely, doll. I'm just about to
close up here.

Craig walks in disheveled and exhausted. Maxine sees him, keeps talking.

MAXINE

(into phone)
Meet you at "The Pig" in twenty
minutes.
(laughs lasciviously)
Oh yeah, maybe I'll keep my legs
closed till then.
(hangs up. to Craig)
I'm splitting for the day. Lock up
for me, won't you, darling.

Maxine stands, puts some stuff in her purse.

CRAIG

Don't you want to know what happened to me?

MAXINE

(considers)

No.

Maxine heads for the door. Craig grabs her arm.

CRAIG

This is important!

MAXINE

(looking at his hand
on her arm)

It better be.

Craig sits Maxine down in a chair, lets go of her arm.

CRAIG

There's a tiny door in that empty office. It's a portal, Maxine. It takes you inside John Malkovich. You see the world through John Malkovich's eyes, then, after about fifteen minutes, you're spit out into a ditch on the side of The New Jersey Turnpike.

MAXINE

Sounds delightful. Who the fuck is John Malkovich?

CRAIG

He's an actor. One of the great American actors of the 20th century.

MAXINE

What's he been in?

CRAIG

Lots of things. He's very well respected. That jewel thief movie, for example. The point is that this is a very odd thing, supernatural, for lack of a better word. It raises all sorts of philosophical questions about the nature of self, about the existence of the soul. Am I me? Is Malkovich Malkovich? Was the Buddha right, is duality an illusion? Do you see what a can of worms this portal is?

CRAIG

I don't think I can go on living my life as I have lived it. There's only one thing to do. Let's get married right away.

MAXINE

Is this Malkovich fellow appealing?

CRAIG

Yes, of course. He's a celebrity.

MAXINE

Good. We'll sell tickets.

CRAIG

Tickets to Malkovich?

MAXINE

Exactly. Two hundred dollars a pop.

CRAIG

But there's something profound here, Maxine, we can't exploit it.

MAXINE

Fine. I'll do it myself. I was going to offer a partnership to you, but this way it's more money for me.

CRAIG

You wanted to be partners with me?

MAXINE

(bored)
Sure. It'd be fun.

CRAIG

(pleased)
Really?
(then:)
But, Maxine, can of worms! End of the world! Illusory nature of existence!

MAXINE

I'll protect you, Dollface.

Maxine reaches over and squeezes his lips affectionately between her thumb and forefinger.

CRAIG
(in love)
Oh. Maxine.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Craig and Lotte are getting into evening clothes.

LOTTE
Don't be ridiculous. There is no
such thing as a portal into someone
else's brain.

CRAIG
Brain. soul, I'm telling you, Lotte.
I was right inside him looking out.
We're going to be rich.

LOTTE
I want to try.

CRAIG
What?

LOTTE
I want to be John Malkovich. Tomorrow
morning. Plus I'd like to meet this
partner of yours.

CRAIG
(nervously)
Well, you know we're going to be
very busy tomorrow. I'll tell you
what. Let's do it tonight. Right
now.

LOTTE
Now?

CRAIG
Yeah. We'll do it right now. On the
way to Lester's house.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Craig holds open the small door as Lotte climbs in.

CRAIG
I'll meet you on the turnpike.

LOTTE
I'm scared.

The door slams shut.

CRAIG
Me too, babe.

Craig hurries out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Malkovich is in the shower. We watch from his POV as he soaps himself. He does this in a sensual manner.

LOTTE (V.O.)
Holy cow!

Malkovich steps out of the shower, slowly towels himself dry.

LOTTE (V.O.)
Oh, yes. Yes.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - NIGHT

Lotte lands in the ditch. She is wet and ragged. Traffic whizzes by. Craig turns on the headlights in his parked car. They shine on Lotte. Craig steps out of the car.

LOTTE
I have to go back.

CRAIG
Okay. Maybe tomorrow.

LOTTE
I have to go back now.

CRAIG
We'll talk about it in the car.

Craig helps Lotte up and toward the car.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S CAR - NIGHT

Craig drives. Lotte looks distractedly out the window.

LOTTE

I have to go back, Craig. Being inside did something to me. All of a sudden everything made sense. I knew who I was.

CRAIG

You weren't you. You were John Malkovich.

LOTTE

(tickled)
I was, wasn't I?
(yelling out the window)
I was John fucking Malkovich!
(laughs, then intensely)
Take me back, Craig.

CRAIG

Tomorrow. We're late for Lester.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

It's a posh place with flocked wallpaper and candelabras. Lester, Craig, and Lotte sit around an elegantly appointed table with all different sorts of juices in front of them. Lotte is still wet. Lester sits quite close to her.

LESTER

Tell me, Lotte, can you understand a word I'm saying?

LOTTE

Yes, of course, Dr. Lester.

LESTER

Oh, be still my heart.

LOTTE

Dr. Lester, would you point me toward the restroom?

LESTER

With immense pleasure, my dear. Down that hall, ninth door on the left. Watch the step down. It's sunken, you know.

Lotte smiles, and heads down the hall.

CRAIG

Dr. Lester...

LESTER

More beet-spinach juice, my friend?

CRAIG

No thank you sir. It's delicious, though. I just wanted to thank you for the opportunity to work at LesterCorp, but I'm afraid I'm going to have to tender my resignation effectively immediately.

LESTER

I see. Are you unhappy at our little company?

CRAIG

No sir, not at all. It's just that I'm going to open my own business and...

LESTER

And what sort of business will this be? If you don't mind my asking.

CRAIG

Uh, import-export. Olive oil. Right on 7 1/2 actually.

(beat)

In the vacant office. So we'll still be seeing each other.

LESTER

The vacant office. I see. Olive oil. Interesting. Be warned, Schwartz, there are certain "doors" which should never be opened.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lotte walks down the ritzy hallway. She is counting closed doors in search of the bathroom. She opens a door, looks inside, gasps, then enters the room.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lotte enters the room. It is dark. At the far end there is what amounts to a candle-lit shrine to John Malkovich. The centerpiece of the shrine is an enormous photograph of

Malkovich bordered by a garland of flowers. Lotte stares at it for a moment, then drops to her knees in front of it.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE' S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lotte has just taken a shower. She towels herself dry in much the same way as Malkovich. Her eyes are closed. She opens them slowly and sees herself in the mirror. Disappointedly, she drops the towel and heads out of the bathroom.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Craig sits at his work table. He is pulling the heads off of the Craig and the Maxine puppets. He puts the Maxine head on the Craig puppet. He sighs.

CRAIG

My kingdom for your portal, Maxine.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Maxine sits at her desk composing an ad. Craig stands behind her, ostensibly looking over her shoulder, but actually studying the back of her head. He sighs.

MAXINE

Okay. Here it is.

(reading)

Ever want to be someone else? Now you can. No kidding. Only two hundred dollars for fifteen minutes. Visit J.M. Inc., Mertin-Flemmer Building. etc., etc.

CRAIG

Sounds good. Oblique but intriguing. Phone it in.

Maxine dials the phone. Lotte enters.

CRAIG

Lotte! Why aren't you at the pet shop?

LOTTE

Fuck pets. Is this your partner?

LOTTE
I had to come back and do the
Malkovich ride again. Fuck everything
else. Is this her?

MAXINE
(into phone)
Yes, hello, I wanted to place an ad.
(to Lotte)
Hi, are you Craig's wife?

LOTTE
Yes, Hi.

CRAIG
Lotte, Maxine. Maxine, Lotte.

Lotte and Maxine shake hands.

LOTTE
Hi. Have you done Malkovich yet?

MAXINE
Hi, uh.
(into phone)
Hi. I wanted to place an ad. Yes.
"Ever want to be someone else?" No,
that's the ad, but let's talk about
you in a minute. "Ever want to be
someone else? Now you can. No
kidding..."

CRAIG
(to Lotte)
Why aren't you at work?

LOTTE
I've been going over and over my
experience last night. It was amazing.
(beat)
I've decided I'm a transsexual. Isn't
that the craziest thing?

CRAIG
What, are you nuts? That's Oprah
talking.

LOTTE
Everything felt right for the first
time. I need to go back to make sure,
then if the feeling is still there.
I'm going to speak to Dr. Feldman
about sexual reassignment surgery.

CRAIG

This is absurd. Besides Feldman's an allergist. If you're going to do something, do it right.

(beat)

It's just the thrill of seeing through someone else's eyes, sweetie. It'll pass.

LOTTE

Don't stand in the way of my actualization as a man, Craig.

MAXINE

(hanging up the phone)

Let her go, Craig. I mean "him."

CRAIG

(anything for Maxine)

Yeah, okay.

(opens the portal door)

I'll pick you up.

Lotte enters. Craig closes the door. stands there.

MAXINE

You better hurry. Traffic.

Maxine tosses Craig his car keys. He heads out the door. Maxine dials the phone.

MAXINE

(into phone)

Davey? Max. Get me John Malkovich's home phone? That's great. Love ya and owe ya.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHN MALKOVICH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Malkovich's POV. He sits on the couch. drinks coffee, and reads a copy of Awake and Sing. Bach plays on the stereo in the background.

MALKOVICH

(reading aloud)

So you believe in God... you got something for it? You worked for all the capitalists. You harvested the fruit from your labor? You got God!

LOTTE (V.O.)

What raw, animal power!

MALKOVICH
But the past comforts you? The present
smiles on you, yes?

The phone rings. Malkovich puts down the script, and picks
up the phone.

MALKOVICH
(into phone)
Yeah?

MAXINE (O.S.)
(telephone voice)
Mr. Malkovich?

MALKOVICH
Who's calling?

MAXINE (O.S.)
You don't know me, but I'm a great
admirer of yours.

MALKOVICH
How'd you get this number?

MAXINE (O.S.)
It's just that I fantasize about you
and, well, speaking to you now has
gotten me sort of excited and...

LOTTE (O.S.)
(turned on)
Oh, I like this.

MALKOVICH
Listen, this is not amusing. Please
don't call here any...

MAXINE (O.S.)
(giggling)
Oho, such authority! NY nipples are
at attention, General Malkovich,
sir. So I'll be at Bernardo's tonight
at eight. Please, please meet me
there. I just adored you in that
jewel thief movie...

Malkovich hangs up the phone.

LOTTE (V.O.)
My God!

LOTTE (V.O.)
 (attempting thought
 control)
 Meet her there. Meet her there. Meet
 her there. Meet her there. Meet her
 there...

Malkovich goes back to his script.

LOTTE
 Meet her there. Meet her there. Meet
 her there...

Malkovich picks up a pen and writes: Bernardo's 8:00.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - MORNING

Craig waits. Lotte pops into the ditch. She's wet and slimy.

CRAIG
 How was it?

LOTTE
 I have to go back tonight. At eight
 Exactly.

CRAIG
 Why?

LOTTE
 Don't crowd me, Craig.

CUT TO:

INT. BERNARDO'S - NIGHT

Malkovich's POV. It's a busy Italian restaurant. Malkovich
 looks around, checks his watch: 8:03. A guy walks up to him.

GUY
 Excuse me, are you John Malkovich?

MALKOVICH
 Yes.

GUY
 Wow. You were really great in that
 movie where you played that retard.

MALKOVICH
 Thank you very much.

GUY

I just wanted to tell you that. And say thank you. I have a cousin that's a retard, so, as you can imagine, it means a lot to me to see retards portrayed on the silver screen so compassionately.

The guy walks away. Malkovich scans the room. Maxine enters the restaurant. We see her, but Malkovich doesn't single her out of the crowd. She looks around.

LOTTE (V.O.)

Maxine!

Maxine spots Malkovich. and heads over. He focuses on her.

MAXINE

Hi. I'm so glad you decided to come. I'm Maxine.

Maxine holds out her hand. She is charming. Malkovich takes her hand.

MALKOVICH

I'm John. I didn't think I was going to come, but I felt oddly compelled. I have to admit I was a bit intrigued by your voice.

LOTTE (V.O.)

God, she's beautiful. The way she's looking at me. At him. At us.

MAXINE

And the funny thing is. Mr. Malkovich, my voice is probably the least intriguing thing about me.

LOTTE (V.O.)

I've never been looked at like this by a woman.

MALKOVICH

Can I get you a drink?

MAXINE

Whatever you're having.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S CAR - NIGHT

Craig drives. Lotte is soaking wet. She stares out the window.

CRAIG

So how was it? What was he doing?

LOTTE

Oh, you know, not a lot. Just hanging around his apartment. I think he must be a lonely man.

CRAIG

You see, men can feel unfulfilled, too. I'm glad you're realizing that. You shouldn't be so quick to assume that switching bodies would be the answer to all your problems.

LOTTE

You're right. You know I was thinking that we should have Maxine over for dinner. Since you two are partners and all. It might be a nice gesture.

CRAIG

I don't know. There's some tension between us. I'd hate to expose you to that.

LOTTE

It'll be okay. I'll fix my lasagna. We'll smoke a joint.
(dreamily)
Tensions will melt away.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Craig, Lotte, and Maxine are seated at the table and eating lasagna. Lotte eyes Maxine. Craig eyes Maxine. There is an awkward silence.

LOTTE

(to Maxine)

Did you know that Eskimos have not one, but fifty words for snow. It's because they have so much of it.

CRAIG

After dinner I'll show you my puppets.

MAXINE

Ah.

LOTTE

After that I'll introduce you to my favorite monkey, Elijah. He's got an

LOTTE

ulcer, due to a suppressed childhood trauma. But we're getting to the bottom of it.

(whispers)

Psychotherapy.

There is another silence.

MAXINE

(to no one in particular)

The way I see it, the world is divide into those go after what they want and those who don't. The passionate ones, the ones who go after what they want, may not get what they want, but they remain vital, in touch with themselves, and when they lie on their deathbeds, they have few regrets. The ones who don't go after what they want... well, who gives a shit about them anyway?

Maxine laughs. There is another silence. Suddenly, at the same moment, both Craig and Lotte lunge for Maxine and start kissing her passionately about the face and neck. They stop just as suddenly and look at each other.

CRAIG

You?

Lotte looks away.

MAXINE

Craig, I just don't find you attractive. And, Lotte, I'm smitten with you, but only when you're in Malkovich. When I looked into his eyes last night, I could feel you peering out. Behind the stubble and the too-prominent brow and the male pattern baldness, I sensed your feminine longing peering out, and it just slew me.

CRAIG

(disgusted)

My God.

Lotte strokes Maxine's face. Craig clears dishes from the table.

MAXINE

(to Lotte, removing
her hand)
Only to John, sweetie. I'm sorry.
(gets up)
Thanks for a wonderful dinner.
(walks past kitchen.
to Craig)
No hard feelings, partner.

Maxine exits. Craig and Lotte look at each other.

LOTTE

I want a divorce.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

It is deadly silent. Craig and Maxine sit at their desks. The wall clock ticks. Craig whistles tunelessly, every once in a while looking up and discreetly checking out Maxine. Eventually there is a knock at the door.

CRAIG

(a little too urgently)
Come in!

Erroll, a sad, fat young man enters meekly.

ERROLL

Hello, I'm here about the ad.

CRAIG

Please, have a seat.

Erroll sits in a chair in front of Craig's desk. He glances nervously over at Maxine.

ERROLL

When you say, I can be somebody else,
what do you mean exactly?

CRAIG

Exactly that. We can put you inside
someone else's body for fifteen
minutes.

ERROLL

Oh, this is just the medical
breakthrough I've been waiting for.
Are there any side effects? Please
say no! Please say no!

MAXINE

No.

ERROLL

Long term psychic or physiological repercussions?

MAXINE

No. Don't be an ass.

ERROLL

Can I be anyone I want?

MAXINE

You can be John Malkovich.

ERROLL

Well that's perfect. My second choice. Ah, this is wonderful. Too good to be true! You see, I'm a sad man. Sad and fat and alone. Oh, I've tried all the diets, my friends. Lived for a year on nothing but imitation mayonnaise. Did it work? You be the judge. But Malkovich! King of New York! Man about town! Most eligible bachelor! Bon Vivant! The Schopenhauer of the 20th century! Thin man extraordinaire!

MAXINE

Two hundred dollars, please.

ERROLL

Yes. Yes. A thousand times, yes!

Erroll takes out his wallet.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Craig waits by his car, checks his watch. "Pop!" Erroll plops into the ditch, wet and unkempt. He looks around, sees Craig, charges him with a yell and gives him an enormous bear hug.

ERROLL

Oh, thank you! Thank you! Thousand times, thank you!

CRAIG

(gasping for air)
Tell your friends.

ERROLL

Oh, I will, and I have many, many friends and associates, my friend. All, by the way, in Overeaters Anonymous. All of them fat and alone like me, all of them dream of being someone else, all of them with John Malkovich as their second choice!

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - DAY

The hall outside Craig and Maxine's office sports a long line of crouching fat people, all clutching cash in their hands.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Craig kneels at the door and peeks out through the mail slot. Maxine sits at her desk and files her toenails.

CRAIG

This is amazing! We're gonna be rich!

MAXINE

So unbolt the fucking door, Einstein.

Craig unlocks the door. Lester steps in, closes the door behind him, locks it.

LESTER

You're making a big mistake, Schwartz.
(nods to Maxine)
MA'AM.

CRAIG

Dr. Lester, I don't know what you're talking about.

LESTER

There are rules, boy, procedures, etiquette. This is not a toy. I've been waiting seventy years to utilize this room, grooming myself, quietly setting the stage, performing ablutions, paying tribute, seeing all his motion pictures again and again. Worshipping, Schwartz, worshipping properly.

CRAIG

You're insane.

LESTER

I am not alone. There are others. We are legion. You will pay for this blasphemy. You will pay dearly.

Lester exits. Craig looks at Maxine. There is a moment of tension. Finally:

MAXINE

Crackpot.

Craig opens the door. The first few fat people move noisily into the room.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. LESTER'S ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

Many cloaked people in the room kneeling with candles in hand before the lit photo of Malkovich. Lotte kneels in the back row. They chant:

DISCIPLES OF MALKOVICH

How much do we love you? We loved you in "Making Mr. Right." That is how much we love you. We even own the director's cut on laser disc. Please accept us into your head as we have accepted you into our hearts. Please let us be you. Amen.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S DINING ROOM - A BIT LATER

The worshippers mill about, chatting, drinking coffee, nibbling on cookies.

LESTER

May I have your attention, please. We have a new disciple among us tonight.

DISCIPLES OF MALKOVICH

Hallelujah.

LESTER

She is the wife of Schwartz.

A stunned hush falls over the group.

LOTTE

(apologetically)
I'm getting divorced.

LESTER

No you mustn't, my child.

LOTTE

But why, Son of Malkovich?

LESTER

We need you on the inside, my child.
To report on his comings and goings,
and if need be, to... destroy him...
(hands Lotte a gun)
...for lack of a better word.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Craig is putting stuff in boxes. Lotte enters in her cloak.

LOTTE

What are you doing?

CRAIG

I'm moving. Remember? What's with
the hooded cloak?

LOTTE

Nothing. Don't go, Craig. I've been
thinking. Let's try to work this
out. We've got so much history.

CRAIG

(still packing)
You should feed your animals. They're
looking peaked.

LOTTE

I'm getting rid of the fucking
animals.

CRAIG

What?

LOTTE

I'm getting rid of the animals. I've
lost interest. Besides, they're
standing between you and me.

CRAIG

No they're not.

LOTTE

You've always hated the animals.

CRAIG
You've always loved the animals.

LOTTE
I'm giving them up. I've changed.
I've found a new focus.

CRAIG
What's that?

LOTTE
(beat)
Us, of course.

Craig looks up from his packing. He and Lotte stare at each other for a long while.

CRAIG
(tenderly)
Oh, Lot...

They hug.

CRAIG
What about Maxine?

LOTTE
Fuck Maxine.

CRAIG
We wish.

They look at each other and laugh, then fall back into the embrace. They both get faraway looks in their eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

The clock reads 3:00 AM. Craig, in his pajamas, is working the Craig and Maxine puppets. They make love on the bare puppet stage. Craig seems possessed.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The phone rings. Maxine sleepily picks it up.

MAXINE
Yes?

LOTTE (O.S.)
I have to see you. Can you call him
and invite us over?

MAXINE

When?

LOTTE (O.S.)

Give me one hour to get inside him
Exactly.

Maxine checks her alarm clock. The time is 3:11 AM.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S CAR - NIGHT

Lotte drives.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S APARTMENT - A BIT LATER

The doorbell rings. Maxine, in a sheer black nightgown,
answers it. John Malkovich stands there.

MAXINE

Thanks so much for coming over.

MALKOVICH

Oh, I'm really glad you called.

Maxine gestures for him to enter. As Malkovich passes by
her, she checks the wall clock. The time is 3:50.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lotte sits on the floor in the dark. She leans, out of breath,
against the wall next to the portal and checks her watch.
The time is 4:10. She pulls open the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maxine and Malkovich sit a bit awkwardly next to each other
on the couch.

MAXINE

So, do you enjoy being an actor?

MALKOVICH

Oh sure. It's very rewarding...

The digital clock on the VCR clicks over to 4:11 AM. Maxine's
look softens, and she kisses Malkovich hard on the lips. He
seems surprised, but quickly warms to it. We shift top

Malkovich's POV as Maxine begins to unbutton Malkovich's shirt.

LOTTE (V.O.)
Oh my darling. Oh my sweetheart.

MAXINE
I love you, Lotte.

LOTTE (V.O.)
Maxine...

MALKOVICH
(stopping)
I'm sorry, did you just call me
"Lotte"?

MAXINE
Do you mind?

MALKOVICH
(thinking)
No, I guess not. I'm an actor.

They get back to it.

MAXINE
Oh, my sweet, beautiful Lotte.

MALKOVICH
(thinks he's playing
along)
Yes, Maxine, yes.

LOTTE (V.O.)
This is too good to be true.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A sweaty and spent Craig sneaks back into the bedroom. He sees that the bed is empty.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - NIGHT

With a gasp and a wail of release, Lotte pops into the ditch. She is soaking wet and breathes heavily. She just lies there.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Craig is hunched over a cup of coffee. The front door can be heard to open. After a moment Lotte appears in the kitchen doorway. She is caked with dirt. Craig looks up at her.

CRAIG
You were him last night, weren't you?

LOTTE
(quietly)
Yes.

CRAIG
And he was with her.

LOTTE
We love her, Craig. I'm sorry.

CRAIG
We?

LOTTE
Me and John.

CRAIG
Don't forget me.

LOTTE
Well, you have the Maxine action figure to play with.

Craig looks down at his coffee.

LOTTE
I'm sorry. That was nasty.

CRAIG
Life is confusing, isn't it?

LOTTE
Sometimes we're forced to make hard decisions.
(beat)
I'd like for us to stay together, Craig. You know, platonically, if that's possible. I truly value our friendship.

CRAIG
I feel that somehow my parents never prepared me to make this particular decision. Not that I blame them. How could they know?

CRAIG
Today's world is so complicated.
(beat)
No. I have to go away now. I'm sorry,
Lotte. I'm so sorry.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Craig enters with red-rimmed eyes. Maxine sits at her desk, actually looking kind of radiant.

MAXINE
You're late.

CRAIG
Are you torturing me on purpose?

MAXINE
(matter of fact)
I've fallen in love.

CRAIG
I don't think so. I've fallen in
love. This is what people who've
fallen in love look like.

MAXINE
You picked the unrequited variety.
Very bad for the skin.

CRAIG
You're evil, Maxine.

MAXINE
Do you have any idea what its like
to have two people look at you with
total lust and devotion through the
same pair of eyes? No I don't suppose
you would. It's quite a thrill, Craig.

Craig turns and walks out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY 7 1/2 FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Craig hurries past a long line of fat people, all looking
eager, all clutching cash.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Lester sits at his desk. The intercom buzzes.

LESTER
(depressing switch)
Yes, my dear?

FLORIS (O.S.)
(intercom voice)
Someone names A Lot of Warts on line
two.

LESTER
Thank you, Floris.

FLORIS (O.S.)
(intercom voice)
Think, Jew florist?

LESTER
(pressing line 2)
Good morning, Lotte!

LOTTE (O.S.)
Dr. Lester, everything's falling
apart.

CUT TO:

INT. GUN SHOP - MORNING

Craig is at the counter buying a pistol.

CUT TO:

INT. JUICY-JUICE JUICE BAR - MORNING

Lester and Lotte sit at a table. They both have really large
glasses of carrot juice in front of them.

LOTTE
I blew it, Dr. Lester.

LESTER
You followed your heart, my child,
and that is not necessarily a bad
thing.

LOTTE
But now we've lost access to Craig.

LESTER

(laughs)
My child, I don't think its a great
mystery what Craig's up to.

CUT TO:

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Craig stands still and tense, with gun in hand. We hear the front door unlock. Lotte enters. She does not see Craig. He grabs her from behind as she passes. Lotte screams. Craig holds the gun to her head.

LOTTE

I'm your Goddamn wife. Once you vowed
to cherish me forever. Now you hold
a gun to my head?

CRAIG

Yeah, well welcome to the nineties.

LOTTE

Suck my dick!

CRAIG

(slapping her)
Shut up!

Lotte is stunned. She feels the muzzle against her forehead. She shuts up. Keeping the gun trained on Lotte, Craig dials the phone. He hands the receiver to her. He holds his ear to the receiver also.

CRAIG

Tell her you need to see her.

LOTTE

(to Craig)
You bastard.

Craig cocks the pistol.

MAXINE (V.O.)

J.M. Inc. Be all that someone else
can be.

LOTTE

(looking at Craig)
I have to see you.

MAXINE (V.O.)

Sweetie!

MAXINE (V.O.)

Oh, but we can't. It's business hours.
I need to keep the membranous tunnel
open for paying customers.

CRAIG

(sotto)

Tell her, what the hell, close early
today, live dangerously.

LOTTE

What the hell, darling. Close early
today, live dangerously.

MAXINE (V.O.)

Oooh, doll. I love this new devil-
may-care side of you. Alrighty, I'll
track down Lover-boy, and I'll see
both of you in one hour. Exactamundo.

Maxine hangs up. Lotte hands the phone to Craig, who hangs
it up. Craig opens up the big cage where Elijah is housed,
and motions with the gun for Lotte to enter.

LOTTE

(screaming)

Help! He's locking me in a cage!

Craig slaps Lotte hard. She looks at him, almost sadly.

NEIGHBOR

Shut up!

PARROT

Shut up!

CRAIG

Lesson number one: Be careful what
you teach your parrot.

Craig tapes Lotte's mouth, ties her hands and feet. Elijah
watches him tie her. He becomes somewhat agitated, and holds
his stomach.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADHURST THEATER - DAY

Malkovich is rehearsing some business on stage. Maxine watches
from the house. She anxiously checks her watch, then points
to it so Malkovich can see.

MALKOVICH
Tommy, can I take fifteen?

CUT TO:

INT. MALKOVICH'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Malkovich and Maxine are having sex on the make-up table, against the mirror.

MAXINE
Oh, Lotte... Oh, sweetie...

We now watch the scene from Malkovich's POV.

MALKOVICH
Maxine...

CRAIG (V.O.)
I can't believe it. This is too good to be true.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

Craig is toweling himself off, hurriedly combing his hair. Maxine enters.

CRAIG
You're glowing again.

MAXINE
A girl has a right to glow if she wants. It's in the fucking constitution.

Maxine sits. Craig smiles to himself.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Craig is feeding the various caged animals. He puts two plates of food in Elijah's cage. Lotte is ungagged and unbound now. She eats as Craig slumps down next to the cage, gun in hand.

CRAIG
It was lovely being you being Malkovich, my dear. I'd never seen the passionate side of sweet Maxine before, or her actual tits for that matter. If only, I've been thinking to myself, if only I could actually feel what Malkovich feels, rather

CRAIG
 than just see what he sees... And
 then, dare I say it, if only I could
 control his arms, his legs, his
 pelvis, and make them do my bidding.

LOTTE
 It'll never happen, fuckface.

CRAIG
 Ah, but you're forgetting one thing,
 Lambchop.

LOTTE
 What's that?

CRAIG
 I'm a puppeteer.

Craig picks up the phone and dials. He smiles as he holds
 the receiver up to Lotte's face.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malkovich and Maxine are having sex on Maxine's couch.

MAXINE
 Lotte, this is so good...

CRAIG (V.O.)
 (tense, commanding)
 Move right hand across her left breast
 now. Move right hand across her left
 breast now. Move right hand across
 her left breast now.

Malkovich clumsily, awkwardly moves his hand across Maxine's
 breast.

CRAIG
 Holy shit, yes!

MALKOVICH
 Holy shit, yes!

CRAIG (V.O.)
 Holy shit! He said what I said!

MALKOVICH
 Holy shit! He said what I said!

MAXINE
 Lotte? Is that you?

CRAIG (V.O.)
Yes, yes, sweetheart, yes!

MALKOVICH
Yes, yes, sweetheart, yes!
(scared)
What the fuck is going on? I'm not
talking. This is not me!

MAXINE
Oh, Lotte...

Maxine kisses Malkovich hard on the lips. There is a sucking sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - NIGHT

There is a pop and Craig lands in the ditch.

CUT TO:

INT. MAXINE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A panicked Malkovich is pulling on his clothes.

MALKOVICH
Something was making me talk. Some
Goddamn thing was making me move. I
gotta get out of here.

MAXINE
Oh, Dollface, it was just your passion
for me taking hold.

MALKOVICH
No, Dollface, I know what my passion
taking hold feels like. I gotta go.

He leaves. Maxine falls back on the couch and sighs contentedly.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A wet, mess Craig sits next to Lotte's cage. Lotte is bound and gagged.

CRAIG
I did it, sweetie. I moved his arm
across your girlfriend's glorious
tit.

CRAIG

I made him talk. And, oh, there was the beginning of sensation in the fingertips. Ummmm-mmmm! It's just a matter of practice before Malkovich becomes nothing more than another puppet hanging next to my worktable. Coffee?

CUT TO:

INT. MALKOVICH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malkovich paces nervously, a glass of whisky in his hand. Kevin Bacon sits on the couch and fiddles with a Rubic's Cube.

MALKOVICH

It's like nothing I've ever felt before. I think I'm going crazy.

KEVIN BACON

I'm sure you're not going crazy.

MALKOVICH

Kevin, I'm telling you... it was like nothing I've...

KEVIN BACON

Yeah yeah yeah. Yadda yadda yadda. Were you stoned?

MALKOVICH

Yes, but you see, someone else was talking through my mouth.

KEVIN BACON

You were stoned. Case closed. End of story. How hot is this babe?

MALKOVICH

I think it might've been this Lotte woman talking through me. Maxine likes to call me Lotte.

KEVIN BACON

Ouch. Now that's hot. She's using you to channel some dead lesbian lover. Let me know when you're done with her. This is my type of chick.

MALKOVICH

I'm done with her now. Tonight really creeped me out.

KEVIN BACON

You're crazy to let go of a chick who calls you Lotte. I tell you that as a friend.

MALKOVICH

I don't know anything about her. What if she's some sort of witch or something?

KEVIN BACON

All the better. Hey, Hot Lesbian Witches, next Geraldo, buddy boy. Ha ha ha.

MALKOVICH

I gotta know the truth, Kevin.

KEVIN BACON

The truth is for suckers, Johnny-Boy.

CUT TO:

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Malkovich, in a baseball cap and sunglasses, leans against the wall. After a moment, Maxine emerges from the building and walks down the block. Malkovich follows at a safe distance.

CUT TO:

INT. 7 1/2 FLOOR - MORNING

The elevator doors are pried open. It's packed. Maxine and a few other people climb out. The last to emerge is Malkovich. He is astounded by the dimensions of the floor. He turns the corner and sees the long line of crouching fat people. Maxine goes into the office and closes the door. Maxine sees "J.M. Inc." stenciled on the office door. He turns to the first fat man and line.

MALKOVICH

Excuse me, what type of service does this company provide?

FAT MAN

You get to be John Malkovich for fifteen minutes. Two hundred clams.

MALKOVICH

(quietly flipped)
I see.

FAT MAN
No cutting, by the way.

Malkovich pounds on the door.

FAT MAN
No cutting!

Several fat people jump on Malkovich, and start beating him. Craig steps out of the office.

CRAIG
Hey! Break it up! Break it up!
Everybody gets a chance to be...

The fat people climb off Malkovich. His glasses and cap have been knocked off and everyone recognizes him.

FAT MAN
It's him! Oh, we're so sorry Mr. Malkovich! I hope me and my associates from Overeaters Anonymous didn't hurt you too terribly.

MALKOVICH
(to Craig)
Inside.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Craig and Malkovich enter. Maxine looks up, startled, but controlling it.

MAXINE
Darling!

MALKOVICH
What the fuck is going on?

CRAIG
Mr. Malkovich, my name is Craig Schwartz. I can explain. We operate a little business her that... simulates, for our clientele, the experience of... being you, actually.

MALKOVICH
Simulates?

CRAIG
Sure, after a fashion.

MALKOVICH

Let me try.

CRAIG

You? Why I'm sure it would pale in comparison to the actual experience.

MALKOVICH

Let me try!

MAXINE

Let him try.

CRAIG

Of course, right this way, Mr. Malkovich. Compliments of the house.

Craig ushers Malkovich to the portal door, opens it.

MALKOVICH

(repulsed by the slime)
Jesus.

Malkovich climbs in. The door closes.

CRAIG

What happens when a man climbs through his own portal?

MAXINE

(shrugs)
How the hell would I know? I wasn't a philosophy major.

CUT TO:

INT. MEMBRANOUS TUNNEL - DAY

Malkovich crawls through. It's murky. He's tense. Suddenly there is a slurping sound.

CUT TO:

PSYCHEDELIC MONTAGE

We see Malkovich hurtling through different environments. It's scary: giant toads, swirling eddies of garish, colored lights, naked old people pointing and laughing, black velvet clown paintings.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Malkovich pops into a chair in a swagn night club. He's wearing a tuxedo. The woman across the table from him is also Malkovich, but in a gown. He looks around the restaurant. Everyone is Malkovich in different clothes. Malkovich is panicked. The girl Malkovich across the table looks at him seductively, winks and talks.

GIRL MALKOVICH

Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich
Malkovich...

Malkovich looks confused. The Malkovich waiter approaches, pen and pad in hand, ready to take their orders.

WAITER MALKOVICH

Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich?

GIRL MALKOVICH

Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich
Malkovich.

WAITER MALKOVICH

Malkovich Malkovich.
(Turning to Malkovich)
Malkovich?

Malkovich looks down at the menu. Every item is "Malkovich."
He screams:

MALKOVICH

Malkovich!

The waiter jots it down on his pad.

WAITER MALKOVICH

Malkovich.

Malkovich pushes himself away from the table and runs for the exit. He passes the stage where a girl singer Malkovich is singin sensuously into the microphone. She is backed by a '40's style big band of Malkoviches.

SINGING MALKOVICH

Malkovich Malkovich Malkovich
Malkovich...

Malkovich flies through the back door.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Malkovich lands with a thud in the ditch. Craig is waiting there with his van. On its side is painted "See The World in Malk-O-Vision" followed by a phone number. Malkovich is huddled and shivering and soaking wet.

CRAIG

So how was it?

MALKOVICH

That... was... no... simulation.

CRAIG

I know. I'm sorry...

MALKOVICH

I have been to the dark side. I have seen a world that no man should ever see.

CRAIG

Really? For most people it's a rather pleasant experience. What exactly did you...

MALKOVICH

This portal is mine and must be sealed up forever. For the love of God.

CRAIG

With all respect, sir, I discovered that portal. Its my livelihood.

MALKOVICH

It's my head, Schwartz, and I'll see you in court!

Malkovich trudges off along the shoulder of the turnpike.

CRAIG

(calling after him)

And who's to say I won't be seeing what you're seeing... in court?

Cars whiz by Malkovich. Someone yells from a passing car.

MOTORIST

Hey, Malkovich! Think fast!

Malkovich looks up. A beer can comes flying out of the car and hits him on the head.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Craig is feeding the animals. His gun is stuck in his pants. He gets to Lotte's cage. She is bound but ungagged. She looks haggard.

LOTTE

Once this was a relationship based on love. Now you have me in a cage with a monkey and a gun to my head.

CRAIG

Things change. Anyway, you gave up your claim to that love the first time you stuck your dick in Maxine.

LOTTE

You fell in love with her first.

CRAIG

Yeah but I didn't do anything about it. Out of respect for our marriage.

LOTTE

You didn't do anything about it out of respect for the fact that she wouldn't let you near her with a ten foot pole, which is, by the way, about nine feet, nine inches off the mark anyway.

CRAIG

(beat)

That's true. Oh, God, Lotte, what have I become? My wife in a cage with a monkey. A gun in my hand. Betrayal in my heart.

LOTTE

Maybe this is what you've always been, Craig, you just never faced it before.

CRAIG

Perhaps you're right. I can't let you go though. Too much has happened. You're my ace in the hole.

LOTTE

I need a shower.

CRAIG

I'm sorry. Oh God, I'm sorry. I'm some kind of monster. I'm the guy

CRAIG
 you read about in the paper and go,
 "he's some kind of monster."

LOTTE
 You're not a monster, Craig. Just a
 confused man.

CRAIG
 I love you so much.

She dials her phone, opens her cage, puts phone to her ear.

CRAIG
 But I gotta go now. I've got to go
 be Johnny.

MAXINE (O.S.)
 J.M. Inc. Be all that someone...

LOTTE
 We have to meet.

MAXINE
 One hour.

Craig hangs up, tapes Lotte's mouth.

CRAIG
 I'll tell you all about it when I
 get home.

Craig exits. Lotte fiddles with the ropes on her hands. Elijah, slumped in the corner of the cage, blankly watches her moving hands. Suddenly his eyes narrow. Something is going on in his brain. We move slowly into his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

It is a memory: blurry and overexposed, the color washed out. We see a weathered wooden sign which reads "Africa." The sound of running feet, huffing frantic breathing. We watch from up in a tree (Elijah's POV) as two men in safari suits chase a couple of chimps across the jungle floor. The chimps are screaming as the safari men tackle them and tie them up. The safari men laugh.

SAFARI MAN
 Well, there monkeys ain't going
 nowhere. Let's get us a couple a
 brews 'fore the boss comes back...

The safari men leave the chimps on the ground. We descend from the trees to the ground next to the bound chimps. One of the chimps looks at the camera. He grunts and squeals.

CHIMP ONE (DUBBED VOICE)
 Son, untie your mother and me!
 Quickly! Before the great bald chimp-
 men return.

A small pair of chimp hands enter into the frame and struggle to untie the ropes, but to no avail. Chimp two speaks.

CHIMP TWO (DUBBED VOICE)
 Hurry, Elijah!

SAFARI MAN
 Why you little bastard!

Elijah is wrestled to the ground amidst much screaming.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Elijah shakes off the memory and looks determinedly at the ropes on Lotte's hands. He attempts to untie the knot. He works furiously and succeeds. Lotte pulls the tape from her mouth.

LOTTE
 Oh, Elijah, you are magnificent!

Elijah beams and screams for ecstatic joy. Lotte unlocks the cage, and dials the phone.

LOTTE
 Maxine! Listen: It hasn't been me
 in John the last three times. Craig's
 had me locked up in the apartment.
 He made me call you at gunpoint.
 It's been him! Oh, God, it's been
 him!

MAXINE (O.S.)
 (beat, calmly)
 Really? Well, you know, he's quite
 good. I'm surprised. Anyway, I have
 a session with Malkovich I have to
 attend. I'll speak with you soon.

LOTTE
 But Maxine, I thought it was me you
 loved.

MAXINE (O.S.)
I thought so too, doll. I guess we
were mistaken.

Maxine hangs up. Lotte, visibly shaken, dials the phone.

LOTTE
Hello, Dr. Lester?

CUT TO:

INT. MALKOVICH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The doorbell rings. Malkovich answers it. Maxine stands there,
dressed in an evening gown.

MALKOVICH
Come on in.

MAXINE
I can explain about the portal,
darling.

MALKOVICH
Don't con me, Maxine. We're over. I
just let you up here to tell you
that, and to tell you that I'm taking
you and Schwartz to court.

MAXINE
Oh shut up.
(beat)
Craig, darling are you in there?

Malkovich tenses up, then shakes his head in an awkward,
puppet-like manner. When Malkovich speaks, it seems to be
against him will.

MALKOVICH
Yes. How did you know it was me?

MAXINE
Lotte called me.

MALKOVICH
Oh, so the bitch escaped.

MAXINE
Apparently you can control this
Malkovich fellow now.

MALKOVICH
I'm getting better all the time.

MAXINE

I'll say you are. Let's do it on his kitchen table, then make him eat an omelette off of it.

MALKOVICH

(as Malkovich)

No... damn... you...

(as Craig)

Oh shut up, you overrated sack of shit.

Malkovich begins undressing, and does a lewd bump and grind while looking mortified. Maxine giggles. Malkovich (Craig) laughs wildly.

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Lester's hand is in a bloody bandage. The juicer sits on his desk. Lotte sits across from him looking nervous and hollow-eyed.

LESTER

You know I think it pays to leave juice-making to the trained professionals. You look terrible, my dear.

LOTTE

Craig stole Maxine from me, Dr. Lester.

LESTER

Hmmm, a lesbian, are you? I must inform you that I find that highly arousing.

LOTTE

No, you don't understand. I've been inside Malkovich when I'm with Maxine...

LESTER

(slaps Lotte furiously)

What?! That is not allowed. My God, you are supposed to be one of us. You know you must never partake of Malkovich by yourself!

LOTTE

No, I didn't know that.

LESTER

Oh, didn't anyone show you the indoctrination video?

LOTTE

No.

LESTER

Oh, sorry. Right this way.

CUT TO:

INT. SCREENING ROOM - NIGHT

Lotte sits next to Lester in the darkened auditorium. The projector whirs. The screen lights up.

TITLE: SO YOU WANT TO BE JOHN MALKOVICH

A much younger Lester addresses the camera in this black and white film, which seems to have been made in the 50's.

LESTER ON FILM

Welcome, my fellow Malkovichians. As you may already know, today a baby was born into this sad world.

We see a shot of a newborn.

LESTER ON FILM

His name is John Horatio Hannibal Malkovich. And we are the keepers of the door to his soul. One day, when his brain is big enough, we will all journey into his head and live there for all eternity. Following the teachings of our leader Karl Marx, we will build the ultimate communist community, one body and hundreds, maybe thousands, of brains inside working together to form a super human intellect capable of curing disease, stopping all war, and ruling the world with a benevolent fist. We will take a wife, a woman of uncommon beauty and intellect, who is, as yet, still an infant herself.

We see a photo of another infant, this one with a ribbon in her hair.

LESTER ON FILM

Her name is Floris Horatia Hannibella DeMent.

LOTTE
Does Floris know that she's the
chosen?

LESTER
Well, I tried to explain it to her,
but...

Lester points to his ear and shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. MALKOVICH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Malkovich and Maxine lie naked on the bed, looking quite relaxed.

MAXINE
You still there, sweets?

MALKOVICH
Yeah. I've figured out how to hold
on as long as I want. Oddly enough,
it's all in the wrists.

MAXINE
Wow.
(little girl pout)
Do a puppet show for me, Craig honey.

MALKOVICH
You mean with Malkovich?

MAXINE
I'd love to see your work.

MALKOVICH
(pleased)
Really? Yeah. Okay.

Malkovich leans over and kisses her, then gets up.

MALKOVICH
I'll do something I call "Craig's
Dance of Despair and Disillusionment."

Malkovich performs the same dance that the Craig pupper did at the beginning of the film. It is exactly the same, complete with impossible somersaults and perspiring brow. He finishes by falling to his knees and weeping.

MAXINE
(moved)
That was incredible. You're brilliant!

MALKOVICH

You see, Maxine, it isn't just playing with dolls.

MAXINE

You're right, my darling, it's so much more. It's playing with people!

Malkovich kisses Maxine. She snuggles close to him.

MAXINE

Stay in him forever?

MALKOVICH

(as Malkovich,
screaming)

No!

(as Craig, calmly)

But how will we make a living, my love, if our clientele doesn't have access to our product?

MAXINE

Well, we'll have all the money in Malkovich's bank account, plus he still gets acting work occasionally.

MALKOVICH

(as Malkovich, breaking
through)

No! Please!

(as Craig, to Malkovich)

Shut up, will you? We're trying to think here.

(to Maxine)

It is sort of like being a puppeteer. I like that about it.

MAXINE

No one would ever have to know its not him.

MALKOVICH

(an idea)

Wait a minute! What if everybody knew? What if we presented Malkovich as the world's most complicated puppet and me as the only puppeteer sophisticated enough to work him? We'd wipe the floor with the Great Mantini!

MAXINE

Oh, Craiggy, that's brilliant!

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S SHRINE ROOM - NIGHT

The worshippers are assembled. Lotte stands before them.

LOTTE

I have sinned, unwittingly, against the community. And for this I am truly sorry.

MAN #2

W-w-what's it like on the inside?

LOTTE

Oh, it's glorious. It's indescribable.

MAN #2

Oooh, I wanna go. I wanna go. I say it's time.

LESTER

Perhaps you're right, Terry. We're all prepared, and perhaps this Schwartz fellow is forcing our hand a bit. We will enter the portal tonight!

Everyone cheers.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Maxine and Malkovich are furiously filling the portal with cement. Suddenly Malkovich stops and runs to the office door screaming a bloodcurdling scream. He stops just as suddenly, begins to strangle himself.

MALKOVICH

(Craig to Malkovich)

Shut up!

(to Maxine)

Sorry, dear, I lost control for a minute.

MAXINE

(kissing him)

It's okay, my sweet.

They go back to filling the portal. There is the sound of many shuffling feet in the hallway. The door flies open and

the Malkovichians led by Lester and Lotte burst in. Malkovich and Maxine turn with a start.

LESTER
Aaaahhhh, the portal!

LOTTE
(to Malkovich)
You bastard!

Lotte lunges for Malkovich. Lester grabs her arm, holds her back.

LESTER
No! Don't harm the vessel!

LOTTE
It's Craig in there, I can tell.

LESTER
I understand, but we must protect
the vessel at all costs.
(to Malkovich)
Please, Craig, please step aside and
allow us to have what is rightfully
ours.

CRAIG
Squatter's rights, Lester.

Craig laughs somewhat maniacally. Maxine slips her arm through Craig's, joins him in his laughter, and glances triumphantly over at Lotte.

MAXINE
Now excuse us, we have an
entertainment legend to create.

LESTER
(to the cult members)
Clear the way for them, my friends.
They will be dealt with in due time.

The Malkovichians grumble and let Malkovich and Maxine exit.

LESTER
Now, let's see what we can do to
salvage this portal... for the sake
of all that is good.

The Malkovichians converge on the sealed portal, and begin clawing desperately at the quick-drying cement.

Fingers are scraped raw, and we see smears of blood and skin on the rough gray surface.

CUT TO:

INT. AGENT'S OFFICE - DAY

A slick-looking agent answers a buzzing phone.

AGENT

Of course, send him right in. Don't ever keep him waiting again. Do you understand?

Malkovich and Maxine enter. The agent stands, holds out his hand.

AGENT

John! Great to see you! Sorry about the cunt at reception.

MALKOVICH

This is my fiancée Maxine.

The agent shakes Maxine's hand.

AGENT

Great to see you, Maxine. Sorry about the cunt at reception. Please have a seat.

Malkovich and Maxine sit.

AGENT

Can I get you anything? Coffee? Water?

MAXINE

No thanks.

AGENT

(into phone)
Teresa, get me a chicken soup.
(to Malkovich and
Maxine)
Chicken soup?

Maxine and Malkovich shake their heads "no."

MALKOVICH

I'll get right to the point, Larry.
I'm a puppet now...

AGENT

Okay.

MALKOVICH
I'm being controlled by the world's
greatest puppeteer, Craig Schwartz...

AGENT
(no clue)
Oh yeah, he's good.

MALKOVICH
... and I want to show off his skills
by performing a one-puppet
extravaganza in Reno.

MAXINE
Vegas.

MALKOVICH
Vegas. Can you arrange that?

AGENT
Sure, sure. Just let me make a couple
of calls.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - DAY

The cult members are still there, now with picks shovels.
They are worn out and sweaty. The portal is excavated, but
it seems ragged and destroyed. Man #2 emerges from the hole,
a rope tied around his waist.

MAN #2
That's the last of it, boss.

Lester peers through the door.

LESTER
Well, let's see what we've got here.

Lester crawls into the tunnel, the door slams behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. PORTAL - CONTINUOUS

Lester crawls through. There is a slurping sound and a flash
of light.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKER - DAY

The scene is in black and white. Bombs are dropping. There is a blonde in forties clothes there. Lester views the scene through somebody's POV.

LESTER (V.O.)
My God, where am I? This seems so familiar.

The person walks past a mirror. It's Hitler.

LESTER (V.O.)
My God, I'm Hitler in the bunker!
Aaaahhhh! Aaaah!

DIRECTOR
Cut!

We look over to see a director and camera crew.

LESTER (V.O.)
Oh, I'm just the actor in that
Twilight Zone episode.

There is a popping sound.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - DAY

Lester pops into the ditch. One of his cult members is waiting with a car, and looking hopeful. Lester sadly shakes his head "no."

CUT TO:

INT. LESTER'S SHRINE ROOM - DAY

The cult members mill about, drinking coffee, chatting. Lester enters with the cult member who picked him up at the ditch. All quiet down and look over at him.

LESTER
Thank you all for your efforts, but
I'm afraid we can no longer get into
Malkovich through the portal.

LOTTE
(panicky)
Why not? I need to get in there!

LESTER

I'm not certain, my dear, but I believe your husband has somehow psychically diverted the route.

LOTTE

That bastard! I'll gladly dispose of him in the name of the order, Son of Malkovich.

LESTER

I'm afraid that no physical harm must come to him as long as he inhabits the vessel.

MAN #3

(raises hand)

Oooh, I got an idea! What if we build another portal to Malkovich, like around back, and sneak in that way?

MAN #4

Only Captain Mertin knew how to build a portal, dummy, and he's dead!

LESTER

Actually, my friends, I suppose its time I told you, I'm Captain James Mertin.

The members fall into a stunned silence. Lester takes some refrigerator magnets and spells out L-E-S-T-E-R on a board. He then rearranges them for a while.

LESTER

You see, Lester is an anagram for Mertin.

Lester continues to rearrange the letters, getting a little tense now.

LESTER

It used to work, I'm sure of it.

Several members check their watches.

LESTER

Oh, damn it to hell. Anyway, I am.

L-E-S-T-E-R has been left as E-L R-E-S-T as Lester turns from the board to face the congregation.

MAN #3

How can this be? I thought you were only one hundred and five years old.

MAN #3
Mertin would have to be...

LESTER
(chuckles amiably)
I'm two hundred and five, truth be
told.

WOMAN #1
(flirtatiously)
You don't look a day over one hundred
and five, Captain. What's your secret?

LESTER
Lots of carrot juice, little lady.
That, and a deal with the Devil.

There is a lot of murmuring in the room now.

MAN #2
So what exactly are you saying? Are
we in cahoots with the Dark Master
here?

LESTER
Surprise.

The cultists get tense, start to leave en masse.

LESTER
Wait! It's not that bad! When we get
into Malkovich, we still get to rule
the world, just like I told you. The
only difference is that we rule in
the name of evil, instead of good.

People stop in their tracks.

MAN #3
That's the only difference?

LESTER
Absolutely.

The cultists think about is, then shrug and stay put.

LESTER
So anyway...

Lotte stands.

LOTTE
Well, I for one, am resigning. I
will not serve evil. I am ashamed of
all of you.

Lotte heads for the door.

LESTER

My dear, let me assure you that when we attain power, it will be much more pleasant for those inside Malkovich, than for those outside.

Lotte stops and turns.

LOTTE

I'll take my chances.

She exits.

LESTER

Anybody else?

WOMAN #1

Do we get to wear a crown?

LESTER

But of course.

WOMAN #1

Count me in.

LESTER

Good. I think its time to beckon Mr. Flemmer. Perhaps He can help us out of this pickle.

FLIP TO:

INT. LESTER'S SHRINE ROOM - A BIT LATER

Mr. Flemmer, a silver-haired gentleman in turtleneck and blazer, scratches his head. The cultists patiently watch him.

FLEMMER

Boy, this is a toughie. To be honest, I didn't anticipate this.

LESTER

And as I said, sir, we can't very well exert physical persuasion upon the sacred vessel Malkovich.

FLEMMER

Right, Lester. I heard you the first time. I'm not a dummy.

LESTER

Didn't mean to imply that you were,
sir.

FLEMMER

Look, I'm going back to my house to
ponder this. So stay calm and keep
track of Schwartz's comings and
goings. Oh, and somebody dispose of
Schwartz's wife, will you?

(to cultists)

Nice to meet you all.

The cult members ad-lib "same here, sir."

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lotte sits in the living room, in her pajamas, softly sobbing.
The caged animals watch her.

LOTTE

Oh, my friends. Be thankful you're
not human. People are treacherous
and greedy and corrupt. I've lost my
heart to two of them and I almost
lost my soul to another. And I'm no
better. Look at the way I keep you,
locked in cages, for my own enjoyment.
Well, I've been in a cage too, my
friends. Literally and figuratively.
So tonight I set you free.

Lotte opens the windows and the front door, then unlocks all
the cages. The animals scurry and fly out of their cages,
and out of the house. Lotte watches silently until she is
alone.

LOTTE

Good-bye, friends.

A hand reaches for hers. She looks down. Elijah is still
there and holding her hand. She smiles.

LOTTE

Hello, friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

We see the menagerie of animals on the otherwise deserted
street, dispersing into the night. A lone dark figure turns

the corner, and walks slowly up the street to Craig and Lotte's building.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND LOTTE'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lotte and Elijah see the dark figure coming up the steps. The buzzer rings. Lotte and Elijah jump.

LOTTE

They've come to kill me, Elijah.
See, I know too much. I should get
the door. It's impolite to keep death
waiting.

Elijah looks at her sweetly, a great sadness in his eyes. Then he leads her by the hand out the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. VEGAS HOTEL - NIGHT

The marquee reads: World's Greatest Puppeteer Craig Schwartz and his Magical Puppet John Malkovich.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Malkovich sits in a tuxedo and watches himself in the dressing table mirror. Maxine, in a tight black number, reclines on the couch.

MAXINE

This is it, lover. You're stepping
onto that stage a nobody and presto-
change-o, you're coming back the
greatest puppeteer the world has
ever seen.

MALKOVICH

I'm nervous. Malkovich is fighting
me hard today.

Malkovich jerks a bit, gets it under control.

MAXINE

Doesn't he know how important tonight
is to us?

MALKOVICH

He's a selfish bastard.

CUT TO:

INT. LAS VEGAS THEATER - NIGHT

The house is filling with formally dressed audience members. The cultists and Lester, also in tuxes and gowns, are among them. The lights go down.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is the great privilege of the Luxor hotel and Casino to present Craig Schwartz and his magical puppet John Malkovich.

The orchestra starts up. The curtains part.

LESTER

Blasphemous bastard.

Malkovich tap dances out onto the stage. He is amazingly nimble and the audience "oohs" and "aahs."

LESTER

(grudgingly)

Pretty good though.

Malkovich does an amazing triple somersault, lands on one knee and, with spread arms, begins singing: "Kiss Today Goodbye." in a beautiful tenor. The orchestra catches up with him. The audience goes wild. A pretty-boy young man with a big tousle of black hair and a shiny, tight suit appears at the back of the house. An usher glances over at him.

USHER

Oh, Mr. Mantini! We weren't expecting you tonight, sir. Um, I'm afraid there's not an empty seat in the entire house.

MANTINI

(not taking his eyes
from the stage)

Make one empty.

USHER

Y-y-y-es sir.

The usher looks nervously around for someone to boot. Mantini waits in the back. On stage, Malkovich is now performing the "back of the car scene" from "On The Waterfront." He alternates between the Marlon Brando part and the Rod Steiger part, moving back and forth from one stool to the another. He performs it magnificently. We see Lester in the audience wiping a small tear from his eye.

LESTER

Not too shabby.

Mantini is now sitting in a good aisle seat next to a beautiful woman. Her boyfriend is being hauled toward the exit by the usher. The beautiful woman watches, with some concern, as the boyfriend is taken away. Then she turns and smiles flirtatiously at Mantini. Mantini smiles back. On stage Malkovich is dressed in a ringmaster's outfit and juggling chainsaws.

MANTINI

Nothing more than a Goddamn clown.

At this point the entire audience stands and gives Malkovich a spontaneous standing ovation. All except Mantini. Even the cultists get up.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Lotte sits sadly in the wet tunnel. She is scrunched-up against the damp cold. A small fire smolders in front of her. We hear footsteps approaching. It is Elijah, carrying supplies: food and blankets. He covers her with a blanket and sits down next to her.

LOTTE

They're going to take over the world,
Elijah. Evil will reign. But, then,
evil already reigns, doesn't it? So
what difference does it make if John
Malkovich is wearing the fucking
crown while it's reigning?

Elijah sighs, then holds his stomach. The ulcer is returning.

CUT TO:

INT. FLEMMER'S APARTMENT - DAY

It's a conservatively furnished upper westside apartment. Looks like it belongs to a Columbia professor. The walls are lined with books. Mr. Flemmer sits at his desk, his head in his hands, deep in thought. The doorbell rings.

FLEMMER

It's open.

The door opens and Lester pokes his head in.

LESTER

It's just me, boss. I brought
croissants.

Lester enters with a greasy white paper bag.

FLEMMER

Have a seat. I wracking my brain
over this Malkovich thing.

LESTER

We saw his show at the Luxor last
night.

FLEMMER

(impressed)
Vegas? What'd you think?

LESTER

The kid's got talent. You've never
seen Malkovich like this. Schwartz
had him up there singing and dancing.
Impressions.

FLEMMER

Impressions? Those are hard.

LESTER

Very talented son of a bitch. Too
bad we can't kill him.

FLEMMER

I suppose I could come to him in a
dream. I don't know. That's the best
I can think of right now.

LESTER

A scary dream?

FLEMMER

No, a sexy dream. Of course, a scary
dream.

LESTER

(noncommittally)
I like that.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Malkovich sits on the floor in silk pajamas. He is surrounded
by newspaper clippings. He is drinking champagne from the
bottle. Maxine is at a dressing table, brushing her hair.

MALKOVICH

They love me, darling! "Craig Schwartz
is fantastic!"

MALKOVICH

The New York Times. "If only Craig Schwartz had always been inside Malkovich!" Women's Wear Daily. "Craig Schwartz - The world's greatest puppeteer!" Paul Wunder, WBAI Radio.

MAXINE

Oh, darling. It's a dream come true. We're going to ride this straight to the top.

MALKOVICH

Sleepy suddenly.

MAXINE

Busy day, my little fire chief. Why don't you climb into bed, and I'll meet you there in just...

But Malkovich is already passed out on the floor on top of his clippings. Maxine smiles maternally, gets up and puts blanket over him. We stay on Malkovich's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HELL - NIGHT

Craig wanders across a jagged, rocky landscape. Geysers of flame shoot up around him. The sky is red. He is frightened. He arrives at a desk. The man behind the desk is facing away from him. He swivels to face Craig. It is Flemmer, looking the same as usual except for little red horns and a sinister grin.

CRAIG

Who are you?

FLEMMER

I am the Devil.

CRAIG

Oh.

FLEMMER

Leave Malkovich. He is mine.

CRAIG

Okay. Sorry. I didn't know.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Malkovich awakes with a start. Maxine looks over at him.

MAXINE
Bad dream, darling?

MALKOVICH
I've got to leave Malkovich.

MAXINE
You've got to be kidding.

MALKOVICH
I just had the most horrifying
nightmare. The devil was in it.

Flemmer crouches behind a bureau and listens. He is pleased with himself.

MAXINE
Malkovich is our meal ticket. You
can't back out because of some stupid
dream.

FLEMMER
(to himself)
Shit.

MALKOVICH
Honey, we can be happy and poor
together.

MAXINE
(laughs derisively)
Perhaps you'll want to consult that
Ouija board again.

There is a knock at the door. Maxine opens it, angry.

MAXINE
Yeah what?!

MALKOVICH
Derek Mantini!

Mantini enters. Maxine is suddenly interested. Mantini and Maxine give each other the once over.

MANTINI
(still eyeing Maxine)
Hello, Schwartz. I saw your show.

MALKOVICH
Did you see the reviews?

MANTINI
Yeah, I saw them

MALKOVICH

Because if you missed any, I just happen to have copies here you can take with you when you leave now.

MAXINE

I'm Maxine. I produced the evening with Malkovich.

MANTINI

Very impressive. I could use a producer with your vision. And other outstanding attributes.

MALKOVICH

She's not available.

MANTINI

We'll see, Schwartz. We'll see.

MAXINE

Yeah, we'll see, Schwartz. We'll see.

MANTINI

I won't waste your time Schwartz, or more importantly, mine. Here's my proposal: There's only room in this world for one "World's Greatest Puppeteer." Correct? So let's allow the puppet-going public to crown their king.

MALKOVICH

How do we do that?

MANTINI

A friendly competition, if you will. Your Malkovich puppet and my Harry S. Truman puppet appear opposite each other in a play. Not some Vegas Burly-Q pyrotechnics, but a real play that requires actual acting. The audience decides who is more deserving of the title. The losing puppeteer bows out graciously. Goes back to obscurity as a file clerk.

MALKOVICH

What's the play?

MANTINI

Say... "Equus"? It's got everything.

MALKOVICH
Never heard of it.

MANTINI
Broadway's finest three hours. It's
about the suppression of the
individual. Conformity as God in
modern society.

MALKOVICH
Sounds boring. Are there any songs?

MANTINI
Nothing but acting to hide behind,
buddy-boy.

MALKOVICH
I'm not afraid. I toured for a year
with the National Puppet Company's
production of "Long Day's Journey
Into Night."

MANTINI
Great then.

MALKOVICH
Is there dancing?

MANTINI
No.

MALKOVICH
Who needs dancing?

CUT TO:

INT. FLEMMER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Lester is watering Flemmer's plants. A key is heard in the door. Flemmer enters, a small carry-on bag slung over his shoulder.

LESTER
How'd it go? Did you say the
philodendron gets water or no?

FLEMMER
No, for God's sake, I just watered
it yesterday.
(beat)
It almost went well. I gave a pretty
good dream, but circumstances arose.

LESTER
What kind of circumstances?

FLEMMER

Maxine says she'll leave him if he leaves Malkovich, plus he's been challenged to a puppet-duel by Mantini.

LESTER

The Great Mantini?

FLEMMER

No, the Mediocre Mantini. Of course the Great Mantini!

LESTER

Oh, he's good! Great, actually. I saw him do "Tru" with his sixty foot Robert Morse puppet. Sensational.

FLEMMER

But I think I have another plan.

LESTER

(snippy)

Do tell. I love a good plan.

FLEMMER

Why are you being like this?

Lester shrugs.

LESTER

I missed you. I'm sorry. Tell me the plan.

FLEMMER

Well, if Mantini wins, Schwartz will leave Malkovich, right? So, if he needs it, I help Mantini's performance a bit, give him an edge. Spice up the show.

LESTER

Can you do that? I mean, do you know anything about puppetry?

FLEMMER

I am the Devil, Lester. I think I can handle it.

LESTER

I was just asking. No disrespect intended.

FLEMMER

Fine. Let's drop it.

LESTER

Fine. I mean, it's not like I was doubting you, it's just that I know puppetry is a skill that takes a long time to acquire.

FLEMMER

Fine. I'm not mad. Let's just drop it.

LESTER

Fine. Your mail's on the kitchen table. Mostly junk. Oh, there's a letter from Alex Trebek.

CUT TO:

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Lotte and Elijah, now dirty and drawn, are talking. Elijah uses sign language.

ELIJAH (SUBTITLES)

You've got to tell Craig what's going on. He must never leave Malkovich.

LOTTE

I'm glad you learned sign language, Elijah, but I'm tired of your nagging. I'm tired of this conversation. I'm tired period. What has the world ever done for me that I should feel personally responsible for saving it?

ELIJAH

It is better to light one candle than curse the darkness. I learned that from you.

Lotte turns away, shaken. A tear rolls down her face.

LOTTE

What have I become?

CUT TO:

EXT. BROADHURST THEATER - NIGHT

The Marquee reads: Derek Mantini's sixty-foot Harry S. Truman puppet and Craig Schwartz's actual-size John Malkovich puppet in Peter Shaffer's "Equus."

CUT TO:

INT. BROADHURST THEATER - NIGHT

The house is packed. On stage is a minimalist set: wood planks and metal poles. Six guys in brown turtlenecks and stylized wire horse heads mill about. The 60 foot Harry S. Truman puppet is pacing, his strings extending up into the flyspace and out of sight. Malkovich sits on a bench. Truman and Malkovich both take stabs at British accents.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET
Do you dream often?

MALKOVICH
Do you?

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET
It's my job to ask the questions.
Yours to answer them.

MALKOVICH
Says who?

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET
Says me. Do you dream often?

MALKOVICH
Do you?

We see the audience fidgeting in their seats, coughing.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADHURST BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

The dialogue drones on as Maxine watches coolly from the wings. She drags on a cigarette. Mr. Flemmer, dressed as a stagehand, stands behind Maxine. He also watches the actors, with an occasional sideways glance at Maxine.

MAXINE
(without turning around)
Keep your eyes in your pants, old
timer.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BROADHURST LOBBY - A BIT LATER

It's intermission. The lobby is crowded. Maxine moves through the crowd listening to snippets of conversation. Flemmer, now in a tuxedo, moves about also. First couple:

THEATERGOER #1
That Truman puppet is downright boring
as the psychiatrist.

THEATERGOER #2

It's a wooden performance, really.
Get it? Wooden?

Second couple:

THEATERGOER #3

What's with the Malkovich puppet?
He was much better in Vegas when he
played the piano with his feet.

THEATERGOER #4

I hate it when they try to stretch.
It's like Woody Allen.

Third couple:

THEATERGOER #5

They both stink! I'm going across
the street to second act Miss Saigon.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Malkovich watches himself in his dressing table mirror.
Maxine enters, flops herself down on the couch and lights up
a cigarette.

MAXINE

You'd better turn on the pyrotechnics,
lover, 'cause right now you're running
neck and neck with the dead president.
And you're both in last place.

Malkovich continues to watch himself in the mirror, nods his
head.

CUT TO:

INT. CATWALK ABOVE STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Mantini leans against a rail and smokes a cigarette. Charles
Nelson Reilly, in a tuxedo, confers with him in hushed tones.

CHARLES NELSON REILLY

You're doing beautifully, my boy. I
wept at the speech about your wife.

Flemmer materializes behind Mantini

CHARLES NELSON REILLY

What the hell? Nyong-nyong!

Mantini spins around to face Flemmer. Reilly makes a break for it. Flemmer points a finger and Reilly freezes in mid-strut. Flemmer then points a finger at Mantini, and he, too, freezes. Flemmer picks up the giant wooden controls for the marionette, and pulls a copy of the play from his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADHURST STAGE - NIGHT

We watch the second act in progress. The Truman puppet paces as he delivers a monologue. Somehow he doesn't even seem to be a puppet anymore, so subtle and graceful are his movements and the changes in his facial expressions. It's as if there's a giant actual Harry Truman on stage.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET

I can hear the creature's voice.
It's calling me out of the black
cave of the Psyche. I shove in my
dim little torch, and there he stands --
waiting for me. He raises his matted
head. He opens his great, square
teeth and says

(mocking)

'Why? ... Why me? ... Why --
ultimately -- Me? ... Do you really
imagine you can account for Me?
Totally, infallibly, inevitably
account for Me? ... Poor Dr. Dysart!'

Malkovich watches impressed and a little scared by this bravura performance. He glances out into the audience and sees a silent, rapt crowd.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BROADHURST STAGE - A BIT LATER

Malkovich is delivering a monologue. Acting up a storm. During Malkovich's speech, Truman repeatedly attempts to upstage him, nodding his head, looking thoughtful, raising his ten foot eyebrows in surprise...

MALKOVICH

Eyes! ... White eyes -- never closed!
Eyes like flames -- coming -- coming!
... God seest! ... God seest! ...
NO!

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - CONTINUOUS

A man hole cover is pushed off. Lotte climbs out onto the street. She is dirty but determined.

CUT TO:

INT. BROADHURST STAGE - LATER STILL

Malkovich is in convulsions on the floor. Big dramatic convulsions. Truman scoops him up, and places him on the bench. Malkovich continues with the convulsions, milking it. Truman speaks.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET

Here ... Here ... Sssh ... Sssh ...
Calm now ... Lie back. Just lie back!
Now breathe in deep. Very deep. In
... Out ... In ... Out ... That's
it ... In. Out .. In ... Out ...

Malkovich is breathing insanely now, trying to keep the focus on himself. Flemmer is in the catwalks, watching the crowd. The audience is watching Malkovich.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

(to his wife)
That Malkovich puppet is a damn fine
actor.

FLEMMER

(blood boiling)
Bastard is stealing my thunder.

Malkovich and Truman on the stage. Truman is pacing, swirling, dancing, juggling enormous bowling pins as he talks.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET

All right! I'll take it away! He'll
be delivered from madness. What then?
He'll feel himself acceptable! What
then?

Malkovich has upped his convulsions now. He watches Truman out of the corner of his eye while writhing tormentedly on the bench. He levitates. Spins in mid-air. Falls on all fours and does an uncanny impression of a yelping dog. Truman watches Malkovich, continues to speak. But now, when he talks, fire comes out of his mouth.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET

I'll heal the rash on his body. I'll
erase the welts cut into his body by
flying manes.

The audience "ooohs" at the flames. Malkovich rips off his clothes and convulses into the dying swan-bit from "Swan Lake." The audience applauds. Truman continues his speech, now transforming himself into an actual 60 foot swan and flying around the auditorium as he speaks.

HARRY S. TRUMAN PUPPET

You won't gallop anymore, Alan. Horses
will be quite safe. You'll save your
pennies every week, till you can
change that scooter into a car...

The audience watches the giant swan overhead, necks craned, in awe. Malkovich sighs. He is out of his league. He goes into a remarkable tap dance routine and sings "Mr. Bojangles", but nobody even looks at the stage. The giant swan bursts into flames, flies back onto the stage, burns to a crisp, then rises from his ashes as the actual Harry S. Truman. Truman looks confused and disoriented, as if just raised from the dead.

ACTUAL TRUMAN

Where am I? Aren't I dead?
(possessed)
Vote for Mantini!

Truman grows and grows until he is again just a giant puppet. The audience bursts into applause, then delivers a standing ovation. Truman bows. Flemmer laughs wildly in the catwalks. Malkovich walks dejectedly from the stage.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Malkovich walks past Maxine. She doesn't even look at him. Thunderous applause is heard in the background.

MALKOVICH

Good-bye, Maxine.

MAXINE

Whatever.

Malkovich drops limply to the floor. He lifts his head.

MALKOVICH

(weak but relieved)
I'm back! My nightmare is over.

CUT TO:

INT. CATWALK - CONTINUOUS

Flemmer watches Malkovich from above. He pulls out a walkie-talkie.

FLEMMER
 (into walkie-talkie)
 Okay, now!

CUT TO:

INT. CRAIG AND MAXINE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Lester is surrounded by all the Malkovichians. He holds the walkie-talkie, has just received word. He nods, and the Malkovichians crawl in single file into the portal, while shrieking a war cry.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Maxine watches as Malkovich pulls himself up off the ground. Suddenly, he is again possessed, first by one person, then by two, then by three, his body jerking and pulsating with each new occupant. It's almost like popping corn, starting out slowly, then going faster and faster, until Malkovich is possessed by all fifty Malkovichians. He shrieks a war cry and runs out onto the stage.

CUT TO:

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The Truman puppet now hangs limply from the catwalks. Malkovich hovers just above the stage and addresses the audience.

MALKOVICH
 (now sounding like
 fifty voices)
 I am your earthly king! Kneel before
 me!

The audience scoffs at first, but then are compelled to their knees.

CROWD
 (like automatons)
 Hail Malkovich, king of the damned.

Malkovich laughs, gives the thumbs up sign to Flemmer in the catwalks. Flemmer gives the thumbs up sign back.

Lotte appears in the back of the theater, an out-of-breath figure in shadows. It is too late. She runs from the theater.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Maxine watches, somewhat amused. She turns and heads for the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW JERSEY TUNPIKE - NIGHT

A dejected Craig walks along the shoulder. He is wet and cold. We hold on him for a long while until he eventually merges with the landscape.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - DAY

CHYRON: LATER THAT WEEK

Something is wrong. It's a typical midtown street, but everything is painted gray: the buildings, the streets, the sidewalks, the cars. People walk along the streets, carrying gray briefcases, wearing gray jumpsuits. Nobody talks, nobody smiles. Gray birds fly silently in the sky. There is no noise whatsoever. There are several movie theaters on the block. All marquees advertise John Malkovich movies. Around the corner comes Malkovich. He is floating about ten feet off the ground on an enormous, bright red, jeweled throne. He wears a gold crown and purple silk robe and smiles condescendingly, majestically. Floris sits on his lap. She is dressed in an orange satin gown. Nobody on the street looks up.

MALKOVICH
(fifty voices)
Greetings, my lowly subjects.

FLORIS
Great things, my lonely subtext?

MALKOVICH
(rolls his eyes)
Boy, be careful what you wish for.
(to Floris)
Never mind, dear. Just enjoy the ride, will you?

Floris shrugs, picks at her finger nails.

MALKOVICH
 (to the people on the
 street)
 I am bored. You will dance for your
 king now.

Without pause the entire street of gray clad people breaks into a meticulously choreographed production number. Totally silent, totally joyless, but exquisitely executed. We see that Maxine is one of the anonymous dancers. Her face is void of expression. Malkovich laughs.

MALKOVICH
 Faster! Faster, my little trained
 monkeys!

The crowd dances faster and faster. Older people fall over, exhausted, clutching their hearts. Nobody stops dancing to help, nobody dares.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Bird's eye view of the park. It's all painted gray. Every tree, every leaf. There's no sign of life. The camera moves in, through some gray trees and gray brush to:

A LUSH GREEN OASIS CAMOUFLAGED ON THE TOP AND SIDES WITH
 GRAY PAINT

This place is filled with life: Colorful birds, lizards, cats, a rooster. All the animals are active, happy, but totally silent, as if they know the precariousness of their position. Lotte and Elijah sit among them. These are the animals that she freed earlier. Lotte and Elijah hold hands and look into each other's eyes. We see that they both wear gold bands. They are husband and wife. Elijah signs.

ELIJAH
 Must you take this terrible demon on
 yourself, my love?

LOTTE
 Yes. I'm the only one. I have to
 enter Malkovich and destroy him from
 the inside. If not me, who?

ELIJAH
 If there was any way I could go in
 your place. But I'm only a monkey
 and...

LOTTE
 (puts finger to his
 lips)
 Hush, sweetheart.

Lotte slips into a gray jumpsuit. She stuffs a homemade bomb on her pocket. She and Elijah kiss passionately, then embrace.

LOTTE
 (to the animals)
 I'll be with you always, my friends.
 Who knows, maybe if I'm lucky, I'll
 rejoin you with wings and a beak.

ELIJAH
 Wings and a halo, my darling. Wings
 and a halo.

Lotte turns quickly. This is too much to bear. She descends into a storm drain. The animals stop what they're doing.

PARROT
 (softly)
 Good-bye. Good-bye.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MERTIN-FLEMMER BUILDING - DAY

A man-hole cover lifts. Lotte pokes her head out. The coast is clear. She emerges. Assumes the dead-eyed expression of the others, and enters the building.

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Lotte watches the floors change. After seven, she presses the emergency stop button. The elevator jerks to a halt. She picks up the crow bar in the corner, pries open the door. The 7 1/2 floor is gone. Nothing is there but pipes and wires and beams. She climbs out onto the floor.

CUT TO:

INT. BETWEEN FLOORS - CONTINUOUS

Lotte searched the floor for some sign of the portal. It is nowhere to be found. There is a noise behind her. She turns with a start. It's Craig, ragged and ill-shaven.

LOTTE
 My God!

CRAIG
I'm so glad you're safe. You look
really wonderful.

LOTTE
I'm in love. For the first time.
It's funny, but when it happens to
you, there's no question.

CRAIG
He's a lucky man.
(beat)
Do I know him?

LOTTE
It's Elijah.

CRAIG
The iguana?

LOTTE
The monkey.

CRAIG
Oh, right. As long as you're happy.
I'm sure he's a better lover than I
ever was.

LOTTE
A better friend.

CRAIG
(beat)
I'm sorry for everything.

LOTTE
(pecking him on the
cheek)
It's okay, Craig. It all worked out,
in an odd sort of way.

CRAIG
You came up here looking for the
portal?

LOTTE
Yeah. I was going to kill him from
the inside.

CRAIG
And yourself too in the process.
God, you're so beautiful. Why couldn't
I see that before?

LOTTE

You saw it once. Now you see it again. That's life, isn't it? And you were up here to try the same thing, weren't you?

CRAIG

I suppose. But they got here first, the lousy bastards. So now it's all over, I guess.

LOTTE

I don't know. There's a small community of us. We have a place they don't know about. We're happy. We'll keep trying to figure out a way. Come stay with us. Join the struggle.

CRAIG

You'll have me, after all I've done to you?

LOTTE

People make mistakes.

CRAIG

I'm through with puppets, Lotte. I just want you to know that.

LOTTE

I know.

CRAIG

I'd like to be a farmer. I want to help things grow, to encourage life. Do you and your friends need a farmer?

LOTTE

Sure. We could really use a farmer. We'd be grateful for the help.

(beat)

Also, I think, you know, if you wouldn't mind too terribly, a little puppet show every once in a while, would do a lot to lift our spirits. You know, if you wouldn't mind too terribly.

Craig's eyes well up with tears. Lotte looks at him sweetly.

LOTTE

Oh honey. It's gonna be okay.

She puts her arm around him and leads him toward the elevator.

CRAIG
I love you, Lotte.

We come on very close to Craig's arm as he lifts it to put it around Lotte. We see a thin almost invisible filament. We follow it up, and discover that Craig is now a marionette being controlled from above by an emotionless Mantini in a gray jumpsuit.

MANTINI
(in Craig's voice)
I can't wait to see where you and
your friends live, Lotte.

LOTTE (O.S.)
It's beautiful, Craig, like Eden.

Now we see filaments attached to Mantini's arms, and we follow them up to find that Flemmer is controlling Mantini.

FLEMMER
One serpent, coming up.

Flemmer throws his head back and laughs. The camera moves into his mouth and down his throat, which, oddly enough, looks exactly like the membranous John Malkovich portal tunnel.

MUSIC IN: "Put Your Hand Inside The Puppet Head" by They Might Be Giants. It plays throughout the credits.

FADE OUT

THE END