

1 INT STERILE EDIT SUITE 1

Thousands of filmstrips, catalogued with manila stock tags, hang in orderly rolls in the shadowy space. Their edges catch the animated light of a distant screen -- we hear a low WHIRRING NOISE...

Various gilded awards and proclamations are bolted to sleek, white tiled walls. The SLOW BREATHING of someone sleeping cuts through the stillness. Always moving to the right, multiple typed charts and logs are expertly arranged in matching clipboards...

A HIDDEN MAN rustles under fresh bedding on a small cot. In the background, a well-kept, old film editing machine (steenbeck) sits between two dock doors...The doors have grimy plastic strips...

A1 The whir identifies itself -- matching reels spool film...A1  
A scene plays on one of the editor's screens -- a fuzzy image of JENNIFER (27), playfully fencing the camera with a violin bow. A small metal megaphone sticks out of the tiled wall, via a bendable metal tube, above the editor...

We travel to the right through one of the dock doors...

2 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 2

A dream-catcher slowly rotates above another megaphone and steenbeck on this side of the wall...This steenbeck has been lovingly decorated with handmade decals and baubles... Jennifer continues to fence, the reels continue to spool film...Art books, trash, and ornate candlesticks litter the work space...

Further into the space reveals large numbers of hip designs sketched on old plaster walls. The SLOW BREATHING of someone sleeping is heard...

Many different-size canvas bins stuffed with thousands of filmstrips pollute the space...

Another MAN sleeps in a hammock covered with a wild afghan... Overhead is that famous poster of Albert Einstein sticking out his tongue...

The man rolls over to reveal a gaunt, sweaty, unshaven LUCAS (33). He twitches in his sleep -- face racked with pain.

LUCAS  
(mumbling)  
Jennifer...

A MYSTERIOUS FILMSTRIP moves like a snake up and over the sleeping Lucas. He twitches as it slithers over his neck.

LUCAS  
(mumbling)  
Come back...

The Filmstrip Snake tightens on his neck. Lucas wipes his sweaty brow, he gags. Spinning out of the hammock, Lucas grabs at the filmstrip.

He unwinds the filmstrip from his neck and holds its contents up to what little light is available.

The filmstrip's end has a crude tape label:

"Lucas and Jennifer, Chinese Restaurant, after movie awards"

He presses the film and his fists against his temples in frustration. Behind him, a small light activates, illuminating more of the room's dark recesses.

A stained wood box bolted to the plaster wall magically swings down to reveal an old turntable.

Lucas composes himself, analyzes the situation, and pensively moves to one of the dock doors.

He hears the STEADY BREATHING of his sleeping neighbor.

3 INT STERILE EDIT SUITE 3

The Hidden Man continues to slumber in his tiled chamber as the dock doors become eerily illuminated by lights turned on in the other suite.

4 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 4

Lucas goes to the steenbeck and gives her a sleepy/loving caress. His eyes meet the scene playing on the screen - Jennifer playing. A small chuckle escapes. He reaches for the on/off toggle and strikes it.

The image stops and Lucas carefully lights a ceremonial candle. He picks up the filmstrip and studies it. After an introspective moment, he releases more levers and toggles and spools it into the reels.

In the back, the turntable's "on" switch lights up as an old vinyl record drops onto the cradle. GLORIOUS VIOLIN MUSIC fills the room.

The slow rotating label reads:

"Jennifer's Violin Score for Lucas's El Cerebro Film"

Lucas spins around, frantically waving his hands at the turntable and making a "ssssssh" noise. Turning to the dock doors, Lucas contorts his body trying to influence the outcome - too late, the doors glow with other suite's lights turning on. Lucas cringes as he hears his neighbor's RUSTLING and LOUD FOOTSTEPS in the other room.

As Jennifer's music plays, a shadowy figure tries to peer through the grimy plastic strips at one of the dock doors.

Lucas fortifies himself and goes to activate a green toggle but stops short. He is full of nervous energy. The megaphone above Lucas rears up startling him.

HIDDEN MAN  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I believe we agreed you would stop  
reediting that scene.

Lucas anxiously scratches his head and arms like a junky. He grabs his end of the megaphone communication system and speaks into its funnel.

LUCAS  
(embarrassed)  
Uh...go back to sleep...just want  
one more time.

HIDDEN MAN  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
We're into another reel. That scene  
is finished.

LUCAS  
(lying)  
No harm...

Lucas clenches his teeth and hits the toggle.

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I object.

One of the steenbeck's screens glows with the filmstrip's  
countdown:

5, 4, 3, 2, beep!

5 EXT CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT 5

An old Chinese restaurant storefront looks like a gleaming beacon through a THUNDEROUS DOWNPOUR. A few PEDESTRIANS race by, trying to get home.

6 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT 6

A FEW PATRONS leave as the WAITRESS waves goodbye. The remaining OLD PATRONS seem to have nowhere to go.

A golden movie award sits alongside a stylish clutch on a table. THUNDER is heard outside.

Here, a stylish and confident Lucas wrings rain water from his hair. Every tie and cuff link on his well-appointed tuxedo has been undone in an attempt to get dry.

An OLD CHEF yells at a BUSBOY in Chinese through the kitchen window and gestures wildly with a meat cleaver.

The Waitress delivers their food as a FEMALE'S HAND puts down her teacup and slowly picks up her chopsticks.

Lucas dries off his Award.

JENNIFER, wearing little make-up, lots of rain water, last year's stylish evening dress, and a penetrating gaze watches Lucas.

LUCAS

What?

She aimlessly picks at her food while planning her next move. A lone hot red pepper can be seen hidden in the rice.

Lucas starts to eat.

JENNIFER

What was the deal with that acceptance speech?

(comically imitating  
Lucas's voice)

"Now, I have completed my ring cycle of visual light and music."

Lucas doesn't like her tone.

LUCAS

I was happy for my win...

Jennifer tries to place a heaping mound of food with the hidden red pepper into her mouth, but his words cause a momentary loss of appetite.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

(he corrects himself with  
an over-sympathetic tone)

Our win.

Jennifer takes a deep breath to suppress her disgust...The front door opens as CALVIN (40) races inside out of the rain. He too is wearing a wet tuxedo.

CALVIN

Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Hello Calvin...

(remembering her manners)

This is Lucas.

Lucas coolly smiles between bites and reluctantly extends his hand when it's demanded. His eyes dart between Jennifer and Calvin.

CALVIN

(to the both of them)

Great win, really, an outstanding  
short film.

JENNIFER

Thank you.

Lucas nods. Jennifer tries again to place the food in her mouth.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

(to Jennifer)

I must say, your strings in the  
film really set it off.

LUCAS

(interrupting)

Yeah, I was able to pound them  
together to fit the story.

The surprising force of Lucas's words pin Jennifer against her seat.

Calvin looks at the feasting Lucas with a perplexed expression. He feels the tension.

CALVIN

O.K., good win all around. I'm going to get some tea and be on my way.

(pause)

Good evening.

LUCAS

Sure.

Jennifer looks to Calvin with a stunned half smile. She watches as Calvin ventures to a side table. He looks back to her upon sitting, smiles and she finally releases herself from the stunned state. Her smile leaves as she turns back to the feasting Lucas. The FRAME FREEZES.

7 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE

7

Jennifer's disgusted face jitters on the screen bathing Lucas's tortured face in soft light. He starts to break down from the inside out. Her music continues to play.

Lucas moves to one of the canvas bins and searches the filmstrips and their crude tape labels:

"Confronting Your Father Take 243"

"5th birthday party - Redux, No Clown Version"

"Shaved Genitals, a new beginning - in progress"

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)

(mumbled/megaphone)

Yes, there are thousands of ways to reedit that scene, but none of them matter now.

Lucas smiles - he has found the filmstrip he wanted:

"Explanation of Award Speech for Jennifer - Modest Addition"

LUCAS

(laughs)

You emotionless bastard.

He releases some toggles and spools the filmstrip into another reel.

The other screen comes alive with various footage of himself talking and eating in the restaurant scene.

HIDDEN MAN(O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
For weeks we've discussed this, yet  
you insist on breaking protocol for  
this one scene.

All of the footage is just of Lucas, seen from Jennifer's point of view. He studies the screen as he fast forwards through the footage.

LUCAS (ON SCREEN)  
True, but...  
(fast forward)  
Please, listen....  
(fast forward)  
What I was thinking...

LUCAS (REAL)  
Gotcha!

Lucas finds the take he likes, grabs a white grease pencil and marks the filmstrip...With catlike dexterity, he reaches for a film splicer while activating the rewind toggle on the steenbeck...Jennifer's face disappears from the screen as Lucas rewinds and pauses at different parts of the previously watched scene...

HIDDEN MAN(O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I've tried to reason with you and  
my offers have been denied.

Reaching the first shots of him explaining his acceptance speech from the scene before, Lucas activates the release toggle and pulls the film out of the steenbeck...The restaurant scene disappears from the screen...

LUCAS  
Yeah...yeah...

Grease pencil marks are placed on the removed film...It's placed in the splicer and the restaurant scene is broken...Lucas makes fast precise cuts in the filmstrip on the splicer before affixing it to the larger film with clear tape.

8 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT

8

JENNIFER

What was the deal with that  
acceptance speech?

(comically imitating  
Lucas's voice)

"Now, I have completed my ring  
cycle of visual light and music."

Lucas is more giving this time.

LUCAS

What I was thinking...and you're  
right...I botched it...is that I've  
found the perfect emotional  
equivalent for a timeless story...

Jennifer has the pepper-laced glob of food halfway in her  
mouth.

LUCAS (CONT'D)

...your music.

The food comes back out.

JENNIFER

My music! It hasn't been about my  
music since Brentwood.

9 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE

9

Lucas sits at the editor with a confused look on his face.

LUCAS

Brentwood? Where the hell did that  
come from?

He pushes the books, trash and candles on the tabletop off to  
the side and sees that the film he is editing travels from  
his machine through a hole in the wall to the other side.

10 INT WALL

10

The film runs into the wall through the hole -- Lucas peers  
into the hole.

LUCAS

I knew it!

11 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 11

Lucas grabs the megaphone.

LUCAS  
(contained fury)  
Stay out of this...You hear me?

12 INT STERILE EDIT SUITE 12

From behind, the Hidden Man crosses to the filmstrip racks in his tiled lair. His hands carefully remove tagged filmstrips and make a mark on his clipboard chart.

13 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 13

Continuous: More of Lucas searching through crude film strip tags...

LUCAS  
I've got to organize this stuff.

More pulling of film footage through the steenbeck of Lucas talking at the table - Jennifer's P.O.V...More grease pencil marks...A shot of an increasingly cut-up piece of film.

14 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT 14

JENNIFER  
What was the deal with that acceptance speech?  
(comically imitating  
Lucas's voice)  
"Now, I have completed my ring cycle of visual light and music."

Lucas passionately pleads his case.

LUCAS  
(whispering)  
If I had pulled you on that stage so we could have celebrated together...

The red pepper finally hits pay dirt. After two chews Jennifer's face becomes flushed.

A14 Large beads of sweat emerge through her reddened pores. A14

She reaches for a napkin but Lucas clasps her hands in his.

LUCAS (CONT'D)  
like at Brentwood...

Jennifer's forehead and chest are bathed with sweat beads.  
The spice moving through her body registers a reaction;  
Jennifer becomes angry and pulls away from Lucas.

JENNIFER  
What a load of crap.  
(starts eating again)  
You're a better actor than any of  
the ones in your movies.

LUCAS  
Jennifer..

She points her chopsticks and reddened face at him causing a  
small amount of food to fly.

JENNIFER  
You're selfish Lucas.  
(searching, eating)  
At Carol's house last spring...

15 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 15

Lucas violently pushes away from the steenbeck causing it to  
hit the wall and the room to shake.

LUCAS  
Damn!

In the background Jennifer's rant and violin playing mix in a  
WEIRD WAY.

JENNIFER (O.C.)  
Tonight isn't close to what you  
pulled at Fremont...

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I know, I've been analyzing  
Jennifer's cognitive process...

Lucas seethes as he grips one of the large candlesticks.

HIDDEN MAN (CONT'D)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
...the possible edits are  
limitless...

Lucas is beside himself with anger - he races through the right dock door with the candlestick...

16 INT STERILE EDIT SUITE 16

Lucas runs into the suite to find the chair at the steenbeck still spinning and the far dock door's plastic strips still aflutter. His rage subsides - another defeat.

This steenbeck's tabletop is a clean gray surface with a carefully placed clipboard of data and five sharpened pencils. The filmstrip comes through the wall into this machine. The megaphone rears its head:

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
You know we are in no condition to  
occupy the same space.

Lucas travels to the expertly organized and sterile filmstrip racks bathed in cold fluorescent light. He removes one of the tagged strips.

LUCAS  
(yelling)  
Why all the negativity?

Lucas reads the filmstrip tag:

"Probable Emotional Que #38B, Brentwood III - Jennifer"

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I'm trying to protect us.

Lucas shakes with anger. He races through the left dock door...

17 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 17

Again, the opposite dock door's plastic strips are aflutter.

Lucas throws the candlestick across the room. It rips through the Albert Einstein poster causing large sections of plaster to fall.

He rips the filmstrip back through the hole in the wall.

LUCAS  
Leave me alone!

He lops off a section of the film with the splicer and carelessly throws it to the side.

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)  
(mumbled/megaphone)  
I'm just doing my job.

Lucas shakes his head "no" while rooting through another bin of filmstrips. Jennifer's violin wails, beautiful but dark.

A17 Transition: Footage of Lucas sitting in the restaurant A17  
pleading his case zooms backwards and forwards. It stops and is dislodged from the frame as a grease pencil makes marks for cutting.

18 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT 18

Lucas sits patiently watching. He checks his watch.

Jennifer picks at her food before taking a bite with the hidden red pepper.

Large beads of sweat emerge through her reddened pores.

Lucas watches as she becomes flushed. She reaches over for her napkin as a wet Calvin races inside out of the rain.

CALVIN  
Jennifer.

JENNIFER  
Hello Calvin...This is Lucas.

Lucas coolly smiles and now graciously extends his hand. His eyes dart between Jennifer and Calvin.

CALVIN  
(to the both of them)  
Great win, really, an outstanding short film.

Jennifer forces a smile for Calvin as she sweats across her brow and breast.

CALVIN  
(to Jennifer)  
I must say, your strings in the film really set it off.

JENNIFER  
Thank you.

Lucas just sits playing with his food. Jennifer wipes some sweat deposits from under her eyes and smiles.

CALVIN (CONT'D)  
I would love to work with you.  
(pause)  
Darling are you o.k.?

Lucas sits up.

JENNIFER  
(embarrassed)  
I'd avoid the red peppers.

They both laugh as Lucas watches, left out.

Calvin's smug mug looks at Lucas. The image FREEZES.

19 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE

19

Calvin's smug mug is frozen on the steenbeck's screen. Lucas is heard thrashing about the filmstrip bins in the background. An ominous MECHANICAL CLICKING SOUND is heard.

Lucas pops up out of a bin covered with filmstrips.

At the far wall, an eerie printer uses spidery tines to stamp out an ink image on a roll of parchment. Nearby, three pulsating security monitors display images from the outside -- different green-tinted views of an unkempt bedroom.

Lucas has a pained expression as if he knows what is coming. Jennifer's luscious violin matches the mood.

The parchment falls into an already overflowing basket.

The sight is like a shot to Lucas's gut.

Lucas works his way to the basket. He unrolls the parchment -- the salutation "Dear Lucas" is at the beginning of the roll. Jennifer's violin starts an increased tempo. He unrolls more - - it's a copy of a wedding invitation with an oval-shaped picture of Calvin and Jennifer in a romantic embrace.

He spins around clutching the parchment like it's a death warrant.

The Hidden Man's mouth can be seen through the funnel and tube of the megaphone.

HIDDEN MAN

(echo)

This is an absolute.

Lucas wrenches his head towards the megaphone. He has a defeated look on his face.

HIDDEN MAN

(echo)

Please...

Lucas's eyes blaze. He lets out a primal yell.

Long cracks travel through the plaster.

Lucas frantically searches through a bin of filmstrips.

The Hidden Man's lips are seen through the megaphone.

HIDDEN MAN

(mumbled/excited)

You need to stop editing and help me fix the cracks.

Jennifer's bow bends with a new ferocity.

Frantic searching through crude tags...The film is ripped from the steenbeck...Lucas's hands rapidly cutting and taping the beat-up film...Hands covered with bits of old splice tape...Discarded film is carelessly thrown to the side.

Lucas is seen hunched over, working at the steenbeck like a dog on a carcass.

20 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT

20

The Old Chef yells at the Busboy in Chinese through the kitchen window and gestures wildly with a meat cleaver.

THUNDER is heard outside. Large beads of sweat emerge through Jennifer's reddened pores.

As a sweaty Jennifer reaches for her napkin, a GHOSTLY VOICE is heard.

LUCAS (V.O.)

My muse.

Jennifer looks at Lucas peacefully sitting across the table.

JENNIFER

Did you..

LUCAS (V.O.)

I love you.

Jennifer is startled because Lucas's lips are not moving.

21 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 21

Lucas speaks into an old radio microphone while working the steenbeck's audio mixing dials. Jennifer's worried face is on the screen.

LUCAS (INTO RADIO MIC)

We belong together.

A20 JENNIFER (V.O.) A20

What is happening?

HIDDEN MAN (O.C.)

(mumbled/megaphone)

This is outrageous.

Lucas stretches over to the megaphone from the radio mic.

LUCAS

You haven't seen nothing yet!

22 INT CHINESE RESTAURANT 22

A concerned Calvin watches Jennifer shaking and sweating.

CALVIN

Darling are you o.k.?

Lucas stares at Calvin with a menacing glare.

JENNIFER

I don't know...

Calvin's head is suddenly a MESS OF BRIGHT SQUIGGLY LINES; it appears his head has been scratched right off the film. Calvin screams and clutches at his head only for his hands to disappear into the squiggles.

Jennifer and the patrons turn over their chairs as they move away from Calvin. Loud screams and Chinese are heard.

The Old Chef jumps out of the kitchen with his meat cleaver, but stops short of attacking.

Calvin, the squiggly headed monster, spins wildly knocking over tables full of tea and half-eaten food.

Jennifer screams and turns towards Lucas. Lucas peacefully sits with sealed lips looking at her.

LUCAS (V.O.)  
Jennifer...

23 EXT CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT 23

Jennifer crashes through the large plate glass window of the restaurant's storefront. She lands in full gallop and runs into the stormy night screaming and clutching her head. Chinese-Americans follow her, scattering in all directions.

24 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE 24

A frustrated Lucas rubs his fingers through his hair. He lays his head on the steenbeck as it continues to emit the sounds of screams and Chinese.

Jennifer's record oscillates on the turntable emitting the familiar in-and-out noise of a forgotten needle.

The Hidden Man's lips are seen through the megaphone.

HIDDEN MAN  
(mumbled/calm)  
It's time.

Lucas closes his eyes.

The turntable waits.

The megaphone waits.

Lucas raises his head and opens his eyes - they're ablaze with action. He rips the film from the steenbeck and uses his teeth to tear a section out of the film. The turntable heats up again.

25 INT STERILE EDIT SUITE 25

The Hidden Man grabs his megaphone, but falling white tile stops him from speaking.

HIDDEN MAN  
Arrrrrrgh!

26 INT ARTY EDIT SUITE

26

Lucas carelessly throws a long section of film off to the side. The film winds and turns in the air in SLOW MOTION as Lucas is heard IN REAL TIME rooting through filmstrips (O.C.)

The slow-moving film once again looks like a snake winding through the air. It floats down to a floor littered with thousands of other discarded filmstrips. It comes to rest on the unrolled invitation with Calvin and Jennifer in a romantic embrace.

Pieces of plaster rain down on the invitation and filmstrips. We rest on Jennifer's image as her violin plays on.

CUT TO BLACK.