

'Dangerous Characters'

Original Screenplay by Yale Udoff

FADE IN:

EXT. VENICE, CALIFORNIA - DUSK - MONTAGE

A SERIES OF SHOTS: traffic, people on bikes, dogs doing tricks, hot dog and burger stands, skateboarders...and the fog rolling in.

INT. VENICE APARTMENT - NIGHT

CAMERA BEHIND a MAN in his bathrobe, working at his computer. Nearby, a cat. A photo of an old woman with grey hair and a smiling countenance somewhere close.

PULL BACK to reveal, beside the cat - long, lovely legs. A beautiful WOMAN'S legs.

WOMAN'S FACE

High cheekbones - angular, mysterious, sensual. She's watching: the man at the computer.

CLOSE ON FACE OF MAN AT THE COMPUTER (WALT)

WALT'S P.O.V - NAKED WOMAN

A ravishing beauty, the stuff of dreams.

IN BED

WALT, in his early thirties, has that disheveled far-away look that many women find irresistible. He and the woman make fierce, heated love. On the night table nearby, a bottle of red wine next to the racing form. As the lovemaking grows violent, the bottle of wine is knocked over: red liquid spills onto the white sheets, but the love making continues unabated.

CUT TO:

ANGLE BEHIND WALT - LATER

Repeat opening shot: At his desk, Walt works at the computer. He stops. Silence. He turns toward the bed. It's freshly made, virginal. No wine glass on the night table, but there is a racing form. Sitting on the bed is Walt's cat, Cagney, who meows, leaps off the bed. Phone RINGS. He picks it up; his face immediately shows concern, worry.

WALT
 (into phone)
 A stroke? When?

EXT. NURSING HOME - NIGHT

Walt walks through the light rain, beside a gurney carrying his MOTHER, the grey-haired old woman in the photo. A Medical Orderly pushes open the door.

INT. NURSING HOME ROOM - LATER

Four beds, all filled with older citizens, mostly asleep. Walt, fighting to keep his composure, holds by the bed where his mother stares into space. He kisses her on the temple, turns to the nearby NURSE.

WALT
 She'll come out of this, won't she?

NURSE
 There's always hope.

The emotion overflowing, he starts out.

WALT
 You'll take the best care of her -
 whatever it costs?

NURSE
 We'll do everything we can.

EXT. NURSING HOME

He exits, slumps against the wall, pulling himself together.

CUT TO:

INT. UCLA RESEARCH LIBRARY (READING ROOM) - DAY

Rows of tables and readers.

WALT'S P.O.V - GUN MANUAL

He makes some notes as he turns the pages revealing photos of .38s, Magnums, Luggers, MM. Handguns, Uzis, Glocks, a pearl-handed pistol, etc., etc. He closes the book, looks like he's far away, the concern over his mother still evident. He picks up his cell-phone, punches in some numbers.

WALT
 (into phone)
 Can I speak to the Doctor about my
 mother, Mrs. Lewis.

A Library Guard comes by and motions "no phones."

DESK

Walt waits to return the checked-out volume, notices a BEAUTIFUL GIRL standing in the adjoining line. She smiles pleasantly, offering a perfect opportunity, an invitation almost. But he turns away, unable to muster the courage.

EXT. WILSHIRE BLVD.- HORIZON HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Walking, thinking, very much into himself.

He passes Horizon House, looks to the top floors of this deluxe condo, jots some notes down, continues on. A HORRIBLE SCREAM! followed by a THUD, something heavy slamming into the concrete behind him.

He keeps walking, as if nothing much has happened. An ELDERLY COUPLE passes him, leisurely taking in the day.

WALT'S VOLVO

It's battered frame is parked a few feet away. He reaches it, disgustedly pulls a parking ticket from the windshield, and as he opens the door, once again gazes to the top balconies of this deluxe building.

CUT TO:

INT. WALT'S APT. - NIGHT

We see it more fully now. Small. Kitchen, bedroom, and living room, which also serves as his study. (NOTE: Though the apt. is all neatness and order, it will, as the story develops, grow disordered, chaotic.)

GRACE, in her late twenties, sits on a torn and battered armchair. Though attractive, she tends to have a running battle with her weight. Walt exams a few sheets of paper next to his computer. The racing form nearby. He looks to the photo of his mother.

GRACE
 Your mom's strong. She's a fighter.

Her reassurance lifts him. He picks up the racing sheet.

GRACE
I read those pages.

WALT
And?

GRACE
Great stuff. Especially that trip
to Havana. The way Gloria has
Charlie doing everything she wants.
Must be nice to have that kind of
power.

He moves to her, sits on the edge of the armchair.

WALT
(laughing)
With power comes responsibilities.

GRACE
Think they know that in Washington?

He laughs, kisses her primly on the forehead.

GRACE
(after a beat)
You should have let me pay tonight.

WALT
A meal out never tastes as good as
when you can't afford it.

She stands, runs her hand over his neck. They kiss. We get
the sense she holds the embrace. She knows this. It hurts.

GRACE
I love you, you know.

He doesn't know how to respond.

WALT
How about some Ben & Jerry's?

She forces a smile.

GRACE
I'll get it.

KITCHEN

She looks with amusement at a sink piled with two days of dishes. Then opens the fridge, and as she reaches into the freezer is surprised to see:

THREE CIGARS

Wedged between the ice cream and a frozen, half-eaten grapefruit.

GRACE

Since when do you smoke cigars?

Walt moves up from behind, seems surprised too, but hides it.

WALT

Probably...Skip's. He was over yesterday.

Grace pulls out the ice cream, and as she passes the dirty plates:

GRACE

Something live living under there.

WALT

Probably Elvis.

Before following her out, he turns back to the freezer and the three cigars, puzzled.

EXT. ZOLTAN'S LUNCH COUNTER - WASHINGTON BLVD. - DAY

SKIP, sitting and munching a hot dog, watches the passing scene; late thirties, weatherbeaten, a man constantly on the make, whether it be for a deal or a woman.

An ATTRACTIVE HIGH SCHOOL GIRL passes by wearing an outfit that would make a hooker look conservative.

SKIP

If I were in high school, I'd carry your books.

She throws him a scorching look of contempt.

GIRL

Fuck off, ol' man.

Walt reaches the counter, having observed the above. As he orders a cup of from the burly ZOLTAN...

WALT

Maybe you ought to stay away from girls and try women.

SKIP

None left. All that feminist garbage. Say one wrong word and they got you pickled and canned.

Walt laughs. GERALDINE, a young woman in her early to mid-twenties, exits the nearby antique shop and heads for the counter carrying two coffee mugs. She stunning.

As she gives the mugs to Zoltan, Walt watches her, mesmerized. He snaps out of it as she nods a friendly smile.

SKIP

Nice "mugs".

She ignores Skip, take the steaming mugs and heads away.

WALT

Know her?

SKIP

In my dreams.

Walt watches as she disappears into the little shop. After a few more beats, he pulls out the three cigars.

WALT

You leave these at my place?

Skip takes one, impressed.

SKIP

You crazy?

WALT

What do you mean?

SKIP

Cuban, baby. The best. Numero uno. Cost a fortune. Where'd you get them?

WALT

I guess, eh -- this friend of Grace's.

SKIP

Great lady, Grace. What is it with you two?

Walt seems puzzled.

SKIP

She's got her place, you got yours.
Why not save the rent? Move in with
her - She's always working.

WALT

That's you Skip, not me.
(hands him the cigars)
Enjoy.

NEW SHOT

Walt moves past the antique shop, glances in. Geraldine is talking to a customer.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMALL SHINGLE HOUSE (SANTA MONICA) - DAY

Walt's guides his Volvo to a stop in front of the old house.

BACKYARD

JACOB, a feisty old man in his late-seventies, spots Walt just as he loses the final point in a ping-pong game to MARTHA, his wife, also in her seventies.

JACOB

This loss I could blame on you,
Walt. But me, I'm a generous sort.
(to Martha)
If you have to lose, it should only
be to a beautiful lady who still
doesn't iron a decent shirt.

MARTHA

He lies so badly. (To Walt) No
kisses?

It's obvious Walt loves these two; he gives her a hug and a big kiss.

MARTHA

Your mother taught you respect.

WALT

That she did. She also said I'd
never make a living.