

THE WALK

Screenplay by

Robert Zemeckis & Christopher Browne

Based on the book  
TO REACH THE CLOUDS by Philippe Petit

WHITE 3/10/14  
BLUE Revisions 3/25/14  
PINK Revisions 4/5/14  
YELLOW Revisions 4/17/14  
GREEN Revisions 5/1/14  
GOLDENROD Revisions 5/9/14  
BUFF Revisions 5/21/14  
SALMON Revisions 5/25/14  
CHERRY Revisions 6/3/14

OVER BLACK --

WE HEAR A VOICE. A VOICE with a slight French accent, eager and full of energy. A voice full of passion...full of fury. This is: PHILIPPE PETIT.

PETIT (V.O.)

Why? That is the question people ask me most. Pourquoi? Why do you walk on the wire? Why do you tempt fate? Why do you chase...

1 CLOSE ON PETIT --

1

PETIT

...DEATH?

(pause...)

But, I do not think of it this way. I never even say this word, death. *La mort*. Yes of course, I said it once, maybe three times, just now...

2 WIDER -- OPEN SKY DAWN

2

PETIT (EARLY 20'S) is handsome, sinewy and perfectly proportioned -- an acrobat. His winning personality and self-deprecating nature easily neutralizes his archetypal French arrogance.

He wears a black turtleneck and black trousers. HE SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO THE CAMERA.

PETIT

But watch... you will not hear me say it again. Instead, I use the opposite word...

CUT TO:

3 EXT. THE TWIN TOWERS MORNING

3

THE TWIN TOWERS of New York's World Trade Center -- STANDING LIKE TWO TWIN GIANTS, rising high to the heavens.

PETIT (V.O.)

LIFE! For me, walking on the wire...is life. *C'est la vie*.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN TOWARDS THE ROOF OF THE SOUTH TOWER, WHICH IS STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION -- IT FINDS PETIT STANDING ON THE LEDGE -- DRESSED IN THE SAME CLOTHES HE WEARS ON THE STATUE. THE IMAGE IS PALE, DESATURATED AND MOVING IN SLOW-MOTION -- A DREAM, PERHAPS?

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

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It's 1974. I am in New York... and I'm being called by the World Trade Center Towers.

The roof of the South Tower is completely deserted except for Petit. He moves to the narrow roof ledge, surveying the scene -- his hair and clothing flutter in the wind.

There is an I-beam protruding -- creating a narrow path that extends into the "Void." Petit climbs over the steel girder bulwark and slides his foot out onto the solitary I-beam!

He studies the opposite Tower, THE NORTH TOWER. He inches closer to the edge...

NOW PETIT IMAGINES A CABLE -- A CABLE SPANNING BETWEEN THE TWO TOWERS. THE CABLE SHIMMERS -- IT'S SPARKLING GOLD!

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

I am planning for what I hope will be my most audacious and beautiful performance... I'm summoned to hang a wire between the World Trade Center Towers -- AND WALK ON IT. Dance on it! I call this dream of mine -- The Coup.

PETIT'S face is intense, full of confidence -- and absolute fear. He stands 1,368 feet above Manhattan. He slowly places his left foot on the wire -- now ever so carefully, HE MOVES HIS RIGHT FOOT ON TO THE WIRE -- AND BALANCES ON THE CABLE! Then, without warning...

THE SHIMMERING CABLE VANISHES!

AT THE SAME MOMENT THE CAMERA RISES TO THE SKY -- TWISTING AS IT BEGINS TO FLY AWAY FROM THE TOWERS! Creating a STOMACH-DROPPING VERTIGO SENSATION!

THE CAMERA CONTINUES BACKING OVER THE HUDSON RIVER -- IT BLOWS INTO A BILLOWING CLOUD...

A SECOND LATER, THE CLOUD DISSIPATES AND VANISHES -- AND NOW THE CAMERA FLIES AWAY FROM THE TOWERS AND MANHATTAN SKYLINE -- TOWARD THE STATUE OF LIBERTY...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

So for this past year, I spend all my months... All my days dreaming, planning, and scheming...

THE CAMERA CONTINUES FLYING SOUTH -- AS LADY LIBERTY'S STOIC EXPRESSION FILLS THE FRAME. SHE GAZES SOMBERLY AT THE TWIN TOWERS...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

How am I going to sneak into the towers? How am I going to rig the wire? How am I going to get a ton of equipment up to the roof? How am I going to disguise myself? How am I going to avoid the guards, etcetera, etcetera...

THE CAMERA CRANES UP TO FIND THE TORCH. THE TORCH FLAME IS PRE 1986 AND MADE OF TINTED GLASS PANELS.

STANDING ON THE RIM OF THE TORCH IS PETIT -- THE CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE AS HE CONTINUES HIS STORY...

PUSH IN TO:

4

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY/TORCH MORNING

4

A CLOSE UP OF PETIT as he begins speaking. The shimmering TWIN TOWERS FRAMED BEHIND HIM...

PETIT

And still, everyone asks... "Why?" And, of course, I can never answer this question with words...

A sincere smile. He then magically produces a silk TOP-HAT which he gracefully puts on.

PETIT (CONT'D)

So we must go back in time, and across the ocean. Because my love affair with these beautiful Towers did not begin in New York.

(MORE)

PETIT (CONT'D)

In case you could not tell, I am  
not from here.

Petit takes the TOP-HAT off and hides it behind his back --  
WHERE IT MAGICALLY SWITCHES INTO A GLOBE. He SPINS IT ON HIS  
FINGER like a basketball.

PETIT (CONT'D)

No, my story begins in another one  
of the world's most beautiful  
cities.

Petit pushes the spinning globe toward the CAMERA -- and  
with his free hand he FLASHES HIS OPEN FINGERS IN BETWEEN THE  
GLOBE AND THE LENS -- CREATING A STROBE-EFFECT.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES IN CLOSE AND FINDS "PARIS" FLASHING LIKE  
A ZOETROPE --

PETIT (CONT'D)

*Oui, c'est Paris.*

CUT TO:

5

EXT. PARIS STREET DAY

5

CLOSE ON A RAIN PUDDLE -- THE EIFFEL TOWER IS REFLECTED in  
the GLASSY WATER. SUPER TITLE: PARIS, 1973.

SPLOOSH -- A single bicycle wheel SPLASHES through the  
puddle. THE CAMERA RISES TO FIND --

PETIT, (20-ish) wearing ratty black clothes, rides a  
UNICYCLE through the narrow streets. Over his shoulder: an  
antique leather postal bag with THREE JUGGLING PINS and a  
LOOP OF ROPE.

PETIT (V.O.)

So here I am... in Paris. A twenty-  
something-year-old, self proclaimed  
wire walker... that nobody on earth  
cares about... surviving as a  
juggler, a troubadour... A street  
juggler with no police permit.

PETIT wheels through the Quarter -- tipping his vintage top-  
hat to every pretty girl he passes.

CUT TO:

6

EXT. LATIN QUARTER CORNER DAY

6

Petit stands inside the chalk circle he has drawn on the pavement. A SMALL CROWD of onlookers APPLAUD AND CHEER as Petit juggles his bowling pins.

PETIT (V.O.)

I create a character. I have a top hat. I wear only black. I perform inside a chalk circle. And I do not talk. Not a single word. The circle is my domain. I don't allow not even a half of toe in my circle.

Petit notices a TOURIST (an hideously dressed American) with his foot over the chalk line. Petit instantly stops juggling - - then using mime gestures, begins to cajole, then berate, and finally humiliate the Man until he steps back. The CROWD loves it.

TIME CUT --

Now Petit zooms around inside he circle while juggling oranges.

PETIT (V.O.)

And if the spectators continue to violate my sacred space...

A BOY (8) inadvertently steps over the chalk line. Petit ROLLS OVER the boy's toes with his tire. The crowd LAUGHS.

PETIT

I must employ even more drastic measures...

A moment later, A WOMAN gets toe-rolled for the same offense. The crowd gets the message and takes a collective step back with a flurry of smiles and laughter. Petit wags his finger.

PETIT (V.O.)

Of course, not owning a permit meant I had to grow eyes in the back of my head to watch out for the police who wanted to arrest me 10 times a day.

TWEET! A POLICE WHISTLE PIERCES THE SCENE!

TWO GENDARMES, swinging nightsticks -- charge toward Petit.

Without missing a beat, Petit tosses the oranges to his audience, quickly salutes them with a tip of his hat, then peddles his ass out of there. He zips away just as the cops arrive.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. LATIN QUARTER OUTDOOR BISTRO LATER SAME 7

At a tiny sidewalk table, A YOUNG COUPLE canoodles -- A waiter places a basket of bread on their table just as...

Petit flies past on his unicycle and swipes a baguette off the table...

CUT TO:

8 EXT. ANOTHER STREET SAME 8

CLOSE ON PETIT as he cycles away -- munching on the bread...

PETIT (V.O.)

No matter where I was going, or what I was doing... I was always searching for the perfect place to hang my rope.

Suddenly Petit sees something and stops.

P.O.V. -- A tree lined PEDESTRIAN PARK. With book stalls and art vendors.

Petit removes a length of RED ROPE from inside his top hat and stretches it in front of his eye -- between two lamp posts.

CLOSE -- the length of rope spans the gap between the lamppost and the tree. Petit smiles.

\*\*

CUT TO:

9 EXT. PEDESTRIAN PARK LATER SAME 9

CLOSE ON PETIT'S FEET -- GRIPPING A WOBBLY ROPE...

WIDEN TO FIND -- Petit balancing on a loose hemp rope, juggling bowling pins. The rope is tied between two lamppost and it sags over Petit's chalk circle. A SMALL CROWD APPLAUDS.

LATER -- CLOSE ON PETIT'S TOP HAT -- as coins drop inside.

PETIT collects donations from his admiring AUDIENCE. He bows and lowers his hat to a YOUNG GIRL. She drops a hard candy jaw-breaker (Raspberry Swirl) inside the hat.

Petit mimes his thanks then SMACKS the bottom of the hat -- the jawbreaker flies out... And Petit catches it on the toe of his shoe.

He kicks his foot and the candy ball shoots high into the air... Ten, twelve, fifteen feet... Then it drops...

Right into Petit's mouth. With a flourish, he CHOMPS down on the candy... Instantly, he GRIMACES in pain!

PETIT  
Arrggh...!!

CUT TO:

10 INT. CHEAP DENTIST OFFICE DAY 10

Petit SWINGS OPEN the door. The large image of a tooth etched on the door's window tells us this is a dentist's office.

It's a shabby, poorly lit, waiting room. Five old, cold and miserable PATIENTS watch with suspicious eyes as Petit charges up to the RECEPTIONIST window.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Hello madame! I have a horrible  
toothache, and I need to see a  
dentist immediately!  
*(Bonjour Madame! J'ai un mal de  
dents épouvantable. Il faut que je  
vois un dentiste tout de suite!)*

The WOMAN RECEPTIONIST (60's) doesn't look up from her book.

RECEPTIONIST (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Did you call for an appointment?  
*(Vous avez appelé pour un rendez-  
vous?)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
I have no telephone.  
*(Je n'ai pas le téléphone.)*

RECEPTIONIST (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Well then, you'll have to wait.  
(MORE)

RECEPTIONIST (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
*(Alors vous allez devoir  
patienter.)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Wait? But madame...please?  
*(Patienter? Mais Madame, je vous en  
prie--)*

RECEPTIONIST  
(in French)  
It shouldn't be more than a couple  
of hours--  
*(Ça ne devrait pas durer plus de  
deux heures.)*

She hands him a clipboard with a SIGN-IN sheet.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
You couldn't possibly expect me to  
endure this terrible ailment for  
hours on end!?  
*(Vous ne pouvez tout de même pas me  
demander d'endurer un tel calvaire  
pendant des heures!?)*

But the RECEPTIONIST has already gone back to her book.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Fine! I'll wait. And hopefully I  
won't collapse from the  
excruciating pain!  
*(Très bien! J'attends! Et j'espère  
ne pas m'évanouir de douleur!)*

Rubbing his jaw, Petit sits next to A SQUARE MAN with bulging  
cheeks, reading a MAGAZINE.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Hello sir, how are you?  
*(Bonjour monsieur. Tout va bien?)*

The Square Man ignores him disdainfully.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Pleased to meet you as well.  
*(Enchanté, vraiment.)*

Petit grabs a MAGAZINE of his own. He then begins to APE the  
square man, clownishly imitating his every move, sitting  
exactly how the man sits, flipping the pages exactly how the  
man flips pages.

He LOOKS directly at the Square Man. Until the Square Man  
looks at him, at which point he immediately LOOKS AWAY, back  
at the magazine.

He thumbs through the pages, continuing his ACT, until  
suddenly, something catches his eye, and he FREEZES.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Suddenly, the pain in my tooth, it  
is gone.

INSERT: FRENCH MAGAZINE --

An artist's rendering of the future WORLD TRADE CENTER standing alongside the Eiffel Tower. The Twin Towers dwarf the Paris landmark with their height.

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 The Towers do not even exist yet.  
 But the magazine says that when  
 they do, they will be the tallest  
 in the world.

Petit is beside himself with glee! But then realizes he has to play it cool.

He goes to TEAR OUT the article, but the Square Man HEARS this, and LOOKS at him scornfully.

Petit waits for the Square Man to go back to reading. Then he tries again to TEAR the magazine, but the Square Man LOOKS at him again.

Petit looks away, frustrated. Then he gets an idea. He does a big FAKE SNEEZE.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
 AHH CHOOO!

And at the same time as the sneeze, he TEARS THE MAGAZINE, gets up, and makes a quick EXIT -- pocketing the article, and tipping his hat to the Receptionist.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
 Merci!

CUT TO:

11 INT. PETIT'S LOFT DAY 11

CLOSE ON THE INSIDE OF A DOOR -- FOUR VERY COMPLEX, AND BYZANTINE LOCKS. They are quickly spun open.

PETIT BURSTS into the room, and with manic energy, he quickly sets a phonograph needle on a VINTAGE JAZZ RECORD. He adjusts the VOLUME to cover any sound.

The room is a glorified broom closet. Petit's humble hideaway. Full of worn top hats, juggling props, a handmade workbench piled very neatly with vintage hand tools. A SMALL SKYLIGHT CASTS SUNLIGHT on a large poster of a juggler: FRANCIS BRUNN -- MASTER JUGGLER AT LE LIDO! \*\*

Now Petit takes the TORN NEWSPAPER ARTICLE out of his pocket, and finds a pencil.

INSERT: His PENCIL draws a simple LINE connecting the TWO TOWERS. A HIGH WIRE!

With a profound sense of destiny, Petit marvels at this simple drawing.

PETIT (V.O.)  
 With this tiny pencil stroke... my  
 fate was sealed. This was the  
 beginning of my dream.

Then he opens a hidden panel that's built into a stair riser -  
 - a secret nook. Petit reaches into the recess and removes a  
 large box, then he reverently opens the lid.

Inside the box is a surprisingly large stash of Franc bills  
 and coins -- but mostly coins. Now Petit removes a leather  
 envelope marked "PROJECTS" from the box. He opens the flap  
 and gingerly places the drawing of The Towers inside. Before  
 closing the envelope, he carefully removes a glass frame...

INSERT FRAME: A 1950'S ERA CIRCUS ADVERTISEMENT POSTER --  
 with a gaudy painting of a Circus Big Top and a troupe of  
 tight-rope walkers on a tight-rope forming a pyramid: "LE  
 CIRQUE -- featuring THE OMANKOWSKY TROUPE -- THE WHITE  
 DEVILS -- *The Greatest Wire Walking Troupe in the World!*"  
 (ALL PRINTED IN FRENCH, of course)

Petit looks raptly at the poster.

PETIT (V.O.)  
 The first time I ever saw a wire  
 walker...

\*\*

CUT TO:

12 CLOSE -- THE POSTER -- STYLIZED VFX SHOT --

12

PETIT'S IMAGE IS REFLECTED IN THE GLASS -- THE CAMERA SLOWLY  
 PUSHES IN...

PETIT (V.O.)  
 ...I was eight years old. The  
 circus had come to my town...

NOW PETIT'S REFLECTION MORPHS INTO A REFLECTION OF BOY PETIT  
 (8) -- THE BOY CONTINUES LOOKING INTENSELY AT THE POSTER...

\*\*

PETIT (V.O.)  
 And it featured The Omankowsky  
 Family Troupe -- The White Devils -  
 - One of the greatest wire walking  
 troupes in the world.

AS THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO PUSH IN PAST THE BOY'S

REFLECTION -- THE POSTER ILLUSTRATION MORPHS INTO 3-D ANIMATION:

TRANSITION TO:

13 EXT. ILLUSTRATED CIRCUS TENT NIGHT STYLIZED VFX 13

THE CAMERA CONTINUES TO CRANE DOWN TOWARD THE ILLUSTRATED TENT AND CIRCUS COMPOUND -- THEN...

THE CAMERA FINDS THE FIGURE OF BOY PETIT sneaking in the shadows. He finds a loose tent flap and flips it open.

The year is 1958.

CUT TO:

14 INT. CIRCUS TENT NIGHT LIVE ACTION -- 14

Crawling on his knees, Boy Petit climbs under the bleachers and scrunches into a front-row seat -- he looks up and SEES...

A WIRE WALKER, wearing a top hat and tails, and holding an open umbrella, balances on a wire high above the audience.

Boy Petit stares in amazement and awe at the dazzling Wire Walker...

Slowly, the AUDIENCE fades out and Boy Petit is left alone in the stands gazing at the wire -- at his destiny.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. PETIT'S MEMORY - PETIT'S YARD STYLIZED IMAGERY 15

CLOSE -- TWO TREES 20 feet apart. WITH EXAGGERATED SPEED, Boy \*\* Petit wraps a long rope around the trees

WIDE -- Boy Petit finishes stretching the rope which hangs about 5 feet off the ground.

CLOSE -- ON ROPE STRANDS. 4 rope strands bundled together with WIRE COAT HANGERS -- creating a wide rope path.

BOY PETIT'S BARE FEET walk along the wide rope path. AS HE WALKS, THE WIDE PATH ROPES BEGIN TO DISAPPEAR -- ONE AT A TIME -- FINALLY LEAVING ONLY ONE ROPE.

\*\*

WIDE -- AS BOY PETIT WALKS FROM TREE TO TREE -- THE SEASONS BEGIN TO CHANGE IN A TIME-LAPSE MORPH -- FIRST THE TREE LEAVES TURN AN AUTUMNAL, GOLDEN YELLOW -- THEN THE LEAVES GENTLY FALL -- NOW THE TREES ARE BARE AND SNOW FLAKES FALL -- - NEXT THE SUN SHINES, THE TREES BUD AND IT TURNS TO SPRING -- \*\* FINALLY IT'S SUMMER ONCE AGAIN.

CLOSE -- ON BOY PETIT'S FEET -- AS HE WALKS ON THE SINGLE ROPE -- HIS FEET MORPH LARGER! THEY BEGIN TO GROW! THE CAMERA TILTS UP TO FIND -- TEENAGE PETIT. (17, our hero actor) -- complete with oily hair and acne. He balances with a long pole, fashioned from five broomsticks taped together.

PETIT (V.O.)  
I taught myself every trick I can think of...

WIDE -- Teen Petit walks with his feet sideways across the rope -- then he hops across the wire in reverse...

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO FIND -- PETIT'S FATHER watching -- a strict and stern man in a military uniform (French Air Force Colonel.) Petit's Father shakes his head in disgust and leaves.

PETIT'S FATHER (SUBTITLE)  
(MUMBLES to himself in French)  
My son, the circus clown.  
(*Mon fils, le clown du cirque.*)

BACK TO PETIT -- as he walks across the rope without a pole, his arms outstretched like a bird.

PETIT (V.O.)  
But I wanted more... I wanted a higher rope.

\*\*

CUT TO:

16

INT. CIRCUS TENT NIGHT RAIN LIGHTENING

16

Under the cover of night, TEEN PETIT sneaks into the vacant circus tent. The tent is dark. Lit by a single work lamp. RAIN FALLS OUTSIDE THE TENT ENTRANCE. The occasional FLASH OF LIGHTENING ILLUMINATES THE TENT CANVAS adding to the suspenseful mood. \*\*

He climbs to the top of the tightrope ladder and stands on the platform. He soaks in the WIRE WALKER'S VIEW -- the empty bleachers, 50 feet below. Teen Petit raises his arms like wings for balance -- he stares at the thin wire stretched out before him. It seems like it's 100 miles long.

He lifts his foot to take the first step and... Just as he is about to shift his weight to the wire...

BANG! A high voltage power switch is thrown and THE TENT IS FLOODED WITH LIGHT!

Startled, Teen Petit jumps back onto the platform.

VOICE (O.C.)

*HEY!!!*

Teen Petit looks down to SEE...

Sal Ladestro

PAPA RUDY -- a diminutive, yet savagely strong man -- stands below, waving his fist at Teen Petit while clenching a golden cigarette holder. He speaks in broken, aggressive French.

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
 (in French)  
 What are you doing on my rigging?!  
 Get down from there! You stupid  
 fool!  
*(Tu fais quoi sur mon matos?*  
*Descends de là p'tit con!)*

TEEN PETIT (SUBTITLE) \*\*  
 (in French) \*\*  
 OK...  
*(D'accord...)*

Teen Petit turns around and climbs down the wire.

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
 (in French)  
 Get your ass off my rigging!! You  
 could've killed yourself! You  
 imbecile!  
*(Tire toi de là! Tu veux (te)*  
*suicider? Imbécile!)*

TEEN PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
 (in French)  
 OK. OK. I'm coming down.  
*(OK, OK, je descends.)*

PETIT (V.O.)  
 So this is how I meet Rudy  
 Omankowsky, Sr. The patriarch of  
 the White Devils Wire-Walking  
 Family -- who everybody calls,  
 "Papa Rudy..."

Teen Petit continues climbing down the ladder. But not fast enough. Papa Rudy SCREAMS in Czech -- or Slovak...

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
 (in Czech)  
 Faster! Or I'll climb up there and  
 pull you down! \*\*

*(Rychle! Nebo tam vylezu a stáhnu tě dolů!)* \*\*  
 [Faster! or there climb (I) and pull you down!] \*\*

PETIT (V.O.)  
 He would never say exactly where he  
 was from. He was certainly not  
 French.

(MORE)

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But he was a supreme juggler,  
acrobat, and wire walker. A  
consummate circus master.

Teen Petit gets halfway down the ladder, but then LEAPS over  
Papa Rudy's head to escape. Papa Rudy grabs a manure shovel  
and chases Teen Petit.

Sal Ladestro

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

You stupid little fool! Don't you  
have a brain in your skull?  
(*Quel idiot! Tu as quoi dans la  
tête?*)

Teen Petit runs into the center ring and trips over a box of clown props. Papa Rudy raises the shovel to bean him -- but quick as a flash, Petit picks up: AN OVERSIZED MALLETT, A FAKE STICK OF DYNAMITE, AND A RUBBER CHICKEN -- he starts juggling the goofy props.

Papa Rudy stops his shovel in mid-swing and gives Petit a keen look -- maybe the kid's got something.

PETIT (V.O.)

And in that moment, I suppose he  
saw something in me. Madness,  
perhaps.

Teen Petit juggles the odd clown objects as if his life were at stake. WE PUSH IN -- his eyes are full of fear...or is it madness?

CUT TO:

17 INT. PAPA RUDY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM ANOTHER DAY 17

Papa Rudy and Teen Petit stand across from each other in the kitchen. FIVE EXCITED DOGS run rampant around their legs. Papa Rudy scolds them in DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

PAPA RUDY

Nyet! Nyet! Nein! No!

PETIT (V.O.)

...and Papa Rudy could speak many  
languages. I have no idea how many.  
And sometimes he would get mixed  
up...

PAPA RUDY

PHILIPPE!!

Papa Rudy SLAMS his fist on the solid oak table. Teen Petit jumps to attention. Papa Rudy starts admonishing Teen Petit in Czech...

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

(in Czech)

Are you listening to me?  
(*Posloucháš mě?*)

TEEN PETIT

Huh?  
(Hein?)

Now Papa Rudy reverts back to French...

Sal Ladestro

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Do you understand Czech?  
(*Tu comprends le Czech?*)

TEEN PETIT  
(in French)  
Non.

Now in English...

PAPA RUDY  
Do you understand English?

TEEN PETIT  
Eh, un peu...eh, yes, a little.

Now French...

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
That's good. Now pay attention.  
(*C'est bien. Alors, écoute moi.*)

Back to English...

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)  
You need to learn how to make an  
entrance. You need to learn how to  
compliment.

TEEN PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Compliment? What's that?  
(*Compliment? C'est quoi ça?*)

PAPA RUDY  
A compliment is a silent message.  
It is an order for the audience to  
pay attention. And after the  
performance, a compliment is also  
an offering of gratitude -- A  
SALUTE!

With the mere extension of his right arm and two fingers,  
Papa Rudy demonstrates a proper compliment -- a slight bow,  
comfortable and confident in its subtlety.

TEEN PETIT  
Okay.

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
So have a go.  
(*Allez, essaye.*)

Teen Petit awkwardly tries to compliment.

Sal Ladestro

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

That was terrible. You're doing too much. Do nothing. Now try again.

Teen Petit tries again...

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

NO!

Papa Rudy BANGS on the table with his ape-like fist.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

I said do nothing! You're still doing too much! You look like a coward! The audience must know you're in control. Do it again, but stop trying so hard. Do nothing.

Teen Petit tries again -- he barely moves...

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

NO!!

Papa Rudy SLAMS his fist on the table even HARDER!

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

That's even worse! Where's your respect? You didn't do anything!

TEEN PETIT

You said to do nothing!

Papa Rudy SIGHS -- and looks at Teen Petit with the smallest of SMILES...

PAPA RUDY

Yes, do nothing on the outside. But in your heart -- you must salute.

TEEN PETIT

My heart?!

(now in French)

What the hell are you talking about?!

*(Merde mais de quoi tu parles?)*

BLAM! Papa Rudy SLAMS his fist on the table!

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

LISTEN! And I will tell you.  
*(ECOUTE! Je vais te dire.)*

Teen Petit steps back -- and shuts-up. Papa Rudy continues in broken English...

Sal Ladestro

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

A great performer, the most brilliant performer in all of Russia, taught me this... You cannot lie on the stage. The audience will always feel whatever is inside your heart. Do you understand?

Teen Petit nods...

TEEN PETIT

Was he a wire walker?

PAPA RUDY

He was a clown.

TEEN PETIT

(incredulous)

Clown?

(in French)

A real clown?

*(Tu veux dire un clown?)*

PAPA RUDY

A brilliant clown. He understood that a performer must always have an honest respect and gratitude for the audience!

TEEN PETIT

But why should I respect the audience? When it is me on the wire!

Papa Rudy SLAMS the table!!

PAPA RUDY

You SALUTE the audience! And pay respect!

(now in French)

There is no performance without the audience!

*(Il n'y a pas de spectacle sans public!)*

(back to English)

And until you understand that, you will never perform in the circus!

TEEN PETIT

Good, okay. Me, I don't want to  
perform in the circus, I am not  
some ridiculous circus clown!! I'm  
an artist!

CUT TO:

Sal Ladestro

18 EXT. PAPA RUDY'S BACK DOOR SAME 18

SLAM! Papa Rudy's kitchen door SMACKS Teen Petit squarely in the ass. He rubs his seat while pondering what just happened...

19 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY/TORCH DAY 19

Petit continues... ADDRESSING the CAMERA

PETIT

So just like that, Papa Rudy threw my artistic, little ass out into the street. And as fate would have it -- a short time later, my father threw me out as well...

CUT TO:

20 EXT. PETIT COUNTRY HOUSE ANOTHER DAY 20

Teen Petit somberly walks his unicycle down the front path and away from the house -- all of his earthly possessions strapped to his back. HIS PARENTS stand in the doorway... His Father berates him as he leaves...

PETIT'S FATHER (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

...you'll never amount to anything!  
With your ridiculous circus tricks!  
*(Tu n'arriveras jamais à rien avec  
ton cirque à la noix.)*

\*\*

\*\*

SLOW MOTION -- As Teen Petit ambles down the pathway...

\*\*

PETIT (V.O.)

\*\*

Looking back on it, I wish my  
leaving home would have been less  
emotional. And perhaps... more  
emotional. But my poor parents did  
the best they could -- with a  
starry-eyed, head-in-the-clouds,  
rebellious son... that they could  
not understand.

\*\*

\*\*

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\*\*

BACK TO -- Petit's Father...

\*\*

PETIT'S FATHER (SUBTITLE)

\*\*

(in French)

\*\*

Walking on a wire will never put a  
scrap of bread on your table!

\*\*

\*\*

(MORE)

PETIT'S FATHER (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
*(Ce n'est pas en marchant sur un  
fil que tu vas gagner ton pain!)* \*\*  
\*\*

Petit's Mother, wipes a tear from her eye, then turns to her husband... \*\*

PETIT'S MOTHER (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Edmond, could we reconsider... give  
him one more chance?  
*(Edmond, on pourrait peut-  
être...lui donner une dernière  
chance?)*

The grim Man shakes his head...

PETIT'S FATHER (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
No. The carrots are cooked...  
*(Non. Les carottes sont cuites...)*

Teen Petit heard that. His sadness quickly turns to defiance.  
He SHOUTS back at his father...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
 (in French)  
 That's right! THE CARROTS ARE  
 COOKED!!  
 (*Ouais c'est ça! LES CAROTTES SONT  
 CUITES!*)

And with that, he hops up on his unicycle and peddles down the path...

PETIT (V.O.)  
 And so, since the carrots were  
 cooked... I moved to Paris. Now, I  
 didn't realize it at the time, but  
 I was riding off to start my dream.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. SMALL MUSEUM/LATIN QUARTER DAY 21

PETIT (24) cycles up to a small Art Museum where he spots two tall trees mounted in planter boxes. He sights his red string between them -- they are a perfect place to hang his rope. But suddenly he hears a strange, lovely melody.

He pedals around to the front of the Museum and SEES...

Perched on the tree planter -- A LOVELY FEMALE STREET MUSICIAN (22) SINGING AND PLAYING A GUITAR. She sings a melancholy arrangement of a 1960's folk song -- the lyrics drifting between French and English.

A SMALL CROWD of onlookers listens politely and tosses a few coins into a vintage mime mask that the singer uses as a tip jar.

PETIT tips his hat to the cute singer. She ignores him. He rides to the other side of the museum stairs and sights his red rope between two lamp posts.

CUT TO:

22 EXT. SMALL MUSEUM/LATIN QUARTER MINUTES LATER 22

TIME CUT --

THE SINGER'S SMALL AUDIENCE begins to notice something behind them, and they start to move away...

CLOSE -- THE FEMALE SINGER is finishing her song, just as the last of her audience turns their back to her and leaves.

Just as she finishes her song, SHE HEARS A LOUD BURST OF APPLAUSE -- but it's not for her. She cases her guitar and gathers her meager earnings from the mime mask...

ANOTHER ERUPTION OF APPLAUSE gets her attention -- SHE LOOKS...

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MUSEUM WALKWAY --

PETIT has a LOOSE ROPE tied between a streetlight and a nearby tree.

Sal Ladestro

He walks barefoot on the rope, juggling FLAMING TORCHES. Once again, THE CROWD APPLAUDS -- They drop coins in Petit's top hat.

ACROSS THE STREET -- The Female Singer watches him like a cat. After a moment, she packs up her guitar and marches over to Petit.

Petit gathers his gear and starts striking his rope -- when he SEES...

The Female Singer storming towards him...

FEMALE SINGER (SUBTITLE)

\*\*

(in French)

You know, I had a good thing going until you came along...

*(Tu sais, ça marchait plutot bien pour moi jusqu'à ce que tu débarques...)*

Petit quickly jumps inside his chalk circle. He shrugs and cups his hand to his ear -- "Sorry, can't hear in here."

The Singer pulls on her mime mask and walks straight toward the chalk circle...

"BONK" she mimes "hitting her head" on an INVISIBLE WALL. This gets Petit's attention. Rubbing her head, she approaches again, and KNOCKS on the "wall of glass." She walks AROUND PETIT'S CIRCLE -- using pantomime to "feel" the invisible barrier between them...

Petit watches, now intrigued. She checks her pocket and pantomimes "looking for a KEY" -- then she finds an imaginary "KEY" -- then mimes "unlocking" an imaginary "door." She gestures for Petit to exit through "the door."

Petit smiles. She's a clever one. He steps out of the circle and bows. But the Singer pulls off her mime mask, her demeanor is angry and strident.

FEMALE SINGER (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

(in French)

Can you hear me now, juggler?

*(Tu m'entends, jongleur?)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Of course I can.

*(Oui, bien sûr.)*

FEMALE SINGER (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Are you proud of yourself, juggler?  
*(T'es fier de toi, jongleur?)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Since when do mimes speak?  
*(Depuis quand les mimes savent parler?)*

Now a TOURIST COUPLE moves into FRAME behind the Female \*\*  
Singer. They enthusiastically watch our heros argue, thinking \*\*  
it's more performance. The Couple's wardrobe tells us they're  
obviously from Texas. Petit notices them, but the Singer \*\*  
doesn't.

Sal Ladeestri

FEMALE SINGER (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Don't be ridiculous, I'm not a mime. I acted like a mime to trick you. I'm a singer. I have a voice. I don't hide behind an imaginary wall.

*(Oh ça va, j'suis pas mime. J'ai fais le mime pour te piéger. Tu vois moi j'suis chanteuse, je fais de la musique, avec du son. Je me cache pas derrière des murs imaginaires.)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Please don't insult my circle. It's my sacred space.

*(S'il vous plaît, ne dites pas du mal de mon cercle. C'est mon espace sacré.)*

And with that, Petit tips his hat to the Tourist Couple -- they APPLAUD.

The Female Singer turns and immediately sizes up the two Americans. She addresses them in English with a big smile, and thick Southern drawl... \*\*

FEMALE SINGER \*\*

(thick Southern accent)

Ah'd be much obliged if y'all could just mosey along. This here's a pri-vit conversation.

The two Tourists are wildly amused...

TOURIST MAN

(Texas accent)

Well shut my mouth. We thought y'was puttin' on a show.

TOURIST WOMAN

(Texas accent)

(to the Singer)

Honey, y're cute as a possum. \*\*

TOURIST WOMAN hands the Singer some coins. \*\*

TOURIST WOMAN (CONT'D)

(Texas accent)

This here's for y'all.

The Tourists amble off. The Female Singer pockets the coins and turns back to Petit... \*\*

PETIT

I like your English -- very American.

Her smile vanishes.

FEMALE SINGER (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

You're a thief!!  
(*Sale voleur*)

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

I think I like better the English.

FEMALE SINGER

(in French)

Who do you think you are, a-hole?  
(*Pour qui tu te prends enfoiré.*)

PETIT

I certainly prefer the English.

Annie continues in English...

FEMALE SINGER

Then listen up, juggler! You stole my best audience in weeks. And for what? Some cheap stunt?

PETIT

People love my high wire.

FEMALE SINGER

Ha, you call that a high wire?! That is the lowest "high" wire I have ever seen!

PETIT

That is because, Mademoiselle, the two tallest trees in this tiny square are in your space.

Petit points them out. The Female Singer looks -- he's right, there are two perfect trees to hang a wire.

PETIT (CONT'D)

And I would never invade another artist's performance space.

Petit gives the Singer a charming smile. But the Singer dismisses Petit with the back of her hand and storms off. Petit watches her leave -- hopelessly smitten.

PETIT (V.O.)

I could not let this beautiful street troubadour, with fire in her eyes, simply dismiss me with the back of her hand...

Sal Ladestro

Petit gathers his equipment bag and his unicycle, then chases after her...

PETIT

Angry Street Musician...Wait please.

She keeps walking -- Petit catches up to her, walking his unicycle along the curb.

PETIT (CONT'D)

I would like to make you an accommodation.

The Singer keeps walking, but she's listening.

PETIT (CONT'D)

I will only perform in The Quarter when you are not.

FEMALE SINGER

That's every weekend and every second Thursday.

Petit stops and extends his hand...

PETIT

Deal?

The Singer stops and gives him a stony look. Petit turns on the charm and flashes a big smile.

PETIT (CONT'D)

My name is Philippe.

She shakes his hand.

FEMALE SINGER

Annie.

PETIT

Annie that's such a beautiful nam...

ANNIE

(interrupting)

Why all the English?

Annie continues walking. Petit sidles alongside.

PETIT

Because I must practice. I'm going to New York.

ANNIE

Oh, New York? That is very exciting... for you.

PETIT

Yes, maybe you will come with me?

She doesn't take him seriously.

ANNIE

Yes, maybe.

PETIT

I love the way you sing. You're very good.

ANNIE

You were not listening to me sing, you were playing with fire on a rope.

PETIT

No, before that. I was here earlier. Maybe you did not see me, but I saw you. And I listened to you sing. It was beautiful.

Reluctantly, she warms to him.

ANNIE

Thank you.

PETIT

Annie, may I buy you a glass of wine?

She shakes her head.

ANNIE

I'm sorry. That would not be a good idea.

She starts walking again.

PETIT

Then I'll make you an accommodation.

ANNIE

Another accommodation?! No thank you.

He steps in front of her, blocking her way.

PETIT

If you join me for a glass of wine... I will never hang my rope in this square again.

ANNIE

(sighs)

You don't give up, do you?

PETIT

No, I am very eh... persistent.

Annie can't help a little smile.

CUT TO:

23

INT. BISTRO DUSK

23

A typical small, French bistro. Petit and Annie are sitting at a quiet table. Annie looks beautiful in the candlelight.

Petit has just finished making a miniature sculpture: It's A TINY WIRE WALKER, fashioned from twisted paper napkins that balances on Petit's small length of red rope. The rope is tied between two wine bottles -- a drinking straw serves as "the wire walker's" balancing pole.

Petit presents his creation with a flourish...

PETIT

Voila! My dream...

ANNIE points to the tiny wire walker...

ANNIE

And this is you?

PETIT

It will be the most glorious high-wire walk in all the world.

ANNIE

And how high must this wire be... to make so much glory?

Petit looks Annie straight in the eye and answers...

PETIT  
Over 100 stories.

Annie laughs...

ANNIE  
And where do trees like this grow?

PETIT  
These are not trees.

ANNIE  
Then what are they?

CUT TO:

24

INT. PETIT'S LOFT NIGHT

24

CLOSE ON THE WTC MAGAZINE DRAWING THAT PETIT STOLE -- with his hand drawn line joining them.

PETIT  
...two magnificent Towers. But they are not complete. But when they are finished, they will be the highest towers in the world. 100 meters higher than the Eiffel Tower itself.

WIDER -- Petit and Annie sit on the floor. A soft RAIN falls outside. The room feels romantic, LIT by a solitary candle.

ANNIE  
I see. This is why you must speak perfect English.

PETIT  
Yes... What do you think?

She stares at the WTC article -- at the Towers.

ANNIE  
I don't know... It looks so...  
So...

Petit is looking only at Annie...

PETIT  
Beautiful?

ANNIE

Beautiful, yes... And dangerous.  
And completely insane... And you  
are a madman.

PETIT

Yes, I am mad. But it's my dream.

ANNIE

Then if it is your dream, you must  
do it.

PETIT

Even if everyone tells me I'm mad?

ANNIE

You should not care what other  
people think.

PETIT

I care what you think.

Annie looks at Petit's magazine article, then back at him.

ANNIE

I love your dream, Philippe.

PETIT

But, tell me Annie, when you are  
singing, you truly don't care what  
other people think about you?

ANNIE

(sighs)

I try not to care. Sometimes I  
have success, sometimes not.

PETIT

Do you want to know what I think  
about you?

She smiles, coyly flirting.

ANNIE

No.

PETIT

No?

ANNIE

No.

PETIT

Not even a little bit?

ANNIE

No.

PETIT

Okay, but I will tell you anyway.

ANNIE

You can tell me, but I won't care.

They lock eyes for a beat. And then he kisses her. She kisses him back. It's a good kiss.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I know where there are two beautiful trees...

He smiles. And they keep kissing.

PETIT (V.O.)

I didn't realize it at the time...  
But Annie had become my first accomplice.

CUT TO:

25

EXT. ART CENTER/PARK DAY

25

TWO MAJESTIC CEDAR TREES stand in the park green behind The Centre de Paris -- etudes d' art. The Art Center.

Petit has a steel wire stretched between the trees, anchored on both sides with very unsophisticated rigging. However, old pieces of carpet are placed between the wire and tree trunk to make certain the bark is not damaged.

With a large balancing pole, Petit walks on the GROANING, SAGGING, SHAKY WIRE. Annie sits nearby on the lawn, strumming her guitar.

PETIT (V.O.)

Annie arranged with her Art School, which happened to have two magnificent cedars growing in their park -- to allow me to hang my wire.

Petit gives Annie a big smile and motions to her...

PETIT

Annie, come join me. The view is beautiful.

Annie smiles back -- she's game.

ANNIE

OK.

CUT TO:

A26 LATER -- SAME DAY --

A26

Now Annie is on the wire, walking behind Petit, holding on to his shoulders. She confidently places one foot in front of the other. Petit calls to her over his shoulder.

PETIT

Annie, you are doing great! You are a natural! I have a magnificent idea... Let's walk between the towers together!

ANNIE

No thank you.

CUT TO:

Sal Ladestro

26 EXT. ART CENTER/PARK ANOTHER DAY 26

Petit is on the wire -- carrying Annie on his back. She has her arms wrapped tightly around his chest.

PETIT (V.O.)

And it was perfect, because I could practice everyday... And see Annie as well.

LATER -- Petit is walking on the wire -- cradling Annie in his arms, using her body for balance. He bends and gives her a kiss. A small group of STUDENTS from the Art Center watch and APPLAUD.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. ART CENTER/PARK ANOTHER DAY LATE AFTERNOON 27

Petit is sitting on his wire eating an apple.

A gangly, SERIOUS LOOKING YOUNG MAN, with cameras hanging from his neck, approaches and studies the tangle of Petit's rigging. Petit watches the Serious Young Man, then...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Do you approve of my rigging? It's well done, no?  
(*Il te plaît mon montage? C'est bien fait non?*)

SERIOUS YOUNG MAN (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Looks complicated, a tangled mess.  
(*Ça m'a l'air compliqué, c'est un peu bordélique.*)

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Yes. Like life. It's a mess.  
(*Et oui, comme la vie. C'est le bordel.*)

The Serious Young Man moves closer to Petit and lifts his camera.

SERIOUS YOUNG MAN (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

I wonder? Would you allow me to take your photograph?

(MORE)

SERIOUS YOUNG MAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
*(Ah bon? Et tu me laisserais faire  
quelques photos de toi?)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Perhaps...  
(points to the Young Man's  
cameras)  
What school do you follow? Robert  
Capa ou Robert Doisneau?  
*(Faut voir...T'es quoi comme école?  
T'es plutôt Robert Capa ou Robert  
Doisneau?)*

Sal Ladeestro

The Serious Young Man scratches his chin...

SERIOUS YOUNG MAN (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

I see, a condition. I must warn  
you, my photos are very avant-  
garde.

*(Je te préviens j'ai un style  
plutôt avant-garde.)*

Petit smiles but continues his rigging.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Avant-garde... I like that. I am  
Philippe.

*(Avant-garde? Ça me plait, ça. Moi  
c'est Philippe.)*

JEAN-LOUIS

Salut Philippe, Jean-Louis.

Now Petit SPEAKS in English...

PETIT

Do you speak English, Jean-Louis?

JEAN-LOUIS

Yes. Why?

PETIT

Because I need to practice. I'm  
going to America.

JEAN-LOUIS

To perform?

PETIT

Exactly.

JEAN-LOUIS

In the circus?

PETIT

Ha! Never!

With that, Petit hops up and stands on the wire.

JEAN-LOUIS

Where else does a wire-walker put  
on his show?

PETIT

Somewhere he is not supposed to. My  
performance will not just be a show  
it, will be a coup.

Jean-Louis' eyes light up...

Sal Ladestro

JEAN-LOUIS

(In French)

A coup?

(*Un coup?*)

PETIT

Yes. I intend to rig my wire in secret... On the most spectacular stage in the world... Then without warning, I will appear. And, with total disregard for the powers that be, I will perform a spectacular, and surprise, illegal wire walk. If it works it will be the artistic coup of the century.

Jean-Louis loves what he hears. He's instantly intrigued.

JEAN-LOUIS

You, my friend, can see my photographs anytime! I also disregard the powers that be!

PETIT

Ahhh. So not only are you a photographer... you are an anarchist as well?

JEAN-LOUIS

All artists are anarchists to some degree. Don't you agree?

PETIT

Yes!

Petit leans forward, balancing precariously on the wire and extends his hand...

PETIT (CONT'D)

You, my artist, anarchist friend, can be my official photographer.

Petit and Jean-Louis shake hands...

PETIT (V.O.)

So this is how I become friends with Jean-Louis -- my second accomplice.

CRACK! WITHOUT WARNING THE WIRE RIGGING SNAPS! And Petit and the wire drop...

Petit leaps off the wire and lands on his feet like a cat.

Shaken, Petit walks over to the tree and inspects his rigging  
-- what the hell happened? Now Jean-Louis steps over.

Sal Ladestro

JEAN-LOUIS

I'll say this... if that were to happen during your coup, it will be the artistic disaster of the century.

CUT TO:

28 INT. PAPA RUDY'S KITCHEN DAY

28

Papa Rudy at the stove, frying a rabbit, puffing his cigarette in a long, golden holder.

PETIT (V.O.)

I need to know more.

Papa Rudy spins around to find...

PETIT -- standing in the kitchen. Papa Rudy glowers at him.

PAPA RUDY (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Do you always enter houses without knocking?

*(Tu sais pas frapper à la porte?)*

Petit takes a sheepish step forward.

PETIT

I need you to teach me how to rig a high wire.

Papa Rudy scoffs.

PAPA RUDY

What for? You're a street juggler.

PETIT

But the wire is my dream. I want to be a supreme wire walker.

Petit steps closer...

PETIT (CONT'D)

But I need you to teach me the correct knots.

And another step...

PETIT (CONT'D)

I need to know what kind of wire to use.

Now Petit and Papa Rudy are standing face-to-face.

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (CONT'D)

The thickness. The weight. The load strength--

PAPA RUDY

And you want me to just give you my secrets? Secrets that I have spent a lifetime learning? Secrets that have given only to my sons? You want me to just hand them to you?

PETIT

I can pay you. I have money from my juggling.

PAPA RUDY

Be here tomorrow at sunrise. And bring your juggling money.

CUT TO:

29 INT. CIRCUS TENT DAY - MONTAGE - 29

Papa Rudy demonstrates how to tie a termination knot. Petit nods. Papa Rudy holds out his hand. Petit digs into his pocket and hands over a Franc note.

CLOSE -- The note's corner is torn off.

Papa Rudy gives him a look -- what kind of crappy money is this? Petit shrugs...

PETIT

It still works.

CUT TO:

30 INT. THE CIRCUS TENT ANOTHER DAY -- 30

Petit watches as Papa Rudy places a 2X4 wood bulwark between a tent pole and a walk cable.

PAPA RUDY

Now tighten the turn buckle.

Petit begins cranking the eye bolt. The tension quickly causes the cable to dig into the wood block -- cutting a deep gouge into it.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)  
 The wood block works as a buffer.  
 So when the masts flex the wire  
 won't snap.

Petit nods and hands over a bill. Papa Rudy holds up his hand. He's not finished.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)  
 And you must always... ALWAYS,  
 check the rigging yourself. Never  
 step on a wire if you haven't  
 checked all of the rigging  
 yourself. Capiche?

\*\*

\*\*

Petit nods. Papa Rudy takes the bill.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. BEHIND THE CIRCUS TENT ANOTHER DAY -- 31

PAPA RUDY teaches Petit how to use a cable tensioner. He cranks the cable taut, then PLUCKS it like a guitar string. He puts his palm out. Petit drops a Franc in his hand.

\*\*

PAPA RUDY  
 One Franc? Don't insult me. Four  
 more.

\*\*

PETIT  
 FIVE FRANCS?! To watch you tug on  
 your little pole? Ridiculous!

PAPA RUDY  
 It's a lever. And I'll take four.

PETIT  
 Two.

PAPA RUDY  
 Three. And I'll throw in a  
 turnbuckle yank.

PETIT  
 Deal.

Petit SLAPS three Francs into Papa Rudy's waiting hand.

\*\*

CUT TO:

32 INT. CIRCUS TENT ANOTHER DAY

32

The Big Top is deserted. Today's show is over. Petit and Papa Rudy dangle in a bosun chair, working on the high wire. Far below, in the center ring, a few roustabouts shovel elephant shit.

CLOSE ON THE WIRE -- With a wrench, Papa Rudy is showing Petit how to adjust a cavaletti plate. The cavaletti plate has been temporarily placed on the walk wire in order to demonstrate. The guy-wires hang loosely to the ground.

PAPA RUDY

You don't need cavalettis on a short wire like this, but on a long one the cavalettis must be the correct tension... not too loose and not too tight.

PETIT

Cavalettis? What is cavaletti?

PAPA RUDY

Cavaletti. From the Italian cavallo. Like a rider on a horse. The cavalettis are the points where the guy lines are attached to the walk wire. They keep the wire from bouncing. If they slip or break the wire will cast you off, pffpt! like a slingshot!.

PETIT

Okay...

Papa Rudy points to the bolts on the clamp...

PAPA RUDY

And always two bolts. Never just one.

Papa Rudy puts out his palm. Petit digs for a bill.

CUT TO:

33 INT. CIRCUS TENT DAY WEEKS LATER

33

Once again the tent is deserted. Petit is walking on the high-wire with a large balancing pole. Papa Rudy silently enters the tent.

ON THE WIRE -- Petit is about to reach the platform. He has three steps to go, but suddenly -- HE STOPS.

He takes a tired breath and stares for a long moment at the pole cradle (mounted to the landing stage.)

Papa Rudy watches with concern.

Sal Ladestro

NOW PETIT LOWERS HIS ARMS -- LETTING THE POLE DROP BELOW HIS NAVEL. HE TAKES ANOTHER DEEP BREATH AND BEGINS ANOTHER STEP... AT THE SAME TIME, HE LIFTS THE POLE AND REACHES FOR THE CRADLE. BUT NOW...

HIS LEGS BEGIN TO QUIVER, OSCILLATING VIOLENTLY, SWINGING SIDE-TO-SIDE! THE WIRE IS OUT OF CONTROL!

THE BALANCING POLE STARTS TIPPING TO HIS SIDE! PETIT YANKS THE LISTING POLE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, BUT...

WHAP! PETIT'S FOOT SLIPS OFF THE WIRE! He FALLS!! The pole misses the cradle and CRACKS the platform! Petit flips head first but is able to hook his elbow on the cable. He swings and dangles for a moment, then he slowly reaches for the cable with his free hand.

Hand-over-hand, he pulls himself toward the platform... He swings his feet forward and catches a ladder rung -- he repels off the wire and grabs hold of the ladder. He takes a deep breath, and climbs down. WE HEAR PAPA RUDY'S VOICE...

PAPA RUDY (O.C.)

Most wire walkers, they die when they arrive.

AT THE BOTTOM -- Papa Rudy is waiting. Petit gives him a sheepish look.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

They think they have arrived... But they are still on the wire.  
If you have three steps to do, and if you do those steps arrogantly... if you think you are invincible... You are going to die!  
(then...)  
Tu vas mourir.

Petit nods and digs in his pocket for cash. Papa Rudy stops him.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

This one, I give to you for free.

PETIT

Merci.

CUT TO:

34 VFX MONTAGE FRENCH VILLAGE STYLIZED STILL IMAGES 34

WE SEE A SERIES OF 3D STILL FRAMES ACCOMPANIED BY THE SOUND  
OF A CAMERA SHUTTER --

CLICK -- Sunshine cascades down on a quaint French village.

Sal Ladeestro

PETIT (V.O.)

A few weeks later, I did my first public walk in a little village that is so tiny it's not even on a map.

CLICK -- PETIT rigs a wire to a large tree, using his tensioner. PAPA RUDY stands at a distance, supervising.

CLICK -- The wire stretches on an incline over a SMALL POND to a tree on the far side.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Every spring, the Mayor of this village puts on a Festival. And Papa Rudy convinced him to hire me to do a walk over this small lake... It was more like a swamp actually.

\*\*

CLICK -- The murky pond is decorated for the Festival. With tables serving wine and food. HAPPY VILLAGERS mill about.

CLICK -- ROW BOATS float on the muddy pond. FISHERMEN sit in the boats with fishing poles, chugging from large bottles of wine.

LIVE ACTION -- SERIES OF SHOTS -- STYLIZED SLO-MO --

C.U. ANNIE -- drops a phonograph needle on a record -- wobbly Nino Rota MUSIC PLAYS...

C.U. PAPA RUDY -- stands with his arms folded. He PUFFS on his cigarette, watching with measured skepticism...

C.U. JEAN-LOUIS -- raises his still camera, and twists the focus ring... Something is wrong with his camera. It's not working. He can't take a picture. HIS SHUTTER IS JAMMED!

Now ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPHER -- A PORTLY FRENCHMAN, steps into frame next to Jean-Louis. He has a motor-drive camera -- The Portly Frenchman SNAPS AWAY. CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

STYLIZED STILL IMAGES --

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. A series of STILLS showing Petit making his way to the middle of the wire.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. A series of CLOSE-UPS OF PETIT --

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

My performance began perfectly, and  
was going very well. But then...

SUDDENLY WE HEAR RAUCOUS LAUGHTER. Petit becomes  
distracted...

Sal Ladestro

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. A series of STILLS -- A BOATLOAD OF VERY DRUNK FISHERMEN -- ANOTHER BOATLOAD WHISTLE AND CHEER -- ANOTHER FISHERMAN catches a big Carp. No one pays any attention to Petit's performance.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

It turns out there is also a fishing contest that afternoon... And these fishermen are drinking wine. And they are laughing and yelling insults at me...

LIVE ACTION -- SERIES OF SHOTS -- STYLIZED SLO-MO --

C.U. PETIT looks down from the wire. He becomes more distracted and angry.

C.U. Petit's feet -- his footing becomes unstable, hesitant.

C.U. PETIT does his best to concentrate -- his frustration mounting!

C.U. PETIT'S LEGS BEGIN WOBBLING --

C.U. PETIT BECOMES UNNERVED BY THE SCREAMING OF THE FISHERMAN!

C.U. PETIT'S LEGS AS THE WIRE STARTS PITCHING, SWINGING SIDE-TO-SIDE. HIS LEGS BEGIN TO QUIVER, OSCILLATING VIOLENTLY, SWINGING SIDE-TO-SIDE! THE WIRE IS OUT OF CONTROL!

C.U. PHONOGRAPH STYLUS -- as the Nino Rota RECORD BEGINS TO SKIP. Adding to the surreal nature of the scene.

C.U. PETIT AS HE BEGINS SWAYING PRECARIOUSLY. LOSING HIS BALANCE!

C.U. PETIT'S HANDS AS THE BALANCING POLE STARTS TIPPING! PETIT YANKS THE LISTING POLE IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, BUT...

WHAP! C.U. PETIT'S FOOT SLIPS OFF THE WIRE!

ON THE LAKE SHORE -- SERIES OF SHOTS -- STYLIZED SLO-MO -- ANNIE SCREAMS AND RUSHES TO THE LAKE...

ANNIE

(IN SLO-MO)

OH -- MY -- GOD!!

PAPA RUDY COVERS HIS EYES WITH HIS HAND.

JEAN-LOUIS STILL CAN'T GET HIS CAMERA TO WORK! He SEES Petit's dilemma and cringes!

THE PORTLY PHOTOGRAPHER SNAPS HIS SHUTTER AS FAST AS THE FILM  
CAN ADVANCE!

STYLIZED STILL IMAGES -- MOVING LIKE FLIP-BOOK ANIMATION --

Sal Ladestro

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. CLICK...

PETIT DROPS OFF THE WIRE -- HE TOSSES THE POLE -- HE GRABS THE CABLE -- HE DANGLES OVER THE SWAMP, SWINGING -- HE LETS GO OF THE WIRE -- HE FALLS LIKE A RUPTURED DUCK...

SMACK! PETIT SPLASHES HEADFIRST INTO THE MUDDY WATER!

THE DRUNKEN FISHERMEN GIVE PETIT A ROUSING OVATION!

PETIT (V.O.)  
So here I am... I was broken.  
Humiliated. In the mud to my  
knees...

PETIT BOBS UP KNEE-DEEP IN THE SWAMP -- with tears streaming down his face -- HE PERFORMS HIS COMPLIMENT BOW!! NOT JUST ONCE, BUT OVER AND OVER!!

PETIT (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
AND HERE I AM! DOING THE "PAPA RUDY  
COMPLIMENT!!" THE PAPA RUDY SALUTE!

CUT TO:

35

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY/TORCH DAY

35

THE FOLLOWING IS ONE CONTINUOUS SHOT --

Petit SIGHS heavily...

PETIT  
This! This was my first  
performance... a failure. And after  
this... I did not feel so good. But  
then one day, as I was walking  
along the Seine, feeling sorry for  
myself...

AS PETIT SPEAKS, THE ICONIC TWIN TOWERS OF NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL BEGIN TO MATERIALIZE IN THE SKY BEHIND HIM!

PETIT (CONT'D)  
When suddenly I looked up and saw  
the towers of Notre Dame...

Petit reaches in his pocket and pulls out his red length of rope. He turns and holds up the string...

\*\*

PETIT (CONT'D)  
And I thought... This is where I  
must put my wire! This is how I  
must redeem myself!

CLOSE -- The red string is stretched between the cathedral towers.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
And so, under the cover of  
darkness, and with a false key. I  
sneak into the cathedral.

THE CAMERA BEGINS PUSHING IN TOWARDS THE CATHEDRAL -- THE RED STRING DISSOLVES AWAY -- THE SKY TURNS TO NIGHT...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
I tie a fishing line to one of my  
juggling balls...

INSERT -- C.U. Petit attaches a monofilament line to his juggling ball with a tack. Then he throws it...

PETIT (V.O.)  
And throw it across to the other  
side...

INSERT -- C.U. Jean-Louis' hand catches the ball.

CLOSE -- EDGE OF THE TOWER -- Hands reel in the fishing line that is attached to a CLOTHESLINE CORDINA...

ANOTHER CLOSE UP -- Hands reel in the cordina that is attached to a THICK HEMP ROPE...

CUT TO:

36 BACK TO ACTION --

36

THE CAMERA CONTINUES PUSHING IN TOWARD THE CATHEDRAL -- AND NOW A STEEL CABLE APPEARS ATTACHED TO THE HEMP ROPE -- THE CABLE IS PULLED ACROSS THE VOID BETWEEN THE TWO TOWERS...

PETIT (V.O.)  
Then my accomplice and I spend all  
night installing a steel cable  
between the two ancient towers...  
And as soon as the first tourists  
begin to arrive...

\*\*

NOW A GOLDEN MORNING SUNRISE LIGHTS THE SKY, THE CATHEDRAL, AND THE CITY OF PARIS...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I START WALKING...

\*\*

NOW PETIT APPEARS ON THE WIRE -- HOLDING A LONG BALANCING  
POLE AND WEARING HIS SIGNATURE BLACK COSTUME -- THE CAMERA  
MOVES IN CLOSER AS PETIT GRACEFULLY CROSSES BETWEEN THE  
GOTHIC TOWERS.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
And I succeed. I make my first  
illegal, and surprise walk.

\*\*

Sal Ladestro

THE CAMERA REVOLVES AROUND PETIT IN A SPECTACULAR 3-D MOMENT AS PETIT KNEELS ON THE WIRE AND SALUTES THE CATHEDRAL.

THE CAMERA CONTINUES AROUND PETIT AND DROPS AWAY...

FROM BELOW WE HEAR THE SPECTATORS APPLAUD AND CHEER.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and I was redeemed.

\*\*

CLICK! THE IMAGE OF PETIT FREEZES AND DISSOLVES INTO A BLACK & WHITE PHOTO.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...so I thought.

\*\*

CLICK! ANOTHER B&W PHOTO APPEARS -- A STILL PICTURE OF PETIT IN HANDCUFFS BEING LEAD INTO A VINTAGE PARIS POLICE PADDY WAGON -- THE CAMERA PULLS BACK AND THE PHOTO BECOMES PART OF THE FRONT PAGE OF A FRENCH NEWSPAPER. The accompanying headline screams: PHILIPPE PETIT DESECRATES HISTORIC MONUMENT!

PETIT (O.C.) (CONT'D)  
These Parisians, they have nothing  
but contempt... They refuse to  
appreciate beauty...

\*\*

THE CAMERA PULLS OUT FROM THE NEWSPAPER AND WE...

TRANSITION TO:

37 INT. BISTRO NIGHT

37

Petit and Annie are at their regular table. Piled high in front of them is a stack of INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS. Petit is in a furious state.

PETIT  
Every other country, Italy,  
Germany, England... even Russia.  
They salute me.

He shows the papers to Annie. Each has a photo of Petit on his Notre Dame wire.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
They call me a maestro, a valiant  
young poet! But not the French.  
They call me a delinquent...a  
vandal!

He waves a copy of La Figaro at Annie, then plops down in his chair. He drops his head in his hands and SIGHS despondently.

Annie picks up the newspaper and spots something on the inside page...

ANNIE  
(interrupting)  
Philippe, look!

Petit stops... Annie lifts a section of the paper. Petit's jaw drops at what he sees...

PETIT  
This is a sign! In the same  
newspaper as my Notre Dame story!  
This is providence. \*\*

ANNIE  
It says they're almost finished. \*\*  
The lower floors are already  
occupied...

Petit nods solemnly and looks at the paper...

CLOSE ON THE PAPER -- It's a double-page article about the World Trade Center with a large aerial photo of the construction -- ALL BUT THE TOP FLOORS ARE COMPLETED!

PETIT  
Annie, we need to pack!

ANNIE  
What do you mean?

PETIT  
We need to go to New York right  
now! Tomorrow! \*\*

ANNIE  
Tomorrow? \*\*

Petit points to the newspaper. \*\*

PETIT  
Once construction is finished  
everything will be locked. Guarded. \*\*  
It will be impossible to attempt  
the coup. This is the moment... I \*\*  
must see my towers. \*\*

ANNIE  
Philippe, I have my classes. My  
work.

PETIT

So...?

Now Annie gets angry. She stands and gets in Petit's face... \*\*

ANNIE

SO?! Do you expect me to just drop \*\*  
everything...?! Put my life on hold \*\*  
and go running to New York so you \*\*  
can meet your precious towers?! Is \*\*  
that what you expect?!? \*\*

Petit is taken aback by Annie's outburst. He pauses to \*\*  
calibrate his response... \*\*

PETIT

(meekly)

Of course not... I would never \*\*  
expect such a thing. \*\*

Sal Ladestro

38 AERIAL SHOT --

38

The majestic, but unfinished, WORLD TRADE CENTER TOWERS peek through the clouds. \*\*

WE PULL BACK THROUGH THE WINDOW OF AN AIR FRANCE PLANE TO REVEAL ANNIE -- looking out the window. WE PULL BACK FURTHER TO FIND Petit sitting beside her. They gaze out the window at the Twin Towers -- both amazed. \*\*

ANNIE

They're enormous...

It's impossible to tell whether Petit is feeling joy or panic.

PETIT

Yes... Monstrous.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. SUBWAY STAIRS/CHURCH STREET DAY

39

Petit and Annie rush up the subway stairs into the DAYLIGHT. The subway entrance sits next to the ancient graveyard belonging to St. Paul's Chapel. A sign mounted on the subway stairs reads: CHURCH ST. WTC.

Petit and Annie shade their eyes as they gaze up at the spectacular TWIN TOWERS GLISTENING in the afternoon sun. Still under construction, the monstrous spires gleam in the sunshine.

ANNIE

Hmm, wow. I knew they were tall,  
but they are taller than I  
imagined. Much taller.

Petit seems like he's in shock.

PETIT

Yes...

CUT TO:

40

EXT. WTC PLAZA DAY

40

Looking completely out of place among the DOZENS OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, Petit moves zombie-like across the plaza toward THE SOUTH TOWER -- looking skyward, toward the monolith of concrete and steel. Annie follows a few steps behind, trying to look inconspicuous. They pass the fountain base of the Fritz Koenig Sphere.

Petit reaches a column wall... He raises his hand and touches "the beast's" aluminum facade. Instantly he doubles over, clutching his stomach -- unable to breath.

PETIT

Absurd! Completely absurd!

Petit staggers around the side of the tower behind another construction fence. Annie presses through the fence and runs up to Petit.

PETIT (CONT'D)

It's not real. These towers have no  
scale. They rise and never stop.  
They're not human. It's over!  
Finished!

ANNIE

What? What's finished?

PETIT

The coup. My dream. It's destroyed.

ANNIE

Your dream is destroyed?

Petit nods. He eyes begin to tear up. Now suddenly, Annie SPEAKS in French...

ANNIE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Good. Let's see the Statue of  
Liberty. Then go back to Paris.  
(*Bien. Allons voir la Statue de la  
Liberté, et on rentre à Paris.*)

PETIT  
Why are you speaking French?

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Your dream is finished. So now you  
can speak French.  
(*Ton rêve est détruit. Alors on  
peut parler français maintenant.*)

PETIT  
(YELLS)  
ANNIE! YOU ARE NOT HEARING A SINGLE  
WORD I'M SAYING!

Annie comes right back at him...

ANNIE  
IS THIS WHY YOU BROUGHT ME TO NEW  
YORK? TO YELL AT ME?! TO BERATE  
ME?!

Petit points to the towers...

PETIT  
Do you see THESE... THESE  
MONSTERS?!

ANNIE  
Yes, I see them. But they are your  
towers! This is your dream. Not  
mine.

Petit cranes his neck and reels -- looking up at the  
buildings, he staggers into the lobby. Annie follows.

CUT TO:

41 INT. SOUTH TOWER LOBBY SAME

41

Petit stumbles into the dusty, unfinished lobby. He heads  
aimlessly toward the elevator bank.

PETIT  
Beasts... these beasts!

Annie runs in after him.

Sal Ladestro

ANNIE

Philippe, calm down. Your behaving  
ridiculously.

PETIT

These beasts, they tell me it's not  
possible! Out of the question.  
Nothing else. I'm given no sign of  
possibility! No sign that tells me  
it can be done!

BANG! At that moment, a side stairwell door BANGS OPEN. A  
CONSTRUCTION WORKER steps out carrying a bucket of drywall  
spackle. He smiles at our heroes and tips his hard hat brim.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER

Yo. How ya doin'?

And with that, he saunters off.

SQUEEEEEAK! Now, the stairwell door slowly begins to close.  
Mesmerized, Petit watches the door swing shut. Until...

CLICK -- IT STOPS -- staying open! Stunned, Petit gives  
Annie a look -- Providence?

PETIT

(to Annie)

Go back to the hotel. If I'm not  
back in five hours... Look for me  
at the police station.

And Petit slips inside the stairwell.

CUT TO:

42 EXT. SOUTH TOWER DAY 42

WE'RE LOOKING UP THE DRAMATIC FACADE OF THE TOWER AS THE  
CAMERA BEGINS TO RISE -- ZOOMING UP THE SIDE OF THE MONOLITH.  
HUNDREDS of feet into the sky -- toward the roof...

TRANSITION TO:

43 EXT. WTC SOUTH TOWER ROOF DAY 43

THE CAMERA reaches the top AND FINDS PETIT as he arrives on  
the roof -- sneaking up the last flight of wooden  
construction stairs.

PETIT (V.O.)  
I make my way to the top. And  
nobody stops me.

The roof is completely deserted except for Petit. He moves to the narrow roof ledge, surveying the scene -- his hair and clothing fluttering in the wind.

PETIT (V.O.)(CONT'D)  
And I find myself standing on an  
island floating in mid-air... at  
the edge of the "void." And of  
course, I automatically look at the  
opposite tower.

He studies the opposite Tower, THE NORTH TOWER, trying to guess the distance between. He inches closer to the edge...

There is an I-beam protruding -- creating a narrow path that extends about four feet into the "Void."

Petit climbs over the steel girder bulwark and slides his foot out onto the solitary I-beam! Balancing with one foot in front of the other, Petit stares across the open space at the far Tower for a long, seemingly endless moment.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But now, I had to dare... To  
look... Down.

\*\*

And then, without warning...

HE LOOKS DOWN -- Over the edge. A quarter mile to the ground. The "Void" is overwhelming. The sheer height of the building is incomprehensible, dizzying.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Now I know what the void is... I'm  
a wire-walker. The void is my  
domain. But not this void.

\*\*

Suddenly, A HUGE GUST OF WIND BUFFETS PETIT -- Nearly knocking him off the I-beam!

Petit steadies himself -- eyes half closed in horror and delight-- his heart pounding.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But somehow I gather the strength  
to whisper... whisper so the demons  
won't hear...

\*\*

Through clenched teeth -- Petit WHISPERS OUT LOUD...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
(whisper)  
It's impossible... But I'll do it.

Sal Ladestro

As if to tempt fate, Petit balances on his left foot, and raises his right leg out over the void. He looks straight down -- into the void -- dizzying, insane... mind-blowing!

THE CAMERA BACKS INTO THE VOID -- FLYING AWAY FROM PETIT. AS THE CAMERA BACKS AWAY...

THE TOWERS MORPH INTO A SCALE MODEL OF THE WTC TOWERS...

WE WIDEN TO:

44

INT. PETIT'S LOFT DAY

44

An elaborate SCALE MODEL OF BOTH TWIN TOWER ROOFTOPS takes up most of the tiny room. Also, hundreds of WTC photos, sketches and drawings are taped to the walls.

Petit and Jean-Louis are in the middle of a heated argument. Annie sits on a futon, listening and shaking her head at the childish display...

JEAN-LOUIS

(in French)

This is ridiculous! Completely ridiculous!

*(C'est ridicule! Complètement ridicule!)*

\*\*

PETIT

English. Only English. We must learn to sound like New Yorkers.

JEAN-LOUIS

Your so called coup is a ridiculous joke! There! Have it in English!

PETIT

I told you. I have it all planned out.

JEAN-LOUIS

Planned out? Who are you kidding? You have no idea what's on the opposite roof. You don't know what time the construction crews arrive. Or what time they quit. You have no idea what the actual distance is between the towers... Or how you are going to anchor the cavalettis - - there is absolutely no place to attach them to the facade! How many days did it take you to build this maquette?

PETIT  
It's beautiful, no?

ANNIE  
What are cavalettis?

Sal Ladestro

PETIT

They are guy-wires. In the circus they are called cavalettis. They stabilize the walk cable.

JEAN-LOUIS

Ah! The walk cable? How do you intend to pass the cable across the void?

PETIT

Just like we did at Notre Dame. Starting with a fishing line, attached to a rope, then attached to the cable.

JEAN-LOUIS

And how do we pass the fishing line between the towers?

PETIT

I was thinking we could attach the line to a soccer ball and kick it across. Or hit a golf ball. Or get a radio controlled airplane and fly the line across.

Jean-Louis SIGHS -- exasperated.

JEAN-LOUIS

Philippe, it takes years to learn how to fly a RC airplane. Do you understand that?

PETIT

Jean-Louis. We have to accomplish the coup this summer. The Towers are almost complete.

Petit puts his hand on Jean-Louis' shoulder.

PETIT (CONT'D)

We're almost out of time. I need you to help me pull this off. This will be the most audacious coup that's ever been done!

JEAN-LOUIS

Audacious? It's madness!

PETIT

Yes, completely! No one in his right mind would ever attempt such a thing. That's exactly why I must do it.

(MORE)

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (CONT'D)

Because it's never been done! So  
yes, I admit it. I am mad.

JEAN-LOUIS

Yes.

PETIT

What?

JEAN-LOUIS

You are mad?

PETIT

Yes, I am mad!

JEAN-LOUIS (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Are you completely insane?  
(*T'es complètement cinglé?*)

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Crazy!  
(*Dingue!*)

JEAN-LOUIS

But that's why I love you!

PETIT

Yes that's why you love me because  
I am mad! I am crazy! I am  
completely insane!

Completely spent, Petit plops into a chair. Jean-Louis looks  
at him for a long moment, then...

JEAN-LOUIS

Ok I got to go.

Jean-Louis gives Petit a wary look...

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)

I'll figure out how to get the  
fishing line across... You figure  
out how to anchor the cavalettis.  
Do we have a deal?

PETIT

Yes, deal.

Jean-Louis heads for the door -- then stops and turns back  
to Petit...

JEAN-LOUIS

You know -- I will solve this  
fishing line problem.

Petit nods.

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)

I hope you can keep your end of  
the deal.

Jean-Louis leaves. As soon as he closes the door, Petit drops  
beside his model in despair. He stretches his tiny piece of  
yarn to different points on the model facade...

PETIT

He's right. There's absolutely no  
way to attach the cavalettis! The  
windows don't open... There's no  
place to attach to the facade...  
With the wind gusting between the  
towers, there is no way to attempt  
such an exposed walk without guy-  
lines. Merde!

ANNIE

You need to see Papa Rudy.

THE CAMERA PUSHES INTO the tangled web of strings.

PAPA RUDY (O.C.)  
The cavalettis cannot be vertical.  
They must be horizontal...

TRANSITION TO:

45 INT. PAPA RUDY'S LIVING ROOM ANOTHER DAY DAY 45

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK from the model and into Papa Rudy's house. Petit's miniature Towers are now set up on the big oak dining table. Annie sits off to the side flipping through an old magazine. Papa Rudy leans in and adjusts the strings to be parallel.

PAPA RUDY  
...parallel to the walk cable.

PETIT  
Parallel?!

Annoyed that Petit is questioning him, he SNAPS back...

PAPA RUDY  
IT WON'T BE PRETTY! But it will keep the cable from swaying! And you will use THREE BOLTS on the cavaletti clamps, not two!! A span this wide will put tremendous pressure on the brace plates and as you walk, your weight could crack a bolt.

(a quick afterthought)  
AND WOOD!

The old man jabs his finger in Petit's chest for emphasis. \*\*

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D) \*\*  
You must remember to put wood blocks between the wire and the building strut! That way, when the building breathes... the wood will break, but the wire won't explode AND TEAR YOU IN HALF!

PETIT  
But, the wire will go slack. Then what do I do?

PAPA RUDY  
YOU'RE A WIRE WALKER! DEAL WITH IT!

PETIT  
Okay.

PAPA RUDY

Also. Here's what you're going to do, Philippe. You're going to wear a safety belt under your costume. Attached to a safety line -- connected to a carabineer.

Petit is staggered.

PETIT

A SAFETY LINE?!?! A CARABINEER?! I cannot walk with a safety line hanging off of me!

PAPA RUDY

From that height, it will be invisible! No one will have any idea!

PETIT

And what do I do at the first cavaletti, huh?!

PAPA RUDY

You're a performer! You kneel down on the wire, unhook it and clip it on the other side!  
(kneels to demonstrate)  
The audience will think you are saluting!

PETIT

I cannot do that! That I cannot do... That I will never do!

PAPA RUDY

So why do you come here?! Because you know so much, you can tell me I'm wrong?!

PETIT

No, because I need you to show me how to rig this wire! Not tell me how to do a phony walk! Wearing a tether!

Papa Rudy dismisses Petit with a wave of his hand and storms into the next room and SLAMS the door. Annie looks up from her magazine and shakes her head.

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Philippe, really? You're both acting like babies.

(MORE)

ANNIE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
*(Philippe...mais enfin! On dirait  
deux gosses.)*

Sal Ladeestro

PETIT

He doesn't comprehend one thing  
that I'm trying to do. My high wire  
and his high wire have nothing in  
common.

Annie takes Petit by the hand and pulls him over to the  
closed door.

ANNIE

Go Philippe, talk to him.  
Apologize.

Annie softly KNOCKS on the door. Papa Rudy GRUMBLES something  
from the other side.

CUT TO:

46

INT. PAPA RUDY'S OFFICE CONTINUOUS

46

Petit shuffles in with his head bowed. The walls of the  
office are lined with photos of Papa Rudy's children -- all  
of them high-wire performers. WIRE-WALKING HISTORY.

PETIT

Look, Papa Rudy. I'm sorry. But, if  
I wear a safety line, the whole  
walk becomes meaningless.

PAPA RUDY

Philippe! My sons are consummate  
wire-walkers, and I would never  
allow them to attempt a walk like  
this without a safety line.

PETIT

But would you wear a safety line?

Petit gives him a knowing look. Papa Rudy looks away, he  
knows Philippe is right. BEAT.

PETIT (CONT'D)

Do you remember when you told me,  
"You cannot lie on stage. The  
audience will always feel what is  
inside your heart."

Papa Rudy looks back at Petit.

PETIT (CONT'D)

I could not understand this,  
because I was young, and I did not  
yet have anything inside my heart.  
But now, I understand.

Papa Rudy takes a deep breath.

PAPA RUDY

You know, Philippe - I don't know  
what you're doing. I mean, what  
you're doing is...

Tears start coming to Papa Rudy's eyes. He takes Petit's  
shoulder.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

What you're doing... I may not  
understand it. But it's... It's  
something... Something beautiful.

Emotion almost overtaking Papa Rudy, he digs into a nearby  
desk drawer and gently removes an ANTIQUE LEATHER TAPE  
MEASURE -- hand-stitched, circa 1900's.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

It was my grandfather's. You'll  
need this.

Petit gently holds the beautiful tape measure as if it was  
made of glass. When suddenly...

SMACK! Papa Rudy SLAPS an envelope on top of the tape  
measure...

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

And you'll need this.

CLOSE ON ENVELOPE -- it's filled with Franc notes.

Petit lifts one of the Franc notes out of the envelope -- the \*\*  
note's corner is torn off. \*\*

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

Now my secrets... are our secrets.

Petit is very moved by this gesture -- his longtime mentor  
believes in him after all.

PAPA RUDY (CONT'D)

And don't forget, the cavalettis.  
They must be mounted parallel to  
the wire.  
And remember, three bolts, not two.

PETIT

Thank you, Papa Rudy.

Papa Rudy gives Petit a comradely, but crushing, bear hug --  
and QUIETLY SAYS...

PAPA RUDY

Be careful.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. OPEN FIELD (VARY, FRANCE) DAY 47

A steel cable hangs between two tall trees about 100 feet  
apart. Smaller cables (cavalettis) run horizontally from the  
cable to smaller outlying trees.

Petit is on the cable with a very long balancing pole. He is  
bouncing violently, trying to keep his balance as the cable  
severely sways and undulates. Petit SHOUTS from the wire.

PETIT

More! Faster! Stronger! More  
violent!

THE CAMERA WIDENS TO FIND -- Annie pulling and tugging on the  
cable with all her might.

PETIT (CONT'D)

You are a tempest!

CLOSE ON THE CAVALETTI CLAMPS -- WE SEE the effect the  
undulating cable has on the bolts. They GRIND AND TWIST UNDER  
THE STRAIN.

PETIT (CONT'D)

You are the terrible, hurricane  
gusts that howl between the towers!

BEEP, BEEP -- a car comes up the road. A tiny, yellow 1960's  
Citroen. Petit sees and CALLS OUT from the wire...

PETIT (CONT'D)

It's Jean-Louis.

The Citroen pulls to a stop and Jean-Louis gets out along with a YOUNG MAN -- a Parisian, with a pleasant, innocent demeanor. Petit hops off the wire and runs up to the car...

PETIT (CONT'D)

Jean-Louis, good to see you.  
(to the YOUNG MAN)  
Who's this?

JEAN-LOUIS

This is my good friend Jean-Francois. He wants to be an accomplice in the coup. He's always in search of adventure.

\*\*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)  
Jean-Francois, pleased to meet you.  
(*Enchanté, Jean-Francois.*)

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

JEAN-FRANCOIS (SUBTITLE)

(in French)  
Please call me Jeff.  
(*Tu peux m'appeler Jeff.*)

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

PETIT

OK Jeff. Welcome to the coup. Have you ever...

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Jean-Louis breaks in...

\*\*

JEAN-LOUIS

Unfortunately he doesn't speak English.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

Jean-Francois (Jeff) understands "speak English"...

\*\*

JEAN-FRANCOIS

Je parle anglais un peu... Six time six equal thirty six.

\*\*

\*\*

Petit gives Jean-Louis a confused look...

\*\*

PETIT

What are you talking about? His English is perfect.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

JEAN-LOUIS

But only numbers. He teaches high school mathematics.

\*\*

\*\*

\*\*

PETIT

OK... Anything else?

\*\*

\*\*

JEAN-LOUIS \*\*  
...he's terrified of heights. \*\*

Petit gives Jeff a wary look. \*\*

PETIT \*\*  
Perfect. I'm terrified of Algebra. \*\*

Oblivious, Jeff smiles broadly. \*\*

Petit extends his hand... \*\*

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D) \*\*  
(in French) \*\*  
Jeff, welcome. \*\*  
(*Bienvenue, Jeff.*) \*\*  
(now in English) \*\*  
What is eighty one divided by \*\*  
twenty seven? \*\*

Jeff answers in an instant... \*\*

JEFF \*\*  
Three. \*\*

PETIT (SUBTITLE) \*\*  
(in French) \*\*  
Correct. And you are accomplice \*\*  
number three. \*\*  
(*Exact. Et toi, tu es l'associé* \*\*  
*numéro trois.*) \*\*

The two men shake hands... \*\*

PETIT (CONT'D) \*\*  
Ten times eleven...? \*\*

JEFF \*\*  
One hundred and ten. \*\*

PETIT (SUBTITLE) \*\*  
(in French) \*\*  
Correct. 110 stories. That's how \*\*  
tall the towers are. \*\*  
(*Exact. 110 étages. Les tours sont* \*\*  
*aussi hautes que ça.*) \*\*

Jean-Louis interrupts... \*\*

JEAN-LOUIS \*\*  
I'm sorry to interrupt your little \*\*  
arithmetic drill... but I believe \*\*  
I've kept my part of our bargain... \*\*

Jean-Louis POPS open the hatch of the car and removes A BOW AND ARROW!

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)  
It's not as sensational as a radio-control airplane...

He threads an arrow in the bow string and hands a spool of monofilament to Jeff -- the end of the fishing line is tied to the arrow.

JEAN-LOUIS (CONT'D)  
...but it's a lot quieter. Now all we need to know is the exact distance between the two towers.

PETIT  
(dead pan)  
140 feet. 42.6 meters.

Petit points to a wood stake with a flag, and another stake 140 feet across the meadow.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Annie and I just measured it out.

Petit proudly flashes Papa Rudy's tape measure. Jean-Louis gives him a quizzical look...

JEAN-LOUIS  
When did you get that info?

PETIT  
When I was in New York.

48 FLASHBACK -- EXT. WTC PLAZA DAY

48

A classic New York press conference is in progress. A LARGE GROUP OF REPORTERS surrounds SIX WTC DIGNITARIES. One of them is GUY TOZZOLI, WTC Development Director. He's answering a question...

TOZZOLI  
...as you know, the North Tower has been completely finished for two years and the South tower is completed up to the 80th floor. Both towers are open for business.

PETIT, DISGUISED AS A REPORTER, and holding a portable tape recorder SHOUTS A QUESTION...

PETIT

(SHOUTS)

Toulouse Cezanne from the magazine  
l'Architecte ... Could you please  
tell me the exact distance from the  
North corner of the South Tower to  
the South corner of the North  
Tower?

TOZZOLI

The what?

49 BACK TO ACTION -- OPEN FIELD -- Petit shrugs...

49

PETIT

It took a while, but I got my  
answer... 140 feet.

Jean-Louis raises the bow to fire...

JEAN-LOUIS

OK. 140 feet it is...

(SHOUTS to Jeff)

BAISSE-TOI!!

Petit, Annie, and Jeff drop to the ground as Jean-Louis lets  
the arrow fly --

VFX SHOT -- THE CAMERA follows the arrow through the air.  
As the arrow soars... THE FIELD BELOW DISAPPEARS... And THE  
TWIN TOWER ROOFS APPEAR!

THWACK! The arrow lands in the center of the South Tower, the  
fishing line stretched back onto the North.

BACK TO ACTION -- Petit jumps for joy.

PETIT

Perfect! Jean-Louis, you are a  
genius!! My friends, The coup is  
real!

CUT TO:

50 EXT STATUE OF LIBERTY SAME

50

PETIT

So, now I have enough money, I have  
my accomplices, and somewhat of a  
plan... The only thing left... was  
selecting the date.

(MORE)

PETIT (CONT'D)

I needed to select a date before the weather turned cold and before the towers are completed. Because once construction is finished, all access to the roof will be cut off... they'll probably even install a security fence!

CUT TO:

51 INT. PETIT'S LOFT NIGHT RAIN/LIGHTNING 51

CLOSE ON A WALL CALENDAR -- Petit's hand ENTERS FRAME and circles AUGUST 6 with a thick red pen...

PETIT (V.O.)

So I chose August 6th to begin the coup.

WIDEN TO FIND -- Petit and Annie are in Petit's tiny apartment. Rain lashes the window. LIGHTNING FLASHES! The small room is in total disarray with half-packed suitcases lying open on the floor. Annie sits cross-legged on the floor idly playing her guitar.

PETIT

(to Annie)

August 6th. That's three months from today. Jean-Louis and Jeff fly to New York at the end of July. In the meantime we start looking for American accomplices.

CUT TO:

52 INT. JFK AIRPORT CUSTOMS HALL DAY 52

A U.S. CUSTOMS AGENT stares stone-faced at Petit and Annie. Petit's open suitcase lays on the table between them, spread out before them is a wide array of RIGGING EQUIPMENT.

PETIT

...Polypropylene ropes, hemp ropes, nylon ropes, small block-and-tackle with two sheaves, large block-and-tackle with three sheaves, slings, quarter-inch cable, steel wire, pulley-blocks...

The massive framed picture of Nixon still hovers menacingly above. Petit continues...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
...Construction gloves, monkey  
wrenches, and a balancing pole in  
four sections!

Sal Ladestro

The Customs Agent looks at him blankly.

CUSTOMS AGENT  
And what's all this for?

PETIT  
I'm going to hang a high wire  
between the World Trade Center  
Towers... And walk on it.

The Agent looks at Annie. She nods -- "It's the truth." The Agent laughs and slams the suitcase shut.

CUSTOMS AGENT  
Right. Good luck. Next!

CUT TO:

53 EXT. WTC PLAZA EARLY MORNING 53

Petit hustles along with all the early construction workers. The Towers gleam in the EARLY MORNING LIGHT.

PETIT (V.O.)  
As soon as we got back to New York,  
I started my spy work. I went to  
the Towers everyday. Sometimes six  
in the morning. Everyday I would  
wear a different disguise...

CUT TO:

54 INT. WTC LOBBY DAY - MONTAGE - 54

Petit is dressed in a gaudy Hawaiian shirt, like a tourist.

PETIT (V.O.) \*\*  
I took photos of everything...and  
made detailed notes about every  
inch of the towers.

From the MEZZANINE BALCONY watches throngs of office personnel enter and exit the elevators. He uses a stopwatch to time everything.

Now PETIT enters an elevator --

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
I ride every elevator -- hundreds  
of them...

He exits a different elevator --

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

The local, the express, the express  
to the sky lobbies, to the  
mechanical floors.

55 EXT. WTC PLAZA/LOADING DOCK DAY - MONTAGE - 55

PETIT is dressed like a messenger delivery man, with a clipboard and tiny binoculars. HE WATCHES --

PETIT (V.O.)

I spy on the maintenance men...and  
the loading docks.

A delivery truck pulls into the loading dock. The driver hands papers to guards, guards check manifests.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

I watch the freight trucks making  
deliveries. Their arrival time. How  
long they stay. How much paperwork  
is exchanged.

THRU BINOCULARS -- Petit observes workers' clothes, ID badges, their manner. He watches the freight elevator operators, the foreman, the guards.

CUT TO:

56 EXT. WTC PLAZA DAY 56

Petit walks through the Plaza construction site wearing a hard hat and carrying rolls of blueprints -- acting like he's surveying the area.

PETIT (V.O.)

Sometimes I disguise myself as an  
architect. I carry blueprints and  
try to look important.

Petit is watching a line of construction workers punching out their timecards. He's not watching where he is walking...

PETIT

(SCREAMS IN PAIN)

OW!!! Merde!!

PETIT STEPS ON A NAIL SPIKE! He grabs his foot and drops to the ground. Writhing in pain.

CUT TO:

57 INT. PETIT'S NY APARTMENT NIGHT

57

The apartment is a small, ground level efficiency apartment. The furniture is moved against the walls to make room for piles of heavy rigging equipment.

Annie is bandaging Petit's foot. Behind her, WE SEE that every inch of wall space is covered with Petit's WTC drawings, photos, lists and floor plans.

ANNIE

(finishes the bandage)  
Philippe, it looks really bad.  
Maybe you should go to the hospital  
and get it stitched.

Petit stands and hobbles around the room.

PETIT

It'll be fine.

He stops at the COUNTDOWN CALENDAR, all of June is crossed out and most of July. Today is: July 19th. He points to it in despair.

PETIT (CONT'D)

Look at the date. Jean-Louis and  
Jeff arrive next week... The coup  
is less than three weeks from  
today, and I still have no access  
to the North Tower roof!

Petit absently stands on his injured foot! He GRIMACES in pain.

ANNIE

Philippe, that's a very deep cut.  
Are you going to be able to walk on  
the wire with that foot?

Petit brushes off her question with a wave of his hand...

PETIT

I'll be healed by then. It's  
tomorrow that concerns me. How am I  
supposed to continue my spy work  
with a ruined foot?

ANNIE

Do you need crutches?

PETIT  
Crutches? Of course not. I don't  
need...

Petit stops -- he gets a brainstorm!

PETIT (CONT'D)  
WAIT! YES! CRUTCHES! Great idea!

CUT TO:

58 INT. SOUTH TOWER LOBBY DAY 58

Petit, dressed once again as a tourist with three cameras  
around his neck, hobbles on crutches up to the lobby door.

A GUARD smiles and holds open the door for Petit...

GUARD  
Let me get that for you.

CUT TO:

59 INT. WTC LOBBY DAY 59

Petit is struggling to take a picture of the lobby, when a  
Port Authority Officer comes up beside him...

PORT AUTHORITY OFFICER  
Here, let me help you with your  
crutches.

PETIT  
Oh, thank you.

The Officer holds Petit's crutches while Petit aims his  
camera and SNAPS away.

CUT TO:

60 INT. WTC NORTH TOWER ELEVATOR BANK SAME DAY 60

A VISITOR'S CONCIERGE pushes Petit in a courtesy wheelchair.  
She wheels him around the corner and up to the elevator bank.

CONCIERGE  
Here you go sir, the express  
elevator. Hope you heal up soon.

PETIT

Thank you. I'll feel much better in  
a few weeks.

With his crutches, Petit hobbles out of the chair and into a waiting elevator.

CUT TO:

61 INT. ELEVATOR CONTINUOUS 61

Petit stands beside the only other passenger in the car. A DEBONAIR MAN wearing a three-piece suit and sporting a freshly waxed handlebar mustache. After the doors close, the Debonair Man gives Petit a curious look...

DEBONAIR MAN

Pardon me, but... May I ask... What are you doing here?

Petit glances to the side, pretending to be deaf.

DEBONAIR MAN (CONT'D)

You don't belong here.

The mysterious Man studies Petit, sizing him up and down.

DEBONAIR MAN (CONT'D)

Yes, in fact I'm quite right.  
You...you don't belong here at  
all... Do you... Philippe?

Petit flinches. He looks straight at the MAN.

DEBONAIR MAN (CONT'D)

I knew it! Philippe Petit,  
daredevil wire walker! I saw you in  
Paris! On top of the Notre Dame  
Cathedral.

CUT TO:

62 EXT. NOTRE DAME PLAZA DAY 62

FLASHBACK -- SHOT FROM INSIDE THE PADDY WAGON -- The Paris POLICE lead Petit, who is in handcuffs, past the CROWD of admirers. Barry is there APPLAUDING in awe of this defiant guy.

DEBONAIR MAN (O.C.)

The cops had absolutely no idea  
what to do with you!

The cops throw Petit into the back of a waiting paddy wagon.

Petit slips out of his handcuffs as the paddy wagon drives off. WE SEE BARRY through the steel window mesh.

CUT TO:

63

INT. ELEVATOR BACK TO ACTION -- SAME

63

Petit smiles at this newfound fan...

PETIT

They never do.

DEBONAIR MAN

Barry. Barry Greenhouse is my name.

Debonair Man extends his hand -- Petit shakes it.

BARRY

So, will you be performing here in New York?

PETIT

(cautious)

Uh, yes. And you... Do you work here?

BARRY

Yes.

(hands Petit a business card)

Life insurance.

The elevator DINGS and the doors slide open.

BARRY (CONT'D)

Well, this is my stop.

Petit looks up at the floor indicator. **82** is illuminated.

BARRY (CONT'D)

You call me and let me know when I can see your American debut, OK.

Barry nods and steps into the hall. Petit stares at the floor indicator-- 82. He's hatching an idea. Then, just as the elevator doors close -- Petit STOPS THEM WITH HIS CRUTCH. He hobbles into the hall and CALLS after Barry.

PETIT  
Barry. Wait up.

CUT TO:

A64 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY DAY A64

Petit continues...

PETIT  
And I thought, if I could seduce  
him into becoming an accomplice...  
He works in the North Tower. Then I  
would have access to the stairwell  
and the North Tower roof.

CUT TO:

64 INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT DUSK 64

Petit sits with Annie across from Barry. Annie has an album  
of newspaper clippings and Petit's "Spy Work" notebook.

PETIT (V.O.)  
So Annie and I invite him to  
dinner. And I bring my book of spy  
work and my clippings from Notre  
Dame, which he had already  
witnessed, so he knew I was  
serious...

\*\*

Petit has just finished making another miniature wire-walker,  
fashioned from twisted napkins. He balances the tiny figure  
on the length of red rope, which is tied between two wine  
bottles.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and little by little, he gets  
the picture.

\*\*

Petit carefully places a drinking straw balancing pole in the  
tiny wire-walker's arms...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
...then -- I walk.

\*\*

Barry slouches in his chair. Grim faced. He absently pages  
through Petit's "Spy Journal," looking at the elaborate  
drawings of the WTC floor plans.

BARRY

Well. It's certainly illegal,  
that's for sure.

Petit and Annie share a concerned look -- it isn't going  
well. Barry closes Petit's "journal."

BARRY (CONT'D)

And extremely subversive. Not to  
mention dangerous.

PETIT

Yes, well, this is true. But...

Barry cuts him off.

BARRY

It's something only a twisted,  
antisocial, anarchistic, pissed-off  
malcontent would have anything to  
do with.

Petit GULPS... Then suddenly, Barry jumps up, reaches across  
the table, and shakes Petit's hand with wild enthusiasm.

BARRY (CONT'D)

(smiling broadly)

You have your inside man.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. PETIT'S N.Y. APARTMENT DAY 65

Petit is on his front stoop washing his walk cable with gasoline. The cable is uncoiled, and snakes down the steps out to the street.

As Petit scrubs, a taxi pulls up and Jean-Louis and Jeff climb out.

JEAN-LOUIS

Philippe.

Petit drops his gas rag and runs to greet them. They give each other typical French hugs and kisses. Once the kissing is finished...

PETIT

(gestures down the street)

So, there they are...

Straight down the street, about 20 blocks away, the Twin Towers rise to the heavens.

JEAN-LOUIS (V.O.)

Philippe! The coup is a disaster.

It will never work. You haven't

thought anything through!...

CUT TO:

66 INT. WTC NORTH TOWER LOBBY SAME DAY 66

The three Frenchmen are on the mezzanine level looking down over the gleaming railing. They watch the bustling pedestrian traffic entering and exiting the elevators.

Jean-Louis continues his rant...

JEAN-LOUIS

Why are we waiting for night to climb to the roof?

PETIT

During the day there is more chance of us running into people!

JEAN-LOUIS

But at night, when someone sees us, we have no excuse to be there!

PETIT

But during the day, someone is certain to see us and ask us where we're going.

JEAN-LOUIS

During the day you say, I'm going to such and such office. To see so and so! But at night you have no excuse! Putain, Philippe!

Now Petit notices Jeff standing away from the mezzanine rail. He's visibly trembling.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(to Jeff in French)

Are you OK? Why are you shaking?  
(*Ça va? Pourquoi tu trembles?*)

JEFF (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

I told you, I don't like heights.  
(*Je t'ai dit que j'avais le vertige.*)

Petit points to the lobby floor...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

This height terrifies you?!  
(*Tu paniques à cette hauteur?!*)

JEFF (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

I get nervous on a step-stool. But I'll be fine.  
(*J'ai déjà du mal sur un tabouret, alors...Mais ça va aller.*)

Petit can't believe it.

PETIT

Putain de merde.

Jean-Louis picks up where he left off...

JEAN-LOUIS

And what about the guards?

CUT TO:

67 EXT. MANHATTAN STREET DAY

67

The three Frenchmen weave through the crowded street. The argument continues. Petit just nods as Jean-Louis prattles on.

JEAN-LOUIS

...the guards, Philippe. What about the guards? Do you know how many there are? What floor do they sit on? When do they change shifts?

PETIT

There's one guard at night. He stays only on the floors under construction. We'll have no problem avoiding him. And he never goes up to the roof.

Petit stops at a shabby electronics store.

JEAN-LOUIS

What are we doing here?

PETIT

We need an inter-phone.

CUT TO:

68 INT. ELECTRONICS STORE CONTINUOUS SAME

68

A pushy SALESMAN drops a walkie-talkie on the glass counter. \*\*

SALESMAN

You want a walkie-talkie.

PETIT

No, I want an inter-phone. This inter-phone.

Petit points to an old model, wire-connected intercom.

PETIT (CONT'D)

This one with the wire.

SALESMAN

Yeah, but this is old-fashioned.  
You want wireless.

PETIT

(tapping the glass)  
No, no, I insist on having one just  
like this. Okay.

Jeff and Jean-Louis exchange a couple of shrugs.

JEFF (SUBTITLE)

(in French)  
What's wrong with a walkie-talkie?  
(*C'est quoi le problème avec un  
talkie-walkie?*)

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)  
We need a wire. So the cops can't  
listen in.  
(*Il faut un truc avec un fil! Comme  
ça les flics pourront pas nous  
écouter.*)

Petit points again to the inter-phone.

PETIT (CONT'D)

This one right here!

SALESMAN

This is discontinued! You can't  
even get a warranty.

PETIT

No, please, THIS inter-phone! With  
the wire!

SALESMAN

Okay...whatever you want.

The Salesman kneels down and opens up the case.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(to Jean-Louis in French)  
Can you believe this *fiels de pute*?  
(*C'est dingue ça. Quel con celui  
là!*)

JEAN-LOUIS (SUBTITLE)

(in French)  
This moron really takes us for a  
couple of suckers! He's doing  
everything to trip us up.

(MORE)

JEAN-LOUIS (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
*(Il nous prend vraiment pour des  
pigeons, il fait tout pour nous  
refourguer sa came.)*

Inter-phone box in hand, the Salesman stands and addresses  
the group in perfect French.

SALESMAN (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Hey guys,  
(MORE)

Sal Ladestro

SALESMAN (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
if you are planning a drug deal or  
a bank robbery, be careful.  
*(Eh les mecs, si vous voulez voler  
une banque ou vendre de la dope,  
Faites attention...)*  
(now in English)  
You're not the only people in New  
York who speak French.

Petit and Jean-Louis look at each other, astonished.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)  
The name is Jean-Pierre. J.P. in  
America.

J.P. extends his hand...

J.P. (SUBTITLE)  
And by the way,  
(now in French)  
I have nothing against bank  
robbers...  
*(Moi je n'ai rien contre les  
voleurs de banque...)*

Petit and Jean-Louis exchange a sly look.

JEAN-LOUIS  
I say we invite him to dinner.

Petit takes J.P.'s hand and shakes it vigorously. J.P. smiles  
a big broad smile...

CLICK! THE FRAME FREEZES AND DISSOLVES TO B&W...

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT: I.D. CARD

J.P.'s photo is now on the face of an I.D. card -- "Fisher  
Industrial Fence Co."

PETIT (O.C.)  
J.P. -- Welcome to the Fisher  
Industrial Fence Company of Fort  
Lee New Jersey.

WIDEN TO:

All of the accomplices sit at a large table -- Jean-Louis,  
Jeff, Barry, Annie, Petit and J.P.

J.P. admires his new I.D.

J.P.

This looks like the real deal. Who  
made this?

PETIT

Trust me. You don't want to know.

Sal Ladestro

J.P.

I'll bet. Do I have a job title?

PETIT

Yes! Since you've lived in New York the longest. I'm going to make you our Personnel Director.

J.P.

That's cool. What do I need to do?

PETIT

(dead pan)

Find more accomplices.

\*\*

70

INT. JAZZ CLUB NIGHT

70

It's late. The club is empty except for a WAITER stacking chairs and a BARTENDER polishing glasses.

Petit, Jean-Louis and J.P. face ALBERT AND DAVID. Two very "happy" jazz musicians. A fat joint SMOLDERS in an ashtray.

ALBERT sports horn rim glasses and a thick mustache -- and he never smiles. He drains his cocktail and leans against the piano.

ALBERT

You need help rigging a wire? I can help you rig a wire. I know how to tie knots, I used to work on a shrimp boat.

DAVID, with a wild frock of unkempt hair stops playing the piano and starts rolling "a fatty."

DAVID

Yeah, count me in too. Especially if that wire is really, really HIGH!

(twists the ends of his Zigzag)

Get it, REALLY HIGH!

David bursts into uncontrolled laughter. Albert continues to glare, stone faced. J.P. gives Petit a sheepish shrug.

ALBERT

And why the World Trade Towers?  
Everybody I know hates those ugly  
boxes. They look like two big  
filing cabinets.

DAVID

Right on! Let's climb the Chrysler  
Building!

Jean-Louis COUGHS as a CLOUD OF GREEN "BAMMY SMOKE" BLOWS  
THROUGH FRAME FROM OFF CAMERA. He shakes his head in disgust  
and speaks to Petit in French.

JEAN-LOUIS (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

This is bad. I don't trust these  
two assholes.

*(Je les sens pas du tout c'est deux  
là...)*

(re: Albert)

Especially the sourpuss over there.  
*(Surtout le petit mariole là-bas.)*

Petit whispers in French to J.P.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

J.P. -- are you sure we can count  
on these guys?

*(J.P. - T'es sur qu'on peut compter  
sur eux?)*

J.P. (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

It's the best I can do on short  
notice. It's either these two...or  
a homeless shelter.

*(C'est le mieux que j'ai trouvé,  
c'est ça ou des clochards.)*

Petit looks over at Jean-Louis and throws up his hands --  
there's nothing else we can do. NOW WE HEAR...

PETIT (V.O.)

TOMORROW!

CUT TO:

PETIT  
The coup is on for tomorrow.

Sal Ladestro

It's late afternoon. The room is grey and the mood is somber. All of the ACCOMPLICES are present: Annie, Jean-Louis, Jeff, J.P, Albert and David. Everyone except Barry. Rigging equipment is stacked everywhere in the room.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Tomorrow is the big day!

A shirtless Petit paces around the room like a caged animal, his arms flailing wildly as he speaks.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Okay. This is the plan...

His animated shadow plays across the somber FACES of his ACCOMPLICES. They sit silently on the floor and on the shabby furniture. Their faces are tight...nerve racked. NO ONE LOOKS AT PETIT...except DAVID, who's enjoying the drama. Wearing a shit-eating-grin, he rolls another fat "Blanket."

Albert is fooling around with a new piece of equipment -- A COLLAPSIBLE BOW. Jean-Louis roughly takes it away from him. \*\*

PETIT (CONT'D)  
The workers start arriving at seven in the morning. I must be on the wire at six o'clock! Is anyone listening? Anyone paying attention?!

No one responds or reacts. The room is dead silent. Annie hands Petit a plate of vegetables...

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Philippe. You should eat something.  
(*Philippe. Tu devrais manger quelque chose.*)

Petit angrily waves the food away...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
EAT!!! How can I eat? The plan! We have to go over the plan!!!  
(*MANGER !! Mais comment je pourrais manger ? Le plan, il faut bosser le plan!!!*)

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
We've gone over the plan.  
(*Mais on l'a déjà bossé le plan.*)  
(in English)  
(MORE)

ANNIE (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
We've gone over the plan twenty  
times already...

PETIT  
Well, here comes number twenty-one!  
(...)

AT 2 P.M. TOMORROW... We load the  
van, J.P. drives. We drop Jean-  
Louis, Albert, and Annie at the  
North Tower to rendezvous with  
Barry.

(MORE)

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (CONT'D)

He will hide you on his floor, then sneak you up the stairwell to the roof.

(...)

The rest of us, wearing our worker disguises, will bring the walk cable and rigging equipment up in the construction elevator... according to my spy-work, we should be able to get up to the 82nd floor. Then, as soon as the coast is clear, as fast as we can, we bring everything up to the roof and start rigging.

(...)

AND BY MIDNIGHT, WE ARE FINISHED... DO YOU HEAR ME?!? AT MIDNIGHT!! This gives me the time to sneak over to the North Tower and check the rigging. I MUST HAVE TIME TO CHECK THE RIGGING ON BOTH TOWERS! AT 6 A.M.... WHEN DAWN BREAKS... I TAKE MY FIRST STEP!

Petit walks heel to toe on one of the half-dozen rigging cables that's laid-out on the floor.

PETIT (CONT'D)

Moi je marche sur le fil.

Petit grimaces when he puts pressure on his bad foot. Annie notices, but says nothing.

After a long pause... Jean-Louis shakes his head, then looks up at Petit.

JEAN-LOUIS

Philippe. I think we should wait...

He throws a sideways glance at Albert and David, and SPEAKS to Petit in French...

JEAN-LOUIS (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

(in French)

...and find some -- more competent associates?

(...*en attendant de trouver des associés plus--- compétents.*)

Petit SHOUTS...

PETIT

NO! LES CAROTTES SONT CUITES!!!

This gets the group's attention.

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
It's now or never, my friend.  
(*Mon ami, c'est maintenant ou  
jamais.*)

Resigned, Jean-Louis nods his head and sighs.

JEAN-LOUIS  
*Les carottes sont cuites.*

Both he and Petit look over to Annie.

ANNIE  
The carrots are cooked.

PETIT  
Bon.

And with that, Petit leaves -- giving the door a firm SLAM.  
After a long silent pause, Albert pipes up...

ALBERT  
Cooked carrots? What the hell is  
that all about?

J.P.  
Les carottes sont cuites. "The  
carrots are cooked." Look, the  
French use a lot of culinary  
metaphors. It's a country with 365  
types of cheese for Christ sake,  
one for each day of the year... So  
of course they use a vegetable  
metaphor... The die is cast.  
There's no turning back. The  
carrots are cooked.

Jean-Louis throws up his hands.

JEAN-LOUIS  
What are we doing here? Are we  
accomplices to this man's suicide?

ALBERT  
And probably our own incarceration.  
Look, I think it's cool to do this,  
but I don't want to go to jail.

David, his head enveloped in a CLOUD OF SMOKE, COUGHS AND  
HACKS...

DAVID  
Shit man. Jail? That's a buzz kill.

JEAN-LOUIS

He's not prepared. He's not ready.

ANNIE

He won't step on the wire if he  
doesn't feel ready. But if the coup  
fails... He'll certainly die...  
(she points to her heart)  
...à l'intérieur.

Now Jeff speaks up in broken English...

JEFF

I zink he vill do it... It vill be  
most beau!

ANNIE

Yes. Beautiful.

CUT TO:

72 INT. PETIT'S NY APARTMENT BEDROOM NIGHT LIGHTNING/RAIN 72

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING AND A CLAP OF THUNDER rattles Petit  
awake! He jumps upright, covered in cold sweat. He slides out  
of bed, careful to not wake Annie.

PETIT (V.O.)

Of course, I couldn't sleep...

CUT TO:

73 INT. PETIT'S NY APARTMENT LIVING ROOM NIGHT RAIN 73

In bare feet, Petit tip-toes past the sleeping accomplices --  
sprawled out on the floor. He carries a large claw hammer.

PETIT (V.O.)

And I had forgotten something very  
important... I had forgotten to  
nail shut the coffin.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

CUT TO:

74 INT. APARTMENT HALL NIGHT 74

Like a madman, Petit POUNDS nails into the lid of a "box."

PETIT (V.O.)

Actually, there was no coffin... It was the crate holding the walk cable. But in my mind, I had changed that crate into a coffin...

THE CAMERA PASSES THROUGH A CRACK IN THE CRATE LID -- A FLASH OF LIGHTNING reveals the face of a CORPSE! IT'S PETIT! Cold, gray and DEAD!

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Perhaps my coffin!

\*\*

THE CRATE HAS MORPHED INTO A COFFIN! As Petit madly hammers... BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! THE COFFIN TURNS BACK INTO THE CRATE!

ANNIE (O.C.)

Philippe, what are you doing? You're waking the whole neighborhood. You need to get some rest.

Petit spins around to find Annie in the hall.

PETIT

I forgot to nail shut the coffin.

ANNIE

Stop calling it that.

PETIT

A coffin is exactly what this may be.

This remark pisses Annie off...

ANNIE

You think that's funny? What's wrong with you? Do you have a death wish, or something?

Now Petit is pissed. He SLAMS the hammer down.

PETIT

I never use that word! EVER!

ANNIE

Oh, please. Coffin, death, die. They're all the same sentiment. If you want to talk stupidly, go ahead.

PETIT

Why are you doing this? Why are you now suddenly against me?

ANNIE

Against you! No one is more supportive!

PETIT

Then why do you call me names? And ridicule me... On the night before my most treacherous walk. Why are you so uncaring?

ANNIE

I'm uncaring? You're the most arrogant selfish...

Petit cuts her off...

PETIT

OF COURSE I'M ARROGANT! I must be! To walk on a wire...to command the wire!

ANNIE

And what about your accomplices? Your partners? You don't offer a simple thank you. To let them know they're appreciated.

PETIT

They know I appreciate them.

ANNIE

Do they?

PETIT

What do you want me to do? Go in there right now and wake them up? Wake them up and tell them thank you?!

Annie looks at him for a long moment -- she's done.

ANNIE

Come to bed Philippe. You're exhausted.

Petit goes to her and takes her in his arms. He looks at her -  
- vulnerable, scared.

PETIT

Annie, my head is full of -- doubts. When it comes time for me to step on the wire -- to confront the void. I'm not sure I'll be able to make the first step.

ANNIE

Your heart will tell you what to do.

She gives him a gentle kiss on the cheek, and turns to leave...

PETIT

Annie, you're the only one who truly knows me. Because of you I have the ability, the strength. Without you, I couldn't do this. I could not do this walk.

She looks at him for a long moment. She sees in his eyes he doesn't really believe this last statement. He doesn't have room for her in his life. She smiles sadly...

ANNIE

You'll be fine. Your accomplices... and your towers -- will be there to support you.

She turns and leaves.

Petit stands alone in the hall, looking at the crate. After a moment, he continues to hammer the lid -- but he TAPS the nails as quietly as he can.

CUT TO:

75

INT. PETIT'S N.Y. APARTMENT NIGHT

75

Annie tip-toes into the dark living room -- carefully stepping over the SNORING Accomplices. Petit's "quiet tapping" can be HEARD coming from the hall.

As she reaches the bedroom door, she stops. She holds her head -- on the verge of tears. Drained, afraid. When suddenly...

PETIT THROWS OPEN THE DOOR AND SWITCHES ON THE LIGHTS. He DRUMS THE HAMMER LOUDLY on the furniture...

PETIT

Wake up! Everyone wake up!

The Accomplices are roused from their sleep. They try to focus their confused, groggy minds.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
I have something very important to say... Something I have not mentioned before...

Petit summons all of his strength -- and spits it out...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Merci.

The Accomplices look at him in stunned silence.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
OK, now get some rest. Tomorrow is the big day...

And Petit leaves. The Accomplices exchange confounded looks...

JEAN-LOUIS  
He's under too much stress. He's lost his mind.

The absurdity of what just happened causes Annie to smile.

CUT TO:

C.U. A SHIPPING LABEL --

**"TO BARRY GREENHOUSE - 1 World Trade Center - South Tower - 82nd FLOOR."** WE WIDEN TO FIND -- the label is glued to the top of the "coffin" (cable crate). \*\*

WIDEN TO REVEAL:

76

INT. VAN MOVING DAY

76

We are in the rear compartment of a small van. There are no windows, but the ROCKING AND VIBRATION tell us we are moving.

PETIT (V.O.)  
Now, it starts...

Petit, Jean-Louis, David, Albert and the crates of equipment are crowded into the rear of the van. Jean-Louis and Albert are dressed in business-suit disguises. David and Petit are disguised as construction workers/delivery men.

Petit cranes his head to SEE -- THRU THE WINDSHIELD, THE BUILDINGS FLASH BY. NOW THE VAN MAKES A TURN AND PETIT SEES THE LOOMING TWIN TOWERS. LESS THAN FIVE BLOCKS AWAY.

Jean-Louis is collapsing a FOLDING ARCHERY BOW. He breaks it into three pieces and slides them into a blueprint tube case. He glares at Albert who is readying his still camera. Albert glares back. Everyone is silent. Very tense.

IN THE CAB --

J.P. is driving, Jeff is next to him and Annie is riding shotgun. J.P. and Jeff are also wearing construction worker disguises.

J.P. SCREECHES the van to a rough stop.

CUT TO:

77 EXT/INT. VAN NORTH TOWER PLAZA SAME 77

Through the van windshield we see the WTC Plaza

J.P.  
(calling over his  
shoulder)  
North Tower plaza. Make it snappy.  
I'm in a red zone.

Annie, Jean-Louis and Albert jump out. Petit watches from inside the van...

Barry appears and greets Jean-Louis and Albert, helping them with their extra heavy bags...

BARRY  
Jesus Christ! What d'ya got in  
here, steel cable rigging tools?

ALBERT  
Very funny.

They lug their heavy bags into the North Tower lobby and past a SECURITY GUARD.

Annie reaches into the van and throws her arms around Petit. They hug in a long, furious embrace.

ANNIE  
*À bientôt. (Goodbye for now.)*

PETIT  
*Au revoir.*

J.P.

Come on, come on... Red zone.

Annie's face fills with terror as she pulls away, she WHISPERS to Petit...

ANNIE

*Je t'aime.*

Petit answers in his manic state...

PETIT

Annie, English please!  
(after a crazed pause...)  
I love you too.

He gives her an emotional kiss and climbs inside the van...

PETIT (CONT'D)

(to J.P.)  
Let's go.

J.P. puts the van in gear and pulls out.

CUT TO:

78

INT. VAN MOVING SAME

78

Petit and Jeff bounce in the back -- nervous as a couple of teens holding a pregnancy test.

PETIT (V.O.)

I knew that my life was not in my command anymore. Now the coup had started...

The van bounces violently on the terrible New York streets, jostling everyone wildly from side to side. Petit tries in vain to see out through the windshield, but all he can see are walls -- brick and glass walls.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And... I knew! I knew we were going to get caught! Right there!

\*\*

J.P. SLAMS on the brakes. Everyone is thrown forward.

PETIT'S P.O.V. THRU THE WINDSHIELD -- A PORT AUTHORITY COP (OFFICER FOLEY) stands on the loading dock. He raises his hand to stop the van.

OFFICER FOLEY

Hold it right there, cowboy.

J.P.  
(to Petit)  
Stay quiet back there.

J.P. closes the porthole opening that separates the rear of the van from the cab.

OFFICER FOLEY (O.C.)  
What's your business?

J.P. (O.C.)  
Delivery. 82nd floor. Fisher Fence Company.

Petit listens intently. He waits... And waits... And waits...

OFFICER FOLEY (O.C.)  
Alright. Let's move it.

The van lurches forward. J.P. slides open the portal. THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD WE SEE THE VAN MOVING DOWN A LONG SUBTERRANEAN TUNNEL.

J.P.  
That cop seemed awfully suspicious.  
I thought I was gonna' crap my pants.

CUT TO:

79 INT. LOADING DOCK SOUTH TOWER DAY 79

A cargo dolly stacked with the rigging gear RUMBLES up on the loading ramp. Petit, Jeff, J.P., and David blend perfectly into the blue-collar atmosphere with their disguises and counterfeit ID's. A burly DOCK FOREMAN stops them...

DOCK FOREMAN  
Hey, hey, hey... No way, no way...

J.P. runs up to the DOCK FOREMAN with a handful of phony paperwork.

J.P.  
We've got a shipment going up to the 82nd floor.

The Foreman waves at the elevators.

DOCK FOREMAN  
Oh no. Only Met deliveries are going up.

(MORE)

DOCK FOREMAN (CONT'D)  
They've got all the elevators  
leased today. Come back next week.

And with that, the Foreman walks away. Petit runs up to J.P.  
and the two men begin HISSING IN FRENCH...

J.P. (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
You heard him. All the elevators  
are rented. It's impossible today.  
*(T'as entendu? Tout est bloqué.  
C'est impossible aujourd'hui.)*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
No! We are not moving! Do whatever  
you have to do to change his mind!  
*(Non! On bouge pas! Fais ce qu'il  
faut pour qu'il change d'avis.)*

Then, in a very loud voice -- and in English...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
We take a pause! A worker's pause.

Petit plops onto the floor and sits against a chain-link  
storage pen. He holds his head in his hand and scans his  
surroundings.

PETIT'S P.O.V. --

The Foreman GRUMBLES at the FREIGHT ELEVATOR OPERATOR as a  
mountain of furniture is slowly loaded.

Petit looks up at the large wall clock above the elevator  
bank. It reads 2:34.

The Foreman plops into a chair at his work station --

This bullpen is nothing more than a couple of office desks  
pushed together surrounded by freestanding corkboards, each  
covered with paperwork and clipboards.

Now, J.P. saddles up alongside the Foreman, holding a copy of  
"The Daily News."

J.P.  
(pointing to the  
newspaper)  
Hey! Did you see the paper? How  
'bout that S.O.B. Nixon? Can you  
believe this guy?

On the front page of the paper is the infamous picture of Nixon flashing two peace signs. The headline screams: "SMOKING GUN."

Sal Ladestro

DOCK FOREMAN

Yeah. If it was up to me that son-of-a-bitch would be in jail for the rest of his life...

The Foreman jumps out of his chair as another truck pulls in. J.P. runs along with him -- continuing the banter.

J.P.

Ain't that the truth?

DOCK FOREMAN

All these goddamn politicians are scum. I hate all the dirty bastards.

J.P.

Hell yes. Ever since Kennedy got shot the whole country's gone to hell in a hand basket...

DOCK FOREMAN

That's for goddamn sure. whad'ya say your name was?

J.P.

J.P. -- Fisher Fence Company. My old man named me after J.P. Morgan.

\*\*

They bond instantly...

Petit looks back over to the elevator bank...

P.O.V. -- FREIGHT ELEVATORS -- VFX --

AS PETIT WATCHES WORKERS LOAD THE ELEVATORS, SUDDENLY EVERYTHING SHIFTS TO SLOW-MOTION...

PETIT (V.O.)

And in my very agitated mind... it looked to me like the workers were MOVING LIKE SNAILS!

THE WORKERS ARE SLOWING TO A CRAWL. PETIT LOOKS AT HIS POCKET WATCH -- THE HANDS SPIN RAPIDLY, TICKING OFF THE HOURS...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There was nothing else I could do. I was trapped. I had to just sit and wait... and pray that J.P. could work some magic.

\*\*

\*\*

CLOSE ON THE SPINNING WATCH -- THE HANDS STOP AT 4:30.

BRIIINNNNGGG!!!

CUT TO:

80

INT. LOADING DOCK SOUTH TOWER DAY

80

A LARGE ALARM BELL BLARING!! The clock on the wall reads:  
**4:30**. The Foreman walks past the elevators, calling to his  
operators...

DOCK FOREMAN

Goodnight, guys. Have a good one!

The Foreman turns the corner and spots Petit and his crew.  
They're sitting on the floor looking like lost, sad puppies.

DOCK FOREMAN (CONT'D)

Are you wallflowers still here?

J.P. stands and begins to plead his case once again...

J.P.

Look, Mr. Cielani... If we don't  
make this delivery, we're gonna get  
fired.

(he points to Petit)

And Phil here, he's a dead duck for  
sure.

Petit, Jeff, and David watch intently...

DOCK FOREMAN

(sighs)

Whattya got? Where ya goin'...

J.P.

Um... 82nd floor...

The Foreman signals to the ELEVATOR OPERATOR...

DOCK FOREMAN

Hey Jimmy, take these frogs to the  
82nd floor... It's your last ride.  
Okay? Come on, guys. It's quittin'  
time.

Petit and his accomplices hustle their heavy load into the  
elevator car.

CUT TO:

81 INT. CONSTRUCTION ELEVATOR DAY

81

The elevator is a coarse construction lift, a simple box with ragged plywood walls and no ceiling.

JIMMY

What floor?

Petit looks up AND SEES WRITING on the elevator wall: **CAR #3  
0-110!**

J.P.

(still acting)

Uh... Let's see... What floor? What floor...? Ah, here we are...

PETIT

(shouts)

**ONE-TEN!!!**

Jimmy stops and turns slowly to Petit...

JIMMY

110? There's nothing up there.  
That's just the mechanical floor.

PETIT

Yes, that's perfect because we need  
to be close to the roof...

\*\*

JIMMY

The roof? Why the roof?

Jimmy gives J.P. a suspicious look...

J.P.

(stammers)

Ahhh... We, ahh... We...

Petit begins talking a mile a minute...

PETIT

We have the pieces for the antenna  
and the antenna mast and all of the  
components for the electrified  
security fence and the insulators  
that have to be installed before  
any of the wiring can be started  
and that needs to be coordinated  
with the initial sizing of the  
conduit pour and that can't happen  
until we measure for the...

Now J.P. jumps in and begins RANTING on top of Petit...

J.P.

And before any of the wiring for  
the aerial system can even be  
initiated not to mention that the  
project is four months behind  
schedule and the...

Jimmy cuts them off...

JIMMY

Whatever! Watch your fingers!

Sal Ladestro

Jimmy SLAMS the grate shut and pulls the power lever.

Motors WHINE and the elevator begins rattling slowly upward. Petit whispers to J.P. in French...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Look, J.P. Now the most important thing is... Get us out on the 110th floor! Throw the equipment out! And get this guy down!

*(Bon, J.P., dès qu'on arrive au 110eme étage, on se débarrasse du matos, et toi tu fais redescendre ce mec.)*

J.P. (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

But you need help to carry all this.

*(Mais t'as besoin d'aide pour porter tout ça.)*

Petit cuts him off --

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Get this guy down! If this guy stays there until we move the equipment we have to come back down with him! And we can forget about the coup!!

*(Fait redescendre ce mec! S'il reste avec nous, on va devoir repartir avec lui. Et on peut oublier le coup.)*

J.P. nods. Petit gives a sheepish grin to the elevator operator who didn't understand a word that Petit and J.P. just said...and couldn't care less.

Now Petit glances up and sees -- A small dim grey square of DAYLIGHT at the top of the elevator shaft.

And now a very slight smile creeps across Petit's face as the square of daylight grows larger as the elevator ascends. Petit elbows J.P.

PETIT (CONT'D)

Look. The sky.

KA-THUNK!! The Elevator jerks to a stop.

JIMMY

110.

CUT TO:

82 INT. 110TH FLOOR DAY

82

They arrive at the 110th floor: a jungle of construction debris, tools, pipes, workbenches and lumber.

Sal Ladestro

Jimmy slides open the grate, and Petit, David and Jeff pile out with their cargo. J.P. stays in the elevator and starts chatting up Jimmy...

J.P.

Say listen, we really appreciate this.

(gestures to Petit's crew)

Look these guys have got a lot of unloading and inventory to do... tell you what, let me buy you a beer. These guys will be OK.

JIMMY

Whatever... Watch your fingers.

Jimmy shuts the grate. Then he and J.P. begin descending... J.P. looks at Jimmy's security badge...

J.P.

Kommedas... What's that? A Greek name? I got a Greek two floors above me... I mean he's always eating lamb...nothing but lamb.

Petit turns in time to see J.P. about to disappear below the floor. J.P. gives Petit a wink: Mission almost accomplished.

WE HEAR A LOUD CRACK --

CUT TO:

83

LATER --

83

The lid of the coffin (crate) is pried open. The three accomplices struggle to lift the heavy cable out of the crate. The walk cable is pre-rigged and has both cavalettis and guy-wires attached. The morass of guy-lines are organized \*\* and carefully taped to the walk cable.

Quiet as possible, the trio carries the heavy walk cable across the floor. David is obviously struggling. He's short of breath, moaning.

DAVID

Aww man, this is turning into a real bummer. Ugh.

(travels a few more steps)

Man, this shit is heavy!

PETIT

Shhh. Quiet!

DAVID

I mean, like, really heavy. Heavy heavy. Not bullshit heavy.

The accomplices shuffle toward an open wood staircase -- temporary access to the roof.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Man, I'm telling ya... This whole scene is giving me bad vibes, man!

PETIT

Shhh!

The trio stops near a pile of stuff that looks like construction material, but in fact, it's the equipment for the coup.

PETIT (CONT'D)

(whisper)

OK. There's room over there next to that tarp.

(Petit translates for Jeff)

*Bon, il y a de la place là-bas à côté de la bâche.*

\*\*

The trio sets the cable down next to a large canvas tarp. The tarp is draped over something like a small tent.

PETIT (CONT'D)

All right. Let's get the rest. We should make it in three trips.

David takes a hazy look at his surreal surroundings. The vaulted concrete walls that are ringed with rectangular portals gives this huge vaulted space an extraterrestrial feeling.

DAVID

This place is a trip, man. It's like something outta *Silent Running*.

Petit checks the time then WHISPERS to his troops...

PETIT

Alright, we're good. This is good. We're actually ahead of schedule. So the first thing we...

Suddenly, A WALKIE-TALKIE CRACKLES! A GUARD is approaching from somewhere!

Petit and Jeff freeze -- but David panics!

DAVID  
(urgent whisper)  
Oh shit! It's the pigs! The pigs  
are here, man! The jig is up, man!

THE WALKIE-TALKIE STATIC AND HISS GROWS LOUDER...

David literally begins running around in circles.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Oh man! Oh, man! This is too  
gnarly, man! Whata' we gonna' do  
man?

Petit grabs David and pulls him behind a crate.

PETIT  
Shhhhh!!! Quiet! We have to hide!

DAVID  
(loud whisper)  
I can't do this, man! This is  
freaking me out, man! Where's he  
coming from, man!

PETIT  
(whisper)  
The far side of the floor.

David jumps up -- hyperventilating and completely terrified!

DAVID  
(panicked whisper)  
I can't do this, man! I'M WIGGIN'  
OUT!!

Petit realizes that David is in fact "wiggin' out."

PETIT  
(urgent whisper)  
Look, we're good. We can handle it  
from here.

Petit points to a stairwell door on the opposite side of the  
floor...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Take that stairway back down to 82.  
Then get in an elevator! You'll be  
fine!

Suddenly David does an emotional 180 and speaks to Petit with  
crazed, earnest candor...

DAVID

Look man, I really, really wanna  
help you do something radical,  
but...

SQUELCH!!! THE WALKIE-TALKIE IS ONLY YARDS AWAY! DAVID LOSES  
it!

DAVID (CONT'D)

(freaking out)

Okay! That's it! I'm shaggin' ass!

David takes off running toward the stairwell door.

Petit and Jeff run to the nearby tarp. Petit lifts a flap and  
throws Jeff under it! JEFF LETS OUT A STIFLED SCREAM!

UNDER THE TARP -- is nothing but a narrow I-beam spanning a  
FOUR-STORY DROP down!! THE TARP is draped over a flimsy frame  
that covers an unfinished elevator shaft like a tent! The  
walkie-talkie SQUELCH SOUND GETS CLOSER!!

Petit leaps under the tarp himself, straddling the I-beam.

CUT TO:

84

INT. UNDER THE TARP SAME

84

A DIM WORK LIGHT four floors below barely ILLUMINATES their  
faces. The WALKIE-TALKIE SOUND is upon them! WE HEAR  
FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING! Petit holds on tight. Only Petit's  
eyes move, trying to discern the Guard's location.

WE HEAR THE CRACKLING WALKIE-TALKIE approach the tarp.....

Jeff balances on the beam with his eyes clamped shut --  
shaking uncontrollably. After a long moment, THE SOUND OF THE  
WALKIE-TALKIE FADES AWAY -- Has the Guard left?

Using very slight movement, Petit, ever-so-slowly, lifts a  
small lip of the tarp off the ground -- a faint SHARD OF SOFT  
DAYLIGHT TRICKLES IN.

SQUELCH! THE WALKIE SQUAWKS!

Petit silently drops the tarp and MOUTHS to Jeff...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(MOUTHS in French)

We have to wait for darkness...  
(*Il faut attendre la nuit.*)

Jeff nods -- his eyes still shut -- still shaking like a leaf.

CUT TO:

85 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY DAY 85

Petit stands before a beautifully clear afternoon sky as he ADDRESSES THE CAMERA...

PETIT

So we have no choice but to wait for darkness. Our only hope was that the guard would move to another floor... or perhaps in the darkness we could slip past him. But I must admit, at this point I had a very bad feeling that the coup was dead.

CUT TO:

86 EXT. CHURCH STREET DAY 86

ANNIE is on the corner of Church and Dey Street -- two blocks \*\* from the WTC Plaza. She paces beneath the BIG DIGITAL CLOCK that hangs on the corner of the East River Savings Bank. The clock reads: 5:48 PM.

J.P. (O.C.)

There you are...

Now J.P. arrives. A panicked look comes over Annie when she sees him.

ANNIE

Is everything OK?

J.P.

There was a little snag, but everything is going smoothly now.  
(checks his watch)  
Now all we do is wa...

Annie interrupts and points.

ANNIE

Look!!

POV -- David throws paranoid looks over his shoulder as he runs down the street like a rabbit, then bolts down the subway stairs.

J.P.

This could be a problem.

CUT TO:

87 UNDER THE TARP LATER

87

Petit and Jeff sit facing each other on the beam. Their boots resting on each other's crotch.

BLAM! A LOUD BANG causes the two men to jump! Jeff's whole body now starts shaking. Petit is frozen.

Suddenly, WE HEAR VOICES! VOICES COMING FROM BELOW! Petit looks down just as a FLASHLIGHT BEAM PLAYS ALONG THE WALLS OF THE DEEP SHAFT BELOW.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Jesus Christ! I can't believe they don't gate this shaft. Somebody's gonna get killed.

And then, the FLASHLIGHT SWITCHES OFF. Then, THE VOICES and footsteps trail off... And Petit breaths for the first time.

But now, Jeff begins SHAKING SO VIOLENTLY that his turquoise, hippy bracelet begins TAPPING against the side of the beam -- MAKING A HORRENDOUS RATTLE!

To silence the RACKET -- Petit presses his boot against Jeff's forearm, leveraging the CLATTERING bracelet away from the beam.

PETIT (V.O.)

So here we sit. Balancing on that steel I-beam for an eternity. And the worst part, the most painful part of this torture... was our heavy construction shoes. Killing our feet.

Jeff GROANS and flexes his foot. Petit motions for him to stop. Then Petit slowly begins to unlace Jeff's boot.

TIME CUT:

88 LATER --

88

CLOSE ON Jeff's stocking feet as Petit slowly finishes removing his partner's boot.

Petit quickly ties the laces of the two boots together, then silently lifts them over his head, hanging the boots around his neck. The two men share a look of relief.

Now Jeff spots something in the DIM WORK LIGHT -- A LARGE FRESH BLOOD STAIN on the bottom of Petit's sock.

Jeff mouths to Petit, "Votre pied!" (Your foot!)

Petit motions back, "It's OK."

SQUAWK! THE OFF SCREEN RADIO SQUELCHES AGAIN!

Both men FREEZE! They stay completely still... There is NO SOUND for a long stretch of time. But the two men don't move a muscle.

Petit rolls his eyes. He can't believe it. He mouths to Jeff, "The son-of-a-bitch is still there!"

PETIT (V.O.)  
I could not believe it. The guard  
was still there!

THE WALKIE SOUNDS ONCE MORE.

In the dim light Petit can make out the terror on Jeff's face.

PETIT (V.O.)  
And I see the terror inscribed on  
Jeff's face... and his terror  
begins to seep into my mind. And I  
begin to conjure hideous thoughts,  
myself...

CUT TO:

89 PETIT'S IMAGINATION --

89

PETIT'S POV AS JEFF TOPPLES OFF THE BEAM!!! PETIT FALLS WITH HIM! THE TWO MEN SCREAM AS THEY FALL! PLUNGING TOWARD THE FLOOR FOUR STORIES BELOW! JUST AS THEY SMACK THE CONCRETE...

CUT TO:

90 PETIT -- HE JOLTS BACK TO REALITY!

90

Still sitting astride the beam. He lifts the tarp flap -- there's still a FAINT GLOW OF DAYLIGHT.

SQUELCH!! IT'S THE WALKIE-TALKIE! THE GUARD IS BACK! Petit drops the tarp and motions to Jeff to be quiet.

PETIT (V.O.)  
So I begin to think...

CUT TO:

91 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TIME-LAPSE DAY/NIGHT 91

As Petit SPEAKS -- behind him the SUN SETS and the SKY TURNS TO NIGHT IN A SPECTACULAR TIME-LAPSE VISUAL EFFECT.

PETIT  
What is going on with this annoying security guard and his aggravating radio? Is he toying with us, just standing there? Or is he asleep? OR DEAD?

Against A STARLIT SKY -- THE MANHATTAN SKYLINE FLICKERS TO LIFE.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
I decided I had to do something...

CUT TO:

92 INT. 110TH FLOOR NIGHT 92

POP --

EXTREME CLOSE UP -- the tiny tip of a ball point pen POKES THROUGH THE PLASTIC TARP. Creating a small hole.

UNDER THE TARP -- Petit carefully moves his eye up to the pinhole...

P.O.V. -- THRU THE HOLE -- PETIT SCANS THE ROOM. It's NIGHT. A small work light coming from somewhere ILLUMINATES the space. There is no sign of movement. The floor is empty.

Petit shifts his head to see as far as he can to the far side of the room. When suddenly...

THE WALKIE-TALKIE SPUTTERS! AND NOW PETIT SPOTS IT -- the radio sits unattended on a crate about 20 feet way.

UNDER THE TARP -- Petit gives Jeff an exasperated look -- "Can you believe this shit?"

PETIT'S HEAD POPS OUT FROM UNDER THE TARP -- He quickly scans the area to make certain the coast is clear, then crawls out from under the tarp. He tries to stand, but his legs instantly give out and he collapses. A moment later, Jeff crawls out and collapses as well. Petit checks his pocket watch, then helps Jeff to his feet...

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
We're three hours behind schedule.  
(*On a trois heures de retard.*)

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Are you going to have enough time to check both sides of the rigging?  
(*Tu vas avoir assez de temps pour verifier l'installation des deux cotés?*)

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
I don't have a choice.  
(*J'ai pas le choix.*)

\*\*

CUT TO:

93

EXT. CHURCH STREET NIGHT

93

Annie leans against the subway stair railing watching the towers through her binoculars. J.P. arrives with a cup of coffee.

J.P.  
Anything?

ANNIE  
It's too dark to really see. I think I see a rope or a wire but I'm not sure.

J.P.  
Let's have a look.

J.P. hands Annie the coffee and takes a look through the binoculars.

J.P. (CONT'D)  
No, nothing. Let's get some rest and come back just before sunrise.

Annie shakes her head.

ANNIE  
You go. I'm staying.

Sal Ladestro

J.P.  
All night?

Annie shrugs -- "I guess."

J.P. (CONT'D)  
Look, there's nothing we can do  
from down here. Either Philippe is  
gonna pull this off, or not.

WHOOP! A police car SOUNDS its SIREN. J.P. and Annie turn to  
see the "blue and white" Plymouth Fury zoom up Courtlandt  
Street.

J.P. (CONT'D)  
Besides, you look pretty suspicious  
standing here with binoculars.  
You'll call attention to the coup.

ANNIE  
I'll keep moving.

J.P. takes off his jacket and puts it around Annie's  
shoulders.

J.P.  
I wonder if Philippe has any idea  
you're still out here.

Annie shakes her head -- he doesn't.

J.P. nods in agreement...

J.P. (CONT'D)  
I'll bring you a doughnut in the  
morning.

ANNIE  
I'll be here.

J. P. smiles and heads off.

CUT TO:

94

INT. 110TH FLOOR NEAR STAIRCASE LATER

94

Petit and Jeff carry the TWO HEAVY COILS of walk cable on  
their shoulders.

In stocking feet, the pair tip-toe toward the staircase leading to the rooftop. Following Jeff's lead, Petit ascends the stairs... But suddenly, he stops dead in his tracks!

PETIT'S P.O.V. -- Through the open stairs, Petit sees a GUARD sitting at his desk -- SOUND ASLEEP! SNORING SOFTLY.

Petit instinctively pulls back on his coil to stop Jeff...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(whispers in French)  
Philippe! I'm falling!!  
(*Philippe! Je tombe!!*)

Petit sees Jeff's stocking feet teetering on the edge of the stair -- the weight of the cable is tipping him backward!

Thinking fast, Petit lunges forward -- forcing the weight of his cable into Jeff's coil. Jeff topples forward -- hitting the wooden stair with a loud CRACK!

The Guard shifts in his chair, but continues SNORING. Holding their breath, the two Frenchmen tip-toe up the stairs.

CUT TO:

95

EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF NIGHT

95

Petit and Jeff arrive on the South Tower. They drop the cable and collapse on top of it -- exhausted. Petit looks over to the North Tower...

PETIT  
(points)  
Look!!

P.O.V. -- THE NORTH TOWER -- Two crouched, sneaking SHAPES. Jean-Louis and Albert have arrived!

PETIT (CONT'D)  
They made it.

Petit waves to them. The two cohorts wave back. Petit motions for Jeff to follow him back to the staircase.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
You need to watch the guard.  
(*Toi, tu surveilles le vigile.*)

Petit hangs Jeff over the stairwell upside-down to watch the Sleeping Guard.

At the NORTH TOWER -- Jean-Louis signals he's ready to shoot the arrow.

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (CONT'D)  
He's ready to shoot!

PETIT runs to the corner of the roof and raises his arm.

PETIT (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Cinq, quatre, trois, deux, un...

PETIT drops to a crouch and throws his arms over his head.

THE ARROW sails across the void between the two Towers.

PETIT lies perfectly still listening for the arrow's impact. But the only sound he hears is the cool, night wind...

PETIT (V.O.)  
At zero nothing happens. Now, the arrow would make a "whooooosh" sound. And the impact of the arrow tip... It would be heard hitting the concrete. But I hear no sound.

\*\*

Squinting his eyes, Petit looks for the arrow. *Nothing.*

Petit begins crawling on all fours, reaching all around, hoping to find the arrow. *Nothing.* He jumps up and frantically begins running around in circles, waving his outstretched arms -- trying to snag the monofilament.

JEFF AT THE STAIRCASE -- hears the strange scuffling behind him and slowly turns his head to see...

PETIT IS NOW BUCK NAKED -- hopping around like a madman -- flinging his naked body around in circles. And then...

Jeff runs over...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Philippe! What the hell are you doing?  
(*Philippe, putain mais qu'est-ce que tu fou?*)

PETIT  
Trying to find the fishing line.

Of course, Jeff doesn't understand him.

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
What? Speak French.  
(*Quoi? Parle français!*)

PETIT

Oh, right...

(now in French)

I'm trying to feel the fishing line  
against my naked skin. I didn't  
hear the arrow. Come help me!!!

\*\*

*(J'essaye de sentir le fil de pêche  
sur ma peau. J'ai pas entendu la  
flèche. Viens m'aider!!!)*

Now Jeff begins jumping around -- flailing his arms. The two leaping Frenchmen look like a couple of spastic ballet dancers.

Now Jeff does a hopping turn and lands right next to the edge of the roof. HE STOPS DEAD -- terrified. Very slowly, he starts backing away from the ledge -- but suddenly, he SEES something...

P.O.V. -- THE ARROW -- balancing precariously on the edge of the facade. Rocking back and forth on the corner of the ledge. A strong breeze could easily blow it over.

JEFF

Philippe!!

Petit (still buck naked) runs over and Jeff points out the arrow. Petit's eyes light up...

PETIT

Great!

(to Jeff in French)

Jeff, go back to the stairs, watch  
the guard. I'll get the arrow.

\*\*

*(Jeff, retourne à l'escalier,  
surveille le vigile. Je m'occupe de  
la flèche.)*

Jeff runs back to his post.

Now Petit hops over the edge and climbs down to the lowest I-beam. He leans out over the ledge, reaching for the arrow -- tilting into the void. He stretches as far as he can... The arrow teeters dangerously on the ledge! Petit reaches once again... His fingertips still inches from the arrow...

Suddenly, more wind blows and FLIPS THE ARROW OVER THE LEDGE!

Petit lunges -- and GRABS IT!!

Now Jeff appears -- calling from the roof...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Philippe! The guard is gone!  
(*Philippe! Le vigile s'est cassé!*)

Great news! Petit scurries up to the roof!

Sal Ladestro

CUT TO:

96 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF NIGHT

96

Jeff drops the final box. All of the equipment is now piled on the roof.

At the corner of the tower (our Hero Corner) -- Petit is pulling in the fishing line. Tied to the end of the monofilament is a clothesline type rope -- a *cordina*.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Is that everything?  
(*On a tout là?*)

JEFF  
Oui.

Petit holds the end of the *cordina* to the edge of the roof ledge and signals the opposite tower. The *cordina* pulls taut -- Jean-Louis signals from his tower.

PETIT  
He marked it. Good.

Petit marks his end of the *cordina* with a piece of tape, then hands the rope to Jeff...

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Here, lay this out. We need to measure where to place the *cavalettis*.  
(*Tiens, pose ça là. Il faut qu'on mesure pour installer les cavalettis.*)

Petit hands Jeff the PAPA RUDY MEASURING TAPE.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
Use this. But whatever you do...  
(*Sers toi de ça. Mais quoique tu fasses...*)

Jeff stops him...

JEFF  
(broken English)  
I guard with life.

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

Petit smiles as Jeff runs the tape out alongside the clothesline...

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (V.O.)

Now, for the first time in my life,  
I will know the exact distance  
between the Towers... I will know  
if the distance Mr. Tazzoli told me  
at the press conference was in  
fact, correct...

Suddenly -- SSSQUUUUEELLCH! WALKIE-TALKIE STATIC! A SECURITY  
GUARD is on the roof!

JEFF drops flat into a DARK SHADOW. PETIT dives behind a pile  
of building material.

THE GUARD walks directly to the stack of crates where Petit  
is hiding... Approaching closer, and closer...

Then suddenly, the WALKIE-TALKIE SOUND changes direction --  
Petit PEEKS around his stack AND SEES...

THE GUARD is walking toward the ledge... RIGHT FOR JEFF,  
who's lying in the dark shadow! THE GUARD continues! Two more  
steps and the Guard will TRIP OVER HIM!! Then --

VOICE ON WALKIE-TALKIE

Garbowski! You awake?

The Guard STOPS. Literally inches from Jeff!

GUARD

(keys his radio)

That's very funny.

VOICE ON WALKIE-TALKIE

I need you to check something down  
on 37...

GUARD

(keys his radio)

Yeah wadda' ya got?

VOICE ON WALKIE-TALKIE

How about a pepperoni and sausage  
combo with extra cheese...

GUARD

(chuckles)

Now you're talking.

The Guard heads down the stairs. Jeff turns toward Petit.  
They both breathe again...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
That was close!  
(*C'était moins une.*)

CUT TO:

Sal Ladestro

97 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF TIME-CUT LATER 97

Petit and Jeff are at the corner reeling in the cordina rope -  
- attached is a small burlap bag.

Petit opens the bag. Finds two army surplus canteens (filled  
with water), and the INTER-PHONE -- its wire leads laced  
around the cordina.

CLOSE -- Petit hooks the leads from his end of the wire to  
the inter-phone and hits the "Talk" switch...

PETIT  
(into the intercom)  
Jean-Louis, how do you hear me?

JEAN-LOUIS  
(on the intercom)  
Loud and clear.

PETIT  
(into the intercom)  
Good. We have communication. Send  
over the heavy rope.

TIME CUT:

98 EXT. CHURCH STREET NIGHT 98

P.O.V. THROUGH BINOCULARS -- We can barely see a dark rope  
snaking between the two towers.

Annie watches through her binocs. She has moved to a street  
across from the WTC Plaza. The streets are eerie and  
deserted, except for a COUPLE OF BAG LADIES who rummage  
through the trash.

99 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF NIGHT 99

Petit finishes tying the end of the cable to a thick utility  
rope. He signals the North Tower -- and the rope pulls taut.

Now Petit and Jeff feed the heavy, STEEL WALK CABLE toward  
the North Tower -- two and three feet of length at a time.  
Slow and controlled.

Then suddenly -- THE CABLE STARTS TO ACCELERATE! THE CABLE  
slides through Petit's gloves faster and faster...picking up  
horrible speed!

SMOKE POURS into the air as the accelerating cable GRINDS through the square of carpet Petit used to protect the edge of the roof!

BOTH JEFF AND PETIT lean backward to slow the cable's descent -- but its weight is too great and continues to speed away! THE TWO MEN lose their footing and are dragged across the roof -- right toward the void!!

PETIT lets go of the cable and tackles Jeff, throwing him to the ground!

THE TAPED GUY-WIRES TEAR LOOSE AND FLAIL WILDLY! THEY WHIP OVER THE HEADS OF OUR HEROS -- almost decapitating them!!

THE CABLE ROARS as it hurls into the abyss...

PETIT dives to the other end of the cable, picks up a WRENCH, and begins frantically tightening the clamp!

THE SHRIEK of the out-of-control cable is deafening!!

PETIT tightens the last bolt and dives to the side just as --

CRACK!!! THE CABLE SLAMS TO A STOP!! Sending a giant shock vibration through the steel column!!

PETIT crawls to the inter-phone and hits the "talk" button.

PETIT  
We have a problem...

There is no response from the other side.

PETIT'S VOICE  
(into the intercom)  
It's less than three hours to  
daylight.

There's a long pause... Then WE HEAR Jean-Louis' weary  
VOICE...

JEAN-LOUIS (O.C.)  
(on the intercom)  
We will do everything we can to  
pull up the cable. Everything we  
can.

For the first time, Petit looks crushed.

CUT TO:

100 EXT. BETWEEN THE TOWERS NIGHT VFX SHOT 100

The cable dangles over the LENS. 150 feet below the roof. Inch-by-inch it's slowly pulled up. An inch at a time...

CUT TO:

101 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF NIGHT 101

Using a block-and-tackle, Petit has pulled 20 feet of cable back up to his roof. Jeff holds tension on the cable while Petit frantically secures the loose end with a termination clamp...

BUZZZZZZZZZZzzzzz....

The inter-phone BLASTS! Petit runs to it....

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Philippe, Albert wants to quit. He doesn't think we'll make it. I can't do it alone.

PETIT

Let me talk to him.

Petit looks across the void. The cable still hangs in a giant "U" between the two Towers.

ALBERT (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Philippe. This is crazy... We'll never finish at this rate.

Petit answers -- harsh, desperate...

PETIT

Albert! We will finish! We will!

ALBERT

We're all gonna get caught and go to jail. I don't wanna go to jail. And the rigging isn't safe. I'm not gonna watch you fall! I quit. I'm leaving!

PETIT

(ultra-convincing)

Albert, listen to me... I completely agree with you.

(MORE)

PETIT (CONT'D)

If we're still rigging at daylight,  
and if the rigging isn't safe...

(now a lie)

Then of course, I'll give up.

Sal Ladestro

Petit looks to the Eastern sky. The first rays of DAYLIGHT begin to appear.

CUT TO:

102 EXT. CHURCH STREET DAWN 102

BINOCULAR P.O.V. -- The sagging cable is barely visible outlined against the early morning sky. The digital clock on the bank reads: 6:04

J.P. arrives with a bag of doughnuts. He has changed his clothes and is freshly shaven. He offers a doughnut to Annie. She shakes her head -- worried.

ANNIE

The cable isn't tight. Something's wrong.

CUT TO:

103 EXT. SOUTH TOWER LEDGE DAWN 103

Petit is on the narrow ledge. He has the grip-hoist secured to the I-beam facade-lattice. He expertly threads the free end of the cable through the winch. Suddenly...

BUZZZZzzzzzz!

The inter-phone BUZZES. Petit hears it and scrambles up onto the roof...

CUT TO:

A104 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF SAME A104

Petit dives for the intercom button...

PETIT

Yes.

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Philippe! The good news is I finally pulled the last inch of cable. The bad news is Albert has quit! He says the sun is rising and the coup is off.

PETIT

Did you put some wood between the  
cable and the anchor point?

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)

(over intercom)

Philippe! Did you hear me? Albert  
is on strike! He will no longer  
lift a finger to help me. Not only  
that... If you walk, he has  
smuggled a camera up here, and he's  
going to take pictures and sell  
them. I knew we couldn't trust him.

Sal Ladestro

Petit SIGHS.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Well then, my friend... It's you  
and me.  
(*Eh bien, mon pote, ça y est c'est  
toi et moi.*)  
(now in English)  
And one more thing -- you will  
always be my Photographe Officiel.

CUT TO:

104 EXT. SOUTH TOWER LEDGE EARLY MORNING 104

PETIT is back on the narrow ledge of the building facade --  
110 stories above the ground.

He has one hand on the building, and one hand on the Tirfor  
grip hoist, furiously tightening the wire.

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
It's working!  
(*Ça marche!*)

CUT TO:

105 EXT. CHURCH STREET EARLY MORNING 105

BINOCULAR P.O.V. -- The cable is moving up. It's "U" shaped  
"smile" becoming a straight line.

ANNIE is looking through her binoculars. She calls out to J.P.

ANNIE  
The cable is moving! It's going up!

CUT TO:

106 EXT. SOUTH TOWER LEDGE SAME 106

THE CAMERA FLOATS out over the cable as Petit cranks the grip-hoist, pulling the slack out of the wire.

Suddenly, Jeff YELLS --

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
The wheel! The wheel!  
(*La roue! La roue!*)

Petit whips around to look. Jeff points at the construction elevator LIFT-WHEEL -- IT'S TURNING! The cargo elevator is on its way up!

JEFF (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)  
(in French)  
The workers will be here soon!!!  
(*Les ouvriers vont bientôt se ramener!!*)

\*\*  
\*\*

PETIT finishes tightening, detaches the handle, and stashes it in a drain pipe underneath the Tower's ledge. He leaps up to the roof.

CUT TO:

A107 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF SAME A107

Petit jumps over the cable rigging and motions to Jeff.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Come on! I need your help!!  
(*Allez ! J'ai besoin de toi!!*)

Jeff follows Petit as he runs like hell to the opposite ledge.

NOW, THE WHEEL LURCHES TO A STOP!!! Jeff sees it and slides to a stop!

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
I can hear them! Workers! Two  
floors below!  
*(Je les entends ! Les ouvriers!  
Deux étages en dessous!)*

Petit ignores Jeff's concern.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Follow me. We have to tighten the  
cavalettis.  
*(Suis moi. Il faut qu'on resserre  
les cavalettis.)*

Petit climbs down onto the ledge.

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Philippe! You know I can't!  
*(Philippe! Tu sais bien que je ne  
peux pas!)*  
(now in broken English)  
I CAN'T!

\*\*  
\*\*

PETIT (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Jeff, please. I need your help. We  
are so close. If you don't help me  
the coup is over.  
*(Jeff, s'il te plaît. J'ai besoin  
de toi. On y est presque. Si tu ne  
m'aides pas, le coup est foutu.)*

Jeff shakes his head...

JEFF  
(broken English)  
I... I can't do!

\*\*  
\*\*  
\*\*

Petit takes Jeff by the arm and coaxes him over to the ledge.

PETIT (SUBTITLE)

(in French)

Don't look down and don't think  
about it. You'll be fine. Come  
on... Help me review...

\*\*

*(Ne regarde pas en bas, n'y pense  
pas. Ça va aller. Tiens... Fais moi  
réviser...)*

\*\*

(now in English)

\*\*

How much is seven times seven?

\*\*

JEFF

\*\*

Forty-nine.

\*\*

PETIT

\*\*

Nine times eight?

JEFF

\*\*

Seventy-two.

Jeff cautiously follows Petit onto the ledge -- dutifully giving Petit his math answers as they furiously tighten the cavaletti cable.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- "THE WHEEL" starts turning again -- as Petit and Jeff dash back to the other side of the roof.

PETIT AND JEFF bolt back across the roof once again!

THE TWO MEN hop onto the ledge and adjust the cavaletti --

THEY bolt back to the other side! With his eyes clamped shut and trembling violently, Jeff holds Petit's waist belt. Petit furiously ratchets the cavaletti turnbuckle -- stretching the cable tighter and tighter.

\*\*

PETIT

\*\*

Ninety six divided by eight?

\*\*

JEFF

\*\*

Twelve!

\*\*

CLOSE ON THE WIRE -- THE THREE BOLTS IN THE CAVALETTI CLAMP TWIST AND CREAK. STRAINING UNDER THE PRESSURE.

THE MEN turn and run again! When suddenly --

"THE WHEEL" STOPS! Petit and Jeff see it and start YELLING to the North Tower...

PETIT AND JEFF

La roue! La roue!! LA ROUE!!

CUT TO:

107 INT. 110TH FLOOR EARLY MORNING

107

A PAIR OF WING-TIP SHOES. Walking across the concrete floor, stepping over planks, pipes, construction equipment.

We don't know who the shoes belong to, but it's not good. They reach the roof stairs and mysteriously stop. WE HEAR PETIT ON THE ROOF, SPEAKING FRENCH...

Sal Ladeestro

PETIT (O.S.)  
(in French)  
Quick, the pole.  
(*Vite, le balancier.*)

CUT TO:

108 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF EARLY MORNING 108

Petit and Jeff are frantically assembling the BALANCING POLE. Petit glances toward the sun... AND FREEZES!

A MAN IN A THREE-PIECE-SUIT is standing on the roof!!! "THE VISITOR" with the wing-tip shoes.

Petit kicks Jeff...

PETIT  
Slow down. Act like a worker who  
hates his job.

Petit instantly changes his demeanor. Acting like an underpaid worker.

Jeff stands paralyzed with fear -- watching the drama unfold...

The VISITOR nonchalantly ambles along the roof. He looks over the ledge. He sees the wire. He sees the rigging. He sees everything!!

PETIT slowly moves toward The Visitor... Then suddenly stops! He spots a three foot length of LEAD PIPE lying on the ground. He nonchalantly reaches down and picks it up. A weapon?

Only a few feet away from each other, the two men face off in silence. Petit's gaze is stone-cold. The Visitor looks at Petit... Then at the pipe in Petit's hand... Then back at Petit, who remains stone silent -- staring deadlock at him.

Jeff looks between the two men -- terrified.

After a long, tense moment...

The Visitor nods -- and walks away. Disappearing the way he came.

Petit steps over to Jeff -- still carrying the pipe. Jeff is completely unnerved by the madness he sees in Petit's eyes...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
What were you going to do with  
that?  
(*Qu'est-ce que t'allais faire avec  
ça?*)

PETIT  
(in French)  
With what?  
(*Quoi ça?*)

Jeff points to the pipe in his hand.

Petit looks -- then drops the pipe as if it were charged. He  
looks back at Jeff -- rattled and shaken.

PETIT (V.O.)  
And that's the moment that I call  
"The Mysterious Visitor."

\*\*

BUZZZZzzzzzz!

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)  
(on the intercom)  
Philippe. Are you alright? What's  
happening over there?

CUT TO:

109 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF MORNING

109

Petit hits the "TALK" button...

PETIT  
(into intercom)  
Jean-Louis! This is it! I have to  
unplug now. I have to change into  
my costume.

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)  
(over intercom)  
Philippe! The first cavaletti plate  
flipped upside down when I was  
tightening.

Petit looks at the wire and assesses the situation. He  
notices the sun peeking over the horizon.

PETIT  
(into the intercom)  
Too late! I'll deal with it.

There's a long, hesitant pause on Jean-Louis' end...

Sal Ladestro

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)  
(over intercom)  
Philippe, I've tied off the cable  
as you instructed... But there's no  
time for you to check it. I'm  
worried.

PETIT  
(into the intercom)  
I trust you. It will be fine. The  
carrots are cooked.

WE HEAR A LOUD SIGH OVER THE SCRATCHY SPEAKER...

JEAN-LOUIS (O.S.)  
(over intercom)  
Break a leg... Mon ami.

PETIT  
(into the intercom)  
Merci.

Petit unplugs the wire... And the two friends give each other  
a thumbs up across the void.

CUT TO:

110

EXT. SOUTH TOWER LEDGE MORNING

110

With his satchel in hand, Petit climbs down from the roof  
onto the very narrow ledge of the building. "The Void" looms  
ominously below him...

PETIT (V.O.)  
Now I have to put on my costume.  
And I have to do that privately, so  
my dressing room was the corner of  
the very ledge of the building, not  
visible from the streets of  
Manhattan.

Petit stands pressed against the facade and gingerly pulls  
the blood stained sock off of his foot. He licks his fingers  
and uses the saliva to clean off the dried blood. He checks  
the wound -- it's no longer bleeding. He lowers his foot and  
stands on it... HE GRIMACES, but continues to press and grind  
his foot into the concrete ledge -- testing his pain  
tolerance.

PETIT  
(to himself)  
OK. It's OK...

Now he reaches into his pack, takes out his slippers -- and inadvertently DROPS his turtleneck...

ANNIE (O.S.)  
(SCREAMS)  
Oh my God! He's falling!!!

CUT TO:

111 P.O.V. BINOCULARS CHURCH STREET MORNING 111

The lenses follow the garment as it falls. Its "arms" flailing.

ANNE  
Oh no, it was a shirt.  
(relieved)  
It was just a shirt.

As the shirt falls, WE HEAR...

PETIT (V.O.)  
The dressing room is also something that I learned from Papa Rudy. The dressing room is where the transformation takes place...

CUT TO:

112 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF MORNING 112

Now in costume, Petit climbs back onto the roof. He wears a black V-neck sweater and wide, black bell-bottoms.

PETIT (V.O.)  
...where the disguised impostor... the intruder... Becomes the performer. The artist.

Petit's face is sickly pale.

JEFF  
Are you okay?

PETIT  
I...I lost my shirt?

JEFF  
You lost it?

PETIT  
It fell off the ledge.

Jeff shrugs -- "So?"

Forgetting, Petit BLATHERS in English...

PETIT (CONT'D)

Jeff, It's my costume. This is a tragedy! I am about to step on to the most important stage of my life... AND I HAVE NO COSTUME!

Now Petit realizes Jeff doesn't understand a single word and quickly REPEATS WHAT HE JUST SAID IN FRENCH.

Now Jeff answers in VERY BROKEN ENGLISH...

JEFF

Ce qui... wat shood we do?

Petit turns and gives the Void a long look -- then, back to Jeff...

PETIT

Do it. We should do it. Let's go! I must wear this ridiculous undershirt as a costume...

(he indicates his threadbare black V-neck)

But we must DO IT!

Jeff gives Petit a giant, bear hug, then spits into his shirt sleeve and uses it to wipe the grime off Petit's face.

CUT TO:

113

EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME

113

P.O.V. BINOCULARS -- The wire, stretched between the towers. All is quiet, nothing moves.

Annie gazes at the wire through her binoculars. J.P. stands beside her squinting at the sky. Now Barry arrives looking fresh, having changed his suit.

BARRY

Anything?

Annie shakes her head. Barry checks the Time & Temp clock mounted on the bank wall.

BARRY (CONT'D)

He better get cracking, the  
construction guys are gonna be up  
there soon.

CUT TO:

Sal Ladestro

114 EXT. SOUTH TOWER LEDGE SAME 114

ON THE LEDGE -- Petit places one foot on the wire -- his left foot. He keeps his right foot on the ledge. After a moment, he signals Jeff with his eyes. Jeff hands him the balancing pole...

NOW -- Petit swallows. His heart pounds. The high-altitude breeze RUFFLES his hair...

PETIT (V.O.)

Before I took that first step, I felt that Jeff no longer existed. My tower was deserted. I felt that the horizon was no longer part of what we call "the rotundity of the earth." The wire was a floating line to infinity.

PETIT'S P.O.V. -- TUNNEL VISION -- EVERYTHING DISAPPEARS BUT THE WIRE.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I no longer heard the sounds of New York. Everything fell silent. I was about to step into an unknown world... "The Void."

\*\*

ALL WE HEAR is Petit's heart -- BEATING.

Petit stares at the "void" for a long, long moment. Then...

PETIT PLACES HIS RIGHT FOOT ON THE WIRE!

WITH A WHOOSH -- REALITY RETURNS! The streets and buildings of Manhattan REAPPEAR! Glistening in the morning sun. The MURMUR of the city rises from 1,350 feet below.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The moment my entire weight is on that wire, I feel immediately a feeling that I know by heart... I feel the wire... I feel the support of the Towers.

\*\*

With extreme focus, Petit walks on the wire... One foot after the other in fluid perfection. The wire bows and flexes under his weight.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I have to listen closely to the rigging.

\*\*

\*\*

(MORE)

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 This being the first time in my  
 life that I dared to walk on a wire  
 where I didn't check both anchor  
 points.

Step by step, Petit treads across the wire...

CUT TO:

115 EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME 115

BINOCULAR P.O.V. -- Petit is halfway across the wire.

ANNIE lowers the binoculars, her eyes are glazed with tears.

ANNIE  
 Oh my God. Philippe... You've done  
 it.

The three accomplices APPLAUD AND CHEER. Annie CALLS OUT to  
 everyone passing by...

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
 Look! A wire walker! A wire walker  
 in the sky! Look!

A CROWD gathers around and watches in amazement.

CUT TO:

116 EXT. PETIT'S WIRE SAME 116

On the roof behind Petit, Jeff literally jumps for joy!  
 Waving his arms in victory, he does a spastic dance of  
 celebration!

JEFF  
 (in broken English)  
 Woo! Ha! Success, Philippe!  
 Success!

CLOSE ON PETIT -- He's very focused, stepping gingerly along  
 the cable...

PETIT (V.O.)  
 And I listen, and there are no  
 vibrations, or noises I should be  
 aware of.

Petit crosses the first cavaletti plate... His feet gliding  
 over Papa Rudy's three bolts. The bolts CREAK and GROAN.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

Of course, I have to very delicately walk over the cavaletti plate that is almost upside-down. Thank you Papa Rudy for suggesting the three bolts.

Though intensely focused, a small, proud smile appears...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

(groping for words)

I...I was walking across a...a beautiful sea of unknown dimension.

Petit walks above a glorious view of New York... The morning fog filtering the sunlight in a beautiful prism.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

Gravity did not exist. I was among the clouds.

About ten yards from the North Tower, Petit looks straight ahead... ON THE NORTH TOWER ROOF -- PETIT SEES Jean-Louis wipe a tear from his eye. Petit breaks into a broad smile. Now Petit glances toward ALBERT, who raises his camera and SNAPS away.

ALBERT

Philippe! Hey Philippe... Smile! Smile right here!!

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK! Albert snaps pictures of Petit as he approaches the Tower. Petit ignores him. Jean-Louis snaps pictures as well, but he is quiet -- savoring the moment.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

C'mon on Philippe! Look at the birdie right here. C'mon Philippe! Say cheeeese!!

CUT TO:

117

EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME

117

THRU BINOCES -- Petit arrives at the North Tower.

THE CROWD ON THE STREET IS NOW MUCH LARGER -- They ERUPT IN APPLAUSE. ALL OF THE ACCOMPLICES joyfully hug each other.

ANNIE

He's done it! He's done it!

Annie raises her binoculars once again...

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
(to herself, in awe)  
He's done it.

CUT TO:

118 EXT. NORTH TOWER ROOF SAME

118

Jean-Louis helps Petit onto the North Tower roof. Both men smile joyfully...

PETIT (V.O.)  
And I arrive at the North Tower  
feeling the most immense elation...  
The most intense joy that I ever  
felt in my life.

Petit rests his hand on Jean-Louis' shoulder and they share a look of utter victory... "We've done it!"

Albert SNAPS pictures incessantly.

ALBERT  
Right here! Look at me!

Petit ignores him and runs to examine the rigging. Albert follows him, SNAPPING away furiously like a Hollywood paparazzi.

ALBERT (CONT'D)  
Philippe, c'mon! Watch the birdie.

Petit makes a few adjustments to the cable, then brushes past Albert and hurries back to the wire. He stops for a moment and turns to Jean-Louis...

PETIT  
Thank you my friend. Thank you.

Jean-Louis acknowledges with a warm nod. Now Petit turns to Albert...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
And you, my traitor... I thank the  
half of you.

Albert smiles like a snake, continues to shoot more pictures.

But Petit ignores him and looks over to Jean-Louis -- he raises his camera...

SNAP! WE CUT TO --

BLACK AND WHITE -- A FREEZE FRAME of Petit sitting on the North Tower ledge. Looking at THE CAMERA -- now, the black and white DISSOLVES TO COLOR -- Then...

DISSOLVE TO:

119 LIVE ACTION --

119

As Petit turns and stares into the "void."

PETIT (V.O.)  
So once more, I am being called by  
the wire. Called by the Towers. And  
I'm thinking...

Petit looks intensely at the wire --

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
Maybe I should get back on that  
wire.

With a mixture of trepidation and elation on his face, PETIT stands and looks over to Jean-Louis...

PETIT (CONT'D) \*\*  
The pole, my friend.

JEAN-LOUIS hands him the balancing pole. And once more...

PETIT STEPS ONTO THE WIRE AND BEGINS HIS SECOND CROSSING

PETIT (V.O.) \*\*  
And I'm going to remain there an  
eternity, drinking that void...and  
being called by the Towers to dance  
on that wire.

Petit begins to perform. He walks in high, wide-arched steps -  
- graceful as a ballet dancer. Wire "dancing." He cautiously  
moves to the center. The wire vibrates and bows -- the  
cavalettis CREAK AND MOAN.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
And I remember being overcome by  
the most profound feeling of  
awareness, of consciousness...of  
gratitude.

Now, Petit stops -- slowly KNEELS on the wire -- and salutes  
the South Tower.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

I salute the Towers. And the wire,  
and my Accomplices...and of course,  
I salute New York. And I'm so taken  
with my emotions... I had  
completely forgotten, this is  
actually a performance.

Petit begins to hear CHEERS from the street audience below.

CUT TO:

120 EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME 120

A LARGE GROUP OF ONLOOKERS gathers in the street around the  
trio of accomplices -- craning their necks and squinting into  
the morning sky. ANNIE lifts her binoculars...

BINOCULAR P.O.V. -- Petit returns to his standing position.

CUT TO:

121 EXT. PETIT'S WIRE SAME 121

As Petit stands... HE SEES -- TWO BLACK SILHOUETTES ON THE  
SOUTH TOWER.

PETIT (V.O.)

And as I stand... I see two  
silhouettes. Uniforms. The cops!

TWO POLICE OFFICERS on the South Tower roof. The sight of  
Petit on the wire stops them dead in their tracks.

CUT TO:

122 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF SAME 122

The two cops are SERGEANT O'DONNELL AND OFFICER GENCO (thick  
mustache) of the Port Authority Police. Sergeant O'Donnell in \*\*  
particular is awestruck.

SERGEANT O'DONNELL

Christ Almighty, what the hell is  
that?

After a long moment of staring in amazement, the two cops  
spot Jeff (who is still jumping for joy) and arrest him.

OFFICER GENCO  
(to Jeff)  
OK buddy, get your hands on your  
head! Now!

The two Cops roughly hand-cuff Jeff. He protests a little IN FRENCH, then falls silent.

OFFICER GENCO (CONT'D)  
Holy shit Sarge, this one's a frog!  
(to Jeff)  
You and twinkle-toes are in a lot  
of trouble you know that?

O'Donnell motions for Petit to come off the wire...

SERGEANT O'DONNELL  
(calls to Petit)  
Ah, look, fella... Just, just c'mon  
in. Let's talk about it, eh?

Petit smiles and laughs.

OFFICER GENCO  
We gotta call this in, Sarge.

SERGEANT O'DONNELL  
Yeah. I know. But I don't know what  
the hell this is, man.

\*\*

Petit walks on the wire toward the cops, unwavering... When he gets within an arm's length -- he stops.

OFFICER GENCO  
(shouts to Petit)  
Come on. Buddy!! Come on in now.  
Let's go. Show's over. Par-lay-voo  
Americano?

Hoisting the pole on his shoulders, Petit spins on the wire -- DOING A 180! The cops GASP!

SERGEANT O'DONNELL  
Oh Jesus!

Petit nonchalantly walks back toward the North Tower.

Sergeant O'Donnell turns to Officer Genco and Jeff -- all three of them are absolutely stunned. Any "bad cop" demeanor starts to melt away.

SERGEANT O'DONNELL (CONT'D)  
Shitfire, d'you see that?!

PETIT BEGINS HIS THIRD CROSSING --

PETIT (V.O.)  
Now it is between the towers and  
me.

CLOSE ON PETIT'S FEET -- striding along the cable with  
perfect, graceful balance...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
I start to feel a growing awareness  
of the spirit in the  
wire...allowing me to walk.

THE CAMERA TRAVELS INSIDE THE WIRE... We see the hundreds of  
tightly woven metal stands supporting Petit's feet and body.

BACK OUT WIDE --

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I feel the soul of the Towers,  
supporting me. I feel the  
air...which gently surrounds me.  
There is energy and strength in my  
shoes...

CLOSE ON PETIT'S SLIPPERS -- skating across the cable as he  
"slide-walks."

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
Even the pain in my injured foot is  
a life-force -- keeping me alert.  
Keeping me sharp.

WIDEN TO FIND -- PETIT gracefully continuing...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
Even my pole feels alive, allowing  
me to balance. And of course...

CUT TO:

123

EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME

123

Now HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE gather in the streets below.

PETIT (V.O.)  
The spirit of the audience below...

The swarm of onlookers fills the sidewalk, spilling out into  
the intersections and blocking traffic.

Stopped in gridlock, drivers don't seem to mind. They stand beside their cars staring slack-jawed at the wonder above.

ANNIE

There's a wire walker! There's a wire walker in the sky!! Look! A wire walker in the sky.

CUT TO:

124 EXT. PETIT'S WIRE SAME 124

THE CAMERA FLOATS above Petit, who now sits on the wire.

PETIT (V.O.)

I find myself in the middle of the wire. And I feel the void... And although a wire-walker should never look down... I do...

He dares to look down... The spectacular drop to the plaza below is breathtaking!

CUT TO:

125 EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH DAY 125

Petit's face fills with emotion as he remembers...

PETIT

And it was... It was beautiful. It was calm and beautiful, and serene, and "not-dangerous."

CUT TO:

126 EXT. PETIT'S WIRE SAME 126

Very carefully, he lays the pole on the wire, then crosses his knees into a "Zen Position." Both knees balanced on the pole, straddling the wire in a meditative pose, he salutes the North Tower with open palms. Petit stretches his arms skyward toward the heavens.

CUT TO:

127 EXT. NORTH TOWER SAME 127

JEAN-LOUIS is winding a 16mm movie camera.

ALBERT continues snapping pictures, when suddenly, he hears something. In an instant, he frantically grabs his equipment and bolts.

Sensing danger, Jean-Louis grabs his cameras and takes off right after him! They hide behind the stairwell door just as FOUR OFFICERS run onto the roof! The two accomplices wait a moment, then slip behind the cops and into the stairwell.

CUT TO:

128 EXT. NORTH TOWER SAME 128

The North Tower cops stop dead in their tracks when they see Petit...

OFFICER CLEMENZA  
Jesus! Get a load of this!

OFFICER WASHINGTON  
Damn, now I seen everything!

Now the cops call out to Petit...

OFFICER CLEMENZA  
C'mon pally! Get offa' that thing!  
Why ya doin' this? C'mon!

OFFICER HAGEN  
OK, hard-on, joke's over! Get yer  
ass off that wire! Quit wastin' our  
time!!

Petit hoists the pole on his shoulders, and takes a step backwards away from the North Tower Officers.

OFFICER CLEMENZA  
Ho, shit!

OFFICER TESSIO  
Don't fall!!

OFFICER WASHINGTON  
Hey! Don't be fallin'!

Petit takes a few steps toward the officers -- and once again, WHIPS AROUND 180 DEGREES. He walks with purpose back toward the South Tower (THE FOURTH CROSSING).

OFFICER CLEMENZA  
Can you friggin' believe this  
little pissant?

PETIT (V.O.)

Now I have no choice. I have to  
stay on my wire.

Petit places the pole on the wire, and balancing with ONE FOOT on the pole, ONE FOOT on the wire, he folds his arms across his chest like an emperor. With his right foot, Petit rocks the pole up and down like a teeter-totter...

PETIT (V.O.)

I am feeling so alive, and so  
thankful that the Towers called  
me...

He spreads his arms like the wings of a bird. Then he bends down and retrieves the pole, causing the wire and adjoining cavalettis to bounce and shake.

And now, PETIT LAYS DOWN ON THE WIRE! After a moment, THE CAMERA flies past Petit... SPIRALING DOWN toward the WTC plaza and the THRONG OF PEOPLE on the streets below.

TRANSITION TO:

129

EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME

129

THE CROWD BURSTS INTO APPLAUSE at the sight of Petit outstretched on the wire above. A FLEET OF POLICE CARS SCREAMS down the street behind the crowd!

A MAN WITH A PLAID SPORTS COAT stands behind Annie. He looks skyward like everyone else -- amazed at what he sees.

PLAID SPORTS COAT

Damn! Now I've seen everything.

Now a YOUNG BEARDED MAN SPEAKS UP...

BEARDED MAN

Damn straight! This dude is  
righteous! I'm talking goddamn  
tubular!

A MAN wearing a single transistor radio earbud CHIMES IN...

EARBUD

He better start wrapping it up. A  
storm front is moving in.

Annie hears all of this...

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)  
 (quietly in French)  
 OK Philippe. Time to stop.  
 (*Bon Philippe. Il est temps  
 d'arrêter là.*)

CUT TO:

130 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF SAME 130

The GAGGLE OF NEW COPS reaches the roof and charges over to the corner where Officers O'Donnell and Genco hold Jeff. The new cops gasp when they see Petit -- lying on his back, looking up at the sky.

OFFICER FOLEY  
 (seeing Petit)  
 Holy Jesus H!

OFFICER SOLLOZZO  
 (shouts to Petit)  
 DON'T TIP OVER!

OFFICER DALEY  
 (to Petit)  
 Listen up Tinker Bell...  
 (gestures comically with  
 some type of cop sign  
 language)  
 Don't make us send somebody out  
 there!

Petit flashes a big smile at the cops. He lifts his index finger off the pole and waggles it at the cops, taunting them -- come and get me.

CUT TO:

131 EXT. CLOSE ON PETIT/ON THE WIRE SAME 131

Still lying on the wire, Petit lets go of the pole with his right hand, and begins sweeping it across the sky -- slow and delicate as if he's conducting an orchestra.

PETIT (V.O.)  
 So, I salute the sky -- a mirror  
 image of the void. I am completely  
 at peace. I feel I am truly in  
 paradise...

Now Petit frowns at something he sees...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

\*\*

Then, as I'm about to bring my hand  
back to the pole... Something  
appears! An apparition!

Sal Ladestro

A SEA GULL appears...flying over Petit and his wire.

The two look at each other... Through eye contact, Petit "converses" with the bird.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D) \*\*  
This bird is saying silently, "What  
are you doing here ugly bird?  
Invading my territory?" There is  
this silent threat that I feel.

The bird hovers over Petit, eerily motionless in the air.  
Petit addresses the bird.

PETIT (CONT'D) \*\*  
Magnificent bird, I apologize for  
invading your space. I mean no  
harm. For reasons I don't  
understand, this trespassing is  
something I am compelled to do.

The bird hovers over Petit for another long moment. Then  
suddenly, it descends -- showing Petit its menacing RED EYE.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I ask the bird to forgive me, to  
grant me clemency. I can see he has  
a red eye... It's the eye of the  
eagle about to devour the liver of  
Prometheus. I couldn't help  
thinking, "What if he calls his  
brothers? His cousins? His clan?"

The bird flies off -- leaving Petit rattled and spooked. He  
stands back up on the wire -- and for the first time, a shade  
of genuine fear envelops Petit's face. Something's wrong...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I am invaded by doubts... I have  
doubts about everything. Now I'm  
aware of the Spirit in the Sky...

Petit looks to the sky. Gray clouds are forming.

THE WIRE BEGINS TO TREMBLE AND SWAY...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I am thinking, "Maybe the cable is  
tired of supporting me."

SERIES OF SHOTS --

THE RIGGING on the North Tower GROANS and BENDS...

THE FORWARD CAVALETTI CLAMP, which is UPSIDEDOWN, VIBRATES AND CREAKS. The tension from the cables CAUSES THE CAVALETTI FLANGE TO SLOWLY BEND -- UNPEELING THE CAVALETTI FROM THE WIRE!

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What if my Towers have had enough?  
What if they start talking to each  
other...and decide to eject me?

THE CABLE stretched around the Tower girder begins to FRAY AND TEAR! THE WOOD BUFFER at the cable anchor point STARTS TO SPLIT APART -- AND SUDDENLY...

CRACK!! THE WOOD BUFFER SPLINTERS! THE CABLE BUCKLES! THE CABLE DROPS AND SAGS!

CRACK! CRACK! TWO BOLTS EXPLODE IN THE FORWARD CAVALETTI CLAMP LIKE GUNSHOTS!

PETIT IS JOLTED! THROWN OFF BALANCE!

As if to punctuate the terror -- A JET SCREAMS OVERHEAD!

CUT TO:

132 EXT. CHURCH STREET SAME 132

ANNIE AND THE CROWD GASP IN TERROR!

CUT TO:

133 EXT. PETIT'S WIRE SAME 133

PETIT FLEXES AND BENDS HIS KNEES TO HOLD HIS EQUILIBRIUM! THE CABLE BOUNCES VIOLENTLY! PETIT SWAYS -- HE TILTS HIS POLE FROM SIDE TO SIDE TO OFFSET THE INERTIA. HIS SLIPPERS TEETER PERILOUSLY ON THE WIRE AS HE RIDES OUT THE OSCILLATION.

Slowly the cable stops undulating and Petit recovers his footing. He takes a breath and continues on. Now the sagging cable bounces with every step.

AT THE CAVALETTI CLAMP -- Now only a single bolt keeps the walk-wire linear and rigid.

Petit's face is filled with concern. He steps over a rattling cavaletti... Then abruptly stops and balances on one foot.

As Petit raises is foot WE SEE the ball of his slipper -- A BLOOD STAIN IS FORMING.

He lets go of the pole with one hand to feel the air.

PETIT (V.O.)  
There is humidity in the air...

A gust of turbulent WIND BLOWS Petit's hair. THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The sky is angry. A tempest is coming. A thunderstorm!

\*\*

Petit paces toward the North Tower...

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I begin to feel it's time to think about ending my trespassing... To close the curtain on this performance.

\*\*

THE COPS yell and curse at Petit. However, their voices are WARPED and WARBLed, as if an invisible sound barrier separates them.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But I cannot end this on a walk of doubts -- a walk of curved shoulder and hanging head.

\*\*

Petit turns once again from the cops, and heads for his point of origin -- The South Tower.

SUDDENLY, PETIT FLINCHES AS SOMETHING ROARS OVER HIM!

A HELICOPTER THUNDERS overhead. An NYPD CHOPPER.

Petit glances at the machine diving toward him, and becomes instantly distracted. He stops walking and spreads his stance. His eyes flick nervously as he attempts to watch the helicopter, the cops on the towers, the TREMBLING CABLE and the GROANING CAVALETTI at his feet.

Now a VOICE BOOMS from the aircraft's P.A.

HELICOPTER VOICE  
(helicopter P.A.)  
This is the New York Port Authority Police. Remove yourself from the wire immediately. You're in violation of about a hundred city ordinances. I want you off that wire immediately.

THE HELICOPTER ROTOR WASH HITS PETIT -- BUFFETING HIM VIOLENTLY! HE BENDS AT THE KNEES TO HOLD HIS BALANCE.

Now, Jeff begins yelling to Petit...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(yelling in French)  
Philippe! Philippe! They're crazy!  
They're gonna kill you. They're  
going to cut the wire!  
(*Philippe! Philippe! Ils sont fous!  
Ils vont te tuer! Ils vont couper  
le cable!*)

The helicopter continues to circle...

PETIT GETS HIT WITH ANOTHER BLAST OF WIND -- HE DROPS INTO A DEEPER CROUCH!

PETIT'S FEET START TO SHIMMY ON THE WIRE, ROCKING FROM SIDE-TO-SIDE -- PETIT USES EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH IN HIS ARCHES TO KEEP HIS FEET FROM SLIPPING OFF. When he shifts his wounded foot... WE SEE A TRACE OF BLOOD ON THE WIRE!

HELICOPTER VOICE  
(helicopter P.A.)  
I repeat... Remove yourself from  
the wire immediately, or we will be  
forced to take steps to remove you  
from it.

Petit looks away from the annoying chopper and focuses on the South Tower where the police hold Jeff in handcuffs.

Petit's face fills with resolve and purpose -- as he slings the balancing pole over his head and up onto his shoulder.

PETIT (V.O.)  
So I decide... I cannot end this  
walk with a feeling of dishonor...  
Feeling as if I've been assailed by  
the gods. No, I will only leave my  
magnificent wire, and my beautiful  
towers... With my head held high.

Like a Matador, Petit uses his free hand to salute both his friends and foes. He performs an arresting Compliment -- a compliment so elegant, it would bring a tear to Papa Rudy's eye. Then with new-found confidence, he struts toward the South Tower.

Time SLOWS DOWN to a crawl. The CHOP of the helicopter and the MURMUR of the street below FADE AWAY.

THE TOWERS DISAPPEAR...leaving Petit alone on his solitary wire. ALONE IN THE VOID!

Sal Ladestro

Petit walks in slow-motion, savoring every step...drinking in the air and silence around him.

And he slows to a stop...

Petit gently lifts the pole to his chest. Then, like a heavyweight champion hoisting his prize belt -- Petit victoriously thrusts the pole HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD.

At that instant -- REALITY RETURNS!!

THE ROAR OF THE HELICOPTER fills Petit's head.

Now Petit LOOKS over at his landing zone -- IN SLO-MO the angry faces of the cops CURSING AND ORDERING HIM OFF HIS WIRE...

ON THE WIRE -- Petit has four steps to go, but now he takes a tired breath and stares for a long moment at the ledge of the tower roof.

PETIT LOWERS HIS ARMS -- LETTING THE POLE DROP BELOW HIS NAVEL. HE TAKES ANOTHER WEARY BREATH AND BEGINS ANOTHER STEP...

ONCE AGAIN, AS HE RAISES HIS FOOT, WE SEE BLOOD ON THE WIRE. HE LIFTS THE POLE -- EXTENDING IT OUT TO THE GAGGLE OF ANGRY COPS. THE COPS REACH FOR IT... BUT THE POLE IS TOO FAR AWAY.

PETIT STARES AT THE ROOF. HE SEES JEFF. JEFF SENSES SOMETHING IS WRONG...

JEFF (SUBTITLE)  
(SHOUTS in French)  
PHILIPPE! WHAT'S WRONG?  
(*Philippe! Qu'est-ce qui se passe?*)

SUDDENLY, PETIT'S LEGS BEGIN TO QUIVER, OSCILLATING VIOLENTLY, SWINGING SIDE-TO-SIDE! THE BALANCING POLE STARTS TIPPING! SLOWLY TO THE LEFT! THEN TO THE RIGHT! PETIT LOOKS VACANTLY AT JEFF AND THE COPS...

JEFF (CONT'D)  
PHILIPPE! ARE YOU OK?

THE COPS ARE BECOMING CONCERNED...

OFFICER O'DONNELL  
HE'S LOSING IT!

THE COPS START TO CLIMB OUT ON THE LEDGE AS FAR AS THEY DARE...

PETIT CONTINUES TO SHIMMY UNCONTROLLABLY...

JEFF  
PHILIPPE! NO!!

BUT THEN -- PETIT DOES AN AMAZING, AND SIMPLE THING...

HE SLOWLY BENDS HIS KNEES -- LOWERING HIS TORSO CLOSER TO  
THE WIRE, THUS, LOWERING HIS CENTER OF GRAVITY AND SLOWING  
THE SHIMMY!

LEGS SUDDENLY STOP SHUTTLING -- HE SMILES A KNOWING, WRY  
SMILE. THEN IN COMPLETE CONTROL, HE RAISES THE BALANCING POLE  
OVER HIS HEAD IN A VICTORY POSE. HE LOOKS AT THE TERRIFIED  
COPS FOR A LONG MOMENT -- THEN SLOWLY LOWERS THE POLE TO HIS \*\*  
WAIST...

THEN WITHOUT WARNING, HE FLICKS HIS WRISTS AND TOSSES THE  
BALANCING POLE STRAIGHT TO THE COPS! THE COPS SCRAMBLE TO  
CATCH IT.

THEN, WITH HIS BACK RAM-ROD STRAIGHT, PETIT WALKS THE LAST  
THREE STEPS... AND STEPS ONTO THE LEDGE.

Like the tentacles, DOZENS of octopus-COP ARMS grab Petit...

CUT TO:

134

EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF SAME

134

The cops roughly shove Petit to the ground. Genco begins  
cuffing him tightly behind his back.

OFFICER GENCO  
OK smart ass. Show's over.

PETIT  
Officers of the law, my performance  
here is finished. I salute you for  
your patience.

OFFICER O'DONNELL  
Hey, guys, guys -- lighten up. The  
poor bastard looks exhausted.  
Somebody get him some water before  
he passes out.

Petit looks up at the cop and thanks him with his eyes.

AND THE CAMERA DRAMATICALLY FLIES BACK until we have a full  
view of the Twin Towers... 1,368 feet high, scraping the  
foggy sky.

CUT TO:

135 EXT. CHURCH STREET DAY 135

Annie, Barry, and J.P. are exuberant! They hug and kiss one another in a joyous celebration.

136 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF MORNING 136

PPPPFFSSSSsst -- An acetylene torch FIRES to life...

On the ledge of the Tower, a TORCH MAN lowers his welding mask. He's about to cut the wire!

PETIT

Wait, wait, wait! Don't cut my wire!

OFFICER GENCO

Shut up! Nobody gives a shit about your wire!

PETIT

No! Please! There's too much tension! The wire will snap and hurt someone! You have to believe me! You have to loosen the wire with the grip hoist!

An ENGINEER COP (SERGEANT REESE) steps out from the crowd.

SERGEANT REESE

Hold on... Hold on guys... He's right.

(to Petit)

Where's the handle?

PETIT

(he points)

It's in the pipe there.

The Torch Man pulls the handle from inside the pipe and begins loosening Petit's wire...

CUT TO:

137 THE TWIN TOWERS 137

The cable sags gently, like a curtain, forming a sad, steel smile.

CUT TO:

138 INT. 110TH FLOOR/CONSTRUCTION ELEVATOR DAY 138

The cops march Petit around a corner and past a gauntlet of CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. When the workmen see Petit, they begin to APPLAUD. THEY APPLAUD AND CHEER as Petit is ushered past... Some even remove their hard hats and salute.

The cops push Petit into an elevator. And as the doors close, Petit nods at the workers... Then breaks into a wide smile.

CUT TO:

139 INT. WTC LOADING DOCK DAY 139

The freight elevator doors open and the cops escort a sweaty and exuberant Petit out onto the loading dock. The Dock Foreman and his crew give Petit a ROUSING OVATION!

DOCK FOREMAN

(applauding and CHUCKLING)

I gotta hand it to you damn frogs.  
You sure pulled the wool over my eyes.

SARGENT O'DONNELL

(looking around)

Where the hell's the paddy wagon?

ANOTHER COP, OFFICER CICCI runs up.

OFFICER CICCI

On North End Avenue. Stuck in traffic.

SARGENT O'DONNELL

Christ. Ain't they got a siren?

CUT TO:

140 CLOSE -- 140

As Sergeant O'Donnell handcuffs Petit to a chair in the Dock Foreman's work station. As the cop secures the cuffs, he becomes strangely emotional. He speaks quietly to Petit.

\*\*

SARGENT O'DONNELL

I gotta tell ya... What you did was somethin'...really somethin'. I know I'll never see anything like that again in my life. You got guts pal... Good job.

As O'Donnell leaves, Petit notices Jeff across the room -- also cuffed to a chair. The two Frenchmen give each other a mischievous smile.

Now, with his free hand, Jeff lifts his tee shirt -- tucked in his waistband is PAPA RUDY'S TAPE MEASURE. Petit SEES it and smiles broadly. He gives Jeff a thumbs up with his cuffed hand.

Now a DOZEN TV NEWSMEN rush in with their cameras rolling. They BARRAGE Petit with questions -- "Why did you do it? How come? What for? Why? Why? Why?"

CUT TO:

141 GRAINY TELEVISION IMAGE -- SOMEWHERE DAY 141

The news anchor is John Chancellor reporting the NBC NIGHTLY NEWS...

CHANCELLOR

Later in the day, a judge sentenced Petit to walk the wire again. But this time, in Central Park for a crowd of children and...only a few feet off the ground.

CUT TO PETIT -- handcuffed to his chair. A REPORTER shoves a microphone in his face.

NEWS REPORTER (O.C.)

Why did you do this?

PETIT

There is no "why." Just because... When I see a beautiful place to put my wire, I cannot resist.

Petit SPEAKS OVER his own image...

PETIT (V.O.)

The story of my adventure was in the news all over the world...

CUT TO:

142 EXT. INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER RACK DAY 142

THE CAMERA DOLLIES PAST dozens of international newspapers -- each with a FRONT PAGE PHOTO of Petit on his wire. The second big story of the day is: "NIXON RESIGNS!"

CUT TO:

143 INT. PAPA RUDY'S LIVING ROOM DAY 143

Papa Rudy sits at the kitchen table reading a FRENCH NEWSPAPER with a picture of Petit's WTC walk.

PETIT (V.O.)

In France, when Papa Rudy heard of it, he was the happiest Papa Rudy in the world.

Tears of joy stream down the old man's face.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And when Papa Rudy's angry, he's deadly angry. But when Papa Rudy's happy, his dogs get a double ration of food.

\*\*

Papa Rudy tosses doggie treats to his gaggle of yapping dogs.

CUT TO:

144 INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT NIGHT 144

The accomplices are gathered around their usual table -- Jean-Louis, Jeff, J.P., Barry, Petit and Annie.

JEAN-LOUIS

...no the most fantastic moment for me, was when I saw you raise your hand to answer my shooting signal. At that moment, I knew there was a 95% chance that the coup would happen. Then when I saw the arrow hit the side of the building I thought... Now it's 98%.

PETIT

What do you mean? The arrow almost fell, it was on the edge of the roof!

JEAN-LOUIS

That's exactly where I was aiming.

J.P.

Yeah, right. You just wanted to watch him jump around in his birthday suit.

Annie translates for Jeff. And then, in his best English...

JEFF

I zink...  
(looks to Annie)  
J' ai pensé...?

ANNIE

(corrects him)  
I thought...

JEFF

Ah. I thought...zat...was your walk costume!

Everyone LAUGHS. Now Petit stands and raises his champagne glass...

PETIT

Okay, okay, now I wish to make a toast... To all of you, my Accomplices... It was your effort, and toil, and strength, that made it possible for me to walk on that wire.

(he raises his glass)

So... for allowing me that honor -- I thank you.

Everyone CLINKS their glasses and drinks.

Now Petit turns to Annie...

PETIT (CONT'D)

And to Annie. Who knows me... very, very well. From my heart, I salute you. My partner in crime.

Annie smiles warmly and touches her glass to Petit's. The Accomplices down their wine and echo the sentiment -- "Cheers, Salude, Sante!"

145

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT LATER NIGHT

145

Petit, Annie and The Accomplices step out into the night air.

The group takes no more than two steps -- and STOPS...

RIGHT THERE. LESS THAN FIVE BLOCKS AWAY ARE THE TWIN TOWERS -- SOARING INTO THE NIGHT SKY, WITH EVERY WINDOW BURNING BRIGHTLY.

The SIX ACCOMPLICES stand in awe, smiling proudly, gazing up at the GLOWING spires...

Jean-Louis raises his camera and takes a picture of them.

JEAN-LOUIS

Philippe, we showed the world that what they thought was impossible... was possible.

Everyone agrees.

J.P.

You know Philippe, the Towers seem different. They're different now.

BARRY

That's right. They're different because you walked up there. Every New Yorker I talk to now says they love these towers.

ANNIE

(looking at the towers)  
Perhaps you brought them to life, Philippe...given them a soul.

She turns from the Towers to face Petit. He looks at her. They look at each other...deeply, honestly. Do they have a future together? Who knows?

Annie breaks their moment and looks back up at the towers -- and so does Petit.

Off Petit's look, THE CAMERA RISES AND CIRCLES THE TWO LUMINOUS TOWERS --

PETIT (V.O.)

Soon afterward, Jean-Louis and Jeff returned to France... But I stayed... and settled in America. New York City adopted me. So I became a New Yorker...

CUT TO:

PETIT (V.O.)

And in order to stay, I had to pay  
my debt to society -- so later that  
summer, I performed a free walk in  
Central Park...

CLICK. CLOSER -- Petit sports a flashy vest and bell-bottom  
ensemble straight out of Studio 54.

CLICK. Petit salutes the tower of Belvedere Castle, 80 feet  
in the air.

CLICK. 5,000 people CHEER him on as LIGHTENING FLASHES in the  
night sky.

CLICK. Petit salute a GROUP OF CHILDREN

CLICK. Annie watches. She seems sad.

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sadly, Annie decided to return to  
France...

\*\*

CUT TO:

147 EXT. PETIT'S N.Y. APARTMENT DAY 147

Petit is loading a large suitcase into the trunk of a taxi.  
He wears a flashy new sheepskin coat. It's Autumn now, the  
trees are turning.

Annie opens the rear door and tosses her large handbag on the  
seat. Petit SLAMS the trunk.

Petit and Annie hug each other good-bye. They break their hug  
and look at one another. Annie gives him a sincere, sad  
smile... and turns to get in the car...

PETIT

Annie!

She stops.

PETIT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)

(in French)

Annie, are you sure?  
(*T'es sure?*)

\*\*

\*\*

Annie smiles.

ANNIE (SUBTITLE)  
(in French)  
Yes, I'm sure.  
(*Oui, je suis sure.*)

Sal Ladeestro

Then, in English...

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
You accomplished your dream. It's  
time for me to find mine.

Petit gives Annie a long emotional, embrace.

PETIT  
*À bientôt. (Goodbye for now.)*

\*\*

ANNIE  
*Au revoir.*

Annie smiles softly and gets into the car, then just before she shuts the door...

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
I'm glad the towers called you.

PETIT  
Me too. I'm very grateful that they  
let me join them with my wire.

She shuts the door and the taxi drives off, Annie waves to Petit from the rear window. He waves back.

The taxi drives off down the street. In the direction of the Towers -- 20 blocks away.

CUT TO:

148 EXT. WTC SOUTH TOWER ROOF AUTUMN SAME DAY 148

CLOSE ON PETIT as he signs his name on a steel beam -- along with a small cartoon of a stick figure walking on a line between two towers.

WIDEN TO SEE --

Petit and the dramatic Manhattan skyline stretching behind him as far as the eye can see.

PETIT (V.O.)  
Guy Tozzoli, one of the men behind  
the creation of the Towers, gave me  
a pass to the observation deck. And  
I could go anytime I wanted...

CUT TO:

149 EXT. SOUTH TOWER ROOF DAY

149

Petit stands alone on the rooftop. A 15 foot protective fence has been erected, but Petit has found his way around it and is standing on the ledge. He looks across at the north tower -  
- then down into "The Void."

PETIT (V.O.)

...and I went there alone many  
times.

(MORE)

Sal Ladestro

PETIT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
And I find myself there looking at  
the void. To see how the thought  
comes back... How the memory  
returns...

IN PETIT'S P.O.V. -- THE WALK WIRE RE-MATERIALIZES.  
Stretching from the corners of both towers.

\*\*

CUT TO:

150

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY DAY

150

PETIT ENTERS FRAME -- Behind him is the Manhattan Skyline --  
BUT WE SEE NO TOWERS!

PETIT  
Because it was a fabulous day. A  
glorious day. And I want to bring  
back some of the feeling of that  
day. The aura, the flavor... The  
spirit of that day.

\*\*

\*\*

Petit FLICKS HIS HAND -- AND A CARD MAGICALLY APPEARS. He  
continues his story...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
(he holds up the card)  
And you know that pass to the roof  
that Guy Tozzoli gave to me?

AS PETIT SPEAKS WE BEGIN TO SEE THE TOWERS BEGIN TO SLOWLY --  
VERY FAINTLY, BEGIN TO APPEAR...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Well most of these passes have a  
little date. A date when they  
expire...

THE TOWERS ARE DISCERNIBLE NOW...

PETIT (CONT'D)  
Well, Mr. Tozzoli crossed out the  
date on my pass... and wrote on it -  
- FOREVER.

Petit looks at the card -- as he does, his expression turns  
melancholy. Perhaps he feels a premonition.

NOW THE CAMERA MOVES PAST PETIT -- TO FRAME THE TWO MAJESTIC  
STRUCTURES -- NOW COMPLETELY FORMED AND GLEAMING IN THE  
MORNING LIGHT, LIKE TWO GOLD BARS.

FADE OUT.

\*\*