

GENTILLE ALOUETTE

screenplay by  
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FADE IN:

INT. MY LITTLE GYM - DAY

Moving slowly around this brightly colored space for child fitness. Tumbling mats, karate pads, gymnastic equipment.

Over the PA, playing on repeat, the jaunty kid's tune "*Alouette, gentille alouette*" performed by Alain le Lait.

It's just another happy day at My Little Gym.

LUKE (V.O.)

"Persistent. Unwanted. Thoughts."  
What mental health folks call it.  
Think of them as coal in the blast  
furnace of anxiety. A Yellow Brick  
Road straight into existential ...  
motherfucking ... crisis.

One by one they appear around the room: blood-soaked men in tailored suits. They pant, smoke cigarettes, dab blood from their faces—recovering from a terribly violent event.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I don't think I can do this anymore.

One man among them is set apart by his brilliantly sparkling disco ball masquerade mask. Whimsical. Sinister. This is LUKE CALIDO, late-40s.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Take this song. (sings) *Alouette, gentille alouette. Alouette, je te plumerai*. Sounds innocent enough. If you don't know the words.

Hidden under a wooden play structure cowers a twenty-something female gym instructor in teal track suit. She hugs and bites a big red foam block to keep from screaming as ...

A geyser of blood sprays her face. It belongs to the newly made corpse of a man sliced ear to ear. His body, clad in khakis and a pastel polo shirt, drops to its knees.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Only my top guys know my true identity. I know. I know. Sparkly mask? What can I say—midlife crisis is a bitch.

Luke's four lieutenants make smalltalk as they tour the aftermath. Floor strewn with a dozen shot, stabbed, and bludgeoned men all in khakis and polo shirts.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 These corpses may look like your average suburban ham-and-egggers out for daddy-daughter day. But lemme tell ya, they're ruthless scum. That guy right there? The one who looks like Paul Giamati? Once used a busload of prostitutes dressed as nuns to smuggle a thousand kilos of heroin outta Michoacán. When they got to Chicago? He had the bus buried. With the girls still inside. And him? I can't even repeat what he was into.

Luke's lieutenants don't even seem to notice the carnage. Only one guy, Luke's RIGHT-HAND MAN, looks over each body and scribbles notes onto a clipboard.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 Don't worry. We got the women and kids out. (long pause) Father's Day's gonna suck. (*sings*) *Alouette, gentille alouette. Alouette, je te plumerai.*

LIEUTENANT 1  
 Housekeeping's two minutes out. Boss?

Distracted Luke realizes his man is talking to him. He nods.

LUKE (V.O.)  
 Some a these guys were alright. As alright as drug cartel assassins can be. They just worked for the wrong guy. In this case, my former best friend. Good old Meda. Guess you could say we had a falling out. This prolly isn't gonna decrease tensions. Meda does the best Christopher Walken impression you ever heard. Seriously. You'd laugh yer balls off.

Luke comes out of his daze long enough to hear a little of what his employees are discussing.

LIEUTENANT 4  
 ... wanted her folks to stay at our place. I got enough headaches. Said send 'em the Days Inn. Daughter gets one quinceañera and I am not—

Lieutenant 4 steps in a pile of sticky guts that makes his slip-on dress loafer come off. He hops on one foot, trying to retrieve the shoe. Hands his gun to Lieutenant 1 and manages to slip the shoe back on.

LIEUTENANT 1

I getta replace a toilet on Saturday.  
Talk about a shitty job.

LIEUTENANT 4

Haven't even paid for this weekend and my son's already asking for a new car.

LIEUTENANT 1

What? Nothin'? I thought it was funny.

LIEUTENANT 4

Says old one's not *environmentally responsible*. Told him, I was his age, we used to burn styrofoam and throw batteries right into the garbage. Thought he was going to faint. Ah, who'm I kiddin'. They're the only reason I do this.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant 2 and 3 replay some petty squabble. Their speech indistinct and the cause unclear.

LUKE (V.O.)

Jesus. They're at it again. The two stooges. Sometimes I feel like Moe Howard. What would Moe do? He'd knock their heads together and poke their eyes out. (imitates Moe) C'mere, porcupine!

Even without seeing his face, Luke's slumped shoulders and hanging head are a dead giveaway he's feeling down.

LIEUTENANT 1

Hey boss. Everything alright?

Luke just stares at his man.

LUKE (V.O.)

Every thing? That's a lot a things to keep track of. Global warming. Voter fraud. Has anyone checked on Richard Simmons lately? I don't usually do this much internal monologuing. But who else can I talk to? Even Tony Soprano had a shrink. My guys? Ho-ho no. Trained killers respect force. Questioning my existence? The point of the Universe?

(MORE)

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 One of 'em 'd put a bullet in my head  
 and be parked in my garage in time  
 for supper. My wife wouldn't even  
 notice. Weak leader dead. Crisis  
 averted. Faster than you can say, "60  
 milligrams of Prozac, please."  
 Status-quiggity-quo.

Luke tries to respond to his man but is overwhelmed with  
 emotion. His breath quickens.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 I can't breathe. Yes you can. No I  
 can't. Yes you can. (operatic  
 singing) *No I caaaan't!* (speaks) You  
 can't be anxious. Psychopaths don't  
 get anxious. Apparently this one  
 does. Some rube online suggested  
 keeping a gratitude journal. (mocking  
 voice) *"Dear diary, today I had the  
 most scrumptious strawberry jam. I'm  
 still a double amputee whose wiener  
 doesn't work but it sure was tasty!"*  
 Shit. Should I be journaling?

Luke has to sit down ... on top of the play structure under  
 which the gym teacher hides.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 Read an article recently—this's no  
 bullshit—study found acetaminophen,  
 that's Tylenol, reduced severity of  
 existential crises in test subjects.  
 Something 'bout the brain similarly  
 processing real and imagined pain.  
 Tylenol. Suck on that, aspirin.

When Luke's men see him falter, they look to one another in  
 confusion and murmur indistinctly over his strange behavior.

Right-hand man sits with Luke. Their feet dangle inches from  
 the gym instructor's horrified face. Blood, hair, and a  
 tooth on Luke's tan leather shoe makes her silently gag.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 Too bad I'm med-phobic. (sings)  
*Alouette, gentille alouette.*  
*Alouette, je te plumerai.*

Right-hand man offers hard candies to Luke.

RIGHT-HAND MAN  
 Cheer up, boss. Got apple or grape.

Luke shakes his head "no."

RIGHT-HAND MAN (cont'd)  
Eesh. More serious 'n I thought.

Luke pulls an invitation to his 25-year high school reunion from his pocket and shows it to his man.

RIGHT-HAND MAN (cont'd)  
Why people do this to themselves? You either brag about how great yer doing. Which, if you were, you wouldn't need to. Or your life's so sad you think reminiscing about the "good old days" and trying to bang the bloated ghost of a cheerleader will absolve you of your rotten kids, shitty job, and thirty-year mortgage.

LUKE  
What could I even say about my life? Remember the star quarterback with the great hair? Well, he betrayed his boss and best friend to run Southern California's largest crime syndicate. Sure, I'd love to see photos of your fat kids and hear about your big stinky battle with rectal cancer.

RIGHT-HAND MAN  
Maybe you should go. Change of scenery. Come back fresh.

LUKE  
I just thought by now—

RIGHT-HAND MAN  
What? You'd be more successful? Happy? Tell ya: nobody's happy. You're already rich and powerful. People respect you. And you provide a quality product at a fair price.

Under the play structure, the gym instructor begins to panic. She's holding something uncomfortable in. But the feeling passes and she remains silent.

LUKE (O.S.)  
Fear isn't respect.

RIGHT-HAND MAN (O.S.)  
Success isn't happiness.

Luke sniffs the air.

RIGHT-HAND MAN

Maybe you have a brain tumor.

LUKE

Place fulla guys and I distinctly  
smell Liz Taylor's White Diamonds.

RIGHT-HAND MAN

You definitely need a vacation. Fuck  
it. None a those people know who you  
are. What you do. So? Lie. Go to your  
reunion. Be anyone or thing you want.

LUKE

Anything I want. Hmm.

EXT. MY LITTLE GYM - DAY

Two "MR. SPARKLE" cargo vans pull up. Men in sweats and  
flipflops exit with bleach, mops, and a giant squeegee.

INT. MY LITTLE GYM - DAY

Right-hand man notices the cleaners and nudges his boss.  
Luke adjusts his tie and climbs down to address his men.

LUKE

Looks like everyone's dead and  
accounted for. Good work today. Be  
sure and get your timecards in to  
payroll by Thurs—

Luke's interrupted by a long loud FART that PARPS and  
SQUEAKS, echoing off the rafters.

CLICK of safeties and COCK of guns as the men turn on the  
source of the sound—the scared and mortified gym instructor  
holding her stomach and closing her eyes.

LUKE (V.O.)

This isn't how I imagined my forties.

She cuts another blast of gas before the stunned gunmen.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)

(sings)

*Alouette, gentille alouette.*  
*Alouette, je te plumerai.*

Luke kneels eye-level with the woman.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
 Now everybody: *(sings)* *Little skylark, lovely little skylark.*

Shaking, the woman opens one eye. Then the other. Luke appears to those around him to be considering her fate.

LUKE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
*Little skylark, I'll pluck your feathers off.* *(speaks)* That's right. It's about ripping the feathers off a sweet little bird. Its wings, its head, its back. What'm I gonna do with this sweet little lark?

Luke sniffs.

LUKE  
 Persistent. Unwanted. Thoughts.

GYM INSTRUCTOR  
 W-what?

LUKE  
 White Diamonds?

Terrified woman hesitates then nods. Luke smiles warmly.

LUKE (cont'd)  
 My mom wore White Diamonds.

Luke hums aloud with the tune playing on the PA system as he pulls a gleaming pearl-handled .45 from his waistband. Checks the mag. Speaks confidentially to the gym instructor.

LUKE (cont'd)  
 I'm gonna go ahead and kill these guys. So ... you should prolly run.

SLOW MOTION

Alouette song changes from kindermusic to DEATH METAL style as Luke cocks his gun and the gym instructor bolts from her hidey hole. The speaker system BLARES heavy metal Alouette.

OVER BLACK

GUN SHOTS ring O.S.

SPEAKER SYSTEM (O.S.)  
*Je te plumerai la tête! Je te plumerai la tête! Et la tête! Et la tête! Alouette! Alouette! Aaaaah!*