

THE CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT ARE PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

PING PONG

by

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1. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE REAL ESTATE AGENCY. DAY 1.

STEVE and ANNABELLE, a married couple in their late 30s, leave a big suburban real estate office, disappointed.

Steve, a bit of a boofhead, walks out in front, carrying a mobile. Annabelle, frail and pretty, struggles with the door behind him, carrying a heavy phone book and her bag.

ANNABELLE
That's it. That's the last
one.

Steve doesn't look back, fiddling with his mobile.

STEVE
There must be somewhere else.

ANNABELLE
I'm telling you there isn't.
We've been to every real
estate agent in the book.

Frustrated, Steve strides off ahead. Annabelle trails some distance behind him.

2. EXT. STREET AND ALLEY. DAY 2.

Steve walks straight past the little alley without even looking. Annabelle, following behind, spots a little sign down the side street: 'Raoul's Realty'.

She calls after him.

ANNABELLE
Steve!

STEVE
What?

ANNABELLE
How about this place?

Steve wheels, comes back. He looks at the amateurish little sign, then at Anna.

STEVE
I don't know.

ANNABELLE
It can't hurt to have a look.

Reluctantly, Steve follows Annabelle down the alley until they're outside the humble little shopfront.

The sign on the window says 'Raoul's Realty. Promoting Honesty in Real Estate.'

A sharp-looking little red Mini is parked outside.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Come on.

She opens the door.

3. INT. RAOUL'S REALTY OFFICE. DAY

3.

RAOUL is a man of obscure origins; a charming, genial guy in his 40s. The office is small, old-fashioned and eccentrically decorated.

Sitting at his desk, Raoul leafs through listings of properties. Annabelle and Steve sit across from him, shaking their heads, unimpressed at what's on offer.

Raoul reaches the end of his listings with an apologetic smile.

ANNABELLE

Don't you have anything cheaper?

RAOUL

Alas, I do not. I wish I could help you.

ANNABELLE

It's the bank. They won't lend us enough money.

Raoul nods sympathetically.

RAOUL

Ah.

STEVE

I've got a job, but Annie doesn't work.

Annabelle glares at him.

ANNABELLE

I do work. I'm an artist.

Raoul smiles.

RAOUL
Ah, where would we be without
art... And children?

STEVE
No.

ANNABELLE
Not yet.

RAOUL
They will come.

He pats Annabelle's hand comfortingly. Steve isn't happy
about this. He stands.

STEVE
Come on Annie.

Annabelle doesn't want to go.

ANNABELLE
We've been searching for
weeks. Are you sure there
isn't something you might have
overlooked?

Steve is impatient.

STEVE
You heard the man. Let's go.

He drags his wife to her feet, a little roughly.
Annabelle looks at Raoul beseechingly.

Reluctantly, the real estate agent produces another
folder from the bottom of the pile. He hesitates before
he speaks.

RAOUL
There is one other property...

4. EXT. GRAND OLD HOUSE. DAY

4.

Raoul gives Steve and Annabelle a guided tour as they
walk around the grounds of a beautiful old two storey
house in a semi-rural setting.

Everything looks a little run down, overgrown, and
unloved, but the place is impressive, with great views.

RAOUL

The original house was built by the Colonial Architect in 1890. There have been additions, over the years. Swimming pool, gardens, tennis court.

ANNABELLE

It's unbelievable!

RAOUL

This area was once considered remote. Of course, today the city has come to the country. You can be in town in less than an hour. The views, of course, speak for themselves.

Raoul gestures expansively.

Annabelle and Steve can't believe their luck.

5. INT. HOUSE - FOYER. DAY

5.

Raoul continues his spiel as Steve and Annabelle follow him through the front door. They find themselves in a grand foyer area, near a staircase. Raoul opens heavy curtains - light filters through cobwebs as dust rises.

RAOUL

There are three bathrooms, six bedrooms, a fully equipped kitchen and scullery, a games room, a study, stables-

ANNABELLE

It's a palace!

STEVE

What's the catch?

RAOUL

The catch?

STEVE

Why is it so cheap? Is it heritage listed or something?

RAOUL

You will be able to renovate, if that's what you mean.

STEVE

So what's wrong with it?

Annabelle is shocked at his rudeness.

ANNABELLE

Steve!

RAOUL

No, the gentleman is quite right to be cautious. Did you notice the sign outside my shop?

STEVE

The thing about honesty?

RAOUL

Honesty in real estate, yes. These are not just words to me, but something I live by.

He continues in a low, serious voice, as though someone might be listening.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

This house is haunted.

STEVE

You're joking.

RAOUL

No sir, I can assure you I'm not. Lots of bad things have happened to the people who have lived here. Divorces, accidents, and... worse. This is why such a grand house is so moderately priced. You will understand, now, why I was reluctant to bring you here.

Annabelle is spooked.

ANNABELLE

Have you seen a ghost here?

RAOUL

Myself, no, but I have sensed their presence.

ANNABELLE

There's more than one?!

STEVE

This is ridiculous. There's no such thing as ghosts.

ANNABELLE

I don't know, Steve. It sounds a bit scary.

STEVE

Nonsense, we'll take it.

RAOUL

Perhaps you would like some time to talk it over?

STEVE

We don't need any time. We'll get the money organised today.

6. EXT. HOUSE. DAY

6.

A removal truck drives away. Steve chucks the 'For Sale' sign on to a heap of rubbish. Steve and Annabelle clink their wine glasses and smile as the sun sets over the lovely view.

7. INT. HOUSE - MONTAGE. DAY

7.

Dressed for work in a shirt and tie, carrying a briefcase, Steve finishes a piece of toast as Annabelle sets up her easel in a sunny room next to a window.

STEVE

Be good, honey.

He gives her a kiss.

STEVE (CONT'D)

See you tonight.

Annabelle smiles and waves as he leaves.

A big old clock rolls through the hours as Annabelle paints, has a nap on the couch, eats, and paints again. The morning sunlight turns to afternoon, then dusk.

8. INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN. NIGHT

8.

Annabelle prepares dinner while Steve gets a beer from the fridge, his tie loose after work.

STEVE
Seen any ghosts yet?

ANNABELLE
No, I had a lovely day, but it
was kind of lonely.

STEVE
That'll change when there's a
few kids running around.

Annabelle is reminded of their situation.

ANNABELLE
Why don't you go to the
doctor, get yourself checked
out?

STEVE
There's nothing wrong with me.

ANNABELLE
But all my fertility tests
came back clear.

STEVE
Doctors don't know everything.

Annoyed, he stomps out.

9. INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM. NIGHT.

9.

Steve and Annabelle lie in bed. Steve wakes to the sound
of someone playing ping pong.

Leaving Annabelle asleep, Steve goes looking for the
source of the sound.

10. INT. HOUSE. NIGHT

10.

Steve goes from room to room, trying to identify the
sound's source. It seems to be somewhere in the house.

Steve opens the door to one of the rooms. The ping pong
sound stops abruptly.

He switches on the light. The room is empty. Steve shakes
his head, thinking he must have imagined it.

ACT/COMMERCIAL BREAK

11. INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN. DAY**11.**

Steve and Annabelle eat breakfast. Steve seems troubled.

STEVE

Annie - did you hear anything...
funny last night?

ANNABELLE

What kind of funny?

STEVE

It sounded like a ping pong
game.

Annabelle laughs out loud.

ANNABELLE

I wish I had dreams like
yours!

STEVE

It wasn't a dream.

Annabelle tries to be serious.

ANNABELLE

Course it wasn't.

Unhappy, Steve grabs his briefcase and goes for the door.

12. INT. HOUSE. DAY**12.**

Annie is painting a still-life when there's a knock at
the door. She answers it. It's Raoul.

ANNABELLE

Raoul!

Raoul is pleased to see her.

RAOUL

The lovely Annabelle.

He notices her painting clothes.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Are you busy working?

ANNABELLE

Oh, just fiddling about
really. Come in, come in.

13. INT. HOUSE. DAY

13.

Raoul admires Annabelle's still-life.

RAOUL
It's very good. I see you
appreciate the country light.

Annabelle is chuffed. Raoul picks up a piece of charcoal
and motions to a blank piece of paper.

RAOUL (CONT'D)
May I?

ANNABELLE
You're an artist?

RAOUL
No, no. Just a dabbler.

Annabelle poses, smiling, while Raoul captures her in a
few quick lines.

Annabelle has a look.

ANNABELLE
You are an artist!

Raoul waves her praise away.

RAOUL
Ah, don't embarrass me.
Anyway, I just dropped by to
see if you're settling in
okay. Any problems?

ANNABELLE
No. Everything's fine. Thank
you.

He goes to the door.

RAOUL
I'm glad to hear it. You keep
working, I'll see myself out.

ANNABELLE
Thanks for the encouragement.

RAOUL
The pleasure was mine.

He closes the door, leaving Annabelle smiling.

14. INT. HOUSE. NIGHT**14.**

Inspired, Annabelle is still hard at work when Steve comes home, tired and exhausted. He goes into the kitchen, where nothing is happening, then finds Annabelle, who's very happy with her painting.

She shows him the still-life.

ANNABELLE
What do you think?

Steve doesn't even look at it.

STEVE
Christ, Annie, what do you do
all day? Isn't there anything
to eat?

Miffed, Annabelle goes to the fridge and gets out a cabbage, chucks it at him. She leaves the room, slamming the door.

STEVE (CONT'D)
What did I do?

15. INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN. NIGHT**15.**

Later. Steve is slumped on a chair, watching a football show on TV. He gets up to get a beer from the fridge.

While he's in the kitchen, the TV in the living room switches to another channel. Steve comes back to find the TV showing tennis. He's not happy.

STEVE
I was watching that!

Annabelle is reading in the next room.

ANNABELLE
You were watching what?

STEVE
Why did you change the
channel?

ANNABELLE
I didn't!

Suspiciously, Steve turns the TV back to the football.

16. INT. HOUSE. NIGHT**16.**

In the middle of the night, Steve comes down the stairs to get a drink of water. The house is dark.

While he's in the kitchen, the TV in the empty living room turns itself on. It's showing tennis. Confused, Steve goes into the room and turns it off.

On his way back to bed, the TV turns itself on again.

STEVE
(to himself)
Bloody switch must be broken.

He goes back to the living room and pulls the TV's power plug out of its socket. The TV falls silent.

17. INT. HOUSE. NIGHT**17.**

Later. Back in bed, Steve hears the mysterious ping pong noise again. He wanders around for a bit, but can't figure out where it's coming from. He goes back to the bedroom and shakes Annabelle.

STEVE
Annie! Annie!

She wakes, groggily. The sound stops immediately.

ANNABELLE
What's wrong?

STEVE
It's that bloody ping pong noise again!

ANNABELLE
I can't hear anything.

STEVE
It's stopped now.

ANNABELLE
Steve. There's no one else in the house. The neighbours are miles away. Who would be playing ping pong in the middle of the night?

STEVE
How would I know?

ANNABELLE
We don't even have a ping pong
table!

Steve looks unconvinced.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)
Well we don't, do we?

STEVE
No.

ANNABELLE
Try to get some rest. We both
need some sleep.

Steve lies down and tries to sleep.

18. INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT

18.

Later. Annabelle sleeps soundly, but Steve can't go back to sleep. He lies awake, listening. There's no sound of ping pong.

19. INT. KITCHEN. DAY

19.

Looking haggard, Steve puts down the phone and drinks coffee. Annabelle is worried about him.

ANNABELLE
What did you tell your work?

STEVE
I told them I was sick.

ANNABELLE
Are you going to the doctor?

STEVE
Of course not! I'm going to
find out where that bloody
noise was coming from.

He pulls a hammer out of his tool kit.

20. INT. HOUSE - MONTAGE. DAY

20.

Annabelle tries to paint while Steve bangs and crashes around her, searching the house and dismantling obstacles as he goes. There's junk scattered all over the place.

ANNABELLE

I hope you're going to clean
this mess up!

Steve searches everywhere, even the basement and the shed. There's no sign of a ping pong table. Eventually there's nowhere left but the attic. Carrying his hammer, Steve climbs the stairs.

21. INT. ATTIC/HOUSE. DAY

21.

In the attic Steve finds a strange little door. It's locked shut, with planks nailed over the door and metal rasps welded over the hinges.

He returns with an electric angle grinder, bolt-cutters and jemmy, and goes to work on the door.

Dust showers down on Annabelle as power tools scream and whine above. She abandons her work, covering her painting with a drop cloth.

In the attic, the door falls open at last. Inside is a little room, illuminated from above by a skylight. In the centre of the room is a dusty old ping pong table with a net, two racquets and a ball.

Victorious, Steve steps into the room, grabs the ping pong table, folds it up, and drags it from the room.

22. EXT. HOUSE/POOL/SHED. DAY

22.

Annabelle is in the pool, trying to get away from all the noise. Triumphant, Steve drags the ping pong table out into the sun and drops it near the pool.

She swims over and looks at it sceptically.

ANNABELLE

What do you want, a medal?

Steve ferrets in the shed. He finds an axe and petrol.

ANNABELLE (CONT'D)

Look at it, Steve. No one's
played ping pong on that table
for years!

Steve doesn't care. Like a man possessed, he lays into the ping pong table with the axe, then gathers the bits together and pours petrol over them.

Raoul arrives with a bottle of champagne just as Steve lights his bonfire with a match. It goes up with a whoof.

Raoul is a bit taken aback.

RAOUL
I see you have started house-warming already.

STEVE
What are you doing here?

Raoul holds out the champagne.

RAOUL
A little house-warming gift. I forgot to leave it when I was here yesterday.

STEVE
(to Annabelle)
You didn't tell me he was here yesterday!

ANNABELLE
What's the big deal? We talked about art. Raoul's an artist too, you know.

STEVE
What'll be next - life drawing?!

RAOUL
The house is affecting you, isn't it, my friend? Tell me what's wrong.

Still brandishing the axe, Steve pokes Raoul in the chest with a finger.

STEVE
The only problem round here is you, pal.

RAOUL
Perhaps I should leave.

STEVE
Good idea.

Raoul puts down the champagne like a peace offering, and leaves.

Annabelle is disgusted with Steve's behaviour. He tries to touch her, to make amends, but she shrugs him away. Wrapping herself in a towel, she goes inside.

Steve is left alone with the burning remains of the ping pong table.

23. INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM. NIGHT

23.

Steve and Annabelle sleep on opposite sides of the bed, as far away from each other as possible.

In the middle of the night, Steve is woken by the sound of someone playing ping pong, somewhere in the house.

He shakes Annabelle roughly.

STEVE
It's happening again!

Annabelle wakes, not impressed.

ANNABELLE
I can't hear a thing.

STEVE
Just wait, it'll start again
any minute.

Annabelle gets out of bed.

ANNABELLE
That's it. I've had enough. If
you want to go crazy you can
do it by yourself.

Dressing hurriedly, she throws a few things into a suitcase.

24. EXT. HOUSE. NIGHT

24.

Annabelle gets into a taxi. It accelerates away. Steve is left in the drive in his dressing gown, holding his car keys. He's about to go after her in his own car, but then stops as he hears something inside.

It's the ping pong noise. Slowly, Steve puts his car keys back in his pocket and returns to the house.

ACT/COMMERCIAL BREAK

25. INT. HOUSE. DAY**25.**

Days later. Still in his dressing gown, Steve looks a wreck. The sink is full of dirty dishes. There's sawdust and junk everywhere.

Obsessively, he prises up floorboards and looks underneath. The answering machine takes a message.

SECRETARY (PHONE, O/V)
... I don't know if you're still
there, Steve, or what's
happening, but the boss has
asked me to tell you you're
fired. I'm sorry. Hope you're
okay. Be seeing you.

The machine hangs up. Steve pays no attention to the message.

26. INT. HOUSE. DAY**26.**

Later. Someone is knocking at the door. Steve ignores the sound. He's busy in the bathroom, unscrewing plugholes and searching for phantom table tennis players.

Raoul lets himself in with his own key.

RAOUL
(shouts out)
Steve?

Steve hears someone in the hallway of the house. Grabbing a monkey wrench, he sneaks up behind Raoul.

STEVE
How did you get in here?!

Raoul leaps, frightened.

RAOUL
Steve! You frightened me.
Sorry I let myself in. There
was a key under the mat.

STEVE
What do you want?

RAOUL
I just dropped by to see how
you were. People are worried
about you.

STEVE
What's the scam, Raoul?

RAOUL
I'm sorry, I don't understand.

STEVE
Sure you understand. Every
time this place changes hands
you get a commission, right?

RAOUL
If you want to leave, I'm
happy to offer you a reduction
on my normal fee.

Steve grins maniacally, waving the monkey wrench.

STEVE
That's how it works, isn't it?
You've got a key. How do you
do the ping pong noises? Is
there a trapdoor? Hidden
speakers? I bet it's remote
controlled!

Steve bears down on him menacingly. Raoul backs into the
kitchen.

RAOUL
You're sounding paranoid,
Steve.

STEVE
The ghost story thing is a
brilliant touch.

RAOUL
It is not a story. I was
honest with you from the
beginning about the ghosts.

STEVE
There's no such thing as
bloody ghosts!

In a high display cabinet, all the spoons in the tea cups
spin around by themselves, then stop again abruptly.
Raoul is unnerved.

Not scared in the least, Steve gets up on a stool and
opens the cabinet. He starts examining the tea cups
closely.

STEVE
How do you do it? Hidden
wires? Magnetism?

RAOUL
Let me get you some help.
Annabelle thinks you need help
too.

STEVE
What do you know about Annie?!

Enraged, Steve trips and falls off the stool. He picks up the monkey wrench as Raoul runs for his life.

27. EXT. HOUSE. DAY

27.

Steve runs after Raoul. The real estate agent gets in his red Mini and accelerates away, leaving Steve alone in the driveway.

28. INT. HOUSE. NIGHT

28.

Later. Steve sleeps uneasily amidst the wreckage of the living room. Suddenly the TV comes on, showing tennis as usual.

Steve wakes. He gets up and checks the cord of the TV. It's still unplugged. Picking up an axe from the floor, Steve smashes the TV set to pieces.

For a moment, there is silence. Then the ping pong noise starts up again.

Enraged, Steve goes from room to room, completely trashing what's left of the house in a vain search for the source of the ping pong noise.

He pulls pictures and cupboards down, smashes holes in the walls and pulls out plumbing.

Still the steady tock, tock of the ping pong game persists.

29. INT. HOUSE - BASEMENT. NIGHT

29.

Steve smashes an old book case. There's nothing behind it. On his last blow, the axe falls apart. Steve tosses it aside. All that's left intact in the room is a big table on top of a rug.

Steve gets an idea. With difficulty, he pulls the table aside, and rolls back the rug.

Beneath the rug is a trapdoor. Steve prises it open. The ping pong sound seems to come from somewhere below. Metal steps lead down into the darkness.

Steve finds a torch nearby. It's a bit dodgy, with old batteries, but it's the only one available, so he takes it.

Using the torch, Steve starts descending the steep steps down into the darkness.

The ping pong sound gets louder.

The steps are old, and slippery with something disgusting. Down, down he goes, but he can see nothing.

Suddenly, one of the steps activates a lever. All the steps rock down on hinges, becoming a slippery, sliding ramp. Steve can't keep his footing. He slides and then freefalls into the darkness with a scream.

The ping pong sounds stop.

30. INT. HOUSE - ATTIC. DAY

30.

Steve wakes up in the attic. Daylight streams through the skylight from above.

He looks dusty and very pale, as though he's sick or anaemic. He tries to stand, and bumps his head on something above him.

Crawling out, Steve realises he was under a ping pong table - it's much like the one he smashed to matchwood earlier. Confused, he picks up one of the racquets lying there. From somewhere below, there are voices.

31. INT. HOUSE - STAIRS. DAY

31.

Groggily, Steve makes his way down the stairs. Raoul can be heard giving his spiel to some house-hunters.

RAOUL (O/V)

The original house was built by the Colonial Architect in 1890. There have been many additions, of course. Swimming pool, gardens, tennis court...

On the stairs, through a window, Steve can see Raoul's red Mini parked outside. Annabelle leans on the bonnet, obviously pregnant.

She looks happy and expectant.

STEVE
(shouts)
Annie! Annabelle!

But she doesn't seem to hear. Steve is confused.

32. INT. HOUSE - FOYER. DAY

32.

Steve comes downstairs to find Raoul speaking to a YOUNG COUPLE, apparently potential buyers. They hang on Raoul's every word.

RAOUL
Did you notice the sign
outside my shop?

YOUNG MAN
Something about promoting
honesty in real estate, wasn't
it?

Raoul has his back to Steve. The young couple don't seem to notice Steve in the shadows.

RAOUL
Precisely. This is my mission,
which is why I must tell you
something else about this
lovely home before you get too
excited.

Coming close to the young couple, Raoul speaks in a low, serious voice, as though someone might be listening.

RAOUL (CONT'D)
This house, sadly, is haunted.

YOUNG WOMAN
Really?

RAOUL
I'm afraid so. Sadly, this
beautiful house has been the
site of many tragedies. The
last owner... Well, I won't go
into that.

RAOUL (CONT'D)

Anyway, you must understand that this is why the house is so reasonably priced. If you don't want to go ahead after what I've told you, I quite understand.

The couple look at each other nervously.

YOUNG MAN

I think, if it's all the same to you, we might look somewhere else.

Spooked, the young woman nods in agreement, holding her husband's hand tightly.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sorry for the trouble.

Raoul waves her concern away with a genuine smile.

RAOUL

Not at all. I'll meet you outside. Just let me lock up.

The couple leave. Steve steps forward.

STEVE

What are you up to now, you greasy bastard, acting like I'm not even here? And what have you done with Annie?

Raoul turns and smiles at Steve oddly. He doesn't say anything, but adjusts his tie and hair.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'm talking to you!

Still Raoul says nothing. He seems to look right past him, or through him. Steve looks around, and realises he's standing between Raoul and a large mirror.

Raoul turns to go.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going?

Raoul completely ignores him.

Furious, Steve swipes at him with the table tennis raquet, but the blow goes right through Raoul's head with no apparent effect.

Steve is flabbergasted.

Raoul goes to the door and opens it, then shuts and locks it behind him.

Through the window in the door, Steve watches Raoul kiss Annabelle. He pats her belly paternally. Steve is appalled.

He goes to grab the door handle but can't make contact with it - he's like transparent jelly. Finally the horrible truth sinks in. Steve is a ghost.

He looks down at the table tennis raquet, trying to comprehend what has happened to him.

Someone is watching him. Steve turns.

A group of similarly haggard-looking male ghosts of different eras stand against the wall, all holding ping pong raquets.

One of the ghosts raises his raquet with a welcoming smile.

GHOST

Ping pong, mate?

Steve is horrified.

Fade to black.