

# **MODERN MR. PERFECT**

*a modern romance*

by  
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## "MODERN MR. PERFECT"

FADE UP TO:

INT. A NEAT, ORDERLY KITCHEN - DAY

CLOSE on a crisp, fresh waffle flopping onto a plate -- it's covered with whipped cream and strawberries. CAMERA FOLLOWS as it is set before a man in a suit -- RON TURNER, 35. He takes a bite, smiles, and surveys his normal suburban kitchen -- a world so normal it makes your teeth hurt. The object of his smile is JILL TURNER, 33, his wife, in silk lingerie and robe. Jill has an ordinary and fresh beauty about her -- the kind you don't notice at first. She watches him eat -- her eyes locked on his every move.

RON

Mmmm, Good -- Great! What's the occasion?

Jill smiles softly.

RON (cont'd)

Something wrong?

JILL

It's just... that I'm going to miss you.

Ron is in the middle of a mouthful.

RON

It's only two weeks, sweetheart.

(chewing)

"Sell, sell, sell...."

He's an idiot. Jill smiles blandly.

INT. THE FRONT DOOR -- DAY

Jill kisses her husband goodbye -- and what a kiss, a sizzler -- it practically buckles his knees. He looks at her like she has lost her mind. She waves goodbye as he loads his bags into the trunk of the Volvo and climbs in.

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Jill closes the door and leans against it. She smiles.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

CLOSE ON the stereo, Jill's hand slips in a CD, turns it on. A slow, sexy JAZZ WALTZ fills the room.

THE STAIRS

Jill walks up the stairs, her robe drops on the landing.

THE BEDROOM

Jill slips off her lingerie -- lets it fall on the floor. There is a slow, dreamy, deliberate pace to her movements. CLOSE NOW, we see only parts of her body, CAMERA floating across her back to her arms to her hands as she reaches for an expensive bottle of perfume. She pours the perfume recklessly into her palm, so much that it trickles down her arm, and onto the carpet. She anoints herself with it -- her neck, stomach, legs -- her nostrils flaring -- loving the rich, intoxicating excessiveness of it all.

There is a BUZZER -- the front door. She throws on a T-shirt and sweat-pants and runs down.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM/FRONT DOOR - DAY

The door opens -- revealing a rough-looking WORKMAN. There's a hard, slightly dangerous, blue-collar edge to him. The perfume hits him like a sucker punch. The look in his eye tells us he doesn't know her -- but his eyes bore into hers. Jill is flushed, she takes a breath.

JILL

GOOD. You're here...

(a smile)

Change ALL the locks. Every door.

TIME CUT - FIVE MINUTES LATER - LIVING ROOM

Jill is moving things out of the house. It's not junk for Goodwill and it's not luggage for a trip. Finally it becomes apparent -- it's only masculine things -- golf

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clubs, skis, softball trophies, several suits, a pair of water-skis, stacks of sports magazines.

EXT. THE FRONT YARD - DAY

She's moving on to the heavy artillery now. She's got a dolly and is moving out the Easy-Boy recliner and the 27 inch Trinatron. The Locksmith offers to help -- she refuses.

She's building a little "scene" -- you might even think it was some kind of confused, suburban installation art -- the TV set up in front of the rocker, covered with trophies. A group of NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS have gathered by now -- they watch silently, sitting on their bikes.

Jill rolls out the new self-propelled lawn mower and completes the tableau. Finally she brings a fuel can from the garage. She unscrews the top. She douses it all with gasoline. The kids cheer her on. The Locksmith sees it coming -- he runs to move his truck to a safe distance.

Jill lights a kitchen match. It flies through the air is a kind of poetic SLOW MOTION. The stuff bursts into flames with a WHOOSH. She smiles, the flames tinting her face with an orange glow. She and the kids and the Locksmith watch silently -- as the lazy boy melts into a charred glob.

CUT TO:

INT. JILL'S DINING ROOM - 20 MINUTES LATER - DAY

A paint roller -- it dips into a pan of jet black paint -- sops it up and spreads it across a perfect, pretty wall covered with a flowered print. The roller spreads and spreads -- covering it in dripping darkness. Jill has pushed all the furniture up against the wall and is methodically painting the wall black.

CUT TO:

INT. A LUXURIOUS BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE on an EYE - a woman's beautiful dark eye. Eye-liner is being carefully put on. A telephone RINGS. The face, NATALIE COROT'S, is a stunner -- it has the kind of beauty that draws

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attention to itself. And she's the kind of woman who has learned to make the most of the attention. She stares at herself in the mirror and sighs. The machine gets it.

JILL'S VOICE

Natalie... Jill... I'm  
painting my dining room, Ron's  
on a business trip.

(she dissolves into laughter --  
on and on in a disturbing way)

Maybe you and Annie should come  
by. Oh, well -- talk later.

Natalie puts down her eyeliner and looks at the phone.

EXT. THE HOUSE/STREET - DAY

A Mercedes pulls up, It makes an abrupt stop in front of the house. Two women get out of the car. Natalie and the driver, ANNIE MCLAUGHLIN, a well-organized and properly presented woman with controlled hair, a Dior dress and an expensive purse. The two women seem unlikely friends -- Natalie is wild, dangerous, anti-matter to Annie's domesticated matter. Natalie is swallowed up by a vast leather coat -- underneath are clothes way too tight for the suburbs. Two women stare dumbly at the charred ruins on the front lawn. The Locksmith is working on the front door, he gives them a look.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM - DAY

Annie and Natalie walk past the Locksmith working on the front door, calling out Jill's name. She doesn't answer. They discover her in the dining room, the wall half-painted. They stand in shock.

Jill stops, smiles as she rubs a smudge from her cheek.

JILL

I feel like a bloody mary.  
Anyone want a bloody mary?

CUT TO:

THE DINING ROOM - TIME CUT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The women are sitting on the floor. Jill is mixing the drinks in a shaker, sitting cross-legged.

NATALIE

So, who was he sleeping with?

Annie pours out the glasses.

ANNIE

Natalie, do you have  
to be so... blunt?

JILL

I think you should add your  
own tabasco -- everyone has  
their own taste

ANNIE

Jill, what happened dear?

JILL

He didn't have an affair. At  
least none I heard about.

NATALIE

Was the sex bad?

Jill grabs the bottle of tabasco and starts shaking it into  
her drink

NATALIE (cont'd)

WAS there sex?

JILL

Who would really want to KNOW  
about an affair anyway? I mean  
REALLY want to know. I wouldn't.

The Locksmith clears his throat at the door. he's been  
listening.

LOCKSMITH

Mrs. Turner, I finished  
all the doors.

He places the keys on the table.

LOCKSMITH

How do you want to pay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Natalie turns towards the man. An internal switch clicks on and the flirt meter goes off the scale. She looks him in the eye.

NATALIE

Couldn't you just leave the bill by the door?

LOCKSMITH

Well, I'm not supposed to... I mean I'm supposed to get paid before I leave -- I guess I can explain it to my boss.

NATALIE

It's not too, too much is it?

Natalie leans back, resting on an elbow. The coat slips aside, revealing her curves.

LOCKSMITH

NO, no... Uh -- why don't I, uh, oh hell -- maybe I'll just charge you for the front door.

NATALIE

That is so NICE of you.

LOCKSMITH

Oh, that's okay. I'll leave it by the door.

Natalie gives him a little wave as he leaves. She smiles as she turns back to the women.

ANNIE

That is so disgusting the way you do that.

Natalie shrugs.

NATALIE

He liked it. And Jill gets some free locks.

Another shrug. Jill can't help but laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

It's so funny how STUPID men really are. I mean it's scary.

NATALIE

I think it's wonderful.

ANNIE

All men aren't like that -- you spend your time with the stupid ones. Albert isn't like that.

NATALIE

They are ALL slaves to testosterone.

JILL

But happy slaves.

NATALIE

Like, for example, you are at a party. You're wearing a low cut dress -- working the miracle bra... Right, you know what I mean? Men talk to you. They CAN'T HELP but look down there instead of into your eyes. They try not to -- at least some of them try not to -- but then they can't help it -- they AGONIZE over it, some of them, the proper ones, you can see them struggling. Then, when they can't stand it a second longer, not a MOMENT -- their eyes flick down, then up to yours -- acting like nothing happened. Maybe they give you a slight smile, like they've stolen something from you without you knowing about it.

ANNIE

Like it's some kind of accomplishment to look down your dress.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NATALIE

They get this stupid, coy look.  
Like they just shot a three  
point basket. The real problem  
with men is that they are  
completely and absolutely  
PREDICTABLE in all ways, at all  
times, for ETERNITY. All you  
have to do is notice the  
patterns.

JILL

You SEE the patterns don't you  
Natalie? I just started to see  
them. On the wall at night. I  
would just look at them.

A BEAT - It's obvious, this girl is losing her grip.

ANNIE

JILL -- what is WRONG? Why  
are you acting like this?  
What did Ron do to you?

Jill looks at them -- she rolls the tabasco bottle in her  
fingers, back and forth.

JILL

I'm just bored I guess.

NATALIE

JUST bored?

ANNIE

Tell us the truth, Jill.

Jill

It is the truth. The other  
day I woke up and realized I  
already knew everything that  
was going to happen in my  
day. EVERYTHING. The  
laundry, working out, my hair  
appointment, going to lunch,  
feeling guilty about what I  
ate, Ron coming home -- what  
he'd say, what he'd do...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

So to spice up the day you  
torch all of Hubbie's  
worldly possessions? It  
does have a certain flair.

JILL

That's the funny thing --  
He really is a very nice  
man. He doesn't MIND the  
boredom -- I even think he  
likes it. It made me mad.

NATALIE

I guess it did.

ANNIE

I think boredom has gotten  
a bad rap. I like getting  
up in the morning knowing  
what my day is going to be  
like. Albert likes boredom  
too. You don't have to go  
crazy over it.

Natalie gives her a hard look about the crazy bit. Jill is  
slowly shaking more and more... and then even MORE tabasco  
sauce into her bloody mary. Natalie and Annie watch as she  
drinks the whole glass in one long luxurious swallow.

JILL

I think I like things a  
little different now.

NATALIE

You know Jill, I think Annie  
has somewhat of a point.  
You have SNAPPED in a fairly  
significant way.

JILL

Have I?

ANNIE

(exasperated)

You burned poor Ron's golf  
clubs and Lazy Boy and  
even the TV. And your new  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE (cont'd))  
wallpaper. JILL! What is  
Ron going to say when he  
comes home and sees this?

Jill surveys the room blankly.

Jill  
I couldn't imagine.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE/ANNIE'S MERCEDES - DAY

Annie and Natalie get into the car. They wave towards the house.

THEIR VIEW - THE HOUSE

Jill is wandering over to inspect the burnt-up Lazy Boy.

BACK TO SCENE

ANNIE  
Poor Jill. What HAPPENED  
to her?

NATALIE  
I don't know. We've got  
to keep an eye on her.

ANNIE  
Tell her something about  
coming again. Hurry, before  
she starts to go in.

Natalie rolls down her window to speak to Jill.

NATALIE  
Jill -- it was fun. We  
don't get together like  
this enough. Really.

THE HOUSE

Jill is digging thru the rubble like a child. She looks up and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

Come over anytime. I'll  
be here. I've got a lot  
of work to do.

THE CAR

Natalie rolls up the window. Annie starts the engine.

NATALIE

Well -- we all have our  
own concept of "work"  
don't we?

CUT TO:

INT. AN EXPENSIVE DRESS SHOP - DAY

Natalie is browsing among rows of dresses. She picks two expensive dresses and heads for the dressing room. A WELL-TO-DO MAN and a young FEMALE COMPANION enter the store. His eyes meet Natalie's, but she looks away. She disappears into a dressing room with the dresses, and pulls the curtain behind her.

The man stands idly near Natalie's dressing room. He's pretending to look at some jackets. His girlfriend is talking to the SALESGIRL. We see that the curtain to Natalie's dressing room has been LEFT OPEN a bit -- and so does the man.

Through the crack there is plenty to see. Natalie is squeezing into a tight, sequined, off-the-shoulder gown. She primps in front of the mirror, and for a quick moment we see her eyes calmly dart to the man outside. Their eyes meet in the mirror -- and lock.

A pause, and her eyes disengage. Then, brazenly, as if he was never there, she slowly takes off the gown. She pulls the zipper slowly down. The material falls off her shoulders, sliding off her back...

THE COUNTER -- A FEW MINUTES LATER

Natalie is handing the Salesgirl the dresses. The man and his woman friend are just beside her. She is showing him a dress. Natalie doesn't even seem to notice them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I think I'll have you hold these two for me for a few hours, I love them, but I still need to look around some more.

SALESGIRL

Of course, your name?

NATALIE

Corot, Natalie. I'll give you my card.

She hands her a business card. The Man has heard the whole thing. As Natalie leaves, she smiles at the Man's lady-friend.

NATALIE

That looks great on you.

WOMAN

Thank you.

Natalie leaves.

WOMAN

André, I want this one.

And she goes to the dressing room. The Man gets out his wallet. He talks to the Salesgirl in a quiet voice.

MAN

We'll take the dress.  
AND... I'll pay for these other two also -- the ones the young woman put on hold. Do you deliver?

CUT TO:

INT. A SOPHISTICATED RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Natalie enters -- she's wearing one of the new dresses and is looking for someone.

THE BAR

There is the Well-to-do Man from the dress shop. He's got a big, idiot's smile on his face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

André, you sweetheart.

She gives him a hug and demi-kiss on the cheek.

NATALIE (cont.)

(meaning the dress)

You've been very, VERY bad.

MAN

It was my pleasure.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CAMERA ROAMS ACROSS a bookcase containing a perfect collection of "snowballs" - the water-filled glass balls with scenes and shake-up snow inside. The scenes are all miniature domestic idylls, home and hearth, Christmas sleighs and snowmen with carrot noses.

A WIDER SHOT reveals Annie and her fiancé, ALBERT, seated in the living room, talking to MRS. HENLEY, a nervous and proper woman who plans and manages weddings. She is showing the couple her picture book of past weddings.

MRS. HENLEY

And this was a lovely setting,  
the courtyard of a marvelous home  
by the coast. The motif was  
French rococo. The bride arrived  
in a coach and four -- all tiny  
white ponies. It was adorable.

ANNIE

(looking close at  
the photo)

Is that... a dwarf driving?

ALBERT

I think we want something simple  
-- simple and practical.

MRS. HENLEY

Oh, I think you are right. You are  
being so sensible. When a more  
"adult" couple marries, sensible is  
quite, well... correct.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBERT

RIGHT.

MRS. HENLEY

Now here is a sensible... but lush look -- the Benson-Dewhurst wedding last March. Country Club, Episcopal, blush pink on almond were the colors. All tradition and commitment.

ALBERT

That's more our style.

ANNIE

It's pretty.

ALBERT

That's what we want.

MRS. HENLEY

You're a lucky little bride Annie. You've got a man that knows what he wants in life. So few of these new husbands do. They lack direction. Leave it all to the woman.

ANNIE

(knowing she'll  
decide it all herself)

Of course. Honey, there are details Mrs. Henley and I must go over, they'll just bore you.

MRS. HENLEY

Yes, I'm sure that is true.

ALBERT

Well, I don't get into the details, just as long as it's, you know, CLASSY. No midgets. And a good band, you know, plays songs you've heard of.

Albert takes a sip from a drink and Annie looks at him, as if she were looking at the man for the first time. Albert's sip is now in SLOW MOTION. He seems like a stranger to her, swallowing the drink, taking the glass from his lips, smiling, his eyes blank, benign, empty.

CUT TO:

INT. JILL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

BLACKNESS -- and a familiar WHIRRING SOUND. Then a SLOW PULL BACK to reveal a stark WHITE LILLY against the blackness. Then FURTHER BACK, revealing HUNDREDS of lilies set against the black walls of Jill's dining room. Jill is arranging the lilies in a variety of vases, jars, and coffee cans like a strange, sad art project..

On the floor, the SHOT FOLLOWS a snake-like orange extension cord -- leading to a whirring blender and a bottle of tequila. Natalie and Annie are sitting on the floor, watching Jill and the lilies.

JILL

Aren't they pretty?

They don't know what to say. Natalie stops the blender and pours out the frozen liquid into three plastic tumblers. Jill joins them.

JILL (cont'd)

I had a dream about white flowers. You can see them better against a black wall. Like you see them for the first time. It's like a show, an opera. Hey, that's an idea...

She jumps up and hurries into the living room. Annie looks at the flowers.

ANNIE

They ARE pretty.

MUSIC STARTS, the overture from an Italian Opera. Jill is back, and sits next to her drink.

JILL

I started liking opera.  
It's big. I like big things.

(she takes a sip)

I don't care if I don't understand  
what they are saying.

NATALIE

It's all about ill-fated  
love affairs.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ANNIE

Albert took me to the opera  
once in New York. We left  
at intermission.

NATALIE

I know opera puts the right kind  
of man in the mood. I remember a  
cardiologist from Denver. God,  
what that music did to him. You  
know that emerald bracelet I  
have? Opera got me that. I  
remember how he would cling to me  
-- like a drowning man. Some men  
like to feel doomed -- they love  
to tell you that you are their  
salvation. And heavens! --  
aren't they grateful for that  
salvation!

Jill finds it funny, laughing like a little girl would at  
her big sister.

ANNIE

I just can't believe you sometimes  
Nat. Listen to yourself. You revel  
in this darkness you harbor about  
men and women and love.

NATALIE

So? What's wrong with it? I just  
like men as they are -- I don't  
imagine that I am going to change  
them. I know how men think. It's  
not such a big mystery, after all.  
God knows they have to be good for  
something -- it might as well be  
getting what I want.

JILL

What about love? Men are good  
for that.

NATALIE

What on earth makes you think so?

JILL

I think everyone should fall in  
love. REAL LOVE -- all the  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL (cont'd)  
things we believed when we were  
girls. Every stupid fantasy.  
That's what we used to want, right?  
You're in love, aren't you Annie?

ANNIE  
(hollow, but bravely)  
Yes. And Albert loves me.

NATALIE  
Oh shit.

ANNIE  
NATALIE...

NATALIE  
Oh, come on Annie, it's all in  
your script -- the master plan -  
- I had one too. So did Jill.  
Right, Jill?

JILL  
(finishing a gulp)  
Hooray for the script.

NATALIE  
And look where it got her -- she's  
roasting her husband's easy chair  
and painting the walls black.

ANNIE  
Stop being hurtful.

NATALIE  
Just be perfect, look perfect,  
fall in perfect love, marry a  
perfect man, make perfect  
children.

ANNIE  
What is wrong with that? What  
is wrong with wanting the best  
for my life?

JILL  
It's great, if it were only to  
happen in real life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I'm all for wanting the best.  
It's just that... it's just if  
you start handing over your  
dreams to a man -- I mean  
they're MEN, they'll drop it, or  
loose it or step on it.

Men are like horses, big and strong  
and scary. But you put a tiny bit  
in a horse's mouth and you can  
CONTROL the thing. They will take  
you where you want to go. They jump  
over fences for you. You just have  
to find out how to get the damn  
thing in their mouth -- it's easy  
from there.

ANNIE

And you learned all of this?

NATALIE

I remember I was only fifteen,  
working as a secretary in this  
little landscaping company. I'd  
had boyfriends.

JILL

...and when Natalie says she's HAD  
boyfriends you can bet she'd HAD  
them...

NATALIE

Thank you Jill... ANYWAY, the  
owner had a "thing" for me. Had  
a wife and baby too, but he was  
kinda cute -- just kinda -- and  
well, what can I say?

Anyway at this point I was still  
scared of men -- with my father,  
and all that shit, and hadn't left  
home yet. But on this day, I  
remember, it was closing time and  
everyone was gone but this guy and  
me and I'm filing some papers and  
I hear him sneaking up behind.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)

I know what's coming of course -- I mean, when they plan to make their move you can see it a mile off -- and the guy had been practicable dribbling down the front of his shirt all day. Even at a stupid fifteen years old I could see it coming.

So, just as he is about to do whatever he had been planning for a week to do, I accidentally drop the papers, I'm so nervous, and instinctively bend over to pick them up.

So I'm wearing this short, ugly mini-skirt, bent over, my ass sticking in the air, scared to death and I hear this "uhhhh" sound come from this guy two feet behind me. This GROANING thing.

JILL

EEwwwww....

NATALIE

Really! But that moment changed my life. A pimply-faced fifteen year old bends over in a short skirt and immobilizes a grown man. I never had such a feeling of POWER before in my life. Something CLICKED in my head. I mean I KNEW. I slowly went on picking up the papers, shifted my ass a bit and said, "Tommy, is that you?" I didn't even know a Tommy. This guy's name was Harry or Hank or something. Then I acted real surprised when I turned and saw him.

I knew I was the boss then -- I mean he was a MAN, a GROWN-UP  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)  
MAN, with a stubble beard and credit cards and cars and a house -- the kind of man who had always told me what to do and made me feel worthless and suddenly he's begging.

ANNIE  
Typical.

NATALIE  
We did it on his desk in his office with the cheap paneling and in the naugahide executive chair, rocking back and forth. The next week I got a little Fiat convertible, pale yellow -- brand new. It was a hell of a lot better than filing.

The phone RINGS. Annie and Natalie look at Jill. She takes a long sip from her drink. It RINGS and RINGS. Finally the machine gets it.

JILL'S VOICE  
Sorry. I'll call you back.

Then a BEEP.

RON'S VOICE  
Jill, honey -- you there?  
Jill? JILL? Guess I missed you again.

The girls look at Jill, as she finishes off her drink.

RON'S VOICE (cont'd)  
Anyway, what was I gonna say -- oh, yeah, I think the Simmons deal may be coming together. Anyway I went to this great seafood place last night with a client. Great flounder. I think I will go back tonight. You know, what I say -- you get something that works, stay with it. Lots of free parking too.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON'S VOICE (cont'd)

You know how I hate to pay to park. I mean even when I'm on expense account I hate to pay. So, lots of free parking and good flounder -- fresh, you know...

And his VOICE seems to trail off as we...

FLASH CUT TO:

EXT. A DREAM GARDEN SOMEWHERE IN JILL'S MIND - DUSK

And his WORDS are covered by a HAUNTING MELODY. CAMERA FLOATS AFTER a small girl wandering through a garden. She is JILL-AGE FOUR, beautiful, happy, dressed in a lacy white Easter dress. Looming overhead in the garden are giant, white lilies -- waving in a gentle breeze. Her movements are liquid -- SLOW MOTION. Now, in the distance, in the midst of part of the garden thick with flowers, a hole -- A GRAVE. The little girl walks to the edge, looks in.

In the grave, laying on the cool earth, covered with loose lilies is the ADULT JILL, in a white Easter dress - a serene smile on her face, she OPENS HER EYES, smiles at the girl, reaches out-stretched arms toward her.

The little girl beams -- giggles and jumps in towards her -- floating in SLOW MOTION down to her...

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. JILL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

The SOUND of the phone hanging up. Jill takes a big swallow of her margarita. She smiles.

ANNIE

Jill... How can you NOT talk to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But she's not listening -- she's playing with some lilies in a jar. Natalie looks at Annie -- then at Jill.

ANNIE

Jill...

FLASH CUT TO:

BRIGHT LIGHT, THE SUN -- then, a TUMBLEWEED -- it rolls across the sand until it hits a LIGHT STAND, and reveals...

EXT. THE MOJAVE DESERT - A FILM SET - DAY

There are lights and cameras and trucks and crew. It is the set of a political commercial. A older man in a grey suit, a SENATOR, is standing, ready. He looks ridiculous -- starting to sweat. He's holding pile of sand in his hands.

Natalie is sitting in a director's chair, all legs and sunglasses, watching a video monitor.

ASST. DIRECTOR

Settle -- Roll'em.

A Clapper snaps.

DIRECTOR

Okay, Senator, one more.  
Communicate -- you *believe*  
this... ACTION.

SENATOR

(to camera)

I'm concerned about our water  
resources.

He lets the sand sift through his fingers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR

Concerned that time is running out for the future of our children. That's why I will never stop being a strong voice in the US Senate for our environment.

He sucks. A moment of sickly quiet settles on the set.

DIRECTOR

Okay, cut. Senator, let me review that one, get out of the sun.

And a PA appears with an umbrella for shade. The Director walks back to Natalie. She sighs to herself.

DIRECTOR

The man is so constipated I'll need plastic explosives to unplug him. You're the fuck'n "image consultant" -- I suggest you try to do something.

NATALIE

I'll see what I can do to loosen him up.

She slips off the chair and walks over to the Senator. She straightens his tie.

NATALIE

(softly)

Eddie, you are doing so well. You look great.

SENATOR

Really?

NATALIE

Really. But remember what we talked about -- seducing them?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SENATOR

(whispering)

You said "F"-ing them -- "F"-ing  
the camera.

NATALIE

I might have been that  
tasteless, although it seems  
unlike me. What I meant, was  
making love to them. Having  
your personal power control  
everything about them.

(closer, pressing)

They have no choice but to vote  
for you. They WANT you.

SENATOR

I remember.

NATALIE

You need to see an image in  
that lens -- an image that  
enhances your power -- give  
yourself the mental tool that  
makes you seduce them.

The Senator is staring at the camera lens, trance-like. We  
see HIS POV -- the reflection on the glass in the mattebox  
-- it's Natalie's firm torso he's getting inspiration from  
-- the hem of her dress pulling up her thigh..

SENATOR

I think I've got it.

Her knee touches his leg.

NATALIE

Good. Take 'em -- now. It's  
not about water, it's about  
*winning*.

SENATOR

Got it.

NATALIE

And stand up straight.

She moves over to the camera. Everyone is ready. They  
roll it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENATOR

(firmly)

I'm concerned about our water resources. Concerned that time is running out for the future of our children.

The man is definitely inspired -- and suddenly he's everything Natalie told him he was: powerful, in-command.

Natalie is watching -- pleased with herself. A SHADOW crosses her. She looks. It is a man, MATT KARAN, standing next to her. He's obviously moneyed, impeccably dressed, and absorbed in the scene. His looks are strong, not pretty. He looks like a man who has never had an insecure thought in his life. Natalie can't take her eyes off him. The scene ends.

DIRECTOR

CUT. Excellent Senator.  
We'll keep that one. New deal everybody.

The crew starts breaking it down. The Director walks by Natalie.

DIRECTOR

Whatever you said, it worked.

Natalie smiles, glances at Matt. He notices her attention. She tries the firm, professional approach.

NATALIE

Hello, I don't believe I know you. I'm Natalie Corot.

MATT

Matthew Karan.

He shakes her extended hand. He seems oddly pained by this social chore. Natalie is challenged. She piles on the eye contact.

NATALIE

I'm Eddie's image consultant.

He could care less.

NATALIE

Are you working with Eddie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

Not really.

He finally looks at her. No one speaks. But what is that look in his eye? Natalie can't tell if it's a distant lust or disdain or... fear.

MATT

You will have to excuse me.

And before she can answer, he leaves, gets in a black Jag and drives away. Natalie stands, looking off at the trail of rising dust. She's found her next project.

CUT TO:

INT. STOCK BROKERAGE FIRM - ANNIE'S OFFICE - DAY

CAMERA CREEPS into a plush, but conservatively furnished office. Annie is at a large oak desk, on the phone. It's late, everyone else is gone.

ANNIE

It's trading at eleven and a half now, I'm not sure how much better than that it is going to do. I can put a sell in for you at twelve. Okay, yes... I'll let you know. I've got to run now, Mr. Pissaro, I'm late for a dinner appointment..

CAMERA is CLOSE now, her face is turned away, peering into her terminal. She hangs up, turns... and GASPS.

There stands a MAN -- young, tough. A BIKER-TYPE dressed in leathers, sunglasses, long hair -- smiling. His hunk-factor is out of sight.

He holds out a package. Annie takes a breath -- thank god he's just a COURIER -- not a rapist-murderer. Then he takes off his glasses. He's gorgeous -- in a seedy rockstar kind of way. Annie just stares at him.

BIKER

Sorry to scare ya, no one out front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hands her the package, and a clipboard. She signs, goes back to her papers. He just stands there.

ANNIE  
(dismissing him)  
Thank you.

BIKER  
Sure.

And he turns and leaves.

INT. STOCK BROKERAGE FIRM - RECEPTION/ELEVATOR - DAY

Annie is leaving the empty office, her arms are full of papers, printouts, briefcase and a purse -- not the image of glamour. She looks up and stops.

The Biker is there waiting for the elevator. He sees her.

Determined not to be intimidated, she marches onward. The elevator arrives -- they get on.

INT. ELEVATOR

They stand quietly. He looks at her.

BIKER  
Need some help with that stuff?

ANNIE  
No, I'm fine.

He looks at her, then steps towards her and takes it.

BIKER  
I'm not carrying noth'n.

Annie doesn't protest. She is still nervous.

ANNIE  
Thank you.

BIKER  
I'm DB.

ANNIE  
Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BIKER  
You are Ms. McLaughlin.

ANNIE  
(alarmed)  
How did you know....

BIKER  
Package. I can read.

He smiles. She tries.

INT. THE PARKING GARAGE - DAY

They step out of the elevator.

ANNIE  
I'm parked right here.

She's scared now, she shouldn't be doing this. She unlocks the door of the Mercedes. A distant car HONKS, she JUMPS.

BIKER (DB)  
Calm down, I'm not gonna touch you.

She's embarrassed. He puts the stuff in the back seat.

ANNIE  
No, that's not it, it's just work, too much work.

BIKER (DB)  
So, take it easy. Live a little.

He turns and leaves.

ANNIE  
Thanks.

He doesn't look, just waves a hand. He gets on a big, dirty Harley and starts it.

ANNIE  
(to herself)  
"Live a little."

Annie sits in her car, doors locked, watching him leave. She takes a big breath and starts the car.

CUT TO:

INT. AN EXCLUSIVE BARBER SHOP - NIGHT

Natalie wanders in, she's out of place, uncomfortable, looking for someone. She glances in a mirror -- she looks perfect.

She sees Matt, in a chair. He is being shaved by a BARBER.

MATT

Oh, Miss Corot, thanks for coming. Sorry to have to call you at the last minute. I'm due to leave town tomorrow.

He smiles, he's actually warm and gracious... a switch from their first meeting.

NATALIE

Do you always do business in a barber shop?

MATT

Miss Corot, I do business wherever I can. Besides, I think it's improper to meet a business woman alone after hours. I didn't want to give you the wrong idea. Please sit down.

The only place is the next barber's chair. It makes a nice scene -- her climbing in the chair in high heels and tight skirt. The Barber stops cutting to appreciate it. She settles, smiles at Matt. The Barber returns to trimming Matt's hair.

NATALIE

Please, call me Natalie.

MATT

Okay, Natalie.

NATALIE

I didn't know men got barber shaves anymore.

MATT

I'm hopelessly old fashioned. If you work for me, you'll have to get used to that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

You want me? As a consultant?

MATT

I'm very impressed with the job you are doing with Ed. Nice work. He's an idiot, and well, you've made him more than presentable.

NATALIE

I guess that's a compliment.

MATT

Certainly, I'm quite impressed by your skills.

And Natalie exercises one of those skills by slowly uncrossing and re-crossing her legs -- BOTH men notice this time.

NATALIE

I'm booked up for this season, Mr Karan. Besides, I'm not sure you are in need of what I do.

That does bring a slight smile from Matt, but he plows on.

MATT

Oh, it's not for me, it's for a couple of boys I'm bringing up. One I think can be a congressman in a few years. And I'll make it worth your while.

NATALIE

I wouldn't have it any other way.

She puts her best steam into it -- followed by a long, defiant look. But it doesn't quite work -- she just can't get Matt to flirt back. He must have armor plating on. The Barber however, is going to need a long, cold shower -- he coughs nervously.

NATALIE

You are awfully young to be a well, whatever you are.

MATT

I'm pushing forty. Not so young.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Not so old.

MATT

My office will call you, you  
won't be seeing a lot of me.  
But I'll be keeping up with your  
work. These men are bright, and  
you will do well with them.

There's a pause. Natalie's at a loss, this isn't going the  
way she thought it would. A cellular PHONE RINGS, he  
answers it.

MATT

Yes. Hold a minute.

(excusing her)

Thanks for coming. You're good.  
REALLY good.

And he smiles blandly, obligatorily -- the kind of smile  
Natalie has given a thousand men. She's being dismissed -- a  
first. He returns to his phone call.

CLOSE on Natalie as we...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP, a doll's face, a familiar one -- it's BARBIE.

A BLACK WALL, and flowers, WHITE ROSES against it this  
time. It's clear now that we are in...

INT. JILL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Jill, Natalie and Annie are all gathered as before, the  
trusty blender is there too, it ROARS to life.

NATALIE

Malibu Barbie's Dream House... I  
can't believe you found Malibu  
Barbie's Dream House. My Mom  
gave mine to the Salvation Army.

And there on the floor, next to a bottle of vodka is a  
spread of Barbie-ism that boggles the mind. Barbies and  
Kens and Skippers galore.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ANNIE

What do you do with all of these Barbies?

JILL

Make up stories. Love stories.

NATALIE

And somehow, Ken always ends up loving Barbie.

JILL

Lets face it, Ken is the perfect man. Polite, does what he's told, honest, true, generous... he LIVES for Barbie.

Annie turns off the blender, pours the drinks.

ANNIE

Not quite perfect, no penis.

NATALIE

My, my, Annie, have we learned a new word for today?

Annie smiles, tips her glass their way.

JILL

Something you would like to share with the class?

Annie takes a long drink -- it's obvious that it's not her first.

ANNIE

I humiliated myself yesterday.

JILL

Oh, really? What did you do?

ANNIE

I lusted massively. At the office. After a BIKER guy -- a kid.

NATALIE

Who was he?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

A messenger, a stupid courier.  
Brought me a package, long greasy  
hair, he was disgusting.

JILL

He came on to you?

ANNIE

Kinda, not really. Uh... I  
think I came on to him.

NATALIE

(mocking)

ANNIE, you *slut* -- you are  
almost MARRIED. Do you think  
poor Alvin even...

ANNIE

ALBERT.

NATALIE

ALBERT. Do you think poor  
Albert even LOOKS at women?

ANNIE

Oh shut up. Not everyone thinks  
like you Nat.

JILL

Annie, come on, was this guy  
exciting?

ANNIE

Well... YES. nothing like  
Albert. This kid was, well...

(smiles)

...different.

NATALIE

Different is nice.

Jill looks at Natalie, smiles and gives her a little wink --  
the kind only girl-friends can give each other. Natalie  
takes a long drink.

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S CONDO/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Natalie is putting night cream on her face. She is dressed for bed. The PHONE RINGS.

INT. A PHONE SOMEWHERE - NIGHT

We see a man's mouth, too close to tell who it is. Natalie's voice answers.

MAN'S VOICE

Roll down your car window a  
half inch, tonight -- I have  
a gift for you.

BACK TO NATALIE

NATALIE

Who is this?

MAN'S VOICE

Who do you think it is?

She pauses -- saying the wrong name could cost her.

MAN'S VOICE (CONT)

It's Matt Karan. Just do as I say.

And he hangs up.

NATALIE

Matt?

Natalie puts the receiver down and frowns. She doesn't like games, especially when it isn't her game.

THE COUCH

She curls up in the corner -- tries to read a magazine. She'll be damned if she'll let some man manipulate her. She stares at the page -- she can't concentrate -- she throws the magazine on the floor and gets up.

THE BEDROOM

She takes off her robe and crawls into bed.

NATALIE

What kind of cornball bullshit is  
that anyway -- Roll down your  
window" -- PLEASE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns out the light.

EXT. NATALIE'S CONDO - THE BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT

It's DARK. A BEAT -- then the bedroom light switches ON.

EXT. NATALIE'S CAR - NIGHT

She's cursing herself, slipping out to the car -- a vintage red corvette -- in her bathrobe and tennis shoes. She rolls down one of the windows a bit and slams the door shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATALIE'S CONDO - DAY

It's just past dawn. The door opens and Natalie looks around. No one is watching, she slips out, hidden behind her sunglasses, scarf and coat.

THE CAR

She opens the door, there is an envelope on the seat -- brown, common, wrapped with red ribbon.. She rips it open, two dozen loose pearls spill out into the seat. She smiles... a nice touch... there's a microcassette too, she unfolds the note. It says: "PLAY ME".

INT. NATALIE'S CONDO/THE BATHROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a drawer, she's digging through it. There in the back is a microcassette recorder. She pops in the cassette -- plays it -- the raspy, deep words echoing off the bathroom tile.

MATT'S VOICE

This is all a little scary  
isn't it?. I think we both  
are in for a ride... This  
feeling of *falling*. It's  
like a sweet, dark dream --  
a mixture of desire and fear  
and passion.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT'S VOICE (cont'd)

I have to tell you that it is not your beauty that has started this. Don't doubt that I know how gorgeous you are. Your face and body haunt me. I can't close my eyes without them nesting in my brain and torturing my sleep.

But your beauty is just a door to the wonders behind your eyes. I can only just glimpse that stage inside your head -- and dare to imagine the dramas we could act out there together. I can feel myself slipping away...

Lost. It's the only word I can use to describe where I am, and where I want to be. I'm lost now, because passion is only a memory in my life. Until you started filling up my dreams.

Lost is where I want to be -- lost inside you. I wake up in the middle of the night -- confused, a wreck -- dreaming of losing all of my senses with you -- giving up everything -- losing all sense -- swirling into a vortex of passion and lust and love and awe for the flame that burns so brightly inside you.

I know you Natalie -- I may know you better than you know yourself. You are greedy like me. You want it all -- to drink all the clean and good and fearful and dark parts mixed together -- we are both starving for that sweet drink. The thought of sharing its sweetness with you keeps me alive.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT'S VOICE (cont'd)

There is an address on the back of the note. Be there at one o'clock. Give them your name, the rest will happen.

Oh, one more thing, I'd cancel all of your appointments for this afternoon... and tonight.

Then nothing. Natalie stares at the recorder for a long moment -- standing in her bathrobe, leaning against the bathroom counter.

NATALIE

Asshole.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN EXCLUSIVE JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Natalie pulls up, looks nervously around as she walks in - she's HATING this. She's dressed in a tasteful -- but not TOO tasteful wool suit that fits her like a glove.

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

She's nervous, but the old pro in her takes over as a young SALESCLERK approaches. His eyes slip up her body before meeting hers.

SALESCLERK

Can I help you?

NATALIE

I'm Natalie Corot.

SALESCLERK

Yes...

His blank face scares her for a moment, then it registers.

SALESCLERK (CONT)

Oh, yes -- MS. COROT -- let me get the manager.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INT. A VIP VIEWING ROOM - DAY

She's ushered into a special viewing room, all leather and pinpoint lighting. A MANAGER appears, so overly gracious you would think his life depended on it. He gives Natalie an exquisitely gift-wrapped package and a ribboned envelope like the one she found on her car seat.

MANAGER

Mr. Karan picked this out himself.  
I'm sure you will adore it.

NATALIE

(a wry edge)

No doubt.

MANAGER

And the pearls, were they  
satisfactory?

NATALIE

Excuse me?

MANAGER

The loose pearls, were they  
what you needed?

NATALIE

Oh yes, fine, exactly what I  
needed -- just the way I  
like to start the day.

MANAGER

How would you like them,  
mounted, a necklace? A  
broach?

She takes the envelope with the pearls out of her purse and hands it to him.

NATALIE

Surprise me.

He leaves her alone with the package. Being the kind of girl she is, she opens the package first. Inside is a big, icy sapphire ring, circled in diamonds. She slips it on her finger, it looks wonderful.

She opens the note, another microcassette is inside. The note reads: "Ride the Limo".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EXT. THE JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Natalie walks out looking towards her car.

THE CAR

And next to it, the longest white limousine Natalie's ever seen.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIMO - DAY

Natalie sits demurely in the wide expanse of leather seat. She has to admit that she's enjoying it all.

THE DRIVER

He's huge, stoic. His eyes dart back at her through the mirror. She gives him a smile.

NATALIE

Where am I going?

DRIVER

Sorry, Miss, I can't say.

This seems to oddly please Natalie. She holds up the microcassette and gives it a little wave.

DRIVER (cont'd)

Drawer to your left, Miss.

Natalie opens a small drawer, there is a microcassette recorder. She puts the cassette in.

MATT'S VOICE

Welcome to my little tour. Life  
can be fun when it's  
unpredictable, can't it?

I'm sure you are aware by now that  
I have an advantage on you dear --  
you know almost nothing about me,  
but I know more about you than you  
can imagine. Like your thing for  
sapphires. And a lot more as well  
-- but we'll get to that later.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

Then nothing. Natalie tosses the recorder on the seat.

EXT. THE MUSEUM OF ART - DAY

The limo pulls in front of the museum. The driver opens the door for her, she steps out.

NATALIE

And... Now what?

The Driver hands her another envelope. She tears it open.

It reads:

SEE THE RENOIR,  
MADAME HENROIT.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MUSEUM - FOYER - DAY

Natalie is asking a guard where the painting is. He points down a corridor.

INT. THE MUSEUM - IMPRESSIONIST GALLERY - DAY

Natalie walks up to the painting and stares at it. Something seems to strike her.

CLOSE, THE PAINTING

It's lush and romantic, a simple portrait of a woman in a white dress. The shape of her face, the attitude of her head, the sensuality and sadness and longing -- it's a perfect image of Natalie herself.

NATALIE

CLOSE, the CAMERA CREEPS IN on her -- she's holding her head the same way as the girl in the painting. We see the resemblance. A firm, familiar male voice startles her.

VOICE

You can get lost in it,  
can't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's Matt. He smiles. He looks wonderful. Natalie's first impulse is to fall into his arms. She resists, letting her eyes do it instead.

NATALIE

Hello.

MATT

(to the painting)  
I'm in love with her. For years. When I was broke I would come here every day.

NATALIE

In love with a painting?

He looks at her, he seems embarrassed. Not at all the Matt she met in the barber shop.

MATT

You think it's stupid.

NATALIE

No I don't.

CLOSE on the painting -- the girl's face.

MATT

She's so alive. There is something in her eyes. He's a genius.

NATALIE

Who's a genius?

BACK TO SCENE

MATT

Renoir.

She scans his eyes -- there's sincerity there.

NATALIE

You really LIKE art.

MATT

Yes, why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I know a lot of men who talk  
art, or buy it because  
they like to own things.

He looks at her.

MATT

I guess beautiful things  
fascinate me.

NATALIE

We all want things that  
don't really exist.

MATT

Do we?

NATALIE

I think so...

MATT

Does that go for you too?

NATALIE

I've found it is more fun to  
be wanted.

MATT

But it must get old.

NATALIE

I don't know. There are  
worst things.

MATT

We should all "want" something too.  
Tossing and turning in bed, not  
being able to sleep... To have the  
thought of something wonderful hold  
you captive. You feel helpless,  
and very ALIVE.

It would be a shame to live your  
whole life without losing sleep  
over anything.

He's poking a little too close to home. Natalie turns her  
attention to the painting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE, THE PAINTING'S FACE

She gazes out at us from the canvas as we:

CUT TO:

INT. AEROBIC DANCE STUDIO - DAY

It's full of women waiting for an aerobic class to start. Annie is on the floor near the front stretching out, wearing color-coordinated workout clothes.

A man comes and sits on the floor in front of her. He's young and built -- she can't help but notice the muscles in his back move as he stretches out. He bends himself over a leg and turns towards her. He looks straight into her eyes. It's DB -- the biker kid -- and he doesn't seem too surprised to see her. He smiles and continues to stretch out. Annie is turning red.

LATER

LOUD MUSIC - The class is doing slow reps with hand weights. Annie's eyes are on DB in front of her, she's in a kind of rhythmic daze. His muscles moving, pumping, tight, swaying. She looks up, into the mirror in front and sees him. He's watching her, watching him. He smiles. This time, she smiles back

EXT. THE GROUNDS OF AN ESTATE - DAY

It is dusk as the limo drives through the grounds of a impressive estate. Horses graze in green pastures.

The car stops in front of the main house -- a gigantic mock-French chateau. Matt and Natalie get out of the limo as a Butler opens the door. Natalie is clearly impressed but is doing her best to maintain her attitude.

NATALIE

All this yours?

MATT

(laughing)

Oh, no. Rented. Just think of it as a big hotel suite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Rented?

MATT

Just for the night.

NATALIE

Like I always say -- "Go big or go home".

MATT

I like that saying.

NATALIE

Not that this isn't making an impression -- but isn't all of this a little fast? I mean the last time I saw you you acted like I didn't exist.

He only smiles, takes her hand and leads her inside.

INT. CHATEAU/FOYER - DAY

It is opulent, all marble and antiques. They walk up the stairs, Matt still leading her by the hand.

A DOOR TO A ROOM

Matt opens the door. It's a bedroom, all lace and candle-light. There are several hundred lit candles and dozens and dozens of gladiolus in crystal vases. The centerpiece of the room is a huge four poster bed, piled high with pillows.

NATALIE

My, it's lovely Matt. And a BED, how surprising...

She looks straight into his face, unblinking -- she's ready. But there is a glint in his eye, and not the kind of glint she's expecting.

MATT

I thought you would like to change for dinner.

NATALIE

Change? Into what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

A dress. In the wardrobe.

She's close now, and tries an old line.

NATALIE

I think you are trying to  
spoil me.

His face is buried in her hair now, he's breathing her in.  
His hand slides across her hip, pulling her tight.

MATT

Right.

And with that he kisses her on the cheek and steps back.

MATT (cont'd)

See you downstairs.

And he leaves, closing the door behind him. Natalie is left  
staring at the door, and catches herself breathing heavily.

NATALIE

I wonder what's for dinner.

INT. THE BEDROOM - THE WARDROBE

CLOSE as the doors are flung open -- alone in the closet is a  
lush reproduction of a 19th century gown -- just like the one  
in the painting at the museum. She pulls it out, holds it up  
to her body, looks in the mirror and smiles to herself. She  
looks herself in the eye, wondering. She tosses the gown on  
the bed and un-zips her dress.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE AEROBICS STUDIO/STREET - DUSK

Annie is leaving, walking to her car.

At the curb in front of her is DB, sitting on his bike in his  
sweats, drying his damp hair with a towel.

She hesitates, thinks about turning around, but keeps walking.  
She walks past him, silently. He says nothing -- just  
watches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AT THE CAR

She gets to her Mercedes, flicks the alarm and opens the door. As she does, DB glides over to her on his bike. He smiles.

DB

Wanna go for a ride?

ANNIE

I don't think so. Thanks.

DB

You do. Just get on.

She hesitates for a moment. She looks around. Then -- as if a dam breaks -- she climbs on the bike, and wraps her arms around him. He goes -- ROARING off.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHATEAU - A STAIRCASE - NIGHT

A tiny bare foot on the marble stairs -- then the hem of a antique petticoat -- then a SLOW PAN UP, past yards of rustling fabric and the tiny cinched waist and the elegant cleavage -- to Natalie's face -- nervous, searching for approval. The tables are turned.

At the bottom of the stairs, Matt waits, he's dressed in period evening clothes that match her dress. He looks great. It's fantasy time. She glides into his arms. She waits to be kissed, it doesn't happen.

MATT

You are beautiful.

She knows. She shows him the ring.

NATALIE

The ring is gorgeous -- but it's just too much, I mean it's wonderful...

MATT

Please, it's a gift. It doesn't obligate you in any way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles at this, jewelry was *invented* to obligate women.

MATT

And your pearls, they made a necklace for you.

He produces a string of pearls.

NATALIE

They are lovely.

MATT

Can I put them on you?

She smiles, turns around and pulls up her hair. His lips skim across her neck as she bends her head down. Natalie inhales deeply. He fastens the pearls.

MATT

There. Hungry?

NATALIE

Yes.

But first he touches her, one hand under her chin, pulls her to him like a magnet. Then a hand on her back, a finger slowly sliding down her spine. His hand comes to rest under the curve of her backside. He pulls her hips to his. And a kiss -- slow and soft.

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

There in front of a roaring fire, a spread that includes a small banquet, champagne on ice and piles of pillows.

He leads her into the room, STRING MUSIC STARTS. It's not recorded. There are four seated figures in the dark corner - a real STRING QUARTET, all men, playing Mozart. She peers at them -- they're BLINDFOLDED.

NATALIE

This is TOO weird.

Matt pauses, smiles.

NATALIE (cont'd)

Lucky for you, I like weird.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

They settle on the pillows, across from one another. He pours the champagne.

NATALIE

(coily)

So Mister Karan, Tell me a little about yourself and which third world countries you control.

MATT

(pouring champagne)

I'll have my girl fax your girl my balance sheet.

NATALIE

I don't mean to be rude. It's just that this is a HELL of a date.

MATT

Thank you. I was inspired.

NATALIE

You aren't easy to figure.

MATT

You want to know what I'm after.

She moves to him, spreads out on a bed of pillows, looking up. She tilts her head back, eyes closed.

NATALIE

I figured out what men were after a long time ago.

And she's ready to give it to him. Her body shifts anxiously. Matt leans over her. His face close to hers.

MATT

Maybe most men. I'm not most men.

NATALIE

Hallelujah for that...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He kisses her, almost shyly, like a nervous boy kissing the homecoming queen. Natalie is beyond such subtleties, she pulls him down on top of her. He kisses her neck and her gaze slips to the Quartet.

THE MUSICIANS

They have a very good idea of what is going on -- the MUSIC SPEEDS UP.

CUT TO:

INT. A ROUGH BEACH APT. - NIGHT

Different MUSIC, A THROBBING METAL BEAT. CLOSE on a woman's hand, perfect nails, running up a man's blue-jeaned leg -- up to a rock-hard stomach and hairy chest. It's ANNIE -- she's all over the Biker kid. They kiss. He pulls her down on top of him. She struggles, pulls away, stands over him, and smiles as she takes off her expensive dress. He pulls her down on him, flips over her on top. Like a cat he's at her, pulling her panties off. CAMERA glides into her face as he lowers himself on her. And her eyes roll back as she lets out an exquisite, low-down MOAN...

CUT TO:

TNT. THE MANSION/FIRESIDE - NIGHT

Matt is letting himself go, kissing Natalie's chest. Natalie is holding his head. He stops, looks into her eyes -- can this really be as important to him as it seems? He's trembling as he kisses her. Natalie can't wait anymore. She moves like a cat, flipping him over. Now she's on top, taking charge. She looks towards the blindfolded musicians. Their excitement charges her. She looks down hungrily at Matt, and smiles. She unbuttons her dress, the firelight dancing off her skin. She touches herself - her eyes boring into his. Matt looks at her. Something's wrong. He pushes her off.

MATT

Please.

Matt gets up, switches on a lamp.

MATT

Gentlemen, hold on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MUSIC STOPS.

MATT

Can I talk to you in the  
hallway?

She covers herself up.

NATALIE

What's wrong?

He says nothing, just walks in the other room. She looks  
at the orchestra, just sitting there... and follows him.

INT. THE HALLWAY - NIGHT

NATALIE

What's wrong?

MATT

I didn't like the way you were  
acting.

NATALIE

Oh, really?

MATT

You are conning me. Everything  
is a con to you isn't it?  
Emotion is a con. Affection.  
Sex. You are working me over. I  
can spot it. I've seen it all my  
life.

She glares at him, then turns and walks. He roughly grabs  
her arm, looks into her eyes, unflinching.

MATT

This isn't about getting laid  
Natalie. It isn't about  
conquest. I'm not so sure it is  
about anything that you CAN  
understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Natalie's un-nerved, shaking. We've never seen her like this.

NATALIE

I don't allow men to speak  
to me like this. I won't  
allow it.

MATT

You want to know what this is  
about? It's about finding the  
person you've looked all your life  
for. I have this stupid idea  
that it could be you.

And what's scary, is that he *means* it. He heads for the door.

MATT (cont'd)

Stay the night, it's paid  
for.

We hear the DOOR SLAM. Natalie is re-gaining control -- a deep breath -- and she calmly finishes buttoning her dress. She looks at the sapphire ring on her hand, and shrugs.

CUT TO:

INT. JILL'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE, a TV screen -- on it is a scene from WUTHERING HEIGHTS, Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon are in love, on top of the craig.

CATHY

Make the world stop right  
here. Make everything stop  
and stand still and never  
move again.

Make the moors never change  
and you and I never change.

HEATHCLIFF

The moors and I will never  
change. Don't you Cathy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PULL to reveal Jill, watching, sprawled on the floor with a pile of pillows.

CATHY

I can't. I can't. No matter  
what I ever do or say Heathcliff  
-- this is me, now, standing on  
this hill with you. This is me  
forever.

Jill pushes a button on the remote control. The laserdisk  
rewinds and re-plays.

CATHY

No matter what I ever do or say  
Heathcliff -- this is me, now,  
standing on this hill with you.  
This is me forever.

Jill keeps rewinding and playing. The CAMERA inches closer  
and closer, CUTTING from the TV, to Jill to the TV and back.

CATHY

No matter what I ever do or say  
Heathcliff -- this is me, now,  
standing on this hill with you,

(rewind)

No matter what I ever do or say  
Heathcliff  
-- this is me, now,  
-- this is me, now,  
-- this is me, now, standing on  
this hill with you. This is me  
forever.

Natalie enters from the kitchen. She looks like shit. She  
gulps a fresh drink.

NATALIE

We ARE NOT watching this again.  
You always cry.

JILL

Everyone cries at this movie --  
except you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I may start today.

She pushes a button. The movie freezes, Cathy and Heathcliff are frozen on the hilltop in eternal embrace. Natalie sits down next to her.

NATALIE (cont'd)

No Annie today?

JILL

No Annie. She left a message on my machine that she was busy with something

NATALIE

That girl has no fun in her life.

JILL

So you get an extra share?

NATALIE

After last night I may retire.

JILL

That good?

NATALIE

Absolutely the weirdest date of my life... and the most wonderful -- AND horrible. I could just stop thinking...

JILL

Natalie -- listen to yourself!

NATALIE

You KNOW. I'm not like this.

JILL

I know. I think it's sweet.

NATALIE

I'm jumpy. This is making me so damn jumpy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

It's okay -- it's just falling in love.

NATALIE

NO. Not that -- I KNOW it's not that. I'm just pissed that he always gets the last word. I can't have that. So I have decided to take my mind off him in the standard way.

JILL

What's that?

NATALIE

Having another man spend a lot of money on me.

JILL

Nice work if you can get it.

NATALIE

I have this man who likes to throw his money around. There are some new dresses at TorchSong. I'll let him throw some of it around it there.

She smiles, picks up the phone and sits in front of the TV. Cathy and Heathcliff are still in eternal embrace. She looks up a number in her book - dials.

NATALIE

André? Natalie. I'm so sorry I haven't been able to return your calls. I've been traveling and so busy. Yes. You HAVE to forgive me.

Me? Fine -- a little bored Really? I have a deadly dull afternoon stretching out in front of me. Oh,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)  
really? You're bored too? But  
you are so busy. You are SWEET.  
I'd love to. ANYTHING? Well, I  
was thinking of going shopping.  
Yes. You could come along I  
guess.

She smiles -- the deal is done. She looks at Jill.

CUT TO:

INT. AN ULTRA-HIP BOUTIQUE - DAY

It's the kind with pinpoint lighting, loud rock music and lots of tiny black mini-dresses. Natalie is there with the well-to-do man who watched her in the dressing room. He's got a lustful intoxication about him, talking in giggly whispers to Natalie. She picks a dress and holds it up to herself in the mirror.

MAN  
It's hot baby. Get it. Get  
them all.

He's close to her, arms around her waist. Natalie snuggles coyly.

NATALIE  
André, you have to come to your  
senses. Can't you see that I am  
just using you?

MAN  
And I adore you for it.

(he pulls her close)  
Bleed me dry.

There's a familiar voice that makes Natalie jump...

VOICE  
That WILL look great on you.

It's the salesperson, a too-cool HIPSTER-type with long hair and sunglasses. Natalie looks, it CAN'T BE, but it is -- it's MATT -- in disguise.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

MATT

(fruity)

Not many women have the body  
to wear something like that.

MAN

This girl does.

MATT

You are so *fabulously* lucky. A  
body like that and a nice friend  
who wants to buy you dresses.

MAN

Buy these too.

MATT

Try them on. You *must* try  
them on.

Natalie smiles, looks at them both. She's game.

NATALIE

Okay.

THE DRESSING ROOM

Natalie is pulling on the dress, it's stuck on her head. She  
can't see. The door opens and Matt slips in behind her.

NATALIE

Hello?

Matt moves on her, his hands all over her. Her head pops  
out of the dress.

NATALIE

You shit. Get away.

MATT

Oh, Natalie, it's YOU.

She laughs. Looks at him in the mirror.

NATALIE

What are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

Like the disguise?

NATALIE

How did you know I was coming here?

MATT

Had people follow you. Paid off the sales girl.

NATALIE

That's too weird. I didn't think I would see you again.

MATT

Shut up.

He kisses her. A real one. Natalie comes up gasping.

NATALIE

You treated me like shit the other night.

MATT

I also treated you well. I had to see you. Forgive me.

NATALIE

This disguise is ridiculous.

She takes off his sunglasses, drops them. Matt slides down to his knees.

NATALIE (cont'd)

I dislike you.

He puts a hand under her dress, lifts it up, high -- presses her back against the mirror. He buries his face deep into her. He stops to look at her.

MATT

I missed you too.

He takes up where he left off. She puts her hands in his long-haired wig -- takes it off, puts it on her head -- the hair cascading over her face. She giggles, digs her fingernails into his scalp as he kisses her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE  
I LOVE shopping.

And as she closes her eyes we...

CUT TO:

THE BOUTIQUE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The Man is waiting still, a little bored -- a little threatened. Natalie appears, finally. She has a proper smile on her face.

NATALIE  
André dear, forgive me. I  
had to try them all on, and  
then I couldn't decide and  
had to try them all on again.  
I love them all.

MAN  
Then I'll buy them all.

He takes them from her and over to the counter. There is Matt, back in disguise, smoking a herbal cigarette.

MAN  
I'll take all of these.

MATT  
Yes sir.

NATALIE  
Thank you.

MATT  
Just let me know when the young  
lady plans to wear these in  
public so I can alert the media.

The Man thinks he's funny.

MAN  
(laughing)  
I like this guy. I like him.  
You're all right.

And we CUT from his laughing face to:

PERFECT FEMININE HANDS

And red, red nails. They are Natalie's. They dig into a fat chinese dumpling and lift it to her lips. We are in a:

INT. A HOLE IN THE WALL CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATE NIGHT

It's the most UN-romantic place in the world; worn formica booths, greasy walls, hard fluorescent light. She glares at Matt as her teeth dig into the dumpling.

MATT

What exactly don't you  
understand? I'm falling in love  
with you.

Matt's self control is visibly un-raveling.

NATALIE

I can't ever get the hang of  
chopsticks. It's too damn  
complicated. Where's a fork?

MATT

Natalie -- listen to me.

NATALIE

DON'T DO THIS! Why can't we  
take it as it comes?

MATT

Natalie. I'm in love with  
you.

NATALIE

(whispering, serious)  
PLEASE don't use that  
sentence. I've HEARD this  
song before. I know what  
kind of man you are -- you  
know what kind of woman I am.  
Don't insult me.

A CHINESE WAITER stops to fill the glasses.

MATT

(to the waiter)  
I LOVE HER.

The waiter smiles at him, looks at her, smiles some more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WAITER

Pretty.

MATT

Exactly. PRETTY. Simplicity  
itself. Very pretty. Perfection.

Natalie wipes her mouth, something vulnerable flashes in her eyes. She believes him.

CUT TO:

INT. THE HALLWAY TO NATALIE'S APT - NIGHT

Matt is kissing Natalie -- she's lost in it, a deep emotional fire. She un-does his tie, her fingernails scrape the buttons of his shirt.

She grabs a button with her teeth, and bites hard. She spits the button on the floor.

NATALIE

Nightcap?

MATT

I have to go. We have an  
early day tomorrow. I have a  
special day planned.

NATALIE

You're not staying?

MATT

Tomorrow is important. Our  
surprise project

NATALIE

You are saying goodbye in the  
hall? Not even coming  
inside?

MATT

Sure.

NATALIE

Is this a Sandra Dee movie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT

Something like that.

NATALIE

Don't you ever run out of surprises?

MATT

Not supposed to. That's not the way I was programmed.

NATALIE

That's what I thought. The "Stepford Man". The perfect robo-date.

She kisses him -- a "change your mind" kiss. She leans towards his ear.

NATALIE

Come. Inside.

Her eyes are telling him everything.

MATT

Eight O'clock in the morning.  
I'll be back.

And he pecks her on the cheek and walks away.

INT. NATALIE'S APT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

She walks into the room. She looks at the bed.

CUT TO:

NATALIE'S SLEEPING FACE - THE NEXT MORNING

A slash of morning light caresses her face. Reveal:

INT. NATALIE'S APT/BEDROOM - DAY

A shadow crosses her, her eyes open, and see a man's dark figure watching her. She's startled and moves to get up, but STOPS with a YANK that leaves her breathless. HER HANDS ARE TIED. The adrenaline is rushing now -- THE MAN IS MOVING TOWARD HER. He's right over her now - and the reflected light illuminates his face. It's MATT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He kisses her rigid arm -- she relaxes -- gasping for air.

MATT

Good morning.

She turns to look at the clock. It reads 5.30 AM. He sniffs at her neck.

NATALIE

I thought you said eight.

MATT

Never believe anything I tell you.

NATALIE

(pulling at the cord)

These are too tight, Dear.

MATT

Hmmmmmm...

NATALIE

How did you get in here?

MATT

I know a locksmith.

He's up now -- rummaging through her closet. It's packed with expensive clothes -- a career's worth of gifts from stupid men.

NATALIE

Can't decide what to wear?

MATT

I'm dressing you today. Like Barbie. Good heavens, look at this WARDROBE. Don't you own a pair of jeans?

He looks her way -- she's still bound.

MATT

Did I forget something?

He drops a handful of clothes and climbs over the end of the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (cont'd)  
I knew I must have had some  
reason for rising early this  
morning.

He straddles her. Her nightgown has a long row of delicate buttons down the front. He takes the top one in his teeth. She's laughing now. He bites it off.

NATALIE  
How do you know every  
thought I have?

He spits out the button. It ricochets off the window.

MATT  
It's easier than you think.

BACK TO THE WINDOW and the continuing giggles of Natalie. MUSIC STARTS, a throbbing, low-down beat. Another button bounces off the glass.

CUT TO:

EXT. A WINDING ROAD IN THE HILLS - DAY

It's still early morning. Matt and Natalie drive together in his convertible Jag. MUSIC CONTINUES. She's watching him. He's enjoying being watched.

EXT. THE STATE HOSPITAL - DAY

The car pulls through the gates. It's institutional drab, and a little oppressive.

Natalie seems a little un-nerved. She studies his face for a clue.

NATALIE  
I don't get it.

MATT  
Relax -- it's fine.  
Really...



EXT. STATE HOSPITAL DORMITORY - DAY

They walk up to the door.

MATT

Just don't act nervous, and  
don't act afraid.

INT. A CHILDREN'S PLAYROOM - DAY

A HEAD NURSE carrying a LITTLE GIRL greets Matt warmly as he and Natalie walk in to the room.

NURSE

Matt, great to see you again.  
And you brought a friend.

Before Matt can answer TWO KIDS run up to him and latch onto his legs.

WIDER -- Reveals a room full of kids -- some are obviously retarded -- others seemingly normal. They all seem to know Matt and are excited by his presence. THREE KIDS run up to Natalie and grab her hands and legs.

MATT

Don't worry. Just give them  
attention. That's all they want.

Matt begins to move through the kids, they cling on him in clumps. They are all starved for attention. He knows most of their names. Natalie panics.

NATALIE

What do I do?

MATT

It's easy, really. Just listen.

A BOY is tugging at her blouse. He holds out a book. Natalie sits down, As if by instinct he and another child crawl in her lap. She starts to read. She glances at Matt.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Matt is holding a child in each arm, kneeling to talk to a very shy girl sitting on a worn-out couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO NATALIE

Her gaze lingers on him -- soaking the image up -- then turns back to the book. She is calmer now. The little girl rests her head on her shoulder.

CUT TO:

CLOSE, DOWNWARD into the swirling vortex of the BLENDER. It's full of purple liquid. A raspberry is dropped into it and it is sucked downward into a mini-whirlpool. There is distant, thumping DANCE MUSIC. Reveal:

INT. JILL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jill, Annie and Natalie are standing around the blender. They are dressed to party. Jill turns it off and starts to pour.

JILL

Fresh raspberry margaritas.

She hands them out. Annie takes a big gulp. She starts to giggle.

NATALIE

Okay. What is it. Something happened.

ANNIE

Oh nothing..

NATALIE

What. What is it.

ANNIE

Albert's pissed. I was gone all weekend and stood him up and didn't even call.

JILL

ANNIE...

ANNIE

Jill. Have you ever been impulsive? REALLY impulsive and... What am I talking about -- you've painted your designer wallpaper black on a whim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

Annie -- what did you do?

ANNIE

Remember the guy, the kid --  
you know, I said I flirted  
with him.

NATALIE

You DID it! I knew it was  
something.

ANNIE

YES...

NATALIE

The weekend? A biker? IN  
YOUR DIOR?

ANNIE

Well, it started in my black  
and grey Issey Miyake and  
ended in a seven dollar T-  
Shirt from Seven Eleven.

NATALIE

And oh, the fun of getting  
from A to B.

JILL

Are you splitting with  
Albert?

ANNIE

WHAT? I already bought the  
wedding dress -- the flowers  
are paid for.

#### JILL'S DINING ROOM

It's a huge party. LOUD ROCK MUSIC, and every nook and  
cranny packed with dancing COLLEGE KIDS. The walls are newly  
painted in a wild variety of bright colors. ALBERT, Annie's  
fiance, is looking around, pushing his way through the  
dancers. He looks completely out of place.

#### JILL'S KITCHEN

The women are giggling together. Albert bursts in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALBERT  
(irritated)  
I've been looking for you.

ANNIE  
(smirking)  
Hi, hon. Wanna fresh  
raspberry margarita?

ALBERT  
No, and I think YOU have had  
enough.

ANNIE  
OHHHH.

JILL  
Oh, come on Albert-person!  
You've got the rest of your life  
to bore Annie to death. Let her  
get a good single-girl party  
drunk out of her system.

ANNIE  
Jill, don't be mean to my pumpkin  
lips.

ALBERT  
(to Jill)  
Does your husband know about this  
little party?

JILL  
In a subconscious sort of way.

NATALIE  
Not having a real good time,  
Albert?

ALBERT  
If I was a dermatologist at least  
I could look for new clients  
here, otherwise, NO. And I can  
tell you, my Annie would never be  
inconsiderate enough to throw a  
frat party in our home. We have  
a bond of trust.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

Oh, that's so sweet...

NATALIE

I like that, "my Annie", kinda like "My Friend Flicka".

ANNIE

(nervous)

Let's dance Albert. Now.

She drags him out of the room towards the music.

THE DINING ROOM

Annie pulls her man into the whirl of dancing bodies. She plows into an energetic version of "the frug". Albert shuffles.

Natalie and Jill are standing at the doorway, watching the dancers.

NATALIE

Where did you find all of these hunky teen guys anyway?

JILL

Talked to a couple of college boys who worked at the paint store -- beer was mentioned and one thing led to another and word got around. It's fun, instant friends. Makes me feel like "The Great Gatsby". Hostess to decadent youth.

Natalie is watching the dancers -- but not really -- her thoughts are elsewhere.

JILL

You seem different.

NATALIE

Oh, It's stupid really.

JILL

No. What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

It's this man. I can't believe  
it -- I'm supposed to see him  
later tonight.

JILL

Is it better or worse?

NATALIE

I don't know. Usually they bore  
me after the first couple of  
days. No matter how it feels  
when it starts -- it always ends  
the same.

JILL

And this one doesn't bore  
you?

NATALIE

Just when I think I have him  
figured out -- he's someone else.  
And he's better and more romantic  
every time.

It's like he has a SPY in my  
brain. He's PERFECT.

JILL

I'm sorry.

NATALIE

There HAS to be something  
wrong with him

They watch the dancers for a beat.

JILL

Nat. Are you in love?

NATALIE

I guess so.

JILL

Do you like it?

NATALIE

I guess I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Two COLLEGE BOYS are watching Jill and Natalie from across the room. Jill sees them, pokes Natalie.

JILL

You have some teen-age admirers.

NATALIE

No, I think YOU do.

JILL

(excited)

How do I do this flirting thing?

I forgot.

NATALIE

Okay, just don't panic -- that's the first rule.

JILL

What do I do? I was always horrible at this. Teach me.

NATALIE

On a scale of one to ten -- how hot do you want it?

JILL

Uh... let's do an eight point five.

NATALIE

Ready? They're looking.

JILL

What do I do???

NATALIE

Okay -- just look at me, look like we are talking about low fat deserts or something. Put your shoulders back -- hold up your chin. Good, that's it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)

Never let the angle of your chin go less than 90 degrees. Show that neck.. Rotate your hips towards me, but keep your shoulders square, facing them. There. Good. Now, slowly turn your head away, SLOWLY now... nod -- like you are agreeing with me -- but turn it deliberately towards him.

"Slowly" is everything. Pick your nose slowly and a man will think its sexy.

WIDER

We see them from the boy's POV. Natalie is still coaching her. Jill's eyes shoot their way. There's electricity.

THE BOYS

The Taller One punches the other with his elbow.

JILL AND NATALIE

NATALIE

Okay, you've got them hooked. Now the fun part is how you play them.

JILL

(keeping her eyes on the boys)

Now what?

NATALIE

SLOWLY now, turn your whole body towards me. Now take the hand toward them -- yes, your hand -- move it very, VERY SLOWLY -- run your fingers through your hair. Start talking to me -- pretend they don't exist. TALK...

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JILL

This makes me feel so stupid.

NATALIE

Keep talking. Of course it's stupid -- but it WORKS.

JILL

Mary had a little lamb. It's fleece was white as snow.

THE BOYS

Are totally engrossed now -- staring.

JILL (O.S.)

And every where that Mary went.  
The lambs were sure to go.

BACK TO THE WOMEN -- THE BOY'S POV

It's happened. Jill has turned into a sexpot. Her hand is slowly running down her thigh now -- Natalie is still coaching her.

AROUND THE ROOM

Half the boys are staring at Jill.

JILL AND NATALIE

JILL

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick...

NATALIE

(rapidly)

Hold it, listen now, here they come. Now, when they talk to you -- look at them as if they are aliens -- you've never seen them before. When one of them asks you to dance -- look him in the eyes for three long seconds. Three seconds. Have your eyes say "no" -- and your lips "yes". Not "sure", or "Okay" or "why not"... only "YES". And say it SLOWLY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The two boys walk up to them. The Short One has a ridiculous grin on his face. The Tall One is wide eyed, nervous.

SHORT BOY

Uh, hey. Howya doin'?

TALL BOY

GREAT PARTY.

Jill turns, gives them the alien look.

SHORT BOY

You feel like dancin'?

JILL

With you?

That hurt. The Tall One gives a little snort. The Short One looks like he might cry.

SHORT BOY

I just wanted to know if you  
want to dance.

A long pause.

JILL

Yes.

Jill leads him into the dancing bodies, she gives a little "help me" look back to Natalie.

The Tall One turns his gaze back to Natalie. He tries to smile. Natalie gulps her drink and takes him by the hand.

THE DANCE

Jill, Natalie and Annie are all bunched together, dancing like schoolgirls.

INSERT - THE ANSWERING MACHINE

RINGING, then it answers. It's Jill's husband.

RON'S VOICE

Jill. Are you there? Jill?

Jill. Are you there? Honey?

CUT TO:

INT. NATALIE'S APT./DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The lights are off. Matt is with her, kissing her. She's backing away from him, making him follow her around the table. Round and round they go. She's coy -- he's silently smiling.

Finally he pounces, cat-like, straight across the table and catches her around the waist. She's laughing -- they tumble to the floor and scuttle under the table. He kisses her -- slow and innocent. She looks him in the eye and caresses his forehead. No games this time -- just real-life intimacy -- two people who need one another.

CLOSE ON HER

NATALIE

I love you.

She holds him tight, for all she's worth.

NATALIE

I've never said that, and  
meant it.

And it seems to almost physically hurt her to say so now. He wraps his arms around her and we,

CUT TO:

EXT. JILL'S BACK YARD - DAY

Jill, Natalie and Annie are sitting on the back deck in their swimsuits, sunning themselves.

ANNIE

Jill, seriously. I mean  
really seriously. There can  
be no naked men at my shower.

JILL

He wasn't going to be  
totally naked.

ANNIE

I will have clients there.

JILL

Okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

Besides, if I were you I would worry about Ron coming home on Thursday and finding his standard of living altered.

JILL

Oh yes. I do need to start thinking about that.

She brings a laugh from the other two. Jill is smiling.

JILL (cont'd)

What if he's dressed like a motorcycle cop?

ANNIE

Ron?

JILL

No, the stripper.

ANNIE

JILL. My future Mother in Law will be there. She thinks I have class.

NATALIE

Annie has done the "easy rider" thing anyway. She might still be sore.

They laugh. Annie's embarrassed -- she covers her face with a copy of the Wall Street Journal.

ANNIE

I wish I had never told you two about that.

NATALIE

Now tell me. Even though this kid was the romantic and sexual highlight of your whole entire LIFE -- I mean, to hear you tell it the earth was scorched afterwards -- you haven't even thought twice since then about marrying Albert?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE

Natalie -- the kid's a COURIER.  
He delivers packages for a  
living. He doesn't own a car.  
Every item of clothing he owns  
can be bought in a sporting goods  
store. Do you understand? I  
want the steady, sure thing.  
Albert gives me that.

NATALIE

Oh, Annie, listen to  
yourself. You talk like he's  
an Oldsmobile or something.

ANNIE

Since when are you the idealist?  
I've waited to get married and I  
know what I want. I've watched  
plenty of my friends plant a  
piece of themselves in a man and  
pray for it to grow. I don't  
want that. I'm fine on my own --  
it's just that I need to add a  
husband to my life.

NATALIE

God, Annie, I may have trouble  
believing in love -- but you are  
an absolute atheist.

ANNIE

I love him -- in a responsible,  
adult way. Albert's not perfect.  
Nothing is.

JILL

Nat's new love is.

NATALIE

No he isn't -- he can't be.

ANNIE

So what is he like?

NATALIE

Well... PERFECT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She starts laughing.

NATALIE (cont'd)

I don't know -- you want a man to be so *much* sometimes. As a little girl you fall in love with the handsome prince in those fairy tales and I guess you spend the rest of your life comparing the real thing to the fairy tale. Then somehow it all gets so twisted -- and then you HATE them all -- because there is not a prince anywhere.

JILL

Until this guy.

NATALIE

I just can't make myself NOT feel anymore. I fought it all the way.

ANNIE

You ARE in bad shape. I have never seen you like this. It's unnatural. You are very, very ill.

JILL

Can you believe it?

ANNIE

It'll wear off.

JILL

Maybe.

ANNIE

You'll get hurt. I know it.

Natalie gets up -- she's uncomfortable talking about her real feelings. She walks into the house.

INSIDE THE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Natalie pours herself a glass of water. She can hear them through the screen door. She takes a blouse and pair of shorts from a chair and puts them on over her swim-suit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE'S VOICE

I'll see you tomorrow at the shower. Remember what I said -- please Jill.

JILL'S VOICE

Okay. Did you see the invitations?

ANNIE'S VOICE

No, I didn't get one.

JILL'S VOICE

Oh, let me get you one. Wait. Natalie, are you in the kitchen?

NATALIE

Yes.

OUTSIDE, THE DECK

JILL

Get Annie an invitation will you? See my writing table -- there are some in the top middle drawer.

THE KITCHEN

Natalie turns towards a small desk. She looks through the middle drawer. No invitations. She pulls open the other drawers and looks through them. Nothing. Finally in a bottom drawer she finds a big stack of notebook paper -- all written in longhand. She leafs through it. No invitations. But something catches her eye. She lifts the stack of the papers out of the drawer and studies them. The blood leaves her face.

OUTSIDE, THE DECK

JILL

Oh Nat dear, never mind. I remember I left them in the bedroom.

She and Annie enter the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE KITCHEN - NATALIE

As she reads the papers -- She seems physically ill.

WHAT SHE SEES: The paper has dialogue written on it. We hear the words in the VOICE of MATT:

MATT'S VOICE  
It's about finding the person  
you've looked for all of your  
life.

FLASHBACK - THE NIGHT IN THE MANSION - MATT

He's talking to Natalie.

MATT (cont'd)  
I have this stupid idea that  
it could be you.

BACK TO THE PRESENT - THE KITCHEN

Natalie is jarred out of the memory.

JILL'S VOICE  
Natalie, Annie's leaving...

THE LIVING ROOM - ANNIE AND JILL

ANNIE  
(calling)  
Bye Natalie. Congratulations.

THE KITCHEN - JILL

NATALIE  
Thanks...

She starts to read again -- confused and dazed.

THE PAPER

Matt's voice drifts in again.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

FLASHBACK - MATT AT THE CHINESE RESTAURANT

MATT

What exactly don't you  
understand? I'm falling in  
love with you.

BACK TO NATALIE - THE KITCHEN

There it is on the paper, the EXACT SAME words. It is all  
crashing in around her. She turns page after page after  
page...

THE PAGES

Page after page of MATT ON PAPER. Notes on how to dress, how  
to act, where to take her, her likes and dislikes, speeches  
written out -- everything.

JILL'S VOICE

Natalie...

Jill walks in the kitchen -- sees her. She knows immediately.

JILL (cont'd)

OH NO. Dear. You aren't  
supposed to find out yet.

There's no trace of deception in Jill's voice. She's smiling.  
Natalie is still in a fog.

NATALIE

What is this? I don't get  
it.

JILL

I love you dear. You needed  
this.

NATALIE

Needed WHAT? What is going  
on? Why were you spying on  
us?

JILL

You needed to fall in love.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I WHAT?

JILL

(proudly)

Fall in love. I wanted to give  
you something IMPORTANT.

NATALIE

You know Matt?

JILL

I MADE Matt.

Natalie just stares at her.

JILL (cont'd)

I created him for YOU.  
EVERYTHING. Just what you were  
looking for. The right car, the  
right suit, ignoring you at  
first, giving you a challenge,  
the note, the pearls, the  
sapphire ring (I'm afraid it  
isn't real) the painting of the  
girl, the house with the  
musicians -- seducing you -- then  
not seducing you -- you know,  
EVERYTHING.

NATALIE

He...

JILL

...is an actor, I hired him.

NATALIE

You hired him? To love me?

JILL

For you to love. It was so much  
FUN, Natalie. And Annie's biker-  
boy was fun too, but not as much  
as you -- YOU were the challenge.  
Oh boy! A toughie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Annie?

JILL

Her biker-boy. I made him too.  
He's really one of those male  
dancers -- you know the ones.  
Don't tell her -- please don't  
tell her. She'll always think it  
was something wonderful.

NATALIE

JILL. How could you do this?

JILL

I know how you think -- you might  
think I don't, but I do. I knew  
I could make this man -- this  
*perfect man* just for you. And  
it worked, at least until today.

Natalie can't speak. She picks up her purse and starts  
digging through it nervously.

JILL (cont'd)

Honey? Are you okay?

NATALIE

You have done something really  
wrong. EVERYTHING? You told him  
to do everything?

JILL

Natalie... -- I thought you would  
get tired of him. Like the rest.  
It wasn't supposed to happen like  
this.

NATALIE

It's like you *killed* him. How  
could you do this. Who asked you  
to do this?

JILL

I thought you were the tough one.  
You know that love is like a  
roller-coaster. It always stops.  
It has to. It would kill you if  
it went on and on and on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

My god -- the man I'm in love  
with doesn't even exist.

JILL

They NEVER DO.

Natalie stares at her -- as if she could shoot her.

CUT TO:

EXT. A MODEST DOWNTOWN THEATER - DAY

Natalie's corvette pulls up to the theater. The marquee  
reads: NOTORIOUS SUSPICION, OPENS APRIL 29TH.

INT THEATER - STAGE - NIGHT

A rehearsal is under way with book. A STAGE DIRECTOR is  
talking to a few ACTORS on stage. There is no scenery, just  
a chair and couch. One of them is Matt, the other, a young  
plain-looking ACTRESS. He is dressed in sweats, looking  
oddly powerless.

Natalie is standing in the back of the dark theater, hidden.  
She's watching.

ON STAGE

DIRECTOR

Top of page twelve. Sandra, you  
are crossing downstage, you feel  
him watching you -- Matt watching  
you. Okay? Matt -- you are  
starting to want her now, you are  
noticing her for the first time in  
a new way. She's changed from  
what you remember, more sexual.

MATT

Uh... page twelve. I thought  
I stay downstage.

CLOSE ON NATALIE

Her worst fears are true. He's just an ordinary man --  
dull and awkward and a little confused -- a shell of what  
he was. The spark was all Jill's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

No -- you're up by the  
couch now.

MATT (O.S.)

Oh yeah, Okay. But do I  
like her here? I mean, am I  
hitting on her?

THE STAGE

DIRECTOR

You are feeling something,  
just a glimmer right now.  
Shall we run through it?

The actors take their places. Matt looks toward the  
director, then at his script, a little lost and unsure.  
Finally he starts.

MATT

(half reading)  
So you are all grown up. And  
now you are in love.

ACTRESS

I don't want your comments

MATT

My comments....

ACTRESS

Your jokes. Snide comments.

MATT

My apartment, my comments.  
You like him, huh.

He's in character now -- the polish that made the old  
Matt is back.

ACTRESS

I love him.

MATT

He's lovable, probably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACTRESS

He is, he isn't -- He is, he  
isn't... what does it matter?

MATT

Are you sure it's not just  
sex?

NATALIE, CLOSE

This is painful. She wants to leave but can't. The voices  
on stage saying awful lines rattle around her head.

ACTRESS (O.S.)

We don't have sex. Yet.

MATT (O.S.)

That's what I mean.

ACTRESS (O.S.)

We will.

MATT (O.S.)

Do you kiss him?

ACTRESS (O.S.)

What do you think?

MATT (O.S.)

I think it seems like  
something you *should* do --  
not something you *have* to do  
-- like eating and breathing  
and scratching when it  
itches. I'd guess he kisses  
like a fish... a carp.

ACTRESS (O.S.)

Accept it. I do love him.

MATT (O.S.)

No you don't. You don't.

ACTRESS (O.S.)

How could YOU know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON STAGE - MATT

MATT

I know. It's my belief, and I have come by this belief by years of observation, that no one in love has ever said to a third person, "I love him or her". The minute you say that to me I know there is a problem.

He crosses down stage to her and kisses her. He pulls her towards him in the same way he pulled Natalie at the stairs that night at the chateau -- one finger trailing down her spine to her rear, then pulling her in tight.

After a long moment, the actress comes up for air. She liked it. The director stops them.

DIRECTOR

Hold it. WAIT. A peck -  
Matt. On the cheek.

MATT

I thought I was teasing her.

DIRECTOR

Yes, with a peck on the cheek.  
And hands off the ass.

MATT

Ahh. I thought it was a BIG  
tease.

The cast laughs. The actress turns red.

NATALIE

Can't stand it any more. She leaves.

EXT. THE THEATER - DAY

She stands alone in the flat light. Her brain is scrambled. People are walking by. If she were an ordinary woman she would cry. She wishes she could.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PARKING LOT BY THE THEATER -- AN HOUR LATER

Natalie is sitting in her car, watching the stage door.

HER VIEW

The door opens and the actors are leaving. Matt is walking with the actress, talking. They part ways casually at her car, not as lovers would. He continues on and gets into a volkswagen. He drives away.

NATALIE

She starts her car and follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CASUAL UPSCALE RESTAURANT - DAY

Matt's volkswagen pulls in the parking lot and parks. He goes inside, carrying some clothes on a hanger with him.

ACROSS THE STREET.

Natalie has parked. She's watching.

INT. RESTAURANT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Matt is a waiter. He delivers two salads to a table, takes out his order pad and turns to a customer reading a menu.

MATT

What would you like today?

The menu lowers. It's Natalie.

NATALIE

Your heart, roasted, with a stake through it.

MATT

Natalie.

NATALIE

Yes.

MATT

I, I'm surprised to see you.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

NATALIE

I guess you are.

MATT

I... uh...

NATALIE

Come on, you can come up with something. I know you don't have a script. Ad lib SOMETHING you shit.

MATT

Natalie, listen.

NATALIE

Say something CLEVER. Something that will SEND me.

MATT

I do have a lot to tell you.

NATALIE

Then say the words.

But none come.

NATALIE (cont'd)

You have no words do you? No words.

MATT

I... I just can't explain it...

NATALIE

You NOBODY! You are NOTHING. A stinking waiter.

MATT

I know what you think. But there is more.

NATALIE

Don't tell me, you LOVE me?

MATT

You are upset. Let's just talk about this later. Give me a chance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She just stares at him -- her eyes tearing. She fights it back.

NATALIE

I *believed* you. Do you know what that means?

MATT

Really, let me call you. I had fun with you

She stands, throws a glass of water in his face. HOLD an enraged BEAT -- then she PUNCHES him -- HARD. He falls back into a table, knocking plates and glasses on the floor. The Manager comes out of the back to see what's going on. So do the cooks. The restaurant comes to a standstill - stoney quiet.

NATALIE

FUN!

She heads for the door. Then remembering, comes back, demurely picks up her purse, and strolls out.

CUT TO:

INT. ANNIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The wedding shower for Annie is in session. About twenty women of varying ages are well dressed and consuming calorically restrained appetizers.

Annie is set in glory among mounds of gifts wrapped in pink, her MOTHER at her right. Jill is there, looking the perfect hostess. Natalie is there too, brooding. The scene has that strange pall of disillusion upon it -- the kind that accompanies most childhood fantasies that finally come true at age thirty four.

ANNIE

Oh, Lori. Thank you, it's lovely.

ANNIE'S MOTHER

I can't believe my beautiful daughter is finally getting married.

ANNIE

Oh, MOTHER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE'S MOTHER

I don't know why they wait so long nowadays -- I may be dead before my grandchildren are born.

JILL

You know Mrs. McLaughlin, men like Albert are not that easy to find anymore. Not like in your day when they shipped them back from the war in boats.

ANNIE'S MOTHER

I just remembered I couldn't wait to have babies. Babies, babies, babies all day long.

ANNIE

MOTHER. It's my shower.

JILL

Oh, your mom is just so proud of you Annie. You are going to be so happy. Marriage is wonderful.

And there is a gleam in her eye as she says it. The twisted irony is not lost on Annie and Natalie. It floats by the others.

ANNIE'S MOTHER

I know, I know, everything will be perfect.

A PHONE RINGS. Someone gets it.

GUEST

Jill, It's for you. It's Ron's brother.

Jill stiffens. She goes to the kitchen. She glances at Natalie, there's a wild, scared look in her eyes.

ANNIE'S MOTHER

Okay, Annie, here is Tara's gift.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Annie opens it. It's crystal.

ANNIE  
Champagne flutes, thank you  
Tara.

ANNIE'S MOTHER  
Oh, they are going to be used.  
Champagne is so romantic.

There is a horrible noise in the kitchen, a CRASH.

GUEST  
Jill... JILL?

THE KITCHEN

Natalie is among the women that push in. Jill is sitting on the floor, as if her legs gave out. A pile of dishes went down with her. The phone is dangling off the counter - swinging.

NATALIE  
Jill... Jill... Are you okay?  
What happened? JILL?

Jill won't respond. She picks up one of the broken dishes and looks at it. Natalie picks up the phone.

NATALIE  
HELLO. Yes... She fell.  
Oh NO -- oh no -- Yes --  
Okay.

Annie and her mother arrive.

ANNIE  
Oh my god -- Jill. What's  
wrong?

NATALIE  
It's Ron. He's dead. A car  
wreck in Ohio.

Jill is on her knees now, trying to gather up all of the broken pieces.

JILL  
I'm so sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

A funeral. It is a weirdly bright and cheery day. Jill is sitting next to Ron's grieving family -- all midwestern good-looking like Ron. She has a blank look on her face. Annie, Albert and Natalie are standing across the coffin from her.

The MINISTER is doing a good job talking about someone he never met.

MINISTER

Ron Turner left behind a loving father and mother, and an older brother and sister. He also knew the deep love of his wonderful wife, Jill -- something some people search for their whole lives. Although I did not know Ron myself, I know that he cared deeply for those close to him.

I know so many of you here are asking yourself why Ron was called from this life, leaving so much behind. There is simply no reason I can give you as to why this horrible thing happened. I can only offer to you the small comfort in telling you that each man is allotted just so many days to live our lives and leave our mark on the world around us. And from what I can tell about the life of Ron Turner -- he left a wonderful mark on the lives of those he loved.

CLOSE ON JILL

She is looking up, watching something -- up in the limbs of a tree. There are two squirrels chasing each other through the branches. Natalie glances at her. Jill is smiling.

CUT TO:

A CHARRED MESS -- It's the remains of Jill's husband's earthly possessions. CAMERA reveals,

EXT. THE FRONT YARD/JILL'S HOUSE - HOURS LATER - DAY

And the rough GRIND of an engine. Jill is sitting on a small back-hoe tractor, just back from the funeral. It says "Budget Rents" on the side. She's attempting to dig a ditch to bury it all. Annie and Natalie are standing by, watching, still in their funeral clothes.

THE HOUSE

A bewildered audience of RELATIVES are looking out the windows. Some are leaving -- sneaking to their cars.

THE TRACTOR

ANNIE

Are you sure they showed you  
how to work this thing?

JILL

I'm figuring it out.

NATALIE

Stop Jill. Really -- it's  
getting wet. Why are you  
doing this now?

JILL

I want to.

ANNIE

Everyone is looking at you.  
I can get Albert to do this.

JILL

(losing it)

I HAVE TO DO IT!

Jill has the thing lurching now -- the claw-arm reaching wildly. Annie and Natalie take a quick step back as the mechanical monster jolts towards them. No one's laughing, but it is weirdly funny -- Jill out of control in her black mourning clothes, digging a giant trench in her yard. It's starting to rain.

ANNIE

Jill, it's RAINING. Come  
inside. Don't be stupid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She ignores her and finally gets the claw-arm to reach out and grab the blackened lazy-boy and drag it unceremoniously into the muddy hole.

THE STREET

A volkswagen bug pulls up. A man gets out, with some kind of foil-wrapped food. It's Matt. He stands bare-headed in the rain and waves.

INT. JILL'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

The house is scattered with clumps of friends and relatives. They are there to give comfort to the new widow, who floats among them trying to get them drinks. Her black dress is splattered with mud from the tractor.

Most of the guests are deeply disturbed by the current state of poor Ron's house -- wild colors slapped over black paint over wallpaper. Furniture pushed against the wall. There are still the remains of a hundred dead white flowers in various coffee cans and vases.

THE KITCHEN

Natalie is sitting at the kitchen table. She has a caged look. Across from her is Matt.

MATT

Horrible what happened to  
Jill's husband.

NATALIE

Uh huh.

MATT

A real shocker. Man...

NATALIE

What are you doing here  
anyway? Why don't you just  
leave?

MATT

I know Jill. She and I  
became good friends. I like  
Jill.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Congratulations. You have a friend.

MATT

You know, you don't think I have any real feelings because of the way it was with us and everything -- but what you don't know is that except at the first, it WASN'T acting. There -- I said it.

NATALIE

And with such panaché, too.

Jill and Annie pass by. They go into the laundry room and close the door.

MATT

I... I'd like to see you again. As just me. You'll like me.

NATALIE

Oh god. Forget it.

MATT

No, really. I can't explain it. You mean something to me. I have never met anyone like you.

NATALIE

RIGHT. Excuse me.

She gets up and goes to the laundry room door and knocks softly.

THE LAUNDRY ROOM

Natalie opens the door gently and steps inside.

Annie is holding Jill. Jill is sobbing. Natalie moves to them, embraces them both. She rests her head against Jill's. She starts to cry.

DISSOLVE TO:



EXT. THE DREAM GARDEN - DUSK

And over the CRYING, floats the same HAUNTING MELODY as before. CAMERA moves through the garden, now wild with overgrown flowers. We push through a bunch of tall larkspurs to reveal a LAWN. And in the middle of the lawn, the GRAVE.

There, looking lost and afraid, is the ADULT JILL, in her white Easter dress. She's alive, but in a daze, sitting on the edge of the grave, her legs dangling in it, pulling flowers out of her hair. She looks straight at the CAMERA, as if it is a person, and the CAMERA responds by turning and running away through the garden -- through another wall of flowers -- once LOOKING BACK to see the frightened Jill all alone at the grave.

ANGLE, JILL as she looks, panicking, after the thing that ran away, and

HER VIEW, of IT running. It's a little girl -- JILL as a little girl, running away. She lost now, gone, with only the swaying of the flower stalks to show that she was there.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JILL'S BEDROOM - DAWN

She's alone in a giant king-sized bed. She opens her eyes. It's quiet.

CUT TO:

EXT. NATALIE'S CONDO - MORNING

Natalie walks out to her car. She's dressed for business. On the windshield is a envelope. She opens it, reads the note inside.

NATALIE  
(reading aloud)  
"I really love you and I  
really want you to be mine  
forever. Give me a chance.  
I mean it. Look behind you."

She does. Matt is sitting on the curb. He gets up and walks to her.

MATT  
Hi, beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE

Listen, I don't know how to tell you any other way than to say FORGET IT. You don't have a chance. What you did was horrible and cruel. It hurt me and I don't want to see you. is that clear?

MATT

If it hurt, you you must have felt something for ME.

NATALIE

No -- it was for something imaginary.

MATT

That was me! It was me. I did it. You love ME. I was the one that kissed you and held you.

NATALIE

You're not him. BELIEVE ME. It's not about looks or a body. Women don't fall in love with that.

MATT

It was me.

NATALIE

Oh yea?

(reading the note  
derisively)

"I really want you to be mine forever. Give me a chance. I mean it."

YOU wrote THAT. The man I felt something for would never write something that stupid and artless. I fell in love with a poet. A fantasy Jill concocted in her twisted, weird mind.

MATT

Okay, so I'm not perfect. I'm not Shakespeare -- I'm HUMAN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE  
NOTHING of him was you. Without  
Jill you are just a -- a MAN.

And she gets into her car, slams the door and takes off.  
Matt has to jump out of the way to avoid being run over.

MATT  
(yelling)  
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

CUT TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING - A TALL DOWNTOWN OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

It's the middle of the work day. The streets are busy. A  
bus passes by.

INT. OFFICE FOYER/ELEVATOR - DAY

Natalie is waiting for an elevator. She is talking to a  
CAMPAIGN EXECUTIVE.

EXECUTIVE  
And his numbers are improving  
among Hispanics and Women,  
twenty five to forty five. We  
have you to thank for that.

NATALIE  
He's doing much better.

The elevator doors open. She enters.

NATALIE  
Thank you Rob.

EXECUTIVE  
Bye.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors close. Natalie is alone except for a single man.  
He turns around. It's MATT.

He flicks the elevator button to "STOP". The elevator jerks  
to a stop. An ALARM SOUNDS. He's taken Natalie by surprise.  
For a moment she says nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes her in his arms -- looks her in the eye -- then slowly kisses her. She gives it a chance -- but nothing. A LONG BEAT, then just,

NATALIE

Sorry.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Natalie exits the building, walking fast. Matt is close behind her. He reaches out and spins her around.

MATT

I'M NOT GIVING UP.

NATALIE

Take my advise.. give up.

MATT

So what do you do now? Never feel anything again? You HAVE to go out with me. You got me fired. You at least owe me a chance to talk to you.

NATALIE

I don't have to do anything.

MATT

But you WILL go out with me. I know you. Underneath all that hard-ass bitch you are kind of real.

NATALIE

You're charming me off my feet.

He smiles some more. Finally she does too -- there is a strong trace of the old Matt in him..

MATT

Just TRY it. You've tried everything else. Every kind of artificial emotional, fix-up

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT (cont'd)

there is. This time no games, no manipulation. Just a DATE -- you know, like normal people have. Dinner and a movie. I'll open the doors -- pull out your chair. Let's start from scratch.

NATALIE

After what you did?. That night in that house when you made me feel like a slut? Those kids at the hospital?

MATT

No, WAIT. That's real. That is REAL -- that's ME. Really. Those kids know me. I go visit them all the time. I told Jill about it and she wanted to use it. I swear. Those kids wouldn't know me if it was an act.

Natalie pauses.

NATALIE

That was you?

MATT

I SWEAR. I'll take you there. You talk to the nurse. Her name is Gloria. Call her.

A long, BEAT. Matt stands there, looking at her. It's just not enough to change her mind.

NATALIE

I'm sorry Matt. I can't. I can't feel it. It's over

MATT

You've got to give me a chance! I'll do something desperate! I'm not joking.

Natalie turns and walks. Matt's so exasperated, he steps backwards off the curb into the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And as he does, BRAKES SQUEAL and a BUS SKIDS TOWARDS HIM -- HE FREEZES. A woman SCREAMS.

Matt uncovers his eyes. The bus has stopped just inches from him. He looks for Natalie. She is gone.

CUT TO:

INT. JILL'S DINING ROOM / A WALL - DAY

Jill's wall, black with a splash of red across it. ROUGH HANDS ENTER THE FRAME, and spread a sheet of flowered wallpaper out over it.

WIDER - TWO WORKERS are re-papering the dining room walls that Jill painted over. It's the same conservative flowered design as before.

CLOSE - A BLACK CUP OF COFFEE, TRAVELING -- It's being carried on a tray with other cups.

ANOTHER ANGLE - THE LIVING ROOM. The girls are together again -- Natalie and Annie are there, sitting not on the floor but on a new couch, dainty with pastel prints.

Jill arrives with the coffee, sets it on the coffee table. Her hair is up, she's dressed in a proper country club style dress. They all take a sip, nothing is said. What CAN they say?

Jill looks off towards the workmen papering the wall. One of them is putting extra effort scraping a chunk of red paint off the wall. Finally Jill speaks.

JILL

I wanted it to be just like  
when he left.

NATALIE

It's pretty.

JILL

It really is. I forgot.

ANNIE

Have you thought about what  
you are going to do? Are you  
going to sell the house?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JILL

Maybe. I can't think very well right now. I might sell it, I might do a lot of things.

ANNIE

If you need any help... financially. We would love to help.

JILL

I can't think, Why can't I think? I don't get it. The patterns are all different.

NATALIE

It's a rough patch Jill. That's what it is. You'll pass over it.

JILL

I didn't WANT him to die. Really. I didn't. I LIKED him. I wasn't planning to leave.

ANNIE

We know, Honey. We know.

JILL

I never told you that I was sorry -- really, truly sorry for... that... your "relationship"... ended badly.

It's clear Annie doesn't have a clue about Matt.

ANNIE

You thought he was "the one"?

NATALIE

Not really. He was -- oh, I don't know -- he just made me feel something. I hadn't done that in awhile. I taught myself not to do it. I was GOOD at not doing it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NATALIE (cont'd)

So he scared the shit out of me -  
- feeling things like that. I  
LIKE the numbness. It's clean  
and neat and organized.

Annie just looks at her. Jill is looking at the floor.

NATALIE

Anyway, I met this new guy,  
he's nothing really, a waiter  
-- but he's been chasing me  
for a while and I don't know,  
he's actually talked me into  
going to dinner with him.

ANNIE

That's great.

JILL

Yes Natalie, that's good, do  
you like him?

CUT TO:

EXT. A SIMPLE ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Natalie and Matt walk up to the restaurant. Natalie seems  
polite, but aloof -- if you didn't know, you would think it  
was their first date. Matt opens the door for her. They go  
inside. We can see through the windows. The hostess seats  
them. Matt pulls out her chair. Natalie sits.

INT. THE TABLE

Matt is talking small talk -- he is charming really -- and  
Natalie smiles. It seems like she is really giving him a  
chance. CAMERA CREEPS IN, CLOSER on her beautiful face, then  
CLOSER AND CLOSER, deep into her eyes. And there, something  
finally RELEASES. There's a warm smile, a LAUGH even. A  
real relaxed emotion.

MATT -- he's goofing off in some kind of off-hand way. He  
smiles back -- he's actually GETTING somewhere... somewhere  
important.

CUT TO:



A FLOATING SHOT

Traveling over worn linoleum floors, scattered children's toys, beat-up institutional furniture. We are in:

INT. THE STATE HOSPITAL/CHILDREN'S WARD - DAY

A group of children are watching TV, FLOATING PAST THEM, past child after child, some severely retarded, CAMERA SETTLES on a DOWN'S SYNDROME BOY, trying to figure out a toy, bored.

He looks up -- something he sees makes him beam. There is Natalie smiling at him. She's dressed casually, relaxed. She opens her arms as she kneels. The boy races into them, overjoyed, and smothers her with hugs. A LITTLE GIRL sees her too, and runs over. Natalie hugs them both, deeply.

NATALIE

Sammy... Hi, how are you?  
Tammy -- hi, sweetheart! Hello  
dear. How have you been? Have  
you been good? It's so nice to  
see you again. Want to go  
outside? Let's go outside  
dear. Come on -- let's go out  
together.

She picks them both up and turning, carries them outside -- into the bright sunlight, and onto the green, green lawn. She walks, and the CAMERA discover MATT, holding a little girl on his lap, reading a book.. She sits next to him, both children crowding in her lap. She takes the book and starts to read.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END

