

ALL THAT GLITTERS

an original screenplay

by

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based on a story

by

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SECOND DRAFT

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FADE IN

Establishing shot. San Francisco, 1964

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

A dark cramped hole in the wall passing as a nightclub.

CLOSE ON MARGUERITE DELASALLE, 28, a beautiful woman warbles out a blues song at the mike. She impatiently snaps her fingers for the band to keep up with her, a nearly impossible feat since Marguerite keeps forgetting the words. She lets out at an expletive, kicks off her shoes and begins again.

PAN the audience. They're growing restless. One inebriated man jumps up.

INEBRIATED MAN
(moving suggestively)
Come on Marguerite...used to could sing.

The crowd laughs at him as....

CAMERA FINDS ANGELA, 11, a child with honey-golden hair and skin to match, inching toward the stage, carrying her baby brother, WHISPER, her mouth moving, her face anxious as she tries to telegraph the lyrics to Marguerite. Her brother, JUNIOR, 10, and sister, CHRISTINA, 9, try to hold her back.

But Angela, clearly on a mission. She hands Whisper to Christina and keeps moving toward the stage. People around her start to clap, urging her on...

ANGELA
I'd rather drink muddy water...

Marguerite smiles down at Angela who's now posed at the stairs, still mouthing the words. Marguerite hoists Angela up on stage and hands her the mike. Angela looks questioningly at her mother. Is she sure? Marguerite nods yes.

Angela turns fearfully to the audience, tightly shuts her eyes, starts to sing, tremulous at first but then she belts.

PAN THE AUDIENCE - who are going wild.

CLOSE ON ANGELA, oblivious. The song has claimed her. Everything else is shut out including...

CONTINUED:

MARGUERITE who watches her child, proud but pained. As Angela sings...

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Marguerite, in a fury, tries desperately to light a cigarette while steering the car and clicking the radio from station to station. Angela holds an open flask, which Marguerite grabs, takes a gulp, then shoves it back at Angela.

ANGELA

Mama, you mad at me about something?

EXT. STORE - NIGHT

Marguerite swerves the car into a parking lot of an all night grocery store. She scrounges around in her purse, hands Angela a few dollars. In doing so, we make out what appears to be a scarf full of works (for heroin) and colored pills.

MARGUERITE

Just get some cereal, something for you
all in the morning. Where's my goddam
money? Get me some cigarettes too.

Marguerite brushes the drug paraphernalia and pills under the scarf, gestures for Angela to go on. Angela hesitates, looks disapprovingly at the scarf and Marguerite, then to the back seat where her siblings turn restlessly in their sleep.

INT. STORE - MINUTES LATER

Angela picks up the cereal, then eyes some doughnuts.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Marguerite unwraps waxy paper and finds nothing but powder residue. She mutters an expletive, then downs a few pills. After a moment, she turns around and adjusts the blanket around her sleeping children.

INT. STORE - CASHIER STATION - NIGHT

Angela pays for the cereal and the cigarettes. The clerk eyes her bulging jacket suspiciously. Angela grins her hundred watt smile. The cashier disarmed by the smile, smiles back.

EXT./INT. CAR - NIGHT

Angela, out of breath, hurries into the car, letting her goodies--candy, chips, doughnuts, juice--spill onto the front seat. She grins at her mother expectantly.

CONTINUED:

ANGELA
(pleased with herself)
Now we can really eat good, Mama.

In a snap, Marguerite hauls off and slaps Angela hard.

EXT. BEACH - DAYBREAK

CAMERA FINDS the children still asleep in the car's back seat, then FINDS Angela and her mother standing near the coastline.

Marguerite, entranced, stares out at the ocean as a distraught Angela pleads with her.

ANGELA
But I don't wanna leave you.

MARGUERITE
(lost in her own thoughts and
the ocean)
It won't be for long, just till...

ANGELA
I won't sing like that again. I promise.
I'll never sing again. We can just stay
together and I can take care all of us.

MARGUERITE
The water is so pure and it has endless
possibilities, just like music. Like my
music used to be. Every note so perfect.

On that, Marguerite suddenly takes off toward the ocean, stripping as she goes.

ANGELA POV:

Marguerite romping in the water and then going under for what seems like eternity.

Angela screams, frantic, runs into the ocean, swims to where she saw her mother go down.

OUR POV:

Angela bobbing up and down, frantically searching the water. Finally Marguerite surfaces laughing. Angela surfaces distraught. Horrified to see her mother laughing, Angela slaps the water hard, nearly knocking Marguerite over. Disgusted, Angela turns and swims toward shore.

INT. BUS - DAY

As Angela's crying siblings press their faces against the bus window, CAMERA FINDS...

AN INK PEN moving slowly across Angela's exposed thigh, inking words set in verse form. The ink pen presses harder drawing, blood on the last word, "Free."

NEW ANGLE

Marguerite stands on the station platform forlornly waving good-bye to her children.

EXT. NEW YORK BUS STATION - NIGHT - DAYS LATER

Angela and her siblings huddle close, clearly unprepared for the New York City cold. They look around for a savior. Finally, a funeral hearse drives up, stops in front of them.

For a moment, no movement from the hearse. Finally, out steps WILLIE, a dignified but fierce looking man in his 70's.

He peruses the children, grunts with displeasure. The siblings step back in fear while Angela steps forward.

ANGELA

Are you our grandfather? Mama said you wouldn't like the way we looked but we're God's rainbow, so don't call us bastards. She said if you have any problem with that, take it up with the man upstairs.

Willie, taken aback for a minute, moves in on Angela.

WILLIE

(looking at her hard)
You're just like her. And I'll be damn if I let you kill me all over again.

On that Willie swings the hearse door open and angrily gestures for them all to get in.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

The hearse pulls in the driveway of a sprawling two story, impeccably kept, funeral home.

CHRISTINE

Are there dead bodies in there? Angela, I don't wanna live in no funeral home.

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

Ssh, it beats living in a car.

JUNIOR

At least the car didn't have bars on the windows.

Whisper starts to whine. Angela protectively puts her arm around him. She opens the hearse door and ushers them out.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

CLOSE ON FRYING PAN of frying chicken. PULL BACK and we see Willie standing over the pan adding more pieces.

Angela and siblings enter. They are stopped short by the table spread of meat and steaming casserole dishes.

WILLIE

(eying them quizzically)
Well sit down. Said you were hungry.

Angela and her siblings hesitate, deciding if the food is a mirage. When they finally take a seat, they immediately grab at the food like ravenous animals.

Willie stares at them in disbelief. He grabs a kettle top and bangs it against the counter, startling them.

WILLIE

Bless the damn food first! What's wrong with ya'll? Didn't your Mama teach you anything?

ANGEL

(sheepish, bows her head)
Dear lord, we're too thankful for all this food, that's why we got in a little bit of a hurry. But we real, stomach singing praises kinda hungry so if it pleases you and our grandfather, can we have an amen everybody and let's eat.

Willie laughs in spite of himself. Angela looks surprised, then offers him a shy smile, a smile that captures his heart.

INT. HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

Angela wearing a long nightgown, stealthily moves through the hallway, doing her best not to wake anyone.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - LATER

CONTINUED:

At the piano, Angela softly plays and sings, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow". She is lost in the song, so lost she doesn't hear Willie enter.

WILLIE

She tell you I taught her that song?

Angela startled at first, then nods yes.

WILLIE

Only wanted to sing the chorus.

He starts to sing, his baritone, spine-tingling perfect.

ANGELA

(excited)

Grandpa, you can sing! Do you know the song, "I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water?"

So excited, Angela doesn't notice the change in Willie's expression. She starts to play a few chords of "Muddy Water" but then Willie reaches over and slams the key cover down, barely missing Angela's fingers.

WILLIE

In this house, music is only for God or the dead!

On that, Willie storms out, shutting off the lights as he goes, leaving Angela in complete darkness.

YEARS LATER - DARK SCREEN - LATE 1973

Sound of whispered voices and the whirring of a sewing machine. The darkness slowly dissolves into the light of two flashlights held by Christina, 16. The flashlights are directed at...

ANGELA, 18, who sits at the sewing machine hurriedly sewing pants made from coffin satin and decorated with gold glitter and ribbon.

CHRISTINA

Hurry up Angela. We won't get to go on.

ANGELA

Keep an eye out in case he sneaks back. Whisper, come get your pants.

Whisper takes his pants from Angela as Junior steps out of the shadows, looking very perturbed. He points downward.

JUNIOR

Angela, look at this.

CONTINUED:

Angela looks down at the hems of his pants, which are riding above his ankles. Angela makes an "oops" face.

ANGELA
So, baby, you'll invent a new style.
Let's go.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - MINUTES LATER

Impatiently, Christina, Junior and Whisper wait by one of the funeral cars. Finally, Angela comes running out yelling.

ANGELA
He took all the keys except the hearse.

The siblings look horrified at their only option, a late model, foreboding looking hearse. Angela shrugs "it's the best we got."

INT. APOLLO THEATRE - NIGHT

Angela prays out loud as she watches her brothers and sister from the wings. On stage Christina sings lead and Whisper and Junior provide background vocals and poorly executed dance steps.

The audience boos and yells for them to get off. Undeterred, Christina keeps singing until finally the Apollo clown uses his long hook to grab her offstage.

BACKSTAGE - MINUTES LATER

Angela puts her arm around a tearful Whisper as he comes off stage. As Junior comes off, he angrily rips his Angela-made shirt off, throws it in Angela's direction.

JUNIOR
You need to sing with us or we might as well forget it.

INT. HEARSE - NIGHT

Angela drives while her siblings anxiously stare out the window as they near the funeral home.

CHRISTINA
Think we beat him home?

ANGELA
If we don't, I'll think of something.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - THAT NIGHT

Angela sits at the piano, her hands trembling on top of the keys as Willie hits her in the back with a razor strap. Each time the strap lands on Angela's back, her hands involuntarily jump.

WILLIE

(yelling)

Put your hands back up there. Defy me again and I'll make sure you can't even touch a piano key.

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Angela sings while she stares out the window at a snow storm in full command. Eventually, she turns from the window and crosses to a corpse laid out on the dressing table. Still singing, she rummages through her make-up kit, applies more pancake to the corpse.

ANGELA

(to the corpse)

You wanna clap, don't you? It's OK, you can save it for when it's recorded. Oh, didn't I tell you? Aretha, Diana, they all wanna record my songs. Oh yes, Mathilda, I'll be rich, buy me and my sister and brothers a big old house...

Enter Christina in a whirlwind. Excited and out of breath, she grabs Angela and drags her out the door.

INT. BACKROOM - MINUTES LATER

Christina shoves Angela toward a privacy curtain.

CHRISTINA

Just look out there and tell me what you see. You said it wasn't him. Now tell me again this is a funeral you want to miss. Is he pretty or is he pretty twice.

ANGELA POV:

Junior playing the organ while Willie and Whisper, dressed in their funeral black, hand out programs to the steady flow of guests. Finally she spots the person on which most attention in the room is riveted...

TROY, 27, an ethnic mixture of Indian and Black, wild looking but gorgeous: earrings in his ear, his long hair braided in tiny braids and decorated with a bandana, dark sunglasses.

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

obviously likes what she sees. Quietly she closes the curtain back, her face expressionless. A beat of silence. Then comes the hog squeal. Christina hurriedly shoves her hand across Angela's mouth.

CHRISTINA

I told you. I told you. This is our chance. Forget the Apollo. If me and you both sing with Junior and Whisper...

ANGELA

Christina you sound like a broken record.

CHRISTINA

(frowning suddenly)
Now where are you going?

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Angela moves a huge cabinet from the wall. She removes some plaster and brick, reaches into the hole and retrieves reams of loose-leaf paper. She rustles through them as...

ANGELA

I told you, I'm not singing in front of people. But maybe I can slip him one of my songs.

Angela shoves three pages of her best songs down her shirt.

CHRISTINA

I'm taking my hair down then, I don't care if Grandpa does beat me...he can't beat me at a funeral can he?

ANGELA

For Pretty Boy Troy, Lil' sister, you and me'll take a beating on the cross.

Angela takes her braid down with gusto. She smiles wickedly, hits the mechanical lift for Mathilda as we CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - LATER

A somber but lavish funeral for Troy's father. Up front, on risings, we see Christina, Whisper and Junior. Near the aisle closest to Troy is Angela, who acts as an usher.

A MAN is just finishing up his tribute as, once again, the minister takes to the mike.

CONTINUED:

MINISTER

Is there anyone else who would like to
pay tribute at this time?

From the back of the room, we here a booming voice...

VOICE

I would Reverend. If you don't mind,
I'll just talk as I come.

All eyes turn to find the voice that sounds as if it belongs
at a rodeo instead of a funeral.

ON FRANK RAY, white, 40'ish, cocky, impeccably dressed,
sauntering toward the front; carrying a thin box. He
addresses the overflowing audience like a politician running
for office.

FRANK

James Cantrell was a great man as all of
you who braved that snowfall outside to
get here can testify. If I died
tomorrow, two people might show up, three
if the sun was out.

Nervous laughter from the audience - they're not sure what to
make of this white man who talks like the Mississippi Delta
but dresses like Park Avenue.

FRANK

I don't know how you can say goodbye to a
great friend, a brother, a father...

Frank has arrived at the front pew where Troy sits. He
touches his shoulder for emphasis, then proceeds to the mike.

FRANK

As you can tell by my accent, I grew up
'round the same parts Jimmy did, 'cept
his family weren't poor and mine was so
poor the roaches had to eat each other
for food.

AUDIENCE - Polite laughter.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

But both Jimmy and I escaped. Jimmy because he had a vision and me, well I'll save that for my own funeral...But I was lucky to know him...Of course we locked heads over the years, Troy was his son and in my zeal to keep Troy at number one on the charts, I sometimes thought I was the Poppa...you know how arrogant us white folks can be sometimes...

Laughter and more than a few enthusiastic amens. Frank opens the box he's holding, holds up a 45 record.

FRANK

This is the first record little Troy made. I kept it all these years for luck but today I give it back to the man who was really responsible for any luck I ever had.

Frank dramatically places the 45 in the casket. From the audience, more amens. Frank returns to the mike.

FRANK

Now I'd sing right about now 'cause as we say where I come from, my heart is full, but y'all don't wanna see James rise up and run out of here, do you?

This time a hearty laugh response from the audience. Frank has changed a somber mood to one of rejoicing. Frank moves toward the front pew where he embraces Troy.

Willie signals for Christina, Whisper and Junior to get in place. Junior moves to the organ, Whisper and Christina to mikes at the front.

CHRISTINA

(in the mike, nervously)

Pretty Boy Troy...I mean the Cantrell family requested this song...

(weighs the next, then blurts out)

And no one sings it better than my sister...

ANGLE - ANGELA

recoiling from all the eyes on her, shakes her head adamantly no. Angela backs up and trips over someone's feet. Frank, within inches of her, steadies her.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

(to Angela)

See darling, hesitation only gives the devil more time to work.

Angela looks into Frank's eyes and sees kindness there. Frank smiles. Angela manages a weak smile.

ON WILLIE: He's furious, motions for Junior to keep playing. Frank puts his arms around Angela's shoulder and urges her forward.

Angela, with leaden feet, makes her way to the mike, gives Christina a barely concealed look of threat, then begins to sing the solo for "His Eye is on the Sparrow" while her siblings sing background.

ON FRANK as he watches Angela's tortured face shut out the room and the audience unwillingness to let her.

INT. FUNERAL BACK ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Angela in the throes of a hyperventilating, self-berating fit.

ANGELA

Stupid, stupid...how could you...

Christina enters excited.

CHRISTINA

Angela, all that rehearsal you made us do paid off. Did you see...?

Christina's excitement quickly changes to concern.

CHRISTINA

(hugging her)

Angela, what's wrong?

Angela bursts into tears just as Willie enters, his face contorted in anger. He yanks off his belt. Christina and Angela both back up in fear.

WILLIE

So that's what it takes, a white man. He grin at you, then you can sing and twist your little ass good.

Willie lurches at Angela with the belt. Christina unsuccessfully tries to block him.

CHRISTINA

No, Grandpa Angela didn't want to sing...

CONTINUED:

Too late, Willie raises the belt and the blow lands across Angela's face. Willie raises the belt again but is caught off guard by the defiant, unforgiving look on Angela's face.

WILLIE

(defeated, lowers the belt)
You're just like her.

ANGELA

(steely)
Oh but if I was...if I only was. You wouldn't have to worry about me, my dress tail would be catching the wind just like hers did.

Willie, enraged now, gets ready to strike her again when he's interrupted by Frank knocking on the door frame. His right hand man, LIGHT, 40, weighing in at 350 plus, positions himself in the background.

FRANK

I just wanted to let you all know what a wonderful service...Oh what the hell... where's my manners?

He outstretches his hand for Willie to shake. Willie does, grudgingly.

FRANK

Frank Ray. And I'd like to sign this young lady.

Christina eagerly steps forward, thinking he means her. Frank, oblivious, moves toward Angela.

ON CHRISTINA, she's devastated.

FRANK

(to Angela)

You know I've managed Troy since the beginning and he's got ten number one records out of it. There have been others but I'm not like most managers, some of 'em will sign anything that moves. You least gotta wiggle a bit for me...

Frank chuckles, waits for them to laugh. No such luck.

WILLIE

We're not interested.

CONTINUED:

Willie roughly points Christina and Angela toward the upstairs. Angela sneaks a look back at Frank who returns her look with a knowing smile.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Christina, barely able to contain her sobs, wrings out a cold compress and is about to place it on Angela's face when Angela places her hand over Christina's.

ANGELA

I'm not going anywhere, Christina. My dreams will always include you.

The flood gates are loose. Christina collapses into Angela's arms, landing them backwards in the tub. Angela laughs.

ANGELA

Christina, shoot! First Grandpa screws up my face and now you wanna give me a concussion.

INT. WILLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Willie reads the bible when he hears a chorus of sound wafting through the floor heat register.

INT. EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

Angela rehearses her siblings in hushed tones. Angela stops them for the umpteenth time.

ANGELA

(exasperated)

Concentrate please. And how long does it take Whisper to pee? Christina you're not hearing your note.

JUNIOR

Who can a hear a note? Whoever heard of doing music you can't even sing loud enough to even hear yourself...

Suddenly they hear mumbling and tapping coming from a nearby coffin. They freeze in fear. Slowly, eerily, the coffin top opens and up jumps Whisper wearing a wig and funeral gloves. With his imaginary microphone, he impersonates Diana Ross.

WHISPER

Baby, baby, sweet baby.....

Laughing Angela and the rest of the siblings surround him as they become the other Supremes.

INT. WILLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Willie slams the bible shut as the sound of the devil's music assaults his sensibility. He gets up, stumbles backward in pain. He grabs for his pill vials.

ANGLE - A SLEEK LIMOUSINE

parked across the street from a high school.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

The sound of Roberta Flack's "Killing me Softly" plays in the b.g. while Troy and Frank argue in the backseat. Light up front. Troy holds an issue of Rolling stone where he's featured on the cover.

TROY

Frank, it's like Roberta says, it's killing me softly...all this teenyboppy shit.

(throwing the magazine)

I'm tired of jumping around on stage. I need to evolve, Frank.

FRANK

What you need is for every teenyboppy shit to buy your next record.

TROY

(defensive)

What's wrong with the record?

FRANK

Well, Mr. Evolve, people don't buy records to hear your philosophy about life. They buy records to fuck or suck to. First you were little Stevie Wonder, then you were Hendrix and now you wanna be Dylan? The war is over...Nixon is on his way out and you're a pretty cock-rocker not a folk singer. I know that, your dad knew that. You're the only hold-out here...

Troy seething. Frank sighs. Regroups, softer.

FRANK

Troy, I love you like a son. I worry about you like a son and now that Jimmie's gone, I'll beat your ass like one.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

Every artist goes through a slump, but let's not go flying without a net here. All I'm asking is for you to do what you do best. You got white and black kids paying to see you...that doesn't happen everyday. You do more race shit, and I guarantee you, that audience is going to dry up.

Troy shifts in his seat, gets ready to interrupt but Frank is on a roll.

FRANK

All I'm saying is when it's time to change, we'll both know. In fifteen years, have I steered you wrong? Are you not pissing from a sweeter smelling spot than any Anglo-Saxon, Jew man?

Troy can't help but laugh. Frank extends his hand, starts to say his trademark saying but Troy surprises him with.

TROY AND FRANK

(in unison)

So and next.

Troy gives him five and exits the limo. Through the window, Frank hands him his suit jacket, and a bouquet of flowers.

FRANK

Her name is Angela. And put the jacket on. I know you like showing off your body but it's winter out there.

Troy leaves the jacket but takes the flowers. Frank watches him go, shakes his head like a father watching his wayward child.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Angela positions to serve the volleyball but is stopped by the sight of Troy sauntering across the gym floor, half-heartedly singing a love song. His lack of enthusiasm goes unnoticed as screaming girls swarm around him.

LATER

The GYM INSTRUCTOR corrals the other girls as Troy hands Angela a business card.

ANGELA

I write songs. I have a song that would be perfect for you.

CONTINUED:

Troy offers her a patronizing smile.

ANGELA

Sure kid, get em to me. Don't forget to call Frank.

Troy throws kisses to the fawning girls and is out the door.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Angela replaces the cover to her hiding place. Blows out the candle, then hurries out holding two sheets of folded paper.

EXT. QUE'SERA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A nervous Christina and a cool Angela approach the club wearing winter coats.

CHRISTINA

Angela, we'll never get in without any money. It won't work, plus it's freezing. Grandpa's gon' kill us.

ANGELA

He's got to catch us first. We're in and out, ten minutes tops. Find Troy, slip him my songs...

They approach the CLUB DOORMAN with wide, what they hope are flirtatious, smiles.

DOORMAN

(unimpressed)

Ten dollars a piece.

Angela turns to Christina who adamantly shakes her head please no.

ANGELA

On a count of three. One, two, three.

On three, Angela and Christina flash open their coats revealing that they're wearing nothing but underwear and spray paint.

The doorman laughs, gestures for them to go on in.

INT. QUE'SERA NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS Frank, nattily dressed as usual, as he moves through the huge, jam packed club of mirrored walls, strobe lights, and loud pulsating music.

CONTINUED:

Frank carries himself like he's the headliner, dispensing charm as he goes: a kiss here, a whispered confidence there, a light for a beautiful woman, a wave to a table of VIPs, a few C notes exchanged for a handshake with undercover cops while....

ON STAGE

We see Troy singing, a rock and roller out of his element. The audience seems to be more impressed with his dance antics than the song or his singing.

ANGLE - ANGELA AND CHRISTINA

watching Troy. Christina smitten. Angela on the other hand, looks befuddled.

ANGELA
(not taking her eyes off of
Troy)

See you can tell. He doesn't trust his material. He wouldn't have to parade around the stage like that if he did...

Christina doesn't answer. She's too caught up watching Troy. Angela looks around the room, studies the reactions, which are lukewarm to engaged.

Suddenly Angela's face registers fear. She nudges Christina.

CHRISTINA AND ANGELA'S POV: Willie moving through the club obviously looking for somebody.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angela and Christina hurriedly undress in the dark. They plop into bed just as Willie opens their bedroom door. He listens in the dark, hears nothing. Finally, he shuts the door back.

ANGELA
(whispering)
Whew, that was close.

CHRISTINA
It was worth it. I wanna wrap myself in
Troy's hair, that's what I want.

Angela playfully hurls a pillow across the room, hitting her sister in the head.

ANGELA
Go to sleep, girl.

CONTINUED:

CHRISTINA

(tentatively)

Angel, you still want it to happen, don't you? Us be a group and all, not just your songwriting.

Angela thinks a moment.

ANGELA

Sometimes Christina, I think I know more about what I don't want than what I do.

(half singing to herself)

Don't know 'bout my future, but I know 'bout my past. Both got me running, 'cause they heard love never lasts.

ANGLE LIMOUSINE

parked across the street from a row of storefronts decorated for Christmas.

EXT. FIVE AND DIME STORE - DAY

where we see Whisper talking to a Salvation Army Santa. Angela exits the store carrying bags overflowing with Christmas paraphernalia. She notices Whisper pleading with the Santa. She hurries over.

WHISPER

(to Santa)

I want her to see me sing. I'm going to be a big star with my sisters and brother. Tell him, Angela.

Angela puts her arm around Whisper.

WHISPER

(to Santa)

If you ask God, maybe he can find her.

The Santa doesn't know how to respond. Angela attempts to redirect Whisper.

ANGELA

I'm sure Santa will tell God, but even if Mama can't come sweetheart, she always sends you something.

WHISPER

No, she doesn't. That stuff is from you. You just put her name on it.

CONTINUED:

Angela's expression confirms what Whisper had secretly hoped wasn't true. Whisper kicks over his bags, takes off running down the street, leaving Angela to reassemble everything sprawled out on the sidewalk.

A perfectly manicured hand ENTERS the frame. Angela looks up and into Frank's eyes.

FRANK

Devil just won't cut you loose, will he?
Look like you could use a ride.

Angela looks over at the limo which has eased to the curb in front of them. Light, hops out to open the door.

ANGELA

(shakes her head no)
I have to get home.

FRANK

You too young to be talking in have-to's
and too old to be so scared, Miss
Delasalle.

ANGELA

How did you know my last name?

FRANK

Did my homework. Your mother had a voice
like mornin' coffee too. Ever ride in a
limo?

ANGELA

(sardonically)
I'm in the funeral business, what do you
think?!

Angela puts on her most confident air, struts into the limo as if she's been doing it all her life.

INT. LIMO - DAY

CLOSE ON ANGELA - as she stares at something.

ANGELA'S POV:

A miniature monkey on a leash sitting at Frank's feet.

CAMERA FINDS Frank yelling into his car phone

FRANK

Tell that son of a bitch he piss on my
records and he'll be pissing blood.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

Forget it. Western Union Man's gonna make a delivery.

On that Frank slams down the phone, regroups as a stunned Angela stares at him.

FRANK

So and next. Just business sweetheart. I'm like David. I can slay Goliath and still go home and play the harp. You know what I mean? That's why I'm not married. I'm married to my artists. Honor, love, obey...sickness, health, I feel it all.

ANGELA

So why do you have a monkey in your car?

FRANK

Oh Moses?

(picking him up tenderly)

Come to Poppa. This my boy.

Frank reaches in his pocket, pulls out a carrot stick, offers it teasingly to Moses who snaps at it, almost taking Frank's finger along with it. Frank yanks his finger back, laughing. Angela jumps and laughs too as we CUT TO...

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Where BIG DADDY CASH, 30's, a tragicomic looking toad of a man, sits barricaded in his chair by Light who holds him down by the shoulders and by Frank who sits on the desk in front of him holding Moses by a leash within inches of Cash's lap.

FRANK

So, tell me and Moses again, how come it's not on your play sheet?

CASH

(sobbing)

Nobody likes the song. Oh God, Frank, really, I don't like small animals.

Moses squeals. Cash freaks. Frank laughs as we Cut to:

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Opened potato chips and peanut bags strewn about as Angela preens and poses, then pushes every button, turning the fully equipped limo into a self-made playground. Each new discovery sends her into a fit of giggles.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Cash in the same position, his clothes now soaked in sweaty fear. Light holds guard with Moses as Frank indiscriminately scratches up LP's with a pocket knife.

FRANK

You know when Moses is hungry, he just takes a bite out of anything small and moist. Isn't that right Light?

On cue Light shoves his hand under Cash's nose where we see he's missing his index finger.

FRANK

Light was just trying to feed him. Now I know your prick can't be much bigger than Light's finger so let's see if Moses gets a little deja vu.

INT. RADIO CONTROL BOOTH - MINUTES LATER

Angela speaks into the mike as Frank holds a sign up for her to read.

ANGELA

(reading)

...you live, so don't change that dial.
And this one from Pretty Boy Troy goes
out to Moses.

Cash clicks a button and a record starts. Angela reluctantly removes her headphones, exhilarated by the experience.

FRANK

Felt good, didn't it?

Angela nods yes while Cash looks nervously to Frank.

CASH

(a bit rehearsed to Angel)

You're right Frank, she's got a certain
star quality.

EXT. BOUTIQUE - DAY

OUR POV:

Through the store window we see Angela trying on a fur coat. We see Frank piling her hair up on top of her head for a more glamorous look. The salesgirl and Frank nod in agreement.

EXT. BOUTIQUE - MINUTES LATER

Where Angela exits excitedly fidgeting with the coat. Frank laughing at her excitement.

ANGELA

Can we stop at the five and dime and get me a bib in case I drop something on myself? Me in a fur coat, I gotta call my sister. Can I use your car phone?

EXT. QUE' SERA - DAY

Frank points out the window at his nightclub, which is on the first floor of a huge three story building.

FRANK

You'll headline for me one day.

ANGELA

It's huge.

FRANK

Well the third floor is my living quarters. I like to keep everything close.

INT. RESTAURANT - TABLE - MINUTES LATER

Frank and Angela seated front and center. Angela still wearing the fur coat.

FRANK

Angel, you mind if I call you that?

ANGELA

Yes. I do mind. My name is Angela.

FRANK

Ok, Angela, I won't ever lie to you. Writing your own songs in the beginning is a ticket to nowhere. People want to see beautiful girls like you singing.

Angela's listening to Frank but is more preoccupied with arranging the large linen napkin around her neck and over the fur coat which she has draped down around her shoulders. We see Frank watch her while trying not to laugh. He motions the waiter for another drink.

ANGELA

I don't drink.

CONTINUED:

Frank smirks. He had no intention of ordering her a drink.

FRANK
How old are you anyway?

ANGELA
Just turned nineteen.

FRANK
And you're still in high school?

Angela's face turns beet red. Frank immediately sorry.

ANGELA
I had to repeat a year when we moved here. We didn't get to go to school regularly when we were...

Angela hesitates, embarrassed...

FRANK
With your mother....I know what you're going through. I was six when the traveling salesman came through town. My ol' girl bought what he was selling, took a ride, told me she was coming right back. That was forty years ago. Guess she's still somewhere riding.

Angela touched.

ANGELA
I'm sorry. You miss her every day, don't you?

FRANK
Nope. So and next, that's my philosophy. Loss just steers me toward opportunity. I was in and out of orphanages for a while, I'd either run away or they'd kick me out. But as luck would have it, a black family took me in,

Angel looks surprised

FRANK
Yeah, that's how everybody reacts. They were sharecroppers so most people thought I belonged to the owners family. But given that I was one angry little kid, nobody white would have me. After a while, I acted so black, people forgot I wasn't.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

Everything I know about music...not that hillbilly twangy shit white folks screech about, but some real music, soul music...the kind of music make you get glad when you really wanna slit somebody's throat...I learned it all there in the back roads of the Delta. Hey, way I see it, my mama's leaving was a gift. I'm a rich man today 'cause of it.

Suddenly, Angel, Frank and the entire restaurant are interrupted by a loud shriek.

OUR POV:

Christina screaming as she stands near a table at the entrance.

At the same time Angela sees the same person.

ANGELA

(shrieking too)

My God, it's Diana Ross.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Christina has joined them at the table. She's trying too hard to impress Frank. Angela looks a bit embarrassed.

CHRISTINA

Angela doesn't like to sing. I'm really the singer of the group. Junior and Whisper do a lot of the harmony. Angela writes some of our songs...but we can sing anybody's songs...

CAMERA TRAVELS UNDER the table and we see Angela's skirt hoisted up and a pen busily scribbling words on her thigh.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The limo idles a block from the funeral parlor. Christina waits nervously on the sidewalk a few feet away.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Angela reluctantly separates from the fur coat while Frank marks up a three page contract on his knee.

ANGELA

Maybe if you had sisters and brothers, maybe you'd understand. It's all of us or none of us...

CONTINUED:

Frank makes a conceding gesture. He writes: GOLD SOUL on the contract.

FRANK
(as he writes)
Gold Soul it is then. Just sign here for me.

Angela hesitates.

ANGEL
But don't we all have to sign?

FRANK
I can't believe this, after spending the whole day together you still don't trust me.

Angela grins, takes the pen and signs. When Frank takes the contract back he notices the scribbling on her leg which Angela quickly tries to hide. Frank looks quizzical.

ANGELA
I used to write down my mother's song ideas, like when she was driving and stuff...it got to be a habit..now whenever I get inspired if I'm not near paper, I just write on my legs and then I transfer it later...

FRANK
May I see?

Angela eases her skirt up bashfully...Frank twists his head as he tries to make out the direction of the writing. Dramatically, he pens on the contract in big letters, SONGWRITING.

Angela can't take anymore good fortune. She leaps out the limo. Through the window, Frank hands her the coat. Angela looks surprised.

FRANK
I lied. It's not a loaner. Consider it an early Christmas present.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MINUTES LATER

As the limo speeds away, we see Angela holding the fur coat. She gives Christina the thumb up sign. They both jump for joy. Then reality creeps in - their faces go from joy to despair.

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

Don't worry, I'll think of something. He signed me up as a songwriter too.

Christina looks concerned. Angela responds by draping the fur coat over her shoulders. Christina beams.

INT. FUNERAL EMBALMING ROOM - DAY

Willie and Angela in the middle of preparing a body for embalming. They work systematically and in sync. He's taught her well.

ANGELA

(setting the corpse's features)
I'll make sure everybody still gets their homework done and we can still help out here after rehearsal...

WILLIE

Nobody should die at the holidays. It's never the same for the ones left behind.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Junior, Whisper and Christina hover near the door listening.

INT. FUNERAL EMBALMING ROOM - DAY

Angela and Willie continue their process.

ANGELA

I can still help you in the business. I'll get up at five if I need to. Maybe you could even manage us with Mr. Ray like your friend Troy's father used to do.

WILLIE

Out of the question.

ANGELA

I'm nineteen Grandpa. I really don't need your permission. How come you can't give a little? I do everything you want. It's like I'm on a leash. I go to school, come home and I take care of everybody. I wash, clean, cook, prepare the service, flush blood and guts out of dead people...

(beat)

Please, can't you just give us your blessing?

CONTINUED:

WILLIE
(threatening)
You giving me an ultimatum girl?

ANGELA
(pause, then carefully weighing
her words)
I know you can beat me everyday until the
day I leave your house, but that's not
going to beat the dream out of me. It's
only going to beat the hate in me. And
it's the hate Grandpa that keeps people
from ever coming back to you.

Bulls-eye. Willie's expression lets us know, she hit him
where it hurt.

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - CHRISTMAS MORNING

Angela, wearing the fur coat, parades around in front of the
mirror. She hears her grandfather's cheerful voice on the
other side of the door, singing a Christmas soul song.
Angela can't believe what she's hearing. She hurriedly hides
the coat and rushes out to see what's going on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wrapping paper and ribbon strewn about. Angela and her
siblings all hold up their new outfits. Their expressions -
thinly veiled attempts to look pleased.

WILLIE
I asked the salesgirl what the style was.
Ya'll like em?

In unison, they all nod yes unconvincingly. Willie looks from
one to the other. He sighs deeply.

WILLIE
Your mother never liked anything I bought
her either.

The kids look at him surprised - he never mentions their
mother. Willie rustles up his conviction for the next. This
is hard for him.

WILLIE
Been thinking about this music thing...

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

Christina, Junior and Whisper excitedly run toward the car. Following behind them at a leisurely pace is Angela and Willie who lovingly swing hands.

INT. QUE SERA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank, while singing happy birthday, takes a stack of bills from a wall safe filled with money, receipts, ledgers, a gun. He crosses to his desk, places the money stack in a children's gift wrapped box.

Light enters.

LIGHT

Frank, they're ready.

Frank continues singing as he ties a perfect red bow around the box, hands it to Light.

FRANK

I love giving gifts. Take this to our friend at the liquor board. And take Moses with you.

LIGHT'S POV - Moses in his cage looking possessed as usual.

LIGHT

Frank, do I have to? Moses is evil.

FRANK

(laughing)

We're in a evil business my friend.

Frank laughs, hands Moses over to Light, exits down the back stairs laughing.

INT QUE SERA CLUB - DAY

Assembled on stage are musicians tuning up. At the stage edge, before four mikes, are Gold Soul, trying to appear unintimidated. Angela nervously adjusts Whisper's mike.

Frank takes a seat next to his trusted studio engineer, BAMMA, 40's, bearded, tight-jawed, pony-tailed. Willie in background.

FRANK

OK give me the best of what you have. Don't let those old farts behind you intimidate you. Last I heard, they only killed their mamas.

CONTINUED:

The musicians laugh. Clearly, they've worked with Frank a long time. But Whisper looks stricken. Angela smiles at him reassuringly that Frank is only joking.

TIME DISSOLVE

CLOSE ON Frank as he watches Gold Soul, his face never changing. The musicians are having a hard time keeping up with the changing tempo and key. Finally it's over.

BAMMA

(whispering to Frank)

That was real bad. The lead can't sing.
You could pass with the song, but they're
like mannequins, they don't move.

Frank nods in acknowledgment, then gives Gold Soul a standing ovation. Bamma looks at him like he's lost his mind.

FRANK

Not bad. That first song, "Other Side of
Free", you wrote it?

Angela nods yes.

FRANK

Sing a line or two for me.

Angela obliges, reluctantly. When she's done, the musicians whistle, applaud. Even Bamma cracks a smile.

FRANK

(smugly to Bamma)

OK, we do a demo. In the mean time, you
need to learn how to dance, how to move.
No offense, but ya'll the whitest black
soul children I ever seen. And Christina
you need to sing the song, not worry it
to death.

MONTAGE OF SCENES...Gold Soul's make over: dance lessons,
breathing lessons, photo sessions.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Christina singing the lead, Angela and the other siblings
singing background. There's been some benefit from the
lessons as evidenced by a consistent beat and key.

INT. STUDIO LATER - DAY

Gold Soul, Frank, Light and Bamma listen to the playback.
Everybody grimaces as Christina hits a high note.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

(to Gold Soul)

Now who can tell me what we need to do?

Christina eagerly raises her hand.

CHRISTINA

(laughing at herself)

Angela, is always telling me to breathe from the diaphragm. I'm too neck with my sound I think. I can do another take.

Beat as no one moves. Frank stares at Angela and we CUT TO.

INT. STUDIO - BATHROOM - LATER

Christina washes her tear streaked face. Angela emerges from a stall. Christina balls up the paper towel, pitches it with a vengeance.

CHRISTINA

You set me up.

(to Angela, mocking)

I don't wanna sing Christina. I don't sing anymore, it reminds me too much of Mama...bullshit Angela. You're so full of shit.

ANGELA

Christina, don't make me tell the truth to your face. This was your idea.

CHRISTINA

Go to hell. And tell Mama hi when you get there.

Angela grabs Christina. They go at it. Junior and Whisper rush in, break them up.

JUNIOR

You two stop it. I said stop, Angela.

ANGELA

(furious)

You're not good enough. I know it, Junior knows it, even Whisper knows it.

Christina looks from Angela to her brothers. They look down, answering her with their avoidance. Christina storms out.

INT. STUDIO - LATER

FRANK'S POV: Angela in the recording booth, headphones on, her eyes closed shutting everything out but the music she sings.

Troy enters, watches Angela appraisingly.

TROY
She should change the tempo.
(dismissively)
But it'll still be bubble gum music.
(hands Bamma a tape)
Put this in Bamma.

Bamma looks to Frank.

FRANK
Troy, we're almost through here.

Frank returns his attention to Angela, motions for her to start again, which she does. Troy takes in Frank's total absorption.

TROY
(parting shot)
I'm outta here. She's got a long way to go Frank before she's your next meal ticket.

INT. STUDIO - MUCH LATER

Angela exits the sound booth, looks around alarmed, becomes frantic.

ANGELA
Guess I lost track of time. Where are my sister and brothers? What time is it?

FRANK
(putting his arms around her)
Settle down sweetheart. I know you've had a hard day but it's all going to be ok.

Angela nestles against his shoulder, fights back tears.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

CAMERA MOVES through the house REVEALING Willie asleep by the front door, waiting up for Angel.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - EMBALMING ROOM - NIGHT

Christina dislodges the plaster of Angela's secret hole. She pulls out stacks of notebooks and loose-leaf papers full of Angela's songs. She places them on the embalming table next to the fur coat already there. Next, she douses them with embalming chemicals. Last, she lights a match.

A small fire at first. Christina watches for a minute, then abruptly reconsiders.

CHRISTINA

(muttering to herself)

Shoot, I can't do this to you.

She tries slapping the fire out with her hands. That doesn't work. She crosses to turn on the water hose. In the meantime, the fire rages larger. Christina tries to beat the fire out with a towel. In doing so, she knocks over more chemicals, fueling the fire more. We hear her scream "Angela" just once before the flames eventually engulf her.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - NIGHT

Lights go on in neighboring houses.

EXT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Engulfed by smoke and flames, Junior and Whisper frantically try to release the security bars on their windows.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Angela jumps out of Frank's limo before it comes to a complete stop. She runs into the emergency entrance.

INT. ICU - NIGHT

A DOCTOR pronounces Willie dead as Angela enters. Her knees buckle at the sight of her grandfather, who's a mass of tubes and burns. Frank steadies her.

DOCTOR

(patting Angela's arm)

He tried to get them all out. I'm sorry.

Angela moves closer to the bed, kisses Willie with great tenderness.

ANGELA

Wake up Grandpa, it's me Angela. I'm here Grandpa.

CONTINUED:

She shakes him. No response. Finally realizes he's really gone.

ANGELA

(collapses, bone racking sobs)

Don't leave me, Grandpa. I love you. I never told you, but I love you so much. Don't leave me here all alone...I'm so sorry...I'm not like Mama, Grandpa, I'm really not...can you tell me that one time? Please?

Frank crosses to Angela, gently helps her up.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

We see a funeral procession with five different hearses carrying five different caskets. One stretch limousine follows behind the last hearse.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Angela sits nearly catatonic, stares out the window. Frank, on the seat next to her, counts out two pills from a vial. He hands them to her. On automatic, she takes them, stares back out the window.

ANGELA

(quietly)

Can you find my mother?

Frank's not sure he's heard right.

FRANK

What did you say?

ANGELA

My Mother.

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

Frank gently removes Angela's funeral garb. Angela offers no resistance nor assistance.

Clothed now only in a slip, Frank hands her two pills which she immediately downs. Frank eases her back onto the pillow. He turns off the bedside lamp. Angela immediately turns her back to him and stares blankly at the wall.

INT. ANGELA'S BEDROOM - DAY

We hear the muted sound of Que Sera's music from below as Frank places a tray of food in front of Angela, who immediately turns away.

FRANK

I made these dumplings myself...now since you won't talk to me...I'm just gonna have to keep boring you with my stories. Did I tell you about the time I ran away from the orphanage? Got about three or four miles, got too hungry and I turned back...

INT. STADIUM - DAY

The place is half full. Disgruntled fans are stomping their feet and yelling for Troy.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Light on the phone trying to soothe an irate Troy.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STADIUM DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Troy on the phone with Light.

TROY

I got an opening act stoned out of their minds. I know I'm crazy but... they fucking pissed on stage like they were watering somebody's garden. And where is Frank, playing fucking Florence Nightingale. The place is half full Light. Since when do I play to empty seats?

We see Light feels bad about this.

LIGHT

How can I help Troy?

TROY

Find me a new fucking manager, that's what you can do.

On that Troy slams down the phone.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Frank and Angela as they were. Frank still telling his story.

INTERCUT: FLASHES OF MEMORY AS FRANK CONTINUES WITH HIS STORY...

EXT. RURAL MISSISSIPPI ORPHANAGE - 1938 DAY

Frank, 9, kicks and beats at the orphanage door, yelling to be let in. Finally, he picks up a brick and throws it in the window.

FRANK V.O

They left me out there all day...

EXT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHTFALL

Hours later. Frank sobs pitifully on the orphanage steps.

FRANK V.O

There I was all snotty and dirty,
planning how one day everybody that ever
hurt me was gonna pay...and that's when
the back door opened...

We see a large black woman, MAMA PILER, 50, wearing an apron. She hands Frank a bowl of dumplings.

FRANK V.O

The only thing she said was "So and
next." That's where I got it from. No
matter what predicament you find yourself
in, there's always next, Mama Piler
taught me that.

MAMA PILER reenters the orphanage, closing the door firmly behind her, leaving Frank to devour the contents of the bowl, eventually licking it clean.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - NEXT MORNING

Mama Piler, weary from working all night, exits the building carrying her hand bag and pilfered leftovers. She takes one look at Frank, then extends her hand. He takes it happily.

FRANK V.O

Just like that I became one of her
fifteen children.

END OF MEMORY IMAGES

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY

Frank stirs the bowl of dumplings on the tray.

FRANK

Her favorite line for me... "Frank if you wasn't running so bad, good just might have time to catch up with you, I declare it might." This is her recipe, so here just take a spoonful of the broth....

Frank puts a spoon of the broth to Angela's lips. Angela manages a few spoonfuls, but then chokes.

FRANK

That's ok, we'll try again tomorrow.

INT. BATHROOM/HALLWAY - DAY

Angela huddled in a bathtub. Frank listens outside the door, for a sound, any sound. But he hears none.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Frank is telling yet another one of his stories while he brushes Angela's hair. He braids it in one long braid down her back while she sits motionless.

INTERCUT: FLASHES OF MEMORY AS FRANK RECOUNTS SECOND STORY

INT. SHACK - DAY - 1946

Dirt poor shack crowded with all age of children. The scratchy sound of a blues record plays on a small record player on the floor.

FRANK V.O

...I braided, raised dandruff....

CAMERA FINDS FRANK, 15, in the kitchen, dancing while he shakes a hotcomb over an open fire. Five little black girls stare at one terrified girl of eight, who, propped up on catalogues, awaits her dreaded date with Frank and the sizzling hot comb.

FRANK V.O

All I needed was a little music, Lady Day, Guitar Slim... Bessie Smith and I'd go to work. Mama Piler called me the Hotcomb King.

Frank glides the fire heated hotcomb over the tightly coiled hair at the nape of the little girl's neck.

CONTINUED:

FRANK V.O

I could catch that kitchen hair before
the child knew to jump.

After Frank successfully accomplishes his hot comb mission,
all the little girls clap. Accepting their applause, Frank
bows to them dramatically.

END OF MEMORY IMAGES

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT DAY

Frank angles his head to see if this story at least brought a
smile to Angela's listless face. It didn't.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angela thrashes about as she experiences a....

NIGHTMARE: Angela fights the ocean as she screams for her
mother.

ANGELA abruptly sits upright with her hands over her ears,
rocks back and forth.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Frank sits listening to Light go over business matters.

LIGHT

I've called the promoter. He says he's
booked another opening act but Troy is
refusing to play any more dates. He's
talking about suing us and blacklisting
Troy in other markets. But we do have
these.

Light hands Frank a few polaroids from a folder. They show
shots of a man in bondage surrounded by half-clad women.

FRANK

Overnight this to him.

(hands him back one of the
polaroids.)

Make sure to tell him that I'll tack this
over his wife's bed while we try the same
position unless I hear some good news by
tomorrow night. Get Troy on the horn and
the program manager for WTZX. No on
second thought...call him thirty times,
what the hell, make it forty. Each time,
tell him Frank Ray called and then hang
up...

CONTINUED:

Light picks up one of the four phones on Frank's desk, starts to dial while something catches Frank's attention out the window.

FRANK

Damn.

EXT. FRANK'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Frank comes tearing down the fire escape. He calls out to Angela.

CAMERA FINDS a dazed Angela walking down the street wearing only her drenched nightgown, oblivious to the rain. Frank finally catches up to her.

ANGELA

My songs Frank. They're in the wall. I have to get my songs out of the wall.

Frank takes Angela's hand and leads her back up the street.

FRANK

You'll make some more songs sweetheart. I promise you.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

While Frank gets a manicure and pedicure from TWO WOMEN, he manically works four different conversations on four different phones. All the conversations overlap, however, the central conversation is with Troy who he's trying his best to calm.

FRANK

Troy, I'm straightening everything out. You'll have a new opening act. Ticket sales in Detroit and Chicago are brisk...and Vegas...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

During the following conversation with Frank, Troy smokes a joint and snorts a line of coke. Nearby a woman stares vacantly at the television as "Chico and the Man" laugh track is heard. The hotel room looks like a junkyard.

TROY

(overlapping)

What's brisk Frank?

CONTINUED:

FRANK clicks another line, cradles the phone with Troy. Then in the second phone...

FRANK
Who loves you baby?
(suddenly irritated)
Never heard of him. I know every promotor
in the country --was one. Tell the
fucker to call back when he gets a
name....hold on...

TROY
(overlapping)
Half empty concert halls?

FRANK
I'm sorry about that Troy...

Frustrated, Troy lights a cigarette, pours himself a drink.

TROY
Frank this feels bad. I'm drowning here.
I'm smoking too much, I'm drinking... my
throats gone to shit...

Frank, a few understandings um-huns to Troy, then clicks on the third line.

FRANK
(in third phone)
Tell him to do a James Brown and get on
the good foot or he'll find his other one
floating in the Hudson.

TROY
I should've taken some time after my
father's death...

Light enters.

LIGHT
Frank, the doctor's here.

FRANK
(hand over mouthpiece)
Has he seen her yet?

TROY
(overlapping)
I ain't got nothing to give these
people...

CONTINUED:

FRANK

(back to second line)

No can do...buddy. We have a deal. We forgo our advance...we take more of the door. Capiche?

TROY

I don't even know what I'm singing anymore Frank.

FRANK

(fourth line)

Yeah. He told me about you. I'll be happy to listen. Send your tapes....

TROY

Can't we just cancel the rest of the dates? Frank?...Frank?

FRANK

(in the phone)

I'm here Troy. I'll be on the next plane. As soon as I can.

TROY

As soon as you can. When? When's that Frank? When Rapunzel let's down her hair?

FRANK

(angry now)

Fuck you Troy. The girl has lost everything...You know what that's like, to not have anybody...

FRANK

Yeah, 'bout how I feel right about now.

On that Troy slams down the phone. Frank slams the phone down too.

FRANK

Self centered son of a bitch. What do I look like, a wet nurse?

LIGHT

(gingerly)

Frank, he hasn't been getting the attention...

Frank throws Light a murderous look. Light abruptly shuts up.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A DOCTOR examines Angela who has retreated so deep into herself, she doesn't appear to know he's even there.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

The doctor's feet are suspended in mid air as Frank pins him against the wall.

FRANK

Make some fucking medicine then...It's been months, she won't cry, she doesn't talk, she's like a damn deaf mute...

The doctor gasps for air, tries to nod his understanding. Frank realizes he's cut off his oxygen, releases his hold.

The doctor quickly writes out another prescription, hands it to Frank.

DOCTOR

All she feels is loss right now...if she can find something, something familiar to hold on to...

INT. QUE'SERA - NIGHT

The club in full swing. CAMERA travels up the back stairs to...

FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Where Gold Soul's demo plays in the background while Frank sits at his desk across from IVAN, a 50ish, slimy record executive snorting a line of cocaine.

IVAN

Like I was saying, it's like the Gestapo. We're all feeling the fall-out from that mess over at Columbia. You got to spend money to make money. I don't care if it's on the table or under the table.

(cutting another line)

You sure you don't want any?

Frank waves him off.

FRANK

Gotta to keep my wits 'bout myself if I plan to stand in the same pissing pen with you Ivan.

CONTINUED:

IVAN
(laughing)
Anybody ever tell you, you talk like a
nigger?

Frank, fire in his eyes, squeezes out a smile. He eases the
coke tray closer to Ivan while Moses screeches in background.

FRANK
Well then help yourself, Massa.

Ivan finds this hysterical. Frank laughs too.

IVAN
Massa, I like that.

FRANK
(disingenuous smile)
I knew you would. So, getting back to the
matter at hand, I think with the right
kind of promotion, everybody loves a sob
story, get enough airplay and I think
we'll have a hit here.

IVAN
I told you on the phone Frank, it's a
bit amateurish. If I can be "Frank"
(laughing at his joke)
It stinks.

FRANK
But Ivan, it was you who said it can
smell and still sell.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Angela painstakingly attempts to draw from memory a picture
of her siblings. The more she draws, the more frustrated she
becomes. CAMERA PULLS BACK REVEALING a bed full of papers
with her siblings names or sketch beginnings.

INT. QUE'SERA - FRANK'S OFFICE - DAY

Ivan picks up the black and white of Angela on Frank's desk.

IVAN
Pretty, but what is she? She's too light
for a nigger. She albino?

FRANK
Her father was white. Her mother black.
That's the beauty.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

White people will think she's white,
black people will think she's black,
cross fertilization, wherever we plant
her, she'll grow...crossover markets.

IVAN

How come you never bring me something
pure?

FRANK

Well, goddamit, let's remedy that right
now.

Frank motions for Light to open the door for the "something
pure". In walks Simone, a beautiful, sultry transvestite.

FRANK

Six feet of lovely. Come in darling and
meet the Massa.

Simone snuggles up to Ivan. Salivating, Ivan shakes Frank's
hand and then exits with Simone.

After Simone and Ivan exit.

LIGHT

I don't like the way he talks to you
Frank. Troy has made millions for his
label.

FRANK

(to Light, shaking his head)
And I've made millions for Troy. So and
next. Learned a long time ago new money
gotta nice scent to it. Let it change
hands, the scent is gone forever,
dragging folks memory right along with
it. And Ivan, that sadistic, pathetic
fuck can only get a hard on for chicks
with dicks. Only respect I want from him,
is on the dotted line.

LIGHT

Speaking of line, Frank, I finally got
one on Angela's mother. She's still in
the Bay area...someplace in Oakland, but
she's basically living on the streets
strung out.

FRANK

Does she sing anymore?

CONTINUED:

LIGHT

With a tin cup if anything. Do you want me to have her picked up.

Frank thinks a moment, then shakes his head no.

FRANK

Naw, that would be like throwing a cup of hot water in hell.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Frank pops a cork of champagne. Pours it for Ivan and a group of station programmers, including Big Daddy Cash.

FRANK

Gentlemen, here's to the top radio stations in the country.

STATION MANAGERS

Here, here.

FRANK

I salute you and what's going to be a number one hit, "Other Side of Free".

Everybody drinks a toast.

FRANK

And now a special treat from me and Ivan.

Frank signals to Light. Light huffs over to the light switch. He pushes one button and the lights dim. The next button starts loud, pulsating music. On cue, out from the french doors parade a line of strippers.

INT. RADIO STATION - DAY

Big Daddy Cash spins a single on the turntable.

CASH

(in the mike)

And here's one from Gold Soul, posthumously released. Sadly the sister and brother act perished in a fire six months ago. The lone survivor, Angela DeLaSalle, sings the lead and what a voice.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Frank stands near the radio listening. CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see Angela listening too.

CONTINUED:

The song finishes. Frank clicks off the radio, ever so delighted with himself.

FRANK

Did you like it? A fitting tribute, don't you think? I'm sure they're in heaven right now singing along.

Angela doesn't answer, appears detached. Looks away. Frank depleted, starts to exit, changes his mind.

FRANK

I found your mother.

CLOSE ON ANGELA - a glimmer of life.

FRANK

(uncharacteristically
stammering)

She's doing fine. But um... he wanted me to tell you how much she loved you and how sorry she was about the fire. She said tell my Angela...

As Frank rattles on we see Angela's face go from hope to despair and then to smoldering anger. Finally...

ANGELA

(bitter control)

Angela died with Gold Soul. From now on, you get to call me Angel.

Frank grins, a point for him.

ANGELA

That's my name from here on out. You find me some new material and I guarantee Angel will sing the hell out of it.

Frank, not sure how to respond to this change.

ANGEL

And Frank.

Angel turns around to face him. For the first time in months, she really looks at him.

ANGEL

Thank you. Without you, I never would have survived.

Frank nods sheepishly.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

OK, Angel baby, so and next, let's go
make us some goddamn music.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - DAY

Frank introduces Angel to her new team, a suspender wearing
twin brother duo, NATE, and NATHANIAL, 30 ish.

FRANK

These two help put the Philly sound on
the map. They've heard "Other Side of
Free".

(to the brothers)

That's just a prelude to what she can
really do with the right kind of
material.

NATE

(laughing)

We hear the hoofbeats Frank. Just point
us toward the piano and two shots of gin
and we'll mix us up a song.

FRANK

Three songs. In a week. She opens for
Troy in Detroit next Friday.

ANGLE - ANGEL

This is news to her.

FRANK

(to Angel)

If you think it's too soon...

ANGEL

(smirking)

For me or for them?

Nate and Nathaniel simultaneously snicker and make a sizzling
sound through their teeth.

FRANK

(chuckling)

Ok, let's get down to it.

(to the twins)

I was thinking she should open with
"Other Side of Free"...

ANGEL

Absolutely not.

CONTINUED:

As she walks toward the piano...

ANGEL

I think we should come up with songs that can fuse my gospel background with something kind of bluesy, but with a hard funk edge...

HOLD ON FRANK as he watches Angel take control. Clearly he feels usurped.

INT. HALLWAY - STUDIO - LATE NIGHT

Nate comes out stretching, meets Frank in the hall.

FRANK

How's it going?

NATE

She got us sweatin', roped and tied. Had to sneak out to take a leak. The girl is driven!

Frank peers in the observation window where he sees Angel, still full of energy, demonstrating a melody change to Nathaniel.

NATE

She knows music and she's got good instincts.

FRANK

Yeah, well, I pay you to be the expert.

Nate is surprised by the edge in Frank's voice, shrugs and proceeds on down the hall to nature's call.

INT. QUE' SERA CLUB - EARLY MORNING

Angela is folded over the piano in an exhausted slumber. Frank enters, admires her for a moment, then picks her up, she stirs, puts her arms around him as she drifts off back to sleep.

INT. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Frank gently eases a sleeping Angel onto the bed. He studies her, becomes aroused. Angel opens her eyes.

FRANK

Girl, I think I've fooled around and let you puncture a big old hole in my heart.

CONTINUED:

He kisses her. Angel tentative, resists.

FRANK
(awkwardly sits up and away
from her)
Maybe you staying here with me is not
such a good idea anymore. You're back to
yourself, maybe we should look in to
getting you a place...

As Frank avoids looking at her, we see a fleeting look of
terror cross Angel's face.

And as if to quiet the terror, Angel shyly places her hand on
Frank's back. Frank looks at her, searches her face for any
sign of love or desire. He finds neither. Yet Angel musters
some kind of sentiment and kisses him, peck-like at first and
then deeper.

FRANK
Angel, you don't have to do this. You
don't owe me. Angel...

Angel continues to kiss him as they fall back on the bed.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Frank, post sex, laid out snoring. The bed space next to him
conspicuously empty.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Angel sits at the piano working on a song (her signature
song) Suddenly she savagely bangs the keys repeatedly.

INT. GYNECOLOGIST EXAM ROOM - DAY

Angel, her feet in stirrups, prepares to be examined by the
GYNECOLOGIST, who's thoroughly perturbed by the presence of
Frank at his elbow.

FRANK
I don't see why she has to be examined
first to get pills. I told you I don't
want a diaphragm for her. You heard me
say that, didn't you?

The gynecologist glares at Frank. Frank returns the look with
a glare of his own while ANGEL, humiliated, uses the drape to
hide.

EXT. DETROIT CONCERT HALL - DAY

Thousands of teens and young adults are lined up to enter.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

ANGLE MAKEUP MIRROR

Wherein a more sophisticated, but harder around the edges
Angel stares back at us. WIDER ANGLE and we see BOSTON, gay,
black, 40ish doing her makeup.

BOSTON

You 'bout the coolest cucumber I ever
seen before a show.

No response from Angel.

BOSTON

You know my make-up don't crack so you
can talk to me and still be the queen.

ANGEL

(coldly)

I thought Frank hired you to do makeup,
not chit chat.

Boston rears back dramatically just as Frank enters carrying
a huge bouquet of flowers and a magazine.

FRANK

(kissing her)

You look beautiful.

(checking out her hair, to
Boston)

I said restrained. I didn't mean fix it
like she was going to vote.

Frank takes over Angel's hair rearranging as Boston exits.
Frank kisses Angel again.

ANGEL

(shooing him away)

Frank stop, you'll mess up my make-up.

Frank hurt by the rebuff. Recovers, shows her the first issue
of PEOPLE MAGAZINE with Mia Farrow on the cover.

FRANK

You see this? It's all about celebrities
in every field. One day I'm getting you
the cover. How do you like Boston?

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

I don't know him well enough to like or dislike. Thanks for the flowers.

FRANK

Sweetheart, are you OK?

ANGEL

Think I'm just tired from all the rehearsal. You don't happen to have any more of those red pills, do you? They really help pick me up.

Frank retrieves a vial from his pocket. Offers Angel two pills. She downs them immediately just as...

Troy enters, looking wild as ever, and carrying a bottle of liquor, of which he's clearly already sampled.

TROY

Well if it isn't Rapunzel and her prince.
How 'bout a little toast everybody?
Something to chase the pre-show jitters
away.

Frank takes one look at Troy, storms into the hallway yelling...

FRANK

I'm on a goddamn warpath. Somebody better get some black coffee in here.

TROY

(yelling behind Frank)
Come on Frank, I'm young, fun, and full
of rum.

ANGEL

(quietly)
If you want, I'll have a toast with you
Troy.

Troy spins around with the grace of the inebriated, stumbles into Angel. Angel steadies him. An awkward moment as they disentangle. Something passes between them, a certain chemistry, a certain recognition of grief behind the eyes. Whichever, it's too much for Troy. He backs up.

TROY

A pretty lady like you really shouldn't drink before a show. Leave that to the assholes.

CONTINUED:

On that Troy staggers out.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

A rowdy bunch of teens and young adults scream Troy's name.

HOUSE PA
Good evening ladies and gentlemen...
Welcome to...

INT. CONCERT HALL WING - DAY

Frank fixes a curl in Angel's hair.

FRANK
Remember, invite the audience in.

Angel nods. Frank retrieves from his pocket, a diamond bracelet. He clasps it around Angel's wrist.

ANGEL
Frank, it's beautiful.

FRANK
For luck.

ANGEL
Should I say anything? I mean introduce the song...

FRANK
No, just let the music do your talking. This is not a make or break. We're doing these dates just to get your feet wet, generate a little heat...OK?

HOUSE PA
Let's give a warm welcome to Angel Delasalle, ladies and gentlemen...

Lukewarm applause as Angel takes the stage. Some catcalls from the men in attendance. Angel takes her place at the mike, looks out at the thousands jammed against the stage, disappointed that she isn't Troy.

Angel momentarily frozen as she flashes...

FLASHBACK SEQUENCE:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Christina applying a cold compress to Angela's face.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
(to Christina)
My dreams will always include you.

INT. EMBALMING ROOM

Whisper standing up in the coffin singing the Supremes song while Angela, Junior and Christina laugh and join in.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Eleven year old Angela pleading with her mother.

ANGEL
I won't sing anymore. Just don't send me
away...

END OF FLASHBACK - BACK TO SCENE

Angel shuts her eyes, takes a deep breath, then starts to sing a Capella. We see the band behind her confused. They had been waiting for a count. They look to each other for a clue. Angel continues to sing

BAMMA
She forgot to count off. She was supposed
to start with the band.

FRANK
That's ok. The girl hooked 'em.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

They've sat up and taken notice.

ANGEL, suddenly stops singing, kicks off her shoes, shakes her hair loose.

ANGEL
(to the audience)
That's better. You all ready to get
loose?

The audience goes wild and so does Angel. Her performance an ecstatic release...

TROY

comes up behind Frank.

TROY
(smiling as he watches Angel)
I'd say Rapunzel just let down her hair.

CONTINUED:

HOLD ON them both watching Angel. Frank looking disgruntled and Troy looking enamoured.

LATER

The sound of Troy on stage singing as Frank escorts an excited Angel backstage.

FRANK

I meant invite them in for tea, not beer and nuts. There's a difference.

ANGEL

But the audience....

FRANK

That's not your audience. You know why? Because, by the time I get through, you're going to be the classiest singer to grace a stage.

ANGEL

But just now, I felt so free...

FRANK

(sardonically)

Did you? It seemed to me the only emancipation out there was you freeing a poor imitation of your mother.

Angel stung.

FRANK

I'm sorry if that hurt your feelings. But style comes from originality, not imitation. Got me?

Angel shakes her head yes.

FRANK

Now let's go celebrate.

ANGEL

Can I watch Troy for a minute?

Frank miffed. He doesn't get to answer for Angel has already moved closer to the curtain to get a better view of Troy. Frank moves closer to her...

ANGEL'S POV:

Troy working his audience into a frenzy with his frenetic energy and athletic dancing.

CONTINUED:

Sweating up a storm, he rips off his vest, throws it into the audience of screaming fans, takes a hit from a joint, then spontaneously jumps from one instrument to the next: the bass, the drums, the guitar, the piano...He's adept at them all.

ANGLE - THE AUDIENCE

They're mobbing the stage trying to get at Troy.

FRANK
(whispering in her ear)
See what I mean? They come to see him
sweat. But you, they'll come to see sing.

Angel continues to watch Troy while Frank watches her.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

A crowded post show party. Musicians, promoters, radio jocks, groupies in various states of drugged out stupor dance or make out. We see Troy furtively glancing in Angel's direction while Angel, uncomfortable in this setting, tries to melt into the woodwork.

FRANK across the room involved in a serious conversation with some promoters about Angel as...

A DANCER offers Angel some cocaine. Troy quickly steps in, waves her off.

ANGEL
(to Troy)
You realize, don't you, that that's the
second time today you've said no for me.

TROY
Somebody has to.

ANGEL
What's that supposed to mean?

Before Troy can answer, a GRACE JONES LOOK ALIKE pulls him on the floor to dance.

ANGEL jealously watches them dance. Troy catches her eye, Angel turns away quickly. She looks over at Frank who now demonstrates for the promoters Moses's new trick. Angel sighs, crosses to the bar, pours a shot of Scotch.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

While Angel holds her hands over her eyes, Frank leads her by the hand into...

CONTINUED:

HER DRESSING ROOM

where lined up are twelve sequined halter gowns with matching stiletto heels.

Angel screeches in delight, jumps up and down while hugging Frank.

INT. STAGE - DAY

Angel, dressed in high heels and one of her new chic dresses, performs her second song. This time everything about her is more restrained.

STAGE WING

Frank looks on approvingly. Troy watches a minute, frowns at Frank, then storms off.

BACKSTAGE - LATER

As Frank escorts her...

FRANK

You're using your hands too much. Looks like a puppet show.

ANGEL

I know you're trying to help me but would it kill you to say something nice for a change?

FRANK

Nice is not going to make you a superstar. Nice are the people who buy tickets to see you sing without paddle hands interpreting the song for 'em.

Angel nods, she's got it, he doesn't have to keep hammering away.

EXT. CINCINNATI AIRPORT - DAY

Angel, Frank, Troy and the tour entourage get into their respective limos and speed through the city.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

The sound of Moses screeching and Frank laughing. PULL BACK and we see Frank holding the leash and Moses straining to get at the half dressed PROMOTOR who screams under the bed.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Hope my money is under that bed or I'm letting Moses go. He just doesn't like it when Poppa gets cheated.

INT. ANGEL'S HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Frank wearing just his shorts, stands over Angel who's glued to the television watching "Charlie's Angels." Frank hands her two pills which Angel downs without looking up.

Frank clicks off the television. Angel, almost robotic, crosses to the bed, gets in. Frank follows behind. He starts to make love to her. Angel, on rote, turns off the light. Frank surprises her by turning it back on.

FRANK

I want to see you.

ANGEL

The light hurts my eyes Frank. Please.

She turns off the light again. Frank grunts, continues to make love to her. Angel shuts her eyes, murmurs on cue.

INT. CINCINNATI STAGE - DAY

Angel does her third song to enthusiastic applause. As she comes off stage.

FRANK

Better. I want you moving, but not so much hip.

(pointedly)

Just pretend you're in bed.

Angel stunned by his flippancy, is about to retort, but then Frank possessively puts his arm around her as he waves to an approaching VIP.

INT. STADIUM - STAGE AREA - DAY

Troy in the midst of making a deodorant commercial. Frank in the middle of the hub, busily offering suggestions to the director while Angel watches, totally absorbed from a distance.

Troy appears irritated by the whole process. He signals for a PRETTY WOMAN to hand him a beer. He takes a swig.

The director, annoyed, takes the beer away and replaces it with a can of Right Guard Deodorant. Troy, amused, begins another take.

CONTINUED:

TROY

(deadpan into the camera)

My fans have come to expect me to be as
downright stinky and funky as a used
Kotex...

Angel bursts out laughing. No one else does. All annoyed eyes
turn on her. Angel apologetic, shrinks back into the
shadows. As they resume, Troy winks at her. Angel smiles
back.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Angel wakes with a start from one of her nightmares. She
feels for Frank. His side of the bed is empty. She stumbles
out of bed, dizzy.

ANGEL

(calling out)

Frank.

No answer except for Moses squealing in his cage.

ANGEL

(to Moses)

Is your name Frank? Quiet down before
they put us out of here.

INT. LOBBY - LATER

Angel wanders the lobby looking for Frank. She hears piano
playing coming from the lounge.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge is empty except for a few workers cleaning up for
the night. Troy sits at the piano singing a song about lost
chance, a song different in tempo and feel than what we've
come to expect from Troy. Angel watches him, surprised by
the lyrics and the passion. When he finishes, she claps.

Troy turns around surprised.

ANGEL

So you do have another side.

Troy pats the seat next to him. Angel joins him. And then he
sings a beautiful ballad to her.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Except for the long sleek limo, the parking lot in this run
down neighborhood is empty.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Frank and Light sit on one seat in the limo. Across from them is a young woman crying....

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm not lying. I don't wanna go to the police but my mother said we should get something to stay quiet. What if I'm pregnant? I'm only seventeen.

The girl sobs more dramatically. Frank and Light exchange looks. They know they're being worked.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE - NIGHT

Troy appreciatively watches Angel sing an improved version of his ballad.

TROY

Girl, you're the real thing.

Angel looks pleased by the compliment.

TROY

I so envy you.

EXT. HOTEL - LATER

The limo pulls up to the hotel. The valet holds the door open for Frank and Light.

FRANK

(tipping the Valet)
If I had a dollar for every place I had to clean up what Troy's cock left behind, I'd be a rich man.

LIGHT

You are a rich man Frank.

FRANK

Light, you used to be a lot more fun.

Light laughs.

LIGHT

I think she was lying myself...Troy's got better taste...

FRANK

Since when? These days, his taste in woman is mirroring his taste in music.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

The record company wants to drop him. I can't blame them. The album isn't selling, the single isn't getting airplay...I can't bribe every station...if that girl makes good on her threat...He really can't afford any more bad press.

LIGHT

He'll straighten out.

FRANK

After I get Angel launched, maybe I'll get him back on track. Haven't figured out how yet or if he's even worth it...

LIGHT

He's a little wild, but he's worth it...

Frank shrugs noncommittal.

INT. HOTEL LOUNGE

Troy and Angel have gone from serious to silly in their singing and piano playing. They're doing exaggerated snippets from Hendrix, the Carpenters, Sly Stone, the Staple Singers. Angel laughs uproariously, something we haven't ever heard her do.

INT. LOBBY - DAY

Frank, fatigued, moves through the lobby. Light, as usual, trailing behind. For a moment we think Frank is going to catch sight of Troy and Angel. Instead, Light does first and quickly diverts Frank's attention.

INT. ELEVATOR - MINUTES LATER

Frank pushes the thirty fifth floor. He looks over at Light who looks fidgety.

FRANK

What the hell is wrong with you?

LIGHT

Nothing. I think I left something in the car.

Light pushes the button for the next floor. The door opens. Light gets off. Frank throws him a puzzled look as the doors close back.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

Light approaches a giggling Troy and Angel. They're so entranced with each other, they fail to see him standing there. Eventually, they look up when Light clears his throat.

LIGHT

(uncomfortable)

Frank's waiting. I'll get the elevator for you.

ANGEL

(looks to Troy)

This was fun.

TROY

I'm a fun kind of guy. You have a great laugh. You should share it more.

Light takes Angel's arm, gently points her toward the elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR

Angel enters. Light pushes her floor. Uneasy silence for a moment.

LIGHT

(not looking at her)

Angel, I've never lied to Frank but I know he wouldn't like it that you were with Troy. Troy is like a son to him. I'm sure it was all innocent. Perhaps you woke up and Frank wasn't there, so you were concerned and wandering the hotel looking for him...

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

The elevator opens and there stands Frank, eyes like ice picks.

ANGEL

There you are. I was looking for you and I ran into Light. Where'd you go off to in the middle of the night. I was lonely.

Frank looks to Light whose face reveals nothing. Angel quickly pecks Frank on the lips...

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

I'm tired. If we're leaving in a few hours, I'd better get some sleep.

On that Angel marches down the hall a new pep in her step.

HOLD ON FRANK looking confused and annoyed.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Angel stares out the window. HER POV:

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Troy patiently signing autographs for a crowd of adoring fans.

INT. PLANE - DAY

Frank slides into the seat beside Angel, hands her a stack of newspaper/magazine reviews.

FRANK

(reading from them)

Angel DeLaSalle has a voice that's heaven sent...Angel soars...

ANGEL

(excited)

Let me see.

She grabs the papers from Frank, reads as Frank looks at his watch.

FRANK

Troy would be late for his own funeral.

Frank looks at Angel, wishes he could retract his words...

FRANK

Sorry sweetheart...I didn't mean

Angel starts to heave and convulse dramatically...

FRANK

(concerned, takes out the pill vial)

Angel, honey, I didn't mean...

Just as quickly as she started, Angel stops. Smirks.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

Frank, I'm a big girl. I can hear the word funeral and not have a break down.

FRANK

Whew I don't know what I'm going to do with you.

(patting his heart)

You aging me girl.

ANGEL

(smiling wickedly)

Other night you said I was keeping you young...so which is it?

FRANK

(laughing)

What's gotten into you?

He takes her hand just as Troy comes down the aisle. Troy looks over at them. Angel eases her hand from under Franks. Frank looks from Troy to Angel. Troy looks at the pill vial, then keeps moving.

EXT. MINNEAPOLIS AIRPORT - DAY

Troy has a long line of autograph seekers waiting. As Troy signs an album cover he poses for a picture, yanks Angel away from Frank, puts his arm around her as the photo is taken.

TROY

(to angel)

Smile. These are your fans too.

Angel smiles while Frank glares at Troy. He takes Angel by the elbow and leads her toward the waiting limo.

INT. HOTEL PRIVATE PARTY - NIGHT

A wall-to-wall love, smoke and drug fest masquerading as an industry party for Troy and Angel. Troy shakes a few more hands then makes his way over to Angel who is trying to make sense of a stoned musician.

Troy comes up from behind, grabs Angel's hand...

TROY

Let's make a run for it.

Angel momentarily frightened, quickly looks in Frank's direction.

CONTINUED:

Troy cups her chin, moves it toward him, points toward the balcony.

TROY
I wasn't talking kidnapping. Just air.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Troy at the balcony railing. He inhales deeply, appreciating the fresh air and the city lights below.

TROY
You know why I like your song "Other Side of Free"? Because freedom, it's what we all trade once we make that pact with fame. You can take that song further though. It's not finished.
(something in the sky catches his attention)
Look, there's a shooting star, you want to make a wish?

No response from Angel. Troy turns around, sees Angel methodically counting to herself with her eyes closed as she inches toward him.

TROY
Baby, don't tell me you're afraid of a little height.

ANGEL
Little? We're fifty floors up.

Troy picks her up in one swirl, plops her up on the railing. Angel lets out a mouse screech.

ANGEL
Troy, you wild child, put me down, I'll fall.

TROY
I won't let you.
(beat)
But I won't be able to stop it if you don't stay off the pills.

ANGEL
(flustered)
I better go back in.

TROY
I like wild child. I'll accept that as your pet name for me.

CONTINUED:

Angel smiles in spite of herself.

ANGEL
Frank will wonder where I am.

TROY
First make a wish.

ANGEL
(shakes her head no, suddenly
sad)
I stopped wishing a long time ago.
(attempt at lightheartedness)
Anyway, you know what they say, be
careful what you wish for, you just
may...

Mid-sentence, Troy kisses her. For a moment Angel passionately returns the kiss, then pulls away, furious. Troy holds on to her.

TROY
Don't ever stop wishing baby. An artist
without hope is...

ANGEL
What? You?

Troy registers his hurt.

TROY
I'm not out to hurt you Angel.

ANGEL
Please! Shit happens, life has a way of
teaching you that, wish or no wishing.

On that Angel jumps down just as Ivan and Frank appear.

IVAN
There you two are. I've been telling
Frank you all need a break before
Vegas...so tomorrow, you'll be my guests.
(cupping Angel's chin.)
Frank and I'll talk about your brilliant
career while you two kids romp in the
sea.

INT. PRIVATE PLANE - DAY

Angel stares out the window at the brilliant sea below. Frank studies her. Feeling his gaze, Angel turns to him, offers a small smile and then returns to the view out the window.

EXT. GULF OF MEXICO - YACHT - DAY

A first class yacht where on deck we see Ivan and several other executives discussing a recording/promotional strategy for Angel. On the other side of the yacht, a WORKER straps Troy and Angel into snorkeling gear.

MINUTES LATER

Angel and Troy position themselves inside the motor boat.

TROY
(to Angel)
I accept your apology for yesterday's comments. I concede they were not totally without merit.

Angel smiles amused - this Troy continues to surprise her.

The worker gets ready to take the helm when...

TROY
(to the worker)
There'll be something in it for you if you manage to get back on board without them knowing you aren't with us...And you can throw me a bottle of champagne while you're at it.

The worker looks to Angel and then to Troy. Smiles conspiratorially.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Like he handles everything else, Troy maneuvers the motor boat at outlaw speed. Angel laughing, exhilarated, holds on for dear life.

EXT. BOAT - LATER

Angel and Troy's boat has travelled to a remote area, beautiful in its isolation. They sip champagne as they do what they do best - argue.

TROY
It's not me they're making big plans about. You've seen the reviews. I'm the runner up in this pageant. You're the star of the hour.

ANGEL
But you act like I asked for it.

CONTINUED:

TROY

Well if you didn't who did? The shame is not in wanting it...the shame is not believing you deserve it. And maybe you don't. Boy, I'm so deep, I scare myself.

Angel irritated. Troy lets his fingertips brush her leg.

ANGEL

Hope you don't think I'm going to sleep with you.

TROY

No, I didn't. What I was thinking was you would just fuck me like no tomorrow.

Angel moves away, furious.

TROY

I'm kidding. You take yourself way too serious for a young woman. I know what you need.

Before Angel has time to react, Troy has picked her up and thrown her overboard.

SERIES OF SHOTS - AT SEA

...Angel and Troy playfully romp like two kids

...Angel and Troy swim underwater as gracefully and as in sync as the fish.

...Angel and Troy serenely float on top of the water, looking for pictures in the sky, connected by their floating hair and the tips of their hands and feet.

...As the sun sets over the water, the motor boat makes its way gently, barely rustling a wave. At the helm we see both Angel and Troy. Troy standing behind Angel holding on tenderly to her waist while nuzzling her neck. Angel softly sings to him as she steers them along.

EXT. LAS VEGAS - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

Angel standing up in the limo, her head through the roof window as she admires all the gaudy lights of Las Vegas.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

Angela collapses in the seat, thrilled.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

Happy?

Angel nods yes.

FRANK

(a slight edge)

I hope so.

INT. CLUB DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Boston works on Angel's hair. She's very fidgety. Boston has to keep redoing what he's done. Both are working each other's last nerve.

There's a knock at the door. Boston, past ready for a break, goes to the door, opens it.

ANGEL

Who is it?

BOSTON

One of Troy's people.

Angel beams. Boston closes the door and hands her a small box. She opens it and finds a beautiful jeweled angel barrette.

BOSTON

(appreciating the barrette)

Now I can work with that.

Angel reads the card: WILD CHILD.

Boston strains to read over her shoulder.

ANGEL

Can you keep a secret Boston?

BOSTON

Better than the Pope at confession.

Angel laughs.

INT. CASINO - DAY

Troy plays craps. Though he's on a losing streak, he remains good natured about it.

TROY

(blows on the dice)

Come on baby, give me a golden Angel.

CONTINUED:

He throws the dice. He wins. The table goes nuts for him.
Troy bows dramatically.

From behind, Frank taps his arm.

FRANK

Cash out. We need to talk before the
show.

TROY

I'll be back fellas. The management wants
a word with me.

EXT. HOTEL GROUNDS - LATER

From a distance we see Frank and Troy walk, heated words
passing between them. PULL IN CLOSER....

TROY

So I'm not a hit factory.

FRANK

You don't have to tell me. I get the
stats.

TROY

I know they're better singers Frank, but
my songs...

(realizes he's talking to deaf
ears)

Hey, I get it...so and next, right? Maybe
it is time we went our separate ways.

FRANK

Separate? Boy, we're forever connected
like dead Siamese twins. Who else would
manage you? You're too much work for too
little return.

Troy stung. A beat.

FRANK

Troy, I didn't really mean that.

TROY

Yes you did. You're always unnecessarily
cruel when you're afraid of losing. So
let's see what could old Frank be afraid
of losing now. Oh, maybe it's the golden
haired Angel...And you are going to lose
her, Frank. Because that's one thing you
can't manage...to make people love you
when they don't...

CONTINUED:

FRANK

I don't know about that. I made people love you and let me tell you that was no small feat given your ounce of talent.

TROY

So now we go for the juggler. You didn't make anything Frank except your own ego...

FRANK

Yeah, that too. I made it all. It's you who made nothing. Everything you think you own, I co-own. Every song...the house you live in...the cars you drive...even the clothes on your back...

In one swoop, Troy unbuckles his pants, kicks them off along with his briefs.

FRANK

Troy. Fuck. I'm sorry. Put your pants back on. What the hell are you doing?

TROY

Making you sure you know what side of my ass I want you to kiss...

He hands Frank his clothes, then saunters away laughing, his behind in the breeze while Frank shouts after him.

FRANK

You stay away from her.

INT. STAGE WING - NIGHT

The promoter is breathing down Frank's neck as they both watch Angel finish her set. We see that she's wearing the new Angel barrette.

PROMOTER

No one knows where he is, Frank. We'll have a riot. He better show up.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Angel sings the last song to thunderous applause. Just as she takes her last bow...

Troy enters drunk from the other side of the stage. Excited applause from the audience.

Troy takes Angel's hand, pulls her with him to the mike.

CONTINUED:

TROY
(in the mike)
Because this is Vegas where people love
taking chances...

Wild applause from the audience.

TROY
Me and this golden Angel...

He eyes Angel up and down, taking special notice of the angel
barrette. Then to the audience.

TROY
She is a golden Angel, wouldn't you all
agree?

The audience answers with hoots and hollers.

TROY
So, we're going to take a chance and sing
a duet that we didn't rehearse...you
ready for that?

The audience claps wildly.

TROY
(to Angel)
Don't look so surprised baby.

STAGE WING

Promoter relieved, pats Frank on the shoulder. Frank
unamused. Looks to Light for explanation. Light shrugs -
this is just as much a surprise to him.

ON STAGE

ANGEL
(hissing)
Troy, are you out of your mind?

TROY
(loud enough for the audience
to hear)
Yes, wild child is out of his mind. ...I
walked in the lobby today with my ass
showing. And it felt damn good!!!!

Drum beat and the audience laughs uproariously.

Troy signals his band...

CONTINUED:

Troy and Angel sing a duet. They make romping, titillating music together.

PAN THE AUDIENCE

They're wild for them.

INT. RESTAURANT - NEXT MORNING

Frank wolfs down a huge breakfast as Angel, distressed, argues with him.

ANGEL

He was just having fun Frank. Ok, he drinks too much but the audience loved it. I really want to finish the tour. I'm just now starting to feel confident on stage.

FRANK

Good. So you'll like my other news. Ivan wants you to cut an album...

Frank registers his annoyance at her lack of excitement.

FRANK

I thought you'd be happy.

ANGEL

I am, but...

FRANK

(wiping his mouth)
Sweetheart, "Other Side of Free" didn't even chart. I think we can say it died a quick death and maybe that's the way it should be. So this tour has been great...gave us both a chance to see the star you can be. Now so and next.

ANGEL

But what's another month or two or a week even? I thought we were going to Europe.

FRANK

(folding his napkin)
Look, there's no tour, no Europe. Troy left last night.

ANGEL

(takes a beat to integrate)
I don't believe you. He wouldn't go without saying goodbye.

CONTINUED:

Frank slams down his fork in his plate. Angel jumps.

FRANK

Have I not been good to you? Have I not
been family when you didn't have one?
Have I not kept every promise I ever made
to you? Then don't play me for a fool.
You either walk now or you stay and keep
up your end of the deal.

Angel doesn't move.

Frank, self satisfied, smiles at her, then throws a few bills
on the table. He stands, kisses her, then "affectionately"
pinches her cheek, much to hard to pass for affection.

FRANK

(whispering in her ear)
If you don't believe me and would like to
make sure he's gone, check at the front
desk. And then I don't want to ever hear
Troy's name
(puckering her lips)
come out of these beautiful lips again.
I'll see you upstairs.

Frank exits. A moment as Angel processes what just happened.
Then as an afterthought, she rubs the place on her cheek
where Frank left his mark.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

The clerk checks the guest sheet. Shakes his head at Angel.

CLERK

Yes, he's checked out.

ANGEL

Did he leave a note or anything?

The Clerk checks around. Shakes his head no.

CLERK

No, but I'll tell you what he did leave.
A mess. But you know these rock and
rollers, they're the scum of the earth.
A nice girl like you shouldn't really get
involved with them.

INT. ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Angel pushes her floor button. Takes from under her clothes, the barrette Troy gave her. The elevator stops and a woman with a little girl gets on.

The elevator stops at Angel's floor. She gets off, then uses her hand to hold the door while she hands the barrette to the little girl.

ANGEL

This would really be pretty in your hair.

Angel let's the doors close before the little girl can even thank her.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

A huge recording studio, top of the line equipment, back up singers, the best musicians all present to support the vocals of...

ANGEL who, at the mike records the first single from her debut album.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH

Frank listens, watches Angel. He's bowled over.

FRANK

(claps his hand, to anybody
who's listening)

Goddamit, Angel, spread your wings! She brought the holy ghost in here, ya'll. That's a number one hit if I ever heard one.

The love ballad bridges us over:

MONTAGE

ANGLE - BILLBOARD CHART

as it displays Angel's song, moving up from number ten to number five.

The love ballad melts into:

AMERICAN BANDSTAND - DAY

Where Angel performs the song live to an audience of enthusiastic teenagers.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

The song continues as Angel performs for a different, more sophisticated audience at an exclusive club.

INT. DRESSMAKER SHOP - DAY

The song continues as Angel gets fitted for new performing gowns.

INT. CONCERT HALL STAGE - NIGHT

The song continues. Angel performs for thousands of fans who mob the stage, many of whom wear "Angel" merchandise.

Security has to intervene. Clearly Angel has now arrived at super stardom.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

The song continues as Frank is handed mail from Light who points out a letter from Troy with a London return address. Frank tears up the letter, pitches it in the trash.

MONTAGE ENDS - SONG ENDS

INT. QUE' SERA BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angel is fitting Frank into a Santa Claus outfit. Frank is clearly taking this Santa business seriously as he preens in front of the mirror.

FRANK

Ho!Ho! Ho! Don't you think I need some more belly?

ANGEL

(laughing at him)

You already can hardly walk. Ok, one more pillow.

Angel grabs a pillow off the bed, puts it under his costume. Frank grabs her hand.

FRANK

You sure you don't want to be Mrs. Santa?

Angel looks uncomfortable.

FRANK

No need for panic. I meant just for the day.

CONTINUED:

Light enters, laughs at the sight of Frank. Angel relieved for the interruption.

LIGHT

Frank, I don't know why you won't let me be Santa just one year.

FRANK

Because you're too big. You'd scare the kids. Plus, they love me.

Frank exits practicing his Ho!Ho! Ho's!

INT. QUE' SERA - DAY

Children, hundreds, enjoy the annual Frank sponsored Christmas party. Though no one seems to be enjoying it more than "Santa Frank" who dispenses expensive toys all around. Angel stands in background too sad to participate.

UNDERWATER

Dazzling shafts of bold color as we see a lone sinewy figure glide gracefully under water.

In a burst, Angel rises to the surface. Momentarily blinded by the water in her eyes, she reaches out for her towel on the tile surface, but it's not there.

She squints, then a towel is dropped in her line of vision. She looks up at...

FRANK who grins down at her, holding Billboard.

FRANK

You did it. You're number one, baby!

Angel squeals with delight, grabs Frank by the neck.

FRANK

Hold on. You know I can't swim... Oh what the hell.

Frank laughing, jumps in the water wearing his thousand dollar suit.

INT. DICK CAVETT STUDIO - DAY

Angel and Frank sit being interviewed live.

CONTINUED:

DICK CAVETT

So how does it feel to have a Grammy nomination and the number one song in the country?

ANGEL

It feels good...I'm very...

Frank laughs a little too forced, pats Angel's knee.

FRANK

Let me tell you, she's being modest now, but she's very excited. And she thanks all of her fans out there...

DICK CAVETT

And where did you get such a voice? Were any of your parents singers?

FRANK

As you know Dick, it's very difficult for Angel to talk about her family who are all dead...

Angel shocked, looks at Frank. Frank ignores the look, continues on while Angel tries to smile as if she's a part of this...

INT. CAVETT STUDIO - BACK STAGE - LATER

Angel furiously walks ahead of Frank as she tries to find a place unoccupied by people. Finally she enters...

THE GREENROOM

where she immediately turns on Frank.

ANGEL

Frank, I have a mouth. I have a tongue. I can talk. I am not stupid. They were supposed to be interviewing us. Not just you. Us!

FRANK

So shoot me. I got a little diarrhea of the mouth. I'm excited.

ANGEL

And how dare you say my mother is dead? She is not dead.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

No, she's not. But she might as well be.
You've said that yourself.

ANGEL

Damn you. I've never said that! You may
feel that way about your mother, but I
don't. And in the future, please don't
fucking confuse the two.

On that Angela storms out the room into the ladies room
leaving Frank standing there not sure what hit him.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Angel, dressed in an exotic evening gown, prances through the
hallway ready to show off her Grammy gown to Frank. As she
nears his office door, she is stopped by what she hears...

LIGHT

With everybody getting investigated
Frank, maybe this isn't a good idea. At
least, find another hiding place for the
other set of books.

Angel peeks through the crack in the door where she sees
Frank on a step stool hiding money in the ceiling and then
some ledgers. She watches for a moment, then tiptoes back the
way she came unnoticed.

EXT. RADIO MUSIC HALL - THE GRAMMYS - DAY

The instant Angel exits the limo, she's all showbiz: exotic
frock, a plastic smile in place, attitude.

She waves to the crowd, smiles sweetly at the paparazzi and
reporters and defers to Frank for responses to their
questions.

Frank masterfully ushers her quickly through the crowd,
lingering just long enough to give the people the feeling
they're in the presence of a star and Angel doesn't
disappoint.

INT. RADIO MUSIC HALL - LATER

Angel waits pensively as the presenter wrestles with the
envelope. Frank puts his hand over hers, squeezes it.

PRESENTER

And the winner is Angel DeLaSalle for...

CONTINUED:

Thrilled, Frank jumps up before Angel does, yells yes! He kisses her.

ANGEL
(whispers to him)
Thank you.

Frank, happy beyond belief, wipes away tears he didn't know were even possible. He gives Angel the thumb up sign as she walks to the podium.

AT THE PODIUM

ANGEL
(to the audience)
I want to thank first and foremost God,
without whom nothing is possible. I want
to thank my manager, Frank Ray, who is
my angel...

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Frank, the tears flowing unabashedly, blows her a kiss.

ANGEL
I am so grateful...and I want to dedicate
this to my sister Christina, my brothers
Whisper and Junior.
(looking upward)
My dreams will always include you.
(to the audience)
Thank you.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

Frank being congratulated by Ivan and other well wishers.

BACKSTAGE

Angel makes her way off stage and almost trips over a wire...

A voice in the semi-darkness steadies her

VOICE
This way Miss DeLaSalle with your lovely,
fine self.

A hand reaches into frame. Angel takes the hand and looks up and into Troy's eyes.

ANGEL
(thrilled)
Troy. How did you get here?

CONTINUED:

TROY
I have friends...

BACKSTAGE MINUTES LATER

Troy and Angel have found a cranny to talk.

ANGEL
How could you just leave like that?

TROY
I had to. It wasn't the right time. And I wasn't the right man, not then... Had to start all over. First, find the beauty in one note and then in one melody, eventually in one song...it's hard to describe, but it's was like I had to fall in love with music again so it could fall in love with me. It was the only way I knew how to do it, away from all of this...I get too trapped in it...You've managed not to..

He takes her hand.

TROY
I never stopped thinking about you...

ANGEL
I better get back to my seat.

TROY
I know. I just wanted to see you, let you know how proud I am of what you've done with your music. I knew you'd be a big star. You so deserve it. Will you save a dance for me at the party?

ANGEL
We'll see. Now go.

Troy kisses her. Angel returns the kiss.

ANGEL
I have to go.

As Angel walks backwards down the hallway, her eyes glued to Troy, he reaches into his jacket, pulls out two plane tickets, holds up one.

TROY
This ticket is yours. Back to London with me. I'm willing to beg.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
I'll see you at the party.

AUDIENCE - LATER

Angel slides back into her seat next to Frank.

FRANK
Where were you?

ANGEL
Reporters.

We see Frank silently questioning her flushed face and her avoidance of his gaze.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Angel stares out the window, realizes that they're going in the wrong direction for the party.

ANGEL
Frank where are we going? I thought we were going to the party.

FRANK
No, I thought we'd go home and celebrate just the two of us...

ANGEL
Frank, this is the biggest night of my life...

FRANK
And that's why I figured you'd want to spend it with me.

Frank pops open a cork of champagne while Angel stares at him in disbelief.

INT. GRAMMY PARTY - NIGHT

Troy waits and waits. Finally someone taps him on the shoulder. It's Light.

LIGHT
Angel wanted me to let you know she and Frank decided they would rather spend a quiet evening at home celebrating.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angel looks over at Frank who appears to be asleep. She eases out of bed. Frank grabs her wrist, a death grip.

FRANK

I don't know what I'd do if I ever lost you Angel.

Angel sighs, so used to the routine.

ANGEL

(by rote)

Don't be silly. You're not going to lose me Frank. Ever.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Troy looks around expectantly, no sign of Angel. Reluctantly, he boards the plane.

INT. QUE' SERA - NIGHT - 1976

Angel is being led down the stairs from the living quarters by Frank. She's blindfolded.

The lights are off in the club. He removes the blindfold and a club full of people yell "surprise". Angel overcome. A huge birthday cake is wheeled in with twenty five huge candles on them.

ANGEL

(joking)

Are these candles big enough? And I'm only twenty-four.

FRANK

So close enough. Make a wish....

The request startles Angel, she hesitates...flashes to Troy telling her the same thing.

She inhales deeply, then blows out the candles.

LATER

The dance floor is full of people dancing and celebrating Angel's birthday.

CAMERA FINDS

Angel sitting at a table alone and miserable. But suddenly the DeeJay plays "Rubberband Man" by the Spinners.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

gets up and sashays over to the dance floor and begins to rubberband with the party.

FRANK

from across the room stops his conversation with a promoter and dances across the room to join Angel.

The place goes wild watching the two of them.

Angel surprised and thrilled to see Frank let loose, though dancing is not his forte. He spins her around. She laughs, then spins him around, a rare free moment of them enjoying each other. But then the song ends.

FRANK

(winded)

That's enough. Let's sit back down

ANGEL

No Frank, it's my birthday. Come on just one more dance.

FRANK

(firmly)

I said let's sit back down.

He leads Angel off the floor.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

In the recording booth, Angel sings a LOVE BALLAD. She's obviously frustrated. She stops midway.

Everybody sighs in the recording booth as well as in the control booth. Obviously these interruptions have been going on all day.

FRANK

(to Bamma)

It's the levels. And too much horn. Did you set the damn levels?

ANGEL

(overlapping)

Frank, this is a bunch of shit. I just can't connect with this material. How many times do I have to say, "let me love you." I mean who the hell cares? Moses can sing this. I wanna do one of my songs...

CONTINUED:

Frank clicks on the studio mike.

FRANK
(in the mike)
Hold on sweetheart.

Bamma shakes his head in disgust.

BAMMA
We would do one of her songs if she'd
ever finished one. Nothing satisfies her
anymore.

ANGEL
(overlapping)
Dammit, it's me on the line here. Can't
I at least sing something I believe in?

FRANK
Take five everybody while me and Ms.
Delasalle confer.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Frank shoves Angel out of the studio. Angel yanks away from
his hold.

ANGEL
Don't manhandle me, just don't manhandle
me.

Frank throws up his arms in a conceding gesture.

ANGEL
Frank, this is my third album. It's time
to do something different...

FRANK
(laughs)
Since when do you know when it's time to
do something different?

ANGEL
I don't feel the music, that's all I'm
saying. I don't want to make the same
mistake Troy made. An artist has to
reinvent themselves otherwise...

FRANK
(chuckles menacingly)
An artist plays two bit clubs in Europe.
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (cont'd)

Believe me, once Troy stops being the exotic flavor of the month, he'll be on his knees praying he can still muster half of what he used to.

ANGEL

Maybe not Frank. Maybe he's happy. For some people that's enough.

On that note, Angel heads back into the recording booth.

INT. RECORDING BOOTH - MINUTES LATER

Angel pours some water from the nearby pitcher, takes a gulp.

ANGEL

(joyless, into the monitor)
OK, let's just get through this people.

EXT/INT. LIMO - DAY

The limo navigates Manhattan traffic. Frank turns up the radio in the limo.

RADIO ANNOUNCER V.O.

On the home front, tickets are sold out for Angel's Madison Square Garden Concert next week... and we hear that her European tour sold four hundred thousand tickets in one day.

FRANK

(to the driver)
Slow down.

Frank points out the window, excited.

ANGEL'S POV:

on the Garden's marquee, her name.

Angel offers Frank a small smile of appreciation. Frank obviously deflated.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - DAY

Angel's crew loads in while Angel, on the edge of the stage, looks around in awe at the thousands of empty seats. Frank comes up behind her, puts his arms around her waist, hands her PEOPLE magazine with her picture on the cover.

FRANK

I always deliver on my promises.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
(flatly)
That you do Frank.

Frank barely able to hide his disappointment at her less than enthusiastic reaction.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark except for a dim candle. We see Angel looking at a picture of Troy in a magazine. She hears her bedroom door knob turn. She hides the magazine.

Frank is barely in the room before...

ANGEL
Not tonight Frank. I'm really tired.

Frank moves over to the bed, gets in anyway, gropes her breast.

Angel sighs.

ANGEL
Well, would you mind making it quick then.

Frank pulls away, annoyed.

FRANK
Damn, you sound like I'm taking a dump on you.

ANGEL
Frank, I'm too tired to argue. So if you want it, take it. Otherwise, I'd like to go to sleep.

FRANK
I'll pass. Maybe I'll go fuck the freezer. It'll probably generate more warmth than you do.

Frank starts toward the door.

ANGEL
(bites her lip, then to his back)
I love you Frank.

Frank stops in his tracks.

CONTINUED:

FRANK

(without turning around)

I just wish you would tell me that one time while you were touching me or I was touching you instead of reserving it as the consolation prize always addressed at my back.

Frank exits. Angel exhales, blows out the candle.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - BACKSTAGE - DAY

Cards from well wishers and flowers compete for every surface. Boston zips up Angel in a stunning red evening gown.

Frank enters, all raw nerves and tension. He takes one look at her dress and scowls.

FRANK

Take that off. Red makes you look cheap.
Where's the dress I bought you?
There's a lot of industry folks out there. I want you to put on a good show.

And exit he goes, muttering over some other detail, leaving Angel nauseous.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN STAGE - DAY

Angel "puts on a good show" as she performs an uptempo SONG from her new album to a wildly enthusiastic audience.

THE UPTEMPO SONG CONTINUES OVER:

INT. SOUL TRAIN TELEVISION SHOW - DAY

Angel's uptempo song continues as she performs it live.

EXT. CHICAGO FIELD - DAY

Song continues during a ground-breaking ceremony for a music/performing arts school. Several paparazzi and hundreds of children cheer Angel on as she cuts the symbolic ribbon.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - ON THE ROAD - DAY

Uptempo song continues as Angel practices dance steps with a choreographer. She attempts one that lands her on her behind. Instead of getting up, she just falls out completely, exhausted.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA ARENA - DAY

Song continues as Angel performs the song live in an open air arena.

EXT. TOURING BUS - NIGHT

Song continues as the bus speeds down the highway we see Angel propped in the window asleep.

INT. TOURING BUS - NIGHT

Song continues as Frank gently places a blanket over her. Angel instantly jumps up in a wide-eyed and sleep-deprived, confused state.

ANGEL

What? Am I supposed to be on stage?

FRANK

No, go back to sleep.

Angel retreats back to a restless slumber.

ANGEL

(muttering)

Can somebody find my bed?

Light has watched the whole thing from across the aisle.

LIGHT

(to Frank)

You're working her too hard Frank.

FRANK

Hmm. I thought I could hear myself ask for an opinion.

Light shrugs.

ANGEL'S SONG ENDS.

INT. QUE' SERA - DAY

Post show party. Music plays. Wild dancing on the floor.

Frank with his arm possessively around Angel's waist moves her through the club to meet the VIP's. Angel is tired; the strain of the day has caught up with her.

She whispers to Frank.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

Frank, I'm really tired. I can't keep up this pace.

FRANK

Just a few more minutes.

ANGEL

That's what you said two hours ago. Look I rehearse all day, then I perform...I'm tired...

Frank takes out a pill vial.

ANGEL

I told you I don't want those anymore.

FRANK

These are different.

Frank counts out two, grabs a glass of champagne, hands it to her. Angel turns away.

FRANK

Wait you have something on your mouth.

Angel suspicious, turns toward him. Frank smiles then forces the pills between her teeth. He pats her hard on the back to facilitate swallowing, then hands her the champagne to chase it down.

Angel's eyes brim with tears.

ANGEL

Sometimes I don't know what I hate worse, Frank. My life or you in it.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angel, in hushed tone, on the phone with international directory assistance.

ANGEL

(in phone)

I don't know...Try Troy Cantrell...

She hears a click on the line. She listens.

OPERATOR V.O.

I'm sorry I'm not seeing anything under that name.

CONTINUED:

Angel realizes someone is listening on the other line. She gingerly replaces the receiver

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Frank replaces the receiver.

EXT. LONG ISLAND MANSION - DAY

Angel exits the limo, a puzzled look on her face.

ANGEL'S POV:

A real estate sign on the lawn with a sold sign slapped across it.

Frank, grinning, dangles keys in front of her face.

INT. MANSION - DAY

The place is huge and cavernous. Angel is not happy, though Frank bustles about, seemingly happy enough for the two of them. He leads her down one hallway.

FRANK

I know things have been a little rough for us lately, but I was thinking, maybe with a real home, a place where you can stretch out, not over some club. Maybe in a new environment, you'd be more creative. Maybe we could turn this into a recording studio for you...Can you see me mowing a lawn?

ANGEL

Frank, how could you buy a house?

FRANK

Don't you like it?

ANGEL

Get your money back because I'll never live in it.

On that Angel storms out the front door.

INT. QUE SERA CLUB - DAWN

Angel at the piano, miserably trying to write a new song, "FROM JUST ONE MEMORY". She's flustered, the song eludes her.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

(half muttering, half singing)
...catching the tail end in the
wind...I'll trade you back your past...if
only I can step away fast...searching for
the key that'll set us free...'cause we
both know prison wasn't meant to be. Love
can never anchor on just one memory.

Angel abruptly flings the sheet music across the room.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Angel wakes from another one of her nightmares. She looks over at Frank who doesn't stir. She eases out of bed.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Angel holds the pill vial in her hand. She dumps the whole vial in her hand, pours a glass of water. She puts the handful of pills in her mouth...looks in the mirror, stares at the dark hollow eyes staring back at her, the lifeless complexion...she can hardly bear to look at what she's become...

Suddenly, in one eruption, she spits the pills out at her reflection.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

Frank watches from the control booth as Angel records yet another album. She sings her new song. Frank looks over at Bamma.

FRANK

It's not a hit.

BAMMA

How could it be? There's no commitment,
no passion.

Frank sighs heavily.

EXT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

Angel and Frank emerge from the studio.

ANGEL'S POV: the studio musicians and back up singers heading across the street to a bar.

Frank opens the car door. Angel makes no move to join him.

CONTINUED:

FRANK
(irritated)
What's the matter now?

ANGEL
What harm Frank would it be to have one drink.

FRANK
Because you need to maintain an air of mystique. You're the star. They aren't. How many times do I have to explain it to you?

ANGEL
(irritated too)
So what does the star get Frank? They get to go and have a good time. I get to do what?

FRANK
OK go. I'm sick of this.

Angel starts across the street, then turns back. Frank in the same spot, knowing she would return.

ANGEL
(humiliated)
Frank, I don't have any money. Can I have...I mean what does a drink cost in a place like that?

Taking her elbow.

FRANK
Get in the damn car.

She yanks away, angrily.

ANGEL
Five dollars Frank, that's all. Can I have five dollars for my pocket? My own money Frank. Just this once.

Frank grabs her again. She yanks away. This time Frank slaps her.

INT. LIMO - MINUTES LATER

Frank contrite. Angel steaming.

FRANK
I've never raised my hand to a woman.

CONTINUED:

Angel grunts in disbelief.

FRANK

It's true. I'm scared of losing you
Angel.

ANGEL

Hit me again Frank and you will. I swear.

INT. QUE' SERA - NIGHT

Angel sings the second hit off of the album to an
appreciative audience. CAMERA FINDS Frank in the crowd
looking wistful and Ivan looking ecstatic. Both watch Angel.

IVAN

(clapping Frank on the back)
She singing about loving you Frank?

Ivan takes out his coke vial, begins to snort. Frank takes
the vial away from Ivan and snorts a line, much to Ivan's
surprise and delight.

IVAN

I thought drugs weren't your thing.

FRANK

Things change.

Ivan turns his attention back to Angel.

IVAN

Does she ever rest? You either got her on
the road or she's playing your club. But
I'm not complaining, she's selling
records left and right. And the European
tour, it's just about sold out. But you
don't seem happy Frank.

Frank answers by downing his entire drink in one gulp. He
orders another.

ANGEL has finished her last song.

ANGEL

(replacing the microphone)
Thank you and good night.

IVAN AND FRANK

IVAN

Hear Troy is making a little noise over there as well, signed with another label...

Angel joins them.

IVAN

(kissing Angel)

Here's my little Angel. We were just talking about you being Frank's second wonder. Troy put him on the map and you're going to take him to the stratosphere, the Angel stratosphere.

As usual, Ivan laughs at his own joke. He reaches into his pocket and retrieves an envelope.

IVAN

Oh you know I almost forgot, I got this letter from Troy...you know I always treated him fair... wasn't my idea to drop him from the label, but anyway...he sent this along for you.

Frank reaches for the envelope.

IVAN

(handing the envelope to Angel)

No, it's for Angel. Probably knows she'll be coming there...

(to Frank)

Now that would be something. Get him at one of the shows...do a nostalgic thing with Angel ...what do you think Frank?

Frank doesn't answer. He's too busy staring at the envelope in Angel's hand.

INT. QUE' SERA - LADIES ROOM STALL - MOMENTS LATER

Angel frantically locks the stall as she tears open the envelope and reads...her face goes from anxious to relief and finally to joy...

TROY V.O

I need a writing partner...how many more letters do I have to send you? Get over here and tame your wild child...I'm not giving up on you or our love...

INT. CLUB OFFICE - LATER

Angel raffling through Frank's dark office, looking for something. She discovers the hidden safe. She fingers under the desk for a key, but what she finds taped to the bottom of the desk are small vials of coke.

Light enters, clicks on the light, spots Angel sitting in Franks chair looking nonchalant.

LIGHT

What are you doing in here Angel?

ANGEL

I just had to get away from the noise and all the people.

Light unconvinced.

ANGEL

Light, where are the letters Troy sent me?

Angel sees a flicker of nervousness cross Light's face. That's answer enough. She crosses to him, pats him affectionately in the chest, then exits.

INT. CLUB - DAY

Angel sits at the piano, determinedly working on a new song...

She fingers through her sheet music. Notices the music for "Other Side of Free". Reflects

TROY V.O.

You aren't through with that song. You can take it further.

Angel shifts the sheet music for "Other Side of Free" in front of her. Begins work restructuring the song. As Angel works on the song we hear her singing it over the next several scenes...

INT. EUROPEAN CLUB - NIGHT

Angel song continues as we see Troy, alone on a small intimate stage. A guitar around his shoulder.

CONTINUED:

TROY

(in mike)

This next one is inspired by a young lady
who showed me God was on the job when he
planted angels here on earth...

The audience laughs appreciatively. Troy begins his song and
we hear the sounds of Angel's song interspersed with his.

EXT. EUROPEAN CLUB - LATE NIGHT

As Angel song continues. Troy exits the club after his set
with one a musician friend. The MUSICIAN points across the
street to another club.

TROY

Why not? Nights still young.

They head across the street.

EXT. EVEN SMALLER EUROPEAN CLUB - SAME NIGHT

A cracker box of a club, even smaller than the one Troy was
singing at across the street. As Troy nears the entrance,
he's stopped cold by the sound coming from inside.

MUSICIAN

What's up?

TROY

That voice. I know that voice.

INT. EVEN SMALLER EUROPEAN CLUB - SAME NIGHT

Excitedly, Troy hurries through the club, looks on stage
expecting to see Angel but instead sees a middle age woman,
once beautiful but now the ravages of illness and hard living
have taken their toll.

Troy sighs, disappointed. But then something catches his
attention.

TROY'S POV:

A poster where the woman on stage is pictured along with her
name. Troy concentrates on the name, MARGUERITE DELASALLE.

INT. EUROPEAN FLAT - DAY

Angel song continues.

CONTINUED:

ANGLE - A FRAMED PICTURE of Angel and her siblings as children, crowded on Marguerite's lap. CAMERA PULLS BACK revealing...

A tiny dank two room apartment no human should inhabit.

Troy walks behind Marguerite who leads him through her home where every wall is covered with pictures of Angel and her success. Angel's song ends as...

MARGUERITE

See, I told you I never forgot her, any
of my children. I was just too shamed...

Troy compassionately puts his arm around her.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

A chartered plane. We see Angel curled up asleep in back of the plane. Frank and Light in front.

FRANK

I want more security. I don't want her
out of your sight. Did you hear me
Light?

Light nods.

FRANK

Then answer me, dammit. What am I, a
mind reader now?

Light watches Frank pour himself yet another drink.

LIGHT

Slow down Frank.

FRANK

Don't tell me to fuckin' slow down you
stupid fat fuck.

Light wounded, but Frank oblivious as he takes a snort from a coke vial.

Light gets up.

FRANK

Where do you think you're going?

LIGHT

To feed Moses. I never thought I'd say
this but he's better company than you are
right now.

CONTINUED:

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Angel eases the letter from Troy from the waistband of her pants. She looks around, sees Frank is engaged, reads the letter again for the umpteenth time.

EXT. PARIS AIRPORT - DAY

Throngs of people press against the fence to catch a glimpse of Angel. They chant her name over and over. There are signs, "ANGEL, WE LOVE YOU." Angel exits the limousine...

ANGEL

I want to sign a few autographs.

FRANK

No, its not safe.

Angel ignores him, approaches the crowd. Pandemonium breaks out as one group tramples another to get closer.

Frank whisks her away just in time.

FRANK

I'm not always wrong. Angel. Try remembering that sometimes.

Angel shook up, nods yes.

EXT. OUTDOOR PARIS CAFE - DAY

Angel sits having lunch with Frank. Frank signs for the check and notices that Angel's attention has been diverted. He follows her gaze and sees that she watches a couple, obviously in love, kiss.

FRANK

They say Paris is the city of romance.

He waits. Angel still studies the couple, finally realizes that he's said something.

ANGEL

What? Did you say something?

Frank, annoyed, shakes his head no.

ANGEL

How many more days before we get to London?

CONTINUED:

FRANK
(with an edge)
Why?

Angel looks down as the waiter approaches. Frank takes his receipt from the waiter then shoves his seat back, obviously irritated.

INT. GERMANY ARENA - DAY

The crowd chants Angel's name. Finally Angel appears. The crowd goes wild.

ANGEL
(in German)
Thank you. I'm so glad to be here.

As Angel sings we CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Where we see Frank rummaging through Angel's things.

INT. LONDON STADIUM - DAY

The biggest arena yet for Angel. Posters advertising Angel's appearance are plastered everywhere.

INT. STAGE AREA

Angel at the mike conducting a sound check. FOUR BURLY SECURITY GUYS stand on alert nearby. Angel looks over at them, frowns.

ANGEL
(to Light)
Is this necessary? There's nobody here
but us and the crew.

LIGHT
Frank's orders.

Angel, exasperated, storms off stage. The security guys go barreling after her. She stops suddenly. They almost fall over her.

ANGEL
I'm taking a leak. I really don't think
Frank wants you join me.

INT. STADIUM - LATER

Capacity crowd, all eagerly anticipating Angel's arrival on stage.

INT. BACKSTAGE - DAY

Four security guards man Angel's dressing room door. Frank, coke wired, comes down the hallway, stops.

FRANK

(to security)

Other than me or Light, no one gets close to her. And I mean no one.

The guards nod yes.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Angel, dressed to go on, looks especially radiant. We see the letter from Troy taped to her mirror. Boston does the last touches of her hair.

BOSTON

You look like love waiting to happen.

Angel smiles at him.

ANGEL

I can feel him. He's here.

Frank enters. Angel yanks the letter down but not before Frank sees. Boston picks up his supplies

BOSTON

I'll just be putting these things in a bag for offstage so we'll have them...

Boston covertly picks up an outfit, then a wig...Frank is too busy glaring at Angel to notice. Boston exits.

FRANK

Give it to me.

ANGEL

No.

Frank raises his hand to hit her.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

That'll make nice copy for tomorrow's paper Frank...Angel DeLaSalle debuts in England with a bruised face courtesy of her manager.

Frank lowers his hand.

FRANK

I'm more than a manager to you.

ANGEL

Not any more. Let me go Frank. We're no good together.

Stage manager yells in the door.

STAGE MANAGER

Ms. DeLaSalle, we need you in place...

FRANK

You think he loves you? Troy loves no one. You know how many abortions and women I had to pay off because he never met a woman he didn't want to use, including you.

ANGEL

Like I'm a stranger to being used.

On that Angel turns and follows behind the stage manager with security picking up the rear.

INT. STAGE AREA - MINUTES LATER

The audience is going wild as a celestial backdrop is illuminated and the sound of Angel's voice is heard.

ANGLE - STAGE WING

Frank nervously paces, scans the area. Doesn't seem satisfied that security is in their rightful place.

ANGLE - AUDIENCE

Where we see Troy and Marguerite. Marguerite starts to tremble with excitement as Angel dramatically descends from above on to the stage...

MARGUERITE

There she is. There she is. There's my baby. She's so beautiful Troy. She really is an Angel.

CONTINUED:

Marguerite bursts into tears...

Troy puts his arm around Marguerite to calm her. He turns his attention back to Angel. Judging from the expression on his face, time has not lessened his feelings.

LATER

ANGEL

(in the mike)

This is the last song of the evening...

The audience voices their displeasure.

ANGEL

And it's for a very special friend who taught me that everybody has got a little wild child hiding in them waiting to be set free...

Angel begins to sing...it's a more in-depth version of "Other Side of Free".

ANGLE - TROY

He's moved beyond imaginable. He picks Marguerite up mid-air and plants a big kiss on her.

TROY

(to Marguerite)

You know you better start loving me 'cause you never getting rid of me.

MARGUERITE

Troy, I'm going to be sick.

TROY

What?

MARGUERITE

Troy I got to get out of here. I'm going to be sick. I can't do this, not like this. You stay.

TROY torn. He looks back on stage, then to Marguerite who's trying with a lot of difficulty to make her way through the crowd.

Troy blows a kiss toward the stage and then hurries after Marguerite.

EXT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Marguerite gets out the car as Troy holds the door for her.

MARGUERITE

I'm sorry again Troy. Maybe you can still catch her. All those people...I just got...

Troy pats her shoulder.

TROY

It's ok. Don't worry. I'll bring her to you. You eating now aren't you?

MARGUERITE

(smiles)

I knew it was you who sent me those groceries...you go on now. So you can see her...I'll wait to hear from you...

Troy gets back in his car, Marguerite hesitates.

MARGUERITE

Troy, don't tell her I've been sick. I want her to come because she wants to...you know what I mean.

Troy nods as he puts the car in gear.

INT. STADIUM - NIGHT

The audience is stomping and yelling for an encore. The musicians come back on stage. The audience goes crazy as they anticipate Angel's imminent arrival...

INT. BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - SAME

In front of the ladies bathroom, we see Boston arguing with the security guards.

BOSTON

Can't she take a leak without you all crowding her? Give me a smoke. Don't any of you Marlboro men smoke?

Frank comes hurrying down the hallway.

FRANK

Where is she?

Security gestures toward the bathroom. Frank slams open the bathroom door and finds an open window but no Angel.

EXT. STADIUM - SAME

We see Angel fleeing with the bag Boston packed for her and wearing a wig. She jumps into a cab that then speeds away.

EXT. STADIUM - MUCH LATER

Troy arrives to find only the maintenance people cleaning up the trash from the concert. No sign of Angel or her entourage. Troy destroyed.

EXT. TROY'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Troy exits his car, ambles up the stairs to his flat. He hears a noise. Behind the stairwell, out comes Angel.

ANGEL

I come all the way here Wild Child. You could at least had the decency to be waiting.

Troy sweeps her into his arms. They kiss passionately.

Troy finally disengaging.

TROY

We can't stay here.

INT. TROY'S CAR - NIGHT

Angel sits pensively listening to Troy as he drives.

TROY

He's right. I'm not a saint. Women, drugs I did it all in spades but I'd like to think I'm reformed...

Angel looks doubtful...

ANGEL

No wife and kid stashed anywhere?

TROY

(smiling at her)
Not yet. But I'm happy to work on it.

Angel smiles and cuddles up against him.

INT. TROY'S STUDIO - DAY

A huge room that doubles as Troy's studio. It's contents: a piano, recording and mixing equipment, a wood stove, a rumpled bed off to the side, a few candles, a small fridge.

CONTINUED:

Troy lights a candle.

ANGEL
I love candles.

Troy looks upset.

ANGEL
What is it?

TROY
I just wish this was better...I
visualized something...I don't know, more
special...

ANGEL
It is special and it's definitely
better... better than anywhere I've ever
been and that's cause I want to be here
and no where else.

She kisses him.

TROY
There's something I need to tell you.

ANGEL
Not now. I got just enough courage left
to make it through the night. I snuck out
on a stadium full of people. All I want
right now is for you to prove to me I
made the right decision.

Troy grins and then goes about the task.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Frank on the phone in a murderous rage.

FRANK
(in phone)
Well tell them she's been kidnapped.
She's an international star. What you
mean they can't fuckin' find her?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Light on the phone with Frank.

CONTINUED:

LIGHT

They did go to his apartment. She wasn't there?

FRANK

Was he?

LIGHT

No.

Frank slams down the phone. Takes a hit of cocaine. Moses screeches. Frank glares at him.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Troy and Angel in the throes of lovemaking. It's an awakening for Angel who's never been an active participant in her own pleasure.

INT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Marguerite paces. She stares at the phone. Finally picks it up, starts to dial, then thinks better of it. She replaces the receiver. She picks up her purse and heads out the door.

EXT. STREET - DAY

With the effort of someone ailing, Marguerite debarks from the city bus. She crosses the street to Troy's apartment.

DIFFERENT ANGLE

Frank gets out of a car, runs across the street

INT. VESTIBULE - DAY

Marguerite sits on the steps trying to catch her breath as Frank enters.

Frank looks for Troy's name, then pushes the bell.

MARGUERITE

He's not home. That's who I'm waiting on, but I think he's with my daughter.

She coughs. Frank takes a look at her, a real good look.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Angel bouncing under the sheets in a fit of giggles. CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see Troy jumping up and down on the bed wearing Angel's bra and using a pillowcase on his head, imitating Angel on stage. He sings one of her songs.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
(giggling hysterically)
Stop it Troy. You're making my stomach
hurt. I don't act like that.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Troy asleep as Angel tosses fitfully next to him. She's
having one of her nightmares.

NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE:

Angel's siblings holding hands spinning each other. As they
spin, Angel reaches out and keeps trying to join hands with
them, but on each try they just spin faster, laughing at her.
Finally they are engulfed in flames.

BACK TO SCENE

With a start, Angel lurches forward out of the nightmare.
Troy awakened by her sudden movement.

TROY
Angel, it's just a nightmare.
Angel, shivering, grabs a hold of Troy.

TROY
You want to talk about it?

LATER

Angel and Troy sit by the wood stove huddled in a blanket.

ANGEL
It's like I couldn't cry. I can't cry. I
guess that's why I keep having the
nightmares. I kept thinking it would
have been easier, if I had just had a
picture, something to remember them by...

TROY
Do you know how the fire started?

ANGEL
(shakes her head no)
They believe Christina started it, in the
embalming room. I can't tell you how
much I loved her. Every day I miss her
more. You know she had a crush on you.

Troy grins sheepishly.

INT. CAR - DAY

Marguerite gets in the car with Frank. They speed away.

INT. STUDIO - DAWN

Angel and Troy in same position.

ANGEL

You sure you want to hear all this?

TROY

Of course. I want to know everything about you.

Angel quiet for a moment. Troy looks at her inquiringly.

ANGEL

I don't think anybody's ever wanted to know about me, not really, I mean about what I think, how I feel...

TROY

So continue.

ANGEL

Well...I wrote songs back then, but taking care of my sister and brothers was my life...ever since my mother sent us away...really even before then...she was so busy trying to carve out a career as a singer...

TROY

And how do you feel about her?

Angel thinks for a minute.

ANGEL

Sometimes I literally ache for her...other times, I'm so full of hate that it feels like it's eating me alive. For years I thought, any day now she'll be coming back. I was scared to leave my grandfather's house for fear I might miss her. The joke was on me, I guess. When the fire happened, I just knew she'd come...

(choking up)

She'd come to get me...maybe take care of me for once. But she didn't. She told Frank...

CONTINUED:

TROY

Frank?! Angel, please, you can't believe
shit he says...

ANGEL

Why would he lie about my mother?

TROY

Why does Frank lie about anything? Have
you seen your royalty statements? Have
you seen any of your money? Better yet,
have you seen a copy of your contract?

Angel shakes her head no...

TROY

I know he's lying about your mother
because she's here and she never stopped
loving you or wanting you. She saw you
tonight. She got so upset that I had to
take her home....

INT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Marguerite, who has been waiting by the phone, picks it up on
the first ring.

MARGUERITE

(voice trembling)

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Angel places the phone to her heart briefly, then into the
receiver.

ANGEL

(blurts out)

I'm coming to see you Mama.

Marguerite offers up a silent prayer.

MARGUERITE

I'm so sorry Angela...

Angel can hardly bear this.

ANGEL

I'll be there soon..

Angel hangs up quickly before she loses it.

CONTINUED:

Marguerite replaces the phone to it's cradle, looks around her apartment and for the first time we see

FRANK sitting across the room grinning.

FRANK

I'm so glad for you. She's always missed you. We'll be just one big happy family.

MARGUERITE

I want to make her a cake or something. She used to love sweets.

Marguerite takes in her meager surroundings...

MARGUERITE

I don't have anything to make it with.

FRANK

There's a store up the street. I'll go get something.

MARGUERITE

OK. Thank you. I wish I had had a manager like you. Somebody that really cared. No telling where I'd be today.

Frank smiles, then exits, leaving Marguerite, full of anticipation, to straighten up what little she has to straighten.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Angel and Troy approach his car.

ANGEL

Could I drive? It's been so long.

Troy tosses her the keys.

INT. CAR - DAY

Angel drives as Troy tells her more about Marguerite. Periodically he reminds her to drive on the left side of the street.

TROY

I think he was a club owner or something, promised her the world. He brought her over here and then when she didn't catch on, though she has built a little fan base...eventually he deserted her...

INT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Marguerite opens the door for Frank who carries a grocery bag, from which he retrieves a cake.

MARGUERITE
That looks yummy.

Then Frank goes into the bag again. This time he retrieves a bag of heroin and some works.

Marguerite, her face a mosaic of hunger and panic, backs up trembling at the sight.

MARGUERITE
I don't do that anymore. Really I don't.
Can you put that up, please.

FRANK
Come on Marguerite, let's make sure your daughter remembers you as you were.

INT. CAR - DAY

Troy and Angel caught in rush hour.

ANGEL
She was always falling for the wrong men.
Like mother like daughter I guess.

TROY
(mock indignation)
Hey...come again.

ANGEL
(grins)
I wasn't talking about your's truly.

ANGEL'S POV:

A flower stand.

ANGEL
Can I have a loan?

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Frank ushers in several bellhops carrying huge flower arrangements. PULL BACK and we see the entire suite is full of flowers. Frank grins as the parade of flowers continues.

EXT. FLOWER STAND - DAY

Angel buys a bouquet of flowers. Jumps back in the driver seat. Hands the flowers for Troy to hold.

ANGEL

Can I keep the change?

Troy laughs, nods yes.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Troy's car pulls up to the curb. Angel turns off the ignition.

ANGEL'S POV:

A dilapidated building.

ANGEL

(to Troy)

Well some things don't change. She was always hiding us in buildings like this.

TROY

(pats her hand)

It looks better on the inside.

ANGEL

(looking at herself in the rear view mirror)

Do I look ok? I mean do you think she'll recognize me...

TROY

Of course she will. You're her daughter...Are you ready?

ANGEL

No. But come on.

Angel opens the car door, gets out. Troy comes around to meet her, takes her hand.

TROY

Remember, you're not doing this alone. I'm going to be right there with you...

He hands her the flowers

CONTINUED:

ANGEL
(appreciative)
I love you Troy. Wait! Is she still
beautiful?

TROY
(not sure how to answer)
If you'd quit stalling, you could see
for yourself.

He takes her hand and leads her toward the entrance.

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Angel and Troy step over garbage as they make their way to
Marguerite's doorway which is ajar.

TROY
(knocking)
Marguerite. Marguerite, we're coming in.

INT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - DAY

As Angel and Troy step into the apartment...

ANGEL'S POV:

The picture of her siblings and herself as children.

Angel excitedly grabs up the picture, hugs it to her chest as
she hears Troy yell in the next room...

TROY
Oh no. Marguerite...

Angel slowly moves toward the room, dreading what is there.
She takes a deep breath, then looks in.

ANGEL'S POV:

Troy kneeled beside her mother who sits in a mumbling stupor,
the tourniquet still on her arm, the needle she used to shoot
up with, on the floor.

TROY
Come on Marguerite...Why...come
on...Angel's here...
(turning around)
Get me some ice.

But the only sign of Angel are the flowers she left behind.

EXT. MARGUERITE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Angel jumps into Troy's car. Throws the childhood picture on the seat next to her, then fumbles with the ignition. She finally gets it started just as Troy runs out yelling for her to stop.

Angel speeds off.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Angel drives like a bat out of hell through the city proper, and then over a high bridge which leads to the countryside...

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

Light enters the darkened suite. The drapes have been drawn and all lights are off. Light clicks on a light and is taken aback by the sight before him.

LIGHT'S POV:

Hundreds of flower arrangements in every nook and cranny and...

Frank, waiting, parked opposite the door, his expression fixed and coke crazed. Moses in his lap.

LIGHT

Frank, she's not coming back.

FRANK

Yes, she is. It's just a matter of time.
Me and Moses will just wait.

Light shakes his head in pity, walks out, leaving Frank to his madness.

SPEEDOMETER - 80 m.p.h.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A honey colored GIRL, 11, with curly hair plays ball near the road with her little brother and puppy.

INT. CAR - DAY

Angel, blinded by tears and the glaring sun, looks up ahead, squints...

ANGEL'S POV:

CONTINUED:

A little girl laughing and twirling a little boy in the air...

Then Junior appears to join them and he too spins while the little girl becomes Christina laughing and the little boy becomes Whisper. They wave to her.

ANGEL smiles at the hallucination.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

The sound of Moses screeching as Frank holds him by the neck over a tub full of water.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The puppy meanders into the roadway. The little boy in SLOW MOTION lets go of his sister's grasp and runs into the road.

INT. CAR - DAY

Angel grins at the sight of her siblings up the road. She presses the accelerator down harder.

ANGEL
(mumbling to herself)
I'm coming.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

As Frank holds Moses underwater, we hear one final screech which blends with...

ANOTHER SHRILL SCREAM

INT. CAR - DAY

Angel screams at the same time she realizes that the little girl up ahead is screaming for her little brother to come back.

Angel hits the brakes. The childhood picture crashes to the floor. The car swerves, careening out of control as it just misses the little boy.

MOMENTS LATER. The car has come to a complete stop. Angel shaken, rests her head on the steering wheel.

EXT. CAR - MINUTES LATER

The little girl cautiously approaches the car, taps on the window. Angel rolls it down.

CONTINUED:

LITTLE GIRL
Lady are you OK? You almost hit my
little brother...

Angel takes a minute and looks into the most innocent eyes,
the eyes she once had.

ANGEL
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. But you
saved him. You took very good care of
your little brother. I heard you scream.

The little girl satisfied, takes her brother's hand, grabs up
the puppy and runs up the hill to their house.

Angel reaches down to the floorboard, picks up the picture,
strokes it.

ANGEL
(to the picture)
I took very good care of you all too. I
did. I did.

And for the first time she grieves all that is lost.
Purging, shattering sobs of release shake her whole body.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Angel's thighs--they're covered with song lyrics.

Angel dials a number.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TROY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Troy picks up the phone on the first ring.

TROY
Hello?

ANGEL
You wanna hear my new song?

Troy exhales, relieved.

EXT. LONDON STADIUM - DAY

Thousands of excited fans file in as we see Angel logos
everywhere.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Angel in the mirror has a new look, more wild. She wears all red and at the moment adds siren red lipstick to her lips. Satisfied, she moves on to her shoes. These are hot red as well.

INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE THE DRESSING ROOM

Frank listens at the door, musters his resolve and turns the knob. The door doesn't open...it's locked.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Angel laughs as she hears Frank rattle the door knob. Ready now, she blows herself a kiss in the mirror then heads for the door.

INT. AUDIENCE - FRONT ROW - DAY

Where we see a nervous Troy and Marguerite.

MARGUERITE

You don't think you should go back and check on her?

TROY

No. She told me she could handle it. Who am I to say she can't?

(beat)

Though I tried.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Angel opens her dressing room door and there is Frank, looking quite contrary to his usual fastidious appearance.

FRANK

(babbling)

Angel, look, just give me a minute...I'm sorry. I just couldn't take you..you're everything to me...

ANGEL

That's too bad Frank. Because it's over.

FRANK

Troy has nothing. He's put you up to this, hasn't he?

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

It has nothing to do with Troy. I'm the one running my life now, Frank. That's hard for you to believe, isn't it?

FRANK

I'll ruin you.

ANGEL

You can't. I'm not yours to ruin. I'm through doing penance Frank. To you, for you, about you, about anybody...It's over.

FRANK

It'll never be over. I love you...

ANGEL

No you don't. Love to you is possession. You rack up points on people Frank, then inevitably, we all disappoint you, then those same points, you use as demerits against us. How can you love anybody when you're too busy keeping count?

FRANK

Look I can change. I even got rid of Moses...

Angel aghast.

ANGEL

You're sick, Frank.

She starts to walk by him, but then Frank grabs her, shoves her back in the dressing room by the throat.

INT. STADIUM - DAY

The audience is stomping and calling Angel's name. Troy looks at his watch.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - SAME

As Frank continues to choke her, Angel jams one of her stiletto heels into Frank's foot.

Frank screams in pain, let's her go.

Angel moves away, coughs, clears her throat.

CONTINUED:

ANGEL

(recovered)

Aren't you glad you started me wearing high heels, Frank? I thought about having the police meet me here today...I've seen enough and I know enough to put you away for a long time. But you know why I didn't, Frank? Because I do owe you.

FRANK

Sweetheart, we can start over...

ANGEL

(as if he never spoke)

You gave me a beginning when I couldn't see anything but an ending. And I'll always be grateful. But today, Frank, I want you to consider yourself paid in full. And if you ever come near me or mine again, I won't have to call the police, I'll kill you my damn self.

Angel starts down the hallway.

FRANK

(yelling after her)

You have nothing. I own everything.

ANGEL

No you don't. Not anymore.

Light steps out the shadows. Angel takes his hand.

ANGEL

See Frank. You can mistreat people for only so long and they'll turn on you.

Angel waves c'est la vie and moves toward the sound she knows she owns--the sound of screaming fans calling her name. Frank, finally defeated, watches her go.

INT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - STAGE - LATER

Angel is in a single spot. The audience is hushed as she speaks to them directly.

ANGEL

This is a new song I wrote for my brothers and sister and my grandfather who are no longer with me but who never left me in spirit.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

ANGEL (cont'd)

And to my mother who like me spent too much time chasing the right answers with the wrong questions...and to Troy, who said, music, when it's true, is your only real witness...It's called "Birth By Fire." I hope you like it.

Angel closes her eyes, starts to sing, more for herself at first, then she breaks out. The song begins a Capella, then shifts to uptempo...

Angel grins wickedly, then kicks off her shoes and lets loose...

ANGLE - MARGUERITE

MARGUERITE

(thrilled, to Troy)

I used to do that! She got that from me..

TROY

(never taking his eyes off of Angel)

But everything else about her is a true original.

Angel's song continues as happy flowing tears stream down her face. A total surrender.

ANGLE - THE AUDIENCE

who sway, taking the journey with her, totally captivated.

And as the song continues, we see...

...Angel, in a funeral home, with the childhood picture propped up as a guide, expertly applying make-up to her mother's corpse.

...Angel, on a yacht with Troy in the middle of the ocean, as she lovingly sets her mother's ashes free.

...And as her song continues, we experience Angel as she finally sets herself free as well....

THE END

