

"DAMES"
Pilot

by
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COLD OPEN:

EXT. UPSCALE SAVANNAH PROTESTANT CEMETERY - DAY

PAN ACROSS an extremely upscale Savannah cemetery to a funeral already in progress. Between the inordinate amount of expensive flowers, to the huge number of mourners, to the designer hats in attendance, this isn't your average send off. Whoever died was king shitsky.

While the MINISTER reads SCRIPTURE, we cut to the faces of the bereaved:

CLOSE ON: ADDISON DAME (67), the widow. Southern wealth and elegance personified as she mourns with dignity, and yet still manages to steal the show - *as she intended*.

Next to her, her daughter CHARLOTTE (38), is having a harder time hiding her grief. She lifts her Jackie O. sunglasses and dabs her heavily made up face with a handkerchief; very grief-glam.

CLOSE ON: Addison subtly SQUEEZES Charlotte's forearm; a distinctive, "knock it off with the crying," mom gesture.

Next to Charlotte sits her dashing husband, BROCK. Their two debutante-to-be DAUGHTERS (13 and 14) squirm in their seats. Charlotte subtly SQUEEZES the arm of one sitting the closest.

ANGLE ON: LOUISA DAME (42), beautiful but weathered; a former beauty queen turned object lesson. She watches from about fifty yards away, not dressed appropriately for a funeral, especially this one. She drags a single suitcase.

Her expression is impassive; it's not clear how she feels about the departed or what her connection is.

ANGLE ON: Addison. Without even moving her head she senses Louisa's presence; a lioness can always sniff out her brood. Her eyes dart into the distance. A moment of emotionless recognition. Then, she turns her attention back to the proceedings.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPSCALE SAVANNAH PROTESTANT CEMETERY - LATER

The same scene except the mourners and workers have left - all except Louisa, who still stands in the distance, frozen in space and time. The silence is deafening.

Finally, she begins to walk slowly and purposefully towards the grave site. She peers down.

POV: the partially covered coffin sits deep in the earth, a few heaps of dirt on top, waiting to be fully buried.

CLOSE ON Louisa's expression. A thousand emotions play on her face. After a moment of reflection, she turns around.

SFX of a ZIPPER... and then the soft stream of urine hitting dirt and wood.

Expressionless, she ZIPS her pants back up and walks out of frame.

EXT. THE DAME ESTATE/SAVANNAH - DAY

Unbearably gorgeous 18th century Georgian style estate, complete with an oak tree canopy leading up to the entryway.

Dozens of fancy cars overwhelm the gravel driveway.

INT. THE DAME ESTATE/SAVANNAH - SAME TIME

The decor inside is just as magnificent as you'd expect.

A regal oil painting of Addison and her dead husband - a dapper man with silver hair - hangs near the entrance way.

CLOSE ON: the plaque under the painting: "Mr. & Mrs. Sherwood Dame."

Addison plays hostess to her guests. It doesn't matter that she just buried her husband - her duty is to ensure that her guests are having a lovely time.

Currently, she's entertaining next to the buffet which is overcrowded with your white Southern favorites: potato salad, casseroles, jello molds - all served on fine china.

As Addison makes her way through the room, she's approached by various SOUTHERN LADIES.

SOUTHERN LADY #1

Oh, Addison, honey, we're just so sorry about Sherwood's passin'.

She takes Addison's hands and squeezes them.

ADDISON

Thank you, darlin'. We had a wonderful life together and he went too soon.

(half beat)

And I might end up with him right quick if I have one more bite of that *delicious* upsidedown pineapple cake you brought!

It's a little unnerving just how disconnected she is.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

Haven't you any sympathy for my Spanx, Cheryl Ann?

SOUTHERN LADY #1

(giggling)

Addison, honey, that's what the Spanx are for! Now you go on over there and cut yourself another slice, I'll keep hush about it.

What's even more unnerving is that the women she's speaking to find this totally normal. Expected, even.

Addison smiles as she takes another slice and walks off. Southern Lady #1 looks at her buddy and shakes her head.

SOUTHERN LADY #1 (CONT'D)

(low, re: the cake)

Someone ought to tell her there's only so much a piece of nylon can do, *bless her heart*.

ANGLE ON: Charlotte and her family greeting a procession of mourners on the other side of the room.

SOUTHERN LADY #2

Charlotte, sweetheart, your Daddy was a very special man.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you, Mrs. Davenport. He was, wasn't he? A very special man.

Charlotte walks the delicate line between drama queen and genuine sorrow.

SOUTHERN LADY #2

How're you holding up?

CHARLOTTE

Just as well as I can, I suppose.

Her voice cracks. Brock and her daughters glance at her.

SOUTHERN LADY #2

Well, all our thoughts are with you
and your precious mother.

Southern Lady #2 smiles and walks off.

BROCK

(whispers to Charlotte)

Try to hold it together, Sugar. You
can let it all hang out when we get
home.

Without dropping her smile, Charlotte whispers back -

CHARLOTTE

Go fuck yourself, Brock.

Neither of them break character and continue to grin as
another cluster of mourners approach them.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont, thank you so
much for comin' -

ANGLE ON: Addison as she continues to work the room, but now
we see that she is headed towards the kitchen as she does.

She stops an African American servant, SOPHIE (55). Sophie is
dressed head to toe in proper housemaid garb, and carries a
silver tray of lemonade.

ADDISON

Sophie, refill the cokes.

Sophie nods and continues on.

Addison turns her attention towards the kitchen and *girds*
herself as she flies in, the door swinging behind her.

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

In one continuous movement she crosses the kitchen and -

SLAPS Louisa - who had been waiting there - HARD across the
face. Louisa takes it like a woman.

BEAT.

LOUISA

How'd you know I was in here?

**Louisa does not have a southern accent.*

The two of them face each other for a LONG BEAT. Finally, Addison sticks her finger in Louisa's face and chokes up.

ADDISON

You broke your Daddy's heart.

Louisa, equally as stoic, also chokes up momentarily.

LOUISA

He broke mine first.

They regard each other again a moment and then Addison aggressively pulls Louisa into a tight, sincere embrace.

Sophie enters with the empty tray.

SOPHIE

Louisa?

Louisa breaks into a grin and chokes up again. The two hug.

LOUISA

Sophie! My God, I can't believe you're still hanging around this mess.

SOPHIE

("this is my home")
C'mon, now. You know this place would burn to the ground without me.

They share a tender look; an understanding. Addison breaks them up.

ADDISON

Alright, enough. You can have your little love-fest later -

SOPHIE

Oh, pipe down you ol' battle axe.
We're *all* grievin'.

Aha. These are the *actual* behind-the-scene dynamics.

ADDISON

(grunts)
We have to figure out where to hide her before Charl -

But it's too late. Charlotte flies into the room and sees Louisa. Her face contorts with anger. The feeling is mutual.

CHARLOTTE
Fucking hell.

LOUISA
("ta-da!")
Hi.

ADDISON
(diffusing)
Now Charlotte, precious, -

Charlotte's a time bomb.

CHARLOTTE
You have no right to be here -

LOUISA
(rolls eyes)
- here we go. I have every right to
be here -

CHARLOTTE
- I'd sooner run through hell with
a pocket full of dynamite before
I'd ever let you see one penny of
Daddy's money - !

LOUISA
- well, at least we're all clear on
where you're headed -

ADDISON
Stop it or I'll cancel both your
birth certificates!

CHARLOTTE
But Mama - !

Addison gives her the STARE.

Intimately familiar, both girls back down instantly.

Addison stands between the two and looks at Charlotte.

ADDISON
Now I have *all* of Savannah in my
livin' room, draggin' mud across my
carpets as we speak, and I will *not*
have a scandal erupt in my kitchen
at your daddy's funeral - *may he*
rest - so go on out there and be
the lady I raised you to be.

Charlotte steps down but eyes Louisa suspiciously. Addison gives Louisa the once-over and shakes her head.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
I will not have my prodigal
daughter make her re-entry into
society after sixteen years looking
like a fresh shit on a hot day.

Louisa rolls her eyes. Addison leans in.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
*And we will be touchin' upon this
tacky accent you seem to have
picked up.*
(indignant sigh)
So make yourself scarce until
everyone's left and then - and only
then - will the three of us discuss
family business, and there *is* some
family business to discuss.

Addison heads back to the party, mumbling to herself.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
*Walking around my goddamn house
like a piece of Yankee Trash...*

Charlotte flashes one more disdainful look at Louisa and then follows her mother. Louisa smiles at Sophie.

LOUISA
I think that went well, don't you?

SOPHIE
Please. I haven't seen your Mama
this happy since Mel's Liquor
opened a drive-thru.

Sophie kisses Louisa on the forehead and exits.

Louisa's cell RINGS. CLOSE ON: "UNKNOWN CALLER." She debates a moment and then finally answers on the last ring.

LOUISA
Hello?

INT. RACHEL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME/INTERCUT

RACHEL is an elegant and very attractive woman in her early fifties. Her office is white, streamlined and expensive. She sits at a desk next to a large window, but we can't make out her location. Right now she looks rattled and paranoid.

RACHEL
 (speaks low)
Where the hell are you?

Louisa throws her shoulders back defiantly.

LOUISA
 I came home.

RACHEL
 Are you aware of the magnitude of
 shit you have put us in?

LOUISA
 I have an idea. Yes.

RACHEL
 I need you to turn your ass around
 and get back here -

LOUISA
 (shrugs, blase)
 Well, you know I would, but my dad
 just died -

RACHEL
 (sneers)
Again?

Louise cringes, caught.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
 Get back here. Now.

Rachel hangs up. OFF Louisa, worried.

INT. DAME ESTATE HALLWAY - DAY

Louisa exits a powder room where she comes face to face with
 a MAN who was passing by. Though she doesn't identify him
 here, we will later learn he is UNCLE BUGGY (73).

She momentarily FREEZES with anger and anxiety.

UNCLE BUGGY
 Hello, Louisa.

A BEAT as they just regard each other, and then Louisa
 continues on her way, visibly shaken.

OFF Uncle Buggy standing there, rejected, but not surprised.

INT. SHERWOOD'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Louisa creeps down the hall and enters her father's study. It's a grand, mahogany room with high ceilings and taxidermied animal heads on the wall. She closes the door quietly behind her and inhales deeply. The scent is familiar.

She runs her fingers over her father's belongings and peaks behind a large painting revealing a hidden, antique REBEL FLAG. She nods to herself, "yup, still there."

She moves to a wall of framed photographs and newspaper clippings, which is when we see it: a veritable shrine to Louisa in her heyday.

A BEAT as her former life wash over her. She is simultaneously sickened and nostalgic.

Louisa, with huge, frosted updo's (the height of Southern, mid 1990's chic), clad in sequined monstrosities with spaghetti straps and every pageant sash you could imagine.

Southern royalty, and ostensibly big fucking deal within Savannah society.

In particular we notice a professional photo of Louisa in a GEORGIA SASH crowned the WINNER at the 1999 MISS USA PAGEANT.

It's surrounded by press clippings naming her the winner as well as, "FIRST MISS USA FROM GEORGIA MAKES HISTORY," etc.

She notices a cluster of photos we sense she's never seen before: nearly identical (but fewer) images of *Charlotte* making the pageant circuit. Louisa is surprised and pleased.

LOUISA
(softly)
Well, you go, Charlotte.

Her face darkens when she comes across a photo of herself with her father.

We PUSH IN SLOWLY on her anxiety and anger when suddenly -

- she's JERKED away from the photos, THROWN up against another wall, and KISSED like a woman ought to be kissed - by impossibly good looking, JACKSON (42).

When he releases her from the kiss, they stare into each other's eyes, the history unfolding between them, and then -

THEY SQUEAL LIKE TWO SCHOOL GIRLS.

She hugs him hard, holding on for dear life.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
Oh, *Jack*, Jack, thank God -

JACKSON
It's Jackson, now, Darlin'.

Louisa pulls away and snorts.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERWOOD'S STUDY - LATER

Louisa and Jackson are both buzzed on Sherwood's good Bourbon and lounge on his leather upholstery like two teenagers.

Jackson holds up a framed photo and laughs uncontrollably.
CLOSE ON: their prom picture.

LOUISA
Stop it! We were adorable! Like
Ross and Rachel.

JACKSON
Yeah, like Ross and Rachel except
Ross was fucking the football coach
and Rachel was snorting anything
that didn't move.

LOUISA
(sighs, beat)
Those were good times, weren't
they?

JACKSON
Maybe for you, your highness, but I
for one would rather poke myself in
the eye with a dry toothpick than
ever be queer in 1990's Savannah
again.

She looks at him with wonder.

LOUISA
It's kind of incredible how
things've turned around. I figured
you and your beard would've had a
litter of artificially inseminated
babies by now.

JACKSON
Oh, it was bumpy at first. Huge
fucking scandal.
(MORE)

JACKSON (CONT'D)

Your mother still won't come to my salon because she thinks I broke your heart or some nonsense. But honestly nowadays, the more I just generally fag out all over those old bitches, the more they like it.

Louisa smiles at him but her face is sad. BEAT.

LOUISA

I'm sorry I left the way I did.
You're probably the only one who didn't deserve it.

Jackson has to glance away; he's still hurt.

JACKSON

I deserved more than a postcard but I suppose it was better than anyone else got.
(half beat)
Anyway. You're here now.

Louisa glances at the pageant photos, more proud than disturbed.

LOUISA

(far away)
I was beautiful, wasn't I...?

JACKSON

(sincere, softly)
Yes. You are.

She climbs onto the couch and lies on top of him. He holds her paternally and strokes her hair. Finally -

JACKSON (CONT'D)

(re: her hair)
You need a deep condition.

LOUISA

I know.

OFF Louisa, exhausted and lost.

INT. THE DAME ESTATE/LIVING AREA - DAY

The "party" continues on the other side of the house. But now in addition to being grief stricken, Charlotte is fuming. Her smile is tight as she greets mourners and works the room.

Her eyes land on an attractive couple, HADLEY and STEVEN NEWSOM (both in their early 30's). Her eyes read of jealousy as she watches Steven fix Hadley a plate of food. Steven looks up and meets her gaze. Caught, Charlotte looks away.

LESLIE ANN (36), polished and pert, approaches Charlotte.

LESLIE ANN

Oh, Charlotte! I know this probably isn't the time or place but I just wanted to say how absolutely lovely the Children's Hospital fundraiser was last week.

CHARLOTTE

(pleased)

Well, thank you, Leslie Ann, I do appreciate that.

LESLIE ANN

I think you might just be the best president the Junior League has ever had.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, now, you flatter me -

LESLIE ANN

No, I mean it, honey. You have really done something special with this organization and I think we all owe you a debt of gratitude.

Charlotte smiles modestly, but inside she's brimming with pride.

EXT. DAME ESTATE PATIO/POOL - LATER

Louisa sits alone on the grand patio smoking a cigarette. Behind her the screen door opens and TOM CARLSON (67) emerges with a cigar and lighter. Tom is about as good looking and distinguished as older guys get - like Richard Gere but with a southern drawl.

They FREEZE for a moment upon seeing each other.

TOM

As I live and breathe.

LOUISA

Unlike Daddy, apparently.

He smiles sympathetically and takes her hand.

TOM
How are you, Louisa - ?

LOUISA
Dame. Still Dame. How are you, Mr.
Carlson?

He gestures, "mind if I join you?" She shrugs. He sits beside her and lights his cigar.

TOM
Oh, I'm gettin' on, I suppose.

LOUISA
And Mrs. Carlson?

TOM
Mrs. Carlson is now Mrs. Murphy,
presumably bleeding Mr. Murphy dry.

LOUISA
Oh. I'm sorry to hear that.

TOM
Nah, it was better for us *and* the
kids. Nowadays I'm just enjoyin'
the silence.

They share a polite smile. BEAT.

TOM (CONT'D)
Nice of you to come home for the
proceedings. I'm sure your mother
is pleased. You know, there's been
some talk about where you've been
all these years.

LOUISA
Everyone knows I'm the 'fallen
queen.' Couldn't exactly stay here.

He waits for a further explanation but she just drags on her cigarette.

TOM
But you're back.

LOUISA
For the proceedings.

He hesitates but leans in anyway.

TOM

Forgive me for speaking out of turn, but I for one never believed that you were run out of town just on account of that scandal.

LOUISA

Oh, no?

TOM

No.

Louisa SHRUGS. BEAT.

TOM (CONT'D)

Louisa, I don't know what happened between you and your father but I can tell you one thing: he was my partner for thirty-five years and he never stopped loving you. Not for one second. No matter what happened. And there's been plenty of talk about all that, too, believe me.

Louisa's eyes begin to sting but she holds it together.

He pulls a card out of his pocket and hands it to her.

TOM (CONT'D)

You need anything while you're home, you don't hesitate to call, you hear?

He squeezes her shoulder, puts out his cigar and stands up. He's almost inside when -

LOUISA

(calling after him)

Mr. Carlson. How'd he - ?

TOM

(beat)

He had a heart attack, Darlin'. He had a lot weighing on that heart of his.

(beat)

It happened real fast. The doctors don't suspect he suffered.

LOUISA

Were you with him?

TOM
He was with your mama.

He gives her a sad smile and goes back inside. Unnerved, she glances at his card before lighting another cigarette.

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - LATER

She lets herself back inside to find Charlotte and Brock bickering quietly but aggressively in the kitchen while their daughters play on their phones nearby.

Louisa draws on her inner strength and is instantly composed.

Upon seeing her, Brock's jaw drops.

BROCK
Holy shit.

They embrace warmly. He's genuinely happy to see her.

LOUISA
I had a feeling you two would end
up together -

BROCK
I had no idea you were here -

He flashes Charlotte a dirty look. Charlotte scowls.

BROCK (CONT'D)
(still stunned)
Incredible.
(beat)
Hey! You gotta meet the girls -
GIRLS!

They ignore him.

BROCK (CONT'D)
Dammit, get up off your spoiled
asses and meet your Aunt Louisa.

He actually snatches away one of their phones. They stand before Louisa, bored but polite.

BROCK (CONT'D)
This is Miranda and Carrie.

Louisa blinks a few times.

LOUISA
Charlotte, Miranda and Carrie.
Isn't that just adorbs?

CHARLOTTE
(snapping)
We thought so.

The girls mutter shy "hi's" and limply shake Louisa's hand.

Charlotte dotes on them proudly by fixing their hair and smoothing their dresses.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(rote)
Miranda is a freshman in high school and the seventh ranking equestrian in the state. Carrie's in the eighth grade and the captain of her dance team. And of course they're both already pageant royalty many, many times over.

LOUISA
Well. It's very nice to meet you.

The girls just stare at her. Louisa smiles, uncomfortable.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
(quick)
And because I've been looking forward to it, I brought gifts!

Charlotte looks thrown. Louisa smirks and reaches into her purse, pulling out her wallet. She opens it and PAUSES.

ANGLE ON: A bunch of mixed bills adding up to one hundred dollars. It's all she has.

Louisa forces a proud smile and divides it up equally. It's tacky and awkward but the girls don't seem to mind.

MIRANDA/CARRIE
Thanks/Thank you.

Charlotte rolls her eyes and leans in to Brock, teeth gritted.

CHARLOTTE
(low, growl)
Same as eva'. She could take a dump on the Thanksgivin' dinner table and the whole room would break out in applause -

MIRANDA

Is it true that your husband slept
with a Jordanian princess?

LOUISA

What?

(to Brock)

What's she talking about?

BROCK

(mortified)

Alright. Time to go home. I think
we're all exhausted.

(to Louisa)

Seriously, it's great to see you
and just as gorgeous as ever -

He leans in slightly, and smiles just this side of flirting.

BROCK (CONT'D)

Please tell me you're sticking
around for a while? I'd love to
hear all about -

Charlotte glowers, jealous.

CHARLOTTE

Y'all go home.

(glaring at Louisa)

I've got some things to take care
of here.

Brock looks between the two of them and backs off.

BROCK

Let's go girls.

They exit. Charlotte turns and heads into -

INT. DAME ESTATE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- the dining room where an elaborate liquor station resides.
Louisa follows as Charlotte makes a whisky drink for herself.
Louisa sits at the table and pushes a decimated Jello mold
out of the way. She looks up at Charlotte and tries her best.

LOUISA

They're beautiful.

CHARLOTTE

Thank you.

LOUISA
How are you, Charlotte?

No answer. Louisa takes a deep breath, already over it.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
How's Mama?

Charlotte turns around and slams the glass in front of Louisa. The ice rattles.

CHARLOTTE
How do you think?

Louisa takes the glass, recognizing it as the peace offering it is. Charlotte makes her own drink and sits down.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(surly, exhausted)
She's the same. Half the time she's on planet Stepford, the other half on planet Tanqueray. Either way she is definitely not *here*.
(thinks)
Daddy wasn't dead five hours before she decided she needed a new dress for the funeral.

LOUISA
Sounds about right.

Suddenly Addison flies in and sits down with them.

ADDISON
("everyone's gone")
Finally. What the hell do they think this is, a goddamn barbecue?

She lights one of Louisa's cigarettes.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
And if Patty Lynn Dewey thinks I didn't notice her covering up that chocolate stain on my settee then she's dumber than a box of hair.

She takes a long drag and then quiets. Louisa and Charlotte glance at each other, concerned.

CHARLOTTE
How're you doin', Mama?

Addison looks lost in thought for a moment. Then she smiles.

ADDISON
My two girls. Under the same roof
again.

She considers Louisa a moment, the anger and love palpable.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
Louisa Mae, I don't know where *the*
hell you've been for the last
sixteen years or how you've gotten
by -

Charlotte is emboldened by her mother's shared anger.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
- but right now we have bigger
problems to discuss.

This takes Charlotte off guard.

CHARLOTTE
Problems? What kind of problems?

Addison glances at their whisky.

ADDISON
Take a drink.

Freaked, the girls do. Addison has to take a deep breath.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
It's with great disappointment that
I reveal to you that your father
was total and complete shit. *May he*
rest.

Louisa and Charlotte look at each other, confused.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
He screwed the people of this town
and he screwed us.

CHARLOTTE
Mama, I think maybe you need to lie
down -

Addison SLAMS her fist on the table. The girls jump.

ADDISON
Nothing! He left us with nothing!

CLOSE ON Louisa as the blood drains from her face.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

(hisses)

He left us with *less than nothing*,
because tomorrow morning Tom
Carlson is going to publish a
missive in the Savannah Herald
exposing your shit of a father and
savaging our family name!

Louisa GRIMACES.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

*We cannot bear the weight of one
more scandal!*

Addison flings her wrist at Louisa.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

After *you-know-who* here, dishonored
the crown -

Louisa rolls her eyes.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

- and your Uncle runnin' off with
that Oriental stewardess - we have
used up all of our nine lives and
then some!

(sigh)

This family - *THE* pillar of society
for over a hundred years - will
finally be ruined! I will be
ruined!

(beat, softly)

But I had a damn good run.

Charlotte begins to shake. Clearly there's more to her story.

CHARLOTTE

There's no money?

ADDISON

No.

CHARLOTTE

(panic rising)

How can there be no money - !?

LOUISA

Charlotte!

But clearly Louisa is just as thrown and panicked.

Charlotte backs down but is still unhinging. Louisa puts her hand on Addison's arm supportively.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
Mama. Everything's going to be
alright -

CHARLOTTE
What happened - ?!

Addison's hand begins to tremble as she smokes.

ADDISON
He was stealing from his clients. A
little here, a little there. This
went on for years.

CHARLOTTE
What? Why would Daddy steal?
(emphasis)
And where's that money *now*?

LOUISA
(resentful)
Jesus Christ! What's with you? It's
not like you're going to be out on
the street. You've got Brock.

CHARLOTTE
("answer the question")
Mama?

Addison takes a deep breath. Louisa looks away.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(to Louisa)
What? What do you know that I
don't?

LOUISA
He was a gambler, Charlotte.

Charlotte looks completely bewildered.

CHARLOTTE
What? Since when - ?

ADDISON
Since always -

CHARLOTTE
(to Louisa)
How come you knew and I didn't - ?

ADDISON
 (terse, "drop it")
 Because she's older and she
 remembers more.

Charlotte slumps back into her chair like a pouting child.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
 Your Uncle Buggy carried us as long
 as he could -

Just the mention of Buggy makes Louisa uncomfortable.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
 - but eventually your father sought
 'other' sources of income,
 apparently.
 (beat)
 He was a complete degenerate.

CHARLOTTE
 So why would Mr. Carlson expose
 Daddy if he was his partner? Won't
 he be implicated, too?

ADDISON
 When Tom found out he repaid their
 clients out of his own pocket. They
 weren't even the wiser.

CHARLOTTE
 Wow. Well, that's really admirable -

ADDISON
 And then blackmailed your father
 for twenty years.

CHARLOTTE
 Oh my God...

Charlotte steps away from the table and starts pacing and
 hyperventilating.

ADDISON
 Anything your Daddy didn't lose at
 the poker table he gave to Tom.
 We've been living on credit for
 years.

LOUISA
 ... how long have you known about
 this, Mama?

ADDISON

Since about three hours before he
dropped dead on our bedroom floor.

Louisa puts her head in her hands.

LOUISA

Jesus Christ.

CHARLOTTE

What are you saying?! Did you kill
Daddy?!

ADDISON

Oh, hells bells, Charlotte, of
course not!

(to Louisa)

But I might've.

Charlotte's still trying to put it together.

CHARLOTTE

...so why is Mr. Carlson exposing
us tomorrow?

ADDISON

Because he's an asshole. And
because I have nothing left to give
him.

(beat)

We'll be pariahs.

(martyr)

I didn't even realize it, but this
was my last party.

LOUISA

(rolls her eyes)

Alright.

CHARLOTTE

We can sell the house -

LOUISA

(instantly tense)

C'mon, isn't that a little
dramatic?

CHARLOTTE

She needs the money, doesn't she?
But whatever there is, you get
nothing.

LOUISA

There's nothing to get, Crazypants!
That means YOU, TOO. Even if she
did sell the house - and that's if
it's *worth* anything after whatever
debt is paid off - the money goes
to Mama, not *you* -

ADDISON

WE ARE NOT SELLING THIS HOUSE! This
house has been in the family for
four generations!

Addison looks to Louisa for support. Louisa nods.

LOUISA

(beat, half laughs)

You know something. When you said
Daddy was a shit I thought you were
gonna say something about him being
a philanderer.

ADDISON

(snorts)

Oh! Don't get me started.

Louisa's face drops. Charlotte begins to cry hard. She grabs
her purse.

CHARLOTTE

I can't be here. I - I can't -

She bolts.

ADDISON

Charlotte - !

Addison sighs mournfully. She turns her attention back to
Louisa and takes her hand.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

I want you to do something for me.

(beat, solemn)

I want you to find Sophie, and tell
her to get that stain out of my
settee before it sets.

OFF Louisa. Welcome home.

EXT. SAVANNAH - GOLDEN HOUR

Louisa looks simultaneously detached and curious as she drives aimlessly through downtown and suburban Savannah. At this hour and time of year, it evokes a sense of magic.

This is not lost on Louisa. She inhales deeply. Then lights another cigarette.

EXT. TOM CARLSON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Louisa checks an address on her phone and looks up at a huge, nineteenth century, Second French Empire style house.

She rings the bell. A moment later Tom Carlson swings the door open. We sense he's not surprised to see her.

TOM

Louisa.

A BEAT as she eyeballs him -

And then THROWS herself into arms as they begin to KISS AND GROPE PASSIONATELY. The door SLAMS shut.

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Louisa rides Tom slowly and deliberately. Every time he tries to take control, she stops him. He's somewhere between heaven and hell.

TOM

(desperate with desire)

Please, Sugar - harder.

LOUISA

(naughty)

Oh, you want harder?

TOM

Yes -

LOUISA

You want *faster* - ?

TOM

YES!

LOUISA

Well, we have a few things to discuss first.

Instead, she slows down. He GROANS with delicious misery.

TOM
(loving it)
Why do you do this to me - ?

LOUISA
You know what I want.

TOM
Say it. Say it like a dirty little
girl -

Louisa stops riding him and suddenly SQUEEZES Tom's penis
with her vaginal muscles. He's surprised to say the least.

TOM (CONT'D)
AAAAGGGHHH! Stop that!

He can't help but LAUGH out loud.

LOUISA
You're gonna stop blackmailing my
family -

TOM
Oh, c'mon. It never bothered you
before - ?

LOUISA
(snaps)
That was when it was Daddy's
problem. He deserved anything that
came his way but he's gone now.
(half beat)
And you can't print that missive.
Tomorrow or ever.
(disgusted)
Talk about overkill.

TOM
(pinched voice)
Too late. The editor has already
got it.
(half beat)
I mean it, Louisa - stop that!

She does. His whole body relaxes.

LOUISA
Call him.

TOM

It's one o'clock in the damn morning!

LOUISA

(southern accent)

Well, I'm sure it would greatly interest the Herald to know that pillar of the community, Thomas Carlson, had a tawdry affair with his business partner's *fifteen year-old* daughter.

He grins at her, turned on by her audacity.

TOM

You were something, weren't you? Fifteen going on thirty.

Louisa isn't fucking around. She drops the accent.

LOUISA

Call him.

TOM

You do realize how this would reflect on you, now don't you?

Louisa looks at him like he's crazy.

LOUISA

Let's think about this for a second. First of all, I was technically a child -

TOM

(dismissive)

- pfft, you had a mind of your own -

LOUISA

- you were married with children, and my father's partner, and do you really think after all these years I give a shit what anyone in this town thinks about me? I think I made that pretty clear when I left.
(thinks, dramatic, accent)
In fact 'that's *why* I left.'

He's not smiling anymore.

TOM

Is that true?

LOUISA
(beat)
No.

He looks relieved.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
I mean it. You're gonna leave Mama
alone. No more money.

Tom laughs and shakes his head. He still loves her.

TOM
Hooo-weee! You drive a hard
bargain, dont'cha, Lou?

She nuzzles up to him seductively and bites his ear.

LOUISA
If you make this call, right now,
in front of me, we can finish what
we started. *And then some.*

His eyes widen with intrigue and lust.

TOM
Hand me my cellular, Sugar.

OFF Louisa smiling to herself.

INT. THE DAME ESTATE/KITCHEN - DAWN

Louisa, just home from Tom's, tip toes into the kitchen. She
opens the refrigerator and peers in.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)
You've got to be kidding me -

Louisa JUMPS.

LOUISA
SHIT!

Charlotte sits at the kitchen table in her yoga pants with no
make up, smoking. She looks vulnerable and scared.

CHARLOTTE
Well, that didn't take long. Where
the hell are you comin' from at six
in the morning? Or should I say
from *whom* - ?

LOUISA
Stop it. Jack and I were catching
up and lost track of the time -
(something occurs to her)
Where are you coming from? Did you
stay here - ?

Charlotte waves her hand dismissively.

CHARLOTTE
I couldn't sleep.

Louisa sits down and lights a cigarette. LONG BEAT.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(wounded)
Do you really believe everything
Mama said?

LOUISA
Yes.

CHARLOTTE
But Daddy was so honorable. I just
can't believe he would ever do
something like that...

Louisa can. She looks away.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Anyway I came over to check on
Mama, but of course she was passed
out.

They share a knowing glance.

LOUISA
What did you expect?

Charlotte just shrugs, helplessly. It really bothers her.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
(gentle)
Charlotte. You're not responsible
for her. She's a grown woman -

CHARLOTTE
(snaps)
You would say that, wouldn't you?
You are the most selfish creature I
ever met. Always have been. Do you
realize what it was like for me,
dealing with Mama and Daddy alone,
after you left?

The lands. Louisa doesn't say anything. The tension is broken when Addison flies into the room in her silk bathrobe holding a laptop. She is both elated and seemingly sober.

ADDISON

Well, it would seem that Baby Jesus has smiled on the Dames once again because Tom's missive is *not in the paper!*

She drops the computer on the table. Charlotte starts scanning the page. She looks confused.

CHARLOTTE

She's right. It's not here. Do you think he changed his mind?

LOUISA

(shrugs, innocent)
He must've.

Addison eyes Louisa suspiciously - *and possibly gratefully.*

ADDISON

Maybe it's your Daddy looking out for us from the beyond.

CHARLOTTE

Why would Tom change his mind - ?

ADDISON

Charlotte, honey, Tom Carlson is slicker than shit on a hoe handle so instead of questioning it, let's go *celebrate* and get your sister fixed up.

(to Louisa)
You look like ten miles of bad road.

LOUISA

(re: the jab)
Thank you, Mama.
(long drag)
But I'm leaving today.

CHARLOTTE

(vicious)
Of course you are.
(beat)
There's no money.

Checkmate.

CLOSE ON Louisa as she burns red with shame and anxiety.
Before she can say anything -

ADDISON

The *hell* she is! I am a grievin'
widow and I need my daughters
around me! She's stayin'.

CHARLOTTE

(grunts)

Well then how're you plannin' on
payin' to 'fix her up.'

Addison looks at her like she's special needs.

ADDISON

Consider it a gift, Darlin'. From
American Express.

Louisa and Charlotte share a look, "Jesus Christ."

ADDISON (CONT'D)

So it's settled. Charlotte, call
Neiman's and have them open early
for us. Louisa, call that fairy ex-
boyfriend of yours.

(fans herself)

Good lord, what's the temperature
in here? It's hotter than two
rabbits screwing in a sack.

She arches her head towards the ceiling.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

SOPHIE! TURN ON THE AIR!

OFF Louisa and Charlotte, already exhausted.

INT. JACKSON'S HAIR SALON - MORNING

Louisa gets extensions, a cut, color and a southern blow out
by Jackson at his salon. At one point, Jackson attempts to
fix Addison's hair but she SLAPS his hand away.

INT. UPSCALE SPA - MORNING

Eyebrow waxing, mani/pedi and full make up. Louisa looks at
her new acrylic nails with a certain amount of wonder.

INT. NEIMAN MARCUS - MORNING

The ladies have the entire store to themselves as the PERSONAL SHOPPER goes above and beyond, dragging racks and racks of expensive clothing into a dressing suite.

ANGLE ON Charlotte. She's not happy about any of this.

ANGLE ON Louisa as she looks at her reflection in the mirror. She's not *not* enjoying herself.

EXT. NEIMAN MARCUS - DAY

The three Dames exit Neiman's looking like the Southern Belle Mafia. Louisa is nearly unrecognizable. For the first time since meeting her, she is comfortable in her own skin and brimming with confidence.

ADDISON

Oh! Louisa, honey, I almost forgot.
We told everyone that you ran away
to Europe and married a Count.

Addison puts on her sunglasses. Louisa does a double take.

LOUISA

You did *what*?

ADDISON

As if that was *really* any better -
you traipsing around Europe all
these years, married to some
swarthy foreigner...

(grinning)

Well Sugar, you've been reborn out
of the baptismal waters of Neiman
Marcus. You ready?

OFF Louisa. IS she ready?

CUT TO:

EXT. SAVANNAH STREET - DAY

The ladies strut down the street. SOCIETY WOMEN quickly recognize Louisa and part like the Red Sea.

QUICK CUTS of dozens of Savannah society women pointing and whispering: on the street, from inside cars, out of store windows. This is a FUCKING EVENT.

But her reception is a mixed one. It's a mosaic of excitement, distaste, awe, but above all, *curiosity*.

EXT. FANCY SAVANNAH RESTAURANT - DAY

The Dames sit outside for lunch, making themselves as visible as possible. QUICK CUTS as excited and nervous women of the upper class approach the table to pay their respects.

Most appear to be old friends or acquaintances, so there's a lot of polite hugging and squealing. Many introduce their own children to Louisa as if she were a celebrity.

ANGLE ON: Two SOCIETY WOMEN walking away with smiles plastered on their faces.

SOCIETY WOMAN #1

(under her breath)

She's gotta a lotta nerve showin' her face in this town after what she did - I don't care how many years ago it was.

SOCIETY WOMAN #2

Pfft. She can screw a hundred mid level politicians for all I care -

SOCIETY WOMAN #1

She was dethroned!

SOCIETY WOMAN #2

That woman has the pageant *touch* and if she's willing to coach my Abigail I will pay her top dollar.

(beat)

Can you believe it? All three Dames in Savannah at once. That's an awful lot of gunpowder.

(amazed)

Lord. She still looks amazing.

ANGLE ON: Louisa at the table. One by one, business cards and scraps of paper with phone numbers and email addresses are handed to her. Everyone wants a piece.

We PUSH IN on her face. Something long dead has been sparked in her. Addison clocks it. She leans in.

ADDISON

(low)

The sun feels good, doesn't it? Or had you forgotten?

Addison hides her smile, the proud stage mother.

SOCIETY WOMAN #6
(leans in, sincere)
I hope you're back for good?

CLOSE ON Louisa as this question lands.

Suddenly her cell RINGS. She glances at it -

POV: "UNKNOWN CALLER."

A moment as she deliberates, and then quietly slips the phone back into her purse.

INT. DAME ESTATE FOYER - LATER

Louisa, still tingling, swings open the front door to reveal Uncle Buggy. Her newly happy countenance dissolves instantly.

UNCLE BUGGY
("me again")
Hello.

OFF Louisa, debating.

EXT. DAME ESTATE PATIO/POOL - MOMENTS LATER

Louisa and Buggy sit at the patio table. Louisa smokes and avoids eye contact. Buggy is a charming and polished man.

UNCLE BUGGY
You look lovely, Rosebud. The whole town is buzzing that you're back, but I guess you knew that.

Silence.

UNCLE BUGGY (CONT'D)
You can't ignore me forever.

LOUISA
(snaps)
Can't I?
(beat, snide)
How's your little stewardess?

UNCLE BUGGY
That ended a long, long time ago.
But you knew that, too.

LOUISA
Why are you here?

UNCLE BUGGY
I came to pay my respects to my brother.

LOUISA
Is that what you call it?
'Respect?'
(beat)
You *owned* him. And you know it.

UNCLE BUGGY
That's a little harsh, don't you think? I was his older brother. And I was the star of the family - I'm sure you can relate to that?

Louisa scowls.

UNCLE BUGGY (CONT'D)
Louisa, being in a position of power in this community allowed me to protect your Daddy from himself. I was able to get him out of a lot of jams. More than you know.

She shakes her head in disgust, "you, fucker." She stabs out her cigarette and stalks off, shaken, leaving Buggy alone.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S HOUSE - DAY

A huge Federal Style house with impeccable gardens.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S HOUSE/LIVING AREA - DAY

Charlotte hosts a bridge game with three other women, one of whom is Hadley, the woman whose husband she was eyeballing at the funeral, and Leslie Ann, the woman who was fawning over Charlotte's Children's Hospital fundraiser. It's all very proper. Lots of tea and pastries.

LESLIE ANN
- I swear it was like seein' a ghost -

SOUTHERN LADY #4
- It was! I don't think I had even uttered her name in ten years -

LESLIE ANN

- Charlotte did you know she was
comin' home?

CHARLOTTE

(tight)
Of course I did.

LESLIE ANN

Well, she is *still* Savannah's
record holder for the most titles
and crowns, so it's only fittin'
that she step up and take her
rightful place as hostess this
season -

Charlotte's shoulders sag. Hadley notices.

HADLEY

(pivoting)
Charlotte, did I hear that Miranda
got the lead in the school play - ?

CHARLOTTE

("thank you")
You did, indeed! She's going to
play Sandy in Grease, isn't that
precious? I can't wait to make her
a little black body suit -

SOUTHERN LADY #4

And did you see that *gorgeous*
necklace she had on - ?

LESLIE ANN

I mean, I'm *assumin'* she's
divorced, but did she walk away
with any *money*? Or is she back
husband huntin'? Because as good as
she looks I doubt any man in *this*
town would have her after -

Charlotte folds her cards onto the table with a THUD.

CHARLOTTE

You know, I'm really surprised by
you ladies. My Daddy's been in the
ground less than one week and all
you can talk about is my dried up
ole' sister.

The ladies look at each other, mortified. Leslie Ann puts her
hand on Charlottes arm.

LESLIE ANN

I'm sorry, sweetheart. You're right.

(beat, can't help herself)

How's Louisa holding up?

(half beat)

And the Junior League *really ought* to honor her homecomin', don't you think?

CHARLOTTE

(curt)

She was never *in* the League.

LESLIE ANN

Well, she *should* be now that she's back.

Charlotte picks her cards back up, and without making eye contact -

CHARLOTTE

(very even)

Leslie Ann, somethin' tells me you ought to spend a little less time worryin' about what goes on in the league and a little more time keepin' your Charles happy.

(half beat)

Or so I've heard.

(re: cards)

Double.

Leslie Ann is frozen with embarrassment. The other two avoid eye contact. Charlotte sucks down her mint julep to keep from exploding. Hadley clocks it.

INT. DAME ESTATE HORSE STABLES - DAY

Louisa brushes a beautiful brown and white horse in the elaborate stable when she notices a RIDING WHIP hanging on the wall. She takes it and fingers it gently, full of wonder.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Hey.

Charlotte enters. They look at each other a moment, still not sure how to interact. Charlotte sits down on a bench.

**In the following scene, and for the rest of the series, Louisa's accent is back. It was not an intentional decision.*

LOUISA
Just meetin' the new horses. I'm
kind of partial to this one.

CHARLOTTE
(re: the horse)
Well, that fits. That's Betsy's
mare.

Louisa looks at Charlotte, deeply moved.

LOUISA
Is she really?

She turns back to the horse and nuzzles it's face.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
(low, emotional)
I loved your mama very much.

CHARLOTTE
Where've you been, Louisa.

Louisa shifts and laughs uncomfortably.

LOUISA
You know, in typical Mama fashion,
she hasn't even asked me yet.

CHARLOTTE
Probably because she doesn't want
to know the answer.

LOUISA
You probably don't either.

CHARLOTTE
I asked, didn't I?

Louisa turns around slowly, debating how to respond. Finally -

LOUISA
(teasing)
You and Brock thinking of having
any more babies? You really need a
Samantha to round out the cast.

Charlotte laughs in spite of herself.

CHARLOTTE
Miranda was named for Brock's
grandmother, so when Carrie came
along, it just seemed like a fun
thing to do.

They share a glance and snort. Charlotte raises an eyebrow.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Your accent is back.

Louisa's about to argue when she realizes that Charlotte's right. She shrugs, caught.

LOUISA
Well, that didn't take long, I suppose.

Charlotte looks down.

CHARLOTTE
I lied to you the other day. About it being hard after you left.
(beat)
It wasn't.

She's definitely got Louisa's attention. BEAT.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
From the time I was ten years old I wished to God every night that you would just - *disappear*. That maybe for once the attention would be on *me*. That maybe for once, *I* would be the pretty one. *I* would be the one Daddy paid attention to. *I* would be Mama's 'prized pony.'
(beat)
And then one day... you did. And it was the happiest day of my life.

Louisa wants not to care but is clearly very hurt. LONG BEAT.

LOUISA
Well. I'm glad I was able to come through for you.

Charlotte looks at her a moment, full of contempt.

CHARLOTTE
How badly do you need money?

Louisa lowers her eyes and shrugs, ashamed.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Louisa, how much do you need - ?

LOUISA
(blurting)
I don't know! I don't -
(MORE)

LOUISA (CONT'D)
(shakes her head)
A lot.

BEAT. Charlotte frowns.

CHARLOTTE
You're not leaving, are you?

CLOSE ON Louisa as she dares to say it:

LOUISA
I - I thought I might stay a while.
(feigned sincerity)
I mean, if it's okay with you?

CHARLOTTE
(not buying it)
As if my feelings have ever been a
consideration of yours.

LOUISA
Oh, get off it. You got everything
you wanted, didn't you? The
husband, the daughters, the house,
the *attention*.

CHARLOTTE
Until now.

LOUISA
Pfft. Once the novelty wears off no
one will care that I'm back.

CHARLOTTE
(beat)
I think you're wrong.

Louisa throws her hands up, "what do you want me to do?" She
takes a deep breath and sits across from Charlotte.

LONG BEAT.

LOUISA
When I left this place, I honestly
believed that I was as special as
everyone in this town had me
thinkin' I was. But I was wrong.
(resentful)
I'm sure it pleases you to no end
that everyone and their grandmother
knows I peaked at twenty.
(beat)
(MORE)

LOUISA (CONT'D)

And I'm sure you have your
suspicions about what I've been up
to.

(laughs darkly)

Mama always said it runs on her
side of the family...

She waits for Charlotte's response as if testing the waters,
but Charlotte just sneers.

CHARLOTTE

Oh please. She was commode-huggin'
drunk when she told us all that,
and if I'm not mistaken, that was
the *same* drunken episode she told
us that her great granddaddy won
the battle at Antietam.

LOUISA

Well, Mama always did bring
historical revisionism to new
levels.

They both SNORT. LONG BEAT. Charlotte really looks at her.

CHARLOTTE

What aren't you telling me?

LOUISA

(beat, sad)

There's a lot of things I don't
tell you.

Charlotte looks exasperated, tortured by her own compassion.
She exhales sharply as if to say, "what's done is done."

CHARLOTTE

Well, I suppose Brock and I have
inherited Mama -

Louisa says it before she thinks it -

LOUISA

Let me take care of Mama.

Charlotte looks at her like she's crazy.

CHARLOTTE

How the in the hell do you plan on
doing that?

Louisa doesn't respond. She has no idea.

INT. DAME ESTATE TV ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Louisa lies on the couch in her sweats, smoking.

She flips off the TV and grabs her cigarettes. She's about to head upstairs when -

ADDISON (O.S.)
(gruff)
Louisa.

Louisa FREEZES.

ADDISON (O.S.) (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Get in here.

A wave of nausea washes over her. She knows.

INT. ADDISON'S GRAND BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Louisa timidly approaches the doorway and pushes it open.

ANGLE ON: Addison. Blind drunk. And *mean*. Her eyes say it all. But there's no sign of booze. She ambles around in her silk robe. Louisa stands there, stiffly.

ADDISON
I'm surprised by you, Louisa Mae.
Thought you were done with this
town. And everyone in it. But don't
worry. I'll keep your secret.

LOUISA
Which one?

ADDISON
That you're a *goddamn loser* and
always have been.

Louisa rolls her eyes.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
Don't make eyes at me! You had this
town fooled but your father and I,
we always knew. We knew even before
you disgraced us, screwing that Jew
mayor -

LOUISA
Comptroller. And don't you start
with me. It was the best way -

ADDISON

(snide)

Oh, was it? I sincerely doubt it.
And look at you now. Washed up.
Unmarried. Still a slut -
(emphatic)
A goddamn loser.

Louisa is deeply wounded, but she's been here before. Her eyes dart around the room for signs of booze.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

What? You lookin' for something?
You tryin' to *imply* something?

LOUISA

(weary)

No, Mama.

Addison almost falls backwards onto a chair but recovers by sitting. Louisa, now totally on edge, rubs her temples.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

You can abuse me all you want, but
I'm not a child anymore. I'm here
to take care of you now.

Addison SNORTS at the absurdity of such a suggestion.

ADDISON

Right. Of course. That makes all
the sense in the world.

LOUISA

(panicky)

You sayin' you want me to leave?
Tough shit -

ADDISON

Oh, don't bullshit a bullshitter!

She looks at Louisa curiously. BEAT.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

What're you runnin' away from,
anyway? It's gotta be somethin'.
Somethin' as ugly as the thing that
sent you runnin' away from here?
(sneers)
Isn't that just like you. Makin' a
mess everywhere you go.

Louisa doesn't say anything. Addison knows her too well.

ADDISON (CONT'D)

The only reason you want to stay is because you've got *nowhere else to go*.

LOUISA

Ugh. Mama, you could depress the devil.

(over it)

I'm going to bed -

Louisa turns to leave but -

ADDISON

Your sister is having an affair!

LOUISA

(beat, thrown)

What? With who?

ADDISON

Her marriage is about to go down in a very public ball of flames, you're back to wreak God knows what kind of havoc, and your father...

LOUISA

What?

Addison waves her hand drunkenly and dissmisively.

ADDISON

Pfft. People were already talkin' before he died... I wasn't completely forthcomin' about what went on between Tom and your father as I didn't need Charlotte strokin' out in my kitchen, but there are people in this town who *did* know - and *still* know - that your father was cheatin' them. Tom was blackmailin' us to pay for their silence. He wasn't gonna print that missive just to humiliate me. He was gonna print it to put an end to all the money *he's* been shellin' out all these years.

Louisa sits down and puts her head in her hands. Apparently she didn't know *everything* that was going on.

LOUISA

So... Tom is still paying them?

ADDISON
 It's only a matter of time before
 this charmin' truth comes to light.
 (beat, sheepish)
Among others...

She looks at Louisa with tears in her eyes; presumably this is the weepy part of her drunken episode.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
 This family used to be respected.
 The name DAME used to mean
 something. And look at us now.

CLOSE ON Louisa really taking this in. As stoic as she appears, her heart is breaking. Finally she stands.

LOUISA
 I'm going to bed.

ADDISON
 Louisa - !

Louisa turns around.

ADDISON (CONT'D)
 (terrified)
We cannot sell this house.

LOUISA
 (beat, unconvincing)
 I know. I'll take care of it. Of
 all of it. I promise.

ADDISON
 (beat, cruel)
 You mean you'll take care of
yourself.

Stung, Louisa leaves.

OFF Addison, her life unraveling before her eyes.

INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Deeply disturbed by what just happened, Louisa lies awake in the dark, staring at the ceiling.

We PUSH IN SLOWLY on her impassive expression. After a few moments her eyes flutter. Then she stifles a moan.

We realize she is masturbating. The tenor is not sexy, but compulsive; desperate.

Her climax is muzzled, and as her breathing stabilizes, she is overcome with an all-too familiar shame.

FADE OUT.

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - MORNING

Louisa enters the kitchen to find Addison at the table, eating breakfast and doing the crossword puzzle.

ADDISON
(warmly)
Mornin', Sugar.

LOUISA
(still a little wounded)
Mornin', Mama.

Apparently this is how it works. Like it never happened.

ADDISON
You want Sophie to make you some
eggs?

Louisa hastily pours herself some coffee and rushes back towards the stairs.

LOUISA
No. I'm already running late.

Addison looks up from her paper, smiling.

ADDISON
You remind those catty bitches who
runs this town, ya hear?

OFF Louisa, hoping she's up to the task.

INT. JUNIOR LEAGUE BATHROOM - MORNING

Louisa, looking every bit the polished Southern Belle, stares at her reflection in a fancy, public bathroom.

She puts her hand to her heart and smiles humbly.

LOUISA
(to the mirror)
Y'all - y'all are just *too much*.
Thank you. Thank you so much for
havin' me here today.

SOUND BRIDGE of uproarious applause.

Slowly, her expression changes. Her reflection sickens her.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNIOR LEAGUE BALLROOM - MORNING

The enthusiastic applause turns into a standing ovation as we watch a room PACKED full of society women (aged twenty five to forty) fete Louisa at a breakfast dedicated to her.

Louisa stands at the podium, her hand to her heart just as she rehearsed.

ANGLE ON: Charlotte, who's sitting at a table near the front. She claps with the others but grits her teeth.

ANGLE ON: Louisa who wipes away a few phony tears and puts on a FUCKING SHOW like the pro she is.

LOUISA

Thank you, please, now, y'all, just
sit down! Hush -

Finally the applause subsides and the ladies sit.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

Well, never in all my life have I
had a reception like that. Makes a
gal want to disappear for another
fifteen years and come back and do
it all over again!

The room LAUGHS. Charlotte rolls her eyes.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

It means more than I can say, to be
your guest of honor this morning.
I'd like to thank my precious
sister Charlotte, who's just about
the best president the Junior
League has ever had, don't y'all
agree?

Louisa applauds Charlotte, as does the rest of the room.
Charlotte stands a moment and waves.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

(conspiratorially, flirty)
Now, I know there've been a lot of
talk about where I've been all
these years.

She clears her throat and tries to move through the next section as quickly as possible.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

And many of you have asked me if I've held on to my 'countess' title and, well, I - I have chosen not to, and would just really love to put all that behind me - but I'm not here to talk about that, anyway.

(moving on)

I'm here to pay the piper. Now, I'm sure most of you remember a *little pickle* I got myself into when I was crowned Miss USA.

ANGLE ON: the ladies, who nod and murmur. A woman shouts from the audience.

SOUTHERN LADY #5

(proud)

THE FIRST AND *LAST* MISS USA EVA'
FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA!

LOUISA

(genuinely touched)

That's right - y'all remember.

(beat, back in character)

Well. I'm not going to shy away from my past. I'm not going to pretend it didn't happen because it did. I'm sure many of us here did things in our youth we wish we could take back, and as public as my fall from grace was, I just thank my lucky stars it was before TMZ!

LAUGHS from the room. Suddenly Louisa turns serious.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

But I want all's ya'll to know something. From the bottom of my heart, I did what I did, well -

(chokes up)

- because I was in love.

SYMPATHETIC murmurs can be heard throughout the room.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

(wipes away a "tear")

It's true.

(MORE)

LOUISA (CONT'D)

I was young and naive and I truly believed that, 'that man' loved me, too. I was so stupid! I was nothing if not blessed. And I just threw it all away; all the opportunities I was given. Over a married man. Who was just usin' me.

(holds in a "sob")

And I just hope ya'll can forgive me for disgracing our beautiful state!

Automatic STANDING OVATION as Louisa is publicly forgiven. She dabs her eyes with a Kleenex.

CLOSE ON Louisa and Charlotte as they share a private nod; "mission accomplished."

INT. CHARLOTTE'S RANGE ROVER - LATER

Charlotte drives the two of them away from the breakfast. Louisa stares out the window at the passing landscape.

CHARLOTTE

So. How do you feel?

LOUISA

Dirty.

CHARLOTTE

("sounds about right")

Well. Welcome home.

LONG BEAT. Louisa hesitates, but finally -

LOUISA

Mama had a fit last night.

CHARLOTTE

(concerned)

How bad?

LOUISA

I'd give it about a six point five.

Louisa looks at Charlotte curiously.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

Usually she's pretty lucid for such a nasty drunk but...

Louisa stops herself.

CHARLOTTE

But what?

Louisa turns back to the window and shrugs dismissively.

LOUISA

Nothin'. It's nothin'.

INT./EXT. CHARLOTTE'S RANGE ROVER/DAME ESTATE - LATER

The two of them pull up to the house when they notice a white Mercedes in the driveway.

CHARLOTTE

(sotto)

Shit.

LOUISA

Who's that?

EXT. DAME ESTATE - CONTINUOUS

The ladies exit the car just as a portly man, MR. GIBBONS (early 50's), exits his. Charlotte is all charm.

CHARLOTTE

Mr. Gibbons! How lovely to see you -

(low)

- *and you're a little early.*

MR. GIBBONS

Hello, Charlotte, I thought I'd come early and pay my respects to your mother but she wasn't home.

Charlotte is clearly anxious.

CHARLOTTE

No, yes, she gets her hair set on Tuesday's -

He and Louisa see each other and sort of FREEZE. Clearly they know each other, though how well is debatable.

Louisa offers her hand.

LOUISA

Hello. Louisa Dame.

He shakes it and blushes a little.

MR. GIBBONS
Hello, Ms. Dame. It's an honor to
finally - to make your
acquaintance.

Charlotte sees right through it and rolls her eyes.

LOUISA
All mine. So, how can we help you?

MR. GIBBONS
Ah, yes, well I'm here to appraise
the property.

Louisa snaps her head to Charlotte who looks down guiltily.

CUT TO:

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - LATER

Charlotte sits at the table while Louisa paces with a drink.

LOUISA
(panicky)
...no right! No right at all! Mama
would drop her fucking basket if
she knew you did this!

CHARLOTTE
(wailing)
I'm sorry, okay! But how's she
supposed to get by?

LOUISA
I told you to leave that to me!

Louisa exhales sharply and sits down next to Charlotte.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
You and I both know what this house
means to her. Her identity, her
pride - all our family history is
wrapped up here. What do you think
you're going to do? Put her in some
town home? Move her in with you and
Brock? If you think her drinkin' is
bad now, losin' this house would
kill her. And you know it.

Charlotte is conflicted but doesn't deny it.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

Now, I need you to promise me that
you're going to take the house off
the table and stay out of it!

CHARLOTTE

Well, what's your plan, then?
Because if we don't act quick, not
sellin' won't be an option.

Louisa's countenance suddenly becomes very even.

LOUISA

(beat)

Are you or are you not havin' an
affair?

Charlotte blanches.

LOUISA (CONT'D)

You need me. More than you know. So
does Mama. Stay in your lane.

She walks out of the room when Charlotte calls after her.

CHARLOTTE

(spiteful, heated)

HEY! Is there anyone in this town
you haven't fucked?

LOUISA (O.S.)

(without missing a beat)

Your husband. Not that he hasn't
tried.

It's all Charlotte can do to keep from SCREAMING.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Louisa is dressed to the nines as she pushes her cart down
the produce aisle. She stops in front of the avocados and
squeezes a few.

Another woman, MAGGIE (42), also attractive and of equal
gentry, spies Louisa. Her face darkens. She approaches with
her own cart - suddenly all smiles.

MAGGIE

Louisa, darlin'! I thought that was
you!

Louisa recognizes the voice before she even turns around. Her
shoulders tighten as she forces a smile.

LOUISA
Maggie Jeffries - !

MAGGIE
Maggie Bryant, now -

LOUISA
Of course it is, honey, how are
you?

They peck hello on both cheeks. It's the most polite conversation you've ever seen between two women who fucking hate each other. Their banter is quick and saccharine.

MAGGIE
I'm just wonderful, darlin', how
are you?

LOUISA
Never been better! But I was just
terribly disappointed I didn't see
you this mornin' at the league
breakfast - ?

MAGGIE
Oh, I know, I'm so sorry about
that. I wanted so *desperately* to
come and welcome you back but my
youngest wasn't feeling well.
(beat, almost sincere)
I'm sorry to hear about your
Daddy's passin'.

LOUISA
Thank you, honey, it was a blow.
(half beat, Addison-esque)
But with so much to do there's just
no time to dwell. You understand.

MAGGIE
(starting to get the hint)
Of course. So... that means you'll
be stayin' on a while?

LOUISA
(beat, "fuck you")
I am. Yes. I just decided.

The idea occurs to her the instant she says it:

LOUISA (CONT'D)
Thinking of startin' a pageant
school. Seems a waste not share
what the good lord gave you, right?

CLOSE ON Louisa, privately proud of herself. It *is* a waste.
It's nearly impossible for Maggie to hide her displeasure.

MAGGIE

Isn't that marvelous! Well, maybe
I'll just have to throw a cocktail
party in your honor -

LOUISA

- oh, now don't put yourself out -

MAGGIE

- I'm sure it wouldn't be any
trouble at all. I'll invite all the
girls and we can drink ourselves
silly and gab about the old pageant
days -

(sour)

- I mean, we're practically war
buddies.

Suddenly it comes to a grinding halt. They smile at each
other silently, years of hostility unfolding between them.

Finally -

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

(clears her throat)

You know, my brother in law was in
Los Angeles a few years back for a
convention or some such thing.

CLOSE ON: The color slowly drains from Louisa's face, yet she
never loses her composure.

LOUISA

Oh?

MAGGIE

He thought he might have seen you.
It was the summer of 2011.

The sound of a man GRUNTING is heard for just a second.
Louisa SNAPS her head up to look for the source. The sound
stops. She refocuses on Maggie and pretends to think.

LOUISA

Summer of 2011... Oh, well, I spent
that summer in Monaco with my ex
husband. So no, it couldn't
possibly have been me.

Maggie smiles at her, "I'm onto you."

MAGGIE

Well, then perhaps you have a doppelganger on the West coast.

LOUISA

Honey, I am one-of-a-kind. At least that's what they always told me.

Louisa just smiles, "go fuck yourself." Maggie smirks as she takes the avocado that Louisa had been fondling.

MAGGIE

I've got to get home and start dinner but it was just so lovely to see you after all these years, Louisa. How does next week sound for your party?

LOUISA

(tight)
Sounds divine.

MAGGIE

Well, alright then. It's a date.

They eyeball each other until Maggie disappears. Once out of sight, Louisa looks not only woozy, but unbalanced in a way we've never seen before.

Trembling she pulls out her cell phone and dials.

LOUISA

(sotto, low)
C'mon, c'mon, c'mon -

She holds the phone to her ear.

VOICE RECORDING (V.O.)

*The number you're trying to reach
is no longer in service -*

Louisa EXHALES with panic. She looks around self consciously. Finally she abandons her nearly full cart and hurries out of the store.

EXT./INT. TOM CARLSON'S HOUSE - LATER/EVENING

Tom SWINGS the door open to reveal Louisa grinning seductively but also a little manically. It would appear she came straight from the grocery store.

TOM

Isn't this a nice surprise.

Louisa enters and drops her purse on the floor.

LOUISA
(overly thick accent)
Well, I was just at the grocery
store to get me some sugar, and
then I realized I was in the wrong
place altogether.

Tom GRINS. So does she.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hot sex in progress. Tom is on top with Louisa's legs over his shoulders. She looks past him and notices a neck tie on the night stand. Switching gears, Louisa pushes him off and gets on top.

She rides him hard for a moment, then sensing she has control of the situation, she snatches the tie, pushes Tom's wrists over his head and ties him to the bed frame.

TOM
What'choo doin', Sugar?

LOUISA
I just thought it might be fun to
play -

SWISH. She pulls the ends of the tie tight. Tom is turned on, but when she grabs his neck as if to choke him, it sends him over the edge. They fuck hard for a moment but apparently it's not rough enough -

- caught up in the moment, Tom abruptly yanks his wrists free, and in one deft movement, FLIPS LOUISA OVER, flat on her stomach, and ties her wrists behind her back.

In a matter of seconds she goes from dominating to being dominated. It's a little violent. Her eyes flash with fear.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
What - what are you doing?

TOM
I'm playin', too -

And with that he FORCES her head down, and THRUSTS into to her so hard that she GASPS with pain.

We SLOWLY PUSH in on Louisa's face as he fucks her. Another woman might have found it exciting, but after a moment the fear turns to numbness, until her eyes just look dead.

CUT TO:

INT. DAME ESTATE - LATER

The FRONT DOOR SLAMS as Louisa races up the stairs.

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Addison and Charlotte write thank you notes at the kitchen table when they hear the racket.

ADDISON
Is that Louisa?

INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Louisa shuts the door and throws off her coat when -

UNCLE BUGGY (O.S.)
I still don't understand how you
kids get this thing to work -

Louisa SPINS around and YELPS with surprise. Buggy sits at her desk, holding her iPad.

LOUISA
What are you doing here!? Does Mama
know you're here?

UNCLE BUGGY
(re: the iPad)
These things still boggle my mind.
I miss the days before you could
look up which actor was in which
movie, or which writer said such
and such.
(laughs, incredulous)
Now everyone knows everything at
the touch of a button. Makes for
lousy dinner conversation if you
ask me. Still refuse to get one
myself -

LOUISA
How did you get in here?

He turns and looks at her like she's crazy.

UNCLE BUGGY
Your Mama let me in, of course. We
had a drink. Or four. That woman
can still put it away.

Louisa SWINGS the door open.

LOUISA
I want you to leave. Now.

UNCLE BUGGY
You're goin' to have to get over
this eventually -

Louisa EXPLODES WITH RAGE.

LOUISA
I WILL NEVER GET OVER IT! NEVER!
AND I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO!

Suddenly she bursts into agonizing, frenzied tears. Years and
years of pent up rage and grief. She screams through her
sobbing.

LOUISA (CONT'D)
*You say you protected Daddy from
himself?! Well, who was going to
protect me from YOU!? Not him! Not
him! Because without you he'd be
broke and ruined and disgraced! So
he let - ! He let - ! FOR YEARS - !*

Buggy approaches her as if to console her.

UNCLE BUGGY
Oh, Rosebud, c'mere -

She SHRIEKS and pushes him away.

LOUISA
DON'T YOU TOUCH ME!

CUT TO:

INT. DAME ESTATE KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Addison and Charlotte hear Louisa screaming. They share a
worried glance and rush away from the table -

INT. DAME ESTATE STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

- up the stairs -

INT. LOUISA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

- and into Louisa's bedroom to find her screaming at -
Nobody.

LOUISA
(to "Buggy")
I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU! I HATE Y -

All the blood drains from Addison's face. Charlotte FREEZES with horror.

Addison, trying to remain calm, pulls Charlotte into the hallway. They speak in hushed tones.

ADDISON
- go call Dr. Steinberg - tell him
Louisa is home -

CHARLOTTE
What's happening - ?!

ADDISON
(snaps)
Charlotte! GO!

Charlotte just stares at her, frightened. Finally she nods and runs off.

ANGLE ON: Louisa SHRIEKING.

ANGLE ON: Addison, standing by, devastated and helpless; she's been here before.

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF EPISODE