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DEATH BECOMES HER

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT NEW YORK SKYLINE NIGHT 1

A soft summer shower flashes and RUMBLES over New York City.  
A legend --

BROADWAY, 1979.

The title of a show, "Songbird!," blinks in red neon on a theatre marquis, and next to it the words "Preview Tonight!" Up above the title, the name "MADELINE ASHTON" glitters in brilliant black letters.

A COUPLE burst out of the theatre and breathe the night air as if for the first time.

MAN

A musical version of "Sweet Bird of Youth?" Are they kidding?

WOMAN

Thank God you wanted to leave.

They hurry down the street as a SECOND COUPLE comes out of the theatre.

SECOND WOMAN

Could you believe, Madeline Ashton?  
Talk about waking the dead.

SECOND MAN

I gotta get a drink.

The Second Woman tosses her Playbill, which lands face up on the sidewalk in the rain. There's a picture of a woman on the cover, a glamorous actress and we --

CUT TO:

2 INT THEATRE NIGHT 2

-- the Actress's face, and the picture on the Playbill isn't exactly from yesterday. MADELINE ASHTON, fortyish, has just reached the point where age is beginning to encroach on her incredible looks. She's elegant, she's beautiful, but if you look closely behind her eyes in a quiet moment, you'll notice something else.

She's terrified.

Right now she's singin' and dancin' up a storm; seemingly without benefit of training in singin' or dancin'.

CONTINUED

A DOZEN GUYS IN TUXEDOS carry her across the stage while she sings the first act curtain number, "Me." Walkouts continue \* in the audience.

IN THE AUDIENCE,

two hands are intertwined. He, DR. ERNEST MENVILLE, is in his forties, a bit ruffled, but clear-eyed. She, HELEN SHARP, is about five years younger. Pretty but dowdy, Helen seems to have completely reinvented style by ignoring it. "Provincial" is too harsh, "homey" is a better word for Helen.

Ernest beams, thoroughly enjoying the play. He leans over to Helen and whispers.

ERNEST  
She's sensational!

Helen looks at him, concerned, strangely saddened by his enjoyment of the play.

DBH00 4

CUT TO:

3 INT BACKSTAGE NIGHT

3

MADELINE is in her dressing room backstage, examining her face critically in the mirror, holding the skin back in an imaginary facelift.

MADELINE \*  
(muttering to herself)  
Wrinkled, wrinkled little star --  
hope they'll never see the scars.

ROSE, Madeline's factotum, comes into the room.

ROSE \*  
Your guests are here, Miss Ashton.  
Miss Helen Sharp, with a gentleman.

MADELINE  
(nervous, snappy)  
How does she look?

ROSE  
Who?

MADELINE  
Helen, you idiot.

CONTINUED

ROSE

Oh! Uh -- I don't know. Smart,  
I guess. Kind of classy.

MADELINE

Who asked you? What do you know  
about smart and classy? Smart and  
classy compared to who?

ROSE

Well, compared to --

MADELINE

Watch it, Rose. You're too old to  
be out of a job.

ROSE

What did I say?

DBH004

MADELINE

Oh, please. If you get any slower  
you'll be declared dead.

The door opens. HELEN enters with ERNEST, who follows her  
rather shyly. Madeline abandons all her nervousness and  
turns toward Helen with the greatest theatrical smile.

MADELINE (cont.)

Hell, darling, I can't believe it!

HELEN

How are you, Mad?

MADELINE

It's been so long. And don't you  
dare say how long.

They kiss. Madeline's eyeline shifts towards Ernest, who  
nods and claps his hands politely in reference to the play.

HELEN

Mad, I want you to meet Dr. Ernest  
Menville, my fiancée.

MADELINE

Ernest Menville, the plastic surgeon?  
I've read all about you, Doctor, how  
nice to finally meet you.

CONTINUED

ERNEST

You were wonderful, Miss Ashton.

HELEN

Ernest is quite a fan. He never told me he had such a Madeline Ashton thing.

MADELINE

Oh, I'm sure he doesn't have a thing. Do you?

ERNEST

(blushing)

Oh, no I, uh -- well, I, uh, I --

He trails off, just looking at Helen and laughing uncomfortably.

MADELINE

I'm so happy for you both. How did you meet? Where? Why?

ERNEST

Helen edited the first medical text I wrote, and we, uh, well, you know --

MADELINE

(to Helen)

An editor? What happened to the writing?

HELEN

(a little embarrassed)

Well, still trying.

ERNEST

Oh, don't be modest. She's brilliant. And the world will soon find out.

MADELINE

Tell me, doctor.

(coquettishly, touching her face)

Do you think I'm starting to need you?

Ernest laughs uncomfortably again and shakes a finger at Madeline. Helen slides an arm possessively through his, pulling him closer.

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3 CONTINUED

3

MADLINE (cont.)  
So, have you two set a date?

HELEN  
Yes, we have.

ERNEST  
No, we haven't.

\*

They look at each other. A smile grows across Madeline's face like a fungus.

CUT TO:

4 INT OPERATING ROOM DAY

4

AN ENORMOUS EYE is visible through a surgeon's lighted magnifying viewer. The eye is closed, and creased on the side by crow's feet. A scalpel moves up alongside the eye and prepares to make an incision.

ERNEST, the surgeon wielding the scalpel, is in gown and mask. He addresses his ASSISTANTS in rapid-fire jargon.

\*

ERNEST  
Move the retractors over, I'm going after the lateral fat pad. Better put a hemostat on it too; there're some decent sized vessels in there and if I clip one I don't need any extra bleeding.

\*

He goes to make the incision, but stops, hearing a strange TAPPING sound. He looks up, confused.

The TAPPING comes again. He looks over to the door. MADLINE stands outside. She waves through the glass. She looks ravishing.

Ernest, surprised, grins broadly beneath the mask and waves back with one gloved, bloody hand.

CUT TO:

5 Dec 91

5 INT HELEN'S APARTMENT NIGHT 5

An austere place, done in pastels, dimly lit. HELEN sits on a sofa, tense, twisting a handkerchief in her hands. A cat winds around her legs. ERNEST, still in his overcoat, paces in front of her.

ERNEST

For heaven's sake, it was dinner, a business dinner. The woman wanted my professional opinion.

HELEN

Ernest, you don't know Madeline the way I do. She wants you. She wants you because you're mine. I've lost men to her before -- she turns on the flash and glitter and they're gone. That's why I wanted you to meet her before we got married. I had to know if you could pass the Madeline Ashton test. Please, please don't fail. I couldn't take it again, I'd -- I don't know what I'd do.

ERNEST

Do you know how silly you sound?

He goes to her and takes her hand.

ERNEST (cont)

I have absolutely no interest in Madeline Ashton.

CUT TO:

6 INT MARRIAGE HALL DAY 6

ERNEST stands in a dark suit, hands folded in front of him. A PRIEST stands before him.

PRIEST

And do you, Ernest, take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, in sickness and in health, till death do you part?

CONTINUED

5 Dec 91

6 CONTINUED

6

ERNEST

I do.

PRIEST

Then by the power vested in me, I  
now pronounce you man and wife.

Ernest turns to a bride standing next to him. He smiles happily, reaches out, and lifts her veil. It's MADELINE. He kisses her and a small group of GUESTS cheer.

Ernest is about to pull out of the rather chaste wedding kiss when Madeline runs one hand into the back of his hair, grabbing a handful of it. She runs her other hand down his chest, heading south. She pulls his head forward and puts her lips to his ear.

She WHISPERS something sexy, and from the look on Ernest's face it's hot enough to light a cigarette from.

ERNEST

Oh God --

They kiss again, hard, and the CHOIR bursts into the "Hallelujah."

IN THE BACK OF THE CHURCH,

almost hiding in the shadows, is HELEN, weeping, devastated, clutching a handkerchief tightly in her hands. She stares at the front of the church, at Ernest and Madeline.

They finally break from their kiss and turn, sweeping down the aisle toward the doors to the CHEERING of Guests. Helen steps back, further into the shadows, out of sight. They sweep almost right past her, but don't see her, totally absorbed in one another, GIGGLING happily.

They burst out the doors and down the steps of the church.

Helen stares after them. She still clutches the handkerchief, even more tightly now, and a trickle of blood oozes out from her palms, staining the cloth red.

CUT TO:

7 OMITTED

7



An enormous woman's butt stares us smack in the face. A legend --

5 YEARS LATER.

The apartment we're in is an absolute pigsty, the home of a lunatic, jammed with newspapers, food cartons, and dozens of cats, which crawl everywhere. Snow falls outside, visible through a window.

There is a relentless POUNDING at the front door.

VOICE (o.s.)

Come on, lady! We know you're in there!

The butt ignores the pounding and waddles across the kitchen. A hand opens a cabinet. Thirty or forty cans of vanilla cake frosting are stacked neatly inside. The hand picks one and cranks off the top.

VOICE (o.s.)<sup>4</sup>

This is your last warning! You can't just ignore an eviction notice!

Finally, the owner of the butt turns around. It's HELEN, and she is an absolute mess. She's only five years older, but at least fifty pounds heavier, and shows no concern for her appearance. Her chin is streaked with frosting.

She turns away from the door and goes back to the TV. She picks up a remote control and pushes play.

On the TV, it's an old movie, from the late sixties, a murder mystery. MADELINE, much younger, dressed in evening wear, has come home to her apartment to find an INTRUDER.

MADELINE

(in the film)

What are you doing here?!

The Intruder jumps her and strangles her with a stocking. Madeline SCREAMS and dies. Helen smiles.

VOICE (o.s.)

We're breaking the door down!

Helen ignores them, pushes rewind, then play, then watches the same scene again. Madeline SCREAMS and dies. Helen rewinds it again.

CONTINUED

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7A CONTINUED

7A

Behind her, the door SMASHES open and light floods the apartment. COPS and the LANDLORD hurry in, then turn and reel at the stench.

On the TV, Helen has started Madeline's death scene again. The Cops come over and grab her by the arms, hauling her to her feet and dragging her to the door.

Helen doesn't resist them, just strains to look back, over her shoulder, at the TV, grinning as she watches Madeline die. Again.

CUT TO:

7B INT PSYCHIATRIC WARD DAY

7B

HELEN, cleaned up now but still vastly overweight, sits in a straight backed chair in a drab, institutional room in a psychiatric ward, twisting a handkerchief in her hands. There are a half dozen other PATIENTS there, part of group therapy. The PSYCHOLOGIST, a tough woman in her forties, looks at Helen. \*

PSYCHOLOGIST

What about you, Helen? We haven't heard from you in a while. Do you have anything you want to talk about with the group?

The Group all turn and look at Helen apprehensively. One even bites a fingernail in dread.

Helen looks up. Her face is blank. Finally:

HELEN

Madeline Ashton.

She barely has the words out of her mouth when the other Group Members throw up their hands and GROAN, some even SHOUTING at her in anger. The Psychologist leaps to her feet and points an accusing finger at Helen.

PSYCHOLOGIST \*

In my office!

CUT TO:

12 Dec 91

7C INT PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE DAY

7C

The PSYCHOLOGIST follows HELEN into her office and closes the door behind them.

PSYCHOLOGIST

I can't take this any more, Helen!  
Six months of therapy, you're not  
one pound lighter, and we're still  
talking about Madeline Ashton!?

HELEN

Do you think I enjoy talking  
about Madeline Ashton?

PSYCHOLOGIST

Do you think I enjoy it?! I don't  
know how many different ways I can  
tell you this! Madeline Ashton has  
nothing to do with you any more!  
You have to tell yourself she doesn't  
even exist! For you to have a life --  
for any of us to have a life -- you  
have to forget about her! You have to  
erase her from your mind. You have to  
completely eliminate any trace of --

\*

HELEN

(looking up suddenly)  
You're right.

PSYCHOLOGIST

(stops short)  
What?

HELEN

You're absolutely right. I don't  
know why I didn't see it before.  
I have to eliminate Madeline.

PSYCHOLOGIST

That's it! Eliminate all the --

\*

CONTINUED

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7C CONTINUED

7C \*

HELEN  
And I should get in shape.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
Right!

HELEN  
Lose a few pounds.

PSYCHOLOGIST  
Exactly!

HELEN  
Get in shape -- lose a few pounds --  
(hard, and we just know  
she's lost something in  
the translation)  
-- eliminate Madeline.

\*

CUT TO:

8 EXT BEVERLY HILLS DAY 8

A MESSENGER on a moped PUTTS down the street in an exclusive section of Beverly Hills, clutching an envelope in his hand. He passes exquisitely manicured estates, all of them protected by heavy, wrought iron security bars that line their front yards and driveways. He stops in front of one such estate and rings at the gate. Another legend --

BEVERLY HILLS, 7 YEARS LATER.

\*

CUT TO:

12 Dec 91

9 INT MANSION DAY 9

ROSE, twelve years older, carries a breakfast tray smoothly up this mansion's central staircase to the second floor. The breakfast is simple -- yogurt, an apple, some tea, and two Ice-Blue eye patches. \*

The messenger's envelope is also on the tray, and now we have a chance to read the name written on the front -- "Madeline Ashton-Menville."

CUT TO:

10 INT MADELINE'S BEDROOM DAY 10

MADELINE is asleep in bed, her face tied back by triangles of plastic that prevent her facial muscles from relaxing. She's not horizontal, but almost sitting up with her head rigid, resting on a hard cushion. By now, Madeline's pushing fifty from the wrong side, but she has kept herself in excellent condition. Her plastic surgeon was a genius.

ROSE comes silently into the room and deposits the breakfast tray next to the bed. She puts on some soft CHAMBER MUSIC.

Madeline wakes up as if on cue. She opens her eyes very wide and strokes her neck languidly with a gloved hand. Rose goes to the drapes. Madeline puts on the eye patches. \*

MADELINE

All right.

Rose opens the drapes. The room is invaded by sunlight.

ROSE

(whispering, by rote)

Good morning, madam. You look absolutely marvelous.

MADELINE

Aren't you forgetting something?

ROSE

Today is Thursday, madam. I thought I only --

MADELINE

Never mind. I think from now on I want you to say it every morning.

CONTINUED

ROSE

Very well.  
 (with feigned spontaneity)  
 Oh, madam! You look younger every day!

MADELINE

Thank you, Rose.

Rose goes to the door. Madeline picks up the envelope on the tray and opens it.

MADELINE (cont.)

What's this?

ROSE

Your tickets, for Helen Sharp's  
 reception tonight. They just came.

Madeline pulls out two large, ornate tickets.

MADELINE

Table assignments. Clever little  
 witch.

(reading, with contempt)

"Forever Young -- a new beauty book  
 by Helen Sharp."

ROSE

Oh, I like that title!

MADELINE

How about "Forever Young and Eternally  
 Fat." You like that one too, Rose?

She turns and looks at the vast expanse of un-slept-in bed  
 next to her. She looks at Rose.

MADELINE (cont.)

I find it hard to believe he got up  
 early and made his half of the bed.

ROSE

No, madam.

She looks up and points to the ceiling. Madeline sighs.

MADELINE

Again?

CUT TO:

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11 INT THIRD FLOOR DAY 11

ROSE carries another tray upstairs, this one even simpler -- a Bloody Mary and a bottle of aspirin. She opens a door to the third floor of the house, revealing it to be a spacious loft with an enormous skylight in the middle of the cathedral ceiling. It looks like someone's sanctuary -- there's a pool table, a television, an easy chair, and a wet bar. \*

On a table next to the comfy chair, a framed picture of MADELINE and ERNEST on their wedding day fights for space with empty glasses and booze bottles.

Someone's feet are on the chair, but coming from the wrong direction. Following the body down, we see ERNEST, lying on the floor where he passed out in last night's clothes.

Unlike Madeline, he looks older. He looks lined. He looks, frankly, a wreck. A beeper on his belt BEEPS away, but he sleeps on peacefully. Rose shuts off his beeper, checks the number, and wakes him by setting the cold Bloody Mary glass on his forehead. He MOANS, opens his eyes and looks up at her.

ERNEST

Is this an angel I see before me?

ROSE

(giggles, flattered)  
Dr. Menville, how sweet.

ERNEST

Not you, Toots.

He closes his hand around the drink, drags himself up into the easy chair, and takes a deep swallow. The drink has a strong, soothing effect, and his head seems to clear. There are a couple scalpels on the table next to him. He picks one up and plays with it idly.

ERNEST (cont.)

Is it up yet?

ROSE

Yes sir. It's in the bath.

Ernest sighs and holds out the scalpel, sighting on a dart board on the wall about fifteen feet away. His hand is a drinker's hand, and it shakes so badly he can barely hold it straight.

CONTINUED

ZING! He tosses the scalpel. He misses wildly, THUNKING the scalpel into the wall a few feet from the board. In fact, that whole wall is peppered with holes, and the dart board itself is like new.

ROSE (cont.)  
Your beeper was beeping, sir.  
(whispering)  
Mr. Franklin again.

Ernest sighs.

CUT TO:

12 INT MANSION FOYER DAY 12

ERNEST comes down the stairs from the third floor, wearing a wrinkled jacket and tie. He looked better when he was still asleep. He looks both ways and starts down the hall.

MADELINE comes out of her room at the same time, now fully dressed. She looks up as the two of them meet at the head of the stairs.

MADELINE  
Oh. It's you.

ERNEST  
Fine, thank you, darling. Like a rock.

MADELINE  
Well, you're dressed. Special occasion?

ERNEST  
Work.

MADELINE  
(shudders)  
Ghoul.

*"If you can call it that."*

ROSE appears at the bottom of the stairs. Madeline speaks to her as she and Ernest descend.

MADELINE (cont.)  
We're leaving for the dinner around eight, Rose. I'll need the masseuse and the whole team no later than four.

CONTINUED



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12 CONTINUED

12

ROSE

But madam, tonight's my night off.

MADELINE

I'm sure you'll work it out. You're a wonder.

ERNEST

Dinner? What dinner?

MADELINE

You know perfectly well.  
(acid on her tongue)  
Helen Sharp's book party.

A brief look of genuine happiness crosses Ernest's face, but he immediately wipes it away.

ERNEST

Oh -- do we have to?

MADELINE

She sent table assignments. You're with the VIP's, ~~you~~ with the SOB's.

ERNEST

Oh, Helen would never do anything --

MADELINE

Watch your step with her, understand?  
If there's one thing I won't tolerate,  
it's infidelity.

CUT TO:

13 INT BEACH HOUSE DAY

13

A woman's fingernails run down a man's muscular, well-tanned back, leaving long white streaks behind. MADELINE, supine, is making love with DAKOTA, a stud in his late twenties, in a small beach cabana. Madeline's style is theatrical, grandiose, vocal; Dakota's movements give the distinct impression he is working on a chain gang. \*

Madeline reaches a climax and Dakota rolls off of her. She lies still, gasping for air, staring up at the ceiling. He pulls on a pair of shorts, goes to the window, and stretches, \* the afternoon sun slanting across his sweaty body.

CONTINUED

## MADELINE

Thank God you were here. I know we were supposed to see each other tonight, but this Helen thing has me an absolute wreck. I bet she holds a grudge. I'm sure she does. She always resented my success with men, ever since school.

Dakota is ignoring her completely, as he's at a mirror now, examining his hip, where he has found some excess fat.

## DAKOTA

Where did this come from?

He starts to do hip exercises.

## MADELINE

Oh, I don't know. Out of her own insecurity, I suppose. But is that my fault? Is it my fault I look the way I do and she looks the way she does? Is that a reason to hate me?

## DAKOTA

(of the fat)

You work and you work and you work --

## MADELINE

And people dump on you. Exactly. She made fun of me, her and her friends, those miserable Park-Avenue-private-school-clenched-tooth --

Dakota checks his watch.

## DAKOTA

Look, uh, you gotta --

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13 CONTINUED

13

MADELINE

Put it behind me, you're absolutely  
right. You see things so clearly.  
God, I feel so free here!

She SIGHS and rolls around in the sheets, but then stops and  
stares up at the ceiling in horror, at a giant mirror  
strategically placed over the bed.

MADELINE (cont.)

Oh, God! Look at that! There's  
an obscene little line running  
all the way from my eyelid to my  
cheekbone! How many times have I  
told you -- NO PILLOWS!

She leaps out of bed with the sheet wrapped around her and  
scurries into the bathroom.

Dakota rolls his eyes.

DBH 04

CUT TO:

22 Oct 91

14 EXT PARKING LOT DAY

14

ERNEST parks his car in a parking lot on what looks like a large estate. He takes his bag from the passenger seat -- and a belt from a bottle under the driver's -- and gets out.

MR. FRANKLIN, a nervous man in a gray suit, is waiting for him at the edge of the parking lot and strides forward quickly when he sees Ernest, his face brightening. \*

MR. FRANKLIN \*

Dr. Menville, thank God! I'm so sorry to call you at the last minute! You know how I hate the last minute!

He leads Ernest across the lush, well-kept grounds.

MR. FRANKLIN (cont.) \*

He's been completely prepped. Our top staff have all been summoned and are waiting for you.

ERNEST \*

Good. He's going to be just fine. Calm down.

DBH004

MR. FRANKLIN \*

Calm? I am calm! Everyone is calm here!

They round a corner, passing a sign. The first word is partially obscured by a column, but the rest is clear:

-EST LAWN MORTUARY. \*

CUT TO:

15 INT MORTUARY CORRIDOR DAY

15

ERNEST strides briskly down a corridor in the mortuary, flanked by MR. FRANKLIN and a growing retinue of ASSISTANTS. Ernest is taking gown and gloves from the Assistants as he walks, preparing for surgery.

ERNEST  
Who is it? Someone?

MR. FRANKLIN  
Fernando Rivas. The actor. You  
know, the handsome one? Our  
reputation's really on the line  
this time. His family insists on  
an open casket, but --

\*

ERNEST  
It's bad?

\*

MR. FRANKLIN  
(nods)  
He drowned in his hot tub. Very  
bloated. Very swollen.  
(a professional whisper)  
He was making love to his new fiancée.  
Eighteen years old. From Cuba. He's  
got this expression of happiness on  
his face that's completely inappropriate.

They've reached a set of double doors with the word  
"EMBALMING" stencilled across them.

ERNEST  
All right. We'll try to give him  
a little character. A little depth.

MR. FRANKLIN  
Depth? Oh no, people have to recognize  
him!

They sweep through the double doors and into the embalming  
room. Poor FERNANDO RIVAS is visible for a second, laid out  
on a slab, grinning like an idiot.

CUT TO:

14 Nov 91

16 EXT CHAGALL'S DAY 16

Chagall's is a sleek, expensive salon in the middle of downtown Beverly Hills. Its front windows are smoked, making it impossible for us to see inside.

An expensive car with a "MAD" vanity plate pulls up in front and MADELINE steps out. A VALET whisks the car into a garage as the DOORMAN nods discreetly to Madeline and admits her to the salon. TWO TOURISTS walking down the sidewalk try to sneak a look inside, but the Doorman closes the door quickly behind Madeline, blocking their view. \*

CUT TO:

17 INT CHAGALL'S DAY 17

Inside Chagall's, CUSTOMERS receive haircuts, facials, and the like. MADELINE comes up to the reception desk, where a SVELTE WOMAN in a trim business suit greets her.

RECEPTIONIST

Good afternoon, Miss Ashton.

MADELINE

How are you? Three o'clock, with Anna.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes, I know. You can go down.

She pushes a button below her desk and a small gate BUZZES. Madeline pushes it open and steps behind the reception desk, to a tiled mirror wall. A SECURITY GUARD pushes a button in the wall and an elevator door opens. Madeline and the Guard step inside.

CUT TO:

18 INT LOWER LEVEL DAY 18

The elevator doors open on the lower level of Chagall's. This is an exclusive, elegant place, all black leather and white carpet. Everything is soft, soothing. Not one hair dryer screams, not one gossipy voice whines -- just here and there are the low, reassuring MURMURS of BEAUTY THERAPISTS.

The SECURITY GUARD leads MADELINE back, into the depths of the lower level. They walk down a long, twisting hallway that has private rooms off each side.

CONTINUED

18 CONTINUED

Madeline glances inside one of the rooms. A MIDDLE AGED MAN \*  
reclines in a black leather examination chair, an IV stand on  
either side of him, a plastic bag hanging from each. One of  
the bags contains a deep red liquid, the other a thick, deep  
blue one.

The blue is being pumped into the Man's left arm, the red  
is being drawn out of his right. We catch only a glimpse  
before the door is shut in our face.

CUT TO:

19 INT TREATMENT ROOM DAY 19

MADELINE is having a heated discussion with ANNA, her beauty  
therapist, who is in her early twenties. A video camera in  
one corner of the ceiling monitors their conversation.

MADELINE

Do you have any idea how much  
money I've spent in here over the  
years? A fortune, I can assure you.

ANNA

(for the third time)

I'm sorry, a plasma separation is  
a very traumatic process for the  
body. Our policy clearly prohibits  
more than one in a six month period.

MADELINE

So? It's been nearly that long.

ANNA

Miss Ashton, you had one three weeks  
ago. What about a nice collagen buff  
instead?

MADELINE

A collagen buff? You might as well  
tell me to wash with soap and water!  
Tonight is important to me!

ANNA

I could do your makeup myself if --

CONTINUED

MADELINE

Makeup is pointless! It doesn't do anything any more. You're not listening to me! You don't even care. You sit there with your twenty-two year old skin and your tits like rocks and you laugh at me and you --

She realizes how she sounds and catches herself.

MADELINE (cont.)

(calmly)

I could pay you extra. You know what I mean. On a -- personal basis, if that's what you're looking for. Money is no object. It means nothing to me.

Anna GASPS, looking over Madeline's shoulder. Madeline turns.

JEAN PAUL CHAGALL, ageless, continental, the ultimate expression of sophistication, stands in the doorway to the room. He's elegant as hell, dressed in a black silk suit with gold flower lapel pin we may not even notice. \*

MADELINE (cont.)

Monsieur Chagall!

CHAGALL

Leave us alone, Anna.

The Therapist hurries out. Chagall closes the door behind her and looks at Madeline, saying nothing for a moment.

MADELINE

I suppose I should apologize. I --

CHAGALL

(cutting her off)

I am very sensitive to your torment.

MADELINE

Excuse me?

CHAGALL

Unfortunately, we are mere mortals here. We are restricted by the laws of nature.

CONTINUED



He looks at her, his right eye fluttering. He could be winking, or it could be a tick, but it's definitely odd.

MADELINE  
(slightly disconcerted)  
Well, what more could one expect?

CHAGALL  
That depends. I couldn't help but overhear your joke about money being no object.

MADELINE  
That wasn't a joke.

CHAGALL  
I see.  
(pause)  
Have you heard of Lisle von Rhumans?

MADELINE  
No.

CHAGALL  
Of course you haven't. Very few have. Only a select group. She may be able to help you.

He pulls a business card from his shirt pocket and holds it out to Madeline.

CHAGALL (cont.)  
This is her address. She accepts callers day or night.

Madeline reaches out to take the card, but he pulls it back with a word of warning.

CHAGALL (cont.)  
A very select group. You understand.

MADELINE  
(not really)  
Sure.

She takes the card. Chagall smiles.

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19 CONTINUED

19

CHAGALL

I'm glad this happened, Miss Ashton.  
We'll be seeing more of you.

His eye starts that winking thing again, then he turns and leaves. Madeline shakes her head, tears the card in half, and drops it in her purse.

MADELINE

Weirdo.

CUT TO:

20 EXT STREET DAY 20

ERNEST drives into the parking lot of Dominick's, a friendly-looking bar on the outskirts of Beverly Hills. \*

CUT TO:

21 INT DOMINICK'S DAY 21

The bar is a warm, intimate place, all polished woods and heavy brass railings.

At one end of the bar itself, a DRUNK, long hair, bearded, slumps over a drink, semi-comatose. He looks like a permanent fixture.

ERNEST comes in and slides onto one of the bar stools. He runs his hands affectionately over the bartop. TONI, the bartender, a friendly woman in her mid-forties, sees him.

TONI

Hey, Dr. M!

ERNEST

How are you, Toni?

TONI

Can't complain. Yourself?

ERNEST

Could. Won't.

Toni laughs genuinely. Ernest smiles for the first time today and they launch into what seems like a very familiar exchange:

CONTINUED

TONI  
What can I get you?

ERNEST  
Fill a glass with scotch.

TONI  
With a little ice to wake it up?

ERNEST  
But not wide awake!

Toni smiles and grabs a tumbler. She scoops up two cubes with the glass in one hand and upends a scotch bottle with the other. As she works, Ernest's eyes mist over with emotion. He watches Toni's balletic movements, clearly in love with the CRACK of the scotch cap, the SWISH of the liquid, the POP of the ice. She slides the drink down the bar to him with a flourish, and it nestles into his palm.

TONI \*  
One drowsy scotch. Some peanuts?

ERNEST \*  
(thinks)  
Pretzels, I think.

TONI \*  
Just opened the bag.

Out of nowhere, she produces a dish of pretzels. Ernest smiles. He toasts the Drunk at the end of the bar, who doesn't respond. Ernest drinks anyway. He closes his eyes as he swallows, deeply soothed. Suddenly the peace of the bar is shattered by an unmistakable voice -- MADELINE's voice. \*

MADLINE (o.s.)  
What are you doing here?!

Ernest flinches reflexively at the sound. He turns and looks up to the TV above the bar. One of Madeline's old movies is playing, the one Helen watched earlier. Young Madeline has returned home in evening clothes and is about to be killed by the Intruder. Toni goes to turn it off.

ERNEST  
Wait a second.

CONTINUED

Toni looks up and recognizes Madeline on the screen.

TONI

Oh, hey! Look! "Dark Windows!"

Ernest watches, a look of longing on his face, as the Intruder strangles Madeline, she SCREAMS, and dies.

ERNEST

(sighs happily)

You can turn it off now.

TONI

(she does)

So how is that wife of yours? She's one in a million, isn't she?

ERNEST

She doesn't love me any more.

TONI

But let's face it, there's plenty more where she came from.

ERNEST

I should leave her.

TONI

You have every right.

ERNEST

But I took a vow. "Till death do us part." And when you sink as low as I have, your word is all you have left.

TONI

And I admire you for that.

Ernest looks up at her gratefully. He slides a hundred dollar bill across the bar to her. She slides it back to him.

TONI (cont.)

Sympathy's on the house.

Toni, who has been wiping the bar with a towel, wipes down near the Drunk. She lifts his head, wipes under it, and sets it back down gently -- on a little pile of cocktail napkins. \* Ernest smiles.

ERNEST

You know something? I envy him. He's really got it all. No wife, no obligations, nobody to answer to, no wife, no possessions.

(finishes his drink)

And no wife.

TONI

Come on, Dr. M. There's gotta be a bright side.

ERNEST

You think so? I'm old, Toni, before my time. I gave other people youth, but I wasted my own life with lousy choices. All I really want is to be able to start the whole darn thing again, but that just doesn't happen. You tell me -- where's the bright side in that?

Toni looks at him, thinking, truly saddened.

TONI

You still love her, don't you?

Ernest looks up at her. He doesn't answer, just finishes his drink. He signals for another, and she fills his glass. He drinks that one too. She looks at him, still waiting for an answer.

ERNEST

Yeah.

(looking at the drunk again)

Lucky bastard.

CUT TO:

22 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

22

MADELINE comes down the stairs, stunningly dressed and with an attitude. ROSE descends behind her, trying to adjust something on the back of Madeline's dress.

MADELINE

What are you doing?! Stop touching me!

ROSE

The label was showing!

CONTINUED

MADELINE

Don't just stand there, fix it!

ROSE

I would have left you years ago if I wasn't such a masochist.

MADELINE

But you are, Rose. You are a masochist. This is a dream job for you.

Rose SIGHS and starts to fix the label again.

MADELINE (cont.)

I refuse to feel sorry for you, Rose. When you have something for me to feel sorry about, please let me know. When you're eight years old and your father walks out and leaves you and your mother in the Oakwood Trailer Park in Piscataway, New Jersey --

Rose, who has obviously heard this story before, mouths the last few words along with Madeline before Madeline cuts herself off as an upstairs door opens and ERNEST comes out of their bedroom. Madeline looks up at him. He looks pretty dishevelled, with little pieces of bloody toilet paper stuck to his face. Madeline shakes her head as he comes down.

MADELINE (cont.)

Ernest! All dressed up! <sup>100%</sup> Once again you intend to be the life of the party. I'm so proud. What is this obsession you have with embarrassing me? I buy you things, why don't you wear them?!

(dramatically)

I'm not going!

ERNEST

(quickly)

Okay.

MADELINE

No, you're not going.

ERNEST

Fine.

CONTINUED

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22 CONTINUED

22

He turns and starts back up the stairs.

MADELINE

Oh no, you're coming. You're coming. If poor Helen insists on humiliating herself, the least we can do is be there to watch.

(mocking)

"Forever Young." Right, and eternally fat.

CUT TO:

22A INT LIMO NIGHT

22A

ERNEST and MADELINE ride in the back of a limo as it pulls up in front of a crowded, expensive restaurant. They're both looking out their windows, lost in their own thoughts, but there's a strange sound in the car. It's Ernest, who breathes loud. No special reason, he's just a loud breather, and in a quiet moment like it really gets to Madeline. She tries to bite her tongue, but can't.

MADELINE

Could you please stop breathing?

Before he can respond, a VALET PARKER pulls their doors open and Madeline sweeps out, leaving her comment for Ernest to interpret.

Ernest gets out and joins Madeline as they head into the restaurant. She notices the crowds.

MADELINE

Jesus. What'd she do, hire extras?

CUT TO:

23 INT RESTAURANT NIGHT

23

The restaurant has been rented out for a private party and is packed with FASHIONABLE GUESTS. Copies of a hardcover beauty book called "Forever Young," by Helen Sharp, are prominently displayed here and there. MADELINE makes a grand entrance, ERNEST in tow.

MADELINE

She must have spent her entire trust fund on this.

CONTINUED

There is an OLD WOMAN near the door, eighty or so. Madeline goes to her warmly.

MADELINE (cont.)  
Helen, darling, how are you?!

ERNEST  
(pulls her away)  
Knock it off.

ACROSS THE ROOM,

a dishy STARLET turns to JAY NORMAN, next to her, a young looking twenty-five, horn-rimmed glasses, anonymous suit.

STARLET  
Jay -- is that someone?

NORMAN  
Sure, that's Madeline Ashton. She was a big star in the sixties.

STARLET  
Really? What was she in?

NORMAN  
What are you, kidding? "Uptown Lover," "Dark Windows," "Nobody's Bride" --

STARLET  
Oh, her? I thought she was dead. What's she done lately?

NORMAN  
Complain. Sue people. "Love Boat."

STARLET  
Ick. Who's her agent?

NORMAN  
(with a sigh)  
I am.

OVER AT THE BAR,

ERNEST leans, a scotch glass growing from his hand. He notices a good-looking MIDDLE-AGED MAN next to him, smiles, and gives a little wave. The Middle-Aged Man notices but pointedly ignores Ernest, chatting with two WOMEN.

CONTINUED



As the Women turn to walk off, the Middle-Aged Man pauses and speaks quietly to Ernest.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Sorry, Dr. Menville. If they know I know you, they know why, you know?

ERNEST

I know. How are you, Mel?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

(taps the underside of his taut chin)

Pretty good after seven years, huh? And the implants?

(thumps his pecs)

I can still bounce quarters off 'em. You were a genius.

(catching himself)

Are a genius.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM,

Madeline comes up behind Jay Norman, looping an arm through his. \*

NORMAN \*

Madeline! I was just coming to talk to you!

MADELINE \*

(to the Starlet)

Can I borrow him for a second?

Not waiting for a response, she spins Norman away, behind a potted palm, and speaks to him urgently.

MADELINE (cont.) \*

Why haven't you --

NORMAN \*

I did call you back! Twice! Your machine wasn't on.

MADELINE \*

(knows he's lying)

Oh. I'll have to speak to Rose about that. Did you hear anything about Roger's film?

CONTINUED

NORMAN

I wouldn't get my hopes up. What did you decide about Hollywood Squares?

MADELINE

I'm having second thoughts. Can you get me center square?

NORMAN

(shakes his head)

Connie Stevens has it, she's part of a package. But Charlie Weaver's old corner square is free. We could get that. We could make that a reality for you.

MADELINE

Which corner?

NORMAN

Lower left. It's a fantastic square.

MADELINE

Why can't I have upper?

NORMAN

(thinks)

Let me talk to Mike.

OVER AT THE BAR,

the Middle-Aged Man is gone and Ernest is speaking to MRS. ADAMS, mid-forties.

MRS. ADAMS

I never got a chance to tell you before, you know, what with all the preparations, but you did a really spectacular job with Aunt Esther.

ERNEST

Oh, uh -- thank you.

MRS. ADAMS

Her color, her tone -- you even brought out her cheekbones.

ERNEST

(embarrassed)

Well, that's my job.

CONTINUED

MRS. ADAMS

It was almost a shame to bury her.

ERNEST

That's -- sweet of you to say.

MRS. ADAMS

Can I ask what your secret is?

ERNEST

(confidentially)

Spray paint.

She looks at him strangely, as if she misunderstood. Ernest nods enthusiastically.

ERNEST (cont.)

See, dead skin just won't hold regular makeup -- the pores are too dry, you have to use a palette knife and really grind the stuff in there. But one day I thought to myself, "What about mannequin paint?" It's got its own chemical adhesive, it comes in an incredible variety of flesh tones, and -- and --

He trails off, as Mrs. Adams is staring at him as if he were a monster. Her orange juice arrives, she takes it, and walks off, aghast.

Madeline comes up as she leaves.

MADELINE

(looking around,  
irritated)

What is this, a joke? She's not even here.

ERNEST

Look over there!

He points toward the front door, where someone is making a helluvan entrance. They see just the top of a head moving through the crowd, then a hand that rises up and turns one lazy circle in the air, acknowledging all with the gesture. The BAND, a discreet string quartet, immediately strikes up their version of "Forever Young."

Madeline and Ernest watch the figure until it stops in the middle of the crowd. In a moment the crowd parts, letting them see the backside of a very OVERWEIGHT WOMAN. Madeline smiles wickedly -- \*

-- and then the Overweight Woman steps out of the way, revealing HELEN SHARP. \*

She looks incredible. She's dropped those fifty pounds like nothing, whipped herself into phenomenal shape, completely abandoned "sweet" in favor of "sexy," and seems not one day older than she was twelve years ago. Maybe even younger. But the most striking thing about Helen is a shining new sense of confidence. She wears a swooping, sexy gown that is held together off one shoulder with a gold flower pin we may or may not notice.

Madeline's jaw drops. So does Ernest's.

ERNEST

My God.

MADELINE

We're leaving.

ERNEST

Don't be ridiculous, Madeline, let's talk to her.

MADELINE

I'll talk to her.

Madeline takes a deep breath and crosses the room to Helen, who, to Madeline's great distress, is speaking with a gushy Jay Norman.

NORMAN

-- want you to know we're absolutely at your disposal. Call me any time, day or night. You have all my numbers, don't you? Did I give you all my numbers?

HELEN

(not really paying attention)  
I think so.

Norman looks up, sees Madeline coming, and quickly turns and walks away. Madeline watches him go, hiding her irritation.

CONTINUED

HELEN (cont.)

Mad!

MADELINE

Hell!

They kiss and fall into an embrace. As they do, Helen looks over Madeline's shoulder and sees Ernest standing forlornly on the other side of the room. He raises one hand in greeting, but Madeline spins Helen away by the arm.

MADELINE (cont.)

I can't get over it, Hell darling.  
Twelve years. Twelve long years,  
and look at you -- you have a waist!

HELEN

(laughs)

You haven't changed. I'm so glad you came. I didn't know if you would, but my P.R. woman said "Madeline Ashton, she goes to the opening of an envelope."

Madeline forces a gay laugh, but nothing comes out.

HELEN (cont.)

Those people can be so cruel. I almost fired her.

MADELINE

That was sweet of you, dear.

The Starlet comes up to Helen, awestruck, and shoves a copy of her book in front of her, for Helen to sign. \*

STARLET \*

Would you mind -- ?

Helen, barely noticing, signs the book while talking to Madeline, who grinds her teeth. \*

HELEN \*

How has it been?

MADELINE

(acting her butt off)

Heaven. Absolute heaven. Ernest is like a dream.

CONTINUED

HELEN

I'm so happy for you two.

MADELINE

You know, there were many times I thought to myself, "I don't deserve this." I know it came at your expense, and that thought just makes me feel --  
(wonderful)  
-- terrible.

HELEN

Oh, please. It was so long ago. And what is he? A man. You didn't steal him, he went to you. It wasn't you, it was him.

She takes Madeline by the shoulders and speaks with utmost sincerity.

HELEN (cont.)

I want you to know that I've never blamed you. Never.

CUT TO:

24 INT PARTY NIGHT

24

ERNEST comes out of the bathroom, drink in hand. HELEN comes up to him.

HELEN

There you are. I was starting to think you were avoiding me.

ERNEST

Not at all. Not at all. I -- not at all.

HELEN

Let's take a walk.

They head out two open doors to the garden beyond.

DBH004

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24A ACROSS THE ROOM,

24A \*

MADLINE hurries up to a table with several copies of Helen's \*  
book arrayed on it. She grabs one of them and rips through \*  
it in angry disbelief.

MADLINE \*

A beauty book?!

TWO FASHIONABLE WOMEN, one of them Mrs. Adams, who spoke to \*  
Ernest earlier, are on either side of her, looking at a large \*  
cardboard standee of Helen, gushing over it. \*

MRS. ADAMS \*

(admiringly)

Can you believe she's almost fifty  
years old?

WOMAN 2 \*

You've got to be kidding me.

Madeline SNAPS the book shut angrily. She turns and sees  
Ernest and Helen, walking out toward the garden. She drifts  
across the room, following them from a discreet distance,  
keeping an eye on them.

CUT TO:

DBHQ 4

14 Nov 91

25 EXT GARDEN NIGHT

25

ERNEST and HELEN walk in the garden area behind the restaurant. They can see the party, still in progress, through huge glass windows.

HELEN

Isn't it strange, Ernest? Seeing each other, after so long?

Ernest hasn't really been listening, just looking at her with something close to adoration.

ERNEST

Wonderful.  
(coming around)  
I mean -- it's wonderful.

HELEN

I thought I was never going to get over you. You should have seen me. I was a mess. I even locked myself away, somewhere upstate, for months. But then I said to myself, it's time to rejoin society, with gusto. Shape up. Lose some weight. I started running. Three or four miles a day at first. Then ten. Then fifteen. Then twenty. Then twenty-five. Then thirty. Then thirty-two. Then thirty-three. Back down to thirty, briefly, then up to forty. Forty-five. Forty-eight.

ERNEST

So, a lot.

HELEN

Right, a lot is my point. And the thing that kept me going was the thought of --

She turns and looks into the party, where she sees Madeline, through the glass. She turns back to Ernest.

HELEN (cont.)

-- you.

ERNEST

Me?

CONTINUED



HELEN

Yes. Tell me everything about yourself. I hear the Menville Clinic's doing very well.

ERNEST

Oh, sure, it's like my own private oil well. We've even opened a franchise in Paris. I'm semi-retired, though. I'm fully committed to the good life.

HELEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

ERNEST

Why? What did I say? Alh meant was life has turned out to be a great party.

HELEN

You used to hate parties.

ERNEST

(false cheer)

Oh, that's when I was old. Now -- well, you should see me now.

He raises his glass in toast.

HELEN

I don't know what to say. I didn't know you were so unhappy.

He looks at her. He hasn't had a slap of honesty like this in a while and it melts him.

ERNEST

Never could fool you, could I?

HELEN

I'm so sorry for you, Ernest. I heard about the kind of -- work -- you're doing now.

ERNEST

(humiliated)

I'd sell my soul to operate again. I've wasted myself, Helen.

CONTINUED

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25 CONTINUED

25

HELEN

No, Ernest. She's wasted you.  
She married a brilliant surgeon and  
turned him into an undertaker.

She puts her hands on his shoulders.

HELEN (cont.)

I want you to know I never blamed  
you for leaving me. I always knew  
it was her. She's a woman. A woman,  
Ernest. From Newark, for God's  
sake.

ERNEST

Piscataway.

HELEN

Exactly. I'm never going to  
forgive her for what she's done to  
you. Never.

He looks at her, overcome. In the distance, MADELINE is  
visible through the glass doors to the party. Watching  
them.

CUT TO:

26 INT ERNEST'S CLOSET NIGHT

26 \*

CLOSE ON a photo of Ernest and Helen, taken at least fifteen  
years ago. They're standing on a pier somewhere on the  
shore. It's fall, they're dressed with scarves and sweaters,  
and the wind has blown color into their cheeks. They look  
happy. They look young.

ERNEST sits at his dressing table, at home, staring at the  
photo as he unbuttons his tuxedo shirt.

He smiles faintly at the photo, then looks up at the mirror  
in front of him. He sees the ravages of the last twelve  
years and his smile disappears.

Off screen, he hears the faint sound of a bedroom door  
SLAMMING.

He gets up and leaves the room, still holding the photo.

CUT TO:

14 Nov 91

27 INT MANSION HALLWAY NIGHT

27

ERNEST hurries to the top of the stairs in time to see MADELINE hurrying out the front door of the house, carrying an overnight bag, making no pretense.

As she SLAMS the front door behind her, Ernest looks back down at the photo in his hand.

CUT TO:

DBH 04

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28 EXT BEACH CABANA NIGHT 28

MADELINE hurries down a sidewalk to a small beach cabana and rings at the door. \*

DAKOTA opens the door, shirtless. Madeline doesn't say a word, just slips into his arms and kisses him passionately. He kisses back, but there is reservation in it.

Madeline senses it and pulls back.

MADELINE

What is it?

DAKOTA

(low voice)

Nothing. I didn't know you were coming over.

MADELINE

Darling, we spoke.

DAKOTA

Yeah, but you came this afternoon and I thought -- I mean, I didn't -- just give me a second, will you?

MADELINE

Oh God, you're not alone.

DAKOTA

What are you talking about? Of course I am. I'm completely alone.

A YOUNG WOMAN'S VOICE comes from offscreen, behind him.

VOICE

Dakota?

DAKOTA

(not missing a beat)

Actually, "completely" isn't quite what I meant --

Madeline turns and walks away quickly.

DAKOTA (cont.)

Madeline! Hey!

He follows her, grabs her by the arm, and turns her around.

CONTINUED

MADELINE

(livid)

How dare you make me feel cheap!

DAKOTA

Madeline, I forgot, she's here  
to fix the -- the --

MADELINE

Who is she? Who is the lump of meat?

DAKOTA

That's what I'm trying to tell you.  
She's a friend of the -- uh, the --

MADELINE

Oh Christ, at least lie quickly.

DAKOTA

I'm trying to! You gotta believe  
me, this is perfectly innocent!

Madeline looks over his shoulder. Far in the background, she catches a good glimpse of a NAKED WOMAN walking across the room. Young. Beautiful.

Madeline looks back at Dakota, her anger completely replaced by humiliation. THUNDER rumbles overhead; a storm is imminent.

DAKOTA

Hey, I'm sick of this shit, you know that? I've been doin' you a favor here.

MADELINE

A favor?! I gave you --

DAKOTA

Yeah, you gave, I gave, big deal. You know, the other day somebody told me we look ridiculous together. How do you think that makes me feel? See, you never think of my feelings. Why don't you go find someone your own age, Madeline?

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28 CONTINUED

28

These words are to Madeline as bullets shot from a gun. She stares at him as the THUNDER crashes, right on top of them now, and the rain starts to pour down, soaking her.

CUT TO:

29 EXT STREET NIGHT

29

MADELINE is in her car, driving too fast, sobbing. The storm is really raging as she tools down Sunset Boulevard, barely making the curves. She looks up and catches sight of her mascara and tear-streaked face in the rear view mirror.

Horrified, she slams on the brakes. The car SQUEALS to a stop in the middle of the road. Other cars HONK and swerve past her as she dumps her purse, searching for a kleenex to repair the damage.

She finds a kleenex. But she also finds the two torn halves of the business card Jean Paul Chagall gave her.

Fascinated, she pieces them back together.

CUT TO:

30 INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

30

HELEN is in front of the mirror in her hotel room. She's messing with a strange little contraption, something like an eyedropper, filling it from a bottle marked "Menthol."

HELEN

(singing)

"I hate her, I hate her, I hate  
her -- and where she goes I'll  
follow, I'll follow, I'll follow -- "

The eyedropper filled, she holds it up to her eyes and squeezes, each in turn. It blows a little puff of something into her eyes, and immediately tears flow down her cheeks. She looks up, into the mirror, affecting a countenance of great distress.

HELEN

(acting)

"Madeline! I have to speak to  
Madeline at once!"

CONTINUED

30 CONTINUED

30

HELEN (cont.)  
 (normal again)  
 Not bad.

She spritzes more stuff in her eyes.

HELEN (cont.)  
 (take two)  
 "Madeline! I have to speak to Madeline!"

CUT TO:

31 EXT VON RHUMANS MANSION NIGHT RAIN 31

MADELINE drives up to the base of a long, winding driveway up in the Hollywood hills. She stops at a gate, where two SECURITY GUARDS in blue suits stand, radios in their ears, sunglasses at night, seemingly impervious to the rain. One of them steps up to her car window. She rolls it down.

MADELINE \*  
 Hi, I know it's late, but I was, uh --  
 passing by and just wondered if it might  
 be possible to see Ms. von Rhumans?

The Guard says nothing, just stares at her through his sunglasses. He turns his head, checking out the inside of her car, but giving no indication he intends to let her pass.

MADELINE (cont.)  
 I was, uh, given her card by --

She holds up the two pieces of the torn business card. The Guard, recognizing the card, immediately steps back and waves to the other, who presses a button and opens the gate.

Madeline drives through. As she starts to climb the driveway, she leans forward and squints through the windshield. A bolt of lightning flashes, illuminating the house at the top of the hill.

Make that "castle" at the top of the hill. Lisle von Rhumans' mansion is an enormous medieval thing, complete with turrets.

MADELINE (cont.)  
 Jesus.

CUT TO:

22 Oct 91

32 EXT HOUSE NIGHT

32

The impressive front door of the house is opened by an ATHLETIC GUY in his twenties. MADELINE stands on the step, wearing sunglasses and a silk scarf that half hides her face, which has been washed clean of makeup by the rain.

MADELINE

Good evening. I hope it's not --

GUY

Not at all, Miss Ashton. Lisle's expecting you.

MADELINE

She is?

Madeline looks at him, confused, but he smiles kindly enough and she enters.

DBH004

CUT TO:

32A INT FOYER NIGHT

32A \*

MADELINE steps into the foyer and the ATHLETIC GUY closes the door behind her. She looks around at the strange, gothic interior of the place.

ATHLETIC GUY

Wait here, please.

\*

He walks ahead, down some stairs and into a darkened room. While Madeline waits, she hears a low HUMMING sound from her left and turns to look. A light shines through a frosted window in a small door on the other side of the foyer, a descending light, as in an elevator door. As Madeline watches, the door swings open and two large, bizarre dogs trot out purposefully. They trot CLICK CLICK CLICK across the foyer and disappear down the stairs as well.

\*

\*

The Athletic Guy reappears at the top of the stairs.

ATHLETIC GUY (cont.)

Right this way.

\*

He goes back down the stairs. Madeline swallows and follows him.

CUT TO:



14 Nov 91

33 INT LOUNGE NIGHT

33

The ATHLETIC GUY leads MADELINE across the floor of an enormous, gothic ballroom with an incredible view of most of Southern California. \*

On the other side of the room, another YOUNG MAN MURMURS softly, leaning forward toward a woman seated on a sofa in a dark part of the room, her back to us. There are three or four of these Beefy Guys throughout the house -- it's hard to be precise; they all look alike. The bizarre dogs are also with the woman, poised on either side of her, unmoving sentinels.

The Athletic Guy leads Madeline over. As they approach, the woman turns around. LISLE VON PHUMANS is an attractive woman, ageless, firm body, beautiful, clear, tight skin. She is baroquely dressed, with huge chunks of jewelry, and speaks with an unplaceable European accent. She smiles.

LISLE

I hoped you'd come. Sit down.

She pats the sofa next to her and sends a fiery look to the Young Man sitting by her.

LISLE (cont.)

Make room for my friend, for Chrissakes.

He and the Athletic Guy leave the room.

LISLE (cont.)

But keep your ass handy!

She winks at Madeline. Madeline moves a bit trepidatiously and sits next to her. Lisle observes her very closely. Madeline is uncomfortable.

MADELINE

Monsieur Chagall said -- \*

CONTINUED

LISLE

May I say I've always thought yours  
to be one of the most beautiful faces  
ever to grace the silver screen.

MADELINE

(delighted)

Oh?

LISLE

(with particular reverence)

And your husband -- I can only say  
his reputation is unsurpassed.

MADELINE

(bored)

Oh.

LISLE

I just arrived in town. I follow the  
spring. I haven't seen autumn or winter  
in years. They aren't for us. We're  
people of the spring, you and I. Aren't  
we?

\*

MADELINE

Listen, I'm not -- really sure why  
I'm here.

LISLE

You're scared as hell. Of yourself.  
Of the body you thought you knew.

MADELINE

I beg your pardon?

Lisle reaches out and takes off Madeline's sunglasses.

LISLE

I'm the one who understands. I'm  
the one who knows your secret.

Madeline looks at her, surprised and intrigued.

MADELINE

Who are you?

14 Nov 91

33 CONTINUED

33

LISLE  
Something of an expert.

She runs her finger down the skin of Madeline's face.

LISLE (cont.)  
You had a young man. Worthless and empty, but he makes you feel in your prime; more alive than the day before. You need him as one needs a gadget to measure blood pressure or heartbeats. To tell you you're alive.

MADELINE  
To tell me I'm alive.

LISLE  
Now he goes. He leaves you. You can't feel your pulse, you see rings around your eyes. He's a symptom, dear. But he's not the problem.

Madeline, who was transfixed, seems to snap out of it.

MADELINE  
I'm being silly. I don't know what you could possibly do to --

LISLE  
(taking Madeline's hand)  
You'd be surprised.

CUT TO:

33A EXT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT 33A \*

As the rain pours down, Helen's car pulls up in front of the Menville mansion and parks at the curb. HELEN gets out. \*

CUT TO:

34 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT 34

ERNEST hurries down the main stairs, drink in hand. Someone's KNOCKING frantically at the front door, and he opens it. HELEN, on the front step, dashes something into her purse as he opens the door and looks up at him, her face awash with tears. \*

CONTINUED

ERNEST

Helen!

HELEN

Madeline! I need to speak to Madeline at once!

ERNEST

She's not here.

HELEN

Thank God!

She throws her arms around Ernest in a tight embrace. He's a little taken aback, but doesn't fight it.

ERNEST <sup>BH 07</sup>

How'd you get in? I didn't hear the gate. \*

HELEN \*

I didn't want you to hear. Ernest, ask me to go. Ask me to leave this house immediately!

ERNEST

You just got here.

HELEN

I know. It's crazy. It took me a minute, a glimpse, and I was right back where I started.

Ernest looks truly confused.

HELEN (cont.)

Don't pretend you're not aware of it. You're a powerful sexual being, Ernest.

ERNEST

I am?

HELEN

You are.

ERNEST

(adjusting to the idea)  
I am.

14 Nov 91

34 CONTINUED

34

HELEN

You've always been. If I never told you before, it was because I was the sort of girl who couldn't say "sexual" without blushing. Well, I can now.

Helen pulls back far enough to look into his eyes.

HELEN (cont.)

Sexual, sensual, sexy, sex, sex, sex.

Ernest's drink slips from his hand and hits the floor with a THUD.

CUT TO:

35 INT VON RHUMANS MANSION

DBM 04  
NIGHT

35

LISLE is gently stroking MADELINE's hand.

\*

LISLE

So warm -- so full of life -- and already it ebbs away from you. This is life's ultimate cruelty. It offers us a taste of youth and vitality and then makes us witnesses of our own decay.

MADELINE

Well, it is the natural law.

Lisle reaches out and CREAKS open an ornate wooden case that sits on the table in front of them. An old, hand-tooled dagger and a bevelled glass vial are sheathed inside. \*

LISLE

Screw the natural law.

MADELINE

What's that?

LISLE

What you came for.

She reaches into the case and pulls out the single vial. It has a silvery liquid inside, thick, strange, like mercury, that seems to shimmer in the light. \*

CONTINUED

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35 CONTINUED

35

Madeline stares at the vial, transfixed. \*

LISLE (cont.)

A touch of magic in a world obsessed  
by science. A tonic. A potion.

MADELINE

What does it do?

LISLE

How old would you guess I am?

MADELINE

Oh, I don't --

LISLE

Go on. And don't try to flatter me.

MADELINE

DBH C-1  
Thirty-eight? Thirty-seven? ?

LISLE

I'm seventy-one years old.

She smiles and sits back proudly.

LISLE (cont.)

That's what it does. Stops  
the aging process dead in its  
tracks and forces it into retreat.  
Drink that potion, and you will  
never grow even one day older  
again. Don't drink it -- and  
continue to watch yourself rot.

CUT TO:

36 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

36

ERNEST and HELEN are on the sofa, necking passionately.

HELEN

We have to stop.

ERNEST

Yes, we do.

But they still kiss.

CONTINUED

HELEN

Really, Ernest.

But they still kiss. When things start to get really heated, Helen pulls away and stands up, smoothing her hair, trying to regain her composure.

HELEN (cont.)

Please don't be angry with me, Ernest. I'm fighting it as hard as I can. But just look at you.

The position Ernest is sitting in makes his stomach rather pronounced. He sucks it in.

HELEN (cont.)

She's already destroyed your career, now she's breaking your heart, stealing your pride, flaunting her lovers all over town.

ERNEST

(shocked)

You know about that?

HELEN

Everyone does, Ernest. At the party people spoke of nothing else.

ERNEST

Oh, God. Oh, Helen, I'm so ashamed. How can you love me? I've been so weak. I should have divorced her years ago.

He stands and points a shaky finger at her.

ERNEST (cont.)

(with unaccustomed strength)

I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to go down to the courthouse tomorrow and file for divorce!

(pause)

No -- Monday. I'll do it Monday.

HELEN

Ernest --

ERNEST

Tuesday at the latest.

CONTINUED

HELEN

Divorce, Ernest? In California?  
That's exactly what she wants you  
to do. You have no talent for  
poverty. You can't let her get  
away with that.

Ernest sits, deflated, his plan snatched away from him.

ERNEST

Then there's nothing I can do.

Helen comes back to him. She sits close, kissing him between  
her words.

HELEN

Yes there is. Ernest, we have not  
only the right, but the duty to  
regain what is ours. And we will,  
even if it means breaking every rule,  
every commandment.

ERNEST

Yes.

She strokes his leg, kisses his ear, whispers into it.

HELEN

She has to go, Ernest. \*

ERNEST

(kissing back) \*  
You're right.

HELEN

She has to disappear. \*

ERNEST

(still kissing) \*  
Okay.

DBH004

CONTINUED



12 Dec 91

36 CONTINUED

36

Helen sits up and pushes him away, leaving him in mid-pucker.

HELEN

You're not listening to me. My therapist showed me once and for all that for us to have a life, Madeline has to --

\*

Ernest finally understands the implication of her words and his jaw drops.

ERNEST

(standing abruptly)

Die?! Did he actually say that?!

HELEN

She.

ERNEST

Whatever! Did she say die?!

HELEN

Not exactly, but I could read between the lines.

BH004

CONTINUED

23 Sept 91

36 CONTINUED

36

Ernest sits again, both relieved and disappointed.

ERNEST  
So she didn't say it.

\*

Helen takes his face in her hands again.

HELEN  
(softly)  
You said it, darling.

CUT TO:

37 INT VON RHUMANS MANSION NIGHT

37

MADELINE is studying the potion, holding it up to the light, its refracted beams playing across her face. LISLE hovers over her shoulder.

MADELINE  
How much is it?

LISLE  
Ah, the sordid topic of coin. I'm afraid it's not so simple. The cost, you see, is different for everyone.

\*

MADELINE  
(swallows)  
Well? For me? How much?

\*

Lisle looks at her, studying her. She takes a pen and writes a figure on a piece of paper. It seems to have a lot of zeroes. She finishes and holds the paper in front of Madeline.

\*

Madeline stifles a GASP. Her face suddenly clears, as one who has just realized they're being conned.

MADELINE (cont.)  
Well, thank you so much, I really should be going.

LISLE  
(strong)  
sit down.

CONTINUED

Madeline, surprised, sits. Lisle takes the potion and uncorks it.

LISLE (cont.)  
Hold out your hand.

Madeline looks at Lisle for a second, decides "what the hell," and holds out her hand. Moving like lightning, Lisle grabs her hand with one hand and reaches into the wooden case with the other, whipping out the dagger. She slits a tiny opening in the pad of Madeline's index finger.

MADELINE  
Ouch!

She tries to pull her hand away, but Lisle holds tight. She dips the dagger into the potion, picking up just a drop, and lets it fall into Madeline's cut. She loosens her hold and Madeline snatches her hand away.

DAHOO 4  
MADELINE (cont.)  
What are you, crazy?! You --

She stops in the middle of her sentence, letting out an involuntary GASP. Before her very eyes, her hand begins to change, to smooth out. Networks of lines disappear, the skin seems to replenish itself. In a few seconds, it's the hand of a much younger woman.

She holds it up next to her other, unchanged hand. The difference is incredible.

MADELINE (cont.)

Check okay?

LISLE

Fine.

Madeline dives into her purse and comes up with her checkbook. She can't move fast enough as she fumbles with the pen, never wanting to take her eyes off her new hand.

LISLE (cont.)

But you must make me a promise. The secret we share must never become public. You may continue your career for ten years -- ten years of perfect, unchanged beauty -- but at the end of that time, before people become suspicious, you must disappear from public view forever. You can retire, you can stage your own phony death, or you can, as one of my clients said, simply --

(a Swedish accent)

-- "vant to be alone."

Madeline looks at her, astonished, as she figures out the reference.

MADELINE

You mean she's -- !

Lisle raises a hand, silencing her. Madeline is wide-eyed.

MADELINE (cont.)

Wow! Okay, no problem, I agree, whatever.

She writes out her check, frantically, and TEARS it from her book, shoving it across the table to Lisle. Lisle smiles and solemnly slides the vial with the potion in it across the table to Madeline.

Madeline takes it. She gives it a little sniff. She holds it up reverently, raising it in toast.

MADELINE (cont.)

Well -- bottoms up.

CONTINUED

She upends it and swallows it in one gulp.

LISLE

Now, a warning.

MADELINE

Now a warning?!

LISLE

Take care of yourself. You and your body are going to be together a long time. Be good to it.

She reaches out and pins something onto Madeline's lapel. It's a tiny flower pin, made of gold, with little bursts of colored petals.

LISLE (cont.)

Siempre viva!

CUT TO:

38 INT

MANSION HALLWAY

NIGHT

38

MADELINE is led out of the mansion by the same ATHLETIC GUY who admitted her. She follows behind him, headed for the door. Halfway there, she stops, feeling strange. She turns to a mirror on the wall next to her.

As she watches, she undergoes an amazing transformation. The crow's feet at the corners of her eyes smooth out with a little HISSING sound. Smile lines at the sides of her mouth disappear with a POP. Her skin smoothes, tightens, she takes off fifteen years just as we look at her.

And that's not all. Her butt seems to lift and define itself; her breasts do the same, regaining old form and tone. An enormous grin spreads across her face and she flushes with color. She turns to the Athletic Guy, the only one around, with a look of absolute incredulity on her face.

MADELINE

I just -- did you -- I'm a girl!

The Athletic Guy raises a finger to his lips, smiling knowingly, devilishly.

ATHLETIC GUY

Shhhhh.

CUT TO:

*Adapted out  
this sequence?*

14 Nov 91

39 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT 39

ERNEST is pacing in front of HELEN, who sits on the couch. He has a scotch glass that he continually refills. \*

HELEN

Let's go over the plan one more time.

ERNEST

Okay.

As they talk, we see flashes of their plan in action, but we see it as Ernest sees it -- perfect, smooth, and elegant, every step flowing perfectly.

HELEN

Tonight, while she's asleep -- \*

*DBH-01*

CUT TO:

40 INT DINING ROOM NIGHT 40

ERNEST, wearing gloves and looking uncommonly suave, carefully takes three crystal glasses from the dining room china cabinet.

HELEN (v.o.) \*

-- you take one of each kind of glass -- highball, wine and water -- from the dining room cabinet.

CUT TO:

40A INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT 40A \*

HELEN hands ERNEST a small vial filled with white powder.

HELEN

Then you take this Narconol --

CUT TO:

16 Dec 91

41 INT DINING ROOM NIGHT 41

ERNEST, in a white lab coat, dumps a little white powder from the vial into each glass, kicking up a small cloud.

HELEN (v.o.)  
-- and dust each glass lightly with it. Tomorrow I'll call Madeline, say I want to come say goodbye, that I have a present for her --

CUT TO:

42 INT FOYER NIGHT 42 \*

MADELINE is on the phone, dressed casually, in workout gear.

MADELINE  
Fine, why not come for dinner?

CUT TO:

43 INT DINING ROOM NIGHT 43

MADELINE is at the table, a glass of water in hand.

HELEN (v.o.)  
-- and at dinner, no matter what she has to drink, the Narconol will be in the glass --

Madeline slumps over, her head hitting the table with a CLUNK. ERNEST and HELEN, also at the table, PING their wine glasses in toast.

HELEN (v.o.)  
I've used a phony name to register --

CUT TO:

43A INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT 43A \*

HELEN hands ERNEST a tiny cellular phone. \*

HELEN  
-- this cellular phone, which you will use to call the police -- \*

CUT TO:

16 Dec 91

44 EXT MULHOLLAND DRIVE NIGHT 44

ERNEST, the picture of Civic Responsibility, is talking on the cellular phone, standing next to Madeline's car, which is parked in a turnout on Mulholland. \*

ERNEST

There's some drunk woman up here on Mulholland, swerving dangerously close to the edge!

CUT TO:

45 INT POLICE DISPATCH NIGHT 45

A SUPERVISOR leans over the POLICE OFFICER answering Ernest's call.

SUPERVISOR \*

Quick! Dispatch a unit up there before she kills somebody!

CUT TO:

46 INT MADELINE'S CAR NIGHT 46

ERNEST and HELEN dump alcohol all over Madeline's car, chucking the empties in back.

HELEN (v.o.) \*

You wedge her foot down on the accelerator --

Ernest wedges an empty bottle between the steering wheel and Madeline's leg. \*

HELEN (v.o.) \*

-- drop the car in gear --

Ernest drops the car into gear. At the back end, which is up on a jack, the rear wheels spin fast, the engine SCREAMING. \*

In front, Ernest jams one last whisky bottle into Madeline's hand. \*

HELEN (v.o.) \*

-- and we'll send her on her way.

Helen delicately, elegantly KICKS the jack out from under the rear bumper. The car drops, the tires SQUEAL, and the car takes off. \*

CUT TO:



14 Nov 91

49 CONTINUED

49

Ernest tears away from her and goes to the fireplace.

ERNEST

What are we saying? We can't go through with it.

HELEN

She's killing you, Ernest. It's self-defense.

Ernest looks to his right, where several ornate shotguns are kept in a glass case. They gleam a little in the light.

ERNEST

(convincing himself)

Self-defense.

HELEN

Tomorrow, then?

ERNEST

Tomorrow.

And he rushes back into her arms.

CUT TO:

50 EXT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

50

MADELINE pulls up in front of the Menville place. Were she not obsessed with looking at her own image in the car's rear view mirror, she would be able to see HELEN as she gets into her car and drives away from the house.

CUT TO:

51 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

51

MADELINE enters the mansion and throws her keys and bag on the front table. She pauses to admire herself in the foyer mirror, then heads upstairs, sweeping past ERNEST, who is in the living room, pacing. He looks up, but she barely notices his existence.

He watches as she disappears upstairs.

\*

CUT TO:

14 Nov 91

52 INT MADELINE'S ROOM NIGHT

52

MADELINE is in her room, climbing out of her still soggy clothes. Her phone RINGS and she picks it up.

MADELINE

Hello? Well, you've got one hell of a lot of nerve, calling me after -- oh, knock it off. I just have one thing to say to you. I had a little too much to drink tonight and I overreacted. It was a ridiculous display of emotion, particularly, I'm sure you'll agree, over someone like you. That's all.

(starts to hang up)

What? Oh, please. You don't mean that. Who do you think you're talking to?

(dirty)

Well, aren't you presumptuous? What makes you think I'll forgive you? I don't know. I have to warn you, you may be too old for me very soon. You'll fall in love, make a scene -- what? Say that again, you'd do what?

She hears a sound and turns. ERNEST is standing at the door to the room, staring at her, livid, the glass of scotch spilling from one hand. He's heard every word.

ERNEST

Unspeakable.

Madeline casually kicks the door shut in his face.

MADELINE

(into phone)

Fine. I'll be there in twenty minutes. Just try not to humiliate yourself.

TEN MINUTES LATER,

MADELINE steps out of her closet, her hair pulled back in a seductive fashion and her body poured into a sexy dress. She goes to the mirror and looks at herself in wonder. \*

CONTINUED

12 Dec 91

52 CONTINUED

52

MADELINE  
My God, it fits.

She giggles and opens the door to the room. Ernest is still standing in the hallway, hate in his eyes.

ERNEST  
Unspeakable.

MADELINE  
(walking past him)  
Yes, Ernest. Unspeakable. Have another drink and go to bed.

She breezes past him and into the hall.

CUT TO:

53 INT HALLWAY NIGHT

53

ERNEST turns and hurries in front of MADELINE, cutting her off at the top of the stairs.

ERNEST  
You'd like that, wouldn't you?  
For me to drink myself to an early grave. Well, it's not going to happen. It's my money, and I'm going to keep it.

MADELINE  
What are you talking about?

ERNEST  
You haven't worked in years -- not a real job. Anything you had left you owed me long ago. Your face owed me.

He squints at her face, studying her, and for a moment, his rage vanishes.

ERNEST (cont.)  
By the way, did you change your makeup?

UBH004

\*

CONTINUED

53 CONTINUED

53

She looks at him, decides he's not worth the explanation, and turns away.

MADELINE

Don't wait up.

She walks away, heading for the stairs.

ERNEST

(mutters)

Cheap.

Madeline stops dead in her tracks. She turns around.

MADELINE

What did you say?

ERNEST

I called you cheap, Madeline. A cheap little tramp who's every day less like a lady and more like a -- like a -- like a broad.

There is a line in every marriage that can't be crossed, and Ernest just crossed theirs. Madeline is enraged.

MADELINE

Who do you think you're talking to? Who do you think you are? You're nothing but a rich failure.

ERNEST

(that stung)

Watch what you say. I don't have to take it any more.

MADELINE

You'll take whatever I give, you always have. You are pathetic, Ernest. You're a tragic, boozy clown. You're not really even a man any more, are you? How long's it been? Long enough so you're afraid to try any more, that's how long.

CONTINUED

Ernest is fuming, his face gone completely red. He turns away from her and grips the railing, his fingers turning white with tension.

MADELINE (cont.)

Well, that's not good enough for me. I need a man, a real man, not some drunken undertaker who's just as dead below the waist as his "clients" are. You --

\*

Ernest turns and grabs Madeline around the throat, pressing his thumbs against her windpipe. His face is grim, set, his body rigid.

He is a killer.

Madeline chokes, gasps, flails with her arms.

ERNEST

Cruel...vicious...loathsome...

They stagger about. Her arms knock over a vase, her fingers gouge his cheek. Still his hold on her neck remains tight.

He backs her over to the top of the stairs.

She speaks, a death gasp.

MADELINE

Ernest -- please --

Ernest's eyes soften. His face washes over with awareness and reprehension at what he is doing. He releases his hold on Madeline and backs away, staring at his hands and at her in horror.

ERNEST

Oh God -- oh Madeline, darling,  
I'm so sorry!

She teeters on her feet, precariously balanced at the top of the stairs, her arms flailing but finding nothing to cling to.

MADELINE

Help me!

Ernest's eyes widen as he studies her delicate position. He looks behind her, down the steep winding staircase. He looks down at her feet, barely balanced on her high heels.

MADELINE (cont.)

Hurry, you miserable failure -- !

\*

Ernest cuts her off, reaching out just ever so slightly and JABBING his finger into the middle of her chest.

The tiny impact is enough to tip her over, backwards, over the top of the staircase. For one brief moment, she is suspended there, like Wile E. Coyote.

MADELINE (cont.)

Oh.

And then she's gone. She tumbles down the stairs, a long, hard, painful fall in which she doesn't miss a single step. There are unmistakable CRUNCHING sounds and finally she lands in a grotesquely tangled heap of arms and legs at the bottom of the stairs.

Ernest stands at the top, hands clutched at his mouth like a mischievous child.

For a few seconds, nobody moves.

Finally, Ernest summons his courage and starts down the stairs. Timidly. One at a time. Trying not to look at Madeline's still form.

He reaches the bottom. Madeline's face looks up at him. Unfortunately, her body is lying face down. Her head is turned almost completely around, her neck certainly broken.

ERNEST

Oh my.

DBH00 4

CONTINUED

He bends down closer to her and moves his fingers along her neck near her jugular. He holds them there for a moment, searching for a pulse.

He finds none.

ERNEST (cont.)

Oh my.

He stands and backs a few unshaky steps away from her. He finds himself next to the liquor cart and hurriedly pours a glass of scotch.

An entire, eight ounce glass of scotch.

He drinks from it greedily.

Bolstered by the liquor, he turns and walks back over to Madeline again. He checks her pulse a second time, then jerks his hand away and wipes it on his pants.

She's plenty dead.

He turns and walks across the room, trying to compose himself. Struck by an idea, he runs to the telephone table. He pulls a scrap of paper from his pocket, checks the number, and dials frantically.

While he's waiting for someone to answer, he looks apprehensively across the room toward Madeline's corpse. It's not going anywhere. He turns around, not able to look at it.

ERNEST

(into phone)

Suite 1110, please.

(pause, then breathless)

Helen! It's me, Ernest Menville!  
I did it! I didn't think I'd be  
able to but I pushed her down the  
stairs and she's absolutely stone  
cold and she was saying the most  
monstrous things and she's dead  
and I did it and I didn't think  
I could but there was just this  
feeling inside me and I couldn't  
contain it and we're free but I'm  
afraid I'm going to burn in hell  
and her neck is broken and there's  
no pulse and I pushed her down the  
stairs and she's dead!!

CUT TO:

10 March 92

54 INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT 54

HELEN is in her hotel room, dressed in jeans and a "Just Do It" tee-shirt, running on a treadmill, the phone to her ear. \*  
For a moment, she says nothing. Finally:

HELEN  
Which part of the plan were you  
unclear on?

CUT TO:

55 INT MENVILLE LIVING ROOM NIGHT 55

ERNEST is still on the phone.

ERNEST  
No, Helen --

HELEN (o.s.)  
Because we went over it three times.

ERNEST  
No, you don't understand. This is  
better! It was an accident! At  
least it'll look like one!

HELEN (o.s.)  
Have you called the police?

ERNEST  
No! I called you first thing.

CUT TO:

56 INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT 56

(Throughout the following, we get a chance to see more of Helen's hotel suite. One corner of it, a small sitting room, looks like the apartment of an assassin. There are blow-ups of Madeline all over the walls, not just publicity shots, but shots that look like they were taken without Madeline's knowledge -- coming out of the market, getting into her car, jogging. There is a calendar on the wall with dates marked off and one -- two days from now -- with a large red circle around it. Most disturbing, on a mirror over the desk, the word "ELIMINATE" is written in lipstick.)

CONTINUED



14 Nov 91

56 CONTINUED

56

HELEN herself is still on the phone, trying to be patient with Ernest.

HELEN

(hard)

Ernest, you --

(regaining)

-- poor, sweet thing. If the police check the phone records, don't you think it'll look unusual that you called me before you called them?

CUT TO:

57 INT MENVILLE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

57

ERNEST is still on the phone.

ERNEST

Oh God, you're right!

HELEN (o.s.)

Of course I'm right.

ERNEST

I'd better call them right now.

HELEN (o.s.)

NO! We have to decide what you're going to say first.

ERNEST

Well?

HELEN (o.s.)

I'm thinking.

Ernest drums his fingers on the desk nervously, waiting for Helen to come up with something. He's sitting with his back to Madeline's corpse, but it is visible behind him. As he waits, something funny happens with Madeline's body.

It moves.

Just a twitch, really, it might not even have happened.

CONTINUED

HELEN (cont.)

Okay, I've got it. Where's her  
body?

Ernest turns around and looks at Madeline, who is still  
again.

ERNEST

At the foot of the stairs.

He turns back. Madeline twitches again.

HELEN (o.s.)

Foot of the stairs, good. Don't  
move her.

Behind Ernest, Madeline sits up.

HELEN (cont.)

As soon as we hang up, you'll call  
the police.

ERNEST

Okay.

While Helen and Ernest talk, Madeline, behind him, begins to  
disentangle herself from her own wreckage. She pulls a  
twisted leg over her head and brings it back down into place.  
She pries a limp wrist off the floor and lets it fall at her  
side.

HELEN (o.s.)

You'll tell them you were on the  
phone with me when you heard a  
terrible scream. You turned around  
and saw Madeline fall down the stairs.

ERNEST

Right! Perfect!

Behind him, Madeline stands up, disoriented. She turns  
around, so she is facing Ernest.

Or so her face is facing Ernest, anyway. Her head is still  
twisted completely around, so while she's looking at Ernest,  
her body is headed in the other direction. She blinks, not  
really seeming to get it.

14 Nov 91

57 CONTINUED

57

HELEN (o.s.)  
Stick to that story! If they ever  
check the phone records, it'll just  
confirm what you told them.

ERNEST  
Got it!

Madeline, facing Ernest, backs across the room toward him.  
He doesn't hear her.

HELEN (o.s.)  
One thing, though -- what about the  
time of death? Do you think they  
could ever use it to prove the phone  
call came after?

Madeline comes all the way up behind Ernest and stands there,  
staring down at him.

ERNEST  
(into phone)  
No, no, time of death can only be  
determined within a few hours. It's  
not an exact --

MADELINE  
Ernest.

He waves her off, not looking up.

ERNEST  
(into phone)  
-- not an exact --

MADELINE  
Ernest!

He waves her off again.

ERNEST  
-- not --

He stops, realizing the implication of Madeline's voice. He  
turns around. His face goes completely pale.

MADELINE  
You pushed me down the stairs.

10 March 92

57 CONTINUED

57

ERNEST  
HOLY JESUS CHRIST!

CUT TO:

57A INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT 57A

HELEN holds the phone with both hands, but the line has gone \*  
completely dead.

HELEN \*  
Ernest! Ernest?!

CUT TO:

57B INT MENVILLE LIVING ROOM NIGHT 57B

ERNEST is backing away from MADELINE in abject horror. \*  
She follows him, backing after him, looking very creepy.

MADELINE  
You pushed me down the stairs!

Ernest keeps away from her, circling her, knocking lamps and  
picture frames over in an attempt to keep her at a distance.

CONTINUED

57B CONTINUED

57B \*

ERNEST

Stay away from me!

MADELINE

You bet I will. Animal! Psycho!

ERNEST

Don't come near me!

MADELINE

Wife-pusher!

ERNEST

Don't come near me! Don't come  
near me or follow me! Don't come  
near me or follow me or talk to me!

MADELINE

I don't need to, I don't want to,  
I don't intend to! I just need  
to make a telephone call. You're in  
the shithouse now, pal.

\*

She goes to the phone and reaches for it, but her arm goes  
the other way.

ERNEST

Madeline, look at yourself!

She looks down, confused, and finds herself looking at her  
own backside.

MADELINE

Ernest! My ass! I can see my  
ass!

ERNEST

There's -- there's something wrong  
with your neck!

MADELINE

Yes! I would say so! I would  
fucking well say so!

She wanders around the room, backwards, in a daze.

MADELINE (cont.)

Ernest, what's wrong with me?!

CONTINUED

The phone starts to RING. They ignore it.

ERNEST

(trying to compose)

It's a -- a dislocated neck,  
that's what it is! It could  
happen! I never heard of it  
happening, but it could happen!

Madeline walks up to a chair. She turns around, as one ordinarily would to sit, but now the front of her body is facing the chair. She tries to sit, but her knees don't want to bend that way. She turns around, so her face is facing the back of the chair along with the backside of her body.

Now, she sits, her face looking at the back of the chair.

MADELINE

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!

ERNEST

Dislocated neck! You have a  
dislocated neck!

MADELINE

Fix it!

ERNEST

How?

MADELINE

Just do it!

Ernest swallows. He takes a deep breath, goes to her, and gingerly lays one hand on either side of her head. He pulls them away and backs off.

ERNEST

I can't, I -- can't!

MADELINE

Oh, for Christ's sake.

She grabs hold of her own head, and with one powerful twist of her hands and a disgusting CRUNCH, cranks it back around to the front. She blinks.

MADELINE (cont.)

I think I need a doctor.

CUT TO:

*Can we simplify*  
*H. B. B.*

14 Nov 91

58 EXT UCLA HOSPITAL NIGHT 58

Ernest's car SQUEALS to a halt outside the UCLA emergency room, BANGING into the rear end of an ambulance. A VALET takes one step forward but ERNEST leaps out of the car and SHOUTS at her. \*

ERNEST  
SHE'S AT DEATH'S DOOR! \*

CUT TO:

59 INT EXAMINATION ROOM NIGHT 59

MADELINE sits on the table in a small examination room, a thermometer in her mouth. ERNEST paces in front of her, frantic, taking an occasional shot from a flask he carries. \*

DR. SELWYN HARRIS, sixtyish, tired, sweeps through the doors. Harris has been in the emergency room for twenty years and seen every conceivable human ailment, none of which shock him any more. Ernest SHOUTS at him.

ERNEST  
SHE'S AT DEATH'S DOOR! \*

HARRIS  
Well, why don't we just let me be the judge of that, all right?  
(to Madeline)  
What seems to be the trouble?

MADELINE  
I --  
(with a look at Ernest)  
-- fell down the stairs.

HARRIS  
Ooops! Anything broken?

MADELINE  
No, I don't think so. It would hurt, wouldn't it?

HARRIS  
I should think so, yes.

CONTINUED

MADELINE

Well, maybe my wrist. And my neck's a little -- out of whack.

\*

HARRIS

All right, let's have a look, shall we?

He pulls down the blanket and reaches for Madeline's hand.

HARRIS (cont.)

Your left wrist?

MADELINE

Yes.

He takes the hand and holds it carefully, turning it a bit, poking here and there.

HARRIS

Does it hurt when I do this?

MADELINE

No.

HARRIS

It doesn't?

MADELINE

No.

HARRIS

What about this?

MADELINE

No.

HARRIS

This?

MADELINE

Uh -- no.

HARRIS

This doesn't hurt?

MADELINE

Well, no.

DBH004



HARRIS

(annoyed)

You're telling me it doesn't hurt  
when I do this?

MADELINE

Yes, that's what I'm telling you,  
okay? It doesn't hurt.

HARRIS

(cryptically)

Uh huh.

He sets her hand down and clears his throat.

HARRIS (cont.)

You said something about your neck?

MADELINE

It feels funny when I turn it.

Harris leans over her, pulling her collar back to have a  
look. His eyes widen and he steps back quickly, wiping his  
hand on his pants.

HARRIS

(voice slightly higher)

Okay, I see. Right. Gotcha.

ERNEST

Did you check for shock? Check for shock!

HARRIS

(his joviality eroding  
into serious unease)

Could be, could be shock.

He unbuttons her blouse a few buttons for his stethoscope and  
puts it to her chest. He listens a moment, then moves it to  
a new area. A look of confusion crosses his face. He stands  
up, chucks the stethoscope in the trash can, and goes to a  
cabinet on the other side of the room.

Madeline and Ernest look at each other, confused.

Harris comes back with another stethoscope, much larger. He puts it to Madeline's chest, moving it around, unnerved.

MADELINE

What is it?

Harris steps back and looks at her.

HARRIS

Interesting.

He takes the thermometer out of her mouth and consults it. He looks at her, he looks at the thermometer, he looks at her.

HARRIS (cont.)

Okey dokey.

(false cheer)

Well, I think that about covers it.

Ernest takes another belt from his flask. Harris notices.

HARRIS (cont.)

I wonder if I might have a sip of that.

ERNEST

Of course.

He hands the doctor the flask. Harris takes one very long gulp and hands it back.

HARRIS

Thank you very much.

ERNEST

Not at all.

Harris steps over to a mirror above the sink. He runs a hand through his hair, but he's shaking so badly the net effect it to muss it up. He takes a small tin box of pills from his breast pocket and puts one under his tongue.

He turns to Ernest and Madeline, trying like hell to be professional, but he's developed a stutter.

CONTINUED

HARRIS

Your wrist, as far as I can t-tell, is fractured in three places. You've also sh-shattered two vertebrae in your neck, although it's impossible to s-s-say for sure without x-rays. Still, there is bone protrusion through the skin, which can't really be called a g-g-g-g-good sign. Your body temperature is below eighty degrees, and your h-h-h-heart has stopped beating.

Silence.

More silence.

ERNEST

What the hell does that mean?!

HARRIS

I believe --

He holds a finger out, about to pronounce his diagnosis, but can't bring himself to do it.

HARRIS (cont.)

-- I'd like a second opinion.

He sweeps out of the room just as dramatically as he swept in.

Ernest and Madeline look at each other. Silence for a second.

MADELINE

Could be worse.

ERNEST

This is ridiculous! I've got to see for myself.

He goes to Madeline.

MADELINE

What are you doing?! Stop it!  
Get away from me!

Ernest quickly searches her neck for her pulse, looks at her protruding vertebrae, and feels her forehead for her temperature. He backs off, staring at her with eyes wide.

CONTINUED

ERNEST

My God! He's right!

MADELINE

Don't be ridiculous, he can't be right! What would it mean if he was right?!

ERNEST

This is incredible! You're in violation of every natural law I know!

On the words "natural law," Madeline GASPS, looking down at the lapel pin Lisle gave her in shock. She covers her mouth in horror and stands, shaking.

ERNEST (cont.)

You're standing there --

MADELINE

Oh, shit!

ERNEST

You're talking to me --

MADELINE

(beginning to swoon)

Oh, shit -- !

ERNEST

-- BUT YOU'RE DEAD!

Madeline tries to scream, but only a tiny GASP comes out.

ERNEST (cont.)

I've got to get help!

He turns and runs out of the room.

Madeline promptly faints, falling back onto the table.

CUT TO:

60 INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT 60

ERNEST hurries out of the room and into the corridor, looking for somebody, anybody, but the emergency area is a chaotic place, full of GUNSHOT VICTIMS, STABBING VICTIMS, and bizarre domestic accidents of all kinds.

CONTINUED

The ADMITTING NURSE is having an argument with a RUDE WOMAN \*  
who keeps shoving a poodle at her.

NURSE \*  
Look, this just isn't that kind  
of hospital --

Ernest tries to get the attention of several other NURSES -- \*

ERNEST  
Excuse me, I need --

-- but they're all in some crisis of their own. A seemingly \*  
unattached NURSE hurries past.

ERNEST (cont.)  
Look, my wife is really --

The Nurse ignores him, continuing on. Ernest, determined, \*  
follows her around a corner and into a room.

61 INT HOSPITAL ROOM NIGHT 61  
ERNEST follows the NURSE into the room

ERNEST  
Would you please just --

He stops as he sees what the Nurse was hurrying to. An  
EMERGENCY TEAM hovers over a man's body, giving him CPR.

DOCTOR  
Hit him again!

Ernest looks closer. The patient is dressed in hospital  
greens. He looks familiar. He's DR. HARRIS. BEEEEEEEEEP!  
The EKG line goes flat.

CUT TO:

62 OMITTED 62 \*

63 INT EXAMINATION ROOM NIGHT 63

ERNEST hurries back into Madeline's examination room, but \*  
Madeline is gone. A SECOND DOCTOR, younger, corporate-  
looking, is there filling out a form on her clipboard.

CONTINUED

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63 CONTINUED

63

ERNEST

Where is she?!

The Doctor looks at him professionally and caps her pen. She \*  
puts an arm around Ernest's shoulders.

DOCTOR

I'm terribly sorry, sir. I know  
how difficult this must be.

ERNEST

No, you don't understand -- she wasn't  
-- she didn't -- it's hard to explain.

DOCTOR

(comfortingly)  
I know it is. How can anyone explain it?

ERNEST

(growing alarmed)  
Where did you put her?!

DOCTOR

Don't worry about that right now.  
Give yourself some time to grieve.

Ernest grabs her by the lapels and shakes her violently. \*

ERNEST

WHERE THE HELL DID YOU PUT MY WIFE?!

DOCTOR

She's dead, sir. They took  
her to the morgue.

Ernest lets go and stares at the Doctor in shock.

ERNEST

The morgue?! She'll be furious!

He turns and races out of the room. The Doctor watches him  
go, sympathetic.

DOCTOR

Poor bastard.

CUT TO:

14 Nov 91

64 INT HOSPITAL CORRIDOR NIGHT

64

ERNEST steps off the elevator and hurries down another corridor, frantic, rubbing his head in confusion, trying like hell to comprehend what's going on.

ERNEST

(muttering)

Can't be -- just can't be --

As he walks, he sees THREE NUNS walking toward him, dressed in full habits, SOBBING uncontrollably. They're an eerie sight, sort of floating past him in all their religious grief and grandeur.

Ernest stops, staring at them, thinking, then continues on.

CUT TO:

65 INT MORGUE NIGHT

65

The hospital's morgue is a stark white tiled place with silver doors in the walls leading to the you-know-whats. A MORGUE WORKER in a white lab coat hovers over a DEAD PRIEST who is on one of the slabs, ready to start undressing him.

The Worker hears a strange SOUND, muted, like a human voice, but very far away. He looks up for a second, listening --

-- then shrugs and goes back to the Priest, unbuttoning his collar. \*

After a few seconds, he hears it again, a little louder, definitely someone's voice. He shakes his head, knowing he's the victim of a joke.

WORKER

Those guys.

ERNEST comes in, frantic, but trying to compose himself.

WORKER (cont.)

Can I help you?

Ernest stops, staring at the dead Priest with a look of amazement on his face.

WORKER (cont.)

Hello?

CONTINUED

ERNEST

(snapping out of it)

Sorry. I need to -- see my wife.  
She was just brought in.

WORKER

Oh, yeah. You got some forms to  
fill out. And you have to sign for  
her clothes.

He shoves a plastic bag across the table to Ernest.

ERNEST

I will, I just --  
(the widower)  
-- I need to see her alone for a  
minute. You know. To say goodbye.

WORKER

Well, okay. I understand.

The Worker re-buttons the Priest's collar, slides his slab  
into the wall, and BANGS the silver door shut, but it doesn't  
latch. He taps the door of the slab two rows down.

WORKER (cont.)

She's in here. Just a couple minutes,  
okay?

ERNEST

Thank you. Thank you.

The Worker goes out into the hallway. Ernest takes a deep  
breath, approaches Madeline's slab, and delicately slides her  
out.

She's in a body bag. Ernest winces and unzips the bag as  
delicately as he can, revealing MADELINE's face. She's  
graying now, death really beginning to take its toll on her  
appearance. She's wide awake and teary, like a child who's  
hurt herself.

MADELINE

Ernest!

DBH004

CONTINUED



ERNEST

Yes. It's me, darling.

MADELINE

Ernest, I fainted and when I woke up it was dark and I was yelling and yelling but nobody could hear me and I didn't know where I was and I was scared and -- and --

She stops, looking around. She recognizes her surroundings and now her tears break.

MADELINE (cont.)

Ernest, I'm in the morgue! Why am I in the morgue?!

ERNEST

Shhhhh. It's okay. Listen to me. I understand what's going on! It's incredible, it's physically impossible, but I understand it now!

MADELINE

They think I'm dead, Ernest!

ERNEST

You are -- but you're not! In the whole of recorded medical history, that has never, ever happened to a single human being!

MADELINE

So why did it have to happen to me?!

ERNEST

Don't you know what you are, Madeline?!

Behind Ernest, the door to the drawer with the Priest in it swings open slowly. Ernest doesn't notice it.

\*

\*

65 CONTINUED

65

ERNEST (cont.)

You're a sign! You're an omen!  
You're a burning bush!

\*

MADELINE

I am?

\*

Now the slab the Priest is on starts to slide out of the drawer, toward Ernest, who still doesn't notice, his rapture building.

\*

ERNEST (cont.)

Of course you are! We're being told we belong together! And I'm being called! I'm being challenged! I have to fix you! I have to reassemble that which I have torn asunder! It's all so clear to me now! It's as if I've been struck dumb by many -- uh, tablets, heavy stone tablets. Don't you understand, Madeline?! God has intervened!

\*

The Priest's slab, all the way out now, hits Ernest in the butt. Ernest whirls and sees the dead Priest just as a massive bolt of lightning flashes and thunder CRACKS.

\*

Ernest throws his hands up to the heavens.

ERNEST (cont.)

IT'S A MIRACLE!

\*

CUT TO:

10 March 92

66 INT HALLWAY NIGHT

66

The MORGUE WORKER has cornered two ORDERLIES, who are folding body bags, and is talking to them in the corridor.

WORKER

I'm just sayin', I don't think it's funny. What if the families were around?

ORDERLY 1

What are you talking about?

The door to the morgue BANGS open. ERNEST and MADELINE come out of the morgue and walk past them as casually as possible. Madeline looks at the Morgue Worker and smiles.

MADELINE

False alarm.

The Worker laughs, assuming this is some kind of joke, and turns back to the Orderlies. After a second, he turns sharply, raising a finger, realizing something is wrong with this picture, but having no idea what and --

CUT TO:

67 OMITTED

67

67A OMITTED

67A \*

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68 OMITTED 68 \*

69 EXT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT 69 \*

HELEN, dressed in black now, is at the gate of the Menville mansion, peering through the bars at the darkened house, trying to see something, anything, but all is dead. Suddenly the gate itself HUMS and starts to move, opening. \*

Helen steps back, confused. From down the street, headlights flash across her. She turns and darts over to her car, parked at the curb a short distance away. She hides behind it as Ernest's car ZOOMS past, flying through the opened gate and racing up the driveway, SQUEALING to a halt near the side entrance to the house. \*

Helen creeps back to the gate as it closes. She pulls out a small pair of binoculars and peers through them. \*

Through the binoculars, she sees ERNEST jump out of his car, run around to the passenger door, pull out MADELINE's lifeless body, and drag it into the house. \*

HELEN \*

Oh -- my -- God.

She folds the binoculars and sticks them in her pocket. She stands, looks both ways to see if anyone's watching, and then, like a gymnast -- \*

-- scampers up and over the gate.

She drops to the ground on the other side and sprints across the lawn, fast and low, headed for the front door. She's almost there when she hears Ernest's car start again. She drops to the driveway, flat. \*

Ernest backs the car up, fast, does a Y-turn in reverse, and stops just a few inches from Helen. He drops it into forward, punches the gas, and SQUEALS the hell out the driveway again. \*

Helen leaps up and runs down the driveway, squeezing through the gate just before it closes and running for her car. \*

She jumps in as Ernest's tail lights disappear down the block. She gives chase.

CUT TO:

27 Jan 92

70 OMITTED 70

71 INT HELEN'S CAR NIGHT 71

HELEN is following ERNEST on an almost abandoned road somewhere. She has a tape in the cassette player, and she's \* singing along, like a mantra.

HELEN \*

"I will follow him -- "

Up ahead, Ernest slows and turns in an unlit driveway, more of a service road.

HELEN (cont.)

What is this?

She looks up at a huge sign on the hill above her. Only the last word is clear:

"MORTUARY."

72 EXT MORTUARY NIGHT 72

HELEN kills her lights and coasts to a stop just down the driveway from the mortuary itself. She peers over her steering wheel. ERNEST is out of his car and standing at the back door to the mortuary, shaking hands with a MAN in a white coat. They seem to know each other rather well.

TWO MORE GUYS come out of the mortuary, carrying jugs of some kind of liquid, strange-looking tools, hoses, and the like. Ernest directs them, putting everything in the trunk.

HELEN

What in God's name -- ?

Ernest shakes hands with the men again, gets in his car, and starts it.

Helen ducks down in the seat as Ernest drives past her, out the way he came.

73 EXT STREET NIGHT 73

HELEN is following ERNEST again, this time on Sunset Boulevard in Beverly Hills. He stops at a stop light. Helen stops behind him. He turns on his right turn signal.

CONTINUED

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73 CONTINUED

73

Helen looks up, ahead of them and to the right, and sees a sign for the Beverly Hills Hotel.

HELEN

Oh, shit!

She cranks her wheel and punches the gas, tearing out ahead of Ernest, through the intersection against the light, and into the driveway of the hotel, SMACKING into a luggage cart. A VALET dives out of the way as Helen jumps out.

VALET

Uh -- 'evening, Miss Sharp.

Helen doesn't answer, just races into the hotel. She's barely inside when Ernest's car pulls up behind hers.

73A INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

73A

HELEN is in her hotel room, frantically shoving the evidence of her Madeline obsession into the sitting room. She pulls the door shut on it all, hiding it from sight, just as there's a KNOCK on the main door.

74 INT HOTEL CORRIDOR NIGHT

74

ERNEST waits patiently outside suite 1110. He's about to knock again when HELEN opens the door --

HELEN

Ernest, thank God!

-- and yanks him into the room.

75 INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM NIGHT

75

HELEN quickly closes the door behind ERNEST.

HELEN

Tell me right now -- what's going on?!

ERNEST

Well, it's very difficult for me to say, Helen.

(takes a deep breath)

Madeline and I have had a reconciliation.

CONTINUED

Helen just looks at him.

HELEN  
Ernest, that's sick.

ERNEST  
Please, I have to be brief. She's waiting for me. I'm going to do some work on her.

She looks at him in disbelief.

HELEN  
Oh, my God, you're completely insane.

ERNEST  
What?

HELEN  
Ernest, I followed you. I had to. I saw her, Ernest. Madeline is dead.

ERNEST  
Well, yes, but not in the usual sense. Please, don't try to be logical about it, it's a waste of time. It's a miracle, that's all I can tell you.

HELEN  
Stop this, Ernest! You're suffering through some kind of psychotic episode!

ERNEST  
(checks his watch)  
I should get back.

HELEN  
Snap out of it!

ERNEST  
She'll be suspicious.

Helen picks up a glass of water and throws it in his face. For a moment he just looks at her, confused, wet.

ERNEST (cont.)  
May I have a towel, please?

HELEN

God, Ernest, I thought you had a plan! You're going to get us both in one hell of a lot of trouble!

ERNEST

Helen, you're not looking at the big picture here.

HELEN

Okay, you've already waited too long to call the police -- <sup>so</sup> we're going to have to get rid of the body ourselves and just report her missing, that's all.

ERNEST

I think she's fine back at the house.

HELEN

The house? Don't be ridiculous. She'll start to smell.

ERNEST

Well, why do you think I picked up the formaldehyde?

HELEN

(looks at him)

Oh, you poor son of a bitch.

ERNEST

Helen, if you would just listen for a --

HELEN

(pacing, thinking)

Body disposal, let's see. We're in California, we've got the ocean, the desert -- the desert!

ERNEST

Helen!

He grabs her and sits her down on the edge of the bed. As if by reflex, she picks up a handkerchief and squeezes it in her hand. Ernest, still in his overcoat, paces in front of her.



ERNEST (cont.)

I love you. I always have and I  
always will. But I have a duty to  
Madeline. I never meant to break  
your heart -- but good bye, Helen.

He kisses her softly on the cheek, turns, and leaves, the  
door CLICKING shut behind him. Helen just sits there for a  
moment. She looks down, at the handkerchief in her hands. \*  
She's squeezed it so hard a few drops of blood from her palms  
have stained it. She stares at it in disbelief.

HELEN

(incredulous)

She did it again!

CUT TO:

75A EXT MENVILLE MANSION MORNING \*

Morning. Sun shining. BIRDS singing. CRICKETS cricketing.  
An old Datsun parks in front of the Menville mansion, three  
PEOPLE inside. ROSE gets out and goes to the main gate. She  
punches in a code and the gate swings open.

CUT TO:

76 INT MENVILLE MANSION MORNING

76 \*

The sun shines on ERNEST, who SNORES softly, asleep in a  
sitting position on the living room couch. From the kitchen,  
we hear the sound of a DOOR OPENING.

IN THE KITCHEN,

ROSE and two MAIDS have come in through the kitchen entrance,  
ready to start their day. They've stopped in their tracks,  
staring at the kitchen, which is a disaster. The contents of  
the refrigerator, shelf racks and all, have been pulled out  
and are stacked on the counters. Flies BUZZ around rotting  
meat, ice cream puddles everywhere, it's a mess.

ROSE

What in God's name -- ?

The First Maid sighs heavily, grabs a towel, and starts to  
clean up.

CONTINUED

MAID  
Waste, waste, waste.

Rose sighs too, tosses a stray chunk of bacon into the sink, looks up at the clock, and starts to prepare Madeline's breakfast tray.

ROSE  
Well, I'm sure they had their reasons.

She goes to the refrigerator, a big Sub-Zero model, and opens it. MADELINE is inside, crumpled slightly to fit, dressed in a terrycloth robe and slippers. Her body is completely blue, with red and white patches here and there. Rose stares in disbelief. Madeline looks up at her.

MADELINE  
Close the door.

ROSE  
Yes, ma'am.

She closes the door. She just stares at it for a moment, trying to figure this out. She turns and looks at the Maids, who didn't notice, still busy cleaning up.

Rose runs a hand through her hair. She finishes with Madeline's breakfast tray, putting a single rose in a vase. She looks up at the clock again. She picks up the tray and raises one hand as if to knock on the refrigerator door.

But she loses her nerve. She sets the tray next to the door and backs away from it, into the living room.

IN THE LIVING ROOM,

Rose sees Ernest asleep on the sofa. She hurries over to him and shakes him.

ROSE  
Dr. Menville! Dr. Menville!

Ernest wakes up and yawns casually, as on a normal day.

ERNEST  
'Morning, Rose. Is it up yet?

ROSE  
Well, sir -- it's in the 'fridge.

CONTINUED

Ernest leaps to his feet, remembering the events of last night.

ERNEST

Right! I know! Don't worry!  
Nothing to worry about!

From the kitchen, the Maids SCREAM and run into the living room, hysterical.

MAID

She's -- sir, she's -- !

Ernest forces a loud, phony, exaggerated laugh.

ERNEST

It's just a beauty thing. She read  
it in a magazine. Can you believe  
she actually did it?!  
(laughs again,  
then hard)  
Wait here.

Ernest races into the kitchen. Rose and the others fall into frantic gossip.

IN THE KITCHEN,

Ernest finds Madeline, stuck in the refrigerator. He starts tugging at her, but she's stiff as a board, her joints don't respond, and one arm is completely encased in frost, like an old package of peas.

ERNEST

They saw you! I told them it was  
a beauty thing! Put some avocado  
on your face or something!

MADELINE

They'll think I'm crazy!

ERNEST

We can only hope.

He finally gets her out of the refrigerator and she lands on the floor with a CLUNK, like a block of ice.

MADELINE

Why am I so stiff?

CONTINUED

ERNEST

Rigor mortis! Try to walk it off!  
Hurry up!

Madeline stands, CREAKING and CRACKING like an old rocker.

IN THE LIVING ROOM,

Ernest, smiling gaily again, hurries back into the living room. He takes three envelopes from his jacket and starts distributing them to the help.

ERNEST

Listen to me carefully, all of you.  
 Mrs. Menville and I are going to  
 Europe. We've sold the house to  
 a buyer who will be here in a few  
 days. I've given you each one  
 year's salary, but I'm afraid --

They GASP, looking at something behind Ernest. Madeline is making her way out of the kitchen stiffly, her arms and legs responding like two by fours, her face green with an impromptu avocado mask. She immediately starts up the stairs.

ERNEST (cont.)

(cheery)

Good morning, darling!

MADELINE

Good morning, everyone! It's me!  
 Perfectly fine, as you can see!  
 Just a Swedish skin thing!

She waves, but with her broken wrist. Her hand flops back unnaturally. It seems stuck, so she reaches back and pulls it forward, trying to act natural as she continues up the steps, which is a bit of a chore.

Ernest opens the front door for Rose and the others.

ERNEST

I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you'll  
 all have to leave this morning.

They don't answer, as they're fascinated, staring at Madeline as she makes her clunky, precarious way up the stairs.

CONTINUED

ERNEST (cont.)  
Uh -- now, actually.

ROSE  
But sir! We were happy here!

ERNEST  
(herding them  
out the door)  
So were we. Thank you all so much  
for everything. Have lovely lives!

When the last of them are gone, he closes the door behind them and locks it.

CUT TO:

76A INT MADELINE'S BEDROOM DAY 76A \*

MADELINE is in her bedroom, staring into a mirror morosely.  
ERNEST races in.

ERNEST  
That was too close. We can't  
risk people seeing you again.  
Think of the publicity!

MADELINE  
(horrified)  
Publicity?!  
(considering it)  
Well, publicity --

ERNEST  
Don't even think about it.

MADELINE  
Why am I so sweaty?

ERNEST  
It's not sweat, darling, you're  
defrosting. I have to make you  
presentable, now!

She looks at the mirror again, totally defeated.

MADELINE  
It's hopeless. Completely hopeless.  
And I looked so good!

CONTINUED

14 Nov 91

76A CONTINUED

76A \*

ERNEST

You will again. Remember the kind of work I used to do? Well, I'm going to be even better. You're going to be my masterpiece.

CUT TO:

76B OMITTED

76B \*

77 OMITTED

77 \*

78 INT MENVILLE THIRD FLOOR DAY

78

Used surgical equipment and empty jugs of formaldehyde lie piled in a corner of the third floor of the house. It's quiet, except for a strange sound. It's familiar, but a little hard to place at first. \*

CHUCKA CHUCKA CHUCKA SHHHHHHHH.

CHUCKA CHUCKA CHUCKA SHHHHHHHH.

Spray paint.

DBH 04

Moving over, past the used equipment and a phone that is RINGING but ignored, we see a wastebasket half filled with empty spray paint cans. Past that, we come upon one of the legs of the pool table, which has been covered with a sheet, turning it into a makeshift hospital bed. We move up it, somewhat nervously.

MADELINE is lying on the table, face down. We start at her feet -- which look absolutely fabulous, by the way, pink and healthy -- and move up, toward her behind.

ERNEST hovers over her like an artist, in gloves and a barbecue apron that reads "Kiss the Chef." He's applied masking tape along the line where her butt gives way to her legs, and is leaning over it with a can of spray paint. He sprays a bit of the paint onto his own fingers and rolls it around, studying the color.

Deciding against it, he tosses the can and leans back, selecting another from a rack with about two dozen different colors behind him. He seems truly happy, HUMMING to himself as he works. The phone, which had stopped ringing, starts again.

CONTINUED

MADLINE (o.s.)

Who keeps calling?

Ernest, annoyed at the distraction, goes to the phone and tears it out of the wall. He returns to his work.

ERNEST

Hold still. This is the tricky part.

Holding his shaking right hand with the other to steady it, he sprays a smooth line along the masking tape.

MADLINE (o.s.)

What are you doing down there?!

Ernest RIPS the masking tape off with a flourish.

ERNEST

Tan line, darling.

CUT TO:

78A INT HELEN'S HOTEL ROOM DUSK 78A

HELEN is in her hotel room. She's a fanatic, running faster than a human being can run on her treadmill. There is a KNOCK at the door and a BELLHOP comes in. \*

BELLHOP \*

Miss Sharp? You asked for the maps of Death Valley? \*

Helen doesn't even slow down as she answers -- and she's not even out of breath.

HELEN \*

Just leave them on the table, thank you. Wait a minute -- when does the sun go down tonight? \*

BELLHOP \*

Uh -- about an hour, I think? \*

HELEN \*

(smiles)  
Perfect.

CUT TO:

10 March 92

78B INT HARDWARE STORE NIGHT

78B \*

HELEN, now dressed in black, stands at the counter of a hardware store while the CLERK rings up her merchandise.

CLERK

Two shovels, one pick, fifty feet of rope, one large plastic tarp, two pairs of gloves, two pairs of rubber boots, and a ten pound bag of lime.

He looks up at her over the top of his glasses.

CLERK (cont.)

That gonna do it for you, or can I get you a headstone to go with this?

Helen laughs at his joke, much too hard.

CUT TO:

79 INT MENVILLE THIRD FLOOR NIGHT

79

MADLINE sits with her back to us. ERNEST hovers in front of her, holding an artist's palette and several small brushes. He's in a creative frenzy, daubing paints from the palette onto her face, blending them with his fingers, CURSING when something isn't quite right, REJOICING when it is.

He does something wrong over one eye and reaches for a small jug of turpentine. He finds it empty.

ERNEST

(heading for the door)

Damn! Hold still.

MADLINE

Where are you going?

CONTINUED



14 Nov 91

79 CONTINUED

79

ERNEST  
I need more turpentine.

MADELINE  
Aren't we done yet?

ERNEST  
(offended)  
The shadows under your eyes are  
unbalanced. Do you want people  
to stare?

Madeline SIGHS and waits as Ernest leaves the room.

CUT TO:

80 INT STAIRCASE NIGHT 80

The door at the top of the staircase to the third floor SLAPS  
open and ERNEST fills the doorway, looking like a mad  
scientist. He SLAMS the door behind him and THUNDERS down  
the stairs.

CUT TO:

81 INT LIVING ROOM NIGHT 81

ERNEST comes down the main staircase, HUMMING to himself,  
happier than we've ever seen him. He reaches the bottom,  
turns to head for the garage -- and stops dead in his tracks.  
He GASPS.

HELEN is standing right in front of him, burdened with  
shovels, picks, and everything else she bought in the  
hardware store, looking like a designer grave digger.

HELEN  
(all business)  
Where is she?

ERNEST  
(whispering)  
God! Helen! What are you doing  
here?!

HELEN  
What is that on your face? Is  
that blood?

CONTINUED

Ernest wipes frantically at his face.

ERNEST

No, it's paint!

HELEN

Paint? What are you doing that you have paint on your face?

ERNEST

(thinks)

Painting!

HELEN

Ernest, are you doing something -- funny with Madeline?

ERNEST

(thinks)

Define "funny."

*cut?*

DBH 04

Helen puts down her gear and strides forward determinedly, past Ernest and to the foot of the stairs, looking up. He follows her.

\*

HELEN

Come on, Ernest. Cough her up.

\*

ERNEST

(whispering)

Helen, I really think we should talk outside.

HELEN

(turning back to him)

Why are you whispering?

ERNEST

She's resting. She's in a foul mood.

HELEN

(loud)

Oh, please!

ERNEST

(horrified)

She'll hear you!

UP ON THE SECOND FLOOR,

it seems Madeline can, in fact, hear them. She stands on the landing, out of their view, and ours too. All we see of her is her hand -- fully restored -- resting on the bannister at the top of the stairs. Helen's voice is clear up here.

HELEN (o.s.)

She's not resting, she's dead,  
Ernest! Just like we wanted. Just  
like we plotted. Together, remember?

\*

On that, Madeline's hand curls into a claw, the fingernails digging into the bannister.

HELEN (cont.)

You may have done it alone, but I  
can't walk away from it now, not  
with you putting us both in  
jeopardy like this. We're going to  
bury her in Death Valley and be done  
with her once and for all!

ERNEST (o.s.)

Helen, please, just listen --

\*

HELEN (o.s.)

Stop waffling! She deserved it,  
Ernest! She was a homewrecker! She  
was a maneater! And she was a bad  
actress!

\*

Madeline's fingernails SCRAPE down the bannister, leaving five long, deep scratches in their wake.

BACK DOWN IN THE LIVING ROOM,

ERNEST

Believe me, Helen, she's not ready  
to be buried. She's upstairs --

HELEN

Okay. Fine. Then why don't you  
go ask her to come down? Why don't  
you tell her to come down here,  
walk right up to me, and kiss me  
on the --

A VOICE comes from the top of the stairs.

MADELINE (o.s.)

Kiss you on the what?

They turn and look up. MADELINE stands at the head of the stairs, now in full view, hands on hips, dressed to kill in a pair of skin tight pants and a loose blouse. She looks absolutely ravishing, better than she did the night she first took the potion. Ernest has even given her a healthy suntan.

HELEN

Mad!

MADELINE

Hell!

ERNEST

Darling!

MADELINE

What are you <sup>04</sup> plotting down there?  
Or should I say "What else?"

Helen stares at her, absolutely shocked out of her skin. Her mouth moves, but she's unable to form words.

Madeline starts down the stairs, and as we watch her, there should only be one word in our minds -- "hips."

HELEN

(under her breath,  
to Ernest)  
My God! It's alive!

ERNEST

(to Madeline, terrified)  
Are you angry, honey?

HELEN

It's alive and it's -- it's --  
beautiful!

ERNEST

Are you very angry, dear?

Madeline ignores him completely, reaching the bottom of the stairs and sweeping right between them, headed for the fireplace. She seems strangely calm. Too calm.

ERNEST (cont.)  
 (watching her walk away)  
 Oh boy.

He grabs her by the arm and starts leading her away, out onto the terrace, which is through two sliding glass doors.

ERNEST (cont.)  
 I think you'd better go, right now. I see a very bad situation developing here.

HELEN  
 (whispering)  
 How can this be?! This isn't possible! I saw her, Ernest, she was dead!

ERNEST  
 Helen, please, you don't know her the way I do!

HELEN  
 And now she's got a suntan!

Ernest hears a CREAKING sound behind him and turns back to Madeline, at the fireplace. The shotgun case, next to the fireplace, is hanging open. So is one of the drawers in its base, which is filled with shotgun shells.

Ernest's eyes widen as Madeline SNAPS shut the barrel of an enormous shotgun and points it straight at Helen. He tries to shout, but nothing comes out. \*

MADELINE  
 I just want you to know one thing, Hell. \*

Helen turns around.

MADELINE (cont.)  
 You brought this on yourself. \*

KA-BOOM!!

Madeline pulls the trigger on both barrels. Helen catches the shots in the midsection, is thrown through the air, and comes to rest in an enormous fountain out on the terrace.

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

81

Madeline breaks open the smoking barrels and the shell casings PING across the floor.

MADELINE

I should have done that years ago.

ERNEST

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!

MADELINE

What have I done?! Defended myself, that's what! You plotter! You co-conspirator!

(proudly, noticing  
Helen's body)

Check it out. Right in the fountain.

Ernest runs to Helen's still form, which is floating upside down in the fountain. The water is completely red. Ernest feels for a pulse with shaking hands.

ERNEST

(hysterical)

She's dead!

Madeline joins him at the fountain and grabs his arm excitedly.

MADELINE

She is?! Oh, these are the moments that make life worth living!

Throughout the following, Ernest runs around the house, turning off lights, pulling drapes, closing blinds.

ERNEST

My God, Madeline! That was horrible! That was brutal! And it was stupid! The police, Madeline, the police!

MADELINE

What are they going to do, give me the gas chamber? Big deal.

ERNEST

Life in prison, then! Do you know what that means for a person in your condition?

CONTINUED

MADELINE \*

You're so negative. Can't you for  
once just let me enjoy a moment?

ERNEST

What about that gunshot?! What  
if the neighbors ask questions?!

MADELINE

What neighbors? In twelve years in Los  
Angeles, have you ever seen a neighbor?

ERNEST \*

(frantic)

I have to think! One of us has to  
be rational!

MADELINE \*

I'm completely rational. We're going  
to bury her, Ernest. In Death Valley.  
You and me.

ERNEST \*

I'll do no such thing!

MADELINE \*

Oh no? That's pretty strong talk for  
a murderer on the run. Let's face it,  
Ernest, that's exactly what you are.  
What if the police were to receive an  
anonymous phone call about you and found  
me upstairs, dead? If anybody can play  
dead, Ernest, it's me. What would you  
tell them? I'm sure you'd be very popular  
in prison.

ERNEST \*

I'll get the shovels.

He runs to the tools Helen brought and struggles to lift them  
up. He staggers back out onto the terrace with them.

MADELINE \*

And she even paid for the hardware.  
Don't you just love it?

Ernest drops all the burial supplies next to the fountain and  
starts to unfurl the roll of plastic. He looks up at  
Madeline, who is staring at Helen, happy as can be.

CONTINUED

ERNEST

Help me! I'm not going to be your accomplice all by myself!

She starts to help him. Both of them turn and bend over the plastic, their backs to Helen.

MADELINE

Well, today certainly shaped up in a hurry, didn't it?

Behind them, Helen slowly stands up in the fountain. She's dripping wet, and with a big, blackened, see-all-the-way-through hole in the middle of her stomach. She towers over Madeline and Ernest, who are spreading the tarp out in front of the fountain, their backs to her.

MADELINE (cont.)

(to Ernest)

Did you ever notice how some days can start out so shitty and then all of a sudden something wonderful happens and your whole outlook just --

She turns to the fountain, to where Helen's body is. Or was. Instead of looking at the fountain, she's looking right through the hole in Helen's stomach. She looks slowly up, at Helen, who glowers down at her, hands on her hips.

Madeline freezes, her jaw dropping open.

MADELINE (cont.)

-- changes.

HELEN

(furious)

That was totally uncalled for!

Ernest whips around, sees Helen, and SCREAMS. His knees go out on him and he BANGS to the floor in a sitting position. Madeline backs quickly away from Helen and trips over him, falling to the floor as well.

Helen starts to climb out of the fountain. Ernest and Madeline scramble away from her, across the floor, trying to get up.



HELEN (cont.)

Ernest! Look at me! Just look at me!  
I'm soaking wet!

ERNEST

And there's a little problem with your  
-- your -- tights.

HELEN

(looks down)

Don't sugarcoat it, Ernest! I've  
got a hole in my stomach!

ERNEST

It's another miracle!

Madeline, finally regaining herself, stands up.

MADELINE

It is not!

(to Helen)

You fraud! Forty-eight miles a day,  
my ass!

She walks over to Helen and flips back her collar, revealing  
a shining siempre viva pin just like her own.

MADELINE (cont.)

This is your beauty book, this  
is your secret! You took the potion!

She RIPS the pin off Helen's collar.

HELEN

How do you know about it?!

(eyes widening)

You took the potion too!

ERNEST

Took what?

HELEN

That's why you look the way you  
do! And you are dead!

MADELINE

(French accent)

"A very select group." Hah! Some selection, if they let you in!

HELEN

What do you mean "if they let me in?!" I took it in New York years ago, way before you!

ERNEST

What are you two talking about?!

MADELINE & HELEN

The potion!

ERNEST

What potion?

HELEN

I paid everything I had, and now look at me! I'm soaking wet!

MADELINE

(pointing to Helen's stomach)

Don't forget that.

HELEN

And I've got a hole in my stomach!

ERNEST

You both took a potion?

HELEN

Can you just try to keep up?

ERNEST

A Satanic potion?!

MADELINE

(to Helen)

Well, I hope that little hole in your stomach teaches you a lesson.

ERNEST

I don't think this is a miracle at all!

CONTINUED

MADELINE

(still to Helen)

You see what happens to people who  
obsess about their weight?

\*

Madeline giggles to herself and turns, walking away from  
Helen.

MADELINE (cont.)

And as a friend, let me just say I'd  
stay out of a bathing suit if I were  
you. People might call you a --

\*

CLANG!! Something big and heavy hits Madeline on the head  
from behind and she sails off her feet. Helen stands behind  
her, soaking wet, with a hole in her stomach, and holding one  
of her shovels.

Madeline stands up, her neck broken again, her head dangling  
over her back.

MADELINE (cont.)

I just fixed this!

She grabs her head by her hair and lifts it back into place,  
although her vertebrae have become hopelessly tangled again.  
Ernest claps his hands to his mouth in shock.

Helen goes to the fountain, grabs the other shovel, and  
tosses it to Madeline, a challenge.

\*

Madeline catches it with one hand.

HELEN

En garde, bitch.

\*

The women start to circle each other, wielding the shovels  
like broadswords.

HELEN (cont.)

Watch yourself, Madeline. You're  
not screwing with the same old Helen.

MADELINE

Did anyone?

\*

CONTINUED

81 CONTINUED

81

Ernest steps between them, the peacemaker.

ERNEST

Now, hold on, girls. Why don't we all just go into the kitchen, sit down, and have a really good --

\*

CLANG!!

Ernest ducks at the last second, as the women swing the shovels at each other, CLANGING them together just where his head was.

ERNEST (cont.)

Gee!

\*

MADELINE

(to Helen)

I thought you'd learned not to compete with me! I always win!

CLANG!

HELEN

You may have won, but you never played fair!

CLANG!

Ernest backs away from them, slowly, up the stairs. The women's shadows fall on the stairs around him as they pitch an unholy battle, SHOUTING, CLANGING the shovels off of each other, fighting like Vikings or something.

MADELINE (o.s.)

You're a sore loser! Who cares if I played fair, I won, period!

CLANG!

HELEN (o.s.)

Just because you could raise your legs higher and wider than anyone!

CLANG!

MADELINE (o.s.)

You mean better than anyone!

CONTINUED

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81 CONTINUED

81

Ernest reaches the top of the stairs and stops, staring down at them in horror as their shadows dance at his feet.

ERNEST  
(quietly)  
I'll be upstairs.

CUT TO:

82 - 102 OMITTED

82 - 102

102A INT MENVILLE THIRD FLOOR NIGHT

102A\*

While the CRASHING and CLANGING of the battle rages on downstairs, ERNEST, looking like a man at the end of his rope, silently trudges up to his third floor sanctuary. \*

CUT TO:

102B INT MENVILLE LIVING ROOM NIGHT

102B

Downstairs, the battle rages on. MADELINE swings at HELEN, misses, and her shovel CRACKS off in the middle of the handle. Realizing she has a spear now, she chucks it at Helen, but it sails through the hole in Helen's midsection and sticks in the sofa. Madeline does a double-take.

MADELINE  
Wait a minute! This is pointless!  
Nothing even hurts! We can't even  
cause each other pain!

HELEN  
Pain?!

She BOPS Madeline on top of the head with her shovel and Madeline's head disappears down between her shoulders.

HELEN (cont.)  
You want to talk about pain?! Bobby  
O'Brien! Scott Hunter! Ernest Menville!  
That's pain! I loved every one of  
them, and they loved me! They --

She stops, as Madeline, who has been struggling to re-seat her head on her shoulders while Helen was speaking, isn't really listening.

CONTINUED

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102B CONTINUED

102B

*Stop playing  
with your  
head!*

HELEN (cont.)

I will not speak to you until you  
put your head on straight.

Madeline finally succeeds.

HELEN (cont.)

(picking up where  
she left off)

They were all I had, and you took  
them away -- not because you loved  
them, not because you cared, but just  
to hurt me! You hurt me on purpose!

MADELINE

That's not true!

HELEN

Liar!

MADELINE

You were the one that attacked me!

HELEN

Me?!

MADELINE

Did you think I was blind? Did you  
think I was deaf?! Do you think I never  
heard what you and your snotty little  
friends said about me behind my back?  
You thought I was cheap, didn't you?

HELEN

Oh, ~~please! You're insane!~~ *that's ridiculous!*

MADELINE

Then how come you never once invited  
me to a party at your parents' place?!

HELEN

We didn't think you'd feel comfortable!  
It just wasn't -- could you stop that?

Madeline's head has drooped again, forward this time, her  
chin banging into her sternum. Annoyed, Madeline yanks it  
back up.

CONTINUED

HELEN (cont.)  
 (continuing)  
 It just wasn't usual for us to have --

MADELINE (cont.)  
 -- trash in the house! Say it!

HELEN  
 You're avoiding the issue! You stole  
 my boyfriends to hurt me on purpose!

MADELINE  
 I did not!

HELEN  
 Admit it!

MADELINE  
 You admit it! Look ~~me~~ in the eye  
 and tell me -- you thought I was cheap!

HELEN  
 (looks her in the eye)  
 Okay. I thought you were cheap.

MADELINE  
 Well, I hurt you on purpose.

There is a long pause while they both digest this information, deciding what to do with it. Madeline chews her lip, absolutely agonizing over the next words that are to come out of her mouth.

MADELINE (cont.)  
 And -- I'm -- sorry.

Helen looks at her, truly surprised, but doesn't reciprocate. Madeline just stares at her, waiting.

HELEN  
 (with equal difficulty)  
 I'm -- sorry too.

And just like that, the air goes out of their feud. They drop their shovels and drop onto the couch in relief, on opposite ends.

*^ make you cry<sup>u</sup> line?*

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102B CONTINUED

102B

There is a long pause while they take stock of their situations. Helen looks down at the hole in her stomach. She sees she has inadvertantly leaned back against the shovel \* handle, which is now protruding through her midsection. \* Madeline finds a decorative African neck piece and wedges it \* down over her own head, so that it supports her neck.

Helen pulls the shovel handle out morosely and starts to cry. \*

MADELINE \*

Hey, don't do that.

Helen continues to cry, a little harder now. She's not the driven Helen she used to be, she's more like the mousy Helen she was years ago. Madeline slides down the sofa, closer to her, and puts an arm around her.

Madeline takes a glass of water from the table next to her and hands it to Helen.

MADELINE (cont.) \*

Hell, honey. What's wrong?

Helen takes the water and looks at her in disbelief.

HELEN \*

What's wrong? Look at me!

She stands up.

HELEN (cont.) \*

For twelve years, I put every ounce of energy I had into hating you. All I wanted was you dead, all I wanted was revenge. Well, now I've got it. But it just feels -- hollow.

She drinks the water, which almost immediately drips out the hole in her stomach. She watches it, starting to sob now.

MADELINE \*

(of the water)

Oh, come on. It'll wipe up.

HELEN \*

I don't care about that! I have a hole in my stomach! What am I supposed to do!?

CUT TO:



A scalpel THUNKS into the wall a few feet to the right of Ernest's still unmolested dart board. Ernest sits morosely in a chair opposite, staring at the dart board vacantly. He gets up and goes to retrieve the scalpels, but he stops in the middle of the motion, as if struck by a thought. His eyes widen and a faint smile crosses his lips as the shadows of the two women fall on the wall on either side of him. \*

MADELINE (o.s.)

Ernest?

Ernest turns. MADELINE and HELEN are standing in the doorway, arms around one another. They're completely different now -- pals, girlfriends.

MADELINE

Helen and I want to apologize for our little quarrel. It's out of our systems now. Completely gone. Honest.

HELEN

And thank God! It was awful, hating her, envying her at the same time --

MADELINE

You envied me? I envied you!

ERNEST

Excuse me --

HELEN

You did not! Did you?! What -- specifically -- about me did you envy?

MADELINE

Well, your gradepoint, for one.

HELEN

No kidding?!

ERNEST

Excuse me!

(they look at him)

I just want to tell you both that I've come to a very important, long overdue decision. I'm leaving. \*

As if to reinforce that, he takes the dart board down and tucks it under his arm. \*

CONTINUED

14 Nov 91

102C CONTINUED

102C

MADELINE

Leaving? What do you mean, leaving?

HELEN

We need you!

MADELINE

I promised Helen you'd fix her!

HELEN

And Maddie needs work too!  
(to Madeline)  
You can go first if you want, sweetie.

MADELINE

Thanks, hon!  
(to Ernest)  
Please? For old times' sake?

They look at him plaintively. He speaks quietly, with unaccustomed determination.

ERNEST

On one condition. When I'm done -- I go. You won't ask me where. You won't look for me. You won't even think of me. Ever again.

MADELINE

I have no problem with that.  
(to Helen)  
Do you?

HELEN

(shrugs)  
Not any more.

CUT TO:

103 OMITTED

103 \*

103A EXT MENVILLE MANSION DAY

103A

Another beautiful Beverly Hills morning. An automated garbage truck picks up a garbage can from in front of the Menville mansion and dumps the contents -- hundreds of spray paint cans and other of Ernest's working supplies.

CUT TO:

16 Dec 91

103B INT            MADELINE'S BEDROOM            DAY            103B\*

MADELINE and HELEN, fully restored and in their underwear, are admiring themselves in a full-length mirror.

MADELINE

Amazing, isn't he? Not a blemish.  
Not a pore.

HELEN

Say what you like about Ernest, the  
man is a genius. \*

Madeline notices something on Helen's arm and reaches over to flick it away. Whatever it was doesn't seem to flick, so Madeline scratches at it with her nail. A chunk of paint comes up, and before Madeline realizes it, she's pulled off a huge strip of Helen's flesh-tone paint, revealing a large patch of gray skin underneath. \*

MADELINE

Ooops. \*

HELEN

(noticing)  
Oh my God. \*

MADELINE

I am so sorry. I shouldn't have  
messed with it. It must have still  
been wet. \*

HELEN

(panicky)  
Can Ernest fix it? \*

MADELINE

I'm sure he can. I'll catch him  
before he leaves. \*

She turns for the door.

HELEN

Wait a minute. What if this happens  
again? What if it fades? What if  
it rains? Do you think Ernest will  
come back for touch-ups?! \*

30 Jan 92

103B CONTINUED

103B

MADELINE

Well, even if he did, he's not going to live forever.

A thought hits them at the same time. They look at each other.

CUT TO:

104 INT ERNEST'S CLOSET DAY 104 \*

ERNEST is in his closet. There's an open suitcase on the island, which he is rapidly filling. He empties one drawer and finds a picture of himself with Helen, the one he looked at before. He throws it and a framed picture of Madeline into a wastebasket. \*

He turns and sees MADELINE and HELEN standing in the doorway.

They have a neatly prepared glass of scotch on a tray that they hold in front of them, so invitingly that there must be something wrong with it.

MADELINE

Hello, Ernest.

ERNEST

Is my cab here?

HELEN

Not yet. We thought you might like some breakfast. BBH 04

He doesn't answer, just GRUNTS, shoving more stuff into his suitcase. Helen takes the drink from the tray and sets it on the dresser next to him. \*

ERNEST

You know, I was just thinking, I was questioning myself, I was wondering. Why didn't I pack this thing and leave five, six, ten years ago? Why did I stay and suffer every indignity, every humiliation?

He latches the suitcase, picks up the drink, and raises it to his lips. Helen and Madeline lean forward, but he stops short, with a thought.

CONTINUED

ERNEST (cont.)

It was because I'd made a promise.  
That meant everything to me.

He BANGS the drink down and heads for the door.

HELEN

Ernest! Your drink!

She picks it up and they follow him.

IN THE HALLWAY,

\*

Ernest races ahead, the women behind him, Helen with the drink. He stops and turns around sharply, pointing at them.

ERNEST (cont.)

Do you know what you call those guys  
who stick to their word, no matter  
what? I do.

Not missing a beat, Helen slips the drink into his extended hand. He barely notices, continuing his thought.

ERNEST (cont.)

Idiots.

He turns and walks again, this time with the drink. They follow. He walks and talks, gesturing wildly with the drink, spilling most of it.

\*

ERNEST (cont.)

Well, from now on, I'm going to be the  
idiot I want to be, an idiot with  
a modicum of pride. Because I finally  
realized I lived up to my promise.  
"Till death do us part," I said.

From out in front of the house, a car HONKS. Ernest brightens.

ERNEST (cont.)

Well, darlings -- you're dead. And  
I'm parting.

16 Dec 91

104 CONTINUED

104

Almost as an afterthought, he raises the glass to his lips. The women lean forward in anticipation, but Ernest stops, looking at the drink as if with new eyes.

ERNEST (cont.)

And you know what else? I drink too much.

\*

He turns and dumps the drink into a nearby plant.

Madeline and Helen look at each other, desperate. Ernest nods to them and turns to go down the stairs.

Madeline looks to her right. There are two antique vases on a table next to her. She picks one up and BASHES Ernest over the head with it.

Ernest doesn't go down, just turns and faces her, woozy, confused.

ERNEST (cont.)

What?

Helen picks up the other base and BASHES that one over his head too.

Ernest pitches forward and falls to the carpet.

As he blacks out, the women lean over him, blurry and out of focus.

HELEN

Sorry, sweetheart!

MADELINE

You'll thank us later! Really!

Everything goes black.

CUT TO:

14 Nov 91

105 INT POOL ROOM NIGHT

105

Everything remains black for a moment. There is only a strange, gentle LAPPING sound in the dark, like someone taking lazy laps in a swimming pool.

ERNEST opens his eyes. He squints, trying to orient himself. At first he sees only steam, but in a moment it clears and he sees --

-- LISLE VON RHUMANS, rising up out of an indoor pool, completely naked. She comes up some steps, out of the shallow end of the pool, but it seems like she's floating out of it. Her body is perfect, hard, tempting as hell, and she's staring straight at Ernest, who's sitting in a chair, groggy, dressed in a tuxedo. He touches it, confused. \*

Ernest looks around. He's in some sort of subterranean pool room. Overhead is a huge stained glass window, a replica of Michelangelo's "Creation" painted on it.

He looks back at Lisle. Every time she takes a step forward, a beam of light materializes above her, lighting her perfectly, as if someone were flicking a switch every time she took a step.

Ernest turns and looks to the door, where one of the Beefy Guys is, in fact, flicking a switch every time she takes a step. He's at a small circuit breaker box with many rows of tiny switches and one big green and red one at the end.

Two other BEEFY GUYS swoop up next to Lisle and blot her dry with large powder puffs before draping a robe over her. She gestures to Ernest's tuxedo. \*

CONTINUED

LISLE

I hope you don't mind. Dick and Harry dressed you. You were improperly attired for the occasion.

ERNEST

Who are you?

LISLE

An admirer. How old do you think I am, Dr. Menville?

(he shrugs)

I'm more than six hundred years old.

ERNEST

You -- you -- you -- what do you want with me?

LISLE

To talk, for the moment. Like colleagues. You're a creator. A restorer. An artist. So am I. In fact, I've even finished a few of your early works for you.

ERNEST

You sound like you're trying to sell me something.

She smiles. She sits on a chair next to him. Her robe falls open a bit too much. Ernest swallows.

LISLE

No, Dr. Menville. Not you. To you, I would like to give a gift. The gift of life and youth. Forever.

She opens the wooden potion case, which is on a small table between them. Ernest looks at the silvery potion inside. He looks back up at Lisle.

LISLE (cont.)

I saw your wife and -- friend. You did brilliant work. You're a genius. You're a God.

She notices he's looking at her breasts but does nothing to cover them. She reaches out and puts her hand on his face.

CONTINUED



LISLE (cont.)

My dream is to have a world full of Ernest Menvilles. But instead, look what I've had to settle for.

(contemptuously)

Movie people. The real triumphs always refused me -- Shakespeare, Lincoln, Max Factor -- all of them were too selfish. They would deprive this world of their magic. So I deprived them of this world.

ERNEST

You killed them!

LISLE

I can't stand rejection. It's a fault, I know.

Ernest looks around, suddenly realizing he's in danger. The Beefy Guys have moved in a little closer and are definitely looking menacing.

LISLE (cont.)

Show me your hands.

(he hesitates)

Come on, I won't bite.

Ernest holds out his shaking hands. Lisle sighs sadly.

LISLE (cont.)

Tch, tch, tch.

She takes his right hand in hers. Moving quickly, she slides the dagger out of the potion case and slits his index finger.

ERNEST

Hey!

Lisle dips the dagger in the potion and drips it into Ernest's cut.

ERNEST (cont.)

What are you -- ?

LISLE

I'm loving you. Look.

Ernest looks down. Sure enough, his left hand is still aged and shaking, but his right hand is youthful, steady as a rock. He looks at Lisle, his eyes swollen with tears.

CONTINUED

ERNEST

My God!

LISLE

Thank you.

She stands up and moves around behind his chair, whispering in his ear seductively.

LISLE (cont.)

But don't be modest. That's what you do, isn't it? It's what you've always done. Stopped time in people's hands, in their faces. You're Don Quixote, tilting at nature's windmill.

She picks up the vial of the potion and holds it out to Ernest.

LISLE (cont.)

Go on. This is your chance to finally beat her. Drink it.

He takes the vial. He holds it up. The light from the pool seems to shimmer off of it. Another light shines on his face. He looks down. It's the light reflecting off the dagger, on the table next to him.

He looks to Lisle. He looks to the potion. He looks at the Beefy Guys, only ten feet away, ready to do Lisle's bidding.

LISLE (cont.)

It's the completion of your life's work.

Ernest is sweating now, absolutely ripped apart inside. He raises the potion toward his lips with his shaking left hand.

LISLE (cont.)

(a whisper)  
Drink!

The potion is a few inches from his lips.

LISLE (cont.)

"Siempre viva!"

The bottle touches his lower lip. He starts to tilt the bottom of the vial up, the potion slides back toward his tongue --

CONTINUED

LISLE (cont.)

"Live forever!"

-- and he stops right there, a thought crushing down on him. He turns and looks at Lisle.

ERNEST

But -- then what?

Lisle just looks at him, confused, as if no one's ever asked that question before.

LISLE

What?

And with that Ernest grabs the dagger off the table, turns, and ZINGS it across the room, scoring a perfect bullseye in the red button in the circuit breaker box. Sparks CRACK and the pool room is plunged into darkness. The Beefy Guys SHOUT in alarm, but Ernest moves fast, grabbing the potion, capping it, and tearing out the door.

BEEFY GUY 1

Get him! GET HIM!!

Lisle just stands there, calm as ever, as lightning flashes. \*

LISLE

Relax. He won't get far. Not at his age.

CUT TO:

106 INT CORRIDOR NIGHT

106

ERNEST races down a windowless corridor, away from the pool room. He runs blindly, no idea where he is or where he's going. It's like a labyrinth here, under Lisle's mansion. Behind him, he can hear VOICES and FOOTSTEPS as the Beefy Guys give chase.

Ernest takes a left, then two rights, then a little jog to the left. He stops, to catch his breath. He doesn't hear the footsteps anymore, but he still hears the PEOPLE, only now it sounds like a hell of a lot more of them.

He's terrified. Up ahead, he sees a narrow staircase. He sprints up it. At the top, he has no more options, there is only a single doorway. He opens it.

CUT TO:

12 Feb 92

107 INT BALLROOM NIGHT

107

NOISE and light wash over ERNEST. He's standing in the middle of Lisle von Rhumans' enormous gothic ballroom --

-- and she's having a party.

A big party. There are probably five hundred people here, all gorgeous and wealthy-looking. There are huge, artificial siempre viva plants ringing the edges of the room, and every single guest has a replica of the flower that they wear on their lapel.

Ernest swallows and moves forward into the crowd, trying to blend in. The door he came out of opens again and the three BEEFY GUYS tumble out. They search the crowd, looking for Ernest, but all they see is an ocean of tuxedos.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROWD,

Ernest is wandering around in an absolute daze. It's not just that the people at the party are attractive, they're famous, too --

-- and most of them died years ago.

GRETA GARBO is there, in her prime, not one day older than the day she retired, talking to MARILYN MONROE while ANDY WARHOL looks on. Ernest sort of circles around them, wide-eyed, trying to smooth out the wrinkles in his face.

From the front of the room, a VOICE speaks over a public address system.

VOICE (o.s.)

Welcome, everyone!

The crowd bursts into applause. Ernest looks. JEAN PAUL CHAGALL is up on the second floor landing with a microphone.

CHAGALL (cont.)

Lisle will be down in just two more minutes!

Everyone APPLAUDS again.

CHAGALL (cont.)

In the meantime, I do have just a few announcements while we wait.

OBH00 4 \*

CONTINUED

12 Feb 92

107 CONTINUED

107

Ernest looks around, panicky, searching for a way out. He spots a large staircase at the other end of the room, leading to the exit. He starts to move toward it, trying like hell to walk at a normal pace so as not to attract attention.

CHAGALL (cont.)

First, I must remind all of you who staged your own deaths of our strict policy against popping up in public to grab a few headlines. I won't name names, you know who you are.

\*

Everyone turns and looks at Ernest. He stops in his tracks, terrified --

-- then turns and looks behind him, at who the crowd is really looking at. It's ELVIS PRESLEY, slimmed down, looking like he did before the Vegas show period, with a stunning BLONDE on his arm. Presley looks away, embarrassed.

ACROSS THE ROOM,

MADLINE and HELEN follow the gaze of the crowd toward Presley and see Ernest.

HELEN

Look! It's Ernest!

MADLINE

(squinting at him)

He still looks like hell. I don't think she gave him the good stuff.

CHAGALL (o.s.)

(continuing from the front)

For those of you who are on the installment plan, payment envelopes will be available before you leave --

\*

Helen looks down and sees Ernest clutching the potion bottle in his hand.

HELEN

He didn't take it at all! He's still got it!

DBH004

CONTINUED

MADELINE

Oh, shit.

They watch as Ernest edges his way toward the stairs at the front of the room. They move with him, keeping pace from across the room, also trying not to attract attention.

BACK WITH ERNEST,

he keeps moving, nodding and smiling nervously to people, fighting back panic.

CHAGALL (o.s.)

Please, keep your accounts current; enforced collection is beneath us all. Kruggerands are still the preferred method of payment, with precious gems or works of art by acknowledged masters also acceptable. If you pay in cash, please remember, contemporary currencies only.

\*

Ernest is only a few yards from the stairs now. He keeps moving, his heart beating wildly, as Chagall drones on from the landing.

CHAGALL (cont.)

One sad note for you Americans -- due to continued deterioration we can no longer accept dollars.

\*

There are some GROANS in the crowd.

UP ON THE LANDING,

Ernest is heading up the stairs and into the foyer when someone taps Chagall on the shoulder and whispers in his ear.

CHAGALL (cont.)

Ah! Everyone please come forward, Lisle will be down any second!

\*

There is a great deal of hubbub as everyone crowds forward, gathering under the landing. Ernest moves faster, across the foyer, the front door in his sights, his escape imminent.

CHAGALL (cont.)

Will the gentlemen please seal the room!

\*

CONTINUED

There are loud CLUNKING and LATCHING sounds as several Beefy Guys go around locking the doors and windows. Ernest steps on it, but he's too late -- a Beefy Guy at the front SLAMS a security gate into place, locking the door. \*

Ernest spins away, hiding his frustration, eyes darting wildly, searching for another way out. He barely has time to think when he hears a WHIRRING sound coming from the other side of the foyer. He looks across and sees a small door on the side of the foyer with a tiny window in it, around eye height. Light shines through the window, descending, as an elevator arriving. \*

Ernest ducks into an alcove and peers around the corner as the elevator door opens and LISLE steps out, flanked by two of her BEEFY GUYS. \*

Ernest presses himself into the alcove, hiding as she sweeps across the foyer and takes her place on the landing. The entire crowd APPLAUDS, long and loud, as she acknowledges them, waving like the pope or something.

Ernest looks behind her, at the elevator, which is still on this floor, waiting. He swallows.

LISLE  
(to the crowd)  
Look at yourselves! Just -- look  
at yourselves!!

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROWD,

While the crowd lustily APPLAUDS and CHEERS Lisle again, Madeline and Helen, at the front, peer up into the foyer, looking for Ernest.

Suddenly, Madeline grabs Helen's arm and points behind Lisle. Ernest is there, tiptoeing behind her, sneaking across the foyer to the elevator.

LISLE (cont.)  
(to the crowd, as  
the applause dies)  
Let me tell you a joke Dick Clark  
told me this morning --

Madeline and Helen watch, frozen, as Ernest slips into the elevator.

DBH004 \*

12 Feb 92

107A IN THE ELEVATOR,

107A

Ernest pulls the door shut behind him and turns around. There's no wall panel, only three small levers on the floor. He steps on one of them. There is a low CHUNG! sound and the elevator starts to move. Up.

107AA IN THE CROWD,

107AA

LISLE

-- to which the man replies, "Don't ask me, I thought it was silicone!"

\*

The crowd LAUGHS uproariously.

Madeline and Helen watch as the light in the door of the elevator ascends.

HELEN

He's going up?

\*

MADELINE

Idiot. Come on.

\*

107AAA IN THE ELEVATOR,

107AAA

Ernest barely has time to celebrate his escape when the elevator CLUNKS to a stop and the door swings open.

107B ON THE UPPER FLOOR,

107B

Ernest steps out and sizes up his surroundings. He's on the upper floor now, the sound of the party far below him.

Looking for somewhere to hide, he sees an open door ahead, at the end of the hall. It's weird inside whatever room that is; there's an ornate bed post visible and a strange, glowing light. Ernest takes one step toward it and --

-- LISLE'S DOGS step out of the room and into the hallway.

Ernest freezes. The dogs stare at him, larger and more bizarre than ever. Ernest takes one step back. The dogs take one step forward.

The elevator WHIRRS again. Ernest tugs on the door, but it's locked, the elevator gone back down.

The dogs GROWL.

CONTINUED



12 Feb 92

107B CONTINUED

107B

Ernest wipes the sweat from his brow, desperate, and then he gets an idea.

He runs.

Down the hall the other way, as fast as he can, an ugly, gasping, spitting sprint. The dogs take off after him, quick, sleek, and scary.

Ernest turns a corner and finds himself in a dead end, an alcove with just a steep metal staircase that leads to a door in the ceiling. He flings himself on the staircase and starts up, but now the dogs are around the corner and leaping at him, SNAPPING and GROWLING.

Ernest flings open the metal door in the ceiling and sees stars above. He tries to pull himself through, but one of the dogs sinks its teeth into the back of his jacket, tugging him down a few steps. Desperate, Ernest shrugs out of the jacket, throws himself through the open doorway in the ceiling, and CLANGS it shut on the dogs.

CUT TO:

DEKHO 4

12 Dec 91

108 EXT ROOF NIGHT

108

ERNEST turns and finds himself on the flat roof of Lisle's mansion. He staggers a little, blown by the wind, which is stiff as hell up here, on top of the world. In every direction, Ernest can see forever, the whole of Los Angeles is spread out far below.

A spring storm is on the way; thunder RUMBLES and lightning flashes.

ERNEST  
Well, that helped.

Ernest looks around, knowing he doesn't have much time. He runs to one end of the roof and looks down, over the edge.

It's a sheer drop, down the side of the house and straight down a limitless cliff.

ERNEST (cont.)  
Oh boy.

\*

He turns and looks around, growing panicky. He spots a garden trellis that comes all the way up to the top of the roof on the other side. He runs to it.

He leans over that edge and looks straight down, into pitch black. But at least the trellis goes all the way, at least all the way that he can see before it's lost in the black.

A door opens behind him. Ernest whirls.

MADLINE and HELEN come out the door to the roof and head toward him.

\*

ERNEST (cont.)  
Stay away!

He shakily starts to climb down the garden trellis.

MADLINE  
(annoyed)  
Ernest!

DEHOOD  
CONTINUED

HELEN

You're embarrassing us!

The top board of the trellis CRACKS under Ernest's weight. He slips down several boards, SMASHING through each of them, before coming to rest on a tough one.

He heaves a sigh of relief.

But his reprieve is only temporary. Now the trellis breaks all the way, practically splitting down the middle. Ernest spins, still holding onto half of it, and SLAMS into the rain gutter, hard.

The trellis breaks away beneath him and falls into the black. Ernest doesn't fall, as his suspenders have hooked onto the rain gutter.

Ernest looks down, at his feet, dangling over the inky black.

Madeline, Helen, and the Beefy Guys rush forward to grab him, but the steel plate holding one end of the rain gutter RIPS out of the concrete.

The end of the gutter swings out, away from the building, dangling Ernest out six or seven feet away, held there by his suspenders, like a marionette.

ERNEST

Oh, my.

He looks at the side of the house. The other end of the rain gutter is held in by a steel plate with four bolts in it, one in each corner.

HELEN

Ernest! Give me your hand!

She goes to the edge of the roof and reaches out, but Ernest is much too far away.

Ernest looks back to the steel plate. One of the bolts CRUNCHES out of the wall. The gutter shudders, almost spilling Ernest.

MADELINE

Ernest! Do you still have the potion?! Do you have it?!

CONTINUED

Ernest's eyes light up. He fumbles in his pocket and pulls out the potion bottle.

HELEN

Drink it! You can put yourself together again!

\*

Ernest spins the cap off.

MADELINE

Drink it! You'll die otherwise!

Ernest looks at the potion. He looks at the steel plate. The second of the four bolts SNAPS out of the concrete. The gutter shakes again, and this time bends, dangerously close to falling.

HELEN

It's your only chance! Drink it!

\*

MADELINE

Drink it!

\*

HELEN

DRINK IT!!

\*

The third bolt ZINGS out of the concrete, almost hitting Ernest. Only one bolt left.

Ernest looks at Madeline and Helen, looking at him, desperate. A strange, peaceful look crosses his face.

ERNEST

I'm sorry, dears.

MADELINE & HELEN

What?!

The fourth bolt GROANS, pulling out of the concrete about halfway.

ERNEST

Tell them -- tell all the monsters  
I created -- I'm so sorry.

He caps the bottle again, holds it out --

-- and deliberately lets go of it. It falls, for a long time, before there is the faroff sound of glass SHATTERING.

CONTINUED

23 Sept 91

108 CONTINUED

108

Ernest looks up at Madeline and Helen for the last time, and then the bolt rips free. The gutter falls. So does Ernest. The last thing he hears is the faroff SCREAMS of Madeline and Helen as he tumbles into the black abyss, down, down, a seemingly endless fall.

Just before he hits, there is a sudden FLASH as lights go on beneath him, illuminating something right in front of him, something he's going to slam into.

A stained glass window. Michelangelo's "Creation." Ernest covers his face as he SMASHES through the window --

CUT TO:

109 INT POOL ROOM NIGHT

109

-- and PLUNGES into Lisle's swimming pool in a shower of glass. He hits the water hard, his fall broken, but he still SMACKS the bottom of the swimming pool pretty hard.

But not too hard. He opens his eyes and sees something floating in the water next to him, something silvery and shiny. It's the potion bottle, unbroken, still corked. Ernest grabs it and swims to the top, bursting out and GASPING for air. He looks up at the window he crashed through. He looks over to the door.

JIM MORRISON is standing at the circuit breaker box. He holds Lisle's dagger, which he has just pulled out of the circuit breaker box. A half-clad BLONDE GROUPIE stands next to him, ready for a swim. \*

MORRISON

You gonna be done soon or what? \*

ERNEST \*

Yes!

(waving the potion bottle)

And so are all of you!

CUT TO:

110 EXT LISLE'S MANSION NIGHT

110

ERNEST runs down the hill from Lisle's mansion, SLOGGING as he goes. He hurries up to the valet parking area, where a '55 racing Porsche has been brought around.

CONTINUED

110 CONTINUED

5 Dec 91

110

Ernest shoves JAMES DEAN away from the driver's side, jumps in, and GUNS the engine, racing out of there.

DEAN

Hey!

111 UP AT THE HOUSE,

111

MADELINE, HELEN, and LISLE come out the front door, watching Ernest drive away. Madeline and Helen are in Lisle's wake, following her like disobedient children.

LISLE

He still has the potion. It will be better for both of you if you get it back.

MADELINE

(rolls her eyes)

What are you going to do?

HELEN

Kill us?

LISLE

(simply)

Bury you.

Madeline and Helen look at each other, not at all pleased.

CUT TO:

112 EXT DOMINICK'S NIGHT

112

The Porsche SCREECHES to a halt outside Dominick's, Ernest's neighborhood bar.

CUT TO:

113 INT DOMINICK'S NIGHT

113

It's late, and the place is empty -- except for the same comatose DRUNK at the end. The door SLAPS open and ERNEST bursts in, looking wild, looking for Toni, his regular bartender, but she's not behind the bar.

ERNEST

(panicky)

Toni?!

CONTINUED

5 Dec 91

113 CONTINUED

113

TONI (o.s.)

Hey, Dr. M!

Ernest whirls around. It's TONI, who was wiping off a table \*  
in the corner.

ERNEST

Toni!

TONI

(going behind the bar)  
You know, you don't look so good.  
Everything okay?

ERNEST

They're after me, Toni! They're  
after me and they won't rest until  
they catch me!

(leaning forward,  
confidentially)

They're all around us, you know.

TONI

Who is?

She pours a cup of coffee and puts it in front of him.

ERNEST

It sounds crazy, I know. Don't  
ask me to explain.

(holds out the  
potion bottle)

You would never believe the horror  
that surrounds us in this city!

TONI

Is Madeline involved?

ERNEST

Yes!

TONI

I believe every word.

He drinks the coffee, without thinking about it. He makes a  
face when he tastes it.

CONTINUED

ERNEST  
Is this coffee?

\*

TONI  
(holding the pot)  
Should I make it a double?

\*

ERNEST  
Yeah.

\*

She fills the cup, and he holds onto it like it's all he's got in the world.

CUT TO:

114 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

114

HELEN and MADELINE burst in the front door of the mansion.

HELEN  
Ernest?!

MADELINE  
Ernest! Come down here right this minute!

HELEN  
He wouldn't come here! This is a waste of time! No one would come back here, it's idiotic!

They look at each other for a second.

HELEN (cont.)  
I'll take this floor, you look upstairs.

CUT TO:

115 INT BAR NIGHT

115

ERNEST has one hand wrapped around his cup of coffee, the other hand wrapped around the potion bottle, which he holds out to Toni.

ERNEST  
Listen carefully. If anything happens to me -- and I'm afraid it's going to -- just get this bottle to the Times. Tell them to analyze it. They'll know what to do.

CONTINUED



TONI

But --

ERNEST

Do you promise?! 

TONI

I promise. But you have to promise me something. For once in your life, you have to take care of yourself! Don't just sit here! If they're after you, you've got to go to the police, or run, or -- something!

ERNEST

It's no use. No matter where I go, they'll find me. I couldn't just disappear, I'd have to die. Die and be reborn. You tell me, Toni -- how could anyone possibly do that?

Down at the end of the bar, the Drunk suddenly sits bolt upright, raising his finger as if he has a terrific idea.

Ernest and Toni look at him.

ERNEST (cont.)

Yes?

Instead of speaking, the Drunk turns completely red, makes one sound --

DRUNK

ACK!

-- and falls forward, his face hitting the bar with a loud CLUNK, his toupee falling off.

Ernest bolts out of his chair and goes to him.

TONI

Is he all right?!

Ernest turns the Drunk over and puts his fingers on the side of his neck, feeling for a pulse.

ERNEST

My God!

CONTINUED

TONI  
What?

ERNEST  
He's dead!

TONI  
Dead?!

ERNEST  
All dead! Extremely dead!

TONI  
Are you sure?!

ERNEST  
I've had some experience in these matters.

TONI  
My God! The poor man!

ERNEST  
I'll call the police.

He heads for the phone.

ERNEST (cont.)  
Do you know his next of kin?

Ernest picks up the phone.

TONI  
No, he had no family.

ERNEST  
No wife?

TONI  
No possessions --

ERNEST  
No wife.

They are both struck by the same thought. They look at the Drunk, then at each other. Ernest hangs up the phone.

*You call his wife*  
*You know what wife? He's got <sup>no</sup> family.*  
*Idea Nobody at all?*  
*Nobody.*

115 CONTINUED

27 Feb 92

115

ERNEST (cont.)  
Well -- I've always admired him.

TONI  
I think he would have wanted it this way.

CUT TO:

116 INT MENVILLE MANSION NIGHT

116

MADELINE and HELEN meet in the foyer.

MADELINE  
Well?

HELEN  
Nothing. You?

MADELINE  
Nothing.

HELEN  
All right. Let's be logical. If you were Ernest and you'd been through what he's been through, what's the first thing you would do?

They turn at the same time and look at the liquor cart. They look at each other -- and bolt for the door.

CUT TO:

116A EXT BAR -- FRONT NIGHT

116A\*

Police cars are parked in front of the bar, lights flashing. \*

117 EXT BAR -- BACK NIGHT

117

TWO CORONERS wheel a gurney out of the bar, a sheet pulled up over a corpse. TONI follows the gurney, acting very upset, talking to a COP who has Ernest's wallet.

TONI  
(too helpful)  
It's Menville. M-E-N-V-I-L-L-E.

COP  
I can't seem to find any picture ID here. Just credit cards and so forth.

CONTINUED

TONI

Oh, I'm sure that's Dr. Menville.  
I've known him for ten years.

COP

Yeah, well, without ID I'll need  
a family member to look at the body.

At the end of the driveway, a car pulls up in front of the  
bar, SQUEALING to a halt. MADELINE and HELEN jump out. \*

COP (cont.)

Do you know his next of kin?

TONI

(mind racing)

Um, well -- I don't think Mrs. Menville --

MADELINE (o.s.)

(hurrying down the driveway)

Mrs. Menville, what?

TONI

(acting very well)

Oh, Mrs. Menville! I'm so sorry!  
It's poor Dr. Menville! He's --  
he's dead! I saw him die! Very  
clearly!

HELEN

Ernest?

MADELINE

(pointing to  
the body)

That's Ernest Menville?!

Toni nods, sobbing.

HELEN

He's dead? Ernest is dead!  
Everybody's dead!

COP

(to Madeline)

I'm sorry, ma'am. These are his  
personal possessions. His wallet  
his keys, everything he had on

Madeline quickly goes through the items, looking for the potion bottle.

MADELINE

This is it? This is all!?

COP

Uh -- yes ma'am.

HELEN

There was nothing else? Maybe in a pocket?

MADELINE

Like a little bottle -- about this big?

COP

I don't think so.

MADELINE

I want to see the body.

COP

Fine, we'll need you to identify it anyway.

TONI

(desperate)

No! It's ugly! He fell into the blender! I was making a margarita!

They ignore her, marching over to the body.

AROUND A CORNER,

ERNEST, crouching in the alley dressed in the Drunk's clothes, hears what's going on and panics. He looks down at the potion bottle that he clutches in his hand. He's torn. Making a decision, he leans out, around the corner, and HSSSTS. Toni turns. He cocks his arm to toss the bottle.

IN THE STREET,

Madeline has walked up next to the gurney. She reaches out and takes hold of the sheet with one hand. She starts to draw it back. In the background, we can see the potion bottle arc gracefully through the air, over everyone's heads, unseen by everyone except Toni, who catches it gracefully.

CONTINUED

25 March 92

117 CONTINUED

117

TONI

Wait a minute!

Madeline turns. She's holding the sheet up with one hand, clearly exposing the DRUNK's face, but she's looking back at Toni, who is holding the potion bottle out in front of her.

TONI (cont.)

Is this what you mean?

Madeline and Helen exchange a look. Madeline lets go of the sheet, which settles over the Drunk's face again.

Helen steps up to Toni.

HELEN

Yes, exactly. I'll take care of that.

Her hand closes around the potion bottle and she tugs it from Toni's unwilling hand. Madeline closes her eyes in relief and joins Helen.

COP

(still at the gurney)

Uh -- ma'am?

Madeline turns. For the first time, she realizes she is a grieving widow.

MADELINE

(theatrically)

Oh -- yes. Yes, that's my husband.

COP

Fine. You can claim the body tomorrow at the morgue.

MADELINE

The morgue?!

(thinks)

I'll send someone.

The Cop shrugs and goes to his car. Madeline and Helen come together, watching as the Coroners finish loading the body into the back of the ambulance. \*

CONTINUED

125A

25 March 92

117 CONTINUED

117

MADELINE

Well -- now it's just you and me,  
Hell.

\*

HELEN

Yep.

\*

A terrible thought sweeps across Helen's face as the doors of the ambulance SLAM. She turns her head, sneaking a look at Madeline that is full of dread.

HELEN (cont.)

Forever.

\*

The implications of eternity with Helen hit Madeline too, now, and she turns to Helen with the same look of dread on her face.

They stare at each other for a second, terrified, then try like hell to force smiles.

But they look a lot more like grimaces.

CUT TO:

118 INT BAR NIGHT

118

TONI comes back in the front door of the bar and closes it behind her. She turns and sees ERNEST, still dressed in the Drunk's clothes, standing in the doorway from the alley.

TONI

You did it. You got away with it.

ERNEST

They got away with it. Without  
that bottle, no one would ever believe  
me.

TONI

They'll get what's coming to them,  
Dr. M. Everybody does. Everybody.

He GRUNTS, staring out the doorway blankly, at the rain that has started to fall.

CONTINUED

*As I'm pucker'ing again. All the way  
to me I'M have to talk to Lisle.  
"He's no Ernest."  
"Who?"  
"You remember."*

5 Dec 91

118 CONTINUED

118

ERNEST

When do you think they'll realize  
that body isn't mine?

TONI

Not before you're far, far away.

ERNEST

And then what?

She looks at him, a look that is a combination of affection and sadness, because he seems already a million miles away from her, just staring out the open doorway at the rain.

CUT TO:

119 EXT SWISS STREET DAY

119

This is a small, quaint street somewhere in a village high in the Swiss Alps. There are no cars, and few signs of progress. Time doesn't seem to move much here. A legend:

SWITZERLAND, 27 YEARS LATER.

It's a beautiful spring day, late in the afternoon. MADELINE and HELEN are sitting on a cafe terrace that looks out over a park. They look exactly the same as they did twenty-seven years ago, exquisite. And they look bored to death.

HELEN

Do you want to go to London?

MADELINE

Again?

HELEN

Do you want to go to Paris?

MADELINE

I don't care.

HELEN

Do you want to go anywhere?

Madeline just looks at her.

MADELINE

What's the rush?

CONTINUED



Madeline looks out, into the park. An OLD COUPLE are in the park with a picnic basket. They're spreading out a blanket, putting out food, moving slowly, awkwardly, like old people.

MADELINE (cont.)

Look at that couple.  
(Helen doesn't answer)  
Look at them!

HELEN

I am looking at them.

MADELINE

God, they're old. Pathetic, aren't they?  
(Helen doesn't answer)  
Huh?!

HELEN

Yeah. Pathetic.

She looks at Madeline, then at herself, then back at the Couple. There is almost a look of longing in her eyes as she watches them struggle with their tired limbs.

HELEN (cont.)

Pathetic.

120 OUT IN THE PARK,

120

the Old Couple are sitting on the blanket now, leaning against each other. The food and wine are laid out in front of them, but it's each other they admire, in love. They're ERNEST and TONI, now in their late seventies, well-dressed, well-groomed. They smile warmly, the picture of happiness.

ERNEST

Hungry?

TONI

Starving.

She holds out her hand to him, and it's an old, wrinkled, liver-spotted hand. Ernest takes it with his left hand, which is every bit as old.

And then he covers it with his right hand. The hand of a twenty-five year old.

FADE OUT.

14 Nov 91

APPENDIX A  
scene from "Dark Windows," Madeline's early film

1 EXT LONDON FLAT DAY 1

MICHAEL CAINE comes up the steps to his London flat and goes inside.

2 INT HALLWAY DAY 2

MICHAEL comes in, closes the door behind him and notices the window over the door to his apartment is slightly ajar, and light is coming from inside. Cautious, he draws his gun and proceeds.

3 INT MICHAEL'S FLAT DAY 3

MICHAEL throws open the door and sweeps inside, revealing MADELINE, very 1965, who is standing next to the desk. She whirls and sees him, his gun pointed at her.

MADELINE

What are you doing here?!

Michael doesn't answer. Suddenly an INTRUDER steps out from the curtains behind Madeline, throws a scarf around her neck, and starts to choke her.

She flails, fights, and finally dies, collapsing to the ground at the Intruder's feet. The Intruder unwraps the scarf from her neck and rubs it softly between his fingers. He looks up to Michael.

INTRUDER

Nice scarf. Cashmere?

MICHAEL

(coldly)

My mother gave it to me for Christmas.

BANG! Without a flinch, Michael fires the gun, shooting the Intruder in the head. He drops to the carpet, dead, next to Madeline.

CUT TO: