

FULL BODY MESSAGE

an original screenplay

by Dan Gurskis

FULL BODY MASSAGE

FADE IN:

1 TITLE CARD #1 1

which reads:

"There is but one temple in the
Universe and that is the human
body. We touch heaven when we
lay our hand on it.

Thomas Carlyle, 1840"

DISSOLVE TO:

2 EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - HIGH ANGLE - DAY 2

A God's-eye view of a long, winding stream of traffic,
curling along the coastline, wrapping itself around the
Santa Monica Mountains, flowing north to who can say where.

Somewhere in the middle of it all, little more than a
droplet in the stream, is a CADILLAC ALLANTE CONVERTIBLE
with its top down.

CUT TO:

3 I./E. CADILLAC ALLANTE - MOVING - DAY 3

As the California sun beats brilliantly down, as the rush
of wind eddies and swirls inside the car, we take our place
directly behind the driver.

From here, there is little to be learned about the driver
other than the obvious fact that she is a woman. For a
moment, we see nothing of the world other than her wind-
blown hair billowing and curling. And so the mystery of
who she is and why we are traveling with her only deepens.

Then, abruptly, VARIOUS CUTS of her hands on the wheel, of
the speedometer, of her hand on the stickshift, etc.
Occasionally, we sweep up to the mountains or down to the
ocean or past the fence of some tony piece of real estate
overlooking the water. But, always, we return to our point
of departure - behind the driver speeding up the Pacific
Coast Highway.

CUT TO:

4 OMIT 4

5 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 5

The Cadillac Allante rolls silently toward us before turning into a driveway that leads up the hill to a contemporary house.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. CONTEMPORARY HOUSE - DAY 6

Pitched on a rolling hillside more evocative of Provence than Malibu is the dramatic, sharply angular two-story with its eclectic exterior mix of corrugated walls and mirrored glass.

As Allante approaches on the driveway, we begin to sense something slightly askew about this house and this place, and not all of it has to do with architecture.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. ALLANTE - DAY 7

The driver's door opens and out swivels NINA: 38 years old, bright, attractive. But more than merely intelligent, she is shrewd; more than simply beautiful, she is alluring. And, perhaps, more to the point, she is shy about neither.

So one senses power as she rises out of the car, just as one senses insight as she takes a long, penetrating look around, just as one sees poise and grace as she glides toward the house.

CUT TO:

8 NINA - MOVING 8

from the car ... up the walkway ... up to the front door with the mirrored glass. She slips her key into the lock without so much as a glance at her reflected image.

CUT TO:

9 INT. CONTEMPORARY HOUSE - DAY 9

From the dramatic slope of the roof to the exposed rafters to the open, loft-like rooms seemingly suspended in space, this house has been designed with an eclectic vengeance. Tasteful, mind you. But nonetheless a conspicuous scheme, a captivating diversion for the restless eye.

(CONTINUED)

All this has long ago ceased to impress Nina, who immediately ducks inside the BEDROOM to her right and slips off her shoes before continuing barefoot down the HALLWAY.

The day's mail awaits her, stacked tidily on a chest midway down the hall. Taking the mail in hand, she begins sorting through it even as she ascends the short staircase to the MAIN ENTERTAINING AREA of the house.

There she stands, in the middle of the floor, absorbed in some letter or other, when footsteps come quickly down a staircase and DEE DEE appears.

Dee Dee, a very young, very eager, very uncertain 24-year-old, lets out a slightly startled gasp at the sight of Nina, who looks up coolly from her letter.

DEE DEE

(painfully self-conscious,
perhaps with a frantic
glance at her watch)

You're home?

(suddenly talking to
herself)

Great, Dee'D.

(just as suddenly talking
to Nina again)

I mean, there you are, standing right
in front of me.

NINA

(doing nothing to put her
at ease)

Hello, Dee Dee.

DEE DEE

Hi, Nina.

A few tentative steps forward.

DEE DEE

How was your day?

NINA

Very pleasant - in a grim sort of
way.

As Nina returns to her letter, Dee Dee moves quickly into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

10 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 10

From a bucket of ice, Dee Dee removes a chilling bottle of white wine and pours a glass.

CUT TO:

11 INT. ENTERTAINMENT AREA - DAY 11

Dee Dee now appears with a glass of wine, which Nina takes from her. With the wine glass in one hand and her mail in the other, Nina sprawls leisurely on a sofa.

NINA

And how were things around here?

But before Dee Dee can utter even syllable, Nina cuts her off.

NINA

Oh, did that what's-his-name, the strange bald lawyer call?

DEE DEE

No.

NINA

How about Douglas - did he reconfirm for this afternoon?

DEE DEE

No, no one called.

NINA

If he ever does call me here, it's fine to give the number for the car - the lawyer. He represents Merkey, the artist I'm showing next month. Douglas already has

the number. Which must mean he's still coming - if he didn't call.

DEE DEE

(not knowing if this
requires a response)

Well, yeah.

Nina looks up: nothing like a response was either expected or desired.

(CONTINUED)

NINA
(back into the mail)
So?

DEE DEE
What...?

NINA
How were things around here? You
were about to say?

DEE DEE
The gardener came.

NINA
And how is Mr. Li?

DEE DEE
He cleared out that underbrush, where
you asked about.

NINA
Good.

DEE DEE
Did the deep-root fertilization, too.

Dee Dee hovers a little too near the sofa, prompting Nina
to gaze up at her expectantly.

DEE DEE
I paid all the bills, the checks are
on your desk, you just have to sign
them. And I bought some haddock from
the fishman this morning, I made a
curry sauce to go with it, all you
have to do is pop it in the oven, I
left the directions.

NINA
And you'd like to go home now.

Dee Dee nods sheepishly.

NINA
Go.

Dee Dee crosses slowly to the staircase.

DEE DEE
Mr. Li said he won't be back again
for three weeks. He has to go to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

DEE DEE (cont'd)
Taiwan, I think he was trying to tell
me. Some family thing.

NINA
No doubt.

DEE DEE
He wanted to know if you wanted his
nephew to come the next two weeks.

NINA
And you told him yes, I hope.

Dee Dee nods.

NINA
You're a good little wife, Dee Dee.
Every woman should have one.

Taking this as a compliment, she smiles and disappears.
After a moment, the front door opens and closes. After a
moment more, Nina rises with wine glass in hand and goes to
the BACK DOOR. She gazes pensively through the glass,
perhaps watching Dee Dee go, perhaps not.

CUT TO:

12 TITLE CARD #2

12

which reads:

"Preparation
The goal of the massage is to
relax all the senses. Prepare
with this in mind."

CUT TO:

13 INT. HOUSE - DAY

13

Nina slips a CD into the compact disc player, and we hear
the first, deep, barely audible bars of Albinoni's Adagio
in G-Minor.

As the music continues ethereally UNDER, we:

CUT TO:

14 INT. BEDROOM DRESSING CLOSET - DAY

14

Standing in front of a full-length mirror, Nina takes a
moment to study herself in her suit, her uniform, if you
will.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

After a moment, after drinking off a little too much wine for one sip, she puts the glass to one side. Then, without taking her eyes off herself, she begins removing her clothes.

It is a slow and sultry dance, and her eyes, rapt hypnotically, never leave the mirror as she slides out of her skirt ... her blouse ... her nylons ... her bra....

Only gradually does it occur to us that there may be something other than prurience at stake here. This strip is not a tease but a conscious peeling away of layer upon layer of her well-ordered, well-practiced life. If she stares, it's only because she is making certain that absolutely nothing of her accustomed life is left.

Once all her clothes are off, she takes another moment to study herself. Then, after retrieving a robe from an adjoining bathroom, she starts into the hallway.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. HOUSE - JACUZZI - DAY 15

She tests the steaming, bubbling water with the graze of a foot. Then, dropping her robe, she eases her body down, penetrating the water until she is submerged to the neck.

Allowing her head to fall gently back, she gazes heavenward at the starry night. She is drifting now; her mind is soaring across space and time.

CUT TO:

16 INT. BATHROOM - DAY 16

Standing in the shower, allowing the water to cascade over him, is a handsome, rugged man in his middle 20s, a man we will later come to know as DOUGLAS.

CUT TO:

17 NINA 17

still in the jacuzzi, still gazing heavenward, still drifting.

CUT TO:

18 EXT. STREET - IN FRONT OF THE CONTEMPORARY HOUSE - DAY 18

Turning into the driveway is a SMALL, UNASSUMING CAR - a Yugo, perhaps - the sort of car that must have always

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

looked as rickety as it does now, even rolling off the assembly line.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. JACUZZI - DAY 19

So far adrift is Nina that it takes her a moment to realize that the car is pulling up the driveway. But when she finally does see the car, she inches forward curiously.

As she watches the car disappear around the front of the house, she reaches for her robe and climbs out of the jacuzzi.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY 20

As he slides out from behind the wheel and unbends himself onto the driveway, we get our first clear look at FITCH.

At 44, he seems to be in equal parts showing his age and hiding it. Yes, his face is deeply lined. Yes, he is as grey as he is not. Yet, at the same time, he is as lean and agile as he was 20 years earlier.

With hair that seems a day or two shy of its next trim and clothing that is - in a word - utilitarian, he resembles nothing so much as the publisher of a natural foods catalogue.

From his place by the car, he eyes the house for a moment. Then, pushing forward the driver's seat, he leans in and dislodges a long, rectangular object (his unassembled, portable massage table) that is wedged diagonally across the interior of the car.

Along with the massage table, he pulls out what used to be known as a "gym bag." He then glances at his watch, locks the driver's door, and with massage table and bag in hand circles around to the sidewalk leading up to the house.

CUT TO:

21 INT. HOUSE - DAY 21

Nina moves quickly down the HALLWAY, tying her robe as she goes. When she reaches the end, she ducks into the BEDROOM and goes to a window for a better look.

CUT TO:

22 OMIT 22

23	OMIT	23
24	OMIT	24
25	OMIT	25
26	EXT. HOUSE - WALKWAY - DAY	26

Fitch walks deliberately toward the house, his eyes surveying the exterior, the corrugated walls, the impenetrable mirrored-glass windows.

CUT TO:

27	FITCH - MOVING	27
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toward ANOTHER HOUSE: small, rural, eerily still, the perfect setting for - well, who can say just what?

CUT TO:

28	EXT. HOUSE - AS BEFORE - DAY	28
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When Fitch reaches the front steps, he removes a business card (not his own) and matches the hand-written name scrawled on the back of it with the name by the door. He takes another look at his watch then presses a button on the intercom.

CUT TO:

29	INT. HOUSE - HOME ENTERTAINMENT CENTER - DAY	29
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With the push of a button, Albinoni falls silent.

CUT TO:

30	INT. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY	30
----	-------------------------------	----

Nina opens the blinds and peers curiously. Whomever she was expecting, Fitch is obviously not he.

CUT TO:

31	EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY	31
----	-----------------------	----

Fitch stands in front of the mirror-glass, seeing absolutely nothing of Nina, glancing inadvertently at his reflected image, perhaps adjusting his hair slightly when he does.

CUT TO:

32 INT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

32

She peers at him a moment longer, then:

NINA
Can I help you?

FITCH
(through the door)
Hi.

She opens the door.

NINA
(eyeing him with
suspicion)
Yes?

FITCH
I'm Fitch. Fitch.

NINA
Fitch?

FITCH
I'm here for your appointment.

As if to introduce some physical evidence in his defense, he points to the portable massage table at his side.

NINA
Where's Douglas?

FITCH
Didn't he call you? He said he was -
he would - call you. He
didn't call you.

NINA
To tell me what?

FITCH
That he couldn't make it.

NINA
Douglas?

FITCH
He said.

It's difficult to tell which has Nina puzzled more: Fitch's presence or his appearance. Whoever the much talked about

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

Douglas is, he definitely doesn't wear Birkenstock sandals. With sox.

Nina then takes an absent-minded step back, giving the impression - more or less unintended - that she would like Fitch to come right in.

Without giving it a second thought, he squeezes by her into the house. And so he's well inside before she even realizes what has happened.

FITCH

So where would you like me to set up, Nina?

Without waiting for a response, Fitch starts for the adjoining bedroom, but Nina intercepts him.

NINA

We're usually this way.

She extends a hand, indicating the end of the hallway is their intended direction of travel. With a bemused shake of the head, Nina closes the front door and follows.

CUT TO:

33 OMIT

33

34 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

34

As she closes the door, Fitch confidently walks to the end of the hallway and turns into the large, open studio. Seeing him disappear, she takes off after him.

CUT TO:

35 OMIT

35

36 INT. STUDIO - DAY

36

Fitch is already in the middle of the room by the time Nina appears in the doorway. He puts his massage items to one side and begins to wander curiously through the room, examining things that he comes across.

NINA

Where is he, do you know?

FITCH

Who?

(CONTINUED)

NINA
Douglas.

FITCH
Didn't come up.

He picks up a book that he finds lying on a table. She crosses to him and takes it from him.

NINA
"The Sun Also Rises."

FITCH
I liked it.

A brief beat, then:

NINA
You see, I'm really very ...
accustomed to him - Douglas.

Fitch nods a small, noncommittal nod.

NINA
I like him....

Fitch nods again.

NINA
I really like him....

Fitch nods yet again.

NINA
And it takes time - for a woman, at least - it takes time getting comfortable, really comfortable with a man who's ...

She doesn't finish her thought.

FITCH
Doug's got the touch.

He pulls open a sliding glass door that leads out to the deck. He steps outside. After a moment, she follows.

CUT TO:

as Fitch appears at her side.

NINA

But without even picking up the phone
or ...?

Fitch peers at her, having temporarily lost the train of
thought.

NINA

Douglas. When you have a
relationship with someone - a
business relationship - we go back,
he and I - you expect some
consideration.

FITCH

He seemed to be in a rush. He's very
young.

NINA

He's not so terribly young.

FITCH

No, not so. But he is young. A lot
younger than he thinks he is, anyway.
Besides, he could have not called
either one of us.

A beat, as he walks farther onto the deck, drinking in the
surroundings.

NINA

He's very talented.

FITCH

He is. Good-looking kid, too. Women
seem to go for him. A lot of his
clients are women. Most, really.

At this, she says nothing.

FITCH

Outside's nice. Especially if you
have some privacy. And you have some
privacy.

NINA

Douglas does me outside.

FITCH

A little cold tonight.

NINA

Where would you suggest then?

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

FITCH

Some dark and quiet place.

She nods her head.

FITCH

You know, I was in such a hurry
getting over here. I've got my oils
and things, but sheets and towels ...

She nods then they steps back into the house.

FITCH

I left some stuff in the car.

CUT TO:

38 INT. HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - DAY

38

Nina opens a linen closet, removes the sheets and towels
that Fitch has asked for, then closes the closet door.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. FITCH'S CAR - DAY

39

He removes another small bag or two from the car then
closes the trunk.

CUT TO:

40 INT. STUDIO - DAY

40

When Nina comes back, however, Fitch is nowhere to be seen.

CUT TO:

41 INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

41

Walking out of the studio, she sees the massage table just
where he left it: still leaning against a wall, still not
set up.

Now, a little curious - perhaps even a little concerned -
she starts out of the room in search of Fitch.

CUT TO:

42 NINA - MOVING 42

through the house, picking up speed, until she at last walks into a bedroom where she discovers Fitch, examining some jewelry that is scattered across the top of a dresser.

CUT TO:

43 ANGLE ON THE BEDROOM 43

as Fitch turns to see Nina, eyes locked on him, coming closer. Without the slightest hesitation, he resumes studying the diamond bracelet that he spreads across his palm.

FITCH

I'm fascinated with things. That is, I'm fascinated with the fascination with things.

NINA

This is my bedroom.

FITCH

I thought it might be. My mother had a spectacular jewelry collection, as I recall.

A dubious beat, as she wonders just what he may be up to.

FITCH

(sensing her distrust)

I wanted to wash up. And when I happened to walk by ...

She hands over the sheets and towels, which forces him to hand over the bracelet.

FITCH

Well, I wanted to wash up.

She leads him into the bathroom, which we recognize as the one that Doug was showering in earlier.

CUT TO:

44 TITLE CARD #3 44

which reads:

(CONTINUED)

"The Massage Table
The table should be tall enough
to elevate the subject to a
comfortable height."

CUT TO:

45 INT. HOUSE - STUDIO - DAY

45

From a chair, Nina looks on as Fitch goes about the ritual of setting up his massage table. And it is just that: a ritual. Each piece, each bolt, each nut and washer, he assembles with devotion and ceremony, all of it perhaps as unconscious as not.

FITCH

What massage is about in the end is healing. There are ways people can heal without drugs or words or prayers. That's it; that's the essence.

NINA

I never really gave it much thought.

FITCH

Healing?

NINA

Massage - in those terms. I try not to intellectualize things too much. It makes life so grey. I'm more ... intuitive, I think.

She watches as Fitch again immerses himself in his ritual, then:

NINA

How old are you?

FITCH

(smiling)
Why do you ask?

NINA

I don't know, why not ask? I mean, you never learn anything without asking, do you?

FITCH

(still smiling)
Older than you.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

She is now staring at him, as we:

CUT TO:

46 A PARK-LIKE PLACE 46

where a BEARDED MAN, approximately Fitch's age, assembles an easel with the same sense of ritual and attention. The man looks up when we hear:

FITCH

(v.o.)

The laying on of hands - there's power in it.

CUT TO:

47 THE SUN ROOM - AS BEFORE 47

Fitch looks up briefly from his work, seeing her staring at him. But, clearly, he doesn't give it a second thought as he once more focuses his attention on the table.

FITCH

But, in our culture, there are so many Western prejudices about illness and healing. We're really pretty tight-assed, medically speaking. Just think about it: when was the last time your doctor actually touched you? not probed or examined but touched you?

NINA

If it never happened, it was too recent. I don't like doctors - mine or anyone else's.

FITCH

Because they consult with you, they talk with you over the phone, they prescribe drugs for you. But they don't actually - personally - heal you. They leave that up to time or chemistry.

NINA

I don't like doctors because ... I don't like doctors.

A beat, then:

(CONTINUED)

NINA

You've known Doug for how long?

Fitch shrugs: Doug is a topic of conversation that he can either take or leave. And right now he feels more like leaving it than taking it.

NINA

Long enough to like him?

FITCH

How long's that?

(beat)

It goes back to the ancients, you know.

NINA

What's that?

FITCH

Massage. Maybe even earlier, some historians think. The Greeks were into massage mainly as a treatment, a healing art. They've got records of people like Socrates and Plato being massaged daily. And Plato lived to be 104.

NINA

Socrates did not.

FITCH

(undeterred)

But the Romans being who they were - essentially Italians without the loafers - they were the first to come up with the idea of massage as a form of foreplay. Courtesans got pretty handy at it. It was part of the transaction, finally.

NINA

Well, it's not like you have to have a degree in molecular biology to see a connection. Massage is sexual. Very sexual.

FITCH

It can be. It doesn't have to be. It shouldn't always be.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

I wasn't talking about sweating, screaming, orgasmic epiphany. It's just that you're lying there naked, someone's touching you in places you sure wouldn't let your father touch you, and it's ... arousing.

FITCH

It's a form of communication. You just have to make sure you're both speaking the same language.

Fitch makes a few final adjustments to the table.

Seeing that he is nearly finished, Nina she sheds her robe. It takes a moment for her to locate a towel, during which time Fitch gets an eyeful.

He says nothing. She says nothing. But neither her complete lack of embarrassment nor his utter professional disinterest strikes us as entirely authentic. Finally spotting her towel, she draws it carelessly around herself.

Fitch stands up.

NINA

Looks like we're ready to start.

FITCH

We've already started.

NINA

What do you mean?

Fitch reaches for his massage "tool bag" and begins removing items.

FITCH

Well, most of any massage worth having takes place in your head. And I'm sure you've been preparing -

(suddenly, a thought
occurs to him)

Why, are you in a hurry?

Before she can reply, he pulls an extremely odd and not easily explained item out of his bag of tricks. He holds it up for her to see.

FITCH

Funny thing, hunh?

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

He puts that item back and pulls out one or two more.

FITCH

You might want to have some music.
What was that music you were playing?
before you turned it off?

NINA

I'll find something.

She crosses out of the room. After a moment, he follows her.

CUT TO:

48 INT. HALLWAY/ENTERTAINMENT AREA 48

From the doorway, Fitch watches as she climbs the stairs and goes to the stereo system. It's only when she makes her music selection and turns back that she sees him looking at her.

A puzzling, slightly unsettling beat, then:

FITCH

I'd say we're ready.

CUT TO:

49 TITLE CARD #4 49

which reads:

"The Back

The back is the best place to
begin any full body massage."

CUT TO:

50 OMIT 50

51 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 51

Nina now lies prone on the table. Fitch is, from all appearances, ready to go to work. He peels back the towel so that it doesn't quite cover her butt.

FITCH

So what are we working on, Nina?

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

FITCH

Any complaints? maladies? any part of
your body that needs special
attention?

NINA

The part that begins at my hair and
ends at my toes.

From his bag, he removes an impressive assortment of
bottles and jars. He selects one then begins applying oil
in long, slow, sweeping strokes until the whole of her back
is slick and glistening.

CUT TO:

52 A SERIES OF SHOTS - THE ART OF THE MASSEUR 52

Hands float ... fingers unfold ... forearms bunch ...
biceps flex ... shoulders tauten ... as IN and OUT OF FRAME
his body glides with power and grace.

Watching, we are witness to nothing short of Fitch's
complete mastery of his art: he is nothing short of the
Baryshnikov of massage.

CUT TO:

53 A PAIR OF HANDS 53

Younger. Slightly more muscular. Noticeably less
accomplished. Decidedly less poetic. More ballroom than
ballet. More James T. Farrell than Marcel Proust.

And when the CAMERA moves slowly BACK, we see that it is
not Fitch massaging Nina but the handsome, rugged man:
Douglas.

Every now and then, she lets out a small, involuntary sigh,
which after a time begins to sound very much like a moan.
This goes on for a moment or two, growing in intensity,
until the spell is broken by:

NINA

(o.s.)

It's my job, you know....

CUT TO:

54 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE

54

Fitch continues with warm, luxurious, circulating strokes, beginning at the small of her back and flowing up to her shoulder blades.

NINA

You were going to say something about how tense I am....

Maybe he was. More likely he was undergoing some out-of-body experience, so deep is his concentration on the area of her back that he massages.

NINA

Douglas always does. He's always telling me how much tension I have. Especially in my upper back, my shoulders. It's all because of my work....

A beat of expectation, as she waits for him to question her about her work. Then, when he does not, when he simply continues massaging her in intense silence, she answers anyway:

NINA

I own a gallery. A couple of them, actually. One here in town, off Melrose. Another in New York, Tribeca. And when it's your business, your baby - well, you know what they say about responsibility falling on your shoulders. It does - literally.

A beat, then:

FITCH

It's best not to talk so much.

NINA

Was I? talking too much?

FITCH

Well, it's your massage. You can do anything you'd like. But you really should take some time to relax. I mean, you can't keep going all the time. Or is that what the people you work with do?

(CONTINUED)

NINA

The people I work with limit their relaxation to what they can purchase in a vial.

After he performs a series of long, deep strokes, she visibly loosens up. She seems to be taking his advice. Half-joking, he lifts one of her feet and lets it drop to the table.

FITCH

Working already, see?

CUT TO:

where the bearded man paints at an easel. The painting that he labors at is perhaps more naturalistic than what is fashionable these days. The work is nevertheless accomplished.

Just then, Nina drives by in her CAR. For some reason, the sight of the man at his easel captures her imagination. She makes a u-turn and drives back.

After a moment, she is out of the car and over his shoulder. He turns, surprised to see anyone anywhere near him. She continues studying the painting, even as he studies her.

PAINTER

(as he continues painting)

So what do you think of it?

Nina gives an approving nod of the head.

CUT TO:

After a brief, contemptive beat -

NINA

How long have you been doing massage, Fitch?

FITCH

Almost 20 years - off and on.

NINA

Interesting work. I'm sure you meet all kinds of people. Gives you a lot
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NINA (cont'd)
of freedom, too, I bet. I mean, it's
so portable: have table, will
travel....

A brief beat, then:

NINA
I travel a lot - in my work. Too
much, I'm starting to think. I guess
it just depends how badly you want
what you want...

Another brief beat, then:

NINA
Do you like art? You seem like the
sort of person who does.

FITCH
And what sort of person is that?

NINA
Well, an ...
(catching herself)
What do you mean?

FITCH
(more musing than
argumentative)
Just that I never thought there was a
type, that's all. But I suppose
you'd know more about that than I
would.

NINA
Well, do you? enjoy art?

FITCH
(after a moment of
consideration)
Who do you consider to be the great
artists of this century?

NINA
How do you mean?

FITCH
I mean who are the five greatest - or
four - or three?

NINA
I'm really not in that business.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

FITCH

Would you say Picasso? Would he be one? Or maybe Chagall - ?

NINA

- I don't think you can quantify artistic achievement -

FITCH

- or would you say Braque? or Klee?

NINA

What's your point, Fitch?

Instead of replying, Fitch retreats for a moment, again massaging her in silence. His strokes now become a tease - although from all appearances an inadvertent one - as his hands move nearer and nearer her ass.

Finally, in a series of deep, slow strokes, he slips his hands under the towel and withdraws them, then slips them under again - to which she visibly succumbs. Her eyelids close heavily.

CUT TO:

57 DOUGLAS 57

now in Fitch's place, leaning over the massage table, as his movements more or less echo the strokes that Fitch has just performed.

CUT TO:

58 NINA 58

on the table as she sighs deeply.

CUT TO:

59 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE 59

Nina emerges slowly from her reverie.

NINA

What was it you were going to say?

No response.

NINA

You were going to say something and then you just stopped.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

When there is still no response, she looks up to see that Fitch is gone. Then, as she slides off the table to go in search of him, she hears a strange CLICKING sound coming from the hallway.

CUT TO:

60 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

60

Returning from his car, Fitch is clicking together TWO LARGE MAGNETS as he walks down the hall. Suddenly, a painting hanging on the wall catches his eye. It's about then that Nina emerges from the studio.

FITCH

This is just me now, this is just my opinion. But so much of what passes for art today - contemporary art - is without any kind of reference point: moral, historic, nothing. It's not about anything.

NINA

Oh, I disagree. Modern art is critical. That's what makes it modern.

CUT TO:

61 THE PARK-LIKE SETTING

61

The bearded painter sits at the easel preparing his palette as Nina continues to linger over his shoulder.

NINA

Where do you show?

The painter laughs.

CUT TO:

62 INT. HALLWAY - AS BEFORE

62

Nina sees the magnets.

NINA

What are those?

FITCH

(deadpan)

I don't know. I just found them in the trunk of my car.

(CONTINUED)

She looks askance at him: she takes him at his word.

FITCH

They're magnets.

NINA

Magnets?

FITCH

About 400 gauss potency - perfect for those hard-to-treat areas.

Without pausing to explain further, he moves into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

Nina follows Fitch in as he crosses to the stove. There, he turns on a burner and begins warming the magnets.

Then, as she looks on with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension -

NINA

You really must visit my gallery. We've got a very interesting installation coming up next month I think you should see.

FITCH

And what's that?

NINA

A history of women's fashion as a form of bondage.

Fitch cocks an amused eyebrow.

NINA

Come and see it. I think you'll enjoy it. It has a certain point of view. It's funny. Ironic. Satiric.

FITCH

A point of view.

NINA

Exactly.

FITCH

I'll tell you - and this is why so much of art today is so pointless, I think - what we suffer from, our society, is a kind of bankruptcy of spirit.

NINA

I'm sure people have said something like as long as there have been people to say it.

FITCH

Except this time it's true.

NINA

I'm sure they said that, too.

CUT TO:

64 ALICE - CLOSE UP

64

20ish, stunning, she stares into the CAMERA, revealing less than she shows.

NINA

(v.o.)

If you're talking about today - the way we live - it's fear - that's what defines us.

CUT TO:

65 INT. THE STUDIO

65

Fitch and Nina return: he with the magnets in hand, she a few steps behind him. Taking note the massage chair by the window, he crosses to it.

FITCH

Is this yours?

She nods. He indicates that she should sit in it, which she does. He then kneels before her, placing a warmed magnet beneath either of her feet.

NINA

Fear of change. Fear of the future. Technology transforming things faster than people can take in. It turns us into strangers, everyone. That's why people create the art they create.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

Bad faith.

NINA

What is?

FITCH

Blaming someone else – something else
– technology – as if we had no
responsibility for ourselves, our
actions.

NINA

So what would you suggest?

FITCH

I suggest we look inward, all of us,
for starters. And then, I suggest we
look outward.

NINA

And then do we all sit cross-legged
on the floor, humming like gnats?

FITCH

We might. We could. Why not? Or
else we could just go out and kill
all the gallery owners.

A beat, as Nina, amused, smiles to herself.

CUT TO:

66 TITLE CARD #5

66

which reads:

"The Neck and Shoulders
Neck tension is often the root of
psychological fatigue."

CUT TO:

67 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE CHAIR

67

Fitch now glides his hands along her spine up to her neck
and shoulders. He begins to apply acupressure in a series
of short, powerful bursts.

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

The power of his fingertips causes her to exhale audibly as she tries to diffuse the discomfort through her breathing. Hearing this, he doesn't stop. Nor does she ask him to.

CUT TO:

68 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE CHAIR

68

where Douglas has once more replaced Fitch. The discomfort that he causes, however, plainly borders on pain, resembling nothing so much as controlled violence.

Yet, the harder he massages her, the more she grunts and groans and gasps for breath and - from all indications - just generally enjoys herself.

CUT TO:

69 ANGLE ON FITCH AND NINA

69

Although Fitch continues his acupuncture strong and hard, the mood - in contrast to Nina and Douglas - seems downright pacific.

NINA

Do you have any family, Fitch? Wife, children?

Fitch shakes his head.

NINA

Mother, father?

FITCH

Gone now. They've been dead a while. I have a sister back in Sydney.

NINA

I try to stay close to my family. It's important, don't you think? My sister's in Boston, my brother's in Georgia somewhere, my parents are retired in Florida, but we work at it. It's important. Don't you think?

CUT TO:

70 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE CHAIR 70

Fitch lets his eyes close, shutting out the world, as his fingertips insinuate themselves into her flesh.

CUT TO:

71 FITCH - MOVING 71

toward the small, rural house, his eyes fixed on the front door.

NINA

(v.o.)

What makes you think that?

CUT TO:

72 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE CHAIR 72

Fitch's eyes remain closed for a moment or two.

FITCH

Think what?

NINA

A "bankruptcy of spirit" - is that really what we're about?

FITCH

Call it what you like. The essence is that we've lost our way. As a civilization. Spiritually, I'm saying. I've been around, and one thing I've learned: we don't know what we don't know.

A beat, then:

NINA

My work, I suppose, has a spiritual side to it.

CUT TO:

73 THE PARK-LIKE PLACE 73

Still seated at the easel, still laughing, the painter turns slightly so that he faces Nina.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

PAINTER

Where do I show?

CUT TO:

74 NINA IN THE CHAIR - AS BEFORE 74

NINA

Each artist is unique.

CUT TO:

75 THE PARK-LIKE PLACE - AS BEFORE 75

PAINTER

People like me don't show anywhere.

CUT TO:

76 NINA IN THE CHAIR - AS BEFORE 76

NINA

Each has individual needs.

CUT TO:

77 THE PARK-LIKE PLACE - AS BEFORE 77

The painter turns back toward the easel.

PAINTER

I'm not in fashion.

CUT TO:

78 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE CHAIR 78

Fitch kneels again and removes the magnets from beneath her feet.

FITCH

Although there is the matter of compensation.

NINA

People understand that when they come to me. Usually, that's why they come to me. Artists are rarely as troubled by the idea of their earning a living as everyone else seems to be.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

(puzzled)

So, then, what's the spiritual side
to your work?

But before she can respond, the strength of his acupressure causes her to exhale hoarsely suddenly.

FITCH

(as he persists in
applying pressure)

This isn't too hard for you, Nina?

NINA

(breathless)

Why do you ask?

Fitch lays off on the acupressure, smoothing over the area with lush, soothing strokes.

NINA

I had aspirations, artistic aspirations. Except that I saw myself up onstage somewhere, a performer. Only problem was I couldn't sing or dance. I could audition. I mean, my gift is I know how to sell and so I sold myself. And in rehearsal, come to think of it, I was okay, passable.

FITCH

Would I have ever seen you in anything?

NINA

No. Lucky man.

She laughs at this. But if what she says is an exaggeration, there clearly remains some element of truth to it.

NINA

It was in school, mostly. But once or twice, in an otherwise professional theatre, I actually got up in front of a paying audience ... and made them pay.

FITCH

(amused)

So how'd the gallery business get you?

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

NINA

Oh, the same way most people end up
doing things. I fell in love with
the wrong person.

FITCH

Artist?

NINA

Artist, art dealer, art critic - he
was all artistic things to all
artistic people.

CUT TO:

79 CLOSE UP 79

ANDY - swaggering, 40ish, slightly scuzzy in a bohemian way
- peers into CAMERA.

CUT TO:

80 ANGLE ON NINA AND FITCH 80

as he leads her from the massage chair back to the massage
table.

FITCH

And what happened to him?

NINA

Who can say really?

CUT TO:

81 TITLE CARD #6 81

which reads:

"The Feet

Because there is less flesh to
work with, care must be taken
not to probe too deeply."

CUT TO:

82 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 82

Standing at the lower end of the table, Fitch drenches her
feet in oil.

CUT TO:

83 DOUGLAS 83

as he strokes her feet.

CUT TO:

84 NINA 84

as she slackens her mind and allows it to roam.

CUT TO:

85 DOUGLAS - AS BEFORE 85

stroking her feet, kneading them, tugging at them, all with unrelieved dispassion.

CUT TO:

86 ANGLE ON FITCH AND NINA 86

In contrast, Fitch's contact with her strikes us as far more sexual - superficially, at least - than Douglas's. But appearances can, as they say, be deceiving.

For as erotic as this foot massage may seem, it is, for Fitch, far more transcendental than sexual. Once more, his eyes close, his mind soars, and his hands seem to assume a will and intelligence of their own.

CUT TO:

87 FITCH - MOVING 87

to the front of the small, RURAL HOUSE. Just as he is about to knock on the door, it opens slowly on its own. He peers inside. Not another person in sight, even when the door has opened all the way.

CUT TO:

88 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE 88

With Fitch continuing to stroke her feet, Nina is very nearly purring - until she is jarred back to reality by her own hyperactive intellect:

NINA

I like what I do, where I've ended up, who I am. It gives me an enormous amount of satisfaction.

A brief beat, then:

(CONTINUED)

NINA

Are you happy, Fitch?

FITCH

Happy?

NINA

You said you've spent all this time traveling around. I was just wondering if it made you happy.

FITCH

It's made me a better person. Sure. I suppose. Happier than most people. If that's what it's about.

Nina seems puzzled.

FITCH

There's more to happiness than being happy.

NINA

Meaning what?

Suddenly, we are back into the foot massage, with it near-eroticism in CLOSE UP.

We take a beat, then:

FITCH

You see, with most people - cultures - civilizations - this idea of happiness - it's not some frivolous thing. It's not a good job. It's not a new car in the driveway. It's something else entirely.

NINA

Something spiritual.

FITCH

(with a reflexive nod)

The Hopi Indians believe the body of a person and the earth are formed in the same way: along an axis.

Fitch gives up her feet for a moment and glides his hand upward along her legs until he reaches her spine, which he then gently massages.

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

FITCH

The axis for you and me is our
backbone, our spine. And along this
axis are various centers of force -

NINA

Centers of force?

CUT TO:

89 EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

89

A Hopi shaman massages a woman by the firelight.

FITCH

(v.o.)

They're all very important, these
different body centers: the brain, the
throat, the solar plexus. But the most
important of all is the heart. Follow
its sincere purpose, the Hopis say, and
you're of one heart. But if you allow
evil feelings to enter, they say you are
of two hearts.

CUT TO:

90 ANGLE ON NINA AND FITCH

90

With his hand reaching under her belly, resting below her
solar plexus, he pauses for a moment.

NINA

It all sounds very ... Eastern.

Fitch withdraws his hand and takes a step back.

FITCH

Well, it is, in a way.

NINA

Is it?

FITCH

The Tibetans and Hindus believed in
an almost identical series of centers
in the body.

NINA

(smug)

It's like some shared subconscious.
Almost like people are programmed to
invent them.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

FITCH

Almost.

A beat, as he sizes her up, wondering if she has even an inkling as to what he's been saying. Then:

FITCH

Now to me, personally, the most interesting part of this is how the Hopi medicine man takes these centers of force and treats someone.

CUT TO:

91 A DOUBLE BED

91

Fitch lies on his back as the young woman ALICE lays her hands upon him. He listens intently, rapt by the words she speaks, the lesson she teaches. For if Fitch is a student of the Hopi culture, this may very well be his first lesson.

ALICE

You see, he can tell what's wrong with just his hands. He can feel the vibrations from each center and find in which one life runs strongest or weakest.

CUT TO:

92 THE MESSAGE TABLE

92

as Fitch continues the laying on of hands.

FITCH

Sometimes what's wrong is what you'd call illness. But other times, it comes from outside, drawn by a person's own evil thoughts or from those of a Two Heart.

CUT TO:

93 THE DOUBLE BED

93

as the woman continues instructing.

ALICE

Then, the medicine man will take a small crystal about an inch and a
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

ALICE (cont'd)
half across and look through it at
each of the centers.

CUT TO:

94 THE MESSAGE TABLE

94

as Fitch continues searching the centers of force.

FITCH

And that way, he can see the source
of the trouble and, the Hopis say,
the actual face of the Two Hearts
who's causing it.

A beat, then Fitch returns his hands to Nina's feet and
resumes massaging them.

NINA

(mocking)

Tell me you've got a crystal in that
bag of yours.

FITCH

(with an unamused laugh)

No.

NINA

Because I could stand to know which
Two Hearts are causing me my pain.

Fitch is visibly annoyed, noticeably tired of humoring her
smugness. He wanders away from the table.

FITCH

It works, though, you know, this kind
of healing. What we forget is modern
medicine - any science when you think
about it - is a belief system: a
religion like any other religion.
Medicine works because we believe it
will work.

NINA

Sometimes it just works.

FITCH

And lots of times it doesn't.

NINA

I like clergymen even less than
doctors.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

That's because you worship in the temple of Art. Which is a whole lot like the temple of Science, when you get right down to it. Your God is a jealous God – the most jealous God of all, in fact – the God of Reason.

NINA

I see. So you're suggesting – what? – I convert? Become a Hopi mystic? Can you do that, by the way? Convert to another race?

FITCH

The point I was making, really, is that we have – without even realizing it – given up one kind of mysticism for another, more socially acceptable form of mysticism. I don't know about you, but I've never seen a black hole or a quark. They may exist; they may not; I personally have no way of knowing. I have seen Hopis walk away healed, though, by nothing more than a medicine man using his hands and a few crystals.

NINA

Christ, you're patronizing.

FITCH

All I'm saying is we – everyone – we've gone and replaced a system of belief with a system of disbelief. And that it's found its way into everything we do and think. We've lost the capacity for wonder. And no one – and this is the insidious part – no one even knows that it's happened.

NINA

Except you.

Fitch is plainly taken aback. Abruptly, we:

CUT TO:

95 THE DOUBLE BED 95

Alice kneels in the middle of the bed while she continues touching Fitch ritualistically.

ALICE

They understand themselves, the Hopis.

CUT TO:

96 THE MESSAGE TABLE - AS BEFORE 96

Fitch takes a moment to regroup, then:

FITCH

They understand themselves, the Hopis.

CUT TO:

97 TITLE CARD #7 97

which reads:

"The Back of the Leg
The abundance of flesh here
requires more penetrating
movements."

CUT TO:

98 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 98

Almost like a flashy bartender mixing a drink, Fitch pours a thick stream of oil into the palm of his hand then spreads it over her right calf and the back of her right thigh.

A beat, as Nina wonders to herself if, perhaps, she hasn't been a little too callous, a little too cavalier about his hard-won beliefs. And so:

NINA

Where have you been, Fitch? in your travels?

FITCH

More places than I can sometimes remember.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

For example.

FITCH

Pretty much wherever the spirit took
me. The Far East, Africa.
A year with the aborigines in
Australia.

NINA

Massaged your way from one end of the
world to the other?

He nods.

NINA

I envy that.

FITCH

Traveling the world?

NINA

Having no responsibilities.

FITCH

No responsibilities? I think it's
jus the opposite.

NINA

Why did you come here tonight, Fitch?

FITCH

Why wouldn't I?

NINA

The Far East, Africa, the Aborigines
- I'm not your style.

FITCH

Doug asked me to. He said you were
different.

NINA

(pleased)

Did he?

(extremely pleased)

I like him.

FITCH

He said, of all the people he knew,
you were the one who was most ...

(CONTINUED)

NINA
What?

FITCH
Adrift.

A beat, as she considers that, then:

NINA
Adrift?

FITCH
That was his word.

NINA
Why would he say that?

FITCH
Doug's got the touch.

Another beat, then:

NINA
What do you suppose that means?
adrift?

Fitch takes this as a rhetorical question until -

NINA
I mean ... what does it mean?

FITCH
Your heart, your spirit - you're
searching.

NINA
How would he know? He's a kid.

FITCH
Not as much of a kid as he thinks he
is.

NINA
All my life, it's been the same
thing: men refusing to see me for who
I am, projecting their idea of who I
should be on me instead. Now, even
the guy does my massages wants me to
be something I'm not.

FITCH
And what's that?

NINA

The tormented, career-obsessed woman. I mean, why not take a little bit of a risk and get to know someone on a more complex level? I really thought more of Douglas - I know he's your friend - but I really thought more of him.

FITCH

So it's a risk?

He guides her off the table, which seems to surprise her.

NINA

What?

As she looks on curiously, he pours oil across the top of the table and begins working it in like a Japanese steak chef.

FITCH

Complexity.

She seems not to understand.

FITCH

Just now, you said he wouldn't risk knowing you on a more complex level. So: is complexity dangerous?

NINA

Isn't it?

FITCH

You said it was.

NINA

It is. Getting to know someone is always a risk.

FITCH

In what way?

NINA

In every way, in every conceivable way.

CUT TO:

The painter studies A PAINTING HANGING ON THE WALL as Nina eases INTO VIEW.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

I just got it. What do you think?

PAINTER

Doesn't matter what I think.

FITCH

(v.o.)

I'm not sure I get it.

CUT TO:

100 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE

100

From his bag he removes a yellow cloth, which he lays across the table. He then guides her back onto to it.

NINA

Intimacy – whether it's emotional or intellectual or sexual – I think it can be very threatening.

FITCH

Threatening? Or a risk?

NINA

Semantics? Christ.

FITCH

No, I'm trying to understand you. You said Doug didn't. So I'm trying to.

He covers her with other colored cloths.

FITCH

That's what these are for. Colors draw things out of you – even in silence.

CUT TO:

101 THE PAINTING ON A WALL

101

studied by Nina and the painter.

NINA

Why doesn't it matter – what you think?

(CONTINUED)

PAINTER

There's only one reason to do art: it needs to be done. And he did it. So why discuss it?

CUT TO:

as Nina's mind races.

NINA

It is a fundamental difference between men and women.

FITCH

What is?

NINA

The level of intimacy they're willing to give themselves up to. And I mean any relationship, not just a sexual - romantic - one....

FITCH

And you base that on...?

NINA

What?

FITCH

Well, I'm just not sure there is this huge difference. I haven't seen it, anyway.

NINA

You are trying to get a rise out of me?

FITCH

Does it sound it? I didn't mean it to.

NINA

It's like that old thing we used to debate: of what drives a man after sex, whether it's nature or nurture that makes him want to run for the door while the woman will lie there forever.

FITCH

And that's it? That's the difference? The etiquette of sex with a stranger?

NINA

I never said anything about strangers.

FITCH

Well, as much as he might be tempted, I don't think a man's going to bolt for the door the minute he's had sex with his wife.

NINA

Obviously, you don't know the same men I do.

CUT TO:

103 FLEA-RIDDEN BED

103

in some artist's garret. Andy is sprawled across the bed, chewing pensively on the end of a cigarette, when a youngish Nina approaches.

Looming above him, she offers a look of great longing as she caresses herself. A brief beat, then he smirks derisively.

CUT TO:

104 ANGLE ON NINA AND FITCH

104

as he now massages her inner thigh, plucking the flesh there.

NINA

What a man wants is an illusion: of what a woman is, of what a man and a woman are together.

FITCH

Any less of an illusion, your idea?

NINA

What's that?

FITCH

That all men are alike, that I'm exactly the same as Douglas, he's exactly the same as -

(CONTINUED)

NINA

(quickly cutting him off)
All men are alike. In certain
fundamental respects. I speak from
experience: two bad marriages - count
'em - before I was 27. There are
some variations, but they don't
amount to much.

She lies contemplatively for a moment, then:

NINA

Except maybe ...

CUT TO:

105 INT. BEDROOM

105

Nina and the painter lie in bed together, après-sex.

PAINTER

I want you to sit for me. I want you
to see yourself the way I see you.

CUT TO:

106 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE

106

A beat, as fleeting as it is wistful, then:

FITCH

Except maybe what?

NINA

Nothing.

Fitch removes the colored clothes and begins to cover her
up with the towel.

NINA

You really don't have to bother with
that, you know.

FITCH

With what?

NINA

The towel. Covering up. I'm not
very modest, I'm afraid. I actually
prefer nothing on. That's the way
Douglas always does it.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH
He can get away with it.

NINA
Get away with it, how?

FITCH
Being gay.

NINA
Gay?

FITCH
Doug.

CUT TO:

107 OMIT 107

108 THE MESSAGE TABLE 108

where the idea of Doug's sexual preference leaves her
thunderstruck, although she tries her hardest to conceal
it.

FITCH
You knew he was gay?

NINA
(lying)
Of course.

FITCH
He said you did.

NINA
Sure. Yes.

FITCH
He's usually very upfront about it.

NINA
Very upfront.

FITCH
In fact, that's how he and I met. He
thought I was. Well, I'd actually
worked on a friend of his who thought
I was.

NINA
You're not.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH
(with a shake of the head)
But Doug thinks everybody's gay.
That's part of his charm. I actually
think he's bisexual in some half-
assed way.

A brief beat, then:

	NINA
Nevertheless.	
	FITCH
What?	
	NINA
Still.	
	FITCH
Yes?	
	NINA
The towel.	

CUT TO:

109 TITLE CARD #8

109

which reads:

"The Buttocks
Begin at the pelvic bone,
moving the flesh instead of
your hand."

CUT TO:

110 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE

110

Fitch coolly strips the towel off Nina and tosses it down.
Reaching for a bottle of oil, he takes a moment to take her
in.

For the first time, he truly sees her: in sharp contrast to
the dowdy, doughy matron one might expect to be massaging
in these tony surroundings, she is lithe and sun-bronzed.
She seems to be, moreover, totally available.

Which prompts us to:

CUT TO:

111 THE DOUBLE BED 111

where Fitch and Alice are wound around each other, panting and writhing, in the sweaty depths of sexual heat.

CUT TO:

112 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE 112

As he pours the oil into his hand, he gazes at Nina a moment more, perhaps unaware of how long and how intensely he has been staring at her.

FITCH

If you're ever interested in something a little different, you might want to try shiatsu. It's all about stimulating energy at different points in the body. No oil of any kind. Skin rarely touches skin.

NINA

I've tried it. Once.

He now goes to work: first, oiling one side of her buttocks then the other; next, working in the oil with slow, glistening, voluptuous strokes.

CUT TO:

113 THE DOUBLE BED 113

where Fitch straddles Alice, applying oil to one side of her buttocks then the other in precisely the same fashion.

ALICE

You're getting pretty good at this, you know. If you don't watch it, you might just spoil me.

FITCH

And if I do?

ALICE

Well, you're the one who's going to have to live with the consequences.

FITCH

I'll risk it.

CUT TO:

114 FITCH AND NINA

114

as he keeps up the slow, voluptuous strokes. If what he does is not sexual, it's a pretty decent imitation, though neither one of them says or does anything to acknowledge it.

NINA

Tell me about your family, Fitch.

FITCH

My family?

NINA

Your family now gone.

FITCH

Not much to tell.

NINA

What was your father?

FITCH

Executive. Ad man. But his family had money to begin with. My mother's side, too. Not a lot, but money. Comfortable I guess is how they'd describe themselves.

CUT TO:

115 DINNER AT EIGHT

115

A TEEN VERSION OF FITCH, along with his SISTER, sits in the middle of a long table with a DISTINGUISHED, GREYING MAN AND WOMAN, his mother and father, at either end.

FITCH

(v.o.)

They used to do things like dress for dinner every Saturday night.

CUT TO:

116 FITCH AND NINA - AS BEFORE

116

as the long, voluptuous strokes continue.

NINA

Sounds fun.

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

FITCH
Sometimes, we'd have guests -

CUT TO:

117 DINNER AT EIGHT 117

The three are now joined by a young, AFFLUENT-LOOKING
COUPLE.

FITCH
(v.o.)
Someone from my father's agency -
some client and his wife.

CUT TO:

118 FITCH AND NINA - AS BEFORE 118

as the long, voluptuous strokes continue.

FITCH
But, usually, it was just the family:
my parents, my sister and me.

FITCH
It's funny. Talking about roles. My
parents had these roles that they always
seemed to ... inhabit. My father was the
shrewd businessman. My mother was the
thoughtful patron of the arts. Which
was, as it turned out, a kind of fiction.

NINA
How?

Making his hands broad, he massages all over her buttocks
in big, circular strokes.

FITCH
Well, it was all the same to her.
Classical music. Classical art.
Didn't matter who or what it was. It
was all lovely. The woman - and over
the years I've come to almost admire
this about her - she didn't have a
critical bone in her body. She was
the sort of person they created
public television for.

He tries to lose himself in the rhythm of his movements,
the strokes he performs deep into her buttocks. But it
doesn't work. Not this time.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

FITCH

One night - it was one of these
Saturday night deals and some very
important client was coming.

CUT TO:

119 TEEN FITCH - MOVING

119

down a staircase.

FITCH

(v.o.)

The men were all going to be in
black tie. And about ten minutes
before the guests were supposed to
arrive, I came downstairs, dressed,
ready.

CUT TO:

120 THE DINING ROOM

120

where Teen Fitch and his father, both dressed for dinner,
meet.

FITCH

(v.o.)

My father took one look at me and -
well, he wasn't pleased, let's say
that.

NINA

(v.o.)

Why?

FITCH

(v.o.)

It was my bow tie. He said that by
wearing one of those clip-on bow ties
I was humiliating him beyond
humiliation....

CUT TO:

121 CLOSE ON FITCH'S FATHER

121

as he mouths the words Fitch speaks OVER.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

(v.o.)

"A real gentleman ties his own tie,"
he said. "You look like a busboy."

CUT TO:

122 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE

122

as Fitch wanders toward the window and looks out.

NINA

Nice. And how old were you?

FITCH

Seventeen. But he wasn't ranting,
you have to understand. Never.

NINA

So what did you do?

FITCH

I pulled apart the tie.

NINA

What do you mean?

CUT TO:

123 ANGLE ON TEEN FITCH AND HIS FATHER

123

Teen Fitch, much to his father's astonishment, pulls apart
the bow.

FITCH

(v.o.)

Because it wasn't a clip-on tie. It
was your standard, J. Press bow tie.
But I'd tied it so
well, I'd done the tie so perfectly,
that it looked too good.

NINA

(v.o.)

And what did he do then?

FITCH

(v.o.)

Told me to retie it.

M.O.S.: Fitch's father mouths words: "Retie it." Teen
Fitch, despite a brave front, appears still wounded from

(CONTINUED)

123 CONTINUED:

his earlier treatment. His father repeats his order:
"Retie it."

CUT TO:

124 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 124

as Fitch stares into some distant place.

NINA

That's it?

FITCH

That's it.

Using bunched fingertips, he begins to probe deeply into
the muscles over the hip joint.

NINA

No apologies or — and you weren't
angry?

FITCH

No.

NINA

Not at all?

FITCH

It wasn't about anger.

NINA

What was it about?

FITCH

Expectations. Responsibilities. My
father, my mother — they were
trapped. Trapped by respon-
sibilities to things they never
thought twice about. Trapped by
their own expectations of themselves.

A beat, then:

NINA

I don't know anyone who doesn't feel
some sort of ambivalence toward their
parents. They are
who they are, you are who they are,
but then again you're not.

FITCH

But I wasn't ambivalent about them,
not at all. I liked them. I totally

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

124 CONTINUED:

FITCH (cont'd)
accepted who they were - maybe even
more than they did.

CUT TO:

125 EXT. MUD HOLE

125

In the shallow water, Fitch massages Alice using techniques from watsu, a kind of water massage.

ALICE
The angels keep their ancient places,
Turn but a stone and start a wing!

FITCH
What's that?

ALICE
Oh, some lines from a poem I once
knew. Funny thing to suddenly
remember.

CUT TO:

126 THE MESSAGE TABLE - AS BEFORE

126

Nina's eyes are now wide: she is not so much shocked by this physical intimacy as by the realization of her openness to it. Fitch, for his part, seems oblivious to what he's doing and its effect on her.

CUT TO:

127 EXT. THE MUD HOLE

127

Fitch continues massaging. Alice then begins humming softly. The astute ear recognizes it as the folk song, "The Streets of Laredo (The Cowboy's Lament)."

ALICE
They're the same, did you know that?
The two songs - "The Streets of
Laredo" and "St. James Infirmary" -
they started out as the same song and
over the years went in two different
directions.

(sings)

As I walked out on the streets of
Laredo ...

(a different tune)

I went down to the St. James
Infirmary ...

(speaking)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

ALICE (cont'd)

Out of one place can come many
different things.

CUT TO:

128 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 128

as he continues plucking and stroking and teasing her inner
thigh.

NINA

With my family, my parents, it was
more - what? - being invisible, I
guess. My father was an engineer.

CUT TO:

129 NINA'S FATHER 129

smiling, perfectly happy, perhaps mugging for the CAMERA,
home movie-style.

NINA

(v.o.)

He invented all these things you'd
never see, things that went inside
huge industrial machines to make them
run faster or smoother or safer.

CUT TO:

130 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 130

as he continues working on her inner thigh.

NINA

But he never owned any of his
inventions; his company did. So he
never made any money to speak of.
And the things he created went inside
other things. So no one outside that
company even knew who he was. He
just did his thing.

FITCH

Maybe he liked it that way. Maybe he
didn't want any recognition.

NINA

Everybody wants recognition.

FITCH

The Hopis have a word: pinú'u. It
means, "I am I."

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

NINA

With my mother, it was pretty much
the same thing.

CUT TO:

131 NINA'S MOTHER

131

Like her father, her mother is smiling, perfectly happy,
perhaps slightly more self-conscious in front of the
CAMERA, home movie-style.

NINA

(v.o.)

She had the only acceptable job any
woman had in those days - a nurse.
And a good one.

CUT TO:

132 THE MESSAGE TABLE - AS BEFORE

132

as Fitch works thoughtfully on her thigh.

NINA

But like every other nurse, she was
totally ignored, stepped on by any
doctor she ever worked with.

Another beat, then:

NINA

It used to break my heart to see it:
two people like that, as gifted as
they were, as caring. I swore I
wouldn't live that way....

CUT TO:

133 ANDY

133

The scuzzy bohemian, palette in hand, is rapt at his easel,
in the soft amber light of late afternoon: a portrait of
the artist as a not-so-young man.

NINA

(v.o.)

Which is what led me to Andy, I
guess. Andy was on the faculty of
the art department at the college I
was going to.

CUT TO:

134 ANGLE ON NINA AND FITCH

134

Closing his eyes, Fitch continues massaging her inner thigh, searching her by sense of touch only.

NINA

And for someone like me - eighteen, small-town girl, anonymous - it was ... liberation. It took about three years, but we did it finally - got married - my parents weren't too pleased.

FITCH

How long were you married?

NINA

Good question. Let's see. Two, three weeks, anyway.

He smiles, believing that she's joking. She's not.

FITCH

What happened?

NINA

Well, as popular as my husband was on-campus, he was revered south of the border.

CUT TO:

135 A DARK ALLEY

135

where Andy meets with an UNAPPETIZING NON-BOHEMIAN.

NINA

(v.o.)

And hard as it is to believe today, I didn't have a clue.

CUT TO:

136 NINA AND FITCH - AS BEFORE

136

NINA

I was eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old. I was a child -

FITCH

- eager for attention.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

Andy was charming, but the truth is he wasn't very smart. He made one trip too many through customs.

CUT TO:

137 A HARSHLY LIGHTED WALL

137

As a UNIFORMED MAN shoves Andy up against it.

CUT TO:

138 NINA AND FITCH - AS BEFORE

138

NINA

I guess I should be grateful it wasn't on our honeymoon.

A thoughtful beat, then:

NINA

Yeah, I did it for the attention, sure. Which can't be said about my second husband. Because I took my parents' advice after that. I settled down with a decent, honorable, hard-working young man. It was like taking a four-year nap.

A brief beat, then:

NINA

They were mistakes.

FITCH

But you learned from them.

NINA

Not really. Well, maybe. I did decide the only men you should ever seriously consider marrying are the ones who already are. For the most part, they've had some experience at it.

FITCH

Let's take a break.

CUT TO:

139 OMIT

139

140 EXT. PATIO

140

As Nina sits, Fitch prepares his Japanese acupressure heating pads.

FITCH

This is a kind of Japanese acupuncture that uses heat instead of needles.

He places the pad between her thumb and index finger and lights it.

FITCH

We put it here for nervous tension.

A beat, as she observes him, then:

NINA

How about you?

FITCH

How about me, what?

NINA

Married?

FITCH

No.

NINA

Never?

FITCH

No.

NINA

Close?

FITCH

I suppose. Maybe. Depends how close you mean.

NINA

A serious relationship. A "meaningful" relationship. You've had one of those, I would hope.

FITCH

I would hope.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

But nothing that stirred up the old
conjugal instinct.

FITCH

An instinct? is that what it is?

NINA

The desire to mate - sure.

FITCH

The desire to mate is not the desire
to marry.

NINA

No, I suppose not.

FITCH

No more than standing in a firing
squad is the same as standing in
front of a firing squad.

NINA

Right.

FITCH

What's getting married about, anyway?
Two people swept up in the most out
of control,
delusive kind of passion, swearing to
God they'll stay that for the rest of
their lives.

NINA

Oh, so you're a romantic.

FITCH

For me, what comes out of an
experience isn't nearly so
interesting as the experience itself.

CUT TO:

141 A CAMPFIRE

141

Fitch and the young woman stare into the fire.

WOMAN

You're rich. It's not your fault.
But that's why you're here. Because
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

WOMAN (cont'd)
you can afford to run away from your
problems.

CUT TO:

142 EXT. PATIO

142

FITCH
How many people know passion? Really
know it?

CUT TO:

143 NINA AND THE PAINTER

143

as she models for him, as he studies her.

CUT TO:

144 EXT. PATIO

144

NINA
Who was she?

145 ALICE

145

alone, staring into the fire.

CUT TO:

146 EXT. THE PATIO

146

as the acupuncture pads smoke.

NINA
How'd you meet her?

FITCH
I was running from myself and she
wasn't.

CUT TO:

147 THE CAMPFIRE

147

The young woman looks up at Fitch who paces thoughtfully.

FITCH
(v.o.)
Some people, from the moment they're
born, seem to sense where life will
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

147 CONTINUED:

FITCH (cont'd)
lead them. They accept it. Maybe
they even embrace it. But it makes
them a little old, too, I think.

CUT TO:

148 EXT. PATIO

148

FITCH
It's because they understand.

NINA
Understand what?

FITCH
She knew what she knew.

CUT TO:

149 THE CAMPFIRE

149

Fitch continues to pace; the woman continues to watch him.

WOMAN
Just decide what it is you want me to
do. Just decide and tell me.

CUT TO:

150 EXT. PATIO

150

He then blows out the pad and removes it from her hand.

NINA
So what happened to her?

He rises and heads for the house.

CUT TO:

151 FITCH - MOVING

151

toward the small, RURAL HOUSE, his eyes fixed on the front
door. Just as he is about to knock on the door, it opens
slowly on its own. He peers inside. Not another person in
sight, even when the door has opened all the way.

CUT TO:

152 EXT. PATIO 152

Fitch disappears inside the house. A moment later, Nina follows.

CUT TO:

153 OMIT 153

154 TITLE CARD #9 154

which reads:

"The Front of the Leg
Because the legs carry blood the
Farthest distance from the heart,
Start with a stroke to stimulate
circulation."

CUT TO:

155 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 155

Fitch starts in again, massaging her legs.

FITCH

People drift apart.

NINA

Not always.

FITCH

More often than not. You get to a certain point of knowing a person and you start asking yourself: what's left?

NINA

Or maybe you just think you've gotten to that point.

FITCH

Well, that's what I've found. At some time, you just realize there are not going to be any more surprises.

NINA

And you like surprises?

Fitch smiles ambiguously.

NINA

Or is it variety?

(CONTINUED)

Fitch remains silent.

NINA

I don't. I don't like surprises.
And I don't like variety. Variety is
a guy in a leather jock strap who's
just had his nipples pierced. And
don't think I haven't dated them.

A long beat, as he slides his hands up to her knee and
begins massaging the lower thigh.

CUT TO:

156 NINA AND THE PAINTER

156

Nina in a pose as the painter paints.

PAINTER

I'm seeing something for the first
time, looking at you.

NINA

And what are you seeing?

PAINTER

An empty room with a locked door.

Nina's eyes open wide. She is hurt. The painter continues
painting as if he hasn't uttered a single word.

CUT TO:

157 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE

157

as Fitch continues to massage her lower thigh.

NINA

I guess I really shouldn't blame
people for what they think of me. No
more than I should blame myself. So
much of what people do is just
invention, anyway, inventing
themselves, inventing their
friendships -

FITCH

And is that what you did: invent
yourself?

NINA

Didn't you? Poor little rich boy
runs off to join the Indians.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH
Is that what it seems like?

NINA
It's what it is.

Fitch quite obviously disagrees with this. He nevertheless resists objecting, instead massaging her in pensive silence.

CUT TO:

The painter sits on the edge of the bed as Nina approaches seductively. Then, when she is virtually standing over him:

NINA
Am I really an empty room?

PAINTER
Yes.

She peels off her blouse.

NINA
Even now?

PAINTER
(sadly)
Especially now.

CUT TO:

NINA
We're alike, I guess, you and me.

FITCH
You don't know anything about me.

NINA
Don't I?

FITCH
Not a thing.

NINA
I know that self-indulgence is not self-fulfillment.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

I don't hide behind things, at least.

NINA

Yes. Yes, you do. In the worst way of all. You hide behind your soul, behind this ooga-booga bullshit.

Fitch is stung sufficiently that he stops working. Nina shifts her weight to look up at him.

CUT TO:

160 NINA'S BEDROOM

160

The painter rises from his position on the bed and walks a few steps past Nina.

PAINTER

In some strange way, you're pretending. At liking my work. At being involved with me. At wanting to go to bed with me right now. At everything.

NINA

No.

PAINTER

I couldn't tell you what it is, but there's just something you can't let go of.

CUT TO:

161 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE

161

At first, Nina seems ready to apologize to Fitch, if an apology is what the situation calls for. Instead, she says nothing.

A long beat, during which he gradually immerses himself in the massage again.

Fitch is now massaging the inside of her thigh, working his way up from the knee to very near her crotch where he concentrates his strokes.

For the first time, he seems fully cognizant of what he's doing to her. Clearly, she's not in the least uncomfortable with this.

FITCH

Is this how Doug does it?

(CONTINUED)

161 CONTINUED:

70.
161

NINA

Excuse me?

CUT TO:

162 TITLE CARD #10

162

which reads:

"The Chest

When massaging the chest of a woman, do not avoid the breasts. Trying to work around the breasts will disrupt the rhythm of your strokes.

CUT TO:

163 ANGLE ON THE MASSAGE TABLE

163

Fitch has positioned himself at the head of the table as he begins a series of broad, circular motions just below the collarbone.

FITCH

Maybe the whole thing's a question of perception.

NINA

What is?

FITCH

It's not the way people see you that's the problem but the way you see them seeing you.

NINA

How do you mean?

FITCH

Well, like, Doug. He said you were - the word he used was adrift. He never mentioned anything about being single or not being single. He never mentioned anything at all. Beyond the initial observation, that is.

NINA

I'm not sure I follow.

(CONTINUED)

His fingers drift nonchalantly lower down her chest, suggesting that he would be the last person to let something like a breast break the rhythm of his strokes.

FITCH

You like things, nice things.

NINA

I do.

FITCH

And you have nice things, lots of them.

NINA

A few.

FITCH

And, yet, you feel like a failure.

NINA

Did I say that?

FITCH

Don't you?

With his palms, he gently strokes the sides of her breasts, steadfastly refusing to move his hands any closer to her nipples.

CUT TO:

164 NINA AND DOUGLAS

164

as he moves his hands slowly around her breasts, encircling the nipples, coming teasingly close to touching them only to pull away.

He repeats this pattern once or twice more until, finally, he lets his fingers caress her nipples. Her back tenses. He gently pulls at them, twisting them slightly as he does. She exhales loudly. He pinches them between his thumb and index finger. Her body stiffens.

CUT TO:

165 NINA AND FITCH

165

as he brings his hands back to her collarbone, never having touched her nipples directly, leaving her visibly frustrated.

(CONTINUED)

NINA

Are you going to hold up your crystals and tell me I'm of Two Hearts?

FITCH

No. But, you see, what I believe is not "ooga-booga bullshit." It comes from first-hand experience. There are people who have possessions, lots of possessions, and they are made miserable by them.

NINA

And there are people who live in refrigerator crates who'd trade places in a second. I buy things, I admit it. But I'm not a materialist. Not really. Because, to me, things are things. They mean nothing.

FITCH

Not true. They carry memories. That's the way they're meaningful - as a link to other people.

NINA

Well, all I know is I usually end up just getting frustrated by all that conspicuous consumption, angry even.

FITCH

Because you think whatever it is you're buying will make you happier. Or younger. Or sexier.

NINA

I see what you're doing, you know. You're trying to convince me how miserable I am.

FITCH

And am I succeeding?

NINA

No, just pissing me off.

FITCH

Why's that?

NINA

(the rage slowly building)
Because unlike you, nothing was ever
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

165 CONTINUED:

NINA (cont'd)
given to me, that's why. And it's not money I'm talking about, not just. Everything I own - everything I have - I've earned, one way or another. So don't tell me I'm wrong - don't tell me I'm immoral - just because I decided to make something of my life and you didn't. I mean, shouldn't a man your age be something?

FITCH
I know you've made something of your life. I'm just asking you what that is.

Nina bolts upright.

NINA
No, you're not! Not anymore.

A long beat, as they remain eye-to-eye for a moment. She then slide herself off the table, rising to her feet.

NINA
You know what they difference is between you and me? Really? The difference is you have spent so much time completely rationalizing your life that you actually believe it.... You are a very lonely man, Fitch.

FITCH
You let him touch you.

NINA
Who?

CUT TO:

166 NINA AND DOUGLAS 166

as he spider-walks his fingers around her breasts, encircling the nipples.

CUT TO:

167 NINA AND FITCH - AS BEFORE 167

as they continue to face off.

FITCH
You expect him to touch you.

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED:

NINA

Expect who to?

CUT TO:

168 DOUGLAS AND NINA

168

as he lets his fingers caress her nipples, then gently pulls at them, twisting them slightly as he does, then pinches them between his thumb and his index finger.

169 ANGLE ON NINA AND FITCH

169

as she backs off slightly.

FITCH

That's what it's about, isn't it?
Doug and you - it's about sex.

Nina doesn't respond.

FITCH

Isn't it?

NINA

I don't know.

A beat, then:

NINA

Did he say something to you?
Douglas?

Fitch shakes his head: no.

NINA

Oh, Christ. That obvious, hunh?

She slouches back toward the massage table.

NINA

I know it's nothing to him. He's very discreet about it. And it's not like he does anything more than touch me. It's about as safe as sex gets these days.

She now drops herself on the table and sits.

NINA

I try to be, too: discreet. We never talk about it. We just pretend it's part of the massage.

(CONTINUED)

FITCH

Which it is.

A brief beat, then:

NINA

All relationships are a kind of currency, I've come to the unfortunate conclusion. I'm using you just like you're using me using you using me. On and on it goes.... The money part - it's, at least, honest.

A long beat, then the TELEPHONE RINGS.

Both heads snap in the direction of the phone as it rings again ... and again ... and again ... until Nina's answering machine CLICKS ON:

NINA'S VOICE

(from the answering machine)

Hi, this is Nina. At the sound of the tone, the voice you hear will be your own....

We hear the shrill BEEP, then:

A MAN'S VOICE

(from the machine)

Nina, you there? It's me: Douglas.

Fitch and Nina exchange a look.

FITCH

You're not going to get it?

Clearly, she is not. So we:

CUT TO:

170 EXT. VINCE'S GYM - TELEPHONE BOOTH - DAY

170

DOUG

(on the phone)

Sorry about the switch.....

He glances out of the booth at the man staring in at him.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Something just came up. I was really just calling to see if Fitch made it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

170 CONTINUED:

DOUG (CONT'D)

He's a real decent guy. I know you'll like him.... Maybe he's already been there and left, hunh? Anyway, see you next week: same time, same place. Ciao, man.

As he hangs up the phone, we:

CUT TO:

171 INT. HOUSE - SUN ROOM - DAY

171

As the answering machine CLICKS OFF, Fitch and Nina share another look. She then reclines on the table, propping herself up on one elbow.

NINA

This is not the most relaxing massage I've ever had.

FITCH

But it's the best.

She half-laughs at this then lowers her shoulder, lying back on the table until she is completely supine.

He stands back for a moment, as if not quite knowing what to do next. He then reaches for a bottle and spreads oil thickly across her belly, from just below her breasts.

He now begins some short, deep strokes across her abdomen, careful to avoid even the slightest contact with anything like an erogenous zone.

Sexual contact would, in any case, be totally extraneous at this point. For in some perceptible though indescribable way, the two are now connected more completely and more intimately than sex would ever have allowed them to be.

NINA

I wasn't being totally honest.

FITCH

About what?

NINA

Men. Men and me. As much as I choose not to believe it, the truth is I've been involved with a lot of them. It's always more of the same, sorry to say.

CUT TO:

172 THE PARK-LIKE SETTING 172

with the painter at the easel and Nina stepping INTO VIEW.

NINA

(v.o.)

But the middle of last year - this man just suddenly appeared in my life. An artist.

CUT TO:

173 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 173

NINA

You've got to understand that in my world so much is done for effect. And here was someone who did nothing for effect - he was who he was, no apologies.

CUT TO:

174 THE TABLE BY CANDLELIGHT 174

Nina and the painter sit across from one another, holding hands.

NINA

(v.o.)

He treated me well.

The painter leans across the table and kisses Nina.

NINA

(v.o.)

Very well.

She smiles at him strangely.

NINA

(v.o.)

Better than I treated him.

PAINTER

I find myself thinking about you all the time.

NINA

Is that bad?

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

PAINTER

That's what I was going to ask you.
It's hard for me to know where I
stand with you.

NINA

Is everything in your life always so
complicated?

PAINTER

No, just the important things.

CUT TO:

175 ANGLE ON THE MESSAGE TABLE 175

NINA

And all he expected in return was for
me to be me.

FITCH

But you couldn't - give yourself up.

CUT TO:

176 THE FRONT DOOR - NINA'S HOUSE 176

She watches in perplexed silence as the painter walks down
the street, disappearing into the darkness.

CUT TO:

177 THE STUDIO 177

NINA

It's been a long time - a long time -
since my various husbands blew
through my life. But still. Too
much stuff. You don't want to admit
how much people affect you, but they
do.

CUT TO:

178 EXT. MISSOURI COUNTRY ROAD 178

Winding, silent, lonely.

CUT TO:

179 FITCH - MOVING 179

along the side of the same lonely road, toward a flashing red light that grows brighter and redder as he approaches. Finally, a POLICE CAR comes INTO VIEW and just beyond it THE WRECKAGE OF AN AUTOMOBILE.

Two EMTS are in the midst of pulling Alice from the wreckage. They are in no particular hurry to get her up the embankment and inside the ambulance; they have no reason to be.

In death - or more accurately, Fitch's imagination of it - she is just as she was in life: achingly beautiful, untouched, without a bruise or scratch.

180 OMIT 180

181 OMIT 181

182 OMIT 182

183 OMIT 183

184 OMIT 184

185 OMIT 185

186 OMIT 186

187 ANGLE ON THE FRONT DOOR - NINA'S HOUSE 187

She watches in perplexed silence as the painter walks down the street, disappearing into the darkness.

CUT TO:

188 OMIT 188

189 FITCH - MOVING 189

toward the small, RURAL HOUSE, his eyes fixed on the front door.

CUT TO:

190 OMIT 190

191 OMIT 191

192 OMIT 192

193 FITCH - MOVING

193

reaches the front of the house. Just as he is about to knock on the door, it opens slowly on its own. He peers inside. Not another person in sight, even when the door has opened all the way.

CUT TO:

194 THE STUDIO

194

Fitch stops for a moment and Nina turns to face him.

FITCH

I came to a place once, not long ago. It was a lonely place, an empty place with no hope and, I thought, no way out. It's a place I could have easily been lost in forever. But, slowly, I began to understand something - that I put myself in that place, and that it was up to me to get myself out. And so I chose hope. I chose belief.

(physically referring to
his various mystical
items)

You see, it's all true. God has to be all things to all people. To be anything less would be less than perfect - human. What you believe in isn't nearly so important as believing in something. But just don't wait too long, or you may find yourself believing in nothing.

CUT TO:

195 FITCH - MOVING

195

through the doorway into the rural house.

Once inside, he is met by a towering HOPI dressed in ceremonial garb. The Hopi extends an arm in the direction of the center of the room. It's there that Fitch sees a casket with its top open.

Fitch leaves the Hopi and crosses reluctantly to the casket. He looks down. There lies the perfect, lifeless body of the young woman, Alice.

(CONTINUED)

195 CONTINUED: 81.
195

Her mouth is turned slightly upward in the faintest melancholy smile. Fitch is ashen at the sight of it.

CUT TO:

196 THE STUDIO 196

Having packed up all his things, Fitch looks at Nina.

FITCH
How do you feel?

NINA
Good. Very good.

FITCH
Good.

CUT TO:

197 INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY 197

Wearing a floor-length robe, she emerges from the room and starts down the hallway.

CUT TO:

198 INT. HOUSE - ANOTHER HALLWAY - DAY 198

As she walks, her legs thresh open the bottom of the robe revealing that she wears nothing underneath.

CUT TO:

199 INT. HOUSE - STILL ANOTHER HALLWAY - DAY 199

In the palm of her hand, we now see, she clutches five \$20 bills.

CUT TO:

200 EXT. HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DUSK 200

Fitch, who has just finished loading his massage table into his car, returns to the house

CUT TO:

201 I./E. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR & HALLWAY - DUSK 201

Nina meets Fitch at the door with the money in her hand.

.

(CONTINUED)

INA

Was it a hundred I owe you?

FITCH

Did I say that?

NINA

That's what Douglas charges me.

FITCH

Fifty's fine.

She pushes all the money toward him.

NINA

Take it.

FITCH

Honestly.

NINA

Take it.

FITCH

Okay, seventy-five, then.

NINA

Seventy-five, then.

She presses all the money in his hand.

NINA

With a twenty-five dollar tip.

He smiles and pockets the money.

FITCH

You get your way, don't you?

From his pocket, he removes what looks like a computer chip.

NINA

What's that?

FITCH

Something we're all looking for.

NINA

And what's that?

(CONTINUED)

FITCH
Information.

NINA
About you?

FITCH
Me and you.

He places the chip in her palm, closes her hand around it, then turns her hand so that her fist faces downward. He then touches the top of her hand with his index finger

FITCH
I want you to think about not dropping it, and that's all I want you to think about.

NINA
Not dropping it - okay.

FITCH
Concentrate. Try as hard as you can. But on the count of ten, the chip is going to fall from your hand, and you'll have absolutely no power to stop it.

NINA
All right.

FITCH
Ready? One ... two ... three ... four ... five ... six ... seven ... eight ... nine ... ten....

The chip drops from her hand. He catches it on the fly. He holds it for a moment then hands it back to her.

FITCH
Keep it.

NINA
Where did you learn that?

FITCH
I saw it in a movie once.

FITCH
(after a moment)
Well, I've got to be going.

CUT TO:

202 INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

202

Nina leads the way to the front door, stopping just before she opens it.

NINA

I'd like you to come back next week.

FITCH

I'm flattered.

NINA

I'm serious. Same day?

A brief beat, as he peers into her eyes.

FITCH

What about Doug?

NINA

What about him?

FITCH

I can't just take his gig away.

NINA

Douglas is young.

FITCH

So?

NINA

He'll find someone else to replace me. Women like him. That's what you said.

FITCH

Well, it's not that I don't want to come back.

NINA

Do you?

FITCH

Yes.

NINA

Then, I'll work something out with him. I'll explain the situation. If it's that important, I'll have you both come. But not at the same time.

(CONTINUED)

202 CONTINUED:

FITCH
(smiles)
Okay.

He then extends his hand.

FITCH
It was nice meeting you. I hope that
I wasn't too ...

NINA
What?

FITCH
Confrontational.

She takes his hand, pulls him close, and kisses him on the
cheek in a friendly, distinctly unsexual way.

NINA
Of course, you were.

CUT TO:

203 EXT. NINA'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DUSK 203

Fitch makes his way down the walkway to his car, glancing
back over his shoulder as he goes.

CUT TO:

204 FITCH'S POV - FRONT DOOR 204

With the door open wide, Nina watches him.

CUT TO:

205 REVERSE POV - FITCH 205

waves, ducks into the car, and turns the ignition.

CUT TO:

206 ANGLE ON FITCH'S CAR 206

as it pulls away.

CUT TO:

207 EXT./INT. HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DUSK 207

Nina lingers a moment, watching the car disappear into the
darkness, before she closes the door. When she turns away

(CONTINUED)

207 CONTINUED:

from the door, something in the bedroom the room catches her eye.

CUT TO:

208 INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DUSK 208

Hanging from the wall is the PORTRAIT OF NINA that the painter painted. Nina gazes at it wistfully. She then remembers that she holds something in her hand. She looks down at the computer chip that Fitch gave her and smiles.

CUT TO:

209 INT. FITCH'S CAR - MOVING - DUSK 209

From the seat next to him, Fitch fumbles for a tape then inserts it into the ageing tape player. But instead of music, we hear the young woman's VOICE.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(from the player)

Is it on?

FITCH'S VOICE

(from the player)

It's on.

The sound of some fumbling with the microphone.

CUT TO:

210 ALICE - CLOSE UP 210

singing into the tape recorder's microphone.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(singing a capella)

I went down to the St. James Infirmary,
To see my baby there,
She was stretched out on a long white table,
So pale, so cold, and so fair.

CUT TO:

211 INT. FITCH'S CAR - MOVING - AS BEFORE - DUSK 211

WOMAN'S VOICE

(v.o., singing)

Let her go, let her go, God bless her -

211 CONTINUED:

Fitch reaches over and turns off the tape player. He then fixes his eyes on the PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY ahead.

CUT TO:

212 OMIT 212

213 INT. HOUSE - HALLWAY - DUSK 213

Nina now moves through the hallway, eyeing her various objets d'art, looking at them with a critical eye that seems to suggest some serious re-analysis is going on, artistic and otherwise.

CUT TO:

214 INT. FITCH'S CAR - MOVING - DUSK 214

As the last light of day disappears, as headlights of oncoming traffic stream uninterrupted toward us, we ride with Fitch for several moments more.

215 OMIT 215

FADE OUT:

THE END