

MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING

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First Draft Screenplay

INT. BOULEY RESTAURANT, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Dim lighting, crowd buzz, a long line of the rich, the celebrated, the congenitally impatient. Everyone in this queue holds a reservation at least an hour overdue. Tourists can't even make the line. PAN ahead to...

... the burnished dining room, the tables of power, the elegant service. Covertly, many eyes are drawn to the one table receiving by far the most lavish service of all. Captains hover, presenting delicacies, pouring wines, murmuring obsequiously to a guest whose person they screen from our view. We can see, however...

... the honored guest's companion. Ignored, bemused, across the table. This is DIGGER DOWNES, 36, darkly attractive. Kind eyes, an intellectual's mouth, Saville Row's most unobtrusive and conservative chalk-stripe suit. He is gay, but you wouldn't guess it. Loyal and wise and generous, and you might. He watches with a quiet twinkle, as the Captains now step back, revealing to us...

... their most unlikely icon. JULIANNE POTTER, almost 28, wears her favorite bulky sweater over a bunch of other stuff she pulled together in fifteen seconds. She is unkempt, quick, volatile, scattered, and beneath it all, perhaps because of it all, an original beauty. Dark liquid eyes, a cynical mouth, slender expressive fingers, which point to...

CAPTAIN

A variation on our squid ink
risotto. Trace of Moselle, to
sweeten the stock.

She doesn't like that idea at all. Shoots him a sharp look of doubt that makes him smile. Murmur...

CAPTAIN

Don't kill us on this one, it's
a long shot.

Places the moist lump of black rice before her. She takes a surprisingly small amount, rolls it over her tongue. Makes dead flat eye contact with Digger. And nods, it's actually quite nice. The Captain breathes with relief. She turns her dark eyes to him. The tone says they're pals...

JULIANNE

I'm writing it up as inventive and confident. Which it is. Off the record, I'll need an extra boat of the ink. Or a salt shaker.

CAPTAIN

I'll toss a coin.

As the Captain splits, Digger looks around at the other tables, which makes many pairs of eyes awkwardly glance away.

DIGGER

Is it ever embarrassing, having your bum kissed in public?

JULIANNE

If your ass isn't chapped, you are not a good-writer of note.

She glances at her two remaining waiters, who shamelessly fawn nearby.

JULIANNE

Is it sad to be an editor, and bask only in reflected insincerity?

DIGGER

I've adjusted, and thanks for asking.

She leans forward, as if sharing something conspiratorial.

JULIANNE

See the pull of a book like *Twenty Chefs*, is not who I put in. It's who I leave out.

DIGGER

Which is everyone you couldn't get in.

JULIANNE

Plus some guys whose food I don't like.

Pushes the risotto across to him. He lifts a fork.

DIGGER

This fellow from *Newsday* ever call?

She shrugs. Pulls a cellular out of a large, jumbled bag.

JULIANNE

I'll buzz my machine. Inventive
and confident, yeh?

She dials. He tastes.

DIGGER

Needs salt.

JULIANNE

Is Newsday a real interview, or
just some cute guy you're setting
me up w...

DIGGER

... I don't send you men, anymore.
You don't know what to do with them.

She's punching in her code.

JULIANNE

Sometimes I do. Like for two months.

DIGGER

... weeks.

Over the phone, we hear her answering machine...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O., soft)

Hey. It's Michael.

And her face changes. Warms. Just to hear the guileless voice.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

God, it must be, what, months, huh?
I can't wait to talk to you. I'm
in Chicago at the Ritz Carlton...

She looks impressed and surprised. Fancy place for this guy.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Call me four in the morning,
whatever, we gotta talk.

As she hangs up. She still has that look in her eye. Digger has
never seen that, and he likes it very much.

DIGGER

Who called? The man of the
moment?

She smiles. A sweet, natural smile that makes us like her, too.
The Bohemian sophisticate has vanished.

JULIANNE

No, no, the opposite. That's
my best friend, Michael O'Neal.
He sounds desperate to talk.

DIGGER

The wandering sportswriter.

He pushes the risotto back her way.

DIGGER

I didn't know you two had a
past.

Her gaze sharpens. Hmmn?

DIGGER

The look in your eye.

She blushes. Shakes her head, no way.

JULIANNE

Sophomore year at Yale we had
this one hot month. And, you
know me, I got restless...

He knows her. She got restless.

JULIANNE

So I get up the nerve to break
his heart. I tell him there's
this dreamy exchange student
from Pakistan who wants to,
you know...

He knows.

JULIANNE

And he gets this... look. He
says, "I knew I couldn't hold
your interest", which, of course,
makes me feel like the shallow
bitch I've always been...

He nods, yeah.

JULIANNE

Then he says, "But what makes
me want to cry. Is I'm losing
the best friend I ever had."

Hears the feeling. In her voice.

JULIANNE

And when he said it, I knew.
I felt the same.

Silence now. She covers with a smile.

JULIANNE

So I cried. For maybe the third time in my life. And I kissed him. And we've been best friends ever since.

Ever since. Fingers turning her wine glass...

JULIANNE

Nine years, we've seen each other through everything. Losing jobs, losing parents, losing lovers... travelled all over, we've had the best times. The best times of my life, maybe. Just drinking and talking. Even over a phone.

DIGGER

Kindred spirits.

JULIANNE

No, he's nothing like me. He's like you. Only straight.

No offense taken.

JULIANNE

He's the salt of the earth. Kind and loyal and generous. The one constant thing in my life, is he'll always be there.

DIGGER

He's still in love with you.

That stops her. She has to say...

JULIANNE

Maybe. But it never gets in the way.

Something she probably hasn't confessed out loud before. Digger understands.

DIGGER

Well, he has a true friend in you.

He wants her to know he sees that.

DIGGER

Whenever George tells someone how steadfast I am, he always makes me sound boring.

JULIANNE

Solid and genuine is not boring.
Michael can be completely insane...

A young waiter arrives. Sets a boat of black squid ink beside her plate.

JULIANNE

There was this one night in
Tucson, like six years ago...
we got amazingly drunk, I mean,
Keith Richards time...

The kid tops off her glass of meursault. Looking at her.

JULIANNE

God, I haven't thought of this
in so long...

The waiter hanging now. Openly listening.

JULIANNE

I can even believe we did
this...

Digger sees the guy listening, gestures to her with his eyes. So she looks up.

JULIANNE

Could you give us a minute?

The kid stunned, speechless. People lose jobs for a lot less.

JULIANNE

You won't miss much, I promise
there was no sex.

He reddens and disappears.

DIGGER

I've lost interest.

JULIANNE

He takes a razor from his dinky
little dopp kit, cuts his fingertip,
takes my hand, does the same to me...

She places the tips of her index fingers together.

DIGGER

Blood oath.

JULIANNE

He says, "Swear. When we're both
28, if we've never been married...
we marry each other!"

And laughs again. Can you believe that? But Digger isn't smiling.

She wonders why. Begins to spoon black squid ink onto her risotto.

JULIANNE

See, he figured that would be a sign from God, or someone of comparable authority, that we'd misunderstood our destinies.

He still has this real serious look. She's still spooning ink.

JULIANNE

We never talked about it again. I don't know what made me think of...

DIGGER (quietly)

I do.

And everything. Stops. She lifts her spoon, mesmerized by the gravity of his tone.

DIGGER

You'll be 28 in three weeks. How old is he?

Holy. Fucking. Shit. It hits her like a ton of lead bricks. She shovels some swampy risotto into her mouth, without looking.

JULIANNE

You think...

DIGGER

Desperate. To talk.

She shovels in more drippy black goop. It is really disgusting.

JULIANNE

He's not proposing marriage, there's no way I'm buying one word of th...

DIGGER

Then why are you compulsively eating? If you're not hysterical?

More goes in. Her lips and mouth completely black. Like a circus clown.

JULIANNE

He can't do that to me!

DIGGER

We're about to find out.

Ink is now dribbling out of the black hole of her mouth and down her face. She absently dabs a napkin, keeping some of it from reaching her sweater.

JULIANNE

When I turn him down...

She realizes the full weight of the truth.

JULIANNE

We'll never be the same.

DIGGER

I have a suggestion...

JULIANNE

I'll have to kill myself before I
call him.

Staring in each other's eyes.

DIGGER (sadly)

That was it.

INT. JULIANNE'S BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

Julianne furiously scrubs her blackened tongue with a toothbrush. Gray foam pours from her mouth, splattering the oversized basketball jersey she wears as a nightshirt. In the mirror, her troubled eyes dwell on Michael, flick to the cordless phone standing ominously on the closed toilet lid.

She spits, sticks her tongue way out. Incredibly black. Great. Depressed, terrified, and disfigured for life. She snatches up the hated phone, and wanders aimlessly into...

... her bedroom. West Village view. Defiantly jumbled, aggressively eclectic. Traces of wonderful taste mixed with I-like-it-you-got-a-problem-with-that? She stumbles around, rehearsing...

JULIANNE

This is awkward timing, Michael,
I just joined this convent, and
they never give your deposit ba...

Stops. Full-length mirror. She straightens her hair, to look her best.

JULIANNE

Michael, I'm married.

Not enough.

JULIANNE

... and I have two weeks to live.

Changes tone...

JULIANNE

Michael, I'm trying to be gay,
don't confuse me.

She turns to continue pacing, and walks straight INTO a dresser. Stuns her, momentarily. Enough, already! She punches up the number, primping absently in the mirror. When it connects...

JULIANNE

I was calling Michael O'Neal,
but seeing it's so late, I could
just leave a mes...

No such luck. Cut off. Waits. And then...

JULIANNE (soft)

Good evening, sir. You've been
enrolled in the Obscene Call Of
The Month Club, and th...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Hey! God, it's so good to hear
your voice.

She forgets herself. Because it's good to hear his, too.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I've been calling for days!

JULIANNE

Yeh, well my old machine kept
eating messages. I tried
constructively ignoring it in
hopes of improvement, but finally...

MICHAEL (V.O., urgent)

Look, I have to ask you something.

She swallows.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Something so incredibly important,
that if you turn me down, I don't
know what I'll d...

JULIANNE (bright)

I just have to tell you this one
thing first, okay? I mean this
will hand you the biggest laugh
of your adult life...

Silence. Come on girl, suck it up.

JULIANNE

I was thinking about you, and I
remembered this unbelievably insane
night we spent together in Tucson,
like a thousand years ago?

More silence. Really quiet.

JULIANNE

I mean, there's no way you could possibly remember the...

MICHAEL (V.O., soft)

Are you kidding?

Stops her. Like a brick wall. The sweetness in his voice.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I think about that night all the time.

She's going to have a heart attack.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But it's not why I called.

She blinks. It's not. And just as a tsunami of relief begins to sweep away...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I called because I met someone.

And her smiles breaks off. Like a spine snapping. Because there is something in his voice.

JULIANNE

Well, that's great. You haven't really had anybody since Dingbat Jennylee...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

You don't understand. I've never felt this way about anybody!

Never. She sits down, hard. Right on the floor.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

And she's all wrong for me!

JULIANNE

Well, somet...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I mean she's a junior at Chicago University, she's twenty years old! Like when I first met you.

Like when. Julianne's mouth is suddenly dry.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

And her dad is like this billionaire who owns the White Sox and some cable empire, and you know how I've always been miserably awkward around those

kinda stuffed suits...

She's finally making her mouth work...

JULIANNE

Well, sure.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But they're so down to earth, such wonderful people...

JULIANNE

You've met her parents.

MICHAEL (V.O., quiet)

Well. Sure.

Wow.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

See. We're getting married.
This Sunday.

There's a knife in her heart. She can scarcely breathe.

JULIANNE

Michael, it's Wednesday night,
you can't possibly be getting
married on Su...

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Actually, it all starts tomorrow.
It's one of those four-day weddings,
with all the traditional events, and
ten million people flying in from
Madagascar such.

JULIANNE (incredibly lame)

Aren't you... working this weekend?
I mean, is that responsible?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Well, the Sox are at home. SI's
letting me do a profile on the Big
Hurt. That's Frank...

JULIANNE

(barely audible)
... Thomas, yeh.

She's staring at herself in the mirror.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Jules. I'm scared.

A straw to lunge at.

JULIANNE
Well, maybe we should talk ab...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I need you.

So heartfelt. A lifetime of emotion welling in her eyes.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
If you can't come. And hold my
hand. I'll never get through this.

Oh.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Please come, please.

JULIANNE
W...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I can't wait for you to meet her!

HOLD ON Julianne. Staring in the mirror. Like watching the end of her life.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The closet, the armoire, all the drawers are wide open. Two huge suitcases open on the bed, into which Julianne is flinging clothes, as she fumbles to smoke and dial at the same time. Over the phone, now...

DIGGER (V.O., machine)
You've reached Digger and George.
Brevity will be appreciated.

BEEP.

JULIANNE (in a rage)
IT'S ME AGAIN, WHY AREN'T YOU GUYS
UP HAVING SAFE SEX??

SNATCHES up a tiny, clingy, sexy dress. Pouts at it.

JULIANNE
OR, IN THE ALTERNATIVE, WHY AREN'T
YOU INTERRUPTING IT TO ANSWER
THE PHONE??

She holds the dress against her body. It's hot.

JULIANNE
YOU, YOU, YOU! IT'S ALL ABOUT
YOU, ISN'T IT??

She clicks OFF. Checks the dress in the mirror. Raises the short

skirt a little higher.

INT. DIGGER'S CHEROKEE, JFK AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING

Digger driving the open-air Cherokee up the ramp to United Airlines departures. Julianne, wind-whipped, trying to light a fresh cigarette from the butt of the last one. He glances over. Hates to see this...

DIGGER

You can't get lung cancer and die in four days. Go to Plan B.

She sucks deep. Really deep.

JULIANNE

You have no appropriate sense of emergency. My best friend is ruining his life.

DIGGER

No, he's ruining yours.

JULIANNE

Same difference. If you love someone, it's your duty to save them from themselves.

DIGGER

You have a real philosophy of life.

JULIANNE

It's called the Law of Love, asshole.

She is tight enough to snap. And at the edge of tears. Staring out at the skycaps, clinging to her cigarette, as he eases to the curb.

DIGGER (gently)

Why don't we have a drink? You could catch a later fl...

JULIANNE

I'm a busy girl. I've got four days to break up a wedding, and steal the bride's fella.

She finally looks at him. He doesn't say anything.

JULIANNE

He's adored me for nine goddamn years.

DIGGER

I can see why.

JULIANNE

She knows him maybe five seconds,
plus she has billions of dollars,
plus she's perfect, so don't go
feeling sorry for Miss Pre-Teen Illinois!

He's not. So her voice softens. Which shows the hurt.

JULIANNE

And don't go feeling sorry for
me, you don't know me that well.
We're only friends.

DIGGER (softly)

I stand corrected.

Tears now. Stand in her eyes.

JULIANNE

I'm making a big mistake, huh?

DIGGER (shrugs)

Maybe you'll learn something.

He wraps his hand over hers. She looks down at it.

JULIANNE

I'm gonna bring him back, man.
Against all odds, y'know. Cos
if I don't...

She wraps her fingers around his.

JULIANNE

... I gotta live with it forever.

Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE

And at my wedding. I'll be the
only bride with her own best man.

And she kisses his cheek.

Jumps out of his car. Before she cries. Yanks her bags from the
back. Brave smile.

They trade small salutes. And then she's gone.

INT. O'HARA AIRPORT, CHICAGO - MORNING

The jetway disgorging passengers into the swarming ant colony
called O'Hare. Julianne lugging multiple carry-ons, trying to pull
fly-away strands of hair into place, nervous as a schoolgirl,
looking all around, and...

... there he is. MICHAEL is tall and square-shouldered, a boyish grin, an unruly shock of hair. He looks gorgeous, sweet, and just dangerous enough to be irresistible. Worthwhile stakes. His face lights to see her, and she...

... RUNS to his arms, shedding bags along the way, slamming off heedless civilians, to be...

... SWEPT OFF the earth in strong arms, spun around, laughing like crazy, their cheeks tight together. When he sets her down...

... he kisses her nose. His arms are still around her.

MICHAEL (murmurs)
Can you believe it? Can you believe
I'm actually gonna do this?

JULIANNE (lost in his eyes)
Not hardly.

He beams. Turns. She follows his gaze, and...

... there she is. KIMBERLY WALLACE is 20, small and slender, but it is a body to die for. The face is striking, not at all perky and vapid, but lovely and interesting. Worst of all, intelligent.

She walks toward them purposefully, her eyes locked to the woman in her fiancée's arms. At the last moment, Michael releases Julianne and Kimmy...

... THROWS her arms around the startled visitor. HOLDS her tight, with such genuine warmth that Julianne can only, slowly, hug back. As Michael beams.

KIMMY
This just makes everything so
perfect.

Her arms stay around the slightly dazed Julianne. The younger girl leans close, confides...

KIMMY
All I've heard, from the day I
met Michael, is Julianne this,
and Julianne that...

JULIANNE
Well, we're...

KIMMY
I think the best part of marrying
this guy is finding you.

Pale gray eyes. Alive with joy and intimacy.

KIMMY
I've never had a sister.

INT. KIMMY'S CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Kimmy TEARING down the throughway in her Mercedes 500 SL, a dashing, confident driver. Julianne riding shotgun, hair flying, a total wreck, in the open convertible. Michael is happily crouched on the little platform behind their seats, hugging his knees. The roar of the wind makes it impossible for him to hear them.

KIMMY

My heart's in my throat, here.
Right off, I have to ask this
monstrous favor...

JULIANNE

You need a few dollars.

Kim glances over. At eighty miles an hour. A bittersweet look.

KIMMY

Dry. Just like he said.

Her eyes at once admiring and regretful.

JULIANNE

Excuse me?

KIMMY

I can be quick. I can even
be funny.

Shakes her head. An endearing youngster.

KIMMY

But I can't be dry.

JULIANNE

Can you watch the road?

KIMMY

See. Dry. It's in the delivery.

She looks back to the highway.

KIMMY

This is a very presumptuous
and burdensome fav...

JULIANNE

... you want a menage on your
wedding night.

KIMMY (straight back)

No, that wouldn't be burdensome.

Julianne studying the delicate, angular profile. Hard not to like this kid.

KIMMY

My classmate Angelique shattered
her pelvis line dancing in
Abeline on Spring Break.

Looks over. The sweetest smile.

KIMMY

Be my maid of honor.

Julianne just blinks.

KIMMY

You can't believe what it'd
cost to bring in a temp.

JULIANNE

Uh. How about promoting a
bridesmaid? Someone you know
for at least forty-five minutes.

We CUT OFF a huge SEMI who BLASTS his horn. Kimmy fearless,
oblivious, and analytical...

KIMMY

The bridesmaids are my only two
female relatives under forty.
Identical twin debutantes from
Nashville, who are basically
vengeful sluts. With amazing
bodies!

JULIANNE

Which was the disqualifying
factor?

KIMMY

The twin part. I like to remain
impartial in my contempt.

Sees the off-ramp, and SLICES across FOUR LANES of speeding bullets
in a heart-stopping nanosecond. This kid could drive for Penske.
Julianne has to pound her chest to get her heart started. Looks
back to see if Michael fell out...

... he is absurdly wind-blown. Gives her a beautiful grinning
thumbs-up. Loves this stuff.

KIMMY

This means I have four days
to make you my new best friend...

Brings Julianne's eyes back...

KIMMY

And since I already know everything

about you. Including intimate facts I'm mortified to have heard, but too envious to forget. It's time for you to learn about me...

Easing off the freeway. She meets Julianne's glance...

KIMMY

Force yourself. To get personal.

JULIANNE (smiles)

Sounds like a plan.

INT. DRESS SHOP, NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE - MORNING

The place is stunning. High-ceiling, soft light, large rococo mirrors, Louis Quatorze sofas and chairs. Michael wanders restlessly, fish out of water among designer displays and stylish female patrons.

Takes a look at his watch.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MORNING

A period sitting room, ringed with mirrors along its tapestried walls. Kimmy sits on a Louis Treize loveseat next to a stack of costly gowns. Watching with an expertise beyond her years, as...

... Julianne stands on a platform. A seamstress fitting her into a sleek pale daffodil-colored gown. There are pins everywhere, as the seamstress struggles toward a perfect fit. Continuously looking to Kim for approval.

KIMMY

If you'd rather the lilac...

Julianne shakes her head. This one is beautiful.

JULIANNE

I thought bridesmaids had to wear the same dress.

KIMMY

Not you. You won't be comfortable unless you're distinctive.

Julianne glances over.

JULIANNE

What else did he tell you...

KIMMY

... you hate weddings, you never go.

Oh. Well, yeah.

KIMMY

You're not up for anything
conventional, or popularly
assumed to be female priorities.
Including marriage. Or romance.
Or even...

And she stops. Not wanting to offend.

JULIANNE (quietly)
... not even love.

The look holds. The seamstress keeps working, as if she's deaf.

JULIANNE
That's why Michael and I were
the wrong fit. Right from the
start.

KIMMY
He said that, too.

She stands up. Walks to the platform. Smooths her hand over the
fabric down Julianne's back, along her hips. Communicating to the
seamstress with her irritated expression.

KIMMY
Well, I thought I was like you.
And proud to be. Until I met
rumped, smelly old Michael...

Pins start to come out. Kimmy points, these, too!

KIMMY
And then I found I was just a
sentimental schmuck. Like all
those flighty nitwits I'd always
pitied.

She leans forward. So they can look at each other.

KIMMY
Funny world, huh?

Julianne swallows. It is that.

JULIANNE
I need a smoke.

And before anyone can breathe, she steps OFF the platform RIPPING
the living shit out of the gown, right down the side. The seam-
stress' eyes FLASH OPEN in abject horror. Julianne, a deer in
headlights, looks quickly around at the evidence of her screw-up in
six different mirrors.

Kimberly just steps to her, fingers the tear...

KIMMY

It's mostly the seam. Let's
get this to Carlos.

And UNZIPS Julianne down the back. In her rush to step out,
Julianne STUMBLES, but her arms are pinned by the pulled-down dress
and she just...

... TOPPLES like a felled oak, THUDDING on her face, the gown
RIPPING some more, the seamstress SCREAMING like an idiot.

Then. Silence. Julianne looking up helplessly, a trussed hog,
bound in her dress.

KIMMY (firm)
Just. Don't. Move.

Like you talk to a three-year-old. Deftly, Kimmy pulls the
dress free, leaving Julianne in her underwear. Signals to the
seamstress, let's go.

JULIANNE
Don't you have to be somewh...

KIMMY
... just my bridal shower. And
Michael has to meet our dads and
the groomsmen at Comiskey for a
one-thirty game.

Opens the door...

KIMMY
Other than that...

Closed SOLID. Gone.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Julianne sits on the loveseat in her bra and panties, lighting one
cigarette from the butt of another. Suddenly, she hears...

... an ARGUMENT outside the door. Strains to listen. It does sound
like Michael and Kim. We can't make out the words. She jumps up,
dashes for the door, STUBBING her toe on the platform, SHIT!, falls
heavily AGAINST the door with a THUD that makes her wince, and...

... the argument stops. Damn. She opens the door a crack. Sees
nothing. Opens it wider to reveal...

... a teenaged BOY looking right at her. He sends a true shit-
eating grin and she SLAMS the door hard enough to RATTLE walls.

She PACES furiously, helplessly, arms around her half-naked self,
until...

... soft knock. The door opens a crack, and her daffodil gown
comes through it.

JULIANNE

Come in, and shut the...

Stops. Because it's Michael who has entered. With the dress.

JULIANNE

... door.

So he does. She flushes and SNATCHES up her own clothes, which were characteristically tangled in a heap, and tries desperately to untangle them enough to cover herself. He is amazed and amused by her embarrassment.

MICHAEL (laughing)

Should I turn around, or someth...

JULIANNE

Michael, I'm in my underwear!

She's TEARING at her clothes, only making more of a mess.

MICHAEL

We've seen each other a lot
more naked than this.

She seems ready to rip her clothes apart, so he gently takes them from her hands. She tries to stand unselfconsciously as he easily untangles them.

MICHAEL

I mean, we were skinny-dipping
in Greece, just as pals, less
than two years ago.

She GRABS the clothes and covers the front of herself. Looking at him with a mix of emotions she couldn't begin to sort out.

JULIANNE

Things are different now.

He looks in her eyes. And nods, a little sadly. Guess they are.

MICHAEL (softly)

Well. I leave with two thoughts
in my mind.

He walks to the door. Puts his hand on the latch. Looks back...

MICHAEL (even softer)

You're still a very pretty
girl.

The look holds. And holds. There is such feeling on both sides, she doesn't know what to make of it. She swallows.

JULIANNE

What's the sec...

MICHAEL

Mirrors.

And he's gone. She looks around at six different VIEWS of her uncovered backside. Hmm.

INT. HOTEL UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

The parking valets wait by their stand as the convertible pulls up. These girls must be late for something, the way they're jumping out of the car.

JULIANNE

... luckiest guy in the Northern
Fucking Hemisphere, is all I'm s...

KIMMY

What? Because I'm a little
understand...

JULIANNE

... most sentimental schmucks I
pity want a honeymoon after their
wedding. Just to top it off.

The valet gives Kimmy her ticket.

KIMMY

I can't expect the NBA to hold
up the playoffs...

They're walking fast toward the garage elevators...

KIMMY

I'm excited Sports Illustrated
gave him this kind of shot, he's
only there a ye...

JULIANNE

So your honeymoon is exactly where?

Well...

KIMMY

It depends. If San Antonio sweeps
Sacramento, we could start there.
Or Phoenix. Or depending on Indiana-
Clevel...

JULIANNE

... garden sports, all. Little swing
of maybe fifty degrees Fahrenheit,
represents a packing challenge, but
there's fine food and cocktails at a
choice of Embassy Suit...

At the elevator. Kimmy SLAMS the button.

KIMMY

It's his career, I'm supportive.
Look, I've been everywhere, I've
seen the world, I've laid on a beach.
I want to be with the man I love.
That's what makes it a honeymoon.

End of story. Okay?

JULIANNE

I'm just saying he's lucky.

An empty elevator arrives. They get in.

JULIANNE

Takes one woman in a billion to
put up with his array of shit.
The guy is a one-man festival of
idiosync...

Kimmy SLAMS the penthouse button. Looks at her calmly. Go on.

JULIANNE

Well. You've been introduced
to the symphonic range of...

KIMMY

... his snoring, yeah. He says
it's worse than ever. That
snaffle one...?

Julianne imitates an incredibly annoying high-pitched SNARL. Three times. Kimmy nods.

KIMMY

Well now it has this sorta
phlegm rattle behind it...

Stopped at the lobby. A family of four gets in. Oblivious, Kimmy DEMONSTRATES the phlegm rattle. Really gets into it. As the family watches, Julianne tries her own version. Like that? No. More like this. The family is looking at each other.

KIMMY

Guess what? Earplugs work.

Oh.

JULIANNE

How about...

KIMMY

... cigars in bed? I broke him
on that. But the bathroom's a

swamp, he wears Reeboks to dinner,
tells the same, admittedly funny,
jokes three hundred times...

Sucks in a breath...

KIMMY

... loves action movies, subscribes
to Playboy for godsake, reads over
my shoulder, can't keep track of
the checks he writes...

Ninth floor. The family gets out. The door closes.

KIMMY

He sucks soup through his
front teeth.

JULIANNE

A trademark move, don't touch
it.

KIMMY

But he sure can kiss.

JULIANNE

It's been awhile. I'll take
your word.

KIMMY

After two weeks of cataloguing
all his faults, I made a command
decision that changed my life.

She SLAMS the EMERGENCY STOP button. We JOLT to a halt.

KIMMY

I threw the list away.

Shakes her head.

KIMMY

He's not a balance sheet, so
many wonderful qualities, so
many faults. He's Michael.

From her heart.

KIMMY

And loving him means loving
all of this.

JULIANNE

Do you get nervous in small
confined spaces?

KIMMY

So it's sweet of you to be
protective...

JULIANNE

Let me rephrase that...

KIMMY

But nothing ever could, ever
did, give me a moment's pause
about this marriage...

JULIANNE

Do you get hysterical in small
confined spa...

KIMMY

... except one.

Julianne's face. Stops.

JULIANNE

Oh, yeah?

Kimmy nods. Confides...

KIMMY

You.

A stopper.

KIMMY

You'll always be there. In his
mind. The perfect creature he
loved for all those y...

JULIANNE

Well, perfection can get wearing
after whi...

KIMMY

I'm not joking. I had to face
up to all my competitive drives,
and believe me, I've got 'em.

JULIANNE

No.

KIMMY

And the answer was so simple.

JULIANNE

I was gonna predict that.

KIMMY

You win.

Julianne blinks. Excuse me?

KIMMY

You're enshrined in his heart
and memory. Unassailable.
Which works out great.

JULIANNE

I've missed a step.

KIMMY

He has you on a pedestal. And
me in his arms.

Oh. Julianne smiles. LUNGES for the EMERGENCY button, YANKING it
so hard it comes OFF in her hand. A terrifying BUZZER ensures.

JULIANNE

Jesus, we're trapped!

KIMMY

Ju...

JULIANNE

No, this happened to me once,
almost, it was excruciating!

Begins BANGING random buttons, out of control. Kimmy watching
this. Julianne looks WILDLY up...

JULIANNE

There's a panel up there, you
could boost me...

RIPPING off her platform shoes.

JULIANNE

You know how little air is
in these things? I've seen
statistics! Once you're trapped
between floors...

Kimmy taps her. Points to the lighted panel. It says PH, they've
reached the Penthouse.

JULIANNE

God! Then the door is jammed!

Takes a heavy platform and begins BANGING the metal door with all
her strength, sending resounding BOOMS throughout the area, as
Kimmy reaches and...

... presses DOOR OPEN. The metal doors part, opening directly onto
the banquet room, just as a mighty blow comes down, and the platform
FLIES from Julianne's hand straight BETWEEN...

... two identical stunning YOUNG WOMEN, serving as twin hostesses
for the shower. A beat of mutually-stupefied looks, and we hear

the shoe CRASH somewhere, to a small spattering of SHRIEKS.

MANDY

Mah Gawd, it's the bride,
and the woman she'll nevah
live up to!

KIMMY (mutters to Julianne)

That would be us.

SAMMY

Did she say th' wrong thang
agin? It is so in character!

AMANDA and SAMANTHA NEWHOUSE, 19-year-old twins. True Southern belles, with the faces of angels and bodies made for hot oil wrestling. Mandy's hair is dyed ash blonde, Sammy's is amber. Otherwise, the experience is similar.

JULIANNE

(thrusts out her hand)

I'm Julianne Potter, and...

SAMMY

... we'd be the vengeful sluts.
We came in complementary colors.

MANDY

Have you sized up the groomsmen,
Jules? As M. of H., you get
first fuck. Don't pick the
short, hairy, rich one.

JULIANNE

... unless he has a hump.

The girls cast identical blank looks at Kimberly.

KIMMY (to the sluts)

Dry. I told you.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Is this Michael's Julianne?

All eyes turn to an elegant woman of barely 40. She has her daughter's hair and eyes and slender form. But the bearing rules half an empire. Fonda would envy.

ISABELLE

I'm Isabelle Wallace, and my
handsome new son scarcely did
you justice, girl.

She takes both of Julianne's hands, and our heroine is sort of magically charmed. As if touched by Glinda the Good Witch of the North.

ISABELLE

Now, my husband says to scoot
you over to the ballpark, so
you can hang with Michael. But
first, you have to meet a lot of
really old women.

Looking warmly in her eyes...

ISABELLE

That is, if you've absorbed
enough profanity.

Flicks a glance at the twins. Leads Julianne off...

MANDY (O.S., pouting)

We sayed one fuck.

INT. TAXI, SOUTH SIDE - DAY

Cab crawling toward COMISKEY PARK through stifling traffic.
Julianne oblivious, cellular to her ear...

JULIANNE

Desperate measures! Do you
hear me? Digger, are you the...

SQUAWK. Static. Then...

JULIANNE

I don't know, hit men, whoopee
cushions, saltpeter, something!
The girl is impossibly impregnable.
Even I want her to get the guy!!

Listens.

JULIANNE

Tell him the what? The truth...??

She shakes her head. What a guy.

JULIANNE

That desperate. May I never get.

INT. LUXURY BOX, COMISKEY PARK - AFTERNOON

Game in progress. Watched by Michael, three groomsmen his age, two
middle-aged men, and one bodyguard. Suddenly, a dull THUMPING at
the door. It keeps up. They finally all look over. The bodyguard
gets the door, revealing...

JULIANNE

Which of you gents ordered
two beers?

One single tray. Holding fourteen beers. Balancing on one hand.

Michael JUMPS UP, terrified at the impending mayhem this sight suggests...

MICHAEL

Wow! Lemme give you a ha...

JULIANNE (sweetly)

Michael. You'll unwittingly imply that I'm clumsy.

He stops in his tracks. The guys whistle.

MICHAEL

Think of that. And as well as I know you.

She goes first to the bodyguard.

BODYGUARD

Sorry, ma'am, I'm on duty.

JULIANNE (lovely smile)

It's Miss. And thanks. That leaves two for me.

Heads down the row...

MICHAEL

Julianne Potter, this is Hank and Gerry from SI, and you know Daniel...

She's nodding, flawlessly plucking two beers each from perimeter of the tray, keeping the rest perfectly balanced in the center. Michael is flat dumbstruck. Next, a tall patrician gentleman with rolled-up sleeves on his hand-stitched silk shirt...

MICHAEL

Oh. This is my father-in-law, Walter.

Once again, she gracefully plucks two beers for the distinguished father-in-law...

MICHAEL

How are you doing this? You're on drugs.

Sets them down. The man has a smile wonderful in its ease. Murmurs...

WALTER

If he gives you grief, I'll have him skillfully beaten, where the wounds won't show.

JULIANNE

I guess getting him whacked would
be politically out of the question.

WALTER
Under the circumstances. Charmed
to know you, Jules.

JULIANNE
Nice meeting you, too, Walt.

A nod between equals. She moves on...

MICHAEL
And, this guy, you know...

She sure does, and effortlessly balancing her one-hand load, she
dips to kiss a porky, balding guy with big-time shoulders.
Straight on the lips.

JULIANNE
Papa Joe.

They go way back. He is uncomfortable at this rich man's wedding,
even as gracious as everyone has been. His watering eyes twinkle
at her, and the voice has a trace of Boston...

JOE
You gonna be my boy's best man?

Despite SHOUTS from the others...

JULIANNE
Best everything, Joe. But I'm
going to dance with you.

MICHAEL
Dance? You don't dance! You
learn to dance??

Her innocent smile.

JULIANNE
Moves. You've never seen.

BIG reaction from the guys, as she heads toward Michael with the
last of the beers, not looking down at the FIELDER'S MITT which
lies right in her path, and as his lips part to scream a warning,
she skips...

... neatly AROUND it. He's in shock.

MICHAEL
You're an impostor! What have
you done with my best friend?

As he takes away the remaining beers...

MICHAEL

And how was the hot dog?

Hot dog? His eyes fix on her left breast. HUGE mustard stain. She can't believe it.

MICHAEL

Cheap and unnecessary. We were looking anyway.

EXT. LUXURY BOX ROOF - DAY

Michael and Julianne sit with their beers on the edge of the luxury box roof. The game, the stadium, spread out beneath them. Yet they are alone in the world. She dangles her legs, and we can hear her kicking the glass below.

JULIANNE

I just admire your maturity, that's all. I mean, there are people who would find that kind of perfection boring. Day after day, year after year...

MICHAEL

... see, that's what I thought at first. How can you like someone that perfect? No potential for long-range livability.

Drinking their beers. Side by side. Both stare only at the game.

MICHAEL

Luckily. The closer I watched, the more the fault came into focus. Each imperfection its own adorable slice of vulnerability.

JULIANNE

Such as.

MICHAEL

She's too genuine.

JULIANNE

Hate that.

MICHAEL

How can you trust someone you can never mistrust?

JULIANNE

What's next?

Keep sipping. Never look at each other.

MICHAEL

No matter how many times I
leave the toilet seat up, she
forgets and puts it down.

JULIANNE
Endearingly absent-minded.

MICHAEL
My very point. Here's another one...

Shakes his head. This one really gets him.

MICHAEL
Every day. She makes the bed.

JULIANNE
Quite the little eccentric.

MICHAEL
At first, I thought it was a
gag, but she's always done it!

This is not the ammunition Julianne was hoping for.

JULIANNE
Is there a coup de grace in
here, somewh...

MICHAEL
She admires. Tommy Lasorda.

JULIANNE
Waiter! Check, please!

MICHAEL
She finds him "personable."

JULIANNE
Can that kind of defect be
passed on genetically?

She looks over now. And Michael is looking back. Smiling the most
wonderful smile. Her reaction shows that she thinks it's for her,
until...

MICHAEL
Then again. She has a few good
traits.

Hating herself for asking, but seeing no way out...

JULIANNE
Gimme like, eight and nine off
the top ten list...

MICHAEL
First girl I ever knew. Who

lets me give her a bath.

The look in his eyes. She can hardly bear it.

MICHAEL

And when I hug her, even in
public. I don't have to let go
right away. She lets me hold
her as long as I want.

He seems so deeply in love.

MICHAEL

Nice kid, don't you think?

A beat. A slow nod. A quiet...

JULIANNE

Looks like, from here.

INT. SOUTH SIDE CLUB - NIGHT

A slender black woman sings a SOARING Gospel number, backed by
three ladies who could each solo in any church choir. It is
mesmerizing, stirring, transcendent. The unseen audience CLAPPING
FIERCELY in rhythm, SHOUTING support. SLOW PAN now...

... every face is black. We aren't in church at all, but a
venerable blue club. One of those places you'd swear everybody's
played, from Robert Johnson to Bessie Smith and back again. As
the song ends, there is APPLAUSE, some RAPPING on tables with their
knuckles or their drunks. We keep PANNING to a far corner. Three
faces.

Julianne leans across her beer to Kimmy...

JULIANNE

How'd you find this pl...

Kim shaking her head. Looks admiringly to Michael...

KIMMY

Lived here my whole life,
never heard of it. Until
our first date.

She reaches slender fingers. Traces one back along his hair.

KIMMY

He finds all these spots,
everywhere he goes, it's a
mystical gift.

MICHAEL (shy)

Jesus, one d-back from the Bears
knows a place...

KIMMY

It's not just clubs. This guy
always knows the best everything.
The best guitar store, the best
beef ribs, the best Horowitz record,
was he always like the...

JULIANNE

... always. The best dim sum, the
best camping stuff...

KIMMY

Stop, we're embarrassing h...

JULIANNE

... best valley in New Zealand,
best... women's shoes...

MICHAEL

I tried those on. When you
weren't looking.

Now he's grinning at Julianne. And she likes that a lot.

JULIANNE

Where was that, Florence, huh?

MICHAEL

Firenze.

Together in the memory. As Kimmy watches.

JULIANNE

The Vespa? Me hanging on behind
in the rain all night?

MICHAEL

Till the gas ran out.

And, the first sniff of left-out...

KIMMY

I love Florence.

Julianne's eyes flicker. Could this be a teensy opening? Keeps
her eyes, her easy smile, and her killer instincts trained on
Michael.

JULIANNE

Take her there.

He nods, okay.

JULIANNE

I mean, now. She's perky,
she deserves a honeymoon.

He draws a breath...

JULIANNE

I heard. If San Antone sweeps
Sacramento. What is this shit?
You gotta get off the road by
September anyway, when does Fall
Quarter start?

And the happy couple look at each other. They are awkward.
Julianne's heart soar like eagle.

KIMMY

Uh. I'm not coming back. For
senior year.

Could this be. The Mother Lode?

JULIANNE

Don't architects find a degree,
sort of... an asset?

The couple still staring in each other's eyes.

KIMMY

Well, the school will be here.
Architecture will still be around.
Right now...

MICHAEL

I travel every week. College
ball, motor sports, training
camps...

KIMMY

The most important thing. Is
being together.

And she smiles. Beautifully.

KIMMY

I'm just a baby. I've got all...
the time... in the world.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Michael putting Kim in the back of a cab. As Julianne watches.

MICHAEL

Because I could come...

KIMMY

To the twins' soiree? So they
can paw you and drool...?

JULIANNE (calls out, helpful)

They're gonna drool anyway!

Kim smiles. He kisses her, tenderly, through the open window. She waves past him at Julianne.

KIMMY (to both)
Enjoy each other.

And drives off. As he watches after, Julianne comes up behind him. Slips her hand up onto his shoulder muscle. Starts giving a little massage.

JULIANNE
Should I whistle down a cab?

MICHAEL
Hey, cabs are expensive. I'm cheap, remember?

Turns his head, to see her. She's still rubbing his shoulder.

JULIANNE
Sometimes. About the dumbest things.

Share a smile. As always, it covers a lot of years.

MICHAEL
The El's right down the street. Unless you're afraid of the neighborhood.

She looks around. It is an issue. But she remembers...

JULIANNE
No. I'm always safe with you.

She means that. He takes her by the hand. They begin walking...

JULIANNE
Pretty amazing girl, you've got. Make that kind of sacrifice.

MICHAEL
What, leaving school...

JULIANNE
... all of it. She's leaving her family, her friends, everything she knows. She's putting her career on hold, and she seems a pretty ambitious, driven, kind of pers...

MICHAEL (quietly)
In her way.

JULIANNE
All to follow you in this dumb

job, where you travel 52 weeks
a year to College Station, Texas,
and such. It's not a job for a
grown man, Michael, Peter Pan
never married.

He's let go of her hand now. Looking down at the pavement before
him, fists in his jacket pockets.

JULIANNE (softly)
I don't think she's naturally
the... submissive type. Aren't you
afraid she's gonna choke on this
stand-by-your-man shit after awhi...

MICHAEL (real quiet)
No.

Hit a nerve. This is promising.

JULIANNE
I mean Walter owns the Sox, cable
sports... most girls in her spot would
be angling to get Daddy to offer you
some juicy gig right here in t...

MICHAEL
She would never. Never. Even think
of that.

Paydirt. Julianne's Geiger Counter is going berserk.

JULIANNE
I guess you're right. That would
be deceitful... manipulative...
controlling... emascula...

MICHAEL
I got the point.

He looks over at her. No smile on his face. An edge we haven't
seen. She shrugs...

JULIANNE
Still. All's fair in love and
w...

MICHAEL
That would be a girl. I don't
even know.

They've reached the stairs to the El. A rickety train RATTLES
above them. As they start up, she slips her arm around his
waist...

JULIANNE (murmurs)
Forgive me, okay? I was talkin'

crazy.

He slides his arm around her shoulder. Pals. They climb out of frame.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE on a shallow pool of water in a bathroom sink. Green powder pouring in, a hand SWIRLING it around, until...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

It's Albanian, I think. Or Mongolian.
Or Canadian. One of those. I bought
it downstairs...

... it becomes truly disgusting lumpy green mud.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

I figure, what the hell. Can it
make me look worse?

Follow the hand up as it SLATHERS the shit across her face in great green dripping gobs. She's juggling the wall phone, trying to keep it mudless, as she assures Digger...

JULIANNE

Dig, of course. Of course, of
course, of course, of course I
have a plan. Certainment!

More green slime. The Julianne we know disappears.

JULIANNE

How? I ask myself, what would
Lucy Ricardo do in this situa...

Desecrates three hotel towels, wiping her hand.

JULIANNE

Well, one worked, once.

THROWS them in the bathtub. Fastidiousness a short suit.

JULIANNE

Ricky wouldn't let her in
the show.

Reaches for her toothbrush, absently. All her attention is on the conversation and the hideous green face in the mirror.

JULIANNE

I recall it differently, but
we digress.

Without looking, picks up a tube of hotel shampoo...

JULIANNE

So in the version, you're Ethel,
with better fashion instincts.

Squeezes it all over the toothbrush.

JULIANNE

This puts you in charge of Plan B,
the unprincipled and insanely
dangerous back-up plan...

Lifts it toward her mouth, liquid shampoo dripping from the
bristles.

JULIANNE

In case simple lying doesn't work.

At the last second. She stops. We don't know why, because she's
still never looked at the brush.

JULIANNE

Question. What happens if you
brush your teeth with shampoo?

Turns on the tap. Tries to scrub the toothbrush clean, and DROPS
the phone into the green swamp, which SPATTERS all over her front.
Euucch. She's stymied, agitated, circling the sink, leaning down
to it...

JULIANNE

HOLD ON. I'M COMING IN FOR YOU!

She sets the toothbrush down in her toiletries kit. Decides to
YANK on the phone's cord, and the receiver SPRINGS out, BOPPING
her in the face. She's so filthy at this point, she just wipes it
clean on her nightshirt. Tells Digger...

JULIANNE

You okay? This is one of those
problem phones.

Lifts the toothbrush and tube of paste from her kit.

JULIANNE

Right. Your role. You know guys
from Sports Illustrated, yes? I
mean, you can walk right in there...

Squeezes on the paste, lifts the brush to her mouth...

JULIANNE

You could get access to letterhead,
for example.

JAMS it in her mouth, brushing as...

JULIANNE (mouthful)

... or even, maybe, their fax.

Stops. The funniest look on her face. Down to the toothpaste tube...

Which says BEN GAY.

Oh.

INT. TIFFANY'S - MORNING

Julianne and Kimmy cruise the stately display cases. Everywhere, the Tiffany logo, the silent, watchful staff in morning coats. As they browse, Julianne takes a blueberry Danish from a paper sack, and begins to eat.

The staff notices. So does Kim.

JULIANNE
It's an homage thing.

Hmm?

JULIANNE
Awkward girls grow up on Audrey
Hepburn movies. You wouldn't
understand.

Kimmy doesn't. But wipes a blue glob from Julianne's face.

KIMMY
Anyway, I think you're wrong.

Wrong?

KIMMY
What you were saying before.

Before?

KIMMY
About Michael's job.

JULIANNE
Oh, that. I forgot I even said
th...

KIMMY
I just think you're wrong, is all.

JULIANNE
Probably am. Forget I brought it
up.

Points to some jade pins. Kimmy wrinkles her nose.

KIMMY
I mean, he loves his job.

JULIANNE

Bad games, bad towns, bad pay, bad flights, bad hotels, real bad food. Homeless, rootless, lonely, maybe your copy gets into one issue out of four...

Smiles.

JULIANNE

What's not to love?

None of this is lost on Kimmy. She's wondered the same.

KIMMY

But he always says...

JULIANNE

... whatever is manly and independent.

Kim nods slowly. Way ahead of her.

JULIANNE

Why would he trade that for running, say, a big piece of the PR at a powerful, complex, challenging conglomerate like your dad's?

Kim stares back. A strange look.

KIMMY

That's just the sort of thing my father and I discussed.

Julianne just blinks. Amazed.

JULIANNE

I'm not stupid. Say, how about this?

Pointing to tiny golden scissors in the novelty case. Kim so absorbed by the main topic, she has to force herself to focus on...

KIMMY

For the twins? What in the world is th...

JULIANNE

Gold nose hair clippers.

Points to the tiny hand-lettered sign. Indeed. Kimmy shrugs, not quite it.

KIMMY

So you don't think Michael's
as happy with his job as...

Julianne points to a matched pair of large...

KIMMY
Gold dog collars? They don't
have dogs.

JULIANNE
Hello.

Kim nods, oh. But can't keep her mind off...

KIMMY
You think he'd accept?

Hmm?

KIMMY
Michael. A job like that.

Oh, well...

JULIANNE
By any yardstick that involves
sanity, it would be the greatest
thing that ever happened to him.
Present company excepted.

Kimmy nodding slowly. Her yearning achingly apparent.

JULIANNE
On the other hand, he's proud.
Last thing a man wants to admit,
is being trapped in a dispiriting
dead-end job that can never
support a family.

A very sweet smile.

JULIANNE
Throw a man a life preserver.
He'll say, "Thanks, anyway,
I'd rather drown."

Kim nods again. Right. They are so bonded at this moment.

KIMMY
So... one almost has to...

JULIANNE
Exactly.

KIMMY
Exactly what?

JULIANNE

What you said. Make it appear
that he's doing you the favor.

Kimmy bites her lip. Her eyes go down. Self-conscious to admit...

JULIANNE

I couldn't really... do that.
After, you know...

Her voice trails off.

JULIANNE (kind, but wise)

... lying. All the time.

That brings the gray eyes up. Julianne bats her dark ones...

JULIANNE

Oh, darling, my pitiful desires
and ambitions are dirt beneath
the manly boots of your priorities!

Kimmy has to smile small. A self-awe gal.

JULIANNE (pouring it on)

Two hundred seedy motels a year?
Dinners out of vending machines?
Waiting for you in vermin-infested
corridors of dark crotch-rot locker
rooms? This stuff makes me hot!!

KIMMY

The very words I've used.

Julianne 'thinks it over.' Kimmy waits for guidance.

JULIANNE

We make Dad your co-conspirator.
Michael does a favor for Walter.

Simple.

JULIANNE

Walter's reorganizing his public
relations, needs a brilliant guy
who's close to him, who he can
completely trust.

Kimmy nodding. Hope overriding reason.

JULIANNE

So you beg. Michael, please do
this for Daddy, please, please,
please, blah, blah, blah... it's
only for six months... it would
mean so much to me to help him out...

Turns up her palms. Viola!

KIMMY

He'll see right through it.

JULIANNE

Only. If he wants to.

They share a smile.

JULIANNE

In six months, he'll be happy,
settled, successful...

KIMMY

He won't get mad, huh?

MR. MOONEY (O.S.)

May I be of any help, whatsoever?

Mr. Mooney is the most gracious Brit salesperson ever to offer kindness, intelligence and thoughtfulness to a customer. He is large, sixty, with disappearing hair, watering eyes, and a manner that makes you think of immediately hiring a butler.

JULIANNE

Bridesmaid gifts for two, well,
assertive, outspoken, Tennessee
debutantes.

KIMMY (still focused)

He won't be mad?

JULIANNE (to Mooney)

Nothing here seems to quite capture
their distinctive personalities.

MR. MOONEY

Something customized, perhaps?
We can fashion most any item
from gold.

Ah. Julianne nodding. Reflecting.

MR. MOONEY

An object that might represent
what is closest. To their heart.

KIMMY (under her breath)

Don't even think dildo.

Julianne digs through her jumbled bag...

JULIANNE

Could you do this...

Tossing an object on the counter...

JULIANNE

In 24 carat?

It is a MASTERCARD. A gold one.

KIMMY (softly)

Bingo.

They smile at each other. More bonded than ever.

KIMMY

You don't think he'll be mad.

A beat. Can Julianne even make herself do this?

JULIANNE

Your call. You can live a lie.
In a fabulous selection of Red
Roof Inns. Or you can make one
desperate stab at hap...

KIMMY

I just don't want to freak him
out.

What do you think? Julianne stares into the soft gray eyes. It's
now or never. The smile of a dear sister...

JULIANNE

How mad could he get?

INT. FASHION RESTAURANT - LUNCH HOUR

Julianne enters with a really nervous Kimberly in tow. Approaches
the maitre d'. We CLOSE to hear...

MAITRE D'

Oh, Mr. Wallace and his guests
have retired to the humidior.

Points to an escalator, leading to the mezzanine. Behind a glass
wall, what looks like a British men's club. Thirty guys and a
billion cigars. As Julianne starts toward it...

MAITRE D'

Oh. Mademoiselle.

She turns back. Loves this shit.

MAITRE D'

It's unofficial, of course. But,
traditionally, the humidior is for
gentlemen, only...

JULIANNE

Great. I've got this girlfriend

at the Justice Department? With
all this time on her hands?

Her look is every bit as hard as his. He gestures to the escalator. She takes Kimmy's hand, and up they go. We can see Walter in a big leather chair, enjoying a major stogie. Kimmy licks her lips.

They enter. Every head turns. A nice range of reactions, from offended to attracted and points in between.

JULIANNE (murmurs)
Piece of cake. I'll hang, and
think happy thoughts...

Kimmy nods. Heads over toward her father. Julianne walks, confidently, even provocatively, to the wall lined with bins of cigars. Every eye in the place is on her butt.

She runs her fingers over a few contenders. Plucks one out, examines it, puts it back. Walks a little farther. Selects another, big and black. Rolls it expertly in her fingers. Sniffs along its length.

A guy comes over. Could be 40, successful, a broker's pin-stripe. Nearly as attractive as he thinks he is.

GUY
Know what you're looking for,
little lady?

Little lady, huh? She glances at his coven of buddies, who pretend not to notice. Then, straight to the guy's blue eyes.

JULIANNE
Yeah. Do you?

GUY
I asked first.

Ah. Wit. She holds up her cigar...

JULIANNE
I like 'em long and hard. Kind
of... big around.

Runs it under her nose.

JULIANNE
Smell is important, I'm a believer
in that.

Takes a match from a cut crystal bowl.

JULIANNE
But you never know what you've
got. Till you run your tongue

over it.

And she does. Moistening the full length of the cigar. The boys are laughing openly. She STRIKES the match. As she lights up...

GUY

I meant. What you're looking for
in a man.

She glances at his wedding ring. Then, straight into his eyes.

JULIANNE

Actually, I'm partial to married
gentlemen.

The way she says that. The guy swallows. We can see some of the air has been sucked from the room.

GUY

Why is that?

JULIANNE

It's so much time. When I phone
the wives.

Explosive LAUGHTER from the peanut gallery. As she jams the big Clemente Churchill into her mouth, she sees Kimmy waving her over from across the room. Without even looking at the guy she's just put away...

... she crosses the room, Walter stands politely, looking very dapper, very powerful, and focusing on her with considerable interest. He waits until she sits on the edge of a costly leather hassock.

WALTER

(simply)

Your idea?

She can't read this guy. Maybe that's how he built an empire. She nods, yeah.

WALTER

You're a woman of insight.

He sits on the arm of his chair. Close enough to speak quietly.

WALTER

My wife and I love this marriage,
and deplore its circumstances.

He puffs his cigar. Julianne puffs her. Kimmy looks on, a kid watching the grown-ups...

WALTER

As you guessed, my daughter is
unhappy about giving up her life.

And, in my opinion, cowardly in
avoiding the necessary confrontation.

Then he stops. As if reading Julianne's eyes.

WALTER

Mike has a world of ability.
I'd do anything to have him in
my company.

One more puff.

WALTER

Except ask him.

Julianne is a little stunned. Kimmy looks helpless.

WALTER

He'd resent it. And me. And,
most important, Kim.

No smile on his lips. Straight talk.

WALTER

He's a great kid, but he's still
a kid. Instead of recognizing
that his resistance comes from
insecurity, he'd turn it to anger.
To protect himself...

Spreads his hands...

WALTER

... from realizing that he's
ignoring my daughter's needs,
despite how very much he loves her.

He looks to his daughter now.

WALTER

They both have some growing up
to do. But they're good people,
they're starting with love.
They've got time.

JULIANNE

(softly)

I think you're making a mistake,
sir.

His eyes come back to her. A little sharply.

WALTER

And that interests me. How
someone who knows him so well
could be so wrong.

A formidable guy. She meets his gaze.

JULIANNE

See, I love him, too, as much
as anyone here. And for a
whole lot longer.

From her heart.

JULIANNE

I think I know best what would
make him happy.

INT. TOILET STALL - DAY

Julianne, fully dressed, sits on the closed lid of a toilet seat. The stall is tiny enough to arouse claustrophobia in an astronaut. Her cellular phone pressed to her ear, she is listening angrily, smoking ferociously, every call in her body running at red-line.

JULIANNE

Okay, okay, okay, okay, I hear
you, all right?

She closes her eyes.

JULIANNE

It is stupid, dishonest, desperate
beyond belief, and can't possibly
ever work. It can only end in
humiliation and disgrace. Now can
I say two words?

Deep drag on the cigarette. For strength.

JULIANNE

Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it!
Do it! Do it!

She's striped her gears. COUGHS horribly.

JULIANNE

All right, twelve words.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Julianne exits the stall. To face three BLACK TEENAGE GIRLS. Just staring at her.

TEENAGER

(supportive)

You do it, girl.

Julianne nods to the kids. They nod back. Damn straight. She exits the restroom, into...

... glaring sunlight. We are in the middle of the BROOKFIELD ZOO.

And sitting on a bench, eating popcorn from a bag...

MICHAEL

Wow. What was going on in there?

She shudders.

JULIANNE

Some crazy person.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

Michael and Julianne walking together. He's eating his popcorn. She carries a cardboard container with nachos, a gooey fudge waffle cone, and a large drink.

MICHAEL

You're not eating.

JULIANNE

I never eat when I'm serene.

MICHAEL

You never eat when you're despondent.

JULIANNE

I switched that around when you weren't looking.

She swirls a single nacho chip in cheese. But her heart isn't in it.

MICHAEL

Last zoo we were in was... Beijing, yeah? Sure. The rhinos were fucking.

JULIANNE

Boy, those were the days.

And when she looks over. His eyes are waiting.

MICHAEL

(softly)
Yeah, they were.

They're passing the hippo pen. But they don't notice.

JULIANNE

That was nice. The way you said that.

So was that. He's feeling restless, something. Doesn't know quite what to say.

MICHAEL

It's weird being the groom. All these things Kimmy has to take care of...

JULIANNE

You need a baby-sitter. That's what I'm here for.

He holds her eyes. Then looks down. Awkward. And the way he's doing it begins to excite her.

JULIANNE

Say it.

He looks up, neither one of them noticing that as they walk, she is about to...

... CRASH into a chest-high metal stand that displays animal facts. We have followed him as she is WIPED from frame. His face from shock... to amusement.

MICHAEL

Now, there's my girl.

... to tenderness. PAN back to see her wearing everything from her cardboard container. Nachos, fudge sauce, Diet Coke, the works. It is really awful. Kids, bystanders, laughing cruelly. Her eyes fill with tears, and she tries bravely to smile against it...

JULIANNE

See, I can only do it with beer.

He takes out his handkerchief. And with that and his hands, gently scoops the worst of the mess off her. The fact that he's touching her breasts and her body is something they pretend not to notice. She laughs softly, and a few tears fall, even though she doesn't know why. Such an odd, raw, confusing moment. To the world looking on, they are lovers.

MICHAEL

(murmurs)

See, better already.

And he kisses her face. Not quite her lips. But only an inch away. We can feel her heart pounding. He strips off his shirt, only a tank top underneath.

MICHAEL

We'll go back to the bathroom, you'll put this on...

Okay? She snuffles, okay. Swallows.

JULIANNE

Bet you're glad I'm here to take care of you.

He puts his arm around her.

MICHAEL

Bet I am.

Holds her close, as they start toward the restroom...

MICHAEL

Hope that crazy person's not
still there.

We're on their backs...

JULIANNE (O.S.)

She doesn't scare me.

EXT. BEACH CLUB, LAKE MICHIGAN - SUNSET

Julianne in T-shirt and shorts, rushes onto the deck of a sprawling beach club. Clutching her bag, she quickly surveys the scene...

... the entire beach has been taken over by the wedding party. Young folks, old folks, little kids, maybe 200 people. We SCAN with her to find a crowd around...

... a three-on-three volleyball game. Kimmy and two groomsmen on one side, facing Michael and the Tennessee debs. The twins wear spectacular bikinis and are surprisingly athletic, as well as predictably uninhabited. As the next point begins, Kimmy serves...

... Sammy in back makes a nice dig, lobbing to Mandy who sets for Michael's vicious SPIKE straight THROUGH his best man's hapless defense. The crowd cheers Michael, and as he turns, Mandy gives him a savage...

... CHEST BUMP of congratulation, that any NFL linebacker would be proud of. It puts the surprised Michael straight on his butt. Laughter, applause. The twins pull him up and Sammy gives him a hot kiss on his ear that makes the crowd react. Kim plays good sport. Julianne watches Michael's body for a beat, then...

... dashes off. Down the beach, several barbecue grills have been set up. Manned by beach club staff and family alike. Michael's pop, Joe, is dispensing beers from a keg. Kim's mom, Isabelle, is coordinating the beans, potato salad and corn-on-the-cob table. Julianne races across the sand to...

... a huge smoky grill where Walter is basting baby back ribs, clearly enjoying himself. Julianne runs up to him, says something into his ear. He looks at her. Then turns his station over to a club steward, and follows Julianne down toward the lakeside.

CLOSE now. As they stroll together, she's a little breathless. He's watching her profile, curious, silent. At the water's edge...

JULIANNE

(whispers)
Is anybody watching?

WALTER
I hope so. This is all too
mysterious to waste on just me.

She reaches into her big bag. Pulls out a single folded sheet of paper.

JULIANNE
I picked up Michael's messages
for him, at our hotel. I stole
one...

His face darkens. The easy smile fades. He holds up his palms...

WALTER
Julianne, reading my son-in-law's
mail, is not something...

JULIANNE
Sir, this is important! Haven't
you ever in your life cut one
corner, to make something important
turn out right?

His smile returns. Just a little.

WALTER
Matter of fact, that's how I got
married.

The look holds. She thrusts the paper out. He still doesn't take it.

JULIANNE
It's a fax from Sports Illustrated
from Ben Isaacson, Michael's boss.

WALTER
(quickly)
I know Ben.

She opens the paper.

JULIANNE
"Mike. We still have no answer to
our E-mail of Wednesday. Which
option do you select? I don't mean
to rush you, but Personnel needs to
tie up the loose ends."

He takes the paper. We see it now. Looks authentic.

JULIANNE
I think he's been fired.

WALTER

It doesn't say th...

JULIANNE

He's said some things over the past few weeks. Look, this is why I came up with the idea of you offering him a job.

He looks up. He's listening. Closely.

JULIANNE

And why I couldn't say anything before in front of Kim.

She bites her lip. Seems so earnest.

JULIANNE

I just think of how... desperate he must be feeling. He's marrying a rich man's daughter, and he's about to become destitute. You know the kind of job market he'll be facing?

He does.

WALTER

And you think he's kept this to himself.

JULIANNE

He's too proud to beg for help. And if you wait till this comes out, your offer will be like charity. Completely humiliating.

He's staring at her. But his mind is working behind his eyes.

JULIANNE

If you do it now, it's like he's helping you. He can accept with dignity.

He taps the paper with the back of his knuckles.

WALTER

This fax could mean... any number of things...

She nods. She knows that.

WALTER

(softly)

Maybe. I should call Ben.

JULIANNE

Then it could all come out, sooner or later. Nobody should be in on this. Just you and me. Or, more correctly, I.

She takes the paper back.

JULIANNE

What if, what if I could find that E-mail?

The long straight look. Maybe he's hooked.

JULIANNE

I never noticed. Kimmy has your eyes.

INT. LOBBY, RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - TWILIGHT

Tall, gangly, young DESK CLERK. Lank hair, pimples. He looks up, beams to see...

JULIANNE

Hello, again.

She's flirting her ass off.

JULIANNE

You still haven't straightened that tie.

And she reaches across the desk with her lovely, slender hands. Does it for him. Her fingers brush his chest on the way back. We can assume a woody.

JULIANNE

You know, my friend, the one whose message I picked up... ?

He does. His eyes flick toward his stately female SUPERVISOR, helping another guest across the way.

JULIANNE

Well, he's still with the wedding party. And he asked me to get something he needs real badly from his room... ?

The boy swallows hard.

JULIANNE

He's in 1526. If you could just let me ha...

BOY

See that woman?

Not only does Julianne see her. The woman is looking back, while she's talking to her customer. Not a pleasant look.

BOY

She said, if I ever pull a stunt like that again...

JULIANNE

You'll lose your job...

BOY

... tear my pecker off. Is what she said.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - TWILIGHT

An elevator OPENS, revealing Julianne, carrying a gym bag. She looks down the long hallway, sees a maid's cart. Heads the other way, briskly, to...

... a small ALCOVE. Opens the gym bag, pulling out a bath towel. Begins to yank her top up OVER her head...

ANGLE... the young MAID now pushing her cart down the hall, wheels SQUEAKING, and from nowhere...

... Julianne DARTS into her path, barely covered by the towel held tight across her, she is grinning, blushing.

JULIANNE

Help me!

The maid can only blink.

JULIANNE

I locked myself out, 1526, please hurry!!

And looks frantically up the hall, mortified that any moment a stranger could happen upon her predicament. Her eyes dart back to the maid. PLEASE. The maid just stares. Stares.

JULIANNE

Uno-cinco-does-ses.

Oh.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - TWILIGHT

Julianne alone in his room, looking around frantically. No worries about this guy making his bed every day, stuff, clothes, strewn everywhere, the bathroom looks like a cherry bomb just detonated. She's tramping through a bachelor's debris, wearing only her towel, looking, looking...

There it is. The corner of his LAPTOP sticking out from beneath a

discarded bedspread. She SNATCHES it up, OPENS it, sets it on the cluttered desk, and...

... stops. There are wallet-sized SNAPSHOTS of Kimmy. Some alone. Some as a little girl. Some with Michael. And next to them...

... the plastic fold-out wallet inset. That he has not yet quite rearranged. So she picks it up. Leafs through, until she finds what she was praying would be there...

... Julianne grinning. Michael's arm around her. On the deck of a boat. They have drinks in their hands. Happiness in their eyes.

And she stares at it. Jesus, God, how long has he carried this around? She flips through further, all the rest have her in them. Maybe half a dozen. Her heart is throbbing. Her eyes are damp.

Back to the one on the boat. She slips it from the plastic window. Holds it. Then, gently...

... puts it back where it belongs. PUNCHES up the goddamn laptop. This is it, girl! Do or die.

JULIANNE

(murmurs)

You wouldn't change your password, would you? You never change anything.

Those words make her bite her lip. Damn, I'm becoming a sentimental slob. TYPES in...

JULIANNE

(murmurs)

Shoeless... Joe.

Yes! We're in! Punching keys. Letters flying across the screen. Okay, we're ready. Types...

JULIANNE

(reads as she types)

Mike. I hate this downsizing shit as much as you do. But I know this can't become as a complete surprise...

INT. BEACH CLUB CARD ROOM - EVENING

Through the window, the wedding party barbecue has extended into night. Lanterns, music, lots more food, lots more drinks. In the distance, on the sand, Michael is slowdancing with Kimmy. Somewhere nearby, the soft CLICKING of keys. We PULL BACK to see...

... a small clubby room. Books, leather, polished woods. Only two people here. Walter, looking on stony-faced, as a determined Julianne grimly "struggles" to "find" what she's looking for in Michael's laptop. And then...

... she stops typing. Looks at the text on the screen. Her eyes sharpen as she "reads" what Walter can't see. It's an Oscar performance for our desperate girl. She turns the screen around...

WALTER
(reads)
Mike. I hate this downsizing...

He reads. Reads. Reads. All the air comes out of him.

WALTER
(softly)
And Kimmy doesn't know.

She shakes her head. Nope. No way.

WALTER
(signs)
I'll tell her I've reconsidered.

She nods, gravely. Right. He looks in her eyes.

WALTER
You're a smart girl, Jules.

She forces up a fleeting smile of gratitude. But Walter isn't smiling at all.

WALTER
Wish my daughter. Bad your
guts.

INT. CHARLES TROTTER'S BAR - NIGHT

The hot saloon in Chinatown. Upscale, downscale, jammed, Michael and Kimmy at a small table in a far corner. CLOSE on them...

MICHAEL
Sure you're okay?

She looks really scared. Turns her drink in her hand. Looking down at it.

MICHAEL
It's not just a gag, huh?

KIMMY
No, it's, uh... a real big favor.

He takes her hand, tenderly.

MICHAEL
I wish you'd just... come out
with it. I mean why are we
waiting for Jules?

She smiles up at him. The best she can.

KIMMY

Moral support.

She loves him so much, and she is sick with worry.

KIMMY

What's good of having a big
sister, if she...

Stops. Gestures with her eyes. Because her big sister has just
entered...

... looking fabulous. Julianne wears a long sleek sarong, slightly
see-through. Her hair is bound up with silver pins. As she moves
through the room toward us, we can see that, for once, her make-up
is flawless, understated. When she arrives at the table...

... Michael is beaming, admiringly. He stands up.

MICHAEL

(softly)

Wow and wow. You have a date,
after this?

JULIANNE

Never can tell.

He holds her chair. She exchanges an intimate smile with the
anxious Kim.

MICHAEL

You make me think of that song,
we used to...

And he starts humming. The song is, "The Way You Look Tonight."

MICHAEL

(singing)

Someday. When I'm awfully low...

They sit. He looks from Julianne to his bride.

MICHAEL

Okay, kid. You're on.

Kim's eyes flick to Julianne, who nods, supportively. The kid
takes a breath.

KIMMY

It's really my father. Who
needs the favor.

His face sort of comes to a stop. Nothing she can read, yet. He
nods, yeah...?

KIMMY

He's... he's reorganizing some of
the divisions of the company...

His eyes flick to Julianne. She looks down.

MICHAEL

(quiet)

He never mentioned that. Neither
did y...

KIMMY

(blurting)

... and public relations is a big
problem area for him.

She can see it now. In his eyes. She just can't tell how bad.

KIMMY

He needs someone incredible,
someone really close, who he
can trust...

MICHAEL

Like family, huh?

So quiet. So cold. She is terrified.

KIMMY

It would only be, maybe, six
months? Or three or four? It
would mean so much to him...

MICHAEL

To him.

She swallows. Straightens her spine.

KIMMY

And to m...

MICHAEL

(sharp, to Julianne)

... and you knew about this.

Real quiet. Against the noise of this place.

JULIANNE

I think you ought to listen to
her, Michael. This is her life,
too.

Just the thing. To bring that anger near the surface. He turns
to Kim...

MICHAEL

Well, which is it?

A demand. Sharp. Accusing. She doesn't like that...

MICHAEL

You gonna tell me Daddy thought
this one up? All of a sudden, I'm
the only jerk alive who can help
him deal with the press?

She's trapped. Angry, scared. A deer in headlights.

MICHAEL

Why don't you start being honest
for one fucking sec...

JULIANNE

Michael!!

KIMMY

(near tears)

I am honest!

Silence.

KIMMY

All of a sudden, I'm supposed to
drop out of school, forget my
family, forget my career, forget
all the plans I had for my life...

MICHAEL

Well, forgive me for screwing up
your plans!

He can't even believe he's hearing this.

MICHAEL

I'm sure glad I'm hearing all
this now, before it's too late!

KIMMY

What is that sup...

MICHAEL

And what am I supposed to do with
my life, huh? I am 28 years old!
I work in a low-paying, low-status,
zero-respect job which,
unfortunately, I happen to fucking
love. How inconvenient.

Shrugs.

MICHAEL

No problem. A little bullshit
about Daddy's "needs," and presto,
I'm a lap dog in high society.

JULIANNE
(softly)
Michael, it sounds like a
wonderful opportun...

MICHAEL
(whips around)
Does it, really? How come you
never took some sell-out
establishment job? You had plenty
of chances!

Glares in her eyes.

MICHAEL
I'll tell you why. Because that
isn't you. And it isn't me,
either! We're the same person!

Back to Kim...

MICHAEL
What a sweet little picture. Mommy
and Daddy aren't losing a daughter,
they're gaining a eunuch!

KIMMY
Well, if that's the way you f...

MICHAEL
Damn straight, it's how I feel!
What's their wedding gift, a little
gold collar that says "Mikey-poo"?
Or do I have to change my name to "Binky"?

She's crying now. Real tears on her face.

MICHAEL
Great! Tears! The big equalizer.
You wait till two days before the
wedding to drop this on me, and
I'm just supposed to roll over and
drool!

She is sobbing now. She can't help herself. Which makes him
totally crazy. He jumps up.

MICHAEL
Fine. I'm an insensitive, chauvinist
asshole, and you're well rid of m...

KIMMY
MICHAEL!!

A wrenching cry from her heart. It stops him cold. And before
Julianne's astonished eyes, Kimmy reaches out a trembling hand...

KIMMY
Michael, you are so...

Choking back the sobs.

KIMMY
... so right. And I am so very
wrong.

Michael blinks. Julianne blinks. For different reasons.

KIMMY
We can't go down two roads. And
still be together.

Her fingers stretch, beckoning.

JULIANNE
Uh, Kimmy...?

KIMMY
(ignores her)
We settled this. And I reneged.
That wasn't fair.

Please, please, take my hand.

KIMMY
You have to forgive me, and forget
this ever happened...

People are watching, staring. These two see only each other.

KIMMY
... or I'll die.

A frozen, forever moment. He steps to her...

... LIFTS her up in his arms. Into the deepest, most heartfelt
KISS. And as she clings to him, people begins to APPLAUD, and
whistle, and laugh.

Julianne. In her pretty dress. Closes her eyes.

INT. JULIANNE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Julianne in her nightshirt, her back to us, sobbing into her
cellular as she paces the room...

JULIANNE
... see that's what I never
counted on! I never heard of
a brilliant moron before!

We CLOSE as she WHIPS around, startling us with her grotesque day-
glo PURPLE face mask. The green was better.

JULIANNE

I mean, the little twerp
GROVELED!!

Losing it. We know the drill.

JULIANNE

SHE IS SO WRONG FOR HIM!

Clutching the phone.

JULIANNE

Michael and I are the same person!
Self-absorbed and imperfect and
vaguely loveable! We deserve
each other!

Tears are flowing. Which, over this mask, is not a pretty sight.

JULIANNE

I'm out of hope, I'm out of sneaky
ideas, I'm at the end of my
rapidly-fraying hysterical little
rope! Help m...

She TRIPS over an open suitcase, and DISAPPEARS from frame. The
THUD is slightly alarming.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

God, I hate this hotel.

HOLD. On nothing is particular.

JULIANNE (O.S.)

And I hate talking to your machine!

INT. JULIANNE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

REAR VIEW of Julianne asleep on the floor, sunlight streaming in.
A soft knocking on a door, somewhere nearby. She barely stirs.
The knock becomes a strong RAPPING, and she fights for conscious-
ness. Her back still to us, she...

... rises, STUMBLES to the door, which is now pulsing with an
insistent POUNDING, and THROWS it OPEN, as we SNAP to...

REVERSE ANGLE... CLOSE on Julianne's face, still encased in a now-
decomposing PURPLE MASK, her eyes SPRINGING wide, she SCREAMS in
shock, and we SNAP BACK to...

ORIGINAL ANGLE... Digger, watching impassively at the high-strung
SHRIEK. In the silence that follows...

DIGGER

You stole my line.

He touches his face, and she realizes!

JULIANNE

Oh, shit!

Starts CLAWING at the overripe mask, but he grabs her wrists.

DIGGER

Chill. We don't want your face coming off with it.

JULIANNE

Chill? Since when do you say ch...

DIGGER

When I'm talking to children.

She looks in his eyes. Realizing at last.

JULIANNE

You flew all the way h...

DIGGER

I noticed. I'm on the noon back. We have this thing with George's family in the Hamptons.

JULIANNE

(soft)

You're butting in.

He still holds her wrists. She brings one of his hands to her lips. Kisses his knuckles.

JULIANNE

(softer)

I really resent this.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Julianne seated at the sink, staring into the mirror, as Digger gently applies soap, cloth and water to easing away the mask. A paleontologist restoring a Bronze Age artifact. By the side of the half-filled sink, rests her plugged-in curling iron.

JULIANNE

What I mean, when I say annoyingly perfect, is that there is nothing annoying about her perfection. It is vulnerable and endearing. And that is annoying as shit.

DIGGER

You like her.

JULIANNE

If I didn't have to hate her, I'd
adore her.

She looks up at him and WINCES, as the movement makes him scrape
her face. He's sorry.

JULIANNE

Last night, she was crying, these
big, real tears, when she thought
she'd lost him. It was like there
was a knife in her heart...

Looking in his eyes. Needs him to hear.

JULIANNE

... and I put it there. I hated
myself, I grieved for her, I
couldn't enjoy one second of it!
And then, when it didn't work...

Can you believe this?

JULIANNE

I was devastated.

DIGGER

(softly)

Go figure you.

JULIANNE

Because I realized. When I see
him say "I do," that knife will
be in my heart. And it will be
there every...

She holds his wrists now. To stop him. To plead for
understanding. Forgiveness.

JULIANNE

... every time I think of him,
forever, which could be a lot.

She almost choked on that last part. So she composes herself.

JULIANNE

You watch a guy caress his
girlfriend's butt. You see an
Old Spice commercial. Sentimental
moments are everywhere, when
you're in the right frame of mind.

She swallows hard. Fights for a grip on her determination.

JULIANNE

There are 18,250 nights in the
next 50 years...

DIGGER

You've been working on this, huh?

JULIANNE

... and having "done the right thing" will only really be comforting, oh, maybe, five, six times.

She sets her jaw.

JULIANNE

This is my whole life's happiness. I have to be ruthless.

DIGGER

(quietly)

And you believe that.

JULIANNE

(unconvincing)

Sure.

His eyes are gentle and merciless at once. No way she gets off this hook.

JULIANNE

He was in love with me every day for nine years. I can make him happier than she can.

DIGGER

It's not his happiness you're feeling guilty about...

JULIANNE

(proudly)

I don't know the meaning of the word guilt!

DIGGER

Impressive.

JULIANNE

I am breaking her heart in the short run, but doing her a gigantic favor! She would be miserable tagging along after this insensitive doofus!

DIGGER

The man you love.

JULIANNE

Beyond reason. The feminist warrior will rise up in this kid, and she'll be standing over his sleeping form with a butcher

knife, selecting from a short
list of body parts!

DIGGER

Someday she'll thank you.

JULIANNE

Let's not get carried away.

And the defenses drain from her clay-ravaged features. The real
Julianne is glimpsed.

JULIANNE

I'd settle for. Someday, I'll
forgive myself.

For...?

JULIANNE

For doing this terrible thing.

Her eyes tear up.

JULIANNE

Which, by the way, I can't
figure out how to do.

As the tears fall, he wipes at them, discovering...

DIGGER

Jesus. You're supposed to take
your make-up off before you
apply the m...

JULIANNE

I KNOW THAT! I WAS DISTRACTED BY
GRIEF!

Oh.

JULIANNE

Guess what I brushed my teeth
with last night?

He thinks about this. Following her eyes to the toiletries kit, he
browses for a moment...

DIGGER

Zit cream?

JULIANNE

I wish.

DIGGER

Neosporin?

JULIANNE

Try less appropriate.

DIGGER

Ben Gay.

JULIANNE

That was Thursday.

He stops on that note.

DIGGER

Elmer's Glue?

JULIANNE

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, WE'RE HAVING
A SERIOUS CONVERSATION!

She's hysterical.

DIGGER

I give.

JULIANNE

I can't even say it.

Now. He's curious.

JULIANNE

A hint. The first word is
"Preparation." Then comes a
letter of the alphabet,
perilously close to G.

She reaches to test her curling iron, BURNS her finger, SHIT!
KNOCKING the appliance into the half-filled sink. She LUNGES for
it, and a terrified Digger GRASPS her arm...

DIGGER

Considering the circumstances,
I'm not wholly against suicide...

Huh?

DIGGER

Just not by electrocution in
front of me!

Oh.

DIGGER

I've got this noon flight.

He reaches to pull the plug from the wall, and now she LUNGES to
grab his arm, slipping, her face falling forward, stopping an inch
above the sink.

JULIANNE

How do you know you can touch
that plug? Are you a licensed
contractor?

DIGGER

What do you suggest?

She looks from the plug down the cord, to the submerged curling
iron. And back.

JULIANNE

Maybe they just seal off this
room. They have others.

He's staring at her. Sweet, but intense.

DIGGER

I didn't mean about that.

Oh. Again.

JULIANNE

If I hear the words "tell the
truth," or any paraphrase thereof,
I dive into the sink and pull you
with me.

Looking at her. Looking at her.

DIGGER

Let's go meet Michael. I'll
wait downstairs.

INT. ARMANI - MORNING

Julianne has cleaned up pretty good. She sits with Digger on a
fashion-fabric sofa. They are side-by-side, studying something
with equal concentration. And slight concern.

DIGGER

I suppose it's too late to
start over.

JULIANNE

It's too late to start over.

PULL BACK to reveal Michael in his wedding tux, submitting to a
final fitting from a stylish fitter.

MICHAEL

You guys are heartless, my
bride picked this out.

JULIANNE

Like I said, dazzling.

DIGGER

Is she going to dress you
every day?

Michael smiles over. Digger smiles back. They live each other.

MICHAEL
Yeah, it's in the contract.

DIGGER
(softly)
Well, then, I'll take it up
with her.

Michael motions, okay, c'mon over. Digger rises, goes to Michael,
the fitter steps back as Digger shows him...

DIGGER
The cut here, here... this
line...

Fingers lightly traveling over the lapel, the side-stitching, the
cloth straight down the spine...

DIGGER
... trouser width, this is all
classic. Which means safe,
something I'd wear.

MICHAEL
I should look different.

DIGGER
You should look like you
dressed yourself.

Yes? Michael's grin is back. Playful and friendly.

MICHAEL
And I'm supposed to respect
your fashion tips, because
you're what, a New Yorker?

DIGGER
(quiet smile)
Something like that.

Julianne loves that the boy are getting on.

MICHAEL
(means this)
Long trip. Pretty nice of you
to come.

DIGGER
Well, I'm close to her. I wanted
to meet the one that got away.

Said so naturally. That embarrasses Michael, who looks down, his smile suddenly awkward.

DIGGER

What?

MICHAEL

I'm just glad someone finally put
this thing in its proper perspective.

Steals a glance at Julianne. She rolls her eyes. What a goofball,
my outrageous friend.

MICHAEL

(to Digger)

Stay, huh?

DIGGER

I honestly wish I could...

MICHAEL

I'll call George's parents.
Tell them I need a best man who
actually looks after me.

Julianne comes over.

JULIANNE

(softly)

They'd say that's my job.

She runs her hands over his jacket, smoothing it everywhere. With
tenderness that approaches transparency. Glances back at Digger...

JULIANNE

I'll take it home from here.

Pinches Michael's ear. Looks in his eyes.

DIGGER

Two words.

JULIANNE

Major. Dish.

DIGGER

Manicure...

She looks down. Michael's nails are unclipped, with layers of
impacted dirt. She touches his fingertips, a little more softly
than she may have intended.

DIGGER

Fly.

Everyone looks down. She ZIPS Michael up.

MICHAEL
(to Digger)
You don't miss much.

DIGGER
Part of being a New Yorker.

INT. HAIR SALON - MORNING

Cutting edge salon. Loud, PULSING MUSIC. Digger and Michael in adjacent chairs, heads back, each smoking impressive cigars as their hair is styled. Digger's stylist is a hot trashy female. Michael's is a tall, flamboyant male in a day-glo vest.

Each man has one hand soaking, the other being worked on by a manicurist, so Julianne goes from one to the other, removing their cigars so they can exhale. A seraglio feel to the way she does this.

Now she's arguing with Michael's stork-like stylist. We can't hear over the music, but she keeps tugging on Michael's hair, pretty passionate about her point of view. Suddenly, she GRABS the scissors to do it herself, and Michael...

... BOLTS out of the chair. WHOA!

EXT. O'HARA AIRPORT - DAY

Skycaps, guests of impatient travelers, a bus offloading forty Japanese tourists. A taxi cuts off a van to reach the curb. Out jumps...

Michael. Opening the door for Digger and Julianne. Digger says something, Michael gives him a strong HUG. Julianne raises one finger to Michael, back in a second. Leads Digger off by the hand.

CLOSE on them now. Alone in the throng.

JULIANNE
Bye, handsome.

Digger just stares at her. Those maddening judgemental eyes.

JULIANNE
You're going to say it, aren't you?

DIGGER
Tell him you love him. With all your heart.

JULIANNE
I'm taking my next book to Viking.

DIGGER
Tell him you've loved him for

nine years, but you were afraid
to realize it.

JULIANNE

I'm moving this book to Viking.

DIGGER

Tell him you're afraid of love.
Afraid of needing.

JULIANNE

Needing.

DIGGER

To belong to someone.

He touches her hair.

DIGGER

We all do, beautiful. I'm sorry
about that.

Staring in her eyes. Even Julianne has run out of words.

DIGGER

Tell him you know this is the
worst, dumbest, cruelest moment
to do this to him. But there
it is, and he has to choose.

JULIANNE

And what will he do?

Digger isn't smiling. His voice low, beneath the crowd...

DIGGER

He'll choose Kim. You'll stand
by her at her wedding. You'll
kiss him good-bye. And you'll
go home.

He holds up one finger. Almost touching her nose.

DIGGER

This is what you've come to do.
Now do it.

Wow. She looks frightened and moved, all at the same time. She
kisses him on the lips.

And walks away. He watches her go through the crowd. Take
Michael's hand. Lead him back toward the taxi.

EXT. SKYLINE CRUISE BOAT - DAY

The skyline of Chicago moves past us. Slowly. The NBC Tower,
Cityfront Center...

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Big weddings are so strange.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
You keep saying that.

Up ahead, the Wrigley Building draws closer...

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Kim has all this stuff to do,
I hardly see her.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Well, you've got the rest of
your lives.

REVERSE ANGLE... they lean on the rail of a cruise boat, easing down
the Chicago River. Wind-blown. Close together.

JULIANNE
Getting your bed made. Every
day.

They smile at each other. Seem so comfortable together.

JULIANNE
You miss her, huh?

MICHAEL
No. I've got you.

She nods. That you have. Staring in her eyes...

MICHAEL
Don't you throw up on boat?

JULIANNE
If you like.

And she LURCHES over the railing, emitting a BARRAGE of incredibly
disgusting sounds, her feet FLAILING in mid-air. He laughs, as he
pulls her back down to the deck. Of course, it was all a joke. He
brushes back her hair. Sighs. Stares.

MICHAEL
I've been thinking a lot the
last couple days. About us,
actually.

JULIANNE
(casual)
Have you.

He has.

JULIANNE

Well. There's a lot of memories
to choose from...

MICHAEL

It's more than that.

That tightens her throat pretty good. When she tries to speak, out
comes a dry CROAK that makes him laugh again. Softer, this time.

MICHAEL

I mean, it's embarrassing to
say it this way, but...

He stops. Her eyes WIDEN in a burlesque of anticipation. So he
smiles. She knows how to put him at ease.

MICHAEL

You've sort of been... y'know,
the woman in my life.

JULIANNE

(straight back)

You've been the man in mine.

Passing under the Michigan Avenue Bridge. No one knows quite what
to say.

MICHAEL

And I was thinking this could be
our last time. Alone. Together.
You know?

JULIANNE

Except for the hot affairs we'll
have twice a year.

MICHAEL

Except for that.

She's smiling so easily. Who would guess her stomach is double-
knotted.

MICHAEL

I can hardly wait for your
wedding.

JULIANNE

Me either.

She watches his surprise.

MICHAEL

Boy, I never thought I'd hear you
say that. Can I come?

She holds herself together. Real soft with...

JULIANNE

I couldn't have it without you.

He's glad to hear that. And then...

MICHAEL

It's normal to have... second thoughts, huh? To be scared.

Is this a change of direction? Or is it the direction she's been praying for.

JULIANNE

I wouldn't know. I never had that many first thoughts.

MICHAEL

I mean, you commit to a wedding. And then it seems like... this... momentum, you know? You forget you... chose it.

She nods. Understands.

MICHAEL

You and I. I mean, in all our relationships with other people... We didn't use the word "love" a lot, did we?

We didn't.

MICHAEL

Kimmy says. When you love someone. You say it, you say it out loud. Right now. Or the moment...

Long beat.

MICHAEL

... passes you by, yeah. She's a smart girl.

Off in distance, the Centennial Fountain SHOOTS an eight-foot JET of water across the river. For Michael and Julianne it goes unnoticed.

MICHAEL

We don't have a song.

Hmm?

MICHAEL

Kimmy and I. We don't have a song. Is that a bad sign?

All Julianne can do is shrug. Then...

MICHAEL
(sings, softly)
Someday, when I'm awfully low...
And the world is cold...

She doesn't want to cry. So she puts all the strength she has into fighting it back.

MICHAEL
(sings)
I will feel a glow just Thinking of you...
And the way you look. Tonight.

He stops. Smiles that sweet, boyish smile.

MICHAEL
Dance card filled?

JULIANNE
I'll check. I have it on
powerbook, these days.

He holds up his arms. And she moves into them. He begins to dance with her, turning so slowly. And, yes, people are watching.

MICHAEL
(sings in her ear)
With each word, your tenderness grows,
Tearing my fears apart...

She holds him closer. Bites her lip.

MICHAEL
(sings)
And that laugh
That wrinkles your nose,
Touches my foolish heart.

He stops. He looks at her. She's still in his arms.

MICHAEL
Where did we first hear th...

JULIANNE
(straight back)
The night we met.

Right to his eyes...

JULIANNE
The night we fell in love.

He doesn't know what to do with that.

MICHAEL
So we heard it... like, right

that... that first...

JULIANNE

We danced to it. Just like this.

Just like this. A long beat. And he has to say...

MICHAEL

I won't lose you, will I?

Her eyes close. Then open. Utterly lost in his.

JULIANNE

No. Because I won't let you.

INT. WALLACE ENTERPRISES - DAY

Julianne in crisp chalk-stripe trousers and a buttoned-up dress shirt. Her coat slung over her shoulder, she wanders through the Saturday-deserted office space. Desks, cubicles, monitors, silent. A row of executive offices standing empty, waiting for the custodian. Turning a corner, we hear...

... life, at the end of the hallway. A grand conference room with a glass wall. Walter, in shirtsleeves, running a strategy meeting for five. DEIDRE, his personal secretary, clicking every word into her laptop at warp speed. Walter sees Julianne through the glass. A comic take of pleased surprise. He comes out to greet her...

WALTER

I thought Michael was picking me up.

JULIANNE

I told him, get the important stuff, Kim's ring. I'll collect the inconsequential.

Meaning, you. They smile at each other. Then...

WALTER

Kim said, when he turned down the job, there was no friction.

Julianne thinks back.

JULIANNE

Friction. No.

He smiles at her line reading. But his mind is always probing.

WALTER

I haven't caused... a problem, have I?

JULIANNE

Nobody has. So far.

Her bright grin. His eyes linger on it.

WALTER

Well, you're a little early...

JULIANNE

I need to make some calls.
Could I use... your office?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julianne enters the spacious corner office, high above the city. Closes the door, quietly, behind her. So anxious, she is practically hyperventilating. She goes, slowly to the vacant cherrywood desk. Its computer and monitor standing silent. She is stalking it, like a deadly animal. And then. She is there.

Talking to herself, her own desperate support network...

JULIANNE

(softly)

You can do this.

Sacred, filled with doubt and conflict. Her hands clutch at each other. Then, one flicks out. And the computer goes ON. The screen GLOWS. Waits for her. Her mouth is sand, her stomach water. She pulls the paper from her pocket...

... looks at it. Looks to the monitor. And begins. To type...

JULIANNE

(mumbling to herself)

E-mail address. To Ben Isaacson,
Senior Editor, Sports Illustrated,
from... Walter Wallace.

And stops. Her heart is thumping.

JULIANNE

See, you can do it. It's easy.

Doesn't look easy. Licks her lips.

JULIANNE

You do it fast, it's over. Like
it never happened.

She sits. And recites as she types...

JULIANNE

Ben. I need a favor.

Here we go. This is it. Types...

JULIANNE

My daughter's every happiness.

And my wife's. And, least of
all, my own, are in your hands.

Nods, okay. Breathing hard. Types...

JULIANNE

Knowing you value our friendship,
and the... cooperative
relationship between our companies...
I am hopeful of your help.

Touch, that. Thinks. It has to be. Types...

JULIANNE

I have offered Mike O'Neal, my
new son-in-law, a great opportunity
in my company. This would also
enable my daughter to settle in
Chicago, near us, and pursue her
dreams and plans.

Almost there. Almost. Types...

JULIANNE

To his own detriment, as well
as ours, Michael will not accept
our offer. While he works for you.

She stands up. Stares at the screen. Walks away. Walks back.
Still standing, types...

JULIANNE

My daughter joins me in this
plea for your cooperation and
discretion.

Is there a SOUND? Outside the door. She HOVERS over the ESCAPE
key. Waits. Waits. Silence. Types...

JULIANNE

With gratitude. For your
understanding. Walter.

She hits a KEY. The screen goes BLANK. The computer asks... DO
YOU WISH TO SEND? She tells the computer...

JULIANNE

Are you crazy? Get him fired?

Types NO. The computer asks HOLD FOR LATER? And she types YES.

JULIANNE

Just till tonight when I bring
him back. To look for...

She glances to her huge bag. Rummages through, pulling out a manila
folder. Lays it by the blank computer. Fans out a few pages in a

natural, disorderly way. Takes a step back...

And stares. Struck to her gut. But when she has done.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter alone with Deidre now, signing a stack of documents, as she efficiently places one after another before him. When he glances up, he sees Julianne wandering the halls. Stands, tells his secretary...

WALTER
(going through stack)
Off to rehearsal. Send out this,
and this, not this, this, and...
that's it.

Slips on his coat. Oh... and by the way...

WALTER
I'm holding four or five E-mails
I wrote over lunch...

On his way through the door...

WALTER
Send 'em out.

INT. CHAPEL, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - DAY

Julianne and Walter enter the rear of a striking Gothic CHAPEL, pastel light slanting in through stained glass windows. We now see the full effect of her outfit, a man's-style chalk stripe SUIT, tailored to fit her body, set off by a bold silk tie. Solid dynamite. She hangs back, while Walter proceeds down the vaulted nave toward...

... Michael, Kimmy, Isabelle and Joe, who stand casually joking by the altar. Scattered around are assorted groomsmen, ushers, an obvious flowergirl. Coming toward us, up the aisle...

... the MINISTER, early 40s, lean and quite attractive. Mandy is HANGING on his arm, pressing her body against him as they walk, murmuring urgent murmurs close to his ear. He's a really good sport, and really uncomfortable. Sammy is walking backwards, right in front of them, DROPS her bag, and BENDS to retrieve it, as if oblivious to major cleavage on immediate display.

Julianne is so lost in her own anxiety, she doesn't even notice, until...

MANDY
Reverend Dyer, this is
Kimberly's somewhat butch
maid of honor...

SAMMY
... Mr. Julianne Potter,

prominent New York drag queen.

Today, the girls' voices are charmingly musically Southern, with none of the extreme accents we heard at the shower. The minister extends his hand...

MINISTER

Billy Dyer, Julianne. And I
love the suit.

She shakes his hand, smiles graciously, but her eyes flick to Michael, now approaching up the aisle. The girls lead the minister away. Michael arrives. Looks her up and down.

MICHAEL

(softly)
Takes me back.

JULIANNE

Well.

She smiles. One that glows a little.

JULIANNE

You sang the song. Least I
could do was wear the outfit.

He nods.

MICHAEL

Except now you're better-
looking.

Oh, yeah? Yes, ma'am. As she loses herself in his eyes...

MICHAEL

I got the ring.

He pulls the box from his pocket. Somewhere, an ORGAN sounds. And as he is about to hand her the box...

MANDY/SAMMY

(sing)
Swi-i-ng low-ow-ow...
Wee-ee-eet Char-i-ot...

Such exquisite two-part harmony, Michael stops to watch.

MANDY/SAMMY

(sing)
Comin', to car-ryyy
Me ho-o-o-me...

It is amazing. Soulful vengeful sluts. He is enthralled. Julianne simply impatient. She wants his attention.

JULIANNE

No accents today.

MICHAEL

Yeah, Kim told me they were giving you their Dueling Scarlet's act. Actually, they're sophomores at Juilliard.

She takes the box from his hand. Opens it, as the singing CONTINUES throughout. The ring is delicate hammered gold. One of a kind.

MICHAEL

Will she like it?

JULIANNE

(whisper)

Yes.

She's staring at the ring.

KIMMY (O.S.)

My groom-person! Your family needs you!

His master's voice. He gives Julianne a smile. And goes. She's left with the box.

Gazes at the ring. Lifts it out.

MANDY/SAMMY

(O.S., singing)

Well, I look over yon-der,
And what did I see-ee-ee?

Slips it on her left hand. Ring finger.

MANDY/SAMMY

(O.S., singing)

Comin too car-ryyy.
Me ho-o-ome...

Touches it. Turns it on her finger. So many emotions.

MANDY/SAMMY

(O.S., singing)

It was a hand. Of a-a-angels.
Coming' for me-e-ee...

Tries to pull it off.

MANDY/SAMMY

(O.S., singing)

Comin' for to carry me home.

It won't come. Not even close.

INT. CRAB HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE on a bowl filled with squares of butter. HEAR the butt of conversation from a rowdy, friendly joint. Julianne's right hand REACHES to the bowl, fingers trace the rim innocently, then...

... SLIDE the bowl into Julianne's lap beneath the table. Her right hand MASSAGES all the butter into a gooey revolving mess. We can pick out familiar voices now, family in distance, the twins closer. As, hidden from view, Julianne brings...

... her left hand from her pocket. Yep. The ring is still there. The finger already red and swollen from pacicky efforts to pull it off. And as APPLAUSE surrounds us, Julianne...

PLUNGES her ring finger into the morass of grease, frantically TEARING at the ring, butter SPLURGING on her pants, everywhere, as we PULL BACK to see...

... the long table covered with butcher paper, the family at the far end, the twins down here with us, a mug of beer for each place, as team of waiters with heaping platters of CRABS, which they...

... FLING across the butcher paper, as APPLAUSE continues from everyone but Julianne, who still struggles secretly. As the waiters set huge wooden MALLETS in front of each guest, Joe O'Neal rises, POUNDS the table with his mallet for attention.

JOE

Like to welcome ever'body to
our little rehearsal supper...

He COUGHS, unaccustomed to public speaking. Walter and Isabelle clap and call out support. So Joe lifts his mallet...

JOE

Okay, everyone stand up!

And everyone does. With one exception. Trapped. She JAMS her left hand in her coat pocket, SMEARS her right palm sort of clean on the underside of the table, GRABS her mallet and JUMPS UP.

JOE

To the bride, uh, goes the
honor... of cracking the first
crab!

Everyone applauses by banging their mallets. Joe RAISES his high. Everybody imitates.

KIMMY

But first, a toast!

And everybody SNATCHES up their beers with their left hands, as Julianne DROPS her mallet with a HORRIFIC CRASH, grabbing her beer, looking up to...

JULIANNE

(on the spot)
I'm right-handed.

A hugely embarrassing half-second. Bailed out by...

KIMMY
To our host, my cuddly Papa
Joe.

All turns.

KIMMY
Who taught me to play "Blue
Hawaii." On my nose.

With a look at Julianne, Kim sets down her mallet gently, and performs a nasal HUM of the tropical standard, strikingly her nostril repeatedly for vibrato. It is charming, and everybody watches.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - LATER

CLOSE on an actual, living, if geriatric, LION. He blinks from his cage, bored as hell. HEAR the surrounding noise, chatter, LOUD Sinatra music, of a very large party. PULL BACK to see...

... and overdecorated BALLROOM, in dim and dramatic lighting, dripping with the trappings of ANCIENT ROME. The mingling guests are the neatly one hundred females of the wedding party, most of them older women. They are served by wandering well-built ATHLETES in Roman togas or gladiator costumes. PAN TO...

... Julianne, still in her suit, hiding by a table piled with a carload of grapes. Her left hand still buried in her pocket. The eyes of a hunted animal. From nowhere...

MANDY/SAMMY (O.S.)
Boo!!!

She JUMPS a foot, both hands FLYING UP, left one awkwardly slamming back into its pocket. The girls have snuck up behind her. They have changed into hot gowns that are really only wide ribbons wrapped around their bodies.

MANDY
I know why you're scared of our
party. It's too hip.

Sinatra singing "Stranger In The Night." Hugely-muscled, half-naked black and white studs, serving enchanted blue-haired ladies.

SAMMY
Kimberly wanted to tickle the
grandmas, so we figured, give
'em a cheap thrill. Walter
supplied the decorative
touches...

SAMMY

(points out the jokes)
Nose tackle from the Bears...
power forward from the Bulls...
defenseman from the Black
Hawks... my personal favorite,
the designated hitter...

MANDY

... I'm partial to the tight end.

SAMMY

This is USDA Prime, largely
available, beef. With no notice-
able competition, present company
excepted...

Now they stare at her. With identical, really odd, smiles.

SAMMY

And yet here you are. All
celibate and reclusive.

MANDY

With those big, dark, haunted eyes.
As if you were harborin' some...
unspeakably... guilty... secret.

Oh.

JULIANNE

Well, I'm worried about something.

Something. Their expressions are deliciously, identically
expectant.

JULIANNE

Oh. I left this really important
file in Walter's office. I have
to send my editor some...

Some...

JULIANNE

... figures. On territorial sales.
To close my book deal.

Uh-huh...

JULIANNE

So Kim gave me the key. And
Michael's on his way, to drive
me down to Wal...

SAMMY

Oh. We thought it was the ring.

Julianne blinks. Ring...?

MANDY

The one you better get the fuck
off your third finger left hand.

Ah. That ring.

JULIANNE

Well. See. That was a...
reflex to see if it would...

MANDY

(helpful)

... look good on Kimberly.

JULIANNE

Right. And then it didn't want
to come off. Exactly.

SAMMY

Maybe it's happy there.

MANDY

Oh the way out of the crab house?
We asked Michael if we could see
the ring?

SAMMY

He said you told him. It'd be
safer with you.

MANDY

An so it is.

Julianne for once is speechless. To our amazement, the girls wear
identical smiles of kindness and support.

MANDY

Shut up, sugar, he's on his way.
Let's get to work.

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Huge gleaming chaotic kitchen. Cooks, waiters, working at top
speed. The three women RACE in, look around frantically, half the
guys stop to ogle the twins. CUT TO...

ANGLES... and industrial-sized jar of peanut butter. Julianne's hand
PLUNGES in, halfway to the rolled-up sleeve at her elbow. SMOUCHES
it around, real good. PULL BACK to reveal...

... she is surrounded by the twins and six guys, all SHOUTING
conflicting instructions. Julianne FLINGS off the excess SLOP.
Tugs for all she's worth...

EIGHT PEOPLE

TWIST IT! TWIST IT!

Nada. It won't budge. A sous chef WIPES her hand with a towel, a janitor CRASHES a tool kit onto the counter. THROWS it open, pulls out...

TUGS. ... a spray can of WD-40. Instantly, her hand is BLACK. The guy
No movement. He can't believe it.

JANITOR

It's mental, lady, you ain't trying!

Sammy is rummaging through her handbag, pulling out...

SAMMY

There is nothing so tight, this can't help it...

... a tube of jelly. The letter K-Y. Julianne just gives her a look. Mandy pushes through with a butcher's CLEAVER...

MANDY

I saw this on Hard Copy. People cut off body parts and the hospital sew 'em back o...

The look has turned toward her.

JULIANNE

(cold)

I saw the show.

MANDY

... well, maybe it works on fingers, too.

FLOWER GIRL (O.S.)

Aunt Mandy...?

Everybody turns. The little girl in the doorway. Southern accent...

FLOWER GIRL

Mr. Michael's here.

Everything gets real quiet. Mandy takes charge. She rolls down Julianne's left sleeve, RIPS the hem out of the cuff, so that it flaps down over her hand, covering the ring. Sammy wipes the black stuff from Julianne's fingers.

MANDY

Don't worry, baby. You could pick your nose with that finger and Michael would never notice. He's a man.

The twins lead her off. We're on their backs for...

MANDY (O.S.)

Personally, I think Mr. Michael's
marrying the wrong girl.

SAMMY (O.S.)

You're much more his type.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

VIEW through a heavy glass door of the empty, dimly-lit lobby.
PULL BACK to see Julianne, just as she...

... KICKS the shit out of the glass! Almost breaks her foot.

JULIANNE

I can't believe this!

PULL BACK farther to see Michael still trying keys from a large key
ring in the heavy lock. Sign over the door says WALLACE ENTERPRISES.
Traffic hustles by, oblivious to her suffering.

MICHAEL

It's no big deal, she just gave
you the wrong keys that's s...

JULIANNE

ISN'T THERE A GUARD? A JANITOR?
A FUCKING CLEANING WOMAN? I'LL
TAKE A BURGLAR! SOMEBODY'S
GOTTA BE IN TH...

And she SLAMS her whole BODY against the glass, making it rattle
ominously.

JULIANNE

WHERE'S A BRICK? FIND ME A
GODDAMN BRICK!!

She looks around wildly, hysterical.

MICHAEL

What is the big deal about
getting this file tonight?

A good question. She needs a good answer.

JULIANNE

I promised Digger I'd E-mail him
those figures.

From his face, that wasn't it.

JULIANNE

They are very important figures.

Apparently. He's just staring at her.

JULIANNE
I'm up against a deadline.

MICHAEL
Me, too. I'm getting married
tomorrow.

JULIANNE
That's my point!!

Now. He really doesn't get it.

JULIANNE
I mean, tomorrow... we'll all be
busy with more important things.
So...

So?

JULIANNE
... tonight's my last chance.

He sighs.

MICHAEL
I forgot how cute you look. When
you get impossible.

JULIANNE
It's just... up there... right in
front of Walter's... y'know, computer.
If memory serves.

Helpless.

JULIANNE
We could use... his computer, to...
just E-mail those suckers right ou...

MICHAEL
Tomorrow is Sunday. Nobody's doing
business. Crack of dawn, Monday,
Walter'll take you up there...

Her eyes fill with tears. He is mystified. Smiles tenderly.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Give it up, kid.

Touches her hair.

MICHAEL
You can't win 'em all.

And slowly, he takes her hand. Leads her way. She takes one backward glance at the locked door. Her last dream dies.

INT. LOBBY, RITZ CARLTON - NIGHT

Michael and a disconsolate Julianne board the elevator. He presses 15, she pushes 11. Michael carries a handful of messages slips and an envelope. As the car starts up, she folds her arms across her chest, at the edge of tears. He doesn't know what to do.

MICHAEL

(gently)

Listen up, huh? Even if you blow this deal, how big could it be?

JULIANNE

(voice nearly cracking)

You're right. Easy come, easy go.

He's really concerned, can't bear to see her so upset.

MICHAEL

(softly)

Jules?

She won't look at him. She wants to die. The bell RINGS, the doors open to her floor. She just walks out.

And he follows. They stand now, she with her arms crossed, lip trembling. She can't believe how close she is to losing it.

MICHAEL

This thing means that much to Y...

JULIANNE

It means a lot.

He nods. Okay.

MICHAEL

I'll call the house, Walter's probably not even asleep...

Her mouth drops. She can't believe this.

MICHAEL

I'll drive you out there, we'll get the key, we'll go back to the office...

She THROWS her arms around his, HUGGING him so hard, so close. He laughs, she is so weird. She pulls back, beaming, glowing.

MICHAEL

Come on, we'll call from your room.

She claps his hand. As they head down the hall...

MICHAEL

If I fall asleep on the altar
tomorrow...

He's trying to flip through the message slips in his free hand...

MICHAEL

... you better be there to...
funny, these are all from Ben.

She's at her door, turning the key. He looks at the envelope.

MICHAEL

The fax is from Ben, too. Man,
it's my wedding, and my boss can't
leave me alone...

JULIANNE

(entering her room)
... maybe it's congratulations.

He follows her in, opening the envelope. Stops. Reads. And his face suddenly... freezes. To stone.

JULIANNE

(turning to him)
Michael? What ha...

MICHAEL

(reading)
Mike. I can't believe I'm doing
this to you on the night before
your wedding. But I think you
need and deserve to know...

And he looks up to her.

MICHAEL

... what you're marrying into.

He hands it toward her. She takes it, hesitantly, and he walks past. Toward the phone.

JULIANNE

(reading)
I received the following E-mail
this afternoon... "Ben, I need a
favor. My daughter's every
happiness... "

Her eyes BUG OUT of her head. Holy shit! We can hear him DIALING the phone. She keeps reading, it's all there. How did this happen?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Isabelle? I need to talk to
Kim...

JULIANNE

(reading)

"Mike, the funny thing is, he's
offering you a gig you'd be
stupid to turn down..."

MICHAEL (O.S.)

I'm just tired. Please put her
on? Thanks.

JULIANNE

(reading)

"Maybe you should take the job.
And dump the girl."

And when she turns...

MICHAEL

Jules. Could you give me a
minute?

He looks more sick than angry. As if the heart has just been cut
out of him. She doesn't know what to say or do, so she just stands,
staring dumbly.

MICHAEL

Please?

She nods, stumbles out of her room, closing the door behind her.
Now she's in the empty corridor, clutching her big jumbled bag,
sinking down to sit on the carpet, her back against the door.

She doesn't look elated. She seems frightened, distraught, and
most of all, confused. Because she can't understand why. She digs
absently through her bag. Cigarettes. Box of matches.

She lights up. Draws deeply. Somehow, she seems near tears, and
laughs bitterly at that. Shakes her head at how fucked-up she finds
herself. Squeaking wheels approach, but she is too lost to hear them.

BELLMAN

Miss, are you locked out,
or something?

She looks up. A small, wiry man of nearly 60, in a slightly faded
but neatly-kept uniform. On his cart, a ton of bags.

JULIANNE

No, I just stepped out, because...
it's a non-smoking room.

And inhales deeply. Leans back against the door, to look up at him
more comfortably.

BELLMAN

(politely)

Well, it's non-smoking floor,
too. Maybe you could go to the...

JULIANNE

(seriously)

Why don't you have me arrested?

That wasn't sarcastic. He doesn't know what to say.

JULIANNE

I mean that. Arrested, convicted,
put in solitary.

Another puff.

JULIANNE

See, I'm a dangerous, criminal
person. I do bad things to
honest people. This, see, this
smoking? Tip of the iceberg.

Waves her hand.

JULIANNE

Make a citizen's arrest, I won't
struggle. It'll be like getting
Al Capone on tax evasion.

Now she seems angry. But not at him. Her eyes fill with tears.

BELLMAN

Can I... Can I help you, miss?

She squints at his nameplate.

JULIANNE

Do you smoke, Richard?

BELLMAN

Yes, ma'am, I do, but it's...

JULIANNE

... a non-smoking floor, yeah.
Well, you know what?

And she takes the cigarette from her lips. Turns it around, holds
it out to him. Go ahead. He doesn't move. Please! And so...

... he reaches down, takes the cigarette from her hand. Staring in
her eyes, he takes a deep drag. Savors an expert nostril-inhale of
his exhaled smoke. Hands the cigarette back to her...

BELLMAN

My grandmother always said,
"This, too, shall pass."

She swallows. Wipes at her eyes. Finds a smile.

JULIANNE

Thanks, Richard. If you weren't
on duty, I'd buy you a drink.

He just nods. She waves. He waves back, pushes his cart down the
hall. As she watches him go, the door behind her suddenly OPENS,
and she...

... FALLS through it, flat on her back at Michael's feet. Staring up
at him, seeing that he looks as bad as she feels, she takes raw, deep
drag.

JULIANNE

What happened?

MICHAEL

(softly)

It's over.

And crouches down. Close beside her. The cigarette drops from her
hand, unnoticed on the carpet. So he lifts it, crushes it on the
heel of his shoe.

MICHAEL

I want you to quit this shit,
it'll kill you.

She just nods, obediently. Okay, I will.

MICHAEL

She denied it. Said I was crazy
and paranoid.

JULIANNE

A bad combination.

He tries to smile. It's really hard.

MICHAEL

There's this big brunch tomorrow
morning? At her place.

He lets the air out. Slow. So he won't cry.

MICHAEL

She said "How can I call everything
off, what do I tell everybody?"

Shakes his head. Can you imagine that?

JULIANNE

Michael...

MICHAEL

No, it's for the best, it really is. We were so wrong for each other.

JULIANNE

Maybe tomorrow, you'll feel dif...

MICHAEL

The job thing would have broken us up, eventually, anyway. She couldn't have lived with it. I know that now.

Julianne nods. Maybe that part is right. Maybe it would have ended anyway. Maybe she can pretend she's not a monster.

MICHAEL

And she's right, I'm crazy to fall for someone. I hardly knew.

Looks deep in her eyes. He's so glad she's there.

MICHAEL

Hey. You still got that ring?

She holds up her left hand, the flapping sleeve falls away. The ring is on a finger that is swollen and raw.

JULIANNE

I tried it on. But it won't come off.

He smiles at that. A sad smile of friendship. Then takes her finger gently...

... into his mouth. It is something like a kiss. And when he removes her moistened finger...

... he pulls the ring OFF. Nothing to it. She blinks.

JULIANNE

It's mental, you know.

He doesn't understand that.

JULIANNE

Should we take a walk? Or maybe some food sent up, or something...

MICHAEL

I just want to be alone. Is that okay?

She nods, sure. He kisses her cheek. Stands up.

MICHAEL
Maybe I'll go back to New York.
Hang with you for awhile, huh?
Ben'll understand.

She nods again. Whatever you say. He steps into the open doorway...

MICHAEL
Or we'll go somewhere. If you
have the time.

JULIANNE
If San Antonio sweeps
Sacramento...

They smiles at each other. For real.

JULIANNE
I've never been to Texas.

Imagine that. The look holds. Just above a whisper...

MICHAEL
Thanks for coming to my wedding.

And then he's gone.

IN.JULIANNE'S BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

Julianne brushing out her hair in the bathroom mirror, eyeing her image with evident dissatisfaction, as she listens to the receiver RINGING.

DIGGER (V.O. MACHINE)
Digger and George are with
family in the Hamptons until
Monday morning. Brevity is even
more in order than usual.

BEEP.

JULIANNE
Hey, handsome. Brevity this...

Her eyes find the pack of cigarettes. Next to her toiletries kit.

JULIANNE
(softly)
I won.

Her fingers touch the pack. As if an object of significance. Takes it up.

JULIANNE
Amazing, huh? I didn't do things
quite your way. But... I got it
down.

Cradling the phone against her shoulder, she carefully tears the top of the pack completely open.

JULIANNE

And forty years and nine grand-children later, when I sit with Michael on some rustic porch, slogging through our sweet swamp of nostalgic memories...

Reaches the pack toward the toilet.

JULIANNE

No one is going to sweet the details...

Turns it upside down, emptying a dozen cigarettes into the john.

JULIANNE

Of one weekend in Chicago.

Drops the lid with a CLATTER. Hits the FLUSH.

JULIANNE

Talk about celebration...

She lifts a tube from her toiletries kit. Stares at it, real close.

JULIANNE

I'm gonna brush my teeth with actual toothpaste.

Turns it over, reads all the writing. Yep.

JULIANNE

I guess I'm too exhausted to feel the elation I so richly deserve...

Squeezes some paste onto her brush. Carefully.

JULIANNE

So I'm gonna hold calls at the desk... while I get my...

Start brushing.

JULIANNE

(around, her mouthful)

God, it is toothpaste, they should sell this stuff commercially! Anyway, a girl does need her...

Squints at her image. Laughs, spewing a little foam.

JULIANNE

... well, we're a bit past
worrying about beauty sleep.
Let's just settle for not
frightening small animals.

She SPITS. Tells Digger's machine...

JULIANNE

Anyway, I couldn't have done
it without you. Even though I
did, if you follow that.

Wipes her mouth. Stares off. The eyes a little dreamy.

JULIANNE

Three words: Happily. Ever.
Well, you know.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Julianne sprawled all over the bed, mouth open like a carp,
sleeping mask against the daylight. A sudden RAPPING at the
door, and she...

... sits BOLT UPRIGHT. Utterly disoriented, until she pulls off
the mask. Stumbles out of bed, walking toward the firm KNOCKING,
when...

... it stops. A message slip SLIDES beneath her door. She lifts
it, barely conscious. This wakes her up. In one.

JULIANNE

(to the slip)

You're going where?

EXT. WALLACE ESTATE - DAY

Julianne climbs from her taxi. Only slightly in awe, she sets off
past the reflecting pool, which fronts a mansion of graceful stone
and timber. It's a hike today, because the circular drives is
clogged deep with Bentleys, Mercedes, and waiting limos, vying for
space with a score of delivery vehicles of all kinds, maintenance
trucks, catering and florist and food vans.

INT. GREAT ROOM - DAY

Julianne escorted into an enormous room, where brunch is in
progress for more than a hundred. She looks from the vaulted
ceilings, to the frescoed walls, the inlaid floors, the massive
pipe organ above the stone staircase, the oil portraits of Scottish
ancestors and their favorite dogs.

Isabelle has risen from the main table, and comes to her. All

smiles. Julianne is in the Twilight Zone. What are these people laughing about? Do they still think there's a wedding?

ISABELLE

Jules. We're so glad you
slept in.

Takes her arm graciously. This woman would make Anne Bancroft look coarse. As they walk...

ISABELLE

Now, you have a choice. The idea
is bride and groom shouldn't see
each other on the magic day...

Julianne looking all around. Magic day it seems to be. Where the hell is a bride or a groom?

ISABELLE

So Michael stays put in the garden.
Kimmy stays in here...

Pointing. THERE she is, obscured by a cluster of the appropriately fawning. She has the same hunted eyes and false, slightly manic smile Julianne wore yesterday. This, at least, makes sense.

ISABELLE (O.S.)

... and the guests go back and
forth. Where will you start?

CLOSE on Julianne. Watching the brave, frightened bride.

JULIANNE

She looks tense.

ISABELLE

(O.S., calmly)

Nerves. I would never have
guessed.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAY

A steward leads Julianne to the edge of an expansive rose garden, altogether elegant and comfortable with its long white picnic tables, where nearly a hundred guests casually dine, served by rolling carts.

There, at the head table, Michael staring at us. He looks like a poor attempt to cover a hard night. She locks onto his eyes. What the hell is going on? He looks helpless, miserable. She gestures with her head, follow me. Stalks off.

EXT. SCULPTURE GARDEN - DAY

Bronze abstract pieces, some quite large, face a huge set of children's swings, regulation playground size. Julianne sits in one, moving slightly back and forth. Trying to hold on to her

temper and her sanity.

In the distance, trucks are winding their way to and from the pond, where crews are setting up tents, lights, heaters for tonight. The circus has come to town. When she looks back...

Michael approaches. Before he can draw a breath...

JULIANNE

I had the craziest dream last night? Walter and Kimmy had asked your boss to...

MICHAEL

Look, I came down here to face everybody. I didn't want to slink away like some coward...

JULIANNE

But the Scotch salmon was so fucking good, you decided to stay for brunch!

MICHAEL

She hasn't told anybody, what am I supposed to do?

JULIANNE

Get married, apparently.

She comes OFF the swing, PUSHES him back two feet.

JULIANNE

What the hell are you thinking of, the goddamn wedding is SIX O'CLOCK!!

He swallows hard. Trapped.

MICHAEL

This is her family and her fault.

JULIANNE

And your point?

MICHAEL

(ten years old)
Well. How come she didn't...

JULIANNE

BECAUSE SHE'S AS CHICKENSHIT AS YOU ARE, YOU MORONS ARE MADE FOR EACH OTHER.

He just blinks.

MICHAEL

Hey. This is a serious matter.

Thank you. She POKES his chest, punctuating...

JULIANNE

I'll be right back.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A modern take on the Medieval castle kitchen, towering ceilings, dark wood, copper pots hanging, a series of walk-in coolers and freezers. The place is a madhouse of activity, as prep cooks slice, chop, sort, every kind of food imaginable, and delivery teams bring more.

The girls walk through. Alone together in the eye of the hurricane. Kim choked with excess sentiment...

KIMMY

Look at all this beautiful food,
so lovingly prepared...

JULIANNE

They'll eat it anyway, you ever
been to a walk?

Kimmy's lip trembles. This is not how she thought of her wedding. The din is so horrific, Kimmy leads them into a walk-in meat locker. Even here, two BUTCHERS are dressing Eastern-fresh corn-fed carcasses.

JULIANNE

You guys want to give us a
minute?

The men blink at each other.

JULIANNE

We'd like to be alone with
our pork.

On that basis. They leave. Kimmy sits on a stack of packaged frozen fowl parts. Stares up with big, sweet, wet eyes.

KIMMY

How's he doing?

Julianne cannot believe this.

JULIANNE

Who? The jerk who's running
your life?

KIMMY

This must be... very, very,
hard on him.

JULIANNE

What with the psychosis and
all, yeah.

Leans in. Listen...

JULIANNE

When are you gonna come clean
with your folks?

KIMMY

Don't you see...

JULIANNE

If you're waiting for "Do you
take this man?", that's
considered poor form.

KIMMY

... that this is all my fault?

Stops Julianne cold. Your fault.

KIMMY

Whatever delusions I drove him to,
there is truth at the heart of it.
I want him to work for my father.
I want to stay in school. I want
a life of my own!

Harder and harder for Julianne to push. Her mouth is dry.

JULIANNE

Yeah, well, lots of couples are
imcompat...

KIMMY

I love him.

Fragile and strong at once. A plea.

KIMMY

Tell him it's my fault and
that I love him.

A long beat.

JULIANNE

I'll be right back.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

The court has become a giant holding pen for tonight's BALLOONS.
There are maybe a billion in assorted colors already blowing in all
directions, under clear plastic sheeting which has ben spread
across the top of the court's chain-link fence.

Michael stands outside the court, clutching the chain link like a prisoner, as Julianne comes through the gate. From somewhere, we hear high, squeaky, alien voice-like SOUNDS. Incongruous against...

MICHAEL

How is she?

Julianne absorbs this. As the bizarre SOUNDS continue, she WHIRLS around...

JULIANNE

KNOCK IT OFF!!!

We now see three STONER COLLEGE GUYS, who have been filling the endless array of balloons from helium tanks at center court. Clearly, they've been inhaling their working materials.

STONER KID

(Minnie Mouse)

YES, SIR!

A Nazi salute. When she turns back...

MICHAEL

I asked you...

JULIANNE

She admits it's her fault.

He absorbs that. And then...

MICHAEL

Do you think she still loves me?

We watch the struggle inside her. Her voice drops...

JULIANNE

Sure, she does. She's crazy about you.

Now tears stand in both their eyes. The stoners are doing their Alvin and the Chipmunks impersonation festival in the B.G., singing in castrato harmony. But our two don't notice.

MICHAEL

I keep asking, how can I explain what happened? And I keep getting that same answer all night long.

Which is...

MICHAEL

I can't. And it doesn't matter.

I drove her to it, because I
want things my way. And even
if she did something tricky and
unfair... she was blinded by
love, okay?

Julianne swallows. For obvious reasons.

JULIANNE
Does that make it right...

MICHAEL
Love doesn't have to be right.
It just has to be love.

The stoners are now helium-crooning "Bridge Over Troubled Waters."
Actually, they're getting better.

MICHAEL
She's giving up half her life
for me, and I'm bitching because
it hurts her.

STONERS
(singing)
Sail on silver girl
Sail on by...

MICHAEL
She's a saint! And I'm a
worthless ingrate!

STONERS
(singing)
Your time has come to shine,
All your dreams are on their way...

MICHAEL
Tell her. I'll marry her at six
o'clock, if she'll still have me.

The stoners blend on the high note. It's pretty moving.

JULIANNE
I'll be right back.

INT. ORGAN LOFT - DAY

PAN along a gigantic serpentine stack of wedding presents. Nearly
twelve feet high, the pile curves along the balcony, high above the
diners in the Great Room, extending all the way to...

... an organ loft. Alone, above the noise of the party, Julianne
and Kimmy have just reached the top of the staircase. Trapped
between ten tons of lavish gifts and the keyboard of the mammoth
organ. Dwarfed by their surroundings, Kimmy draws the hardest
breath of her life...

KIMMY
(whispers)
So. What did he say?

Julianne's eyes move over the young girl's face.

JULIANNE
He said. Marry me.

Kimmy YELPS in her ecstasy, FLINGING herself against Julianne, and they go DOWN full length across the organ's pedals, BLASTING the room with a MONSTER CHORD of china-rattling volume and horrifying disharmony.

As grown men and women SCREAM in spontaneous terror below, Kimmy begins to...

... LAUGH. And KISS and hug her new sister. And holds her tight.

EXT. WILLOW POND - DAY

Julianne and Michael walk the gravel path beside a breathtaking POND, ringed with WILLOWS that dig heavy branches to the water's surface. He is relieved, reflective. Head down, he never notices that she is...

... dangerously freaked. Too petrified even to hyperventilate, we're lucky she's breathing at all. We watch her life unraveling before her glassy eyes.

MICHAEL
(never looks up)
Thank God you were here.

JULIANNE
(mumbles to herself)
Oh, yeah.

MICHAEL
I was so confused, so conflicted,
so... unstable.

JULIANNE
Well, it happens.

They pass an expanse of lawn which has become the event parking area. Family vehicles, delivery trucks, service vans. Everything that couldn't fit on the circular front driveway.

MICHAEL
I might have thrown away...

Searching for the right words.

JULIANNE
... your one chance for true

happiness?

MICHAEL

... yeah, that.

JULIANNE

You never want to do that, see,
that's always a... costly
turnover. As they say in the
sport biz.

There's a vague Stepford Wife quality to her voice. He hears that now, and looks at her. Maybe he can't tell she's frightened. But he can tell she's something.

MICHAEL

(softly)

Are you okay?

She stops walking. She can't look at him, so she looks around. Across the lawn crews are moving equipment into the brightly-colored tents, unfolding and setting up stacks of tables and chairs, raising the poles between which all those balloons will be strung. At the center of it all...

.... a huge topiary White Sox batter, just completing a murderous swing. He's maybe fifteen feet tall. She points to it...

JULIANNE

The Big Hurt, huh?

MICHAEL

Nellie Fox. Walter likes the
past. And he likes the little
guys.

So Julianne nods. Because she does too. Squints up at Michael.

JULIANNE

Got a minute?

He nods, you bet. Worried for her. What is this? She looks in another direction, and we now see that we have nearly reached...

... a stage that's been set up for the band. Chairs, music stands, sound equipment. A gleaming dance floor, already in place over the lawn. Next to it, a shimmering white GAZEBO. Like the centerpiece of a wedding cake.

JULIANNE

Why is the dance floor by the
gazebo?

She takes his hand. They walk toward it.

MICHAEL

Kimmy's idea. She thought it

would be such a romantic place.
For our wedding dance.

Looking down at her.

MICHAEL

What's up?

JULIANNE

Shhh.

Up the white steps now. Together. The gazebo floor has been covered with hardwood. The perfect place. For a wedding dance. And Julianne...

... turns, suddenly. He almost runs into her. She is staring up at him, so strangely, their bodies only inches apart. He is caught, transfixed by the intensity in her eyes.

JULIANNE

I have to say this quick, okay,
or I'll have this massive
coronary and you'll never have
to hear it. Which you need to.
Does that make any sense at all?

The coronary part does. We can feel her heart beating from here.

MICHAEL

Jules, what's wrong...

JULIANNE

This is the dumbest thing I will
ever do. So dumb, in fact, that
I can't. I don't think.

And then, she does. She puts her hands flat on his chest. Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE

Michael, I love you.

A heartbeat passes.

JULIANNE

I've loved you for nine years,
but I was too arrogant and
scared to realize it. Now I'm
just scared.

He stares at her, dumbstruck. She moves even closer.

JULIANNE

I know this comes at an
inopportune time, but I have to
ask this one really gigantic
favor, okay?

Holds her breath. And...

JULIANNE

Choose me. Marry me. Let me
make you happy.

And in a half beat of excruciating silence...

JULIANNE

I know. It sounds like three
favors.

His eyes are loving. They care for her. She swallows, lost in
them.

JULIANNE

But when you think about it...

Slides her arms around his neck, and raises her mouth...

... to his. The most beautiful kiss she will ever offer. All of
her heart is in this, and as his hands touch her body...

... a SCREAM rips the world to pieces. They whirl to see...

... KIMMY, halfway up the path. Her hands across her mouth, as if
to stem the horror that pours forth as she SHRIEKS from her soul,
and...

... runs. Back Down the path. Michael BOLTING after her, SHOUTING
her name. A frozen moment, and...

... Julianne TAKES OFF after him. All three running, SCREAMING
their various emotions at the top of their lungs, as workmen stop
to watch from neighboring countries.

Kimmy, staring from halfway there, has an insurmountable lead.
LEAPS into her convertible and PEELS OUT, just TEARING up the
gravel as she ROCKETS out of sight. No way to catch her. Still...

... Michael is racing for the cars. Julianne, sprinting her guts
out, losing ground with every stride. Michael JUMPS into a
Cherokee...

JULIANNE

MICHAEL, DON'T, YOU'LL NEVER
CATCH HER!!

He GRINDS the gears. She keeps RUNNING. His engine FIRES.

JULIANNE

SHE HAS TOO BIG A LEAD AND SHE
DRIVES LIKE A RABID ANIMAL!!!

He BLASTS OFF. She keeps going. Gasping for air, clutching her side,
she's dying here. Slams into a florist's truck, looks inside, shit!

Next, a butcher's van, looks inside, Jesus!

JULIANNE
(to the world at large)
DOESN'T ANYBODY LEAVE KEYS
ANYMORE? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO
TRUST??

Up ahead, Michael has STALLED the Cherokee. She still has a chance, DASHES to the next van. BORNSTEIN EXTERMINATION, a handsome rendering of a rat above the TOXIC MATERIALS warning FLINGS the door open. Stumbles in. Keys!

JULIANNE (O.S.)
THANK GOD, A SAMARITAN!!

Michael SPEEDS away. She KICKS the ratmobile in gear.

LURCHES off.

INT. RATMOBILE, DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Julianne tearing through traffic, desperately struggling to keep Michael's Cherokee in view, while she shrieks into her cellular...

JULIANNE
IT IS NOT GOING WELL!

Down the block, Michael WHIPS around a corner. We follow suit to see his destination dead ahead. Union Station. The DISPATCHER RADIO intrudes...

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
Uh, Unit Four Baker Charlie,
how we cookin' on that Skokiie
infestation?

Now she's steering the car, tearing at the radio controls, and screaming into the phone cradled on her shoulder...

JULIANNE
THIS IS WHAT COMES OF TELLING
THE TRUTH!

FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Copy, dispatcher...

JULIANNE
OR EVEN PART OF IT!

FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Uh, what happens if you got
that methyl-ethyl shit on
your hands?

Michael RIPS into the train station's parking lot. We SWERVE around a taxi, CUT OFF Harley, CAREEN into the lot...

JULIANNE
GETTING WHAT YOU DESERVE IS
NOT FAIR!

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
Uh, you got maybe thirty seconds
before you're sterile. For God's
sake don't touch yourself, or
anything.

Up ahead, Michael is OUT of his jeep and running.

JULIANNE
AND I HATE TALKING TO YOUR
MACHINE!

She SLAMS on the brakes, THROWING herself against the wheel.

YOUNGER FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Uh, this is One Monkey Zebra.
It wasn't bees in the gal's
wall, it was cats!

She TEARS the door open. SCRAMBLE OUT...

YOUNGER FIELD MAN (O.S.)
She says gas 'em, anyway,
she'll pay cash. Uh... how
do I pay this?

WITH Julianne now, RACING through the lot, Michael vanishes INTO the Station, she PLUNGES in after him, BOUNCING off bystanders, apologizing, lunging on, gasping for breath, past exhaustion, threatening clumsily through the crowd like a staggering drunk, catching a lucky glimpse as he heads...

... DOWN a staircase to the TRACKS. My God, what's he doing? A second wind, fueled by panic, and she BOLTS after him, DANCING down the steep staircase somehow without killing herself, reaching the concourse to see him, running for...

... Track 29, a train already RUMBLING, ready to pull out, she SPRINTS after him.

JULIANNE
MICHAEL!!

He DISAPPEARS behind the train, she FALLS, skids, springs up, pushes through gaping onlookers, almost there, the train PULLS AWAY...

JULIANNE
NNNOOOO!!!

But he's just standing there. His back to us. Watching it go.

Her body nearly collapses with relief. She pushes herself on, but her legs aren't working right in their maxed-out fatigue, and she lopes and staggers until she comes up behind him. He's still lost in thought, staring after the train.

She tries to speak, but there's no breath. So she puts her hands on her knees and just GASPS for air like a dog. Wheezing, panting, trying once more to speak, but she can't yet, and then he casually turns and...

... JUMPS out of his skin! A heart attack seeing her.

JULIANNE
(croaks)
Don't speak!

He just blinks at this sweaty, ripped-up, maniacal figure.

MICHAEL
Uh. I saw that moving...

JULIANNE
DON'T SPEAK!

FLINGING both her hands across his mouth. A frozen beat. He nods, okay. Cautiously, she takes her hands away. At least she has made him smile, in spite of everything. At least she's done that.

JULIANNE
I have to make a confession.
Another confession. Besides
that I love you. This is even
worse.

This. He's waiting to hear.

JULIANNE
The E-mail? You thought Walter
sent your boss? I wrote that.

You. WHAT?! Synapse overload.

MICHAEL
You're not saying you actually...
you're saying that y...

JULIANNE
(stricken with remorse)
... wrote it, yeah. I'm the
bad guy.

MICHAEL
ARE YOU CRAZY?

She nods her head wildly, hair flopping.

MICHAEL

ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY INSANE??

Bigger nodding.

MICHAEL
ARE YOU ON DRUGS???

Shakes her head, like a two-year-old.

MICHAEL
(pacing in circles)
I mean, do you realize what
you've... well, of course you
realize, that's why you're
confessing, I mean... I mean...
how could you do that?

JULIANNE
I didn't know it would get
sent. I just wanted you to...
get mad at Kimmy... and...

And watching. As this begins to sink in.

JULIANNE
I've done nothing but slimy,
underhanded, despicable, not
even terribly imaginative,
things. Ever since I got
here. Trying to...

Staring in his eyes. Eyes she can't read at this point.

JULIANNE
... to win you. To win you
back.

Tears in her own eyes now. Big ones.

JULIANNE
And I was blinded by love.
Like you said.

Shaking her head...

JULIANNE
But that doesn't excuse any
part of it. I am pond scum.

No...

JULIANNE
Actually. Lower. I am the fungus
that feeds on pond scum. Lower.
The layer of mucous that cruds up
the fung...

MICHAEL

Lower.

JULIANNE

(agreeing)

Lower.

MICHAEL

The pus that infects the mucous
that cruds up the fungus.

And to her amazement. The trace of a smile...

MICHAEL

(softly)

On the other hand, thank you.

She blinks at that. Which squeezes out a tear.

MICHAEL

For loving me that much, that
way.

He shrugs. Just above a whisper...

MICHEL

It's pretty flattering.

JULIANNE

Except it makes me fungus.

MICHAEL

Well, that part I knew.

She's never loved him more.

JULIANNE

So you have to marry Kim.
Because she will actually make
you happy. I, in contrast, am
a shallow, neurotic psychopath,
with relatively little to offer.

Okay?

JULIANNE

Kim. Nod your head. Do as
you're told.

He nods his head, still smiling. Her tears are running now. Maybe
she doesn't notice.

JULIANNE

Just promise you'll never tell
me who you would have chosen.
If I hadn't confessed.

She chokes back a sob.

JULIANNE

Cos if you would have chosen me.
Then I threw away a perfectly
good life. Just to be a decent
person. Which is a questionable
trade-off. Right?

He nods, slowly. Because he's supposed to.

JULIANNE

And if you would have chosen
some 20-year-old punk over me.
I'd have to kill myself.

Ah. His smile keeps getting smaller. More loving. More wonderful.

MICHAEL

(whispers)

I'll take it to my grave.

Good. She looks around.

JULIANNE

I'm so glad you didn't jump on
that train, before...

MICHAEL

I came here, looking for her.

For her. The words leave a silence.

JULIANNE

Why would she come here...

MICHAEL

This is where I proposed.

Stares deep in her eyes. She needs to hear this.

MICHAEL

I had to cover a game in
Milwaukee. She saw me off.
And when the train started to
leave... I jumped up on the
step, I help the handle, and
without...

He grins. Has to admit...

MICHAEL

... without a thought in my head.
I shouted, "Marry me."

I did. Now her eyes tear up again. And she doesn't know why.

MICHAEL

And she gasped, and covered her mouth, and the train was pulling out, and suddenly she screamed YES! Just once. And blew me a kiss.

What a girl.

MICHAEL

I never forgot that.

JULIANNE

It's two weeks.

MICHAEL

Almost three.

JULIANNE

That is so romantic.

Which makes him reach and touch her hair.

MICHAEL

I just wonder if you know why.

Do you?

MICHAEL

It's because romance isn't mystery, and tricks, and doubts, and halting, unspoken longings. That's not the real romance.

Tears in his eyes now. First time.

MICHAEL

The real romance is saying yes.

Does she know that now? He looks at his watch.

MICHAEL

(sighs)

Woulda been a nice wedding.

Oh. That.

JULIANNE

(urgently)

You can't believe you've lost her! Sooner or later, you'll find her, and you'll look in each other's eyes, and you'll see all that love...

JULIANNE

Course, if it's later rather

than sooner, I'd hate to be you
at six o'clock.

(beat)

You've got a lot of explaining
to...

MICHAEL

I'm just thinking of how she's
hurting. Lost. Alone. Like
her life is over.

JULIANNE

That's little egotistical.

He glares at her.

JULIANNE

But, undoubtedly accurate.

She claps her hands, galvanized by the emergency.

JULIANNE

Okay, we'll split up. You go
to every romantic place you
guys have, I'll go... someplace
brilliant, and the first one
who...

MICHAEL

If you find her...

Strange tone. A gentle warning.

MICHAEL

The kiss. May be hard. For
you to explain.

(beat)

Because the only fear she
really has, is...

JULIANNE

... me, yeah. And she likes
Tommy Lasorda. Case closed.

Looks at her own watch. Shit!

MICHAEL

But if you do get to her first...

She looks up.

MICHAEL

There is something you are
authorized to say.

EXT. TAXI STAND - DAY

Julianne sits on the fender of this guy's taxi. The driver smokes, paces, while she waits for a connection on her cellular. Then...

MANDY (V.O.)

Wallace egregious residence,
Mandy speaking.

JULIANNE

It's Jules, you guys haven't
had a call from, say, Kimberly,
have you?

MANDY (V.O.)

Oh, she's slipped out, the
little monkey. Prob'ly with
Michael, doin' the nasty.

A shallow laugh...

MANDY (V.O.)

Or crying in her nachos, down
at Comiskey Park.

Julianne's face SNAPS to alert.

JULIANNE

Ex-cuse me?

MANDY (V.O.)

I had this crank call? From
some guy who thinks he saw her?
I said, what would a bride be
doin', on her wedding...

JULIANNE

You are <u<so right. What a
nerve on that guy! Bring my
dress to church, huh?

Signals the driver, let's GO!

JULIANNE

I want to pick up a little
something for the ceremony.

INT. LUXURY BOX, COMISKEY PARK - AFTERNOON

Game in progress. Julianne and the bodyguard stand in the doorway of the deserted skybox. Everyone Walter knows is going to a wedding. The box is empty except for one cardboard container of nachos, extra cheese, sitting alone before a pulled-back chair.

BODYGUARD

She wouldn't confide in me,
so I called the house.

He sighs. Feels terrible about all this.

BODYGUARD
Luckily, I got her cousin.

Julianne nods. Yeah, big break, there.

JULIANNE
Going to the john, she said?

BODYGUARD
Could be there awhile.

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM - AFTERNOON

Julianne BURSTS into the enormous chaotic restroom. Looks around wildly, no sign of Kim.

JULIANNE
YO! IMMIGRATION!

Everybody stops. Pays attention.

JULIANNE
I GOT A WARRANT FOR MS. KIMBERLY
WALLACE!

Silence. From the long line of stalls...

KIMMY
(O.S., sobbing)
In here, you bitch!

Now everybody's really interested. Julianne ignores them, strides to the stall. KNOCKS, like it's a door. No answer.

JULIANNE
Let me in, baby, or I'll rip
this damn thing off its non-
code-compliant hinges...

WOMAN (O.S.)
GET THE FUCK OUTTA MY FACE OR
I'M GONNA MESS YOUR SHIT UP!!

Some scattered APPLAUSE. From down the line...

KIMMY
(O.S., still sobbing)
Over here, nitwit!

Oh. Scattered laughter. Julianne moves down the line. Stares at the door. We hear the soft, muted crying from within. Slowly, Julianne...

... drops to her knees. Bends her head low. PEERS under the door. What she sees, prompts a sad warning...

JULIANNE

Incoming.

And she crawls UNDER the door, on her belly. We go WITH her to see...

... Kim fully dressed, perched on the closed toilet lid, her knees drawn up, her arms around them.

JULIANNE

Pitiful.

And pulls herself up to her knees. Kimmy tries to glare, but it just isn't in her.

KIMMY

Haven't you done enough?

The world gets real quiet. An entire bathroom is listening. Julianne cocks her head to one side.

JULIANNE

In one minute. You are going to feel so foolish.

KIMMY

WHY DON'T YOU JUST DRIVE A
STAKE THROUGH MY HEART?

JULIANNE

Have you ever heard of.
Irony?

Irony? Kimmy snuffles.

JULIANNE

I threw my arms around your
husband. And kissed him with
all my heart. Because I was
so happy. For you. Nitwit.

And leans close. As Kimmy flinches.

JULIANNE

(whispers)
He's going to take...
(big grin)
The job!

A stunned pole-axed moment. And Kimmy's eyes SPRING open. You mean...?

JULIANNE

(beaming)
With your dad, yeah. Can you
guess why? Bitch?

Everything inside Kimmy BURSTS free in a torrent of tears...

KIMMY
HE LOVES ME!!

And DISSOLVES, sobbing, into Julianne's arms. A beat, for Julianne to reflect, and then she strokes her tenderly.

JULIANNE
Well, of course, he loves
you.

Kisses the top of Kimmy's head.

JULIANNE
(very soft)
Hell, even I love you.

Kimmy holds her tight. From her heart...

JULIANNE
I never want to go through this
again.

KIMMY
That's entirely understandable.

ANGLES... outside the stall. Julianne's feet sticking out under the door.

KIMMY (O.S.)
Shit! THE TIME!

The two BURST out of the stall, hand-in-hand, at a desperate DEAD RUN past us. HEAR them EXPLODE out the door, and...

... five stalls OPEN. Women exit, crying.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CHAPEL - TWILIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front of an ivy-covered CHAPEL, fronted by nearly a hundred souls, milling about in attitude ranging from overstimulated curiosity to clinical hyperanxiety. Our girls JUMP out of the cab, and half the crowd starts running toward us, twins in the lead...

SAMMY
Whatever hap...

JULIANNE
(cutting this short)
We were bonding, we lost track,
we're officially sorry, now
let's put it behind us.

Kim WAVES at her mom by the chapel entrance. And takes Julianne's hand for support.

JULIANNE

Believe me, we got a bride who's
worth waiting for, yes?

Everybody nods.

JULIANNE

Out of our way.

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - TWILIGHT

White. Pure blinding white. Across FRAME floats more white, this gauzy and ethereal. It settles, its roots planting deeply in the bride's hair. TILTS UP to...

... the face of the woman who placed it there. Julianne's eyes, appraising this bride we cannot see. And so softly...

JULIANNE

Don't worry, sugar.

Don't worry.

JULIANNE

When he looks at you, it will
be as if...

The words stronger. Because there is no smile.

JULIANNE

... he's never seen a woman
before.

PAN DOWN the white until we are...

CLOSE on the bride's perfect slippers. HOLD. And...

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

Begins to slowly PAN BACK UP the length of an exquisite gown. We can tell from the organ, the nearby thrum of expectant voices, that we are nearing the moment. We reach...

... Kimmy's hand. Firmly clasping Walter's. Keep PANNING, the bodice, the lace, her throat, and finally, we are CLOSE on...

... the face of the bride. Now we understand the word radiant. We also understand scared senseless. Our perfect, unflappable Kimmy is in a trance of emotional overload where bliss and panic seamlessly blend.

The organ's noddling stops. Kimmy's eyes alerted, like a small animal bearing a predator approach her thicket. Suddenly, the CHORD. The Wedding March from Wagner's Lohengrin. Here. Comes. The bride. And we SNAP TO...

FULL ANGLE... Kim and Walter. This is it.

WALTER
(whispers)
Left foot.

REVERSE ANGLE... Kim's POV, the chapel, every pew packed, every neck craning this way, the white satin carpet down the endless aisle to where...

Michael waits. Also in a zone of pseudo-consciousness. From which he attempts a smile. Not comforting. Kim's POV WHIP PAN the groomsmen, the twins, LOCKING FOCUS on Julianne, standing strong and beautiful, a glow of her own in the daffodil dress. She sends her little sister a WINK across the trackless miles of aisle. You can do this, kid. So...

... Kimmy does. On her father's arm, she walks the gauntlet of the world's intrusive admiration. One step at a time. The most beautiful she will ever be. She is dazzling the crowd and managing to not throw up at the same time.

And she's there. At his side. She glances back to her maid of honor, just to make sure she's not working without a net. So Julianne...

... CROSSES her eyes. Which lets the kid smile and finally take a breath. Have a little fun, huh? Kim nods, got it, turns to...

The Minister. Who stands before them with a calming presence. Thank God someone has done this before. The crowd has hushed. The Minister's eyes are only for two. His words are for all...

MINISTER
Michael and Kimmy wrote these
words. She asked me to confide,
mostly Michael.

A ripple of laughter. Gentle and fine. They are setting in.

MINISTER
So he gets to say them.

A surprise. A pleasant one. The crowd adjust in its seats. As Michael begins...

MICHAEL
Why do people get married
anymore?

And on these words. We SNAP to Julianne. Share her interest in the bluntness, the simplicity, the unorthodoxy of this beginning.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Why not live together amicably,
with no sense of obligation
beyond the moment?

Her eyes. She's listening.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

As long as the sex is good. As long as no one more interesting has wandered into view. As long as the thousand conflicts of two individual wills remain comfortably compromised.

PANNING now. Other faces. Isabelle. Proud to the bone.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

And when one feels the urge to move on, to explore the new. No guilt, no disgrace, no promise broken.

Walter. His eyes damp. Against our expectation.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

No agony of having dishonored a time. When our hearts. And the world were different.

Joe nods, as he hears...

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Marriage is a lot to put up with.

Julianne once more. No breath. Rapt.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

The answer must be. That there is some need basic to the human heart. That embracing... the obligation of commitment... fulfills.

Her eyes have clouded. As if Michael is talking to her.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Some need to belong to one another in a way which rages against the notion... that all is impermanent. Against the notion of mortality.

And suddenly, ALL the feeling rises in her throat.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Our love is bigger. And longer. Than life itself.

And the tears come. They come freely, unhidden, unnoticed. As if they were needed.

Michael now. Looking at his bride.

MICHAEL

That's what we want. And marriage.
Is what we do about it.

Kimmy smiles at him. With love bigger than life itself.

MICHAEL

We are fools in this. Thank
God Almighty.

He is done. There is a silence.

MINISTER

Boy, that was good!

People LAUGH. The Minister holds up a sheet of paper. For the crowd to see. Mostly paragraphs crossed out in red ink.

MINISTER

Michael and Kim also edited what
they want me to say...

More laughter.

MINISTER

The idea was, we're only marrying
once. We have to remember it
forever. Let's keep to the good
stuff.

(squints at the sheet)

You may kiss the bride.

Bigger LAUGHTER. The Minister waves this off, his little joke. Turns to the best man, pantomimes the ring. As the hammered gold circle is handed to Michael, Julianne absently scratches her still-swollen finger. Mandy taps Julianne on the arm, and produces...

... a matching ring. Take it! Gives it to her. So Julianne steps forward. Places the second ring into Kimmy's waiting hand. Their eyes meet, and hold throughout...

MINISTER (O.S.)

If anyone here can show just cause
why this man and woman should not
be married, speak now. Or forever
hold your peace.

Julianne CLEARS her throat. Kimmy's heart flutters. In the silence... Julianne's wonderful smile. Just kidding.

Michael reaches for Kim's hand, turns her gently to him. Places his ring on her finger. Holds her hands.

MICHAEL

Kimberly. I promise to love.
And respect and comfort you.

To hear your voice and your
heart. Until we are parted
by death.

She swallows. Smiles a fleeting, beautiful smile. Fumbles
slightly, putting the ring on his finger.

KIMMY

Michael. I promise to love and
respect and comfort you. To
hear your voice and your heart.
Until we are parted by death.

Staring in each other's eyes. A moment so fragile, the Minister
waits an extra beat.

MINISTER

For the record, you each agree
to marry the other?

KIMMY

(quickly)

I do!

MICHAEL

(smiling)

I do.

The Minister joins their right hands.

MINISTER

We haven't said much about God
this evening, I know. But He
is here. And He is happy. To
bless His wonderful children.

CLOSE now on Julianne. For the inevitable moment.

MINISTER (O.S.)

In that Michael and Kimberly have
given themselves to each other by
solemn vows, and the exchanging
of rings...

Unnoticed by the world. Her eyes are close.

MINISTER (O.S.)

I pronounce them husband and wife.
Those whom God has joined together,
let no one put asunder.

The eyes open. Wet, brave, ready for...

MINISTER (O.S.)

Now. Kiss the bride.

Julianne watching. As Michael does.

EXT. WALLACE POND - NIGHT

This is what all the preparation was for. Tables, lights, balloons, the guests dancing on the hardwood floor, at the base of the gazebo. The bride and groom among them, relaxed and happy. Two who are one. PAN TO...

... the stage, the band playing. Julianne conferring with the twins and the band leader, clear that she's giving the instructions. Then, she takes her glass of champagne to the microphone...

... KLUNKS it, for silence. The band stops. The dancers follow. All eyes are comfortably turned to the maid of honor. She looks to the couple. Just below her. Then, to the crowd...

JULIANNE

I'm a writer, too, not as good as Michael. But I do steal from quality.

She raises her glass. Everyone at the table does the same.

JULIANNE

This is to my best friend. On the occasion of his wedding.

Shouts of support, a few whistles. Silence. She tells Michael...

JULIANNE

If I have truly come to know your bride as my new sister. This is in her heart...

She has to stop. Swallows. Because she will not let herself cry.

JULIANNE

"Understand. I'll slip quietly away from the noisy crowd when I see the pale stars rising, blooming, over the oaks."

Deep breath. Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE

"I'll pursue solitary pathways through the pale twilit meadows, with only this one dream: You come too."

A hush. SHARP applause. From four hundred hands. But not from his. He is too moved. Too understanding of what he has heard.

JULIANNE

I don't have a wedding gift. But this is on loan. Until you two find your song...

And with that the band begins. The opening phrases of a song we have come to know. Michael seems overwhelmed. Julianne nods toward the gazebo...

... Michael takes his bride's hand, leads her up the stairs, into his arms, as the twins step to the microphone, and guests begin to applaud an unscheduled wedding dance...

MANDY/SAMMY

(singing)

Someday, when I'm awfully low,
And the world is cold,
I will feel a glow just thinking of you,
And the way you look tonight.

Soft two-part harmony. As perfect as the words.

MANDY/SAMMY

(singing)

You're lovely. With your smile so warm,
And your cheeks so soft,
There is nothing for me but to love you,
Just the way you look tonight.

Julianne can cry now. Because she's tied with half the place.

MANDY/SAMMY

(singing)

With each word, your tenderness grows,
Tearing my fears apart...
And the laugh that wrinkles your nose,
Touches my foolish heart.

Julianne begins to sing. Unheard. Unseen. Even by the man she's singing to...

JULIANNE/MANDY/SAMMY

(singing)

You're lovely, please don't ever change,
Keep that breathless charm,
Darling, please arrange it, cos I love you...
Just the way you look tonight.

The band keeps playing. The dance goes on. Two people lost in each other. The way it's supposed to be.

INT. GREAT ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Bedlam. Julianne caught in the middle of the throng. A young couple, dressed for travel, appear at the top of the staircase. The SHOUT are deafening. The bride has her bouquet...

... she spots Julianne far below. THROWS it her way, Julianne reflexively GOES FOR IT...

... not a fucking chance. The twins nearly TRAMPLE her in the

stampede, Mandy WRESTING the prize from Sammy's grasp. Everyone CHEERS, and then the couple is...

... FLYING down the stairs, RACING through the crowd with a protective phalanx of groomsmen bodyguards, heading for the door, for freedom...

... Julianne, trapped in the crush, loses sight of the couple, struggles against the flow, suddenly panicked by the certainty that she will never see him before...

And then, he's THERE. He has Julianne in his arms. Holding her so tight. An embrace so wonderful, so terrible, she could go mad from the confusion alone. Against the din, he murmurs in her ear...

MICHAEL

Wherever I go. However far...

She sobs. Holds him.

Deep, deep breath.

JULIANNE

You win a few, you lose a few.
Some get rained out.

And to her surprise...

DIGGER

(V.O., very softly)

You have a good time?

To her greater surprise. There are a few tears left, after all.

JULIANNE

I did what I came to do.

DIGGER

(V.O., even softer)

Good girl.

She just can't speak now. So she doesn't.

DIGGER (V.O.)

I was thinking. Maybe you might visit us for awhile. We've got the room made up.

This fucking guy. God, she loves him.

JULIANNE

I'll think about it. I'm okay.

DIGGER (V.O.)

Oh, you're more than okay.

Just above a whisper...

JULIANNE

You, too.

And with the last of her strength...

JULIANNE

If the sun comes up, I'll see
you tomorrow, huh?

A chuckle. At the other end.

DIGGER (V.O.)

I'll play those odds. You have
sweet dreams.

We hear the CLICK. She turns her back on the stars. Shoulders
straight. Chin up.

She walks from frame.

FADE TO BLACK. HOLD END CREDITS.