

SHE DEVIL

a screenplay by

Barry Strugatz & Mark R. Burns

based on the novel

"The Life and Loves of a She Devil"

by Fay Weldon

Director: Susan Seidelman
Producers: Susan Seidelman & Jonathan Brett
Line Producer: Mac Brown

December 7, 1988
REVISED

SHE DEVIL

FADE IN:

TITLE: ONCE UPON A TIME...1973

BEGIN CREDITS

INT. BLOOMINGDALE'S - AFTERNOON

The glitzy Manhattan department store is adorned with Christmas decorations. Attractive, well-to-do SHOPPERS scurry about to the strains of classic holiday MUSIC.

ON THE MAIN FLOOR -- a gorgeous PERFUME LADY offers to spray shoppers with a new scent.

IN THE MEN'S DEPARTMENT -- a stunning WOMAN IN A LEATHER COAT selects a silk tie.

IN THE SHOE DEPARTMENT -- a statuesque BRUNETTE slips her foot into a sexy high heel.

IN THE HAT DEPARTMENT -- a RAVISHING BLOND woman tries on an expensive fur hat.

AT THE COSMETICS COUNTER -- a perfectly BEAUTIFUL SALESWOMAN takes a delicate Mother-of-pearl handmirror out of a display case and brings it over to a CUSTOMER who waits at the counter. She holds it up for the customer to admire.

Reflected in the mirror, we now see RUTH, a big, homely, 19 year-old, with stringy brown hair and a large mole above her lip. In the lottery that is life, Ruth is clearly not one of the winners. She stares at her reflection for a moment, then puts the mirror down.

SALESWOMAN

It's beautiful, isn't it?

RUTH

...How much does it cost?

SALESWOMAN

Thirty-five dollars.

Ruth thinks a moment.

RUTH

I guess I'll take it.

SALESWOMAN

Would you like that gift wrapped?

RUTH

Please. It's for my mother.

The Beautiful Saleswoman begins to wrap the mirror as Ruth counts out her money.

END CREDITS.

EXT. SUBURBAN TRAIN STATION - EVENING

A Long Island Railroad train pulls in. Wreaths and colored lights decorate the station. As PASSENGERS exit the train, they button their overcoats and turn up collars against the cold winter air. Many of them carry armloads of gifts. Everyone is in a friendly, festive mood. A Salvation Army SANTA CLAUS stands by his kettle RINGING a bell. It is Christmas Eve.

ON THE STATION STAIRS

Ruth, carrying a suitcase and a shopping bag full of gifts, struggles in her platform shoes to keep balance on the slippery steps. She stops to drop a few coins into Santa's kettle. Ruth seems a bit lost as she heads for the taxi stand.

RUTH

Taxi!

Suddenly Ruth slips on the ice and her bags go flying. A CAB DRIVER helps Ruth to her feet as PASSERSBY help pick up her packages.

EXT. A MODEST SUBURBAN HOME - LATER

The house is outlined in colored Christmas lights. The lawn is decorated with a life-size, plastic Santa Claus and reindeer. As the cab drives away, Ruth walks precariously up the icy steps toward the front door of the house. SOMEONE peeks out through the curtain of the bay window.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Ruth is about to knock when the door opens and there stands a middle-aged chubby man, EDGAR PATCHETT. Ruth stares at him, confused.

EDGAR

Can I help you?

RUTH

Are my parents here?

EDGAR

Who?

RUTH

Mr. and Mrs. Stevens.

EDGAR
Stevens? Oh, them! They moved six
months ago. Bought a condo in
Florida.

RUTH
(astonished)
Ohhhh.

EDGAR
You're their daughter and they didn't
tell you?

RUTH
(dazed)
We haven't spoken in a while. I
thought I'd surprise them.

Ruth wipes at her nose -- she has a nose-bleed.

EDGAR
Hey, are you okay?

Just then Edgar's wife, BRENDA, appears.

BRENDA
Who is it, Edgar?

INT. THE PATCHETT DINING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

In the small but comfortable Patchett home, Ruth, Edgar,
Brenda and the Patchett's handsome 23 year-old son, BOB, are
eating dinner. Bob, wearing a Hofstra University T-shirt,
stares at Ruth, sizing her up. Unnerved, Ruth turns to
Brenda.

RUTH
It's so nice of you to take me in like
this. I never would have made it back
to Buffalo tonight.

BRENDA
It's the least we could do. No one
should have to spend Christmas Eve all
alone.

EDGAR
That's right.

BRENDA
Ruth, you can sleep in Bob's room
tonight.

RUTH
No, I couldn't.

BRENDA
Nonsense. Bob, you take the couch.

Ruth smiles at Bob, but he just stares at her. Ruth's smile fades. She self-consciously reaches for her drink, but instead knocks over a candle. Bob pours his beer on the flame, dousing it.

BOB

Geez!

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE THAT NIGHT

Ruth's presents are under the Christmas tree. The house is dark except for the glow of the television which shows an Osmond Family Christmas special. Bob sits in his underwear on the pull-out couch watching the TV as he drinks a can of beer. He thinks a moment, then gets up, and drunkenly heads upstairs.

IN THE UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Bob slowly opens his bedroom door and enters.

IN THE DARK BEDROOM

Bob closes the door behind him. Ruth stirs in bed.

RUTH

Who is it?

BOB

Santa Claus.

Bob slips into the bed.

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

Edgar comes out of the master bedroom in his pajamas and heads for the bathroom. As he passes Bob's bedroom door, he hears MOANING and the GROANING of a mattress. Edgar pauses, listens, then shrugs and walks away.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

TITLE: SIX MONTHS LATER

INT. COLLEGE DORMITORY - DAY

Bob and seven of his CLASSMATES are drinking beer, laughing and listening to ROCK MUSIC. As the song ends a VOICE is heard coming from outside.

RUTH (VO)

Bob!? Bob!!

Everyone in the room looks at Bob. He walks over to the open window and a few friends follow. Standing on the lawn below

is Ruth. She's very pregnant.

BOB

Holy shit.

FRIEND

Bummer!

A BABY CRIES.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

TITLE: FIVE YEARS LATER

INT. A TINY APARTMENT IN QUEENS - EARLY MORNING

Ruth, wearing a large bathrobe, is at the stove cooking breakfast. She's a whirlwind of activity: buttering toast, frying eggs, squeezing juice. Besides that, she's eight months and twenty-nine days pregnant.

Bob, dressed in a suit and tie, is drinking coffee, nervously pacing back and forth.

NICOLETTE, five years-old, sits at the kitchen table impatiently waiting for her breakfast. Stacked around her are Bob's accounting textbooks.

BOB

(concentrating very hard)

The depreciation on business equipment valued over five thousand dollars is deductible at a rate of forty percent the first year, and fifteen percent for each following--

RUTH

(cracking eggs into
frying pan)

No, honey, that rate only applies to farm animals.

BOB

Shit! Look, Ruth, you know this stuff better than I do. Why don't you take the test for me?

RUTH

C'mon, Bob, relax. You'll do fine.

NICOLETTE

Mommy, I'm hungry!

RUTH

Coming right up, sweetheart.

Bob looks at his watch.

BOB
I'd better get going.

Bob hugs her, Ruth lets out a terrible GROAN. Bob steps back. Ruth leans against the table for support and grabs hold of the tablecloth.

BOB
Ruth!

RUTH
(breathing deeply)
I think this is it, Bob!

BOB
Now?

GROANING, Ruth lowers herself slowly to the floor pulling the tablecloth with her. The breakfast dishes CRASH to the floor.

NICOLETTE
Oooh...you made a mess, Mommy!

INT. A SUB-COMPACT CAR - LATER

Bob drives with Ruth next to him. As Ruth breathes through the labor pains, she continues to quiz Bob.

RUTH
Name the eleven key ratios.

BOB
Current assets to current liabilities. Current liabilities to tangible net worth. Net sales to...

RUTH
...Net working capital.

EXT. A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ENTRANCE

Bob's car SCREECHES to a stop. Bob hops out and opens the door for Ruth.

BOB
Ruth, please let me go in with you.

RUTH
I can handle it, Bob. You've got to take that test. My husband's going to be the best CPA on Long Island. Now go...I'll be fine.

BOB
Ruth, you're amazing. What would I do without you?

Bob helps Ruth out of the car and gives her a big kiss.

BOB

Good luck, honey.

RUTH

Good luck to you. I love you, Bob!

Bob jumps into his car and speeds off. Ruth turns and waddles into the Emergency Room.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. A WIND-SWEPT SCOTTISH MOOR - DAY

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN wearing a tightly corseted 19th century gown runs across a field of heather. In the distance a handsome SCOTTISH HIGHLANDER approaches on a white stallion. He gallops up to the woman, leaps off the horse, takes the woman in his arms and kisses her passionately. Romantic MUSIC swells.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM - DAY - PRESENT DAY

Ruth is now a dumpy, 34 year-old housewife, looking worse for wear. (Time has not been kind to Ruth Patchett.) Dressed in polyester slacks and an Islanders t-shirt, she watches TV as she runs a shampoo machine across the carpet, covering it with a thick foam.

ON THE TV:

The Woman and the Highlander finish their kiss and come up for air. But the beautiful Woman is now Ruth and the Highlander is now Bob. Bob gets on his horse and rides away as Ruth wipes away tears.

IN RUTH'S LIVING ROOM

Ruth heaves a gentle sigh as she watches "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous."

ROBIN LEACH (VO on TV)

Yet another magnificent mini-series
based on the passionate prose of...

ON THE TV:

the Scottish scene DISSOLVES to a shot of MARY FISHER gracefully descending a spiral staircase to the living room of her sumptuous converted Montauk lighthouse home. Mary is a well-preserved, elegantly feminine, pretty, blonde woman.

ROBIN LEACH (VO on TV)

...the reigning Royal Highness of Romance -- Her Majesty, Mary Fisher. Her steamy stories have sold millions, affording her a lifestyle even her wealthiest heroine would envy. Here in her lavish Long Island lighthouse, Mary lives in the lap of luxury.

- Mary is served breakfast in bed by her swarthy young manservant, GARCIA, who smiles seductively. Just then, JULIET -- Mary's small white manicured French poodle -- jumps onto the bed and licks Mary's cheek. Mary laughs and feeds the dog a croissant.

ROBIN LEACH (VO on TV)

In her writing and in her self, Mary Fisher is a model to women everywhere.

- Mary steps out of her silver Rolls Royce -- the door is held by a handsome HUNK.

- Mary is seated at her vanity selecting a jeweled necklace to match her formal attire.

- Mary works at her computer, in a special room decorated in a sensuous pink and satin "love" motif.

ROBIN LEACH (VO on TV)

Champagne, caviar and dashing men are put temporarily on hold as Mary Fisher locks herself in her "Romance Room" to write another tantalizing tale designed to quicken the pulse of her faithful female fans.

- Mary drinks champagne with her wheelchair-bound mother, MRS. FISHER, on the lawn of The Golden Twilight Rest Home.

ROBIN LEACH (VO on TV)

Ever the faithful daughter, Mary's never too busy to visit with her mother, who convalesces in style at the Golden Twilight Rest Home. Mrs. Francine Fisher is the proud matriarch of the Fisher clan.

- Champagne dribbles down Mrs. Fisher's chin. But Mary's too busy smiling into the camera to notice.

- Mary Fisher, holding Juliet, stands on the rolling lawn overlooking the crashing waves of the Atlantic Ocean. The lighthouse looms behind her.

MARY

As my lighthouse is a beacon for ships that sail the stormy seas, so my

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
novels are a beacon of love for women
tossed about on the treacherous waves
of the yearning heart's desire.

IN RUTH'S LIVING ROOM

Ruth brushes a lock of hair from her eyes and stares wistfully
at Mary Fisher and her world.

NICOLETTE (VO)
Give it back, you little turd! Mom!

From the Kitchen, ANDY PATCHETT, an overweight 10 year-old,
runs into the living room eating a Dove ice cream bar.
Nicolette, now a 15 years-old spoiled suburban princess,
chases him across the sudsy carpet. FUZZY, the Patchett's
flea-ridden, mangy mutt, follows, BARKING.

RUTH
Kids! Get off the carpet! Nicolette,
what's the problem?

NICOLETTE
(whining)
He took my Dove Bar. It's the last
one.

RUTH
Andy, is that true?

Andy shakes his head "yes" as he continues to devour the ice
cream bar. The phone RINGS.

RUTH
Nicolette, I'll buy you another one
when I go shopping.

NICOLETTE
I want it now! Give it to me, you fat
pig!

Nicolette lunges for the ice cream. Andy pulls the Dove Bar
out of her reach, but the ice cream flies off the stick and
lands on the carpet. Nicolette SCREAMS and hits Andy as he
runs away. The phone keeps RINGING.

RUTH
I want you both to clean that up!

But the kids are already out of the room. Resigned, Ruth
picks up the phone.

RUTH (into phone)
Hello?

INT. OUTSIDE BOB'S OFFICE - DAY

Bob's silhouette is seen on the frosted glass door that is stenciled with the title:

ROBERT PATCHETT, C.P.A.

SECRETARY'S VOICE (VO)

Mr. Patchett, I've got your wife on line three.

INT. BOB'S OFFICE

Bob sits behind the desk in his small Manhattan office. He picks up the phone.

BOB (into phone)

Hello, Ruth.

IN RUTH'S LIVING ROOM

RUTH (into phone)

(brightening)

Oh, hi, honey! How's my favorite accountant doing today?

IN BOB'S OFFICE

Bob's perky secretary, KIMMY, hands him a file.

BOB

Look, I'm swamped. My secretary quit and I'm breaking in a new girl.

(he smiles at Kimmy as she exits the room)

I just called to see if you still want to go to the party tonight.

IN RUTH'S LIVING ROOM

RUTH

Oh, Bob, I'm really looking forward to it!

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB

It's gonna be really boring. Just a lot of shop talk.

RUTH (VO in phone)

I don't mind. We haven't been out together in so long.

BOB

Okay, I warned you. Gotta go, Ruth. See you later.

IN RUTH'S LIVING ROOM

RUTH

Bye, Bob.

Ruth hangs up. She turns and looks at herself in the mirror. Ruth sees her messy hair. She tugs at her bangs and frowns.

INT. N.Y. PUBLIC LIBRARY ON FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

In the main lobby a mix of ARTISTS, INTELLECTUALS and well-heeled PATRONS enjoy a gala literary party. The CAMERA moves through the crowd of FASHIONABLE PEOPLE until it comes to RUTH. Her hair is inexpertly coiffed in an awkward pile of curls, her dress, just bright enough to call attention to her large frame. She stands, alone, by the hors d'oeuvres table, nibbling on "pigs-in-a-blanket" and sipping red wine as she stares at all the elegantly dressed men and women.

IN THE CROWD

Bob mingles and shakes hands.

AT THE BUFFET TABLE

Excited, Ruth cranes her neck scanning the crowd. She turns and spills her glass of red wine on the white dress of the woman standing next to her. Ruth is mortified.

RUTH

Oh, I'm so--

Ruth looks at the woman -- it's Mary Fisher.

RUTH

(recognizing Mary)

Oh my God! It's you! I don't believe it!

MARY

(fuming)

Neither do I, you clumsy--

Ruth grabs a napkin and excitedly tries to wipe off Mary's dress. Mary pushes Ruth's hand away.

MARY

Please!

BOB (VO)

(annoyed)

Ruth, what are you doing?

Bob comes over.

RUTH

Oh, Bob, I just spilled my wine on
(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

Mary Fisher -- the famous author!
(to Mary)
I've read all your books!

MARY

(sarcastic)

How nice.

Bob looks at Mary as she tries to clean her dress. Bob is immediately attracted to Mary's delicate beauty and aristocratic bearing.

BOB

Ruth, get some salt and Perrier so we
can remove that stain. Hurry!

As Ruth runs off, Mary looks up to see Bob, whose handsome face expresses interest and concern. Her curiosity is aroused.

MARY

A man familiar with woman's domain...I
like that.

BOB

Actually, it's just that my wife's a
bit clumsy. She's always spilling
things.

MARY

That's too bad.

Bob touches the stain on Mary's dress.

BOB

Yes, and it's too late. The stain has
already set. Why don't we just cover
it up?

Bob takes off his jacket and drapes it over Mary's shoulders,
covering the stain.

MARY

(charmed)

How gallant! Now all I need is
another drink, Mister...?

BOB

Patchett, Bob Patchett. Allow me.

Mary takes Bob's arm and they stroll toward the bar.

MARY

And what is it that you do, Mr.
Patchett?

BOB
I'm a financial consultant.

MARY
Oh, I love a man who knows how to
handle money.

BOB
Actually, I'm moving heavily into
artist management. I love being
around creative types. But I refuse
to divulge any more information about
myself unless you call me Bob.

Mary LAUGHS.

WALKING THROUGH THE CROWD

Ruth returns to the hors d'oeuvres table carrying a bottle of
Perrier and a salt shaker -- but Bob and Mary are gone. Ruth
is bewildered.

EXT/INT. BOB'S CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Bob drives onto an exit ramp off the Long Island Expressway.
Mary sits next to him while Ruth is squeezed into the back
seat. Mary gazes out her window at the suburban tract houses.

MARY
All the little families -- Mommies and
Daddies and the dear little children
tucked away for the night. How lucky
they all are...
(turning to Bob)
It's so kind of you to drive me home.

BOB
(smiling)
Absolutely no problem.

EXT/INT. A SUBURBAN STREET CORNER - NIGHT

The car pulls over to the curb, stopping abruptly. Ruth
smashes into the back of Mary's seat.

BOB
Ruth, be careful! I'm gonna drop you
here. Okay, honey?

MARY
Shouldn't we take her to the door?

BOB
It's a dead end street. No sense in
making a U-turn.

RUTH
It's all right, Mary. We just live up
the block.

MARY

And we do have such a long way to
go. It's another hour to Montauk.
(touching Bob's arm)
Are you sure I'm not putting you out?

BOB

Don't be silly.
(to Ruth)
See you later, hon.

Ruth climbs out of the car.

RUTH

It's been so nice meeting you, Mary.

MARY

(smiling at Bob)
Yes it has.

RUTH

Bye, hon...Drive carefully.

Ruth closes the door and watches apprehensively as the car
pulls away. Then she walks off down the dark suburban street.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Mary Fisher's face as she sits on the front seat
next to Bob.

The glow of the highway lights flicker across her face.

RUTH (VO)

Mary Fisher ----

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

A large, dazzling white mansion, built around a lighthouse, at
the end of a long sweeping driveway.

RUTH (VO)

Mary Fisher lives in a mansion by the
sea. She has named her mansion, "The
Dove's Heart," after her first novel
which sold five million paperback
copies.

Bob's car pulls up.

The lighthouse is dramatically lit, making it look even more
spectacular by night.

RUTH (VO)

Mary Fisher writes about the nature of
love.

(a beat)
She tells lies.

Bob gets out of the car and rushes around to help Mary out of her side.

BOB

...there are a lot of accountants out there, one's as good as the next. The important thing is to find someone you feel comfortable with. Someone you can trust--

(admiring the house)

--My God, this is fantastic!

MARY

You should see my electric bill.

BOB

I'd love to.

AT THE DOOR

As Mary puts her key in the lock, the door opens. There stands Garcia, the well-built Latin manservant. He wears a black silk robe, revealing a muscular, bare chest. Juliet, Mary's poodle, stands at his feet.

GARCIA

(suggestively)

I waited up for you.

Juliet starts to YAP. Just then Garcia sees Bob standing behind Mary.

MARY

Down, Juliet!

Garcia's manner immediately becomes more formal and obsequious as Bob and Mary enter.

INT. THE VESTIBULE

MARY

(with authority)

That really wasn't necessary, Garcia. You can go to bed now, we'll be all right.

GARCIA

Yes, Ma'am. Buenos noches.

As Garcia leaves the room he glowers at Bob. Mary turns and smiles at Bob.

MARY

How about a drink?

BOB

Love one.

ON THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE - LATER

Bob and Mary, drinks in hand, step off onto the second floor landing. Mary takes Bob's hand and leads him through a doorway.

IN THE "ROMANCE ROOM"

Bob and Mary enter. Bob surveys the room.

BOB

Wow!

The room is decorated in pink and red satin and velvet. There are huge over-stuffed pillows scattered on the thick, plush carpet. At the far end of the room is an ornate antique French desk with a computer on top. Mary walks to the fireplace and presses a button, igniting a gas fire behind the fake logs. A huge oil portrait of Mary hangs above the fireplace. Classical music, the Romantic Period, comes on the stereo.

MARY

This is where I get my best ideas.
You see, I try to think beautiful
thoughts because then the beauty will
come out in my work.

Mary kicks off her shoes and gracefully sits on the plush carpet, leaning against a few throw pillows. Bob sits down next to her.

BOB

You must lead a very glamorous life,
Mary.

MARY

I suppose so, Bob. But sitting here,
day after day, banging away at my
keyboard -- writing can be so, so
lonely.

Bob watches with great interest as Mary seductively runs her hand up her leg.

BOB

You've got to have a very vivid
imagination to write these romance
novels.

MARY

Yes, but I also do a lot of research.

Mary leans close and Bob takes her in his arms. They kiss lustfully as they roll onto the fur rug.

INT. THE PATCHETT MASTER BEDROOM - AT THAT MOMENT

Ruth is in bed trying to read Mary's latest novel, "Lilacs, Lace and Longing". But she's much too upset. Ruth glances at the clock-radio which reads: 4:30 AM. She becomes distraught and angrily throws the book against the wall. Ruth grabs a brush and begins brushing the curls out of her hair.

INT. PATCHETT KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

At the table, Andy is pouring way too much sugar into his "Cap'n Crunch" cereal while Nicolette eats yogurt. Ruth is at the stove anxiously cooking bacon. Bob's place is set, but he's not there.

ANDY

Maybe he had an accident and got amnesia.

NICOLETTE

You jerk. If he lost his memory the people in the hospital would just look in his wallet.

Andy has now taken his pet gerbil out of his school bag and is attempting to feed it his cereal.

ANDY

But what if his car went off the road and he got knocked out and they haven't found him yet?

RUTH

(upset)

Stop talking like that. Andrew, get that animal off the table!...Your father drove someone home and it got late and he probably...he probably just decided to--

Just then they hear the front DOOR OPEN. Ruth puts down the spatula.

RUTH

(expectantly)

Bob?

Bob, unshaven, strides into the kitchen and kisses Ruth.

BOB

Hi ya, honey.

RUTH

Where were you?....

BOB

You'll never believe what happened. I'm headed home on the expressway last night and my rear tire blows out.

Bob pours himself some coffee.

BOB
By the time I got the damn tire
changed it was so late and I was so
exhausted, I figured I'd better check
into a motel. I certainly didn't want
to fall asleep at the wheel.

Bob tousles Andy's hair.

BOB
(to Andy)
How you doing, champ?

RUTH
Why didn't you call me?

BOB
(defensively)
You want me to call at four-thirty in
the morning and wake up the whole
house?
(to Nicolette)
Morning, princess.

Ruth glares at Bob as he kisses Nicolette on the forehead and
sits at the table.

BOB
Boy, I'm hungry! By the way, I've got
some great news.

Ruth is about to serve Bob a plate of bacon and eggs.

BOB
(smiling)
I landed Mary Fisher's account.

Ruth slaps the plate down in front of Bob. Bob doesn't notice
and digs into his breakfast.

BOB
And this is just the beginning. With
Mary Fisher as my star client, I'm not
just an accountant -- I'm a business
manager!

NICOLETTE
(excited)
Daddy, are we going to be rich?

BOB
We're on our way, princess.

NICOLETTE & ANDY
All right!

Ruth turns back to the stove, picks up an egg -- and squeezes it until it cracks.

IN CLOSE UP: The yolk hits the skillet and sizzles.

MONTAGE:

- Mary and Bob run along the beach. Mary is wearing a Japanese silk kimono which is blowing in the wind. Bob chases after her, also wearing a Japanese robe.

Garcia watches jealously from the cliffs.

- Ruth sweats as she mows the lawn with a large power lawnmower.

- Bob, wearing tinted glasses and "hip" new clothes, talks on the phone with his feet up on his desk in his new high-rise office. In the background, Mary and a DECORATOR toss designer pillows here and there. A WORKMAN paints "Robert Patchett Personal Management" on Bob's new "high-tech" glass door.

- Ruth is on a ladder, washing the windows of the house.

- Bob and Mary make-out in the back of a hansom cab riding through Central Park.

INT. PATCHETT MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wearing a negligee, Ruth sits at her vanity carefully cutting the hairs on her mole. She looks at herself in the mirror, adds a little blush to her cheeks, licks her lips and tries to put on a happy face. Just then she hears Bob on the stairs. Ruth stands, and adjusts her negligee expectantly as Bob walks in. Bob's a little tipsy.

RUTH

Hi, Bob.

BOB

Hi, hon.

Bob barely looks at her. He throws his suit jacket on the bed and kicks off his shoes as he heads into the bathroom.

BOB

Oh, boy, am I beat.

Ruth automatically picks up Bob's jacket.

IN THE BATHROOM

Bob removes his shirt, spots a hickey on his neck and smiles.

IN THE BEDROOM

as Ruth puts Bob's jacket on a hanger, a paper falls out. Ruth picks it up and studies the paper -- it's a bank statement.

BOB (VO)
Oh listen, honey. My folks are coming
over for dinner tomorrow night. Think
you can make something special?

RUTH
(still reading)
Sure. Bob?

Just then Bob's pants come flying out of the bathroom and land
at Ruth's feet.

RUTH
Bob, what's this?

Bob comes out of the bathroom and sees Ruth reading the
statement.

BOB
Oh, it's a bank statement.

RUTH
It says here you have two hundred
thousand dollars in certificates of
deposit.

BOB
Sorry, Ruth, it's not my money. I'm
just holding it in my account as a
trustee for my clients.

RUTH
Oh?...Are you allowed to do that, Bob?

Bob takes the bank statement and puts it in a bureau drawer.
Ruth picks up Bob's pants and hangs them up.

BOB
It's a complex business matter,
Ruth. The kind of thing you wouldn't
understand, and I'm too tired to
explain it.

Bob climbs into bed and fluffs up the pillows. Ruth gets in
beside him.

RUTH
So...How was your evening?

BOB
Great! I bagged a playwright and a
T.V. producer over dinner. My client
list is looking very impressive. And
Mary's got a few more leads for me.

Ruth freezes.

RUTH
Mary Fisher was there?

BOB
Of course Mary was there. Who do you
think introduced me to the clients?

RUTH
Oh...
(trying to make light of it)
It seems like you spend more time with
her these days than you do with me...

BOB
That's not fair, Ruth. She's been a
big help to my career. We owe her.

Ruth rolls over, away from Bob. Tears come to her eyes as she
begins to SOB. After a moment, Bob rolls over next to her.

BOB
You don't understand, do you?

RUTH
I'd like to, Bob.

Bob pats Ruth's head.

BOB
Then listen to me. Mary is a
brilliant, fascinating woman. She's a
very sensitive person, Ruth. An
artist. She's taught me so much about
myself. She's put me in touch with
ideas I never knew I had...
(groping for just
the right words)
How can I explain it?...

RUTH
You're having an affair with her.

BOB
Ruth. What are you saying?

RUTH
(sniffling)
I'm saying, you're having an affair
with Mary Fisher.

BOB
What do you mean..."an affair"...

RUTH
I mean, are you or are you not
sleeping with Mary Fisher?

Bob SIGHS, resigned.

BOB
I'm sorry you asked that question,
Ruth. But I've never lied to you and
I'm not going to start now.

RUTH
...Well?

BOB
(after a beat)
Yes, I've been seeing Mary.

Ruth's nose starts to bleed. After a moment, Bob takes a
handkerchief from the night-table, puts it to Ruth's nose and
tilts her head back.

BOB
C'mon, Ruth, don't start with the
nosebleeds. You're taking this much
too hard.

RUTH
What am I supposed to do? I just
found out my husband is having sex
with another woman.

BOB
You didn't expected me, when I married
you, never to love anyone again.

RUTH
That's exactly what I expected. It's
what everyone expects.

BOB
Our marriage was one of convenience,
Ruth. I think we both acknowledged
that at the time.
(a beat)
Look, I know you're upset and I don't
blame you. But don't worry, Ruth. I
have no intention of ever leaving you
and the kids. Be patient with me.
It's just an infatuation, a fling --
it'll pass.

RUTH
When?

BOB
(getting irritated)
Don't try to pin me down, Ruth. It'll
just make things worse.

Ruth dabs at her nose -- it's no longer bleeding. Bob softens
a bit and strokes Ruth's hair, twice.

BOB
I just need some time.

Bob rolls over and turns out the light. Ruth stares at the ceiling. The CAMERA moves in on her anguished face.

INT. A LARGE MODERN SUPERMARKET - DAY

Ruth is pushing a loaded cart along the aisle with Andy and Nicolette trudging beside her. A disembodied, almost futuristic, VOICE ON THE STORE'S P.A. SYSTEM urges shoppers to try "our jalepeno cheese flavored spread, available in the cheese section..." or "check out our special on Tampax super absorbent deodorized Maxi-Pads..."

The world's largest bag of potato chips is lodged in the shopping cart, torn open, as Ruth and Andy devour handfuls of chips. Nicolette is reading from an article clipped from a women's magazine entitled:

"WINNING BACK YOUR MAN - SEVEN SEXY RECIPES"

NICOLETTE

The secret to chicken vul-au-vents is a delicate puff pastry. A perfect appetizer for this dish is a smooth, bubbling mushroom soup.

ANDY

Gross!

RUTH

Your father loves mushroom soup.

ANDY

We don't love it. We're going to eat too, aren't we?

RUTH

But tonight we're going to make your father very happy.

NICOLETTE

Why? So he'll stay home?

AT THE CHECK-OUT COUNTER:

Ruth pushes her cart past a cardboard display case filled with Mary Fisher paperbacks. There's Mary Fisher's smiling face, surrounded by a soft fur collar and delicate pearls. Alongside, is a blow-up of the cover of her latest novel. It shows a bare-chested Napoleonic soldier laying on his stomach on a French hillside. A young French peasant woman in a low cut dress leans over him and massages his massive shoulders. Emblazoned above the scene is the title, "The Wicked Wench of Waterloo."

Ruth stares at the romantic couple, distraught.

INT. PLAZA HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

IN A SIMILAR POSITION:

Naked in bed, Bob lays on his stomach GROANING with pleasure as Mary massages his back. Bob checks his watch and gently rolls out from under Mary.

MARY

What are you doing?

BOB

I've got to get home.

MARY

Already?

Bob starts getting dressed.

BOB

My parents are coming over for dinner.

MARY

Bob, I didn't realize you were still so...domestic.

BOB

Oh, come on, Mary. I've got to go home sometime.

MARY

(with total sincerity)
No, you don't. Bob, we fell in love. It's no one's fault. Not yours. Not mine. You acted out of kindness when you married Ruth. And I love you for it. But now, Bob, be kind to me...live with me.

BOB

I'd love to, Mary, but it's not that easy. I've got kids.

BOB

And they've got their mother. Ruth is blessed with those children. By bearing and raising your children, Ruth has fulfilled her destiny. It's so unfair. What do I have? My life is so empty.

Mary stands and lays her head against Bob's bare chest.

BOB

Don't say that. You have me.

MARY

But I'm tired of sharing you with
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
her. I don't know how much longer I
can put up with this.

Mary starts kissing her way down Bob's torso.

MARY
I want all of you, Bob.

Bob's nostrils flare.

BOB
(quivering)
I know, I know.

INT. THE PATCHETT KITCHEN - LATE THAT AFTERNOON

IN CLOSE-UP: Tears are streaming down Ruth's cheeks.

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal Ruth in her kitchen chopping onions. The counters are covered with foods, spices, pots, pans and utensils. Ruth finishes with the onions. She turns on the oven, then arranges pastry dough into little heart shapes on a baking pan. Unseen by Ruth, Bob comes through the back door. He spots a pot boiling over on the stove.

BOB
Ruth!!

Ruth jumps, knocking the pastry "hearts" onto the floor. Bob lunges to the stove and turns the heat down. Ruth takes a step toward the stove and SQUASHES on some of the pastry shells under foot.

BOB
Jesus, Ruth! Get it together!

RUTH
(rattled)
You were supposed to be home an hour ago. I could have used some help.

BOB
I got stuck in a meeting.

Ruth freezes for an anguished moment, then gets down on her knees to pick up the pastry shells. She starts to CRY.

BOB
Is dinner going to be ready on time?

RUTH
(sniffing)
Yes, it will.

BOB
Now what's wrong?

RUTH
You know very well what's wrong --
Mary Fisher.

BOB
(angry)
Oh, let's not go into that again. My
parents will be here in an hour. Now
pull yourself together!

Nicolette walks into the kitchen and acts overly surprised at
seeing Bob.

NICOLETTE
(sarcastic)
Dad! You're actually home for
dinner. Are you sleeping here, too?

Nicolette grabs a diet soda from the refrigerator.

BOB
Behave yourself, Nicolette. Your
grandparents are coming and I want
this to be a nice family night.

Nicolette exits, ignoring him. Bob turns to Ruth.

BOB
And do me a favor, Ruth, please don't
embarrass me in front of my parents.

Bob leaves the kitchen. Ruth goes back to the pastry dough,
attempts to re-form the hearts, but they are too mangled.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE PATCHETT HOUSE

A late model white Cadillac pulls up. Bob's parents, Edgar
and Brenda Patchett, climb out. Brenda is over-coiffed and
overdressed, desperately chasing her lost youth. Edgar wears
a bolo tie with a huge turquoise stone at the center, like a
parody of a Texas oil millionaire. Brenda straightens Edgar's
collar.

INT. THE PATCHETT LIVING ROOM

Andy is on his hands and knees looking under the couch.

ANDY
Herbie? Herbie, where are you?

The doorbell RINGS.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Brenda and Edgar are letting themselves in.

BRENDA
Hel-looo!

BOB

Mom, Pop, you're early!

Bob trots down the stairs. He gives his mother a kiss as he shakes his father's hand.

EDGAR

Wanted to get a jump on rush hour.

BRENDA

Bob, you've put on weight! Is she spoiling you with that wonderful cooking?

BOB

Well...

BRENDA

(looking around)

That Ruth, she's such a good housekeeper.

EDGAR

'Course she's a good housekeeper. What'd you expect her to be, a fashion model?

BRENDA

Oh, shut up!...Now where's that terrific wife of yours?

(calling out)

Ruth! It's your horrible in-laws!

EDGAR

(to Bob)

I'm starved. When do we eat?

IN THE KITCHEN

Frantic, Ruth starts laying out cheese and crackers on a platter. Bob enters and hovers over her.

RUTH

They're early.

BOB

They're always early. Cheese and crackers? That's it?

RUTH

The clam puffs will be ready in ten minutes. I'm doing the best I can, Bob.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Brenda and Edgar are comfortably seated on the sofa. Andy's

legs stick out from under the sofa in between Edgar and Brenda.

EDGAR

What are you doing down there, son.

ANDY

I can't find my gerbil.

Just then Ruth enters the room carrying the hors d'oeuvres.

BRENDA

There she is!

Ruth stumbles over Andy's legs. The tray almost falls out of her hands, but Bob grabs it in the nick of time.

BOB

(concealing his annoyance)

I've got it, honey.

Andy gets up and runs into the kitchen. Brenda and Edgar kiss Ruth.

BRENDA

I tell everyone, my son is the luckiest man in the world to have a wife like you. I don't know how you put up with him. He's such a louse.

Ruth shoots a look at Bob, but Bob looks away. Ruth turns to leave.

RUTH

I'd better get back into the kitchen.

BRENDA

Can I help?

BOB

Just relax, Mom. Ruth's got everything under control. How about a drink?

IN THE KITCHEN

Andy is looking around the stove. Ruth enters. Her nerves are frayed.

ANDY

Mom, did you see my gerbil?

RUTH

No, I didn't see your gerbil! Now get out of my kitchen!

Andy leaves quickly. Ruth collapses at the table, cradling her head in her arms.

IN THE DINING ROOM - LATER

the family is seated at the table finishing their salad. Ruth enters from the kitchen carrying a large tureen of soup, smiling tightly, as she tries to hold herself together.

BOB

Certainly these romance novels have a universal appeal. They sell like crazy.

EDGAR

These women will buy anything.

Ruth puts the soup tureen down on the table.

BOB

Ask Ruth. She's read every one.

RUTH

Nicolette, why don't you clear the salad plates?

NICOLETTE

Do I have to?

Ruth shoots her a look and starts clearing the plates.

BRENDA

Oh, you men don't understand. It's always the woman who ends up being responsible for keeping the romance in a relationship. I'm sure Ruth reads these books for inspiration, don't you, Ruth? And let's face it, Bob -- you're the one who reaps the benefits.

BOB

We don't need books.

As Ruth leans over to pick up Bob's salad plate, Bob pats Ruth's back.

BOB

Ruth and I have a terrific relationship -- always have, always will. Sure we have our problems, but it's a question of give and take. Once you understand that, the romance takes care of itself.

Ruth takes out a stack of bowls from the china cabinet.

BRENDA

Bob, that's so sensitive coming from you! Ruth, I didn't know he was so sensitive!

Ruth lifts the lid off the tureen. She looks at the soup and freezes.

BOB

Ruth?

Everyone looks in the tureen. There, floating in the mushroom soup, is Andy's gerbil. It's dead. Nicolette SCREAMS.

ANDY
(crying)

Herbie!

BOB

Oh my God!

EDGAR
None for me, thanks.

NICOLETTE
I'm gonna barf.

BOB
Ruth, what the hell is wrong with you?!

BRENDA
Language!

RUTH
(robot-like)
I'll get a strainer.

BRENDA
Good idea.

BOB
A strainer?! That's a dead rodent!
Ruth, you idiot, put the cover back on!

Ruth puts the cover on the tureen.

BRENDA
Now calm down, Bob.

BOB
Calm down?! The woman is a walking disaster area!
(to Ruth)
Get it out of here! Get it out of my sight!

Ruth calmly picks up the tureen and turns toward the kitchen.

BOB
I don't believe it! A simple dinner
and she screws it up. Can't you do
anything right?!

Ruth stops and turns back to look at Bob.

RUTH
(matter-of-factly)
Why don't you get Mary Fisher to cook
you dinner?

Ruth deliberately drops the tureen on the floor. It SMASHES,
soup splashing everywhere. Fuzzy the dog runs in and starts
lapping up the soup as Ruth walks upstairs. Everyone looks at
Bob, who turns red.

BOB
(innocently)
You see what I have to put up with?

Shaken, Brenda stands.

BRENDA
Nicolette, Andrew -- why don't we go
out for pizza?

EXT. THE PATCHETT HOUSE - LATER

Edgar, Brenda, Nicolette and Andy drive off in the Cadillac.
Storm clouds are forming overhead. A roll of DISTANT THUNDER.

INT. THE PATCHETT'S MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Bob is angrily packing a large suitcase as Ruth watches from
the bathroom doorway. Ruth's nose is bleeding.

There is a FLASH OF LIGHTNING from outside.

BOB
Are you satisfied, Ruth? You upset my
parents, the kids are in shock...Well,
I suppose you can guess where I'm
going.

Ruth just stares at her hands and the bloody Kleenex.

Ruth's silence exasperates Bob. He grabs some shirts from a
drawer and tosses them into the suitcase.

BOB
The whole thing would have blown
over. I had every intention of seeing
this marriage through. But, no, you
had to go and spoil it all. Just
remember, Ruth -- you drove me to
(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

her. You have no one to blame but yourself.

(he stops packing and
looks over at her)

Don't you have anything to say?!

RUTH

(softly)

Does she want the children, too?

BOB

That's disgusting! Mary's a gentle, sensitive person. She's an artist. You know, Ruth, the way you ruined this simple little dinner -- it's so typical. It's like you see happiness so you have to destroy it.

Bob now takes a step closer to Ruth.

BOB

I'm gonna tell you something, Ruth. Life is made up of assets and liabilities. As a man, I have four basic assets...

(counting with his fingers)

A home, that's my castle. A family that's devoted and loving. A successful career, that I work very hard to maintain--and finally, freedom--to enjoy the fruits of my labor...But when it comes to liabilities--I have only one.

(a beat)

That's you, Ruth. Well, I'm not going to let you destroy everything I've worked so hard for.

Bob grabs his "World's Greatest Dad" trophy from the bureau, tosses it into the suitcase, snaps it shut and walks over to Ruth.

BOB

You know, Ruth, in a way I'm glad because I'm finally seeing the real you. You're a bad mother, a worse wife and a dreadful cook. In fact, I don't think you're a woman at all...Have you looked into a mirror lately?...I think that what you are is a...a...a...She Devil!

Ruth stares at him blankly.

Bob strides out of the bedroom, suitcase in hand.

EXT. THE PATCHETT HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Bob's car pulls out of the driveway as Ruth walks out of the house onto the front lawn. Shell-shocked, Ruth watches as Bob drives off. Just then LIGHTNING FLASHES and rain begins to pour down, drenching Ruth.

The CAMERA moves in close on Ruth's face as another BOLT OF LIGHTNING illuminates the wild look in her eyes. She lets out a SCREAM. It's a howl that reverberates with all the hurt, anger and fury of every person, everywhere, who has ever been dumped.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

A LONG SHOT: The Lighthouse by the sea. A stormy night.

RUTH (VO)
Mary Fisher lives in a mansion by the
sea.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary and Bob sleep in Mary's oval bed, covered by pink satin sheets.

RUTH (VO)
She is pretty and rich and loved by my
husband, who is her accountant.

Bob rolls over and Mary snuggles under his arm.

I love my husband...

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING illuminates the room.

...and I hate Mary Fisher...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE PATCHETT HOUSE - MORNING

The next morning. The storm is over. In fact, the sun is shining down on this peaceful suburban neighborhood. The birds are CHIRPING.

From above, the camera moves in on the Patchett back yard, with its perfectly mowed grass and tidy garden. There, in the above-ground pool, we now see Ruth, still wearing her clothes from the night before, floating -- staring at some inner vision. She mouths the words -- "She Devil".

Her eyes glow red.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PATCHETT KITCHEN - LATER

Ruth is seated at the kitchen table, writing something on a "shopping list" note pad.

CLOSE ON PAD:

Ruth has written:

Bob's Four Assets
HOME - FAMILY - CAREER - FREEDOM

Ruth folds it and puts it in her pocket.

EXT. A GAZEBO AT MARY'S LIGHTHOUSE - AT THAT MOMENT

Mary is seated at a small picnic table, typing away on her pink laptop computer. Snuggled in her lap is Juliet, her poodle. Mary reads aloud as she types.

MARY

"He came up behind her and grasped her shoulders with his powerful hands..."

Bob, dressed in a jogging outfit, comes up behind Mary and squeezes her shoulders.

MARY

"...The fingers of his right hand wandered along her clavicles then dipped from view into her blouse."

Bob's right hand disappears under Mary's blouse. Mary takes a deep breath, but keeps typing.

MARY

"She felt his callouses rough against her soft ivory bosom. He pinched its pert pink tip, forcing her to release a gasp of pleasure."

Bob's hand moves under Mary's blouse. Mary lets out a SQUEAL of delight. Mary looks up at Bob. He leans down and kisses her.

MARY

Oh, Bob, the words have been just flowing out of me all morning! It's so wonderful to have you here with me!

Bob tries to smile, but falters.

MARY

(concerned)

What?

BOB

I'm a little concerned about Ruth.

MARY

Now, Bob, there's nothing to feel guilty about. It's all for the better. Ruth will find her own little niche in the world. After all, she still has her children. Poor me, I have none. All I have is you, Bob.

Bob softens.

BOB

I guess you're right...I just hope she's not taking it too hard...

CUT TO:

RUTH -- AT THAT MOMENT:

IN QUICK CUTS:

IN THE BASEMENT -- Ruth replaces the fuses with pennies. She overloads the washer and dryer and switches them on "high" and "hot".

IN THE LIVING ROOM -- Ruth turns the thermostat up to ninety degrees, turns on all the lights and, via "remote control", switches on the TV and the VCR. The TV BLARES.

IN THE MASTER BEDROOM -- Ruth calmly turns on all the lights and the TV. She switches an electric blanket on "high" and does the same with Bob's electric exercise treadmill. She turns on the air conditioner full blast.

IN NICOLETTE'S ROOM -- Ruth takes a small rubber ball out of Fuzzy's mouth and shoves it in the nozzle of an electric blow dryer. She turns it on "high" and tucks it under the bed covers.

IN ANDY'S ROOM -- Ruth flips on the computer. She turns on his electric football game and the plastic players scramble over the vibrating field. Ruth turns the rheostat on Andy's train set to "fast" and the train speeds precariously around the track. She grabs a handful of modelling clay.

IN THE KITCHEN -- Ruth shoves the modelling clay into the blender and turns it on "puree". The blender WHIRS helplessly in overdrive as the motor burns. She turns on the toaster oven, the popcorn popper, the hot dog steamer, the waffle iron, the butter melter, the crock pot and the mixer. She fills the deep fryer with oil and turns it on. At the stove Ruth blows out the pilot lights and turns the gas on "high". The room "shimmers" as heat and gas fill the air.

FROM UNDER THE KITCHEN SINK -- Ruth takes bottles and aerosol cans of ammonia, furniture polish, and cleansers. She shoves them all into the microwave and sets the digital timer to twenty seconds on "bake". The bottles and cans spin around in the microwave.

AS THE NUMBERS ON THE MICROWAVE TIMER COUNTDOWN, Ruth takes her purse from a chair and walks out of the kitchen.

THE MICROWAVE COUNTER CHANGES FROM "18" TO "17"

IN BOB'S STUDY -- Ruth opens a file cabinet drawer and pulls out an accordion file marked "MARY FISHER FINANCIAL RECORDS". She folds it and puts it in her purse.

Ruth lights a cigarette, takes a puff, then drops it in Bob's overflowing wastepaper basket. The cigarette smolders.

THE MICROWAVE COUNTER CHANGES FROM "13" TO "12"

IN THE VESTIBULE -- Ruth looks at a family photo for a moment -- the photo is a family portrait of Ruth, Bob and the kids in happier days. Ruth drops the photo into a large purse, takes out her lipstick and touches up her lips.

THE MICROWAVE COUNTER CHANGES FROM "9" TO "8"

Ruth slips off her wedding ring and opens the front door.

THE MICROWAVE COUNTER CHANGES FROM "4" TO "3"

EXT. THE PATCHETT HOUSE

Ruth steps outside. She's about to close the door behind her when she opens it again. Fuzzy scampers out.

THE MICROWAVE COUNTER CHANGES FROM "1" TO "0"

OUTSIDE -- Ruth strolls calmly down the front walk. BEHIND HER THE HOUSE EXPLODES IN A BALL OF FIRE. Ruth stops and turns around. She smiles as the light of the flames plays across her face.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. THE PATCHETT LAWN - LATER

The house is leveled. FIREMEN hose down the charred, smoldering remains. POLICEMEN keep BYSTANDERS away.

Ruth stands in the driveway talking to an INSURANCE MAN who holds a clip-board.

INSURANCE MAN

The important thing is there was no loss of life. Believe me, I've seen carnage. Whole families wiped out-- burnt beyond recognition. You're lucky.

RUTH

I guess.

INSURANCE MAN

All you've lost is your house and all your worldly possessions. But Security Mutual is going to pay the cost of replacing them--or at least seventy percent of the cost.

RUTH

That's very reassuring.

The Insurance Man pulls out a pack of cigarettes and offers one to Ruth.

INSURANCE MAN

Unless of course, there's been negligence.

Ruth takes a cigarette and he lights it for her.

RUTH

(puffing nervously)

Oh, no! There was no negligence.

INSURANCE MAN

So...you're a smoker?

RUTH

Oh, lately I've been smoking like a fiend. My husband just left me and I've been...well...I don't know what I'm doing half the time.

INSURANCE MAN

Maybe that's how it started? A smoldering cigarette tossed in a waste-paper basket?

RUTH

...Come to think of it, I was smoking as I was going through Bob's papers. I started crying, then I --

(a beat)

Oh my God! What am I saying?! That's negligence, isn't it?!

The Insurance Man scribbles furiously on his clip-board.

INSURANCE MAN

(pleased)

Honesty is the best policy, Mrs. Patchett.

RUTH

(moaning)

Oh, no! Bob is going to kill me.

INSURANCE MAN

Well, if he does, you're covered.

(he laughs, handing

Ruth his card)

Call me tomorrow for an assessment on
the house.

(handing Ruth the cigarettes)

'Keep 'em.

He walks off as Nicolette and Andy push their way through the crowd of bystanders. The kids stare at the burnt skeleton of their house, in a state of shock.

NICOLETTE

Mom! What happened?

RUTH

(calmly)

We had a little accident.

Ruth flicks her half-smoked cigarette onto the lawn. The cigarette SIZZLES in the wet grass.

EXT/INT. TAXI - LATER

Ruth, Nicolette, Andy and Fuzzy climb into the backseat of a taxicab. The taxi pulls away.

Ruth looks out the window and sees images of this perfect suburban neighborhood depicted in Norman Rockwell-esque tableaux:

- On a front lawn, a DAD pitches a baseball to his SON who swings and hits the ball back to him.
- On a porch, a MOM converses with a MAILMAN while her LITTLE DAUGHTER tugs at her apron.
- THREE KIDS sell lemonade at their makeshift stand.
- FOUR GIRLS skip jump-rope on the sidewalk.

ANDY (VO)

Where we going, Mom?...Mom?!

Ruth just stares out the window.

EXT. THE DOORSTEP OF THE LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Ruth tucks Andy's shirt into his pants, then smooths Nicolette's hair into place. She turns and faces the door, putting her arms around the kids.

A dour Garcia opens the door. He sees Ruth, soot still on her face, standing with Nicolette, Andy and Fuzzy.

GARCIA

(haughty)

Yes?

RUTH
I'm Mrs. Robert Patchett. The
children want to see their father.

Garcia's face lights up.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE DOORWAY

Garcia steps aside and points the way. Ruth, the kids and the dog enter the house.

GARCIA
Right up the stairs. First room on
your left.

Ruth grabs Nicolette and Andy by the hand and leads them up the spiral staircase. Fuzzy starts to follow when Juliet appears and starts YAPPING. Fuzzy GROWLS back at her. Juliet runs out of the house YELPING with Fuzzy in hot pursuit.

ON THE STAIRCASE

Nicolette and Andy, looking around in amazement, follow Ruth up the stairs.

ANDY
This place is cool!

IN THE VESTIBULE

Garcia, smiling to himself, slowly and deliberately picks up the intercom phone and presses a button.

IN THE ROMANCE ROOM

the phone RINGS next to the computer -- but no one is at the desk. The room is empty. Discarded clothes lie on the floor in a trail leading to the bathroom. From behind the bathroom door comes the sound of SPLASHING and LAUGHTER.

The door to the Romance Room swings open. Ruth and the kids enter. They look around the room.

MARY (VO)
(laughing)
Bob!

Ruth quickly crosses the room and pushes open the bathroom door.

IN THE BATHROOM

Bob and Mary are in a heart-shaped tub, fondling each other in a bubble bath. They look up and see Ruth standing there.

MARY
Yaaaah!!!

BOB

Ruth!

MARY
(livid)

Who let you in here? Garcia!

Just then Nicolette and Andy appear in the doorway next to Ruth.

ANDY
(blasé)

Hi, Dad.

Mary hunkers down, covering herself with the suds.

NICOLETTE

Nice tub!

BOB
Ruth, what the hell do you think
you're doing?

RUTH
(ignoring Bob)
Andy, Nicolette, this is your new
home. You'll be very happy here.

MARY
(her composure cracking)
Hold it, sister!

RUTH
And this is your father's mistress,
Mary Fisher.

BOB
(sneering at Ruth)
Ruth, you're really depraved.

MARY
(venomous)
Somebody get this deranged woman out
of here! Garcia!

RUTH
My taxi's waiting.

Ruth turns and leaves. Bob grabs a towel, gets out of the tub
and chases after Ruth.

BOB
Ruth!

The kids stare at Mary.

ANDY

Do you have a satellite dish?

Mary glares at Andy.

ON THE STAIRS

Bob, dripping wet, follows Ruth down the steps.

BOB

Ruth, take the children home!

RUTH

I can't.

BOB

If you want to talk we'll meet for lunch. But the children belong at home with their mother.

IN THE ENTRANCE HALL

Garcia watches as Ruth steps off the stairs and heads for the front door.

RUTH

You don't understand, Bob. There is no home.

Bob catches up to Ruth and grabs her by the arm.

BOB

What are you talking about?

RUTH

The house is gone. It burned down. Nothing left but ashes.

BOB

I don't believe you.

Ruth takes the Insurance Man's business card out of her purse and hands it to Bob.

RUTH

Call the insurance adjuster; he'll tell you--

BOB

Ruth!

As Ruth walks to the door Garcia opens it. She exits.

EXT. THE FRONT DOOR

Ruth walks toward the waiting taxi as Bob, still wrapped in his towel, darts out after her.

BOB

Okay, Ruth, I'll give you a few days. Then you've got to come back for the children. Where can I reach you?

RUTH

(opens taxi door)

I'm not coming back. They'll have a much better life here with you...

She gets into the cab.

RUTH

...Don't forget that Andy's allergic to bee stings. Nicolette needs new contacts. And Fuzzy's got worms.

BOB

Ruth! Wait!! Where are you going?

RUTH

I don't know, Bob. Into my future, I guess.

She slams the door shut and the taxi starts to drive off.

BOB

SHE DEVIL!!!

Bob picks up a rock and hurls it at the taxi, but it falls short as the taxi drives away. Bob turns and sees Garcia smirking at him.

INT. THE ROMANCE ROOM - LATER

Bob sits in an armchair as Nicolette browses at the bookshelf. Andy is seated at the computer.

BOB

It has absolutely nothing to do with you kids.

AT THE COMPUTER

Andy looks at the screen displaying Mary's work-in-progress. He presses a key. On the screen appears:

"DELETE DOCUMENT? YES OR NO?"

ACROSS THE ROOM

Bob shifts uncomfortably in the armchair, uneasy in his "Father Knows Best" role.

BOB

I love you both, but your mother and I just can't get along. She's got a lot of problems...

AT THE COMPUTER

Andy presses the "Y" on the keyboard. A new message appears on the screen, flashing ominously:

"WARNING! NO BACKUP!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO ERASE?
YES OR NO?"

Andy thinks about this.

ACROSS THE ROOM

BOB
Now I don't want you to worry, because
things will work out. For the time
being you'll stay here.

MARY (VO)
And since you'll be staying here
temporarily...

AT THE DOOR

Mary enters followed by SIMONE, the middle-aged French housekeeper. Simone is carrying a tray with four fluted glasses and a plate of hors d'oeuvres.

MARY
...we might as well make the best of
it. How about some refreshments?

BOB
Hey! Isn't that thoughtful, guys?
Look what Mary's got for you.

Nicolette comes over as Simone puts the tray down on the cocktail table. The four glasses are filled with champagne and cassis. Nicolette takes one, but Bob grabs it out of her hand before she can take a sip.

BOB
(testily)
Mary, children don't drink Kir
Royales.

MARY
(sarcastic)
Well, excuse me, I'll just run out to
the store and get some Kool-Aid.

Simone brings the plate of hors d'oeuvres over to Andy at the computer.

AT THE COMPUTER

Simone offers an hors d'oeuvres to Andy.

SIMONE

Smoked oyster?

Andy takes two, puts them in his mouth and starts to chew. As Simone walks off, Andy grimaces and GAGS.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Mary and Bob turn to see Andy spit out the oysters onto the white rug.

BOB

Andrew, that's disgusting. Pick that up!

Andy ignores Bob and turns back to the computer.

MARY

(alarmed)

What are you doing over there?

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

The message still flashes:

"WARNING! NO BACKUP!
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO ERASE?
YES OR NO?"

AT THE COMPUTER

As Mary rushes over, Andy presses the "Y" key. the computer emits three loud BEEPS as the screen goes blank. Mary looks over Andy's shoulder at the blank screen. Her face turns white.

MARY

Oh my God! What the hell did you do?!

Andy shrugs and runs off as Mary frantically begins pounding the keys. Mary searches in vain for her lost document.

BOB

(standing)

Mary, what's the matter?

MARY

(horrified)

It's gone! The little bastard erased my novel!

Bob goes over to Mary.

BOB

Mary, watch your language! Calm down.

NICOLETTE (VO)

Gross me out!

Mary and Bob turn to see Nicolette browsing through a book:
"The Masterpieces of Erotic Art". She GIGGLES.

MARY

(apoplectic)

Get them out of here! NOW! Simone!
Take these children and feed them...or
whatever it is that people do with
children.

BOB

Nicolette, Andy -- why don't you both
go into the kitchen and Simone will
fix you something nice to eat.

Nicolette and Andy head for the door. Unseen by Bob,
Nicolette takes a glass of champagne with her.

NICOLETTE

I could get used to this.

The kids leave.

MARY

Bob, they can't stay.

BOB

Mary, they're my kids. What am I
supposed to do, throw them out on the
street?

MARY

Yes, preferably from a third floor
window. Bob, I can't live with
children. Look at me. Do I seem like
the maternal type?

Bob takes Mary in his arms.

BOB

I know you're upset, but don't
worry. Ruth will come back. She has
to. She has no family, no friends, no
money. She doesn't even have anywhere
to go.

MARY

Are you sure?

EXT. PENN STATION -- NIGHT

Ruth comes out of the train terminal onto Seventh Avenue. The
street is crowded with pedestrians. Scattered around the
terminal entrance are several of the city's homeless -- DOWN-
AND-OUT MEN AND WOMEN with their few possessions in shopping
bags.

Ruth walks slowly past, staring at their misery.

FLOWER WOMAN (VO)

Buy a rose?

Ruth turns and sees a shabby old FLOWER WOMAN selling roses.
The Flower Woman smiles sweetly.

FLOWER WOMAN

A beautiful rose for a beautiful
woman.

Ruth smiles and opens her purse.

RUTH

How much?

FLOWER WOMAN

A dollar...or two, if you can spare
it. I'm a little down on my luck
right now.

Ruth hands the Flower Woman a five dollar bill and takes the
rose from her.

FLOWER WOMAN

God bless you. You're an angel.

RUTH

No. Just the opposite, I would say.

Ruth's eyes glow red.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The sounds of Bob and the kids can be heard from the living
room below, as Mary enters her bedroom. She closes the door
and quietly goes over to Bob's jacket hanging on the back of a
chair. She slips out his wallet and removes a credit card.
Then she picks up the phone and dials a number she reads from
the back of the card.

MARY (into phone)

Yes, I'd like to report a lost credit
card.

EXT. THE "DAYS INN" HOTEL, MANHATTAN - NIGHT

A modest hotel on West Fifty-Seventh Street.

INT. "DAYS INN" FRONT DESK

Ruth is filling out a registration form. The CLERK taps
Ruth's credit card on the counter as he awaits verification
through the "Credi-Chek" machine. He smiles politely at Ruth.

Suddenly the "Credi-Chek" machine emits a loud BEEPING sound. The Clerk looks down at the machine, his face turning grim.

RUTH
Is something wrong?

CLERK
I'm sorry but your credit card has been cancelled. It's no longer valid.

RUTH
What?

CLERK
I've been authorized to destroy it.

The Clerk takes a pair of scissors and cuts the credit card in half. He hands the pieces back to Ruth. Ruth stares in disbelief at the plastic pieces in her hand.

CLERK
That will be ninety-five dollars.
Will you be paying in cash?

INT. A FLEA-BAG TIMES SQUARE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The dingy, cheap room contains a sagging bed and a decrepit bureau. On the bureau, Ruth's rose is in an empty pint liquor bottle. Ruth is sitting up on the bed studying the Mary Fisher file she took from Bob's study.

An eerie light from a flashing neon sign plays across her face.

RUTH (VO)
Dumped. That what happens to the poor and useless. They get dumped. I thought I was a good wife, but he says I am a She Devil...

Ruth examines a bill from the Golden Twilight Rest Home. Ruth closes the file. Paper-clipped to the front of the file is the list of "Bob's Four Assets". Ruth takes a pen and draws a line through "HOME" and circles the next item on the list: "FAMILY".

RUTH (VO)
And what a She Devil wants most is --
revenge.

INT. THE ACME EMPLOYMENT AGENCY - MORNING

A sleazy, second-story employment office, the agency is furnished with beat-up metal desks and molded plastic chairs. In the reception area, shabbily-dressed men and women of all ages wait patiently to be called. One weary woman cradles a baby.

AT A DESK

Ruth sits across from an over-weight, red-nosed INTERVIEWER who peruses her application as he chain-smokes. The inch-long ash falls onto the application, but he doesn't bother to brush it off.

INTERVIEWER

Let's see here, Ms...Vesta Rose? What the hell kind of name is that?

RUTH

Well, it's a--

The Baby starts CRYING. The Interviewer turns.

INTERVIEWER

Shut the kid up or get the hell out of here!

(to Ruth)

Look, Mrs. Rose, this application's a joke. What do you think fifteen years experience as a housewife qualifies you for? -- I'll tell you what -- nothing -- zero -- zippo -- niente.

RUTH

But I can cook, I can clean. I can manage a household quite well. And I've helped my ex-husband run his accounting business.

INTERVIEWER

Then maybe you should marry another accountant.

The Interviewer laughs at his joke.

RUTH

...Actually, I had something more substantial in mind -- I was hoping for a job at the Golden Twilight Rest Home.

The Interviewer stops laughing, surprised.

INTERVIEWER

Sure, no problem! They've always got openings!

EXT. THE GOLDEN TWILIGHT REST HOME - DAY

The Golden Twilight Home is a large three-story Gothic structure on a wooded lane on the outskirts of a town in upstate New York. Inanimate old ladies in wheelchairs are randomly strewn about the porch and grounds, isolated from each other. There are no caretakers in sight.

INT. THE GOLDEN TWILIGHT HOME

MRS. TRUMPER, a pompous woman in her late fifties, leads Ruth down a hallway. Ruth is dressed in a white orderly's uniform. Her hair is now pulled back in a "no-nonsense" bun and she wears a pair of thick, black-rimmed glasses.

MRS. TRUMPER

The old are all the same. Allow no nonsense, take a firm line. Remember, they're no different from children. Are you used to children, Miss Rose?

RUTH

Yes.

MRS. TRUMPER

Good, then you'll feel right at home here.

Ruth follows Mrs. Trumper into the day room.

IN THE DAY ROOM

six ELDERLY WOMEN doze on chaise lounges.

MRS. TRUMPER

Let me stress one thing above all else: you must report any damp or smelly beds immediately.

RUTH

Do you mean--

MRS. TRUMPER

(fervently)

Incontinence. Bed-wetters have no place in the Golden Twilight Home.

Suddenly a book slides off the lap of one of the dozing Elderly Women. Ruth picks it up and looks at the title: "Lilacs, Lace and Longing" by Mary Fisher. Ruth opens the book. ON the front page is an inscription in a flowery handwriting:

"To my dear, dear mother,
Enjoy this book as you pass away your
sunset days -- Mary"

Ruth realizes the old woman is MRS. FISHER. Ruth lifts one of Mrs. Fisher's hands and places the book under it.

RUTH

Are they sedated?

MRS. TRUMPER

Our angels would rather sleep than be
awake wondering why their families
have thrown them away. You can
understand that, can't you, Miss Rose?

RUTH

Yes--

Just then, NURSE HOOPER, an extremely tiny woman, enters.
She's middle aged and nearly as wide as she is tall. Her
manner, totally efficient, as she wheels in a cart of pills.

HOOPER

Good afternoon, Mrs. Trumper.

MRS. TRUMPER

Nurse Hooper, this is Vesta Rose.
She's the new orderly.

HOOPER

(brusquely)

Hello.

Ruth smiles down at Hooper.

RUTH

Hello.

Hooper rings a small bell. The ELDERLY WOMEN stir.

MRS. TRUMPER

(to Ruth)

It's time for their afternoon
medication.

(whispering)

Nurse Hooper may be short but she's
very devoted -- been with me for
years. You'll take your orders from
her. Now go help her.

RUTH

Yes, Mrs. Trumper.

Mrs. Trumper leaves.

Nurse Hooper takes a bottle of pills and pops one into an old
woman's mouth.

RUTH

Do they need to take all those pills?

HOOPER

Let's get one thing straight, Miss
Rose. They take pills for our benefit
as well as their own.

She continues down the row, feeding the women their pills as

Ruth follows behind passing out water.

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT DORM ROOM - EVENING

The small bleak room contains two cots with night tables and lamps, rather like a room you might find in a convent. On one side of the room is a kitchenette with a small dining table. Ruth and Hooper eat their dinner in silence. Ruth stands, walks to the stove and pours a cup of coffee.

RUTH
(friendly)
Would you like some coffee?

HOOPER
(coldly)
I'll get it myself.

RUTH
(shrugging)
Fine.

Ruth sits down at the table as Hooper continues eating in silence. The only noise in the room is the SCRAPING SOUND of Hooper's knife as she cuts her food into meticulous mouth-sized pieces.

INT. DORM ROOM - LATER

Ruth and Hooper are in their beds. Ruth's feet hang over the edge of her small cot. The room is dark and silent, except for Hooper's SNORING.

Ruth's eyes are open. She glances over at Hooper, then quietly tosses back the covers and slips out of bed. She puts on her bathrobe and leaves the room.

INT. REST HOME WALK-IN CLOSET - NIGHT

Quietly, Ruth enters the walk-in closet that is filled with shelves of medical supplies, drugs, etc. Ruth pokes around and discovers a large bottle of mega-vitamins. She then takes a bottle of sedatives, dumps them into the sink and runs the water. Ruth pours the mega-vitamins into the sedative bottle and puts it back in its place. She hides the empty mega-vitamin bottle on a high shelf.

RUTH (VO)
Mary Fisher's mother has been enjoying
a long, untroubled sleep. It was time
to wake her up.

CUT TO:

INT. REST HOME DAY ROOM - MORNING

IN EXTREME CLOSE UP: An elderly woman's mouth opens and she sticks out her pastey tongue. A hand places a pill on the tongue which curls back into the mouth.

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal all the Elderly Women lined up in their wheelchairs. Hooper carries the "Sedative" bottle and Ruth follows with a tray of water-filled paper cups. Hooper goes down the line placing the "sedatives" on each of the elderly women's outstretched tongues. Ruth hands each woman a cup of water. When Ruth comes to Mrs. Fisher, she pauses.

RUTH

How are you, Mrs. Fisher? You look very pretty today.

Mrs. Fisher stares blankly.

HOOPER (VO)

Miss Rose! Get over here!

Ruth rushes over to Hooper who hovers over MRS. PLATT, another resident.

HOOPER

Reach down and get the bed pan, quick!

Ruth reaches under the chaise lounge and pulls out a bed pan.

HOOPER

Hold on now, Mrs. Platt. Maintain control.

MRS. PLATT

(grimacing)

I'm trying.

Ruth slides the bed pan under Mrs. Platt and a metallic TINKLE is heard. Ruth looks over and tentatively smiles at Hooper, who finally smiles back.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mary is seated at her dressing table, touching up her face. She stares for a moment at her reflection, pulls back the skin around her cheeks to see what she'd look like with a "tuck", then goes back to her mascara.

Suddenly, LOUD ROCK MUSIC BLARES from downstairs, frightening Mary and causing her hand to shake and run the masquera wand across her cheek.

MARY
(exasperated)
Nicolette!

The MUSIC continues. Mary gets up and leaves the room.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRCASE

Mary steps down off the spiral staircase. The MUSIC grows louder as she heads for the living room.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Nicolette is laying on the couch talking on the cordless phone as the rock music pounds away. Mary enters and shuts off the stereo.

MARY
NICOLETTE!

Nicolette looks up at Mary.

NICOLETTE (into phone)
I'll call you right back.

Nicolette turns off the phone and puts it down.

NICOLETTE
You don't have to scream!

MARY
I asked you ten times not to play the stereo so loud.

NICOLETTE
Then buy me some headphones.

Just then the phone RINGS. Mary and Nicolette both lunge for the phone, but Mary gets to it first.

MARY (into phone)
Hello...Hi, Darling!

INT. BOB'S CAR (FERRARI) - LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY

Bob is talking on his car phone, stuck in slow-moving traffic.

BOB
Mary, what's going on out there? I just spoke to your publisher. She's been trying to reach you.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

MARY
Well, Nicolette's tied up the phone all day.

Nicolette shoots Mary a dirty look.

IN BOB'S CAR

Bob is checking out a BLONDE in a sports car in the next traffic lane. He tries to pull alongside her.

BOB

Paula's very upset. She says your manuscript is two months overdue?

IN THE LIVING ROOM

MARY

Bob, if your son hadn't erased my only draft I wouldn't be in this predicament. You don't know what I have to put up with around here. The noise, the fighting, the constant interruptions. I just can't concentrate. Bob, I'm warning you -- I can't put up with this much longer...

IN BOB'S CAR

BOB

(calmly)

Mary, the children have been through a very emotional experience, being dumped by their mother like that. They need time to adjust to their new environment. This is their home now. You must help them to feel at home. You're their stepmother. Help them, Mary...

IN THE LIVING ROOM

At that moment, Mary looks out the front window and sees:

ON THE FRONT LAWN

Andy plays "fetch" with Juliet and Fuzzy. Andy tosses a stick and the two dogs race after it. They pick up the stick and have a tug-of-war with it. Juliet is a mess, her fur coated with dirt and her ribbons undone. Andy tries to take the stick from the two dogs.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

MARY (into phone)

(angry)

Jesus!

Mary heads for the front door.

BOB (VO into phone)
Mary, what's wrong?

MARY
Your son and that mongrel are
molesting my poodle!

EXT. ON THE FRONT LAWN - AT THAT MOMENT

Andy wrestles the stick from the dogs. He cocks his arm to toss it, the dogs jumping eagerly in anticipation.

Mary opens the front door of the house just in time to see Andy heave the stick with all his might. The stick sails onto the main road. Fuzzy and Juliet race after it.

MARY
Juliet!

ON THE MAIN ROAD

a tractor-trailer truck speeds down the blacktop.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Fuzzy and Juliet grapple over the stick.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Mary watches in horror. She SCREAMS.

ON THE MAIN ROAD

the truck blasts its AIR-HORN as it zooms by. A YELP is heard.

FLUTTERING IN THE AIR

is one of Juliet's ribbons.

ON THE SHOULDER OF THE ROAD

Fuzzy holds the stick in his mouth, his tail wagging.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Mary is sprawled in the doorway, out like a light. The cordless phone is at her side.

BOB (VO into phone)
Mary? Mary?!

INT. MRS. FISHER'S ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Fisher reclines in a chair, her feet up on the windowsill. Awake and alert, she reads Mary's novel. Ruth enters carrying a tray of food.

RUTH
Time for your medication, Mrs. Fisher.

MRS. FISHER
(turning a page)
This is the stupidest piece of trash
I've ever read!

Mrs. Fisher tosses the book on the bed. Ruth puts the tray down on the windowsill, takes one of the vitamin pills and attempts to pop it into Mrs. Fisher's mouth. Mrs. Fisher grabs the pill from Ruth and takes it herself.

RUTH
How are you today, dear?

MRS. FISHER
(feisty)
How the hell do I look?!

RUTH
Better, dear. Much better.

MRS. FISHER
Well, I'm bored to death! A person
could go crazy in a place like this.

Ruth uncovers a bowl of soup and a large glass of milk.

RUTH
How about some nice, hearty beef
barley?

MRS. FISHER
It's not lunchtime.

RUTH
I thought you could use a nutritious
snack.

Mrs. Fisher looks suspiciously at Ruth.

MRS. FISHER
I don't know what you're up to, Vesta,
but I'll go along for the ride.

As Mrs. Fisher cautiously tastes the soup.

MRS. FISHER
A bit salty. But it's better than
that slop they usually feed us. Think
you could get me a beer?

Mrs. Fisher hungrily slurps down the soup. Ruth picks up Mary's novel.

RUTH
Mary Fisher -- any relation?

MRS. FISHER
She's my daughter.

RUTH
How nice!

MRS. FISHER
She's a slut! That bitch keeps me in
this dog pound while she lives the
good life in her goddamn mansion.

RUTH
Oh. That doesn't seem fair.

MRS. FISHER
I oughta just drop in on her
sometime. That'd scare the shit out
of her.

RUTH
Well, this isn't a prison, you know.
You could take the train. I'm sure
your daughter would love to see you.

Mrs. Fisher thinks about it, then changes her mind.

MRS. FISHER
Nah...I'm too old.

RUTH
Nonsense. You're only seventy-two.
That's nothing.

MRS. FISHER
...I suppose I could go one Sunday
afternoon.

RUTH
I'll put you on the train. I'll buy
your return ticket and call ahead to
see if the butler can meet you at the
station.

MRS. FISHER
Butler?! I bet there's hanky-panky
there.

RUTH
(smiling)
...I bet there is, too.

MRS. FISHER
She can't hide anything from me. I'm
into everything. I'll fish her out!

HOOPER (VO)
(loud whisper)
Vesta!!

Ruth turns to see Hooper at the doorway. Hooper motions for Ruth to follow her.

IN THE HALLWAY

Ruth follows Hooper to the window.

HOOPER
(astonished)
Take a look at this...

EXT. THE LAWN - AT THAT MOMENT

A group of Elderly Women play a lively game of croquette. It looks like they're having more fun than they've had in years.

AT THE HALLWAY WINDOW

RUTH
(smiling)
Isn't it wonderful?

Hooper looks at Ruth with suspicion.

HOOPER
I know what you've been doing -- the vitamins, the extra meals. It's against the rules. If I report you to Mrs. Trumper, you'll be sorry.

RUTH
(calmly)
I don't think so. I've been sorry my whole life -- and by the looks of it, so have you -- so do whatever you want.

Ruth begins walk away, then stops and turns back.

RUTH
It's a shame, Hooper. I've always thought women like us should stick together.

Ruth walks off, leaving Hooper stunned.

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

On the back lawn two TECHNICIANS are setting up a huge satellite dish. Nearby is a small mound of dirt with a headstone shaped like a poodle -- it's Juliet's grave. Mary places a little bouquet of flowers by the graveside.

INT. THE T.V. ROOM - AT THAT MOMENT

Eating from a box of Godiva Chocolates, Andy sits in front of the giant static-filled TV screen, watching Hulk Hogan's

WRESTLEMANIA. He pounds on the remote control. The room is a total mess. Mary walks in.

MARY
(exasperated)
Andy, you'll just have to have
patience, the antenna's not connected
yet.

Andy throws the remote control against the wall.

MARY
(irate)
That's it! Get upstairs and clean
your room!

ANDY
Tell the maid to do it.

Andy pops another chocolate into his mouth and leaves the room.

MARY
Just wait til your father hears about
this, young man!

Just then Simone walks by, dragging the vacuum cleaner.

MARY
(patronizingly sweet)
Simone, there's a whole pile of
laundry that needs to be washed. Do
you think you could--

SIMONE
I'm busy.

Simone walks off. Just then Nicolette walks in. She's wearing a micro-mini skirt, a tight, revealing sweater and expensive cowboy boots. She's followed by Garcia, who is laden with department store shopping bags.

MARY
Nicolette, where did you get that
outfit?

Nicolette twirls around modelling it as Garcia leers.

NICOLETTE
Isn't it great? I just put it on
Daddy's gold card. Garcia says it's
"muy caliente".

Mary glares at Garcia.

MARY
(to Nicolette)
I want you to go upstairs, put on your
(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

brasier, then go downstairs and do the laundry!

NICOLETTE

Maybe later. I want to try on my new clothes.

Nicolette walks off, followed by Garcia.

MARY

Nicolette! I am talking to you!
(but she's gone)
...Garcia, wait!

Garcia stops and looks at her. Mary sidles up to him.

MARY

Garcia, darling, could you do a little laundry favor for me.

NICOLETTE (VO)

Garcia!

GARCIA

Madam, I'm the butler, not the maid.

He walks off.

MARY

(yelling up stairs)
And I am not the housewife! I will
not be treated this way. Do you hear
me?!

But no one does.

CUT TO:

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM - LATER

Surrounded by piles of dirty clothes, Mary is pouring liquid bleach into a measuring cup. She fills it halfway. She takes a box of powdered detergent, scans the directions and shrugs. Mary fills the rest of the measuring cup with the soap powder. She pours the cup of goop over the dirty clothes in the over-stuffed dryer. She closed the door and turns on the dryer.

MARY

(self-satisfied)
That's easy!

Mary turns and walks out, passing by the washing machine. In the background the doorbell RINGS incessantly.

MARY

Would somebody please get the door!!

IN THE FOYER

Annoyed, Mary walks to the door and opens it.

MARY
(incredulous)

What the--

There stands Mrs. Fisher, smiling vengefully and looking like an old floosy in a dress that might have been a hit at Roseland in 1946.

MARY
Mother, what are you doing here?

MRS. FISHER
The chickens have come home to roost.

Mrs. Fisher barges past Mary into the house. A loud HONK of a car horn is heard outside.

MRS. FISHER
(to Mary)
You'd better pay the taxi.

Just then, Garcia walks downstairs.

MRS. FISHER
Oh, he's cute. How much to you pay him?
(smiling at Garcia)
I bet she makes you earn every penny.

Mrs. Fisher winks.

INT. THE LIGHTHOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Speaking into the phone, Mary paces, stretching the long phone cord across the kitchen. Simone gets angry as she is forced to duck and dodge the cord while cooking dinner.

MARY (into phone)
(fuming)
Mrs. Trumper, this is inexcusable!
How dare you send my poor, old, senile mother all the way out here without giving me any warning!

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT OFFICE - AT THAT MOMENT

Ruth is alone in the office, seated at the desk.

RUTH (into phone)
(calm and direct)
This is not Mrs. Trumper. Mrs. Trumper is at a funeral. This is a senior member of the staff. We
(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)
couldn't give you any warning because
your mother gave us none. She's a
human being and this is America.
She's free to come and go as she
pleases. And she's not senile. Her
health, mind and spirits are
wonderfully improved. We're all very
thankful and you as her daughter must
be too.

IN THE LIGHTHOUSE KITCHEN

MARY
Of course I am! But since I pay the
bills, I'm entitled to be informed of
all her movements.

IN THE GOLDEN TWILIGHT OFFICE

RUTH
Then you'll be glad to know she's very
regular. If you like, we can send a
specimen out to the lab.

IN THE LIGHTHOUSE KITCHEN

MARY
That won't be necessary. My mother
will be returning on the first train
in the morning. Please have someone
there to meet her.

RUTH (VO into phone)
Of course, Miss Fisher. Enjoy your
mother's visit.

Shaken, Mary hangs up the phone.

MARY
Simone, set another place for dinner.
Simone angrily raises a meat cleaver over her head and hacks
through a rack of lamb.

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT - A RESIDENT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Two old women are asleep in their beds. Ruth holds a full
bed-pan in one hand as she removes another full bed-pan from
under the bed of the second old woman.

RUTH
Very nice work.

Ruth exits the room carrying the bed-pans.

IN THE HALLWAY

Ruth places the bed-pans on a cart holding four full bed-pans. Ruth cheerfully rolls the cart down the hall and into another bedroom.

IN MRS. FISHER'S ROOM

Ruth wheels the cart over to Mrs. Fisher's bed. She pulls back the blanket and top sheet then proceeds to empty all the bed-pans onto the mattress.

CUT TO:

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT DORM ROOM - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Ruth is pouring herself a cup of coffee. Hooper enters and takes a cup from the cupboard.

RUTH

Would you like some coffee?

HOOPER

(brusquely)

I'll get it.

Ruth shrugs and puts the coffee pot down. Ruth sits down at the table as Hooper pours herself a cup. Hooper sits at the table. Ruth picks up a carton of milk and pours some in her coffee.

RUTH

Milk?

HOOPER

I don't take milk.

Ruth puts down the carton and sips her coffee. Hooper looks around for something on the table.

HOOPER

But I do take sugar.

Hooper looks up and spots the sugar bowl out of reach on the top shelf of the cupboard. Ruth looks up, "surprised".

RUTH

(mock innocence)

Now how do you suppose it got up there?

HOOPER

I can't imagine.

Ruth stands, gets the sugar bowl and hands it to Hooper.

HOOPER

That's very big of you.

Ruth offers a plate of cookies to Hooper.

HOOPER
(skeptically)
What kind?

RUTH
Shortbread.

Ruth smiles.

Slowly Hooper melts and gives an awkward smile back.

Hooper takes a cookie and begins to eat it with pleasure.

HOOPER
Can I have another?

Ruth nods.

RUTH
...Tell me something, Hooper. How
long have you been here?

HOOPER
Twenty-two years.

RUTH
Really. That's a long time. You must
like it here.

HOOPER
I can't say that I do, but I guess
it's what I'm used to.

RUTH
Yes. The outside world can be very
cruel.

HOOPER
But I'm not going to stay here
forever.

Hooper walks over to her bed and reaches under her mattress.
She pulls something out and walks back to the table. Hooper
hands Ruth a well-worn bank book. Ruth opens the bank book
and looks inside.

RUTH
Hooper! There's over fifty-five
thousand dollars here!

HOOPER
Well, I don't really have any
expenses. Almost everything I make
goes in the bank.

RUTH
I'm impressed...What are you going to
do with all that money?

HOOPER

Do with it?

(a beat, as she thinks)

I never thought about what I'd do with it.

RUTH

Hooper, money has no value if one doesn't put it to good use.

HOOPER

...Yes, I suppose you're right.

RUTH

Oh, yes. I'm very right.

Suddenly we hear a blood-curdling SCREAM.

MRS. TRUMPER (O.S.)

Hooper!! Vestal!!

IN THE HALLWAY

Ruth and Hooper come running full speed down the corridor and into Mrs. Fisher's room.

IN MRS. FISHER'S ROOM

The sheets, blankets and pillows from Mrs. Fisher's bed are strewn about the room. Apoplectic, Mrs. Trumper gestures madly at the badly stained mattress.

MRS. TRUMPER

(accusingly)

This is long-term leakage! How long has this been going on?

Hooper is dumbfounded. She looks towards Ruth.

RUTH

About a month. I didn't want to tell you. Poor Mrs. Fisher, she--

MRS. TRUMPER

No excuses! You're fired! Hooper, get some disinfectant and wash down that bed! Now, where is Mrs. Fisher?

EXT. MARY'S PATIO -- AT THAT MOMENT

CLOSE ON: Mrs. Fisher -- she's sprawled out on a lounge chair, slurping a Pina Colada, wearing a large floral sunhat.

At the other end of the patio, we see Mary, in a tasteful cream-colored jumpsuit. Seated across from her is a hiply-dressed REPORTER from People Magazine.

MARY

I'm so thrilled that People Magazine
is doing a story on me.

REPORTER

I think it's long overdue.

Garcia saunters over carrying a tray of Cheez-Whiz, Ritz
Crackers, Pretzel Rods and two cans of Yoo-Hoo.

MARY

Garcia, what's this?

GARCIA

Tea time, as usual, m'am.

Garcia turns and goes back into the house. Mary smiles,
embarrassed, at the Reporter who jots down a note.

REPORTER

Now let me ask you a real "toughie".
Some critics charge that your books
are nothing but soft-core porn for
bored housewives.

MARY

Those critics are usually men. It's
silly. My books reflect my own
notions and experiences of romance and
love-making as sacred and beautiful
things. Something special to be
shared and treasured.

Just then Garcia sticks his head out a window.

GARCIA

Yo, phone call!

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT OFFICE

Mrs. Trumper barely keeps a lid on her anger as she speaks
into the phone.

MRS. TRUMPER

(into phone)

The issue here is bladder control.

IN THE POOLSIDE CABANA

Mary is on the phone. The cabana is a total mess.

MARY (into phone)

Look, I said I'd pay extra for the
inconvenience.

MRS. TRUMPER

Incontinence is more than an
inconvenience. Your mother is no
longer welcome here.

MARY

What am I supposed to do with her?

IN MRS. TRUMPER'S OFFICE

(CUT BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN MRS. TRUMPER AND MARY)

MRS. TRUMPER

What I've done for the past ten years
-- put up with her!

MARY

But I'm not a nurse.

MRS. TRUMPER

She doesn't need nursing. She needs
T-L-C.

MARY

(hopeful)

What is that? A new drug?

MRS. TRUMPER

Tender Loving Care. Something that
I'm sure you, as her daughter, can
provide.

MARY

But Bob and I are going on vacation
next month.

MRS. TRUMPER

Take her with you. She loves new
places, new people.

MARY

Don't be absurd.

MRS. TRUMPER

Then stay home like the rest of us
do. Do you know how long it's been
since I've had a vacation?! Good day
Miss Fisher.

Trumper hangs up.

Mary lowers the phone as tears of frustration well up in her
eyes.

ON THE PATIO

Mrs. Fisher reclines on the chaise lounge, drinking what must
be her fourth pina colada. The Reporter, holding a mini-
recorder, leans forward with rapt attention.

REPORTER

Are you saying she was promiscuous?

MRS. FISHER
(slightly tipsy)
Promiscuous? She was a teenage
tramp! She couldn't get enough.
She'd do it anywhere, anytime, with
anyone. As a matter of fact, she got
knocked up when she was sixteen.

REPORTER
(delighted)
Really?

MRS. FISHER
Yeah, we couldn't keep it though. We
had to put that cute little baby boy
up for adoption.

REPORTER
A boy! So there's a missing heir in
the Fisher family's royal dynasty.

MRS. FISHER
Royal my ass! We're from
Pittsburgh. Three generations of
steel workers, sweating it out in the
mills. And damn proud of it!

Just then, Mary comes out of the cabana and approaches. Mary
sees her mother talking to the Reporter. She hides her
annoyance behind a phony smile. The Reporter turns to Mary.

MARY
Now, where were we?

REPORTER
Tell me all about your son!

Mary freezes in terror.

INT. GOLDEN TWILIGHT - RUTH'S ROOM - LATER

Ruth is packing her things into a small suitcase. Hooper sits
on her bed, watching sadly.

HOOPER
What are you going to do now?

RUTH
I've got some plans.

HOOPER
Oh...It's too bad, Vesta. If you
stayed longer, I think we could have
been friends.

RUTH
But we are friends, Hooper.

Ruth snaps her suitcase shut and turns to leave, when suddenly Hooper runs over and hugs her about the waist. Hooper's head rests against Ruth's belly.

HOOPER

Oh, Vesta -- I'm going to miss you.

Ruth's expression reveals nothing, as she pats Hooper on top of the head.

RUTH

(kindly)

I'll let you know when I get settled.

Ruth picks up her suitcase and leaves the room. Upset, Hooper stares at Ruth's folded cot.

IN THE HALLWAY

The Elderly Women have lined up to bid Ruth farewell, many with tears in their eyes. Ruth goes down the line kissing each one goodbye.

EXT. BUS STOP - LATER

A deserted bus shelter on the side of the road, surrounded by cornfields. Ruth is seated on a bench with her suitcase. She pulls out a folded piece of paper and stares at it. It's the list of "Bob's Assets". The first two items ("HOME" and "FAMILY") have been crossed off. She takes out a pencil and circles the third item: "CAREER".

A bus drives up and stops. Ruth gets in.

ON THE BUS

Ruth pays the BUS DRIVER and takes a seat. The bus starts to drive off when there is a BANGING at the door. The bus stops and the doors open. Ruth sees Hooper get on with a suitcase. Hooper pays the driver and sits down next to Ruth. Hooper is out of breath.

RUTH

What are you doing here?

HOOPER

(gasping)

I don't know. Got any plans?

RUTH

Yes. A very good one.

Ruth LAUGHS. Hooper joins in.

Ruth's eyes glow red.

RUTH (V.O.)

Oh yes, I had a plan. I will start
an agency for the unwanted and
useless. Women like Nurse Hooper,
that the world had thrown away.

CUT TO:

A CLASSIFIED AD IN A NEWSPAPER READS:

AIMLESS, HOPELESS, JOBLESS?
Are You Looking For A
CAREER?
Come to 915 W. 45th Street
We can help!

The CAMERA pulls back to reveal:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

A FRUMPY WOMAN is reading the classified ad in the newspaper.

RUTH (VO)

And these women need only the
slightest encouragement to change
their lives...they will become my own
personal army.

The Frumpy Woman walks over to 915 W. 45th Street. It is a
second-floor office of a small run-down commercial building.
Two SIGNMAKERS are on ladders mounting a sign over the front
window. It reads:

THE VESTA ROSE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

INT. THE VESTA ROSE AGENCY - DAY

The Frumpy Woman sits across the desk from Ruth. Ruth is
primly dressed in a women's business suit, her hair in a
fashionable, but conservative style. The office is nearly
bare except for the battered old desk and few folding
chairs. On the desk is a telephone and a dog-eared Yellow
Pages.

FRUMPY WOMAN

You see, my husband just left me and
I've got three kids. I've never had a
real job before. and--

RUTH

Taking care of three kids sounds like
a real job to me.

FRUMPY WOMEN

Yeah. I'm sure you don't have
anything for someone like me, but...I
had nowhere else to go, so I figured
what the hell.

RUTH

(zealously)

That's why the Vesta Rose Agency was created: to help those who are trapped in dreary lives they were never meant for -- those driven by necessity into jobs they loath that will eventually kill them.

(she stands and begins to pace)

You see, our goal is to help women tap their own energies and take control of their destinies -- to help them get into the exciting world of business, and money, and profit and loss.

FRUMPY WOMEN

(shrugging)

Sounds good to me.

Ruth picks up the phone and dials

RUTH (into phone)

Yes, Personnel Department, please...

Ruth smiles at the FRUMPY WOMEN.

RUTH (into phone)

Hello, this is the Vesta Rose Agency. I have someone here who would be just perfect for that clerical position...

(intimidatingly)

...Well, I wouldn't have called if her qualifications weren't superb, but if you can't help me, perhaps I can speak to your supervisor...

Ruth winks at the FRUMPY WOMAN who giggles.

RUTH (into phone)

...Good, she'll be there.

Ruth hangs up.

RUTH

You start tomorrow.

FRUMPY WOMAN

That's great! Oh, but what am I gonna do about my youngest boy, Roger? He's only three.

HOOPER (V.O.)

Drop him off in the morning.

The Frumpy Woman and Ruth turn to see Hooper standing there. She's also dressed in a business suit, a little bow around her neck.

HOOPER

(continuing)

He'll be looked after at our day care facility. You see, Vesta Rose is a full service agency. We also provide shopping and delivery services for your convenience so that workers won't have to shop during their lunch hour, but can relax as male workers do, and even go home on the bus unencumbered by shopping bags.

Ruth comes around the desk and stands next to Hooper.

RUTH

Of course, for these priviledges there will be a service charge, but I'm sure you'll agree the benefits far outweigh the cost.

The Frumpy Woman stands, delighted.

FRUMPY WOMAN

Oh. Thank you! Thank you both.

Ruth sticks a gold-plated "ROSE" pin on the woman's blouse. The Frumpy Woman gives Ruth and Hooper each a big hug.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE

EXT. MIDTOWN NEW YORK STREETS - DAY

IN CLOSE UP: A leaflet reads:

GET THE JOB YOU DESERVE!
Come to Vesta Rose Today.

We now see that Ruth and Hooper are handing out leaflets to the unemployed and the blue-collar female workforce of WAITRESSES, CLEANING LADIES, BEAUTICIANS, HOUSEWIVES, BAGWOMEN, PROSTITUTES--

WE DISSOLVE FROM THESE TIRED FACES TO --

THE VERY SAME FACES, but now looking happier, -- as Bank Clerks, Computer Operators, Executive Secretaries -- each now wearing a gold "ROSE" pin.

CUT TO:

A FULL SCREEN VIDEO IMAGE (T.V. COMMERCIAL):

-- In an office, a 60 year old WOMAN IN A WHEEL CHAIR, wearing a Vesta Rose pin turns to the camera and smiles.

WOMAN

They labeled me "terminally
unemployable." Vesta Rose proved them
wrong.

T.V. CUTS TO:

-- A time lapse shot of the rose.

T.V. CUTS TO:

-- In a high-tech factory, a BOSS walks past work
stations where happy technicians assemble computers.

BOSS

Since I started hiring through Vesta
Rose, our productivity has soared.

T.V. CUTS TO:

-- Again, time-lapse shot of the rose.

T.V. CUTS TO:

-- Hooper looks into the camera

HOOPER

Feeling useless? Think you have
nothing to offer? Were you voted
"least likely to succeed"?

(a beat)

Then you are who we're looking for.

(THE CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL HOOPER STANDING IN A HUGE
FIELD OF ROSES.)

HOOPER

At Vesta Rose, we think people are
more than just their jobs.

Come Bloom with us!

INT. LOBBY - BOB'S OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

The Vesta Rose commercial finishes and is replaced by a T.V.
GAME SHOW, watched by a SECURITY GUARD in the lobby of a
modern high-rise office building.

Nearby, elevator doors open and the 9-to-5 crowd spills out.
Bob emerges from the crowd and heads for the revolving door,
but not without first giving the once-over to a CUTE SECRETARY
walking alongside of him.

Lurking in the corner of the lobby, we now see Ruth, in a
scarf and dark glasses.

She watches as Bob hails a taxi, then she gets into the
elevator.

INT. HALLWAY

Ruth walks down the nearly deserted hallway. She waits until the coast is clear then stops in front of the frosted glass doors of "ROBERT PATCHETT, PERSONAL MANAGEMENT".

She takes a flier from her handbag and slips it under the door.

CLOSE-UP ON THE FLIER:

It's an ad for the Vesta Rose Employment Agency featuring a "Special Introductory Offer" and showing the photo of a gorgeous blond secretary.

EXT. MANHATTAN ROOFTOP - DAY

IN CLOSE-UP: a picture of a large red rose. The CAMERA pulls back to reveal the rose is on a rooftop sign that reads:

VESTA ROSE AGENCY

The CAMERA pans down to reveal the newly renovated Vesta Rose building. Clearly the agency has expanded. On the sidewalk a line of DOWN-AND-OUT PEOPLE stretches down the block waiting to enter.

INT. THE VESTA ROSE BUILDING

The building is buzzing with activity. Phones are RINGING, interviews are in progress, people are filling out applications.

INT. THE VESTA ROSE SWITCHBOARD - DAY

An OPERATOR, wearing a telephone headset, sits at a computer terminal.

OPERATOR

(into phone)

You're looking to hire...Can I have your name and the name of your company, sir?

The Operator starts typing on her keyboard.

ON THE VIDEO DISPLAY

-the name "Robert Patchett" is spelled out. Suddenly the computer BEEPS. A message appears on the screen:

REFER DIRECTLY TO VESTA ROSE

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

Ruth, filled with anticipation, takes a deep breath and answers the phone.

RUTH
(into phone)
This is Vesta Rose. How can I help
you, Mister...Patchett?

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB
(into phone)
I own, actually, I am Patchett
Management. I'm sure you've heard of
us.

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

RUTH
No, I haven't.

BOB
Oh...well, we manage talent. We're
one of the biggies.

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB
I'm looking for a personal assistant,
bookkeeper...someone who knows their
way around a computer. Someone with a
good head on their shoulders. Someone
I'll feel comfortable working closely
with. Someone...very attractive.

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

RUTH
Would you prefer a man or a woman?

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB
(defensive)
A woman, of course!

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

Ruth smiles slyly.

RUTH
I have just the right person for
you. I'll send her over for an
interview.

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB
Terrific! By the way, did anyone ever
tell you that you have a very sexy
voice?

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

RUTH
...Mr. Patchett, are you flirting with
me?

IN BOB'S OFFICE

BOB
The best way I know how. Is it
working?

IN RUTH'S OFFICE

RUTH
Better than you think. Goodbye, Mr.
Patchett.

Ruth hangs up and savors the moment, then picks up a cassette
and pops it into the VCR. She picks up the remote control and
clicks on the machine.

THE TV MONITOR:

-- A plain looking **SERIOUS WOMAN** talks directly into CAMERA.

SERIOUS WOMAN
...I just want to earn enough money as
a bookkeeper to support myself while I
complete my correspondence school
course in taxidermy...

-- THE VIDEOTAPE FAST-FORWARDS TO:

-- An **INTENSE WOMAN** talks into CAMERA.

INTENSE WOMAN
...I love bookkeeping. I guess I'm
better with numbers than with people.

-- THE VIDEOTAPE FAST-FORWARDS TO:

-- **OLIVIA**, a trashy, sexy, 23 year-old redhead, chews gum as
she talks into the CAMERA.

OLIVIA
...Men go crazy when I tell them my
name...It's Olivia Honey. They think
it's so cute. It is, isn't it?
(giggles)
...As you can see from my resume, I'm
an excellent bookkeeper and data
processor. My goal is to work for a
powerful, successful, man who makes
lots of money -- and marry him...

-- Olivia LAUGHS. HER IMAGE FREEZES ON THE TV MONITOR.

RUTH (VO)

Perfect! I had been waiting for someone like Olivia to appear. The kind of woman who uses sex the way a fisherman uses worms.

(a beat)

She would give Mary Fisher a dose of her own medicine.

CUT TO:

INT. BOB'S OUTER OFFICE - NEXT DAY

THE GOLD PLATED VESTA ROSE PIN -- pinned to the most voluptuous chest in the world. Wearing fish-net stockings, a leather mini-skirt and a tight sweater, Olivia sashays towards Bob's office. The other office workers can't help but stare.

IN BOB'S OFFICE

The door swings open and Olivia enters. Bob looks up from his desk and gives Olivia the "once-over". He likes what he sees and quickly stands.

BOB

Hello!

Olivia looks at Bob and lights up.

OLIVIA

(smiling broadly)

Hello! I'm Olivia. The agency sent me over to interview for the bookkeeping position.

BOB

You're hired.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOUR SEASONS RESTAURANT - LUNCHTIME

The restaurant is filled with the powerful movers and shakers of Manhattan. Mary winds her way through the maze of tables. The MAITRE D' follows at her heels. Mary waves and smiles as she approaches a table.

MARY

Paula, darling!

AT THE TABLE

PAULA, a fifty year-old publishing executive, stands up and smiles. Mary gives her a big kiss.

PAULA

Mary, how are you?

MARY

Sorry I'm late. I got stuck in traffic. It's crazy-time out there.

PAULA

Sit.

The Maitre D' pulls out a chair for Mary as she and Paula sit.

MARY

(to the Maitre D')

The usual, please, Henri.

The Maitre D' leaves.

MARY

(bubbling with excitement)

So tell me how much you loved my new book and how much money we're going to make.

Paula smiles painfully.

PAULA

I don't know what to say, Mary. we extended deadline after deadline, waiting patiently for your manuscript. Then you give us something called "Love in the Rinse Cycle."

The smile drops from Mary's face.

MARY

You mean you don't love it?

PAULA

(gingerly)

It's just not a Mary Fisher novel. Not at all. The real world keeps crashing in on the romantic fantasy.

MARY

I don't understand.

PAULA

Mary, the love scenes are wonderful. But you heroine has two children and a husband named "Bob". Your fans don't want to read about a woman who's coping with a couple of screaming brats.

MARY

That's only a small part of the book.

PAULA
And, darling, what is this whole
chapter on laundry?

MARY
It's a metaphor

PAULA
A what?

MARY
A metaphor. Women always get stuck
with the laundry. My readers will
identify. Look, I'll admit I'm trying
something new, something a little more
realistic. But it's still romance --
it's still Mary Fisher.

PAULA
I'm sorry. We just can't publish
without extensive revisions.

MARY
(laughing incredulously)
I can't believe what I'm hearing!

PAULA
Mary, in the romance businesss you're
only as good as your last novel. Fans
are fickle. Disappoint them once and
they'll feel betrayed. You'll lose
them.

MARY
(getting angry)
Don't lecture me about my readers!
Are you going to publish it or not?

PAULA
Not as is. You see, Mary...

MARY
Fine. I'm exercising my option. I'll
take it to another publisher.

PAULA
(concerned)
Mary, why don't you take a day and
think about this? You seem to be out
of sorts lately. Is there something
wrong?

MARY
How dare you patronize me!
(she stands)
And I think "Bob" is a wonderful name!

Mary walks off in a huff

EXT. THE FOUR SEASONS - DAY

Mary walks to the corner and tries to hail a cab. She glances at the corner newspaper stand and does a double take. Prominently displayed on the newspaper stand are copies of PEOPLE MAGAZINE. The headline screams:

"ROMANCE QUEEN'S UNSAVORY SECRETS!!"
"MOM TELLS ALL!!"

The cover shows a full-length picture of Mary Fisher in a gown. Peeking from behind Mary's dress -- via "paste-up magic" -- is Mrs. Fisher with her mouth open.

Mary is absolutely horrified. She digs out a wad of bills from her purse and pays the NEWS-VENDOR. Then Mary frantically grabs every copy of People Magazine.

CUT TO:

INT. VESTA ROSE AGENCY - EVENING

Ruth is at work at her desk. Hooper races in, breathless, waving a copy of People Magazine.

HOOPER
I can't believe it! Look, look!
Remember Old Mrs. Fisher? She's on
the cover of People.

Hooper thrusts the magazine in front of Ruth. Ruth doesn't seem interested.

HOOPER
But Vesta -- it's OUR Mrs. Fisher...
(she opens the magazine and
points at the photo spread)
Look!

Ruth gives the magazine a cursory look.

RUTH
Uh,huh.

HOOPER
...And to think I have carried and
emptied hundreds, maybe thousands, of
her bedpans.

RUTH
I'm working, Hooper. I'll look at it
later.

HOOPER
(hurt)
...OK, OK, I just thought it was quite
a thing -- old Mrs. Fisher getting on
(MORE)

HOOPER (CONT'D)
the front page of People -- that's
all...

Hooper turns to leave.

RUTH
(looking up)
You're right, I'm sorry.

HOOPER
Vesta, I was thinking...
(a beat)
Maybe we could go out for some Chinese
food after work.

Ruth pulls a file out of a drawer and thumbs through it.

RUTH
Not tonight, thank you, Hooper.
(a beat)
I've got some things to catch up on.

HOOPER
(disappointed)
Oh...well, good night then.

Hooper picks up the magazine.

Ruth gets up and walks her to the door. She notices the
magazine in Hooper's hand.

RUTH
Maybe I'll glance at it, before going
to bed.

Hooper gives her the magazine - stands on tip-toes and gives
her a quick peck on the cheek. Ruth doesn't react.

HOOPER
Night, Vesta.

RUTH
Night, Hooper.

HOOPER
Remember what they say. All work and
no play makes Jack a dull boy.

RUTH
...Night, Hooper.

As soon as Hooper has left, Ruth takes the magazine back to
her desk and thumbs to the article on Mary Fisher.

CLOSE ON:

A photo of Mary and Bob. Standing alongside them, smiling

Mary hands it back to Ruth without looking up at her.

RUTH

Thank you...

By which time the next fan has thrust a copy of the book into Mary's hand.

MARY

--and how would you like me to
inscribe it?

We watch Ruth clutch the book, exit the store and disappear into the mid-afternoon crowd.

THE END.

like two little angels, are Nicolette and Andy.

Ruth stares at the photo of her children and her eyes begin to mist up. Could she actually be sad?

She puts her hand to her face -- on her finger is a dot of blood.

Her nose is bleeding.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

A LONG SHOT of the illuminated Lighthouse.

RUTH (VO)
Mary Fisher lives in a mansion by the
sea --

INT. LIGHTHOUSE - NIGHT

The CLOCK STRIKES MIDNIGHT, as the CAMERA moves through the living room, which is now filled with toys, electronic gadgets, comic books and fingerprints.

INT. KITCHEN

The CAMERA moves into the kitchen where we see Mary seated alone at the table pouring herself a glass of champagne. Her hands are shaking, probably from bad nerves. She is dressed in a terri-cloth robe and has rings under her eyes.

RUTH (VO)
Mary Fisher doesn't find life so easy
now, with two children, an angry
mother and a disinterested lover --

She takes a sip of the champagne, makes a face, then pours the remainder of the bottle down the sink.

-- and these days, even champagne
gives her indigestion.

Mary Fisher can hardly believe that
things can get worse, but they
will...The She-Devil will see to that.

AT THE SINK - MARY'S POV:

The door to Garcia's bedroom (behind the kitchen) is open a crack and she can see Garcia getting ready for bed.

He takes off his shirt revealing a strong, muscular chest.

Suddenly, Garcia turns and sees Mary staring at him. A lonely, longing, look in her eyes.

Garcia closes the door in Mary's face.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

CLOSE UP on Mary's alarm clock. It is 2:30am. The room is dark, except for a night-table lamp. A haggard Mary is awake in bed. She reaches for a bedside medicine bottle and pops a few Valium.

The bedroom door opens and Bob tip-toes in, undoing his tie.

MARY

Bob, honey -- where've you been!?
I've been calling and calling all
night, but your machine picked up.

Bob goes into the bathroom and starts undressing, tossing his clothes onto the floor, like he'd done a million times with Ruth.

BOB (OS)

Sorry babe -- I had urgent contracts
to go over -- and then, wouldn't you
know it, the friggin' Ferrari broke
down on the way home...

INT. BATHROOM - THAT NIGHT

Bob examining himself in the mirror. He's rubbing a lipstick mark off his neck.

BOB

You know, sweetie, what I've been
thinking? The drive into the city is
so long, and what with tax season
coming up, I think it would be safer
if I sleep in the office a few nights
a week --

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM

Bob reappears in the bedroom.

BOB

I mean, hey, it would be better
roughing it on the office couch than
falling asleep at the wheel -- What do
you think?

MARY

I think you should take a look at
this!

Mary flings a copy of the People Magazine at Bob, almost hitting him in the head. Bob catches it and looks at the cover.

BOB
Jesus Christ!

MARY
We're going to sue the bastards!

BOB
Wait a minute -- calm down, Mary.
Just who are you gonna sue? Your
mother?

INT. MRS. FISHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In her bedroom, next door to Mary's, Mrs. Fisher sits in bed, smoking a cigarette as she eavesdrops on Mary and Bob through the wall.

MARY (OS)
We'll sue the magazine! My mother --
I'll just wring her scrawny old neck.

Mrs. Fisher chuckles to herself.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM

BOB
Hey, look on the bright side. Even
bad publicity is good publicity. And
babe, you're gonna need all the help
you can get when "Love In The Rinse
Cycle" comes out.

MARY
And what may I ask is that supposed to
mean?

BOB
I read the manuscript. I'm worried,
Mary.

Mary reaches for another Valium. She looks beside herself.

MARY
Why is everyone turning against me?
First Paula refuses to publish it and
now you tell me you hate it!

BOB
I don't hate it. I just don't know
why you strayed from the formula.

MARY
Bob, don't you understand? I'm an
artist. Since you and the children
came to live with me my life has
changed. I have to reflect that in my
work.

BOB

Mary, let's not exaggerate the significance of your writing.

MARY

(sarcastic)

Well, thanks for the support.

BOB

(soothing)

All I meant was maybe this creative experiment of yours could have waited. We've got so many expenses now. We're not in great shape financially, Mary. Hey, look, I'm not just your lover, I'm your money man! And my job is to keep an eye on the bottom line.

Bob goes over to the bed and gently pats Mary's hair. Mary melts. Bob lays down next to her.

MARY

I know, I know. You only have my interests at heart.

BOB

Of course I do.

Mary puts her head on Bob's chest.

MARY

Oh, Bob! Everything's been so hectic lately. I feel like we haven't had a moment to ourselves.

(brightening)

I know! Why don't we fly to the Bahamas and get married! Right now! Wouldn't that be great?!

BOB

I'd love to, you know that. But we can't get married until I get a divorce. And I can't get a divorce from someone who's vanished into thin air.

MARY

I don't know why you ever married her in the first place.

BOB

Mary, let's not get into that again.

MARY

Oh, Bob, promise you'll never leave me. What would I do without you?

Mary starts stroking Bob's shoulders and nibbling on his ear. She emits a low moan.

Bob gently pulls away.

BOB
Sorry, Mary, not tonight. I'm really
bushed. You should get some sleep,
too.

MARY
(disappointed)
Oh. Okay...

Bob rolls over, then punches the wall.

BOB
(shouting)
Good night, Mrs. Fisher.

INT. MRS. FISHER'S BEDROOM

Mrs. Fisher pulls her ear away from the wall.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM

Mary turns away from Bob, onto her back and stares up at the ceiling. Within moments, Bob is asleep, SNORING.

Mary SIGHS as the CAMERA moves in on her unhappy face.

RUTH (VO)
Poor Mary Fisher. She's learning that
men who burn so passionately for a
mistress, turn cold when the mistress
begins to resemble a wife.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - LATE MORNING

IN CLOSE-UP: Mary is wearing an "eyeshade", asleep in bed. Gradually a smile begins to appear on her face. The smile turns to a look of pleasure.

MARY
(a soft MOAN)
Ohh...Bob...Yes...

Mary slips up the eyeshade and looks down at the bottom half of the bed. The CAMERA pulls back to reveal Fuzzy, dirty and mangy as ever, in bed with Mary, licking her toes. Mary SCREAMS and kicks the dog off the bed.

INT. SPIRAL STARICASE - MOMENTS LATER

Mary walks down the stairs in her bathrobe. The sound of a MOTORCYCLE REVVING its engine can be heard coming from outside.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS

Mary sees Simone walk by carrying a suitcase.

MARY

Simone, where are you going?

SIMONE

(livid)

I've had it! I took this job because I only had to cook and clean up after one person and one dog. Then I got your mother, your boyfriend, his kids, their dog and now this grease monkey! I quit!

MARY

Simone, wait!

Simone walks out, slamming the front door behind her. Mary is mystified. Just then Garcia comes into the front hall wearing cut-off shorts and a tank top.

MARY

Garcia?

GARCIA

(sarcastic)

Good afternoon.

MARY

What's going on here?

GARCIA

We got company. If I were you I'd make myself a drink. It's gonna be a rough fucking day.

He walks towards the living room. Incredible, Mary follows.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Mary looks outside and sees:

ON THE LAWN

A Harley-Davidson motorcycle being driven by a scruffy-looking young guy. There is a female passenger sitting behind him as he charges around the manicured lawn, tearing up the flower beds.

AT THE DOOR

Mary is horrified.

MARY
Garcia, call the police!

Suddenly the motorcycle charges to a SCREECHING stop in front of Mary. She SCREAMS. The driver pulls off his helmet to reveal RANDY, a greasy, tough-looking, tattooed 20 year-old. A cigarette dangles from his lips. The passenger behind him is Mrs. Fisher, having the time of her life. She's swigging from a bottle of Mary's finest champagne and cackles with laughter. Peering over Mary's shoulder, Nicolette stares at Randy, repelled yet fascinated.

RANDY
(to Garcia)
Hey, man, got any beer?

Garcia exits.

MRS. FISHER
Mary, I want you to meet someone.
(proudly)
This is Randy -- my grandson.

Mary takes a good look at Randy who smiles.

MARY
Who?

Randy dismounts, drops his cigarette and stubs it out with his foot. From his leather jacket he pulls a copy of the People Magazine featuring Mary.

RANDY
Hi, Mommy.

MARY
(stunned)
Oh, no.

NICOLETTE
(whining)
Is he gonna live here too?

Randy moves toward Mary and takes her hand. Mary is too flabbergasted to respond.

RANDY
Don't worry, Mom. I understand and I forgive you. Now I don't wanna bleed you. I just wanna hang out for a while.

MRS. FISHER
He's such a nice boy!

Randy comes to Mary's side.

RANDY

It's good to be home, Mom.

Garcia re-enters with a six-pack and throws a beer to Randy. Randy pops open the can and chugs it down. Mary looks as if her mind is about to snap.

MARY

(to herself)

No, this isn't happening...

Randy BURPS.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK ZOO - DAY

A tiger opens its mouth and lets out a ferocious roar.

Ruth and Olivia stroll through the zoo.

OLIVIA

It's more than just sex. You've got no idea how nice he is. How very, very, special.

RUTH

Is it love?

OLIVIA

I don't know...But, oh -- he's such an incredible lover...

RUTH

Really? Is he married?

OLIVIA

He was, but she ran off and left him with the kids. Can you imagine? sounds like she was a real nut.

RUTH

Must have been tough on him.

OLIVIA

Oh, yeah. He lives with someone now, but that's on the rocks. As soon as tax season's over, they'll probably break up.

(beat)

I just wish I knew how he felt about me.

RUTH

Have you told him...this, what's his name--?

OLIVIA

Bobby.

RUTH

Have you told Bobby how you feel?

OLIVIA

Oh, I couldn't. It's not like that.
He's so...I don't know...important.

RUTH

But so are you. You should tell him
you love him or he may think this is
the kind of thing you do all the time.

OLIVIA

But you know how men sometimes are. I
don't want to scare him off.

RUTH

(with total sincerity)
Now how could telling someone the
truth possibly scare him off?

Ruth smiles maternally.

CUT TO:

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a silver-framed photo of Mary Fisher, smiling
confidently, on Bob's desk. Behind the photo, the answering
machine clicks on and we hear Mary's desperate voice.

MARY

Bob?...Where are you?...It's eleven-
thirty...Bob, I need you...Please,
Bob, pick up...Please...Ohhhhh...

The CAMERA moves away from the answering machine and across
the office to where we now see Bob and Olivia in flagrante
delicto on the office couch.

CLOSE ON Bob and Olivia. Olivia is kissing Bob's neck.

OLIVIA

Oh, Bob, there's something I've got to
tell you.

BOB

(in the throes of passion)
...huh...What?...

OLIVIA

I love you, Bob. I do. I truly do.

Bob stops. Clearly these words hit him like a bucket of ice

water. The look on Bob's face tells all.

CUT TO:

INT. WOMEN'S LAVATORY - VESTA ROSE AGENCY

Olivia is by the sink, rinsing off her tear stained face. Her mascara has formed racoon circles under her eyes. Ruth stands next to her with tissues, trying to console her.

OLIVIA

(between sobs)

---I told him I loved him, then he told me to pack up my desk and get out...(SOB)...He accused me of trying to sleep my way to the top.

(she begins to CRY again)

RUTH

(patting her back)

There, there. It sounds like he really took advantage of you.

OLIVIA

Yeah. It's like you give men what they want, and then they don't want it anymore. I can't believe I trusted that slime-ball. I should've known. I mean, any guy who juggles his books so he can make extra interest off his clients...

(sob)

If only there was some way of getting back at him.

RUTH

Well, I'm sure if we put our heads together we might come up with something.

OLIVIA

(thinking)

I could call the police...

RUTH

I don't know. The way the courts are these days, they'd probably just give him a slap on the wrist. No, he'd have to get caught for something much bigger to suffer any real punishment.

OLIVIA

It's not fair. Men get away with murder. It seems like if you're a woman, there's no justice in the world.

RUTH

I've always found that justice serves
those who serve themselves.

Olivia stops crying and thinks about this.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOPPING MALL BOOKSTORE - DAY

A sign in the front window reads:

BOOK-SIGNING TODAY!
MEET MARY FISHER,
AUTHORESS OF "LOVE IN THE RINSE CYCLE"!!

Next to it is a blow-up of the book jacket. It shows a
HAGGARD LOOKING WOMAN bent over a washing machine, as a man
(who resembles Bob) looks on.

IN THE BOOKSTORE

Mary is seated at a table with copies of "Love In The Rinse
Cycle" piled all around her. The BOOKSTORE MANAGER is at her
side. The few people in the store walk right past the table,
ignoring Mary.

MANAGER

I ain't seen it this bad since Regis
Philbin's autobiography.

Mary looks distraught.

INT. MARY'S LIMO - LATE AFTERNOON

Mary and Bob are in the backseat.

Mary is sniffing as Bob reads, aloud, a review from the Book
Review Section of the New York Times.

BOB

"...while clearly this novel is an
utter and complete waste of time,
paper, ink and shelf space, this
reviewer for one, wouldn't shed a tear
to find his copy of "Love In The Rinse
Cycle" lost in the garbage
disposal..."

Bob lowers the paper, and looks at Mary, who is wiping her
eyes.

BOB

To hell with them -- they're only
critics!

MARY

Oh, Bob, what's happening to me? I've never been treated this way. This has been the worst day of my life.

BOB

Oh, c'mon Mary -- it has to get worse before it gets better.

Mary starts to CRY again, her nose running. She wipes it with the back of her hand.

BOB

For heaven's sake, Mary! Pull yourself together!

Bob leans away from Mary, and stares out the window.

MARY

You're right -- I'm sorry, I'm just upset.

BOB

Honey, you're so high strung lately.

MARY

I know. It's been a difficult time for me.

BOB

For me too.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The limo pulls up the circular drive, where we see a half dozen motorcycles on the front lawn.

Mary and Bob get out of the car.

BOB

What the hell is going on here!?

A BIKER is blocking the path to the house.

BOB

(to the Biker)

Do you mind? This happens to be our home!

The Biker kick-starts his machine and moves it off the path, and onto an ornamental flower bed.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE

Bob and Mary enter.

A party is in progress. Reclining on the beige sofa is Randy, with his biker boots sunk into a large satin pillow.

Nicolette, wearing one of Mary's dresses, is seated between his legs drinking a beer.

RANDY

Hi, Mom. A couple of my friends
stopped by. But don't worry, they've
brought their own beer.

A drunken Mrs. Fisher is dancing around the room holding onto an open bottle of beer. She's wearing one of the biker's leather jackets.

MRS. FISHER

(to Bob and Mary)

Where've you been? You're missing the
party!

Mary just stares at the scene before her, horrified. It's the final straw -- she SNAPS.

She goes over to the fireplace, picks up a decorative andiron, and turns on Randy and the bikers.

MARY

GET THE HELL OUT OF MY LIGHTHOUSE!!

Screaming, Mary chases them around the living room and out the front door.

EXT. THE LIGHTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Randy and his friends sprint out of the house in terror. Mary runs out onto the front steps still wielding the andiron. Randy and the gang hop on their bikes and race off.

AT THE DOORWAY

Nicolette appears.

NICOLETTE

Randy, don't go!!

Mary whirls around and glares at Nicolette.

NICOLETTE

I hate you!

Mary SMACKS Nicolette across the face. Nicolette GASPS, more startled than hurt.

MARY

(growling)

Shut up! Now get inside and clean up
your room!

Nicolette just stands there, shocked, about to cry.

NICOLETTE
You're not my mother...

MARY
I said move! NOW!!

Terrified, Nicolette retreats into the house.

Mary now turns to Mrs. Fisher who is oblivious to what's been going on.

MRS. FISHER
(holding her empty beer
bottle upside down)
Oh, no, we're out of beer...Bob, be a
sweetheart and run to the 7-11 and
bring back a six-pack.

Mary turns to face Bob -- her face consumed by rage.

MARY
DON'T YOU DARE! I'm taking back
control of my life, Bob! None of my
heroines would put up with this crap
and I won't either. There's going to
be some changes around here, starting
NOW!

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The halls are deserted, except for a CLEANING LADY who is vacuuming. She disappears around the corner, and into frame pops Olivia, then Ruth.

They check to see if the coast is clear, then Olivia takes a key out of her pocketbook. She unlocks the door to Bob's office, and both women slip inside.

RUTH (V.O.)
Poor Olivia had learned about the
nature of love, but more importantly,
she had learned the secret access code
to Bob's clients' accounts. Clients
of very high caliber -- Mary Fisher's
dearest friends, who trusted Bob
implicitly.

CUT TO:

INT. BOB'S OFFICE - NIGHT

In the dark office, Olivia is working intensely at Bob's computer. Her fingers move at breakneck speed. Ruth watches over her shoulder.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

is a list of Bob's clients. Next to each name is a dollar figure. The computer cursor moves to the right of the name "Norman Mailer" and highlights "\$250,000".

On the bottom of the screen a "menu" appears and the cursor chooses the option "TRANSFER FUNDS". A message appears:

"HOW MUCH SHOULD I TRANSFER?"

AT THE KEYBOARD

Olivia types a number.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

a message appears: "TRANSFER \$20,000"

Norman Mailer's \$250,000 changes to \$230,000.

AT THE KEYBOARD

Olivia looks up at Ruth for approval. Ruth is not satisfied. She reaches over and presses another key.

ON THE COMPUTER

the "\$20,000" becomes "\$200,000" and Norman Mailer's \$250,000 changes to \$50,000.

AT THE KEYBOARD

Ruth gives Olivia an approving nod, motioning for her to continue.

ON THE COMPUTER

A new message appears:

"WHERE SHALL I TRANSFER \$200,000?"

AT THE KEYBOARD

Olivia types.

ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

a new message appears:

"BANQUE SUISSE, ZURICH"
"ACCOUNT #0015346"
"ROBERT PATCHETT"

The computer BEEPS and a message appears:

"TRANSFER COMPLETED"

AT THE COMPUTER

Olivia and Ruth exchange a smile as they continue to transfer money out of the accounts of Bob's clients.

CUT TO:

INT. KENNEDY AIRPORT DEPARTURE GATE - DAY

Ruth and Olivia stand at the gate as passengers walk past them to board the plane.

OLIVIA

(waving an airline ticket)
This is beyond my wildest dreams! I mean the trip and the money and everything. You've been so generous. You've changed my life.

Ruth helps Olivia lift her suitcases.

RUTH

No, you've changed your life. Anyway, it's the least that we could do, after that unforgivable experience with Mr. Patchett.

OLIVIA

You should take a vacation yourself, Miss Rose. You work so hard.

Ruth stares through the plate glass window at the waiting aircraft, and the ground crew loading cargo.

RUTH

In time, I will. But I still have a lot of things to do.

AIRLINE OFFICIAL (VO)

(over PA system)

This is the final boarding call for passengers on Varig Flight 102, non-stop to Rio de Janeiro.

Olivia squeals with excitement and picks up her bags.

OLIVIA

Well, goodbye, Miss Rose. Give my love to Miss Hooper -- I'll send you both a postcard from the Copacabana.

Olivia gives Ruth a hug and turns to board the plane.

CUT TO:

INT. Lighthouse Living Room/Dining Room - Night

A gala party is in progress. There are WRITERS, ARTISTS, and a few FAMOUS FACES we recognize.

The long buffet table is beautifully set with sumptuous culinary delights. CATERERS, in black tie, serve hors d'oeuvres. Garcia, in "tails", stands at attention near the dining room entrance, holding a tray of tall glasses, brimming with champagne.

A pair of hands come into frame and grab two of the glasses of champagne.

WE PULL BACK to see Mrs. Fisher, who is clearly very drunk. She downs one of the glasses in a gulp, and approaches a group of GUESTS. One of the guests is holding a small plate with canapes.

Mrs. Fisher takes a canape off the plate, sniffs it, and then puts it back.

MRS. FISHER

(confidentially)

I wouldn't touch them with a ten-foot pole! I know the cook -- he doesn't wash his hands after going to the toilet!

MARY (O.S.)

M-O-T-H-E-R!

Mrs. Fisher freezes and turns to see Mary coming towards her. Wearing an incredibly elegant gown, Mary exudes her old confidence.

MARY

I told you you could have one champagne then it's seltzer for the rest of the night. Now go sit down and behave!

Mrs. Fisher sulks away and sits down on the couch next to Nicolette, who is looking miserable, chewing on a thumbnail. Mary shoots her a "look", and reluctantly Nicolette takes her fingers out of her mouth.

A celebrity guest (Norman Mailer, Dick Cavett etc.) walks up to Mary.

CELEBRITY GUEST #1

Mary! You look fabulous! What a party!

The guest is distracted by an even more famous CELEBRITY GUEST (Steve Martin maybe?).

CELEBRITY GUEST #1

Oh look, there's Steve. I haven't
seen him in ages. I've got to go say
hello.

Mary begins to "work the room".

Bob stands on a chair and hits a spoon against a glass.

The hubbub dies down.

BOB

(addressing the guests)

I just want to take this opportunity
to make a toast.

(raising his glass)

...To the wonderful woman who pulled
this fantastic party together, and to
all our good friends who could share
this moment with us tonight.

Bob and Mary kiss, and clink their glasses as the guests
CHEER. Just then, Garcia, followed by TWO DETECTIVES and TWO
UNIFORMED COPS, walks through the crowd towards BOB.

A HUSH comes over the party.

MARY

(indignant)

Who allowed you in?

DETECTIVE #1

(thick Queens accent)

Robert Patchett?

BOB

Yes.

DETECTIVE #1

I have a warrant for your arrest.
Would you follow me please.

MARY

No! There must be some mistake..

DETECTIVE #1

There's no mistake, M'am.

The detective signals to one of the uniformed cops who
promptly handcuffs Bob's wrists.

The crowd GASPS.

DETECTIVE

(to Mary)

Sorry to break up the party.

They lead a stunned Bob out of the house.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

In handcuffs, Bob is led into a SQUAD CAR. Mary, distraught, watches. The crowd of shocked guests watch from the windows.

UNIFORMED COP #1

Watch your head.

MARY

Don't worry Bob -- I'll call Larry!

A cop shoves Bob into the backseat and closes the door. As the car pulls away, Bob turns and looks out of the rear window at Mary - scared.

INT. LAWYER'S OFFICE - DAY

We are in a large and tastefully decorated office in one of those Park Avenue high-rises. The room is furnished with expensive English antiques and Persian rugs.

LARRY (Mary and Bob's lawyer) is leaning back in his leather chair, perusing a document. Mary is seated next to Bob, holding his hand.

MARY

(impatiently)

...but what does it mean, Larry?

Larry gets up and walks around to the front of his football-field size desk and sits on the edge, facing the anxious twosome.

LARRY

Simply put, Bob has been indicted on 26 counts of fraud.

BOB

(swallows hard)

Is -- is that serious Larry?

LARRY

Serious? We're talking ten to fifteen--

BOB

Ten to fifteen thousand dollar fine.

(turns to Mary)

I think we can manage that, hon.
Don't you?

LARRY

No, no Bob -- Years not dollars.

(a beat)

The fine comes on top.

Bob grabs Mary's hand. He's in a state of panic.

MARY

That's crazy! Larry, you've been my lawyer for years, you've never failed me. You've got to do something.

Larry returns to his leather chair and sits down.

LARRY

(looks at Mary)

Mary.

(then looks at Bob)

Bob.

(then faces both)

I will only say two words--

Mary and Bob clutching hands.

LARRY

(smugly)

Judge Bishop.

BOB

Judge Bishop?

LARRY

I had my clerk check the Judicial calendar. Judge Bishop will be hearing your case, and that is good news, Bob. Bishop is known to be very lenient towards white-collar criminals. Besides, he and my father are old golf partners.

BOB

Criminals!? Who's talking about criminals? I'm no criminal.

LARRY

Bob, of course you're not. Just relax. It's quite straightforward, we know a sum -- uh, considerable sums, were somehow transferred from your clients accounts to a numbered account in Switzerland...

(he leans forward)

Our defense will be one of computer error -- a virus that crept into Bob's computer causing a mistaken transfer of money. The idea is to chalk the whole thing up to a software glitch.

(leans back again)

I think Judge Bishop would go for that.

Bob seems relieved.

LARRY

And to help ram home our defense, that the transfers were purely accidental, we can show that one of the largest misappropriations was from Mary's own account...

(looks at Mary)

And we all know that must have been a mistake...

Mary -- as the realisation that Bob has been embezzling from her, sets in.

Larry gets up and escorts them to the door.

BOB

You're sure this will work -- the computer virus and everything?

LARRY

(smugly)

Bob, I don't get paid \$350 an hour to give bad advice.

Bob shakes Larry's hand vigorously.

INT. HALLWAY

As Mary and Bob walk to the elevators we can see that Mary is upset.

The elevator doors open and Mary and Bob get in. The elevator is empty except for a DELI DELIVERY MAN.

INT. ELEVATOR

BOB

God, Mary, you've been so great. How the hell did a bum like me end up with a wonderful woman like you?

Bob goes to hug Mary. She pulls away.

MARY

Don't you touch me! Do you think I was born yesterday? I know what you've been up to! It's bad enough you stole money from your clients--

Bob tries to shhh! her

MARY

--but to steal from the very hand that feeds you!

She slaps Bob across the face as hard as she can.

The elevator doors open and Mary storms out.

BOB
(trying to keep up with her)
But Mary! I don't believe this is
happening. You are my closest friend,
my woman -- I would never dream of,
of...

But Mary is gone.

INT. COURT CLERK'S OFFICE - day

On the wall is a large CHART -- Labelled "JUDGE'S CALENDAR"

WE SEE A LIST OF CASES -- People vs. Smith etc.

Alongside the individual cases are the names of the JUDGES
assigned to them.

A STUBBY WOMAN'S FINGER runs down the list and stops at a case
which READS:

PEOPLE VS. PATCHETT (His Hon. Judge Bishop)

We hear the WOMAN'S VOICE.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Judge Bishop.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: The FRUMPY WOMAN we saw earlier at the
VESTA ROSE AGENCY. Clearly she now works in the COURT CLERK'S
OFFICE. She's wearing a VESTA ROSE PIN.

FRUMPY WOMAN

(into phone)

Yes, the job is working out very well
-- I can't begin to thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTH'S OFFICE - VESTA ROSE AGENCY - DAY

Ruth hangs the phone up. A satisfied look sweeps across her
face.

INT. OAK PANELLED RESTAURANT - EVENING

The restaurant has a CLUBBY feel - oak panelling, red leather
banquettes, white table cloths, elderly waiters, well-done-to-
overdone roast beef etc.

We SEE a solitary table with a solitary dry martini waiting
for some regular diner.

An ELDERLY MAN dressed in a custom-tailored conservative pin-
striped suit enters the restaurant.

He's in his 70's. He's carrying a well-worn leather brief

case. The MAITRE D' helps him take off his overcoat, and leads him to his waiting table.

MAITRE D'
There we are, Judge Bishop. Your usual.

The Maitre D' gives the Judge a large menu.

The Judge lifts the menu up so it hides him completely.

JUDGE
What are the lamb chops like today, Freddy?

MAITRE D'
Not good, Monsieur. I would recommend the Dover Sole, flown in fresh today.

JUDGE
No, no I don't feel like fish.

RUTH (OS)
Why don't you try the roast pheasant with chestnut stuffing -- I think that sounds good.

The Judge lowers his menu to see where the voice came from.

At the next table, Ruth is seated, alone, sipping wine from a stem glass. She's wearing a low cut scarlet red dress.

JUDGE
(smiles at Ruth, appreciatively)
Yes, yes. That does sound good. I'll have the pheasant, Freddy.

The Maitre D' leaves.

RUTH
Dining alone?

JUDGE
After a long day in court, I prefer to.

RUTH
Oh, really. Are you a lawyer?

JUDGE
No. A Judge.

RUTH
Oh, that sounds very exciting. You must hear a lot of fascinating cases.

JUDGE

You might think so, but I assure you most of the time it's quite boring.

RUTH

Oh, I doubt that. I'm sure you have some very interesting case waiting for you tomorrow.

JUDGE

Certainly not. In fact, tomorrow is just a routine case involving fraud.

Ruth is served a plate of oysters.

She plucks one with her fork, and pops it in her mouth.

RUTH

Fraud!? Just the word sounds so thrilling. I'd love to hear the details--

(a beat)

I'm sorry, I imagine it's confidential... I fully understand if you can't...

The Judge notices Ruth's cleavage -- Ruth spots this.

JUDGE

No, no...I don't see the harm, I mean if it really is that interesting to you...

RUTH

Oh, it is.

JUDGE

(chuckles)

It seems the defendant, a young man, is an accountant to the showbusiness crowd...You know, writers, actors those types. People ill fitted enough to look after themselves, let alone their money...

RUTH

What did he do?

JUDGE

Embezzlement on a grand scale. However, it seems he had been cheating his clients in minor ways for years, failing to turn over interest received on money he'd been handling on their behalf --

Ruth lances an oyster.

JUDGE

-- But he'd probably never have been caught had he not been greedy and transferred a considerable sum -- over a million dollars -- into a Swiss bank account.

RUTH

Really?

JUDGE

And some of the money was taken from the man's very own mistress! Of course, he denies the charges.

RUTH

A mistress? What about his poor wife?

JUDGE

Disappeared some time back. After he dumped her, he went to live with one of those trashy novelists.

RUTH

Never trust a woman!

JUDGE

(eyeing Ruth)

I wouldn't make such a generalization.

He smiles seductively.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ruth and the Judge exit the restaurant together and walk along the street.

JUDGE

I thought you might like to walk me to my car. It's just around the corner.

RUTH

Of course.

They stroll for a moment in silence.

Then Ruth puts her arm through his.

RUTH

I was just thinking about that accountant. I mean, I really think people like him shouldn't be allowed to get away scot-free.

JUDGE

Oh, his crime is minor, really. I expect he'll be found guilty and if so, I'll give him a heavy fine -- and a stern reprimand, of course.

EXT. PARKING LOT

They reach the parking lot. It's deserted at this time of night. Ruth stands very close to the Judge, and looks straight into his eyes.

RUTH

(excitable)

But don't you think a fine isn't enough. He should go to jail! After all, he's a common thief.

The Judge smiles. He then puts a hand onto her breast.

Ruth -- a little surprised, but she doesn't pull his hand away.

JUDGE

There's no need to get so excited --
(a beat, the Judge is becoming a little excited himself)
-- He's a middle class man, accustomed to good-living. One must keep in mind the humiliation he will suffer -- and the loss of friends.

The Judge is now fondling Ruth's breast.

RUTH

Ordinary street criminals do wrong by accident, or out of ignorance. White collar criminals do wrong out of greed--

The Judge has now pressed himself against Ruth.

RUTH

--their penalties should be doubled, because they're educated and should know better. I think this accountant should be given a very stiff sentence.

JUDGE

(breathing heavily)

A stiff one, yes, yes...you're so right...Two years...

RUTH

More.

JUDGE

(becoming more excited)

Three years.

RUTH

Not enough!

JUDGE

...Five years...

RUTH

More!!

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP on Judge Bishop.

JUDGE

Seven years!

He pounds his gavel.

WHIP PAN to Bob, seated at the defense table. He has gone ghostly white.

BOB

(choking back tears)

He's kidding -- you said, you promised
I'd be OK...

Larry, too, looks surprised.

Bob turns in his seat and looks for Mary, who is seated in the gallery.

Mary averts her eyes, picks up her coat and leaves the courtroom -- passing by Ruth who is wearing dark glasses and seated in the back row.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The room is dark.

CLOSE UP: The glow of a matchstick.

The match alights a piece of paper. It is the list of Bob's assets. All four items, HOME - FAMILY - CAREER - FREEDOM, have been crossed off.

Ruth places the paper in an ashtray and watches as it burns.

The red flames consume the FRAME as we DISSOLVE TO RED.

FADE IN:

EXT. PRISON FARM - DAY

We are in one of those minimum security prisons which cater to the likes of Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Ivan Boesky--

It's a white-collar prison which also functions as an agricultural facility.

Bob is dressed in prison overalls and is hosing down a dirty pigpen. PIGS are rubbing up against him, and he's trying to push them away.

GUARD

Hey! You!

Bob turns.

GUARD

Visitor.

Bob smiles and waves.

His POV: Mary is standing in the adjoining prison visiting yard. She gives him a half-hearted wave.

Bob is escorted through a wire mesh gate, and into the yard where we SEE other inmates walking and taking with their loved ones.

Bob wipes his dirty hands on his overalls and hugs Mary. Clearly his clothes stink, and grimacing, she pulls free.

BOB

Mary! It's great to see you.

Mary is dressed in plainer clothes, a simple jacket and pair of pants. She's wearing little make-up and hasn't had her hair coiffed in awhile.

She begins to walk, and Bob follows.

BOB

How are the kids? Do they miss their Dad?

MARY

They're fine. They're away at camp. In the fall they'll start boarding school.

BOB

Oh...Do you think they'll adjust, being away from home?

MARY

I think it will do them a world of good. Anyway, they have no choice. Their mother has dumped them on you, and you are now -- here.

(a beat)

Besides, I've decided to sell the lighthouse.

BOB

Mary, you can't. Where will you live?

MARY

In a small, sensible apartment, like other people do. I no longer have a taste for lavish living, Bob. Besides, the lighthouse is expensive and my finances have seen better days.

Mary looks across at a couple of INMATES who are milking cows.

MARY

I've been thinking about a new book.

BOB

A romance novel?

MARY

No. To write about something, you have to believe in it. And there are lots of things I no longer believe in.

(beat)

This book will be quite different. Something true to life.

BOB

Sounds great. I can't wait to read it.

(a beat)

When I get out things will be much better for us. I know they will.

MARY

I don't know about that, Bob. Seven years is a long time to wait for someone.

BOB

Someone? I'm not any old someone -- I'm Bob, your Bob, hon. And anyway, they tell me with good behavior, I could be out in two-and-a-half years.

Mary gives him a non-assuring smile, and a peck on the cheek.

MARY

I've got to go now. I'm being shown an apartment in Greenwich Village.

A GUARD unlocks the gate and she leaves.

MARY

Bye, Bob.

Bob presses his face up against the wire fence and waves as Mary walks off.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

A LONG SHOT of the Lighthouse. The grass is overgrown and a "For Sale" sign is on the front lawn.

We now see the Lighthouse through the VIEWFINDER OF A VIDEO CAMERA.

The viewfinder moves in a hand-held jerky manner.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

The property is set amongst
luxuriously appointed and exquisitely
manicured grounds...

The viewfinder pans across the ornamental lawns.

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

(continuing)

...realistically priced at two-
million-five-hundred-thousand dollars,
such value, dollar for dollar, is hard
to find in today's luxury real estate
market...

Mrs. Fisher's face comes into the frame. She peers at the camera, pulls a face, then disappears.

The image of the Lighthouse, as seen in the viewfinder,
FREEZES AND BECOMES A PHOTO in an ad in the real estate pages
of a magazine.

We HEAR a VOICE:

FEMALE VOICE (OS)

Ruth Patchett? We can see you now.

INT. BEAUTY SALON - MADISON AVENUE - DAY

A TOWN AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE lowers to REVEAL Ruth, seated in
the waiting area of a HI-TECH CHIC BEAUTY SALON. "NEW AGE"
MUSIC is playing over the PA system.

Ruth takes the magazine, gets up and follows a YOUNG BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN, dressed in a gray uniform.

The woman ushers Ruth past a row of curtained-off cubicles.
Through the crack in each curtain we see WOMEN seated in
dentist-type chairs, staring at computer screens suspended

from the ceiling. There are continually changing images on the screens which flash and reflect onto their faces. Standing next to each of these women are BEAUTIFUL COSMETOLOGISTS dressed in identical gray uniforms.

INT. CUBICLE

Ruth is shown into a vacant cubicle. She sits down on the reclining chair.

The beautiful COSMETOLOGIST smiles at her.

COSMETOLOGIST

Hello, I'm Gina, your personal beauty consultant.

She adjusts Ruth's chair so she can see the computer screen, suspended above her.

COSMETOLOGIST

I will now show the possibilities open to you, Ms. Patchett.

She clicks a REMOTE CONTROL and on the screen we see a computer-enhanced image of Ruth's face.

Another click. Ruth's computerized face begins to change -- a rapid succession of make-up, hair style and facial contour possibilities.

COSMETOLOGIST

You see, our goal is to make improvements where nature has failed.

CLICK -- Ruth's face with severe dark eye make-up, strong red lips, and a short up-sweep hairdo.

COSMETOLOGIST

We'll call this the "ready for success" look.

Ruth hates it.

RUTH

Let me see another.

As each image bounces onto the screen, Ruth studies it, and then shakes her head, denoting it's not for her.

CLICK -- we now see another image -- not too severe, not too sweet.

Ruth raises her hand to stop the Cosmetologist from proceeding any further.

RUTH

This one.

COSMETOLOGIST

A very good choice.

The CAMERA starts on the photo of the Lighthouse featured in the magazine on Ruth's lap, then moves in on the COMPUTERIZED IMAGE OF RUTH on the screen.

RUTH (VO)

Mary Fisher no longer lives in her mansion by the sea.

When she thinks about the nature of love, she finds that love is complicated.

The COMPUTERIZED IMAGE OF RUTH FADES TO BLACK.

She learned that from me --
the She Devil.

TITLE: TWO AND A HALF YEARS LATER

EXT. PRISON - DAY

A steel gate opens electronically to REVEAL Bob -- dressed in a suit, now somewhat shabby. He's carrying a small holdall.

He seems to have lost weight, but this new humility suits him, and even makes him look handsomer.

A TAXI is waiting. He gets in, and it drives off.

EXT/INT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Bob seated in the back of the taxi, drives through this familiar neighborhood.

It is the neighborhood where he and Ruth used to live.

BOB'S POV:

- On a front lawn, a DAD pitches a baseball to his SON who swings and hits the ball back to him.

- On a porch, a MOM converses with a MAILMAN while the LITTLE DAUGHTER tugs at her apron.

- THREE KIDS sell lemonade at their makeshift stand. They wave at Bob as he drives by.

- FOUR GIRLS skip jump-rope on the sidewalk.

EXT. AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The taxi now turns down a more affluent street. The houses are more set back, more surrounded by gardens, and are -- well, just simply, more.

Bob's taxi pulls up in front of a comfortable Tudor-Style house. There's a double garage, and a gardener, trimming the rose bushes that surround the house.

Bob gets out of the taxi.

BOB
(to taxi driver)
I'll only be a few minutes. Can you wait?

Bob walks up the long path to the front door. He RINGS the door bell.

As he waits, he scans the house.

Andy opens the front door. He is now three years older, thinner and actually quite cute.

ANDY
Dad!
(he calls inside)
Mom! Nico! Look who it is!

Nicolette - a pretty, 18-year-old, appears at the front door. She embraces her father. It's quite touching.

ANDY
Where are you living now?

BOB
I've arranged for a small studio apartment in town. You'd like it, it's only fifteen minutes away.

A brief awkward pause, then:

Bob hugs both his kids.

BOB
You've got to come over. We'll go out sometime, maybe go see a...
(a beat)
...movie, maybe a rock show. Yeah, howabout that, that's what we'll do.

Bob's attention is caught by something. He looks over the kids and into the house.

From his POV WE SEE RUTH: She is thinner, and beautifully coiffed, making her features appear almost, but not quite, delicate. She no longer has her mole. Dressed in a fashionable outfit, she looks nothing short of attractive. Or maybe, it's just her confident attitude that makes her seem so.

Bob stands there stunned.

BOB
Hey! What happened? You look...
(a moment)
...you look great, Ruth. You do, you
really do.

Ruth smiles -- a tiny smile.

RUTH
Bob. How are you?

BOB
Me? Fine...I guess...You know, things
are a little different now, but I'll
manage. There's an agricultural
college nearby -- I'm planning to do
some teaching there.

RUTH
You don't say.

Bob smiles, a bit nervously.

RUTH
Why don't you stay awhile. I'm sure
you and the kids have a lot of
catching up to do.
(looks at the kids)
Right?

ANDY
Sure, Mom.

RUTH
Sorry, I've gotta run, but I have an
appointment in the city --

She starts to walk away, then turns back and looks at Bob --
and for the first time in quite awhile, we see a look of
compassion on her face.

RUTH
Bob...You look good, too.
(she smiles; a beat)
Mind if I take your cab?

EXT. FIFTH AVE -- MANHATTAN -- DAY

Ruth pays the cab fare and gets out.

She's hurrying along the busy sidewalk, when suddenly she
stops.

There, in a bookstore window, is a huge display of the new
Mary Fisher novel, and a sign which reads: