

T H E H U N G E R

screenplay by
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from the novel by
Whitley Strieber

FINAL DRAFT

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FADE IN:

INT. MUSIC ROOM - DAY

1

FOCUS on a 17th Century Dutch portrait in the manner of Vermeer's 'Young Woman seated at a Virginal.' The subject is a creature of extraordinary beauty and elegance, staring out with an air of veiled mystery: aloof, imperious, at once seductive and forbidding. Over this image, piano MUSIC is heard, the simple haunting melody of the second movement of Lalo's Piano Trio No. 1, Opus 7.

The CAMERA moves toward the hypnotic eyes of the woman in the picture, then veers down to FOCUS on the same woman come to life, her eyes fixed on the keyboard of the grand piano at which she sits, her exquisite hands moving easily over the keys. The Dutch portrait hangs on the wall behind her in a solarium converted into a music room. The light, like Vermeer's, is golden, touched with the green and jewel tones of plants and flowers. MIRIAM appears to be about thirty, a classic beauty so harmonious in every detail as to seem almost unreal. Her pale blue silk gown emphasizes the lustrous quality of her skin. At her throat she wears a small gold cross with a loop at the top suspended from a fine gold chain.

As the piano solo is completed, the low, dusky voice of the cello joins in a reprise of the melody. CAMERA moves to FOCUS on JOHN BLAYLOCK, seated nearby, his glance roving from his music stand to cello strings and bow. He appears no older than Miriam, perhaps slightly younger. Aristocratic good-looks suggest an earlier, more romantic age, but his clothing is modern: pearl grey flannel suit, pale blue silk necktie, shirt of fine white broadcloth with gold and sapphire links at the cuffs. While piano and cello pursue their duet, the CAMERA holds on this second image of rare beauty.

Now, off-CAMERA, a violin begins to sing, joining the other instruments. The CAMERA again moves to FOCUS on thirteen year old ALICE CAVENDER, wooing melody from her instrument. In her white party dress, tied with a pale blue sash, Alice lacks the old world air of her companions. Her sweet face is wholesome and uniquely American.

WIDE ANGLE - THE ROOM

Exceptionally beautiful and decorated in superb taste.

The violin floats the melody above the cello's pizzicato accompaniment. Alice watches John studiously pluck the strings, then shares a smile of amusement with Miriam.

CLOSE SHOT - JOHN

Looks up from his playing to see Miriam smiling at the child with intimate affection. He turns his gaze back to his cello.

INT. DISCO - NIGHT

2

FOCUS on a young GUITARIST in bizarre clothing and a dyed punk-rock hairdo, plucking the strings of a much amplified electric guitar. He is part of a small band playing for dancers amidst flashing, constantly changing lights.

INT. MUSIC ROOM

3

as before, John plucking the strings of his cello in accompaniment to the violin's gentle melody.

INT. DISCO

4

Again the guitarist, blaring MUSIC, flashing lights.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

~~several couples move to the driving beat of the MUSIC.~~

LIZA AND BOLGER

stand out from the crowd by virtue of both physical endowment and dancing style. Tight, flashy clothes emphasize their shapely bodies. Their movement has as much to do with fornication as with dance.

INT. LIMBO

5

In an unidentifiable space, strangely lit, we have a momentary glimpse of a YOUNG COUPLE in 18th century dress dancing sedately. Like the pair seen a moment before, they are young, good-looking and sexually aware. MUSIC: the third movement, marked Andante, of Mozart's Divertimento in G Major, K.63.

IMAGES

6

Intercut images flash by, almost subliminally: the disco couple's rotating bottoms, thrusting groins; a glimpse of 18th century bosom, of muscular calf tensing through tight stocking as the leg is raised in dance-step.

INT. DISCO

7

Liza and Bolger continue to gyrate frenetically.

LIMBO

The 18th century couple, continuing their stately dance, are joined by a couple dressed in the height of French fashion, very elegant and artificial, powdered faces, powdered wigs. They wear domino masks. The dance at once becomes a ceremony of seduction. The frankly sexual exchange of glances leads to a change of partners. At the moment that hands are raised to touch in dainty formality, ecstatic breathing and groaning are suddenly heard on the SOUNDTRACK.

IMAGES

Again subliminal glimpses are seen: a breast freed from a low-cut bodice, a stocking peeled from a muscular calf, mouths hungrily seeking one another. Gradually denuded bodies flash and turn in a dazzling, mysterious light. All this should somehow have the look of ritual, rendering the sexual experience as if it were some formalized religious ceremony. The glow that illumines naked flesh is reflected from a golden ankh, glittering from some unearthly source of light. Male and female VOICES sigh and groan in a rhythmic way, suggesting plainsong or medieval chant.

INT. DISCO

The punk musicians play feverishly, their dyed hair and painted faces wet with perspiration. The dance floor rocks.

LIZA AND BOLGER

are totally absorbed in their dancing until, at almost the same moment, their attention is drawn to

THE BAR

where John and Miriam, disguised, stand watching them. The meeting of eyes embodies not so much a shock of recognition as of inevitability. When John raises his drink in salute to the young couple, an extraordinary thing occurs.

THE ROOM

is instantaneously bathed in a light of such white, hot intensity that it appears to vanish, leaving only a misty void in which the MUSIC strangles and dissolves.

LIMBO

Out of silence comes the SOUND of strings playing a lovely waltz.

CONTINUED

MUSIC: 'Im Chambre Separee' from Heuberger's 'Der Opernball.'

Where Kay and Bolger were a moment since, we see a beautiful YOUNG COUPLE in 19th century evening dress. Gracefully they sway, glide, turn. The effect is infinitely romantic. In a moment another couple join them in the dance. We cannot see their faces, but it is clear that they quickly charm the young couple. Partners are exchanged. The dance continues. The MUSIC swells.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

13

No sound but the hum of the engine. Miriam drives, never taking her eyes from the road. Bolger, seated beside her, studies her in profile, finds her air of mystery tantalizing. He turns to Liza, seated in the back with John. Her energy is irrepressible even in these close quarters. She begins to hum one of the songs to which she danced earlier, moving her shoulders in rhythm. Abruptly, the hum of the car's motor is replaced by the SOUND of horses' hooves on cobblestone.

INT. HANSOM - NIGHT

14

SOUND of hooves continues. In a swaying cab, the young couple who waltzed sit opposite the pair who joined them. The latter's faces are concealed in shadow.

MONTAGE: HIGHWAY - NIGHT

15

Old English signposts flash by, pointing the way or giving the distance to Tewkesbury...Chipping Norton...Oxford...High Wycombe...Maidenhead...Slough...London...each view accompanied by the SOUND of hooves on a dirt road. These images are INTER-CUT with exit signs on Long Island's State 27 that seem to explode out of the darkness: Bay Shore...Patchogue...Eastport...Westhampton Beach...Hampton Bays...each set to the SOUND of a high-powered car engine.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

16

Miriam's car travels along a narrow, deserted beachfront road. An almost full moon is reflected in a calm sea.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE

17

It comes into view, a dark shadow against the water. It is starkly modern, but the use of towers and sloping roofs lends an air of tradition.

INT. CAR

18

Bolger and Liza stare from the moving car, wondering exactly what the strange house holds in store for them.

EXT. HOUSE

19

The CAMERA shoots from a high window, looking down into the moonlit courtyard in front of the house. A car pulls up, stops at the door. It is not Miriam's luxurious Bentley, but a big, 1920's open touring car. A YOUNG COUPLE, slightly drunk, emerge, smartly dressed in clothes of the flapper era. They stare up at the house. We are not quite able to see the faces of the couple who accompany them. As they emerge from the car CUT TO:

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

20

Darkness. Silence. We are in the living room. A light goes on in the entry hall, spilling in through half-open doors. Strange forms seem to float in the gloom. Someone comes in. A switch is struck which turns on overhead spot-lighting, picking out several large, modern pictures and pieces of sculpture. The forms prove to be furniture under dust covers. Miriam moves about, lighting dim table or floor lamps.

JOHN

turns up the thermostat beside the door. Bolger hesitates in the doorway, but Liza makes herself at home, removing her coat, dropping it on a chair, as she inspects the room. John picks it up, takes Bolger's as well, carries them to the hall. Left alone with Miriam, Bolger is slightly unnerved by her silence, her probing stare. He grins foolishly, shifting from one foot to the other. Liza continues her inspection.

LIZA

Is there a bar? I could use a drink.

(opens a cabinet
full of bottles)

Ooh...not a cheapo label in the bunch.

(takes out vodka
and a tumbler; John
returns)

Anybody else?

(silent stares from
host and hostess)

Bolger?

BOLGER

No, thanks.

She fills her glass half full. John returns.

LIZA
 (leafing through an lp
 record holder, she hums
 a lively rock tune)
 Is this all you got, this classical
 crap?

She finds a station playing hard rock MUSIC, turns it up full blast, moves to it, sipping her drink at the same time.

MIRIAM

watches like a woman biding her time. If her look is inscrutable, her displeasure at the noise is implicit.

LIZA

sings along with the group on the radio, swinging her hips.

LIZA
 'Yeah, yeah...yeah, yeah...!
 (above the MUSIC)
 Is anybody else hungry? The food
 back there is the pits. We never
 did get any dinner.
 (starts out through the
 dining area)
 Kitchen out this way?

Carrying bottle and glass, she disappears. Miriam and John, observed by the uneasy Bolger, exchange a glance, and John follows Liza toward the kitchen.

Bolger stares apologetically at Miriam, who remains silent and aloof. He crosses to the radio, turns it off. The room is suddenly so quiet that the radiators can be heard clicking as they supply heat.

BOLGER
 I'm sorry.

Without a word, Miriam crosses directly toward him. For a moment it seems she will walk into his arms, but the stereo system is her destination. She plays a record already on the turntable. In contrast to the din of a moment before, we hear the gentle, lovely melody of the Mozart Andante to which the 18th century couple danced. Miriam and Bolger are now standing close enough to touch. Finding her nearness as disconcerting as it is provocative, he rattles on.

BOLGER

She's really a good kid, honest,
only...you know...she can't seem
to handle the booze. I mean...I'd
be sorry if you decided this was,
you know, some kind of a mistake.

He lapses into silence, impaled on Miriam's enigmatic stare. After a moment, she moves away from him, stops, turns to confront him with a look that makes us think she might indeed say, 'It is a mistake; get out.' Instead, with a quick, easy gesture, she strips the dust sheet off a modular piece of furniture that is as much a bed as a sofa. Then, her eyes fixed on Bolger, she slowly begins to unbutton her dress, proceeding down to the waist, so that the line of her breast is revealed. Bolger watches transfixed, motionless.

INT. KITCHEN

21

It is spacious, ultra-modern, immaculate, never a pot or utensil in view. FOCUS on cupboards as Liza, watched by John, opens one after another, all empty. MUSIC is heard faintly from the living room.

LIZA

I don't believe this. Not even an
old jar of peanut butter? A stale
soda cracker?

(finds a box of super size
plastic garbage bags,
turns to him, wielding it)

I mean, my God, what do you people
eat?

Assuming from the way he stares at her body that she has aroused him sexually, she smiles slyly, touches the box of plastic bags to his groin.

LIZA

You don't say much, do you?

(slithers along the
counter toward him)

My name is Liza, by the way.
What's y...?

The question 'What's yours?' is stopped by John suddenly pulling her blouse open and plunging his mouth between her breasts. She is as delighted as she is surprised.

LIZA

Ooh...now you're talkin'.

INT. LIVING ROOM

22

The gentle, restrained MUSIC of Mozart continues softly on the record player.

Miriam and Bolger, nude, viewed from the waist up, lie on the modular sofa, he on his back, she hovering above him, her smile enchanting, swaying slightly from side to side so that the golden ankh swings on its chain, barely grazing his throat. The touch of the sharp point causes him to suck his breath through his teeth. She slides the ankh over her shoulder so that it no longer dangles between them. Her lips travel along his jaw, down his neck, nipping at the flesh.

BOLGER

Whatever you want...I mean
it...just do it.

Miriam stops. A pause, then she breaks silence.

MIRIAM

No. First your hunger
...then mine.

Her head moves down to his chest, lingers over the nipple, then starts down toward his navel. He writhes with pleasure.

BOLGER

Oh, hell, yes...!

INT. KITCHEN

23

MUSIC continues from living room. A shot of John and Liza, viewed from the waist up, pressed against the counter where the box of garbage bags lies. They kiss ferociously. After a moment, she groans impatiently.

LIZA

What are you waiting for? Why
don't you give it to me?

Venting her frustration, she claws his shirtfront open, exposing the golden ankh dangling on his chest.

JOHN

Soon. Very soon.

He forces his mouth over hers again. Her hands work feverishly outside the CAMERA'S range. His left hand continues to explore her breast, while the other seizes the ankh and slowly raises

CONTINUED

it close to her throat. Suddenly, Bolger's VOICE is heard from the living room, a terrified, terrifying shriek. Liza's eyes fly open; she frees her mouth from John's.

LIZA

What...?

Before she can finish, the ankh flashes blindingly in the brilliant light of fluorescent ceiling panels. Her head snaps back toward the CAMERA, mouth agape.

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

24

A shrill, inhuman scream. In the cage room of a research laboratory, lit by one blood-red light bulb, the head of a female RHESUS MONKEY snaps toward the CAMERA, blood gushing from a ragged wound in the throat.

ANOTHER ANGLE

25

shows her under attack by a large MALE, his lip curled back to reveal the great, sharp teeth that slash repeatedly at her neck, shoulders and breast. The mortally wounded female, shrieking, tries desperately to escape her assailant.

ANOTHER ANGLE

26

A door flies open. PHYLLIS ROCKLER, a sturdily built woman of forty, enters swiftly, flicks a switch that floods the room with light.

PHYLLIS

Methuselah! Stop it! Stop it, what are you doing!

She seizes a broom, thrusts its handle into the cage, trying to separate the animals. Frightened beasts in the neighboring cages chatter their alarm. When Phyllis pokes the male rhesus with the broom handle, he siezes it and snaps it in half, baring his fangs and snarling as if to attack the woman herself. She recoils in fear, shouts.

PHYLLIS

Dr. Roberts!

She runs out into

THE HALL

27

A long, antiseptically bare passage lit by flourescent panels overhead, and calls down its length.

CONTINUED

PHYLLIS
Dr. Roberts! Sarah!

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

28

SARAH ROBERTS sits at her desk in the small, cluttered office, writing by the light of a goose-neck lamp. She is in her early thirties, small and well-made, with a face at once intelligent and sexually attractive. At the SOUND of a distant call, she looks up.

PHYLLIS (OS)
Sarah!
(Sarah frowns)
Sarah, please!

She rises, crosses toward the door.

INT. HALL

29

Sarah moves quickly around a corner, sees Phyllis standing outside the cage-room.

PHYLLIS
Hurry...hurry!

Sarah runs toward her, follows her into

THE CAGE ROOM

30

Where all the beasts are wild with anxiety now.

PHYLLIS
It's Methuselah! He's killing
Betty!

SARAH
Killing her! She's his mate.
He loves...

The carnage inside the cage stops her short.

THE CAGE - THEIR POV

31

The head of the female rhesus lies in a puddle of blood on the cage floor, face frozen in final agony.

SARAH
Dear God, no!

Phyllis makes a sound of nauseous revulsion. Sarah turns her face away.

CONTINUED

SARAH

Where's the rest of her?

Still staring toward the cage, Phyllis can barely bring herself to answer.

PHYLLIS

He's got it. He's eating her!

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

32

In the bathroom of the beach house, FOCUS on the dual washstand where Miriam and John have discarded the wigs and contact lenses that formed part of their disguise. The Ankhs lie tangled together in a tiny pool of blood. Over the shot, the SOUND of rushing water is heard. The CAMERA moves across the tile floor where bloody clothing lies in a pile to the stall shower, its glass door fogged with steam.

IN THE SHOWER

33

Miriam and John share a moment of the animal frenzy that brings release, relief, and is at the same time, for them, an act of cleansing, of purging. When her hands claw at the flesh of his back, directly under the flow of water, dried blood is liquified and runs down his back in crimson rivulets. The same happens with his hands, splayed against the shower wall. The scene ends on a note of mutual climax, of utmost ecstasy.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

34

The Bentley tools along State 27, headed toward New York. Over the shot, John's VOICE is heard.

JOHN (VO)

What is so incredible is that every time with you is the first time all over again, and never less.

INT. CAR

35

Miriam drives. John sits beside her, his hand resting on her thigh. Both wear fresh clothing. They stare straight ahead, a sense of fulfillment about them.

EXT. LAKESHORE - DAY

36

A tight shot of Miriam and John lying on her cloak, on the grass, at Hadley. The CAMERA is so close that there is no clue as to period. Behind the young lovers, sunlight glitters on the water of the lake.

EXT. F.D.R. DRIVE - NIGHT

37

Lights of bridges and buildings glitter in the chill night air as the Bentley proceeds swiftly downtown.

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET

38

The car turns into a tree-lined street, pulls up in front of a palatial town house.

INT. CAR

39

Miriam presses a button.

EXT. HOUSE

40

Lit by the car's headlights, the garage door opens, lights go on inside, the car enters, the door closes.

INT. CAR

41

Miriam turns off the motor. They exchange a look. She takes his hand from her thigh, lifts it to her lips, kisses it, yawns inadvertently.

MIRIAM

I'm sorry.

Sympathetically, lovingly, he touches her face. She smiles. They kiss lightly. While she unbuckles her safety-belt, he gets out of the car.

INT. GARAGE

42

John opens the trunk, pulls out two large, green plastic garbage bags. At the moment he turns with them, a startling SOUND is heard, someone rapping on glass. John quickly shoves the bags back into the trunk.

JOHN

Bloody hell!

He grabs a flashlight, shines it on the small window pane in the garden door. A face appears, squinting, a hand shielding eyes from the glare.

MIRIAM

It's only Alice.

JOHN

At this hour?

CONTINUED

MIRIAM
(starts toward door)
Don't blind her with that.

John turns off the flashlight. Miriam presses a button beside the door. It opens. Alice grins.

ALICE
Hi.

MIRIAM
Hi.

ALICE
How was the country?

MIRIAM
Cold. How did you know we were back?

ALICE
I saw your car from my window.
Were you guys watching tv tonight?

MIRIAM
I'm afraid not.

ALICE
You rilly missed it. Isaac Stern was on with the Boston Pops, and there was this documentary on Channel Thirteen that would have grossed you out, I mean it. These big, dumb nerds hitting baby seals over the head with clubs for no reason. It's totally gross. Anyway, I know how you feel about stuff like that. There's an address you can...

A glance from John reminds Miriam that it is late and they must sleep.

MIRIAM
Tomorrow. You can tell me all about it tomorrow. Just now we're going straight to bed.

ALICE
Okay. I see you brought your garbage back with you. (Continued)

CONTINUED

ALICE (Continued)

(a look from John)

That's cool. Everybody with a weekend place does it. Walk around here any Sunday night, and you're liable to see half the social register stuffing those big plastic bags in the trash baskets. There was even this article in the Times about how...

MIRIAM

(firmly)

Goodnight, Alice.

ALICE

Goodnight.

Miriam presses a button. The door starts down.

ALICE

Goodnight, John. Happy garbage disposal.

The door closes.

JOHN

Is she gone?

MIRIAM

(at the window)

Yes.

He reaches for the plastic bags in the trunk.

JOHN

There's something spooky about that child.

(carries bags toward
back of garage)

Every time I turn round, there she is, with that mysterious little smile of hers. Always saying something cheeky to get my back up.

MIRIAM

(following him)

But you encourage her by letting her know she can.

He opens a door and goes through it. Miriam crosses to the threshold.

INT. FURNACE ROOM

43

John crosses the stone floor to the furnace, sets down the bags.

JOHN

And you don't encourage her?

MIRIAM

What, to tease you?

JOHN

No, to pop in any time she feels like it, day or night.

He opens the furnace door.

MIRIAM

Oh, yes, I'd have to plead guilty to that.

JOHN

But why? She's only a child, after all.

MIRIAM

She's much more than a child.

JOHN

In what way?

He lifts one of the plastic bags, shoves it into the furnace. Devouring it, the flames leap and roar.

MIRIAM

She's a musician. She's good to look at. And she loves me.

John stops what he is doing, turns to her. Now he picks up the second bag and shoves it through the door. Miriam crosses in behind him. Their faces are lit by the fire.

MIRIAM

It's wicked, isn't it?

JOHN

What?

MIRIAM

Loving you so much that there's very little left for anyone else.

CONTINUED

JOHN
(quoting Alice)
Totally gross.

They smile at one another. She lays her head on his chest, closes her eyes.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

44

In her big, luxurious bed, Miriam and John lie in each other's arms. When she stirs in her sleep, he opens his eyes, adjusts his position for her comfort, then closes his eyes again.

LIMBO

45

FOCUS close on John and Miriam lying in each other's arms. Although the bed is of 18th century design, we have no idea where we are in time or space. A brief, staccato sequence of SHOTS follows, from above and all about the bed, giving the simple act of sleeping a sense of monumental importance, lending the figures in the bed the awesome look of effigies carved atop a stone sarcophagus, telling us that theirs is a sleep of great mystery and profound meaning.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

46

John and Miriam as before. The CAMERA moves in close to reveal that his eyes are open, that he is deeply troubled by his inability to sleep.

INT. LABORATORY - NIGHT

47

In the cage room, FOCUS close on Sarah, sitting at Phyllis' work table, looking troubled.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Phyllis is seated nearby. Behind them stands CHARLIE HUMPHRIES, resident blood expert. All three stare wearily at the cage where Methuselah paces back and forth, agitated, sullenly glaring back at them, snarling from time to time. The hall door opens and TOM HAVER enters. He is in his thirties, athletic, personable, aggressive in the clinches. He shares their vigil for a moment.

TOM
What are we doing?

SARAH
Watching Methuselah not sleep.

CONTINUED

She raises her hand. He takes it, bends to kiss her, sets a paper bag on the table.

TOM

It was pretty clear you weren't coming home to supper, so I stopped at the deli. There's corned beef and ham on rye there for anybody that wants it.

CHARLIE

Pass.

PHYLLIS

I'd be sick all over the lab.

CHARLIE

Bones. All he left of her was bones.

TOM

He doesn't seem any the worse for wear. Decency dictates if you can't look repentant at times like this, at least look pooped.

SARAH

That's what's so odd. Hours later, there's not the slightest drop in energy. He's manic.

TOM

Any idea what went wrong?

SARAH

He stopped sleeping night before last, for no apparent reason. Yesterday he got crankier by the hour.

PHYLLIS

Today he was downright mean. He gave me a punch on the arm when I fed him his lunch, and I thought 'If he doesn't sleep tonight, I'm going to take Betty out of there in the morning. I don't want him punching her ar...'

The word is 'around', but she cannot finish. Choked by emotion, she presses hand to mouth to stifle a sob. Sarah puts a hand on her arm.

CONTINUED

SARAH

Hey...

PHYLLIS

All that time...all that work
...ruined.

SARAH

(arm around her)

It's not ruined. We won't let
it be ruined.

PHYLLIS

But Betty was the only one that
had actually stopped aging.

SARAH

There'll be others. Next time
we'll protect ourselves. No
more Methuselahs going ape on
us overnight.

Charlie and Tom laugh, then Phyllis, through her tears. Sarah,
last to realize she has made a joke, joins in, and the tension
is momentarily relieved.

SARAH

(to Phyllis)

Let's get some videotape equip-
ment in here. I want a record
of every move the old cannibal
makes from now on.

Methuselah has come forward to the bars of his cage. When Sarah
turns, they are face to face, glowering at one another.

SARAH

Don't you snarl at me, you
evil son of a bitch!

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

48

John lies on his back atop the bedspread, staring at the ceiling,
disturbed, nervously smoking a cigarette. He wears slacks,
espadrilles and a rather Byronic shirt, open at the collar, with
the golden ankh in clear view.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALL

49

John walks the length of the hall from Miriam's bedroom, moving
like a caged animal. He avoids his reflection in the elaborately
framed mirror at the top of the stairs.

INT. ENTRY HALL

50

John comes down the stairs, turns into the hall leading toward the back of the house. Again, he avoids his reflection in a console mirror near the entry. Down the hall, VOICES can be heard through an open door.

INT. LIBRARY

51

A traditional room, bookshelves crammed with scientific reference works, stacks of medical journals on every available surface. Miriam, incredibly beautiful in a long hostess gown, sits watching a tv set normally concealed in a chinoiserie cabinet. A chat show HOST holds forth to a guest not presently on camera.

TV HOST

I won't use that magic word
'immortality,' but longevity
...longevity is something that
has to be on everybody's mind.

MIRIAM

looks up to see John in the doorway. The VOICE of the tv host continues over the shot.

TV HOST (OS)

I mean, in this day and age of
fantastic technology...

A long look between Miriam and John

MIRIAM

Not to worry. Tonight...

JOHN

Yes...tonight.

Putting a brave face on it, he smiles, continues toward the back of the house. Miriam stares after him, clearly worried.

TV HOST (OS)

...you can't help thinking, 'Oh,
wow, if only I'd been born maybe
fifty years later, when science
has pretty much eliminated disease
and the life expectancy is, oh,
two, three hundred years...maybe more...

INT. KITCHEN

52

John enters the antiseptically clean, bare room, stubs out his cigarette in the sink. He opens a pair of cupboards simultaneously. Both are empty. About to open a third, he stops, arrested by an angry, humming SOUND, accompanied by a spasmodic little thump. A large house fly, trapped in the room, flails against the window pane, desperately seeking some means of escape. John watches it for a moment, raises his hand as if to swat, then opens the window instead, freeing the fly.

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET - DAY

53

Alice, in her school uniform, waves goodbye to her friends aboard a departing bus marked 'Goodwin School of Music and Art.' It has deposited her under the awning of a posh apartment building. Book-bag in one hand, violin case in the other, she approaches HAROLD, the doorman, a double row of shiny brass buttons on his uniform coat.

ALICE

Hi, Harold.

HAROLD

(touches visor of
his cap)

Miss Cavender.

She hands him the books.

ALICE

Give these to my mom when she
comes home, will you? And
tell her I'm over at Mrs. Blaylock's.

HAROLD

This is news?

ALICE

Don't get fresh, Harold or
I'll breathe on your buttons.

She turns and darts across the street, dodging cars.

INT. KITCHEN

54

as before. John closes the window, returns to his search, finds a jar of instant coffee, opens it. As he lifts it to smell if it is still fresh, the SOUND of the doorbell is heard.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

55

On the step Alice, violin case in hand, rings impatiently, then tries the door, calls.

ALICE

Anybody home?

INT. ENTRY HALL

56

The door rattles. John comes quickly through the hall, presses a series of buttons on a panel beside the door, opens it.

ALICE

Hi.

JOHN

Mustn't rattle the door, dear girl.

She enters. He closes the door behind her, punches the same series of buttons.

JOHN

It might just muck up the security system.

At the top of the panel, the red light that went off before goes on again.

John turns. In the light falling from the fan-window above the front door, blue shadows are visible under his eyes.

ALICE

What've you been doing? You look awful.

JOHN

Thanks very much.

He starts across the entry, toward the back of the house.

ALICE

Just kidding. Ha ha ha.

He stops at the powder room door, turns to her.

JOHN

Miriam's waiting for you in the library.

CONTINUED

ALICE

John...

He goes in, closes the door, locks it with a snapping SOUND.

ALICE

Balls.

Annoyed at herself, she continues down the hall toward the open doors to the library, where VOICES can be heard.

INT. POWDER ROOM

57

John switches on the bright bulbs that circle the mirror above the vanity, leans close to examine the shadows beneath his eyes, touching them cautiously, as if they were painful bruises.

He looks into the two-way mirror standing on the vanity top, flips it over so that his reflection appears suddenly and violently magnified, emphasizing the little lines at the corners of eyes and mouth. The effect is startling, as if he had visibly aged in a matter of seconds.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

58

FOCUS on the tv screen. The chat show guest is Sarah.

TV HOST

Then you don't feel that people who sleep nine or ten hours a night have a longer life expectancy than someone who only gets, say, five or six?

SARAH

Not at all. We have a woman of ninety in the program who never sleeps more than three hours, and she has more energy and enthusiasm for life than any of us.

MIRIAM

is engrossed. Alice comes in behind her, bends to kiss her cheek. She smiles, grips the girl's hand, but remains intent on the screen.

TV HOST

Fantastic. What's her secret?

SARAH

When I know that, I hope you'll invite me back.

CONTINUED

TV HOST

Invite you? We'll drag you.
(to camera)

My guest is Dr. Sarah Roberts,
world renowned expert in the
field of gerontology. The
book is called

(holds up book)

'Sleep and Aging'. It's all
about mankind's ongoing flirtation
with immortality and it's fasci-
nating. Order it. Read it. I'll
be back in a minute with a final word.

Miriam shuts off the set by remote control, rises. She and Alice
embrace, then walk hand in hand into

THE HALL

59

They move toward the back of the house.

ALICE

John's in a funny mood, isn't he?

MIRIAM

He didn't sleep at all last night.

They enter

THE SITTING ROOM

60

A room at once formal and inviting, brilliantly combining museum-quality furniture of many periods, from Italian Renaissance to Art Nouveau. Everywhere are priceless art objects: Greek, Roman and Egyptian artifacts, medieval ivory and wood carvings, Renaissance bronzes, sharing the company of a jewel-encrusted Faberge egg, a marble sculpture by Brancusi, an abstract form by Pevsner. All these lovely things flourish in muted light filtering through sheer curtains at tall windows. Miriam and Alice are merely passing through.

ALICE

So? Everybody misses once in
a while. It's no big deal.

MIRIAM

It is for John. Be extra nice
to him today.

ALICE

I'll smother him with affection.

CONTINUED

Miriam grins and squeezes her hand gratefully. They continue into

THE MUSIC ROOM

61

where John sits waiting, cello at the ready. Passing him, Alice bends to kiss his cheek.

JOHN

What's that for?

ALICE

For nothing.

MIRIAM

(sits at piano)

Are you all right?

JOHN

Fine.

MIRIAM

I thought we'd start with the Lalo. Second movement.

JOHN

Again?

MIRIAM

If you'd rather not...

JOHN

No, no. Don't mind me. I'm a little edgy, that's all.

Having taken her violin from its case, Alice arranges her music on the stand.

ALICE

It's the part where you play pizzicato that I rilly get off on.

JOHN

(laughs)

Do you? Good heavens!

He looks at Miriam, who laughs with him, delighted to see him relaxed and happy again.

JOHN

We must start there then, by all means!

CONTINUED

Looking at Miriam for a sign to begin, Alice glows with pleasure at having amused her friends. Together, she and Miriam play the six notes that begin the passage. Now Alice carries the melody on her violin, and John begins to pluck the cello's strings. When the CAMERA moves in for a close view of him, we see his smile gradually fade as he remembers his condition. Over the shot, Sarah's VOICE is heard.

SARAH (VO)

This is where he seems to realize that he's begun to disintegrate.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

62

Methuselah claws at his cage bars, screeching his anger and discomfort. As we watch, his brown fur turns gray, then gradually snow white. Phyllis' VOICE is heard over.

PHYLLIS (OS)

Effective age fifty-five at this point.

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE - NIGHT

63

We are watching the rhesus on a videotape monitor. Sarah, Phyllis, (63A) Charlie and Tom sit staring at the screen.

TOM

What's that in human terms?

PHYLLIS

Equivalent to around ninety-two.

On the screen, the animal's body begins to shrivel. His movements become slow and arthritic.

(63B)

SARAH

He'd been awake over a hundred hours here. The first degenerative changes were visible after the seventieth hour.

CHARLIE

The curve starts accelerating now.

PHYLLIS

He's aging at a rate of approximately five years per minute.

CONTINUED

Methuselah puts stiff, claw-like fingers up to his wizened face. When he touches his mouth, several teeth fall out.

(63C)

TOM

Oh, my god.

Charlie appears on the tape, draws a blood sample. The monkey is annoyed but too feeble to resist.

(63D)

TOM

What was the result of that test, Charlie?

CHARLIE

His blood cells gradually lost their ability to uptake oxygen.

Clutching the bars with the last of his strength, Methuselah emits an infuriated, heartrending howl.

(63E)

PHYLLIS

Effective age now eighty-five. Human equivalent, one hundred, twenty-nine.

The beast falls onto his side, his eyes glazed with cataracts and narrowed to slits. His mouth works, arms slash the air. There is a long, rattling sigh.

(63F)

SARAH

Life signs terminate here.

CHARLIE

Now comes the most amazing part of all.

With astonishing swiftness, the dead monkey's skin cracks and falls like tissue to the floor of the cage. In a matter of seconds, skull and skeleton lie amid a pile of rubble. Then the skeleton, too, collapses, dissolves, until all that is left of Methuselah is a pile of dust on the cage floor. The tape ends. The screen goes blank. Total silence. The four people sit almost motionless, profoundly affected.

(63G)

PHYLLIS

Two years of post mortem, dry air degeneration accelerated into seventy-one point five-six seconds.

TOM

(to Sarah)

What does that say to you?

CONTINUED

SARAH
What does it say to me?

The question is so unexpected and so oddly phrased that she almost laughs, but when she replies it is with the utmost seriousness.

SARAH
That we need not die.

TOM
I see.

CHARLIE
Hear, hear.

TOM
Look, I'm just a crass administrator. Remember me? I'm the guy who has to face the finance committee tomorrow and try to explain all this in terms their tiny minds can grasp.

SARAH
All right. Show them the tape.

CHARLIE
Oh-oh.

PHYLLIS
Is that wise?

TOM
They won't know what they're watching.

SARAH
Tell them. Tell them this proves what I've been saying all along: that there's something in the body we know nothing about, a secret clock that can be tampered with.

TOM
And if it can be speeded up...

SARAH
Then it can be slowed down, as well, it can be stopped. But if they cut back our funding again, the way they did in October, chances are we'll never know. Goddammit, Tom, we've made history here in the past twenty-four hours!

CONTINUED

TOM

Okay, okay! I'll give it my best shot, that's all I can promise.

SARAH

That's all we ask.

TOM

Now do me a favor before you all keel over. Phyllis, go home and get some sleep. Charlie, go home and get some sleep.

(putting his arm around Sarah)

Sarah, come home and...

CHARLIE

Get some.

SARAH

In which case, the answer is yes.

She hugs Tom, kisses him.

PHYLLIS

Somebody's forgetting a prior engagement.

TOM

(to Sarah)

Did you and Phyllis have a date?

PHYLLIS

You're cute.

(to a puzzled Sarah)

If I asked for your autograph, would that be a clue?

SARAH

Oh, damn. What time is it?

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - NIGHT

64

Copies of Sarah's book 'Sleep and Aging' are displayed in a pyramid in Brentano's window. A card reads, 'This evening - Dr. Roberts will autograph her book from 6 to 8 p.m.'

INT. BRENTANO'S - NIGHT

65

FOCUS on the hands of a CLERK putting a copy of Sarah's book and a sales slip into a bag. The bag is handed to Miriam.

CONTINUED

Above the desk is a tv monitor. Miriam looks up to see Sarah signing autographs in another part of the store. The CAMERA moves with Miriam as she walks in that direction, approaching a small crowd surrounding a desk. The crowd parts slightly to reveal Sarah, head bowed, signing a book, then smiling as she returns it to its owner. Miriam moves closer but does not join the queue. Instead she stands watching intently.

CLOSE SHOT - MIRIAM

Her eyes are concealed in the shadow of her hat's brim. She holds Sarah's book with both hands, pressed against her breast. She is exercising a telepathic power of communication. Sarah goes on signing, but shortly her attention to the task wanes. She looks up at Miriam.

SARAH

I'm sorry...what did you say?

(Miriam remains
silent, staring)

I'm afraid I'd need more details about the case you describe. The importance of sleep in slowing down the aging process...well, that's the whole focus of our experiments at Park West these days. But as far as any...

(a book is placed in
front of her)

Excuse me.

(She signs the book,
hands it to its owner,
smiles)

Thank you.

(turning back to Miriam)

What I started to...

But Miriam is gone. Sarah looks about the crowded store and is puzzled.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

66

John paces restlessly. At the window, he looks down into -

THE STREET

67

Cars pass, people come and go. There is no sign of Miriam.

JOHN'S FACE

68

reflects his disappointment.

INT. SLEEP CLINIC - NIGHT

69

A wall of glass exposes the control room to passersby in the hall. Inside, a group of doctors and technicians sit at a long table containing control panels, etc., observing the behavior of PATIENTS on a vast bank of tv monitors.

MIRIAM

70

has hesitated for a moment to observe this impressive technological display. She, carries a plastic record-folder. Now she continues along the hall to a door marked 'C. Humphries,' opens it.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

71

The room as laid out is part office, part lab, part pharmacy. Charlie sits at his desk.

MIRIAM

Excuse me...

CHARLIE

(looks up)

Yes, come in.

(indicates chair
opposite desk)

Have a seat.

(reaches for folder)

I'll take that.

(opens folder, looks
at record)

Mrs. Dupont?

He gives the American pronunciation, she the French.

MIRIAM

Dupont.

CHARLIE

Ah-hah. Quite a distinguished name in this country.

MIRIAM

Quite common in France. The equivalent of Smith.

CHARLIE

That right? I see they got all your vital statistics outside.

CONTINUED

She watches him as he pores over her chart.

MIRIAM

You work very late.

CHARLIE

Well, it's a sleep clinic.
People will insist on sleeping
at night. What can you do?

This has been said to amuse her. She smiles cooperatively.

MIRIAM

May I ask what your position is
here?

CHARLIE

I'm the resident blood person.

MIRIAM

Blood person?

CHARLIE

The boring, two dollar title is
hematologist.

MIRIAM

Not boring to me, I assure you.
Have you found that the type of
blood in one's veins has a great
deal to do with how one sleeps
and how one ages?

CHARLIE

It has a great deal to do with
everything, doesn't it?
(consulting chart)
Now let's see...

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

72

John picks up the little clock on the bedside table, checking
the time.

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE

73

as before, Charlie with pencil poised over Miriam's chart.

CONTINUED

CHARLIE
Childhood diseases.
(looks at her)
Measles? Mumps?

MIRIAM
Just to pursue the point a
bit further, have you had
any success changing blood or
possibly strengthening it, say,
to induce a deeper level of sleep,
or to counteract insomnia?

CHARLIE
Chicken pox?

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

74

John paces in the dark, smoking. A SOUND from downstairs
arrests him.

JOHN
Miriam?

He descends to

THE ENTRY HALL

75

where he sees that the red light on the security panel is burning
normally. At this moment he catches sight of himself in the con-
sole mirror near the front door. The progress of deterioration
alarms him. He leans toward his reflection, pressing his fore-
head against the glass, shutting his eyes tight.

Over the shot, Miriam's VOICE is heard.

MIRIAM (VO)
Forgive me, doctor...

INT. CHARLIE'S OFFICE

76

as before.

MIRIAM
...but it appears to me that
unless one happens to be a monkey,
there is very little help to be
got from this clinic.

CONTINUED

CHARLIE

Mrs. Dupont

(changes to French
pronunciation)

Dupont, sorry...if you weren't so damn pretty, I'd probably take offense at that. You've been sitting there for twenty minutes, firing questions at me. I'm confused. I thought you were here to volunteer for our sleep program.

MIRIAM

I apologize. I let you think that because I needed certain information. Unhappily it's clear to me now that your work isn't sufficiently advanced to answer my need.

CHARLIE

I wish I at least knew what that need is.

MIRIAM

Quite simple. The need to save someone I love very dearly.

INT. CAFETERIA - NIGHT

77

In a grubby all-night cafeteria on Upper Lexington Avenue, frequented by drunks, flagrant homosexuals and prostitutes, John sits alone at a remote table, an ashtray full of butts and a half-finished cup of coffee in front of him. Contact lenses and a wig alter his appearance, but he now has the appearance of a man in his early forties. He sits with head in hands, avoiding his reflection in the window beside him which looks out onto Lexington Avenue. Over the shot, a girl's VOICE is heard.

DOREEN (OS)

Anybody sitting here?

John makes no move of acknowledgement.

DOREEN

I guess that means no.

DOREEN HOFSTETTER

sits opposite him. She is in her twenties, nicely dressed, with a pleasant face and a charming smile.

DOREEN

Would you please pass the sugar?

CONTINUED

His reply is a barely audible mutter.

JOHN

Go away.

DOREEN

Sorry?

(no reply)

I said would you...

JOHN

I said go away.

DOREEN

Go away? I don't understand.

JOHN

Sit somewhere else. Is that clear enough for you?

DOREEN

No. Why should I?

JOHN

For your own sake.

DOREEN

My own sake? What does that mean? Frankly, I'd rather take my chances here than at some of these other tables. I mean, did you ever see so many creepy looking people? It's gruesome, but what else is open at this hour?

Silence from John. Face averted, he now stares at his reflection in the window as at an unwelcome stranger.

DOREEN

Okay, Doreen, he's not going to pass the sugar. You'll just have to be ill-mannered and reach for it.

(does so, spoons it
into her coffee)

Poison. I expect to die of sugar poisoning. It's my fate.

(sets sugar down)

I can't quite place your accent. It could be English, but I guess it could also be Australian. Either way, you're a long way from home. (Continued)

CONTINUED

DOREEN (Cont'd.)

(sips coffee, makes a face)

Euch.

(daintily wipes her mouth
with a paper napkin)

I'm a long way from home, too. I'm
from Portland. Oregon, not Maine.
Why, Doreen, that is a long way
away, now drink your lethal potion
and leave the nice man alone.

(sips, grimaces, shudders)

Look, I hope you don't really mind
my sitting here. The fact is I'm
a pretty good judge of character,
and you seemed like just about the
only straight person in the place.

At long last John turns to look at her. As she chatters, the
SOUND lowers to indicate his loss of interest in what she is
saying, while the CAMERA, from his POV, drifts from her eyes
to her mouth to FOCUS on the tenderest part of her throat.

DOREEN

I said to myself, 'There's a nice,
quiet-looking older man.' Oh, I
don't mean you're really old or any-
thing. You're still very nice
looking. I just can't see sharing
a table with some doped-up freak who
might turn out to be dangerous, you
know what I mean? And it'll get
worse pretty soon when the bars close.

A pause. Realizing she has finished, John stirs from his reverie
of hunger.

JOHN

Come here often, do you?

DOREEN

Not if I can help it. Unfortunately,
I'm one of the original members of
Insomniacs Anonymous.

JOHN

Ah.

DOREEN

Is that your problem, too?

JOHN

Just recently, yes.

CONTINUED

DOREEN

Welcome to the club.

Smiling warmly, she holds out her hand. John hesitates for an instant, then takes it. Over the shot, a tv reporter's VOICE is heard.

REPORTER (VO)

The victim was identified as twenty-six year old Doreen Hofstetter, a computer analyst employed here by a company with its main office in her home city of Portland, Oregon.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

78

Early morning. John sits facing the tv set, but his attention is on the stack of medical journals in his lap. He leafs through one after another, swiftly, looking for some scrap of hope. The lines in his face, the amount of grey in his hair, now suggest a man well past forty. On the tv screen, the REPORTER, a young black woman, stands in front of a brownstone building, talking into a hand-held microphone.

REPORTER

Neighbors in this well-kept brownstone building describe her as quiet...not unfriendly...but something of a loner. Police this morning have no clue to the identity of her assailant. Doctors describe her condition as stable, with multiple wounds in the upper body caused by a knife or other sharp instrument.

Miriam appears silently in the doorway, come straight from her bed. Unaware of her presence, John rises in agitation, crosses to get another stack of journals from a table.

REPORTER

Ironically, it was a doctor living on the floor below who heard the victim's screams, and whose quick action - coupled with the attacker's clumsy use of the weapon - undoubtedly saved Doreen Hofstetter's life. For Early Bird News, this is Bettina Higgins on East Sixty-First Street.

CONTINUED

As John turns off TV, Miriam moves in close behind him, speaks gently.

MIRIAM

Have you been careless, my darling?

JOHN

(turns to face her)

Mightn't you be just the least bit off form, if this were you?

His deterioration is difficult to witness. She averts her gaze.

JOHN

No, don't look away.

(pulls her face around)

It's too late to pretend that if we ignore it, it will go away...or if I sleep tonight, it will all be reversed. Year after year it went like clockwork: sleep six hours out of twenty-four, the hunger one day in seven, and always, always the same age, not an hour, not a minute older, ever. Now I sleep not at all, I am hungry more or less constantly, and I have aged...I don't know...twenty years in the past two days. Don't you think it's time we talked simple truth to one another?

MIRIAM

What truth?

JOHN

We've hardly ever talked about my predecessors.

MIRIAM

You didn't want to.

JOHN

I was jealous. What matters to me now is how they ended. I think I have a right to know, don't you?

A pause.

MIRIAM

(a whisper)

The same. All the same.

JOHN

How long did it take?

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Not long.

JOHN

Be precise. A week? Two weeks?

MIRIAM

More or less.

JOHN

The one just before me...how long
did he...?

He leaves the question unfinished.

MIRIAM

It wasn't a man.

JOHN

She, then.

MIRIAM

A few days.

He closes his eyes against the pain of the thought, moves away,
casting about for some shred of hope.

JOHN

Of course that was such a long
time ago. Medical science has
made incredible strides since
then. That must give me an ad-
vantage, mustn't it?

MIRIAM

I always hoped so. It's why I
subscribe to all these journals...
why I've read every word...

JOHN

And found nothing.

(pained silence is her
answer)

What is it I'm to do then? You're
the one with all the experience.
Tell me. Just shrivel up and die
as quickly as possible so that you
can get on to the next one?

The taunt is too cruel for Miriam to deal with. She turns and
goes out into.

CONTINUED

THE HALL

79

John follows her toward the stairs. Rain spatters the fan-window above the front door.

JOHN

Have you chosen my successor,
by the way?

IN THE ENTRY

80

Miriam starts up. John crosses to the foot of the stairs.

JOHN

Shall I tell you who I think it
is? I think it's Alice.

She stops half-way up. John cannot see her face, but reads her response in her back. The CAMERA observes that her eyes fill with tears, but she manages to keep the emotion out of her voice when she answers him, without turning.

MIRIAM

John, I love you. I want you.
I'm not thinking of anyone else.

But John cannot resist the temptation, out of his hurt, to inflict it on her...

JOHN

You said the one before me was
female. Is that your system, to
alternate the sexes?

(no reply)

You've been grooming her all along
to take my place, haven't you?

MIRIAM

No.

JOHN

Liar!

She turns to him, explosively, matching his ferocity.

MIRIAM

All right! All right, yes, I admit
it may have crossed my mind! I
lost the others; I prayed I'd never
lose you, but the possibility was
always there! For me it's a torment
beyond grief, beyond the fear of pain
or old age or death! I know you're
suffering, don't you think I know that? (Continued)

CONTINUED

MIRIAM (Cont'd.)
 I want to hold you and be tender,
 Johnny, but you won't have it!
 (with a sweeping, dis-
 missive gesture)
 You won't have it!

Choked with anger and weeping, she turns and hurries up the stairs, out of sight. He shouts after her.

JOHN
 Because I haven't given up on
 me, even if you have!

From above comes the SOUND of her bedroom door slamming. He storms down the hall toward the library.

JOHN
 It's my life we're talking about,
 and I intend to fight for it.

INT. LIBRARY

81

Entering, he furiously sweeps a stack of medical journals onto the floor. A single hardcover book in their midst falls with a thud. He bends to pick it up. It's title is 'SLEEP AND AGING'. He turns it over. On the back of the jacket is a photograph of Sarah.

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - DAY (RAIN)

82

it is raining as John pays his taxi-driver in front of the tall, imposing building on upper Central Park West. He wears a trench-coat over his suit.

INT. HALL

83

The door marked 'Emergency Exit' opens. On the other side is painted the number '11'. John moves cautiously along the deserted hallway, hesitates before an unmarked door, opens it.

INT. CAGE ROOM - DAY

84

In a special glass enclosure, a large monkey is strapped to a tilted platform, wired with electrodes and connectors. Phyllis stands with her back to the door, clipboard in hand, monitoring the monkey's responses. John finds a grim fascination in this spectacle, but his presence sets off a disturbance among the other beasts. They chatter, grow increasingly agitated. Phyllis turns, nonplussed to encounter a stranger in her domain.

PHYLLIS
 This is authorized personnel only.
 You're upsetting my animals.

CONTINUED

JOHN

Sorry.

He goes. The monkeys continue in a state of uproar.

PHYLLIS
(bellows)

Quiet!

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

85

Rain spatters the windows.

At her desk Sarah is on the phone, listening intently, frowning.

SARAH
(listens)

I see. Well, what if I came up there?
(looks at her watch)

No, right now. Of course I don't mind.
I want that money. See you in five
minutes.

She rings off, dials an extension number.

SARAH
Barbara, I'm going up to the board
room to seduce the finance committee.
Don't put anything through unless
it's urgent.

She hangs up, takes her handbag from the file-drawer of her desk, finds mirror and comb, turns toward the light of the window, begins to comb her hair. Suddenly she sees John's reflection in the mirror, turns in her swivel chair to face him, standing tensely in the shadows just inside the door.

JOHN

Please don't be alarmed. You're
in no danger.

SARAH

What...

JOHN

You don't know me. My name is
Blaylock. I'll come straight to
the point. I'm here to offer my-
self to you.

SARAH

Offer yourself?

JOHN

I mean, of course, in regard to
your experiments.

CONTINUED

SARAH
How do you know about...?

JOHN
I've read your book. No, I tell
a lie. I've read part of it.
(approaching)
What impressed me especially was
the passage where you refer to old
age as a disease. Do you honestly
believe that?

SARAH
I do, yes.

JOHN
A curable disease?

SARAH
Potentially.

JOHN
'Potentially.'
(grasps her hand)
If you knew how that one word
raises my hopes.

SARAH
(uneasily)
Mr. Bayliss...

JOHN
Blaylock. In me you have the case
of a lifetime...

SARAH
Forgive me, but I'm late to an
appointment in another part of
the building.

She reclaims her hand, rises.

JOHN
Look closely at my face and tell
me what you see.

SARAH
They're waiting.

JOHN
How old a man would you judge me to be?

(CONTINUED)

SARAH
I don't know. Fifty. Fifty-five
Mr. Blaylock...

Since he blocks the only way to the door, she finds herself
trapped between desk and window.

JOHN
Suppose I were to tell you I'm
not yet thirty?

SARAH
That would be hard to...

JOHN
(interrupting)
Look at my hands.
(presents backs of
both hands)
Those are liver spots, wouldn't
you say?

SARAH
Possibly.

JOHN
Look here.

He loosens his necktie, opens his shirt to show a pinkish spot on
the collarbone. Sarah notices the ank he wears.

JOHN
What do you call this?

SARAH
(shrugs)
It resembles senile keratosis.
None of this is unusual in a man
of your age.

JOHN
A man of thirty? That thing wasn't
there last night, I swear it.
(of the liver spots)
Nor these.

SARAH
That is remarkable.

She glances nervously from her watch to the phone. Noting her
distraction, he speaks with increased urgency.

CONTINUED

JOHN

There's something else. I said I was thirty; that's not quite accurate. In point of fact, I've lived...

(cautiously)

...somewhat longer. But for a number of years I seemed to be, one might say, frozen at that age. Until two nights ago, when I suddenly lost the ability to sleep. Is it any wonder I seem a bit desperate?

SARAH

(placating)

No, of course not.

JOHN

(pause; a plea)

Can you help me?

SARAH

I can try.

JOHN

How do we begin?

SARAH

Do you know where the patients' lounge is on the eighth floor?

JOHN

I'll find it.

SARAH

Would you wait there for me?

JOHN

Anything.

(crosses to the door, turns)

You won't be long?

SARAH

No, not long.

He goes out. Quickly, she picks up the phone, punches three digits. A man's VOICE answers the ring.

VOICE

Sleep Clinic. This is Fred.

SARAH

Fred, it's Dr. Roberts. I just had a classic nut-case wander in-
to my office.

VOICE

Are you okay?

SARAH

Yes, I sent him down to the lounge.
How did you handle the last one?

VOICE

We just left him to cool his heels.
He finally got tired of waiting and
took off.

SARAH

Let's try the same routine.

INT. LOUNGE - DAY

86

John sits by himself, waiting, isolated from the others. Over the shot, Sarah's VOICE continues

SARAH (VO)

If he asks for me, say I'm in a
meeting and can't be disturbed.
You won't be lying. Later, you
can tell him I've left the building.

MONTAGE - JOHN WAITING

87

The long red minute-hand on the electric wall clock seems to slice time away. Several hours pass. PATIENTS come and go, summoned by a NURSE. Each time she appears, John's expectations are aroused, then dashed. His desperation grows. We witness his actual physical deterioration, the wrinkling of his skin, sagging of facial muscles. He tries to smoke but is cautioned not to by the nurse. A young MALE PATIENT comes in carrying a portable radio. The driving rock music adds to John's agitation. He glares at the young man, who only turns the thing off when warned by the nurse. In the ensuing silence, John hears a very different MUSIC, Boccherini's Sonata in C Major.

INT. HADLEY MANOR - NIGHT

88

Before the baronial fireplace in the great hall, John and Miriam, in 18th century dress, play to his father on viola da gamba and harpsichord. LORD HADLEY is a big, once-handsome man of fifty, grown fleshy and dissolute with age. He marks time with the stick he carries for a gouty foot. The young musicians, oblivious to him, have eyes only for each other.

INT. LOUNGE

89

A CLOSE SHOT of John, remembering. In the brief space of the flashback, he has aged noticeably.

INT. GREAT HALL

90

Angered to be ignored, Hadley lurches from his chair, slams his stick across a table with a great THWACK!

HADLEY

Enough!

Startled, Miriam stops playing. John continues.

HADLEY

Enough, damn you!

He smashes the stick across John's bowing hand, shattering the bow. The boy cries out in pain.

MIRIAM

Lord Hadley!

HADLEY

I brought the baggage here for my amusement, not yours. Pathetic creature.

(to Miriam)

No more use to a woman of appetite than a eunuch in a whorehouse!

Clutching his wounded hand, John cannot meet Miriam's sympathetic gaze for embarrassment. Hadley roughly siezes her arm.

HADLEY

Come and let a man show you what a bed is for.

When he pulls Miriam to her feet, the golden ankh at her throat swings on its chain, catching candle and firelight.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

91

The boy lies in bed, eyes open, listening to the SOUND of his father's heavy breathing, grunting, mouthing of oaths in a nearby room. The orgasmic crescendo ends with a terrifying howl of shock and pain. John sits bolt upright, his young face looming into the CAMERA.

INT. LOUNGE

92

A CLOSE SHOT of John's face, aged even more, recalling his emotions in that long ago night.

EXT. HADLEY MANOR - DAY

93

At first light, low ground-mists swirl about the great house, formal gardens, park and forest. The silence is abruptly shattered by the SOUND of a horse's hooves. A superb white stallion comes at a gallop from the direction of the stables, saddle empty, reins flying, racing across the park and vanishing into the forest.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - DAY

94

John, in nightdress, stands at his window, looking down. Silence.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

95

Miriam, wearing a dark blue hooded cloak with scarlet lining, moves away from the house, across the garden toward the park, dragging a large homespun sack. Somewhere a lone bird shrieks.

EXT. WINDOW - DAY

96

John as before, staring down at the woman in the garden.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

97

The CAMERA moves with John as - fully clothed - he walks through the trees. Rook and pheasant voice their objection at his passing.

EXT. LAKESHORE - DAY

98

He comes to the shore of a lake within the forest, stops, stands looking into the mist, waiting.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

99

The light of the rising sun dazzles the water where the mist is thinnest. The effect is magical and mysterious. Out of the mist, a small boat appears, a sort of flat-topped barge. Miriam guides it expertly toward shore with a long pole.

JOHN

watches.

MIRIAM

beaches the boat. No sign of the homespun bag. When she steps ashore she stops. They stare at one another for a long moment before either speaks.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Profit by his death. Use his great wealth to buy the life you want.

JOHN

But I want nothing. He was too apt a teacher. I've learned to see only what is vile and corrupt in human nature. I cannot love my own kind.

MIRIAM

Then love some other kind.

Slowly she takes off her cloak, spreads it on the grass at the water's edge.

JOHN

Did you not mark all he said... that I am soft and impotent?

She moves near him, frames his face with both hands, kisses him gently. When she starts to pull away, he puts his arms around her, pulls her close, kisses her ardently, a long, probing kiss. As his excitement grows, the boyish hands grope clumsily. She disengages herself.

MIRIAM

Nothing too swift.
(she kneels on the cloak,
holds out her hand to him)
Everything slow...and languid...
and lovely.

He kneels facing her, their mouths almost touching.

MIRIAM

The first time must be memorable.
A memory to last forever.

INT. LOUNGE

100

John, still aging visibly, reflecting on the past.

EXT. LAKESHORE

101

The sunlight dazzling the water and the light glistening on the ankhs at her throat seem part of the same medium.

JOHN

Who are you? Where did you come from?

MIRIAM

Suppose I were to tell you I come from a race apart and have lived thousands of years. (Continued)

CONTINUED

MIRIAM (Cont'd.)

(pause)

Do you believe me?

JOHN

I want you.

MIRIAM

I prefer that.

His mouth brushes hers.

JOHN

I want you now.

Again their lips touch and part excitingly.

MIRIAM

Belief will come later.

They kiss hungrily. Hanging between them, the ankh glistens, intensity growing until the screen is a glare devoid of images.

LIMBO

102

Images appear suggesting much more than mere sexual initiation. In a vortex of light and air, water and wind, of naked flesh and raw desire, one way of life is exchanged for another.

LOUNGE

103

The CAMERA shoots from John's POV. Several patients seated nearby stare at him, talking in whispers, apparently commenting on his appearance. Nearest are two YOUNG WOMEN in hospital gowns. One of them, whose gown hangs open to reveal throat and partial breast, is disturbed by the way the unseen old man stares at her. With a discouraging frown at him, she pulls the gown closed. The CAMERA, as John, rises, starts toward the exit.

INT. HALL

104

The CAMERA, still from John's POV, moves along the hall, past curious DOCTORS and PATIENTS.

INT. MEN'S ROOM

105

The door marked 'Men' flies open and, on the instant, John sees his image in the mirror above the wash-basins. The effect is startling. His face is now that of a man in his seventies. His hair has thinned and turned snow white. Horrified, he runs his

CONTINUED

hand through it, and clumps come away in his fingers. After a moment he is aware of being watched by a YOUNG INTERN, who has removed his shirt and is washing at one of the basins. The raw flesh of throat and breastbone beckons to John, but then a toilet flushes, a MAN comes out of a booth and begins to wash his hands, and the moment is lost.

INT. HALL - DAY

106

Turning from a busy hall into a deserted corridor, John sees a YOUNG NURSE, buxom beneath her tight uniform, come out of a room, carrying an empty glass carafe, and proceed toward a door at the far end of the hall. John moves along behind her, following the rat-tat-tat of her heels, hooded eyes gleaming, like a hawk who has his prey in sight. He stops when an ORDERLY comes into the hall, takes out a handkerchief, pretends to be coughing as the man passes. From the room the nurse has entered comes the SOUND of water running. She emerges with a full carafe, returns to the original room, re-appears, goes into the next room, emerges a moment later with another carafe. Again John walks slightly behind her. This time she hears him, turns her head, smiles so openly that the preying beast must avert his gaze. Again she goes into

THE UTILITY ROOM

107

where she rinses the carafe and refills it at the sink. We see this from John's POV as he continues past the open door.

THE HALL

108

John goes around the corner and disappears. The nurse comes out of the utility room with a full carafe, goes back to the room where it belongs. John reappears, quickly enters

THE UTILITY ROOM

109

He stands in deep shadow, back to the wall, concealed by stacks of huge cartons. Scarcely breathing, he waits. The SOUND of high heels is heard - rat-tat-tat - along the corridor, coming closer. John thrusts a hand inside his raincoat collar. The nurse enters with yet another almost empty carafe. She turns on the water. It strikes the bottom of the deep metal tub with a loud, drumming SOUND. John removes hand from inside his coat, gripping the ankh, it's cutting edge reflecting with a flash the naked light bulb that illuminates the room. The nurse hums as she rinses and fills the carafe. Stealthily John starts from his hiding place, slowly raising the ankh. Then, at the moment when he must emerge into the light, a young ORDERLY abruptly appears in the doorway, calling over the SOUND of the water. John freezes.

CONTINUED

ORDERLY

Hey?

(nurse shuts off water)

When's your coffee break?

NURSE

(consults watch)

Five minutes, if I finish on time.

ORDERLY

Why don't I give you a hand?

NURSE

Terrific.

She follows him out into the hall, rat-tat-tat diminishing. John's sweating face is taut, drained of color. Thrusting the ank back into his pocket, he slips quickly out of the room.

INT. HALL - DAY

110

John hurries along, seeking a way out. He pushes his way past those who block his path, trying to reach a bank of

ELEVATORS

111

He stops, impatiently watching the floor indicator. When one arrives, he pushes in despite the fact that it is already full.

INT. ELEVATOR

112

The press of exposed human flesh - bare arms, shoulders, breasts - is now an unendurable agony to the stoop-shouldered, white-haired man in the military-style raincoat.

INT. EIGHTH FLOOR

113

The doors open on '8', near the Sleep Clinic. Fearful of going berserk, John steps out, sees a door marked STAIRS, starts toward it, suddenly finds himself face to face with Sarah, walking toward him, cheerfully talking to Phyllis.

SARAH

It's twenty-thousand less than we asked for, but never mind, it'll see us through the year.

PHYLLIS

I'm thrilled!

John stops, astonished that she has passed him with only a cursory glance, no glimmer of recognition. He calls after her.

CONTINUED

JOHN
Dr. Roberts?

Sarah stops, turns.

SARAH
Yes?

The old man stares at her with a demanding glower that is at once fierce and pathetic.

JOHN
You lied.

SARAH
I beg your pardon?

JOHN
You lied! You had no intention
of helping me!

Sarah frowns incredulously as something about him strikes a familiar note.

SARAH
Mr. Blaylock?

JOHN
You didn't believe me!

SARAH
Is it Mr. Blaylock?

JOHN
You had money on your mind. You
couldn't be bothered with my tedious little problem. And now
see what's come of your indifference and your deceit!

SARAH
I'm sorry.

JOHN
You're not fit to call yourself
a doctor! You're a fraud!

PHYLLIS
Now just a minute!

SARAH
Truly I am sorry. Please come inside where we can talk.

CONTINUED

JOHN

No time! Not any more! Urgent business elsewhere! Like you, I have a vitally important meeting that cannot be postponed!

He storms toward the door marked STAIRS. Sarah follows.

SARAH

Mr. Blaylock...

JOHN

Have a seat in the patients' lounge, why don't you?

INT. STAIRWELL

114

Sarah stands in the doorway, calls down toward the echoing SOUND of footsteps descending.

SARAH

Mr. Blaylock, please!

His cry comes hurtling up to her, furious and aggrieved.

JOHN (OS)

GO TO HELL!

The SOUND of receding footsteps continues. Phyllis appears behind Sarah.

PHYLLIS

What was that all about?

SARAH

(cursing herself)

You wouldn't believe!

EXT. MEDICAL CENTER - DAY

115

John explodes from the building, rushing past a startled DOORMAN. Under a threatening sky, he runs out into the heavy traffic of Central Park West. Brakes screech, tires squeal on wet pavement, angry horns shriek but the frail-looking old man seems as indifferent to the noise as to the danger. Reaching the opposite side, he disappears into the park, headed east.

INT. STEINWAY & SONS SHOWROOM - DAY

116

All is quiet and serene. Lamps have been lit to ward off the gloom of a rainy day. Miriam stands at the keyboard of an ebony

CONTINUED

concert grand piano, letting her fingers silently graze the tops of the keys. She wears a blue-grey nylon raincoat with hat to match in the soft-brimmed Garbo style. After a moment, she sits, flexes her fingers, then very softly begins to play Satie's 'Trois Gymnopedies', as beautiful in melancholy as the pianist. In the back, two SALESMEN end their whispered conversation, turn to listen.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

117

On a deserted path in an obscure part of the park, John stalks a young SCHOOLGIRL, about seventeen, carrying textbooks under her arm. She walks briskly, conscious of the figure behind her. The Statie MUSIC continues OVER, its delicacy an odd counterpoint to the desperate, furtive behavior of the old man. When the girl opts for a short-cut down a slope and through a stand of trees, John follows, quickening his pace.

EXT. STAND OF TREES

118

The girl walks faster, sensing danger. John's pace now is that of a great cat preparing to pounce. The MUSIC continues sweet and sad.

EXT. CLEARING

119

In the split second before John can make his move, the girl bursts out of the wood into a clearing. Here the land slopes upward again, and on another path, a young

SCOOTER COP

travels blithely along. His route and the girl's will converge in a moment, leaving

JOHN

at the wood's edge, panting, perspiring, more desperate than ever.

INT. STEINWAY SHOWROOM - DAY

120

Miriam still casting her spell, and that of the music, over the room.

EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

121

MUSIC continuing, a young, male JOGGER follows a path into a tunnel that runs beneath a park roadway, loping along at an easy pace, listening to music on a pair of headphones. The CAMERA moves with him through the tunnel, toward the pale glow of light at the far end. An arm is suddenly raised, catching him across the windpipe, knocking him violently to the ground. Shocked, voice momentarily

CONTINUED

gone, he is unable to cry out. John and the jogger struggle, groaning, panting. Rock MUSIC blares tinnily from the headphones, which lie in the path, creating an odd counterpoint to the MUSIC of Satie on the soundtrack. The ankh is raised, refracting light. A superficial cut on the jogger's throat draws blood.

JOGGER

Jesus, he cut me! Get off!
 (again the ankh flashes,
 drawing blood)
 Get off me, you bastard! I'm
 bleeding!
 (begins to shout)
 Help! Somebody help!

He fights back, knocks John against the wall of the tunnel, runs out. John staggers to his feet, starts toward the opposite end of the tunnel.

WIDE SHOT - THE PARK

122

We see John running desperately in one direction, the terrified jogger in another, still shouting for help.

EXT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

123

Alice, in her school uniform, carrying bookbag and violin case, rings the bell, calls.

ALICE

Anybody home?

She rings again, then again, impatiently. At last there is the SOUND of the lock disengaging. The door opens to reveal a strange wizened old man.

ALICE

Oh...hi.

JOHN

What do you want?

ALICE

Is Miriam around?

JOHN

No.

ALICE

(not recognizing him)
 I'm Alice Cavender from across the street. I do music with the Blaylocks Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

CONTINUED

JOHN
This is Tuesday.

ALICE
I know. I wanted to tell Miriam
I can't make it tomorrow on
account of some dumb lecture I got
sucked into at school.

JOHN
She's not here.

ALICE
Could I leave a note?

After a moment's hesitation, John steps aside to allow her to enter.

INT. ENTRY HALL

124

John closes the door, punches buttons on the security panel. The red light goes on.

ALICE
You a friend of theirs?

JOHN
That's right.

She starts down the hall toward the rear of the house.

ALICE
I'll leave it in the music room,
okay? I've got my own paper.

John follows, CAMERA moving with them, the heels of Alice's shoes beating a soft thump-thump-thump on the highly-polished marble floor.

INT. SITTING ROOM

125

They pass through enroute to the music room.

ALICE
I'm glad you're their friend. I've
never seen one other person in the
year I've been coming here. Which
is kind of strange when you think
how beautiful and smart they are
and everything.

INT. MUSIC ROOM

126

The light outside the windows is grey and moist. Talking non-stop

CONTINUED

Alice crosses to her chair, sits, takes notebook and pen from her book-bag, scribbles her message. John stands stiffly in the doorway, watching her throughout.

ALICE

How we met is rilly far out.
 Miriam has this thing she can do that she calls 'the touch'. It's like ESP, only more so. I used to be standing in front of my building over there in the morning, waiting for the school bus, and I'd get this, like, jolt that I couldn't figure out, and then I'd have this creepy compulsion to come over here and ring the doorbell, when I didn't even know who lived here, for God's sake. It was Miriam, of course. She saw me with my violin case, and she just willed me to come, and the next thing I knew I was playing trios with her and John, and her and me were best friends. She and I. She hates bad grammar. She hates anything coarse or vulgar. I'm totally devoted to her, in case you didn't notice. Of course, I couldn't tell my folks any of the weird stuff. They'd never let me come over, they're so ultra-reactionary.

(of her note)

There, I've finished.

(adds two words)

'Love, Alice'.

She tears the leaf from her notebook, neatly folds it, rises, lays it carefully on the chair.

ALICE

You can tell her where it is, in case she doesn't see it right away.

(picks up violin case)

I better get home. Nobody knows I'm here.

Still in the doorway, John stares intently at her, blocking her path.

ALICE

Well...nice meeting you.

JOHN

Will you play to me?

CONTINUED

The request takes her by surprise.

ALICE

What for?

He holds up gnarled hands, crippled by arthritis.

ALICE

Well...it'll have to be something short.

(opens violin-case)

What would you like?

JOHN

You choose.

ALICE

I've got this Paganini Caprice
I'm working on.

JOHN

Splendid.

The music is rolled inside the case. She places it on the stand.

ALICE

I've only had it a few days, so
don't expect miracles.

Violin securely beneath her chin and bow poised above the strings, she frowns. The talkative child disappears and the serious young artist takes charge. With a splendidly theatrical attack, she begins to play Paganini's Caprice No. 9 in E Major, with its rollicking suggestion of a hunting horn, of the chase. Now John moves, very slowly, behind and around the piano, stopping when she hesitates over a wrong note.

ALICE

Oh-oh. Sorry about that.

JOHN

Don't stop. Don't call attention
to your mistakes.

ALICE

(resumes playing)

You sound like John.

She plays. He circles.

HIS POV - ALICE

The CAMERA moves as if it were John, traveling in an arc, behind her, FOCUSING on her back.

CONTINUED

JOHN (OS)
Do you like John?

ALICE
More to the point, does John
like me?

CLOSE SHOT - JOHN

He has stopped behind her, near enough to catch her scent. Eyes glittering with insuppressible necessity, he speaks in a barely audible voice.

JOHN
It may be he likes you in a way
you will never know, let alone
understand.
(a hint of regret)
Let alone forgive.

He fumbles at the collar of his shirt, pulls out the ankh.

CLOSE SHOT - ALICE

Lost in the music, her sweet young face radiant, she has not heard.

CLOSE SHOT - VIOLIN

FOCUS from Alice's POV, seeing exactly what she sees: violin, bow, music, music stand, the gleaming marble floor beneath. Suddenly, the CAMERA is jarred, the bow grates across the strings with a hideous, dissonant SOUND. Blood spurts across the violin and spatters the sheet music. The hand holding the bow lurches violently, toppling the music stand with a clatter. The other hand grips the neck of the violin with increased force, then gradually relaxes. The violin drops to the floor. One neatly-shod small foot twitches, flies forward, kicking the fallen instrument. It skids across the floor, strings vibrating, echoing eerily within the sound-box.

INT. ENTRY HALL - NIGHT (RAIN)

127

Silence. FOCUS on the security panel beside the front door. The red light goes off - a life snuffed out. The hall is dark. A key SOUNDS in the lock. Miriam lets herself in. Rain has resumed with storm force. She switches on the hall lights, closes the door, restores the security alarm. Now she listens. No SOUND anywhere in the house. She calls.

MIRIAM
John?

CONTINUED

Silence. She removes her hat, carries it to the hall closet, takes off her wet raincoat, hangs it inside. Moving cautiously, she starts down the hall toward

THE SITTING ROOM (RAIN)

128

The room is dark, silent but for a distant rumble of thunder. Miriam hesitates in the doorway.

MIRIAM

John, are you here?

She touches a light-switch just inside the door. Several lamps go on. She enters, stops, listening.

HER POV - THE ROOM

The ancient carved and sculpted figures on tables and shelves stare in mute repudiation of vices witnessed and evils overheard.

MUSIC ROOM - (RAIN)

129

Miriam moves into the doorway. Thunder SOUNDS again.

MIRIAM

John?

A pause. The VOICE that answers is barely a hoarse whisper.

JOHN

Don't put the light on.

His figure is slumped in a chair by the windows, silhouetted against a faint glow of light outside. Rain drums on the glass.

JOHN

Where have you been?

MIRIAM

Walking. Walking.

JOHN

And remembering?

MIRIAM

Yes.

JOHN

I've been sitting here for hours, thinking of all the happiness... the love. We were something magical together, were we not?

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Yes.

Lightning strikes at some distance, momentarily throwing the huddled figure in the chair into sharp relief.

JOHN

Come closer, why don't you?
(she approaches)

Closer.

She crosses nearer. The back-lighting from the windows, which throws his face into dark shadow, illuminates hers.

JOHN

How beautiful you are.
Kneel down.

She kneels in front of him. The claw-like hands that reach out to caress her face are feeble, gnarled, arthritic.

JOHN

Do you know what I want at this moment, more than anything on earth?

MIRIAM

Tell me.

JOHN

I want you. I want you, my darling,
as I wanted you all those years ago,
on the lakeshore at Hadley, you remember?

MIRIAM'S FACE

is radiant with recollection; tears fill her eyes.

INTERCUT

with this shot are two brief glimpses of Miriam and John on the lakeshore at Hadley showing their first tentative kiss, then their coming together in mutual passion.

IN THE MUSIC ROOM

131

John continues.

JOHN

Love me like that, Miriam!
Love me now!

CONTINUED

A flash of lightning illuminates his face: a corpse, a skull with flesh stretched over it like ancient, crumbling parchment. Unprepared, Miriam turns away with an involuntary cry.

JOHN

That's right, don't look! Think of me as I was. Will me to be like that again, and perhaps I can be.

(rising)

We've worked such miracles between us, you and I! Once you gave me two hundred years at a stroke.

(pulls her up)

Give me a little longer!

MIRIAM

I can't.

JOHN

Save me! Please!

He clings to her, panting, feebly clawing at her clothing. Sorrowed and sickened, she responds in anguish.

MIRIAM

I can't! I can't!

JOHN

You said 'forever', damn you!

She thrusts him away from her. He slumps back into the chair. Again, thunder and lightning outside the windows.

He opens his collar, unfastens the gold chain around his neck, drops it and the ankh into her hand.

MIRIAM

It's yours. I gave it to you.

JOHN

It's no use to me. Save it for the next one.

MIRIAM

The next...?

(slight pause)

Something's wrong. I sensed it the moment I came in.

She crosses to the light-switch beside the door.

CONTINUED

JOHN

You sensed me, my dear.

The lights go on. He shields his face with his hands.

Nothing is out of order. The marble floor is immaculate. Even so, Miriam has a sense of foreboding, shrieks at him.

MIRIAM

What have you done? What have you done?!

She goes quickly through

THE SITTING ROOM

132

and into

THE HALL

133

Her heels clatter as she hurries to the basement door.

INT. STAIRWELL

134

She flips a switch just inside the door. Lights go on. She clatters down the cement stairs to the garage.

INT. GARAGE

135

She crosses quickly, flings open the door to

THE FURNACE ROOM

136

She goes directly to the furnace, hesitates in dread of what she may find, then slowly opens the furnace door.

CLOSE SHOT - FURNACE

137

A fire rages within.

CLOSE SHOT - MIRIAM

138

She stares into hell. Her face, suddenly gone chalk-white, reflects the light and color of the mounting flames.

INT. STAIRWELL

139

John stands silhouetted in the doorway at the top of the stairs.

IN THE FURNACE ROOM

140

the CAMERA shoots up through the flames to see Miriam looking down, horrified. After a moment, she slams the furnace door.

INT. STAIRWELL

141

The CAMERA shoots from behind John's back, looking down. Miriam appears at the foot of the stairs, a wraith bent on vengeance.

JOHN

What will you do now...kill me? I wish you would.

Moving with difficulty, he starts down the poorly-lit stairs. At the same time, Miriam starts up.

JOHN

Let me sleep at last. Let me rest.

The steep stairs are too much for the old crippled legs. He falters, pitches forward with a cry.

JOHN

Miriam!

Miriam shrinks against the wall as he plummets past her, landing with a sickening thud on the cement floor. She waits, no movement. She descends. The crumpled, inert form lies face down. She bends and turns him over. Only now is she able to look without revulsion on the wasted face. The eyes stare blindly; breath comes in a faint, rhythmic wheeze. She speaks gently.

MIRIAM

The hardest part of all is to realize that there is no sleep. There is no rest.

Gently she lifts him, cradling him in her arms like a child, starts slowly up the stairs.

MIRIAM

Humankind die one way, we another. Their end is final...ours is not.

INT. ENTRY HALL

142

Carrying her burden without strain, Miriam moves to the

MAIN STAIRCASE

143

and continues upward at the same stately pace.

MIRIAM

The imperishable seed of life is in our blood.

INT. 2ND FLOOR LANDING

144

The stairs to the attic are dark and narrow. She mounts without the slightest evidence of fatigue.

MIRIAM

Bury us, burn us...we continue.
In the earth, in the rotting
coffin, we still see and hear
and feel.

(near-darkness envelopes her)

In the dark...we know.

At the top of the stairs, she enters

A WINDOWLESS ROOM

145

designed for storage or utility. A few old suitcases stand in one corner; in another, an old sewing machine. One wall is lined with shelves, mostly empty, and cupboard doors. When the door to the hall closes behind Miriam, the room is plunged into darkness.

INT. ATTIC ROOM - NIGHT (RAIN)

146

This room is lit only by an occasional flash of lightning outside a small, round window at the far end. SOUND: rain drumming on the roof, occasional thunder. In the room are eight or more large chests of various shapes and sizes bearing the patina of centuries. In the center, another such chest lies open. Miriam lays her burden carefully inside it. John's sunken eyes flash in terror and a throttled, pleading groan escapes his gaping mouth. Miriam quickly lowers the lid and secures it. His muffled cry is heard again, triggering a strange phenomenon. All about, little rustlings and sighs fill the air. From the other chests come muted VOICES, male and female, in wordless whispers, moans, entreaties. Miriam puts her hand on the chest nearest the one in which she has placed John, its brass name plate inscribed with a scroll-letter 'L', she speaks quietly to it.

MIRIAM

Lollia...

LIMBO

147

The beautiful young LOLLIA, in 16th century Italian dress, raises a hand toward the CAMERA as if to touch the face of a lover. Over the shot, Miriam's VOICE:

MIRIAM (VO)

Here is John. He's been my companion ever since you left me.

CONTINUED

Lollia smiles and lifts her lovely mouth to the CAMERA for a kiss.

INT. ATTIC ROOM

148

as before.

MIRIAM

Welcome him. Comfort him.

(to the other chests)

All of you...all my loves...
be kind to John tonight.

She leans close to the chest containing John, speaks softly.

MIRIAM

I shall never abandon you, dear
friend.

(slight pause)

You see, I meant it when I said
forever.

She kisses the top of the chest, closing her eyes. The scene is
plunged into darkness, OVER which, the SOUND of a doorbell chiming.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - DAY

149

Intense, brilliant light. FOCUS close on Mirian's face as she
lies in deep sleep. The eyes open abruptly. She looks about.
The curtains are open, the room flooded with early morning sunlight.
She sits up, listening. The bell chimes again.

INT. ENTRY HALL - DAY

150

Miriam comes down the stairs, pulling a dressing-gown about her.
The bell SOUNDS again. Still only half-awake, she forgets to de-
activate the security system, starts to open the door. A shrill
alarm SOUNDS. Lights flash. Miriam quickly punches the panel
buttons. The SOUND stops, lights cease flashing. Sarah stands
in bright sunlight on the doorstep. With the door open little
more than a crack, she has only a shadowy, indistinct view of
Miriam.

SARAH

Mrs. Blaylock?

MIRIAM

Yes?

SARAH

I'm so glad. It was a job locating
you, with an unlisted phone. I
finally had to claim a medical emer-
gency. I rang you last night and
again this morning.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

I was asleep. If it's about
my husband...

SARAH

It is. I'm Dr. Roberts from
Park West Research Center.

MIRIAM

I know who you are.

She opens the door wider, revealing her face in full light. Sarah
recognizes her at once.

SARAH

Oh...hello.

MIRIAM

Hello.

SARAH

I expect Mr. Blaylock told you
I was very unfair to him
yesterday.

MIRIAM

I'm afraid he's gone.

SARAH

(thinks the worst)

Gone?

MIRIAM

Back to England. He was given
the name of a clinic there.

SARAH

If you could put me in touch
with them.

MIRIAM

Oh, I don't think...

SARAH

I'd be so grateful.

A pause. Miriam looks intently at her.

LIMBO

151

Lollia raises a hand toward the CAMERA as if to touch a lover's
face.

ENTRY HALL

152

as before, Miriam staring at Sarah. Then the spell is broken by something she sees over the other's shoulder.

MIRIAM'S POV - THE STREET

153

A police car pulls up to the curb, its uniformed DRIVER and his PASSENGER checking the number of her house.

MIRIAM

154

Only a flicker of anxiety crosses her face.

MIRIAM

Later, when I know more of the details, we might talk.

SARAH

(takes pen and note pad from her bag)

This is my office and
(jotting a second number)
this is my home number. I'll be waiting to hear.

MIRIAM

(taking note)

Very well.

There is something so frank and incisive in her glance that Sarah finds it hard to meet.

SARAH

Thank you for your time.

MIRIAM

Not at all.

SARAH

Goodbye.

MIRIAM

Goodbye.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

155

As Sarah turns, the passenger gets out of the police car. They pass each other enroute. The man, whose name is ALLEGREZZA, is in his mid-thirties, dark and brawny, dressed in a business suit. Miriam waits in the doorway with an air of calm expectancy.

CONTINUED

ALLEGREZZA
'Morning. Mrs. Blaylock at home?

MIRIAM
I'm she.

ALLEGREZZA
(shows his badge)
Detective Lieutenant Allegrezza.
(Miriam smiles)
Oh, nice. I don't usually get
smiles on that.

MIRIAM
You should. After all, your name
means 'good cheer'.

ALLEGREZZA
You Italian?

MIRIAM
No, but I lived in Rome for many years.

ALLEGREZZA
Ah-ha.

MIRIAM
You're here about Alice Cavender.

ALLEGREZZA
Right.

MIRIAM
Come in.

INT. ENTRY HALL

156

She closes the door, leads him down the hall, past the door to the
basement.

ALLEGREZZA
Any idea where she might've got to?

MIRIAM
None.

He has a glimpse of the library as they pass.

ALLEGREZZA
The last time you saw her...did she
say anything about, like, problems
at home?

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Nothing.

She leads him through

THE SITTING ROOM

157

He is impressed by opulence rarely encountered.

ALLEGREZZA

Nothing to make you think she might
want to, you know, run away or
anything?

MIRIAM

Quite the opposite. When she left,
she said she'd be here today at
the usual time.

INT. MUSIC ROOM

158

He stops just inside the door. She crosses to Alice's place.

MIRIAM

This is her chair. She's a very
talented violinist, you know.

ALLEGREZZA

I heard.

(looks at piano)

You play this?

MIRIAM

I play that.

ALLEGREZZA

Suonate bene?

MIRIAM

A mio parere, si.

ALLEGREZZA

Brava.

She crosses, opens French windows into the garden, admitting a
breeze that ruffles and lifts the curtains.

ALLEGREZZA

If you think of anything that might
be a clue, maybe you'll give me a
call at the precinct. Seventeenth.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Of course.

(turns to him)

How many precincts are there altogether?

ALLEGREZZA

Oh,

(shrugs)

seventy-some. Why?

MIRIAM

(smiles)

In Japanese mythology, even heaven has only twelve.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

159

She steps into winter sunlight. He comes to the doorway behind her, looks out at evergreen shrubs, pond and fountain. An idyllic scene.

ALLEGREZZA

Yeah, well, New York's not exactly heaven, is it?

MIRIAM

No, not exactly.

ALLEGREZZA

Except on a day like today, in a spot like this...

MIRIAM

You might mistake it.

ALLEGREZZA

Yeah.

She turns away from him, toward the garden. She looks at the note in her hand, bearing Sarah's phone numbers. Allegrezza cannot see exactly what she is doing. She presses the paper to her forehead, closes her eyes. Over the shot comes a hair-raising SOUND: brakes, tires screeching to a halt.

EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

160

Sarah has carelessly stepped off the curb into the path of an on-coming delivery truck. She shakes with fright at the near-miss while the DRIVER berates her.

CONTINUED

DRIVER
Dumb-ass bitch!

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

161

Sarah and Tom lie in bed, he watching her, she staring at the phone on the bedside table.

SARAH
I was waiting for the light to change, and...I don't know...it was as if I heard a telephone ringing and I wanted to answer it quickly. I stepped right off the curb.

She shudders at the memory. He puts his arms around her.

TOM
Think of something else.

SARAH
Okay. Um...
(a pause)
I've got it.

In a spirit of fun, she grabs him, rolls him onto his back, hovers over him, making a hungry, dog-snarl noise.

TOM
Rape!

She kisses, fondles, tickles him with mock ferocity. He laughs helplessly.

TOM
You beast! I'm nothing but a sex-object to you! All you want is my beautiful body!

SARAH
And your beautiful face! And your beautiful brain!
(stops, suddenly serious)
You don't even know how important you are to me, do you?

The game ends. After a pause, he answers with equal seriousness.

TOM
Tell me about it.

They kiss, tenderly at first, then with increasing fervor. The foreplay begins.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

162

FOCUS on Miriam's hands, moving over the piano keyboard. The image lasts only a moment.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

163

Sarah abruptly curtails the foreplay.

TOM

What's wrong?

Sarah looks at the phone. A pause.

SARAH

Nothing.

They resume, passion growing.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT

164

Miriam sits at the piano, playing the second movement, marked 'adagio', of Haydn's Sonata No. 23 in F Major, Hob. XVI, with its deep throbbing in the bass beneath a treble figure suggestive of a bell ringing, perhaps a phone bell. Her face is dispassionate but concentrated.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

165

With the lovemaking at a fever pitch, Sarah suddenly pulls back.

TOM

Now what?

SARAH

I can't. I'm sorry.

TOM

What happened?

SARAH

I don't know.

(a beat)

Maybe in the morning.

TOM

Look, you're not under any obligation. It's not a debt.

SARAH

Can we sleep then?

CONTINUED

TOM
What the hell else are we going
to do?

He lies on his back, staring in frustration at the ceiling.

CLOSE SHOT - SARAH

She lies on her side, as troubled as he by her behavior. Over the shot, MUSIC is heard: the Haydn Piano Sonata.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT 166

Miriam as before, playing with complete concentration.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 167

MUSIC continuing, Sarah and Tom sleep with their backs to one another. CAMERA moves in to a tight shot of Sarah's eyelids.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT 168

FOCUS tight on Miriam's unblinking eyes as she goes on playing.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 169

FOCUS on Sarah's face. She stirs in her sleep.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT 170

FOCUS tight on Miriam's mouth. The lips part slightly to be moistened by the tip of her tongue.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 171

The sleeping woman moans softly, longingly. The CAMERA moves in to a tight shot of her mouth. The lips part.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - NIGHT 172

In a tight shot of her face, lips moist and parted, Miriam closes her eyes, plays more passionately.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 173

Sarah's thighs move beneath the blanket, and she gasps in ecstasy, murmurs.

SARAH
Yes...oh, yes...!

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

174

Sarah sits at her desk, staring absently out the window. Phyllis sits opposite her, checking off items on an order form. The MUSIC of the Haydn sonata continues over the shot until, without warning, Sarah suddenly picks up the phone.

SARAH

Yes?

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET - DAY

175

A brief, almost subliminal glimpse of Miriam's front door.

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE

176

SARAH

Hello?

PHYLLIS

It didn't ring.

Sarah punches three digits.

SARAH

Barbara, did you buzz me just now?
Okay. No, that's all right.

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET

177

The momentary flash of Miriam's front door is repeated.

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE

178

Sarah hangs up, looking puzzled.

PHYLLIS

I promise you it didn't ring.

SARAH

I could have sworn...
(shivers, as from a chill)
Whoo.

EXT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

179

Sarah on the doorstep, facing Miriam.

SARAH

I was in a cab on my way home, all the way up on the other side of town, and suddenly...for no reason...I gave the driver your address. I don't know what I'm doing here.

INT. ENTRY HALL

180

Miriam closes the door, reactivates security system.

MIRIAM

I assume you've come to ask about my husband. After all, his case and your research must overlap in a number of interesting ways.

She leads her down the hall.

SARAH

Yes, they do.

MIRIAM

I don't know just how much he told you about himself...or about me, for that matter.

SARAH

Nothing whatever about you.

Relieved by this, Miriam stops at the sitting room doorway.

MIRIAM

Did he confide anything that you found...well...shocking or distasteful?

SARAH

No, not at all.

MIRIAM

Good.

(smiles)

He's in a place now where he'll be very well looked after. Forgive me if I seem mysterious, but until we know each other better...

(takes her hand)

I want to know you. I want you to know me.

Embarrassed by so premature a confidence, Sarah can only smile feebly. When the moment threatens to become too intimate, Miriam releases her hand, ushers her into

THE SITTING ROOM

181

Sarah stops just inside, taking it all in.

CONTINUED

SARAH
Your house is beautiful.

Spellbound, Sarah wanders among the objects and artifacts.

SARAH
Good Lord, it's a whole history
of civilization, isn't it?

MIRIAM
My people were a migrant breed.
These are the relics of their wandering.

SARAH
Gypsies?

MIRIAM
In a sense. We too, have been hunted,
tortured, all but annihilated.
(Sarah's look says 'How
dreadful')
I'm very nearly the last of my kind,
and no matter where I go, I'm a
foreigner.

SARAH
It sounds very lonely.

MIRIAM
It is.

A pause. This is a side of the seemingly aloof and self-possessed Miriam that Sarah has not seen before. She feels a rush of sympathy, wanting to console, but without quite knowing how. After a moment, she points to the ankh.

SARAH
This is Egyptian, isn't it?

MIRIAM
Yes. They called it an ankh...
a symbol of everlasting life.

SARAH
Which was never achieved.

MIRIAM
No, not by them. So I took it
for my own.

CONTINUED

SARAH
It's very handsome.

MIRIAM
Thank you.

She crosses into

THE MUSIC ROOM

182

Sarah follows. Sunlight, greenery and flowers immediately brighten the mood. Miriam's piano stands as before, but John's and Alice's chairs and music stands are gone.

MIRIAM
This is my favorite room. I'm
not so much burdened by the past
here.

(sits at piano)
Here I can live in the present
and think about the future.

Staring directly at Sarah, she begins to play the melody of Delibes' Domes Epaie'.

MIRIAM
Pour yourself a glass of wine, why
don't you? And another for me.

Sarah moves to a nearby table. She pours, sets a glass on the piano for Miriam.

SARAH
Ah...what's that?

MIRIAM
It's from the opera 'Lakme.' You
really have to hear it sung in
close harmony by two women to get
the full effect.

Swaying to the music, Sarah sips her wine.

SARAH
Delicious!

Swaying a little too enthusiastically, she spills a few drops of wine on her blouse.

SARAH
Oops...

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

(smiles indulgently)

Lakme is a Brahmin princess in India. She has a devoted hand-maiden, a slave named Mallika.

SARAH

(repeating it for the sound)

Mallika?

MIRIAM

In a magical garden they sing how they'll follow the stream together to its source, gliding over the water, their hands ever so lightly making ripples on the surface.

SARAH

Is it a love song?

MIRIAM

I told you it was sung by two women.

SARAH

So? I never heard anything that sounded more like a love song.

MIRIAM

Then I expect that's what it is.

SARAH

Are you making a pass at me, Mrs. Blaylock?

MIRIAM

Miriam.

SARAH

Miriam?

MIRIAM

Not that I'm aware of...Sarah.

She goes on playing, never missing a note.

SARAH

I think I ought to tell you, I'm not that way.

MIRIAM

I understand.

CONTINUED

SARAH

If I were, I hope it would be
with someone exactly like you,
but I'm not.

She lays her head on Miriam's shoulder. Miriam looks at her affectionately, almost maternally. Sarah closes her eyes.

MONTAGE - SARAH'S FANTASY

183

This sequence should have the quality of a dream both sensuous and romantic. Large, empty Gothic room penetrated by an expanse of white light coming from a solitary window at the far end. Slowly the room (through the process of love making which is held in extreme C.U.) transfers into space and light with their bodies horizontal, upside down and revolving through this abstract space. Some of the love making takes place beneath a sheet which light punches through, illuminating their bodies. Towards the end, INTER-CUT this with backward and forward time capsule images that we have already seen. Time lapse skies accompanied by wind and strange musical FX. A high speed helicopter shot at ground level over bleak red desert at dawn. In effect we should be witnessing the changing and metamorphosis of one being into another. The impression should not be one of symbolic love making; it should be the exorcising of one spirit and the creation of another. At the end, we should see the sheet heavily stained with blood; filmed overcranked and billowing across the room; shot in reverse so that when it stops moving, it creates an uncomfortable feeling. The final image is of the ankh placed around Sarah's neck.

There will be one reoccurring image of Sarah throughout the initiation: We see her body and face, distort, distend, pull, twist, and shudder; eyeballs roll away leaving only the whites. The camera would do a fast track forward to C.U. of Sarah but zooming out at the same time to create a strange vacuum effect.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

184

FOCUS on a knife slicing into a thick filet steak, oozing blood.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Sarah and Tom sit opposite each other in an intimate, expensive-looking room. Over the dress she had on at Miriam's house, she wears a gold ankh on a chain. Looking rather tense, she watches Tom take the first bite of his steak.

TOM

Mm...perfect. Dig in.

As he cuts another bite, Sarah slices a small piece from her steak, turns it back to reveal crimson flesh and a trickle of

CONTINUED

blood. She lays knife and fork on the plate, pushes it slightly away from her.

TOM

You asked for it rare.

SARAH

Yes.

TOM

What's the problem?

SARAH

I don't know.

TOM

You sent back a whole plate of clams without touching them. Now you don't want your steak. My question is, why order it?

SARAH

I thought I was hungry.

TOM

And you're not.

SARAH

Apparently.

She takes a cigarette from her bag, lights it nervously.

TOM

Is that a solution?

SARAH

No. Merely an alternative.

She drinks from a glass of red wine.

TOM

And that?

SARAH

The same.

TOM

I thought you said you'd had too much to drink at Mrs. What's-her-name's house.

CONTINUED

SARAH

I had exactly one glass of red wine. It went to my head, that's all. Maybe because I'd only had some fruit for lunch.

TOM

All the more reason to eat now.

SARAH

Tom, I would if I could. If you're worried about the expense, I'll pick up the check, okay?

TOM

Foul.

SARAH

I'm sorry. But please, can't we just drop it?

TOM

It's dropped.

SARAH

Good.

He goes on eating. She smokes, takes another sip of wine.

TOM

What the hell happened over there to put you in such a lousy mood?

SARAH

Nothing happened.

TOM

Sarah, you were over an hour late.

SARAH

I felt woozy, that's all. I had to lie down.

TOM

Woozy?

SARAH

You know...as in woozy.

TOM

Gotcha.

(another bite; chews)

Does Mrs. What's-her-face...

CONTINUED

SARAH
Blaylock.

TOM
...Mrs. Blaylock always give little
trinkets
(touching ankh)
like this to folks who pass out on
her premises?

SARAH
She probably buys them by the gross.
I remember he was wearing one the
day he came to my office.

TOM
He?

SARAH
Mr. Blaylock.

TOM
Ah, yes. The other half of the puzzle.

INT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT 185

In the entry hall, Miriam checks front door and security panel,
turns off first floor lights, starts up the stairs.

INT. ATTIC ROOM - NIGHT 186

FOCUS on John's coffin-chest. He moans for release.

2ND FLOOR LANDING 187

Miriam stops at the SOUND from overhead, listens for a moment,
then continues. The CAMERA holds as she goes down the hall to
her room, turns out the hall lights, then disappears, closing
her door behind her. The rattling, moaning SOUND from above
echoes in the dark.

INT. ATTIC ROOM 188

The irate moaning continues as the CAMERA, starting with John,
tracks from one chest to another, a different VOICE emanating
from each.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 189

The SOUND of retching awakens Tom. He sits up, switches on the
lamp, listens. Silence.

TOM
Sarah?

CONTINUED

He gets up, goes into

THE HALL

190

where a light shines from an open door at either end. No sound. He goes first to

THE KITCHEN

191

On the counter lie a meat package and a raw pork chop with several bites out of it. He picks it up. In the distance, the SOUND of retching is repeated. He exits into

THE HALL

192

and walks toward the bathroom, whence the SOUND of a toilet flushing.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

193

Exhausted from vomiting, Sarah, in her nightgown, sits on the floor, her head resting against the porcelain rim of the toilet bowl. Tom stands in the doorway, staring down incredulously, the gnawed meat in his hand.

TOM

You tried to eat it raw? Raw pork?

All sickly pallor, she looks up at him with an expression of helpless confusion. Over the shot, Tom's VOICE.

TOM (VO)

She can't keep anything on her stomach...

INT. SARAH'S OFFICE - DAY

194

Sarah, looking pale and unhealthy, sits at her desk, back to the room, staring out the window at Central Park below. A white dress emphasizes her pallor. Tom sits on the desk. Phyllis stands near the door, one eye on the hall.

TOM

...in spite of the fact that she's desperately hungry. But try and get her to see a doctor!

SARAH

I am a doctor.

TOM

Yeah, well, I want another opinion. 'Some little bug or other' doesn't sound like much of a diagnosis to me.

CONTINUED

PHYLLIS
Here's Charlie.

She has seen him coming along the hall. Sarah turns to face him. A pause.

SARAH
If it's leukemia, tell me in a letter. Preferably next year.

CHARLIE
I don't know what it is. It's the damndest blood-test I've ever seen, and I've seen thousands.

SARAH
Sounds fabulous.
(stands up)
Why don't we all have a look?

MICROSCOPIC SLIDE

195

A greatly magnified slide fills the screen with a mass of wriggling blood cells, leukocytes and blood platelets.

CHARLIE (VO)
The first thing I noticed was foreign leukocytes. I thought, 'This isn't possible. It's as if two entirely different strains of blood were not only present, but were fighting it out for dominance'.

INT. BLOOD ANALYSIS LABORATORY - DAY

196

Sarah, bent over a microscope, straightens up, faces a worried Charlie.

SARAH
Never did care for war pictures.

Tom takes her place, squinting into the microscope. Phyllis waits her turn.

TOM
The foreign strain...were you able to isolate it?

CHARLIE
On another slide.

CONTINUED

SARAH

And?

CHARLIE

This is the spooky part...
it's not human blood.

Tom straightens up from the microscope.

TOM

Not human?

CHARLIE

Actually, it's a stronger blood
than ours. Very similar, but
more disease resistant.

PHYLLIS

Of what species?

CHARLIE

No idea.

TOM

What the hell is it doing in
Sarah's veins?

CHARLIE

For me that's the question of
the century.

(to Sarah)

Roll up your sleeve...the left.

Sarah complies. Charlie takes her arm, points to a small red
welt, surrounded by a bruise, on the inside of the elbow.

CHARLIE

What is this?

SARAH

I don't know.

CHARLIE

How long have you had it?

SARAH

I'm not sure. I only noticed it
when you...

CHARLIE

When I went to take the sample. I
said, 'No, you've got some kind (Continued)

CONTINUED

CHARLIE (Cont'd.)
of a bite or sore there', and
I drew from the other arm.
You've no idea where you got that?

SARAH
None.

PHYLLIS
It looks as if she'd had a trans-
fusion.

CHARLIE
Very recently.

Something sparks in Sarah's face, a terrible suspicion beginning.

SARAH
You said...a fight between the
two strains of blood. A fight
for dominance, you said.

CHARLIE
That's right.

SARAH
Who's winning, Charlie?
(pause; he looks pained)
It's the foreign element, isn't it?

CHARLIE
(nods)
It appears to be consuming your blood.

She stares rigidly at him, her emotions too deep and complicated
to reveal.

Over the shot, Sarah's VOICE is heard.

SARAH (VO)
At this moment, my colleagues
think I'm in the office of a
leading blood specialist, but
I had a different idea.

INT. MUSIC ROOM - AFTERNOON

197

Sarah, a coat over the white dress she wore in the previous scene,
confronts Miriam.

MIRIAM
You came to me. Nothing could
give me greater happiness.

CONTINUED

She puts out her hand. Sarah recoils.

SARAH
Don't touch me.

MIRIAM
That's rather harsh, isn't it?
In view of what I've done for you.

SARAH
What you've done for me?

MIRIAM
What I've given you.

Sarah grips the ankh, still suspended from her neck.

SARAH
You mean this?

MIRIAM
That's only a token of the real
gift...the thing you were prepared
to spend your life searching for,
and would likely never have found.

SARAH
I don't know what you're talking
about. I do know that you put
something in my bloodstream that's
threatening my life.

MIRIAM
A very poor diagnosis, doctor.
Just the opposite of the truth.
By mingling my blood with yours...

SARAH
Your blood?

MIRIAM
...I've given you your one real
chance at immortality. The chance
to live with me, forever.

SARAH
You're crazy. It can't be your
blood. It isn't...

MIRIAM
Human? No...proud to say.

SARAH
God almighty, what are you?

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

I'm what you're in the process
of becoming.

SARAH

What's that?

MIRIAM

You'll only understand when the
transition is complete.

SARAH

This isn't happening.
(turns, starts out)
This isn't happening!

MIRIAM

Where are you going?

She follows her into

THE SITTING ROOM

198

Sarah sets a rapid pace.

SARAH

To get help.

MIRIAM

Help is here. It's here.

INT. THE HALL

199

Sarah heads toward the front door.

SARAH

Blood can be cleansed, you know.
It can be removed and cleansed.

Miriam stops outside the sitting room doors, calls after her.

MIRIAM

Not mine. Not yours, not any
more. Your specialist will
tell you as much.
(as Sarah reaches for
the doorknob)
Don't open that. It's dangerous.

SARAH

You can't stop me.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

(crossing)

I can, but I don't want you
that way. You must come to
me of your own accord.

She taps the security panel beside the door. The red light goes out.

MIRIAM

Open it now, if you wish.

SARAH

You bet your ass I wish!

Miriam frowns at the profanity.

Sarah opens the door, starts out.

MIRIAM

You'll be back. The hunger
you feel now...devouring
you...screaming all through
your body...will be a hundred
times stronger by nightfall.
And without me to teach you
how to feed...how and where and
on what...you're lost, poor child.

SARAH

(spitting the words)

You're worse than crazy. You're
some kind of fucking menace!

MIRIAM

I'll be waiting.

Sarah goes, slamming the door behind her. Miriam stares after
her, confident of her return.

MONTAGE - SARAH'S FLIGHT

200

A brief sequence of SHOTS in which Sarah tries and fails to find
a taxi; hurrying west on 79th Street, waving at cabs already taken.
Nearing the corner of 79th and Park, her anxiety mounting, she
sees a taxi dropping a fare, desperately races to claim it. In
the cab, heading up Park Avenue, her face is taut, drained of
color. The cab's meter ticks the minutes away. A tall professional
building on upper Fifth Avenue looms; a door marked 'Robert L.
Schrader, M.D.' opens.

INT. SCHRADER'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

201

A hyper-tense Sarah faces the matronly RECEPTIONIST across her desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Roberts, there's really nothing I can do. You are very, very late for your appointment. He's with another patient.

SARAH

Can't you see that I'm desperate?

RECEPTIONIST

Please have a seat. Doctor Schrader will see you as soon as possible.

In a swift, backward glance, Sarah sees

JOHN

202

snapping at her as he flees toward the medical center stairs.

JOHN

Have a seat in the patients' lounge, why don't you?

SARAH

203

retreats to a chair, is too agitated to sit for more than a moment, rises, crosses to a window, nervously lights a cigarette. The receptionist's clock effects a time lapse. Sarah has smoked her cigarette to the filter. She returns to her chair, stubs it out, lights another. Next to her is a young female PATIENT, who has been watching her with a sympathetic half-smile.

PATIENT

What's wrong?

SARAH

I beg your pardon?

PATIENT

I heard you say 'emergency' to Miss Pollack. What's wrong with you?

SARAH

I don't know. Something unnatural.

CONTINUED

PATIENT

It's all unnatural, isn't it?

As she chatters, there is an echo of John and the girl in the cafeteria. SOUND is lowered to indicate Sarah's loss of interest in the words. CAMERA, shooting from her POV, wanders from the girl's eyes to her mouth to the tender flesh of her throat.

PATIENT

I mean the only 'natural' thing is health. If you haven't got that, really what have you got? Like there's this man in our building with a twenty-seven room penthouse and all the money in the world, and he's just literally wasting away because his body can't take any nutrition from food, so what good is it to him to be rich and...

In a sudden startling move, Sarah's hand involuntarily flashes out and grips the girl's throat, frightening her.

PATIENT

What are you doing? What'd I say? Please, you're hurting me.

Shocked at herself, Sarah quickly withdraws her hand, rises sharply, starts out of the room, past the receptionist's desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Roberts?

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - LATE AFTERNOON

204

Sarah runs out of Schrader's building, crosses Fifth Avenue, enters

CENTRAL PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

205

She hurries along a path leading to

THE ZOO

Monkeys leap and chatter in their cages as Sarah passes.

SARAH

206

continues toward the restaurant. In LONG SHOT we see her find what she is looking for - a pay phone.

CONTINUED

CLOSE SHOT - SARAH

207

on the phone, listening to a FEMALE VOICE

VOICE

I'm sorry, Dr. Roberts. Mr.
Haver has left for the day.

SARAH

I tried the apartment. He's
not there.

VOICE

He's probably on his way. You
know what the traffic's like
at this hour.

SARAH

Yes. Thank you.
(hangs up)
Oh, Tom...Tom...

Suddenly she lifts the receiver, as if the phone had rung.

SARAH

Hello? Hello?

Under compulsion, she looks sharply to the left, sees

MIRIAM

208

standing a little way off, near the path where STROLLERS come
and go, staring at her in a beckoning way.

SARAH

209

jerks her gaze away, slams the phone down, cannot resist another
look at

THE PATH

210

Miriam has vanished.

SARAH

211

closes her eyes in despair, leans her forehead against the fist
that still grips the receiver. A male VOICE startles her back
to reality.

CONTINUED

VOICE

How about it, doll?

Two husky YOUTHS wearing tight jeans, t-shirts, athletic club jackets, stand behind her, hemming her in. One presses especially close, his manner grossly sexual.

YOUTH

How about it?

His muscular throat seems to swell toward her, taunting her.

SARAH

How about what?

With a smirk, he nods toward the phone. To let him near it, she must move through a gauntlet of tantalizing flesh, an agony of hunger and desire. Playing with her, the youths rub against her as she goes, making vulgar, erotic noises. Fighting free, she runs off into the park.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM - TWILIGHT

212

Miriam stands at the window, looking down.

EXT. EAST SIDE STREET

213

A desperate, disheveled Sarah comes across the street, approaches the front door, stops, stares at the house, turns away in one last, futile effort to escape, takes a few steps, falters, falls to her knees. The front door opens: Miriam comes quickly down the steps to Sarah, who is bent over, shaking violently, suffering severe cramps, on the verge of total collapse. When Miriam begins to help her up, the effort causes Sarah to cry out.

MIRIAM

Lean on me. Trust me. I'm
all you have now.

Sarah sags in her arms. Miriam guides her up the steps, into the house.

INT. ATTIC ROOM - TWILIGHT

214

The SOUND emanating from the chests is more insistent, more resentful than before.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

215

Tom, with a beer and a bag of pretzels, is on the phone in the kitchen. SOUND of ringing. A man's VOICE answers, a slight German accent.

CONTINUED

VOICE

This is Dr. Schrader. I'm unable to take your call just now. If you care to leave a message, kindly wait for the tone.

SOUND of a beep.

TOM

It's Tom Haver again, about Sarah Roberts. I still haven't heard from her. Please call me as soon as you come in, doctor. I left my number before.

(slams the receiver down)

'Doctor, this is an emergency. I'm bleeding to death.'

(imitates Schrader's voice and accent)

'I'm unable to take your call just now, but if you care to leave a final message...'

Exasperated, he tosses back a slug of beer.

INT. SINGLES BAR - NIGHT

216

FOCUS on a handsome, somewhat vapid looking young stud named RON, a minor executive type, lowering a glass of beer, wiping foam from his mouth. Looking down the bar - noisy with the chatter of other YOUNG EXECUTIVES and OFFICE GIRLS - he sees

MIRIAM

staring at him over a glass of wine. She wears make-up, wig, and contact lenses.

RON

smiles his most ingratiating smile.

MIRIAM

continues to stare inscrutably.

INT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

217

Miriam switches on the lamps in the library. Ron, slightly drunk, stands in the doorway. She crosses to a bookcase, touches a button. The case slides open, revealing a well-stocked bar. Her gesture says 'Help yourself'. He crosses in, picks up a bottle, inclines his mouth toward hers. She puts a hand between.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Patience.

With a look that promises pleasure to come, she slips out of the room. Grinning with self-satisfaction, Ron pours himself a drink.

INT. ATTIC ROOM

218

Babel of VOICES from the chests.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

219

Sarah, eyes closed, lies atop the bedspread, face contorted with pain. Miriam sits beside her.

MIRIAM

Sarah.

(shakes her gently)

Sarah, open your eyes.

Sarah opens her eyes.

INT. LIBRARY

220

Drink in hand, Ron flips through a stack of medical journals as if looking for a copy of Hustler. Impatiently, he exits into

THE HALL

221

and looks toward the stairs.

RON

Hey?

INT. ATTIC ROOM

222

Cacophony of SOUND. The VOICES grow steadily more restless.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

223

as before

MIRIAM

I'm going to bring someone to you, someone who can relieve the hunger. It will be difficult this first time. You must do exactly as I tell you.

SARAH

(through her pain)

I hate you.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

Not for long.

(rises, bends to kiss
her on the forehead)

You'll see.

2ND FLOOR LANDING

224

Ron reaches the landing, stops, listens, calls softly.

RON

Hello-oo.

He looks down the hall toward Miriam's bedroom, would start that way but a SOUND from above stops him, a muffled female moan.

RON

Ah-ha.

(starts upstairs)

Kinky sex on the upper East Side.
The answer to a boy's prayer.

Reaching the attic landing, he calls softly, in a sing-song voice.

RON

You-hoo-oo! Where are you-u-u?

INT. ATTIC ROOM

225

Within one of the chests, a female VOICE moans

ATTIC LANDING

226

Ron opens the nearest door.

RON

Come out, come out, wherever
you are!

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM

227

He looks about, sees nothing but luggage, the disused sewing machine. SOUND: the muffled female moan repeated.

LANDING

228

Ron proceeds to the only other door, opens it, finds only a big, empty cupboard. Puzzled, he starts back to the first door.

RON

Olly-olly-oxen-free!

CONTINUED

MIRIAM

229

has come from her room on her way downstairs. Hearing Ron above, she stops, looks up.

He returns to

THE WINDOWLESS ROOM

230

and begins opening doors in the wall of cupboards. As he does so, the cacophony of VOICES rises to a head-splitting pitch. Clutching his ears, Ron bursts out onto the landing, looks down confusedly at Miriam, then back to the room.

RON

Somebody...

He is astonished to see Miriam standing in the doorway, the ankhs glittering at her throat. Turning away from the apparition, he sees

MIRIAM

231

where she was before, on the landing below.

RON

232

shouts in bewilderment.

RON

What the hell's going on?

Raising his eyes, he sees

MIRIAM

233

standing in space just beyond the bannister.

RON

Oh, shit. I'm drunk. Where
are you?

2ND FLOOR LANDING

234

The CAMERA shoots upward, from behind Miriam, so that we see both her corporeal self in the foreground and the image she has projected overhead.

ATTIC LANDING

235

The image of Miriam in space holds out its hand to Ron. In his confusion, he reaches toward it, topples head first over the

CONTINUED

bannister. The image of Miriam vanishes as he falls. Half-way down he strikes the chandelier that hangs from the entry ceiling, then drops with a terrible thud, on his back. The dead eyes stare upward, frozen in terror. The chandelier swings crazily, flashing light from wall to wall.

MIRIAM

236

calls toward her bedroom.

MIRIAM

Sarah! Sarah, come!

She goes quickly down the stairs to

THE ENTRY HALL

237

where's Ron's body lies in a spreading pool of blood. Swiftly and with surprising strength she siezes his clothing at the throat, rips it open, exposing chest and belly.

MIRIAM

Sarah!

Sarah, looking frail, moving with difficulty, appears at the rail on the second floor landing.

MIRIAM

Come down at once! You must do as I do!

SARAH

Do what? What's happening?

Miriam unfastens the chain about her throat, raises the ankh, like a knife, above the corpse.

SARAH

stares down in horrified disbelief.

SARAH

No!

MIRIAM

pulls back from the corpse. The irregular light of the still-swinging chandelier reveals the throat slashed. She looks up toward the landing, eyes glittering wildly, her teeth, lips, chin stained with blood which spills down onto her clothing.

CONTINUED

MIRIAM
Quickly! Quickly!

SARAH

shrieks in revulsion

SARAH
No! No! No!

She stumbles blindly along the hall back to

MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

238

She slams the door, tries to lock it, but there is no key or latch, only a panel of buttons on the wall. She strikes it with her fist, to no avail. Strength failing, she sinks to the floor, sobbing, muttering.

SARAH
No...no, please...please...

EXT. MIRIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

239

Looking tired and distraught, Tom rings the bell. Waits, rings again. Miriam's VOICE is heard beyond the door.

MIRIAM (OS)
Who is it?

TOM
Mrs. Blaylock?

MIRIAM (OS)
Who is it?

TOM
It's Tom Haver.

MIRIAM (OS)
Tom...?

TOM
Haver. I'm a friend of Sarah Roberts.

A slight pause, then the door opens. Miriam has removed makeup, wig, and contact lenses and changed her clothes.

TOM
I'm sorry to bother you at this
hour, but she didn't come home (Continued)

CONTINUED

TOM (Cont'd.)
 tonight, and I'm worried. I just
 talked to a doctor she had an
 appointment with this afternoon.
 She never kept it. I remembered
 she was here yesterday, and I
 thought maybe...

MIRIAM
 Come in.

INT. ENTRY HALL

240

He steps in. She closes the door, re-activates the alarm.

TOM
 Have you heard from her by
 any chance?

MIRIAM
 She's upstairs.

TOM
 Oh, thank God.

He starts up.

MIRIAM
 Your friend is very ill.

TOM
 Which room?

MIRIAM
 Last door on your left.

He disappears into the second floor hall. Miriam stares after him.

INT. MIRIAM'S BEDROOM

241

Sarah lies on the bed, shaking violently, knees drawn up to her
 chest, fists clenched, eyes glazed. Tom enters, approaches.
 Alarmed by what he sees, he sits on the bed, grips her arm.

TOM
 Sarah? Sarah, can you hear me?
 (no reply; he feels
 her forehead)
 Darling, you're burning up.

She shakes her head, muttering almost inaudibly through clenched
 teeth.

CONTINUED

SARAH
Cold...cold...

TOM
I'll warm you, babe.

He lies beside her, holds her. Still she trembles.

SARAH
Hunger...hunger...

TOM
Shh...it's going to be all right.
Everything's going to be fine.

Unseen by either,

MIRIAM

stands in the doorway, observing the scene on her bed. The ankh gleams with unearthly light.

TOM

hugs Sarah closer, stroking her hair.

TOM
Tom's here. Tom's here.

The ankh at Sarah's throat flashes. Tom kisses her cheeks. She begins to respond, to kiss him in return. Over his shoulder, she sees Miriam in the doorway and listens to a fearful, unspoken command. Sarah's eyes grow wild as her kissing becomes more desperate and demanding. Tom resists what appears to be a feverish attempt to seduce him on the spot.

TOM
No, baby, no. We can't. Not now.

MIRIAM

silently closes the door.

INT. ENTRY HALL

242

Silence. Miriam descends, starts toward

THE SITTING ROOM.

243

She enters. The silence continues. She moves about among her artifacts and works of art, stops before an ancient statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis, remembering.

INT. EGYPT - NIGHT

244

A bedchamber in the style of a dynasty hundreds of years B.C. Miriam's hair is braided and coiled, her eyes lined with kohl in the fashion of the time. She lies coupling ecstatically with a magnificently built SLAVE. As he thrusts into her, panting, nearing his climax, the CAMERA follows her hand to her throat. The ankh is raised above the slave's heaving back. An agonized SCREAM is heard.

INT. SITTING ROOM

245

as before. The SCREAM CONTINUES from the bedroom upstairs. It echoes through the house for a moment, then all is silent again. Miriam crosses into

THE MUSIC ROOM

246

and sits at the piano. She begins to play very softly the Satie that she played earlier in Steinway's showroom. For a time her concentration is entirely on the keyboard. When finally she looks up, Sarah is standing in the doorway, her body slack, arms hanging at her sides, eyes glazed, the white dress smeared with blood. Miriam stops playing, rises, pours two glasses of wine.

MIRIAM

It isn't nearly as difficult
as you imagined, is it?

Sarah takes the glass of wine she offers like an automaton, speaks in a flat, unemotional voice.

SARAH

Monster.

MIRIAM

Fiend. Demon. Monster. Man can always find a word to villify anyone whose tastes run counter to his own. It is, of course, the most sublime hypocrisy. In his indiscriminate gluttony, the human animal will slaughter and eat anything that moves, from the snail to the elephant...even, in certain places, his best friend, the dog. It's only at the thought of another species feeding on him that he becomes squeamish and scrupulous, and incorruptibly high-minded. (Continued)

CONTINUED

MIRIAM (Cont'd.)

(Sarah's expression seems
to say, 'What's your point?')
I want you to face what you've been as
honestly as you must now face what
you've become. Accept what you were.
Submit to what you are.

(smiling, she touches her
glass to Sarah's)

To love.

SARAH

Love?

MIRIAM

Forever.

Their lips meet. Miriam closes her eyes. The MUSIC of 'Domes
Epais' is heard. It is a moment of rare beauty. Then the CAMERA
follows Sarah's hand as it rises, hovers over the ankh. In an
instant, she has seized it and, with startling swiftness, driven
its point into her own throat, severing the jugular vein. The
MUSIC ends abruptly.

CLOSE SHOT - MIRIAM

247

Her eyes fly open in shock as blood gushes from Sarah's mouth
into her own. She sputters, falls back, choking.

MIRIAM

(a howl)

NOOOOOOOOOO!!

ANOTHER ANGLE

Eyes rolling toward the ceiling, Sarah topples forward. Her face
swoops by Miriam's, blood flowing from nose, mouth and throat.
She lies face down on the floor.

MIRIAM

Why? Why?

Tears fill her eyes. She kneels beside Sarah, presses a hand
to the wound.

MIRIAM

I could stop the bleeding. It
might be possible to save you.
You've only to tell me it's
what you want.

CONTINUED

Sarah's eyes seem to beckon her nearer. Her lips try to form a word. Miriam bends close. The word, scarcely more than a gasp, is whispered into her ear.

SARAH

Evil.

Miriam straightens up. It is a judgement she cannot accept. She takes her hand from the wound, letting the blood seep out again. Dignity restored, she dries her eyes, then lifts Sarah in her arms, carries her toward the door.

INT. ENTRY HALL

248

Miriam comes into the hall, carrying Sarah.

MIRIAM

We are not evil.

2ND FLOOR LANDING

249

The CAMERA shoots down, facing Miriam as she mounts toward it.

MIRIAM

We are part of the justice of the earth.

She reaches the landing. The CAMERA holds, watching her climb to the top, enter

THE WINDOWLESS ROOM

250

The door closes behind her, plunging the room into darkness.

THE ATTIC ROOM

251

Darkness. Silence. Miriam crosses to the center of the room, stops. She has sensed that something is wrong. She stands perfectly still, trying to penetrate the surrounding shadows with her mind. Realizing a potential danger, she carefully lays Sarah's body on the floor, turns, starts out. Suddenly John materializes in the doorway, blocking her path. His ghastly eyes blaze with resentment. The wasted lips curl back in a hideous snarl.

MIRIAM

John...how did you...?

Something stops her, some movement in the dark behind her. She turns.

MIRIAM

Lollia?

CONTINUED

A claw-like hand sweeps across her face. Miriam cries out in alarm. The nails have left a track of bloody welts on her cheek. As she grips the wound, a SOUND begins on all sides, softly at first, increasing in intensity and volume. What starts as a kind of sighing becomes moaning, then wailing, finally demonic shrieking. This is accompanied by threatening movement: rustling, shuffling, slithering. The deep shadows vibrate with unspeakable, unseen presences, slowly and steadily converging on Miriam. At the same time, Lollia materializes, a terrifying, mummified apparition.

MIRIAM

Oh, Lollia...

Abruptly, shockingly, another hand lashes out of the darkness, ripping at her throat. She screams in disbelief.

MIRIAM

Eumenes? You?

But the hand strikes again, then another hand, and another. She begins to fight back, tearing the hands away, but they reappear at once, multiplying, clawing at her clothing, her hair, her eyes. Faces appear, teeth bared like fangs, slashing at her throat.

MIRIAM

I loved you! I loved you all!

She strikes out blindly. Her fist connects with a skull-like face. The ancient, mummified flesh shatters like brittle parchment. At that instant, the spectral shrieking ceases and in dead silence, for a moment only, we see the face as it once was, the magnificent young Greek, Eumenes, joining his lips to Miriam's in a passionate kiss. Then the memory vanishes, the shrieking resumes, the attack continues.

This mingling of past and present recurs several times in quick succession. When the wasted Lollia's teeth seek to feed on Miriam's throat, there is a silent, momentary FLASH of Lollia at twenty, kissing the older woman's throat, fondling her bare breast. When Miriam's fingers thrust into the accusing eyes of John's death mask, the youthful John smiles and pulls her to him in sexual embrace.

Raging SOUND and silence, violence and loving tenderness alternate. The effect is one of nightmare maelstrom, as if Miriam were recalling, in extremis, what used to be, while the others demand retribution for the price they have had to pay. The explosive force of their assault propels Miriam out onto

CONTINUED

THE ATTIC LANDING

252

The CAMERA shoots from the space beyond the railing where Ron fell earlier. Miriam twists, turns and stumbles across the landing, arms flailing against the cloud of indistinct presences that cling to her like a swarm of deadly hornets. With a final cry of terror, she bursts backwards through the railing, arms outstretched, into the void. Halfway down she strikes the chandelier, and again it swings drunkenly. Her body hits the marble floor with a sickening thud. Her assailants, spilling after her, scarcely make a sound on impact. Their shrieking ceases at once, replaced by a pathetic whimpering.

CLOSE SHOT - MIRIAM

253

She lies on her back as did the hapless Ron, eyes frozen in horrified astonishment, staring straight up toward the swaying light. Deterioration begins at once. In a matter of seconds the glorious face ages thousands of years. What is left at the end is something vile and corrupt, an obscene image. The CAMERA pulls back to reveal the forms of the others crumbling exactly as Methuselah did, disintegrating until there is nothing but little mounds of dust on the floor. The CAMERA HOLDS on this spectacle for a moment, lit by the swinging chandelier.

HIGH SHOT - ENTRY HALL

254

Now the CAMERA shoots down from the highest possible elevation. The chandelier is still. Daylight fills the hall. The marble floor is spotless. The only SOUND is the surprisingly gentle chiming of the doorbell. Then a MAN crosses the hall, footsteps echoing, and opens the front door.

CLOSE SHOT - FRONT DOOR

255

Detective Lieutenant Allegrezza stands on the doorstep. The tall, distinguished-looking man who has answered is named JELINEK, and might pass as a butler in his dark suit and tie.

ALLEGREZZA

Lieutenant Allegrezza to see
Mrs. Blaylock.

JELINEK

Mrs. Blaylock?

ALLEGREZZA

She'll remember. I talked to
her before, about a missing
person. Only now it's three.

CONTINUED

JELINEK
Three missing persons?
(Allegrezza nods)
Come in, won't you?

INT. ENTRY HALL - DAY

256

The detective enters. Jelinek closes the door.

JELINEK
I don't know what to tell
you. I'm only the agent.

ALLEGREZZA
The agent?

JELINEK
Real estate.
(hands him a card)
Arthur Jelinek. We're handling
the sale of the house.

ALLEGREZZA
The sale?

JELINEK
It all happened very suddenly.
Would you come back this way? I
have clients looking the place
over. I don't want them to think
I've deserted them.

He leads the way toward the rear of the house. The hall is completely empty, as is the library, glimpsed in passing.

JELINEK
It's an estate sale. The whole
thing was handled by a law firm.
My understanding is that the
owner or owners are deceased,
and that whatever proceeds are
left after taxes go to some sort
of clinic or research center here
in town. I don't mean to sound
cynical, but I get a picture of
...like an old movie, of, you know
...the mad scientist jabbering about
eternal life.

ALLEGREZZA
And then he drops dead at age forty.

CONTINUED

JELINEK

(laughs)

Right. What a waste.

They arrive at the doors to

THE SITTING ROOM

257

and stop in the doorway.

JELINEK

If I had that kind of money, I'd
as soon light cigarettes with it
or flush it down the john.

(craning his neck
toward music room)

I think my people have wandered
out to the garden. Would you
excuse me for a minute?

ALLEGREZZA

Take your time.

Jelinek exits. Allegrezza walks slowly about the sitting room,
cavernous now without carpets or furniture. The shelves are all
empty. Only the drapes and sheer curtains remain. The detective
stops in the center of the void.

ALLEGREZZA

Bella signora misteriosa...
dove andata? Dove?

A breeze gently ruffles and lifts the curtains. Allegrezza
proceeds to

THE MUSIC ROOM

258

which looks especially empty and forlorn. Everything of Miriam's
is gone. MUSIC begins here: the Lalo played at the beginning
by Miriam, John and Alice. From Allegrezza's POV, the CAMERA
CIRCLES the room, stopping at last at the place where the piano
stood.

The CAMERA pans up to and LOCKS on the wall where Miriam's por- 259
trait in the manner of Vermeer previously hung. Only a dis-
colored patch remains. Here a magical thing happens. Slowly,
the portrait is restored, filling the empty space. Then the
CAMERA PANS DOWN to reveal Miriam, as we first saw her, seated
at the piano, playing the solo beginning of the Lalo movement,
and we realize we are in another room, amazingly like the first.

CONTINUED

We see Miriam only from behind, but everything - hairstyle, gown, jewels - is recognizably the same as it was at the beginning. When the VOICE of the cello asserts itself, OFF-SCREEN, the CAMERA moves from Miriam's back to FOCUS on a beautiful GIRL of twenty, an older version of Alice. Her playing is disciplined and skillful. Now the violin claims precedence, and the CAMERA moves to FOCUS on a BOY the same age as the girl, in fact so like her that they might be twins. He plays dreamily, eyes closing in a kind of rapture. Pursuing its single, continuous move, the CAMERA presses in to a close view of the boy. He wears an open-necked, Byronic shirt of the type once favored by John, and we can see that about his neck is a fine gold chain with an ankh suspended from it.

The CAMERA now returns to an equally close view of the girl. Her dress is cut in such a way that the gold chain and talisman can be clearly seen.

Now the CAMERA pans back to a tight shot of Miriam, beginning on the back of her head, circling her neck with its familiar gold chain. At the moment the ankh comes into view we also see a small, jagged scar on the throat just above it. A full-face CLOSE-UP reveals not Miriam but Sarah, looking more beautiful, more elegant than we have ever seen her, with an air of veiled mystery; aloof, imperious, at once seductive and forbidding. Lost in the music, she goes on playing, her exquisite hands moving easily over the keys.

Still moving without interruption, the CAMERA continues past 260 her to the windows. Beyond the vast expanse of glass enclosing the room, obviously part of a hilltop house, a city panorama is brought into sharp FOCUS. The city is London, sparkling in all its glory on a fine spring afternoon. The CAMERA turns back toward the house, moves up past the second floor windows to the top, approaches the small round attic window, a single leather chest sitting in the center of the floor. The CAMERA moves directly to it and holds. On the name plate is engraved a scroll-letter 'M'. From within comes the SOUND of Miriam's VOICE, moaning, disconsolately. MUSIC continues softly from below.

FADE OUT