

THE HYPNOTIST'S LOVE STORY

Written by

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Network Draft

Based on the book by Liane Moriarty

Mandeville Television

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SEATTLE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

City lights reflect off the bay. Pike Place teems with life, the Ferris wheel glitters on the pier. And everywhere we look, COUPLES IN LOVE are kissing, holding hands, and having romantic dinners. It's a bit nauseating, really.

ELLEN (V.O.)

We aren't meant to admit, even to ourselves, how badly we want love. The man is supposed to be the icing, not the cake. And so, here I am. A successful, empowered, independent woman. Who is also 38 and single. And starting to think that a cake with no icing has all the appeal of a shit sandwich, minus the bread.

Cue the torqued-up opening chords of the Violent Femmes' "Blister in the Sun," as we WHIP TO --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A glass of RED WINE on the vanity, along with lipstick, eyeshadow palettes, birth control pills. Femmes play from a speaker somewhere. Ellen's pre-date protocol in full swing.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I assure you, the absence of icing on my particular cake is not for lack of trying. But countless dates with countless men the Internet thinks would be good for me have thus far proven fruitless.

Meet the indomitable ELLEN (38), in a bra and panties. She's a beauty - polished, yet bohemian. She holds a DRESS up to JULIA (38), her impish BFF, who sits on the bed.

ELLEN (V.O.)

"Nevertheless, she persisted."

JULIA

That's a sex dress. You minx.
Is tonight the night?

ELLEN

Maybe. It is date number four.

JULIA

Ding ding! Patrick The Single
Father advances to the next round.

ELLEN

He checks a lot of boxes.

Julia squints, the resident skeptic. She treads lightly.

JULIA

So did the ventriloquist. Until we
found out he was a ventriloquist.

ELLEN

Patrick is different.
(off Julia's silence)
He is. Smart, funny. Well-
employed as not-a-ventriloquist.

JULIA

... And he opens doors, and he read
Lean In, and he shares your
irrational fear of ham. He seems
great.

ELLEN

So why are you making your ugly
baby face?

JULIA

Because he could still have a body
in his trunk. Or be weird in bed.
Not good weird. It's my duty as
your attorney to advise caution --

ELLEN

You own a dress shop.

JULIA

Irrelevant.

ELLEN

(raises her right hand)
I hereby acknowledge the possibility
that Patrick Scott is a murderous,
sexual deviant. Happy?

Julia nods, satisfied. Ellen turns to the mirror.

ELLEN (V.O.)

*But I also acknowledge that he just
might be my icing.*

She whips a dress off a hanger, FILLING FRAME. MUSIC UP as --

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ellen walks in, bringing PATRICK SCOTT (38) to his feet at a table near the back. Patrick is both boyish and masculine, warm, charming. He greets her with a sweet kiss.

ELLEN (V.O.)
He even tastes like icing.

PATRICK
Do you have any idea how many heads
you just turned with that entrance?

Ellen demurs, but it's true. She's stunning. As they sit --

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Every guy in here is wondering how
I got you to have dinner with me.

ELLEN
Well. You did say they have the
best seabass in Seattle.

He grins, revealing a dimple, feigns addressing the room.

PATRICK
Relax, fellas. She's just in it
for the seabass.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*That dimple! See, Julia? He even
comes with a special marking to
show he's different from the rest.*

As she opens her menu, Patrick's PHONE rings. Ellen clocks a picture of a cute ten year-old BOY, and the name "Jack."

PATRICK
It's my son. Probably wants to say
goodnight. Do you mind --?

ELLEN
Of course not. Please.

She fake-studies her menu, eavesdropping, as he picks up.

PATRICK
(into phone)
Hey, buddy. How was practice, did
you wear your new cleats? What
jacket? Well, I'm sure she'll give
it back... You can wear the plaid
jacket tomorrow.

He winks at her, mouths "sorry!" As he talks, his voice
FADES DOWN and Ellen SIGHS dreamily in V.O. Then, sternly --

ELLEN (V.O.)
*Ellen, be cool. What if this is a
move he does? Show off what a good
father he is to soften you up for
the kill? Just take it easy.*

PATRICK
(into phone)
...Goodnight, buddy. I love you.
You know that, right?

ELLEN (V.O.)
(melting)
I wonder if dimples are genetic.

Patrick puts his phone away, smiling, as a WAITER approaches.

PATRICK
Now. Where were we? Oh, yes.
(to the Waiter)
Would you please bring us some wine
before my date realizes how out of
my league she is?

Ellen smiles, surrendering to the moment. From here --

SLAM TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Outside the restaurant, looking in - at Ellen and Patrick.
It's a jarring, disturbing POV. RACK FOCUS to catch a glint
of a REFLECTION - fragments of a profile. And now we're ON
THE MOVE. Snaking inside, gliding past waiters - landing at
an empty table. Still fixed on Patrick and Ellen.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Back with Patrick as he draws an elaborate MAP on a napkin.
A STAR drawn near the middle. He hands it to Ellen.

PATRICK
I give you, the world through the
eyes of an urban surveyor.

ELLEN
I love it. Are we the star?

PATRICK
You are, Madame Hypnotist.

She shifts, which he clocks, quickly correcting himself --

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Wait. I meant Hypnotherapist.
There's a difference, right?

ELLEN

There is...

ELLEN (V.O.)

*But nobody ever grasps it, even
after I explain it. Again, and
again...*

ELLEN

Hypnotists do stage shows, make
people cluck like chickens, that
sort of thing.

PATRICK

Sounds like more of a parlor trick
than therapy. What you do... I
mean, you actually help people.

ELLEN

I like to think so.

She nods, smiling to herself. He notices.

PATRICK

What is it?

ELLEN

Just, hearing you say that was...

ELLEN (V.O.)

Incredibly sexy.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

... Refreshing.

He holds her in a lingering gaze, leaning closer.

PATRICK

I confess I would like you to
hypnotize me, though.

ELLEN

Sorry. Clients only.

PATRICK

Maybe I should book a session?

ELLEN

Maybe. But I can think of better
things to do with an hour alone.

He looks at her, heat rising between them.

Then - his eyes dart over her shoulder. His expression darkens. She clocks his change in demeanor as --

PATRICK

Ellen.

His fork clanks down onto his plate. His neck muscles tense.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I need to tell you something.

ELLEN

Oh?

ELLEN (V.O.)

Oh, no.

She masks her alarm with a quizzical look. Finally --

PATRICK

Actually, will you excuse me a minute?

ELLEN

Of course.

He bolts to his feet. A WAITER points him to the bathrooms. Ellen eyes Patrick's FORK - food still speared on the end.

ELLEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Here we go. Once again, my love life falls flat on its face. What else could it be? The man dropped his fork and ran.

She dabs her mouth with her napkin. Composed.

ELLEN (V.O.)

But why? It was going so well. All that eye contact, the lingering looks? Did I imagine that?

She fingers the NAPKIN with the map. The bright little star.

ELLEN

Maybe I did. I was fantasizing about having his dimply little baby, for God's sake. Doesn't matter now. It's over. I'll be fine. I've been down this road before. I'll be over him by Wednesday. Thursday.

She reaches for her wine, utterly bewildered.

ELLEN (V.O.)

What if he is a psychopath? He lied about being a widower? His wife is alive. He keeps her in a shed. Or he's a mobster. He has a terminal illness. Terrible, but less personally hurtful, at least.

More wine. She glances toward the bathrooms.

ELLEN (V.O.)

What's he doing in there? What am I doing out here? If I leave now, I can get in a good cry, and still catch The Bachelor finale.

She takes out her phone, pulls up Uber, considering. Then --

PATRICK (O.C.)

Sorry. You must think I'm a lunatic.

She looks up, smiling falsely. He sits, visibly shaken.

ELLEN

Well, I am a bit curious, Patrick.

ELLEN (V.O.)

"I am a bit curious, Patrick." Who knew I sound like a jolly, middle aged lady when I'm getting dumped?

PATRICK

I didn't want to have to tell you this until... later. But it can't wait. You deserve to know now.

ELLEN

Know what?

PATRICK

That I have a stalker.

He looks at her, grim. A long beat. Then --

ELLEN

Did you just say you have a stalker?

ELLEN (V.O.)

Did he just say he has a stalker?

PATRICK

My ex-girlfriend. When things ended, she started following me.

ELLEN

Your ex-girlfriend follows you.
Everywhere?

PATRICK

Pretty much. That's why I got up
just now, I saw she was here.

He falls silent. They lock eyes as it lands on Ellen --

ELLEN (V.O.)

*A stalker. He got up just now
because of his stalker.
(glorious relief)
Which means I'm not getting dumped!*

ELLEN

How long has she been doing this?

PATRICK

Three years. I dated her after
Colleen died. Colleen's my wife.

ELLEN

And the stalker?
(off his confused look)
What is her name?

PATRICK

Oh. Uh, it's Sasha.

ELLEN

Is Sasha deranged?

PATRICK

No. She's a fairly normal person
in other respects --

ELLEN

Is she dangerous?

PATRICK

(quickly)
No.

ELLEN

How can you be sure --

PATRICK

For three years, all Sasha has done
is follow me, text me, send me
gifts at work. She is a terrible
nuisance. But she's not a threat,
Ellen. Not in any way.

Ellen suddenly straightens, her hair standing on end --

ELLEN
You said she's here now?

PATRICK
She was. She left.

Ellen throws a look to the front of the restaurant. We RACE through the room and out the window --

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Where a taxi idles at the curb. A gorgeous HIGH HEEL - Valentino, rock stud, devastating - disappears into a cab. The door SLAMS and the car peels away.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Patrick squirms like a convict waiting for sentencing. He looks at her, his eyes a mix of hope and regret.

ELLEN
Thank you for telling me.

PATRICK
I didn't want to, trust me. I hate talking about her.

ELLEN
Because of all the emotion it brings up?

PATRICK
(scoffs)
No. Because there's a fascinating woman sitting across from me who is a much more interesting topic of conversation.

ELLEN (V.O.)
I don't know, a devoted stalker of over three years is pretty damn interesting...

PATRICK
But if it means there's a chance you'll see me again? I'll talk about it all night. You must have questions.

He looks at her, bracing. His fear of losing Ellen is very obvious. And tremendously endearing.

ELLEN
Just one, actually.

She takes his hand, laces her fingers through his.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Do you want to order dessert?

His worried expression dissolves into a smile. "Blister In The Sun" resumes as they both lean in and we SMASH TO MAIN TITLES: "The Hypnotist's Love Story."

FADE TO WHITE.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ellen's phone DINGS. She rolls over in bed, reading a TEXT from Patrick. "I think you hypnotized me after all."

ELLEN (V.O.)
*Hypnosis is a bit like falling in
love. For it to work, you have to
be willing.*

Then: "When can I see you again?" She smiles, but doesn't answer him just yet. Off this --

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Ellen is graceful and unpretentious in leggings, ballet flats, flowing cardigan. She fills a bowl with chocolates, fluffs a pillow. Pre-client protocol. The DOORBELL rings.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*I've helped clients conquer
phobias, nervous ticks. And quit
smoking, of course.*

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen opens the door to ROSIE (28), beautiful, fragile, filthy rich. Rosie exhales a column of cigarette smoke.

ELLEN (V.O.)
But again, one must be willing.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Rosie plops into the leather Eames chair across from Ellen's striped red and cream winged armchair.

ELLEN
How are you?

ROSIE
Still smoking like a chimney.

ELLEN
And Ian?

ROSIE
Still a monster. Who I'm still
marrying, apparently. I wish I
could smoke in here.

Rosie gets up and paces. Ellen watches her, calm.

ROSIE (CONT'D)
If you're hypnotizing me so I can
break up with him, why'd I spend my
morning in a bridesmaid's fitting?

ELLEN
I'm helping you find the inner
strength to make the decision
that's right for you --

ROSIE
The dresses are the most hideous
shade of peach. It looks like baby
poop. Who chooses that?

ELLEN
Have you spoken to Ian?

ROSIE
No, he's out of town. Buying a tv
station somewhere. This is the
only way I see him lately.

She whips out a FORTUNE MAGAZINE - A distinguished MAN on the
covers: "America's Top Entrepreneurs - Ian Roman Exclusive."

ROSIE (CONT'D)
There should be a rule about not
appearing on the cover of a
magazine you own. It's tacky.

ELLEN
Why don't we begin?

Rosie nods, settling in. Ellen's voice is low and even.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Take a deep breath. You might want
to close your eyes. Now, imagine
you're staring at a wall.
(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)
It's the exact shade as your
bridesmaid's dresses.

ROSIE
(eyes closed)
Great.

ELLEN
Now look down. You're holding a
paintbrush. See it? You can re-
paint. Any color you choose...

ROSIE
(after a beat)
I choose blue. Like the ocean.

ELLEN
Perfect. Start painting.

As Ellen talks, we DRIFT through the room and out her large
picture window - beyond which lies --

EXT. ELLEN'S BEACH - DAY

A sandy, untouched stretch of beach, waves rushing up and
away, in constant motion... soothing and hypnotic.

ELLEN (V.O.)
(to Rosie)
When the wall is completely covered
in this new shade of blue, you will
be completely relaxed. Completely
at peace.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Back with Rosie, Ellen's voice fades down as her inner
thoughts become audible in V.O. We cut back and forth
between Ellen's serene office and the ocean waves.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*Rosie and I weren't even half way
through her first session when I
realized her problem isn't smoking.
It's her fiancé, Ian Roman. The
media mogul whose empire spans
print, tv, and radio. People are
fascinated by him. His wealth, his
influence. They say Ian Roman owns
the news, and Ian Roman is the news.*

Ellen slips the magazine with Ian's face on it out of sight.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Unfortunately, the private man is very different from the public mogul. Controlling, Cruel. But Rosie had repressed his abuse so deeply, she didn't know she was miserable. Until her smoking habit brought her to my door.

Rosie's eyes start to move rapidly behind her eyelids and her jaw grows slack, slipping deeper into hypnosis

ELLEN

This wall you're painting is your life, Rosie. You can change it any time. As many times as you want.
(firm)
But you can't change Ian.

Ellen falls silent, studying Rosie's hypnotized face. Wondering if she's getting through.

INT. YOGA CLASS - DAY

Ellen is mid cobra-pose. Julia cobras right beside her, her face a mix of shock and alarm as she whispers.

JULIA

There are a lot of reasonable reactions to a man telling you he has a stalker. None of them involve ordering dessert.

ELLEN

You should have seen the flambé.

Julia moves into warrior pose, exasperated.

JULIA

Come on, ten years ago you'd have left this guy in the dust by now.

ELLEN

That's probably true.

JULIA

So, what changed?

ELLEN

Me. The game. Don't forget you've been married the last ten years.

A HOT MALE YOGA TEACHER adjusts Julia's positioning.

JULIA

Thanks for the reminder.

(to Yoga teacher)

I'm divorced now, just so you know.

She smiles alluringly. Ellen rolls her eyes, continuing --

ELLEN

The point is, Patrick is a catch.

I think it's worth trying to make this work.

JULIA

How does one "make it work" with a stalker?

ELLEN

I guess we'll find out.

JULIA

Are you at all concerned about being chopped into pieces?

ELLEN

He swears she's not dangerous.

They switch poses again. Julia looks at her, frowning.

JULIA

Do you have a picture of her?

ELLEN

No.

(off her look)

It didn't come up! And I didn't want to pry. It's clearly hard for him to talk about.

JULIA

So your stalker could be anywhere.

ELLEN

She's not my stalker.

JULIA

I bet that's her right there.
Plotting your death during
Shavasana.

Julia eyeballs a woman in Tree Pose suspiciously. Off this --

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Ellen and Julia weave through the lingerie section, sifting through bra-and-panty sets.

JULIA

Could you at least get her last name so we can Google her?

Ellen looks at her friend, a hint of a smile.

ELLEN

For the record? That would technically qualify as stalking.

JULIA

Creeping on someone's social media and following them for three years are not the same thing! She's clearly crazy.

ELLEN

Maybe so. But that's not Patrick's fault. He's the victim here.

JULIA

Unless he did something to her to make her this way.

ELLEN

Such as?

JULIA

I don't know. That would've been one of my follow-up questions prior to ordering the cherries jubilee.

Julia holds up a racy, fire-engine RED lace number.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Here. If you're going to wind up dead in a ditch, at least do so in decent lingerie.

ELLEN

Thank you. You're very supportive.

JULIE

Are you seeing him tonight?

ELLEN

No, I have dinner at my Mom's.

JULIA

I am dying to hear her input.

ELLEN

Please. You know what she's going to say, it's the same every time.

They say it together, imitating Ellen's mom in unison:

JULIA/ELLEN

"It's not *this man* I object to..."

CUT TO:

INT. ANNE'S CONDO - DAY

A stylish mid-century vibe, curated by ANNE O'FARRELL (60s), who regards her daughter while uncorking a bottle of wine.

ANNE

It's pursuit of traditional marriage in general I find so confounding.

Anne is a force of nature. Still a beauty, elegant, and black belt in throwing shade, particularly Ellen's way.

ELLEN

Really? You've never mentioned it.

Anne is perpetually attended by PHILLIPA "PIP" SUTTON (60 - Ellen's "fun aunt") and MELVIN YOUNG (60 - gay best friend of 50 years and resident chef). Pip smiles at Ellen.

PIP

I'm happy for you, hon.

MEL

Me too! Enough "down with love," Anne. Teriyaki's almost ready.

ANNE

Love is not the problem. But the patriarchy is very seductive. One must actively resist it.

ELLEN

By sleeping with strangers, say?

ANNE

I make no apologies for the way I conceived you. I wanted a child, and I didn't wish to be subjugated to a man for eternity in exchange.

ELLEN

As you've said. To basically everyone, my entire childhood.

Mel and Pip chime in from the kitchen, teasingly --

MEL

"Why, I barely knew Ellen's father!"

PIP

"Didn't even catch his full name!"

Anne stands down. Pip and Mel set dinner on the table.

ANNE

Tell us more about Patrick. You said he has a son?

They dig in - an eccentric, untraditional family.

MEL

How long's he been divorced?

ELLEN

He's not. His wife died not long after their son was born, of cancer --

ANNE

Divorced is better. Very hard to compete with a dead woman.

ELLEN

I'm not competing with her. She died.

ANNE

And had she lived, he might be with her, to this day.

ELLEN

Mom, did you ever hear the phrase "if you don't have something nice to say..."

ANNE

There's another woman in this relationship with you, Ellen, like it or not. Sooner you accept it, the better. Cheers.

Anne sips her wine as Ellen nods, smiling ironically.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

A vibrant outdoor market. Ellen looks fetching in a pretty sundress.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*My mother is more right than she
knows about there being another
woman. But she's very much alive.
All facts which I've chosen to
accept. Hence, date number five.*

WIDEN TO REVEAL Patrick beside her, browsing. She turns to an inviting fruit display, inspecting the produce. She buys a few peaches, chatting pleasantly with the FRUIT VENDOR.

When she turns around - Patrick is GONE. She scans the market, a slight tension settling in her jawline.

ELLEN
Patrick?

She comes around a corner, her eyes landing on --

EXT. MARKET - FLOWER CART - DAY

Patrick is talking closely with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN (30s) in a sunhat, whose back is to us. Ellen's pulse quickens.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*She could be anywhere, at any time.
Isn't that what Julia was saying?*

Patrick touches the woman's ARM gently. Ellen clocks it.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*I didn't picture a blonde.
Especially not one so thin and
perky. Is she his type? I could
never pull off that hat.*

Patrick sees Ellen awkwardly staring. He waves. The WOMAN turns and waves also. He heads toward Ellen, all smiles.

PATRICK
Sorry. I got sidetracked en route
to the sourdough.

ELLEN
Who was that?

ELLEN (V.O.)
There's the middle-aged lady again.

PATRICK

Brenda. A mom from Jack's school.
She wants me to work the craft
fair. I told her it's a hard pass.

Ellen smiles, covering, as we pull back from them to...

ANOTHER POV: In the market, but apart from them. Watching.

EXT. FRUIT STALL - DAY

Now: TIGHT ON A HAND, plucking a peach from a heaping
display, squeezing it gently. TILT UP to REVEAL SASHA.

She is, in fact, blonde. And gorgeous in a floppy hat and
flowery dress. She SNIFFS the peach deeply, as the GUY (20s)
manning the stand watches, captivated by her.

SASHA'S POV: Is on Patrick's hand, as he places it gently at
the base of Ellen's spine, guiding her through the crowd.

The Fruit Guy reacts - she's squeezed the peach way too hard,
crushing it. She notices JUICE runs through her fingers.

SASHA

Sorry. I get carried away
sometimes.

She hands him the dripping peach. MUSIC UP - "Have I the
Right" by the Honeycombs - as we go off Sasha - her gazed
fixed on Patrick. Determined.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

A sleek, mid-level architecture firm. Lots of glass and steel, open floor plan, a panoramic view of downtown Seattle.

Sasha strides off the elevator, fierce and fabulous in leather pants and those Valentino heels. She operates with a studied coolness, though there's a fragility behind her eyes that she can't always conceal. She's carrying a PIE.

MICKEY (30s, handsome, smitten,) stands from behind his partition, taking her in - wowza. He smiles.

MICKEY

What do we have today?

SASHA

Peach.

MICKEY

Yum.

SASHA

All yours.

He takes the pie from her. Sniffs it appreciatively.

MICKEY

You have a gift.

SASHA

Just a hobby. I find it therapeutic.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - SASHA'S DESK

She settles into her work space. One framed PICTURE on her desk - a boy we remember from Patrick's phone: Jack. Mickey appears, having followed her to her desk.

MICKEY

I was thinking I could buy you lunch. As a thank you for the pie.

He's actually quite charming, this guy. Sasha sits and moves her mouse, waking her computer up. Checks her schedule.

SASHA

I have a lunch meeting.

MICKEY
Drinks, then? Happy hour?

SASHA
I can't. I'm sorry.

He deflates, moving off. This is not his first rejection.

MICKEY
No problem. Thanks for the pie.

Sasha turns to her CALENDAR. MUSIC UP, increasingly unsettling, as we note a trend in her schedule. "Patrick oil change 4pm, Patrick Dentist 12:30, Patrick Cross fit class, Patrick haircut, Patrick electric bill due."

She eyes today's date: "JACK" in bold letters. Off this...

INT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Patrick pulls into the parking lot beside a public soccer pitch with JACK (10, in his team jersey).

PATRICK
You sure you don't want me to stay?

JACK
This one's a gimme. Come for the Brother Rice game instead.

PATRICK
You got it. Good luck.

Jack shoulders his duffel bag and runs to the field. As Patrick drives away, he dials his phone. Ellen answers --

ELLEN (V.O.)
(on phone)
Well, hello, you.

PATRICK
Hi. I've got a little time on my hands. I wonder if you have any ideas on how to spend it?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen smiles, eyes the shopping bag on her counter, the lacy red lingerie peeking out...

ELLEN
I do, actually.

But then - her DOORBELL rings. Her face falls.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
But I have a client. How about I
make you dinner tomorrow?

PATRICK
Tomorrow night seems like an
awfully long time from now.

ELLEN
Trust me, it will be worth the
wait.
(the bell rings again)
I have to go.

INT. PATRICK'S CAR - DAY

PATRICK
Okay. But consider me confirmed
for tomorrow.

He hangs up, immediately typing "Dinner with Ellen" into his
calendar, smiling. Off this --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Rosie paces, upset. Doesn't even put her handbag down.
Ellen settles into her chair, watching Rosie.

ROSIE
Ian says I can't leave.

ELLEN
What?

ROSIE
He said it's just pre-wedding
jitters. Then he talked about all
the high profile people on the
guest list.

ELLEN
Why don't you take a deep breath.

ROSIE
He's so controlling, he's used to
getting what he wants. He'd rather
force me to marry him than be
embarrassed in front of the mayor!

ELLEN
He can't force you to do anything --

ROSIE

You don't know him. His whole life is getting people to do what he wants them to do.

ELLEN

This is actually good news. You took the first step toward freedom.

ROSIE

Not if he doesn't accept it.

ELLEN

You can't control how Ian will react. But I believe that with time, he will accept that it's over and he'll move on.

ROSIE

How do you know?

ELLEN

What other choice is there?

Rosie looks out the window, unsettled. Off Ellen's words --

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Jack runs down the field, red cheeked, shouting. He fields a pass - dribbles, shoots - scores! He pumps his fist, then heads back to centerfield, wheezing slightly.

He pauses, reaching into his pocket and producing an INHALER. The REFEREE waits as Jack takes a puff. Asthmatic.

And now, we PULL BACK from the field... finding ourselves some distance away, in the parking lot.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Drift up over the hood of a black sedan to reveal SASHA. Watching Jack. As she does, smiling, we --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

CHYRON "Five Years Ago." A banner on the wall reads "Back-To-School Night - Welcome Parents!" PARENTS and STUDENTS mill about. Then, Sasha appears in the doorway, in a sweater and jeans. Her eyes land on FIVE YEAR-OLD Jack.

But then Jack's TEACHER steps in front of her. Blocking her.

TEACHER
Can I help you?

SASHA
Hi. I'm here for Jack.

The teacher regards her with a fixed, false smile. Sasha grows defensive, sensing the Teacher's suspicion.

TEACHER
And you are?

JACK (O.S.)
Sasha!

Jack (5) runs over to Sasha, throwing his arms around her.

SASHA
Hi, buddy.

PATRICK (O.S.)
(behind her)
Hi. Sorry I'm late. Work.

He kisses Sasha warmly as Jack hugs his leg.

SASHA
No problem. I was just meeting
Jack's teacher. Sasha.

The teacher shakes Sasha's hand, standing down.

TEACHER
Welcome.

JACK
Do you like my drawing?

He holds up a worksheet drawing that says "MY FAMILY" at the top. Jack's drawn three FIGURES holding hands: "Daddy, Me, Sasha." Sasha studies it.

SASHA
It's perfect.

Jack smiles. Sasha hugs him. Off this happy family --

INT./EXT. SASHA'S CAR - DAY

Sasha is lost in thought, watching Jack playing.

Then - A KNOCK on her window startles her. She rolls her window down for the COACH (50s, burly, clipboard and whistle), who gives her a hard look.

COACH

Mind if I ask what you're doing here?

SASHA

(taken aback)

I'm watching the game.

COACH

You can't do that.

SASHA

What? Why not?

COACH

I can't have strangers driving in here to watch the kids, lady. Makes the parents jumpy.

Sasha's eyes go past him to the bleachers. A handful of PARENTS casting looks her way.

SASHA

I'm not a stranger, I'm his -- just ask Jack.

COACH

All parents and caregivers are here on my list. You are not on it.

Sasha cranes to see Jack - but the Coach blocks her view. She grows alarmed as he pulls out his phone and dials --

SASHA

What are you doing? Who are you calling?

COACH

Security. If you won't leave I have to have you removed --

SASHA

Don't do that. I'm going. See?

She puts her car in reverse and drives away, trying to catch a last glimpse Jack in her rearview. Off her... crushed.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

An upscale gastro-pub, Ellen and Julia's regular spot.

JULIA

No one aspires to be a soccer mom, you know.

(MORE)

JULIA (CONT'D)

Why do you think so many of us put
rum and coke in our coffee
travelers?

Julia refills their glasses from a margarita pitcher.

ELLEN

I'm hardly in soccer mom territory.
I haven't even met Jack yet. I
mean, until now, I haven't really
thought of him as a person. Patrick
having a son was sort of the same
as him having a Border Collie. Or
a speedboat.

JULIA

Border Collie would be less work.
You know Travis won't let me wash
his jeans anymore? He says "dirty
is the new clean."

ELLEN

How long do you wait to introduce
Travis to someone?

JULIA

I do not mention my kid to the men
I date.

ELLEN

Why not?

JULIA

Because my dating goals are
different from yours. Baggage does
not help one get laid.

ELLEN

It's not *baggage*, it's life. It's
the reality of dating in your late
30's. People have kids, and
alimony, and credit card debt...

JULIA

... And stalkers.

ELLEN

Yeah. And stalkers.

Ellen falls silent. She glances unconsciously around the
bar. Julia clocks it, just tipsy enough to say --

JULIA

God, I'd love to have a drink with her, wouldn't you? See what goes on in that twisted head of hers.

Ellen sighs. Reveals her own interest in the topic --

ELLEN

"The rejected stalker is often a former intimate partner, with a complex, volatile desire for both reconciliation and revenge."

(off her look)

But what does Google know.

JULIA

Been doing your homework, I see. Find out what she looks like?

ELLEN

Not yet.

JULIA

So she could be here.

ELLEN

No. She only follows Patrick.

JULIA

That he knows of, anyway...

Ellen looks around the bar again, suddenly on alert...

INT. BAR - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ellen slides the lock closed in her stall as the bathroom door OPENS and someone steps in. Heels clack on tile.

ELLEN

(calling)

I'm assuming you're sleeping over if Travis is at his Dad's? Jules?

A WOMAN enters the next stall. Ellen halts, pulse racing.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Is that what you're after? A mix of reconciliation and revenge? Revenge for what?

Completely forgetting her need to pee, Ellen leans against the partition, listening. The TOILET flushes, jarring her. She peers through the crack of her stall, trying to glimpse the WOMAN washing her hands. She can't get a good look.

Then - an EYE appears on the other side of the door, peering back at her through the crack. It's Julia.

JULIA
If you're looking for a glory hole,
I think you're doing it wrong.

Ellen rolls her eyes and opens the stall. She looks around, slumping with disappointment - the mystery woman has left.

ELLEN
Did you see someone in here just
now?

JULIA
I see two of you...

Julia squints drunkenly. Off Ellen, shaking it off.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Ellen and Julia stumble up the walkway. Ellen digs through her purse as Julia does an urgent pee-pee dance.

JULIA
Hurry up, I gotta pee.

ELLEN
Hang on, they're here somewhere...

Impatient, Julia lifts up a PLANTER BOX on the side of Ellen's front door, producing a HIDE-A-KEY.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
That's for emergencies.

JULIA
This qualifies.

Julia runs in. Ellen follows her as we PULL BACK FROM THEM --

EXT. ELLEN'S STREET - NIGHT

To a car, parked on the opposite side of the street. Engine off, lights off - PUSH closer... someone's inside.

INT./EXT. SASHA'S CAR - NIGHT

Sasha watches Ellen disappear behind the door. Her eyes drift to Ellen's planter box hiding spot. A small smile forms on her lips. Off this --

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Ellen is dressed for work, fluffing pillows, refilling chocolates - her pre-client routine. The DOORBELL rings.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

She opens the door and looks down to her feet - where a beautiful FLOWER ARRANGEMENT sits. Gerbera daisies mostly.

ELLEN
(softly)
Patrick...

She smiles, picks them up dreamily. Then, she scans the street beyond her porch, puzzled. No client in sight.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sasha is immersed in work, drafting a floor plan. Mickey passes by, slowing to admire her work.

MICKEY
I like what you did with the
atrium. Very inventive.

She looks up, smiles.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
You going to the gala?
(off her look)
Ribbon cutting for the Aerospace
museum. Black tie, open bar...

SASHA
That's tonight.

MICKEY
Some of us are getting together for
dinner first. Jerry's coming,
even. Says he's bringing his wife.

SASHA
Jerry has a wife?

MICKEY
Right? I'm dying of curiosity.

They share a grin. For just a moment, she's a regular person having a regular conversation with a co-worker.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

You should come. We worked hard on that project, we should celebrate.

SASHA

Okay.

They both look surprised. Sasha blinks - didn't entirely mean to say that out loud.

MICKEY

Okay. Great. See you there.

He leaves. Off Sasha, the smile draining from her face.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ellen happily pushes a cart laden with wine, champagne, pork loin... Then - she stops. The hair on her arms stands up.

ELLEN (V.O.)

You ever get the feeling you're being watched? Because I never have. Until now...

She turns to see someone DISAPPEAR around a display stand, ducking out of sight. Ellen hesitates -- then moves TOWARD the display, oddly compelled.

WITH ELLEN - MOVING around the display, slowly revealing --

ELLEN

Rosie?

Ellen reacts with surprise. Rosie meets her eyes, caught.

ROSIE

(nervous)

Hi, Ellen... I'm surprised to see you.

ELLEN

Yeah, well. I don't normally do my shopping at this time.

(pointedly)

But I had a no show this morning.

Rosie looks at her, guilty.

ROSIE

Sorry about that. I should've called. I meant to...to tell you I think we should take a break. From our sessions, I mean.

ELLEN
(surprised)
Is everything okay?

ROSIE
Yes. Great, actually. Me and Ian
are working it out.

ELLEN
Working it out?

Ellen reacts, measured. Non-confrontational. Rosie looks
around, lowering her voice.

ROSIE
Trust me, it's better this way.

ELLEN
Better for who?

ROSIE
He knows I've been seeing you. He
thinks you brainwashed me --

ELLEN
Why don't we schedule a session,
talk about all this?

ROSIE
Ian punishes people who stand
between him and what he wants. I'm
trying to protect you. I gotta go.

Rosie hurries away, spooked. Off Ellen, concerned...

INT. SASHA'S LOFT - EVENING

Sasha stands in her walk-in closet. She pulls out a GARMENT
BAG. She unzips it, revealing a beautiful beaded gown.
Perfect for a black tie affair.

Then - her PHONE CHIMES - her calendar app: "1 New
Notification: Dinner at Ellen's, 8pm." Sasha sighs. Closes
the app. Looks back to the dress.

She lifts the sleeve of the dress. She makes it "talk" in a
high-pitched, cartoonish voice.

SASHA
(as the dress)
Go to the party.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I don't want to.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(as the dress)
You promised you'd leave Patrick
alone.

The dress "scolds" her. Sasha looks at the dress with a
mixture of guilt and defiance.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(in dress voice)
A promise is a promise.

Off Sasha and her dress, mid-argument.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Ellen, looking ravishing, throws open the door, revealing
Patrick, dressed for their date, but looking stricken.

PATRICK
Hi. We have a problem --

ELLEN
What do you mean? What is it?

PATRICK
I have Jack with me.

Patrick gestures toward his CAR - where Jack plays a game on
Patrick's phone.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I was dropping him at his friend's,
where he's supposed to spend the
night. Then the mother calls me.
Kid's got the flu or something. I
wanted to call, but Jack was in the
car with me... so I just came here.

Ellen processes this. A little overwhelmed.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
So, how would you feel about Jack
joining us for dinner?

ELLEN
Jack. Joining us...

She smiles, wheels spinning. Patrick gauges her reaction.

ELLEN (V.O.)
His son. I'm meeting his son.
That's great. I think.
(then, faltering)
(MORE)

ELLEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Oh, God, I made pork loin. What
kid eats pork loin?*

PATRICK
Or, we can just reschedule --

ELLEN
No! No, let's do it. I'd love to
meet Jack.

PATRICK
Really? I know it's a lot to
spring on you...

ELLEN
I've got a box of Brownie mix and a
fully charged Ipad. What could go
wrong?

He gestures to Jack, who hops out of the car and joins them.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Hi, Jack. I'm Ellen.

JACK
I know. Where's your tv?

PATRICK
Where are your manners?

Jack walks in. Patrick looks at Ellen, they share a grin.

ELLEN (V.O.)
Here goes nothing...

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

An elegant space, marble floors and high ceilings. Passed
hors d'oeuvre, string quartet. SASHA stands at the entrance,
wearing the beautiful beaded gown, her hair swept up, lovely.

MICKEY
Sasha.

Mickey approaches, handsome in his tuxedo.

MICKEY (CONT'D)
I'm glad you made it.

SASHA
(unconvinced)
Me, too.

He offers her his arm. Off them, walking in --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen plays Monopoly with Patrick and Jack. Ellen catches Jack eyeing the charcuterie platter with suspicion. He looks at her, grins with mischief.

JACK

Can you teach me to hypnotize my friends?

ELLEN

Not in one night.

JACK

My dad said he can't be hypnotized.

ELLEN

Did he, now?

Patrick grins, caught.

PATRICK

All I said is I think some people are more susceptible than others.

ELLEN

The term is suggestible. There's a test for it, actually. Would you like me to give it to you?

Jack gets excited. Patrick looks at Ellen, questioning.

PATRICK

Isn't that against the rules?

ELLEN

Not if my credibility is at stake. Follow my lead, will you please?

She interlaces her hands as if in prayer, then lifts her index fingers so they're aligned, but not touching. Patrick does the same as Jack looks on.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I want you to imagine a powerful magnetic force is pulling your fingertips together. You're fighting it, but you can't resist. It's getting stronger. Even stronger. It's too strong. There.

Patrick's fingertips close. Ellen raises an eyebrow.

JACK

Whoa!

PATRICK

That's just -- I was just going along with what you were saying.

ELLEN

Exactly. Most hypnosis is self-hypnosis.

JACK

Do something else!

Patrick shrugs, agreeing. Ellen laughs. Off this --

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

Mickey and Sasha walk through the space, sipping champagne. He watches her look around, taking it all in.

SASHA

This is nice. I don't go out very much.

MICKEY

Well, we should change that. You should let me take you out some time. On a proper date.

Sasha falters, suddenly vulnerable. Mickey clocks this.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Just think about it. No pressure.

PUSH IN on her - the strings of the quartet suddenly grow dissonant. Silverware CLINKS on China, disproportionately loud. Her mind suddenly elsewhere...

PATRICK (PRELAP)

I don't want to pressure you.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Patrick sits with Sasha on the couch. He looks nervous.

PATRICK

I know it's only been six months. And I don't want to rush things. But when I think about us... And I see you with Jack... It's just time.

She tilts her head, not sure what's coming next...

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I want you to have this.

He produces an envelope.

SASHA
What is it?

PATRICK
A letter, from Colleen. She wrote
it when she realized she probably
wasn't going to --

He stops short, the words catching in his throat.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
It's a sort of instruction list.
Her wishes, for how she wanted Jack
to be raised.

SASHA
And you want me to have it?

PATRICK
I know you didn't sign up to raise
a five year-old. And Jack is a
handful, as you know --

SASHA
(stopping him)
Jack is more than I could have ever
hoped for. More than I could've
dreamed.

She takes the letter from him, tears in her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
This is what I signed up for.

Off them, in an emotional embrace.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

Mickey turns from the bar, toting two champagne glasses. But
his smile fades as he scans the room. Sasha is gone.

EXT. ELLEN'S STREET - NIGHT

Quiet, lined with trees and quaint street lamps. CRANE DOWN
to reveal Sasha - parked outside. Still in her gown.

Sasha spies Patrick on the couch. And then - JACK bounces into view. Sasha bolts upright in sudden shock - the sight of Jack in Ellen's house hitting her like a punch.

Ellen holds up a pan of BROWNIES. Sasha clocks the Duncan Hines box on the table. In utter disgust --

SASHA

From a box?

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen and Patrick tidy up the living room. A happy, easy vibe between them.

PATRICK

You were incredible with him.
Tonight was a huge success.

ELLEN

I'm just glad he ate the pork loin.

PATRICK

You're the first woman I've
introduced him to since his mother
died.

Ellen stops, looks at him.

ELLEN

What about Sasha?

PATRICK

I don't count her.

ELLEN

But didn't you live together? For
a couple years? Surely she had a
relationship with Jack --

PATRICK

(sharply)
He barely remembers her.

Ellen reacts to his tone as Jack calls from the hall --

JACK (O.S.)

Dad!

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Patrick and Ellen find Jack in the hall putting on his shoes. Jack points to the flowers arranged on the table.

JACK
Look. Gerberas.

ELLEN
Oh, thank you for those, by the way. They're beautiful. Did you pick those out with your dad, Jack?

JACK
No.

Patrick looks at her, uneasy...

PATRICK
We didn't send them.

Ellen nods, a pit forming in her stomach. Then --

ELLEN
How do you know what they're called, Jack?

JACK
They're my mom's favorite. We bring 'em to the cemetery for her.

ELLEN
I see.

ELLEN (V.O.)
Sasha.

Ellen's eyes dart to Patrick. He reads her thoughts --

PATRICK
It can't be her. She -- she's never done anything like this --

JACK
Who are you talking about?

Flustered, Patrick snaps --

PATRICK
Go wait in the car, Jack.

JACK
Why?

PATRICK
Because I said so!

Ellen reacts to the wild look in Patrick's eye, stepping in.

JACK
Did I do something wrong?

ELLEN

No, sweetie. Patrick, why don't
you guys head home, it's late --

PATRICK

It's just psychotic. You shouldn't
have to look at this!

He reaches for the flowers like he wants to strangle them.

ELLEN

Patrick --

He spins toward Ellen -- and KNOCKS the vase to the floor.
It SHATTERS loudly. Water and glass everywhere. Jack backs
up. Patrick stops, sees how disturbed Ellen is.

PATRICK

I'm sorry --

ELLEN

It's okay. It was an accident...

ELLEN (V.O.)

It was, right?

Patrick reaches to tidy the mess -- CUTS himself on glass.
Cursing, he puts it to his lips. Ellen fights for composure.

ELLEN

I think you should go.

PATRICK

(off her look)

Okay. You're right. Say good
night to Ellen, Jack.

JACK

Goodnight, Ellen.

Ellen waves as Jack bounds out the door, escaping the tension
in the hall. She bends down and picks up a large piece of
broken glass. Patrick looks at her as he heads out, his
expression a mix of anger and regret. Off this --

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen sits at the kitchen island, reading the SEATTLE TIMES - the headline "Hypnotherapy - Snake Oil For The Modern Age."

ELLEN

This reporter characterizes all hypnotherapy as a hoax, and refers to me personally as a "con artist" no less than three times.

JULIA

What does she have against you?

ELLEN

It's not her. It's her boss.

Ellen pulls up IAN ROMANS' WIKI page. His face staring back at her. Julia scans it as Ellen folds the newspaper up.

JULIA

Who's Ian Roman?

ELLEN

He owns the paper. And he's using it to punish me for his fiancée wanting to break up with him, apparently.

JULIA

He can't honestly blame you for that.

ELLEN

According to this article, I'm to blame for all kinds of things.

Julia closes Ian Roman's profile on Ellen's computer.

ON SCREEN: A few open WEB PAGES searches: "Reasons For Stalking, A Psychologist's Perspective," "Obsessive Behaviors Explained." Julia looks at Ellen.

JULIA

So... I think we need to talk about a restraining order.

ELLEN

Against some lackey reporter doing Ian Roman's bidding? I hardly think that would solve my problem.

JULIA

I'm not talking about the article.
I'm talking about Sasha.

Julia's eyes go to the Gerberas, which Ellen has salvaged from the broken vase and stuck in a jar of water.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Why haven't you thrown those away?

ELLEN

I don't know. They're pretty.

JULIA

Yes. A very pretty reminder that your boyfriend's stalker has your home address.

ELLEN

I work from home. A lot of people have my address.

Julia takes Ellen in, baffled.

JULIA

So you're doubling down on this guy?

ELLEN

I met his son. And it was really great. At least, before the thing with the flowers --

JULIA

The flowers his stalker sent, you mean?

Ellen looks both vulnerable and determined as Julia's eyes narrow - something dawning on her.

ELLEN

I'm not gonna let her ruin this for me. I like him too much.

JULIA

I think you like her too much.

ELLEN

What?

JULIA

You're getting off on it somehow. The idea of this woman following you around...

ELLEN
That's crazy --

JULIA
No, keeping those flowers is crazy.

ELLEN
Fine.

Ellen grabs the Gerberas and tosses them in the trash.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Ian Roman is trying to ruin my
life. Can we not fight?

Julia nods, letting it go for now. Off them, unsettled --

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sasha finds Mickey rolling up blueprints. A beat.

SASHA
There's something you don't know
about me.

MICKEY
I think there are a lot of things
about you I don't know...

SASHA
I should've told you sooner.

She moves toward him, genuine. Eyes full of regret.

SASHA (CONT'D)
The truth is, I was involved with
someone for a long time. The love
of my life, actually. We hit a
rough patch, parted ways. And
we've tried to move on. But what
we've both realized is that it's
just not over between us.

MICKEY
Oh. I see.

SASHA
I really like you, Mickey. But
Patrick and I are soulmates. And I
can't let anything come between us.

She smiles apologetically. Off him, vaguely unnerved --

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Ellen joins Patrick at a small patio cafe, a little guarded.

PATRICK

Thank you for meeting me so last minute.

ELLEN

I happen to be free. Another client flaked, thanks to Ian.

PATRICK

I cancelled my subscription to the Seattle Times. In solidarity.

She looks at him, her expression neutral. He clears his throat, gets to the point.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I want to apologize for losing it the way I did. I didn't want Sasha to ruin our night, and when I saw the flowers -- She just pushes me to my limits.

ELLEN

I can understand that.

PATRICK

But I know I can't just pretend she didn't exist. But sometimes I wish I could, because --

He reaches for her hand. Meets her eyes.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Because I love this. What we have. And I don't want my baggage to screw it up.

She looks up, touched by the sincerity of his words.

ELLEN

You're not screwing anything up. And anyway, I don't like that word.

PATRICK

What word, love?

ELLEN

No, baggage.

(then)

I like the other word very much.

They smile, clearly falling for each other as we GO TO --

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

LOW ANGLE outside Ellen's house. Sasha steps onto the porch, deftly lifts the PLANTER BOX and retrieves the hide-a-key.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SASHA moves into Ellen's kitchen. She finds an APRON, quickly ties it around her waist. She looks around.

MUSIC - "You Look Like An Angel" by Elvis over QUICK CUTS --

-- Sasha sifts flour, white particles flying through the air.

-- BANANA PEELS pile up on the counter.

-- An ELECTRIC BEATER plunges into dough, splattering.

-- An egg DROPS to the floor, breaks into a runny mess. Sasha crouches down beside it, tilts her head.

SASHA
(to the egg)
Sorry. You are not on the list.

She steps over the fatally cracked egg, resumes her work.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mickey passes by Sasha's work station, eyes her empty chair. He makes his way back to his own desk, plops down.

Mickey turns to the workspace next to his, where JERRY (50's, jolly) eats a sandwich.

MICKEY
Sasha back from lunch?

JERRY
Not yet, I don't think.

Mickey nods, thinking. Finally --

MICKEY
Do you remember the name of the guy she used to go out with? He worked for one of the survey firms we use. Patrick something.

Jerry thinks.

JERRY

Patrick Scott. Works for Pan
Pacific, I think?

MICKEY

Right. Patrick Scott.

JERRY

Why do you ask?

MICKEY

No reason.

Off Mickey, his eyes drifting back to Sasha's empty chair.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sasha opens the OVEN and pulls out two pans of BANANA BREAD.

She wipes a streak of flour from her forehead. Mixing bowls
are piled in the sink, the counter's a mess. Sasha transfers
the breads to a plate, meticulous, methodical, untroubled.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen digs for her keys in her purse again, on the phone.

ELLEN

(into phone)

Rosie, it's Ellen again. We need
to talk. I'd like to schedule a
session soon. Please call me back.

She hangs up, flustered. Finds her keys and steps into --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

TIGHT ON ELLEN as she stands in the kitchen. WIDEN TO
reveal: The kitchen is spotless. She picks up the newspaper
off the kitchen island, and heads for the trash with it.

ANGLE ON the trash contents, which show no sign of Sasha.
The Gerberas lay on top, necks bent. Ellen spies one of the
flowers, somehow still straight and perky.

She rescues it. Puts it in a teacup of water on the sill.

Then, she turns to leave the kitchen - pausing at the door
for just a beat, sniffing the air.

ELLEN (V.O.)

What is that, banana bread?

SMASH TO:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Jack sits at the side of the field, tying his cleats for practice. Suddenly, he looks up - sensing something.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

On the far side of the lot, free of the watchful stare of parents and coaches - REVEAL Sasha in her car. Jack walks through the lot, then freezes. They lock eyes.

She opens her car door, stepping out. Jack looks behind him - the Coach has yet to notice he's gone - then he runs into Sasha's arms.

SASHA

Hey, you.

JACK

You missed my game.

She closes her eyes, devastated to disappoint him.

SASHA

I know, honey. I tried to come,
but... here. I made you
something. As an "I'm sorry."

JACK

Banana bread.

SASHA

Still your favorite, right?

He nods, shoving it into his mouth in one piece. She smiles, stroking his hair. Maternal.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry about the game.

JACK

I thought maybe you weren't gonna
come anymore. Because of Ellen.

Alarm flickers across Sasha's eyes.

SASHA

Don't you worry about Ellen. I'm
not going anywhere. Not ever.

INT. JULIA'S BOUTIQUE - NIGHT

Julia dresses a mannequin in the storefront, talking to her phone, lying beside her on SPEAKER.

JULIA

Did he actually say the words "I love you?"

ELLEN (V.O.)

(on phone)

No. But that was the sentiment.
The word love was said. By him.

JULIA

And I assume you're en route to further explore the nuances of that sentiment? By which, I mean have sex?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ELLEN'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Ellen smiles at her protective friend, speaking on Bluetooth as she drives, dolled up for a date.

ELLEN

Red lace and all.

JULIA

Have fun. Oh, and be sure to leave the window open so Sasha gets a good view.

ELLEN

Very funny.

JULIA

That wasn't a joke. Unless you came to your senses and filed a restraining order since we last spoke.

ELLEN

'Bye, Jules.

Ellen hangs up, smiling. Then she quickly throws a look in her rearview mirror. Her face changes.

IN HER REARVIEW: a CAR trails her, headlights off. A little unnerved, Ellen changes lanes. So does the car behind...

ELLEN (V.O.)

I thought you only followed him?

Ellen makes a SUDDEN TURN. The tailing car follows suit. Ellen pulls over. The other car pulls behind her. Ellen squints in the rearview - can't see the driver.

Ellen gets out. And we realize - that's not Sasha's car behind her. IAN ROMAN (40, imposing) walks toward her.

Expensive suit, designer shoes. Just like his Wiki page - except his eyes are puffy, his tie askew - he may have been drinking. He towers over her, a manic energy about him.

Ellen instinctively takes a step back. But he still looms.

ELLEN

Mr. Roman.

IAN ROMAN

(oozing sarcasm)

Please, call me Ian. I'm sure that's how you refer to me when you're brainwashing my wife.

ELLEN

I haven't brainwashed anyone. That article was cheap and unethical --

IAN ROMAN

That article is just the beginning of what I can do to you.

He staggers toward her, rage coming off him like cologne. She draws in a breath, silenced. But he holds up his hands, as if to illustrate he's not harming her.

IAN ROMAN (CONT'D)

Stay away from Rosie. Or I'll see you again very soon.

He backs away from her, disappearing into his car and driving off. Off Ellen, finally exhaling...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Patrick throws open the door and walks Ellen inside. He puts his arm around her, consumed with worry.

ELLEN
I'm okay, really.

PATRICK
I'm staying with you tonight.
(before she can protest)
My mom is watching Jack, I'm
staying.

They head to the living room, landing on the couch.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Tomorrow I'm putting an alarm
system in. Security cameras. And
we'll file a restraining order
first thing in the morning. That
creep is not coming near you again.

Ellen looks at him, overwhelmed and emotional.

ELLEN
After Ian drove away, I stood
there, shaking, thinking a million
things. I need to call my mom,
Julia, Rosie... but before all
that... The first thing I thought?
Was "Patrick."

He takes her face in his hands, overwhelmed.

PATRICK
I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.

He pulls her into a kiss - a long kiss, that grows increasingly passionate, the emotion of the night taking hold of them both and pulling us up to --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Where clothes drop hastily on the floor as they make their way toward the bed, passionate. Suddenly, Ellen stops, her attention drawn over his shoulder. He notices her distraction, slows down a beat, rubbing her bare arms.

PATRICK
You okay?

We see where her attention went - the open window.

ELLEN

Yes.

She kisses him with lust, pulls him toward the window. He pushes her against the wall as we clock her HAND opening the window a bit more. She grabs him, perversely thrilled by possibility that they're being watched. Off this --

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Dawn just breaking over the bay. Ellen walks along the shoreline, her pant legs rolled up. She skips a few stones.

ELLEN (V.O.)

They say love makes you do crazy things. Maybe Ian loves Rosie so much, he truly lost his mind when she tried to leave. Is that what happened to Sasha? Did she just snap one day? Does she believe that if she holds out long enough, Patrick will come back to her?

Ellen turns to see Patrick walking toward her, carrying two coffee mugs. He wraps his arms around her.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Sorry Sasha, I don't think that's gonna happen.

Off Ellen and Patrick's morning-after glow...

EXT. SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN SEATTLE - DAY

Sasha walks along a busy sidewalk. She slows as she sees a KID with his mother pass by. The KID reaches into his pocket and retrieves an asthma inhaler. As Sasha looks on, we --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Sasha bursts into the E.R., screaming. She carries 5 YEAR-OLD JACK her arms. He's gasping in shallow, jagged breaths, his eyes wide with alarm.

SASHA

**I need help. He can't breathe!
Hang on Jack, just hang on, baby.
(screaming)
HELP ME!**

She sobs, in the grips of every parent's worst nightmare.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Hours later. Jack's small body on a hospital bed, oxygen mask over his face. Sasha talks to the DOCTOR at Jack's bedside, when suddenly Patrick bursts in, panicked.

PATRICK

What happened?

Patrick clocks the mask over Jack's face, devastated.

DOCTOR

Your son has asthma.

PATRICK

What? Since when?

DOCTOR

Sometimes it comes on suddenly.

Triggered by the environment.

(to Sasha)

Or maybe there's a family history?

Patrick flinches involuntarily, muttering under his breath --

PATRICK

She's not his mother.

The doctor continues, not hearing him --

DOCTOR

He's going to be okay, thanks to your quick actions. He was in acute hypoxia, Mom got him here just in time. I'd like to keep him overnight --

PATRICK

She's not his mother.

The Doctor reacts to this eruption. Sasha looks down, wounded. She takes Jack's hand. Off this tense moment.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN SEATTLE - DAY

Sasha SNAPS out of her reverie --

PATRICK

What the hell are you doing here?

She smiles as Patrick stands before her, staring daggers.

SASHA

I was just out for a walk.

PATRICK

(yeah, right)

Exactly in front of my office.

SASHA

We need to talk about Jack. Don't you think it was a little soon to introduce her to Ellen? I mean, what were you thinking, Patrick?

PATRICK

That's none of your business.

He glares at her, seething. She tilts her head.

SASHA

What is so special about her? Just tell me that. What is it about Ellen?

PATRICK

Don't say her name.

SASHA

Then what should I call her?

PATRICK

You are not in this picture. Understand? I don't want to see you, I don't want to talk to you, I want nothing to do with you.

Despite the harshness of his tone, Sasha is smiling. Intoxicated by his proximity. She whispers to him --

SASHA

Then why didn't you just keep walking?

And now Patrick realizes his fatal mistake - he's given her exactly the attention she wants. Wordlessly, he storms away.

Off Sasha, watching him go. Hardly deterred...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Sasha sits on a park bench, reading Colleen's letter.

We catch glimpses of Colleen's handwriting. "Kind and generous... must have discipline... not be spoiled... consideration." Sasha looks up, moved.

SASHA

Beautiful.

She carefully folds the letter, slides it into the envelope.

She holds the envelope over a nearby trash can, lighting it on FIRE. Off Sasha... watching the flame engulf the letter.

INT. ANNE'S CONDO - DAY

Ellen sits at the table with Anne, drinking a cup of tea.

ANNE

That man could've killed you.

ELLEN

But he didn't. I'm alive.

ANNE

Alive and in love, I dare say.

(off Ellen's look)

Nobody looks this happy after almost being killed on the side of the road, dear. This is the widower, I presume?

Anne raises an eyebrow at her daughter.

ELLEN

Patrick. Yes. And for the record, I think it's beautiful that he had a wife, whom he loved deeply. I'm not threatened by Colleen.

ANNE

Okay... so what's the problem?

Ellen slumps. Anne can read her daughter like a book.

ELLEN

I'm not *threatened*, per se. But I do think about her. I wonder if she'd approve of me.

ANNE

I doubt she'd approve you dating her husband. Wives don't tend to go for that sort of thing.

ELLEN

I mean with Jack. She was his mother. Do you think she'd be okay with me in her son's life?

ANNE

I don't know, hon. But if the opinion of a dead woman is your biggest worry with this man, I'd say you have a rosy future ahead.

Anne offers a reassuring toast of her teacup, confident.

ELLEN

Actually. There's something else about him you should know.

Off Ellen, taking a deep breath...

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE SECTION - DAY

Sasha makes her to the sales counter, lays a RED LACE lingerie set - identical to Ellen's - beside the register.

SALESGIRL

Is this a gift?

SASHA

No. It's for me.

SALESGIRL

Big date?

She smiles coyly. The Salesgirl hands Sasha her bag.

SALESGIRL (CONT'D)

Enjoy it.

SASHA

I will.

Off Sasha, breezing out the door --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Ellen looks over her APPOINTMENT BOOK. We scan it with her, clocking ROSIE'S NAME written in by hand.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Rosie booked a session the other day. Said she postponed the wedding, and wants to quit smoking for good.

(MORE)

ELLEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Though after the damage Ian did to
my practice, I think she made the
appointment mostly out of guilt.*

The DOORBELL rings. Ellen adds a few more chocolates to the bowl, then heads to the door.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*I did book a new client this week.
So with any luck, I'll survive with
or without Rosie's charity.*

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen opens the door. STAY ON HER, smiling in warm welcome.

ELLEN
Deborah, right? Come on in.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

We follow Ellen into the office over DEBORAH'S shoulder. Ellen has her back to us, leading us into the office --

ELLEN
In your message, you said you
suffer from chronic pain.
Something about an old wound?

With Ellen's back still to her, Deborah reaches up to adjust a BRA STRAP, peeking out from under her blouse. RED LACE. Unmistakable. She tucks it safely out of view as Ellen finally turns to face her.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
I hope I can help.

Ellen gestures for Deborah to sit. And now we ARC AROUND from Ellen to finally REVEAL DEBORAH - serenely holding Ellen's gaze. Helping herself to a chocolate. It's Sasha.

She smiles at Ellen.

SASHA
Me, too. I have a good feeling
about us.

ELLEN
Why don't we begin?

Off them --

END OF PILOT