

I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY

THE SCREENPLAY



Written By
ANTHONY McCARTEN

May 14, 2020

PRODUCERS: Muse Of Fire Productions, Primary Wave, Whit Nipp Enterprises, Clive Davis.

EXT. WHITNEY'S MANSION (1991) - DAY

A DELIVERY VAN arrives - and a LARGE BOX is taken up to the house by a DELIVERY MAN...who, when the door opens, can't believe his eyes! He freezes, can only stare -

 WHITNEY (O.S.)
Well?

 DELIVERY MAN
Delivery?

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION (1991) - DAY

Without fully revealing her, a YOUNG WOMAN (**WHITNEY HOUSTON**, 28) - opens the BOX. Inside - a VACUUM CLEANER.

(WHITNEY) plugs in the vacuum cleaner and starts to VACUUM. Happy, she sings/rehearses - the STAR SPANGLED BANNER -

 WHITNEY
*Oh, say can you see--when you see--
by the dawn's--by the dawn's early
liiiiight--what so prouuuuu--
prou--prouuuudly we hailed--at
the twilight's last gleaming?...*

HIGH ANGLE O/HEAD of: WHITNEY, happily vacuuming, and stop-start singing, working out the vocal.

EXT. WHITNEY'S MANSION (1991)

Through the window we see WHITNEY, vacuuming, singing...

PRELAP: Rising sound of a FIGHTER JET -

EXT. SKIES - DAY

A patch of EMPTY SKY is suddenly filled by - an F16 FIGHTER JET (rearing up into frame from below)

The FIGHTER then banks and falls into line with -

THREE other F16 FIGHTER PLANES, flying in tight diamond formation.

INT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY (1991)

A VAST STADIUM CROWD waves little AMERICAN FLAGS as they await the Superbowl Football pre-game show -

SUPERBOWL COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
Almost ready then for Superbowl 25--

CUT TO:

PRESS BOOTH. With a view of the entire packed stadium, one of the many SPORTS COMMENTATORS leans into the MICROPHONE -

SUPERBOWL COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)
- where the Giants take on the
Buffalo Bills for the ultimate prize
in football.

INT. DRESSING ROOM/ TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

To the sound (off) of a packed stadium, WHITNEY, in dressing gown, applies her own lipstick - doing vocal exercises and softly singing to herself the NATIONAL ANTHEM...

Enter, WHITNEY's STYLIST, pushing a rack of DRESSES and GOWNS. Behind her, her CREATIVE ASSISTANT, ROBYN CRAWFORD.

ROBYN
Alright. Time to choose. Can't
put this off any longer.

The STYLIST holds up two glittering gowns -

STYLIST
I have a range of different
looks here to choose from -

WHITNEY
No dresses. Uh uh. No dresses.

The STYLIST and ROBYN share a surprised look.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
This is superbowl. This is beer,
chicken wings, family tailgate
grills. Uh uh.

STYLIST
No dresses?

WHITNEY
Nope.

INT. RUNWAY/ TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

As WHITNEY and her GUARDS and ROBYN walk down the runway toward the stadium and the LOUDLY BAYING crowds...

WHITNEY wears a white Le Coq Sportiff tracksuit, and a white headband holding up her hair.

She starts to sing to herself the song "**HOME**"...

WHITNEY

Home...

EXT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

The CROWD wave their flags and cheer -

SUPERBOWL COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

And now, to honor America -

INT. IRAQ/ MILITARY TENT - DAY

GULF WAR US TROOPS, in desert uniform, are crammed into a tent to watch a telecast of SUPERBOWL -

CAMERA passes over the faces of young men and women in uniform -

SUPERBOWL COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

*- especially the brave men and women
serving our nation in the Persian
Gulf and throughout the world -*

The TROOPS cheer -

EXT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

One FAN in the crowd holds up a sign - that reads: "**AMERICAS
BRAVEST CITIZENS - Support Our Troops**"

SUPERBOWL COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

*- please join in the singing of our
national anthem. The anthem, which
will be preceded by a fly-over of F16
Jets from the 56th Tactical Training
Wing at McBeal Airforce Base, will be
sung this year by Grammy-Award winner
- Whitney - Houston...*

A SOLITARY MICROPHONE stands in the middle of the field, awaiting the singer's arrival. As the CROWD cheers -

EXT. SKIES - DAY

The FOUR FIGHTER PLANES light up their SMOKE TRAILS - in three colors: One RED, Two WHITE and One BLUE.

The SIX FIGHTERS then bank together and swoop down on -

EXT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

The CROWD, hearing the FIGHTER PLANES, all look up into the sky and point -

INT. RUNWAY/ TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

WHITNEY and her GUARDS and ROBYN (with a TV CAMERMAN in advance of her) - near the entrance to the stadium, where they are greeted by the RISING SOUND of the F16's and the CROWD -

EXT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

As the F16s begin a low and loud fly-over pass of the stadium-

CUT TO:

The MICROPHONE, waiting in the middle of the field. The CHEERS of the CROWD (O.S) and the sound of F16's at climax -

FLASHBACK TO:

**EXT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/ WAINWRIGHT ST/ NEWARK - NIGHT
(1967)**

24 YEARS EARLIER

WHITNEY (O.S.)

Home...

A modest but well-maintained family home. Lights burn inside. We hold on this idealized image of middle-class American life until -

- a **BLACK YOUTH** sprints through the frame, inexplicably entering and exiting, right to left.

We push in on the HOUSTON front door...

PRELAP:

CISSY (O.S.)

Okay, quiet down. Whitney, your turn.

INT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/WAINWRIGHT ST/ NEWARK - NIGHT (1967)

WHITNEY (4) is placed in a high-chair by her devoted father, JOHN, who kisses her on the head - she's Daddy's girl alright. Also seated at table are Whitney's mother, CISSY, and her older brothers MICHAEL and half-brother GARY.

The CURTAINS are drawn.

WHITNEY
I did it--Tuesday -

CISSY
Enough. Your turn, baby. Let's go.

WHITNEY folds her hands, and closes her eyes.

WHITNEY
Father God--we thank you for the
blessing of this food--bless our
beautiful family and our beautiful
home--and Mommie and Papa, who are
the best best best parents in the
world--but not so much Michael or
Gary who are horrible to me -

JOHN HOUSTON
Whitney Elizabeth!

WHITNEY
- for which I'm so so so grateful -

AS GARY reaches for some chicken - thinking everyone has their
eyes closed, CISSY spots it -

CISSY
Gary you touch that chicken -
(picks up a knife)
- I swear to God.

As GARY puts the chicken down -

WHITNEY
In family and faith we trust -

FAMILY
- family and faith -

CISSY
Amen.

FAMILY
Amen.

As they begin to serve -

- BULLETS pierce the window - BANG! BANG! BANG! - as the FAMILY dives for cover under the table, screaming in fear for their lives...

CLOSE ON: WHITNEY, teary-eyed, terrified.

JOHN HOUSTON
Get down! Get down!

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

The **NEWARK RIOTS** - (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE)

- A) Police brutality - beating of an unarmed black man.
- B) Rioting
- C) Property destruction
- D) 3000 National Guard deployed on the streets
- E) 26 people killed, hundreds injured.

INT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/ BEDROOM/ WAINWRIGHT ST (1967)

Sitting low, against the wall, below window height, CISSY cradles WHITNEY's head in her lap. **In what is to be a repeated MOTHER-CHILD TABLEAU**, CISSY strokes WHITNEY's hair, with GARY and MICHAEL huddled close.

CISSY
(sings)
*I once was lost in sin but Jesus took
me in...*
(speaking)
Come on now.

They all join in - a way of coping with the fear -

CISSY/GARY/MICHAEL/WHITNEY
*And then a little light from Heaven
filled my soul/ He bathed my heart in
love and wrote my name above
And just a little talk with Jesus
made me whole...*

CLOSE ON: WHITNEY, with her head in her MOM's lap, has her eyes trained on -

- the BLACK AND WHITE TV SET, which soundlessly plays - **"THE DORIS DAY SHOW"** - the epitome of the white American Dream.

INT. NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH/ NEWARK (1982)

WHITNEY (19) dressed in a white vestment leads the BAPTIST CHOIR in song...conducted by SISSY. The CHOIR is singing along with her, so that her voice is first among equals...

WHITNEY
*...Oh, I go to Him in prayer, He
 knows my every care
 And just a little talk with Jesus
 gonna makes it right...*

The CONGREGATION ecstatically joins in...

In the CONGREGATION, JOHN HOUSTON, and also the **PASTOR**, who smiles, delighted.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/ EAST ORANGE/ NJ - DAY (1982)

ROBYN CRAWFORD (22) goes from group to group passing out fliers when she sees -

WHITNEY, sitting alone. ROBYN approaches her.

ROBYN
 Hey.

WHITNEY
(nervously)
 What?

ROBYN
 Just said "hey".

WHITNEY
 Hey.

ROBYN
 And you are?

WHITNEY
 Whitney ElizabethHouston.

ROBYN
Whitney ElizabethHouston.
(*amused*)
You always give your middle name?

WHITNEY stares at her - of course she does.

ROBYN (CONT'D)
You from around here?

WHITNEY
East Orange. Mount St Dominic
Academy.

ROBYN
The Catholic High school? The
white Catholic High School?

WHITNEY
You?

ROBYN
College. Just home for the summer.
Nice perfume. What's it called?

WHITNEY
Worth by JeReviens.

ROBYN picks up a basketball.

ROBYN
You play basketball?

She spins the basketball on her finger-tip.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTRE/ EAST ORANGE/ NJ - DAY

BASKETBALL COURT. ROBYN shoots and drains a long-range bucket -
SWISH.

WHITNEY
Bet you can't do it again.

ROBYN
You doubt me? You're questioning me?
Let's see you do better -

ROBYN tosses the ball but WHITNEY is unprepared and it sails
past her, rolling to a stop against the chainlink fence.

WHITNEY runs to get it, just as - THREE WHITE GIRLS from her
SCHOOL walk past.

WHITE GIRL 1
Well if it isn't *White-ney*.

WHITE GIRL 2
Stuck-up little Oreo, on the cover of
Seventeen!

WHITE GIRL 1
Thinking she's a model.

WHITE GIRL 2
Thinking she's hot.

The WHITE GIRLS laugh at her -

At this moment GARY and MICHAEL walk up the street and see the harassment - GARY is now very tall, MICHAEL not so. As GARY walks toward ROBYN, MICHAEL sees that WHITNEY is upset -

WHITNEY
Brave--with a fence between us.
Whyn't you come round this side.

The WHITE GIRLS walk away as MICHAEL approaches -

WHITE GIRL 1
See you at school, nappy-headed
bitch.

WHITNEY touches her hair - insecure about it.

MICHAEL
Whassup Nip?

WHITNEY
Nuthin.

WHITNEY and MICHAEL return to ROBYN, as GARY calls for the ball. ROBYN throws the ball to GARY, who dribbles up and DUNKS the ball in a spectacular SLAM!

ROBYN
Whoa!

WHITNEY
That's Gary. NBA. Denver Nuggets.
Playing in the CBA now. And this is
Michael.

ROBYN
(to MICHAEL)
Hey.

GARY

Nippy!
(passes the ball to her)

WHITNEY catches the ball this time.

ROBYN

"Nippy"?

WHITNEY

That cartoon character Nippy,
you know -

ROBYN

- who keeps getting into trouble?

MICHAEL

Nip! Pass!

WHITNEY throws it to MICHAEL. MICHAEL dribbles the ball toward the basket but then has his shot blocked by GARY -

ROBYN

Ouch!

MICHAEL

Shit. Girls wanna get high?

MICHAEL pulls out a JOINT.

WHITNEY

(*embarrassed*)
(to ROBYN)

Let's go.

WHITNEY leads ROBYN away.

GARY

Nip, where ya goin'?

GARY shoots and scores, and the two men start to play one-on-one with their own ball.

EXT. STREET/ EAST ORANGE - DAY

ROBYN bounces her ball as she walks home beside WHITNEY.

ROBYN

Cissy Houston's your Mom? The singer?

WHITNEY nods, no big deal.

WHITNEY

My first cousin is Dionne Warwick.

ROBYN

You're shitting me. No damn way.

WHITNEY

Aretha Franklin is like my Godmother.

ROBYN

Stop it now!

WHITNEY

My dream, crazy, is to be a professional singer like them--and then branch out into movies, you know?

ROBYN

Naturally.

WHITNEY

- but the bar is way way too high so I'm happy to just, just sing my little *shoop shoops* and *diddy dum diddy doo's* back of my Mom.

ROBYN

Let me hear you. Sing. I showed you my three point shot. Come on.

WHITNEY

Uh uh. Come along to the Sweetwater Club sometime. You can see me sing chorus for my Mom.

INT. SWEETWATER'S CLUB / NYC - DAY

CISSY sings lead, while WHITNEY and GARY and a third woman sing back-up.

ANGLE ON: ROBYN, smiling, watching WHITNEY sing.

EXT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/ EAST ORANGE - DAY

WHITNEY, on her own now, walks down the street, happy, humming a BAPTIST song to herself - **"I LOVE THE LORD"**

WHITNEY
(singing)
*I love the the Lord, he heard my cry/
 And pitied every groan, long as I, I
 live/ And troubles rise,
 I hasten to histhrone...*

WHITNEY passes her MOTHER'S CAR in the driveway: the bumper sticker is "**JESUS LOVES YOU**".

She goes to the front door - MUSIC is playing inside - the door is locked. She goes round the back of the house.

INT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/ EAST ORANGE - DAY

KITCHEN. WHITNEY enters the kitchen through the back door - walking toward the living room, where she hears her mother's laughter -

WHITNEY
 Mommie ?

LIVING ROOM. WHITNEY enters and sees CISSY swaying, as she listens to the music, holding a glass of wine.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
 Mommie?

CISSY turns and stares at WHITNEY -

CISSY
 Go to your room.

WHITNEY
 I just -

CISSY
 Now.

Enter, the **PASTOR**, laughing, wearing only a tank-top undershirt and trousers.

PASTOR
 Cissy, I -
(sees WHITNEY)
 Whitney. Well, I -

CISSY
(to the PASTOR)
 Ah, here's your shirt, Pastor. Ah,
 we'll see you on Saturday for
 rehearsals.
(to WHITNEY)
 (MORE)

CISSY (CONT'D)
The pastor was, uh, he lost a button,
I sewed it back on.

WHITNEY stares, trying to make sense of this scene -

 PASTOR
We got a Believer's Baptism on
Saturday. We were just discussing the
hymns.

 CISSY
Some new songs. Now go to your room.
Don't make me tell you again.

WHITNEY doesn't move - in shock now.

 PASTOR
Not how it looks.

Exit WHITNEY. CISSY follows WHITNEY -

 PASTOR (CONT'D)
Dammit.

KITCHEN.

 CISSY
Nippy! Don't be looking at me like
that, child. And don't go building
this into something it's not. Hear
me? We're friends is all.

WHITNEY shakes her head -

 WHITNEY
How could you? Daddy - ?

 CISSY
You think your father's a saint? Huh?
Uh Uh. When you grow up you'll
understand. Now--go to your room.
Whitney Elizabeth I gave you an
order. Get your skinny ass up those
stairs.

ANGLE ON: WHITNEY, stunned, as TEARS come -

 WHITNEY
You've ruined everything.

WHITNEY storms up stairs and slams a DOOR.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT/ COMMUNITY CENTRE/ EAST ORANGE/ NJ - DAY

WHITNEY and ROBYN sit, back to back, on the basketball court, their eyes closed, HIGH now, as -

- GARY and MICHAEL, in the distance, walk away.

We circle WHITNEY and ROBYN as -

WHITNEY
They're fakes, they're phonies. My
whole life, filling me up with Jesus,
while all the time, lies, it was all
a lie, hypocrites and liars--
hypocrites and liars...

- their hands finds each other, and their fingers intertwine -
taking consolation in each other.

EXT. HOUSTON FAMILY HOME/ EAST ORANGE - DAY

WHITNEY carry suitcases out of her family home. She is in a hurry - as if running from an incident.

As WHITNEY starts to tote her suitcases up the street - CISSY comes out of the house and calls -

CISSY
I'm trying to protect you girl!
From damnation! That's right!
You hearing me?
(beat)
You only got one mother!

UP WITH: an INSTRUMENTAL VERSION of "I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY". This plays over -

MONTAGE

A) WHITNEY, back in WHITE GOWN, is joylessly singing lead in the CHOIR once again, conducted by CISSY. WHITNEY shoots angry looks at her mother.

B) NEWARK AIRPORT. AIRPORT CHECK-IN DESK. ROBYN is an airline check-in worker, in uniform, dispensing boarding passes and checking in bags. A large male supervisor, MARVIN, comes up from behind and stands ridiculously close to ROBYN, not respecting her personal space.

ROBYN
Marvin.

MARVIN

How did you know it's me?

ROBYN

You don't wanna know the answer to that.

MARVIN, rebuked, backs away and cups his hand over his mouth to sniff his own breath.

Next in line: WHITNEY, holding up DOOR KEYS.

ROBYN (CONT'D)

We got it?!

C) In a department store, WHITNEY and ROBYN buy kitchen items - throwing them in their SHOPPING CART.

D) WHITNEY and ROBYN move in to their new apartment.

E) ROBYN sets flowers in a vase, as WHITNEY assiduously vacuums.

F) WHITNEY hangs POSTERS - of Otis Redding, Aretha, and Dionne in the living room. She sings to a record, and then turns into ROBYN's embrace. A FIRST TENTATIVE KISS. Just then - a string of firecrackers is thrown in her open window - bang, bang, bang! It's her brothers, outside in the street, playing a prank on her. She screams at them, then laughs.

G) WHITNEY and ROBYN make up their beds.

H) Back in their apartment, with candles burning, ROBYN and WHITNEY dance to a record, laughing.

I) WHITNEY, back in WHITE GOWN, conducted by CISSY, finishes singing the GOSPEL SONG, watched by *both* JOHN HOUSTON and the PASTOR, who seem to be on good terms.

EXT. SWEETWATER'S CLUB / NYC - NIGHT

PATRONS enter the busy club. It's popular. A limo pulls up and out gets CLIVE DAVIS (51), record executive. He is met by GERRY GRIFFITH, his A&R man.

GERRY GRIFFITH

She sings back-up, for her mother,
but wait'll you see this girl. I'm
telling ya, total knockout.
Model looks, skinny, but *the voice*,
my God.

CLIVE
Well, if it's anything like Dionne's
or Arethas.

They go inside...

INT. SWEETWATER'S CLUB / NYC - NIGHT

As the band prepares to play - CISSY (through a gap in a curtain) sees that - CLIVE and GERRY are in the audience, just then tipping the waiter for a superior table at the front. CISSY gets an idea, before she closes the curtain.

CISSY
(to WHITNEY)
My voice.

WHITNEY
What?

CISSY
I want you to sing the opening solo.
(coughs)

WHITNEY
You were shouting at me an hour ago.

CISSY
That must have done it. I need
time to warm it up. You'll -
(cough)
- start the show tonight.

WHITNEY
Mommie - I just -

CISSY
I need you to help me, now. Start the
show. Do "Greatest Love Of All." Not
another word.

(seeing WHITNEY is
nervous)
Place your faith in the Lord and
remember where great singing comes
from, what I taught ya. Where does
great singing come from?

WHITNEY
The head -- the heart -

CISSY
(thumping her gut)
- and the gut, never forget it.

WHITNEY

Mommie -

CISSY

(firmly)

Don't make me whup your ass, girl.
Now git!

WHITNEY takes a deep breath, hesitates, and then steps through the curtain.

CUT TO:

WHITNEY takes the stage. CISSY emerges and CLIVE greets her, kissing her on both cheeks. CISSY then moves to the back of the room to watch.

WHITNEY stands at the MIC like a deer in the headlights, looking at the crowd, and at CLIVE. CLIVE adjusts his glasses, as -

The band strikes up: **THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL.**

Whitney, under a spotlight, begins -

WHITNEY

*I believe the children are our are
future
Teach them well and let them lead the
way
Show them all the beauty they possess
inside
Give them a sense of pride to make it
easier
Let the children's laughter remind us
how we used to be...*

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. TALENT SHOW - DAY

WHITNEY (19), wearing a leather jacket, and singing, walks through the fantasy scene of her first success, coming RUNNER-UP in a talent contest seven years earlier, the present and the past merging...

WHITNEY

*Everybody searching for a hero
People need someone to look up to
I never found anyone who fulfill my
needs
A lonely place to be
And so I learned to depend on me
(MORE)*

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

*I decided long ago
Never to walk in anyone's shadows
If I fail, if I succeed
At least I'll live as I believe
No matter what they take from me
They can't take away my dignity
Because the greatest
Love of all is happening to me
I found the greatest
Love of all inside of me
The greatest love of all
Is easy to achieve
Learning to love yourself
It is the greatest love of all...*

Here we dissolve in - WHITNEY (12) stepping up to the MIC, as the empty seats fill with NERVOUS PARENTS, which includes JOHN HOUSTON.

Young WHITNEY looks nervously at the AUDIENCE, and then into the wings, where - CISSY nods at her, encouragingly.

YOUNG WHITNEY prepares to sing...

WHITNEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*I believe the children are our future
Teach them well and let them lead the
way
Show them all the beauty they possess
inside*

FLASHBACK TO:

Backstage, YOUNG WHITNEY is embraced lovingly by JOHN -

FLASHFORWARD TO:

YOUNG WHITNEY, singing in the talent contest -

WHITNEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Give them a sense of pride to make it
easier
Let the children's laughter remind us
how we used to be*

CUT TO:

NEWARK PROJECTS. On a hot summer's day, YOUNG WHITNEY, (12) walks home from SCHOOL, with her perfect hair, in a lovely dress. She approaches -

- four BLACK STREET KIDS PLAYING with an open FIRE-HYDRANT. When they see her -

GERRY GRIFFITH
Just okay?

CLIVE
(*stunned*)
I may have just heard the greatest
voice of her generation.

GERRY GRIFFITH
(*relieved*)
Oh, that kind of "Okay".

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

WHITNEY reads the record contract.

WHITNEY
"In perpetuity, throughout the
universe." I guess that means -

CISSY
Means, for a long time, everywhere.

WHITNEY
Then - here goes - everything. Pen?

CLIVE hands WHITNEY a pen -

JOHN HOUSTON
Wait.

WHITNEY
Daddy?

JOHN HOUSTON
(to CLIVE)
What if you move on? She's coming
here for you. If you move on you've
gotta take her with you when you go.

CLIVE
A Key Man clause? We've never ever
given that right to any artist.

JOHN takes the PEN back from WHITNEY, as if deal off. A
plaintive look from WHITNEY to CLIVE, a lifelong bond forming.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
I would need to get approvals, from
Arista's parent company. But--I
believe in you, completely, so--I can
try. No promises.

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

A WEEK LATER. WHITNEY grins as - CLIVE hands the PEN to her, and she signs her record deal with ARISTA, with her LAWYER PRESENT. CLIVE kisses her on both cheeks.

CLIVE
Welcome to Arista. Consider me
your Key Man.

CISSY and JOHN HOUSTON smile and shake CLIVE's hand.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Congratulations, John, Cissy.

JOHN HOUSTON
You take good care of her now.

CISSY
Of course he will.

LATER.

CLIVE and WHITNEY alone - WHITNEY is holding a PHOTO of -
CLIVE and his second WIFE (**JANET**) and his **TWO YOUNGEST SONS**.

CLIVE
Do you write songs?

WHITNEY
No. Is that okay?

She puts down the PHOTO.

CLIVE
You ever tried?

WHITNEY
(shakes her head)
Is that a problem?

CLIVE
No. We'll ask others to write them
for you. What kind of music do you
like?

WHITNEY
Great big songs.

CLIVE
Great big songs -

WHITNEY

- that you almost can't wrap your arms around, that--that make your head spin and move the heart, take the breath away--songs that are like climbing a mountain, that will, that will stretch me vocally, that I really have to sing my raggedy ass off to sell, that takes me right out there to the end of the line.

CLIVE

Good answer. What *style* of song? Broadway, Pop, R&B, country, gospel, black, white?

WHITNEY

All the above.

CLIVE

All the above?

WHITNEY

All of them. I don't care. A great song is a great song.

CLIVE

You are 100% correct. So let me ask the finest songwriters in America to write a great big vocally ambitious song for a great new vocally ambitious star.

WHITNEY

Will they do that for me?

CLIVE

They'll do that for us.

WHITNEY

Can I ask you something?

CLIVE

I'm an open book, even if some people say the text size is so small you need very strong glasses.

She points to a PLAQUE hanging on the wall.

WHITNEY

You went to Harvard.

CLIVE

Law.

WHITNEY
What was that like?

CLIVE's SECRETARY then enters with a tray containing two glasses of champagne.

CLIVE
Stressful. Anxiety attacks actually.
But I worked through them. In private
of course. In those days, you could
never admit there was anything wrong
with you.

WHITNEY
Can you now? And anyway, who judges
what's wrong? Who says?

CLIVE hands WHITNEY a glass of champagne, and takes one himself.

CLIVE
Whitney--I should tell you, I don't
get involved in the personal life of
my artists, ever. I'm not a
babysitter, I'm not a Rabbi, I'm not
a camp counsellor. I know music. I
have an instinct. In this respect I
can serve you, and I am here for you
at any hour.

They clink glasses and sip.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
To you. Congratulations.

WHITNEY
(*touched*)
Thank you. Thank you Clive.

CLIVE
Now let's get to work, shall we?

MONTAGE

A) DOZENS of CASSETTE TAPES are delivered to CLIVE's desk.
WHITNEY looks overwhelmed.

B) WHITNEY and CLIVE listen to the tapes.

C) WHITNEY gives her opinion on various songs, and CLIVE
writes her decision on his list.

WHITNEY
No.

CLIVE
I agree.

WHITNEY
(next tape)
No.
(next tape)
Maybe.

CLOSE ON: The CASSETTE TAPE: TITLE "YOU GIVE GOOD LOVE"

CLIVE
Maybe? Why?

WHITNEY
(improvising, sings)
Baby You Give Good Love To Me, To Me,
To Me...
(breaks)
I could do something with the chorus.
Go up a key there.
Get more out of it.

CLIVE
Okay. But that's not enough reason to
record a song. It needs a hook.

WHITNEY
Hook? Oh I'll give it a hook.

D) WHITNEY and CLIVE, go through more tapes. WHITNEY then
picks up one TAPE.

CLOSE ON: the cassette - title:

"SAVING ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU."

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
What's this one?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO/ NYC - DAY

WHITNEY, standing before a microphone, hears playback of the
DEMO of "SAVING ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU"

PRODUCER
Ready to listen to it a second time?

WHITNEY
No. I got it.

PRODUCER

You don't want to hear it a second time?

WHITNEY

I'm good. I got it. Let's do this.

The PRODUCER turns to CLIVE DAVIS, who stands beside CISSY and JOHN. CLIVE nods.

They hit the RECORD button - the tapes turn and we're into -

- WHITNEY's stunning first take of -

"SAVING ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU"

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

(sings)

Saving all my love for you...(etc)

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

WHITNEY and CLIVE go through the TAPES submitted by songwriters. Written on these tapes are the TITLES of the eventual songs that will comprise her first album...

INT. WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - DAY

ROBYN turns on the TV - to the MERV GRIFFIN SHOW...

INT. CISSY'S HOME - DAY

GARY and MICHAEL tune in to the show -

INT. MERV GRIFFIN SHOW/ TV STUDIO - DAY

In front of a live audience CLIVE answers questions from MERV-

MERV

Clive Davis--he discovered and nurtured the likes of Janis Joplin, Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, Aerosmith, Patti Smith, Chicago, Barry Manilow, the list is endless. Today he's brought his latest discovery with him and she is--in two words--simply breathtaking. Clive, what do you look for in an artist?

CLIVE

Well you look for originality,
someone with something new to say -

(INTERCUT as necessary with -)

BACKSTAGE - WHITNEY, more and more nervous, waiting to perform
- JOHN and CISSY trying to reassure her, then - at WHITNEY's
bidding - taking their leave. WHITNEY waits, alone.

CLIVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

- you never know where you're gonna
find them, really. But when you see
them, when they have that spark of
originality, whether it be as a
performer or as a writer, you just
know. You just know you're in the
presence of--of somebody special.

MERV (O.S.)

Whitney Houston. You've signed her to
Arista.

CLIVE (O.S.)

That's correct.

MERV (O.S.)

You'll probably start off with an
album.

CLIVE (O.S.)

That's correct.

CLIVE and MERV -

MERV

She is gorgeous. She's how old? 19?

CLIVE

This girl is 19 years old, yeah and
rarely do you find--you wonder--there
was Lena Horne, there was Dionne
Warwick -

MERV

She's Dionne's cousin, isn't she?

CLIVE

She's Dionne's first cousin. Daughter
of Cissy Houston, and Aretha Franklin
was like her Godmother.

MERV

Wait'll you hear her. Miss Whitney
Houston.

They turn and lights come up on WHITNEY as she nervously steps forward into the light...

WHITNEY

*When I think of home
I think of a place where there's
Love overflowing;
I wish I was home
I wish I was back there
With the things I've been knowing*

ANGLE ON: CISSY and JOHN HOUSTON, standing in the wings.

CISSY

It's too slow.

JOHN HOUSTON

It's fine.

CISSY

And look at her skin tone. They're
not lighting her right. Too slow.
It's too slow -

CISSY isn't to be stopped. She slips behind the DIAPHANOUS CURTAIN separating the audience from the band, before JOHN can stop her, and starts to CONDUCT the ORCHESTRA, urging them to pick up the beat. The ORCHESTRA responds -

WHITNEY (O.S.)

*Wind that makes the tall grass bend
into leaning
Suddenly the raindrops that fall
Have a meaning
Sprinkling the scene
Makes it all clean*

ANGLE ON: WHITNEY again - gaining in confidence as the song goes on...

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

*...So I know that it's real, its
real, real to me...
And I've learned that we must look
Inside our hearts to find...
Yeah we gotta find
A world full of love
Like yours, like mine-
Like Hooooooooooooooooooooome.*

The AUDIENCE erupt -

MERV
Oh Whitney! You won't forget that
name. Whitney Houston!

INT. WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ROBYN claps, with pride. Nailed it!

EXT. BEACH/ JERSEY SHORE - DAY

WHITNEY and ROBYN sit side by side on the sand, looking out to sea. WHITNEY is wet from swimming, ROBYN dry.

ROBYN puts her hand on WHITNEY's salty leg, then bends and kisses it.

ROBYN
Salty.

But ROBYN can see that WHITNEY looks concerned.

ROBYN (CONT'D)
What? What is it?

WHITNEY
We need to straighten it up, you
know, from now on. We'll still be
friends, it's just the physical
stuff...

ROBYN withdraws her hand from WHITNEY's knee.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
And I want children one day. A
family. Faith and family. You know?

ROBYN
But we love each other. Don't we?

WHITNEY
The Bible says you can go to hell for
living that kind of life. I don't
wanna go to hell.

ROBYN
Not in a hurry myself.
(beat)
You're gonna quote the Bible now
aren't you.

WHITNEY
Leviticus -

ROBYN
Please!

ROBYN - suffering acute pain - stares out to sea, trying to cope with the loss.

ROBYN (CONT'D)
It's not just about that though, is it? Is it?

WHITNEY
They're gonna use it against us, if it gets out. It's gonna stop us from going where we need to go. You know that, right?

ROBYN
It doesn't have to. And we just keep it a secret. No-one needs to know.

WHITNEY
Nothing's *that* secret. Everyone watching, *all* the time. And it's only gonna get worse.

ROBYN
So - you're moving out?

WHITNEY
No, no. God no. I love you.

ROBYN looks at WHITNEY, tears in her eyes -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
In Perpetuity. Throughout The Universe.

ROBYN
What?

INT. WHITNEY'S ROOM/ WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The BEDSIDE RADIO ALARM CLOCK reads **6 AM**.

INT. WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - DAY

ROBYN, sleepy, opens the door and it's GARY, holding up a RADIO.

ROBYN
Gary? What the hell?

He blows by her, heading for WHITNEY'S BEDROOM -

INT. WHITNEY'S BEDROOM/ WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Enter GARY. He shakes WHITNEY and holds the radio up to her ear.

WHITNEY
Gary? Go away.

GARY
You're on the radio! You're on the
radio, Nip.

The song is "**HOLD ME**". They both listen - serious at first -

GARY (CONT'D)
It's happening, little sister.

ROBYN is watching from the doorway.

ROBYN
Holy shit.

They all appreciate the moment.

WHITNEY
OK, turn it off. Great. Now get
out of my room! I need to sleep!

LATER.

ROBYN and WHITNEY drink coffee.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Come work for me. Full time. Handle
bookings, wardrobe, travel, find me a
pack of Fruity Pebbles or a Cap'n
Crunch bar at 1 am in the morning.

ROBYN
If you say 1 am you don't need to say
in the morning.

WHITNEY
I want someone I can trust
completely.

ROBYN

You can trust me but you can't afford me.

WHITNEY

Oh I'm gettin' you cheap, bitch!

(grins)

Where I go I want you with me.

ROBYN

You'd be my boss. I'm not sure I'm down with that.

WHITNEY

Would you rather have Marvin the 260 pound gorilla with trench-breath ordering your ass around for minimum wage for a few more years?

ROBYN

I'd have to give up this natty little uniform. And I get 10% discount on airfares.

WHITNEY

A tough call then sister.

ROBYN

What about your parents? Have you told them. Your Mom won't be happy. She hates me.

WHITNEY

We'll go see Daddy.

(grabbing the alarm clock, seeing the time)

Shit Rob, I need to sleep.

She collapses back on the bed.

ROBYN

I haven't said yes, yet.

But WHITNEY is already pretending to be asleep.

INT. NEW JERSEY CITY PLANNING OFFICE - DAY

WHITNEY and ROBYN cross the room full of city planners, carrying large rolled plans. They march up to the office of:

JOHN HOUSTON, CITY PLANNER

They march right in....

INT. JOHN HOUSTON'S OFFICE/ NJC OFFICE - DAY

...and find JOHN (62), in his desk chair, talking to a SEXY YOUNG BLACK WOMAN, BARBARA (22), who sits on the edge of his desk, still wearing her COAT, clearly not just paying JOHN a visit. There is clearly something more intimate going on here than city planning.

JOHN HOUSTON

(to BARBARA)

Alright then. Let's pick this up later.

(to WHITNEY)

Whitney, you know better than to come charging into a room without knocking.

BARBARA

(leaving, to WHITNEY)

How do you do?

JOHN HOUSTON

Barbara, my daughter Whitney.

BARBARA

Congratulations, your Dad told me a great deal about you. So pretty.

WHITNEY

Bye.

BARBARA exits. WHITNEY stares at her father.

JOHN HOUSTON

What's this about?

WHITNEY

Robyn's gonna come work for me. Full time. As my creative assistant.

JOHN HOUSTON

Creative assistant. Nice title.

JOHN scrutinizes ROBYN, gestures for her to step forward.

JOHN HOUSTON (CONT'D)

You two been spending a lot of time together. Living in the same apartment. Thick as thieves. Out everywhere, arm in arm. And now you want to officially *work* together, side by side, in the public eye.

(to ROBYN)

You always wear your hair so short?

ROBYN
Easier to manage.

He doesn't like this answer.

JOHN HOUSTON
"Easier to manage."
(beat)
Let me tell you something, Miss
Crawford. Whitney is Daddy's girl.
Always has been, always will be.
Nothing comes between us. You hear?

JOHN puts his arms around WHITNEY and pulls her very close.

ROBYN
Yes sir.

JOHN HOUSTON
You won't find a more close-knit
family anywhere. Whitney, her mother,
Gary, Michael, myself. We're a team.
And no-one is going to get in the way
of that.
(beat)
Here's what I want. You want my
blessing? Go out on some dates. With
boys.

WHITNEY
With boys?

JOHN HOUSTON
Be seen in public, get your
photographs taken. You. And men.

ROBYN
Mr Houston, are you *serious*?

JOHN HOUSTON
You don't ever need to ask me that
question again.

ROBYN
Well--I'm not gonna do that.

JOHN HOUSTON
Well that tells me just about
everything I need to know, then,
doesn't it?

WHITNEY
Daddy.

JOHN HOUSTON

You want me to approve of this thing?
Huh?

(*accusative*)

You want me to approve you hiring
this girl, who has no background in
management whatsoever?

(to ROBYN)

You got a background in personal
management?

ROBYN

No.

JOHN HOUSTON

(to WHITNEY)

Then you get out there baby girl, the
two of you--on the arms--of men.

WHITNEY and ROBYN are stunned.

INT. LA RECORDING STUDIO/ LOS ANGELES - DAY

CAPTION: **LOS ANGELES**

JERMAINE JACKSON enters, interrupting a WHITNEY RECORDING
SESSION. CLIVE introduces him to his new star -

CLIVE

Jermaine. Whitney. When Jermaine
called me and said "I just have to
work with this girl" I invited him
down here so you two could meet. I
thought he could produce a track or
two, see if you two gel.

WHITNEY

How do you do? It's very nice to meet
you.

JERMAINE

It's very nice to meet you as well.

She looks into his eyes - and smiles. There's a spark there.

WHITNEY

I'm a big fan -

JERMAINE beams - proudly, until -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

- been in love with Michael since I
was 7 years old.

JERMAINE's smile fades.

LATER.

JERMAINE and WHITNEY record their vocals for **"IF YOU SAY MY EYES ARE BEAUTIFUL"** at the same time - eyes fixed on each other, electricity in the air..

MIXING BOOTH (on other side of the glass)

The ENGINEER glances at CLIVE DAVIS -

ENGINEER
Chemistry.

CLIVE
(*admonishingly*)
Watch your needles.

INT. WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ROBYN (alone, except for the cat, MisteBlu) phones -

INT. WHITNEY'S HOTEL ROOM/ LA - NIGHT

WHITNEY, dressed for a date, exits her hotel room.

CLOSE ON: The TELEPHONE, as it RINGS and RINGS...

INT. RESTAURANT/ LA - NIGHT

WHITNEY and JERMAINE dine together -

JERMAINE
You're not eating.

WHITNEY
Too nervous.

JERMAINE
Nervous? How come?

WHITNEY
Ahhh...earthquakes. LA has lots of earthquakes, or so they tell me.

JERMAINE
What else they tell ya?

WHITNEY
Never date a musician.

JERMAINE

And why's that?

WHITNEY

They're either in love with their music, or themselves.

JERMAINE

Who said that?

WHITNEY

I did.

JERMAINE

Well she's wrong. You're cute. Scratch that-- gorgeous.

He places his hand on hers -

WHITNEY

You're handsome. Scratch that-- married.

She withdraws her hand -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

You're married, Jermaine. With kids.

JERMAINE

Now who told you that?

WHITNEY

Married with kids. Married with -

JERMAINE

I've heard this part.
The kids, yeah, they're here to stay.
Love my kids. The other part...?
That's, well, only the heart can
decide if you're truly married. And I
aint truly married. Haven't been for
a long time. Truth is, not sure I've
ever been married by that measure.

WHITNEY

Listen to you.

JERMAINE

Yeah, listen to me. Listen to me.

He puts his hand back on hers and this time she doesn't withdraw hers - instead looking into his dreamy eyes...

WHITNEY
Ah, what the hell.

INT. HOTEL ROOM/ LA - NIGHT

JERMAINE and WHITNEY undress each other.

LATER.

WHITNEY, in a towel, walks to the BAR and takes a bottle of water, but hesitates when she reads the MENU CARD.

WHITNEY
Oh my God. Six dollars? For water?
These people are crazy.

Enter JERMAINE, lighting a cigarette.

JERMAINE
You shoulda told me.

WHITNEY
Why?

JERMAINE
I didn't want to be your first guy,
you crazy?

WHITNEY
Someone had to be.

JERMAINE
You have to tell someone shit like
that. I'm probably going to go to
hell.

WHITNEY
You were going there anyway, for
cheating on your wife. And it's not
like it's a responsibility or
anything. Just pretend it didn't
happen. I'm cool. You can just go,
while I drink my record advance in
bottled water. Six dollars!

JERMAINE
What if I don't want to?
We'll have to be careful, initially.
But. I'm going to leave her.

WHITNEY
Oh yeah? When did you decide that?

JERMAINE
About--about ten seconds ago.

INT. WHITNEY AND ROBYN'S APARTMENT - DAY

ROBYN, in her anger, is busting up their lovely apartment -

ROBYN
(*furious*)
He's using you. And he's never gonna
leave his wife.

WHITNEY
I'm not cleaning this up.

ROBYN
She's Berry Gordy's daughter.
Jermaine didn't just marry Hazel, he
married Motown--he can't walk away
from all that.

WHITNEY
You don't know shit. He's gonna
divorce her. And I love him.

For ROBYN this is like a gut punch.

ROBYN
Love? Bullshit. That's just -

WHITNEY
And he loves me.
(*intensely*)
This could be it. This is my chance.

ROBYN
Oh yeah? For what? For what exactly?

WHITNEY
To have a home. A real, honest-to-God
home.

ROBYN
How could you!

WHITNEY
Rob -

ROBYN
HOW COULD YOU!

WHITNEY
You know what? Fine. Smash
everything.

WHITNEY gets up and goes into the kitchen. She opens the
icebox, and gets a bowl and scoops ice cream into it.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Smash everything! It's all crap
anyway!

ROBYN (O.S.)
I hate you so much right now!

As SMASHES sound, off -

WHITNEY
Speak up, Rob! I can't hear you. I
can't hear you. You know what...?

WHITNEY then re-enters the living room, where ROBYN is trying
to bend the pipe of the VACUUM CLEANER. WHITNEY sits on the
couch, eating her ice-cream.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
HEY! Not the vacuum cleaner! Not the
vacuum cleaner, okay? Think about it.
How we gonna clean this place up?
(*eating ice-cream*)
You're crazy Robyn. You're craa-aazy.
(*eats ice-cream*)

INT. TV STUDIO/ "AS THE WORLD TURNS" - DAY

WHITNEY and JERMAINE perform a duet on the cheesy soap opera:
AS THE WORLD TURNS. They look into each others eyes as they
sing..."**IF YOU SAY MY EYES ARE BEAUTIFUL.**"

EXT. TV STUDIO - NIGHT

WHITNEY is waiting for JERMAINE, in a fur coat near the curb.
JERMAINE comes out, but cannot even acknowledge WHITNEY
because -

- HAZEL GORDY, his wife, is waiting at the curb, standing
beside their LIMO.

JERMAINE kisses her and gets in the back.

HAZEL walks up to WHITNEY.

HAZEL GORDY
 Uh uh. Not gonna happen. You think
 you're the first? Mmmm-mmm. Did he
 tell you he loves you? Men--aint they
 somethin'?

HAZEL walks back to the car - and the car drives off. WHITNEY
 is shaking with emotion.

Up with: **"HOW WILL I KNOW"**

INT. STUDIO - DAY

WHITNEY films the garishly colorful and poppy VIDEO for **"HOW
 WILL I KNOW"**. INTERCUT WITH:

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

WHITNEY records vocals on **"HOW WILL I KNOW"**

INT. STUDIO - DAY

The VIDEO SHOOT again as: FOUR WHITE FEMALE DANCERS dance
 around WHITNEY holding telephones up to her ear as she sings
 cheerfully, before we SNAP to:

INT. R&B STATION - NIGHT

A RADIO INTERVIEW with WHITNEY. CLIVE and ROBYN watch from
 the other side of the glass -

R&B DJ
 It's a criticism I increasingly hear
 from callers.

WHITNEY
(remaining calm)
 I'm not "black enough"?

R&B DJ
 Your music. Your music "isn't
 black enough."

WHITNEY
 What do you want me to say?

R&B DJ
 The truth. Aren't you selling out?

WHITNEY

You got a lot of nerve, asking me that.

R&B DJ

That's what my mother tells me. It's a valid question. A common criticism of you and your music. That you're a sell out. That you're not really a black artist.

WHITNEY glares at him - outraged.

R&B DJ (CONT'D)

You're about to walk out, aren't you.

WHITNEY

No. I'm not. You'll be walking out before I will.

R&B DJ

How do you respond?

WHITNEY

If I'm not a black artist, what am I?

R&B DJ

You tell me.

WHITNEY

Music--music doesn't have a color. *Period.* Blue-black, medium black, light black, brown, white, green, orange. An artist is free or (else) we're all in chains. A good song is a good song. *Period.* Look. *I'm blind, race-wise, when it comes to music.* Okay?

CLIVE nods.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Why people gotta say something dumb-ass like that? Who said that? That's just BS, and it makes me angry actually. It's hateful and uninformed.

ANGLE ON: ROBYN, looking through the glass, nervously chewing on a ball-point pen....She and CLIVE share a concerned look.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

(losing her tempter)

And why I gotta be what someone else wants me to be, anyway? Sing what I want to sing, be how I wanna be? Reach as big an audience as I can? Isn't that what art's meant to do? My whole life--she's "not black enough", "not white enough". Well how about she's "not *obedient* enough"? How about "she's not fearful enough."

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

WHITNEY and ROBYN shop for human HAIR. They study a MENU, as the HAIR STYLIST - ELLIN LAVAR, explains -

ELLIN LAVAR

So you can get Indian hair, Malaysian, Hawaiian, Chinese, European hair.

WHITNEY

(reading MENU)

Oh my sweet Jesus. So many types of hair. How about pubic?

ELLIN LAVAR

(straight faced)

Well we don't usually recommend that, as its very difficult to style.

(beat)

I'm joking.

WHITNEY

I like you -

(reading Ellin's nametag)

- Ellin.

ROBYN

Let's get out of here, Nip.

WHITNEY

No. No. I gotta do it. I gotta do something.

LATER

WHITNEY, in a chair, has fake hair woven into her real hair by ELLIN.

WHITNEY reads ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE:

CLOSE ON: a highlighted quote: "**one of the most exciting new voices in years**".

LATER

Her "WEAVE" is now complete. Quite a creation.

PAN to ROBYN, who has her own weave. But ROBYN hates hers, and starts to pull it out.

ROBYN
Uh uh. No way. Out! Out!

When ELLIN screams and tries to stop her, WHITNEY screams with LAUGHTER.

WHITNEY
Robyn! Leave it!

EXT. JERSEY SHORE BEACH - DAY

WHITNEY (wearing her weave) and ROBYN (without weave) lie on blankets on their stomachs, sunbathing, as - "**HOW WILL I KNOW**" reaches them from a nearby sunbather's portable radio.

ROBYN
(*eyes closed*)
I hate this damn song.

INT. HOTEL ROOM/ CHICAGO - NIGHT

WHITNEY opens the door, and it's a ROOM SERVICEMAN, holding a tray of DOM PERIGNON and three glasses.

CLIVE takes the tray. The ROOM SERVICEMAN exits.

CLIVE
I'm gonna give you a bottle of Dom Perignon every time a single of yours reaches number 1 in the charts.
(*proffers the bottle*)
Congratulations.

WHITNEY
Number 1! Number 1!

WHITNEY screams. WHITNEY starts to dance and jump around with ROBYN, who is slowly won over by WHITNEY's joy. WHITNEY then grabs the DOM PERIGNON from which CLIVE has removed the wire -

CLIVE
Don't shake up the champagne. It -

WHITNEY

(sings)
*"How Will I know, if Clive really
 loves me!"*

CLIVE

Whitney -

WHITNEY

*"He buys me champagne with every
 heartbeat."*

But then - the bottle explodes and the girls shriek as the
 bottle spumes champagne onto the carpet.

CLIVE

That's 500 dollars a bottle!

They stare at him, guilty. CLIVE picks up the phone. Hits Room
 Service.

CLIVE (CONT'D)

(into phone)
 Three more bottles of Dom Perignon.
 And maybe a mop.

CLIVE gives a devilish/mischievous smile that WHITNEY matches.

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

Piles of tapes are being worked through. CLIVE holds one up.

CLIVE

Ah, this one--I love it, but it
 reminds me of a rodeo song with
 Olivia Newton-John singing. I love
 Olivia but you might be able to find
 deeper meaning here.

CLIVE doesn't put the TAPE in the DECK - uncertain whether
 this will work.

WHITNEY

Are you gonna play it?

CLIVE

Not sure you'll hear what I hear.

CLIVE inserts the TAPE and plays it -

MERRILL & RUBICAM

(on tape)

"I wanna dance with some body...want to feel the heat with somebody..."

- and this DEMO is a very Country and Western rendering of the song we know. WHITNEY turns it off, looks at him stone faced -

CLIVE

No?

WHITNEY

Yes! Please license it. This one's *mine*. It's about wanting to dance with somebody, real bad, I mean *really really really really bad*, but-- for whatever reason--for whatever reason--you can't.

CLIVE gives her a look of relief and compassion.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

With CLIVE and ROBYN watching, WHITNEY records: **"I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY"**. She is crushing it!

WHITNEY

*IIIIII - wanna dance with somebody,
wanna feel the heat with
somebody...(etc)*

"I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY" - plays over -

MONTAGE of:

A (1986), GRAPHICS and IMAGERY to visually convey the information that Whitney Houston has topped the album chart. (For instance, Diana Ross' intro to Whitney's live performance at the American Music Awards...
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1Y5Ln9PzVw>. She is the No. 1 artist of the year and Whitney Houston is the No. 1 album of the year on the 1986 Billboard year-end charts, making her the first woman to earn that distinction. It is the best-selling debut album by a solo artist, ever.

B) CLIVE gives WHITNEY another bottle of DOM PERIGNON. WHITNEY puts it - empty - on the MANTLE PIECE beside TWO OTHER EMPTY BOTTLES. The count of number 1's at THREE.

C) WHITNEY, on stage, sings: **"I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY"**

D) WHITNEY puts another empty bottle of DOM PERIGNON on the MANTLE PIECE beside FOUR OTHER EMPTY BOTTLES. The count of number 1's at FIVE.

E) 1986 Grammy Awards. Whitney, nervous, arrives at the Grammy's with Robyn, to great hoopla and pomp. She rises to the occasion, looks like royalty and is treated accordingly. When Whitney stops to pose for the bank of photographers, Clive notices Robyn -standing apart in the wings with the other PA's - and sees in Robyn's lingering look an expression of longing, evidence of romantic feelings for Whitney.

F) Dionne Warwick, on stage at the GRAMMY's, opens the envelope for Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female...and screams:

DIONNE WARWICK
Whitney Houston!

Whitney, in red, receives the award, grinning, happy, so happy..."Whooooo!"

G) WHITNEY puts another empty bottle of DOM PERIGNON on the MANTLE PIECE beside FOUR OTHER EMPTY BOTTLES. The count of number 1's at SEVEN.

H) Singer B, at another awards show, opens the envelope and says:

SINGER B
Whitney Houston!

Whitney, in black and blue, receives the award, grinning, happy, so happy.

I) Singer C, at another awards show, opens the envelope and says:

SINGER C
The Greatest Love Of All, Whitney
Houston!

Whitney, in black and white stripes, receives the award, grinning, happy, so happy...

WHITNEY
Firstly, I wanna thank the sweet Lord
above, and then I wanna thank you
all.

J) (1987 Grammy Awards) - Billy Crystal announces:

BILLY CRYSTAL
 Once again, would you please welcome,
 nominated for "Record Of The Year",
 let's hear it for--Whitney Houston!

Lights up on Whitney, in a dazzling gown, descends steps, and delivers a barn-burning performance of:

"Didn't We Almost Have It All."

ANGLE ON: the back-up singers - among the women, GARY HOUSTON.

K) 3000 seat theatre. WHITNEY performs - **"Didn't We Almost Have It All."**

Her family and Robyn and Ellin and Clive are moved and proud as she smashes it. Standing O from the industry.

L) At home, Whitney blows out the candles on her birthday cake which bears the number: **23**

INT. RESTAURANT/ LA - NIGHT

WHITNEY has a dinner date with EDDIE MURPHY. Everybody in the restaurant is looking at them -

WHITNEY
 How you handle it? How do you handle it?

EDDIE
 Fame? How do I handle Fame. I was younger than you when I did *48 Hours*, *Beverly Hills Cop*. Fame? It handles you, you don't watch out. It's the bitch goddess. The most public method ever invented to ensure you stay as isolated as *hell*. Can't go nowhere. Can't trust nobody. Everybody using you. Sleep with you only coz you got money. And they're just the benefits!

WHITNEY laughs LOUD. Everyone turns and looks.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
 Shit, long time since my laugh was the quietest one in the room.

WHITNEY
 You're soo funny.

EDDIE

You don't have to tell me that. I
make a living from it. Actually.

WHITNEY

You don't say.

EDDIE

(eating)

I do. I do. So--Miss Houston.

WHITNEY

Whitney. Please.

EDDIE

Witty Whitney. As "Brevity is the
soul of Wit", I'll keep this short.
Who you datin' right now? What fine
hunk of African brotherhood wavin'
his big ol' dick in front of you at
this present time?

WHITNEY

(shocked gasp)

EDDIE

Come on, don't be coy now. You from
the boonies, just like me. You can
tell creepy old uncle Eddie. Who you
seein' horizontally?

WHITNEY

And why on earth would you like to
know that, Mr Murphy?

EDDIE

Coz I can see us maybe lighting it up
and burnin' it down. A little bit me,
a little bit you. My yin, your yang.
I read my horoscope
this morning -

WHITNEY

Oh you did?

EDDIE

Yes I did. And it said -

WHITNEY

What'd it say?

EDDIE

- to expect good things in
"a small brown package."

WHITNEY
A small brown package?

EDDIE
Didn't say nothin' about no
goddamn stamps either.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

WHITNEY's SHOES lie beside EDDIE's shoes on the hotel room floor, as we hear - (O.S) -

MUSIC UP: "SO EMOTIONAL"...

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

EDDIE faces the press -

EDDIE
No. I am not seeing Whitney Houston.
We're friends. Period. Got that?
Talked a couple of times on the
telephone, that's it.

INT. CONCERT - NIGHT

WHITNEY performs (with TWO MALE DANCERS) "SO EMOTIONAL". The AUDIENCE here is predominantly African American.

WHITNEY
(spoken)
I don't know why I like him. I just
do.
(sings)
*I've been hearing your heartbeat
inside of me
I keep your photo right beside my bed
Livin' in a world of fantasies
I can't get you out of my head
I've been waiting for the phone to
ring all night*

ANGLE ON: ROBYN, in the wings - watching WHITNEY.

EXT. CONCERT - NIGHT

WHITNEY gets into a waiting LIMO, and the LIMO drives off before ROBYN can reach it. In the rear window she sees - EDDIE and WHITNEY, kissing.

WHITNEY (O.S.)
*Why you want to make me feel so good
 I got a love of my own
 Shouldn't get so hung up on you
 I remember the way that we touched I
 wish I didn't like it so much
 I get so emotional, baby*

INT. CONCERT - NIGHT

WHITNEY (O.S.)
*Every time I think of you
 I get so emotional, baby
 Ain't it shocking what love can do
 Ain't it shocking what love can do...*

EXT. EDDIE'S MANSION - NIGHT

A beautiful villa with a WHITE ROLLS ROYCE in the drive.

INT. EDDIE'S MANSION - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A RING-BOX, as WHITNEY opens it. A huge DIAMOND ring!

WHITNEY looks up into EDDIE's eyes -

EDDIE MURPHY
 Diamonds. Nice aint they? Ice--
 fastest way to a woman's heart. Well,
 it's actually through the rib cage
 but diamonds are a lot less messy.

WHITNEY suddenly looks doubtful, nervous.

EDDIE MURPHY (CONT'D)
 What?

WHITNEY
 Not sure I should accept this.

EDDIE MURPHY
 I aint gettin' a bigger one--I'd take
 it I was you.

WHITNEY
 I'm not sure what it means. To you.

EDDIE MURPHY
 Shit it means we're good together.

WHITNEY
I'm a serious girl when it comes to
this kind of thing. You know?

EDDIE MURPHY
Well, I'm not a comedian all the
time. Now come on now.

He kisses her, and now she throws her arms around his neck and
kisses him hard on the lips.

EDDIE MURPHY (CONT'D)
Now that there is much more like it.

INT. WHITNEY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

ROBYN, dressed in sweats, is about to go out, when she sees -

ROBYN'S POV of: WHITNEY, putting on ear-rings in the mirror,
getting ready for a romantic dinner, in a beautiful gown. The
DINING ROOM table is impeccably set with burning candles and
china and napkins -

ROBYN
Eddie?

WHITNEY
Uh huh.

ROBYN
I'll uh--I'll stay out at Ellin's
place I guess.

WHITNEY
Good idea.

ROBYN
Okay.
(beat)
I can -

WHITNEY brushes by her, with a kiss on her cheek.

WHITNEY
See you tomorrow.

ROBYN
You look great.

WHITNEY smiles and exits. ROBYN leaves the room.

EXT. WHITNEY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

ROBYN starts to walk toward her car, but stops when she turns and sees, inside, through the window - WHITNEY adjusting things on the dining table for a romantic tryst.

REACTION: The pain of jealousy.

INT. WHITNEY'S NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

The wall clock says 10 o'clock.

WHITNEY smokes, waiting for EDDIE.

LATER.

The wall clock says 1 am.

The candles having burned low - WHITNEY, in her dress, unexpectedly plugs in the VACUUM and starts to vacuum.

PRELAP: **"WHERE DO BROKEN HEARTS GO?"**

MONTAGE:

A) **CONCERT.** Audience of 15,000 - now a DIVERSE MIX OF RACES. WHITNEY sings a song of lost love: **WHERE DO BROKEN HEARTS GO?**

WHITNEY
*I know it's been sometime
 But there's something on my mind
 You see, I haven't been the same
 Since that cold November day
 We said we needed space*

Watching from one wing - CISSY and JOHN.

Watching from the other wing - ROBYN.

B) **RED CARPET EVENT.** EDDIE MURPHY and his new GIRLFRIEND, a TALL ELEGANT (WHITE) MODEL, pose for pictures in front of the bank of photographers.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*But all we found was an empty place
 And the only things I learned
 Is that I need you desperately
 So here I am*

C) **WHITNEY in concert -**

WHITNEY
*And can you please tell me, oh
 Where do broken hearts go
 Can they find their way home
 Back to the open arms
 Of a love that's waiting there...*

D) **RESTAURANT.** ROBYN has dinner with - a FEMALE FRIEND.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*And if somebody loves you
 Won't they always love you
 I look in your eyes
 And I know that you still care,
 for me...*

E) **WHITNEY in concert -**

WHITNEY
*I've been around enough to know
 That dreams don't turn to gold
 And that there is no easy way
 No you just can't run away
 And what we have is so much more*

F) A SIGN is painted on an OFFICE DOOR...**"NIPPY INC."**

G) An office is set up, by JOHN HOUSTON and his STAFF of THREE NEW EMPLOYEES. Amid the flurry of activity, phone company men running phones, photocopier delivery, etc - focus on JOHN giving orders to the THREE NIPPY INC. EMPLOYEES.

H) WHITNEY and GARY and MICHAEL and ROBYN and other members of the team (RICKEY MINOR) play basketball. While other people have their shots rejected by tall GARY, WHITNEY is gifted uncontested layups, as GARY calls:

JOHN HOUSTON
 Don't block the goose that
 laid the golden egg!

WHITNEY drives to the basket, unopposed, scores and holds up her arms in triumph!

I) NIPPY INC. JOHN hands out THREE COMPANY CREDIT CARDS to his THREE NIPPY INC. EMPLOYEES.

J) Interior, department store. CLOSE ON: the COMPANY CREDIT CARD being swiped - WIDE, JOHN HOUSTON buys a DIAMOND WATCH.

K) CLOSE ON: COMPANY CREDIT CARD being inserted into a GAS STATION PUMP, as NIPPY INC. EMPLOYEE 1 waits for her CAR to FILL with GAS.

L) CLOSE ON: COMPANY CREDIT CARD being swiped - WIDE, NIPPY INC. EMPLOYEE 2 buys expensive HIGH-HEEL SHOES.

M) WHITNEY in concert, working her butt off - the peerless musical singing goddess!

ANGLE ON: GARY singing back-up, working hard.

ANGLE ON: CISSY and JOHN and MICHAEL, proud of her.

ANGLE ON: ROBYN and ELLIN watching from the other wing.

All are playing their parts, supporting WHITNEY, SUPERSTAR.

ROBYN withdraws when she gets disapproving looks from WHITNEY's parents.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*Than we ever had before
 And no matter how I try (etc)...*

N) A HOUSE PARTY is underway. Champagne is being opened - as JOHN walks through the party holding court with his THREE EMPLOYEES.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*Than we ever had before
 And no matter how I try
 You're always on my mind (etc)...*

O) The CREST on a BENTLEY. Inside the BENTLEY, WHITNEY, wrapped in furs - looks stunning, but looks lonely.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*Can they find their way home
 Back to the open arms
 Of a love that's waiting there...*

O) WHITNEY's NEW HOUSE. NIGHT. WHITNEY takes off EDDIE's DIAMOND RING and lays it on the dining table...

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*And now that I am here with you
 I'll never let you go
 I look into your eyes
 And now I know, now I know
 Where do broken hearts go*

P) WHITNEY shoots baskets, on her own.

Q) WHITNEY in concert -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
*And if somebody loves you
Won't they always love you
I look in your eyes and I
know that you still care for me
for me, you still care for me...*

INT. TV STUDIO INTERVIEW - NIGHT

WHITNEY, on a couch, is interviewed by an INTERVIEWER
(EUROPEAN ACCENT) off-screen...

INTERVIEWER
Are you a business woman?

WHITNEY
Yes, I think so.

INTERVIEWER
What does a business woman do?

WHITNEY
Well--hmm---what does a business
woman do?--She says what she uh,
doesn't want. And she knows,
primarily, what she wants. And
that's, that's a pretty tough thing
to have to determine sometimes. Most
of the people that work -
(is about to say "for")
- uh, *with* me--are, um, people I've
known for many years, they're people,
competent people that I can trust to
look out for me and to do their job
well--but it's hard sometimes to make
the transition from being the friend
to the boss, from being the boss to
the friend--or from the daughter to
the boss, and the boss to the
daughter--it's hard, you know, it's
complicated to wear these different
hats. But I think I do pretty good.

INTERVIEWER
So you're a tough cookie?

WHITNEY
Sometimes.

INTERVIEWER
Always?

WHITNEY

Not always. No. Some times. That means some--times.

INTERVIEWER

How is it to become the boss of your own family, of your brothers, their wives and everything--of your own father and mother. What is that like? Or are you still the little girl, sometimes?

WHITNEY

(reflective)

Sometimes...

INT. WHITNEY'S HOTEL ROOM/ PARIS - NIGHT

WHITNEY, alone, in her "little girl" pajamas, eats popcorn as she watches a MOVIE on TV.

CLOSE ON: the TV - a DORIS DAY MOVIE plays, with its perfect representation of *the perfect AMERICAN HOME*, that WHITNEY has craved since childhood.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE/ NIPPY INC - DAY

JOHN passes WHITNEY a MAGAZINE ARTICLE whose cover reads: "WHITNEY HOUSTON GAY?"

JOHN HOUSTON

Robyn is a nobody. The Bible tells us: 'Do not be misled, bad company corrupts good character.' Walk with God not the devil. I need her gone.

WHITNEY

Daddy -

EMPLOYEE 1 enters, brings in a coffee, silently, for JOHN.

JOHN HOUSTON

She's not a good influence, and the press are talking too much trash, it's damaging the brand, you understand? It's damaging the brand.

WHITNEY

And when did your little girl turn into "the brand"? I missed that.

(beat)

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

And I'm not firing Robyn. I need her.
I need someone I can trust 100%.

JOHN HOUSTON

You trust me 100%. Now you do as I
tell ya. I'm the manager here.

WHITNEY

I know you are, and you work for me.

JOHN stares at WHITNEY - stunned by this.

JOHN HOUSTON

Oh you don't say.

WHITNEY

(*gently*)
Daddy -
(*firmly*)
I do.

WHITNEY turns and walks out. JOHN is left to ponder this
profound status-shift. He doesn't like it.

MAIN OFFICE. WHITNEY marches across the office and notices
that the THREE EMPLOYEES are not doing much.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Get your feet off that goddamn desk
and when you see me, you better at
least *pretend* to be doing something.

She marches out.

LATER.

JOHN'S OFFICE. JOHN talks to GARY and MICHAEL -

JOHN HOUSTON

I was thinkin' of something not too
severe--like maybe payin' someone a
little something to, I dunno, break
both her legs. One. Then the other.

GARY

Pop, you -

JOHN HOUSTON

I'm just saying. It's an idea. I get
someone to y'know, scare her a little
bit. Okay, maybe not the legs, just
threaten to break both her legs, if
she doesn't get lost.

MICHAEL

Daddy, you can't do that. It's not-

JOHN HOUSTON

Well something's gotta be done. This *situation*--can't go on. That woman? Scaring men away from Nippy. And every photo that's taken, there she is in the goddamn background, like a shadow, like a *spectre*.

JOHN HOUSTON tosses TWO MAGAZINES to MICHAEL and GARY. On the covers - WHITNEY, and behind her, ROBYN.

JOHN HOUSTON (CONT'D)

I got diabetes, heart condition, I can't be dealing with this shit.

EXT. SOUL TRAIN AWARDS/ SHRINE AUD./ LA - NIGHT (1989)

WHITNEY and ROBYN arrive and join CISSY and JOHN, then start up the RED CARPET. WHITNEY, posing for shots on her own, looks so good she could stop traffic, stop time itself.

WHITNEY is lead by a PUBLICIST to a REPORTER with MICROPHONE -

REPORTER

Whitney - these rumors about your private life. Would you care to -

But JOHN steps in and pushes the MICROPHONE aside.

JOHN HOUSTON

(to reporter)

That's enough. Last warning.

JOHN leads WHITNEY up the CARPET. WHITNEY then sees PROTESTORS, lead by the **REV. AL SHARPTON** - holding up a placard that reads:

BOYCOTT

WHITNEY "WHITEY" HOUSTON

AL SHARPTON

Shame! Shame on you!

JOHN pulls a shocked, dazed WHITNEY away from these protestors and ushers her indoors.

INT. SOUL TRAIN AWARDS/ SHRINE AUD./ LA - NIGHT (1989)

BOBBY BROWN performs an energetic dance number - singing and dancing his ass off to the entirely black audience.

WHITNEY, sitting with her parents and ROBYN, is smiling and CLAPPING.

BOBBY BROWN, in his prime, is electrifying - bare-chested, chiseled 'fro, attitude - he's charismatic and she loves it!

LATER.

On stage, ANITA BAKER and the WINANS.

ANITA BAKER

The nominees for best music video are
- Janet Jackson, "Control" - Michael
Jackson "The Way You Make Me Feel" -
Whitney Houston, "I Wanna Dance with
Somebody" -

When the VIDEO CLIP comes up, of WHITNEY singing - "I WANNA DANCE WITH SOMEBODY" -

- the BLACK AUDIENCE "B000000000 !!!!! "

A few in the audience jeer ! Some call "**Oreo!**" and mutter "**Brown on the outside white on the inside, baby!**"

ANGLE ON: WHITNEY, stunned, tries to keep smiling but she is devastated. CISSY and JOHN turn - ANGRY.

WHITNEY

(to herself)

Why they booing me? Why they booing me?

ANITA BAKER

- Jody Watley - "Looking For A New Love".

The AUDIENCE now SCREAM their approval of JODY WATLEY. WHITNEY slumps in her chair - humiliated.

ANITA BAKER (CONT'D)

And the winner is--the winner is--
Janet Jackson!

The CROWD rise to their feet around the HOUSTON contingent.

WHITNEY, still reeling, is surprised when the MAN in the seat in front of her turns around - it's BOBBY BROWN.

BOBBY

Don't worry about it. They dogs.

He returns his attention back to the stage where the award is being presented to JANET JACKSON.

WHITNEY stares at the back of BOBBY's CHISELED HEAD, then -

WHITNEY

(to ROBYN)

Pen. And a business card.

ROBYN fetches out a PEN and a BUSINESS CARD. WHITNEY writes on the CARD, then passes it forward.

BOBBY reads the CARD without turning his head. WHITNEY waits for him to turn around again, but he doesn't do so.

INT. HOTEL ROOM/ LA - NIGHT

The HOUSTONS all spill into the hotel, talking over each other, outraged by the reception WHITNEY received.

JOHN HOUSTON

You just gotta ignore that kinda garbage.

CISSY

They all just jealous. Jealous as hell.

ROBYN

All it is, Nip. So don't go worrying about it.

JOHN HOUSTON

You have to be prepared for it. Success like you're enjoying, which the black stations have not owned and controlled, it drives them crazy.

WHITNEY is inconsolable.

WHITNEY

Mommie?

CISSY sits beside her dejected daughter. **In a repeat of the MOTHER-DAUGHTER TABLEAU** - WHITNEY rests her head on her mother's lap. CISSY strokes WHITNEY's hair -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

They hate me. "Oreo". Calling me an "Oreo." Black on the outside, white on the inside. Great, I'll just become blacker.

JOHN HOUSTON

You don't change a thing.

CISSY

You keep on doing what you're doing, coz what you're doing no-one's ever done before, and first one over the wall always gets hurt. You the first.

WHITNEY

I don't ever want to show my face again.

CISSY

Oh you gonna show it. You gonna show it even more.

(beat)

But what we can do, is mix it up now. John? You talk to Clive. I know he'll agree.

JOHN nods. ROBYN watches CISSY stroke WHITNEY's hair, then answers a KNOCK on the door. It's FLOWERS, with a card.

ROBYN

Flowers.

JOHN HOUSTON

(suspicious)

Who from?

ROBYN hands the CARD to WHITNEY. She opens the card.

WHITNEY

Bobby Brown.

CISSY

The kid, always jumping around, like he's got ants in his pants? Can't be more than 17 years old.

WHITNEY

He's 20.

CISSY

What's this child thinking sending you flowers?

JOHN picks up the flowers -

JOHN HOUSTON
I'll have a word with him.

JOHN drops the flowers in the TRASH.

WHITNEY
Daddy!

JOHN HOUSTON
I'm just gonna talk to him.

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION/ MENDHAM / NJ - DAY

A BIRTHDAY CAKE shows the number **26**.

The big HOUSE-PARTY full of family and friends. People dancing by the pool.

WHITNEY is talking with her brothers, GARY and MICHAEL and his wife, **DONNA**, when - EDDIE MURPHY walks in.

WHITNEY sees EDDIE - and approaches him.

WHITNEY
Glad you could come.

EDDIE kisses her on both cheeks. WHITNEY is still infatuated. But EDDIE has clearly shifted into friendship mode.

EDDIE
Happy Birthday. You look fine.

WHITNEY
Meaning?

EDDIE
How you doing?

WHITNEY
Working. Paying for all this. Harder I work, poorer I get.

EDDIE
Welcome to the show.

CISSY, concerned, calls WHITNEY over -

CISSY
(calls)
Nippy!

WHITNEY

Be right back. Don't go anywhere.

NIPPY goes over to CISSY.

And then BOBBY BROWN arrives. He and EDDIE greet each other, old acquaintances.

BOBBY

Eddie Goddamn Murphy. Brother.
Thought I might see you here.

EDDIE

You're big shit now.

BOBBY

Trying, man. Trying. Listen--
wanted to ask you. About Whitney.

EDDIE

That's over.

BOBBY

Yeah? Okay, that's cool.

EDDIE

Bobby Brown! You and her? Come on
man. Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee...

EDDIE's patented laugh rings out. People notice.

BOBBY

What? Is that - is that funny? What?

EDDIE

No, it's just. No, no, it's cool man.
I can see that. *Almost*. That's cool.
Look. Gotta go. See ya round. Treat
her good, she's special.

BOBBY

I know brother, believe dat.

They hug and EDDIE goes over to WHITNEY.

EDDIE

I'm outa here.

WHITNEY

You just got here.

EDDIE

Gotta run. Movie star stuff. Gonna be you one day. Talk soon. You take care now, y'hear?

EDDIE kisses her cheek, eyes elsewhere, then he leaves.

REACTION WHITNEY: Disappointment. Loss.

BOBBY clocks this, and approaches - determined to prove he's worthy and to sweep all memory of EDDIE aside.

BOBBY

So. Girl. You good? Lemme help you get this party really kicking. Watch Bobby Brown go to work...

BOBBY gives her a KISS on the cheek then walks off, dancing his way across the room -

ANGLE ON: ROBYN, who has been watching these moments with EDDIE and BOBBY. A look of disapproval in her eyes.

BACK TO: BOBBY, as he approaches GARY and MICHAEL and DONNA.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

The Houston family.

GARY and BOBBY slap hands, then BOBBY and MICHAEL.

GARY

Bobby--my brother Michael, his wife Donna.

BOBBY

Charmed. Charmed.

BOBBY bows in a gentlemanly fashion.

Across the room: CLIVE and BABYFACE (RECORD PRODUCER) approach WHITNEY -

CLIVE

Whitney. This is the famous Babyface. We've been talking and he's interested in producing your next album. We're all thinking it could be a little more R&B-influenced.

WHITNEY

Blacker.

(to BABYFACE)

Hey Babyface.

BABYFACE

Huge fan.

CLIVE

Just more R&B influenced.

WHITNEY

So they got to you too. Great.

CLIVE

Whitney, dear, you have the range to do anything, why not embrace a more urban contemporary sound? So I want to encourage you to think about working with Babyface here and L.A.Reid--everything they're writing and producing, going gold, platinum.

WHITNEY

(to BABYFACE)

Congratulations.

CLIVE

I think you could bring out great things in each other.

(pause)

Think about it.

WHITNEY

I will.

BABYFACE

Cool.

BABYFACE walks away. Just CLIVE and WHITNEY now.

CLIVE

A wonderful party. Fascinating to see Bobby Brown here. How old is he?

WHITNEY

Clive. "Personallife."

CLIVE

(taking her point)

Oh, there's cake.

CLIVE goes to the buffet table.

WHITNEY watches BOBBY BROWN who dances GOOFY with a bunch of teenage kids, who love him.

WHITNEY can't help but smile. This man will make her laugh.

LATER. POOLSIDE.

Party over. WHITNEY and BOBBY alone, slow-dancing at the pool's edge as BOBBY quietly sings along to James' Brown's "TRY ME". They KISS. Then pause. She looks into his eyes -

BOBBY
I'm in trouble, aren't I?

WHITNEY
You have no idea.

They laugh.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

BABYFACE plays a demo, of "WHY DOES IT HURT SO BAD" - to WHITNEY, who reads the lyrics. CLIVE waits on her opinion.

WHITNEY
*Why does it hurt so bad
Why do I feel so sad
Thought I was over you
But I keep crying
When I don't love you
So why does it hurt so bad...*
(to BABYFACE)
I'm sorry Face. I can't do this song.

CLIVE
Why not?

WHITNEY
I can only sing songs I understand.
No man could ever have that effect on
me. I would drop him first. You know?
This doesn't fit me. I'd never let a
man affect me like that. I never
would be so broken up. Either he
loves me or doesn't love me - I don't
respond to it.

CLIVE and BABYFACE stare at her -

CLIVE
Whitney -

WHITNEY
Can't do it.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE/ NIPPY INC - DAY

JOHN is staring hard at BOBBY - evaluating him. BOBBY is wearing glasses, and looking gentlemanly.

JOHN HOUSTON
You just met her.

BOBBY
It's love, sir. I come here to seek your permission to marry your daughter.

JOHN HOUSTON
You don't say. So, you from the 19th century now? You think this is some Norman Rockwell picture?

(beat)
Let me get this straight. You meet my daughter, just a few weeks ago, the most famous singer in the world, and you get the nerve to ask her to marry you -

BOBBY
No sir. I haven't asked her yet.

JOHN HOUSTON
You haven't asked her?

BOBBY
No sir. Not yet. No sir. Not yet.

JOHN HOUSTON
Then what the hell you doin' here?

BOBBY
I wanted to ask you first. Out of respect, because I know and appreciate what a tight knit family you are. I applaud that.
(beat)
I thought there's no point in asking her until I ask the chief of the clan first, know what I'm saying?

JOHN stares at BOBBY.

JOHN HOUSTON
And you think if you ask her -

BOBBY
Oh she's gonna say yes. No question.

JOHN HOUSTON

Really?

BOBBY

I'm Bobby Brown.

JOHN HOUSTON

You're Bobby Brown.

BOBBY

The one and only. Yessir.

JOHN takes a deep breath.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Plus, we love each other.
We're gonna make a home.

JOHN HOUSTON

With what? You got money, Bobby Brown?

BOBBY

Hell yeah. Lot more than she has,
I tell you that.

JOHN HOUSTON

You don't say.

BOBBY

I don't have to say. I brought a--a
uh---a bank statement here with me.
Wanted to show you that I have the
means and the uh, the wherewithall to
look after her in the style to which
she's accustomed.

BOBBY takes out a bank statement and hands it to JOHN. JOHN reads it. Then looks at BOBBY hard -

JOHN HOUSTON

This (*the bank statement*) is for
real? It's not some - (fake) ?

BOBBY

It's real. Hell yeah. I'm a rich man.
(*beat*)
I have your permission?

JOHN looks at the bank statement again -

JOHN HOUSTON

You got *this much* in the bank?

BOBBY

Yes sir.

JOHN HOUSTON

For some crazy ass *rap* songs?
What's the matter with the world.

BOBBY

It's R&B. I do R&B.

JOHN HOUSTON

(suspicious)

The date here. This is an old bank
statement. 18 months old.

BOBBY

Really? Musta brought the wrong one.
I'll send you the latest. We're good.

JOHN weighs up whether this guy can be trusted. He hands back
the bank statement. They are settled.

JOHN HOUSTON

You don't be messin' with me now.

BOBBY

No sir.

INT. LIMO - NIGHT

BOBBY and WHITNEY in the back seat. He takes out a RING BOX.
Her eyes widen.

WHITNEY

What is that? What are you doing?

BOBBY

Will you marry me?

WHITNEY

Yes!

BOBBY

Open it. Open it.

With tears in her eyes, she opens it. Inside a small but
lovely 6 carat ring.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

She nods.

WHITNEY

Yeah.

BOBBY

Okay.

He takes, from his pocket, a HUGE 20 CARAT RING and puts it on her finger.

WHITNEY screams!

WHITNEY

No you didn't! Why would you mess with me like that! Bobby!

They both burst out laughing and kiss. She then draws back, concern creeping over her face -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Can I trust you?

BOBBY

Yes you can.

WHITNEY

Tell me everything?

BOBBY

Yeah. I can do that. You want that? You got it. Absolutely.

WHITNEY

This marriage gonna be under a giant microscope. Everything we do, everything we say. No-one is getting away with shit.

BOBBY nods.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

WHITNEY (hungrily eating pancakes) and BOBBY, wearing hat and sunglasses, sit in the back corner of a simple DINER. BOBBY has something on his mind -

BOBBY

Oh, one thing. Kim is pregnant.

WHITNEY stops eat her pancakes and stares at him -

BOBBY (CONT'D)

But that's it. Beyond that we're cool.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Just needed to get that out there. No secrets. Honesty. All the way. Woah, feel better now. Man.

WHITNEY

- the hell you just say?

BOBBY

Just needed you to know, so that we're, you know, hundred percent. We're good. Happened months ago. Old news. But the cards on the table, right? More syrup?

WHITNEY stares at him. BOBBY hopes she's not gonna explode.

WHITNEY

You're messing with me.

BOBBY

Waddaya mean?

WHITNEY

You're messing with me. You better be messing with me.

BOBBY

What?

WHITNEY

Kim?

BOBBY

Yeah.

WHITNEY

Kim is pregnant?

BOBBY

Yeah. Alcohol. Lot of it. Just happened. Water under the bridge.

WHITNEY

And this happened, after we started seeing each other?

BOBBY

Well, in the--in the transition phase, but I was *finished* with her.

WHITNEY

Not so finished you weren't still banging her, y'mean.

(beat)

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

So let me get this straight Bobby Brown. You ask me to marry you, wait till I say yes, then tell me your goddamn ex-girlfriend is goddamn pregnant?

BOBBY

I love you. I want to spend my life with you, no-one else. I didn't know that then but I know that now. That's why I dropped a quarter million on a diamond ring. I don't do that. I want you at my side, for all time. Build a home. I was raised right. I'm a gentleman. I leave the bad boy thing on the stage.

(beat)

And let's face it, you were holding a torch for Eddie. Right? You been holding one, I know. I didn't say nothing. I let you get on with it. I'm cool.

(beat)

So are we gonna do this, or not?

She shifts her attention back to the ring -

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Not gonna tell you how many carats.

WHITNEY

No, only how much it costs. You don't mind telling me that.

BOBBY

Best jeweler in America. Guy in LA. One of the biggest diamonds in America. Okay, it's 20 carats. Whitney? Are we cool?

WHITNEY

Hope he's the kind of jeweler give you a goddamn refund when you take it back.

BOBBY

(passionately)

Uh uh. It's not going back.

WHITNEY

The hell you know.

BOBBY

Coz I know you. I know you. We from the hood, you just the same as me. And you don't have to be Whitney Houston around me, not for one day.

WHITNEY softens -

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Gonna accept the ring?

She nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Good. Coz it's non-refundable. You had me worried there for a minute.

WHITNEY

I had you worried?

BOBBY

Big time, oh yeah.

WHITNEY

So any other women you got pregnant you wanna tell me about?

BOBBY

Uh uh. That's it. Swear to God.

WHITNEY

Bobby, I want a normal life. A solid home. Kids. A home.

BOBBY

And that's exactly what I'm gonna give you. Just watch.

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION/ MENDHAM / NJ - DAY

CLOSE ON: ROBYN. She's shocked.

ROBYN

Congratulations.

WHITNEY

Thanks Rob. You're gonna be bridesmaid. Maybe even give me away, if Daddy don't change his hostile attitude.

ROBYN
Congratulations Bobby.

BOBBY
Thank you.

BOBBY kisses WHITNEY's cheek.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Now you said you had news?

WHITNEY
Yeah. What's up? Better be good news.

ROBYN
It's pretty good. There was a uh - a
phone call.

BOBBY
From?

ROBYN
The NFL. National Football -

BOBBY
- we got it.

ROBYN
(to Whitney)
They want you to sing the national
anthem, this year's Superbowl.

WHITNEY and BOBBY stare -

WHITNEY
Like *Superbowl* Superbowl?

PRELAP sound of - F16 FIGHTER JETS -

EXT. SKIES - DAY

FOUR F16 FIGHTER PLANES, flying in tight formation.

INT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY (1991)

A VAST STADIUM CROWD waves little AMERICAN FLAGS as they await
the Superbowl Football pre-game show -

INT. MOBILE TV OB VAN - DAY

ON a TV SCREEN, we see - WHITNEY and GUARDS coming down the tunnel and entering the FIELD - to a huge roar.

INT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

The FLORIDA ORCHESTRA is ready to play. A black MARINE in uniform stands by, representing the MILITARY.

STADIUM ANNOUNCER

And now - to sing the national anthem
of the United States Of America -
grammy award winning artist, Whitney
Houston.

WHITNEY waves to the crowd and steps up to the MICROPHONE.

ANGLE ON: ROBYN, anxiously watching her friend.

As the MUSIC strikes up:

WHITNEY

*Oh, say can you see by the dawn's
early light
What so proudly we hailed at the
twilight's last gleaming?*

INT. CISSY'S HOME - DAY

CISSY, GARY, MICHAEL watch their TV's -

WHITNEY

*Whose broad stripes and bright stars
through the perilous fight -*

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE/ NIPPY INC - DAY

JOHN watches a TV -

WHITNEY

*O'er the ramparts we watched
were so gallantly streaming?*

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION / NJ - DAY

BOBBY and ELLIN watch the TV -

WHITNEY
*And the rocket's red glare, the bombs
 bursting in air -*

INT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

WHITNEY is singing her heart out -

WHITNEY
*And the rocket's red glare, the bombs
 bursting in air,
 Gave proof through the night that our
 flag was still there.
 Oh, say does that star-spangled
 banner yet wave -*

EXT. IRAQ - DAY

GULF WAR US TROOPS are crammed into a tent to watch. The CAMERA passes over the faces of these young men and women in uniform -

WHITNEY
- O'er the land of the freeeeee-

INT. CHINESE AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY

The family watch the TV -

WHITNEY (ON TV)
- eeeeeeeeeee -

INT. HISPANIC AMERICAN HOUSEHOLD - DAY

The family watch the TV -

WHITNEY (ON TV)
- eeeeeeeeeee -

INT. TAMPA STADIUM - DAY

WHITNEY
*- eeeeeeeeeee - and the home - of the -
 braaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaave!*

The FLAG-WAVING CROWD goes crazy, as -

- the F16's SWOOP over their heads, and then disappear into the distance.

End on WHITNEY, raising her face - JOYFUL - with the adulation washing over her, like nothing she's ever experienced. Hold on her smile, which then FALTERS, and a sense grows over her - as the cheering fades - that even this moment of triumph feels empty - that there's something missing - that the adulation of the crowd is not enough.

EXT. FILM STUDIO LOT / HOLLYWOOD - DAY

CLIVE and WHITNEY walk past sound stages with actors in costume crossing in front of them. He hands her a script.

CLIVE

From Nicole. She believes this is the role for you. I have my concerns.

WHITNEY

(reading the cover)

THE BODYGUARD ?

CLIVE

About a world famous singing star and her difficult relationship with her bodyguard.

WHITNEY

Who's playing the titular bodyguard?

CLIVE

The titular bodyguard? Kevin Costner. He wants you.

(beat)

Is there any way you can delay your wedding?

WHITNEY

For Kevin Costner...?

EXT. LOCATION/ HOLLYWOOD - NIGHT

A SCENE in the film - COSTNER (seen only from behind) carries WHITNEY through the rain in his arms.

INT. FILM LOCATION/ LOS ANGELES HOTEL - DAY

(Filming of the "RUN TO YOU" sequence from THE BODYGUARD.)

WHITNEY, in her hotel room, having her hair fixed, hears "RUN TO YOU" being played by someone, out the window. She rises and looks down, at -

WHITNEY's POV of: her BODYGUARD's HOTEL ROOM, wherein COSTNER (his back turned to us) watches a TV VIDEO CLIP of WHITNEY's character, performing this song.

PUNCH INTO: the VIDEO CLIP, as we get a shot of WHITNEY's CHARACTER running toward us through clouds, as the song plays..."RUN TO YOU..."

Back to: WHITNEY, watching, until - she **FLINCHES in PAIN**.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Whitney?!

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT comes up to her, tends to her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

WHITNEY lies in a hospital bed. BOBBY comforts her.

BOBBY

We'll try again. Baby? We gonna have lots of babies don't worry about that. That's for sure. Okay? You hear? That's right.

They entwine their fingers, tightly. TEARS come to BOBBY's eyes. He wipes them away. She sees this, cradles his head and pulls him close, she comforting him also.

INT. FILM STUDIO - DAY

WHITNEY, in a bathrobe, comes up to CLIVE DAVIS, who is sitting at a MONITOR. He rises and gives her his chair.

WHITNEY

I don't know if I can finish this film.

CLIVE

If that's what you want. We could ask for a delay.

WHITNEY

You gotta tell me if I'm making a fool of myself with this whole thing.

CLIVE

You're beautiful. Your acting is fine. Only thing I'm worried about is the music they're planning on using, or the lack of it.

(MORE)

CLIVE (CONT'D)

I'm worried they're not affording you the chance to sing strongly enough in this picture to show why your character is such a huge star. The songs need to be great for your character to be great. It needs songs, truly great songs...

WHITNEY

Well Clive, then let's make some noise, shall we? Ain't no diva like a Jersey diva.

INT. WHITNEY'S TRAILER - DAY

A CASSETTE TAPE plays - **"I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU"**, as sung by **LINDA RONDSTADT**. It stops.

WHITNEY, nervous, is dressing in the small bathroom, the door ajar. We hear COSTNER (O.S) speaking from the other side of the door.

COSTNER (O.S.)

What do you think? This is the Linda Rondstadt version of a Dolly Parton song.

WHITNEY

I like it. Feels a little dated. Can we update it? I have some ideas.

COSTNER (O.S.)

Sure. Great. And I had an idea--that you start singing it slow, breathy, without any backup music--like a speech, like a monologue. Passion, pure passion.

WHITNEY

I like that. A capella. Very slow. That's great. I'll do something.

COSTNER (O.S.)

The producers aren't sure, think that'll make it unplayable on the radio, but I could give a flying-you-know-what about whether it's playable on the radio.

WHITNEY

I'll show them. When they hear it, they'll realise. They always have to be shown.

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
 (beat)
 Kevin?

COSTNER (O.S.)
 Yeah?

WHITNEY pushes open the door and approaches -

KEVIN COSTNER (*the real KEVIN COSTNER ! - de-aged.*)

WHITNEY
 Am I good enough?

COSTNER
 Are you good enough?
 (beat)
 Will you believe me if I tell
 you, honestly?

WHITNEY
 Yeah.

COSTNER
 Yes. You are.

WHITNEY takes a deep breath, relieved!

WHITNEY
 I think we should redo our
 kissing scene. Don't you?
 I'm not sure we got it.

He smiles.

EXT. FILM STUDIO - DAY

A jealous BOBBY is pacing, being kept from entering the set.

BOBBY
 How long this gonna take? I should be
 in there.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
 They're just filming a take Mr
 Houston.

BOBBY
 Brown. Brown.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT
 The director has called for a closed
 set.

BOBBY
No shit, I bet he has.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO/ LA - DAY

WHITNEY and producer DAVID FOSTER re-arrange the country song into a SOUL BALAD. DAVID plays the piano.

WHITNEY
Slower. More soulful.

DAVID FOSTER
Oh, and Dolly heard you're covering it. She sent in the third verse. Linda dropped it. Dolly said it's important.

DAVID hands WHITNEY the third verse. She reads it.

DAVID FOSTER (CONT'D)
Yeah?

WHITNEY
It's important. Let's hear the Dolly version. I want to hear the original.

DAVID calls to his technician -

DAVID FOSTER
Jimmy? Can you play Dolly's version for Whitney? Third verse.

DOLLY (PLAYBACK)
*I hope life treats you kind
And I hope you have all you've
dreamed
I wish you joy and happiness
But above all, I wish you love
And I will always love you
And I will always love
youuuuuuuuu.....*

As we hear the third verse of Dolly's version, we cut to -

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

CLIVE and DAVID FOSTER speak by phone - CLIVE holds the tape in his hands of **"WHITNEY - I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU"**

CLIVE
Yes, I just listened to Whitney's version.
(MORE)

CLIVE (CONT'D)

And I have to tell you I love it just as it is.

(indistinct yelling in phone)

Yep, yep, I know, yes, but I don't care if it's an early demo. David it's gorgeous just like this. I don't think you can improve it by -

(more yelling from David)

David, David, listen to me - David, I understand, you want to add further orchestration--I know, make it lush before we press the record, I get that, I do. But Warners is desp-

(more yelling)

David! They're desperate. They need the single out there.

(more yelling)

But OK, you win, do it, finish your process. Thank you. Okay. Bye. Bye David.

CLIVE hangs up and then holds out the demo tape to GERRY.

GERRY GRIFFITH

(disappointed)

So I'll let Warners know we have to wait for a new version?

CLIVE

No. Press the record. Just as it is. Don't change a note. This version is the one. We can't hold Warners up one minute longer.

GERRY GRIFFITH

David will have a fit!

CLIVE

I'll deal with David. It's a huge hit, just as it is. Simple. Pure.

GERRY takes the tape and exits. CLIVE drums his fingers.

INT/ EXT. THEATRE/ SNOWY FIELD - DAY

A FILM CREW is re-staging the famous MUSIC VIDEO, where WHITNEY is sitting alone on a chair on an empty stage in a THEATRE...until...the background turns into...a SNOWY FIELD.

WHITNEY starts to sing...a capella...and it's transcendently beautiful !!!

A recording for the ages...and we also appreciate what she's done to the song - elevating it into an epic -

WHITNEY
*If I, should stay, I would only
 be in your wayyyyyyyyyy...*

EXT. "THE CONCERT FOR SOUTH AFRICA" (1994) - NIGHT

WHITNEY is dressed in a golden gown with golden turban. She is at her imperious best - a defining moment in her career - performing for - wait for it! - **105,000 people**, almost all of them black Africans, who sway and dance and hold each other, captivated by her and the moment.

CAPTION: CONCERT FOR SOUTH AFRICA

WHITNEY
*So I'll go, but I know
 That I'll...
 (points to the crowd)
 think of you every step of the
 wayyyyyyyyyy.....*

The VAST CROWD roars with love, in anticipation of the chorus.

ANGLE ON: **NELSON MANDELA**, smiling, in the front row, applauds, delighted -

But WHITNEY makes them all wait, looking to her left, eyes closed, then looking off-stage to her right, controlling this vast crowd imperiously, taking in a deep breath and taking in the moment - a moment of pure joy, so much so that she breaks into the most DIVINE SMILE. The CROWD respond, cheering their love for her, until - she embarks on the famous chorus.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
*And IIIIII --ooh IIIIIIII ---will
 always love you...will always love
 youuuuuuuuu...*

INT. BEDROOM/ WHITNEY'S MANSION / NJ - DAY

WHITNEY stands in her wedding dress, looking at herself in the mirror - the picture-book bride.

A knock on the door. BOBBY enters, in his white wedding suit.

They turn and look at each other.

WHITNEY
I'm not supposed to see you before
the wedding. It's bad luck.

BOBBY
I'll risk it.
(he kisses her)

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION / NJ - DAY

JOHN walks WHITNEY down the AISLE toward BOBBY. CISSY is glowing with pride. GARY and MICHAEL smile.

LATER. BOBBY and WHITNEY exchange vows.

WHITNEY (V.O.)
And IIIIIII will always love you...

ANGLE ON: ROBYN watching, with mixed feelings.

EXT. "THE CONCERT FOR SOUTH AFRICA" (1994) - NIGHT

The CROWD wave sparklers and hold up candles in the night -

WHITNEY
IIIII will always love you -
(pointing)
and you and you and you and you and
you and you and you and youuuuu-
OOOOOO!

As the SAX solo begins -

LATER.

WHITNEY and BOBBY sway on the dance floor - as CISSY and JOHN watch.

LATER.

WHITNEY and BOBBY step outside the house for the WORLD'S PRESS.

REPORTER
(to camera)
Grammy Award winning artist and star
of the smash hit film The Bodyguard,
Whitney Houston wed Bobby Brown in a
private ceremony today...

WHITNEY and BOBBY wave to the paparazzi.

EXT. "THE CONCERT FOR SOUTH AFRICA" (1994) - NIGHT

WHITNEY (V.O.)
*I hope that life treats you kind And
 I hope you have all you dreamed of,
 and I wish to you so much joy and
 happiness
 But above all this, I wish you loooo--
 -ooooooooove...*

Another grace note - then - And as the audience roar and sky-rockets fill the air -

WHITNEY
*And IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII !!!!!!!
 will always love youuuuuu, IIIIII will
 always, love youuuuuu IIIIII, will
 always love youuuu IIIIII, will
 always love you. I will always love
 you, I will always love you, I will
 always -*

PAUSE. More applause and love - as she waits, the audience begin to chant "WE LOVE YOU, WE LOVE YOU..."

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

WHITNEY'S NEW BORN BABY, BOBBI-KRISTINA, is set into WHITNEY'S arms. WHITNEY'S face is shining with JOY. She reaches out her hand to BOBBY, who envelops mother and daughter in his arms. A FAMILY. A HOME! At LAST!

SOUTHAFRICAN CROWD
We Love you, we loveyou...

EXT. "THE CONCERT FOR SOUTH AFRICA" (1994) - NIGHT

WHITNEY raises her hand and the crowd silences. On this -

WHITNEY
*Youuuuuuuuuuuuuu, you you you and you,
 I will always--I will always love
 youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu, youuuuuuuuu,
 youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!*

WHITNEY steps down the steps to the edge of the stage blowing kisses to the adoring crowd, as the BAND play an outro. Finally she does a deep regal curtsy, and lowers her head.

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION/ WHITNEY'S MANSION / NJ - DAY

PUSH IN ON: The Wedding Cake. On top of it, two miniatures of the ideal HUSBAND AND WIFE...As we push in on this...

EXT. BACKSTAGE/ ANOTHER CONCERT - NIGHT

WHITNEY, on another night, comes off stage, wearing a different dress, dripping in sweat, exhausted, and - who is waiting, but BOBBY - with towels. He wraps WHITNEY up and, with his arms around her, leads her toward her dressing room. She lays her head on his shoulder, until -

SECURITY GUARD
This way, Mr Houston.

BOBBY
Mother Fu - ! It's *Brown*, okay?
Mr and Mrs *Brown*! ~~Say that~~ again I'll
rip your goddamn head off.

BOBBY shoves the security guard - at which point others intervene. BOBBY backs down and walks away with WHITNEY.

INT. DRESSING ROOM/ POST SHOW - NIGHT

BOBBY takes good care of WHITNEY, toweling her down - as people bang on the door, trying to see her.

WHITNEY
I don't want to see anyone.

BOBBY
I got ya, baby.

Enter ROBYN -

ROBYN
Great show Nip.

BOBBY
She doesn't want to see nobody.

ROBYN
I'm not nobody.
(to WHITNEY)
Oprah needs an answer about you
doing an interview with her.

BOBBY
I got this.

ROBYN
No. I got this, Bobby.

BOBBY

Oh yeah?

BOBBY walks right up to ROBYN and stands an inch from her, moving his head side to side.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

This has been coming for a while.

ROBYN

I'm creative director.

BOBBY

I'm her husband. I win.

Out of this tense standoff ROBYN seeks WHITNEY's support.

ROBYN

Whit?

WHITNEY is torn -

WHITNEY

Gotta listen to my husband Rob.

ROBYN

That's it? "You gotta listen to my husband."

BOBBY

You heard her.

WHITNEY

But Bobby, be nice. Rob is my best friend.

BOBBY

Thought I was that.

WHITNEY

I need you both, okay? So quit it. Stop this. It's driving me crazy.

*(goes back to removing her
makeup)*

I need you both.

BOBBY doesn't like this one bit.

BOBBY

Both of us? Well I married you, not her.

ROBYN
 I'm going back to my hotel, you
 need me, call me.
(Whitney ignores her)
 Nip?

WHITNEY
 Okay. Thanks Robyn.

ROBYN and BOBBY exchange icy looks as ROBYN starts to go.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
 Hey--I love you.

ROBYN nods, not so sure of this anymore. She exits.

BOBBY
 "I love you." "I love you."

WHITNEY
 Will you stop! You're my husband.
 One flesh. Okay? One flesh, baby.
 Read the Bible. One flesh. Let no
 man. Break asunder.

EXT. CONCERT VENUE - NIGHT

BOBBY has his arm around WHITNEY (wrapped in a long fur coat)
 as he ushers her toward the waiting LIMO.

FANS (AUTOGRAPH HUNTERS) are calling for WHITNEY, holding out
 pens and photos.

As BOBBY gets in the LIMO - WHITNEY turns and approaches -

- a **SUPERFAN** - a YOUNG MALE, in his twenties, who strangely
 doesn't wear any kind of smile - in fact looks a little
 sinister...

WHITNEY
 You again. You everywhere.

SUPERFAN
(taking out a PEN)
 Get your signature?

WHITNEY opens her HANDBAG and pulls out a SMALL NOTEPAD. She
 takes his PEN and signs the SMALL NOTEPAD and then hands him
 the ENTIRE NOTEPAD, as -

BOBBY
 Whitney! Get in! Robyn!

ROBYN gets in the limo, and WHITNEY walks back to the limo, "accidentally" carrying the SUPERFANS pen.

As the fans bay "WHITNEY!" She waves and blows a kiss and then gets in the LIMO, which then drives away.

INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION/ MENDHAM / NJ - DAY (1995)

With BOBBI KRISTINA sleeping in her crib - BOBBY enters and WHITNEY keeps vacuuming, ignoring him. He finally turns off the VACUUM. She turns and looks at him, with resigned emotional distance -

BOBBY

What?

WHITNEY

I'm disturbed. You don't smell right,
you don't look right.

BOBBY

What you talking about?

WHITNEY

Bringing dirt into my home.

BOBBY

No idea what you're -

WHITNEY

I checked. I don't look for it, but I
check. I check. I am disturbed. It
disturbs me. Out with other women,
with my credit card? I have a problem
with that. Get out of my house.

BOBBY

No, you leave.

WHITNEY

It's my house.

BOBBY

I'm not going anywhere, and you're
not going anywhere either. We man and
wife.

WHITNEY

Get out my house. Get out my house
Bobby. Get out my house.

BOBBY

You get out! You get out!
Who you talk'in to, girl? Huh?

BOBBI KRISTINA starts to cry -

WHITNEY

Well that's a good question.
Out! I said out.

WHITNEY picks up her crying TODDLER -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Or I'll get the police over here. You
want that again? I'll either get the
police or a gun. Maybe I should get a
gun.

BOBBY

You gonna get a gun?

WHITNEY

Smoke your ass.

BOBBY

You get a gun. We'll see about that.
You gonna mess with BobbyBrown?

BOBBY walks right up to WHITNEY and stares threateningly into
her face from a few inches away - they are both in pain.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Huh? Mrs Brown? You don't ever talk
like that Whitney. Never talk like
that. Do not disrespect me. I don't
screw around.

WHITNEY

Yeah? Well I got news for you,
neither do I.

BOBBY

Fine. I'm gone. And I'll stay gone.
You outa your mind.

BOBBY goes, as WHITNEY tries to calm her crying child. **In a further installment of the MOTHER-CHILD TABLEAU** - WHITNEY sits on the couch with BOBBI-KRISTINA and strokes her hair - softly singing to her -

WHITNEY

Shhhh, babygirl. We gonna be okay. We
gonna be fine.

(sings)

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
*I once was lost in sin but Jesus took
me in.
And then a little light from Heaven
filled my soul
He bathed my heart in love and wrote
my name above
And just a little talk with Jesus
made me whole...*

EXT. PRIVATE JET/ RUNWAY/ AIRPORT - DAY

WHITNEY, in FURS, disembarks a PRIVATE JET. She's tired but she puts on a smile to wave to FANS waiting at the TERMINAL. As she de-planes -

CAPTAIN
See you tomorrow, Miss Houston.

WHITNEY
Bring in another crew. I don't care
what it costs. I'm sleeping in my own
damn bed tonight.

EXT. STADIUM CONCERT - NIGHT

WHITNEY performs a few bars of - **"I'M YOUR BABY TONIGHT"**

CUT TO:

WHITNEY performs a few bars of - **"I'M EVERY WOMAN"**

CUT TO:

WHITNEY performs (holding a handkerchief now) a few bars of - **"ONE MOMENT IN TIME"** - and now, bathed in sweat, we can see her voice weakening. She is struggling with exhaustion.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

BOBBY is drinking with friends and has his arm around **WOMAN 1**. He kisses her on the cheek and whispers in her ear. As the WOMAN laughs - a PHOTOGRAPHER's FLASHBULB goes off. BOBBY jumps up and gives chase but the PHOTOGRAPHER gets away.

INT. CISSY'S HOME - DAY

CISSY reads **PEOPLE MAGAZINE**, whose COVER shows the photo of - BOBBY and WOMAN 1. REACTION, CISSY: Furious, as she throwd down the magazine on to the floor.

INT. CLIVE'S LIMO - DAY

WHITNEY (miserable now) and CLIVE in the back seat.

WHITNEY
Remember that song, the one I
said I didn't know how to sing--
because I'd never be so affected
by a relationship?

CLIVE
"Why Does It Hurt So Bad?" Sure. The
Babyface song.

WHITNEY, sadly -

WHITNEY
I get it now.
(looks out the window)
I'm ready.

PRELAP: "WHY DOES IT HURT SO BAD."

INT. STUDIO - DAY

WHITNEY records the LEAD VOCAL of "WHY DOES IT HURT SO BAD".

WHITNEY
*Why does it hurt so bad
Why do I feel so sad
Thought I was over you
But I keep crying
When I don't love you
So why does it hurt so bad
I thought I had let you go
So why does it hurt me so
I gotta get you outta my head
It hurts so bad
Oh it hurts so bad baby, Mmmmm.*

INT. STAGE/ CONCERT VENUE - DAY

On an empty stage, during a rehearsal, RICKEY MINOR opens a MANUSCRIPT as WHITNEY gargles something for her throat.

RICKEY
How's the voice?

WHITNEY
Fine.

RICKEY

Coz I've been working on something
new for you. To finish your shows.
But it's big.

WHITNEY

Uh oh. I got a show full of big
already.

RICKEY

Not big like this.

WHITNEY

What is it?

RICKEY

A three-song medley, sung straight
through that will tell a single
narrative, plumbing the story of the
black female experience as well as
every woman's romantic history,
starting with "I Loves You Porgy",
moving on to "And I Am Telling You
I'm Not Going" -

WHITNEY

Oh my Lord -

RICKEY

- and finishing with "I Have
Nothing".

WHITNEY

Rickey, that's -

RICKEY

Mmmm?

WHITNEY

Can't be done. You understand that
right? Those three songs, together?
That's like climbing Mt Everest.
Without oxygen.

RICKEY

I think you're the only singer on the
planet who could pull it off.

WHITNEY

That's coz you're crazy.

RICKEY

Can we just try it?

WHITNEY
No. We cannot. You crazy Rickey
Minor! You crazy!

LATER.

CLOSE ON: WHITNEY'S RIB-CAGE (from behind) EXPANDING with AIR, before she tries to sing, on a single breath, a sustained section of the MEDLEY. She stops.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
This is--no, no. There's no way. This
whole section'd have to be sung on a
single breath, for, for eight bars.

RICKEY
So sing it on a single breath
for eight bars.

WHITNEY
You goddamn sing it for eight bars!
It can't be done.

WHITNEY throws the MANUSCRIPT at him, and walks out.

EXT. CONCERT VENUE - DAY

WHITNEY, exits the rehearsal, and - in the presence of many people - pauses when she sees -

- the young **FANBOY** we have seen before. She crosses to him. The FANBOY hands Whitney a PEN. She takes out her own NOTEPAD, (as before) signs her name, gives the PAD to the FANBOY, who walks away, leaving Whitney with his PEN. She puts his PEN in her handbag and goes to the waiting ROBYN and LIMO, waving to her fans.

EXT. CLIVE'S COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

CLIVE and CLIVE'S HOUSEMAN, and WHITNEY watch CLIVE'S two adult sons play tennis on the private outdoor court.

CLIVE
We have to talk.

WHITNEY
Here it comes -

CLIVE
I've been very respectful, patient,
but it's been eight years, Whitney,
eight years. During which -

WHITNEY

I've -

CLIVE

- you've released just seven pop songs. Not one studio album. I think it's time you return to work. Regain your crown.

(beat)

The worst thing, this life, wasting your gifts. Yours are God-given.

WHITNEY

I've been acting.

CLIVE

Three wonderful movies, I'm just pointing out -

WHITNEY takes out cigarettes - which causes CLIVE concern.

WHITNEY

And performing. The tours. And raising a daughter on my own -

(gestures at private tennis instructor.)

- not like this.

CLIVE

Of course, Bobbi Kristina must be your priority.

(re the cigarette)

Whitney, please. Don't. You, smoking? That's like leaving a Stradivarius out in the rain.

WHITNEY

You have everything, Clive. Look at you. Children, wife -

CLIVE

Ex-wife.

WHITNEY

Servants, houses.

CLIVE

Family is the most important thing.

WHITNEY

I believe that. But it's so hard. I need my daughter to have the home she deserves, but how can she when her mother--is me?

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
 And her father is Bobby Brown?
(smokes)
 I'm carrying everyone, Clive. The
 press always on me. It's exhausting.

CLIVE
 You're still exhausted?

WHITNEY
 All black people are exhausted--from
 figuring out how much of our true
 self is acceptable to show in any
 given situation, how much can we
 bring out of storage before we get
 into trouble. People only wanna see
 me bring out "the princess." That's
tiring. So yeah, I could use a rest,
 especially when most of the time all
this princess be dreaming about--is
 wearing jeans and a T-shirt and being
 home with my daughter on the couch
 and forgetting that her royal
 highness Queen Whitney Elizabeth ever
 existed.

CLIVE
 It's wonderful that you take her
 wherever you go.
(clarifying)
 Bobby Kristina.

WHITNEY
 I'm not sure. She sees everything.
Everything. The road's no place for a
 child.

Pause. They watch tennis -

CLIVE
 Eight years Whitney. I won't mention
 it again.

WHITNEY reflects on this -

INT. DINER / SUNSET BLVD - DAY (1999)

WHITNEY, wearing a CAP and JEANS - being ordinary, not a
 princess, sits at a counter drinking a MILKSHAKE, beside BOBBI
 KRISTINA (6) who also sucks on a STRAW.

On the counter she looks at, a MINI-JUKE BOX of SONGS. She
 flicks through the hits. Thinking...

The resolve to return to the studio strikes. Her. She takes a QUARTER and inserts it into the MINI-JUKEBOX.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

Guests cross back and forth as we highlight BUNGALOW #3

INT. CLIVE'S BUNGALOW #3/ BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - NIGHT

CLIVE is reading a newspaper when there comes a knock on his door. He looks at his wristwatch.

He opens the door to find - WHITNEY standing there in her nightgown and bathrobe!

CLIVE
Whitney! It's midnight.

WHITNEY
You got songs? They'll need to be damn fine ones, Clive. And have some attitude about them, coz if I'm coming back, it better be with a splash. Coz Whitney is angry now.

CLIVE
What happened?

WHITNEY
I couldn't sleep. Might as well be working, right? So, whaddaya got? You got any tapes? New songs?

CLIVE
(*smiling*)
Here? Now? I have, perhaps, one or two. A couple of originals. Just came in. Looking for a singer, but -

WHITNEY
Gimme the best one.

CLIVE
The best one? My God. Did you walk from your room through the lobby like that? The best one - well that would be - perhaps this one. I can't believe you're making me do this now, I have an early breakfast with P-Diddy and Nancy Pelosi. Don't ask.

CLIVE finds the tape he wants and puts it in the tape deck and presses play.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
So. This one would suit your range.

The DEMO starts - we hear the intro begin, as we -

CUT TO:

CLIVE stops the tape deck playing. He turns and looks to WHITNEY for her reaction.

Silence, then -

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Do you like it?

She nods.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
Do you want to hear it again? Yes?

When WHITNEY nods, CLIVE presses rewind, as we -

CUT TO:

The tapedeck stops again.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
A third time? Let me play it a few more times, so that you -

WHITNEY
No. I've got it.

CLIVE
You've got it? Got what? The song?

WHITNEY stands up. She needs only two hearings of the song to know it by heart and have a unique interpretation. She starts to click her fingers - she carries the whole song in her head - and can hear the orchestration she wants, the feel...

She starts to sing - and thereafter dances through the bedrooms - joyfully singing this up-tempo smash, as CLIVE follows, incredulous with delight, in awe of her genius...

WHITNEY

*Friday night you and your boys went
out to eat
Then they hung out, but you came home
around three
If six of y'all went out
Then four of you were really cheap
'Cause only two of you had dinner
I found your credit card receipt*

We then begin to HEAR the musical backing arrangement that she can already hear in her head:

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

*It's not right but it's okay
I'm gonna make it anyway
Pack your bags up and leave
And don't you dare come running back
to me...*

WHITNEY is dancing and singing and CLIVE beams - in awe -

CLIVE

I don't believe this...

WHITNEY

*It's not right, but it's okay
I'm gonna make it anyway
Close the door behind you leave your
key
I'd rather be alone than unhappy
It's not right, but it's okay
I'm gonna make it anyway
Pack your bags up and leave...*

WHITNEY stops, and bows, to her audience of ONE. CLIVE is just delighted that this genius still has the magic after so many years away.

CLIVE

Bravo.

INT. STAGE/ CONCERT VENUE/ CHICAGO - NIGHT (2000)

With the BAND playing the background music to "MY LOVE IS YOUR LOVE" - WHITNEY enters, after a costume change, and takes the MICROPHONE and begins to speak to the crowd. WHITNEY looks THIN and TIRED, and her voice is not as strong as usual...troubling signs...

WHITNEY

(to rapt audience)
That feels better.
(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

A girl needs three costume changes on a night like this, right?

(she struggles to take the microphone from the stand)

It's great to--to be here in Chicago--to kick off our 70 date world tour.

(applause)

70 dates - my God. Oh my Lord. And sometimes two shows a day. I'm a working girl! Damn!

(applause)

No but it is my joy and my privilege to be able to perform for you. Thank you so much. And so now I want to sing you the song that--that--that gave this little tour its name: *My Love--*

(holding out her hand)

Is Your Love....

EXT. FLORIDA - NIGHT

BOBBY BROWN is handcuffed and arrested by police. His CAR has crashed into a CONDOMINIUM SIGN.

INT. FLORIDA JAIL - NIGHT

BOBBY angrily paces, behind bars.

INT. LIMO/ CHICAGO - NIGHT

WHITNEY jumps in the back of a LIMO, escaping the glare of flashbulbs, which are dimmed by the tinted windows.

She is really struggling. In a deep funk she takes a TRAY and puts it on her knee.

She pulls down the ARM-REST, where she keeps her "stash". She takes out a bag of COCAINE, a TEASPOON and a LIGHTER. She looks at these items on the tray.

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ J RECORDS - DAY (2001)

CLOSE ON: A NATIONAL ENQUIRER NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

WHITNEY SKIN AND BONE PERFORMS JACKSON TRIBUTE.

A PHOTO shows WHITNEY, looking very very skinny.

CLIVE lowers the newspaper, looking very concerned.

INT. BOBBI-KRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

WHITNEY enters, after a night of partying, in a mink coat (*that hides her serious weight-loss*) and lies down next to BOBBI-KRISTINA (7). Here, at least, she can find peace.

BOBBI K wakes.

BOBBI KRISTINA
I'm awake now.

WHITNEY
Go to sleep.

BOBBI KRISTINA
Mommy, why is Daddy in jail?

WHITNEY
Who said he's in jail?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Everyone. Is he in jail?

WHITNEY
He's gonna be home in a few days,
don't worry.

BOBBI KRISTINA
Is it because he slept with someone
else?

WHITNEY
What? Honey. Who's telling you these
things? Who told you that?

BOBBI KRISTINA
At school.

WHITNEY
Which kid? Tell me a name and I'll go
down there with a baseball bat.
That's not right.

BOBBI KRISTINA
Is it true?

WHITNEY
No. baby. It's fine. Daddy's a good
man. They're just--people are just
picking on him is all. You don't have
to worry. Okay?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Why are they picking on him?

WHITNEY
Why? I don't know why. They're
jealous of him maybe. Now stop
worrying, okay? Have you stopped
worrying? Baby?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Yes.

WHITNEY
Good. Now go to sleep. Okay? Eyes
closed. Sssh now. Sleeping time.

WHITNEY strokes BOBBI-K's hair, sending her off to sleep.

EXT. CLIVE'S COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY and BOBBI-KRISTINA get out of the LIMO and enter
CLIVE's country house.

INT. CLIVE'S COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

CLIVE and WHITNEY stand at the glass ranch-sliders, looking
out into the garden where -

BOBBI-KRISTINA and a HANDSOME MAN play with a DOG.

WHITNEY
So sorry to hear about your divorce.
I was so upset.

CLIVE
Love has many forms. Only one is
romantic.
(beat)
We'll stay good friends--devoted
parents, of course.

WHITNEY's POV of: the "DOCTOR" playing with BOBBI.

WHITNEY
Nice looking man. Single?

At just this moment, the DOCTOR runs toward them across the
grass to retrieve a thrown ball. He smiles and waves - at
CLIVE. CLIVE waves back and smiles at him. WHITNEY realizes
that the two men are a couple.

CLIVE
Yes--and no.

WHITNEY
Clive?

CLIVE
I'm an open book, Whitney -

WHITNEY
- yeah, that you need damn strong
glasses to read.

CLIVE
It appears--that I'm blind--gender-
wise.

WHITNEY
(smiles, in admiration)
Good for you. I didn't see that.

CLIVE
Nor did I, quite frankly. Seriously.
And I want you to be happy too, my
dear friend.

He reaches out and takes her hand, tenderly. WHITNEY
complicates the chances of this, and can only offer -

WHITNEY
Ha.

They sit, facing each other on the same couch.

CLIVE
I am leaving Arista, to set up my own
label. So I'm afraid we must part
ways. I wanted to tell you myself.

WHITNEY
But then I'm coming with you.

CLIVE
I tried. I begged. But they won't
release you from your contract. Of
course not. You're too valuable to
them. I did everything I could,
believe me, but no.

WHITNEY
We're a team.

CLIVE

My replacements are excellent people. You'll be in very good hands. So there's that. I can explain the reasons in greater detail later. Now-- secondly, and more importantly -

WHITNEY

More importantly?

CLIVE

- the real reason I've asked you up here -

WHITNEY

What?

CLIVE

- dear Whitney - the time has come -

WHITNEY

For?

CLIVE

- for me to tell you--you need rehab.

WHITNEY

Clive -

CLIVE

The amount of problems arising indicates you're not gonna win this battle and you're underestimating the lethal power of drugs.

WHITNEY

I'm not underestimating anything. Actually, you're underestimating me.

CLIVE

Nobody wins this battle. Those before you, in entertainment, whether a Judy Garland or Janis, they end up losing. And you can't do it on your own. And how sad, how--for you to affect your voice, for you to affect everything, it's just criminal. I've got to openly tell you, you *must* go into rehab.

WHITNEY

It's not what you think. It's not that bad.

CLIVE

Bobby's in jail. You can't do it alone. I've gotten word that he would agree to go into rehab too-- because for one of you to go without the other, it will not work. He will go into rehab, if you go. So you're not doing it alone. Now you don't have to go to the same place, but right near here is a place, New Canaan--20 minutes away from here. You should deal with it now. You've got to deal with it now.

Silence.

WHITNEY

You're way overestimating my involvement. I agree, occasionally, I, I'm involved with some, but it's not serious.

CLIVE

You're in denial. It's serious enough to have affected you. There's a hoarseness in your voice. There are incidents that are arising. Do it now, when Bobby is agreeing to do it with you.

WHITNEY listens, but then -

WHITNEY

Whatever is going on, it's my own personal matter and I have it under control. There is absolutely no need for rehab.

CLIVE realizes she's completely in denial.

CLIVE

Are you still in love with Bobby?

WHITNEY

I thought you didn't deal with the personal lives of your artists?

CLIVE

I feel in my bones this is a matter of life and death.

He levels her with a deep look, trying to reach her...

WHITNEY
I love him.

BOBBI KRISTINA runs into the room and into the arms of
WHITNEY.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Hey babygirl.

BOBBI KRISTINA
I want a dog, Mommy.

WHITNEY
You want one? Sure. Anything you want
honey. Anything you want.

CLIVE
Whitney, please. Will you at least -

But WHITNEY silences CLIVE with a look, as in "not in front of
my daughter."

INT. HOTEL LOBBY / DETROIT - DAY

ROBYN enters, in coat, carrying handbag. Walks to the
ELEVATOR.

INT. HALLWAY/ DETROIT HOTEL - DAY

ROBYN knocks on WHITNEY's door.

The door finally opens - it's WHITNEY. Her HAIR weave is not
in. She doesn't look good.

WHITNEY looks at ROBYN then turns and walks away.

ROBYN enters -

INT. WHITNEY'S HOTEL ROOM/ DETROIT HOTEL - DAY

WHITNEY
Hi Robyn.

ROBYN
What's up? What's going on?
Everyone's talking about you. Where's
Bobby?

WHITNEY
He has another room on another floor,
on another planet.

ROBYN

Why?

WHITNEY

So he can see his women without
upsetting me.

ROBYN

Considerate.

(beat)

I came to see if you're okay. And I
can see you're not. Nip, we need to
cancel this show, and get you home.
Okay?

Before WHITNEY can reply - BOBBY enters from the hallway.

BOBBY

(to WHITNEY)

What's she doing here? You called
her?

WHITNEY

No. I didn't call her.

ROBYN

I came because I'm worried about her,
and it's clear to everyone she isn't
doing well and needs to go home.

BOBBY

Baby? You need to go home? Do you
need to go home?

WHITNEY looks between ROBYN and BOBBY.

WHITNEY

No. I don't need to go home.

ROBYN

That's it?

BOBBY

I'm looking after her.

ROBYN

Oh is that what you're doing?

When BOBBY walks up to ROBYN, she snaps -

ROBYN (CONT'D)

Nip--I can't do this anymore, and I
won't watch this. You need to decide.
It's him or me.

BOBBY

Ha!

WHITNEY stares at ROBYN -

WHITNEY

You bring this to me before a show?

ROBYN

A show you shouldn't be doing.

(pause)

Him or me.

Silence. BOBBY waits for WHITNEY to speak -

BOBBY

You gotta think about this? What the hell?

WHITNEY

No. I am not doing this now. We will deal with this later. Why do I gotta deal with everyone else's shit?!

WHITNEY walks away, going to get ready. BOBBY and ROBYN exchange hard looks.

BOBBY

You're right baby, we gotta get to the venue.

(to ROBYN)

We're done here.

ROBYN

(calling to WHITNEY)

This man doesn't deserve you.

(starts to go)

And your father's in the hospital.

WHITNEY turns back to look at ROBYN.

WHITNEY

Daddy?

BOBBY

Oh shit, I was gonna tell you. After the show.

(to ROBYN)

After the show.

BOBBY ushers WHITNEY into the bedroom. ROBYN turns and exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY (2003)

WHITNEY appears in the doorway. In bed, seriously ill, is JOHN HOUSTON - an oxygen tube under his nose. He's at death's door. JOHN's NEW WIFE, BARBARA, holds JOHN's hand. No love is lost between WHITNEY and BARBARA. BARBARA rises.

NEW WIFE

Whitney -

JOHN looks and sees WHITNEY.

JOHN HOUSTON

(to BARBARA)

Leave us.

BARBARA exits, with a polite look at WHITNEY. WHITNEY sits in the bedside chair.

WHITNEY

Daddy. Oh Daddy.

JOHN HOUSTON

I'm gonna be out here, day or two,
you'll see.

WHITNEY

You're not going anywhere, until the
doctors say you can. You're gonna get
the best care in the world.

JOHN HOUSTON

I gotta get outa here and take care'a
business.

WHITNEY

No you don't. Not anymore. That's
over. Pat's handling everything now.
So you just relax and get better.

JOHN HOUSTON

What you talking about? Pat?

WHITNEY

I was shown the books, Daddy. The
money's, my money, has been going
into too many pockets. Let's not talk
about it now.

JOHN HOUSTON

I've been looking after the books
just fine.

WHITNEY

It's okay. Pat's managing me.

JOHN HOUSTON

You're out of your mind little girl!
I been looking after everything your
whole life, *my* whole life, shit--
taking care'a business. World War 2,
who you think drove all night to get
those supply trucks, ammunition,
gasoline, to the front lines, France,
1944? Me. And who you think looked
after you when your Momma was off on
some tour, changing your diapers?
Huh? So, you aint taking over shit.

WHITNEY

It's done, Daddy. It's my decision.
The mink coats and cars, private jets
and condos for everybody, it's over.
I need you to relax.

JOHN HOUSTON

Yeah? What about the millions you
blew on Bobby, his lawyers, court
cases--your private jets, huh?

WHITNEY

My minds made up. Let's go forward.

JOHN HOUSTON

Then you'd better get a good lawyer,
babygirl.

WHITNEY can't believe her ears.

JOHN HOUSTON (CONT'D)

And you'd better pay me all the money
you owe me.

WHITNEY

Daddy, what money?

JOHN HOUSTON

My piece of this new record deal that
I negotiated for you with Arista.

WHITNEY

You negotiated - ?

JOHN HOUSTON

100 million dollars.

WHITNEY

Daddy - you didn't negotiate that.

JOHN HOUSTON

I negotiated it. I took care'a it.

WHITNEY

Yeah, like you thought you took care of being my Daddy. And being a faithful husband. Oh you took care of that. And now you're taking care of your new wife, by coming after me? You're taking care of a lot.

JOHN HOUSTON

I want my piece. Or I'll sue for all of it. You believe it.

WHITNEY

There's no--there's no 100 million. They pay by the album and I haven't done any new albums yet. As of right now, it's almost all gone. You let me down, Daddy. And now you're breaking my heart.

JOHN HOUSTON

I know you and Bobby are hiding it from me. You pay me or get yourself a good lawyer, I'm serious now. You wanna fight me I'll sue your ass for the entire 100 million. Get me my money.

Whitney is shocked to her core. She can't reply. She rises and runs out of the room.

JOHN HOUSTON (CONT'D)

Yeah!

(to himself)

You get your act together, honey-- and you pay me the money you owe me-- one hundred million. Mmmhmm.

EXT. POOL/ WHITNEY'S MANSION / ATLANTA - DAY

WHITNEY, after a swim, sits at the patio table in her white bathrobe, with wet hair and sunglasses. It's clear she's been crying.

BOBBY stands behind her, comforting her, patiently rubbing her shoulders.

BOBBY
Fix you a drink.

BOBBY exits. WHITNEY picks up a CORDLESS PHONE, dials.

WHITNEY
Donna. It's me. Do something for me.
Call Robyn and - and tell her -
(beat)
- I've accepted her resignation.
(pause)
Okay. Thank you.

WHITNEY hangs up.

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Seated at the GRAVESIDE, GARY and PAT and MICHAEL and DONNA and CISSY and BOBBI KRISTINA. Next to BOBBI K is an empty chair.

They all watch as a COFFIN is lowered into the ground, presided over by the same PASTOR from Act 1. JOHN HOUSTON's current wife stands beside the PASTOR. (No sign of WHITNEY.)

PASTOR
We commend to the earth the body
of our brother JohnHouston...

REACTIONS GARY & MICHAEL: Hiding their emotions.

REACTION CISSY: Tears form in her eyes. She loved this man. She watches as JOHN's current wife wipes her eyes and then turns her eyes, with concern, to BOBBI KRISTINA. She reaches out and holds her grand-daughter's hand, and then looks at -

- the EMPTY CHAIR.

INT. WHITNEY'S NEW MANSION / ATLANTA - DAY

CISSY HOUSTON enters and walks through the empty rooms of the MANSION. She finds that somebody has spray-painted the walls and door with big glaring eyes and strange faces. Evil eyes, staring out like a threat ...

On the coffee tables - evidence of DRUG USE, teaspoons that have been blackened over a flame.

In another room there is a big framed PHOTO on the wall of - WHITNEY, BOBBY and BOBBI-KRISTINA - but someone has cut WHITNEY's head out! It is beyond disturbing, seeing her daughter's face cut out.

REACTION CISSY: Grave concern.

EXT. WHITNEY'S MANSION - DAY

WHITNEY is lead by a POLICEMAN and put into the back of a PATROL CAR.

ANGLE ON: PAT and GARY on the front porch. GARY holds the hand of BOBBI-KRISTINA. CISSY emerges from indoors and stands beside them, watching.

CLOSE ON: BOBBI-K, watching as her mother is put into the patrol car, tear-stained face. PAT and GARY comfort her.

ANGLE ON: WHITNEY, looking back at - the crying BOBBI-K - before she gets into the car.

INT. PATROL CAR - DAY

As WHITNEY hangs her head in shame, in the back seat -

The POLICEMAN looks at WHITNEY (who is furious) in the rear-view mirror as - his police partner speaks with PAT and GARRY and CISSY of the steps of the mansion.

The POLICEMAN (at the wheel) mistakenly starts singing a song he thinks Whitney recorded:

POLICEMAN
Whitney Houston-- "*Can you woo, woo woo?*" Right? "*Can you woo, woo woo?*"

WHITNEY
"*Can you woo, woo*" too, motherfucker.
1986, Jeffrey Osbourne, wrong singer,
get up to date, asshole.

The POLICEMAN is put in his place.

EXT. GARDEN/ REHAB CENTRE - DAY

COUNSELLOR, WARREN BOYD, speaks with her -

WARREN BOYD
We're all slowly dying, but you don't
have to participate so
enthusiastically in the process.

WHITNEY
I need to get out of here. Now.

WARREN BOYD

Okay. Then I'd like to recommend to you, and your family, a private secure residence, in California. Four months. You'd be closely monitored.

WHITNEY

By who?

WARREN BOYD

Me.

WHITNEY

Four months?

WARREN BOYD

We'd have a contract. To complete the four months. No excuses.

WHITNEY

House arrest?

WARREN BOYD

To save your life.

WHITNEY

Bobbi-Kristina?

WARREN BOYD

She would visit.

EXT. PRIVATE REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY swims in the private pool. She gets out. Towels herself, she walks inside -

ANGLE ON: WARREN BOYD, watching her.

LATER.

WHITNEY, in a bathrobe, sits in a chair, looking out at the gardens, contemplating her life. She takes out a pack of CIGARETTES and as she lights up we can see her hand is slightly shaking, from withdrawal.

INT. PRIVATE REHAB HOUSE - DAY

BOBBI KRISTINA (12) runs in the door, into her mother's arms.

WHITNEY

Baby! Oh my God, I am so happy to see you!

BOBBI KRISTINA

Hi Mommy.

WHITNEY

Look at you! Oh my darling girl. Tall as a beanstalk, just overnight.

BOBBI KRISTINA

This place is cool. Are you still sick?

WHITNEY

Getting better, every day. I'm working hard, baby.

BOBBI KRISTINA

Are we gonna be okay?

This hits WHITNEY -

WHITNEY

We gonna be fine, better than ever, because the Lord Jesus has looked down and seen that your Momma needed some extra help and he's made sure that she's getting it now.

(touching Bobbi's cheek)

Oh, such a sad face.

BOBBI KRISTINA

I miss Daddy.

WHITNEY

Gonna be fine. Just you and me. We're gonna build a home together. You and me. Okay?

BOBBI KRISTINA

Yeah.

WHITNEY

That's good, right?

BOBBI KRISTINA

(smiles)

Yeah. So--what shall we do? Is there anything to do here?

WHITNEY

Anything to do? Anything to do?

UP WITH: "HIGHER LOVE"

WHITNEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
"Bring me a Higher Love...!"

EXT. POOL/ REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY and BOBBI jog around the garden, until BOBBI pushes WHITNEY in the pool. WHITNEY screams as she falls in the water, then jumps out and chases BOBBI.

WHITNEY (O.S.)
"Bring me a Higher Love...!"

INT. REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY and BOBBI work out - a dance class - to the music.

WHITNEY (O.S.)
"Bring me a Higher Love...!"

INT. BEDROOM/ REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY and BOBBI stalk each other, a happy, playful, but serious, WATER-GUN FIGHT, with pump-action water guns and high tension, that ends in eruptions of screams and laughs.

WHITNEY (O.S.)
"Bring me a Higher Love...!"

INT. REHAB HOUSE - NIGHT

WHITNEY coaches BOBBI on how to be a runway model, striking the pose, doing the turn. BOBBI emulates WHITNEY.

LATER.

ON THE COUCH - **in the final reprise of the MOTHER-DAUGHTER TABLEAU** - WHITNEY, still battling the remnants of withdrawal - lies with her head on BOBBI's LAP.

BOBBI K begins to sing to her mother - **"HOME"**

BOBBI KRISTINA
*When I think of home/ I think of a
 place where there's/Love overflowing;
 (MORE)*

BOBBI KRISTINA (CONT'D)
*I wish I was home/ I wish I was back
 there/ With the things I've been
 knowing/ Wind that makes the tall
 grass bend into leaning/ Suddenly the
 raindrops that fall/ Have a meaning
 Sprinkling the scene/ Makes it all
 clean/ Maybe there's a chance
 For me to go back/ Now that I have
 some direction/ It sure would be nice
 to be back home...*

Silence, then -

BOBBI KRISTINA (CONT'D)
 I'm proud of you Momma.

WHITNEY's eyes are open, then she pretends to sleep when BOBBI checks - (*similar to what Whitney did with Robyn in Act 1*)

INT. BATHROOM/ REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY lies in the bath - contemplating her future. The bath tap drips...drips...drips... She SMILES, then CRIES, then LAUGHS - so many conflicting emotions breaking over her...

INT. REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WHITNEY puts down the phone, sees WARREN watching her.

WARREN BOYD
 Who was that?

WHITNEY
 What?

WARREN BOYD
 Phone's off limits. Who were you on the phone with?

WHITNEY
 Trying to get ahold of my daughter.
 She must be with friends.

WARREN is suspicious.

WARREN BOYD
 Whitney, this can't work if you're not 100% honest with me.

WHITNEY
 I was trying to order some perfume.
 You caught me. My favorite perfume.
 (MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

But no one has it. So I need to borrow your car Warren. I need to go find a bottle of it. I need it.

WARREN BOYD

You can't drive. You know you can't leave the property.

WHITNEY

If I can't get this perfume I'm leaving the property.

WARREN BOYD

What's the perfume? What's the perfume called?

WHITNEY

Worth.

WARREN BOYD

Worth?

WHITNEY

Worth. I'm in need a bottle of it.

WARREN stares at her.

WARREN BOYD

You stay here. I'll go. How expensive is it?

WHITNEY

You can take my credit card.

WARREN BOYD

You surrendered your credit card. You can pay me back.

WHITNEY

Really? Can you go now?

WARREN BOYD

Now?

WHITNEY

I'm desperate.

WARREN BOYD

Worth?

WHITNEY

Worth.

MONTAGE:

A) DEPARTMENT STORE A

WARREN BOYD
Worth.

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 1 shakes her head.

B) DEPARTMENT STORE B

WARREN BOYD (CONT'D)
Worth?

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 2 shakes her head.

C) DEPARTMENT STORE C

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 3 shakes her head.

D) DEPARTMENT STORE D

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 4 nods.

WARREN BOYD (CONT'D)
You have it?

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 4
One second.

WARREN takes out THREE CREDIT CARDS and lays them down on the counter. She comes back with the BOTTLE of "WORTH."

WARREN BOYD
Amazing. So hard to get hold of.
I've got three credit cards here
and each has a limit of 500 dollars.
Is it more expensive than that?

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 4
Sir - it's \$5.99.

WARREN BOYD
\$5.99 ?

PERFUME COUNTER GIRL 4
It's a first perfume, for little
girls.

EXT. REHAB HOUSE - DAY

WARREN pulls up in his car and sees - a LIMO-DRIVER packing WHITNEY's bags into a LIMO. WARREN approaches the driver -

WARREN BOYD

What's going on?

DRIVER

Lady wants transport to the airport.

WHITNEY emerges, in her coat and traveling bags. WARREN approaches her - holding the bottle of WORTH perfume.

WARREN BOYD

Got me out of the way so you could escape.

WHITNEY

No. I really do need the perfume. Thank you. Reminds me of a better version of myself. An early model. But darling, I have to go.

WARREN BOYD

Whitney. This is a moment. A moment in your life you may never get back again. You need to decide, not just what kind of life you want, but whether you want a life at all. It's critical you complete your rehabilitation therapy. Stay. Complete the journey you've begun.

WHITNEY

They need me.

WARREN BOYD

Who does? Who? This is you. This is your life.

WHITNEY

Everyone. My family. My daughter. My fans. And I need them. I have to get back to work. I'm fine now. I really am. And Warren, I want to thank you so much for getting me here.

WARREN BOYD

You're not clear of this.

WHITNEY

I'll call you. Maybe you can come on tour with me. Okay? Come on tour. That's a great idea.

WHITNEY gets into the LIMO. WARREN watches - worried.

**INT. WHITNEY'S MANSION/ ATLANTA - CLIVE'S HOTEL ROOM/
BELAGIO/ LAS VEGAS - DAY**

WHITNEY, on the phone to - CLIVE (in his hotel room).

WHITNEY

How could you possibly do this
tribute concert to you without me?
We're back together. They just told
me you're back as head of Arista.

CLIVE

Arista, and Jive, yes, and the entire
RCA music group.

WHITNEY

So we're back together, right?

CLIVE

And I'm delighted, but -

WHITNEY

Clive, there's no show for you
without me. Uh'uh.

CLIVE

Whitney, I have no idea what you
look like! ABC has it all
programmed! Last time I saw you
at Michael's anniversary concert
you were skin and bone. And all
the acts have already been booked
and approved by the network.

WHITNEY

I'm better Clive. I'm looking better,
a little thin, but looking much
better. I'm singing great. I'm flying
out there to sing for you.

CLIVE

What are you talking about?

WHITNEY

I'm coming tomorrow.

INT. BACKSTAGE/ WORLD MUSIC AWARDS/ MGM GRAND - NIGHT. (2004)

WHITNEY waits to perform. She is NERVOUS. BOBBI-KRISTINA (12)
holds WHITNEY's hand while ELLIN touches up WHITNEY's hair.

WHITNEY

I hope I remember how to sing.

ELLIN LAVAR
I hope you do too.

WHITNEY
(to BOBBI K)
How's Momma look?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Awesome. Go get 'em.

WHITNEY
(sings "EXHALE" to warm
up)
*Sometimes you'll laugh
Sometimes you'll cry
Life never tells us,
the when's or why's -*

BOBBI KRISTINA
*When you've got friends, to wish you
well/ You'll find your point when
You will exhale -*

WHITNEY
(yeah, yeah, say)

WHITNEY/BOBBI K
Shoop, shoop, shoop -

BOBBI KRISTINA
*Shoop be doop, shoop, shoop
Shoop be doop, shoop, shoop
Shoop be doooooo....*

WHITNEY
*Come on Ellin, you can shoop.
I know you can shoop. Say
shoop -*

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
All ya got to do is say

ELLIN LAVAR
*Shoop be doop, shoop, shoop
Shoop be doop, shoop, shoop*

WHITNEY/BOBBI K/ ELLIN
*Shoop be doop, shoop, shoop
Shoo be doooooo.*

They laugh and high-five.

ONSTAGE:

CLIVE stands at the MICROPHONE, before 15,000 fans. (Behind him the LOGO: **WORLD MUSIC AWARDS 2004**)

CLIVE

We have a surprise guest for you now. You haven't seen her for a while but I can assure you she's back, and how. Ladies and gentlemen, the best singer in the world today--Miss Whitney Houston.

15,000 shocked screaming fans erupt - they can't believe it.

ANGLE ON: PAT and GARY and BOBBI-KRISTINA and CISSY, in the front row.

WHITNEY takes the stage, looking thin but beautiful - and sings to CLIVE - who takes his place in the front row.

"I BELIEVE IN YOU AND ME". There's not a dry eye in the house! When she blows Clive a kiss it's clear the lifelong bond between CLIVE and WHITNEY is as strong as ever.

INT. BOOTH/ DINER / HOUSTON - DAY

WHITNEY takes off a CAP and SUNGLASSES. She's in a banquette with BOBBY as their glasses of ICED-TEA are refilled by a WAITRESS.

BOBBY

You look good.

WHITNEY

Don't.

The WAITRESS notices this. WHITNEY sends her on her way with a smile -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

But thank you. I don't blame you Bobby, I don't. The drugs were there before you came along. We didn't help each other, but I don't blame you for that.

BOBBY

Wish someone'd tell the media that.

WHITNEY

See, what I looked for in you wasn't there. A home. Outside my music that's all I ever wanted. But you broke that, with your infidelities. I watched my parents do that to each other and I promised myself, uh uh, not gonna be me.

BOBBY

Nip, I got you. It's still you
and me. We can talk this out.

WHITNEY

Yeah, we can. That's what we're
doing. We're talking it out.

She slides her hand across the table toward him, palm down. He reaches out, hopefully, to take her hand, but she withdraws hers, to REVEAL - the DIAMOND RING lying there on the table. He stares at it - CRUSHED, EMOTIONAL. A punch in the gut.

BOBBY

I'm fightin'. You see that. The
arrests, the jail time, all the
mistakes you make when you're too
young and y'get anything and
everything you ever wanted, you stood
by me, only one, man and wife, man
and wife. I got you. *(tears)* Whitney,
can you still get me?'S'all I want.

WHITNEY

My whole life I didn't want this,
I never wanted to be this person.
Bye Bobby. Get well. Your daughter
needs you.

She gets up, and walks towards the door where PAT is waiting.

PAT

Okay?

WHITNEY blinks away tears, and then puts on her SUNGLASSES and CAP, takes a deep breath, then exits the restaurant...

WHITNEY

Let's roll.

INT. OPRAH WINFREY SHOW - DAY

OPRAH's studio AUDIENCE scream and jump up and down as - a screen rises and reveals WHITNEY, singing - powerfully - **"I DIDN'T KNOW MY OWN STRENGTH"**... OPRAH watches, spell-bound.

WHITNEY

*...I didn't know my own strength!
I crunched down, I tumbled -
(points into the camera)
- but I did not crumble. I got
through all the pain. I didn't know
my own strength.*

(MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

*All through my darkest hour, my faith
kept me alive, I pulled myself back
up, held my head up high/ I was not
built to breeeeak.*

*Didn't know my own strength!
There were so many times I, wondered
how I could get through the night, I
thought I took all that I could
taaaaakkke. Didn't know! Didn't know!
I didn't know! I didn't know! I
didn't know! I didn't know! I didn't
know! I got through all the
paaaaaaain...*

Cut to: OPRAH, singing along, tears in her eyes.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

*Hold on! I didn't know my own
strength! Yes I did! Yes I did! I
held my head up hiiigh. I got through
all the pain.*

(brings the music down)

*Oh, let me tell ya, I didn't know...I
didn't know....My mama said I was not
born to break...*

(audience roars)

*Dionne said I was not born to break.
Clive said come back and sing you're
not born to break.*

*(Clive in front row
smiles)*

*Your love (the audience) said, your
love said, I was not born to breakkk.
Oprah said, "Girl, do you know your
loved?" Now I know my own strenggthh.*

Again, not a dry eye in the house.

EXT. BACKSTAGE DOOR/ OPRAH SHOW - NIGHT

WHITNEY exits the venue, with BOBBI KRISTINA and her BODYGUARD, heading for the LIMO's when the cries of FANS wanting AUTOGRAPHS make her go to them. She SIGNS PHOTOS, but IGNORES the **SUPERFAN** who once more stands there, offering his PEN, holding PHOTOS.

SUPERFAN

Whitney? I love you Whitney.

WHITNEY almost takes the PEN but then stops herself, and instead heads toward BOBBI KRISTINA and the LIMO.

SUPERFAN's disappointed POV of: WHITNEY and BOBBI K getting in the LIMO.

EXT. HUMBLE CONDO/ ATLANTA - DAY

CLOSE ON: one NAME PLATE among the many: **ELIZABETH COLLINS.**

INT. CONDO/ ATLANTA - DAY

CLOSE ON: Letter on the counter, to **MS. E. COLLINS.**

WIDE: WHITNEY is clean, and bouncy and on the road back from addiction. In the humble condo. She is taking a CAKE out of the oven that she has baked, and cutting a slice for BOBBI-KRISTINA who sits at a LAPTOP computer.

BOBBI KRISTINA
Smells good.

WHITNEY
Better pray to the Lord baby girl. A new recipe. But let's see. Big piece, small piece?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Small piece.

WHITNEY
Small piece it is.

BOBBI K is looking around the humble condo. She can't believe that this is where she is living - all the money gone.

BOBBI KRISTINA
So how long we gonna live here?

WHITNEY
Until we save some money, honey. Apparently it don't grow on trees. Not anymore. But we got a pool here. I swam this morning, and a gym. We can get in shape. But before that-- cake.

BOBBI KRISTINA
What happened to all our houses?

WHITNEY
Gone, baby. I never kept track. Mommy was one giant ATM.

BOBBI KRISTINA

I don't care.

WHITNEY

I know you don't.

BOBBI KRISTINA

But you still got the 100 million coming, right?

WHITNEY

Oh shit, whatever happened to that?
Must be around here somewhere.

She makes a big show of looking under cushions, in cabinet drawers, before saying -

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

Uh oh, oh that's right, didn't deliver the albums. I knew there was something. No album, no dough.

BOBBI K laughs -

BOBBI KRISTINA

But you are gonna do more albums, right?

WHITNEY

Oh, no one wants to hear from an old hag. They want the next 19 year old. How is it?

(the cake)
It's good?

BOBBI KRISTINA

Mmm-hmmm.

BOBBI-KRISTINA then goes back to her lap-top.

WHITNEY

What's all the tapping on that thing?

BOBBI KRISTINA

I'm searching for you.

WHITNEY

Don't gotta search anymore babygirl, hell I'm right here.

WHITNEY has a cigarette burning in the ash-tray. WHITNEY takes a short drag and then stubs out the cigarette. Then she takes her piece of cake and stands over BOBBI-K's shoulder.

BOBBI KRISTINA
I need to show you something.

WHITNEY
What's that? YouTube?

BOBBI KRISTINA
Youtube. You don't know what Youtube is? Mom--I forgot how tech-dumb you are. Look'it - check it out -- It's a clip of you singing "I Will Always Love You." Now check this--here -

WHITNEY
- oh my God. It's me.

BOBBI KRISTINA
And see here - this is how many people have viewed this one clip. This number? 742 million. And nearly as many for all your other clips, 400 million, 150 million. You see?

WHITNEY
What you talkin' about?
742 million?

She stares at her daughter, incredulous.

BOBBI KRISTINA
That's how many people still love you Momma. And that's just *some* of them.

WHITNEY, looking at the screen, is deeply touched.

WHITNEY
Well. Waddaya know.
(wipes away a tear)
How many Mariah Carey get?

INT. CLIVE'S OFFICE/ ARISTA RECORDS - DAY

WHITNEY and CLIVE -

WHITNEY
So how about we record a new album?

CLIVE
I have to tell you, dear Whitney, I will not go into a recording studio again with you until you regain your full voice.

(MORE)

CLIVE (CONT'D)

That means quitting cigarettes for good, completely - cutting back is not good enough. And you will have to commit to a regimen of vocal exercises. You promise me that.

WHITNEY

You're such a bitch sometimes but yes, I can try and do that.

CLIVE

No, you'll have to promise me.
"Try" isn't good enough.

She smiles. WHITNEY rises to go, CLIVE shows her out...

CLIVE (CONT'D)

And I want you to be my special guest at my pre-Grammy party. I'll take care of everything, just be in LA on February 12th. Is it a date?

WHITNEY

You want me to sing?

CLIVE

This year, no. Next year definitely.

WHITNEY

Well you may want to change your mind *this year* when you see me, hear me. I'm nearly back to 100%.

CLIVE

Well that is music to my ears.

INT. REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

WHITNEY stands at a piano - practicing with her VOICE COACH, GARY CATONA.

GARY

Sounding good. What's your secret?

WHITNEY

Like Mommie always told me. Great singing comes from...the head, the heart...

ANGLE ON: CISSY, watching, from the corner.

CISSY

And the gut.

WHITNEY
 And the gut. Got to train all three.
 So let's keep going. We're coming
 back, get ready.
(sings a high note)
 Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

CISSY watches, proud of the fight in her daughter.

EXT. TENNIS CLUB/ ATLANTA - DAY

WHITNEY plays tennis with BOBBI-KRISTINA.

INT. KITCHEN/ CONDO - DAY

WHITNEY pours green juice into a glass and drinks, hating it.

LATER.

WHITNEY happily vacuums, while singing to herself.

INT. LIVING ROOM/ CONDO - DAY

BOBBI KRISTINA approaches WHITNEY's bedroom door, from which we can hear WHITNEY protesting:

WHITNEY (O.S.)
 No, no, no. Uh, uh, I aint gonna do
 that. No way no how. So you can
 forget about that. No! NO!

BOBBI KRISTINA knocks - concerned. WHITNEY bursts out.

BOBBI KRISTINA
 You okay?

WHITNEY
 Me? I'm fine.

BOBBI KRISTINA
 Someone in there?

WHITNEY
 In there? No.

BOBBI KRISTINA
 So who you talking to then?

WHITNEY
 Jesus. Just Jesus. He always be
 wantin' something from me.
 (MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
I say "enough" but you know Jesus -
pushy. Never satisfied. Never. Uh uh.

INT. RECEPTION/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

WHITNEY wearing hat and sunglasses breezily checks in.

WHITNEY
Collins. Elizabeth. Ms. Ms.

RECEPTIONIST (KATHY)
Of course, Ms Collins. Your room is
ready. Welcome back.

WHITNEY
Well it's nice to be back -
(checks the name tag)
- Kathy. It's nice to be back. Been
gone too long.

WHITNEY - who is back, in many ways! - is whisked away, up to
her room, by the porters.

EXT. OUTDOOR POOL/ BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - DAY

UNDERWATER SHOT, as - WHITNEY dives into the water, then swims
laps.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY/ BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - DAY

WHITNEY in BATHROBE with TOWEL wrapped around her hair,
headphones around her neck, wearing SUNGLASSES and a CAP,
crosses the LOBBY toward the ELEVATOR with PAT.

PAT
Looking better every day. Strong.

WHITNEY
14 months clean.

PAT
Praise Jesus.

WHITNEY
Praise Jesus.

WHITNEY lights a cigarette. PAT gives her a look.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)

My first today. Rome wasn't built
in a day, but I'm waaay down on
these too.

PAT

You're doing good. Not easy.
None of it easy.

WHITNEY

The head, the heart...and the gut.

Waiting on the elevator...

PAT

Donna and Robyn spoke.

WHITNEY

Robyn? How is she?

PAT

She's good. Married. Another woman.

WHITNEY

I'm happy for her. I'm glad.
(*stubs out the cigarette*)
I'm not even enjoying this.

PAT

So, is what I heard right? Bout
you dating...you know who?

WHITNEY

What's the matter with this
damn elevator?

PAT

Yes or no?

WHITNEY

Yeah. But *waaaay* too young.

PAT

Come on. You're only 48.
What's the age difference?

WHITNEY

18 years.

PAT

Whooo! Too young!

WHITNEY

Ha!Ha!Ha! You said it, damn!

PAT
Ha!Ha!Ha! *Waaaay* too young. But
if it makes you happy, go for it.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

REHEARSALS are taking place, led by RICKEY MINOR. WHITNEY sits in the next row back, beside BOBBI KRISTINA and behind RICKEY - playfully leaning forward and whispering in his ear.

RICKEY
Okay everybody, let's try it again
from bar 32, and a little more
staccato with the strings -

WHITNEY
(into RICKEY's ear)
Let me siiing, you know you want
to let me sing, Rickey -

RICKEY
Everyone clear? Bar 32? Let's go
people.

WHITNEY
(into RICKEY's ear)
Can't be a party without Whitney.
Need a microphone Rickey.

RICKEY
(To Whitney)
Whitney, I can't. And you're not
ready. Sorry.

WHITNEY
You owe me, for torturing me
with that impossible medley.

RICKEY
Next year, I promise.
(to singers)
Okay now. Everybody. Listen up! On
four. Read the ink. Two, three -

Music starts to play, and she slumps back in her chair and then gets an idea and slips away from BOBBI KRISTINA.

LATER.

As the back-up singers sing their parts, WHITNEY sneaks up from off-stage and joins the BACK-UP SINGERS.

ANGLE ON: RICKEY, conducting, shaking his head and smiling as WHITNEY joyfully sings back-up. BOBBI K laughs and applauds exaggeratedly.

EXT. POOL/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

WHITNEY gets out of the pool, and is given a towel and sunglasses by BOBBI K. They walk down the pool together until WHITNEY sees a copy of the NATIONAL ENQUIRER being read by a GUEST.

The headline reads: **"WHITNEY COLLAPSES! STRUNG OUT & BROKE, IT'S WORSE THAN ANYONE THOUGHT."**

WHITNEY stares at the HEADLINE, it's a SUCKER-PUNCH, until the GUEST looks around his NEWSPAPER at WHITNEY.

GUEST
Can I help you?

WHITNEY
(to the GUEST)
That picture is 2 years old. It's two years old! That's not right. It's not right!

BOBBI KRISTINA
It's okay, Mommie. Don't give in to it.

WHITNEY
All this hard work, for what?!

GUEST
Please keep your voice down.

WHITNEY
You keep your voice down you trash-reading asshole.

WHITNEY looks around - and sees that ALL the POSH PEOPLE are staring at her - judging her. She throws the NATIONAL ENQUIRER back at the man, and stalks off, gutted.

GUEST
Hey!

BOBBI KRISTINA
Trash reading asshole.

BOBBI K grabs the NEWSPAPER back and throws it in the pool as she trails her unnerved mother.

EXT. TRU HOLLYWOOD NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

WHITNEY, alone, moves through the throng of PAPARAZZI who blind WHITNEY with CAMERA FLASHES. It's like a nightmare now.

WHITNEY stops and sees - the **SUPERFAN**, waiting with his PEN. Decision time, she pauses, looks around at all the PAPARAZZI taking her picture and calling her name:

PAPARAZZI
Whitney!...Whitney!...Whitney!

WHITNEY, with a TEAR in her eye, decides - she takes out a PAD from her handbag, signs her name, leaves the PAD with the SUPERFAN and pockets the guy's PEN. She hurries to the limo.

ANGLE ON: a MEDIA COMMENTATOR, recording an item for E-News -

MEDIA COMMENTATOR
And there we have Whitney Houston leaving the party. Can we speculate that she will be springing a surprise performance at Clive Davis' legendary pre-Grammy party tomorrow night?

INT. FANBOY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The FANBOY takes off his jacket, and takes out a NOTEPAD which, in its pages, holds **\$500 in cash**. He pockets the cash, then throws the NOTEPAD onto...a heap of identical notepads...our CAMERA pushes in on these notepads...each, on the top page, bears a signature...**WHITNEY**...

EXT. POOL/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

The Beautiful Ones all cavort around the famous pool.

INT. BATHROOM/ WHITNEY'S ROOM/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

From the **BATHROOM** taps, water runs...

On the BATHROOM TV - from years ago - a tabloid news item - showing her travails - images of her, skeletal, at **Michael Jackson 30th anniversary concert** (2001). She turns the TV OFF.

WHITNEY, in her bathrobe, she sings, improvising a tune around the psalm: *"The Lord Is My Shepherd"*. She is bent over the bathroom vanity, preparing something...

From her HANDBAG she takes out - the **FANBOY's PEN**, and starts to take the PEN apart. Inside it, **FREEBASE COCAINE**.

On the vanity surface she sets a lighter and a tea spoon. She then faces herself in the mirror, and takes stock of herself, reciting Psalm 23 from the bible:

WHITNEY
*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not
 want. He maketh me lie down in green
 pastures...*

WHITNEY'S ROOM

In the next room, BOBBI-KRISTINA can hear the bath-taps running and her mother singing...

BOBBI KRISTINA
 Mom? I'm going out for an hour. Mom?

BOBBI-K goes to the bathroom door then hears her Mom hit a high note in the song. BOBBI-K smiles and exits.

INT. HALLWAY/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

PAT and GARY are on the way to their room, and they pass BOBBI-K, as she exits WHITNEY'S ROOM.

GARY
 Uh oh. Here's trouble.

PAT
 And where you off too sweetie?

BOBBI KRISTINA
 Gonna grab a coffee. You want anything?

PAT
 Use room service.

BOBBI KRISTINA
 Nah, gotta get some air.

PAT
 Don't be late.

EXT. BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

BOBBI-K pushes through the CROWDS of GROUPIES and PAPPARAZI and we see her **POV OF:** the first STARS as they arrive at the hotel to get dressed for Clive's PRE-GRAMMY PARTY.... black cars deliver **Serena Williams, Britney Spears**, et al.

INT. BATHROOM/ WHITNEY'S ROOM/ BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

WHITNEY steps into the hot bathwater....

WHITNEY'S ROOM:

On WHITNEY's bed, lies the GOWN she is going to wear tonight.

WHITNEY (O.S.)
*Near restful waters he leads me,
 to revive my droopingspirit...*

UP WITH: A CAPELLA version of **"HOME"**. This plays over -

MONTAGE

A) CISSY is rehearsing the singers in the NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHOIR in NEWARK.

B) ROBYN is having dinner with her WIFE at home.

C) ELLIN LAVAR, back in NEW YORK, is preparing a WIG for a client.

D) In BEVERLY HILTON hotel restaurant, GARY eats dinner. Through the window they see AMBULANCES appear outside.

EXT. BEVERLY HILTON - DAY

An AMBULANCE pulls up in front of the HOTEL. MEDICS run into the hotel -

EXT. BACKSTAGE/ BEVERLY HILTON - NIGHT

The BAND and RICKEY are all crying and sobbing.

MONTAGE

A) BOBBI-K beats on the door of her mother's room, demanding to be allowed access but being denied the right to go in by the POLICE.

B) In Church, the new PASTOR approaches CISSY and delivers the tragic news. CISSY backs away and slumps into a pew.

C) ROBYN is comforted by her WIFE as they watch the news on the TELEVISION...

TV COMMENTATOR
Confirmation then that the
Grammy Award winning artist,
Whitney Houston, has died.

D) ELLIN LAVAR, in NEW YORK, her eyes TEAR-STAINED, continues to prepare the WIG.

E) In the BEVERLY HILTON hallway, GARY tries to comfort a distraught BOBBI KRISTINA.

EXT. BEACH / NEW JERSEY SHORE - SUNRISE

ROBYN watches the sun rise - thinking of her dear friend.

INT. CISSY'S HOME - DAY

DONNA enters the room, and CISSY looks up from her chair, her eyes flooded with tears.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - DAY

PAT, on the telephone to CLIVE - with GARY, grief-stricken in the background.

PAT
She'd want the show to go on.
The family is okay with that.

INT. CLIVE'S BUNGALOW/ BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - DAY

CLIVE
(into telephone)
God bless you, and much love to
all the family. We will talk soon.
Thank you. Thank you. Goodbye.

CLIVE puts the phone down, and turns to his HANDSOME MALE FRIEND.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
It's on.

The FRIEND nods, and then - when CLIVE breaks down, and tears fall from his eyes - the FRIEND embraces CLIVE.

CLIVE (CONT'D)
 (PRELAP)
 I am personally devastated by the
 loss of someone who has meant so
 much to me for so many years...

INT. AUDITORIUM / BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - DAY

CLIVE stands at the podium, in front of one thousand invited guests. He finally speaks.

CLIVE
 Whitney was a beautiful person and
 a talent beyond compare. She graced
 this stage with her regal presence
 and gave so many memorable
 performances here over the years.
 Simply put, Whitney would have
 wanted the music to go on and her
 family asked that we carry on.
 And so, in honor of our beloved
 Whitney, I ask you all to stand
 and give a minute's silence.

During the silence, PAN around the faces, revealing eyes full of tears, all standing, paying tribute to Whitney - friends, colleagues and fans. All face the darkened stage, until the lights begin to rise -

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. 21ST ANNUAL AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS (1994) - DAY

- as the lights rise on - WHITNEY ! (29) - at her most gorgeous and imperious, a musical goddess. What she delivers here is the impossible THREE-SONG MEDLEY proposed by RICKEY earlier and declined by her at the time - **"I LOVES YOU PORGY", "AND I AM TELLING YOU I AM NOT GOING", "I HAVE NOTHING"** - a virtuoso turn such as can only have been delivered by the best female singer in the world at the top of her game.

WHITNEY
 I'd like to try and sing you a
 medley of songs now, that captures
 I think, the experience of black
 women in America but maybe also of
 women, maybe men and women
 everywhere. Coz friends, we're all
 on a journey, yes we are, and tho
 we often think we're traveling alone
 uh uh, no,no,no,no -- we're not
 alone. We're all moving down the
 (MORE)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
 road together, sometimes getting
 it right, sometimes getting lost,
 but headed towards heaven all the
 same and just trying to get there
 before they close the door. I love
 you all, thank you so much for
 coming out tonight, now let's see
 if we can do this...

She takes a deep breath, and looks at RICKEY, who is
 conducting the band - he NODS encouragement. She begins...

During this - **FLASHBACK TO:** key moments of her life, with
 WHITNEY (29), walking through these scenes - observing, like a
 ghost, these moments...until we arrive at the image of her
 holding the infant BOBBI K for the very first time, the
 happiest moment in her life. The moment she found **HOME**.

But end on: WHITNEY (29), just WHITNEY, on stage, mid-medley -
 as she reaches the "IMPOSSIBLE" EIGHT-BAR-ON-A SINGLE-BREATH
 SECTION - we see RICKEY and her exchange a nervous look. On
 this, WHITNEY pauses and INFLATES HER LUNGS. (We see, from
 behind, her RIBCAGE expand amazingly!) Now she's ready, to
 sing, sing as no-one has ever sung before or since...

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
*Don't make me close one more door
 I don't wanna hurt anymore
 Stay in my arms if you dare
 Or must I imagine you there
 Don't walk away from me
 No, don't walk away from me
 Don't you dare walk away from me
 I have nothing, nothing, nothing
 If I don't have you, you
 If I don't have you, you, you...
 If I don't have YOUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU.*

LIGHTS FADE and screen is nearly black, then UP WITH -

BRIEF CLIP OF: **The REAL WHITNEY**, as taken from her official
 video for "I Will Always Love You" -

- We see the camera push in on her face, her eyes cast down
 during the pause in the song, then after the push in ends, her
 eyes lift and look directly into camera...extend this moment.
 Then - SNAP TO BLACK

THE END

OVER END CREDITS: WHITNEY's voice, A CAPELLA, sings **"ONE
 MOMENT IN TIME."**