

THE GILDED LILYS

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EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - ESTABLISHING - DAY - 1895

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - FIRST CLASS STATEROOM - DAY

VIOLET LANGTON LILY, 19, faces us, half-clad in a vanity table MIRROR in this gorgeously appointed suite. She is virginally beautiful, her sparkling eyes reflecting a restless, vibrant soul. Constantly balancing propriety and longing, she is dipping her toe in the waters of rebellion.

MAISY, her earnest ship stewardess, is lacing her CORSET.

MAISY

You've lost an inch from your waist, Miss.

VIOLET

Eating nothing but water biscuits for a week will do it. I'd pitch myself over the railing to get my hands on a croissant.

MAISY

Miss Lily.

VIOLET

Have you had one?

MAISY

Never.

VIOLET

Oh, you must. The French do fearless things with butter. With everything sensual, really.

She runs her fingers over the FEATHERS of an EXOTIC NEW HAT. The ship TILTS. Violet clasps the sides of the vanity.

MAISY

Are you sure you are past your seasickness, Miss? I think it is best if you do not go out.

VIOLET

If there's one thing I learned from my time in Paris, it is that you must live every night as though it is your last.

Off of Violet, excited to take on the evening...

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - STEERAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON JOHN KIDD, 20's, a lower-class survivor of Scottish descent. It's hard to tell what's sexier about John, his adventurous spirit, his romantic soul, or the fact that despite the life he's seen, he's still full of hope. He sits on a wooden crate, facing off with an Italian dishwasher (CONMAN), whose ROUGH AND DIRTY HANDS shuffle three large WALNUT SHELLS. A crowd of his fellow-waiters, some maids and coal shovelers (one named YAKOV) has gathered.

YAKOV

It is rigged, John, there is no way to win.

John places a finger in front of a shell.

JOHN

There.

Conman lifts the shell-- the ball is there! Confused, Conman quickly shuffles again. John places his finger.

JOHN (CONT'D)

There.

Shell up, ball there, shuffle--

JOHN (CONT'D)

There.

CONMAN

Impossible!

Crowd cheers, slaps John on the back. John grabs the bills and coins from the table, offering consolation as he goes:

JOHN

A man with smaller nuts never coulda beat me, Franco.

CONMAN

Siete un orfano sporco.
(you dirty orphan)

Italian-speakers gasp. Others infer from the tone that it was a nasty insult. John turns, walks toward Franco:

JOHN

(in perfect Italian)
You steal from one more of these people on their way to a better life, and this dirty orphan will beat you in your sleep.

Crowd cheers. John walks off, leaving Conman speechless. Yakov follows John on a fast walk through the lower hold (on every beam hangs supplies, casks and barrels line the floor).

YAKOV

How much you win, we can use in NY!

JOHN

I'm not getting off in NY.

YAKOV

Why?

NEARBY DECKHAND

He never gets off.

JOHN

I prefer to rejoice in the exploits of my friends.

(to DECK HAND)

Last time you were in Manhattan you caught a few things, what were they, Finn?

FINN

Broadway musical and the clap.

JOHN

I'll see you boys when you get back.

John goes through a door...

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - MIDDLE DECK - MOMENTS LATER

JOHN bursts through a door. A nervous officer, JOFFREY, nearly sheds tears when John hands him his money.

JOFFREY CONT'D)

Thank you. I am an idiot for gambling. He called me Nancy Boy so I had to prove that I--

JOHN

Not proving it by crying.

JOFFREY CONT'D)

Right, you are right.

They pass a MAID who hands John a tux jacket.

MAID

Freshly pressed, Johnny.

JOHN
You're an angel, Grace.

John slips through another door...

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - UPPER CLASS FOYER - EVENING

John slips out a door, his tux jacket on. He nods to passing SOCIETY GUESTS in muted colors and elegant couture.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Good evening, Countess. Fine evening, Sir.

SIR
Shame it is our last.

John's heart is then stopped by the sight of a well-dressed young LADY. She holds onto a pillar, and her face is hidden behind an exotic FEATHERED HAT (it is Violet).

CAPTAIN
John! There you are.

CAPTAIN approaches John, who can't take his eyes off Violet.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
The ten-year-old Townage boy says you've promised him a spot next to me on the Bridge tomorrow?

JOHN
He's recently lost his father, Captain, thought he could use the joy.

Captain grumbles and heads off. John moves to Violet slowly, passing a HIGH SOCIETY COUPLE. The din of their conversation plays under his approach.

SOCIETY WOMAN
Well, I think 1895 has been a superb year for the arts so far. There was "An Ideal Husband", that viciously funny work by that homosexual...

SOCIETY MAN
Don't forget the marvelous revival of Swan Lake in St. Petersburg.

SOCIETY WOMAN

Though the girl playing the White Swan was grossly more talented than the one playing the Black.

SOCIETY MAN

(wants to kill himself)
Same dancer, Harriet.

SOCIETY WOMAN

No.

SOCIETY MAN

Yes.

John nears Violet, her hand on her chest, coaxing a breath.

JOHN

You all right, Miss?

From underneath the sanctuary of her wide brim her eyes look up at him. She is startlingly pretty.

VIOLET

I'm sorry, were you speaking to me?

JOHN

You look as though you might faint.

VIOLET

(polite)
I am fine, I'm just famished.

JOHN

(gently, carefully)
You realize that dinner is just through those doors.

VIOLET

Walk through the dining room without a man on my arm? All of Society would burst into flames.

He smiles. She smiles back, cautiously.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)

Violet!

They turn to see a handsome young man jogging up. This is her older brother ALEXANDER LILY, 22, unconsciously snobby, especially for someone with such a penchant for failure.

VIOLET
 Alex! I checked your stateroom,
 where have you been?

Alex leads Violet to dinner; John holds open the door.

ALEX
 What *is* that you're wearing?

VIOLET
 (proudly touching her hat)
 I picked it up in Paris.

ALEX
 A bit daring for you, isn't it?

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

All eyes train on Violet and Alex at the door. Whispers blow like a wind from table to table. Gentlemen stand, women nod. Violet glides, Alex teeters as they smile through the room.

VIOLET
 Please tell me you aren't drunk.

ALEX
 Please tell me you aren't chiding.
 The whole reason I'm on this ship
 is because Mother and Dad didn't
 want you crossing the Atlantic un-
 chaperoned.

VIOLET
 I'm hardly un-chaperoned. I have a
 maid and a half a dozen NY families
 apparently instructed to keep an
 eye on me...

...She gracefully nods and waves to spying parties...

VIOLET (CONT'D)
 Good evening, Mrs. Waterbury, Ms.
 Willing.

ALEX
 She isn't.

VIOLET
 What?

ALEX
 Willing. I've tried.

VIOLET
 (speaking her own heart)
 She's looking for *love*, Alex.

ALEX
 No, sweet sister, she's looking for
 a *husband*.

On Violet's offense at this societal paradox...

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM (O.C.)
 Her name is Violet Langton Lily.

...says the voice of boorish and smarmy passenger WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM, 30's, a Society wannabe who's sidled up to John, undetected. John doesn't ask, but Fitz offers the skinny-

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM (CONT'D)
 She's from one of NY's most prominent families, her father's just built the first grand luxury hotel in America-- half of First Class is likely headed to its opening.

JOHN
 How is it I haven't seen her before?

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM
 She's been confined to her cabin with sea sickness, the delicate flower. But she seems, how shall I put it... to me, quite restored.

He then slips John an impressive bit of CASH.

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM (CONT'D)
 I assume I will find a seat at her table?

Noting his lasciviousness, John refuses it...

JOHN
 Apologies, Sir, but I've got no clout on this ship.

Will snorts and heads off, and John passes the MAITRE D'.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 I'll work the Captain's table.
 (before he can argue)
 You owe me.

MAITRE D'
Oh, all right.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - DINING ROOM - CAPTAIN'S TABLE - LATER

Among other Society guests, Violet and Alex are the toast of the table, but Alex is drunk to the point of unseemly. John pours their wine, casting glances at Violet, who subtly covers Alex's glass with her hand-- making a quiet connection with John. Guests include the CAPTAIN, a Society DOWAGER, a young UNHAPPY WIFE and her COLD HUSBAND.

ALEX
The hotel will of course have private apartments for greater personages, Duveen of London has made the furniture, the china was made in France, and all of the glass was made by Baccarat.

UNHAPPY WIFE
The carving on the cafe ceiling alone cost 38,000 dollars.

COLD HUSBAND
Ellen, don't be vulgar.

UNHAPPY WIFE
I read it in today's Journal.

COLD HUSBAND
Equally as vulgar. Do me a turn and try not to speak.

DOWAGER
The De Fords will attend the opening. They are the wealthiest family in Baltimore. Of course, it is *Baltimore*.

VIOLET
(whispers to Wife)
How long have you been married?

UNHAPPY WIFE
Six months this May.

VIOLET
Newlyweds?

Alex reaches for Violet's wine. John plucks it from the table just before he gets to it.

JOHN
Crack in the glass, excuse me.

She meets John's gaze-- thank you again.

CAPTAIN

Well, I'm sure that The Lillian
will have a marvelous future.

ALEX

Counting on that, since I have
dropped out of Harvard. I guess
all our parents hopes must now fall
on Violet.

Table laughs. Violet tries to smile. Dowager pats her hand.

DOWAGER

With your fresh European finishing
education, and your name and your
face, you will no doubt secure a
substantial marriage.

Before Violet can respond...

CAPTAIN

So are you and Miss Violet Edwin
Lily's only children?

Shamed looks between brother and sister--

VIOLET

There are four of us--

ALEX

There are **three**. Our eldest
sister's dead; we have a younger
sister, Emma.

Some guests seem to know there's a scandal here and look into
their laps. Whatever it is, no one is to speak of it.

John puts a full glass of wine by Violet. She eyes him--
thank you-- and takes a big sip. Breaking the silence:

DOWAGER

Well, who is that odd man? Craning
his head to get a view of us?

They look over to see a man peering and waving....

COLD HUSBAND

Good God, it's William Fitzwilliam,
Society's largest irritant. Every
so often he's cast out of NY and
kicked to the Continent.

ALEX

It seems that the Continent is
kicking him back.

John notices Violet put on a pair of SPECTACLES to get a
better look. Alex clocks his stare.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What are you looking at?

VIOLET

Alex.

JOHN

I apologize. I've just never seen
a lady in spectacles before.

ALEX

(judgmental of her)
Of course not, he's used to seeing
the pince-nez.

VIOLET

(charm, a pleasant smile)
Yes, well, these were given to me
by an artist on the Left Bank of
Paris. He was of the mind that men
aren't the only ones entitled to
see the world clearly.

Unhappy Wife smiles. Playing to the men:

COLD HUSBAND

Well, most ladies I've met prefer a
world without the sharp edges.

The men erupt in laughter.

VIOLET

And I suppose they're also spared
the burden of considering anything
but what is two feet in front of
them?

COLD HUSBAND

I take it you're not such a lady?

ALEX

She is the model lady. They should
all be like Violet.

As dinner resumes and utensils clink on plates, John sneaks
one more smile at Violet who steals a smile back.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - VIOLET'S SUITE - THAT NIGHT

The ship is rocking. Violet's in bed, unable to sleep. Maisy snores on a cot in the room. She doesn't wake her. She puts on a gorgeous robe, pins up her hair quickly, and checks the adjoining room-- Alex's bed is EMPTY. She throws caution to the wind and ventures out alone.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Violet stumbles past a few night owls who seem not to notice the rocking. They zigzag from one wall of the corridor to the other without a break in conversation. Oh no! Violet sees Unhappy Wife and Husband coming toward her, in a snit.

COLD HUSBAND

Then why didn't you stay in the Ladies' Parlor?

UNHAPPY WIFE

How many games of bridge can I play?

Violet hides her face and escapes around a corner...

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is completely empty and dim, already set for the morning's breakfast. Violet sees a light under a swinging door. She heads toward it. As she reaches out to push it, it opens. John stands before her, with some glasses on a tray. She is startled and embarrassed, but pleased it is him.

VIOLET

I'm so sorry.

JOHN

Miss Lily.

VIOLET

I was out looking for hot milk.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - KITCHEN - NIGHT

CLOSE on the warm glow of flames, a saucepan on a stove. Violet sits on an overturned crate while John makes her a lovely sandwich. The ship rocks a bit.

VIOLET

I meant to eat at dinner.

JOHN
You managed to avoid a gruesome
partridge flan.

VIOLET
Is there a good partridge flan?

JOHN
I've always said a bird should not
be put in a pudding.

They smile, laugh. He cuts off a corner of the sandwich and holds it out to her, near her lips. With her fingers, she takes the food from his, touching him slightly. She puts the morsel in her mouth. It's delicious.

VIOLET
Mmm. My heavens, what is this?

JOHN
Ham, cheese, butter and honey. You
can't forget the honey.

VIOLET
I never will again.

They smile. He puts the plate down in front of her. He steps aside, his hands behind his back. Violet slices the sandwich in half and places it on the other side of the table.

VIOLET (CONT'D)
A lady never eats until her host
has joined the table.

Surprised and moved by this gesture of respect, he sits on a crate across from her. She devours the food. The ship tilts again violently and he catches her glass of sliding milk.

JOHN
Shall I show you the steadiest spot
on the ship?

Off Violet's twinkling eyes and mouth full of food...

EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - DECK 4 - NIGHT

Violet stands on the empty deck. The wind in her hair, her feet on the ground, the view stretching out before her. She is both free and steady at once, two feelings she was sure could not exist together. John stands by her, but a respectful distance away.

VIOLET

Why wasn't I told of this lovely spot earlier in the journey?

JOHN

We're on the Second Class deck, Miss. If the First Class passengers were to find out that the calmest place on the ship was here there would surely be an uprising.

VIOLET

(laughs)

Then it is our secret.

In a daring move, she says...

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I hear you never leave the boat.

JOHN

You asked about me, Miss?

VIOLET

My maid gossips freely. But, she says no one knows why.

JOHN

Five years ago I made a mistake... and after that I couldn't go home.

She looks at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I thought the open air would be a good place for me given the... fight that was in me at the time.

VIOLET

So you've been here ever since? Don't you want to see the world?

JOHN

The world is made up of people; and I meet a larger variety of them on this ship than I would anywhere else. And here I'm not tied to any country, or any man, or any limitation.

VIOLET

Sounds like freedom.

She shivers from the cold. He gets a blanket from a chest and approaches her... tension... he wraps it around her.

JOHN

And I have access to things here.
Things I never would otherwise.

VIOLET

(looking in his eyes)
I understand the attraction.

It is loaded between them. Their faces close.

JOHN

Are you feeling steady?

VIOLET

(heart pounding)
No.

Just then a pair of groping lovers come tripping onto the deck. Violet breaks away, returning to the lady she must be.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Yes, much better. I think I've
evened my keels.

Violet and John must part- there's a sadness in it-- as they know they will not have this moment again.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I should take myself back to bed.
There's packing to do in the
morning...

JOHN

Good night then, Miss Lily.

VIOLET

Good night...?

JOHN

John Kidd.

VIOLET

Good night, Mr. Kidd.

She heads upstairs and he heads down. As John begins to disappear down a STAIRCASE he takes one last look back for her, but she's gone... when he hears strange voices...

He creeps back up and peers through the darkness to find William Fitzwilliam with Alex. *On the Second Class deck.*

ALEX
What is it you want from me?

FITZWILLIAM
I have laid out my terms.

Alex grabs his collar, enraged.

ALEX
Why can't you understand, I do not
control my father's money!

Fitzwilliam is eerily calm, and Alex relents.

ALEX (CONT'D)
I'm tired, Mr. Fitzwilliam. Excuse
me. Good night.

As Alex walks away, he senses someone. He stops long enough
to *perhaps* see it is John, then continues inside.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - UPPER DECK - THE NEXT DAY

Arrival day. Maids scurry and excited passengers mill.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - ALEX'S STATEROOM - DAY

A VALET finishes packing Alex, who hands him a sac of coins.

ALEX
Thank you for serving me, Henry.

VALET
(exiting, under breath)
It's been Harry... the whole time.

ALEX
(knocks on adjoining door)
Violet, we're docking!

MAISY
(opens it, worried)
She wasn't here when I woke, Sir.

Off Alex's concern...

LITTLE BOY (PRE-LAP)
There she is! There she is!

EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - LOWER DECK - THE NEXT DAY

A LITTLE BOY shouts and points to a distant sight. John enters, joining all Steerage passengers, including Yakov and other staff, who turn to look at what the Little Boy sees. A religious silence falls over the crowd. Each man, woman and child agape, moved and still.

REVEAL the STATUE OF LIBERTY growing closer as they pass Ellis Island. The little boy is scooped up by his father who puts an arm around his wife. John takes in the sight of this family and shakes off the longing. Eying Lady Liberty:

YAKOV

She is the most beautiful woman you ever have seen?

JOHN

The second, my friend.

Violet's Maid approaches.

MAISY

Miss Lily is missing.

INT./EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - LATER

Almost all have disembarked. Alex, John, the Captain and crew make separate searches for Violet-- she's nowhere in the FIRST CLASS rooms or decks (where workmen and maids furiously rip up carpets, strip beds, and polish metal).

EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - SECOND CLASS DECK - MINUTES LATER

John heads to the spot where they had their night together. He looks over the railing, sees her FEATHERED HAT floating on the water. He trains his eye back toward the STAIRCASE he descended the night before. Could she have gone down there?

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - STEERAGE - MOMENTS LATER

John finds Violet sitting in an empty room, tears down her face. Their connection is deep and surprisingly true.

JOHN

What are you doing, Miss?

VIOLET

I cannot get off.

JOHN

You know you can't stay here.

VIOLET

(knowing it's silly)
I *could* be a ship stewardess.

JOHN

You could. The job demands grueling exertion, knowledge in nursing and proof against sea-sickness.

VIOLET

Then I guess I'm out of luck.

BELLOWING VOICE (O.C.)

Violet Lily!

She reaches out and grabs John's hand, as stunned by the gesture as he, but not half as moved.

JOHN

You think your story's written, but you can change it, you know.

VIOLET

And what would you know of my story, Mr. Kidd?

JOHN

Miss Violet Lily will not be permitted to go to college or to even speak of any interests she may have discovered in Paris.

Violet is breathless, disarmed by his insight.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Instead she will endure years of parlor visits from suitors, monitored conversations, and chaperoned walks.

VIOLET

And then what?

JOHN

She will choose a husband.

VIOLET

Yes.

JOHN

And smile through months of engagement parties.

VIOLET

Yes.

JOHN

And enter into a contract with one
of these lucky men...

VIOLET

All of whom I've known my whole
life, and none of whom I love...

JOHN

For what?

VIOLET

For a lifetime.

JOHN

What I mean is-- *why?*

BELLOWING VOICE (O.C.)

Violet, are you down here?!

VIOLET

(broken heart, teary eyes)

A person with no attachments could
never understand.

He looks down at their CLASPED HANDS. She tries gently to
remove hers, but he *will not let go*. She knows what he is
saying-- he's become attached to *her*. She looks at him, they
smile. And tear themselves apart. Alex is upon them.

ALEX

What's going on here?

VIOLET

(paragon of grace)

It was my fault, Alex, I got lost,
and he found me. It's been a long
trip. I am anxious to get home.

She moves to the door and Alex slips John some CASH.

ALEX

Do not speak of this... or anything
you've seen on this ship... to
anyone.

We now understand he *did* see John on the deck. He leads
Violet out. Off of John, aching to follow...

INT./EXT. CARRIAGE - PARK AVENUE - DAY

Violet and Alex's CARRIAGE makes its way Uptown. Violet is
far away, thinking of John. The CLIP-CLOPS take us to...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DAY

The SLAP of a MESSAGE CAPSULE that's come through a PNEUMATIC TUBE and into the hand of a BUTLER. The Butler CRACKS open the capsule and glances at the NOTE. He folds it, poises it next to a rose on a polished water buffalo horn tray.

BUTLER

Miss Violet Langton Lily's ship has arrived!

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - UPSTAIRS - DAY

DING! A hotel MANAGER steps off the newfangled elevator, looks back at it and crosses himself-- he made it. He passes a waiting MAID, terrified to get on.

MANAGER

Perfectly safe.

He CLAPS his hands at a bevy of MAIDS on the floor.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Faster, girls! Move faster!

The SNAP of a fresh FRETTE LINEN, the WHOOSH of a WOMAN'S HAND smoothing it on a bed, the CLACK of a MING VASE being set on a night stand.

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - STEERAGE - DAY

John and a deckhand (FINN) walk the hall, back to work...

FINN

Eight days to make the crossing, depending on the wind.

...when John sees two adoring lovers flirting up ahead. The BOY kisses the GIRL. John's walk breaks into an urgent run.

FINN (CONT'D)

John, where you going?

INT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - JOHN'S LIVING QUARTERS

John gathers some things-- his trumpet case, a hat, his waiter's tux, a duffel...

INT. CARRIAGE/EXT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DAY

Vi and Alex pull up. She is confused.

VIOLET

I could have sworn we turned onto our street. I thought we were going home.

ALEX

This is home.

From her POV we REVEAL...the absolutely MAJESTIC HOTEL-FRONT of THE LILLIAN. A 2nd Empire Baroque palace meets a grand French Chateau. Violet takes in its size and magnificence.

ALEX (CONT'D)

We will live with our parents and sister on the entire top floor. Officially the tallest hotel in the world.

Violet looks up, can't see that high.

VIOLET

You must be pleased. Now you can look down on hundreds at once.

She stands in awe, excited and afraid to venture inside...

EXT. LUXURY STEAMSHIP - MINUTES LATER

John runs past MEN re-painting funnels, hulls, and every inch of woodwork. Captain calls after him from a lagging distance:

CAPTAIN

Is it safe for you to leave, John?

JOHN

It is worth the risk, Captain. But, I will be back!

CAPTAIN

Well, can you at least tell me where you are headed?

John turns to the vast ocean behind him, then looks ahead, at the expanse of the unknown. Excited and disbelieving he says to himself:

JOHN

I guess I am headed to the new grand hotel.

OFF his eyes WE SAIL over Gilded Age Manhattan, a sparser landscape than we know, full of endless possibility.

END ACT ONE

ACT II

EXT./INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND LOBBY - DAY

We face the GOLD EMBOSSED DOORS of the Lillian Hotel. Two smartly dressed DOORMEN pull them open, seduce us in.

DOORMAN 1

Welcome to The Lillian, Mr. Lily.

DOORMAN 2

Welcome home, Miss Lily.

We enter with Alex and Violet. THROUGH HER EYES we see the sheer elegance of the expanse. Parquet floors, Carrera marble sculptures, mahogany walls, velvet sofas, Australian crystal chandeliers, French silk pillows, Venetian silk drapes, gilded frames and accents, electric lights dazzling every wall, ceiling, and table top. STAFF in brass-buttoned jackets, MAIDS in black and white, UPHOLSTERERS and HANDYMEN do final preparations.

VIOLET

This should give Society something else to talk about.

A BELLMAN and a CONCIERGE greet her. A FLORIST passes by with a virtual parade float of lilies.

BELLMAN

I'll get your trunks, Miss Lily.

CONCIERGE

I'll take you up, Mr. And Miss Lily.

FLORIST

Welcome back, Miss Lily.

VIOLET

(whispering)

Who are these people?

JASPER KRAVETZ 20's, a sharp-tongued shit-stirrer in a hotel uniform, passes in a rush.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I know you! Jasper Kravetz!

JASPER

Welcome to the Lillian, Miss Lily, Mr. Lily.

ALEX

Jasper, why aren't you working for our Uncle next door?

JASPER

He gave me a promotion. I'm a hotel footman now.

Jasper heads off. Alex and Vi follow Concierge across lobby.

ALEX

Two dollars says Father stole him out from under Julius.

VIOLET

I thought Uncle Julius was also running this hotel.

As they step in front of a HUGE EMPTY SPACE on a wall...

ALEX

Julius runs tabs, not businesses, Violet.

EDWIN (PRELAP)

My brother did what?!

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - EDWIN'S STUDY - DAY

EDWIN FALTERHAUS LILY, late 40's, serious, tidy, and socially ungifted, YELLS into his single-wire telephone (a requirement for use of the device in the day). ELIZABETH LANGTON LILY, his beautiful, beloved wife, who's risen from Upper Middle Class to High Society with hidden claws, scans the gala seating chart. They are very much a partnership (for 1895).

EDWIN

(in phone)

The painting is worth half that. Then send it back to Europe. I said send it back!

He hangs up.

ELIZABETH

Edwin, that painting is for the most prominent wall in the lobby. Without it guests will be greeted by a fifteen-foot hole.

EDWIN

I'm not paying 50 when the budget was 25. And do not defend him, Elizabeth, he put us where we are.

KNOCK ON THE DOOR. Edwin makes another call...

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Connect me to Police Commissioner Roosevelt, please.

Elizabeth walks past a table with the HORN TRAY and NOTE. She opens the door to find their loyal old school Butler, standing with another NOTE on a tray.

BUTLER

Your children have crossed the threshold, Madam.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Mr. Jones.

EDWIN

(yelling in phone)

Teddy! Edwin Lily here! We are expecting a parade of 600 carriages! We will need street closures! Our guests cannot be expected to snake through the Five Points!

The Butler looks unnerved by Edwin, who continues in the BG.

ELIZABETH

He is not angry. The single wire telephone requires much yelling.

The Butler leaves, Elizabeth sighs.

EDWIN

Then I'll see you tomorrow night, Teddy! Wear a tuxedo! Wear a--

Frustrated, he hangs up.

ELIZABETH

That contraption you insist on using will be the death of human contact.

EDWIN

I certainly hope so with all of my heart.

ELIZABETH

(holding seating chart)

Though I know you'd prefer to hide
in the balcony while your party
happens without you, I implore you
to choose your dinner companions.

He grunts, consults the list.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Out of 13 hundred people you can
find someone's company to tolerate.

EDWIN

Yours.

ELIZABETH

The table is round, you *will* have
two sides. How about Julius, he is
coming alone.

EDWIN

The Lothario doesn't have a
companion this week?

ELIZABETH

No one who'd survive your Mother's
scrutiny, I'm sure.

EDWIN

Why don't you seat me next to
Andrew Carnegie?

She looks at him. He smiles.

ELIZABETH

The deal is done?

EDWIN

The deal is done.

Very emotional, she rises, embraces him.

EDWIN (CONT'D)

I will not let us drown.

ELIZABETH

That is not why I am crying. It is
the first time in years I have
actually seen you smile.

Edwin strokes her face, then barks out the door to an unseen
construction crew:

EDWIN

I am off of the telephone! Why are you not working?!

INT. LILY MANSION - JULIUS'S BEDROOM - DAY

BANG, BANG. HAMMERS and SAWS distract JULIUS ASHFORD LILY, late 30's, from a morning triste with two NAKED MAIDS. The golden boy, he's mama's favorite, charming, optimistic, lucky, and loose. He hears a SHRIEK from downstairs, peels himself from the bed.

JULIUS

Leave as you came-- sweetly, discreetly.

NAKED HOUSEMAID 1

As always, Mr. Lily.

CAROLINE (PRELAP)

Will someone please put a bullet in my brain?

INT. LILY MANSION - PARLOR - DAY

The sounds of last-minute construction cause DUST to fall from the ceiling and the entire house to SHAKE. Julius enters to find CAROLINE NAUGHTON LILY, 60's, our ruthless but wickedly funny matriarch widow, in a BUTLER-frightening fury.

CAROLINE

I will not abide this invasion, Julius. I haven't heard this much infernal banging since you had a headboard in your room. Your brother's insistence on building this hotel next door to our once grand and now *dwarfed* mansion is his ultimate act of rebellion.

JULIUS

(weary)

I thought you said his marrying Elizabeth was his ultimate act of rebellion.

CAROLINE

Each decade has its own defining vexation.

Julius exchanges a look with the Butler.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

And using our money for such a vulgar and dangerous venture? A hotel with public spaces? Where common people can get a view of the Upper Class? What are we-- stage actors? Without so much as consulting me.

JULIUS

You have no stakes in the company, Mother, he needn't consult you.

CAROLINE

Well, he need consult you.

JULIUS

He did.

CAROLINE

On what? The napkin rings? He diminishes you.

JULIUS

No, Father diminished me. When he left me 20 and him 80 percent.

Julius pops a treat in his mouth.

CAROLINE

And there you sit. Sanguine, with profiteroles.

JULIUS

The Lillian Hotel has my stamp all over it, Mother. I have designed the restaurant, secured the top chef, and chosen every piece of furniture and every piece of art.

CAROLINE

(proud of him)

Of course you have, you've inherited my exquisite taste and class. Vital talents underappreciated once by your father and now by your brother. Without me, there would be no Society to aspire to, let alone to conquer. And here I am, on allowance from my sons.

JULIUS

That being the case you should at least appear to want this business to thrive.

CAROLINE

I would wear it on a banner if I thought you'd get the glory.

JULIUS

Edwin is my partner in business, Mother. Some people would say his successes are mine.

CAROLINE

Well, those people are idiots. Make your own mark.

Off of Julius, knowing she's right.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

ABIGAIL PERKINS, 19, Violet's personal maid and devoted to the task, carries fresh linens and walks with Jasper Kravetz.

ABIGAIL

You sure it's a step up, Jasper?

JASPER

Being the slave to a hundred different men will be far more interesting than being knicker-picker-upper for the same damn one.

ABIGAIL

Well, the other house-gone-hotel staff are not as cheery about the workload.

JASPER

Yes, the Lily family cook is about to have a nervous breakdown. One fat woman versus a thousand roasted capons. Not to mention there's a mutiny brewing among the dish washers.

ABIGAIL

I'll be happy to return to serving only Violet.

At the SERVICE ELEVATOR, gossiping MAIDS snub Abigail.

MAID 1

Miss Lily didn't find a Count, let
alone a Prince to marry in Europe.

MAID 2

Heaven forbid she ends up like
Margaret.

NEW MAID

Who is Margaret?

MAID 2

She **was** the blackened elder sister.
She was engaged to a Carnegie when
she ran off with a Spaniard...

ABIGAIL

Did you hear that each guestroom
has its own bath and toilet?

MAID 1

(rolling eyes, continuing)
Then Margaret took her own life in
her shame.

JASPER

(unable to resist)
Some say her ghost haunts the
mansions of NY.

MAID 1

I think I saw her just last night
on the 5th floor.

ABIGAIL

Oh, stop it! You can not speak
about the family this way here. To
you it is a hotel, but to them it
is their home.

MAID 2

Their home, not yours-- Abigail
Perkins.

The MAIDS scoff and head off. Jasper is sorry, but tells her
the truth:

JASPER

Just because your mother was
Violet's governess doesn't mean
you're sisters. And make no
mistake, you surely aren't friends.

Jasper heads off, leaving Abigail rattled...

EXT. MANHATTAN FIVE POINTS DISTRICT - DAY

John is let out of the back of a textile-hauling carriage into this colorful but seedy neighborhood. The beleaguered DRIVER unloads his cargo.

DRIVER
As far as I go, Kidd.

An ARGUMENT between a Russian and an Italian distracts John.

RUSSIAN
(*in Russian*)
Your horse shit on my sidewalk!

ITALIAN
Spiacente, è ammalato.

JOHN
(to Driver)
Would the residence of Violet Lily
be somewhere close to here?

The Russian starts throwing punches; John can't help but yell to him *in Russian*:

JOHN (CONT'D)
He's apologizing, comrade!

And the Russian relents. John turns back to Driver.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Can you at least point me in the
direction of the new grand hotel?

He looks John over, nods to a brothel and a boarding house.

DRIVER
There, grand hotels.

ON John-- great thanks... desperate, to passers-by:

JOHN
New grand hotel? The Lily family
hotel? Come on, it's a big event
for this city!

He then realizes-- of course-- and runs to a NEWSIE on the corner. He pulls a paper from his bag-- the front page reads: Grand Hotel Opening... with the 5th Avenue address. In one graceful move John slips the BRIBE MONEY Alex gave him into the Newsie's palm, and takes off riding on the baffled kid's bike.

Off John, one step closer to finding his Violet.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LILY PENTHOUSE - DAY

ELEVATOR DOORS DING open; Alex and Vi step out. SERVANTS await. Their 8-year-old sister, EMMA, comes running to Vi.

VIOLET
My Emma! You are huge!

EMMA
Bienvenue, ma soeur.

Everyone laughs.

ALEX
I taught her to say that. Tres bon, ma cherie.

Vi gives Emma to Alex and greets the line of trusted house staff. Abigail waits self-consciously at the end.

VIOLET
Mr. Jones, hello.

BUTLER
Welcome home, Miss Lily.

VIOLET
Mrs. Watkins, Mrs. Lowry. Abigail.

ABIGAIL
(painfully braced)
Miss Violet.

Then Violet explodes and throws her arms around Abby.

VIOLET
It is so good to see you!

Alex is offended and the Staff is shocked. Abby's relieved--

ABIGAIL
Oh, thank you, Miss Violet!

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - VIOLET'S ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Abigail unpacks Violet and presses for details.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Did you find love in Paris?

VIOLET

No. Not in Paris. I found art in Paris. And opera and books.

ABIGAIL

Were they romantic books? You look all aglow.

VIOLET

(unable to contain it)
Abby, I met a man on the ship.

ABIGAIL

You did?! Who is he?

VIOLET

He is... he is not possible for me... but what I felt for him? The feelings he awakened in me can never be put to bed... I will compare every single man to him for the rest of my life.

ABIGAIL

Does he feel the same for you?

VIOLET

I don't know. It doesn't matter.

ABIGAIL

But, how can it not matter?

VIOLET

(full of life and hope)
What's important is I know now that I will die if I settle for anything less. If it takes a lifetime, I don't care... I will wait to find true love.

Elizabeth pops in. They embrace.

ELIZABETH

My darling? Welcome home!

VIOLET

Mother! Hello!

ELIZABETH

(embracing her)
What do you think of the hotel?

VIOLET

I think I left my charming
brownstone unsupervised for a year
and it seems to have eaten four
other houses on the block.

ELIZABETH

The sarcasm you've picked up in
Paris will knock the wind out of
your father. He needs his perfect
girl; this week is important.

VIOLET

Of course it is, Mother.

Off of Violet, snapping back into her role...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - EDWIN'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Vi and Elizabeth enter to find Edwin on the phone.

EDWIN

I must call you back.
(hangs up, beams)
My Violet!

VIOLET

You look so trim, Father!

EDWIN

I've gone off of food. Now how was
this finishing school your mother
convinced me you needed?

VIOLET

She was making the trip sound
suitable-- she knew I wanted time
abroad. The hotel is magnificent!

EDWIN

Have you seen the electric call
system? I'll take you on the tour.

ELIZABETH

I thought we might share the good
news with her first.
(he hesitates)
Your father has reconciled with
Andrew Carnegie.

VIOLET

What? Such wonderful news! I thought they'd never embrace us after everything with Margaret!

EDWIN

Well, Carnegie is no fool. As the leading steel magnate in America he knows a relationship with Lily Real Estate is simply good business.

VIOLET

Oh, Father! I am thrilled! I know the chasm in your friendship caused you merciless torment, and the rest of us great shame. How did they finally come around to forgiveness?

EDWIN

The nephew, Charlie Carnegie, would like you for his wife.

Off Violet, a fate worse the she fathomed, suddenly upon her.

END ACT II

ACT III

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Violet bursts in, crying. Elizabeth tries to explain.

VIOLET

I can't believe I don't get a choice. I don't even get time to adjust to the idea of being married.

ELIZABETH

You're a woman, my darling... what other idea has there been?

VIOLET

But, why like this? Why now?

ELIZABETH

You're nineteen, Violet, some would say you're overdue.

VIOLET

Mommy, please do not act as if we've just met. I can't bear to feel more foreign here than I already do.

Elizabeth aches for her. Is tender from here on out.

ELIZABETH

Your father has been through so much these past years.

VIOLET

Yes, I know.

ELIZABETH

His father's sudden death, the
(can hardly say it)
...loss of Margaret. His spirit
has been restored by this
reconciliation.

VIOLET

So I give my life to erase that Margaret jilted his son? And what does Carnegie get? What good do I do him?

ELIZABETH

You're a Lily. Your money is old. Society may acknowledge Carnegie's wealth, but in every parlor they whisper about the ink that's on his hands. And...

Violet looks at her mother... what else can there be?

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

The hotel was a massive venture, and your father has had unforeseen financial strains.

Violet pulls away from her mother, feeling so betrayed.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I sent you to Paris. I hoped you'd fall in love. I am not cruel; I just can't deal in abstractions. If you had come home with a titled gentleman, perhaps I could have fought for you...

Elizabeth feels a pain in her chest. Hates to say it, but:

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry to do this now, love. I have an appointment I can not break... would you like me to send in your brother to comfort you?

Violet looks up-- seriously? Elizabeth nods and heads out.

CAROLINE (PRE-LAP)

What engagement, Mr. Lavage?!

INT. CAROLINE'S MANSION - SALON - DAY

The Butler nervously pours tea for Caroline and her personal, flamboyant SOCIETY JOURNALIST.

LAVAGE

Your granddaughter's, of course. I know it is not yet official, but I was slipped the early tip.

Caroline is surprised and *fuming*, affects calm through gritted teeth:

CAROLINE

And who slipped you this tip?

LAVAGE
Mrs. Lily, of course.

CAROLINE
I AM MRS. LILY!

The rattled Butler slips out.

LAVAGE
The other Mrs. Lily. The lesser,
Elizabeth. Lily.

CAROLINE
And did the lesser Elizabeth share
the name of the gentleman?

LAVAGE
Yes, Charlie Carnegie.

CAROLINE
(pretending to know)
Yes, Charlie Carnegie. That should
make for a juicy column.

She gets up, heads to the window, can hardly breathe.

LAVAGE
I'm sorry, did you not know?

CAROLINE
Don't be ridiculous, of course I
knew. No one in this Society has
married in the last thirty years
without my explicit approval.

LAVAGE
After two decades, I can't believe
this is our last daily meeting.

CAROLINE
What now?

LAVAGE
I will write tomorrow's column as
you've dictated it, as usual. But,
once the hotel opens I am out of a
job.

CAROLINE
What are you talking about, Lavage?

LAVAGE

All the city's journalists will soon have access to your family-- you build a public hotel, you get a public lobby. It seems your son Edwin has made me irrelevant.

These words fall hard on Caroline, defining her plight.

LAVAGE (CONT'D)

But even with an unfettered press, you'll be fine, Mrs. Lily. You're the emblem of propriety and have nothing to hide.

BUTLER

(entering)

A Mr. Fitzwilliam to see you, Madame.

Caroline goes ashen. Not annoyed-- *frightened*. As we wonder how someone like him has business with her...

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM

Hello, Mrs. Lily.

CAROLINE

Mr. Fitzwilliam. What a surprise.

LAVAGE

Louis Lavage, Society Writer.

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM

William Fitzwilliam, *entrepreneur*.

Off Caroline, trying to uphold her composure.

INT. CAROLINE'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Caroline and Fitzwilliam in a room alone...

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM (CONT'D)

The Vanderbilts gave me a similar reception. Then they declined to be of any help.

CAROLINE

What is it you want from us?

FITZWILLIAM

A place at the table.

CAROLINE

For Heaven's sake, we sent you to Europe, you lived there well, how long will we have to pay for what you think you know?

FITZWILLIAM

As long as I have a photograph of Margaret alive. It could surely reinvigorate the talk of her scandal.

Off of Caroline, containing her disdain for this man...

EXT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DAY

A carriage rides up. John rides up next to it on the bike, sweating and dirty from thirty blocks of peddling. He surveys the entrance of the hotel - fancy and guarded, spectators in finery being turned away.

DOORMAN

The doors don't open until after tomorrow, ladies and gentlemen.

Julius exits the carriage, passing by John.

JULIUS

Employee entrance is around back, lad.

JOHN

Sorry, Sir.

JULIUS

Not at all.

John watches Julius go in, wondering who he is to Violet.

EXT. LILLIAN HOTEL - BACK ENTRANCE - MINUTES LATER

John is trying to trade the bike with HOTEL SECURITY.

JOHN

It's got a rear freewheel and coaster brakes.

SECURITY

I can't let you in unless your name's on the list.

JOHN

Smith.

SECURITY

Come on, kid.

JOHN

Hannigan. Keating. Jefferson.
Wong.

Suddenly a stream of DISGRUNTLED WORKERS come pouring out the door, cursing in colorful languages and throwing down aprons.

DISGRUNTLED WORKERS

Unten mit Edwin-Lilie!/ Laschi
l'hotel venire a mancare!

John slips into the outpouring crowd and fights his way in.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DOWNSTAIRS - DAY

Abigail is with her mother, PENNY PERKINS, 40's, once the Lily governess, now hotel head maid, and in a total panic.

PENNY PERKINS

Please, Abby! The gala is tomorrow night, and the dishwashers have just gone on strike! If the kitchen doesn't get their situation under control, my maids will be infected with dreams of higher wages and I'll lose my entire staff--

ABIGAIL

But, you're the only one who can talk to her, Mama. You raised all of her children, can't you try and soften her on Violet's behalf?

PENNY

You want me to talk to Elizabeth Lily about who her daughter should marry? I can't believe how much you don't understand about boundaries between upstairs and down. It's going to get you in trouble, Abby, you mark my words.

Just then John pops his head in, breathless and hopeful.

JOHN

Excuse me. Are you hiring valets?
Bellmen perhaps?

Penny sighs with relief and points him toward the kitchen-

PENNY
Dishwashers.

JOHN
Nothing upstairs?

PENNY
(unmoved)
Dishwashers.

JOHN
(nods, waves at Abby)
How you doin'?

And heads off. Abby watches him go... *smitten*, when a SERVICE CALL LIGHT BEAMS next to the name VIOLET LILY.

PENNY
(knowing her well)
And I certainly didn't raise you to
end up with a dishwasher.

Off Abby's blushing smile, as she prepares Violet's tea.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Elizabeth is on her way out when she finds Julius, standing in front of a smooth Carrera marble statue of a near-nude woman with a bow, a quiver of arrows, and a hunting dog.

Their banter is sparkling but not overt or out of line.

JULIUS
Diana of the Hunt-- do you like
her?

ELIZABETH
I do like her.

JULIUS
She reminds me of you.

ELIZABETH
And how is that, Julius?

JULIUS
She was a goddess who had the power
to control wild animals.

ELIZABETH
Are you speaking ill of my husband?

JULIUS
(speaking of himself)
I wasn't speaking of him at all.

That was a bit flirty, she takes it in stride.

ELIZABETH
You've done an extraordinary job
with this hotel, Julius, I've never
seen so much beauty. But, you have
caused my husband excessive
agitation.

JULIUS
He gets agitated by things he
doesn't understand.

ELIZABETH
He understands that you've never
made an attempt to veil your boyish
behavior, or to hide the cast of
characters with whom you consort.
He understands that society seems
to have endless tolerance for your
wayward style but none at all for
his. He also understands that you
defy him at every turn. What he
doesn't understand is why.

They see Edwin approaching.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I am sure you two have business, I
am going on an errand.

EDWIN
Which coachman will drive you?

ELIZABETH
I am driving myself.

EDWIN
You've been doing that a lot
lately, driving yourself.

ELIZABETH
I'll make sure to alert tomorrow's
Town Topics.

She shakes her head, smiles, and blows a kiss to Edwin.

JULIUS
Perhaps there is somewhere you and
I can talk?

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - MEN'S BAR - DAY

Jasper serves drinks then steps out of earshot.

EDWIN

So, you were about to ask me for a favor.

JULIUS

Not a favor, Edwin. My right as part owner and creator of this hotel. I want my name on the marquis.

EDWIN

There is no marquis.

JULIUS

I wasn't being literal. Even your language has no imagination.

EDWIN

What do you want? Me to toast you at the gala? Thank you for the hundred thousand dollar overage on our linens? The deficit in our electricity budget because of your obsession with palm fronds? Or the bathroom fixtures you insisted be made of 18 karat gold?

JULIUS

You know you never have to clean them.

EDWIN

No, you don't have to clean things that have already been stolen.

(off Julius)

Yes, by the platoon of handymen we had to fire yesterday. Two days before we open our doors.

JULIUS

(afraid of the answer)

Where is the Gasparini for the front lobby wall?

EDWIN

I sent it back.

JULIUS

I made an excellent deal with Palma for that painting.

EDWIN

You spent twice the budget.

JULIUS

The one you slashed in half without a word of it to me. Edwin, if you want beauty you must pay for it.

EDWIN

A motto better suited for a brothel downtown. Not the Lillian.

JULIUS

It's a museum not a boarding house.

EDWIN

It is a business, brother, with a callous bottom line.

JULIUS

They will gasp at what they see here, and they will return in droves.

EDWIN

And if they don't? Where does that leave us?

Julius realizes his brother's deep fears. Softens a bit.

JULIUS

If you put me by your side I can shoulder half the blame.

But, tragically, Edwin can't bear the kindness, walk away...

EDWIN

You're never blamed for anything. Now go home to our mother.

JULIUS

(angry, calling after him)
It is not my fault he died and left you the burden of responsibility.

EDWIN

I do not think he intended for you to be chief among them.

JULIUS

(trying to be mature)
I'll fix the painting mishap. And we'll return to this conversation after tomorrow night's success.

Edwin continues walking...

JULIUS (CONT'D)
And I'm taking back my valet!!

ON JASPER, crushed, and feeling like a pawn...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DOWNSTAIRS - MEN'S ROOM

John and MALE EMPLOYEES crowd a row of sinks and mirrors, shaving their faces to the specifications of a MANAGER.

MANAGER
All of it, men. Not a whisker
beneath the brow.

DISHWASHER
(grumbling under breath)
I bet the household dishwashers
don't have to shave their beards.

JOHN
Household? Here?

DISHWASHER
Mr. Lily keeps his precious family
up on the 14th floor.

Noting the Manager's presence, John asks a guy *in Russian*:

JOHN
*How can I get access to the
Penthouse?*

RUSSIAN GUY
*If a dishwasher leaves the kitchen
area he gets fired.*

JOHN
Are the waiters free to roam?

RUSSIAN GUY
Lobby and basement.

Off of John, devising a plan...

INT. VIOLET'S ROOM - DAY

Abigail enters with tea service to find Violet primping; she looks in the mirror, drained of her fire.

VIOLET
They would not survive another
scandal.

(MORE)

VIOLET (CONT'D)

My parents barely recovered from Margaret. My brother is hopeless, the family has long since stopped expecting anything from him. All of NY Society is ready to pounce on us-- waiting to suck the blood from our next social scrape. Without financial security all they have is their name.

ABIGAIL

What are you going to do?

VIOLET

Get ready for Charlie. He is calling in two hours.

ABIGAIL

But, Violet, you can't!

VIOLET

I haven't seen him since we were young. I hope he isn't some drooling misfit or wanton deviant.

ABIGAIL

What about the man from the ship? Can't you find him? What about what you said about true love?

VIOLET

It is a privilege reserved for people of your class!!

Silence. Both girls are hurt by this. Violet fights tears.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Abby. Please. It's all I can do to do my duty.

Off the two women, a wedge in their friendship.

EXT. MET - DAY

The front steps. Julius stands with a man, SR. PALMA.

PALMA

I will not do business with him.

JULIUS

Signori Palma, I wouldn't ask you to do business with my brother again.

PALMA

He sent back the Gasparini. He screamed at me.

JULIUS

My problem is I already have thirty pieces from the Louvre. The seventh floor is an homage to Versailles. Queen Victoria has sent us a 4000 pound clock. Bronze.

We see Palma becoming jealous, caving...

JULIUS (CONT'D)

I have nice pieces of marble, but I'd hate for Italy to be underrepresented... as an authority on true beauty, luxury, you know...

PALMA

If I gave you the painting. Edwin won't honor the deal, we all know that he writes the checks.

JULIUS

Then let's make it cash.

PALMA

(dubious)
Your gala is tomorrow.

JULIUS

Then Signori, you shall have it tonight.

Julius shakes his hand and heads off, smiling... when his eye is caught by a woman across the street. It's Elizabeth. She's looking furtive and heading into a strange building.

WE FOLLOW JULIUS as he crosses the street and heads into the building into which Elizabeth has just disappeared.

INT. UPTOWN MANHATTAN BUILDING - LATER

We're CLOSE on Elizabeth. Her eyelids open, she is misty, almost shy. WE WIDEN to see she is with a MAN whose identity is obscured. Unbuttoning her own high-collared blouse she:

ELIZABETH

You do understand, no one can know.

END ACT III

ACT IV

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - SITTING ROOM - EVENING

Violet, Elizabeth, Edwin, Alex, and Emma wait for Charlie's arrival in deathly silence. The clock TICKS loudly.

ALEX

Will he come with his uncle or will
he come alone?

ELIZABETH

I hear he is modern - he'll
probably come alone.

Violet puts on her SPECS to see the time. Elizabeth gasps,
Edwin grabs them:

EDWIN

Do you want to scare him off?

The door opens-Violet holds her breath. A BUTLER announces...

BUTLER

Mrs. Caroline Naughton Lily.

Violet sighs, gets up, and embraces her grandmother.

VIOLET

Grandmother.

CAROLINE

I'm ecstatic to see you, too, dear.
You've gotten ever more beautiful
over the year. And what an
exciting week for us all-
engagements and hotels and Edwin I
need a word.

She pulls him to the window and whispers behind her fan-

CAROLINE (CONT'D)

I have thoughts about this
sacrilege, but I do not have time.
Fitzwilliam is here.

Edwin goes dark. Alex blanches. Elizabeth approaches.

ELIZABETH

What is it?

Caroline puts her fan between her face and Elizabeth's.

EDWIN
Fitzwilliam's back in town.

CAROLINE
Among other things he says he's got
a photograph of Margaret.

ELIZABETH
What should we do?

CAROLINE
It's already done. I promised him a
ticket to the gala and a long-term
suite at The Lillian.

EDWIN
Without consulting me?

CAROLINE
Yes. Without consulting **you**. My
son. Whom I nearly died birthing
and whose knickers I changed. The
world. Is. In order.

Edwin and Elizabeth are both silenced. The three adults
seat themselves politely with the children. Silence.

CAROLINE (CONT'D)
(to Alex)
Dropped out of Harvard or kicked
out of Harvard?

EDWIN
Mother, not now.

Off Violet, among these people, it all falls on her.

INT. BURLESQUE HOUSE - EVENING

A sexy, smoky, salacious contrast to anything we've seen so
far. Bawdy music and lots of flesh. Having surveyed the
place, a resentful Jasper opens the door and waves Julius in.

JASPER
No one from your circle is ever
here, Sir.

JULIUS
Wait for me at the carriage.

Julius heads to his USUAL DANCER, touches her face and passes
her by. He approaches a dapper looking man, TOMMY BARONE at
the joint's best table. Smiles wide:

TOMMY BARONE
Julius Lily.

JULIUS
Mr. Barone.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

The Lilys wait for Charlie, stiffly. Suffocating. Except for Emma who giggles and plays cards with Alex.

EMMA
I win! Didn't I win?

ALEX
Pure shecoonery! Again, I'm undone.

BUTLER
(entering)
Mr. Charles Carnegie.

The family stands as CHARLIE CARNEGIE enters. He is tall, dark, dashing, and very shy. Violet is pleasantly surprised.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE
Good evening, Mrs. Lily.

CAROLINE
Good evening.

ELIZABETH
Good evening.

Oops. Charlie wisely turns to Elizabeth.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE (CONT'D)
And the other Mrs. Lily. Mr. Lily.
Alex, how are you?

ALEX
Wounded since the last time you
trounced me in tennis.
(smiles at him)
Ego only. No cares, my friend.

EDWIN
It is nice to see you, Charlie.
You remember our daughter?

CHARLIE
(bending down to Emma)
Prettiest girl in town.

EDWIN
I meant Violet.

ELIZABETH

He knew what you meant.

Violet curtsies daintily and locks eyes with Charlie. He offers a compassionate smile.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE

I remember her well. How could I not?

Violet is wary, but takes the compliment. Off of the family, exchanging hopeful looks.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DOWNSTAIRS - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John is stuck washing dishes under the watchful eye of a KITCHEN MATRON, who sees a DISHWASHER stop to wipe his brow.

KITCHEN MATRON

Five thousand glasses, no time for sweating.

John holds a large SHARP KNIFE in his fist. He's come this far, he won't be trapped in the basement. He looks at a passing hotel RESTAURANT WAITER, wearing a very specific CRESTED JACKET and heads right for him. He slyly CUTS a slit in the back of the jacket, then points it out to the guy.

JOHN

Mate, you've got a tear there.

RESTAURANT WAITER

What? Oh, no.

JOHN

The manager won't like this, I can do a quick mend and return it.

WAITER

Thank you, friend.

He hands it to John, who heads out with it over his arm, but not before grabbing a TRAY of food... and passing Abigail. "Shhhh" he says to her with a wink and continues upstairs.

EXT. BURLESQUE HOUSE - NIGHT

Amongst street hawkers and prostitutes, a pissed-off Jasper smokes and waits for Julius. A JOURNALIST sidles up.

JOURNALIST

Kravetz, Franky from the tenement. Thought you had a job at that big new hotel.

JASPER
Where'd you hear that?

JOURNALIST
Your pops was braggin about it to everyone on the floor.

JASPER
(moved, news to him)
Yeah, well, he can go back to being eternally disappointed. Prince Panties took my job away cause he was in a pouty mood.

JOURNALIST
You know my paper would pay a decent penny for tidbits on the Lilys. Enough to maybe get you outta the rathole for good.

JASPER
Since when does their personal life make for profitable news?

JOURNALIST
The moment the doors open to that fancy hotel. The poor get close to the spoils, there'll be a whole new level of interest.

Off of Jasper, very intrigued...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

CONCIERGE shakes hands with early awestruck GUESTS.

GUEST #1
I've never heard of that--
"concierge."

CONCIERGE
The position was created by Mr. Edwin Lily. You see, no one should feel a stranger in his town...

As Concierge trail off, Violet and Charlie tour the hotel.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE
I do remember you. You were nine.
And even quieter than I.

VIOLET
You had a habit of pulling my hair.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE
I hated awkward silences, I
preferred to hear you shriek.

Violet smiles, liking him a bit. They pass but DO NOT SEE...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LOBBY/CORRIDOR NIGHT

John, who DOES NOT SEE them as he hides his face behind the tray and slips past the RESTAURANT and into...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - ELEVATOR

He looks at the dubious ELEVATOR OPERATOR, who eyes the tray.

JOHN
Up, please. For a bedridden guest.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

John steps out of the elevator, places the tray on the floor in the hall outside a guest room, and searches for Violet.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - SILVER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Violet and Charlie continue their stroll down the 200-foot long majestic corridor (hand-painted barrel vaulted ceilings, Austrian crystal chandeliers, black and white mosaic floor.)

VIOLET
Each painting represents a month in
the year.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE
Violet. I know you know our
families have plans for us. And I
have to admit I was hesitant, but
you have grown into a beautiful and
charming young woman...

He takes her hand. She looks at it-- feeling a tiny stir.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE (CONT'D)
Miss Violet Langton Lily--

Then Violet's eyes go WIDE at a sight--

ANGLE ON John Kidd! Walking the Silver Corridor of her father's hotel! Turns to Charlie:

VIOLET
Excuse me a moment.

Goes to John, attracted without needing to touch him at all.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

Mr. Kidd. What are you doing here?

JOHN

I came here for you.

Violet is breathless. She looks around, *Charlie's coming*, a MANAGER looks on. This is as dangerous as it is romantic.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Though this is not a fate as
terrible as I would have imagined.
Given your reluctance to come home.

She can't help but smile. A held look between them.
Crackling with longing and energy. Charlie is close.

CHARLIE CARNEGIE

Is everything all right, Violet?

JOHN

(whispering to her)
Just answer me one question.
Should I find you again?

But before she can respond, Charlie is there, locking eyes
with John-- the challenge is on.

VIOLET

Shall we tour the Turkish Lounge,
Mr. Carnegie?

Violet and Charlie head off. John watches her go...

CHARLIE CARNEGIE

Who was that?

VIOLET

No one.

John is crushed... when she turns around and gives John that
look-- that one look that is enough to give a man hope.

MANAGER

(from a distance)
Who are you, boy? Excuse me! What
are you doing on this floor?

John smiles after Violet, and slips through a door.

END ACT IV

ACT V

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - VIOLET'S ROOM - EVENING

The night of the gala. A GORGEOUS GOWN hangs on the door. Violet is in her corset in a mirror once again, while Abby does her hair-- nothing to say to one another right now. Violet's BARRETTE breaks.

VIOLET

Damn.

ABIGAIL

I'll find glue for you, Miss.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - ALEX'S ROOM - EVENING

Alex dresses with the help of his VALET.

VALET

Are you an usher tonight, Sir?

ALEX

My father did not choose me for such a distinguished honor.
(hands him an envelope)
Will you deliver this to Mr. William Fitzwilliam? Room 225?

VALET

307, I believe.

INT. CAROLINE'S MANSION - dressing room - evening

Caroline is formally clad and being bedazzled by a JEWELER, who holds open another case of fine gems. As Caroline looks satisfied with the jewels she has on...

JEWELER

I hear Elizabeth Lily is wearing three pounds of diamonds.

Caroline snarls and reaches for another piece.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - EDWIN AND ELIZABETH'S ROOM - EVENING

Dapper in his tux, Edwin looks at a PORTRAIT of his father on the wall. A delicate hand is suddenly on his shoulder. It's Elizabeth, assuring him... don't be nervous, darling.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LOBBY - EVENING

Julius stands in the relatively empty lobby (but for SERVICE and STAFF) smiling up at the glorious 15 foot painting.

MANAGER

Mr. Lily, the first guests have arrived.

EXT. LILLIAN HOTEL - EVENING - MINUTES LATER

BAM. The GALA is on. Lines of horse drawn carriages, red carpets, photographers, reporters. The most elite of East Coast Society are here, dressed to the nines. Electric lights dazzle even the snobbiest of people. This is like nothing they've ever seen, and they haven't even been inside.

ANDREW CARNEGIE, his WIFE, and Charlie Carnegie step out of their coach. A GREETER unhooks a VELVET ROPE for them.

GREETER

Welcome to the Lillian, Mr. Carnegie. Mrs. Carnegie. Sir.

WIFE

(re: velvet rope)
What on Earth was that thing?

CHARLIE CARNEGIE

I don't know, yet I feel strangely happy to be on this side of it.

They smile, excited, and head inside.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - DOWNSTAIRS - SAME

An organized madhouse. Nervous and excited servants mill. A Manager stands on a table and addresses hundreds of troops.

MANAGER

Remember, people! The difficult we do immediately, the impossible will take a bit longer!

Jasper tags along with Abigail as she glues a stone back in Violet's HAIR PIECE...

JASPER

I should be up there! Ziegfield's here, The Divine Sarah is here...
(off her)
Bernhardt. That handsome gangster, Tommy Barone, with the severe center part.

ABIGAIL
Gangster!?

JASPER
Don't worry, Police Commissioner
Roosevelt is also here. No mischief
will happen tonight.
(off the hair piece)
It's done. Let me take it to Miss
Violet? Please. I want to pass
through the lobby.

Just then Abigail sees John coming down the hall. She gives
the piece to Jasper so she can stay and talk to John.

ABIGAIL
Just this once.

JASPER
Thank you, Abby.

Jasper runs off. John is there.

JOHN
Hello again.

ABIGAIL
I thought you'd be fired for
sneaking upstairs.

JOHN
I simply explained to the manager I
was honoring a guest's request for
dinner in his room.

ABIGAIL
(laughs)
Meals served in the guest rooms?

JOHN
He thought it was a promising idea,
going to bring it to Mr. Lily.
Anyway, is there a place where I
can press my jacket?

He holds out his WAITER'S TUX JACKET from the ship.

ABIGAIL
Follow me. I am Abby.

JOHN
Hello there, I am John.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND LOBBY - EVENING

Elizabeth and Julius (both looking gorgeous) greet guests in front of the massive oil painting Julius was able to procure.

ELIZABETH

How did you do it?

JULIUS

Director of the Met is a croquet pal of mine. Edwin can thank me at any time.

ELIZABETH

I'm sure it's forthcoming.

(to a couple)

Mr. and Mrs. Vanderbilt, you look absolutely divine.

Julius studies her, sadly. Leans into her close.

JULIUS

About your trip Uptown today...

Elizabeth looks at him, gets nervous.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

I followed you into the building. I didn't even know Dr. Morris had an office. Why didn't you just have him to the house?

(off her face)

How serious is it, Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH

(her eyes well with tears)

Do not tell him yet. It will only break his heart.

ANGLE ON Edwin chatting with Andrew Carnegie. Edwin watches Julius and Elizabeth in their intimate exchange.

CARNEGIE

(re: High Society)

Look at them. Mouths agape. You've done it, man, you've done it. Have you thought about my offer?

EDWIN

It's always been a family business.

CARNEGIE

We will be family soon enough.

As Edwin mulls this, he sees a FLASHY COUPLE coming toward them. It's TOMMY BARONE on the arm of the BURLESQUE DANCER. Edwin's face tightens. He hopes Carnegie doesn't see them.

TOMMY BARONE

There he is! Edwin Lily! We finally meet.

Carnegie looks him over, discomfited by his presence.

EDWIN

I am sorry. Who are you?

TOMMY BARONE

Friend of Julius, Tommy Barone.

EDWIN

(anxious)

This is Mr. Andrew Carnegie.

TOMMY BARONE

Nice to make your acquaintance. I'm proud tonight. To even be a small part of making this happen.

EDWIN

I'm sorry?

TOMMY BARONE

(points to the painting)

No interest on the loan. Congratulations on the night.

Unhappy, Carnegie looks at Edwin. Off Edwin, fuming.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - EVENING

John, looking dapper in his freshly pressed tux, holding his TRUMPET, snakes through the crowd. We PICK UP Alex nearby, conspiring with an effete SOCIETY MAN. He doesn't see John.

SOCIETY MAN

I will tell her I am going to a gentlemen's game of poker.

ALEX

I have missed "the game", Marcus.

SOCIETY MAN

(a hand on his arm)

Not more than I.

And John continues to wend his way through guests, grabs a chair, and deposits himself as the fifth player of a performing QUARTET. He introduces himself to the violinist.

JOHN

Hello, I'm Longfellow. Don't stop playing, I'll blend in.

John lifts his instrument, and joins in- the other musicians going with it, as they can not make a scene.

He searches the crowd for Violet, but she is no where in sight. He sees *Charlie Carnegie*. Terrific. Then he spots... *William Fitzwilliam!* That putz from the ship! He's headed in John's direction. John doesn't want his cover blown, burrows into the depths of the crowd. When he surfaces...

The whole party seems to have stopped to look over at him. But he realizes they are not looking at him-- they are looking behind him to a vision in the archway. John turns...

Violet has entered. And she is absolutely stunning. They lock eyes. Steal a smile. But Fitzwilliam is upon him--

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM

Kidd! Thought it was you!

JOHN

It's Longfellow actually.

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM

Is it? Word from the ship is that your real name's McCoy.

John goes pale. Fitzwilliam has obviously uncovered a secret. Before John can reply...

WILLIAM FITZWILLIAM (CONT'D)

There's fine business to be done with these people. I could use someone like you. We can't talk here. Room 307 at nine o'clock?

Off of John, agreeing, looking back at Violet.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - BALCONY

Julius looks over the party. A stunning event. Edwin joins.

JULIUS

Edwin. It's miraculous. Father would have been quite proud.

(MORE)

JULIUS (CONT'D)

I have never been more proud
myself, of anything in my life.

EDWIN

I have decided to take on Andrew
Carnegie as a partner in The
Lillian.

JULIUS

And how will that work?

EDWIN

At first I wasn't sure. You
certainly don't comport yourself in
a way he can ally himself with.
There's a Tommy Barone downstairs,
taking credit for our art
collection--

JULIUS

Come on, Edwin, he gave me a cash
loan so I could make the deal
quickly. All he wanted in return
was a ticket to the show.

EDWIN

Carnegie gave his nephew to my
daughter to put sordidness in the
past, Julius! Have you enjoyed it
all these years? Watching me fight
my way through disrepute and
despair with a smile on your face
and Rob Roy in your hand? I need a
partner who shares my philosophy.
Carnegie will be my equal; your
role will be diminished.

JULIUS

You're making *him* your equal?

EDWIN

I can not do this on my own.

And Edwin walks away. Off Julius, deeply wounded.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

John watches Charlie kiss Violet's hand. She looks over at
John, a glance through the crowd. She nods-- over there--
and breaks away from Charlie. She covertly leads John to a
SECRET DOOR. She enters. He waits, then follows her in.

INT. SECRET TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

He enters this tunnel behind the main dais.

VIOLET

It's designed to sneak dignitaries
past pawing crowds.

He nears her. They smile at each other-- giggle-- they can't help it. They look in each other's eyes.

VIOLET (CONT'D)

You got off the boat.

JOHN

That I did.

VIOLET

You can't stay.

JOHN

I can't go.

He touches her face. She quivers. As he moves his lips close to hers, she whispers to him:

VIOLET

This isn't possible.

JOHN

Then why is it happening?

And their lips meet in a kiss. It is a deep, tender beginning of a passionate kiss-- when a GUEST interrupts by opening the door. John and Violet part.

GUEST

I thought this was the loo.

JOHN

This isn't the loo.

Guest leaves.

VIOLET

We can't do this here. What am I saying? We can't do this at all.

JOHN

(looks at his watch)
I promised someone I'd meet him. I will be back.
(points down tunnel)
This go to the street?

VIOLET

It goes to the street.

She watches him go, smiles, braces herself for the ballroom.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - BALLROOM - NIGHT

FIND Julius at a BAR, drinking heavily. Caroline saunters up, wearing pounds of pearls and diamonds.

CAROLINE

Well, this damn evening is a screaming success. How can you stand it? Being socially overshadowed by a humorless half-man?

Growing as sick of his mother as he is of his brother...

JULIUS

Barman, another shot?

ANGLE ON Edwin. Elizabeth approaches him, leans in close.

ELIZABETH

They love it, Edwin.

Edwin turns to her, looks deeply at this woman with whom he's been through so much. Then he takes her hand.

EDWIN

Lizzie, I think we have come through the woods.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GUEST ROOM FLOOR - NIGHT

John knocks on Fitz's door.

JOHN

Mr. Fitzwilliam? Hello?

He turns the knob and the door CREAKS open...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GRAND BALLROOM - NIGHT

CLINK, CLINK, CLINK. A wasted Julius is clinking a glass.

JULIUS

May I have your attention, please?

EDWIN

What the hell is he doing?

ELIZABETH

I don't know, I don't know.

JULIUS

Good evening. I am Julius Lily.

The crowd is on edge. Violet is concerned.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

I just wanted to congratulate my brother, Edwin on his marvelous hotel.

Crowd cheers. Edwin is braced. Caroline is, too.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

And bid him farewell as my trusted partner.

GASPS. What is he saying?

JULIUS (CONT'D)

I have learned much from you, Edwin. Especially how to look past the bonds of family and do simply good business. With that in mind I am building my own grand hotel.

GASPS, APPLAUSE. Caroline is beaming.

JULIUS (CONT'D)

On the site of my mother's razed mansion next door.

Caroline's face falls. And before an irate Edwin can respond-- a BELLMAN is upon him-- in his ear. Edwin goes pale, whispers something to Elizabeth. Bellman pulls Roosevelt from the bar. Edwin and Teddy run out.

Elizabeth pulls Violet away from Charlie. We stay on Violet's face as she hears the news...

ELIZABETH (MOS)

A terrible thing... a trumpet player found...

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GUEST ROOMS FLOOR - NIGHT

Edwin and Teddy sprint down the hall. They arrive at an open door and look inside, horrified by what they see.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

Violet runs up the grand staircase.

INT. LILLIAN HOTEL - GUEST ROOMS FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Violet runs past her father, who is calming some maids...

EDWIN

You should never have had to see
that. I implore you, be discreet.

She runs past Roosevelt who grabs her.

ROOSEVELT

No, Miss Lily. Stop here, darling,
stop here.

She then sees John Kidd step out of William's room! Worse
for wear, but alive and well!

They lock eyes. She sighs as though her own life has been
saved. But, then she sees the look on his face and the BLOOD
STAINS on his clothes. John turns to look back in the room.

John's SLO-MO POV: A room safe wide open, and William
Fitzwilliam's brutally MURDERED BODY.

John then looks back toward Violet. Concern grows in the
gaze between them... as Roosevelt says:

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Mr. Longfellow, is it? You need to
come with us.

As Violet and John absorb the implications of Roosevelt and
two POLICEMEN, leading him away...

... around the corner hides Jasper Kravetz, jotting notes
down on a pad.

END OF PILOT