

VALENTINE

by

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Scared of being alone on Valentine's Day?

You should be.

VALENTINE

FADE IN:

RED SCREEN

Crimson so vibrant it pulsates. Rising out of the surging color field, the Warner Brothers logo. Buried deep within it, a heart-like THROBBING. The logo expands. Contracts. With each BEAT, we hear SCARED BREATHING.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL - OUR POV - NIGHT (1988)

We're staring UP AT the monolithic brick school. A symbol of prepubescent hell.

CAMERA DARTS DOWN TO a pair of boyish, fifteen-year-old hands, fingernails gnawed into oblivion. Stained with bike grease, they fumble with a combination lock. The BREATHING continues.

Teenybopper TITTING assaults us from the left. CAMERA WHIPS, catches the cadre of seventh grade girls -- a flurry of hair scrunchies and party dresses -- piling out of a station wagon. No one makes eye contact with the camera, but that doesn't stop us from RISING and ZOOMING IN ON SHELLEY, a pretty twelve-year-old.

Nervous, the hands rub against a powder blue tuxedo shirt. We MOVE WITH our BOY as he closes in behind the girls. The CAMERA BOUNCES WITH his herky-jerky, uneven steps.

BOY (O.S.)

Hi, Shelley.

Shelley rolls her gorgeous blue eyes in disgust. She looks down at the Boy's feet and wrinkles her nose. CAMERA FOLLOWS the gaze to expose cruelly pigeon-toed feet, clad in thick black orthopedic shoes.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM - NIGHT

We've entered a Valentine Day's dance. It's just as awful as you remember it. TIFFANY'S horrific cover of "I Think We're Alone Now" booms from a P.A. system.

The CAMERA takes it all in. On a banner, "CUPID'S BALL, 1988!!!" A blur of red and white streamers and heart-shaped balloons. A flash of the rented fog machine, the disco ball, the teachers standing guard over punch bowls.

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A glance of pre-teen boys, gathered in packs, pretending to ignore the groups of pre-teen girls. Some of the kids wear plastic cherub masks -- obvious party favors that will clutter their closets for years to come.

CAMERA SHUFFLES OVER TO LILY, a sixth-grade princess in a pink gown. She holds court with several loyal SUBJECTS.

BOY (O.S.)

Um. Lily, would you like to dance with me?

LILY

No.

The Subjects erupt into laughter.

SUBJECT #1

He smells.

SUBJECT #2

Where'd you get your jacket, Jeremy? The dump?

They toss their hair and float off. We TURN, spot the class bad girl, PAIGE, posing defiantly in her black mini-skirt and stilettos. She's definitely packing cigarettes in her purse. The Boy approaches cautiously.

BOY (O.S.)

Paige? Do you want to dance?

PAIGE

I'd rather be boiled alive, dork.

Suddenly, we're PUSHED FROM BEHIND. Right AT Paige. An eighth grade BULLY circles around, gets up in the Boy's (and our) face.

BULLY

Shove off, pigeon shit.

MOVING WITH the Boy, as he goes in the direction of the bleachers, where JENNIFER, a confident girl, sips a glass of punch. She's not afraid to catch the Boy's eye.

BOY (O.S.)

Jennifer, will you dance with me?

JENNIFER

I came with a date, Jeremy.
Sorry.

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CAMERA PUSHES THROUGH a crowd of awkward faces, approaches the dance floor, where exuberant girls and rhythm-impaired boys bop up and down like Belinda Carlisle. A quick peek at each brace-covered mouth, or acne-covered cheek, or hand darting to cover an exposed bra strap. Here and there, flashes of cherub masks.

We TURN and LAND ON DOROTHY, a plump, shy girl. Her eyes rove. A clique of seventh graders moves past her. As they do, they snort like pigs.

Dorothy makes a paranoid inventory of the gym. She looks straight INTO the CAMERA and realizes that the Boy heard everything. Finally, he steps forward and INTO our VIEW. He has a bird-like face and dark, hollow eyes.

DOROTHY

What are you looking at?

BOY

Dorothy, I --

DOROTHY

Get away!

BOY

I just wanted to ask you --

DOROTHY

Leave me alone, pigeon shit!

The Bully appears out of nowhere.

BULLY

Is Jeremy bothering you, Dorothy?

Dorothy backs away -- uncomfortable in the spotlight. The Bully shoves the Boy.

BOY

I didn't do anything.

A crowd of onlookers has gathered. Dorothy starts to panic.

DOROTHY

He's -- he's been following me all night. Asking me if I'll make out with him under the bleachers.

Several JOCK TYPES raise their cherub masks, laser angry, judgmental gazes.

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JOCK #1

You looking for some action,
Jeremy? Get over here.

He jerks the Boy into the center of the mob. Hands grab at his jacket, yank it off.

BOY

No --

The Boy tries to twist away.

DOROTHY

This'll teach you.

There's no escape. TIFFANY still belts her heart out, but the KIDS have their own song.

KIDS

Pigeon shit! Pigeon shit!
Careful you might step in it!

It's utter chaos. The Boy's orthopedic shoes sail into the air. Wild hands hot-potato them around the gym.

KIDS

Pigeon shit! Pigeon shit!
Careful you might step in it!

Shirt and pants are wrestled away, exposing the concave chest, the dingy Penney's briefs. Spindly, crooked legs. Scrawny arms frantically try to cover up. A punch cup goes flying. Hits him in the head. Red liquid spills down his pale torso.

KIDS

Pigeon shit! Pigeon shit!
Careful you might step in it!

Paige shoves a chocolate cupcake down into his underwear.

We're TIGHT ON the Boy's trembling face as he watches the circus-like proceedings. Blood trickles from one nostril -- an involuntary nosebleed. In shock, he stands and calmly tries to walk through the crush of jeers, but the Kids push him back.

Someone drapes a tangle of crepe paper over his head. The Kids spin him around and around.

KIDS

Pigeon shit! Pigeon shit!
Careful you might step in it!

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CONTINUED:

The Boy snaps, tries to fight back with a wild and girlish punch. Four boys easily tackle him to the ground. They grab at his underwear. Threadbare seams begin to give way, exposing the runny brown cupcake frosting. The Boy howls like a cornered animal.

PULL UP as the crowd grows and surges with a sinister life of its own. The Boy is swallowed by the mob.

KIDS

Pigeon shit! Pigeon shit!
Careful you might step in it!

STOP ON the banner, "CUPID'S BALL, 1988!" and the frozen, poster-painted grin of a cupid's face. Gradually, the children's TAUNTS FADE AWAY.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELEGANT RESTAURANT - NIGHT (2001)

PAN ACROSS the room, where couples dine at candle-lit tables. One patron feeds delectable morsels to his beloved. Next to them, a miserable bore and shy girl hide behind menus. Nearby, a long-time married couple eat in silence and stare off into space.

STOP ON JASON, 30, and a pompous ass. He leans forward, and talks with his mouth full of food.

JASON

What Jason is looking for in a relationship is a perfect match. Someone who will bring out my good qualities, but won't judge me for my bad ones.

PULL BACK to reveal SHELLY FISHER, 24 and beautiful. She tries not to stare at the horrendous display in front of her.

SHELLY

(off his teeth)
You've got some spinach or something...

JASON

Huh? Oh, thanks. Anyway, unconditional love. That's what I'm after. That's what I'm offering. How 'bout you?

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CONTINUED:

SHELLEY

Me? Well, uh, what Shelley's looking for is...

(spotting a passing waiter; calling off)

The check!

The WAITER approaches.

WAITER

Would you care for any coffee or --

SHELLEY

Nope. Just the check.

The Waiter deposits it and leaves.

JASON

Are you sure? Jason has a sweet tooth.

SHELLEY

Yeah. Actually, I have to get back. It's finals and --

Jason scoops up the check and gulps down his mouthful of food.

JASON

Muy expensivo.

Horrified, Shelley spots another woman, whose male companion blathers on and on. The woman catches Shelley's eye, and they share a sympathetic look.

Jason pulls out a Palm Pilot.

JASON

Let's see, you had the salmon; I had a salad. Did you have two glasses of wine?

Shelley swigs down the last of her merlot and tries not to scream.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - NIGHT

A cab pulls up to the curb and Shelley yanks open the door. She slaps on a smile and extends a hand.

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SHELLEY

Jason, I'm glad we did this. Take care.

Jason fumbles for a pen.

JASON

Let me get your number. On Valentine's Day, we'll go out on my friend's sailboat. It has a bedroom below deck and everything.

SHELLEY

I don't think so.

JASON

But --

SHELLEY

Good night.

Shelley gets into the CAB, and it ROARS off. Jason yells after it --

JASON

Hey! I did this as a favor!

STAY ON Jason, seething as the cab disappears into the night.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Shelley uses a tissue to scrub the lipstick from her face as she talks into her cell phone.

SHELLEY

Mother, you may never, ever set me up on a blind date again... So what if he's a doctor? I'm going to be a doctor!

CUT TO:

EXT. MEDICAL SCHOOL BUILDING - NIGHT

A sterile, three-story structure in the dead of night. The windows are black. All is still until the cab pulls up. Shelley jumps out and dashes into the building. As soon as the cab pulls away --

Someone creeps through the trees and approaches a first floor window. Inside, a light goes on.

INT. GROSS ANATOMY LAB - NIGHT

MOVING PAST colorful anatomical charts, sign-up sheets for study groups, and jars of organs. An ancient epitaph, donated by some miserable student, is etched into the black surface of a lab table: "ANATOMY SUCKS." The letters are deep, jagged, obviously augmented every year with scalpels and ballpoint pens. From a corner, a skeleton smiles out over the room. Two red carnations protrude from his empty eye sockets.

ON CHALKBOARD

Another epitaph: "EXAM TOMORROW. 10:00 A.M." The room is quiet, empty, until:

SHELLEY (O.S.)
Transversus abdominis.

BACK OF ROOM

A drawn privacy curtain is lit from within. PUSH IN THROUGH a crack in the fabric to find Shelley, wearing a white lab coat. She holds an open anatomy manual in one arm and hovers over an open body bag. Books and handouts are scattered everywhere. Her eyes droop with exhaustion. They move back and forth from the book to --

BODY BAG

Labelled "GREG." Inside, the object of her scrutiny wears only one expression -- dead. The pickled, smooth skin of his chest, torso, and abdomen is the palest white. From a valve at the foot of the bag, fluids drip into a collection pan.

Shelley picks up her scalpel, hovers over the left side of Greg's abdomen.

The quivering blade moves closer. Touches the skin. Pushes in ever so slightly. Stops.

Shelley glances into her cadaver's face. She can't make the first cut.

SHELLEY
(to Greg)
You won't feel it. I promise.

She waits for an answer. None comes. Finally, she grabs a medical sheet and drapes it over Greg's face and upper body. Now, just a milky stretch of the abdomen is exposed.

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SHELLEY
Transversus abdominus.

Shelly reaches over to a battered RADIO, sitting on a rolling equipment cart. She CRANKS IT UP.

DJ (V.O.)
Less than a week 'til the big V-Day. The most romantic holiday on the planet. To keep cupid happy, I've got a block of love songs to break your heart and keep you misty.

SHELLEY
Perfect.

DJ (V.O.)
But first, by request, this upbeat little number from 1988. You're listening to K.N.U.R. - F.M. San Francisco's best tunes.

TIFFANY'S rendition of "I Think We're Alone Now" bops across the airwaves. Shelley scowls, hating the song, but her focus in on her scalpel as it moves in for the target.

There's a CLATTER from outside the privacy curtain. Startled, Shelley drops her instrument.

SHELLEY
Hello?

She peeks her head through the crack. It takes a moment for her eyes to adjust to the low light, but the room is empty.

Rusty RINGS SCREECH on the metal bar as Shelley pulls aside the curtain and flicks on another bank of lights.

There's another CLATTER. Shelley jumps and looks toward --

The door next to her. Hand-painted letters on the glass read, "LOCKER ROOM."

INT. GROSS ANATOMY LAB - LOCKERS - MOMENTS LATER

Shelley cautiously pokes her head into the room.

SHELLEY
Professor Buckley?

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CONTINUED:

She searches the wall for a light switch, finds it. There's a fluttering strobe as the overhead lighting fights to turn on.

BEHIND SHELLEY

A silhouette appears over her shoulder, just behind the door. Motionless. Waiting.

The LIGHT POPS and goes out. BLACKNESS. A nearly inaudible whisper --

VOICE (O.S.)

Dance with me.

A weak, green fluorescent light floods the room. Shelley pivots to look behind her. The silhouette is gone. She looks deeper into the locker room. Thirty lockers line either side. No one. The last locker on the right is half open, obscuring what lies behind it.

Shelley strides further into the room when the bank of FLUORESCENTS once again SPUTTERS and goes out. She freezes. There's a CREAK of METAL HINGES, and the lights come back on.

The once-open locker is now almost completely closed.

Shelley marches to the last locker and rips it open. She stifles a scream as she sees --

Her own flustered reflection in the locker mirror.

She slams the door, moves to her own locker, and unlocks it. Extracting a ponytail holder, she notices the shiny pink envelope, taped to the inside of the door. A length of crimson ribbon ties it up in an intricate bow.

Shelley opens the envelope to find -- an antique valentine.

The lace-edged card is lettered in gold: "Our hearts by love united, /Nor days nor nights can sever. /Our bodies may be parted, /Our hearts love on forever."

A white tassel is attached to the center of the card. She pulls it, and the face separates and lifts into a paper cage. Through the delicate bars --

A rosy-cheeked girl kisses a skeleton.

At the bottom, it's signed with a heart and a "J."

Confused, she lets go of the tassel, and the card snaps back into place. With a whoosh, it sails into the trash.

INT. MED SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Shelley peers out AT us through the glass window of the anatomy lab door. Unable to see anything, she steps into the hall. Her feet skid a little as she walks halfway down it.

At the far end of the dark corridor --

A janitor stows his mop and bucket in a closet and pushes out the exit doors.

Relieved, she re-traces her slippery path.

INT. GROSS ANATOMY LAB - NIGHT

Shelley strides to the radio. With a CLICK, she SILENCES TIFFANY forever. Attention shifts to the medical dictionary.

SHELLEY

The fibers run perpendicular to one another at a 45 degree angle to the transverse plane.

White skin still peeks out from underneath the sterile drape. Shelley bends to retrieve her scalpel. She finds it, takes a deep breath, and moves the edge of the blade ever closer to the cadaver's exposed epidermis. Almost there, she notices --

The abdomen rising and falling. Taking a breath!

Shelley screams. The scalpel goes flying. She bolts back, spins and locks eyes with --

Her cadaver's face, slamming against the glass of the locker room door.

The weight of his body pushes it open, and he lands at her feet.

As she stares in horror at the sight before her, we see --

A form on the dissection table sit up. The sheet is pulled away to reveal --

CHERUB MASK

Waxy, rosy, full-cheeked like that of a Botticelli angel. Behind it, the eyes are cold.

WIDER

A gloved hand tugs down a powder blue tuxedo shirt and white dinner jacket to cover his once-exposed abdomen.

Shelley doesn't realize the danger approaching until the red ribbon is around her throat. Hands yank, and the ligature digs deep into the skin.

She tries to yell, but the effort is useless. The thick ribbon cuts off her air supply. She writhes, twists, looks up into the face of the cherub.

He pulls her back to the lab table, but Shelley jerks, scattering the dissection kit across the room.

The cherub tightens the noose with a fierce tub. His victim's head spins. Bulging eyes glimpse a silver flash of the scalpel, resting underneath the lab table. Summoning everything, she throws a punch, stunning the cherub and knocking his mask askew. Gasping for breath, she pitches herself over the table and slams to the floor.

The scalpel is inches away. She reaches for it, fingers almost to the handle, when the cherub's foot crashes onto her hand, crushing it instantly. Shelley moans, follows the line of her attacker's black tuxedo pants, up to the blue ruffled tuxedo shirt, white dinner jacket, and withered red boutonniere.

The cherub picks up the scalpel, straddles her, and raises the blade. With one last burst, Shelley buries her foot deep into his stomach. The cherub sinks to the floor.

INT. MED SCHOOL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Shelley slams out the lab doors.

SHELLEY

Help!

She skids across the glistening floor, still wet from the janitor's mopping. Arms flying, she holds her balance and pedals on. Her eyes sweep the far-off foyer for any sign of life.

INT. MED SCHOOL FOYER - NIGHT

Shelley careens into the foyer.

AT SECURITY DESK

A portable TELEVISION, BASKETBALL GAME BLARING, is the only thing in sight.

Shelley throws herself against the exit door. It won't budge.

DOWN HALL

The anatomy lab door opens. The cherub appears, scalpel glinting in his hands. He locks onto his target and moves toward her. Slow, deliberate, slightly pigeon-toed steps.

BACK TO SCENE

Shelley scrambles for traction, but the slick floor won't allow it. Clawing at the air, she hangs a right and flies down another shadowy corridor. In the distance, the cherub's FOOTSTEPS ECHO in pursuit. She opens a stairwell door and slips inside.

He's not far behind her.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

The cherub steps into the empty corridor. He reaches out for a doorknob. Twists. Locked. He tries another. Nothing. Finally, one gives way.

INT. CADAVER ROOM - NIGHT

The door swings open, and a light clicks on. The cherub stands in the cadaver room. Ten body bags, five on each side, rest end-to-end on their respective carts. He waits for a noise. Nothing greets him but dead stillness. He turns to go. Stops.

Moving to one of the bags, he jerks the zipper down, exposing the corpse of an old woman. Her body is stiff and bloated. Hands blazing, the cherub moves through the makeshift aisle, unzipping as he goes.

He reaches the last bag, yanks the zipper, and greets a dead man, whose open mouth is a checkerboard of missing teeth. His thirty-eight inch belly sags open. There's a slight movement from beneath the body, and the corpse explodes upward, revealing Shelley. The cherub recoils, but the body slams into him, forcing him back.

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Covered in formaldehyde, Shelley tugs on the zipper of the body bag. It's stuck just above her knees.

The scalpel slides across her fingers. Shelley drops back, screams, gags as soaking strands of hair fall across her mouth. The cherub stuffs her arms to her sides. There's a horrifying ZING as the zipper slides up to her collarbone. Immobilized, Shelley strains against the body bag.

SHELLEY

Please!

The cherub stares at his victim. A trail of blood dribbles from his nostril. Ignoring it, he moves in, puts the scalpel to Shelley's neck, and pulls. A crimson path opens in its wake.

Shelley's eyes glaze over in shock. The cherub shoves her head deep into thick, rank ooze. One more zip closes everything off.

The cherub steps back and watches as the bag jerks, squirms, then ceases to move altogether. After a moment he goes.

Silence fills the room, then scattered drops, then a trickle. At the foot of the cart, the fluid collection pan begins to fill with blood.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO GOLDEN TRIANGLE - NIGHT

The bars and sidewalks of Fillmore Street are filled with beautiful young professionals. They mingle, chat, and flirt -- running toward the weekend with open, grateful arms.

Two young women stand out. Meet JENNIFER KEATS, 24, sweet, with a spunky pragmatism that never comes off as cynical. At her side is PAIGE PRESCOTT, 24, jaw-dropping in fire engine red lipstick and a clingy top.

They stop in front of the Balboa Cafe. There's a standee that reads, "SPEED DATING -- 10 O'CLOCK." Jennifer sees the sign and turns on her heel to go. Paige grabs her.

PAIGE

You promised.

JENNIFER

Paige, only a loser would do this.

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PAIGE

Excuse me. This is the hottest thing among young professionals. An efficient, risk-free way to meet your soul mate.

JENNIFER

Uh-huh. Sounds great.

Jennifer turns to go again. Paige grabs her arm.

PAIGE

Blind dates? A waste of an entire evening. Personal ads, video dating? The guys never turn out as advertised. Singles bars? --

JENNIFER

Hey, I'm not even a hundred percent available.

PAIGE

Whatever. You meet a prospect, and in thirty seconds you'll know if you want to spend a second more with him. If you don't, you're on to the next one. It's foolproof. I wish I'd thought of it.

JENNIFER

If I'm going to meet my so-called soul mate, I prefer the old-fashioned way. Wandering through the grocery store. Reaching out for the same grapefruit. Our hands touch, our eyes meet...

PAIGE

Grapefruit? Jennifer, when was the last time you met a guy at Park 'N Pack?

Paige jabs at the standee.

PAIGE

Take control of your romantic destiny.

As Jennifer considers --

INT. BALBOA CAFE - BACK ROOM - CLOSE ON BOOKISH GUY - NIGHT

His wire rims are cockeyed. He bites at his upper lip excitedly.

BOOKISH GUY

Last summer I traced my mother's side back to the Mayflower. Pretty awesome, huh? You know, my mom was the most amazing --

An EGG TIMER DINGS. In a seamless CUT, his face is replaced by that of a COCKY INVESTMENT BANKER -- perfectly coifed, perfectly Armanied.

BANKER

Lesbian. She told me on our second anniversary. Said I couldn't give her what she needed. Like wintering in St. Barths is something to sneeze at. The whole thing hit me like --

DING. A balding JOCK with a University of North Carolina T-shirt.

JOCK

Tarheels b-ball, baby! Some buddies and I try to crash at least half the games. So, I'm on the road a lot. Just me, a six pack, and --

DING. Another CUT. A PAINFULLY SHY GUY stares at the table and chews his nails. He's silent. Awkward. Endless. Then --

PAINFULLY SHY

Uh, you know... Uh...

DING. Another CUT. BRIAN, a sexy alterna dude. Nose stud. Celtic tattoo. Probably five million in internet stock options.

BRIAN

Nipple rings. Mine went in last week. What holes do you have?

FIND Jennifer, the object of his inquiry. An egg timer sits in front of her. She wears a name tag and a horrified look on her face.

Paige, seated next to Jennifer, leans in and smiles at Brian.

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PAIGE

Are your jewels adorned, too?

JENNIFER

Paige!

PAIGE

And if so, may we please see them?

Jennifer drops her head to the table. Brian gives Paige a wink and a nod and starts to unbutton his pants.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Jennifer and Paige hit the sidewalk. Paige laughs hysterically.

JENNIFER

Thank god you got us booted.

PAIGE

(pulling out a
slip of paper)

I got the pierced guy's number, so
as far as I'm concerned, mission
accomplished.

Jennifer's CELL PHONE RINGS.

JENNIFER

Hello? Hey, Dorothy. You'll
never believe --

She sobers immediately. Paige picks up on it, stops laughing.

JENNIFER

What?...

Stunned, Jennifer steadies herself against a light post.

JENNIFER

Wow. Oh my god.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The cemetery lies under a blanket of clouds and cold. Mourners surround an open grave. A PASTOR'S voice barely carries over the muffled sobs.

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PASTOR

Shelley Fisher was taken from us before her time. But her heavenly Father watches over her, even now...

Behind the packed rows of family members, Jennifer watches solemnly with DOROTHY WHEELER, 24, big-boned. Dorothy fidgets with three strands of very expensive pearls.

FURTHER DOWN, Paige, wearing a too-short skirt, observes with LILY VOIGHT, a paragon of blonde sweetness.

PASTOR

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil...

Mr. and MRS. FISHER, the shell-shocked parents, cling to one another. Unable to watch, Jennifer looks away from the casket.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - LATER

The funeral party is starting to disperse. Jennifer and Dorothy head for their cars.

DOROTHY

It was a beautiful service. What were those? Irises?

Jennifer doesn't respond. Dorothy follows her surprised gaze to --

A beat-up Saab. Exiting it is ADAM COLE, 26, handsome, clean-cut, a guy that every mom would want as a son-in-law. He quickly closes the distance between them.

JENNIFER

Adam, I said you didn't have to come.

ADAM

I wanted to make sure you were okay.

(then)

Hey, Dorothy.

Dorothy knows the drill. She gives the couple some space. Adam surveys the crowd.

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ADAM

Looks like she had a lot of friends.

JENNIFER

Yeah.

ADAM

I would've been here sooner, but John yanked me into a meeting and gave me some good news.

(a beat)

In light of all this, it's really not important.

JENNIFER

What?

ADAM

They're letting me cover Giants' spring training.

JENNIFER

Congratulations.

ADAM

Someone else was on-deck for the gig, but...

Jennifer fights the urge to linger.

JENNIFER

Dorothy and I should...

ADAM

Look, would you celebrate with me? Not now, obviously. But it's been a few weeks, and...

Adam realizes Jennifer isn't listening. Her eyes are locked on --

HER POV - BOTTLE OF PATRON

resting on the passenger seat of the Saab.

BACK TO SCENE

She shoots him the kind of disappointed look reserved for close friends, family, and exes.

Adam yanks the car door open and pulls out the bottle.

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ADAM

A guy at the office got a job at the L.A. Times. I bought it as a gift. Here's the card.

JENNIFER

It's none of my business.

ADAM

I want it to be your business. I miss you, Jen.

(then)

Can we try dinner sometime this week?

JENNIFER

(gentle)

Let me call you, okay?

ADAM

Fine. Seeya.

(then)

I'm sorry about your friend.

JENNIFER

Thanks.

Frustrated, Adam gets in his car and drives off. Dorothy joins Jennifer.

DOROTHY

Good girl. I so would've caved.

JENNIFER

He looked really good, didn't he?

DOROTHY

'Dignity.' Remember our word for 2001?

JENNIFER

Dignity. Dignity. Got it.

They turn to go and are blocked by CINDY VAUGHN, a tough, no-nonsense woman in her forties.

VAUGHN

Excuse me. I assume you girls are friends of Shelley's?

Jennifer spots the police badge hanging from Vaughn's belt.

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CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

We knew her when we were kids. We haven't seen her in a few years.

VAUGHN

I'm Detective Vaughn. The officer on the case.

The women look at each other. Is this the right time or place?

VAUGHN

We have no leads. I'm here with the family's approval.

(pulling one)

Here's my card. If you think of anything or anyone who might be helpful to our investigation, please call.

They nod, and she goes.

Paige and Lily approach.

PAIGE

(to Jennifer)

Sorry we were late.

LILY

My fault. Hi, Jen.

JENNIFER

(hugging her)

Lily, I totally didn't recognize you. Your hair got so long.

DOROTHY

Hey, Paige.

PAIGE

Oh, hi... uh --

DOROTHY

Dorothy. Wheeler.

JENNIFER

Dorothy went to Kennedy with us. You've met before.

PAIGE

Right.

LILY

Right. Sorry. How are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

Fine.

LILY

When's the last time you guys saw Shelley?

JENNIFER

It's been forever.

LILY

Yeah. She and I used to party together, but once she started medical school...

PAIGE

Are you guys going back to her parents' house?

JENNIFER

I thought about it.

DOROTHY

It'll probably just be family.

PAIGE

Maybe we should have our own wake.

LILY

Much better idea.

JENNIFER

My place. Twenty minutes.

They disperse. Dorothy climbs into a giant Mercedes sedan. Jennifer continues down the row of cars until she reaches her Civic. As she draws her keys, she notices --

Something pinned under her windshield wiper. It's a red rose. Retrieving it, Jennifer pricks her finger on a hidden thorn. She grimaces and examines the tiny droplet of blood.

A CAR ZOOMS past Jennifer and throws muddy water onto her shoes. Shaking them off, she unlocks her car.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A six-story apartment building in the Tenderloin District. It houses a couple hundred singles and the less than 30-grand-a-year crowd.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jennifer, Dorothy, Paige and Lily spill into Jennifer's humble studio. She's done decorating wonders with the help of homemade bookshelves, bright curtains, and a lot of plants.

JENNIFER

Pantyhose should be outlawed.
Anyone want to borrow anything?

Jennifer heads to a bureau and yanks out a few pairs of sweat pants and sweat shirts.

LILY

Please.

Paige and Lily start to change. Jennifer moves to the kitchen area, where Dorothy checks out the bar on top of the fridge.

DOROTHY

You've got vodka, a centimeter of rum, and tequila.

JENNIFER

I've got this. Go change clothes.

Dorothy makes sure the other girls can't hear.

DOROTHY

Nothing of yours will fit.

JENNIFER

You don't know that.

DOROTHY

I'm fine in this.

Jennifer nods, grabs the bottles, and stuffs them into her purse. Then, she crosses to a trunk and pulls out a stack of blankets.

JENNIFER

Everybody grab your coats.

Jennifer throws open the window and exits out it. One by one, the girls follow.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Single-file, the girls climb up the rickety fire escape, through the shadows, through the sounds of HONKING CARS, through the damp wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dorothy lingers, staring up at the stories left to go. She sneaks a look down and grabs the banister. Jennifer's hand lands on hers.

JENNIFER

Keep your eyes on my back.

They continue onward.

AT TOP OF FIRE ESCAPE

Paige and Lily wait on the platform. Paige leans against the railing and looks down at Jennifer and Dorothy, still tackling the steps.

PAIGE

I used to make oinking noises when she ran laps in gym. She wouldn't remember that, right?

Lily shrugs.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP - CLOSE ON VODKA BOTTLE - NIGHT

topping off glasses of cranberry juice.

PAIGE (O.S.)

Mr. Yarnek. I swear the guy was missing half his tongue.

PULL BACK to reveal: Jennifer, Dorothy, Paige and Lily buried under blankets and sitting on cast-off patio furniture.

The girls smoke cigarettes, guzzle their drinks, and laugh. City lights surround them.

LILY

How could they let someone with such a colossal speech impediment teach class?

DOROTHY

Remember the lecture on global agriculture?

(affecting slurred speech)

'Paige, beside penis, wha is a cash cop of Afika?'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

(laughing)

'Peanuts.'

DOROTHY

'Paige, wha do you tink?' You shouted, 'I. Can't. Understand. You!' The whole class applauded.

PAIGE

That was sixth grade. How do you remember that?

DOROTHY

I don't forget anything.

Paige and Lily exchange a look. Uh-oh.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A gooey pizza has joined the party. So has the tequila. The girls are drunk.

LILY

Max is an artist. We've been together less than two weeks.

JENNIFER

Impressive. I don't start any new relationships in February.

LILY

Not a word about Valentine's Day. I'm terrified he's going to want to spend it with me out of obligation. That's why I have a business trip planned.

PAIGE

Listen to this. It's brilliant.

LILY

I give him one more date. If it looks like it's moving forward, I cancel my trip. If we crash and burn, I save face for everyone by being in Chicago.

PAIGE

Or you could just fuck him and enjoy it. I would.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY

Her dating advice rarely changes.
How 'bout you, Jennifer? Are you
still seeing what's-his-name?

JENNIFER

There's no one word answer to that
question.

DOROTHY

Adam. They broke up.

JENNIFER

(to Dorothy)

I've told you six hundred times.
We're taking a break. Not
breaking up.

LILY

Hey. I support the misguided
logic that seeing other people
will show you how good you were
with someone else.

PAIGE

Or you could just fuck him and
enjoy it.

JENNIFER

(a groan)

Why does Valentine's Day have to
suck so much?

Jennifer stomps her feet and screams. The other girls
join in. It's a primal howl that lasts several seconds.
Then --

DOROTHY

My father and his teenage bride
are leaving tomorrow for a tour of
nude Caribbean beaches. How gross
is that?

Another howl. After they regain their composure --

JENNIFER

We shouldn't forget why we're
here.

(holding up her
drink)

To Shelley. We love you. We'll
miss you.

The girls clink glasses and drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

One good thing happened.
(to Paige and Lily)
I got to see you two again.

PAIGE

Amen.

Jennifer checks her watch.

JENNIFER

Sorry, folks, gotta call it a
night. Big interview tomorrow.

LILY

Are you still catering?

JENNIFER

Yep.

As they clean up --

LILY

Max has an opening tomorrow night
at the gallery I manage. I'm
putting you all on the list.

JENNIFER

A party where I don't have to
worry about the asparagus running
out? Count me in.

Jennifer stows the empty bottles in her purse. Dorothy
looks nervously toward the fire escape.

DOROTHY

Do we have to climb down that
thing again?

JENNIFER

We'll go the other way.

Jennifer steps around a rooftop air conditioning unit and
barrels into --

A giant figure.

Jennifer screams. The other girls scream. The giant
screams.

Jennifer steps back and realizes it's the BUILDING
SUPERVISOR, 50s and gruff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUILDING SUPER

What are you doing up here? The people on six are trying to sleep.

JENNIFER

Hi, Murray. We were just --

BUILDING SUPER

Leaving. Now.

Guilty, the girls file out.

EXT. PACIFIC HEIGHTS - NIGHT

We're in the heart of old money and internet IPO nouveau millionaires. Mega-homes as far as the eye can see. Dorothy's Mercedes parks on the street, and she hops out.

FROM SHADOWS

across the street --

Someone watches Dorothy head for the hillside steps that lead to the entrance of the Wheeler family mansion.

The shadow steps out.

AT FOOT OF STAIRS

Dorothy hears the SHOES on the sidewalk. She turns, peers across the street.

The shadow ducks out of view again.

EXT. WHEELER MANSION - SAME TIME

Dorothy darts up the stairs and onto the porch. She rings the DOORBELL, then knocks. There's no answer. She searches through a jumble of keys.

The FOOTSTEPS on the sidewalk GET CLOSER. FASTER.

Dorothy drops the keys. Glances back again.

A shadow falls at the foot of the stairs.

ON DOROTHY

as she finds the right key. She rams it into the lock and pushes inside.

INT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - FOYER - NIGHT

The house is straight out of Architectural Digest.

DOROTHY

Hello?

WOMAN (O.S.)

Jesus, Frank, he is my trainer!

MAN (O.S.)

Well, those were the strangest looking crunches I've ever seen!

As the argument in the back of the house continues, Dorothy peeks into the adjoining living room.

On the couch, an elderly MAID watches TELEVISION.

Dorothy ducks back into the foyer, where FRANK WHEELER, an industrialist in his fifties, chases LAUREN WHEELER, a cackling trophy wife in her twenties, up the stairs with a smack of the ass. Their argument is obviously over.

Dorothy shudders and grabs a pile of mail. She sorts through and is shocked to see the red envelope, addressed to her. Dorothy tears into it. A chubby cupid smiles from the face of an elaborate card. She reads.

DOROTHY

'Tis all in vain, your putrid
looks/ You never can incline/ With
all your girdles, rouge, and
curls/ To find a Valentine.'

It's signed with a heart and shaky cursive handwriting --
"Jeremy Melton."

Horrified, Dorothy drops the card. The DOORBELL CHIMES.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The Maid makes no move to answer.

BACK TO DOROTHY

The DOORBELL CHIMES again. Dorothy composes herself, puts the chain on the door, and opens.

Through the crack --

She sees CAMPBELL HARRIS, 26, so handsome, so built you don't know which part of him to look at first. A duffel is over his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMPBELL

Hey.

DOROTHY

Campbell. Was that you?

CAMPBELL

What?

Dorothy shuts the door, unlocks the chain, and opens it. Campbell enters. As he takes in the magnificent foyer --

DOROTHY

Someone was behind me. On the steps.

Dorothy kicks the valentine under a nearby credenza.

CAMPBELL

Didn't see anyone. The cab just dropped me off. Look, I hate to do this... Bobby left town without paying his share of the rent. I got home today, and all my stuff was on the sidewalk.

DOROTHY

Oh, no.

CAMPBELL

My CD collection, my skis, my clothes. Gone. Some neighbors, huh?

DOROTHY

Millicent. Come here, please.
(then, angrier)
Millicent!

Finally, the Maid teeters into the foyer.

DOROTHY

Make up a guest room.

MAID

Did your father say --

DOROTHY

I said.

The Maid waves her off and disappears down the hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMPBELL

This is too much trouble. I just wanted to use your phone.

DOROTHY

Kitchen's to your left. There's meatloaf in the fridge. I'll be right back to get you settled in.

He puts his arms around her, and Dorothy melts. She pulls away and heads up the staircase.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

Dorothy reaches the top of the staircase, hangs a left, and slams into Lauren.

LAUREN

(rubbing her arm)

That'll bruise. Who's your friend?

DOROTHY

His name's Campbell. Let Daddy know he'll be staying with us for a few days.

LAUREN

Is he the reason you've been spending so much time on the treadmill?

DOROTHY

You're not my girlfriend. You're not my mother. We don't have these conversations.

LAUREN

Well, he sure is cute.

Lauren checks out her own perfect ass in a hall mirror. Fuming, Dorothy goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

This is a San Francisco bathroom, so cramped would be an understatement. Covered from head to toe in suds, Jennifer's in the shower.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A RADIO sits on the back of the toilet. Over the airwaves, a cheery group chorus sings their call letters --

RADIO CHORUS (V.O.)

'K-N-U-R...'

Jennifer sings along.

RADIO CHORUS/JENNIFER

'San Francisco in the morning.'

CHET BAKER'S "My Funny Valentine" comes through the speaker. Jennifer shivers.

JENNIFER

Ew.

The water is still flowing. Jennifer sticks a naked arm through the shower curtain.

The radio is just out of reach. Jennifer strains. Her fingertips brush the volume control, but she can't get a grip. Jennifer lunges, knocking the radio over. And then, something out of your mother's arsenal of water safety horror stories happens --

The RADIO, STILL ON, bounces off the closed toilet seat and between the wall and shower curtain.

Jennifer thinks fast, shoots out a hand, catches the handle. It slips in her sudsy fingers, drops, and falls into the water with her. Jennifer closes her eyes and waits for the first jolt.

Nothing. The RADIO has fallen SILENT.

Jennifer slams off the water, then peeks out behind the curtain to the electric socket. The force of the fall has unplugged the cord.

JENNIFER

(to heavens)

Thank you.

There's a THUD from the living room.

JENNIFER

Hello?

Silence.

Jennifer extricates herself and the radio from the shower and grabs a towel.

FROM HALL

Jennifer peeks into the living room. All is well. She feels her head -- realizes that it's still covered in shampoo.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Back in the shower, Jennifer turns on the water. There's a painful GROAN from the PIPES and nothing but a slight dribble.

JENNIFER

No. No!

She turns the knobs, bangs the shower head, all to no avail. Hair still plastered under a mound of shampoo, Jennifer wraps a towel around her. She tries the sink. No water.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Jennifer tries the kitchen faucet. No go. She grabs the phone and dials out.

JENNIFER

(into phone)

Murray, it's Jennifer Keats in 401. Shocker -- you're not there. Well, I don't have any water, and I have a job interview in a half hour, and you're ruining my life!

Jennifer slams down the receiver and cruises to the fridge. She swings open the door. Yes! There's a large container of bottled water inside. Thrilled, she grabs it.

It's only got two sips-worth left. Useless. She tosses it toward the trash can. Swish. Basket.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The shampoo is turning to mush on her head. It dribbles down her back and drips onto the floor. One last try with the faucet. No luck.

Her eyes lock onto the toilet. It's filled with clean water. The idea repulses her, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

She lifts the lid, closes her eyes, dunks her head into the toilet water, and flushes. WHOOSH!

The PHONE RINGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer snatches up the phone.

JENNIFER

Perfect timing, Murray --

But it's not the building super. It's the sound of CHILDREN LAUGHING. Not playful giggles, but COLD, DERISIVE LAUGHTER. Jennifer shivers -- the goose bumps tickling her neck and arms. She turns to slam down the phone when she sees --

The open front door.

Not cracked. Not ajar. Wide open, leaving her absolutely vulnerable.

Jennifer spots a field hockey stick, propped in a corner. She sweeps it up. Thank God she's in a studio. One glance checks the kitchen. It's clear. She drops to her knees. Under the bed is okay, but --

The closet looms ahead. The door is tightly shut. It stares her down, almost threatening her to open it. Will she bite?

Yes. Jennifer throws open the door. The stick crashes into the closet, jabs wildly at empty hangers, skirts, and overcoats. Jennifer jumps back and surveys her handiwork. No one. Just a lot of battered clothes. Shaken, pissed at the mess, she slams the closet door, then hears from the outside hallway --

THUMP, THUMP.

The front door is still wide open. Jennifer peeks her head out.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer looks down the hall at the elevator. The doors open, shut, open, shut with a clatter.

Grasping the towel tightly around her, Jennifer creeps closer and discovers something blocking the door's path. Curious, she bends to retrieve it.

It's a plastic cherub mask. We've seen this before -- at the middle school dance. Jennifer stares into the vacant eyeholes and shivers.

There's a TUMBLING of LOCKS. An elderly neighbor steps into the hallway, smack in front of the towel-clad Jennifer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

Uh... Hi, Mrs. Carlson.

Mrs. Carlson clicks her tongue. Jennifer races back to her apartment.

INT. HIGH-RISE OFFICE - DAY

Looking very professional, Jennifer sits across from HADLEY DAVIS, 50s, a proper secretary. Hadley glances at her resume. If we thought Jennifer was scared before, it's nothing compared to this. She does her best to stay calm, cool, and collected.

JENNIFER

I'm playing with a Jamaican/Asian fusion thing right now.

HADLEY

Fusion.

JENNIFER

Jerk chicken spring rolls, spicy seafood rice, plantain ice cream.

HADLEY

Yes, I gathered as much.

Horrible interview silence. Jennifer shuffles her feet.

HADLEY

My employer is demanding. His daughter is a nightmare. Kathy's been through five caterers already.

JENNIFER

She'll love me.
(off Hadley's
silence)
I can tell you do.

It gets a mild smile.

HADLEY

(rolling right on)
And where were you thinking?

JENNIFER

Where?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLEY

Venue. The Hudsons have one of the most beautiful homes in the city. Mr. Hudson would never let Kathy's friends set foot there.

JENNIFER

All the decent hotels and clubs are already booked.

HADLEY

Yes. Well, thank you for stopping by.

JENNIFER

I didn't mean --

Hadley hands the resume back.

HADLEY

I need rabbits pulled out of hats. You don't seem capable of that.

JENNIFER

Okay, then. Thanks for your time.

Humiliated, Jennifer beelines for the exit.

HADLEY

Don't worry, dear. It'll come with age and experience.

JENNIFER

(turning)

I can get you the biggest mansion in Pacific Heights.

Jennifer regrets the words as soon as they are out of her mouth, but Hadley's interest is piqued.

HADLEY

Whose?

JENNIFER

(gulp)

Do you want the rabbit or not?

Hadley offers a hand, and they shake.

INT. PAIGE AND LILY'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - MORNING

A two-bedroom with an almost-view.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paige slams through the cupboards, but her eyes are trained on the living room TELEVISION. On it, a plain-looking guy talks to her from the screen.

GUY (V.O.)

Hey, Paige. Thanks for requesting my tape. As you know, my name is Lance, and here's why I'm perfect for you. I'm outgoing, a lot of fun, six foot. Actually, six foot-ish.

Paige grabs the remote and shuts OFF the TV.

Lily enters with the morning paper and a heart-shaped box of chocolate under her arm.

LILY

(off TV)

What? He was cute.

PAIGE

'Six foot-ish' means five-four in loafers. We're outta Starbucks. I had to use the Folgers crap your mom bought.

LILY

This was propped in front of our door. No name on the card.

PAIGE

I'm sure it's from Max.

Paige leans over Lily's shoulder to read the card. Two bluebirds snuggle in a nest. Under the picture, a verse reads, "Blush not, my fair, at what I send./'Tis a fond present from a friend."

The picture is cut to form a fold-out door. Lily opens it, revealing a woman giving a man a blow job. It's signed with a heart and "J.M."

LILY

J.M.? I don't know a J.M. It's gotta be for you. You're the ho.

PAIGE

Ha ha. Up yours.

Lily opens the box and swipes up a piece of chocolate. Tauntingly, she pops it into her mouth. Chews. Then --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILY

What the --

She spits the candy into her hand. Pulls it apart to find the remains of a white worm, still wiggling in the caramel goo.

Lily gags, then drops the candy box. Only then do she and Paige see the army of maggots, feasting and writhing on the assortment of dark chocolates.

The girls scream. Paige grabs the box, opens the window, and tosses it into the alley below.

Lily's already at the fridge. She's guzzling orange juice.

PAIGE

I know some J.M.'s. John McCrite.

LILY

Gross.

PAIGE

Jeff Mallick.

LILY

He needs Altoids.

PAIGE

(teasing)

Jeremy Melton.

LILY

Who?

PAIGE

You know. Pigeon Shit from sixth grade.

LILY

Those dating tapes have turned your brain to mush.

PAIGE

(sing-song)

Pigeon Shit's got a crush on you.

LILY

Shut up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAIGE
 (sing-song)
 Pigeon Shit wants to dance with
 you.

LILY
 Paige!

Paige dances out of the kitchen.

Still grossed out, Lily takes another swig of juice. She whirls around and checks behind her. The kitchen is empty except for the lone maggot, squirming on the floor. Lily crushes it under her foot and goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

A naked woman stares AT us.

WOMAN (V.O.)
 Love me. Love me. Love me.

A caterer, carrying a tray of red wine, crosses in front of the woman. Her image replays on a VIDEO MONITOR.

The gallery is a dark, cavernous, industrial space. On a wall banner, in fire-engine letters: "MAX IVES. BLIND DATE."

Twenty scattered video monitors display other naked women. Each one repeats the same phrase: "Love me." Opposite them, twenty screens project naked men. Their words match those of their female counterparts.

Partygoers, invites in hand, push in through the front entrance. Buyers and patrons opt for upscale black. Avant-garde boho freaks and students, obviously friends of the artist, have a decidedly non-conformist look.

Sipping champagne, Jennifer and Paige stare at one of the monitors. Jennifer is stunned. Even Paige is speechless. A sedately frantic Lily joins. On her arm is MAX IVES, 28, brooding with Rasputin-like eyes and magnetism.

LILY
 Jennifer, Paige, this is Max --

JENNIFER
 Ives. Right. It's on the banner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max smiles at Jennifer. He likes what he sees.

MAX

A pleasure.

LILY

(to her friends)

Are you enjoying it?

JENNIFER/PAIGE

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Great.

MAX

They hate it. It's okay. That's how I keep getting the grants.

A GALLERY EMPLOYEE interrupts the pow-wow.

GALLERY EMPLOYEE

(to Max)

The sixteen millimeter in the tunnel keeps snapping.

MAX

Excuse me.

LILY

I'll help.

As they go, Lily turns surreptitiously back to her friends. She quickly mouths, "What do you think?" Jennifer gives a thumbs-up. Paige sucks her index finger.

DOROTHY (O.S.)

Hi, guys.

Paige and Jennifer turn to find Dorothy. At her side is Campbell, looking drop-dead gorgeous. Paige can't hide her surprise. Jennifer covers well.

JENNIFER

Dorothy. You look amazing.

DOROTHY

Thanks. Jennifer, this is Campbell.

CAMPBELL

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

And this is Paige. We all had head-gear and braces together. Where's Lily?

JENNIFER

Handling some crisis.

Campbell helps Dorothy out of her wrap.

CAMPBELL

(to Dorothy)

Do you want a drink, honey?

DOROTHY

Gin and tonic.

She kisses him on the cheek, and he goes.

PAIGE

Okay. Dish.

DOROTHY

It's no big deal.

JENNIFER

His shoulders alone are a big deal. Spill it.

But Dorothy is looking over Jennifer's shoulder at an ancient socialite, who waves furiously.

DOROTHY

Shit. Mrs. Johanssen from my father's board. I have to say hi. You'll get details. I promise.

Dorothy heads off.

PAIGE

And we're the two who came stag.

JENNIFER

She tells me everything.

PAIGE

By this time of the week, my answering machine is usually full. You know what I'm realizing? A slut is good to have around at Christmas, New Year's and Flag Day. But a Valentine is someone you really love. Not some girl you cheat on your wife with.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

I'm not feeling so hot, either. I almost called Adam twice tonight.

PAIGE

'Know what? Forget him. Fix your lipstick and get back out here. We're gonna tear this little wing-ding up.

Jennifer eyes the line at the women's room. Instead, she heads through a swinging door and into --

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The deserted back room serves as a makeshift kitchen. A few tables are lined with electric burners and other catering paraphernalia. Grabbing the lid off of a pot, Jennifer uses it as a mirror to apply lipstick.

A white form flashes past. The pot lid catches the reflection.

Jennifer whirls in time to see a white-jacketed figure, moving purposefully for the far door.

JENNIFER

Hey, your veggie station could use some more asparagus.

Instead, he grabs a knife from a cutting board and slips out. Jennifer starts after him when the other kitchen door opens, and Dorothy enters.

DOROTHY

It's starting.

JENNIFER

Okay.

Silence between the two friends.

DOROTHY

I care what you think. And it's all so new --

JENNIFER

Where did you meet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

That Italian place on Geary. Jen, I really like him. He's sweet, smart. He's starting his own internet venture.

JENNIFER

You don't ever need to hide things from me. We're friends. I only want the best for you.

DOROTHY

And most guys want the best from me.

JENNIFER

Not true.

DOROTHY

Well, I just need to take the time to make sure.

JENNIFER

I say go for it.

(then)

C'mon, we're missing some really bad art.

Laughing, they start for the door.

JENNIFER

Dorothy, wait. I did something really dumb, and if you hate me forever, I totally understand.

DOROTHY

What?

JENNIFER

It's the Kathy Hudson party. They needed a place. I stupidly mentioned yours.

DOROTHY

Of course.

JENNIFER

I never should have done it, but you said your folks were going out of town --

DOROTHY

Please. On Wednesday, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

I won't let anything happen. And if it does, I take full responsibility for every broken ashtray and scratched coffee table.

DOROTHY

I say trash the joint. It's all gonna end up belonging to Lauren anyway.

(then)

Kathy Hudson in my house. Wow.

The two friends head out.

INT. GALLERY - LATER

The television monitors have been muted. The lights are down. Max stands in the middle of the assembled crowd. Jennifer and Dorothy join Paige, Lily and Campbell.

MAX

On February fifteenth, early Romans put the names of their young women in an urn.

Jennifer glances up. Max's eyes are on her.

MAX

One by one, single men took turns drawing names. The girls they chose were to be their mates.

Campbell takes a gulp of wine and sneaks a look at a nearby blonde bombshell's tits.

MAX

Over the centuries, this event turned into what we now call Valentine's Day, proving that not much has changed over the centuries.

Jennifer turns to her friends.

JENNIFER

(low)

Remember that middle school Valentine's dance where that kid got ganged up on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dorothy's fingers tighten around her drink. Lily and Paige's eyes widen.

LILY

Jeremy Melton.

PAIGE

We were talking about him today.

JENNIFER

One of those masks they gave away as party favors was in my hallway this morning. Isn't that bizarre?

From the front of the room, Max clears his throat. The women cease their conversation.

MAX

Ultimately, fate controls love, and we all end up with complete strangers. To that end -- women, one staircase. Men, the other.

Applause as the groups start for the stairs. Lily stops Dorothy and Campbell.

LILY

Uh uh uh.

(unclasping their hands)

Couples can't go in together.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT GALLERY - MAZE - NIGHT

Blackness, punctuated by erratic red strobe lights from above. 70s PORNO MUSIC BLARES over hidden loudspeakers. Jennifer claws at the emptiness and stumbles forward. Moving down a dark, maze-like tunnel, she eases into a turn. A man stares at her.

MAN

What do you like to do?

It's only a projected film image. It loops and repeats.

Jennifer continues on. At every turn, another projected image jumps to life, blocks her path, forces her to turn one way then another. Onscreen, men tell us about themselves. Their wants. Their fantasies. Their dislikes. A collage of overlapping voices assaults Jennifer from all sides. She forges on.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF MAZE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Lily and Max kiss in a dark corner of the maze. They're surrounded by images of awkwardly silent couples in a restaurant. We hear nothing but STAMMERING, COUGHING, CLEARING OF THROATS, and the occasional, "Should we do this again?"

Lily and Max's passion builds as his hands slide under her skirt. Lily moans. Her legs wrap around him, and they begin to move together, rising, falling, kissing, devouring each other. Lily runs her tongue down Max's neck. Her eyes catch sight of --

The Gallery Employee, standing in the darkness.

Lily clenches up, lets out a startled yelp.

MAX

What?

LILY

Oh, my God.

MAX

(to Gallery Employee)

Hi, Kimberly.

LILY

Go away!

GALLERY EMPLOYEE

I... I'm sorry.

Embarrassed, the Gallery Employee flees. Lily adjusts her skirt.

LILY

This is so humiliating.

MAX

Relax.

LILY

She's gonna tell everyone.

MAX

No, she won't. I asked her to come.

He tries to heat things up again. Lily pushes him away.

LILY

You are a pig.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAX

C'mon, it could've been fun.

LILY

Good-bye, Max.

MAX

Lily, Valentine's Day is in two days. I'll make it up to you.

LILY

I have a business trip. Good night.

With that, she's out the door -- leaving Max pissed, alone, and surrounded by his creation.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF MAZE - SAME TIME

Dorothy's transfixed by footage of a little girl, pulling petals from a daisy. Jennifer joins her.

JENNIFER

Still haven't found Campbell?

DOROTHY

No. Seems like everyone is clearing out.

JENNIFER

Someone said there are major makeout rooms further down. I'm curious.

DOROTHY

Enjoy. I'll meet you at the coat check.

Dorothy retreats. Jennifer keeps moving.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF MAZE - NIGHT

Lily wanders down the corridor. A stuttering strobe light flashes erratically. Red. Red. Black. On the walls surrounding her, projected portraits of cupids drift lazily to and fro. The images are haunting, but beautiful. She stops to admire them.

The strobe flashes, and she comes face to face with the cherub. It's impossible to tell whether he's part of the menagerie of on-screen cupids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Curious, Lily looks closer.

The kitchen knife flashes and slices her throat. The cherub steps away from the screen -- pops into vivid 3-D.

Lily tries to scream, but only a choked gurgle comes out. Blood dribbles from the cherub's nostril. Lily staggers backward and runs.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF MAZE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Lily tears through the empty passageways. Stealing glances over her shoulder, she takes a turn into a dead end. Backtracking, she slams into the cherub, recognizes the tattered jacket, the powder blue shirt, sees the knife in his hand.

LILY
(a whisper)
Jeremy, I'm sorry --

Her hand goes up. The knife rips through it. Lily limps left and into --

INT. MATCH ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Ropes and long panels of red fabric hang from an intricate system of pulleys. They undulate in sensual waves.

Projected on a far wall is super-8 film of couples kissing and moaning. The footage is blown up so large that it looks like pointillism.

Lily stumbles straight into a fabric panel, jumps back. She puts a crimson-soaked hand over her mouth and burrows deeper into the wall to dodge the light from the film screen.

The loss of blood is finally affecting her. She swoons, then regains her concentration. Weaves among the flowing panels. The door is only fifteen feet away.

Lily takes another step, but something catches her foot. She looks down, barely has time to register the rope that tightens around her ankle. With a whizz, she's jerked upside-down and six feet into the air.

The cherub mask flashes into her eyeline.

LILY
Please --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her plea is cut short by another stab to the throat. The force of the blow sends Lily swinging across the room.

Upside down, she reaches the end of her arc and flies back in the direction of the cherub. Feet kicking, arms flailing, she catches a fabric panel and halts her trajectory.

The cherub calmly reaches behind another fabric panel and removes a bow and arrow.

Lily grips the fabric panel for dear life, but her slick hands and dwindling strength cause her to lose hold. She flies back in the cherub's direction.

He's ready and aimed at his moving target. As she swings by -- THWACK. The ARROW nails its intended mark. Lily's heart. A maroon pool blossoms across her chest. She gasps.

THWACK. THWACK. Two more ARROWS find a home inside Lily.

Bewildered eyes stare at the film footage of the couples kissing. Blood runs down her neck and covers her face. Before the stream can hit the ground --

Gloved hands grab a nearby fabric panel and tug it down. Within seconds, the body is wrapped up. Lily's contorted face is the only thing left exposed.

The cherub grabs a nearby rope and bears down on it with his full weight. Lily's body flies thirty feet up to the ceiling. The sea of pulleys, ropes, and fabric block it from sight.

The match room door opens.

The cherub steps back into the shadows as Jennifer enters.

UP IN RAFTERS

Lily sees her friend. She gurgles. Tries to make noise. Two drops of blood drip onto the floor -- five feet from Jennifer.

Jennifer is unaware, gazing at the super-8 footage. Suddenly, she senses a presence. She turns, but the panels of fabric drift and block her view. She sees the corner of a black sleeve disappearing, starts around panel when suddenly --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Max is right in front of her.

MAX

Guess you're my new partner.

He moves in, wraps an arm around her. Jennifer squirms out from under it.

JENNIFER

What about Lily?

MAX

She dumped me. Said something about a business trip. You chicks can be cold-hearted.

UP IN RAFTERS

Lily continues to fight against the confines of her bloody restraints.

Max leans in to kiss Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Some people are waiting upstairs.

MAX

It's my exhibit. Humor me.

JENNIFER

I'm flattered, but --

MAX

I told you Lily and I are through.

He tries again.

UP IN RAFTERS

Lily is in a death rattle. She's too far away to be heard.

JENNIFER

Here's womanhood rule number one. You don't move in on a girlfriend's guy. It's tacky, it's wrong, and it's the best defense we have against jerks like you.

Jennifer storms out. Incensed, Max watches her go.

INT. GALLERY - COAT CHECK - NIGHT

Dorothy and Campbell retrieve their coats. Jennifer cruises up to them.

DOROTHY

Paige went home with some sculptor.

JENNIFER

Let's go then.

As they head for the exit, a WOMAN taps Campbell's shoulder.

WOMAN

Hey, leech.

Everyone turns to face RUTHIE EVANS, collagen-enhanced. She's in her early thirties and pissed about it.

RUTHIE (WOMAN)

I want my money back.

Campbell tries to think on his feet.

RUTHIE

(off girls)

Which one of you is his new victim?

DOROTHY

Who are you?

CAMPBELL

No one --

RUTHIE

The idiot who's still waiting for a return on her internet investment. What was it? Golddigger-dot-com?

Campbell tries for the door. Ruthie steps in his path.

CAMPBELL

Ruthie. Not now.

RUTHIE

My lawyers say there's nothing I can do, so I've decided to personally make your life hell.

With that, she's gone.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Hanging Chianti bottles. Candlelight. Very romantic.
At the hostess stand, a HOSTESS barks into the phone.

HOSTESS

I've got nothing. Well, I can squeeze you in at 10:30, but I'm warning you now, the table's next to the kitchen... Yeah? You, too, pal. And think ahead next time. This isn't Easter. The date never changes.

FIND Adam and Jennifer, still wearing her clothes from the gallery. They share a window table. Adam plays with melted wax from the candle.

JENNIFER

We were down there in that dungeon. Music blaring. Porn playing out on the wall. He thought it was a turn-on.

Adam reaches across the table. His fingers dance across Jennifer's hand, trace the outline of her thumbnail.

JENNIFER

It was so skeezy. If my apartment had running water, I'd be in the shower right now.

ADAM

What are we doing?

JENNIFER

What?

ADAM

This was supposed to be a celebration.

Finally, she notices his hand on hers. Jennifer steadies her already trembling knees.

ADAM

You look incredible tonight.

JENNIFER

Thanks. I'm sorry.
Congratulations again.

She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

What would you say to a walk along
the wharf? Maybe an Irish coffee
at the Buena Vista?

JENNIFER

It's freezing.

ADAM

You can borrow my jacket.

She deliberates, knowing what the answer should be.

ADAM

(knowing it's lame
trying to sell it
anyway)
Or there's a variety pack of
herbal tea at my place.

JENNIFER

Adam, I don't think --

ADAM

I could draw a bath. Give you a
foot rub.

JENNIFER

Not tonight.

ADAM

You love my foot rubs.

JENNIFER

(gently but firmly)
No.

He pulls his hand away as the waiter returns with the
check. Adam busies himself with the tip math.

JENNIFER

I don't want to get hurt.

ADAM

You spent the whole night talking
about how men are pigs. The
nutjob artist. Dorothy's leech
boyfriend.

JENNIFER

That's different.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

You're right. The difference is I'm in love with you. And you absolutely refuse to see it.

JENNIFER

Every part of me wants to go home with you tonight, okay? Is that the answer you were looking for?

ADAM

Then stop fighting it..

JENNIFER

We agreed to go slow. To start over as friends. This is what friends do. They go to dinner. They talk.

ADAM

I want to be your boyfriend. Not your pal.

JENNIFER

You are so selfish.

ADAM

How can you say that, when all I can think about is you?

Adam signs, pockets his credit card and gets up.

JENNIFER

So, this is it, then? We're over? Right here, in the Italian restaurant where they still can't make a decent calzone?

He stops, turns.

ADAM

They are god-awful.

JENNIFER

But we just keep ordering them.

Adam smiles. She got him.

ADAM

I'll call you.

And with that, he's gone.

EXT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A cab drops Jennifer at the lobby door. An assortment of cheery valentine's decorations have been taped above the call box. Jennifer checks the sidewalk. No one's in sight. In a flash, she rips down a smiling cupid and a cardboard bouquet of roses. Reaching for a pink heart that reads "Happy Valentine's Day," she notices the ink scrawls at the top of the decoration: "I'm Coming."

Jennifer looks up and down the street. It's a normal, non-threatening night. She punches in her access code and steps inside.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY -
CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer enters as the Building Super exits a supply closet with a garland of red cupids. He stops in his tracks when he notices the decorations in her hands.

JENNIFER

Wind got them.

She hands them over and punches the elevator call button.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SHELLEY'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A humble one-bedroom. Only assorted boxes are left. Jennifer and Dorothy are on the couch. Mrs. Fisher hands a shoe box to Paige. She opens it to find dozens of intricately-folded missives.

PAIGE

God. She kept all the notes we passed?

MRS. FISHER

I also found this.

Mrs. Fisher gives Jennifer a photo. In it, a bunch of twelve-year-olds are dressed in birthday party gear.

JENNIFER

I remember that party. A goat attacked me in the petting zoo.

MRS. FISHER

She insisted we invite the whole class.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mrs. Fisher's face crumbles. Jennifer notices a stack of floral arrangement cards on the table. Mrs. Fisher follows her gaze.

MRS. FISHER

So many friends sent their regards.

JENNIFER

May I?

MRS. FISHER

(nods)

I'm running late. You girls can see yourselves out. I may call you sometimes. To jog my memory. I've already started forgetting little details.

She leaves. Jennifer flips through the cards. Paige looks up from her reading.

PAIGE

Wow. We had filthy little mouths back then. Jen, here's one from you. You want it?

But Jennifer's eyes are stuck on one of the cards and the message: "With love and fond memories, Jeremy Melton."

PAIGE

Jen?

It pulls her back out. She holds up the "Jeremy Melton" card. Dorothy grabs it from Jennifer.

DOROTHY

He killed her.

PAIGE

Dorothy! It's a card.

DOROTHY

He's out there.

JENNIFER

Of course he is. Somewhere. But that doesn't mean --

DOROTHY

You just happened to find that cherub mask lying in your hallway?

Jennifer considers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

I got a valentine. He signed it.

JENNIFER

Why didn't you tell us?

DOROTHY

I was hoping it was a sick joke.

JENNIFER

That cop said if we thought of anything...

PAIGE

I'd like to hear that 9-1-1 call -- 'Officers, some guy we teased in middle school might be coming after us.'

Dorothy's fingers are white. Her chest heaves.

DOROTHY

I'm next. He's coming after me.

PAIGE

Why would you say that?

DOROTHY

I called him names --

PAIGE

Everybody did. Relax.

DOROTHY

That night, when the whole school went after him... I started it.

JENNIFER

Dorothy. Why?

DOROTHY

Can you imagine your mother force-feeding you nothing but celery? Measuring your waist every night and putting the results on the fridge? That's what the Wheelers did three weeks before that stupid dance. All that work, and for what? The only person who noticed me that night was Jeremy. I couldn't stomach pity from him, so I lied. Said he was harassing me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

It got the mob going in no time.
(then)
Let's face it. The only person
more hated than me was Pigeon
Shit.

Jennifer and Paige are in shock.

JENNIFER

Who knows about this?

DOROTHY

Just him. I have to get out of
here. Leave town.

JENNIFER

Dorothy, that's a little extreme.

DOROTHY

He wants revenge. I would.

JENNIFER

You don't know that.

Dorothy picks up the card.

DOROTHY

Prove me wrong.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Jennifer's Civic creeps along the grey wasteland of row
houses and dilapidated cars.

INT. JENNIFER'S CIVIC - DAY

Jennifer and Paige eye the passing house numbers.

PAIGE

Should be up here on the left. We
t.p.'d it every Friday night for a
month. Dorothy should be here.
She's the reason we're doing this.

JENNIFER

Paige.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAIGE

Fine. What do we do if he answers the door?

JENNIFER

We start with an apology.

The car pulls up in front of a Monopoly-style house. The chain link fence is faltering. The windows are gone. The structure is a burned-out shell.

Jennifer and Paige stare in shock at the ruins.

PAIGE

Now what?

CUT TO:

INT. SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY - NIGHT

A nearly silent research room. Patrons are lost in their own worlds of words and facts.

Jennifer stares into the grey glow of a microfiche machine. Shelley's twelfth birthday party photo is propped up against the monitor. Paige is at a nearby table, up to her armpits in phone books and public records.

PAIGE

As far as I can tell, Jeremy Melton doesn't live in California. Please keep in mind, I'm going cross-eyed from all the small print. Did you find anything?

Before Jennifer can answer, Adam approaches with some research of his own. He reads to them from a photocopy.

ADAM

'February fifteenth, nineteen ninety-nine. A husband and wife were killed when their home was engulfed in flames late last night.'

JENNIFER

Valentine's Day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

(still reading)

'Marty and Deidre Melton were overwhelmed by fumes and smoke and may have died in their sleep, though witnesses claim to have heard cries for help prior to the arrival of firefighters.'

PAIGE

Any mention of Jeremy?

ADAM

None.

Adam sees the photo next to Jennifer's microfiche machine.

ADAM

What's that?

JENNIFER

A picture from my sixth-grade class. I'm just trying to figure out where everyone landed. At least the names I remember.

Jennifer points to his face in the photograph. It's one of the jocks from the middle school Valentine's Day dance.

JENNIFER

Donnie Bogus. What a little turd. He used to pick on Jeremy all the time.

(pointing to screen)

Last Valentine's Day in Santa Cruz, he was bludgeoned to death in his own garage. They found pieces of brain matter up to twenty feet away. The killer was never found.

ADAM

Talk about revenge of the nerd.

PAIGE

This proves nothing.

JENNIFER

Paige, his parents were killed. Then there's Donnie, Shelley --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAIGE

Chances are several people from our sixth grade class have bitten the big one. Is Jeremy Melton behind all their deaths? I doubt it. That kid couldn't even visit the water fountain without humiliating himself.

JENNIFER

I remember he came up to me on the bleachers and asked me to dance. Instead, I stood by as a bunch of screaming kids ripped his clothes off and paraded him around a school gym.

PAIGE

We were kids! Kids are mean! Kids are rotten! If he can't buck up and grow a spine like the rest of us, he's a bigger loser now than he ever was.

Patrons toss them disapproving looks and hiss, "Shhh!"

PAIGE

Speaking of losers.
(heading for door)
Look, Pigeon Shit wasn't worth my time then, and he's certainly not worth it now. I'm not hitching a ride on Dorothy's guilt trip. I have no reason to be paranoid. Nice meeting you, Adam.

ADAM

You, too.
(off books)
It's been really... educational.

They watch her angry retreat.

JENNIFER

How do you think she really feels about it?

Adam puts his arm around her. It's habit.

ADAM

She has a point.

JENNIFER

Thanks for coming with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

Absolutely.

(a beat)

They changed the cup holders at our movie theater.

JENNIFER

Oh, yeah?

ADAM

Get anything smaller than a large soda, and it falls right through.

JENNIFER

That sucks.

A studying patron tosses them a dirty look. Jennifer twirls a pen between her fingers. Adam reaches over and touches her hand. Jennifer doesn't pull away.

ADAM

Tell me again why we can't be together.

JENNIFER

You get out of control, Adam. It scares me.

ADAM

I've been going to A.A. for three weeks.

JENNIFER

That's great.

ADAM

I feel like a fraud there. Those people really have huge things to sort through. I was never that messed up, was I?

JENNIFER

You're always going to find someone more messed up than you are. It's one of the advantages of living in this city.

ADAM

So, you do think I have a problem.

JENNIFER

Are you looking for my permission to drop out of the program? That's not my decision to make.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

I'm saying I'm trying to figure this out. And I may be doing it for the rest of my life. So if you're waiting for me to turn into something I can never be, I want to know now.

Jennifer fiddles with the dial on the microfiche machine. Finally --

JENNIFER

Wanna come to my party tomorrow?

ADAM

Like, as your date?

(off her nod)

I could move some stuff around.

JENNIFER

Come on. I'll buy you a coffee.

They gather up their stuff.

INT. SUPERMARKET - NIGHT

The portrait of domestic bliss, Dorothy grabs a box of condoms. Feeling optimistic, she snags a second.

INT. FROZEN FOODS SECTION

Dorothy selects a half gallon of ice cream. There's a crash as her cart is broadsided by another. Dorothy looks up to Ruthie's glare.

RUTHIE

(loudly)

You might want to try French vanilla. He likes that.

Dorothy pulls a one-eighty and cruises for the front of the store. Ruthie is on her heels.

RUTHIE

How's the new boyfriend working out? Has he asked for a check yet?

Other shoppers slow to a crawl, hoping to witness a scene.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruthie races in front of Dorothy's cart and jams her shoe under the front wheel. Dorothy slams into the cart's handle.

DOROTHY

Leave me alone.

More people are staring. Ruthie spots the condoms.

RUTHIE

Good idea. God knows what he picked up last year when he was fucking Mrs. Frazier.

Dorothy knocks the cart aside and shoves Ruthie into a display of Valentine's Day candy. Girl and goodies spill everywhere.

DOROTHY

Don't come near us again.

Dorothy flees the scene. The customers quickly lose interest and disperse. No one offers a helping hand to Ruthie, who disentangles herself from the mess of spilled chocolate.

EXT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Jennifer and Adam avoid treacherous puddles on the sidewalk. They reach the front door, and the impulse is to dally.

JENNIFER

Want to come up?

ADAM

That's okay.

JENNIFER

Let me try that again. Please come up?

ADAM

Jen, everything's gonna be okay.

JENNIFER

But --

ADAM

I don't want us to do something that you're just going to write off as a weak moment tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

We could sit on opposite ends of the couch and watch Larry King. It would totally kill the mood.

ADAM

Look, yesterday someone I really care about suggested we take this slow. I'm gonna go before I come to my senses.

JENNIFER

Thanks for today.

Adam leans in and delivers the gentlest, sweetest kiss. They savor the moment, and he goes. Jennifer longingly watches him disappear into the darkness.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Dressed in pajamas, Jennifer pulls back her hair and slams the medicine cabinet shut. She stares at her mirrored reflection. Dark circles ring her eyes.

From the open window, a sing-songy chant drifts in on the breeze.

KIDS (V.O.)

'Pigeon Shit. Pigeon Shit.
Careful you might step in it.'

Jennifer slams the window shut. Was it just in her head? She uncaps a tube of toothpaste, grabs her toothbrush and gets to work.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Still brushing her teeth, Jennifer sorts through a stack of mail. She arrives at a plain white envelope. Her address is calligraphied across the front.

Jennifer opens the envelope to find --

A mimeographed flier that reads, "CUPID'S BALL, 1998!!
IN THE KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL GYM!! BRING YOUR BOWS!!
BRING YOUR ARROWS!!"

Terrified, Jennifer turns the invitation over.

In red ink -- "Roses are red/ Violets are blue/ They'll need dental records/ To identify you.'

Jennifer drops her toothbrush and scoops up the phone. As she punches 911 --

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Jennifer and Paige hold court with Vaughn. They're crowded around a battered computer workstation. Vaughn sifts through a file. The middle school dance flier is in a plastic bag on the edge of her desk.

VAUGHN

Melton was transferred from school to school until his fondness for violent outbursts landed him in juvenile hall.

PAIGE

Where he became a law-abiding citizen, right?

VAUGHN

Juvie doesn't exactly turn out Cub Scouts, and no one could control Melton. He got shipped off to a state-run mental hospital. Spent six years there.

JENNIFER

Where is he now?

VAUGHN

I've got nothing after that. He never got a driver's license. Never had a credit card or bank account. Basically, there's no paper trail on the guy.

JENNIFER

What about his parents' deaths?

VAUGHN

Happened after his release, but forensics declared it an accidental fire.

PAIGE

(to Jennifer)

Told you.

VAUGHN

Doesn't mean he didn't have reasons to feel a little aggression toward them. Daddy put cigarettes out in his scalp. There was evidence of sexual abuse by the mother.

JENNIFER

We didn't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAUGHN

What you kids did to him was just the tip of a very screwed-up iceberg.

Vaughn places a photo on a scanner.

VAUGHN

The school district sent me a page from the yearbook.

PAIGE

Good, then you can just round the weirdo up.

VAUGHN

It's not that easy.

She hits a button, and the image of a ten-year-old Jeremy Melton fills the screen. Coke-bottle glasses. Greasy bangs obscuring a pinched face. His smile betrays an interior sadness. His eyes are dark and withdrawn.

Jennifer and Paige squirm under his gaze.

VAUGHN

This is the only photo we have of him.

Vaughn hits a few buttons on the keyboard.

ON SCREEN, Jeremy morphs into an adult.

VAUGHN

In this shot he's got long brown hair, right?

(typing)

So how about a crew cut, dyed red? Or blond. Or jet black. He's got brown eyes. How about blue contacts. Or green?

The image on the computer screen changing, morphing Jeremy into a series of totally different-looking men.

VAUGHN

Add a beard. A goatee. Moustache.

JENNIFER

He was pigeon-toed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAUGHN

Could be taken care of with surgery or physical therapy.

Jennifer watches as the faces continue to change at a rapid-fire pace. Ominous. Leading her to the terrifying revelation --

JENNIFER

He could be anyone.

VAUGHN

I'm trying to track down a more recent photo of him. One lead is the juvie files in Sacramento. Most of the kids have release pictures. The moment they send it, I'll be in touch. Has anyone spoken with Lily Voight?

PAIGE

She's in Chicago, on business.

VAUGHN

Has she checked in at all?

Paige shakes her head. Then --

PAIGE

I'll try her mom. See if she knows what hotel she's in.

VAUGHN

And this guy she was dating. Max Ives. You say it wasn't a pleasant parting?

JENNIFER

She dumped him.

VAUGHN

You, Miss Prescott? Boyfriends?

PAIGE

Single. You?

There's a stare-down. Vaughn wins.

JENNIFER

I don't understand. What does that have to do with anything?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAUGHN

It's possible someone may just be trying to scare you, so I wanna look closer to home. A jealous co-worker, an unhappy ex...

PAIGE

(to Jennifer)

Good thing you and Adam are back on track. She might've patted him down.

VAUGHN

Who's Adam?

JENNIFER

Adam Cole. My ex-boyfriend. We're trying to get back together.

Vaughn hands Jennifer the notebook and pencil.

VAUGHN

Last known address and phone number.

JENNIFER

(writing it down)

He didn't do this.

VAUGHN

Everything helps. In the meantime, you girls stick together. Check in on each other frequently. There's safety in numbers.

JENNIFER

Maybe I should cancel the party.

PAIGE

You know my opinion on that.

Vaughn questions them with a look.

JENNIFER

It's work. A Valentine's thing I planned for tomorrow night. Two hundred people are showing up at our friend Dorothy's.

VAUGHN

That should be okay.

(then)

Why isn't she here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAIGE

We didn't want to scare her.
She's home with her boyfriend.

VAUGHN

And what's his story?

Suddenly, it dawns on Jennifer.

JENNIFER

They just met.

CUT TO:

INT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Campbell stretches out on the sofa and watches Notorious. Dorothy scampers about, cramming last-minute items into a duffel.

DOROTHY

You're gonna love Cabo. Nothing
to do but sip daiquiris and
loungue.

CAMPBELL

(eyes never leaving TV)
Uh-huh. Sounds great.

Dorothy stares at the beautiful man in front of her. She drops what she's doing and snuggles up to him.

DOROTHY

What would I do without you?

CAMPBELL

That's sweet, babe.

The DOORBELL RINGS. Dorothy moves closer, drapes a leg over his.

DOROTHY

Let the maid --

CAMPBELL

I ordered Chinese.

He's up and out. Dorothy grabs the remote and pauses the movie.

INT. FOYER - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Campbell throws open the door to find Detective Vaughn.

VAUGHN

Mr. Harris? Let's chat.

Alarmed, Campbell steps back as Vaughn pushes inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FLORIST SHOP - DAY

It's Valentine's Day. This little neighborhood flower shop looks like a D-day beach. Male customers shoving, yelling, swearing at each other. The flowers are abused and picked over.

Jennifer and Paige push their way to the front counter. They each have a cell phone pressed to their ear.

JENNIFER

(into phone)

Dorothy, it's Jennifer. Pick up.

PAIGE

(into phone)

Jimmy. It's your favorite party girl. If you get this, call me.

Paige pushes a rude customer in the crowd.

PAIGE

Ow! Happy Valentine's Day to you, too, buddy.

JENNIFER

(still on phone)

Pick up pick up pick up. You're not picking up. Okay. I'll talk to you later.

(to another customer)

That's my foot you're obliterating.

Paige has dialed another number.

PAIGE

(into phone)

Roger? Hey! It's Paige. There's a little fiesta tonight that's right up your alley... Engaged, huh? I didn't know. Congrats.

(hanging up)

Hope she doesn't mind you suck in the sack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

(to Paige)

Dorothy hasn't called me back.
Millicent said she's
'unavailable.'

PAIGE

You'll be over there in a couple
of hours. Talk to her then.
Ready for the real tragedy? I
can't find a date for tonight.

JENNIFER

What happened to Brian, the
pierced dude from Speed Dating?

PAIGE

Phone tag, so he's a maybe.

Jennifer waves down the harried owner and hands off a
claim ticket.

JENNIFER

I called in an order on Monday.

He disappears into the back. Several men tail him.

PAIGE

(off their
desperation)

Pathetic.

JENNIFER

Embarrassingly so.

PAIGE

A guy lavishes you with gifts all
in the hopes of getting a little
nookie. How's today different
from any other day?

The owner returns and hands over several dozen roses.
Arms full, she and Paige fight their way for the front
door.

EXT. FLORIST SHOP - DAY

Jennifer and Paige load the flowers into a rental van.
It's already bursting with party supplies.

An ill-prepared HUSBAND steps in their path.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUSBAND

I'll give you a hundred dollars
for one.

Jennifer shakes her head.

PAIGE

Cash.

She puts out her palm.

INT. JENNIFER'S ELEVATOR - DAY

Jennifer mashes the "4" button. She kneels down to tie her shoe.

The doors open. An arm reaches into the elevator and yanks Jennifer out.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Laughing, Adam pulls her into a kiss.

ADAM

Happy Valentine's Day.

JENNIFER

Aww. You got me a coronary.

ADAM

I had one myself when that
detective called this morning.

JENNIFER

She insisted. I told her --

ADAM

It's cool. My serial killing
spree is still a well-kept secret.

(then)

I know you're crazed, but I just
wanted to stop by and give you
this.

Adam presents a miniature rose.

ADAM

And this.

Adam places a heart-shaped lollipop in her palm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

And this.

He hands her a construction paper heart. It reads, "A.C. + J.K."

ADAM

I made it myself.

JENNIFER

Adam, thanks. Here... I got you...

She fumbles in her pocket and produces a dry cleaner's receipt.

ADAM

(playful)

You had my suit cleaned?

JENNIFER

No.

She pulls a pen and writes on the back of it, "I.O.U. some T.L.C. this P.M."

JENNIFER

Can't buy that at the mall.

ADAM

Nope.

He kisses her.

ADAM

I gotta get back to the office.
Just know I'm thinking about you.

JENNIFER

See you tonight.

He gets on the elevator and disappears.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Starry-eyed and smiling, Jennifer enters to find --

Dorothy, looking none too pleased. She sits at the kitchen table.

DOROTHY

What were you thinking, calling
the cops on Campbell?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

They -- they called Adam, too.

DOROTHY

Called him, or questioned him for two hours? Now they've 'requested' he doesn't leave town for a few days. It's humiliating.

JENNIFER

I'm sorry. I --

DOROTHY

Don't fuck this up for me.

JENNIFER

Okay, what is this about?

Dorothy's eyes burn. She can't face her friend.

DOROTHY

You don't understand what it's like. And don't tell me how good I look. They just don't see me like that.

(then)

Campbell walks in a room, and my heart stops. Every day, I'm terrified he's going to bolt. What you guys did could've chased him away.

JENNIFER

You don't know that.

DOROTHY

Exactly. You never know. I look at you and Adam. You went out for six months, and he hid his drinking for five. I look at my dad, and see how he's lied and cheated on my mom. She never had a clue.

JENNIFER

Dorothy, where is Campbell now?

DOROTHY

At home.

JENNIFER

Then why are you here with me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

What if --

JENNIFER

Don't make problems where there aren't any.

It's a genuine observation.

DOROTHY

I'm sorry. You must think I'm such a dork --

JENNIFER

Do you want to talk about it?

Dorothy doesn't make a move for the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Overdone and expensive. Dorothy pokes her head in.

DOROTHY

Campbell?

CAMPBELL (O.S.)

Out here, babe.

Dorothy crosses to --

EXT. MASTER BEDROOM - TERRACE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Dorothy steps out onto the terrace. A hot tub is nestled in a corner. Campbell, sweaty and greasy, stands over it. Tools are spread out everywhere.

CAMPBELL

Hey. I promised Jennifer I'd have this up and running for tonight.

DOROTHY

Look at you, so handy.

She wraps her arms around him. He pulls away.

CAMPBELL

Hon, I'm all gross.

She hands him a velvet jewelry box. He opens it to find a gold and platinum Rolex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAMPBELL

I didn't know we were exchanging.

DOROTHY

Put it on.

Campbell fastens the watch to his wrist.

DOROTHY

No one loves you more than I do.

She inches closer. Her silk blouse droops open, exposing a full breast.

DOROTHY

No one.

She reaches for his pants. They're unbuttoned in a second. She kneels before him. Campbell tries to back away, but her mouth is already around him. He fights, then gives in with a trembling moan. The second hand on the ROLEX continues to TICK.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Dorothy and Campbell lie in a king-sized bed. He stares vacantly at the ceiling. Dorothy watches him earnestly.

DOROTHY

Don't worry about it.

(off his silence)

I'm gonna take a shower.

(heads to the
bathroom)

Try on my dad's robe. It's silk.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Steaming shower water beats at Dorothy's morose face. She draws a heart on the foggy shower door and sings to herself. It's a dirge.

DOROTHY

'I love you baby, and if it's
quite all right, I need you
baby...'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A shadow looms in the doorway. Dorothy doesn't see it. She turns her back to it and continues to sing.

The shower door is thrown open. Dorothy spins to face Campbell, clad in a robe that only money and bad taste can buy.

CAMPBELL

Now it's my turn.

He gives her a blue box from Tiffany. Elated, Dorothy snatches the gift and tosses the lid aside. She lifts a cupid pendant into the light. There's a single ruby on the tip of the arrow.

DOROTHY

It's beautiful.

CAMPBELL

I've got a meeting with an investor later, so I might be a little late for the party.

DOROTHY

Care to join me now?

CAMPBELL

I want to get in a quick workout before I go.

(kisses her quickly)

Save a dance for me.

He goes as Dorothy swoons.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Campbell heads down the stairs.

The Maid stands in the middle of the foyer and directs various caterers and construction workers. They carry tables, pieces of dance floor, and chafing dishes.

As Campbell passes, he tosses her a smirk and a wink. She scowls, has his number. Campbell laughs and heads down the hall.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Humming, Dorothy sits at Lauren's vanity and does her makeup. She wears the cupid necklace. The Maid appears in the doorway behind her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAID

What are you doing in your daddy's
bedroom?

Dorothy ignores her.

MAID

Your parents are coming home
tomorrow, and I'm not cleaning up
that mess downstairs.

Dorothy stands, floats by the Maid, and kisses her cheek.

DOROTHY

I have to pick up my dress. Bye.
(singing)
'I love you baby, and if it's
quite all right, I need you
baby...'

She exits.

INT. BASEMENT GYM - DAY

Clad in nothing but his boxers, Campbell pumps iron.
This boy knows his way around Nautilus equipment.

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM - DAY

The bathroom is as big as a locker room but done in pink
marble. Glistening with sweat, Campbell throws on the
spigot of the giant bathtub. He sniffs a few bottles of
bubble bath, then dumps some into the flowing water.

INT. BASEMENT GYM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Campbell scoops up a dumbbell, does a few arm curls,
poses. There's a flash of white in the mirror. A figure
disappears into the bathroom.

Campbell detects the movement out of the corner of his
eye. He spins.

CAMPBELL

Dodo? Sweetie?

Nothing. Campbell closes the gym door, then locks it.
He yanks a cordless phone from the wall.

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

WATER GURGLES from the spigot. Bubbles crest at the edge of the monstrous tub. Campbell dials out on the phone as he sits on the porcelain lip. He lets his fingers dance under the flowing water.

CAMPBELL

Bobby? It's me... I'm calling you now, aren't I?

He turns OFF the WATER, drops his boxers, and slips into the tub. Ahhhh. He settles back.

CAMPBELL

I'm telling you, she's frothing at the crotch for me... I don't know, couple days maybe... Yeah, well, tell Bernie he'll get it...

(getting pissed)

Then tell him again.

Campbell's face twists in rage.

CAMPBELL

I'll be there in twenty minutes.

Campbell throws the phone across the room. It explodes against the tiling.

CAMPBELL

(yells)

Fuck!

Covered in suds, Campbell climbs out of the tub. Water and bubbles slosh all over the marble floor. He slips, nearly crashing to the ground.

CAMPBELL

Shit!

He carefully maneuvers over to the standing shower, yanks ON the WATER, and steps inside.

The suds instantly wash away, unmasking --

Dozens of leeches, stuck to Campbell's naked body. They're fat around the middle, engorged from their feeding.

Campbell sees the parasites and screams. He jumps out of the shower, smacking and yanking at them. The leeches hold fast -- clamped on by their razor sharp teeth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Yelling, Campbell pulls at a giant leech on his arm. It stretches, stretches, and finally rips in two. Blood gushes from the animal's innards. Campbell's blood. The leech's head is still stuck to Campbell's arm.

Campbell runs for the door. His feet slide out from under him and he crashes heavily to the marble. He sits up and slaps at his thighs, scrambles to his feet, and tears the leeches from his skin. He manages to rid them from his arms and torso. Campbell turns, and we see --

The monster leech on his back. He senses it, too. Strains his neck in an attempt to look over his shoulder.

Campbell strides to the mirror, wipes the steam from it. The cherub's reflection appears behind him. A stream of blood dribbles from a nostril. Campbell doesn't notice -- he's too busy reaching, stretching, trying to grab the leech.

The cherub's reflection finally catches his eye. Startled, he spins to face him -- sees the waxy face, frozen in a wicked grin.

CAMPBELL

Who the fuck are you?

The question is cut short as a fifty-pound barbell caves in Campbell's skull. He flies backward and slams to the floor.

CLOSE ON Campbell's arm as it twitches on the marble. A leech lets go and creeps across the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - NIGHT

At the street-level valet station, party-goers spill out of German-engineered sedans, greet each other, and trip toward the throbbing mansion. Every brick, every shingle strains against the internal combustion of a party that is way past out of control.

INT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - BALLROOM - NIGHT

A red spotlight ricochets off a disco ball. Helium-filled Mylar balloons in the shape of hearts blanket the ceiling. A band, loud and one notch beyond punk, fills the room with music.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The black-tie crowd swells and gyrates. The dance floor has a life of its own. Couples mash under rose trellises. Singles look to hook up. It's Valentine's Day, and the young, rich, and beautiful generate enough sexual energy to make the space pulsate.

Jennifer auto-pilots across the floor.

JENNIFER
(flagging a waiter)
Send out the dumplings next.

Jennifer pushes through a set of swinging doors.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

It's a whirlwind of caterers. Jennifer finds Paige and Dorothy staking out an isolated section of counter top. They pick at the remains of an hors d'oeuvre tray. Everyone's dressed to party. They just don't act like it.

JENNIFER
Still no sign of Kathy Hudson.

DOROTHY
Or Campbell.

PAIGE
(to both of them)
It's barely eleven.

JENNIFER
The band can only play until
midnight. That's about the time
I'll head over to Kinko's and pick
up an application.

PAIGE
They're open twenty-four hours.

Adam enters the kitchen from the back door. He shakes off the cold and joins them.

ADAM
Any more trash to go out?

JENNIFER
We're good for now.

A CATERER interrupts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CATERER

(to Jennifer)

There's enough food to carry us,
so we're gonna start cleaning up.

JENNIFER

Go ahead.

He moves off. Jennifer's face falls even more.

ADAM

She'll show.

PAIGE

Whadya say, Dotty? Wanna check
out the band? Get a groove on?

DOROTHY

I'm gonna wait.

Dorothy stares at the floor. Absentminded fingers play
with the cupid necklace, then tuck it beneath her blouse.

JENNIFER

You said he was going to
Sausalito. The bridge is probably
backed up.

No response.

PAIGE

I am not letting this dress go to
waste. C'mon. We'll have a
better view of his arrival from
the dance floor.

Paige drags Dorothy out. Jennifer drops her head to the
counter. Adam kneads her shoulders. He whispers.

ADAM

How's that?

JENNIFER

Lower... Mmm.

ADAM

What are your plans for later?

JENNIFER

I was thinking I'd finish up here.
Kick off these shoes.

(then, returning the
whisper)

Maybe get lucky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

With whom?

JENNIFER

I'm young. Available. Shouldn't
be a problem finding volunteers.

Adam plucks a red rose out of a nearby floral arrangement, hands it to Jennifer. He fishes in his pocket and produces the dry cleaning ticket -- Jennifer's IOU.

JENNIFER

Excellent. I've had my eye on you
all night.

Several caterers eavesdrop on their conversation. The swinging doors open, and a WAITER pokes his head in.

WAITER

(to Jennifer)

One of the heating lamps went out.

JENNIFER

I've got matches.

Jennifer stows her rose in a glass of water and starts to follow. Adam grabs her arm and pulls her into a kiss.

ADAM

Happy Valentine's Day.

JENNIFER

You, too.

She breaks away and goes. Barely able to contain his happiness, Adam turns to the staff. A CATERER shoves a champagne flute into his hand.

CATERER #2

What's your name, buddy?

ADAM

Adam.

Adam thinks about handing the flute back when --

CATERER #2

(to kitchen staff)

To Adam. The one guy in this room
who's getting some tonight!

Warm smiles are on him. Adam tosses back the drink.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Sweating bodies writhe on the dance floor.

CENTER OF THRONG

Paige and Dorothy tear things up. They laugh, spin, spill their Kir Royales. Dorothy tries to steal a glance at the ballroom entrance, but Paige darts into her eye-line.

Someone watches the girls from across the dance floor.

HIS POV

is ON Paige, uninhibited, displaying her bad-girl roots. Dorothy begins to relax. Lets the heat of the crowd and the throbbing of the music take over.

The watcher gets CLOSER, CLOSER. Weaving, bobbing in and out amongst the sweaty partners.

Paige grinds. Spins. Pumps to the beat.

The Watcher is VERY CLOSE.

Paige twirls and collides with Brian, the pierced guy from Speed Dating.

BRIAN

Hey, hot stuff.

PAIGE

You came.

BRIAN

I like how you move.

PAIGE

Why don't you join me, then?

She throws her arms around his neck. He matches her rhythm. Forgotten, Dorothy melts back into the crowd. Her eyes scan the room. No sign of Campbell.

BACK ON PAIGE

Or, rather, Paige's gyrating pelvis. Brian teases her lips with his.

BRIAN

Wanna crank this up a little bit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Two tabs of Ecstasy appear from his tuxedo jacket. Paige pops one into her mouth. He downs the other.

Dorothy spots the transaction.

PAIGE

Did you know this house has eight bedrooms?

Paige catches Dorothy's disapproving stare and slides over.

PAIGE

I'm not going through another Valentine's Day with no one to kiss.

DOROTHY

You won't feel any better.

PAIGE

I already do.

With a whoop, Paige leads Brian out of the ballroom.

Dorothy checks her watch as the band kicks in with a thrash version of Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are." Miserable and alone, she looks out over the dancing mob. Her eyes lock on --

EDGE OF DANCE FLOOR

And the leering cherub mask. As quickly as it's there, it's gone.

Tossed about by moshers, Dorothy heads in the mask's direction. Heads and shoulders spin about. A dancer bumps her, knocking her to the ground. Rude guests have left the floor littered with beer, cigarette butts, and plastic cups. Dorothy looks in horror at her soaked hands, her ruined dress. Then, in front of her, she sees a discarded cherub mask.

Dorothy reaches for it. A dancing foot kicks it away.

Out of nowhere, a hand yanks her to her feet.

JENNIFER

Are you okay?

DOROTHY

He's here!

OVER DOROTHY'S SHOULDER

Jennifer catches a flash of the cherub mask and freezes. It's gone, only to instantly re-appear thirty feet across the ballroom.

BACK TO SCENE

Dorothy plows ahead, knocking party-goers aside like rag dolls. Jennifer's on her heels. They close in on the cherub. Jennifer rips the mask off to reveal Max, the artist.

JENNIFER

What the hell are you doing here?

MAX

I came with friends.

DOROTHY

(off mask)

Where'd you get that?

MAX

At the door.

DOROTHY

(to Jennifer)

Look.

Several cherubs move throughout the ballroom.

Jennifer takes in Dorothy's trashed dress.

JENNIFER

Go clean up. I'll take care of this.

Still shaky, Dorothy obeys. Jennifer turns her attention back to Max.

MAX

I also came to tell Lily that she's busted. The museum in Chicago called. She never showed up for the conference. Classy, huh?

Jennifer's disturbed by the news. Max checks out her low-cut dress.

MAX

I thought about you this morning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER
 (looking at his
 crotch)
 How could you tell?

He scowls, replaces the cherub mask, and rejoins the throng. Jennifer pulls her cell phone and dials out.

JENNIFER
 (into phone)
 Detective Vaughn, please... Can
 you tell her Jennifer Keats
 called? It's urgent.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paige and Brian go at it on a satin floor cushion. A bottle of champagne rests on the floor next to them. He unbuttons the back of her dress, pulls the top down and kisses her breasts. Paige closes her eyes. The drugs are kicking in. Everything feels good. He picks her up and deposits her on the bed. Paige slides his shirt off. Hands burrow under the crinolines of her skirt. He tugs them up to her thighs.

PAIGE
 Wait.

He runs his tongue down her chest.

PAIGE
 Slow down.

BRIAN
 Shhh.

PAIGE
 Let's talk a little.

BRIAN
 You taste like bubble gum.

Paige stops him.

PAIGE
 I mean it.

BRIAN
 You're gonna cum either way, so
 why does chit-chat matter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He goes back to kissing her. Paige shoves him off. Drunk, stoned, stunned, he lands on the carpet with a thud.

PAIGE

Get out!

He smirks.

PAIGE

Get out!

Brian grabs his shirt.

BRIAN

Skank.

And he's gone. Fighting back tears, Paige runs to the door and locks it.

EXT. MASTER BEDROOM - TERRACE - NIGHT

Paige slips out the French doors. She moves to the edge of the terrace and looks over.

ON TERRACE BELOW

Several guests mill about and smoke. The sound of the BAND is DEAFENING.

Paige looks around. Lightheaded. Trying to get her bearings.

JACUZZI

GURGLS and HISSES seductively at the other end of the terrace. Paige undoes a clasp and throws back the plastic cover. The WIND whips up. Shuddering, she sheds her dress and heads for the steaming turquoise water.

PAIGE

Ouch!

Paige retracts her stubbed foot. Looks down. Notices the pile of plumber's tools that Campbell has left hidden to one side of the tub. She shakes off the pain and slips into the water.

Head falls back. Bubbles rush up to her neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A JET BACKFIRES, sending a splash up and over Paige's face. She opens her eyes and wipes the chlorinated water from her lips. Pulling a hand back, she notices the wet rose petal stuck to her palm. Paige sits up.

Rose petals cover the surface of the Jacuzzi.

She looks to the French doors. A dark figure watches from the shadows. Instinctively, Paige covers herself.

PAIGE

Hey, freakshow --

The cherub steps INTO VIEW -- his knife at his side.

CLOSE ON MASK

On the eyes behind it, seeing Paige's horror.

On the mouth, curled in mad delight.

On the drips of blood that ooze from the nose.

BACK TO SCENE

Paige screams. Gets to her feet. The blade swings toward her chest, but she jumps back, slips, falls end over end out of the Jacuzzi to the hard terrace floor.

PAIGE

Help me!

The JACUZZI MOTOR and the MUSIC downstairs drown out her cries.

The cherub closes in. Paige stands, but her wet feet stick to the cold slate terrace. She backpedals, falls hard with a fearful whimper.

KNIFE

soars against the starry sky.

BACK TO SCENE

Paige rolls, grabs the cherub's knife-hand at the wrist.

PAIGE

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The other hand draws back and punches her in the face. Her head snaps back from the blow, and she lets go of the killer's wrist. She falls against the terrace wall. Head rolls back. Catching a glimpse of --

TERRACE

below. Oblivious guests smoke and laugh.

BACK TO SCENE

Paige tries to yell but can't muster the breath. The cherub swipes at her throat. She steps back on wobbly feet, barely avoiding the blade. It swings again. Paige swerves, but the Jacuzzi blocks her way. With a vicious shove, the cherub knocks her back into the water.

UNDERWATER

Her body drops. Wild eyes look up for a sign of the attacker, but he's out of sight. Paige pushes up as --

The plastic cover crashes onto her, shoving her back under. It's a flurry of jets and bubbles. Paige struggles to get her bearings. Pushes back up. The cherub's face meets hers through the clear plastic.

He kneels on the cover.

ON PAIGE

realizing what's happening!

With a flick, the cherub secures the cover with the clasp and steps back onto the terrace.

Feet kick. Fingernails claw at the hard plastic. Paige shoves her face into a tiny air pocket, but a new rush of bubbles and water obliterates it. The hot, chemical infused water burns at her eyes, but she focuses, spots another air pocket inches away. Moves for it when --

EIGHT-INCH DRILL BIT

punches through the cover. As soon as it's there, it's gone.

CHERUB

Outside, the cherub holds the plumber's DRILL. A squeeze of the trigger sends a MECHANICAL WHIR across the terrace.

Paige notes the tiny air hole. Lips close around it. Suck in a trickle of precious oxygen.

The drill slams through the cover again -- this time inches from Paige's face. She steals another breath and darts away. Unfortunately, full lungs increase her buoyancy. She floats to the surface. The drill bit plunges through the water and into Paige's arm. A bubbly scream mixes with the blood from the puncture wound.

The cherub smiles, pleased with himself. He watches as his victim huddles against the bottom of the Jacuzzi. Paige bangs the cover with her feet. Her wild eyes beg for a reprieve.

Another air hole opens with a ZING of the DRILL. Like a starved goldfish, Paige zooms to the surface, inhales madly. The DRILL JABS again, this time near her chest, and she retreats to a corner.

Bloody clouds fill the water. Paige has little left in her. Head spinning, chest heaving, she takes her first underwater breath and gags. Now, it's only a matter of seconds.

The cherub realizes this. He clicks off the DRILL's safety control, and it RUNS of its own accord.

Paige slams the plastic again. Takes another deadly inhale.

In one move, the cherub unlatches the cover and tosses the still running drill into the tub. Sparks fly the minute it hits the water. The cherub slams the cover back into place.

ON PAIGE

Feeling the first jolts of ELECTRICITY racing into her body. Boiling her alive. She convulses. Eyes gape. A last bubble parts her lips, and her face turns to a gruesome mask of terror.

BACK TO SCENE

The cherub kicks the drill plug free and returns inside.

EXT. MANSION - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jennifer approaches a burly DOORMAN, who oversees the line of entering guests. A box of cherub masks rests on a stool next to him. Jennifer grabs one.

JENNIFER

Where did these come from?

DOORMAN

I don't know.

JENNIFER

Were they here all night?

DOORMAN

I'm checking off names. I look down, and they're sitting right next to me. Figured they were party favors.

JENNIFER

Wrong.

Jennifer scoops up the box and re-enters the house.

INT. MANSION - FOYER - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer starts through the foyer when she notices --
Ruthie, heading up the staircase.

JENNIFER

Excuse me.

Ruthie doesn't stop. Jennifer catches up, taps her on the arm.

JENNIFER

Hi, I'm Jennifer. This is my event.

RUTHIE

Then why don't you grab a tray of crab cakes and start working the room?

JENNIFER

Because I want the pleasure of removing your ass from the premises.

Jennifer shoves the box of cherub masks into Ruthie's arms and guides her back down the steps.

RUTHIE

Don't touch me.

FROM TOP OF STAIRCASE

Dorothy watches the proceedings. She sports a new dress. Her fury is cold, controlled.

JENNIFER
She was just leaving.

RUTHIE
(to Dorothy)
I'm here for my money. Where's
Campbell?

JENNIFER
Come on.

Jennifer jerks Ruthie into the foyer. Dorothy trails close behind. Almost to the door, Ruthie digs in her heels. She studies Dorothy.

RUTHIE
He left you.

DOROTHY
No.

RUTHIE
Then where is he? Did I mention
that half my jewelry is missing?

Dorothy can't answer. She touches the necklace under her blouse.

RUTHIE
Hurts, doesn't it?

For the first time, we see a crack in Ruthie's hard-assed facade.

DOROTHY
He loves me.

The crack seals up.

RUTHIE
Grow up, honey. Everybody knows
the heavier the heiress, the
heavier the trust fund.

JENNIFER
Get out!

It's a side of Jennifer that we haven't seen before. She pushes Ruthie to the door and shoves her out.

EXT. MANSION - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer presents Ruthie to the Doorman.

JENNIFER

She's done for the night.

RUTHIE

Get your hands off.

Seething, Ruthie slips into the darkness.

JENNIFER

(back to Doorman)

Check I.D.'s and stick to the guest list. If anything's weird, you have my cell number.

DOORMAN

Speaking of which, a Kathy Hudson called the main line. Said she's bringing thirty extra people. What do I do about them?

JENNIFER

Anybody with Kathy is in. Have the valet guys call me when she gets here.

Jennifer heads back inside. There's no sign of Dorothy.

INT. MANSION - DOROTHY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jennifer pushes into Dorothy's bedroom. RUNNING WATER comes from the attached bath. Jennifer approaches.

JENNIFER

Dotty?

She enters.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Dorothy covers the red splotches on her cheeks with concealer. Jennifer goes to her.

JENNIFER

Need help?

DOROTHY

I'm okay. Seriously.

(then)

My date will be here soon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jennifer smooths the back of Dorothy's hair. Dorothy catches her friend's reflection in the mirror.

DOROTHY

What's wrong?

JENNIFER

That Max guy said Lily didn't make it to Chicago. Did Paige ever call her mother and find out?

DOROTHY

Well, you can't ask her now. She's busy.

It dawns on Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Something's going on. You're scared. You think Jeremy's here.

JENNIFER

No, I don't. I promise --

DOROTHY

My dad has a gun. He keeps it in his study.

JENNIFER

Absolutely not.

(then)

Dorothy, relax, I'm just concerned about Lily. That's all.

They head out of the bedroom and down the hall as Jennifer's CELL PHONE RINGS. She answers.

JENNIFER

Hello?

VAUGHN (V.O.)

It's Vaughn.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. POLICE CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

Vaughn drives the city streets and talks on her phone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VAUGHN

Sacramento came through with the release picture. The photo's ten years old, but it should help you make an I.D.

JENNIFER

Max Ives was at the party tonight. He said Lily didn't go to Chicago.

VAUGHN

That's why I've got two of my guys waiting for him at his place.

JENNIFER

Do you think it's him?

VAUGHN

You tell me. We're looking for someone between five-eleven and six feet.

JENNIFER

Uh, no.

VAUGHN

One-seventy to one-ninety pounds. Black hair, brown eyes.

Jennifer looks down into the foyer filled with men of varying shapes and sizes. One guy catches her stare and winks. Jennifer flinches, breaks eye contact immediately.

JENNIFER

Easily half the guys at this party.

VAUGHN

Everything's fine. Just sit tight, and I'll see you in an hour.

Vaughn disconnects. Dorothy stares at Jennifer with frozen anticipation.

JENNIFER

She's got the photo.

(then)

Let's find Adam.

CUT TO:

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Jennifer and Dorothy slip down into the foyer. It's still wall-to-wall people. For once, Dorothy's the more composed of the two.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer and Dorothy enter the kitchen. They stop in their tracks when they see --

Adam, guzzling a glass of champagne. He reaches for the bottle and refills. His eyes connect with Jennifer's. Dorothy promptly exits.

JENNIFER

Which of the twelve steps is that?

ADAM

(buzzed)

Jen! You're beautiful! It's Valentine's Day! Celebrate with me!

He looks at the pile of trash bags scattered around him.

ADAM

Hey, who's in charge of these?

(to caterers)

Chop, chop, guys!

Heartbroken, Jennifer goes. He's on her heels.

INT. BALLROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer tries to lose Adam in the crowd.

FROM STAGE

The band speeds to a throbbing finale.

Adam catches up to Jennifer.

ADAM

Don't be mad.

She opens her mouth to let him have it when --

ON STAGE

There's a POP from the band's AMPS, and the power goes out in the ballroom. The crowd sends up a moan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jennifer's CELL PHONE RINGS. She answers.

JENNIFER
(into phone)
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. DOROTHY'S MANSION - VALET STAND - NIGHT

Staring amusedly at an entourage of beautiful twenty-somethings, a VALET ATTENDANT speaks low into the phone.

VALET ATTENDANT
Your princess has arrived.

KATHY HUDSON, a blonde slip of a girl, stumbles to the front of the group. She wears a party crown from Burger King and a ten-thousand-dollar mink coat. She's trashed.

JENNIFER
Shit. We blew a fuse.

Adam tries to get Jennifer's attention. Jennifer covers the phone with her hand.

JENNIFER
Go away.

She means it. He complies. Dorothy approaches.

JENNIFER
Do you know where the circuit breaker is?

DOROTHY
I can do it.

JENNIFER
No, let me.

DOROTHY
You have a guest to greet. I'll be fine.

Embracing her newfound bravado, Dorothy goes.

JENNIFER
(back into phone)
Stall her.

Jennifer clicks off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Kathy throws her arms around the Valet Attendant.

KATHY

You're cute.
 (looking up at the
 mansion)
 My party!

Which means, "Release the hounds!" The entourage races for the house. The Valet Attendant can only watch them go, never realizing that one of the group is Ruthie.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. The tea lights from the cabaret tables cast an eerie glow. Jennifer stands by the stage and watches the band pack up their instruments.

JENNIFER

Guys, the power will be up in a few minutes.

The LEAD SINGER doesn't even slow down.

LEAD SINGER

We got a gig in Oakland at twelve-thirty.

JENNIFER

The guest of honor is on her way up. Just one song. I'm begging.

LEAD SINGER

Can I have your phone number?

JENNIFER

You can have all the leftover chicken skewers.

LEAD SINGER

Fine.

He starts to unwind his mic cord.

AT FRONT DOOR

There's a commotion as Kathy Hudson and crew make their grand entrance. Jennifer zips up to Kathy and extends a hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

Kathy, Jennifer Keats. So great
to finally meet you.

Kathy lurches, vomits down the front of her fur, and
passes out in the arms of the GUY behind her.

GUY

Dude, she is wasted.

The entourage laughs.

GUY

We'd better get her home.

Speechless, Jennifer nods. She catches the eye of the
Lead Singer.

JENNIFER

You guys can go.

(then)

There's dipping sauce in the
kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - TIGHT ON DUFFEL BAG - NIGHT

as deliberate hands unzip and rifle through it.

Taking advantage of the moonlight, Ruthie shakes the
contents onto the floor. Like a mad archaeologist, her
fingers pick through socks and toiletries. There's no
sign of a checkbook or wallet. Something gleams in the
darkness. It's the Rolex.

There's a NOISE outside.

Ruthie pockets the watch and slips to the door. She
cracks it.

INT. HALL

Jennifer zooms past with a flashlight.

Ruthie ducks back inside, waits a beat, then looks again.
The hall is clear.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Ruthie steps into the hall. Instead of heading for the
main staircase, she starts in the other direction.

END OF HALL

An open doorway looms. Ruthie steps inside and shuts it behind her.

INT. SERVICE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Ruthie stands in the utilitarian stairwell, designed to keep the servants away from their masters. The surroundings are spartan, but Ruthie doesn't spend much time looking. She heads down the steps two at a time.

GROUND LEVEL

A service entrance. Ruthie tries the door. Locked. She continues down the steps and into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - BILLIARDS ROOM - NIGHT

A red-velveted pool table commands the middle of the floor. The balls are racked and ready for play. Ruthie blows into the room.

RUTHIE

Fuck me.

Frustrated, she perches on the edge of the pool table and scatters the balls across the velvet. Ruthie pulls out the Rolex and fastens it on her wrist.

The door to the billiards room opens, and a man backs inside. He's dragging something.

RUTHIE

Hey! How the hell do I get out of this place?

The cherub turns around, looks at her quizzically, drops his cargo.

Ruthie stares in horror as he takes a step toward her, revealing the Maid's dead body.

RUTHIE

Well... I should go.

Pretending not to see the mess, she tries to step around him. A drop of blood spills from the cherub's nose. He pulls his knife. Charges.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The blade sinks into Ruthie's back. She screams at the white-hot pain, watches in horror as the knife rises again. She twists away, thinks fast, and grabs a pool cue out of a nearby rack. Swings it. Bashes the cherub in the kidney. He falls back. Groggy, bleeding, Ruthie drops her weapon and charges out the door.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Screaming, she tears down the hallway, but she's deep in the bowels of the house. No one can hear her. Fortunately, the darkness is thick and black. Perfect for hiding. She opens a door and slips into --

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT

So, so dark. Ruthie fumbles to get her bearings in the pink marble bathroom.

The lights flash on. Someone found the circuit breaker.

Ruthie stares at her teary reflection in the bathroom mirror. The wound in her back bleeds profusely.

From the hall, there's a CLATTER.

Ruthie spies the dry sauna. She flips off the bathroom light switch and heads for it.

INT. DRY SAUNA - CONTINUOUS ACTION

It's dark in here. Instinctively, Ruthie drops to her knees and backs under one of the benches. Her eyes never waiver from the door until something brushes her shoulder. Ruthie looks down at the human arm that drapes across her chest. She screams, pushes it away, turns to see Campbell. His face, or what's left of it, is cloaked in a final, silent scream.

Hyperventilating, Ruthie pushes the corpse off of her and slides out.

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Ruthie bolts for the exit when she hears another NOISE in the hall. She backs away from the doors and spies...

WICKER LAUNDRY HAMPER

In a flash, she's inside.

INT. LAUNDRY HAMPER - NIGHT

It's a tight fit, but Ruthie burrows into a pile of musty towels. Her breathing is jagged, terrified. She closes her eyes, calms herself.

There's a RIP as the pool cue slams through the top of the hamper, millimeters from Ruthie's terrified face. She screams. Presses up against the side as the cue slams through the front. With everything she's got left, Ruthie blasts out of the hamper.

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Spills end over end onto the bathroom floor. The cherub hovers over her. Aims for her head. Swings. Ruthie rolls, and he misses. She gets to her feet and tears out of the bathroom. The killer rams the cue back into the hamper and pulls his knife.

INT. SERVICE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Gathering strength, Ruthie climbs for her life. She passes the service entrance, knowing already that it's locked.

SECOND FLOOR

Ruthie arrives at the door that got her into this mess. She tries the knob. It doesn't budge.

FOOTSTEPS come from below. Ruthie darts up another flight.

THIRD FLOOR

She cranes her neck and gazes down into the twisting, dropping maze of stairs and banisters.

TWO STORIES BELOW

A hand clasps the railing. Deliberate FOOTSTEPS make their ascent.

Ruthie spins and runs up the steps, taking three at a time.

The cherub continues his methodical climb.

FOURTH FLOOR

The attic level. One door stands at the top of the stairs. Ruthie tries it. No good. She pounds, kicks, claws at the wood.

RUTHIE

Help me!

The footsteps stop. Ruthie twists to find nothing. She blinks. Takes one step down at a time.

RUTHIE

Please, don't hurt me.

(another step)

I don't want to die.

She stops. Listens. Nothing. She makes it to the landing. Breathes easier now. Looks over the edge of the banister, thinks she sees something down in the twisting, dropping maze of the stairwell. Looks closer. It's just one of her high heels. Everything looks clear. She turns and --

The cherub shoves her against the railing. The force is bone-crushing, rapid fire.

Ruthie screams, tries to push forward, but he shoves her again. WOOD CREAKS as the railing breaks off and plummets into the abyss. Nothing's left of the banister but the spindly wooden slats.

RUTHIE

No.

The cherub shoves again. Ruthie loses her footing and sits back on the slats. They give way and she pitches over the edge.

The cherub's mouth reacts in surprise. Ruthie hasn't fallen!

The Rolex watch, too big for her wrist, has caught on one of the slats. It bends at a hundred and seventy-five degree angle, but it still supports her weight.

She twists in the air, stares up into his unfeeling eyes.

RUTHIE

Help me. Please, help me. You can have anything you want.

The cherub steps forward. Extends a hand. And unclasps the watch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruthie shrieks as her hand slips out of the band and she drops end over end through the stairwell. It's a messy, interminable fall as her flailing body ricochets against the unforgiving banisters and slams to the floor.

Ruthie's eyes blink, flutter, close.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

The ballroom is completely cleared out. Jennifer hands a check to a CATERER.

JENNIFER

Thanks, Scott.

CATERER

Happy Valentine's Day.

JENNIFER

Right back at ya.

He goes, leaving her all alone. Jennifer yanks down a heart-shaped BALLOON and POPS it with a fork. She pulls her cell PHONE and dials out. There's nothing on the other end but RINGING.

DOROTHY (O.S.)

Campbell didn't even call. I'm kicking him out of the house tomorrow.

Dorothy stands in a dark corner of the room. Jennifer suppresses the scare and goes to her.

JENNIFER

Dignity.

(then)

I've already got the word for 2002. Self-sufficient.

DOROTHY

That's two.

JENNIFER

Call it a hyphenate. Thanks for all the help tonight.

DOROTHY

Who are you calling?

JENNIFER

Vaughn. She should've been here by now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

Traffic's probably a nightmare.
Oh, well, I'm gonna go break up
Paige's sex-fest.

JENNIFER

Why?

DOROTHY

You know girls like Paige.
They're fine when they're fooling
around, but the morning after,
they complain about how sleeping
with strange guys destroys their
self-esteem. I don't want to hear
it.

(then)

Like she'd know how that feels.

JENNIFER

I think she does.

DOROTHY

That's 'coz you're a pretty girl.
Hurt is finite for your species.

Dorothy spits out a bitter laugh.

JENNIFER

Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Just kidding. It's the champagne.
Where's Adam?

JENNIFER

Hopefully, in bed.

DOROTHY

Men. They lie. They keep
secrets. Every last one. He
could be Jeremy, you know. Adam.
Ever thought of that?

JENNIFER

Don't even joke.

DOROTHY

How do you know if deep inside
that gorgeous man of yours lurks a
psychopath? You don't know much
about him. You know where his
office is. How he laughs. The
size of his dick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Stung, mind racing, Jennifer withdraws from the verbal blows.

JENNIFER

Enough.

DOROTHY

You and I need to cut them loose.
Self-sufficient. See? You
already forgot.

JENNIFER

Go to bed, Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Even if Adam isn't the bad guy, he
still cut you up pretty nicely.

Dorothy levels a defiant gaze and goes. Jennifer collapses into a chair. Depositing her phone on the table, she pours herself a glass of champagne.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jennifer finishes straightening up. Moving to the sink, she notices Adam's rose still sitting in its glass of water. Jennifer picks it up and hits a switch.

The GARBAGE DISPOSAL RUMBLES to life. Bud side down, Jennifer feeds the rose into the GRINDING GEARS until it's nothing but a three inch piece of mangled stem.

She sweeps up her cell phone again.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

Bulging trash bags in hand, cell phone wedged between ear and shoulder, Jennifer heads for the garage. There's nothing but RINGING on the other end.

Outside, the night is dead, and she's alone. Realizing this, Jennifer quickens her pace.

EXT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Still on her phone, Jennifer opens an already crammed trash bin and shoves one of the bags into it. She moves to the next when she hears --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MUFFLED RINGING.

Jennifer stops. Is she crazy? She shifts her phone to the other ear, opens another trash can and deposits a second bag.

More RINGING.

Jennifer zeroes in on the SOUND. It's coming from the last trash can. Every SHRILL RING twisting her stomach in knots.

Jennifer goes into a defensive stance. Filled with trepidation, she pulls away the lid.

ON JENNIFER

as her mouth opens in a horrifying scream.

The cell phone slips from her ear, and smashes to the pavement. Plastic goes flying, but Jennifer doesn't notice. Her eyes are locked on --

JENNIFER'S POV

Vaughn's twisted face staring back at her from its dank, metal prison. Her throat is a mess of congealed blood. Her body is crumpled and lifeless. Her police PHONE RINGS one last time, then STOPS.

Discarded on top of the entire mess is --

The dry cleaning receipt. Adam's valentine. Jennifer's red handwriting is still scrawled across it. "I.O.U. some T.L.C. this P.M."

BACK TO SCENE

Jennifer is too frozen to reach for it. A sharp, nauseating terror flows down through every inch of her body. She looks back to the house --

There's a light on in Dorothy's room.

Jennifer reaches for her broken phone. Tries to get a signal. Impossible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A scream is ready to erupt from the bottom of Jennifer's gut, but she stops herself. She has to keep her wits together. She has to get her friend out of there, and there's only one way -- the way lovers have done it for centuries.

Jennifer scoops up a handful of rocks from the driveway. She sneaks up to Dorothy's window, hides herself behind a row of hedges. The first rock sails into the air. Misses.

JENNIFER
(fierce whisper)
Dorothy!

Another rock. PING, as it hits the window. No answer. Another. Another. Another.

JENNIFER
Dorothy!

Adam's face appears in front of Jennifer. He's heard the ruckus, peers through the open curtain of a first-floor window. Jennifer steps out of sight. Sucks in a terrified breath. Adam stares out into the night.

Jennifer looks at her palm. There are a few rocks left. She steps back and hurls the handful at a bank of windows just down from Adam. PING. PING. PING. He lets the curtain fall back into place and goes to investigate.

Jennifer bolts out of her hiding place, tears around the house, and arrives at the back door.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jennifer slips inside. Hugs the walls. Shoots for --

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

It's darker in here. Jennifer weaves her way through the cabaret tables. Her gaze is locked on --

FOYER AND STAIRCASE

She skirts another table, is almost out of the maze, when her dress catches on a chair, which catches on another, which pulls the tablecloth, which tips the crystal champagne flutes. They teeter, but Jennifer steadies them with shaky hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM (O.S.)

Hi.

One of the FLUTES teeters again and CRASHES to the floor. Stomach churning, Jennifer turns to find her wild-eyed boyfriend -- just feet away.

JENNIFER

You scared me.

ADAM

I'm sorry.

He touches her bare shoulder. Jennifer holds back tears.

ADAM

You're freezing. Were you outside?

JENNIFER

No.

ADAM

I heard a door shut.

JENNIFER

Oh, yeah. I was just putting some empty bottles out on the back step. I'm just too exhausted to make a trash run tonight.

ADAM

I'll finish the rest of it tomorrow.

Adam pulls away and crosses to the stereo. In an instant, a supersexy, super-slow version of "I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANYTHING BUT LOVE" seeps through the SPEAKERS.

ADAM

Dance with me.

She doesn't know what to do. She doesn't know if he knows that she knows. She's afraid he'll kill her if she resists.

He takes her in his arms, and they begin to slow dance to the SONG. His body presses against her. His hands run down her spine, and she shudders in terror.

ADAM

I screwed up, Jen. I'm sorry.

She wills herself to stay calm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

You... you had a few drinks. It's not the end of the world.

ADAM

No. Jen's disappointed.

JENNIFER

No. Jen's stupid. And sanctimonious. And demanding.

(then)

You're a great guy.

ADAM

I'm a drunk. Who gets out of control. It scares you.

JENNIFER

You feel things. And if I can't see that...

ADAM

You were always a good listener.

He pulls back and looks into her eyes. She tries to accept his stare, must not fall apart. She gently puts her head on his shoulder.

Tears of fear and horror moisten her eyes as he buries his head in her hair, takes in her fragrance. Quickly, he moves to her lips, maneuvers her over to a cabaret table, and pushes her back. His body presses against her. His hands run down her legs, and she trembles.

He jerks at the front of her dress. Unclasps his belt.

JENNIFER

I went off my birth control.

He stops.

JENNIFER

Do you have...

ADAM

In my wallet? Gentlemen don't really do that, Jennifer.

JENNIFER

There's one in my purse.

He bores deep into her. Jennifer's mind whirls. Waiting for her chance to escape.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JENNIFER

I want you.

The sound of her voice is fearful. Adam misconstrues it for heated anticipation.

ADAM

I'll wait here.

She slides out from under him and darts across the dance floor.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Out of Adam's sight, Jennifer zooms up the steps.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Numb, she keeps moving down the hall. Her FOOTSTEPS sound like cannon fire. Her every sense is in overdrive. The door to Dorothy's bedroom is part way open.

JENNIFER

Dorothy.

She throws open the door.

INT. DOROTHY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Disaster. The vanity is overturned. Sheets, stripped violently from the bed, lie in a lumpy heap on the floor. Next to them, the cherub necklace.

ADAM (O.S.)

Jennifer!

She races out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Explodes into the master bedroom. Jennifer's crying, now. Wet, fierce, hysterical tears.

JENNIFER

Dorothy, answer me!

She takes a sweep of the room. It's empty.

FROM MASTER BEDROOM TERRACE

The Jacuzzi MOTOR CHUGS.

EXT. MASTER BEDROOM - TERRACE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Steam slips out from under the Jacuzzi cover and floats into the winter sky. Jennifer moves to it and turns OFF the MOTOR.

A GURGLE of WATER spurts from beneath the cover. It sprays the white skirt of Jennifer's dress. She looks down at the pink stain as the CHURNING, foamy WATER finally SETTLES. Jennifer glances at the plastic Jacuzzi top.

Paige's bloated face rises to the surface. Her mouth is open in a silent wail.

Jennifer chokes on her sobs and stumbles back inside.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer trips over the floor cushions, falls. Adam's face appears in the doorway.

ADAM

Good idea.

He starts for her. Jennifer spies the empty champagne bottle.

JENNIFER

Get away from me!

She sweeps it up and bashes him in the groin. Rocked by the blow, Adam falls back into the hallway and screams. Jennifer darts out of the room.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

On his knees, blocking her path to the main staircase, an enraged Adam writhes on the ground.

Jennifer turns, bolts for the service staircase at the far end of the hall.

ADAM

Jennifer!

CUT TO:

INT. SERVICE STAIRWELL - NIGHT

She explodes through the door and onto the landing, but there's nothing to stop her forward momentum. The banister is gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's falling before she even realizes it. Her foot catches in between two of the broken banister slats.

There's a cruel SNAP as her ANKLE twists, but it alters her path from straight down to a diagonal flight through the air and onto the staircase.

Falling down the stairway. Her body slamming into and rolling over each step with sickening thuds. Down. Down. To...

FIRST FLOOR

She comes to a terrifying rest next to the service entrance. Jennifer is motionless, stunned. Gasping to replace the wind knocked out of her lungs.

Her hand touches the bloody pool that seeps underneath her. She touches it. Touches herself. Tries to assess the damage to her body. Turns and realizes that it's not her blood --

It's Ruthie's. Rigor mortis has set in, but blood still seeps from the gaping wound in her stomach. Two splintered banister slats are still embedded in the soft tissue.

Jennifer struggles to get up, hurt, disoriented, her dress slick with red. She looks up to the top of the stairway. Sees no one. Jennifer tries the door. Locked. She turns and pushes through another one.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer looks down the long corridor. The entryway and front door loom at the opposite end. Escape. She goes for it. Limping, then running. Gritting at the pain. Her body becoming a machine, a fulcrum of perpetual motion born of her instinct to survive.

She's halfway down the hall. Passing a maze of closed doors. And then --

The cherub steps INTO VIEW -- blocking her way.

Jennifer's body tries to catch up with her mind as she stops her forward momentum, spins around, and scrambles back the way she came.

FEET POUNDING across the floor. She sees all the closed doors but doesn't know where they lead, her breathing labored, and the THUDDING of HEAVY FEET behind her and run, run, oh God run! She throws herself through a swinging door and finds herself in the --

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

There's another door at the opposite end of the expansive, overly formal room. She charges for it.

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer freezes as she takes in the study. The leather-paneled walls. The taxidermied bear in the corner. The giant mahogany desk -- with the gun in it!

She flies for the desk. Slides behind it. Tries the phone. The line is cut. She rummages through the center drawer. Just pricey pens and paper clips. She hastens for another drawer. Finds the gun and the box of bullets.

FOOTSTEPS STOP outside the study door.

Jennifer sweeps up the gun and bullets and rushes to the louvered closet at the end of the room.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Jennifer shuts herself inside. Fumbles with the awkward cargo in her hands.

She drops to the floor, burrows back underneath the winter coats, umbrellas, and two pairs of feet!

Frank and Lauren Wheeler hang by their necks from the closet bar. Their purple faces are frozen in agony. Lauren's toes brush against Jennifer's face. She scrambles away, is about to scream when --

The study door opens.

Jennifer shakes uncontrollably. Fighting against the urge to pass out. Trying to load the gun. Several BULLETS drop to the floor with a CLATTER.

FOOTSTEPS APPROACH the closet.

Jennifer's breaths are spastic. Her fingers scramble to fit the bullets in the chamber.

The FOOTSTEPS are getting CLOSER.

Jennifer centers herself in front of the door.

The knob turns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A finger tenses against the trigger. BAM! BAM! BAM!
The BULLETS tear apart the louvers and thrust the door open. Rough, irregular light bathes the closet.

Jennifer creeps out and scans the floor. It's empty. No body. Just three gaping holes in the opposite wall. Jennifer stares at them, unbelieving, ready to break down when --

TIFFANY begins to SING. "I Think We're Alone Now" is CRANKED UP to deafening proportions. Jennifer reloads, gets to her feet. The ankle pain is really starting to kick in.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

She keeps going. Mind over-alert. Hearing SOUNDS from everywhere, above her, behind her. Looks back down the hall, sees the empty foyer, decides to go for it.

Jennifer charges, every cell focused on one thing -- the front door. Her ankle gives way, but she keeps running. The marble floor of the foyer gleams. It's almost within her reach. She closes in when --

A CRASH comes from the foyer.

Jennifer freezes. Cornered. Finally losing it, she backtracks down the hall. She spots an open doorway. Moves to it. Peers into the darkness.

There's a steep, wooden stairway that leads into the basement. Jennifer contemplates entering. Contemplates fainting.

She doesn't see -- behind her -- another door opening -- just a crack at first -- and then swinging open wide -- a blur of a figure lunging at her as --

Jennifer turns. Sees the masked face. Puts up her hands to block the blow. Impact! The gun goes flying. So do Jennifer and the cherub, falling backward through the basement door and into the darkness.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS ACTION

It's a twisted, crashing jumble of limbs. Bodies fall end over end. Hit the cement floor with a bone-crunching smack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jennifer lies limp and facedown on top of the cherub. She stirs, gets her bearings. Shivering, virtually comatose, she drags her injured body toward the staircase. Never taking her eyes off her attacker.

She reaches the first step when --

The cherub bolts upright.

Jennifer freezes.

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM!

The BULLETS rip into the tuxedo shirt, drive the cherub back and to the floor.

Adam stands halfway down the stairs. In his hand, the smoking GUN. He rushes to Jennifer. Puts his arms around her.

ADAM

Are you okay?

Jennifer nods. She's slipping into shock.

ON BASEMENT FLOOR

The cherub is lifeless. Head cruelly twisted away from them. Adam starts for the body.

JENNIFER

Stay away from him!

Adam rips the mask off, revealing --

Dorothy.

JENNIFER

No!

Jennifer tries to crawl to her friend. Adam shields her with an embrace.

ADAM

Don't look at her.

CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Adam's on his cell phone. Stunned, overcome, Jennifer sits nearby. Stares at her shaking hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

It's at the top of the street. On the right... Please, hurry.

He disconnects and slides next to Jennifer.

ADAM

The police are on their way.

JENNIFER

(in her own world)

I can't believe it. She was happier than I've ever seen her.

ADAM

Shhh.

JENNIFER

She was my best friend.

ADAM

I know.

Jennifer looks at herself. The blood stains. The uncontrollable tremors. Now, the tears come. She buries herself in Adam's chest.

ADAM

But when you're that lonely, that unhappy, you learn to hide it. Never disappears, though. It just stays inside and eats away at you.

JENNIFER

I loved her.

ADAM

Sometimes that's not enough.

She searches his eyes, and he smiles.

JENNIFER

I love you.

ADAM

I know.

He pulls her close.

JENNIFER

I'm so sorry. For the way I've been. For how we've treated each other --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ADAM

Shhh. It's over, sweetheart.
It's over.

Her sobs are fierce. Adam smooths her hair. Rubs her back. Comforts her like the best boyfriend in the world.

ADAM

Baby, it's over.

His eyes are strong and steely. His arms hold her tight. Jennifer never sees the trickle of blood, dripping from his nose.

THE END