

VAPOR

a screenplay by neil labute
based on the novel by amanda filipacchi

renaissance films

pretty pictures

third draft
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"Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not..."

- W. Shakespeare, The Tempest

SLOW FADE IN:

WARNER BROTHERS LOGO

comes into focus, clouds drifting slowly behind it. After a moment, the 'WB' disappears into the haze and WE SEE

EXT. CITY SCAPE - MORNING

Manhattan, the center of New York City. Way, way below US.

An isle of regimented brick, concrete and steel, broken only by a patch of lush green here and there. Cars moving in tiny rows down below. For a moment, there is nothing but surreal beauty, bliss, and silence.

And then WE drop.

Hurtling down, hundreds of feet per second toward the ground, just missing birds that SCREECH to get out of the way. Tall buildings passing now, rushing glass. And only as WE reach ground level do WE come to a stop as the SOUND and movement of the city overtakes US. A city that, for the moment, is being battered by rain.

A YOUNG WOMAN moves past. Fairly cute, a touch heavy, a mass of dark curls. This is ANNA GRAHAM, 30's, would-be actress, professional photocopy attendant and part-time ear piercer, pushing her way uptown through THE CROWD and fighting to stay dry. She is losing.

ANNA

...oh, damn! I hate weather.

She bobs along for a moment with a soaked copy of "Backstage" held over her head, then disappears into a building. In her hurry, Anna doesn't even notice the faint rainbow over the Chrysler Building.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' COPY CENTER - DAY

A sterile stretch of copy machines, enlargers, cheap computer monitors, etc. AN AFTERNOON CROWD milling about.

Anna, hair still damp and sporting a multi-colored apron, stands at a cash register, counting copies and punching numbers. A FEMALE STUDENT stands across from her, watching.

ANNA

(Scottish Dialect)

...so sorry. (TO STUDENT) It's just this bloody machine...

STUDENT
 (Scottish Dialect)
 Not a problem. Take your time.

The student glances around, then leans in toward Anna.

STUDENT (cont'd)
 You're from Edinburgh, aren't you?

ANNA
 Aye, that's...and you're from?

STUDENT
 Ummm, Edinburgh as well.

ANNA
 That's funny. (HITS A BUTTON) There we are. That's three-fifty, please.

STUDENT
 Great. (PAYS HER) And you didn't even charge me for the copy of myself.

ANNA
 'Scuse me? (TENSE) What?

STUDENT
 I was in here two days ago with my classmate--we're over at NYU--and he chatted you up.

She holds a moment, waiting to see if Anna can call up the memory. A LINE is forming.

ANNA
 Ummm, I don't really...

STUDENT
 Blonde hair, smiles a lot. 'Brett,' from Texas. No?

ANNA
 Look, sorry...now, if you'll excuse me I've got to...

CUSTOMER
 Hey, sister, let's move it...

STUDENT
 One second, please. (TO ANNA) I stood and listened to you all that time, as you spoke with him. You said you were from Austin.
 (MORE)

STUDENT (cont'd)
 You told him about your growing up
 'round there...you had the Texan
 accent, for God's sake!

ANNA
 ...I don't know what you're talking
 about. Now could you please go?
Please...

The student glares at her, then turns to the crowd.

STUDENT
 That's fine...I just want to know
 your game. (TO THE CROWD) What is
 she on about, that's what I want to
 know! What?!

She stares Anna down one last time, then hurries off. The
 folks in line watch her go, then slowly turn to Anna.

ANNA
 (normal voice)
 Don't ask me, I just work here.
 Next!

AN OLD WOMAN in line leans over to HER HUSBAND and WHISPERS.

OLDER WOMAN
 ...actress.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' COPY CENTER - BACK ROOM - LATER

A sort of employee's lounge/storage room. A few chairs from a
 previous decade and a battered counter top. An ashtray.

Anna with her feet up, sipping a Coke and eating from a bag
 of Doritos. She is reading Miss Julie and CRYING softly.

LARRY, a pimply Assistant Manager of maybe 30, wanders past.

LARRY
 ...that dude hates women...you know
 that, right? Strindberg.

ANNA
 I know. It's still sad. (WIPING HER
 EYES) I'm doing a scene from it...

LARRY
 You need a 'Jean?' I'd be killer in
 that part...

ANNA
 ...ahh, no. No, I'm good.

LARRY

Your loss. (TURNS BACK) Hey, Anna, you wanna work a double? We're doing inventory...

ANNA

Nah, I have my class thingie this afternoon, then I'm over at the jewelry store...

LARRY

Why do you have two jobs, anyway? You only need another twelve hours a week and you could be pulling down full benefits...like me.

ANNA

Yeah, but then this'd be considered my career and I'd have to commit suicide, so...

LARRY

Whatever. (SMIRKS) You ever need a scene partner, you gimme a jingle.

ANNA

Got it. (GOES BACK TO READING)
Thanks...

EXT. MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON - VARIOUS SHOTS

The city after lunch. Taxis pounding down avenues, PEOPLE staggering back to work. Puddles in the crosswalks.

Anna wanders through a mid-town crowd, heading south. She carries two big tote bags, an empty birdcage on her back. She BUMPS into A BUSINESSWOMAN who gives her a dirty look; she stares her down with a silent "What?!" and a shrug.

INT. THEATER SPACE - SAME TIME

A small playing space at one end of a room. Makeshift curtain and a tangle of hanging lights. A few rows of seats at the other end. A GROUP OF SPECTATORS watching; some take notes.

CLOSE ON the cage with a stuffed bird inside. It rests in the hands of Anna, dressed in a 19th Century gown and heavily made up. She is performing her scene with A YOUNG MAN playing 'Jean.' He wears a fake moustache and carries a stick.

MISS JULIE

...no, I won't leave it in strange hands. I'd rather have you kill it!

JEAN

Give the little beast here then and
I'll wring its neck.

MISS JULIE

Dear little Serena... (TO THE BIRD)
Must you die and leave me?

JEAN

Don't make a scene. Come on, now!

'Jean' snatches the bird from the cage and accidentally drops
it. A FEW SNICKERS from the class. Anna is horrified by this.

JEAN (cont'd)

You--(shit)--you should learn how
to kill chickens, then you wouldn't
faint at a drop of blood...

MISS JULIE

Kill me, too! Kill me! Oh, how can
you butcher an innocent creature
without so much as a quiver? How
I loathe you! I curse the hour I
first saw you, I curse the hour I
was conceived in my mother's womb!!

Anna has ended in a heap at the feet of her classmate. After
a dramatic moment, she stands and they hold hands. A solemn
bow. A SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE from the class.

INT. THEATER SPACE - AARON'S OFFICE - LATER

A cramped office space in the back of the theatre. Jammed
with memorabilia, photos, etc. Mostly of A MAN, smiling
broadly in a variety of roles. Back when he had hair.

The man is AARON SMITH, handsome, late 40's. Now balding. He
smiles across a desk at Anna--face still made up as 'Julie.'

AARON

...listen, I'm going to be blunt.

ANNA

Okay, umm...

AARON

I don't care what your peers said.
It was...good. Honestly.

ANNA

Thanks. (BEAT) ...but?

AARON

Look, Anna, you know what I'm going to say. You were you. You weren't some poor Scandinavian aristocrat, you were just...Anna Graham. A very good Anna Graham, but still.

ANNA

Oh. (SIGHS) ...I see. Again.

AARON

Yes. Anna... I'm advising you to switch career paths, and I'll tell you why.

ANNA

...ahh, alright...

AARON

...you have a sweet face, but by no means ravishing. And your body... look, you could never be a leading lady.

ANNA

...did I forget to make my payment this month or something?

AARON

Anna, listen to me. This is for your own good, and the good of the group, too. People don't like to see other people fail...

ANNA

I'm not failing.

AARON

Yes, you are.

ANNA

It's an acting seminar. A seminar! You don't fail those...

AARON

If anyone can, it's you...your personality is too strong and you seem unable to adopt a different one. Or even a variety of emotions. You are simply too much yourself.

ANNA

I'm...I mimic people where I work. All the time now...I take on their voice and mannerisms and stuff. I think it's helping...

AARON

Anna, please hear what I'm saying. I like you, you're a nice person. We've *slept* together. I want you to succeed! But you won't, you never will. Not at-acting...I've taught many people like you, and they all end up the same way...

ANNA

What...killing themselves after your pep talk?

AARON

No, in television, and I don't want to see that happen to you.

ANNA

I'd love to do TV, are you kidding me?!

AARON

Yes, I was, actually...

ANNA

Oh.

AARON

I don't know what to tell you, Anna. You would have to do things, I mean things so radical...so... *humiliating*, really...to even start to break away from who you are.

ANNA

...I could do that! I think...be radical. Sure...

AARON

Anna, please. This is not for you. It was time to tell you. It was. You are genuine and true to a fault --and that is precisely what works against you in your acting.

ANNA

...you mean, I'm not a good enough liar. Is that it?

AARON

Basically, yes.

INT. THEATER SPACE - FREIGHT ELEVATOR - LATER

A musty elevator from another century; essentially a wooden cage that raises and lowers on a cable.

Aaron and Anna riding downstairs together, not speaking. He finally glances over at her. Looks her up and down.

AARON

...why are you still wearing that get-up?

ANNA

I'm *humiliating* myself. (DEFENSIVE)
Whadda you care?

Aaron is about to respond, but stops. Clears his throat.

AARON

...Listen, not to seem insensitive, but there is one other matter that I'd like to discuss with you.

ANNA

Okay...

AARON

One of my students--you don't know her, she's in Monday's group--has an unfortunate name. It's *ethnic*. I was wondering if you would mind if I told her to change her name to yours, for career purposes...

ANNA

What?!

AARON

Your name would be an amazing one for an actress... 'Anna Graham.'

Anna turns abruptly, confronting Aaron.

ANNA

I can't believe this...I can't believe I keep coming here...

AARON

It would really help her out... she's a major talent.

ANNA

You're an ass, you know that?

AARON

Come on, there's no need for that...

ANNA

Yeah, there is, because you should know it. You are an asshole, Aaron!

The elevator lands. Anna, near tears, yanks the gate up and starts off. Suddenly, she turns around and walks up to Aaron, SMACKING him hard with one of her tote bags. She then runs off, the birdcage CLANGING wildly about.

AARON

(calling after her)

You do understand that she can take it if she wants to, since you don't have a SAG card! I just thought as a courtesy I would ask you first...

EXT. 'EARS TO YOU' JEWELRY STORE - LATE AFTERNOON

Anna looking in the window of a pretty standard boutique for jewelry, ear piercing and accessories.

Anna has been crying. She glances at herself in the darkened window of the business next door, trying to smile--she looks like Giulietta Masina at the end of Nights of Cabiria.

ANNA

(to herself)

"...humiliating," huh? Okay. Fine.

INT. 'EARS TO YOU' JEWELRY STORE - SAME TIME

Business as usual. A GROUP OF WOMEN sit around, waiting to be waited on. EMPLOYEES hard at work: piercing, putting out stock, etc.

The bell at the front door JINGLES and people turn. In walks Anna, still dressed from head to toe in her make-up and costume, but with a few flourishes. The birdcage is tied to her waist; the bird itself rides like a plume in her fancy piled-high hairdo and she staggers about, using 'Jean's' stick as a cane. And make-up--a lot of make-up.

ANNA

...sorry I'm late, ladies... (TO THE CUSTOMERS) Okay, who's next?

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - 14TH STREET - NIGHT

A lonely section of grubby concrete, offset by benches and garbage cans. TWO OR THREE PEOPLE down the way. Floodlights glaring down. The only sign of life is a flutter of fabric in the distance.

The fabric belongs to Anna's ill-fitting dress. She is seated on a bench near the stairs, head in hand and feeling sorry for herself. After a moment, TWO BUSINESS GUYS wander down the stairs, full of liquor and wanting a train. Pronto. It doesn't take them long to notice Anna.

BUSINESS GUY

...hey, look... (LAUGHS) It's that one chick...

BUSINESS GUY 2

Who?

BUSINESS GUY

You idiot. From Gunsmoke...that bartender lady.

ANNA

...she owned the place, stupid.

BUSINESS GUY

Ooohhh...it speaks. So what's your name, barmaid?

ANNA

Kitty.

BUSINESS GUY 2

That's a dumb name...

ANNA

It's not mine...it was her name. 'Miss Kitty,' actually.

BUSINESS GUY 2

It's still dumb...

ANNA

Yea, well, talk to Marshall Dillon, not me...

BUSINESS GUY 2

What the hell's with that outfit, anyway?

BUSINESS GUY

The freak probably lives in the tunnels down here...

ANNA

I'm an actress, asswipe...

BUSINESS GUY

Oh, God, not that! (CLUTCHING HIS HEART) Anything but that!!

Anna starts to stand up to defend herself when a CRY FOR HELP rings out.

In the distance, the flurry of A MAN being pulled off the platform and into the tunnel by TWO HULKING FIGURES. Another SCREAM. Anna and the business dudes look at one another.

ANNA

Somebody's being attacked...

BUSINESS GUY

Hey, man, you got your cell? Call the cops!

BUSINESS GUY 2

Hold on...I wanna see what happens.

Anna doesn't really think so much as leap into action. She rummages in her purse and produces a small bottle. Pepper spray. She clutches this in one hand and her cane in the other as she rises up and waddles off down the platform. Anna springs onto the tracks below.

BUSINESS GUY 2 (cont'd)

Kitty, get back here! (TO HIS CO-WORKER) Dude, go help her...

BUSINESS GUY

Screw her. She's the one with the stick...

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - SAME TIME

A MAN is huddled on his knees, weathering kicks, fists and abuse from two tormentors. WE can't see his face.

DAMON

....O, damn...

Anna emerges from the shadows and CLEARS her throat. Twice. Surprised, the two male attackers look up and turn. Only now do WE fully see the man on his knees: This is DAMON WETLEY. Indiscriminate age. Clothes the color of pale skin.

Anna looks at him, taken aback by his beautiful, haunted eyes and strangely calm manner--especially in view of present circumstances. She CLEARS her throat again and speaks.

ANNA
 (softly to Damon)
 Gosh...you have wonderful eyes.

DAMON
 Thank you...

One of the brutes smiles at this and looks down at Damon. He SMASHES Damon in the face after this comment. Anna holds up her spray.

ANNA
 Okay, umm...this isn't Mace. It's worse. It's pepper juice and it hurts...

THUG 2
 You want 'er, or should I?

THUG
 Uh-uh, she's mine...

The first thug makes a lunge at Anna, who brings her can of pepper spray forward in a fluid move. A jet of hot juice jumps out and the man drops, clutching at his eyes and SCREAMING. Anna stands over him as the second thug starts toward her; Damon reaches up and clutches at him, which catches Anna's attention enough to turn her around.

She sprays wildly at him, which causes the liquid to splash on both the attacker and Damon. Both men reach up to their eyes and stagger back. The assailant on the ground is now grabbing blindly at Anna and manages to get a bit of her dress in his hands. Anna turns and uses her cane like a foil, WHACKING the man squarely several times until he falls back.

The stick breaks during this last flourish but it is enough. The two men limp off down the tunnel, CURSING and stumbling away. Anna turns immediately to Damon.

ANNA
 ...God, I'm so....are you alright?

DAMON
 No, no, thank you, I'm very...
 (TRIES TO STAND) I'm going to be sick.

He flashes a gorgeous smile up at her, then vomits all over the tracks. Anna tries to be a good sport, even when he does it a second time.

ANNA
 That's okay, that's fine...eeewww.

INT. 'SUDS FOR DUDS' LAUNDROMAT - LATER

A low-rent joint full of washers and dryers. Harshly lit.

CLOSE ON a bottle as Anna quickly works on getting the top off. She fights it, even using her teeth. Finally, it comes free and she moves to Damon, who is curled up on a bench. His clothing is dirty and torn in places.

ANNA

...here you go. Try this. (LAUGHS)
I feel a little like Jane Eyre...

She splashes some water on his eyes and Damon immediately lashes out, WAILING at the pain.

ANNA (cont'd)

What's wrong?! (PULLING BACK) Hey,
I tried to do a nice thing here...
it's just water.

DAMON

Yes, it's just water. I'm sorry,
but I'm very sensitive to every
aspect of it, and I need something
else. With a better pH to it...

ANNA

A what?

DAMON

The pH balance...what've you got
there, I can't see it, but it must
be...Evian?

ANNA

Yeah. I bought you the good kind.
It's the most expensive...

DAMON

Yes, but the pH is very high. It's
toxic to someone like me...

ANNA

Which raises a pretty good question
right there...who the hell are you?

DAMON

Sorry, right...Damon Wetley. Nice
to meet you.

ANNA

(British dialect)
Anna Graham. Charmed, I'm sure.

She and Damon share a moment; rather, he reaches out, touches her breast by accident, then finds her arm and pats it.

DAMON

Sorry, I was...are you English?

ANNA

Yes, I'm...actually, no, I'm not.
It's just a thing I do. I sometimes
copy people, it's for my work. I'm
an actor.

DAMON

(quietly)
...oh. I see. *That.*

ANNA

I love your accent, by the way...

DAMON

(nonplussed)
What accent?

ANNA

You're British, right? I mean...

DAMON

No. I just speak properly.

ANNA

Oh. (STOPS HERSELF) It's okay. One
of those nights, I guess...

DAMON

Look, could you get me something
with less alkalinity, nothing over
a seven. Volvic would be lovely.

ANNA

Right, sorry, your eyes...yeah,
I'll run back to the store.

Anna grabs up her purse and move toward the door. She stops herself and heads back to her own pile of bags.

ANNA (cont'd)

What'm I thinking? Geez, this is so
crazy...look. I have my own.

Anna reaches into her large tote and produces a half-full
bottle of Volvic water. She also pulls out a fencing epee.

ANNA (cont'd)

Here... (SHOWING IT OFF) I forgot,
I had a weapon. See?

(MORE)

ANNA (cont'd)
I do a little bit of fencing, but when I saw you I didn't think, I just ran over. (POINTS TO DRESS) I mean 'hopped.'

DAMON
'Fencing.' (SMILING) Well, that helps explain the *swordsmanship*.

Anna moves to Damon and gently sits, scooping his head into her lap. She pours the water onto his eyes.

DAMON (cont'd)
Ahhhh...that's nice. Thank you.

ANNA
Did you know those guys?

DAMON
Who? The gentlemen in the subway?

ANNA
I'm not sure about the 'gentlemen' part, but yeah, them...

DAMON
No, afraid not. I was just sitting there, on a bench, and they came up and grabbed me... (REACHES HIS HAND TO HERS) ...you're dribbling.

Anna has been studying the thin material of Damon's clothing. Mostly the area around his crotch. The material is very thin. She suddenly looks up, embarrassed at being caught out.

ANNA
Oh, sorry! (ADJUSTS WATER) Anyway, good thing I came along...

DAMON
Yes. It was quite good indeed... your saving me. Thank you.

ANNA
No problem. You'd've done the same for me...right? (WAITS) ...maybe.

DAMON
Honestly? I'm not sure. (TOUCHING HER ARM) What you did was quite extraordinary. Really, it was.

Anna smiles at him, one of her patented 'Anna' smiles. And when she smiles, everything gets just a little brighter.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

At a corner down in Union Square. Pretty quiet for New York.

Damon and Anna stand under a street lamp, not knowing what to say. Anna hands Damon a damp piece of paper; the tears pour down Damon's cheeks. He dabs at them from time to time.

ANNA

You poor thing...should we go to an emergency room? Or the police?

DAMON

I don't think so. I'd like to go home, actually...if you could just hail me a cab, I'd be grateful. I live outside the city, so I...

Anna nods and walks to the street. WHISTLES like a Teamster. A cab pulls up almost instantly.

DAMON (cont'd)

Wonderful...oh, and would you mind giving me your phone number so I can thank you properly?

ANNA

No.

DAMON

Oh. Well, then...I guess I'll...

ANNA

I mean, yes...no, I don't mind. Here.

She pulls a marker out of her purse and looks for a stray slip of paper. Nothing. She turns to Damon, who shrugs. Anna suddenly reaches over and writes her number in fat numerals across the taxi window. The driver looks over, annoyed.

ANNA (cont'd)

Oh, mind your own business!

Damon climbs into the taxi, then abruptly gets back out and kisses Anna lightly on both cheeks.

DAMON

(explaining)

...sorry for my boldness, but I didn't think I should shake your hand in case I'm still contaminated with your spray.

ANNA
...that's thoughtful.

As an afterthought, Damon adjusts the bird in Anna's hair. He then slips back into the cab but rolls down the window.

DAMON
Anna Graham...tell me something before I go. What is your greatest wish? That one above all others that would make you happiest...

ANNA
Umm, well, I'd...huh. Lemme think. Ahh, I need to be a better actor. It's all I wish for in life. That's what I want...

Damon nods and SIGHS heavily. He sits back and motions to THE DRIVER. Anna watches the cab leave and touches her cheek.

CLOSE-UP - A YOUNG MAN

staring at US. He is 30's, sandy haired. Well built. He is handsome in a way, but carries great sadness in his eyes. He is earnestly talking with A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN. His name is STEM, and only after a moment does it become obvious that he is in a wheelchair.

GO WIDER to see that he is on television, part of a popular medical drama. Think ER in New York City.

INT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - LOBBY - MORNING

A spacious if somewhat antiquated apartment building for seniors. Thick pillars to the ceiling. Overhead chandeliers.

Anna enters from the street and into a vast room that makes up the lounge. Anna's parents run this place and Anna herself is a familiar figure to the pensioners. She moves past A FEW OLDER PEOPLE, who sit in tight little groups watching the TV.

ANNA
...morning, good morning...hey, what's up on Trauma Central?

MR. HORVATH
It's a tape of last night's show. Stem is determined to walk again.

ANNA
Mr. Horvath, his legs're...not just the character's, but the actor's...

MR. HORVATH

You just watch! He's traveling to Denmark for the operation...

ANNA

Look, I know it's television, but people don't just suddenly start...

MR. HORVATH

It's not TV! It's a docu-drama!! These stories are all...

ANNA

(repeating)

"ripped from tomorrow's headlines," yeah, I know. I know.

Anna smiles as she is nearly sideswiped by a FLASHING blade. That's what I said, the flashing blade of a sword. Anna looks over, barely changing expressions.

ANNA (cont'd)

Mom...

MRS. GRAHAM

En Garde!

ANNA

No, mother, not now. I'm late... I just dropped by to ask dad about something.

MRS. GRAHAM

Anna, you must always be ready for what this life dishes out! Always! Now, 'En Garde!'

ANNA

I don't wanna. I had a lousy night and I just want to...

MRS. GRAHAM

It's not a matter of 'want,' it's a matter of 'must.' Do it, girl!

ANNA

Fine...whatever.

Anna drops her belongings, at the same time producing her own foil from the largest bag. She and her mother square off. The mother in question is MRS. GRAHAM. 50's, tall, solid, a wave of red hair. Vaguely European. Dresses well, for a fencer.

MRS. GRAHAM

Show me what you've got...

And they're off. Hacking at one another, past the ancient residents in the lobby. Most barely look up, so used to this family ritual by now. A few CHEER ON one fencer or the other.

RESIDENTS

Get 'er, Mrs. Graham! Go on, Anna, you can take her!!

ANNA

Can't we ever just *communicate* like normal people?

MRS. GRAHAM

This is communicating. Fighting is an analogy for life...

ANNA

Yeah, but it's not normal.

MRS. GRAHAM

Nothing in this world is normal, child. Not you, not me, certainly not anybody else.

ANNA

But this is just weird. We're a weird family...

MRS. GRAHAM

I wouldn't trade us for anybody. Keep your shoulder up!

ANNA

Where's dad?

MRS. GRAHAM

He's been dealing with a sink in 3-B. Backed up again...Whoahh, almost got me there! Nice!!

Like a female Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone they go, up the stairs and down, around a couch and between pillars. Cutting and parrying their way back to where they started.

Suddenly, Mrs. Graham feints right, moves left and Anna's foil shoots into the air, CLATTERING LOUDLY on the ground. A SMATTERING OF APPLAUSE from the residents as Anna stands pinned to an ornate glass wall by her mother's blade.

ANNA

Okay, Mom, you win. Mom!

MRS. GRAHAM

Again. Because you don't push! In your life, your art, everything.

(MORE)

MRS. GRAHAM (cont'd)
 You, Anna, are soft...just like
 your father.

Mrs. Graham turns on her heel and moves off. Anna shakes her head, then follows.

INT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - APARTMENT - LATER

Mr. Graham chewing on a piece of dark toast and watching something intently.

He is 50's, elegant, European matinee idol-type, with an ascot protruding from the throat of his orange work jumpsuit. WE now see he is studying his daughter, Anna, who is seated nearby and staring out the window. Drifting.

MR. GRAHAM
 ...honey, what is it? (CAUTIOUSLY)
 Have you met somebody?

Anna snaps out of her daydream and turns back to coffee and a danish. She smiles thinly at her father and begins to eat.

MR. GRAHAM (cont'd)
 What, did he hurt you?

ANNA
 No, I'm okay, I think...I'm fine.
 Perfectly. (THINKS A MOMENT) And,
 yes, I met a man. I helped him...

MR. GRAHAM
 You gave 'em money?

ANNA
 No! I...well, I rescued him. Sort
 of. On the subway.

MR. GRAHAM
 What?

ANNA
 Well, not on the subway, actually.
 The tracks. In a tunnel...

MR. GRAHAM
 My God...

ANNA
 I used the pepper spray you got me
 for my birthday...and saved him.

Mr. Graham visibly brightens at this.

ANNA (cont'd)

Anyway, we met and he's...I dunno.
He's interesting. I hope he calls.

MR. GRAHAM

Be careful, baby...keep your guard
up.

ANNA

God...why does everything have to
do with *fencing*? You and mom are
not in the Olympics any more...it
was over thirty years ago! (PLEADS)
Why can't you be like real parents
and say, 'That's wonderful, what's
his name?' Or something...

Mr. Graham reaches over near a wall phone and grabs a pen and
paper.

MR. GRAHAM

You're right, I should get his
info...run a check on him through
the Internet.

Exasperated, Anna pushes away her breakfast and stands. She
gathers up her belongings.

MR. GRAHAM (cont'd)

What's the name?

ANNA

Forget it, he's...It's 'Damon.' His
name is Damon.

MR. GRAHAM

God, I hate that name...like that
little kid from The Omen?

ANNA

'Da-mon.' Not 'Damien.' Look, have
a good day, okay?

Anna heads toward the door with her father following her.

MR. GRAHAM

Is he wealthy? Not that I care,
but...

ANNA

I dunno. Oh, and Dad? My oven isn't
heating up very well. Could you...?

MR. GRAHAM

Of course! I'll...I don't know why you had to move out of here, by the way.

ANNA

...I just need some space. I'm an adult. Anyhow, three blocks down isn't exactly *moving out*.

MR. GRAHAM

Still...

ANNA

I need...that's why I work so much. That is why I go on *unscheduled* vacations and audition for national touring shows.

MR. GRAHAM

Why?

ANNA

Because! I need to stake a claim on my life...a life of my own.

Anna shrugs and turns to open the door, fiddling with her keys.

ANNA (cont'd)

Anyway... 'bye. Tell mom that I'm...

Suddenly, Mr. Graham SHOUTS at her with her back turned.

MR. GRAHAM

En Garde!!

Anna YELPS and turns to him, angry.

ANNA

Stop that! Dad...just, please. (AS SHE EXITS) Stop.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' COPY CENTER - AFTERNOON

The place is fairly empty, just before the lunch rush. Larry is loading machines with paper. Anna is wiping down computers and studying her hazy reflection in the window.

A VOICE calls out behind Anna. It is TRINA, another employee who is 20's, a bit goofy. She signals to Anna with a wave.

TRINA

...Anna? You got a call on two.
(GRINS) Sounds cute...

ANNA

Thanks. Hey, lemme ask you...does
this apron make me look heavy?

TRINA

Ummm...no. Not too bad. Rainbow is
pretty slimming...

Anna smiles and moves toward a counter, wavering for a moment before she grabs the receiver. Then, impulsively, she reaches over and picks it up. Pushes a button.

ANNA

"Always Copies, where our motto is,
'Why be sloppy when you can always
re-copy? For free.' This is Anna."
Hello? Hell-o, is there...?

EXT. CITY STREET - PAY PHONE - SAME TIME

A bank of pay phones near the park. Yes, Central Park. KIDS running around, followed by NANNIES or MOTHERS. TOURISTS pass in waves. A MAN selling balloons nearby.

Damon stands cradling the phone in one hand. He is again dressed in a variation of his strange clothing.

DAMON

...yes, hello. Hi. Anna? This is...
Damon. Damon Wetley. We met last...
a few days ago. I don't know if you
remember?

INT./EXT. COPY CENTER/PAY PHONE - SAME TIME

(Intercut the following exchange as necessary)

ANNA

...oh, hey, hi! Ahh, yeah, Damon,
yes, I remember. God, of course.
Yes. How are you? Are you...you
know, are you well?

DAMON

'...well?' Umm, don't know about
that. I've never felt that 'well,'
I mean, not for some time. And
that's such a strong word, anyway,
and so subjective. 'Well.' (BEAT)
But far more importantly, how is my
savior today? Hmm?

ANNA

...oh, you know, pretty well. I mean, okay. Good. I'm good. Geez, now you've made me self-conscious. I'm fine. Really fine. (WAITS) And...? You called because...

DAMON

...to check on you, really. That's all. To make sure you were, you know, 'well,' (CHUCKLES) and see if I could repay you, for the heroics. Might we speak about it? Near the zoo, say, at twelve tomorrow. I hope you can make it. Goodbye.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - TIGER CAGE - THE NEXT DAY

A blast of foliage in the heart of the city. A zoo tucked away from the angry throb of cars and noise. The tiger cage at lunchtime. TOURISTS and EMPLOYEES lolling about.

Anna stands patiently, watching the big cats from a safe distance. She notices that the animals study her every move now--mostly because of the sandwich she is eating. She spots the "Do Not Feed The Animals" sign but, after looking around, throws a section of hoagie through the bars anyway.

DAMON

...there's a fine for that, you know.

ANNA

God! (JUMPS BACK) Sorry, you scared me...

DAMON

Forgive me. (SMILES) You looked so sweet, I couldn't help myself...

ANNA

Okay, thanks, but, see...the old 'creeping up and whispering' thing, most people hate that. Very *Ted Bundy*. Just so you know...

DAMON

I'll make a note of it. (BEAT) I don't meet many girls, actually.

ANNA

Well, you should. You should at least meet a few more so you can get better at it. Practice.

DAMON

Hmmm.

ANNA

...and you probably shouldn't call them *girls*, either. I mean, if you want to get anywhere with them.

DAMON

Oh. Right.

ANNA

Most women don't like that. I don't mind, though.

DAMON

Well, good. I'll just stick with you, then... (REACHES INTO POCKET)
Oh...this is for you.

Damon smiles at her and hands over a small ruby-colored box that glitters. Just like Dorothy's slippers. A note attached.

DAMON (cont'd)

I made that. You can open it later, if you'd like...

Damon studies her as she marvels at the little treasure-- He smiles and Anna melts a little. Puts the gift in her bag.

ANNA

You really do have great eyes...

DAMON

Thank you.

ANNA

Sure... (POINTING) Hey, what're the funky clothes for? I mean...

DAMON

...ummm, personal taste, mostly. I design them myself.

ANNA

Really? That's...

DAMON

Yes, I design most the things in my life. Clothes, house...you know.

ANNA

Huh. So, look... (SIZING HIM UP)
Why are we here? What's the...?

DAMON

I wanted to thank you properly, for saving me.

ANNA

That's sweet, honestly, it is, but it's okay. I really just went on instinct. You know?

DAMON

No, no, it was more than that, I'm sure of it. Much more. I can't explain it, really, but you need to trust me on this...

ANNA

...alright. (LOOKS AROUND) And what does that translate into, I mean, for a lay person like me?

DAMON

That I must pay you back somehow. I have to. Some gesture...a gesture as worthy as the one you bestowed on me. (THINKS) Dinner?

ANNA

"...dinner?"

A monkey CHATTERS nearby, stopping Anna from replying. She catches herself and walks off a bit. Damon follows.

DAMON

Is that not enough? Should I write you a check or...?

ANNA

(a bit underwhelmed)
No. Dinner's great, it's just that I thought...ahh, I'm pretty busy.

DAMON

Right, of course, you're an *act-or*. That must be very...something. Hmm? Glamorous or whatnot.

ANNA

You say it like it's a dirty word ..."*act-or*."

DAMON

Not at all. On the contrary, it's a beautiful art form. No...I just... nothing. So, then, you act and you're very busy.

ANNA

No, I'm an actor, so I'm constantly out of work which forces me to hold down a lot of bad, meaningless, low-paying jobs...which keep me busy.

DAMON

Got it. Right. Well, then, I must insist. A night out. On me.

ANNA

Okay...when?

DAMON

Ummm, whenever. You choose.

ANNA

I really don't have many free days. It's a busy month...

Damon stops for a moment, thinking this through. Anna glances over at the monkey cage and makes a face. Damon smiles again.

ANNA (cont'd)

...I love the set-up there, for the monkeys. It's cozy, isn't it? I mean, for a *prison*...

DAMON

Yes. Very. (HANDS OVER A NOTE)
Look, don't worry about it then. That's me. Give a call whenever it's practical for you...

ANNA

Okay. Although, I mean, *logically* speaking, the most 'practical' time for me would be...tomorrow. But I don't know if that's convenient for you...

DAMON

It's, umm...yes. It is. Perfect.

Anna smiles at him and walks over to watch the monkeys. After a moment, Damon follows. From a distance, they almost look like a couple. Almost.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - LATER

A wooded corner of the park. Anna can stand it no longer; she moves off the path and looks at her present. Reads the note.

DAMON

(voiceover)

Dear Anna Graham: This is what you must do to your old self/Use your name to understand me/(4 letter word)/Yours, Damon

Anna is a bit confused; she turns the ruby-colored box over, then opens it. Empty.

ANNA

"Anna Graham. Anna-Graham." Hmm...
Anagram. (TO HERSELF) This is nuts.
Let's see...'red.' No. 'Scarlet,'
uh-uh. How about 'ruby?' R-U-B-Y.
B-u-r-y. 'Bury' my old self...

GO CLOSE to see inside the box. Nothing. Well, just a sort of hazy air. Then, slowly, the tiniest of clouds--like a cotton ball--rises up and out of the box. It bobs gently in front of Anna. GO WIDER to see a dawning amazement on Anna's face.

INT. "CUMULUS" RESTAURANT - THE NEXT NIGHT

A blaze of white, various shades. Tables, chairs, walls. Pretty upscale and teeming with CUSTOMERS.

A WAITER is standing at a table in one corner. He waits as Damon intently studies two bottles of water.

DAMON

...this should do nicely.

Damon chooses one and the waiter leaves, drawing a small blue curtain closed with a flourish for complete privacy. Anna has been watching Damon, clearly amused.

ANNA

By the way, I absolutely love my gift. I do. And the puzzle was fun!

DAMON

Well, thank you.

ANNA

But...what is it? I mean, it's a...
is it what I think it is? A cloud?

DAMON

Yes. A pygmy variety, actually, but still. A perfectly formed cloud.

ANNA

That's pretty amazing, really...
where'd you get it?

DAMON

I made it.

ANNA

Huh? ...you make clouds?

DAMON

Yes.

ANNA

Cool. What're they for, though? I mean, you know...for, like, what?

DAMON

For looking at, mostly. *Admiring.* That kind of thing.

ANNA

I see... (LOOKING AROUND) Well, no wonder you like this place, then.

DAMON

But they can be studied as well. Should be. Clouds, air. Water.

He pours some aqua into his glass, holds it up to the light for Anna to look at.

DAMON (cont'd)

In fact, the greatest actor in the world is right here in front of us. You should watch it...you'll learn a lot about your craft.

ANNA

How is water the greatest actor?

DAMON

It has the ability, through its influence, for pronounced but reversible change, without ever ceasing to be itself...

ANNA

Oh. Huh. (BEAT) My acting teacher says I'm too much myself.

DAMON

Nonsense. An actor's secret weapon is him or herself...and there's no one else like you Anna, of that I'm certain.

ANNA

...thanks. (GRINS) Well, maybe you can give him a call, then. Explain my elusive charms...

DAMON

Happily. Anyway, I'm doing a lot with it out at my house--water, I mean--experiments and such. A few for the *government*, even. (BEAT) You should come by...take a peek.

Anna looks at Damon, not sure whether this is the scientific equivalent of 'come up and see my etchings' or not. Damon smiles but seems quite serious.

ANNA

That's, umm, you know...when?

DAMON

Well, I know you're busy. So, at your convenience...

ANNA

Okay. Ahh...I mean, I have next Saturday off, and we're closed Sunday, so...what's your weekend like?

Damon is quiet for a moment, studying her. I mean, really studying her. Anna flushes. Damon snaps out of it, smiling.

DAMON

Well, I'd have to work quickly, but...yes, that's fine. Lovely.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - LATER

A cramped studio--Anna's place. Mr. Graham works on Anna's stove, tightening something inside. A NOISE in the bathroom. A VOICE MESSAGE from Damon just finishing on the machine.

DAMON (O.S.)

...anyway, I had a wonderful time and would love to see you again, even before Saturday a week. I'll be at a club in town on Wednesday, the Liquid Angel. Please join me. At 10:00 p.m. Hope to see you...

GO WIDER to see Mr. Graham stand and stretch as he throws a screwdriver back into his tool box. As he does, he notices a little ruby box on Anna's counter.

Mr. Graham opens it and looks inside, perplexed. He pokes it, smells it. Even licks it. Appears to enjoy the taste. After a moment, he reaches in and grabs the cloud, popping it into his mouth. Swallows.

Sound of KEYS in the lock. Feeling guilty, Mr. Graham quickly puts the lid on the box and goes back to cleaning up. Anna enters a moment later, just getting back from her date.

MR. GRAHAM

...good evening, sweetie!

ANNA

Dad...what're you doing here? It's so late...

MR. GRAHAM

You asked me. The oven...

ANNA

Oh, right, right, yes. Ummm...

MR. GRAHAM

You're gonna need a new heating element. I got the old one out.

ANNA

Okay, that's... .

Anna turns, hearing a NOISE in her bathroom. Mr. Graham shrugs sheepishly.

MR. GRAHAM

...what can I do? The woman hardly let's me out of her sight!

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna yanks open the door to find Mrs. Graham reading pill bottles and generally searching through the medicine cabinet. Caught red-handed, she doesn't seem to mind.

ANNA

...mom!

Mrs. Graham's eyes narrow as she holds up a diaphragm.

MRS. GRAHAM

(whispering)

...and so what's this, then?

ANNA

That is called a sensible woman's survival kit. Or, in my case, a museum relic... Please get out.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Graham is holding his stomach; obviously, the cloud has not settled well with him. Without warning, the sound of a FART. Loud and throaty. Anna sticks her head out the door.

ANNA

...umm, Dad, can you save that for the boiler room?

MR. GRAHAM

Sorry, honey...it's the pop-tarts.

Anna pulls her head back inside to deal with her mother.

The tiny cloud, looking a bit worse for wear, slowly floats UP INTO FRAME. Mr. Graham, mortified, scoops it up and returns it to the box just as his wife and daughter enter.

Mr. Graham snatches up his tools and grabs his wife's arm before she can protest.

MR. GRAHAM (cont'd)

I'll get that piece and bring it over another time, honey. Come on, mother, time to go...

They are gone. Anna stands there, unsure what just happened. After a moment, she SNIFFS the air. Goes to the sink and grabs up some Glade aerosol. Sprays.

INT. 'LIQUID ANGEL' DANCE CLUB - WEDNESDAY NIGHT

A riot of color and SOUND. MUSIC BLARING from another place, PEOPLE moving in and out of this velvet room. Off to one side, Damon and Anna, standing at a small table. Damon is locked on her, listening. Anna SPEAKING over the MUSIC.

ANNA

...so that's why I want to act. Not really for the fame or the glamour, but for more noble and worthwhile reasons. (BEAT) Is that ok? You're looking at me like I'm...

DAMON

No, of course. Yes. Such as?

ANNA

Oh, you know...my fascination with human behavior and because I, umm, love art. Stuff like that.

DAMON

But anything can be art, can't it?
What I do is art...

ANNA

No, it's not.

DAMON

Of course it is! Look at...that
cloud I gave you, it's...it's...

ANNA

No, it's science. I mean, it's neat
and everything, but it's not art.

DAMON

'Neat?'

ANNA

It's a beautiful little concoction,
Damon, but it doesn't speak to me.
Doesn't *move* me. It's not art.

DAMON

Anna, of course it is...

ANNA

Science can't be art. That would be
a contradiction in terms...

DAMON

Yes, well... (FRUSTRATED) ...then
if it isn't art, it's greater than
art.

Damon burns a hole through Anna with his eyes. Finally, she
looks away.

DAMON (cont'd)

...you sure you don't act just so
people will notice you? Hmm?

ANNA

So, is that what you do when you
lose an argument? Insult people?

DAMON

Answer the question, please.

ANNA

No, I'm not gonna... (BEAT) Yeah,
maybe a little. So what? I still
feel all that other stuff, too.

Damon nods and looks off into the crowd, his head moving slightly to the POUNDING MUSIC. He looks back at Anna, who sips on her drink. Fingers crawling toward her purse.

DAMON

You don't have to go yet, do you?

ANNA

No, it's okay. But I do need to head out soon...I'm on graveyard this week and I need the cash.

DAMON

Fine. (GESTURES) ...so, is dancing art, then? What about that?

ANNA

Well, sure. Yes.

DAMON

Why?

ANNA

Because it is...everyone knows that.

DAMON

Alright. (EXTENDS HIS HAND) Come on, then. Tell me if I'm an artist.

INT. 'LIQUID ANGEL' DANCE CLUB - LATER

An EXPLOSION of sound and movement. PEOPLE dancing, I mean, really going at it. And at the center of it all, Damon and Anna.

Anna is trying to keep up and she's not bad, but Damon rules the floor. Men, women, young, old, they are no match for this cat. He seems to float between them, defying gravity, moving this way and that almost simultaneously. After a while, Anna simply stops and watches. Damon keeps darting in, seemingly about to kiss her, hovering in front of her mouth. Just as Anna reaches out, however, he whisks himself away.

Suddenly, Anna has lost sight of him--in the throbbing crowd, she is starting to feel a bit claustrophobic. And then, like a vision, he appears. Scoops her into his arms. Moving hard to the beat. She tries to keep up but has to stop again. He SCREAMS at her to be heard above the music.

DAMON

...so?!

ANNA

What?!

DAMON

Am I an artist or not?! Well?!!

ANNA

Yes, you are! Yes!! But I...

DAMON

Yes, what?!

ANNA

I need...I think I should go! It's getting late!!

DAMON

Do you want me to walk you?! I'd be happy to take you...

ANNA

No, I can...you stay if you want!

DAMON

But you're still coming out to my home?! Please say 'yes!'

ANNA

...yes! Yes, I'd love to!!

DAMON

Alright! Thank you!! Sorry, but I find this noise very cleansing!!

Anna smiles and nods, moving off. She looks back once, able to catch only a glimpse of Damon as he bobs and weaves along.

EXT. CITY STREETS - LATE NIGHT - VARIOUS SHOTS

Anna walking back to work. She moves along the main avenues for the most part, but she knows the city well enough to use a few shortcuts. Pretty light FOOT TRAFFIC due to the hour.

Anna cuts down a dark street when she notices TWO FIGURES standing near a construction site. Anna doesn't like the look of this--their shadowy outlines against the light--and stops for a second. She is about to double back when one calls out:

FIGURE

...hey. Hold it a second!

Anna, despite herself, swings around for a moment. The two men continue to move toward her in the dark. Anna starts to back away as they advance. She turns and runs but is quickly caught. Rough hands bring her to the ground, face down. Her skirt being pulled off. Bag rummaged through.

Anna tries to scream but rough fingers slip around her mouth. Pulling her back into the dirty work area, through ribbons of 'Caution' tape. CLOSE ON her face as her eyes widen, trying to focus.

Suddenly, she spots A MAN just crossing the other end of the street. The sound of HARD SHOES moving fast on pavement.

MAN

Hey! Hey, you two!!

Anna bites into a thumb and rolls hard to one side as her attacker falls over, CURSING her. She jumps up and runs smack into the arms of NATHANIEL POWERS. 30's, dark hair, clever eyes. Anna grabs him and SHOUTS:

ANNA

Help me! Please!!

NATHANIEL

Of course, sure... (PUSHING HER AWAY) You go! Hurry!!

Anna, breathing hard, staggers toward the building opposite. Nathaniel's eyes narrow as he disappears behind strips of flapping plastic. Anna leans against a brick wall, watching as a shadowy fight rages behind the translucent sheeting. Then:

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

(offscreen)

Come here! Yeah, that's right...
you better run!!

CLOSE ON Anna as she waits nervously outside. After a moment, the sound of FOOTSTEPS. She looks timidly into the gloom to see Nathaniel walking quickly back towards her. He waves.

ANNA

Are you alright?

NATHANIEL

More than...I think it's okay now.

He reaches her, a bit winded. A bleeding lip. He leans one arm on Anna for support and hands over her purse.

ANNA

Did you...?

NATHANIEL

Yes, I hit one, but they ran off. I think my *menacing* presence scared them...

Nathaniel smiles, allowing Anna to catch the irony. She does, but she seems a bit out of it. She wanders around with her skirt in her hands, trying unsuccessfully to get it back on.

ANNA

Thank God! That's the second time this week that I've been...

NATHANIEL

What? (NOTICES) Can I help you with that?

Nathaniel bends down, quite gentlemanly, and holds the skirt open so that Anna can step into it.

ANNA

Oh, thanks. Umm, I was...actually, forget it. It sounds like one of those 'crazy New Yorker' stories...

NATHANIEL

That's fine. I usually like those. I'm Nathaniel, by the way. Powers.

ANNA

Hello. Hi. I'm Anna Graham.

NATHANIEL

Hello, Miss Anna Graham. Can I take you to...wherever you're going?

ANNA

Umm, sure. That'd be...yes.

He motions toward the street but Anna is pulling back, not ready to go back that way. Nathaniel smiles and points toward the lighted avenue.

NATHANIEL

Right...let's go the other way.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' COPY CENTER - ALMOST MIDNIGHT

Anna and Nathaniel stand at the entrance, looking around. Nathaniel LAUGHS to himself; Anna looks at him, curious.

NATHANIEL

...you work here? That's funny.

ANNA

Why's that?

NATHANIEL

That's where I was headed, when we ran into each other.

(MORE)

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
I mean, not here specifically, but
to a copy place...

ANNA
Huh. That is funny...

Anna holds up a finger, moving away for a moment. Trina is
just finishing up with TWO CUSTOMERS.

ANNA (cont'd)
Hey, Trina, can you cover for me
tonight? I just got attacked...

TRINA
Oh, okay. Sure. (GRINS) G'night.

Trina waves goodbye and returns to ANOTHER CUSTOMER. Anna
turns to Nathaniel and smiles weakly.

ANNA
Could you maybe walk me home?

NATHANIEL
...no, I won't. I'll do you one
better.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Nathaniel and Anna sitting close together in the back of a
pedicab--basically, A GUY on a bike pulling a wheeled seat.

Nathaniel watches Anna as they travel; she is resting her
head on the arm that he has conveniently put behind her.

NATHANIEL
...by the way, I do actually need
some copies. *Flyers*, really, for my
job. I mean, one of my jobs. I'm
with...I work at Waist Watchers.

ANNA
Oh. Great organization...

NATHANIEL
Thanks. I was one of the founders,
actually. And the name was mine...

ANNA
Wow. Impressive...

NATHANIEL
Thanks. (STUDIES HER) ...you know,
you have a terrific face. One of
the best I've seen...

ANNA

Oh. Well, thanks. Thank you for...
ahh, yeah. That's nice. (LAUGHS)
Coming from you, that probably
means the rest of me is too fat...

NATHANIEL

No. Of course not...

ANNA

Okay. Well, you're very sweet.

NATHANIEL

Not at all, I'm just being honest.
And direct. (GRINS)...and since I'm
being direct, I'd like to ask you
to dinner. If you'll go.

ANNA

Oh. Well, that is direct...

NATHANIEL

I know. Sorry.

ANNA

Okay, I, umm...alright. That's the
least I can do, since you...

NATHANIEL

Terrific. Maybe 'Les Deux Chats.'
Wednesday. Eight-ish?

ANNA

Oh, I hear that's wonderful...yes.
So, I should give you my...

But Nathaniel shakes his head, putting a free hand over her eyes and speaking soothingly.

NATHANIEL

...later. Right now you just lie
back and enjoy the ride. Trust me,
you're in good hands.

INT. 'EARS TO YOU' JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Jumping for a week day. EMPLOYEES working hard to meet the demands of THE CUSTOMERS.

Anna stands near a raised chair, holding a Sharpie pen in one hand and trying to keep hold of A YOUNG GIRL, who appears to have no interest in having her ears pierced. HER MOTHER, however, does. She is 30's, a native New Yorker and loud.

MOM
 ...honey, stop it, st-op! (TO ANNA)
 Just grab 'er, ya can't hurt 'er!!

ANNA
 (New York dialect)
 Ya su-re? Come 'ere, ya little...

MOM
 Absolutely!

Anna gives it her best, but the little girl is not going down easy. She throws a hand back, catching Anna across the mouth with a cheap 'flower' ring. Blood appears.

ANNA
 Geez, lady, you got a live one here!

Anna signals for help and ANOTHER EMPLOYEE runs to take over. Anna heads to the back room, a splash of red on her blouse.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Anna is outside now, having her lunch, a small band-aid on her lip. PASSERSBY are moving along, asking directions, sight-seeing, etc. Anna is sipping a Coke and carefully eating a hot dog. An oversized pretzel is nearby on a napkin.

INT. 'LES DEUX CHATS' RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A French bistro in midtown. The motif is cats and they are everywhere. I mean, everywhere. Tables, chairs, the works.

Nathaniel and Anna sit at a booth tucked in a corner. Anna is wearing a lovely dress but still sports her band-aid--which she is trying to remove by using her knife as a mirror.

NATHANIEL
 ...you really don't have to do that, you look great. Honestly.

ANNA
 Just gonna pull this off... It was a lot worse before. Some customer smacked me one...

NATHANIEL
 I see. You're always in some kind of *peril*, aren't you? (SMILES) So, somebody at the copy place hit you?

ANNA

No, no, at my other job...and I'm also an actor. Except my teacher says I'm lousy...

NATHANIEL

And are you?

ANNA

'Lousy?' No, I don't think so, but I have trouble getting into it, being somebody other than me...

NATHANIEL

That must be hard.

ANNA

It is, but I'm working on it.

NATHANIEL

Good for you. Me, I only do jobs that I'm great at.

ANNA

"Jobs?" So, you have more than one, too?

NATHANIEL

Oh yeah...I do the Waist Watchers gig, that's a few days a week, I'm a classically trained cellist, and I also have an etiquette hotline of my own--it's a per minute charge so that income fluctuates.

ANNA

Cellist? You're...musical?

NATHANIEL

Well, composer, really, but I just prefer 'cellist.'

ANNA

Wow. I...huh. Anything else up your sleeve?

NATHANIEL

Well, yes, actually...

Like magic, he produces a business card. It carries the name "NATHANIEL POWERS" on it and a blank line underneath it.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

...I always try to keep my options open.

ANNA

That's great.

NATHANIEL

It pays the bills. It has to, since I can't...anyway. Enough about me.

ANNA

No, please, you seem fascinating.

NATHANIEL

I am, actually. I mean, kind of. But I'd rather know more about you...

ANNA

Oh. Okay, ummm...I do some...

NATHANIEL

Are you seeing anyone?

ANNA

I'm sorry?

NATHANIEL

'Seeing anyone.' Dating. As I said before, I'm direct...

ANNA

Right. Ahh, no. Well, yes. I don't know.

NATHANIEL

So...which one?

ANNA

I met someone. Recently. We haven't really been dating, yet, but...

NATHANIEL

...you like him. Want him. I see, I get it. Understood.

ANNA

I'm sorry, I just felt I should be...you know...

NATHANIEL

...honest. No, I'm glad you were, because I like you, Anna. I do...

Suddenly Nathaniel is there, right next to Anna and he scoops up her hand in his.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 And I don't know who this fellow is
 or where the two of you are at...

ANNA
 ...we're just sort of...

NATHANIEL
 ...but I'd like to see more of you.
 Lots more.

Nathaniel kisses Anna's hand. She smiles and allows it.

INT. DOWNTOWN CASTING CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

A long stretch of linoleum, with chairs at various intervals.
 An office at one end.

Anna sitting toward the front of a LINE OF WOMEN, all waiting
 and holding head shots. A MIDDLE-AGED MAN emerges from a door
 with a file in one hand. Walks down the hall, pointing out
 SEVERAL WOMEN, who immediately stand and follow him. Anna,
 frustrated by the wait, jumps up and CALLS after him.

ANNA
 ...hey, umm, sir? What's up?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
 Excuse me?

ANNA
 It's just that, you know, we've all
 been waiting here in kind of a, you
 know, line, so...why them first?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
 We're doing 'Gorgeous Student' now,
 okay? We'll get to 'Average-Looking
 Best Friend' next...

With that he turns and walks off. Anna, watched by all the
 others, sits slowly back down.

EXT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - ROOFTOP - LATER

A clear view of Manhattan from here. Lots of buildings in the
 distance. Mr. and Mrs. Graham are in an intricate fencing
 duel--almost slow motion--within the fabled 'Spanish Circle,
 which has been painted on the black roof. They are complete
 with masks, armored padding, etc. Anna sits on a rough bench
 nearby, looking out at the city and watching the sun drop.

MRS. GRAHAM
 ...and point!

MR. GRAHAM

Damn! Damn it!!

MRS. GRAHAM

Point goes to me...

MR. GRAHAM

Fine, fine. Whatever. (TO ANNA) You wanna go a round, honey? It'll make you feel better...

ANNA

I have ways of getting my feelings out without using swords.

MR. GRAHAM

Technically they're called 'foils,' sweetie...but you know that.

ANNA

Whatever.

MRS. GRAHAM

Listen, don't take it out on us because your 'Mr. Mysterious' isn't calling...

ANNA

Mother...I'm going out with him tonight, okay? It's not that...

MR. GRAHAM

Then what, baby? What is it?

ANNA

...I met somebody else.

MRS. GRAHAM

Jesus, suddenly she's a slut...

ANNA

Mom!

MR. GRAHAM

Don't listen to her! (TO MRS. GRAHAM) You stop that now...

ANNA

I only had dinner with him...not the first one, the other guy.

MRS. GRAHAM

Dinner here, a meal there, that's a lot of calories...

ANNA

Wow, thanks for the support.

MRS. GRAHAM

I'm just saying, you can't sit and talk, why do you have to eat every time?

Anna gets up and stomps off toward the metal door across the way, followed by her father.

MR. GRAHAM

She doesn't mean anything by it, baby...

ANNA

I know, Daddy, I know, but I'm... it's all just a little confusing. I mean, first no guys, and now two come along and I'm...I dunno...

MR. GRAHAM

We just want you to be safe...

MRS. GRAHAM

...and maybe snack a little less.

ANNA

Don't wait up! Who knows, we may go to an all-you-can-eat *buffet*!!

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - LATER

CLOSE ON a small travel case out on the bed. GO WIDER to see Anna is bustling around it, putting her wallet inside, along with a makeup bag and tissues. On impulse, she adds a short nightgown and her diaphragm. And her ruby-colored box.

EXT./INT. DAMON'S CAR - NIGHT - VARIOUS SHOTS

A Volvo 1800E cruises through Manhattan traffic, darting between other cars.

Anna sits in the passenger seat, stealing glances at Damon. He is dressed smartly in another version of his translucent clothing, this time with driving cap and gloves. He SIGHS.

DAMON

...I'm...so glad you could make it.

ANNA

It doesn't sound like it.

DAMON

Oh, no, I really am. I've got some other things on my mind, work and all, but...really, I'm thrilled that you're coming up to the house.

ANNA

Good. Me too. Normally I wouldn't do this, I mean, just take off with some man, but you make me feel...I dunno. Something.

DAMON

I'm glad. It's always great to feel something...

ANNA

Yeah. (SWITCHING GEARS) Speaking of that...your work...what do you do, Damon? I mean, specifically?

DAMON

Umm, I don't really like to discuss it too much...

ANNA

Oh.

DAMON

I'm a...well, a sort of scientist, I suppose. Right now I'm working with water in all its many forms. And my clouds, of course. Trying to alter their density...

ANNA

Really? Geez, that's interesting. It is. So, do you...?

DAMON

I can't really say any more than that...it wouldn't be right.

Damon smiles that sad smile again and suddenly cuts sideways through traffic. SCREECHING tires and BLARING horns.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - EVENING

Hidden gates near a wooded road. Hanging mist. The thin blast of lights coming as the gates begin to open. Moments later, the Volvo darts through the opening; the gates CLANG shut.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - FRONT LAWN - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON Anna's face as she steps out of the car. Her eyes move back and forth, looking at something. PULL BACK to see that she is studying the sleek modern walls of Damon's home.

The entire place seems shrouded in a kind of beautiful, misty cloud bank. Oh, and snow. Pure white snow. Everywhere. It is a bit overpowering.

ANNA

...umm, did we drive to the Arctic?

DAMON

(obviously pleased)

No, of course not! It's all hand-made. (POINTS) I did it...

ANNA

Yeah, but it's fake, right? I mean, like from a machine or something...

DAMON

No, no, completely real. Go on, you can touch it if you like...

Anna obliges by bending down to scoop up a handful.

ANNA

...wow. You did all this, huh? The house, too? (DAMON NODS) And they don't consider it a *state*?

DAMON

No... (LAUGHS) Just an e-state.

ANNA

... 'just' ...

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - GRAND HALLWAY - SAME TIME

A wall slides silently shut as Damon and Anna enter. Damon CLAPS his hands and several fluffy clouds slowly drop into place and hover above the furniture. No, I'm serious. Real clouds. Anna wanders around the room.

Straight out of the last scene in 2001--or maybe a Magritte painting. The very modern mixed with the very baroque. Huge fireplace, suits of armor. Lots of marble and glass. An out-of-place blue vinyl couch.

ANNA

...so. Scientists make pretty good money, I guess.

DAMON

No, it isn't mine. I mean, it is, but I didn't earn it. It was my inheritance...or, what I bought with it, anyway. (BEAT) You see, my parents died in a plane crash. Which may account for some of my interest in keeping things aloft...

ANNA

...I'm sorry. (TRYING TO LIGHTEN THINGS UP) Well, I'd love to see what the other kids got...

Damon clears his throat at this, looking away.

DAMON

We didn't, umm...it was just me, I'm afraid. Well, I had a brother, but...long story.

ANNA

We have all night...

DAMON

Longer than that.

ANNA

Okay. Some other time, then.

DAMON

Yes. Maybe so. (CHANGING TOPICS) Ahhh...shall I show you around the place or would you like to dig in? I've had a nice buffet arranged for us in the dining hall...

Anna LAUGHS at this; Damon doesn't get it.

ANNA

Great...

DAMON

Did I say something funny?

ANNA

No, no, not really...I mean, funny to me, but no. I said something to my mother about a 'buffet' tonight and then, lo and behold...

DAMON

It should be quite good...

ANNA

It's not that, it's...she thinks I eat too much. Or something.

DAMON

I see. And do you?

ANNA

Well...I dunno. What do you think?

She twirls around in her Audrey Hepburn-knockoff dress and sweater and hopes for the best.

DAMON

I think you look perfectly...nice. Very substantial.

ANNA

Oh. Well, thanks.

DAMON

Sorry, I'm not too good at...why don't I show you the place? We'll get a bit of exercise so that your mother'll be pleased, and then we can eat, almost guilt-free.

ANNA

Sounds great...

Anna walks over to Damon, slipping an arm through his. Damon leads her toward a set of doors across the room, snatching up a translucent parka (with fur collar) off a nearby rack and pulling it around Anna's shoulders.

Damon calls out "Open!" and the doors magically do. Just like in the movies.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE COURT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Inside a massive compound with high walls. Detailed topiary, fountains and the like. All covered in a blanket of snow.

Damon and Anna at the edge of a man-made pond whose water isn't frozen. Swans nearby. Light dancing off the surface.

DAMON

...beautiful, isn't it?

ANNA

Very. Really, Damon, it's...so... but why winter? I mean...

DAMON

No, that's just it, you see...it's not winter. It's just snow. That's the beauty of it. No windchill, no storms. It's got all of the wonder, none of the fuss.

ANNA

But it feels like winter...

DAMON

Yes, but only here. I can leave it in an instant by driving outside my gates. So, best of both worlds... (BEAT) Plus, I think snow gets a bad rap. It's simply misunderstood.

Their eyes lock for a moment and thus begins the particular silence that surrounds a first kiss. Anna leans toward him but Damon turns away.

DAMON (cont'd)

Let's not spoil it...not yet.

ANNA

Oh. Umm, I wasn't trying to...you know, 'spoil' anything, I just...

DAMON

I know, I understand.

ANNA

...okay. Whatever that means.

Before it can get any more awkward, the swans arrive and hover. Just out of reach.

DAMON

(pointing)

Would you like to be out there... wander amongst them?

ANNA

I guess. Yes, they're lovely...

DAMON

Come on, then. Don't be afraid.

Damon steps out onto the water and starts moving toward them. Uh-huh, just what it says, "onto" the water. He walks across the pond like Jesus in the middle of a parable.

DAMON (cont'd)

Come on...

ANNA

But the...Damon, you can't do that.
It's water.

DAMON

No, it's not. It just looks like
water. But it's better...

ANNA

No, it's...and why isn't it frozen?

DAMON

...I made it. It's mine, and I'm
telling you that it's alright.
Trust me.

Anna looks skeptically at him but decides to give it a try. She slips out of her high heels and, barefooted, is about to walk out onto the pond. At the last moment, she chickens out.

ANNA

How did you ever...I mean, how is
it even possible to...?

DAMON

...the trick is knowing where the
stones are.

ANNA

Oh. *Ohh!* (BEAT) Wait, is that true,
or not...

DAMON

...if that makes it easier for you
to believe, then it's true.

Anna is about to ask another question when Damon walks back to her, putting a finger softly to her lips. With his other hand, he gently touches her face. Anna smiles as Damon takes her hand, leading her back toward his house.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - GRAND DINING ROOM - LATER

Damon sits on one side of a table, Anna on the other. They are both scooping up dessert from their plates and stealing glances at one another. A glass grandfather clock chimes 'midnight.' Clouds hang low overhead. Roaring fire.

ANNA

...hmm. If I were Cinderella, I'd
have to leave now.

DAMON

True enough. And then I'd have to
chase after you, I suppose...

ANNA

Hey, don't sound so excited...

DAMON

No, I just meant...in the story.

ANNA

Uh-uh, that came later, I think.
The next day or something.

DAMON

Really? Didn't the prince go and
find the slipper that night? After
she'd run off, I mean...

ANNA

Oh, yeah, right...forgot about that
part. I guess he did do that...

DAMON

See, the men always get blamed for
things...even when we're trying to
save you damsels.

ANNA

Yep. Just your lot in life, I
guess.

DAMON

I suppose so. (SERIOUS) I...I want
to help you, Anna, I really do.

ANNA

Well, you know...that's nice.

She is about to continue when she notices a small PLOP that
lands in her custard. Several more follow, forcing her to put
a hand over her bowl.

ANNA (cont'd)

...I think your cloud is dripping.

DAMON

Sprinkling, actually. I assume it's
the heat from the fire...

ANNA

Right. 'Sprinkling.' (LOOKING UP)
And these are all for...admiring?

DAMON

Yes. Although they're prototypes
for another thing I'm creating...

ANNA

And what's that? (GUESSES) Is it for the military or something?

DAMON

Oh no! I mean, they've given me a grant, but I'm just leading them on. No, this is...well, just know that it's very important. To me.

ANNA

Huh. You're always so mysterious.

DAMON

Not really. No, most of this is just for fun...the clouds, snow, water. All of it.

Damon reaches up and gently pushes the cloud away. It drifts across Anna's face, completely obscuring her for a moment, then moves out into the vast emptiness of the room.

DAMON (cont'd)

'Mysterious' is what I have going on upstairs...wanna peek?

ANNA

Ummm, okay...sure. Why not?

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAYS - VARIOUS SHOTS

Damon leading Anna into various rooms, down long corridors, etc. WE SEE bedrooms, sitting rooms, a sewing room, even a glimpse of a laboratory of some kind.

Damon and Anna hold hands as he leads her ever higher into the reaches of his towering estate.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - UPPERMOST HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A pale blue doorway stands at the end of a long passage. Damon steps aside and offers the honor to Anna. She smiles and pulls open the door.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna stands in the doorway, staring at the rest of the room. Damon puts a hand on her shoulder and leads her forward. Her mouth falls open just a bit.

PULL BACK to reveal Damon and Anna standing in front of an exact replica of the monkey cage from the New York City Zoo, except that it has been built inside this room.

It has the tree, a tire swing, a rope climb. Everything. The sand has been replaced by beige carpeting, but all else is exact. Large windows at one end reveal what again seems to be the outside. The gate to this strange 'exhibit' stands open.

ANNA

...is this, like, a joke or what?

Anna moves slowly away from Damon and goes to the entrance, looking cautiously around. A huge grin on her face. She looks back at him, then cranes her neck to look inside. She is about to step in when Damon charges her, pushing her from behind. Instead of propelling her forward, however, she falls to her knees and Damon tumbles over her. Without a word, Anna suddenly gets the picture--this is for her--and struggles to her feet. She heads for the door but is slammed into it by a quick-moving Damon. He grabs her around the waist and pulls her back toward the cage.

Anna gives as good as she gets, but Damon is just ultimately stronger. Finally, he gets her to the doorway and tosses her flailing body inside. The door SLAMS shut just before she can get to her feet. Anna instantly throws herself against the thick bars but it is no use. She is trapped.

ANNA (cont'd)

...no! No!! What're you doing?!!
No!! God, Damon, NO!!!

Damon seems to instantly regret what he's done--he hangs his head and steps back. Anna reaches out, pleading with both of her hands. Damon looks at her sadly, touches her fingers.

Damon points toward a note pinned to the tree and silently excuses himself. Anna SCREAMS again but she is alone.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - UPPERMOST HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Damon leans against the pale blue door, panting heavily. He takes a breath or two, fighting to regain control. The sound of Anna SCREAMING can be faintly heard from behind the wall.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna, chest still heaving, looks madly about the cage. She goes toward the note but notices a bend at the back of the space. She hurries to it and looks cautiously around; to her surprise it reveals another thin passageway, complete with nightstand, alarm clock, steel mirror, sink, toilet and bed. A set of handmade garments on the pillow. Matching shoes, mittens, hat, scarf. The works.

There is also a bank of video monitors on one wall--old, black & white--that show various other rooms in the house. Anna quickly looks about but sees no cameras pointing at her.

INSERT - VIDEO MONITORS

WE SEE a shadowy image of Damon cross to a TV. Picks up a tape and shoves it in the VCR. Damon, still shaking, settles himself down on a big bed and watches closely.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna watches Damon for a moment, then goes back to the tree and studies the note. GO CLOSE to reveal Damon's spidery handwriting as WE HEAR:

DAMON

(voice-over)

"Dear Anna: Here are a hammer and a bowling ball for your convenience, should you want to smash windows. I should warn you, however, that they are both sound and bullet-proof, and that trying to break them will only limit your enjoyment of the view from then on."

Anna looks down at her feet and, indeed, there is a blue bowling ball and a carpenter's hammer. She takes the hammer and begins THRASHING it against the glass. As promised, it only turns white in the places she makes contact. Anna returns and grabs up the bowling ball.

She heaves it at the windows, but it too only makes a variety of smudge marks as it DROPS to the floor. Over and over.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - DAMON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Another odd, cavernous room. Dali by way of science geek. Damon still watching TV, but becoming racked with fits and tears; it is too much. He turns away, crosses to a desk. Pulls a box out of a drawer. Pen, postcards. Damon selects one with a sunny picture of California, turns it over. Still crying whenever he looks up, he begins to scribble.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna, bowling ball in hand, has stopped and is listening to the sound of WEEPING. Uncertain, she moves over to the bank of video monitors and studies one in particular. It is now obvious to her that Damon is crying, but she can't make out why. FAMILIAR TV THEME MUSIC playing in the background.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Anna sitting in the tire swing, moving slowly back and forth. Her eyes never leave the pale blue door. As if by magic or sheer determination, it slowly opens with a LOW CREAK.

DAMON

...it's me.

Damon steps quietly inside, holding a tray of food. Anna and Damon are silent for a bit, staring at one another.

ANNA

(quietly)

Thank God.

DAMON

Oh. I thought you'd be angry...

ANNA

Well, don't worry, I am. I am very angry, but I figured you were going to come in with some sort of John Wayne Gacy clown outfit on, and I was really gonna be in trouble...

DAMON

That's not very funny.

ANNA

It is from where I'm sitting...now, let me out of here. Please.

Damon tries a smile but it fades. He starts to move forward with the tray but thinks better of it; he studies Anna.

DAMON

I'll make a deal with you...give me the hammer and you can have food.

Anna doesn't move but one hand involuntarily shifts toward her sweater. She glances around.

DAMON (cont'd)

No, you're not being videotaped... I just know you're hiding it, to use on me. I'd do the same. But take the food, it's more important. You'll still have the bowling ball.

Anna bites her lip, then reaches behind her back and removes the hammer. She tosses it through the bars. Damon visibly brightens and crosses to the cage, placing the food on the ground. Anna scrambles to it and gobbles up the healthy sandwich, fruit and water. Damon sits and observes.

DAMON (cont'd)

I thought making you wait to eat
might help you be more...open...
to my proposition.

Anna looks up from slurping the juice out of the fruit bowl.
That didn't sound so good: "proposition." Her eyes narrow.

ANNA

...what's that mean?

DAMON

There...wasn't that tasty? So,
then, we've already started.

ANNA

'Started?'

DAMON

We've begun. My gift to you...it's
under way.

ANNA

Damon, look, I don't...just let me
go. Let me out of here and I'll...

DAMON

No, I can't. No. Let's not waste
time with that. I'm resolute. I
must do this. For you.

ANNA

What?! DO WHAT?!!

DAMON

This. (GESTURES) Do everything in
my power to make your wishes come
true. Help you...transform.

ANNA

But I'm a prisoner.

DAMON

No, you're a chrysalis...

ANNA

Damon, I'm not a *scientist*. What
the hell does that mean?

DAMON

It's a butterfly. Or, at least,
something turning into a butterfly.
I'm repaying you by making you find
your...wings...as it were.

ANNA

"Wings?"

DAMON

Yes. In a manner of speaking...

ANNA

Yeah, but...aren't you one of those kids who grew up tearing the wings off things?

DAMON

Only sometimes. And only so I could see how those things worked.

Damon nonchalantly gets to his feet, stretching. He crosses to the tray and picks it up. Anna suddenly jumps forward and grabs hold of his leg and holds on for dear life.

ANNA

Damon, please don't do this!

He quickly pulls himself free and backs away.

DAMON

Stop it...now, you stop that! Listen to me, this is what you wanted and you're going to have it!! I am going to sacrifice my happiness for yours...

ANNA

What...? What did I want?!

DAMON

THIS! I'm going to make you a great actress...no matter what. (QUIETLY) ...I promise not to fail you, Anna. No matter how I feel about you, or what it costs me personally.

ANNA

Oh, well...that's comforting.

Damon opens the thick door and moves into the hallway. He stands in the shadows and CALLS back to her:

DAMON

We start training tomorrow.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - DAY

Anna in her new sweats, seated on the tan carpet and staring grimly ahead. Damon sits on a chair across from her (inside the cage) and rummaging through a clear plastic bag.

ANNA

...Damon...I don't understand. I thought you liked me.

DAMON

I do like you. That's why I'm going to make you happy...

ANNA

Well, I am not happy. At all. I'm disgusted. I want you to let me out of here right now...

DAMON

No. But I will give you a gift...

ANNA

How about some chocolate? I need sweets, or, or some...

DAMON

Uh-uh. No sugar, nothing unhealthy. No, my gift to you is to take away your freedom of choice for a while. Instead, you'll have freedom *from* choice...

ANNA

And the TV monitors? Why those?

DAMON

...I thought you'd be less lonely.

Suddenly, like some wild animal, Anna flings herself on Damon and tears at him. Pulling his hair and clawing at his face. Damon pushes her away and reaches into his bag, producing a gun. GO CLOSE to see that it resembles an orange plastic toy, but Damon trains it on Anna with determination.

ANNA

(giggling)

Oooohh...he's got a gun.

DAMON

* Yes. A water gun.

Anna shudders and makes a mock-frightened face. Without warning, Damon shoots her in the arm. A half-inch sliver of ice protrudes from her track suit.

ANNA

Awww! That stings!!

DAMON

I warned you...

ANNA
No, you didn't!!

DAMON
Well, I waved the thing at you,
showed it to you. That's a warning.

ANNA
Damon, I'm hurt, help me! I've got
to go to a hospital!!

Damon doesn't move to her, but instead reaches in his bag and
tosses her cotton balls and a bottle of peroxide. Bandages.

DAMON
No, you don't. Disinfect it and put
a band-aid on it.

ANNA
You said it was a water gun, you
liar!

DAMON
Ice is water. (SHOOTS AGAIN) It
also has a 'boiling' feature...

ANNA
Oww! You deceitful asshole...

DAMON
I was hoping I wouldn't have to use
it. That's why it was in the bag.

He reaches into the case again, this time pulling out a
translucent swimsuit.

ANNA
What's that?

DAMON
For swimming. After dinner. And I
need to see your body...to get a
picture of how much work it needs.

ANNA
It's *see-through*!

DAMON
No, it isn't. It's translucent.

ANNA
I'm not a piece of meat...

DAMON
Look, you're the one who wants to
be an actor. Bodies matter.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - POOL - NIGHT

A lovely indoor pool, with huge windows all around. Like a greenhouse, but with water. Clouds above, of course. Inside. Snow falling on the glass ceiling, high overhead.

Damon stands on the diving board (dressed in muscle-t, swim trunks, and hat--all translucent), pointing his gun at Anna. She stands in her swimsuit, slowly turning circles.

DAMON

...okay...that's enough.

ANNA

What's enough?

DAMON

Turning. We have to work on the legs...we could tone the arms a little more. Stomach's in good shape. Comparatively speaking...

ANNA

...thank you...

DAMON

Buttocks need firming, but that'll happen with the legs. When you stand straight, your breasts look as young as their age. You're lucky as they should still be quite nice after all this...

Anna turns slowly toward Damon. This has a bad ring to it.

ANNA

"After" what?

DAMON

After you do things. Eat better. Exercise. Become a more *positive* person. (SIGNALS WITH GUN) Okay, jump in...

Anna is skeptical, but does what she's asked. She drops into the water and disappears to the bottom. For a long time. Damon starts to worry, kneeling down and peering in.

Suddenly, Anna erupts to the surface near his face, waving her arms madly. It hasn't been a trick; she is drowning.

ANNA

What the *hell* is going on?! What's wrong with this water?!!

DAMON

It's excellent exercise...great for your...

ANNA

I CAN'T swim in it, something's the matter with it!!

DAMON

It's the opposite of my swan pond. This is highly diluted. With air.

ANNA

What're you talking about...water can't be diluted!

DAMON

Fine, then call it aeration. It's *drenched* with air, thereby offering less support to swimmers. More work is better exercise. I call it my 'Watair.'

ANNA

Please...help me...

DAMON

Look, you'll feel better if you accept the fact that you're here until we reach our goal...

Anna struggles over to the far side of the pool, paddling madly like a dog's first swim. She clings to the lip.

DAMON (cont'd)

Now...what other kinds of exercise do you like?

ANNA

None. (THINKS) ...horseback riding.

DAMON

Hmmm...

ANNA

Dirt biking. Snow skiing. Any sort of swift outdoor transportation that takes me quickly away from you...

DAMON

Sorry.

ANNA

And fencing. You know that...

DAMON

Yes, but that's risky. You'd finish me off in a second. I saw you in the subway...you're dangerous.

Damon paces back and forth above Anna, pointing a finger.

DAMON (cont'd)

Keep treading water. Oh, I rented us La Femme Nikita to watch later. I thought it might inspire you... it's about a woman who gets trained and improved.

ANNA

...yeah, to kill people.

DAMON

Still, there are similarities...

ANNA

Why didn't you just rent My Fair Lady? That would satisfy all your Pygmalion leanings...

DAMON

Not a bad idea, but Nikita's more modern. A better role model.

ANNA

You're crazy...

DAMON

I am *honestly* doing this for you. I like you, a lot, and yet I'm going through with this, in spite of it. (SHOTS AGAIN) Now swim, please!

Anna swims away from the side and fights to keep herself afloat. She dips under a few times. Damon wanders along the edge, keeping his gun pointed at Anna's trembling body.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Anna curled up on the bed, picking at healthy snacks. Damon sits away from her on the floor, water gun in hand. They are both staring at a TV screen where La Femme Nikita is playing.

At the moment, Anne Parillaud is kicking the shit out of Tcheky Karyo. Anna glances over at Damon, who notices this and scoots a bit further away. In spite of herself, Anna smiles inwardly at this.

After a moment, Damon and Anna glance over at one another again--they both look quickly away.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' - EVEN LATER

Machines chugging away. CUSTOMERS wandering around. Trina at the register. Larry adding toner to a copier out front.

A HAND falls on Larry's shoulder and he jumps, covering his apron in black powder. He looks up.

NATHANIEL

...hi, hello...sorry about that.

LARRY

It's okay, no problem. It happens.
Can I help?

NATHANIEL

I hope so, yes...I'm looking for
someone who works here.

LARRY

Who?

NATHANIEL

Her name's 'Anna.' Anna Graham.

Larry's face changes slightly. He stands up now and gives Nathaniel the once-over.

LARRY

Why do you want her? You a cop?

NATHANIEL

Umm, no, I'm not...I'm a friend.
Why would I be a policeman?

LARRY

'Cause she's vanished. Into thin
air.

NATHANIEL

Oh. Really?

LARRY

Yeah, at least from here. Hasn't
shown up for, like, over a week...

NATHANIEL

Is that right?

LARRY

Yep. And she's never even late...

NATHANIEL

Well, maybe she could be...huh.

LARRY

Yeah, 'huh.' I checked her place, even her parents. Nothing. (BEAT) I'm pretty sure she's out on the West Coast, or some place like that...

NATHANIEL

Yeah, why's that?

LARRY

'S what her mother hinted at when I went over there...she showed me a postcard or two.

NATHANIEL

Huh.

LARRY

Yep. I don't know what else to tell you...are you in her acting class?

NATHANIEL

Ummm, no.

LARRY

You sure are interested in her...

NATHANIEL

She's a lovely woman, we met, then she disappeared. Simple.

LARRY

Gotcha. Well, anyways, that's all I know...hasn't really been around since her date.

NATHANIEL

"Date?"

LARRY

What I said...'date.' With some guy who was in that movie The Omen or something. Figures, a *celebrity*...

NATHANIEL

Really?

LARRY

That's what her dad says. The dude who played that little devil-boy. He also said not to worry, she does this sometimes, disappears, but...

NATHANIEL

You mean "Damien?"

LARRY

That's him. Damien! All grown up
and up to no good...

NATHANIEL

Huh. 'Damien.' 'Da-mi-en.' (TO
LARRY) Well, here's my card. If you
see her, please say I stopped by.

Larry looks down at the card, turning it over. CLOSE ON the
card to see Nathaniel's name; on the blank line it reads, "a
friend." Larry looks up but he now stands alone. Nathaniel
has disappeared.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - DAYS LATER

Morning light spills in the bruised windows. Anna, tired and
hostile, sitting up in the tree; Damon leans against the door
with the gun in his pocket. Both holding typewritten pages.

ANNA

...this is idiotic. I'm not going
to do this.

DAMON

Yes, you will, Anna. Yes.

His hand slowly moves to his 'water' pistol.

DAMON (cont'd)

...or else.

ANNA

But...the writing's horrible. No
offense, but it's melodramatic
crap. Worse. This makes Trauma
Central look like a masterpiece...

DAMON

...why would you mention that? Hmm?

ANNA

Because I know you watch it...I've
seen you on the monitors. You even
watch the re-runs...

DAMON

So? And...?

ANNA

And it makes you cry! Which is so
pathetic. And baffling...

DAMON

Don't you worry about that. Just read.

ANNA

But this is...

DAMON

Look, I've studied a lot of acting books for this, different theories, and I have decided that we won't follow anybody else's notions... we'll strike out on our own. And that's why I'll write the scenes for us. Scenes for you to memorize and perform. So...shall we?

Anna looks down at the paper, scanning it. She LAUGHS.

ANNA

This is... (CRIES OUT) Damon, you are wasting your time by keeping me here! You will never be able to improve my acting. I'm either going to fail or succeed as an actress, it has NOTHING to do with you!!

DAMON

If I hadn't come along, ten years from now you'd still be struggling.

ANNA

Yeah, well, if I hadn't come along, you might be dead!

DAMON

True. But what's more important is that you would be a failure. And unhappy.

ANNA

Oh yeah?! (LIKE A CHILD) Says you!!

Damon, as if suddenly coming out of a trance, stands and looks around. Then back to Anna.

DAMON

"My God...honey, do you know who that was that just walked by?"

CLOSE ON Anna, who stares at Damon like he's possessed. Then, slowly, she realizes this is the beginning of the scene.

ANNA

"...who?"

DAMON

"Anna Graham."

ANNA

"The actress? Are you sure?"

DAMON

"Yes, she looked right at me."

ANNA

"Oh. Well...was she pretty?"

DAMON

"Yes."

ANNA

"More than me?"

DAMON

"Maybe slightly...but it's not her looks that make her so appealing as an actress."

ANNA

"Right, right, it's her amazing *personality*. Would you sleep with her if you could?"

DAMON

"I don't know. It depends on how you feel about it..."

ANNA

"You would want to sleep with someone else? I can't believe it!"

DAMON

"She's not just someone else. She's a great actress."

ANNA

"Which makes it more okay, is that what you think? More excusable? So, what, I should be proud to have a boyfriend who slept with Ms. Anna Graham?! What am I supposed to say, 'He was good enough for her, so he must be a good catch. He must be pretty damn great!' Is THAT it?!!"

DAMON

"I don't think things are working out between us..." (PAUSES FOR A MOMENT) I'd say that was a very good beginning..."

ANNA

That was the stupidest scene I've ever heard. Even porno movies don't have dialogue that bad!

DAMON

Yes, true...but you were good.

ANNA

I mean, it was so ignorant, and the... (STOPS, THINKS) ...hey. I was good, wasn't I?

CLOSE ON a tiny, begrudging smile that spreads across Anna's face. It disappears quickly, but it was there. I promise.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Anna and Damon watching the monitors again--Anna sitting up and forward as she studies Falconetti in Dryer's version of Joan D'Arc. Anna is crying as she watches one fabulous close-up after another. A nearby Damon silently holds up a tissue for Anna, who accepts it without looking away.

INT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - APARTMENT - LATER

THUNDEROUS POUNDING on the front door. Mr. Graham is watching Trauma Central and eating a sandwich from a plate balanced on his knees. He has no intention of answering, as Stem (on TV) is having a crying jag sitting in his Porsche.

Mrs. Graham storms in from the hallway in a glorious paisley housecoat.

MRS. GRAHAM

...no, that's alright, you stay there on your ass...I'll get it!

Mrs. Graham pulls open the door and looks directly into the eyes of a smiling Nathaniel Powers. He bows slightly.

NATHANIEL

The lovely Mrs. Graham, I imagine.

MRS. GRAHAM

You have imagined correctly. And you are?

NATHANIEL

I'm, ahh...a friend of Anna's.

MRS. GRAHAM

You don't say.

NATHANIEL
Actually, I just did.

Mr. Graham looks up suspiciously and cranes his neck. He rises out of his chair.

MR. GRAHAM
Hey...you're not Damien, are you?

NATHANIEL
"Damien?"

MR. GRAHAM
You heard me...

NATHANIEL
No, sir, the name's Nathaniel.
Nathaniel Powers. I'm a friend...
and more.

One of his cards appears from nowhere; Mrs. Graham APPLAUDS the display of magic. Mr. Graham takes it and examines it.

MR. GRAHAM
You're a detective?

NATHANIEL
After a matter of speaking...

MR. GRAHAM
What's that mean?

NATHANIEL
It means I'm not a paid employee of this city, but I'm looking for your daughter, nonetheless.

MRS. GRAHAM
Ohhhh....you must be the other one.

A smile spreads on Nathaniel's face. A kind of smile, anyway.

NATHANIEL
That's right. I'm the other one.

MRS. GRAHAM
Good for you. Or should I say...
good for her. (MOVES OFF) I'll get
you the postcards she's sent us.
Have a look.

MR. GRAHAM
Honey, those are private!

MRS. GRAHAM
Oh, hush up and watch your show!!

Mrs. Graham moves into a kitchen area and starts removing cards from the side of a fridge. Mr. Graham eyes Nathaniel, then turns back to watch the show. Nathaniel follows his gaze and locks on the TV. As if hypnotized, he steps forward.

MR. GRAHAM

You enjoy Trauma Central?

NATHANIEL

Oh yes. Very much...very much indeed.

Nathaniel stares at the screen, although his eyes drift to a place above the television--several pictures of a young Anna grace an overstuffed shelf. GO CLOSE to see her smiling face.

MONTAGE BEGINS

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE COURT YARD - ANOTHER DAY

In the center of the courtyard is Anna, trudging in endless circles through waist-deep snow--she is wearing a harness that is tethered to a metal pole. A cloud follows after her, pouring down snow on only her as she MUTTERS her way through a series of vocal exercises.

- ANNA

Brum-mum-mum...brum-mum-mum...ha-hum...brum-mum-mum...ha-hum. Ha-ha-hum!

During her many rotations, Anna notices something very interesting in the distance. The SOUND of cars passing.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - SLEEPING ANNEX - NIGHT

Anna, yawning as she works to decode another one of Damon's anagrams. She studies a bowl of strawberries and the little pink note. A stack of similar pink notes in a nearby bowl.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE LAB - ANOTHER DAY

Damon is busying himself in his lab, which is a mix of high tech and deep Gothic. Frank Gehry meets Victor Frankenstein.

Damon, like a caring father, moves it to a glass storage unit and coaxes a nice, thick cloud out into the room. It is about twice the size of a man. Damon holds it in place, then walks up a short step ladder.

Damon dives into the middle of the thing and, miraculously, doesn't fall through. Instead, the cloud swallows him up like a pair of misty hip waders.

He floats about the room for a bit, bumping into shelves and dodging around pipes. Suddenly, he pulls a syringe from his pocket and raises it above his head. Like mighty Ahab, he plunges in his tiny harpoon and extracts some ooze; the cloud reacts and begins bucking like a rodeo animal.

INSERT - VIDEO MONITOR

A hazy image of Damon floating around on his cloud, hanging on for dear life. He passes near the camera.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - POOL - ANOTHER DAY

Anna standing frozen on the diving board--eyes wide open and staring straight ahead. WE SEE that she is more fit now and quite able to manoeuver effectively. Damon watches from a nearby lifeguard chair, SHOUTING orders with a bullhorn. Each time Damon does, Anna instantly stops and adopts an emotional pose--a kind of acting exercise that recalls 'freeze tag.'

DAMON

...do 'content!' Do 'stoic!' Now do
'pensive!' Come on, really do it...
sell it! Do 'tragic!' Do 'bold!'

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - SLEEPING ANNEX - NIGHT

Damon and Anna lying next to one another on the bed. Not talking, not touching. Just together. He has the gun by his side but it is not threatening. They are even sharing a plate of carrot sticks. CLOSE ON fingers touching. Lingerin.

On each of the video screens, VARIOUS FILMS are being played simultaneously. All scenes of strong women, acting their little hearts out. All About Eve, Sophie's Choice, Klute, Diary of a Chambermaid, My Fair Lady. Damon and Anna watch the pictures in silence, eyes jumping back and forth between each screen--Anna mouthing the dialogue quietly to herself, skipping back and forth from scene to scene.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. WAIST WATCHERS - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A small, old-fashioned auditorium--maybe six rows of seats, one rising behind the next. A little stage area in front. BEAUTIFUL CELLO MUSIC playing underneath.

Nathaniel is standing center stage, just finishing up an inspirational speech. Large charts dangling behind him. A RAPT AUDIENCE (mostly women) fill the seats.

NATHANIEL

...so, I'm not gonna stand here and promise you the world, or the moon, or heck, I'm not even gonna promise you your *husbands* back! (A MURMUR OF LAUGHTER FROM THE CROWD) All I can say is that the program works for me. You all know I used to be 245 pounds, it's true. I don't deny it. But with this plan I came out of my shame cycle, I came out of hiding, I came back to life. And now I live it, every day. Life. So, look me over, go on, take a look... (DOES A LITTLE TWIRL) If you like what you see, then give us a chance to bring you back to the land of the living. I thank you.

Nathaniel does a little bow to the OVERWHELMING APPLAUSE. Many of the listeners make their way down to SEVERAL SALES ASSOCIATES who wait for them at a nearby table.

Nathaniel starts off toward a side door when a hand falls on his arm--he turns to find Mrs. Graham smiling over at him.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Well, hello there.

MRS. GRAHAM

Good evening. I must say, that was very impressive! Quite impassioned.

NATHANIEL

Thanks. I do what I can...

MRS. GRAHAM

I can tell that, I really can. And that's why I dropped by tonight... I thought you might like to know. We got some more...

She pulls a postcard out of her clutch purse. GO CLOSE to see that it says: "WELCOME TO SUNNY CALIFORNIA!" A picture of the sun wearing Ray-Bans and smiling down on a sandy beach.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - DAMON'S BEDROOM - ANOTHER EVENING

CLOSE ON Damon, tears flowing; sure enough, WE SEE that he is indeed watching Trauma Central. After a moment, he reaches over to a night table and picks up a syringe. He rolls up one sleeve and sinks the needle into a vein. Almost instantly, Damon appears to float a few inches above the mattress. That's right, 'above.' It's true. Damon then reaches down, injects some more. He rises up maybe a foot this time.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - SAME TIME

Snow drifting down outside. It's getting late in the day. Anna is lying on her bed, staring over at a huge bouquet of roses and studying a little pink note. GO CLOSE to reveal:

DAMON

(voice-over)

Dear Anna Graham: I hope that these are not too unbearable/I'm sorry to be giving them to you/But with them will come more beauty/Follow your name to understand me/(5-letter word)/Yours, Damon

She looks at the flowers again, then back at the note.

ANNA

Another one of these...well, okay. "Roses." "Sesor." "Resos." "Sores." My sores...he's sorry for giving me 'sores.' Wow. ...he's saying he's sorry! Maybe he's getting ready to let me go...

SUPERTITLE: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - NIGHT

Anna, enraged, throwing a handful of the little pink notes at Damon. They flutter to the ground.

ANNA

...I have had it with this SHIT!!

DAMON

Now, look...

ANNA

I'm sick of the health food, the jogging under a *cloud*, your crappy scenes...and these stinking little puzzles! Sick of it! You HEAR me?!!

DAMON

I thought the anagrams were cute...

ANNA

They suck, Damon! They SUCK ass!!

DAMON

Stop that, just stop yelling!! I hate that! Now, don't...

(MORE)

DAMON (cont'd)
 (POINTS WITH GUN) Go look at
 yourself. Anna, do it, look in the
 mirror.

She is ready to attack, but turns on her heel and disappears.

CLOSE ON the metal mirror. Anna leans forward, really trying
 to take herself in. Turns around, looks over her shoulder.
 Looks again. After a moment, she returns.

ANNA
 Yeah...so?

DAMON
 Your face. Your figure...I mean,
 the clothes I gave you are almost
hanging off you.

ANNA
 So?

DAMON
 So?! It's working. You're becoming
 a better 'you.'

ANNA
 I don't wanna be *me*, remember?

DAMON
 The more you like yourself the less
 you'll need to be someone else...

ANNA
 This is bullshit...all that was my
 problem to begin with!

DAMON
 You know what I mean! And you are a
 much finer actress now, you know
 that. You do.

Anna throws herself down on the carpet. Damon CLAPS twice
 and, instinctively, Anna starts doing lady push-ups.

ANNA
 'I...I don't think it's going to be
 enough to just escape any more. No,
 I need to kill you. Make you *suffer*
 first, but actually kill you...

DAMON
 Don't talk like that. Please. Anna,
 I really, deeply care for you...

ANNA
 If you *cared* for me, you'd release
 me. Simple as that.

DAMON

No, it's not. It isn't, because...

ANNA

Remember the poem? "If you love something, set it free" or whatever? You'd do that if I meant so damn much to you...

DAMON

That's not a po-em, it's a song... by that fellow, from The Police.

ANNA

Sting! Jesus, his name is Sting! And where do you think he got the idea, huh? From the poem! Po-em!!

DAMON

Quit talking and exercise...

ANNA

Yeah, well, all I know is that if you love something, you see to its needs first...

DAMON

...who says I love you?

ANNA

Oh, come on, you know you do.

DAMON

No, I don't.

ANNA

Yes, you do...you *totally* do.

DAMON

You probably love me...you have Stockholm syndrome or something.

ANNA

Fat chance! You love me, so what? Just say it, it's no big deal...

DAMON

Anna, I do not love you, stop that!

ANNA

Yes you do, you do, too...

DAMON

No, no, NO!!

ANNA

...uh-huh...love-love-love..."Love,
soft as an easy chair, love, fresh
as the morning air..."

DAMON

STOP!! STOP IT!!!

Damon has now SCREAMED louder than ever before and it scares both of them. Complete silence. THEME MUSIC from Trauma Central comes in over the video speakers in the next room.

ANNA

...uh-oh, it's time for your little
show...time for Damon to have his
itsy, bitsy cry! Waaah! WAAAH!!

Damon shoots Anna squarely in the shoulder. She falls back and clutches her arm. He stands up, unlocks the cell door and walks out. He turns back, suddenly. Abruptly.

DAMON

And if I did love you, Anna, so
what? What business would that be
of yours?!

Damon SLAMS out of the room. The pale blue door SHUDDERS on its hinges. Anna is so stunned by this revelation that it takes her a good minute or two to realize Damon has left the cell door wide open. I mean, WIDE open. As in, unlocked.

Like a death row inmate, Anna creeps forward. Looking around. She can't believe it. She tiptoes out of the cage and into the rest of the room. The wound is completely forgotten.

Anna tests the door and it swings open. CREAKS a bit. Without any more hesitation, she takes off down the hall like a track star on steroids. Lots of steroids. BOOM!

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAYS - VARIOUS SHOTS

Anna THUNDERING along corridors, getting lost, doubling back, moving down staircases. She's not sure where she's going but she sure 'as hell is not turning back.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - DAMON'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Damon lounging on his bed, about to inject himself with a syringe, and watching TV. (Stem SPEAKS passionately to a TEAM OF DOCTORS) The tears have already started when Damon looks up, cocking an ear to one side. A SOUND begins to build outside, crescendos, then passes. Like a herd of bison on holiday. CLOSE ON Damon's face as he thinks. Realizes.

Damon drops the syringe and is up and running. He is barefoot and his shirt is open, but he moves like a man possessed. He probably is, actually. At least a bit.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - GRAND HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Anna running about the room, clawing at the walls and trying to find a way out. Clouds overhead. They start to THUNDER and flash lightening when a CLAPPING sound is heard. Rain falls.

Anna turns to see the source: It is Damon, standing in the hall. He is serious and getting drenched. So is she.

DAMON
...Anna...come back upstairs. Now.

ANNA
Never.

DAMON
Anna, I said... (RAISES HIS HAND)
I said, 'now.'

ANNA
You forgot your gun.

DAMON
So, I did...so I did.

ANNA
Well, well.

DAMON
Choose your weapon, then.

Anna looks frantically around as Damon starts to advance on her. CLOSE ON a suit of armor in a far corner. Anna jumps over the vinyl couch and makes for it but Damon cuts her off. She doubles back and grabs up a long metal candlestick holder as Damon reaches her.

Anna LASHES out at Damon's head. He barely ducks in time.

ANNA
Damon, I'm leaving this house. Now.

DAMON
I can't let you do that.

ANNA
Then stop me.

Damon's eyes narrow and he grabs down an axe from a nearby wall. The combatants square off. Lightening and THUNDER. Rain pours down, making the polished marble floor treacherous.

Damon makes the first move but it is the attack of a zealous, untrained amateur. He moves too quickly and slips, swinging his weapon wildly. Anna easily sidesteps the attack and catches Damon across the neck with her weapon. Blood appears.

DAMON

O, damn!

Anna smiles and backs slowly away. She keeps one eye on her foe and one on the lookout for an escape route. Damon approaches again, this time running at her and hacking madly in several directions. Anna meets him, easily defending herself. The weapons CLANG loudly throughout the room. The rain falls. Flashes of lightening. THUNDER. Damon swings, Anna parries. Anna cuts Damon, he retreats. Again and again.

ANNA

Enough?

DAMON

...never.

The battle is nearing its climax. Anna moving slower now, but still grimly determined to fight her way out of here. Damon looks the worse for wear; he is cut and bruised in a variety of places but he struggles to hold on.

Anna is feeling the wall with one hand, looking for a latch or spring lock. Finally, beneath a picture frame, she finds one. The wall slides open with a POP! Damon, really nervous now, makes a last ditch attack.

Damon jumps over the vinyl couch and comes down fighting. He catches Anna's outfit and slices a hole in it, but she parries quickly and knocks Damon's axe from his hand. They stare at one another. Anna is breathing heavily, Damon fighting for air. Huge gulps.

Damon smiles sadly at Anna--a frozen moment--then dives for the floor. Anna brings her candlestick holder down quickly, smacking Damon across the back of the head. Damon drops to his knees, then passes out. Anna starts to move to him but turns and runs off instead, out through the front doors.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - FRONT LAWN - CONTINUOUS

Anna dashes down the front steps, past the Volvo and down the gravel path. In her desperation, she loses one clear shoe but doesn't go back for it. Anna disappears into the woods at the front of the property, never letting go of her weapon.

The SOUNDS of nature for a moment. Quiet. Serene. Only the tracks she has left in the snow betray Anna's escape.

EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE - ESTABLISHING

The dawn is mounting its push over the buildings and canyons of the city. The NYC equivalent of a rooster crowing--the sound of TRAFFIC, HORNS and HELICOPTERS overhead.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The front door CREAKS open. Out of habit, Anna replaces her extra key in its hiding place and then enters the room.

She falls down on her bed and listens to herself breathe. In and out. Anna then picks up her phone. GO CLOSE to see her dial 911, then abruptly hang up. She dials again. Slowly.

DAMON

(offscreen)

...hello? Hello? Is any one there?

(BEAT) ...Anna? Anna, is that you?

Anna quickly hangs up. DIAL TONE. Anna replaces the receiver and falls back on her pillow. She is trying to keep from becoming hysterical. It takes some work.

INT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - APARTMENT - DAY

At the dining table again. Mrs. Graham is sipping tea and studying something. Mr. Graham hovering behind her. GO WIDE to see Anna seated nearby, head down and lethargic. She is looking through the stack of postcards that she 'sent.'

MRS. GRAHAM

...and, so, you liked California?

ANNA

...uh-huh. A lot.

MRS. GRAHAM

Huh. You always hated the sun as a child...

ANNA

Oh, well, I enjoyed it this time...

MR. GRAHAM

Good for you, baby. You look great!
(TO MRS. GRAHAM) Doesn't she?

MRS. GRAHAM

You didn't get very tan...

MR. GRAHAM

Now, don't. (TO ANNA) The postcards were very thoughtful, sweetie...

ANNA

...you're welcome. (FAKING IT AS SHE LOOKS) Oh, yeah, that one. And Rodeo Drive. That was *really* fun...

Anna is trying to focus on them, but mostly traces the block letters they are written in. Mr. Graham takes each one after his daughter, looking at it, then holds it up for his wife.

MR. GRAHAM

I loved the giant-size rabbit... that's so cute! And the *redwoods*! Are they beautiful or what?

ANNA

Uh-huh. Yeah...very...

Anna leans over to study them; Mrs. Graham studies her.

MRS. GRAHAM

You didn't send those, did you?

ANNA

What?

MRS. GRAHAM

That's not even your handwriting. I wondered why they were so...

ANNA

No...I printed them...for better legibility.

MRS. GRAHAM

Bull! Lemme see those... (GRABS THEM UP) Who did these? Were you traveling with someone...?

ANNA

No, of course, not, I...I was...

MRS. GRAHAM

Jesus, you really are a tramp!

MR. GRAHAM

Stop it! (TO ANNA) It's okay, baby, it's alright.

Anna looks from one parent to the other, her face beginning to quiver. She tries to speak but BURSTS into tears. Sobbing.

ANNA
...I was...kidnapped.

MR. GRAHAM
What?!

MRS. GRAHAM
"Kidnapped?" Please.

ANNA
...yes...

Anna can't speak through her sobs but nods her head.

MRS. GRAHAM
For three *months*?! Come on...we never got any threatening calls, or ransom notes or anything....

MR. GRAHAM
I told you about him, I could *sense* it! A name like that...

ANNA
It wasn't that kind of kidnapping, mother! It was the other kind. The sick kind.

MR. GRAHAM
What do you mean?

ANNA
Held against my will...forced to change, that sort of deal.

MR. GRAHAM
Oh, my poor baby...you're safe now. (BEAT) ...but why didn't you say so before?

ANNA
I was...I dunno. Scared, I guess...

Mr. Graham goes to his daughter and hugs her fiercely. Mrs. Graham pats Anna lightly on the head, then moves off.

MRS. GRAHAM
Well, that's why you're so thin... I thought you were dieting.

ANNA
No, I was in a cage.

MR. GRAHAM
A "cage?!"

MRS. GRAHAM

This is...I'm calling the police.

ANNA

No! Mother, I don't want to...I just want to forget it! Please.

MRS. GRAHAM

Anna, the lunatic is still out there, isn't he? Well?!

ANNA

Yes...but I don't think he'd come after me. I beat him in a duel...

MR. GRAHAM

Good for you, baby!

MRS. GRAHAM

Still, he's free. He could track you down. Or us. I'm calling...

Mrs. Graham storms into the other room and picks up the phone. She dials.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - FRONT LAWN - MORNING

A GROUP OF SQUAD CARS pulled up on the grounds of Damon's home. OFFICERS fanned out in various directions, some in white lab coats. A POLICE DOG OR TWO.

Anna stands off to one side, next to her father and mother, looking around at the estate. It stands silent and the snow is gone. All of it. A DETECTIVE stands respectfully nearby.

ANNA

(to herself)

...where'd it all go? Where's...

DETECTIVE

I'm sorry?

ANNA

Oh, umm, nothing. I was just...

MRS. GRAHAM

She wasn't going to say anything to anyone, but I insisted...

ANNA

Mom...

DETECTIVE

I understand, these things are so often complicated. What kind of car did he have? Miss?

ANNA

(fibbing a bit)
Ummm...I don't really remember.

MRS. GRAHAM

Oh, that's *helpful*...

DETECTIVE

Can you show us where he kept you?

ANNA

Of course...

Anna is about to lead them into the house when an older model Jaguar pulls up. Nathaniel pops out and runs over.

NATHANIEL

Hey, hi, hello...I got caught in traffic. Sorry. (LOOKING AROUND)
Wow, this place is really hidden away...like the "Bat Cave" or something! I almost missed it...

Mrs. Graham smiles knowingly at him. Mr. Graham says nothing. Anna looks at Nathaniel, unsure how to feel; he scoops Anna into his arms and gives her a long hug.

ANNA

Nathaniel...what're you doing here?

NATHANIEL

Well, that's almost like 'Hey, great to see you.'

ANNA

Of course it is, of course, but...

MRS. GRAHAM

I called him. After the police.

NATHANIEL

I tracked you down, went to see your folks when I didn't hear from you...I was very worried.

ANNA

Thank you. (TO THE GROUP) Every one. For all the...

Anna is a bit overcome and leans back into Nathaniel's arm. He smiles and holds her close.

DETECTIVE
Ma'am, can you take us now?

ANNA
...sure. It's this way...upstairs.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - A BIT LATER

OFFICERS milling about, putting things in little bags, etc. Anna, Nathaniel, Mrs. Graham and Mr. Graham stand together in a corner, watching. The detective is examining the 'water gun'. ANOTHER OFFICER approaches.

OFFICER
...hey, chief...you should see this. On the video.

The detective nods and motions for everyone to follow. Anna hangs back a bit, slipping the gun into her purse.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - SLEEPING ANNEX - CONTINUOUS

Everyone crowded into the sleeping area, watching the TV monitors. Nathaniel still with an arm around Anna.

INSERT - B & W VIDEO MONITOR

A loop of Damon directly addressing THE CAMERA.

DAMON
"...Anna, if you're seeing this then I've either died, disappeared or something has happened. In that event, you will find fifteen keys hidden around the cell, any of which will open the lock. One is behind the toilet, if that helps."

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE ROOM - SLEEPING ANNEX - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON everyone watching. All eyes shift slowly toward Anna, who is quietly starting to cry. All eyes, that is, except for Nathaniel. His mouth begins to curl downwards as he studies Damon's face.

DAMON
(offscreen)
"This tape is programmed to play at 9:00am every day unless I turn it off. Good-bye and forgive me. It was all for you...Anna, if you're seeing this then I've..."

EXT./INT. NATHANIEL'S JAGUAR - LATER

The Jag cruises effortlessly through traffic, Nathaniel at the wheel. He WHISTLES Grieg's Peer Gynt to himself and has his arm loosely around Anna's shoulder. After a moment, she lowers her head and rests it on his sleeve. Nathaniel smiles.

INT. 'ALWAYS COPIES' - DAY

Anna back at work, manning the register. Trina is bouncing around, cleaning the counter. Larry is restocking the 'self-serve' area but with one eye on Anna.

TRINA

...glad you're back... (LOOKS OVER)
So's Larry, but he won't say it.

ANNA

Yeah. Me, too. (BEAT) I don't know
for how long, but still...yep...

TRINA

So, d'you get it?

ANNA

What?

TRINA

The play...didn't you go out of
town for an audition or whatever?

ANNA

Oh, right, yeah...no. Just missed
out. I was the, umm...understudy.

TRINA

Cool. 'Understudy.' Is that a big
part?

Larry has been listening and wanders over, trying to fit in.

LARRY

What show?

ANNA

Huh? Oh...Streetcar. At the Taper.

LARRY

Nice. I've got a hell of a Stanley
in me, one 'a these days...

Larry nods and moves off, toward the back room. The girls hold it together until he's gone, then burst out LAUGHING.

INT. WAIST WATCHERS - AUDITORIUM - ANOTHER EVENING

The same space that WE SAW Nathaniel before--this time, he sits in a chair and is PLAYING his cello. It is hauntingly beautiful. The entire place is lit by candles.

Anna sits in the first row and tries to concentrate but is only half-listening. Nathaniel finishes and Anna snaps to attention; she returns from her daydream and APPLAUDS softly. Nathaniel smiles and moves to stand across from her.

NATHANIEL

...anyway, I thought you'd enjoy that. I wrote it for you. (STUDIES HER) ...did I blow it here? I felt this would be kind of romantic...

ANNA

No, it's not that, it's lovely... I'm just a little tired, I guess.

NATHANIEL

You miss him, don't you? Don't say anything, I can tell...

ANNA

Damon? No...God no.

NATHANIEL

I said "don't say anything..." (GRINS) Kidding.

ANNA

I hate him, hate what he did to me.

NATHANIEL

Why?

ANNA

"Why?!" Because...because he...

NATHANIEL

I mean, look at you. You're so... beautiful. As you know, I always loved your face, I told you that, but you're really...

ANNA

Thanks. It's just that it's all very...confusing.

NATHANIEL

I'm only saying, he really did do a number on you...

ANNA

...yes...

NATHANIEL

See, I hate him for stealing you away from me, but, well...it's not that you should be happy, but I bet your career's going to take off like a rocket.

Anna is about to respond, but stops cold. Weighs this.

ANNA

Why do you say that?

NATHANIEL

Anna, have you glanced in a mirror lately? I mean, look at you!!

ANNA

But...how do you know I can *really* act? That was my problem before...

NATHANIEL

With a figure like that, who cares? Seriously, it's not about that... acting...big deal. Bodies matter.

Anna stares at Nathaniel like she's seen a ghost. The same phrase that Damon said. Exactly.

ANNA

"Bodies matter."

NATHANIEL

Completely. And yours, well, it matters a lot. Especially to me. (CELL PHONE RINGS) Oh, hold on... Hello? Uh-huh. Right. Okay. Well, no, salad fork *always* goes on the outside. Yes. Not a problem.

Nathaniel hangs up and looks at Anna. He reaches over, kisses her hand. Smiles. She tries to smile back. Almost makes it.

ANNA

Thank you.

NATHANIEL

I'm so glad you're back...back in my life. (HUGS HER) You know he's going to try and contact you...

ANNA

No. Why would he?

NATHANIEL

I'm sure he will. If he's had this kind of influence on you, you can be sure you've had the same on him. I'd lay money on it...

ANNA

Well, I hope not. I don't wanna be some sort of decoy. (BEAT) Anyway, I despise him...

NATHANIEL

Oh, he'll come around, you mark my words. But this time, we're gonna be ready...

INT. DOWNTOWN CASTING CENTER - HALLWAY - DAY

A different stretch of linoleum, with chairs at various intervals. An office at one end. Sign-up sheet on the wall.

Anna sits near the front of the line, patiently holding her resume and a picture. It is new and it is a knockout. After a moment, she glances at THE ETHNIC WOMAN next to her, then at her resume. GO CLOSE to see the woman's name: Anna Grahamm. Two 'm's.'

Anna's mouth falls open but she catches herself and taps the woman on the shoulder.

ANNA

...excuse me...I'm new in town and I'm curious, who do you study with?

ETHNIC WOMAN

Me? Aaron Smith. But it's not really a class. It's a seminar.

ANNA

...thank you. (SMILES) Good luck.

INT. DOWNTOWN CASTING CENTER - STUDIO - LATER

A bare room with curtains on one end. Mirrors on the other. A bit of theatrical lighting overhead.

A SMALL CLUSTER OF THEATRE TYPES at a table, watching. Anna is on the ground, clutching at the footrests of a wheelchair and CRYING. The two actors--Anna and A YOUNG MAN--have just finished a scene. Anna is overcome.

CASTING DIRECTOR

...and scene.

DIRECTOR

Jesus, that was good! Really.

ANNA

Thank you.

She slowly stands, dusting herself off. A HAND reaches out and touches her. It is Stem from Trauma Central, or rather, the actor who plays him on TV: PHILLIP TWEELY.

PHILLIP

Seriously, that was knockout stuff. I mean, for a cold reading? *Forget* about it, it was great...and your dialect! Fantastic!

ANNA

Thanks. (STUDIES HIM) Wow, you have such wonderful eyes...

PHILLIP

Thanks. You, too. I'm Phillip, by the way. Phillip Tweely.

DIRECTOR

Well, Ms. Anna Graham--aren't we seeing another Anna Graham later?--that was really something. Special.

PHILLIP

She's dynamite, guys.

DIRECTOR

We know, we know. Kind of perfect. You speak Shaw like you were born to it. An unknown, I love it! (TO ANNA) Who represents you?

ANNA

Ummm...I don't really have anyone.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Well, that was just...where've they been hiding you?

ANNA

Oh, you know...here and there.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Anna SLAMS out of a side door and out onto the sidewalk. "OPEN CASTING CALL - UPSTAIRS" sign taped to the wall. MANY PEDESTRIANS passing. Anna stands for a moment and doesn't move--she's just taking it all in for a second.

GO WIDE to see A FIGURE watching her from a car. A Volvo 1800E, to be exact. The figure turns and WE SEE that it is Damon. Fairly unkempt. His translucent clothing is gray and dingy.

Suddenly, the car ROARS to life, executes a U-turn and lands right next to the startled Anna. A window rolls down. Damon looks out at Anna. A glove over his injured finger.

DAMON

...are you happy? Anna...?

Anna is frozen, doesn't know what to think. A flood of emotion.

ANNA

...did you let me escape? Did you?

No answer from Damon--instead, he starts to open the door of the car. Anna steps back, looking around. Suddenly, she runs off in the direction of THE PASSING CROWD. And safety.

Damon starts to follow but jumps back in, throws the car into gear and ZOOMS off.

INT. 'GENTLE ARMS' RETIREMENT HOME - APARTMENT - EVENING

Anna sitting in the front room with her father. They are both watching the news. Anna appears fidgety, wanting to speak.

ANNA

...dad? I got a job today.

MR. GRAHAM

Another one? Well, that's nice, sweetie...typing or food service?

ANNA

No, no, I mean, like, a *real* job. Acting. I start Monday. On stage.

MR. GRAHAM

You do?

ANNA

Yes...it's a Broadway show. And I'm starring with one of the people off that TV show, Trauma Central.

MR. GRAHAM

What?! I love that show! That's wonderful!

ANNA

I mean, I went to an open call...
open! Nothing ever comes of that
stuff, and they just...I dunno...

MR. GRAHAM

Fantastic...my own little girl, on
Broadway!

ANNA

Yep, it's unbelievable. It's all...
really starting to happen for me.

MR. GRAHAM

That's wonderful. Oh, your mother
is gonna be...well, something.

ANNA

...hope so. (THINKS A MOMENT) Hey,
dad...why is mom so, you know, that
way? So 'something?'

MR. GRAHAM

Oh, you know, she's, umm...

ANNA

No, I don't know. None of us ever
really talk. We fence...

MR. GRAHAM

True. (CHUCKLES) Well...I think
it's a bit of everything, probably.
Not just me, or you, or even ending
up in this place. It's life. Ahh,
you should've seen her in the old
days! The speed, the poise. Those
white pants. See, when you're an
Olympian, and a bronze medalist,
well...you're one of three best
at something in the world. I mean,
the *entire* world! But...you're also
third. And, in a way, last. We all
love a winner, even a runner-up,
but when you've gone *bronze*--you
just barely made it. Me, I came in
fifth, so I never had to face it!
Anyway, ever since Munich...she's
been under a dark cloud. I love
her, so I endure...

Mr. Graham gives his girl a big hug, then backs off. He's a
little embarrassed.

MR. GRAHAM (cont'd)

Hey, you want a pop tart? I'm a
touch hungry...

ANNA

No, I'm fine. Good. (TO HERSELF)
Well...I'm well.

Mr. Graham moves off into the kitchen and starts to rummage about. Anna turns her head to look at the fridge. GO CLOSE to see that she is staring at the postcards.

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - BACKSTAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON the funny pages from the New York Post. A pencil is writing letters into little round spaces. GO WIDE to see Anna sitting on the sofa in a darkened 'penthouse' set and doing today's anagram puzzles. She is stuck.

After a moment, Phillip rolls by in his wheelchair. Glances over, SPEAKS.

PHILLIP

..."transform."

Anna looks up and smiles that smile; WE haven't seen one of those for a while. It works its magic.

ANNA

Good one! You're right...

PHILLIP

Yeah, I did 'em earlier...even off the show, I can't learn to relax! (POINTS) Do you do those often?

ANNA

Ummm...I kinda got hooked.

PHILLIP

Yeah, me too. My brother and I used to always try them. They're fun...

ANNA

Older or younger?

PHILLIP

He's older...pretty interesting guy, actually. Well, odd, really, but odd is interesting, right?

ANNA

Sometimes...and sometimes it's just odd.

PHILLIP

True...we're estranged, anyway.

Anna glances around, YAWNING. TECHNICIANS wandering around.

PHILLIP (cont'd)
 Lots of down time, huh? It's almost worse than my show...well, you know what cable is like, right?

ANNA
 Yeah! You don't realize it until you get the job, and then...

PHILLIP
 Thank God I come with my own chair!

ANNA
 (laughing)
 Ha! Did you always...I mean, do you mind me asking? How it happened?

PHILLIP
 No, it's fine...the company line is: Running with the bulls in Spain. Sounds dramatic, right?

ANNA
 Sure...and the truth?

PHILLIP
 ...much, much darker. Ask me when I know you better. Or I'm drunk.

ANNA
 'Kay. Well, how about...did you always want to be an actor?

PHILLIP
 No...but you did, didn't you?

ANNA
 Yes. Always. And now I am...

PHILLIP
 You're a *hell* of an actor. A month on the job, and I can already tell.

ANNA
 Thank you.

PHILLIP
 And me...let's see. No. In fact, I used to be a doctor. Well, plastic surgeon, anyway. But then...

A shadow passes over Phillip briefly, then he brightens.

PHILLIP (cont'd)
 ...how do you all do that? Women, I mean. Get us guys to open up?

ANNA

It's a gift. Or a curse...

PHILLIP

Yeah, well. Things didn't work out, then I had the accident, and I just sort of stumbled into acting...oh, wait, you have to be able to *stand* before you can stumble! I mean fell...

ANNA

...you've got a good attitude.

PHILLIP

Yep. It makes up for what I haven't got... (LOOKS AROUND) Anyway, great to have you here. See ya on set! I mean, *rehearsal*...

Phillip wheels off, but Anna calls out to him; a light is starting to turn on in her head.

ANNA

Phillip? Is that your real name? I mean, actors so often...

PHILLIP.

No, it's not. I mean, 'Phillip' is, but I changed my last name...but it's close.

ANNA

What's that mean?

PHILLIP

...it's an anagram.

He smiles and waves, disappearing around a corner. Anna sits and thinks for a moment. Puts pencil to paper. GO CLOSE to see "TWEELY" now sitting neatly in six little round spaces. She rearranges it. And again. And again.

EXT. CITY STREET - EARLY EVENING

A tree-lined side street. A JOGGER moves past. Anna trudging along toward home. Wandering. A car pulls up, slows. Anna looks over; it is a Volvo 1800E. The window is open. Damon inside.

DAMON

...are you happy?

Anna glances around, frozen in her tracks. She can't decide whether to scream again, call the police or climb inside.

ANNA
I hate you. I think...

DAMON
Yes, well, there was always the danger of that...

ANNA
Right...

DAMON
I fell in love and you fell in hate. It's a trade-off, I suppose.

They stare at one another, unsure what to say. A CAR HORN from behind forces them to act.

DAMON (cont'd)
I can drive off, right now, and leave you alone...or you can get in. With me.

ANNA
And be your prisoner again? Fat chance...

DAMON
I promise I won't touch you. But you'll have to trust me...

HORN BLAST again. Anna is torn, but finally moves onto the street and slips inside the car. Damon speeds off.

EXT./INT. DAMON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

It starts to rain. Damon and Anna sitting quietly as he negotiates New York traffic. He gets cut off by a Fed Ex truck and has to swerve to avoid it. More HORNS.

DAMON
...O, damn!

ANNA
I'm on to you, Damon.

DAMON
Hmmm. And what does that mean?

ANNA
I know why you cry when you watch TV...or at least, Trauma Central.
(MORE)

ANNA (cont'd)

I'm working with someone from that cast...

DAMON

Yes, I read about that. How *ironic*.

ANNA

Isn't it? (LOOKS OVER AT DAMON)
Stem's your brother, isn't he? I mean, Phillip...

DAMON

...yes. A long time ago, but yes.

ANNA

And something happened...you hurt him, didn't you?

DAMON

...look...no, I mean...

ANNA

Injured him in one of your horrible experiments. Is that it?!

DAMON

I don't really want to talk about it, thank you...

ANNA

Well, you're going to! You ARE!!

Anna reaches over and jerks the wheel, causing the car to SKID and change lanes. HORNS. Damon has to fight to maintain control. He manages to get to the side of the road and stop.

ANNA (cont'd)

You *kidnapped* me, took away part of my life and I want answers! Now!!

DAMON

I GAVE you a life, Anna!!

ANNA

Who are you and what the HELL is going on!! TELL ME, or so help me God, I'll jump out there right now and get a cop, or, or...SHIT!! I dunno what I'll do. But something.

Damon stares at her, unsure what to say. He tears up a bit.

DAMON

...I've missed you so much.

ANNA

Yeah, me too, so what?

DAMON

Anna...please...

ANNA

No, don't do that! I don't want that now, I'm seeing someone. A nice guy, a *normal* guy...I just want some answers. So tell me...

DAMON

...you're with someone?

ANNA

Sort of. He wants to kill you...

DAMON

The list keeps growing.

ANNA

Damon Wetley...ever mysterious.

DAMON

Always.

ANNA

Damon...I want to know. Please. Tell me 'why.' About anything. It'll help me...get over...this.

DAMON

I don't want you to get over it.

ANNA

But I want to! You haunt me, you do. What we did, what you did, to me, the *clouds*, all the...I have to have some answers.

DAMON

Alright. But I can't just explain it...I need to show you, as well.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CASTLE ON THE HILL - NIGHT

Overlooking the park. Nothing but trees, with buildings in the distance. The moon out and shining down.

Damon and Anna sitting on the wall of the castle, looking down toward the Delacourt Theatre. Damon dangles his feet over the edge--he is wearing a pair of over-size leather and metal boots. Imagine early astronaut. Very early.

DAMON

...I swear to God, it's true.

Anna, staring at him, incredulous. She doesn't know what to say, but that rarely stops her.

ANNA

He was...maimed? Maimed?!

DAMON

Yes. By his business partner. Ben. A brilliant surgeon, but hopelessly insane. A God-complex times nine.

ANNA

And he, what? I'm a little lost...

DAMON

They had a clinic together. Everything seemed normal on the surface, but Phillip found out that Ben was doing experiments on his own, at night. Perfecting his techniques on people whom he was kidnapping off the streets...

ANNA

You're joking...

DAMON

No...*snatching* them right out of their neighborhoods, like something from that movie, M.

Anna shudders at this. Damon cautiously puts an arm around her but she shakes it off.

ANNA

Don't do that...only reason I can even be near you is because we're in public. Outside.

DAMON

I understand...

She scoots further away and reaches into her purse, pulling out the water gun. Points it at Damon. He smiles sadly. Nods.

DAMON (cont'd)

...hmm. I wondered where that was.

ANNA

Then what happened? To Phillip?

DAMON

I turned Ben in. Phillip made him promise to stop but when he told me about it, what this man was doing-- I mean, attacking innocent people, *bastardizing* science--well, I had to do something! Unfortunately, he thought Phillip was the informer...

ANNA

...and he paralyzed him.

DAMON

Yes. After killing Phillip's wife. In front of him. (BEAT) He told my brother that taking those things which are most precious to a person are the cruelest cut of all...and, therefore, what he enjoyed most.

ANNA

My God...

DAMON

No, God was nowhere to be found. I found Phillip, in his home, almost dead and his legs rendered useless, but you know? He never let on that it was me...he didn't. The police tried to find Ben but he was gone. Vanished.

ANNA

...that's unbelievable...

DAMON

Yes, like something off his show. "Ripped from *tomorrow's* headlines!"

ANNA

Exactly! They'd probably reject it, too fantastical...

DAMON

I suppose. And yet it all happened. You can ask Phillip, if you like...

ANNA

...no. No, I think I believe you.

Anna scoots over and allows Damon to put an arm around her. Even puts the gun away.

ANNA (cont'd)

Do you two ever speak? I know you watch the show, but...

DAMON

Never. It'd be too painful for him, that's what he told me. No, the only way he could live with it was to forget. Forget about me, about himself...to lose himself. In his acting. (BEAT) And I learned to lose myself in guilt. And regret.

ANNA

God. I mean, that's so...

DAMON

...yes. (STARTS TO CRY) I...always thought that if perhaps, somehow, through my work I could help him get out of that chair, then maybe he might...forgive me...

ANNA

I see. And me?

DAMON

You...Anna, just happened. Out of the blue.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - SOFTBALL FIELDS - LATER

Damon and Anna walking along, holding hands. Actually, she walks and he CLOMPS. Anna glances down at Damon's boots.

ANNA

...hey, what's up with those? Are they for exercise?

DAMON

(elusive)
No, they're for...nothing. My work. It's complicated.

Damon is about to let it go when he realizes this tactic no longer works with Anna; she is visibly cooled by his remarks.

DAMON (cont'd)

...wait, no, you're right. Yes. Anna, I want to show you something.

ANNA

What?

DAMON

This.

He reaches down and begins to unfasten the rather elaborate contraptions on his feet.

DAMON (cont'd)
Clouds were easy...but this, this
was tricky.

After a moment, Damon is free of his footwear and, almost instantly, he floats up from them and slowly OUT OF FRAME. Anna looks up, incredulous.

DAMON (cont'd)
(offscreen)
I worked from the outside in...
found out what makes a cloud tick.
Then, put that inside the body.

ANNA
(looking around)
Damon...come down here!

DAMON
I can't. I mean, not so easily...
it takes a while. I'm still working
on getting the dosage just right.
It's incredibly complicated, since
it reacts differently with every
person...mili parts per thousand
and all that.

Almost like swimming, Damon cuts through the air around Anna, moving this way and that. Like a ballet dancer in jello. He reaches into a coat pocket and produces a thin syringe. GO CLOSE to see it filled with a bubbling white serum.

DAMON (cont'd)
Try it with me. Anna, please...

ANNA
What're you, crazy?! I'm not gonna
let you shoot me up with some...

DAMON
Anna, it's amazing...

ANNA
Fine, it's amazing. Great.

DAMON
...come on...please...be with me...

Anna starts to speak, looks around, then holds out her arm.

ANNA
...oh, go on, then. Before I wake
up and come to my senses...

Damon smiles and 'swims' down to her. He holds on to her arm and draws the syringe near. CLOSE to see the needle prick Anna's skin.

It takes a moment. Still nothing. Then, suddenly, Anna also rises up OUT OF FRAME. Her face lights up as she lifts off. GO WIDER to see she and Damon, arm in arm, floating off above the trees of Central Park, lit only by moonlight. Soaring along now, they begin to kiss. I mean, really kiss. Like something out of a Brassai photograph. Only lighter.

EXT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - LATER

GO CLOSE to see a trail of clothing leading to Anna's bed. Follow it along to find rumpled sheets, but no one in it. Instead, WE SEE that the blankets are hanging down from above. Yes, that's right.

A naked Anna and Damon, hidden by a comforter that dangles down, are lying in each other's arms. Content. Post coital. And floating high above the floor.

DAMON

(whispering)

...we have to be careful. Too much and we'll stop being clouds. We'll just...rain...until we die.

ANNA

(whispering)

...thanks for warning me.

After a moment, they begin to make love again and WE LEAVE THEM to look out Anna's window at the glorious skyline of Manhattan with the moon shining down. Still one of the best sights on the planet.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - DAWN

The sun is just starting to peek in the window. Anna and Damon lying together in the bed. Both asleep. TV still on; Wyler's The Collector is playing.

A GENTLE KNOCK at the door. No answer. ANOTHER, then the RATTLING of keys in the lock. The door swings open.

MR. GRAHAM

...Anna? I got that thermostat and thought I'd get a jump on...Honey?

Damon looks up first, meeting Mr. Graham's gaze. Damon tries to wake and smile at the same time. Waves at him.

DAMON
Umm, good morning...Mr. Graham, I
presume? I'm Damon...Anna's friend.

MR. GRAHAM
(whispering)
Damien...Da-mi-en...

Mr. Graham drops his toolbox with a CRASH and runs off,
SCREAMING Damon's name down the hall. Anna sits up.

ANNA
...what was that?

DAMON
I think I met your father.

Anna clears her head and jumps up, thinking. She gathers her
clothing and motions to a befuddled Damon.

ANNA
We gotta get out of here. Now!

DAMON
But...

ANNA
Damon, you're my *kidnapper!* -That'll
be a little hard to explain to my
folks...

Damon nods and gets to his feet, swiftly slipping on his
translucent pants over his translucent boxers.

EXT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - FRONT STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Anna and Damon in a hurry, moving down a flight of steps.
They are almost in the clear when:

MRS. GRAHAM
...hold it right there, missy!

Anna looks up to see her mother, outfitted in full fencing
gear, standing on the sidewalk. Blocking their way.

ANNA
Mom, I don't wanna fight you, but I
will...

DAMON
Mrs. Graham, we can explain...

MRS. GRAHAM

Shut up, you! Just shut it...my own daughter, harboring a criminal.

ANNA

Mother, we are leaving right now, whether you get out of the way or not.

MRS. GRAHAM

You can't take me, girl, and you know it. The police have been called, and so has your boyfriend. All I need to do is detain you...

DAMON

Anna, maybe we should just...

ANNA

No, Damon. No. This has been coming for a long time...

Anna throws her overnight bag down, withdrawing her foil from it as it drops. She squares off with her mom, the two women slowly circling one another. Mrs. Graham drops her visor.

MRS. GRAHAM

You've never done what you're told. Never. And now you're gonna pay...

ANNA

...says you.

Mr. Graham approaches from further up the street and spots Damon; both men seem to know to stay out of the way. This is going to be a cat fight.

CLANG! The ladies meet head on, running toward each other and slicing the air. Cut and thrust, parry and jab. Across the sidewalk, over trash cans, up and down the block. When they are close together, elbows and knees are used. Hair is pulled. A head butt or two. It isn't pretty.

MRS. GRAHAM

* You're soft, you've always been soft! A disappointment...

ANNA

You are a hard, hard woman. You never loved me!

Mrs. Graham pins Anna against a wall but she manages to dive out of the way, roll across the cement and scoop up her blade. Off they go again. Slowly, the sound of SIRENS.

Mrs. Graham smiles. Only minutes left now. She lunges at Anna, who blocks her move and thrusts at her mother with all her might. Bingo! A direct hit, one that slashes the purple arm of her pantsuit. Mrs. Graham SCREAMS with rage and then charges forward, grabbing Anna and tearing at her. Anna smacks her mother across the head with the hand guard on her foil, knocking the older woman back over a car fender. She rolls to a stop at the feet of her husband.

Anna looks over at her father, shrugs. Turns to her mother.

ANNA (cont'd)
 Mom, I'm sorry, but, well...you had
 it coming.

Mrs. Graham studies her daughter for a moment, a look of curiosity on her face. She reaches out a hand toward her. Anna cautiously takes it and pulls Mrs. Graham to her feet. She responds by giving Anna a deep hug.

MRS. GRAHAM
 I know, baby, I know. I just didn't
 think anyone would ever give it to
 me. (BEAT) Now go! Just get out of
 here...

Anna gathers up her things and grabs Damon's hand. They dash down the street as Mr. Graham goes to the aid of his wife. She loses her balance a bit; Mr. Graham holds her firmly.

MRS. GRAHAM (cont'd)
 And don't you go getting any ideas.

MR. GRAHAM
 Oh, loosen up, will ya?

Mr. Graham looks around, then SMACKS his wife affectionately on the ass--she goes wide-eyed. Then, the thinnest of smiles.

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS - VARIOUS SHOTS

Anna and Damon running, crouching down when A POLICE CAR zips past. They sneak down an alley and then cut across an avenue. WE LOSE THEM as they blend into the early morning rush of PEDESTRIANS.

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Anna's homey touches in all corners. Flowers. Throw pillows on the couch. Pictures tucked into her mirror.

Damon sits on the sofa, listening to Anna. She paces.

ANNA

...only thing to do is pretend like nothing's happened. Right?

DAMON

I suppose. I'm not really very good at this...*intrigue*...sort of thing.

ANNA

I mean, if the police show up here. Look, I can't miss tech rehearsal or they'll...today's Friday. We can go away for the weekend and sort stuff out.

DAMON

What 'stuff?'

ANNA

Our stuff, *life* stuff. 'What the hell we're going to do now' stuff!

DAMON

Alright...

Anna begins putting on some costume pieces, trying to focus on the script in front of her. KNOCK at the door. They both freeze; Anna indicates the closet and Damon goes over and gets in. Anna opens the dressing room door a little.

ANNA

Yes?

ASSISTANT

Ms. Graham, they'd like you on the stage in ten minutes...

ANNA

Thank you.

Anna closes the door and returns to the closet. Opens it. Damon is crouching down, hidden behind some dresses.

DAMON

Look how the tables have turned...
I'm *your* prisoner now.

ANNA

Only until tonight...and only while you're being hunted.

DAMON

What about Phillip? Or if some law enforcement officer comes in...?

ANNA

Let 'em. I'll say that you had a gun on me, or a knife, and that I escaped...I don't know. Something.

DAMON

You've become a very good liar, Ms. Anna Graham...

ANNA

...which is just another word for 'actor.'

DAMON

Indeed. I lost my brother to this world, now I'm losing you...

ANNA

Shhh...you're not losing anybody. It's just a rehearsal.

She reaches in and kisses Damon on the cheek.

DAMON

I know I shouldn't say this, but... I wish you were still my captive.

ANNA

Damon, don't.

DAMON

No, we must always be honest with one another. We have to have that. (TOUCHES HER) You...in that cage, the two of us all alone like that, I miss it. I do. That *togetherness*.

ANNA

Damon, no matter how this worked out, what good you did for me... I could never do that again. I couldn't. Not ever.

DAMON

I know...but I can still want it.

ANNA

Shhh...

She puts a finger to his lips, kissing him again. Anna then stands, grabbing a bottle of water from a nearby tray and handing it in to Damon.

ANNA (cont'd)

Make it last...is the pH okay?

DAMON
Mmmmm. Perfect.

They smile a last time at one another, then Anna closes the closet. Locks it. She walks to the door, turns off the light. Locks the door behind her.

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - ACT IV 'STUDIO' SET - LATER

An expansive set for George Bernard Shaw's The Doctor's Dilemma. Ornate Victorian furnishings. A FEW OTHER ACTORS stand around in costume.

The director is seated at a work table in the middle of the darkened, empty house of this beautiful old theater. SEVERAL TECHNICIANS surround him.

DIRECTOR
...alright, let's move on to the next cue, please. Anna and Phillip, whenever you're ready.

Anna, dressed as 'Jessica Dubedat,' kneels at the feet of her ailing husband, 'Louis' (played by Phillip). Anna looks out at the auditorium, then bursts into tears. Buckets of them.

'JESSICA'
Louis--dearest--

'LOUIS'
My darling, I want you to promise me something.

'JESSICA'
Yes, yes: you know I will! Only, my love, my love, don't talk: it will waste your strength...

'LOUIS'
It has been heaven, darling, hasn't it--sometimes?

'JESSICA'
'Oh yes. Always, always! You are the light and the blessing of my life. I never lived until I knew you...

CLOSE ON the shadowy face of the director, watching from the orchestra. He CALLS OUT, interrupting them.

DIRECTOR
Hold it a second, people. Hold it! Both of you, that's lovely, yes... but Anna, please, my dear, do save something for the paying customers!
(MORE)

DIRECTOR (cont'd)
Okay? And, moving forward... (TO
HIMSELF) ...God, the woman is good.

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Anna's room again, lights still out. SOUND of the key in the lock. Door swings open and Anna bounds in; she runs smack into the smiling Nathaniel.

ANNA
...sorry, I tried to hang out until everybody was gone. We should...

NATHANIEL
That's okay. (HOLDS HER) Hi, honey.

ANNA
Nathaniel...hello. Hey. Yes. Umm, how did you...? I mean, I'm so glad that you're...

NATHANIEL
I called the police, told them it was all a misunderstanding. Helped out as best I could...

ANNA
. Thank you.

NATHANIEL
Pleasure. Now all we have to do is catch that prick, and the deed is done, right?

ANNA
I, ahh...right. Yes.

NATHANIEL
So, what happened? He showed up at your house or what? Your parents were a bit hazy on the details...

ANNA
Well, see, yeah, he...he came in my window. That's it. The window, and he wanted to...

NATHANIEL
How'd you get away? That's the part I don't get--your mother calls me, then she denies that it happened--so, how did you escape? Sweetheart?

ANNA
I, ahh, I mean...you know.

NATHANIEL

No, I don't know. I do not know.
Or, frankly, understand, and that's
why I'm asking. Asking nicely, in
fact...

By now Anna has pulled away from Nathaniel's hold and is slowly backing toward the door.

She glances at the closet door, then starts to gather her coat. Hat. Purse. At a slow, steady pace, Nathaniel follows.

ANNA

I don't...what's the matter?

NATHANIEL

I wanna get this guy! This 'Damon'
person.

ANNA

Okay, right, then maybe we should
try...I mean, so do I, I do...

NATHANIEL

Do you, honey? Do you really wanna
get him? I'm not so sure...

Anna has run out of space. She finds herself up against the door. Nathaniel looms closer. Suddenly, a KNOCK. Thankful, Anna wheels around and pulls it open. Nathaniel turns away.

In the hallway, beaming with pride, is Phillip.

ANNA

...Phillip, hi. I didn't know that
anyone else was still here...

PHILLIP

Sorry. I waited outside for you,
but when you didn't come I got...

ANNA

That's fine, but I'm sort of...

PHILLIP

Jesus, what a show! I mean, you
were a knockout, just so honest...
it felt amazing out there, working
with you, Anna. I'm gonna recommend
you to my producers on Trauma...

ANNA

Oh, thank you, that's...

Anna, self-conscious now, turns to Nathaniel, then back to Phillip.

ANNA (cont'd)
 I'm sorry, I'm being rude. I should
 introduce the two of you. Phillip,
 this is my...friend...Nathaniel.
 Nathaniel, this is Phillip.

Phillip rolls forward, extending a hand.

PHILLIP
 No, no, my fault. Hello! (HAND OUT)
 I'm Phillip Tweely.

Nathaniel turns and moves toward him. Smile on his face.

NATHANIEL
 ...we've met, actually.

Phillip's face slowly goes stark white. Like he's seen a
 ghost. In a way, I guess he has.

PHILLIP
 (whispers)
 ...oh...my...God. Your face...

A PUNCH from Nathaniel knocks Phillip straight back and out
 of his chair. The actor slumps to the ground, unconscious.
 This has all happened too fast; Anna can't process. She looks
 over at Nathaniel, who moves quickly toward her.

ANNA
 What the hell is...? (REALIZING)
 ...you're 'Ben.'

NATHANIEL
 Well, I prefer 'Benjamin,' but...

Nathaniel BACKHANDS Anna, knocking her against the closet
 door; she slides down it to the floor. A BANGING SOUND from
 behind it.

Anna clears her head and crawls toward the exit. Nathaniel
 moves past her. He SMASHES through the closet door and pulls
 out a struggling Damon.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 ...well hello, stranger! 'Member
 me?

He SMACKS Damon several times; Damon slumps to the ground.

Nathaniel is about to hit Damon again when he realizes that
 Anna has gotten to her feet. He jumps up, throwing himself on
 her. His hands close around her throat. Anna's eyes go wide.
 Lids fluttering. He lets go and Anna drops to the floor,
 COUGHING LOUDLY. Nathaniel towers over her.

ANNA

...I know...I know about you.

NATHANIEL

You sound disappointed, Anna. It's hard being used, I'm sure...

ANNA

"Used?"

NATHANIEL

You were my carrot...I'm not sure I would've gotten 'em without you.

Nathaniel reaches down and pulls the dazed Anna to her feet.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

By the by, thanks for making it so simple to find him! *Locking* him in your closet was a big help...

ANNA

This isn't happening...it's not...

Anna tries to kick Nathaniel but he blocks it--he shakes his head and PUSHES her back against the dressing room door. It EXPLODES open, dropping her hard to the stage floor. The edge of a Victorian setting can be seen just beyond.

NATHANIEL

Oh, it is...it totally is. (BEAT)
See, I knew how Phillip ended up, and I enjoyed watching him, every day, as he blundered about in his chair. Pathetic! But then I found out the truth...

Nathaniel scoops her up again, kisses her on the forehead. He smiles, then grips both sides of her face.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

He's the one who sold me out. Ol' Damon, the *weirdo* brother...

Suddenly, Nathaniel stops, stepping back and looking down. Damon is now at his feet, holding on for dear life. GO CLOSE to see two syringes sticking out of Nathaniel's right calf.

A SCREAM rises up in Nathaniel's throat; he SLAMS Damon back with a KICK, then falls down and starts pulling the needles out of his leg.

Anna staggers to her feet and disappears out onto the stage. Nathaniel scowls, then gets up and follows. Limping now. He is about to give chase when his cell phone RINGS. He answers.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)
 Hello? Oh, yes. Sure... 'The Power
 of Positive Eating' pep rallies are
 on Tuesday nights. At the 'Y.' Of
 course. Quite alright...

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - ACT I 'CONSULTING ROOM' - LATER

No one around. The stage has been reset for Act I and the
 work lights are on. They shine down on a beautifully realized
 doctor's office, complete with table and instrumentation.
 It's fake, but no one seems to be complaining.

Nathaniel is moving slowly about in the shadows, checking
 behind corners and pieces of furniture.

NATHANIEL
 ...isn't this fun, Anna? Hide-and-
 Seek?

Anna is wedged into a space behind the set; trying to hide.
 Looking around desperately for an avenue of escape. She is
 trying to unfasten a hook from the set; sound of CREAKING
 FOOTSTEPS coming closer.

ANNA
 (taking a chance)
 Nathaniel, listen to me...

NATHANIEL
 It's Benjamin. Please don't make
 that mistake again...

ANNA
 ...*Benjamin*...you've got to believe
 me, Damon didn't do...

NATHANIEL
 Anna, don't. Please do not take me
 for anything other than clever.
 Because I am. *Very*. That's how I've
 lasted this long, okay? Now, I made
 a mistake the first time...I don't
 plan to do it again.

ANNA
 But he didn't! He...

NATHANIEL
 Didn't what? Turn me in? Of course
 he did, I should've seen it before,
 but Phillip there played the hero
 and messed it all up... His only
 mistake was becoming *so popular*!

Suddenly, Nathaniel pulls open a 'door' near her and jumps through. He moves quickly forward.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Boo!!

Anna is ready, though, and swings the heavy hook around and catches Nathaniel square in the head. He drops to the floor.

Anna runs past the bleeding Nathaniel, who tries to grab her. She darts in and out of the set pieces. Eventually, she finds herself against the brick wall of the theater and backed into a corner. A ladder next to her. She begins climbing.

As she goes higher, she feels the rungs shudder--Nathaniel is crawling up slowly beneath her.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

TV Guide did a big piece on Phillip this year and the writer did a hell of a job getting the real story, I mean, from the cops and everything.

Anna is near the catwalk now; she reaches out for it as a hand falls on her ankle. Anna tries to shake it off but can't. Nathaniel isn't letting go.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Quite honestly, Damon was a bitch to track down. Hard as hell! I had some guys on it, full time--you met them, actually. In the subway...and then in the street, that one night.

Anna's eyes widen; it's all been a trick with Nathaniel. All of it. He smiles, nodding, as he reaches for her leg. Just misses it.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

Yep...even *that* was a set-up. Isn't that naughty?

Desperate, she makes a jump off the ladder toward the walkway in front of her. Anna catches it and pulls herself up onto it--her physical training is coming in handy now, isn't it?

Nathaniel APPLAUDS this move and then pulls himself up onto the rickety ledge. They are both fifty feet above the ground on a swinging wooden bridge. Running out of space.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

(enjoying the game)
...this is really the best part of all. Killing somebody in front of their loved ones. I live for it!

Anna is up against it--nearly to the other side. Desperate, she reaches into her purse and withdraws the plastic water gun. Points it down at Nathaniel, who smiles at this.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

...my, my. *Scary.*

ANNA

Don't do this...you can still...
I mean...

NATHANIEL

'Still' what? Get 'help?!' Jesus, Anna, please...think-before-you-speak! I do not want help. I want to perform surgery. I want to do my job, what I was born to do. And what these two took away from me...

Nathaniel is about to lunge at her; she SHOOTs at him.

The ice bullet hits Nathaniel in the neck and he staggers back and off the side of the catwalk. Instead of plunging down, however, he remains suspended in mid-air.

The force of his fall jars the walkway, though, and Anna is flipped off the structure; she reaches out as she falls and just catches the lip of the Act IV 'studio' set. She swings wildly back and forth, bumping into the bobbing Nathaniel.

NATHANIEL (cont'd)

What the hell?! What's *happening* to me?! Help me, help ME!!

Nathaniel is beginning to float higher. He drifts up through the various suspended set pieces, settling there and YELLING his head off. Anna watches him but is slowly losing her grip.

DAMON

(from below)

...hold on, Anna! Hold on!!

Damon is at the fly rail, desperately trying to figure out how to work the complicated mess of ropes and handles. GO CLOSE as a hand falls on his leg. He looks down--Phillip is at his feet, having pulled himself across the stage.

PHILLIP

Need a hand, brother? (SMILES) Help me up, quick!

Damon lifts Phillip to his feet; Phillip looks up, identifies the correct pulley and unlatches the rigging. With his upper-body strength, he has no problem guiding the set piece safely to the ground. Anna jumps the last bit to the floor.

Damon rushes to her and hugs her tightly. They kiss. Deeply.

DAMON

...oh, Anna Graham. I love you.

ANNA

See? I told you so.

They smile and kiss again as Phillip crawls over and joins them. Damon turns to Phillip and the two brothers hug for the first time in a very long time.

Tears from both as Damon holds Phillip's face in his hands. Anna leans back against the stage, exhausted.

DAMON

...it's been so long. So, so long.

PHILLIP

I know. Forgive me...

DAMON

Of course, of course.

PHILLIP

How did all this happen?

DAMON

Long story...

PHILLIP

Well, we've got the rest of our lives.

DAMON

...longer than that. (GLANCES AT ANNA) *Much* longer.

The siblings hug again and then, almost in unison, look up at a CRASHING sound. Nathaniel is thrashing about, hopelessly tangled in the overhead machinery of the cavernous fly space.

PHILLIP

Should we call someone? The police?

DAMON

If you like. He's had an overdose, though, I'm afraid. There's nothing we can do for him...he's a goner.

GO CLOSE to see a handful of personalized cards fall out of Nathaniel's pocket and to the ground. Moments later, water begins to sprinkle down onto them from above. Nathaniel is raining. The ink on his name begins to run.

The three survivors glance up, then look at one another. It's been decided: not a word about this will be spoken. They sit back, exhausted, silent. Tearful.

Sound of APPLAUSE begins to play over. GETTING LOUDER.

INT. BROADWAY THEATER - ACT V 'GALLERY' SET - DAY

The theater is packed with PATRONS, all on their feet and APPLAUDING madly. Shouts of "Bravo!" fill the air. THE CAST of The Doctor's Dilemma are taking their bows. Suddenly they part as Anna and Phillip enter. Anna moves forward next to Phillip in his wheelchair.

She smiles at the audience, then motions toward her co-star, who slowly does the unthinkable: he stands. Yes, you read it correctly: 'stands.' Actually, he is floating (thanks to Damon's serum) but the audience doesn't know it. He bobs a little, but overall, it is pretty remarkable to behold.

APPLAUSE becomes wilder as WE PAN around the room, picking out a few of the patrons. There are Trina and Larry. Nearby, a few women from the boutique. All dressed up. A somewhat humbled Aaron Smith claps from the cheap seats. A few rows down sits Mr. Horvath and a few others from the 'Gentle Arms.'

MR. HORVATH

...what did I say, what did I say?
I told you he would walk again!

Mr. Graham stands down front, CLAPPING LOUDLY. Next to him, Mrs. Graham, who is still seated. Slowly she rises to her feet and joins in the THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. Another smile.

Mr. Graham elbows the person next to him. It happens to be Damon, who is standing and smiling sadly. Only now do WE realize that he is dressed in ordinary clothes--a tuxedo. He is perspiring and pulls absently at the tie around his neck.

From the stage Anna flashes Damon a smile, then she is swept back into the moment by the appreciation radiating from this opening night crowd. She executes a letter-perfect curtsy.

INT. "CUMULUS" RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

The sleek white restaurant is hosting a premiere party. LOTS OF PEOPLE milling about. Most of them congratulating Phillip (who bobs just slightly above them all) and Anna, who wanders around with a drink and is looking for something. Or someone.

Anna spots a booth with its blue curtain drawn and moves to it, slipping inside. She finds Damon sitting in the near dark, huddled in one corner and nearly undressed.

ANNA

...honey, what's wrong?

DAMON

Dunno. I just know something is...

ANNA

What, 'wrong?'

DAMON

Yes. I mean, me, here, in these clothes. Surroundings. I can't do it...

ANNA

So let's go then, that's fine...

DAMON

No, Anna, not just these normal clothes. It's something else...I think it's the fact that I'm trying so hard to go against it. Nature, that is.

ANNA

What does that mean?

DAMON

It means that most things--my work, your art, our love--these things are ephemeral, they're intangible, and that's what's so horrible about them. And wonderful, too. Now you see them, now you don't...

ANNA

What're you talking about? People love each other, then they're with each other. I don't see where...

DAMON

Yes, right, the love will always be there...but we move on. Just like clouds. It's natural...

ANNA

What're you saying...you don't love me or...I don't understand, Damon!

DAMON

Shh, shh...it's alright. I'm saying just the opposite. I love you so completely, Anna...and that love has made me realize how much I still have to do.

Anna moves closer to him, kisses him. Damon responds.

ANNA

Look, it's a big night and you're probably...let's go home. I bet you're just tired.

DAMON

Alright, yes. Maybe that's it...

Damon smiles at her, then pulls Anna toward him--they embrace in one of those old-time movie clenches. Deep and endless.

EXT. CITY STREET - BROADWAY THEATER - A DIFFERENT DAY

On the sidewalk near the 'stage door' of a glamorous old Broadway theater. FANS crowd around after the show, waiting. Suddenly, a radiant Anna emerges from doorway carrying a few bundles of flowers. She is mobbed; ever gracious, Anna stops and signs a few autographs.

After a moment, she nods and smiles, then dashes out toward a passing taxi. She catches it and heads uptown. CRANE UP to see the yellow cab in traffic. Nearby is the blinking sign for Shaw's The Doctor's Dilemma.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S APARTMENT - STILL LATER

The door swings open, Anna bounds in. She seems finally at ease. Almost happy. She kicks off her shoes, sets down the bouquets and looks around for Damon. Doesn't see him. Spots that the bathroom door is closed. A pile of clothing on the floor.

ANNA

...honey, are you home? Hello? I have something that I need to...

DAMON

(offscreen)
I'm here.

She goes to the door and SPEAKS through it.

ANNA

...plus, I've got a surprise. Guess what? No, don't guess, I have to tell you first...I'm up for a Tony! Honey, did you hear me?

DAMON

(offscreen)
Come in, please.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Anna looks in but it is empty. The shower curtain drawn.

ANNA

A TONY! Honey, can you believe it?

Damon peeks out from behind the curtain. Looks into her eyes.

DAMON

...that's wonderful. (BEAT) It's happening faster than I thought.

ANNA

What is? Damon...

DAMON

We don't have much time. Please listen to me, Anna. (BEAT) I've been trying to hide it, but...

ANNA

What's going on? Tell me... (SHE STUDIES HIM) Why are you crying?

DAMON

They're not tears, I'm afraid...

Worried now, Anna crosses quickly to the curtain and pulls it back. She isn't ready for what she sees.

Damon is seated, clutching the sides of the tub and up to his waist in water. More specifically, that's all that's left of him now: everything from the waist up. The rest of him is simply gone. Anna covers her mouth and sits next to him.

DAMON (cont'd)

...I'm turning into vapor and I don't want to leave just yet.

Anna nods, catching herself. Starts to tear up. Damon tries to shift a bit, clinging to the side of the bathtub.

ANNA

...did you...? (REALIZING) You did it, didn't you? An overdose...

DAMON

Mmmmm-hmmmm. 'Fraid so.

ANNA

Oh, Damon, why...why?!

DAMON

Because...

ANNA

Because WHY?!!

DAMON

Because I needed to know. Know what was too much, so that Phillip can always...

ANNA

...no...NO!

DAMON

Yes! You see, after the run-in with Benjamin, I worried that my serum wasn't working. It took so long to take hold. So, I began to up the dosage, to experiment on myself...

ANNA

But I thought you were happy...I am, I am so happy now, why would you do this to me?! To US?!!

DAMON

I didn't, Anna...I did it to *me*. And for someone else. Both of you.

Anna starts to cry, not understanding. Damon struggles to move his hand over and pull her closer to him.

DAMON (cont'd)

Remember I said we had to be honest with one another, so...

ANNA

"Damon, I can't do this. I can't! Yes, I'm stronger now, and thinner and a better actress, but it only holds together if you're with me...

DAMON

No, no, now, listen...

ANNA

No, you listen! I-need-you. You are it, for me. You gave me all this... life...but what the hell good is it if I don't have anyone to share it with? Then it's nothing. I wanted a career so that everyone would love me. You were right. That's what I used to want. But in the end, that everyone is you. Just you. (CRIES) Damon, I love you...

DAMON

I know you do, I know, and I love you, Anna...but it's not enough. It isn't! I have tried to fit in, I have, to wear *cotton* trousers and think normal thoughts, but I can't. I cannot.

ANNA

Yes, you can. I'll help you...

DAMON

Ever since we've been here--even before the whole 'Benjamin' thing-- I've wanted you back. Back in the cage and locked up where I could keep you, away from everyone else. Only *mine*. It's wrong and bad but I cannot help myself. I want it! I lay there in our bed at night and imagine ways to do it again and I know, sooner or later, I would. I will. And be happy doing it, Anna. Even if it kills you. (BEAT)...so I had to kill me first.

ANNA

No, no, no! Damon...oh God, we've got to get you to the...

Anna starts to pull on Damon but he fights it. With one hand, he gestures toward the tub full of liquid that he's becoming.

DAMON

Don't, you'll *spill* me! I want you to keep this...me, when I'm gone. (BEAT) My whole life has been about pushing on boundaries, against the scientific envelope, as it were... that's all I knew how to do. Until you taught me something more...the human factor.

He smiles at her, reaching again for her hand. She takes his.

DAMON (cont'd)

Spread a little of me around the estate, for *posterity*. When you need more serum for Phillip, the formula is locked in my lab...along with all my data. Show it to the world when you think they're ready.

ANNA

...alright.

Anna reaches over and pulls Damon tightly to her.

DAMON

Easy, darling...I'm starting to go now.

She shifts a bit and holds him gently. After a moment, they kiss. Long and full and forever. A final hug. So tight.

DAMON (cont'd)

(whispers)

....O, damn.

INT. EAST SIDE APARTMENTS - ANNA'S BATHROOM - EVENING

The studio apartment, standing empty. Everything is quiet, with a little moonlight spilling in through the window.

From the bathroom comes the SOUND of splashing. WE MOVE IN to see Anna, still in her clothes, lying in the massive tub. Only her face out of the water. Submerged in the water that was once Damon. She takes a little in one hand and lets the clear liquid trickle over her face. Remembering.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE GREAT LAWN - A DIFFERENT DAY

A perfect day. Clouds in the sky. Damon's clouds, in fact, hanging low and covering the property. House in the distance.

Damon's Volvo slowly ambles up the driveway. After a moment, Anna gets out and looks around.

Anna wanders about toward the front door. Silent. Tranquil. A jug of water hanging loose in one hand. The word "Damon" clearly legible on its side in magic marker.

EXT. COUNTRY ESTATE - THE COURT YARD - SAME TIME

The place seems dormant. Still as a painting. WE SEE Anna now, staring out at the shimmering surface of Damon's pond.

ANNA

...there aren't really any stones, are there? No. That's the point...

Suddenly, Anna is walking purposefully across the surface of the pond, no longer afraid. Of anything. Past the swans and out toward the center of this miraculous stretch of liquid.

After a while, Anna stops and looks around. SOUNDS of nature. She uncaps the jug and begins to pour 'Damon' out. The water from the gallon container mixes with the water of the pond; at the same instant, snow begins to fall.

A blanket of white slowly appears, covering everything in sight. Anna stands where she is, eyes closed, arms and face stretched upward; she is content, a smile creeping across her face. She opens her eyes slowly, looking up at the falling flakes. She follows them down to the water, where they begin to disappear. All except a handful.

GO CLOSE to see, etched in snowflakes that dance and shimmer, the words "O DAMN" on the water. It may just be a trick of the light, but for a moment, they are there.

WE LIFT OFF now, soaring high above the property. Up, up, up as Westchester County and, indeed, New York itself begins to disappear. Until we are floating through only clouds. Nothing but glorious white. A shadow passes by, perhaps the outline of a man. Lying back. At peace.

Perhaps. But I'll never tell...

SLOW FADE OUT.