

FADE IN:

BLACK AND WHITE/DREAMY

CU: THE SERENE FACE OF A BEATIFIC STATUE

Three people, one after the other, rush by in a blur.

EXT. CHURCHYARD -- AFTERNOON

A stiff WIND. A BRIDE angrily drags her ass out of a church and into its courtyard.

Trees bend their bare, twisted limbs as if to lynch her: snagging her gown, catching at the layers of tulle over her face. She fights them off and storms on. Behind her, TWO MEN try to keep up, the Wind chasing the tails of their morning coats.

The men--tall, aristocratic UNCLE ERNEST and MAMMY, his gentler, younger, queenier male companion--collapse on a bench, while the bride, LEILA SWEET, 18, paces in front of them. Mammy silently reads a letter.

MAMMY

Well, his note claims he's ... dead.

A scowling Ernest rips it out of his hand.

UNCLE ERNEST

(beat)

But he signed it, right?

The answer's written on Mammy's sympathetic face.

UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)

And he dotted the "I" in his name with a little happy face?

Can't argue with the facts.

From ABOVE we see the young bride. Her uncles stand around her awkwardly. The uncommon Wind stirs the leaves on the ground. CRANE UP off Leila's face to an ASKEW ANGLE:

LEILA

On my parents' grave, before God, never again will I let some lying clown tell me he loves me, much less agree to marry him for it.

Uncle Ernest steps forward.

UNCLE ERNEST

Nonsense.

LEILA

I'll die first.

UNCLE ERNEST

You'll go to Harvard first.

The camera WIDENS to reveal a trail of clothes leading down the courtyard path through the church's outer gates: dark pants, cummerbund, suspenders, tailed jacket, bow tie, dress shirt and shoes. We imagine an intended GROOM running the streets of New York in his underwear, and incongruously hear the sound of an alarm clock as we...

FADE IN:

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- DAY

BEGIN CREDITS

In total darkness we HEAR the sound of a hand slamming down on the ringing clock, silencing it. Out of the darkness, in POV, an image emerges: that of a mop-topped, sorry-looking dog staring straight at us with a Post-It stuck on his head.

Turn around to find Leila, now 29 years old, and still so fresh and beautiful it defies the laws of nature. So what.

LEILA

'Morning, Paxil.

She pulls the Post-It off his head and reads it.

LEILA (CONT'D)

"Brunch." Okay, boy. Okay.

Leila sits on the side of the bed, rubs her eyes, and then heads for the bathroom. She is wearing a long Harvard T-shirt and socks.

Paxil sits attentively on the bed while we HEAR Leila brushing her teeth.

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

You want to go to the park later?

Paxil BARKS his approval, as Leila returns, pets his head, and walks towards the kitchen.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Good boy.

Her LOFT is a bit of a shambles: books everywhere, lots of stuff in boxes. Her taste isn't bad, but her homemaking skills seem to be. A planet-themed mobile stands on a table in the living area.

Leila slaps the Post-It next to another on the fridge that reads "WEDDING!". And one which reads "GET A GRIP!". She pulls out a carton of milk, and a bottle of Vitamin C, chugs both from their containers, and pushes the message button on the answering machine. Her sister's voice:

EVY (O.S.)

Hey, it's me. Saturday night. Around...10:30, I think. I hope you're out somewhere, 'cause if not, then you're asleep -- and well, that would just be too pathetic. Anyway, I can't make it to Uncle's tomorrow. Donald and I are, I don't know, choosing linens or something. Let's have breakfast on Monday. I've got the day off. Bye.

Leila walks towards the bedroom to change.

INT. LEILA'S LOBBY -- DAY

With Paxil in tow, Leila heads out. There are delivery menus strewn all over the floor. She picks them up, with a shake of the head that says she's done it a hundred times before.

EXT. LEILA'S LOFT -- DAY

A few more menus are littered on the outside stoop, and assorted other rubbish decorates the sidewalk in front of the adjacent SWEET'S MUFFIN SHOP. She cleans all of this up, dumps the whole mess in a trash bin, and walks Paxil around the corner. We notice a "Closed" sign in the shop window.

EXT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Leila drags a somewhat reluctant Paxil up the steps of an imposing-looking brownstone.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- DAY

The door opens on Mammy's generous face. He's eleven years older.

MAMMY

Hello, dear.

LEILA

Hi, Mammy.

After a big hug, Mammy leads them inside. He is wearing an apron, and carrying a glass of Sherry.

They walk into the living room of a beautifully appointed home. Old school. Uncle Ernest sits by the fire barely looking up from his laptop computer.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(to Mammy)

How is he?

UNCLE ERNEST

I hate that. I'm right here.

LEILA

(smiling)

I know you are.

UNCLE ERNEST

I'm not dead yet. I still have...relations.

Ernest notices the dog cowering behind Leila.

UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)

And I don't recall inviting YOU to brunch.

(beat)

In civilized countries you would BE brunch.

Paxil makes himself even smaller.

LEILA

I promised him a walk.

UNCLE ERNEST

We all know how seriously you take your promises.

MAMMY

Don't start, Ernest.

UNCLE ERNEST

Who's starting?

Leila comes to peek over his shoulder, as Mammy heads to the kitchen.

LEILA

(childlike)

What do you do exactly?

UNCLE ERNEST

I push the little beans around on the little table until a few of them fall off in my pocket. Then I use those to PAY for all of you.

LEILA

You're quite a grouchy Uncle, aren't you?

Leila produces a bag of fresh coffee beans from Zabar's and dangles it in front of his nose. Ernest grunts his approval.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S DINING ROOM -- DAY

Eggs Benedict and Bolivian coffee for all. Mammy enters from the kitchen with a coffee pot.

UNCLE ERNEST

So where's the other one?

LEILA

Um.

(mid-chew)

She and Donald are doing something...wedding related.

UNCLE ERNEST

Ah, yes. The Donald.

MAMMY

He's a very nice boy. Good family.

UNCLE ERNEST

Dumb as toast.

MAMMY

(scolding)

He's about to be our son-in-law.

UNCLE ERNEST

Still a chowderhead. Must be great in the sheets.

Off Mammy's scandalized look.

UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)

What? Like you both haven't thought the same thing.

(to Leila)

-- well, you probably haven't, --

(to Mammy)

But I know you have.

Mammy energetically clears his plate.

MAMMY

You are a vile and rude old man.

Ernest yells out after him.

UNCLE ERNEST

DON'T CALL ME OLD.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK/BALTO STATUE -- DAY

Leila sits alone on a bench reading *The New York Times*, while Paxil waits dutifully at her heels. Children play on the statue nearby.

LEILA

Listen to this: "Researchers announced that male dogs raised in New York City are at increased risk to develop medical problems including anxiety, skin rashes, depression, tooth decay, hypochondria and impotence."

(Leila looks down sympathetically)

That's so sad.

Paxil looks up, troubled. A rubber kick-ball rolls over near Leila. A cute kid, about six, runs over to retrieve it. He breaks into a heart-melting smile, picks up the ball, gives Leila a shy little wave and rejoins his friends.

VOICE (O.S.)

Yours?

A startled Leila looks up as a MAN joins her on the bench.

LEILA

Me, uh, no.

(indicating Paxil)

Mine. Paxil.

Regards the dog.

MAN

Very...fuzzy head.

There is an awkward pause as the Man beats himself up over that one. A little girl roughhouses on the statue.

LEILA

(being polite)

Yours?

MAN

My sister's. I borrow her on Sundays.

Silence.

MAN (CONT'D)

The closest my wife and I got was two canaries and a hamster.

(long beat, sadly)

She kept the hamster.

(beat)

Freddie.

LEILA

I actually...don't do this.

MAN

What?

LEILA

The...talking to you part.

MAN

I understand.

LEILA

You seem very nice and everything.

MAN

Thank you.

LEILA

But I think it's better this way.

MAN

Of course.

They resume their non-talking. After a bit...

MAN (CONT'D)

She's a lesbian now, my wife.

LEILA

Really?

MAN

(smiles)

No. I'm just bitter. She's actually with some giant guy named Douggie.

Leila indulges him with a slight smile. More silence.

MAN (CONT'D)

We, uh, were just about to leave. I don't suppose you would want to get a cup of coffee with us?

LEILA

I wouldn't?

MAN

You would?

LEILA

No. I just wondered why you thought I wouldn't.

MAN

So you won't.

LEILA

I'm actually pretty busy. Not now, of course, but -- well, soon. Thanks, though.

MAN

Sure.

The disappointed man heads off towards his niece. After a moment, he turns back.

MAN (CONT'D)

So why'd you name your dog after an anti-depressant?

LEILA

Look at him!

He gives her a puzzled look, the dog gives him a puzzled look, and they continue on. Leila watches them go.

INT. LEILA'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Leila stirs a pot of macaroni and cheese, while talking on a portable phone. She looks exasperated. Paxil follows her every move.

LEILA

No, I'm not trying to sell you anything...I understand that, but I'm not the person who rents out clowns...I'm sure you do want his little birthday party to be special...Who wouldn't?...Hello?

She pulls the phone away from her ear, and looks at it. Another night shot to hell.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

As before, except Leila is now seated. The CAMERA takes a while to find her. A plate of half-eaten food gets cold. She crosses a name off a list while she speaks.

LEILA (O.S.)

Mrs. Barrows? My name is Leila Sweet. You mistakenly called my number when you were trying to reach "Clowns to Go." Their number is the same as mine, but it's 718. See, I get a lot of messages from people looking for clowns, and...I'm sorry? Okay. I'll hold.

Leila leans back in her seat and sighs. She notices a framed photograph nestled in a cluster of them, and picks it up.

INSERT: two pensive little girls sitting on the Alice in Wonderland statue in Central Park: PUSH IN on Leila and her little sister Evy as girls...

INT. CAR -- DAY

PULL OUT from Leila, as a young girl, sitting next to Evy in the back seat of a cherry 1963 Falcon. They are both dressed in expensive, official-looking NASA spacesuits. Up front DADDY, driving, and MOMMY, riding shotgun, are singing a road song:

MOMMY AND DADDY

There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was his name-o.

(turning to the girls)

We can't hear you...

CU: little Evy and Leila, mouthing the words through their space helmets...their adoring eyes glued on Daddy's adoring eyes...

ALL

B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, B-I-N-G-O, and Bingo was his name--ohhhhhh!

As the car passes out of frame we hear the SCREECH of tires, CRUNCH of twisted metal.

The CAMERA finds a billboard welcoming visitors to the space center, while a lone hubcap rolls into frame.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

CU Leila's face as she remembers. Widen to show the phone in her lap. After a moment lost in thought Leila walks to the kitchen, dumps her plate in the sink, pulls off a Post-It and writes a note to herself.

She slaps it on the refrigerator next to the others, and hits the lights. We can't read it.

LEILA

(to Paxil)

C'mon boy.

As they exit, we move in on the note: "HAVE A CHILD".

INT. LEILA'S LOBBY -- MORNING

Leila again scoops up an unwanted pile of delivery menus. She produces a homemade "NO MENUS" sign, posts it on the outside lobby door, and takes a moment to admire her work before heading out.

INT. RESTAURANT -- MORNING

Evy digs into her bagel and lox. Leila toys with biscotti.

LEILA

Can I ask you something?

EVY

Shoot.

Leila begins to speak and then notices something.

LEILA

Is that my shirt?

EVY

Oh, yeah. How does it look?

LEILA

It looks like...my shirt!

EVY

Sorry. I was all out.

(beat)

Is that what you wanted to ask me?

LEILA

No.

(beat)

Look. we both had the same odd, orphaned upbringing, right?

EVY

Emphasis on "odd".

LEILA

So how come I dysfunctioned and you didn't?

Evy doesn't look up from her breakfast.

EVY

Sex.

LEILA

I thought that might be it.

EVY

Uh, huh.

Beat.

LEILA

Well, I've decided to have some.

Evy's eyes go wide.

EVY

Oh, god.

LEILA

Actually, I **NEED** to have some.

EVY

Oh, God.

LEILA

I want to have a child.

EVY

But...why?

LEILA

I'm going to ask you some questions and you have to answer them because you're my sister.

EVY

Waiter!

A waiter approaches the table.

LEILA

Like, what exactly does it mean to be, you know, "good in bed"?

WAITER

Naked and peppy.

EVY

She's not asking you. Go away.

WAITER

You called me.

EVY

Oh, right. I'll have a really huge Bloody Mary. Hold the red stuff.

The waiter glances at his watch. It's ten in the morning. Impressive.

WAITER

(to Leila)

And for you?

LEILA

Am I the kind of person you would have sex with? You know -- hypothetically?

WAITER

(to Evy)

This a trick question, right?.

EVY

Tell you what. Skip the drink. We'll take a check.

LEILA

You didn't finish your food.

EXT. SKATING RINK -- DAY

Evy and Leila skate side by side and talk about Leila's sex life.

EVY

This is not a pretty mental picture?

LEILA

Gee, thanks.

EVY

'Cause you know, it's one thing to talk about, another to actually visualize.

LEILA

(sternly)

Maybe that's because you're trying too hard.

EVY

(still thinking)

No, really. I can't even get your clothes off.

LEILA

EVY!

Leila walks on as Evy follows.

EVY

Okay, sorry. It's just funny, Leila. I mean, for ten years you've been locked up tighter than a nun and all of a sudden, you want the Kama Sutra.

LEILA

Just the part that gets you pregnant.

EVY

That's the last chapter. First you've got dinner, drinks, HIS life story, a couple of ego strokes and a minute or two of serious headboard slamming.

Leila makes a face.

EVY (CONT'D)

When that gets old, you marry one of them. Say, in my case...

(pointedly)

...next Saturday.

LEILA

Could we back up a bit? Like to "hello"?

EVY

This is really basic stuff, Leila. I mean like "Girl 101".

LEILA

I guess I missed class.

EVY

Well, then, let's see. Okay. You know there are working parts, right?

LEILA

(deadpan)

The penace.

The girls share a smile as they walk on, away from the camera.

EVY

Why don't I find you a professional.

EXT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the luncheonette-type shop directly adjacent to Leila's loft in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood of Manhattan.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

Two WAITRESSES (late teens) sit in a booth, slacking. DARCY, the punked-out smartass smokes a cigarette while DOTTIE, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, shuffles Tarot cards.

Leila plods in and looks back out the window towards the packed coffee bar on the corner.

LEILA

Nellie's Deli is killing us.

Darcy discreetly hides the Nellie's Deli cappuccino she had been drinking.

DARCY

Bummer.

With trepidation, Dottie turns over a card. Darcy squints at the supine man with the swords in his back..

DOTTIE

The Ten of Rods!

DARCY

Looks like the bartender at "Vivisection".

(off Dottie's shocked look)

What?

Leila goes behind the counter and brings the coffee pot from the industrial urn. She pours them each a mug, careful not to disturb the Tarot.

LEILA

(prompting)

'Good morning, Boss.'

DOTTIE AND DARCY

(rote, sing-song)

Good morning, Boss.

Darcy tries the cream pitcher. It's empty. She hands it to Leila.

LEILA

Remind me to nominate you employee of the month.

Leila heads towards the kitchen.

DARCY

'Remind' you? Isn't that what's it's job?

DOTTIE

Post-It's.

DARCY

Prozac's.

LEILA

PAXIL.

Darcy calls out after her.

DARCY

Oh, your sister called. Who's Beverly Kirk?

Leila comes out with a tray of fresh muffins.

LEILA

I don't know. Why?

DARCY

Because you got an appointment with her in, like, ten minutes. Evy says don't be late.

An exasperated Leila rushes to put the muffins out.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Shrink?

LEILA

No.

DOTTIE

The hole in your stomach?

LEILA

"Ulcer," Dottie. And no.

The girls continue to stare.

LEILA (CONT'D)

She's an OB/GYN. Okay?

DARCY

Ah, that hole.

LEILA

There could be customers, Darcy.

DOTTIE

(innocently)

He usually doesn't come until three.

Leila takes a deep breath as she approaches their booth.

LEILA

Look, girls. You may as well know, since it could impact on your

(finger quotes)

"Work" lives: I've decided to have...a child.

The girls look at each other in wide-eyed wonder.

LEILA (CONT'D)

WHAT?! Am I so repulsive?

They can't stop staring.

DOTTIE

But, Leila, you're sort of a virgin.

LEILA

Yes, Dottie, I know.

DARCY

Maybe we should have a long talk when you get back.

Leila looks at Darcy's orange hair and belly-button ring.

LEILA

That's just...too scary.

Leila walks to the front of the shop for her coat. The girls glance at her expectantly.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything else?

LEILA

I may not be back in time to serve you your lunch.

Leila leaves quickly. Darcy pushes away her mug of coffee and retrieves the cappuccino from her lap.

DOTTIE

The real hole's in her heart... She's like one of those round, sweet things? With the empty middle?

DARCY

You don't know the word 'donut'?

DOTTIE

(shrugging)

Pardon me for not taking "Food" at Haavaard.

EXT. DR. KIRK'S OFFICE -- DAY

INSERT: on a plaque which reads "DR. BEVERLY KIRK, OB-GYN"

Leila stands outside the office door, gathering her courage.

INT. DR. KIRK'S EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Leila is writing the great American novel on the medical form. A knockoff of NURSE Ratched enters the room, rips the chart out of her hand, and tosses a blue gown to the exam table, ringing one of the dreaded stirrups.

NURSE

Make sure you lose the panties.

Leila cringes.

NURSE (CONT'D)

WHAT?

LEILA

Nothing.

NURSE

You're not wearing panties?

LEILA

I am wearing 'underwear.' You don't see men wearing...

NURSE

Panties? Maybe in a perfect world.

LEILA

Fine.

NURSE

Fine.

(looking over her chart)

Job?

LEILA

Excuse me?

NURSE

(tapping the chart with her pen)

Occupation?

LEILA

(with dignity)

I run a muffin shop.

NURSE

Gee. That's what I do.

LEILA

God.

NURSE

Panties. Muffins ... Anything else we need to worry about?

LEILA

No...

NURSE

What?

LEILA

I find it offensive, so naturally I don't say it.

NURSE

Oh, goodie. What's it begin with?

LEILA

(hesitating)

'F'

NURSE

(pretending to make a chart entry)

"Panties", "Muffin"...and "Fuck".

LEILA

No ... I rather like 'fuck.' At least it's in the Oxford English Dictionary.

NURSE

(wincing)

You had to look it up?

LEILA

Shouldn't I be getting undressed?

NURSE

Oh sure. The doctor will be beating the door down any minute now.

Leaving:

NURSE (CONT'D)

How many letters that 'f' word have?

LEILA

(reluctant)

Four.

Pondering, Nurse leaves. Leila looks around. On one wall, a large blackboard, on another, a photo-montage, featuring hundreds of babies delivered by Dr. Kirk, under the caption: 'WE DELIVER.' Leila starts biting her nails.

INT. DR. KIRK'S EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Leila is now wearing the blue robe, sitting on the exam table, a hand tensely clutching each stirrup. Her luxurious hair, loosed from its bun, lies in a generous wave over her shoulder.

INT. DR. KIRK'S EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Holding the back of the blue gown closed over her beautiful butt, Leila is at the chalkboard, writing the words:

MAN, WOMAN, BIRTH, DEATH, INFINITY.

INT. DR. KIRK'S EXAM ROOM -- DAY

Leila, her face resting in a stirrup, sleeping. A White Rubber Glove taps her on the shoulder. She looks at her watch, as the doctor reads her chart.

DR. KIRK

(looking down)

Sorry. That's why there's no clock in here.

DR. KIRK

(extending a glove)

I'm Dr...Kirk.

They look at each other in astonishment. Not only are his voice and gender a surprise to Leila; so too is the fact that HE IS THE MAN SHE MET IN THE PARK YESTERDAY.

LEILA

(dazed)

As in... 'Beverly'?

DR. KIRK

(equally dazed)

Yes, well. My mother claims it's British.

Couldn't be more awkward.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

This really is quite the horrifying coincidence. I could refer you to a colleague...

Fighting closed the back of her examination gown.

LEILA

Thank you. That won't be necessary...Horrifying?

DR. KIRK

Not, of course, what I meant at all. Embarrassing is what I meant...I mean, for me, that is...Um. Do you know that's on backwards?

She looks down at her gown.

LEILA

I thought they were supposed to be.

DR. KIRK

Not...here.

LEILA

Should I turn it around?

DR. KIRK

(uncomfortable smile)

We'll manage.

He looks over her overly long chart, fumbles it. He's a shy gynecologist; she's a beautiful woman. Why didn't he choose husbandry?

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

(after several pages, finally cutting to the chase)

So. You'd like to start a family. That's lovely.

(beat)

And I noticed you answered the sex question... 'No.'

LEILA

Yes.

DR. KIRK

(gently)

But, of course, gender isn't a Yes or No question...well, there are rare cases...Anyway, next to sex, you were supposed to write M for male, F for female. And you wrote 'no.'

LEILA

I was trying to be helpful.

DR. KIRK

I see.

He studies her.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

And how long have you and your ... partner been trying to conceive?

LEILA

I ... don't have a donor.

(beat)

As yet.

Oh.

DR. KIRK

Artificial insemination?

LEILA

(primly)

No thank you.

DR. KIRK

Right.

(beat)

I tell you what. Let's start with a routine exam, and then when you leave I'll recommend an ovulation kit. The instructions are on the package.

LEILA

All of them?

He looks up in response, only to be distracted by the new words on his blackboard: Man, Woman, Birth, Death, Infinity.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Sorry. I was bored.

For Dr. Kirk, what she's written is apparently so fraught with meaning, he can't even talk about it.

LEILA (CONT'D)

It can be erased.

DR. KIRK

You wrote this? ... It's...It's...

Words fail him. He's completely floored.

LEILA

It's from Ben Casey. Not even a real doctor. Not even a real sentence.

Not to Dr. Kirk.

DR KIRK

There used to be symbols...

He takes the Magic Marker and draws the symbols for Man and Woman, hesitates at Birth, goes on to draw Death and Infinity.

DR. KIRK

I can't remember the one for 'Birth.'

Kirk wracks his brain for the answer, while Leila waits patiently on the exam table.

LEILA

Um, Doctor...?

DR KIRK

(snapping out of it)

Yes, of course. Sorry.

He goes to her, gingerly pulls down the gown, puts a stethoscope to her chest and listens.

DR. KIRK

I'm having trouble finding...

LEILA

Your ears are on your...

Points to his neck. With dignity, Dr. Kirk fixes his stethoscope.

DR. KIRK

Quite right.

He pauses.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

Would you be more comfortable if the nurse were present?

LEILA

NO! No, thank you.

She is definitely stealing a look back at him as he again puts the stethoscope to her heart. This time we clearly HEAR-thump thump thump: she really has one.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

Darcy rests in a booth painting her nails black while Dottie refills the sugar dispensers.

DOTTIE

What did she say?

Leila moves back and forth behind the counter, straightening up.

LEILA

The doctor was a Man named 'Beverly.'

DARCY

That must have been a big hit in the school yard.

LEILA

He was soft-spoken and kind. Naturally, I didn't know how to talk to him.

DOTTIE

Was he single?

Leila cleans up the sugar that Dottie spills at every station.

LEILA

(appalled)

How should I know? He's a doctor, not a dating service.

(off their stares)

Yes, he's single. Okay?

DARCY

Aren't you leaving something out?

LEILA

What? I went to the doctor. I bought a kit.

DARCY

I hope it includes a DICK.

LEILA

Good Lord, Darcy!

DARCY

Leila, you haven't even had a date like this whole decade...

LEILA

You're counting...?

DOTTIE

You need to have sex to have a child, Leila...

DARCY

...unless this cloning thing takes off...

LEILA

Thank you both for your interest.

DARCY

And even if you pay for it, you need a date to have sex.

LEILA

I don't want to talk about this anymore. It's private.

Leila goes to the kitchen to get a trash bag. She peeks out again.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Go back to your coven.

A MAN (30's) enters the shop. He's wearing a baseball cap, and dark glasses, which he never removes.

DARCY

Yuk. It's the Customer.

Dottie sighs and walks behind the counter.

DOTTIE

(pouring his coffee, cheerful)

Welcome to Sweet's Muffin Shop. Would you like to hear a list of our muffins today?

CUSTOMER

What's YOUR problem?

DOTTIE

Leila wants us to be nicer.

CUSTOMER

All right, Dottie. Let me hear a list of your muffins today.

DOTTIE

Cranberry.

CUSTOMER

I'll have one of those.

The Customer removes his leather jacket. There's a flesh-colored nicotine PATCH on his arm.

DOTTIE

(dumbfounded by patch)

What happened? You get shot?

CUSTOMER

It's a nicotine patch.

DOTTIE

(disgusted)

Like you don't get enough from smoking.

Customer shakes his head in amazement, as Leila crosses.

CUSTOMER

Hey, Leila.

Barely a glance, as Leila shovels uneaten muffins into the trash bag.

LEILA

Hello.

Leila grabs her coat and drags the bag towards the side door.

LEILA (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow, Dottie. Will you lock up?

DOTTIE

You want to come out with us tonight? We're gonna get tattoos!

LEILA

Thank you. I already have...plans.

She hurries out.

CUSTOMER

All I said was "hey".

(mopey)

It's like I'm invisible.

Dottie and Darcy look at him.

INT. DR. KIRK'S OFFICE -- MAGIC HOUR

Music cue starts. Dr. Kirk stands at an easel in his office, writing out the five words Leila wrote on the blackboard in his exam room. Then he draws the symbols, again struggling to remember the one for Birth. He stands back, transfixed.

EXT. LEILA'S LOFT -- MAGIC HOUR

CRANE UP from Dottie and Darcy locking up the shop to Leila silhouetted in her living room window, looking out over the city. She holds a portable phone in her hand.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

A deserted corner of a seedy street. A RUSTY BLUE CHEVROLET with the muffler hanging on for dear life comes into frame and screeches to a halt. The back door of the car opens and a beat-up stuffed DOG is tossed out. Moments later two CHILDREN (9 and 6) clamber out onto the damp road. One is a Boy and the other a Girl. They could be siblings, except he's black and she's white. The car takes off with a roar. The children remain sitting on the street, stunned. A moment, and then the Chevrolet reverses into frame. The back door opens again and two TWINKIES, one after the other, fly out onto the pavement beside the two children. The car takes off again. This time for good. The Boy picks up the Twinkies, the Girl picks up the dog. He takes her hand and they walk away from camera down the deserted road.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Leila steps out of her bathroom and reads the results of the ovulation test. Fertile as Iowa loam. She looks at herself in the mirror.

INT. DR. KIRK'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

The nurse enters the now empty office. She angrily tears the paper off the easel, smashes it into a ball, and chucks it in the waste paper basket. Music ends.

FADE IN:

EXT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- DAY

Leila approaches the brownstone and heads up the stairs.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S LIBRARY -- DAY

Leila enters the library. An open laptop sits on the etage, screen-saved by the flying toasters.

LEILA

(looking around)

Mammy? Uncle Ernest?

A voice from another room.

MAMMY (O.S.)

We're in the bath, dear. Won't be a sec.

Leila sits by the computer, scared of it. She touches the mouse tentatively. The screen pops up saying: "Welcome to the Web.' To continue, press Enter." She does.

COMPUTER

Welcome to the Web. Do you wish to browse? Press "Y" or "N".

Leila starts. The computer is talking to her in a slightly exaggerated "computer voice."
She presses "Y".

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

Do you wish to access a conference on the subject of your
choice? Press "Y" or "N".

Leila presses "Y". A bulletin board of topics currently being discussed online flashes
up. Since Leila does nothing, the computer once again prompts her.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

If you are unable to select a topic, would you like
assistance? Press "Y" or "N".

Leila presses "Y".

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

Do you have an interest in gardening, politics, film, music,
literature, sports, virtual reality...or sex?

Leila stares at the screen in horror.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

(with attitude)

Do you have an interest?

No response.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

(more attitude)

Do you have a problem?

No response.

COMPUTER (CONT'D)

(almost mad)

What's wrong with you?

Leila abruptly closes the lid of the laptop -- which then beeps at her -- forcing her to pull the plug from the outlet. Switching over to battery, the computer continues to beep. Leila puts a pillow over the contraption.

Mammy and Ernest approach from behind in robes that reflect their personalities: Mammy's -- floral and bright; Ernest's -- Brooks Brothers and muted. Mammy nips at his ever-present glass of Sherry.

MAMMY

I'm sorry, dear.

LEILA

(to Ernest)

That thing yelled at me.

Ernest grumbles his way to turn off the beeping computer.

UNCLE ERNEST

Can't imagine why.

MAMMY

(trying to avoid a potential situation)

Honey, can I fix you a snack?

LEILA

No thanks, Mammy. I should go to work soon.

UNCLE ERNEST

Hah!

MAMMY

(warning)

Ernest.

Mammy heads for the kitchen.

UNCLE ERNEST

The word just comes out of her mouth funny.

LEILA

(to Mammy)

I saw Evy yesterday.

UNCLE ERNEST

And how is your sister?

LEILA

She's working on another fish story for the magazine.

UNCLE ERNEST

One uses the Ivy League education I paid for to write about food. The other to serve it.

Mammy returns with milk and cookies, to Leila's dismay.

LEILA

I think she's getting cold feet.

MAMMY

Perfectly natural. Which reminds me. We absolutely must get the measurements for your dress.

Mammy searches in the sideboard drawer for a tape measure.

LEILA

Please... not today, Mammy.

Mammy starts measuring Leila's hips, her waist, her bust.

UNCLE ERNEST

I understand you've got a new doctor.

LEILA

Are there any secrets in this family?

UNCLE ERNEST

How did you find him?

LEILA

Evy found him.

(to Mammy)

I'm a size six, OK?

Mammy measures the distance from the nape of Leila's neck to her waist and writes it down.

MAMMY

So far, except for the rise, the exact same as Evy.

LEILA

Mammy, I'm four inches taller.

MAMMY

That's okay. Now let me just measure your rise...for the little white panties.

LEILA

No!

MAMMY

(wounded)

Fine. Provide your own panties.

LEILA

NO PROBLEM.

UNCLE ERNEST

I know how you found the doctor, but how did you find him? Handsome?

LEILA

Competent.

UNCLE ERNEST

Bullshit. He's a hunk.

LEILA

How would you know?

UNCLE ERNEST

(indicating computer)

Evy E-mailed his file.

LEILA

God.

UNCLE ERNEST

If you can't give it up for a cute, single doctor -- I'll shoot your dog.

MAMMY

He's not trying to pressure you, dear.

UNCLE ERNEST

Yes I am.

LEILA

Let me remind you all, I am not marriage-minded. I hate love, I hate marriage, I hate white dresses...

MAMMY

No, you don't. You were a beautiful bride.

Horrified at his own indiscretion, Mammy puts his hand over his mouth.

LEILA

WHAT!? You can say it. I was dumped at the altar. Stood up. Humiliated. And now, dear Uncles, since you can only nourish yourselves so long on the shame of THAT event, here's a new morsel: I intend to give birth to a child. Forthwith.

The two uncles stare at each other.

MAMMY

Immaculately?

LEILA

Vaginally.

(beat)

As soon as I can figure out how.

UNCLE ERNEST

Not another dime to Harvard, Mammy. Hear me? Not one red cent.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

CU: Leila's face as she looks on with fascination and horror.

DARCY (O.S.)

The worst thing you can do is cozy it in there.

DARCY (O.S.)

When I say push, push hard. And don't freak out if there's a little blood.

DOTTIE (O.S.)

Won't it hurt?

TURN AROUND to reveal Darcy, covered in a barber's smock, sitting in a chair while Dottie holds ice to the top portion of her left ear. A piercing is in progress.

DARCY

Only for a second. Just make sure you get all the way through. Catch the needle with the cork.

DOTTIE

Got it.

Leila shudders and looks back down at something she's been writing, while the Customer, behind the counter, pours himself a coffee refill. Business as usual at the muffin shop.

CUSTOMER

Have you got any cream?

LEILA

Check the fridge.

Customer walks to the kitchen.

DARCY

We're out.

Customer makes a u-turn.

DARCY (CONT'D)

OK. Ready? One, two, three, GO!

Dottie closes her eyes and pushes the needle through Darcy's ear.

DARCY (CONT'D)

Ohhh!

DOTTIE

Gross!

DARCY

Good. Now just leave it there for a minute or two until it takes.

Leila looks up from her papers.

LEILA

Tell me if you think I've got this right.

(reading)

"Attractive, intelligent, self-employed woman, not-thirty -- virgin; seeks potent, genetically-sound man, twenty-five to forty, for short-term sex. No romantics or commitment-seekers, please."

Leila looks up. The girls, one with a needle through her ear, look stunned. The Customer fumbles in his jacket, pulls out his emergency cigarette and sucks on it like there's no tomorrow.

EXT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

A line of men stretches from the door down the stairs, for as far as the eye can see.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

CU of a primping, Italian, God's-gift-to-women type.

MAN 1

So the deal is, I put the doggie in the pound for ya -- and that's it. No strings.

(off an unseen nod)

I'm in.

Evy sits across the table from prospective candidates. We see photos and what appear to be medical records piling up. Leila sits off to the side, horrified at the can of worms she's opened. A video camera rests on a tripod between them, running. They've been at this a while.

EVY

You mentioned in your questionnaire that you had four children. Can I ask if you're still in touch with them?

Turn around on...

MAN 2

Oh, as "in touch" as the next guy, I suppose. You know teenagers. They definitely have a mind of their own.

EVY

So your wife has custody?

Blank stare from Man 2.

EVY (CONT'D)

You know, custody? Divorce? You are divorced?

Blank stare from Man 2.

MAN 3

I almost didn't come over. The whole thing seemed so, I don't know, clinical. But then I realized the kind of sacrifice you're making for this baby and I thought -- maybe I could help.

Evy looks up at Mr. Perfect and then, hopefully, across at Leila. He's got their attention.

MAN 3 (CONT'D)

I thought maybe, I had been chosen to help. That the Virgin of the Plains was risen to smite down the rough beast and

that I, the foul spawn of indifference, had found purchase
on the honeyed trail.

MAN 4

I'm just really horny.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Man 5 is on the television monitor in Leila's bedroom.

MAN 5

Truth is, ma'am, I'm hangin' fat and low. Wanna see?

OFF-CAMERA VOICES, Evy and Leila.

EVY AND LEILA (O.S.)

No!

MAN 5

And I do not shoot blanks.

(confidentially)

Full metal jacket.

Man 5 drops his two front teeth for emphasis, and winks.

Fast forward on the tape. Stop on WOMAN 1, a lesbian. Fast forward to MAN 6, a priest. Fast forward to MAN 7. Evy's off-camera voice.

EVY (O.S.)

Do you speak English?

(beat)

Do you speak at all?

Man 7 sits with a shit-eating grin.

Pull back on Leila, disgusted, as she turns off the tape and throws the remote on a chair. She's wearing flannel pajamas.

INT. LEILA'S KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Leila walks out to the kitchen for a glass of milk. She sees the "Have a Child" Post-It, crosses out the word "Child" and replaces it with "Girl."

Her intercom BUZZES.

LEILA

(into intercom)

I'm sorry -- no more men.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

What?

LEILA

No interviews.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Don't want one.

LEILA

Who are you?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Slappy.

LEILA

Well -- I didn't order anything. And stop leaving menus!

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Not food, "Slappy"!

LEILA

What's "Slappy"?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Look out your window.

Leila goes tentatively to her window, opens it and looks down.

POV Leila: a grown man with a red wig, a bulbous nose, a polka dotted suit and big feet looks up at her, arms extended.

INT./EXT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

LEILA

What are you supposed to be?

SLAPPY

Whaddya mean, what? I'm Slappy the Clown!

She gives an exaggerated shrug. He blasts his big HORN.

SLAPPY (CONT'D)

Nothing ringing a bell?

He squirts water from his lapel. She shakes her head.

SLAPPY (CONT'D)

Come on...you were a kid once.

LEILA

Not everyone knows who you are Mr. Narcissistic Bad Dresser.

SLAPPY

What kind of childhood did you have that you don't know Slappy the Clown when he comes to your door!?

LEILA

I heard of him. I thought he was cuter.

(beat)

And I don't like your name.

SLAPPY

Yeah, well, all the good ones are trademarked.

Slappy produces a bouquet of paper flowers from his sleeve.

SLAPPY (CONT'D)

I brought you these.

LEILA

Don't you frighten the children?

SLAPPY

I just wanted to thank you for referring all those calls back to Clowns to Go.

A window opens on the floor below Leila's. A man leans out.

MAN

Hey you, Tickles. Fuck off.

SLAPPY

It's Slappy, pal. And eat me.

The man's window slams shut.

SLAPPY (CONT'D)

(to Leila)

So...well, thanks. Go back to your...whatever you were doing.

Slappy is about to say something else, decides against it, starts to walk away, comes back, and carefully lays the flowers on the doorstep. He walks off, sadly.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Leila starts to close the window when she sees Menu Man working his way down the street towards her door. She rushes out of the loft.

INT./EXT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

CU -- Bottom of the outer door to Leila's building. A bunch of menus come under the door. A hand pushes them back outside. In again, out again. A tug-of-war-to-the-death over a "Pizza Perfect" delivery menu.

With her free hand Leila reaches up and pushes open the door -- hard. THUMP.

MENU MAN (O.S.)

Ow.

Leila looks through the door and sees Menu Man hopping around on the stoop holding the side of his head. She tries to comfort him.

MENU MAN (CONT'D)

Get away from me, lady.

LEILA

I'm sorry. I just...

MENU MAN

What?

In the light, Leila can't help noticing that she has beamed the most beautiful, young black man on earth: gorgeous dreads, fiery eyes... She softens a bit.

LEILA

I just don't want any menus.

MENU MAN

Did I ask you if you wanted any menus, lady? I didn't ask you if you wanted any menus. I don't care if you want menus.

LEILA

Well, I don't.

MENU MAN

Good. Because I don't want to crawl around like a reptile passing the damn things out. So that makes us even. Except for you hit me in the head with a door. Which makes it not so even.

LEILA

(innocently)

I'm really sorry about that. It was an accident.

MENU MAN

Accident? Lady, you hit me in the head with a door.

LEILA

Oh, don't be so dramatic. I barely bumped you.

MENU MAN

You took aim!

LEILA

Did not.

Menu Man pulls open the door.

MENU MAN

Put your head by the door, here. Let me give you a little "bump."

LEILA

Do you want some ice for that?

MENU MAN

I want to know what you were doing in your pajamas on the other side of that door. You weren't leaving, obviously, and I don't think you were out walking around like that. So

I can only guess you were waiting to assault my head with that door.

LEILA

(defensively)

Oh, poor you.

MENU MAN

Damn right, poor me. If I don't hand these out, I don't eat.

LEILA

Well, if you had bothered to read my sign, none of this would have happened.

MENU MAN

I read your sign. I ignored it. That's how I make money.

LEILA

Which is another thing. Aren't you a bit ... attractive to be doling out menus for a living?

MENU MAN

What's that supposed to mean?

LEILA

Nothing. Except you could be, like... a supermodel.

MENU MAN

Then I definitely couldn't eat.

LEILA

Fine.

MENU MAN

That was a joke.

LEILA

I know.

MENU MAN

You do?

Beat.

LEILA

So what do you want to be?

MENU MAN

According to my MFA, I am a poet.

LEILA

(brightening)

Really? I love poetry. Say one.

MENU MAN

What am I. A jukebox?

LEILA

C'mon. It'll be fun.

Leila starts to chase him down the steps when she notices the plastic flowers. She offers them to Menu Man. Behind them, the door closes and locks. They look at it. Whoops.

LEILA (CONT'D)

We can go have coffee and muffins.

MENU MAN

Do you think I need a date?

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

The abandoned Boy and Girl rest on an embankment over train tracks. As trains pass in opposite directions underneath, they crack open and eat their Twinkies. Red hugs her stuffed dog.

EXT. MUFFIN SHOP -- NIGHT

Through the window, we can see Leila and the Menu Man in animated conversation. Outside, the daily bag of UNEATEN MUFFINS sits by the trash.

FADE IN:

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- MORNING

CU: Lots of different symbols, drawn, and then scratched out. The one that remains appears to be the letter "O" within the letter "O".

Darcy studies the drawing which lies on the front table, as Dottie enters.

DARCY

Dottie, that's so sad.

DOTTIE

What?

DARCY

Not only can't you say "donut" -- you can barely draw one. You're like an idiot savant. Well, the first part.

DOTTIE

(indignant)

That's not mine. And it wasn't here last night.

Darcy shushes her when she notices Leila and the Menu Man in a booth, slumped over a couple of cartons of milk, asleep. They approach carefully, stunned by the sight of the handsome young man.

They attempt to pick up a dreadlock to get a better look at his face. Leila wakes up and sees her staff.

LEILA

What're you looking at?

DOTTIE

Him.

LEILA

Oh. Yes. He's quite remarkably handsome. But he doesn't like to hear it.

DOTTIE

After all these years, how'd you ...?

LEILA

He's a friend.

DARCY

She means how'd you find a friend?

LEILA

On the street -- he's a starving artist.

DOTTIE

That explains the donut.

Leila stands, looking as dignified as she can in her pajamas, grabs the not-donut from Dottie and walks towards the door leading upstairs to her apartment.

LEILA

It's not a donut, and I have to take it somewhere. When he wakes up, give him whatever he wants.

DOTTIE

Don't worry.

LEILA

And then, you know, show him the ropes.

DOTTIE

Uh, what ropes?

LEILA

The ropes around here. I promised him a job.

DARCY

We don't have ropes around here, Leila. If we did, we'd hang ourselves. What's he going to do?

LEILA

What you do. Do you think he can handle it?

INT. DR. KIRK'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Leila has a stare-down with a mean looking ten year old boy. She curls her lip in a sneer, he does the same. She sticks out her tongue -- pink. He sticks out his -- bad-candy purple. She raises her finger and thumb, and eyeballs him down the barrel of her "gun". He pulls out a SuperSoaker and completely drowns her.

Nurse looks up, barely containing her glee.

NURSE

The Doctor will see you now.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

Menu Man pokes at the muffin in front of him and eyes it suspiciously. He decides to stick with coffee. Dottie and Darcy solemnly approach.

DOTTIE

We're supposed to tell you what to do around here.

MENU MAN

I'm listening.

Menu Man walks behind the counter to the kitchen. The girls follow.

DARCY

As you can see, business is not an issue. But there is still something that desperately...needs doing.

(beat)

That would be the Boss.

DOTTIE

You have to tell her about the birds and the bees.

DARCY

Or barring that, how to get boned.

He begins to gather pots, pans and ingredients from the shelves.

MENU MAN

Consider it done.

The girls exchange a look.

DARCY

You did her?

MENU MAN

She's been clued.

DOTTIE

Right here?

Menu Man begins to make himself a fabulous-looking omelet.

MENU MAN

(enjoying himself)

Right here. Six hours of good, hard, honest...talking.

DOTTIE

Wuz that a slam?

MENU MAN

She was a bit confused about "penis".

DARCY

Who isn't?

MENU MAN

Straight up? You guys make the worst muffins I've ever tasted.

DOTTIE

The Customer likes them.

They look in the Customer's direction. He's slumped over in his seat, a nicotine patch on each arm, lighting one cigarette off the end of another. Point taken.

INT. DR. KIRK'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Kirk opens the door to find Leila standing there. She's drenched.

LEILA

I don't have an appointment.

DR. KIRK

Please. Come in.

He ushers her into his office, and gives her a hand towel.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I apologize about Timmy. He's mad at his mother for being pregnant.

LEILA

(looking at her wet clothes)

Me too.

Leila hands Kirk the cardboard symbol, now dripping and limp.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Here, it's...birth.

DR. KIRK

You found it!

LEILA

I'm sorry it's so messy.

DR. KIRK

Usually is.

Kirk delicately transports the wet card towards the easel, looking at it oddly.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

Circles. I don't remember circles.

He erases the "?" next to "Birth" on his reworked design, tacks up the donut, and stands back with a sense of accomplishment.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

So...

Still doesn't look right. He crosses to his desk and picks up a folder.

DR KIRK

I've got your exam results back and everything looks...normal.

LEILA

(cheerfully)

I'm normal?

DR. KIRK

Well, not "normal" -- that sounds like "average" -- which of course I don't mean. You're certainly way, way above average, like, I don't know, -- "spectacular"...uh, the point being, I can't see any reason you shouldn't be able to have a child.

(beat)

If you want to.

(beat)

Would you like a grapefruit juice?

Kirk tries to calm himself down. Leila shakes her head and points to her stomach.

LEILA

Ulcer.

DR. KIRK

Ulcer. Yes. You mentioned that.

LEILA

You have read my chart then?

DR. KIRK

I'm nearly through it. You have wonderful penmanship.

LEILA

I suppose I was a little...thorough.

DR. KIRK

No. No. I learned you have very good... teeth.

(adding quickly)

Not that it matters to me, of course.

LEILA

Good thing you're not my dentist.

DR. KIRK

And that you had a fine education. Which you used to...
become a waitress in a donut shop.

LEILA

(with dignity)

Proprietor. Muffins.

DR. KIRK

(getting worked up)

And that your height and weight are perfect, not to mention your skin, of course, and your eyes... Your hair is... looks, uh, healthy.

DR. KIRK

Oh, and your heart. You have a good one -- I mean, I heard it...

Kirk braves an uncertain glance at her.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

Would you go out with me?

Decidedly pregnant pause.

LEILA

I really can't.

DR KIRK

Of course not. I'm sorry.

Kirk looks like he wants to crawl in a hole.

LEILA

No. It's just that I had a date once. A wedding date. He broke it.

DR KIRK

I shouldn't have asked.

LEILA

It's okay. But I made this vow never to do that again.

DR. KIRK

"That" being me, specifically? Just to be clear?

LEILA

Exactly. No. I mean, I don't, "go out" with anyone. Not that I'm against it or anything -- just that it leads to...

DR KIRK

Intercourse?

LEILA

You got pretty far in my chart.

DR. KIRK

Sorry.

If there were scissors present, Kirk would cut out his tongue.

LEILA

I was actually referring to love and marriage. Those two I don't do. The other -- thing -- well, I just haven't done yet. That's why I'm here.

Kirk's eyes go wide. Dare he dream? The nurse, as usual, finds some non-reason to enter the room. She smirks at the easel.

NURSE

That's not birth.

LEILA/KIRK

What!?

NURSE

Birth's not a donut. It's an upside-down triangle.

LEILA

Your source?

NURSE

The Web. Yours?

LEILA

A...poet.

NURSE

I think we have a loser.

DR. KIRK

Thank you, Jean.

Nurse puts some files on the table by the door and exits with a smirk. Kirk and Leila look at each other for a moment.

LEILA

(suddenly self-conscious)

I should go now. Timmy's probably out there...squirting things. I just wanted to -- give birth to you. The...sign.

Leila rushes out. Kirk looks perplexed.

INT. DR. KIRK'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Leila heads through the waiting room on her way out.

NURSE

FART!

Leila freezes.

NURSE (CONT'D)

That's it, isn't it? The "F" word. Fart. FART. FART.
PANTIES! FART!

Where's that door.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

The abandoned Boy and Girl, both exhausted, descend the stairs leading from the park. As they walk towards us, the girl drags her little stuffed dog at her side. As they clear frame and walk away from us, the dog is gone.

The CAMERA finds the dog lying in the street, just before a LIMOUSINE crushes it. A squeal of brakes. The limo backs up, a jeweled hand reaches out and grabs the pooch, and the car heads off down the street in a cloud of steam.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- NIGHT

Dr. Kirk strolls under the street lamps of a deserted New York street, his head cast down, his collar turned up. Very Edward Hopper. As he approaches the entrance to an upscale restaurant, the limo turns a corner and comes towards us.

A YOUNG COUPLE hops out. They're beautifully dressed and stupendously drunk. They whirl through the restaurant's front door. Then, the woman spins out again, crying gaily:

DOG WOMAN

Not without the children!

She dives back into the limo and returns holding FIVE STUFFED DOGS. As she whisks through the door again, the little girl's dog flies out of her arms and lands in the bushes.

DR. KIRK

(calling out)

Wait.

Dr. Kirk waits for the woman to spin back around, but the door stays closed. Meanwhile, the limo drives off.

Dr. Kirk looks back and forth between the dog and the restaurant entrance. He looks through the window for the couple--rather easy to locate because now they are seated at a table with four Collies.

He sets the mutt next to the door, so it can be found by its owners on the way out.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

Tough break, pooch. The others are ordering steak.

He begins to walk away, but turns to look back at the dog.

He stands there for an inordinately long time--wrestling with some kind of question of conscience. Then he suddenly comes back, snatches up the dog and strides off.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

The place is mostly empty. Dr. Kirk puts the dog on the bar, and takes a seat on a stool. A DRUNK looks on from further down. The BARTENDER, 20s, good-looking, bemused, comes over.

BARTENDER

(after a suitable silence)

What's with the guard dog?

DR. KIRK

He wasn't as...pretty as the collies. So they dumped him.

BARTENDER

Who dumped him?

DR. KIRK

His rich, indifferent owners. Didn't even know he was gone.

(looking up)

Some people shouldn't have dogs and others, who truly deserve them, can't have them.

BARTENDER

Like for instance...?

Dr. Kirk has to think about it.

DR. KIRK

...orphans.

BARTENDER

Okay. Orphans.

DR. KIRK

Orphans do not have beautiful dogs with bows on their heads.

BARTENDER

What about Annie?

DR. KIRK

She's an exception.

(beat)

And she's a cartoon.

BARTENDER

So what are you having?

DR. KIRK

What's good?

BARTENDER

What's 'good'? Gee, scotch is good. Vodka. Gin is interesting, but my Mommy tells me not to serve it to girls, 'cause it shows up in the face...Who asks that?

DR. KIRK

Sorry. I don't know that much about drinking. I guess I'll start with...Vodka. No, Scotch. Just...Gimme one of each.

The bartender stares at him with a bottle in each hand. The drunk in the corner rolls his eyes.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- MORNING

Evy lets herself in with a key.

EVY

Hello? Leila?

No answer.

Evy unloads a shopping bag of goodies in Leila's kitchen: lotions, some pornographic magazines, a video or two, some lingerie. She puts a bottle of champagne in the fridge, and is about to do the same with some fresh, raw oysters. Paxil jumps on a stool.

EVY (CONT'D)

Hi, Postum.

Paxil stands on his hind legs. Evy scoops a few oysters in his bowl.

EVY (CONT'D)

They're oysters. You'll like 'em.

The phone rings. Evy answers on the portable and heads for Leila's bedroom with the lingerie.

EVY (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello?

(long beat)

You have the wrong number.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Evy enters still on the phone, and fishes around in Leila's closet for some clothes to "borrow".

EVY

I said, you have the wrong number.

(beat)

OK. What kind of clown do you want.

(beat)

Nope, sorry. He died in a freak piñata accident. But thanks for calling.

She hangs up, stuffs the scarf she has snared into her bag, and walks back to the kitchen.

INT. LEILA'S KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Evy puts the phone down, writes "I fed myself" on a Post-It, sticks it on the dog, and is out the door.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- DAY

Evy enters the muffin shop, not particularly surprised to find a basin filled with grape Kool-Aid, and Darcy's head in it. Dottie stands above her monitoring the dye job.

Customer is unusually perky, as he devours an actual lunch.

EVY

Where'd he get...food?

Dottie motions toward the kitchen where Menu Man kneads a pile of sourdough. Evy is instantly struck by his looks.

EVY (CONT'D)

Who's he?

DARCY

A stray. Leila adopted him.

EVY

(to Menu Man)

Hey, who are you?

Menu Man looks up, biceps rippling, chest hair glistening, flour flecking...

MENU MAN

Strictly "need-to-know" basis.

Her peek at Menu Man says "Mysterious AND Cute".

EVY

(to girls)

Have you guys seen Leila? She's not upstairs.

DOTTIE

Sorry.

EVY

Tight ship, as always. This place is like the Microsoft of muffin shops.

Dottie beams until a glance from Darcy lets her know that wasn't a compliment.

EVY (CONT'D)

(to Darcy)

Nice 'do.

Rack focus past the dripping Darcy to Menu Man. A serious look is exchanged. Evy shudders and leaves.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S KITCHEN -- AFTERNOON

Mammy ducks his head in the refrigerator.

MAMMY

You're skin and bones. I'm making you a Tin Roof.

Leila sits on a stool at the kitchen "island". Mammy pulls out hot fudge, ice cream and peanuts.

MAMMY (CONT'D)

It's your Uncle's favorite. Every bite could kill him.

LEILA

Mammy, you're kind of like a woman, right?

MAMMY

It's a good thing I love you, dear.

LEILA

No, you know what I mean. You're...softer than Uncle.

MAMMY

Thank you, sweetie.

LEILA

You still have sex with him, don't you?

MAMMY

You are aware that normal people don't talk like this?

LEILA

Well, when you do, does a big bell go off or something, because I've interviewed some men and, I don't think I've got a bell, Mammy.

Mammy kisses the top of her head.

MAMMY

It's just in a different key, dear. Wait for the right song.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- AFTERNOON

They take their sundaes into the living room, where Uncle Ernest sits in his half-moon glasses reading *The Wall Street Journal*.

LEILA

(jokingly, to Mammy)

So how is he, really.

UNCLE ERNEST

(without looking up)

Funny.

Leila plops down next to him.

LEILA

I hired somebody new at the muffin shop.

UNCLE ERNEST

Bankruptcy lawyer?

LEILA

More of a poet.

UNCLE ERNEST

Of course.

MAMMY

Really, dear, a poet? What kind?

UNCLE ERNEST

What kind? There are no kinds. There are good ones and bad ones.

MAMMY

There are rich ones and poor ones.

UNCLE ERNEST

Name a rich one.

MAMMY

Alright, there are dead ones and live ones.

UNCLE ERNEST

All the dead ones are good ones. Plus I expect my niece had enough sense to hire a live one.

(to Leila)

He is alive, isn't he?

LEILA

He's poor.

UNCLE ERNEST

There. Case closed.

(of Mammy's Tin Roof)

Did you ever think that I might want one of those?

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- LATER

PAN past Leila as she reads to her dozing Uncles.

LEILA

...Concern about an overheating economy and inflationary indicators prompted the Federal Reserve to raise short-term interest rates Monday, and while it is not clear whether this is an isolated adjustment or the first in a series of corrective

LEILA

measures, economists warn that the stock market is likely to overreact to the news as evidenced by the hundred and thirty-six point drop in the Dow yesterday...

Ernest is sound asleep, Mammy tucked in against his shoulder. Three empty Tin Roof glasses sit on the table in front of them.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Leila drags herself in, dog-tired and reading her mail. She takes off Paxil's Post-It, fails to read it, and absently slaps it on the refrigerator. She picks up Paxil's bowl and sees it's half full -- of oysters.

LEILA

Paxil, you fed yourself. What a great dog.

Leila hits the playback on her answering machine as she sorts through the mail.

ANGRY VOICE (V.O.)

You may think your little crack about the piñata accident was funny but I can assure you I do not. As it is, my little Jimmy is going bowling with his sisters on his birthday instead of hosting a fabulous party with all the most popular boys and your clown. Hope you're happy -- BITCH.

As Leila stares at the phone, a voice comes from the street below.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hello? Hello? Are you there?

Leila crosses to the window and looks down.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

It's the Gingerbread Man, carrying a shopping bag.

LEILA

Who are you?

GINGERBREAD MAN

It's me. Slappy.

LEILA

You're not Slappy. He's got...a face.

GINGERBREAD MAN

Okay, so I'm -- the Gingerbread Man. Look. Do you think I could come up and change my clothes. Please.

LEILA

Why?

GINGERBREAD MAN

Why do I want to, or why should you let me?

LEILA

Well, both.

GINGERBREAD MAN

I want to because it's late, and this is New York, and apparently I'm even more fun to set on fire than dumpsters.

A familiar face leans out an upstairs window.

MAN

Hey you. Ginger Snap.

GINGERBREAD MAN

WHAT?

MAN

Fuck off.

GINGERBREAD MAN

O-kay

(to Leila)

And...you should let me because...because I'm a cookie, for Christ's sake.

LEILA

Do you have a business card?

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Leila holds the card.

GINGERBREAD MAN

(pointing to the card)

Eddie. Head clown.

Paxil comes up for a sniff.

LEILA

Paxil. Head dog.

(beat)

I'm Leila.

EDDIE

Like the song?

LEILA

There's a song?

Eddie shakes his head and motions towards the bathroom.

EDDIE

Do you think I could, uh...

LEILA

Oh sure, help yourself.

Eddie heads off with his shopping bag.

Leila sniffs at the odd stuff in the dog's food bowl. She's about to place the bowl back on the floor when she notices the porn magazines. Eddie steps out of the bathroom. He has evolved from the Gingerbread Man into a Calvin Klein ad: dark jeans, tight white t-shirt; a FACE.

Leila hides the magazines behind her back with one hand and continues to hold the bowl with the other.

EDDIE

(eyeing Leila's bowl)

What're you having?

Leila shoves it aside.

LEILA

I changed my mind. Would you, uh, like...anything? At all?
I mean, along the lines of...milk?

EDDIE

Do you have anything along the lines of...Tequila.

LEILA

There's a bottle of scotch, but it's ten years old. And it warns you on the label it was eighteen to begin with.

A disarming smile from Eddie.

LEILA (CONT'D)

What?

EDDIE

Nothing.

LEILA

(re- cupboard)

It's up there.

Leila stashes the pornos as he retrieves the bottle -- very expensive. Eddie pours two glasses and plops one in front of Leila, who's reasonably well discombobulated.

EDDIE

Looks like you could use some too.

LEILA

I haven't had any since I was eighteen. Alcohol.

EDDIE

Twelve steps?

LEILA

Three. I got dumped. I got depressed. I drank a gallon of Blue Nun. Since then, I haven't had the same desire.

(flustered)

For it.

EDDIE

What kind of peckerhead would dump a babe like you?

LEILA

I bet you say that to all the girls.

Leila bolts her drink.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- LATER

Leila sits very still, a spoon hanging precariously from her nose.

LEILA

Uh, Luxembourg.

Eddie sits very still, a spoon hanging precariously from his nose.

EDDIE

G-Gabon.

LEILA

"N". Okay, Nepal.

EDDIE

Lesotho.

Leila raises her eyebrows. That was a good one. She thinks long and hard. She's not completely sober.

LEILA

"O". There aren't any "o"s.

Eddie hands her a shot.

EDDIE

Drink up.

LEILA

Wait. Okinawa.

EDDIE

Not a country.

LEILA

(pouty)

I know. I thought you wouldn't.

She takes the spoon off her nose.

EDDIE

That's another shot.

LEILA

No fair. You've done this before.

Leila downs her drink and watches as Eddie heads to the fridge. Did those jeans just get tighter?

EDDIE

More ice.

Eddie reaches for the ice, but pulls out and admires the Dom Perignon.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

For someone who doesn't drink you don't drink the best.
But you're probably saving this.

Leila is now officially wasted. She semi-staggers to a more comfortable couch in the living area.

LEILA

(more pouty)

No I'm not. I don't even know how it got there. But we should drink it all, immediately, and be done with it.

We hear the POP of a champagne cork, some rummaging around.

EDDIE (O.S.)

"I fed myself"?

LEILA

Good for you.

Eddie brings two glasses to the couch, along with another Post-It.

EDDIE

"Have a girl"?

LEILA

I'm trying, okay? Don't pressure me.

EDDIE

(suddenly serious)

You're married.

LEILA

Yuk.

EDDIE

Gay?

Leila shakes her head.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Help me out here, Leila.

Leila puts down the glass and begins to kiss her own hand, passionately, with tongue.

LEILA

That's my sex life.

(beat)

I'm a total...virgin.

She moves closer to him on the couch, as his eyes go wide.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Show me what to do.

Not quite sure what she means, but completely turned on.

EDDIE

Well, your mouth was a little...slack. You might want to put some muscle in it.

He demonstrates a great, taut kiss on his own hand. Leila shakes her head and points to her own lips.

LEILA

Show me.

Eddie leans over and kisses her with enthusiasm. When they come up for air, Leila gets to her feet and takes his hand.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You'll do.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Camera pans Leila's loft, past the living area, past an empty champagne bottle, past clothes strewn on the floor to...

Leila, who lies sprawled on her bed. Her eyes crack open and she is hit with the queasy sensation of her life's second brutal hangover. A Post-It is stuck to her forehead. She pulls it off and reads it:

INSERT: "I undressed myself"

Bleary-eyed and nauseous, she stumbles out of bed and heads for the bathroom. Another Post-It is stuck to the mirror:

INSERT: "No. We didn't."

Paxil walks in and looks at her plaintively. He, too, has a Post-It:

INSERT: "Oman".

INT. DR. KIRK'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Leila, looking positively green, sits opposite Dr. Kirk. The dog rests conspicuously on the desk between them. They both try to ignore it.

DR KIRK

So you didn't actually...have sex, then.

LEILA

Not according to the evidence.

DR. KIRK

GOOD! I mean, well most people like to at least remember their first time so they can pretend years later that they enjoyed it.

LEILA

He barely touched me. I mean, this man -- this live, cute man -- shows up at my door -- no interview -- nothing, and...and I wake up with a

LEILA

hangover, and a Post-It stuck on my head.

(beat)

Intact.

DR. KIRK

So he's a fool.

LEILA

Actually, he's a clown.

DR. KIRK

Subtle distinction.

Leila takes off her sunglasses, and leans in.

LEILA

I want tips. Hard tips. Hard as bullets. Right between the eyes. I want it to be scary.

DR. KIRK

Tips?

LEILA

Positions. Good ones.

DR. KIRK

You do realize that I'm not a fertility expert?

LEILA

You're expert enough. I want to know where to put what for one-shot, girl-producing, impregnation. I may not get that many chances.

Huge pause.

DR. KIRK

And I have to answer you?

LEILA

You're my doctor.

If only that weren't true.

DR. KIRK

Yes. Well, there is a school of thought which believes that... conception...may be more likely to occur if one were to... well if you were to get up on one's...uh,

Kirk nods discreetly towards the dog.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

All fours...helping to...retaining, uh, sperm, near the...cervix.

LEILA

Sperm near the cervix. Check.

DR. KIRK

And then...after...you might want to roll over on one's...

LEILA

Back?

DR. KIRK

Good. So that your long...your, uh...are up in the air.

LEILA

My legs?

DR. KIRK

That would be fine.

Nowhere near as embarrassed as Kirk, but getting there.

LEILA

Straight up?

DR. KIRK

Hugging your...

Awkwardly gesturing.

LEILA

My breasts?

DR. KIRK

Okay.

LEILA

And?

DR. KIRK

And -- gravity takes over.

LEILA

So that's it?

DR. KIRK

That's it.

LEILA

Doesn't sound like much fun.

DR. KIRK

Speak for yourself.

LEILA

Could I use your bathroom? I need to throw up.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- DAY

Leila returns to a spotless apartment; a far cry from the train wreck she left this morning. Mammy, in a tasteful patterned apron, stands over the sink doing dishes.

LEILA

Mammy. What are you doing?

MAMMY

Orderly home, orderly life. Really, dear, this is quite appalling.

LEILA

Could you stop?

MAMMY

Last few.

LEILA

I mean it Mammy. Please! Every time I make a mess, you clean it up. Which makes me feel like a child. Which I'm not. Which makes me feel like a failure. Which leads to making messes. Which you clean up. Do you see what I mean? I do not have an orderly life!

She succeeds in wrestling away the plate, which she drops, which shatters. Leila plops down on the couch.

MAMMY

Bad night, dear?

Mammy cleans up the mess with a broom.

LEILA

I got drunk and kissed a clown.

MAMMY

But that's wonderful.

LEILA

I went to the doctor.

MAMMY

You don't need a doctor.

LEILA

I got worse at the doctor's.

Mammy comes over and tucks her head against his shoulder.

MAMMY

It's about love, isn't it? That sickly blue sheen under your skin. An affair of the heart can make you wretchedly blue. People have perished.

Mammy takes her hand, massages it earnestly. Leila retracts her hand and feels her face.

LEILA

It's alcohol. Not love.

MAMMY

Nothing wrong with a splash of champagne in moderation and on the right occasion.

LEILA

What about a tidal wave of scotch?

MAMMY

Washes away the inhibitions. Very instrumental in the bedding of your Uncle. And look how that turned out.

Mammy takes Leila's hand again. Suddenly:

MAMMY (CONT'D)

Oh, Lord, your Uncle. The fitting!

Mammy jumps into action.

LEILA

What's "the fitting?"

MAMMY

Baby sister's big day? Maid of honor? I left Ernest in a Love Car. Today's the final fitting.

LEILA

The final. When was the first?

MAMMY

Well, honey, you're not the bride.

(quickly)

Of course you will be one. Again. Where's everyone's jacket?

He finds his on a chair.

LEILA

Look, just bring me a dress. I don't care if it fits.

Hustling her out the door.

MAMMY

Yumi Katsura waits for no one.

(gossipy)

She outfitted The Nutcracker.

INT. LOVE CAB -- DAY

Crawling up Madison Avenue in heavy traffic, Uncle Ernest, Mammy and Leila sit in morose gloom. Leila still looks like death warmed over.

UNCLE ERNEST

I don't see how one person can forget about another person when that person is sitting downstairs in a cab. For an hour.

MAMMY

Twenty minutes, tops.

UNCLE ERNEST

Forty bucks, minimum.

LEILA

Where's Evy?

MAMMY

You tell her.

UNCLE ERNEST

(shrugging)

She's not in the mood.

LEILA

It's her wedding. I'm not in the mood.

MAMMY

The important thing is, the only thing is, there's going to be a wedding.

Uncle Ernest glowers at him. Mammy stares straight on.

LEILA

What about her dress?

UNCLE ERNEST

Tell her.

MAMMY

You tell her.

LEILA

Tell me what.

Uncle Ernest stares straight on. Leila looks back and forth.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(appalled)

No. Absolutely not. I don't wear gowns.

UNCLE ERNEST

You can and you will.

INT. YUMI KATSURA -- DAY

It's an expensive wedding cake of a store, adorned with cappuccino colored carpeting and a headless mannequin wearing a two hundred thousand dollar simple white gown. Harp muzak drones in the background. Mammy leads them through the front door.

MAMMY

(smoothing ruffled feathers)

Don't worry, you're more or less the same size. Except for the rise. Except there is no rise. Except for the little white panties. And you want your own little white panties.

LEILA

(practically barfing)

Please. The scotch...this language? I'd rather die.

She tries to leave. They yank her back in.

A refined WOMAN--more like a mother of the bride than a shop clerk--rises to greet them.

CLERK

Is this the joyful bride?

LEILA

No.

CLERK

Do I detect a few jitters?

UNCLE ERNEST

You detect a bottle of scotch.

LEILA

Where's the dumb dress?

UNCLE ERNEST

Please forgive my extra niece. She pooh-poohs love and marriage.

CLERK

(knowingly)

Ah, the single sister of the bride. Poor child.

UNCLE ERNEST

For this 'poor' child, we'll also need something white. As we mentioned, we're planning an all-white wedding. This one actually is a virgin. The bride, of course, is not.

MAMMY

Ernest...

CLERK

(reassuringly)

Don't worry. When a young woman puts on a wedding dress, even if it's someone else's, her whole demeanor is positively transformed. You'll see.

INT. YUMI KATSURA / DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

To the tune of "Going to the Chapel" as if it were spit out by a seething Courtney Love:

The clerk yanks Leila into a white lace push-up bustier. So far, it's doing zip to transform her demeanor.

White slips, crinolines, shoes, stockings, gloves, garters, pearls are presented for Leila's approval. She doesn't approve.

INT. YUMI KATSURA / WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Mammy takes all kinds of time selecting accessories. He's as happy as pork. Ernest sits nearby, drinking cappuccino and reading the paper. Couldn't be more bored.

INT. YUMI KATSURA / DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

The clerk demonstrates how Leila should dive into the dress. Leila complies with a cannonball. As two hundred buttons are fastened onto their loops--her chest heaves portentously. "Going to the Chapel" ends like someone dragged the needle across the record and smashed it.

INT. YUMI KATSURA / WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Reestablish harp muzak. Leila is presented to Uncle Ernest and Mammy. From the neck down, she is Bride's Magazine. From the neck up, she is Bride of Satan. She is hauled to a six-way mirror, where it's time to choose a veil. If looks could kill, they'd all be dead meat. Leila puts her hand urgently over her mouth, like she ATE dead meat.

EXT. LEILA'S STOOP -- NIGHT

The abandoned Boy and Girl emerge from the shadows to swipe a handful of today's uneaten muffins. Menu Man observes the scene through the store's front window.

PAN OVER to find Leila on the stoop, wearing wraparounds, washing down Vitamin C with milk. It's raining gently. SHE's raining gently.

Leila looks up as a gladiator walks down the street towards her.

LEILA

Spartacus?

EDDIE

It's me. Eddie.

LEILA

Oh. You look like Spartacus. But then, you look like a lot of people.

EDDIE

Why are you taking vitamins?

LEILA

So I don't catch cold.

EDDIE

Why're you crying?

LEILA

Because I barfed on my sister's wedding dress.

EDDIE

(sympathetically)

I get puked on all the time. Nobody ever cries about it.

LEILA

Well I am.

(beat)

You're trying to make me say that I'm crying, I'm really crying, because ... I was once a kid. With parents. That I once had secret hopes and dreams. That one of those dreams might have been a wedding and a dress and maybe even a groom to go with it.

(decisively)

But I'm afraid that's not it. It's that I threw up on my sister's dress. My uncles will have it cleaned. But still, my sister, my baby sister, has to get married in a dress that I barfed on.

(beat)

If you barf on it, they make you buy it.

EDDIE

Bastards.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Bartender hands a drink to the ever-present Drunk Guy on a corner stool. Meanwhile, off-camera, a half-bagged patron opens a vein and spills his guts.

DR. KIRK (O.S.)

...One look I'm talking about -- one -- and suddenly I'm in the vortex of some giant, sucking, unfathomably forceful...force. Remember the Undertoad?

Swing around to find Dr. Kirk in his cups. The bar is mostly empty.

BARTENDER

No.

DR KIRK

Except this was more like a good, nice hopeful toad...

BARTENDER

We're still talking about the virgin, right?

DR KIRK

More like -- a great, big, thundering speed ball of a rushing, toady, flood. Do you know that feeling?

BARTENDER

Lust?

DR. KIRK

Dread. The kind of dread that perfect women inspire. The kind that caves in your lungs and makes your head explode.

BARTENDER

(an "I wouldn't know" shrug)

I'm married.

DR. KIRK

She writes five TV show words on my blackboard, and I run with it. Boy do I run with it. And all of a sudden it's high school gym class and I'm naked in front of the guys.

BARTENDER

(heads for the drunk guy)

Let it out.

EXT. LEILA'S STOOP -- NIGHT

Leila's head rests on Spartacus' shoulder -- his cape around both of them.

LEILA

I don't completely remember last night.

EDDIE

You were toast.

LEILA

I guess I should thank you for being such a gentleman.

EDDIE

You were a little bit unconscious. They have laws about that now.

LEILA

Gee, you're like a perfect clown.

Eddie looks at her meaningfully.

EDDIE

I'm not a clown now.

LEILA

No. You're a vulcanized gladiator. I saw the movie.

EDDIE

Touch my chest.

She runs her hand over his rubberized bod.

LEILA

So cold and synthetic.

EDDIE

But inside I'm a man. If you prick me do I not bleed?

LEILA

(fishing)

If you...bite me will I not hang upside down in caves?

Hand to his scabbard.

EDDIE

Let's draw the sword.

LEILA

You would be so shamelessly used?

EDDIE

I'm Spartacus.

LEILA

(my hero)

You really deserve to wear the skirt.

CRANE UP as he sweeps her into his arms and heads up the stairs.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

Dr. Kirk is a few more sheets to the wind.

DR. KIRK

And you know who chose that dappled grey leather jacket in lieu of plain black or even brown?

Bartender shakes his head hopelessly. While Kirk drones on, Bartender begins to collect the dead soldiers littered in front of him: something that came with an umbrella; an empty martini glass with olives; salt, the detritus of a Margarita.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I did. To save my poor, overworked mother sixty-nine bucks. Which she would gladly have forked over to have a kid with a friend.

Bartender heads towards the Drunk Guy at the end of the bar. Kirk picks up his drink and heads after him.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I dragged my ass around school looking like a roan. Or is that a palomino? One guy called me 'beaver boy', which was later truncated to 'Beave' by some but 'asshole' by most.

Dr. Kirk stops in mid-ramble. He looks up at the Bartender and blinks.

DR KIRK

Hey, would you like to be my buddy?

BARTENDER

You're not a natural at this, are you?

DR. KIRK

I'm a gynecologist. I don't meet guys.

(beat)

You know that guy who says "I'm not a doctor but I play one on TV?"

BARTENDER

Yeah?

DR. KIRK

Well, screw him. If I didn't have fifty-seven precious new lives to bring into this sinkholed, blowholed, insect-swarmed world, I'd come in here every day, and drink stuff, and hope I drowned.

Bartender leans over.

BARTENDER

So what's your name anyway?

DR. KIRK

It's Beverly.

Bartender bolts a drink of his own.

BARTENDER

Well -- Beverly -- has this been a fair representation of the approach you took with the chick?

DR. KIRK

Who cares? To her I'm just a head with a glove.

BARTENDER

Right.

(beat)

I assume, being a Doctor, you have access to a stomach pump? And a buttload of aspirin?

DR. KIRK

(oblivious, looking at his drink)

Hey this one's good. What's it called?

BARTENDER

A Manhattan.

Kirk finishes his drink and fishes in the glass for dessert.

CU: the gleaming, red cherry.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

CAMERA at floor level looks through the legs of the television stand towards the unmade bed. Active lovemaking noises are heard. CRANE UP past the back of the TV to find: PAXIL sitting on the bed, in Spartacus' shield, watching the screen.

Leila, incongruously attired in a sexy nightgown and socks, emerges from the bathroom brushing her teeth. She points her foamy brush to the erotic video, and talks to her dog.

LEILA

See that? I could have done that. I would have done that.

LEILA

(beat)

And that? -- That's the one I was gonna use.

An odd expression creases her face.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I wouldn't have done that. God, I can't believe anyone does that.

She sits on the bed, still watching, still brushing.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You have to admit, there's something comical about the whole procedure. I mean, look at their faces.

She switches off the video and heads back to the bathroom.

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

So all of a sudden he's Mr. Serious.

Paxil sits faithfully, none the wiser.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK -- DAY

A QUARTERBACK drops back and heaves a long spiral down the field. Just before it settles into the receiver's hands, Evy's fiancée DONALD comes out of nowhere to deflect the ball away. A six-on-six game of touch football is in progress in the dirt and mud of Central Park.

As the teams trot back to their huddles, Donald looks over to the sidelines where Evy and Leila sit on blankets. A couple of other spectators look on.

EVY

GOOD PLAY, DONALD!

Resuming a previous conversation, intimate, sisterly.

EVY (CONT'D)

(to Leila, prompting)

So what happened then? I need details.

LEILA

Then...he took off his helmet and shield.

EVY

And...?

LEILA

And...he kissed me. A lot. All over.

EVY

You were awake?

Leila nods.

EVY (CONT'D)

That's so great.

(leaning closer)

Okay. Breastplate -- on or off?

LEILA

Off.

EVY

God, it's like high school.

(beat)

Did he take it out?

LEILA

Eventually. It got stuck in the loincloth.

EVY

Did you touch it?

LEILA

I laughed at it.

EVY

(incredulous)

No you didn't.

LEILA

He took it out. I laughed. He left. That's all.

Leila starts to crack up.

EVY

That's all?

LEILA

Well. I sorta said it looked like a dog balloon.

(beat)

A dachshund.

They completely lose it.

Donald makes a diving catch in the endzone with a defender draped all over him. He spikes the ball between his legs, shoots the defender with an imaginary gun, blows away the imaginary smoke and holsters the imaginary finger. He's entirely pleased with himself.

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

He's quite graceful.

EVY (O.S.)

And rich. And gorgeous. And perfect in bed.

Donald finishes his endzone dance and sees his fiancée apparently overcome by the magnificence of himself.

DONALD

(to Leila)

Isn't she great?

Evy is sobbing on Leila's shoulder.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- AFTERNOON

Darcy collects two BLT's from Menu Man and delivers them to a couple in the corner. The Customer occupies his usual spot at the counter. The place has come alive, somewhat.

Leila enters and looks around, followed by Evy, looking miserable, and Donald, oblivious.

DARCY

Hi, Boss. Haven't seen you in a while.

LEILA

Who are these people?

DOTTIE

Customers.

LEILA

When did we get...customers?

Dottie indicates Menu Man, who walks out from behind the counter.

MENU MAN

Here's the deal, Harvard. From now on, the menu's whatever I decide to cook. I set the prices according to who's buying. Lawyers can no longer afford to eat here.

DONALD

Hey. I'm a lawyer. Who is this guy?

EVY

He hates that question.

LEILA

(to Evy)

How would you know?

MENU MAN

I get no salary, but ten percent of the gross. We're closed on Wednesdays because I don't like Wednesdays and we're closed on Sundays because I DO like Sundays.

DONALD

(an attempt at wit)

Somebody put the "dick" in dictator.

MENU MAN

Quiet, junior. I do all the shopping, I eat for free and I live for free in those two rooms behind the kitchen. It's possible that I will leave at any time. Do we have an understanding?

DONALD

Are you wanted or something?

EVY

(disgusted)

Good one, Donald.

DONALD

I'm just asking.

LEILA

He's a poet.

DARCY

Say "yes", Boss.

LEILA

Can you get them here by 6:00 a.m.? Nose rings...set and shined?

MENU MAN

Doubtful. Very, very doubtful. So. Who's hungry?

DONALD

I could eat.

MENU MAN

What about you? I don't know how to price your meal.

TURN AROUND to find Eddie, as "The Defender", approaching.

EDDIE

Leila?

LEILA

Ah, Eddie.

EDDIE

Listen, I don't know what got into me last night. I'm just not used to being...laughed at.

LEILA

Some clown!

DOTTIE

Last night?

LEILA

It's a long story.

Darcy crosses to ogle the Defender.

DARCY

So this is Slappy?

LEILA

The good names are taken.

DOTTIE

(to Leila)

You're not really going through with it, are you?

DARCY

(to Dottie)

Are you nuts?

LEILA

That's what I do, Dottie. I go through with things. Usually.

(hustling him out the door)

Could we, uh...?

Pulls him outside.

EXT. MUFFIN SHOP -- AFTERNOON

They stand just beyond the door.

EDDIE

Leila, you know, I'm beginning to feel a little
bit...objectified here.

A small HAND tugs on the Defender's cape. Then two small hands.

BOY

Defender?

Eddie turns to find the Twinkie-eating kids.

EDDIE

(sarcastic)

Oh good. Children.

BOY

Are you really the Defender?

EDDIE

Sure. Why not.

BOY

Then you gotta help her. She's sick.

CLOSE ON: the little girl.

INT. DR. KIRK'S EXAM ROOM -- EVENING

CU: Little girl's mouth with a thermometer in it.

Dr. Kirk takes and reads it, drops it in a beaker of disinfectant.

LEILA

How is she?

DR. KIRK

Mildly hypothermic. A little weak. She'll be fine.

Eddie scrubs out his cape in the sink.

EDDIE

They always feel better after they throw up on me.

DR. KIRK

Who are you again?

EDDIE

Eddie.

LEILA

Head clown.

DR. KIRK

Ah.

Jack goes to the blackboard and stares at the words and symbols drawn there. Dr. Kirk covers Red with a blanket.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

(to Red)

Somebody must be worried about you. What's your name?

JACK

I'm Jack. She's Red. Nobody's worried.

DR. KIRK

I see.

Kirk picks up the phone.

JACK

(like he can see out of the back of his head)

You call the cops, or anyone like the cops, we're gone.

DR. KIRK

(putting down the phone)

Wouldn't think of it.

Kirk goes over to Red, taking from Eddie the speculum he has begun to play with.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I bet your mommy...

(quick glance at Eddie)

Really misses you. Do you remember your address?

JACK

She zipped her lips.

Trying to connect...

DR. KIRK

Really? You know I used to do that, too. I once zipped mine for about a month.

(leaning in)

So, where's the secret key?

JACK

(matter-of-factly)

It's a zipper, not a lock.

Point taken.

DR. KIRK

Okay. Then what about you? What's your address?

JACK

Same as hers. We're twins.

As Jack puts his arm around her, it's pretty hard to miss the difference in their race.

DR. KIRK

Great. That makes it easy. So where do you and your...sister live?

JACK

Nowhere.

They take a moment to soak that one in.

EDDIE

Well, on that note...

Eddie hops off the counter.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

See ya, kids. Bye Leila, doc.

(mock heroic)

Somewhere there's a wrong to be righted.

Eddie exits.

JACK

Is he your boyfriend?

LEILA

I don't have boyfriends, Jack.

Kirk looks hurt.

JACK

He's not really a Superhero, you know.

DR. KIRK

Not by a long stretch.

Leila looks hurt. Kirk turns back to Red.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

So...

Red spies the stuffed dog on the cabinet and runs over to hug it.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

...my dog. I was going to mention him.

JACK

That's HER dog.

DR. KIRK

Okay.

(to Red)

Then will you take good care of him? Even if he's not a purebred? He zipped his lips too.

Jack and Red play with the dog. (NOTE: We will never again see Red without the dog.)

LEILA

They've got to have parents somewhere.

DR. KIRK

They've barely got names.

Leila looks at Kirk, then at the children. She reaches a decision.

LEILA

Jack, Red -- you're staying with me tonight. Okay?

JACK

You got cable?

OMITTED

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Leila enters, holding a sleeping Red in her arms. Kirk follows, leading a sleepy Jack by the hand.

LEILA

Let me just tuck her in. Jack, your room's down the hall.

Leila carries Red into her bedroom. Kirk stays behind with Jack who looks completely terrified at the thought of sleeping alone.

JACK

(nonchalant)

I'm just gonna wait and make sure everything's cool.

DR. KIRK

I understand.

Jack walks around the living room picking up stuff, putting it down.

JACK

You never know what's gonna happen.

DR. KIRK

That's true.

JACK

I'm not even that tired.

Kirk goes over to the stalling Jack.

DR. KIRK

You're a brave guy, Jack. You took good care of your sister. Can I shake your hand?

They shake.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I was thinking, though. What if Red wakes up and you're not there. She might get scared.

Jack looks at him with a glimmer of hope.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I know you'd rather have your own room, but do you think, for tonight, you might stay with her -- you know, protect her.

Jack muses for about a second, and then books into the bedroom, past Leila who has witnessed most of this exchange. She follows him to the back.

INT. LEILA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Leila looks down at the sleeping kids.

LEILA

Please do not get S.I.D.S., or ringworm, or sleep apnea or anything else bad, or fatal, or indictable while you are in my house. Or. Not in my house. Actually, just don't get anything, anywhere. OK. Amen.

TURN AROUND to find Paxil.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Paxil. You watch them.

Leila starts to leave...

LEILA (CONT'D)

No sleeping.

Paxil looks up to the challenge.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Kirk admires the mobile in the living room, as Leila returns.

DR. KIRK

Asleep?

Leila nods. Kirk spins the hanging sculpture.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

This is nice. It's like a little story.

LEILA

When Evy and I were kids we used to think our father was an astronaut, 'cause there were always space suits lying around. His real job was to make sure the visors on the helmets didn't steam up.

DR. KIRK

(pointedly)

Not everyone's a star.

A beat, as Leila moves to the couch.

LEILA

What's gonna to happen to them?

DR. KIRK

I don't know. I'll make some calls.

LEILA

I think they should stay here for a while. It'll be good practice for me.

DR. KIRK

What about your...mission?

LEILA

I can postpone that. Still, I think Eddie's an excellent choice. He can name almost every country.

DR. KIRK

And people are quick to criticize genetic engineering.

LEILA

I'm serious.

DR. KIRK

All right, seriously then. I'd have to say the...clown in question is not an excellent choice. Less than excellent, in fact. Actually -- insane. Stupendously, mind-numbingly insane.

Rolling now...

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

You don't "practice" on children, Leila. And you don't pick daddies off a Wheaties box. The only thing more idiotic than letting that guy touch you is letting him father your child, and the only thing dumber than that is you having a child in the first place.

Leila crosses to the corner.

LEILA

Is that a medical opinion?

DR. KIRK

No. Would you like one.

LEILA

Umm.

Kirk chases her as she moves over to the "safety" of her mobile.

DR. KIRK

Life isn't a balance sheet, Leila. Babies don't offset dead parents, and random...guys...don't make up for busted hearts. Look. You didn't come to my office for positions or ...pregnancy kits. You knew all that stuff when you were fifteen.

LEILA

Really? Then why did I come.

DR. KIRK

For some sort of permission.

LEILA

I wasn't aware you needed a note from your doctor to lose your virginity.

DR. KIRK

No. People manage to do that all the time. But you want it nice and tidy. No fear.

LEILA

I do.

DR. KIRK

When I was about four, my mother was pregnant with my little sister. She asked me if I wanted to touch her stomach and I burst out crying. I thought she had swallowed a baby and that she was going to swallow me.

Leila turns her back on him and fiddles with the mobile.

LEILA

So?

Close behind her...in her ear...

DR. KIRK

So she told me she loved me more than anything and that I had nothing to be scared of.

Beat.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

The reason I know -- I mean absolutely know -- that you can love somebody again Leila...is that you're so completely afraid to.

Leila starts to turn...

LEILA

Why are you doing this to me?

Kirk gives her a passionate and unexpected kiss. For a moment, it takes. Then Leila's eyes go wide. They are both taken aback.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Please...I can't.

Long silence. Kirk moves away.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Look, I told you from the beginning...

DR. KIRK

I know. You don't do love.

(beat)

You asked about a medical opinion -- here it is. The only known treatment for fear -- IS love. But it doesn't work if you spit out the pill.

LEILA

I'm sorry.

A long look at her. Then, with finality:

DR. KIRK

Know what? Me too.

He snags his jacket and heads for the door.

EXT/INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

The Twins watch from the window as Dr. Kirk hails a cab. They look at each other, disappointed.

FADE IN:

INT. LEILA'S LOFT-- MORNING

CU: Leila's face as she sleeps, not all that comfortably, on the couch in the living room. One eye pops open.

TURN AROUND to find Jack and Red staring at her, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. We don't get the sense that Leila is a morning person.

LEILA

What do you want?

Beat.

JACK

Meat loaf.

Leila ponders her first parental decision.

LEILA

Okay.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- MORNING

Two bowls of oatmeal hit the table in front of the kids. Jack looks up at Dottie with regret.

JACK

What a rip.

DOTTIE

Sorry. Orders.

Dottie looks over her shoulder at Menu Man, who smiles and shakes his head at Leila.

MENU MAN

Get up on the stupid side of the bed this morning, Harvard?

LEILA

Oh, excuse me, Mr. Perfect. Not all of us had mothers, you know.

MENU MAN

Like I did?

Jack calls out from the booth.

JACK

Can we get some coffee here?

LEILA

Okay.

Menu Man scowls at her.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(sternly, to kids)

Decaf.

As Leila looks back for approval, Evy emerges from Menu Man's room, hastily putting herself together. It's pretty clear she spent the night.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Evy?

Deer in the headlights. Stunned looks from everyone in the room, except, of course, Menu Man, who is inscrutable as always.

EVY

Oh. Ah. Very awkward moment.

(motions towards the back room)

The, uh, room back there...

EVY

(clears throat)

I thought maybe I should, uh. Right. Here's the funny part.
Um...Okay, fuck it.

Evy heads for the door. Blank stares from the crowd, including the ubiquitous Customer. Darcy gives Evy a very discreet thumbs-up.

JACK

Fuck it.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET -- DAY

Evy and Leila walk down the street carrying shopping bags filled with wedding purchases.

EVY

Passing fling. That's all. A little pre-meal snack. Why torture myself? So I lost my mind a little, so what. Perfectly natural. Probably even healthy in the long run. Let's just not everybody go to pieces over this, okay...

Evy and Leila walk out of frame as Evy's voice drifts away. A moment later Jack and Red enter frame happily eating hot pretzels and mustard.

INT. DR. KIRK'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY

Busy day in the waiting room. The Supersoaker kid and his equally obnoxious chum play toss with a plastic vagina. Kirk intercepts, and scolds one of the monsters. He is not a happy camper.

DR. KIRK

This is not a toy. Okay? Do you understand? You could seriously hurt somebody with one of these.

He holds out the vagina to Nurse -- who refuses to take it.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

Where's Mrs. Peters?

NURSE

Exam Room B.

Kirk looks around for a place to stow the vagina, settling on an end table.

DR. KIRK

Ten minutes, kids. Then we're out of here. Okay?

Jack and Red sit patiently in the corner.

Kirk departs as the SuperSoaker kid gets off a squirt in Red's direction. Jack jumps up and matter-of-factly grabs the toy from the kid's hands.

JACK

I don't like guns. Guns scare girls.

Not as much as Jack scares him.

INT. ERNEST AND MAMMY'S HOUSE -- EVENING

Leila reads Dante to Uncle Ernest and Mammy.

LEILA

(with an increasingly disgusted expression)

"We now had left him, passing on our way, when I beheld two spirits by the ice pent in one hollow, that the head of one was cowl unto the other; and as bread is raven'd up through hunger, the uppermost did so apply his fangs to the other's brain, where the spine joins it."

She looks up to find her uncles asleep in their chairs, holding Jack and Red who are wide-eyed, loving it, and ready for more.

INT. BAR -- NIGHT

CU: Kirk's unhappy face, staring straight ahead.

Shot widens to include Red on his left and Jack on his right, imitating his sullen expression. Kirk takes a sip of beer, the kids take a sip of Shirley Temple.

Bartender and Drunk Guy take it all in with a shake of their heads.

INT. LEILA'S LOFT -- NIGHT

Leila sits with Paxil talking on the portable phone.

LEILA

Listen, Eddie. I appreciate what you...almost did to me -- I do. Oh, and under the cape? Very impressive. I know, I've seen videos. Certainly didn't mean to laugh. This just isn't a good time for me -- at all -- and, well, thank you. You've been very kind.

(about to sign off)

Oh, by the way. A Mrs. Schwartz is looking for two clowns next Tuesday. I said you were excellent.

We hear the sound of Eddie's answering machine beep.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- AFTERNOON

Jack attempts to show Menu Man that he can flip a pancake. The results wind up mostly on Customer.

Dottie does a Tarot reading for a completely terrified Red. Leila tends to the few patrons that are there, as Kirk enters.

Red runs over to hug his leg, but catches him in a sensitive spot instead.

DR. KIRK

Ow.

Red looks sad. Kirk tussles her head.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

It's okay, honey.

(eye contact with Leila)

Even...metaphorical.

Jack joins the group.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

You two ready?

LEILA

I thought they could stay with me tonight.

DR. KIRK

That's not the arrangement, Leila.

LEILA

Well I don't really think they need to spend another night in a bar.

DR. KIRK

Certainly not when they could be listening to bedtime stories -- about the damnation of their immortal souls.

Leila drops down to kid level.

LEILA

How 'bout it, guys. Do you want to stay here? I rented "Toy Story".

Oh, yeah...

DR. KIRK

Well. That's very...average.

Also dropping down to kid level.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

I bought a trampoline.

The one-up battle begins.

LEILA

(to the kids)

You can have popcorn and cocoa. As much as you want.

DR. KIRK

(to the kids)

How 'bout Whoppers and beer?

LEILA

I'll let you stay up all night.

(to Kirk)

Plus I have a dog.

Hard to top that.

DR. KIRK

I'll let you drive.

Not that hard. They stand up and go nose to nose.

LEILA

I'm sorry I ever let you talk to me in the park that day.

DR. KIRK

For the record, you didn't.

LEILA

And you shouldn't have kissed me.

DR. KIRK

Why? No fright wig?

LEILA

Well I'm keeping Jack and Red. I found 'em.

DR. KIRK

They're not your kids, Leila.

LEILA

Yeah, well. They're not anybody's kids.

As shame and regret cloud her face, she looks around the room for help which doesn't arrive.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Wait. That's not what I meant.

(calling after)

Red!

Red and Jack have already taken Menu Man by the hand and are walking away towards his "apartment". Menu Man casts a disapproving stare over his shoulder.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK/ALICE IN WONDERLAND STATUE -- AFTERNOON

Pouring rain at the ALICE IN WONDERLAND STATUE of Leila's youth.

Red and Jack sit with Leila under Alice's big toadstool. Red turns to Leila and buries herself under her arm. Jack moves closer. The wind howls.

JACK

Why are you mad at the doctor?

LEILA

I'm not mad at him, Jack.

JACK

Scared?

LEILA

No!

JACK

He's the best one. He helped my sister. And he shook my hand.

LEILA

It's just that I made a promise to myself, Jack. And keeping the promises you make, even if you don't feel like it anymore, is...very, very important.

RED

(beat)

Why?

Leila looks down at her in shock. She's never looked sadder. They fall into a deep huddle against the wind and rain. Leila takes off her scarf and wraps it around Jack and Red as best she can.

FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH -- MORNING

Beautiful sunshine falls on the same church Leila didn't get married in twelve years ago.

INT. CHURCH / DRESSING ROOM -- MORNING

On the accoutrements of an imminent marriage: ribbon-wrapped boxes of shoes, gloves, pearls and the wedding dress itself, still in its dry cleaning plastic.

Widen to include Evy at the mirror adjusting her bustier. Leila opens boxes nearby.

EVY

Your breasts are bigger than mine. That pisses me off.

LEILA

They're Mother's.

EVY

(looking down)

So whose are these?

LEILA

Donald's.

Evy makes a face. Leila looks gorgeous in a clingy silk-satin knockout sheath. She takes off a gold chain and fastens it to her sister's neck.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Something borrowed.

Leila looks around the room for...

LEILA (CONT'D)

Something...blue.

They smile simultaneously.

LEILA/EVY

(pointing at each other)

YOU!

EVY

Something...barfed on.

(brightly)

My dress!

Evy reaches into her purse and takes a nip from a flask of scotch. Off Leila's surprised look, she proffers the flask...

EVY (CONT'D)

Something old?

INT. CHURCH / HALLWAY -- DAY

Mammy paces outside the closed dressing room door, occasionally pressing his ear against it.

Uncle Ernest, resplendent in his morning coat, finds him eavesdropping.

UNCLE ERNEST

Oh God. Not girl talk.

MAMMY

Let them be. This is a precious time for sisters.

Ignoring all that, Ernest goes up and beats on the door.

UNCLE ERNEST

Ten minutes.

As he walks away, Ernest taps on his digital watch and holds it to his ear.

**UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)**

I liked time better when it ticked.

INT. CHURCH / DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

Evy continues with her preparations, though at a decidedly less enthusiastic pace. Leila is sitting on a couch.

LEILA

So how did you know that Donald was...the one?

Evyy eyes her skeptically.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I mean, I could tell he was the one who was...tall. And very handsome. But is he secretly funny and sweet?

EVY

Well that doesn't jump right out at you.

LEILA

Smart?

EVY

Hah.

LEILA

What, then?

Evyy thinks long and hard.

EVY

We just belong together.

(reversing tone)

And I resent your implication.

EVY

Donald's going to be a huge success... and he loves me to pieces. I'm probably the luckiest girl in the world.

INT. CHURCH / HALLWAY -- DAY

Uncle Ernest returns in high dither, tapping his damn watch.

UNCLE ERNEST

Tell me this, Mammy. How did two old queers wind up with daughters?

MAMMY

God's little joke.

UNCLE ERNEST

Well they're a pain in the butt.

MAMMY

Of course they are, dear. But one must be kind and encourage them.

Menu Man, stunning in a suit, emerges from yet another door with Jack, looking good in a morning coat and backwards baseball cap, and Red, in her usual tom-boy gear. He hands Red's little white dress to Ernest.

MENU MAN

Your turn. We tried.

He exits a side door.

UNCLE ERNEST

(of the children)

What are these?

MAMMY

Grandchildren.

UNCLE ERNEST

Oh good.

Ernest takes the dress and leads Red down the hall.

**UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)**

**Mammy. If they're not out of there in two minutes,
break down the door.**

They disappear around a corner.

**UNCLE ERNEST (O.S.)
(CONT'D)**

**But ALL the girls are wearing white dresses. That's the
POINT.**

INT. CHURCH / DRESSING ROOM -- DAY

Leila and Evy are both plopped on the floor passing the flask back and forth.

EVY

I could be making a big mistake.

LEILA

Me too.

EVY

This isn't about you.

LEILA

Sorry.

Long pause.

EVY

Leila, is this how you felt before you... almost got married?

LEILA

No. I felt beautiful. I felt perfect.

EVY

Well that fucked up.

LEILA

Thanks.

Evy ponders.

EVY

No. That's good. See, you were really happy and the guy bailed, and I'm really...drunk. So this is good. This is fine.

One more pass of the flask while the sisters try to digest the logic of that.

OMITTED

INT. CHURCH / HALLWAY -- DAY

Mammy retreats to the hallway as Ernest emerges from his battle with Red, carrying her dress.

UNCLE ERNEST

Stubborn little monster. She won't put the dress on or talk to me.

Kirk enters the hallway from the church. Red rushes to him.

DR. KIRK

Here. Let me.

UNCLE ERNEST

Be my guest.

Kirk takes the dress into Red's room.

**UNCLE ERNEST
(CONT'D)**

Do we know any of these people?

MAMMY

That's Dr. Beverly.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Mammy peeks out at the gathering congregation. The groom's side looks snooty and well-dressed; the bride's considerably more casual.

We spot a few familiar faces -- among them, Dottie, Darcy, and the Customer. Not a big crowd. Mammy returns.

INT. CHURCH / HALLWAY -- DAY

A moment later the door to the Bride's room opens. All eyes turn as Evy and Leila, bride and maid of honor, emerge -- having made a humongous effort towards sobriety.

MAMMY

Oh my God, you look like an angel.

UNCLE ERNEST

Could we get on with this?

Ernest walks Evy into the church. Now another door opens and Red walks out, looking pretty in her white dress.

LEILA

Red, you're beautiful.

She glances uncertainly at Kirk.

DR. KIRK

So are you.

Mammy claps his hands.

MAMMY

Okay. All in your places with shiny faces.

DR. KIRK

(to Red)

C'mon pumpkin

Kirk walks Red into the chapel. Mammy lingers a moment, then follows. Leila stands alone in the doorway.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Leila enters the staging area behind a curtain to find Ernest looking at his watch and Mammy fussing over Evy, who nervously calls out to her big sister.

EVY

Leila?

Leila takes her by the hand and they walk to the corner of the curtain. Evy takes a deep breath and tries to compose herself. Then...

EVY (CONT'D)

Shit.

LEILA

Evy?

Evy grabs Leila's sleeve.

EVY

I forgot to write my vows. We're supposed to write vows.

Evy scoots across the back of the church, swipes a pen from the guest book, and dashes past Leila, Mammy and Ernest towards the dressing room, almost bumping into Menu Man who has returned from outside carrying the ring pillow. He gives her a killer smile.

MENU MAN

Hey, little Harvard.

Evy makes a tiny, plaintive noise and quickens her pace.

EVY

Oh no. No no no no no.

Ernest, who will give Evy away, looks in bewilderment towards his "normal" niece, while Mammy peeks down the aisle.

UNCLE ERNEST

I'm amazed they still let heterosexuals marry.

UNCLE ERNEST

(beat)

Is the groom at least here, this time?

Mammy POV: Donald and the Best Man (previously seen as Quarterback), stand at the altar, exchange discreet little punches and try not to laugh. Both are wearing sunglasses, evidently to hide the aftermath of last night's bachelor blowout.

MAMMY

Oh, he's here.

UNCLE ERNEST

When Evy divorces him and remarries, do you realize we'll have at least one more of these.

MAMMY

Your pessimism has no place at this ceremony.

The Wedding March begins.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Menu Man, as usher, escorts Mammy, as mother of the bride, to his seat.

The wedding procession begins: Jack and Red as flower children lead Uncle Ernest and Evy down the center aisle.

At the altar, Ernest hands Evy off to the groom--still yukking it up with his Best Man, still sporting the shades.

Evy, Donald, Leila and Best Man, stand before the PREACHER --an older, dignified, no-nonsense gentleman. The MUSIC ends. For a moment or two, there is an uncomfortable silence. Finally Preacher leans in towards Donald.

PREACHER

(quietly)

Would you agree that the eyes are the windows to the soul, son?

DONALD

Uh. Absolutely, Father.

PREACHER

Perhaps your bride would like a glimpse of your soul now. I know I would.

Donald grins, and then looks concerned. He has no clue.

As he speaks the following to the congregation, Preacher reaches over and snags the Ray-Bans right off Donald's face.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Dearly beloved. We are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony.

Pause. Then to the Best Man.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

You too.

The Best Man hands over his shades. Donald gives Evy a lame smile.

DONALD

(whispers)

Rough night.

PREACHER

Before we recite the traditional vows, I understand the bride and groom have taken time to compose something from their hearts.

Preacher nods to Donald, who stands there, stiff as ice.

DONALD

Why do I have to go first?

PREACHER

Just read what you've written, son.

Donald opens his paper and works on his dry-mouth. Various members of the congregation look up in anticipation. Donald looks at Evy.

DONALD

(loudly)

I love you deeply. Like the deep...snow.

He folds his paper. He's done. SILENCE. Stunned reactions, first from Mammy, then Ernest, then Darcy who sports a few new piercings, green hair and a vinyl get-up. Dottie, sitting next to her, looks pleased just to be here.

PREACHER

Sometimes the heart is too full for words.

Best Man claps Donald on the shoulder. Sounded good to him.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

And the bride's declaration?

Evy pulls a page from the guest book out of her bustier, and looks at Donald who is grinning like an idiot. After a moment.

EVY

Ah, forget it. Let's just move on.

(to Donald, incredulous)

Deep snow?

Preacher gathers himself.

PREACHER

Well, then...If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.

All present hold their breath in holy terror. Except the PARENTS OF THE GROOM, who whip their heads around desperately.

Preacher looks out over his half-moon glasses. We see Kirk at the back of the church.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Anyone?

He turns his attention back to the couple.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

No.

(beat)

Then I require and charge you both, as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it.

EVY

(to herself)

Oh boy.

PREACHER

This part is largely rhetorical.

(gathers himself)

Wilt thou, Donald, have this woman to thy wedded wife? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, so long as you both shall live.

DONALD

I do. Wilt.

Best Man chuckles: Wilt? What a riot. Preacher looks up.

PREACHER

**Wilt thou, Evy, have this man to thy wedded husband?
Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honour and keep him,
in sickness and in health, so long as you both shall live?**

EVY

**Could you go over that "dreadful day of judgment"
part again?**

PREACHER

Just say "I will", dear.

EVY

Mmmmm.

PREACHER

Or "I do".

Evy, alarmed looks at Leila.

LEILA

(quietly)

Or...something else.

Gasps.

PREACHER

Excuse me?

LEILA

(clearing throat)

Seems like...such a narrow range of choices.

PREACHER

(to the assemblage)

Who is this woman?

DONALD

The sister.

Evy teeters on the precipice.

LEILA

Is it too late to -- forever -- not --hold my peace?

The Preacher can't answer while he tries to unravel the grammar.

PREACHER

Um...

LEILA

I mean...to speak now?

DONALD

Yes.

Menu Man rises.

MENU MAN

No.

PREACHER

And you are...?

EVY

A poet.

DONALD

I thought he was the cook?

MENU MAN

Go on, Harvard.

LEILA

(to Donald, in an insane rush)

I know this is really tricky timing and everything -- God, you've got your whole family here -- but I mean, look, my guy didn't even make it inside the church. At least Evy walked all the way up here to tell you.

DONALD

(to Evy)

Tell me what?

Evy shrugs.

LEILA

That you're not, "the one", Donald. I mean, you're certainly, "a one". Probably even "the one" to a lot of women -- Evy says you really know your way around a waterbed. But you're just going to have to be somebody else's...big one...because my sister's not in love with you...

(to Evy)

You're not...

LEILA

(back to Donald)

And I think it would be better off for all concerned if you just...you know, shook hands or something.

PREACHER

Is she drunk?

LEILA

A little scotch, Reverend, sorry -- I think they call it "courage" in England. Anyway. I'm probably the last person who should say anything about love.

(beat)

But I know what it looks like. I've seen its reflection.

Begin to PUSH IN on Kirk standing at the rear doors of the church.

LEILA (CONT'D)

All it has to do is glance somewhere...and it bounces and beams and alights on things, and makes them better. Things like...the world...the floor...the faces of children.

DONALD

(to Preacher)

When did this become her moment?

Preacher shrugs.

LEILA

Your's too, Donald. The moment when you realize that you don't love Evy any more than she doesn't love you.

Find the groom's parents in the front pew.

FATHER OF GROOM

That makes it unanimous.

MOTHER OF GROOM

Lewis! You're his father!

FATHER OF GROOM

What! She writes about fish. She's a fish writer.

Back up front.

LEILA

Love's -- well, I don't know what love is -- but I know what it does.

(acting out her metaphors)

It's...this thing. And it gets under your skin, and...and...

MENU MAN

"And what in me is dark illumines."

Preacher is impressed; Evy melts a little.

LEILA

Wow, that's good. Very...medieval. But no, I was going to say "makes you psychotic". It's like having a really itchy bug bite. No, worse. A hairball!

Raised eyebrows all around.

LEILA (CONT'D)

An unholy hairball. Which festers and rots and grows enormous. So for like...twelve years...you don't lay a finger on it, for fear that when it stops choking and itching and gagging you -- you won't feel anything at all. And then one day -- I mean the lightbulb goes on -- and you see...you KNOW...

Leila searches the church for Kirk who looks up with a glimmer of hope in his eyes. She can't close the deal.

LEILA (CONT'D)

...well, that your sister shouldn't marry the man she intended to.

(beat)

That's all.

A resigned and disappointed Kirk walks away towards the exit, witnessed only by Leila.

Dottie and Darcy look at each other, briefly consider the appropriateness of the gesture...and then start applauding and cat-calling. All on the bride's side -- and a few on the groom's -- join in.

EVY

Thank you, thank you.

(sarcastically)

At least we still have our dignity.

EVY

(to Donald, sincerely)

But she's right, you know -- if you think about it -- they're all right. You understand, don't you Donald?

DONALD

I understand. I just don't know where to go.

EVY

(quietly)

Don't go anywhere. We're unmarried, not dead. Maybe we can get together later.

Par-ty. He and the Best Man high five each other. Menu Man raises an eyebrow.

UNCLE ERNEST

(to crowd)

You'll all get your presents back, Federal Express.

PREACHER

Well then, if there are no more completely inappropriate surprises, perhaps now would be a fine time to bring these...proceedings to a merciful close.

LEILA

Wait. There's actually one more thing.

PREACHER

Of course there is.

LEILA

When I was 17, I stood outside this same church and swore to God that I would never again let anybody say they loved me. And guess what? Nobody has.

Leila looks out towards the back doors. The congregation begins to look with her.

The CAMERA TRACKS past Ernest and Mammy as they turn their heads, then the kids, then Dottie and Darcy...

LEILA (CONT'D)

Because the longer the wall stood, the higher it got...

The CAMERA moves past Eddie dressed as a giant Bumblebee as he turns, then, as if amazed that a giant Bumblebee is IN a church, the Camera "double-takes" past him again...

LEILA (CONT'D)

...and the higher it got, the fewer people even tried to get over it.

**Past Customer who points to himself in hopes that Leila is talking to him.
Realizing she is not, he too turns to look...**

LEILA (CONT'D)

**It's pretty easy for us to create our own sad destinies
when we're too scared to embrace the ones...**

The back of the church is empty...

LEILA (CONT'D)

(raising her voice)

**...THAT ARE HIDING OUT THERE BEHIND THE
CURTAINS.**

Leila turns to the Preacher.

LEILA (CONT'D)

**What do you think, Reverend? I promised God that no
one could claim me -- not that I couldn't claim love for
myself.**

PREACHER

Will it involve further speech?

LEILA

(to the back of the church)

How about it, Beverly? WILL YOU LOVE ME?

Gasps from the groom's side.

PREACHER

Beverly? Not in my church.

LEILA

He's a man, Reverend, a good and kind man. But even if he were a woman, I'd love him till Death even dared...

(to back)

Will you comfort, and keep me, Beverly, in sickness and dubious mental health?

No answer.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Beverly?

Kirk peeks around the curtain.

DR. KIRK

(mock serious)

Are you a virgin?

LEILA

As a matter of fact...

Applause.

EXT. CHURCHYARD -- DAY

CU: Kirk gives Leila a long, passionate kiss, while an orgy of rice falls on their heads.

Widen to see the smiling faces of the wedding parties, clapping and celebrating. Mammy keeps piling on the rice, as Uncle Ernest looks on, bewildered.

UNCLE ERNEST

What are you doing? Nobody's married.

MAMMY

We may never get this close again. So kiss me darling.

UNCLE ERNEST

Are you insane?

Jack emerges from the pack and grabs the bag of rice from Mammy's hands.

JACK

I don't like rice. Rice kills birds.

Everybody cracks up.

INT. MUFFIN SHOP -- NIGHT

While Bob Marley sings his heart out, we watch a party in full bloom. The muffin shop has never been more alive.

BARTENDER and DRUNK GUY pour drinks for everybody.

JACK takes a nip off the gin and tonic he is delivering to UNCLE ERNEST, and is promptly busted by PREACHER who takes away the drink.

CUSTOMER smokes at his usual stool.

MENU MAN and DONALD arm-wrestle to the death, to the apparent delight of EVY, who looks on.

DARCY is all over EDDIE, now mostly out of his Bumblebee costume.

MAMMY is everywhere at once, cleaning up.

DOTTIE is painting RED's nails some scary color, as...

LEILA and KIRK survey their domain.

DR. KIRK

I've got something for you.

Kirk smiles and produces a beautiful silver star on a chain.

DR. KIRK (CONT'D)

It's Birth.

LEILA

I've got something for you, too.

Leila gently takes his hand and leads him towards the door.

DOTTIE

Hey, where are you guys going?

Darcy has come up for air just long enough to say...

DARCY

Boy, you're dumb.

DOTTIE

Pardon me for not taking "Love" at Ha-a-arvard.

As Marley wails, the CAMERA pulls back and out of the muffin shop, and into the nighttime New York sky.

