MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING

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First Draft Screenplay

INT. BOULEY RESTAURANT, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Dim lighting, crowd buzz, a long line of the rich, the celebrated, the congenitally impatient. Everyone in this queue holds a reservation at least an hour overdue. Tourists can't even make the line. PAN ahead to...

... the burnished dining room, the tables of power, the elegant service. Covertly, many eyes are drawn to the one table receiving by far the most lavish service of all. Captains hover, presenting delicacies, pouring wines, murmuring obsequiously to a guest whose person they screen from our view. We can see, however...

... the honored guest's companion. Ignored, bemused, across the table. This is DIGGER DOWNES, 36, darkly attractive. Kind eyes, an intellectual's mouth, Saville Row's most unobtrusive and conservative chalk-stripe suit. He is gay, but you wouldn't guess it. Loyal and wise and generous, and you might. He watches with a quiet twinkle, as the Captains now step back, revealing to us...

... their most unlikely icon. JULIANNE POTTER, almost 28, wears her favorite bulky sweater over a bunch of other stuff she pulled together in fifteen seconds. She is unkempt, quick, volatile, scattered, and beneath it all, perhaps because of it all, an original beauty. Dark liquid eyes, a cynical mouth, slender expressive fingers, which point to...

CAPTAIN
A variation on our squid ink risotto. Trace of Moselle, to sweeten the stock.

She doesn't like that idea at all. Shoots him a sharp look of doubt that makes him smile. Murmur...

CAPTAIN
Don't kill us on this one, it's a long shot.

Places the moist lump of black rice before her. She takes a surprisingly small amount, rolls it over her tongue. Makes dead flat eye contact with Digger. And nods, it's actually quite nice. The Captain breathes with relief. She turns her dark eyes to him. The tone says they're pals...

JULIANNE
I'm writing it up as inventive and confident. Which it is. Off the record, I'll need an extra boat of the ink. Or a salt shaker.

CAPTAIN
I'll toss a coin.

As the Captain splits, Digger looks around at the other tables, which makes many pairs of eyes awkwardly glace away.

DIGGER
Is it ever embarrassing, having your bum kissed in public?

JULIANNE
If your ass isn't chapped, you are not a good-writer of note.

She glances at her two remaining waiters, who shamelessly fawn nearby.

JULIANNE
Is it sad to be an editor, and bask only in reflected insincerity?

DIGGER
I've adjusted, and thanks for asking.

She leans forward, as if sharing something conspiratorial.

JULIANNE
See the pull of a book like Twenty Chefs, is not who I put in. It's who I leave out.

DIGGER
Which is everyone you couldn't get in.

JULIANNE
Plus some guys whose food I don't like.

Pushes the risotte across to him. He lifts a fork.

DIGGER
This fellow from Newsday ever call?

She shrugs. Pulls a cellular out of a large, jumbled bag.

JULIANNE
I'll buzz my machine. Inventive and confident, yeh?

She dials. He tastes.

DIGGER
Needs salt.

JULIANNE
Is Newsday a real interview, or just some cute guy you're setting me up w...

DIGGER
... I don't send you men, anymore. You don't know what to do with them.

She's punching in her code.

JULIANNE
Sometimes I do. Like for two months.

DIGGER
... weeks.

Over the phone, we hear her answering machine...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O., soft)
Hey. It's Michael.

And her face changes. Warms. Just to hear the guileless voice.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
God, it must be, what, months, huh? I can't wait to talk to you. I'm in Chicago at the Ritz Carlton...

She looks impressed and surprised. Fancy place for this guy.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Call me four in the morning, whatever, we gotta talk.

As she hangs up. She still has that look in her eye. Digger has never seen that, and he likes it very much.

DIGGER
Who called? The man of the moment?

She smiles. A sweet, natural smile that makes us like her, too. The Bohemian sophisticate has vanished.

JULIANNE

No, no, the opposite. That's my best friend, Michael O'Neal. He sounds desperate to talk.

DIGGER
The wandering sportswriter.

He pushes the risotto back her way.

DIGGER
I didn't know you two had a past.

Her gaze sharpens. Hmmn?

DIGGER
The look in your eye.

She blushes. Shakes her head, no way.

JULIANNE
Sophomore year at Yale we had this one hot month. And, you know me, I got restless...

He knows her. She got restless.

JULIANNE
So I get up the nerve to break his heart. I tell him there's this dreamy exchange student from Pakistan who wants to, you know...

He knows.

JULIANNE
And he gets this... look. He says, "I knew I couldn't hold your interest", which, of course, makes me feel like the shallow bitch I've always been...

He nods, yeah.

JULIANNE
Then he says, "But what makes me want to cry. Is I'm losing the best friend I ever had."

Hears the feeling. In her voice.

JULIANNE
And when he said it, I knew. I felt the same.

Silence now. She covers with a smile.

JULIANNE
So I cried. For maybe the third time in my life. And I kissed him. And we've been best friends ever since.

Ever since. Fingers turning her wine glass...

JULIANNE
Nine years, we've seen each other through everything. Losing jobs, losing parents, losing lovers... travelled all over, we've had the best times. The best times of my life, maybe. Just drinking and talking. Even over a phone.

DIGGER
Kindred spirits.

JULIANNE
No, he's nothing like me. He's like you. Only straight.

No offense taken.

JULIANNE
He's the salt of the earth. Kind and loyal and generous. The one constant thing in my life, is he'll always be there.

DIGGER
He's still in love with you.

That stops her. She has to say...

JULIANNE
Maybe. But it never gets in the way.

Something she probably hasn't confessed out loud before. Digger understands.

DIGGER
Well, he has a true friend in you.

He wants her to know he sees that.

DIGGER
Whenever George tells someone how steadfast I am, he always makes me sound boring.

JULIANNE

Solid and genuine is not boring.
Michael can be completely insane...

A young waiter arrives. Sets a boat of black squid ink beside her plate.

JULIANNE
There was this one night in
Tucson, like six years ago...
we got amazingly drunk, I mean,
Keith Richards time...

The kid tops off her glass of meursault. Looking at her.

JULIANNE
God, I haven't thought of this
in so long...

The waiter hanging now. Openly listening.

JULIANNE
I can even believe we did
this...

Digger sees the guy listening, gestures to her with his eyes. So she looks up.

JULIANNE
Could you give us a minute?

The kid stunned, speechless. People lose jobs for a lot less.

JULIANNE
You won't miss much, I promise
there was no sex.

He reddens and disappears.

DIGGER
I've lost interest.

JULIANNE
He takes a razor from his dinky
little dopp kit, cuts his fingertip,
takes my hand, does the same to me...

She places the tips of her index fingers together.

DIGGER
Blood oath.

JULIANNE
He says, "Swear. When we're both
28, if we've never been married...
we marry each other!"

And laughs again. Can you believe that? But Digger isn't smiling.

She wonders why. Begins to spoon black squid ink onto her risotto.

JULIANNE
See, he figured that would be a sign from God, or someone of comparable authority, that we'd misunderstood our destinies.

He still has this real serious look. She's still spooning ink.

JULIANNE
We never talked about it again. I don't know what made me think of...

DIGGER (quietly)
I do.

And everything. Stops. She lifts her spoon, mesmerized by the gravity of his tone.

DIGGER
You'll be 28 in three weeks. How old is he?

Holy. Fucking. Shit. It hits her like a ton of lead bricks. She shovels some swampy risotto into her mouth, without looking.

JULIANNE
You think...

DIGGER
Desperate. To talk.

She shovels in more drippy black goop. It is really disgusting.

JULIANNE
He's not proposing marriage, there's no way I'm buying one word of th...

DIGGER
Then why are you compulsively eating? If you're not hysterical?

More goes in. Her lips and mouth completely black. Like a circus clown.

JULIANNE
He can't do that to me!

DIGGER
We're about to find out.

Ink is now dribbling out of the black hole of her mouth and down her face. She absently dabs a napkin, keeping some of it from reaching her sweater.

JULIANNE
When I turn him down...

She realizes the full weight of the truth.

JULIANNE
We'll never be the same.

DIGGER
I have a suggestion...

JULIANNE
I'll have to kill myself before I call him.

Staring in each other's eyes.

DIGGER (sadly)
That was it.

INT. JULIANNE'S BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

Julianne furiously scrubs her blackened tongue with a toothbrush. Gray foam pours from her mouth, spattering the oversized basketball jersey she wears as a nightshirt. In the mirror, her troubled eyes dwell on Michael, flick to the cordless phone standing ominously on the closed toilet lid.

She spits, sticks her tongue way out. Incredibly black. Great. Depressed, terrified, and disfigured for life. She snatches up the hated phone, and wanders aimlessly into...

... her bedroom. West Village view. Defiantly jumbled, aggressively eclectic. Traces of wonderful taste mixed with I-like-it-you-got-a-problem-with-that? She stumbles around, rehearsing...

JULIANNE
This is awkward timing, Michael, I just joined this convent, and they never give your deposit ba...

Stops. Full-length mirror. She straightens her hair, to look her best.

JULIANNE
Michael, I'm married.

Not enough.

JULIANNE
... and I have two weeks to live.

Changes tone...

JULIANNE
Michael, I'm trying to be gay, don't confuse me.

She turns to continue pacing, and walks straight INTO a dresser. Stuns her, momentarily. Enough, already! She punches up the number, primping absently in the mirror. When it connects...

JULIANNE
I was calling Michael O'Neal, but seeing it's so late, I could just leave a mes...

No such luck. Cut off. Waits. And then...

JULIANNE (soft)
Good evening, sir. You've been enrolled in the Obscene Call Of The Month Club, and th...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Hey! God, it's so good to hear your voice.

She forgets herself. Because it's good to hear his, too.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I've been calling for days!

JULIANNE
Yeh, well my old machine kept eating messages. I tried constructively ignoring it in hopes of improvement, but finally...

MICHAEL (V.O., urgent)
Look, I have to ask you something.

She swallows.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Something so incredibly important, that if you turn me down, I don't know what I'll d...

JULIANNE (bright)
I just have to tell you this one thing first, okay? I mean this will hand you the biggest laugh of your adult life...

Silence. Come on girl, suck it up.

JULIANNE
I was thinking about you, and I remembered this unbelievably insane night we spent together in Tucson, like a thousand years ago?

More silence. Really quiet.

JULIANNE
I mean, there's no way you could possibly remember the...

MICHAEL (V.O., soft)
Are you kidding?

Stops her. Like a brick wall. The sweetness in his voice.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I think about that night all the time.

She's going to have a heart attack.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
But it's not why I called.

She blinks. It's not. And just as a tsunami of relief begins to sweep away...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I called because I met someone.

And her smiles breaks off. Like a spine snapping. Because there is something in his voice.

JULIANNE
Well, that's great. You haven't really had anybody since Dingbat Jennylee...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
You don't understand. I've never felt this way about anybody!

Never. She sits down, hard. Right on the floor.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
And she's all wrong for me!

JULIANNE
Well, somet...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I mean she's a junior at Chicago University, she's twenty years old! Like when I first met you.

Like when. Julianne's mouth is suddenly dry.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
And her dad is like this billionaire who owns the White Sox and some cable empire, and you know how I've always been miserably awkward around those

kinda stuffed suits...

She's finally making her mouth work...

JULIANNE
Well, sure.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
But they're so down to earth, such wonderful people...

JULIANNE
You've met her parents.

MICHAEL (V.O., quiet)
Well. Sure.

Wow.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
See. We're getting married. This Sunday.

There's a knife in her heart. She can scarcely breathe.

JULIANNE
Michael, it's Wednesday night, you can't possibly be getting married on Su...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Actually, it all starts tomorrow. It's one of those four-day weddings, with all the traditional events, and ten million people flying in from Madagascar such.

JULIANNE (incredibly lame)
Aren't you... working this weekend? I mean, is that responsible?

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Well, the Sox are at home. SI's letting me do a profile on the Big Hurt. That's Frank...

JULIANNE
(barely audible)
... Thomas, yeh.

She's staring at herself in the mirror.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Jules. I'm scared.

A straw to lunge at.

JULIANNE
Well, maybe we should talk ab...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I need you.

So heartfelt. A lifetime of emotion welling in her eyes.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
If you can't come. And hold my hand. I'll never get through this.

Oh.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Please come, please.

JULIANNE
W...

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I can't wait for you to meet her!

HOLD ON Julianne. Staring in the mirror. Like watching the end of her life.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The closet, the armoire, all the drawers are wide open. Two huge suitcases open on the bed, into which Julianne is flinging clothes, as she fumbles to smoke and dial at the same time. Over the phone, now...

DIGGER (V.O., machine)
You've reached Digger and George. Brevity will be appreciated.

BEEP.

JULIANNE (in a rage)
IT'S ME AGAIN, WHY AREN'T YOU GUYS UP HAVING SAFE SEX??

SNATCHES up a tiny, clingy, sexy dress. Pouts at it.

JULIANNE
OR, IN THE ALTERNATIVE, WHY AREN'T YOU INTERRUPTING IT TO ANSWER THE PHONE??

She holds the dress against her body. It's hot.

JULIANNE
YOU, YOU, YOU! IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU, ISN'T IT??

She clicks OFF. Checks the dress in the mirror. Raises the short

skirt a little higher.

INT. DIGGER'S CHEROKEE, JFK AIRPORT - EARLY MORNING

Digger driving the open-air Cherokee up the ramp to United Airlines departures. Julianne, wind-whipped, trying to light a fresh cigarette from the butt of the last one. He glances over. Hates to see this...

DIGGER
You can't get lung cancer and die in four days. Go to Plan B.

She sucks deep. Really deep.

JULIANNE
You have no appropriate sense of emergency. My best friend is ruining his life.

DIGGER
No, he's ruining yours.

JULIANNE
Same difference. If you love someone, it's your duty to save them from themselves.

DIGGER
You have a real philosophy of life.

JULIANNE
It's called the Law of Love, asshole.

She is tight enough to snap. And at the edge of tears. Staring out at the skycaps, clinging to her cigarette, as he eases to the curb.

DIGGER (gently)
Why don't we have a drink? You could catch a later fl...

JULIANNE
I'm a busy girl. I've got four days to break up a wedding, and steal the bride's fella.

She finally looks at him. He doesn't say anything.

JULIANNE
He's adored me for nine goddamn years.

DIGGER
I can see why.

JULIANNE
She knows him maybe five seconds,
plus she has billions of dollars,
plus she's perfect, so don't go
feeling sorry for Miss Pre-Teen Illinois!

He's not. So her voice softens. Which shows the hurt.

JULIANNE
And don't go feeling sorry for
me, you don't know me that well.
We're only friends.

DIGGER (softly)
I stand corrected.

Tears now. Stand in her eyes.

JULIANNE
I'm making a big mistake, huh?

DIGGER (shrugs)
Maybe you'll learn something.

He wraps his hand over hers. She looks down at it.

JULIANNE
I'm gonna bring him back, man.
Against all odds, y'know. Cos
if I don't...

She wraps her fingers around his.

JULIANNE
... I gotta live with it forever.

Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE
And at my wedding. I'll be the
only bride with her own best man.

And she kisses his cheek.

Jumps out of his car. Before she cries. Yanks her bags from the back. Brave smile.

They trade small salutes. And then she's gone.

INT. O'HARA AIRPORT, CHICAGO - MORNING

The jetway disgorging passengers into the swarming ant colony called O'Hare. Julianne lugging multiple carry-ons, trying to pull fly-away strands of hair into place, nervous as a schoolgirl, looking all around, and...

... there he is. MICHAEL is tall and square-shouldered, a boyish grin, an unruly shock of hair. He looks gorgeous, sweet, and just dangerous enough to be irresistible. Worthwhile stakes. His face lights to see her, and she...

... RUNS to his arms, shedding bags along the way, slamming off heedless civilians, to be...

... SWEPT OFF the earth in strong arms, spun around, laughing like crazy, their cheeks tight together. When he sets her down...

... he kisses her nose. His arms are still around her.

MICHAEL (murmurs)
Can you believe it? Can you believe
I'm actually gonna do this?

JULIANNE (lost in his eyes)
Not hardly.

He beams. Turns. She follows his gaze, and...

... there she is. KIMBERLY WALLACE is 20, small and slender, but it is a body to die for. The face is striking, not at all perky and vapid, but lovely and interesting. Worst of all, intelligent.

She walks toward them purposefully, her eyes locked to the woman in her fiancee's arms. At the last moment, Michael releases Julianne and Kimmy...

... THROWS her arms around the startled visitor. HOLDS her tight, with such genuine warmth that Julianne can only, slowly, hug back. As Michael beams.

KIMMY
This just makes everything so
perfect.

Her arms stay around the slightly dazed Julianne. The younger girl leans close, confides...

KIMMY
All I've heard, from the day I
met Michael, is Julianne this,
and Julianne that...

JULIANNE
Well, we're...

KIMMY
I think the best part of marrying
this guy is finding you.

Pale gray eyes. Alive with joy and intimacy.

KIMMY
I've never had a sister.

INT. KIMMY'S CONVERTIBLE - DAY

Kimmy TEARING down the throughway in her Mercedes 500 SL, a dashing, confident driver. Julianne riding shotgun, hair flying, a total wreck, in the open convertible. Michael is happily crouched on the little platform behind their seats, hugging his knees. The roar of the wind makes it impossible for him to hear them.

KIMMY
My heart's in my throat, here. Right off, I have to ask this monstrous favor...

JULIANNE
You need a few dollars.

Kim glances over. At eighty miles an hour. A bittersweet look.

KIMMY
Dry. Just like he said.

Her eyes at once admiring and regretful.

JULIANNE
Excuse me?

KIMMY
I can be quick. I can even be funny.

Shakes her head. An endearing youngster.

KIMMY
But I can't be dry.

JULIANNE
Can you watch the road?

KIMMY
See. Dry. It's in the delivery.

She looks back to the highway.

KIMMY
This is a very presumptuous and burdensome fav...

JULIANNE
... you want a menage on your wedding night.

KIMMY (straight back)
No, that wouldn't be burdensome.

Julianne studying the delicate, angular profile. Hard not to like this kid.

KIMMY
My classmate Angelique shattered her pelvis line dancing in Abeline on Spring Break.

Looks over. The sweetest smile.

KIMMY
Be my maid of honor.

Julianne just blinks.

KIMMY
You can't believe what it'd cost to bring in a temp.

JULIANNE
Uh. How about promoting a bridesmaid? Someone you know for at least forty-five minutes.

We CUT OFF a huge SEMI who BLASTS his horn. Kimmy fearless, oblivious, and analytical...

KIMMY
The bridesmaids are my only two female relatives under forty. Identical twin debutantes from Nashville, who are basically vengeful sluts. With amazing bodies!

JULIANNE
Which was the disqualifying factor?

KIMMY
The twin part. I like to remain impartial in my contempt.

Sees the off-ramp, and SLICES across FOUR LANES of speeding bullets in a heart-stopping nanosecond. This kid could drive for Penske. Julianne has to pound her chest to get her heart started. Looks back to see if Michael fell out...

... he is absurdly wind-blown. Gives her a beautiful grinning thumbs-up. Loves this stuff.

KIMMY
This means I have four days to make you my new best friend...

Brings Julianne's eyes back...

KIMMY
And since I already know everything

about you. Including intimate facts I'm mortified to have heard, but too envious to forget. It's time for you to learn about me...

Easing off the freeway. She meets Julianne's glance...

KIMMY
Force yourself. To get personal.

JULIANNE (smiles)
Sounds like a plan.

INT. DRESS SHOP, NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE - MORNING

The place is stunning. High-ceiling, soft light, large rococo mirrors, Louis Quatorze sofas and chairs. Michael wanders restlessly, fish out of water among designer displays and stylish female patrons.

Takes a look at his watch.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MORNING

A period sitting room, ringed with mirrors along its tapestried walls. Kimmy sits on a Louis Treize loveseat next to a stack of costly gowns. Watching with an expertise beyond her years, as...

... Julianne stands on a platform. A seamstress fitting her into a sleek pale daffodil-colored gown. There are pins everywhere, as the seamstress struggles toward a perfect fit. Continuously looking to Kim for approval.

KIMMY
If you'd rather the lilac...

Julianne shakes her head. This one is beautiful.

JULIANNE
I thought bridesmaids had to wear the same dress.

KIMMY
Not you. You won't be comfortable unless you're distinctive.

Julianne glances over.

JULIANNE
What else did he tell you...

KIMMY
... you hate weddings, you never go.

Oh. Well, yeah.

KIMMY

You're not up for anything conventional, or popularly assumed to be female priorities. Including marriage. Or romance. Or even...

And she stops. Not wanting to offend.

JULIANNE (quietly)
... not even love.

The look holds. The seamstress keeps working, as if she's deaf.

JULIANNE
That's why Michael and I were the wrong fit. Right from the start.

KIMMY
He said that, too.

She stands up. Walks to the platform. Smooths her hand over the fabric down Julianne's back, along her hips. Communicating to the seamstress with her irritated expression.

KIMMY
Well, I thought I was like you. And proud to be. Until I met rumpled, smelly old Michael...

Pins start to come out. Kimmy points, these, too!

KIMMY
And then I found I was just a sentimental schmuck. Like all those flighty nitwits I'd always pitied.

She leans forward. So they can look at each other.

KIMMY
Funny world, huh?

Julianne swallows. It is that.

JULIANNE
I need a smoke.

And before anyone can breathe, she steps OFF the platform RIPPING the living shit out of the gown, right down the side. The seamstress' eyes FLASH OPEN in abject horror. Julianne, a deer in headlights, looks quickly around at the evidence of her screw-up in six different mirrors.

Kimberly just steps to her, fingers the tear...

KIMMY

It's mostly the seam. Let's get this to Carlos.

And UNZIPS Julianne down the back. In her rush to step out, Julianne STUMBLES, but her arms are pinned by the pulled-down dress and she just...

... TOPPLES like a felled oak, THUDDING on her face, the gown RIPPING some more, the seamstress SCREAMING like an idiot.

Then. Silence. Julianne looking up helplessly, a trussed hog, bound in her dress.

KIMMY (firm)
Just. Don't. Move.

Like you talk to a three-year-old. Deftly, Kimmy pulls the dress free, leaving Julianne in her underwear. Signals to the seamstress, let's go.

JULIANNE
Don't you have to be somewh...

KIMMY
... just my bridal shower. And Michael has to meet our dads and the groomsmen at Comiskey for a one-thirty game.

Opens the door...

KIMMY
Other than that...

Closed SOLID. Gone.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Julianne sits on the loveseat in her bra and panties, lighting one cigarette from the butt of another. Suddenly, she hears...

... an ARGUMENT outside the door. Strains to listen. It does sound like Michael and Kim. We can't make out the words. She jumps up, dashes for the door, STUBBING her toe on the platform, SHIT!, falls heavily AGAINST the door with a THUD that makes her wince, and...

... the argument stops. Damn. She opens the door a crack. Sees nothing. Opens it wider to reveal...

... a teenaged BOY looking right at her. He sends a true shit-eating grin and she SLAMS the door hard enough to RATTLE walls.

She PACES furiously, helplessly, arms around her half-naked self, until...

... soft knock. The door opens a crack, and her daffodil gown comes through it.

JULIANNE
Come in, and shut the...

Stops. Because it's Michael who has entered. With the dress.

JULIANNE
... door.

So he does. She flushes and SNATCHES up her own clothes, which were characteristically tangled in a heap, and tries desperately to untangle them enough to cover herself. He is amazed and amused by her embarrassment.

MICHAEL (laughing)
Should I turn around, or someth...

JULIANNE
Michael, I'm in my underwear!

She's TEARING at her clothes, only making more of a mess.

MICHAEL
We've seen each other a lot
more naked than this.

She seems ready to rip her clothes apart, so he gently takes them from her hands. She tries to stand unselfconsciously as he easily untangles them.

MICHAEL
I mean, we were skinny-dipping
in Greece, just as pals, less
than two years ago.

She GRABS the clothes and covers the front of herself. Looking at him with a mix of emotions she couldn't begin to sort out.

JULIANNE
Things are different now.

He looks in her eyes. And nods, a little sadly. Guess they are.

MICHAEL (softly)
Well. I leave with two thoughts
in my mind.

He walks to the door. Puts his hand on the latch. Looks back...

MICHAEL (even softer)
You're still a very pretty
girl.

The look holds. And holds. There is such feeling on both sides, she doesn't know what to make of it. She swallows.

JULIANNE

What's the sec...

MICHAEL
Mirrors.

And he's gone. She looks around at six different VIEWS of her uncovered backside. Hmm.

INT. HOTEL UNDERGROUND GARAGE - DAY

The parking valets wait by their stand as the convertible pulls up. These girls must be late for something, the way they're jumping out of the car.

JULIANNE
... luckiest guy in the Northern Fucking Hemisphere, is all I'm s...

KIMMY
What? Because I'm a little understand...

JULIANNE
... most sentimental schmucks I pity want a honeymoon after their wedding. Just to top it off.

The valet gives Kimmy her ticket.

KIMMY
I can't expect the NBA to hold up the playoffs...

They're walking fast toward the garage elevators...

KIMMY
I'm excited Sports Illustrated gave him this kind of shot, he's only there a ye...

JULIANNE
So your honeymoon is exactly where?

Well...

KIMMY
It depends. If San Antonio sweeps Sacramento, we could start there. Or Phoenix. Or depending on Indiana-Clevel...

JULIANNE
... garden sports, all. Little swing of maybe fifty degrees Fahrenheit, represents a packing challenge, but there's fine food and cocktails at a choice of Embassy Suit...

At the elevator. Kimmy SLAMS the button.

KIMMY
It's his career, I'm supportive. Look, I've been everywhere, I've seen the world, I've laid on a beach. I want to be with the man I love. That's what makes it a honeymoon.

End of story. Okay?

JULIANNE
I'm just saying he's lucky.

An empty elevator arrives. They get in.

JULIANNE
Takes one woman in a billion to put up with his array of shit. The guy is a one-man festival of idiosync...

Kimmy SLAMS the penthouse button. Looks at her calmly. Go on.

JULIANNE
Well. You've been introduced to the symphonic range of...

KIMMY
... his snoring, yeah. He says it's worse than ever. That snaffle one...?

Julianne imitates an incredibly annoying high-pitched SNARL. Three times. Kimmy nods.

KIMMY
Well now it has this sorta phlegm rattle behind it...

Stopped at the lobby. A family of four gets in. Oblivious, Kimmy DEMONSTRATES the phlegm rattle. Really gets into it. As the family watches, Julianne tries her own version. Like that? No. More like this. The family is looking at each other.

KIMMY
Guess what? Earplugs work.

Oh.

JULIANNE
How about...

KIMMY
... cigars in bed? I broke him on that. But the bathroom's a

swamp, he wears Reeboks to dinner,
tells the same, admittedly funny,
jokes three hundred times...

Sucks in a breath...

KIMMY
... loves action movies, subscribes
to Playboy for godsake, reads over
my shoulder, can't keep track of
the checks he writes...

Ninth floor. The family gets out. The door closes.

KIMMY
He sucks soup through his
front teeth.

JULIANNE
A trademark move, don't touch
it.

KIMMY
But he sure can kiss.

JULIANNE
It's been awhile. I'll take
your word.

KIMMY
After two weeks of cataloguing
all his faults, I made a command
decision that changed my life.

She SLAMS the EMERGENCY STOP button. We JOLT to a halt.

KIMMY
I threw the list away.

Shakes her head.

KIMMY
He's not a balance sheet, so
many wonderful qualities, so
many faults. He's Michael.

From her heart.

KIMMY
And loving him means loving
all of this.

JULIANNE
Do you get nervous in small
confined spaces?

KIMMY

So it's sweet of you to be protective...

JULIANNE
Let me rephrase that...

KIMMY
But nothing ever could, ever did, give me a moment's pause about this marriage...

JULIANNE
Do you get hysterical in small confined spa...

KIMMY
... except one.

Julianne's face. Stops.

JULIANNE
Oh, yeah?

Kimmy nods. Confides...

KIMMY
You.

A stopper.

KIMMY
You'll always be there. In his mind. The perfect creature he loved for all those y...

JULIANNE
Well, perfection can get wearing after whi...

KIMMY
I'm not joking. I had to face up to all my competitive drives, and believe me, I've got 'em.

JULIANNE
No.

KIMMY
And the answer was so simple.

JULIANNE
I was gonna predict that.

KIMMY
You win.

Julianne blinks. Excuse me?

KIMMY
You're enshrined in his heart and memory. Unassailable. Which works out great.

JULIANNE
I've missed a step.

KIMMY
He has you on a pedestal. And me in his arms.

Oh. Julianne smiles. LUNGES for the EMERGENCY button, YANKING it so hard it comes OFF in her hand. A terrifying BUZZER ensures.

JULIANNE
Jesus, we're trapped!

KIMMY
Ju...

JULIANNE
No, this happened to me once, almost, it was excruciating!

Begins BANGING random buttons, out of control. Kimmy watching this. Julianne looks WILDLY up...

JULIANNE
There's a panel up there, you could boost me...

RIPPING off her platform shoes.

JULIANNE
You know how little air is in these things? I've seen statistics! Once you're trapped between floors...

Kimmy taps her. Points to the lighted panel. It says PH, they've reached the Penthouse.

JULIANNE
God! Then the door is jammed!

Takes a heavy platform and begins BANGING the metal door with all her strength, sending resounding BOOMS throughout the area, as Kimmy reaches and...

... presses DOOR OPEN. The metal doors part, opening directly onto the banquet room, just as a mighty blow comes down, and the platform FLIES from Julianne's hand straight BETWEEN...

... two identical stunning YOUNG WOMEN, serving as twin hostesses for the shower. A beat of mutually-stupefied looks, and we hear

the shoe CRASH somewhere, to a small spattering of SHRIEKS.

MANDY
Mah Gawd, it's the bride,
and the woman she'll nevah
live up to!

KIMMY (mutters to Julianne)
That would be us.

SAMMY
Did she say th' wrong thang
agin? It is so in character!

AMANDA and SAMANTHA NEWHOUSE, 19-year-old twins. True Southern belles, with the faces of angels and bodies made for hot oil wrestling. Mandy's hair is dyed ash blonde, Sammy's is amber. Otherwise, the experience is similar.

JULIANNE
(thrusts out her hand)
I'm Julianne Potter, and...

SAMMY
... we'd be the vengeful sluts.
We came in complementary colors.

MANDY
Have you sized up the groomsmen,
Jules? As M. of H., you get
first fuck. Don't pick the
short, hairy, rich one.

JULIANNE
... unless he has a hump.

The girls cast identical blank looks at Kimberly.

KIMMY (to the sluts)
Dry. I told you.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Is this Michael's Julianne?

All eyes turn to an elegant woman of barely 40. She has her daughter's hair and eyes and slender form. But the bearing rules half an empire. Fonda would envy.

ISABELLE
I'm Isabelle Wallace, and my
handsome new son scarcely did
you justice, girl.

She takes both of Julianne's hands, and our heroine is sort of magically charmed. As if touched by Glinda the Good Witch of the North.

ISABELLE
Now, my husband says to scoot you over to the ballpark, so you can hang with Michael. But first, you have to meet a lot of really old women.

Looking warmly in her eyes...

ISABELLE
That is, if you've absorbed enough profanity.

Flicks a glance at the twins. Leads Julianne off...

MANDY (O.S., pouting)
We sayed one fuck.

INT. TAXI, SOUTH SIDE - DAY

Cab crawling toward COMISKEY PARK through stifling traffic. Julianne oblivious, cellular to her ear...

JULIANNE
Desperate measures! Do you hear me? Digger, are you the...

SQUAWK. Static. Then...

JULIANNE
I don't know, hit men, whoopee cushions, saltpeter, something! The girl is impossibly impregnable. Even I want her to get the guy!!

Listens.

JULIANNE
Tell him the what? The truth...??

She shakes her head. What a guy.

JULIANNE
That desperate. May I never get.

INT. LUXURY BOX, COMISKEY PARK - AFTERNOON

Game in progress. Watched by Michael, three groomsmen his age, two middle-aged men, and one bodyguard. Suddenly, a dull THUMPING at the door. It keeps up. They finally all look over. The bodyguard gets the door, revealing...

JULIANNE
Which of you gents ordered two beers?

One single tray. Holding fourteen beers. Balancing on one hand.

Michael JUMPS UP, terrified at the impending mayhem this sight suggests...

MICHAEL
Wow! Lemme give you a ha...

JULIANNE (sweetly)
Michael. You'll unwittingly imply that I'm clumsy.

He stops in his tracks. The guys whistle.

MICHAEL
Think of that. And as well as I know you.

She goes first to the bodyguard.

BODYGUARD
Sorry, ma'am, I'm on duty.

JULIANNE (lovely smile)
It's Miss. And thanks. That leaves two for me.

Heads down the row...

MICHAEL
Julianne Potter, this is Hank and Gerry from SI, and you know Daniel...

She's nodding, flawlessly plucking two beers each from perimeter of the tray, keeping the rest perfectly balanced in the center. Michael is flat dumbstruck. Next, a tall patrician gentleman with rolled-up sleeves on his hand-stitched silk shirt...

MICHAEL
Oh. This is my father-in-law, Walter.

Once again, she gracefully plucks two beers for the distinguished father-in-law...

MICHAEL
How are you doing this? You're on drugs.

Sets them down. The man has a smile wonderful in its ease. Murmurs...

WALTER
If he gives you grief, I'll have him skillfully beaten, where the wounds won't show.

JULIANNE

I guess getting him whacked would be politically out of the question.

WALTER
Under the circumstances. Charmed to know you, Jules.

JULIANNE
Nice meeting you, too, Walt.

A nod between equals. She moves on...

MICHAEL
And, this guy, you know...

She sure does, and effortlessly balancing her one-hand load, she dips to kiss a porky, balding guy with big-time shoulders. Straight on the lips.

JULIANNE
Papa Joe.

They go way back. He is uncomfortable at this rich man's wedding, even as gracious as everyone has been. His watering eyes twinkle at her, and the voice has a trace of Boston...

JOE
You gonna be my boy's best man?

Despite SHOUTS from the others...

JULIANNE
Best everything, Joe. But I'm going to dance with you.

MICHAEL
Dance? You don't dance! You learn to dance??

Her innocent smile.

JULIANNE
Moves. You've never seen.

BIG reaction from the guys, as she heads toward Michael with the last of the beers, not looking down at the FIELDER'S MITT which lies right in her path, and as his lips part to scream a warning, she skips...

... neatly AROUND it. He's in shock.

MICHAEL
You're an impostor! What have you done with my best friend?

As he takes away the remaining beers...

MICHAEL
And how was the hot dog?

Hot dog? His eyes fix on her left breast. HUGE mustard stain. She can't believe it.

MICHAEL
Cheap and unnecessary. We were looking anyway.

EXT. LUXURY BOX ROOF - DAY

Michael and Julianne sit with their beers on the edge of the luxury box roof. The game, the stadium, spread out beneath them. Yet they are alone in the world. She dangles her legs, and we can hear her kicking the glass below.

JULIANNE
I just admire your maturity, that's all. I mean, there are people who would find that kind of perfection boring. Day after day, year after year...

MICHAEL
... see, that's what I thought at first. How can you like someone that perfect? No potential for long-range livability.

Drinking their beers. Side by side. Both stare only at the game.

MICHAEL
Luckily. The closer I watched, the more the fault came into focus. Each imperfection its own adorable slice of vulnerability.

JULIANNE
Such as.

MICHAEL
She's too genuine.

JULIANNE
Hate that.

MICHAEL
How can you trust someone you can never mistrust?

JULIANNE
What's next?

Keep sipping. Never look at each other.

MICHAEL

No matter how many times I leave the toilet seat up, she forgets and puts it down.

JULIANNE
Endearingly absent-minded.

MICHAEL
My very point. Here's another one...

Shakes his head. This one really gets him.

MICHAEL
Every day. She makes the bed.

JULIANNE
Quite the little eccentric.

MICHAEL
At first, I thought it was a gag, but she's always done it!

This is not the ammunition Julianne was hoping for.

JULIANNE
Is there a coup de grace in here, somewh...

MICHAEL
She admires. Tommy Lasorda.

JULIANNE
Waiter! Check, please!

MICHAEL
She finds him "personable."

JULIANNE
Can that kind of defect be passed on genetically?

She looks over now. And Michael is looking back. Smiling the most wonderful smile. Her reaction shows that she thinks it's for her, until...

MICHAEL
Then again. She has a few good traits.

Hating herself for asking, but seeing no way out...

JULIANNE
Gimme like, eight and nine off the top ten list...

MICHAEL
First girl I ever knew. Who

lets me give her a bath.

The look in his eyes. She can hardly bear it.

MICHAEL
And when I hug her, even in public. I don't have to let go right away. She lets me hold her as long as I want.

He seems so deeply in love.

MICHAEL
Nice kid, don't you think?

A beat. A slow nod. A quiet...

JULIANNE
Looks like, from here.

INT. SOUTH SIDE CLUB - NIGHT

A slender black woman sings a SOARING Gospel number, backed by three ladies who could each solo in any church choir. It is mesmerizing, stirring, transcendent. The unseen audience CLAPPING FIERCELY in rhythm, SHOUTING support. SLOW PAN now...

... every face is black. We aren't in church at all, but a venerable blue club. One of those places you'd swear everybody's played, from Robert Johnson to Bessie Smith and back again. As the song ends, there is APPLAUSE, some RAPPING on tables with their knuckles or their drunks. We keep PANNING to a far corner. Three faces.

Julianne leans across her beer to Kimmy...

JULIANNE
How'd you find this pl...

Kim shaking her head. Looks admiringly to Michael...

KIMMY
Lived here my whole life, never heard of it. Until our first date.

She reaches slender fingers. Traces one back along his hair.

KIMMY
He finds all these spots, everywhere he goes, it's a mystical gift.

MICHAEL (shy)
Jesus, one d-back from the Bears knows a place...

KIMMY
It's not just clubs. This guy always knows the best everything. The best guitar store, the best beef ribs, the best Horowitz record, was he always like the...

JULIANNE
... always. The best dim sum, the best camping stuff...

KIMMY
Stop, we're embarrassing h...

JULIANNE
... best valley in New Zealand, best... women's shoes...

MICHAEL
I tried those on. When you weren't looking.

Now he's grinning at Julianne. And she likes that a lot.

JULIANNE
Where was that, Florence, huh?

MICHAEL
Firenze.

Together in the memory. As Kimmy watches.

JULIANNE
The Vespa? Me hanging on behind in the rain all night?

MICHAEL
Till the gas ran out.

And, the first sniff of left-out...

KIMMY
I love Florence.

Julianne's eyes flicker. Could this be a teensy opening? Keeps her eyes, her easy smile, and her killer instincts trained on Michael.

JULIANNE
Take her there.

He nods, okay.

JULIANNE
I mean, now. She's perky, she deserves a honeymoon.

He draws a breath...

JULIANNE
I heard. If San Antone sweeps Sacramento. What is this shit? You gotta get off the road by September anyway, when does Fall Quarter start?

And the happy couple look at each other. They are awkward. Julianne's heart soar like eagle.

KIMMY
Uh. I'm not coming back. For senior year.

Could this be. The Mother Lode?

JULIANNE
Don't architects find a degree, sort of... an asset?

The couple still staring in each other's eyes.

KIMMY
Well, the school will be here. Architecture will still be around. Right now...

MICHAEL
I travel every week. College ball, motor sports, training camps...

KIMMY
The most important thing. Is being together.

And she smiles. Beautifully.

KIMMY
I'm just a baby. I've got all... the time... in the world.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

Michael putting Kim in the back of a cab. As Julianne watches.

MICHAEL
Because I could come...

KIMMY
To the twins' soiree? So they can paw you and drool...?

JULIANNE (calls out, helpful)
They're gonna drool anyway!

Kim smiles. He kisses her, tenderly, through the open window. She waves past him at Julianne.

KIMMY (to both)
Enjoy each other.

And drives off. As he watches after, Julianne comes up behind him. Slips her hand up onto his shoulder muscle. Starts giving a little massage.

JULIANNE
Should I whistle down a cab?

MICHAEL
Hey, cabs are expensive. I'm cheap, remember?

Turns his head, to see her. She's still rubbing his shoulder.

JULIANNE
Sometimes. About the dumbest things.

Share a smile. As always, it covers a lot of years.

MICHAEL
The El's right down the street. Unless you're afraid of the neighborhood.

She looks around. It is an issue. But she remembers...

JULIANNE
No. I'm always safe with you.

She means that. He takes her by the hand. They begin walking...

JULIANNE
Pretty amazing girl, you've got. Make that kind of sacrifice.

MICHAEL
What, leaving school...

JULIANNE
... all of it. She's leaving her family, her friends, everything she knows. She's putting her career on hold, and she seems a pretty ambitious, driven, kind of pers...

MICHAEL (quietly)
In her way.

JULIANNE
All to follow you in this dumb

job, where you travel 52 weeks a year to College Station, Texas, and such. It's not a job for a grown man, Michael, Peter Pan never married.

He's let go of her hand now. Looking down at the pavement before him, fists in his jacket pockets.

JULIANNE (softly)
I don't think she's naturally the... submissive type. Aren't you afraid she's gonna choke on this stand-by-your-man shit after awhi...

MICHAEL (real quiet)
No.

Hit a nerve. This is promising.

JULIANNE
I mean Walter owns the Sox, cable sports... most girls in her spot would be angling to get Daddy to offer you some juicy gig right here in t...

MICHAEL
She would never. Never. Even think of that.

Paydirt. Julianne's Geiger Counter is going berserk.

JULIANNE
I guess you're right. That would be deceitful... manipulative... controlling... emascula...

MICHAEL
I got the point.

He looks over at her. No smile on his face. An edge we haven't seen. She shrugs...

JULIANNE
Still. All's fair in love and w...

MICHAEL
That would be a girl. I don't even know.

They've reached the stairs to the El. A rickety train RATTLES above them. As they start up, she slips her arm around his waist...

JULIANNE (murmurs)
Forgive me, okay? I was talkin'

crazy.

He slides his arm around her shoulder. Pals. They climb out of frame.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

CLOSE on a shallow pool of water in a bathroom sink. Green powder pouring in, a hand SWIRLING it around, until...

JULIANNE (O.S.)
It's Albanian, I think. Or Mongolian. Or Canadian. One of those. I bought it downstairs...

... it becomes truly disgusting lumpy green mud.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
I figure, what the hell. Can it make me look worse?

Follow the hand up as it SLATHERS the shit across her face in great green dripping gobs. She's juggling the wall phone, trying to keep it mudless, as she assures Digger...

JULIANNE
Dig, of course. Of course, of course, of course, of course I have a plan. Certainment!

More green slime. The Julianne we know disappears.

JULIANNE
How? I ask myself, what would Lucy Ricardo do in this situa...

Desecrates three hotel towels, wiping her hand.

JULIANNE
Well, one worked, once.

THROWS them in the bathtub. Fastidiousness a short suit.

JULIANNE
Ricky wouldn't let her in the show.

Reaches for her toothbrush, absently. All her attention is on the conversation and the hideous green face in the mirror.

JULIANNE
I recall it differently, but we digress.

Without looking, picks up a tube of hotel shampoo...

JULIANNE

So in the version, you're Ethel,
with better fashion instincts.

Squeezes it all over the toothbrush.

JULIANNE
This puts you in charge of Plan B,
the unprincipled and insanely
dangerous back-up plan...

Lifts it toward her mouth, liquid shampoo dripping from the bristles.

JULIANNE
In case simple lying doesn't work.

At the last second. She stops. We don't know why, because she's still never looked at the brush.

JULIANNE
Question. What happens if you
brush your teeth with shampoo?

Turns on the tap. Tries to scrub the toothbrush clean, and DROPS the phone into the green swamp, which SPATTERS all over her front. Euucch. She's stymied, agitated, circling the sink, leaning down to it...

JULIANNE
HOLD ON. I'M COMING IN FOR YOU!

She sets the toothbrush down in her toiletries kit. Decides to YANK on the phone's cord, and the receiver SPRINGS out, BOPPING her in the face. She's so filthy at this point, she just wipes it clean on her nightshirt. Tells Digger...

JULIANNE
You okay? This is one of those
problem phones.

Lifts the toothbrush and tube of paste from her kit.

JULIANNE
Right. Your role. You know guys
from Sports Illustrated, yes? I
mean, you can walk right in there...

Squeezes on the paste, lifts the brush to her mouth...

JULIANNE
You could get access to letterhead,
for example.

JAMS it in her mouth, brushing as...

JULIANNE (mouthful)
... or even, maybe, their fax.

Stops. The funniest look on her face. Down to the toothpaste tube...

Which says BEN GAY.

Oh.

INT. TIFFANY'S - MORNING

Julianne and Kimmy cruise the stately display cases. Everywhere, the Tiffany logo, the silent, watchful staff in morning coats. As they browse, Julianne takes a blueberry Danish from a paper sack, and begins to eat.

The staff notices. So does Kim.

JULIANNE
It's an homage thing.

Hmm?

JULIANNE
Awkward girls grow up on Audrey Hepburn movies. You wouldn't understand.

Kimmy doesn't. But wipes a blue glob from Julianne's face.

KIMMY
Anyway, I think you're wrong.

Wrong?

KIMMY
What you were saying before.

Before?

KIMMY
About Michael's job.

JULIANNE
Oh, that. I forgot I even said th...

KIMMY
I just think you're wrong, is all.

JULIANNE
Probably am. Forget I brought it up.

Points to some jade pins. Kimmy wrinkles her nose.

KIMMY
I mean, he loves his job.

JULIANNE
Bad games, bad towns, bad pay, bad flights, bad hotels, real bad food. Homeless, rootless, lonely, maybe your copy gets into one issue out of four...

Smiles.

JULIANNE
What's not to love?

None of this is lost on Kimmy. She's wondered the same.

KIMMY
But he always says...

JULIANNE
... whatever is manly and independent.

Kim nods slowly. Way ahead of her.

JULIANNE
Why would he trade that for running, say, a big piece of the PR at a powerful, complex, challenging conglomerate like your dad's?

Kim stares back. A strange look.

KIMMY
That's just the sort of thing my father and I discussed.

Julianne just blinks. Amazed.

JULIANNE
I'm not stupid. Say, how about this?

Pointing to tiny golden scissors in the novelty case. Kim so absorbed by the main topic, she has to force herself to focus on...

KIMMY
For the twins? What in the world is th...

JULIANNE
Gold nose hair clippers.

Points to the tiny hand-lettered sign. Indeed. Kimmy shrugs, not quite it.

KIMMY

So you don't think Michael's
as happy with his job as...

Julianne points to a matched pair of large...

KIMMY
Gold dog collars? They don't
have dogs.

JULIANNE
Hello.

Kim nods, oh. But can't keep her mind off...

KIMMY
You think he'd accept?

Hmm?

KIMMY
Michael. A job like that.

Oh, well...

JULIANNE
By any yardstick that involves
sanity, it would be the greatest
thing that ever happened to him.
Present company excepted.

Kimmy nodding slowly. Her yearing achingly apparent.

JULIANNE
On the other hand, he's proud.
Last thing a man wants to admit,
is being trapped in a dispiriting
dead-end job that can never
support a family.

A very sweet smile.

JULIANNE
Throw a man a life preserver.
He'll say, "Thanks, anyway,
I'd rather drown."

Kim nods again. Right. They are so bonded at this moment.

KIMMY
So... one almost has to...

JULIANNE
Exactly.

KIMMY
Exactly what?

JULIANNE
What you said. Make it appear that he's doing you the favor.

Kimmy bites her lip. Her eyes go down. Self-conscious to admit...

JULIANNE
I couldn't really... do that. After, you know...

Her voice trails off.

JULIANNE (kind, but wise)
... lying. All the time.

That brings the gray eyes up. Julianne bats her dark ones...

JULIANNE
Oh, darling, my pitiful desires and ambitions are dirt beneath the manly boots of your priorities!

Kimmy has to smile small. A self-awe gal.

JULIANNE (pouring it on)
Two hundred seedy motels a year? Dinners out of vending machines? Waiting for you in vermin-infested corridors of dark crotch-rot locker rooms? This stuff makes me hot!!

KIMMY
The very words I've used.

Julianne 'thinks it over.' Kimmy waits for guidance.

JULIANNE
We make Dad your co-conspirator. Michael does a favor for Walter.

Simple.

JULIANNE
Walter's reorganizing his public relations, needs a brilliant guy who's close to him, who he can completely trust.

Kimmy nodding. Hope overriding reason.

JULIANNE
So you beg. Michael, please do this for Daddy, please, please, please, blah, blah, blah... it's only for six months... it would mean so much to me to help him out...

Turns up her palms. Viola!

KIMMY
He'll see right through it.

JULIANNE
Only. If he wants to.

They share a smile.

JULIANNE
In six months, he'll be happy, settled, successful...

KIMMY
He won't get mad, huh?

MR. MOONEY (O.S.)
May I be of any help, whatsoever?

Mr. Mooney is the most gracious Brit salesperson ever to offer kindness, intelligence and thoughtfulness to a customer. He is large, sixty, with disappearing hair, watering eyes, and a manner that makes you think of immediately hiring a butler.

JULIANNE
Bridesmaid gifts for two, well, assertive, outspoken, Tennessee debutantes.

KIMMY (still focused)
He won't be mad?

JULIANNE (to Mooney)
Nothing here seems to quite capture their distinctive personalities.

MR. MOONEY
Something customized, perhaps? We can fashion most any item from gold.

Ah. Julianne nodding. Reflecting.

MR. MOONEY
An object that might represent what is closest. To their heart.

KIMMY (under her breath)
Don't even think dildo.

Julianne digs through her jumbled bag...

JULIANNE
Could you do this...

Tossing an object on the counter...

JULIANNE
In 24 carat?

It is a MASTERCARD. A gold one.

KIMMY (softly)
Bingo.

They smile at each other. More bonded than ever.

KIMMY
You don't think he'll be mad.

A beat. Can Julianne even make herself do this?

JULIANNE
Your call. You can live a lie. In a fabulous selection of Red Roof Inns. Or you can make one desperate stab at hap...

KIMMY
I just don't want to freak him out.

What do you think? Julianne stares into the soft gray eyes. It's now or never. The smile of a dear sister...

JULIANNE
How mad could he get?

INT. FASHION RESTAURANT - LUNCH HOUR

Julianne enters with a really nervous Kimberly in tow. Approaches the maitre d'. We CLOSE to hear...

MAITRE D'
Oh, Mr. Wallace and his guests have retired to the humidor.

Points to an escalator, leading to the mezzanine. Behind a glass wall, what looks like a British men's club. Thirty guys and a billion cigars. As Julianne starts toward it...

MAITRE D'
Oh. Mademoiselle.

She turns back. Loves this shit.

MAITRE D'
It's unofficial, of course. But, traditionally, the humidor is for gentlemen, only...

JULIANNE
Great. I've got this girlfriend

at the Justice Department? With all this time on her hands?

Her look is every bit as hard as his. He gestures to the escalator. She takes Kimmy's hand, and up they go. We can see Walter in a big leather chair, enjoying a major stogie. Kimmy licks her lips.

They enter. Every head turns. A nice range of reactions, from offended to attracted and points in between.

JULIANNE (murmurs)
Piece of cake. I'll hang, and think happy thoughts...

Kimmy nods. Heads over toward her father. Julianne walks, confidently, even provocatively, to the wall lined with bins of cigars. Every eye in the place is on her butt.

She runs her fingers over a few contenders. Plucks one out, examines it, puts it back. Walks a little farther. Selects another, big and black. Rolls it expertly in her fingers. Sniffs along its length.

A guy comes over. Could be 40, successful, a broker's pin-stripe. Nearly as attractive as he thinks he is.

GUY
Know what you're looking for, little lady?

Little lady, huh? She glances at his coven of buddies, who pretend not to notice. Then, straight to the guy's blue eyes.

JULIANNE
Yeah. Do you?

GUY
I asked first.

Ah. Wit. She holds up her cigar...

JULIANNE
I like 'em long and hard. Kind of... big around.

Runs it under her nose.

JULIANNE
Smell is important, I'm a believer in that.

Takes a match from a cut crystal bowl.

JULIANNE
But you never know what you've got. Till you run your tongue

over it.

And she does. Moistening the full length of the cigar. The boys are laughing openly. She STRIKES the match. As she lights up...

GUY
I meant. What you're looking for in a man.

She glances at his wedding ring. Then, straight into his eyes.

JULIANNE
Actually, I'm partial to married gentlemen.

The way she says that. The guy swallows. We can see some of the air has been sucked from the room.

GUY
Why is that?

JULIANNE
It's so much time. When I phone the wives.

Explosive LAUGHTER from the peanut gallery. As she jams the big Clemente Churchill into her mouth, she sees Kimmy waving her over from across the room. Without even looking at the guy she's just put away...

... she crosses the room, Walter stands politely, looking very dapper, very powerful, and focusing on her with considerable interest. He waits until she sits on the edge of a costly leather hassock.

WALTER
(simply)
Your idea?

She can't read this guy. Maybe that's how he built an empire. She nods, yeah.

WALTER
You're a woman of insight.

He sits on the arm of his chair. Close enough to speak quietly.

WALTER
My wife and I love this marriage, and deplore its circumstances.

He puffs his cigar. Julianne puffs her. Kimmy looks on, a kid watching the grown-ups...

WALTER
As you guessed, my daughter is unhappy about giving up her life.

And, in my opinion, cowardly in avoiding the necessary confrontation.

Then he stops. As if reading Julianne's eyes.

WALTER
Mike has a world of ability. I'd do anything to have him in my company.

One more puff.

WALTER
Except ask him.

Julianne is a little stunned. Kimmy looks helpless.

WALTER
He'd resent it. And me. And, most important, Kim.

No smile on his lips. Straight talk.

WALTER
He's a great kid, but he's still a kid. Instead of recognizing that his resistance comes from insecurity, he'd turn it to anger. To protect himself...

Spreads his hands...

WALTER
... from realizing that he's ignoring my daughter's needs, despite how very much he loves her.

He looks to his daughter now.

WALTER
They both have some growing up to do. But they're good people, they're starting with love. They've got time.

JULIANNE
(softly)
I think you're making a mistake, sir.

His eyes come back to her. A little sharply.

WALTER
And that interests me. How someone who knows him so well could be so wrong.

A formidable guy. She meets his gaze.

JULIANNE
See, I love him, too, as much as anyone here. And for a whole lot longer.

From her heart.

JULIANNE
I think I know best what would make him happy.

INT. TOILET STALL - DAY

Julianne, fully dressed, sits on the closed lid of a toilet seat. The stall is tiny enough to arouse claustrophobia in an astronaut. Her cellular phone pressed to her ear, she is listening angrily, smoking ferociously, every call in her body running at red-line.

JULIANNE
Okay, okay, okay, okay, I hear you, all right?

She closes her eyes.

JULIANNE
It is stupid, dishonest, desperate beyond belief, and can't possibly ever work. It can only end in humiliation and disgrace. Now can I say two words?

Deep drag on the cigarette. For strength.

JULIANNE
Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it! Do it!

She's striped her gears. COUGHS horribly.

JULIANNE
All right, twelve words.

INT. PUBLIC RESTROOM - DAY

Julianne exits the stall. To face three BLACK TEENAGE GIRLS. Just staring at her.

TEENAGER
(supportive)
You do it, girl.

Julianne nods to the kids. They nod back. Damn straight. She exits the restroom, into...

... glaring sunlight. We are in the middle of the BROOKFIELD ZOO.

And sitting on a bench, eating popcorn from a bag...

MICHAEL
Wow. What was going on in there?

She shudders.

JULIANNE
Some crazy person.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

Michael and Julianne walking together. He's eating his popcorn. She carries a cardboard container with nachos, a gooey fudge waffle cone, and a large drink.

MICHAEL
You're not eating.

JULIANNE
I never eat when I'm serene.

MICHAEL
You never eat when you're despondent.

JULIANNE
I switched that around when you weren't looking.

She swirls a single nacho chip in cheese. But her heart isn't in it.

MICHAEL
Last zoo we were in was... Beijing, yeah? Sure. The rhinos were fucking.

JULIANNE
Boy, those were the days.

And when she looks over. His eyes are waiting.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Yeah, they were.

They're passing the hippo pen. But they don't notice.

JULIANNE
That was nice. The way you said that.

So was that. He's feeling restless, something. Doesn't know quite what to say.

MICHAEL

It's weird being the groom. All these things Kimmy has to take care of...

JULIANNE
You need a baby-sitter. That's what I'm here for.

He holds her eyes. Then looks down. Awkward. And the way he's doing it begins to excite her.

JULIANNE
Say it.

He looks up, neither one of them noticing that as they walk, she is about to...

... CRASH into a chest-high metal stand that displays animal facts. We have followed him as she is WIPED from frame. His face from shock... to amusement.

MICHAEL
Now, there's my girl.

... to tenderness. PAN back to see her wearing everything from her cardboard container. Nachos, fudge sauce, Diet Coke, the works. It is really awful. Kids, bystanders, laughing cruelly. Her eyes fill with tears, and she tries bravely to smile against it...

JULIANNE
See, I can only do it with beer.

He takes out his handkerchief. And with that and his hands, gently scoops the worst of the mess off her. The fact that he's touching her breasts and her body is something they pretend not to notice. She laughs softly, and a few tears fall, even though she doesn't know why. Such an odd, raw, confusing moment. To the world looking on, they are lovers.

MICHAEL
(murmurs)
See, better already.

And he kisses her face. Not quite her lips. But only an inch away. We can feel her heart pounding. He strips off his shirt, only a tank top underneath.

MICHAEL
We'll go back to the bathroom, you'll put this on...

Okay? She sniffles, okay. Swallows.

JULIANNE
Bet you're glad I'm here to take care of you.

He puts his arm around her.

MICHAEL
Bet I am.

Holds her close, as they start toward the restroom...

MICHAEL
Hope that crazy person's not still there.

We're on their backs...

JULIANNE (O.S.)
She doesn't scare me.

EXT. BEACH CLUB, LAKE MICHIGAN - SUNSET

Julianne in T-shirt and shorts, rushes onto the deck of a sprawling beach club. Clutching her bag, she quickly surveys the scene...

... the entire beach has been taken over by the wedding party. Young folks, old folks, little kids, maybe 200 people. We SCAN with her to find a crowd around...

... a three-on-three volleyball game. Kimmy and two groomsmen on one side, facing Michael and the Tennessee debs. The twins wear spectacular bikinis and are surprisingly athletic, as well as predictably uninhabited. As the next point begins, Kimmy serves...

... Sammy in back makes a nice dig, lobbing to Mandy who sets for Michael's vicious SPIKE straight THROUGH his best man's hapless defense. The crowd cheers Michael, and as he turns, Mandy gives him a savage...

... CHEST BUMP of congratulation, that any NFL linebacker would be proud of. It puts the surprised Michael straight on his butt. Laughter, applause. The twins pull him up and Sammy gives him a hot kiss on his ear that makes the crowd react. Kim plays good sport. Julianne watches Michael's body for a beat, then...

... dashes off. Down the beach, several barbecue grills have been set up. Manned by beach club staff and family alike. Michael's pop, Joe, is dispensing beers from a keg. Kim's mom, Isabelle, is coordinating the beans, potato salad and corn-on-the-cob table. Julianne races across the sand to...

... a huge smoky grill where Walter is basting baby back ribs, clearly enjoying himself. Julianne runs up to him, says something into his ear. He looks at her. Then turns his station over to a club steward, and follows Julianne down toward the lakeside.

CLOSE now. As they stroll together, she's a little breathless. He's watching her profile, curious, silent. At the water's edge...

JULIANNE

(whispers)
Is anybody watching?

WALTER
I hope so. This is all too mysterious to waste on just me.

She reaches into her big bag. Pulls out a single folded sheet of paper.

JULIANNE
I picked up Michael's messages for him, at our hotel. I stole one...

His face darkens. The easy smile fades. He holds up his palms...

WALTER
Julianne, reading my son-in-law's mail, is not something...

JULIANNE
Sir, this is important! Haven't you ever in your life cut one corner, to make something important turn out right?

His smile returns. Just a little.

WALTER
Matter of fact, that's how I got married.

The look holds. She thrusts the paper out. He still doesn't take it.

JULIANNE
It's a fax from Sports Illustrated from Ben Isaacson, Michael's boss.

WALTER
(quickly)
I know Ben.

She opens the paper.

JULIANNE
"Mike. We still have no answer to our E-mail of Wednesday. Which option do you select? I don't mean to rush you, but Personnel needs to tie up the loose ends."

He takes the paper. We see it now. Looks authentic.

JULIANNE
I think he's been fired.

WALTER
It doesn't say th...

JULIANNE
He's said some things over the past few weeks. Look, this is why I came up with the idea of you offering him a job.

He looks up. He's listening. Closely.

JULIANNE
And why I couldn't say anything before in front of Kim.

She bites her lip. Seems so earnest.

JULIANNE
I just think of how... desperate he must be feeling. He's marrying a rich man's daughter, and he's about to become destitute. You know the kind of job market he'll be facing?

He does.

WALTER
And you think he's kept this to himself.

JULIANNE
He's too proud to beg for help. And if you wait till this comes out, your offer will be like charity. Completely humiliating.

He's staring at her. But his mind is working behind his eyes.

JULIANNE
If you do it now, it's like he's helping you. He can accept with dignity.

He taps the paper with the back of his knuckles.

WALTER
This fax could mean... any number of things...

She nods. She knows that.

WALTER
(softly)
Maybe. I should call Ben.

JULIANNE
Then it could all come out, sooner or later. Nobody should be in on this. Just you and me. Or, more correctly, I.

She takes the paper back.

JULIANNE
What if, what if I could find that E-mail?

The long straight look. Maybe he's hooked.

JULIANNE
I never noticed. Kimmy has your eyes.

INT. LOBBY, RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - TWILIGHT

Tall, gangly, young DESK CLERK. Lank hair, pimples. He looks up, beams to see...

JULIANNE
Hello, again.

She's flirting her ass off.

JULIANNE
You still haven't straightened that tie.

And she reaches across the desk with her lovely, slender hands. Does it for him. Her fingers brush his chest on the way back. We can assume a woody.

JULIANNE
You know, my friend, the one whose message I picked up... ?

He does. His eyes flick toward his stately female SUPERVISOR, helping another guest across the way.

JULIANNE
Well, he's still with the wedding party. And he asked me to get something he needs real badly from his room... ?

The boy swallows hard.

JULIANNE
He's in 1526. If you could just let me ha...

BOY
See that woman?

Not only does Julianne see her. The woman is looking back, while she's talking to her customer. Not a pleasant look.

BOY
She said, if I ever pull a stunt like that again...

JULIANNE
You'll lose your job...

BOY
... tear my pecker off. Is what she said.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - TWILIGHT

An elevator OPENS, revealing Julianne, carrying a gym bag. She looks down the long hallway, sees a maid's cart. Heads the other way, briskly, to...

... a small ALCOVE. Opens the gym bag, pulling out a bath towel. Begins to yank her top up OVER her head...

ANGLE... the young MAID now pushing her cart down the hall, wheels SQUEAKING, and from nowhere...

... Julianne DARTS into her path, barely covered by the towel held tight across her, she is grinning, blushing.

JULIANNE
Help me!

The maid can only blink.

JULIANNE
I locked myself out, 1526, please hurry!!

And looks frantically up the hall, mortified that any moment a stranger could happen upon her predicament. Her eyes dart back to the maid. PLEASE. The maid just stares. Stares.

JULIANNE
Uno-cinco-does-ses.

Oh.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - TWILIGHT

Julianne alone in his room, looking around frantically. No worries about this guy making his bed every day, stuff, clothes, strewn everywhere, the bathroom looks like a cherry bomb just detonated. She's tramping through a bachelor's debris, wearing only her towel, looking, looking...

There it is. The corner of his LAPTOP sticking out from beneath a

discarded bedspread. She SNATCHES it up, OPENS it, sets it on the cluttered desk, and...

... stops. There are wallet-sized SNAPSHOTS of Kimmy. Some alone. Some as a little girl. Some with Michael. And next to them...

... the plastic fold-out wallet inset. That he has not yet quite rearranged. So she picks it up. Leafs through, until she finds what she was praying would be there...

... Julianne grinning. Michael's arm around her. On the deck of a boat. They have drinks in their hands. Happiness in their eyes.

And she stares at it. Jesus, God, how long has he carried this around? She flips through further, all the rest have her in them. Maybe half a dozen. Her heart is throbbing. Her eyes are damp.

Back to the one on the boat. She slips it from the plastic window. Holds it. Then, gently...

... puts it back where it belongs. PUNCHES up the goddamn laptop. This is it, girl! Do or die.

JULIANNE
(murmurs)
You wouldn't change your password, would you? You never change anything.

Those words make her bite her lip. Damn, I'm becoming a sentimental slob. TYPES in...

JULIANNE
(murmurs)
Shoeless... Joe.

Yes! We're in! Punching keys. Letters flying across the screen. Okay, we're ready. Types...

JULIANNE
(reads as she types)
Mike. I hate this downsizing shit as much as you do. But I know this can't become as a complete surprise...

INT. BEACH CLUB CARD ROOM - EVENING

Through the window, the wedding party barbecue has extended into night. Lanterns, music, lots more food, lots more drinks. In the distance, on the sand, Michael is slowdancing with Kimmy. Somewhere nearby, the soft CLICKING of keys. We PULL BACK to see...

... a small clubby room. Books, leather, polished woods. Only two people here. Walter, looking on stony-faced, as a determined Julianne grimly "struggles" to "find" what she's looking for in Michael's laptop. And then...

... she stops typing. Looks at the text on the screen. Her eyes sharpen as she "reads" what Walter can't see. It's an Oscar performance for our desperate girl. She turns the screen around...

WALTER
(reads)
Mike. I hate this downsizing...

He reads. Reads. Reads. All the air comes out of him.

WALTER
(softly)
And Kimmy doesn't know.

She shakes her head. Nope. No way.

WALTER
(signs)
I'll tell her I've reconsidered.

She nods, gravely. Right. He looks in her eyes.

WALTER
You're a smart girl, Jules.

She forces up a fleeting smile of gratitude. But Walter isn't smiling at all.

WALTER
Wish my daughter. Bad your guts.

INT. CHARLES TROTTER'S BAR - NIGHT

The hot saloon in Chinatown. Upscale, downscale, jammed, Michael and Kimmy at a small table in a far corner. CLOSE on them...

MICHAEL
Sure you're okay?

She looks really scared. Turns her drink in her hand. Looking down at it.

MICHAEL
It's not just a gag, huh?

KIMMY
No, it's, uh... a real big favor.

He takes her hand, tenderly.

MICHAEL
I wish you'd just... come out with it. I mean why are we waiting for Jules?

She smiles up at him. The best she can.

KIMMY
Moral support.

She loves him so much, and she is sick with worry.

KIMMY
What's good of having a big sister, if she...

Stops. Gestures with her eyes. Because her big sister has just entered...

... looking fabulous. Julianne wears a long sleek sarong, slightly see-through. Her hair is bound up with silver pins. As she moves through the room toward us, we can see that, for once, her make-up is flawless, understated. When she arrives at the table...

... Michael is beaming, admiringly. He stands up.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Wow and wow. You have a date, after this?

JULIANNE
Never can tell.

He holds her chair. She exchanges an intimate smile with the anxious Kim.

MICHAEL
You make me think of that song, we used to...

And he starts humming. The song is, "The Way You Look Tonight."

MICHAEL
(singing)
Someday. When I'm awfully low...

They sit. He looks from Julianne to his bride.

MICHAEL
Okay, kid. You're on.

Kim's eyes flick to Julianne, who nods, supportively. The kid takes a breath.

KIMMY
It's really my father. Who needs the favor.

His face sort of comes to a stop. Nothing she can read, yet. He nods, yeah...?

KIMMY
He's... he's reorganizing some of the divisions of the company...

His eyes flick to Julianne. She looks down.

MICHAEL
(quiet)
He never mentioned that. Neither did y...

KIMMY
(blurting)
... and public relations is a big problem area for him.

She can see it now. In his eyes. She just can't tell how bad.

KIMMY
He needs someone incredible, someone really close, who he can trust...

MICHAEL
Like family, huh?

So quiet. So cold. She is terrified.

KIMMY
It would only be, maybe, six months? Or three or four? It would mean so much to him...

MICHAEL
To him.

She swallows. Straightens her spine.

KIMMY
And to m...

MICHAEL
(sharp, to Julianne)
... and you knew about this.

Real quiet. Against the noise of this place.

JULIANNE
I think you ought to listen to her, Michael. This is her life, too.

Just the thing. To bring that anger near the surface. He turns to Kim...

MICHAEL
Well, which is it?

A demand. Sharp. Accusing. She doesn't like that...

MICHAEL
You gonna tell me Daddy thought this one up? All of a sudden, I'm the only jerk alive who can help him deal with the press?

She's trapped. Angry, scared. A deer in headlights.

MICHAEL
Why don't you start being honest for one fucking sec...

JULIANNE
Michael!!

KIMMY
(near tears)
I am honest!

Silence.

KIMMY
All of a sudden, I'm supposed to drop out of school, forget my family, forget my career, forget all the plans I had for my life...

MICHAEL
Well, forgive me for screwing up your plans!

He can't even believe he's hearing this.

MICHAEL
I'm sure glad I'm hearing all this now, before it's too late!

KIMMY
What is that sup...

MICHAEL
And what am I supposed to do with my life, huh? I am 28 years old! I work in a low-paying, low-status, zero-respect job which, unfortunately, I happen to fucking love. How inconvenient.

Shrugs.

MICHAEL
No problem. A little bullshit about Daddy's "needs," and presto, I'm a lap dog in high society.

JULIANNE
(softly)
Michael, it sounds like a wonderful opportun...

MICHAEL
(whips around)
Does it, really? How come you never took some sell-out establishment job? You had plenty of chances!

Glares in her eyes.

MICHAEL
I'll tell you why. Because that isn't you. And it isn't me, either! We're the same person!

Back to Kim...

MICHAEL
What a sweet little picture. Mommy and Daddy aren't losing a daughter, they're gaining a eunuch!

KIMMY
Well, if that's the way you f...

MICHAEL
Damn straight, it's how I feel! What's their wedding gift, a little gold collar that says "Mikey-poo"? Or do I have to change my name to "Binky"?

She's crying now. Real tears on her face.

MICHAEL
Great! Tears! The big equalizer. You wait till two days before the wedding to drop this on me, and I'm just supposed to roll over and drool!

She is sobbing now. She can't help herself. Which makes him totally crazy. He jumps up.

MICHAEL
Fine. I'm an insensitive, chauvinist asshole, and you're well rid of m...

KIMMY
MICHAEL!!

A wrenching cry from her heart. It stops him cold. And before Julianne's astonished eyes, Kimmy reaches out a trembling hand...

KIMMY
Michael, you are so...

Choking back the sobs.

KIMMY
... so right. And I am so very wrong.

Michael blinks. Julianne blinks. For different reasons.

KIMMY
We can't go down two roads. And still be together.

Her fingers stretch, beckoning.

JULIANNE
Uh, Kimmy...?

KIMMY
(ignores her)
We settled this. And I reneged. That wasn't fair.

Please, please, take my hand.

KIMMY
You have to forgive me, and forget this ever happened...

People are watching, staring. These two see only each other.

KIMMY
... or I'll die.

A frozen, forever moment. He steps to her...

... LIFTS her up in his arms. Into the deepest, most heartfelt KISS. And as she clings to him, people begins to APPLAUD, and whistle, and laugh.

Julianne. In her pretty dress. Closes her eyes.

INT.JULIANNE'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Julianne in her nightshirt, her back to us, sobbing into her cellular as she paces the room...

JULIANNE
... see that's what I never counted on! I never heard of a brilliant moron before!

We CLOSE as she WHIPS around, startling us with her grotesque day-glo PURPLE face mask. The green was better.

JULIANNE
I mean, the little twerp GROVELED!!

Losing it. We know the drill.

JULIANNE
SHE IS SO WRONG FOR HIM!

Clutching the phone.

JULIANNE
Michael and I are the same person! Self-absorbed and imperfect and vaguely loveable! We deserve each other!

Tears are flowing. Which, over this mask, is not a pretty sight.

JULIANNE
I'm out of hope, I'm out of sneaky ideas, I'm at the end of my rapidly-fraying hysterical little rope! Help m...

She TRIPS over an open suitcase, and DISAPPEARS from frame. The THUD is slightly alarming.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
God, I hate this hotel.

HOLD. On nothing is particular.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
And I hate talking to your machine!

INT. JULIANNE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

REAR VIEW of Julianne asleep on the floor, sunlight streaming in. A soft knocking on a door, somewhere nearby. She barely stirs. The knock becomes a strong RAPPING, and she fights for consciousness. Her back still to us, she...

... rises, STUMBLES to the door, which is now pulsing with an insistent POUNDING, and THROWS it OPEN, as we SNAP to...

REVERSE ANGLE... CLOSE on Julianne's face, still encased in a now-decomposing PURPLE MASK, her eyes SPRINGING wide, she SCREAMS in shock, and we SNAP BACK to...

ORIGINAL ANGLE... Digger, watching impassively at the high-strung SHRIEK. In the silence that follows...

DIGGER
You stole my line.

He touches his face, and she realizes!

JULIANNE
Oh, shit!

Starts CLAWING at the overripe mask, but he grabs her wrists.

DIGGER
Chill. We don't want your face coming off with it.

JULIANNE
Chill? Since when do you say ch...

DIGGER
When I'm talking to children.

She looks in his eyes. Realizing at last.

JULIANNE
You flew all the way h...

DIGGER
I noticed. I'm on the noon back. We have this thing with George's family in the Hamptons.

JULIANNE
(soft)
You're butting in.

He still holds her wrists. She brings one of his hands to her lips. Kisses his knuckles.

JULIANNE
(softer)
I really resent this.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Julianne seated at the sink, staring into the mirror, as Digger gently applies soup, cloth and water to easing away the mask. A paleontologist restoring a Bronze Age artifact. By the side of the half-filled sink, rests her plugged-in curling iron.

JULIANNE
What I mean, when I say annoyingly perfect, is that there is nothing annoying about her perfection. It is vulnerable and endearing. And that is annoying as shit.

DIGGER
You like her.

JULIANNE

If I didn't have to hate her, I'd adore her.

She looks up at him and WINCES, as the movement makes him scrape her face. He's sorry.

JULIANNE
Last night, she was crying, these big, real tears, when she thought she'd lost him. It was like there was a knife in her heart...

Looking in his eyes. Needs him to hear.

JULIANNE
... and I put it there. I hated myself, I grieved for her, I couldn't enjoy one second of it! And then, when it didn't work...

Can you believe this?

JULIANNE
I was devastated.

DIGGER
(softly)
Go figure you.

JULIANNE
Because I realized. When I see him say "I do," that knife will be in my heart. And it will be there every...

She holds his wrists now. To stop him. To plead for understanding. Forgiveness.

JULIANNE
... every time I think of him, forever, which could be a lot.

She almost choked on that last part. So she composes herself.

JULIANNE
You watch a guy caress his girlfriend's butt. You see an Old Spice commercial. Sentimental moments are everywhere, when you're in the right frame of mind.

She swallows hard. Fights for a grip on her determination.

JULIANNE
There are 18,250 nights in the next 50 years...

DIGGER
You've been working on this, huh?

JULIANNE
... and having "done the right thing" will only really be comforting, oh, maybe, five, six times.

She sets her jaw.

JULIANNE
This is my whole life's happiness. I have to be ruthless.

DIGGER
(quietly)
And you believe that.

JULIANNE
(unconvincing)
Sure.

His eyes are gentle and merciless at once. No way she gets off this hook.

JULIANNE
He was in love with me every day for nine years. I can make him happier than she can.

DIGGER
It's not his happiness you're feeling guilty about...

JULIANNE
(proudly)
I don't know the meaning of the word guilt!

DIGGER
Impressive.

JULIANNE
I am breaking her heart in the short run, but doing her a gigantic favor! She would be miserable tagging along after this insensitive doofus!

DIGGER
The man you love.

JULIANNE
Beyond reason. The feminist warrior will rise up in this kid, and she'll be standing over his sleeping form with a butcher

knife, selecting from a short
list of body parts!

DIGGER
Someday she'll thank you.

JULIANNE
Let's not get carried away.

And the defenses drain from her clay-ravaged features. The real Julianne is glimpsed.

JULIANNE
I'd settle for. Someday, I'll
forgive myself.

For...?

JULIANNE
For doing this terrible thing.

Her eyes tear up.

JULIANNE
Which, by the way, I can't
figure out how to do.

As the tears fall, he wipes at them, discovering...

DIGGER
Jesus. You're supposed to take
your make-up off before you
apply the m...

JULIANNE
I KNOW THAT! I WAS DISTRACTED BY
GRIEF!

Oh.

JULIANNE
Guess what I brushed my teeth
with last night?

He thinks about this. Following her eyes to the toiletries kit, he browses for a moment...

DIGGER
Zit cream?

JULIANNE
I wish.

DIGGER
Neosporin?

JULIANNE

Try less appropriate.

DIGGER
Ben Gay.

JULIANNE
That was Thursday.

He stops on that note.

DIGGER
Elmer's Glue?

JULIANNE
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, WE'RE HAVING
A SERIOUS CONVERSATION!

She's hysterical.

DIGGER
I give.

JULIANNE
I can't even say it.

Now. He's curious.

JULIANNE
A hint. The first word is
"Preparation." Then comes a
letter of the alphabet,
perilously close to G.

She reaches to test her curling iron, BURNS her finger, SHIT! KNOCKING the appliance into the half-filled sink. She LUNGES for it, and a terrified Digger GRASPS her arm...

DIGGER
Considering the circumstances,
I'm not wholly against suicide...

Huh?

DIGGER
Just not by electrocution in
front of me!

Oh.

DIGGER
I've got this noon flight.

He reaches to pull the plug from the wall, and now she LUNGES to grab his arm, slipping, her face falling forward, stopping an inch above the sink.

JULIANNE

How do you know you can touch that plug? Are you a licensed contractor?

DIGGER
What do you suggest?

She looks from the plug down the cord, to the submerged curling iron. And back.

JULIANNE
Maybe they just seal off this room. They have others.

He's staring at her. Sweet, but intense.

DIGGER
I didn't mean about that.

Oh. Again.

JULIANNE
If I hear the words "tell the truth," or any paraphrase thereof, I dive into the sink and pull you with me.

Looking at her. Looking at her.

DIGGER
Let's go meet Michael. I'll wait downstairs.

INT. ARMANI - MORNING

Julianne has cleaned up pretty good. She sits with Digger on a fashion-fabric sofa. They are side-by-side, studying something with equal concentration. And slight concern.

DIGGER
I suppose it's too late to start over.

JULIANNE
It's too late to start over.

PULL BACK to reveal Michael in his wedding tux, submitting to a final fitting from a stylish fitter.

MICHAEL
You guys are heartless, my bride picked this out.

JULIANNE
Like I said, dazzling.

DIGGER

Is she going to dress you
every day?

Michael smiles over. Digger smiles back. They live each other.

MICHAEL
Yeah, it's in the contract.

DIGGER
(softly)
Well, then, I'll take it up
with her.

Michael motions, okay, c'mon over. Digger rises, goes to Michael, the fitter steps back as Digger shows him...

DIGGER
The cut here, here... this
line...

Fingers lightly traveling over the lapel, the side-stitching, the cloth straight down the spine...

DIGGER
... trouser width, this is all
classic. Which means safe,
something I'd wear.

MICHAEL
I should look different.

DIGGER
You should look like you
dressed yourself.

Yes? Michael's grin is back. Playful and friendly.

MICHAEL
And I'm supposed to respect
your fashion tips, because
you're what, a New Yorker?

DIGGER
(quiet smile)
Something like that.

Julianne loves that the boy are getting on.

MICHAEL
(means this)
Long trip. Pretty nice of you
to come.

DIGGER
Well, I'm close to her. I wanted
to meet the one that got away.

Said so naturally. That embarrasses Michael, who looks down, his smile suddenly awkward.

DIGGER
What?

MICHAEL
I'm just glad someone finally put this thing in its proper perspective.

Steals a glance at Julianne. She rolls her eyes. What a goofball, my outrageous friend.

MICHAEL
(to Digger)
Stay, huh?

DIGGER
I honestly wish I could...

MICHAEL
I'll call George's parents. Tell them I need a best man who actually looks after me.

Julianne comes over.

JULIANNE
(softly)
They'd say that's my job.

She runs her hands over his jacket, smoothing it everywhere. With tenderness that approaches transparency. Glances back at Digger...

JULIANNE
I'll take it home from here.

Pinches Michael's ear. Looks in his eyes.

DIGGER
Two words.

JULIANNE
Major. Dish.

DIGGER
Manicure...

She looks down. Michael's nails are unclipped, with layers of impacted dirt. She touches his fingertips, a little more softly than she may have intended.

DIGGER
Fly.

Everyone looks down. She ZIPS Michael up.

MICHAEL
(to Digger)
You don't miss much.

DIGGER
Part of being a New Yorker.

INT. HAIR SALON - MORNING

Cutting edge salon. Loud, PULSING MUSIC. Digger and Michael in adjacent chairs, heads back, each smoking impressive cigars as their hair is styled. Digger's stylist is a hot trashy female. Michael's is a tall, flamboyant male in a day-glo vest.

Each man has one hand soaking, the other being worked on by a manicurist, so Julianne goes from one to the other, removing their cigars so they can exhale. A seraglio feel to the way she does this.

Now she's arguing with Michael's stork-like stylist. We can't hear over the music, but she keeps tugging on Michael's hair, pretty passionate about her point of view. Suddenly, she GRABS the scissors to do it herself, and Michael...

... BOLTS out of the chair. WHOA!

EXT. O'HARA AIRPORT - DAY

Skycaps, guests of impatient travelers, a bus offloading forty Japanese tourists. A taxi cuts off a van to reach the curb. Out jumps...

Michael. Opening the door for Digger and Julianne. Digger says something, Michael gives him a strong HUG. Julianne raises one finger to Michael, back in a second. Leads Digger off by the hand.

CLOSE on them now. Alone in the throng.

JULIANNE
Bye, handsome.

Digger just stares at her. Those maddening judgemental eyes.

JULIANNE
You're going to say it, aren't you?

DIGGER
Tell him you love him. With all your heart.

JULIANNE
I'm taking my next book to Viking.

DIGGER
Tell him you've loved him for

nine years, but you were afraid
to realize it.

JULIANNE
I'm moving this book to Viking.

DIGGER
Tell him you're afraid of love.
Afraid of needing.

JULIANNE
Needing.

DIGGER
To belong to someone.

He touches her hair.

DIGGER
We all do, beautiful. I'm sorry
about that.

Staring in her eyes. Even Julianne has run out of words.

DIGGER
Tell him you know this is the
worst, dumbest, cruelest moment
to do this to him. But there
it is, and he has to choose.

JULIANNE
And what will he do?

Digger isn't smiling. His voice low, beneath the crowd...

DIGGER
He'll choose Kim. You'll stand
by her at her wedding. You'll
kiss him good-bye. And you'll
go home.

He holds up one finger. Almost touching her nose.

DIGGER
This is what you've come to do.
Now do it.

Wow. She looks frightened and moved, all at the same time. She kisses him on the lips.

And walks away. He watches her go through the crowd. Take Michael's hand. Lead him back toward the taxi.

EXT. SKYLINE CRUISE BOAT - DAY

The skyline of Chicago moves past us. Slowly. The NBC Tower, Cityfront Center...

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Big weddings are so strange.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
You keep saying that.

Up ahead, the Wrigley Building draws closer...

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Kim has all this stuff to do,
I hardly see her.

JULIANNE (O.S.)
Well, you've got the rest of
your lives.

REVERSE ANGLE... they lean on the rail of a cruise boat, easing down the Chicago River. Wind-blown. Close together.

JULIANNE
Getting your bed made. Every
day.

They smile at each other. Seem so comfortable together.

JULIANNE
You miss her, huh?

MICHAEL
No. I've got you.

She nods. That you have. Staring in her eyes...

MICHAEL
Don't you throw up on boat?

JULIANNE
If you like.

And she LURCHES over the railing, emitting a BARRAGE of incredibly disgusting sounds, her feet FLAILING in mid-air. He laughs, as he pulls her back down to the deck. Of course, it was all a joke. He brushes back her hair. Sighs. Stares.

MICHAEL
I've been thinking a lot the
last couple days. About us,
actually.

JULIANNE
(casual)
Have you.

He has.

JULIANNE

Well. There's a lot of memories
to choose from...

MICHAEL
It's more than that.

That tightens her throat pretty good. When she tries to speak, out comes a dry CROAK that makes him laugh again. Softer, this time.

MICHAEL
I mean, it's embarrassing to
say it this way, but...

He stops. Her eyes WIDEN in a burlesque of anticipation. So he smiles. She knows how to put him at ease.

MICHAEL
You've sort of been... y'know,
the woman in my life.

JULIANNE
(straight back)
You've been the man in mine.

Passing under the Michigan Avenue Bridge. No one knows quite what to say.

MICHAEL
And I was thinking this could be
our last time. Alone. Together.
You know?

JULIANNE
Except for the hot affairs we'll
have twice a year.

MICHAEL
Except for that.

She's smiling so easily. Who would guess her stomach is double-knotted.

MICHAEL
I can hardly wait for your
wedding.

JULIANNE
Me either.

She watches his surprise.

MICHAEL
Boy, I never thought I'd hear you
say that. Can I come?

She holds herself together. Real soft with...

JULIANNE
I couldn't have it without you.

He's glad to hear that. And then...

MICHAEL
It's normal to have... second thoughts, huh? To be scared.

Is this a change of direction? Or is it the direction she's been praying for.

JULIANNE
I wouldn't know. I never had that many first thoughts.

MICHAEL
I mean, you commit to a wedding. And then it seems like... this... momentum, you know? You forget you... chose it.

She nods. Understands.

MICHAEL
You and I. I mean, in all our relationships with other people... We didn't use the word "love" a lot, did we?

We didn't.

MICHAEL
Kimmy says. When you love someone. You say it, you say it out loud. Right now. Or the moment...

Long beat.

MICHAEL
... passes you by, yeah. She's a smart girl.

Off in distance, the Centennial Fountain SHOOTS an eight-foot JET of water across the river. For Michael and Julianne it goes unnoticed.

MICHAEL
We don't have a song.

Hmm?

MICHAEL
Kimmy and I. We don't have a song. Is that a bad sign?

All Julianne can do is shrug. Then...

MICHAEL
(sings, softly)
Someday, when I'm awfully low...
And the world is cold...

She doesn't want to cry. So she puts all the strength she has into fighting it back.

MICHAEL
(sings)
I will feel a glow just Thinking of you...
And the way you look. Tonight.

He stops. Smiles that sweet, boyish smile.

MICHAEL
Dance card filled?

JULIANNE
I'll check. I have it on
powerbook, these days.

He holds up his arms. And she moves into them. He begins to dance with her, turning so slowly. And, yes, people are watching.

MICHAEL
(sings in her ear)
With each word, your tenderness grows,
Tearing my fears apart...

She holds him closer. Bites her lip.

MICHAEL
(sings)
And that laugh
That wrinkles your nose,
Touches my foolish heart.

He stops. He looks at her. She's still in his arms.

MICHAEL
Where did we first hear th...

JULIANNE
(straight back)
The night we met.

Right to his eyes...

JULIANNE
The night we fell in love.

He doesn't know what to do with that.

MICHAEL
So we heard it... like, right

that... that first...

JULIANNE
We danced to it. Just like this.

Just like this. A long beat. And he has to say...

MICHAEL
I won't lose you, will I?

Her eyes close. Then open. Utterly lost in his.

JULIANNE
No. Because I won't let you.

INT. WALLACE ENTERPRISES - DAY

Julianne in crisp chalk-stripe trousers and a buttoned-up dress shirt. Her coat slung over her shoulder, she wanders through the Saturday-deserted office space. Desks, cubicles, monitors, silent. A row of executive offices standing empty, waiting for the custodian. Turning a corner, we hear...

... life, at the end of the hallway. A grand conference room with a glass wall. Walter, in shirtsleeves, running a strategy meeting for five. DEIDRE, his personal secretary, clicking every word into her laptop at warp speed. Walter sees Julianne through the glass. A comic take of pleased surprise. He comes out to greet her...

WALTER
I thought Michael was picking me up.

JULIANNE
I told him, get the important stuff, Kim's ring. I'll collect the inconsequentials.

Meaning, you. They smile at each other. Then...

WALTER
Kim said, when he turned down the job, there was no friction.

Julianne thinks back.

JULIANNE
Friction. No.

He smiles at her line reading. But his mind is always probing.

WALTER
I haven't caused... a problem, have I?

JULIANNE
Nobody has. So far.

Her bright grin. His eyes linger on it.

WALTER
Well, you're a little early...

JULIANNE
I need to make some calls.
Could I use... your office?

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Julianne enters the spacious corner office, high above the city. Closes the door, quietly, behind her. So anxious, she is practically hyperventilating. She goes, slowly to the vacant cherrywood desk. Its computer and monitor standing silent. She is stalking it, like a deadly animal. And then. She is there.

Talking to herself, her own desperate support network...

JULIANNE
(softly)
You can do this.

Sacred, filled with doubt and conflict. Her hands clutch at each other. Then, one flicks out. And the computer goes ON. The screen GLOWS. Waits for her. Her mouth is sand, her stomach water. She pulls the paper from her pocket...

... looks at it. Looks to the monitor. And begins. To type...

JULIANNE
(mumbling to herself)
E-mail address. To Ben Isaacson,
Senior Editor, Sports Illustrated,
from... Walter Wallace.

And stops. Her heart is thumping.

JULIANNE
See, you can do it. It's easy.

Doesn't look easy. Licks her lips.

JULIANNE
You do it fast, it's over. Like
it never happened.

She sits. And recites as she types...

JULIANNE
Ben. I need a favor.

Here we go. This is it. Types...

JULIANNE
My daughter's every happiness.

And my wife's. And, least of all, my own, are in your hands.

Nods, okay. Breathing hard. Types...

JULIANNE
Knowing you value our friendship, and the... cooperative relationship between our companies... I am hopeful of your help.

Touch, that. Thinks. It has to be. Types...

JULIANNE
I have offered Mike O'Neal, my new son-in-law, a great opportunity in my company. This would also enable my daughter to settle in Chicago, near us, and pursue her dreams and plans.

Almost there. Almost. Types...

JULIANNE
To his own detriment, as well as ours, Michael will not accept our offer. While he works for you.

She stands up. Stares at the screen. Walks away. Walks back. Still standing, types...

JULIANNE
My daughter joins me in this plea for your cooperation and discretion.

Is there a SOUND? Outside the door. She HOVERS over the ESCAPE key. Waits. Waits. Silence. Types...

JULIANNE
With gratitude. For your understanding. Walter.

She hits a KEY. The screen goes BLANK. The computer asks... DO YOU WISH TO SEND? She tells the computer...

JULIANNE
Are you crazy? Get him fired?

Types NO. The computer asks HOLD FOR LATER? And she types YES.

JULIANNE
Just till tonight when I bring him back. To look for...

She glances to her huge bag. Rummages through, pulling out a manila folder. Lays it by the blank computer. Fans out a few pages in a

natural, disorderly way. Takes a step back...

And stares. Struck to her gut. But when she has done.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Walter alone with Deidre now, signing a stack of documents, as she efficiently places one after another before him. When he glances up, he sees Julianne wandering the halls. Stands, tells his secretary...

WALTER
(going through stack)
Off to rehearsal. Send out this, and this, not this, this, and... that's it.

Slips on his coat. Oh... and by the way...

WALTER
I'm holding four or five E-mails I wrote over lunch...

On his way through the door...

WALTER
Send 'em out.

INT. CHAPEL, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - DAY

Julianne and Walter enter the rear of a striking Gothic CHAPEL, pastel light slanting in through stained glass windows. We now see the full effect of her outfit, a man's-style chalk stripe SUIT, tailored to fit her body, set off by a bold silk tie. Solid dynamite. She hangs back, while Walter proceeds down the vaulted nave toward...

... Michael, Kimmy, Isabelle and Joe, who stand casually joking by the altar. Scattered around are assorted groomsmen, ushers, an obvious flowergirl. Coming toward us, up the aisle...

... the MINISTER, early 40s, lean and quite attractive. Mandy is HANGING on his arm, pressing her body against him as they walk, murmuring urgent murmurs close to his ear. He's a really good sport, and really uncomfortable. Sammy is walking backwards, right in front of them, DROPS her bag, and BENDS to retrieve it, as if oblivious to major cleavage on immediate display.

Julianne is so lost in her own anxiety, she doesn't even notice, until...

MANDY
Reverend Dyer, this is Kimberly's somewhat butch maid of honor...

SAMMY
... Mr. Julianne Potter,

prominent New York drag queen.

Today, the girls' voices are charmingly musically Southern, with none of the extreme accents we heard at the shower. The minister extends his hand...

MINISTER
Billy Dyer, Julianne. And I love the suit.

She shakes his hand, smiles graciously, but her eyes flick to Michael, now approaching up the aisle. The girls lead the minister away. Michael arrives. Looks her up and down.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Takes me back.

JULIANNE
Well.

She smiles. One that glows a little.

JULIANNE
You sang the song. Least I could do was wear the outfit.

He nods.

MICHAEL
Except now you're better-looking.

Oh, yeah? Yes, ma'am. As she loses herself in his eyes...

MICHAEL
I got the ring.

He pulls the box from his pocket. Somewhere, an ORGAN sounds. And as he is about to hand her the box...

MANDY/SAMMY
(sing)
Swi-i-ng low-ow-ow...
Wee-ee-eet Char-i-ot...

Such exquisite two-part harmony, Michael stops to watch.

MANDY/SAMMY
(sing)
Comin', to car-ryyy
Me ho-o-o-me...

It is amazing. Soulful vengeful sluts. He is enthralled. Julianne simply impatient. She wants his attention.

JULIANNE

No accents today.

MICHAEL
Yeah, Kim told me they were giving you their Dueling Scarlet's act. Actually, they're sophomores at Juilliard.

She takes the box from his hand. Opens it, as the singing CONTINUES throughout. The ring is delicate hammered gold. One of a kind.

MICHAEL
Will she like it?

JULIANNE
(whisper)
Yes.

She's staring at the ring.

KIMMY (O.S.)
My groom-person! Your family needs you!

His master's voice. He gives Julianne a smile. And goes. She's left with the box.

Gazes at the ring. Lifts it out.

MANDY/SAMMY
(O.S., singing)
Well, I look over yon-der,
And what did I see-ee-ee?

Slips it on her left hand. Ring finger.

MANDY/SAMMY
(O.S., singing)
Comin too car-ryyy.
Me ho-o-ome...

Touches it. Turns it on her finger. So many emotions.

MANDY/SAMMY
(O.S., singing)
It was a hand. Of a-a-angels.
Coming' for me-e-ee...

Tries to pull it off.

MANDY/SAMMY
(O.S., singing)
Comin' for to carry me home.

It won't come. Not even close.

INT. CRAB HOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE on a bowl filled with squares of butter. HEAR the butt of conversation from a rowdy, friendly joint. Julianne's right hand REACHES to the bowl, fingers trace the rim innocently, then...

... SLIDE the bowl into Julianne's lap beneath the table. Her right hand MASSAGES all the butter into a gooey revolving mess. We can pick out familiar voices now, family in distance, the twins closer. As, hidden from view, Julianne brings...

... her left hand from her pocket. Yep. The ring is still there. The finger already red and swollen from pacicky efforts to pull it off. And as APPLAUSE surrounds us, Julianne...

PLUNGES her ring finger into the morass of grease, frantically TEARING at the ring, butter SPLURGING on her pants, everywhere, as we PULL BACK to see...

... the long table covered with butcher paper, the family at the far end, the twins down here with us, a mug of beer for each place, as team of waiters with heaping platters of CRABS, which they...

... FLING across the butcher paper, as APPLAUSE continues from everyone but Julianne, who still struggles secretly. As the waiters set huge wooden MALLETS in front of each guest, Joe O'Neal rises, POUNDS the table with his mallet for attention.

JOE
Like to welcome ever'body to
our little rehearsal supper...

He COUGHS, unaccustomed to public speaking. Walter and Isabelle clap and call out support. So Joe lifts his mallet...

JOE
Okay, everyone stand up!

And everyone does. With one exception. Trapped. She JAMS her left hand in her coat pocket, SMEARS her right palm sort of clean on the underside of the table, GRABS her mallet and JUMPS UP.

JOE
To the bride, uh, goes the
honor... of cracking the first
crab!

Everyone applauses by banging their mallets. Joe RAISES his high. Everybody imitates.

KIMMY
But first, a toast!

And everybody SNATCHES up their beers with their left hands, as Julianne DROPS her mallet with a HORRIFIC CRASH, grabbing her beer, looking up to...

JULIANNE

(on the spot)
I'm right-handed.

A hugely embarrassing half-second. Bailed out by...

KIMMY
To our host, my cuddly Papa Joe.

All turns.

KIMMY
Who taught me to play "Blue Hawaii." On my nose.

With a look at Julianne, Kim sets down her mallet gently, and performs a nasal HUM of the tropical standard, strikingly her nostril repeatedly for vibrato. It is charming, and everybody watches.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - LATER

CLOSE on an actual, living, if geriatric, LION. He blinks from his cage, bored as hell. HEAR the surrounding noise, chatter, LOUD Sinatra music, of a very large party. PULL BACK to see...

... and overdecorated BALLROOM, in dim and dramatic lighting, dripping with the trappings of ANCIENT ROME. The mingling guests are the neatly one hundred females of the wedding party, most of them older women. They are served by wandering well-built ATHLETES in Roman togas or gladiator costumes. PAN TO...

... Julianne, still in her suit, hiding by a table piled with a carload of grapes. Her left hand still buried in her pocket. The eyes of a hunted animal. From nowhere...

MANDY/SAMMY (O.S.)
Boo!!!

She JUMPS a foot, both hands FLYING UP, left one awkwardly slamming back into its pocket. The girls have snuck up behind her. They have changed into hot gowns that are really only wide ribbons wrapped around their bodies.

MANDY
I know why you're scared of our party. It's too hip.

Sinatra singing "Stranger In The Night." Hugely-muscled, half-naked black and white studs, serving enchanted blue-haired ladies.

SAMMY
Kimberly wanted to tickle the grandmas, so we figured, give 'em a cheap thrill. Walter supplied the decorative touches...

SAMMY
(points out the jokes)
Nose tackle from the Bears... power forward from the Bulls... defenseman from the Black Hawks... my personal favorite, the designated hitter...

MANDY
... I'm partial to the tight end.

SAMMY
This is USDA Prime, largely available, beef. With no notice-able competition, present company excepted...

Now they stare at her. With identical, really odd, smiles.

SAMMY
And yet here you are. All celibate and reclusive.

MANDY
With those big, dark, haunted eyes. As if you were harborin' some... unspeakably... guilty... secret.

Oh.

JULIANNE
Well, I'm worried about something.

Something. Their expressions are deliciously, identically expectant.

JULIANNE
Oh. I left this really important file in Walter's office. I have to send my editor some...

Some...

JULIANNE
... figures. On territorial sales. To close my book deal.

Uh-huh...

JULIANNE
So Kim gave me the key. And Michael's on his way, to drive me down to Wal...

SAMMY
Oh. We thought it was the ring.

Julianne blinks. Ring...?

MANDY
The one you better get the fuck off your third finger left hand.

Ah. That ring.

JULIANNE
Well. See. That was a... reflex to see if it would...

MANDY
(helpful)
... look good on Kimberly.

JULIANNE
Right. And then it didn't want to come off. Exactly.

SAMMY
Maybe it's happy there.

MANDY
Oh the way out of the crab house? We asked Michael if we could see the ring?

SAMMY
He said you told him. It'd be safer with you.

MANDY
An so it is.

Julianne for once is speechless. To our amazement, the girls wear identical smiles of kindness and support.

MANDY
Shut up, sugar, he's on his way. Let's get to work.

INT. HOTEL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Huge gleaming chaotic kitchen. Cooks, waiters, working at top speed. The three women RACE in, look around frantically, half the guys stop to ogle the twins. CUT TO...

ANGLES... and industrial-sized jar of peanut butter. Julianne's hand PLUNGES in, halfway to the rolled-up sleeve at her elbow. SMOOCHES it around, real good. PULL BACK to reveal...

... she is surrounded by the twins and six guys, all SHOUTING conflicting instructions. Julianne FLINGS off the excess SLOP. Tugs for all she's worth...

TWIST IT! TWIST IT!

Nada. It won't budge. A sous chef WIPES her hand with a towel, a janitor CRASHES a tool kit onto the counter. THROWS it open, pulls out...

... a spray can of WD-40. Instantly, her hand is BLACK. The guy TUGS.

No movement. He can't believe it.

JANITOR
It's mental, lady, you ain't trying!

Sammy is rummaging through her handbag, pulling out...

SAMMY
There is nothing so tight, this can't help it...

... a tube of jelly. The letter K-Y. Julianne just gives her a look. Mandy pushes through with a butcher's CLEAVER...

MANDY
I saw this on Hard Copy. People cut off body parts and the hospital sew 'em back o...

The look has turned toward her.

JULIANNE
(cold)
I saw the show.

MANDY
... well, maybe it works on fingers, too.

FLOWER GIRL (O.S.)
Aunt Mandy...?

Everybody turns. The little girl in the doorway. Southern accent...

FLOWER GIRL
Mr. Michael's here.

Everything gets real quiet. Mandy takes charge. She rolls down Julianne's left sleeve, RIPS the hem out of the cuff, so that it flaps down over her hand, covering the ring. Sammy wipes the black stuff from Julianne's fingers.

MANDY
Don't worry, baby. You could pick your nose with that finger and Michael would never notice. He's a man.

The twins lead her off. We're on their backs for...

MANDY (O.S.)
Personally, I think Mr. Michael's marrying the wrong girl.

SAMMY (O.S.)
You're much more his type.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

VIEW through a heavy glass door of the empty, dimly-lit lobby. PULL BACK to see Julianne, just as she...

... KICKS the shit out of the glass! Almost breaks her foot.

JULIANNE
I can't believe this!

PULL BACK farther to see Michael still trying keys from a large key ring in the heavy lock. Sign over the door says WALLACE ENTERPRISES. Traffic hustles by, oblivious to her suffering.

MICHAEL
It's no big deal, she just gave you the wrong keys that's s...

JULIANNE
ISN'T THERE A GUARD? A JANITOR? A FUCKING CLEANING WOMAN? I'LL TAKE A BURGLAR! SOMEBODY'S GOTTA BE IN TH...

And she SLAMS her whole BODY against the glass, making it rattle ominously.

JULIANNE
WHERE'S A BRICK? FIND ME A GODDAMN BRICK!!

She looks around wildly, hysterical.

MICHAEL
What is the big deal about getting this file tonight?

A good question. She needs a good answer.

JULIANNE
I promised Digger I'd E-mail him those figures.

From his face, that wasn't it.

JULIANNE
They are very important figures.

Apparently. He's just staring at her.

JULIANNE
I'm up against a deadline.

MICHAEL
Me, too. I'm getting married tomorrow.

JULIANNE
That's my point!!

Now. He really doesn't get it.

JULIANNE
I mean, tomorrow... we'll all be busy with more important things. So...

So?

JULIANNE
... tonight's my last chance.

He sighs.

MICHAEL
I forgot how cute you look. When you get impossible.

JULIANNE
It's just... up there... right in front of Walter's... y'know, computer. If memory serves.

Helpless.

JULIANNE
We could use... his computer, to... just E-mail those suckers right ou...

MICHAEL
Tomorrow is Sunday. Nobody's doing business. Crack of dawn, Monday, Walter'll take you up there...

Her eyes fill with tears. He is mystified. Smiles tenderly.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Give it up, kid.

Touches her hair.

MICHAEL
You can't win 'em all.

And slowly, he takes her hand. Leads her way. She takes one backward glance at the locked door. Her last dream dies.

INT. LOBBY, RITZ CARLTON - NIGHT

Michael and a disconsolate Julianne board the elevator. He presses 15, she pushes 11. Michael carries a handful of messages slips and an envelope. As the car starts up, she folds her arms across her chest, at the edge of tears. He doesn't know what to do.

MICHAEL
(gently)
Listen up, huh? Even if you blow this deal, how big could it be?

JULIANNE
(voice nearly cracking)
You're right. Easy come, easy go.

He's really concerned, can't bear to see her so upset.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Jules?

She won't look at him. She wants to die. The bell RINGS, the doors open to her floor. She just walks out.

And he follows. They stand now, she with her arms crossed, lip trembling. She can't believe how close she is to losing it.

MICHAEL
This thing means that much to y...

JULIANNE
It means a lot.

He nods. Okay.

MICHAEL
I'll call the house, Walter's probably not even asleep...

Her mouth drops. She can't believe this.

MICHAEL
I'll drive you out there, we'll get the key, we'll go back to the office...

She THROWS her arms around his, HUGGING him so hard, so close. He laughs, she is so weird. She pulls back, beaming, glowing.

MICHAEL
Come on, we'll call from your room.

She claps his hand. As they head down the hall...

MICHAEL
If I fall asleep on the altar tomorrow...

He's trying to flip through the message slips in his free hand...

MICHAEL
... you better be there to... funny, these are all from Ben.

She's at her door, turning the key. He looks at the envelope.

MICHAEL
The fax is from Ben, too. Man, it's my wedding, and my boss can't leave me alone...

JULIANNE
(entering her room)
... maybe it's congratulations.

He follows her in, opening the envelope. Stops. Reads. And his face suddenly... freezes. To stone.

JULIANNE
(turning to him)
Michael? What ha...

MICHAEL
(reading)
Mike. I can't believe I'm doing this to you on the night before your wedding. But I think you need and deserve to know...

And he looks up to her.

MICHAEL
... what you're marrying into.

He hands it toward her. She takes it, hesitantly, and he walks past. Toward the phone.

JULIANNE
(reading)
I received the following E-mail this afternoon... "Ben, I need a favor. My daughter's every happiness... "

Her eyes BUG OUT of her head. Holy shit! We can hear him DIALING the phone. She keeps reading, it's all there. How did this happen?

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Isabelle? I need to talk to Kim...

JULIANNE
(reading)
"Mike, the funny thing is, he's offering you a gig you'd be stupid to turn down..."

MICHAEL (O.S.)
I'm just tired. Please put her on? Thanks.

JULIANNE
(reading)
"Maybe you should take the job. And dump the girl."

And when she turns...

MICHAEL
Jules. Could you give me a minute?

He looks more sick than angry. As if the heart has just been cut out of him. She doesn't know what to say or do, so she just stands, staring dumbly.

MICHAEL
Please?

She nods, stumbles out of her room, closing the door behind her. Now she's in the empty corridor, clutching her big jumbled bag, sinking down to sit on the carpet, her back against the door.

She doesn't look elated. She seems frightened, distraught, and most of all, confused. Because she can't understand why. She digs absently through her bag. Cigarettes. Box of matches.

She lights up. Draws deeply. Somehow, she seems near tears, and laughs bitterly at that. Shakes her head at how fucked-up she finds herself. Squeaking wheels approach, but she is too lost to hear them.

BELLMAN
Miss, are you locked out, or something?

She looks up. A small, wiry man of nearly 60, in a slightly faded but neatly-kept uniform. On his cart, a ton of bags.

JULIANNE
No, I just stepped out, because... it's a non-smoking room.

And inhales deeply. Leans back against the door, to look up at him more comfortably.

BELLMAN
(politely)
Well, it's non-smoking floor, too. Maybe you could go to the...

JULIANNE
(seriously)
Why don't you have me arrested?

That wasn't sarcastic. He doesn't know what to say.

JULIANNE
I mean that. Arrested, convicted, put in solitary.

Another puff.

JULIANNE
See, I'm a dangerous, criminal person. I do bad things to honest people. This, see, this smoking? Tip of the iceberg.

Waves her hand.

JULIANNE
Make a citizen's arrest, I won't struggle. It'll be like getting Al Capone on tax evasion.

Now she seems angry. But not at him. Her eyes fill with tears.

BELLMAN
Can I... Can I help you, miss?

She squints at his nameplate.

JULIANNE
Do you smoke, Richard?

BELLMAN
Yes, ma'am, I do, but it's...

JULIANNE
... a non-smoking floor, yeah. Well, you know what?

And she takes the cigarette from her lips. Turns it around, holds it out to him. Go ahead. He doesn't move. Please! And so...

... he reaches down, takes the cigarette from her hand. Staring in her eyes, he takes a deep drag. Savors an expert nostril-inhale of his exhaled smoke. Hands the cigarette back to her...

BELLMAN
My grandmother always said, "This, too, shall pass."

She swallows. Wipes at her eyes. Finds a smile.

JULIANNE
Thanks, Richard. If you weren't on duty, I'd buy you a drink.

He just nods. She waves. He waves back, pushes his cart down the hall. As she watches him go, the door behind her suddenly OPENS, and she...

... FALLS through it, flat on her back at Michael's feet. Staring up at him, seeing that he looks as bad as she feels, she takes raw, deep drag.

JULIANNE
What happened?

MICHAEL
(softly)
It's over.

And crouches down. Close beside her. The cigarette drops from her hand, unnoticed on the carpet. So he lifts it, crushes it on the heel of his shoe.

MICHAEL
I want you to quit this shit, it'll kill you.

She just nods, obediently. Okay, I will.

MICHAEL
She denied it. Said I was crazy and paranoid.

JULIANNE
A bad combination.

He tries to smile. It's really hard.

MICHAEL
There's this big brunch tomorrow morning? At her place.

He lets the air out. Slow. So he won't cry.

MICHAEL
She said "How can I call everything off, what do I tell everybody?"

Shakes his head. Can you imagine that?

JULIANNE
Michael...

MICHAEL

No, it's for the best, it really is. We were so wrong for each other.

JULIANNE
Maybe tomorrow, you'll feel dif...

MICHAEL
The job thing would have broken us up, eventually, anyway. She couldn't have lived with it. I know that now.

Julianne nods. Maybe that part is right. Maybe it would have ended anyway. Maybe she can pretend she's not a monster.

MICHAEL
And she's right, I'm crazy to fall for someone. I hardly knew.

Looks deep in her eyes. He's so glad she's there.

MICHAEL
Hey. You still got that ring?

She holds up her left hand, the flapping sleeve falls away. The ring is on a finger that is swollen and raw.

JULIANNE
I tried it on. But it won't come off.

He smiles at that. A sad smile of friendship. Then takes her finger gently...

... into his mouth. It is something like a kiss. And when he removes her moistened finger...

... he pulls the ring OFF. Nothing to it. She blinks.

JULIANNE
It's mental, you know.

He doesn't understand that.

JULIANNE
Should we take a walk? Or maybe some food sent up, or something...

MICHAEL
I just want to be alone. Is that okay?

She nods, sure. He kisses her cheek. Stands up.

MICHAEL
Maybe I'll go back to New York. Hang with you for awhile, huh? Ben'll understand.

She nods again. Whatever you say. He steps into the open doorway...

MICHAEL
Or we'll go somewhere. If you have the time.

JULIANNE
If San Antonio sweeps Sacramento...

They smiles at each other. For real.

JULIANNE
I've never been to Texas.

Imagine that. The look holds. Just above a whisper...

MICHAEL
Thanks for coming to my wedding.

And then he's gone.

IN.JULIANNE'S BATHROOM - LATE NIGHT

Julianne brushing out her hair in the bathroom mirror, eyeing her image with evident dissatisfaction, as she listens to the receiver RINGING.

DIGGER (V.O. MACHINE)
Digger and George are with family in the Hamptons until Monday morning. Brevity is even more in order than usual.

BEEP.

JULIANNE
Hey, handsome. Brevity this...

Her eyes find the pack of cigarettes. Next to her toiletries kit.

JULIANNE
(softly)
I won.

Her fingers touch the pack. As if an object of significance. Takes it up.

JULIANNE
Amazing, huh? I didn't do things quite your way. But... I got it down.

Cradling the phone against her shoulder, she carefully tears the top of the pack completely open.

JULIANNE
And forty years and nine grand-children later, when I sit with Michael on some rustic porch, slogging through our sweet swamp of nostalgic memories...

Reaches the pack toward the toilet.

JULIANNE
No one is going to sweet the details...

Turns it upside down, emptying a dozen cigarettes into the john.

JULIANNE
Of one weekend in Chicago.

Drops the lid with a CLATTER. Hits the FLUSH.

JULIANNE
Talk about celebration...

She lifts a tube from her toiletries kit. Stares at it, real close.

JULIANNE
I'm gonna brush my teeth with actual toothpaste.

Turns it over, reads all the writing. Yep.

JULIANNE
I guess I'm too exhausted to feel the elation I so richly undeserve...

Squeezes some paste onto her brush. Carefully.

JULIANNE
So I'm gonna hold calls at the desk... while I get my...

Start brushing.

JULIANNE
(around, her mouthful)
God, it is toothpaste, they should sell this stuff commercially! Anyway, a girl does need her...

Squints at her image. Laughs, spewing a little foam.

JULIANNE
... well, we're a bit past worrying about beauty sleep. Let's just settle for not frightening small animals.

She SPITS. Tells Digger's machine...

JULIANNE
Anyway, I couldn't have done it without you. Even though I did, if you follow that.

Wipes her mouth. Stares off. The eyes a little dreamy.

JULIANNE
Three words: Happily. Ever. Well, you know.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Julianne sprawled all over the bed, mouth open like a carp, sleeping mask against the daylight. A sudden RAPPING at the door, and she...

... sits BOLT UPRIGHT. Utterly disoriented, until she pulls off the mask. Stumbles out of bed, walking toward the firm KNOCKING, when...

... it stops. A message slip SLIDES beneath her door. She lifts it, barely conscious. This wakes her up. In one.

JULIANNE
(to the slip)
You're going where?

EXT. WALLACE ESTATE - DAY

Julianne climbs from her taxi. Only slightly in awe, she sets off past the reflecting pool, which fronts a mansion of graceful stone and timber. It's a hike today, because the circular drives is clogged deep with Bentleys, Mercedes, and waiting limos, vying for space with a score of delivery vehicles of all kinds, maintenance trucks, catering and florist and food vans.

INT. GREAT ROOM - DAY

Julianne escorted into an enormous room, where brunch is in progress for more than a hundred. She looks from the vaulted ceilings, to the frescoed walls, the inlaid floors, the massive pipe organ above the stone staircase, the oil portraits of Scottish ancestors and their favorite dogs.

Isabelle has risen from the main table, and comes to her. All

smiles. Julianne is in the Twilight Zone. What are these people laughing about? Do they still think there's a wedding?

ISABELLE
Jules. We're so glad you slept in.

Takes her arm graciously. This woman would make Anne Bancroft look coarse. As they walk...

ISABELLE
Now, you have a choice. The idea is bride and groom shouldn't see each other on the magic day...

Julianne looking all around. Magic day it seems to be. Where the bell is a bride or a groom?

ISABELLE
So Michael stays put in the garden. Kimmy stays in here...

Pointing. THERE she is, obscured by a cluster of the appropriately fawning. She has the same hunted eyes and false, slightly manic smile Julianne wore yesterday. This, at least, makes sense.

ISABELLE (O.S.)
... and the guests go back and forth. Where will you start?

CLOSE on Julianne. Watching the brave, frightened bride.

JULIANNE
She looks tense.

ISABELLE
(O.S., calmly)
Nerves. I would never have guessed.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - DAAY

A steward leads Julianne to the edge of an expansive rose garden, altogether elegant and comfortable with its long white picnic tables, where nearly a hundred guests casually dine, served by rolling carts.

There, at the head table, Michael staring at us. He looks like a poor attempt to cover a hard night. She locks onto his eyes. What the hell is going on? He looks helpless, miserable. She gestures with her head, follow me. Stalks off.

EXT. SCULPTURE GARDEN - DAY

Bronze abstract pieces, some quite large, face a huge set of children's swings, regulation playground size. Julianne sits in one, moving slightly back and forth. Trying to hold on to her

temper and her sanity.

In the distance, trucks are winding their way to and from the pond, where crews are setting up tents, lights, heaters for tonight. The circus has come to town. When she looks back...

Michael approaches. Before he can draw a breath...

JULIANNE
I had the craziest dream last night? Walter and Kimmy had asked your boss to...

MICHAEL
Look, I came down here to face everybody. I didn't want to slink away like some coward...

JULIANNE
But the Scotch salmon was so fucking good, you decided to stay for brunch!

MICHAEL
She hasn't told anybody, what am I supposed to do?

JULIANNE
Get married, apparently.

She comes OFF the swing, PUSHES him back two feet.

JULIANNE
What the hell are you thinking of, the goddamn wedding is SIX O'CLOCK!!

He swallows hard. Trapped.

MICHAEL
This is her family and her fault.

JULIANNE
And your point?

MICHAEL
(ten years old)
Well. How come she didn't...

JULIANNE
BECAUSE SHE'S AS CHICKENSHIT AS YOU ARE, YOU MORONS ARE MADE FOR EACH OTHER.

He just blinks.

MICHAEL
Hey. This is a serious matter.

Thank you. She POKES his chest, punctuating...

JULIANNE
I'll be right back.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A modern take on the Medieval castle kitchen, towering ceilings, dark wood, copper pots hanging, a series of walk-in coolers and freezers. The place is a madhouse of activity, as prep cooks slice, chop, sort, every kind of food imaginable, and delivery teams bring more.

The girls walk through. Alone together in the eye of the hurricane. Kim choked with excess sentiment...

KIMMY
Look at all this beautiful food, so lovingly prepared...

JULIANNE
They'll eat it anyway, you ever been to a walk?

Kimmy's lip trembles. This is not how she thought of her wedding. The din is so horrific, Kimmy leads them into a walk-in meat locker. Even here, two BUTCHERS are dressing Eastern-fresh corn-fed carcasses.

JULIANNE
You guys want to give us a minute?

The men blink at each other.

JULIANNE
We'd like to be alone with our pork.

On that basis. They leave. Kimmy sits on a stack of packaged frozen fowl parts. Stares up with big, sweet, wet eyes.

KIMMY
How's he doing?

Julianne cannot believe this.

JULIANNE
Who? The jerk who's running your life?

KIMMY
This must be... very, very, hard on him.

JULIANNE
What with the psychosis and all, yeah.

Leans in. Listen...

JULIANNE
When are you gonna come clean with your folks?

KIMMY
Don't you see...

JULIANNE
If you're waiting for "Do you take this man?", that's considered poor form.

KIMMY
... that this is all my fault?

Stops Julianne cold. Your fault.

KIMMY
Whatever delusions I drove him to, there is truth at the heart of it. I want him to work for my father. I want to stay in school. I want a life of my own!

Harder and harder for Julianne to push. Her mouth is dry.

JULIANNE
Yeah, well, lots of couples are imcompat...

KIMMY
I love him.

Fragile and strong at once. A plea.

KIMMY
Tell him it's my fault and that I love him.

A long beat.

JULIANNE
I'll be right back.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - DAY

The court has become a giant holding pen for tonight's BALLOONS. There are maybe a billion in assorted colors already blowing in all directions, under clear plastic sheeting which has ben spread across the top of the court's chain-link fence.

Michael stands outside the court, clutching the chain link like a prisoner, as Julianne comes through the gate. From somewhere, we hear high, squeaky, alien voice-like SOUNDS. Incongruous against...

MICHAEL
How is she?

Julianne absorbs this. As the bizarre SOUNDS continue, she WHIRLS around...

JULIANNE
KNOCK IT OFF!!!

We now see three STONER COLLEGE GUYS, who have been filling the endless array of balloons from helium tanks at center court. Clearly, they've been inhaling their working materials.

STONER KID
(Minnie Mouse)
YES, SIR!

A Nazi salute. When she turns back...

MICHAEL
I asked you...

JULIANNE
She admits it's her fault.

He absorbs that. And then...

MICHAEL
Do you think she still loves me?

We watch the struggle inside her. Her voice drops...

JULIANNE
Sure, she does. She's crazy about you.

Now tears stand in both their eyes. The stoners are doing their Alvin and the Chipmuks impersonation festival in the B.G., singing in castrato harmony. But our two don't notice.

MICHAEL
I keep asking, how can I explain what happened? And I keep getting that same answer all night long.

Which is...

MICHAEL
I can't. And it doesn't matter.

I drove her to it, because I want things my way. And even if she did something tricky and unfair... she was blinded by love, okay?

Julianne swallows. For obvious reasons.

JULIANNE
Does that make it right...

MICHAEL
Love doesn't have to be right. It just has to be love.

The stoner are now helium-crooning "Bridge Over Troubled Waters." Actually, they're getting better.

MICHAEL
She's giving up half her life for me, and I'm bitching because it hurts her.

STONERS
(singing)
Sail on silver girl
Sail on by...

MICHAEL
She's a saint! And I'm a worthless ingrate!

STONERS
(singing)
Your time has come to shine,
All your dreams are on their way...

MICHAEL
Tell her. I'll marry her at six o'clock, if she'll still have me.

The stoners blend on the high note. It's pretty moving.

JULIANNE
I'll be right back.

INT. ORGAN LOFT - DAY

PAN along a gigantic serpentine stack of wedding presents. Nearly twelve feet high, the pile curves along the balcony, high above the diners in the Great Room, extending al the way to...

... an organ loft. Alone, above the noise of the party, Julianne and Kimmy have just reached the top of the staircase. Trapped between ten tons of lavish gifts and the keyboard of the mammoth organ. Dwarfed by their surroundings, Kimmy draws the hardest breath of her life...

KIMMY
(whispers)
So. What did he say?

Julianne's eyes move over the young girl's face.

JULIANNE
He said. Marry me.

Kimmy YELPS in her ecstasy, FLINGING herself against Julianne, and they go DOWN full length across the organ's pedals, BLASTING the room with a MONSTER CHORD of china-rattling volume and horrifying disharmony.

As grown men and women SCREAM in spontaneous terror below, Kimmy begins to...

... LAUGH. And KISS and hug her new sister. And holds her tight.

EXT. WILLOW POND - DAY

Julianne and Michael walk the gravel path beside a breathtaking POND, ringed with WILLOWS that dig heavy branches to the water's surface. He is relieved, reflective. Head down, he never notices that she is...

... dangerously freaked. Too petrified even to hyperventilate, we're lucky she's breathing at all. We watch her life unraveling before her glassy eyes.

MICHAEL
(never looks up)
Thank God you were here.

JULIANNE
(mumbles to herself)
Oh, yeah.

MICHAEL
I was so confused, so conflicted,
so... unstable.

JULIANNE
Well, it happens.

They pass an expanse of lawn which has become the event parking area. Family vehicles, delivery trucks, service vans. Everything that couldn't fit on the circular front driveway.

MICHAEL
I might have thrown away...

Searching for the right words.

JULIANNE
... your one chance for true

happiness?

MICHAEL
... yeah, that.

JULIANNE
You never want to do that, see, that's always a... costly turnover. As they say in the sport biz.

There's a vague Stepford Wife quality to her voice. He hears that now, and looks at her. Maybe he can't tell she's frightened. But he can tell she's something.

MICHAEL
(softly)
Are you okay?

She stops walking. She can't look at him, so she looks around. Across the lawn crews are moving equipment into the brightly-colored tents, unfolding and setting up stacks of tables and chairs, raising the poles between which all those balloons will be strung. At the center of it all...

.... a huge topiary White Sox batter, just completing a murderous swing. He's maybe fifteen feet tall. She points to it...

JULIANNE
The Big Hurt, huh?

MICHAEL
Nellie Fox. Walter likes the past. And he likes the little guys.

So Julianne nods. Because she does too. Squints up at Michael.

JULIANNE
Got a minute?

He nods, you bet. Worried for her. What is this? She looks in another direction, and we now see that we have nearly reached...

... a stage that's been set up for the band. Chairs, music stands, sound equipment. A gleaming dance floor, already in place over the lawn. Next to it, a shimmering white GAZEBO. Like the centerpiece of a wedding cake.

JULIANNE
Why is the dance floor by the gazebo?

She takes his hand. They walk toward it.

MICHAEL
Kimmy's idea. She thought it

would be such a romantic place.
For our wedding dance.

Looking down at her.

MICHAEL
What's up?

JULIANNE
Shhh.

Up the white steps now. Together. The gazebo floor has been covered with hardwood. The perfect place. For a wedding dance. And Julianne...

... turns, suddenly. He almost runs into her. She is staring up at him, so strangely, their bodies only inches apart. He is caught, transfixed by the intensity in her eyes.

JULIANNE
I have to say this quick, okay, or I'll have this massive coronary and you'll never have to hear it. Which you need to. Does that make any sense at all?

The coronary part does. We can feel her heart beating from here.

MICHAEL
Jules, what's wrong...

JULIANNE
This is the dumbest thing I will ever do. So dumb, in fact, that I can't. I don't think.

And then, she does. She puts her hands flat on his chest. Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE
Michael, I love you.

A heartbeat passes.

JULIANNE
I've loved you for nine years, but I was too arrogant and scared to realize it. Now I'm just scared.

He stares at her, dumbstruck. She moves even closer.

JULIANNE
I know this comes at an inopportune time, but I have to ask this one really gigantic favor, okay?

Holds her breath. And...

JULIANNE
Choose me. Marry me. Let me make you happy.

And in a half beat of excruciating silence...

JULIANNE
I know. It sounds like three favors.

His eyes are loving. They care for her. She swallows, lost in them.

JULIANNE
But when you think about it...

Slides her arms around his neck, and raises her mouth...

... to his. The most beautiful kiss she will ever offer. All of her heart is in this, and as his hands touch her body...

... a SCREAM rips the world to pieces. They whirl to see...

... KIMMY, halfway up the path. Her hands across her mouth, as if to stem the horror that pours forth as she SHRIEKS from her soul, and...

... runs. Back Down the path. Michael BOLTING after her, SHOUTING her name. A frozen moment, and...

... Julianne TAKES OFF after him. All three running, SCREAMING their various emotions at the top of their lungs, as workmen stop to watch from neighboring countries.

Kimmy, staring from halfway there, has an insurmountable lead. LEAPS into her convertible and PEELS OUT, just TEARING up the gravel as she ROCKETS out of sight. No way to catch her. Still...

... Michael is racing for the cars. Julianne, sprinting her guts out, losing ground with every stride. Michael JUMPS into a Cherokee...

JULIANNE
MICHAEL, DON'T, YOU'LL NEVER CATCH HER!!

He GRINDS the gears. She keeps RUNNING. His engine FIRES.

JULIANNE
SHE HAS TOO BIG A LEAD AND SHE DRIVES LIKE A RABID ANIMAL!!!

He BLASTS OFF. She keeps going. Gasping for air, clutching her side, she's dying here. Slams into a florist's truck, looks inside, shit!

Next, a butcher's van, looks inside, Jesus!

JULIANNE
(to the world at large)
DOESN'T ANYBODY LEAVE KEYS ANYMORE? WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TRUST??

Up ahead, Michael has STALLED the Cherokee. She still has a chance, DASHES to the next van. BORNSTEIN EXTERMINATION, a handsome rendering of a rat above the TOXIC MATERIALS warning FLINGS the door open. Stumbles in. Keys!

JULIANNE (O.S.)
THANK GOD, A SAMARITAN!!

Michael SPEEDS away. She KICKS the ratmobile in gear.

LURCHES off.

INT. RATMOBILE, DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - DAY

Julianne tearing through traffic, desperately struggling to keep Michael's Cherokee in view, while she shrieks into her cellular...

JULIANNE
IT IS NOT GOING WELL!

Down the block, Michael WHIPS around a corner. We follow suit to see his destination dead ahead. Union Station. The DISPATCHER RADIO intrudes...

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
Uh, Unit Four Baker Charlie, how we cookin' on that Skokiie infestation?

Now she's steering the car, tearing at the radio controls, and screaming into the phone cradled on her shoulder...

JULIANNE
THIS IS WHAT COMES OF TELLING THE TRUTH!

FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Copy, dispatcher...

JULIANNE
OR EVEN PART OF IT!

FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Uh, what happens if you got that methyl-ethyl shit on your hands?

Michael RIPS into the train station's parking lot. We SWERVE around a taxi, CUT OFF Harley, CAREEN into the lot...

JULIANNE
GETTING WHAT YOU DESERVE IS
NOT FAIR!

DISPATCHER (O.S.)
Uh, you got maybe thirty seconds
before you're sterile. For God's
sake don't touch yourself, or
anything.

Up ahead, Michael is OUT of his jeep and running.

JULIANNE
AND I HATE TALKING TO YOUR
MACHINE!

She SLAMS on the brakes, THROWING herself against the wheel.

YOUNGER FIELD MAN (O.S.)
Uh, this is One Monkey Zebra.
It wasn't bees in the gal's
wall, it was cats!

She TEARS the door open. SCRAMBLE OUT...

YOUNGER FIELD MAN (O.S.)
She says gas 'em, anyway,
she'll pay cash. Uh... how
do I pay this?

WITH Julianne now, RACING through the lot, Michael vanishes INTO the Station, she PLUNGES in after him, BOUNCING off bystanders, apologizing, lunging on, gasping for breath, past exhaustion, threatening clumsily through the crowd like a staggering drunk, catching a lucky glimpse as he heads...

... DOWN a staircase to the TRACKS. My God, what's he doing? A second wind, fueled by panic, and she BOLTS after him, DANCING down the steep staircase somehow without killing herself, reaching the concourse to see him, running for...

... Track 29, a train already RUMBLING, ready to pull out, she SPRINTS after him.

JULIANNE
MICHAEL!!

He DISAPPEARS behind the train, she FALLS, skids, springs up, pushes through gaping onlookers, almost there, the train PULLS AWAY...

JULIANNE
NNNOOOO!!!

But he's just standing there. His back to us. Watching it go.

Her body nearly collapses with relief. She pushes herself on, but her legs aren't working right in their maxed-out fatigue, and she lopes and staggers until she comes up behind him. He's still lost in thought, staring after the train.

She tries to speak, but there's no breath. So she puts her hands on her knees and just GASPS for air like a dog. Wheezing, panting, trying once more to speak, but she can't yet, and then he casually turns and...

... JUMPS out of his skin! A heart attack seeing her.

JULIANNE
(croaks)
Don't speak!

He just blinks at this sweaty, ripped-up, maniacal figure.

MICHAEL
Uh. I saw that moving...

JULIANNE
DON'T SPEAK!

FLINGING both her hands across his mouth. A frozen beat. He nods, okay. Cautiously, she takes her hands away. At least she has made him smile, in spite of everything. At least she's done that.

JULIANNE
I have to make a confession. Another confession. Besides that I love you. This is even worse.

This. He's waiting to hear.

JULIANNE
The E-mail? You thought Walter sent your boss? I wrote that.

You. WHAT?! Synapse overload.

MICHAEL
You're not saying you actually... you're saying that y...

JULIANNE
(stricken with remorse)
... wrote it, yeah. I'm the bad guy.

MICHAEL
ARE YOU CRAZY?

She nods her head wildly, hair flopping.

MICHAEL

ARE YOU ABSOLUTELY INSANE??

Bigger nodding.

MICHAEL
ARE YOU ON DRUGS???

Shakes her head, like a two-year-old.

MICHAEL
(pacing in circles)
I mean, do you realize what you've... well, of course you realize, that's why you're confessing, I mean... I mean... how could you do that?

JULIANNE
I didn't know it would get sent. I just wanted you to... get mad at Kimmy... and...

And watching. As this begins to sink in.

JULIANNE
I've done nothing but slimy, underhanded, despicable, not even terribly imaginative, things. Ever since I got here. Trying to...

Staring in his eyes. Eyes she can't read at this point.

JULIANNE
... to win you. To win you back.

Tears in her own eyes now. Big ones.

JULIANNE
And I was blinded by love. Like you said.

Shaking her head...

JULIANNE
But that doesn't excuse any part of it. I am pond scum.

No...

JULIANNE
Actually. Lower. I am the fungus that feeds on pond scum. Lower. The layer of mucous that cruds up the fung...

MICHAEL
Lower.

JULIANNE
(agreeing)
Lower.

MICHAEL
The pus that infects the mucous that cruds up the fungus.

And to her amazement. The trace of a smile...

MICHAEL
(softly)
On the other hand, thank you.

She blinks at that. Which squeezes out a tear.

MICHAEL
For loving me that much, that way.

He shrugs. Just above a whisper...

MICHEL
It's pretty flattering.

JULIANNE
Except it makes me fungus.

MICHAEL
Well, that part I knew.

She's never loved him more.

JULIANNE
So you have to marry Kim. Because she will actually make you happy. I, in contrast, am a shallow, neurotic psychopath, with relatively little to offer.

Okay?

JULIANNE
Kim. Nod your head. Do as you're told.

He nods his head, still smiling. Her tears are running now. Maybe she doesn't notice.

JULIANNE
Just promise you'll never tell me who you would have chosen. If I hadn't confessed.

She chokes back a sob.

JULIANNE
Cos if you would have chosen me. Then I threw away a perfectly good life. Just to be a decent person. Which is a questionable trade-off. Right?

He nods, slowly. Because he's supposed to.

JULIANNE
And if you would have chosen some 20-year-old punk over me. I'd have to kill myself.

Ah. His smile keeps getting smaller. More loving. More wonderful.

MICHAEL
(whispers)
I'll take it to my grave.

Good. She looks around.

JULIANNE
I'm so glad you didn't jump on that train, before...

MICHAEL
I came here, looking for her.

For her. The words leave a silence.

JULIANNE
Why would she come here...

MICHAEL
This is where I proposed.

Stares deep in her eyes. She needs to hear this.

MICHAEL
I had to cover a game in Milwaukee. She saw me off. And when the train started to leave... I jumped up on the step, I help the handle, and without...

He grins. Has to admit...

MICHAEL
... without a thought in my head. I shouted, "Marry me."

I did. Now her eyes tear up again. And she doesn't know why.

MICHAEL
And she gasped, and covered her mouth, and the train was pulling out, and suddenly she screamed YES! Just once. And blew me a kiss.

What a girl.

MICHAEL
I never forgot that.

JULIANNE
It's two weeks.

MICHAEL
Almost three.

JULIANNE
That is so romantic.

Which makes him reach and touch her hair.

MICHAEL
I just wonder if you know why.

Do you?

MICHAEL
It's because romance isn't mystery, and tricks, and doubts, and halting, unspoken longings. That's not the real romance.

Tears in his eyes now. First time.

MICHAEL
The real romance is saying yes.

Does she know that now? He looks at his watch.

MICHAEL
(sighs)
Woulda been a nice wedding.

Oh. That.

JULIANNE
(urgently)
You can't believe you've lost her! Sooner or later, you'll find her, and you'll look in each other's eyes, and you'll see all that love...

JULIANNE
Course, if it's later rather

than sooner, I'd hate to be you at six o'clock.
(beat)
You've got a lot of explaining to...

MICHAEL
I'm just thinking of how she's hurting. Lost. Alone. Like her life is over.

JULIANNE
That's little egotistical.

He glares at her.

JULIANNE
But, undoubtedly accurate.

She claps her hands, galvanized by the emergency.

JULIANNE
Okay, we'll split up. You go to every romantic place you guys have, I'll go... someplace brilliant, and the first one who...

MICHAEL
If you find her...

Strange tone. A gentle warning.

MICHAEL
The kiss. May be hard. For you to explain.
(beat)
Because the only fear she really has, is...

JULIANNE
... me, yeah. And she likes Tommy Lasorda. Case closed.

Looks at her own watch. Shit!

MICHAEL
But if you do get to her first...

She looks up.

MICHAEL
There is something you are authorized to say.

EXT. TAXI STAND - DAY

Julianne sits on the fender of this guy's taxi. The driver smokes, paces, while she waits for a connection on her cellular. Then...

MANDY (V.O.)
Wallace egregious residence, Mandy speaking.

JULIANNE
It's Jules, you guys haven't had a call from, say, Kimberly, have you?

MANDY (V.O.)
Oh, she's slipped out, the little monkey. Prob'ly with Michael, doin' the nasty.

A shallow laugh...

MANDY (V.O.)
Or crying in her nachos, down at Comskey Park.

Julianne's face SNAPS to alert.

JULIANNE
Ex-cuse me?

MANDY (V.O.)
I had this crank call? From some guy who thinks he saw her? I said, what would a bride be doin', on her wedding...

JULIANNE
You are <u<so right. What a nerve on that guy! Bring my dress to church, huh?

Signals the driver, let's GO!

JULIANNE
I want to pick up a little something for the ceremony.

INT. LUXURY BOX, COMISKEY PARK - AFTERNOON

Game in progress. Julianne and the bodyguard stand in the doorway of the deserted skybox. Everyone Walter knows is going to a wedding. The box is empty except for one cardboard container of nachos, extra cheese, sitting alone before a pulled-back chair.

BODYGUARD
She wouldn't confide in me, so I called the house.

He sighs. Feels terrible about all this.

BODYGUARD
Luckily, I got her cousin.

Julianne nods. Yeah, big break, there.

JULIANNE
Going to the john, she said?

BODYGUARD
Could be there awhile.

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM - AFTERNOON

Julianne BURSTS into the enormous chaotic restroom. Looks around wildly, no sign of Kim.

JULIANNE
YO! IMMIGRATION!

Everybody stops. Pays attention.

JULIANNE
I GOT A WARRANT FOR MS. KIMBERLY WALLACE!

Silence. From the long line of stalls...

KIMMY
(O.S., sobbing)
In here, you bitch!

Now everybody's really interested. Julianne ignores them, strides to the stall. KNOCKS, like it's a door. No answer.

JULIANNE
Let me in, baby, or I'll rip this damn thing off its non-code-compliant hinges...

WOMAN (O.S.)
GET THE FUCK OUTTA MY FACE OR I'M GONNA MESS YOUR SHIT UP!!

Some scattered APPLAUSE. From down the line...

KIMMY
(O.S., still sobbing)
Over here, nitwit!

Oh. Scattered laughter. Julianne moves down the line. Stares at the door. We hear the soft, muted crying from within. Slowly, Julianne...

... drops to her knees. Bends her head low. PEERS under the door. What she sees, prompts a sad warning...

JULIANNE
Incoming.

And she crawls UNDER the door, on her belly. We go WITH her to see...

... Kim fully dressed, perched on the closed toilet lid, her knees drawn up, her arms around them.

JULIANNE
Pitiful.

And pulls herself up to her knees. Kimmy tries to glare, but it just isn't in her.

KIMMY
Haven't you done enough?

The world gets real quiet. An entire bathroom is listening. Julianne cocks her head to one side.

JULIANNE
In one minute. You are going to feel so foolish.

KIMMY
WHY DON'T YOU JUST DRIVE A STAKE THROUGH MY HEART?

JULIANNE
Have you ever heard of. Irony?

Irony? Kimmy sniffles.

JULIANNE
I threw my arms around your husband. And kissed him with all my heart. Because I was so happy. For you. Nitwit.

And leans close. As Kimmy flinches.

JULIANNE
(whispers)
He's going to take...
(big grin)
The job!

A stunned pole-axed moment. And Kimmy's eyes SPRING open. You mean...?

JULIANNE
(beaming)
With your dad, yeah. Can you guess why? Bitch?

Everything inside Kimmy BURSTS free in a torrent of tears...

KIMMY
HE LOVES ME!!

And DISSOLVES, sobbing, into Julianne's arms. A beat, for Julianne to reflect, and then she strokes her tenderly.

JULIANNE
Well, of course, he loves you.

Kisses the top of Kimmy's head.

JULIANNE
(very soft)
Hell, even I love you.

Kimmy holds her tight. From her heart...

JULIANNE
I never want to go through this again.

KIMMY
That's entirely understandable.

ANGLES... outside the stall. Julianne's feet sticking out under the door.

KIMMY (O.S.)
Shit! THE TIME!

The two BURST out of the stall, hand-in-hand, at a desperate DEAD RUN past us. HEAR them EXPLODE out the door, and...

... five stalls OPEN. Women exit, crying.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CHAPEL - TWILIGHT

A taxi pulls up in front of an ivy-covered CHAPEL, fronted by nearly a hundred souls, milling about in attitude ranging from overstimulated curiosity to clinical hyperanxiety. Our girls JUMP out of the cab, and half the crowd starts running toward us, twins in the lead...

SAMMY
Whatever hap...

JULIANNE
(cutting this short)
We were bonding, we lost track, we're officially sorry, now let's put it behind us.

Kim WAVES at her mom by the chapel entrance. And takes Julianne's hand for support.

JULIANNE
Believe me, we got a bride who's worth waiting for, yes?

Everybody nods.

JULIANNE
Out of our way.

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - TWILIGHT

White. Pure blinding white. Across FRAME floats more white, this gauzy and ethereal. It settles, its roots planting deeply in the bride's hair. TILTS UP to...

... the face of the woman who placed it there. Julianne's eyes, appraising this bride we cannot see. And so softly...

JULIANNE
Don't worry, sugar.

Don't worry.

JULIANNE
When he looks at you, it will be as if...

The words stronger. Because there is no smile.

JULIANNE
... he's never seen a woman before.

PAN DOWN the white until we are...

CLOSE on the bride's perfect slippers. HOLD. And...

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

Begins to slowly PAN BACK UP the length of an exquisite gown. We can tell from the organ, the nearby thrum of expectant voices, that we are nearing the moment. We reach...

... Kimmy's hand. Firmly clasping Walter's. Keep PANNING, the bodice, the lace, her throat, and finally, we are CLOSE on...

... the face of the bride. Now we understand the word radiant. We also understand scared senseless. Our perfect, unflappable Kimmy is in a trance of emotional overload where bliss and panic seamlessly blend.

The organ's noddling stops. Kimmy's eyes alerted, like a small animal bearing a predator approach her thicket. Suddenly, the CHORD. The Wedding March from Wagner's Lohengrin. Here. Comes. The bride. And we SNAP TO...

FULL ANGLE... Kim and Walter. This is it.

WALTER
(whispers)
Left foot.

REVERSE ANGLE... Kim's POV, the chapel, every pew packed, every neck craning this way, the white satin carpet down the endless aisle to where...

Michael waits. Also in a zone of pseudo-consciousness. From which he attempts a smile. Not comforting. Kim's POV WHIP PAN the groomsmen, the twins, LOCKING FOCUS on Julianne, standing strong and beautiful, a glow of her own in the daffodil dress. She sends her little sister a WINK across the trackless miles of aisle. You can do this, kid. So...

... Kimmy does. On her father's arm, she walks the gauntlet of the world's intrusive admiration. One step at a time. The most beautiful she will ever be. She is dazzling the crowd and managing to not throw up at the same time.

And she's there. At his side. She glances back to her maid of honor, just to make sure she's not working without a net. So Julianne...

... CROSSES her eyes. Which lets the kid smile and finally take a breath. Have a little fun, huh? Kim nods, got it, turns to...

The Minister. Who stands before them with a calming presence. Thank God someone has done this before. The crowd has hushed. The Minister's eyes are only for two. His words are for all...

MINISTER
Michael and Kimmy wrote these words. She asked me to confide, mostly Michael.

A ripple of laughter. Gentle and fine. They are setting in.

MINISTER
So he gets to say them.

A surprise. A pleasant one. The crowd adjust in its seats. As Michael begins...

MICHAEL
Why do people get married anymore?

And on these words. We SNAP to Julianne. Share her interest in the bluntness, the simplicity, the unorthodoxy of this beginning.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Why not live together amicably, with no sense of obligation beyond the moment?

Her eyes. She's listening.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
As long as the sex is good. As long as no one more interesting has wandered into view. As long as the thousand conflicts of two individual wills remain comfortably compromised.

PANNING now. Other faces. Isabelle. Proud to the bone.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
And when one feels the urge to move on, to explore the new. No guilt, no disgrace, no promise broken.

Walter. His eyes damp. Against our expectation.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
No agony of having dishonored a time. When our hearts. And the world were different.

Joe nods, as he hears...

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Marriage is a lot to put up with.

Julianne once more. No breath. Rapt.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
The answer must be. That there is some need basic to the human heart. That<u< embracing... the obligation of commitment... fulfills.

Her eyes have clouded. As if Michael is talking to her.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Some need to belong to one another in a way which rages against the notion... that all is impermanent. Against the notion of mortality.

And suddenly, ALL the feeling rises in her throat.

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Our love is bigger. And longer. Than life itself.

And the tears come. They come freely, unhidden, unnoticed. As if they were needed.

Michael now. Looking at his bride.

MICHAEL
That's what we want. And marriage.
Is what we do about it.

Kimmy smiles at him. With love bigger than life itself.

MICHAEL
We are fools in this. Thank
God Almighty.

He is done. There is a silence.

MINISTER
Boy, that was good!

People LAUGH. The Minister holds up a sheet of paper. For the crowd to see. Mostly paragraphs crossed out in red ink.

MINISTER
Michael and Kim also edited what
they want me to say...

More laughter.

MINISTER
The idea was, we're only marrying
once. We have to remember it
forever. Let's keep to the good
stuff.
(squints at the sheet)
You may kiss the bride.

Bigger LAUGHTER. The Minister waves this off, his little joke. Turns to the best man, pantomimes the ring. As the hammered gold circle is handed to Michael, Julianne absently scratches her still-swollen finger. Mandy taps Julianne on the arm, and produces...

... a matching ring. Take it! Gives it to her. So Julianne steps forward. Places the second ring into Kimmy's waiting hand. Their eyes meet, and hold throughout...

MINISTER (O.S.)
If anyone here can show just cause
why this man and woman should not
be married, speak now. Or forever
hold your peace.

Julianne CLEARS her throat. Kimmy's heart flutters. In the silence... Julianne's wonderful smile. Just kidding.

Michael reaches for Kim's hand, turns her gently to him. Places his ring on her finger. Holds her hands.

MICHAEL
Kimberly. I promise to love.
And respect and comfort you.

To hear your voice and your heart. Until we are parted by death.

She swallows. Smiles a fleeting, beautiful smile. Fumbles slightly, putting the ring on his finger.

KIMMY
Michael. I promise to love and respect and comfort you. To hear your voice and your heart. Until we are parted by death.

Staring in each other's eyes. A moment so fragile, the Minister waits an extra beat.

MINISTER
For the record, you each agree to marry the other?

KIMMY
(quickly)
I do!

MICHAEL
(smiling)
I do.

The Minister joins their right hands.

MINISTER
We haven't said much about God this evening, I know. But He is here. And He is happy. To bless His wonderful children.

CLOSE now on Julianne. For the inevitable moment.

MINISTER (O.S.)
In that Michael and Kimberly have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, and the exchanging of rings...

Unnoticed by the world. Her eyes are close.

MINISTER (O.S.)
I pronounce them husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

The eyes open. Wet, brave, ready for...

MINISTER (O.S.)
Now. Kiss the bride.

Julianne watching. As Michael does.

EXT. WALLACE POND - NIGHT

This is what all the preparation was for. Tables, lights, balloons, the guests dancing on the hardwood floor, at the base of the gazebo. The bride and groom among them, relaxed and happy. Two who are one. PAN TO...

... the stage, the band playing. Julianne conferring with the twins and the band leader, clear that she's giving the instructions. Then, she takes her glass of champagne to the microphone...

... KLUNKS it, for silence. The band stops. The dancers follow. All eyes are comfortably turned to the maid of honor. She looks to the couple. Just below her. Then, to the crowd...

JULIANNE
I'm a writer, too, not as good as Michael. But I do steal from quality.

She raises her glass. Everyone at the table does the same.

JULIANNE
This is to my best friend. On the occasion of his wedding.

Shouts of support, a few whistles. Silence. She tells Michael...

JULIANNE
If I have truly come to know your bride as my new sister. This is in her heart...

She has to stop. Swallows. Because she will not let herself cry.

JULIANNE
"Understand. I'll slip quietly away from the noisy crowd when I see the pale stars rising, blooming, over the oaks."

Deep breath. Looks in his eyes.

JULIANNE
"I'll pursue solitary pathways through the pale twilit meadows, with only this one dream: You come too."

A hush. SHARP applause. From four hundred hands. But not from his. He is too moved. Too understanding of what he has heard.

JULIANNE
I don't have a wedding gift. But this is on loan. Until you two find your song...

And with that the band begins. The opening phrases of a song we have come to know. Michael seems overwhelmed. Julianne nods toward the gazebo...

... Michael takes his bride's hand, leads her up the stairs, into his arms, as the twins step to the microphone, and guests begin to applaud an unscheduled wedding dance...

MANDY/SAMMY
(singing)
Someday, when I'm awfully low,
And the world is cold,
I will feel a glow just thinking of you,
And the way you look tonight.

Soft two-part harmony. As perfect as the words.

MANDY/SAMMY
(singing)
You're lovely. With your smile so warm,
And your cheeks so soft,
There is nothing for me but to love you,
Just the way you look tonight.

Julianne can cry now. Because she's tied with half the place.

MANDY/SAMMY
(singing)
With each word, your tenderness grows,
Tearing my fears apart...
And the laugh that wrinkles your nose,
Touches my foolish heart.

Julianne begins to sing. Unheard. Unseen. Even by the man she's singing to...

JULIANNE/MANDY/SAMMY
(singing)
You're lovely, please don't ever change,
Keep that breathless charm,
Darling, please arrange it, cos I love you...
Just the way you look tonight.

The band keeps playing. The dance goes on. Two people lost in each other. The way it's supposed to be.

INT. GREAT ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Bedlam. Julianne caught in the middle of the throng. A young couple, dressed for travel, appear at the top of the staircase. The SHOUT are deafening. The bride has her bouquet...

... she spots Julianne far below. THROWS it her way, Julianne reflexively GOES FOR IT...

... not a fucking chance. The twins nearly TRAMPLE her in the

stampede, Mandy WRESTING the prize from Sammy's grasp. Everyone CHEERS, and then the couple is...

... FLYING down the stairs, RACING through the crowd with a protective phalanx of groomsmen bodyguards, heading for the door, for freedom...

... Julianne, trapped in the crush, loses sight of the couple, struggles against the flow, suddenly panicked by the certainty that she will never see him before...

And then, he's THERE. He has Julianne in his arms. Holding her so tight. An embrace so wonderful, so terrible, she could go mad from the confusion alone. Against the din, he murmurs in her ear...

MICHAEL
Wherever I go. However far...

She sobs. Holds him.

Deep, deep breath.

JULIANNE
You win a few, you lose a few.
Some get rained out.

And to her surprise...

DIGGER
(V.O., very softly)
You have a good time?

To her greater surprise. There are a few tears left, after all.

JULIANNE
I did what I came to do.

DIGGER
(V.O., even softer)
Good girl.

She just can't speak now. So she doesn't.

DIGGER (V.O.)
I was thinking. Maybe you might visit us for awhile. We've got the room made up.

This fucking guy. God, she loves him.

JULIANNE
I'll think about it. I'm okay.

DIGGER (V.O.)
Oh, you're more than okay.

Just above a whisper...

JULIANNE
You, too.

And with the last of her strength...

JULIANNE
If the sun comes up, I'll see you tomorrow, huh?

A chuckle. At the other end.

DIGGER (V.O.)
I'll play those odds. You have sweet dreams.

We hear the CLICK. She turns her back on the stars. Shoulders straight. Chin up.

She walks from frame.

FADE TO BLACK. HOLD END CREDITS.