

**THE BEST MAN**

An Original Screenplay

by

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EXT./ INT. HARPER'S BROWNSTONE -- NIGHT

It is late spring on a warm Friday evening of a Memorial Day weekend. HARPER STEWART, Black, 28, handsome, simply but fastidiously dressed, gets out of his Honda Accord with a weekend bag and bounds up the steps two at a time. He enters the building and heads straight to his apartment door. Before he can insert his keys, the door swings open revealing a slightly disheveled (food-stained blouse, tousled au naturale hair, ripped jeans), but extremely cute and adorable ROBIN JONES, 27. She is armed with a fork-full of colorful food.

HARPER

Robin! Baby, I got some great news!!

ROBIN

Try this. Tell me what you think.

HARPER

What is it?

ROBIN

Harper, just trust me.

HARPER

You know I don't like new . .

She shovels it in his mouth. He eats and he is surprisingly pleased.

ROBIN

Grilled ginger shrimp with orange-cranberry-mango chutney.

HARPER

You're serving Carribean food at a bar-mitzvah?

ROBIN

Yah, mon. Yah, mon.

She kisses him and pulls him inside of the apartment that is in more disarray than she is. Harper looks around at it and he is not pleased. He follows Robin back into the kitchen (another disaster area) as she attends to her pots.

ROBIN

Thanks for letting me use your kitchen. I nearly panicked when my stove broke, but then I remembered what a loving boyfriend I have.

Harper instinctively starts cleaning up the mess she's created, trying to regain some semblance of order.

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ROBIN

Sorry about the mess. I have like 3 jobs going at once here. It's crazy.

HARPER

Uh-huh.

ROBIN

So hey!! What's your news? What's the deallie, yo?

HARPER

Oprah wants Unfinished Business for her August book of the month club show.

ROBIN

Harper, you're kidding. Oh my God. Your first novel?

HARPER

(nodding)

When my agent said that she wanted - no, when Oprah Winfrey demanded - a preview copy, I got nervous. But she said that I impressed Oprah with that Esquire article I did on her last year. And she loved the book.

ROBIN

When's the release date?

HARPER

We go to print next month.

Robin squeals, jumps into his arms wrapping her arms and legs around his torso. She pelts him with kisses.

ROBIN

Oh, baby. I'm so happy for you!! That's so great. Ooops the callaloo.

She gets back to the stove for taste-testing as Harper brushes the remnants of Robin's food off of his urban-chic outfit.

HARPER

This is just the beginning, y'know? I still got plenty to do. Press releases, a 20-city book tour. All my shit's gotta be on point . . .

Robin belches loud. Harper pauses and furrows his brow.

ROBIN

Excuse me, little piggy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Harper resumes straightening up and looking uptight and disgruntled. Robin smiles at him admiringly.

ROBIN  
Hey. Harper?

HARPER  
What?

Robin looks at him with bedroom eyes and begins to purr like a cat. She unbuttons her blouse as she approaches him.

HARPER  
What are you doing? People can see in here.

ROBIN  
(still purring)  
So, let them see.

HARPER  
You're such an exhibitionist.

ROBIN  
(purring)  
So. I'm horny.

HARPER  
You're horny?

ROBIN  
You know how I get when you're excited.

HARPER  
(Jamaican accent)  
But wop'nin' wit de food, beauty?

ROBIN  
Me say me tired o' shrimp, mon.

She sits him on on chair and straddles him. They kiss.

HARPER  
Good. 'Cuz me 'ave no shrimp 'ere.

They laugh as they continue to kiss.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Highlighted by candles, sensuous jazz, and incense Harper & Robin (in post-coital relaxation) sip White Zinfandel and caress one another in a steaming-hot salt bath.

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CONTINUED: (3)

ROBIN

Mmmm. I missed you. I'm glad you decided to come back in town before you headed to DC.

HARPER

Yeah, me too, baby. Did I tell you I dedicated the book to Lance and Mia?

ROBIN

Um-hmm. That's sweet. You sound pretty excited for them.

HARPER

Hell yeah. We all been waiting for this day to come. Those two were made for each other.

ROBIN

(smiling)

I can't wait to meet your friends ..

HARPER

Did I tell you my agent said reviewers are already calling it the male Waiting to Exhale? I really gotta prepare myself . . .

ROBIN

Come on, Harper . . .

HARPER

What?

ROBIN

You never live enough for today. You've accomplished so much already. For once just enjoy the moment. At least for a little while. OK?

HARPER

Robin, if I start believing my own press too soon I won't make it out the gate. I've got to stay focused.

ROBIN

All work and no play makes Harper a very dull boy.

HARPER

Yeah, whatever, man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ROBIN  
(mocking)  
"Yeah, whatever, man." You're not  
feeling me, huh?

HARPER  
I felt you getting your freak on.

ROBIN  
Only with you, boo.

HARPER  
Now that's what I like to hear.

ROBIN  
(relaxed)  
Mmmmm. Me too.  
(sigh)  
I could be like this with you  
forever, Harper.

HARPER  
(freezing up)  
What? What do you mean?

ROBIN  
(laughing)  
Relax. OK? All I mean is that I  
really like being with you. We fit  
together. And you said yourself that  
I'm the best girlfriend you've ever  
had. You've never been with someone  
this long or had this much fun.

HARPER  
Yeah, but . . .

ROBIN  
You love me don't you?

HARPER  
Of course I do. But it's not that  
simple.

ROBIN  
It is to me.

Harper is stumped for words as most men in this situation are.

ROBIN  
Wow. Dead silence. Nice.

She gets out of the tub.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HARPER

Robin . . .

ROBIN

Nooo. Think I'll get some sleep.

She walks out of the tub and the door dripping water everywhere.

HARPER

Hey, put something on. You'll catch a cold. Someone's gonna see you.

Robin's closes the bedroom door. Harper puts a finger gun to his head and pulls the trigger.

INT. HARPER'S CAR -- DAY

Robin has the wheel and she's not the most skilled driver (think Annie Hall). Harper, in the passenger seat tries to figure out how to break the silence and keep calm amidst the erratic ride.

HARPER

Breakfast was great, honey.

Robin nods and smiles pleasantly. The awkward silence continues.

HARPER

Did you sleep well, sweetie?

Nodding again. Silence.

HARPER

So, how about those Yankees . . . ?

ROBIN

Harper, It's okay. I know that you love me.

HARPER

I do, you know? Ooh easy on the gas.

ROBIN

I'm not an insecure person. But sometimes I have doubts. Especially with dishonesty and old girlfriends.

HARPER

Whoah, whoah. Hold up. Baby, I've been straight up with you from jump. And there's no old girl-friends that would make me leave you.

ROBIN

Really? Not even Kendall?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

This strikes an uncomfortable yet familiar chord within Harper.

HARPER

We're not going there again are we?

ROBIN

I don't think it's so far off-base.

HARPER

It is. You're jealous of a character in my book . . . .

ROBIN

Not just a character. An icon. An ideal: Your soul - Jackson's soul-mate. And she's nothing like me.

HARPER

She's not like anybody, Rob. She's an amalgam: a combination of a lot of women I knew in college. Why would I lie about that?

ROBIN

I don't know. That's what scares me.

HARPER

Well, here it is. Here's the drama. I thought I had finally avoided it with this relationship.

ROBIN

I'm not perfect, Harper . . . .

HARPER

Let's just drop this please. Jesus.

ROBIN

Look, I'm sorry if I upset you. I didn't mean to get emotional. But I had to let you know how I feel . . . .

HARPER

Are you still coming to the wedding?

ROBIN

Of course I am. Nothing has changed about that. I want you to have fun. Hang out with your boys, reminisce. I'll still be there on Memorial Day.

HARPER

Fine. Good. Great.

Robin looks sorry that any of this was brought up.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EXT. La GUARDIA AIRPORT/ HARPER'S CAR -- DAY

They park at the entrance of the Marine Air Terminal for the Delta Shuttle. Robin stares at him.

ROBIN

I really hope you get all that you want out of this weekend. Take care of "unfinished business" and close that chapter of your life.

HARPER

And what's that mean?

ROBIN

Just hear me out, Harper. Something is holding you back from "us". You haven't resolved something about your college days. Like maybe you have to prove something . . .

HARPER

I don't have anything to prove, Robin. You're over-reacting.

ROBIN

Maybe I am with the book. Maybe. But not this. Whether we're going to be together or not, you should really let that go.

HARPER

With or without you, huh?

ROBIN

I don't want to be without you, Harper. But I'm not going to play the fool either.

Robin gets out of the car. Harper stews in disappointment.

EXT. La GUARDIA AIRPORT -- DAY

Harper stands with his bag staring at Robin.

ROBIN

(adorably)

Can I have a kiss?

After a beat Harper leans over and kisses her cheek.

ROBIN

Damn. No lip action, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

You're gonna be late, Rob.

ROBIN

OK. I love you.

HARPER

I know.

She exhales and shrugs her shoulders. She gets back in the car and Harper watches her drive away. He goes inside the terminal.

INT. PLANE (FLYING) -- DAY

Harper opens his bag and comes across the latest issue of Sports Illustrated with a post-it note that says (with a smiley face) "Thought you might enjoy!! Love you." Harper shakes his head and tries to resist smiling as he inspects the cover. It is a football player, in a Washington Redskins uniform making a Heisman pose. This is LANCE SULLIVAN. In the photo he walks across a replica model of the US/ Canadian border, and the headline reads "HOME AGAIN, AT LAST - Redskins snag Lance Sullivan back from the Canadians". Harper smiles admiringly at it. As he flips through it he gets very pensive.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen we are making  
our descent to our nation's capitol.  
Please pull your seat backs up . . .

He snaps out of his daze, to see some familiar surroundings out of the window. He anxiously packs his things up with a smile.

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Standing at the gate is a husky Black bohemian who looks like he's straight out of page 17 of the Spring J. Crew catalog. This is JULIAN MURCHISON aka MURCH, dreadlocked and bearded but well groomed. He searches the crowd of passengers for Harper who emerges from the crowd. Murch beams when he sees him.

MURCH

Harper!!

Harper smiles as he picks up the pace toward him. They hug.

HARPER

Murch, my man. What's up?

INT. MURCH'S TRUCK -- DAY

Murch and Harper drive down Highway 395 alongside the shimmering Potomac river.

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CONTINUED:

MURCH

I had to take a gun away from one of them last week.

HARPER

Damn! Shortys are wild today. Well, at least you got a summer to get them off your mind.

MURCH

No sir. We just got a grant to continue through the summer.

HARPER

I thought you were taking the bar.

MURCH

I'll make time. The kids need me.

HARPER

Didn't that firm in Silver Spring offer you . . . ?

MURCH

A six-figure salary? Yes, they did.

HARPER

Murch, if you're gonna be stressed you should at least get paid for it.

MURCH

Brother, I know. I wrestle with that everyday. This was not my parents' plan. But I can't abandon my people.

HARPER

Julian Murchison: the steadfast champion for the disenfranchised.

MURCH

Ha, you sound just like Shelby.

HARPER

Ah. Shelby.

They ride in awkward silence for a few moments.

HARPER

She get into the FBI yet?

MURCH

One more test and she'll be in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Riiight. She'll be a great agent.  
She's . . . headstrong. Take charge.

MURCH

You think she's a domineering bitch?

HARPER

(taken aback)

What? I never said that.

MURCH

Well, isn't that how you feel?

HARPER

(hesitant to answer)

Well, Murch you know we all felt she  
was a bit . . . pushy - to a degree.

MURCH

How can you say that? You and I were  
always the stable ones, Harper. We  
always had girlfriends.

HARPER

I had girlfriends. You had a Shelby.

MURCH

But you know I like strong women.

HARPER

Like Audre Lorde, right?

MURCH

(reluctant)

Yes.

HARPER

And what's that quote of hers you  
always tell the kids? "If you allow  
yourself to be crushed" -no. "If I  
allow myself to be eaten" . ?

MURCH

"If I didn't define myself for  
myself I would be crunched into  
other people's fantasies for me and  
eaten alive".

Harper looks at him as if to say "get my meaning?"

MURCH

You are lucky I love you like an  
adopted brother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER

I know I know. Come on, man.  
Shelby's cool. In her way.

MURCH

Well, you certainly did not make her  
any kind of cool in your book . . .

Murch freezes as Harper looks at Murch incredulously.

MURCH

Uh, I mean . . . not like I read it . . .

HARPER

You read my book, Murch? How did -  
What are you doing with my book?

MURCH

(panicky)

I don't have it. Jordan does.

HARPER

Jordan's got my book?

INT. BLACK ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION (B.E.T.) STUDIOS -- DAY

In the control booth directing the taping of BET Teen Summit is  
JORDAN ARMSTRONG, a confident, sophisticated, beautiful, sexy  
young woman who is in total control of her surroundings.

JORDAN

Camera 2 zoom in on the young lady  
in lime green with the finger waves.  
Not too fast. Good. Alright, Larry?  
Let him know he's got 30 seconds  
before commercial.

A production assistant shows Harper and Murch into the adjoining  
"green room". Murch thanks her as Harper, upon seeing Jordan  
brushes his hair and his clothes with his hand instinctively. He  
can't take his eyes off of her.

HARPER

She's already running shit, huh?

MURCH

You should not be surprised. You  
know how gung-ho she is. She is the  
only one more driven than you are.

Harper looks at her with reverence and Murch observes it.

MURCH

When's the last time you saw Jordan?

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CONTINUED:

HARPER  
(still looking)  
Back in December. She was producing  
a music video for Brandy and VIBE  
had me cover it. But we didn't  
really spend much time. Y'know, I  
had a deadline, she had a . . .

Harper turns around and stops in mid-sentence when he discovers  
Murch staring and smiling at him.

HARPER  
What? What, nigga?

MURCH  
You, my brother, have been  
withholding information.

HARPER  
Ohhh, here we go . . .

MURCH  
You two got busy in undergrad didn't  
you?

HARPER  
No, Murch. No.

MURCH  
What about the book? Jackson and  
Kendall - that's you two, I know it.  
They seized a prime opportunity to  
make grass sandwiches: "A passionate  
night of love-making so intense that  
made them dizzier . . ."

HARPER  
Embellishment sells books, Murch.

MURCH  
So what really happened?

HARPER  
Nothing.

MURCH  
You are lying!

HARPER  
See? You should be in court cross-  
examining folks.

MURCH  
Come on. Out with it.

Harper lets out a sigh and rolls his eyes at Murch.

INT. CAMPUS NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

In a messy campus newsroom. Harper works on a computer and Jordan studies at a separate table. They are alone. The room is only lit by their two desk lamps.

HARPER (V.O.)

Senior year during finals. The year-end issue was off to the printer and the staff had left for the night. We stayed because we both had studying to do. But we were mad tired . . .

Harper takes a swig of coffee. Jordan downs some caffeine pills with a diet coke. Despite that they are still nodding off.

Then Jordan wakes from her desk with a start at the sound of Stevie Wonder's "As". She turns to see Harper turning up the volume on the office stereo. She smiles and gets up.

They sing the words to one another and start dancing, laughing and acting silly. Harper kisses Jordan on her forehead.

They hug one another in their playfulness and then pull apart from one another and look at each other, and start kissing each other passionately, hungrily. They rub and fondle over each other with urgency.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Murch sits in bewilderment at the story.

MURCH

And you didn't tell us?

HARPER

There wasn't really anything to tell. Besides, you know you can't keep a secret.

MURCH

What do you mean I can't keep a secret?

HARPER

Were you supposed to tell me you had my book?

MURCH

(can't deny it)  
Just finish the story.

INT. NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan unbuckles his belt, Harper nibbles on her earlobe and searches for the clasp on her bra. They are set to bone!

Then the CD skips, repeatedly and they get distracted. They break from one another and look over at the stereo equipment. They look at one another and seemingly have come to their senses. Jordan walks away from Harper and he just stands, clearly wanting more.

HARPER (V.O.)

It was the strangest thing. Looking back it's one of those moments you wish you could have back. But at the time it wasn't right.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Jordan wraps up the show. She shakes hands with the staff as the production assistant who showed Harper and Murch in points them out to Jordan. She sees them and Harper looks especially handsome to her. After a pause she grabs her bag, turns away from the window that separates them, and straightens herself out. In the foreground Harper talks to Murch.

MURCH

I am not getting it. Why?

HARPER

Well, it was the end of the year. She was taking that internship in LA. I was moving back home. It just wouldn't have gone anywhere. It would've been too much . . .

MURCH

You two are ridiculous.

HARPER

What?

MURCH

In other words the two control-freaks could not lose control and get freaky. Right?

HARPER

Y'know. I'd almost forgotten how corny you could be. Almost.

MURCH

I thought that was a pretty good play on words . . .

INT. B.E.T. CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

As Harper and Murch continue talking Jordan takes a breath and makes sure that her clothes and hair are together. Then she releases her tension.

JORDAN

Stop it. No big deal. This is my boy. This is business.

A carbon copy of Jordan appears behind her smoking a cigarette and looking ten years older. This is Jordan's mentor, ANITA.

ANITA

Good job, Jordan. Keep it up.

JORDAN

(caught off-guard)

Oh, thanks, Anita. It was OK. I think can do better with . . .

ANITA

(indicating Harper)

Is that him?

JORDAN

Oh. Yes. Yes indeed. That's Harper Stewart. Lance Sullivan's best man.

ANITA

Mmmm. You sure we can't get a camera into that wedding? It could be huge.

JORDAN

I know. I'm still trying, but they've been pretty adamant.

ANITA

Keep trying.

(looking at Harper)

Your boy is kind of cute.

JORDAN

We're just friends, y'know?

ANITA

Uh-huh. You ready?

Before Jordan can respond, Anita swoops in on Harper introducing herself and making small-talk. Jordan looks at her for a moment, then grabs her things and follows.

INT. B.E.T. STUDIOS (GREEN ROOM) -- DAY

Harper looks at Jordan as she enters with her on-cue smile.

JORDAN

What's up, Harper?

HARPER

Hey.

ANITA

Harper, I've always enjoyed your writing. But that book of yours, wow! You nailed it. And your girl here -talk about a fan- she has her nose in that preview copy every free moment she's got.

Harper looks at Jordan with raised eyebrows and a smile.

JORDAN

It's my job to keep up with what's current.

HARPER

Of course.

ANITA

Harper, can we get you on Teen Summit or profile you on Night Talk with Tavis?

HARPER

Sure, I'd love to.

ANITA

Great. We'll even get Jordan to produce it. What d'you think, J?

JORDAN

Why not? We have the inside track.

ANITA

This is going to be fabulous. It was a pleasure meeting you both. I've got to run. Take care now, Harper.

Anita sweeps out of the room as swiftly as she came into it.

MURCH

Wow. I have never heard someone talk as fast as that.

HARPER

That's gonna be Jordan in awhile. Hard Copy's got nothing on her.

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CONTINUED:

JORDAN

Please. The publicity will not hurt you, honey. Don't front.

HARPER

Alright, Armstrong. So what's up, girl? I can't get no love?

JORDAN

Oh, hey. Sorry. How you doing?

She comes over and kisses him very awkwardly. Harper hugs her as if she were a long lost lover. She laughs nervously.

JORDAN

Yeah well. It's good to see you. So, like Anita said we want to get you in the studio.

HARPER

I'm all yours.

Harper stares at her but Jordan averts her eyes. Harper, noticing her apprehension gets a little uncomfortable himself.

JORDAN

Good. I'm done for the day. You guys ready to go?

MURCH

Sure.

JORDAN

Good. Come on let's be out.

Harper holds the door open for her. She walks past him, careful to avoid touching. Harper notices, but plays it off. Murch follows them.

INT. MURCH'S TRUCK (MOVING) -- DAY

Jordan sits in the back finishing a call on her cellular phone. Harper peeks at her in the passenger mirror as he checks his goatee.

JORDAN

Just tell them big country-ass Negroes we ain't serving no ham-hocks at the damn reception. Alright? Yeah, I'll see you later. Yeah, okay. Shit!

MURCH

Who wants ham-hocks?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN

Lance's uncles and cousins. This wedding shit never ends. Mia's cousins are getting on my nerves. Wanting to meet guys and shit . . .

HARPER

You should introduce them to Quentin.

JORDAN

I did. Big mistake. He got those poor girls open too. Charming motherfucker.

HARPER

It's what he's good at. If they gave college credit for it he'd have his Phd by now.

JORDAN

Well, Dr. Feelgood has your book.

Harper has a look of concern in his eyes.

HARPER

What? Quentin has my book now?

JORDAN

Yup. Your prep school homeboy swiped it right off my coffee table last week. I told him I wasn't supposed to have it, but you know Q doesn't follow anyone's rules but his own. Sorry.

She instinctively puts her hand on his shoulder and then swiftly pulls it away as if she had done something wrong.

HARPER

Oh, s'okay. No big deal.

Something clearly bothers him about Quentin having the book.

HARPER

Hey Murch, did he say where he was gonna be? I gotta discuss the bachelor party with him.

JORDAN

You got the right assistant for that gig. That boy's life is a bachelor party. I can only imagine what that night is gonna be like.

INT. STUDENT CENTER -- NIGHT

Bass-heavy reggae is heard as college seniors get their grinding groove on. In a DJ booth the devilishly handsome and hip-hop, QUENTIN SPIVEY spins records and is sweated by impressionable coeds. Harper, Jordan, and Murch walk in.

JORDAN

There goes Q.

They see him through the DJ's booth window.

HARPER

Be back in a second.

Jordan watches Harper like a hawk as he heads over to the booth.

MURCH

Want to cut a rug, Jordan . . ?

JORDAN

Why can't you keep your mouth shut?

MURCH

Sorry. But I don't think he's mad.

JORDAN

That's not the point! I told you . .

They ad-lib their debate as Quentin spies Harper through the booth. He smiles coolly and waves him in. Harper comes in as Quentin charms the co-eds out. The guys greet each other warmly.

INT. DJ BOOTH -- NIGHT

But once inside Harper and Quentin stand apart from one another staring: suspicious, and skeptical.

HARPER

What happened with that gig at The Post I got you?

QUENTIN

Shorty, you know that 9 to 5 shit ain't me. I can't be jockeying with other mafuckas to get the right shot. I'm a artist.

HARPER

Yeah. A bullshit artist.

QUENTIN

Awww don't player-hate, nigga. I read your book.

HARPER

Yeah, I heard. And?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUENTIN

You got skilz, joe. I can't front.  
You gonna blow the fuck up. Make me  
want be a writer and shit.

HARPER

Q, please . . .

QUENTIN

Naw, I'm serious, joe.

HARPER

Major change number what? 6? Thought  
you were finally graduating . . .

QUENTIN

Don't sweat that, joe. Seriously,  
tho' your shit is on point. But I  
think you might've exaggerated my  
character a little bit. I mean, my  
mama not being around ain't got shit  
to do with how I treat bitches.

HARPER

Why do you assume it's you I'm  
talking about?

QUENTIN

Give a nigga some credit, aw-ite? I  
ain't stupid. And I was more focused  
than that when I was in school.

HARPER

You're still in school.

QUENTIN

I'm sayin' tho, yo. You could've  
embellished a nigga some. I mean  
ain't that the buttery shit about  
bein' a writer? Rewriting history?  
Tailoring shit to your ideal self?

HARPER

What are you talking about?

QUENTIN

Oh, come on, "Jackson". Check it,  
right? If I was to write my book,  
I'd make my character like a actor  
or a world-class athlete. Something  
to justify the inordinate amount of  
pussy I get . . .

HARPER

Right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN

Or I could make my character real respected for being responsible about his obligations; studying, graduating. Y'know? Live that fantasy out on paper?

HARPER

And oh what a fantasy that would be.

QUENTIN

. . . Or gloss over real scandalous shit from my past . . .

HARPER

That's a lot of gloss.

QUENTIN

Well, that's true.  
(mischievous grin)  
But I ain't got no monopoly on scandalous shit, nigga.

HARPER

(getting serious)  
You better chill with that.

QUENTIN

"The frontal lobe", shorty?

HARPER

There's nothing there. Leave it be.

QUENTIN

Alright. But I don't know. That copy of the book being in town this weekend has got some weird energy, y'know . . . ?

HARPER

Look, Dionne Warwick. Nothing's gonna happen if you just keep your mouth shut.

QUENTIN

All I'm sayin' is, it brought back wild memories. Shit I ain't thought about in years. Knowutumsayin'?

HARPER

(long pause)  
Where's the book?

QUENTIN

At the crib.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER

Who else has read it?

Quentin shrugs as a loud consistent barking is heard; the sure sound of the biggest fraternity on campus: Alpha Kappa Omega (AKΩ). Quentin smiles. Harper glares at him as they exit.

INT. STUDENT CENTER COMMONS -- NIGHT

The undergraduates gather around to watch the young men trying to pledge the prestigious fraternity. They all dress similarly and stare straight ahead like soldiers as they march into the room. The "big brothers" inspect and scrutinize them thoroughly. Harper, Jordan, Murch and Quentin all come out to observe the show. One of the big brothers, WAYNE speaks:

WAYNE

Y'all some sorry mufuckas, I swear. Only real men get in this frat. It ain't a right. It's a privilege, goddammit. We need someone here to whip y'all bitch-ass pussy-footin' niggas into shape. We need a leader.

The pledgies start getting antsy. Harper shakes his head.

WAYNE

Don't bitch up now. If y'all so much as drip a head of sweat when he gets here, that's yo' ass. Respect and revere mufuckas. LANCE SULLIVAN!!

The entire room explodes for LANCE SULLIVAN, a tall, handsome, chiseled out of stone, chocolate Black man, as he walks through a smoke and light show complete with cheerleaders. Lance is all business as he stalks over to his pledgies. The coeds all point, stare, and gawk as Jordan leans into Harper.

JORDAN

That is a grandiose nigga.

HARPER

Are you kidding? L-Boogie? The BMOC? The HNIC? All time leading rusher in school history? Why wouldn't he be?

They watch as Lance gets menacingly close to a pledgie's face.

LANCE

You trying to pledge my frat, bitch?

PLEDGIE

A uh a . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE  
(thru gritted teeth)  
Did I tell you to speak,  
mafucka . . . ?

Harper has seen enough and walks over to them as Lance hazes the pledgie. Harper steps into Lance's line of vision. His whip-cracking demeanor immediately gives way to a huge childish smile. He thunders out a yell and embraces Harper in a bear hug that lifts Harper off of the ground.

LANCE  
Harp, my man!! My Brother!! What's  
up cat-daddy?!

HARPER  
Not much, big fella.

LANCE  
Wooo! These fools lucky you here.  
I'd be putting these mafuckas  
through the real wringer if it  
wasn't for you. Softening my mood  
and shit.

HARPER  
Wedding kicking your ass?

LANCE  
Dog, yes! The wedding, the contract  
negotiations. I'm stressed as shit.

HARPER  
The best man is here to help out.  
I'm getting you over that broom no  
matter what. Even if it kills me.

LANCE  
Not even the devil himself will stop  
Mia from becoming Mrs. Lance  
Sullivan, brother-man.

HARPER  
I'm glad to hear it, L.

They laugh and smile as they join the rest of the crew.

JORDAN  
Well, the bosom buddies kick it once  
again.

QUENTIN  
Yeah, them fools are like a couple  
of pendulous titties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Just in time to break up the party comes a distinguished voice.

SHELBY (O.S.)

Juliiiiannnn!

They all deflate and groan at the sight and sound of SHELBY, Murch's nagging, golddigging, and controlling bourgeois girlfriend. Murch immediately downshifts into "honey-do" mode.

MURCH

Hi, Shel.

SHELBY

Well, hello, honey.

She air-kisses Murch and then turns to everyone else.

SHELBY

Well, well, well the gang's all here! Back in effect.

ALL

(in drab unison)

Hi, Shelby.

SHELBY

Well, nice to see all of you too.

She sees Harper.

SHELBY

Ah, Harper Stewart: Richard Wrong, Langston Snooze.

HARPER

How're you doing, Shelby?

SHELBY

I heard about your book.

Harper looks over at Murch whose eyes look elsewhere.

SHELBY

And I don't think it's cute. Listen, the next time you want to characterize me in one of your little projects, do me a favor.

HARPER

What's that, Shelby?

SHELBY

Don't!

Harper holds up his hands and backs off. She turns to Murch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHELBY

Julian, drive me to Neiman Marcus would you? I can't decide on what I should wear for the wedding.

MURCH

I thought you were wearing . . .

SHELBY

No. I decided against that.

MURCH

But, Shel I have plans.

SHELBY

What kind of plans?

MURCH

Honey, I told you I was spending time with the guys tonight.

SHELBY

Oh, that can wait. You have all weekend. Only take a few hours.

MURCH

Shel . . .

SHELBY

Now you know how I value your opinion. You're always so good at helping me pick out things.

Murch hesitates and Shelby, seeing all his friends in support, gets an attitude.

SHELBY

Oh, I see. It's gang up on Shelby day. Fine, if you'd rather be with them than me. That's fine.

She starts to walk away and Murch has to make a move.

QUENTIN

Here it comes.

She whips around to address him, her bottom lip quivering.

SHELBY

(whining)

Am I being that unreasonable?

The crew roll their eyes in unison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HARPER

We'll see you in a few, Murch.

MURCH

Okay, guys I'll be there soon.

SHELBY

(perky)

Thanks dear. You're the best.

(serious)

Harper, I'm watching you.

She takes Murch by the hand and leads him out like a little kid.

QUENTIN

Damn! She be giving youngin' drama.

JORDAN

For real. How'd she know we were here? What is she? Part blood-hound?

HARPER

She got a lo-jack on that brother.

LANCE

Well, come on Harp. I'll show you the new house we bought. Mia'll be excited to see her "big brother".

JORDAN

Good. I gotta go too. The queen needs me.

HARPER

Bet.

Harper sees Quentin observing some senior honeys passing him by and he pursues them like a dog in heat.

QUENTIN

I'll catch y'all bourgie niggas at the crib later.

LANCE

Don't be late.

Harper watches Quentin and shakes his head before following Lance and Jordan.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

The three of them walk into the luxurious Potomac, MD home that isn't quite lived in yet. There are plenty of packing boxes and furniture draped in blankets, but Harper is clearly impressed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

That 'Skins contract is fat, huh?

LANCE

Qbese, player.

From the top of the stairs Lance's angelic fiancée, MIA floats down the steps heading straight for Harper and hugs him with all her might.

MIA

Ohhh, it is so good to see you, Harper Stewart. How are you?

HARPER

I'm good, Mia. You look great.

MIA

So do you.

LANCE

Damn, baby. How can you tell? You got him all hemmed up.

MIA

(releasing him)  
Shut up, Lance.. Don't pay him any mind, Harper.

LANCE

I don't see why you love that fool so much. He ain't shit.

She holds Harper's arm and looks into his eyes.

MIA

He's a true friend. Always there when you need him. Dependable. And he dedicated his first novel to us.

HARPER

You read my book, too?

MIA

No, but I heard great things.

Harper shoots Jordan a look. She returns a nonchalant shrug.

MIA

So when's that girlfriend of yours coming? I can't wait to meet her.

LANCE

Yeah, dog. You been keeping this one under wraps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

And with good reason. Bringing her around y'all might taint her image of me. But she'll be here Monday.

MIA

You're always so secretive, Harper.

Jordan observes Harper suspiciously. He holds Mia's hand with the engagement ring.

HARPER

Wow! Look at the size of that rock. I'll go blind just looking at it.

JORDAN

She's been doing finger curls just to lift that mug.

MIA

(laughing)  
Stop it, y'all.

HARPER

L, Did you mortgage the house?

LANCE

Ha, ha, ha, mafuckas. There's nothing too good for my Mia.

Jordan and Harper observe Lance and Mia kissing lovingly.

LANCE

I love you, baby.

MIA

I love you, too, boo.

JORDAN

Would y'all please?! Tired of that "Leave it to Beaver" shit. Mia what do you need?

MIA

Girl, the caterer is tripping, the florist screwed up the order, and mama still can't find a dress . . .

JORDAN

Alright, come on. Superwoman's here.

LANCE

Hey, we ain't got all night. We got men stuff to do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MIA

Lance, go away. Show Harper the rest of the house.

Mia pulls Jordan away and then looks back around at Harper.

MIA

It's really good to see you, Harper.

Harper smiles back at her. Lance takes him the opposite direction. Harper briefly pauses at a framed photo of Lance in the end zone praying after just scoring a touchdown. He smiles before following Lance.

HARPER (O.S.)

Front page, kid.

INT. SCHOOL NEWSROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

Harper takes this same photo to show Lance the new front page layout for the newspaper that features this photo and a feature story on "The Sophomore Sensation."

HARPER

We were gonna use the photo where you're dragging the 5 guys from State over the goal line, but this one tells it all.

LANCE

Ooohh. I know you had to fight the white boys about that. They always want that super-nigga shit.

HARPER

Yeah, but me and Jordan squashed that bullshit. Besides, it relates better to the article I wrote. Tells the students who you are.

LANCE

Surprised you took the holy road. You ain't the most spiritual brother I know.

HARPER

It ain't got nothing to do with that, kid. The story is all I care about.

LANCE

Uh-huh. You'll see. Someday you're gonna believe in my God. Our God.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Yeah, whateva, man. So, yo what happened at Pittsburgh, kid?

LANCE

Dog! Twins. Two sets. Waiting for me at the hotel. Some agent hooked it up. Big ass titties, player. Like punching bags . . .

HARPER

Praise the Lord, and pass the panties, huh?

LANCE

Words to live by, dog.

They bust up laughing as Mia comes into the room.

MIA

Harper . . . ? Oh, I'm sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, but here are the ads. And I even convinced Fridays to place one provided that they get the one next to Lance Sullivan's photo.

HARPER

Wow. You got Friday's? That's great.

Lance is impressed by what he sees and clears his throat.

MIA

I'm sorry. Hi, I'm Mia Myers.

LANCE

(mack-daddy vibe)  
The pleasure's mine.

MIA

How nice. But what's your name?

HARPER

That's Lance Sullivan, Mia.

MIA

Oh, you're Lance Sullivan?

LANCE

In the flesh.

MIA

Nice to meet you. I apologize. I didn't recognize you. You look bigger on TV.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Harper chuckles and Lance takes the comment in stride.

MIA

Harper, I've got to get to Econ, but I can take those deposits to the bank if you want?

HARPER

Sure. Thanks.

MIA

Nice meeting you, Lance. Oh, and great game on Saturday.

LANCE

You've seen me play?

MIA

Oh, yeah. I love the game.

Lance smiles at Harper who rolls his eyes.

MIA

But I think you'd get more yardage if you used your offensive line more. They're giving you the holes. Just run through them. And you would want to stop planting so hard on turf. Your knees won't make it to junior year if you keep that up.

Lance is taken aback and Harper chuckles again.

MIA

Think about it, OK? See ya.

She walks out and Harper breaks out laughing.

HARPER

She got you, mack-daddy.

LANCE

Hmmph. She bad. That you, player?

HARPER

Naw, just good friends. You know I don't shit where I eat. Plus, the word is she's saving it.

LANCE

Virgin? Really? You gotta hook me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER

With you?! Hell no. She's a sweet girl. And I'd like to keep her that way. She's on time, does her work ..

LANCE

Come on, Harp. She could be Mrs. Sullivan.

HARPER

So could those four freaks at Pittsburgh, bionic dick . . .

The two ad-lib a debate.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Back in the present Harper ponders his memories as he watches Lance and Mia hug good night. Jordan waits impatiently.

LANCE

Come on, y'all. Let's go.

Harper breaks out of his daze and the three of them leave.

EXT. ADAMS MORGAN -- NIGHT

Lance waits in his Lexus SUV as Harper helps Jordan carry some things to her door. She still hasn't made eye-contact with him.

JORDAN

So, tomorrow. Let's let the station buy us brunch. Pick you up about 11?

HARPER

Splendid, Ms. Armstrong. That fits well in my schedule. Shall I call to confirm?

JORDAN

What? A sister can't be professional?

HARPER

Wooo, some things never change.

JORDAN

Change is overrated.

HARPER

Jordan, you know you could've asked me for a copy of my book.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

What for? You wouldn't have given it to me.

HARPER

Yeah, that's true. But at least I'd know that you were still interested.

JORDAN

(knowing what he means)

Please. Don't play yourself. I just want the exclusive. Fuck Oprah.

HARPER

If that's all it is, how come you can't look me in the face?

Jordan looks right into his eyes.

JORDAN

Harper. Why'd you really leave your girl at home this weekend?

HARPER

(slightly off-balance)

I uh just wanted to hang with the fellas for a minute. Cut up a bit before she got here. That's all.

JORDAN

Uh-huh. Good night, Harper.

Jordan walks to her apartment and Harper smiles.

HARPER

Night, Jordan.

Lance beeps the horn. Harper watches her go into her complex and then he runs back to the car.

INT. QUENTIN & LANCE CRIB -- NIGHT

The fellas sit around the table eating Philly steaks, drinking brew, and bustin' Spades. Lance and Quentin pair up against Harper and Murch.

QUENTIN

We 'bout to run a Boston on y'all niggas. Y'all 'bout to be set.

MURCH

Do you always have to talk trash? You're worse then my kids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Quentin Spivey came out the womb jaw-jacking.

MURCH

Come on. It is just a game.

QUENTIN

That's what all punk-ass losers say.

LANCE

Easy, Mojo. Let the boy alone.

HARPER

Mojo! Shit. I ain't heard that name in a clip. Fuckin' Mojo.

QUENTIN

That's what I put on the ladies when I do my thing.

LANCE

Got 'em turned the fuck out, making breakfast, buying jewelry, and trying to figure why they do it because they really hate your ass.

MURCH

And then drop them like bad habits.

HARPER

He's got them singing, "Mojo, gimme once more chance. Gimme, gimme one more chance."

MURCH & LANCE

Uh-huh, uh-huh.

The fellas bust up laughing.

QUENTIN

I know you ain't talking about leavin' hoes strung out, Harper.

LANCE

Yeah, that's true, player. You the "serial monogamist".

HARPER

What?

QUENTIN

You be havin' girlfriends. Serious public relationships, like "This is my queen" and shit. But if she cross

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN (continued)  
that boundary you set, she gone.

LANCE  
Dismissed. With the quicks.

Fellas laugh at that and even Harper has to chuckle.

MURCH  
That's only because none of them  
have ever measured up to Jordan.

QUENTIN & LANCE  
Uh-huh. Excellent point, counsel  
Murchison. Well done. Sustained.

HARPER  
Aww, get the hell outta here.

MURCH  
You know it's true. Jordan is the  
best girlfriend you never had. You  
guys know they kissed in undergrad?

LANCE  
Up in the newsroom senior year.

MURCH  
You knew about that?

QUENTIN  
Yeah, we knew about that shit.

Murch looks at Harper who just shrugs his shoulders.

QUENTIN  
Nigga, you know you can't keep a  
secret.

MURCH  
That is so messed up.

LANCE  
So, is that the case, Harp? You  
waiting for Jordan to slow down from  
that career path for the Harper  
Stewart rest stop?

HARPER  
Whateva, man. Y'all are buggin'.  
Deal the cards.

QUENTIN  
I can't believe you never hit that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE

Me neither.

HARPER

We were friends, we didn't bone and we're still friends. Call me crazy, but I think there's a correlation.

LANCE

Player, I saw how she was acting around you tonight.

HARPER

What? What did you see?

LANCE

She wanna get with you, Harp.

HARPER

(slight pause)  
I'm in a very fulfilling relationship. Thank you very much.

MURCH

Two years now. Right, Harp?

HARPER

A happy and virtually drama-free two years, gentlemen.

LANCE

She does stand-up comedy, right?

MURCH

I thought she made jewelry.

QUENTIN

You said she was teacher.

HARPER

She's a caterer. Took her awhile to find her creative niche in life.

QUENTIN

Well, you know I can relate. But that don't sound like Jordan.

HARPER

She's not Jordan. She's Robin.

LANCE

Shit. I hope she ain't Jordan.

HARPER

Why you say that, L-Boogie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LANCE

'Cuz Jordan is too damn sassy and independent. And might make more cheese than you someday.

HARPER

Ohhh, so what, L?

LANCE

Hey, I love Jordan. But a woman like that don't need no man. Face it, dog. She's one step from lesbian.

The guys protest and laugh at that.

LANCE

(laughing)

I'm just saying that the only way a relationship works is if the man provides the loot and the woman takes care of shit at home.

HARPER

You're like a caveman from the stone-age.

MURCH

And it is so ironic. I mean guys are always on guard for the gold-diggers and yet they cannot take an educated sister who makes more money.

QUENTIN

We know you don't care, Murch. Your woman runs your ass regardless.

MURCH

Bite it. Okay, Spivey. Bite it.

LANCE

Man, shit. When we get married Mia's not going to be working no more. I'm bringing home the'bacon. And her job will be being my wife and raising our kids.

HARPER

She's gonna be content with that?

QUENTIN

Man, is you kiddin'? Mia can't wait to have that nigga's babies. She old-school like a mug.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LANCE

Thank the good Lord for that too. These chicken heads out here today won't let a man be a man. Mia let's me know I'm running shit.

MURCH

The consummate mother/whore, eh?

LANCE

Word is bond. Every man wants one.

HARPER

So what makes you think you want to get married now, Lance? You been fucking around on her for years. And with that new contract . . .

QUENTIN

Word, shorty. You gonna need a catcher's mit for all the pussy that'll be thrown your way.

LANCE

Man, I been had all the ass 10 men can have. My wild oats are sown. I mean how much ass can one man have?

ALL

A lot.

LANCE

Naw. It's just time, man. Marriage is sacred. My folks been together 35 years. That means something to me.

MURCH

I hear that.

Quentin grumbles.

LANCE

Besides, marriage is going to curb that appetite for more women. Marriage is the cure to promiscuity.

The fellas all laugh at that.

MURCH

Tell that to Frank Gifford.

QUENTIN

Tell it to my pops.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

HARPER

For someone graduated summa cum  
laude you say some dumb shit, L.

LANCE

All I'm saying is there's a time for  
everything. We're in the real world  
now. Real world, real things.

Lance shoots a look to Quentin.

QUENTIN

I don't give a fuck what y'all say.  
Monogamy ain't natural. We ain't  
meant to be with just one person. If  
God had intended it to be that way  
he wouldn't have given us all that  
sperm.

MURCH

Aw man.

QUENTIN

And He wouldn't have bitches out  
number us so much . . .

ALL

(overlapping)

Whoa, whoa, Hey, hey hey cool the  
"bitch" stuff. They queens. Come on.

LANCE

You a philosophy major now?

HARPER

Why not? He's good at bullshit.

The fellas laugh at that, but Quentin takes offense at the  
comment and momentarily glares at Harper.

QUENTIN

Fuck y'all. Y'all know as well as I  
do that ain't nothing better than  
pussy. Except new pussy.

They all agree with that.

QUENTIN

Plus, I don't trust bitches anyway.  
They just as scandalous as niggas.

LANCE

(proudly)

Not all women, player.

Quentin looks over at Harper who returns a stern glare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

QUENTIN

What? You don't think Mia never got with no other dudes?

LANCE

I'm the first, last, and only.

QUENTIN

How do you know?

LANCE

'Cuz the pussy curve to my dick. Besides, I know my little angel.

Lance reaches for another beer and Quentin keeps staring at him.

QUENTIN

As much as you fucked around on her you don't think she's fucked around on you? Not once?

Harper wants to change the subject, but Quentin is pushing the envelope. Lance is getting hot and squeezing his unopened beer.

LANCE

No.

QUENTIN

If she did get her swerve on you know she'd be within her rights.

Lance is getting pissed.

QUENTIN

It's karma, baby.

The beer explodes in Lance's hands. He reaches across the table and grabs Quentin by the collar and violently yanks him to his face. Quentin is unfazed like he's been here before.

LANCE

I gotta take a piss.

He releases Quentin, walks into the bathroom, and slams the door. Harper looks at Quentin who relaxes and goes through his cards again. Harper is sober now.

INT. QUENTIN & LANCE CRIB -- NIGHT

(Later) Murch quickly loses the battle with sleep as Quentin makes a booty call. Harper searches around for the copy of Unfinished Business. He gets Quentin's attention.

QUENTIN

Hold on a second, baby. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER  
(almost whispering)  
The book.

Quentin points unspecifically to the coffee table. Harper sees it, and tries to stash it in his jacket.

LANCE  
Yo.

Harper looks up to see Lance smiling. Harper feigns a smile.

LANCE  
(taking the book)  
You best get your own copy, player.

HARPER  
Oh, well y'know just feeling protective of my shit. Y'know?

LANCE  
Too late for that, dog. I cain't wait to read this mug. I know this shit is tight.

HARPER  
Well, uh go easy, big fella. You've always my toughest critic, Lance . .

LANCE  
Blah, blah, blah, nigga.

HARPER  
Alright.

LANCE  
You're blessed. The Lord is smiling on you . . .

HARPER  
Come on, Lance. Dead that.

LANCE  
You still don't believe?

HARPER  
I make it happen, L. Not some being beyond the clouds possessing me and shit.

Harper does a zombie walk. Lance chuckles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE

You ig'nant, dog. How you think we're as fortunate as we are? We lucky, man. Anyone us could be poor, homeless, or like Quentin.

QUENTIN

I heard that shit. Fuck y'all.

HARPER

If He's in my life I ain't seen him.

LANCE

Yeah you have, player. And you will.

HARPER

Yeah, OK. Tuxedo fitting tomorrow?

LANCE

Yeah, but we gotta push it back to like 7. Mia's got a laundry list of shit for this brother here.

HARPER

Oh, that's cool. Jordan and I . . .

LANCE

Yeah, Jordan. Y'all gonna be smacking bellies this weekend.

HARPER

You never give it a rest do you?

LANCE

Bruh, please. You said you'd marry baby-girl in undergrad. Said y'all would be the power couple and shit.

HARPER

I said that?

LANCE

(nodding)

Kindred spirits. Soul mates. You meant that shit. Old feelings die hard. At least hit it, player.

HARPER

Hit it? Come on, L. What about all that talk about fidelity and being through with promiscuous behavior?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE

I said me. That don't apply to you. Look, I know you got your girl and y'all relationship. But yo. Harp. My brother. My ace. My man. Jordan is fine. For once in you life, go 'head and be a dog, dog.

Harper stares at him a moment and then rubs his temple.

HARPER

I'm getting a headache. Let's go, Murch.

MURCH

(snapping awake)  
Coming dear.

Murch jumps right up and out of the door. Quentin and Lance laugh. Harper can only muster a smile as he takes a look at the book in Lance's hand. He follows Murch out of the door.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

A frazzled Robin concocts another masterpiece as she talks with Harper on the phone. The scene is intercut between locations.

ROBIN

It's not the worst thing in the world. They were all going to read it anyway, right?

HARPER (O.S.)

Yeah, I guess . . .

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Harper, dressed only in stylish boxer shorts, lays out his clothes for the day.

HARPER

But I just don't like things out of my control like that.

ROBIN (O.S.)

I'm sure it'll be fine.

(beat)

Hey. I'm glad you called me . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Yeah, you're probably right. It'll be fine. So, did you decide what you're wearing?

Jordan comes to the door, but pauses at the sight of Harper's half-naked body. She is at first embarrassed, and then takes a full gaze.

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

ROBIN

Not yet.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

HARPER

What about that beige . . . ?

ROBIN (O.S.)

I think I know how to dress for a wedding, Harper. It's under control.

HARPER

Come on. It's not like I'm . . .

Harper turns to discover Jordan standing there and he gets flustered, trying to find something to cover himself. Jordan smiles and acts relaxed.

HARPER

Uh . . . wow. Look at the time.

ROBIN (O.S.)

You gotta go?

HARPER

Uh yeah, I'll talk to . . . what?

INT. ROBIN'S KITCHEN -- DAY

ROBIN

I said, I love you.

HARPER (O.S.)

Okay. I'll call you later. Bye.

Robin looks at the receiver contemplatively.

INT. BEDROOM -- DAY

Jordan smiles bashfully as Harper hangs up the phone.

HARPER

Uh, morning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN  
Good morning.

HARPER  
I'll, uh be ready in a minute.

JORDAN  
Chop, chop. Time is money.

Harper grabs a towel and squeezes past Jordan who makes no conscious attempt to move out of touch this time.

JORDAN  
Nice boxers. But I thought you were strictly a briefs man.

HARPER  
Gift from Robin.

JORDAN  
The girl's got taste.

Jordan smiles as Harper walks into the bathroom.

INT. CHEESECAKE FACTORY -- DAY

Harper and Jordan sit at a booth looking over the menus.

HARPER  
Oh, come on. Don't you think it's time for a hetero-sexual Black man to be on the best-seller list? Black women writers have cornered the market for years. If I read one more novel where the Black man is unemployed, a dog, can't fuck ...

JORDAN  
Ohh, here we go ...

HARPER  
You know it's true. That's all they talk about ...

JORDAN  
If they ain't talking about you what difference does it make?

HARPER  
I just hope I'm given the same leeway.

JORDAN  
Well, I can't give you no leeway. You are talking about me. And you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harper smiles and Jordan tries to fight one back.

HARPER

You ever think about that night?

Just then Jordan's phone rings and she picks it up immediately. Harper watches his friend thoughtfully and keeps smiles.

JORDAN

Anita? Hey. Um-hmm. We're having  
brunch now. Of course.

(laughing)

Okay. Bye.

The waiter comes over.

WAITER

You guys ready to order?

HARPER

Jordan, you go. I'll be ready soon.

Jordan looks at him as he scans the menu. She smiles.

JORDAN

We'll share the spinach quesadilla  
appetizer . . .

Harper looks up from his menu at her. He is intrigued.

JORDAN

And he'll have the linguine with  
grilled chicken and sun-dried  
tomatoes, side ceasar, and an iced  
tea with lemon. Unsweetened.

Harper closes up his menu and looks at her.

JORDAN

The ceasar with grilled shrimp for  
me . . .

HARPER

And a diet coke with lime?

JORDAN

Right.

WAITER

OK. Right away, guys. Thanks.

He walks away and Harper smiles at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN

Oh, please. You always order the same thing. You haven't changed.

HARPER

You know me that well, huh?

JORDAN

'Fraid so.

EXT. WASHINGTON MONUMENTS (THE MALL) -- DAY

Harper & Jordan walk amongst the tourists and the cherry blossoms.

HARPER

That Anita is a real go-getter, huh?

JORDAN

Anita is the shit, boy. She's got me under her wing, showing a sister how to thrive in this business.

HARPER

Uh-huh. She's very aggressive.

JORDAN

She just seizes her opportunities like any smart, professional person would do.

HARPER

Alright. Easy now.

JORDAN

They don't be giving Black women but so many shots. Shit.

HARPER

She got a man?

JORDAN

Why? What difference does that make?

HARPER

It's just a question.

JORDAN

(pause)

No. Her career is her "man".

HARPER

You got any kind of social life?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN  
(uncomfortable)  
I mean not really. Personal and professional cross over so much that I don't even know where the line is anymore. But I'm fine with it. Sacrifice is the name of the game.

HARPER  
You can't let work consume you.

JORDAN  
What?! Please. That doesn't even sound like you.

HARPER  
Maybe I'm maturing.

JORDAN  
Maybe you're full of shit. I know how badly you want that lime-light. I see it. I recognize it in myself.

HARPER  
Really?

JORDAN  
Don't play coy. You recognize it too. You made that painfully obvious with your depiction of "Kendall".

HARPER  
I call it like I see it.

JORDAN  
Only where you're not concerned, Slackson Jackson. 'Cuz you are exactly the same.

HARPER  
Peas in a pod, huh?

JORDAN  
(nodding)  
Ummm-hmmm. Your girl must be real patient or real dumb.

HARPER  
Hey, Robin deals with it. She understands that I had dreams of my life way before I thought about her. But she's starting to get that itch.

JORDAN  
Ooooh. The "m"-word, huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER  
You better believe it.

JORDAN  
And you have a problem with that?

HARPER  
I mean, yeah. Marriage, moving in together, the last person you'll ever have sex with? That's wild.

JORDAN  
Least you're getting some on the regular.

HARPER  
Ohhh. No action, huh?

JORDAN  
8 months and counting. Longer than that if we're talking good sex.

HARPER  
All work and no play makes . . .

JORDAN  
. . . Jordan a horny nut basket.

Harper laughs as Jordan takes a seat on a bench. Harper sits next to her.

JORDAN  
I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I let myself go that night. If we both had.

HARPER  
Yeah?

JORDAN  
The way it is in your book is exactly how I pictured it.

HARPER  
That close?

JORDAN  
Damn near. You ever had that kind of sex for real?

HARPER  
(pause)  
Well. Not exactly. But close.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JORDAN

For real? Where can a sister get some from?

HARPER

(laughing)

You could have had some once upon a time.

JORDAN

If I'da known how you'd turn out maybe I would have.

(pause)

Maybe I still can.

Jordan looks off into space. Harper isn't sure he heard her correctly.

HARPER

What did you say?

JORDAN

Nothing. Let's get back to this interview.

Jordan gets up and walks away and Harper follows her.

INT. PENTAGON CITY MALL -- DAY

Harper is on the phone. Across the mall Jordan browses half-heartedly in Victoria's Secrets. She fingers some sexy lingerie and signals to approaching sales reps that she's just looking. Harper watches her as he prepares to leave Robin a message.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Hey, this is Robin. Leave me a message.

HARPER

(after the beep)

Hey, boo. Just thinking about you.

Hope you're enjoying your day ...

(pause)

I uh, lo-

Her machine beeps off. Jordan holds a sexy kimono up to her as she looks in a mirror. She bashfully shakes her head and hangs it back up. Harper hangs up the phone.

INT. BLOOMINGDALES -- DAY

Jordan stares at Harper as he and the saleswoman search the shelves and check the registry list of remaining gifts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

I'm going for the pasta bowls and serving utensils.

The saleswoman gathers up the order.

JORDAN

Good choice. You ever had Mia's shrimp scampi and angel hair?

HARPER

Shiiit, what? The bomb, baby. She used to cook at the drop of a hat. Good shit too. Remember?

JORDAN

Hell yeah. That girl can throw down.

HARPER

That she can.  
(wistful pause)  
That girl's got a lot of talent.

Jordan stares at Harper who spends one moment too long in a pensive state. By the time he looks at Jordan a light has already come on in her head. Her eyes widen.

JORDAN

Oh. My. God.

HARPER

What is wrong with you?

JORDAN

You scandalous motherfucker.

HARPER

OK. While you're tripping, I'll pay for this.

Harper walks toward the check out counter shaking his head. She follows in pleasurable astonishment.

JORDAN

It makes perfect sense. We just switched places.

HARPER

(to the salesman)  
Could you wrap that please?

JORDAN

Mia's Kacey, you're Jackson and I'm . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER  
Buggin' the fuck out.

JORDAN  
I'm Kendall. Jackson gives me  
earthquake sex . . .

HARPER  
Earthquake sex . . ?

JORDAN  
But you and I never had sex. And all  
Kacey and Jackson do is sleep in the  
same bed together like we used to do  
all the time.

HARPER  
So what does that mean?

JORDAN  
Oh. You're good. You are the shit!

HARPER  
Jordan, I think the stress of the  
wedding is really getting to you.

Harper leans over and kisses her forehead. Jordan squeals.

JORDAN  
That's it. The forehead kiss. Oh my  
God. It's a dead give-away. That's  
your signature. It's legendary.

HARPER  
(pause)  
What? What do you mean "forehead  
kiss"?

JORDAN  
Oh, your forehead kiss is very  
endearing. Damn near erotic. Shit,  
you nearly got me with it. It's  
passionate. It's loving. It's . . .

HARPER  
Bullshit. It's a book I wrote: a  
fictional account of some  
experiences I had, some people I  
knew. Something I've been wanting to  
do for a long time.

JORDAN  
Right. To purge yourself. To right  
the wrongs. To live out fantastic  
missed opportunities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER

There she is ladies and gentlemen:  
Dr. Ruth Blackheimer.

JORDAN

Whoah. Wait a minute. Are you crazy?

HARPER

You're asking me that?

JORDAN

You dedicated the book to them. I mean, do you want to be found out? That's sick.

HARPER

You're right because what you're suggesting is totally ludicrous. Use your head.

JORDAN

Well, if Lance figures out what went down when he reads it, you better use your feet and run.

HARPER

First of all, you need a sedative. And secondly, Lance is grounded and has got a million important things to keep his mind from wandering on outlandish flights of fancy from reading Unfinished Business. As a matter of fact, he won't even finish it. At least not before the wedding. He won't have time.

INT. LANCE & QUENTIN'S CRIB -- DAY

Lance reads from the book and it's more than half finished.

LANCE

"White boys admired his prowess on the hardwood and his reputation with the ladies. They secretly deemed him 'The Ebony Humper'" This shit is hilarious, boy.

Harper stands dumbfounded at the door with Jordan.

JORDAN

See you later on at the church.

Harper is completely focused on Lance as Jordan exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER  
It's okay, L-baby.

LANCE  
She won't even talk to me, man. It's been over a week.

HARPER  
Lance, she's real upset, man . . .

LANCE  
I can't lose her, man. I love her. I can't live without her . . .

HARPER  
(overlapping)  
Lance, Lance! You gotta tell her that, man. She's hurting. When she found out about the honeys at the Cotton Bowl . . .

LANCE  
I know, I know. Fuck!!  
(drops to his knees)  
Lord forgive me and my wayward dick.  
(grabs & looks at his penis)  
What the fuck is wrong with you!!

Harper is on edge and feeling awkward.

LANCE  
I'm a low mafucka man. Low!!

HARPER  
I know what you mean.

LANCE  
I gotta make this right, Harp. Can't lose her over this dumb shit. I love her, and I'm so sorry.

Lance breaks down again and Harper hugs him.

HARPER  
Did you tell her that? That's all you really have to say. I'm sorry.

Lance bawls and Harper comforts him as best he can. Lance shoves the Bible into Harper's hands and starts praying. Harper rolls his eyes at this all-too familiar ritual.

LANCE  
Isaiah 41:13, Harp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

HARPER  
You've been reading.

LANCE  
Hell yeah.

HARPER  
I uh didn't think you'd have time.

LANCE  
Yeah, me neither. I had insomnia last night tho, duke. Woooo! I am on edge. Thought your book would knock me out. But I should have known better. Quentin was right. This is a page-turner like a mug.

HARPER  
(nervous)  
Ha, ha. Quentin said that, huh?

LANCE  
It's a good thing you changed this dude to a hoop star 'cuz I'd have to disassociate myself from this shit. This mafucka banged many hoes. I'm flattered, but yo, was I that bad?

HARPER  
Yes. You were.

LANCE  
(grinning)  
Yeah, you right. Cain't deny it. Ha ha.

Lance walks toward the kitchen with his face buried in the book.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

In a dimly lit room Harper paces the floor, talking to himself. A loud banging at the door startles him.

LANCE (O.S.)  
Harp!! Harp!! Open up, man. Harp!!

Harper takes a breath before answering to find Lance drunk, crying, and with his Bible. He collapses into Harper's arms.

LANCE  
Harp, man. Help me. Help me, Harp.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER  
L, you know I don't . . .

Lance grabs Harper's right hand. He is very uncomfortable.

HARPER  
(sighing)  
Is that old or new testament?

LANCE  
New.

HARPER  
(finding it)  
"I am holding you by your right hand -  
I the Lord your God and I say to you -  
Don't be afraid: I am here to help  
you."

LANCE  
Yes. Lord, yes, Jesus. Help me.

HARPER  
Lance, my hand, kid . . .

LANCE  
(crying)  
Isaiah 1:18.

HARPER  
"Come, let's talk this over! Says  
the Lord. No matter how deep the  
stain of your sins, I can take it  
out & make you as clean as freshly  
fallen snow . . .

LANCE  
Take it away, Lord. Please.

HARPER  
"I can make you as white as wool . . ."

The fellas ad-lib some more prayer together.

EXT. GEORGETOWN PARK -- DAY

Harper watches Lance finish signing autographs for a couple of giggling female groupies. Nearby Quentin and Murch get cash from the ATM. Lance catches Harper smiling as the groupies depart.

LANCE  
I know what you're gonna say.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

They practically threw the panties  
at you. Teddy Pendergrass style, L.

Quentin and Murch join them as they walk up the block.

LANCE

Well, you better take notes, player.  
You're gonna have to beat random  
honeys off with a stick soon.

QUENTIN

Who? Harp? Please.

LANCE

Shit yeah, player. After he does  
Oprah it's on. Honeys be approaching  
brothers in the limelight.

HARPER

Sounds enticing.

MURCH

Sounds like fun.

QUENTIN

Be like jail-break for you, Murch.

LANCE

Yup. Harper ain't never gonna have  
to work for no unsolicited, quality  
ass again. Panties will drop without  
coercion, cuddling, caressing, or  
hah ha ha ..

HARPER

What, L? What's so funny?

LANCE

. . . or kissing on the forehead to  
get 'em moist.

Harper hopes that he heard wrong. Quentin perks up.

HARPER & QUENTIN

What?

LANCE

You know when Harp kissed babes on  
the forehead, drawers dropped with  
the quicks.

MURCH

Is that true?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA

What? What we shared was as sweet and endearing as a forehead kiss. It was what I needed. What I wanted. He was a gentleman. A friend. I'll always love him for that.

Jordan is floored.

MIA

So, pearl or diamond earrings?

INT. TUXEDO RENTAL SHOP -- DAY

Murch and Quentin stand in front of the mirrors checking how their tuxedos fit. Quentin takes extra care with each piece of clothing. A frustrated Murch can't get his to fit correctly.

QUENTIN

Murch, my man, bohos like you weren't meant to wear fine Italian designer tuxedos. But a handsome, debonair player like me? I'm pimping this mafucka.

MURCH

You know I have got my own style . . . never mind.

Murch walks away and Harper steps into the mirror.

HARPER

Mojo's on the prowl again, huh?

QUENTIN

... And you don't stop 'til the panties drop. Gots to represent up in there, shorty. You know how many single honeys be at weddings hoping to meet a handsome devil such as myself? It's gonna be a hoasis up in that piece.

HARPER

It's funny. If you put half the effort into your future as you do into impressing women . . .

QUENTIN

Nigga, I'm a pimp. So my future's mighty bright. Thank you very much.

Harper shakes his head and busies himself in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER  
(nervous laughter)  
You know it didn't work that way. I  
never did it to get ass . . .

LANCE  
Bullshit, nigga. You ain't slick.

QUENTIN  
Yeah, nigga. You ain't slick.

LANCE  
Honeys love that tender, sensitive,  
paternal stuff. Mia's the same way.

QUENTIN  
Oh, Mia too, huh?

Harper glares at Quentin who implodes with laughter.

QUENTIN  
Y'know, I tried that shit once. And  
it didn't work for me. Guess I ain't  
as authentic as ol' Harp.

Harper is in a panic. Quentin pats him on the back as they go  
into the tuxedo rental shop.

INT. LANCE & MIA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mia, in her virgin-white wedding dress, stands in front of a 3-  
way mirror as Jordan places her veil.

MIA  
A forehead kiss?

Jordan nods. Mia smiles at the thought.

JORDAN  
So?

MIA  
So, what?

JORDAN  
So what?! Mia?!

MIA  
Jordan, good girls never tell.

JORDAN  
Bitch, don't make me stick you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Everything set for the bachelor party tonight?

QUENTIN

Hell yeah, shorty. Pops givin' me the key to the penthouse suite tonight. That shit is gonna be ig'nant. Off the hook. Luke dancers, youngin'. Luke dancers.

HARPER

Big Poppa still trying to groom you for hotel management?

QUENTIN

Only for the past 20 years. But I ain't tryin' to hear that shit. Dealing with payroll, unions, complaining guests . . .

HARPER

I guess it's too much like a job.

QUENTIN

Fuck you, nigga. You ain't my judge.

HARPER

Hey, I'm just trying to . . .

QUENTIN

Y'know, it's amazing how you be analyzing other mafuckas' shit and don't do the same for your own ass.

HARPER

Lower your voice, Q . . .

QUENTIN

You done dirt too, mafucka. And you'll do more.

Harper looks over his shoulder to see Lance looking at them.

QUENTIN

Yeah, that's right. You're gonna fuck Jordan this weekend. You ain't no better than the rest of us. Your shit just ain't caught up to you yet.

Harper can't say anything because Lance has approached.

LANCE

Everything cool over here . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

QUENTIN  
(walking away).  
Cooler than a fan, cat.

LANCE  
Harp, what's up?

HARPER  
Nothing, man. It's just, y'know, Q.

LANCE  
Yeah, I know. You can't change that  
fool though.

HARPER  
What you see is what you get.

LANCE  
Yep. Least he's honest. More than  
you can say for most mafuckas.

Harper takes silent offense to that comment, but knows that  
truer words have never been spoken.

INT. LANCE'S LEXUS SUV -- NIGHT

The fellas ride in silence until Murch looks at his watch.

MURCH  
Lance, may I use your phone?

LANCE  
Sure, player . . .

Murch reaches for the phone and Quentin intervenes.

QUENTIN  
Yo, hold up. Who you callin', Murch?

MURCH  
Shelby.

QUENTIN  
Uh-uh. No.

MURCH  
Excuse me?

QUENTIN  
I said no, man. You gotta stop  
letting her know your every move.

Murch tries to wrestle the phone from Quentin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH

Cut it out, Quentin. I am not playing.

QUENTIN

Yeah, but you gettin' played, dog.

HARPER

Leave him alone, Q.

QUENTIN

Naw, fuck that. It's time for him to be a man.

MURCH

You are such an a-hole.

QUENTIN

And she's a . . .

MURCH

Don't you dare!

QUENTIN

Come on, Murch. You know you don't like how that ho run you. None of us like it, dog.

Murch sits with his arms folded.

QUENTIN

Man, you gotta get firm with her. I mean, when she say "jump" you need to be like "off my nuts, Shelby".

Harper and Lance chuckle at that.

QUENTIN

Like with this bachelor party tonight. I don't want to see you all uptight and shit. Get loose tonight. And don't go home to her.

MURCH

You are talking crazy now.

QUENTIN

No, I'm not. Listen, just trust me.

Murch reluctantly lets go of the receiver.

INT. FIRST AWE -- NIGHT

All the wedding party has just gone through the rehearsal process. Jordan talks with Lance, but he is clearly impatient.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

Lance, I'm not trying to exploit you. It'll be tastefully done . . .

LANCE

This is not a media event, Jordan. It's our wedding day.

JORDAN

It's only gonna be one camera . . .

LANCE

This is one day where I don't want no microphones or bright lights up in my face. Is that too much to ask?

JORDAN

Lance, I just . . .

LANCE

Some things are sacred. Like between a man and a woman? But I guess you don't know anything about that.

Jordan takes offense as Mia comes over to squelch the conflict.

MIA

Hey, hey. Easy you two . . .

LANCE

No. My mind is made up

Lance walks away as Jordan still feels the sting of his words.

MIA

I'm sorry, J. He's stressed . . .

Jordan nods and watches Mia go over to comfort her man. She wraps her arms around him and makes him smile. Jordan observes them. She shakes her head and breathes out.

JORDAN

(to herself)

What am I doing?

Harper comes up behind her and puts his firm hands on her shoulders. She nearly jumps at his touch.

HARPER

You alright?

JORDAN

Y-yeah. Yeah. No biggie.

Mia and Lance kiss. Harper smiles at that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Are they disgusting or what?

She turns to Harper with something on her mind. She grabs his arm and walks him away.

JORDAN

Let me talk to you for a second.

Quentin watches them walk away and he nods his head knowingly. He spies Shelby playing watch dog, fussing over Murch.

SHELBY

Hmmph. Mia's got some nerve not putting me in this wedding.

MURCH

Well, you guys aren't really friends are you?

SHELBY

Are we a little snippy this evening?

MURCH

Sorry.

Quentin smacks his forehead in disbelief. He puts himself in Murch's line of vision.

SHELBY

Why didn't you call me to tell me how the tuxedo fit?

MURCH

Um Lance's phone was broken?

SHELBY

You guys are wearing the Armani's right?

Quentin signals him to do all sorts of contrary things. Murch tries his best to ignore him, but he has problems doing that.

MURCH

Yes.

SHELBY

(overlapping)

Because you cannot wear an American cut. It does nothing for your frame.

MURCH

(sigh)

Shelby . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHELBY

While we're on the subject, are you taking that job with the firm?

MURCH

How is that on the subject?

SHELBY

Armani suits. Prestigious law firm. Need I say more?

Quentin signals for him to drive in a dagger.

MURCH

Uh, Shelby. I'm just not sure yet.

SHELBY

Well, honey you can not keep babysitting those ghetto children forever. You have to get a real job.

Quentin yells at Murch with his eyes to be more forceful.

MURCH

I do not want to talk about this. I am not going to talk about this now.

Hesitantly, Murch walks away and cracks a half-smile. Shelby is taken aback and goes after him. Quentin pumps his fist proudly.

INT. CHURCH ANTEROOM -- NIGHT

Harper paces back and forth as Jordan talks to him.

JORDAN

Calm down. You don't have to worry.

HARPER

Why did you have to say anything to her at all?

JORDAN

I was curious.

HARPER

Oh Jesus Christ.

Harper sits down with his head in his hands.

JORDAN

I've got something else to tell you.

HARPER

Something less dramatic please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

I want to make love to you tonight.

Harper slowly looks up at her in awe but is speechless.

JORDAN

I think our opportunity has come again. I don't want to let it pass by twice. I've been thinking about it and the truth is I don't want to end up like Anita with no balance in my life. Constantly climbing to get to the top. And for what? To be alone? Uh-uh. Look, I know this is a bit much. But I hope you'll say yes.

HARPER

Wow. I, Jordan. Wow. How- How do you expect me to react to this?

JORDAN

I don't know what to expect. I only know what I want. What I need. Let's have our night. And then we'll see.

HARPER

But, Jordan, Robin is coming . . .

Jordan leans over and kisses him. It's not deep and long but it's soft and passionate. Harper kisses back with conviction.

JORDAN

Don't answer now. Think about it.

Harper still feels the passion of her kiss as Jordan walks out of the room. Harper sits there and then looks heavenward.

HARPER

What are you doing to me?

Harper remembers that he's an atheist and snaps out of it.

HARPER

(walking out)

Myself. I was talking to myself.

INT. RESTAURANT (REHEARSAL DINNER) -- NIGHT

The families and friends all sit down to the rehearsal dinner. Mia and Lance ring their glasses to get everyone's attention.

MIA

Thank you all for coming to share this time with us. We are so overjoyed that so many of you came from

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA (continued)  
all over to be here this weekend.  
(looking at Lance)  
I am so in love with this man here.

Everyone claps and gushes with "Awwws".

MIA  
I wish I could take the sole credit  
for getting swept off of my feet,  
but I can't. Lance certainly played  
a part in that. And that new  
contract didn't hurt either.

Everyone laughs.

MIA  
But seriously, none of this would  
have been possible without our  
friend, our counselor, our liaison,  
our best man, Harper Stewart.

Harper is a little embarrassed as everyone applauds him and pats  
his back. Lance looks at Mia and then at Harper. He is leery of  
their exchange. Mia blows Harper a kiss.

MIA  
We love you, Harper.

Harper blows a collective kiss back.

MIA  
Lance?

LANCE  
(dazed)  
Uh, yeah right. Yeah. I think Mia  
said it all. Yeah. Now y'all eat up  
'cuz it's paid for.

Everyone laughs again and gets set to eat. Harper excuses  
himself and heads to the bathroom. Lance sees him and follows.  
He passes by Shelby and Murch as a waiter takes their order.

WAITER  
Grilled prime rib or the baked sole?

Murch is set to answer and Shelby intercedes.

SHELBY  
We'll have the sole.

MURCH  
(beat)  
I'll have the prime rib.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Shelby is shocked, but she composes herself.

SHELBY  
Julian, the sole will be better for  
you . . .

MURCH  
Shel, I don't want the sole.

Shelby gets self-conscious. The waiter doesn't know what to do.

SHELBY  
Julian . . .

MURCH  
I don't even like sole. I want red  
meat. If it clogs my colon so be it.

Shelby clams up wanting to respond. Murch smiles.

MURCH  
Prime rib, please. Thank you.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Harper stands in the urinal when Lance comes in.

HARPER  
ELL! S'up, baby?

Lance locks the door and turns to Harper with a deadly serious  
look on his face. Harper is concerned.

LANCE  
Harp, I've been thinking. Listening  
to Mia just now and reading your  
book has really made me think. Do  
some soul searching. Y'know?

Harper flushes and goes to the sink.

HARPER  
(nervous)  
Oh oh, yeah?

LANCE  
Yeah. I realized something. I owe  
you a lot, man. Mia's right. You  
kept us together.

HARPER  
Come on, man. Ain't no need . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE

Naw. Naw. You could have easily dogged me out to Mia 'cuz I know how close you and your "little sister" are. I know that there were times that you thought I didn't deserve her. And you were probably right.

HARPER

Lance, who am I to judge . . . ?

LANCE

You're everything, Harp. Thank you. I promise you I'm going to make her happy, and I'm going to be faithful.

HARPER

Well . . . good.

Harper is really uncomfortable with Lance staring at him. There is silence for a few beats. Harper washes his hands again.

HARPER

So this is it, huh?

LANCE

Yeah, man. Not a moment too soon.

HARPER

Lance, man. You always set the standard. And I've always admired that. I mean the football, the honeys, even your spirituality. And now you're getting fucking married! The ultimate step. How can you . . . ?

LANCE

Harp, I have to. I'm strong in mind and body, but emotionally, I'm weak. I need Mia. She's the one who makes me whole. She's my earth. My queen.

HARPER

Man, I am so far from that.

LANCE

When the time is right you'll know.

HARPER

I'm not so sure, Lance. I mean Robin's great, but is she the woman I'm supposed to grow old with? I'm finally coming into my own and now I'm supposed to commit to her? Do I even really know how to commit?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE

You committed to that book.

HARPER

Yeah. But that was on my terms. I had sole control. And when I don't have it, I fuck up. And I don't wanna fuck up no more, man.

LANCE

We're human, Harp. We supposed to fuck up. Lord knows I know . . .

HARPER

No, you don't understand, L. I mean really fuck up . . .

LANCE

I understand, Harp. And I am not afraid. God has told me that this is right. I made Him a promise that if He gave me another chance with Mia. I'd do right by her. She's forgiven me for all my indiscretions, and that's amazing. So if she slept with someone else . . .

He takes a deep breath as tears well up in his eyes.

HARPER

(anxious)

What?

LANCE

I'd just have to deal with it. I wouldn't even question her about it.

HARPER

Just from faith in God?

Lance nods. Harper studies Lance's face for a long time and looks heavenward for a moment. He takes a deep breath.

HARPER

Lance, I gotta say something to you.

LANCE

What's up, dog?

Just then someone tries to open the bathroom door. Harper reconsiders. Lance opens the door and his UNCLE SKEETER enters.

LANCE

What's happening, Uncle Skeeter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

UNCLE SKEETER  
Some fine gals in there, boy. Don't see why you wanna get married.

LANCE  
Because I don't want 5 alimony payments like yo' ass.

UNCLE SKEETER  
Ain't too old to whup you, boy.

LANCE  
You and what platoon, big Skeet?

UNCLE SKEETER  
Did I ever tell you 'bout W.W. II?

LANCE  
Aww here we go . . .

HARPER  
Yo, L, man. I'ma go eat.

LANCE  
I don't blame ya, player. Get your grub on . . . Oh yo, what'd you wanna tell me?

HARPER  
Nothing. Just . . . congratulations.

They smile at one another and Harper walks out.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

(Continuous) As Harper comes out he runs smack dab into Jordan on her way to the ladies' room. Their bodies press against one another for a few beats and they smile at one another. Harper tries to side-step her and she accidentally side-steps with him. They nervously laugh and then look in each other's eyes. Then they brush away from one another in opposite directions simultaneously sighing relief.

INT. RESTAURANT REHEARSAL DINNER -- NIGHT

(Later) Mia and Lance present the wedding party with gifts: silk robes and boxers for the groomsmen and Coach change purses for the bridesmaids. Quentin models his robe for and flirts with Mia's cousins. He spies Shelby and Murch in debate and eavesdrops for a progress report. As expected: high drama.

SHELBY  
You know I really don't appreciate you embarrassing me in front of everybody like that . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH

Shel, why do you always do this?

SHELBY

I'm doing something to you? I wasn't aware of that. I'm trying to help you. If I'm guilty of caring too much for you then sentence me now.

MURCH

God, you are so dramatic!

Quentin is shocked himself at those words coming from Murch.

QUENTIN

Everything cool, y'all?

MURCH

Peachy.

Murch walks away to greet other guests.

QUENTIN

Shelby?

SHELBY

Fuck off, Quentin.

She goes after Murch with a vengeance.

EXT. REHEARSAL DINNER -- NIGHT

Harper stands with Jordan in the doorway of the restaurant as family members hug the bride and the groom good-night.

JORDAN

(slightly buzzed)

So are you coming by after all that drinking and lap-dancing?

HARPER

I'm gonna call you later.

JORDAN

Well, don't have me waiting too long.

HARPER

No doubt.

JORDAN

This is our night, Harper. It's in the stars. I know you feel it too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA  
(from her car)  
Jordan! Girl, come on.

JORDAN  
I hope you're wearing those boxers I  
like.

Jordan walks away toward the cars and Harper can't help but smile to himself. Quentin exits the building dangling the penthouse keys from his fingertips. Lance's frat brothers, teammates, and cousins woof and carry on. Quentin and Lance smile.

QUENTIN  
Shorty, you got no idea what type of  
ig'nant shit we 'bout to set off  
tonight.

LANCE  
Lead the way, dog.

Quentin leads the boisterous crowd to the parking lot. Meanwhile, Murch continues to get drama from Shelby.

SHELBY  
Are you going to this juvenile  
bachelor party?

MURCH  
Of course I am. And it is not  
juvenile.

SHELBY  
Oh, come on. I'm sure your boyz from  
the 'hood would fit right in.

MURCH  
You really need to stop talking  
about my kids.

SHELBY  
Well, you need to stay with me  
tonight. There are some unresolved  
issues between us, and I think we  
should tackle them now rather than  
give them time to fester . . .

MURCH  
I am not going to do that, Shelby.

SHELBY  
Well, what am I supposed to do while  
you're out doing God knows what with  
some low-class hoochie-mothers?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Murch just looks at him like a whipped dog. Quentin points out the phone.

QUENTIN  
You whipped, man. It's pitiful.

Murch ignores him and heads straight for the phone.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper looks at the breathtaking view of the Washington DC skyline as Lance searches through his suitcase.

LANCE  
In all the madness, I almost forgot.

In his rummaging, Lance tosses the preview copy of Unfinished Business on the bed. Harper zeroes in on the book. Lance pulls out a small jewelry box and a scrolled up piece of paper and shows them to Harper who is thoroughly distracted.

HARPER  
(spacey)  
What's that?

LANCE  
My vows and the rings, dog. You still my best man ain't you?

HARPER  
Yeah, of course.

LANCE  
Best man got to carry the rings.

Lance opens up the box with matching wedding bands.

HARPER  
Wow. Those are . . . they're beautiful, Lance.

LANCE  
Thanks. 5K platinum. Gold is played.

Harper puts the rings and vows in his jacket. Then he sneaks a peek at the book on the bed. Lance grabs him around the neck.

LANCE  
Come on. Let's get our drink on, fool . . .

They start to walk out but then Harper stops short.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURCH

Shel, that's really not my problem.

SHELBY

Ohhh. Not your problem?

Murch has hit a nerve and looks like he might wither.

SHELBY

Alright. Fine. Go. Go to your stupid-  
little-boys-only-bachelor-raunch-o-  
rama-shindig. I don't care. Go.

Shelby starts the quivering lip. Murch looks at her and looks over to the fellas who are loading up into the cars. He sighs.

MURCH

Alright. Fine.

Shelby begins to smile.

MURCH

See you in the morning.

Murch walks away and Shelby can't believe it. The fellas all cheer, woof, and chant, "Murch! Murch! Murch!" Murch doesn't smile. He gets in the car and looks back at Shelby who stands there with her arms folded and giving him the evil eye. Murch is clearly conflicted about his decision. He may have gone too far.

INT. PENTHOUSE (BACHELOR PARTY) -- NIGHT

The hoard of guys spill out into the plush penthouse room and it is laid out: big screen TV, VCR, video games, a pool table, dominoes and spades tables, fully stocked bar, porno mags, and lots of erotic treats from chocolate breasts to cakes shaped like naked women.

QUENTIN

Welcome to paradise gentlemen!

They all check out the surroundings in awesome wonder.

LANCE

Harp, I gotta give you something . . .

Harper and Lance walk to another room.

MURCH

Quentin, where's the phone?

QUENTIN

(with contempt)

Murch . . .

(CONTINUED)

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Murch listens to Shelby's answering machine.

SHELBY (O.S.)

If this is anyone other than my selfish, thoughtless, spineless, excuse for a boyfriend, Julian Murchison please leave a detailed message, and I will be happy to get back to you. Thank you.

Quentin comes over to Murch with a tall mixed drink.

MURCH

Shelby, I know you're there. Please pick up the phone. Honey, I am so sorry that I didn't talk at . . .

Quentin snatches the receiver from Murch and hangs it up.

MURCH

Quentin, what are you doing?

Quentin stops him with his finger over Murch's mouth.

QUENTIN

Shhh. Drink.

Murch looks at him, clinks glasses and then he drinks.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

The stag party is in full effect as evidenced by a montage of slamming dominoes, clinking glasses, shuffled cards, smoke rings, and major trash talking. Lance comes through the room to see everyone having a good time except for a twisted Murch having a conversation with himself about Shelby.

MURCH

Fuck that bitch! But I love her, man. But you love your people. Power to the people! We're the future of America. But what about the future of Black America? You can't abandon the kids. They need you. She needs me too. Who? You motherfucker. Shhh.

Murch looks up to see Lance and he smiles.

MURCH

Hey, Lance. I love you, man. Big motherfucker. Shhh.

Lance shakes his head and walks over to the dominoes table to get Quentin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE

Say, dog. Murch is trippin'. Keep an eye on him. And don't let him drink no more, aw-ite?

QUENTIN

Bet, shorty.

Lance walks over to the pool table as Quentin gets up to take care of Murch. Harper steps in front of him with a haughty grin and clearly feeling the effects of the alcohol. Quentin returns a wry look and then attends to Murch.

HARPER

Oh, it's like that, Mojo? You mad?

QUENTIN

Shorty, I'm busy right now. Gimme that drink, Murch . . .

Murch snatches it back and gets in Quentin's face.

MURCH

Why, Quentin? Why did you make me do it?

Quentin snatches the drink.

QUENTIN

Shut up, Murch. This is the best thing for you.

HARPER

And this is the best thing for Lance & Mia.

MURCH

But she hates me now . . .

HARPER

By the time he reads it they'll be happily married. He won't even think twice about those ambiguous words.

MURCH

Oh God. I think I'm gonna be sick.

Murch runs to the bathroom covering his mouth.

QUENTIN

Yo, if you feel good about it, case closed. End of story.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

I'll be there in a second, L. Gotta  
drain the main vein. Knowhutumsain'?

LANCE

Bet. Hurry up.

Lance walks out and Harper turns to the bathroom. When Lance is out of sight Harper grabs the copy of Unfinished Business and holds it like it's gold. Just then Quentin passes by the door and sees exactly what Harper is doing. The two exchange a pointed stare as Harper stashes it in his jacket. Quentin glares at Harper before walking away. Harper breathes easy, exits the room and gets more confident with each step.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Guys are all loud and boisterous except for Murch who sits on the couch talking into the receiver.

MURCH

Shelby, don't hang up again . . . !

She does. Murch presses the redial button.

INT. PENTHOUSE KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Lance and Harper laugh with the rest of the party goers. Lance pours shot glasses of 180% proof grain alcohol for everyone.

LANCE

To that fat-ass contract and my phat  
ass bride to be. Hah hah.

The fellas all laugh and drink. Harper is already buzzed. They all wince and chase the shot with beer.

HARPER

Ahh!! Hit me off again, son!!

LANCE

Aww shit!! You 'bout to do your  
thang tonight ain't ya?

Harper smiles. Lance smiles back at him.

LANCE

You dirty dog! Oooh, you so nasty.  
But I ain't mad at 'cha. Ha ha.

Lance happily pours again and Harper drinks it down.

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Why are you acting like I did something to you?

QUENTIN

You gave me your fuckin' skeletons when I didn't want 'em.

HARPER

Quentin, you were the only one I could trust at the time. I needed your help. Just like you've needed mine from time to time.

QUENTIN

Well we even now. Aw-ite? I'm taking that shit to the grave. And you can stop the job interviews and shit. I'd rather be unemployed for life than have to carry some more of your guilt for another 5 years.

Quentin heads back for the dominoes table. Harper isn't fazed and grabs Quentin by the arm. They stare each other down.

HARPER

You know you haven't changed a bit. You're still the same spoiled, rich brat you were in prep-school. Lashing out at the world for your fuck-ups and shortcomings. And jealous of your friends' success. You need to grow the fuck up.

Quentin knocks Harper's hand away but still looks at him.

QUENTIN

You know for a hypocritical cowardly bastard you talk a lot of shit, Harp. I may have had my share of fuck-ups. But I paid for all of 'em. You just been lucky. That's all.

HARPER

(beat)

Well then. I guess I got what you'd call "good karma". Don't I?

Quentin has no answer for him.

HARPER

Whateva, man.

A knock comes to the door. Wayne looks through the peep hole. His eyes and smile widen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WAYNE

Oh, it's on! It's on and poppin'!

He opens the door and in come 3 voluptuous strippers and their bodyguard, FANDANGO. It is on, indeed. Miami bass music pumps loud and the party goers stop what they are doing to find a good seat. They bark, whoop, and holler for the strippers, two of which enter the living room immediately.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Fandango escorts the third stripper (CANDY) to the back room. As they come down the hall Murch stumbles out of the bathroom and bumps into them.

MURCH

Oh, excuse me.

FANDANGO

Better get on in there, homey. 'Bout to get freakedafied up in this bieeeeyatch!

Murch stares at Candy somewhat mesmerized. Fandango whisks her away and Murch walks into the room in a daze.

INT. MAIN PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Lance's frat brothers and teammates drag him into the room and sit him in the center of the room. The strippers converge.

STRIPPER #1

Is this the unlucky man?

STRIPPER #2

The one they call L-Boogie?

The fellas are titillated and scream out, "That's him. Word up. Get him girl." Lance nods his head and smiles. A bass version of Boogie-Ooogie-Ooogie plays and the strippers get buck-wild!

BOTH STRIPPERS

Well, boogie down, baby.

STRIPPER #1

I'm gonna boogie-oogie-oogie 'til I just can't boogie no more.

STRIPPER #2

Boo-gie, Boo-gie some more.

The music pumps loud, fast and fierce and the strippers gyrate, jiggle, and fondle all over Lance. Fellas jump out of their seats and crane their necks to see what's happening. Lance takes the strippers by their arms, and walks them over to Harper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE  
Get yourself a taste, fool. 'Cuz  
this is my life!!

Harper welcomes the double team, and he returns their grinding and jiggling. Fellas throw down money chanting "Go, go, go, go".

LANCE  
That's my homeboy there!! Set it off  
tonight, dog!! Get in that ass!!

The strippers strip an inebriated Harper of his jacket and toss it away. The copy of Unfinished Business falls onto the floor at Lance's feet. Lance sees it and picks it up. He looks at Harper with suspicion. Harper is too busy grinding to notice. Lance conceals the book and then focuses back to the main attraction. Murch sits dazed, drunk, and depressed. Quentin begins rolling a marijuana blunt.

INT. PENTHOUSE HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Fandango gets Candy.

FANDANGO  
Girl, you gots to handle your  
bidness tonight. These some paid,  
high-falutin' niggas up in here.

She nods her head as he walks toward the living room.

INT. PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

The fellas whoop and clap for the strippers as they collect their money off of the ground. Fandango enters the room with all the style of a low-class pimp.

FANDANGO  
Y'all like that, huh?

Fellas cheer in affirmation.

FANDANGO  
We got mo' fo' yo'. Right now  
Fandango -that's me- and Sweet  
Cheeks 'bout to bring you something  
luscious and shug-ray. Allow me to  
introduce the flava we call, Caan  
Daay! Give it up niggas! Give it up!

CANDY emerges as the song "Candy" by Cameo is heard. She shakes her groove thing for all the guys who steadily throw dollars at her feet. Murch wakes up and he is riveted. She approaches him seductively and jumps on his lap butt first and grinds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDY

Oooh, daddy. Pump me. Pump Candy.

The fellas go bananas. Murch tries to grind, but instead he stops and buries his face in her back. She smells like heaven.

MURCH

Do you love me?

CANDY

Oooh, what, daddy. What'd you say?

MURCH

Do you love me?

CANDY

Oooh, yes, daddy. Candy loves you.

Murch is is heaven and hugs her around her waist. The fellas all get a big guffaw out of that.

INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

(Later) The party has wound down. Some guys leave, others stand around talking, and some are passed out cold. Lance stands at the doorway of his room laughing with Wayne.

WAYNE

Grabbed old-girl like a 5 year-old grabs his momma.

LANCE

He overdid it tonight, dog. Please order him some coffee and make him drink it.

WAYNE

You got it, boss.

LANCE

I gotta take care of some business.

WAYNE

I better pass out the gas-masks.

LANCE

Prime rib gotta hold of a brother.

Wayne walks away and Lance walks into his bedroom feigning laughter. When he sees that Wayne is gone he pulls out Unfinished Business, heads for the bathroom, and shuts the door.

INT. FOYER -- NIGHT

Murch, trying to appear sober, waits for CANDY to emerge. The other two dancers come out from the back room talking loud and counting their money. Candy is more reserved. Fandango approaches her.

CANDY

Oh no. Fandango, no.

FANDANGO

Come on now, Candy. Do me this solid. Alicia's sick. There's one in Rosslyn and a white one up in Silver Spring.

CANDY

I can't tonight. I . . .

He looks at her with sympathetic mack-daddy eyes.

FANDANGO

I wouldn't ask if I wasn't in a quandary. Come on. There's an extra \$150 in it for you. Wit' tips you could clear \$500 easy tonight. I know you could use that.

CANDY

(kissing her teeth)

Alright.

He hands her the address.

FANDANGO

'Bout an hour. Bebe and Lucinda fiddna go get some IHOP. Don't fill up too much now. You still gotta shake them thangs, baby. Shake them thangs, baby. Ha ha ha.

Fandango walks out of the door laughing. Candy takes a breath and Murch seizes the opportunity.

MURCH

Excuse me. Candy?

CANDY

Yeah?

MURCH

I . . . I really enjoyed your show. You were excellent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CANDY  
(walking out)  
Yeah. Thanks.

MURCH  
Listen, are you leaving now?

CANDY  
I got 2 more parties tonight.

MURCH  
C-can I call you sometime?

CANDY  
Sorry, baby. Company policy forbids  
me to give out my number, but here's  
my card for Sweet Cheeks. If you're  
in need of a stripper call and ask  
for Candy, alright? I gotta go.

She is out of the door and Murch is right on her tail. Meanwhile  
Harper talks on the phone with Jordan.

JORDAN (O.S.)  
So what's up?

HARPER  
(tipsy)  
You mean besides this love shank  
between my legs?

JORDAN (O.S.)  
Boy, do not tease me.

Harper laughs.

JORDAN (O.S.)  
So, I guess you're coming tonight?

HARPER  
Oh yeah. You're coming too.

JORDAN (O.S.)  
Oh, promise me.

HARPER  
You got it.

JORDAN (O.S.)  
See you in a bit.

Harper hangs up, contemplating his decision. He smiles and nods.

EXT. THE SPIVEY GRAND -- NIGHT

Candy's co-workers sit in their car waiting impatiently. Murch talks with her, but is steadily losing her attention.

STRIPPER #1

Come on, Candy-girl. You comin'?

STRIPPER #2

We tryin' to get our grub on.

CANDY

I'm coming you guys. Hold on.

STRIPPER #1

(to Stripper #2)

Sidditty-ass college girl.

STRIPPER #2

For real tho'.

MURCH

So d-do you like work . . . ?

CANDY

Look, you seem like a really nice brother, but I really have to go. They're waiting.

MURCH

I don't mean to bother you. I really don't. I - I just thought we had a connection back there was all.

CANDY

Kind of goes with the job. Y'know? Provide the fantasy. That's the business. But I keep my personal life very separate.

MURCH

Right. You'd have to. Please forgive me. You did a great show.

CANDY

Thanks.

She begins to walk away.

MURCH

B - because if you didn't define yourself for yourself you'd be crunched into other people's fantasies of you and you'd be eaten alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candy stops in her tracks and turns around to Murch with a strange look.

CANDY  
What?

MURCH  
Sorry. It's just a little quote I use to inspire my students . . .

CANDY  
Audre Lorde. I know.

Murch is speechless. He pinches himself.

MURCH  
Yeah.

Candy smiles slightly.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Quentin lights the rolled blunt. Harper, in the midst of his good-byes doesn't see Lance anywhere.

HARPER  
(to Wayne)  
Yo, where's Lance?

WAYNE  
That brother's dumping some bio-hazardous waste up in there.

HARPER  
Word? Wanted to say good night before I broke out. Wish him luck and all.

WAYNE  
You can try, Harp. But when he get on there this time of night he means business.

HARPER  
I'm well aware, my man.

Harper smiles and quickens his step. D'Angelo's "Shit, Damn, Motherfucker" oozes out of the stereo system.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Lance reads and flips through the pages looking for something to catch his eye. He finds something and begins to read carefully. His eyes narrow and his face contorts. He brings the book closer to his face and shifts his sitting position to full attention.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hear Harper narrating.

HARPER (V.O.)

Kacey had cried a river on Jackson's shoulder that week. Not only were the rumored exploits of the "Ebony Humper" becoming too commonplace to for her to handle, but she'd also had her fill of the false paternity suits and the groupies' crank phone calls. Sure, Brian meant the world to her, but she wasn't going play the fool any longer. She wanted revenge.

Lance's eyes narrow.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

FLASHBACK

Harper sits at his desk studying. He looks up to see Mia dressed in his robe staring at him lovingly. She lets the robe drop and she is butt-naked.

HARPER (V.O.)

The sweetest payback for his random indiscretions would be a personal one of her own. But how could Jackson be a part of that? What did he have to gain from that other than the guilt of betraying the trust of the brotherhood that he shared with Brian? But he was responsible for bringing them together and thus accountable for her misery.

Mia walks over to Harper who stands up protesting only slightly. She puts his fingers in her mouth, sucking them sensuously and thus quieting his protestations.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

Back in the present Quentin passes the blunt after taking a hit. Harper interrupts the cipher and takes a long, arrogant toke himself. Quentin looks at him with disdain.

HARPER

Y'all brothers have good evening.  
Catch you in the a.m. Peace.

Quentin glares at Harper as he snatches up his jacket, slings it over his shoulder, and walks to the bedroom.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Meanwhile, Lance continues reading and starts to burn up.

HARPER (V.O.)

Yet and still he had to take the moral high-road. They both had to. They ignored the desire and the hormones that screamed in their loins . . .

INT. HARPER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper and Mia climax together, moaning in ecstasy.

HARPER (V.O.)

And Jackson found his most unflattering set of pajamas for her and tucked her in. She too had come to her senses, but she did have one last request.

MIA

Can we do it from the back?

HARPER (V.O.)

She asked to be held. And he had to oblige her. She was his friend. He was her protector. So they cuddled, and though this boundary probably shouldn't have been crossed their bond was made stronger that night. He was there for her, and she was comforted.

INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper talks to Lance through the bathroom door. He searches his jacket for the book. He can't find it. But he isn't panicked. Yet.

HARPER

Yo, ELL! I'm 'bout to break. Yo, son. I'm gonna blw her back out tonight. She don't even know . . .

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Lance can only hear Harper's narration and he is enraged.

HARPER (V.O.)

As she slept in his arms, beautiful and angelic, Jackson sealed the innocent evening with a kiss to her frontal lobe.

He slams the book shut.

## INT. PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Harper looks around him on the floor, but still can't find the book. A primal scream is heard coming from the bathroom. Everyone turns to it as Lance nearly breaks the hinges off of the bathroom door. With rage in his eyes and the book gripped in his hand, he sees Harper. Harper is now in a panic.

LANCE

You!! You fucked Mia!!

Lance throws down the book and charges Harper full-throttle swinging his fists wildly. Harper tries to fight him off, but it is nearly impossible because Lance is bigger, stronger, and faster. Fellas try to jump in but they are thrown off.

LANCE

You dirty back-stabbing bastard!!  
You mafuckin' sonofabitch!! I'm  
gonna kill you!!

HARPER

Lance, you, you don't know what  
you're saying!

LANCE

Oh, yes, I do!! "Kissed on the  
frontal lobe". I know what that shit  
means!! You supposed to be my boy!!

Quentin stands toking his blunt and watching Harper get his ass kicked. Lance picks him up by the collar and slams him against a wall. Harper struggles against him.

HARPER

L!! You're making a mistake. You  
been drinking. I wouldn't do that!

Lance throws Harper across the room like a rag doll. Fellas try to restrain him, but they have no luck. He grabs Harper again and they struggle to the balcony. Lance leans Harper over the balcony railing. Quentin comes over to get a closer look.

## EXT. THE SPIVEY GRAND -- NIGHT

The other strippers wait impatiently as Murch and Candy stand smiling and talking.

CANDY

Thank goodness I'm in my final  
semester because it's been hard to  
pay that tuition. So . . .

MURCH

You're shaking what your mama gave  
you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Candy laughs. The other strippers roll their eyes. One of them leans out the window and notices something: 8 stories up Lance leans Harper over the balcony railing.

STRIPPER #1  
Damn. Look y'all!!

CANDY  
(not noticing)  
I'm coming you guys.

STRIPPER #1  
No, look up there!

STRIPPER #2  
Them fools trippin'.

Murch looks up to see what's going on.

MURCH  
Omigod!

He rushes toward the building then stops, and turns back around.

MURCH  
Don't leave. I'll get you home. I'll pay for your time. Just don't go okay? Please.

She stands anxiously, but doesn't make a move. Murch runs inside.

CANDY  
Be careful.

INT. PENTHOUSE -- NIGHT

The party guests hold onto Lance's arms trying to get him to pull Harper up from his compromising position.

LANCE  
Y'all back the fuck up. I'll drop his ass!

They do so. Harper is scared shitless. He looks over at Quentin who's just standing there. Harper pleads with him to help.

HARPER  
Don't do this, man. Chill. We boys. You're reading too much into it, L.

LANCE  
I know how to read between the lines. I ain't fuckin' stupid!! No wonder you hid that shit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER

Don't drop me, Lance. God, please.  
Oh God.

LANCE

Oh, you want God now? Ain't that a  
bitch?

Harper's is petrified. Quentin gets in Lance's ear.

QUENTIN

L-baby, You ain't gonna do this.

LANCE

Yes, I am.

QUENTIN

You're gonna risk your future for  
this mafucka?

LANCE

Latrell Sprewell came back. It might  
be worth it.

QUENTIN

Come on, L. You're gonna marry a  
beautiful woman tomorrow. She loves  
you and only you, shorty.

HARPER

Listen to him, Lance.

LANCE

Shut the fuck up! I'm listening, Q.

QUENTIN

Look, I know Harper's a bitch-ass.  
But he's your man 100-grand. He  
ain't do that to you. Karma don't  
come back that strong, shorty.

HARPER

You know he's right, Lance. Q's  
honest. You said it yourself. He  
wouldn't lie.

QUENTIN

Even about you being a bitch-ass?

HARPER

Yes, yes! Especially that.

QUENTIN

See, L? God don't want this. Pull  
him up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Lance is conflicted, but he comes to his senses and pulls Harper back onto the balcony. In a daze he walks back into the room. All eyes are on him. He grabs the book, stares at it and nearly cries. He recomposes himself and stares blankly at everyone.

LANCE

The mafuckin' wedding is off.

No one is sure how to react and all stand flabbergasted and frozen by the announcement. Lance stares directly at Harper.

LANCE

Get the fuck out.

Everyone save Harper and Quentin scramble to get their jackets and make their way out of the joint with the quicks. Harper doesn't move, but tries to speak.

HARPER

(breathless)

L, wait. Don't . . .

Lance hurls the book at Harper.

LANCE

You . . . you go to hell.

Lance walks back into the bathroom like a zombie and slams the door. Harper makes eye-contact with Quentin standing in the doorway. He walks into the other room toking on his blunt. Murch comes in looking around at the evidence of the melee.

MURCH

Whoah. Harper what happened?

Harper picks up his book, gets up, and pulls himself together as best he can before he walks out alone. Murch stands confused.

MURCH

Damn! I'm always out of the loop.

INT. JORDAN'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Handkerchiefs drape over lamps. A bump-n-grind R&B song permeates the atmosphere. Jordan, dressed in that sexy kimono throws videotapes and spreadsheets off of her bed. She pulls some hors d'oeuvres from the microwave and gives the room a spray of air-freshener. To her, the mood is absolutely perfect. The doorbell rings. Jordan takes a breath and checks her reflection before answering the door. Harper is there looking very disheveled.

JORDAN

Oh my God, Harper. What . . . ?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He comes in and starts kissing and caressing Jordan. She laughs.

JORDAN

Wait a minute, baby. We got time.

Harper starts pulling off her robe and fondling and kissing on her breasts. She gets uncomfortable and begins to resist him.

JORDAN

Harper. Wait . . . stop. Harper!

HARPER

What?! Isn't this the exclusive you wanted?

They stand apart from one another staring until Harper walks over to the couch and sits.

HARPER

What the fuck am I doing?

He buries his head in his hands. Jordan stands with her hands on her hips waiting for an explanation.

HARPER

Lance called off the wedding.

JORDAN

What? Was he serious?

HARPER

I hope not. He was drunk. Maybe not..

JORDAN

Oh my God. Are you alright?

HARPER

Yeah. But thanks to you I can trade my appearance on Oprah for an average Jerry Springer show.

JORDAN

Thanks to me?

HARPER

Thanks to your stepping-on-whoever-it-takes-to-get-to-the-top attitude.

JORDAN

This is supposed to be my fault?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARPER

Yeah. They'd be in total marital bliss by the time the book was supposed to come out, but I got my ass kicked instead. Thanks.

Jordan tries to formulate her thoughts.

HARPER

And what is the fuck is that smell?

Jordan hauls off and smacks Harper.

JORDAN

How dare you!! You got a lot of motherfucking nerve blaming me for your skeletons, mister!

HARPER

Jordan . . .

JORDAN -

I'm not through, Harper Stewart. This is royally fucked up! For weeks you got me all fired up: Thinking that my life is empty and that we could have been great together. And then you come in here with wino's breath and a stiff dick trying to hump me like some street whore?

HARPER

Look, I didn't mean to disrespect you. I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking. But let's not get emotional. Be practical, J. Come on. Me and you. Peas in a pod.

JORDAN

Motherfucker, I've been drinking tequila and inhaling ginsana. My hormones are raging out of control. So I don't wanna hear about no goddamned peas. I'm horny!!

Harper stands confounded for a beat. Then he tries to kiss Jordan's forehead. She pushes him away in disgust.

JORDAN

Fuck you and good night!!

She storms to the bedroom and slams the door.

HARPER

Can't we just hold each other?

FADE OUT:

INT. NATIONAL AIRPORT -- DAY

Harper, shabbily dressed his tuxedo tries to keep up a good appearance as he waits for Robin. She emerges from the gate dressed in her usual imperfect-but-cute style. Harper forms a weak smile behind his sunglasses. He kisses her cheek.

HARPER

H-Hi.

ROBIN

Morning. You look so handsome.

HARPER

(barely audible)

Thanks.

ROBIN

Don't worry I'm not wearing this. I just didn't want to get my dress wrinkled on the plane. Think I can change at the church?

HARPER

I- I don't . . . Sure. I don't know . . .

ROBIN

Hey. You alright?

Harper nods weakly.

ROBIN

Well, come on let's get going . . .

Robin begins walking away, but Harper's legs won't support him. He needs the wall for support and then slumps down in a chair. Robin stops walking and talking when she notices Harper isn't with her. She heads back toward him.

ROBIN

Come on, honey. Harper . . . ?

With a trembling hand Harper reaches out, grabs her arm tightly and pulls her close to him.

ROBIN

I knew it. Hangover city. Come on, baby. Let's get you some coffee . . .

As if he doesn't hear her he holds her close wrapping his arms around her waist. Robin is self-conscious now.

ROBIN

Harper, what's wrong with you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harper looks up at her. She takes off his sunglasses to see his bruises. She is taken aback, but maintains her composure.

ROBIN

Okay. It's alright. Just get up.  
Come on. Tell me what happened.

He continues to hold her tightly and she strokes his head.

INT. AU BON PAIN -- DAY

Harper has just given Robin a review of the past 36 hours and she takes it all in. Harper waits for her response with caution.

ROBIN

Did you sleep with her?

HARPER

No.

ROBIN

But you were going to. You wanted  
to.

Silence is Harper's answer. Robin shakes her head and breathes out. After a musing pause:

ROBIN

I am very disappointed in you,  
Harper. I know you feel like shit  
now, but I'm not going to lie to  
you. You compromised yourself, our  
relationship, and Lance and Mia's.

HARPER

(nodding with guilt)

I know.

ROBIN

But I'm glad you told me. At least I  
know where I stand with you now.

HARPER

Robin, that's not true. I . . .

ROBIN

Don't. Please. It's okay. I may not  
be perfect, but I'm strong. At least  
I know I'm not crazy.

Harper is at a loss for words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN

But let's not worry about that right now. You have to try to make this right. The wedding starts soon.

HARPER

I know, but what am I gonna do? I've been looking all over for Lance this morning. I can't find him anywhere. Even if I do how am I gonna convince him to get married now?

ROBIN

That doesn't sound like you Harper. You have one of the most creative minds I've ever known. Don't worry you'll think of something.

HARPER

But how, Robin?

ROBIN

I dunno. Divine intervention?

Harper isn't convinced and is defeated.

ROBIN

It'll be OK. I'll go with you.

Harper is very pleased to hear that news.

ROBIN

I think I owe it to myself to see what's been holding you back from me all this time.

HARPER

Thank you, Robin.

He attempts to hold her hand and kiss her, but is rebuffed.

ROBIN

You're welcome. Come on.

She gets up and walks away. Harper is grateful, but disappointed. He follows her.

EXT. FIRST AWE -- DAY

Shelby stands at the doors of the church alone in a very expensive designer dress and a pleasant expression on her face. The groomsmen's limo pulls up. Quentin, Murch, Wayne and the other groomsmen head up the stairs. Murch sees Shelby standing there and he walks over to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURCH

Shelby, I have something . . .

SHELBY

Julian, please. Let me speak. Before you say anything I want you to know that I forgive you.

MURCH

You do?

SHELBY

Yes, I know now that you were just succumbing to that testosterone peer pressure.

MURCH

Shelby . . .

SHELBY

I know you wanted to be with me last night. And it ate you up that you couldn't.

Murch tries to get a word in edgewise but is unsuccessful.

SHELBY

The more I thought about it, the more it made sense that you should continue to suffer and think about the jeopardy that you put our relationship through rather than let you have your way.

MURCH

Shel, I have to tell you . . .

SHELBY

Shhhh. Whatever it is I'm sure it can wait until the reception. You better get inside . . .

Shelby is distracted by one of the guests cautiously coming toward them. It's Candy, the stripper, dressed conservatively, but still a knockout. Murch beams when he sees her.

MURCH

Candace! I'm glad you could make it. You look great.

CANDY

(referring to her dress)  
Is it okay? I didn't really . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MURCH

It's great. It's more than great.

CANDY

You think so?

MURCH

Yes. Definitely.

Shelby (pissed off) clears her throat to get their attention.

MURCH

Oh, I'm sorry. Candace, this is  
Shelby. Shelby, Candace.

CANDY

How're you doing? Nice to meet you.

SHELBY

Hah, I'm so sure.

CANDY

So, should I sit anywhere?

MURCH

Sure, I'll see you at the reception.

CANDY

(smiling sweetly)  
Okay. Thanks, Julian.

She goes inside and Murch watches her. Shelby is livid.

SHELBY

Who was that . . . that . . . pop tart?

MURCH

Shelby, it's over. I am not the man  
for you and you are not the woman  
for me. Let's just stop fooling one  
another. I hope you find what you're  
looking for because that's what I  
plan to do. I have to go. Bye, Shel.

Murch runs inside while Shelby stands mouth wide open. In the  
background Harper and Robin pull up in a cab and come up the  
steps. Quentin smirks at Shelby and points to the ground.

QUENTIN

You better pick that up.

SHELBY

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

QUENTIN  
Your bottom jaw.

HARPER  
Q!! Morning, Shelby. You look . . .

SHELBY  
Go to hell!!

Shelby storms inside.

HARPER  
Meet you there. We'll do lunch.

QUENTIN  
What's up? Where's Lance?

HARPER  
I don't know.

QUENTIN  
What?!

HARPER  
Robin, Quentin. Quentin, Robin.

ROBIN  
My pleasure. I'll get changed.

Harper watches Robin as she heads inside. Murch emerges.

MURCH  
Hey, Harper. Is that Robin . . . ?

QUENTIN  
He can't find Lance.

MURCH  
Oh, not good. Not good. What are we going to do?

HARPER  
(frantic)  
I don't know. I don't know . . .

QUENTIN  
Well, you better figure something out . . .

The fellas bicker as Lance, dressed in the previous night's clothes, gets out of a cab, and storms up the stairs.

HARPER  
(noticing)  
Lance!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lance keeps walking and says nothing. They step in front of him.

MURCH

Good morning, Lance.

QUENTIN

Nervous, L-Boogie?

HARPER

Lance, you gotta get dressed.

LANCE

I told you mafuckas this wedding is off. I just have to tell my parents face to face. Then I'm out.

Lance continues walking and Quentin grabs him by the arm.

QUENTIN

(like last night)

Come on, L-baby. You ain't gonna ...

LANCE

Man, shut the fuck up. That bullshit ain't working today. Get out my way.

Lance shrugs him off as he walks into the church. They all stand dumbfounded for a moment and then go after him.

INT.. CHURCH -- DAY

In an archway adjacent to the church Jordan hands the flower girls their baskets of petals. She notices Lance storming in.

LANCE

Mama!! Daddy!!

MR. & MRS. SULLIVAN, sitting at the front of the church turn to their son. Lance heads toward them with determination. The fellas have to make a move. Jordan shoos the girls to the back.

LANCE

I've got to tell you something!!

All the fellas jump on top of Lance trying to drag him in the other direction, but Lance drags them along, albeit slowly.

MURCH

Lance, no.

QUENTIN

Dog, wait.

HARPER

Wayne, help us, man!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Wayne comes over to help hold Lance back but he keeps coming. The gathered wedding guests don't know what to think. Mrs. Sullivan looks worried. Mr. Sullivan just laughs. Lance keeps walking and he's more than halfway down the aisle. Harper has to think of something quickly before it's too late.

HARPER

Lance!! You gotta pray, man.

Lance stops in his tracks, shrugs everyone off and they slump to the floor. He turns to Harper. Jordan's heart is in her throat.

LANCE

What did you say?

HARPER

Pray, man.

LANCE

You want me to kick yo' butt again?

HARPER

(desperate)

Come on, L. You haven't really done it today. Ask your God. Ask our God, man.

(getting on his knees)

Let's pray together, Lance. Pray with me, brother.

Lance looks at Harper as if he were an alien. The crew waits with baited breath for a response to Harper's desperate plan.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM -- DAY

Robin dressed in a very classy dress stands in the mirror pinning her hair. She looks at herself critically. Tears well up in her eyes, but a deep breath and exhale fights them back.

ROBIN

It'll be fine, Rob. Hold it down.

She packs up her stuff without finishing her make-up.

INT. CHURCH ANTEROOM -- DAY

Robin exits the bathroom to see Murch, Quentin and Jordan down the hall crouched and peeking into the pastor's office. They whisper amongst themselves.

MURCH

Do you think this will work?

QUENTIN

God only knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN  
Shut up, Quentin.

Frantic voices behind a nearby closed door distracts Robin. She takes a listen.

BRIDESMAID (O.S.)  
Mia, calm down. It'll be fine.

Robin thinks a moment, takes a breath, and goes inside the room.

INT. BRIDE'S MAID'S ROOM -- DAY

(Continuous) Robin peeks in to see Mia is a bundle of nerves.

MIA  
Did I order enough food? Did I  
choose the right flower arrangement?  
Oh my Jesus, I should have worn the  
pearl earrings shouldn't I?

The bridesmaids all "yes" her to death and try to get her to relax, but she's still frantic. She immediately freezes when she looks at Robin with glassy eyes. Robin gets self-conscious.

MIA  
Hello?

ROBIN  
Oh, um I. Hi, Mia. I'm Robin.  
Harper's . . . girlfriend.

MIA  
Oh my Jesus. Robin, yes . . .

Mia hugs her warmly as if she were a long lost friend. Robin can't help but smile.

MIA  
How are you, my sister?

ROBIN  
I'm fine. But are you alright?  
Because you really look beautiful.

MIA  
Oh thank you. Yes, I'm fine. I'm  
just . . . I've got jitters! I know  
I'm driving my girls crazy. I've  
been fine for weeks, but my wedding  
day is finally here! I just want  
everything to go right. I know it  
sounds silly, but if this day isn't  
perfect . . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Just then Jordan comes in the room in a panic.

JORDAN

Mia, I'm sorry. Honey, you better sit down. I have some bad news to tell you . . .

MIA

Jordan, what is it?

Jordan! Robin's eyes light up. The icon!

JORDAN

(babbling)

Maybe, this is all my fault. I don't know. I let my career rule me . . .

MIA

J, baby you're scaring me.

Mia will die if she hears the truth. Robin gets tense.

JORDAN

It's Lance. He . . .

ROBIN

. . . he's running late, Mia.

Jordan looks at Robin in mad confusion and some derision.

ROBIN

I'm Robin. Nice to meet you.

Jordan shakes her hand with trepidation. Robin feigns a smile.

MIA

Running late?

ROBIN

Um yeah. That's what I uh came in here to tell you. He's just running a little late. But he's here now. Right, Kend- I mean, Jordan?

JORDAN

Yeah. He's here, but . . .

ROBIN

And he knows how important this is to you. You see Harper told me all about last night. The guys just got a little wild at the bachelor party. You know, boys will be boys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA

Well, they better have been on their best behavior.

ROBIN

Oh, I'm sure of it, Mia. I'm sure.

She looks directly at Jordan who has to look away.

ROBIN

So, we have a little C.P. time for now. But they'll wait for you.

MIA

Yeah. That's right. This is my day. Calm down, Jordan. I need you to keep your head today.

Jordan just nods as she and Robin exchange looks. Mia smiles and stares at Robin. She gets self-conscious.

MIA

Girl, I'm sorry, but Harper is a lucky man. You got it going on. Your style is so cute.

ROBIN

Oh. Thanks. But I didn't really get to finish my girly stuff . . .

MIA

Well, honey. Let's get you dolled up like you want. We got a little time.

Robin smiles at her as Mia whisks her away. Jordan is clearly still worried about the bigger picture.

INT. PASTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Murch and Quentin continue peeking through the door as Lance stands defiantly in the room facing Harper. With clenched fists he looks as far as one can look from praying. To say Harper is shitting bricks would be a gross understatement.

HARPER

Just pray whenever you feel it, man.

Lance stares until Harper gets the idea to grab a Bible.

HARPER

Which chapters, L?

LANCE

How about Exodus 20:14.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER  
(searching)  
Great. Here it is. "Thou shalt not  
. . . commit adultery."

Lance's stare is ice-cold. Murch and Quentin look at each other and shake their heads.

HARPER  
Okay. Look, L. I'm just trying to  
stop you from making a big mistake.

LANCE  
By running up in my woman?

HARPER  
Is that all you wanna hear?

LANCE  
I want the truth.

HARPER  
You don't want that . . .

LANCE  
You can't hurt me any more than you  
have already. I want to know.

HARPER  
No, you don't, man! All you . . . !  
(deep breath)  
All you want to hear is how great a  
running back you are, how grounded  
you are in the Lord, and that your  
bride-to-be is perfect. But the  
truth is you need to get better at  
3rd down completions, you haven't  
always practiced what you preached,  
and Mia slept with your best man a  
long, long time ago.

Lance grabs Harper by the collar and slams him against the wall.

LANCE  
(seething)  
Y'know I could've killed you last  
night. I still could now.

HARPER  
But that's not gonna change a thing,  
Lance. I made a terrible mistake,  
and I'm sorry. I would give my right  
arm for it not to have happened. But  
it did. It just . . happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LANCE

I suppose you just lost control?

Harper can't answer that. Lance releases him with a shove.

HARPER

Come on, Lance, you said you'd forgive her if she ever . . . .

LANCE

So now I'm a hypocrite?!

HARPER

You're just not being realistic, Lance. This is reality, man. This isn't the Bible. It's the real world. And the real world ain't about perfections or ideals. But Mia is as close to perfection as you're gonna get in this world. That ideal woman that we're all looking for doesn't exist. We play the hand we're dealt and make it work.

LANCE

You got all the answers don't you? Everything is so damn logical, ain't it? You got balls telling me how I should feel about all of this. How to live in the world? Nigga, please. You don't live in the real Goddammed world either!

HARPER

L, come on. We're in a church . . .

LANCE

You can't control me. Harp! I ain't one of your characters. This ain't one of your stories. You can't control this outcome. You are not God! That's reality, Harper.

HARPER

(desperate)

Lance, just listen to reason . . .

Lance screams as he flips over the pastor's desk. There is nothing but silence between them. Harper is out of options.

LANCE

(quietly)

I knew. Always in the back of my mind I knew she'd been with someone else. But never in a million

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LANCE (continued)  
lifetimes did I think you'd be that  
self-serving back-stabbing bastard.

HARPER  
Lance, you can hate me forever, but  
not Mia. She loves you, man. She's  
crazy about you. Your ideal woman is  
staring you in the face and . . .  
(pause)  
. . . you're made for each other . . .  
(thinking)  
You two just fit together.

Harper and Lance are thinking now. Quentin & Murch wait.

LANCE  
(long pause)  
She's my earth, my queen. You know?

HARPER  
Yeah. I know.

Lance looks skyward and Harper waits. Slowly, Lance gets on his  
knees. Murch & Quentin pump their fists, hi-five and head toward  
the church. Harper sighs big relief.

HARPER  
Okay, I'll get your tuxedo . . .

Lance grabs Harper's hand and squeezes it tightly.

LANCE  
Harper, I'm a Christian so I have to  
forgive you. But it doesn't mean I  
have to like it.

HARPER  
Okaaaay?

LANCE  
You better find your way to deal  
with your issues too. Writing can't  
purge you completely. So I suggest  
you acknowledge Him, Harp.

HARPER  
Him who?

Lance furrows his brow at him. Harper gets it.

HARPER  
Oh. Uh Lance, I really think I  
should get that tux . . .

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Lance crushes Harper's hand and yanks him down to his knees, .

LANCE

You promised you'd get me over that broom no matter what. Don't back out now. Recognize His strength. Respect it.

HARPER

(wincing)  
Okay. Okay. Recognize. Respect.

Lance glares at Harper before bowing his head and immersing himself in silent prayer. Harper eyes him and then around the entire room. He feels very awkward and doesn't really know what to do. He looks at Lance one more time in his most heart-felt prayer. Harper then looks skyward, contemplates and makes a decision. He respectfully bows his head and prays as best he can.

INT. FIRST AWE -- DAY

The church organ plays as Lance, Harper, Quentin, Murch and the other groomsmen stand at attention. Jordan comes down the aisle. She and Harper share a look. Harper crosses his fingers and she just cuts her eyes at him.

Harper notices Robin sitting in the pews and she is more together than we've ever seen her. He smiles proudly at how beautiful she looks and is. She makes eye-contact him and the look on his face communicates his compliment. She smiles slightly and turns away to Mia coming down the aisle.

Mia is an angel. Her dress is stunning virgin white, her make-up is flawless, her hair is perfect, and her smiling face beams as she looks at her husband to be. Meanwhile, Lance trembles.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

(Flashback) Harper and Mia have sex in a doggy style position.

MIA

Ohh, Harper . . .

INT. FIRST AWE -- DAY

Lance blinks hard as if his eyes sting him.

INT. HARPER'S ROOM -- NIGHT

(Flashback) Mia sits on top of Harper grinding him heavily.

MIA

Mmmmmmm.

INT. FIRST AWE -- DAY

Mia looks at Lance in adoration. Tears start streaming down his face. Mia sees him and she fights back her own tears, but they start running anyway. Lance's aunts try to hold back their emotions. The bridesmaids start doing the same as Mia gets to the altar.

PASTOR

Dearly beloved we are gathered here today in the sight of God to join this man and this woman in holy-matrimony. If any person can show just cause of why these two should not be married let him speak now or forever hold his peace . . .

The groomsmen and Jordan wait with baited breath. Robin is on the edge of her seat. Harper puts a hand on Lance's shoulder but Lance shakes it off. Lance forms a crooked smile and then motions for the pastor to continue. Big sighs all around.

PASTOR

The couple have written their own wedding vows that they will speak to each other and in front of you, their family and dear friends. Mia?

Jordan hands Mia her vows. Mia looks at Lance with adoration.

MIA

Lance, my friend, my love, my hero, the purest manifestation of manhood I shall ever know, I invite you this day and always to share my sacred space. The love which leads me to my hearts' joy and teaches me to be faithful to my personal truths. As I stand beside you this day, I offer you the very heart of me, filled with sacred love - pure, unconditional, and everlasting. For love bears all things, endures all things, believes all things. Love never fails, and I do love you, Lance, body, mind, and soul. May we honor all those who have come before us and all who shall follow in our unity - for ever more.

Folks weep in the pews. Lance cries like a baby. Harper pats him on the shoulder and hands him his vows. Lance takes them, looks at them, and then at Mia. Harper crosses his fingers and pleadingly looks skyward. Lance clears his throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LANCE

(through tears)

Mia, my darling, my love, as I stand here beside you this day, know that there is nothing greater than love, for God is love. And having faith in you and belief in our love makes life worth living. In this world of uncertainties, I find comfort and peaceful assurance in you. As sure as I am gazing upon your angelic face . . .

Lance nearly breaks, but he maintains his composure.

LANCE

I am made whole today. A man with a higher purpose, for a woman's virtue is a man's greatest glory. From this day forth we will love one another as God loves us, accepting and passing on the torch of life, the light of the world.

Lance bawls, as does Mia, the wedding party, the pastor, Robin and the entire church.

PASTOR

(choked up)

By the powers invested in me I now pronounce you, husband and wife. Please kiss your bride.

He does. There isn't a dry eye in the house. Lance and Mia turn toward the wedding guests and jump the broom. They walk down the aisle and the wedding party follows. Cameras snap and flash.

EXT. DC HARBOR -- DAY

A montage of wedding photos of the bride and groom, wedding party, parents and the like are terrible because everyone is crying except for the last photo of Harper and Jordan who smirk.

INT. RECEPTION (SPIVEY GRAND BALLROOM) -- NIGHT

Lance and Mia receive congratulations, but Lance is still going through inner turmoil. Robin comes in and hugs Mia.

MIA

Ohh, thank you for coming, Robin. Lance, this is Harper's girlfriend.

Robin hugs Lance who gives her the once over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN

Congratulations you two. It was a beautiful ceremony. Beautiful vows.

LANCE

Thanks.

MIA

Come on, girl let me show you to your table.

Mia leads her away. Harper (at the bar) sees them passing through the room, but he fails to make eye-contact with Robin. When he makes eye contact with Jordan she averts her gaze. He turns his attentions back to his 4th attempt at his best man speech which he promptly balls up. Along comes Quentin ordering a drink. The fellas stare at each other and share an awkward pause.

HARPER

Q, I . . .

QUENTIN

Listen, Harp . . .

They both laugh.

HARPER

Sorry. Quentin, I just wanted . . .

QUENTIN

Don't mention it, shorty. It was for the best. You did good. Sorry, 'bout those verbal jabs last night.

HARPER

Q, I deserved them.

QUENTIN

I guess we really even now. huh?

HARPER

Brother-man, I owe you plenty.

QUENTIN

Yeah? Well in that case, you think you could get a nig - get a brotha a interview with Hugh Heffner. 'Cuz you know I always wanted to get paid to photograph nekkid honeys. Tastefully done, of course.

HARPER

Of course. I'll see what I can do.

QUENTIN

Sounds like a plan, shorty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He pats Harper on the shoulder and orders a drink. Harper shakes his head and smiles.

INT. RECEPTION -- DAY

(Later) Robin has Uncle Skeeter and the rest of the her table laughing. Conversely, Shelby is having a miserable time as she downs her 5th glass of champagne. Over at the dais the wedding party eats dinner. Candy and Murch enjoy each other's company.

CANDY

Julian, it was really sweet of you to invite me. Thank you so much.

MURCH

Did you get enough to eat? Are you having a good time?

CANDY

You've got to stop doting on me so much. A girl could get used to that.

MURCH

Oh, really?

CANDY

Oh, yes. Besides, I'm very maternal. To nurture is my nature. So let me take care of you now. You want some more roast beef au jus?

Murch smiles and hugs her. Nearby Mia gazes into Lance's eyes.

MIA

Oh, honey. You were so sweet today. Those wedding photos are going to be horrible, but I wouldn't change it for the world.

LANCE

I'm just so . . . happy, Mia.

MIA

Ohhhh.

Harper rings his glass with his fork. All eyes are on him. Mia smiles and Lance glares. Robin listens attentively as does Jordan. Quentin takes Harper's prepared speech from him and balls it up. Harper looks a bit nervous without it. Quentin pats his own heart. All eyes are on Harper. Long pause.

HARPER

Mia gave me too much credit for this union. Because I am the one who has learned from them what it means to

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARPER (continued)

truly commit to another person. To accept a friend's faults at face value and thank them for the joy, the pain, and the drama that comes with those faults. They've taught me the importance of seizing the moment. Because we don't always recognize nor appreciate the good things that we have until time has us passed by.

Robin starts to get misty.

HARPER

But we can never go back. We live for today. Not for what was or what could have been.

Jordan contemplates and slowly nods her head.

HARPER

And what will be, no one can say. But sometimes you just have to step out on faith . . .

Mia smiles. Lance loosens up and does the same.

HARPER

And believe that what you've built together is worth preserving. When you are made for one another as much as these two are . . .

With moist eyes he looks directly at Robin.

HARPER

It's definitely worth preserving.

(pause)

To the bride and groom. Mia, Lance, I love you both. I wish both of you eternal joy. May God bless your union.

Everyone claps. Harper takes his seat and wipes his tears. Robin has lost it completely. Jordan smiles, applauds, and wipes her tears. Quentin gives him a thumbs up. Mia and Lance look down the table at Harper. Mia blows him a kiss. Lance gives him the power fist. Harper acknowledges them both. Lance looks at Mia, hugs her tight and kisses her temple and forehead. Harper looks through the standing ovation for Robin but she's nowhere to be found. He is disappointed.

## INT. RECEPTION -- NIGHT

All of the single women bunch up in a crowd readying themselves for Mia's bouquet. Shelby eases her way into the crowd and gets right into the thick of things. Mia tosses the bouquet over her head and Shelby slyly and forcefully nudges a young lady out of the bouquet's trajectory to grab it. The young lady is stunned and quizzically looks at Shelby who expresses no shame. She holds up the bouquet triumphantly and walks away.

## WEDDING COORDINATOR

Alright now. All the fellas. Come on. Catch the garter.

No guys move at all.

## WEDDING COORDINATOR

Oh, don't be that way. Come on now.

Guys reluctantly stand in a crowd with their hands in their pockets. All the ladies laugh and shake their heads at them. Quentin, and Harper stand in the back laughing about Shelby.

Lance tosses the garter over his head. It flies through the air and the guys part like the Red Sea as it descends. Harper instinctively reaches for it, but bumps Quentin's hand on the way up and like a magnet to steel Quentin's hand catches the garter. The whole room goes wild as Quentin looks up to see Shelby across the room dreading the next part of the ceremony. They both get dragged to the middle of the dance floor. Shelby sits in a chair with her arms folded. The band strikes up a romantic ballad. The fellas chant "Q,Q,Q,Q,Q." She eyeballs him evilly. Realizing he has a crowd he smirks and gets down on one knee with the garter. Everyone laughs hysterically. Quentin slips off Shelby's shoe sensuously.

## SHELBY

Just put it on, Quentin.

## QUENTIN

Don't rush me now, baby.

He caresses her calf. Everyone hoots and hollers. She smacks his hand away.

## SHELBY

Cut it out.

Quentin stretches the garter playfully over his nose and chin. The place goes bananas. He lifts Shelby's foot to his mouth and clenches his teeth gently on her big toe. He closes his lips on her toe and the garter rolls on to her foot. Shelby is getting turned on, but is very self-conscious of the crowd.

## SHELBY

Quentin! Stop it. I'm not playing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Quentin just looks in her eyes and rolls the garter up her thigh. The higher he gets the more people start to whoop and holler. Shelby breaks out of her momentary daze, pushes Quentin away and runs to the other room. Everyone applauds as Quentin takes a bow. He chases after her. Jordan comes over to Harper.

HARPER

Go get her, Q!

JORDAN

Quentin better look out. Shelby'll put a hurting on him.

HARPER

Now that would be the oddest couple since Felix and Oscar.

JORDAN

True indeed, my brother.

They exchange looks and then smile.

HARPER

Hey, uh have you seen Robin?

JORDAN

She's not far. Believe me.

Harper looks around the room and she's nowhere in sight.

JORDAN

Come on and dance with me?

Harper hesitates.

JORDAN

I just want to talk to you a minute.

Harper nods and takes her by the hand and they dance closely. Across the room Robin emerges from the ladies room wiping away her remaining tears. She sees Harper and Jordan, but before she gets too upset here comes Uncle Skeeter:

UNCLE SKEETER

Cut a rug with a war vet, darlin'?

ROBIN

Sure, Uncle Skeeter.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Quentin has cornered Shelby. She is pacing, trying to get away from him, but he keeps cutting her off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

QUENTIN

Why you wanna be that way?

Finally, she stops and stands with her arms folded.

SHELBY

I don't get turned on by silly games.

QUENTIN

Who said anything about turning you on?

SHELBY

I suppose that's your idea of fun?

QUENTIN

Hell yeah. Girl, please. I wouldn't even try turning you on. I'd need a bonfire just to thaw you out.

SHELBY

I'm not that frigid.

QUENTIN

You had me fooled.

SHELBY

That doesn't seem too difficult.

QUENTIN

Touche. Touche.

A waiter comes around with a tray of champagne in glasses. Quentin grabs two. He offers one to Shelby.

SHELBY

Thank you.

QUENTIN

(charming)

You're welcome.

INT. BALLROOM -- NIGHT

Jordan and Harper slow dance as they watch the loving newlyweds across the floor do the same.

JORDAN

That was a good speech, Harper.

HARPER

Thanks. I winged it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JORDAN

It was heartfelt and sincere. We all felt it. Damn, this has been an emotional-ass weekend.

HARPER

A roller-coaster ride, J.  
(beat)  
Jordan, about last night . . .

JORDAN

(looking at him)  
Harper. Last night never happened. And if I ever hear it mentioned, I swear I'm selling what I know to the Inquirer. You got me?

HARPER

Loud and clear, Ms Armstrong. Loud and clear.

Harper kisses her on the forehead. She is appreciative and hugs him tighter. Nearby, Robin dances with Uncle Skeeter. Harper wistfully observes her laughing, being charming, and fending off Skeeter's advances. Jordan notices him.

JORDAN

I saw you reach for that garter.

Harper smiles at her.

JORDAN

I don't blame you. She's the woman. Don't blow it. I love you, Harper.

Jordan kisses him on the cheek and brushes his face tenderly. She and walks over to Robin and Skeeter.

JORDAN

Listen, I hate to interrupt, Robin. But Uncle Skeeter promised to save me a dance and he's the only available man up in here, anyway.

She and Robin exchange respectful looks.

UNCLE SKEETER

Come on with it, baby-girl. You don't mind do you, darlin'?

ROBIN

No, not at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JORDAN

Thanks, Robin. I owe you. Listen, I think the best man wants to see you.

Robin sees Harper standing and waiting for her. She turns back to Jordan who gives her a small nod and smile.

JORDAN

Watch those hands now, Skeeter . . .

Robin smiles and chuckles having experienced the same groping. Harper comes over to her. They stand apart for a moment.

HARPER

Hi.

ROBIN

Hey.

They pull together cautiously not really knowing what to say.

HARPER

Thanks for your help today.

ROBIN

You're welcome. Great speech. I was . . . moved.

HARPER

I meant what I said up there. What we have is worth preserving and . . .

ROBIN

Harper, I don't think that this is the right time. We have a lot to talk about, and it's not going to be solved overnight. There are things to figure . . .

HARPER

You know what your problem is, Robin? You don't live enough for today.

ROBIN

What . . . ?

HARPER

For once just enjoy the moment.

Harper takes her hand and begins to get down on one knee.

ROBIN

(self-conscious)

Harper, what are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARPER

At least for a little while. OK?

Harper just looks at her lovingly and sincerely. Robin is in shock.

HARPER

Robin Jones, will you marry me?

Robin is absolutely speechless and near tears. All attention is focused on the two of them.

HARPER

I love you. Please?

ROBIN

(near tears again)

"Yeah, whateva, man."

Harper gets up and hugs her. Everyone surrounding them applauds. They kiss.

INT. RECEPTION -- NIGHT

Later the band strikes up "Candy" and everyone dances. Candy and Murch dance together and she starts doing a nasty dance with a slight strip tease and looks seductively at Murch. Murch grabs her and looks around to see if anyone sees. She laughs and playfully hits him. Uncle Skeeter gets on the dance floor.

UNCLE SKEETER

I'm 'bout to get it goin', y'all.

Uncle Skeeter starts off the electric slide and everyone starts getting into it, the children, the elderly, and the wedding party. The whole party's in sync with the electric slide.

Harper gets behind Robin, presses his body against her and whispers in her ear. She smiles and widens her eyes. She nods at him and he takes her hand to lead her out of the ballroom.

FADE OUT:

INT. SPIVEY TOWERS PENTHOUSE BEDROOM -- DAY

It is morning. Two figures stir awake from underneath the sheets. It is Quentin And Shelby. They wake up simultaneously, think for a moment and then turn to one another. They stare for a few beats and then jump out of bed.

BOTH

Oh shit. What have we done? Oh no.  
Fuck that. I will never drink again.

END