

Ideal Beginnings

By

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FADE IN:

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - SUSAN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Looking out from the second floor - city streetlights flicker to life.

Inside Ideal Beginnings, a chic, glass and chrome art-deco motif adorns the office.

SUSAN, 33, blonde, bright eyed, interviews FRED, 44, average pot-bellied. They sit with a desk between them.

Susan offers Fred a tissue to wipe his eyes and nose.

FRED

Thank you. I don't know why I'm here. It doesn't make sense. I do a good job at work. My life just falls apart when I leave my own office.

SUSAN

It's not you Fred. You are a very nice man. You're a good man. Right? Your first wife cheated on you. But that's not your fault. You did what you had to. You tried to keep her.

FRED

I know.

SUSAN

And your second wife. She obviously never got to know you, did she? She never got to meet the real you. And these other women you meet. The ones you told me about. They may be looking for the same thing you are, but not at the same time, in the same way, so it's not your fault. Not everybody is ready for a relationship with an honest, caring, sensitive man. It's not you Fred. It's them! They don't see the real Fred.

Susan rolls around from behind the desk and comes face to face with Fred.

Fred cowers.

SUSAN

They don't see the man that I am looking at right now. Look at me Fred.

He looks at her.

SUSAN

You are a sweet and beautiful man. I don't know why some women don't see it Fred, but they just don't. This is why you're here, isn't it?

Fred nods agreeably and snuffles.

SUSAN

Of course it is. Fred! Thank you. Thank yourself. You are changing your life now so you can have the only thing you ever wanted. Love. You are going to meet better women at Ideal Beginnings, Fred. Women who come here with the very same stories you told me. They've been cheated on or strung along and they're fed up. Just like you Fred.

FRED

So, do you really think you can find me a match? I mean a real good match? Somebody nice.

She reaches to hug him and draws him to her bosom.

SUSAN

Oh, Fred. Of course we will. Of course.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Fred and Susan wait for the elevator.

The door opens directly into the office lobby.

SUSAN

I'm proud of you Fred. You're doing the right thing.

The elevator door opens for CHESTER, 50+, a mustached man in a wheelchair.

Behind him, BIANCA, 40, a beautiful dark Venezuelan woman pushes CHESTER into the office.

BIANCA

Susan! Chica! Oh, you are beautiful. How are you?

SUSAN

Excellent, Bianca, excellent! How are you? And Chester! How nice to see you!

Susan bends down and hugs Chester.

Bianca comes around and kisses Susan as well.

CHESTER

Have you captured another one in your little web here?

SUSAN

I think we did! Fred, I'd like you to meet Chester and Bianca, one of my favorite success stories. They met right here.

Fred appears awed by Bianca.

FRED

Really?

CHESTER

This place saved my life, I'll tell you that.

He takes Bianca's hand.

CHESTER

If it wasn't for Susan and their library full of possibilities, I never would have met Bianca. I bless every day that we have.

BIANCA

Absolutely. This place I love. If not for this place, I would never meet Chester.

(to Susan)

Chica! We are going to dinner across the street. You must come with us!

SUSAN

Oh, no, I couldn't. David is waiting for me and it's late already.

FRED

I'm sorry if I kept you.

SUSAN

Oh, Fred, no! Please, don't be sorry. Don't be sorry one bit. It's all worth it just to know what happened for them can happen for you.

TALENT AGENCY - DAY

A secretary answers the phone.

SECRETARY

Talent.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

ROBIN, 25, brunette, buxom, on the phone, taps a pencil on her desk.

ROBIN

Okay! I need ten hot guys and twenty hot girls. This is going to be an awesome dance, you should really be there! Oh, that's too bad. Maybe next time. Yep, same deal. They need to interview first. Send twice as many to the cast call, so we know what to weed out.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

A notice reads "AUDITIONS FOURTH FLOOR"

FOURTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Beautiful young men and women exit the elevator.

The fourth floor is stark and barren of furnishings except for a few chairs, wires hang from the ceiling.

A dozen actors wait their turn. Some are seated  
A sign in sheet rests on a folding table.  
NICOLE, 30, blond, serious attitude, pairs up couples.  
She grabs a guy by the shirt and drags him to a girl.

NICOLE  
Okay. Let's see.

She sizes them up and decides . . . .

NICOLE  
No.

Then drags the guy a few steps away to another girl.

NICOLE  
Let's see . . . what you look like  
. . . with her. That's it.

KEN (O.C.)  
NEXT!

STARK OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

A matched couple, GUY, 30, and GIRL, 30, sit across from KEN  
PIERCE, 29, handsome, smart, the owner of Ideal Beginnings.

Ken glances at their head shots and flips them over to read  
the back, and barely looks at the couple.

KEN  
You understand this is a live  
event?

They nod.

KEN  
It's a little different than most  
other jobs you might have worked.  
You've heard of stealth marketing?

GUY  
No.

Ken makes severe eye contact.

KEN

It works like this. You are going to play a happy couple who met at Ideal Beginnings. That's it. For three and a half, four hours, you hang on each other like you're the happiest people on the face of the earth. You dance, you hug, you nibble on his ear once in a while and whoever you talk to, you met through Ideal Beginnings. Can you do that?

They look at each other with subtle smiles.

GUY

Yeah.

GIRL

Sure.

KEN

Good. Let me see you hold hands. Go ahead. Just hold hands like you're a married couple. Or engaged.

They clasp hands and smile.

KEN

Show me the love.

They look at each other.

KEN

Look in his eyes.

They stare lovingly.

KEN

Kiss her.

The guy looks shocked.

KEN

You kiss girls right?

GUY

I'm married.

KEN

We're not making pornos here. It's just acting. Is it okay for him to kiss you?

GIRL

Yeah. You can kiss me.

The guy hesitates and the girl moves in and they kiss, softly at first, then with passion.

HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A banner above the dance floor reads "Ideal Beginnings Annual Swing Fest."

People stream in.

Elegant furnishings. Piles of delectable food. Live swing band. The dance floor bustles.

Happy couples dance and drink.

At the front door Susan, Robin, Nicole and JESSICA, 22, a Nordic blonde, greet guests.

Fred enters.

A MAN in an overcoat comes to the table.

MAN

Hey, what's going on in here?

JESSICA

It's a dance sir, do you have an invitation?

MAN

No.

JESSICA

I'm sorry sir. It's by invitation only.

MAN

You can't just pay admission or something?

JESSICA

No sir.

Susan steps in.

SUSAN  
This is a private event sir.  
You'll have to leave.

MAN  
I was just asking what's going on.

SUSAN  
It's private sir.

Fred waits patiently. Susan waves him in.

MAN  
What about him?

SUSAN  
He has an invitation, sir.

DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Fred moseys along with a drink.

He almost talks to a woman, but then she looks at him and he chickens out and goes by quickly.

Happy couples are all around. Bianca pushes Chester through the crowd.

They stop to speak to Ken, who stands beside a pretty woman.

BIANCA  
You have a beautiful party here  
tonight.

KEN  
Thank you! How have you been?

CHESTER  
Absolutely grand. This really is  
nice. Beautiful set up! You think  
you might end up doing this on a  
regular basis?

KEN  
I don't know. We'll see.

CHESTER  
Looks like a good idea if you ask  
me.

BAR - MOMENTS LATER

A middle aged couple speak with a man alone at the bar.

WOMAN

I found him in the library. One thing led to another. And here we are. Six months later.

MAN

I'm sure I'm not speaking for everyone. But we've had excellent results. It's a great way to meet somebody.

MAN 2

So you would recommend it?

MAN

Definitely. Because it eliminates the bullshit, man. People want to meet each other and, well, for me, it was perfect. No time wasted trying meet somebody who didn't want to meet me.

WOMAN

Same here. You should join. You'll meet women here, but there's a lot more in the library.

(winks)

You should join. Think about it. For sure.

BALCONY - LATER

Ken, Susan, Robin and Jessica survey the scene.

They focus on particular people.

SUSAN

That guy is going to get laid tonight.

KEN

You taking him home?

SUSAN

Ha-ha. Very funny. No. Look at him.

(MORE)

SUSAN(cont'd)

He asks every woman he sees to dance. He'll get laid based on the odds.

KEN

Good for him. Where's Dewey?

SUSAN

He's down there.

(beat, then to the girls)

Do you see Dewey?

JESSICA

(points)

There.

DEWEY, 55, business suit, stands in the crowd with a drink and talks with another man.

SUSAN

Who's he with?

JESSICA

That's Mark Seven.

ROBIN

That's Mark Eight.

KEN

Eight. It's quite the beautiful night, isn't it ladies?

Dewey looks up to the balcony and gives a subtle nod.

KEN

What about Nicole? Where's she at?

TELEPHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Down the deserted hallway of the hotel Nicole has sex with a man in the phone booth.

Nicole climaxes like an animal.

NICOLE

(gritting her teeth)

Don't stop. Fuck me. Just keep fucking me.

HIM

I'm not stopping. Goddamn.

NICOLE  
 You know, I'm not supposed to date  
 clients. So this isn't a date.

HIM  
 Right.

NICOLE  
 It's just fucking.

HIM  
 Right.

DANCE FLOOR - LATER

DEWEY shakes hands with MARK EIGHT and they go their separate  
 ways.

Dewey pivots to the bar and notices a WOMAN, about 30, alone,  
 teething on a swizzle stick. Dewey, although not  
 particularly handsome, speaks with a charming Southern  
 accent.

DEWEY  
 (to bartender)  
 Hey, buddy, how you doing? Can I  
 get a Scotch, rocks? Thanks.  
 (to woman)  
 You having a good time tonight?

WOMAN  
 I'm here.

DEWEY  
 Sure you are but are you having a  
 good time?

Dewey gets his drink and throws five dollars on the bar. He  
 then steps toward her.

WOMAN  
 I guess. Are you going to ask me  
 to dance?

DEWEY  
 Okay. Want to dance?

WOMAN  
 Not really. No.

Awkward silence.

DEWEY

What *would* you like to do?

WOMAN

I want to understand the world. I want to know how it works. I want to know why all these single men need help finding dates.

DEWEY

I can tell you that.

WOMAN

You can? Are you an expert?

DEWEY

Sure. I am an expert. It's simple. All these guys here, they don't know how women think, so they need guidance. Most men don't know enough to ask a woman what she wants. They try to guess. And most of the time they guess wrong, so through trial and error, they eventually learn what works and what doesn't. Some catch on quick. Some don't. And since it's the majority that don't, there's deals like this for guys who just say and do the wrong things over and over again. Now we just get to pay more for making the same mistakes.

WOMAN

How many dates have you gotten through the agency?

DEWEY

None.

WOMAN

Are you new, then?

DEWEY

No. I've been a member for a while. But I'm kind of particular. What about you?

WOMAN

Just joined.

DEWEY

Not your cup of tea?

BALCONY - MOMENTS LATER

Nicole approaches Ken, Susan, Jessica, and Robin from the hallway.

SUSAN  
Where you been?

NICOLE  
Busy. Working the crowd.

SUSAN  
That's nice. Meet anybody?

NICOLE  
(annoyed)  
What are you trying to find out?

SUSAN  
Nothing. I'm making conversation.  
Jesus Christ!

JESSICA  
Looks like the girls we brought in  
are working.

ROBIN  
(to Ken)  
Hell of a marketing scheme. Keep  
it up and you might have to go  
legit.

KEN  
Don't start talking crazy now.  
(to Jessica)  
You think you see any of these  
models we brought in working with  
us.

JESSICA  
Maybe one or two.

KEN  
(to Nicole)  
Pixie. What do you think?

NICOLE  
(annoyed)  
About what?

KEN

Have you met any of these models we brought in?

NICOLE

I hired them with you!

KEN

What do you think of them?

NICOLE

They're fine.

KEN

No. I mean, do you think they could work with us?

NICOLE

No. I mean, yeah I guess.

Nicole storms away.

KEN

What's her problem?

SUSAN

Let me go see. Jess, you want to come with?

JESSICA

Sure.

They walk off toward Nicole's exit, leaving Robin and Ken alone.

ROBIN

I don't think she likes being called Pixie.

KEN

Oh, well fuck her then! You know I just say that because she has that fairy calendar over her desk! You know, she's starting to piss me off.

ROBIN

Temper, oh foul-mouthed one.

KEN

I don't lose my temper.

She grabs his arm and squeezes.

ROBIN  
You better not.  
(beat)  
Maybe she just needs to get laid.

KEN  
(sarcastically)  
Yeah. That's it.

BALLROOM CORNER - LATER

Hotel staff expediently sweep floors and clear tables.

Ken and the girls sit around a table.

Dewey strolls up as the overhead lights flash on.

Everyone is momentarily blinded.

Dewey squints and covers his eyes.

DEWEY  
Damn! They ought to make an  
announcement before they do that  
shit!

KEN  
What's the good word, Dew.

DEWEY  
Most of these guys aren't as  
qualified as we thought.

JESSICA  
Seems like most guys with money are  
already married.

SUSAN  
Maybe we need to make friends with  
a divorce attorney.

KEN  
What have we got this time?

DEWEY  
Well, from the dozen or so we  
spotted, good job, by the way  
Nicole. It looks like four of them  
are worth entertaining. You've got  
one guy who runs an art gallery.

(MORE)

DEWEY(cont'd)

A real art gallery with good shit inside, not one of those frame shops. Another who has some tire stores, he's a little young but just inherited the business. And the other two are business rivals coincidentally. They own computer stores across the street from each other. Lots of inventory.

KEN

Forget about the computer geeks. They're worthless.

Bianca pushes Chester in his chair up to the table.

Ken claps.

KEN

Excellent. Excellent performance.

Bianca bows and no longer speaks with an accent.

BIANCA

Thank you. Thank you very much.

CHESTER

Can I get out of this Goddamn chair now?

BIANCA

No. You can get up when you get home.

KEN

I think it's okay. They're all gone.

CHESTER

Thank God.

He stands and stretches.

SUSAN

Yeah, don't be so paranoid.

JESSICA

It's nobody's business how your legs work anyway.

Chester peels off his moustache.

The Woman Dewey spoke with approaches the crew.

DEWEY  
Oh, shit!

KEN  
It's cool.

Ken stands and greets her with a kiss.

KEN  
Michelle, my dear, did you have an  
absolutely fabulous evening?

She notices Dewey.

MICHELLE  
I did. You throw a classy hoe-  
down, Pierce. Hell of a show. Oh,  
is he one of yours?

Dewey extends his hand and they shake.

DEWEY  
Dewey Gleason.

MICHELLE  
Michelle Howard. So you're on the  
team, too. And I just thought you  
were a sensitive man with issues.

DEWEY  
I am a sensitive man with issues,  
but we all need to eat, right?

KEN  
Michelle used to work with me in  
Spokane.

DEWEY  
Spokane? Washington? That's a  
world away.

KEN  
How do you like these digs?

MICHELLE  
I like. Is this everybody?

KEN  
No. This is just the front end.  
Dewey is one of our fishermen.

(MORE)

KEN(cont'd)

Car salesman by day, hunter and gatherer by night. You've met Debbie and Dan, also known as Bianca and Chester.

BIANCA

Or whoever else we need to be.

KEN

Susan runs the fishnet. She reels them in, we keep them in the boat.

KEN

You've met Jess and Nicole, they run bait and tackle. And Robin is our angel. She towers above us in the crows nest and watches over all.

OPEN COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Bright and sunny.

A luxury convertible zips by. It roars and hugs the curves.

CURTIS REDD, 40, handsome, clean shaven, necktie in the breeze, drives confidently, shifts gears and leans into corners.

The speedometer touches 90 MPH.

Dewey sits shotgun.

He drips with concern as they flash by a 45 MPH sign.

They wind around a sharp turn. Dewey points.

DEWEY

How about pulling it over up there.

Curtis nods.

He peels off the pavement on a quiet farm road and kicks up dust.

DEWEY

So, what do you think? Do you like that?

Curtis smiles.

CURTIS

I like.

DEWEY

Hard not to when you've got ten cylinders. Want to kick the tires and look under the hood?

OPEN COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

They stand over the open hood of the vehicle.

CURTIS

That's an impressive piece of machinery, but I really don't know what I'm looking at.

DEWEY

You don't have to. Unless you like working on engines, this is the only time you'll ever see it.

Dewey drops the hood and it closes quietly.

DEWEY

You know, Curtis. They say the car makes the man.

CURTIS

I've heard that.

DEWEY

That's bullshit. The man makes the man. But it takes a man to handle a car like this. Now we both know, you can do that. You can do whatever you want. The question is . . . do you want this car?

He pauses briefly.

CURTIS

I think I do.

AUTO DEALERSHIP PARKING LOT - DAY

Curtis and Dewey drive onto the lot.

DEWEY

You'll look good in this car. Hell, I would look good in this car! But you know how you told me about that problem you have? Meeting the ladies?

(MORE)

DEWEY(cont'd)

This car *might* help with that, but I know about something that you might be interested in.

CURTIS

You mean that dating thing?

DEWEY

Introductory service. If you want, I can give you the number.

CURTIS

Thanks, but I don't know that I need anything like that.

DEWEY

Course not. Sometimes it's better to ride alone.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LIBRARY - DAY

Fred leafs through catalogs of women.

Susan walks in.

SUSAN

Hi, Freddy! How are you doing?

His face lights up.

FRED

Pretty good. How are you?

SUSAN

Excellent! Are you finding everything okay?

FRED

I think so. I wanted to see if I could see a video of this lady.

He points inside a book to Bianca/Debbie.

The profile is captioned Debbie.

SUSAN

Oh, you know what! She didn't record one. I know her. I should have written that in there.

She takes the book out of his hands and edits it right in front of him.

SUSAN

Actually, she did make a video, but after she saw it, she hated it, so she asked to keep it. Not all members have videos, you know. We don't require it. Some people are too shy to be on camera.

FRED

Well, can I see her anyway?

SUSAN

Not her video.

FRED

No, I mean can I meet her.

SUSAN

Oh, of course! I'll put in a request to her, and we'll see what she says. I have to send her your picture first.

FRED

I know. That's okay, I don't want to meet anybody I'm not 100% compatible with. You know, like you said, that's just asking for trouble.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - LOBBY

Dewey enters from the elevator.

Jessica sits at the reception desk.

Beyond her, Nicole at her desk, cradles a phone to her ear.

She waves to Dewey as he walks past.

Dewey cruises right to Ken's door.

DEWEY

Hey, beautiful. Where's the Chief.

JESSICA

The inner sanctum.

Dewey knocks on the door.

KEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The magnetic lock clicks and Dewey enters.

A grand office perfectly furnished with strong elegant design.

In the wall beyond the desk, three small silent monitors watch outside, the elevator, the office and the library. They flip every minute so you only see three out of four places a minute at a time. Behind the desk a huge corner window overlooks downtown.

KEN

Entre.

DEWEY

Guess what I caught.

KEN

Tell me it's a barracuda.

DEWEY

Something like that. He likes fast cars and he's more like a whale. I guess you'd probably call him a whale shark.

KEN

Who is he?

DEWEY

Hand me that phone book right there.

Ken reaches over and hands him the yellow pages.

Dewey flips it over and points to the back cover.

The caption on the smiling attorney reads CURTIS REDD, ATTORNEY AT LAW, P.A.

DEWEY

I think he qualifies.

KEN

As long as he's not mortgaged in debt up to his ass, like the last attorney.

DEWEY

Not likely. He cut me a check for eighty grand yesterday.

KEN

No shit. What'd he buy?

DEWEY

That special edition Viper with all the bells and whistles. Tough ass negotiator too. Got it \$18 below invoice.

KEN

Eighteen dollars! He saved eighteen whole dollars! You fucking robbed him!

DEWEY

I know! I thought he was going to do better than that but he just said "Okay!" I thought to myself damn, I still make four grand on the deal. I only would have made six anyway if he went full sticker, so I had a good week yesterday, how about you?

KEN

We did good with that dance. That guy who does roofs or whatever signed this morning. We're going to put a girl on him next week.

Dewey looks at the monitors.

Fred and Susan talk in the library.

DEWEY

Who's that guy?

KEN

I don't know. He's been around for a while.

DEWEY

Oh, I know that guy. That's Fred. Good old Fred. He's been trying pretty steady hasn't he?

KEN

He's only qualified for real clients and we're pretty shy on those right now. We need some guys in here with money in their bank accounts.

He ponders the phone book.

KEN

You sure this guy didn't blow his last eighty grand on a car recently?

DEWEY

Pretty sure. You know what that page right there costs? Try about a quarter mil.

The monitor clicks over to the outside.

Curtis Redd waits for the elevator.

KEN

Ah, we have a visitor. Who's this guy?

DEWEY

Shit. It's him!

KEN

Who?

DEWEY

Him! The guy I'm talking about.

KEN

Seriously? Are you sure?

DEWEY

Look at his picture.

KEN

That's him alright. The boy acts fast. He must be pretty damn horny. Or he's following you.

DEWEY

He's not following me. But I can't let him see me here.

KEN

Don't worry about it. Nothing is getting through that door. Believe me. If you had a heart attack, the paramedics wouldn't even get in with the jaws of life.

DEWEY

Terrific.

KEN

Let's see what he's up to. You sure he's legit?

DEWEY

He's legit.

Curtis speaks to Jessica briefly.

Jessica calls to Susan, who leaves Fred in the library.

Susan greets Curtis and leads him into her office.

KEN

He has an appointment. Good job, Dewars.

DEWEY

Tell me about it. I didn't think he would walk right in here, not this quick anyway. Now get me out of here.

KEN

Going so soon?

DEWEY

I have things to do, people to screw.

KEN

Okay, give it a minute.

They watch the monitor.

Curtis sits at Susan's desk and she closes the door.

Ken picks up the phone and buzzes her.

She picks up.

KEN  
(whisper)  
Keep your guest busy.

SUSAN'S IDEAL BEGINNINGS - CONTINUOUS

Susan speaks into the phone.

SUSAN  
Okay. I will. Thanks.

She hangs up and smiles.

SUSAN  
I recognize you. You're just as  
cute in person as you are on your  
billboards.

CURTIS  
Come on, you say that to every guy  
who walks in here and sits across  
from you. Don't bullshit me.

SUSAN  
That's not bullshit. You're kind  
of cute. Do you think you're not?

A silent moment.

SUSAN  
Well?

CURTIS  
I'm sorry. I'm a bit . . .  
nervous. My defensive hackles go  
up whenever I feel like I am in  
opposition.

SUSAN  
I'm sorry you feel that way. We  
can work on that. It's not unusual  
to be a little gruff. Most men  
don't want to admit they need help.

CURTIS  
I don't need help!

SUSAN  
Then why are you here?

CURTIS

I'm sorry. Again. I don't meet the right . . . women. I guess. How do we do this? I mean what happens now? How do we get started?

SUSAN

Are you ready to join?

CURTIS

Yes, cut to the chase. Skip the fancy sales pitch. I don't like wasting time. I'm sold. I'll try it. I'm good to go!

SUSAN

Okay, Curtis. But maybe we can slow down just a teeny bit. The membership here is \$3500.

CURTIS

So you need a check?

SUSAN

Curtis, do you always make decisions this fast?

CURTIS

Basically, yes.

SUSAN

Okay. Well, I need to explain a few things to you first. You need to know how this place works and what we expect from you. For starters, you need to fill out an application.

CURTIS

Just a check won't cut it?

SUSAN

No. Sorry. And we need to run a background check.

CURTIS

A background check? What for?

SUSAN

Criminal history. Credit. That sort of thing.

CURTIS

I've never been arrested and I'm paying cash. Is that good enough?

SUSAN

No. It's not. You don't just walk in here and say "hook me up!" It doesn't work like that.

CURTIS

How does it work then?

SUSAN

You jump through a couple hoops. You fill out the application. We run a background check. You look clean, then you get a psychological exami . . . .

CURTIS

Psychological exam?

SUSAN

Yes. So we can tell that you're not a nut case. You jump through those three little hoops and you get to stand in the center ring and look at the crowd. That's it.

The phone rings and Susan answers.

KEN (V.O.)

Clear.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Robin enters from the elevator as Fred exits.

FRED

Goodbye, Jessica. See you later Nicole.

NICOLE

Bye.

JESSICA

See you Freddy.

ROBIN

See you Freddy.

He disappears behind the closing elevator doors.

ROBIN  
Freddy's still at bat I see.

JESSICA  
Swing and a miss. But look at  
this.

Jessica hands her the photo of Bianca/Debbie.

JESSICA  
Freddy found this in the library.

ROBIN  
Okay. That's not good. Nicole,  
can you please look through the  
library once and see if there are  
any other pictures that shouldn't  
be in there?

NICOLE  
You got it.

JESSICA  
Susan's doing an interview right  
now.

NICOLE  
That guy looked familiar.

ROBIN  
Who is it?

JESSICA  
He's a lawyer.

Susan and Curtis emerge from her office.

CURTIS  
So that's it? What do we do next?

SUSAN  
Jessica will schedule you for the  
personality test, and then you can  
start using the library and you'll  
be added to the database a few days  
after that.

JESSICA  
If you want to, you can take the  
test right now.

CURTIS

No. I have things to do. Can I take it with me and mail it to you.

SUSAN

Curtis. Slow down. It's okay. The ball is now rolling. Can you come back tonight? We're open til seven.

CURTIS

I can come in tomorrow at 10:25  
(beat)  
A.M.

Jessica looks at the calendar.

JESSICA

That should be fine.

SUSAN

That works.

CURTIS

Okay, great. Nice to meet you.  
See you tomorrow.

He pushes the button for the elevator. It doesn't show up.  
He pushes it again.

SUSAN

It takes a minute.

CURTIS

Oh. Okay.  
(beat)  
Well . . . thank you.

SUSAN

You're welcome.

The door opens and he pushes the button for it to close. It closes completely and Susan exhales deeply.

SUSAN

Oh, God. Give me a cigarette. I'm going up on the roof. That guy is so hyper - he's a fucking chipmunk!

ROBIN

Who is he?

SUSAN

Curtis Redd. Accident and criminal defense attorney. He's the guy with his face on all the buses.

Ken walks out of his office and sits on Nicole's desk.

KEN

You know that is? The great white shark. I just started the research. He's a major stockholder at Grand Union Bank. This one's a keeper ladies. If all we did was scratch the interest off his accounts it would net five figures, easy.

ROBIN

How do we play him?

KEN

Same as usual. Wait until day nine or ten and set him up with the love of his life. Wait a month while he sits in her fishbowl. . . .

JESSICA

Until she breaks his little heart into a million pieces and poor baby fishy gets flushed.

KEN

And he'll never know what hit him.

CITY STREETS - DAY

A sexy woman's legs strut quick and smart through the streets, up and down curbs, and finally into a building and onto an elevator. Her feet step in.

ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

The legs walk onto the barren fourth floor.

These legs belong to Michelle.

Nicole and Robin stand on the balcony smoking cigarettes.

MICHELLE

Hello lovelies. He still doesn't let anybody smoke within twenty feet of the office does he?

ROBIN

Not if you don't want to hear about it.

NICOLE

Right. Lung cancer and emphysema. His favorite subjects.

MICHELLE

This really is a cool little building. He owns the whole thing? He ought to fix up this floor and make it a dance hall. Then he wouldn't have to rent hotel ballrooms.

NICOLE

But then you would have security breaches.

MICHELLE

Oh, he taught you all about that too, I see?

ROBIN

It's a fortress. Have you been to his office yet?

MICHELLE

Not this one. But Ken was always that way. Better safe than sorry. Is he here? What's the itinerary?

Robin hands her a manila envelope and Michelle takes out the photo of Curtis Redd.

ROBIN

Curtis Redd. Accident attorney. Major shareholder of a bank. Estimated worth . . . .

NICOLE

Seventy-five to eighty million.

MICHELLE

A real sea monster this time. I'm dating him?

ROBIN  
That's the plan.

MICHELLE  
Looks cute. Do I get to fuck him?

ROBIN  
Royally.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - EVENING

Photos of both Michelle and Curtis sit in front of Jessica.  
Jessica at her desk. She dials the phone.

CURTIS (V.O.)  
Curtis Redd.

JESSICA  
Hello Curtis! I have some good  
news for you.

CURTIS (V.O.)  
What is it?

JESSICA  
Well, we have a lady who saw your  
video and she would like to meet  
you and wonders if you're  
interested.

CURTIS (V.O.)  
Who is it?

JESSICA  
Her name is Whitney and she sells  
computer software. So I'll send  
you her picture and video.

RESTAURANT - EVENING

Curtis and Michelle/Whitney dine in an elegant place.  
Under the table they are cuddling with their feet.  
Michelle pours white wine.

MICHELLE  
More?

CURTIS  
Yes, please. I'd like some more.

MICHELLE  
Have you ever been to Cancun?

CURTIS  
No.

MICHELLE  
In Cancun they have ice cream that  
. . . I can't really describe. In  
fact, all the milk products there.  
It's like they are extra . . .  
rich.

CURTIS  
So.

MICHELLE  
How would you like to go get some  
ice cream?  
(beat)  
In Cancun?

Curtis quietly his wine.

MICHELLE  
This is our fourth date Curtis.  
When am I going to get to know you?

CURTIS  
You know me.

MICHELLE  
I know you but I haven't met the  
real you. Not yet. Do you have  
any dreams? Anything you always  
wanted to do?

CURTIS  
I do everything I want to do  
already.

MICHELLE  
There's more to life than  
litigation. Don't you want to go  
anywhere? See anything? Engage in  
life?

CURTIS  
I am engaged. I work and I make a  
lot of money. That's what I do.

She pulls her foot away.

MICHELLE

Okay. When you decide you want to  
have fun . . . .

She slips on her shoes and stands.

MICHELLE

Let me know.

Curtis grabs her by the wrist.

CURTIS

Whitney. Where are you going?

MICHELLE

Does it matter?

CURTIS

Yes. It matters. You don't just  
walk out on dinner. That's rude.  
Would you please sit down.

She hesitates.

CURTIS

Sit down. Please.

She sits.

CURTIS

Thank you.  
(beat)  
Let's get some ice cream.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - DAY

Ken stands beside Robin seated at her desk.

Jessica at her desk.

Susan emerges from an interview room.

There is extreme sobbing inside.

She shuts the door gently.

SUSAN

That guy is a wreck.

KEN

Did he join?

SUSAN

I don't want him to join. His wife committed suicide a month ago. He doesn't need a date. He needs counseling.

KEN

Did she have life insurance?

Susan looks at him angrily.

Robin rolls her eyes.

Jessica shrugs away.

SUSAN

Ken. That's . . . you're a piece of shit sometimes you know that? You might not realize it, but when these guys come in here they have hearts and feelings and they care about things. They're not all fish! Damn it, Ken!

She marches back into the office with the sobbing man.

Robin cuts him a look of disgust.

KEN

What?

Michelle walks in from the elevator.

MICHELLE

Hi, Jess.

JESSICA

Hello!

MICHELLE

Kenny, we need to talk.

(to Robin)

Nice top.

ROBIN

Thanks.

KEN

Step into my parlor. Robin?

She reaches under her desk and pushes the silent lock.

Ken holds the door for Michelle and motions to Robin to come in too.

Robin follows them in.

MICHELLE

Your boy is a freak. He has absolutely no sex drive.

KEN

Okay, what about his finances?

MICHELLE

He has money, there's no question about that, but until I get him to break down and let me into his bedroom, I don't know how I'm going to get account numbers. I haven't even seen the inside of his house yet.

KEN

It's been two weeks! What have you been doing?

MICHELLE

Maybe he needs a redhead or a blond or something exotic. I don't know what.

ROBIN

Or pharmaceuticals.

KEN

They always work for me.

ROBIN

What else do you need?

MICHELLE

I need a few bucks to pay rent and cover expenses. I think I'll pay him a visit at his office in the middle of the day, see how that goes.

KEN

If stealing were easy, it wouldn't be fun. Robin will cut you a check.

(MORE)

KEN(cont'd)

Don't worry, if it takes a few more weeks, that's what it takes.

ROBIN

Good things come to those who wait.

FOURTH FLOOR - DAY

Susan sits on the balcony in a secretary's chair. The chair bobs up and down lightly and spins side to side.

Nicole emerges from the elevator.

SUSAN

You need me downstairs?

NICOLE

No. I just came up to get away for a minute.

SUSAN

What did Ken do now?

NICOLE

He left.

SUSAN

Oh. I thought he might have said something to you.

NICOLE

What about?

SUSAN

Nothing important, just his stupid remarks. I'm sick of him. I swear. He doesn't see both sides of the business. We handle the front end! He doesn't understand what we do in this place! All he cares about are his little spies.

NICOLE

I think I want to move to the back of the boat.

Susan perks up and leans forward.

SUSAN

Really? Do you know what you're talking about doing? I mean really?

NICOLE

I don't want to throw chum anymore.  
I'd rather reel one in myself.

SUSAN

It's a completely different life.  
Once you work the back end of the  
boat, you can't come back to the  
bridge. When you scam somebody,  
when you change your name, you  
start risking your life. I don't  
mean life and death, I mean jail,  
which is worse than death. Honey,  
don't go there. Up front, we're  
legit. We get regular paychecks,  
taxes, weekends off, and big  
fucking bonuses. And if Ken ever  
gets busted, we don't go down with  
him. We just say we didn't know.  
It's safer up here. Trust me.

CURTIS REDD'S OFFICE - DAY

On a top floor in a high office building Curtis surveys the city while he talks on the speaker phone. He plays with a rubber band while he talks.

CURTIS

Look, you've got no choice. You  
can either settle for seven point  
two or we can rip you a new asshole  
in court and waste your time for  
eighteen months and still take you  
to the cleaners for twenty-five  
plus! I'll ask again. What is  
your decision?

VOICE (V.O.)

We'll have to talk this over with  
our client. It's not a simple . .  
. .

CURTIS

(cutting him off)  
Okay see you in court.

Curtis disconnects the call. The phone buzzes immediately.

CURTIS

What!

SECRETARY (V.O.)  
Mr. Redd, you have a visitor.  
Whitney Carver.

CURTIS  
(surprised)  
Oh. Okay, send her in.

He disconnects and curiously searches his office.

He opens a cabinet to reveal a mirror on the inside. He looks at himself and cinches up his tie and straightens his hair. A knock at the door. He closes the cabinet.

CURTIS  
Come in.

Michelle walks in and closes the door behind her.

MICHELLE  
Did I surprise you?

CURTIS  
Yes, you did. Nobody ever visits me here.

MICHELLE  
They don't. That's too bad. You want to have lunch?

CURTIS  
Lunch?

MICHELLE  
Yeah, you know that meal in the middle of the day between breakfast and dinner?

He smiles, maybe for the first time since he bought his car.

CURTIS  
I could do lunch today.

MICHELLE  
Can you do anything else?

BEDROOM - DAY

Michelle and Curtis deep in sexual climax.

She bounces on top of him and collapses at his side.

They kiss.

MICHELLE

Now that's what I call an excellent lunch.

CURTIS

Yeah.

MICHELLE

You ever say anything besides "yeah"?

CURTIS

Oh, yeah.

MICHELLE

Curtis? Can we just stay here the rest of the day?

CURTIS

If you want.

MICHELLE

I don't want to go back to work. I don't have to.

CURTIS

Okay then, don't.

MICHELLE

Want to watch TV?

CURTIS

If you want.

MICHELLE

Are you feeling okay?

She plays with his hair and climbs on top of him.

CURTIS

I'm fine.

MICHELLE

You're fine? Could you try to find a more intriguing adverb? You're fine is what you tell your Mother when you come home from school.

CURTIS

What do you want me to say?

MICHELLE

Are you interested in me, Curt? Or what? You seem . . . emotionally detached. Or something. I don't know.

CURTIS

You want me to fall in love with you? Is that it? I thought you were after my money.

MICHELLE

What! Why would you think that?

CURTIS

Isn't that what all women want? A man with money?

MICHELLE

Give me a fucking break! God-Damn! No wonder you don't talk about any ex-girlfriends! I can see why you don't have any!

She gets up and wraps the blanket around her.

CURTIS

Where are you going?

MICHELLE

To the bathroom.

Curtis looks around the room. He sees his reflection in the mirror.

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michelle watches herself in the mirror.

She opens the cabinet. It is bare except for aspirin, a toothbrush and a razor.

She closes it and sees Curtis behind her in the reflection.

CURTIS

What are you looking for?

MICHELLE

Nothing. I'm just looking. Getting to know you. Don't you ever look in other people's cabinets?

He doesn't answer.

MICHELLE  
What's the matter?  
(beat)  
Curtis. You know, it's not unusual  
for a girl to want to get to know  
her boyfriend.

CURTIS  
Boyfriend?

MICHELLE  
I don't know what you think is  
going on here, but you're acting  
weird.

CURTIS  
I'm not acting.

MICHELLE  
Okay. Fuck this!

She pushes past him.

MICHELLE  
You obviously don't know what you  
want. You can't decide what to eat  
in a restaurant. You don't know  
how to say "Great SEX!, Let's do it  
again!"

CURTIS  
I know what you want.

MICHELLE  
Do you Curtis? Do you really?

He lunges at her and puts his hands around her throat,  
pushing her onto the edge of the bed in one swift movement.

CURTIS  
You want my money! That's what you  
all want! All you women! And the  
sales people! The tax people!

She starts to gurgle. He keeps squeezing.

CURTIS  
Everybody wants my money! You  
can't have it! It's mine! I  
earned it!

She reaches up to grab his wrists but can't breathe.  
Her eyes bulge out.

CURTIS  
You can't have it! It's mine!  
Mine!

He squeezes.

Michelle struggles and pushes his face.

He bites her hand.

She falls unconscious and her arms drape down.

Curtis squeezes harder. He breathes heavily.

He lets go and she flops lifelessly on the bed.

CURTIS  
Look what you made me do!

RACETRACK - DAY

MAX, 40, an unshaven man in a leather jacket and sunglasses, shouts for his horse to come across the finish line.

The horses are in the stretch.

MAX  
Move it baby, move it! Kick up  
some dust! Atta girl!

She wins the race by a nose.

MAX  
That's my girl! That's my girl!  
That's a thoroughbred!

The tote board reads PHOTO/OBJECTION.

MAX  
That's bullshit!

Max's cell phone rings. He answers.

MAX  
Yeah? Speak up, I can't hear you.  
Okay. And do what? This better  
not be a surprise I can't handle.  
Okay. Okay. Ok-ayyyyyyy!  
(MORE)

MAX(cont'd)

Alright. I'll be there. Shit.  
Goodbye.

The tote board places his horse second.

MAX

Shit.

CURTIS REDD'S BEDROOM - LATER

A sheet drapes over Michelle's body.

Max stands over her.

MAX

This is . . . Oh, Jesus Christ.  
Redd, what is with you, man?  
Again? You did it again? Why?  
Don't answer that. I don't want to  
know. Is she a hooker?

Curtis straightens his tie and puts on a jacket.

CURTIS

No. I met her at a dating service.

MAX

You what? A dating service? You  
mean an escort service?

CURTIS

No. I mean a dating service.  
We've been going out for two weeks.

MAX

Oh, fuck me! Redd! You can't be  
doing this shit! You need help!

CURTIS

That's why I called you. I need  
you to get rid of her.

MAX

Goddamn you! I ought to plug you  
myself and leave you here to sort  
it out with God! You need to get  
some mental help! It's not normal  
to have sex and then kill the girl  
you had sex with. She's not  
underage is she?

CURTIS

No, they don't let high school girls join the dating service.

MAX

Lucky for them.

CURTIS

So, do you want to send me to jail? Because if that happened, I could only wonder what would happen to you. I mean, I might break privilege. We wouldn't want that to happen would we?

(beat)

Or another alternative is - you could plug me! And then the police could start investigating a *double* homicide. It just gets more interesting every second, doesn't it?

Curtis picks up a briefcase and heads toward the door.

MAX

Where are you going?

CURTIS

I have things to do.

MAX

Sit down! You don't go anyplace until it's dark. And you don't leave until I do. I'm not taking my eyes off you.

KEN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Robin and Ken sip cognac from large snifters.

They both have their feet on the desk.

Robin reads from a clipboard.

ROBIN

You realize we're doing better with the front end than we are with the back.

KEN

How much better?

ROBIN

Susan wrote twelve new clients in the past two weeks. Four of them are women.

KEN

No shit! She's earning her commission isn't she? That's real nice but I don't think it's a reason to pull into dry dock.

ROBIN

Not saying it is. But on the other end of the spectrum, Dan had an accident and now he really is in a wheelchair. He broke his leg, tripped in a grease puddle.

KEN

Damn, is that like karma, or what?

ROBIN

I don't know. Debbie's taking some time off. Her sister had a baby, so she went to St. Louis. The roofer guy - we're dropping him.

KEN

Why?

ROBIN

He doesn't have control of his assets. His ex does. So he's worthless. And the one who owns the golf course, Jessica thinks it'll happen next week. The girl we set him up with moved in a few days ago. We should be able to link up to his accounts any time now and milk him.

KEN

Good. What about Michelle?

ROBIN

Haven't heard from her in a while. Guess about a week.

KEN

Oh, that's right. She was going to take lawyer boy to Cancun to meet his cousins.

ROBIN  
His cousins?

KEN  
Fish! He could swim with fish!

ROBIN  
That's getting old Ken.

A knock on the door.

On the monitor Nicole stands outside.

Ken buzzes her in.

KEN  
Hey Pixie.

NICOLE  
Hey. Can I talk to you?

KEN  
Of course.

Nicole looks blankly at Robin, who gets the message. She slurps down her snifter and places it on the desk.

ROBIN  
Looks like this party's over.

Robin stands and leaves. Nicole sits down.

KEN  
What's on your mind?

NICOLE  
I'm ready.

KEN  
Ready for what?

NICOLE  
Ready for a promotion.

KEN  
A promotion to what?

Nicole climbs over the desk past Ken's feet.

NICOLE  
Trophy fishing.

KEN

Oh, you think you're ready for that?

NICOLE

I've been working on one of my own. I got him to buy me a car.

KEN

You did? What kind of car?

NICOLE

A Jetta.

KEN

Volkswagen? What year?

NICOLE

Ninety-nine.

KEN

Pixie. That car doesn't even hold bluebook value anymore. Where did you meet this guy?

NICOLE

At the dance.

KEN

What dance?

NICOLE

The dance we had a couple months ago. I've been working him ever since.

KEN

Really? And how did you work him?

NICOLE

I have my ways.

KEN

What are they?

NICOLE

What are what?

Ken sits up and leans forward so they are face to face.

KEN

What are your ways? Your feminine wiles? What did you do to charm a car out of this guy?

NICOLE

I went out with him. I was nice to him. And I told him I wanted a car.

KEN

Does he know your real name?

NICOLE

Yes.

KEN

And he knows where you work?

NICOLE

Yeah.

KEN

And, have you slept with him yet?

NICOLE

Maybe.

KEN

Maybe - YES! That's a boyfriend, Nicole, not a fish! What are you going to do with him now?

NICOLE

Throw him back?

Upset, Ken stands and paces around the table to sit down before her.

KEN

So you screwed the guy for a couple of months and you got him to buy you a car and now what? You dump him? For a car? Does he have any assets? Anything in the bank? Does he own land? What does he do?

NICOLE

He manages a Baskin-Robbins.

KEN

Oh, Nicole. Be honest with me. Do you like this guy? Tell.

NICOLE

No. I don't really like him at all. In fact, I think he's . . . putrid. He can't tell jokes. He doesn't comb his hair. Well, he does, but he needs a haircut. He wants to be in a band. I can't stand him.

KEN

Okay, so break up with him. But now, look at the difference between him and what you're doing with him, and what we do here.

Ken grabs the phone book.

KEN

Remember Michelle? You know where she is? She is working *this guy*. This is a guy who paid eighty grand cash for a sports car. He spends more on advertising than what most people spend on a house. He has money that he won't miss. And when we take it, he won't even feel it. Will he get his heart broken? Maybe a little. Will he ever see her again? No. She's using a different name, a false history, and she's not getting emotionally attached. When you say, "I can't stand him, I think he's putrid", you've got to ask yourself, "What am I doing?" Tricking a used car out of a guy at an ice cream store is just cheap, Nicole. You want to know what the real difference is? Right now, Michelle is entertaining this guy in Cancun, showing him the time of his life and when he gets taken, he won't even know it. Your ice cream man is just going to go and tell his friends, Nicole is a bitch and I know where she works.

Nicole tears up and jumps to the door.

She pulls the knob and hits the door.

NICOLE

Let me out of here.

Ken reaches for her.

KEN  
Nicole. Pixie. Just because we're  
crooks doesn't make us bad people.

A soft-tone doorbell chimes.

They look at the monitors.

A man has entered from the elevator.

KEN  
That's our whale shark.

NICOLE  
You mean the guy on the back of the  
phone book?

KEN  
Yeah. What's he up to?

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Curtis stands before Robin.

ROBIN  
Of course you can use the library.  
We are open for another 40 minutes.  
Would you like a drink or a snack?  
Can I get you something?

Curtis pauses to think first.

CURTIS  
Yes, you can! Do you have any of  
those little thin mint wafer  
cookies? You know, with the  
chocolate?

ROBIN  
Are you serious?

CURTIS  
I guess.

ROBIN  
Well, no. Sorry. We don't.

She opens her desk drawer and looks inside.

ROBIN  
I have some of these gummy . . .  
stars, or something, I guess.

CURTIS  
Well, thanks anyway. So I just go  
through here?

He starts toward the library.

ROBIN  
Yes, have you visited the library  
before?

CURTIS  
Yes. Susan showed me around.

Curtis turns the corner.

CURTIS (O.C.)  
Thanks.

Robin walks around the corner and looks at him briefly then  
moves to Ken's office.

The door clicks a second before she opens it.

KEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Robin enters.

KEN  
What's he doing here?

ROBIN  
He came in to use the library.

KEN  
Why?

ROBIN  
He didn't say. He just walked in.

They watch him go through the catalogs of women.

ROBIN  
Has Michelle called in?

KEN  
Uh-uh.

NICOLE

No.

KEN

We need to get in there and find out what's going on. He's supposed to be getting his brains fucked out in Cancun.

On the monitor, they see Susan step into the elevator.

Just before it opens, they open the office door and Robin places her finger to her lips in a SSSHHH signal.

Ken waves for her to come in.

Susan hurriedly moves into the office and they shut the door.

ROBIN

Curtis Redd is here.

SUSAN

Curtis Redd? Where?

ROBIN

In the library.

KEN

Look.

ROBIN

He came in two minutes ago.

KEN

You heard from Michelle?

SUSAN

No. Why? What did he say?

ROBIN

Nothing. Just came in and went to the library.

SUSAN

Do you think something's wrong?

KEN

Looks like he's looking for a date. You tell me.

ROBIN

You know her best Ken.

KEN  
Michelle doesn't drop the line.

SUSAN  
He's cheating!

KEN  
That's it! That fucker is two-  
timing our lying back-stabbing,  
fish killer. I don't believe it.

ROBIN  
That bastard!

KEN  
Susie, want to go play nice with  
Mr. Fishy and pick his brain?  
Looks like he could use some  
customer service.

SUSAN  
He's sushi.

LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Susan walks in behind Curtis.

SUSAN  
Oh. Hello there! I didn't know  
you were in here!

CURTIS  
Oh. Hello. I decided I would take  
a look through your catalogues and  
see who you have. Now, when they  
have the transparent pink tape  
across them, that means . . . .

SUSAN  
Not currently available.

CURTIS  
You seem to have a lot of those.

SUSAN  
We've been getting very good  
results for our members these days.  
People are just pairing up all over  
the place. How are things with you  
and Whitney? She likes you, you  
know.

CURTIS  
Really? Do you think so?

SUSAN  
She said she did.

CURTIS  
Oh, that's too bad. I didn't think  
it was working out.

SUSAN  
Why? What happened?

CURTIS  
We went out, but . . . I haven't  
called her and she hasn't called  
me. So . . . Well, I didn't really  
sense a connection.

SUSAN  
Oh. Well that's too bad.  
(beat)  
Are you finding everything okay?  
Would you like anything?

CURTIS  
I was in the mood for . . . well,  
no. Nothing. Not really. Thank  
you, though.

SUSAN  
Curtis. I know how you feel.

She places a hand on his shoulder like a caring sister.

SUSAN  
It's not easy to connect these  
days. You want one thing. She  
wants another. Compatibility is  
rare. That's why it's such a hot  
commodity. Do you want some help?

CURTIS  
Like, what kind of help, exactly?

SUSAN  
Well, I know all of our clients. I  
have met every single person in  
these books. So tell me what you  
are looking for and I'll help you  
find her.

KEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The trio keeps watching the library on the monitor.

Ken picks up the phone and dials.

Ken lets the phone ring a few times, then hangs up when he hears voice mail.

VOICE MAIL

Hi. You know you're dying to talk to me, so leave me a mess-

Click.

KEN

She's not answering. Robin, go back to your desk, okay? Let's watch him swim around the boat for a while. See what happens.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis pushes the elevator button and the door opens almost immediately.

CURTIS

Got that fixed I see.

Susan is right beside him.

SUSAN

Thank you for being honest with me Curtis. I truly, truly, appreciate it. I will go ahead and contact this one and see what she says, and we'll take it from there. Okay?

Curtis steps into the elevator and smiles.

CURTIS

Okay. That's fair. Thanks.

SUSAN

Thank you, Curtis. Bye.

The door closes.

Nicole and Ken burst into the lobby.

Robin bolts out of her chair and they all rush together.

SUSAN  
He is such a fucking liar!

ROBIN  
What did he say?

She looks back at the elevator button to see that it indeed went to the first floor.

KEN  
He's gone. Now dish! What's going on with this guy?

SUSAN  
He says Michelle asked him about how much money he had and he didn't like that.

KEN  
Oh, that is bullshit!

SUSAN  
I know! She knows better than to ask that! Doesn't she?

KEN  
Of course she does! Michelle don't rock the boat. She's a pro. So what's he looking for now?

SUSAN  
Her.

Susan holds up a photo from the library.

ROBIN  
Who is that?

SUSAN  
I don't know, but he found it in there. And she's not taped off.

NICOLE  
That's Sarah. She was a member about five or six months ago. I signed her up and she never got any dates, so she stopped coming in.

ROBIN  
She's not the prettiest lady.

KEN  
How tall is she? 5'7"? That's  
pretty average.

He looks at Nicole and back to the picture.

KEN  
She's thin too. 135.

SUSAN  
What's does he see in her? She  
likes gardening and books. And she  
has dogs. He doesn't like dogs.

KEN  
He's not a real client, he's a  
fish, Susan. How tall are you  
Pixie?

NICOLE  
Five-six.

KEN  
If we dyed her hair . . . .

SUSAN  
It won't work. Nicole is pretty!  
And this lady is . . . echhh! They  
don't look alike at all.

KEN  
Well, what if we bitched her up?

ROBIN  
Bitched her up?

KEN  
Yeah. Bitched her up. Made her  
look . . . more like her.  
(beat)  
What, you never heard that  
expression before?

ELEVATOR

A woman's legs step onto the elevator and go to the Fourth  
Floor.

Susan, Robin and Ken stand and watch the door open.

She walks out toward them.

Ken is the only one smiling.

KEN  
There's my girl!

Nicole bears a close resemblance to Sarah.

ROBIN  
She's not old enough.

SUSAN  
What did you do to your hair?

NICOLE  
I singed the ends with a lighter.

KEN  
I think it looks great.

SUSAN  
Are you kidding, she's hideous!

KEN  
That's what he likes!

Robin looks at the picture and back at Nicole.

ROBIN  
Her eyes. They're not sunken  
enough. Look at the picture.

KEN  
Since when do people look like  
their picture? So she doesn't  
photograph well. He's not going to  
remember this photograph anyway.  
You look great Pixie.

No she doesn't.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Jessica sits at her desk near the elevator.

The door opens and Nicole/Sarah steps into the lobby.

JESSICA  
Hello. Can I help you?

Nicole stands there for a moment.

Jessica looks at her with confused recognition.

NICOLE  
Can you get me a date?

Jessica realizes who it is as the rest of them step off the elevator. She stands and comes out from behind her desk.

JESSICA  
Oh, my God! Who are you supposed to be?

KEN  
Her.

He hands her the photo and Jessica compares.

ROBIN  
What do you think?

JESSICA  
Why do you want to look like her?

KEN  
Because that's what the whale shark wants.

She looks back and forth and back and forth.

JESSICA  
I don't think it's going to work.

KEN  
Why?

The elevator opens again and Fred steps into the lobby.

The crew disperses.

Ken and Robin walk over to her desk.

Susan steps between Fred and Nicole/Sarah.

SUSAN  
Freddy! How's it going?

JESSICA  
Hello Fred!

FRED  
Hello. Hello. Going well. I just stopped in to see what's new. Take a look through the books, you know.

He notices Nicole.

FRED  
Oh, hi there, Sarah!

Everyone is shocked, especially Nicole.

NICOLE  
Hi?

FRED  
I'm Fred. We met at the dance a few months ago? You drink vodka.

NICOLE  
Right. So you remember me?

FRED  
Of course! You were wearing that blue dress with the polka dots. That was a really nice outfit. You look great, by the way!

Ken bumps Robin in the arm to say "See!".

NICOLE  
Oh. Thank you.

FRED  
I was thinking of putting in a request to meet you.

NICOLE  
You were? Why didn't you?

FRED  
I was actually waiting to see if my other requests would get filled first.

Robin hits Ken back to say "See, he's an idiot."

Susan and Jessica also roll their eyes.

NICOLE  
Oh. Well, I'm seeing somebody now. So sorry.

FRED  
That's okay. Good luck!

NICOLE  
Thanks. You too. Okay. Goodbye.

She pushes the elevator button and it opens immediately.

As she steps on everyone says goodbye.

SUSAN  
Goodbye Sarah.

JESSICA  
Bye Sarah.

FRED  
Bye Sarah. Nice to meet you.  
Again.

The door closes without her reply.

Susan puts her arm around Fred.

SUSAN  
Freddy. We need to talk.

Susan leads him away to an office and shuts the door.

Jessica, Robin and Ken converge in the middle of the office.

KEN  
Now do you believe it?

ROBIN  
What do we do if the real Sarah  
comes in?

KEN  
You had to ask, didn't you?

ROBIN  
Well?

KEN  
I don't know. I'm open to ideas!  
Hit me!

JESSICA  
I'll call her and see where she's  
at.

ROBIN  
Let me do it. I'll make sure she  
doesn't come back.

OUTDOOR CAFE - AFTERNOON

Nicole/Sarah is sits at a table and waits for Curtis.

He recognizes her.

CURTIS  
Sarah?

NICOLE  
Curtis?

OUTDOOR CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

They sip coffee. The waiter clears dishes away.

WAITER  
Can I get you anything else?

CURTIS  
No. Thank you.

NICOLE  
No. Thank you.

WAITER  
Thank you. Enjoy your day.

He leaves a check and walks away.

NICOLE  
Thank you. We will.

Curtis and Nicole smile at each other.

NICOLE  
So, what kind of lawyer are you?

CURTIS  
Criminal defense.

NICOLE  
You defend the bad guys?

CURTIS  
I defend people who are innocent  
until they are proven guilty.

NICOLE  
How do you know if they're  
innocent?

CURTIS  
I don't. That's not my business.  
My job is to make sure the accused  
get a fair trial. That's it.

NICOLE  
So if somebody's guilty . . . .

CURTIS  
They go to jail.

NICOLE  
What kinds of crime?

CURTIS  
Any kind.

NICOLE  
Like killers?

CURTIS  
Sometimes.

NICOLE  
Can I meet a killer?

CURTIS  
Why would you want to?

NICOLE  
I don't know. What else do you  
have?

CURTIS  
I have accused rapists. Accused  
extortionists. Accused thieves.  
People get accused of all kinds of  
things. But whether or not they  
did it, that's another drama  
entirely. Some of my clients have  
been accused of the most vile  
things you can imagine, and they  
are free. A monster can walk right  
by you and you would never know it.  
People talk to criminals every day.  
Criminals who will never experience  
the permanence of penitentiary  
life, only because of me. Because  
my evidence that they didn't do it  
is stronger than the ones who say  
they did.

NICOLE  
That's kind of cool.

Curtis sips his coffee and smiles.

FOURTH FLOOR - DAY

Robin smokes while she and Ken watch the city.

KEN

When are you going to stop smoking?

The elevator door opens and Debbie/Bianca steps out.

DEBBIE

Tell me a story Pierce.

He gets closer and closer to her face with each word, speaking slowly.

KEN

Once upon a time there was a great big fish - a whale shark. It got real fat because it had a lot of money. Everybody wanted to catch the fish because they knew how much it was worth, but every time somebody got it on the line, the line would snap and somehow they got lost, adrift on the sea and never heard from again. So, we know where this fish is. We know what kind of bait he likes, but we just seem to keep snapping our line.

DEBBIE

Have you tried smearing your bait with jelly?

They are close enough to kiss, but don't.

DEBBIE

The real sweet kind? Maybe you should try that.

KEN

That's why you're here. Ready to gaff a big one?

DEBBIE

I'm always ready.

KEN

That's my girl.

They break away Robin moves in with the file.

KEN

Remember my friend Michelle? We put her on him first. It was a no-go. He was looking for another flavor. So we let Nicole take a stab at him. She got us four account numbers. But then she dropped the line.

DEBBIE

What happened?

KEN

We don't know.

ROBIN

She disappeared. So did Michelle.

DEBBIE

What do you mean, disappeared?

ROBIN

They're gone.

DEBBIE

Where did they go?

KEN

That's the other thing we don't know. Nicole went fishing and one day she didn't come home. We think she found a little treasure, grabbed it and took off so she wouldn't have to split. Same thing for Michelle. They guy is worth what - eighty mil? We think.

ROBIN

More like twenty mil.

KEN

Okay, so I can dream can't I? We wouldn't take it all anyway, but I can't believe two in a row went out without sharing the catch.

Debbie laughs.

DEBBIE

Pierce. You are so sweet. You still believe in honor among thieves.

KEN

It's not like I can do the job myself here. So you want to go fishing, or what?

KEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Robin sits at Ken's desk. Debbie is across from her.

ROBIN

I'm going to be straight with you Deb. You know who I know. I already have the Coast Guard out for Michelle and Nicole. So unless you want them breathing down your neck, too, you bring the boat back home.

DEBBIE

I know. You don't have to try to scare me.

ROBIN

I know I don't have to try. Just do the right thing and don't screw us, and we all get paid.

DEBBIE

You going to stop being a bitch now and give me the details?

Robin reaches into a pocket and unfolds a paper.

ROBIN

These represent his holdings in the bank. These are public statements. So we know what he has. Your goal is to merge all of the funds in all four accounts into one and set up a direct deposit to this account. It's in the Caymans. We have it set up so that when the fund transfer takes place, it routes through an Iraqi bank which is physically defunct, but still operates online. So it looks like Iraqis stole the money, or he's funding terrorists, we don't care which. When the funds go from Iraq to the Caribbean, they become untraceable.

CURTIS REDD'S OFFICE

Curtis answers the phone at his desk.

CURTIS  
Curtis Redd.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
Hello Curtis? This is Jessica at  
I.B.! Do you have a minute?

CURTIS  
Sure. Go ahead.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS - CONTINUOUS

Jessica on phone. Debbie stands beside her.

JESSICA  
I have somebody for you to meet.

KEN'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Robin stands behind Ken and rubs his shoulders.

He leans forward on his desk.

KEN  
Debbie says she's close, now. He  
let's her play on his computer, in  
his bedroom.

ROBIN  
That's where all the important  
things happen.

KEN  
Can you believe it took six whole  
months to net this one? How are we  
doing with the rest of the catch?

ROBIN  
All been cleaned and gutted.  
Broken hearts with smaller bank  
accounts.

KEN

Good. When Debbie makes the transfer, we'll close up shop, give Susan and Jess nice little bonuses and then, hang up the tackle. Take a vacation.

ROBIN

Sounds nice. Where will you go?

KEN

Maybe back to Spokane. Priest Lake. Just relax. What about you?

ROBIN

I'll never tell. Someplace in the Caribbean. With cold drinks and white sand and dark men.

He spins around to face her, grabs her torso.

KEN

Don't want to run away to the land of pines and snow?

She pushes him back gently and grabs his hands, then leans forward playfully.

ROBIN

I may just pay you a surprise visit someday, Pierce.

CITY STREETS - EVENING

Summertime dusk.

Curtis and Debbie carry go-cups with straws.

They walk hand in hand.

CURTIS

What movie should we see?

DEBBIE

What do you want to see?

CURTIS

Something nice. Without violence.

DEBBIE

Okay.

A limo pulls up. The mirrored window lowers. It's Max.

MAX  
Get in, counselor.

CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Limo saunters through traffic.

LIMO INTERIOR - CONTINUOUS

Max sits alone across from them as TWO GOONS flank our guests.

MAX  
Redd. Buddy. You need to stop. I know how it is, trust me. But man. You *need* to stop. This is *not* a request. This is a command to my *protezione*.

(*Italian for defender*)

It ends now.

(to Debbie)

You. Go home and don't remember my face. You got that?

DEBBIE  
What? What's going on?

Max bangs on the window to the driver and the limo pulls over.

MAX  
An intervention. Say goodbye to your boyfriend. It's the last time you're going to see him.

DEBBIE  
What!

MAX  
Now get your ass out of the car.

A GOON opens the door and grabs her.

He pulls her out and drags her away from the limo.

DEBBIE  
Curtis! Curtis!

Curtis reaches for her desperately but remains silent, shocked.

Their hands are ripped apart.

DEBBIE  
CURTIS!

GOON  
Move it!

The Goon pushes her away and gets back in and the limo drives off.

She runs after the car as it speeds away.

DEBBIE  
CURTIS! CURTIS! CURTIS!

MONTAGE - CITY STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Tears stream down her face, Debbie runs at top speed, wipes her eyes. She runs through quiet streets to busier and busier streets. She runs to Ideal Beginnings.

She pounds the elevator button. The doors open up and she stumbles in.

Robin and Ken see her on the monitor.

Susan pushes Fred to the elevator past Debbie.

Jessica comforts her.

Robin and Ken emerge from Ken's office.

ROBIN  
Debbie! Are you okay?

JESSICA  
What happened to you?

Jessica blots her face with a tissue.

DEBBIE  
They - they took him.

JESSICA  
Who? Who took who?

DEBBIE

Men! They took Curtis! Mean men  
in leather coats! In a limo! They  
pulled up and made us get in, and  
they took him!

KEN

Who were they?

DEBBIE

Men! In a limo! They said I would  
never see him again!

Debbie collapses in Jessica's arms.

KEN

Where? Deb, where?

DEBBIE

I don't know. It was some  
industrial place. Nobody was  
around. I ran all the way here.  
They just threw me out and they  
drove away.

ROBIN

Did they hurt you?

DEBBIE

No.

Ken touches both Susan and Robin on the shoulders and pulls  
them away for a huddle steps away.

KEN

Let's let her calm down. What's  
this angle all about? Who would  
want to kidnap the guy?

ROBIN

He's criminal defense.

SUSAN

Somebody . . . maybe they just want  
to talk to him.

KEN

Does that look like somebody just  
wanted to talk? Talk to him about  
a slug in the back of his head is  
my guess.

(beat)

(MORE)

KEN(cont'd)

So, there goes our trophy. What do you know?

CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Limo cruises.

LIMO INTERIOR - CONTINUOUS

Max reprimands Curtis.

MAX

Redd. This is for your own good  
Redd. You need to trust me.

CURTIS

So what do I do? Just break up  
with her?

MAX

Does it matter? You break up with  
all of them.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Debbie sits at the center desk with Jessica, Susan, Ken and Robin nearby.

SUSAN

It'll be okay, Deb. They wanted  
him. Not you. You're lucky they  
let you go.

ROBIN

Very lucky.

DEBBIE

It's not supposed to end like this.  
It's supposed to be quiet and  
normal. It's supposed to be on our  
terms. It was just scary. That's  
all.

KEN

Don't worry, whatever happens to  
him, we're not involved in that  
anyway. Besides, there's more fish  
in the sea.

JESSICA

Will the fishing analogies never end?

KEN

Hey! That's what we do.

DEBBIE

You won't have to charter another boat for a while, Ken. I got the money. I made the transfer. It's done.

KEN

How much?

DEBBIE

Forty-two million. And change.

KEN

Oh, you beautiful woman you! You got the money! You . . . got . . . the money! Are you serious?

He kisses her on the forehead.

KEN

You win the tournament, baby. That's my girl! That's my girl!

LIMO INTERIOR - MOMENTS LATER

Curtis argues with Max.

CURTIS

They wanted my money!

MAX

They all want your money, Redd! What do you think they want? You think women walk down the highway because they want fucking romance? You think they join a place like that to find a soul mate or some dumb shit? They want money Redd! That's what they all want. They are not your friends! I am your friend Redd. Me. You know why? I don't take your money. Have I ever taken your money from you?

Curtis thinks.

MAX

Ever?

Curtis shakes his head "No".

MAX

That's right. You know why?  
Because I don't take money from my  
friends, Redd. I buy my friends.  
And I own you. So my friend, this  
is the end of the line. Time for  
you to do what you gotta do.

The limo stops and Max raises his hand.

He hands a cord to Curtis.

EXT. IDEAL BEGINNINGS - NIGHT

The limo parks in front of the building.

Neon shines down from the sign onto the roof of the limo as  
Curtis steps out.

INT. IDEAL BEGINNINGS - CONTINUOUS

The group revels.

KEN

Where do we keep the champagne  
sweetheart? Do we have champagne?  
What else can we drink?

SUSAN

Get your cognac.

The elevator dings and the door opens.

Curtis Redd bolts in.

Debbie sits at a desk and clutches her purse.

Everyone freezes.

Curtis refers to Debbie as her alias.

CURTIS

Sandra?

DEBBIE

Curtis.

She goes to him and hugs him tightly.

DEBBIE

Are you okay? What happened. Who were those men? Did they hurt you?

CURTIS

No. I'm okay. What are you doing here?

DEBBIE

I didn't know where else to go.

SUSAN

Sandra told us what happened Curtis. Do you need to call the police?

CURTIS

No. Not at all. That was one of my clients. We had business to discuss. I'm sorry if he scared you. There's no need for police. No crime has taken place, I assure you.

KEN

Mr. Redd. I'm Kenneth Pierce. I manage Ideal Beginnings. I appreciate your business, and I understand you are a businessman yourself, but I can't have my clients coming in here baffled out of their wits. It's not good for business, you understand.

CURTIS

Of course. And I apologize. I have explained to the gentlemen in question that I would prefer to not do business without an appointment and they assured me it would not happen again. So - May I have a moment with Sandra, if you don't mind?

Debbie/Sandra leans on him.

CURTIS

May we use the library?

KEN

Of course.

Curtis and Debbie/Sandra exit to the library.

The group gathers in the center of the office.

KEN

What do you know about that?

JESSICA

He doesn't seem scared.

ROBIN

Maybe it wasn't as bad as she thought.

Ken leads them to his office.

KEN

Let's get a drink and figure this out.

They all go into the office and close the door behind them.

ROBIN

What happens now?

Ken uncorks the bottle and starts setting up glasses.

He looks at the monitor.

Curtis and Sandra/Debbie talk.

He pours and passes out glasses.

KEN

I think it's at the point where Sandra needs to break up with our boy and send him on his way. We couldn't have asked for a better scenario - thugs scare the shit of her, why the hell would she want to stay with a guy like that? It's perfect!

JESSICA

Now she can say she has a headache, she goes home, leaves him a Dear John message on his voice mail, and we're done!

KEN

That's right!

SUSAN  
What are they doing?

Susan points to the monitor.

KEN  
They're just talking.

They all turn away from the monitor.

The quartet speaks as our focus slowly shifts back to the monitor.

SUSAN  
It's almost eight. I'll kick them out in five minutes anyway.

KEN  
I want you guys to start thinking about any loose ends we need to tie up.

Focus on monitor now.

JESSICA (V.O.)  
How long before we actually shut the doors.

KEN (V.O.)  
Give it three weeks.

ROBIN (V.O.)  
Two.

KEN (V.O.)  
You think?

On the monitor Curtis strangles Debbie.

She fights.

The group pays no attention.

ROBIN (V.O.)  
I think we need to head for international waters pretty quick.

SUSAN  
I'll miss this place.

JESSICA  
Susan, you're so sweet!

SUSAN

Well, it's still a fun place to work. Even if it is a front.

KEN

Don't worry, with your severance, you can have your own Ideal Beginnings.

SUSAN

I suppose.

Ken notices the monitor.

KEN

What the fuck!

He runs to the door. It's locked.

KEN

Robin! The button.

She pushes it. The door clicks.

The girls look at the monitor, then chase behind Ken.

LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Curtis releases the snare from her neck and Debbie falls to the floor.

He turns to see Ken.

Ken freezes.

Curtis attacks, rushing toward Ken with the cord outstretched right at his throat.

Ken puts up a hand and blocks the cord but gets knocked back into the wall.

Curit bashes Ken into the wall and grabs a huge catalogue, smashing him with it.

Ken puts up his arms for defense. Curtis does not stop.

Pages fly out of the book and Ken gets hit several more times in the head until he is unconscious.

The women at the library door see him look up at them.

He charges like a wild animal toward them.

Jessica screams, falls and blocks the path of Robin and Susan, who trip over her.

Curtis sweats and towers over them.

He circles them and places himself between them and the door, the only escape.

CURTIS

You dirty bitches. All you want is money. That's what you all want. You don't help people find love. You help them find whores. You waste. . . time. You and women like you. You're all whores. You don't want to love, honor and obey. You just want a man to buy you things and take you places and cater to you. And all you want is to spend my money. MY MONEY! It's not yours! It's mine!

SUSAN

We don't want your money Curtis!

CURTIS

Yes you do! That's what everybody wants. They want my money! But they can't have it! It's mine. I - I'm the one who worked for it! Not them. They don't deserve it. It's my money! I deserve it! Look at all the money in here!

He pulls a catalogue off the shelf and tears pages out.

CURTIS

Look at all the money! You charge thousands to each one of these people! What do they get? A whore? You don't know the first thing about love. You sell false hope to imbeciles who think they will find one burning love and all their hopes and desires wedged in the pages of a book! All you do is build impossible dreams and dash them like cinders. You can't have my money! You can't do that to me.

Jessica whips a shoe and hits him in the head.

Robin bolts for the door and Curtis grabs her wrist.

Susan pushes him into the shelves.

Jessica stands as Robin breaks free.

As Susan and Robin start to run, he slams Jessica into the opposite wall with violent force.

She flies across the room and lands unconscious.

Robin and Susan flee to Ken's office with Curtis one step behind them.

KEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Robin, one beat in front of Susan, gets inside and spins around quickly.

Susan bolts toward the office.

Robin slams the door and locks Susan out.

SUSAN

ROBIN!

IDEAL BEGINNINGS LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Susan claws at the door and Curtis jumps on her and tackles her to the floor

SUSAN

ROBIN!

KEN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Robin shakes. She can hear Susan scream her name.

SUSAN (O.C.)

Robin! Robin!

Then silence.

Robin winces, terrified.

She looks to the monitor.

On the monitor Curtis drags Susan through the lobby by her hair and the sleeve of her dress.

On another screen, the library strewn with papers on the floor.

Ken, Jessica, and Debbie don't move.

On the third screen, Curtis wraps a cord around her Susan's neck.

Robin watches, terrified.

ROBIN  
Oh, God. Oh. God.

Robin covers her mouth and cries.

On the monitor Susan drops to the floor.

Robin watches the door. Curtis pounds from the other side.

The door shakes despite the magnetic lock.

Robin cowers below the monitors. She cries.

The pounding stops.

She looks to the monitor and watches Curtis. He gets on the elevator.

The other two monitors show the library and the lobby.

The monitors switch over and the outside of the building replaces the library.

Curtis exits the elevator and disappears.

He does not exit the building.

He does not return to the lobby.

He can not be in the library.

Robin shudders.

ROBIN  
No. No. No. No. NO! That's  
impossible. That . . . he can't.

Dead quiet. Robin freezes. She looks up and hears a creak.

She hears commotion above. Robin winces. She stands and runs to the door.

Then she runs to push the button. It clicks and she runs back. It's still locked.

She piles things onto the chair and shoves it under the desk to try to keep the button pushed.

She uses catalogues, the fax machine, a desk drawer. It's no good. She can't keep the pressure on the button. She sees the cordless phone and pushes the on button. She dials.

The power goes out.

The monitor screens fade to tiny pinpoints of light.

The phone has no tone.

ROBIN  
No. No! NO! NO!

She throws the phone.

ROBIN  
GODAMMIT!

There is noise above the window.

Robin goes for the door.

Auxiliary lights suddenly come on as she pulls the door. She opens it just a hair but the magnet pulls it back out of her hand. She pulls harder.

A huge light fixture bashes into the window from the outside.

Curtis hangs over the ledge of the floor above.

He whips the light fixture into the window until it breaks.

Robin screams out the window.

ROBIN  
Help! Somebody! Please! Help me!

Curtis drops down from the ledge and stands outside the broken window.

Robin grabs the first big thing her hands reach - the yellow pages. She lifts the massive book overhead and hurls it through the broken window dead on at Curtis Redd who clutches it and loses his balance.

He falls backwards to the street below.

EXT. IDEAL BEGINNINGS - CONTINUOUS

People witness the fall and run to Curtis Redd's aid.

Robin sees them and calls out the window.

ROBIN  
Stop! Help! Help me! Call the  
police!

CLOSE-UP

Three glasses filled with liquor clink in a toast.

KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

Max holds up a glass.

MAX  
To our dear departed counselor,  
Curtis Redd. May he burn in  
fucking hell.

Dewey downs his shot.

Max pours a second for himself and puts the bottle back down.

MAX  
Goddamn, Dew. Quite the fucking  
psycho wasn't he?

DEWEY  
How did you know he was so  
predictable.

MAX  
He's like a robot. That cheap  
motherfucker would count his money  
after lunch to make sure he got  
every cent back in his change. He  
wouldn't let a nickel roll under a  
table and forget about it. Anybody  
ever tried to take his money, or  
you were late paying him, you could  
see he was bound to snap. Mikey  
made a joke about him having too  
much money in the bank once, said  
he should give him some, you should  
have seen the guy go off. He was  
like a fucking monster.

DEWEY

How did you know he would react to the women the way he did.

MAX

He was a fucking psycho from the start. One day, he calls me. Says he has a problem. He picked up some hooker. Took her home. That was it. He had sex with her. Couldn't help himself. Strangled her. He couldn't date regular chicks. Couldn't do it. So he would drive to some other city or somewhere, find some bitch hitchhiking, and that was it.

DEWEY

How many were there?

MAX

Don't want to know. I just cleaned up after him because the fucker had me over a barrel. But look who's cleaned up now, right babe?

The third glass touches a woman's lips. She speaks.

ROBIN

You got that right.

MAX

Here's to a new chapter.

Max raises his glass for another toast.

DEWEY

And a nice healthy retirement.

MAX

Hear, hear.

DEWEY

What's that come out to? Around fourteen a piece when you split it three ways?

MAX

Something like that.

ROBIN

No. It's more.

MAX  
It's more?

Dewey pulls out a calculator and places it on the table.

DEWEY  
Let me check.

MAX  
How is it more?

ROBIN  
It's like this.

A gunshot.

Max gets hit from under the table.

A second shot.

Now its Dewey.

Max reaches for his pistol.

Robin stands and fires twice more.

Max collapses.

Dewey reaches out to plead with one hand and shield his face with the other. She shoots Dewey again. He drops.

ROBIN  
Now you don't have to do any math.

CABIN IN WOODS - DAY

A car rolls into the driveway.

Ken walks out of the cabin.

A reflection on the windshield hides the driver

Robin emerges.

She smirks and slinks up to the steps.

KEN  
What are you doing here?

ROBIN  
Visiting.

KEN

I thought you ripped me off.

ROBIN

I did.

KEN

No you didn't. If you did, you wouldn't be here. And even if you did, then - what? Am I supposed to go nuts now? I'm not like that you know. It's not the first time I've been disappointed. So don't worry about me getting violent or anything. You know I wouldn't put up a good fight.

He sits on the top step.

ROBIN

I know.

KEN

You know, Jessica got screwed too. And of course Susan and Debbie-

He stops and hangs his head low.

KEN

-I don't know about the other girls. I don't know what happened to Dewey. He disappeared. So I'm just going to stick around here for a while. Just stay in my cabin and go down to the creek and hunt for real fish. Surprised you remember how to find it.

She sits next to him and puts his arm around him.

ROBIN

Of course I remember. It wasn't that long ago.

KEN

What's this all about? Are you going to stay for a while?

She leans over and kisses him.

ROBIN  
Who says introduction services  
don't work.

FADE OUT.

IDEAL BEGINNINGS

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WGA Registration # 1006366