

Sculpted

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - NIGHT

A neo-modern home: clean lines, manicured lawn, walled off from neighbors by trees/shrubs, still and cold. The muffled sound of Mozart's Symphony No. 25 in G Minor Mvt. 1 plays from deep in the house.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/VARIOUS ROOMS - NIGHT

Main living area features a state-of-the-art stereo system. The music plays through speakers in each room. All rooms are uncluttered and immaculate as if decorated for show.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

The full moon gives a glow to the well-kept garden and adds to the illumination of flowing water from a miniature replica of Cathedral of St. John the Divine's Peace Fountain depicting St. Michael slaying the dragon. A variety of wind chimes hang throughout the backyard and TINKLE and BONG in response to an irregular breeze. The music is again muffled.

MOVE IN FROM FOUNTAIN TOWARDS HOUSE

The music gets louder.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

PULL BACK FROM BASEMENT WINDOW

The round window is the only one in the basement and the fountain recedes as the room comes into view. Mozart's Symphony No. 25 in G Minor Mvt. 1 plays loudest in the candle lit basement art studio. AERIAL KRIZANOVITCH, a thirty-year old male, works in his art studio.

Aerial wears only a clay-and-paint stained heavy apron over his nude body as he works on the feet of a lifesize clay sculpture. In contrast to the pristine appearance of the rest of the house, the studio is a mess of creativity with various painting and sculpting supplies as well as abandoned projects scattered about.

ANGLE ON AERIAL AND FIGURE

Dipping a sponge in a bucket of water, Aerial lovingly smooths the clay surface. The expression on his face is intense, but technical.

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON SCULPTURE - MOVING Aerial methodically strokes, washes, and smooths his way along the figure starting with feet to calf to thigh.

FANTASY SEQUENCE - AERIAL'S STUDIO - NIGHT MELISSA, a pretty early twenties woman with long dark curly hair, seen from chest up nude. Her breathing is shallow in her chest; eyes filled with a growing fear.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Aerial works his way up the sculpture past groin, over hips and belly.

FANTASY SEQUENCE - AERIAL'S STUDIO - NIGHT Melissa tries not to tremble as Aerial comes up from behind her, circling to her side. A silent tear streams down Melissa's face as she holds still, immobilized with fear.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Aerial works his way up the sculpture around breasts and past neck.

FANTASY SEQUENCE - AERIAL'S STUDIO - NIGHT Aerial takes a pair of rusty scissors and snips lockets of her hair. As he cuts her hair, various incarnations of Melissa's face transition from one to the other in a jerkystop motion fashion: unblemished, bruised and battered, missing features, repeating the sequence as eyes, nose, mouth vanish and all that is left is a blank face and no hair.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Aerial reaches the sculpture's head; where a face should be, framed by carefully sculpted twisted locks of hair that radiate out like rays of a sun, is a hollow area: a large cavity in place of a face. Aerial stands over the sculpture, beads of sweat forming on his intense face, his eyes go slack as his tongue, as if over swollen, protrudes from between his lips. He lets the apron drop. Leaving him nude in front of the sculpture. Aerial caresses the clay hair, closes his eyes, and places his face into the hollow, faceless area of the figure's head. He fondles the hips and dips his head down to kiss the breasts.

VIEW OF WORK COUNTER Textbooks of war wound management and amputations from various time periods lay scattered open or stacked carelessly on the work counter.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - NIGHT

The neo-contemporary designed bedroom is softly lit. Aerial enters in a plush white robe and carrying a goblet of red wine. Symphony Number 25 in G minor Mvt. 1 plays on through hidden speakers as Aerial settles into a reading chair. The piece of music ends and the RADIO HOST comes on.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)

That was Mozart's symphony number 25 in G minor movement one. Just want to remind listeners that our own Aerial Krizanovitch will unveil some new works at Eden's End gallery a week from Saturday.

Aerial allows a wry smile to visit his face.

RADIO HOST (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We're fortunate to have this artist show his work locally before it's grabbed up by the greedy city. So come out and support artists who support our community. And remember it's Aerial, so there is bound to be a surprise.

Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata No. 14 plays and Aerial slips into a comfortable drowsiness. The house phone RINGS shattering the serenity. Aerial startles, spilling drops of red wine on his robe. The terse look of anger on his face vanishes, replaced by his usual careful countenance. Aerial gets up, sits his wine down, and inspects his robe as the message machine replaces the RINGING.

AERIAL (V.O.)

(on message machine) Not available.
BEEP.

JEFF (V.O.)

(on message machine) Aerial? C'mon buddy pick up. You're supposed to be here celebrating. I picked up the limo and two Puerto Rican sisters who want to meet you.

Aerial walks over and opens his compulsively organized closet. He picks out some clothes.

JEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All right then - screw you if you're not going to pick up. I know you're there. I'm coming over and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JEFF (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)
 we're going to get our drink on and
 party with beautiful people!

The classical music blends into Megaherz's cover of Rock Me Amadeus.

INT. NIGHT CLUB - NIGHT

Megaherz's cover of Rock Me Amadeus booms and pulsates, joining over-stimulating frantic flashes of lights. The upscale and the hip pack the club. Aerial lounges in a private booth with arms spread wide across the back of the leather booth seat. He observes the dance floor with restrained delight. On the table in front of him is a bottle of Lucid Absinthe with its cat eyes label staring out beside the glass, spoon, and pile of sugar cubes. His friends' champagne and flutes set off to either side.

ANGLE ON DANCE FLOOR JEFF MARX a Black thirty-year old well-groomed metro-male dances while sandwiched between two young Latina beauties - YOLANDA and MARIE.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial watches as he drinks his absinthe.

ANGLE ON JEFF, YOLANDA, AND MARIE Strobe lights highlight Jeff, Yolanda, and Marie's bodies, elongating time and revealing moments in the separation of fluid movement now reduced to jerky, sudden shifts in positions.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial works to readjust his eyes.

ANGLE ON JEFF, YOLANDA, AND MARIE Each time the flash of the strobe captures and freezes Jeff, Yolanda, and Marie in time - morphed into different artistic styles: cubism, surrealism, fauvism, expressionism.

ANGLE ON AERIAL

Sweat beads on his forehead - breathing labored. He stares intensely until...

CLUB WAITRESS (O.S.)
 Another bottle?

WIDER ANGLE CLUB WAITRESS, a young, scantily clothed woman stands by Aerial with a bottle of champagne.

AERIAL
 What?

(CONTINUED)

CLUB WAITRESS

May I open you all another bottle?

Aerial smiles and nods. Club waitress POPS the cork and leans over to pour into the four large flutes on the small table. As she does, Aerial glances down at the back of her legs.

ANGLE ON CLUB WAITRESS'S LEGS Through the sheer pantyhose is seen a burn scar that runs from the back of her knee, up her thigh, and vanishes under the cover of a short skirt that barely covers the curve of her butt.

WIDER ANGLE Aerial looks at Club Waitress as she finishes pouring. He glances down again and reaches out to her leg.

ANGLE ON CLUB WAITRESS'S LEGS Aerial's hand feels up the scar through the pantyhose at the back of the knee. He gently brushes upwards.

WIDER ANGLE Club Waitress startles and steps away.

CLUB WAITRESS

What the.. Hey!

Waitress slaps Aerial's hand as he puts them up in surrender.

CLUB WAITRESS (CONT'D)

No touching, asshole.

The music has changed to a grinding sexual BEAT.

AERIAL

Sorry. Just digging the scar. What did you do to deserve that?

CLUB WAITRESS

Go fuck yourself!

Club Waitress turns and leaves putting a smile on Aerial's face as Marie comes to the table, grabs Aerial's hands, and pulls him up.

MARIE

Come on, Poppy - stop ignoring me.

They embrace and start to sway to the music. Aerial whispers in her ear.

AERIAL

I've been watching you move all night.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE
(giggles) Oh, yeah? Well, I'm ready
to be felt, baby.

Holding Marie tight, Aerial looks over her shoulder at Club Waitress's departure.

ANGLE ON CROWD Club Waitress looks like a pencil-sketch of herself as she walks away and into the crowd.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial stares into the crowd. His smug smile drops.

ANGLE ON CROWD Spot lighted throughout the crowd are FIVE WOMEN, scarred and twisted, glaring at Aerial.

ANGLE ON AERIAL

Aerial closes his eyes hard. Sweat beads on his face. He dares to open his eyes again as he dances Marie around to face another direction.

ANGLE ON CROWD The spot lighted Five Women are gone, only the regular crowd remains.

INT. LIMOUSINE (MOVING) - NIGHT

Clearly intoxicated, Jeff, Yolanda, and Marie laugh and carry on as Aerial smiles, relaxed Marie cozies up to him. Yolanda straddles Jeff and faces him. She takes a snort of cocaine from a small spoon.

JEFF
(pointing to Aerial)
Let me tell you about this guy
here...

Marie starts kissing Aerial's neck.

MARIE
Like a juicy mango.

Yolanda rubs Jeff's groin.

YOLANDA
Whatcha got for me?

AERIAL
Come on, Jeff, no one wants to hear
a long story.

Marie's hand goes from Aerial's chest to between his legs.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE

I love a long story.

Yolanda nuzzles Jeff's neck.

JEFF

No no, listen to this shit. When Aerial finished art school - at nineteen I might add - the Archdiocese commissioned him to do a statue of Saint Paul.

Marie startles and quickly crosses herself.

MARIE

Jesus Christ! Don't talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit when I'm stoned.

Yolanda looks at Aerial, points, and laughs.

YOLANDA

Oh shit - you're that guy. That guy who...

Aerial shakes his head with a forced grin.

JEFF

... who pissed off the Bishop and had to pay all that advance money back.

MARIE

Poor baby.

AERIAL

Nothing is poor receiving three times what it was worth in a private auction.

Jeff gives Aerial a glare.

JEFF

Which took forever to collect and was more pain that it was worth.

YOLANDA

You made Saint Paul look crazy and all electrocuted.

Aerial returns the glare.

AERIAL

It's art. No one tells me how to do my art.

Marie nibbles Aerial's ear.

MARIE

(whispers) There's a special Hell waiting for you, eh Poppy? Where you're all alone in the silence.

AERIAL

There is.

INT. UPSCALE CONDO/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The dim-lit, well-decorated condo flickers from the light of many candles. Sitting on a sofa, Aerial watches with controlled disdain as Marie does a line of coke off an end table.

MARIE

(sniffing)

Oh, baby, that makes my pussy tingle.

AERIAL

Don't be vulgar.

Marie tries to smile off the reprimand. Aerial gets up and removes his shirt, dropping it on the sofa. He walks over and CLICKS on a sound system. Nina Simone sings 'I Put a Spell on You'.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

It's too quiet in here.

Marie sways to the music.

MARIE

Yeah, baby, let's get some motion going. Whew!

Aerial walks over to Marie and stands over her. Marie stops her dancing and looks around the condo - nervous.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Nice place your friend has. Sure he won't mind us partying here?

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

He's out of the country. He let's
me hangout here when I'm in the
city.

Marie gets up and goes to embrace him. She rubs his groin.

MARIE

Hmmm... not quite ready for Marie,
I see.

Aerial does not react. He stands statue-still with a dark,
brooding intensity.

Marie takes a step back and smiles sweetly to cover her
confusion. She takes a throw pillow from the sofa and
putting it on the floor, goes down to her knees on the
pillow in front of Aerial.

ANGLE AERIAL'S FACE Unmoved as the sound of his zipper
UNZIPPING mixes with Marie's soft MOAN.

PAN OVER TO TABLE ACROSS THE ROOM A discreetly placed Flip
video camera records the scene.

ANGLE ON AERIAL AND MARIE Marie stand up with a grin.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Now, you are ready for Marie.

Marie grabs the bottom of her dress, turns around and lifts
the up over her back, exposing her nakedness below and a
large tattoo on her back of the Death Tarot card. Marie
looks coyly over her shoulder at Aerial.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You like?

Aerial approaches her; his fingers trace around the tattoo.

AERIAL

You like death - the mystery, the
ecstasy? You must - to bear the
pain of getting this inked on your
back.

MARIE

Life, death, pain, pleasure - same
coin isn't it?

AERIAL

So infatuated with darkness in the
abstract, oblivious to what your
playing with.

(CONTINUED)

Aerial weaves his fingers tight in her hair and pulls her head back.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Do you think art is freedom and joy? Art enslaves you - tears at you. Commands you with a whip that cuts into your flesh.

MARIE

Take it easy, okay? You're scaring me.

Aerial unlooses her hair rubbing his hands down Marie's back to her butt.

AERIAL

Tranquilo, tranquilo - It's okay.

Marie nods slowly, reluctantly. Aerial snakes one hand around her, resting it on her belly.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

You're so beautiful, Marie. So ripe and full of life. It's moments like this that I love to capture in a painting, a sculpture... a whisper...

Marie blushes and LAUGHS in relief.

MARIE

Oh, Poppy, my heart...

Aerial reaches down and grabs his shirt off the sofa. Marie closes her eyes and smiles as Aerial pulls her arms behind her. He takes the shirt binds Marie's arms behind her at the elbows.

MARIE (CONT'D)

(moaning)

That's it, baby, yes...

He guides Marie to the tiled floor; on her knees and face down on the pillow.

MARIE (CONT'D)

That's it - fuck me, baby...

This throws off the moment, his countenance changes.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL
(stern)
I said don't be vulgar.

MARIE
What's wrong?

AERIAL
Shhh - listen.

Aerial picks up one of the candles and holds it three feet above Marie. She sees what he is doing.

MARIE
Keep it high so it doesn't burn,
okay, mi amante?

AERIAL
You don't talk when I'm doing art.
You listen.

Aerial tilts the candle, letting small drops of wax splatter on Marie's back, outlining the tattoo.

MARIE
Yeah, like that...

AERIAL
Shhh. Listen. (brief pause) Bernini was a master sculptor in the Baroque style. His sculpture Apollo and Daphne tells the story of Apollo chasing after Daphne whom he can never have - a cruel trick of cupid. Daphane is turned into a tree by her father to save her from Apollo's pursuit. Bernini's work captures her terrifying moment.

Aerial stops dripping the wax, looking down on Marie with contempt. He slowly lowers the candle close to Marie's well shaped butt.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
She is turned into a tree after she prays to her father saying,
"Destroy the beauty that has injured me, or change the body that destroys my life."

Aerial pours the wax too close and too hot onto Marie's butt, making a long line from lower back to upper thigh.

(CONTINUED)

MARIE
AHHH! Maldición! Tu puta madre!

Aerial grabs the shirt and keeps Marie from getting up.

MARIE (CONT'D)
(angry and crying)
Let me up you, fuck! Puto pendejo.

AERIAL
Shut up! Did that darkness get too
real for you, princess? Well, it's
about to get real dark.

Marie turns her head to look up at Aerial - disbelief and
shock on her face. Aerial smiles with content.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
That's it - the look Bernini's
Daphne had.

INT. UPSCALE CONDO/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Yolanda is belly-down on the bed with her legs hanging over
the edge of the bed. She is clearly passed out with her
dress pulled up, exposing her butt, and her panties pulled
to her below her knees. Jeff is bare-chested and buckling
his belt. He grabs his shirt and heads out of the bedroom.

INT. UPSCALE CONDO/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON JEFF

Jeff walks into the living room, putting on his shirt when
he looks over at the sofa area.

JEFF
What the fuck, Aerial?

WIDER ANGLE Marie is on her side on the floor SOBBING, still
bound. Cut locks of her hair litter the floor. A skull is
drawn on her face with lipstick. Aerial, sitting on the edge
of the sofa, examines her fingers with curiosity with one
hand as he absentmindedly snips some scissors with the other
hand.

JEFF (CONT'D)
Goddamn it! Get away from her.

Aerial shrugs and leans back on the sofa, stretching his
arms out.

(CONTINUED)

Yolanda stumbles into the room half-dressed.

YOLANDA
I feel sick, Jeff, take me home.

She looks down at Marie.

YOLANDA (CONT'D)
What happened to you?

JEFF
Just an accident. Everyone's fucked
up, okay? - it was just an
accident.

INT. DINER - DAY

A diner out of a Norman Rockwell painting that has aged 50 years. Aerial and Jeff are out of place in their frumpy party clothes as they sit in a booth surrounded by the breakfast crowd of truckers and travelers. Aerial wears a pair of Revo green mirrored sunglasses that reflect the bustle of the diner.

JEFF
Why did you drag me here?

AERIAL
I come here most every weekend.

JEFF
(sarcastic)
Well that's shocking.

AERIAL
It's real. It has a vibe. Real
people, living real lives.

HOSTESS comes by with a carafe of coffee and places menus and mugs on the table.

HOSTESS
Your server will be with you in a
moment. Coffee?

Aerial nods in acceptance and Jeff gives in with a nod and a flick of the hand. The hostess pours and leaves.

JEFF
Real people, real lives. That's
such bullshit. We're real people,
Aerial. We have real lives.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

(annoyed)

Yes, your cone of perception is very broad.

JEFF (CONT'D)

We could be in the city getting real coffee and real food that's not going to slide out my ass two hours from now.

AERIAL

Why are we all irritable?

JEFF

Are you serious? I'm tired of cleaning up after your bullshit.

AERIAL

What her? She'll survive - the wax will leave a mark, nothing permanent. Hair grows back. She will thank me she felt alive for that moment.

JEFF

What the fuck is wrong with you? These weren't some Eastside whores, you feel me? It's not just a matter of appeasing some pimp like before - which, by the way, is not easy. Just because I'm black, doesn't mean I'm fluent in pimp.

AERIAL

Oh, you speak pimp just fine.

JEFF

That's racist, yo.

AERIAL

You started it.

Aerial shrugs off the comment.

JEFF (CONT'D)

These were well-to-do beautiful girls - understand? From families with money - you don't go around fucking shit like that up.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Yes, they were beautiful.

JEFF

Goddamn right.

AERIAL

The picture of perfection.

JEFF

That's right, and?

AERIAL

In nature there are no straight lines. To nature it's the flaw that defines beauty.

JEFF

Oh, fuck you and your nature. Those girls had connections - big money art connections.

AERIAL

You think too much on the business end.

JEFF

Excuse me for being your agent. Your fourth agent by the way, thanks to your reputation of being a prick - which is what you were last night.

Aerial waves Jeff off and looks across the diner.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA DAVIS

At the far end of the diner, CYNTHIA DAVIS, wearing a waitress uniform, has her back to Aerial. She is facing a booth by the large diner window and singing happy birthday to ELDERLY MAN and ELDERLY WOMAN. Her voice is captivating.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Cynthia is seen in the reflection of Aerial's mirrored glasses.

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

(voice trailing off)

Their grandfather's connected in Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico, man. You know how much restoration work is down in Puerto Rico?

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Don't worry, she'll be as quiet as a church mouse. Even well-to-do girls don't want daddy seeing a video of them sucking a stranger's cock. They begged me - you heard - they begged me.

Aerial lowers his glasses and peers over the top of them as Cynthia comes to a close. Her voice in the perfection of Marilyn Monroe.

JEFF (O.S.)

(fading voice)

We sure as shit won't be invited to meet the grandfather...

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA

The morning sun washes out details of Cynthia's appearance. She cleans the Elderly Man's glasses as the Elderly Woman laughs. Cynthia gently places the glasses back on Elderly Man's face and all three share a laugh.

ANGLE ON AERIAL AND JEFF

Aerial turns back to Jeff, sliding his glasses back into place.

AERIAL

It's important to keep things in perspective, Jeff. Did you know that Michelangelo's statue of David is not proportional? It was meant to be viewed from below.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA

Cynthia turns and walks towards Aerial and Jeff's booth. Cynthia is a redhead in her early twenties, plain looking and carrying some extra pounds. Her hair is tied up in a hurry, make-up sparse except for bright pink lipstick.

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

Even though it never was displayed on high - it's still a masterpiece despite of - or maybe due to the flaw.

ANGLE ON AERIAL AND JEFF

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

Great. Well that explains everything. That makes it all better.

AERIAL

Michelangelo also said, "I saw an angel in the marble and carved until I set her free."

Cynthia reaches Aerial and Jeff.

CYNTHIA

Sorry for the wait. What can I get you guys?

JEFF

(snidely)

Whatever s fresh off the road?

AERIAL

Don't mind him. His anger is focused at me. Haven't seen you before and I come here most weekends.

CYNTHIA

Just started a couple weeks ago.

AERIAL

Well...

Aerial looks at her name tag.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

... Cynthia, we'll each have a short stack - wheat - and a side of fruit.

Cynthia looks at Jeff to check-in and Jeff gives a nonchalant wave in his approval. Aerial keeps his eyes on Cynthia as she walks away - obviously fascinated with the waitress. Jeff SNAPS his fingers.

JEFF

Hey, Aerial, over here. Pay attention.

His trance broken, Aerial looks at Jeff.

AERIAL

What?

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

What - What? Are you kidding me with this bullshit? You fuck things up with a gorgeous girl like Marie and then drool over that waitress?

AERIAL

You don't see what I see. The essence in the form waiting to be sculpted and brought out.

JEFF

That's a road we don't need to go down again. Understand? Just focus on work.

Aerial shifts uncomfortably in his seat. He avoids eye contact with Jeff.

AERIAL

Don't worry about it.

JEFF

I am worried about it. I'm worried you're going to fuck up the Rome trip. I haven't slept since I booked you that job. This could be huge - repair your reputation.

Aerial snaps his attention back to Jeff.

AERIAL

There's nothing wrong with my reputation. You always blow everything out of proportion.

JEFF

I'm not blowing it out of proportion - I'm putting it into perspective for you. You're classically trained in Greek and Roman art - but you can't get work in that area because of your need to make a statement.

AERIAL

(sarcastic)

Thank you for regurgitating the importance of a proper resume'.

JEFF

Sometimes I think you need reminder of what's important and what's not.

(CONTINUED)

Cynthia brings Aerial and Jeff their orders and places plates on the table. She sets Aerial's down and then...

ANGLE ON JEFF'S PLACE MAT ... sets Jeff's plate of pancakes in front of him on the cheap paper place mat. On the top pancake she has put a smiley face made of whipped cream.

ANGLE ON BOOTH Jeff gives Cynthia a questioning look.

CYNTHIA

Hope your day brightens up. Can I get you guys anything else?

Aerial laughs in approval giving Jeff a coy smile.

AERIAL

Now that is a statement, eh Jeff?

Cynthia gives a wink and walks away. Jeff stares at the smiley face pancakes.

JEFF

What the fuck am I suppose to do with this?

AERIAL

Eat it? Look - don't worry so much. I'm going to behave in Rome. I swear. I'll go down there, work for a couple of months on the restoration - following the original design - and come back. No problem.

JEFF

I hope so - for both our sakes. I mean, there's a gold mine of steady work in restoration out there, my friend, and you need to get paid so I get paid. I got a standard of living to maintain.

AERIAL

Don't lay that your shit on me. It's not my problem you piss your money away.

JEFF

Fuck you, Aerial. If it weren't for me, you'd be hocking your bullshit on Ebay.

AERIAL
You're such a goddamn leach.

Jeff gets up.

JEFF
I'm outta this dump.

AERIAL
We came in a limo together.

JEFF
I'll find my own way home.

Jeff storms out.

A CLATTER arises and Aerial looks over in the direction of the commotion.

ANGLE ON ANOTHER DINER SECTION Cynthia has spilled a tray of food on two TRUCKERS who grumble at her. JANET, another waitress, comes over to help clean up.

JANET
Why don't you go on and take your break now, honey.

Cynthia picks up some more items, but is shooed away by Janet when BUS BOY appears. Cynthia heads for the kitchen.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial cocks his head and raises his hands as if to frame the scene.

EXT. SIDE OF DINER - DAY

Aerial makes his way to the waiting limo.

EXT. REAR OF DINER - DAY

Cynthia stands behind the diner taking a smoke break. Aerial notices her as he passes the corner of the diner on his way to the limo. She gives him a forced smile.

AERIAL
You okay?

CYNTHIA
Oh, sure. Yeah. Yup. Hazard of the job, you know. Slick floor, asshole truckers.

Aerial walks over to Cynthia.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

That's a perilous combination. My name's Aerial. Aerial Krizanovitch.

Cynthia looks quizzically at Aerial.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

I know, I know, my parents were very old world European.

CYNTHIA

It's nice. I like that name. I'm Cyn...

She smiles and TAPS her name tag.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

But you already know. Anyway - don't worry about me. Just phase one of the restoration.

AERIAL

Restoration?

CYNTHIA

Yeah - you know when something starts to fall apart, you put it back together again new and true and right as rain.

AERIAL

It's an interesting way to put things. Restoration. I'm an artist.

CYNTHIA

I see.

Aerial removes his mirrored sunglasses.

AERIAL

Sorry - didn't mean to sound pretentious.

CYNTHIA

No, not at all. I think art's great. I took some art history classes in college.

AERIAL

Yeah?

CYNTHIA

I maybe a clumsy waitress, but I'm not a dumb one.

AERIAL

No, of course not.

CYNTHIA

Just working to pay off school loans. It was either this or work the pole and I figure I'd get better tips pouring coffee than shaking these little things.

Cynthia cups her small breasts. Aerial looks down at them in awkward silence.

CYNTHIA

Relax - wasn't fishing for a compliment.

AERIAL

No, I was just thinking - you went to college and your only employment choices are stripping or slinging hash?

CYNTHIA

Yeah, well, I didn't finish - that's the problem. I had to take a leave of absence during my social work internship.

AERIAL

So what happened? Or is that too personal to tell a stranger behind a diner?

Cynthia shrugs with a smile and takes a drag off her cigarette. Aerial reaches out and gently takes the cigarette from her, takes a drag, and hands it back.

CYNTHIA

Now that's personal.

AERIAL

These things'll kill you - so I'm told.

CYNTHIA

So can saliva from a stranger.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

I'm not worried about it.

Cynthia scrutinizes Aerial and then slowly takes a long drag off the cigarette, releasing the smoke from her nostrils.

CYNTHIA

Are you fucking with me?

AERIAL

What are you talking about?

CYNTHIA

I saw you and your friend get out of the limo - all dressed up, little hung over, no doubt jetting around in the high life. And now here you are flirting with a dumpy waitress behind some shitty diner. Kinda seems like I'm being fucked with.

AERIAL

It's not like that.

CYNTHIA

Then what?

AERIAL

I don't know.

CYNTHIA

Didn't think this out very well, did you, sport?

AERIAL

I can't always articulate the things inside of me. Something catches my eye and I'm drawn to it. Something about you caught my eye and... you know...

CYNTHIA

I'm sure bimbos find that line flattering, but to me - it's kind of an insult. Bullshit, I believe is the Old Worldly English term.

AERIAL

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA
I think my break is over.

AERIAL
Can I just make an observation?
Please?

CYNTHIA
(reluctantly)
Okay...

AERIAL
You're a natural redhead, right?

CYNTHIA
Now I'm really leaving.

AERIAL
No, no, wait, I'm not being a perv,
I swear. I ask only for aesthetic
reasons.

CYNTHIA
What's aesthetic about red hair?

AERIAL
Your lipstick.

CYNTHIA
What about it?

AERIAL
With your hair color you should
avoid pink and wear something more
neutral and natural like peach.

CYNTHIA
(flatly)
Really.

AERIAL
Colors are my world.

Cynthia tosses her cigarette on the ground and snuffs it out
with her shoe.

CYNTHIA
Uh-huh.

She goes inside.

ANGLE ON AERIAL He stares intensely at the ground.

ANGLE ON CIGARETTE BUTT

(CONTINUED)

The twisted, pink lipstick smudged butt still smolders on the ground.

WIDER ANGLE Aerial carefully picks up the butt, stamps it out, and places it in his pocket. The limo horn BLARES.

INT. DINER/BREAK ROOM - DAY

Cynthia stands at a beehive of cubby holes crammed full of the personal items of employees in the cramped, rundown break room. She reaches into her cubby and retrieves a bottle of body spritz, brushing her hand past a small mirror suspended on a string from the top of her cubby.

As Cynthia spritzs herself, the mirror spins alternating from reflective side to the back side, which contains the "Don't Tread On Me" snake. Cynthia glances at the mirror as it slows - pensive as she glimpses images of her reflection - snake - reflection - snake... The entrance of Janet jars Cynthia from her hypnotic state.

JANET

Jesus - what did you do, blow him behind the dumpster?

CYNTHIA

Who?

Janet hands Cynthia an envelope.

JANET

Aerial.

Cynthia takes the envelope peers inside seeing tickets and three-hundred dollars.

JANET

Yeah. So, what's in the envelope?

Cynthia takes one of the hundred dollar bills out and gives it to Janet.

CYNTHIA

Thanks for letting me take that table.

Cynthia gives Janet a smirk and tucks the envelope inside her blouse. Janet shakes her head as she tucks the bill into her bra.

(CONTINUED)

JANET

Jesus, you can over all my tables -
it's my turn to pollute the air.

Janet leaves and Cynthia looks at her mirror. She takes out some tissues from the cubby and wipes her lipstick off.

CYNTHIA

(to self)

Okay, keep it together Cynthia.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The working class apartment is dark and quiet, except for the sound of an old window air conditioner that RATTLES and GROANS like a struggling asthmatic.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - DAY

Cynthia stands outside her apartment door, stuffing something into her oversize purse. She still wears her waitress uniform.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The front door CREAKS open. The dirty hallway light pales behind Cynthia as she stands silhouetted in the doorway. She pauses. Entering the apartment, Cynthia CLICKS on an overhead light.

A WHITE CAT enters the kitchen and MEOWS.

CYNTHIA

Hi, little mow mow kitty.

Cynthia closes the door, and SWITCHES radio on low volume as the Bangle's cover of Hazy Shade of Winter plays. She places her purse on the small dining table and removes the envelope from it.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(calling out)

I'm home. You awake?

Cynthia turns away to peer into the refrigerator. From a back bedroom Melissa is heard.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Did anyone see you?

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

No, I was careful as always. Did you eat?

MELISSA (O.S.)

A little. No.

Cynthia removes some fruit and cheese from the fridge and places the items on the table.

CYNTHIA

I'm bringing you a snack.

Cynthia grabs a plate and arranges the food on it. She sets the plate and a drink on a tray. Pausing, she and looks down at the envelope. Cynthia's fingers hesitantly DRUM on the envelope. Cynthia picks up the envelope and fans herself with it - lost in a faraway look.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I met him today. I gave him the brush off and he left me an envelope.

MELISSA (O.S.)

What's in it?

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA

Cynthia empties the rest of the envelope.

CYNTHIA

Three hundred dollars. Some tip, huh?

Cynthia reads over the note.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

He wants me to buy a nice dress and come to his showing at that Eden's End art gallery next Saturday.

Cynthia tosses the note and money on the table. She picks up the tray of food and heads towards the hallway with White Cat in tow.

INT. APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Cynthia, along with light from the hallway, enters the dark room backwards, shouldering the door open. In the foreground is a gloved hand resting on the arm of a wheelchair.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Did you spend all day in the dark?

Cynthia turns and places the tray on the vanity. She CLICKS on a desk lamp as a BLACK CAT jumps up on the vanity HISSING and YOWLING. Cynthia shoos the cat off the vanity.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Scat!

WIDER ANGLE FROM BEHIND MELISSA

Cynthia turns towards the shadowy figure in the wheelchair whose black curly hair is seen from behind.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(sternly)

What is this? We're not back to this are we? You can't get better acting sick.

MELISSA

I'm sorry. Don't be angry.

Cynthia softens. She walks over to Melissa; Cynthia's face is lost for a moment behind Melissa's hair as Cynthia dips down to give Melissa a kiss on the cheek.

CYNTHIA

It's okay, sweetie. Everything's working out.

Cynthia turns back to pick up the plate from the tray.

ANGLE ON VANITY MIRROR

Cynthia catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror.

CLOSE UP OF CYNTHIA'S EYES IN THE MIRROR

MELISSA (O.S.)

I never thought it would happen.

CYNTHIA

We make the things we want to happen in our lives. It's time good things started happening.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/DIFFERENT LOCATIONS - NIGHT

Aerial's art showing is in full swing. The upper social level is in attendance sipping wine, discussing pieces, networking, and putting in face time. A small ensemble jazz band plays Mile Davis's 'So What'.

Aerial's *Woman in Repose Against Barbed Wire* is prominently displayed as a center piece of the showing. Paintings of Aerial's hang with a few torsos from molds and other generally prosaic works. Around the corner gathering attention is a glass piece made from a live cast. It features a child falling from a high chair. The child's hands, forearms, and face have hit the floor and shattered - leg and torso stick up in the air.

Around the next corner is an area partitioned off by large partitions. Taped across the panels is yellow "Caution" tape and red and white striped hazard tape. A sign on the center panel reads: "Please Excuse Our Mess As We Remodel" At the entrance, Jeff greets FATHER FLYNN, a catholic priest in traditional black with white collar. The two walk through the gallery as they speak.

JEFF

I'm glad you could make it, Father.

FATHER FLYNN

Thank you for inviting me.

JEFF

You're welcome. Thought you should view some of Aerial's work. See what you think.

FATHER FLYNN

See if I thought he should have the restoration contract for the chapel?

JEFF

Can't lie, that is a conversation I'd like to have with you.

Jeff and Father Flynn pass the partitioned off area.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/INSIDE PANEL PARTITION - NIGHT

Aerial looks through the thin spaces between the partitions. Jeff and Father Flynn are seen and heard by Aerial. Aerial begins to see the two men as if they are part of a pointillism painting.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER FLYNN

It's not Aerial's talent that concerns us. It's his attitude. Specifically his attitude towards the Church.

JEFF

Did you know he's been commissioned to participate in a restoration project in Italy? Overseen by the Vatican, I might add. He'll be gone for a few months.

FATHER FLYNN

That's wonderful, Jeffrey, but in Italy his arrogance towards what we hold sacred isn't known like it is here.

JEFF

He's changing... changed, Father. I think you'll find his work challenging, but respectful.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/OUTSIDE OF PANELS - NIGHT

Jeff and Father Flynn, back to normal, walk off away from the partitions.

FATHER FLYNN

I've come with an open mind.

JEFF

Good - allow me to show you some interesting pieces.

EXT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/FRONT - NIGHT

Cynthia's clunky car pulls up to the front of the gallery where VALET greets her. Cynthia rolls down her window.

CYNTHIA

I'm having a hard time finding any parking.

VALET

I'll do that for you, ma'am.

CYNTHIA

Oh, that's okay - just point me in the right direction.

(CONTINUED)

VALET

It's valet parking, ma'am. We park your car for you.

CYNTHIA

(confused)

Oh... (then getting it) Oh. Right. Sorry.

VALET

It's okay.

Cynthia puts shoulder to the driver's door to POP it open.

CYNTHIA

Takes a little bit of a push.

She gets out wearing the best department store dress she could find and carrying her oversize purse.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/CYNTHIA'S LOCATION - NIGHT

Cynthia shifts from looking at the "Lady in Repose..." statue to scanning the crowd. She is clearly uncomfortable and self conscious.

CYNTHIA'S POV She notices what other people are wearing - expensive clothes, shoes, accessories...

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia looks at her own dress and fiddles with it as if trying to straighten the mediocrity out of it. She looks around at all the people interacting as she stands alone. WAITER walks by with a tray holding a number of filled wine glasses. She takes a glass.

CYNTHIA

Excuse me. Do you know where Aerial is?

WAITER

Mr. K? Haven't seen him. But you can never tell when or if he'll show up.

CYNTHIA

Oh.

Waiter walks off. Cynthia clenches her jaw, gives a small head shake, and turns her attention to the "Lady in Repose..." statue. She is transfixed by the statue, her languid stare grows more distant with each drowsy eye blink until...

CRASH her wine glass has slipped from her grip and shattered on the ground. Jolted from her trance she becomes painfully aware of being stared at and WHISPER about. Cynthia hastily retreats to the exit in embarrassment.

EXT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/FRONT - NIGHT

Cynthia exits the gallery and hurries past the Doorman.

DOORMAN

Have a good evening, ma'am.

CYNTHIA

Uh-huh.

She is visibly perturbed as she looks around for Valet. Rummaging through her bag she gets out her cigarettes. She struggles to light one as her lighter won't spark. Out of the shadows emerges Aerial.

AERIAL

You leaving all ready?

Cynthia is startled, but quickly recovers.

She stuffs her unlit cigarette and lighter in her purse.

CYNTHIA

This was a mistake.

AERIAL

I've been looking forward to seeing you all week.

CYNTHIA

Oh, well, that explains why I've been standing around like an idiot for half an hour.

AERIAL

I'm sorry - I should have explained in the note, there's always last minute details I have to attend to at these types of shows.

CYNTHIA

Guess I'm just a detail you overlooked.

AERIAL

Did you like any of the pieces?

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA
I'm sorry? What?

AERIAL
My art pieces... in the showing...
did you like any of them?

CYNTHIA
Art pieces? No, I was too busy
feeling out of place and
ridiculous.

AERIAL
Again, I apologize.

Aerial puts his hands up, thumbs extended, like a director framing a shot.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
Luminous.

CYNTHIA
What?

AERIAL
Your eyes.

Aerial gives Cynthia a charming smile as he drops his hands. Cynthia is confused at first, but then a smile warms her face and she shakes off her anger.

CYNTHIA
All righty then - wow, a charmer
and a prick. Nice combination. Very
Ted Bundy.

AERIAL
(chuckles)
I believe I haven't left a trail of
dead women, yet.

Cynthia CHUCKLES in return before her face flashes disdain. Awkward silence.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
You look nice tonight. Is this all
three hundred dollars buys these
days?

CYNTHIA
(embarrassed)
I didn't know what to get - it's
the best I could do. Look, I gotta
go. I'm way over my head here.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL
I wish you'd stay.

CYNTHIA
I don't belong here. And you - I
can't make you out. One minute
sweet, the next, well, frankly, a
narcissistic ass.

Aerial considers this and shrugs.

AERIAL
I see what I see as I experience
it. I'm...

CYNTHIA
An artist, sounds like an excuse
for not having manners.

There is a heavy pause between them. Cynthia turns, she
mouths the words, I cant do this and begins to leave.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Thanks for the invite...

Aerial bellows out stopping her in mid-step.

AERIAL
You want to. You want to belong...
in there... with these people... in
this world. Don't lie to yourself,
Cynthia. You've wanted it your
whole life, haven't you? Ten years
old, a scrawny little girl flipping
through her mom's worn copy of
Vogue... But that world always
remained beyond your grasp.

Cynthia's lip begins to quiver, but her eyes are defiant.

CYNTHIA
I never...

AERIAL
Do you know why it's remained
beyond your grasp?

CYNTHIA
Stop it.

AERIAL
Because deep down, down at your
core - you see yourself as an ugly
pig.

Cynthia fights back her tears.

CYNTHIA
What is wrong with you?

She turns and hurries away.

AERIAL
(calling after her)
I see you much deeper.

Cynthia stops. Aerial approaches her.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
When I saw you that day in the
diner, saw the way you connected
with everyone - you are so
beautiful. I feel compelled, I want
to bring that beauty out - nurture
it. Look inside yourself, Cynthia -
you want me to bring it out.

Cynthia turns and faces Aerial.

CYNTHIA
Why would you do that?

Aerial shrugs.

AERIAL
I have no idea, I can't articulate
it, it just feels - it's what I do.

Aerial holds out his crooked arm for her to take. Cynthia regards him cautiously. She slowly moves towards him as if drawn by an unseen force. She takes his arm with hers and they walk back to the gallery.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/OUTSIDE OF PANELS - NIGHT

The jazz band is playing George Gershwin's Summertime from Porgy and Bess. Aerial, flanked by two ASSISTANTS, stands in front of the taped off partitions of the construction area.

A speaker has been set up and Aerial turns on the microphone, causing a brief SQUELCH of feedback. The jazz band stops playing.

AERIAL
May I have your attention?
Attention over here, please.

The crowd MURMURS slowly fade as they move towards Aerial.

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON JEFF

Jeff is talking to LEXIA, the beautiful mid-30's oriental owner of the gallery.

JEFF
What's going on?

LEXIA
I don't know.

JEFF
It's your gallery, how can you not know?

LEXIA
He's your client, how can you not know? Listen, he kicked me out this morning and tonight.. (points to partitioned area) ... that was there.

JEFF
Goddamn it. He's gonna.. he's gonna fuck me. I know he's gonna fuck me.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA

Cynthia stands off to the side of the gathering crowd and sips her wine. She tosses Aerial a quick nod and smile.

ANGLE ON AERIAL

Aerial returns Cynthia's smile, then turns to face his guests.

AERIAL
Welcome friends, business associates, and people who didn't have anything better to do on a Saturday night.

A spattering of LAUGHTER ripples through the crowd.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
Most of you know I've had some, let's say, reputation problems with various authorities in my career.

The crowd reacts with more LAUGHTER and MURMURS.

ANGLE ON JEFF Jeff's discomfort grows.

He looks over at...

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON FATHER FLYNN ... Father Flynn, who is clearly not amused.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Like many of us, my problems started in school, because academics is about the delusion of control and art is about the power of freedom. You can't grade art on its technical merits. If a piece invokes a visceral, raw, and emotional response - it is art. If it doesn't - it's just a decoration.

The crowd MURMURS in acknowledgment.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia is captivated.

ANGLE ON JEFF Jeff downs the rest of his drink.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial looks at Cynthia as if speaking the next part directly to her.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia shifts her weight, feeling vulnerable.

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

Michelangelo once said, "The artist alone has the thought of what is contained within the marble shell; the sculptor's hand can only break the spell to free the figure slumbering in the stone."

ANGLE ON AERIAL As if on cue, the two Assistants open the partitions, folding them back like gates.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

I present a life cast in resin, glass, and polyurethane called, "Abandoned Hope."

An uneasy combination of GASPS and SILENCES fill the space as Aerial's work is revealed.

ANGLE ON ART WORK The God figure from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling painting of the Creation of Adam desperately reaches out towards a 50's style television set. God's eyes are drooping, his tongue bulges in his mouth. Around his neck is a noose with the tail-end of the rope trailing off behind him.

(CONTINUED)

One hand encircles his erect penis in a pose of auto-erotic asphyxiation. His other hands points to the television set from which a woman's nude torso bulges as part of the glass screen.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial unsuccessfully tries to hide a grin of self satisfaction as he takes in reactions ranging from awe to anger.

ANGLE ON FATHER FLYNN Father Flynn's face is red with rage. He turns and storms out of the gallery.

ANGLE ON JEFF Jeff sees Father Flynn leave.

JEFF

Oh, no, no, no...

He rushes off towards Father Flynn running into the crowd trying to admire the piece as Father Flynn storms out the door.

ANGLE ON ART WORK AND CROWD

Energetic CHATTER from the crowd. Several people take pictures with their cell phones.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/LEXIA'S OFFICE

Jeff escorts Aerial into Lexia's office. A smirk sits comfortably on Aerial's face, but Jeff is fuming. Once in the office, Aerial turns to face Jeff - Aerial's face returning to cool indifference.

AERIAL

Why are you taking me away from my guests?

JEFF

You fuckin' asshole. Goddamn, you fuckin' asshole.

AERIAL

You vulgarian.

Jeff's body shakes, can only respond by shaking his head in disbelief.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Oh, come on, Jeff, tell me you don't think that piece is brilliant, provocative, and oozing with social commentary.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

And what's the point!

AERIAL

There is no other point.

JEF

Bullshit! You just lost any hope of working classic restoration in the whole region.

AERIAL

Small price.

JEFF

No - it's a big price.

Cynthia walks in.

CYNTHIA

Aerial, that was just... wow... it blew me away.

JEFF

Who the fuck are you? (taking a closer look) The waitress? Oh, sweet Jesus. Honey, listen, do me a favor and stick to waiting tables.

Aerial gives Jeff a shove.

AERIAL

Back off.

Jeff pushes Aerial's hand away.

JEFF

Really? Over this bitch?

Cynthia leaves the room.

CYNTHIA

Asshole.

Aerial grabs Jeff's shirt at the collar and Jeff grabs back.

AERIAL

What's the matter, Jeff? Lose at the track again? Afraid your gravy train's drying up?

(CONTINUED)

JEFF

You want to relive that dark path again?! Not again Aerial, I'm not covering...

Lexia rushes in, pushing the two men apart.

LEXIA

Knock it off, you two. Not in my office.

Aerial and Jeff let go of each other.

LEXIA (CONT'D)

Aerial - go schmooze your guests, okay? Jeff - have a seat. We have business to discuss.

Aerial gives Jeff a sneer, turns, and exits the office. Lexia closes the door as Jeff sits.

LEXIA (CONT'D)

You're gonna buy me a drink tonight.

JEFF

Look, I'm sorry. I didn't know anything about that.

LEXIA

Jeffie, you worry too much, we are celebrating.

JEFF

Celebrating, what, what do you mean celebrating?

Lexia walks behind Jeff and puts her hands on his shoulder and strokes his hair with her fingernails.

LEXIA

Did you see what was going on? At least five people snapped shots of that piece. Do you know who they were?

JEFF

People who don't follow the no camera's allowed rule.

Lexia places her face besides Jeff's.

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA

Representatives of very wealthy prospects. Too wealthy to even bother showing up. They text the pictures to the buyers only if they think they'd be interested and everyone was texting away. That piece is going to make a lot of cash.

EXT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/FRONT - NIGHT

Cynthia strides out of the gallery, past the Doorman, to the lot, and up to the Valet. She thrusts the claim slip at the Valet.

CYNTHIA

Just give me my keys and point.

EXT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/LOT - NIGHT

Cynthia approaches her car, furiously smoking a cigarette. Aerial closes in on her with a slow jog.

AERIAL

Hey, wait up. Where you going?

Cynthia stops and turns towards Aerial.

CYNTHIA

Home.

Aerial walks up to her.

AERIAL

Oh, come on, you can't blame me for that. He's just pissed at me and took it out on you - that's all.

CYNTHIA

Seems he's pissed at you a lot.

AERIAL

Yeah, well, that's the downside of managing me.

Cynthia can't repress a smile and shakes her head.

CYNTHIA

I'm starting to get that picture.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Let's just get out of here. What do you say? Take a ride?

Cynthia shrugs.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Come on, I'll drive.

Cynthia nods and Aerial smiles.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

No smoking though, okay, and uh, just don't anything?

INT. AERIAL'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Aerial and Cynthia sit in awkward silence as Aerial drives through town in his Z06 Corvette. She spies Aerial's MP3 player in a console dock and reaches for it.

CYNTHIA

Oh, sweet. Can I see what's on your play list?

AERIAL

Uhhh... well...

Cynthia pulls her hand back.

CYNTHIA

Really? Are you serious? What do you have on there? Kiddie songs? (mock sings) Little bunny Foo Foo/ Hopping through the forest/ Scooping up the field mice/ And bopping them on the head. (speaking) Are you some sort of pedophile?

AERIAL

(grinning)

No, don't be ridiculous. Mozart, Wagner, other stuff.

CYNTHIA

Jewel?

AERIAL

Jewel?

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Yeah, Jewel. What's wrong with Jewel?

AERIAL

She's, I don't know... pseudo intellectual, tries to be deep, but she's just some chick who grew up in bars and lived out of her van.

CYNTHIA

Mozart was a drunk who died penniless and was buried with five other people in a debtor's grave.

AERIAL

I'm impressed, but he did elevated the common man with his music. Jewel just brings everyone down to street level.

CYNTHIA

Great - another prick with a superiority complex come to save us poor common folk. Give me a break.

AERIAL

I'm just saying Mozart was highly skilled - that's all.

CYNTHIA

Jewel mastered the guitar even though she was dyslexic, trained in operatic voice, and goddamn it - the girl can yodel.

AERIAL

Yodel.

CYNTHIA

Yeah, yodel. How's that for some old world European styled shit?

AERIAL

(chuckling)

You're something else, you know that?

Cynthia smiles and looks out of the passenger window. The silence is now comfortable. Cynthia turns to Aerial and touches him on the shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Okay, check this out. Just listen
and then tell me these aren't
lyrics about something real. (sings
Jewel's Foolish Games) You're
always the mysterious one with/
Dark eyes and careless hair...

Cynthia flips Aerial's hair and he grins.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(singing)

You were fashionably sensitive/ But
too cool to care/ You stood in my
doorway, with nothing to say/
Besides some comment on the
weather...

Aerial stops grinning. He tightens his grip on the steering
wheel and stares straight ahead.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(singing)

Well in case you failed to notice/
In case you failed to see/ This is
my heart bleeding before you/ This
is me down on my knees and...

MONTAGE - AERIAL'S MEMORY FLASHES

-- Melissa with long black curly hair and acne scarring on
her face

-- Melissa with smooth skin looking beautiful.

-- Melissa lying down, frozen stiff with Aerial holding her
in a pose reminiscent of Giambologna's statue The Rape of
the Sabine Women.

BACK TO SCENE. Aerial stares at Cynthia, lost in the painful
memory.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(singing)

These foolish games are tearing me
apart/ And your thoughtless words
are breaking my heart/ You're
breaking my heart...

Light explodes through the windshield.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Aerial has crossed over the line into an oncoming truck. The truck's horn BLARES.

INT. AERIAL'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

CYNTHIA
Ohhh... shit!

AERIAL
Holy...

Aerial turns the wheel sharply to get back into his lane as the truck passes dangerously by - its HORN trailing off in the ensuing distance.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Aerial's car swerves and fishtails from over correcting.

INT. AERIAL'S CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

CYNTHIA
Turn, turn, turn...

AERIAL
Got it, I got it, I got...

Time slows.

The only sound is Aerial and Cynthia's BREATHING - rhythmic, erotic. Aerial looks over at Cynthia. Shadows play over her with a slash of light that crosses her face, highlighting her eyes - eyes that look hungry and mysterious. Cynthia's face deconstructs like a cubism painting and then the parts are reassembled. Aerial winces. Cynthia's face has reassembled to look like Melissa.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Aerial's car spins out on a dirt turn-about on the side of the road. It comes to an abrupt standstill inches from a drop off guarded by a rail.

INT. AERIAL'S CAR - NIGHT

Aerial and Cynthia work to catch their breath. They look at each other for a split second before embracing and kissing passionately - desperately. The kiss ends as quickly as it started and they each settle into their seats composed.

AERIAL
That was close.

CYNTHIA
Yeah.

AERIAL
You okay?

CYNTHIA
Yeah.

AERIAL
I need a drink, I think I need a drink. Want to come over for a drink?

CYNTHIA
Yeah.

INT. LEXIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lexia and Jeff have just finished making love and she rolls off of him. They are both BREATHING heavily.

JEFF
Damn, girl, this is what you call a business meeting?

LEXIA
It's not easy finding a straight guy in the art world.

JEFF
I always thought you played for the other team.

LEXIA
I give my pussy whatever she's hungry for. Water?

JEFF
Yeah.

Lexia gets up and goes to a table with a carafe of ice water.

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA

I think that piece is going to bring in a lot of money.

Jeff looks down at his groin.

JEFF

That good was it?

Lexia looks at Jeff, LAUGHS, and pours water into two glasses.

LEXIA

Aerial's new piece.

JEFF

You think so, huh?

LEXIA

Definitely.

Lexia brings Jeff the water and joins him back in bed with her glass.

LEXIA (CONT'D)

You and Aerial don't seem to be getting along these days.

JEFF

He's flaky and temperamental - I have to ride his ass hard to keep him on track or he'll lose it again.

LEXIA

Yeah, what happened with that? He just dropped out and stopped working.

JEFF

All over a woman - Melissa. He got so obsessed with her he wasn't getting any work done. Then one day she left him and ended up killing herself.

LEXIA

Heartbreak is great for inspiration.

JEFF

Yeah, well, he's weird enough without it. Now he's getting all

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JEFF (cont'd)
twisted up with this homely
waitress.

LEXIA
Maybe he should concentrate more on
his original work and stop spending
time on restorations.

JEFF
Oh, the truth, that would be good
for you, right? Nice commission
from the sale. Free market work
takes forever to get paid. I hope
that's not what tonight is all
about.

LEXIA
Course not - don't be paranoid.

JEFF
Anyway, restoration is where the
steady work is. Original works are
too risky, so hands off my client,
baby.

LEXIA
Risky is the business, baby, and
I'm very hands on.

Lexia takes several ice cubes from her water glass, puts
them seductively in her mouth, and goes down on Jeff.

ANGLE ON JEFF He clenches with pleasure.

JEFF
Oh... oh, my lord...

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aerial pulls out a bottle of Green Devil absinthe with its
label showing a green devil.

AERIAL
(calling out to Cynthia)
Want some absinthe? Home brewed.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
Wine's good for me - I'm not into
that freaky stuff.

Aerial selects a bottle of wine from a rack and HUFFS.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL
(muttering to self)
It's not freaky.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia looks around and checks out Aerial's stereo system.

CYNTHIA
(calling out to Aerial)
You have a beautiful home. You can
get music in every room?

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aerial opens the bottle of wine.

AERIAL
(calling out to Cynthia)
Yeah - it's a wireless system with
speakers in every room. I don't
like a quiet house.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CYNTHIA
Does it play anything besides
Mozart?

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aerial prepares his drink of absinthe.

AERIAL
Ha, Ha. Check out the touch pad and
pick out whatever you like.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia grins and scrolls through a menu on a touch screen.

CYNTHIA
(to self) Nice. (calling out to
Aerial) You've been holding out on
me... (to self) Oh, no way... Nina
Simone.

Cynthia double taps the touch screen.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
 (to self) I guess even snobs have
 to give it up for a strong black
 woman.

Nina Simone's version of Feeling Good plays. Behind Cynthia,
 Aerial enters the room with the drinks. Cynthia, still
 facing the stereo, softly sings to the opening verse.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
 (singing softly) Birds flying high
 you know how I feel/ Sun in the sky
 you know how I feel/ Breeze
 driftin' on by you know how I
 feel...

ANGLE ON AERIAL He is captivated by her, enjoying this
 stolen moment as she is not aware of his presence. She turns
 around with a smile as Aerial lifts the glasses in a toast.

AERIAL
 Good choice.

Cynthia walks over with a little dance in her step and takes
 the wine goblet Aerial offers her.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
 Let's go out back. I want to show
 you something.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

A breeze moves through the chimes creating a TINKLING
 background to the music that can still be heard outside the
 house. Aerial walks Cynthia to his working replica of
 Cathedral of St. John the Divine's Peace Fountain.

CYNTHIA
 Look at that.

AERIAL
 It's a scaled down version of the
 Peace Fountain at the Cathedral of
 St. John the Divine in New York
 City. The only major difference is
 this one works. The original
 fountain has no running water. Made
 no sense to me.

CYNTHIA
 World run dry.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

How's that?

CYNTHIA

The piece is about the battle of good and evil on an epic scale, don't you think?

AERIAL

I believe that was the message of the creator.

CYNTHIA

Maybe it wasn't a mistake or an oversight for the fountain not to run. Without human life and dignity the struggle is meaningless. Maybe the artist thought the world had run dry. Pretty hopeless.

AERIAL

Hmm.

CYNTHIA

But you have water running so you must be optimistic or hoping for forgiveness.

AERIAL

Forgiveness for what?

Cynthia looks at him deeply in the eyes.

CYNTHIA

I don't know. You tell me.

Aerial slowly shakes his head as if considering the matter, but comes up empty. Cynthia sits on a bench by the fountain.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Just a stab at art interpretation.

AERIAL

Pretty good...

CYNTHIA

... for a waitress?

AERIAL

I wasn't going to say that.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Thought it though, huh? I know I'm not what you're use to.

AERIAL

Hey - you can have all that they have, you know, I'm just trying to help you see that.

CYNTHIA

I know and I appreciate it. It's just...

AERIAL

What?

Aerial joins her on the bench.

CYNTHIA

It's been a big day, you know? Full of embarrassment and near death experiences. I just want to feel good right now - okay?

Aerial nods. With one finger he lightly touches her, outlining her face from forehead to chin and back up to forehead. Aerial gets up and heads towards the house.

AERIAL

Come inside. I'm ready for bed.

Cynthia watches Aerial walk to the house. She GULPS down the rest of her wine.

CYNTHIA

(to self)

Easy does it.

Cynthia looks over at the side of the house.

ANGLE ON SIDE OF HOUSE

The round window of Aerial's basement studio is draped from the inside, blocking any view of the studio.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia stares with a sneer towards the back door where Aerial had entered the house.

AERIAL (O.S.)

Come on.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

The music has changed to another track and Nina Simone is beginning Ain't Got No... I've Got Life. The door opens revealing Aerial and Cynthia silhouetted by the hallway light. Aerial reaches into the room and CLICKS on a light. The room is sparse but tastefully decorated. Cynthia enters, but Aerial stays at the doorway.

AERIAL

The bathroom is just two doors down. I play music at night, because...

CYNTHIA

Yeah, you don't like the quiet.

AERIAL

Right.

Aerial points to a speaker on a dresser.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Adjust the volume or turn it off if you like. Should be something in the drawers to change into. I'll see you in the morning.

Aerial leaves and Cynthia sits on the bed.

CYNTHIA

(sighs)

Well... that tops it.

Cynthia goes over to a dresser and rummages through the drawers. She pauses and stares down with a sad look.

Cynthia takes out a long night shirt that is folded so the monogram "M" is visible. She puts the shirt to her face and breathes in deep. Unfolding the shirt, a triquetra pendant on a leather cord falls to the floor with a THUD. Cynthia stares at it with a growing look of anguish. With trembling hands she gently picks up the necklace and holds it to her heart.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Aerial wakes up in a bed twisted full of sheets and blankets - the remnants of a restless night's sleep. He looks around confused. The room is silent - no music plays. He stares at his door.

ANGLE ON DOOR The ghostly-memory figure of Melissa with acne scars walks by wearing the night shirt with the monogrammed "M". The figure looks over at Aerial sadly. The scars vanish and she disappears into the door.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BATHROOM - DAY

Aerial RUNS cold water and splashes his face. He looks in the mirror - haggard and then, curious, combs his fingers through his hair... there is a section where some locks were cut.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

ANGLE ON TELEVISION

The 1946 Warner Brothers, Merrie Melodies' cartoon Hair Raising Hare plays.

BUGS BUNNY

(on TV)

Did you ever have the feeling you
was being watched?

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

The muffled sound of the television is heard, but the cartoon dialogue is not clear. Aerial enters the kitchen wearing a carelessly thrown on robe. He looks about the kitchen. It is obvious Cynthia has made herself coffee and a breakfast of cereal, but had yet to clean up after herself. Aerial tenses as each out of place item he sees irritates him. He pours himself a cup of coffee and grabs an apple.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Cynthia sits with her feet on the coffee table and wearing the "M" night shirt. On the table is a white plaster sculpture of two smooth and glossy human hands, outstretched, palms up with a small colorful globe of the earth between the hands. Cynthia eats cereal from a bowl as she lounges on the sofa - her feet on the table between her coffee and the sculpture. She is into the cartoon, unaware of Aerial entering the room.

BUGS BUNNY

(on tv - to Gossamer)

Oh, for shame! Just look at those
fingernails! My, I'll bet you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BUGS BUNNY (cont'd)
monsters lead in-teresting lives. I
said to my girlfriend just the
other day, 'Gee, I'll bet monsters
are in-teresting,' I said.

Aerial takes a loud bite out of the apple, catching
Cynthia's attention.

BUGS BUNNY (CONT'D)
(on tv)
The places you must go and the
things you must see - my stars!...

CYNTHIA
Hey, sleepy head.

Aerial walks over to the table, picks up the remote, and
switches the channel to a news station.

AERIAL
I like to know what's going on in
the markets and the world when I
get up.

CYNTHIA
Don't want to ruin the surprise,
but people are still killing each
other and stocks are in the
shitter. Why don't they ever report
all the good things that happen?

Aerial gives a grumpy glare as he picks up Cynthia's coffee
mug and places a coaster under it. Cynthia slowly removes
her feet from the table, sits up, and places the bowl of
cereal on her lap. Aerial moves the sculpture to a place on
the table away from Cynthia's feet.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
(pointing to the sculpture)
Hey, is that made from a cast of
your hands?

AERIAL
Yup. Sleep well?

Cynthia shrugs like a child that has just been scolded.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
I'll get dressed and take you to
your car.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Aerial enters and makes a selection on the remote sound system panel.

Mozart's Adagio and Fugue for Strings in C minor plays as Aerial claws his fingers through his hair and squeezes the back of his neck..

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mozart's Adagio and Fugue for Strings in C minor still plays. Aerial is dressed and walks into the room. He looks around - Cynthia is not there.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

Mozart's Adagio and Fugue for Strings in C minor still plays. Aerial walks out the front door to see...

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF AERIAL'S HOUSE - DAY

... a cab vanishing in the distance.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

Aerial looks around perplexed. His cell phone RINGS.

AERIAL
(into phone)
Hello? Yeah, fine. What's up?

INT. LEXIA'S BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY

Lexia is wearing a short black kimono and sipping on tea at a small table - the morning paper spread out in front of her.

LEXIA
(into phone)
Just wanted to congratulate you on the showing. Lots of interest on the Abandoned Hope piece. You should do more original work. There's definitely a market for it. (pause) I know you have your trip, but I think you can do much better with your own work. Give it some
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA (cont'd)
thought, okay? I think we can do
good business together. (pause) Do
you have to tell Jeff everything?
Can't we talk business between us?

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

Aerial continues to look in the direction of the now
departed cab.

AERIAL
Yeah, sure - in fact, I'm working
on a new project right now. I'll
keep you posted.

Aerial hangs up his phone and walks back into the house.

INT. LEXIA'S BREAKFAST NOOK - DAY

Lexia hangs the phone up with a smile and takes a bite of
bagel. Jeff enters the room buttoning up his shirt and
gathering his things.

JEFF
Got to get going. Got a few last
minute arrangements for Aerial's
Italy trip. What are you up to
today?

Lexia slowly shakes her head.

LEXIA
The same, making arrangements.

She takes a careful bite of bagel and gives Jeff a board
look. Jeff has finished dressing. He looks around,
hesitating his exit.

JEFF
So how do you usually operate the
morning after? Handshake? Denial?

Lexia LAUGHS.

LEXIA
You can kiss me. It's not like we
didn't know each other before.

Jeff gives her a kiss.

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA

That doesn't mean you can come sniffing around anytime you get an itch. My bedroom is by invitation only.

He flashes her a smile and turns to leave.

JEFF

Call me when a sale goes through. I got bills to pay.

Lexia raises her eyebrows. She takes a sip of tea and picks up her phone as the sound of her front door CLUNKS shut.

EXT. DINER/PARKING LOT - DAY

It is early afternoon and Cynthia and Janet are getting off from work wearing their waitress uniforms. They walk into the lot. Janet takes out a pack of cigarettes and offers Cynthia one.

CYNTHIA

No thanks.

Cynthia takes out a piece of nicotine-gum.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Trying to quit.

JANET

Ha! Fuck that.

Janet stops walking and cocks her head as she looks into the lot. Cynthia stops and looks at Janet.

CYNTHIA

What is it?

JANET

Look.

Cynthia looks at the lot.

ANGLE ON LOT Aerial is leaning up against his car and waiting.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA AND JANET

CYNTHIA

Oh, boy. The stalking begins.

Janet gives a full arm wave.

(CONTINUED)

JANET
(calling out to Aerial)
Hey, Aerial!

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial returns the wave.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA AND JANET

JANET (CONT'D)
I never trusted a guy with money.
What do you think he wants?

CYNTHIA
I don't know, but stick around
while I check it out, okay?

Cynthia heads over to Aerial.

ANGLE FROM ACROSS THE LOT Cynthia walks over to Aerial. He gets up from leaning on the car. Aerial appears to be apologizing as Cynthia nods. She looks up at Aerial and allows him a smile. Aerial smiles back and indicates to the car.

CLOSER ANGLE ON CYNTHIA AND AERIAL

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
That's okay - I'll follow you in my
car.

AERIAL
I promise to keep my eyes on the
road. No more spin offs.

CYNTHIA
It's not that, I just want to be
able to leave when I want and not
get stuck somewhere if...

AERIAL
Fair enough. I did say I was sorry
though.

CYNTHIA
I know. Consider this part of your
penance.

INT. CYNTHIA'S CAR - DAY

Cynthia enters and shuts the door. Hanging from the rear view mirror is the triquetra pendant on a leather cord -- a lock of Aerial's hair is tied around the necklace with a piece of twine. She takes the necklace off the rear view mirror and puts it in the glove compartment.

EXT. DINER/PARKING LOT - DAY

Cynthia's car follows Aerial's car out of the lot.

EXT. OUTDOOR AREA - DAY

Aerial and Cynthia sit on a blanket with food and wine. The grassy area looks out at a city skyline - the sun is at late afternoon.

AERIAL

So how come you didn't finish school?

CYNTHIA

(shrugs)

I was doing my internship and got too involved with the clients. That's what my instructors said.

AERIAL

Were they right? Cynthia shrugs.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

You should go back - finish what you started.

CYNTHIA

Maybe. So you're taking off to Italy soon? Exciting.

AERIAL

I guess. Jeff thinks it'll be good for my career.

CYNTHIA

Jeff. I'm surprise you let him control you.

AERIAL

He doesn't control me, he manages me. There's a difference. Besides, he was there for me when I needed

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL (cont'd)
someone and everyone else walked
away.

CYNTHIA
What happened?

Aerial shrugs.

AERIAL
I love this spot, especially this
time of day. See how the sun is
leaving the city? It's the start of
the change over to the night
people.

CYNTHIA
I like when the sun actually sets.

AERIAL
Not me, I like the prelude, the
moment just before something
pivotal happens.

Aerial takes out his MP3 player and offers Cynthia one of
the ear pieces.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
It's great to watch while listing
to Mozart.

Cynthia retrieves an MP3 player from her purse.

CYNTHIA
That's okay - got my own classical
music.

AERIAL
Really?

CYNTHIA
Yeah, downloaded some classical
music by heavy metal bands. Pretty
awesome stuff. What do you have
queued up?

AERIAL
His Turkish March - Rondo Alla
Turca.

CYNTHIA
Me too - I have Mozart's March.

Cynthia puts her earphones in and leans back on her arms. Aerial smirks and put his earphones in.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 11: Rondo Alla Turca plays. He sees the world in the rich, deep colors of a Baroque style painting.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Dark Moor's Mozart's March plays. She sees the world in the gritty realism of a George Bellows painting.

WIDER ANGLE Aerial shuts off his MP3 player and removes his earphones. He taps Cynthia on the shoulder. She removes her earphones.

AERIAL

Let me hear.

Cynthia hands him her earphones and he puts them in his ears. He listens to the heavy metal version for a few beats and then removes the earphones.

CYNTHIA

What do you think?

AERIAL

Not bad, but not me.

Aerial stares into Cynthia's eyes.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

I want to cast you.

CYNTHIA

What - into the river?

AERIAL

No - a life cast. Not a complete body, just face down to shoulders, like that.

CYNTHIA

I don't know... It seems...

AERIAL

It's really easy. I've cast hundreds of people. Takes about an hour, maybe two tops. You'll be perfectly comfortable, I promise.

CYNTHIA

Where do you do this at - your basement studio?

(CONTINUED)

Aerial is puzzled.

AERIAL
How'd you know I had a studio in my
basement?

Cynthia back peddles.

CYNTHIA
You mentioned it?

Cynthia looks Aerial dead in the eye and waits.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
I do my casting in my garage - no
one goes into my studio except the
big burly guys who move my work to
the gallery.

Trying to shift his focus she agrees.

CYNTHIA
Okay - let's do it.

AERIAL
Really?

CYNTHIA
Yeah, I should try to be more
adventurous - just don't do
anything weird when you sculpt the
final mold.

AERIAL
Why would you say that?

CYNTHIA
I've seen your work.

Aerial strikes a curious face.

AERIAL
You have.

EXT. REAR OF DINER - DAY

Jeff watches Cynthia and Aerial drive off in separate cars.
He sneaks into the diner by way of the back door.

INT. DINER/BREAKROOM - DAY

Jeff looks through the cubby holes until he finds the one labeled "Cynthia." He shuffles through the items in Cynthia's cubby hole, pulling out a business card.

INSERT BUSINESS CARD The card is for a property management company with the address of an apartment building.

ANGLE ON JEFF Jeff is puzzled by the card.

JEFF
(whispers to self)
That's not right.

There is a commotion and Jeff squats down against a far wall.

WAITRESS 1 (O.S.)
You taking a break now?

WAITRESS 2 (O.S.)
No - I gotta find a fuckin' tampon
before I gush over someone's tater
tots.

WAITRESS 1
Come here - I'll show you where I
stash them in the bathroom.

Pause. Silence. Jeff exits.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/GARAGE - DAY

Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21: Andante plays. Cynthia lies on a casting table slightly tilted back. She wears a cloth wrapped under her arm pits and draped down her body. Aerial wears latex gloves and applies a cream on her skin. Cynthia looks apprehensive as Aerial rubs the cream on her shoulders.

AERIAL
How low do you want me to go?

Cynthia's hands tremble as she moves the draped cloth from under her arm pits to under her breasts. She closes her eyes in a wince of embarrassment and takes a deep breath. Aerial smiles and continues to apply the cream.

MONTAGE - LIFE CASTING CYNTHIA The life casting session is sensual as Aerial applies materials with great care to Cynthia who is expose from breast up.

(CONTINUED)

- Applying blue silicone.
- Applying plaster bandages.
- Removing plaster cast.
- Cynthia in garage, makeshift shower stall removing residue while Aerial looks over the cast.

EXT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cynthia's car pulls in and parks. The car sits without activity for a beat. Then, WOMAN with long dark curly hair exits the car. It is difficult to make her out in the poorly lit lot. The Woman wears hospital scrubs and carries a big purse.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door CREAKS open. The dirty hallway light pales behind the Woman as she stands silhouetted in the doorway.

She pauses.

ANGLE ON LIGHT SWITCH Her hand CLICKS on the light switch.

ANGLE ON WOMAN'S LOWER LEGS White Cat rubs on the Woman's legs and PURRS.

ANGLE ON RADIO Her hand CLICKS on the radio.

WIDER ANGLE Tom Waits sings Walk Away on the radio. The Woman be-bops a little to the music as she walks out of the kitchen area and into the hallway.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Woman stands in front of the mirrored medicine cabinet, but the back of her head blocks the reflection of her face in the mirror. Her hand reaches up and grabs onto the top of her head. She slowly removes a black haired wig, revealing in the mirror that it is Cynthia looking emotionally drained. She pauses to stare at herself in the mirror.

CYNTHIA
(calling out)
I'm home. You up?

Cynthia opens the medicine cabinet so she is no longer reflected in the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (O.S.)
I'm up. Did anyone see you come in.

CYNTHIA
No, I was careful.

MELISSA (O.S.)
Why were you gone so long?

Cynthia grabs a bottle of medications and takes some pills.

CYNTHIA
(sharply)
You know why.

She closes the cabinet and turns to leave the bathroom. She reaches into the top of her shirt and pulls out and takes off the triquetra pendant on a leather cord.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
(kinder tone)
I have a surprise for you, sweetie.
Something you thought you lost.
Cynthia looks down.

ANGLE ON FLOOR Black Cat stares up at Cynthia - flicking its tail.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Mozart's Requiem in D minor Dies Irae Mov. 3-5/14 plays as Aerial works on sketches for a new project; he is surrounded by a number of casts from Cynthia's mold. Aerial's cordless house phone RINGS and RINGS. Finally Aerial snatches up the phone.

AERIAL
(curtly)
What is it?

JEFF (O.S.)
Don't snap at me asshole - you haven't answered your phone or fuckin' door for a week.

Aerial rolls his eyes and heads for the stairs that lead out of the basement.

AERIAL
Sorry. What's up?

Aerial taps on stereo system keypad on his way up the stairs, shutting off the music.

EXT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/FRONT - DAY

Jeff leans up against his car parked in front of a middle working class stone apartment building several stories high with balconies that abut each other for every two apartments.

JEFF

Besides your head up in your ass?
You're supposed to be on a plane to
Italy tomorrow and I can't ever get
a hold of you.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Aerial enters the kitchen and starts making a Green Devil absinthe.

AERIAL

Been working.

INTER CUT WITH JEFF AT APARTMENT BUILDING

JEFF

You been seeing that waitress?

AERIAL

You mean Cynthia? No, not really.
Been busy. Why?

JEFF

Uh-huh...

AERIAL

Look, don't start...

JEFF

I won't start if you don't start,
all right? - I'll mind my business
as long as you keep minding yours,
you know what I mean?

AERIAL

About that. Can we push the Italy
thing back a month? I got shit to
do. I'm working on a...

JEFF

Oh, bullshit! I'm not having a
repeat of last time...

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL
Hey, that was...

JEFF
Yeah - I know what that was. Look,
stick to the plan and stay on
schedule or just fire me.

Doorbell CHIMES. Aerial walks to front door, cradling the
phone to his ear with his shoulder and carrying his drink.

AERIAL
I'm not going to...

JEFF
Good, cause you've burned too many
bridges in this industry already.
You're practically out there on
your own.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

AERIAL
I know.

Aerial opens the front door to reveal Cynthia standing
there, smiling and holding up a wine bottle.

JEFF (O.S.)
Just stay focused, okay?

Aerial returns her smile and holds up his drink in a salute.

AERIAL
Yeah, I'm focused. A hundred
percent.

EXT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/FRONT - DAY

Jeff hangs up his phone and catches sight of OLD WOMAN
walking back to the building from the apartment mailbox
kiosk. Jeff walks up and greets her.

JEFF
Good afternoon, ma'am. Can you help
me? I'm supposed to meet Cynthia
Davis here and give her a check. Do
you know her?

(CONTINUED)

OLD WOMAN

No, but I'm not good with names anymore - only faces. You look familiar. Do you take care of the lawn?

JEFF

Not this week. Cynthia's about so tall, short red hair, mid twenties...

OLD WOMAN

Doesn't sound familiar. There's a young woman with long black hair. Most everyone else is old like me supposed to be a 55 and up lease.

JEFF

Do you remember her name? Melissa maybe?

OLD WOMAN

No dear, I'm sorry I don't.

JEFF

That's okay. I'll just call her later. Thank you so much.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

Aerial and Cynthia walk through the house as they talk.

CYNTHIA

You don't have anyone else that can check in on your house?

AERIAL

A cleaning company comes by every Thursday, otherwise no.

They pass through the kitchen. Cynthia sets the wine bottle down on the counter. Aerial points to the wine rack.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

All I ask is that you not drink the Chateau Lafite-Rothschild 2006 - that's a thousand dollar bottle.

CYNTHIA

You're joking.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

No - really. Saving it for... I don't know - something big to happen.

They pass the closed door to the basement studio.

CYNTHIA

What's in there?

AERIAL

That's my studio - stays locked. Like I said - for me only.

CYNTHIA

(nodding)

Huh. O-kay.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 9 in E Flat Mt. 2 plays in the back ground as Aerial and Cynthia eat dinner.

AERIAL

A car's coming to pick me up early in the morning and take me to the airport. Want to go?

CYNTHIA

Early in the morning?

AERIAL

Yeah, do you work tomorrow?

CYNTHIA

No.

AERIAL

You could stay here tonight and ride out to the airport with me.

Cynthia considers this.

CYNTHIA

Sooo - I'll stay in the guest room?

AERIAL

Is that okay?

CYNTHIA

Yeah, of course. Just wasn't sure what the deal was since you

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
recently rubbed cream all over my
breast.

AERIAL
I really like you... I just... I
just came out of a bad situation.
You understand?

CYNTHIA
Yeah, of course, totally. I was
just messing with you. I mean, not
all of us waitresses are floozies
you know.

AERIAL
Course not.

CYNTHIA
So, can I see what you've done with
the cast you made of me?

AERIAL
Uh - no. Not quite done yet.

INT. LIMOUSINE (MOVING) - DAWN

Aerial looks fresh and crisp as he sits beside Cynthia
looking frumpy and still groggy.

CYNTHIA
This was a really bad idea.

AERIAL
Don't you get up early for your
shift anyway? This can't be that
much different.

CYNTHIA
It's three cups of coffee and a hot
shower different. You got me up in
time just to leave.

AERIAL
Sorry - wanted you to rest. We can
stop and pick up a coffee before
dropping you off.

CYNTHIA
Dropping me off? What, after the
airport? Can't I get some coffee
before that?

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Cynthia, I'm going to be honest.

CYNTHIA

Oh, boy here we go. Don't do a dark secret big reveal while I'm half dead to the world.

AERIAL

Dark secret? What makes you think I have dark secrets?

CYNTHIA

I've seen your work.

AERIAL

Cynthia, listen to me. I've made you an appointment.

CYNTHIA

I don't understand. What kind of appointment?

AERIAL

With a surgeon. A surgeon who specializes in micro-fat grafting for facial and body reconstruction.

Cynthia gives Aerial a shove as she scoots as far from him as she can.

CYNTHIA

What the fuck is that? What are you saying?

AERIAL

No need to get upset.

CYNTHIA

No need to get upset? You're saying I'm fat and ugly, you fuckin' asshole.

AERIAL

Please - just listen.

CYNTHIA

Let me out. I'll get home on my own.

Cynthia RAPS on the window that separates driver from passenger.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
(to DRIVER)
Stop the car!

AERIAL
(sharply)
Cynthia!

Cynthia looks over at Aerial who points a stern finger at her.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
Listen.

Cynthia grabs at Aerial's finger, but Aerial pulls it away and grabs Cynthia by the upper arms.

CYNTHIA
Let go!

Aerial lets go. The separation window lowers.

DRIVER
Everything okay?

AERIAL
It's fine.

Separation window rolls up. Cynthia sits back in the seat, quiet, but still glaring.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
(softening)
There's no easy way to say this, so
I'm going to just put it out there.

CYNTHIA
What? That you find me revolting
and you have to fix me, so you can
stand being with me?

AERIAL
No. No, that's not it at all. You
are a great person and if you want
to take it to the next level,
you're going to need some help. You
have two choices: you can see the
world as shallow and obsessed with
outer beauty; or you can see that
we live in a time in which inner
beauty can be brought out - that
you can be more of who you are...

Aerial reaches out and touches her heart.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL (CONT'D)
... in here.

Cynthia's glare has melted. She takes out a piece of nicotine-gum from her purse and pops it into her mouth.

CYNTHIA
You don't know what it's like growing up and not quite cutting it. Always the last one asked to dance, if you're noticed at all. The only choice you have if you want to be noticed is to be the funny girl, the tragic girl, or the slutty girl.

AERIAL
And you?

CYNTHIA
Me? I was the invisible girl. Stopped caring about being noticed and just disappeared.

AERIAL
You never stopped caring - just stopped trying.

CYNTHIA
Yeah. Look, I appreciate what you're trying to do for me even if I don't understand exactly why...

AERIAL
I know what it's like to hide away to avoid pain. But nothing goes away until you look it in the face and demand your life back.

CYNTHIA
(incredulous)
You know what it's like?

AERIAL
Like you said - you've seen my work.

CYNTHIA
Yeah, and now what? You want to sculpt me?

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

I made you a consultation appointment that's all. This guy can take fat from different parts of your body and reshape you however you want. Completely natural and safe. Talk to the doctor. If you don't like what he has to say, then walk away. If you do - then I've arranged for it to be paid for.

CYNTHIA

What do you get out of this? What, will I owe you? Some slave...

AERIAL

It's not like that.

CYNTHIA

Then what?

Aerial shakes his head.

AERIAL

I have my reasons, I can't always articulate reasons. I'm, its.. I'm just compelled to act.

Cynthia looks away and stares out of the window.

CYNTHIA

How would Michelangelo articulate it?

Aerial gently reaches out and, taking Cynthia's chin in hand, turns her head to face him. He looks deep into her eyes.

AERIAL

From such a gentle thing, from such a fountain of all delight, my every pain is born.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cynthia sits at the kitchen table as Nina Simone's version of Sinnerman plays on the radio. White Cat and Black Cat sprawl out on the table. Cynthia sucks on a cinnamon stick and stares off thoughtfully. She goes through her purse and finds an old pack of cigarettes. She pauses, thinks about it, and then crumples the pack and throws it towards the garbage can. She looks down at the table.

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON TABLE Cynthia pulls out brochures on micro-fat grafting, facial reconstructing, breast augmentation, and rhino-plasty that the cats have been laying on. The cats YOWL in protest and leap down from the table.

MELISSA (O.S.)

Hey, I thought I heard you in here.
How long you've been back?

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA She looks over to the right.

CYNTHIA

Not long. Just having a sit. Nice
to see you up and moving.

Cynthia gets up, tosses the brochures back on the table, and faces the kitchen as she puts water in a tea kettle and places it on a burner.

MELISSA (O.S.)

What are these?

Cynthia shrugs.

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

Don't do this Cynthia. Can't you
see what he's trying to do? That's
what he does - he manipulates and
controls until all that's left is
his version of you... and you get
lost - lost and forgotten.

Cynthia busies herself preparing two cups for tea.

WIDER ANGLE The back of Melissa's long dark curly hair is seen as she sits at the table wearing a vinyl slicker.

CYNTHIA

It's not like that.

MELISSA

It is. You'll be jumping through
hoops until you get his stamp of
approval - which never happens.

CYNTHIA

I know what I'm doing - you're just
going to have to trust me, that's
all.

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia reaches into the refrigerator to get some cream.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (O.S.)
Your falling for him.

Cynthia turns towards the hallway doorway.

CYNTHIA
Nothing's changed, Melissa, okay?
I'm still me and you're not going
to lose me.

MELISSA (O.S.)
This is turning bad - so bad.

The teapot on the stove SCREAMS as hot steam pours out.

WIDER ANGLE

Cynthia is alone in the room holding a carton of cream.

CYNTHIA
(to self)
Stay strong Cynthia, you have
finish this.

INT. JEFF'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

Nina Simone's version of Sinnerman plays through. A corner of Jeff's upscale apartment is a makeshift office. He sits going through paperwork. Jeff looks behind him suddenly as if startled by something. He is alone in the apartment. Jeff is startled by his cell phone RINGING. He answers.

JEFF
Yo.

FRIEND (O.S.)
Hey, man, I looked and there's just
nothing there.

JEFF
How far out did you go?

FRIEND (O.S.)
Six months. I'm telling you there
was no retraction to the death
notice in the paper. The girl died,
what can I say?

JEFF
Yeah, well, there's dead and
there's dead.

(CONTINUED)

FRIEND (O.S.)
Can't help you there. I'd let it go
if I were you. Later.

Jeff hangs up the phone. Nina Simone's version of Sinnerman plays through...

MONTAGE - RESTORATION SEQUENCE

-- Aerial in Italy working on statues, making molds of broken pieces, reapplying, smoothing in.

-- Cynthia undergoing facial and breast surgery.

-- Aerial alone in hotel room working on sketches.

-- Cynthia at her house recovering; faced bruised, nose bandaged. Back of curly haired figure seen sitting across table from Cynthia.

-- Jeff sitting in his car at Cynthia's apartment building. Watches as her car pulls into parking lot.

-- Aerial working on a gargoyle.

-- Police officer taps on Jeff's car window.

-- Cynthia tucked down in her car with cell phone in hand. Bandage gone - bruising and swelling greatly reduced.

-- Aerial finishes work on gargoyle.

-- Cynthia finding a web page with contact info sending Lexia an email from Aerial's home computer. She types the subject message "Hey, I need a favor..."

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - DAY

Cynthia sits on the bench by the fountain as a cool breeze moves through the CHIMES. She has transformed into a more beautiful version of herself. She looks over at the house.

ANGLE ON BASEMENT WINDOW The curtains on the window are drawn.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - DAY

Cynthia takes hammer and chisel and pounds out the hinges of the door that leads to Aerial's basement studio.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Lights flicker on and Cynthia enters the studio. She is drawn to a large armature framework in the middle of the room. It is a recreation of Michelangelo's Pieta with Mary cradling the dead body of Jesus. Cynthia looks through sketches on a work counter.

ANGLE ON SKETCHES Large sketches of the Pieta lay on top, but neither Mary or Jesus have heads in the sketches. Under these sketches is a portfolio that Cynthia opens, revealing sketches of Cynthia in various stages of transformation from her original appearance to approximations of her post-surgery appearance. There are several sketches of Medusa.

Cynthia's hand shuffles through the papers, unsettling her lipstick stained cigarette butt Aerial took from the parking lot. She finds a piece of paper with early sketches of her face - one of which is her face with dark curly hair. She turns the paper over and sees it is a placement mat from the diner.

WIDER ANGLE Cynthia looks over to a stack of binders. She goes over and sorts through them. Each is labeled with a different woman's name.

CYNTHIA

Jesus, Aerial, how many woman's
lives have you fucked up?

Cynthia picks out the binder labeled: "Melissa" Cynthia takes the binder over to the table and opens it from the back cover.

ANGLE ON BINDER Cynthia flips through the pages. Photographs of Melissa in various stages of being cast, pictures of Melissa in the backyard, at the beach, asleep on a couch. Some photos show Melissa with acne scarring and others with smooth skin. Images like a blueprint of how he will change her.

Cynthia pulls out a collection of sketches of Melissa with facial scarring and without scarring and several sketches with Melissa as female figure in a poses reminiscent of Giambologna's statue The Rape of the Sabine Women.

WIDER ANGLE Anger and sadness twist through Cynthia's face as she looks around the room. The room darkens as a wind from nowhere WHOOSHES around.

Cynthia's BREATHING is accentuated she closes her eyes as ghostly images flash around her.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL (V.O.)

Who the fuck were you with last night, Melissa? Huh? You going back to sucking dick for crack?

MELISSA (V.O.)

No - I don't do that anymore. I told you.

AERIAL (V.O.)

You were supposed to be here. We have work to do.

MELISSA (V.O.)

No, Aerial, no more. I'm through with your shit. I'm not doing this anymore. I just came to tell you we're through.

AERIAL (V.O.)

No - you're through!

The sound of SLAPPING, a STRUGGLE, and Melissa SCREAMING shatters the air and Cynthia winces.

MELISSA (V.O.)

Let me go! A grinder WHIRS to life.

MELISSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Aerial no!
Please no - let me go!

AERIAL (V.O.)

I took away those scars and I can give them right back! You backstabbing bitch!

MELISSA (V.O.)

Agggrhhh!!

The room returns to silence. Cynthia eyes snap open as she fights back tears. She turns to hurry towards the stairs and stumbles to her knees. As she picks herself up she sees...

ANGLE ON WORK COUNTER A safe at the far corner of the work bench.

WIDER ANGLE Cynthia gets up and walks over to the safe, it looks closed, but as she angles her head she sees a gap between the door and the safe. She slowly opens the safe door and GASPS as the jars of severed fingers is revealed.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

Lexia RINGS the doorbell. No response. She KNOCKS. No response. As Lexia starts to leave the door opens and Cynthia emerges. Pearl Jams' song Black plays through the house's speaker system.

LEXIA

Oh, hi, didn't think anyone was home. I'm Lexia. I own Eden's End.

CYNTHIA

Hi, yeah, I remember seeing you at Aerial's last showing. I'm Cynthia.

Lexia concentrates to place a face.

LEXIA

Cynthia?

CYNTHIA

Yes. What's wrong?

LEXIA

Nothing - it's just you're much different then Jeff described you. You're very pretty.

CYNTHIA

Yeah, well, Jeff isn't exactly fond of me.

LEXIA

Jeff is only fond of money.

CYNTHIA

If he'd let Aerial work he'd have more of it.

Lexia gives Cynthia a thoughtful gaze and smile.

LEXIA

Girl after my own heart. That's what I've been saying for months. Believe me, if I could find a way to steal Aerial away from Jeff - I would.

CYNTHIA

So what brings you around? You know Aerial's in Italy, right?

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA

Well, to be truthful - he wrote and asked me to stop by. Says he hadn't been able to get a hold of you for the last couple of days. I think it's driving him crazy.

CYNTHIA

(shrugs)

Been busy.

LEXIA

Been busy, huh? Good for you - keep 'em dangling, right? Don't let them run your life.

CYNTHIA

Exactly! Want to come in? I was just having some wine if you'd like to join me.

LEXIA

It's a little early.

CYNTHIA

Consider it an open invitation.

A glow comes over Lexia's face, she smiles and enters.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Pearl Jams' Black continues to play through the speaker system. Cynthia and Lexia stand in the kitchen by the counter. On the counter is the opened bottle of Chateau Lafite-Rothschild 2006.

CYNTHIA

Someone paid that much for his last piece?

LEXIA

Oh yeah, he's especially popular in the Arab world, if you can believe it. Those Middle East oil guys have got loads of cash and a big taste for that type of art.

Lexia finishes her glass and puts it on the counter. Cynthia pours each of them another glass of wine.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Wow, no wonder he can afford to live like this. And now he's wasting his time in Italy when he could be finishing the piece he's working on.

Cynthia takes a drink of the wine.

LEXIA

He started something before he left?

Lexia takes a drink of the wine.

CYNTHIA

Something huge.

Lexia looks at the wine.

LEXIA

This is really good.

CYNTHIA

Should be. It's Chateau LafiteRothschild 2006. A thousand bucks a bottle.

LEXIA

Sounds like a wine for a special occasion.

Cynthia lifts her glass towards Lexia in a toast gesture.

CYNTHIA

It is.

Lexia returns the gesture and they CLINK their glasses together.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

To meeting new friends.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Pearl Jams' Black continues to play through the speaker system. Lexia looking at the Pieta sketches and the armature framework. The sketch books of different women have been but away, the safe closed, nothing untoward showing.

(CONTINUED)

LEXIA

How long is Aerial supposed to be gone?

CYNTHIA

Another month, maybe two.

LEXIA

That's too long to be gone. I have buyers harassing me about Aerial's next original piece. You know how people are, they lose interest so quickly.

CYNTHIA

Maybe we should find a way to get him back here.

LEXIA

Okay, and just how do propose we do that?

CYNTHIA

All we have to do is disappear - fade away from him and Jeff. Can you imagine what that sort of loss of control will do to him? He'll be back soon - very soon.

Lexia looks at Cynthia with surprise.

LEXIA

You've really given this some thought.

Cynthia nods.

CYNTHIA

So?

LEXIA

You're serious. Well, I don't know. Should we even be talking like this?

Cynthia LAUGHS.

CYNTHIA

Are you kidding? Of course we shouldn't be talking like this. We shouldn't even be down in his studio, shouldn't be drinking this wine, and shouldn't be listening to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (cont'd)
grunge music in the house of the
classics.

Cynthia brushes a loose strain of Lexia's hair behind her ear.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
But we are.

Lexia is caught up in Cynthia's eyes.

LEXIA
What else shouldn't we be doing?

CYNTHIA
We shouldn't be betraying him for
our gain. But we will.

Cynthia moves in and kisses Lexia deeply and Lexia returns the kiss.

INT. AERIAL'S ITALY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, Mvt. 3 plays on Aerial's portable CD player. Aerial sits naked on a chair with sketch pad on his lap as he sketches PROSTITUTE, a young Italian beauty laying on the bed with a sheet draped over her hips. She faces away from Aerial.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial rubs his eyes and stretches his face. He looks about the room with a curious grin.

WIDER ANGLE

The room takes on a surreal quality as objects and Prostitute begin to bend and melt reminiscent of Salvador Dali's The Persistence of Memory. With a SIGH of boredom, Prostitute turns her head to face Aerial.

PROSTITUTE
(Italian accent)
Signore...

Aerial snaps his fingers and points to Prostitute to turn her back around.

PROSTITUTE (CONT'D)
(turning back around)
Phht.

The room returns to normal as Aerial taps his pencil on the drawing pad - distracted by thought.

(CONTINUED)

PROSTITUTE (CONT'D)
 (in broken English)
 Signore, it is two hours. Come to
 bed with me.

AERIAL
 Un minuto...

Aerial gets up, takes money from his pants pocket, and places it on a stack of bills already on the night stand by the bed. He rubs Prostitute's shoulders.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
 One more hour - I promise. Relax
 have a drink. I have to make some
 calls.

Prostitute nods in compliance and sits up to drink wine from her glass on the night stand. Aerial goes to a table in a corner where there is a phone and a laptop. He dials. Pauses. Hangs up. Dials. Pauses. Hangs up. Each sequence performed with growing frustration.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
 (to Prostitute)
 What's the time difference between
 here and the United States?

Prostitute has started flipping through a magazine. She looks up at Aerial and shrugs. Aerial gets on laptop and searches for a phone number. He refers to the laptop screen as he dials. A RINGING comes through the phone and then...

DINER STAFF
 Route One Diner.

AERIAL
 Hello - is Cynthia working, can I
 speak to her?

DINER STAFF
 Who?

AERIAL
 Cynthia. Cynthia Davis. She's a
 waitress there. Usually works the
 morning shift. I'm trying to see if
 she's still there.

There is a MUMBLING over the phone as Diner Staff consults with someone.

(CONTINUED)

DINER STAFF

Nope. She quit six weeks ago.

AERIAL

Well, do you know...

DINER STAFF

Yup, all right then, bye.

CLICK. Aerial looks at phone and then SLAMS it down. Prostitute eyes him with caution and sips her wine, then goes back to the magazine. Aerial types hard on the laptop; he again refers to the screen as he dials. A RINGING comes through the phone and then...

UNIVERSITY STAFF

Academic Student Affairs, may I help you?

AERIAL

I hope so. I was suppose to send in a tuition payment for my friend who is starting there next semester and wondered if I could do that over the phone with a credit card?

UNIVERSITY STAFF

Certainly. Student name and academic program?

AERIAL

Cynthia Davis, undergraduate social work program.

Pause. Aerial looks over at Prostitute who puts fresh polish on her toe nails.

UNIVERSITY STAFF

Cynthia Davis you said?

AERIAL

That's right.

UNIVERSITY STAFF

Well, sir, you're a little late. She finished the graduate program several years ago.

AERIAL

What?

(CONTINUED)

UNIVERSITY STAFF

In fact, if you talk to her, can you have her update her address with us? We'd like to send her an alumni newsletter.

Aerial's anger is growing as he hangs up the phone. He picks the phone back up and dials. Pauses.

INT. JEFF'S APARTMENT - DAY

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, Mvt. 3 plays through. Jeff is in a rush. He opens the front door to see...

BERNIE and JERRY, two large shifty-looking characters, filling up the doorway. Jeff gives a start.

JEFF

Oh, shit, you scared me.

BERNIE

Going somewhere, Jeffie?

JEFF

Yeah, I was just headed to the A-TM and then to see your boss. How did you guys find me?

JERRY

You got a fan club, we'll save you some gas and drive ya.

Jeff's cell phone RINGS in his pocket. Bernie holds out his hand.

BERNIE

You won't be needing that for a while.

Jeff hands Bernie the phone and Bernie turns off the ringer.

JEFF

Come on fellas, I have the money... or... I'll be getting the money...

Jerry grabs Jeff's arm.

JERRY

Save it for the boss - he's the one who wants to talk to you.

INT. AERIAL'S ITALY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, Mvt. 3 plays through. Aerial hangs up the phone. He picks it back up and dials.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, Mvt. 3 plays through. On a night stand Lexia's phone RINGS and VIBRATES. Her arm comes out from the covers and reaches for it. Lexia moves towards the night stand and looks at the phone.

LEXIA

It's Aerial?

Cynthia reaches over Lexia and guides Lexia's hand back down to return the phone to the night stand. The phone goes silent. Cynthia cozies up to Lexia. Aerial's house phone RINGS. The two women smile and giggle at each other.

INT. AERIAL'S ITALY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 23 in F Minor, Op. 57, Mvt. 3 plays through. Aerial SLAMS the phone repeatedly and then picks up a bottle of red wine and SMASHES it against the wall. Prostitute jumps up from the bed as Aerial swings the broken bottle neck around.

AERIAL

FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!

Prostitute grabs her clothes.

PROSTITUTE

I must be leaving, Signore.

Aerial goes to the bed where Prostitute is desperately trying to slink into her dress. With his free hand, Aerial rips the dress from her fumbling hands and tosses it aside.

AERIAL

You leave when I say, when your time is up! I paid for you. I paid for all of you.

PROSTITUTE

(pleading)

Signore! Please...

(CONTINUED)

Aerial turns her around with one hand and pushes her onto the bed - she falls face first CRYING.

AERIAL

Shut up! You fat ass, whore. How dare you charge me money to look at your disgusting fat ass!

Aerial slashes at her butt with the broken bottle, cutting her across her butt.

PROSTITUTE

(crying out)

No, please - I tell no one - let me go Signore.

AERIAL

There's no one left to tell.

Aerial begins to thrust as prostitute tries to stifle her CRYING.

LATER Prostitute lays quietly on the bed, blood smeared over her butt and down her leg. Aerial sits naked on a chair with sketch pad on his lap as he continues to sketch. Blood is splattered up his chest. He grabs a paint brush from a side table, leans over, dabs the brush on Prostitute's bloody butt and starts to highlight his sketch with her blood.

EXT. EDEN'S END GALLERY/ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

Outside the windows of the gallery the sky is overcast and darkening. Jeff is talking to JANITOR. A small bandage spans the bridge of Jeff's nose. He appears swollen with a split lip.

JEFF

She's out of town? For how long?

JANITOR

(shrugging)

That's all I know, boss.

JEFF

Shit. Okay, thanks, man.

Janitor goes about his business as Jeff's cell phone RINGS.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Yo... No, I haven't heard from him.
...What?

Jeff listens intently, the anger growing inside.

(CONTINUED)

JEFF (CONT'D)
When the fuck did that happen?...
No! Bullshit! You gotta at least
pay us for the work he did do...
Hello?... Hello?!

Jeff hangs up.

JEFF (CONT'D)
(to self)
That fucker.

Thunder RUMBLES.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT YARD - NIGHT

Distant flashes of lightening are followed by RUMBLES of
thunder. A cab pulls up to the curb.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/ENTRANCE WAY - NIGHT

Aerial enters. The house is quiet and still except for the
interruption in the solitude by lightening and distant
thunder. Aerial pauses to take in the house.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aerial seethes as he stands before the unhinged basement
studio door.

CYNTHIA (O.S.)
Finally...

Aerial looks up...

ANGLE ON CYNTHIA Cynthia stands at end of hallway partially
silhouetted and partially lit by the off-cast of an
adjoining room's light source. She wears a light summer
dress.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
... you're home. I got your message
and I've been waiting.

ANGLE ON AERIAL Aerial storms towards Cynthia like an angry
bull.

AERIAL
What have you done?

(CONTINUED)

WIDER ANGLE Aerial comes directly up to Cynthia who holds her ground. He starts to grab her, but clenches his fists and withdraws his hands. Cynthia flinches, but keeps her chin up and eyes fixed on Aerial.

AERIAL (CONT'D)
(more controlled)
What have you done?

CYNTHIA
What are you talking about? I haven't done anything.

Aerial points to the unhinged door.

AERIAL
What the fuck do you call that?

CYNTHIA
Jesus, calm down. I can't believe you're freaking out.

Aerial grabs his head and locks his fingers into his hair. He stomps off towards the living room.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM

The lightening is more frequent and THUNDER louder. Cynthia follows Aerial into the room. He turns sharply to face her.

AERIAL
Can't believe I'm freaking out?
What the fuck have you been doing?
You won't answer my calls, you quit your job, you lied about your school. And now I come home and find you broke into my studio.

CYNTHIA
Yeah, that's right and I drank your fuckin' thousand dollar bottle of wine too. So what.

AERIAL
You what?

CYNTHIA
Don't you know anything about women? You can't just forbid and not expect us to find a way. Goddamn, Aerial, that's how we've been getting around you guys since Eve.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL
Since.. Eve? What?

CYNTHIA
That's right - us women, just
fucking up your perfect designs.
Shit, do you even like women?

AERIAL
What is that suppose to mean?

CYNTHIA
Your work. Bits and pieces of us
scattered and disconnected - all
convenient bite sized chunks. But
do you ever like the whole of us?
The curious, moody, wild, scared,
passionate, crazy, beautiful soul
of us?

Aerial glares at Cynthia.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Jesus, Aerial, I think you'd be
happier sucking dick. Probably your
own.

Aerial pushes Cynthia onto the sofa as a clap of THUNDER rattles the windows. He is frothing mad and jabbing his finger towards her.

AERIAL
Fuck you! And fuck all your
feminist bullshit! I made you and
you stabbed me in the back.

Cynthia sits up, defiantly staring back at him.

CYNTHIA
You didn't make me, asshole. You
just played dress up with me. You
thought changing me on the outside
would help my inside.

Cynthia touches herself on the outside of her clothing.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Hot, confident, desire of every
man, so sorry, my outside seems to
have bested the inside you thought
you could mold.

Aerial glares back at her for a beat, then raises his hand swiftly to slap her, but hesitates.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Careful, boyfriend. Don't mess up
your precious work.

He backs off not knowing what to do with his urge to strike.

AERIAL
FUCK!

Aerial tears out of the room. Cynthia is left on the sofa
controlling a tremble.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

A standing floor lamp CLICKS on and Aerial moves over to the
worktable to CLICK on a table lamp. He steadies himself on
the worktable and then turns to face the room. He stares at
the armature framework of his unfinished Pieta. Aerial turns
back to the worktable and shuffles through his sketches. He
looks over at the safe - door is closed. Heavy rain PLOPS
and PELTS the basement window. Aerial walks over and opens
the curtains.

A strobe series of lightning flashes revealing a frosted and
blue lipped Melissa with eyes wild as she stares through the
window. Aerial SHRIEKS and stumbles backwards, falling over
the standing floor lamp as he CRASHES to the ground. Aerial
lays on the floor GASPING for air. The room is illuminated
oddly now by the table lamp. He looks up at the window.

ANGLE ON WINDOW The image of Melissa is gone and distant
flashes of lightning outline the garden. WIDER ANGLE Aerial
lies on the floor catching his breath.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia stands looking down at the candlelight dinner laid
out on the table. A single long stemmed rose graces a
crystal vase.

Beside Aerial's plate is a bottle of Alandia's Strong 68
absinthe with the green fairy label - a red gift bow tied
around the neck. She takes a drink of her wine and blows out
the candles.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Aerial lies on the floor looking up at the window.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

ANGLE ON STEREO SYSTEM

Cynthia's finger searches the touch pad.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Aerial lies on the floor looking up at the window. Janis Joplin's cover of Summertime plays over the speakers. Aerial slowly gets himself off the floor and rights the lamp. He goes over to the window and looks out into the rain drenched garden. AERIAL'S POV Cynthia walks into the backyard.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Janis Joplin's cover of Summertime plays from the house. Cynthia walks to the bench by the fountain and sits down, stretching her neck up to allow the rain to fall on her face.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Aerial looks over the dinner on the table and the smoking candlewicks recently extinguished. He picks up the bottle of Strong 68 absinthe and admires it. He touches the rose.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BACKYARD - NIGHT

Aerial walks up and stands in front of Cynthia, holding out the rose. Cynthia looks up rain streaming down her face and takes the rose. Her skin glistening wet under the moonlight.

CYNTHIA

You never told me how pretty I look.

AERIAL

You look beautiful. Aerial sits beside her on the bench.

CYNTHIA

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

How can you fuck me over like this?
I was... good to you.

CYNTHIA

Good to me?

Cynthia snorts, Aerial tries to find the right words.

AERIAL

You're not... doing this right...

Cynthia stands up sneering and squares off on Aerial.

CYNTHIA

Maybe you should just fuck me...
right now.

Cynthia grabs the back of Aerial's head and leans over. They lock into a passionate kiss as Cynthia mounts him on the bench.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Jeff's car is parked along the side of the road across from Cynthia's apartment building. It is raining.

INT. JEFF'S CAR - NIGHT

With windshield wipers working the rain, Jeff wipes off interior condensation from the side window with his sleeve.

EXT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Cynthia's car arrives and parks. The Woman with long black curly hair, dressed in jeans and a vinyl slicker, exits the car. She runs towards the apartment building.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Jeff gets out of his car and runs over to the apartment building.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/ENTRANCE WAY - NIGHT

Jeff rushes in to see a stairwell door close.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Jeff follows a wet trail of water splatter on the floor. The trail leads to a third floor hallway entrance.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeff enters the hallway and hears an apartment door CLICK open. No one is in the hallway. Jeff moves slowly down the hallway - listening and watching. He comes to an apartment door that is slightly ajar. He looks at the door and lightly brushes over the number on the door with his fingertips. Jeff peers in through the cracked door into the dimly lit kitchen. James Mason's narration of the 1953 animated version of The Tell-Tale Heart comes from some interior room. He KNOCKS on the door and it CREAKS open.

JEFF

Cynthia?

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The sound of bath WATER RUNNING is heard along with the The Tell-Tale Heart narration as Jeff cautiously enters the shadowy apartment.

JEFF

Cynthia? It's Jeff. Come on now.
Come out and talk to me.

Black Cat and White Cat SCREAM through the kitchen chasing each other over counters and the table, upsetting items as they disappear into the hallway.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Goddamn it! Shit! That's it,
Cynthia - I've had enough of your
bullshit. I'm on to you and you've
cost me plenty.

Jeff freezes mid-step. He slowly looks over.

WIDER ANGLE The back of the Woman with long dark curly hair and wearing a vinyl slicker sits in a wheelchair beside the kitchen table. Jeff pauses as he looks at her. He walks over and lifts off a dark curly hair wig revealing a mannequin.

(CONTINUED)

Jeff looks at a waitress uniform draped over a kitchen chair next to the seated mannequin. ANGLE ON WAITRESS UNIFORM The name tag reads: "Cynthia"

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeff moves down the dark hallway and the sound of bath WATER RUNNING and the The Tell-Tale Heart narration get louder as he moves further into the apartment.

JEFF

Cynthia!

Jeff takes out his cell phone and dials.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aerial sits on his sofa wearing his robe and going over some papers. An open briefcase sits on the coffee table beside the sculpture casting of his hands surrounding a globe. Aerial's cell RINGS and he answers it.

AERIAL

Hey.

INTER CUT WITH JEFF IN CYNTHIA'S HALLWAY

JEFF

Where the fuck have you been?

AERIAL

Traveling back home.

JEFF

You left the Rome job just like that? They're not going to pay us you fuck!

AERIAL

I.. I was compelled, I had to come home. I had to see Cynthia. I don't expect you to understand, but I love her.

JEFF

Oh, that's just... are you outta... goddamn it! Listen shithead, I just followed Cynthia into her apartment and she's hiding from me. She fucked us over, man, I'm telling you.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

What are you talking about?

Jeff gets to the bathroom door - light slashes out from the ajar door.

JEFF

She's living in Melissa's old apartment - and Aerial - that crazy bitch has been dressing up like Melissa. Got me my ass kicked and I think she knows what happened.

AERIAL

What? You're not making any sense. Jeff slowly pushes the bathroom door open.

ANGLE INTO THE BATHROOM FROM HALLWAY

The bathroom is brightly lit. The tub is almost full to overflowing as the water continues to GUSH from the faucet. Beside the bathtub on a tall bathroom organizer sits a small television on which the 1953 animated version of The TellTale Heart plays.

JEFF

What the fuck?

AERIAL

What's going on?

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jeff enters the bathroom and moves towards the television and bathtub. A piece of paper is taped to the mirror, but Jeff is focused on the television and bathtub.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cynthia walks in wearing a towel wrapped around her and holding two wine glasses.

PAN AROUND THE COFFEE TABLE Cynthia's large handbag is on the table behind Aerial's open briefcase.

AERIAL

(into phone)

Jeff... Cynthia's here with me.

INT. CYNTHIA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jeff is suddenly frightened. He turns towards the bathroom door.

JEFF

Then who...

He spies a note taped to the mirror that reads: "NEVER MORE"
He closes his phone.

JEFF (CONT'D)

Oh, no...

CEILING SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON ROOM Melissa, wearing a vinyl slicker, BURSTS into the room with a bloodcurdling SCREAM and pushes Jeff hard. Jeff instinctively grabs onto Melissa as he falls and they both tumble down, CRASHING and SPLASHING into the tub.

WIDER ANGLE The two struggle, slipping and sliding as they BANG painfully off the tile and metal fixtures - Jeff fighting to get up and Melissa to keep him down. Melissa grabs and squeezes Jeff's face - she is missing fingers on her hand. Clawing at Melissa, Jeff grabs hold of her triquetra pendant on a leather cord, rips it off her neck in his flying and sends it flying across the bathroom. Jeff gets the upper hand and rises up from the tub.

JEFF (CONT'D)

This time you're going to stay
dead!

MELISSA

No!

Melissa kicks him hard in the kneecap, sending him CRASHING back down into the tub. Melissa climbs up by pushing him further into the tub. She grabs the TV and holds it above her head.

With a YELL, Melissa hurls the still plugged-in TV into the tub - electrocuting them both.

ANGLE ON BATHROOM DOORWAY White Cat and Black Cat sit in the doorway with the necklace laying on the floor in front of them. The Cats stare coldly as lights FLICKER wildly and Jeff and Melissa HOWL.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

AERIAL

Jeff?

He hangs up the phone and looks up at Cynthia who holds out a glass of wine for him to take.

CYNTHIA

Everything all right?

Aerial takes the glass, looking intensely at Cynthia. Cynthia sips her wine.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

It's good.

Aerial sits his glass on the table.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Okay... thought we were making progress.

AERIAL

Jeff's over at your apartment.

CYNTHIA

What's he doing there?

AERIAL

Or should I say, Melissa's apartment.

Cynthia shrugs.

CYNTHIA

Have some wine - it's good.

Aerial slaps the wine off the table, sending the glass flying across the room and SMASHING onto the floor. He stands up to confront her.

AERIAL

How do you know Melissa? - Cynthia?

CYNTHIA

It's not what you think...

AERIAL

I don't know what to think, because she's FUCKING DEAD!

Cynthia and Aerial hold a death stare between them.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Okay, you're right. Cynthia sets down her wine and reaches into her purse.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I have something to show you...

Aerial picks up Cynthia's wine glass...

AERIAL

This better be good.

... and takes a deep drink.

While Aerial is distracted by drinking the wine, Cynthia pulls out a syringe from her purse, stabs the needle into Aerial's upper arm, and jams the plunger down.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Agggghhh what the fuck!

Aerial turns his arm away from Cynthia, grabs her with his other arm, and flings Cynthia across the table, sending her CRASHING to the ground along with the table's contents.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Bitch!

Aerial comes after her, jumping over the coffee table. Cynthia scurries backwards like a crab - her hand finds the casting of Aerial's hands around a globe. She hurls it at Aerial catching him on the forehead. Aerial is sent staggering backwards clutching his head.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Goddam!

Aerial falls shaking to his hands and knees, BREATHING heavy as he struggles to remain conscious. Blood streams down his face from a cut underneath his hair. Cynthia PANTS, but remains still and watches Aerial with a look of disgust.

CYNTHIA

This is your favorite moment. The moment just before something pivotal happens.

Aerial's BREATHING becomes slow and shallow as his head droops and his body buckles to the floor. Stillness. Aerial lunges forward towards Cynthia with a YOWL. Cynthia scrambles further backward and Aerial lands unconscious in front of her - his head hitting the floor between her knees.

SLOW DISSOLVE BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - DAY

Cynthia, looking nerdy and homely with stocking cap and thick, black rimmed glasses, opens Melissa's door with a key. She holds a pan of brownies.

CYNTHIA

Hey, sweetie... You home? Made some goodies.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT - DAY

This is the same as Cynthia's apartment in previous scenes. Melissa sits at the kitchen table with her face resting on her hand as Cynthia enters. Melissa has been crying.

CYNTHIA

Hey, what's wrong?

Cynthia puts the pan of brownies down and goes behind Melissa to rub her shoulders.

MELISSA

Oh, nothing. I'm okay. I just had an accident.

Melissa pulls her hands closer to her body.

CYNTHIA

(gritting her teeth)

Let me see.

Melissa shakes her head, holding her hands to her chest. Cynthia gets a hold of one of Melissa's hands and pulls it towards her.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(softer)

Let me see.

ANGLE ON MELISSA'S HAND

Pinkie and ring finger are missing - the stubs are bandaged.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(horrified)

Jesus, sweet, baby - who did this to you? Did Aerial do this to you?

Melissa retracts her hand and holds it tight to her chest.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

It was an accident - that's all.
Aerial fixed it up. I'm fine.

CYNTHIA

You didn't see a doctor?

MELISSA

I ain't got no insurance for that.

CYNTHIA

Melissa - this isn't right. This is
fucking sick. You gotta get away
from him.

MELISSA

(sobbing)

And go where? Do what? Who cares
about a whore in this world? Aerial
got me cleaned up and sober and off
the street. And there was this
accident - that's all. It's okay
now.

Cynthia comes around to face Melissa, taking Melissa's hands
into hers and kissing them.

CYNTHIA

It's not okay, Melissa - this shit
is far from okay.

MELISSA

Maybe I deserve it - for my
wickedness - deserve to be
swallowed up by some darkness.

CYNTHIA

I'm so sorry you feel this way.

Cynthia takes her triquetra pendant on a leather cord from
around her neck and places it around Melissa's neck.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

This is for us - for when you feel
like the darkness is swallowing you
up. We're gonna fight it.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Melissa enters the studio - the bandages are off her hand. It has been sometime and fresh pink skin has grown over the wound.

AERIAL

Who the fuck were you with last night, Melissa? Huh? You going back to sucking dick for crack?

Melissa screws up her courage.

MELISSA

No - I don't do that anymore. I told you. Aerial looks her up and down.

AERIAL

You were supposed to be here. We have work to do.

MELISSA

No, Aerial, no more. I'm through with your shit. I'm not doing this anymore. I just came to tell you we're through.

AERIAL

No - you're through!

Aerial SLAPS Melissa. They struggle and Aerial throws her into a table. Melissa SCREAMS as Aerial holds her down and grabs a grinder.

MELISSA

Let me go! The grinder WHIRS to life and Aerial moves it towards her face.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Aerial no! Please no - let me go!

AERIAL

I took away those scars and I can give them right back! You backstabbing bitch!

MELISSA

Aerial stop! I'll do anything... anything.

(CONTINUED)

Aerial turns off the grinder. He gets up and stands over the crying Melissa.

AERIAL

You're going to help me finish this piece.

Melissa works to control her crying as she stands up.

MELISSA

Okay.

AERIAL

Take off your fucking clothes and get over here.

Melissa strips and, wearing only the triquetra pendant on a leather cord, she walks over to Aerial who stands by a table with a wide bucket filled with ice and water.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

You know the look I need.

Melissa nods, puts her face in the water, but quickly pulls out.

MELISSA

(gasping)

It's too cold.

AERIAL

Do it! You owe me. Melissa grasps the pendant.

MELISSA

(weakly)

No.

Aerial grabs a fist full of Melissa's hair.

Her hands go up to battle Aerial's grip on her hair. Aerial snatches her pendant with his free hand and, with a quick jerk, rips it from her neck.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Aerial, please, stop!

He plunges her head into the water. Melissa struggles, but Aerial holds her head underwater. Aerial lets go of Melissa and she jerks away from the table, falling onto the ground. Her eyes are wide and her BREATHING rapid. Aerial tosses the necklace and grabs his sketch pad.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Hold! Just stay right there.

Melissa starts crawling towards the stairs.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

Aerial grabs Melissa's arm. He links several zip ties together and "cuffs" her to a table leg.

MELISSA

Aerial no.. Please let me go...
Please, Aerial... you're hurting
me...

Aerial picks up the bucket of water and dumps it on the naked Melissa.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Agggrhhh!!

Aerial frames the shot looking crazed.

AERIAL

That's the look.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/ENTRANCE WAY - NIGHT

Aerial opens the door and Jeff rushes in.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melissa lays on the bed, shivering and COUGHING. Jeff and Aerial look in on her.

JEFF

Get rid of whatever you were
working on.

Aerial hands Jeff a prescription bottle with a sobering look.

AERIAL

It'll help her with the pain.

Aerial looks down.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

I really fucked up this time.

Jeff gives Aerial an incredulous look.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cynthia opens her door, which is next door to Melissa's apartment. She peeks out to see... Jeff with Melissa's purse slung over his shoulder. He fumbles to open Melissa's apartment door while Melissa leans against him. Cynthia fades back into her apartment and carefully shuts her door.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jeff sits Melissa down at the kitchen table and places the purse on the table.

JEFF

It's gonna be all right.

MELISSA

No, it's not. I have to call the police.

JEFF

Hey, Hey, come on now, I thought we talked about that. He just lost control - that's all. After his next showing he'll make a ton of cash and I'll cut you in on a fat percentage. How's that sound?

MELISSA

Jeff, he's crazy. I could have been killed. I have to call the police.

JEFF

No, no, no need, I'm gonna help you, please just give me a second.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM

Jeff enters the bathroom and pounds his head with his fists.

JEFF

Shit! Fuck! This can't be happening. I can't lose everything. Fucking, Aerial.

He pats his coat pocket and hears the pills RATTLE. He takes out the prescription bottle and looks at it. Jeff turns on the tub water.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Melissa is face down at the table as Jeff crushes up pills at the counter and mixes them into a glass of cranberry juice. He puts a straw in the glass and takes it to Melissa. Jeff helps Melissa lift her head.

JEFF

Here - this will help with the pain.

Jeff holds the drugged drink while she sips on the straw. She continues to shiver and COUGH.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Jeff turns off the tub water. The tub is full. Jeff looks through a basket of toiletries and finds some red lipstick. On the mirror, in small case letters, he writes: "never more" Jeff leaves and returns with a naked Melissa who is obviously drugged and having difficulty walking on her own. Jeff puts her in the bath.

JEFF

Just have a nice warm bath and you'll feel better. I'll be right back.

Jeff leaves and Melissa fights unconsciousness as she works to keep herself from slipping under the water.

MELISSA

Jeff... help... help me...

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jeff enters and places a phone with the cord wrapped around it and a pair of pliers on the kitchen table. Jeff goes through Melissa's purse, takes out her cell phone and removes the battery - placing both in his pocket. He takes out her keys and looks around - thinking things through. He grabs a rag and starts wiping down handles and other places he may have left prints.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jeff, holding the phone wrapped in a cord, closes the door and tries the handle. The door is locked. He puts the key in the lock and with the pliers, snaps the key off in the lock. He places Melissa's key ring in his pocket and wipes the

(CONTINUED)

door handle. He walks down the hallway and exits into the stairwell as... Cynthia opens her door and looks up and down the hallway. She goes to Melissa's door and tries to use her key, but the broken key in the lock prevents her.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING/BALCONY - NIGHT

Cynthia's balcony abuts Melissa's. Cynthia makes her way over the railing to Melissa's balcony as White Cat and Black Cat YOWL and SCREECH. She jimmys the sliding glass door and enters Melissa's apartment.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Melissa tries to keep her head above water as she slips in and out of consciousness. Cynthia enters the bathroom.

CYNTHIA
Melissa! No!

Cynthia pulls a MOANING and COUGHING Melissa from the tub. With Melissa on the floor, Cynthia releases the plug and the bath water drains.

Cynthia helps Melissa lean over the side of the tub.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
Stay with me. Stay awake.

Cynthia jams her fingers down Melissa's throat and Melissa VOMITS into the tub.

INT. MELISSA'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - DAY

Cynthia cradles Melissa as they lay on the bed.

MELISSA
I fell asleep again.

CYNTHIA
You rest - don't worry about it.

MELISSA
I have to call the police.

Cynthia closes her eyes and thinks hard about her request.

CYNTHIA
That won't do any good.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - NIGHT

Tom Waits's cover of Sea of Love plays over the speaker system as Aerial comes to awareness. He is shirtless and strapped with duct tape to the casting table. The table is tilted horizontally. The top half of his head is shaved and his wound bandaged. Electrical leads run from placements on the side of his face and upper body to a small suitcase sized device. Cynthia prepares a mixture at the worktable.

AERIAL

(still groggy)

What's going on? Hey... Hey! What the fuck? Let me out!

CYNTHIA

Is this a great song or what? God I love this guy.

Aerial struggles against the tape.

AERIAL

Let me out, you crazy bitch!

Cynthia goes over to him and strokes his forehead.

CYNTHIA

Settle down, boyfriend, you're not going anywhere right now. You have some restorations to do.

AERIAL

What are you talking about? Cynthia enough - let me out. Goddamn it, what is this all about?

CYNTHIA

Melissa of course. I thought you knew that or at least would have figured it out by now. You're not all that smart are you?

AERIAL

I didn't have anything to do with that, you gotta believe me.

CYNTHIA

I'll tell you what I believe. You hurt her. You hurt her bad, and left Jeff to clean up the mess. As usual.

Aerial struggles mightily against the tape.

(CONTINUED)

AERIAL

Fuck! Cynthia, this is insane. I can't help that she killed herself. Cynthia leans close to Aerial's face.

CYNTHIA

Asshole! Jeff tried to kill her!

Aerial stops struggling.

AERIAL

What? No. That's not true.

CYNTHIA

But I saved her. And now you have to make it right.

AERIAL

What happened to Jeff?

Cynthia backs off and turns her attention to the dials on the device.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

Goddamn it, Cynthia! What happened to Jeff?

Cynthia takes a sponge, dips it in some water, and wets Aerial's face and chest. Aerial starts to BREATHE rapidly in a growing fear.

AERIAL (CONT'D)

(pleading)

Whatever you are planning to do - just don't. Cynthia, please, please don't. I'm sorry, I didn't know anything about it. You have to believe me.

CYNTHIA

But I do believe you, sweetie. You still have to make this right. (points to Pieta) You are going to finish this piece with my help and it's going to be amazing.

AERIAL

Yeah, yeah, anything. That's what I want to do. Just let me up.

Cynthia rubs a cream on his face.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA
Sure, boyfriend, sure.

AERIAL
What are you doing? Cynthia! What
the fuck are you doing?

Cynthia smiles and...

CYNTHIA
Here it is, Aerial.

CLICK a switch on the device. A mild electrical current contorts Aerial's body and facial muscles. He grimaces with clenched jaw.

Cynthia frames Aerial's face with her hands. Aerial WHINES and BREATHES rapid shallow breaths.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
That's the look. A picture perfect
performance.

Cynthia CLICKS the switch off. Aerial WHINES and BREATHES rapid shallow breaths.

AERIAL
Let me up - please. What are you
going to kill me?!

CYNTHIA
No, I am not going to kill you, you
have too much potential, lover boy,
don't you worry.

Cynthia turns the switch back on, Aerial's body tenses.

INT. EDEN'S END GALLERY - DAY

People gather around the finished Pieta. Mary's face is a skull, her hair is Medusa-like with snakes twisting and protruding from her veil like dark curly hair. Jesus's face, made from a mold of Aerial, is wide-eyed, contorted, and deep with pain. Cynthia and Lexia stand off to the side as patrons look at and DISCUSS the collection of Aerial's work amongst themselves.

LEXIA
Unbelievable. His work's never sold
for this much before - but this
main piece... wow.

Cynthia smiles and gives Lexia a kiss on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Gotta go.

LEXIA

So soon? Okay, sweetie. I'll wire
the money soon.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

Mozart's Symphony 40 in G Minor plays through the speaker system. Cynthia enters the house and closes the door.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - DAY

Mozart's Symphony 40 in G Minor plays through. Cynthia opens a bottle of wine and pours a glass.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/HALLWAY - DAY

Mozart's Symphony 40 in G Minor plays through as Cynthia stops with her glass of wine outside the closed entrance to the basement studio. The door has a number of added locks and bolts. Beside the door is a table with a closed-circuit television on it. Cynthia pauses and looks at the image on the television screen.

ANGLE ON TV SCREEN The back of Aerial is seen as he sits at a potter's wheel. He wears only a pair of tattered boxer shorts and is splattered with paint speckles and clay smears.

WIDER ANGLE Cynthia watches the image of Aerial working the clay for several beats and sips her wine.

INT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/BASEMENT STUDIO - DAY

Cynthia enters the basement with wine glass in one hand and a plate of bread and cheese in the other. She places the plate on a wheeled bed tray-table containing several bottles of water and then taps on the stereo system keypad, shutting off the music.

ANGLE ON POTTER'S WHEEL Aerial stops the potter's wheel - he has only his middle finger on each hand left, grasping the clay mostly with his palms. WIDER ANGLE He turns to look at her. With grey scraggy hair from his head and a beard sticking out. His leg is shackled with a chain that runs to and is bolted into a wall.

(CONTINUED)

CYNTHIA

Your work was a big hit today - especially the Pieta. Big payday. We make a great team, don't you think?

Aerial turns away and goes back to working the potter's wheel. Cynthia smiles and downs the rest of the wine. She pushes the wheeled tray-table towards Aerial. Cynthia PUNCHES some codes into the stereo system keypad before heading up the basement stairs. The SLAMMING shut of the basement door and CLICKING of the locks cause Aerial to look over towards the basement stairwell. He swipes the clay off the potter's wheel, YELLING in anger and anguish. Jewel's Who Will Save Your Soul plays over the stereo system. Aerial looks over to...

ANGLE ON WALL AREA OF BASEMENT WINDOW

... the boarded up window. Under the window, up against the wall on a bench, are the shellacked bodies of Jeff and Melissa, propped up and tied to 2x4's to keep the bodies in the pose of the Pieta. WIDER ANGLE Aerial stares at the bodies. ... Aerial jumps in front of the stairwell entrance and swings the weapon. He looks up the stairwell. It is empty. Breathing heavy, Aerial searches his mind, confused and frightened. He scrambles for the keys and works to undue the shackles.

EXT. AERIAL'S HOUSE/FRONT - DAY

Aerial runs out of the house in his boxer briefs and carrying the weapon. He stops in the middle of his lawn and looks around. The world is dull and de-saturated with all sound distant and muffled. The only accentuated sound is Aerial's BREATHING. Neighbors come out and COMMENT, but the activity is disconnected from Aerial. Aerial continues to look around for Cynthia in a landscape drained of vitality.

EXT. SAFE HOUSE/BACKYARD - DAY

Jewel's Who Will Save Your Soul plays through. Cynthia stands smoking a cigarette on the back porch of a plain house in an impoverished part of town. White Cat and Black Cat stretch out on the lawn.

Cynthia's clothing is simple and comfortable; she wears her dark rimmed glasses and wrapped around her wrist is the triquetra pendant on a leather cord. She watches as a police car pulls up in the alley behind the house. FEMALE OFFICER gets out of the police car and goes around to the rear passenger side door.

(CONTINUED)

Cynthia stubs out her cigarette and watches as Female Officer opens the rear passenger side door of the police vehicle. An adult woman SUSAN and her child LILIAN exit.

Female Officer escorts Susan and Lilian through the chain linked gate, across the yard, and up to the house. Susan has abrasions on her face and a black eye. Lilian wears dirty and tattered clothes.

CYNTHIA

Hi. You must be Susan.

The woman, tired and worn, nods sadly.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

(to Child)

And you must be Lilian.

LILIAN

Lilly.

CYNTHIA

Okay, Lilly. Why don't you and your mom go inside and I'll be right there. You can have a snack if you'd like.

Lilian smiles and nods. Susan and Lilian go inside with White Cat and Black Cat following them in and MEOWING. Female Officer touches Cynthia lightly on the arm.

FEMALE OFFICER

Hey, I don't know where you found the funding to reopen this place, but... thank you.

CYNTHIA

We have generous donors.

MONTAGE OF PULL BACK

-- Safe House recedes while Female Officer turns and goes back to police car and Cynthia goes into house.

-- Street scenes of poverty recede into upper scale neighborhoods.

-- Metropolitan street scenes late in the day with mixture of business persons and the homeless recedes into alleyway.

-- Rear door stage entrance, back stage...

INT. SMALL CLUB - NIGHT

On stage of the packed, dark club JEWEL continues singing Who Will Save Your Soul to a limited audience. Across the crowd enjoying the music and then stopping at a table where Aerial sits and watches Jewel perform. His appearance is neat, but it is obvious he is in poor health. His face is drawn and dull.

SMALL CLUB WAITRESS sits a drink on the table in front of Aerial. Aerial slides her money with his middle finger, the only remaining on his hand. The Waitress shows her disgust as she grabs the money and storms off, Ariel, without making eye contact - all his attention is on the stage.

THE END