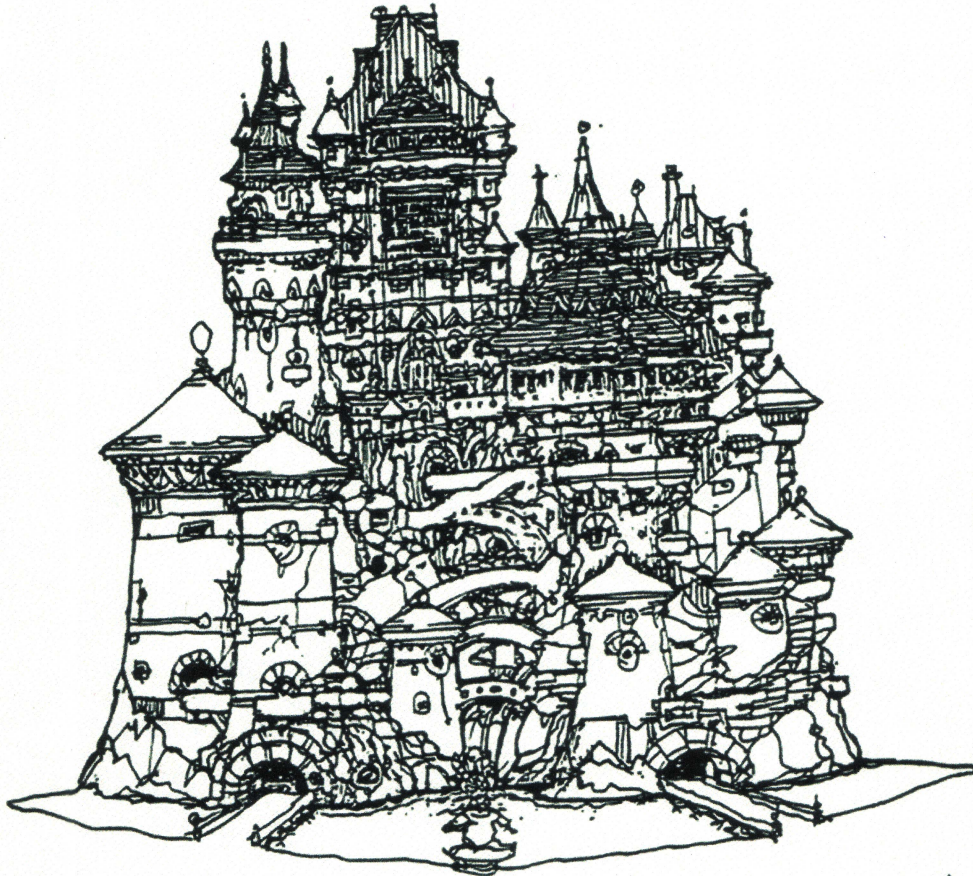


Transients in Arcadia



original screenplay by

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WHITE TITLES ON BLACK:

"Life is a dream."

-- Calderon de la Barca

FADE IN:

EXT. GREY, STONE WALL - DAY

AN OLD VICTROLA PLAYS A CLASSICAL HARPSICHORD MOZART PIECE.

JOE (V.O.)

Everyone's life is, in part, their own little fairy tale. Mine started the day I inherited the Arcadia Hotel from a distant uncle. I left my wife for it--the witch.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LARGE ROOM - DAY

Billowing white curtains cover HUGE windows filtering strong sunlight. A bitter woman of about 40 lies on her deathbed. A NURSE and her 17 year old SON stand over her. She is dressed completely in white. Her cracked lips move, speaking unintelligible words.

JOE (V.O.)

With her last breath she uttered her dying curse: That whosoever shall own this damned Arcadia would live imprisoned within it until the day his soul is truly free.

The woman convulses for a brief moment, and expires.

CLOSE - A single tear falls from her son's face, and splashes on her hand.

DISSOLVE BACK TO:

EXT. GREY, STONE WALL - DAY

A little field mouse, who we shall call BUSTER for the sake of our story, runs along the tightly gripped ivy vines on a gray stone wall.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

That's our resident field mouse, Buster. He helps the bellboys get up in the mornings. See, we all share the work around here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Buster runs through a patch of vines that glow with a green liveliness. As he passes by, some of the leaves begin to turn brown as if decaying in FAST-MOTION. The dried leaves spell out:

TRANSIENTS IN ARCADIA

Before Buster leaves the frame, we FOLLOW him, as he comes upon a huge open window.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D) (cont'd)
 Nothing in our lives is ever as it
 appears to be on the surface is it? Life
 is a dream. A disguise.

He rushes in past the billowing curtains, and suddenly looks monstrously huge next to an old, stone castle.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D) (cont'd)
 My Arcadia Hotel is a castle where my
 beloved guests recapture a propriety and
 carriage of a time of yore. Here, they
 escape reality for lengthy respites.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: that it is actually a miniature of the Arcadia Hotel, and we are inside one of its rooms.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D) (cont'd)
 The place was said to be enchanted, but
 I'm a realist. Ask me, I'll tell you it's
 all a bunch of poppycock...

THE CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES RISES, MOVING TO A BIRD'S EYE POV.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Then again, the Arcadia has always been a
 place where folks take magic as
 happenstance... I'm sorry. Something in
 my Gemeni nature, or maybe the hotel's
 influence. I'm full of contradictions.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two young fellows, FRANCIS and DONNER, both in their twin beds, sleep soundly and SNORE loudly. Francis has on a night cap, while Donner has ear muffs on.

The little mouse scurries over to a piece of cheese on a small rope. He takes it and exits through the window. The rope is attached to a complex contraption. At the end of the intricately devised series of pulleys and cogs and wheels is a hammer, which hits a plastic rooster on the head, causing it to CROW LOUDLY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCIS sits up immediately, and tries to poke Donner awake with a strategically placed, long stick at his bedside. Francis gets up, cranky, and shoves Donner around a few times. Donner is dead to the world. Finally, Francis pulls one side of Donner's ear muffs off.

FRANCIS
GET UP!

Donner startles awake, giving Francis a dirty look.

DONNER
Well you don't have to YELL!

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS - DAY

POV - FROM THE HOOD OF A CAR.- A FAST-MOTION ride through the streets of Los Angeles.

JOE (V.O.)
My castle has fortunately escaped discovery by the summer resort promoters. Even I've used it as an escape from the outside world.

We pass briskly by Hollywood Blvd., Melrose, Beverly Hills, until we reach the Pacific Coast Highway.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D) (cont'd)
You see, it is ensconced in the deep, wide, cool mountains of California; the famous West where people came in the early days to find their fame and fortune.

The surrounding hills and mountains glow golden as they often do.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

CLOSE - AUBURN LIPSTICK being applied on a pair of lips.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)
The hotel rooms are finished in dark oak of a low temperature, and periods are mixed and matched aesthetically, thereby giving a unique, anachronistic air.

A MIRROR, through which we view a strangely designed, off-kilter hotel suite finished in a stunning oak. Several glamorous dresses, some shining with sequins, rest on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A YOUNG WOMAN walks by our view, but we only catch a glance at her.

EXT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

REAR WINDOW - a Lincoln Continental traveling down the ocean-side highway (presumably Pacific Coast Highway).

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

Only the most refined of guests know of
its whereabouts...

The window rolls down: zzzzzzp, to REVEAL an elegant, bespectacled young man in his mid-twenties, HAROLD. He is dressed in a coffee colored suit insinuating the 1920's-meets-GQ Magazine. His hair buffed and slicked back with Pomade. He seems tired from travel.

INT. LIMO DAY

CLOSE - TV SCREEN - Harold flips through images of the hotel on a TV in the limo, which appears to be somehow connected to the internet:

- A. A luxurious suite
- B. The ballroom
- C. The cliff overlooking the ocean

EXT. LIMO - DAY

POV - HOOD OF THE LIMO racing down Pacific Coast Highway.

Zzzzp. The tinted window rolls down once again. Harold's eyes open for the first time after a long nap. He puts on odd-looking shades, which give off a mirrored reflection of the sun.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

CLOSE - Blond hair being put up in a refined swirl of a bun before a mirror.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

The CHAUFFEUR rolls down the window between them. Harold speaks with a British accent.

CHAUFFEUR

You're going to the Arcadia Hotel, is
that right, sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Yes. Correct, sir.

CHAUFFEUR

Very exclusive, sir.

HAROLD

Yes. Correct, sir.

CHAUFFEUR

If you'd like to sleep, I'll wake you up when we get there.

HAROLD

Much obliged.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

CLOSE - a pearl-drop earring being inserted into an earlobe.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

At every strange footstep, the guests turn an anxious ear, fearful lest their retreat be discovered and invaded by restless pleasure seekers and paparazzi who are forever hounding Nature to her deepest lairs.

CLOSE - The feminine face turns so fast, we only see a blur. The second pearl drops into the second earlobe. Ah... balance.

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL GROUNDS - DAY

FAST-MOTION - The Lincoln continental limousine drives through hills and obscure mountainous areas until it comes upon a winding road. Then, REGULAR SPEED, if a little SLOW in MOTION...

THE DRIVER suddenly stops, seeing a MAIDEN on the side of the road.

DRIVER'S POV - The maiden, covered in a long, jade colored cape with a hood, reveals her beautiful, fairy-like face.

She runs into the middle of the road, and suddenly, in a sly, mischievous way, "flashes" him, revealing a luminescent, golden body, with wings like that of a dragonfly. She laughs nervously, sticks her tongue out at him and opens her mouth, creating a SCREAMING BANSHEE sound that cracks his windshield!

She flies into the woods across the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE DRIVER is left dumbfounded, with little space to see. He swallows a big gulp of dry air, and continues driving along carefully, narrowing his eyes.

The limousine slowly comes upon a clearing REVEALING: A majestic, baroque edifice: THE ARCADIA HOTEL.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

We SEE what Joe describes:

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

A cross between a cottage and a castle, the hotel harbors the finest of guests. Today they gather luxuriously about amidst the garden, shrubs and flowers, enjoying the afternoon sun. These connoisseurs delight in the fact that the hotel is built upon a cliff, so they have a view of woods, and beyond it, the ocean. Home-made breezes and deep green shrubbery give the resort an endless variety of delights without the inconveniences of the Adirondacks.

TRACK ALONG THE GARDEN TO FIND:

In a small section of the garden, a three year old LITTLE BOY wanders into a nearby wood, only to have a shadow cover him. The child looks up.

It's a HUGE, OGRE with a gruesome face! It growls at the child, which makes the kid laugh! Instantly, the little boy takes it by the finger and leads it around. He's got the Ogre suckered into waving "bye-bye" as he returns past a bush... and back to its PARENTS, reserved and incognizant, lounging on the grass.

The limousine drives up to the front doors of the hotel.

Our two bungling bellboys, Francis and Donner trip and fall against each other as they open the car door, wake the sleeping young man, and remove his bags from the limo.

All the while, Donner has an old 8mm camera aimed at the proceedings. We hear the TICKING of its wheels going 'round and 'round as it shoots its rickety shots.

Harold surfaces, half asleep, and is almost tripped by one of them. He walks into the hotel. Francis wipes him off, as the second bellboy struggles with the suitcases and the camera. The limousine drives away.

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

HAROLD'S POV - The hotel's baroque doors are opened by one of the bellboys.

We walk in immediately noting the elegance of the place.

TILT UP TO REVEAL THE CEILING - It is painted over in watercolors to counterfeit a summer sky across which delicate clouds drift.

TILTING BACK DOWN - Now, directly before us, behind the front desk is JOE, an old Ghepetto. A jovial man in his sixties, Joe is slightly chubby, and wears a jubilant smile. We've heard his voice from the beginning, and now the sight of him feels hearth warm as yellow lights embrace him:

JOE

Welcome to the Arcadia Hotel! You look a little sleepy there, young man. What can I do for you?

HAROLD

I'd like a room until New Millennium's Day.

JOE

Well, that's just around the corner.

HAROLD

Our lives are just around the corner.

JOE

Guess so's the new millennium if you're the type that cares... Name?

HAROLD

Farrington-- two r's, please-- Harold.

JOE

Oh, yes. We have just the luxurious space that you asked for Mr. Farrington. I'm so excited for you! May I call you Harold?

HAROLD

Why not?

Joe prepares his paperwork. Harold signs papers half asleep as the dialogue ensues.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Well, you know, some people are particular about titles around these parts: "Your Majesty", "Your Honor", "Your Excellency"-- "you're stepping on my toes"--

Joe clears his throat and chuckles. No reaction.

JOE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

That was just a little joke. As you have made reservations early in the year, we've had time to prepare your suite quite nicely. Mints- plenty of chocolate mints. On the pillows.

HAROLD

Very well.

JOE

Now, just sign here and here and here... So you've come by yourself? Are you expecting any guests?

HAROLD

No. I'm unfortunately...alone.

JOE

Oh, That's too bad with the New Year and all. You know, just today a very proper- and may I say-majestic young lady, if you will--

HAROLD

I will.

JOE

So will I.

They laugh. Joe's laughter is contagious.

JOE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Well, she checked in in the wee hours of the morning. Said her cruise ship had taken longer than expected. Very tired, she was. Maybe you'll see her at dinner? It would be nice, hunh? The New Millennium is a time to share with someone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

I guess it is. I just came for the secluded nature of your hotel. I hope it is very private- those are my plans.

JOE

You know what they say: Wanna make God laugh? Tell 'im your plans! But, but-- It is, sir, it is. Very quiet and modest.

HAROLD

Well, I'll only be spending the weekend here. No more.

JOE

No more? Never say 'no more'. It's so scarily conclusive.

HAROLD

I suppose so. This is just a short respite for me.

JOE

I'm embarrassed to ask, but are you a movie star? I make them all sign my personal autograph book, even though it is against company policy. But since I am the company and I made up the policy... How 'bout it?

HAROLD

No, not a movie star.

JOE

Must be royalty.

HAROLD

(flattered)
Why do you think so?

JOE

Well, let's just say, you have an air about you. A certain gait.

HAROLD

Well, it just so happens I'm a---

JOE

King?

HAROLD

Lower.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOE
Lady in waiting?

HAROLD
Not that low.

JOE
Duke?

HAROLD
That's close enough.

JOE
I'm a little psychic, you know. And at the same time an atheist. I'm full of contradictions.

Joe rings a bell in front of him.

The bellboys appear carrying the suitcases. Francis drops one as he attempts to light a cigarette. Donner rushes over and takes it out of his mouth. Donner fakes a smile before his boss and Harold to cover for his co-worker's indiscretions.

GUESTS standing around the lobby point and laugh at them. These two are not only the bellboys at the hotel, but also the comic relief.

JOE (cont'd)
I'm very sorry about this, Mr. Farrington. These two are the resident jesters around here. We'll be sure to get some order. I'm very--
(stifles a laugh)
Will you guys get it together?!

FRANCIS
Yes, sir!

Francis salutes. A FART rips out of Donner. Joe rolls his eyes. Everyone laughs.

JOE
"When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools!"
That's Shakespeare's KING LEAR, you know.

Harold looks tired as he follows them, shaking his head, giving up on them.

CLOSE - A MINISCULE CREATURE jumps up on the suitcase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

EXTREME CLOSE UP - It's some sort of GREMLIN. It opens the latch on the suitcase.

The bags open and Harold's clothing falls out.

Desperately trying to put the clothes back in while people laugh, Donner looks over to Harold, who just takes his hand and dejectedly slaps it on his forehead.

DONNER
Very truly sorry, sir.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - The gremlin laughs.

HAROLD
Airing my dirty laundry before I get a chance to?

FRANCIS
Please, don't be upset, we're just adjusting to our new bodies as humans.

DONNER
We used to be aliens from the planet Mars, but my friend here lost the key to start up the spaceship.

FRANCIS
It's been a mess.

Francis and Donner laugh weakly. Harold cracks a semi-smile.

HAROLD
OK if I pay you in dollars? Never been to Mars.

FRANCIS
Human currency is fine.

DONNER
Dollars are interstellar.

The elevator arrives, Francis opens the door to it.

FRANCIS
The millennium approaches, please stand back from the platform edge.

DONNER
What he means is- watch your step, sir.

As they walk into the elevator:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOE

Have a pleasant stay Mr. Ffff-Harold! And work on that accent!

Harold is taken aback by that last remark as the elevator doors close.

Francis and Donner stare at the numbers above them with vapid looks on their faces. The doors open.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

The bellboys haul the suitcases as Harold walks behind them.

FRANCIS

Carts? Joe doesn't like us to use those.

DONNER

Says it makes us look lazy.

FRANCIS

I argue that we look lazy anyway.

DONNER

Probably because we are lazy.

FRANCIS

Probably.

They arrive at his door.

DONNER

Guess you'll be spending the new year with us?

HAROLD

That is the plan.

FRANCIS

No family to spend it with, eh?

HAROLD

Well, my parents do their own thing... and their bratlings wander the world aimlessly.

Donner opens the door. The bellboys walk in. Harold is about to follow them when he smells something.

From behind him, a door opens. The young woman we've been seeing making herself up, in silhouette, returns to her suite and locks the door behind her: CLICK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harold looks in the direction of her suite.

HAROLD

What divine creature is wearing that perfume?

Harold spots a piece of paper on the floor, next to the door. He walks over and picks it up.

He reads as he walks back to his suite: "Macy's Women's Dresses: \$1,500.00"

Suddenly, Donner's arm surfaces out of Harold's room and jerks him in. The door closes behind him. BANG!

Madame Beaumont surfaces from her room and walks towards, and past us. Somehow, her perfume, like a wistful, semi-transparent smoke is visible to us.

She walks past us, as we FOLLOW a visible waft of PERFUME weaving through the air with snake-like charm. It works its way under the door, into Harold's suite, and up his excited nose.

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

A beautiful young writer, pouty-lipped and seemingly demure DOROTHY PARAMOUR walks in chewing gum. She's in her mid-twenties with short, dark hair, dark sunglasses and pillbox hat. She holds her sharp featured, blond, boxer boyfriend GOLDEN tightly by the arm.

JOE

Been waiting for you Ms. Paramour. Your suite is ready.

She signs the paperwork.

DOROTHY

Well, corky, Joe. Just corky.

JOE

Who's this?

DOROTHY

He'll be staying with me. Joe, this is Golden. Heavy-weight champ. We just married in Vegas. It was outrageous.

JOE

By the way, may I have your autograph? I happen to have one of your books right here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

Sure. Plug it whenever you get a chance,
K, Joe?

She sighs and signs.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Say, Joe, can I ask you for a favor?

JOE

Anything.

DOROTHY

Don't tell people we're here. Bad enough
we have to suffer through performing on
our honeymoon.

JOE

Oh... well... of course. Mum's the
word! However, you do know we have a
special singing star in this year. The
press will show up for that. I'll try and
have them not make too much of it.

DOROTHY

There's no such thing as "too much",
love. "Too much" is what we... are all
about.

She whisks the key from Joe's hand, and turns to Golden.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Golden, would you be a dear, and bring
the bags? That'd be too kind.

Golden grunts affirmative and brings the suitcases along.
They disappear down the corridor. Joe picks up the phone.

SPLIT SCREEN - POOL SIDE - DAY

INTERCUT: Frankie, a twenty-two year old crooner with a 50's
flair, wearing sunglasses, sits in a robe sipping a martini,
talking into his cellular.

JOE

Hello, Frankie? This is Joe. I want to
let you know who's staying at the hotel.
Make sure you can sing with her here.

FRANKIE

Why should I care?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Well... because I know you were intimate.
Don't want it to be a surprise.

FRANKIE

Pshaw. Don't worry about it, old boy. I
think I'll be fine. Been singin' onstage
and in the moving pictures long enough to
do it in front of an old girlfriend.

JOE

Isn't she an ex-wife?

FRANKIE

Ahhh- girlfriend, ex-wife, tomato
tomahto, you know?

JOE

Alright then.

FRANKIE

Can't wait to play this hotel's Cabaret
Lounge again, Joe.

JOE

Last time it was a little loud, you
know... Now you're not inviting that much
press are you? We really don't need
disruptions around here.

FRANKIE

Joe, New Millennium's is a disruption!
It's going to be a soirée to remember!

JOE

KISS. Keep It Simple Stupid. With all due
respect, of course.

FRANKIE

Not to worry, Joe. Just a little song &
dance for the kind folks and I'm out.

JOE

Very well. Hope you enjoy your stay, Mr.
Sweetzer.

EXT. POOL SIDE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

POOL SIDE GUESTS note their entrance, as Dorothy and Golden
promenade by the pool. Frankie spots them.

FRANKIE

Lovin' it. Gotta go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frankie slips off in an opposite direction, as they walk toward him. He CLICKS to the other line:

FRANKIE
Yeah, go ahead and invite them, Tim. It's gonna be a doozie.

INT. HAROLD'S SUITE - DAY

Harold, Francis and Donner are in mid-discussion:

FRANCIS DONNER
--comes here ju-- --just about every year.

HAROLD
No kidding. She smells, you know-- every year, hunh? My ex-girlfriend wore the same exact fragrance. Why didn't I see her last year?

FRANCIS
You come last year?

HAROLD
Only one day, but-man, I would've noticed!

DONNER
I wasn't here, so--

FRANCIS
Yes you were.

DONNER
No I wasn-- Why are you so interested in her, anyway? You date girls based on what perfume they wear?

FRANCIS
Yeah, smell all the flowers. Is she a queen or something, Joe said?

DONNER
Something like that. I think.

HAROLD
Well if she's got blue blood, my friends, you know what that means?

FRANCIS
Negatory.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

It means that they're supposed to keep it that way! They're supposed to only do it with their cousins and relatives.

DONNER

No kidding.

FRANCIS

Well, that leaves you out in the cold, Donner.

DONNER

Up yours, Francis! Like you're so royal.

HAROLD

Point is, I have also got blue blood. That makes me related-- and here's the best part-- I didn't even come here to meet somebody! And I don't really care to. I didn't really care to meet you two, but--

FRANCIS

Now it's too late.

DONNER

Now it's too late.

HAROLD (cont'd)

Exactly. (Sighs.) Well... Here we are...

Harold extracts a few bills from his pocket.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

So the best way to get rid of you is to tip you, eh? OK, here you go. Take that, take that. Now please, if you could find it in your souls to leave me alone. You think you guys could-- you, you know-- tinker away, or whatever it is you do?

FRANCIS

Sure thing, sir.

DONNER

Sure thing, sir.

HAROLD

See you chaps at dinner.

Harold winks. They scurry out of the room. Harold lightly slams the door behind him and rests against it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee. God help me,
I'm falling through the looking glass.

He stands in front of a full length mirror, and it is visibly warped as if at a carnival funhouse.

INT. FRONT DESK - DAY

BETSY, a sexy, voluptuous redhead stands before Joe's front desk (all concentric circles on her perfectly lit). Joe tidies up papers in a scattered rush. A young, thick woman in her late 30's, she saunters up to him smoking a cigarette in a holder.

BETSY

Listen Joe, don't get so uptight. I'm doomed to come here every year. You've seen me here before. On this table.

JOE

You destroyed my marriage, Betsy. No matter how I feel about you. Now or then. I'm not saying I haven't seen you walking around here year after year, but let's keep things civil-- and subtle.

BETSY

I love this joint and everyone in it. That's why I keep recommending it to my ex-boyfriends. Not you, of course. How's the mailman?

JOE

You leave him alone... Betsy... Why do you keep coming here?

BETSY

I answered ya already. I'm a cat. I've sprayed all over your Arcadia! My territory now... Get some new shoes, will ya?

Joe peers down at his shoes.

JOE'S POV - His shoes are tattered and full of holes.

JOE

The kind of stuff you say,
Betsy-- so--

BETSY

You didn't seem to mind when
we were doing it on the
table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Shhh! New shoes are uncomfortable! Quit giving me a hard time!

Joe tries to find a rock to crawl under.

JOE

It's-- it's just not right. Especially not here. Makes me look like a lousy host.

BETSY

Makes you look worse to be asexual. People beginnin' to wonder about you, Joe. I'm just being Betsy. I'm tellin' ya like it is, Mr. Holier-Shoes-Than-Thou.

JOE (cont'd)

This hotel is class, Betsy. It's no place for women--

JOE

Women of the night!

BETSY

Say it! Women? What kind of women?!

BETSY

Well, they gotta hustle just like the men do in broad day light.

Beat.

JOE

Y-- You still... hustle?

Betsy softens, melancholy.

BETSY

Like that's news to you-- Look, you better take my money because it's green just like everyone else's. And if you dare try and kick me out, Mr. Joe, I'm gonna sue you for discrimination.

JOE

You're never gonna win-- except if you just wanna wreck another marriage.

BETSY

Who says I wanna win? Maybe I'm just one of those girls who likes to lose. One of those girls that likes the kicks in the head!

Tears burst out of Betsy although she angrily tries to control them. She pulls out another cigarette and lights it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE

Don't get sentimental on me, Betsy.
People are watching us. They're going to
think I hurt your feelings.

BETSY

There's no one here with feelings this
time of year, Joe. And, yes, you have
hurt my feelings.

(under her breath)

Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe.

Joe goes up to her, and whispers in her ear.

JOE

(sotto)

Betsy, what do you want?

BETSY

If I knew what I wanted, don't you think
I would have chosen it a long time ago?
I'm just one big wrecking ball to you
ain't I?

JOE

Don't want to see you wear anymore of
that flashy-fleshy stuff. Makes you look
chea- you know... out of the ordinary.

BETSY

Joe, you blind? I AM outta the ordinary.
This place is outta ordinary. I'm **Betsy!**
And the day you start giving me fashion
tips is the day I start telling you how
to wipe your nose. Got me?

JOE

I just hope you've got a good head on
your shoulders this year, Betsy.

BETSY

I've got a good head somewhere, but it
ain't on my shoulders.

She walks away from Joe as she blows the two bell boys a kiss
laced with smoke. They glance at each other for a 'take'.
Francis scribbles something on a note pad as a drowsy Donner:

TURNS the POV of his 8mm from Betsy to the landscape.

REVERSE ANGLE - Through the window, we can see Donner tire,
and the camera fall on his lap as he drifts off to sleep.

INT. WINDING HOTEL STAIRCASE - DAY

Francis nudges Donner in the ribs.

Donner startles awake. His eyes open wide with what he sees before him. Urgently, he aims the 8mm at it and shoots!

DONNER'S CAMERA POV - Our young lady in her mid-twenties, MADAME BEAUMONT appears at the top of the spiral staircase.

GUESTS around the lobby stop to acknowledge Mme. Beaumont as the final touch of feminine exclusivity. She makes her way down the steps in SLOW MOTION.

The young lady gracefully passes by Betsy with a nod, on her way to a nearby balcony.

Dorothy and Golden saunter by.

DOROTHY

Oh, dear, dear Betsy. How are you these days?

BETSY

Rotten.

DOROTHY

Oh... So everything's as usual? Meet Jeremy Golden. We just married.

Betsy shakes his hand.

BETSY

I'm so sorry...

DOROTHY

Dear, dear Betsy. Always so-upbeat.

They laugh hypocritically, and the couple moves on.

BETSY

(to herself)

Oh, Lordy, such fakery.

We FOLLOW Betsy to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

Madame Beaumont enters the balcony and takes a deep breath as she looks past the wooded area to the ocean beyond it. The sound of a WATERFALL fills the woods in the distance with its restful sound.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Betsy suddenly appears leaning her head against the frame of the archway behind her. Madame Beaumont speaks with a French accent. Betsy curtsies.

BETSY

Oh, Madame Beaumont.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Oh, what? Betsy? You look alive this time of year, I have noticed.

Betsy steps up beside Madame Beaumont.

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Look at how pretty it all is. The sun descending into the ocean before the Arcadia Hotel.

BETSY

With me here it always runs the risk of becoming a motel.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Do not be silly. You are an extremely popular, young, respectable lady. Look at you!

BETSY

Everybody is looking at me! What is this, a conspiracy? (she bobs hair, flutters eyelashes)...Now tell me, you come here every year from-- where is it?

MADAME BEAUMONT

A city far away in France- er-- Roulette.

BETSY

Where in God's blackened lungs is that?

MADAME BEAUMONT

My home is on the other side of the sunset.

Beat.

BETSY

It is tranquil here, isn't it? One last moment of pause, for remembrances before the new age envelops us...Can you believe I just made that up? Ha, ha, ha. That's quotable, sister!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAME BEAUMONT

Betsy, you are so silly. Only dead people are quotable.

Madame Beaumont laughs and places her hand on Betsy's shoulder.

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Betsy, what do you do when one of your boyfriends doesn't love you anymore?

BETSY

Well, I get very attached. Last one was disastrous. Saw him out with-- another one of his girl friends. I was just numb, just livid-- you know-- white as paper. So I started jumping up and down to get the color back in me and attract attention. Everybody's watching. I go up to him and kiss him square on the codpiece, and said to it: "MISS YA, BABY!"

MADAME BEAUMONT

Did you cry?

BETSY

Mostly hyperventilated...but then he cried, then I cried. Everybody laughed.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You cried because you loved him?

BETSY

NO, because he was a stock broker. Greeeat presents from Tiffany's year-round, baby... look at these earrings.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Oh. Like two victrolas. How modern. How classic. How fun.

BETSY

How are you? What's wrong? Your father won't let you marry the man you love or some kind of princess problem like that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MADAME BEAUMONT

My last lover-- no matter how much we tried to make the two dimensional puzzle pieces of our lives fit together, in the end, we found out that the pieces were incompatible. Because we're living in 3D. We went our separate ways.

BETSY

I'm glad you're letting it all out, honey. You've kept this skeleton in your credenza long enough.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Come along. I'm famished.

The two ladies exit the balcony, as we TILT DOWN to the front door of the hotel. It SWINGS OPEN violently with Francis running briskly through, holding a manila envelope in hand. We TURN AROUND and FOLLOW HIM.

In the distance, a MAIL TRUCK is making its way down the winding road leading to the hotel. Francis runs after it, yelling:

FRANCIS

STOP! HEY! WAIT A MINUTE!

INT. MAIL TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The MAILMAN, an agreeable man in his mid-20's with a friendly appeal, looks out his rear-view mirror and sees Francis racing toward him.

EXT. ROAD AND OPEN FIELD - SUNSET - CONTINUOUS

The mailman stops the car as Francis quickly covers ground across the open field. Francis finally makes it, completely out of breath. The mailman surfaces from the truck.

MAILMAN

Lucky I saw you.

FRANCIS

Sure am. Donner was supposed to be the look-out, but he--

MAILMAN

Fell asleep.

FRANCIS

Fell asleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCIS

Always dreaming, you know...

MAILMAN

This is what?-- the third package this month? You guys hand-writing bibles? These things are heavy!

FRANCIS

Well, we're not supposed to talk about it, but our first commandment is: THOU SHALL NOT MISS THE MAILMAN!

MAILMAN

You guys aren't ordering dirty magazines are ya?

Punches Francis on the arm way too hard. Francis looks at him in pain and gesticulates: "outch!".

FRANCIS

No we're publishing one.

MAILMAN

Can I see?

The mailman begins to open the envelope.

FRANCIS

No! No!... I--I was only kidding. It's just-- you know, writing.

MAILMAN

Yeah, sure, I believe ya. Where's it going?

FRANCIS

Hollywood.

MAILMAN

No problem- some fox you're in love with no doubt?

FRANCIS

Yeah, she's a real twenty-first century dame. Thanks.

The mailman gets back in the truck and drives off. Francis watches him go and waves good-bye. He smiles, satisfied. He looks down as he walks a few steps towards the hotel.

Suddenly he trips on a nearby rock, double-flips and lands on his stomach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks and notices a little plant. He plucks it, and holds it up close to his face.

EXTREME CLOSE UP - FRANCIS'S EYE - before it, he revolves the clover he has found between his index finger and thumb. A lady bug is about to fly off of it.

FRANCIS

Wow! A four-leaf clover! My lucky day!

The lady bug flies away, a little glittery golden dust falling off of it as it goes. Francis stands up and wipes off. The bug flies into his trousers and jets around inside, causing Francis to do a little wiggling jig. Finally, the bug, flies out of the seat of his pants, and...

WE FOLLOW THE LADY BUG IN THE AIR FROM ITS ROLLERCOASTER-LIKE POV - as it swirls around at fast speeds, jetting for the mail truck in the distance. It squeezes through a small hole in the truck, and disappears inside.

Francis dusts himself off and with a shrug, puts the four-leaf clover in his pocket. He skips back to the Arcadia, appearing to magically float about a foot above ground as he does so.

INT. DINNING ROOM - ARCADIA HOTEL

We SEE what Joe describes:

JOE (V.O.)

The hotel's reduced array of GUESTS this time of year scatter luxuriously about in the cool twilight of its lofty dining area. Gazing at one another across the snowy waste of unoccupied tables, they nod at each other as they dine, silently congratulatory. Superfluous, watchful, pneumatically moving waiters hover near, supplying every want before it is expressed.

DOLLY AROUND THE ROOM, PAST THE WAITERS TO REVEAL: Betsy and Madame Beaumont finishing their desert in the midst of light-hearted conversation. They both have changed outfits. Betsy wears a green sequined dress, and Madame Beaumont having donned a sleek evening gown.

Harold walks in and stands there, surveying the area for a moment. Picture perfect.

Donner and Francis walk in from behind him and crash against both his shoulders on their way in almost knocking him over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He turns to them angrily, dusting off his pants as he regains composure and they plead for his forgiveness.

BETSY AND MADAME BEAUMONT see this and come to his aid.

HAROLD

I'm very sorry.

BETSY

Are you kidding me? Sorry? You're not late at all. Right on time.

MADAME BEAUMONT

What is your name?

HAROLD

Actually, I'm kidding. My name is Harold.

MADAME BEAUMONT

My name, is Madame Beaumont.

HAROLD

How do you do, Madame Beaumont?

Harold politely kisses her hand. Betsy withdraws a cigarette case from her purse.

BETSY

Listen, I gotta go... You smoke Harold?

HAROLD

No I don't.

BETSY

Never mind, I only got one left in the ol' cigarette case.

Over Harold's shoulder Betsy sees an OLDER MAN walk by.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Mr. Stillman!... Mr. Stillman!

Betsy runs after him. Madame gestures politely to Harold.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Come sit at our table. Please...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MADAME BEAUMONT'S TABLE- LATER

Remnants of their meal rest on the table. Harold sips a cup of coffee, as WAITERS whisk their table clean with choreographed eloquence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME BEAUMONT

You know, at the Arcadia I really enjoy
the...

HAROLD

Anonymity. Yeah.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Anonymity. Yeah.

They giggle at the synchronicity between them.

HAROLD

Jinx!

She looks puzzled.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Dinner was great. Hope you didn't mind
having to watch me eat.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You chew very little. You inhaled it. Bad
for you.

HAROLD

Very typical of me. I always want to
swallow everything whole.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Let us go on the veranda. I like that I
can see the stars from here.

EXT. VERANDA- NIGHT

Harold and Madame Beaumont step onto the veranda, in awe of
the clear, starry night and the big full moon.

HAROLD

Look almost electrical, don't they?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Tempting... tempting to just reach out to
try and grab one.

HAROLD

So are you-- like a star? Electrical,
tempting? Careful, stars like you have
burnt my hands.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Touch me with oven mitts.

HAROLD

You're tellin' me--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beat.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Are you French?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Well, let us not place anyone anywhere this evening. Anonymity at the Arcadia remember?

HAROLD

You are a princess aren't you? On vacation, away from your angry father who's not really your father, but King of the Gnomes! And especially from your evil step-queen mother. The story goes that every year, the princess shows up at the Arcadia to live out her fantasy of anonymity. To see if one day she'll be whisked away from her mundane royal life by a charming prince... I'm, unfortunately, not one.

MADAME BEAUMONT

A prince-- or charming?

HAROLD

Prince, no not pr-- maybe a talkative frog in sheep's clothing. Or is that a wolf? I'm all mixed up. But you're looking like little red riding hood to me, and I'm feeling K-9 right now, love.

He takes her in his arms and kisses her, as MOON DOLPHINS fly past the moon like silhouetted clouds. She SMACKS him.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I'm sorry- I- that was so sudden-- I haven't kissed anyone in a long time.

HAROLD

Look at me! Am I different?! Have I changed into a charming prince? With your kiss I must have dispelled the evil curse on my ugly contorted face.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Oh, pooh! You were never a frog to begin with. I am rather fatigued. I have been through a lot this evening with your kissing me and dinner and--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD
Can I see you again?

He immediately hops on the balcony.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Don't say "no" because I'll jump I tell
you!

MADAME BEAUMONT
Alright, you are not stable.

She quickly PUSHES HIM OFF the balcony!

He falls TWO STORIES IN SLOW MOTION (made to feel like a dozen stories-- or Alice falling through the looking glass) into...

SPLASH!

EXT. FOUNTAIN - NIGHT

...a fountain below. He pops his head out, disoriented. There's not much water, so his legs protrude like a frogs. As a matter of fact there are two frogs around him on lily pads.

For the sake of our story, we'll call them: MOE and LOU. The frogs are five times larger than in real life, and possess fully articulated facial personalities.

MOE
(loud New Yorker voice)
So it's not going so well.

LOU
(Mexican guy voice)
We know how you feel, we've been striking
out too. Hey, Moe, those salted peanuts
are giving me heartburn.

Lou's throat suddenly blows up red to the point where it look like it's going to POP! We're sure it's going to, and it's going to be disgusting. Harold cringes, bracing for impact. Then, it suddenly deflates and Lou's eyes shut as he falls over, dead.

HAROLD
What's wrong with him?

MOE
I think he croaked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

First they're talking, and now they're cracking jokes!?

MOE

Hey, you mind kissin' me? Maybe you can change me back.

HAROLD

I think you've got it all wrong.

MOE

Look pal, I'm sure you're royalty. The blue blood, that's all I need. Put it right HERE!

Moe puckers up. Harold feels sorry for him, and considers it.

HAROLD

(To himself)

You're not gonna go through with it...
(To Moe) No, I really shouldn't. I'm not really the right--

Mme. Beaumont comes charging down her last set of stairs as Moe hops away.

MOE

Have it your way, Casanova! See if I care.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You're all wet, you- you madman!

HAROLD

Finally, you notice.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Get out of there and let's get you dry.

HAROLD

Dear me, I should have jumped in the moat long ago, for this sort of attention!

She helps him out.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

I would just like to escort you to your room. It's on the way to mine, in the west wing and I thought we could both use a nice spot of company before we retire for the evening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2) HAROLD(cont'd)

Perhaps if I'm lucky, I'll get to steal another kiss at your door?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I would believe you were a frog, before I would believe you were a thief. No stealing kisses, please.

She smiles. She puts her arm in his.

HAROLD

At the very least I'll drip-dry.

They walk away arm in arm, Harold looking like a wobbly mess of a scarecrow.

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Harold and Madame Beaumont arrive at her door.

MADAME BEAUMONT

So here we are.

HAROLD

Yes. Here we are.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I was hoping I could get away without the kiss. I'm afraid you may swallow me whole.

HAROLD

Oh, please, not to worry. I should keep my masculine impulses under wraps. Grrrrr! You know, we see a beautiful young thing and our first impulse is to pounce on it. Grrrrr! But the wary hunter lets the prey get accustomed to its scent first. Makes believe he's really not standing there, when he is.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You're really not there?

HAROLD

No. I am.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Well, I am too tired to be hunted this evening, if that's what you do, Mr.--

HAROLD

No, it's just an irony about human relationships, I mean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: HAROLD(cont'd)

I was hoping for a quiet time, and now
look, you're enchanting me.

She tries to unlock her door.

MADAME BEAUMONT
Look I am afraid we may have our
proverbial wires crossed. I find you
charming. Like a prince, but--

HAROLD
But, but, but, but, but!

MADAME BEAUMONT
But I--

HAROLD
Why is there always a but?

The door won't budge.

MADAME BEAUMONT
Because without it, one could never get
rid of the turds!

She suddenly gasps, eyes wide open in surprise, and presses
her hands against her mouth, as she firmly kicks the door
open..

HAROLD
Oh, dear. Now I'm afraid you're finding
my cologne offensive.

MADAME BEAUMONT
No, no, not at all. I am very sorry. I
just never intended to meet anyone here,
really, sir and you are so--

HAROLD
Gentle?

MADAME BEAUMONT
Persistent and--

HAROLD
Nice?

MADAME BEAUMONT
Bizarre.

HAROLD
Bizarre?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAME BEAUMONT
Out of the ordinary.

HAROLD
I seem perfectly average to me.

MADAME BEAUMONT
Aren't you a duke or a prince?

HAROLD
Depends on who you ask.

She smiles. Pause.

MADAME BEAUMONT
Please, I really must go now...

HAROLD
Just one kiss and I'll be happy.

MADAME BEAUMONT
I can't. I'm sorry.

He bends down on one knee.

HAROLD
Please?

Madame Beaumont, leans in and kisses him on the forehead. She steps behind her door.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
That's it?

MADAME BEAUMONT
That is it.

With that and a smile, she SLAMS the door on his face. Harold gives the door the finger. From within the room:

MADAME BEAUMONT
(O.S.)
I saw that!

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS - DAY

POV - HOOD OF A CAR - FAST MOTION

A ride through the streets of Beverly Hills, emphasizing vistas of expensive designer clothes in store windows.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE - DAY

HANDHELD - Betsy talks directly into the CAMERA as she window-shops with a bag under her arm. Slightly overweight, yet lyrical, she gesticulates gracefully as she speaks to put the story into pictures for us.

BETSY

Dearest Madame Beaumont, how funny to bump into you here... Oh, look, I liberally went shopping for tonight. Got this dress--

She removes it from the bag and shows it to us. Laughs.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Black. White polka-dots. I bought it on impulse. Never wear polka-dots. They make you feel fractured. Odd of me to buy it. I want to be looking out at the polka-dots in the sky as we reach the new millennium not on my dress. But it was on sale. That's the elixir. Alright, here's the other one... Dear? Whaddaya think?

She puts the polka-dotted dress away. Shows us another.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Sort of a sky blue-- well, maybe a night-sky blue. I guess. No polka-dots, although it does have this beautiful fringe here...And... What do you think of this third one?

She switches dresses. Takes out a red one.

BETSY (CONT'D)

The red. If I show up wearing this tonight... PAZZAZZ! That'll wake 'im up! I mean, BABY!(laughs)... I wanna be wearing this, standing on that cliff, arms outstretched to the world when that invisible deluge of Aquarian meteors shows up and bombards me with its energy! The age of Aquarius, baby! You just watch! Good-bye Betsy, Hello Hollywood Hills Housewife! Ahhh. Life's a fart-- flies by and it stinks...(giggles)

She puts the dress away and lights herself a cigarette.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BESTY (CONT'D)

Get this. Today I'm walking down this boutique part of town-- you know with all the new fangled, edgy designers- not here, Melrose- and not ten minutes into it, BANG!

EXT. STORE WINDOW - RODEO DRIVE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Harold peers inside a store window as he polishes his spectacles. He's very awkward without his glasses.

BETSY (V.O.)

There's our young nobleman, Mr. Farrington looking around some eye glass booth.

Harold bumps his head on the glass by mistake.

BETSY

HIII!

Betsy startles him. He bumps his head on the glass again. Betsy gallivants right up to him. When Betsy speaks, it's live action; when he speaks, it's in her "voice over"-this dialogue overlaps his lip movements in synchronicity.

BETSY (CONT'D)

I says: Pleased to make your

acquaintance again! It's Betsy...dear. "Oh", he says, "didn't see you there. I'm practically blind, not deaf", ain't that cute? "Glasses are for work" he says.

Betsy pulls out some old glasses from her purse.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Here put these on.

BETSY (V.O.)

I give him Joe's old bifocals which he left in my room four years ago when we were-

EXT. JOE'S SUITE DOOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Joe is clearly trying to get rid of Betsy. He's very frantic and paranoid.

BETSY (V.O.)

...when he begged my forgiveness for splitting up with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe finally squeezes into his room, leaving Betsy outside, dejected.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE SIDEWALK - DAY - FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS

BETSY

So, the boy scout puts on the glasses,
looks up at me--

Harold's eyes look ENORMOUS!

HAROLD'S POV - Betsy is grotesque, and warped like in a funhouse mirror. THE 50-FOOT WOMAN!

Harold is startled to see her so huge.

BETSY (V.O.)

-- he screams, and sort of does that freaky wiggle people do when someone startles them from behind. I says:

BETSY

Listen, hon, it's me Betsy, relax.

Harold turns around, catches his breath and apologizes.

BETSY (V.O.)

"Oh!" he says, "you looked like a gila monster for a second!" (laughs heartily)
I says: You turn me on like a gila monster, baby!

Betsy puts two fans on each side of her face, fans them back and forth and then sticks her tongue out at him.

FROM HIS DISTORTED POV, with the BOTTLE RIMMED GLASSES, she looks like a horrible monster about to eat him alive.

She laughs contagiously.

BETSY

"Hey, whatcha doin' to help welcome in the new millennium?"--

Harold is nervous. He looks at his watch, at the street, anything for a sign of escape.

BETSY (V.O.)

-- I says. And he says he's spending it by himself, and that he's not looking to party much.

Harold gives her the glasses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETSY

It was two months before I came to after last year's new years! I'm on a ten month calendar year, baby! Two outta ten, I'm recuperatin'-- from somethin'!

Harold fakes a laugh.

BETSY (V.O.)

But get this-- I pressure him a little, and it turns out he caves! He says, "I'm down". I say, "Why are you down?" He says, "No. I'm down to go." I says, "Down to go?" I'm like, "So, you're gonna feel like shit, but go anyway, I wanna see ya!"...

EXT. RODEO DRIVE CAFÉ - DAY

Betsy talks to CAMERA, while sipping tea. She laughs till she coughs, clears her throat, and puts out the cigarette.

BETSY (V.O., CONT'D)

It took me a minute to realize that here was a prince trying to speak street lingo, so I humored him and said, "Nobody is more 'down' about this whole thing than me, baby!"

She does the gilamonster flare with the fans at us.

EXT. FRONT OF ARCADIA HOTEL - DAY

Harold gets out of a taxi with flowers and races into the Arcadia.

INT. MADAME BEAUMONT'S SUITE - AFTERNOON

Harold peers into the suite, knocking on a half-open door. He holds flowers behind his back.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Harold, is it you?

HAROLD

It's me.

A vase sails through the air aimed directly at his head, but he closes the door fast enough for it to CRASH into pieces on it.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Get out!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Hello?

MADAME BEAUMONT

What are you doing here? Get out!

HAROLD

You must still be referring to the fact that you banged the door on my face last night? I still don't know why.

MADAME BEAUMONT

No, I am referring to this

She throws a shoe at him.

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Because-- you two-timer-- you are spending new millennium's eve with Betsy! She told me today!

Harold resurfaces from cringing behind the door.

HAROLD

Betsy?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Yes, Betsy.

Madame Beaumont crosses her arms, huffy.

HAROLD

Is that who I'm going out with?

MADAME BEAUMONT

That's what Betsy said when we went shopping today.

HAROLD

And you believe her?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I believe her! Why should I not? I swear if I were in my own country right now, I'd have you beheaded for insolence!

HAROLD

Beheaded?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Yes be-headed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

Insolence, hunh... Isn't be-heading a bit outdated?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Maybe not insolence, maybe arrogance.

HAROLD

Look, I was buying new glasses today and bumped into Betsy who's crazy as a loony bird. She invited herself out with me, twisted some words around. You kiss me once on the forehead, and then bang the door on my face. Our relationship is one big door slam! And I'm supposed to think you love me? Love is a door slam to you!

MADAME BEAUMONT

Everything to you is a metaphor.

HAROLD

No, everything to me is an irony. See how you have ways of putting words in my mouth unless I guard myself -- same as Betsy? What am I, a puppet for your feminine wiles and whims?... And here I am bringing you flowers like a total idiot!

MADAME BEAUMONT

Well, I cannot accept the flowers because you have a date with Betsy.

She whisks the flowers from his hand, and before we know it, is arranging them in an empty vase.

HAROLD

Which I'm not intending to keep.

MADAME BEAUMONT

(smiles dangerously)
You're going to leave her in -- how do you say -- hanging?

HAROLD

Her head is already in mid-air.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Well, do not hurt her feelings, please. She's a good friend.

He leaves her room and walks down the hallway. She follows him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

What do I care? You hate me anyway. And I forgot why I like you.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I don't hate you. I am annoyed by you. I am frustrated by you. But I don't hate you.

HAROLD

You frustrate me too. All the time.

MADAME BEAUMONT

It is all about sex to you, is it not?

HAROLD

Did I say that? No!... It's all about the little piece of peach-shaded fuzzy hair that you have on that delicate birthmark patch on the side of your neck. That's what it's about! It's all about the sudden flush of horror and excitement that runs into your face when you throw me off the balcony or find out I'm Betsy's date.

MADAME BEAUMONT

So you are!

She starts back to her suite, racing down the hall for her door, but he trips her. She falls flat on her face.

HAROLD

No, I'm not!

MADAME BEAUMONT

Liar!

She stands, takes off a heel, and SWINGS at him! He ducks. She misses!

MADAME BEAUMONT

Run out of comparisons, Molière? I look at you and I see--

HAROLD

What do you see? An ass-head of your own, do you?

They look in the mirror. He's got an ass's head on. They look back at each other. He's busted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MADAME BEAUMONT

I see a fool... Get out! Why can't you be like every other regular guy that bores me?

She makes her way into her suite and he follows. Madame Beaumont loses all composure, and throws a brush. It JACKS him in the head as he enters.

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Can't you see I'm falling in love with you, you imbecile?!

HAROLD

You're what?

MADAME BEAUMONT

GET OUT!

She comes right up to his face. Will they kiss good-night?

HAROLD

I think I love you too.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Did you hear me?!

A rush of sexuality overcomes them. They are so close, we actually can see subtle, MAGICAL, ELECTRICAL SPARKS between them. But, quite suddenly, he steps on her foot! She recoils in pain--

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

AAAHHHH!

HAROLD

THAT'S for the flying brush and pushing me off the ledge!

He steps outside the suite.

INT. HALLWAY - ARCADIA HOTEL - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

HOTEL GUESTS peer out of their rooms with night caps and such on to find out what this ruckus is all about.

HAROLD

And what did you say about being in love with who?

Her door SLAMS SHUT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everyone "oohs" and "ahhs" as Harold huffs down the hallway TOWARD US, feeling the throbbing lump on the back of his head, angry and embarrassed.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 (to the nosy busybodies)
 We're getting married tomorrow, dear
 friends. I'm marrying a shrew.

HAROLD'S POV - As GUESTS return to their rooms, and close their doors.

TILT DOWN TO REVEAL our very own Buster running along the edge of the hallway. Harold follows him as the mouse goes through a hole on the floor, which leads straight into her room. Harold holds his ear to the door in the hopes that...

He hears her SCREAM! He smiles, satisfied. He walks away.

Suddenly the door opens behind him, and a lone hand propels the mouse directly at his head.

BUSTER'S FACE AND HANDS WAVE - as he flies through the air...

SMACK! Buster lands in his hair, on Harold's sore! Harold wiggles around, trying to get the mouse off his head. Finally he gets it and holds it in front of his face.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
 Sorry about that, Mister Fieldmouse.

BUSTER
 (Deep, raspy, low voice)
 Dames today- sheesh... How do you feed a
 wife when she squeezes out nine hundred
 kids a year?

Harold shudders, and sets him on a nearby window sill. Buster scurries away.

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL - SUNSET

A BELL RINGS alerting the guests that dinner is prepared. OCCUPANTS who have been milling about the lounge area begin to migrate inside.

INT. HAROLD'S SUITE - NIGHT

Harold stands by the window in an eccentric tuxedo, looking out, sipping on a martini.

There's a knock on his door. He opens it to REVEAL Donner & Francis dressed for the evening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCIS
Hello, Mr. Farrington.

HAROLD
Hello, Donner--

FRANCIS
Francis. Here to cheer you up for the new millennium, old man!

HAROLD
Right... Well, I'm feeling like this martini.

DONNER
Stirred?

HAROLD
Shaken, not stirred.

Francis removes the 8mm camera from his coat pocket and aims it at Harold like a gun as we hear it TICK away.

DONNER
We haven't seen you all evening.

FRANCIS
Any particular reason why?

HAROLD
If you must know...I-I am not feeling well. Turn that thing off, I look terrible.

FRANCIS
We know. How's the bruise?

HAROLD
She went around telling everyone, didn't she?

DONNER
She didn't have to. You were both loud enough.

FRANCIS
Not feeling much like yourself, eh?

Harold gives him an odd look.

HAROLD
Yes, you could say--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCIS

So, you won't be joining us for the festivities?

HAROLD

No. I--I dare say I might stay in my suite tonight.

DONNER

You should come along, you know. It's gonna be great fun. Dancing... people to impress, women to depress, the new era to welcome.

HAROLD

There's no one that I'd want to-I'm feeling melancholy.

DONNER

Oh, I'm sure there's someone.

FRANCIS

There's always someone. You just have to get drunk enough.

HAROLD

Please send dinner up to my room.

DONNER

Are you sure?

HAROLD

Quite.

FRANCIS

Oh, alright.

Francis & Donner turn to leave. As they reach the door and open it:

HAROLD

Hey, Francis-- did you see that Madame Beaumont down there?

FRANCIS

Yeah-- she seemed upset.

DONNER

Or sad. Those French women- who can tell?

They close the door behind them... Francis peeks his head in:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCIS
Forlorn. Definitely forlorn.

INT. LOUNGE - NIGHT

Sofas and fine Persian rugs adorn the large room. The space is grand and so is the piano which lives at its center.

A crystalline, delicate chandelier hangs directly above the piano.

The room's magnanimous, baroque double doors are opened and a rush of dinner GUESTS saunter in.

Harold casually appears among them, dressed in an odd-style, eccentric tuxedo. He heads straight for the piano, playing and singing "LUCKY SO AND SO" by Duke Ellington.

An older balding man with a red bulbous nose, RON, stands next to Harold and appreciates everything, drink in hand.

RON
I love this piece. Ellington is tremendous, isn't he? You play very nicely.

HAROLD
No I don't. The piano's electric. It plays itself!

They laugh. Ron surveys the room and offhandedly becomes involved in a quick SONG & DANCE number choreographed to the song!

All of the GUESTS join in the choreography. During the musical interlude, the gentlemen speak:

RON
Will you just look at these Persian rugs!
And the chandelier is just a perfectly formed sugar crystal, isn't it?

HAROLD
And here I thought it was made out of glass!

RON
Only in your imagination, dear boy! In reality it's edible!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Of course! I should see it as a sugar
crystal, shouldn't I? Couldn't you just
eat it tear by tear?

They share a chuckle.

Harold walks away from the piano which continues to play by
itself. He finishes the song with a choreographed flourish.

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the room!

Suddenly, simultaneously, everyone regains composure.

Joe enters the room with Francis and Donner. They are dressed
to the nines. Joe looks somewhat like the captain of a ship,
and the other two have make-shift outfits that are dressy yet
odd somehow. They are all smiles and waves, as if on a
holiday float.

PULL BACK from the reverie and go OUT A WINDOW.

TILT UP THE SIDE OF THE HOTEL TO REVEAL:

EXT. ROOF-TOP AREA - CONTINUOUS

GUESTS admiring the moonlit night, sipping champagne and the
like.

Betsy is among them, standing perilously close to the
railing. She has opted for the bright red dress tonight, and
wears it with style as she admires the cloudless sky. She
takes a sip from her glass, and longingly looks out to the
moonlit ocean beyond.

Over her shoulder, Harold appears walking up a set of steps
that lead to the roof. Now, by the light of the moon, he
looks twice as refined. He slowly walks up to Betsy as the
last few roof-top GUESTS make their way down the stairs,
leaving them alone. Harold walks up close behind her.

BETSY

I don't know who that is behind me, and I
don't care. Just, don't move. Stay there
for a bit and look up at the stars with
me, wontcha? Look up at Orion's bel---

BESTY'S POV - A shooting star across the night sky.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Hey, did you see that? A shooting star!
Do you think that means good luck for us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She sips from her drink.

BETSY (CONT'D)

This, uh, boy stood me up today... I'm old. I'm a washed up old whore waiting for the end of the millennium to change her life. Put your arms around me and don't let go, will ya?

He hugs her from behind. She looks down at his hands.

BETSY (CONT'D)

Oh, a man's hands. That helps. I thought for a minute you might have been a woman behind me-- and I wanna make some changes but-- you know-- not that drastic... yet.

She laughs. He turns her around.

HAROLD

It's me.

She embraces him.

BETSY

I knew you'd come, I-I--

HAROLD

I'm so sorry, Betsy. I'm sorry I'm late. I was thinking I'd not even surface from my suite tonight.

BETSY

Let's go get you dinner.

HAROLD

Betsy--

BETSY

You're starving, I'm sure. Maybe I can get the cook to hustle you up a little somethin' real fast.

HAROLD

Betsy, I'm not hungry. I--I want to thank you for asking me out tonight. But there's another girl.

BETSY

There's always another girl. Where've you been hiding the wedding ring?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD
I'm not married.

BETSY
Then let's go get you some food and
dessert, and then I can have you for
dessert.

HAROLD
See, I've been really entranced by this
young lady who is staying here, Madame--

BETSY
--Beaumont. I see. No wonder her face
went cold envy when I talked to her about
you. Well, I'm not giving up on you,
honey. To hell with her, this is New
Millennium's Eve!

HAROLD
Betsy, I can't. I really would like to
spend time with her.

BETSY
What do you want from me then?

HAROLD
Your forgiveness.

Joe appears walking up the steps, and heads toward them.

BETSY
Everybody's sorry, honey, you should be
no different. You're forgiven.
Everybody's forgiven... Men. You're all
the same.

Harold kisses her on the cheek.

JOE
I am different.

BETSY
You-- go away. I'm not into charity
cases.

Harold smiles at Joe, and leaves them alone, descending the
staircase behind them quietly. Betsy turns away.

JOE
Betsy, listen to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BETSY

Don't come here to harass me, please. Not tonight.

JOE

I'm not.

BETSY

I know you, Joe. You're here to set me out in the cold on New Millennium's Eve... Can't do that, Joe. I'm cold. I'm lonely. I'm depressed, and I own a gun.

JOE

You own a gun?

BETSY

Yes, I've been thinking of using it.

JOE

On yourself?

BETSY

No, on you, you asshole! You've been driving me nuts! Look at this-

JOE

People are staring.

BETSY

At your smelly feet in those old, decrepit shoes!

JOE

You're creating a scene.

BETSY

I'm makin' a scene, Mr. Hush-hush, ain't I? Oh, now look what you made me do! I used the word

"ain't" in a sentence. "She mustn't be proper enough for our glamorous hotel". Well, if you don't tell on me, the "ho" wont "tel". Isn't that cute? Ho-tel?

JOE

Now, Betsy--

BETSY

Why must your sentences begin with "Now, Betsy, or "Listen, Betsy". Take away Betsy, and all you've got's "listen" and "now". "Now Listen"...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Joe dances with her as we PULL BACK into a SEMI-AERIAL VIEW of the roof-top.

FLASH OF A BULB!

WHITE TITLES ON BLACK:

"'tis a naughty night to swim in."

-- William Shakespeare

BLACK & WHITE, GRAINY FILM

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL - CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

CRANE SHOT - GUESTS get out of their limousines and Lincoln town cars.

There is a MOB OF PAPARAZZI PHOTOGRAPHERS waiting for them before the carpet that leads them into the club. What a night!

JOE (V.O)

I had promised everyone a quiet and peaceful new year, and yet-as things do, it all got a little out of hand. I still don't know who invited those darn paparazzi...

ADORING FANS stand behind several SECURITY GUARDS enlisted to keep them in order down the walkway.

Giant spotlights fill the night sky, almost seeming to shine off the many stars flickering above.

A gossip reporter, TIMMY TATTLE, walks directly into our POV and addresses the camera.

TIMMY

Hello, ladies and gentlemen, this is your one and only Timmy Tattle reporting for MOVIE REEL NEWS!

ANGLE - POV OF A PAPARAZZI CAMERA MAN, DOROTHY PARAMOUR, steps out of a town car with her boxer, JEREMY GOLDEN. They walk onto the red carpet and smile at the cameras as they half-wave them off.

People in the crowd on the sidelines call their names!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TIMMY(CONT'D)

Tonight, we're bringing you moving pictures from one of Hollywood's hottest night clubs where Frankie Sweetzer will be crooning to an audience of adoring fans.

He points to a huge poster of the crooner, and the camera MOVES TO FOCUS IN ON IT... Then, PAN BACK TO TIMMY. By now, Dorothy and Golden have reached Timmy's side.

TIMMY(CONT'D)

Oh, and here comes elegant Dorothy Paramour, controversial author and former girlfriend of the honey voiced, movie musical star with her new beau, young Jeremy Golden, who charged onto the ring just a year ago, winning several boxing championships against some of the greatest fighters of his time.

He grabs Golden by the arm, and instantly he yanks it away, giving Timmy a nasty look. Dorothy pats Golden's arm and makes eye contact with him as if to say "It's OK".

TIMMY(CONT'D)

How are you folks feelin' tonight?

DOROTHY

Corky.

TIMMY

Whadaya mean by that?

DOROTHY

Like we're corks on champagne bottles.

GOLDEN

Ready to pop.

TIMMY

Don't pop me!

(he chuckles weakly)

So tell us, Dorothy, how come you're coming to hear your ex-beau sing sweet melodies with your new hubby?

DOROTHY

Well, firstly, darling, we're not married- yet. And secondly, I'm on good terms with Frankie. He's a nice fellow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DOROTHY(cont'd)

And I don't think a girl has to stop being friends with a dandy guy just because it didn't work out.

TIMMY

Say, how do you feel about it, Jimmy?

GOLDEN

It's Jeremy, but you can call me Golden. And how does it feel for you to have such an appropriate last name like Tattle? Anyway, no comment... Let's go, baby doll.

They walk off.

TIMMY

There it is, folks, straight from the horse's mouth. Now I wouldn't be Timmy Tattle if I didn't give you the inside scoop, so step closer.

CAMERA ZOOMS IN.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

Rumor has it that Golden has been offered several leading man roles in Hollywood pictures on account of his articulate manner, smooth talk and sly maneuvering. Would you know it from this interview?

INT. SOUNDSTAGE MOVIE MUSICAL SET - DAY

Frankie performs a dance number like one out of an old movie musical.

TIMMY (V.O.)

Why you'd have to be sly to steal a smart gal like Dorothy away from melodious Frankie Sweetzer.

INT. BOXING RING - NIGHT

Golden slugs a bleeding competitor in the ring. KNOCKS HIM OUT cold!

TIMMY (V.O., CONT'D)

Ever since she started dating Golden for the publicity and kept on two-timing him with Sweetzer, sales of her new book, PARAMOUR--

INT. BOOKSTORE SIGNING - DAY

CLOSE - PARAMOUR, the book.

FANS line around the block.

TIMMY (V.O., CONT'D)

--have gone through the roof! Gossip has it that Golden knows the deal, and isn't man enough to face Frankie or call it quits!

Dorothy signs autographs on a table at the store.

EXT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

TIMMY (V.O., CONT'D)

Oooops, DID I SAY THAT? Provoking the scandal from Hollyweird, this has been Timmy Tattle! And if you don't like it, run home and tell your mother!

RETURN TO COLOR FILM.

INT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

The joint is jumpin'! People in stylish garb walk around, drink champagne, chit-chat, and inhale cigarettes on long holders.

Everyone listens to a tall, debonair and darkly handsome FRANKIE SWEETZER who is already crooning his first set: "MORE" by Bobby Darin.

Harold, Joe, Betsy, Madame Beaumont, Francis and Donner mill about in the background. A GROUP OF PEOPLE dance right below the stage.

AT AN OPPOSITE CORNER OF THE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francis and Donner are seated on exquisite, plush, over-sized armchairs. They smoke cigars and feign sophistication. Francis writes on a note pad.

TWO BEAUTIFUL OLDER WOMEN in their late 40's flirt with both of them from across the room during the following conversation:

FRANCIS

So, you having a good time?

DONNER

No, not really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANCIS
Why's that?

DONNER
No girls.

FRANCIS
None.

DONNER
Everyone was invited to the party on the
roof.

FRANCIS
But not the one on the fifth floor.

DONNER
What's happening there? It's a special
kind of party somehow?

FRANCIS
Yes, lots of dolls.

DONNER
Kidding me.

FRANCIS
No kidding.

DONNER
Drugs?

FRANCIS
Whatever you want: drugs, dolls...

DONNER
Who's throwing it?

FRANCIS
Some producer of... you know-- sex.

DONNER
He produces sex?

FRANCIS
Yeah.

DONNER
Sex with who?

FRANCIS
Dolls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNER

Oh...and people come to his parties to watch it? Plastics are getting some resurgence these days!

Donner suddenly takes out a note pad and scribbles something on it.

FRANCIS

No, people watch it and then go to his parties.

DONNER

Oh, he makes films.

FRANCIS

Yeah, films. More like videos.

DONNER

So, sounds like you were invited.

FRANCIS

Uh-uh. Nope. Not at all.

DONNER

How come you know about it?

Francis taps his temple with his index finger.

FRANCIS

Gotta know everything, man. Or you'll never get ahead.

DONNER

You'll never get head either.

FRANCIS

Ain't that the truth.

DONNER

So, what are you gonna do now?

FRANCIS

I dunno.

DONNER

Should we crash the porn party?

FRANCIS

Naw--I--we shouldn't.

DONNER

OK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCIS
We'll just-- you know--

DONNER
Yeah...just...kinda...

FRANCIS
Hang.

DONNER
Hang.

FRANCIS
Look for chicks.

The two older women wink at them from across the room.

DONNER
Yeah, that one over there-- no forget it.
Too old...welllll--

FRANCIS
Man, I wish we were rich and famous.

DONNER
I tell ya. We got MFAs for this?

FRANCIS
Happy New Year, man.

DONNER
Yeah, Happy New Year, man.

IN A BOOTH - THREE YOUNG LADIES sit and chatter. They are all beauties of some sort: models, starlets, cashiers at the local Woolworth's.

YOUNG LADY #1
He's elegant and electric.

YOUNG LADY #2
Simply corky!

YOUNG LADY #3
He can explode all over me, that's for sure.

YOUNG LADY #2
What about Robert, lovey?

YOUNG LADY #3
What ABOUT Robert? You think I wouldn't give him up for a film star?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

YOUNG LADY #1

I'd think twice, dearheart. But why Dorothy split up with Frankie is anyone's guess.

YOUNG LADY #2's POV - Dorothy and Jeremy walk into the room. Everyone's eyes are on them.

YOUNG LADY #2

Yes, but have you taken a look at the boxer? They say he can talk the talk.

Ladies standing around the couple in question whisper into their husband's ears and then turn back and smile devilishly.

BACK TO THE BOOTH

ROBERT, a finely dressed young man, green eyed and slight of build, walks with a haughty arrogance to the booth holding a glass of champagne.

YOUNG LADY #1

I hear she was two-timing Frankie for a while with the boxer, but then finally made the trade. Hi Robert dearie.

ROBERT

She two-times them both...complete nymphomaniac. Need I tell you?

INT. MILAN CLUB - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

An expensive club in Milan. Robert stands around with a martini in hand.

ROBERT'S POV - Frankie and Dorothy tear up the dance floor.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I, myself, spotted her and Frankie together in a club in Milan.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Golden checks in with a couple of suitcases at his side. Robert glances over and sees him as he reads his newspaper in the lobby.

ROBERT (V.O., CONT'D)

Then, I discovered that she had asked Golden to show up at the very same hotel, incognizant that Frankie was there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Golden finishes checking in, and steps into the elevator, just as Dorothy walks in through the front doors with Frankie.

INT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Robert winks at the girls, holds his drink up as if to toast, and nonchalantly waves to someone across the room.

ROBERT
Highly scandalous behavior if you ask me.

YOUNG LADY #1
(incredulous)
Really?

ROBERT
Yes. Bumped into the boxer in the sauna and we played a game of tennis. I like 'im... Thinking about using him for my next picture with 20th Century Fox, called "HEAVY HITTER". There was a special maniacal gleam in his eye that I liked in Milan.

He waves to Golden, who waves back unsure of who he's waving to.

Donner and Francis lurk in the background long enough to overhear the following exchange and scoff:

YOUNG LADY #3
You're so intercontinental, Robert dear... So, tell us about your next picture. Are you writing and producing again?

ROBERT
Add directing.

ALL THREE LADIES
Diiiiireeecting...

They all turn to him and smile. Donner and Francis do a "take" to each other, roll their eyes, and walk away dejected.

Golden is caught in the middle of a boring conversation with a short, older BALDING MAN, as Dorothy and Frankie exchange sexually charged, longing looks.

Golden notices, and gives Frankie a "dirty look".

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The crooner looks away.

Several PEOPLE IN THE CROWD spot this exchange of glances and look on with scandalous delight.

Golden excuses Dorothy and himself, and escorts her to a seat at a nearby booth.

The SONG ENDS, and there is UPROARIOUS APPLAUSE.

FRANKIE

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming out tonight. This is a very special evening for me, as I have many friends from the film world here tonight out to immortalize me on celluloid! Special thanks to Robert Moore, producer of my last movie musical "TWO'S COMPANY, THREE'S A BALL".

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the audience.

ROBERT lifts a glass of champagne to him, and the three girls bat their eyelashes at him from the booth.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

This is the end of my set. A big round of applause for the band, ladies and gentlemen.

APPLAUSE as the band plays a little RIFF.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Be back in fifteen, folks. Not to worry, our souls are timeless. Be back way before twelve, and the world ends.'

People "awww", and then immediately turn around and continue their networking.

Frankie approaches the writer/boxer table at which stands the gossip reporter.

Golden is not very happy about all of this. A sour look rests on his face. He looks up at Timmy. "I don't like you either", it seems to say.

TIMMY

So, uh, no comment, hunh? I heard you were quite the verbal dynamo.

And all of a sudden they turn on the camera and all I get is a frozen tundra?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GOLDEN

"Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace,
is counted wise."

TIMMY

Ooooh, Shakespeare-- very clever.

GOLDEN

No, The Bible, Proverbs 17:28.

TIMMY

Oh, yeah, I hear it's a good book.

GOLDEN

I hear it's THE good book.

TIMMY

Touché, but how do you make peace with
the fact that you punch people for a
living?

GOLDEN

Life is violent. God made it that way.
And, I only punch people when they get on
my nerves. So-- Step off!

TIMMY

Alright, calm down.

GOLDEN

(to Frankie)

What are you doing here?

FRANKIE

I'm singing here tonight in case you
hadn't noticed, and I came over to say
"hello" to Dorothy. Is it a crime?

DOROTHY

Alright, boys. Calm down... I loved that
last song, Frankie. You gonna croon one
for us?

FRANKIE

Which us? You two "us"? Or "us two" us?

DOROTHY

All three "us".

Frankie smiles nervously.

FRANKIE

Well, I don't know about that--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DOROTHY

Aw, come on, Frankie love. Why can't we just be one big happy family?

TIMMY

Looks like sooner or later, you're gonna have to choose, Ms. Paramour.

DOROTHY

My only choice right now Mr. Tattle is that you scram, before I sick 'em BOTH on ya. Got it?

TIMMY

Well, I'll hand it to ya, the boxer's not as dumb as his trade makes him look. Most of the ones I know are monosyllabic.

Golden begins to rise from the booth as Dorothy holds him down. Frankie takes Tattle aside by the shoulder and turns him around.

FRANKIE

Hey, Timmy, I wouldn't say I'm in love with the guy either, but you're walkin' on thin ice. Get my meanin'?

Tattle turns his head around and catches a load of the fire in Golden's eyes.

TIMMY

Yeah, I get it.

Tattle scrams.

Frankie watches him go off, and then turns around to catch a glimpse of Dorothy and Golden looking dead at him.

A strange, SLOW MOTION moment where the crooner and the boxer exchange uneasy glances. A gleam of light reflecting off of their eyes.

Harold walks right up to Ron and Madame Beaumont.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Please send your wife my very best. Last year she appeared so sick, I am glad she is better--

RON

And resting in Morocco.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MADAME BEAUMONT

Resting in Morocco? I am afraid that sounds like an oxymoron.

HAROLD

Speaking of morons.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Not morons, Moroccans... Hello, Mr. Farrington, this is Mr. Mansfield.

HAROLD

We've met already and discussed tasting the chandelier.

MADAME BEAUMONT

What?

HAROLD

May I speak to you in private?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Only if you promise not to raise your voice.

HAROLD

I promise.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Please excuse us.

RON

Of course.

Harold gracefully puts her arm around his, winks at Ron, and walks proudly away with her to another corner of the room.

HAROLD

I've broken off with Betsy. The whole evening I've been alone. There are only two more hours to go before the new millennium! Will you see it arrive with me?

CLINKING OF A SPOON ON A GLASS near the bar.

The room full of reporters and other elite stars slowly comes to a near-silent halt. Tattle stands next to the bar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

TIMMY

On behalf of the STAR REPORTER, who has the honor of sponsoring this get together tonight, we are proud to announce that Ms. Paramour will be sharing with us a moment of her poetry-- to be released formally to the public in her sequel volume, simply titled "MORE".

APPLAUSE, as Dorothy is helped out of her booth by Golden, walks over, and takes the stage.

The PERCUSSIONIST walks in from the audience, shakes her hand, and sits behind her as the square, old-time microphone SQUEALS a little FEEDBACK. They ad-lib "hello's" and "thank you for helping me out's".

DOROTHY

I'd like to thank you Timmy, and the popular STAR REPORTER for inviting me today, although I feel a little awkward...

NERVOUS LAUGHTER and HUBBUB from the crowd.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

...I'm not used to reading my pieces in a nightclub. I'm more used to the New York salons. But with the aid of Frankie's percussionist, who has been nice enough to accompany me--

SCATTERED APPLAUSE for him.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

--I'm sure I'll be fine. A special thanks to Frankie for having me.

Golden looks nervously around as people turn to him in response to her last remark. He turns his glance downward, then to Dorothy, playing it off nonchalantly.

She nods to the percussionist. A SEXY BEAT.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

There was a bird with tenor voice,
Sang by my bedside every night.
But then came a golden fuller sound,
Of one who seduces me in a fight.
But I am no trophy, award, or plaque.
I cannot be won.
I am a woman of rugged back, who cannot
just have one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

GASPS AND MURMURS from the CROWD. People WHISPER to each other in delighted slander.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
 Keep thy judgement to thyselfes!
 Or I will settle the score.
 Yes, I confess to loving men,
 If not one, then maybe more.

A moment of silence. MICROPHONE FEEDBACK.

AUDIENCE MEMBERS exchange uneasy glances not knowing what to do. SCATTERED APPLAUSE begins. It emanates from Frankie and Golden on opposite sides of the room. People join in, and it becomes an appropriate sounding amount of noise.

Dorothy curtsies and is helped off the stage by the percussionist, who also escorts her to her table where Golden stands waiting for her. She sits next to him, and glances nervously at him, taking a sip from her champagne glass.

The boxer and the crooner exchange glances, angry ones this time. People look on in fear, worried that this might bring on a brawl.

Tattle immediately takes the stage before the mike. FEEDBACK.

TIMMY
 Ladies and gents. No need for commotion,
 as this party will soon be in motion,
 when Frankie Sweetzer returns to the
 stage! Just because of a few
 controversial verses, we can't get bent
 out of shape! That's Ms. Paramour's
 specialty. Not to mention her loose---
 prose.

SCATTERED LAUGHTER. Tattle clears his throat before the mike...

TIMMY (CONT'D)
 We should have the band up to play a few
 tunes. Whaddaya say gents?

THE BAND goes back onstage and begins some soft JAZZ MUSIC.

NEXT TO A HUGE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Moonlight enters and reflects off their eyes, as Harold and Madame Beaumont hold hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME BEAUMONT

You really do not want to start out the new year with me.

HAROLD

Who says?

MADAME BEAUMONT

It is...I am just not-- all that I am cracked up to be. I am just some--

HAROLD

Goddess.

MADAME BEAUMONT

No, not really. You are very nice.

HAROLD

I'm just trying to keep you on my arm for the rest of the evening. I don't know, there's some kind of silly idea rolling around in my head that if I actually convince you to stay with me until the new year, when the clock strikes twelve, something magical's going to happen. And you're going to-- I don't know...

MADAME BEAUMONT

Fall in love with you?

HAROLD

Yes! Yes! Just that! Fall in love with me! What's wrong? You're looking at me with this pained look as if your glass slippers are blistering your feet.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I do not look pained.

She looks in a mirror across the room. She has the face of a pained OLD LADY!

HAROLD

Look, just promise me that you'll stay with me until two a.m.... If I can't convince you to fall in love with me by then--

MADAME BEAUMONT

You will give up?

HAROLD

No, I'll never give up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAME BEAUMONT

You will jump into the pond?

HAROLD

No, unless you're doing it with me.
Naked.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You will try a new angle at wooing me?

HAROLD

Yep... but I'll be a gentleman the whole
way. Whaddaya say? You down?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Yes. I guess I am... down.

THE BAR - Tattle chit-chats. Golden approaches him.

GOLDEN

What were you talking about up there...
Tattle?

TIMMY

Look, Golden, quit bustin' my chops about
your girlfriend's escapades. If she
wanted them secret, she'd be more subtle.

Golden grabs him by the neck with one hand to the GASPS of
the crowd around them.

GOLDEN

"Subtle" is something YOU know nothing
about!

Golden pushes Tattle and pins him up against a wall. Tattle,
becomes painfully aware that now he is being ridiculed,
himself.

TIMMY

I'm not a violent man, but let's be
brutally Frankie, Golden. Obviously the
question is whether you are being
cuckolded or not, dear boy.

The boxer walks right up to his face menacingly.

GOLDEN

Call me a "boy", will ya?

TIMMY

Don't look at me, your rival's standing
right over there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Tattle points an accusing finger at Frankie who is engaged in conversation with Robert and the three giggling girls at the booth. PEOPLE GASP...The boxer walks right up to the crooner.

GOLDEN

You been sleeping with my honey behind my back?

BEAT. Frankie looks around. Smiles.

FRANKIE

So what if I have?

GOLDEN

I'll tell ya what-- you dirty bastard!

Golden grabs him by the neck and begins choking him, knocking over a set of tables along the way.

Dorothy runs over and looks on in horror, standing before Tattle. She turns to him.

DOROTHY

Now look at what you've done, you malevolent, sinister stirrer of deceit.

TIMMY

You dug your own hole, missy.

She slaps him across the face with her purse. Quite a slug! One that sends him reeling into a group of partygoers standing nearby with drinks in their hands.

Golden pushes Frankie, and he falls backward onto the Pullman seat, his head concealed from us behind the table.

The three girls quickly remove themselves from the seats.

DOROTHY

Stop fighting! This is preposterous!
You're acting like children! WILL YOU
STOP!

With Frankie's head inside a booth, the boxer begins to pummel him. We see his right arm lift and punch down several times.

CLOSE - in a very discreet move, Golden takes a capsule from his coat pocket and puts it in Frankie's mouth, precisely between his teeth. The crooner winks at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

The Boxer continues to pummel him in the booth behind the table. Finally the crooner puts his foot to his chest and kicks him off. He surfaces with a bloody lip.

The crooner walks over, and as soon as Golden has come to his feet, he punches him in the stomach and knocks his breath out.

TWO SECURITY GUARDS come in and separate them before any retaliation can be made on the boxer's part. He's out of breath, but no blood.

Dorothy walks up to the now disheveled Tattle.

DOROTHY

I hope you're satisfied... I'm sure this'll give you fodder for your column of lies and hypocrisy that keeps this ridiculous town running, you equivocator! It's slanderous, wagging tongues like yours that ruin Hollywood romances and kill fun nights like these for gals like me! You filthy rat!

She knocks him across the face with her purse again. Magical dust flies off of it, as Tattle SQUISHED IN, as if in a cartoon. He holds his nose and blows, and his face "pops" back out. Dorothy looks around at everyone in disgust. She storms out of the club.

Golden stands there and regains his composure as they lead Frankie off to his dressing room. He gathers his coat and looks around, holding his head up high before the horrified crowd.

GOLDEN

Whatareyalookinat? Mind your own business!

People look away.

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL - NIGHT

Dorothy hails a CAB as the paparazzi FLASH pictures of her traumatized demeanor.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Joe stands before Frankie, who holds a handkerchief on top of his blood-stained lip.

JOE

Whaddayamean you can't go on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKIE

I'm not going on. I can't sing like this.

JOE

What am I paying you for? Ruining my hotel's reputation with movie star brawls? Tearing up the place?

FRANKIE

I don't have the composure for it Joe. I'll make it up to ya some other night.

JOE

You don't sing another tune here tonight, and I'm sunk. Get it? Sunk.

FRANKIE

Listen here, Joe. I'm not feelin' quite so corky anymore, pal. I got a bloody lip and a broken heart. You can't make me pour myself out there to the crowd if the well has gone dry. Besides, I go out there now and try to act like nothin's happening and I'll look like a fool!

JOE

In my eyes, you already do.

FRANKIE

Alright Joe, for you I'll sing one more. I'll make it a special one. Slow-- just for the girls. I wantcha to go out there and make a big deal outta my broken heart. You know, let 'em know this isn't easy for me. That I'm not feelin' too good, but I love 'em enough to do just one more-- just for them.

JOE

Just one more?

FRANKIE

Just one more.

JOE

You're breaking my heart now.

FRANKIE

For me, Joe. Just this once.

JOE

I never known you to fight a guy with that much strength.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2) JOE(cont'd)

But everyone out there, all the newspaper guys, think you're an action picture hero now. I hate that Timmy Tattle myself, to be sure, but tonight's made for great press, Frankie. You should wanna go out there! They love you!... Alright, I'll do what you ask for. But a couple of months from now, you're playing this club at this hotel for free. You hear me? For FREE!

FRANKIE

I hear ya, Joe. I hear ya.

Frankie turns around and looks at himself in the mirror. Over his left shoulder we see Joe leave the dressing room. Frankie's face, a GREMLIN'S GRIN.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

FLASH OF A BULB!

Golden walks out of the club onto the red carpet just in time to see the last moment of Dorothy getting in a taxi cab and driving off.

Cameras surround them, FLASHING pictures. FANS look on in fascination.

He runs after the cab calling after her, but it's too late...He languidly puts his coat over his shoulder and walks away.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Joe stands before the mike.

JOE

(embarrassed)

Ladies and gents. I'm Joe, the proud owner of this fine establishment. And you wouldn't know it by some of tonight's proceedings, but it is fine... I'd like to announce that due to the commotion tonight, Frankie Sweetzer will not be playing for the rest of the evening.

MOANS from the crowd.

JOE (CONT'D)

However, since Frankie knows that there are many devoted fans of his here tonight, he's agreed to perform one more for you, and... well...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: JOE(cont'd)

(he looks offstage, nods)
Here he is, the one and only-- this one's
especially for all the ladies in the
house, since he's now a broken hearted
man-- FRANKIE SWEETZER!

Frankie walks on, melancholy, and goes straight to the mike.

FRANKIE
This one's for my Paramour.

A sexy, percussive song like: FEVER.

Betsy's so close to tears, she has to leave. Mme. Beaumont
catches her at the door.

MADAME BEAUMONT
Are you alright, Betsy?

BETSY
Yes, I just-- I love Frankie Sweetzer.
He's such a knight in shining armor. I
hate to see him suffer. Excuse me, honey,
I-- I need some fresh air.

Frankie's watery eyes... high drama... Betsy walks out the
door. Harold walks over to Mme. Beaumont, and extends his
arm. She takes it and he escorts her outside.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

Golden, melancholy, walks down an empty alley.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The taxi driving around the block.

Dorothy looks out the window.

INT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

Girls at the club crying and couples dancing.

Frankie sings his heart out.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

Golden continues to walk, as behind him approaches the
headlights of... a...TAXI!

He looks up, and lets out a BROAD SMILE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a singular move, he whirls around, jumps on the hood of the cab and dances a little jig.

He slides down the hood, as the driver gets out and opens the back door for him.

INSIDE THE CAB - Dorothy waits for him, all smiles.

He slides in. She kisses him. The door closes.

OUTSIDE VIEW AS - The TAXI DRIVER gets back in the front seat and they drive off towards us through the alley way.

INT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

The last strains of the song plays... The CROWD GOES WILD, and the crooner runs out of the club, with mobs of beautiful, well-dressed girls tearing at him...

As Frankie makes his way through the crowds pawing at him inside the club, reporters are briskly writing their new headlines, and the actual NEWSPAPERS SWIRL ON WITH THE FOLLOWING TITLES SMASHING AGAINST the SCREEN:

"HOT YOUNG COUPLES FIGHT FOR LOVE!"

"FUTURE FILM STARS IN EARLY LOVE DRAMAS!"

"HOLLYWOOD ROMANCES: REAL AND VIOLENT!"

...to MANIACAL APPLAUSE and SCREAMS and CHAOS!

THE SONG REPRISSES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

INT. TAXI CAB - NIGHT

Dorothy and Golden kiss as they sink down the back seat.

EXT. ARCADIA CABARET CLUB - NIGHT

The cab pulls up in front of the club, just in time for the paparazzi to take pictures of Frankie getting in THE VERY SAME CAB... we do not see the other two here.

THE CAB DRIVES OFF...as GORGEOUS YOUNG GIRLS dressed in the finest of 20's nighttime garb run after it, and are left depressed in the middle of the street.

INT. TAXI CAB'S BACK SEAT - NIGHT

Golden and Dorothy sit up. Frankie wipes off the rest of the blood with a handkerchief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They look at each other: Did we pull it off??? They all smile broadly... Yes, we did... Dorothy turns to the crooner and makes out with him. Then, the two men smile at each other and shake hands.

She takes out a bottle of champagne, and holds it up.

CLOSE - Cork pops off.

CLOSE - Three champagne glasses in three hands. Champagne pours till it overflows.

First GIGGLES then all-out LAUGHS!

DOROTHY
Champagne for the Hollywood Sham? HAPPY
NEW IMAGE!

FRANKIE
I cried real tears. Can you believe it?

GOLDEN
Think we pulled it off?

DOROTHY
With grand style, darling, grand style.

GOLDEN
Hope I didn't really hurtcha.

FRANKIE
Only if you meant what you said.

GOLDEN
Not a word, lover, not a word.

They CLINK glasses, and exchange "Cheers", winks and drinks.

They both kiss her on their respective side of her lips. When the men remove their faces, half of their lips are comically lipstick-stained. She notices and laughs. She points at the rear-view mirror.

THROUGH THE REAR VIEW MIRROR - The gents put their heads together and take a look. Then, they burst out laughing again!

DOROTHY
All the world's a stage, my dears...Or so
says Shakespeare.

FRANKIE
Reputed himself to be quite a scandal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

GOLDEN

Nothing like violence for good publicity
and a clean cover, eh, pal o' mine?

FRANKIE

I just would've liked a swing at Tattle
that's all.

GOLDEN

True, we both got a crack at 'im, except
for you.

DOROTHY

Worth every slug, too.

FRANKIE

So, uh...now that the fightin's done...
can I keep you both?

DOROTHY

You know what I say. Why settle for just
one lover, when you can have more?

ALL THREE

Here, here!

FRANKIE

If two's company and three's a crowd, and
if third time's the charm, doesn't that
make us a "charming crowd"?

DOROTHY

Darling, if those cowards don't approve
of our design for living-- we'll just
give them the spectacle they want. We'll
fake normality.

GOLDEN

Hypocrisy is the vaseline of social
intercourse.

FRANKIE

Intercourse?! Here,here!

CLINK!

Dorothy swallows the last of her champagne and for a fraction
of a second looks for a place to put it. Since there is none,
she FLINGS the glass out the window.

EXT. CAR - SLOW MOTION - The champagne glass flies through
the air.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAR RADIO ANNOUNCER

(FILTERED)

Only ten more minutes until the end of the year, kids. But before the Aliens land, and the second coming comes- let's tune in to FRANKIE!

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy grabs both their arms with her gloved hands and squeezes in delight. Both men wink seductively at each other and sip more champagne.

FRANKIE

Say, driver, turn up that tune on the radio!

CLOSE - THE RADIO...It's FRANKIE'S SONG... Hell, it's THEIR SONG!

DOROTHY

Happy New Year, fellas.

FRANKIE

Happy New Year.

GOLDEN

Happy New Year.

EXT. TAXI - NIGHT

They drive off into the night down an empty highway. Stars glisten in the dark sky like diamonds.

JOE (V.O.)

I didn't live long enough to hear from that threesome again. But I know that they always showed up at the Arcadia on special occasions when things got dull.

THE MUSIC PLAYS ON...Frankie's filtered voice croons on the radio.

The cab drives into the distance, as the IRIS CLOSES.

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT

The hotel guests have gathered on the hilltop. There are lawn chairs and the like strewn about for them to lounge on.

Nearby, a small band is assembled, playing Claude Debussy's L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE as a DANCE TROUPE performs the Nijinsky choreography atop a wooden platform.

Joe has already found his way there with Betsy, who is a little drunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Francis and Donner are in the midst of sexual flirtation with the two older women they spotted inside, and now signal thumbs up signs at each other.

Harold and Madame Beaumont make their way to the festivities with broad smiles on their faces. Harold breaks off from her, and heads for the pianist, who sits before a black curtain that's been tentatively propped up behind the band.

Harold appears to be making some kind of deal with the pianist. He gives the man a few wadded bills. Right behind the pianist's back, Harold cuts two slits in the black curtain, parallel to the pianist's elbows. Then, he shakes hands with the man and heads back to Madame Beaumont.

She stands next to Joe, looking out at the night sky. Joe checks his pocket watch, and then stands on a nearby tree stump.

JOE

Alright everybody, we're two minutes from the New Millennium! Now if you'll all gather and look in a westernly direction, in just about a minute, you'll get to see splendid fireworks coming from the Santa Monica Pier!

People do as he says. Almost assembling in a line, we TRACK RIGHT REVEALING CLOSE-UPS OF Harold glancing lovingly at Madame Beaumont who smiles back, followed by the bellboys and their dates, and at the very end, Betsy and Joe. The rest of the guests are gathered behind them.

JOE (CONT'D)

Everybody ready! Ten, nine, eight...

EVERYONE

Seven, six, five, four, three, two, ONE!
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THEIR POV -In the distance, the fireworks go off, lighting the night sky with brilliant colors which dance and reflect off their faces.

CLOSE - Popping champagne corks!

Everyone kisses, hugs, shakes hands, throws confetti, lights sparklers, etc.

Harold removes mistletoe from a pocket and holds it above Madame Beaumont. For the first time, she kisses him willingly and passionately.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He breaks off with her, smiling, backing away onto the stage. Harold sits at the piano and discreetly folds his hands behind his back. From behind the black curtain, the pianist's arms slip in alongside Harold, so that it appears as if he's playing "AULD LANG SYNE".

EVERYONE joins in as Harold SINGS and smiles brightly. Mme. Beaumont looks up at him starry-eyed, and terribly amused at his antics!

Joe and Betsy kiss for a brief moment. He hugs her, and she cuddles against his chest as the last few fireworks hit the sky and explode.

Then, Joe becomes self-conscious and looks around to see who is looking. Returning to an officious attitude, he separates himself a little too abruptly from Betsy. She senses his sudden coldness, and this depresses her.

Joe walks over and hugs Harold strongly.

HAROLD

You almost squeezed all the air out of me!

JOE

Why is it that real men only hug and kiss during holidays and awards ceremonies?

HAROLD

Because excessive hugging and kissing is best left to men and-- women in romantic, unique, and under-populated resorts such as this one! If you'll excuse me, I'm not done with my squeezing--

Harold motions his head toward Madame Beaumont, and gives Joe a wink and a nudge. They share a hearty laugh together.

Madame Beaumont walks over and hugs Betsy, as behind them, Harold shakes the hand of Francis and Donner and their respective older dates.

Betsy notices a run in her stocking. Joe steps up beside her. She looks a little worried.

Harold asks Madame Beaumont to wait for a moment, and walks over to the MUSICIANS. He talks to them for a second, and then walks triumphantly back to her.

Behind Betsy and Joe, Harold gets on one knee as the small band begins to play an impassioned BOLERO. They turn towards the young lovers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

May I have this dance?

Madame Beaumont looks around embarrassed. Everyone is looking at Harold on his knee. She cannot do a thing other than curtsy and nod her head 'yes'-- which is what she does.

They begin to dance to the delight of the onlookers, and especially, their own.

The MUSIC gains intensity, until it melds with instruments of AN ENTIRE ORCHESTRA, and the BOLERO crescendos.

A very delicate night drizzle begins to fall.

SEVERAL LADIES shudder slightly at the dew drops, which combined with the effects of the moon, create a charming Seurat painting out of them.

POV OF THE FALLING DRIZZLE - The two lovers dance in swirls, and graceful turns. They look up and open their mouths to the sweet drops of water falling from the sky.

A MAN puts his coat over the arms of his WIFE, who looks at him adoringly.

A few OLD LADIES sit together and clap their hands to the time of the music.

The musicians enjoy the BOLERO themselves as they bring it to a dramatic end, and the lovers reach a picture perfect tableau.

CHEERS and APPLAUSE from the audience of GUESTS.

Joe is proud, and applauds with them. Betsy stands next to him upset she didn't get Joe's coat thrown over her shoulders. She looks around at what the other women have and she doesn't. She looks up longingly at Joe.

JOE

If you'd like to gather inside folks, the festivities will continue in the lounge area!

Harold and Madame Beaumont begin to walk off in the direction of the hotel hand in hand.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to Betsy)

I've got some things to attend to inside, Besty. If you'd like to come along...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

BETSY

Well, what say you go inside, and I meet you back out here in-- at one?

Joe checks his pocket watch and looks nervously around.

JOE

Alright.

BETSY

Joe, the universe is entroping.

JOE

What?

BETSY

Never mind, Joe, never mind...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Harold and Madame Beaumont walk hand in hand through the moonlit woods.

Harold climbs up a tree.

HAROLD

Let's do it, right now!

MADAME BEAUMONT

Do what?

HAROLD

Let's fall in love, right now!

Jumps down to her and holds her close.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Why are you always in such a rush?

HAROLD

Because we are the right people, and we know it. Ever since I saw you for the first time, you know-- descending the stairs- as you oftentimes do - something went off in me like a fire cracker or a space ship taking off, and I... You know? Is it just me?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I do not know. I-- Do I have to give you an answer right now?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

Yes. Right now. If you love me, say it.

MADAME BEAUMONT

We met yesterday. It would be rash.

HAROLD

But that's the point, love is rash! It's spur of the moment! If you think, it's not real. You can only tell someone you love them when it's quite sudden. That's how you know it's coming from-- from the heart.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I-- I would...(sighs)...I would love to plead the fifth right now.

HAROLD

You are in America, and I'm afraid you can.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I do!

HAROLD

If only you'd say that in church...

They laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WEST WING HALLWAY- LATER

They walk down the hallway and reach her room as they converse.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I cannot hide here forever. Charming though it may be. The chat au has been in preparation for me for over a month.

HAROLD

How shall I ever forget my days with you at the Arcadia Hotel?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Hopefully we will remember for a long time-- the millennium and all.

HAROLD

The millennium.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME BEAUMONT

However, I set sail on the Cedric tomorrow. I'm sorry.

HAROLD

Me too. I leave too.

A beat as they look into each others eyes. Then he kisses her and she melts in his embrace.

MADAME BEAUMONT

You have won.

HAROLD

Won what?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Me over.

HAROLD

Won you over? Well-- that wasn't easy.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I know. I am like that.

HAROLD

So this is "like that"? You take off and I never see you again?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I live too far away.

She shrugs a shoulder and looks down sadly. He hugs her but she is cold and pulls away.

MADAME BEAUMONT

I must go now.

HAROLD

You're so lonely.

This stops her.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Loneliness or solitude? I'm always trying to figure out what plagues me.

HAROLD

I'll keep you company.

MADAME BEAUMONT

But you will leave, just like the others.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

Give me your address and I'll go see you
in-- where is it??

MADAME BEAUMONT

My father does not allow guests.

HAROLD

Then we'll elope!

MADAME BEAUMONT

You are already marrying us off?

HAROLD

No, I meant we could just elope like--
Romeo and Juliet.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Yes, and look how they ended up.

HAROLD

You won't tell me where you live. You're
to remain a mystery to me?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Guess so.

She takes her key and inserts it into the door knob and half
slips into her suite, when Betsy comes running down the hall.

BETSY

Madame Beaumont! Gwen! Is that you?! You
have a hose I could borrow?!

Madame Beaumont BANGS the door shut as Betsy gets there.

HAROLD

You scared her away again Betsy!

BETSY

I just want some hosiery. Panty-hose, and
a husband. That's all.

MADAME BEAUMONT (O.S.)

Betsy, go away!

BETSY

I'm not here to steal your guy, so don't
worry!

She pats him on the chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

Betsy? Now, what did you call her? Gwen?

BETSY

Gwen? No, for heavens sake. I meant, when. When is she going to let me borrow some panty-hose?!!

Besty POUNDS on the door.

BETSY (CONT'D)

There's a run in mine and I don't want Joe to see it and not think I'm high (BANG!) class! (BANG!)

HAROLD

He didn't touch you did he?

BETSY

Sure he did. Why? You jealous?...I was hoping he would touch me. Hell, I was hoping you would, but apparently Gw-- Madame Beaumont's got dibs.

MADAME BEAUMONT (O.S.)

GO! AWAY!

BETSY

Fine!

MADAME BEAUMONT (O.S.)

Fine!

HAROLD

Fine!

Betsy staggers away in a rush leaving Harold alone in the hallway. Harold lets out a deep sigh, and walks away in an opposite direction.

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT - LATER

Betsy and Joe walk hand in hand towards the cliff looking out to the sea shore and moonlit ocean before them.

Betsy lets go of Joe and talks to him while walking perilously close to the edge of the cliff.

BETSY

Wonder what people felt like in 1899 when 1900 came, and Jesus... and the apocalypse... didn't, and... nothing changed?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Hey, Betsy. That's a little dangerous there.

BETSY

I've thought about it.

JOE

About what?

BETSY

Jumping.

JOE

Oh, Betsy...nonsense.

BETSY

But I'll never do it. Because I'm a coward.

Besty shoots her mask of a smile.

JOE

You're braver to stay off the edge.

BETSY

From here, I can always look down and see my options. I look into the depths below and think that if I really sunk low enough, I'd be there... like a broken doll... with plastic blood splattered on the rocks.

JOE

You can jump.

BETSY

I can? You think so?

JOE

With a parachute. I think with a bungee cord you'd still crack your crazy doll-head.

Betsy picks up little pebbles and throws them over the cliff.

BETSY

You think you could ever love me Joe? Or do I have rocks in my head?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE

No... I've been alone for too long. To settle with someone now would be too difficult. You're unstable Betsy. I know that come next summer you'll be hopping off to Barstow with some gentleman caller and I'll be left--

BETSY

But I always come back for the new year.

JOE

Like a migrant bird.

BETSY

I wish I could fly, Joe.

JOE

We all wish we could fly, Betsy. Hey, lets go inside...

BETSY

Not until you've given me a straight answer.

JOE

I did. It was 'no'.

BETSY

Yeah, but that's on first impulse.

JOE

Women take longer to process emotions, Betsy. Men hurry to them.

Joe stands still as Betsy slowly walks up to him. She comes up very close and looks into his eyes. Eye to eye.

BETSY

Now, can you tell me you really don't love me?

JOE

You're obsessed, Betsy... You've had much too much to drink. Let's go.

He grabs her by the arm. She yanks herself away.

BETSY

Let go of me!

JOE

Alright, Betsy. I'll let you go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Betsy puts her hand to his face.

BETSY
Oh, Joe. I wanted to love you so.

JOE
(chuckles awkwardly)
That rhymes.

BETSY
You go ahead, Joe. I want to stay here a
little longer.

She smiles and takes him in for a moment then she kisses him. The kiss is brief yet meaningful. Uncomfortable, he takes a few steps backwards, still facing her.

JOE
Will I see you before you leave?

BETSY
(a jovial tone)
Go. I'll be back next year.

JOE
You sure? Come say good-bye before you
leave.

BETSY
Go.

He turns around to leave and walks away a step or two, and then thinks better of it and turns around.

JOE'S POV - Betsy is nowhere to be found.

LONG SHOT - THE CLIFF - Silhouetted, Joe runs to the edge of the cliff and looks down as simultaneously we SEE Besty's silhouette falling off its side!

JOE
Betsy? BETSY!!?

JOE'S POV - A DISTORTED MOONLIT VIEW of Betsy, like a rag doll in a red dress, broken on the rocks.

JOE (CONT'D)
BETSYYYY!!!

Joe falls to his knees bringing his hands up to his face and erupts into tears. He stands there desperate, nervously shifting- what to do?

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL- EARLY MORNING

The remnants of New Millennium's celebrations are scattered about the lawn. An ambulance is parked in front of the hotel.

JOE (V.O.)

I got rid of the body quietly, without worrying any of the guests. Made the ambulance turn off it's siren.

A body, covered with a white blanket is put into the ambulance.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

I figured they'd find out on their own in due time- read about it in the paper.

It drives away leaving Joe standing there holding himself, looking down.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

I had no idea this was coming, you know.

CLOSE - JOE deeply saddened, and older now.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

And, well, I was-- terribly-- dare I say it? I don't know. I-- I'm ashamed to say: relieved for Betsy somehow. Maybe she took the only way out of here.

Joe shakes his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FRANCIS & DONNER'S ROOM- MORNING

Francis and Donner are asleep in their small room on a twin bed. They sleep with their heads on opposite ends of the bed. From the look on their faces they're obviously having pleasant dreams.

Francis is having an erotic dream. His face leans up against Donner's left foot. He smiles sensuously and mumbles something unintelligible to it.

FRANCIS

...mmm, bubbles, oooh yeah... com'ere...

Francis begins to kiss Donner's foot as if it were a woman's face and then leans in closer and begins to French kiss Donner's pinky toe as if it were her tongue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE: DONNER'S FACE - He smiles and giggles.

FRANCIS continues slobbering on Donner's foot as Donner wiggles his toes. Francis is clearly close to orgasm as he gets more and more intense, and begins sucking the pinky toe.

The black rotary phone on his night stand RINGS, startling Francis awake. He turns, still half asleep, and picks up the receiver with his right hand.

FRANCIS
Hello?...Yeah?...Yeah!!

Donner wiggles his toes some more and mumbles to himself.

DONNER
...Madame Beaumont-- stop...

We hear the distant MURMUR of a FILTERED VOICE on the phone.

FRANCIS
OH MY GOD!

Francis springs upright in bed to a sitting position.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)
Yes! Oh my God! How soon? Yes! We'll be there this afternoon. Thank you! Good-bye!

Francis hangs up the receiver, sits up, and excitedly taps Donner on the shoulder.

DONNER
..shhhh....I'm having a great dream.

FRANCIS
Wake up!

DONNER
Shhhh!!!

Francis grabs Donner by each shoulder of his pajama shirt and forcefully sits him up-right so that they're facing each other in a seated position. Donner groggily comes to life.

DONNER (CONT'D)
What?

FRANCIS
We're rich!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DONNER

How?

FRANCIS

We sold it.

DONNER

Oh my God! We're rich!

FRANCIS

That's what I said!

They hug each other, and sit there taking it in for a beat. Simultaneously they both glance down and notice Francis's blanket is wet around the crotch. They look at each other awkwardly.

FRANCIS

Can you blame me?

They shrug simultaneously, laugh, and embrace again.

INT. FRONT DESK- LATER

Joe's eyes are bloodshot, his demeanor resigned. He has not slept all night. Madame Beaumont appears on the staircase, carrying her suitcase.

JOE

So this is it?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I'm afraid so. Are you alright? You look...

JOE

(smiling)

Why yes, I'm fine. Who's picking you up?

MADAME BEAUMONT

Papa is sending a limousine.

JOE

Sorry about Francis and Donner. I don't know where they are this morning. I rang them to get your suitcases, but there was no answer. They're probably passed out somewhere on the lawn after last night's festivities. Our sincerest apologies...

(pushes a smile)

Did you hear anything from Betsy last night?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME BEAUMONT

I'm afraid not.

JOE

I guess it's for the best that you don't--

MADAME BEAUMONT

Banging on my door for spare panty-hose to impress you because she had a run... but I love her. Guess I'm going to have to miss saying good-bye.

JOE

Yes. It's a shame... I never noticed that run in her stockings. Here you go. Just sign here and you're all set.

She signs.

MADAME BEAUMONT

My limousine should be arriving any moment now.

The elevator doors open, and Harold appears inside. He notices Madame Beaumont and races up to the front desk.

MADAME BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Oh, no. Not now!

She tries to hide behind an indoor tree. He finds her.

HAROLD

Good morning, Madame.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Good morning, Mr. Farrington.

HAROLD

Call me Harold. Quite an evening last night, eh Madame?

MADAME BEAUMONT

I should say so, Harold.

The limousine pulls up outside right on schedule.

Madame Beaumont reaches for her suitcase, but before she can grab it, Harold has already dropped his for hers.

HAROLD

Please, let me take your suitcase to your limousine. It's the least I can do for someone I'm in love with.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAME BEAUMONT

Oh, goodness. I really-- You should not--
Please, let me take it myself. I am quite
capable of carrying it.

She grabs a hold of it, and YANKS it towards herself in a
fashion that is quite unlike her. This is a clear battle of
wills.

HAROLD

Please, I insist.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Mr. Farrington-- please-- do not
embarrass us any further.

HAROLD

But I think I love you! Is that
embarrassing?

JOE

You are going to have to try and resolve
this lover's quarrel amicably, friends.

HAROLD

(to Joe)

YOU! Give me two seconds!

MADAME BEAUMONT

You won't need ONE!

She STEPS ON HIS FOOT!

As he recoils in pain and lets go, she takes the opportunity
to race out of the hotel. Harold, on one leg, is in hot
pursuit.

Joe can't help himself but put propriety aside just this
once:

JOE

Fight for her, Mr. Farrington! You listen
to him, Madame!

EXT. FRONT OF HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

MADAME BEAUMONT/HAROLD

You stay out of this, please!

HAROLD

(to Beaumont)

But-- But I love you!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She finally reaches the limousine, and sets down her bag, which the CHAUFFEUR instantly snatches up and puts in the trunk.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Just a minute Mr. Chauffeur. This won't take long.

CHAUFFEUR

Sure thing, ma'am.

HAROLD

Wait a minute, that's my chauffeur! He won't drive you away from me!

CHAUFFEUR

Wanna bet? This place gives me the heebie-jeebies.

He gets back in the limousine, ready to go. Harold stands there on one foot. Finally he sets it down as she takes a couple of steps toward him. He puts up his dukes. She grabs him by the lapels and pins him squarely before her.

MADAME BEAUMONT

Mister Farrington-- Harold, if you will. You, sir, are insane!

HAROLD

Bec--

MADAME BEAUMONT

Shhhhh! But you are only partially to blame for this. With your warped genes, you must have been sensing some horrific denouement-- and that's...well-- because there is one. We must part ways, no matter how we feel about each other. Sometimes-- and you will have to face this sooner or later in your rich, eccentric world the day you grow up, Mr. Farrington-- sometimes we cannot have what we desire the most. I can only tell you one thing to make this all any better for you...

She gets in the car and closes the door. The window comes down: zzzzzzz. She smiles sadly.

HAROLD

What?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MADAME BEAUMONT

I think-- I think I love you too.

She nods to the driver. The limousine drives off, leaving Harold livid in a cloud of dust.

HAROLD

But who-- why-- hey!

The dust gets into his mouth. He coughs. Joe surfaces opening the big double doors to the hotel.

JOE

Come inside Mr. Farrington.

HAROLD

Call me Harry, Joe. Please.

Harold walks inside. Joe puts his arm around him as the huge doors close behind them.

INT. FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

JOE

There there, Mr. Harry.

Joe pats him on the back a moment, and then resumes his post behind the front desk counter.

HAROLD

This is the worst morning of my life! I fall in love with the perfect girl and then I can never see her again. You don't know how this feels, Joe.

JOE

Don't feel too bad. These things happen. She said she loved you, didn't she?

HAROLD

She said she thinks she loves me, I think.

JOE

It's too bad.

HAROLD

It's too bad?

JOE

You'll never see her again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD

I won't?

JOE

Well, Maybe if you come back next year you'll see her again.

HAROLD

Next year? Next year?! I'll have to wait a whole year?! What? Are you kidding me? Just tell me her name.

JOE

Oh, I don't know her first name.

HAROLD

Well, it's Madame Beaumont, isn't it?

JOE

Oh, that's easy, let me look through my files. It's-- It's--

Joe puts on his bifocals and rummages through some files on the counter.

JOE

Beaumont, Madame. Madame Beaumont-- first name-- why, I don't know. She signed everything without a first name. You wouldn't suppose that her first name is Madame, would you?

HAROLD

You have a point... Guinevere? Gwendolyn? Gwen! Betsy called her Gwen. And the tag!

JOE

What was that?

HAROLD

You know what, old boy? I think you've given me an idea!

JOE

Don't mention it. You know-- they say I'm a little psychic.

HAROLD

Psychic or psychotic?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE

I think you and that girl are destined to be together. You're both of the very same ilk.

HAROLD

No kidding.

JOE

Yes. Something special and magical surrounding it. I can sense it.

HAROLD

Yes-- a bunch of lies! It's in the air, Joe. I've seen a lot of people quite upset today. I thought I'd been reflecting my mood in their faces. But I think they're genuinely upset themselves that-- you know-- that the millennium arrived, and the aliens didn't.

Harold chuckles.

JOE

Oh, they did.

Harold is confused. Joe points at the staircase.

Walking down the steps, holding suitcases in their hands and dressed in ultra modern neon threads are Francis and Donner.

Donner removes his sunglasses and beams a bright smile at Joe and Harold as he accidentally trips Francis, making him fumble down the staircase and knock into a vase on a small pillar.

The vase tips over and threatens to fall but deftly, Francis recuperates his composure, catches it, and replaces it on the pillar with dance-like panache.

This gets a "perfect 10!" response from Joe, who can't help but smile.

Francis strikes a business-like pose as Donner reaches his side. Pose. They both are very faux pretentious now. They'd love to be the real thing, but they wouldn't know how.

FRANCIS

Joe--

DONNER

We thought we'd let you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCIS

We gotta go.

JOE

Why?

DONNER

I know you won't believe this, but we just sold our script to Hollywood!

FRANCIS

You mean my script!

DONNER

It was my idea.

FRANCIS

Yeah, but I wrote it.

DONNER

Yeah, but I paid for the postage to send it.

JOE

Awww, you boys are leaving me? This is sudden.

FRANCIS

Yyyyyyyep.

DONNER

Yyyyyyyep.

JOE (cont'd)

How am I gonna replace you?

FRANCIS

You can't, we're two of a kind.

DONNER

Weren't you thinking of replacing us anyway?

JOE

I was, but that's not a nice thing to say. My goodness, this is so sudden. Will you stay until I can find some help?

DONNER

No-can-do. We're on a tight schedule.

FRANCIS

We have meetings all day. But we'll pay for the temp bellboys and offset your cost. How's that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JOE

No, that's alright boys. This is exciting news! You go ahead... I wish you good luck. Our guests will miss you, I'm sure.

They wink at each other.

FRANCIS

The studio's sending a car, so we're going to wait for it, and then we're outtie-five thousand.

DONNER

Bailing.

FRANCIS

Jetting.

DONNER

Booking.

FRANCIS

Weeeeeee're outta here, baby!

HAROLD

Well, boys, I-I-I would give you a ride, b--

DONNER

Hey, sounds GREAT!

FRANCIS

But, we've got our own wheels.

DONNER

We have?

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A chauffeur-driven, red 1968 Rolls Royce convertible pulls up and comes to a screeching halt before the hotel. The driver, a beautiful BLONDE MODEL revs the motor. She whistles at them "baseball field-style".

INT. FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

DONNER

Weeeelllll, that's us!

FRANCIS

Hey, Joe?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONNER
Thanks a lot.

FRANCIS
For all you've done for us.

DONNER
Our Christmas gift's in the mail.

JOE
Why'd you mail it? You could have just
given it to me here.

FRANCIS
You'll see--

DONNER
Nice to meetcha Mr. Farrington.

HAROLD
Call me Harry.

FRANCIS
Say, Harry, need a ride?

HAROLD
I guess so.

DONNER
Where you headed?

HAROLD
Los Angeles.

FRANCIS
We're headed to Hollywood.

DONNER
I think L.A. is on the way!

HAROLD
Alright, I'll meet you there in a sec.

FRANCIS and DONNER excitedly race towards the doors to get in the car like a couple of stooges. Joe puts the paperwork on the desk.

JOE
Lotsa folks leaving me today... Sign
here, Mr. Harry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HAROLD

Harold... Thanks for the stay, Joe.
Perhaps I'll be back next year.

JOE

I hope so... Oh, and one last thing, Mr.
Harry?

Beat. Joe takes a deep breath.

JOE (CONT'D)

There is a sadness to being chained to
this castle I've created for myself, son.
I-- I once had a chance to chase after a
young woman, and I didn't pursue her...
Fear of-- What?-- Commitment? Love?
Change? I don't know. Point is: Chase
her, son. Don't end up stagnant and
immovable and sorry that you didn't, like
me.

Joe lowers his eyes.

HAROLD

Thanks, Joe. I will... (pats him on the
back) And hey, don't worry about Betsy.
If she took off all of a sudden, I'm sure
she'll be back next year.

JOE

I guess you didn't hear--

The car HORN HONKS A MELODIOUS TUNE from outside.

HAROLD

Happy New Millennium, Joe!

JOE

Happy New Millennium, Harold. And, uh--
hey, work on that accent!

Joe chuckles and winks at him. Harold shrugs. They shake
hands across the counter. Harold pulls up his glasses with
his index finger, takes his bag, and races outside.

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL FRONT DRIVE - DAY

A tremendous stereo system plays upbeat MUSIC.

Francis and Donner sit in the back seat of the Rolls with the
top down, smoking cigars like the Mac Daddies they are.

The chauffeur waits for Harold with the trunk open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harold runs out of the hotel, and hands his suitcase to the chauffeur, who pops it in the trunk. Harold hops in the back seat between the ex-bellboy millionaires. The car PEELS off.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

We watch as the three young men enjoy the ride, laughing and performing juvenile antics in the car.

At one point Harold stands up to feel the wind on his face, his suit coat flapping in the wind, as the other two hold his legs down.

The chauffeur tips her head down to look above her shades through the rear-view mirror, and shakes her head side to side as she smiles and laughs.

She CRANKS up the MUSIC.

Their car ride is INTERCUT WITH:

POV - THE HOOD OF THE CAR - a FAST-MOTION ride down Pacific Coast Highway until we reach the streets of Los Angeles. We pass briskly by Hollywood Blvd., Melrose, Beverly Hills, etc.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

STEADY CAM POV - A YOUNG LADY behind a counter sells hand lotion to AN OLD LADY. She smiles at us, as we LOOK AROUND the counter area. A white light emanates from the display cases, which casts a soft upward halo from below.

A YOUNG MAN crosses our path, and smiles a little too seductively, especially for those large ears he has and the buck teeth. We look away. Then we look back at him. He winks at us. We look away then we look back, and zoom in on his name tag: BUSTER.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Hey, Buster, you know a girl named Gwen?

BUSTER

Yes I do.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Can you tell me where she is?

BUSTER

Maybe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLD (O.S.)

Whaddaya mean maybe? Either she's here or she's not.

BUSTER

What are you willing to give me for that top secret information?

HAROLD (O.S.)

A broken nose.

We turn away and walk towards an older woman, ROSE, in her sixties putting boxes away in a display case. She turns around, smiles, looks us up and down, and then smiles again.

ZOOM IN - ON HER NAME: ROSE

HAROLD (O.S., CONT'D)

Pardon me, Rose, would a girl named Gwyneth work here?

ROSE

Gwyneth? Yes-- well --I --there's this girl. She blonde?

HAROLD (O.S.)

Yes.

ROSE

I am-- How old are you?

HAROLD (O.S.)

Why?

ROSE

Just asking.

She tidies her fried, over-permed hair and primps it for him.

ROSE (CONT'D)

How'd you know my name?

HAROLD (O.S.)

Name Tag.

ROSE

Oh.

HAROLD (O.S.)

So you know her?

ROSE

Who was that, dear?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She pulls out some make-up and packs some more pancake on, then lipstick, red as her name.

HAROLD (O.S.)

Gwen.

ROSE

Gimme a kiss.

She exposes her huge lips towards us seductively. THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN on her lips, and they BLACKEN the screen. SMACK!

WE PULL BACK to REVEAL ROSE pointing in the opposite direction through the lipstick stain.

A TEENAGER IN A TUX plays a baby grand piano with a sole red rose in a green vase. We MOVE past him... and working in the opposite ladies dresses aisle is: Madame Beaumont.

CLOSE ON HER NAME TAG: GWEN.

All of the varied dresses around her are the ones she's worn the entire time we've seen her. A dress falls, and she bends to pick it up.

GWENNETH'S POV - from between the dresses, in the distance, she sees Harold heading straight for her.

MADAME BEAUMONT/GWEN

Aaahhhh!!!

She crouches and hides among the dresses. She crawls on the floor, escapes that area, and breaks into a light jog when she resurfaces in another department, somewhere towards the men's shoes.

Harold is relentlessly in hot pursuit.

HAROLD'S POV - we watch her walk briskly across the men's shoes area and hide amongst the mirrors in the make up area.

We FOLLOW HER there and catch her kaleidoscopic fractured visage reflected from the mirrors. Which one is she?

She turns her face so that we only see her hair. In a desperate effort to disguise herself, she puts it up in a quick bun and clips it there.

Harold walks right up to her.

HAROLD

Turn around, Madame Beaumont.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns around, resigned.

GWEN

(sans French accent)

It's Gwen... and I really don't have a French accent.

HAROLD

I know. I know what you do for a living. You don't have to be embarrassed, I know. I forgive you.

GWEN

OK, so I work behind the counter at Macy's in the Beverly Center. I'm sorry. But my fantasy was up at 8 o'clock this morning when I had to get up to go to work. You're my fantasy. Not reality. These two worlds are not supposed to overlap!

HAROLD

Sorry, but I--

GWEN

Mr. Farrington, I'm not what I pretended to be. I'm no princess. I'm a pauper.

She draws a ten dollar bill from a small pink purse.

GWEN (CONT'D)

This ten dollar bill you see here is the last cent I'll see till I draw my four hundred dollar a week salary next Friday. You're a real gentleman, and you've been good to me, and- I'll be honest- I've played hard to get. I want to be truthful and sincere for the first time in our friendship.

He tries to interrupt her.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Listen! I-I-I save up out of my wages every year just for that fantasy. I want to spend one special week a year living like a queen if I ever live another one. I want to get up when I please instead of having to crawl out of bed at seven every morning, and I want to live on the best, and be waited on, and ring bells for things just like the rich people do. Now I've welcomed in the new millennium...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He reaches for her hand, and takes it. She yanks it away.

GWEN (CONT'D)

I've had the happiest time I've ever expected to have in my life-- thanks to... you...(Sighs.) I'm going back to work now. Back to my little efficiency apartment on Melrose, satisfied for another year. I told you I loved you all of a sudden, Mr. Farrington, because I-I thought you kind of liked me, and I like you too. But we're from different worlds. Different realities. Here's where the story ends.

He gets on one knee. She walks away.

GWEN (CONT'D)

So I talked about Europe and the things that I've read about in glamour magazines about other countries, and made you think I was a princess or something. I'm not.

HAROLD

Well, you sure fooled me in that dress.

He stands.

GWEN

But- this dress I've got on- it's the only one I have that's fit to wear. I bought it here. On the installment plan. It cost me two hundred and fifty dollars. Made to measure. I paid one hundred dollars down and they'll collect ten a week till it's paid for.

She extends the ten dollar bill to him.

GWEN (CONT'D)

This ten dollar bill will pay the installment due on the plan tomorrow. It's all the money I have... That'll be about all I have to say, Mr. Farrington. Except that my name is Gwyneth Beaumont, and I thank you for your attentions. I'm very sorry.

Impassive countenance and all, Harold looks into her eyes, filling with tears. From his coat pocket, he retracts a small checkbook. He opens it and scribbles across a blank form.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAROLD

(as he scribbles)

I've also got to go to work in the morning, and I might as well begin being honest with you right now.

(drops the British accent)

I don't really have a British accent. I have been a collector for this department store for three years in their garments division.

He tears out the leaf, snatches her ten dollar bill from her hand, and replaces it with his leaf.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

There's the receipt for the ten dollar installment.

He smiles broadly and points at it. Beat. She stands there dumbfounded.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Funny, ain't it? That you and me both had the same idea about spending our vacation? I've always wanted to be put up at a swell hotel, and I saved up out of my six hundred a week, and I did it. So--

Gwen crosses her arms. Looks anxiously around, clearly upset at him for a moment. She's been taken for a ride herself! Suddenly, she realizes the absurdity of the situation and shakes her head "no" and giggles.

GWEN

I-- I can't believe this.

She's now truly amused. She lets out a SPAZTIC SCREAM, covering her mouth with her hands in comical horror-- like the reaction of people just fooled on CANDID CAMERA.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Oh my God! Who Are You?

HAROLD

Harold Farrington. Nice to meet you.

GWEN

That name is real?

HAROLD

Maybe, but it sounds twice as fake as yours, doesn't it? Especially without the accent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

She laughs in amused agreement.

GWEN

OK, you've got me there.

HAROLD

So, hey I gotta go-- but how about a trip to the Catalinas for Valentine's Day? You know... on a boat?

She stares at him, beaming.

GWEN

What? Wh-- what?

She considers his offer for a moment as she feigns walking away. She turns back to him, index finger aimed at him.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Well, we've both been lying. And having a good relationship is finding creative ways to apologize. So, the store closes at twelve on Saturdays. What do you say we start with the roller coaster at the Santa Monica Pier? Sound crazy?

HAROLD

Very apropos. Watch the roller coaster be a metaphor for our relationship.

GWEN

Harold-- everything to you is a metaphor.

HAROLD

No, everything to me is an irony. Hey, Gwyneth, just forget that Harold Farrington will you? I'm coming clean.

GWEN

Well, OK, what's your real name?

JOHN

Well, my friends call me John.

He extends his hand. Gwen shakes it.

GWEN

Well, hello John.

JOHN

Hello... Gwen?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GWEN

Yeah.

She looks away suspiciously.

EXT. CLIFF - SUNSET

Joe looks out over the cliff. His head hung low, as he throws some white flowers over it.

They land on the rocky seashore below. The waves take some of them away as they ebb.

JOE

"Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low,
an excellent thing in a woman."

From behind Joe, the mailman appears and walks toward him.

MAILMAN

Got a package for ya Joe. Hafta get your signature.

JOE

Is that all you've ever wanted from me?

MAILMAN

We're not going to talk about that ever,
Joe. I'm just the mailman, alright?

JOE

"I fear I am not in my perfect mind."

MAILMAN

Just sign this and take it, will ya?

Joe signs and takes the box. He opens it.

A pair of shoes. Just like Joe's usual pair, but new.

JOE

Now, who do you suppose--

But he turns around, but the mailman has already gone.

MONTAGE:

A. Joe visits Betsy's grave.

B. Joe bids farewell to GUESTS at the Arcadia.

C. Joe falls asleep on the front counter desk, late at night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

D. Joe walks into his room and shuts the door, exhausted.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe drapes his sleeping gown over himself and sets his alarm. A chill wind moves the drapes before the open window.

Joe turns around, and there, in the candlelight, stands a phantasm: **BETSY!** She is not grotesque, but seemingly incarnate. As she would be in 'real life', except for a yellowish glow around her.

BESTY

Why do you walk with holes on your soles,
oh king o' the castle?

Joe just moans a little out of fright, and makes an effort to scream-- a silent scream-- a dribble of saliva coming out of the edge of his mouth as if he had just had a fit of epilepsy...

After trying to propel himself forward a couple of times to get the hell out of the room, he finally manages to do it, BANGING the door closed behind him.

EXT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Some of the remaining GUESTS peer out of their rooms to see what all the to-do is about.

Joe breathes heavily outside the door, eyes big and wide like saucers.

He opens the door a little-- just enough to glance inside.

The hairs on his neck, electric eels, as he sees her ghost again.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

JOE'S POV - Betsy levitates, and then descends upon his old pair of shoes.

Joe SLAMS the door shut, and leans up against the wall.

He rubs his eyes, and opens the door once more.

JOE'S POV - Nothing there.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He leaves the door wide open, and then tip-toes to his old pair of shoes, handles them with tea cup-shaped index fingers, and throws them swiftly out the window.

Joe walks to his bedside, kneels, and prays.

FADE OUT.

WHITE TITLES ON BLACK:

"My advice to you, if you should ever be in a hold-up, is to line up with the cowards and save your bravery for an occasion when it may be of some benefit to you."

-- O. Henry

INT. JOE'S ROOM - DAWN

Several candles are now burning.

Joe's toes wiggle as he finally drifts to sleep with spectacles on.

Joe's alarm clock reads six a.m., as ROOSTERS CROW.

TWO BURLY MEN, dressed in black, and with black hoods over their heads pry the door open. Joe is startled awake. They come in, and take Joe by force.

JOE

If you're Death come to take me- no need to be rough-- I won't be putting up much of a fight!

The men are not violent, just gruff. They manhandle, but don't hurt him. Joe's depression and resignation register on his demeanor.

In no time, they have the old man bound and gagged.

EXT. ARCADIA - DAWN

They put Joe in a potato-sack, and throw him in the truck.

They drive off with Joe into the distance.

INT. TRUCK - DAWN - INSIDE THE SACK

Joe cracks his head against the back walls of the truck a few times, finally causing him to get knocked unconscious.

EXT. GWEN'S APARTMENT COMPLEX - MORNING

John and his new girlfriend, Gwen, meet. He with a small suitcase. She with three.

JOHN
Here we go again.

GWEN
Yep. Again. But this time for money.

JOHN
You said it.

GWEN
Think the old man's easy to nab?

JOHN
He calls that place his castle.

GWEN
Come on, those aliens are well trained in abducting people.

JOHN
Well, not to change the subject, but I was hoping we could go for a swim in the fountain in our underwear.

GWEN
Wouldn't miss it for a second.

JOHN
How experimental your new self is.

GWEN
My new self is very liberated. Enough stuffiness. We found each other there, remember? But that was the Victorian fun of last week. This week, it's a new age.

JOHN
You won't let me forget.

He grabs her by the waist and turns her around seductively.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN (CONT'D)

You think what we're doing to the old man
is sinister?

GWEN

It's for his own good.

A limo awaits them. They hop in.

INT. DARK ROOM

Joe has a sharp, white spot light on his face.

JOE'S POV - TWO MASKED MEN in the room: deep voices.

Behind them, a movie reel begins as if projected onto them.
It plays numbers as the reel unspools.

MASKED MAN #1

Look at yourself, you're pathetic!

MASKED MAN #2

Locked up in your castle all the time.

MASKED MAN #1

Don't even know the real world anymore.
Don't know reality from fiction.

MASKED MAN #2

Joe, we've been watching you. And now we
want you to watch yourself.

The reel finally reaches the numbers 3...2...1.

In grainy 8mm stock, we re-live all of the moments Donner
shot, this time in continuum, and with a lovely CLASSICAL
SOUNDTRACK.

MONTAGE: (8mm film)

A. Mme. Beaumont descending the stairs in a ravishing outfit.

B. FRANCIS AND DONNER'S POV- Harold pushing them out of his
room.

C. Joe waving them over, angry, at the front desk.

D. Betsy turning around in the balcony.

E. Joe dancing with Betsy at New Millennium's Eve, waving to
the camera.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The film ends, and runs out of the projector, leaving only a white light. The masked men step into the projector light and remove their masks.

REVEAL: FRANCIS AND DONNER.

Joe is taken aback.

JOE

You two... are behind all this torture?
(in a rage)

"Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend!
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
to have thankless children." I won't even
tell you who that is that wrote that!

FRANCIS

Your foolish children thought you should
see yourself how we see you!

DONNER

We think you're a sick old
man, Joe! Very sick. We think
the mildew is eating your
mind up.

FRANCIS
Stagnation!

JOE

"Here I stand, bound and gagged,
your slave. A poor, infirm, weak, and
despised old man." Now let me go.

FRANCIS

Do you know what time it is, Joe?

JOE

No.

DONNER

It's time you knew the truth. No one ever
dies once they've been immortalized on
celluloid. Death is a facade Joe, and our
lives are reels of film. You!... Will be
eternal!

DONNER signals with a thumbs up, and the lamp lights go
flying upwards into the darkness, followed by the huge white
screen. Then the very walls spread apart.

Joe watches as if the very reality of his existence changes
before his eyes several times:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A magical metamorphosis. Like two-dimensional puzzle pieces separating in a deconstructivist painting, everything parts in two, REVEALING that they are in a cavernous chamber. The walls are padded as in a madhouse.

JOE

Where are we? This place smells of wood.
Of a "wooden O"...

FRANCIS

WEL-COME TOOOO HO-LLY-WOOD!

As if by magic, Joe's chair becomes a wheelchair.

Two huge doors making METALLIC NOISE begin to open, letting wide beams of light into the giant room, which we can now tell is a soundstage.

JOE'S POV - he looks downward, then up.

He sees TWO BEAUTIFUL SHOWGIRLS appear through the bright, blinding daylight outside, heading directly for him.

One of them takes control of his wheelchair, caring for Joe's point of view at all times like a car in a theme park ride.

DONNER

These two girls are movie stars here in
Hollywood, Joe! Say 'hello'.

JOE

H-- h-- hhello.

SHOWGIRL #1

Hello, Joe.

SHOWGIRL #2

Hello, Joe.

The showgirls begin to push Joe through the soundstage doors.

They ALL exit through the large doors to the back lot of a major Hollywood studio, as the showgirls and EXTRAS launch into an old MUSICAL-STYLE dance number throughout the following:

DONNER

See Joe? No attitude. Especially when
they know you're--

FRANCIS

Diiiiireeeeecting!

DONNER

Diiiiireeeeecting!

JOE

I'm feeling a little dazed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCIS

Not as dazed as you'll feel next.

DONNER

Well, that's gonna be funny.

JOE

"When we are born, we cry that we are
come to this great stage of fools."

FRANCIS

We showed the executives on the lot that
little demo we just showed you-- they
loved you. Think you're perfect for the
part.

JOE

Really?

DONNER

YES!

JOE

What part?

FRANCIS

THE part.

DONNER

THE part.

FRANCIS takes Joe to a SEAMSTRESS, who instantly begins to
take measurements and whisk him away.FRANCIS and DONNER, satisfied with themselves, "signal a
wiping their hands clean, finished" gesture. They take off
with the showgirls, showing off their prowess and long chain
wallets.

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER

Joe dressed as AN OLD KING before an elaborate,
futuristically baroque throne.

JOE

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!
Rage, blow!"... I have seen the eyes of
GOD... and they are DIGITAL!!!FRANCIS & DONNER APPLAUD and CHEER from behind a movie camera
as a wind machine makes Joe's beard fly off!

FRANCIS

CUT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE

Was that too mean?

DONNER

No, it was great! One more time! LOUDER!

JOE

AGAIN?! Boys, I've done this fifteen times. I'm getting tired. I have no business doing this, you know. I'm not an act--

A man in a suit saunters up to Joe and shakes his hand.

MR. PAGE

I'm Mr. Page, Joe. I'm the studio executive who hired your sons.

JOE

Sons?

MR. PAGE

Said they learned it all from you. That you inspired them.

JOE

Sons...(takes him aside, sotto) Mr. Page, please help me. These boys are a bit off their rocker. They accosted me and ran this entire production, which I'm sure must have cost you a fortune, just to bring me here and become an actor in their... movie!... I don't want to be an actor. I hate actors.

An awkward pause. Abruptly, Mr. Page laughs heartily.

MR. PAGE

I can't believe this! You're just as amusing as they said you were! Have a good time! These are your fifteen minutes of fame, Joe, soup 'em up!

Joe, pained and beaten looks longingly at Francis and Donner, who are both stunned that Mr. Page took that as a joke.

JOE

You boys love me. I get it. Now, please. Could you get me home? I-- I don't-- I don't feel well.

Joe faints. Francis and Donner exchange glances: That's enough.

EXT. ROAD - SUNSET

A limousine drives down Hollywood streets.

INT. LIMOUSINE - SUNSET

Joe sleeps all the way there.

INT. HOLLYWOOD HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A newfangled, art deco designed room.

Joe enters and finds an assortment of shoes all over the room. Each is wrapped with a small red ribbon, bearing the name of a different country.

JOE
Would you look at this?

MONTAGE: Joe tries on different pairs of shoes and sees how it feels to walk in them.

JOE (V.O.)
I tried each pair on that night. And it was then, seeing all these shoes before me, given to me by the sons I never had, that I realized... I'd forgotten how to walk the world... I'd come to the Arcadia for an escape once, and it had turned into an eternal hiding place from the real world. I'd condemned myself.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLLYWOOD HOTEL ROOM - LATER

A digital alarm clock displays: 12 a.m.

Joe is ready for bed in his nightshirt. A KNOCK at the door. He opens it.

A young woman in her early twenties, SUSIE, stands there in promiscuous clothes.

SUSIE
Hi, I'm here to spend the night with you.

JOE
I-I can't--

Joe pokes his head out into the hallway and makes sure no one's looking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (CONT'D)
Come inside.

SUSIE
So whaddaya want?

JOE
Who sent you?

SUSIE
They told me not to say.

JOE
Of course... Tell you what. There's an old movie, on television tonight. Want to stay and watch it with me?

SUSIE
I guess so-- why not?

INT. HOLLYWOOD HOTEL - LATER - MONTAGE

A. Joe and Susie cry while they watch IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE and eat Chinese food.

JOE (V.O.)
For the first time in a long time, I enjoyed the company of a woman. The ground was cleared for me to tread.

B. He gives her some money. She refuses it and leaves.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)
Sleep was easy that night. The night I realized that a simple change of scenery and company can bring about deep changes in one's soul.

C. Joe falls asleep.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)
I was thankful to Francis and Donner for making me live out their dream.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ARCADIA HOTEL - MORNING

Joe arrives in his limo and sighs a relief as he sees the Arcadia before him. We FOLLOW JOE and then pass him, turning into his POV as we go THROUGH the hotel's huge baroque front door to REVEAL:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE FRONT COUNTER, run by John and Gwen!

JOE
What are you doing here?

GWEN
We're here to help.

JOHN
We're your assistants now, paid for by
Francis and Donner.

JOE
Boy, how the world changes. Yesterday you
were both royalty. Look at you now
slaving away at the front desk of a
hotel.

GWEN
We love it here, Joe.

JOE
Where--

JOHN
Where? We know where everything is.

JOE
Oh yeah? Where are your accents?

Gwen and Harry look at each other and shrug.

JOHN
Those are the only two things we can't
seem to find.

JOE
Told ya you should work on that accent.

JOHN
You sure did, Joe.

Joe nods and walks past them, down the hallway smiling
honestly for the first time since we've met him.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - AFTERNOON

Joe walks in tired. Faces himself in the mirror for a long,
long time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (V.O.)

With Betsy gone, and all the madness
over, that afternoon was one of reckoning
for me.

Joe opens a bottle of red wine and pours himself a glass.

He unpacks every shoe, and spaces them out in his closet.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

Of all of my new shoes, I liked
Australia, Taiwan, and Italy the best.

Joe picks up the phone and makes a call.

INT. FRONT DESK - AFTERNOON

CLOSE - AN URGENT FAX scans out of the machine...

JOHN

Wouldya look at this?

GWEN

What is it?

JOHN

The old man's got the travel bug.

GWEN

They say it's good for the soul.

JOHN

I'd say he's making up for lost time. And
while he's away, so will we.

He steals her away into a hidden nook. They're TIGHT, up
against each other.

JOHN

Will you marry me?

GWEN

Not yet.

INT. JOE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joe writes by candle light, with quill & ink on a large piece
of parchment. A picture of Betsy, and another of a scared
little boy adorn his table.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOE'S ROOM - MORNING

Joe appears to be falling asleep.

He has Betsy's picture in his hand. His grip releases and it comes CRASHING to the floor. The glass fractures into a million pieces in SLOW MOTION:

JOE (V.O.)

"For never was there more pity in saving any, than in ending me, both because therein my agonies shall end, and so shall you preserve this excellent young man who else wilfully follows his own ruin." -- *Arcadia*, 1590, by Sir Phillip Sidney.

The IMAGE of his dead WIFE appears at the foot of his bed for a fleeting moment. She smiles and disappears.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

The mailman stands next to his WIFE in full postal gear as she wails while giving birth. He breathes with her and wipes away her sweat.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A THUNDER CLAP and rain.

A CROWD OF PEOPLE gather in the cemetery for Joe's burial, dressed in black, holding oversized umbrellas.

Francis and Donner weep themselves silly.

John and Gwen appear, dressed in black, walking slowly towards the grave.

The mailman, his WIFE and NEWBORN also make their way there.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The rain has ceased.

A PRIEST gives Joe the last rites. Joe looks statuesque and pale in his coffin.

PRIEST

(to the mailman)

You are the son... Would you like to say a few words?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The mailman looks around anxiously.

MAILMAN

Joe was my father. He never treated me like a son. He treated his property, his inheritance with more care.

THE CROWD gasps at his impropriety.

INT. SMALL ROOM BEHIND COUNTER - ARCADIA HOTEL - DAY - FLASHBACK

The mailman, who is 18 here, walks in and sees something horrible. Stunned for a moment, he brings his hand to his mouth in horror. Holding back tears, he stands there:

MAILMAN (V.O.)

I was delivering mail as a young man, and walked in on him and his mistress together.

MAILMAN'S POV - A younger Joe and Betsy make love. Betsy is on a table, and Joe has his back to us. Joe turns around and sees the young man.

The young man runs out of the room.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Everyone listens, stunned.

MAILMAN

It was terrible. My mother and I disowned him. Not long after that, mother died of cancer and a broken heart. I could never bring myself to speak to him again. I was too angry to make amends...

He tries to hold back tears. His wife supports him, holding the baby.

MAILMAN (CONT'D)

Now he's blessed my son with a grand inheritance, and I hope that our family will respect it and treat it with the care that we lacked in our relationship. Sometimes our parents are not the gods we perceive them to be. They're fallible, and that's difficult to accept...

(he looks up at heaven)

Thanks Joe, for making us...

(sudden change in attitude)

RICH! I'M FILTHY, FILTHY RICH!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The mailman jumps around for joy, as the others look on stunned.

FREEZE FRAMES of the mailman jumping high in the air INTERCUT with the proceedings.

MAILMAN (CONT'D)

You two-- you planning to get married or what?!

GWEN

JOHN

Yes.

No.

GWEN

JOHN

I mean-- no.

I mean-- yes!

MAILMAN (cont'd)

I'm buying!

JOHN

GWEN

YES!

Yes!

MAILMAN (cont'd)

ALRIGHT!

They all CHEER!

The clergyman\ looks confused.

For a quick moment, the mailman's CHILD, twists in his mother's arms, and gRoWs a SATYR'S HORNS-- which, just as quickly, melt down and disappear in the next moment. The child GURGGLES lasciviously.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

John and Gwen walk away, hand in hand, from the proceedings.

GWEN

Betsy-- I miss Besty.

JOHN

So did he.

GWEN

Maybe they're together now.

JOHN

Yes-- unless his first wife's around.

Gwen glances at John, arching one eyebrow.

EXT. ARCADIA - DAY

A. GUESTS arrive for the wedding. It's a glamorous midday affair!

B. PEOPLE sitting around chatting, as fairies steal their toupees, and their wallets.

C. KIDS running and playing. Sometimes, in full gallop, flying conspicuously high off the ground, as if by enchantment.

D. With solemn sincerity, JOHN & GWEN exchange vows, and kiss. Behind them, the day changes to night as they embrace. They look behind them to see MOON DOLPHINS swim across a full blue moon, with clouds scattered like peaceful waves.

E. People CHEER, APPLAUD, do backflips and throw rice!

JOE (V.O.)

It was one of the most beautiful weddings there ever was. Real movie stars--

F. Dorothy, sits lavishly toking on her cigarette holder with Frankie and Golden on either side. They nonchalantly join in the applause.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

--invited by Francis and Donner. And even real royalty attended.

G. Off to the side, in a cranny of the woods, the FAIRY KING and QUEEN surrounded by their MINIONS look on and CHEER!

H. A limousine waits for the young couple as they run past a WEDDING MOB throwing rice in the air. FAIRIES fly through the rice, stealing it.

I. They make their way towards the limo.

The bride slams the door shout to the limo, but leaves her trail behind.

A GOOD WITCH standing nearby twitches some fingers, and the tail disappears.

It re-appears inside the car. Gwyneth notices and sighs in relief, looks out the back window and waves at them.

A FEW of the witches gather around the GOOD WITCH as if to say "job well done!". They have a LAUGH and WAVE BACK!

EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

The limo winds down Pacific Coast highway, towards us, and when it passes us:

In the distance is the SANTA MONICA PIER'S FERRIS WHEEL.

INT. ROLLER COASTER CAR - DAY

The two lovers sit, wearing their marriage outfits as the befuddled PREPUBESCENT RIDE ATTENDANT closes the iron security bar before them.

They look at each other, and smile broadly as the car begins to move towards us.

JOHN

Well... here we are.

GWEN

Here we are.

JOHN

Welcome to our marriage.

They look down at the precipice before them in horror!

JOHN (CONT'D)

By the way, my name's not really John!

GWEN

Mine's not Gwen either-- I, uh -- I hate that name! Will this be a metaphor for our life together!?

JOHN

No, an irony!

A moment of hesitation from both of them.

REVERSE ANGLE - THE COUPLE'S POV- the roller coaster takes its dizzying twist and turns.

THEY LAUGH!

ON A DOWNWARD TURN, GWEN SCREAMS like a BANSHEE!

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - NIGHT

WIDE - the roller coaster and the ferris wheel shine their neon bulbs brightly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (V.O.)

I wasn't around for the end of the story.
I was with Betsy by then. Natural causes
took me to her. Now she's duking it out
with my ex-wife again.

EXT. WOODS BEHIND ARCADIA HOTEL - DAY

John and Gwen are in a game of hide and go seek. Gwen runs
around the forest looking for places to hide.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

But I know that in the end, two of my
transient guests stayed...

John stops next to a tree, and suddenly, magically, his face
begins to morph.

His eyes grow angled and long and the tips of his ears begin
to elongate as well. A mischievous grin appears over his face
as his facial features transform to that of... AN ELF!

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

... and made the Arcadia their home, for
quite an eternity...

He runs around searching, as Gwen surfaces from behind a rock
and sees the newly transformed Harold.

She screams and runs away in horror.

He's hot on her trail.

ELF'S POV - CHASING Gwen through the woods.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

"If we shadows have offended, think but
this and all is mended:

John actually catches Gwen in his arms, and like a butterfly
coming out of a cocoon, a sprite-like being springs forth
from within her carnal shell!

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

Such as in life, you have slumbered here,
while these celluloid visions did appear.

John covers his elfin eyes to avert the brightness of the
metamorphosis.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

"And if to us you look for a cheerful ending, know that life is a dream, and stories are truths, and truths...

Wings spread behind her, she hovers, smiling before him. She sticks out her tongue, and is about to fly away.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

...are worth bending."

John catches her by a foot, and manages to pull her toward him for a kiss. She struggles, but finally gives in, and embraces him.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

That's a little Shakespeare. Mostly me.

GWEN

What is your real name?

JOHN

They call me Puck. What is yours?

GWEN/ARIEL

Ariel.

JOHN/PUCK

Pleased to meet you, Ariel.

He moves in and steals a kiss from her.

GWEN/ARIEL

Oh, no! You shouldn't have done that- not in this form!

JOHN/PUCK

Why not?

As soon as she pulls away: POP! Her stomach B-u-L-G-e-S out like a BALLOON, and her wings *shrink*.

She tries to pull away from him, but cannot release herself with quite the same force now.

He smiles, and rubs her belly. She smiles back and shrugs, as if to say, "Oh, well."

They run toward the hotel, hand in hand; Ariel floating lightly above the ground as her wings flap with a blurry quickness.

THE ARCADIA stands majestically before us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

And with my passing, you know, the curse
was forever dissolved.

The GREMLIN from the beginning resurfaces from behind a tree,
with a mischievous grin.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

They all live there to this day, coming
and going as they please, through the
halls and rooms of my mistress Arcadia.

It runs up to the frame, and begins to eat and tear away at
the image so that the film appears to be literally breaking
off, burning up, and being eaten.

JOE (V.O., CONT'D)

And for the first time ever, I rest in
peace.

Seemingly the projector in the theatre "breaks down" and
shuts off...

BLACK AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE.

MUSIC WALTZES IN WITH WHITE TITLES OVER BLACK: "FIN"

FADE OUT.