

PASSPORT TO PERIL
an original screenplay by
Katharine Panzella

kcpwriter@gmail.com
770-316-4937 cell

FADE IN:

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - DAY

A jet takes off at the end of Runway Two-Seven Right.

INT. AIRPORT - TERMINAL - DEPARTURE COUNTER - DAY

A PORTER (40's) stands behind a wheelchair carrying disheveled and distraught BETSY CONNER(34).

A ticket counter AGENT (30's) weighs her bag.

BETSY CONNER
Can I make flight 2650 to Lisbon?

AGENT
If you hurry.

The agent staples the bag tag to her boarding pass.

CLOSE ON HER NAME, "BETSY CONNER".

AGENT
Have a great vacation.

BETSY CONNER
It's not a vacation. I'm leaving
and never coming back.

She grabs the boarding pass and the porter pushes her toward security.

SIMONE HARRIS (30`s), trim in a tailored suit and low pumps, watches passengers get off the escalator. She holds up a sign that reads "CONNER" with one hand and holds a briefcase in the other.

She wanders across the corridor to study a poster of the Eiffel Tower with "PARIS" below it.

She sighs and dejectedly looks at the floor.

Suddenly, a passport lands at her feet.

Simone tucks the sign under her arm, hiding "CONNER", and picks up the passport.

BETSY CONNER
I dropped it.

Simone faces Betsy Conner who has her hand out. Simone hands her the passport.

SIMONE
Where are you going?

BETSY CONNER
To Portugal. I was in a car accident.
Never trust a man.

Simone stares at Betsy as she is wheeled away, glances at her watch, walks back to the escalators, and holds up the sign.

BEN CONNER (40`s), handsome, trim in jeans and a jacket arrives at the top of the escalator. He has a dark birthmark on his left hand. He carries a briefcase in one hand and holds a cell phone to one ear.

Simone waves the sign and shouts as he turns onto the concourse.

SIMONE
Mr. Conner.

Ben finally spots her and stops walking.

Simone hurries over him, tucks the sign under her arm, and extends her hand.

SIMONE
I`m Simone Harris. Welcome to
Atlanta.

Ben motions forward with his briefcase and continues down the corridor as he talks on the phone.

BEN
Paint the trim white and change the
AC filters.

SIMONE
Mr. Conner, I have the reports.

Simone holds up her briefcase.

Ben keeps talking.

Simone lowers her briefcase.

EXT. ATLANTA AIRPORT - OUTSIDE BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY

Ben strides through the door with Simone behind him.

A LIMO DRIVER follows with Ben`s suitcase.

He opens the limo door for Ben then opens the other door for Simone who walks around the car and climbs in.

The man puts the bag in the trunk, shuts both doors, and drives away.

INT. LIMO - DAY

Ben talks on the phone.

Simone stares out the window.

BEN

The dark gray carpet goes in the living room. The other roll goes in the office.

Ben snaps the phone shut and looks at Simone.

BEN

What was your name again?

SIMONE

Simone Harris, sir.

Ben opens the refrigerator door, grabs a beer, pops the top, then shoves it into her hands.

Simone protests.

SIMONE

Mr. Conner, we`re going to the office.

Ben pops the top of another beer.

BEN

Simone, I`m the consultant.

He slugs down half of it.

BEN

I`m going to the hotel, change, have a swim, then drinks and dinner.

He smiles.

BEN

Meet me at the office at eight tomorrow morning.

SIMONE

Yes, sir.

BEN

Drink up. I`ll tell you about my idiot contractor.

EXT. ATLANTA - INTERSTATE 85 NORTH - DAY

The limo heads down the freeway towards skyscrapers.

EXT. ATLANTA - RITZ CARLTON HOTEL - DAY

The limo pulls up under the hotel portico.

The doorman opens the door and Ben climbs out.

Simone sticks her head out an open window.

SIMONE

It was nice meeting you. I'll be at
the office at eight.

BEN

See you then.

The doorman shuts the door, gets in, and drives off.

EXT. ATLANTA FINANCIAL CENTER - DAY

Twenty story towers of glass form the office complex.

INT. ATLANTA FINANCIAL CENTER - LOBBY - DAY

Ben breezes into the elegant granite and marble lobby.

Simone, briefcase in hand, meets him at the elevators.

SIMONE

Good morning, Mr. Conner. Hope you
had a pleasant evening.

BEN

Very pleasant.

He steps into an open elevator. She follows.

SUPER: "MANY HOURS LATER"

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

A wall clock reads 6:00. The lights of the other buildings
shine through the windows. The conference table is strewn
with papers, pens, laptops, coffee cups, and water bottles.

Several MEN in suits file out of the room.

Ben and Simone are the last to leave.

BEN

Simone, I couldn't have done this
without you today.

SIMONE

It was nothing.

BEN

You were prepared. We got more done in one day than I ever hoped for.

SIMONE

Thank you, sir.

BEN

Call me Ben. Let`s go eat. I`m starved.

SIMONE

Uh, I was going home...

BEN

Nonsense, I`m buying you dinner.

INT. RITZ CARLTON - AG STEAKHOUSE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Vintage black and white photos decorate the walls above the checkered black leather banquette seats.

Simone and Ben sit at a table covered with a white tablecloth and silver flatware. Simone sips a glass of red wine.

SIMONE

So you have condos?

BEN

Yes. I have six but I live in the best, a penthouse with a view of the Savannah River.

Ben reaches across the table and squeezes her hand.

BEN

Savannah is a beautiful city. I could show you the sights. It has museums and even a haunted restaurant where pirates lived.

SIMONE

It sounds fascinating.

BEN

I'm staying here for the weekend and next week. I'd love to see some of the city. Want to be my tour guide?

Simone nods and smiles.

EXT. ATLANTA BOTANIC GARDEN - DAY

A gray stone lily pond fronts wide steps leading up to the eight story glass-walled building.

INT. ATLANTA BOTANIC GARDEN - CONSERVATORY - DAY

Simone and Ben walk through towering palms.

BEN

This is beautiful, just like you.

She smiles.

SIMONE

I could live in the tropics.

He takes Simone's hand.

BEN

I'm in Mexico next month. Maybe you can join me.

Simone withdraws her hand and stammers.

SIMONE

I have to work.

BEN

I'm gonna be here this week. And then a week every month. We'll become great friends.

INT. ORCHID HOUSE - DAY

They laugh and look at the colorful orchids.

INT. GIFT SHOP - DAY

Ben buys her an orchid plant at the gift shop.

He glances at his watch.

BEN

It's almost five. Would you like to have dinner with me?

SIMONE

Dinner would be nice. We could drive by my house and drop off the plant.

BEN

Sounds perfect.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben drives along a tree-lined street.

SIMONE

Go two blocks and then turn right.

They drive past several houses.

Simone points at a house down the road.

SIMONE

There it is.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - DAY

The one story mid-century modern house is nestled between trees and shrubs.

Ben pulls into the driveway and they get out of the car. Simone holds the plant.

BEN

Your house is lovely. Can I take a picture of it?

SIMONE

Sure.

BEN

You can be in it too.

Ben waves her over to stand in front of the house then snaps a picture with his phone.

BEN

Great picture.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Simone hands him the plant, opens the front door and enters, followed by Ben who places the plant on a hall table.

BEN

Very nice.

Ben follows Simone into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A large vaulted area contains the kitchen and dining room. The modern kitchen has birch cabinets, granite countertops, and stainless steel appliances.

Ben walks over to the windows overlooking the back yard.

BEN
How big is the lot?

SIMONE
Around an acre. We bought the house
almost twenty years ago.

BEN
I'm sure it's gone up in value.

SIMONE
We remodeled the kitchen before the
divorce.

BEN
It looks brand new.

SIMONE
I try to keep the house looking nice
for Josh.

BEN
Josh?

SIMONE
My son. He's sixteen. He'll inherit
it someday. That is, unless I marry
again.

She blushes.

He smiles.

BEN
Life is full of changes.

He turns and walks toward the back of the house.

BEN
I'd love to see the rest.

INT. HALL - DAY

Simone follows him as he heads down the hall, peeking into
the bedrooms.

BEN
Big rooms.

Ben turns back to Simone.

BEN
Is Italian OK?

INT. BUCKHEAD - ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben and Simone sit at a table with empty wine glasses, dessert plates, and coffee cups.

Simone pushes her plate away.

SIMONE

Tell me about your marriage.

BEN

My wife had cancer and died two years ago.

SIMONE

I'm so sorry.

BEN

With each round of chemo, she lost more hair. She was so brave.

Ben wipes his eyes with his napkin.

SIMONE

How awful.

BEN

I'm ruining our dinner. Let's talk about something happier.

He takes Simone's hand.

BEN

I want to know you better.

He kisses her hand.

BEN

I want to spend more time with you. And meet Josh. Can he have dinner with us tomorrow?

SIMONE

I'll talk to him tonight.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The table is littered with empty plates. Simone and JOSH (16), a tall teenager with short hair, sit across from Ben.

SIMONE

I loved that lasagna.

JOSH

And we have dinner for tomorrow.

He points to a full to go bag.

BEN
Josh, I'm happy we finally met. I'd
like to see you play sometime.

JOSH
I have a game next weekend.

BEN
We can go out to eat after it's over.
What's your favorite restaurant?

JOSH
I like steak.

BEN
Steak it is.

He turns to Simone.

BEN
There's a new comedy club downtown.
Want to go after we drop off Josh?

SIMONE
Sounds like fun.

INT. COMEDY CLUB - NIGHT

Simone and Ben laugh at a performer on the stage.

Ben reaches for Simone's hand and kisses it.

BEN
Having fun, darling?

SIMONE
Oh yes.

BEN
You're so beautiful.

He kisses her fingers.

BEN
Let's have a drink at your house.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben and Simone cuddle on the sofa, drinks on the table in front of them.

BEN

I love you. I can't stand being
away from you.

SIMONE

I love you too.

He kisses her and she kisses back. They passionately embrace
and he starts to unbutton her dress.

SIMONE

Not here.

She stands up and walks out. Ben follows.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

She walks down the hall with Ben behind her. He grabs her
waist as she turns to go into the bedroom.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben pushes Simone onto the bed. They take off each other's
clothes and get under the covers.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The morning sun streams in as Simone texts, "COME OVER FOR
PIZZA TONIGHT"

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Two pizza boxes are on the kitchen counter along with two
wine bottles.

Simone sits next to her friend, BETH, similar age, wearing
glasses. Both have full wine glasses.

BETH

Tell me about your date last night.

SIMONE

Dinner and the show were great and
so was afterwards.

She blushes.

Both laugh.

BETH

He loves you and now you're not alone.

Simone grins.

SIMONE

Remember how I would call you and cry. You and Josh were the only friends I had for months after the divorce. I didn't trust anyone.

BETH

Just because Henry cheated on you, doesn't mean Ben will. Thank God you got this house.

Simone nods.

SIMONE

It was a battle. Henry didn't want to pay for Josh's tuition either.

The door opens and Josh breezes in. He's in basketball gear and carries a gym bag.

JOSH

Hi, Mom.

SIMONE

How was practice?

JOSH

The usual.

Josh grabs a soda, then opens a pizza box.

JOSH

You got pepperoni. Thanks.

He grabs the whole box then walks out.

Simone laughs.

BETH

He eats like a horse.

SIMONE

I'm going to try to get some overtime.

She sips her wine.

SIMONE

My gas bill is due, we need groceries, and Josh needs new basketball shoes.

BETH

Does Ben know?

SIMONE

He says I should get more child support so I need to get a modification from the court.

She looks out a window.

SIMONE

I got the house and some money but it's not enough. Going back to court will cost more money.

BETH

How does Ben treat Josh?

SIMONE

Just fine when they see each other, which isn't often. Ben's away on trips and Josh has games.

Beth looks at her phone, then stands up.

BETH

It's late. We can talk more tomorrow.

She hugs Simone.

SUPER: "THREE MONTHS LATER"

INT. BUCKHEAD - ST. REGIS HOTEL - THE GARDEN ROOM - NIGHT

Cascading vines cover the walls. Trees and plants grow amid the tables, set with flickering votive candles.

Ben and Simone sit at a banquette under the leafy canopy.

Ben stands, gets a ring box from his jacket pocket, drops to one knee, and opens it.

Simone gasps.

BEN

Simone, you are beautiful. I can't live without you. Please marry me.

Simone throws her arms around him.

SIMONE

Yes, yes, yes.

SUPER: "ONE MONTH LATER"

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben shows Simone a thick legal document lying on the counter.

BEN

This is the pre-nup that I told you about.

Simone reads the first page then leafs through the many pages.

SIMONE

It's all about your business.

BEN

Legally the business is mine and that's what it says. We can go to the bank and then have lunch.

He kisses her cheek.

SIMONE

Are you sure this is necessary?

BEN

Darling, you can trust me.

He kisses her on the lips.

BEN

I'm different from your first husband.

Ben takes her hand and they walk out of the room.

EXT. BANK LOBBY - DAY

Ben and Simone sit at a desk. Simone looks at the document. She leafs through the pages then stops to read one page.

Ben frowns.

BEN

Is there a problem?

Simone looks up.

SIMONE

I haven't read the whole thing.

BEN

Baby, it's just business stuff. Everything's fine.

He kisses her cheek.

BEN

I'm hungry. Let's go to that pizza place that Josh likes. We can get an order for him too.

SIMONE
Where do I sign?

The notary points to a yellow post it arrow.

Simone signs and then Ben signs.

The NOTARY (40's) crimps the paper with a seal.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Ben and Simone sit in a booth. A single pizza slice is on a stand in front of them.

SIMONE
I was hungry.

BEN
Me too.

He pushes his plate away.

BEN
I want to talk about Josh. What if something happened to you?
(pause)
If my name was on the house until he turned eighteen then he would be taken care of. Legally, that is.

SIMONE
I don't know. Now I'm gonna worry.

BEN
I want to protect you and Josh.

Ben takes her hand.

BEN
I love you. You are the most important thing in my life.

He kisses her cheek.

SIMONE
I'll think about it.

Ben smiles.

BEN
Neither of us should worry about Josh. I'm so happy that I'll be a part of your family.

He kisses her hand then her neck then her lips.

INT. ST. REGIS HOTEL - ASTOR BALLROOM - EVENING

Three tiered chandeliers hang over large floral arrangements and tall flickering candles on round tables, draped with tablecloths. Candle sconces flank the curtained windows.

A hundred guests in formal attire mingle and drink champagne.

Ben and Simone sit at a table on a raised stage. Ben wears a black tux and Simone wears a bridal gown.

Josh sits next to them with his girlfriend KIMI, same age, thin, long brown hair. Kimi whispers in Josh's ear.

KIMI
The happy couple.

Josh whispers back.

JOSH
My fingers are crossed. Mom hasn't dated much since the divorce. She seems happy.

He glances at his mother who is smiling.

Ben stands up, glass in hand.

BEN
Let's toast my beautiful bride.

All stand and raise their glasses.

BEN
Simone, I will always love you.

He touches his glass to hers then both take a sip.

The guests cheer and clap.

SUPER: "THE HONEYMOON"

EXT. LAKE OCONEE, GEORGIA - THE RITZ CARLTON RESORT - DAY

The luxury lakefront resort, nestled in the woods, has golf courses, water sports, and skeet shooting.

INT. THE RITZ CARLTON RESORT - SUITE - DAY

Ben is dressed for a day on the links. He kisses Simone.

BEN
Have fun, dear. Get a massage.

He walks out.

Simone looks out the window, sighs, and looks around.

She opens the closet door and grabs a pair of Ben's pants from the floor.

A piece of paper falls out of the back pocket.

Simone drops the pants and picks up the paper. She reads the handwritten note.

SIMONE

Call M about closing? Closing what?

INT. THE RITZ CARLTON RESORT - BARREL ROOM - NIGHT

The coffered ceiling of wood timbers lends a rustic feel to the crowded room. Whiskey barrels are along the walls.

Ben sits at the bar with Simone.

SIMONE

(to Ben)

I sent the laundry out today and a paper fell out of your pocket. It said, "call M about closing." What is that?

BEN

Nothing. Just to remind me to call a guy I know who's buying a house.

Ben kisses her hand.

BEN

Darling, I will always tell you everything important in my life. You can trust me.

He kisses her lips.

BEN

Let's eat and go back to the room. We are on our honeymoon.

He grins.

SUPER: "THREE MONTHS LATER"

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Simone and Beth rake leaves. Both wear dirty jeans and gardening gloves.

Simone wipes her face and sighs.

SIMONE
Almost finished.

Josh wheels a green fiberglass wheelbarrow. The women pile leaves and branches into it and Josh wheels it away. He calls back to Simone.

JOSH
Mom, please come over here.

He waits while Simone walks over.

JOSH
I need to talk to you about Ben.

Josh drops the wheelbarrow handle.

JOSH
I'm just not sure about him.

SIMONE
Why?

JOSH
He's always nice. I never see him get mad or frustrated or even sweat. We go to great restaurants.

SIMONE
He's a gentleman who wants to take care of us.

JOSH
Mom, men aren't perfect. It's like he's buttering me up.

SIMONE
Baby, don't worry.

She hugs him.

SIMONE
This marriage will work.

She steps back.

SIMONE
I'm finally happy.

Simone walks back to Beth.

SIMONE
It's quitting time.

She tugs off her gloves. Beth throws her rake to the side and pulls off her gloves.

Simone opens the back door for Beth, who enters first.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK

There are cartons of Chinese food on the counter.

Beth washes her hands at the sink.

BETH
We should do this more often.

SIMONE
NOT.

Both laugh.

Beth dries her hands as Simone washes hers.

SIMONE
Josh was a big help.

She lowers her voice.

SIMONE
We need to talk after he leaves.

Simone dries her hands, then starts to say something, but Josh walks into the room.

JOSH
I'm starved.

He washes his hands, then dries them.

Simone passes out plates, then points at the food containers.

SIMONE
Beef lo mein, kung pao chicken, and
shrimp fried rice.

Josh piles food on his plate, grabs a soda, and walks out.

Beth turns to Simone and grabs her arm.

BETH
Tell me.

Simone moves away and grabs a plate.

SIMONE
Let's eat first.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The fire blazes. Empty plates and Chinese food cartons cover the coffee table.

SIMONE
You clear and I'll get the wine.

Beth puts the plates and cartons on the counter.

Simone picks up a bottle of Merlot and sets it on the coffee table.

Beth grabs two wine glasses and a wine bottle opener.

BETH
You're stalling.

She gives the corkscrew to Simone then places the glasses on the table.

Simone uncorks the wine, pours, then sets the bottle down.

BETH
What is going on?

SIMONE
Ben stays in Savannah a lot. He was here two weeks last month but only a week this month.

She opens a folder on the coffee table.

SIMONE
Here's the note about the closing.

She places the note on the left side of the folder.

SIMONE
And this.

She hands a partially shredded paper to Beth.

SIMONE
I emptied the shredder and saw it.

Beth stares at the paper.

BETH
It's a mortgage statement dated two years ago. Ben and Betsy Conner are on the loan.

SIMONE

He told me his wife died of cancer but he never told me her name. And Ben told me the note was about a friend's closing.

BETH

Maybe not.

SIMONE

Ben wants me to sign my house over to him. He's talked about it for months.

She sips her wine.

SIMONE

He wants to get a line of credit and then buy stock. He says the stock will be in both our names.

BETH

This sounds fishy. Run it by your lawyer.

SIMONE

I'll tell Ben it's gonna take time.

BETH

Why did he lie about her having cancer? Is she dead or alive now?

SIMONE

Maybe he's too upset to talk about her because he really loved her. He's hiding his feelings.

BETH

That's possible. But you still need to find out about his ex and about that mortgage.

Simone smiles.

SIMONE

I forgot to tell you. Ben's gonna be home for Thanksgiving. We're gonna go over to his cousin's house.

BETH

That sounds nice.

Simone nods.

SIMONE

I met her at the wedding. Ben's gone over there but he's never taken me with him.

BETH

Why?

Simone shrugs her shoulders.

SIMONE

I don't know.

BETH

More unknown things.

SIMONE

Stop that.

She stands up and motions for Beth to follow her.

SIMONE

I want to see that new painting that you got and I bought a new bedspread too. Ben gets home tomorrow so I wanted something to freshen up the bedroom.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - DAY

A BMW drives into the driveway. Ben gets out of the car.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben walks into the kitchen and sees Simone.

SIMONE

How was the flight?

BEN

The usual. I hate airports.

He drops his bags, opens the refrigerator, and grabs a beer. He pops the top and takes a gulp.

BEN

I needed that.

He faces Simone.

SIMONE

I want you to see the bedroom.

Ben takes another gulp and puts his arm around her waist.

BEN
My favorite room.

They walk out of the kitchen.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - HALL - DAY

They walk down the hall and into the bedroom.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The large bedroom is a suite with walk-in closets, a dressing table, and a bathroom. The bed is covered with a bedspread that matches the curtains on the windows that flank it.

SIMONE
Do you like it?

Ben finishes the beer, tosses it into a trash can, then turns to Simone.

BEN
I love it.

He kisses Simone.

BEN
I love you.

He pulls her down on the bed and they kiss.

BEN
You know what they say?

Ben laughs.

BEN
What do men bring home after a
business trip?

SIMONE
What?

BEN
Dirty laundry and

He kisses her again. They roll around on the bed as he pulls her clothes off.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A tipsy Simone sits with Ben at the dinner table, covered with dirty plates and two opened wine bottles. They both hold half full wine glasses.

BEN

Baby that was so good. Both you and that steak.

He takes a sip of wine.

Simone giggles.

SIMONE

Bet you say that to all the girls.

Ben grins.

BEN

Only the ones that can cook.

He puts the glass down.

BEN

So what about the house?

Simone takes a sip of wine then slowly puts her glass down.

BEN

Well?

Simone twists her hair.

SIMONE

I've been too busy to even think about it.

She looks out the window.

Ben grabs her arm and raises his voice.

BEN

It's a good investment.

Simone pushes him away and rubs her arm.

SIMONE

That hurt.

She pushes her chair back.

SIMONE

And don't yell at me.

She stands up and walks out of the room.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Simone runs down the hall and into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

She slams the door, Locks it, sits on the bed, and cries.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Ben pounds on the bedroom door.

BEN
Open up.

SIMONE (O.S.)
No.

BEN
Please.

SIMONE (O.S.)
Sleep in the guest room.

Ben paces up and down the hall.

BEN
I didn't want to start a fight.

SIMONE (O.S.)
But you did.

BEN
I'm sorry I grabbed your arm. I
didn't mean to hurt you.

Ben starts to punch the door then stops. He stalks back into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ben opens cabinets, gets out a liquor bottle and a glass. He pours a drink, takes a sip, then walks over to the sofa.

He puts down his glass and punches a pillow, first softly, then harder and harder. He punches it again and it splits.

Ben throws it down, looks at a filing cabinet, and stomps over to it. He opens the top drawer, leafs through the files, and pulls out a folder.

Ben opens it.

CLOSE ON: THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF SIMONE HARRIS.

He reads it.

BEN
Josh is not getting this house.

Ben rips up the will into little pieces, puts them down the garbage disposal, and turns it on. The pieces disappear.

He removes the file folder label and puts it down the disposal.

He puts the blank file into the lower drawer with other blank folders and closes it.

EXT. BEN'S CAR - THE NEXT DAY

The car drives through a suburb of large two story brick houses with manicured lawns.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben drives while Simone looks out of her window.

BEN
Are you gonna talk to me?

SIMONE
Why?

She turns toward him.

SIMONE
All you do is pick fights.

She turns back to the window.

BEN
I won't say anything about the house
today. OK?

SIMONE
Don't mention it.
(pause)
Ever.

Ben tightly grips the steering wheel and stares ahead.

The car slows down and pulls into a driveway behind three other cars.

EXT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DAY

The house is a Mid-Century Modern masterpiece. Two story glass windows flank tall entry doors. Green swags are on the railings. Wreaths decorate every window.

Ben and Simone get out of the car and walk toward the house.

Ben takes her hand but Simone pulls it back.

Ben rings the doorbell. RING! RING!

The door opens to reveal a smiling EMILY (40's), a tall woman in a short cocktail dress.

EMILY
Ben, it's good to see you.

She hugs Ben then pushes him away.

EMILY
Hello Simone.

Emily hugs Simone.

EMILY
Come in.

Simone and Ben walk inside.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

The foyer has a mirror above an antique table next to a coat closet. The kitchen and living room are on either sides of an open fireplace, now blazing.

Emily turns to Ben.

EMILY
Hang up the coats and I'll get drinks.
(to Simone)
Do you like red or white wine?

SIMONE
Merlot, please, if you have it.

Emily smiles.

EMILY
Honey, we've got everything.

She walks away.

Ben and Simone take off their coats. Ben hangs them up.

They walk into the living room.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The party is in full swing.

Emily's husband, MIKE, tall, dark hair, same age, shakes hands with Ben.

Ben introduces Simone.

BEN

And here's my darling wife.

Simone shakes hands with Mike.

SIMONE

So nice to be here.

Emily breezes in with a glass of red wine in one hand and a bourbon on the rocks in the other. She gives the wine to Simone and the bourbon to Ben.

EMILY

Ben, say hello to our neighbors.

Emily links arms with Ben and pulls him away. They walk towards another couple, GWEN (50's), short dark curly hair, wears glasses, and TOM, same age, balding, portly.

Mike turns to Emily.

MIKE

Nice you could take off.

Simone frowns.

SIMONE

What do you mean?

MIKE

Ben said you've been so busy at work that you didn't have time to come over with him.

Simone raises her eyebrows.

SIMONE

He exaggerates.

Mike smiles.

MIKE

Call us anytime. We're family.

Emily rejoins them.

EMILY

Ben's other wives never came over for Thanksgiving.

SIMONE

Wives?

EMILY
He didn't tell you? Two marriages
and two divorces, both in two years.

Simone puts her hand over her mouth.

EMILY
Dinner's ready.
(to Mike)
Mike, please seat everyone.

Emily walks into the kitchen while Mike escorts Simone to the dining table.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

The vaulted dining room is lit by holiday candle centerpieces on the table and sideboard, reflecting on the glass windows.

Ben carves a large glazed ham on a silver platter. He looks up and sees Simone.

BEN
Simone, come sit here.

He points to a chair, two seats, away with the carving knife.

BEN
I always do the carving.

Simone sits down.

Emily walks in with a steaming bowl of green beans, followed by Mike, who carries a basket of rolls.

Emily sits at the table head facing Ben.

MIKE
Ready?

BEN
Yep.

MIKE
OK, I'll get everyone.

He walks back into the living room.

Gwen and Tom walk in.

EMILY
Gwen and Tom, sit anywhere.

They sit across from Simone.

Carol and Les walk in and sit next to Simone.

Mike walks in with Josh and Kimi.

JOSH

Sorry we're late. Meet Kimi.

They sit together.

Ben gets up and sits next to Simone.

Mike sits down, facing Emily.

MIKE

Time for the blessing?

He bows his head as do all at the table.

MIKE

Lord, bless this food and all at
this table. Amen.

EMILY

Pass me your plates. And Mike, please
refill our wine glasses.

Emily serves the vegetables then the plates are passed to
Ben who serves the turkey.

Mike grabs a bottle of red and a bottle of white wine from
the sideboard. He refills her glass, then the others.

Tom introduces himself across the table.

TOM

I'm Tom and this is my wife Gwen.
We live next door.

GWEN

I gave Emily cookies when she was a
child.

A tipsy Emily speaks up.

EMILY

They liked me better because they
knew Ben was mean to me.

Ben's face reddens.

EMILY

(to Ben)

I told Gwen about those awful spiders.
You put them in my face until I kissed
your hand.

Mike stands up and goes to Emily.

EMILY
(to Emily)
Honey, you've had enough.
(to the guests)
Everyone eat. I'll make some coffee.

He leads Emily away from the table.

BEN
Tarantulas don't bite. It was a
joke.

Ben and Simone face Josh and Kimi.

BEN
All this food. Let's eat.

He starts eating.

Josh and Kimi look at each other then eat.

Simone looks at Ben then stands up.

SIMONE
I'll be right back.

She walks out and into the kitchen.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mike pours coffee into a silver coffee pot. Emily dabs her eyes with a napkin.

Simone walks in.

SIMONE
Ben put spiders in your face?

EMILY
I had forgotten about it until now.

Emily puts her hand on Simone's arm.

EMILY
Honey, I like you so much better
than the other two.

SIMONE
Other two?

EMILY
Betsy and Nancy.

MIKE

Betsy was Ben's first wife. Nancy was his second. Divorced each of them after only a year. I thought that was too quick.

EMILY

A real marriage lasts more than a year.

SIMONE

Ben told me his wife died of cancer.

MIKE

He must know more than we do.

Mike picks up the coffee pot.

MIKE

Let's salvage this meal.

He walks out.

Emily picks up a tray of coffee cups and follows him.

Simone paces the room, rubbing her hands together. She sighs heavily then walks back into the dining room.

INT. EMILY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Simone sits down. She glares at Ben.

MIKE

Who wants coffee?

EXT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Ben drives and Simone looks out her window.

SIMONE

You put spiders in Emily's face?

BEN

Two tiny creatures that don't bite and stay in a cage. She overreacted.

SIMONE

That was cruel.

BEN

Kids fight all the time.

SIMONE

Not like that.

She raises her voice.

SIMONE

Emily said you had two wives, which you didn't tell me, and you said nothing about either dying from cancer.

BEN

The surgeon said he found a tumor.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The car turns into their driveway and stops. Simone opens her door and starts to get out. Ben grabs her arm.

BEN

I don't want to wreck our holiday.

Simone gets out of the car then turns to him.

SIMONE

You already did.

She slams the door in his face and walks into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT DAY

Simone and Ben sit at the kitchen table holding coffee mugs.

SIMONE

I wanted to talk to you about the house taxes. They're due in three weeks.

BEN

So?

SIMONE

You know I don't have the money.

BEN

You should have planned better.

SIMONE

I can hardly pay the mortgage and buy groceries. There's not enough left to cover the taxes.

BEN

You should ask for a raise.

SIMONE

We're not talking about my job.
We're talking about the taxes on
this house.

She stands up and goes to the window.

SIMONE

You know how hard it was to get this
house in the divorce. I love living
here.

She turns back.

SIMONE

Please help me.

She goes to Ben, kneels, then and kisses his hand.

BEN

OK, OK. I'll pay the taxes.

Simone stands up and hugs him.

SIMONE

Now I can stop worrying.

Ben sips coffee.

BEN

Let's talk about the convention. It
starts next week.

EXT. SEA ISLAND, GA. - THE CLOISTER - NIGHT

The four story Moorish resort reeks of old money. The white stucco towers have red tile roofs and graceful arched porches, called loggias, patterned after a Spanish palace.

Ben and Simone arrive at the entrance portico which is draped with a banner reading, "WELCOME US SOCIETY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS" A porter takes their luggage.

INT. THE CLOISTER BEACH CLUB - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The suite has a separate bedroom, bathroom, and living room. Ben talks to Simone who is in the bedroom.

BEN

I'm going down for a nightcap.

SIMONE (O.S.)

I have to get up early for my spa
day. I'm going to sleep. Nite.

BEN

Good-night.

He walks out.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Ben walks down the hall to an elevator and gets in.

EXT. THE CLOISTER BEACH CLUB - NIGHT

He walks out of the elevator and towards his car.

EXT. BEN'S CAR - NIGHT

Ben drives away from the hotel.

EXT. THE INN AT SEA ISLAND - NIGHT

Ben arrives at the Inn, a two story, much smaller version of the Cloister. He parks his car, and walks inside.

INT. THE INN AT SEA ISLAND - BAR - NIGHT

The bar is crowded and noisy.

Ben finds a WAITRESS (20's).

BEN

Double Scotch on the rocks.

He scans the room. The waitress returns with his drink.

Ben picks up the drink and takes a sip.

BEN

Put it on room two-zero-five.
Beasley.

He walks outside toward the pool.

EXT. POOL BAR - NIGHT

Ben spots an attractive brunette and walks over to her.

MARCIE BEASLEY (30's), tall, thin, short hair, in a tight top and pants, turns to Ben.

MARCIE

Hello, stranger.

He kisses her.

BEN

I told you I'd be here.

He takes a sip then puts an arm around her waist.

BEN
You look great tonight.

Marcie pulls away.

MARCIE
The other women signed the deeds.
What is the problem?

BEN
I don't know why Simone won't sign
the house over. And she knows about
my other marriages.

MARCIE
How?

BEN
Emily has a big mouth.

MARCIE
What about the closings?

BEN
I don't know. I shredded all the
copies and put the originals in the
box at the bank.

He takes another sip.

BEN
It's a great mid-century house on a
big lot. Worth over a million.

He kisses her.

BEN
Simone's gonna sleep like a log. We
can go to your room tonight and still
play tennis tomorrow.

Marcie frowns.

MARCIE
This won't work.

BEN
It will. Do you remember that pre-
nup that Simone signed?

MARCIE
About your business.

BEN

Not really.

Ben grins.

BEN

In the middle of a hundred pages of small print, I added a sentence. If Simone dies before Josh is eighteen, I get the house so I can "take care of him." He just turned seventeen.

MARCIE

When is her massage appointment tomorrow?

BEN

I think it's before she has lunch, maybe eleven.

MARCIE

I'll meet you around eleven-fifteen on the tennis courts.

INT. THE CLOISTER BEACH CLUB - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Simone wears a yoga outfit and carries a gym bag. She kisses Ben and gives him a hug.

SIMONE

Today will be fun.

BEN

Don't get used to it.

He laughs when Simone frowns.

BEN

Can't you take a joke?

He kisses her cheek.

BEN

Have a wonderful day at the spa.

She smiles.

SIMONE

I will. So what are you going to do all day?

BEN

Play tennis with a buddy. Maybe go swimming.

SIMONE
Meet me at five. Bye.

She kisses his cheek and walks out.

INT. SEA ISLAND, GA. - THE CLOISTER SPA - MASSAGE ROOM - DAY

A FEMALE MASSEUSE (20's) massages Simone.

A female ATTENDANT (20's) comes into the room.

ATTENDANT
You have a call on the house phone.

Simone raises her head.

SIMONE
Why didn't they call my cell?

ATTENDANT
They said it's an emergency.

Simone pulls the sheet around her, sits up, grabs a robe, and rushes out, slamming the door behind her, leaving the masseuse with the attendant.

INT. THE CLOISTER SPA - HALL - DAY

A phone sits on a table by the wall. Simone picks it up and turns to face the closed massage room door.

SIMONE
Hello?

Holding a tennis racquet, a tennis white garbed Marcie creeps up on Simone. She flips a light switch on the wall.

The lights go off.

SIMONE
Hello?

There is a THUD, a CRASH, then FOOTSTEPS running away.

The attendant opens the door.

ATTENDANT
Why are the lights off?

She walks into the hall and flicks the switch.

The lights reveal an unconscious Simone lying on the floor.

EXT. SEA ISLAND, GA. - TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Ben and Marcie play tennis.

BEN

Honey, you can beat me. NOT.

He lobs the ball past her.

MARCIE

Not fair.

Ben walks to the net and kisses her cheek.

BEN

You can do this.

He backs away and walks back to the service line.

BEN

Serve next.

Marcie serves and Ben misses the ball.

BEN

I told you.

A TENNIS PRO walks up to Ben.

TENNNIS PRO

Your wife has had an accident.

BEN

What?

TENNNIS PRO

They said she hit her head. Follow me.

Ben waves at Marcie and follows the man.

INT. THE CLOISTER - INFIRMARY - DAY

Simone sits on a gurney holding an ice pack on her head with one hand. She has blood on her other hand.

Ben walks into the room, sees her, then hugs her.

BEN

Darling, what happened?

SIMONE

I don't know. I picked up the phone and next I blacked out. I must have hit my head.

BEN
You're bleeding.

The uniformed doctor walks over.

DOCTOR
She'll need stitches. I can do them here or we can take her to the urgent care center.

BEN
Do them here.

MONTAGE:

The doctor stitches up Simone.

Marcie has a drink in the bar.

Ben helps a bandaged Simone walk out of the room.

Marcie eats lunch in the bar.

END MONTAGE.

INT. THE CLOISTER BEACH CLUB - BEDROOM - DECK - DAY

A robed Simone reclines on a lounge. She sips iced tea.

Ben holds an ice pack on her head.

BEN
I never imagined you'd be hurt at a spa.

MARCIE
Neither did I.

BEN
So you blacked out?

SIMONE
Yes. I don't remember anything.

BEN
The doctor says you probably have a concussion. You have to stay still for the next twenty-four hours.

SIMONE
After we eat lunch, I'll just relax here. The pain pills are working.

BEN
I won't leave your side.

INT. SEA ISLAND, GA. - RIVER BAR - NIGHT

The day turns to dusk. The sunset is as hot as the group in the room. Thirsty guests crowd the bar.

A laughing Marcie is perched on a barstool surrounded by THREE MEN.

Ben shoves his way over then puts his arm around her.

BEN
Come here often?

Marcie puts her glass down.

MARCIE
Follow me outside.

Ben scans the bar, then follows Marcie.

INT. THE CLOISTER - NIGHT

Marcie faces Ben.

MARCIE
What happened?

BEN
She's got six stitches and a
concussion. She'll be fine.

MARCIE
Darn.

BEN
She blacked out, didn't see anything.
Doesn't know what happened.

MARCIE
I do.

Ben grabs her arm.

BEN
Why would you pull such a stunt in a
public place?

Marcie pulls away from him.

MARCIE
I checked out the massage rooms
yesterday. They are very private.
I knew I wouldn't get caught.

BEN
I have to get back. She's sleeping
but I have to watch her. I'll call
you tomorrow.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Simone with a bandage on her head sits at the table, sipping
coffee.

Ben enters carrying a briefcase and roll aboard suitcase.

BEN
Time to head out.

SIMONE
When will you be home?

BEN
Maybe a week. You know how these
contracts go.

He looks at his watch.

BEN
I'm gonna be late.

He kisses her cheek.

BEN
The doctor said you should take a
few sick days so take it easy.

SIMONE
Ben, I need the money. You said
you'd help.

Ben heads out the door.

BEN
I have to catch the plane.

SIMONE
I need to pay the bills.

BEN
I have to go. We can talk tonight.

He walks out.

Simone texts "COME OVER AFTER WORK" then hits send.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Simone and Beth sit at a cluttered dinner table, full of to go boxes, dirty plates, wine bottles, and wine glasses.

BETH
What happened?

SIMONE
It was just an accident. I guess I slipped on some massage oil. I feel fine now. My head doesn't even hurt.

BETH
Good.

SIMONE
Something's going on with Ben. He's either hot or cold to me.

BETH
I bet he's bipolar. He needs a therapist.

SIMONE
He would laugh at that.

BETH
Why did he keep the wives a secret?
And what about that loan?

Simone rubs her forehead.

BETH
Maybe I can find them.

Simone bites her lip.

BETH
And what about the money? Does he expect you to starve?

Beth sets her glass down.

BETH
I just thought of something. Weren't you gonna go visit the condo sometime?

SIMONE
Yeah, but Ben always says he's working.

BETH
Go there. Don't tell him you're coming.

SIMONE
He could have a client.

BETH
A woman.

SIMONE
I didn't mean that.

BETH
I did.

SIMONE
You're right. I'll drive down next
weekend. A wife can surprise her
husband, can't she?

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The building is four stories of glass and stone. Simone
walks in the front door.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Simone gets off the elevator and walks onto the top floor.
The open floor plan has a catwalk around a four story atrium.

Simone peers down over the glass railing to the ground floor.
She moves back and continues looking at numbers on the tall
frosted glass doors.

She stops at a door marked "425" and opens it.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

The open office has floor to ceiling windows with a view of
the Savannah River. A glassed in conference room with a
long table is between two offices on one side.

Simone walks up to a reception desk.

The RECEPTIONIST (20's) looks up.

SIMONE
Hello. Ben Conner please.

The receptionist picks up a phone and punches a button.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Conner, you have a guest.
(to Simone)
What is your company?

SIMONE
Tell Ben it's family business.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Conner, please come out here.

Ben comes out of a corner office and hurries over.

BEN

Simone.

Ben stares at her, obviously surprised.

Simone kisses his cheek.

SIMONE

Hello, Ben. Where's your office?

Ben points to the rear.

Simone strides towards his office.

Ben hurries after her.

BEN

Simone, wait.

Simone gets to his office door first.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

The modern room is full of glass and chrome and teak with tall windows that look out onto the water.

Ben glances at a photo on his desk then puts his hand on Simone's back.

BEN

Look at these.

He steers her towards a wall of sailboat prints.

Simone studies them.

SIMONE

They are quite good.

Ben grabs a photo of Marcie on the desk, opens the top drawer, and shoves the photo in.

Simone turns around as Ben closes the drawer.

He walks over to her.

BEN

This is an unexpected surprise.

SIMONE
You told me I should see Savannah
sometime.

He walks over to the window.

BEN
Do you like the view?

SIMONE
It's lovely.

BEN
The reason why I work here.

SIMONE
Where's the condo?

BEN
Condo?

SIMONE
Yes. Your condo.

He points to a five story brick building.

BEN
It's over there.

Simone peers at it.

BEN
I've still got work to do. You can
go shopping. Walk down the street
by the river.

Simone turns away from the window.

SIMONE
OK. I'll explore.

She kisses his cheek.

BEN
I'll call you in an hour.

Simone walks out of the room.

Ben watches her walk out the main office door then grabs his
phone and frantically dials.

BEN
(into phone)
Marcie, get over to the condo now.
Simone's here. Get all of your stuff.

He listens for a second.

BEN
Remove everything, clothes, pictures,
perfume. I'll call you back.

He hangs up the phone then pounds the desk in anger.

EXT. SAVANNAH STREET - DAY

Simone walks down a sidewalk.

Her cell phone rings. She answers it.

SIMONE
Hello?

INT. BETH'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth stirs a pot and talks into her phone on a counter.

BETH
Simone, I found the ex-wives.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

Simone stops walking.

SIMONE
Really?

BETH
I found a newspaper article. Ben's
first wife was in a car accident.
Somebody hit her at night and took
off. She's in a wheelchair now.

SIMONE
Ben said his wife died before we
were married.

BETH
That's not what I read.

SIMONE
he lied to me.

BETH
Another lie. Did you find anything
in the condo?

SIMONE
Not yet. I'll look tonight.

BETH

Don't tell Ben anything. Keep all
of this quiet. Call me tomorrow.

SIMONE

OK. Bye.

Simone hangs up.

END INTERCUT.

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben and Simone sit at a candlelit table.

Simone yawns.

SIMONE

It's getting late.

Ben looks at his watch.

BEN

It's only nine.

Simone yawns again.

SIMONE

I'm tired. It was a long drive.

Ben gets out his phone.

BEN

OK, let me text a client first.

He texts, "Is the condo clean?", to Marcie, then pockets the
phone.

BEN

Let's go.

INT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - BEN'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The modern penthouse in a historic brick building has floor
to ceiling windows overlooking the river.

Simone looks at the river as Ben hurries into the bedroom.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben frantically opens drawers and rummages in them.

He opens the closet as Simone walks in. Ben whirls around.

BEN

Just wondering if you needed a robe.

He grabs a robe from a hanger and throws it on the bed.

SIMONE

I brought clothes.

She walks over to the bathroom and peeks in.

SIMONE

I need a shower. Can you get my bag?

BEN

Sure.

He leaves the room.

Simone opens a night stand drawer and finds a GUN. She jumps back in surprise.

Ben enters the room and puts her bag on the bed. He picks up the gun.

BEN

I keep it in case somebody tries to break in.

Ben pulls the bolt back, aims it at Simone, and fires.

BEN

Pow.

Simone jumps then becomes angry.

SIMONE

You scared me.

BEN

Don't worry. It's not loaded. I'll put it in the safe.

Ben shuts the drawer and leaves the room with the gun.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben dials his cell phone.

BEN

She'll be asleep in an hour.
(listens)

I'll meet you at the bar at ten.

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - BAR - NIGHT

Ben and Marcie sit at a corner booth. He's drinking scotch on the rocks. Her drink is a tall rum punch.

BEN

I had no idea she'd show up.

MARCIE

I got all my stuff out.

She sips her drink.

MARCIE

Maybe for good.

Ben leans over and kisses her.

BEN

No. This is temporary.

Marcie frowns.

MARCIE

This was supposed to take six months.

He kisses her cheek.

BEN

Everything will be OK.

Ben takes her hand.

BEN

I'm gonna send Simone on a tour tomorrow.

He kisses her hand.

BEN

She'll be gone in two days.

Marcie glares at him.

MARCIE

Or I will.

Ben kisses her.

BEN

Stick with me, baby. Soon my name will be on that deed.

MARCIE

We need another plan since yours
isn't working.

Ben protests.

BEN

Give me time.

MARCIE

What about her son? If something
happens to him, then you would
inherit the house.

BEN

I ripped up her will and I didn't
find a copy at the courthouse. Josh
is in the pre-nup but I don't want
any trouble, like if he contests it.

MARCIE

We have to be careful.

Ben and Marcie clink their glasses together.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A yawning Simone wakes up and looks at the bedside clock.
It reads "10:30". She stumbles out of bed, pulls on the
robe, then walks into the condo living room.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Simone looks around the dark apartment.

SIMONE

Ben?

She wanders around the living room then sits at the desk.
She hits a key and the computer screen lights up. The
password box appears on the screen. Simone frowns.

SIMONE

Hmm. Let's see.

She types in "SIMONE", then hits enter.

Nothing happens.

She types in "BENANDSIMONE" and nothing happens.

Simone pulls out the desk drawer, rummages through it, then
shuts it.

The computer monitor goes dark.

Simone looks at a shelf of labelled CD's above the monitor. She flips through them. All are labeled "BACKUP".

SIMONE

Business, twenty-twenty.

She flips through more then stops.

SIMONE

Finances twenty-twenty-two.

She pockets the CD, flips through more, and stops at one.

SIMONE

Personal.

She pockets it.

CLICK. A key turns the front door lock.

Simone dashes to the kitchen.

Ben walks in and sees Simone with a glass in hand.

BEN

I thought you were asleep.

SIMONE

I was thirsty.

She fills the glass with water and drinks.

Ben walks up to Simone and kisses her cheek.

BEN

Your tour starts at nine. Get some sleep.

He escorts her into the bedroom.

MONTAGE:

The next morning, Ben puts Simone on a red trolley bus.

Simone smiles in front of the Juliette Gordon Low Museum.

Simone looks at Chinese porcelain in the Mercer-Williams House.

Simone walks around the Forsyth Park Fountain.

Simone stands with other tour guests in front of the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.

The tour group eat lunch at the Pirate's House Restaurant.

Simone looks at the Washington Guns.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - CITY STREET - DAY

Simone dials her phone.

SIMONE
Beth, Ben has a gun.

INT. BETH'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth talks on the phone.

BETH
A gun?

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

SIMONE
He says it's for burglars.

BETH
Did he ever mention it?

SIMONE
No. And I found two CD's.

Ben drives up to the bus stop.

SIMONE
Ben's here. We can talk tomorrow.

She hangs up.

END INTERCUT.

Ben opens the car door and Simone sits down.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben faces Simone.

BEN
How was it?

SIMONE
It was so much fun. We saw so many things. We ate at the Pirate's House.

Ben interrupts her.

BEN

I'm starved. Let's eat now. You've gotta get up early tomorrow.

Simone sighs.

SIMONE

All right. I'm hungry too.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben kisses Simone who is in bed.

BEN

I'm gonna read a little.

He switches off the bedside lamp and walks out.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben walks through the room and out the front door.

INT. BEN'S CONDO - PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

Simone's car is parked next to a wall.

Ben pulls on a pair of gloves, opens the car trunk, opens a tool box, and finds a socket wrench. He kneels down on the passenger side of the car and loosens all of the front tire lug nuts. He replaces the wrench, shuts the tool box lid, shuts the trunk, and walks away.

EXT. BEN'S CONDO - DAY

Ben parks Simone's car at the curb. He gets out and Simone gets in. They kiss.

SIMONE

It's been fun. I can't wait to do it again.

BEN

Next time, tell me ahead of time. I like to plan things for us to do.

Simone smiles.

SIMONE

OK. No more surprises.

She drives off.

Ben dials his cell phone.

BEN

She's gone.

(pause)

Let's have dinner tonight.

EXT. INTERSTATE 20 - DAY

Simone turns onto I-20 West toward Atlanta. Suddenly, the front end of her car starts to weave.

SIMONE

What's wrong?

Simone looks around. There are cars all around her. She puts on her turn signal to turn right and steps on the brakes. The car weaves again. It slows down.

CLOSE ON THE FRONT PASSENGER TIRE.

The last lug nut snaps off and the car lurches sideways. Simone screams.

SIMONE

Nooooo.

Sparks fly from the axle hitting the road. The car leans toward the passenger side as it veers off the highway.

Simone pulls on the emergency flashers after the car stops.

A MOTORIST, a tall man in his 40's, stops to help her. He gets out of his car and walks up as Simone opens her door.

MOTORIST

Ma'am, are you OK?

SIMONE

Yes, thanks. Just a little shaken.

She walks around the car and the man follows. They look at the axle, which has plowed a furrow in the grass.

MOTORIST

You're gonna need a tow truck.

He looks back down the grassy strip which borders woods.

MOTORIST

That tire is long gone.

SIMONE

I'll call my husband.

He walks off. She dials her phone.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

SIMONE

Ben, I was in a car accident.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben sits at his desk and answers the phone.

BEN

Darling, are you hurt?

SIMONE

No, just shaken. The front tire came off and I slowed down so I'm stopped on the side of the road.

Ben grimaces.

BEN

That is a relief. Have you called the insurance company yet?

SIMONE

No.

BEN

Do it then call me back.

He hangs up.

BEN

Damn.

Ben pounds the desk.

END INTERCUT.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Simone calls Beth.

SIMONE

It's late but I'm finally home. A TEN hour drive after the tow and the rental car.

BETH (O.S.)

I'm glad you're OK.

SIMONE

I want you to look at the CD's.

BETH (O.S.)

You're such a computer geek...NOT!

Simone laughs.

SIMONE
Come over for dinner tomorrow.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Pizza boxes and wine bottles crowd the counter. The kitchen clock reads, "7:45".

Beth types on a laptop on the dining table. Simone stands behind her, hands gripping the back of the chair.

Beth points to the screen.

BETH
Look at this American Express entry.
It's for the Ritz.

Simone peers at the screen.

BETH
And look at what he spent on dinner
at La Florencia.

SIMONE
FOUR hundred dollars???

BETH
Oh my God. Look at this.

She points at the screen. Beth stares at it.

SIMONE
The Washington Inn, eighteen hundred
dollars?

Beth turns around.

BETH
What is going on?

Simone stammers.

SIMONE
Ben told me he had business expenses.

BETH
Funny business.

Beth turns back to the screen.

BETH
Here's a phone file.

She clicks on it.

The screen is filled with entries of phone numbers from all over the country.

SIMONE

Oh my God.

BETH

We've gotta look up each one.

The kitchen clock reads "11:10".

Simone and Beth look disheveled and exhausted. Three phone books are open on the table. Papers and pens are scattered around. A yellow note pad is filled with names and numbers.

Two empty wine bottles are next to open to go boxes. Beth holds a wine glass. Simone's glass is in front of her.

BETH

Look at this.

She points to her computer screen.

CLOSE ON A PHOTO OF A WOMAN AND A HOUSE.

BETH

Women and pictures of their houses.
There are dozens.

Simone blinks back tears, wiping them with a kitchen towel.

SIMONE

I just can't believe it.

BETH

Believe this.

Beth puts down her glass, lifts up the manilla pad with both hands, and slams it down.

BETH

He is nothing more than pond scum.

Simone sobs.

BETH

Don't say anything to anybody. We need to think how to handle this.

SIMONE

What do I say to him?

BETH
Just be normal.

Simone shakes her head.

SIMONE
How can I?

BETH
You have to.

Beth drains her glass and stands up.

BETH
Call me at lunch tomorrow.

She hugs Simone.

BETH
Just go to work. I'll come over
tomorrow night.

She walks out of the room.

Simone puts her head in her hands and weeps.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The next morning Simone picks up the telephone.

SIMONE
Hello.

BEN (O.S.)
Morning.

Simone gasps.

BEN (O.S.)
Simone?

Simone holds the phone away from her ear and puts her hand over her mouth. She puts it on the counter.

BEN (O.S.)
Simone?

Simone walks out.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - HALL - DAY

She walks down the hall and into the bedroom.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - GUEST ROOM - DAY

She slams the door shut and starts screaming.

SIMONE

How could he do this?

She punches a pillow several times then walks out.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

She picks up the phone, then dials.

SIMONE

Ben.

(listens)

Just had to catch the mail truck.

She paces as she listens.

SIMONE

I'll see you Friday night.

She hangs up the phone, grabs a pair of scissors from a knife rack, and walks out of the kitchen.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Simone opens the closet door, grabs a suit jacket, and cuts off a sleeve. She throws it on the floor, grabs a pair of pants, and cuts off a pants leg.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Simone and Beth sit at the dining room table, each with a wine glass. Beth types on the lap top.

SIMONE

He's gonna be so mad when he sees his clothes.

Both laugh.

BETH

I need to be here so he won't kill you.

SIMONE

I cut up some of his old things but it probably is a good idea for you to be here.

BETH

And Josh too.

SIMONE

No. I don't want him to see what's going on.

Beth turns back to the screen.

BETH

Look here.

She points to the screen.

BETH

Another woman.

Beth runs her finger down the yellow pad.

BETH

Too many to count.

SIMONE

I wanna know about them.

Beth looks up from the screen.

BETH

Let's call her.

Beth turns to Simone.

BETH

Why not? You need evidence.

SIMONE

Evidence?

BETH

For your lawyer.

Simone sits back, shakes her head, then begins to cry.

Beth raises her voice.

BETH

This man has women all over the country plus numbers we couldn't trace. And you have to beg for money. You have to divorce him.

Beth puts her arms around Simone.

BETH

Don't cry.

Beth grabs a kitchen towel and gives it to Simone who dries her eyes.

Beth hands her the wine glass and Simone takes a sip.

BETH
Better?

Simone nods yes.

BETH
Pick one.

Simone looks at the list and points to a name.

Beth punches in numbers as Simone speaks then hits the speaker button.

SIMONE
Rhonda Stevens. Seven, oh, seven,
five, five, five, one, two, four,
four.

The phone rings three times then someone answers.

BETH'S PHONE
Hello.

Simone and Beth stare at the phone.

BETH'S PHONE
Hello?

BETH
Hi. We found your number. I'm Beth.
Do you know Ben Carson?

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

INT. RHONDA STEVENS APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rhonda Stevens (35) stands in her living room holding her phone.

RHONDA STEVENS
Who is this?

BETH
Ben's new wife is my best friend.

RHONDA STEVENS
Ben asked me to marry him.

Simone and Beth exchange glances.

BETH
When?

RHONDA STEVENS

Two years ago. I turned him down.

BETH

Why?

RHONDA STEVENS

He asked me for my house as a wedding present. I said no and never saw him again.

SIMONE

I married Ben a few months ago.

RHONDA STEVENS

Did he want your house too?

Simone puts her hand over her mouth.

BETH

We'll call you back next week, OK?

RHONDA STEVENS

Sure.

Beth hangs up.

END INTERCUT.

BETH

Now we know. This is a list of his women.

SIMONE

What about her house?

BETH

We need more proof. We can call his ex's.

She flips pages on a note pad, stops, runs her finger down the page, dials her cell, and hits the speaker button.

RING. RING. The phone rings then there is a recording.

BETH'S PHONE

I'm sorry the number you have called has been disconnected.

Beth hangs up and looks at Simone.

BETH

I just remembered, she's the one who was in a car accident.

SIMONE

I met a woman in the airport who was in a wheelchair. She said she was in a car accident and to not trust men. I didn't know what she meant.

BETH

You do now.

Beth looks at the paper, dials, and hits the speaker button.

RING. RING. The phone rings.

BETH'S PHONE

Hello.

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Nancy Edwards (36) stands in her kitchen holding her phone.

NANCY EDWARDS

Hello.

BEGIN INTERCUT.

BETH

Hi. I'm Beth and I'm with Ben Connor's wife Simone.

NANCY EDWARDS

Oh my God. I never want to see that con artist again.

BETH

Can we come over and talk?

NANCY EDWARDS

I have to leave for work. Can you meet me at the coffee shop in Tower Place? I have on a blue dress.

BETH

Yes. We'll leave now.

END INTERCUT.

INT. TOWER PLACE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Beth and Simone stand near the door. They spot Nancy and wave to her. The three women shake hands then sit at a table in a corner far from the other tables.

SIMONE

You said Ben was a con artist?

NANCY EDWARDS

He was a charmer and I loved him.
He took me to great restaurants. We
had fun until we married.

Simone grimaces, tightly grabs the edge of the table, and
bites her lip.

NANCY EDWARDS

Ben said my father could have an
accident. He threatened me if I
went to the police so I had to sign
over the house to him.

Simone closes her eyes, balls up her fists, and drums them
on the table.

Nancy looks at her watch.

NANCY EDWARDS

I've got to run.

BETH

We'll be in touch.

Simone opens her eyes and puts her hands in her lap.

SIMONE

Thank you for telling me this.

Nancy nods and walks away.

Simone puts her hands over her eyes and sobs.

BETH

Wife number one moved out of the
country after a car accident.

She counts on her fingers.

BETH

Wife number two was conned out of
her house plus Ben threatened her
dad. You are wife number three.
You need to divorce him.

Simone sobs louder.

Beth hugs her.

BETH

Maybe there's another way. He's got
two personalities. He needs a doctor.

Beth releases Simone who wipes her eyes with both hands.

BETH
I know somebody in therapy. I'll
talk to her tomorrow.

She hugs Simone again.

BETH
Don't worry. This will work.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Simone and Beth stand at the counter.

SIMONE
He'll be here any minute. What if
he gets angry?

BETH
I'll dial nine-one-one.

Beth gets out her cell phone and holds it.

Simone paces.

SIMONE
I can't do this.

BETH
Yes you can.

Ben walks in. He holds a jacket and carries a briefcase and
a suitcase. Ben puts down his luggage.

BEN
(to Simone)
What is going on?

Simone bites her lip.

Beth glances at Simone then speaks.

BETH
Ben, you're home. Let's go into the
living room.

She walks out of the kitchen.

Ben and Simone follow her.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Simone looks at Beth and shrugs, palms up.

BETH
Simone, can you get Ben a drink?

Simone walks to the table, pours liquor into a glass, and takes it to Ben.

BEN
(to Simone)
Talk to me.

The women sit down.

BETH
We know about your women.

Ben startles and spills his drink. He looks at Simone.

Simone nods affirmatively.

Ben gulps the liquor, then stammers.

BEN
Simone, uh, I can explain.

Beth softly cuts him off.

BETH
Ben. It's OK.

Ben's eyes widen.

BETH
We want to help you get better.
It's either therapy or a divorce.

Ben drains his glass. He refills it and stands by the fireplace, drinking and staring at the two women.

BETH
You need to be in therapy.

Ben spits out his liquor and stutters.

BEN
Therapy?

BETH
I know it's a shock.
(to Simone)
Is ten tomorrow OK?

Simone nods yes.

Beth types on her phone.

BETH
I called the therapist yesterday. I
told her you'd be there at ten.

Simone and Beth stand up.

SIMONE

(to Ben)

You can spend the night in the guest room or find a hotel.

She tosses a business card at Ben. It falls at his feet.

SIMONE

Meet me at her office at ten.

Simone and Beth walk out.

He looks around, drains the glass, then picks up the card.

He grabs the liquor decanter, gets his bags, and walks out.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

Ben enters the guest bedroom and slams the door.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

The dark room has a bed flanked by two night stands.

Ben drops the bags on the floor, sets down the decanter and glass on a bedside table, and turns on the bedside lamp.

He dials his cell phone and speaks into it.

BEN

Hi. I'm here. It wasn't a warm reception. Simone knows.

INT. MARCIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marcie grips the phone.

MARCIE

What happened?

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

Ben pours liquor into his glass and takes a sip.

BEN

She wants me to go to therapy.

He laughs again and takes another gulp.

BEN

She thinks the women on the list were my lovers.

He drains his glass then laughs.

BEN
She doesn't have a clue that they
were our marks.

MARCIE
Does she know about me?

BEN
No.

MARCIE
Keep it that way. I have another
plan that will speed things up.

END INTERCUT.

INT. DR. ALLWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben and Simone sit in chairs facing DR. ALLWELL (40's).

DR. ALLWELL
Ben, Simone is right. No contact
with the other women.

BEN
I told you. They are business
associates.

Simone is indignant.

SIMONE
Only phone numbers for women are on
your list. Where are the men?

Ben crosses his arms.

BEN
How did you get their numbers?

SIMONE
Why did you threaten Nancy's father?

BEN
How do you know about her? And why
did you cut up my clothes?

SIMONE
Why did you lie to me about your
marriages?

BEN
I didn't mean to. I didn't want to
scare you away.

DR. ALLWELL
You want to stay married, don't you?

BEN
Of course.

Dr. Allwell smiles.

DR. ALLWELL
This is only our first session. It
will get easier.

She looks down at the appointment book on her desk.

DR. ALLWELL
Thursday at two?

MONTAGE:

Ben and Simone drive home.

Ben sleeps alone in the guest bedroom.

Ben and Simone talk to Dr. Allwell.

Simone sleeps alone in the master bedroom.

Ben and Simone talk to Dr. Allwell.

Ben drives away.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. ATLANTA STREET - DAY

Simone walks down a sidewalk while talking on her phone.

SIMONE
I'll get a tuna salad and sweet tea
for you.

A car slowly follows her.

INT. GETAWAY CAR - DAY

Marcie, hair in a turban, wearing a red dress and big
sunglasses, drives the car.

EXT. ATLANTA STREET - DAY

The car speeds up and passes her. It turns right onto a
cross street.

Simone hangs up her phone and punches in another number while
walking towards a deli restaurant.

Suddenly, the same car turns left from the cross street and accelerates towards Simone who looks up at the last minute.

The car grazes her as she steps sideways away from it. Simone falls onto the sidewalk.

The car turns onto a side street and disappears.

INT. BETH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Beth stirs a pot on the stove. Her phone rings and she answers it.

BETH

Hello.

INT. PIEDMONT HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

A uniformed nurse (30's) speaks to Simone.

NURSE

This is the Piedmont Hospital
Emergency Room. Simone Conner has
been in a car accident.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

BETH

Oh no.

NURSE

Get here as fast as possible.

END INTERCUT.

Beth hangs up, turns off the stove, and runs out of the room.

INT. PIEDMONT HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

Beth stands next to Simone who lies on a gurney in a hallway. Her left elbow is in a cast. Her head is swathed in gauze.

BETH

Simone, what happened?

SIMONE

The car came out of nowhere. It
came straight at me. I fell on the
sidewalk and I must have hit my head.

She touches her head and winces.

SIMONE

I had a CAT scan. I may have a
concussion.

She points to her elbow.

SIMONE

I need to be in a cast for at least
six weeks.

A POLICE DETECTIVE walks up.

POLICE DETECTIVE

A camera got the license plate.
It's registered to a Carlos Gomez in
Atlanta. We're looking for it now.
I'll call you with any updates.

He walks away.

Simone holds her forehead.

SIMONE

It's a blur but I think I saw a woman
driving. She had on a red dress.

BETH

I'll find that detective.

Beth walks away.

SUPER: "THREE WEEKS LATER"

INT. RITZ CARLTON - AG STEAKHOUSE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben and Simone sit at a table. Her elbow is in a cast. A
big bouquet of flowers is on a chair. The card reads, "Get
well soon. Love, Ben."

BEN

Thank you for having dinner with me.

SIMONE

I love the flowers.

BEN

Please forgive me. I didn't want
you to find out about the other women.
They were all before you.

He kisses her hand.

BEN

I love you and only you. And I'm
glad that we are going to therapy.

SIMONE

You are?

BEN

Yes. It's the best thing that has happened to me. Except for you.

He kisses her cheek then her lips.

BEN

I'll drive you home tonight.

SIMONE

I have a reservation for a ride.

BEN

Don't be silly. I'll drive you.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

They pull up to the house. Ben gets out and rushes over to help her out of the car. He escorts her to the door.

She opens the door, turns, and Ben kisses her. He pushes open the door.

BEN

Let's have an after dinner drink to end this fine evening.

MONTAGE:

Ben lights a fire.

They have a drink.

Ben kisses Simone.

He makes more drinks.

He kisses her.

They have another drink.

END MONTAGE.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Simone and Ben are in bed. She sleeps.

Ben rolls out of bed and creeps out of the room.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - HALL - NIGHT

He walks down the hall.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Ben walks in and grabs a flashlight off the shelf. He opens a tool box and gets out a socket wrench and a pair of pliers. He opens a side door and walks out.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

Ben walks to the front steps, squats, and loosens the bolts on the stair railings that attach the railings to the house. He finishes then walks back to the side door and goes inside.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Josh, ready for school, opens the front door. He closes the door, turns, and grabs the stair railing.

It pulls away from the house and takes Josh with it. He falls sideways into the bushes.

JOSH

What happened?

He slowly gets up and goes back in the house.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Josh walks in and speaks to Simone who is pouring coffee.

JOSH

Mom, the front railing broke.

SIMONE

What?

BEN

I grabbed it and it broke loose. I fell into the bushes.

Simone hugs Josh.

SIMONE

Oh no. Are you OK?

JOSH

Yes. I wanted to tell you to get it fixed. I've gotta hurry. Bye.

He walks out. Simone follows him to the front door.

EXT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - FRONT STEPS - DAY

She inspects the damage.

SIMONE

What next?

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen table is full of opened to go food boxes. Simone, elbow in a cast, and Beth drink wine.

SIMONE

Thank God, the railing was easy to fix. The repair guy said the bolts were rusty.

BETH

It could have been you.

SIMONE

But it wasn't and now it's fixed.

BETH

Houses are like a pit that you throw money in.

Beth takes a sip.

BETH

So they still haven't found the car?

SIMONE

It's registered in Atlanta and the owner said it was stolen.

BETH

What else did the detective say?

SIMONE

It could have been a drunk who stole the car and swerved onto the sidewalk.

BETH

But what about that red dress?

Simone shrugs her shoulders.

SIMONE

Lots of women have red dresses.

BETH

There are too many coincidences.

Simone laughs at her.

SIMONE

You are a worry wort.

She takes a gulp of wine.

SIMONE

Josh is doing well and Ben's more mellow. He doesn't argue any more and he deposited two thousand dollars into our account yesterday.

BETH

Good.

SIMONE

Therapy has been wonderful. Ben was afraid I wouldn't like him if he told me about his other marriages. He's told me about a lot of things.

She sips her wine.

SIMONE

He said that Betsy, his first wife, was crazy. He had to get lithium for her.

BETH

Wow.

SIMONE

Ben said his second wife Nancy lied to get back at him. It was her idea to put his name on the house and to get a new loan.

BETH

Really?

SIMONE

Her dad has Alzheimer's and says a lot of mixed-up stuff. Ben never threatened him.

Beth holds her glass up.

BETH

I'm relieved.

Simone raises her glass and the two glasses CLINK.

Both women sip their wine.

SIMONE

Oh, I forgot to tell you. Ben wants me to come to Savannah.

BETH

Why?

SIMONE

He wants to go sailing.

Beth puts her glass down.

BETH

Has he ever sailed?

SIMONE

I don't know. I think we're going with a group.

BETH

Are you sure about this?

SIMONE

Ben is back to his old self, like before we were married. Even in bed.

Simone grins.

Beth frowns.

BETH

You need more time in therapy. You need to be sure he's changed.

SIMONE

It's just a tour. What could go wrong?

INT. SAVANNAH AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - DAY

Simone arrives without a cast on her elbow.

Ben sees it and scowls.

Simone kisses him.

SIMONE

Be happy I got the cast off.

She flexes her elbow.

SIMONE

And Josh is fine.

He kisses her cheek then heads for a bathroom.

BEN

I'll be right back.

INT. AIRPORT BATHROOM - DAY

Ben faces a wall and dials his cell phone.

BEN
Marcie, Simone's here. Josh wasn't hurt.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

INT. MARCIE'S CAR - DAY

Marcie drives and talks into a microphone.

MARCIE
You screwed up. I'll deal with her.

BEN
We both have to be careful and not get caught.

MARCIE
I was careful.

BEN
Meet me at the boat.

END INTERCUT.

INT. AIRPORT - ARRIVALS - DAY

Ben storms out of the bathroom and towards baggage claim.

SIMONE
Ben. Wait.

She runs after him.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben drives.

Simone turns to him.

SIMONE
Tell me about the trip.

BEN
It's a great boat. Thirty five foot Endeavor. Got a jib, head, shower.....

Simone interrupts him.

SIMONE

I thought we were going on a tour.

BEN

It's made for the ocean. It's got four fire extinguishers, three pumps, new lines, solar panels....

Simone interrupts him again.

SIMONE

When did you get a boat?

BEN

It's a friend's boat. I've been taking sailing lessons for a year.

Simone frowns.

SIMONE

You didn't tell me.

BEN

Nothing to tell.

SIMONE

Can't we take a tour?

BEN

I can sail. Don't worry.

Simone looks out of the window in silence.

EXT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - THUNDERBOLT MARINA - DOCK - DAY

White sailboats with tall masts are lined up in rows.

Simone follows Ben down a dock to the boat. Both wear shorts, hats, and deck shoes and pull roll on suitcases.

The 35 foot long white sailboat is named, "HASHTAG". It has a mast, 7 small windows, a deck with benches, and a large wooden wheel for steering. A hatch leads to the main cabin. Chrome railing encircles the vessel.

Simone stops and stares at the boat.

SIMONE

It's so small.

Ben laughs.

BEN

It has a shower and a bathroom. What else do you need?

Simone points at the name.

SIMONE
Why is it named that?

BEN
My buddy's in computers.

He grabs her hand.

BEN
Come on.

Ben pulls on the aft mooring line to bring the vessel closer.
He takes Simone's hand.

BEN
Step on the platform.

Simone hesitates.

BEN
One big step.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - DAY

Simone leans forward, grabs the railing, and steps onto the platform.

SIMONE
WHOA.

She leans forward to steady herself.

Ben jumps behind her onto the platform and puts his hand on her back.

BEN
Easy. Just step in.

Simone steps over the edge and quickly sits down on a built-in bench.

SIMONE
We should have taken the tour.

Ben tosses both bags into the cockpit then steps in.

BEN
No whining.

The two louvered doors of the cabin hatch open.

Simone's head whips around as Marcie emerges, wearing a man's long sleeve shirt with turned up cuffs.

It barely covers her bikini.

BEN
Simone, this is Marcie. She works
with me so I invited her on the trip.

Both women scrutinize each other.

SIMONE
Nice to meet you.

MARCIE
I'm sure we'll become great friends.

Ben grabs both bags, throws them into the cabin, then steps
back onto the stern platform.

He jumps off the boat and frees the aft mooring line.

BEN
Marcie, grab the lines.

Marcie pulls the line out of the water.

Ben releases the front bowline and Marcie pulls it in.

Ben jumps onboard.

BEN
Time to cast off.

He starts the engine.

BEN
Marcie, get the life jackets.

Marcie ducks in the cabin, then returns with three orange
life preservers.

BEN
Gotta wear these when the Coast Guard
can see us.

They all don life jackets.

Ben starts the engine and steers away from the dock and into
the Wilmington River.

SIMONE
(to Ben)
I'm gonna put on my bathing suit.

BEN
Fine.

Simone sticks her head through the hatch and steps down three steps into the cabin.

INT. CABIN - DAY

The room has teak cabinets and trim. To the left (port) of the steps is a platform with a blue cushion, making a sofa. Shelves with small bins are below the four window hatches.

The starboard (right) side has an upper cabinet with louvered doors. A sink and stove are built into the lower cabinet. There is a built in cooler which acts as a refrigerator.

Another blue cushioned sofa is beyond the galley on the same side. A skylight hatch is in the cabin ceiling. A mahogany door leads to a triangle shaped bed in the bow. Another door leads to the bathroom, called the head.

Simone grabs the bags, puts them on the port sofa, sits down next to them, gets out her cell phone, and dials.

SIMONE

Beth.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

INT. BETH'S CAR - DAY

Beth drives her car. She listens on the speaker.

BETH

Simone, how's the tour?

Simone whispers.

SIMONE

I'm not on a tour. I'm on a small sailboat.

BETH

What?

SIMONE

Ben brought some colleague named Marcie.

Beth yells.

BETH

You're on a boat with Ben and another woman?

SIMONE

Yes. Ben told me to bring a bag and then he brought me to this boat.

Simone turns around and looks out a window.

SIMONE
We're heading out to sea.

BETH
I don't like this.

SIMONE
We're sailing to St. Simons Island.

BETH
How long does it take to get there?

SIMONE
I don't know.

Simone pulls the phone away from her ear, then puts it back.

SIMONE
It's hard to hear. I'll call you
when we arrive.

Simone hangs up.

END INTERCUT.

Simone stands up as Marcie comes down the steps.

Marcie grabs two beers from the cooler.

MARCIE
Help yourself.

Marcie climbs the steps out of the cabin.

Simone looks at her cell phone. The time reads, "11:30".

Simone unzips her suitcase, grabs a bathing suit, and goes into the bedroom.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - DAY

Ben steers the wheel. He drains his beer, then tosses the bottle overboard.

BEN
Marcie, take over.

Marcie holds the wheel.

Ben unzips the long canvas cover. He pulls on a rope to hoist the mainsail up. As he pulls, more of the sail is exposed. It flutters in the wind.

Simone emerges from the open hatch. She stands on the deck and looks up at the sail.

Marcie watches her.

When the sail is set and full of wind, Marcie yells:

MARCIE
Coming about.

Marcie spins the wheel. The sail deflates.

Ben swings the boom and the boat veers to the right.

Simone screams, grabbing the railing as she falls.

The boom misses Simone's head by an inch.

Ben secures the boom rigging to a cleat.

BEN
(to Marcie))
Nice jibe.

Simone lies on the deck.

Ben spots her.

BEN
Are you OK?

Ben grabs Simone's arm as she struggles to her feet. Both knees are red. Blood drips from one onto the deck.

SIMONE
Ow.

She looks down at her knees.

BEN
Gotta hold on when we turn.

Ben points to the hatch.

BEN
There's a first aid kit below. Look
under the sink.

Simone limps to it and goes inside.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - DAY

Simone steps down the stairs and grabs a paper towel from a wall rack. She wipes her knee then opens the bottom cabinet door.

She finds the first aid kit, limps to the sofa, and sits down. She opens the kit, sees a band aid, rips off the paper, and puts it on her knee.

She gets a beer out of the refrigerator and sips it.

Simone looks around, opens a cabinet over the sink, and finds a GUN.

SIMONE

Why did he bring his gun?

She shuts the cabinet then rummages in a bin behind her and pulls out a clear zip bag with mascara and other makeup items.

She puts the bag back and looks in another bin.

She lifts out a lacy bra and raises her eyebrows.

Simone pulls out a red dress, sandals, shorts, bras, panties, and a bathing suit.

She holds up the red dress then puts it down on the bench.

She spots a large bound journal and picks it out of the bin.

Simone sits down on the sofa and opens the journal.

The first page shows, "ENDEAVOR 35.5", "OWNER: MARCIE BEASLEY", and NAME OF VESSEL: HASHTAG".

Simone's head snaps up and she whispers.

SIMONE

Oh my God. It's her boat.

Simone frantically puts the clothes and journal back.

She runs to her suitcase, grabs her cell phone, and dials.

BUZZ, BUZZ. The phone rings but there is no answer.

Simone throws the phone back into her bag.

SIMONE

Damn.

Ben looks in.

BEN

Come on up.

He ducks back out.

Simone throws up her hands in exasperation then climbs out of the cabin.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - DAY

The sun is lower on the horizon.

Ben hands a beer to Marcie.

He points to an inlet at the end of a small island covered with scrub pines.

BEN

That's Wolf Island and the Altamaha Sound. We'll pass Sea Island, turn inland, and into St. Simons Sound. Maybe ninety minutes more.

MARCIE

Good. I'm hungry.

Ben swigs his beer.

BEN

You two should change. We're going to a great steakhouse.

Simone stands up.

SIMONE

I'll go first.

She ducks into the cabin.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - DAY

Simone grabs a beer and opens her suitcase. She takes underwear, a dress, shoes, and her cell phone, goes into the bedroom, and shuts the door.

INT. SAILBOAT - BEDROOM - DAY

Simone pops open the beer, drinks, then dials. RING. RING.

INT. BETH'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Beth holds her cell phone.

INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

BETH

Hello.

SIMONE

Beth, Marcie owns the boat.

BETH

No.

SIMONE

I found a journal with her name on it. She's been giving sailing lessons to Ben.

Beth snorts.

BETH

Other lessons too. Has she done anything funny?

SIMONE

She spun the wheel and the boom under the sail almost hit me. I fell and cut my knee.

BETH

I don't trust either of them.

SIMONE

I found a red dress too.

BETH

Get off that boat A-S-A-P.

SIMONE

We're going to dinner. And Ben wants to sail back tonight.

BETH

Stall him. Call me back after dinner and don't let them know you found the book or the dress.

END INTERCUT.

EXT. ST. SIMONS - STREET - NIGHT

Marcie in the red dress and Ben walk into the restaurant.

Simone follows them. Her cell phone rings so she answers it.

SIMONE

Hello.

INTERCUT CONVERSATIONS.

INT. REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

A MECHANIC (40's) in greasy coveralls speaks into a phone.

MECHANIC

Ma'am, we fixed the brake line. It had a hole in it.

SIMONE

Really?

MECHANIC

This doesn't happen often. Maybe a rock hit it. You can pick up the car any time.

SIMONE

OK. Thanks.

END INTERCUT.

EXT. ST. SIMONS ISLAND - STREET - NIGHT

Ben, Marcie, and Simone walk out of the restaurant.

Ben points to a shop.

BEN

(to Simone)

You can go shopping. I'm gonna talk business with Marcie.

He pushes Simone into the open shop door and walks ahead with Marcie.

SIMONE

But...

Ben and Marcie walk down the street. Ben puts his arm on Marcie's back.

Simone sticks her head out, watches them for a moment, then enters the shop.

EXT. ST. SIMONS - MORNINGSTAR MARINA - NIGHT

Simone carries shopping bags in both hands. She walks down the dock then stops at the darkened sailboat.

SIMONE

Ben?

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Simone steps onto the platform and onto the deck. She opens the hatch and ducks in.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

The cabin is dark.

Simone switches on a light.

She drops the bags and gets out her cell phone.

She dials. RING, RING.

INT. BETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Beth is in bed. The clock reads, "10:30".

INTERCUT CONVERSATION.

Beth picks up the phone.

BETH

Hello.

SIMONE

Hi. The mechanic said a rock hit the brake line and Ben's gone somewhere with Marcie. The boat's empty.

BETH

I'm glad you're OK. I keep thinking about that gun. Who owns it?

SIMONE

I don't know. Now you're making me nervous.

BETH

I want you to get a room tonight. How many times do I have to ask?

SIMONE

OK. OK. I'll get a room.

BETH

Good. If anybody does anything to you, call the cops and me.

She hangs up.

END INTERCUT.

Simone packs her bag. She glances at the cabinet.

She steps over to it and opens it.

The gun is missing.

Simone gasps.

SIMONE
Where is the gun?

She pulls out bins and opens cabinets.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Ben and Marcie stagger onto the boat.

BEN
Home again.

He kisses Marcie.

BEN
I want to live here. With you.

BAM. He throws open the louvered doors.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - NIGHT

Simone backs up against a cabinet.

Ben staggers down the steps with Marcie close behind.

SIMONE
Ben. I was worried.

A drunken Ben opens a cabinet and removes a rum bottle.

BEN
I need my grog.

SIMONE
Ben. Stop.

Simone grabs the bottle but Ben won't let go of it. He pushes her back onto the sofa.

Simone stands up and pleads with him.

SIMONE
Ben, let's get some sleep. We can
leave in the morning.

Ben throws a punch at Simone, but she ducks, turns, and steps over to the galley, elbowing Marcie.

Ben growls.

BEN
The Captain is always right.

Ben pushes Simone onto the starboard sofa, binds her hands together with marine rope, stuffs her mouth with a towel, then socks her in the jaw. Simone lies on the sofa with her eyes shut.

He grabs her cell phone and the bottle.

BEN

Damn bitch.

He stomps up the stairs.

Marcie follows.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Ben takes a slug then tosses Simone's phone overboard.

Marcie grabs his arm.

MARCIE

I don't want to get caught.

BEN

We won't.

He goes to the stern platform, jumps off onto the dock, releases the stern line, throws it in, then jumps back in the boat.

MARCIE

We need to talk about this when you're not drunk.

Ben goes to the bow and repeats the process.

The sailboat floats away from the dock.

Ben starts the engines.

MARCIE

I haven't paid the marina fees.

BEN

They can bill you.

He takes the wheel as the boat motors towards the ocean.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - NIGHT

As Simone opens her eyes, a shaft of moonlight illuminates her face. The boat rocks. The motor and the splashing of waves on the hull are the only sounds. Her wrists are still bound.

Simone rolls off the bunk and onto the floor. She gets on her knees, then stands.

Ben's voice booms through the hatch.

BEN (O.S.)
I can't wait.

Quickly lying back down on the bunk, Simone plays dead.

The door opens and Ben and Marcie stagger down the steps. They head for the bedroom and slam the door.

Simone listens a moment, cautiously rolls off the bunk, and rises. She looks at the galley. The drawer by the sink is recessed under the cabinet.

Simone backs up to it but her fingers don't reach the drawer. She grimaces then creeps up the steps and out of the cabin.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Simone slowly closes each hatch door with an elbow.

She spots a tackle box on the deck. She kneels, turns around on her knees, and fingers the latch. It pops open. A fishing knife is next to fishing lures.

Simone carefully picks up the knife blade with her thumb and forefinger. She stands, drops it on the bench, backs up, then picks it up by the handle and starts sawing the rope on her left wrist. It finally parts and she frees her hands.

She drops the knife and rubs her wrists.

Simone puts a metal crab net pole through the hatch door handles then turns toward the steering wheel.

A white rectangular VHF radio is built into the starboard side to the right of the wheel. It has knobs, buttons, a LCD screen, a speaker, and a hand held microphone/receiver.

Simone grabs the microphone and clicks it a few times.

The radio screen glows amber.

She reads the screen and whispers.

SIMONE
GPS data OK. Distress. Safety.
Call.

She punches the call button and the radio comes to life.

MARINE OPERATOR
This is the marine operator.

Simone talks into the microphone.

SIMONE
Help. I'm in danger. He has a gun.
I'm on a sailboat and we're going
out to sea.

MARINE OPERATOR
I need the name of the boat.

SIMONE
Hashtag.

MARINE OPERATOR
Where is the boat docked?

SIMONE
We left St. Simons Island and now
we're going out to sea. I need help.

MARINE OPERATOR
Are your lights on?

SIMONE
Lights?

MARINE OPERATOR
Running lights. The ones in the
front and back.

Simone looks behind her and everything is dark.

SIMONE
I don't see any lights.

MARINE OPERATOR
Look for a switch.

Simone spots a switch on a panel next to the radio. She
toggles it and the lights come on.

A white light from the mast spotlights the boat. A green
light is on the right side and a red light is on the left
side. A white stern light illuminates the water around the
rear platform.

SIMONE
Now the lights are on.

MARINE OPERATOR
I need you to look at the radio.

Simone stares at it.

SIMONE

Ok.

MARINE OPERATOR

Does it have a red button with a cover?

Simone looks.

SIMONE

Yes, I see it.

MARINE RADIO

Good. Press and hold the button for three seconds when I tell you. First, press the sixteen slash nine button to talk on channel sixteen.

Simone pushes the 16/9 button.

BAM. The hatch door shudders from Ben's kicks.

SIMONE

Operator, help. My husband is trying to kill me and he has a gun.

MARINE OPERATOR

Push the red button until I say stop.

Simone pushes the red button.

BAM. Ben kicks the door again.

CREAK. The ceiling hatch door opens.

MARINE OPERATOR

Stop.

Simone releases the button.

Ben looks out the ceiling hatch.

BEN

Who turned on the lights?

He sees Simone.

BEN

YOU.

Ben ducks inside.

PING! A shot goes through the door, then another. PING!

Simone screams, drops the microphone, and steps away from the doors.

She spots the tackle box, grabs a big wrench, then climbs onto the cabin roof above the doors.

BAM. A bullet goes through the crab net handle and it splits in half. The doors crash open.

Ben sticks his head out.

Simone swings the wrench which hits Ben on the forehead, then tosses it onto the cabin roof.

The wrench slides off the roof, through the railing, and disappears into the sea.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - NIGHT

Ben falls backwards into the cabin onto a screaming Marcie.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Simone shuts the doors, grabs a padlock from the tackle box, and padlocks them.

In two steps, the microphone is in her hand.

SIMONE

Help. Help.

MARINE OPERATOR

The Coast Guard should be there in ten minutes.

SIMONE

I could be dead by then.

MARINE OPERATOR

Stay on the line with me. Where is your husband?

SIMONE

He's in the cabin. I think I knocked him out. What if he wakes up?

PING. PING. Shots come through the door, narrowly missing Simone.

Simone screams, drops the microphone, and backs sideways along the side.

She climbs back onto the cabin roof, grabs the starboard railing, and inches toward the bow as more shots are heard.

PING. PING.

Marcie looks out the ceiling hatch and spots Simone.

MARCIE
Open the doors and we can talk.

Simone keeps heading toward the bow.

MARCIE
Ben wants to apologize.

Simone reaches the bow, turns, and yells at Marcie.

SIMONE
I know you own the boat.

MARCIE
And I have a radio in the cabin. I
told the Coast Guard I'd fixed the
problem, which is you, so they're
not coming.

Marcie ducks back into the cabin.

Simone screams.

SIMONE
No.

She hurries along the starboard railing, kicks the ceiling hatch shut, drops to the deck, and grabs the microphone.

SIMONE
Help.

MARINE OPERATOR
This is the Marine Operator.

SIMONE
EMERGENCY! Send the Coast Guard to
HASHTAG. Hurry.

PING. PING. Shots come through the cabin doors.

One grazes Simone, hitting in her left calf. Blood pours down her leg.

She drops the microphone.

SIMONE
OW.

Ben's injured head pops through the ceiling hatch. He has blood running down his cheek from the cut on his forehead.

He spots Simone.

BEN

I'm gonna love that house. I might even live in it awhile. After Josh disappears.

SIMONE

No. You can't hurt Josh.

He ducks inside.

Bullets sail through the doors. PING. PING.

Simone leaps to the port side as one hits the radio. Sparks fly into the air and the radio smolders.

Simone scrambles onto the cabin roof and clutches the railing.

Flames erupt from the radio.

Marcie sticks her head out of the ceiling hatch and spots the flaming radio.

MARCIE

Oh my God, fire. Simone, let me out. I need to save the boat.

Simone is toward the bow. She turns, creeps back to the open ceiling hatch, and kicks the back of Marcie's head, forcing her inside, then closes the hatch and stands on it's edge.

PING. Shots go through the ceiling hatch.

Simone jumps back.

The hatch pops open.

Ben aims the gun at Simone.

BEN

Open the doors now.

Simone inches forward as Ben tracks her with the gun.

SIMONE

I know it was Marcie who tried to run me over.

Simone drops out of sight onto the deck.

BEN

Open them.

SIMONE

I need the combination.

Simone quickly unbuckles a fire extinguisher by the wheel and tucks it under her arm.

BEN

Five, five, zero, one, two.

She keys in the numbers and pulls off the lock.

SIMONE

It's open.

Simone stands to the side as Ben knocks the doors open.

As he sticks his head out, Simone hits him on the head with the fire extinguisher.

INT. SAILBOAT - CABIN - NIGHT

Ben, gun in hand, falls into the cabin on top of Marcie. The gun hits her head. Both lie unconscious in a pile on the cabin floor.

EXT. SAILBOAT - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Flames reach a canvas tarp covering the narrow deck under the starboard railing. The canvas catches on fire and the flames spread along the right side.

Simone opens a storage box to the left of the cabin doors. She grabs a towel and tries to put out the flames but the towel catches on fire so she throws it overboard.

A coil of rope on the deck catches fire.

Simone backs away from the flames and climbs onto the cabin roof. She walks along the railing until she is at the bow.

The flames along the tarp grow higher.

The edge of the mainsail blackens, smolders, then catches fire.

Simone holds onto the bow railing and stares into the depths.

SIMONE

I love you Josh.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

A beam of light pierces the darkness.

OOGA. OOGA. The Coast Guard horn sounds.

Simone frantically waves.

SIMONE

Help.

A white Coast Guard cutter pulls up to the sailboat.

An officer in a white uniform and hat drops a float down the side of the cutter. The two boats come together.

Another uniformed officer leans over the side and speaks to Simone.

OFFICER

Fire is a definite distress call,
ma'am.

MONTAGE:

Two uniformed officers put out the flames then open the cabin door.

Ben and Marcie are handcuffed and taken on the cutter.

Simone is escorted to the Captain's quarters.

The sailboat is towed behind the cutter to St. Simons.

Ben and Marcie are put into a St. Simons police car.

Ben and Marcie arrive at the St. Simons police station.

Ben is put in a cell.

Marcie is put in a cell.

END MONTAGE.

INT. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA - COURTROOM - DAY

Marcie and Ben, both in handcuffs and wearing orange prison jumpsuits, stand together before a middle-aged eyeglass-wearing female JUDGE in black robes behind the bench.

JUDGE

(to Marcie)

Do you have anything to say?

MARCIE

I protected my boat.

Ben pushes her sideways.

BEN

Don't say a word.

A GUARD restrains Ben.

MARCIE

He was gonna con her out of her house,
just like he did to his other wives.

ANOTHER GUARD pulls her back.

MARCIE

Let me go.

Ben struggles to free himself.

BEN

Shut up.

The judge shakes her head in sorrow.

JUDGE

(to Ben)

You gave your wife a passport to
peril.

She slams down a gavel.

JUDGE

Take them away.

GUARDS take each out of the courtroom.

INT. AIRLINER - FIRST CLASS - DAY

Simone, in a tailored jacket and pants, sits next to a
handsome FRENCHMAN (35), dark hair, nicely dressed. Two
glasses of red wine are on the tray between them.

Simone holds a small guidebook, titled "PARIS".

SIMONE

I divorced Ben a year ago. It's
taken this long to sell his condos.

She looks in the guidebook.

SIMONE

Should I see the Louve or Versailles
first?

The man smiles then speaks with a French accent.

FRENCHMAN

Both are national treasures.

SIMONE

My grandmother named me. She grew
up on Guadeloupe and she always wanted
me to see Paris.

FRENCHMAN

I'd love to see the Louvre again.
I'm free on Friday.

Simone sips her wine and laughs.

SIMONE

Friday will be perfect.

CLOSE ON: A PASSPORT STICKING OUT OF HER BAG.

FADE OUT.

THE END.