

McBrides

A Comedy Screenplay

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INT. LOS ANGELES - RETRO'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

A single's meat market if there ever was one. Tacky mood lighting works hard to mask the desperation of its clientele, but the live music adds just enough class to balance it out.

CLARE GAGARIN, (40's), stout and regal in her designer suit, heads toward a table where her co-worker and friend JANE WALLINGFORD, (32) sits. Clare waves a magazine and shouts to get her attention.

CLARE

Jane. Wahoo!

Jane breaths an exaggerated sigh of relief. Clare advances through the crowd and slaps the magazine, SIR SAVANT, on the table as she pulls up a chair.

CLARE

Aaaaaand April is out. Another backbreaking issue finished.

Jane flips the pages. On the cover, a Super Model leans seductively over a Porsche. Jane has a sweet face under her thick glasses and an athletic body clad with an off the rack blouse and slacks. A beauty mark graces her cheek.

JANE

Amen.

Clare points to the stage.

CLARE

Is that Anton's first number?

JANE

No, he's wrapping up.

On the stage, ANTON GAGARIN, (37) is the spitting image of a young Frank Sinatra. With a vapor cigarette, fedora, and skinny frame, he sings "My Way," mimicking Sinatra's voice. Superbly.

ANTON

(singing)

*To say the things he truly feels -  
and not the words of one who kneels  
- The record shows - I took the  
blows and did it my way.*

The audience applauds. Anton accepts the love, then leaves the stage with a swagger as he joins his friends at the bar: RICH BRUBAKER and BEN THOMPSON, both mid 30's.

Ben's a bean pole, with an unflattering, awkward hair cut that doesn't do him any favors.

Rich's clothes match his vanilla personality. He wipes peanut shells off the bar; then Purell's his hands. Nervously, he scrapes dirt out from under his fingernails. He holds out his fist for Anton; then they fist-bump.

ANTON

Thanks for finally showing up.

RICH

Of course, Sinatra, but the vape pen makes you look like a douche.

ANTON

Dude. You do not use Sinatra and douche in the same sentence.

RICH

My point exactly.

BEN

Ignore Mr. Vanilla here, you looked and sounded great, Anton.

A MYSTERIOUS BLONDE - all silicone and spray tan with a golden retriever weave turns into Anton's lips for a sensuous kiss. Ben and Rich watch in awe.

MYSTERIOUS BLONDE

Anton, baby, I loved your Sinada song.

ANTON

Si-natra--

MYSTERIOUS BLONDE

Okay, Sinatra. Mmmm...last night was amazing. You got time for me Friday?

ANTON

Already booked, sorry.

She pouts and touches his chest.

MYSTERIOUS BLONDE

Too bad. You really could have been the one who *took the blows*.

She winks and turns away. Over her shoulder:

MYSTERIOUS BLONDE

Call me.

Anton smiles after her.

RICH

What's with the already booked?

ANTON

I'm spreading myself thin to cover more territory.

Four average WOMEN sit at a table and catch Ben's attention. A sweet-looking one wearing cat-eye glasses makes eye contact and offers a pleasant smile.

ANTON

(to Ben)

Duuuude! What are you doing?

BEN

What?

ANTON

Making virgin eyes at the table of bow-wows?

BEN

The one with the glasses is cute.

ANTON

Ben, seriously, what's with the four-eye fetish?

BEN

It's not a fetish; it's sexy. Like Jane--

ANTON

You can do much better than plain Jane. Check out the table over there.

Anton's head points sideways.

ANTON

That's prime selection. I'd even let you put glasses on the redhead.

Ben checks her out.

BEN

Way out of my league.

ANTON

Come on, would Frank ever say that?  
Confidence, brother. Now, show us  
your game, or I'm draining the air  
from your tires.

The pep talk doesn't make him look any more confident.

BEN

Fine.

Ben sighs and tries to get the attention of the REDHEAD. As she sips her sparkling water, she smiles at him. Ben nods, pops up from his chair, and walks toward the table.

A BRUNETTE from the table intercepts him.

BRUNETTE GIRL

Off-limits, testosterone bucket.  
Ladies night out. Turn around.

The redhead quickly slips him a piece of paper. Ben smiles and returns to his buddies. Rich and Anton give him "attaboy" slaps on the back when they see the paper.

RICH

And he gets her number!

BEN

(reading paper)  
You are invited to... study the  
Bible with the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Disappointment covers his face. Anton holds in a laugh.

BEN

I'm destined to die alone.

Rich is almost floored by a LATINA in a black dress. She sees him looking at her like a high school kid with a first crush. She smiles back, thinks it's kind of cute.

Anton sees the look they share.

ANTON

Prime cut right there, Richie. Why  
are you still sitting here?

RICH

Come-on, she doesn't want anything  
to do with me.

Anton drops his chin to his chest and pulls the guys in on either side of him.

ANTON

You jellyfish may as well shack up  
and grow old together.

Anton heads to Clare and Jane's table.

ANTON

Hey Mister Sister, hey Jane,  
celebrating our latest issue? I  
even got my articles in on time.

CLARE

And maybe if I hounded you even  
more and gave you more assignments,  
it may keep you out of trouble.

ANTON

(innocently)  
Me? Trouble?

CLARE

Dipshit, you're more trouble than a  
cougar at goat yoga.  
(beat)  
Speaking of trouble, Kim called me  
and told me about your date.

Anton sighs.

ANTON

Next time, maybe set me up with a  
friend who's heard about make-up.  
And a diet plan.

A spasm of irritation crosses Clare's face.

CLARE

You didn't have to ask her to purge  
after dinner!

ANTON

Hey, I said, 'please.'

Anton winks at a BARELY LEGAL GIRL who walks by.

CLARE

Gross. You're almost 40! Remind me  
never to let you get near another  
one of my friends.

Clare pushes him away from her. Anton turns his attention to  
Jane.

ANTON

Sweet Jane, got any gorgeous friends that aren't as stuck up as my sister?

JANE

Why would I set up a friend with an immature, sexist, overcompensating lounge lizard?

ANTON

(balking)

Overcompensating? I don't think so.

JANE

That's the biggest microphone I've ever seen. Unless your hands are just exceptionally tiny.

Anton rolls his eyes and leaves. Clare laughs hard.

CLARE

I swear, I should have had him neutered with the dog.

Clare notices Jane staring at Ben.

CLARE

Just ask him to buy you a drink already.

Jane looks uncomfortable.

JANE

Oh my god, no.

She watches Anton point out the barely legal girl to Ben and Rich.

JANE

They're like diabetics in a candy store. Too bad... he's such a nice guy.

CLARE

It's Anton's fault. Been influencing them since high school. It's like they never got out of puberty.

JANE

It's not even their fault, Clare.

Jane looks at the model on the cover of their magazine.

JANE

We do it to ourselves, endless  
embarrassment and constant  
rejection unless we look like the  
girls we put in our magazine.

Jane pages through the magazine, slim beautiful women, page  
after page.

JANE

Who men fall in love within a  
fleeting second.

CLARE

Careful. Lust and love are on  
opposite ends of the spectrum.

JANE

Like men know the difference? Look  
around.

Every "beautiful" woman in the bar, table after table, in  
corner after corner, have men almost lining up to take a  
number.

JANE

It's the frumpy girl's dilemma.

CLARE

You're not frumpy. That's more my  
style.

JANE

No you're not. I'm more the elf on  
a shelf waiting for a Christmas  
that never comes.

Jane takes a sip of her drink. Clare flips through the pages  
of Sir Savant. Her face is hot and pinched with resentment.

CLARE

Not one real woman in here. Just  
airbrushed young eye candy.

JANE

George still won't let you update?  
Everyone else is doing it.

CLARE

Not George. But I'll make sure  
does.



EXT. SIR SAVANT - STREET VIEW - DAY

A classic skyscraper in West Los Angeles with the pacific ocean gracing the background. A huge, embossed sign reads: SIR SAVANT MAGAZINE - Founded 1980.

INT. SIR SAVANT - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Modern-day office with cameras, computers, lenses, and STAFF seated at computers or rushing about. Bright sunshine illuminates the room.

Clare blasts through the door - boss dynamo. In your face assertive and ready for action.

A sign fills the wall: SIR SAVANT - THE SAVVY MEN'S MAGAZINE. An "Editor at work" sign graces Anton's computer.

A "Marketing" sign hangs over Rich's cubicle. Ben's desk, filled with photographer's equipment, is adjacent to Anton.

CLARE

Rich, what's the ad line up for May?

Rich hands her an ad printout. Clare gawks incredulously.

CLARE

Ukrainian mail order brides?  
(scoffs)  
Viagra? Penis enlargement pills?  
Are we a trash mag now? We can't run these.

RICH

Oh, but George said we must.

CLARE

Where's the new Rolex and Versace ads? Mercedes, BMW, Jaguar?

RICH

They all pulled out after last quarter's readership drop.

Clare looks like she's gonna be sick. Rich looks concerned.

RICH

Should we be updating our resumes?  
What about my home renovations?

CLARE

No. The magazine's not in the hole...

(MORE)

CLARE (CONT'D)

(low)  
...yet.

Clare scurries away. Ben walks by and observes Frank Sinatra's photo on Anton's desk. Anton's Fedora hangs on his computer.

BEN

I still don't understand your  
fascination with Sinatra. He looks  
like a scarecrow to me.

Anton puts on the Fedora for effect, which he not only wears on stage but also outside. He answers in Sinatra jive:

ANTON

Get with it, Rich! I don't think  
there was ever a cool cat that  
walked the earth who got so many  
beautiful dames. They were falling  
all over him.

Anton removes the hat and watches the entry door open. A lovely model - JENNIFER (20), a tall leggy blonde squeezed into tight jeans - sashays in.

ANTON-BEN-RICH

(swoon)  
Hi, Jennifer.

JENNIFER

Hi, guys.

ANTON

I loved your Seychelles photo-  
shoot.

JENNIFER

Thanks.

The door opens, and GEORGE FELDERMAN, (50's), President, pops out. He's attractive with greying hair.

JENNIFER

Hey, George.

GEORGE

Hey, baby.

Jennifer smiles. They kiss, she enters George's office, and the door closes. The three guys stare with respect.

RICH

It's so not fair.

Clare buzzes by.

CLARE

Hey. Curly, Larry, and Moe.  
Conference Room. Meeting with the  
boss in two minutes.

BEN

Especially if he only lasts two  
minutes.

INT. OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The three guys sit attentively at the conference table with  
Clare. They pour themselves some coffee and grab muffins off  
the tray. George notices that Clare doesn't take one.

GEORGE

No muffin?

CLARE

I'm allergic to eggs. But not to  
coffee.

She pours herself a big cup.

GEORGE

Okay, the reason you're all here is  
that this magazine needs revamping.  
Look at the numbers. We're barely  
making a profit. If we don't  
increase subscriptions by 20  
percent within the next half-year,  
Sir Savant will be sold off.

CLARE

What does that mean for us?

GEORGE

All our jobs would be in jeopardy.

CLARE

Ads for the quicker pecker upper?  
And a mail order bride feature?  
That's gonna save us?

George, energy in high gear, circles the table.

GEORGE

The advertiser might. A major vodka  
firm with deep pockets and a desire  
for a feature article on Ukrainian  
ladies.

(MORE)

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We'll be doing an investigative  
journal piece about the  
misconception of mail order brides.  
(points to Clare)  
Clare, you'll oversee the project.

Clare stabs an imaginary knife into her heart and yanks it  
out.

GEORGE

We have this guy, Penrod Zimmer,  
who wants to go to Ukraine and get  
a bride.

BEN

Penrod? Can we give him a better  
name for the article?

Clare jumps out of her seat and shouts:

CLARE

Isn't a Ukrainian bride ring pretty  
much human trafficking?

George's hand calmly waves her down.

GEORGE

Calm your judgment, Clare. These  
women are in search of  
opportunities and adventure. And  
from what I've gathered from a  
first dip into it, there's a  
shortage of men in Ukraine.

CLARE

But isn't it dangerous for the  
girl?

GEORGE

The agency has a regimented  
screening process, and security is  
highly important to them. Consider  
this "The Bachelorette" with a  
passport.

CLARE

That show can get sleazy, but this  
is dripping in it.

ANTON

Who are you to stand in the way of  
love, Sis?

CLARE  
Love of what, a green card?

Anton frowns.

GEORGE  
You're all on this. Anton writes.  
Ben shoots. Rich, shmoozes our  
Vodka sponsor. Huge potential here.

ANTON  
Yeah! A trip to Ukraine.

BEN  
Always wanted to see Eastern  
Europe.

RICH  
Is it like Amsterdam at all?

Annoyance covers Clare's face.

CLARE  
We're not going there to shoot a  
porn!  
(beat)  
I swear I'm running a daycare here.  
I'm glad I get to keep an eye on  
all of you.

The guys chuckle.

GEORGE  
An old college buddy of mine is a  
diplomat at the Ukrainian embassy.  
He can get her the K-1 Visa sooner.

BEN  
I hear the women are really  
beautiful there.

GEORGE  
That's the hook. Where can the  
average Joe get a gorgeous woman?  
Here, especially in this town, if  
he's not loaded or handsome, he has  
no chance. There, if you have a  
job, a car, and even a mortgaged  
house you're considered rich.

George smirks a bit. He hands photos to the team.

GEORGE  
These are the hopeful brides.

The guys' eyes go wide at the photos. Clare broods.

BEN

Daaaaamn.

ANTON

Seriously.

GEORGE

The advertisers are covering all expenses. Penrod arrives and interviews the women and picks one.

ANTON

That's it? That fast?

CLARE

Imagine, Anton. Some men want to actually find one woman and settle down.

Anton rolls his eyes.

GEORGE

Once her visa's approved, she arrives here. She has 90 days to decide if she wants to marry him and vice versa. Our next three issues will focus on those phases and end with either a wedding or a sad good-bye. Either way it's great ink.

(beat)

Get your passports ready.

EXT. CLARE'S HOME - IVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anton enters, with Fedora in hand. IVAN GAGARIN, (70's), sits up in bed, stern-faced and brooding with his hands folded.

ANTON

How are ya doing, Pops? Is the Chemo making you tired?

Ivan grunts.

IVAN

(heavy Russian accent)

I am always tired. I am sick old man. What do you expect? I not live much longer.

ANTON

Come-on Pops, the Doctor said you have a good chance of beating this.

IVAN

Doctors, what do they know?

Ivan shoots Anton a level stare.

IVAN

Clare tells me you also "sick old man" chasing after young floozies.

ANTON

Pops! You know how she exaggerat--

IVAN

Clare say these woman not make good wives. You need good wife. Children. You can get jiggy with good wife too. I give up on Clare. She lives to work. But Anton, you need son to carry on Gagarin name. I'm not going to live much longer. I want to see my grandchildren.

ANTON

I want kids too. What about love?

Ivan spits on the floor. Anton grimaces.

IVAN

Love? You're almost 40. Need energy for children. Not getting any younger.

ANTON

Okay, Pops. Calm down; you'll pop a tube. I'll find a good wife soon.

IVAN

Must be from good family. Do not forget, our family heritage is of nobles, Dukes and royalty.

Ivan reaches into his nightstand and pulls out a Grand Duke's crown and places it on his head. Anton sighs.

ANTON

(under his breath)  
Here we go.

Ivan grabs a royal scepter from his nightstand and lays it across his lap.

IVAN

My father saved this scepter during revolution. It was given to me to keep our history alive. Never forget, your grandfather was a Grand Duke and keeper of the scepter. When the Bolsheviks stripped the nobles of their wealth, this...

(holds up the scepter)

...was one of the few treasures left. When they stormed our home, the only secure place we could hide this was--

ANTON

--I know, up the cow's butt.

Clare enters with a tea tray full of Ivan's medications.

CLARE

Oh God, not the scepter again.

IVAN

This is your heritage.

She sets the tray on Ivan's nightstand. She stares at the scepter.

CLARE

That thing could never be clean enough for me. Dad, you got Chemo tomorrow at three. I'll drop by after work and pick you up.

Ivan reaches under an adjacent pillow and brings out a czar's glass goblet and sets it next to the bed. Ivan adjusts the crown on his head while Clare fluffs his pillow.

ANTON

This side of the world no one gives a gerbil's fart about Russian royalty.

IVAN

Do not say that. Royal blood is in your veins. You must wear with pride. You could be a Prince now.

A spasm of irritation crosses Clare's face.



CLARE

Papa, don't start putting any ideas into Anton's head. His ego's bigger than the Russian Tundra.

IVAN

Anton should go to old country and get old fashioned woman who cooks and cleans and obeys man.

CLARE

Pops, no one talks like that anymore.

IVAN

You kids these days too picky, selfish. When I was ten years-old my mother pointed to little girl in market and told me I will marry her when I become a man. That girl was your mother.

ANTON

And you were happy?

CLARE

Mom wasn't happy.

Anton startles at Clare's remark.

IVAN

What the shit is happy? We were poor, we try to survive. The Communists were on our backs like a baboon with a rocket up his ass.

Ivan stares eye to eye with Anton.

IVAN

Son, listen to your father. American woman talk back. Nothing good enough for her. She want to be like man. She not know her place. Find woman from old country. Marry. Do like rabbits and make a son.

CLARE

You think they haven't heard about feminism there? Word gets around.

IVAN

They still honor tradition.

Ivan yawns. He taps Anton on the shoulder with the scepter. Anton recoils.

IVAN

You tire me. I want to read books  
of a better time when we dined with  
Kings.

ANTON

And hid scepters up cow butts.

CLARE

I bet the livestock got pretty  
nervous when they saw you coming.

Clare and Anton chuckle. Ivan shakes his scepter at them, and they rush out the room. He holds it over his shoulder, proudly.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Anton confronts Clare.

ANTON

I don't understand why you're so  
secretive about--

CLARE

That's none of your business.

ANTON

Why not? You're always butting into  
my business!

CLARE

That's because I know best.

ANTON

You are so far in the closet you're  
finding Christmas presents.

CLARE

I can't tell Pops I'm gay. He's so  
old world he's never going to  
accept it. I can't tell anyone else  
either cause I'm afraid it will get  
back to him.

ANTON

They're taking bets at work.

CLARE

I don't care about anyone else. I  
just care about Pops.

EXT. ANTON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Decorated mid-century modern in orange and browns. A Sinatra vinyl "All Alone" plays on the record player.

SINATRA

(on record player)

*All alone, I'm so all alone. There  
is no one else but you...*

Anton is sprawled on his couch. Beer and Chinese takeout litter the coffee table. The TV plays. He scrolls through his phone. No messages.

The NEWSCASTER announces on TV:

MODERATOR

Per our new statistics, single men  
die younger than married men.

Unnerved, Anton quickly changes the station.

MODERATOR

An elderly gentleman was found dead  
in his apartment after a week. The  
stench alerted neighbors. And  
here's a gruesome bit of news, his  
body was found half-eaten by his  
cocker-spaniel.

Anton grimaces. The song continues:

SINATRA

(on record player)

*I'm all alone every evening, All  
alone feeling blue, Wond'ring where  
you are and how you are, and if you  
are all alone too.*

Anton pauses in thought. His living room seems to grow larger and larger. The record player skips on "alone" in the lyrics.

He stares ahead with a new sense of fear in his eyes.

INT. SIR SAVANT - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

Clare, Rich, Ben, and Anton are busy at work.

Jane approaches Ben and hands him a folder. He grabs it, and Jane playfully tugs back and smiles. She lights up at Ben's glance. Clare takes notice.

CLARE

Ben, do you know Jane is a skilled boxer? Why don't you join us for a workout?

Jane smiles and winks at Clare. Ben stares at both of them, and his cheeks grow a bit red.

BEN

Wow, Clare, I know I'm not the most muscular guy but you don't have to rub it in my face.

Ben wraps his arms around his non-existent biceps.

JANE

No, no, Ben. She definitely didn't mean that. I think your body is delicious.

She turns beat red at her choice of words. Ben, embarrassed as well, sees Anton giving him a warning look.

BEN

You're just being nice.

Ben turns away, and disappointment covers Jane's face.

George storms out of his office and hurries toward their desks. They all stop work. George heaves a heavy sigh.

GEORGE

Big hiccup on the Brides project. Our Penrod backed out. Got cold feet.

RICH

I knew it! No dude named Penrod is a stand-up guy.

Clare turns around, and air-pumps her arm.

CLARE

Yes!

GEORGE

Unless we find a new guy willing to do this in 16 hours, we're screwed.

Anton hesitates for a second then speaks.

ANTON

I'll do it.

Clare stares at Anton, not believing what he just said. She chuckles as if he was joking. Ben and Rich stare. George lights up as if his ticket had the winning lotto numbers.

GEORGE

That sounds great. Thanks for saving our asses, Anton, my boy!

Ben and Rich try to figure out his game. Clare realizes that Anton is truly serious. She looks sick. Drops into her chair.

ANTON

I was thinking this could be cool with some Gonzo journalism, you know, first-person narrative. How more directly involved could it be?

George looks to Anton, serious.

GEORGE

You're not yanking my dick on this? You're serious?

Anton smiles and nods confidently. George's office phone rings.

GEORGE

All right. That call is probably the vodka guys. All of you, conference room in ten.

George heads into his office. Rich and Ben walk up to Anton like they are in the presence of greatness.

BEN

You're really going to do this?

RICH

I don't think I've envied you as much as I do at this moment. I'd never have the guts to do that.

Anton ponders for a moment.

ANTON

Why don't we all get brides? You guys aren't finding any girls here. How about it? Family? Kids? You want all that shit, right? You saw the girls in the brochure.

Ben and Rich think for a moment. Jane has an ashen look on her face like the floor fell out beneath her. She is about to say something when --

BEN

I don't know. It's just so bizarre.

RICH

I could never do that. I'd be too scared. I mean... wow.

ANTON

These girls have signed up to be chosen by a guy. No risk. Big reward.

Anton grabs the poster of the brides and holds it in front of them. Ben and Rich stare.

BEN

Maybe... I should think about this.

RICH

You know what? My options are about zero. Why not. Count me in.

Rich joins Anton in staring Ben down.

JANE

Like, what, you're all gonna hit the Ukrainian drive-through and order some McBrides?

BEN

Well... we wouldn't be doing this by ourselves, right? We'd have each other? There's strength in numbers.

ANTON

Whadya say? Are you in?

Ben smiles at the goofy grins his best pals are giving him. He looks like he's about to shit his pants, but he nods.

ANTON

Boom! Way to grow some balls, boys.

The three stooges high five and man-hug it out as they wander down the hall to the conference room.

Jane looks to Clare, and it seems like a tear is about to fall from her devastated eyes. Clare puts her arm around her shoulder and pulls her close.

CLARE

Christmas is overrated anyways.

Jane smiles a little sadly and lets her friend comfort her.

INT. SIR SAVANT - CONFERENCE ROOM - LATER

The three guys smile nervously as George contemplates their decision. Jane's face is pressed outside against the glass.

GEORGE

The three of you?

Anton nods. George plays out scenarios in his head. He taps the table with his pen.

GEORGE

Sir Savant staff members going to Ukraine to get their very own brides... It's brilliant! Gentlemen. I think you may have saved our magazine.

INT. PLANE - FLYING -DAY

Anton, Rich, and Ben sit in economy class drinking beer. Clare sips tea.

CLARE

If this is going to play right, you need to immerse yourselves and get to know the Ukrainian culture as fast and as thoroughly as possible.

RICH

I consider myself a worldly man.

BEN

We'll be adaptable. Hey, Clare. Why don't you get yourself a Ukrainian Adonis while we're there?

Clare smiles spastically. Anton jumps in to help.

ANTON

Forget her. She's all work and no play.

Ben shrugs his shoulders to Clare's relief.

ANTON

As you all know, every good article needs a detailed investigation. And three soon to be grooms need one hell of a bachelor party.

Rich likes this idea. He offers a shit-eating grin.

CLARE  
Not on my watch!

The guys cringe. Anton raises his beer...

ANTON  
To the appreciation of new  
cultures.

RICH  
To dipping our kielbasa's in warm,  
creamy pots of perogies.

Clare, Ben, and Anton cringe.

CLARE  
(to Rich)  
I'll make sure your girl doesn't  
speak English.  
(to all)  
And don't think this is a trip to  
Disneyland. We're talking marriage  
here. Till death due us part shit.

Their faces grow pensive, and with a forced smile, they gulp  
down their beers.

EXT. AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

The UIA plane lands at the Kiev Airport.

INT. KIEV AIRPORT - MAIN TERMINAL - DAY

Clare, Anton, Ben, and Rich enter the airport. They look  
around. The writing on the walls is in the Ukrainian alphabet  
and English. Ukrainian is spoken over the loudspeaker.

CLARE  
Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore.

VLADISLAV YERZOV, (50's) a burly, toothy-smiled Ukrainian man  
with foggy eyes, greets them with a kiss on each cheek. His  
ASSISTANTS grab their suitcases.

VLADISLAV  
I am Mr. Vladislav Yertzov from the  
company National Ukraine Vodka. We  
are the sponsors of your magazine.

Vladislav leads Clare and the eager guys to the exit. Before  
Anton can ask a question -



VLADISLAV

I want to let you know that Madame Gribanov from the Bride's committee has taken care of your hotel. You just need to sign in and go to your rooms where her assistants will have unpacked your things. We have a wonderful evening planned.

CLARE

Dear Mr.Yerzov, I wonder if I may excuse myself, I'm exhausted from the flight. I'll go straight to my room if that's all right.

Vlad nods. Clare gives the boys the evil eye.

CLARE

Stay out of trouble.

The boys shrink back.

INT. VODKA HEADQUARTERS (KIEV) - CELLAR - NIGHT

Vladislav stands in front of a bar in the Vodka tasting cellar. Vodka EMPLOYEES sit at tables, smoke, and drink. Anton, Rich, and Ben sit at the bar.

Every table is full of Vodka bottles. A band of 4 MUSICIANS play Ukrainian Folk music. A pretty UKRAINIAN GIRL, dressed in traditional Ukrainian fashion, sings.

A cuddly BEAR sits by her feet. This is the real thing. Rich turns and sees the bear, and does a double-take. The bear stares back at Rich. Rich tugs on Ben's sleeve.

RICH

Um. That's a bear.

BEN

I'm sure it's trained.

RICH

But it's a freaking bear.

Ben leans toward the bear.

BEN

Hey, Smokey. Would you like to meet my friend, his nickname is *honey*.

Ben chuckles. The bear stands to attention and sniffs Rich, who freezes and may have had a drip of pee leak out.

BEN

Look, it likes you.

Rich slowly backs away, and Ben pats the bear on the head. The male MUSICIAN tugs the bear's chain to retreat. The Musician smiles at Rich.

UKRAINIAN FOLK MUSICIAN

Lola, is very tame bear and we treat her like family.

RICH

Yeah sure. She's the type of girl you take home to meet your parents.

Vladislav clears his throat.

VLADISLAV

I would like to introduce our American friends, Rich, Anton and Ben.

The employees applaud.

VLADISLAV

I welcome you gentlemen to our headquarters where National Vodka makes the best Vodka in Ukraine. We have also arranged a folk quartet for good Ukraine music.

One of the musicians strikes his accordion, which signals Lola to sit up on her hind legs and raise her paws. The female singer gives her a treat.

RICH

We are very honored to be here.

VLADISLAV

Your first drink in Kiev must be our famous Vodka.

ANTON

I suppose a Vodka Collins would be an insult to your culture or something, right?

The bar goes silent. The Ukrainian employees stare daggers at the guys. Even the bear GROWLS.

The BARTENDER'S jaw inadvertently twitches with rage and spews a Ukrainian word that either means: out, or some expletive. Vladislav shakes his head and SLAPS his palm down on the bar, then shows the Bartender four fingers.

VLADISLAV

Right!

Three Ukrainian employees at a table pour half a glass each from their bottle and down them in one gulp - and SLAM the empty glasses on the table - that's how you do it!

The Bartender comes from around the bar, SLAMS a large bottle of Vodka down with four glasses.

VLADISLAV

You want to marry our women, you show us you are men.

Vladislav pours three sloppy ounces into each glass and slides one in front of each guy. Anton, Ben, and Rich sense all eyes on them. They pick up their glasses and swallow the liquor in unison.

They try hard to mask the sting in their throats as the bar fills with CHEERS.

The band plays again. Some gruff men circle the guys, click glasses with them and laugh.

INT. KIEV - COMPANY - CELLAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Ukrainian folk music drones. Ben, Anton, and Rich sit on chairs held high by the men as they dance them around the room. The guys are shit-faced drunk.

ANTON

I'm the King of Kiev.

RICH

Wooooooo!

Ben looks a bit green.

BEN

I don't feel so good.

INT. KIEV HOLIDAY INN - SUITE - EARLY MORNING

The room looks like a rock band destroyed it. Clothes everywhere, furniture tipped over, empty bottles, and glasses on every surface.

Anton is spread across the couch, passed out. A STRANGE GRUMBLING rouses him. He rubs his head.

ANTON  
Where am I?

He looks across the room.

ANTON  
Ben? Rich?

BEN  
Hey.

Ben pops up from behind the couch, startling Anton so much he almost falls off the couch. Ben seems cross-eyed.

BEN  
Are we ready for takeoff?

Ben holds his tummy and runs for the bathroom, trips on a foot sticking out from under the bed as he stumbles toward the toilet. The foot retreats.

RICH (O.S.)  
Ow!

Anton searches for the source of the yelp.

ANTON  
Rich?

RICH (O.S.)  
Help. Help.

Anton crawls across the floor and around the bed; he sees Rich's arm extended from under the bed. He yanks him out. Rich wears the girl's traditional clothes made up of her skirt and headdress. Anton smirks.

ANTON  
Well, don't you look fetching?

The sound of Ben VOMITING echoes from the bathroom as does a woman's CHIRPING DISPLEASURE.

The Ukrainian singer, wearing her bra and panties, scurries out of the bathroom. She yells something in Ukrainian to Rich. Rich gets it. He takes off her clothes. She quickly dresses.

The girl WHISTLES. The bear Lola pops out from under the bed beside Rich and follows her out the door.

But the bear pauses, saunters back to Rich and licks the top of his head. Lola sashays back to the door and leaves with her owner.

Anton smirks and sings in his Sinatra voice.

ANTON  
*Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets.*

Rich looks like he's gonna be sick.

RICH  
I'm afraid to remember what  
happened last night.

Anton can't help but laugh - resulting in more pain. His hands cradle his head.

ANTON  
My head feels like it's about to  
explode.

Ben drudges from the bathroom and onto the bed.

BEN  
What happened?

ANTON  
A lot of Vodka happened.

A LOUD knock at the door.

ANTON/RICH/BEN  
(variations of)  
Ow - Go away - Kill me now.

Clare enters, her eyes take in the carnage.

CLARE  
What the hell is going on here?

Another knock. The door opens. There stands MADAME GRIBANOV, tall with straight blonde hair and an air of masculinity. She holds a riding crop with no horse in sight for miles. She carries a roll of toilet paper and steps inside.

MADAME GRIBANOV  
I am Madame Gribanov, from Brides  
committee.

CLARE  
I'm Clare Gegarín from Sir Savant  
magazine.

Madame Gribanov shakes Clare's hand as if it was a pump well. She stares deep into Clare's eyes. Clare gives a startled gasp and is quite intrigued. Gribanov then scans the room.

MADAME GRIBANOV

What have you *Podonoks* done?

BEN

What's a *Podonok*?

ANTON

Prick. My dad taught me all the good swear words.

(to Gribanov)

It's not our fault. Ask Vlad from National Vodka. At the meeting, they forced Vodka down our throats.

MADAME GRIBANOV

So. American pussy boys cannot take our Vodka like men?

She grunts and hands the toilet paper roll to Anton.

ANTON

Um... thanks?

MADAME GRIBANOV

Toilet paper valuable here. Do not waste. Use only two squares for poop.

She claps her hands together.

MADAME GRIBANOV

You get up now. I have hangover medicine with me. I will take you to Banya later. Right after Haash.

CLARE

Haash? What's that? Is it legal?

Madame picks up the hotel phone.

MADAME GRIBANOV

(subtitled Ukrainian)

*Bring Radishes and Garlic.*

(to the guys)

Rest of remedy on the way.

(to Clare)

Haash is hangover cure.

ANTON

What's a Banya?

MADAME GRIBANOV

Banya is a wonderful place where  
you will experience the heart of  
Ukraine.

She takes a bottle out of her purse. Clare collects empty  
glasses from the table, and Gribanov pours. The guys sniff  
the concoction and gag.

RICH

This must be what the toilet paper  
is for.

CLARE

What's in this Haash?

MADAME GRIBANOV

It is tripe and beef feet boiled  
for six hours to make broth. Must  
drink with radish and garlic clove.  
Hotel will deliver soon.

Hearing this prompts Rich to run to the bathroom and throw  
up. Gribanov whips her riding crop so everyone knows she  
means business.

MADAME GRIBANOV

No one leaves until every drop  
gone.

Clare rubs her hands together like a spiteful little girl.

CLARE

I'll make sure of that!

Knock at the door. A WAITER enters with a basket of radishes  
and garlic cloves. Rich stumbles back into the room.

Grinning, Clare hands Anton a glass of the concoction with  
the vegetables. Anton takes a sip, puts a radish and garlic  
clove in his mouth and chews. Ben and Rich watch closely.

ANTON

Like death...

Anton's stomach churns LOUDLY. His eyes go wide, but then a  
calmness overcomes him.

ANTON

I actually feel a little better.

Madame nods and smiles. She pokes Rich and Ben with her crop.  
Rich cautiously brings the liquid to his lips. He gags.  
Madame gives him a radish and a garlic clove.

Rich goes in for a second try but hesitates. Gribanov cracks her whip. Rich manages to gulp it down.

RICH  
My God - it tastes like a bear's  
ass.

ANTON  
A gentleman doesn't kiss and tell.

RICH  
Bite me.

Rich's stomach makes the same sound; then he looks to Anton in surprise and nods. Ben takes a swig. He gags.

BEN  
Mindy McCarty from grade 10 tasted  
like this.

Anton and Rich laugh. Madame forces the glass up with the guidance of her crop, and he drinks it all.

MADAME GRIBANOV  
Good. All gone. Now, show me what  
you wear today!

She opens their sliding door closet. Rich stumbles to the closet and takes out a nice pair of shirt and pants. Madame shakes her head in disapproval.

MADAME GRIBANOV  
No suit? Are you off to buy goat  
for farm? Women need to know you  
are successful men.

The three guys look at her then at their closet and shrug.

MADAME GRIBANOV  
After Banya we go to Sanahunt. Get  
designer suits. You must look like  
princes!

ANTON  
So is this Banya like a...  
Massage parlor?

Anton winks. Clare slaps Anton on the back of the head like a naughty schoolboy.

MADAME GRIBANOV  
It is a relaxing Sauna.

Gribanov casts Clare a sexy side glance.



MADAME GRIBANOV

You must come too, Clare. I will  
take care of you.

Clare blushes.

INT. BANYA/STEAMBATH - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Three BIG BURLY men, wearing felt hats - and absolutely nothing else - stand in front of the three guys, who all have awkward looks on their faces. Madame Gribanov speaks.

MADAME GRIBANOV

These are your Banschiks. I will be  
in private sauna with Clare and  
meet you after Banya.

Gribanov exits the door.

BEN

Band chicks look *totally* different  
in my fantasies.

ANTON

Um... what exactly does a Banschik  
do?

Anton's Banschik steps closer. His stomach flows over his  
genitals. Anton recoils as the Banschik undresses him and  
neatly hangs his clothes in the locker.

ANTON

I can undress myself, thank you.

Rich and Ben fight theirs off also, to no avail. The  
Banschiks keep removing their clothes.

BEN

At least buy me dinner first.

RICH

Hands out of the cookie jar!

ANTON

(to Rich)

I thought you liked bears?

Rich swats at Anton. The Banschiks put a felt hat on each of  
the guys' heads. They stare at each other naked - except for  
the hats.

BEN

We look like Robin Hood and his  
Merry men. At an orgy.

INT. BANYA/STEAMBATH - DAY

Wide wooden benches stretch along the walls of the wooden Banya, built up like steps, naked men sitting on each. The three guys enter and take deep breaths.

ANTON  
Ah, this is nice.

The guys lie down.

RICH  
I think I'm sweating pure Vodka.

A NAKED MAN, speaking English, smiles.

NAKED MAN  
The higher you go up, is hotter.

The sweat drips down their faces.

BEN  
I wonder how hot it is up there? I think I can handle it. I've been to Arizona.

Ben climbs upward and makes himself comfortable among other men. He sees his sweat droplets disappear in seconds and can't breathe. Back down he goes.

BEN  
I think I'll stay down here where the temperature is compatible with human life.

After a few minutes, the door opens, and their Banschiks enter. The Banschiks grab some "veniks" (a bundle of twigs and leafy birch branches bound together.)

ANTON  
What the hell is that?

ANTON'S BANSCHIK  
(holds up the twigs)  
Veniks.

One of them rounds up the guys while the others dip the veniks into ice water and smack the guys briskly all over.

ANTON  
It's like I'm in a car wash.

BEN

They're tenderizing the meat; they plan to eat us.

SPLOOSH! The guys are DRENCHED with buckets of ice-cold water delivered from their Banschiks. They SCREAM from the shock.

The bench men chuckle at the sensitive Americans. Rich loses his mind, shivering, and trying to find a place to hide. He stumbles toward the door but instead falls right in front of a naked UKRAINIAN MAN sitting on the bench.

With water and steam blinding his eyes, he uses the man's legs to pull himself on his knees, with his head positioned between the man's thighs. He wipes his eyes and immediately gets an eyeful. He screams and heads back to his friends.

The door opens, and a group of beautiful YOUNG WOMEN enter. NAKED. The guys freeze. The naked man notices their surprise.

NAKED MAN

On Wednesdays, banya's are co-ed.

The guys smile.

ANTON

I love Wednesdays.

RICH

Best day of the week. Ever.

They smile at the girls. The girls look at the guy's equipment and giggle. Ben notices. Looks down.

BEN

Oh no... guys?

They notice the smirks as well, then follow Ben's direction to look down at their genitalia.

ANTON

Oh no, we have cocksicles.

The three guys cup their shrinkage.

ANTON

Mine retracted like a turtle head.

BEN

Mine's hiding in the bushes.

RICH

Mine ran away and didn't even leave a note.

The girls giggle and walk by. Anton shouts after them.

ANTON

We don't really look like this. You know where we can find a heater?

The big burly Banschiks finish rubbing them down with towels despite the guys' shrieks.

INT. BANYA - PRIVATE STEAM ROOM

Madame Gribanov and Clare, alone, sit with towels on a lower bunk.

MADAME GRIBANOV

You are a shy little flower.

Gribanov puts her arm around Clare.

CLARE

I don't have that much experience.

MADAME GRIBANOV

Don't worry, my Rosebud. I am patient.

Clare feels comfortable and smiles.

INT. SANAHUNT LUXURY DEPARTMENT STORE - MEN'S DRESSING ROOM

MONTAGE:

A) Anton comes out of the dressing room, wearing a native folk outfit with sash and tassels. He tries the "prisyadka" dance (squat-and-kick move) but falls on his butt. Clare and Gribanov laugh.

B) Rich comes out in a suit with overflowing sleeves and nearly trips over the extra leg fabric.

C) Ben displays his bell-bottomed disco suit in bright yellow. He does the diagonal up down arm movement.

Clare and Gribanov roll eyes and hand them more appropriate attire. Later, the guys preen like peacocks in front of the mirror, admiring and showing off their amazing designer suits. Perfect cuts. Style. They look damn good. Gribanov and Clare nod their heads in approval.

INT. KIEV - WAREHOUSE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Anton, Ben, and Rich peek through the door. The warehouse is full of HOPEFUL BRIDES. Clare carries the camera equipment.

CLARE

Don't get sidetracked, and keep in mind we're doing this for the feature article.

RICH

Hey, I didn't come all this way and get molested by a fat, sweaty, cabana boy *not* to find my soul mate. The article is secondary.

BEN

Me too. Objective: soul mate.

CLARE

Okay. But this is a job, and if we don't pull this off, then we won't have jobs to go back to. Ask questions and take notes of their answers. And don't end any conversation without asking why they're using a marriage service.

BEN

I'm rather interested myself about that.

RICH

It's not an unfair question. Especially with how gorgeous they all are.

ANTON

Guys, I'm not one to hold my boys back from dipping their wand in a foreign pond. Game time. Let's go.

INT. WAREHOUSE BUILDING - NIGHT

The hall is filled with folding chairs and tables. Three empty tables stand in front. UKRAINIAN WOMEN (20's to early 30's) stand in lines leading to each table.

Anton, Ben, and Rich enter the hall like roosters in a hen house. All the women stare then applaud. Ben shyly nods and smiles. Anton struts his stuff proudly. Rich stares like a deer in headlights.

Beautiful women line the walls, waiting anxiously. Hair coiffed and perfect make-up, directed through long lines that lead to the three guys with their INTERPRETERS.

Each woman hands them a sheet in English with their photo, age, religion, hobbies, and education. They wink, flirt, and direct their answers to the interpreter when needed.

Rich talks to a voluptuous beauty.

RICH

May I ask why you're using this service?

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

I am a feminist. Most men here expect woman to clean house and take care of them. It is not 50/50 relationship.

Rich smiles and takes notes.

RICH

I like a women who has a career, I can take care of myself, and I love to cook. Any questions for me?

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

Do you like pets?

RICH

Not bears.

The girl laughs.

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

Bears? Bears are not pets.

RICH

Never mind.

In between taking photos, Clare interviews the girls at the end of the line as they wait their turns.

AT THE NEXT TABLE

Anton speaks with a very attractive GIRL in her early twenties and takes notes.

ANTON

What are your hobbies?

Her eyes blink nervously and she shyly answers.

UKRAINIAN GIRL

I like to cook. I also like to...

The girl now talks a hundred words a minute. The interpreter can't keep up and stares incredulously. Her animated body rocks in her chair. The interpreter finally shoves her aside, and the next girl in line takes her place.

ANTON

What do you like in a man?

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

I like...

She stares into the air thinking...

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

Man who is funny. Ambitious. Able to take care of family. And not too much drinking.

The blonde woman "air drinks" with her thumb to her mouth and crosses her eyes. Anton chuckles.

ANTON

Do you like Frank Sinatra?

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

Sinatra? Who is he?

Disappointment covers Anton's face.

AT BEN'S TABLE

Ben interviews a shy, pretty girl.

BEN

What do you think about being a mail-order bride... I mean, about marriage?

UKRAINIAN GIRL/INTERPRETER

I want to get married and have family. I love America. I want to go to baseball game, eat hot dog.

Ben nods approvingly.

INT. WAREHOUSE BUILDING - HOURS LATER

Now only a few girls are left in line. A girl steps aside and a cute blonde, OLGA, early 20's, sits down at Ben's table.

OLGA

You are such a good looking man.

Ben grins, embarrassed.

OLGA  
My name is Olga. I know the woman  
for you. Me!

BEN  
Your English is very good.

Olga grins, pleased.

OLGA  
Do you believe in love at first  
sight?

Ben gets a bit lost in her big blue eyes.

BEN  
You may be able to convince me.

A TALL GIRL with voluptuous blond hair, shimmering skin, and pouting lips stands next in line at Rich's table. As she approaches, she quickly hides her heavy thick eyeglasses into her purse to reveal sparkling green eyes.

She stumbles to the chair and smiles. She feels her chair and plops down. She can only view a fuzzy talking block sitting across from her.

ALIENA  
Hello, my name is Aliena.

RICH  
My name is Richard; people call me  
Rich for short. Tell me all about  
yourself. I want to know  
everything.

ALIENA  
I come from small village. My  
parents are teachers. I do much  
photography. I take many pictures.

Rich checks her sheet for a minute. Aliena squints hard to get a good look at him. She smiles approvingly. Rich looks up. Embarrassed, her eyes widen.

RICH  
You have such beautiful eyes.

Rich is hypnotized by her presence. He snaps out of it.

RICH  
Back to business. Do you smoke? I  
noticed that a lot of people smoke  
here.



ALIENA

I stop smoking for you.

Rich smiles.

AT ANTON'S TABLE

A dark beauty sits before him, in a classic embroidered Ukrainian shirt. This is KISKA. Anton skims her sheet, tired from the day's activities.

ANTON

Says you speak English, great. You like to cook and love music. What type of music do you like?

Kiska's eyes widen in excitement.

KISKA

I love swing music. My favorite is Frank Sinatra. Ahhh, his voice is like velvet. I have his records. My favorite song is "It had to be you". He is very interesting man. I read all about him and his Rat Pack.

Anton has a smile fill his face, and he looks up with hopeful eyes, only to be floored by the beauty before him.

ANTON

Do you have any plans this evening?

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Ben and Olga sit in a quaint coffee shop and laugh. The couple try each other's coffees, and she giggles at him when he has foam stuck on his upper lip.

She leans forward, as though to wipe it off, and then it seems like she will kiss him. But she blows in his face, and the foam flies away.

He looks at her, shell-shocked, and she laughs so hard she snorts. He laughs. The chemistry is undeniable.

INT. NATIONAL ART MUSEUM OF UKRAINE - DAY

Rich and Aliena walk hand in hand, admiring the paintings. When Rich looks at the next painting, Aliena grabs her glasses hanging from a necklace hidden inside her pullover. She's fast, so Rich can't see her. But he side-eyes her, and a puzzled look covers his face. As they continue walking, she lets her head fall to his shoulder.

Rich stops in front of the next painting, and poses in a way that makes it look like he is sleeping on the lap of a naked woman in the painting.

Aliena quick-peaks in her glasses, and laughs. She pulls him away, and he looks up at her. Rich pulls her glasses up from her chain and slips them on her face. She gratefully smiles. He leans his face to hers, and they share a soft, warm kiss.

EXT. KIEV - PARK - DAY

Anton and Kiska make out on a bench in the park.

ANTON

You almost don't seem real. Perfect figure. Smart as a whip. Sense of humor. You love Ol' Blue Eyes. And don't even get me started on how great you smell.

Kiska grabs a cigarette from her purse, and presents it to Anton to light. Anton crumples the cigarette in his hand.

ANTON

Like I said. You smell great. We need to kick you off this habit.

KISKA

But this keep me on diet.

(she retracts)

I know. You right. I will try to stop. I am nervous person. But I feel good with you. You give me geesebumps.

ANTON

(chuckles)

You mean goosebumps.

KISKA

Goosebumps.

He smiles at her, and pulls her in for another kiss.

INT. KIEV AIRPORT - TERMINAL - DAY

Clare, Anton, Kiska, Ben, Olga, Rich, and Aliena stand in front of the security entrance at the gates. The guys drop their carryons, and give their girls a big kiss. They wave good-byes, and queue at the security line.

MONTAGE OF SCENES:

A) Visa applications from Kiev to the U.S. fill the screen, stamped, and filed out. Olga, Aliena, and Kiska walk into the U.S. Embassy in Kiev. They sit smoking in the waiting room.

B) At home, Kiska puts out her cigarette, and with both arms, waves the smoke away. She Skypes and sees Anton's face. She winks at him salaciously, and blows him kisses.

C) Ben and Olga Skype. They stare into each other's eyes. Olga runs her tongue over her lips. Ben puckers, and she longingly kisses her screen.

D) Rich and Aliena Skype. The lovers exchange heated looks. She accidentally bumps her screen, the edge of the screen reveals at least ten PEOPLE in a cloud of smoke, sitting on a couch and chairs, watching T.V. Aliena quickly sets the screen, so only her face is in view. Rich looks confused.

E) The girls' passports open. A "U.S. VISA APPROVED" is stamped onto each of their Ukrainian passports.

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - OUTSIDE - DAY

The Ukrainian fiances walk out of the LAX airport. They stare at the wide-open spaces, and the clean lines of the buildings. They speak in Ukrainian, point, and ooh and ahh at their surroundings. The guys carry the girl's luggage.

INT. ANTON'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kiska sits on the couch with Anton. She wears a red negligee and feeds him chocolate-covered strawberries. They kiss in a passionate embrace. Frankie boy sings in the b.g.

ANTON

Oh, baby. You are one hot number...

Kiska lights up a cigarette. Anton grabs it and puts it out in a glass of water.

KISKA

I need cigarette. I put on weight if I cannot smoke.

ANTON

No way would you ruin a perfect ass like that.

Kiska's mouth tightens into a stubborn line.

INT. RICH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Aliena, wearing her glasses, enters with Rich behind her, carrying her luggage. She scans the area, confused.

ALIENA

Is this hotel? It is so big.

RICH

No, I grew up here. My parents gifted it to me then moved to Florida. I had a renovation done.

ALIENA

But where is kitchen? There is no kitchen? Such a big room and no kitchen?

Rich directs her into the

KITCHEN

Aliena clasps her hands over her mouth in surprise.

ALIENA

I cannot believe.

She runs to the fridge and opens.

ALIENA

Ice box is so big. But where do you sleep?

RICH

There are four bedrooms upstairs.

Rich's finger points upwards.

ALIENA

You have upstairs? Why so many bedrooms? You are only one person.

RICH

Kid's room one day, or company? I'm planning for the future.

She runs out. Rich runs after her to the

LIVING ROOM

Rich follows her upstairs. Aliena glances over the railings.

ALIENA

Are you sure this not hotel?

INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Aliena opens the cupboard and sees Costco sized packs of toilet paper. She grabs the rolls and hugs for dear life. Rich enters.

ALIENA

Who did you bribe to get this much paper? Are you government spy?

INT. BEN'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Olga is clad in a leather bra and G-string, covered with a feather boa. She takes her boa and wraps it around Ben's head and pulls him to the bed.

Ben flops onto it, and Olga straddles him, and they move together in a passionate rhythm.

INT. SIR SAVANT - GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

KNOCK on the door. George sees Clare standing outside with a nervous grin on her face. He waves her in.

GEORGE

What's up, Clare? How's the Brides project going?

CLARE

Fine. Will interview the guys and gals shortly.

Clare sits down and searches for courage, squares her shoulders, and shoots George a level stare.

CLARE

I... um, I desperately want to make some changes to our editorials, photography, and the spirit of our magazine.

George sighs and leans back in his chair.

GEORGE

And what would you suggest?

Clare leans forward with enthusiasm.

CLARE

I have so many ideas. Starting with the image of our models. They need an update. The perception of beauty for women has changed.

(MORE)

CLARE (CONT'D)

With social media calling out the fat-shamers and bullies, we need a new cover with -- real women on it.

GEORGE

But Sir Savant showcases the most beautiful women on the planet. We pay them an outrageous amount of money for their beauty. The male readers expect to see them. It's the age-old story. Beauty and sex sell.

CLARE

But do we have to turn ourselves into a mail-order catalog? With sexist, outdated garbage. The public has changed.

A crease of concentration appears between George's brows.

GEORGE

But 89 percent of our readers are men.

CLARE

So you're saying all men are superficial, sexist pigs who only want women who subsist mainly on water and jello?

George laughs. She is getting frustrated.

CLARE

Clearly, I'm asking the wrong person. Look, we still hold ourselves to a higher class, do we not? With innovative articles and a fight to stay current? I'll set up interviews with a wide array of women. Women who have overcome obstacles and have them beautifully photographed.

GEORGE

We're not in the position to take on such a risk.

CLARE

This is the era of change, and it's changing so fast that the only strategy guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.

Clare hands him a report.

CLARE  
I wrote the project report for the  
Spirit of Beauty.

George barely takes a look and hands the report back to her.

GEORGE  
Not happening.

Clare is crushed and walks out the door.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Clare, Kiska, Jane, and Aliena, (without her glasses) sit at a table drinking coffee and tea.

CLARE  
Sorry, Olga couldn't make it. She  
says next time for sure.

Aliena puts a cigarette in her mouth and clicks her lighter. Kiska longingly stares at the cigarette as if it was water in the desert. Clare and Jane balk. Clare's hand stops Aliena.

CLARE  
Aliena, you can't smoke here. You  
can't smoke anywhere inside, even  
at a bar.

Aliena puts her cigarette away, very embarrassed and apologetic.

ALIENA  
So sorry. We smoke everywhere in  
Ukraine. They are very cheap.

JANE  
Honest mistake. So, is Rich taking  
good care of you?

ALIENA  
Oh, my goodness, Jane. Rich is so  
good to me. I miss my family much,  
but I love America. So modern,  
everything shiny.

CLARE  
Do you have any hobbies?

ALIENA

I love photography, and it is my dream since little girl to become photo model.

Jane eyes Aliena intensely.

JANE

What are you, five-ten?

ALIENA

And a half.

CLARE

You're built for the part. Were you unable to get into modeling back in Ukraine?

Aliena shakes her head, looks defeated. She whips her black oversized glasses out of her pullover and slips them on. The girls do a double-take.

ALIENA

I can only afford government issue glasses. Agent no want me to wear. I try walking on catwalk without them but I fall off end of runway.

Aliena motions a hand deep-dive. Clare and Jane try to muffle their giggles. Aliena smiles.

ALIENA

It's okay. I see now it is funny.

Her glasses slip down her nose. She pushes them back up.

CLARE

--Oh, no worries, sweetie, Rich will get you some contact lenses. You can find them here in all colors.

Aliena is blown away. She is immediately lost in her thoughts and possibilities. Clare turns to Kiska.

CLARE

Kiska, tell me a little bit about yourself.

KISKA

I always dream of coming to America. Here is much opportunity.  
(MORE)



KISKA (CONT'D)

I want to start business, making pirozhkis, mine were known to be best in Kiev. My big dream is also an over-the-top church wedding. In big Russian Orthodox cathedral. Surrounded by flowers and family and everyone important to me.

CLARE

That's a great dream, but if you're hoping Anton gives that to you, well... I can warn you that my brother is  
a pig-headed pain in the ass.

KISKA

I am strong woman.

Clare's face lights up.

CLARE

You inspire me. I need to get some of that Kiska spirit in my blood.

KISKA

You have dream too?

CLARE

I have an article the "Spirit of Beauty" I'd love to do. It's about courageous women.

JANE

Clare, for the brides article we should highlight Kiska as the Queen of pirozhkis.

KISKA

You come to me and I show you how to make.

All the ladies clink glasses in a toast.

INT. CLARE'S OFFICE - PHOTOSHOOT - DAY

Aliena poses as Clare watches. The photographer clicks. They check the slides. The photos are extraordinary, not just Aliena's pretty face but her compelling expressions as well.

CLARE

Can you say: cover girl?

Aliena swoons at her photo.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - DAY

MONTAGE OF SCENES:

A) AT RESTAURANT: Anton and Kiska eat dinner. Kiska has gained 20 pounds. The dessert tray stops at their table. Anton shakes his head NO as Kiska eyes the dessert selection. He shoos the waiter away. Her mouth quirks in annoyance.

B) LIVING ROOM: Anton lies on the couch as Kiska cleans. She looks tired and wipes the sweat off her brow. She lifts Anton's legs off the couch to vacuum the cushions. Anton doesn't budge. Kiska pantomimes whacking the vacuum hose over his head. She glares at him and relishes the candy bar she takes out of her pocket and eats.

C) KITCHEN: Kiska makes her piroshkis. She is nervous and restless. She reaches behind the fridge for her hidden stash of cigarettes -- starts to grab one but stops. Instead, she opens the fridge and gets a piece of pie. LATER the empty pie dish sits before Kiska. A stuffed smile appears on her face.

INT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Rich and Aliena enter the house with many suitcases and bags in hand. Behind them, Aliena's parents, MR. and MRS. IVANOVITCH strut in wide-eyed, dressed too elegantly for the occasion.

RICH  
(quietly to Aliena)  
So your parents just got off a  
cargo ship?

ALIENA  
Yes, many fish on ship. They eat  
fish every day. They save much  
money with traveling cargo ship.

Mr. Ivanovitch ceremoniously hands Rich a box of fish. Rich graciously accepts.

RICH  
Flounder?

Mr. Ivanowitch inspects the house, he nods his head approvingly. Aliena beams.

INT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - DAY

The doorbell rings. Rich, dressed differently, opens the door to ANOTHER UKRAINIAN FAMILY with two BOYS. Aliena intervenes and lets them in.

ALIENA

Rich, meet my brother and sister-in-law and my two nephews.

RICH

Wait, what--

The father of the family slaps a box into Rich's hands and heads past him with Aliena. He reads the box. Leery.

RICH

Great. I love tuna.

The frozen box slips from his grip and lands hard on his foot. He YELPS and hops and falls out the open door.

INT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

Ben and Olga walk hand in hand and check out the fresh produce. Olga carries a straw basket filled with vegetables.

While she's checking out some apples, Ben leaves and returns with a bouquet of red roses. Olga smiles and kisses him.

INT. SIR SAVANT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Clare sits at the conference table with Anton, Rich, and Ben.

CLARE

Okay guys. Next issue has the first brides article. I interviewed the gals, all homesick but otherwise okay. I need the big picture from you guys. After a month, you still feeling it?

BEN

Cupid hit this boy hard, center mass. My life is amazing.

ANTON

No issues? Unexpected weight gain? Excessive sweating?

Clare's eyes shoot daggers at Anton. Ben cocks his eyebrow.

BEN

Uh, no.

CLARE

Rich?

RICH

I never thought I'd say it, but I'm in love. The bells are ringing.

ANTON

You don't suspect any strange behavior? Like she's not the same girl you brought home?

RICH

Anton. I went for a bride and brought home a supermodel.

ANTON

Right.

Anton is clearly troubled. Ben picks up on it.

BEN

(to Anton)

How are things going with you, buddy?

ANTON

Good, I guess. She stopped smoking but... her appetite is outta control. I swear she's gaining a pound a day. The honeymoon phase will be over before it starts if I don't get her to a gym. I need to start getting Biggest Loser on the DVR, preventative measures.

RICH

Simmer down. She maybe put on a few pounds, but imagine the stress from being away from her family. At least she's not smoking.

ANTON

Yeah.

RICH

Be careful there, buddy. Nudging a woman into a gym has been known to have a dude's pecker sliced clean off.

BEN

Just remember what it is that made you pick her out of a warehouse full of women. I know it wasn't just her looks. Right?

ANTON

I didn't choose Kiska just because  
of her looks.

But it's clear he doesn't agree with his response. Clare groans at Anton but has a pleasant look of surprise on her face as she gazes at Ben and Rich.

CLARE

Ben, Rich, I've never seen this  
side of you two. I'm formally  
taking you guys off my shit list  
and onto my good guy list.

BEN

I'm offended that you think we're  
some dicks that don't appreciate  
women. We don't share Anton's  
views.

CLARE

And that's why Anton stays on my  
shit list.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Clare sits at the kitchen table and sips red wine. Kiska kneads dough at the counter, visibly ten pounds heavier.

KISKA

Is okay if I work while we talk?

CLARE

Sure. So you got more orders from  
the Restaurant?

KISKA

Yes. Two more deli's want  
pirozhkis, too. I cannot keep up  
with orders. Anton get mad since I  
buy so much flour and meat. Food  
bill go up.

CLARE

But aren't you making money to  
cover that?

Kiska waves her hand in a dismissive gesture.

KISKA

Ah, money not reason. He no want me  
to work. He say he is man of the  
house. He work... not me.

Kiska sighs, her eyes begin to water. She fights back tears. Clare gets up and comforts Kiska.

KISKA

I don't know what to do. I love Anton, but he is impossible. I don't think I am right for him.

CLARE

You are *exactly* right for him. He needs a strong woman to kick his butt so he's not such a superficial asshole. So don't take any crap from him, because believe me, once you start doing that, you've lost.

KISKA

I will try.

Kiska's silent tears fall into her dough. Clare lights up with an idea.

CLARE

You, Kiska, are a strong independent woman. And I'm always looking for good investments. How about I finance your business. I can be your partner.

Kiska stops to think.

KISKA

Partner?

CLARE

Yeah. You bake the pirozhkis up front, I make everything work in the background. It's golden.

KISKA

Then I can hire people to help me. Buy more flour. Make more pirozhkis. We do partner shake. That makes contract.

Kiska shakes Clare's hand, gets dough and flour all over it. Clare gingerly rubs her hand on Kiska's apron. They laugh.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - FOYER - DAY

The doorbell rings. Kiska opens. Jane, Olga, and Clare arrive with flowers and bottles of wine.

CLARE  
It's Pirozhki time!

Kiska graciously shows them to the kitchen.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - KITCHEN

Kiska sets a pack of eggs in front of Clare. Flour, eggs, and pans line the counter.

CLARE  
Oh, I'm allergic to eggs, I break out in hives.

KISKA  
I will keep bad eggs away from you.

CLARE  
Where were you in my twenties?

Clare and Jane laugh. Kiska doesn't get the joke.

KISKA  
No Aliena again?

CLARE  
She booked another modeling gig, and thanks to her new contact lenses; she's not falling off the catwalks of Europe.

KISKA  
Good for her. So. You girls want to learn how to make Pirozhki?

CLARE-JANE-OLGA  
Yes!

The girls gather around Kiska and her piece of dough.

KISKA  
First, you must believe you are the boss of dough. You cradle with your hands, then you are soft and gently mold.

(She carefully molds the dough)  
Then when it not do what you want, you beat with both hands, as if it owes you money.

She manically beats the dough. The girls glance at each other uneasily. Jane gives it a try, and punches the dough with voracity.

KISKA

Now that is good dough making.

Jane beams at her accomplishment. She picks up the dough and shapes it into two hanging balls with a roll in the middle: a makeshift penis. Kiska takes a good look at the doughboy.

KISKA

I know that penis. I dated him long ago. Stupid man.

JANE

We must kiss many frogs before our prince comes along. To all the frogs out there!

She smashes the penis on the counter. All the girls join in. They laugh, scream, and giggle.

INT. SIR SAVANT - CLARE'S OFFICE - DAY

Clare reads a report Jane hands her.

JANE

Are you done with the quarterly report? The Shareholders are waiting to see it. I'm sending them out today. Do you have something else for them?

CLARE

I sure do.

Clare hands her the project report for The Spirit of Beauty. Jane's face lights up.

JANE

George approved it?

A wry smile appears on Clare's face.

CLARE

No, he did not.

Jane stuffs the report in the envelope with a mischievous spark in her eyes.

JANE

Good for you!

Jane runs down the hall and yells back.

JANE

I'm stamping and mailing it myself.



The look of determination is still etched on Clare's face.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Flour and dough balls line the kitchen counter. Kiska is now thirty pounds heavier. Anton enters.

KISKA

I put your lunch in refrigerator.

ANTON

Thanks.

KISKA

You think you are able to unwrap it all by yourself? I have important appointment and must deliver pirozhkis to deli.

ANTON

Ever since you came here, all you do is make pirozhkis.

KISKA

What would you rather I do all day besides cook and clean for you?

ANTON

You could go to the gym.

KISKA

Waste of time. If you work hard here in America you can make money.

ANTON

I make enough money.

Kiska shakes her head.

KISKA

For yourself. Children need many things. If you want family you need make more money.

ANTON

Maybe if you didn't spend all my money on these ingredients, I'd have more.

KISKA

Clare invested in my business so don't worry about it.

Anton pumps up with rage.

ANTON

She did what?

KISKA

She believe in me. More than you.

ANTON

News flash, sweetheart. She's not doing this to help you; she's trying to make me look bad. She's a bad influence on you. She's making you grow balls.

KISKA

Someone must have balls in house. Now, no more complain, go clean garage.

ANTON

I've been working the whole week!

KISKA

I work too. Sell many pirozhkis.

ANTON

I'm surprised they made it out the door before they made it in your mouth.

That one hurt. Kiska tries to pretend it didn't.

KISKA

I am away from home, without family. It is stressful. Hard. But you tell me stop smoking. So now I eat. And still you complain.

Anton steps forward in an attempt to save face.

ANTON

Look, I'm s--

KISKA

Like little boy. You no man. You think you a man? Just because you do--

Kiska dry humps air. Anton looks belittled.

KISKA

That no make you man. Monkey in zoo do just as good.

ANTON

I can get you his number.

Kiska shouts and waves her arms.

KISKA

If he clean garage, I take him!

She stomps out of the kitchen. Anton stares speechless.

INT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

The doorbell RINGS. Rich, limping, opens the door to a WOMAN with TWO YOUNG GIRLS holding boxes.

RICH

Sorry, I already bought Girl Scout cookies at the office.

The little girl holds up the box. He sees a stamp that reads: SARDINES. After a moment of thought, he starts to close the door on them--

ALIENA

Welcome to America!

She pulls the door open and looks to Rich in annoyance.

ALIENA

This is my aunt and two little cousins.

Rich grins a forced smile. Aliena ushers them in and hands him the sardines. He lifts the flap and sees them packed tight.

RICH

I know just how you guys feel.

Aliena whisks past him out the door.

ALIENA

Got to go. Modeling shoot.

RICH

Again? Hey, isn't it a little early to be inviting all these relatives, especially since you're hardly here anymore?

ALIENA

In Ukraine, family everything.

RICH

But they're only here on vacation,  
right?

Aliena pretends she didn't hear that and closes the door as she leaves.

INT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben enters the house to find Olga greeting him with a smile and a cocktail.

OLGA

You must be tired, my love. I make  
you drink. Go sit down and rest.

Ben kisses her, takes his cocktail, and proceeds to the couch.

BEN

It *has* been a long day. How was  
yours?

OLGA

I study English and clean house.  
Met girls to make pirozkis. Was  
nice. Comfortable.

Olga joins him on the couch, looks a tad melancholy.

BEN

You getting a little homesick?

Sheepishly, she nods.

BEN

You don't talk much about your  
family.

OLGA

We are not good with each other.  
Only my cousin, Serge, like brother  
to me, there for me when father  
drinking, kept me safe.

Ben runs his hand along her cheek. She looks up at him with sad eyes.

BEN

Hey... what if he came here?

OLGA

He has no money for things like  
that.

BEN

I'll send him a ticket: he can spend a week or so. I hate to see you lonely. And it'll be nice to have another guy around. Rich and Anton are busy with their problems.

Olga jumps up.

OLGA

You would do for me?

Olga embraces him.

OLGA

I love my Ben.

Ben eyes widen. He looks at her, affected by her words.

BEN

Olga... I love you too.

They kiss warmly. She pulls back from it, a twinkle in her eye.

OLGA

I will be very good to you tonight,  
Mr. Ben.

Olga giggles, pulls him up, and leads him to the bedroom.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anton enters the bedroom. Kiska cleans the closet. He sees the sexy red dress, size 6, that he bought Kiska upon her arrival. Anton grabs the dress.

ANTON

Remember when I bought this for you? God, you looked great in it.

Kiska grabs the dress from him. She's definitely can't fit into it anymore.

KISKA

Maybe I can take it out. Let me check seams.

ANTON

But you looked so hot in it as it is. I was so proud of you. Couldn't you take those pounds off?

KISKA

You are real son of bitch, Anton  
Gagarin.

ANTON

Excuse me?

KISKA

You choose me for my face. My body.  
I come here, you have all these  
rules - no smoking, stay skinny,  
sex every day. It is not easy. You  
don't give shit about who I am. You  
only want Ukrainian trophy!

Kiska throws the red dress at Anton.

ANTON

I do not! I want us to go out and  
not have people think I'm a loser.

She stares at him incredulously.

KISKA

Do you know at grocery store today  
I had two men ask me for number,  
and one not able to take his eyes  
off this ass as he followed me  
around the place?

She smacks her ass as she walks away from him.

KISKA

The size of my body does not make  
you loser, Anton. Not knowing how  
lucky you got when I chose you,  
that makes you loser.

And she's gone.

ANTON

Hey, what are you beating on me  
for?

Kiska storms to the

LIVING ROOM

Anton is on her heels.

KISKA

You think I'm the stupid one? You  
think having hot, skinny woman  
makes you a God!

ANTON

You're overreacting! I'm only thinking about your health.

KISKA

Shit of bull!

ANTON

Well, yeah, you'd look a lot better, too, all right. Jesus! Don't you want to be beautiful?

That hits her like a brick. She holds it together but speaks with a quiver in her voice.

KISKA

I *am* beautiful! And I too good for you. You give nothing to me! A woman needs admiration, charm. A woman need man to listen to her. You think all woman want is penis. If that all woman want then prostitutes must be happiest women in the world.

Anton pauses. For a brief moment, self-exploration spreads across his face. But then anger bursts forth --

ANTON

You would lose the weight if you loved me!

KISKA

You would not ask me to do if you love *me*!

Kiska grabs a vase and HURLS it an Anton. He ducks, and it SMASHES against the wall.

EXT. NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS - NIGHT

The light turns on; two silhouettes stand by the window looking out.

EXT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - TEN MINUTES LATER

A police car parks in front of the house. Two officers step out and walk up to their driveway. The sounds of intense arguing filters out from the house. They ring the bell.

The door swings open, revealing Kiska. Pure venom covers her face. She's startled to see a HEFTY COP (40s) and a sexy, calendar cop named BRIAN (30s), ripped and gorgeous -- standing before her.

Brian's eyes light up as he sees Kiska.

KISKA  
Yes, officers?

HEFTY COP  
Your neighbors complained of some  
noise.

Anton appears behind her, sees the cops.

ANTON  
Oh, great. See what you did?

KISKA  
What *I* did?

Kiska launches at Anton, but Brian holds her back. She spins to him and smiles, enjoying his touch.

BRIAN  
Let's take a breather here, Miss,  
calm down.

He lets her go, and she bats her eyes at him. Anton notices that this guy is an Adonis!

BRIAN  
These situations usually diffuse  
themselves by morning. Is there  
anywhere you can stay tonight, away  
from here?

KISKA  
Yes. I call Clare.

ANTON  
Yeah, run to her. She's the one  
turning you against me.

Kiska ignores Anton and asks Brian.

KISKA  
Can you drive me there?

Anton's mouth drops open... he's flabbergasted.

ANTON  
This guy's not driving you  
anywhere!

Kiska continues to ignore Anton. Brian can't stop giving Kiska the seductive glance. He offers his hand.



BRIAN

I'm officer Davis, but you can call me Brian.

Anton and Hefty Cop exchange glances.

KISKA

I will need to pack some things, Brian.

Kiska hurries to the bedroom. Anton stares daggers at Brian.

EXT. CLARE'S HOME - STREET - NIGHT

Kiska exits the police vehicle. Clare stands outside the front door. Brian hands Kiska a note. It's his cellphone number. He smiles. The car drives off.

Kiska turns and sees Clare walking towards her. Kiska's shell cracks and she breaks down crying.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY (MOVING)

Ben drives the car down the Interstate, Olga holds his hand.

OLGA

It is so sweet of you to take me to famous Las Vegas.

Ben smiles.

BEN

I think you'll love it. We can take in a couple of shows--

OLGA

I have an idea.

BEN

Anything you want, my love.

OLGA

Why don't we get married?

Ben's eyes light up. He smiles.

BEN

Seriously?

OLGA

Isn't that what people do when they go to Las Vegas? I love you more than I could have imagined. Why waste another day?

BEN

All right. Let's do it! I'll call Anton and Clare; they can come and take the wedding photos.

MONTAGE OF SCENES:

A) Overview of the city of Las Vegas.

B) LAS VEGAS JEWELRY STORE: The SALESWOMEN takes out wedding rings from the display case and shows Ben and Olga. Olga slips a one-carat wedding ring on her finger. Ben takes out his Master Card. Anton takes a photo of the lovely couple as Clare grins.

C) WEDDING CHAPEL: Ben and Olga stand before an Elvis impersonator MINISTER and they take their vows. Anton is the best man, Clare stands teary-eyed.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

She enters. George has a stony expression on his face. He points to the chair.

GEORGE

I'm not very happy with you, Clare.

Clare looks puzzled. George talks through clenched teeth.

GEORGE

One of the stockholders received your report on the "Spirit of Beauty." Now, how did that happen?

CLARE

I'm sorry it must have been sent in error.

He clips his words.

GEORGE

You know nothing goes to the shareholders, but through me, right?

Clare's face grows haggard with worry.

CLARE

I know. I'm very sorry about that.

George sighs -- then blurts out.

GEORGE

They want to see your presentation.

Clare almost cries for joy but checks herself in time.

GEORGE

They want to meet you first. You're invited to the biannual shareholder's dinner this Friday.

CLARE

Thank you, I will be there. Sorry again.

George's mouth crimps in annoyance.

GEORGE

You can go now.

Clare exits and hurries into the restroom.

INT. OFFICE - LADIES RESTROOM

Clare enters the empty room, shouts a joyous cry and does a victory dance.

MONTAGE OF SCENES:

A) MT. HAMILTON in California. Clare stands with Ben atop a picturesque hill. Ben photographs a WOMAN in a wheelchair. Clare talks and laughs with the woman. The woman spreads her arms. Clare nods approvingly then creeps out of camera range. Ben snaps the photo, Clare directs Ben for more shots.

B) RANCH. A teenaged GIRL, DEBBIE, with down syndrome saddles her pony. Ben points his camera at her. Clare picks out some of the hay in the girl's hair. The girl laughs and mounts. Ben clicks away; the girl is all smiles.

C) THEATER STAGE. Under a spotlight, a GIRL with primordial dwarfism, tap dances across the stage. She is talented and loaded with vigor. Clare cheers her on. Ben clicks.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. RESTAURANT - SHAREHOLDERS DINNER - NIGHT

Clare and George sit with seven senior SHAREHOLDERS around a large table. MRS. GOLDSTEIN sits next to Clare.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

I'm looking forward to your presentation for the "Spirit of Beauty." I hear it is fresh and new.

Clare nods her thank you and opens her purse -- but Mrs. Goldstein grabs her hand as she sees the Whitmans' arrive.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

Come Clare, the Whitmans' want to meet you.

Clare gets up and follows Mrs. Goldstein. Everyone is served a shrimp cocktail appetizer. There is also a large plate with an anti-pasta arrangement, decorated with a sliced hard-boiled egg.

George, who is seated next to Clare, checks to make sure no one is watching him. He quickly grabs an egg slice with his fork and mixes it into his cocktail until only the red sauce is visible. Then he switches appetizers with Clare.

He notices on Clare's seat that her clutch purse is open. He sees her EPI-pen and grabs it just in time before Clare and Mrs. Goldstein return.

CLARE

They are such a lovely couple.  
Thank you for introducing me, Mrs. Goldstein.

Clare digs into her shrimp cocktail.

INT. RESTAURANT - HALF-HOUR LATER

Clare's hand reaches under the table and discreetly scratches her knee. She smiles spastically. The entree is served but Clare looks extremely uncomfortable. She rubs against the back of her chair and nearly bumps the server.

CLARE

Sorry.

She scratches the back of her head under the hairline. Next, she hides a fork in her hand, spreads her arm, and discreetly runs it up and down her back. Her face is ecstatic. Her companions begin to notice something is off. George smirks.

GEORGE

Clare! What's wrong? You're making a fool out of yourself.

Clare gets up.

CLARE

Excuse me.

She heads toward the ladies room.

INT. RESTAURANT - LADIES ROOM

Clare enters a stall and closes the door. She opens her purse and searches for her missing EpiPen. She is frantic now. She scratches herself and can't stop. The walls of the stall rumble. Mrs. Goldstein enters the chaos.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

My goodness, dear, are you all right?

Clare exits the stall.

CLARE

Mrs. Goldstein, would you happen to have any antihistamines on you?

Mrs. Goldstein shakes her head no. Clare's skin is blotchy and red from scratching. She quickly exits.

INT. RESTAURANT - HALLWAY

Clare looks for a place where she can do some serious scratching. She rubs against the wall. A WOMAN walks by. Clare straightens. The woman stares and disappears.

Clare notices a TREE SCULPTURE by a water fountain. The tree's branches stick out in inviting points. Clare rubs up against the branches. The sculpture moves on its pedestal and tips into the fountain, making a big SPLASH. Clare escapes into the garden.

EXT. RESTAURANT - OUTSIDE GARDEN

A pleasant garden with a concrete bench and green grass.

And SHRUBS.

Clare takes off her dress and dives into the Evergreen needles. The shrubs move back and forth as she rolls. She lets out a sigh of relief.

Mr. WHITMAN, 60's, very debonair, steps into the garden. He sits on a bench and lights his cigarette. Clare peaks up from the shrubs.

CLARE

Mr. Whitman?

Mr. Whitman turns to Clare in her bra and panties. She quickly slips on her dress.

MR. WHITMAN

Are you all right, Miss Gagarin? We were wondering where you were.

He gets up and helps her out of the bushes.

CLARE

I am so sorry; I must have eaten something with eggs in it. I'm allergic.

MR. WHITMAN

Oh my, how dreadful!

Clare brushes the needles and leaves off her dress and hair.

CLARE

I'll get back to them now. This can stay between us, right?

MR. WHITMAN

No worries. You can trust me.

Before Clare leaves, she takes a second to turn around.

CLARE

And smoking is really bad for you, Mr. Whitman.

MR. WHITMAN

(mumbles to himself)

Said the woman rolling in the bushes in her underwear.

INT. RESTAURANT - HALLWAY

Clare tries to find her way back to the shareholder's dinner. She scratches her arms and back. She notices a door opens to a large hall filled with a party of RETIREE'S. The CHICKEN DANCE song plays.

CLARE

Old people. The Pharmacy is open!

INT. RESTAURANT - PENSION PARTY

Clare enters the room. An elderly GENTLEMAN'S hand grabs her shoulder to dance the chicken dance with him. She tries to talk to her partner, but the music is too loud for conversation.

In sync, when the dancers do the hand beak, Clare scratches her shoulders. When the dancers flap their arms, Clare scratches her sides with her elbows. When the dancers sway back and forth, Clare scratches her upper thighs.

Clare is getting the hang of it and can relieve the itch without much attention.

INT. RESTAURANT - HALLWAY

Mrs. Goldstein walks down the hall, searching for Clare. She peeks into the doorway and sees Clare dancing the chicken dance.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

What the...?

INT. RESTAURANT - PENSION PARTY

The music stops, the dancers take a deep breath. Mrs. Goldstein enters and approaches Clare.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

Are you all right, dear?

Clare's hair looks like she stuck her tongue in a light socket.

CLARE

I'm so sorry. I must have eaten something with egg in it. I've been itching like crazy.

Mrs. Goldstein yells to the surrounding seniors.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

Does anyone have an EpiPen or antihistamine with them?

Hands reach out with multiple EpiPens and antihistamine pills. Clare grabs an EpiPen from a woman. She injects the pen into her thigh.

Mrs. Goldstein grabs a \$50 bill from her purse and gives it to the woman. The woman smiles from ear to ear.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

Let's get back to dinner. But we'll fix your hair first.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Mrs. Goldstein and Clare return to the dinner. Clare sits and sees her EPI-Pen on the table by her plate.

George shoots her a menacing smile.

GEORGE

See what you get when you go over  
my head?

Clare's face is hot and pinched with resentment.

INT. OFFICE - ANTON'S DESK

Debbie, the teenager with down syndrome sits at Anton's desk and smiles.

ANTON

Debbie, it is a pleasure to meet  
such a nice young lady. Tell me a  
little bit about yourself.

She smiles and shows Anton a photo.

DEBBIE

This is my pony, Liberty. I call  
her Libby for short.

Anton smiles at her and looks at the picture.

ANTON

Why, you look like a princess on  
that pony. And where's your prince?

Debbie's expression is full of joy. She giggles.

DEBBIE

Will you be my prince?

ANTON

I would be honored oh fair lady. I  
will build you a castle upon the  
hill.

Debbie giggles some more. Anton's takes a moment to look deep into her eyes and reflects. His eyes are bit wet and smiles.

ANTON

You are as cute as a box full of  
kittens.

EXT. CLARE'S HOME - GARDEN - DAY

Clare holds a basket with pruning shears, miracle gro, and other gardening tools and hands them to Kiska. Kiska kneels on dirt and prunes the roses.



Clare sees Anton advance with a bouquet of red roses in one hand and his Fedora in the other. She quickly gets up and cuts him off before he can get to Kiska.

CLARE

It's going to take more than flowers to smooth this over. You need to change!

ANTON

Why do you keep meddling in my life? She should be home with me.

CLARE

Because she's your responsibility, therefore my responsibility, since you're an immature dipshit. Besides, I really like her.

Anton grunts and strolls toward Kiska.

ANTON

I'm sorry I called you fat.

Kiska pokes her finger into Anton's belly, which protrudes over his pants.

KISKA

You put on weight since I come to America, too.

Anton is self-conscious about his tummy sticking out. He sucks it in.

ANTON

That's because your cooking's so good. It's your fault.

Kiska's face hardens.

KISKA

Everything is my fault. You always blame someone else. You still a little boy.

Anton tries to smooth things out.

ANTON

Look, I'm sorry. How about you come back, and we both go on a diet?

His eyes meet Kiska's harsh look. She gets up, pruning shears in hand, beelines to him and SNIP -- she cuts the roses off their stems and turns away in a huff.

Anton watches her go, looks at the roses, then to Clare.

CLARE

You're lucky that's all she  
snipped.

Clare stomps away as well. Anton turns and leaves.

INT. ANTON'S CAR - DAY (MOVING)

Anton comes to a stop at a red light. Stares out the window.  
Something catches his eye -

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - SAME TIME

Kiska and Brian sit at a patio table. Brian laughs and slaps  
his thigh, roaring with laughter. Kiska waves her arms while  
telling a story.

Brian stares into her eyes, hanging on every word. He puts  
his hand on hers, but... she gracefully pulls it back. Anton  
watches closely, a hopeful gleam in his eye.

INT. ANTON AND KISKA'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rich and Ben drink beer while paging through Sports  
Illustrated swimsuit issue. Anton stands in front of a full-  
length mirror. He does a muscle man pose.

ANTON

I don't look so bad, do I?

Anton does a profile view, holds his breath, and sucks in his  
tummy till it disappears. Ben glances his way.

BEN

Now you look like the Pillsbury  
doughboy on Jenny Craig.

Rich laughs. Anton lets it out.

ANTON

It's not even my fault. She cooks  
like she makes love.

Anton looks sad. The guys see it. He notices their looks and  
shakes his head.

ANTON

I don't miss her. One bit. I just  
don't want to be made a fool of.

He flexes his biceps hard until he can see a little bump.

ANTON

You know, it's all Clare's fault with her meddling.

BEN

Clare? What's she done?

ANTON

She keeps filling Kiska's head with stupid ideas.

BEN

Like being a strong woman? Being competent enough to run her own business? Being who she wants to be and making good money for both of you as she does? Yeah, what a bitch.

ANTON

You're coming at me too, now?

BEN

Nobody's coming at you! But your concepts about women are so yesterday. You look for a girl like you're judging a beauty pageant. And you treat your actual girl like she's a piece of meat.

RICH

Ben has a point. Keep this up, and you'll be a wrinkled old man who can't even read the instructions of your "blow-until-feet-plump" companion.

Anton's face flushes with indignation.

ANTON

Okay. Out.  
(points to the door)

BEN

Oh, but we are on your side, idiot. That's the conundrum.

ANTON

You're a conundrum!

Rich and Ben get up to leave, nonplussed by his outbreak.

INT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ukrainian folk music blares from the speakers. The house is filled to overcapacity. Smoke fills the room. Rich empties ashtrays and wipes ashes off surfaces.

RICH

Hey, when ya'all going back to Ukraine? Your homeland. When?

A PEASANT thinks he's taking food orders and shouts over the music:

PEASANT

I take Rice-of-Roni. San Francisco treat.

RICH

What?

PEASANT

Rice-of-Rini. No more potatoes.

Another Ukrainian RELATIVE shouts out.

RELATIVE

We watch American movie now! Rich, what your favorite movie?

Rich pauses in thought a moment.

RICH

Home Alone.

EXT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

Clare strolls through the gate, waving to Rich, who is peeling potatoes. She steps awkwardly around the chickens.

CLARE

I knew you liked young chicks, but this is taking it a little far.

Rich puts down the potato peeler and woefully cradles his head in his hands.

CLARE

I was only joking. Just doing my job and checking if there are any updates concerning you and Aliena.

Clare clicks her iPhone and hits record.

CLARE  
For my notes.

Rich takes her iPhone and screams into the recorder.

RICH  
I can't take this anymore.

Clare jumps back.

RICH  
Aliena must've brought her entire extended family here. I woke up to Uncle Broya asleep on my en-suite toilet last night! It's loud, I have no privacy, and do you know how many potatoes I have to buy a week?

Clare sits on a crate next to him and wraps her arm around his shoulder.

CLARE  
I'm sure it'll settle down soon.

Rich scans the area.

RICH  
Wait a second, where's Ethel?

CLARE  
Ethel? Did you get another mail-order bride?

ETHEL, the CHICKEN, comes CLUCKING toward Rich. He grabs her and holds her in the crook of his arm and cuddles her.

RICH  
Ethel has a calming effect on me.

Clare stares at Ethel - then at Rich. She quickly snaps a photo of the man and chicken.

CLARE  
Ooooookay... are you at least connecting with Aliena?

Rich shrugs and pets Ethel like she's a cat.

RICH  
I rarely ever see her. She's always on modeling assignments: she's even booked for the Paris shows.

CLARE

Look on the bright side, more money  
in your bank account.

RICH

So I can buy more potatoes?

Rich frantically shakes his head.

CLARE

So are you asking me for some days  
off?

RICH

No! Please! The office is the only  
place where I can find any sanity.

CLARE

It looks like this relationship has  
taken a turn down shit alley.

RICH

I really need a compassionate  
shoulder to cry on.

Clare gets up and heads for the gate.

CLARE

Yeah right... you guys wanted your  
Brides -- good luck.

RICH

Can you just help me peel some  
potatoes? It's really fun.

The gate SLAMS shut, and Clare's gone.

EXT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - NEXT DAY - NIGHT

Aliena steps out of a \$200,000 Lamborghini Gallardo's side  
door. She runs to the front door and enters.

INT. RICH AND ALIENA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Rich greets Aliena with a big hug. Aliena pushes him gently  
away. Tears flow from her eyes.

ALIENA

I am so sorry.

Rich leads her to the couch.

RICH

What's wrong?

ALIENA

I have fallen in love with Ricky Rocket.

RICH

The rock star? What the hell? When? I just saw you two weeks ago!

Aliena nods and shrugs.

ALIENA

We fall in love in Paris. He is waiting outside in car. He ask me to marry him. I am so sorry. You were so good to me. I do not want to hurt you.

Rich looks downtrodden. She reaches into her Birken-Hermes bag and pulls out a cashier's check, hands it to him.

RICH

A hundred grand? For wha--

Aliena places her finger on his lips.

ALIENA

For my family, for their food and living in house, for me, for breaking your heart. Please, I feel better if you take.

She leaves. Rich gulps and stares into the air.

INT. RICH'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The house is empty and clean. He sits on the couch, staring at the TV. On mute. It's so quiet.

Ethel picks at the carpet strands by his feet. He looks down and sees a potato peel jutting out the side of her beak. He looks up at the TV. Something draws his interest. He grabs the remote and ups the volume.

ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT plays paparazzi shots and clips of Aliena and rock star RICKY ROCKET.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Instant sensation and superstar, Ukrainian model Aliena, has won rock star Ricky Rocket's heart.

A video clip shows the back of a huge Hollywood mansion. Aliena lounges by an Olympic size pool in a bikini. Her relatives dot the landscape.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But it looks like Ricky got more than he bargained for when his in-laws moved in.

Aunt Natasha sits in a lawn chair with a sun reflector under her double chin. Other Aunts hang their clothes and oversized undies out to dry on the clothesline, strung between two baroque statues.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But, how can he say no to his gorgeous wife? We hope the walls don't close in on Ricky living with half of the Ukrainian population.

The TV shows a back shot of Uncle Broya peeing into the Koi pond.

RICH jumps up and does his victory dance.

RICH

In your face Ricky Rocket! You take care of Uncle Broya now!

INT. SIR SAVANT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Clare, Anton, Ben, and Rich sit at the table.

CLARE

Okay guys. Ben got hooked, we got a wedding for the article.

Clare stares at the lump of sorrow that is Rich.

CLARE

Sorry it didn't work out for you, Rich.

RICH

You live and learn.

ANTON

Man... you really fell for her, hey?

RICH

Yeah. But hey, I got my place back, which helps heal the wounds. And she paid for all the expenses and then some.



CLARE

You'll get over it, Rich. I wish  
you the best next time around.

Clare turns her attention to Anton.

CLARE

Things improving with Kiska, little  
bro?

Anton shakes his head.

ANTON

She's not the girl I brought over.  
Not only does she weigh a ton more,  
but she bosses me around *all* the  
time.

RICH

Are you rethinking your proposal?

ANTON

No. But she needs to change.

Clare shoots Anton a level stare.

BEN

Are you sure it's her that needs to  
change?

Anton cocks his head at Ben, annoyance on his face.

ANTON

Wow. Thanks, brother.

CLARE

You go Ben!

BEN

I'm only thinking of you.

ANTON

Sorry it can't be all champagne and  
leather panties like with you and  
Olga.

Ben rolls his eyes. Clare scribbles some notes.

CLARE

By the way, Ben, how's wedded  
bliss, besides the nightly  
destruction of your mattress  
springs?

BEN

I'm bringing Olga's cousin Serge over from Ukraine to keep her company.

Rich's head snaps to Ben.

RICH

Did you get something in writing?

BEN

What?

RICH

How much does he eat? How long is he planning to stay? I'd get something in writing if I were you.

Ben chuckles at his friend.

BEN

Don't worry. I got his return ticket.

RICH

If he stays longer than two weeks, I'd start the eviction proceedings.

Rich opens his drawer and lays out a stack of papers.

RICH

I got all the forms right here.

Clare, Ben and Anton stare in question at him and his papers.

RICH

They're Ukrainian nesting dolls! The only way you get rid of them is if they move into a mansion with an Olympic sized swimming pool.

INT. SIR SAVANT - MAIN OFFICE - DAY

MEGAN, mid-thirties, sits by Anton's desk. She's bubbly, has a beautiful smile and exudes self-confidence. A real flirt. A slight scar on her face is conspicuous. She crosses her prosthetic leg; the metal gleams in the sunlight.

Anton asks questions, and Clare takes notes.

ANTON

Thanks for this interview. So this happened a year ago?

MEGAN

Yeah, it was in June. On Stewart Beach in Martin County, Florida.

ANTON

You were surfing?

MEGAN

Yeah, with friends. We had some great waves that day. The shark was circling me. I put up a good fight, but the shark still got my leg. One of my friends had the balls to swim me to shore.

Rich glances from his desk, interested. He can't hold his curiosity. He leans closer to Megan.

RICH

He bit off your leg?

MEGAN

Yeah.

Megan straightens her prosthetic leg to give him a better view. She rolls up her sleeve and points to a tattoo of the shark and smiles.

MEGAN

That's him.

RICH

You are incredibly brave. I admire you so much for that. I really love a woman with courage.

Megan throws Rich a big smile.

MEGAN

Oh, don't think it isn't a horrible experience. And it's just one challenge after another. But it's not going to break me. Life is still wonderful!

ANTON

Do you find people staring at you?

She turns back to Anton.

MEGAN

Because of my metal leg?

Anton looks embarrassed.

MEGAN

It's okay to ask. It was annoying at first. But my pseudo leg is something people don't see every day, that's why they stare. Human curiosity is a natural instinct. I just don't take it personally.

RICH

How does your boyfriend feel about it?

Megan looks at Rich innocently.

MEGAN

I don't have one. Currently.

Clare gives Rich a nudge, spurs him on. Rich stammers but gets the words out.

RICH

Then I can ask you out for dinner?  
No seafood of course.

Clare rolls her eyes. Megan laughs out loud.

MEGAN

You're funny.

RICH

And you are one amazing girl.  
Tomorrow night at eight?

MEGAN

Sounds like a date.

ANTON

And I think we have what we need.

She gets up, they shake hands, and leaves the office. Rich can't take his eyes off her. Anton grabs his shoulder and gives him a shake.

RICH

One comment about this one, and I'll throat-punch you.

ANTON

Hey, she's a hot girl with sexy confidence. What's not to like?

RICH  
 You're okay with... her? But  
 Kiska's got a few curves, and you  
 can't handle it?

ANTON  
 What can I say? I'm the world's  
 biggest idiot.

Clare's mouth drops open, not believing her ears.

INT. SIR SAVANT - CLARE'S OFFICE - EVENING

Jane hands some slides to Clare but keeps a couple for  
 herself - candid shots of Ben and Olga.

CLARE  
 Good photos. We may find a couple  
 here that are magazine worthy.

Jane doesn't respond. Clare studies Jane for a second.

CLARE  
 How you holding up?

JANE  
 Huh? What do you mean?

She knows exactly what Clare means.

CLARE  
 The wedding was as big of a  
 surprise for me. But I know you  
 still care for Ben.

JANE  
 Yeah, it hurts. I even baked a  
 carrot cake for him.  
 (dreamy-eyed)  
 He always loved my carrot cake.  
 But... it's not like he ever looked  
 at me twice. Just another day.

Jane looks crushed. Clare wraps her arm around Jane.

CLARE  
 I'm sorry, hun.

JANE  
 Here I am bothering you with my  
 problems. What about you, Lavender  
 Queen? You should be out and proud.  
 I don't see Pat Robinson running  
 after you with a Net Shooter.

CLARE

I am proud. I'm worried about my Dad, and it's so frigging personal. When the time's ready, I will.

JANE

Okay, I understand. But I will visit Olga and Ben. It's not her fault Ben fell in love with her. Maybe if I see how nice she treats Ben, it'll help me, somehow, to get over it. Besides, I'm going to eat the whole carrot cake myself if I don't give it to them.

EXT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

SERGE - handsome, chiseled, long hair, late - twenties, fills the swimming pool with water. Olga stands and stares at the water rising.

EXT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - FRONT YARD - DAY

Jane parks her bike and grabs her carrot cake from the front basket. She fumbles to get a hand free and rings the doorbell.

INT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - FOYER

Olga opens.

JANE

Hi!

Olga stares at Jane as if she doesn't even recognize her.

JANE

It's Jane. From the magazine. Congratulations on your wedding!

Olga musters a fake smile.

OLGA

Ben not home yet. Will be soon. We have plans.

JANE

Oh, I won't stay. I just wanted to see how you're doing. We hardly ever see you.

Jane gives her the carrot cake.

OLGA

Just shy...

JANE

Well, I baked you guys a carrot cake. Ben always loved it when I brought it to the office.

Olga stares at her, not welcoming her in. CLANKING noises sound from the backyard.

JANE

Oh, you having some work done?

Olga finally moves to the side and waves Jane in.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Jane and Olga exit the house, and Jane's eyes go wide at Serge pulling the water hose from the filled pool. He turns and smiles at her, checking her out from head to toe.

JANE

Nice pool boy-- pool, boy, oh boy.  
It's a big one-- um...

She's affected by his smile. Subconsciously adjusts her glasses.

JANE

I wondered when Ben was finally gonna fill this thing. You must be a big swimmer.

OLGA

I can't swim. Will get Ben to teach me.

JANE

Of course. This must be your cousin Ben was talking about.

OLGA

Yes, this is Serge. Serge, meet Jane.

JANE

I'm Jane. You look like Tarzan.  
Haha, kind of a co-ink-a-dink.

She laughs awkwardly. He smiles at her sweetly. Takes her hand. Kisses it.

OLGA  
Serge only speaks Ukrainian.

JANE  
Oh, that's okay. Looking like that,  
he doesn't have to say a word, does  
he?

Olga finds this cute and giggles a bit.

JANE  
Anyways. I'll get out of your hair.  
I'm happy for you and Ben.

Awkward silence.

OLGA  
Okay. Thank you.

JANE  
I'll head out this way.

Jane points to the path going to the front of the house as  
Serge and Olga watch her leave.

EXT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - FRONT YARD

Jane mounts her bike. Her cargo pant leg gets stuck on the  
pedal. She drives around, trying to catch her balance. She  
finally loses it and falls into the planted flowers.

JANE  
Criminy!

Jane gets up and dusts the dirt off herself. She kneels and  
fluffs up the bent flowers and pounds the loose dirt. She  
hears a splash of a person diving into the pool. Then  
another. Her head turns to the sound of the second splash.  
Then the laughter of a man and woman.

She creeps along the building and peeks over the corner.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Olga and Serge are in the pool, naked. Olga swims to him like  
a fish. They embrace in a passionate kiss. Jane quickly hides  
behind the hedges and stares. Olga's cell phone RINGS. She  
gets out of the water and wraps a towel around her body.

OLGA  
Hi, Baby. No, you don't have to  
bring anything. Love you. See you  
in few minutes.



Olga nods to Serge. Serge nods back. They hurry into the house. Jane mumbles:

JANE  
That mail order slut! Right under  
Ben's nose.

EXT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - FRONT YARD

Jane hurries to the front door and hides her bike in the bushes. She turns to see Ben arrive on his Harley. She again runs to the backyard, hides, and watches the pool area.

INT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - LIVING ROOM

Olga greets Ben with a kiss.

BEN  
I'm dying to try out the water!  
Where's Serge?

Olga shrugs her shoulders.

OLGA  
He found girlfriend. Maybe he get  
lucky. Now, swimming lesson.

EXT. BEN AND OLGA'S HOME - BACKYARD - POOL AREA

Ben jumps in the water, and Olga follows. Serge emerges from the back, jumps in, pounces on Ben, and holds him down.

Olga helps. They both push down hard, trying to keep the flaying drowning man under water. Ben fights for his life.

Jane bolts across the lawn -- jumps in the water and SMASHES Serge in the back of the head with a wicked right hook. Ben gets free, jumps up, and takes a deep breath.

JANE  
They're trying to kill you!

BEN  
No shit!

Ben attacks Serge. Olga attacks Jane. Jane punches Olga in the face and beats on her like a drum. She drags her out of the pool and throws her on the grass. Olga lies exhausted on the ground but Jane gets up and kicks her few times for good measure.

Serge has a stranglehold on Ben, who thrashes in the water. Jane grabs the tequila bottle from the bar and hits Serge over the head. Serge passes out.

INT. BEN'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jane and Ben sit on the couch with wet hair and a plate of carrot cake between them. Their forks dig in haphazardly at the remnants. They look exhausted.

JANE

I've heard of kissing cousins, but that is ridiculous.

Ben looks downtrodden, as if all the life force was drained from his body.

BEN

He wasn't even her cousin.

Jane looks puzzled.

BEN

The detective said Interpol wanted Serge for ID scams and fake passports. Olga says he was abusive and forced her into becoming a mail order bride so she could find some sucker for them to drain. As my widow, she would've gotten the house and all my money.

JANE

Bullshit. That bitch was in on it. I saw them making out in the pool before you got home.

BEN

I know. The joke would've been on her anyway. I have a brand new mortgage, and I have no life insurance. Take that!

They laugh together. Jane puts the half-eaten cake plate on the coffee table and places her hand on Ben's knee.

JANE

I'm terribly sorry, Ben.

BEN

You really saved my ass. The way you took them both out? Like a ninja. Clare was right; you're incredibly impressive.

Ben stares at Jane. A gleam shines in his eyes. Jane blushes and pulls her hair back. She casts her eyes downward.

JANE

I was a Tomboy growing up. Never grew out of it.

BEN

You never talk about yourself at the office. I hardly know anything about you.

JANE

Well, I grew up in Boston. I have two brothers and a sister. I can't stand any of them, but I do like my dog, Chuck, and my cat, Asshole.

BEN

You mean, your asshole cat.

JANE

No, my cat's name is Asshole.

Ben laughs.

BEN

Oh.

JANE

No seriously, he is such a fucking asshole.

BEN

I'd hate to hear what you say about your boyfriend when he's not around.

JANE

No boyfriend... Just a guy I'm in love with who doesn't seem to know I exist.

BEN

Then he's not paying enough attention. You're impossible to miss.

Jane gets shy. Can't hold eye contact.

BEN

I always wanted to ask you out, Jane.

JANE

What? Why didn't you?

BEN

Because I'm a moron. With no backbone. And I listened to an idiot friend who knew nothing about women.

Jane giggles. Ben stares at Jane.

BEN

I always loved the beauty mark on your cheek that disappears when you smile, then comes back out when it fades. Like the most amazing sunrise and sunset. You can always count on it to make you feel alive.

Jane smiles. On cue, her beauty mark disappears.

BEN

I call it Millie.

JANE

Millie?

Jane's face is in repose. The beauty mark reappears.

BEN

There you are, Millie.

There is so much love in Jane's eyes; it's impossible to miss.

BEN

That guy you're in love with, I'm glad he didn't notice you, because maybe I'll still have my chance.

Ben slides his hand over to Jane's, and she opens it for him. Their fingers intertwine, and she leans into him, enjoying the silence and warmth of the moment.

INT. SIR SAVANT - MAIN OFFICE - NIGHT

Editors and photographers go over the September spread. Ben checks out prints on the screen.

In one, Megan, in a bikini, stands on a sandy beach holding her surfboard. Everything is perfect about this image; even her prosthetic leg gleams in the sunlight.

BEN

I love this picture. It's fierce.

Clare inspects the photo.

CLARE

Why did you erase every line and crevice on her then?

Ben looks closer, puzzled.

BEN

We've always touched up a photo.

CLARE

But she's not real. You should have left in her freckles. And put back that scar. It tells her story.

Ben retrieves the freckles and adds the scar back with the undo button. He contemplates the picture.

BEN

I never thought we needed blemish correcting in the first place.

Anton enters. She points at him.

CLARE

I need your articles.

ANTON

You'll have them tomorrow night.

CLARE

I heard what you said about Megan.

ANTON

Fearless. She's quite the woman.

BEN

Totally fearless. She got on that board again after just a year.

CLARE

And Debbie? The girl with Down Syndrome?

Anton smiles. Gets lost in thought for a moment.

ANTON

I don't think I've ever met someone with such sweet innocence about them. She was captivating.

Clare waits for a punchline. But it doesn't come. She realizes he's being serious.

CLARE

I can't believe what I'm hearing.

Anton contemplates a moment, then clears his throat.

ANTON

These may be the best articles I've written with you. So... thanks.

Clare has a staggering look on her face.

CLARE

Really?

He looks at the shots Ben has at his workstation.

ANTON

It gave me a new perspective. These women are strong. And they're beautiful. All of them.

Clare beams.

CLARE

Finally.

ANTON

Finally what?

CLARE

They aren't just Barbie Dolls to you anymore.

Anton stares at the photos, deep in thought. His eyes look sad and remorseful.

ANTON

I haven't been to Mom's grave for a while. Wanna come with me?

EXT. CEMETARY - DAY

Clare refreshes the flowers on LUDMILA GAGARIN'S grave. She gets up and stands next to Anton.

ANTON

You said when we were with Dad, that Mom wasn't happy. Is that true? I saw her crying a few times...

Anton's eyes are haunted by an inner guilt.

CLARE

You were just a kid; you couldn't know that.

ANTON

Did she know about you being gay?

CLARE

We never talked about it, but I'm sure she knew. She always tried to match me up with some guy, but she figured it out and didn't say a word. She just said I hope you find your happiness.

(chuckles)

She would have loved me even if I was a mass murderer.

ANTON

Didn't Dad ever let her know that he loved her?

CLARE

I'm sure Dad loved her, but he didn't know how to show it.

Anton's face is etched with sorrow as he reflects a few moments on Clare's words.

ANTON

I wish I could talk to her now and tell her how much I loved and appreciated her.

Clare puts her hand on Anton's shoulder.

CLARE

She knows.

INT. CLARE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The key turns, and the door opens. Anton sees Clare.

ANTON

Hey.

CLARE

Kiska made dinner.

ANTON

Has she... said anything about me?

CLARE

Why don't you ask her?

ANTON

I'm not ready. I thought I'd say hi to Pops.

Ivan sits in front of the T.V.

ANTON

Hey, Pops!

Ivan nods. RATTLING noises come from the kitchen. Kiska enters carrying a cake. She sees Anton and freezes a second. Then she puts the cake on the table.

CLARE

Thanks so much for making dinner tonight and keeping Pops company.

IVAN

I don't need baby-sitter!

KISKA

Hey, what did I say about being grouchy?

Ivan fires:

IVAN

I'm sick and old; what do you expect?

Kiska throws her arms up in the air.

KISKA

You're still breathing, and I made you cake. What more do you want?

IVAN

Must I listen to your clucking all night?

He looks to Anton, exasperated.

IVAN

The whole world is wrong. Everybody's crazy. I'm surrounded by idiots.

ANTON

The present excluded, of course.

IVAN

No, you're the biggest one. Look at Stephan's son, Victor. Now that is a man a father can be proud of.

(MORE)



IVAN (CONT'D)

He's a navy captain. He does man's work. Has big family, with three sons. And your cousin Alex. He is chief of Police. Now *that* is a man.

Kiska shoots Ivan a level stare.

KISKA

Your son is good man. You are afraid to tell him you love him because no one ever say they love you. You more comfortable putting finger up tiger's ass than to tell your own flesh and blood you love him.

Clare stares at Kiska's nerve with admiration. Anton blinks in surprise.

KISKA

You think because you roar like lion people respect you? No, I do not shake like rabbit because you roar. I am lion too.

Anton sits in silence, dumbfounded. Ivan waves her off.

IVAN

I know you from no good family, in Ukraine your family are peasants.

ANTON

(defensive)

Hey!

Anton gets between Kiska and his father.

ANTON

You do *not* talk to her like that. This woman's hardly been here three months and has a business more successful than anything you ever did. She cooks like a professional chef, is one of the strongest women I've met, and is traffic-stopping, drop-dead gorgeous in red.

Astonishment fills Kiska's face. Anton turns to her.

ANTON

In any dress size.

Clare's mouth drops open. Ivan waves off Anton in a dismissive gesture.

IVAN  
Be quiet and bring me tea.

KISKA  
You been alive how many years and  
you not learn the word please?

Ivan stares hard.

KISKA  
You afraid your walnuts fall off if  
you say it?

IVAN  
Anton. Get. Me. Tea.

ANTON  
I don't think so.

Ivan folds his arms indignant, grumbles and sarcastically  
grunts at Kiska.

IVAN  
(barely audible)  
Please.

Kiska frowns.

KISKA  
You want I go to bathroom and make  
you tea?

This time without the sarcasm.

IVAN  
Please.

Kiska's eyes roll, and she goes into the kitchen. Anton  
enjoys the view as she goes. Clare pulls him to the corner.

CLARE  
Did she just get him to say please?

ANTON  
No one's ever stood up for me like  
that. Ever. She's amazing. Isn't  
she just--

CLARE  
--the woman for you?

ANTON  
We go to print in ten days, right,  
for the Brides article?

CLARE

Yeah.

ANTON

I need to make sure there is one couple that has a happy ending.

CLARE

This isn't only for the article?

ANTON

No, this is for real. She's the one. But I need your help to get her back.

She considers this a beat, then tells him:

CLARE

I have an idea.

She pulls him by the arm.

CLARE

Come with me, Frankie boy.

INT. RETRO'S NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Packed crowd. Clare, Jane, Ben, Rich and Megan, sit at the front row table. Kiska arrives out of breath.

CLARE

What took you so long? The show's 'bout to start.

KISKA

Cabbie argued tip. He tried to cheat me out of two dollars.

CLARE

Sit! Oh, by the way...

Clare gives Kiska a beautifully wrapped present.

CLARE

It's from Anton. Open it.

Kiska unwraps the box. She takes out the same red dress she owned in a size 6. She checks the tag. Size 14. Tears of joy form in her eyes.

Anton slides on stage in a 1940's suit with a fedora. He speaks into a microphone in a deep, sultry voice:

ANTON

To my special lady. This one's for  
you.

Kiska's eyes pop as Anton points to her, and a spotlight engulfs her in light. Anton begins to sing, "It had to be you" in his perfect Sinatra voice.

ANTON

(singing)

*It had to be you, it had to be you,  
I wandered around, and finally  
found, the somebody who --*

Anton jumps off the stage and walks over to Kiska.

ANTON

(singing)

*-- could make me be true, and could  
make me be blue. And even be glad,  
just to be sad, thinking of you.*

Kiska melts. It's obvious she's in love. Anton stops singing and kneels before her. He takes out a beautiful diamond ring. The karats sparkle under the spotlight.

ANTON

Will you marry me?

Kiska's head nods, she throws up her arms and embraces him. The Audience applauds. She slips on the ring.

Anton kisses her. Kiska flashes the ring to everyone.

INT. ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL - DAY

The pews are filled with Anton's FAMILY and FRIENDS. Icon paintings hang from the wooden and golden walls. Kiska and Anton stand before a golden altar.

The groomsmen, Rich and Ben, hold red velvet crowns over the bride and groom's heads as the PRIEST speaks. Anton and Kiska exchange rings.

INT. HAWAII MAUI - HONEYMOON SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The midnight moon and the ocean sparkles from Kiska's and Anton's honeymoon suite. Kiska, wearing her matrimonial crown, rides Anton in bed like a stallion.

KISKA

Who's your queen, baby?!

ANTON  
You are! You are!

KISKA  
Louder!

Anton screams.

ANTON  
Queen Kiska... rides tonight!

Anton nears climax, shouts:

ANTON  
Long live the Ukraine!

INT. SIR SAVANT - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The Shareholders and George sit around the table. Clare stands in the front and glances at her notes. She begins:

CLARE  
Although we've lost readership, I think whatever direction we take we need to keep our integrity intact. Which is why I want to bring new eyes into our photos and a new heart into our articles.

George looks bored and checks his cell. Clare continues.

CLARE  
We're embarking on an era when what was considered beautiful and desirable has widened its horizons.

Clare clicks on a photo of a girl in a bikini, standing on a sandy beach next to her surfboard: Megan.

CLARE  
The human being is slowly evolving beyond the flesh and is embracing a new spirit.

Next photo: Deanne lies on the grass, her hair strands flowing over her big blue eyes. The photo captures the frailty and beauty of Down Syndrome.

CLARE  
So-called "flaws" are no longer to be pitied, but celebrated and admired.

A bald cancer survivor laughs on top of a mountain, her arms outstretched. Birds fly above her as her joy reflects the freedom of life. Ben's photo captures this spirit of beauty.

CLARE

And our photos represent these changes in our society. Airbrushed perfection is not where you find the human soul.

A series of photos fade in and out on the office screen:

- A) Siamese twins
- B) Little women
- C) Transgender women
- D) Women in wheelchairs
- E) Vitiligo
- F) Overweight women
- G) Underweight women

Their beauty shines before them as Clare speaks.

CLARE

There's a trend now to go deeper than a straight nose or a washboard stomach. We are in the process of reprogramming our mind's eye. We look for that passion and uniqueness in our subjects. We were blind to that allure, but now we have regained our sight. Our eyes finally recognize true beauty.

There is a silence among the shareholders. They glance at each other. Mrs. Goldstein starts to applaud, and the rest follow. George squirms in his chair uneasily. Clare is stealing his thunder, and he's pissed.

MONTAGE:

- A) A Printing Press spits out copies of Sir Savant magazine. Megan and her surfboard grace the cover.
- B) Two women sit on a TRAIN, their eyes on their cellphones. They swipe Sir Savant magazine to wedding photos of Anton and Kiska. They read the article "Spirit of Beauty." One girl taps her friend's shoulder and points to her screen. A satisfied smile spreads across their faces.

C) In a CAFE HOUSE, customers swipe their iPads to Sir Savant. An ad shows photos of Aliena wearing glasses; underneath reads the blurb: "*ALIENA - the new face of Troy Viceroy eyeglasses. Beautiful glasses for beautiful people.*"

D) Hands grab magazine issues off of SUPERMARKET shelves.

E) Article from the LOS ANGELES TIMES: The "Spirit of Beauty" article has put Sir Savant magazine on the Best Selling list.

INT. RESTAURANT - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

A large scale MONITOR displays looping screen images of the September issue of Sir Savant.

All Clare's coworkers attend with their love interests by their sides. Even Madame Gribanov arrived from Kiev to join the ceremony.

Ivan sits at the table, next to a huge cake and champagne. He proudly holds his scepter across his chest. Gribanov sits next to Clare and skootches closer, but Clare is hesitant of the open display of affection. Instead, they hold hands under the table.

George slouches in his chair, shit-faced drunk.

The SHAREHOLDERS listen. Mrs. Goldstein speaks into the mic.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

Our September issue is a big hit, and subscriptions in both print and digital sales are up 40 percent. Because of our great success, we are planning acquisitions to add to our roster. We thank Madame Gribanov for her help with the Brides project.

Everyone applauds. Mrs. Goldstein waves her arm for Gribanov to stand. Gribanov takes a bow. She sits and whispers to Ben and Jane sitting next to her.

MADAME GRIBANOV

Sorry for mishap with the Dragonlady. No hard feelings or poison letter from lawyer?

Ben smiles and shakes his head no. Gribanov nods gratefully. Her hand cups Jane's chin, smiles, and nods to Ben.

MADAME GRIBANOV

Excellent taste!

She studies Ben and sighs. Her fingers comb through his hair.

MADAME GRIBANOV

Time for haircut. You look like my  
uncle's Sheepdog.

Back to Mrs. Goldstein's closing speech:

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

We are grateful to Clare for her  
"Spirit of Beauty" feature, which  
sent our sales soaring.

(afterthought)

And thank you, George, for bringing  
our attention to Clare.

George smirks and nods his head cynically.

RICH

Our former advertisers are back.  
We're booked out for the next year.

Everyone applauds.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

And I am proud to announce that  
Clare is promoted to editor-in-  
chief of Sir Savant.

Ivan smiles proudly. George claps his hands slowly. Too slow.  
He rises, stumbles to the head of the table with a drink in  
his hand.

GEORGE

Hail Clare, the hero of SIR SAVANT.  
Never mind that I worked here years  
for this lousy company!

(he raises his glass)

I toast to you, Clare, a Dyke-  
Lesbian has made it to the top. Bet  
you guys didn't know that pink  
isn't her color.

Enraged chatter is heard from her coworkers as they stare  
George down. Mrs. Goldstein's voice is tinged with menace.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN

It is definitely your color. As in  
your pink slip, which you'll  
receive shortly.

BEN

(whispers to Anton)

Why didn't Clare tell us she's gay?

(MORE)



BEN (CONT'D)

I could have set her up with my  
sister.

(proudly)

She's a doctor, you know.

Her coworkers smile and applaud to show their alliance to Clare, but her eyes grow wide with anticipatory dread as she stares at her father. What will he say?

Ivan is angry, but not at Clare. He slowly rises and approaches George. He takes his scepter and starts beating him over the head with it.

IVAN

I am proud of my daughter, no  
matter who she gets jiggy with.

George raises his arms to protect his head from the blows.

IVAN

And her mother would too!

Anton tears his father away from George. George sniffs the scepter and wrinkles his nose.

GEORGE

Whew. That thing smells like shit!

Ivan takes a whiff of his scepter and crinkles his nose.

IVAN

Right!

Ivan takes one last jab at George for good measure.

Clare has tears of joy in her eyes. She turns to Griбанov, but this time she plants a passionate kiss on her mouth, right in front of everyone.

FADE OUT