

"WANNA BET?"

FADE IN:

INT. BANQUET HALL -- NIGHT

Lilacs, candles, balloon arches, and flowingly draped lavender taffeta bedeck every inch of the banquet hall. This is an obviously lavish, overtly-romantic reception, complete with a fairy-tale style, castle-shaped wedding cake and a fountain of pale pink punch.

WEDDING GUESTS mob the dance floor, moving crazily to "The Chicken Dance" song. Only a few stragglers occupy the tables. Most obvious is the head table where the groom, KENNETH(31), sits with his THREE GROOMSMEN laughing and tossing back shots.

FAITH (29), the bride, stands to one side of the dance floor. Standing with her, in bright purple, southern belle style bridesmaid gowns, are DEBRA (29), ELLEN(30), and a pregnant PAIGE (29). They are all drinking wine while staring intently at the groomsmen.

DEBRA
Piece of cake.

ELLEN
You've only got three minutes.

PAIGE
Less. It's half over.

FAITH
Do we have to do this? It's my wedding day.

DEBRA
Oh yes.

Debra hands her glass of wine to Paige and heads determinedly towards the groomsmen. The moment she approaches, they stop speaking and turn to stare at her. After a few moments, Debra walks back towards the dance floor. The groomsmen stand and follow her with big grins on their faces.

Debra stops at the edge of the dance floor and turns to face the groomsmen. Each one leans down to kiss her as they file onto the dance floor. The groomsmen form a line and execute a perfect rendition of the chicken dance. Faith, Ellen and Paige look on in disbelief.

ELLEN
I thought you said they never danced.

FAITH
They never have before.

Paige puts a defeated hand to her head.

PAIGE
We can't keep doing this.

ELLEN
Richard says it's going to have to
start coming out of my shopping
budget.

PAIGE
Mine comes out of entertainment.
Jim thinks I must enjoy losing to
her, I do it so often.

FAITH
We could stop.

ELLEN
Yeah.

PAIGE
I could.

ELLEN
Right.

FAITH
I could, too.

PAIGE
If only she'd lose.

ELLEN
Once. Just once.

FAITH
That's all it would take.

PAIGE
Yeah.

FAITH
Never happen.

ELLEN
It could happen.

PAIGE
We've been betting her since college.
It's not going to happen.

The song ends and a triumphant Debra returns to the group.

DEBRA
What did I say. And I only needed
to get one of them to dance.

PAIGE

We should've made the stipulation
that you couldn't promise sexual
favors to get them to do it.

DEBRA

I would hardly call a kiss, a sexual
favor. Anyway, you didn't. So, I
win. Again. Pay up.

Ellen and Paige reach into their evening bags, pull out
twenties and hand them to Debra. Faith looks in her bag
then bites her lip.

FAITH

I don't have any cash on me. Deb,
can I borrow a twenty?

Debra laughs and pulls a third twenty out of her bag and
holds it up with the others.

DEBRA

Another sixty bucks. How much does
that make this year?

Ellen and Paige glare at Debra while Faith tries to add it
up on her fingers.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

You should know by now. I always
win.

One of the groomsmen approaches Debra and takes her hand.

GROOMSMAN

I believe you promised me this dance.

DEBRA

I did. And I always keep my promises.
Just one more of those things I always
do.

Debra allows herself to be whisked away by the groomsmen,
with a laughing glance back at the frowning Paige and Ellen.

PAIGE

Just once.

ELLEN

Like I said. It could happen.

PAIGE

Yeah? How?

Ellen reaches into her bag and pulls out a worn, crumpled
piece of paper.

ELLEN
We make it happen.

Faith and Paige stare at the paper uncomprehendingly.

FAITH
What is that?

ELLEN
A sure thing.

Faith and Paige stare at Ellen uncomprehendingly.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
It's the bet. The Bet.
(beat)
The one we made in college?

Paige nods with sudden understanding.

PAIGE
The Bet.

Faith stares at Paige uncomprehendingly.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
Don't you remember?

ELLEN
We were all sitting around after my
first date with Richard.

PAIGE
(sighs dreamily)
The associate professor.

ELLEN
And you were teasing me about marrying
for grades.

PAIGE
And then we all started talking about
what kind of man we wanted to marry.

ELLEN
And when.

PAIGE
And Debra said, 'I'm not gonna get
married until after I turn thirty.'

ELLEN
Hence, The Bet.

FAITH
(in sudden remembrance)
The Bet.

(MORE)

FAITH (CONT'D)

(beat)

How is that a sure thing?

Faith takes a sip of her wine.

ELLEN

Simple. We've got seven months to get her married.

Faith spits her wine all over Paige.

FAITH

I am so sorry.

PAIGE

It's all right. I have a two-year-old.

ELLEN

(to Paige)

Besides, it blends in perfectly.

Paige smothers a laugh. An oblivious Faith turns to Ellen.

FAITH

You think Debra's just going to magically get married within the next seven months?

ELLEN

This isn't a fairy tale.

Paige wryly contemplates the over-done decorations of the hall.

PAIGE

Could've fooled me.

ELLEN

We'll have to help her.

FAITH

How, exactly, do you help someone get married?

ELLEN

We simply find the right man for her, coach him, and throw him in her path. So to speak.

PAIGE

Find him where? It's not like you can go to a store and pick one out.

FAITH

You think there's a man out there who'd agree to this? It's hard enough to find a guy who's ready for marriage, let alone willing to be coached into it by someone else.

ELLEN

We're in a new century. That whole 'men afraid of commitment' thing is in the past. You'll see. How about it?

PAIGE

I'll do just about anything to shut Debra up. I'm in.

Kenneth comes up behind Faith and puts his arm around her.

KENNETH

Mind if I steal my bride away.

ELLEN

We were kind of in the middle of something.

Everyone turns to look at Ellen.

PAIGE

(to Kenneth)

She's all yours.

Kenneth pulls Faith onto the dance floor just as strains of a ballad are heard. Ellen's daughter, MOLLY (5), runs up.

MOLLY

Mommy? What's 'dopted mean?

ELLEN

You mean adopted?

Molly nods.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

It's when a mommy and daddy take care of a child that used to belong to another mommy and daddy.

MOLLY

Am I 'dopted?

ELLEN

No.

Ellen turns back to Paige.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

So here's what I'm thinking-

Molly runs over to her brother, BOBBY (7).

MOLLY

(to Bobby)

I am not 'dopted. Mommy said.

Molly sticks her tongue out.

BOBBY

You are too. Mommy's not gonna tell you. Someday you're real parents are gonna come take you away.

MOLLY

Nuh-huh.

Bobby tugs at the bow on Molly's dress until it comes undone. Molly begins to wail, then tackles Bobby. They knock into an ELDERLY COUPLE on the dance floor, but continue to scuffle amongst the dancers.

PAIGE

Umm, Ell? Your kids-

ELLEN

They're fine. So all we have to do is start checking the personals.

PAIGE

The personals? You mean like "Single White Male, 40's looking for single female beauty in her 20s for a sexy romp." Not exactly husband material.

ELLEN

Not everyone who takes out an ad is a pervert.

PAIGE

I don't think scouring the personals is the best way to approach this.

ELLEN

Well, what's your brilliant idea?

PAIGE

I don't know. Maybe we could meet someone at a bookstore, or a coffee house. Maybe a film festival? At least we'd know they'd have something in common with her.

ELLEN

Sorry, my days of picking up men off the street are over.

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Tell you what, we can both go looking for potentials our own way. Then, when Faith gets back from her honeymoon, she can help us decide who found the better man.

Paige glances over to where Debra is dancing with the groomsman.

PAIGE

Fine. But who knows? By that time, Deb may have taken care of it on her own.

Ellen follows Paige's gaze towards Debra, who is heading their way. Debra gathers her things from a nearby table and turns to give Ellen and Paige each a good-bye hug. Kenneth returns Faith to her friends.

KENNETH

(to Debra)

You leaving?

DEBRA

Yeah, I'm going to go show your little country boy friend what we do for fun here in Hollywood.

Debra indicates her groomsman dance partner who is saying his good-byes.

PAIGE

You're certainly dressed for it.

KENNETH

Why am I not surprised. I'd better say goodbye before you drag him off.

Kenneth heads over for a final chat with his groomsman.

ELLEN

Way to go, Bo Peep. Is that romance I smell brewing there, Deb?

DEBRA

Hardly, he's from Iowa. A cross-country courtship with a farm boy isn't what I'm looking for at the moment.

The elderly couple approaches with Bobby and Molly in tow.

ELDERLY MAN

I believe these belong to you?

ELLEN

Why yes.

Ellen grabs Bobby and Molly by their collars.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Is that all you have to say?

ELLEN

Thank you.

The elderly couple walks away, their noses in the air. Ellen stares disapprovingly at her children for a moment.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Go find your father.

Bobby and Molly scamper away, reprieved.

FAITH

(to Debra)

What are you looking for at the moment?

DEBRA

Besides a couple of restraining harnesses for Ellen?

FAITH

No, what are you looking for in a man.

DEBRA

I don't know. But, I suppose I'll have to start looking, now that you've tied the knot.

Ellen exchanges an I-told-you-so glance with Faith. The Groomsman approaches to collect Debra.

GROOMSMAN

You ready?

DEBRA

You bet.

Debra hugs Faith.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Congratulations sweetie. Say, why don't I take us all out to lunch when you get back from your honeymoon? On me.

Debra pats her handbag containing the bet money.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Or should I say you?

The three women watch them leave.

PAIGE
We have got to get her married.

FAITH
I don't know you guys, this seems
kind of mercenary.

ELLEN
It's not mercenary. Look, you're
happy being married, right?

Faith nods. Paige rolls her eyes.

PAIGE
She's only been married five hours.

Ellen elbows Paige in the ribs.

ELLEN
So are we. We just want her to be
happy, too.

PAIGE
And if we should happen find her a
man before she turns thirty, well,
that's icing on the cake.

A waiter walks by with a tray of cake slices. Ellen grabs a
piece and takes a bite.

ELLEN
The wedding cake. What do you say?

Paige throws a manipulative arm around Faith's shoulders
while Ellen shoves a bite of cake into Faith's mouth.

FAITH
(doubtfully)
If it will make her happy.

PAIGE
Oh, it will. It will.

ELLEN
Don't worry, we'll take care of
everything.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN & RICHARD'S HOME -- NIGHT

ELLEN stands primping in front of a mirror in the sleekly
modern bedroom. Her reserved, mild-mannered, intellectual
husband, RICHARD (40) stands watching her from the doorway.

RICHARD
You're going through with this?

ELLEN
Of course. Why wouldn't I?

RICHARD
This betting of yours is getting rather foolish.

ELLEN
Why do you say that? There's no money involved this time.

RICHARD
True. I only hope you don't come to regret this.

Ellen walks over to Richard and wraps her arms around him.

ELLEN
Sweetheart. There will be nothing to regret. I'm simply going to find a man for Debra to fall in love with. Then they'll get married, live happily ever after, and she will never be able to say "I always win," again.

RICHARD
If you say so.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. ELLEN & RICHARD'S HOME -- LATER

COLE (37), a distinguished-looking gentleman, stands at the front door holding a dozen roses. He is just brushing lint off his jacket when BOBBY opens the door. Cole is a bit stunned to see a child there.

The living room is a picture of untouched sophistication. All cream carpets, overstuffed leather furniture and strategically placed bric-a-brac lend the room a model-home feel. A wall of glass-encased books tells everyone who enters, that intelligence resides within. Bobby grins.

BOBBY
(yells O.S.)
Molly, your dad's here.

Bobby leaves the door wide open as he runs off to find Molly. Cole hesitantly steps into the living room.

COLE
Dad?

Cole shakes his head, certain he must have misunderstood.

COLE (CONT'D)

Date.

RICHARD gets up from the easy-chair where he's been watching T.V. and shakes Cole's hand.

RICHARD

You must be Cole.

(yells O.S.)

Honey, your date's here.

Bobby and Molly peek around the corner at Cole.

COLE

Hi. I suppose I must be here for
your daughter?

Molly screams and grabs on to Richard's leg. Cole watches her odd behavior, then looks up at Richard.

RICHARD

No, you're here for my wife, Ellen.

COLE

I thought her name was Debra. Did
you say wife?

Richard attempts to shake Molly loose. Bobby runs off.

RICHARD

Yes.

COLE

Maybe there was a misprint in my ad.
I'm looking to get married, not get
with a married-

Molly continues screaming and crying. ELLEN enters. Bobby returns with Molly's suitcase and her favorite doll.

RICHARD

Ahh, here she is.

MOLLY

Daddy, don't let him take me away.

ELLEN

You must be Cole. You certainly
didn't misrepresent yourself.

COLE

(to Ellen)

Ah, thanks.

Bobby waves the suitcase in front of Molly's face, making her cry louder.

RICHARD

(to Molly)

Honey, no one is taking you away.
He's here to take mommy out.

MOLLY

Is mommy 'dopted?

RICHARD

What?

ELLEN

(to Molly)

Sweetheart, nobody is adopted. Bobby,
stop that. Tell your sister she's
not adopted.

Cole starts edging his way to the door.

COLE

Look, I'm sure you're all very nice.
Really. But this isn't what I was
looking for. At all.

ELLEN

Oh, don't tell me a little outburst
like this is going to put you off
marriage. I thought your ad said
you were a family man.

COLE

Maybe I should've been more clear.
I'm looking to start a family, not
join one.

RICHARD

I think he's under the impression
you're the one he's to be dating.

ELLEN

(to Cole)

Oh no, you're for Debra.

COLE

Is she here? Because I have
reservations for seven-

ELLEN

No, you and I are going out tonight.
Call it a pre-screening date.

Cole looks doubtful.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I'll explain everything over dinner.

Ellen quickly kisses her husband and kids goodbye as she rushes a confused Cole out the door.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE HOUSE -- DAY

Plush couches, overstuffed chairs, colorful wall hangings and cafe tables create a cozily eccentric atmosphere. Various pseudo-intellectual PATRONS occupy many of the seats in the house. Every one of them is either reading or typing away importantly on a laptop.

The very pregnant PAIGE sits alone at a table for two, trying her best to look sexy and intelligent. She seductively scans the crowd, smiling invitingly at any male patron who looks even slightly available. Her husband, JIM (30), tries to entertain their daughter ,VICTORIA (2), at a nearby table.

Paige beckons secretively to Jim. Jim swaggers over, vainly attempting to act like he's a stranger to Paige. His macho strut is effectively ruined when Victoria runs up and grabs a hold of his hand.

PAIGE

I don't belong here. Let's just go.

JIM

What are you saying? You're doing great.

(loudly)

I just had to come over here and tell you how beautiful and available you look.

Several patrons glance up at him curiously.

JIM (CONT'D)

I'll be returning to my seat now.

Jim pulls Victoria along towards their table. Victoria is determined to wiggle away and run over to Paige.

VICTORIA

(to Paige)

Mommy, look! Look, mommy!

Victoria points at Paige.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

(to Jim)

Mommy.

JIM

(to Victoria)

I know that's mommy. But we need to leave her alone for a little while so she can -

Jim looks at Paige confused as he tries to explain.

PAIGE
(mouths)
Game.

Jim still looks confused.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
G-A-M-E. Game.

JIM
Oh. It's a game. We have to be
very quiet and pretend we don't see-

Jim's voice fades out as he continues to explain.

A handsome MAN sits down at the table next to Paige and begins reading the paper while sipping his coffee. The man looks up occasionally to eye the HOT YOUNG WOMAN at the table directly in front of his. Paige clears her throat.

PAIGE
(hesitantly)
Hi.

The man doesn't glance her way. She edges her chair closer to his. He still doesn't notice her. Paige slides down in her seat and stretches her leg out towards the empty chair at the man's table.

Just as she gives it a quick nudge with her foot, another male PATRON walks by and trips over her outstretched leg. He spills his coffee all over himself and the floor, attracting the attentions of the hot young woman.

The man looks over to Paige. She smiles awkwardly as she struggles to sit back up straight. Her pregnant belly is still hidden beneath the table. She pretends she's just noticed him.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
Oh - Hi.

MAN
Hello.

PAIGE
I was wondering what you were reading.
What are you reading?

The man glances at the UNENTHUSIASTIC EMPLOYEE who is mopping up the spilled coffee and then toward the coffee-stained patron who is now flirting at the table of the hot young woman. He turns back towards Paige and returns her smile. He lifts the paper to show her it's the Wall Street Journal.

MAN

Was that all?

PAIGE

Yes. No. I mean, are you single?

MAN

Possibly. You?

Paige squirms uncomfortably. The man smiles.

MAN (CONT'D)

Would you care to join me?

PAIGE

Thank you.

Paige struggles out of her chair. The man's eyes fall on her stomach. He rises quickly and begins hastily gathering his things.

MAN

I'm sorry. I just remembered, I'm due - I'm expecting - they're expecting - I mean you're having -

PAIGE

But you haven't finished your coffee.

The man grabs his mug and hurriedly drinks it down as he rushes blindly towards the door. He bumps into the chair of the hot, young woman, just as she's flirtatiously sipping her raspberry Italian soda. The red concoction spills down the front of her blouse.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to -

The man runs out the door, coffee mug still in hand. The unenthusiastic employee yells after him.

UNENTHUSIASTIC EMPLOYEE

Hey, we're not supposed to let you take those.

Paige waddles to the door and yells after the retreating figure of the man.

PAIGE

But you're not for me. I was getting you for my friend.

Paige turns towards her husband and begins to sob loudly. Everyone in the coffee house stops what they're doing to stare at the spectacle. Jim picks up Victoria and puts his arm around Paige.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
Nobody finds me attractive anymore.

JIM
It's ok honey. Don't cry. You'll
meet someone.

PAIGE
I won't. I'm big and fat and - and -
ugly.

JIM
Sure you will, sweetheart. You're
gorgeous.

VICTORIA
Mommy's pretty.

PAIGE
Thank you, sweetie.
(to Jim)
So now what?

JIM
I've got an idea.

Jim, Paige and Victoria exit. All the patrons turn hurriedly
back to what they were doing, embarrassed to have been caught
showing an interest in something.

CUT TO:

INT. COMPUTER DATING SERVICE OFFICE -- DAY

Numerous photographs of grinning couples cover the walls.
Underneath each is a bright yellow sign with red lettering
which reads "Success!"

JIM holds the hand of a fretful PAIGE as they sit at the
desk of a CONSULTANT. They're leafing through a large stack
of male head shots.

PAIGE
No. No. No.

Jim holds up a photograph of a sinister looking man for
Paige's perusal.

PAIGE (CONT'D)
No. He looks like an assassin.
(beat)
No. No - wait a minute.

Paige pauses at the photograph of a strikingly handsome man.
Jim reads off the printed information on the back of the
photo.

JIM

Dakota Stone. Thirty-three; owner
of Stone Spas; former NHL -

(beat)

Oh my God. Paige, it's Dakota Stone.
I've got to meet him. He was the
goalie for the Phoenix Coyotes back
when they first -

Paige's eyes light up.

JIM & PAIGE

No one gets through the STONE!

Jim and Paige high-five.

PAIGE

We'll take this one.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PENGUIN FAMILY RESTAURANT -- DAY

Vinyl booths, noisy video games, a large singing penguin and the laughter of many happy children. PAIGE, FAITH, ELLEN, DEBRA, BOBBY, MOLLY and VICTORIA are all crammed into one booth. Leftover pizza and several half-empty pitchers of soda litter the tabletop.

Bobby, Molly and Victoria are all happily coloring on their place mats. Paige is attempting to balance a spoon on top of the water glass she has placed on her pregnant belly, Faith is applying lip-gloss, and Ellen stares mindlessly at the kid-mobbed penguin. All are attempting to tune Debra out as she tells of yet another bet she's won.

DEBRA

So, I walk over and I drop it in his
lap. He doesn't say a word. Just
whips out his wallet and hands me a
fifty.

Ellen, Paige and Faith feign interest and attention when they realize Debra has stopped talking and is staring at them expectantly.

FAITH

Oh. Umm, what happened then?

DEBRA

That's it. He just ignored me until
I walked away. Can you believe that?

ELLEN

Absolutely.

Victoria crawls up onto the table and starts coloring on Bobby's place mat.

Bobby tries to edge it away from her without making her cry.

PAIGE
So, what else is happening at the
office? I mean work-related.

DEBRA
That's right. I haven't mentioned,
I got promoted.

The three married women exclaim over this.

PAIGE
I can't believe you didn't mention
that. Did you get the new office?

Bobby grabs a crayon out of Molly's hand.

MOLLY
Give it back.

DEBRA
Yes. Complete with a -

ELLEN
How about your love life? Any inter-
office romances brewing?

DEBRA
No. Romance has been dead in my
life since Faith's wedding.

Molly grabs Bobby's place mat away from him, jerking the
corner where Victoria has been scribbling, out of her reach.

FAITH
That's too bad.

Victoria starts to cry.

DEBRA
Not really. I enjoy being single.

PAIGE
But, you'd like to be married, right?

Victoria continues to cry. Paige pulls her into her arms
and attempts to quiet her. Bobby throws the crayon he took
back at Molly.

BOBBY
Here.

DEBRA
I suppose. If the right guy came
along. But I'm not really looking
at the moment.

MOLLY

That hurt.
(crying)
Mommy.

ELLEN

Well, you know what they say. Romance finds you when you least expect it.

BOBBY

Shut up, penguin face.

DEBRA

Then I'm due for an onslaught.

Debra stands and grabs her purse. Bobby sticks out his tongue at Molly. Ellen grabs Bobby's face and shushes him.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

You know, I'd love to sit around chatting all day, but I've got to head back to work. I have a meeting with a client at 1:50pm that I'm about to be late for.

FAITH

Who sets a meeting for 1:50?

Molly throws a pepperoni at Bobby, it ends up in Ellen's hair. Ellen grabs Molly's hand. Victoria is still crying loudly. Debra watches all this with a sincere wistfulness.

DEBRA

You know, sometimes I envy you guys.
(beat)
Give your hubbies my love.

Ellen, Paige and Faith smile innocently after Debra as she walks out the door. Paige sighs as she rummages in her diaper bag. She pulls out a pacifier and shoves it into Victoria's mouth. Victoria immediately quits crying.

ELLEN

I thought you were trying to wean her from that.

PAIGE

We are. But it's either this or the highway.

FAITH

The highway?

Ellen pulls the pepperoni out of her hair and reaches for her purse.

PAIGE

It's the only other thing that calms her down. Once, Jim had to drive the Pacific Coast nine times to get her quiet.

FAITH

The whole coast?

Paige lays a sleeping Victoria down on the booth. Ellen hands a handful of dollars to Bobby.

ELLEN

Here, take your sister and go play. I don't want to see you back here until all that money's spent.

FAITH

You remind me of my mother.

Bobby and Molly run gleefully towards the video games.

ELLEN

And make sure you share, or I'll keep every prize ticket you win, for myself.

The three women watch the kids until they are well away from the table. The moment they are, Ellen and Paige begin talking.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I've got the greatest
guy lined -

PAIGE

I found the perfect man
for -

They stop.

ELLEN

He's a stockbroker.

PAIGE

He owns his own business.

Faith looks back and forth between them, fascinated as they attempt to outdo each other.

ELLEN

He's worth millions.

PAIGE

He's a famous former hockey
player.

ELLEN

What's his name?

PAIGE

Dakota Stone.

ELLEN

Dakota Stone? We're trying to find her a husband, not an action hero.

PAIGE

Well, at least he's led an interesting life. Not like your dried up bank teller.

ELLEN

He's a stockbroker.

PAIGE

How old is he, fifty? Just because you married a dried-up fossil doesn't mean Debra should.

ELLEN

You little - At least my husband can spell fossil.

The penguin and all the children surrounding him turn to stare at Ellen and Paige.

FAITH

Calm down. You're causing a scene.

ELLEN

What would you know. You didn't even bother to find a candidate.

FAITH

I was in Jamaica. What did you want me to do, bring back the concierge?

Paige puts a comforting arm around Faith.

PAIGE

(to Ellen)

Hey, don't yell at her.

(to Faith)

It's alright. You can help me get Debra and Dakota together.

ELLEN

Like that's ever going to happen.

Ellen fills Faith's empty glass from one of the pitchers and hands it to her.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(to Faith)

Wouldn't you rather assist in getting Debra together with the man she's actually going to marry?

PAIGE

Deb's too smart to fall for your old foggy. She'd take a man like Dakota over him, any day.

ELLEN
That sounds like a wager.

PAIGE
You're on.

ELLEN
Whichever one of us found the man
Debra marries, wins.

PAIGE
Fine.

ELLEN
(to Faith)
Who's relationship are you going to
help with? The one that's going to
win, or Paige's?

Faith takes a slow sip of soda.

FAITH
I'm not sure I want to be a party to
either.

ELLEN
Then you automatically lose.

PAIGE
She's right, you have to help one of
us, or you won't be in on the win.

Faith stirs the ice in her soda with a straw.

FAITH
I thought this was about making Deb
happy, not winning.

ELLEN
Stop stalling. You have to choose.
It's not like you'd be able to get a
candidate of your own.

Faith slams the soda down on the table.

FAITH
And why not?

ELLEN
You don't have what it takes.

PAIGE
You're not the competitive type.

FAITH
Is that so? Maybe you don't know me
as well as you think.

Ellen laughs and pours herself more soda.

PAIGE
Come on, Faith. You don't stand a chance. We've already got great candidates lined up.

FAITH
I'll get a better one.

ELLEN
Where? At the Ladies Luncheon at your country club?

Paige reaches for another slice of pizza. Ellen watches Paige shove the cold, greasy slice into her mouth.

FAITH
No. Kenneth will find one for me. He says his department is just crawling with single guys.

Ellen and Paige stop suddenly and turn slowly to stare at Faith.

FAITH (CONT'D)
(defensive)
I wanted him to find a date for my sister. She's been whining about her manless state since the wedding. And since females are practically non-existent on Kenneth's floor, they must be open to blind dates.

ELLEN
They'd have to be blind -

PAIGE
And desperate -

ELLEN
- to date your sister.

Paige takes another bite.

PAIGE
No offense, Faith. But all the guys at your husband's office are geeks.

FAITH
They are not geeks. Most of them are just like Kenneth. So if they're geek-

ELLEN
They're geeks.

FAITH

I don't care what you say. I'm going to get one of them to marry Deb.

PAIGE

Fine. You'd better to be ready to compete.

Ellen stands to check on her kids.

ELLEN

And don't come crying to me when you wimp out, because you just missed your chance to back the winner.

FAITH

I won't wimp out.

(beat)

Besides, this could all be for nothing. How do you know Debra doesn't remember the bet?

PAIGE

That's true. One of us could find the perfect guy for her and she'll refuse to marry him in order to win.

Ellen spots her children, fighting with each other, but otherwise unharmed. She sits back down.

ELLEN

Not a chance. If she remembered, she'd already be bragging to us about how she's going to win it.

FAITH

True.

Faith chews on her straw.

FAITH (CONT'D)

You know, we could just encourage her to meet a guy on her own.

PAIGE

Scared already?

FAITH

No.

ELLEN

Where could she meet one? All she does is work.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKENED MOVIE THEATER -- LATER

DEBRA sits alone in the middle of the theater wiping away a tear as the end credits roll. In the back of the theater, the only other patron, SEAN (33), is using a penlight to take notes.

Sean finishes writing and follows behind Debra as she exits the theater.

SEAN
Feels sort of decadent going to the
movies on a weekday, doesn't it?

Debra jumps at the sound of a voice so close behind her and bumps in to him.

DEBRA
Sorry. What?

SEAN
Going to a movie when the rest of
the world is working. Seems a bit,
illicit.

Debra looks away, embarrassed.

DEBRA
Yeah. This was the last showing, so-

SEAN
I know. It's a shame they don't run
these classics longer. Well, they
will soon, if I have anything to say
about it.

Debra looks at him strangely.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Sorry. Sean Seton. And you are?

DEBRA
Debra. Sean Seton. Sean Seton the
Times film critic?

SEAN
The one and only. I'm here doing a
story on the lost classics-

DEBRA
You trashed "The Slow Lane" last
week.

SEAN
Yeah, the plot was non-existent. I-

DEBRA

Not only did you trash the movie,
you tore the trailer to shreds.
What did you say? Misleading,
tedious, gave away the plot?

SEAN

Well, you know -

DEBRA

Which really makes no sense. Because
you said the film had no plot, so
how could the trailer give it away?

SEAN

I've seen better trailers.

DEBRA

I made that trailer.

Sean pulls out his notepad and pen and pretends to write.

SEAN

Note to self. Film critic's should
never try to pick up women at the
movies.

DEBRA

What do you have to say for yourself?

SEAN

I loved it?

DEBRA

Too late.

SEAN

Look, I'm sure I must've liked one
of the movies you did the promo for.
Name some.

Debra deliberately chooses some of the worst films she's
worked on.

DEBRA

"Food, Swill, Grumbling," "Could You
Call Me A Caddy?", "Crimes Of The
Supermart."

Sean cringes.

SEAN

Can I make it up to you?

DEBRA

You offering to print a retraction?

SEAN

Umm, no. But I am offering a chance to attend the premier of Mel Gibson's new film. It's a great movie. You really should see it.

DEBRA

With you?

SEAN

I promise to be on my best behavior. I won't even bring my notepad.

Sean tosses his notepad over his shoulder.

DEBRA

You know, you almost cost me my promotion.

SEAN

I'll throw in popcorn, too. What do you say?

DEBRA

It would be a slick career move to have a critic up my sleeve.

Sean retrieves his notepad, his pen poised to write.

SEAN

Where can I pick you up?

DEBRA

I haven't said yes, yet.

SEAN

Please?

DEBRA

Well, you did write that my trailer for "Enemy Undone" was better than the film itself.

SEAN

You were behind that? You should have edited the film, too. Then it might've made some money. So, will you come?

DEBRA

I don't know. Your trailer has been a bit rocky. But, I suppose it'd be rude to review you without seeing your feature presentation.

SEAN
I'll take that as a yes.

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH & KENNETH'S HOME -- NIGHT

A door swings open to reveal a man's face that is not Sean's, letting us know this isn't Debra's home as we first assume. KENNETH greets the man, NATHANIEL (32), and leads him into the oddly old-fashioned, antique filled living room. Kenneth joins FAITH on the love seat, where they look uncannily like a Stepford version of the Cleavers.

Nathaniel sits down uncomfortably next to the three other men already on the couch. They are GREG, TED and WESLEY. The couch can barely hold the four of them. Kenneth and Faith beam at the four men who nervously shift and clear their throats.

FAITH
I'd better go check on the roast.

All the men stand as Faith rises and heads for the kitchen. The men sit back down in an uneasy silence. The moment seems to stretch on forever.

KENNETH
Well, shall we adjourn to the dining room?

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH & KENNETH'S HOME - LATER

KENNETH, FAITH and the four men, GREG, TED, WESLEY and NATHANIEL sit around an elegant dining room table at the end of the meal. A large vase of lilacs graces the center of the table.

Nathaniel removes the napkin from his lap and folds it gently next to his place setting.

NATHANIEL
That was an excellent meal.

FAITH
Why, thank you.

GREG
Yes, it was.

TED
Truly delicious.

WESLEY
Better than my mother's.

FAITH

You are all too kind.

Kenneth looks at Faith expectantly.

KENNETH

Should we get started?

The men glance at their empty plates and each other, bewildered.

FAITH

Let me just clear away these dishes.
We'll have dessert when we're through.

Nathaniel rises.

NATHANIEL

Allow me, ma'am.

KENNETH

That's very kind of you.

FAITH

You're earning points and we haven't even started yet.

A confused Nathaniel carries the empty plates to the kitchen sink. When he returns to the living room, Faith is holding a clipboard and a pen. Kenneth stands next to a sheet-shrouded easel. GREG, TED and WESLEY are now all sitting on one side of the table looking as stunned as deer caught in headlights. There is an empty seat next to them.

NATHANIEL

What is this?

KENNETH

If you'll take your seat, we can get started.

Nathaniel sits down uncertainly. Kenneth throws off the shroud to reveal a series of personal questions headed by the title "What Kind of Man Are You?" Faith dims the overhead lights until the track lighting spotlights Ken and each of the "contestants."

The atmosphere becomes that of a game show with Kenneth as the suave, over-pronouncing host.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Alright, question one. A perfect evening out with your wife involves going to A) dinner, B) a movie, C) dinner and a movie, OR D) you should take her somewhere more original & romantic than dinner and a movie.

The four men exchange bewildered glances. Greg raises his hand.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

Greg?

GREG

But, I don't have a wife.

KENNETH

This is a hypothetical question, Greg.

There is an awkward silence. Ted raises his hand.

KENNETH (CONT'D)

It isn't necessary to raise your hand, Ted. Just answer the question.

TED

C?

KENNETH

Are you sure, Ted? Are you absolutely sure you would like to go with that answer.

TED

B? No, A. It's A.

FAITH

I'm afraid not, Ted. The correct answer for this question is -

Wesley raises his hand.

KENNETH

Yes?

WESLEY

All of the above?

KENNETH

That's not one of the choices, Wes. The correct answer is -

Kenneth pulls a piece of tag-board off the easel to reveal the letter "D."

KENNETH (CONT'D)

D. I'm sorry. That puts you both in the hole. Maybe you two can do better.

Ted and Wesley lower their heads in shame and embarrassment. Greg and Nathaniel lean forward, still confused, but determined not to end up "in the hole."

KENNETH (CONT'D)
Now, you tell a woman you'll call
her soon. When, exactly, is soon?

The four men lean their heads together and start whispering
about the what the correct answer might be.

KENNETH (CONT'D)
No talking please.

GREG
Within the week?

KENNETH
Good answer, Greg.

Greg responds in the voice of a television game show
contestant.

GREG
Thank you, Ken.

NATHANIEL
I believe, within three days would
be more appropriate.

KENNETH
Judge?

FAITH
Top score.

Faith and Kenneth smile at each other.

KENNETH
Next question.

Game show countdown music begins to play.

MONTAGE - THE GAME -- CONTINUOUS

-- Greg leads his dance partner, Nathaniel, in an intricate
dance step, ineptly twirling him into a nearby planter.

-- Ted demonstrates his less than slick cuddling techniques
on a fluttery-eyed Wesley.

-- While bowing over the hand of a coyly-shy Ted, Nathaniel
slips smoothly into a down-on-one-knee proposal.

-- Greg, Ted and Wesley show their disappointment over giving
wrong answers as the countdown music reaches its tense
conclusion.

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH'S & KENNETH'S HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

The dining room floor is now littered with discarded questions and answers. The "contestants" have all loosened their ties and removed their jackets.

KENNETH is leaning with both hands on the table. GREG, TED, WESLEY and FAITH lean forward in their seats. All eyes are concentrated on NATHANIEL.

KENNETH

We're going to need an answer.

WESLEY

(whispers to Nathaniel)

All of the above.

Greg and Ted jab Wesley in the ribs with their elbows.

KENNETH

For the last time, "all of the above" is not an option.

Kenneth exchanges a look with Faith. She shakes her head sadly and looks down at her clip board. Next to Wesley's name there is a huge zero.

NATHANIEL

Roses?

Everyone reacts badly to this answer. Faith coughs loudly. When Nathaniel looks up at her, she stares pointedly at the large vase of lilacs.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

No, wait. Long, purple, drippy-looking, star flowers.

KENNETH

(under his breath)

Lilacs.

NATHANIEL

Lilacs.

Everyone exclaims over the inventiveness of this answer. Faith smiles proudly.

FAITH

That puts you over the top.

KENNETH

Congratulations, Nathaniel.

FAITH

I'll go get the champagne.

Faith walks into the kitchen. Kenneth leans over the table to shake the hand of a happily bemused Nathaniel. Greg, Ted, and Wesley pound Nathaniel on the back and shake his hand.

KENNETH
I knew you could do it.

GREG
Way to go, buddy.

TED
You were great.

Faith enters carrying a bottle of champagne and a lovely torte.

FAITH
Who's ready for dessert?

The men straighten their ties and shrug their jackets on.

WESLEY
I guess the best man won.

NATHANIEL
Thanks, man.
(beat)
Hey?
(to Faith)
What did I win?

CUT TO:

EXT. DEBRA'S FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT

Grand Prize music plays as a glamorized DEBRA, in an elegant evening gown, floats down her well-manicured walkway towards SEAN and a waiting limo. Sean lets out a low whistle.

SEAN
It oughtta be illegal for a woman to
look that good.

DEBRA
Flattery won't earn you forgiveness.
(beat)
But it's a good start.

Sean smiles appreciatively as he holds open the door and helps Debra into the limo.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKENED MOVIE THEATER -- LATER

While all the other PEOPLE in the theater watch the film, SEAN and DEBRA cannot keep themselves from stealing glances

at each other. Sean finally slides his arm around her.
Debra moves in closer.

CUT TO:

INT. BOOKSTORE -- DAY

A spacious, brightly-lit bookstore. Clusters of plush chairs and artistic end tables invite customers to linger. A number of CONSUMERS peruse the various displays.

DEBRA and ELLEN stroll among the shelves browsing. Debra is in the middle of a story. Ellen keeps looking over her shoulder, searching. Debra stops talking.

DEBRA
Looking for someone?

ELLEN
What? No.
(beat)
What were you saying?

DEBRA
I met a man.

ELLEN
(under her breath)
So, one of you beat me to the punch.

DEBRA
What?

Ellen looks over her shoulder again.

ELLEN
Lunch. Soon after this, we'll go
eat lunch.

DEBRA
So you think lunch is going to come
sneaking up behind you?

ELLEN
Excuse me?

DEBRA
You keep looking over your shoulder.

ELLEN
Oh, no. I'm trying to find - There's
a book, I'm trying to remember the
title.

DEBRA
Why don't we go check at information.

Ellen spots COLE over Debra's shoulder. He indicates a nearby chair with a book on it and gives Ellen the thumbs up sign. Ellen motions for Cole to hide behind a shelf. Just then another GUY WITH A MAGAZINE walks up to the chair Cole had indicated.

ELLEN

Yes. No. I'll go check, you don't need to come with me. Why don't you -

Ellen waves frantically at Cole, who struggles to decipher her motions. The guy sits in the chair, then reaches under him to pull out the book Cole had placed there.

DEBRA

That's ridiculous. I can help you find the book. What's it about?

Cole finally glances over at the chair and rushes the guy. He rips the magazine out of the guy's hand and throws it across the store. The guy chases after it like a dog for a stick.

ELLEN

Oh, it's about a man and his dog.

The guy plows head first into the magazine rack. Cole gives Ellen the "touchdown" signal.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

At the super-bowl.

DEBRA

Interesting. I haven't heard of that one.

Cole gently replaces the book in the chair.

ELLEN

It's from a foreign press.

DEBRA

An international book. About our super-bowl?

ELLEN

Yes. It's supposed to be a great read. Why don't you -

Ellen grabs a forestry magazine out of a nearby rack.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Take this. And go sit over there. I'll only be a minute.

DEBRA

Are you sure? I could just come with -

ELLEN

Absolutely. Relax, catch up on your reading.

DEBRA

Well, I have been meaning to broaden my knowledge on "country brook fishing."

ELLEN

Great. There's a chair right over -

Debra moves to sit on a nearby bench.

DEBRA

This is fine.

ELLEN

No.

(beat)

I mean, who know's how long it will take to find an international printing. Just head on over to that comfy chair and I'll know where to find you.

DEBRA

O.K.

Ellen walks toward the information center until she's sure Debra isn't looking, then darts behind a bookcase. Debra heads over to the chair where Cole has placed the book.

A GRANDMOTHER and GRANDCHILD approach the chair with a storybook in hand, Cole catches the Grandmother's eye and looks down his nose at her.

COLE

This seat's taken.

The Grandmother directs the grandchild away.

GRANDMOTHER

Of all the rude -

Debra flips casually through the forestry magazine as she sits down in the chair. She is just reaching under her to remove the book, when Cole approaches.

COLE

Pardon me, but you're sitting on my Dickens.

DEBRA

I'm sorry. Is this your seat?

Debra hands the copy of Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" to Cole, and starts to rise. Cole motions her back down.

COLE

That's quite alright. I shouldn't
have left the chair unattended.

Ellen moves covertly among the bookshelves. She darts back and forth, maneuvering to get in closer to Cole and Debra. Cole sits on an end table near Debra.

ELLEN

(to herself)

That's it. Nice and casual. Don't
look to desperate.

A BOOKISH MAN eyes Ellen as she leans peaking around the corner. He edges closer trying to catch her attention. He begins laughing softly to appear casual just as Cole lets out a loud guffaw.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

No, no. Tone it down. Laughing too
much is a turn off.

The bookish man abruptly cuts off his laughter.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Be smooth. Charming.

Cole leans towards Debra with a charming smile. The bookish man straightens his bow-tie, pushes up his glasses and slaps a ridiculously swaggering smile on his face.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

(to herself)

That's it. Now ask her to dinner.

(beat)

Perfect.

BOOKISH MAN

Pardon me, would you like to -

Ellen straightens, brushes her hair back and heads over towards the chair just as Cole is departing with a smile. The bookish man clears his throat, tugs at his collar and turns away as if nothing has happened.

ELLEN

Who was that?

DEBRA

Just some guy.

ELLEN

Just some guy? It looked like you
two were talking pretty comfortably
for him to be just some guy.

DEBRA

It was the strangest thing. I tried to let him know I wasn't interested, but he wouldn't take no for an answer.

ELLEN

Why would you say no? He's attractive and rich.

DEBRA

Rich? How would you know?

ELLEN

He's just got that look about him. Why wouldn't you be interested?

DEBRA

As I was trying to tell you earlier, I met this -

ELLEN

That's all well and good, but can you guarantee that guy is the one? What if this guy is the man you're supposed to be with. And from what I saw, how could he not be? What if he is the one, and you let him get away just because some other muscle head talked to you first.

DEBRA

He's not a muscle head. He's-

ELLEN

That's fine. I'm just saying, keep your options open.

DEBRA

Well, we're having dinner later this week. That open enough for you?

ELLEN

Perfect.

CUT TO:

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT -- DAY

PEOPLE dressed to play lounge on the benches lining the racquetball section of the gym. DEBRA and PAIGE walk along the hall of glass-encased courts.

PAIGE

So, you were telling me you met a guy?

DEBRA

Yeah, he's great. I met him at the -

PAIGE

That's fascinating. But, don't get too attached. You never know when someone better might come along. Just look at all the great men here.

They brush past an ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE MAN.

DEBRA

Yes. They are quite attractive.

ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE MAN

Thank you.

The especially attractive man blushes and starts brushing imaginary lint from his shorts.

DEBRA

Speaking of here. Why are we -
(beat)
here?

PAIGE

So we can play racquetball.

Debra stares at Paige's stomach.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

So you can play racquetball.

DEBRA

And exactly whom shall I be playing with? I refuse to spend the afternoon bouncing a ball around on my own, just to entertain you.

PAIGE

We'll find somebody.

They reach the end of the hall and come to a stop. DAKOTA is on a nearby pay phone.

DEBRA

Where? People come here to play games with partners. They don't come looking for one. I'm going home.

Debra turns to leave.

PAIGE

No, wait. Let's just check around for someone. If I can't play, I at least want to watch you for a while. I miss playing. Come on, I'm pregnant. Don't make me cry.

DEBRA

We don't even have a court reserved.
And where are we going to -

DAKOTA

You're kidding me?

(beat)

Well, can't you just -

(beat)

O.K. That's fine. I understand.

I'll just give up the court to someone
else if I can't find a partner.

Paige elbows Debra in the ribs with an I-told-you-so-smile.
Debra's mouth hangs open a bit at the sight of such a fine
male specimen. Dakota hangs up the phone.

PAIGE

Now's your chance. Go over there.

DEBRA

I'm not going to go up to a complete
stranger and ask him if he'll play
with me. It's not a school night
and he's not my next door neighbor.

Dakota approaches Debra from behind.

DAKOTA

Did I hear you say you're looking
for someone to play with?

DEBRA

Ah, yeah. I usually play with my
friend here, but as you can see she's
in no condition-

DAKOTA

I do have a court reserved if you'd
care to join me. If that's alright
with your friend, of course.

PAIGE

Sounds great.

DEBRA

Paige.

(to Dakota)

I'm sure you'd rather-

DAKOTA

There's nothing I'd rather than to
play a good game with a beautiful
woman. Though I should warn you, I
like to win. So don't expect me to
be giving games up to you.

Paige gives Dakota the thumbs up sign behind Debra's back.

DEBRA

Oh really. I've never needed wins
to be handed to me. I hope you don't
mind losing.

DAKOTA

I wouldn't know. I'd love the chance
to find out.

Dakota holds the door to the court open for Debra. She takes
off her jewelry and hands it to Paige.

DEBRA

Let's play.

CUT TO:

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT -- LATER

Several games later, and DAKOTA and DEBRA are still both
going strong. PAIGE pounds on the glass door to get their
attention.

PAIGE

I gotta go.

DEBRA

Wait. I'll go with you.

PAIGE

No, I just gotta go get something to
eat. You finish your game. You
don't want to lose, do you?

Debra glances at Dakota as she wipes the sweat from her brow.

DEBRA

You sure?

PAIGE

It's fine. Really. Go have fun.

When Paige leaves, Debra turns back to Dakota. He's already
in the process of serving. Though caught by surprise, Debra
slides smoothly back into the game. Intense play follows.
Dakota makes a dive to hit the ball before the second bounce.
He misses.

DAKOTA

Whew. You weren't kidding. You
don't give an inch.

DEBRA

That ties it up. One more game to
decide the winner?

DAKOTA

We could.
(beat)
How about we discuss it over dinner?

Debra appears surprised.

DEBRA

You want to go to dinner? With me?

Dakota nods.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Um. O.K. Just let me get my things.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PARK BY A LAKE -- DAY

Flowers bloom, butterflies flutter in the sunny haze and birds are cooing in the trees. A COUPLE sits on a blanket feeding each other grapes. Another PAIR stroll hand in hand along the lakeside. Still another TWOSOME are kissing under a tree. It is the perfect romantic setting.

FAITH and DEBRA walk along a path towards a bridge spanning a narrow section of the lake. A tawdry romance novel is just visible sticking out of Faith's purse.

DEBRA

He's smart, funny. We have so much in common.

FAITH

Sounds sweet. Where did you meet him?

DEBRA

The movies.

FAITH

How unoriginal. So you've only met the one, then?

DEBRA

Funny you should mention that. I've been meeting men left and -

They come to the bridge.

FAITH

This is it. This is where Kenneth proposed. You know, some people believe the place where a proposal occurs, becomes charged with romantic energy.

DEBRA

So what happens to the place if the
relationship ends in divorce?

Faith is oblivious to Debra's comment.

FAITH

You never can tell what will happen
once the fates deem a place, romantic.

Just then, NATHANIEL comes rowing up to the bridge in a tiny
boat.

NATHANIEL

Here was I, a despondent soul alone
in a rowboat, only to have fate grace
my path with such an incredible vision
as you two lovely ladies present.

Nathaniel struggles to get the rowboat to come to a halt.
It continues under the bridge to the other side while Debra
speaks.

DEBRA

Actually, I think they call this a
lake, not a path. Because you walk
on a path, and you can't walk on a -

The rowboat comes to an abrupt halt as it runs into a log.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Lake.

Faith elbows Debra.

FAITH

Be nice.

NATHANIEL

You are a vision with the fading
sunlight framing you -r figure- face-
you. Yes, framing you. The sunset
is framing you.

DEBRA

The sun's behind you.

NATHANIEL

Oh.

FAITH

Debra.

DEBRA

What?

FAITH

He's trying to be romantic.

DEBRA
Is this how Kenneth wooed you?

FAITH
Oh no. This is much more romantic.

Nathaniel struggles to his feet in the rocking boat.

NATHANIEL
Now that you have crossed my - my
lake. I cannot let you get away.
Give me your name.

Debra covers her face in embarrassment.

FAITH
What's wrong?

DEBRA
This is like something out of a trashy
romance novel.

Faith reaches into her bag and shoves the novel out of sight.

FAITH
What makes you say that?

DEBRA
Are you kidding me? Look at him.

Nathaniel stands precariously in the boat, arms outstretched
toward Debra in a plea for affection.

NATHANIEL
Oh, beauti-

Nathaniel loses his balance in the middle of his fervent
plea. He plunges headfirst into the lake. Faith and Debra
exclaim as they rush off the bridge to the lakeside next to
the now-empty boat.

FAITH
Are you alright?

DEBRA
Let me give you a hand.

Debra reaches down to help Nathaniel onto the shore. His
face and clothes are covered with pond scum. Debra smiles.

FAITH
I think I might have a towel in my
car.

DEBRA
Wait, we'll walk with...you.

Debra trails off as Faith scampers away.

NATHANIEL

That's ok. the sun'll dry me 'til
she gets back.

Debra grins toward the sunset, but doesn't say a word. She
picks a piece of lake slime off of his cheek.

DEBRA

I'm Deb, and you are?

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY PARK BY A LAKE -- MOMENTS LATER

FAITH returns with a box in her hand. She pauses to sigh
over the strikingly romantic couple she envisions DEBRA and
NATHANIEL to be, before walking up to them.

FAITH

Here. All I had were wet-naps.

Nathaniel takes the box.

NATHANIEL

Thanks.

He pulls out a tiny, wet sheet and dabs ineffectually at his
waterlogged clothes.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

(to Debra)

Well, it's been great talking to
you.

Faith moves quickly and "accidentally" steps on his foot, on
purpose.

FAITH

Pardon me. I am so clumsy.

Nathaniel grits his teeth in pain.

NATHANIEL

Quite alright.

(to Debra)

Say, I was wondering. I have two
tickets to the theater next week.
And, while it's perfectly acceptable
to be found all alone in a rowboat,
I don't think I'm up to facing a
theater with an empty seat by my
side. Would you care to join me?

DEBRA

I don't know. You see, I'm sort of -

Faith steps on Debra's foot.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Oww.

FAITH

(to Debra)

Fate, dear.

DEBRA

I guess I owe it to the universe to say, yes.

NATHANIEL

Great. I'll pick you up at 7:00.

He's about to leave, when he catches Faith's glare.

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

But- but I don't know where you live.
So that would be rather difficult.
Why don't I just take that down right now.

He pulls out a pen and a sodden pad of paper from his pockets.

DEBRA

Why don't I give you my card, and you can call me.

NATHANIEL

Great. It's been great meeting you.

Debra maintains her smile until Nathaniel is safely out of range. It fades as she turns to Faith.

DEBRA

Why did you make me do that? I already told you I met -

FAITH

Don't blame me. It's the universe that wants you two together.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN & RICHARD'S HOME -- NIGHT

RICHARD is seated on the couch cradling a snifter of brandy and smoking a cigar. COLE, looking dapper in a tuxedo, sits on the opposite end of the couch nursing his own snifter and cigar. MOLLY and BOBBY sit stiffly on a nearby settee, dressed in their finest clothes.

ELLEN is seated in a chair near an antique telephone table, the receiver up to her ear.

FAITH (V.O.)

She met my candidate this afternoon
and absolutely loved him. This is
going to be easier than I thought.
Oh -

(laughs)

Good luck with your guy.

Ellen frowns as she hangs up the phone, then turns to Cole
with a brilliant smile on her face.

ELLEN

Did I tell you how much Debra adores
to dance?

COLE

I believe you might have.

ELLEN

And don't forget to treat her like
royalty. She absolutely melts for
that.

Molly and Bobby fidget, scratch and tug at their clothes.

COLE

I will make every effort to charm
her.

ELLEN

And you do remember -

Cole raises a hand to stop her mid-sentence.

COLE

Madam, I can all but guarantee you
success.

Ellen smiles, satisfied. Bobby tugs so hard at his clip-on
bow-tie that it flies off and lands in Cole's snifter of
brandy, splashing it onto his white shirt. Ellen stands in
a panic.

Richard leans over and plucks the tie out of the drink. He
shakes off the excess brandy, tosses the tie back to Bobby,
then takes a calm puff from his cigar.

RICHARD

Honey, why don't you go get the man
some ginger-ale.

Bobby clips the tie back into his collar, then folds his
hands innocently in his lap.

CUT TO:

INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT -- DAY

Black and white photographs show up starkly against the white walls, complimenting the simplicity of the unstained hardwood fixtures of the small, naturally-lit restaurant.

ELLEN and DEBRA sit at a table for two near a bank of windows, having a casual lunch.

ELLEN
What did you think of him?

DEBRA
Of who?

ELLEN
Of who. The guy from the book store.
I heard you had another date with
him.

DEBRA
Where did you hear that?

ELLEN
(furtively)
You told me.

DEBRA
I did? My schedule has been so crazy
lately, I can't seem to keep anything
straight anymore.

ELLEN
So, tell me everything.

DEBRA
It was nice.

ELLEN
Just nice?

FLASHBACK - DEBRA'S BENEFIT DATE WITH COLE

Elegantly-gowned LADIES and handsomely-tuxedoed GENTLEMEN chat condescendingly and laugh superiorly while clinking champagne flutes. COLE courteously directs a sleekly beautiful DEBRA through the crowd. They dance, they laugh, they converse, but Debra is obviously harboring no romantic feelings.

DEBRA (V.O.)
He was a perfect gentleman. Suave.
Charming.

ELLEN (V.O.)
Don't forget intelligent.

DEBRA (V.O.)

He is that.

FLASHBACK -- DEBRA'S PREMIER DATE WITH SEAN

DEBRA & SEAN arrive at the movie premier after party. Though they are surrounded by celebrity friends, they have eyes only for each other. They laugh, they dance, they converse, and there is a definite spark between them.

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

But there was no spark. No excitement. Cole seems like a wonderful man to have for a friend, but Sea-

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Ellen drops her fork on her plate.

ELLEN

How can you say that. He's just the kind of man I would, would - pick for you. If I were to pick a guy for you. Which I wouldn't.

DEBRA

You ascertained that from his retreating back? I may be forgetting a lot of things, but that is all you saw of him, right?

ELLEN

Waiter?

CUT TO:

EXT. PAIGE'S AND JIM'S BACKYARD -- DAY

JIM stands by a barbecue flipping burgers. DAKOTA and PAIGE recline back in lawn chairs, watching VICTORIA attempt to throw her small basketball up into the adult-sized hoop. A cordless phone on the table between them rings. Paige answers it with a laugh.

PAIGE

Hello?
(beat)
So you say.
(beat)
Oh really?

Paige hangs up the phone and slams it down on the table.

JIM

What's wrong, sweetie?

PAIGE

That was Ellen. She said Cole's date with Debra went so well, Dakota shouldn't even bother taking Debra to the game tonight.

Dakota bolts out of the chair.

DAKOTA

Maybe I should go right on over there and have a little chat with this Cole fella.

JIM

Easy, boy.

PAIGE

No. What we need to do is make absolutely certain Deb falls head over heels for you.

DAKOTA

Gottcha.

Dakota sits back down and takes a slow sip of his beer. Jim and Paige watch Dakota intently as seconds tick by.

DAKOTA (CONT'D)

Maybe we should come up with some sort of game plan.

JIM

We thought you'd never ask.

Jim pulls down an exterior sunshade to reveal a crudely drawn game plan. Paige scoops up a child-sized golf club from the ground and uses it as a pointer.

PAIGE

Here's what you do -

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TRENDY RESTAURANT -- DAY

PAIGE and DEBRA sit at the exact same table for two having another casual lunch on another day.

PAIGE

Did you know he used to be the goalie for the Phoenix Coyotes?

DEBRA

He's told me. And you've told me.

PAIGE

So. How many times have you seen him?

DEBRA

A few.

PAIGE

More than the others, right?

DEBRA

What others?

PAIGE

I thought you mentioned you were
seeing some other men.

DEBRA

Well I am dating this one guy named -

PAIGE

Only one? Didn't you mention meeting
a few -

DEBRA

Well, yes. But they're just friends.
I'm only romantically involved with -

PAIGE

You don't consider Dakota just a
friend, do you?

FLASHBACK - DEBRA & DAKOTA AT A L.A. KINGS HOCKEY GAME

DAKOTA is wearing his Phoenix Coyote's away jersey in the middle of an L.A. Kings fan section. Debra is wearing one for the Kings. Dakota celebrates when the Coyotes score, Debra celebrates the Kings goals. Debra leans away from Dakota any time he attempts a romantic move. Debra and Dakota are laughing, joking and having an all-around good time, but it is obviously buddy-buddy.

DEBRA (V.O.)

Well, he's not the most charming man
I've ever met. But he's funny. And
almost as competitive as I am.

PAIGE (V.O.)

So what's the problem?

DEBRA (V.O.)

He's a Phoenix fan.

FLASHBACK - DEBRA & SEAN AT AN L.A. LAKERS GAME

DEBRA & SEAN have court-side seats. Sean's arm lays across the back of Debra's chair. She has no problem leaning in. They share the same excitement and disappointments as the score varies throughout the game. They are laughing, joking and having an all-round good time, and it is anything but buddy-buddy.

DEBRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Besides, the energy's not there.
There's no connection. I mean he's
a great guy to take to a game.
Especially when we're cheering for
opposite teams, but -

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Paige sits back in a huff.

PAIGE
No. No but. Why is there a but?

DEBRA
Paige, calm down. We're going to
stay friends. Jim can still meet
him.

PAIGE
Friends is fine, I'm sure. But I
wanted you to date him. Why won't
you date him? He's such a great
catch.

DEBRA
I'm sure he is, but -

PAIGE
No buts! You have to keep dating
him. Please? For me? Come on, I'm
pregnant.

DEBRA
Fine. But this is the last time you
can pull that "pregnant" bit. And,
I can't guarantee we'll stay friends,
if I do.

PAIGE
You won't need to stay friends if
you marry him.

DEBRA
Are you nuts?

PAIGE
No, I'm pregnant.

DEBRA
What did I just say?

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH'S & KENNETH'S HOME -- NIGHT

A proud KENNETH stands by FAITH as she fusses over NATHANIEL. Nathaniel has his hair slicked back, a box of chocolates in his hands and a flower in his button hole.

KENNETH
Stand back and let the boy breathe.

FAITH
You look just perfect.

NATHANIEL
You're sure she'll like me?

KENNETH
What are you worried about? You'll do fine.

Kenneth opens the front door for Nathaniel.

FAITH
Oh, wait. Let me go get the camera.

KENNETH
Now honey. There will be plenty of other chances.

FAITH
I suppose so.

Nathaniel bounds down the walkway towards his car. Kenneth and Faith follow him out to stand of the front step. Nathaniel turns back to wave a cheerful farewell before climbing into the car.

KENNETH
Are you sure you have enough money?

FAITH
Don't stay out to late.

They turn and look at each other strangely.

KENNETH
We need to start having kids.

Faith nods. After a moment, they re-enter the house and shut the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SAME TRENDY RESTAURANT -- DAY

Again, at the same table, FAITH and DEBRA have a casual lunch on still another day.

DEBRA
We should go, we'll miss the movie.

FAITH
Oh, I can't see that movie without
my husband.

DEBRA
Afraid you'll get scared?

FAITH
No, it's just that he wants to see
it. So I can't go without -

DEBRA
I get the picture. I suppose I should
be going alone, then.

Debra starts to rise.

FAITH
No, wait. I want to know how it
went.

DEBRA
How what went?

FAITH
The date.

Debra sinks back into her chair.

DEBRA
Which one?

FAITH
How many have you been on?

DEBRA
You have no idea. Which one are you
talking about?

FAITH
That sweet boy we met in the park.
You were going to the theater
together?

DEBRA
Oh, him. It was pleasant.

FAITH
Pleasant? Didn't he sweep you off
your feet? I told him-hem-Kem-Kenneth
I thought he would sweep you off
your feet.

FLASHBACK - DEBRA & NATHANIEL AT THE THEATER

DEBRA and NATHANIEL stop at will-call to pick up the tickets. As he turns towards the entrance he almost knocks Debra to the ground.

DEBRA (V.O.)
He didn't quite sweep me off my feet.
Though not for the lack of trying.

FAITH (V.O.)
But, he was sweet and romantic, right?

FLASHBACK - DEBRA & NATHANIEL AT THE THEATER PT. II

NATHANIEL escorts DEBRA out of the theater. They are deeply involved in a discussion on the performance they have just seen. They are smiling, animated, and interested in each others point of view. A WOMAN is selling roses on the corner. Nathaniel purchases one and hands it to Debra with a flourish. He is sweetly romantic, but Debra looks at him as a youngster with a schoolboy crush.

DEBRA (V.O.)
He was that. He was very much that.

FAITH (V.O.)
They didn't have lilacs?

DEBRA (V.O.)
Huh?

FAITH (V.O.)
Nothing. So you did like him.

DEBRA (V.O.)
Sure, I like him. But not like that.
He's a little too eager.

FAITH (V.O.)
That's just romance.

DEBRA (V.O.)
No, I know romance.

FLASHBACK - DEBRA & SEAN AT A POETRY READING

A spotlight is centered on a YOUNG WOMAN reading poetry off of cocktail napkins. Candlelight flickers through the glasses of wine on DEBRA and SEAN's table. They sit close to each other in the dark. Arms around each other, hands clasped. As the AUDIENCE erupts into applause, Sean leans down to kiss Debra. She meets him half way.

DEBRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's those moments you are completely
connected with the person you're
with. And the two of you are in a
place where no one else exists.

FAITH (V.O.)
What did I tell you. Fate.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Debra shakes herself back into reality.

DEBRA
What, with Nathaniel? Look, he's a sweet guy. Very philosophical. And I'd definitely be interested in hearing his viewpoint on any number of things. But fate? He's too corny to be fate's answer to my love life.

FAITH
So that's it? You're going to dump him? Just like that? You hardly know him.

DEBRA
I'm not dumping him. I said -

FAITH
Give him another chance, Deb. I'm sure he'll do better next time.

DEBRA
I'll still spend time with him, but don't go expecting anything. It's not fate.

FAITH
We'll see.

CUT TO:

INTERCUT - DECEPTIVELY ENCOURAGING PHONE CALLS

INT. COLE'S OFFICE -- DAY

COLE reclines in a plush office chair, chewing on a cigar while talking out loud to the speaker phone.

COLE
I get the feeling she regards me as more of an associate, than a romantic interest.

EXT. DAKOTA'S DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

DAKOTA stands below the portable hoop with a basketball under his arm and a cell-phone to his ear.

DAKOTA
Every time we're together, she seems more buddy-buddy than lovey-lovey.

INT. NATHANIEL'S CUBICLE -- CONTINUOUS

NATHANIEL sits hunched over in his office cubicle, glancing around furtively to make sure no one hears him.

NATHANIEL

I'm not sure these romance tactics are working. One of these times, I swear she's going to pat me on the head and tell me what a good boy I am.

INT. COLE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

ELLEN'S VOICE comes on over the speaker.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Don't be ridiculous. She was just telling me what a wonderful man she thinks you are. Suave, charming.

EXT. DAKOTA'S DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

PAIGE'S VOICE is heard through the cell phone.

PAIGE (V.O.)

All she could talk about over lunch was what a great time she had at the game. She had so much fun with you.

INT. NATHANIEL'S CUBICLE -- CONTINUOUS

Nathaniel holds the phone away from his hear as FAITH'S VOICE blares out of it.

FAITH (V.O.)

Don't you wimp out on me now. She just finished telling me how sweet and romantic you are. Definitely interested, she said. Those were her exact words.

INT. COLE'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Cole leans forward.

COLE

Is that so?

EXT. DAKOTA'S DRIVEWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Dakota bounces the ball.

DAKOTA

Really?

INT. NATHANIEL'S CUBICLE -- CONTINUOUS

Nathaniel sits up straight.

NATHANIEL
She said that?

INTERCUT ELLEN/ PAIGE/ FAITH ON PHONES -- CONTINUOUS

PAIGE/ ELLEN/ FAITH (V.O.)
Of course. You're the man of her
dreams.

CUT TO:

INT. DEBRA'S OFFICE -- DAY

A richly appointed office, with a variety of film posters and movie memorabilia adorning the walls. DEBRA sits at her desk completely absorbed in some story boards.

Ellen's husband, RICHARD, stands at the entrance and raps on the open door.

DEBRA
Richard? Hi. Ellen's not here today.
We had lunch earlier in the week.

RICHARD
Is that so. I must have my days
mixed up.

Richard walks in and absently peruses the awards on a nearby shelf.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
So, how are you doing?

DEBRA
Fine. Just fine.
(beat)
You?

RICHARD
Good.

Silence stretches.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I hear you've had quite a busy romance
life as of late.

Debra is visibly uncomfortable discussing this with Richard.

DEBRA
You could say that, yes.

RICHARD

Which one are you leaning towards?
If you don't mind my asking.

DEBRA

(pleasantly surprised)
Not at all. You know. I've spent
hours talking about my love life
with Ellen and the others, and not
one of them has bothered to ask me
that.

(beat)

In fact, they've done more talking
about my current affairs than I have.

RICHARD

That's rather curious.

DEBRA

It is.

(beat)

Sean.

RICHARD

Hmmm. That's good to know.

Richard nods his head in farewell.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'm sure I'll be seeing you.

Debra waves lamely after him as he walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S PLACE -- NIGHT

Sean's place is a small, yet modern townhouse bordering a
private beach. Black leather sofas, glass tables, high-tech
stereo equipment and industrial lighting create an atmosphere
of casual sophistication.

They've just finished a romantic dinner for two. DEBRA blows
out the candles on the table while SEAN carries their empty
plates into the kitchen.

DEBRA

That was fantastic. I haven't had
food that good in a long time.

SEAN (O.S.)

You don't cook?

DEBRA

I can make exactly three things.

Debra wanders over to the living room area where a fire roars
in the fireplace next to the balcony.

Debra looks out at the ocean view through the sliding glass balcony doors.

SEAN (O.S.)
And those would be?

DEBRA
Salad. Pasta. And I grill a pretty mean steak.

Sean enters carrying an open bottle of wine and two wineglasses.

SEAN
Steak, huh? Next time, you cook.

Sean hands Debra the glasses then pours the wine. Debra turns back to the view.

DEBRA
How does a mere film critic afford a place like this?

SEAN
Mere?

Sean places the bottle of wine on the coffee table in front of the fire and moves to stand next to Debra.

SEAN (CONT'D)
I have an older sister with the Midas touch when it comes to the stock market.

DEBRA
Really?

SEAN
Yep. When I was eighteen, I decided to give the college fund from my parents over to Carol and paid for college with student loans instead. And she turned it into enough money to pay back the loans and as well as provide me with cash to live comfortably for some time to come.

DEBRA
That was pretty risky.

SEAN
Not if you knew Carol. We may have fought through most of our childhood, but when it comes to money, there's no one I trust more.

DEBRA
You fought through your entire
childhood?

SEAN
Fought, picked on, teased. Still do
actually. Every time we get together
back home. We enjoy it, though.

Sean takes a sip of wine.

SEAN (CONT'D)
What about you? What's your family
like? Any sibling rivalry?

Sean walks to a low, leather sofa in front of the fireplace
and sits down.

DEBRA
Nope. No siblings. My friends are
like family, though.

SEAN
What about parents?

Debra joins Sean on the sofa.

DEBRA
I do have parents. I don't know
where they are, though.

SEAN
I'm sorry. You never knew your
parents?

DEBRA
No, I know them. I just don't know
where they are. Which probably means
they'll be showing up on my doorstep
any day now.

SEAN
And you know that because?

DEBRA
Sorry. When they retired, they sold
everything and bought an RV. They
send me postcards every so often to
let me know where they are. And
when I haven't received one in a
while, I know they're in the area
and planning to stop by.

Sean pours more wine into their glasses.

SEAN
They haven't heard of cell-phones?

DEBRA

My dad says the only people he wants to pay for his roaming are the people who sell gas, food or rental space in RV parks.

SEAN

Do you miss them?

DEBRA

Yeah, I do. Mostly I miss having family around. You know, criticizing me, telling me what to do.

SEAN

Maybe I can remedy that for you.

Sean leans in close.

DEBRA

You can?

SEAN

Well, I am a critic. And I would love to tell you what to do.

Debra hits Sean with a pillow.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S PLACE -- LATER

The now empty wineglasses and two empty bottles of wine are on the coffee table. DEBRA and SEAN still sit on the low sofa in front of the roaring fireplace, wrapped in each other's arms.

DEBRA

This is nice.

SEAN

Yeah.

DEBRA

It's late, I should go.

Debra starts to get up. Sean stops her.

SEAN

Stay. At least until the fire burns out.

DEBRA

Alright.

They wrap their arms around each other contentedly as they watch the fire burn. Long, romantic moments pass.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

How long do you think it'll take to
burn out?

SEAN

I don't know, an hour or so?

DEBRA

It'll take longer than that.

SEAN

I don't think so.

Debra sits up with a challenging gleam in her eye.

DEBRA

How much do you want to bet?

SEAN

I don't bet.

DEBRA

Why not? It's quite enjoyable.

SEAN

I don't enjoy losing.

Sean pulls Debra back into his arms and silences her with a
kiss. They snuggle closer. More sweet, long, romantic
moments pass as they watch the fire.

DEBRA

I would've won.

Sean laughs.

SEAN

Is everything a competition to you?

DEBRA

No.

Still more peacefully sweet, long, romantic moments pass.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

But I would have.

Sean laughs at Debra again.

SEAN

Do you ever let things go?

DEBRA

Not when I'm right.

SEAN

And you're always right?

DEBRA
Every time I bet, I am.

SEAN
Is that so?

DEBRA
Absolutely. That way, I never lose.

SEAN
Make a boast like that, and you're just asking for it.

DEBRA
I suppose you're enjoying the thought of being there to laugh at me.

SEAN
Definitely. I definitely enjoy the thought of being there. Whenever.

They kiss.

DEBRA
So, you planning on sticking around to see if I ever lose?

SEAN
Not if, baby. When.

DEBRA
You're gonna have to stick around a long time.

SEAN
I don't think so.

DEBRA
Is that a wager?

SEAN
I don't need to wager. I'm right.

Debra sits back in a frustrated huff. Sean laughs gently as he kisses her out of her pout.

SEAN (CONT'D)
But, I will still stick around.

CUT TO:

INT. DEBRA'S CAR -- LATER

DEBRA speeds along the freeway with a phone to her ear.

DEBRA
He's the one. I can't believe it.
(MORE)

DEBRA (CONT'D)

I've actually met the man I'm going to marry.

PAIGE (V.O.)

Wait. Slow down. Which one are you talking about? Did he propose? What's-

DEBRA

Not yet. But I have this feeling. I've felt it for a while, but tonight I knew. He's the one.

PAIGE (V.O.)

Who? Which one- ahhhhhhh!

DEBRA

Paige, what is it?

PAIGE (V.O.)

Contractions. I've been having them all night.

DEBRA

What are you doing talking to me? You've got to get to the hospital.

PAIGE (V.O.)

Tell me who it is. There's no rush until my water - crap - it just broke.

DEBRA

Are you ok? Where's Jim? Nevermind, call a cab. I'll -

PAIGE (V.O.)

Not until you tell me who -

DEBRA

Paige.

PAIGE (V.O.)

Debra.

DEBRA

I'm not telling you, until you're on your way.

PAIGE (V.O.)

Fine. But you'd better be there to tell me.

CUT TO:

INT. PAIGE'S HOME -- CONTINUOUS

PAIGE is standing in the middle of her kitchen. She hangs up the phone.

PAIGE
(yells)
Jim.

JIM comes running into the kitchen. He slips on the water all over the floor and lands on his back.

JIM
Yes Dear?

PAIGE
My water broke. We've got to get to the hospital.

A panicked Jim struggles to his feet in the slippery mess.

JIM
OK. Alright. Where's the bag?
(yells)
Victoria!
(to Paige)
Honey, go get in the car. I'll take care of everything.
(beat)
What are you doing?

Paige is on the phone, dialing.

PAIGE
Hang on, I gotta make a call.

JIM
Are you crazy? We can call our parents from the hospital.

PAIGE
I'm not calling them. Just grab Victoria and our things and get in the car. I'll be right there.

JIM
Honey, we don't have time for -

PAIGE
Are you trying to make me upset? The doctor told you not to get me upset. Is that what you're trying to do?

JIM
No, I -

PAIGE

(yells)

Then get in the car!

(into the receiver)

Hello? Hi, it's me. Guess what
Debra just told me?

(beat)

Yeah, she's picked one.

(beat)

I don't know. She didn't say.

JIM

Honey.

PAIGE

Oh, and I'm having the baby.

(beat)

Yeah. Meet me at the hospital.

She's telling me there.

Paige hangs up the phone, then picks up the receiver and
starts to dial another number.

JIM

Paige!

PAIGE

Fine. Grab the cell phone. I'll
call on the way.

CUT TO:

INT. ELLEN'S HOME -- CONTINUOUS

RICHARD sits in his easy chair puffing on a cigar while
reading the paper. A troubled ELLEN sits on the chair next
to the telephone table, gnawing on her bottom lip.

RICHARD

Who was that, dear?

ELLEN

Paige. She's having her baby.

RICHARD

And that upsets you?

ELLEN

No.

Richard doesn't look up from the paper.

RICHARD

You look upset.

ELLEN

Debra's about to be proposed to.

RICHARD

That's what you wanted, isn't it?

ELLEN

Yes. No. I don't think Cole is the one who's going to do the proposing.

RICHARD

Well, as long as she gets married.

Richard turns another page.

ELLEN

If she doesn't marry Cole, I lose. Paige, Faith and I all bet our pick would be the one Debra would marry.

RICHARD

How much did you bet this time?

There is a long pause. Richard turns another page.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Well?

ELLEN

You know, I don't know? We never actually said an amount. It should be a lot, considering.

RICHARD

Not necessarily.

ELLEN

What do you mean?

RICHARD

From what I can see, Cole seems like the perfect match for Debra. Wouldn't you agree.

ELLEN

So?

RICHARD

So, if he's the perfect match, you're sure to win. And if you're sure to win, why not make the wager over something more interesting than money?

ELLEN

What did you have in mind?

Richard lowers the paper and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- LATER

A sterile room with two hospital beds and a dividing curtain. PAIGE is lying on the bed farthest from the door, doing her Lamaze breathing. The other bed is empty.

VICTORIA sits on a chair beside her mother playing with her baby-doll and doing her best to imitate her mother's breathing. JIM stands on one side of the bed coaching Paige's breathing. DAKOTA stands on the other side, being coached by Paige. DOCTORS and NURSES wander in and out performing their duties.

PAIGE

Now's the time to strike. I know
she likes you. You've got to show
her how you feel.

JIM

(demonstrates breathing)
Hee-hee-hee-hee-Who. Hee-hee-hee-
hee-who.

DAKOTA

I don't know. She seems to think of
me as a frie-

Paige grabs Dakota's hand.

PAIGE

Hee-hee-hee-hee- don't you say that
word to me. You are much more than
a friend.

JIM'S MOTHER walks into the room, but stops short in the doorway when she sees Paige holding Dakota's hand and overhears what she's saying. No one notices her.

DAKOTA

I'm not sure this is going to work.

PAIGE

Of course it will hee-hee-hee-hee-
work.

A NURSE enters and listens to the breathing. She steps in front of Jim.

NURSE

No, no. We don't want her to push
yet. It's like this -
(demonstrates breathing)
Hee-who-hee-who-hee-who.

JIM

Hee-who-hee-who-hee-

NURSE

That's it.

The nurse leaves. Jim's mother still stands gripping the doorframe as she struggles to get her breathing under control.

JIM

Honey, like this.

PAIGE

(to Jim)

In a minute. He's got to practice.

(to Dakota)

I want to hear you.

DAKOTA

(breathing)

Hee-who-hee-who-hee.

PAIGE

Not the breathing. Propose.

Jim's mother almost falls to the floor.

JIM'S MOTHER

Oh my God.

Dakota, still holding Paige's hand, gets down on one knee.

DAKOTA

My- my-

PAIGE

Darling.

DAKOTA

My darling -

JIM

Relax. Hee-who-hee-who.

DAKOTA

Hee-who. My darling. I know we haven't known each other long. But, will you marry me?

PAIGE

Be more romantic.

JIM'S MOTHER

(screams)

Ahhhhh!

Everyone in the room turns to stare at Jim's mother.

JIM

Mom?

VICTORIA

Hi gamma!

JIM'S MOTHER

How could you. Here, as you're giving birth to my baby's child. Oh my God. It is his child, isn't it?

PAIGE

It isn't what you think, mother.

JIM'S MOTHER

Don't you dare call me that. You - you hussy.

Jim walks over, puts his arms around his mother and leads her to the edge of the empty bed, their backs to the door.

JIM

Mom, calm down.

Jim's mother strokes his cheek.

JIM'S MOTHER

Oh, my darling baby boy. I always thought if you ended up in a polygamist relationship, you'd be like your Uncle Harry, God rest him. A man with two wives, not number one of two husbands.

JIM

Uncle Harry had two wives?

JIM'S MOTHER

How can you talk to me about Uncle Harry at a time like this. You're wife is with another man.

(points)

Right over there.

PAIGE

Mother, please. Will you listen?

Jim's mother closes the curtain between the beds with an angry jerk. DEBRA walks up to the doorway, but upon hearing the argument, decides to wait it out just outside the door.

JIM'S MOTHER

And I thought I had gained a daughter. I have no daughter. Oh, my son. My poor son.

JIM

Mother, listen to me. Dakota isn't here for Paige.

Debra attention is piqued at the mention of Dakota being in the room. She strains to listen.

JIM (CONT'D)
He's dating one of Paige's best
friends, Debra. You remember her.

JIM'S MOTHER
Then what is he doing here, proposing
to my former daughter-in-law?

PAIGE (O.S.)
I'm still your daughter, mother.

JIM'S MOTHER
Don't you talk to me.

JIM
It's a bet. It's all a bet. They
need to get Debra married before she
turns thirty in order to win. Dakota
is Paige's, Paige's and my candidate
for her husband.

Debra is utterly confused until the sudden remembrance of
the long-forgotten bet comes flooding back.

JIM'S MOTHER
My God. She's gotten you involved
in some wacked-out Willy Wonka scheme.
I told you. I told you, you shouldn't
have married that -

A stunned Debra walks down the hospital corridor. A slow
smile spreading over her face as she begins to scheme.

CUT TO:

INTERCUT - DEBRA'S DINNER DATES

An elegantly appointed dinner table. COLE sits across from
a giggly, coy, flirtatious DEBRA. She plays with Cole's
fingers while they eat dinner.

DEBRA
I don't know why I didn't notice it
before. Maybe it's the wine talking,
but you -

The same elegantly appointed dinner table, another night.
DAKOTA sits across from a giggly, coy, flirtatious Debra.
She spoon-feeds Dakota dessert.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
- are everything I have ever wanted
in a man. It's someone like you
that I -

The same elegantly appointed dinner table, still another
night. NATHANIEL sits across from a giggly, coy, flirtatious
DEBRA. Their arms are linked as they sip champagne.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
- could imagine spending the rest of
my life with.

Debra smiles wickedly.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S PLACE -- NIGHT

DEBRA and SEAN are again seated on the low sofa, drinking wine in front of the roaring fireplace. Debra keeps her distance from Sean as she stares intently into the fire, deciding if Sean is another "contestant" or merely a coincidence.

SEAN
Which is why I consider Alfred
Hitchcock to be an over-rated hack.

Debra doesn't look at him.

DEBRA
Hmm-hmm.

SEAN
And it's a man's world. Women should
not be allowed to work.

DEBRA
Hmmm.

SEAN
So we're agreed.

Debra breaks her reverie.

DEBRA
On what?

SEAN
You're going to become my stay-at-
home slave, and Hitchcock is a hack.

DEBRA
What? Hitchcock is one of the best -

SEAN
Agreed. But you're still going to
be my slave, right?

Debra cocks an eyebrow.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Guess not. Where are you tonight?

Debra eyes Sean suspiciously, then breaks into a false smile.

DEBRA
No place. Where were we?

Debra snuggles closer to Sean.

SEAN
Well, I did have something important
to ask you.

This decides it. Debra's sure he's in on the bet.

DEBRA
I thought you might.

Debra sits up straight, relishing the thought of turning him
down.

SEAN
But, you can't seem to stay focused
long enough. I don't think I'd trust
your answer tonight.

DEBRA
Sure you can. Go ahead. Ask.

SEAN
I want it to be perfect for you.

DEBRA
Ehh. This is good enough.

SEAN
I tell you what. Why don't we skip
your premier and come here tomorrow
night, instead. I'll ask you then.

Debra sits back looking devilish, as another idea forms.

DEBRA
If you insist.

Debra sets the idea aside for the moment, takes a slow sip
of her wine and thoughtfully contemplates Sean.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
I saw you panned "Cross Checking" in
today's column.

SEAN
Yes, something about a hockey player
on a religious quest just doesn't -

DEBRA
You know what's wrong with film
critics?

Sean smiles slowly.

SEAN

What?

DEBRA

They're under the impression that each and every movie is tailor-made for them. And when they discover one that's not, they whine about it in the papers.

SEAN

Is that so?

Sean gently takes Debra's wineglass from her and sets it on the table, before tackling her. They laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. TRENDY RESTAURANT -- DAY

The four women sit at a table for four near the bank of windows. DEBRA sits back in obvious boredom as ELLEN, FAITH and PAIGE argue over Debra's love life. WAITERS are clearing away the remnants of their meal.

FAITH

I think this Nathaniel is - sounds like - such a sweet man. I really think -

ELLEN

We're not going to add another computer nerd to our group. What we need is someone sophisticated and -

PAIGE

Boring, like Richard? Debra needs a man that can hold his own. Dakota seems more the stand-up, competitive -

FAITH

Yeah, that's just what we need. Another stubborn bonehead.

PAIGE

Are you referring to Jim, you little wimp-marrying -

ELLEN

Ladies, please. Why don't we let Debra decide?

The waiter reaches for a spoon, Debra grabs it and uses it as a mirror while she applies her lipstick.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Well?

DEBRA
(to Paige)
So, how's the baby?

PAIGE
Just fine. Victoria swears the baby
smiled at-

ELLEN
We need a decision from you.

DEBRA
Alright. I think the baby did smile
at Victoria.

ELLEN
A decision on which guy you like
better. We can't decide. Personally,
I think -

DEBRA
I agree.

PAIGE
With who? Ellen?

DEBRA
All of you.

FAITH
You can't agree with all of us.
We're arguing opposite sides.

DEBRA
That's true.

Debra stands.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
I've got to go.

ELLEN
Where do you think you're going?

DEBRA
Tonight's the night. He's proposing.

Ellen, Paige and Faith look suspiciously at each other.
Debra waits for them to ask for details, then sighs.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
At his house tonight. Eight o'clock.

The seated women lean forward, but don't say a word.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
His house along Malibu Beach. Off
the Pacific Coast Highway.

The women edge in closer.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
The white house with the glass
balcony. The one where I park my
car in the driveway.

The women lean back in their chairs.

PAIGE
That's nice.

ELLEN
We're all very happy for you.

FAITH
Have a good time.

Ellen, Paige and Faith glare at each other suspiciously as Debra leaves. They stare at each other a moment longer, then make a mad dash for the door. The waiter comes over with the check.

WAITER
Hey wait. You forgot your credit
cards.

The waiter grins to himself.

WAITER (CONT'D)
(softly)
Stop. Please. Come back.

Ellen, Paige and Faith rush back in the door, grab their cards and hurry back out. The waiter looks down at the receipts.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Hey wait. You forgot to tip me.

The waiter hurries to the door.

WAITER (CONT'D)
(yells)
Stop. Please. Come back.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAN'S PLACE -- NIGHT

Sean's balcony overlooking the ocean. Waves are crashing. Music is playing. SEAN and DEBRA sip champagne and gaze into each other's eyes. Everything is perfect.

DEBRA
It's such a beautiful night.

Sean stares at Debra.

SEAN
It is beautiful.

He leans down to kiss her. She pulls back.

DEBRA
You wanted to ask me something?

CUT TO:

INT. RICHARD & ELLEN'S SEDAN -- CONTINUOUS

RICHARD drives sedately down the highway towards Malibu Beach. MOLLY sits proudly in the front seat next to him. BOBBY sits pouting in the back seat next to COLE and ELLEN. Ellen is pinning a rose to Cole's collar and straightening his appearance.

ELLEN
(to Richard)
Can't you for once drive the speed
limit?
(to Cole)
Let's go over it one more time.

COLE
I really don't see the need.

ELLEN
The need. The need is that if you
mess this up you could lose Debra
for ever.

COLE
You know, I'm not-

RICHARD
I may be mistaken, but I do believe
that's Jim and Paige in the mini-van
right up ahead there.

ELLEN
What? Of all the -

Ellen clambers into the front seat squishing Molly into the corner. Molly cries out. Bobby laughs.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Step on it honey.

CUT TO:

INT. JIM & PAIGE'S MINI-VAN -- CONTINUOUS

JIM weaves in and out of traffic. PAIGE is in the back of the mini-van with DAKOTA, helping him struggle into a tuxedo. VICTORIA, securely fastened into her car seat leans over the baby carrier next to her, entertaining her BABY SISTER.

DAKOTA
It's not going to fit.

PAIGE
Well, you wouldn't have to wear Jim's,
if you hadn't messed up your own.
My flower bed will never be the same.

DAKOTA
It's not my fault. Jim's the one
who wanted to play.

JIM
Don't blame me if you can't stay on
your feet.

DAKOTA
You could've mentioned there was a
tricycle behind me.

Dakota struggles to make the small jacket stretch as he
reaches up to put on his tie. The jacket tears.

PAIGE
Now look what you've done. Let me.

JIM
Hang on back there.

DAKOTA
What's going on?

JIM
Richard and Ellen are creeping up
behind us.

DAKOTA
Who?

PAIGE
What does she think she's doing?
(to Jim)
Go, go, go!

Jim guns it.

CUT TO:

INT. FAITH & KENNETH'S BMW -- CONTINUOUS

KENNETH drives at a good clip with FAITH at his side. They
both smile back at the nervously sweating NATHANIEL in the
back seat.

FAITH
You have everything?

NATHANIEL

I think so.

FAITH

Lilacs?

Nathaniel holds up a bunch of cellophane wrapped lilacs.

NATHANIEL

Check.

FAITH

Proposal?

Nathaniel holds up several note cards.

NATHANIEL

Check.

FAITH

Ring?

Nathaniel freezes.

NATHANIEL

I don't have one.

FAITH

You don't have a ring?

Faith tugs her wedding ring off of her finger.

FAITH (CONT'D)

Here, take mine.

KENNETH

Dear?

FAITH

(demonically)

He's taking mine.

KENNETH

Yes dear.

Faith smiles sweetly.

FAITH

It's going to be the most perfectly romantic proposal.

KENNETH

It won't be the only one.

FAITH

What?

KENNETH

Look.

Kenneth points at the Sedan and Mini-van crazily racing through the traffic. Faith reaches over with her foot and steps on the gas.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAN'S PLACE -- CONTINUOUS

SEAN reaches over to take DEBRA's glass. He sets them on the table and turns back to her.

SEAN

This is harder than I thought. We both know what I'm going to ask. But now that the moment's here -

DEBRA

You can do it.

SEAN

Ok. Umm. I know we haven't - We've only been seeing -

(beat)

I make my living off of words. And here I am, tongue-tied. The only words my mind seems to be able to string together at the moment are -

Sean gets down on one knee and pulls a ring out of his pocket.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Will you marry me?

The proposal is so perfect and genuine, Debra momentarily forgets she believes this to be part of the bet. At that exact moment, DAKOTA, COLE and NATHANIEL come running up the beach towards the balcony.

DAKOTA/COLE/NATHANIEL

(adlib)

Debra - Wait, it's me - Honey, I have something to ask you - Over here -

Sean and Debra turn to stare at the three men. Nathaniel juggles the flowers, ring and note cards.

NATHANIEL

(reading the cards)

Debra. Over the past few months, since I've known you, I've come to admire-

Dakota tackles Nathaniel to the ground.

DAKOTA

Don't listen to him, Debra. I'm the
one you want to -

Cole edges his way around Nathaniel and Dakota.

COLE

Debra, my darling. My life is not
complete without you-

Dakota stands and grabs Cole by the collar.

DAKOTA

Where do you think you're going?

Nathaniel takes the opportunity to tackle Dakota. Cole grabs
some sand and throws it at Nathaniel. The three fall to the
sand in a mad scuffle. Sean stands dumbstruck on the balcony.
Debra moves towards the stairs leading down to the beach.

SEAN

Who the hell are they? What's going
on?

DEBRA

Hang on, I'll turn you down in a
minute. I've got to see this.

Debra gains the beach and sprints over to the scuffling men.
Sean stares at Debra's retreating back.

SEAN

Turn me down?

Debra comes to a halt at the tangled threesome.

DEBRA

(dramatically)

Boys please. Don't do this. Don't
fight.

The three men get in some last-minute punches as they struggle
to their feet. They straighten their collars and brush off
the sand.

DAKOTA/COLE/NATHANIEL

Debra? Will you marry me?

DEBRA

Oh, I am so confused. I don't know
what to do.

(beat)

Yes I do. I need time. Time to
sort out the deep feelings I have
for all of you.

COLE

Debra, I -

Debra puts a finger to his lips.

DEBRA
No. Don't say anything.
(beat)
I think you should go.

COLE
(indicates Dakota)
I'm not going until he goes.

DAKOTA
I'm not going anywhere until he-

DEBRA
I think you should all go.

The three men start to leave. Nathaniel reaches down to collect the flowers and note cards. He pats his pockets in sudden panic.

NATHANIEL
Oh my God. I need to -

Nathaniel drops to his knees in the sand.

DAKOTA
You don't need to do anything but
get outta here.

Dakota grabs Nathaniel and shoves him along down the beach.

NATHANIEL
But, but -

Debra maintains her comically distraught expression until they all disappear from sight. She bursts into laughter as she heads back towards the balcony.

When she reaches the top, she notices Sean is gone. Her purse and car keys sit where the champagne used to be.

DEBRA
Hmmm.

Debra walks over to the house and peers in the window. The entire house is dark. She pounds on the door. No answer. Debra waits a few moments before turning to leave. She hears voices on the beach and peers over the edge of the balcony.

KENNETH and NATHANIEL are crawling around in the sand on their hands and knees. FAITH is sitting in the sand, crying pathetically.

FAITH
My ring!

Debra laughs softly before sneaking away unseen.

CUT TO:

INT. DEBRA'S HOME - DAY

A frowning DEBRA sits at the breakfast bar with a phone to her ear. She's impatiently tapping a pen on a notepad. She breaks into a huge smile.

DEBRA

Hi, it's me.

(beat)

I've made a decision.

(beat)

No, this is too big. I don't want to say it over the phone. But I think you'll like it.

(beat)

No, no. Meet me at work. Security will show you where. And don't forget to bring everyone.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO LOT - DAY

Palm trees, hay bales, film equipment and random set pieces are scattered throughout the building. KENNETH and FAITH are led by a SECURITY GUARD toward a group of chairs beneath an overhead spot. The chairs are occupied by ELLEN, RICHARD, MOLLY, BOBBY, VICTORIA, JIM, PAIGE and JIM'S MOTHER who is holding their new BABY GIRL. The rest of the studio is shrouded in darkness.

MOLLY

Mommy? Are we going to see a show?

ELLEN

I don't think so.

The noise of sound equipment being turned on is heard.

DEBRA (V.O.)

Ladies and Gentlemen. I win.

A light flashes on to reveal four stools set up in front of the chairs. Three are occupied by COLE, DAKOTA and NATHANIEL. One stool is conspicuously empty.

DEBRA steps out from behind the glittering spangled panels that are carelessly placed along the wall behind the stools. She's carrying a wireless microphone.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

(to the 3 men)

That's right.

(MORE)

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 I'm not marrying any of you.
 (beat)
 I'm sure my friends will send you
 some lovely parting gifts.

Debra indicates the door.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 You can go now.

Jim's mother stares at the men as they leave.

JIM'S MOTHER
 Well, there's your problem.

PAIGE
 (whispers)
 What?

JIM'S MOTHER
 You gave her too many good men to
 choose from. In my day there were
 no good men to choose from. You
 just married the one who irritated
 you the least.

JIM
 Mom.

Debra waits until the men file out before turning to her
 friends.

DEBRA
 To think you could've saved yourself
 all this trouble, if you would've
 just flown me to Vegas and gotten me
 drunk. Then you could've married me
 to any old thing.

Everyone searches for somewhere else to look.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 Did you think I would let you win?
 Did you actually think you could
 play God with my life and get away
 with it?

FAITH
 We were -

JIM
 Louder.

FAITH
 (louder)
 WE WERE ONLY -

A black-clothed STAGEHAND rushes over and hands Faith a microphone.

FAITH (CONT'D)
- trying to make you happy.

DEBRA
By trying to decide my romantic "fate"
for me?

Ellen grabs the microphone from Faith.

ELLEN
We weren't trying to decide your
fate, just give you options.

Paige grabs hold of the microphone and leans it towards her.

PAIGE
We wanted to help you find someone
you could spend the rest of your
life with.

DEBRA
What made any of you think you were
qualified to do that?

Ellen and Paige tug the microphone back and forth between the two of them.

ELLEN
You have to admit, we know you pretty
well.

PAIGE
I think we all did a great job finding
the right men for you.

DEBRA
You didn't find the right men for
me. You found men who were right
for you -

ELLEN
No we didn't.

PAIGE
You've got to be kidding.

Faith walks over and grabs the microphone from Ellen and Paige.

FAITH
For the last time. Kenneth is not a
geek.

Absolute silence.

BOBBY
(whispers to Richard)
Hey dad? Is this the Jerry Springer
show?

RICHARD
(whispers to Bobby)
Could be, son.

FAITH
I mean - I would date -

Kenneth clears his throat and shifts uncomfortably.

FAITH (CONT'D)
I mean - I wouldn't, but I would.

Kenneth pulls the microphone out of Faith's hands, gives it
back to Ellen and leads the embarrassed Faith back to her
seat.

DEBRA
Anyway. You found men who were right
for you, if you were me.

Debra sits down on the edge of a stool.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
Think about it. Can you imagine me
with a man whose whole life is sports,
or money or - or whatever Nathaniel's
life is about?

ELLEN
I suppose not.

DEBRA
Although, whichever one of you picked
out Sean? Great job. You almost
had me with him.

Paige jumps out of her seat and looks at Ellen.

PAIGE
(to Ellen)
I knew you had two men going.

Faith leaps to her feet.

FAITH
Wait a minute. That's against the
rules. We said one man per person.
And whose-ever man she picked would
win.

Paige and Faith glare at Ellen. Ellen rises in challenge.

ELLEN
Don't look at me.

DEBRA
Wait a minute. That's not the bet I remember.

ELLEN
I was betting on Cole to win.

DEBRA
All you had to do to win, was get me married before my next birthday.
What did it matter -

Faith, Paige and Ellen sit guiltily.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
Who I married?

ELLEN
Getting you married was the original bet.

PAIGE
But we sort of expanded on it.

DEBRA
Really.

FAITH
Whichever man you married would determine the winner among the three of us.

DEBRA
You bet on my life?

FAITH
I wouldn't exactly put it that way.

ELLEN
(defensively)
You bet all the time.

PAIGE
All the time.

DEBRA
I bet on little things. Not on people's lives.

FAITH
But-

DEBRA

And I have never, ever manipulated
anyone in order to win. Ever. What
do you have to say for yourselves?

Paige, Ellen and Faith look at each other, each determined
that the other will stand up and defend their actions.

PAIGE

I don't know about those two, but I
just had a baby.

Paige grabs her tiny daughter from her mother-in-law and
holds her out for everyone to see. Everyone stares at her.

PAIGE (CONT'D)

What?

Debra glares at Paige until she sinks back into her seat.

DEBRA

I can't believe you people.
(beat)
So which one of you picked out Sean?
If I wouldn't have found out, you
would've won.

PAIGE

I didn't.

FAITH

Not me.

ELLEN

I already said 'Don't look at me.'

Everyone turns to Debra in confusion.

DEBRA

You're telling me Sean wasn't a setup?

ELLEN

We haven't a clue who you're talking
about.

DEBRA

What?

FAITH

Who is he?

A stunned Debra lets the microphone fall from her fingers.
It lands with a jarring thud.

DEBRA

The man I could've married.

Debra slowly walks away. Everyone stays sitting in an ashamed silence.

RICHARD
You do know what this means.

Ellen, Paige and Faith look at Richard.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
You all lost the bet. Both of them.

Jim and Kenneth smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAN'S PLACE -- NIGHT

DEBRA walks slowly up to Sean's front door and rings the bell. Moments pass. SEAN peeks through the window blinds at her. He lets go of the blinds. More moments pass. Debra rings again. Even more moments pass. Debra rings a third time just as Sean opens the door.

SEAN
If you're here to turn me down, don't bother. I retract the offer.

Sean starts to close the door. Debra puts up a hand to stop him.

DEBRA
No, wait.

SEAN
Was there something else?

Debra is at a loss for words.

SEAN (CONT'D)
I'm waiting.

DEBRA
This is harder than I thought.
(beat)
I'm supposed to know how to get the most said in the shortest time possible. But I don't know how to say this.

SEAN
Well?

DEBRA
Can I come in?

SEAN
You're right.
(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

That is difficult to say. And I won't even make you wait before I turn you down.

DEBRA

Please? I need to explain. And apologize.

SEAN

Are you going to grovel and beg my forgiveness?

DEBRA

If that's what it takes.

Sean stares at Debra for a moment.

SEAN

Alright. You can come in.

CUT TO:

INT. SEAN'S PLACE -- LATER

DEBRA sits on the low couch in front of the cold fireplace. SEAN leans casually against the mantel.

DEBRA

So it was all a stupid bet.

SEAN

And you were willing to throw us away over that bet.

DEBRA

I thought you were part of the set-up.

SEAN

So? Even if I were, what difference would it make.

DEBRA

I thought it was all just make-believe.

SEAN

You couldn't tell what we had was real?

DEBRA

Before I knew about the bet, I knew.

SEAN

And after you knew about the bet?

DEBRA

All I could think about was winning.

Sean laughs humorlessly.

SEAN

Winning. That's the most important thing in your life, isn't it?

DEBRA

It was. Until I met you.

SEAN

I'm not sure I can believe that.

DEBRA

It's true.

SEAN

Then prove it. Marry me.

DEBRA

Yes. Of course yes.

Debra smiles, leaps off the couch and moves towards him.

SEAN

Before your birthday.

Debra stops in her tracks.

DEBRA

What are you saying?

SEAN

I can't marry someone who would place winning above everything else. The next thing I'd know, you'd have lost one of our kids in a poker match.

DEBRA

I don't play poker. Couldn't we -

SEAN

Marry me before your next birthday and lose the bet.

(beat)

Or lose me.

Debra stares at him in a stunned silence.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I take it that's your answer.

DEBRA

You're asking me to change something about myself that has been a part of
(MORE)

DEBRA (CONT'D)
me, my entire life. I'm going to
need a minute.

Seconds tick by.

SEAN
So?

DEBRA
I want to. You have to know how
much I want to. I just don't know-

Sean walks to the front door and holds it open for Debra.

SEAN
You will let me know when you make
up your mind, won't you? That is,
unless you make it up to late.

Debra walks out the door and towards her car. Sean's voice
stops her.

SEAN (CONT'D)
You're about to lose. And here I
thought I'd be laughing.

DEBRA
But I lose if I marry you, not -

Debra turns around. Sean has closed the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SEAN'S PLACE -- DAY

SEAN stands alone on his balcony staring out across the ocean.
After a few moments he turns, walks back into his house and
slides the door closed.

CUT TO:

INT. DEBRA'S OFFICE -- DAY

DEBRA sits staring out the window, ignoring the stacks of
advertisements and press releases that cover her desk.

CUT TO:

INT. DARKENED MOVIE THEATER -- DAY

The very same theater where Sean and Debra first met. The
lights have just dimmed in the crowded theater. SEAN sits
all alone. An ELDERLY COUPLE sits directly behind him.

MOVIE TRAILER GUY (V.O.)
Coming soon, to a theater near you.

The words "Lose to Win" flash across the black screen.

MOVIE TRAILER GUY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It all began with a decadent afternoon
in a darkened theater.

Sean sits up straight and glances around. Debra's image
flashes on-screen. Sean half-rises.

ELDERLY MAN
Down in front.

Sean falls back into his seat. The screen holds an image of
Debra in front of this very-same theater looking up as if
gazing into a man's eyes.

DEBRA'S ON-SCREEN IMAGE
I don't know. Your trailer has been
a bit rocky. But I suppose it'd be
rude to review you without seeing
your feature presentation.

MOVIE TRAILER GUY (V.O.)
Over time the relationship melted
into romance.

Images of a smiling Debra flicker by. Debra at a Lakers
game; Debra strolling in the park; Debra in a darkened
theater, Debra at a poetry reading. In every shot Debra is
looking at the camera as if staring into the eyes of her
lover.

Sean is dumbfounded. The elderly couple sits with huge grins
on their face.

MOVIE TRAILER GUY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But one thing threatens to come
between them.

The screen goes black.

DEBRA (V.O.)
It was a stupid bet.
(beat)
All I could think about was winning.

An image flashes on screen. Debra, in a flowing white gown,
stands alone, spotlighted.

DEBRA'S ON-SCREEN IMAGE
I have spent my whole life wagering
on anything that could be wagered
on. I needed to win. I've always
needed to win. In everything. And,
until I met you, I never realized
relationships weren't something you
win at.

(MORE)

DEBRA'S ON-SCREEN IMAGE (CONT'D)
They're something you work at. And
Sean, I would give up anything to be
able to work on my relationship with
you, even winning. So, what do you
say? Will you make a loser out of
me?

The theater lights come up. DEBRA is standing on the center
of the stage. The AUDIENCE murmurs curiously.

ELDERLY MAN
What's going on?

ELDERLY WOMAN
It must be one of those live-action
thing-a-ma-rigs.

DEBRA
Sean?

Sean rises and walks slowly onto the stage.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
So, what do you think?

SEAN
I have to pan it.

DEBRA
What?

SEAN
It gave away the plot.

DEBRA
It did?

SEAN
And the ending.

DEBRA
How does it end?

SEAN
Well, I think.

DEBRA
So, overall?

SEAN
I'm holding back the rest of my review
until I get a taste of the feature
presentation.

Sean pulls Debra into his arms. The audience erupts in
applause.

DEBRA
 (to Sean)
 Will you marry me?

Sean kisses her.

ELDERLY WOMAN
 Now there's a movie I'd pay to see.

The lights dim and the rest of the trailers roll as their kiss continues.

CUT TO:

INT. FLOWER BEDECKED CHURCH -- DAY

DEBRA and SEAN stand in front of a MINISTER, exchanging their wedding vows. Sean leans over to whisper in Debra's ear.

SEAN
 What did we lose, anyway?

The minister frowns at Sean.

MINISTER
 Repeat after me. I, Debra Lea Williams -

DEBRA
 I, Debra Lea Williams -

A bouquet of flowers appears from nowhere and jabs Debra in the back. Debra glares over her shoulder.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 I, Debra Lea Loser -

Sean bursts out laughing. Debra kicks him in the shins.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 Williams take you Sean -

KENNETH, JIM and RICHARD sit side by side in one of the front pews. They are all staring intently at the bride and groom.

KENNETH
 Well, she said it.

JIM
 Yep.

RICHARD
 So she did.

Kenneth, Jim and Richard all pull out their wallets and open them up. Kenneth and Jim pull out twenties and hand them to Richard.

KENNETH
We should have known better.

JIM
Yeah, look at our wives.

RICHARD
Indeed.

All three men turn to look at ELLEN, PAIGE and FAITH who are standing at the front of the church wearing beautiful, blue bridesmaids dresses. Each one of them is completely shaved bald.

KENNETH
It was a ridiculous thing to bet over.

JIM
Totally foolish.

RICHARD
The only un-foolish bet, is a sure thing.

Richard smiles slowly.

MINISTER
You may now kiss the bride.

Sean and Debra kiss as the bridesmaids and groomsmen throw rose petals all over them.

FAITH
Lilacs would've been better.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL -- LATER

CATERERS clear the tables as the obviously lavish reception comes to a close. PAIGE, FAITH and ELLEN are on the dance floor playing with BOBBY, MARY, and VICTORIA in the silver and white balloons that are scattered across the floor. DEBRA, holding Jim & Paige's baby, is dancing close by. They are all talking and laughing together.

FAITH
You could've at least let us wear wigs to the reception.

DEBRA
Nonsense. The shininess compliments your gowns.

ELLEN
Whatever you say, Loser.

DEBRA
Look who's talking, baldie. You
lost your bet, too.

PAIGE
Welcome to the club.

FAITH
Loser.

KENNETH, JIM, RICHARD and SEAN sit at a nearby table drinking champagne and smoking cigars. Sean raises his glass for a toast, the other men follow suit.

SEAN
Gentlemen. To our wives.

KENNETH/JIM/RICHARD
Our wives.

RICHARD
Aren't they beautiful?

SEAN
Absolutely.

JIM
Gorgeous.

KENNETH
Yeah. Would it be shallow of me to
say I preferred my wife with hair?

The men laugh.

JIM
So, Sean? How does it feel to be an
old, married man?

SEAN
It feels pretty good.

Ellen, Debra, Faith and Paige approach the men and sit down by their husbands. Richard wraps his arm around Ellen and kisses her on top of her bald head.

RICHARD
Regretting it yet, sweetheart?

ELLEN
Not a bit. It was worth it.

Faith self-consciously pats her head.

FAITH
Speak for yourself.

The baby starts to whimper. Debra hands her back to Paige.

DEBRA

Paige, I love her to death, but that's about all I can handle at the moment.

KENNETH

What, you're not chomping at the bit to have kids?

Sean toys with Debra's fingers.

SEAN

I'm sure I told you I want at least a dozen.

DEBRA

Hold on there, buddy. One thing at a time.

PAIGE

Deb's a confirmed career woman.

FAITH

It'll take a lot of convincing to get her to have kids.

ELLEN

I don't know. I'm sure Sean'll have her barefoot and pregnant before the year is out.

DEBRA

Wanna bet?

Kenneth, Jim, Sean and Richard slap their hands over their wives' mouths. The wives grin mischievously from beneath their fingers.

FADE OUT: