

ALCHEMY

A Romantic Comedy

by

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FADE IN:

To a CLOSE UP up of a painting of Ilona; a beautiful Hungarian Princess from a fairy tale. She's stands in a dark forest, wearing a long white dress and a blue cloak. Her long blonde plait hangs over one shoulder, illuminated by the lantern she's holding. She's staring directly at us.

INT. LARGE CHAOTIC ART STUDIO - DAY

Full of canvases, mouldy food, ancient furniture, books, a computer.

A dishevelled artist, DANIEL ROCHESTER (30s) stands in front of an empty canvas, desperately trying to squeeze oil paint out of numerous empty tubes. He throws them on the floor.

His parrot, CHARLIE, watches him from his cage.

CHARLIE

There was once a boy called Dan.
Who wanted to fry in a pan.

DAN

Very funny, Charlie.

Charlie hops and up and squawks loudly.

Dan looks everywhere for money. Eventually he finds some loose change and pockets it.

CHARLIE

He tried and he tried and
eventually died.

DAN

A limerick to lift the spirits.

Charlie droops as Dan walks out.

INT. MADAME KARI'S HALLWAY - DAY

A dark Victorian hallway. A sign reads: NO PETS ALLOWED.

Dan creeps down the stairs past his Hungarian landlady's room. MADAME KARI opens the door and we hear the faint strains of Hungarian MUSIC PLAYING. She watches him creeping for a few minutes before shouting out.

MADAM KARI

Daniel! What for you crawl down the
stairs?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan freezes and turns to her.

DAN
Creep, Madam Kari. I'm not
crawling.

MADAM KARI
Creeping. Crawling. It's all the
same. Your friend Charlie, he is
ill? He make strange noise.

Dan beams at her.

DAN
No, he's got a sore throat. I was
creeping because I didn't want to
disturb you.

MADAM KARI
You only disturb me when you do not
pay the money, Daniel.

DAN
Ah... the rent. There's a bit of a
problem there.

MADAM KARI
Life is a problem, but we must-

Dan rushes up the stairs.

DAN
I've got something for you.

MADAME KARI
I live in hope.

He rushes down the stairs with a painting and gives it to
Madam Kari. She peers at it. It's full of wild swirling
colours. She shakes her head. She has no idea what it is.

MADAM KARI
And what is this?

DAN
Vortex.

MADAM
So you give me this ... this Vortex
instead of money?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

This painting will be worth a fortune in a hundred years.

MADAM

I have to wait a hundred years for rent? I'm 77 years old, Daniel.

Dan studies the light slanting down the stairs.

DAN

Isn't the translucence of light beautiful?

She's confused about the changing topic.

He smiles at her disarmingly.

DAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry about the rent, Madame Kari. I've got an Art Exhibition in the Picasso Gallery next month and I'll be loaded.

She stares at him in incomprehension.

DAN (CONT'D)

Lots of people will buy my paintings.

She shakes her head at him.

MADAME KARI

I cannot live on dreams, Daniel. In Hungary we have a saying: nincs bérlet, nincs szoba. It means no rent, no room. I give you four days to find reality.

DAN

But reality leaves a lot to the imagination.

He laughs. It doesn't work.

Dan looks stunned as she closes her door.

EXT. A LONDON STREET - DAY

Dan walks down the street in deep depression. An arrogant-looking business-man bumps into him and rushes off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan looks around at all the stressed faces of people in the street, cafes and offices.

CUT TO:

In the distance, LAURA, an attractive, stylish, 28 year old with long blonde hair walks down the street towards him and turns into a supermarket. **She looks exactly like Princess Ilona in modern clothes.**

Dan hasn't seen her yet.

CUT TO:

Dan walks towards the supermarket, searching through his pockets for money. He walks in.

INT. A SUPERMARKET - DAY

A huge pyramid of artistically arranged fruit. A middle-aged SHOP ASSISTANT, delicately places the last shining apple on top.

Dan turns into the aisle and stares at it.

A LITTLE GIRL near Dan stares at the pyramid of fruit too.

DAN

That's a work of art.

The shop assistant blushes with pleasure and walks off. The little girl takes an apple from the bottom.

She and Dan watch in fascinated horror as the pyramid wobbles and suddenly collapses. The little girl gasps as hundreds of apples, oranges, pineapples and pears cascade over the floor.

Dan and the little girl pick up the fruit when suddenly Laura turns into the aisle and trips awkwardly over some fruit. The sandwiches she's carrying go flying.

Dan rushes to help her up and their eyes meet.

Dan is blown away.

DAN (CONT'D)

Unbelievable!

LAURA

Sorry?

The little girl stares at them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Are you hurt?

Laura looks embarrassed and brushes her skirt straight.

LAURA
No, I'm fine, thanks.

Dan can't take his eyes off her.

DAN
Are you sure? Falls can be fatal.

Laura frowns - he sounds serious.

DAN (CONT'D)
I knew a man once who fell. He died
10 years later.

He smiles at her. Laura almost smiles back, then walks towards the door.

Dan continues to stare at her.

DAN (CONT'D)
(to himself)
She's the one.

LITTLE GIRL
The one, what?

Dan continues staring at Laura as she exits the shop.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
The one who's dropped her
sandwiches?

She points to Laura's sandwiches on the floor.

Dan rushes to pick them up and races out of the shop with them. An alarm bell RINGS.

An over-weight security guard starts to run after him, then stops, holding his chest in pain.

Dan runs on.

EXT. A LONDON STREET - DAY

Laura walks along the street.

Dan walks some way behind her, carrying her sandwiches and his drawing pad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A large hoarding advertises The Royal Opera House's performances of MADAME BUTTERFLY. Laura stops and stares at it for a long time.

Dan watches her.

Laura sighs, then walks off. Dan follows her.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SAINBURY WING. NATIONAL GALLERY - DAY

Laura walks into the gallery.

A few seconds later, Dan follows.

INT. SAINBURY WING. ROOM 2. - DAY

Laura stands in front of one of the paintings.

A very bored female security guard yawns.

Dan stands at the doorway, staring at Laura. He looks incredibly nervous as he walks up to her.

DAN

Hi. You left these in the shop.

She turns around, startled as Dan gives her the sandwiches.

LAURA

Oh. Thanks. I must pay you for them.

DAN

Oh no, you mustn't.

Laura gets some money out of her purse and forces it on Dan. He resists.

LAURA

You can't buy food for a stranger!

Dan looks hugely embarrassed.

She thrusts the money back in his hand. He thrusts it back.

The security guard becomes interested and watches this interaction going on for some time. Suddenly, the money shoots out of their hands and scatters everywhere.

Dan and Laura pretend it hasn't happened and stare at the painting.

The guard strolls towards the money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A little boy runs into the room and sees it. He squeals with delight and picks up the money. His parents look around for someone to claim it. The security guard holds out her hand. The disappointed little boy gives it to her.

Laura suddenly walks off to look at THE VIRGIN ON THE ROCKS by Leonardo da Vinci and is mesmerized.

Dan walks off after her, desperate to get her attention.

DAN

Have you heard of sfumato?

Laura looks startled.

LAURA

I don't want to be rude but -

DAN

It's a technique da Vinci used to blend light and shadow. You see how he captures the changes in the light in the faces of the Virgin and the Angel?

Laura's intrigued, but doesn't want to encourage him. She walks away. He follows her.

DAN (CONT'D)

(rushed)

I work for Christies. I'm an art dealer.

Laura looks at his scruffy clothes.

DAN (CONT'D)

My day off.

LAURA

So how much would The Virgin on the Rocks raise if it was auctioned?

Dan stares at the da Vinci painting in desperation.

DAN

The Virgin on the Rocks?

He hasn't a clue.

DAN (CONT'D)

That would be...

He looks around for inspiration.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)
Priceless.

Laura smiles, then turns back to the painting.

LAURA
Imagine being able to afford a
painting like that.

DAN
I don't care much about money.

LAURA
Then you're either crazy or
wealthy.

Dan is taken aback by her comment.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Money gives us options.

Laura suddenly glances across the room and sees the clock.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Oh my God!

DAN
What?

Laura runs off so quickly that Dan is left staring at the
space where she's been.

He suddenly sees the painting of Ilona, the beautiful
Princess from a fairy tale and walks towards it.

He gasps when he sees she's exactly like Laura.

He leans forward to see the title: The Lovely Ilana.

He gets out his mobile and hits a number.

INT. A LONDON PUB - DAY

A very excited Dan is sitting with his long-suffering school
friend ALEX who's wearing a smart business suit. Dan's
drinking a pint of beer. Alex's having a coffee.

DAN
She's Ilana, a Hungarian Princess
who was painted in 1900.

ALEX
So you fancy a girl who's dead?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

She's Hestia, Selene and Aurora all wrapped in one beautiful body.

Alex stifles a yawn and glances at his watch.

ALEX

Is that the time?

Dan looks at him, appalled.

DAN

Do you know what love is?

ALEX

No, I have to work.

DAN

I work! It's not my fault that society doesn't understand my paintings. Did they understand Picasso or Pollock or -

ALEX

Why don't you do something like that guy?

DAN

What guy?

ALEX

The one who pickled a whale.

DAN

He pickled a shark. Do you know how much it costs to pickle a shark? Anyway, I don't want to pickle anything. I want to...

He searches the ceiling for inspiration.

ALEX

Sell something commercial to make money?

DAN

Create paintings that'll imprint themselves in people's minds for ever! (BEAT) You know what's wrong with society?

Alex groans. He's heard it all before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)

Everyone's grubbing around in the dirt for money all the time! (BEAT)
I can live without it.

Dan knocks back his beer, satisfied he's made his point.

ALEX

No. You live off people who have it.

Dan is stunned. He drinks his beer, thinking of Alex's words.

DAN

Do you think I'm crazy?

ALEX

Yes. You've got to get a job, Dan.
I can't keep on subbing you.

Dan stares morosely into his beer.

DAN

Getting a job is the most conformist thing anyone can ever do. How can you stand working in an office? I'd rather eat my own testicles.

Alex smiles.

ALEX

So where would you take this beautiful bird if you could?

DAN

(annoyed)
She's not a bird. She's Ilona.

ALEX

Where would you take her?

Dan considers all the places.

DAN

The opera.

ALEX

And how much is that going to cost?

Daniel frowns.

INT. AN OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

FIVE CREATIVES are waiting for someone to arrive: PETER 30s, -arrogant, JAMES 30s, nervous, ANGUS, 30s, a Scots pedant, Sanjay, 20s, a gentle Asian eccentric, and Sade, 20s - a black fun-loving girl from the East End.

They react differently as they wait: Sade files her nails with an enormous file which disgusts James and Peter. Sanjay quacks quietly into his mobile. Angus draws a caricature of Sanjay, dressed like a duck. Peter taps his fingers on the table top and James bites his finger nails.

The door opens. They all stand up immediately.

Laura rushes in. Everyone sits down.

PETER

You're late!

Laura and Sade smile at each other.

James rushes to the door and listens.

JAMES

He's coming!

Sanjay immediately cuts his mobile.

SANJAY

Sorry about that. Personal.

MARK HUDSON, (45) a dynamic American walks in. He's wearing expensive black biker's leathers. He crashes his crash helmet onto a table and flashes them a dazzling smile.

MARK

Hi. I'm Mark Hudson.

Everyone stands up and smiles. Mark stares at Laura, obviously interested.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sit down, please. I like informality.

Everyone sits, except Peter.

PETER

As the most senior creative here, I'd like to-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mark makes a gesture to stop him. He walks around the room, taking everything in.

Peter sits down, deflated.

MARK

But don't be misled by the word.

ANGUS

(strong Glaswegian accent)
Which word would that be?

MARK

What language is he speaking?

SANJAY

Glaswegian.
(to Angus)
He means 'informality'.

Angus types fast on a computer. Mark is taken aback by this.

MARK

It doesn't mean laxity or negligence.

ANGUS

Ach, it can mean that. I've just checked on-line and-

Mark shakes his head and stops him with a gesture.

MARK

My informality means a lack of ceremony, but an abundance of brilliant ideas -

Angus tries again, but Mark stops him with the same gesture.

MARK (CONT'D)

followed by the technical know-how to make those ideas happen. Do you copy?

Everyone nods enthusiastically, except Angus who tries to interrupt again. Mark uses the same gesture.

MARK (CONT'D)

In 6 week's time this agency is going to pitch for the biggest perfume account this century.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARK (CONT'D)

And two of you are going to win us
the account and make yourself a
shed load of bucks.

Peter and James look at each other; Angus and Sanjay look at
each other. Sade and Laura look at each other; they all have
the same look of determination on their faces.

MARK (CONT'D)

But ...and this is very important.
(beat)
No AI can be used in your
presentations.

They all look astonished.

PETER

But why?

Mark gives him a cutting look.

MARK

Because Tony García, the Managing
Director of the Perfume Consortium
in New York says so. You have to
use your creative talents, not a
computer's.

INT. AN UPMARKET ESTATE AGENT - DAY

Alex is the only estate agent in the office. He's sitting at
a desk with a wealthy German middle-aged couple. HERR & FRAU
DURCHDENWALD. They're studying a very glossy brochure of an
enormous house.

The door opens and a scruffy Dan walks in. Alex is horrified
and waves him away.

Dan sits down at another desk and studies the brochures on
it.

Alex smiles at the couple.

Mr Durchenwald stares intently at the brochure.

HERR DURCHDENWALD

Is not one side of the house in
disrepair?

Alex studies the brochure and then smiles at him. He speaks
to the couple with an upper class accent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

Good heavens, no. It's the angle of the photograph.

Dan laughs at Alex's accent.

The couple turn to look at him before slanting the photo to see what Alex's talking about.

HERR DURCHDENWALD

It still looks as if it is falling down.

ALEX

That would be the medieval pointing.

(beat)

You know where this house is located?

The couple shake their heads.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Bloomsbury.

They look impressed.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I believe it's the best area to buy in London, Frau Doiden...

HERR DURCHDENWALD

Durchdenwald nicht Doiden! It is not the best, but it's good. And the price?

ALEX

Amazingly reasonable for such a prodigious area.

HERR DURCHDENWALD

The price, Mr. Searson.

ALEX

15 million.

Dan and Frau Durchdenwald open their mouths in shock.

FRAU DURCHDENWALD

(stunned)

You think 15 million is amazingly reasonable?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALEX

Certainly in that area. Most of the houses in Bloomsbury are well over 20.

FRAU DURCHDENWALD

Mein Gott, Heinreich - Wir könnten zehn Häuser in Gutenberg für den gleichen Preis kaufen!

HERR DURCHDENWALD

Ja, aber dieses Haus ist ausgezeichnet.

The couple stare at the brochure.

Dan grins at Alex mischievously. Alex looks worried.

DAN

Ich stimme zu, dieses Haus bin ausgezeichnet.

The Germans are taken aback by his German.

Dan copies Alex's pucker accent.

DAN (CONT'D)

Actually, it's one of the areas in which I'm looking to buy. Property's going up daily in Bloomsbury.

Alex closes his eyes and presses his hands together as if he's praying.

Dan gets up and studies the brochure the couple are holding. The couple stare at his scruffy clothes in amazement.

DAN (CONT'D)

Wouldn't mind looking at the house myself. Rather splendid, what? Could one look at it this afternoon?

The couple give each other silent signals.

Alex gives Dan a look which should kill.

HERR DURCHDENWALD

(to Dan)

Now listen to me, young man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HERR DURCHDENWALD (CONT'D)

You British believe in queues and we were first here, nicht wahr? So we are seeing the house first.

He turns and gives Alex a steely look.

ALEX

Of course, Herr Dundevad...

HERR DURCHDENWALD

Durchdenwald! Durchdenwald

ALEX

I'll take you there myself. As soon as the manager returns from lunch.

FRAU DURCHDENWALD

And make sure you don't show him the house first.

She glares at Dan who's fiddling with the sole of one of his trainers. It's coming off.

ALEX

You have my word of honour as a gentleman, Herr...er...

HERR DURCHDENWALD

I trust an Englishman's word of honour, so we will be back in half an hour, Mr Searson. Make sure you are ready to take us.

The couple walk out, ignoring Dan.

ALEX

I certainly will, Herr...

He closes the door.

DAN

(German accent)

I certainly will, Herr Dundehed, Doival or whatever your name is. I can't remember because I have the distinction of being thrown out of every German class I was thrown into because I am so thick!

Alex hits Dan's arm as he looks nervously through the window at the couple talking animatedly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ALEX

Fuck off!

Dan winces and rubs his arm.

DAN

You know what you said in the pub
about getting a job?

ALEX

Yeah.

DAN

I've come to offer my services.

ALEX

Where?

DAN

To this up-market horror of
capitalism.

Alex looks at him in alarm.

ALEX

You can't work here. You hate
offices.

DAN

It won't be so bad with you here.

ALEX

And what about your testicles?

Dan touches them.

DAN

They're fine. That sale's almost in
the bag. They love the house. Come
on, Alex. You're my best mate and I
need money.

Alex slumps into a chair in defeat. Dan beams at him.

ALEX

I'll talk to the manager.

Dan pulls him out of the chair and gives him a bear hug.

DAN

You won't regret it.

Alex's face shows he already does.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ALEX

If he agrees - you have to act as if you're normal and wear a suit.

DAN

(aghast)
A suit?

ALEX

A suit.
(beat)
Not a birthday one.

Alex laughs.

EXT. OUTSIDE AN OLD COUNTRY HOUSE - DAY

The house is falling into ruin; the roof leaks, stone-work is crumbling; the garden is neglected etc.

Dan walks up to the front door and opens it.

INT. THE ROCHESTER DRAWING ROOM - DAY

DAN'S PARENTS, MALCOLM and SONIA ROCHESTER, eccentric naturists in their 60s, are playing a sonata duet enthusiastically, but not very well. Malcolm plays the piano; Sonia, the double bass. As usual, both are naked.

Dan walks in. They carry on playing. Malcolm speeds up. Sonia stops playing.

SONIA

It's supposed to be adagio,
Malcolm.

DAN

Hello, Mum. Dad.

A piece of plaster falls from the ceiling. No one reacts.

MALCOLM

Put your glasses on, Sonia! It says
allegro - lively and fast!

SONIA

Hello Dan.
(to Malcolm)
I can see perfectly well without
glasses. This is how it should be
played.

She plays a few very slow bars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Just wondered if you had any opera
tickets hanging around.

MALCOLM
No, no, no. That's the wrong tempo!

He plays the same bars twice as fast.

SONIA
Rubbish!

Dan stares at them as they both play together at completely
different tempos. He walks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE:

A) In a bedroom. Daniel looks under a bed. He moves around
the room, looking through drawers and cupboards. He doesn't
find what he's looking for. He sees a violin case and opens
it. It's empty. He sighs.

B) In a shabby bathroom. Daniel searches desperately through
a laundry basket. He throws all the dirty towels out. At the
bottom of the basket he finds some tickets. He looks at them
and smiles.

INT. DAN'S OLD BEDROOM -DAY

The faint discordant SOUNDS of his parent's playing and
arguing in the distance.

The bedroom is covered in dust and fallen plaster. Dan's
early representational paintings cover every wall.

Dan looks around his room with great sadness.

He opens his wardrobe and searches through it. In one corner,
is a suit. He brings it out and walks over to a long mirror.

He holds it in front of him and shudders at his reflection.

INT. ROCHESTER DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Malcolm finishes the sonata and shakes his head as Sonia
continues playing slowly.

Dan walks in, carrying his suit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

I found some opera tickets in the laundry basket.

Malcolm sees him for the first time.

MALCOLM

Far too slow, isn't it?

Sonia stops playing. They both wait for his answer.

Dan thinks of a diplomatic response.

DAN

I think people have different opinions about how Sibelius should be played, Dad.

MALCOLM & SONIA

Rubbish!

DAN

Is it okay for me to take the tickets or do you want them?

MALCOLM

What does it say at bar 15?

Sonia peers closely at the music.

SONIA

Energico.

DAN

The tickets?

Dan stands by the door, ignored.

MALCOLM

A-ha! Got you! It says *espressivo*.

SONIA

No, it doesn't!

MALCOLM

(triumphantly)
Daniel - come and adjudicate.

He looks around. Dan isn't there.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Always was a strange boy. Right - bar 15 and *espressivo*, Sonia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She sniffs loudly. They start to play.

INT. CREATIVES' OFFICE, MERIDIAN MEDIA AD AGENCY - DAY

Peter and James are working together on their idea for the perfume ad. Sanjay and Angus are working together. Laura is working alone. The clock reads 8.50 a.m.

DISSOLVE TO:

The clock reads 10 a.m. Sade's high heels click noisily over the floor as she totters across the room.

PETER

Held up by an in-growing finger
nail, by any chance?

The men laugh. Sade gives them a finger and sits down near Laura.

SADE

You know who held me up, Laur? A
guy with a bulging -

LAURA

I can't keep covering for you,
Sade! I want us to win the account!
I need the money! You've got to
work!

She notices Laura's tight face and immediately gets out her sketch pad.

SADE

Okay, okay. I've got this great
idea for our presentation.

DISSOLVE TO:

Half-eaten sandwiches and coffee cups litter the desks.

Everyone in the office looks exhausted. As usual, Sanjay is quacking on the phone.

Peter and James look at each other, annoyed.

PETER

Who the hell are you quacking to?

Sanjay cuts the call and smiles apologetically.

SANJAY

Sorry about that, personal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sade and Laura stare at a drawing in front of them.

THEIR POV: a woman with a lump on her head. Above the lump is a bright falling star. Underneath the drawing it is a slogan: STAR-STRUCK - A PERFUME THAT WILL KNOCK YOU OUT.

Sade looks pleased. Laura looks horrified.

LAURA

No women in her right mind would buy that perfume!

SADE

What about targeting women who aren't?

LAURA

Aren't what?

SADE

In their right minds.

Laura gives her a withering look and gets up.

SADE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

LAURA

Out.

SADE

I thought we were working.

LAURA

I am. Going to look at faces.

She walks out.

INT. CORRIDOR IN MERIDIAN MEDIA AD AGENCY - DAY

Laura walks up the corridor, deep in thought. Mark walks towards her.

MARK

How the ideas for the ad going?

LAURA

Really well.

MARK

That's great. Let's discuss it over dinner tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laura is reluctant.

MARK (CONT'D)
I can give you a lot of help,
Laura. I know what women want. I'll
pick you up at 8.30.

LAURA
I can't tonight. Sorry.

Mark stares at her.

MARK
Genuine?

Laura nods.

MARK (CONT'D)
Okay, but don't keep me waiting too
long.

She shoots him a look. Is he giving her a warning?

He gives her a slow, reassuring smile.

INT. UP-MARKET ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

Dan sits at a desk, wearing a smart suit, talking to a
wealthy young couple, TILLY & RUPERT.

Alex sits at another desk, talking to another couple.

Dan suddenly sees Laura walking past the window. He rushes
out. The young couple look astonished.

EXT. OUTSIDE AN ART GALLERY - DAY

Laura walks into the gallery near the estate agents.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Laura walks around the gallery. She is only person there.

Dan stares in through the window and smiles.

The door bell TINKLES as Dan goes in. He walks over and
studies Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon.

Laura turns and recognizes him. She studies his smart suit
and obviously likes what she sees. She turns quickly as he
pretends to see her for the first time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Hello again. Buying or looking?

Laura pretends to see him for the first time.

LAURA

Oh, hello. Looking. You buying?

DAN

Thinking about it.

They both pretend to study different paintings.

DAN (CONT'D)

Do you like Picasso?

LAURA

I don't understand him.

DAN

That's because he painted what he felt, not what he saw.

Laura looks at the painting in front of Dan.

LAURA

So what he was feeling when he painted that?

Dan smiles.

DAN

Perhaps he didn't like prostitutes.

Laura moves closer to the painting to study the strange women's faces.

LAURA

They're prostitutes?

Dan moves closer too. Their faces are very close to each other. He turns to look at her.

DAN

Or perhaps he couldn't paint real beauty.

(beat)

I've got two tickets for next Tuesday's performance of Madame Butterfly. Would you come with me?

Laura is completely taken aback. She moves away from him and doesn't answer for some time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAURA

I don't go out with strangers.

DAN

I'm Dan. I won't be a stranger if you go out with me.

She doesn't answer.

DAN (CONT'D)

How do birds know when to fly to warm countries?

She stares at him in surprise.

EXT. OUTSIDE AN ART GALLERY. LONDON - DAY

Dan and Laura are talking. She gestures she's going in one direction. (Past the estate agents.) Dan waves and walks it the other. He walks on for a few seconds, stops and races back to the estate agents.

INT. UPMARKET ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

Alex tries to stop an angry Tilly and Rupert from leaving the office as Daniel rushes in.

He directs them back their seats, picking up a glossy brochure on the way.

Alex glares at Dan.

DAN

Do forgive me for rushing away, but I saw my elderly Aunt walking past, carrying some heavy shopping. She has a bad heart so you can imagine how concerned I was.

Their faces change immediately. They nod sympathetically.

Dan smiles at them and gives them the glossy brochure. They are totally disarmed.

DAN (CONT'D)

I believe that this house was meant for you ...

They look at the stunning house in the brochure and smile.

Dan looks at a book about Feng Shui in Tilly's bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)
 You might find what I'm going to
 say unusual, but the Yin Yang
 forces in this house are perfectly
 balanced.

Tilly beams at him in delight.

TILLY
 Oh, that's wonderful.

She turns to her husband.

TILLY (CONT'D)
 That's so important, Rupert.

RUPERT
 (sceptical)
 Yin Yang?

TILLY
 Forces that are found in all things
 in the universe. I told you about
 it last night.
 (to Dan)
 I'm studying Feng Shui, you see.

DAN
 Really? I've used it all over my
 house. It's amazing.

TILLY
 Your health must be very good then.

DAN
 Oh, it is.

Dan beams at her, looking the epitome of health.

Rupert is concerned by his wife's enthusiasm for Dan.

Alex looks at Dan and swivels his eyes towards Rupert as the
 other couple walk out.

Dan directs his comments at Rupert.

DAN (CONT'D)
 And the dining-room! What a
 fabulous place to entertain. Your
 children could have the top floor
 with the nanny and make as much
 noise as they want and you'd never
 hear a sound.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Alex gives him a warning look.

Tilly blushes and looks at Rupert.

DAN (CONT'D)
And the swimming pool is almost
Olympian! Could you think of a
better place to relax with your
boss and his wife?

Tilly holds Rupert's hand and smiles at him. He's putty.

RUPERT
Okay. How much is it?

Dan can't bring himself to say the figure.

Alex smiles at them reassuringly.

ALEX
The asking price is four million.

The couple are speechless with shock.

ALEX (CONT'D)
But we know the owner well, I'm
sure we can persuade him to lower
that figure considerably...

A CUSTOMER walks in and goes to speak with Alex.

Alex gestures for Dan to carry on.

DAN
Especially...

Dan leans forward. The young couple lean forward.

DAN (CONT'D)
(whispering)
We haven't told anyone else, but
the owner is very particular about
the type of person to whom he's
prepared to sell. As you can see,
it's a highly exclusive area. I'll
just ring and tell him we've got
the perfect couple waiting to view.

Tilly and Rupert smile delightedly as Dan picks up the phone.
He smiles delightedly back.

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Dan and Alex are alone in the estate agents. Alex looks happy. Dan looks stunned.

DAN (CONT'D)
I sold a house...

ALEX
Now all you have to do is get over
your fear of figures. Keep
repeating the mantra: millions
don't matter to money.

Dan frowns as he mouths it. He doesn't get it.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Just think, Dan - you can pay off
your debts, buy some paint and
still have money to spend on this
Hungarian Princess.

DAN
Her name's Laura.

ALEX
So when are you taking her out?

Dan smiles.

DAN
Tonight.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE. COVENT GARDEN - NIGHT

ON STAGE. Two opera singers are singing the love duet Viene
La Sera from MADAME BUTTERFLY.

IN A BOX. A formally dressed Laura and Daniel listen to the
exquisite singing. Laura's eyes are bright with tears. Daniel
studies her beautiful profile.

INT. A CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Daniel is driving Laura home. They both look happy.

DISSOLVE TO:

OUTSIDE A BLOCK OF FLATS - NIGHT.

Daniel stops the car and starts humming the HUMMING CHORUS
from MADAME BUTTERFLY. Laura smiles at him and joins in. Dan
holds her hand. They stop humming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL

That was an incredible evening.

LAURA

I'll never forget it.

Dan leans over and tries to kiss her. She draws back. He's surprised.

LAURA (CONT'D)

It's late. I'd better go.

DAN

Come out with me tomorrow. To a park, a cinema, a restaurant. Anywhere.

LAURA

I can't. I have to work on my presentation. It's important.

DAN

What presentation?

Laura is reluctant to tell him.

DAN (CONT'D)

If it's something artistic, perhaps I could help.

She still doesn't speak.

DAN (CONT'D)

It can't be that bad. What do you do?

LAURA

I'm a copy-writer at Meridian Media. It's an advertising agency.

DAN

(shocked)

You work in advertising?

She opens the car door.

LAURA

Good night, Dan.

Dan puts his hand on her arm to stop her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

I'm sorry, I just thought you worked with artists.

LAURA

I do... but obviously it's not the sort of art you like.

She gets out of the car and walks off.

Dan watches her, then his head slumps onto the steering wheel.

INT. LAURA'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The lounge is a mess of newspapers, magazines, bottles of beer and wine strewn around the floor. Her mother, HILARY, a middle-aged woman lies drunk on a settee. She's a faded beauty.

Laura walks in and stops short when she sees her. She looks around the room in disgust and starts clearing away the bottles. Hilary stirs at the noise.

HILARY

(slurred)

Is that you, Laur? I've been waiting and waiting...

LAURA

What are you doing here? ... Have you eaten?

Hilary sits up with difficulty and thinks.

HILARY

Don't think so.

LAURA

I'll make you a sandwich.

HILARY

Got any more booze?

Laura's face crumples as she walks out of the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE MERIDIAN MEDIA AD AGENCY - NIGHT

Dan stops the car outside the building and stares at it. He suddenly starts the car again and drives off fast, in the opposite direction.

EXT. OUTSIDE LAURA'S BLOCK OF FLATS - NIGHT

Dan's car screeches to a halt. He races out of the car and rings the intercom. No answer. He rings it again. Nothing.

He looks up. A light comes on in one of the windows.

He starts to sing *Viene la Sera* very loudly.

NEIGHBOURS come out onto their balconies. A COUPLE of MEN shout abuse at him.

Dan carries on singing.

Laura comes out onto her balcony. He stops singing. They shout out to each other.

LAURA

You're keeping everyone awake!

DANIEL

I won't go until you promise to go out with me!

LAURA

I've told you I have to work!

Various neighbours shout for them to shut up.

DANIEL

I'll help you. I've got lots of ideas. Say yes. I'll sing all night if you don't!

A man on the balcony next to Laura's leans out and shouts.

NEIGHBOUR 1

For God's sake, go out with the bugger or none of us will get any bloody sleep!

Other neighbours shout their support.

LAURA

I can't!

NEIGHBOURS

You can!

DAN

8 o'clock! Tomorrow! D'Marcos Restaurant! Piccadilly! Say yes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Neighbours look at Laura.

NEIGHBOURS

Yes!

Laura is hugely embarrassed.

Daniel starts singing again. The neighbours start shouting.

LAURA

All right! All right! All right!

A cheer goes up before people go back into their flats.

Dan performs a comic mime.

Laura can't help laughing before she goes back into her flat.

Hilary looks down at Dan from a window as he dances back to his car.

INT. D'MARCO'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A cosy Italian restaurant with white table-clothes and candles on every table. It's half full of people.

SIGNORA D'MARCO, a large woman, sits at a small table, knitting. She smiles as she looks across at -

Dan and Laura sitting at a window table, talking. They look like the perfect romantic couple. They hold menus, but neither of them look at them, only at each other. Dan says something to Laura - she laughs.

SIGNOR D'MARCO, a large man, supervises the numerous waiters who rush around, serving everyone.

A waiter rushes up to Dan and Laura's table. They shake their heads. He rushes off to serve someone else.

DAN

So am I forgiven?

LAURA

I'll think about it.

DAN

I had to see you again.

Laura is embarrassed by his look. She studies the menu.

LAURA

I think I'll have a pizza.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
So will I.

CUT TO:

Signora D'Marco studies Dan and Laura as they talk and unconsciously mirror each other's body language.

They raise their glasses, drink their wine and place it back down on the table at the same time. Laura tilts her head to one side; Dan copies her; Dan says something funny - Laura laughs, throwing herself back in her chair and trawling her fingers through her hair. Dan mirrors her. Dan leans forward, so does Laura. Dan whispers something to her. She nods and smiles.

Unconsciously, Signora D'Marco copies their body language too. Her worried husband comes over to see if she's all right. She points Laura and Dan out to her husband. He sighs romantically before rushing off to shout at a waiter.

CUT TO:

DAN (CONT'D)
So tell me.

LAURA
What?

DAN
About the presentation.

LAURA
We're got to create an original perfume ad.

DAN
We?

LAURA
Sade and I. She's my creative partner at the agency. We've got ideas, but can't see the whole picture.

DANIEL
Do you know the old Indian tale about four blind Indian men who felt different parts of the same animal?

Laura shakes her head. Daniel gets out some drawing pencils and starts drawing on the table cloth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN
Close your eyes.

Laura stares at him for some time, then closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

Signora D'Marco leans forward, trying to see what he's doing. Her husband suddenly sees and is horrified. He's just about to go over and stop him, when his wife hits his arm. He smiles at her and goes over to hit one of the WAITERS on the arm. The waiter looks astonished.

CUT TO:

Dan continues drawing, but we don't see what he's drawing.

DANIEL
One man felt the tail and said 'It is a rope'. Another one felt the trunk and said, 'No, it is a serpent!' The third felt the leg and said, "Oh no, it is a tree!" Then the fourth felt the animal's side and said, "No, you are all wrong - it is a wall!' ... What do you think it is?

Laura opens her eyes and shakes her head. He shows her the table-cloth. Laura walks around to Dan's side of the table and sees an elephant on it. She laughs.

DAN
You have to think laterally. I could come back to your flat and brain-storm with you.

Laura stops smiling and walks back to her seat.

LAURA
No.

DAN
Don't you trust me?

LAURA
I don't want to be late, Dan. I didn't get much sleep last night.

He smiles at her.

DAN
Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The waiter comes up with their pizzas and whistles appreciatively when he sees the elephant.

DISSOLVE TO:

Dan and Laura drink coffee in the nearly empty restaurant.

A number of people walk past the window. One of them is Mark. He stops dead when he sees Laura and Dan. They don't notice him as he stands partially hidden behind a sign.

DAN (CONT'D)

I want to know everything about you.

LAURA

Nothing much to tell.

DAN

So you didn't have parents or go to school, then?

He smiles, expecting her to smile too. She doesn't.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, have I said something wrong?

LAURA

I don't talk about my parents much.
(pause)
They died when I was young.

Dan is hugely embarrassed.

DAN

Oh God, I'm sorry, I don't know what to say.

LAURA

You can tell me about your parents.

DAN

You don't want to hear about them.

LAURA

But I do. I bet you're part of a huge, happy family.

DAN

Not huge. I'm an only child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LAURA
But happy?

FLASHBACK. A BEACH - DAY

People stare as a naked Sonia, Malcolm and Dan (12) run towards the sea. Dan is mortified with embarrassment.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

DAN
Oh yes,
(beat)
gloriously happy.

LAURA
You're very lucky.

DAN
So would you like me to sketch some ideas for you?

LAURA
That would be great.

DAN
I could give them to you the next time we meet.

Dan suddenly leans forward.

DAN (CONT'D)
Here's one idea I've got...

Laura leans forward to listen..

CUT TO:

Signora D' Marco's table. As she watches them, she leans forward and waits expectantly.

Dan leans forward a little more, so does Laura. It looks like they're going to kiss.

Signor, Signora D'Marco and the waiters all lean forward, willing them to kiss.

Instead, Dan puts his hands out on the table with his palms upwards. She looks down at them for a long time.

The Italians all stare at each other and shrug: what does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laura slowly places her hands in Dan's.

Outside the window, Mark stares at Dan and Laura's entwined hands and frowns.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - NIGHT

He rushes into the studio and puts on some LOUD MUSIC.

Charlie jumps up and down in agitation.

He takes his suit off in time with the music and tosses it into the air, until he's only wearing boxer shorts.

DAN

She's nearly mine, Charlie bird!

Dan puts a canvas on an easel, dips a large brush into a paint pot and throws great globules of it onto the canvas in time to the music.

Charlie flaps around his cage, trying to avoid the paint.

DISSOLVE TO:

Dan is asleep on the settee. The room and Charlie are covered in paint. On the easel is another incomprehensible canvas of paint. Dan smiles in his sleep.

EXT. DANIEL'S DREAM 1. A FOREST - NIGHT

He's walking through a forest at night, dressed in 1900 Hungarian clothes when he sees a light in the distance and walks towards it. As he gets nearer to the light, Laura appears, wearing a long white dress and holding a lantern.

DANIEL

Ilana- I've found you!

Laura runs towards him. They kiss.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDIO - DAY

Daniel wakes up and smiles. He opens his eyes and jumps up when he sees the paint all over Charlie.

DAN

Oh, poor old Charlie bird. Got carried away. I'll get you some breakfast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Charlie squawks sleepily.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Dan feeds Charlie his favourite food - cuttle fish and tries to clean the paint off him at the same time.

B) Dan sings in the shower.

C) Dan gets dressed.

D) Dan rushes downstairs. Madame Kari opens the door of her apartment. Dan gives her a wad of money and a kiss, then rushes off. She touches her cheek and smiles.

INT. UP MARKET ESTATE OFFICE - DAY

The manager, Mr. HARGEAVES, (50s) sits at a desk, watching Dan and Alex talk to some clients:

Dan talks to a female GAY COUPLE and makes them laugh. They look at the brochure he gives them, read it, smile at each other, then speak to him.

Alex talks to a MAN. He nods at everything Alex says.

Mr Hargeaves smiles contentedly.

DISSOLVE TO:

Alex and Dan are alone in the office. They both look happy.

Alex gets out a note pad and jots down some figures.

DAN

Laura's the most beautiful girl
I've ever met, Alex but it's not
just about her-

ALEX

If we only sell half the houses
we've been selling recently -we
can retire in eight years.

Dan looks horrified.

DAN

I'm not selling houses for eight
years! I want to paint!

ALEX

And what are you going to tell the
Hungarian Princess?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX (CONT'D)

(cockney)

Sorry, love - can't take you out -
I'm skint.

Dan looks worried.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Be positive, Dan. You're ace at
selling houses.

DAN

Meaning I'm no good at painting?

ALEX

And you've got a woman. Look at me?
No hobbies. No sex life. No coffee.

He looks into his empty coffee cup.

Dan smiles at him.

DAN

Why don't you come out with Laura
and me?

ALEX

Oh, I'd love that, Dan. Just the
three of us holding hands in a dark
cinema.

DAN

We could go out with one of Laura's
friends.

ALEX

Oh no. I remember the last blind
date you forced me to go on.

FLASH-BACK. A CLUB - NIGHT

Heavy with noise, sweat and people dancing. Dan is sitting at
a table with two PRETTY GIRLS, talking animatedly.

Alex walks across the room towards Dan and smiles in relief
when he sees the girls.

Dan introduces the girls to Alex, then takes the hand of one
girl and they get up to dance. The other girl smiles at Alex.
He takes the hint and asks her to dance. She stands up.
Alex's eyes travel up her body slowly in shock. She's 6ft.
3in and wearing high heels.

INT. ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

ALEX

I'm not going through another night like that. I couldn't see higher than her navel.

DAN

It won't be like that. Laura's got this short friend.

ALEX

Oh God - she's a midget.

DAN

No, she's about...

Dan estimates various heights with his hand.

ALEX

You haven't seen her, have you?

DAN

Life's all about taking chances, Alex.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A CLUB - NIGHT

Laura, Sade, Dan and Alex are dancing to loud music. Dan winks at Alex.

A space forms around Alex and Sade as they're great dancers. People start to watch and cheer. Alex and Sade are having a wild time.

INT. A LONDON TAXI- TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Dan, Laura, Sade and Alex look animated.

SADE

(to Dan)

So you work at Christies. Very upmarket.

ALEX

If you think that's upmarket. You ought to see his parent's house. The grounds cover half of Hampshire!

Dan gives him a look that should kill. Alex grins back at him

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Aren't you getting out here?

ALEX
No, miles to go yet, Dan. And the
lake - you have to see it to
believe it, it's - fuck!

Dan crushes Alex's foot as they turn a corner.

DAN
Sorry.

LAURA
It sounds wonderful, Dan.

SADE
Yeah. Always wanted to be invited
to a country mansion.

ALEX
(to Dan)
I'm sure your parents would show
the girls around if you asked them.

Laura and Sade stare at Dan while Alex suppresses laughter.

Dan crushes Alex's foot again.

INT. DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lots of strange abstract paintings cover the walls of the
messy room.

Dan lies in bed, tossing and turning in his sleep.

DAN'S 2ND DREAM. ROCHESTER DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan, Alex, Laura and Sade are listening to the discordant
sounds of Dan's parents playing a duet. The girls look at
Dan's naked parents in amazed disbelief.

Suddenly, a large piece of plaster crashes onto the floor
near them. The girls jump.

Malcolm hits the keys hard. Another piece of plaster drops
onto the piano. As he carries on playing, more and more
plaster falls. Eventually, Malcolm stops playing and gets up.

Dan covers his eyes as the girls stare at the sight of his
father's naked, wobbling body dancing in time with Sonia's
enthusiastic double bass playing.

INT. DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He jerks awake, holds his head in horror and rocks.

DAN
Oh, God, Oh, God, Oh, God.

INT. UPMARKET ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

Alex whistles as he takes out some brochures from a filing cabinet and reads them.

Dan sits at his desk, staring into space.

Mr Hargeaves speaks on the phone and frowns as he looks at Dan.

A CUSTOMER walks in, Alex rushes over to shake his hand. Dan carries on staring into space.

Mr Hargeaves looks at Dan in annoyance.

DISSOLVE TO:

Only Alex and Dan are in the office. Alex is speaking in his usual pucker voice on the phone.

ALEX
(on phone)
That's no trouble at all, Mr. Brownlow. I'm just very glad I could be of some service. Goodbye.

He puts the phone down and beams at Dan.

DAN
I should kill you.

ALEX
Oh, come on - where's your sense of humour? It was a great night.

DAN
What did you have to mention my wacky parents for?

ALEX
What do you think they'll play? Rac 3 or 4?

Alex hoots with laughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan throws a pile of brochures at him. Alex tries to control himself.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 I didn't know they'd want to meet
 them, did I?
 (beat)
 You remember the last time I went
 there? - half the ceiling fell down
 and they didn't even notice!

Alex laughs so much he has tears in his eyes.

Dan suddenly turns to his computer and types fast.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 What you doing?

Dan ignores him and jots down some numbers.

DAN
 See you after lunch.

He walks out. Alex looks puzzled.

INT. ACTOR'S AGENCY - DAY

Dan sits with a number of out of work actors. A door has the sign BELLAMY'S ACTOR'S AGENCY on it.

JO , a nervous young woman, cracks her knuckles repeatedly.

A MAN rehearses his part in a play. He gesticulates as he talks to himself.

ELISABETH, a serene elderly woman does yoga exercises in the corner of the room.

JONATHAN, her husband; a distinguished-looking actor with a mane of white hair, is absorbed in a book. Dan stares at it: T.S. Elliot's The Waste Land.

MIKE BELLAMY, A middle-aged balding man comes out of room and looks at Jo.

MIKE
 It's no good waiting, Jo. There's
 no work for you.

Jo stifles a sob.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JO
You're always saying that! I'll get
another agent!

MIKE
And they'll tell you the same! You
can't act!

She hops up and down in agitation.

JO
Who says?

MIKE
About 300 people. Next!

Everyone stands up, except Jonathan.

Mike looks at Dan with interest.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Come in.

Dan looks apologetically at the others as he walks into
Mike's office.

INT. MIKE'S OFFICE - DAY

Small. Basic. Functional.

MIKE
So what have you done?

Dan looks around, wondering.

DAN
When?

MIKE
Remember where you are?

DAN
I think you've got the wrong-

MIKE
Don't waste my time, son. What have
you done?

DAN
Oh... Painted pictures. Sold
houses. Sung songs.

Mike looks confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

Tell me a play that's got a singing painter in it that sells houses?

DAN

I'm not an actor.

Mike nods his head slowly.

MIKE

You know something? That's the first honest thing that anyone's ever said to me in this office.

DAN

No, I really mean I'm not an actor.
(beat)
I'm here to look for some parents.

Mike blinks rapidly in astonishment.

DISSOLVE TO:

Dan flicks through a portfolio full of older actor's photos. He points to a couple in their 60's.

DISSOLVE TO:

Dan and Mike sit behind Mike's desk. A couple from one of the photos sit opposite them. There's a water jug and glasses on the table.

MIKE

So just pretend that Dan is your son and be a natural mother and father.

The couple smile at him, then notice Dan fiddling with his nose.

FATHER 1

(to Dan)

Picking your nose again! How many times have we told you not to do that?

MOTHER 1

But did you listen to us?

FATHER 1

Oh no, you always knew best. Even when you were in primary school.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MOTHER 1

I'll never forget your first report.

FATHER 1

'Daniel could do better, but he never, never tries.' Absolutely appalling.

MOTHER

How do you think we felt, Dan?

FATHER 1

And when we moved you to another school -

MOTHER 1

Your second report was even worse.

FATHER 1

'Daniel is a slow learner who'll never catch up however hard he tries.'

MOTHER

How do you think we felt, Dan?

The couple stop talking and look at the shell-shocked expressions on Dan and Mike's faces.

FATHER 1

Was that realistic enough?

DISSOLVE TO:

FATHER 2

What I liked about you, son, was the way you always listened to me.

MOTHER 2

He had no choice, Matthew. You were always so -

FATHER 2

And when we sent you away to boarding school, you never complained once.

MOTHER 2

He did to me. Many times.

Father 2 turns to Mother 2.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER 2

You never told me.

MOTHER 2

You never asked. You were always working. When you sent him away it was the worst day of my life. But you didn't care how much I suffered, did you? You've never cared about me!

She sobs desperately.

Dan and Mike stare at each other in alarm.

DISSOLVE TO:

ELIZABETH & JONATHAN, an aristocratic looking couple sit opposite Dan and Mike.

Dan is now noticeably nervous.

Mike nods to them to start. Both of them sound as if they're related to the Royal Family.

ELIZABETH

I wasn't in favour of Eton... at first, but your father made the right choice.

JONATHAN

As you know, Daniel, I believe the connections one makes in school are vitally important for one's future success in life.

ELIZABETH

And you did succeed... Remember his first medal for athletics, Jonathan?

They smile at each proudly.

JONATHAN

As if I could forget, my dear. The proudest moment of my life.

Dan and his 'parents' smile at each other.

ELIZABETH

And his performance as Hamlet in the school play?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JONATHAN

You were the best Hamlet I've seen treading the boards and I've seen a great many, Daniel. I think it surpassed even Geilgud's.

ELIZABETH

We couldn't have wished for a more talented son.

They both smile happily at Dan.

Dan and Mike smile happily back.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAN

So you're interested?

Jonathan shakes his mane of white hair and speaks with all the authority of Lawrence Olivier.

JONATHAN

That depends on how much you're prepared to invest in your future parents, dear boy.

Dan shows Mike a signed cheque. He looks at it in surprise. Dan shows it to Jonathan and Elizabeth. They smile with pleasure.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

I am quite sure you'll make us an excellent son.

(beat)

Obviously, you'll have to enlighten us with some trifling details like your full name, date of birth -

ELIZABETH

When you were weaned, what public school we really sent you to, how many dogs we had -

JONATHAN

Your favourite foods and foibles. We don't want to get any facts wrong.

A small look passes between the couple and Mike.

Dan misses it as he gets a file out of his bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DAN

All the details you need to remember are in this file.

Dan gives them the file. They open it. Elizabeth looks horrified.

ELIZABETH

Oh, I don't think we should have sent you to Gordonstoun. Isn't it dreadfully harsh there?. It must have been appalling having to cut through ice every morning to wash.

DAN

I didn't, actually.

ELIZABETH

You didn't cut through ice?

DAN

I didn't go to Gordonstoun.

ELIZABETH

But it says here, you did.

JONATHAN

This is pure invention, my dear.

ELIZABETH

Oh, so you didn't go to Art School, either?

DAN

I did, actually.

ELIZABETH

This is very confusing.

DAN

(confused)
Is it?

ELIZABETH

How am I to know when I'm telling the truth or not?

JONATHAN

It doesn't matter, Elizabeth. We're playing a part, remember?

ELIZABETH

Oh yes. Of course, how silly of me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Dan looks a little worried. Elizabeth smiles at him reassuringly.

DAN
So how long will it take you to
learn your parts?

JONATHAN
Seven days and in that time we'll
know everything you've ever done
since the day you were born.

The couple laugh.

JONATHAN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Where exactly is this performance
taking place?

Dan looks at him blankly and drinks some water. He hasn't thought that far.

ELIZABETH
Perhaps you could hire a stately
home.

Dan chokes.

INT. UPMARKET ESTATE AGENTS - DAY

Dan rushes into the empty office, picks up some brochures and keys and rushes out again.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

A stunning 18th Century Country House nestling in acres of beautiful parklands, woods and large lakes.

Dan drives up and stops his car outside the front door. He gets out, looks around and smiles at the lake shimmering in the distance.

INT. THE HALLWAY. HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

Dan walks through the immaculate hallway towards the dining room and opens a door.

INT. THE DINING ROOM - DAY

An elegant Georgian room with a long expensive Mahogany table. The chair-backs match the beautifully draped windows. Dan sighs with pleasure as he looks around.

INT. A CAFE - DAY

Laura and Sade are having lunch together at a window table. Laura hardly touches her food. Sade is half way through an enormous tortilla.

SADE

What a great night, Laur. Your guy must be so loaded.

LAURA

That's not why I'm going out with him.

SADE

No? Want some of this?

She gestures towards her tortilla.

LAURA

No... he said he'd help us with our presentation.

SADE

Right.

Sade gives her a knowing look as she eats.

SADE (CONT'D)

Then make sure he helps us in the country mansion.

Outside, a young, good-looking window cleaner is cleaning the windows. Unconsciously, Sade starts to flirt with him. He's interested. She draws a large puckered upper lip on the window with her lipstick. The window cleaner and all the people in the cafe stare at it.

LAURA

What are you doing?

Sade draws a large puckered lower lip. The mouth is designed to look as if it's kissing someone. Sade nods to the window cleaner. He suddenly understands. He kisses the lips. People in the café laugh.

LAURA (CONT'D)

You're hopeless.

SADE

No, I'm bursting with hope! There's hundreds of men out there, Laur!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laura looks at the window-cleaner who's now staring at her through the window.

The window cleaner presses his lips to the window lips, waiting for Laura to kiss them too. She glances at him, then turns away.

LAURA

Come on. We'd better get back.

As they get up the formidable FEMALE CAFE OWNER hands Sade a dirty cloth and looks at the window. Sade smiles at her.

The woman folds her arms across her formidable chest and glowers at Sade. Sade starts wiping the kiss off the window.

Everyone in the café looks disappointed.

Laura walks off.

LAURA (CONT'D)

See you at the office.

INT. MERIDIAN MEDIA OFFICE - DAY

Angus is drawing huge designs on his pad while Sanjay talks to him; Peter is drawing as James talks to him.

At the other side of the room, Laura and Sade smile at a drawing.

C.U. of a drawing. A girl in a sparkling outfit on a trapeze. She holds a large bottle of perfume between her thighs and smiles at us.

LAURA (OS)

Vestal Virgin - The purest perfume
in the world.

They laugh, then see Mark walking into the office.

SADE

Utila the Hun's arrived...

The girls hide the drawing and talk animatedly as Mark walks over to them.

MARK

Been working hard on the
presentation?

SADE

Non-stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA
Night and day.

MARK
(to Laura)
So how come I saw you the other
night at D'Marcos.

Laura is annoyed.

LAURA
My night off?

MARK
Who were you with?

LAURA
Someone I know.

Mark looks annoyed.

MARK
So let's see what you've got.

Laura gets a number of drawings out a portfolio. Sade picks one up and turns it to -

DISSOLVE TO:

A LARGE FIELD.

Filled with people in black and white. Only one beautiful girl is in colour. Everyone turns to look at her.

DEEP SEXY MALE (VO)
Spotlight perfume for women who
want to stand out from the crowd.

MARK (VO)
Next.

DISSOLVE TO:

A HEAVENLY PLACE. A crowd of depressed-looking people, wearing clothes from different centuries, wait indefinitely outside St Peter's gate.

The same beautiful woman, now dressed in a long robe, walks towards the gates.

The crowd lean forward and sniff the air, then part to let her through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The gates open.

The beautiful woman turns to show the crowd a bottle she produces from under her robes. The writing on the bottle reads: HEAVEN SCENT. She walks through the gates serenely.

MARK (VO) (CONT'D)

Next.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN ART GALLERY. The same woman, scantily dressed, stands on a pedestal holding a large bottle of SEDUCTION in front of her. There is a cordon around her.

DEEP SEXY MALE (VO)

SEDUCTION is all you need.

Lots of MEN stand outside the cordon, desperate to touch her.

MARK (VO)

Next.

DISSOLVE TO:

In the office. Sade angrily puts the drawings back in the portfolio.

LAURA

That's it.

MARK

That's it? In three weeks you've come up with three ideas?

LAURA

Three good ideas. What's wrong with them?

SADE

We've got lots more -

MARK

I want something original by next Tuesday.

(beat))

You missed a beat, Laura.

Mark walks off to talk to James and Peter.

SADE

What's he mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAURA
He asked me out.

SADE
And? Jes - Laur! - go out with the
guy!

On the other side of the room, Peter and James show Mark their copious designs for their presentation.

MARK
(loudly)
Now this is what I call
originality!

Peter smiles triumphantly at the girls.

SADE
You want that bastard to win the
account?

Laura looks worried.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

The same messy tip. An empty canvas sits on Dan's easel.

Charlie is half asleep in his cage when Dan walks in and rips his tie off.

DAN
Why's life so complicated, Charlie?

His phone RINGS. He answers it.

CHARLIE
There was a young fellow named
Clyde -

DAN
(to Charlie)
Shut up!

CHARLIE
who fell in an outhouse and died.

Dan stares at him.

DAN
(into phone)
Hello. Laura! ...No, that was my
parrot's thought for the day. How's
things?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Charlie tries to answer. Dan throws a cover over him.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Saturday? ...no... that's great.
 I'll have masses of ideas by then.

He listens again. Charlie gives a muffled squawk.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Here? No... I've got the
 decorators in. Paint everywhere.
 Total chaos. What about your
 flat?... Sade's place? ...Even
 smaller...
 (pause)
 Okay. I'll ask my parents and get
 back to you. Bye.

He throws his mobile on a chair, uncovers Charlie's cage and pushes some cuttle fish in through the bars.

DAN (CONT'D)
 Oh, Charlie bird...

CHARLIE
 Oh, Danny boy...

Charlie eats his cuttle fish.

INT. HOLMES HOUSE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

Dan sits in an exquisite chair watching Jonathan and Elizabeth walk around the room in ecstatic joy.

ELIZABETH
 This house was built for me,
 Jonathan.

JONATHAN
 To the manor born, Elizabeth.

They sit regally on a large settee and beam at Dan who doesn't look happy.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
 We know every detail of your life,
 Daniel.

ELIZABETH
 You were 8lbs 2 ounces when you
 were born. You were a happy child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JONATHAN

Excelled at sport and art in
Gordonstoun.

ELIZABETH

At four, we took you to the
National Gallery and you've been
fascinated by art ever since.

JONATHAN

Went to the Royal College of Art
when you were 18.

ELIZABETH

I always said we'd have a talented
son.

JONATHAN

Finished art school and Uncle
Jocelyn took you to an auction at
Christies and you were riveted.

ELIZABETH

Three weeks later, you secured a
position there as an art dealer.

JONATHAN

We knew you'd go far when you were
a boy.

ELIZABETH

That's because he's got your
determination, Jonathan.

Jonathan beams at his wife.

Dan has listened to them in growing astonishment.

DAN

You certainly get into a role,
don't you?

They look at him in amazement.

ELIZABETH

Naturally.

JONATHAN

We're professional to our finger-
tips, dear boy.

Elizabeth studies her white-gloved fingers with pleasure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

What time are the young ladies
arriving, Daniel?

Dan he glances at his watch, nervously.

DAN

In two hours.

ELIZABETH

Wonderful. You can give us a guided
tour.

They smile at him and get up.

DAN

You're sure you know everything in
the file?

JONATHAN & ELIZABETH

Everything.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The Library. Holmes House. An elegant room, full of books and paintings. Jonathan, Elizabeth and Dan look around with pleasure.

B) The Dining Room. Holmes House. A panelled elegant room with a long dining table and large fire-place. Elizabeth trails her gloved hand over the exquisite mahogany table. Jonathan and Dan study the numerous paintings of ancestors. Jonathan points to the aristocratic features of one of the ancestors. He looks like Jonathan. Dan looks at him in surprise.

C) The Kitchen. Holmes House. A large well equipped kitchen in spotless condition. The three of them pop their heads around the door. Elizabeth sighs contentedly.

D) A bedroom. Holmes House. A deeply carpeted room with a large 4 poster bed. Elizabeth and Jonathan beam with delight, then throw themselves onto the bed. Dan desperately pulls them up and rearranges the bed cover.

E) The grounds. Holmes House. The three of them walk towards the beautiful lake in front of the house. A large van drives up.

F) The grounds. 4 CATERERS get out of the van carrying trays of food. One of them (MARY, early 30s) is dressed in a smart suit. Dan supervises them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Elizabeth and Jonathan stand at the entrance of the house and shake hands with each person regally. The caterers bow or curtsy to them. These actions are hampered by the fact that they're all carrying something.

G) The kitchens. 3 caterers rush around the kitchen to produce a luncheon fit for royalty.

H) The dining room. Mary places bowls of flowers on the table which is now laid with a dazzlingly white tablecloth and sparkling silver. She studies the effect she's created and smiles.

INT. A SMALL COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Laura drives along with Sade at her side.

SAT NAV
Turn right in 500 yards and then
turn left immediately.

Laura throws the steering wheel around small turning. She's incredibly stressed. Sade studies the map on the Sat Nav.

SADE
Your Sat Nav's crap.

Laura glares at her.

SAT NAV
Turn left in 200 yards, then turn
right immediately.

Laura throws the car around another corner. Sade looks nervous.

EXT. OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

Jonathan and Elizabeth sit on a bench, enjoying the sunshine. Dan paces up and down and looks at his watch.

JONATHAN
Relax, dear boy. They'll be here
soon.

DAN
Could you stop calling me dear boy?
It's very annoying.

The couple raise their eyebrows at each other.

Suddenly Laura's car drives towards them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jonathan and Elizabeth stand up regally.

Dan tries to look relaxed as the car stops near him.

The girls get out. Sade gasps as she looks around. Laura straightens her skirt and tries to look relaxed.

SADE
Fucking hell!

Everyone stares at her, looking appalled.

SADE (CONT'D)
Sorry, just slipped out. Lovely house.

Dan and Laura smile at each other, then Laura glances nervously over to Dan's parents. Elizabeth holds out a gloved hand to her.

ELIZABETH
You must be Laura, my dear.

DAN
This is my mother, Laura.

ELIZABETH
Welcome to Holmes House. Daniel has told us so much about you.

Laura looks worried, but shakes her hand.

LAURA
Hello.

DAN
And this is my father.

Jonathan holds out both hands. Laura awkwardly holds out hers. He grasps them firmly.

JONATHAN
Delighted, my dear. Would you like a tour of the grounds before luncheon?

Dan, Laura and Elizabeth look startled as he places Laura's hand in the crook of his arm and walks off with her.

DAN
And this is Laura's friend Sade... Mother.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

How do you do, Sade. What an interesting name. Did you invent it yourself? Do follow me - I'm sure you need to use the bathroom.

Sade suppresses laughter as she follows Elizabeth into the house.

Dan stares at Jonathan who's pointing out various aspects of the grounds to Laura as they walk along. She's enchanted.

INT. HOLMES HOUSE. DINING ROOM - DAY

Everyone is eating mussels. Mary stands waiting in a corner.

Elizabeth and Jonathan dip their fingers elegantly into the finger bowl and wipe their hands delicately on a linen napkin and drink some wine.

The other three copy their actions exactly.

Mary pours out more wine for everyone.

Jonathan holds out a mussel towards Laura.

JONATHAN

Male or female?

LAURA

Sorry?

Jonathan opens the mussel - the flesh is orange coloured.

JONATHAN

Orange flesh means it's female.
White flesh means it's male.

SADE

I never knew that.

ELIZABETH

My husband is a mine of information. He taught Daniel everything he knows.

JONATHAN

Scuba diving...bungee jumping ... flying.

Dan holds onto the table for support.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA
You're a pilot!

SADE
What do you fly?

DAN
(beat)
Planes... mostly...

The girls roar with laughter.

LAURA
My cousin flies a Cessna 525.

Dan nods his head knowingly, then knocks back a glass of wine.

Mary pours him some more. Sade holds up her glass for more. Elizabeth points to her glass and Jonathan's. Mary tops them all up. She opens another bottle of wine.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I'd love to learn to fly.

ELIZABETH
Oh, I'm sure Daniel will give you lessons, my dear.

Dan chokes on his wine.

Jonathan gets up and hits Dan on the back. Dan gasps with shock.

LAURA
Are you all right?

Dan nods.

Sade and Elizabeth drink steadily. Mary opens another bottle of wine as Jonathan sits down again.

ELIZABETH
Have you told them about your Conservation work with the poor in that Brazilian jungle, Daniel?

Dan can't answer. He shakes his head slowly.

JONATHAN
To give and not to count the cost-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELIZABETH

To fight and not to heed the wounds

-

JONATHAN

to toil and not to seek for rest...

ELIZABETH

That's our Daniel.

Jonathan and Elizabeth smile proudly at him as they drink their wine.

Laura and Sade stare at Dan with admiration.

Dan presses his fists together under the table.

DISSOLVE TO:

They're finishing the main course. Dan has hardly eaten a thing because he's so stressed. Laura plays with her food.

In contrast, Sade, Jonathan and Elizabeth finish the last morsel on their plates. Elizabeth and Jonathan sigh with contentment as they lean back in their chairs. Mary is not there.

Sade groans.

SADE

I'm stuffed.

Laura looks at her in horror.

ELIZABETH

You're what, dear?

LAURA

She's had enough to eat. It was lovely. Thank you.

Elizabeth looks at Laura's and Dan's half full plates.

ELIZABETH

But you and Daniel have hardly eaten a morsel. If you're not careful you'll both look like those funny refugees. My goodness, when I was a girl we were never -

DAN

Shall I get the next course?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Elizabeth and Jonathan laugh heartily. The others look at them in surprise.

JONATHAN

I really think that Daniel has become a closet Socialist.

He pours himself more wine.

ELIZABETH

Ring for Mary, Daniel.

DAN

Who?

ELIZABETH

Oh, Daniel. She's only been our housekeeper for the last 15 years.

She smiles at him indulgently.

SADE

Is she the girl who served us?

ELIZABETH

Yes, dear.

Laura and Sade glance at each other in astonishment.

Dan drinks more wine desperately.

DISSOLVE TO:

Everyone eats dessert and looks a little drunk. [Apart from Laura] Mary expertly pours out dessert wine as they speak.

SADE

(to Mary)

So you started work when you were 10 then.

Sade sniggers and knocks back a glass of wine.

Mary looks startled.

MARY

I'm sorry?

LAURA

(to Sade)

Be quiet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SADE

She looks about 20.

Dan laughs at the absurdity of this. Elizabeth and Jonathan join in.

JONATHAN

She's 40 if she's a day. Could you bring me up the bottle of Chateaux Patache d'Aux 1862 from the cellar, Mary? You keep forgetting that I hate dessert wine.

Mary flashes him a look.

MARY

It must be my age, Sir.

She walks out.

DISSOLVE TO:

Sade, Jonathan, Elizabeth and Dan are in various stages of drunkenness as they slurp coffee.

SADE

Couldn't eat like that every day.

ELIZABETH

We don't eat like that every day, dear. Couldn't afford it on our pensions.

Sade, Elizabeth and Jonathan roar with laughter at this absurdity.

Dan tears off a part of a finger-nail and glances at Laura.

LAURA

I loved the lamb.

SADE

How'd you know? You didn't eat it.

The trio laugh again. Sade suddenly stops.

SADE (CONT'D)

Ohhh...I'm going to throw up.

She rushes from the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LAURA

I'm so sorry. I'd better see if she's okay.

She rushes out.

JONATHAN

Well, I think luncheon went extremely well, don't you, Daniel?

Dan holds his head in his hands and groans.

CUT TO:

A BATHROOM. Sade is throwing up in a toilet. Laura paces up and down.

LAURA

I can't believe you did that!

Sade groans.

CUT TO:

DAN

I can't believe you did that.

CUT TO:

LAURA

How am I going to face them?

Sade lies on the floor and groans again.

CUT TO:

DAN

How am I going to face her?

JONATHAN

A little honesty in a relationship is a good thing, Daniel, but a lot of it can be fatal.

Elizabeth gives Jonathan a searching look.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

Dan walks beside a row of trees.

Laura walks on the other side of the trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly they meet at the end. They both stop and stare at each other, very embarrassed. Neither of them speak for some time.

DAN
I have to tell you some-

LAURA
This is really embarrass-

They both stop speaking.

DAN & LAURA
I don't know how to tell you...

DAN
Sorry.

LAURA
I'm sorry.

DAN
About what?

LAURA
It's so embarrassing. Sade has been sick in one of your parent's bathrooms. Your house-keeper is cleaning it up.

DAN
Oh.

LAURA
I know. It's inexcusable. Can you apologize to your parents and thank them for a lovely lunch. I'll take Sade home.

DAN
You can't go! We haven't talked about the ad yet.

LAURA
I can't face your parents.

DAN
I have to tell you something.

Dan's mobile RINGS. He answers it, looking apologetically at Laura.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hello.

INTERCUT:

Alex is in the office with Mark Hudson. Mark stares at a glossy brochure of Holmes House.

ALEX
 (into phone)
 You're at Holmes House, aren't you?
 The keys are missing... I've got a
 client who wants to view it in an
 hour. Can you show him around?

Dan walks away before answering. He looks panic-stricken.

DAN
 (into phone)
 Not today?

Alex smiles at Mark.

ALEX
 (into phone)
 Yes, today, Dan. That's why I'm
 ringing. It's Mr. Hudson. Don't
 forget to bring the keys back.

Dan drops his mobile on the grass.

LAURA
 Bad news?

Dan nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE. Dan, Jonathan and Elizabeth wave goodbye to Laura as she drives away from the house. Sade is slumped in the back of Laura's car, asleep.

B) IN THE KITCHEN. The caterers rush around cleaning up the kitchen as Dan shouts frantic orders at them.

C) OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE. Dan pushes Elizabeth and Jonathan into a taxi. It drives off. Dan rushes into the house.

D) IN A BATHROOM. Mary has just finished cleaning up. The room is spotless. She looks exhausted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

E) OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE. Dan pays the disgruntled caterers extra money. They get into the van and drive off.

F) IN THE LIBRARY Dan collapses in a chair and closes his eyes. The front door bell RINGS. He jumps up.

INT. HALLWAY. HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

Dan opens the door and smiles at Mark.

Mark recognizes Dan from the restaurant.

DAN
You must be Mr. Hudson. Come in.

MARK
And you must be Dan Rochester.

They shake hands.

DAN
This is the hall-way.

MARK
I'd never have guessed.

They size each other up. Already rivals.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLMES HOUSE LIBRARY - DAY

Dan and Mark walk in. Mark laughs.

MARK
Don't tell me - this is the library!

DAN
It's not, actually. It's called the Chess room.

Mark looks around, confused.

MARK
Where's the chess?

DAN
There isn't any. Follow me. The Nebula room next.

Dan walks out. Mark frowns as he follows him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan smiles.

EXT. GROUNDS OF HOLMES HOUSE - DAY

Mark stares at the sun shimmering on the lake.

MARK
You like classy women?

Dan is taken aback and doesn't answer.

MARK (CONT'D)
One in particular?

DAN
My personal life's got nothing to do with you.

MARK
Oh, but it has. I'm the new C.E.O. of Meridian Media.

DAN
So?

MARK
So back off. She's out of your league.

He strolls nonchalantly towards the house.

Dan tries to contain his anger.

Mark suddenly stops and smiles at Dan.

MARK (CONT'D)
You've made a sale.

DAN
So you like living dangerously?

MARK
Come again?

DAN
Living near water isn't the best recommendation when you think of global warming. But if you're prepared for pitfalls.

The men eyeball each other.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A) DAN'S STUDIO. Dan sits in front of a computer flying a virtual plane. Charlie hops up and down on his perch agitatedly. Suddenly the plane crashes spectacularly. Charlie squawks and hides his head under a wing.

B) AT THE AD. AGENCY. Night. Laura and Sade are working in the office alone. Mark walks past and goes to speak to Laura. She shakes her head and points to her work. Mark disguises his annoyance and walks off. Sade shakes her head at Laura.

C) REAL FLIGHT SIMULATOR. Dan sits at the controls. A FLYING INSTRUCTOR sits next to him. As the instructor speaks, Dan nods as if he understands everything.

D) REAL FLIGHT SIMULATOR. Dan is now at the controls - his hands clenched over the joy-stick. The instructor tells him to relax. He tries to relax. Dan 'takes-off'. The 'plane' shoots off at high speed. The instructor sighs.

E) REAL FLIGHT SIMULATOR. Dan tries again. This time, the take-off is slow. The plane stalls and crash-lands. The instructor sighs.

F) REAL FLIGHT SIMULATOR. Dan tries again. This time, the take-off is perfect. The instructor and Dan look pleased. Dan moves the joy-stick sideways - the 'plane banks' steeply. He slams his hand over his mouth, looking as if he's going to be sick over the alarmed instructor.

G) A BRIDGE. Dan watches as a SPORTS INSTRUCTOR jumps over the bridge to show him how to bungee jump. He looks over the bridge as the instructor plummets down to almost near death. Dan looks horrified as the instructor swings inches from a dried up river bed. Dan suddenly races away from the bridge.

H) THE ESTATE AGENTS. Mark talks to Alex. Alex looks delighted. Mark signs some papers. They shake hands.

DAN'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Dan surfs the Net for Brazilian jungles. He finds a site he likes.

Charlie watches him.

DAN

Ah-ha! The Atlantic Forest of
Brazil. There's where I used to do
Conservation work.

CHARLIE

A flea and a fly in a flue, were
imprisoned, so what could they do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
No more limericks!

Charlie droops on his perch.

Dan reads the site.

DAN (CONT'D)
Listen to this. The Atlantic Forest
harbours around 2,200 species of
birds. Think of all the birds I
could buy if I went there, Charlie
Bird.

Charlie squawks pathetically and droops even further.

DAN (CONT'D)
Only joking, Charlie.

Charlie brightens and hops up and down.

DAN (CONT'D)
I'd better ring Laura before the
gorilla does.

He makes raucous gorilla noises and bangs his chest.

Charlie flaps around his cage in alarm.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Tuesday?

Dan looks alarmed.

DAN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Of course I want to see you...it's
just that...

He makes a desperate face at Charlie. Charlie hides under a wing.

DAN (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Tuesday's fine. My parents are away
at the moment...

Dan gives a silent scream as he listens. Charlie copies him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 No, I'm sure they wouldn't... well,
 it's possible... that is... perhaps
 we could.....no... okay... I'll
 pick you up then. Bye.

Dan cuts the phone and makes strangulated sounds as he paces up and down the room. Charlie copies the sounds and paces up and down his perch.

DAN (CONT'D)
 You know what I feel like, Charlie?
 Like I'm living in that painting.

They both stare at the swirling chaos of colours of VORTEX on the wall.

INT. THE HALLWAY. HOLMES HOUSE - DAY.

The door opens. Dan and Laura walk in. They're both carrying portfolios. Laura looks around admiringly.

LAURA
 It must have been wonderful growing
 up in a house like this.

DAN
 My memory's terrible. I can hardly
 remember it to be honest... Let's
 go to the library.

He walks up the hallway towards a door on the left.

LAURA
 I thought the library was on the
 right.

Dan stops walking.

DAN
 You see - I told you!

She laughs as he crosses over to the library and opens the door.

IN. LIBRARY. HOLMES HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura and Dan kneel on the carpet surrounded by masses of drawings. Dan shows her a drawing of a high tower and a sexy girl standing at a window.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TOP OF A HIGH TOWER - DAY

Raunchy music PLAYS as a SEXY GIRL, wearing an incredibly long shining black wig, sprays herself with perfume in seductive SLOW MOTION. A MIST covers her. She leans out of the window.

In the distance, A YOUNG BIKER on a Harley Davidson speeds towards her. He's wearing chain mail.

The sexy girl throws her long coil of hair out of the tower as the biker skids to a halt at the bottom of the tower.

A searing, sexy look passes between them.

The biker climbs up the hair.

The sexy girl gets some scissors and cuts the hair.

The biker falls in SLOW MOTION.

The sexy girl swings her now neat bob and smiles at us and mouths -

GIRL(VO)
(deep sexy voice)
FORTRESS - Only for the strong.

DISSOLVE TO:

Laura and Dan laugh. They're very close together. Dan suddenly holds her head in his hands and kisses her slowly. Laura responds. The kiss goes on and on.

INT. ALEX'S CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

Alex drives through heavy traffic. Mark sits beside him, looking out.

ALEX
I'm really sorry about this. Dan must have forgotten to return the keys.

MARK
Lucky you found the spare set.

ALEX
Yes.

MARK
Strange guy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEX

Sorry?

MARK

The guy who works with you.

Alex flashes him a look before answering.

ALEX

Can be.

Alex turns into a heavily congested road. They stop.

MARK

Why don't you people sort out the
traffic problems in your country?

Alex smiles at him apologetically.

INT. HOLMES HOUSE - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Dan is showing Laura around the house. He opens a door.

DAN

This was my bedroom.

CUT TO:

A teenage girl's room. It's painted pink and blue with pop
star's pictures pasted everywhere.

Laura and Dan look around in amazement.

LAURA

Your room?

DAN

My parents must have had it
redecorated.

He slams the door closed and smiles at her. Laura frowns.

CUT TO:

Dan and Laura walk down a corridor. Dan opens another door.

LAURA

Don't tell me - this is a
cupboard...

They laugh. It is a cupboard.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan opens another door.

DAN
And this is...

CUT TO:

An exquisite four-poster bed in a large bedroom. Laura looks around in awe.

LAURA
This is just like a film set.

Dan nods.

DAN
We call it the Elizabeth 1 room ...
for obvious reasons.

Laura's eyes widen with amazement.

INT. ALEX'S CAR. TRAVELLING - NIGHT

They crawl through heavy traffic.

ALEX
It's never this bad, usually.

Mark shoots him a disbelieving look.

MARK
Death comes quicker than driving in
the UK.

Alex snorts with laughter at the absurdity of this. The traffic suddenly starts moving.

ALEX
Off we go!

Mark gives him a withering look, then glances at his watch.

INT. FOUR-POSTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laura wanders around the room. Dan sits on the bed.

DAN
Great springs. Try them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laura looks very vulnerable as she gazes at Dan. He smiles at her. She walks over and sits beside him. Dan bounces the bed. Laura tips towards him. MUSIC PLAYS as they kiss slowly.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. Alex's car sweeps into the drive and stops. Mark and Alex get out. They frown as they see lights on inside the house.

MARK

I thought the owners were abroad.

ALEX

They are.

Alex marches up to the front door and opens it.

CUT TO:

FOUR-POSTER BEDROOM

The music soars as Dan and Laura roll around the enormous four-poster bed, enjoying themselves.

ALEX (OS)

(calling)

Dan! Dan! Where are you?

The music stops. Dan jumps up from the bed looking alarmed.

DAN

Shit! Get up! Quick!

Laura looks frightened as she straightens her clothes.

LAURA

Who is it?

DAN

Alex. You met him with Sade.

LAURA

How's he got a key to your parent's house?

ALEX (OS)

Dan - where are you?

DAN

You stay here. I'll explain later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door bursts open. A stunned Alex and Mark stand in the doorway, staring at a dishevelled Dan and Laura.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) Sade's FLAT. DAY. Laura cries as she tells Sade what's happened. Sade gives her a hug.

B) THE ESTATE AGENTS. Mark talks to the manager, Mr. Hargeaves. He's very shocked by what Mark tells him.

C) THE ESTATE AGENTS. DAY. Mr Hargeaves looks monumentally angry as he gives Dan the sack. Dan looks apologetic. Mr Hargeaves points to the door. Dan slinks out.

D) OUTSIDE HOLMES HOUSE. DAY. Mark smiles as he wanders around the grounds.

E) DAN'S STUDIO. Dan sits in chaotic squalor, looking depressed. Charlie droops on his perch.

INT. THE OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA AGENCY - DAY

The six creatives are in the office. Sanjay and Angus have their feet on their desk and stare blankly up at the ceiling.

ANGUS

No fucking ideas for three days!

Sanjay suddenly has a brain wave.

SANJAY

We could use ducks!

ANGUS

Ducks?

He thinks about it.

ANGUS (CONT'D)

It's different, I'll give you that.

(beat)

I've never seen ducks in a perfume ad before. So what do they do?

SANJAY

Well... they could walk around, see a pretty woman and -

(beat)

quack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Angus stares at him for a long, long time.

CUT TO:

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM. A very pale Laura works with Sade on a power point presentation. Sade looks at her with concern and gives her a hug.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE ROOM. Peter and James stare at the girls with sudden understanding.

PETER

That's why they'd never go out with us.

JAMES

It's their loss, Pete, not ours.

The men nod knowingly.

CUT TO:

SADE

All men are bastards, Laur. Once you accept that you'll be happy.

Laura stops working.

LAURA

I could be a bastard too.

SADE

What?

Mark walks into the office and goes over to Laura.

MARK

You okay, Laura?

She smiles brightly at him.

Everyone stops working to watch them.

LAURA

I'm much better now, thanks.

MARK

Not all men are bastards. Remember that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAURA

Of course they're not. Fancy taking me out to dinner tonight?

Mark is stunned.

MARK

Sure.

LAURA

I'll meet you in D'Marcos at 8. Do you know where it is?

MARK

Sure do. See you later.

He walks off, whistling.

SADE

Do you know what you're doing, Laur?

LAURA

Oh yes.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Dan has just finished cleaning up the place. It's completely transformed. Charlie watches him.

Dan makes a phone call.

DAN

(into phone)

Look I know you're angry with -

Dan stares at the phone.

DAN (CONT'D)

My best mate won't talk to me, Charlie.

Charlie droops as Dan walks out.

INT. OUTSIDE MADAME KARI'S DOOR - DAY

Daniel knocks on the door. Madame Kari is singing to Hungarian music as she opens the door. She looks at him.

MADAME KARI

You need Tokay, Daniel.

INT. MADAME KARI'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

Hungarian folk music plays in the background. The room is full of Hungarian Artefacts: paintings, wood-cuts, hand-painted dolls, porcelain and beautiful rugs. Dan sees a painting on the wall.

DANIEL'S P.O.V. A painting of Ilona. The painting from the National Gallery. She stands in a forest at night wearing a long white dress and holding a lantern. Her long blonde plait hangs over one shoulder as she stares at us.

Madame Kari tries to give him some Totay, but he can't move. She downs it in one.

DAN

I love that girl.

MADAME KARI

That lovely girl is dead, Daniel.

DAN

To me, anyway. I tried to impress her with lies and now ...

MADAME KARI

She hates you?

DAN

Yes. And her wealthy boss fancies her so I might as well drown myself.

Madame Kari opens an old illustrated Hungarian book of fables and shows Dan an illustration.

DANIEL'S POV. An Ant and a Chrysalis surrounded by myriad colours in a forest.

MADAME KARI

The ant he sees only the shell and he pities the chrysalis for its imprisonment. Then one day, he finds the chrysalis empty and feels the wings of a beautiful blue butterfly. It flies high into the sky and the ant? He remains on the ground. Forever. Which are you going to be, Daniel?

He stares at her.

INT. LAURA'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The room is a tip. Laura tries to clear it up as her mother downs another a glass of Scotch. Hilary sways around the room, following Laura.

LAURA

I can't cope with this any longer.
You've got to go to Aunt Mary's.

HILARY

Cramping your style, am I, honey?

LAURA

Don't start, Mum.

HILARY

Can't do it in a car?

LAURA

Stop!

HILARY

Two men in two weeks. Not bad for a
fucking virgin.

LAURA

Stop it!

HILARY

(angry)
After all I've told you! You go out
with shitty bastard men! How many
times have I told you can't trust
anyone with a dick! What's the
matter with you?

LAURA

(very angry)
You! That's what's the matter with
me! You and your drinking! That's
why Dad left!

Hilary's face crumples. She collapses on the settee and sobs. Laura looks contrite and goes over and cradles her in her arms.

LAURA (CONT'D)

It's all right. Come on, I'll take
you to bed.

She helps her sobbing mother up.

INT. MADAME KARI'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Dan stares at the floor in despair.

MADAME KARI
So why you paint abstract art?

DANIEL
I'm trying to break the boundaries
of perception.

Madame Kari sighs.

MADAME KARI
Such pomposity.
(beat)
And what is wrong with beauty? Why
don't you paint beauty?

She gets up.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)
Now I go to bed and dream of
Hungary. And what will you dream
of, little ant?

Daniel stares up at her.

INT. D'MARCOS - NIGHT

Laura and Mark sit at the window table.

Signora D'Marco frowns as she studies them from her table.
She gestures to her husband. He looks at Laura and Mark and
smiles. His wife hits his arm. He looks astonished.

AT LAURA'S TABLE.

LAURA
Then the girl says...
(deep sexy voice)
FORTRESS. Only for the strong.

Mark laughs.

MARK
That's a great idea, but I want to
this ad to target all women.

LAURA
All?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARK

Yep. All ages and all ethnic groups. Maximize the profits. Can you do it?

LAURA

I can do anything, Mark.

Mark stares at her with admiration.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDIO - NIGHT

He's painting an imaginative forest - a wonderfully vivid painting is starting to emerge. Charlie watches him with interest.

INT. D'MARCOS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Mark clicks his fingers at the WINE WAITER. He rushes to their table.

MARK

A bottle of Dom Perignon 64 please.

The waiter is ecstatic with this choice and rushes off to tell Signor D'Marco. He's also ecstatic. He gestures to TWO WAITERS. They fall over each other in the rush to give Mark and Laura menus. Signora D'Marco doesn't look happy.

DISSOLVE TO:

Mark and Laura are eating their main course. A GUITARIST PLAYS romantic Italian music.

Mark lifts his glass to Laura.

MARK (CONT'D)

To us. We've got the same drive,
Laura. We make a great team.

Laura clinks her glass against his and smiles at him.

LAURA

Cheers.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Daniel is finishing the forest scene. Charlie is asleep in his cage. Daniel studies the painting. It glows with colour and light like the da Vinci painting. He moves forward and paints the outline of a woman's body.

INT. D'MARCOS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Mark and Laura are drinking coffee, now watched by the staff. Mark gets out a small box and gives it to Laura. The staff tense expectantly.

LAURA
What's this?

MARK
Something special.

Laura opens the box. It's a diamond eternity ring.

MARK (CONT'D)
Life's too short to waste time.
You're a limited edition, Laura.
Beautiful. Bright. Ambitious.

The Italian staff start clapping. The guitarist plays louder. The few other DINERS join in the clapping. Mark slips the ring on Laura's finger. Laura is overwhelmed.

LAURA
Mark, we hardly -

The manager rushes over to them to shake their hands.

SIGNORE D'MARCO
Signore. Signora. Vorrei offrire le
congratulazioni del personale
intero sulle vostre nozze
forecoming!

Mark smiles at him. Laura obviously doesn't understand.

MARK
He's congratulating us. Molti
ringraziamenti.

The Signore beams. Laura opens her mouth to protest.

SIGNORE D'MARCO
Now you dance.

Mark takes Laura's hand and guides her to the dance floor. Everyone claps to the music. Laura loves dancing so she can't help but enjoy herself. They dance expertly together. Other couples join in, even the staff.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

DAYLIGHT now shines through the window. An exhausted Daniel stands in front of a finished painting. Laura stands in the magical forest, completely encased in ice. The outline of her body shimmers. It's a powerful and enigmatic painting. Charlie stares at it and squawks.

DANIEL

This is it, Charlie bird. This is the big one.

He collapses on a settee and sleeps. Charlie falls off his perch and sleeps.

INT. THE OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA AGENCY - DAY

Everyone is working when Laura walks in. She looks shell-shocked. James and Peter whisper to each other as they stare at her.

Laura sits down next to Sade like a robot.

SADE

How'd it go?

She doesn't answer. Sade nudges her.

LAURA

I seem to be engaged.

SADE

(shrieking)

Engaged! You only went out for a meal!

The men stare at them.

LAURA

Shh... I don't know how it happened.

SADE

How about this? He proposed. You accepted.

LAURA

But I didn't. There was music and dancing and no one seemed to notice that I didn't say anything.

SADE

Didn't you say something later?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA

It didn't seem very polite.

SADE

Polite! Are you nuts! We're talking about a ball and chain here, Laur!

INT. OUTSIDE DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Madame Kari knocks on Dan's door. After some time, a bleary-eyed Dan opens it.

MADAME KARI

Too much Tokay, Daniel.

He frowns at her, confused.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)

Have you any tablets for the head?

DAN

Tablets?...umm...

He walks into his studio. Madame Kari follows him.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Madame Kari screams when she sees Charlie. Charlie screams and falls off his perch.

MADAME KARI

You have a bird!

Dan stands in front of Charlie to protect him.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)

That is why you never ask me up here!

DAN

I'm sorry, Madame Kari, but he's not just a bird. Charlie's a friend. If he goes, I go.

Madame Kari sees his Ice Maiden painting and gasps.

MADAME KARI

You have done it, Daniel. You have become a butterfly... we must show this to my friends.

She picks up the painting and walks towards the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

What are you doing? What about your headache?

MADAME KARI

What headache? Come. Quick. We go.

She walks out, Dan looks at Charlie.

DAN

Do you think she's mad?

Charlie bobs his head up and down.

MADAME KARI (OS)

Daniel! I am waiting!

Dan grabs a jacket and runs out.

EXT. OUTSIDE MERIDIAN MEDIA - DAY

Mark, wearing black leathers, drives up on a Harley Davidson and honks the horn repeatedly. Numerous people stare out of windows at him. Laura waves from a window.

DISSOLVE TO:

A busy street. Laura rides pillion on the bike as Mark weaves expertly through heavy traffic. She's very nervous. Mark is elated. They stop at traffic lights. Mark turns to speak to her.

MARK

So we'll fly to New York after you've won the perfume account and you can meet my folks. Mom will arrange the wedding. She's a great organiser. So, how many people you want to invite? My folks like big aff-

The lights change. Laura hangs on to him as he careers off at high speed, looking terrified.

INT. O'CONNOR'S ART GALLERY - DAY

C.U. of Dan's ICE MAIDEN painting hanging on a wall.

Looking at the painting are BRENDAN, 50s, the Irish gallery-owner, his mother MRS O'CONNOR, 80s, Madame Kari and Dan. Dan looks very worried as none of them show any reaction to the painting at all. At last...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS O'CONNOR

This is going to pay for my funeral, Brendan. With a little something left over for you and the artist, of course.

DAN

So you like it, then?

BRENDAN

It's a grand painting.

His mother kicks his foot.

MRS O'CONNOR

It's not bad, I'll give you that.

MADAME KARI

It is beautiful, Bridget and you know it.

MRS O'CONNOR

I wouldn't go as far as that, Katalin.

(to Dan)

So how many have you painted?

DAN

Well... actually... I -

MADAME KARI

He is painting a series.

Dan's mouth opens.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)

So we do business. I am Daniel's manager.

Dan's mouth opens more.

MRS O'CONNOR

I'd better do the negotiations, Brendan. Come in the back, Katalin.

The women walk off, arm in arm, leaving Dan and Brendan staring after them.

DISSOLVE TO:

Madame Kari and Mrs O'Connor come back into the gallery and smile at the men who are talking quietly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRENDAN

Is it all settled, Ma?

MRS O'CONNOR

It is that, Brendan. We've commissioned young Daniel here to paint five more paintings like that.

Daniel is about to argue when Madame Kari flaps her arms up and down like a butterfly.

Dan smiles at the O'Connors.

DAN

I'll paint you the most beautiful paintings you've ever seen, but I'm not selling that one.

Brendan and his mother are just about to argue, when they see the resolution on Dan's face. They nod to him.

INT. MADAME KARI'S LOUNGE - DAY

A stunned Dan looks at a cheque for £3,000. Madame Kari smiles at him.

MADAME KARI

This is an advance for five more paintings, Daniel. You'll get much more when they are sold.

(beat)

Oh, I nearly forget. My commission - it is 10%. Very cheap, I think.

Dan looks at her.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)

Artists don't make good salesmen.

DAN

Actually, I'm quite a good...

(beat)

Okay. But only if Charlie can stay.

MADAME KARI

Charlie?

Dan squawks and flaps his arms up and down. Madame Kari smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)
 Charlie can stay, but tell him - no
 squeaking in the night.

DAN
 Okay. I'll oil his cage.

He smiles as he walks out. She frowns.

EXT. OUTSIDE LAURA'S FLAT - NIGHT

Daniel looks incredibly nervous as he rings the bell and
 waits. Nothing. He rings again for longer. He's carrying the
 ICE MAIDEN painting.

HILARY (OS)
 Yes?

DANIEL
 Hi. Is Laura there?

HILARY (OS)
 No. Who's that?

DANIEL
 Daniel. I'm a ...friend of Laura's.

HILARY (OS)
 Any friend of Laura's is a friend
 of mine. Come up, Daniel.

The door opens. Daniel walks in, looking worried.

INT. LAURA'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

The usual tip. Jazz music plays. Hilary, tipsy, not drunk,
 sways around the room.

INT. AN CORRIDOR OUTSIDE LAURA'S FLAT - NIGHT.

Dan leans the painting against the wall and RINGS the
 doorbell. The door opens. Hilary's eyes widen with pleasure
 when she sees Daniel. She holds his hand and pulls him into
 the room. Daniel is taken aback.

HILARY
 Hello, Daniel. Come in.

INT. LAURA'S LOUNGE - NIGHT

Hilary closes the door, smiles at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HILARY
I'm Hilary. Laura's -

DANIEL
Sister. I can see the resemblance.

Hilary smiles with pleasure. He smiles back.

HILARY
What will you drink?

DANIEL
Well, I'm driving so I won't -

HILARY
Whiskey or whiskey?

She giggles and pours two glasses. She gives one to Daniel.
He takes it.

HILARY (CONT'D)
So what you want to see Laura
about?

DANIEL
Well, it's...kind of...personal...

HILARY
Is it really? Do sit down.

He sits down. She sits down close beside him.

HILARY (CONT'D)
Now tell me what you do? Something
fascinating, I'm sure.

DANIEL
I'm an artist, actually.

HILARY
I thought so. It's all in your
fingers.

She strokes his fingers. Daniel is embarrassed.

HILARY (CONT'D)
Laura doesn't like men.

DANIEL
Doesn't she?

HILARY
I do, though. Very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Hilary leans forward, displaying her cleavage. Daniel gets up and walks towards the door. Hilary follows him.

DANIEL

Listen. I'd better go. Could you tell Laura...

Suddenly, Hilary throws her arms around him and kisses him. At that moment the door opens and Laura walks in. She stands rigid, watching her mother and Daniel kissing. Daniel jumps back in horror.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

It's not what-

LAURA

You lying, mother-mauling bastard!

She man-handles him towards the door.

INT. OUTSIDE LAURA'S FLAT DOOR. NIGHT

Laura slams the door in Dan's face. We hear raised voices through the door. Things being thrown. Daniel listens, not knowing what to do. He paces up and down.

Suddenly, the door opens. Daniel flattens himself in a doorway so Laura won't see him. She angrily throws her mother's things down the stair well.

HILARY (OS)

Not my best chemise, darling!

Laura goes back into the flat and gets more things, and throws them down the stair well. Daniel watches them float away. Hilary starts wailing.

HILARY (OS) (CONT'D)

You can't throw me out! I'm your mother!

LAURA (OS)

I never had a mother!

HILARY (OS)

Where am I supposed to go?

LAURA (OS)

Am I supposed to care!

Laura throws her mother's coat and bag out of the door, then pushes her mother outside and slams the door in her face. Hilary wails.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HILARY

Don't do this to Mummy, Laura. I love you.

Laura doesn't answer.

HILARY (CONT'D)

Open the bloody door, Laura! You always were a horrible child and you've turned into a horrible woman! I hope I never see you as long as I live!

She listens for some response. Nothing. She sniffs dramatically, then puts on her coat.

She suddenly sees Daniel in a doorway and starts crying even more dramatically.

HILARY (CONT'D)

To be thrown out on such a night. Oh thank God, Daniel - you're waiting for me. Such a gentleman. Wherever am I to go?

She looks at Daniel pathetically. Daniel looks cornered.

INT. DAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Hilary sits happily beside Daniel, pointing out the sights of London to him. He drives on auto-pilot.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Hilary and Dan walk in. Daniel looks as if he's in shock.

HILARY

I never thought there were any honourable men left, Daniel. How wrong I was. How noble of you to share your abode with me in my hour of despair.

She suddenly sees Charlie and rushes over to his cage.

HILARY (CONT'D)

Oh, I love parrots. Who's a pretty boy, then? Who's a pretty boy?

CHARLIE

Those that know little often repeat it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hilary is taken aback.

HILARY
What a strange parrot.

She turns and smiles seductively at Daniel.

HILARY (CONT'D)
Now where do we sleep, Daniel?

Daniel's eyes widen with alarm.

CHARLIE
Uh-oh.

DISSOLVE TO:

Daniel is lying on the settee with a duvet over him. A chair is wedged under the bedroom door handle.

Daniel watches in horror as it moves down.

HILARY (OS)
Daniel - there seems to be something wrong with the door.

Daniel lies rigidly on the settee until he hears her get back into bed. He stares at the ceiling and shakes his head in bewilderment.

DAN
Why me? Why?

INT. OUTSIDE LAURA'S FLAT - DAY

Laura walks out of her flat and sees the Ice Maiden painting leaning against a wall. She stares at it in amazement.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Dan is fast asleep on the settee. Hilary bangs repeatedly on the lounge door. Dan wakes up, falls off the settee, looks around and groans.

Charlie falls off his perch and squawks.

Dan gets up, finds his mobile and hits a number.

DAN
(into phone)
I've got all the money I owe you.
I've been commissioned to paint.
For Christ's sake - come round!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)

I think I'm having a nervous
breakdown!

Hilary bangs the door even louder.

HILARY (OS)

Daniel! - I can't open the door!

DAN

(shouting)

I'm working on it!

(into phone)

If you want to see me alive - come
round. Now!

DISSOLVE TO:

Hilary is still hammering on the door as Dan's doorbell BUZZES. Dan rushes to open the door. Alex stands there. He doesn't look happy. Charlie cowers in his cage.

Dan stuffs money into Alex's jacket pocket. Alex looks around, stunned.

ALEX

What's happened? Who the hell's
making that noise?

DAN

Laura's mother.

Alex looks very shocked.

ALEX

You're not banging Laura's mother?

DAN

No!

Hilary hammers louder.

DAN (CONT'D)

Laura threw her out.

ALEX

And you took her in?

Dan nods.

HILARY (OS)

(screaming)

Open the fucking door!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dan walks over and takes the chair away from the door handle. Hilary falls into the room. Alex stares at her in alarm. Hilary gets up, trying to muster up some dignity.

HILARY (CONT'D)

You must be a friend of Daniel's.
I'm so sorry about the noise, but I
hate being trapped. I'm Hilary
Hamilton. And you are?

She presents her hand to Alex, very regally. Alex doesn't know whether he should kiss it or not. He fudges the issue and shakes her fingers.

ALEX

Alex Searson. An ex-friend of
Dan's.

Dan shoots him a look.

HILARY

Ex? How very interesting.

She sits down on Dan's settee and pats it for Alex to join her. Alex looks cornered as Dan disappears into the bathroom.

DISSOLVE TO:

Hilary has a hand on Alex's knee as Dan walks in. Alex jumps up.

ALEX

Got to go to work.

DAN

So have I. I'm sorry, Hilary, but
you can't stay here any longer.

HILARY

(wailing)
I've only stayed one night. Where
am I going to go when I've got no
money?

Dan and Alex exchange glances. They both get out some money and give it to her. She smiles delightedly.

DISSOLVE TO:

Alex and Dan are alone.

ALEX

I wasn't going to see you again...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHARLIE
See you again...

DAN
I only did it to impress Laura.

CHARLIE
Impress Laura.

ALEX & DAN
Shut up!

ALEX
How the hell did you expect to get
away with it?

Charlie opens his beak and closes it when they both stare at him.

DAN
I don't know... Why would you tell
someone your mother's dead, when
they're not?

ALEX
Christ - who did that?

DAN
Laura.

They stare at each other in confusion.

DAN (CONT'D)
Would you do something for me?

Alex looks very wary.

DAN (CONT'D)
Would you tell Laura why I did it.

Alex doesn't answer.

DISSOLVE TO:

Dan is alone, painting another Ice Maiden picture. This time, the ice covering Laura's body is melting slightly. Charlie sways to the music that PLAYS in the background.

INT. OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA AGENCY - DAY

The men are working.

At the other end of the room, Laura is whispering to Sade.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SADE
 (shocked)
 With your Mum!
 (shouting)
 Men are complete bastards!

Sanjay jumps up, very hurt by the accusation. Peter and James look dismissive. Angus carries on drawing.

SANJAY
 I'm not! You can ask my girl-
 friend! She says I'm...

They all look at him and wait.

Sanjay sits down, smiling to himself.

CUT TO:

SADE
 Dan is like... the shittiest man
 I've ever met.

LAURA
 What would you do if a man painted
 a picture of you covered in ice and
 left it on your door-step.

SADE
 Have him sectioned.

She looks at Laura.

SADE (CONT'D)
 Who did that?

Laura brings out the Ice Maiden painting and shows it to Sade. She's stunned.

LAURA
 Dan.

A DUCK HAND-PUPPET suddenly appears at the door of the office. It quacks repeatedly.

Everyone looks up, surprised. Sanjay gets a duck puppet out of his pocket and puts it on his hand and rushes to the door, quacking. The ducks meet at the door and kiss.

Everyone stares in amazement as DAFFY, a girl in her 20s appears from behind the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAFFY
I couldn't wait. Quack. Quack.

SANJAY
Oh, Daffy duck. Quack. Quack.

They turn the duck's faces away so they can't see them as they kiss.

Everyone in the office screams with laughter.

Sanjay and Daffy stop kissing to look at them. They stop laughing.

SANJAY (CONT'D)
Have you never been so much in love
that you don't care what other
people think of the silly,
wonderful things you do together?

Everyone looks sad.

Sanjay quacks good-bye to Daffy and walks back to his desk, beaming with happiness.

Laura looks close to tears as she picks up the painting and walks out. Sade frowns at her.

EXT. OUTSIDE MERIDIAN MEDIA - DAY

Laura hails a taxi. One stops. She gets in with the painting.

Alex walks around the corner and enters the building.

INT. O'CONNOR'S GALLERY - DAY

Dan and Brendan are trying to hang one of Dan's paintings. Mrs O'CONNOR supervises them.

MRS O'CONNOR
Left. No, higher. Higher than that,
Brendan! Are you listening, at all?
No, no - it's slanting now. Down a
little on your side, Daniel. May
the curse of Mary Malone and her
nine illegitimate children chase
you so far over the hills of
Damnation that the Lord himself
won't find you with a telescope if
you don't get this right. Up a bit
on the left now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brendan and Dan glance at each other as they move the painting endlessly around the wall.

DAN
(whispering)
Is she always so...

BRENDAN
(whispering)
No, something it's worse.

DISSOLVE TO:

Brendan and Dan lean against the wall, exhausted. They have put up three paintings. Dan looks at his watch.

DAN
That's taken three hours, Brendan.

Mrs O'CONNOR stares at the paintings, critically. She still doesn't like the way they hang.

Brendan pulls Dan towards the door.

BRENDAN
We're off now, Ma. See you later.

They run out of the gallery.

INT. OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA - DAY

In a corridor outside the glass-sided office Alex talks animatedly to Sade. Sade walks off. Alex walks after her and grabs her by the shoulders. She looks annoyed and pushes them away.

The men in the office, watch them with interest. Angus draws a caricature of them both. It's good, but vicious. Sanjay smiles as he speaks into his mobile.

Alex holds Sade's shoulders as he speaks. She's thawing.

CUT TO:

ALEX
But he only did it because he's totally nuts about her. Will you tell her. He's a good guy, Sade.
(beat)
Fancy going dancing?

SADE
I'll think about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She walks back into the office, swaying her hips. He watches them with interest.

INT. MADAME KARI'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

Laura and Madame Kari sit on a settee. Laura looks nervous and miserable. Madame Kari is relaxed as she drinks tea and studies Laura. The Ice Maiden Painting leans against the door.

LAURA

It's very peaceful in this room. So many paintings and books and... have you lived here long? I hope you don't mind me leaving the painting with you, but I don't want to ...

Laura touches her hair.

MADAME KARI

Why can't you accept such a beautiful gift?

Laura stares around the room. She's taken aback when she sees the painting of Ilana.

LAURA

What do you think of Dan?

MADAME KARI

What do you think of him?

Laura twists her hair round and round her fingers.

LAURA

You can't trust him. He lies to people.

MADAME KARI

And you have never lied?

(beat)

More tea?

Laura looks embarrassed as Madame Kari pours a cup and gives it to Laura.

LAURA

I'm engaged to be married.

MADAME KARI

So that is why you are so happy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Laura glances at her and bites her lip.

LAURA

I was bought up in a council house.

Madame Kari drinks her tea and waits.

LAURA (CONT'D)

After my father left, we didn't have any money, you see. My mother was very angry about it. She was used to money. I have to make money for her. She's got nothing.

Laura waits for Madame Kari's response. Nothing.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Money will help... won't it?

MADAME KARI

If it will bring you happiness. Do you think it will?

Laura stares at her.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Dan stares out of the window and sees Laura hailing a taxi. He rushes out of the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE MADAME KARI'S HOUSE - DAY

The taxi drives Laura from the house as Dan rushes into the street.

DAN

(shouting)

Laura! Shit! Shit! Shit!

People stare at him, then look away as he kicks a rubbish bin repeatedly.

INT. HALLWAY. MADAME KARI'S HOUSE -DAY

As Dan walks in Madame Kari opens her door.

MADAME KARI

She loves you and she's engaged to be married to another man. What are you going to do, Daniel?

Dan rushes out of the door. Madame Kari sings to herself as she closes the front door.

INT. THE OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA - DAY

Laura walks into the office. Sade gets up to speak to her, but Mark comes into the office and gets to her first.

MARK
We need to talk.

Laura walks past him and sits down near Sade.

LAURA
Not now.

MARK
Yes, now!

SADE
Leave her alone.

MARK
Who's talking to you?

Suddenly Hilary appears at the doorway and sees Laura. She's drunk.

HILARY
Laurie-laur - I've come to see you,
baby!

Laura looks horrified.

MARK
Who's the drunk?

Laura rushes over to Hilary.

LAURA
(hissing)
What are you doing here?

HILARY
(a slurred shout)
A little bird told me you're
marrying a wealthy American! Where
is he? I wanna meet him!

Angus wipes out his drawing pad and does a caricature of her. Everyone in the office stares as Hilary staggers towards Mark.

HILARY (CONT'D)
Got it in one. The style says it
all, buster.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As she speaks, she slides down Mark's suit and collapses on the floor.

HILARY (CONT'D)
I'm your future ...what's it
called?... mother-in-law.

Mark stares down at her in horror. Laura is rigid with embarrassment.

Dan appears at the door and takes in the situation. He walks over to Hilary and picks her up.

DAN
Come on, Laura.

He carries Hilary out. Laura follows him.

INT. DAN'S CAR - TRAVELLING - DAY

Dan crawls through heavy traffic. Laura sits besides him, blinking back tears. Hilary is snoring in the back.

DAN
I'm sorry I told you so many lies.
I wanted to impress you and it just
escalated. But you know the time
you came in and saw your mother and
me... it wasn't -

LAURA
I know. She's done it before.
(beat)
She's been like this since Dad left
us. I don't know what to do.

Laura starts to cry.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I've tried everything. She won't
listen to me.

DAN
I know someone she might listen to.

INT. HALLWAY. MADAME KARI'S HOUSE - DAY

Dan carries Hilary into the hallway. Laura follows him.

Madame Kari comes out of her apartment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME KARI
Bring her in, Daniel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MADAME KARI'S SITTING ROOM - DAY

Dan puts Hilary down on Madame Kari's settee. She's still fast asleep.

MADAME KARI
I'll look after her. You go away
and talk.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - DAY

Laura and Dan stare at each other across the room. Charlie watches them.

DAN
This is Laura, Charlie.

CHARLIE
She walks in beauty like the night.

Laura is taken aback.

LAURA
How did you teach him to say that?

DAN
I didn't. I bought him off an
English Professor who liked Byron,
Shakespeare and limericks.

CHARLIE
Is this dagger that I see -

DAN
Shut up, Charlie!

He throws a cloth over his cage. Charlie gives a muffled squawk.

They stand in silence, staring at each other. Laura takes the eternity ring off her finger and puts it in her pocket. They move towards each other and kiss.

INT. MADAME KARI'S SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Madame Kari sits reading. Hilary stirs in her sleep. She opens her eyes and looks around in bewilderment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADAME KARI

I'm Madame Katalin Kari and you are Laura's mother. You have a lot of listening to do.

INT. DAN'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Laura stands at the end of the room, posing for Dan as he paints. They smile at each other.

INT. MADAME KARI'S SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Madame Kari is standing over Hilary who's holding her head against the pain of a massive hangover.

MADAME KARI

So you are going to stop being a self-centred, petulant child who is ruining her daughter's life and start thinking of her.

Hilary groans.

MADAME KARI (CONT'D)

And unless you agree to my terms, you will be locked in this flat until you do.

(beat)

If you agree, I will get you something to stop the pain in your self-centred head. Do you agree?

Hilary groans.

HILARY

To what?

Madame Kari smiles.

INT. DAN'S CAR. TRAVELLING - NIGHT.

Dan is driving. Hilary sits rigidly in the back seat beside Alex.

DAN

They're a fantastic organization. They really help people, don't they, Alex?

Dan stops at a traffic light. Hilary tries to get out. Alex clutches her arm. They wrestle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A car pulls up beside them. Hilary bangs on the window and shouts.

HILARY

Help! Help! I'm being abducted!

The COUPLE in the car stare in alarm at the sight of Hilary and Alex fighting. The lights suddenly change and Dan speeds off. The couple in the other car look shocked.

ALEX

They could call the police!

DAN

We're trying to help you, Hilary.
Don't fight us. We'll come in with you and give you lots of support. I promise.

Hilary stops fighting. Alex collapses back into the seat.

ALEX

How'd you get me into these situations, Dan?

DAN

(puzzled)
I don't know.

INT. A HALL. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS MEETING - NIGHT

A group of SILENT PEOPLE, from 18 to 90, are sitting in a circle; the new members look embarrassed, the old, relaxed. The GROUP LEADER, a middle-aged enthusiastic man, looks around the group.

LEADER

So, who wants to start?

A lot of coughing and shuffling. The door suddenly opens. Everyone looks at it. Daniel walks in backwards, talking to Hilary and pulling her hands. Alex pushes her into the room.

DANIEL

It's not difficult. You just say.
Hello. I'm Hilary and I'm an alcoholic.

He turns around and sees the happy expressions on people's faces. Everyone starts clapping furiously. Daniel looks at the group, completely bemused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEADER

Well done, Hilary! Well done!

DISSOLVE TO:

Hilary, Alex and Daniel are sitting in the group. Hilary is chatting to a number of people happily. Daniel is listening to an old man and nodding. Alex looks at his watch in agitation.

Suddenly the group leader turns to Alex and claps his hands loudly. Everyone falls silent.

LEADER (CONT'D)

There's only one person left who hasn't spoken yet. And you are?

Everyone turns and smiles at Alex. He's horrified.

ALEX

Alex, but I'm not an alcoholic! I only came here to support-

LEADER

Your friends. Of course you did, Alex. Listen, we've all been in your position. We know the desperation you're feeling now.

The group nod their heads in compassionate sympathy. Dan bites his knuckles to stop laughing. Alex gives him a killer look.

INT. DAN'S CAR - TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Alex's face is set in stone. Daniel shakes with helpless laughter as he drives.

DAN

I didn't know it would be like that.

ALEX

I'll be haunted by the looks on those people's faces for ever.

Dan leans forward and gives Alex the same compassionate look, then roars with laughter. Alex bursts out laughing too.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) MARK'S OFFICE. Laura gives back the ring to Mark. They both look relieved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

B) A LONDON STREET. Posters of The Ice Maiden Exhibition on billboards. People stare at it in fascination.

C) DAN'S STUDIO. Dan paints. Laura poses. Charlie watches.

D) A RADIO STUDIO. Dan talks to an interviewer. He holds up a photograph of The Ice Maiden 2 to show him. The interviewer obviously likes it and speaks into the Mic.

E) D'MARCO'S RESTAURANT. NIGHT. Dan and Laura sit in their usual table, watched by a happy Signora D'Marco. She calls her husband and speaks to him. He's shocked, but gets a bottle of champagne and takes it over to them and gestures towards his wife. He opens the champagne and pours it. They raise their glasses to the Signora. She smiles. Signore mops his head with a handkerchief.

F) OFFICE. MERIDIAN MEDIA. NIGHT. Laura and Sade are working on a power point presentation. They look exhausted.

INT. MAIN OFFICE. ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

A nervous Laura and Sade are waiting alone.

SADE

I'm going to throw up.

Mark and TONY GARCIA, 70s, a distinguished Italian-American, walk in. Laura and Sade smile at him. He smiles back. Mark doesn't make eye contact with Laura.

MARK

I'd like you to meet Tony García,
the Managing Director of the
Perfume Consortium in New York.
This is Laura and Sade.

LAURA

Hello, Mr. García. We've read a
great deal about you.

TONY

All of it interesting, I hope.

The girls smile nervously as the men sit down.

TONY (CONT'D)

Okay. Show me an ad that's going to
blow me away.

Laura's smile doesn't slip. Sade lowers the lights and clicks a switch. Everyone looks at the screen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA (OS)
Our ad targets women of all ages
from all ethnic groups.

ON THE SCREEN.

The scene moves from a steamy Brazilian jungle full of mysterious sounds, a pyramid in Cairo at sunset, the Taj Mahal in India, a spectacular African plain, a popular Spanish resort, Mount Fuji at sunrise, a beer festival in Munich, the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, an aerial view of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Harlech Castle in Wales, the splendour of Niagara Falls, the dunes of the Sahara desert, a lively Cornish sea-side to a majestic Norwegian Fiord. In each scene, the MUSIC changes to reflect the country we visit. Women of all sizes, ages and nationalities walk through each scene holding ALCHEMY PERFUME. As they use the perfume, each woman is gradually transformed. Men appear from the sand, the sea, the desert and the mountains to stare at them.

MALE VO
(very sexy)
Alchemy - perfume that turns you
into the woman you've always wanted
to be.

The screen goes dead. Sade switches on the lights. She and Laura stare at each other, nervously.

Tony Garcia sits deep in thought for some time, then he jumps up and paces the room, excitedly.

TONY
We could market male and female
versions. Alchemy X and Y.
(beat)
This is a winner. Congratulations
ladies.

He shakes hands with Mark.

TONY (CONT'D)
Your company's got the account,
Mark.

Laura and Sade run towards each other and hug.

Tony glances at Mark and raises one eye-brow.

INT. A LONDON CLUB - NIGHT

Sade, Alex, Laura and Dan are dancing wildly around the room to loud music.

DISSOLVE TO:

The exhausted group sit at a table drinking water and beer. Dan's mobile RINGS.

DAN
Hello... Brendan? What's up?...
What?... Now?

INT. O'CONNOR'S ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Brendan is trying to reason with Mrs O'Connor as Dan, Alex, Sade and Laura walk in. She's trying to take down one of the paintings.

BRENDAN
The paintings are perfect, Ma.

MRS O'CONNOR
They are not!

BRENDAN
(exploding)
That is it! Not one thing is going to be changed in this gallery until Daniel's exhibition. Do you hear me, Ma! Not one single thing!

She looks at the determination on Brendan's face and smiles.

MRS O'CONNOR
Well, it's taken you a long time, Brendan O'Connor. But at last you've done it. You've stood up to me.

Brendan is stunned.

BRENDAN
You mean that's all it took?

Mrs O'Connor nods, then turns to Dan.

MRS O'CONNOR
Let's hope you sell the paintings, Daniel. We've invested a lot of money in you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan suddenly looks worried.

INT. THE ART GALLERY - NIGHT

The place is packed with people staring at Dan's Ice Maiden series of paintings. Each one has a slightly different background, but in each painting a little more ice is melting until in the last painting - Laura stands almost naked in the forest. She's staring at us with a smile on her face. All the paintings have SOLD stickers on them. Mrs O'Connor and Madame Kari look ecstatic.

Sade, Laura, Alex and Dan stand together.

DAN
They're buying them all!

LAURA
Of course they are.

ALEX
They're the best things you've ever painted, Dan.

DAN
You see the one over there.

Dan points to Ice Maiden 6.

DAN (CONT'D)
That's reserved for you, Al. Thanks for everything. You're a great-

Alex punches him playfully on the shoulder. Dan staggers back in pain.

DAN (CONT'D)
Shit!

CUT TO:

Sanjay and his girl-friend Daffy wander around hand in hand. In their other hands are their duck puppets.

A stylish, radiant Hilary talks to Brendan who's very interested.

Elizabeth and Jonathan are surrounded by JOURNALISTS with Dictaphones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIZABETH

We always knew our son would be a famous painter, didn't we, Jonathan?

JONATHAN

From the moment he picked up one of my paint brushes and painted a mural on the dining room wall. He was four years old.

ELIZABETH

Oh, the stories we could tell you.

The journalists lean forward to hear more.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE ROOM. Madame Kari and Mrs O'Connor stare at Hilary.

MADAME KARI

Laura tells me her mother hit a wagon.

MRS O'CONNOR

Holy Mary Mother of God. She's taken the pledge.

(beat)

Never trust a woman who doesn't drink, Katalin.

They collect two drinks from a passing waiter.

MADAME KARI

Let's drink to that, Bridget.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE ROOM. Laura and Dan stare at each other.

LAURA

Do you know where I'd like to go? That Brazilian forest where you did all that Conservation work to help the poor.

Dan looks embarrassed. Laura laughs.

LAURA (CONT'D)

It'd make a great place for a honeymoon, don't you think?

Dan stares at her, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN
You mean you'll marry me?

LAURA
I will.

Dan whoops with joy and spins her around in his arms.

Madame Kari and Mrs O'Connor smile at them from the other side of the room.

CUT TO:

MADAME KARI
I knew they would marry the moment
I saw them together, Bridget.

MRS 'O CONNOR
That's clairvoyance for you,
Katalin.

Mrs O'Connor bangs her walking stick loudly on the floor.

MRS O'CONNOR
(shouting)
Let's be having a toast now! Raise
your glasses.

Hilary steps forward and raises a glass of water.

HILARY
To my lovely daughter Laura and
Daniel. All happiness.

Everyone raises glasses.

EVERYONE
To Laura and Daniel!

Everyone smiles as they kiss.

Angus draws a picture of Dan and Laura kissing. It's pure gold.

FADE OUT.