

WHAT A GIRL NEEDS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

At the service counter of an exclusive perfumery, a SALES ASSISTANT gift-wraps a bottle of eau de parfum.

PHOEBE LENAUT (30), blonde hair sleekly coiffured, takes a satisfying whiff of the inside of her wrist, looks aimlessly at the opulence about her. She smiles awkwardly at a young PREGNANT WOMAN waiting at the other end of the counter.

The Assistant returns with the package, glances at the Pregnant Woman and issues a courteous cough to get Phoebe's attention.

SALES ASSISTANT
Should do the trick.

Accepting the package, Phoebe's happy smile returns and she walks off, a parting glance back at the bulging belly.

EXT. BOULEVARD - CAR TRAVELING - DAY

An older model black Mercedes CLC200 coupé, tinted to the max, cruises a boulevard. It slows, turns down into an undercover parking lot below a medium-rise Office Building.

INT. CLAUDE'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

SHARON (late 20s), the Receptionist in the modern reception area, sniffs the air, eyes not straying from her keyboard.

SHARON
Morning, Phoebe.

Sharon savors the fragrance as Phoebe heads straight past...

SHARON (CONT'D)
Time of the month again?

... toward the door to ...

INT. CLAUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Just inside the door, CLAUDE LENAUT (suave, late 30s), a lustful gleam in his eye, delicately kisses the hand of PAULINE (late 30s).

CLAUDE
 (faux French accent)
 Perhaps we should zeal it wiz a --

Wham! The door opens, jolts the back of Pauline, her hand back-slapping Claude in the mouth.

Phoebe, at the door, smiles politely at Pauline while Claude dabs his neat little handkerchief on his lips.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
 (muffled introduction)
 Chérie, Pauline Sloane. Phoebe my wife.

Bemused by his accent, Phoebe mouths '*Chérie*' ? to herself.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
 Mademoiselle Sloane --

PAULINE
 Pauline.

CLAUDE
Pauline runs "Aerotique". The lifestyle center.
 (a glance back at Pauline)
 Um, with a difference.

Blonde Pauline, attractive in smart business suit, smiles and assesses the slightly frumpy Phoebe.

PAULINE
 Drop over some time. You don't have to exert yourself.

She again offers her hand to Claude in a dominant fashion hovering over his upturned palm.

CLAUDE
 Au revoir.

As Pauline passes through the door she sniffs the air with approval, smiles again to Phoebe who returns a forced smile.

EXT. RESTAURANT (ALFRESCO) - DAY

Claude and Phoebe take lunch at a fashionable restaurant overlooking Santa Monica's 3rd Street Promenade.

CLAUDE
 (sans accent)
 She's no fool, that woman.

He refers to the JOGGERs and other fitness fanatics constantly passing by in view.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
She's taking all this to a new level. Sensual fitness. And I'm planning on being part of it.

PHOEBE
Better have a physical first.

CLAUDE
On the PR side!

PHOEBE
She's very attractive. For her age.

No comment from Claude as he stares at the Joggers.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
At least she noticed.

She thrusts an upturned wrist under his nose.

CLAUDE
Perfume is perfume.

PHOEBE
It's the best money can buy!

CLAUDE
No doubt!

She returns her wrist to her own nose.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
It would help if you eased back on the throttle for a while, okay chérie? If all goes to plan --

PHOEBE
Whose plan, Claude? Whose plan?

Claude dismisses her comment and returns his gaze to the sensual bodies promenading.

EXT. LENAUT HOUSE - GARAGE - DAY

The roll-up door of the garage is activated. Phoebe drives in to the sound of an enthusiastic BARKING from within.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

Phoebe is greeted by BABY, a lovable German Shepherd bitch, a little on the flabby side. It sniffs Phoebe's crotch and enthusiastically jumps up, humping her leg.

PHOEBE

Not what I had planned.

Cuddling the dog, they walk together from the kitchen to a Hallway where they pass a door to a Utility Room where Phoebe's cleaning woman, DORIS (early 60s), irons shirts.

Phoebe gives her scant acknowledgement ...

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Dorry.

... as she and Baby continue along the Hallway. Doris calls after them.

DORIS (O.S.)

This any good?

Doris emerges from the Utility Room holding a slip of paper. Getting no response, she puts it into her pinafore pocket.

DORIS (CONT'D)

Word of advice. This habit of his will cost him dearly.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - DAY

Phoebe's clothes are strewn on the voluptuous queen-size bed.

Near naked, she gives herself a 'pinch test' - a little bit of excess - nothing to sully a desirable physical specimen. She gathers her clothes and enters the

WALK-IN CLOSET

Phoebe hangs up her clothes and in the process chips one of her finger nails. Cursing, she goes to one of two bureaux. She rummages through the drawers of one. No luck.

Then the other. Amongst men's socks and other personals she locates a manicure set. But a small jewel box hidden there catches her eye.

She opens it, removes a diamond studded gold bracelet. A rush of dopamine.

There is an inscription: "Mon Chérie"

Phoebe fixes it to her right wrist just as Doris enters with a collection of Claude's freshly ironed shirts.

PHOEBE
Mon Chérie.

She is transfixed by the bracelet.

Doris, unfazed by the exposed body, rolls her eyes at the extravagance of the bracelet, breaks Phoebe's reverie, handing her the slip of paper from her pinafore.

Phoebe's eyes light up.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Seated on a stool at a breakfast bar, Phoebe fondles the scrap of paper - a receipt for \$6K for the bracelet.

The sound of a CAR (O.S.) pulling up.

Phoebe places the receipt in her jeans pocket and goes to the refrigerator, removes a prepared meal of lasagne, places it in a microwave and sets the timer.

She looks down at the dog at her feet, shakes her head in disapproval.

PHOEBE
We'd better not upset him. Come on.

She goes to the back door, gives a soft but stern whistle to the reluctant dog. The muffled sound of a car door slamming shut is stimulus enough and Baby leaves.

The door from the garage opens and Claude enters the kitchen. Phoebe greets him lovingly, much to his surprise.

He disdainfully sniffs the air.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Too much Parmesan?

CLAUDE
(looks to back door)
Nothing a vet couldn't fix!

PHOEBE
She's company. She's protection.
And she's my muse.

CLAUDE
(derisive)
Muse?!

Phoebe goes to her open laptop on the bench - there's a blank screen - and closes it.

Claude's scoff is masked by the ring of the microwave.

Phoebe removes a plate of pasta well beyond *al dente*, places it on the counter.

Off Claude's insincere smile.

PHOEBE
(apologetic)
I never know when you'll be home.

CLAUDE
(feigned sincerity)
Pressure of work.

PHOEBE
Poor darling.

Claude looks at his unpalatable dinner.

Phoebe runs her hand sensuously up and down Claude's arm.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claude, naked under the bed covers.

PHOEBE (O.S.)
Where's her husband?

He leans over and searches through the drawer of his night stand.

CLAUDE
She's not married.

Claude removes a small sachet from a pack.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
She's a business woman. No time for that.

WALK-IN CLOSET - INTERCUT

Phoebe, naked, removes the receipt from the pocket of her jeans, places it in a clutch bag on her dresser.

PHOEBE

Ah, yes, mademoiselle.

She neatly folds the jeans and stows them in her bureau,
grabs the bottle of perfume and dabs behind her ears ...

... looks about her briefly ...

... and dabs some on her crotch. Ouch! It's a little bit
sensitive down there.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

So, no special man in her life?

BEDROOM:

Claude is a little uneasy at this questioning as he
manipulates his hands under the bed covers.

CLAUDE

Just her brother. In business
together.

Phoebe enters wearing revealing lingerie, just in time to
catch Claude, hands under the bed covers, hurriedly,
awkwardly trying to manipulate his member.

PHOEBE

I trust that's safe sex!

Sprung, Claude is flummoxed.

CLAUDE

Yes. No, no. I was. Yes. I mean ...
it's just a precaution. I didn't
want to get you --

PHOEBE

(hurt)

No, you never do!

CLAUDE

You know how I feel about that.

PHOEBE

And you know how I feel about it! I
thought tonight maybe --

She gets in, rolls over on her side of the bed, snubbing him.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

May as well finish the job!

Frustrated, Claude removes the unused condom from under the bed covers, throws it into a nearby waste paper basket as the little covered hillock of an erection slowly wilts.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - MORNING

Claude stands by the opening to the walk-in closet, adjusting his tie; he's dressed for work - very suave indeed.

A sullen Phoebe, in dressing gown, passes him on the way out of the room.

Satisfied that she is gone, he heads back into

WALK-IN CLOSET

Claude goes to the bureau, where he stops and takes a final check that no-one is watching.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - MORNING

Phoebe, in dressing gown, at the breakfast bar, toying with toast and marmalade, Baby at the foot of the stool.

Her laptop is open but it's another case of the cursed blank page.

Claude enters, stands at the breakfast bar, sips his coffee.

CLAUDE
Got a meeting this evening so don't
worry about dinner.

Phoebe is indifferent; Claude tries to placate her.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
I've got her just about where I
want her.

No response from Phoebe.

Claude takes a last sip of his coffee and moves past Phoebe toward the door that leads to the garage.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
If I can pull this off --

PHOEBE
(sotto)
You're good at that.

He returns, gives her a patronising kiss on her head, moves out to the garage.

Peeved, she wanders over to a wall calendar and strikes through three consecutive circled dates.

She returns to the breakfast bar but she has no appetite. She feeds the toast to Baby.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
(to Baby)
He has no idea what a girl wants.

She and Baby share a look. Inspired, Phoebe turns to her laptop and types in a title: 'What a Girl Wants - by Phoebe Lenault'. She stares at the words a moment, waiting for options. None forthcoming. But at least it's a start.

Breaking her reverie, Claude pokes his head back through the door from the garage and glares at the dog.

CLAUDE
And do something about that one,
please.

EXT. VETERINARY PRACTICE - DAY

Phoebe, with Baby in tow, exits the building holding a pill bottle. They go to her black Mercedes coupé.

PHOEBE
The nerve of her..."We could both
do with a bit"!

The dog nestles into the meager back seat as Phoebe gets in and drives off with a squeal of tires.

INT. LENAULT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Phoebe tries to administer a pill to Baby - but the dog is wary.

PHOEBE
Look, if you want to stay inside.

The dog refuses to cooperate.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
I promise it's for the best.

But still no response.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Here, I'll show you.

She places the pill in her own mouth and crunches. The dog shies away and curls up in a corner of the kitchen.

Phoebe finds the pill quite pleasant.

EXT. STREET - PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

A well-worn Ford Mustang, with Florida plates, parked in an up-market tree-lined street, stakes out a large bungalow.

The front door of the Bungalow opens - Pauline casually farewells a thirty-something male, DAVID, who drives off in a Mercedes SUV.

The Mustang starts and drives off trailing it.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - NIGHT - SAME

Phoebe, eyes heavy, stares at the Title 'What a Girl Wants' on her laptop screen. She begins typing something incomprehensible. Frustrated, she deletes all but the Title.

She nods again, eyes heavier.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT - LATER

A silver-grey compact executive BMW sedan approaches and pulls up outside Pauline's bungalow.

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The TV is on softly in the background. Phoebe lies slumped on the couch asleep, Baby snoring at her feet.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

The silver-grey compact executive BMW sedan drives off from outside Pauline's bungalow.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phoebe in bed asleep. Muffled noise of a car pulling up.

Phoebe stirs and, after a short silence, punctuated with a creak or two, barely wakes.

PHOEBE
Get tied up?

Claude stops in his tracks, stumbles in the dark.

CLAUDE
Well and truly.

With an equivocal smile on his face, he starts undressing.

Phoebe huffs, rolls on her side, drifts off again.

Claude stares at her back, a stare that borders on disdain.

The clock on his night stand reads 2.00 am.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

Claude, dressed for work, enters - finds Phoebe dressed in an older style tracksuit with Baby, leash at the ready.

CLAUDE
What's all this?!

PHOEBE
Doctor's orders. Need the exercise.

CLAUDE
You could work out at Aerotique.
Won't cost.

PHOEBE
The dog!

CLAUDE
I'm not sure they have a crèche for canines.

PHOEBE
Bastard!

He shrugs: *What'd I say? What'd I say?*

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Forget it.

She fixes the leash on the dog.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
You can lock up.

And she and Baby head for the door to the garage.

CLAUDE
By the way, tried telling you last night. We're invited for dinner tonight. Got a surprise for you.

Phoebe's eyes brighten up in anticipation.

INT. PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM- NIGHT

An open planned area to one side of the Front Door of the bungalow. Sparsely furnished with a mix of stylish old and new. At a walnut marquetry drinks cabinet, David deftly POPS the cork from a bottle of champagne, pours four glasses.

He hands a glass to his guests, Phoebe and Claude. He raises his own glass.

DAVID
French champagne.

PHOEBE
The only kind.

Phoebe sips, splutters and almost chokes as...

Pauline enters, fixing the diamond-studded gold bracelet to her wrist.

Phoebe's face sours as Claude, making little of the incident, politely kisses the back of Pauline's hand sporting the bracelet. He grabs the fourth glass and offers it to her.

David sidles to Phoebe who composes herself as best she can.

Claude raises his glass.

CLAUDE
(hint of accent)
A toast. After some particularly amiable negotiations, Lenault Communiqué has secured a new business arrangement.

They toast the venture.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Everyone in Vegas with a desire for the barely legal will be clamoring to be seen at Aerotique.

Phoebe stares indignantly at the bracelet on Pauline's wrist.

PHOEBE
You're certainly one for surprises.

CLAUDE
I knew you'd be impressed.

Phoebe bites her tongue.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

Phoebe, in old track suit enters the kitchen to be greeted by Doris, cleaning aids in hand. Phoebe caresses Baby without really acknowledging Doris who shrugs off the snub.

PHOEBE
(to the ether)
Am I a fool to seek old-fashioned
fulfilment?

DORIS
Word of advice. It's hardly
fulfilment. Trust me. I had six.

PHOEBE
Aren't you the fool!

DORIS
So what's your hurry?

PHOEBE
I'm already thirty for God's sake!

DORIS
Oh dear, the warranty's about to
run out. I had my last when I was
forty-two; didn't do me no harm.

Phoebe appraises Doris - she is not a handsome specimen.

DORIS (CONT'D)
Word of advice. You're too
sensitive, that's your problem.

PHOEBE
What do you expect! He gave it to
that other woman last night! And
all I could do was stand and watch!

DORIS
You were there and you watched?

PHOEBE
Of course!

DORIS
Of course! And she didn't mind?

PHOEBE
"Didn't Mind"? She was gloating.
Her eyes were popping out!

DORIS
And you?

PHOEBE
What could I do? I didn't want to
make a scene in front of her
brother!

DORIS
Her brother was there as well?

PHOEBE
(nods)
I just stood there with my mouth
open. Was one of the most beautiful
things I've ever seen.

DORIS
So you rated it?!

PHOEBE
Didn't you when you saw it?

DORIS
We did it in the dark, in our day!

PHOEBE
Must have been two carats! At
least!

DORIS
(still confused)
At least?

PHOEBE
Is there a reason behind all this?

Doris screws her nose and stares the dog down.

DORIS
The wrong diet, maybe?

It's a good out, and Doris quickly vacates the room.

Phoebe stews a moment, looks at Baby, goes to a cabinet and removes the bottle of pills.

PHOEBE
Time for our exercise.

But the dog retreats to the corner of the kitchen.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
(looks at her clothes)
You're right. Not like this!

EXT. SPORTS BOUTIQUE - RODEO DRIVE - DAY

Phoebe, laden with some carry bags, merrily exits the boutique.

INT. AEROTIQUE FITNESS CENTER - DAY

Phoebe, in stunning new gym outfit and dazzling trainers, mini backpack, ambles aimlessly about the foyer, rhythmic Dance Music in the background.

PAULINE (O.C.)
Surprise, surprise.

Phoebe turns toward the

SERVICE COUNTER:

Pauline behind the service counter, business-like in her erotic, tight-but tracksuit uniform bearing the 'Aerotique' logo.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
Couldn't resist, eh?

Phoebe composes herself.

PHOEBE
Thought I'd take up your offer.

PAULINE
Wise girl, wise girl.

She comes round to the front of the counter, grabs a pamphlet on the way and hands it to Phoebe. The cover reads:

WE GET THE MOST FROM EVERY BODY

Phoebe eyes the simple bangle on Pauline's wrist.

Pauline appraises Phoebe's physique.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
Best to start off with our
beginners.

Phoebe stores the pamphlet in her mini backpack.

PHOEBE
Actually, I -- I really thought --
I thought I could have a chat.

PAULINE
Good idea. Over a fruit juice. But
only after a work-out.

PHOEBE
No, really. I'd like to --

But the assertive Pauline escorts her away, revealing a pole dancing class taking place in the background.

INT. AEROTIQUE FITNESS STUDIO - DAY

GANGSTA MUSIC: A young MALE INSTRUCTOR leads an aerobics class of attractive WOMEN, most with scanty outfits befitting the nature of the routine bordering on pornographic ...

With their limited mobility and coordination, their pelvic thrusts and backward butt projections border on the comical.

Among their number is Phoebe, not fully participating. She's no prude but she's not comfortable with the tone of the activity.

INT. AEROTIQUE CAFE - DAY - LATER

At a table, Phoebe, towel slung around neck, sips a fruit juice with Pauline and surveys the unfamiliar territory.

PHOEBE
Very impressive. And the name!

PAULINE
Says it all. We're creating our own market. Puts us ahead of the pack.

PHOEBE
Bit risqué.

PAULINE
But if you know what you want, you sometimes have to take the risk.

PHOEBE

Easier said than done for a woman.

PAULINE

Whoa. Where you coming from, woman?
You know what it is you want?

PHOEBE

I thought so.

PAULINE

Then go for it. Just spell it out.

PHOEBE

The bracelet.

Pauline is thrown by this comment from left field.

Phoebe, flummoxed by her indiscretion, nervously motions to Pauline's bare wrists.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You're not wearing Your beautiful
bracelet. If it were mine --

PAULINE

Not for public eyes. Part of my
investment portfolio. Nothing
sentimental.

(more intimately)

Sleeping safe and sound in my
bedroom. Away from the grubby hands
of --

Pauline's cell phone RINGS. She excuses herself and turns away to take the call. She's a bit puzzled at first but then a concerned look comes across her as she listens to her caller.

PAULINE (CONT'D)

Who is this?

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE - DAY

BRUCE (mid 40s), a slovenly specimen with grubby hands, at his disheveled desk, in conversation on his cell phone.

BRUCE

As if you didn't know!

PAULINE (V.O.)

Well I don't. So what do you want?

BRUCE
I've come to collect my dues, you
scheming bitch.

PAULINE (V.O.)
Your dues?

BRUCE
Fifteen grand, sweetheart. Time for
the pay-off.

He hangs up.

RESUME AEROTIQUE CAFE:

Blood drains from Pauline's face, her defences challenged.
She turns back to face Phoebe.

PAULINE
(into phone)
I'm sorry but we're not in a
position to help at the moment.

She closes her phone. With a brave face and forced smile, she
returns to stand beside Phoebe at the table.

PHOEBE
Problems?

PAULINE
Damn charities. Seems everybody
wants something from me these days.

Phoebe watches with an air of disdain, as her adversary
simply departs with nary a farewell.

PHOEBE
(sotto)
And what might that be, I wonder?

INT. CLAUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Claude at his desk sifts through old correspondence.

Sharon, enters with a handful of mail and flops it on the
desk.

CLAUDE
My bookings confirmed?

She nods and turns to leave. He hands her the pile of papers.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Here, get rid of this.

Taking the papers, she exits.

Claude opens the mail, peruses one, then another, much to his chagrin.

INT. CLAUDE'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Sharon feeds the old correspondence into a shredding machine.

CLAUDE (O.S.)
Sharon!! Get me the bloody bank!

She continues with her task, calls back.

SHARON
Yeah, in a minute.

CLAUDE (O.S.)
Now!

She rolls her eyes, stops what she is doing and ambles to her desk and begins dialing on the phone.

CLAUDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And then I want American Express!

SHARON
Good as done.

CLAUDE (O.S.)
And then I want all the department stores.

She is increasingly more sarcastic.

SHARON
And...?

CLAUDE (O.S.)
And then I want a coffee!

Naturally. And, unfazed, Sharon goes about her dialing.

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Claude paces the room, a drink in his hand, berating Phoebe, seated on the couch.

CLAUDE

I want an end to it. Now! Face it,
you've become an addict with a sick
habit!

PHOEBE

Perhaps if you gave me what I want.

CLAUDE

Give me a break!

PHOEBE

Well, until then --

CLAUDE

Until then just remember I'm not
made of money!

Phoebe stands in direct confrontation with Claude. She points to the 'Aerotique' pamphlet left on the coffee table.

PHOEBE

You seem to made of it when it
comes to that woman!

CLAUDE

What do you mean?

Phoebe leaps before she looks.

PHOEBE

That diam -
(checks herself)
damn "business arrangement".

CLAUDE

It's an investment.

He picks up the pamphlet by way of emphasis.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

This is the way to go.

PHOEBE

So you say! Me, I'm not so sure I
trust her. But I guess you see her
in a different light.

She storms out of the room leaving him pondering this last accusation.

She calls back to him.

PHOEBE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
So, if it's all the same to you,
until you give me what I want, I'll
pamper myself before all our hard
earned is gone.

Claude tosses the pamphlet back on the coffee table.

CLAUDE
Bonne chance, chérie!

EXT. DOMESTIC AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

VALET PARKING:

Claude pulls his BMW into the airport parking area and hands the vehicle over to a waiting VALET.

INT. JEWELER SORE - DAY

Phoebe, holds a wrist out, allowing a beautiful bracelet to sparkle in the store lights.

She removes it and hands it to a flamboyant MALE ASSISTANT who returns it to its dedicated box.

MALE ASSISTANT
Credit?

Phoebe nods and rummages through her shoulder bag.

She extracts her pack of credit cards from her bag, chooses that store's own card, double checks it is the right one and offers it.

As the transaction is being carried out, Phoebe fondles the bracelet in its dedicated box.

The Assistant returns, looking glum and embarrassed.

MALE ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry Missus Lenorlt.

PHOEBE
"Lenault", it's French, apparently.

MALE ASSISTANT
Pardonnez-moi, "Lenault". But this card is no longer valid.

PHOEBE
How do you mean?

MALE ASSISTANT
It's been cancelled.

PHOEBE
I think there must be some mistake.

MALE ASSISTANT
I'm sorry but --

Phoebe selects another card and proffers it.

PHOEBE
You accept this, I believe?

The Assistant checks the type of card.

MALE ASSISTANT
Certainly.

He goes to the terminal again. He looks back tentatively at Phoebe and meekly shakes his head.

MALE ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. Perhaps there has been a
mistake. Somewhere.

Phoebe snatches the card back, red-faced in front of the other well-to-do CUSTOMERS.

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Phoebe on her cell phone, paces the floor by the couch. Baby watches on warily.

PHOEBE
You're a bastard, you know that.
How dare you.

CLAUDE (V.O.)
(filtered)
*I told you before I left. But
obviously it didn't sink in.*

PHOEBE
What right have you got, eh? The
embarrassment, the humiliation.

CLAUDE (V.O.)
*Like I said, it's a nasty habit
you've got, Phoebe.*

She slams down the phone and sinks into the couch.

Overwhelmed, she leans back and places her left hand over her eyes, blocking out the angst.

Lifting her hand, she examines the meagre engagement ring nestled next to her wedding ring.

PHOEBE
Cheapskate.

She tugs the rings free and tosses them on the coffee table in front of the couch. It lands on the 'Aerotique' pamphlet. She picks up the pamphlet, stares menacingly at it, her mind ticking over.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Phoebe, in tracksuit and dazzling trainers, comes into the kitchen. Baby looks up at her with forlorn eyes.

PHOEBE
It's okay, Baby. You stay here.
This is a one-woman exercise.

The dog settles on the floor of the kitchen.

INT. PHOEBE'S MERCEDES - GARAGE - NIGHT

Phoebe opens the glove compartment, removes a pair of driving gloves, dons them and starts the car.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

One of the windows near the front door is ajar.

A window on the driveway side of the house is also ajar.

INT. PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Total darkness inside, save for some feeble illumination from a street light through the open front window ...and the faint beam from a pen-light held by a gloved hand.

Dazzling, hi-viz trainer-clad feet make their way clumsily, occasionally bumping into a piece of furniture.

INT. PAULINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness, the door slowly opens. Phoebe, with the aid of the pen-light, moves across the polished wood floorboards.

She rummages through the drawers of an antique chest,
discovers a set of handcuffs and a fancy leather quirt.

She locates an ornate marquetry jewel box. It's locked. She finds a comb with a sharp-pointed handle. She tries to lever open the box when a PHONE (O.S.) RINGS.

Startled, she fumbles the box, does well not to drop it.

INT. PAULINE'S STUDY - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Darkness. A cordless phone in its dock on a desk rings.

A MAN, wearing leather gloves and masked with a balaclava, stops rummaging through the top drawer of an office desk, drops to the floor, freezes a moment, waits.

On the fifth ring, the phone answer machine, set on loudspeaker, is activated.

PAULINE RECORDED MESSAGE
*You've paid for it, leave a message
 after the tone.
 (Tone sounds)*

David's Voice leaves a message.

DAVID (V.O.)
*Congratulations my dear. Couldn't
 get you on your cell but you did
 well. Looks like the would-be frog
 is in for twenty. I'll tie things
 up tomorrow and fly back later.*

The Man half removes the balaclava - it is Bruce. He stands, his head just missing the open drawer. He gently closes it.

PAULINE'S BEDROOM:

Silence again. Phoebe restrains her panted breathing, waits a moment then starts again to lever open the box.

PAULINE'S STUDY:

Bruce stares at the phone machine a moment then starts through a lower drawer. He stops on the SOUND (O.S.) of an object crashing, contents spilling.

Bruce pulls down the balaclava again, picks up a letter opener from the desk, turns in the direction of the noise when again the phone rings ...and rings...

And again the answer machine is activated.

PAULINE RECORDED MESSAGE
*You've paid for it, leave a message
after the tone.*
(Tone sounds)

INT. LAS VEGAS HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

Claude, gazing at the dazzling lights of Las Vegas through the window. On his cell, he speaks with the hint of accent.

CLAUDE
Chérie. 'Tis Claude. The Vegas
plans, very impressive. I think we
have a wonderful future together.
As for my present matrimonial
circumstances, I'm not yet sure.
We'll work something out on my
return. Mon précieux.

RESUME PAULINE'S STUDY:

Bruce sniggers at the tone of this message. He turns to leave, but in the darkness slams his leg into the open lower drawer. He stifles his cry of pain.

PAULINE'S BEDROOM:

Phoebe on hands and knees trembling, caresses the cache of jewels strewn over the floorboards. She comes across the BRACELET, holds it up closer to see the inscription in the pale light of the pen-light attached to her keys.

INSERT: Inscription on bracelet - "Mon Chérie"

Phoebe places the bracelet on her right wrist, admires it.

From behind her a leather-gloved hand grasps her shoulder and a letter opener is pressed to her neck.

She struggles with Bruce. In the process most of the other jewelry is scattered.

Escaping his grip she makes her way out of the bedroom.

Bruce rummages in the dark, can't locate any jewelry, goes off in pursuit of Phoebe.

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phoebe makes for the open window but is thwarted by Bruce. He struggles with her wrist bearing the bracelet - but again she breaks loose.

The headlights of a car arriving in the driveway momentarily light up the room.

Phoebe ducks behind the drinks cabinet.

Bruce gropes his way past her, makes it to the Front Door, contains his breathing as best he can, and listens.

The front door opens. Pauline enters, reaches for the light switch but before it can be thrown - Wham! Bruce slams the door into Pauline's face and her body slumps to the floor.

He resumes his search for Phoebe.

With car keys in her hand, Phoebe makes a dash for the front door only to find it jammed shut by Pauline's body slumped before the threshold.

Bruce attacks again, dislodges Phoebe's keys. But she manages to place a well-aimed knee to her assailant's groin and, ignoring her keys, stumbles toward the nearby open Living Room widow and makes good her escape.

Rising from his knees Bruce now has Phoebe's keys in his hand. Pauline moans, regaining consciousness. Bruce weighs his options and makes a bumbling exit via the window.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

In the dimly-lit street, an ELDERLY MAN walks his Dog, the sound of FOOTSTEPS rapidly approaching on the other side.

Phoebe jogs briskly and approaches her parked Mercedes. She goes to the driver's door, fumbles in her track pant pockets.

Cursing, she looks around. The street seems bare. She runs off again, through a barely lit intersection. She takes refuge behind a large tree and looks back.

The Elderly Man waits as his Dog urinates on the trunk of a street tree. When finished, they continue on their walk.

FOOTSTEPS again, heavier this time.

An unfit Bruce, balaclava removed, labors along, about to pass the Mercedes, but stops in his tracks. He surveys the scene but is oblivious to the Elderly Man opposite.

He removes Phoebe's set of keys from his pocket. They have the Mercedes marque on them. Bruce is not quite sure how to use them.

ELDERLY MAN (O.S.)
Just aim and press the button.

Bruce, embarrassed, aims the key at the driver's door, presses the button with his gloved hands. Success. He enters the car, fidgets a moment. He eventually starts it, drives off and turns the corner at the intersection just up ahead.

The Elderly Man walks his dog on toward the corner, shaking his head in disbelief.

Phoebe comes from behind the tree, cursing before running off again, away from the scene -- and her car.

EXT. STREET #2 - NIGHT

The black Mercedes turns the corner into this street and travels only yards, pulling up behind the beat-up Mustang.

The Elderly Man and his Dog come round the corner just in time to witness Bruce get in and drive off in the Mustang.

EXT. LENAUT HOUSE - NIGHT

In the darkness on the back patio, an exhausted, disheveled Phoebe fumbles under a large concrete pot. Baby barks from inside the house. She tries to placate the dog.

PHOEBE
Sshh ... sshh...

She locates a key.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
You'll wake the whole goddam neighborhood.

On that, as she heads towards the back door, the whole area becomes lit by security lights activated by her movements. She freezes in her steps as neighboring houses light up.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phoebe lies propped up with numerous pillows on her bed, gazing at, mesmerized by, the bracelet. She gets up, goes to

WALK-IN CLOSET:

Phoebe removes the bracelet and stashes it deep beneath her personals in the second drawer of her bureau. She ensures the drawer is closed and leaves

THE BEDROOM:

Phoebe goes to the phone on Claude's night stand and dials.

INT. PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pauline, sporting a black eye, in interview with two Santa Monica Police Department PATROL OFFICERS.

POLICE OFFICER #1
And you're certain only one item
was taken?

PAULINE
And extremely valuable.

PATROL OFFICER #1
Seems a bit odd. Unless he knew
just what he was after. Sounds like
a pro.

(He looks at Pauline's
eye...)
And a nasty one at that.
(to partner)
We'd better inform Robbery and
Homicide.

PAULINE
Homicide?

PATROL OFFICER #1
This is a violent assault, maybe
with intent, not just straight
burglary.

PAULINE
I'll be fine, really. There was no
assault.

Both Officers look at Pauline's darkened eye.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
It was an accident. I lost my grip.

The Officers are not convinced.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
I was going down on a pole.

The two Officers eye-ball each other.

PATROL OFFICER #2
Name?

PAULINE
Dancing! I instruct!

Again the two Officers eye-ball each other, nod their heads.
Officer #2 jots a note in his report book.

PATROL OFFICER #1
All the same, better get some
medical attention. Concussion...
you never know.

PATROL OFFICER #2
We'll leave you to get some rest.

PATROL OFFICER #1
Oh, and if you could refrain from
touching too many things until the
boys arrive.

PAULINE
The "boys"?

PATROL OFFICER #1
Detectives. We'll see ourselves
out.

Once they're gone, Pauline immediately dials on her cell.
Upon answering...

PAULINE
David? At last, where've you been?
I've been phoning. Me? I um...
Yeah, I'm okay. Actually, no I'm
not! I've been assaulted... And
we've been burgled!

INT. LAS VEGAS HOTEL COCKTAIL LOUNGE - NIGHT - INTERCUT

David on his cell phone wanders over and leans on the
Cocktail Bar of the ritzy hotel. At a table in the background
Claude sits with two attractive FEMALES.

DAVID
Burgled!?
(He ponders a moment)
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)
Well whatever you do, don't call
the Police... What? Damn.

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM:

PAULINE
I had to so I can claim on the
insurance.

COCKTAIL LOUNGE:

DAVID
Look, I thought we'd agreed to give
that game away.

He looks back toward Claude et al.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Claude and his ilk are the way to
go.

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM:

PAULINE
Precisely. But this is legit. It
was his bracelet that went missing
and you know how much that was
worth. And I want to get some of it
back...

She nurses her darkened eye as she listens a moment...

PAULINE (CONT'D)
No there isn't any "attachment" as
you call it. Spare me, please!
Look, don't worry, it's under
control, okay?
(...PAUSE...)
No. Stay with him and make sure the
deal's tight.

She hangs up.

COCKTAIL LOUNGE:

David closes his phone, turns and feigns a smile at Claude
and the two Female companions.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

Baby's eyes follow an agitated Phoebe as she paces up and down in the kitchen. She is jolted back to reality when the land-line on the bench rings.

She stares at the phone, wary, but she plucks up her nerve and answers.

PHOEBE

Lenault household. Yes... Yes...
Oh, your officers were in the
vicinity last night? I see.

(she jots something on a
message pad)

I think I can find it... Got it.

Relieved, she hangs up, takes the note, goes and pats Baby.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Stroke of luck, as the lovely
policeman said.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Santa Monica PD Detectives, Sergeant CASSIE CROWTHER (late 30s) and novice Detective NEIL STEWART (late 20s), at the Front Door.

The brash Stewart goes to pound his fist on the door. But Crowther, who could qualify for a Network cop show, thwarts him, preferring to politely press the door CHIME button ...A BEAT... The door opens. Crowther presents her ID to Pauline.

CROWTHER

Sergeant Crowther, Robbery
Homicide.

She looks at Pauline's purple eye as she returns her ID to her butt-hugging jeans, a nice complement to her tailored leather jacket.

PAULINE

(invites them in)

Can't linger. Business to run.

As they enter, Stewart finally gets his ID wallet out of the coat of his off-the-rack suit.

STEWART

(proudly)

Neil Stewart. Detective.

INT. PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Stewart's eyes glean every nook and cranny of the room as Crowther conducts the interview.

CROWTHER
We'll be as brief as possible.

PAULINE
Heard that before.

Crowther acknowledges this comment. Stewart interrupts.

STEWART
I'll go check for clues.

Crowther and Pauline cringe at the cliché as Stewart wanders off towards the Bedroom, watched by a suspicious Pauline.

CROWTHER
(calls after him)
Remember, use discretion.

Pauline is uneasy about this.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Still learning.

Crowther withdraws her pen and notebook and gestures toward the sofa.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Just get some details, shall we?

PAULINE
If we must.

Just as they sit, Stewart, shaking his head at Pauline in disgust passes from the bedroom toward the Study.

CROWTHER
Like I said, just the details.

INT. PAULINE'S STUDY - DAY - INTERCUT

Stewart checks the desk drawers not properly closed, notices the flashing 'message' light on the answer machine. He looks in direction of Living Room but presses the message replay button anyway.

ANSWER MACHINE
You have two new messages...

As it completes the announcement, Stewart notices the still open window, goes to it.

ANSWER MACHINE (CONT'D)
Message number one, received at ...

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM:

Crowther stands by the still open window in this room.

CROWTHER
We'll get the powder-puffs in at some stage. Routine, sorry.

CHIMES sound. Pauline stands from the sofa and moves off, Crowther following her to the nearby Front Door.

Pauline admits a disheveled Claude who takes her in his arms. She, however, is not so enthusiastic.

CLAUDE
(faux French accent)
Chérie, mon précieux. I came as soon as I --

Crowther approaches. Claude brakes the embrace.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Who is zis?

But before Pauline can answer...

CROWTHER
Sergeant Crowther, Santa Monica PD.

Claude frowns.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
You must be...?

CLAUDE
(reluctant)
Claude. Claude Lenault.

Stewart enters the arena and sidles next to his superior.

CROWTHER
No need to linger longer, I suppose. Leave you to it.
(to Stewart)
Let's go Hercule.

The two Detectives take their leave.

I/E. CAR TRAVELLING - STREET #2 - DAY

Stewart, driving, in a daydream as Crowther checks her make-up in the visor vanity mirror.

Ahead of them on the opposite side, Phoebe, wearing her old track outfit, jumps out of a taxi, and into the parked black Mercedes. With a squeal of tires, she drives off past the Police Car. Stewart's eyes light up at the sight of Phoebe.

STEWART
Late for the latte.

Crowther tries to adjust her mirror to look back at the receding Mercedes.

CROWTHER
Get the number?

STEWART
Partial only. But she was blonde.

Crowther rolls her eyes, resumes checking her make-up.

Stewart again ponders.

STEWART (CONT'D)
Her husband?

CROWTHER
What? Who?

STEWART
The guy who turned up.

CROWTHER
Name's Renault... no, Lenault.
Claude Lenault. Lover, I suspect.

STEWART
Lover, eh? That was quick.

CROWTHER
How do you mean?

STEWART
If it's the same Claude who left a message on her answer machine, he was in Vegas last night.

CROWTHER
What message? What answer machine?

STEWART

In the other room. I used my discretion. There was another message too, from a 'David'. Obviously she has a few friends. But does she have any enemies? Someone out for revenge?

CROWTHER

How do you mean?

STEWART

Well, by the look of her eye. Not just a jealous lover's tap.

CROWTHER

Report says she had a mishap ... with a work client. Nah, probably just your basic burglary. Easy pickings. I mean no proper security. Saw the opportunity, in through the open window in the living room.

STEWART

You mean in the study or whatever it is.

CROWTHER

No, the living room. You saw the open window there didn't you, Detective?

STEWART

And another one open in the study.

The two look intently at one another, each doubting the other's credibility.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

Phoebe, in old track outfit, kisses her spare car keys.

Baby growls.

PHOEBE

Don't get cross at me, sweetheart --

She stops on hearing a car pull up. Hurriedly composing herself, she opens her laptop on the bench as a disheveled Claude comes in via the door from the garage.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
What's this?

Claude moves straight past with nary an acknowledgement.

CLAUDE
Urgent business at the office.
There's been a few developments.

She goes after him.

PHOEBE
Urgent? Developments? How so?

CLAUDE
All under control.

Phoebe stops and leaves him to exit the kitchen.

CLAUDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I need a shave.

Phoebe turns back to baby.

PHOEBE
A close one, eh Baby?

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE- DAY

At his untidy desk, Bruce, with his grubby hands, fondles the set of keys to Phoebe's Mercedes. Along with the car's marque is another little tag. He notes the inscription:

If found phone 4134713945 - *Animals Alike* -
kindly donate

Bruce reaches for the telephone and begins dialing.

INT. ANIMALS ALIKE OFFICE - DAY

A simple office. A middle-aged RECEPTIONIST answers a ringing telephone. There's no enthusiasm to her voice.

RECEPTIONIST
Animals Alike and we hope you like
them too.

Under this conversation, the babble of the caller's voice.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
That's correct sir... a service we
run for those who donate...
(MORE)

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
we also have for sale beautiful
ball-points and fountain... The
keys? Yes... Well what we do is...
Er, no I'm sorry sir, we contact
the owners and have them contact
you. Now can I have... No, I'm
sorry, it doesn't work that way...
no. Now a contact number for you
sir...

As she types this info into her computer.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
... "just ask for the 'Boss'". All
hours? Yes sir, I have that. I'll
see what I can do. Thank --

The caller terminates the phone call mid-sentence.

Unfazed, she hangs up her own phone and consults the info on
her screen, mumbles profanities to herself.

INT. CLAUDE'S OUTER OFFICE - DAY

Sharon, phone to ear, scribbles a note on a pad.

She hangs up, looks at her watch, and takes the note to
Claude's Office.

She taps on the door once and enters without awaiting a
response.

CLAUDE'S OFFICE:

Sharon enters and hands Claude the note.

SHARON
Not sure what this is all about.

Claude has a number of small nicks on his chin and cheek.

SHARON (CONT'D)
Have a close one this morning?

He reacts with a guilty look.

CLAUDE
Who told you...?

She runs a finger around her own chin.

SHARON

You know, you really should use an electric shaver.

CLAUDE

I do.

SHARON

Whatever.

(refers to note)

Didn't think you liked animals.

She leaves Claude to contemplate the note.

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bruce tosses the set of keys into the air and nearly loses his balance in the dilapidated swivel chair as he snatches them.

His cell phone RINGS and again he fumbles the keys as he snatches up the 'phone.

BRUCE

Better be good.

CLAUDE (V.O.)

Beau jour, I'd like to speak to "ze bose".

BRUCE

"Ze Bose"? You pissin' me pal?

CLAUDE (V.O.)

I received a message to contact ze bose. About zum keys.

Bruce looks inquisitively at the 'phone.

BRUCE

Ah. The would-be frog.

CLAUDE (V.O.)

"Frog"?

BRUCE

Don't worry, I'm with ya, man. The keys, yeah. But I didn't expect... a male caller.

CLAUDE (V.O.)

My wife uses them.

BRUCE

Really? Well then, what do you have
to offer in return?

CLAUDE (V.O.)

Pardon?

BRUCE

Compensation.

CLAUDE (V.O.)

*Compensation? I don't know who you
are or how you came across my
wife's keys. But if you forward
them to my private Postal Box 1379,
on 5th and Arizona, Santa Monica,
there'll be no questions asked.*

Bruce scribbles down this number with a pencil.

BRUCE

No questions? Ha. I'll be in touch.

Bruce hangs up the phone, looks vacantly at the note on his pad. Jubilant, he picks up the keys again and begins tossing them in the air...

The phone RINGS again, and again he fumbles the keys as he answers.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Yeah?

But this time we barely hear the caller's voice.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

No I do not want to buy a pen!

He pounds the phone down, crudely underlines the address on his message pad - the pencil point snaps.

INT. CLAUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Claude at his desk contemplates the message slip a moment, shoves it in his shirt pocket and begins punching figures into his cell phone calculator. His face contorts - an important decision pending.

Dilemma resolved, he removes a framed Impressionist print from the wall to reveal a safe. With little ado he opens it and removes a hand gun. He sets the painting right, dons his suit coat, slips the weapon in the inside pocket, grabs his folio satchel and passes into

OUTER OFFICE:

Claude swiftly passes Sharon.

CLAUDE

Be a few hours. I'll pick up the
mail.

He exits. She doesn't bat an eyelid as she files her nails.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

PRIVATE POSTAL BOXES:

Number 1379 Set into the external wall of a Post Office.

I/E. MUSTANG - 5TH & ARIZONA - DAY

Bruce, in his Mustang, with a pair of opera glasses, spies on
the panel of Private Postal Boxes set into this wall.

A TAP on the windshield. A PARKING INSPECTOR points to a
"LOADING ZONE" sign on the sidewalk in clear view.

She gestures to a vacant park space a few yards further
along.

Taking the hint, Bruce starts the car, puts it into drive.

But a silver-gray compact BMW pulls into the vacant space.

Bruce blasts his horn at the other Driver...

Claude gets out of the BMW, gives a thumb flick from the
upper teeth gesture - and goes straight to his Postal Box -
1379.

Bruce watches Claude remove the contents of the mailbox.

Another tap on the windshield. The Parking Inspector takes
out her Expiration Notice Equipment.

Claude gets in his car and immediately drives off.

Bruce follows and as the Mustang drives off, the Parking
Inspector offers the same thumb gesture.

INT. BANK - DAY

Claude, carrying his folio satchel, approaches the service
counter. A Bank Official, ALEESHIA (20s) comes to greet him.

ALEESHIA
Yes sir, I'm here to help.

Claude places his documents satchel on the counter, looks at her name tag on her generous chest.

CLAUDE
Good to know, Aleeshia. I'd like to take some money off your hands.

ALEESHIA
"Take some money off my --"?

CLAUDE
That's right. A considerable sum of money, too.

Aleeshia is a little unnerved by Claude's tone and she looks around at her colleagues - just in case.

ALEESHIA
A considerable sum?

CLAUDE
Twenty thousand dollars.

Her eyes pop at this figure.

Claude takes a slip of paper from his satchel and slides it across.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
A cash withdrawal from this account.

ALEESHIA
A considerable sum!

Claude smiles, nodding.

ALEESHIA (CONT'D)
Sir, there are new regulations in force regarding large cash withdrawals.

Claude chuckles, then explains.

CLAUDE
I understand.

ALEESHIA
It's just that we have to be aware of... well, you know... dishonest money.

Claude chuckles again.

CLAUDE
It's okay. I'm a lawyer.

A DESK BEHIND THE COUNTER:

A FEMALE CLERK is quite taken by Claude's good looks and demeanour.

FEMALE CLERK
Hmm, a lawyer.

But a Male colleague responds.

MALE CLERK
Yeah, and his lips are moving.

THE COUNTER:

ALEESHIA
Any ID?

Claude pats his jacket pocket.

CLAUDE
More than enough.

The unnerved Aleeshia is relieved when Claude displays his driver's licence.

ALEESHIA
You might be better off with a bank check.

CLAUDE
Cash will be preferable. It's a business deal.

ALEESHIA
Very well sir. But I'll need to get the Supervisor's approval for this.

She stares a moment at his scarred face. He pats his chin.

CLAUDE
Had to rush back from Vegas.

ALEESHIA
Ah... casinos? I see.

She moves off before Claude can clarify.

Claude catches the eye of the Female Clerk and smiles unctuously at her, but when she turns her back to him, he becomes contemplative, agitated, drumming his fingers on the counter.

FEMALE CLERK
(to Male Clerk)
And he should use an electric shaver.

INT. CLAUDE'S BMW - DAY

Claude places his satchel on the passenger seat, leans over and removes his hand gun from the glove compartment and rests it upon the precious cargo.

He checks his face in the vanity mirror, licks the end of a finger but cannot quite erase all the bloodied tell-tale signs of a hasty shave. He drives off.

EXT. BOULEVARD #1 - CARS TRAVELING - DAY

The stylish elegance of Claude's BMW is followed a few cars distant by the air polluting Mustang.

Claude's BMW drives into an undercover parking lot below a medium-rise Office Building.

Seconds later the Mustang arrives at the entry ramp and slowly enters.

INT. UNDERCOVER PARKING LOT - DAY

Claude, exits his BMW and, carrying his satchel, mounts some internal stairs leading up to an entrance to the building.

The Mustang slams on the brakes, reverses into the first park space he sees - for the Disabled.

Bruce, as inconspicuously as possible, enters the building also.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Bruce ambles along a corridor as up ahead Claude enters an Office, on the door of which is a sign : "LENAULT COMMUNIQUE - PUBLIC RELATIONS".

Bruce halts in his tracks and heads back the way he came.

EXT. ELDERLY MAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Stewart and Crowther at the front door. Stewart goes to bang a fist but opts for a gentle, polite knock.

By their demeanor, they've been at it for a while.

The front door is opened and they are confronted by the Elderly Man.

CROWTHER
(showing ID)
Crowther, Robbery Homicide.

STEWART
Stewart.

CROWTHER
Some routine enquiries if you don't mind, in relation to a robbery and assault in the vicinity last night.

ELDERLY MAN
Do I look gangsta?

CROWTHER
Hard to tell these days, sir.

He gives Crowther's designer apparel close scrutiny.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Perhaps you noticed something out of the ordinary, heard something? Between seven-thirty and nine?

ELDERLY MAN
I was walking my dog.

CROWTHER
I see.

ELDERLY MAN
Not a crime, is it?

CROWTHER
No.

ELDERLY MAN
Pissin' on a tree's not a crime, is it?

CROWTHER
Again, not really. But perhaps while you were pissin' on a tree --

ELDERLY MAN

The dog!

CROWTHER

I take your point, sir. But while
your dog was doing its business,
did you perhaps notice anything
unusual? Apart from how your dog
went about it.

ELDERLY MAN

Only one of those stupid 'body'
freaks.

(looks Crowther up and
down)

Silly women. Out in the streets at
night.

CROWTHER

And nothing else?

The Elderly Man reflects for a moment.

ELDERLY MAN

Just some guy who got into a sports
car. Black.

STEWART

Mmm... Afro.

ELDERLY MAN

Mercedes.

STEWART

How tall?

ELDERLY MAN

(places hand to waist)

'Bout up to here.

CROWTHER

(dismissing the banter)

Anything unusual about this?

ELDERLY MAN

Fucktard didn't know how to use the
keys. Had to tell him. He drove
around the corner into this street,
got out and got into another car,
old Mustang I think, and drove off.

The detectives look at each other, not sure how to take this
piece of information.

STEWART

And you're sure it was a Mercedes?

ELDERLY MAN

Look buddy, I know all the cars
around here.

STEWART

Plate number?

The old man shrugs.

STEWART (CONT'D)

Owner?

ELDERLY MAN

No-one in this neighborhood.

CROWTHER

And the Mustang?

ELDERLY MAN

Not from these parts.

CROWTHER

Okay, thank you sir. Most helpful.

And without further ado or ceremony, the Elderly Man closes
the door in their faces.

They head off to the car.

STEWART

Is pissin' on a tree a crime?

CROWTHER

You tell me.

Stewart mulls over this ... but before he can get too deep

CROWTHER (CONT'D)

But as for this one, just a run-of-the-mill thug out for a quick buck.

STEWART

Not a disgruntled employee?

CROWTHER

Once again, you tell me.

INT. AEROTIQUE FITNESS CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

Stewart at the Service Counter is confronted with pulsating music, bodies to die for etc. Pauline, darkened eye softened with make-up, approaches with a list of names.

STEWART

If we can eliminate non-suspects
it'll make our job just that much
easier.

PAULINE

Whatever.

Stewart peruses the list.

STEWART

All the employees?
(Pauline nods)
Associates?

Pauline sighs "yes". She has better things to do.

Stewart folds the list about to depart. Out of left field ...

STEWART (CONT'D)

Old adversaries?

Pauline's brow furrows momentarily but she walks off before Stewart can probe further. He gets to thinking.

INT. UNDERCOVER PARKING LOT - DUSK

The headlights of Claude's BMW shine on the Mustang, wakes the dozing Bruce. He whips out the earbuds, looks at his watch, cusses to himself.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DUSK

Claude's BMW exits the undercover parking lot and pulls into the traffic.

The Mustang follows.

EXT. BOULEVARD #2 - CARS TRAVELING - DUSK

Further along another boulevard, Bruce's Mustang trails Claude's BMW, a few cars in front.

Another, identical, BMW pulls in from another lane right behind Claude's car. The two BMW's continually swap lanes in the failing light.

Bruce speeds up and comes alongside one of the BMWs.

He looks across to the driver - an attractive, sultry female we'll call CHARLENE (30). The sign on her car door - 'Charlene's Personal Services' - gives a clue as to her occupation.

She gives him the "come on". He cannot resist.

Claude's Car takes a right. Too late for Bruce to react - he goes past the turn-off.

He blows Charlene a kiss, flattens the foot, speeds up in the right lane and with scant regard for the rest of the traffic, maneuvers around the block and hurries off again after his prey.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - DUSK

Claude's BMW pulls up outside Pauline's bungalow. Carrying his folio satchel, he approaches the front door where he is greeted amorously by Pauline.

Bruce's Mustang slowly cruises past. He slaps the steering wheel with a mischievous smirk and flies off down the street.

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - INTERCUT

On the desk, an old telephone directory is open at the "Lenault" entries.

Bruce labors away on his dinosaur computer, having trouble Googling "Lenault". He scrolls the few entries... comes to "Lenault Communiqué"... opens the site.

The Home Page has the usual details of a Public Relations business with a photo of Claude. It has the business' address and number, and also an After Hours number.

He quickly consults the old telephone directory. No match up there and he tosses it aside.

Unperturbed, he picks up the land-line phone and starts dialing the After Hours number on the screen.

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A screen-saver on Phoebe's open laptop, sitting on a coffee table, dances randomly. Alongside, Phoebe, in her jogging attire, sleeps on the sofa.

The 'phone rings... and rings... Phoebe stirs to answer it.

PHOEBE
Lenault residence...

BRUCE (V.O.)
*Was hoping to talk to Mr Lenault,
but he's not in at the moment, is
he?*

PHOEBE
No, he's not in ... But if you knew
that... Why are you --?

BRUCE (V.O.)
Just ringing about your keys.

Concern grows upon her face as Baby settles by her feet.

PHOEBE
How did -- ? Where did you find
them?

BRUCE'S OFFICE:

Bruce, Mercedes keys in hand, on the phone.

BRUCE
Exactly where you dropped them
sweetheart...

PHOEBE (V.O.)
I don't know what --

BRUCE
You know exactly --

LENAUT LIVING ROOM:

PHOEBE
Who is this?

In the background, the PURR of a car pulling up - stops. Baby growls.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Name's Bruce, sweetheart. Don't know what your game is but I was there last night on business but thanks to you, the deal fell through! Now, I'm pretty sure you wouldn't want others to know about your supporting role in this, would you?

PHOEBE

I suggest you get off the phone or I'll --

She is interrupted by Claude's entrance. She hastily curtails the conversation.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry but we're not in a position to help at the moment.

She hangs up. Anxious, she turns to Claude, thinks on her feet.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Damned charities.

But Claude is not convinced.

He screws up his nose as he sniffs the air in the room, looks menacingly at the dog. Phoebe takes the hint and escorts Baby out of the room.

The 'phone rings again. Claude answers.

CLAUDE

Lenault residence.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Whoa. Now where have I heard that voice before? That was a fleeting visit wasn't it? She not in the mood tonight, our darling Penelope? Or Pauline or whatever name she goes by these days?

CLAUDE

Who the hell is this?!

Phoebe re-enters the room. Claude promptly ends the call.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

We've donated already!

But Phoebe is not convinced!

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - MORNING - INTERCUT

EN-SUITE BATHROOM:

Phoebe takes a hot shower; steam fogging up the glass cubicle.

CLAUDE (O.S.)
(calling)
Chérie. You seen the manicure set?

PHOEBE
(mumbling)
'Chérie', my ass.
(calling out)
In one of my drawers.

WALK-IN CLOSET:

Claude, business shirt and tie, goes from his bureau to the top drawer of Phoebe's, rummages unsuccessfully.

EN-SUITE BATHROOM:

Suddenly a look of horror appears on Phoebe's face (a la 'Psycho'). She hurriedly turns off the shower, grabs a towel and rushes out just as a phone RINGS (O.S.)

WALK-IN CLOSET:

Distracted by the phone ringing, Claude leaves the drawer, brushes past the half naked, dripping Phoebe, to answer it.

Phoebe goes to the second drawer, locates the bracelet. She hurriedly hides it further back in the bottom drawer, closes it, re-opens the second, locates the manicure set, listens.

Still dripping, she goes out into ...

BEDROOM:

Claude throws the phone on the bed. An uneasy look on Claude's face. An uneasy look on Phoebe's.

CLAUDE
Wrong number.

She hands him the manicure set.

PHOEBE
Wrong drawer.

INT. ROBBERY HOMICIDE OFFICE - DAY

Crowther enters the main office area, greets her colleagues.

CROWTHER
The apprentice in?

All eyes train on another part of the office area.

Stewart at his desk, his back to the others, earbuds, head bopping, working away at his computer.

Crowther goes to Stewart's desk, leans over and picks up a lifestyle/fitness magazine open to a photo of an attractive, healthy young woman. Stewart whips out the earbuds.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Homework?

STEWART
You bet.

CROWTHER
And?

He hands over a legal pad.

STEWART
All her employees and
acquaintances.

Crowther shrugs "so?"

STEWART (CONT'D)
Perhaps an enemy?

CROWTHER
You tell me.

Stewart returns to his computer screen.

STEWART
I'm on it.

INT. CLAUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Claude at his desk, reviewing a document. He stands, goes to the window, agitated.

The phone RINGS. He turns and watches it, hesitating.

He picks it up but does not speak.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Yo, it's me again, baby. Not too early for you now? So, what to do about our little predicament. I have something of yours and I reckon it must be worth --

CLAUDE

Not worth anything to me!

BRUCE (V.O.)

Oh, I dunno. I reckon it's about twenty klicks worth. Wasn't that the figure mentioned in the telephone message at Pauline's?

CLAUDE

Telephone message? This is ridiculous.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Let's get real about this. You wouldn't want your sweet wife to know about your little indiscretion with a certain woman of dubious background that you're about to squander a heap of money on.

Claude glances at the document, weighing up the import of this assessment.

BRUCE (V.O.)

What I'm thinking is that some of that twenty grand could find a detour my way --

CLAUDE

(in French)

Bâtard.

(in English)

This is black --

BRUCE

Blackmail? Certainly is.

CLAUDE

Well bad luck, you're too --

BRUCE

"Late"? Is that the word you're looking for? She's certainly got you by the balls, hasn't she? You can kiss your twenty gees goodbye.

Claude can't find a response.

BRUCE (V.O.)

It seems you're lost for words at the moment, so I'll give you some time to think about it.

The phone clicks dead.

Beads of sweat form on Claude's brow.

He looks again at the document, a hard copy of his BANK WITHDRAWAL SLIP for the twenty thousand dollar withdrawal.

INT. ROBBERY HOMICIDE OFFICE - DAY

A tired Stewart crosses another name off a list he has on the pad beside him. He turns back to his computer terminal and proceeds to type the next name.

THE SCREEN:

A search app brings up details -

Full Name (Claude Aloysius Lenault); Age (36); Sex (Male); Place of Birth (Quebec, Canada); Marital Status (Married); Drivers Licence Number (N2875419 - Class C); Criminal Record (Nil) etc.

ON STEWART as he crosses Claude's name off his list, presses another key and types again.

THE SCREEN:

New details appear on the screen -

Full Name (Phoebe Alice Lenault); Age (30); Sex (Female); Place of Birth (Topeka, Kansas); Marital Status (Married); Drivers Licence Number (N3285645 - Class C); Criminal Record (Nil) etc.

ON STEWART as he leans back dejected. But something else on the screen catches his attention. He scribbles down details alongside Phoebe's name on his pad, studies the information a moment.

STEWART
Hey Boss!

All else is quiet in the room. One by one, different Detectives, at different desks, look to Stewart.

Finally, Crowther looks up from her desk, reluctantly stops what she is doing, and moves over to her subordinate's desk.

Stewart indicates the information on the screen.

STEWART (CONT'D)
Got a report here of a stolen Merc.

Crowther shrugs - "so what?"

STEWART (CONT'D)
Reported by a Phoebe Lenault.
Address not all that far from the scene. Remember what that old guy said? About the black Merc in his street, just around the corner from Miss Pauline's. The one driven by the blonde that sped off past us? Same model. Partial plate number match.

CROWTHER
And?

STEWART
Maybe it was driven by the attacker.

Crowther reluctantly accepts that perhaps it is worth closer scrutiny and examines the computer screen.

CROWTHER
Lenault? Name of the guy we met at our Miss Pauline's.

Stewart grows in stature, chest puffing out.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Must be coincidence. I mean, wasn't he in Vegas at the time?

STEWART
But if it was his car?

CROWTHER
(points to Phoebe's name)
Or hers?

INT. AEROTIQUE FITNESS GYM - DAY

Pauline on the super-circuit. She finishes on the exercise cycle, picks up some light dumb-bells and, with Claude in tow, moves on to a mini-tramp and begins jogging.

PAULINE
I wouldn't worry about it.
Blackmail always backfires.

CLAUDE
But what if Phoebe finds out?

PAULINE
What if she does?

She pauses her jogging to address him.

PAULINE (CONT'D)
I'm sure there's a way to make sure
she doesn't.

Claude is un-nerved by this challenge. He turns to leave but checks himself.

CLAUDE
How many people know I've... y'know
... invested in your project?

PAULINE
Only the three of us. Why?

CLAUDE
Well, he seemed to know a lot about it. He knows it's twenty thousand dollars. Says that's the figure mentioned on the telephone message.

Pauline steps off the mini-tramp.

PAULINE
Telephone message?

CLAUDE
I never mentioned money in my message. But apparently someone else did. Now this Bruce guy seems to think I'm "squandering" my money on a woman of dubious background.

Pauline smiles seductively and slips her arms around his neck, dumb-bells still in her hands CLINK together. Claude cringes as if his testicles have just been crushed.

EXT. AEROTIQUE FITNESS CENTER - PARKING LOT - DAY

Claude, dazed, walks to his car. From seemingly no-where he is flanked by Crowther and Stewart.

CROWTHER

Your secretary said we might find you here.

STEWART

We have a few more questions in relation to the incident with Miss Pauline. On the night in question --

CLAUDE

I was in Vegas.

CROWTHER

That's not in dispute.

Claude looks around the parking lot.

CLAUDE

Look, do you have to goose-step me out here like this?

By this time they have reached Claude's car.

CROWTHER

Fine, let's talk inside.

Reluctantly, Claude invites them in.

INT. CLAUDE'S CAR - PARKING LOT - DAY

Crowther settles in the front seat next to Claude, Stewart crammed in the rear.

CROWTHER

Just how well do you know Ms Pauline?

CLAUDE

We have a business arrangement. I'm doing all the Public Relations for the firm's expansion into Vegas.

CROWTHER

And that's it?

CLAUDE

Well, not that it's any business of yours but I've invested a small sum to assist this expansion.

CROWTHER

I see. So you're old friends?

CLAUDE

No, we've only known each... Look, for your information, I happen to be a lawyer and I'd like to know the purpose of these questions.

STEWART

For your information, on the night in question, a black Mercedes in your name was reported stolen and --

CLAUDE

That's the first I've heard of it.

STEWART

-- and which we have reason to believe, was in the vicinity of the crime scene. We thought you might be able to enlighten us.

CLAUDE

For your information I never drive that car. My wife does.

Crowther offers a subtle smile to Stewart.

Stewart runs his hand over the trim of the car.

STEWART

You prefer the Beemer?

CLAUDE

As a matter of fact, yes. You'd be better off interrogating my wife. Now if you don't mind.

Having unnerved Claude, the Detectives exit the car.

PARKING LOT:

Claude drives off. Crowther looks back suspiciously at the Fitness Center itself.

CROWTHER

Now who would invest a "small sum"
in a woman they hardly knew?

STEWART

A masochist?

Crowther nods.

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Doris vacuums the carpet with a light-weight back-pack cleaner. A phone RINGS above the machine's subtle HUM. The phone continues ringing unanswered for some time. Doris looks around but there is no one in sight. She switches off the cleaner, goes to the phone on an occasional table.

DORIS

Lenault residence.

But she is immediately taken aback by the tone of the caller.

BRUCE (V.O.)

*Listen honey, I trust you've given
some thought to my proposition last
night?*

DORIS

For starters, I am not your honey
and what's more I haven't been
propositioned in nigh on twenty
years.

BRUCE (V.O.)

Who the fuck is this?

DORIS

Never you mind. Who the fuck you
think you are, propositioning a
married lady?

BRUCE (V.O.)

*I just wanna talk to the madam of
the house.*

Doris looks around her.

DORIS

What type of establishment you
think this is?

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY - INTERCUT

Phoebe staring at her laptop. The Title Page "What A Girl Wants" is displayed - she scrolls to a new page and types a simple heading: *Chapter One*

Doris enters, hands the cordless phone to Phoebe who, surprised to see her maid with the phone, intimates "Who?" Doris shrugs.

She hands over the phone, starts up the vacuum cleaner again and moves away but the HUM is still enough to cause inconvenience to Phoebe.

PHOEBE
Lenault residence.

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bruce is leaning precariously back in his chair, dangling Phoebe's keys.

BRUCE
Bruce, honey. Remember? Now here's the deal. We need to set up an exchange.

LENAULT KITCHEN:

Phoebe's confusion now borders on concern.

Doris finds a troublesome spot to clean at the entrance to the kitchen and tries desperately to eaves-drop on Phoebe.

PHOEBE
What do you mean, "exchange"?

BRUCE (V.O.)
You want your keys back, you give to me what you took that night. I have more right than anyone to that bitch's ill-gotten gains. You know what I mean?

PHOEBE
No, I don't know what you mean.

BRUCE (V.O.)
Lady, I want those jewels! If that bracelet was any indication you must've gotten away with a fortune.
(MORE)

BRUCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*And what you didn't get, you
stuffed me up from getting. Now,
you play by the rules - if you want
your keys back.*

PHOEBE
Keys? I have a spare.

Now Doris is indeed intrigued.

BRUCE'S OFFICE:

BRUCE
(jangles keys into phone)
I can always put these back where I
found them.

PHOEBE (V.O.)
*Shouldn't be a problem. You see, I
reported my car stolen. If the
Police find them, it'll be obvious
that whoever stole --*

BRUCE
Don't give me that shit, lady. If
Pauline finds them she'll soon put
two and two together. And then
what?

LENAULT KITCHEN:

Phoebe begins to sweat on this - he's got a point. The faint CHIME (O.S.) of a door bell. Baby, lying by the sofa, pricks up her ears, barks, rushes toward the front door.

Doris, her eavesdropping interrupted, shuts down the vacuum cleaner, goes to answer.

BRUCE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*You want 'em back it's gonna cost
ya. Otherwise you'd better have a
very good alibi --*

But Phoebe hangs up mid-sentence, looks toward the front door, the source of Muffled Voices.

EXT. LENAUT HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Stewart, lost in his little world, stands at the Front Door with Crowther.

STEWART
Of course, the Beemer is no doubt
the more powerful. But on the other
hand if you're looking for pulling
power...

Stewart follows Crowther's gaze toward the door.

Doris, still with back-pack cleaner, stands at the open door
with the growling Baby next to her.

Stewart retreats a few inches.

CROWTHER
We'd like to speak to the madam of
the house.

DORIS
Join the queue.

Phoebe, composing herself as best she can, comes and takes
charge of the dog, dismissing Doris who resumes vacuuming.

Stewart is impressed by the sight of Phoebe.

STEWART
Missus Lenault?

But Crowther intervenes, showing her ID.

CROWTHER
Ms Lenault? Ms Phoebe Lenault?

Phoebe appraises the two detectives and nods warily.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
We'd like to ask you some questions
relating to the illegal use of your
motor vehicle.

Phoebe shrugs and ushers them inside. Stewart feigns bravado
as they pass the dog, and Doris (pretending to mind her own
business), into

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Stewart maintains an eye on Baby as they enter

STEWART
Exactly where were you at the time?

PHOEBE
Out jogging with the dog.

Baby cocks her head at Phoebe prompting Crowther to reach forward and pat it. Baby laps up the attention.

CROWTHER
With the dog? You sure?

Stewart wanders off.

PHOEBE
Of course. I never go out without my protection.

CROWTHER
Wise move. Didn't come across any other dogs?

PHOEBE
Not that I recall.

Crowther makes a mental note.

ON STEWART as he approaches Doris - but before he reaches her she turns off the vacuum cleaner and leaves to pack it away.

CROWTHER (O.S.)
Tell me, do you know a Pauline Sloane?

Stewart does an about face and returns to the interview.

PHOEBE
Sort of. She has a gym. Been there once, why?

CROWTHER
Why did you go jogging and not to the gym the night your car was taken?

PHOEBE
Vet's orders.

STEWART
Your vet orders you jogging?

PHOEBE
The dog! Helps her digestion.

CROWTHER
You see, Ms. Lenault. On the night in question, Ms Sloane was burgled and violently assaulted. Your car was sighted in the vicinity at approximately 9:00pm.

Phoebe restrains her reaction, feigning an interest as Stewart subtly sniffs the air.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
So your vehicle must have been
stolen, say, around 8:30pm?

PHOEBE
Well, that's about when I --
(looking at Baby)
we went out.

CROWTHER
But it wasn't reported missing
until some hours later.

PHOEBE
I wasn't quite sure what to do. I
tried to contact my husband. He was
out of state.

Doris passes in the background sporting a feather duster.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
He didn't return until the morning.
And he was in no mood.

Doris cringes.

STEWART
Yesterday morning you say?

Crowther's look concurs with Stewart's. She returns to Phoebe.

CROWTHER
How well do you know Ms Sloane?

PHOEBE
Hardly, really. My husband's
involved with her business.

CROWTHER
So we understand.

Stewart again subtly sniffs the air.

Phoebe stares questioningly at Crowther, then at Stewart.

INT. CAR - DAY

Crowther and Stewart fasten their seat belts.

CROWTHER
Something on the nose back there.

Stewart turns to his superior.

STEWART
Hey, don't look at me. I thought it
was --

CROWTHER
The situation. There's more to it
than meets the eye.

STEWART
Ah yes. Mister and Missus Lenault.
Might keep an eye on her.

Crowther gives him a censuring look.

STEWART (CONT'D)
On them.

Stewart starts the car.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - DAY

WALK-IN CLOSET

Phoebe switches on the light, rushes to her bureau, rummages through the bottom drawer, locates the bracelet.

She holds it at a distance, almost too hot to handle. She works up the courage and places it on her wrist.

DORIS (O.S.)
Any of these worth keeping?

Startled, Phoebe hastily tosses the bracelet back in the drawer and goes into

BEDROOM:

Doris holds a collection of Claude's newly ironed shirts.

PHOEBE
They've hardly been worn.

But Doris thrusts over a collection of message slips.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Oh.

She takes the message slips as Doris enters the Walk-in Closet with the shirts.

DORIS (O.C.)
Like I say. This habit will cost
him dearly.

Phoebe examines the slips of paper. She crumples all but one.

Doris re-enters the bedroom proper, places out her hand and takes the crumpled slips of paper, places them in the pocket of her pinafore and exits.

Phoebe gazes at the message slip she has retained. She picks up the phone on Claude's night stand, paces the room slowly. She takes a deep breath, summoning up courage and dials.

INT. BRUCE'S OFFICE - DAY - INTERCUT

The phone rings in the empty office.

BRUCE (O.S.)
Yeah, yeah, first things first.

Bruce saunters into the office, having difficulty fastening the zip of his fly. Eventually he answers the phone.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Bruce's Bar'N'Bistro.

BEDROOM:

Phoebe stands silent a beat. But she's resolute, committed.

PHOEBE
Bruce?

BRUCE (V.O.)
Who wants him?

She doesn't reply. Silence.

BRUCE (V.O.)
Talk to me, lady.

Silence.

Bruce's Office:

BRUCE

Who is this? Pauline? Is that you, Pauline? Or is it back to Penelope again?... It's you, isn't it? Took you a while to get back to me eh?

And still silence

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Now you listen to me and listen careful. You did me in, just like that sucker with the frog accent. But I'm no sucker, see. I'm after you, Bitch.

BEDROOM:

Phoebe hangs up the phone, a look of steely determination.

INT. CLAUDE'S OFFICE - DAY

Phoebe, hot under the collar, parades back and forth in front of Claude seated behind his desk.

PHOEBE

It's a simple enough question. How much is your "investment" in her?

CLAUDE

Just a small --

PHOEBE

Bullshit!

Claude does not have an answer.

She stops, stews a moment.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

And what are you getting in return then? Good sex without the kids? Is that it?

Claude's face drops.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

I'm damned sure I'm not going to hang around and watch "Pauline" or whatever her name is, prosper at my expense. It is "Pauline", isn't it?

Claude doesn't bite.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
You don't know fuck all about her,
do you?

Claude still doesn't respond.

She storms out of the office.

EXT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

Stewart cruises slowly in his unmarked car, looking intently ahead as Phoebe's black Mercedes pulls into the curb. He slows to a virtual crawl as Phoebe leaves her car and approaches the entrance to Bruce's Bar'N'Bistro.

In front, another car full of YOUTHS pulls up and prepares to reverse into a parking space a few cars behind the Mercedes.

Stewart jumps the queue, pulls nose first into the space, much to the annoyance of the Youths who leave their car double ranked and angrily approach him.

Standing at the entrance to the bar, Phoebe looks to the source of the commotion.

Stewart ducks below the dashboard. He's restrained by his seat-belt and suffers mild whiplash.

Phoebe falters, looks from the unruly youths to the less than salubrious entrance to the Bar.

The Youths bear down on Stewart and start to lift one side of the vehicle.

He fumbles frantically in his jacket for his ID wallet. He flashes it just in time. The Youths reluctantly move on - not without a comment or two.

Stewart looks toward the entrance - no Phoebe in sight.

INT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

A real dive of a nightclub of sorts. Grunge Music, topless dancers on the podium entice the bedraggled collection of mostly male patrons.

In a dimly lit booth, Bruce, overdressed peacock, inebriated, slobbers over his bar stool queen, Charlene from "Charlene's Personal Services".

At the entrance, Stewart pokes his head inside, watches Phoebe approach the bar. All the MALES in the place gawk at her and assess their prospects.

Stewart cringes, makes a hasty retreat.

Phoebe musters her confidence and poise and takes up a stool at the bar.

ANDY (mid-20s), a barman, comes to tend. He's the antithesis of Bruce; healthy and uncommonly chivalrous.

PHOEBE
Water. For now.

She surveys the establishment, taking in all the would-be studs. She's from a different league.

Andy returns with her drink.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
So this is Bruce's Bar'N'Bistro?

ANDY
Yeah! More bar than bistro. After the boss!

PHOEBE
(feigns ignorance)
The "boss"?

ANDY
Bruce. He likes to be called that.

Phoebe suppresses a smile.

PHOEBE
Interesting character?

ANDY
You wouldn't want to meet --

Andy looks up... to someone standing behind Phoebe.

ANDY (CONT'D)
-- him.

Out of the blue, Bruce appears, swaying, next to Phoebe.

ANDY (CONT'D)
(muttered acknowledgement)
Boss.

Bruce gestures to Andy to attend to other business. He sniffs the air, slurs his words

BRUCE
Very nice indeed.

PHOEBE
Pardon?

BRUCE
Your perfume. Unusual. But familiar. The best money can buy, I guess. The name's Bruce.

He withdraws a crumpled business card from his jacket. Phoebe gives it scant regard. Unfazed, Bruce replaces it.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
You lose your way?

PHOEBE
I'm sorry?

BRUCE
Lady of your class. What brings you here?

Gives her pause a moment. She thinks on her feet.

PHOEBE
Background research.

Bruce feigns his intrigue as she surveys the joint.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
For my novel.

BRUCE
(looks about)
Plenty of fiction here.

PHOEBE
Not to mention fantasy.

She smiles, sips her water and runs her tongue over her glossy lips.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Like to buy me a drink?

BRUCE
I'm fussy.

PHOEBE

I'm not.

Bruce smirks, tries unsuccessfully to snap his fingers, calls to Andy.

BRUCE

Oi... champagne...
(he winks at Andy...)
the best.

He takes Phoebe's hand and leads her to his dimly lit booth which is still occupied by Charlene.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I thought I told you to fu... find
someone else to bother.

CHARLENE

(vacating the booth)
Listen pal, I know people!

BRUCE

Yeah, yeah.

He takes a kerchief from his jacket pocket and crudely brushes over the vacated seat, ushers Phoebe into a comfortable position.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

I have a golden rule in this place.
Don't talk to strangers.

She acts dumb.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

You have a name?

Phoebe searches a moment.

PHOEBE

Penelope.

Which causes Bruce some consternation.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You don't like my name?

He leans back a moment, distancing himself from her, morose.

BRUCE

It's just I knew a Penelope once.

Feigning pity for the man, Phoebe places a "consoling" hand on his as Andy arrives with two glasses and a bottle of sparkling wine in an ice bucket.

Phoebe looks at the label.

PHOEBE
Not from France?

BRUCE
Nah... Miami.

Phoebe indicates the label. It's cheap Californian sparkling wine. Caught out, Bruce calls after Andy.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Oi... I thought I said the best.

And he gestures that Andy remove the sparkling wine ...

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Staff! Dunno why I bother. So tell me all about Penelope.

PHOEBE
(teasing smile)
Why don't you tell me!

BRUCE
Too painful.

I/E. CAR - BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

A short distance from Bruce's Bar 'N' Bistro, Stewart sits in the unmarked car, incognito, wearing ear-buds, bopping away to himself.

Charlene saunters toward the car, gives him the 'come-on' and waits patiently for him to make a decision.

Flummoxed, he bids her move on.

She persists.

He winds down the passenger window and flashes his ID Wallet.

CHARLENE
Oh, Detective Stewart? Where's that naughty girl, Sergeant Crowther?

The comment leaves him bemused.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)
Hasn't taken me into custody for a
while.

She moves on. Stewart hurriedly re-focusses on the Bar up ahead.

INT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT - LATER

In the dimly lit booth, Bruce, face in his hands, sobs.

BRUCE
The woman owes me.

On the table, two empty bottles of reasonable champagne up-ended in the ice bucket.

PHOEBE
(rising)
I have to go to the bathroom.

BRUCE
Be my guest, Penelope.

Phoebe stands. Bruce tries to motion the way but is incapable. She heads to Andy at the bar who points the way.

Bruce's eyes are very heavy. He calls to Andy

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Another one.

THE BAR:

ANDY
(patronizing)
Yeah, yeah...

Andy serves another patron. There's the sound of an Off Screen THUD.

The noise attracts the attention of a few of the Patrons. A bit of a chuckle and they return to their own activities.

Andy makes his way to the booth, pushes the ice bucket and glasses to one side, lifts Bruce's forehead, wipes down the table top and allows his boss's head to thud down again.

He takes the glasses and bucket to the bar and resumes his usual chores.

Phoebe returns to the booth, realises that Bruce is history, gathers her things together and goes to the bar.

PHOEBE
What do you know about him?

Andy feigns ignorance.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Seriously. What do you know about
him?

Andy weighs this, checks out the rest of the clientele.

ANDY
You a cop?

PHOEBE
Writer. Looking for material.

He suppresses a derisory smile.

ANDY
Learnt a few things along the way.
Heard some rumors.

PHOEBE
Don't have time for rumors. Do me a
favor?

EXT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

Phoebe's Mercedes pulls from the curb. She does a U-turn and drives off in the opposite direction past Stewart's parked car ... as Charlene again approaches, accompanied now by Crowther.

Peeking inside the car they see Stewart fast asleep.

They move off arm in arm, without disturbing him.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - NIGHT

Phoebe sprays air freshener around the kitchen, picks up the remains of an ill-fated sandwich and, with a whistle to Baby, takes it outside.

She returns and moves into

INT. LENAUT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hearing Phoebe enter, Claude on the sofa stirs from a light nap. In front of him on the coffee table is a cognac bottle, its contents considerably diminished.

CLAUDE
Where've you been?

Phoebe grabs a brandy balloon from the drinks cabinet, pours herself a cognac in front of her husband. In her own time she answers him.

PHOEBE
Out.

CLAUDE
Doing what?

PHOEBE
Looking... for a man.

She relaxes in a lounge chair opposite him.

CLAUDE
I'm your husband, aren't I?

PHOEBE
Don't need a husband for what I want.

CLAUDE
Haven't I given you everything?

Phoebe stares daggers at Claude.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
I've told you. In time, when everything's been established.

He stands and approaches her with a contrived Gallic, romantic countenance.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Mon chérie...

PHOEBE
(sotto voce)
"Chérie". You wish.

He leans over her trying to embrace her but she evades him, stands and, swirling her cognac in her glass, wanders off toward the bedroom.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
I'll take my nightcap in bed.

Claude stares after her, grabs the bottle of cognac and staggers off in hopeful pursuit.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claude, beneath the bed covers, his clothes strewn about. He leans over, rummages through the drawer of his night stand, pulls out a condom packet. Empty.

He looks up, fiery lust in his eyes. Phoebe, scantily clad, stands at the doorway to the en-suite.

CLAUDE

I thought there was one--

Phoebe holds up a condom.

PHOEBE

-- last one?

She walks to her night stand, picks up her balloon of cognac, swirls it sensuously, slugs it down, smacks her lips and tosses the glass over her shoulder, carefree. She puts the condom to her mouth, inflates it to the max and dangles it, tormenting Claude...

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Chérie, you don't need these.

... before releasing it to fly around the room.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You've perfected your own brand of
contraception.

She grabs the duvet from the bed and heads out of the room, leaving a sad and sorry Claude, whose 'masculinity' slowly wilts beneath the light-weight bed sheet.

PHOEBE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Sorry about the let-down.

EXT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

Hazard lights pulsate in the deserted street outside Bruce's Bar'N'Bistro, its neon sign dowsed.

A street cleaner truck pulls out from the curb to pass a Triple A roadside van, parked behind Stewart's car.

A hapless Stewart looks on as the Black-American MECHANIC, with a battery operated pump, completes the inflation of one of the rear tires of the unmarked police car... and moves to attend the other flat rear tire.

STEWART
(tactless)
I blame the projects.

EXT. ALFRESCO RESTAURANT - DAY

Sidewalk Table. Phoebe and Andy sip coffee. He has a glint in his eye. She fidgets with her ring-less ring finger. He looks around warily.

ANDY
Seems he's a cheap gangsta from Miami. Dirty tricks y'know, conman, fraud, blackmail. Quite a few people after him. But he always stayed clear of the cops.

He looks at Phoebe and shrugs.

PHOEBE
That it?

He holds his palms out apologetically.

ANDY
Except that apparently someone then did the dirty on him - a woman so I'm told. Penelope, I believe.

Phoebe nods, mouths "Pauline" unseen by Andy.

ANDY (CONT'D)
Whoever she was, she hooked up with a younger guy and left poor Bruce high and dry.

Phoebe successfully hides her concern at this last revelation, subtly mouths "David".

ANDY (CONT'D)
Came west about eighteen months ago.

PHOEBE
Why's that, I wonder?

ANDY
Get away from her I suppose.

PHOEBE
Or to find her perhaps?

ANDY
Makes him a real glutton for punishment. So, apart from material for a novel, why the interest?

She leans back in her chair, relaxed and in control.

PHOEBE
Could be he has something I want.

ANDY
Trust you have a good physician.

She peers at him disapprovingly over her sunglasses.

PHOEBE
You misconstrue me.

ANDY
Sorry. So, is it valuable, this thing?

PHOEBE
Probably not.

It's a bit vague for Andy.

ANDY
You think you can handle him?

PHOEBE
Putty.

ANDY
Yeah, grubby and smelly. But seriously --

PHOEBE
Don't worry. I'm not your average dumb blonde.

ANDY
I didn't --

PHOEBE
You were thinking it.

ANDY
I was thinking about your safety.

She gathers her things and stands.

PHOEBE
Thanks.

Departing, she walks past another table where a disheveled Stewart, wearing sunglasses, sits incognito, pretending to do the crossword in the newspaper.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
Three across - 'incognito'!

STEWART
Thanks.

Stewart realizing his faux pas, drowns his embarrassment in the newspaper.

INT. ROBBERY HOMICIDE OFFICE - DAY

Stewart totters into the office, tired and bedraggled.

Crowther checks the clock on the wall - it's 2:30 - and approaches her subordinate as he sits at his desk.

CROWTHER
Look what the cat dragged in.

Stewart checks his attire and appearance.

STEWART
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Look, it may come as a surprise but I've been on duty since yesterday morning and all through the night, earning my keep.

CROWTHER
So I heard.

Stewart looks at her enquiringly.

Crowther moves over to a nearby urn and pours two paper cups of coffee.

STEWART
I've been doing a bit of ground work on Phoebe.

Crowther returns with the coffees, places one in front of Stewart.

CROWTHER
Oh, so it's simply "Phoebe" now?

Stewart gives his superior a convincing evil eye.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Our job is to deal with the victim,
"Ms Pauline", about whom we know
precious little.

STEWART
Not so. For starters, she's from
out of state.

Crowther looks for enlightenment.

STEWART (CONT'D)
You see, last night I followed
Phoebe, Missus Lenault, Ms Lenault
to a nightclub, called Bruce's
Bar'N'Bistro.

Crowther concedes and settles herself on the edge of the desk
and sips her coffee but it is too hot.

STEWART (CONT'D)
This place, let me tell you, is a
bit of a dive....

LATER:

Crowther, now seated, takes a final sip, screws up her empty
paper cup, tosses it into a waste basket. Stewart's coffee is
untouched.

STEWART (CONT'D)
Now earlier today, Phoebe had lunch
with a young man whom I believe is
a bartender at that establishment.

Crowther rubs the back of her neck, relieves the tension,
sick of the voice of Stewart.

STEWART (CONT'D)
It seems that Bruce --

CROWTHER
The bartender?

STEWART
No, that's Andy. Bruce is the Boss.
Of Bruce's Bar and Bistro. It turns
out that Bruce is from Miami.

Crowther glares at him disbelievingly.

CROWTHER
As are all the senior citizens. So
what?

STEWART

(deadly serious)

He's a two-bit thug apparently and
got stung once by one of his
accomplices. A woman. Penelope.
From Miami. And that's why he's
over here.

CROWTHER

Why?

STEWART

Revenge.

Crowther nods her head in mock approval.

CROWTHER

Our "Ms Pauline"?

Stewart opens his palms, gestures "maybe".

CROWTHER (CONT'D)

We'd better look into it then.

Stewart gives the evil eye.

STEWART

"We"?

Crowther nods towards Stewart's computer.

CROWTHER

Get on with it.

EXT. PAULINE'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Bruce in his Mustang is parked a short distance away from
Pauline's place.

David leaves the house, enters his Mercedes SUV parked
outside, and drives off.

Bruce starts the Mustang and follows.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

David's car pulls into the driveway of the townhouse. He
exits the car and enters the townhouse through the front
door. The house lights are turned on, shades are drawn.

A hand knocks on the front door of the townhouse.

David opens from inside. A look of terror comes across his face. A hand proffers a crumpled business card, the other, in a fist, strikes a blow - and all goes black.

INT. LENAUT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dressed to the nines, Phoebe glides through the doorway into the bedroom, followed by an enthusiastic Baby - and a wimpish Claude.

Phoebe goes straight into the walk-in 'robe.

CLAUDE

You could at least tell me where you're going.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

I'm going to see a man who can give me what I want.

CLAUDE

That's grounds for divorce, you know.

PHOEBE (O.S.)

That so?

She emerges from the walk-in 'robe. Claude is totally dumbstruck by the bracelet adorning Phoebe's right wrist.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Perhaps you'd better get yourself a good lawyer. No doubt your friend Pauline will be pleased to know you'll be a free man soon - if she's still interested.

She pulls a piece of paper from her clutch bag and offers it to Claude. He reads it.

THE NOTE READS:

"Keys - Tel. 310 271-5120 Ask for Bruce the Boss"

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Met him last night. Pay him another visit. See what hehas to offer me.

Claude crumples the note and goes to grab her wrist.

CLAUDE

Bitch.

But Baby snarls, bares her teeth, causing him to back off.

PHOEBE
(to dog)
Come on, my true love. Let's not upset him.

INT. POLICE CAR - TRAVELING - NIGHT

Crowther and Stewart cruise through the night.

CROWTHER
When I said "we" --

STEWART
It's overtime, isn't it?

CROWTHER
A single gal like me has better things to do than spend her nights working overtime.

STEWART
Better than getting a result?

Crowther looks out the window, non-plus.

STEWART (CONT'D)
Look, I know it's a long shot but our Ms Pauline very much fits the description of one "Penelope Cash", associate of "Bruce Grybowski", both con artists from Miami. Bruce now runs Bruce's Bar'N'Bistro, the same place I saw Phoebe enter. Putting two and two together...

CROWTHER
Okay, but which two...?

INT. PAULINE'S STUDY - NIGHT

Pauline is at the desk, account books open. Claude paces neurotically around the room.

CLAUDE
She's serious. For the first time in her life, she's serious.

PAULINE
What took her so long?

CLAUDE

She had nothing when I took her
into my life. Just a dumb blonde
pageant queen from the Mid-West.

This outburst strikes a nerve in the blonde Pauline.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

Who does she think she is?

PAULINE

Obviously not a dumb blonde.
Anyway, so what if she files for
divorce?

Claude sits at a plush chair in front of the desk, said chair
being lower than that occupied by Pauline; a submissive
status.

CLAUDE

I just want to know... y'know...
that we...

Pauline stands, moves to the front of the desk, towering over
Claude.

PAULINE

"We", darling?

CLAUDE

(taken aback)

Our plans?

PAULINE

"Our plans"?

She chuckles derisively.

CLAUDE

Yes. The investment plans. What
about my investment?

PAULINE

"Investment"?

CLAUDE

My twenty thousand.

PAULINE

Twenty thousand?

CLAUDE

We have a contract.

PAULINE

Between?

CLAUDE

Between me and you, Pauline Sloane.

PAULINE

Never heard of her. Not worth the
paper it's --

CLAUDE

But that's you!

Pauline shrugs her shoulders, blasé about it all.

PAULINE

When it suits.

CLAUDE

There's my bank account.

PAULINE

For a cash withdrawal?

CLAUDE

Well yes, but...

Claude stands to confront her but she simply turns her back on him and returns to the other side of the desk.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

We had a gentleman's agreement?

PAULINE

Do I look like a gentleman?

Claude follows her, confronts her, more determined.

CLAUDE

And what about the bracelet?

PAULINE

I believe it was stolen. The only
thing, funny enough.

CLAUDE

Well, for your information, my soon-to-be-ex-wife left home tonight
wearing it!

Pauline's demeanor turns decidedly sour.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)

So you tell me, what's going on?

Pauline doesn't have an answer.

Sound of a CHIME (O.S.). Pauline moves out of the study and Claude follows her to the doorway.

PAULINE'S FRONT DOOR:

Pauline opens the door to be confronted by Crowther and Stewart.

CROWTHER
Evening. Sorry to bother but I...
(looks back at Stewart)
...er... we have a few more
questions with regard to our
enquiries.

Both Detectives stand there politely.

PAULINE
If you must...

She allows them inside.

Claude tries unsuccessfully to shuffle out of view and back into the Study.

CROWTHER
If we're not imposing.

Claude sheepishly exits the Study and joins the other three.

With Stewart and Claude following behind, Crowther escorts Pauline into

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS:

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
My colleague has been doing a bit
of research. But unfortunately he
still has a few loose ends.

STEWART
You see Ms Pauline ... er ... it is
Ms Pauline is it not?

Pauline doesn't respond.

Claude is bemused by this line of questioning.

STEWART (CONT'D)

Well the thing is, Pauline. The thing is, it will be easier to track your assailant if we can eliminate all innocent parties. But to do that we must know all your acquaintances. Now we understand you're from out of state, from Miami, is that right?

PAULINE

(hesitant)

That's correct.

STEWART

Not California?

Pauline is quite unnerved by this. Claude is even more confused.

PAULINE

No, not -- Why do you --?

She's interrupted by the RING of the phone in the room.

Pauline excuses herself, goes to the adjacent Study and closes the door behind her. Claude stands mute as a statue.

Stewart steals away to the phone in the Living Room, delicately picks up the receiver just as the ringing stops. And eavesdrops.

CLAUDE

(protests)

You need a warrant to --

Crowther restrains him. Stewart is not fazed.

CROWTHER

He's still learning.

PAULINE'S STUDY:

Pauline places the phone to her ear but says nothing initially.

DAVID (V.O.)

(muffled)

Hello? Hello? Penelope?

Pauline looks back at the door of the Study before answering softly.

PAULINE

Hello?

DAVID (V.O.)

Penny, love. It's me, David.

PAULINE

Darling? You sound --

INT. DAVID'S DEN - NIGHT - INTERCUT

David holds a blood-stained handkerchief on his nose as he talks on the phone.

DAVID

It's him! He's found us.

PAULINE (V.O.)

Who...?

DAVID

Lover boy Bruce!

PAULINE (V.O.)

Darling, are you all right?

DAVID

Fine, fine. It's my bet he's the one who attacked you. But I've got it all under control. I know where to find him. He'll wish he never left Miami!

PAULINE (V.O.)

David, don't do anything stupid.

David drops his handkerchief from his inflamed nose, and picks up a revolver from the small desk.

PAULINE'S STUDY:

Pauline is overcome by anxiety as David continues.

DAVID (V.O.)

Don't worry, my sweet. Good ol' Bruce has so many enemies no-one will ever know who pulled the trigger.

Pauline hears a faint "CLICK" elsewhere on the line.

PAULINE

David, David, don't say --

DAVID (V.O.)

Trust me. It'll be over before you know it. I'm not having that douche screw up our plans. I'll get back to you.

PAULINE

Darling, listen to me --

But the line goes dead. Perturbed, she hangs up and looks toward the door to the Living Room.

PAULINE'S LIVING ROOM:

Stewart, removing his hand from the telephone, turns toward the Study in anticipation.

CLAUDE

Barging in without a warrant, I hope they throw the --

CROWTHER

Book? The lady invited us in.

Pauline emerges from the Study.

STEWART

Speaking of whom.
(to Pauline)
So tell me, who's Bruce?

PAULINE

You tell me.

Stewart leads the inquisition.

STEWART

The boss. Runs Bruce's
Bar'N'Bistro. Formerly of Miami.

CROWTHER

And just where might that be, I wonder?

STEWART

Just south of Fort Lauderdale.

CROWTHER

The bar'n'bistro!

STEWART

Oh. Not far. Short drive on --

CROWTHER

I know, I know.

STEWART

There's talk of a weapon.

CROWTHER

Well, we'd better not linger. We
wouldn't want a homicide as well as
robbery on our hands, would we?

Crowther leads the others out.

Stewart lingers a few paces behind at the doorway, pulls his cell phone from his jacket and hammers in a number.

STEWART

Just in case.

INT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

Phoebe, glowing in the spotlight of all the eyes upon her, sidles up to the bar.

ANDY

Aren't you the glutton for punishment.

PHOEBE

Depends what's on the menu. But first an aperitif. You make a good martini?

ANDY

The best.

He moves away to prepare the martini.

BRUCE'S OFFICE DOOR:

Bruce's prying eyes watch Phoebe.

THE BAR:

With her right hand Phoebe flicks back her hair from her eye, rubs her sensuous neck and clearly reveals the magnificent bracelet she is wearing.

Andy returns with the martini.

ANDY (CONT'D)
My best yet. Listen, about what I
said at lunch --

PHOEBE
I can look after my self. Besides,
I never go out without protection.

ANDY
Is that wise?

PHOEBE
Don't worry. All legal. And
licenced.

She places her small clutch bag on the bar. A hand, the knuckle adorned with a band-aid, reaches over from behind her and rests on the small bag.

BRUCE (O.S.)
My buy.

Phoebe doesn't respond.

Bruce sidles up next to her, sniffs the air.

BRUCE (CONT'D)
The lady with the perfume.

Bruce motions to Andy to leave them. He takes Phoebe's right hand, admires the bracelet on her wrist, kisses her hand.

ENTRANCE:

Through the dim entrance of this dive, red-nosed David enters and moves to a secluded booth. He spies Bruce and Phoebe at the bar and his eyes widen at the sight of the bracelet.

RESUME THE BAR:

BRUCE (CONT'D)
Looking for anyone in particular?

Phoebe subtly withdraws her hand from Bruce's and takes a sip of her martini. She picks up the olive on the toothpick, sucks it sensuously, and utters

PHOEBE
Could be.

Her "come on" throws Bruce momentarily but he does his utmost to gather his macho wits.

BRUCE

There's something about you I find very attractive.

She smiles sarcastically.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

In fact I believe you have something this man desires.

She feigns innocence and a degree of shock.

PHOEBE

Really, I'm not that kind of a girl.

(As she bites into the olive.)

But on the other hand --

She seductively places the remainder of the olive in her mouth, slowly withdrawing the toothpick, licking the last drop of moisture from its tip, and very slowly masticates.

Macho Bruce drools.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

All depends on what's offered in exchange...

(She looks him squarely in the eye.)

... for what you desire. A bit of tit --

He looks around, unsure of the exactness of her proposition.

BRUCE

A bit of tit --?

She nods.

PHOEBE

For tat. I believe that's the term.

He motions over his shoulder toward his office.

BRUCE

Perhaps we should go somewhere intimate.

PHOEBE

I know a place even more intimate.
You'll feel right at home.

Bruce is all agog.

Phoebe finally swallows the last of the masticated olive and stands, her smiling glossy lips an irresistible invitation.

She grabs her clutch bag and moves toward the exit, chancing a confident glance back at a concerned Andy.

Bruce quickly gulps down the last of Phoebe's martini and as he turns to follow her, he delicately grabs various loose bills left on the bar by others, tucks them into his pocket and scurries off after her like a dog after his hot bitch.

BOOTH:

In the dimly lit booth, David downs his drink, stands and braces himself.

EXT. BRUCE'S BAR'N'BISTRO - NIGHT

A few PEDESTRIANS pass by.

Bruce scurries behind Phoebe until they reach her Mercedes a little way down the street.

He balks at the sight of the dark, foreboding car but continues to follow.

Phoebe sways her hips to the driver's door, Bruce to the passenger side. He runs his hand along the sleek roof-line.

BRUCE

A little quickie.

PHOEBE

If we're lucky.

Off the innuendo Bruce is now a blundering mess.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

It's not locked.

He is hesitant.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

Won't bite.

They both get in.

I/E. PHOEBE'S MERCEDES - STREET - NIGHT

Bruce sits in the Mercedes with a start - he places a hand under his posterior and retrieves a dog's leather chew bone, examines it briefly and tosses it over the back.

MOMENTARY SILENCE - A STOMACH RUMBLES.

Bruce shifts awkwardly in his seat, looks straight ahead, chancing the quickest of peripheral glances in Phoebe's direction. He goes to wind down the window - but the button won't operate.

He smiles awkwardly and pats his stomach.

Phoebe looks at him, feigns an apologetic smile and mutters.

PHOEBE

Tsch. Poor baby.

(sits a moment)

Well then, let's get on with it.

BRUCE

What! Here?!

PHOEBE

Why not?

BRUCE

Couldn't we go somewhere... more
comfortable?

She taps her clutch bag.

PHOEBE

I seem to have misplaced my keys.

She eyes him down.

Bruce comes back to reality. He gathers his wits and removes Phoebe's original set of keys from his jacket and dangles them in front of her.

She goes to take them but he quickly closes his hand around them, denying her. With his other hand he takes hold of her right wrist. She struggles, his grip becomes firmer and firmer. She utters a little "YELP" in pain.

From the rear seat, up lunges Baby, the German Shepherd.

Panic-struck, Bruce drops Phoebe's keys on the seat by his crotch and makes a final grab at her wrist. He successfully snatches the bracelet, flings open his door, hastily exits to

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Bruce makes off to his old Mustang just down the street.

Baby jumps out of the Merc but Bruce, safely in his own car, squeals off. Baby sets off in pursuit.

Phoebe steps from her Merc holding her keys. From seemingly nowhere, David grabs her by the wrist.

DAVID
I'll take that.

A struggle ensues. There is no bracelet.

He releases her and sets off, gun in hand and makes it to his own SUV further along the street.

Phoebe, holding the door of the Merc open, whistles and Baby comes loping back to her and into the front seat.

Now the Mercedes squeals off in pursuit...

MOMENTS LATER:

Crowther and Stewart's Police Car, with Claude and Pauline in back, pulls up whence Phoebe just departed. Stewart gets out curb-side. The BANG (O.S.) of a gun discharged.

Stewart jumps back in and the Police Car heads off in pursuit of Phoebe in pursuit of David in pursuit of Bruce.

The rampaging cavalcade makes its way on to

EXT. COLORADO AVENUE - NIGHT

Heading toward the coast, the vehicles overtake a Santa Monica Streetcar.

Ahead, Bruce's Mustang, crosses over the 4th Street intersection, weaves in and out of the slow moving traffic but soon comes to a screeching halt, unable to proceed through the traffic jam.

The unfit Bruce exits his car and heads off on foot, crosses over to the Colorado Esplanade, weaves his way through the mass of pedestrians and cyclists, toward the pier.

The SUV screeches up behind the Mustang. David emerges wielding his hand gun and follows after Bruce, causing mayhem among the public.

Phoebe's Mercedes follows suit. Baby leaps from the vehicle and bounds off along the Esplanade after the miscreants ... and quickly overtakes David and gains on the panting Bruce.

Fearing the barking Baby, Bruce knocks a cyclist to the ground, mounts the bicycle and struggles to make good his escape.

I/E. CROWTHER'S POLICE CAR - COLORADO - NIGHT

Speeding as safely as she can, Crowther spies in the rearview mirror the flashing blue and red lights of a SMPD patrol car following right behind.

CROWTHER
Who else did you ring in?

Stewart starts to answer but Crowther raises her hand, distracted by something else outside. She cranes forward, looks out the windshield, at a SMPD helicopter above, its searchlight paving the way to the pier.

Crowther brings the vehicle to a rapid halt behind the other three abandoned vehicles, glares at Stewart and gestures to the pandemonium ahead.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Head him off at the --

STEWART
Pier!

Taking his cue, Stewart leaps from the car and heads off. Passing Phoebe standing by her car, their eyes meet, he falters a beat, smitten, comes back to reality and heads off.

The younger, athletic Stewart gains on David and executes a perfect rugby tackle to apprehend him. He is relieved of this burden by two panting SMPD Patrol Officers who take David into custody.

Following the sound of Baby's BARKING, Stewart sprints off again toward the pier.

Bruce pedals precariously from the Esplanade, dodges traffic, heads across Ocean Avenue, ditches the bicycle.

Baby, bounding enthusiastically, crosses Ocean after him.

A short distance behind, Stewart slows and cautiously crosses through the chaotic, stalled traffic ...

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - NIGHT

Seemingly out of nowhere, A SWAT van, along with Police Patrol cars, lights flashing, sirens wailing, converge on the entrance to the pier and a waiting Stewart.

Crowther more casually approaches, with David, Pauline, and Claude in the custody of other Patrol Officers.

STEWART

Lost him.

Crowther, points to the Pacific Park complex from which emanates the sound of Baby BARKING.

CROWTHER

After you.

STEWART

Should have called the K-9 Unit.

Crowther rolls her eyes in exasperation.

CROWTHER

Just get after him.

Stewart complies, gathers his breath and heads off in pursuit again.

EXT. PACIFIC PARK COMPLEX - NIGHT

Bruce, near exhaustion, stumbles through the complex, trying to evade Baby, causing mayhem among the REVELLERS.

He finds himself at the entrance to the ...

BIG PACIFIC WHEEL:

Bruce skittles aside the waiting queue of PATRONS, and lunges into one of the gondolas. In the process he drops the bracelet. He fumbles for it but the gondola starts to ascend.

Ignoring Bruce, Baby stops her barking and retrieves the jewelry.

The wheel goes only partially up. It stops for the next gondola to load up but Stewart lunges forward through the waiting queue, flashing his ID.

STEWART

(to Wheel Operator)

Reverse!

But the Wheel starts upward again. Stewart scrambles aboard the empty gondola as it soars skyward. He calls after Bruce.

STEWART (CONT'D)
Stop!

The Wheel comes to a halt at the zenith of the cycle, whence Stewart yells out the Miranda rights.

STEWART (CONT'D)
I'm arresting you under suspicion
of assault with intent. You have
the right to remain silent.
Anything you do say can and will be
used against you in a court of law.
You have the right to -- (FADES)

Down on the pier, Crowther and the Entourage arrive and they, too, barge through the waiting queue.

Crowther looks up at the farcical situation and turns to the SWAT Officer at her side.

CROWTHER
Looking for new recruits?

The SWAT Officer slowly, pathetically shakes his head.

MOMENTS LATER:

An exhausted Stewart sidles up to his superior. Crowther looks him up and down and shakes her head in disbelief.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Trust you enjoyed the ride.

STEWART
Yeah, except for the bit --

But Crowther hastily raises her hand to prevent her colleague from continuing.

CROWTHER
You did good.

Stewart is taken aback by the compliment.

Crowther turns to the others.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
All right, who's first?

Bruce tries to struggle free from the SWAT Officer detaining him.

BRUCE

You've got a nerve, arresting an innocent guy like --

CROWTHER

Innocent?

BRUCE

Yeah. I'm the damned victim here.

STEWART

And how's that?

Bruce makes a lunge at Pauline but is restrained.

BRUCE

Ask the bitch.

STEWART

Not our Ms Pauline, surely?

BRUCE

Ms Pauline my ass. Try Penelope Cash. And her slimy husband.

He lunges at David but again is restrained.

CLAUDE

(no trace of accent)

Husband?

Claude turns to Pauline who sniggers at him.

PAULINE

A special relationship.

CLAUDE

But we - You mean -? You tied me up, you - That's sick.

Phoebe finds it difficult to restrain her laughter.

PAULINE

You enjoyed it more than me.

BRUCE

The darlings of Miami. The bitch jilted me and ripped me off for fifteen grand. Not to mention the others, insurance companies, seniors, you name 'em.

PHOEBE
Failed Lawyers?

Pauline lashes out at Bruce.

PAULINE
Liar. You'd say anything to save
your ass. I want you up for
assault. And what about my
bracelet?!

A MUFFLED BARK from nearby.

Baby, the bracelet held gently in its mouth, ambles up to Phoebe who cuddles the dog. She takes possession of the bracelet, turns to Claude, wipes the dog's saliva on his jacket and slips it on her wrist.

PHOEBE
I never did thank you, did I
chérie?

Claude is lost for words.

PAULINE
Hang on. That bracelet was stolen.
(points at Bruce)
By him... from me. I've even made
my insurance claim.

Stewart takes a firmer hold of Bruce.

BRUCE
I didn't steal it.
(points at Phoebe)
She did!

PHOEBE
Oh but I assure you. My husband
bought it for me. You see, he's
been unable to give me a child, so
he's been pampering me.
(to Claude)
We have the receipt, don't we,
chérie? Was it cash or credit card?
I forgot.

CROWTHER
Hang on, hang on.
(To Claude)
You have the receipt?

CLAUDE
(reluctantly)
Yes. Somewhere.

Phoebe takes the receipt from her clutch bag and waves it in front of Claude.

STEWART
Well if it wasn't stolen, then there wasn't a robbery.

BRUCE
Oh yes there was. And she was there with me. How else would I come by her keys?

PHOEBE
What keys?

BRUCE
To your car.

CROWTHER
(to Bruce)
You got her keys?

BRUCE
Yes... er no... I mean I did have.

PHOEBE
(holds up her keys)
You mean to the car you stole ...

BRUCE
I didn't steal any car.

PHOEBE
... And used, no doubt, for the robbery.

Stewart relieves Phoebe of the keys.

STEWART
Evidence.

CROWTHER
But there wasn't a robbery.

STEWART
Then who stole the car?

BRUCE
Not me.

CROWTHER
Goddam it. Then who did?

Crowther pans around and one by one everyone else present shakes their head.

CROWTHER (CONT'D)
Oh what the fuck.
(To SWAT OFFICER in charge)
Sorry guys... might as well pack it
in for the night. Let him go.

The SWAT Officer releases Bruce and the Team slowly disperse, disappointed.

CLAUDE
But what about the blackmail?

CROWTHER
What blackmail?

Phoebe is all ears.

CLAUDE
Nothing.

Crowther shakes her head in disbelief, then turns her attention to David and Pauline.

CROWTHER
That leaves you two.

DAVID
You can't hold me.

CROWTHER
Discharging firearms, pal.
(and to Pauline)
And as for you, there's the matter
of fraudulent insurance claims.

PAULINE
But this time it was legit --

David digs her in the ribs.

CROWTHER
But there was no robbery.

PAULINE
What about the assault?

CROWTHER

No witnesses. No case.
 (looks at Pauline's eye,
 then at David's nose)
 More likely domestic discord.

She directs the Patrol Officers to escort the villains away.

DAVID

But I was in Vegas.

Crowther shrugs, opens her palms. She couldn't give a -

CLAUDE

Hey, what about my investment. My
 twenty grand?

Crowther groans as Stewart mouths "a small sum"?

PHOEBE

Twenty grand?

She walks right up to her husband, face to face.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

You'd better know a good attorney.

She slips off the bracelet and hands it to Bruce.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

For all your troubles.

This only serves to confuse, insult or frustrate the others
 as the case may be.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)

(to Claude)

I'm sure I'll have enough after the
 divorce.

(to Bruce)

Probably glass, anyway.

She turns, clicks her fingers to Baby who comes to her side
 and together they walk away from the rabble.

CROWTHER

(to Stewart)

Well done, Detective.

Crowther looks toward Phoebe walking off and gestures to
 Stewart's hand still holding Phoebe's keys.

STEWART

Hey!

He catches up to Phoebe.

STEWART (CONT'D)
I'll walk you back. Some crazy
people in this precinct.

She smiles warmly.

STEWART (CONT'D)
That was a weird thing you did back
there giving him the bracelet.

PHOEBE
Payment for inspiration.

He looks for elaboration but none is forthcoming.

PHOEBE (CONT'D)
For the novel I'm writing.

STEWART
Crime? Romance?

PHOEBE
Farce.

EXT. COLORADO AVENUE - NIGHT

Red and Blue flashing lights. SMPD Officers re-direct traffic as Phoebe, Baby and Stewart approach the black Mercedes. Phoebe opens the unlocked passenger door, Baby jumps in.

Phoebe moves around to the driver's door - but falters. She starts searching her clothes, her clutch bag etc.

PHOEBE
Now what did I do with them?

Stewart dangles the keys in the air before tossing them to her. He runs his hand over the sleek roof.

STEWART
Great pulling power.

She smiles and winks at him.

PHOEBE
What a girl needs.

INT. LENAUT KITCHEN - DAY

A new look Phoebe at the bench finishes typing on her laptop.

"Great pulling power," he said with lustful eyes.

"What a girl needs," she replied with a wink and a slutty smile.

She leans back, content with her effort. She hurriedly scrolls back to the Title Page, deletes the word "Wants" and re-types "What A Girl Needs".

She rapidly returns the last page and types the last two words of her novel:

"THE END"