

SOUL MATE

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Spacious and expensively furnished with large windows and great views of New York. Celebrity photographs and show business awards cover the walls.

Seated around a table strewn with head shots are ARTIE SCHNEIDER, late 30's, very casually dressed, KEN ROSEN, late 30's, professional in a blazer and FRED JENNINGS, late 50's, impeccably dressed.

FRED

It's down to twenty girls.  
Tomorrow, you guys interview them,  
then we can meet and choose the  
twelve contestants.

Artie and Ken scan a pile of photos and resumes. While Ken is rapid, Artie is distant.

KEN

What do we have, the usual group of  
gold-diggers looking to cash in?

FRED

Way beyond the usual, Ken. I found  
the most off-beat characters  
available. It's "Soul Mate's"  
third and final season, I'm going  
all out.

KEN

Johnny's last chance to find true  
love?

Artie looks off, distracted.

ARTIE

True love, classic oxymoron.

FRED

What's the matter with you, Artie?  
You're not yourself.

Artie snaps back.

ARTIE

It's something I read. About the  
zebras.

FRED  
Zebras? What, are they endangered?

ARTIE  
No, depressed. They think the stripes make them look fat.

Fred and Ken laugh, as Artie smiles confidently.

FRED  
How do you come up with this stuff?

KEN  
He's a master, the best!

FRED  
Well, keep it up. I want our ratings to soar this year.

ARTIE  
Have I ever failed to deliver?

Ken looks at Artie in awe and admiration.

An intercom on the table near Fred buzzes. He presses a button on it.

FRED  
What is it, Ms. Hopkins?

MS. HOPKINS (V.O.)  
Mr. Jennings, Johnny Soul is here to see you.

Artie mutters incoherently. Fred rolls his eyes and sighs.

FRED  
Alright, send him in.

Fred hits the off button.

FRED (CONT'D)  
What the hell does he want?

Artie gets up and walks to the window, his back to the room, looking out toward the street.

JOHNNY SOUL, tall fortyish, dressed like the has-been rock star he is, ambles into the room.

JOHNNY  
Hey, Fred, Ken. What's up.

KEN  
Johnny. Good to see you.

JOHNNY  
Artie, man, so glad you're here.

Artie gives Johnny a half-hearted wave without turning around.

FRED  
So, what can I do for you?

JOHNNY  
I thought, like, maybe I could help with casting. After all, it's my show, right?

Artie snorts derisively.

Ken looks away.

Fred rises from his seat and crosses to Johnny, putting an arm around his shoulders.

FRED  
You're the star. You don't do this stuff. Your job is be Johnny Soul, rock star. Right?

JOHNNY  
I guess so.

FRED  
Of course it is. Now, go home and get some rest, maybe write a song and let us do the grunt work. Okay?

Johnny shrugs and nods with a grin.

JOHNNY  
I'll see you guys soon.

KEN  
See ya, Johnny.

FRED  
Take care.

Johnny exits.

Fred crosses back to the table. Artie turns back toward the others, leaning against the window.

FRED (CONT'D)  
His show! You believe that guy?

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Artie and Ken ride down to the lobby.

ARTIE  
That was the last person I needed  
to see.

KEN  
I know, but you gotta tough it out,  
at least til the season is  
finished.

ARTIE  
Hey, I can handle anything. I just  
didn't expect to see him this soon.

KEN  
Well, yeah it sucks, but--

ARTIE  
So, I gotta gun into him? You know  
how I feel? It's like Jennifer  
Anniston running into Angelina  
Jolie.

KEN  
That would be pretty hot.

ARTIE  
It's always hot until somebody  
loses an eye.

KEN  
Look, Joanna slept with quite a few  
guys. It's not like Johnny single-  
handedly destroyed your marriage.

ARTIE  
He didn't help it.

INT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

A large, beautifully decorated area.

The elevator doors open. Artie bursts out quickly, eyes  
focused straight ahead.

Ken rushes to keep up.

KEN

Artie, it's been almost a year, you sure you're not tired of being alone?

ARTIE

Tired? Of being with someone I love?

Ken laughs and is momentarily distracted, as he eyes two very attractive women standing nearby.

Artie takes this opportunity to move ahead of Ken.

Ken recovers and catches up again.

KEN

It's just that ... well, Rachel seem to think--

Artie zips out the door onto the street.

Ken dashes ahead in pursuit.

EXT. FRONT OF OFFICE BUILDING

Artie quickly moves out onto the crowded street, strides to a kiosk and buys a newspaper.

Ken catches up and purchases a candy bar.

KEN

She has a friend, a philosophy professor, really bright. I know you hate set ups, but, you wanna come to dinner? Maybe meet her?

ARTIE

Why don't you bypass me and just introduce her to Johnny, cut out the middleman.

Artie turns and strides quickly to the corner.

KEN

Artie!

Ken, stuffing the candy bar into his mouth, lumbers over to his friend.

ARTIE

Look. I do hate set ups. And I'm fine. I'm always okay.

KEN

Yeah, I know. Hey, Rachel's coming to pick me up. Why don't you let us give you a ride home? We could stop for a beer.

ARTIE

Thanks, I appreciate the offer, but I really just want to be alone.

Artie opens his paper and buries his face in it.

KEN

You spend too much time by yourself. How are you gonna meet anybody?

ARTIE

Meet somebody? I'm not even sure what I want.

KEN

Well, then you gotta do some thinking. What's your ideal woman like?

Artie lowers the paper and looks at Ken in amusement.

ARTIE

I can't get the hot water in my shower to last ten minutes and you're talking to me about ideal women.

KEN

I just mean you gotta know what you're looking for. Hey, here comes Rachel.

RACHEL ROSEN, Ken's wife, an average middle-aged, working mom, walks up to the two men.

RACHEL

Sorry, Ken, I had to take Trudi to her boyfriend's house.

(to him)

Hi, Artie, how are ya, Sweetie?

ARTIE

Hi, Rachel. I'm just great. Got to see my pal, Johnny today.

Artie folds the paper and puts it under his arm.

RACHEL  
Oh God, are you alright?

ARTIE  
Sure, fine, fantastic! Hey, do they sell hara-kiri knives at Williams-Sonoma?

RACHEL  
Artie, always with the jokes.

The three of them walk down the street.

RACHEL (CONT'D)  
So, Ken, did you tell him what we talked about?

KEN  
You mean what you talked about. He's not interested.

Rachel looks at Artie like a mother looking at a child who won't eat his vegetables. Artie shrugs.

RACHEL  
We're your friends. At least let us drive you home. Come out with us for a bite or a drink.

ARTIE  
No, thanks. Look, I really do appreciate the way you guys look out for me, but I'm okay. I'm always okay.

Artie gives Rachel a kiss on the cheek, then shakes hands with Ken.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna go for a walk, maybe have a drink. Great seeing ya, Rachel, give Trudi my love. Ken, I'll see you tomorrow at casting.

KEN  
Alright, Artie. Cheer up, pal, and think about what I said.

RACHEL  
Bye, Artie.

Artie walks off in a different direction as Ken and Rachel continue on.

Rachel gives Ken a slap on the arm.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

What's the matter with you? He shouldn't be alone! You couldn't talk him into coming with us?

KEN

What was I gonna do? He's okay.

RACHEL

Couldn't you see how much pain he was in? I swear, Kenny, sometimes you are just clueless!

Ken stops and regards his wife with a look of amused, false annoyance.

KEN

I've known Artie since we were eight. He can handle anything. I think we know who the clueless one is here.

RACHEL

I was clueless when I married you, I'll tell ya that!

KEN

(smiling)  
You want a divorce?

RACHEL

(with a big smile)  
I'll take half of everything we own.

KEN

You paid for half of everything we own.

Ken puts his arm around Rachel and gives her a nice kiss. She kisses him back with equal affection.

KEN (CONT'D)

You're luck I love you.

RACHEL

I think we know who the lucky one is.

Ken and Rachel continue down the street.

Artie stands alone on an adjacent corner, watching the happy couple.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A typical residential building on the Upper West Side.

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT

Small and sparsely furnished, a large, plasma television is the only expensive looking item in the place. The rest is worn, but comfortable.

Artie bursts through the door.

ARTIE  
Honey, I'm home!

After surveying the empty room and listening to the deafening silence, Artie steps into the kitchen area.

He opens his refrigerator, which is empty except for a few nearly empty condiment jars. He then extracts one of many frozen dinners from his freezer.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
(in an upper crust British  
accent)  
Your usual sir?  
(back to his normal voice)  
Yes, Jeeves. Dinner for one.

LATER

Artie sits at his small table, eating his microwaved meal, an empty seat opposite him. He looks over at the other chair, then takes a forkful of food.

ARTIE  
(British accent)  
You've really outdone yourself,  
darling. The Salisbury steak is  
perfectly cooked.

He looks back at the empty seat, then looks down, rubbing his eyes and shaking his head.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
My ideal woman.

Artie looks back up to the chair and now sees SOPHIE, late 30's, pretty, but nondescript, dressed very simply in black. For a moment, he appears breathless.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Wow!

He recovers his composure.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

So, you would be ...

SOPHIE

An imaginary manifestation of your ideal woman.

ARTIE

Yeah, well, lay low, you're not on the lease.

Sophie glares at Artie with no reaction.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Tough crowd.

Sophie gives him a smile.

SOPHIE

Nice try, but I'm smarter than you.

Artie shakes his head in frustration.

ARTIE

I couldn't be interested in airheads like a normal guy.

He looks her over and gestures to her.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

I don't get this look.

SOPHIE

Do you have a favorite physical type?

Artie thinks for a moment, then shakes his head "no".

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

There you go.

ARTIE

Okay. You got a name?

SOPHIE  
Call me Sophie

ARTIE  
Why Sophie?

SOPHIE  
Who knows what's in the dark  
recesses of your mind?

ARTIE  
Great. I'm being heckled by my  
imagination.

Artie gets up, goes into the kitchen and tosses his tray into the sink. He then comes back out and looks at Sophie.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
I'm going to bed. You can sleep on  
the couch or in my hypothalamus or  
wherever imaginary women sleep.

Artie dashes through the door to his bedroom.

INT. ARTIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Furnished sparsely like the living room; bed, dresser, television and a lamp on a night stand. Clothes lie around the room. It lacks a women's touch.

Artie sits in bed watching television. He looks toward his door, then gets up and cautiously approaches it.

He slowly opens the door and takes a peek outside. Seeing nothing, he closes it and turns around.

Sophie stands in front of him. Artie jumps with a start.

ARTIE  
This is crossing the line. What  
are you doing in my bedroom?

Sophie surveys the mess in disgust.

SOPHIE  
When was the last time you had a  
woman in here?

ARTIE  
Imaginary, pretty recently. Flesh  
and blood, it's been awhile.

Artie pushes past Sophie and sits on his bed.

She follows him over and leans down to address him.

SOPHIE

That's what I'm here to change.  
And I will be with you until we do.

Artie smirks and starts to say something, but Sophie abruptly cuts him off.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

What did I tell you about the  
jokes?

His strongest line of defense thwarted, Artie is momentarily silent. He appears flustered.

ARTIE

I am not capable of maintaining a  
relationship. And I can't deal  
with another break up.

Sophie sits next to Artie and puts an arm around his shoulders.

SOPHIE

Can you deal with spending the rest  
of your life alone? We're going to  
change things for the better.

Artie sits speechless for a moment.

ARTIE

I don't have a comeback. What did  
you do to me?

SOPHIE

I'm trying to help you.

ARTIE

So, basically, I'm stuck with you.

SOPHIE

Until we find you a woman.

Artie sighs and looks doubtful.

ARTIE

I hope you have a magic wand,  
'cause I'm not exactly a catch.

SOPHIE

Relax. We can do this. We start  
tomorrow.

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Artie emerges from his bedroom. Barely awake, he heads into the kitchen and makes coffee.

SOPHIE

It's about time you got up.

Artie turns, sees Sophie and snaps to attention.

ARTIE

That's a new look for you, isn't it?

Sophie now has red hair and wears the form-fitting Black Widow costume from "Iron Man 2". She looks down at herself, astonished.

SOPHIE

What the hell? What did you do?

ARTIE

Well, I was watching "Iron Man 2" last night before I went to sleep. And now you look like--

SOPHIE

Scarlett Johansson. You saw her in the movie and transferred her look to me, your ideal woman.

ARTIE

Well, she did look really good in that costume.

Sophie gives Artie an annoyed look.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

So, I can change your appearance?

SOPHIE

Apparently.

ARTIE

(with a wicked grin)  
This could be fun!

SOPHIE

Life is not a comic book, Artie.  
We're gonna find you a real woman.

INT. LOBBY OUTSIDE OFFICE - DAY

DARRELL CONNORS, the show's director, a trim energetic man in his early 30's, talks to Ken when Artie approaches them.

ARTIE

So, Darrell. How crazy is this bunch of girls?

KEN

Anybody Artie might be interested in?

Artie glares at Ken. Darrell shakes his head like a schoolteacher admonishing a student.

DARRELL

Now you know Fred would ruin Arthur's career if he got caught dating a contestant.

ARTIE

Thank you, Darrell. Come on, let's get this over with.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A large conference table sits in the middle of the bright room.

Artie and Ken sit on one side of the table, stacks of head shots and resumes in front of them.

AINSLEY NORLANDER, early 20's, big hair dyed black, with a deep, fake tan, sits opposite Artie and Ken. Ainsley speaks with a very bad Jersey accent.

Ken reads from her resume.

KEN

Ainsley Norlander?

AINSLEY

Yeah, but you can call me Ainno.

ARTIE

Ainno?

AINSLEY

As in, ain't nobody gonna beat this girl!

Ainsley laughs at this with no reaction from Artie or Ken.

AINSLEY (CONT'D)

I just hope I'll have enough  
inspiration to bring out my best.

ARTIE

Well, there will be plenty of  
alcohol available.

AINSLEY

Cool!

LATER

Now in the hot seat is JEZEBEL BURLEIGH, mid 20's, dressed like a Gothic schoolgirl and sporting fangs that look more goofy than menacing. Jezebel has a Louisiana accent.

JEZEBEL

Hi, I'm Jezebel Burleigh.

Artie rubs his face with a hand, clearly frustrated.

ARTIE

These God damn "Twilight" movies  
are killing me!

LATER

KELLY MELENDEZ, tall, stunningly beautiful, in her late 20's not talks to Artie and Ken. Kelly displays her looks in an overtly sexual way.

Ken reads from her resume.

KEN

Kelly Melendez. A model, huh?

KELLY

You got it. Lingerie, bikinis.  
Miss Florida 2004. And the winner  
of this year's show.

Kelly flips her hair and strikes a confident, sexy pose.

Artie glances over at Ken, who has a big, goofy smile on his face. His eyes are glued to Kelly.

ARTIE

You're pretty confident.

Kelly gives Artie a smug look.

KELLY

Wouldn't you be? This show is my ticket to the big time. I'll do whatever I have to.

ARTIE

Fred's gonna love this one.

LATER

MICHELLE CARLYLE now sits in. Michelle is in her early 30's, cute, but not glamorous, with glasses that give her an academic look.

Ken searches around the table, not finding what he is looking for.

Artie can't take his eyes off Michelle, a fact that goes unnoticed by Ken.

MICHELLE

Hi, I'm Michelle Carlyle.

Michelle gives Artie a big smile which he returns.

KEN

I can't seem to find your resume, Michelle.

MICHELLE

Oh, I don't have one. At least not the kind you're looking for.

Artie and Ken exchange a puzzled look.

ARTIE

Aren't you an actress or a singer or something?

MICHELLE

No, I'm a grad student. PhD candidate in literature.

Artie sits up and looks at Michelle with interest.

ARTIE

Really? That's fantastic.

Michelle breaks into a huge smile.

MICHELLE

Most men are intimidated by my intellect.

ARTIE

I'm not most men.

Artie and Michelle make eye contact and smile at each other.

Ken looks at the two of them, smiles, then interjects.

KEN

How is this show going to help your career?

Artie and Michelle snap out of their connection and acknowledge Ken.

MICHELLE

I'm not sure what you mean. I'm here to meet Johnny. Isn't that what the show is about?

ARTIE

Why do you want to meet Johnny?

Michelle places a hand over her heart and gets a wistful, almost pained look on her face.

MICHELLE

His song, "Soul Mate", the one the show is named after. I loved it when I was young. It's so beautifully tragic.

Artie and Ken exchange another look.

ARTIE

What's so tragic about a song that made him a millionaire?

MICHELLE

It's about lost love. He really moved me. I wish I was there to console him.

KEN

I think he's gotten over it.

MICHELLE

I think he's still looking for his soul mate.

ARTIE

I think he was looking for fame and fortune and found it.

MICHELLE

Maybe. But some things money can't buy. Connecting with another person is important, too, don't you think?

Artie looks at Michelle, clearly considering her words.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - LATER

The interviews finished, Artie and Ken exit the building and walk down the street.

ARTIE

Where the hell does Fred find these girls?

KEN

How about that Kelly, huh? You should try to hook up with her.

Ken gives Artie a big smile while nodding.

ARTIE

Yeah, vanity is such an attractive trait. Besides, I couldn't go out with her. I'd need a stepladder to kiss her.

KEN

Depends on where you kiss her.

ARTIE

You say stuff like that to Rachel?

KEN

Who do you think gave me the line?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Artie, Ken and Fred stand by the table, perusing head shots. Sophie, in her generic look, stands by Artie.

A bulletin board hangs on the wall with head shots of the chosen contestants. Each photo has the girl's name printed across it.

The photos show: BRANDI JAMES, mid 20's, African-American, TAYLOR WORTHINGTON, 20's, blond and blue-eyed.

Other photos show: PHYLLIS COATES, CRYSTAL LI, JEANNETTE MOREAU, HEATHER NELSON AND BRISTOL STEVENS, all twenty-something, none look very bright.

FRED

Okay, we got the vampire, the computer geek, Miss Florida ...

Fred tacks the photos of Jezebel, DORRIE WEISS, early 20's, mousy brunette, and Kelly on the board.

Artie shakes his head, looking toward the ceiling.

KEN

Jersey girl, that's eleven, we need one more.

Fred tacks Ainsley's picture on the board.

Sophie taps Artie on the shoulder and points to Michelle's head shot.

Artie picks it up.

ARTIE

How about her? We gotta have a smart one for contrast.

Fred and Ken look at the photo. Ken smiles and glances at Artie, but Fred looks doubtful.

FRED

Forget it. Who's gonna watch some egghead? We need bimbos, Artie. Drunks, crazy girls. I want bigger ratings.

Artie starts to put the photo down, but Sophie stops him.

SOPHIE

Come on, you con him all the time. Talk him into it.

Artie thinks a moment and holds the picture back up to Fred.

ARTIE

We have to pull viewers from new demographics. We already have the low-brows. Let's grab some intellectuals.

Fred takes Michelle's head shot from Artie and looks at it.

FRED  
You might have something there.  
Alright, we got 'em, boys.

Fred tacks the photo up.

FRED (CONT'D)  
We're ready to start the season.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Artie emerges from a subway station. He carries his laptop case and a newspaper. Sophie is with him, in her generic look.

SOPHIE  
Are you excited to start the season?

ARTIE  
Yeah, thrilled. It's like writing for Wild Kingdom. Except the animals are more civilized.

SOPHIE  
Come on, Artie!

ARTIE  
Plus, I get to spend time with Johnny.

SOPHIE  
Forget about him, you got Michelle on the show.

ARTIE  
About Michelle. I'm not really sure I wanna ...

An attractive woman jogs by in a sports bra and spandex shorts.

Artie watches her go by, then turns back to Sophie, who is now dressed like the jogger.

Sophie looks down at herself.

SOPHIE  
Will you stop that? You're too smart to be superficial.

ARTIE  
I have a Y chromosome, so sue me.

EXT. FRONT OF TELEVISION STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Artie and Sophie approach the building and stop when they see Johnny signing autographs for a large group of girls.

ARTIE

Look at this. I can't believe that philistine has so many fans.

A busty girl in a low cut shirt saunters up to Johnny.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Watch, he's gonna sign her breasts.

SOPHIE

No, he won't that's so cliché.

The girl rips open the top of her shirt, exposing her upper breasts. Johnny signs one with a sharpie.

Artie gives Sophie an "I-told-you-so" look.

ARTIE

That guy is a walking cliché. What did Joanna see in him?

Johnny breaks from the group and enters the building as Artie walks toward it.

INT. SOUL MATE SET - DAY

Typical television studio with several distinct areas built around centralized cameras and a control room.

CONFESSIONAL AREA

Johnny sits in a chair in front of large logo for the show.

JOHNNY

Things didn't work out between me and last year's winner, Christi, so here we are again. I know my soul mate is out there somewhere. Hopefully, she's one of these twelve women. Today, I'm just gonna hang out and get to know them.

## INT. CONTROL ROOM

Technicians, directed by Darrell, man the control boards in front of a bank of monitors. Artie and Ken eye the images.

ARTIE

Listen to that ridiculous "soul mate" stuff.

KEN

You wrote it.

ARTIE

I know, but that idiot actually believes it.

## INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM SET

A lavishly furnished living room; overstuffed furniture, plasma TV, stereo, bar, everything a successful rock star could need to be comfortable.

It is absolute bedlam with most of the girls drinking heavily. There are girls paired off in arguments.

## BRANDI AND TAYLOR

Brandi is face to face in a heated exchange with Taylor, who speaks with a fake ghetto accent.

TAYLOR

Why you gotta be all getting up in my face like that, Brandi?

BRANDI

Taylor, you're from Beverly Hills, not my neighborhood. You're making ghetto people look bad.

TAYLOR

I ain't doing nothing, I'm just here, um, cooling off.

BRANDI

You mean chillin', rich girl. That's some racist shit! Why don't you just be yourself?

## BAR AREA

Johnny is at the bar with Kelly hanging all over him. He has a huge smile on his face, unable to take his eyes off her body.

Ainsley tries to get his attention.

Jezebel tries to push her way past Michelle, who turns to her.

MICHELLE

Excuse me! What ever happened to good manners?

Jezebel opens her mouth and shows Michelle her fangs. Michelle pulls off her glasses and leans close.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

I'll shove those phony fangs right down your throat, Vampirella.

Jezebel slinks off in fear.

Ainsley still tries to get Johnny's attention. She sways drunkenly and slurs her words.

AINSLEY

Hey, Johnny, Johnny!

She downs a shot of vodka, then, grabbing the bottle, refills the glass and does it again.

AINSLEY (CONT'D)

Johnny! Oh my God, I'm literally having a heart attack!

Kelly gives Ainsley a nasty look.

KELLY

Literally? Then I guess you better drop dead.

AINSLEY

Shut up, Kel-- Kelly.

JOHNNY

Calm down, girls, I can talk to all of you.

(to Ainsley)

It's Draino, right?

AINSLEY

No, Ainno, damn it!

Kelly laughs at Johnny's malapropism.

KELLY

Look at her, Johnny. She gets her personality out of a bottle, just like her hair color and that stupid tan.

Ainsley reacts in fury, getting in Kelly's face.

AINSLEY

Mexican bitch!

KELLY

Hey, I'm Cuban, you drunken puta!

Ainsley throws a wild punch at Kelly, misses her and hits Johnny in the nose, knocking him to the floor. Kelly grabs Ainsley by the hair and the girls wrestle.

Michelle rushes to Johnny's aid, as other girls try to break up the fight.

JOHNNY AND MICHELLE

Michelle bends down and props up Johnny's head.

Johnny looks into her eyes.

JOHNNY

Wow!

MICHELLE

Are you okay?

JOHNNY

I feel a little loopy, but that's normal.

Michelle pulls a napkin off the bar and covers Johnny's bleeding nose.

MICHELLE

Here, hold this on there. Let's get you some ice.

She helps him to his feet, then grabs the ice bucket from the bar.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Artie and Ken watch the action in a corner of the room. Sophie, in her generic look, stands next to Artie.

SOPHIE  
She's compassionate. Nice.

ARTIE  
She should let him bleed.

Ken, hearing this, looks at Artie with a big smile.

KEN  
You're jealous.

Artie snaps to look at Ken, as Sophie laughs.

ARTIE  
Don't be ridiculous.

KEN  
Oh, come on. You can't resist an intelligent woman. Take a shot. Nobody has to know.

SOPHIE  
See. Even Ken knows.

ARTIE  
Look at her with Johnny. I don't have a prayer.

INT. BAR SET

The brawl rages on. Dorrie watches the fight and texts away on her I-Phone.

DORRIE  
O-M-G! This is amazing!

Darrell comes over to Dorrie and confronts her.

DARRELL  
Excuse me, what are you doing?

DORRIE  
I'm tweeting. I gotta tell my B-F-F all about this.

DARRELL  
You're not allowed to do that.  
Didn't you read the release you  
signed?

DORRIE  
Who reads paper? Try sending me a  
text next time.

Darrell grabs her phone and stalks away.

DORRIE (CONT'D)  
Hey! W-T-F! You can't do that.  
Gimme my phone!

Darrell turns to address her.

DARRELL  
S-T-F-U!

INT. OFFICE - LATER

Fred sits behind a desk, Johnny stands in front of it.

FRED  
So, who's going home?

JOHNNY  
I was thinking Crystal.

FRED  
That's fine, she's too quiet. What  
about Dorrie?

JOHNNY  
I thought she was kind of cool.

FRED  
No, she broke your rules and you're  
furious. Right?

Johnny looks around the room in disappointment.

JOHNNY  
Yeah. Right.

FRED  
Good. Dump both of them.

INT. ELIMINATION SET - NIGHT

A low stage with a big "Soul Mate" logo on the wall behind it. The stage and the floor are carpeted.

The Soul Mate girls stand in a line facing the stage.

Johnny and Dorrie stand on the stage facing each other, her back to the other girls.

JOHNNY  
Crystal is not the only  
elimination.

Johnny sighs, then takes a step toward Dorrie.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
Dorrie, you broke a serious rule.  
My soul mate wouldn't do that. I'm  
sorry. You have to go.

Dorrie storms off, visibly upset.

DORRIE  
I gotta go post this on Facebook.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

Artie, Ken and Rachel loiter in front of a display of hats; the men wearing fedoras from the old film noir era.

RACHEL  
(laughing)  
You two are nuts!

On cue, Artie and Ken exchange rapid fire, old-time gangster dialogue and voices.

KEN  
I gotta ask you a few questions,  
Blackie.

ARTIE  
It's a free country.

KEN  
You like to hang out in Dempsey's  
joint?

ARTIE  
That's right.

KEN  
Were you there Thursday night?

ARTIE  
Maybe. What's it to you, copper?

KEN  
Fat Eddie Arnold turned up dead in  
the alley out back.

ARTIE  
Yeah, I heard about it.

KEN  
Know anything about it?

ARTIE  
I don't know, I think I got  
amnesia.

KEN  
Oh, a tough guy, eh?

ARTIE  
That's right.

KEN  
I've known a few tough guys in my  
day. Some of them are in the state  
pen.

ARTIE  
Yeah?

KEN  
Yeah. The rest are in the morgue!

MICHELLE (O.S.)  
(laughs)  
You guys are so funny!

Artie, Ken and Rachel turn and see Michelle drifting toward  
them.

KEN  
Oh, hi. Looks who's here, Artie.

Artie is speechless.

Sophie, in her generic look, appears behind Artie.

SOPHIE  
This is perfect! Find a way to be  
alone with her.

Artie tenses up and glares at Sophie.

MICHELLE  
You were great, Artie!

KEN  
Michelle, this is my wife, Rachel.  
Rachel, this is Michelle, the grad  
student I told you about.

Rachel looks from Artie to Michelle with a knowing nod and smile.

RACHEL  
So nice to meet you.

MICHELLE  
Same here.

Artie looks intently at Michelle. Rachel notices and sees an opening.

RACHEL  
Artie was a stand up comic.

MICHELLE  
Really? I can tell.

RACHEL  
He's funny, talented and single.  
And he loves intelligent women.

SOPHIE  
You tell her, Rachel.

Artie glares at Rachel, then at Sophie.

ARTIE  
Don't you two have to pick Trudi up  
from Girl Scouts or something?

KEN  
Trudi's not a Girl Scout. She--

RACHEL  
Yes, we do have to get Trudi.  
Artie, why don't you be a gentleman  
and see Michelle back to her hotel.

MICHELLE  
That would be nice, if it's no  
trouble.

Artie hesitates, a panicked look on his face.

Sophie massages Artie's shoulders.

SOPHIE  
Come on, now. Suck it up. Say  
yes.

ARTIE  
Sure. Okay.

Rachel drags Ken off.

KEN  
Trudi's home with your mother.

RACHEL  
Shut up, Ken!

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Artie and Michelle stroll along, appearing to enjoy each other's company.

MICHELLE  
So, stand up comedy, huh? That  
must be so scary.

ARTIE  
Not really. It was basically a  
neurotic cry for attention.

Michelle pulls her glasses down and looks at Artie over the top of them, laughing as she does.

MICHELLE  
Well, I think it's great. I love  
to laugh. In academia, you meet so  
few funny people.

ARTIE  
I gotta ask you. What are you  
doing on this show?

Michelle gives Artie a puzzled look.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
Most of these girls are looking for  
their fifteen minutes. They don't  
even know who Johnny is.

MICHELLE  
You'll think it's stupid.

ARTIE

No, I won't. Come on.

Michelle hesitates, looking closely at Artie.

MICHELLE

Well, I think Johnny might be my soul mate.

ARTIE

I take it back. I do think it's stupid.

Michelle pulls her glasses off and glares at Artie.

MICHELLE

He wrote that beautiful song.

ARTIE

Are you kidding? That guy couldn't write a hundred words on "what I did on my summer vacation".

Michelle cleans her glasses, puts them back on and shakes her head.

MICHELLE

Don't you have any sense of romance?

Artie nods in a knowing manner.

ARTIE

Now I see. Literature major. Right. You've read a lot of Jane Austen, haven't you?

Michelle gets a rapturous look.

MICHELLE

God, I love her!

Artie shakes his head, laughing.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Okay, Mr. Cynic. Who do you read?

ARTIE

How about Flaubert?

MICHELLE

No! "Sentimental Education" is great, but Frederick never finds true love.

ARTIE  
Exactly. It's real.

MICHELLE  
No wonder you're not married.

ARTIE  
Hey, I was married. Twice.

MICHELLE  
Really?

ARTIE  
Yeah, I can get women. I just  
can't keep them.

MICHELLE  
You just haven't met your soul  
mate.

ARTIE  
Will you please stop? I'm just not  
husband material.

MICHELLE  
Why not?

Artie sighs.

ARTIE  
I didn't become a comedian until  
after I married my first wife,  
Gillian. Show business is brutal  
on relationships.

MICHELLE  
I guess that makes sense.

ARTIE  
I'm not romantic, not charming, not  
easy to live with.

Michelle considers this.

MICHELLE  
I guess I should thank you for  
warning me.

ARTIE  
Oh, you're wel-- wait a minute.  
What?

MICHELLE

Maybe it's not Johnny I'm supposed to meet. You're smart, funny and interesting. I think I could go for you. But now I know to stay away.

Michelle gives Artie a big smile and a pat on the cheek, then walks away from him.

Artie stands stunned for a moment, then rushes to catch up.

ARTIE

No, wait.

EXT. CITY STREET -- NEAR HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

Michelle dashes across the street with Artie close behind. They stop at the corner of Seventh Avenue and 54th Street.

ARTIE

Listen, about what I said ...

Artie and Michelle hear the sound of laughter. They look and see Johnny and Kelly walking up to the hotel, his arm around her shoulders.

JOHNNY

God, you're fun, Kelly, and the hottest girl on the show.

KELLY

I can make it even hotter, baby.

Kelly snuggles up to Johnny, who nuzzles her neck.

Michelle tenses up, visibly angry.

MICHELLE

That sneaky little ...

Michelle rushes forward, her competitive instincts kicking in.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Hey, Johnny! Great to see you!

JOHNNY

Michelle! Cool! Now it's a party!

Michelle joins the couple as she and Kelly exchange dirty looks. Johnny puts his other arm around Michelle and they enter the lobby.

Artie watches this, shaking his head.

ARTIE

Yeah, so that was great, let's do it again some time.

As Artie turns and walks away, Sophie appears, dressed like Michelle.

SOPHIE

What the hell was that? You tell her she's stupid and then list your flaws?

ARTIE

I was trying to be honest. Isn't that the key to a good relationship?

SOPHIE

Be honest, not suicidal.

ARTIE

I told you, I'm not good at this.

SOPHIE

Well, you better figure it out. You really like this one.

Artie looks at Sophie, stunned.

ARTIE

Why do you think that?

Sophie rolls her eyes and indicates her appearance.

Artie turns away, annoyed.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

That's not as much fun as I thought it would be.

SOPHIE

Okay, this was your first attempt. We can fix this.

INT. KEN AND RACHEL'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Artie sits at the table having lunch with Ken, Rachel and TRUDI, the Rosens' bright, precocious, eleven year old daughter.

RACHEL

Artie, Sweetie, I'm sorry things didn't work out last night, but you'll get another chance.

ARTIE

What's the difference? I'm not interested in her anyway.

RACHEL

Ooh, Artie, always in denial. You should've seen the way he looked at her, Trudi.

TRUDI

You're right, Mom. Classic case of denial. I can help you Uncle Artie.

KEN

Well, if he's not interested--

RACHEL

Ken, you are blind, I swear.

KEN

And you're deaf.

RACHEL

Well, how about you be my ears and I'll be your eyes and we'll go make some coffee.

Ken and Rachel get up and clear plates, heading into the kitchen.

Artie looks at Trudi for a moment.

ARTIE

What do you mean you can help me?

TRUDI

I know what your problem is.

Artie looks at Trudi in astonishment.

ARTIE

You're eleven. What do you know about relationships?

Trudi folds her arms and gives Artie a smug look.

TRUDI

I'm in one. Are you?

Artie looks at Trudi, then toward the kitchen door. He leans in toward her.

ARTIE  
So, what do you think?

TRUDI  
You fear intimacy because of your  
past trauma.

Artie gives her a puzzled look. She rolls her eyes.

TRUDI (CONT'D)  
You're afraid to get hurt again.

Ken sneaks back into the dining room and grabs more dishes.

Artie sits up straight.

ARTIE  
Right, of course. That's why I  
stopped playing contact sports.

With a quick glance at Artie, Ken smirks and slips out of the room.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
So, how do I fix that?

Trudi gets up from the table.

TRUDI  
Sorry, we can continue next time.  
I have to go.

Trudi holds out her hand.

TRUDI (CONT'D)  
That'll be fifty dollars.

Artie reacts in shock.

ARTIE  
Fifty? Are you serious?

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out some bills.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
What the hell? It's less than my  
analyst charges.

Artie puts a fifty dollar bill in Trudi's open hand.

Pocketing the bill, Trudi kisses Artie on the cheek, then skips playfully out of the room.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFSSIONAL AREA - DAY

Johnny sits there.

JOHNNY

We had some conflicts last week, so I wanna see if these girls can work together, you know, be part of a team. That's why I picked this first challenge.

LATER

Kelly, dressed very sexy, flirts with the camera.

KELLY

It was really great of Johnny to make me a team captain. I don't know what we're doing yet, but I'll be a great leader.

LATER

Taylor, dressed in hip hop style, speaks with false bravado.

TAYLOR

I don't know what kind of competition this gonna be, but if I have to, I'll drop a tap in somebody's ass!

BRANDI (O.S.)

That's pop a cap!

TAYLOR

Whateva!

EXT. PAINTBALL FIELD - DAY

Slightly larger than an outdoor hockey rink, filled with paint-splattered walls, stacks of old tires, concrete tubes and other assorted barriers. At one end is a pink flag, the other, a yellow.

## NEAR SIDELINE

Johnny is surrounded by two teams of Soul Mate Girls dressed in spandex suits and paintball gear.

The YELLOW TEAM: Kelly, Jezebel, Brandi, Jeanette and Phyllis.

The PINK TEAM: Michelle, Ainsley, Taylor, Heather and Bristol.

Artie and Ken linger nearby with the camera crew.

## JOHNNY

Okay, ladies. Capture the other team's flag and get it back to your base. Kelly and Michelle are your captains. Two awesome babes. Everybody ready?

## KELLY

We're gonna crush Michelle's little pink puffballs.

Kelly sneers at Michelle.

Michelle pulls off her glasses, gives them a wipe on her suit and gingerly places them back on.

## MICHELLE

That's not very intimidating coming from someone dressed in cowardly yellow.

The pink girls laugh as Kelly snarls.

## EXT. PAINTBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Both teams spread out in front of their respective flags anxiously waiting for Johnny's signal.

## NEAR SIDELINE

Flanked by Artie and Ken, Johnny raises an air horn and gives it a LOUD BLAST.

## ON THE FIELD

Both teams sprint forward, screaming like banshees and wildly firing their paintball markers. Most of them look lost.

Brandi runs out from behind a barrier.

KELLY

Brandi, no! Get back here!

Michelle pops out from behind a barrier and shoots Brandi in the chest.

BRANDI

Damn!

Ainsley runs toward the yellow flag.

Kelly stands up from behind a tire stack and fires.

Paintballs drill Ainsley in the helmet. Some splatters onto her face.

AINSLEY

Hey, watch the tan!

YELLOW FLAG STATION

Heather makes a dash for the yellow flag.

Kelly notices, then unloads a barrage of paint.

Heather is splattered with yellow paint.

HEATHER

(screams)

Ow! That hurts.

NEAR SIDELINE

An excited Ken elbows a more subdued Artie.

KEN

My God! Kelly and Michelle are like twin Rambos!

JOHNNY

I know! This is so cool! Cat fight with paint guns!

PINK FLAG STATION

Kelly runs up and grabs the flag.

Michelle and Taylor step out from behind a barrier and point their markers at her.

MICHELLE  
Drop it, Kelly!

Kelly fires at Michelle.

Michelle deftly drops and rolls away. The shot misses. Michelle pops up and tries to get off a shot, but her marker jams.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
Damn! Shoot her, Taylor!

Taylor points her paint pistol at Kelly.

TAYLOR  
Got you now, bitch! Oh wait, I gotta do this the ghetto way.

Taylor turns her marker sideways, loses her grip and drops it.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)  
Shit!

Kelly shoots Taylor and unloads on Michelle. Flashing an evil smile, she runs off to her base with the pink flag.

Michelle raises her goggles and pulls off her glasses, glaring at Taylor.

MICHELLE  
You idiot!

Michelle picks up Taylor's marker and shoots her in the ass with it.

Taylor falls to the ground.

TAYLOR  
Owww!

Artie trots over and bends down to address Taylor.

ARTIE  
Now, that was popping a cap in your ass!

Michelle laughs heartily.

INT. ELIMINATION SET - NIGHT

Johnny and Taylor stand together, center stage.

Taylor is sobbing, head down.

The rest of the Soul Mate girls stand in their positions. The contestants are still dressed in their paintball gear.

Artie and Ken lurk near a camera crew.

Besides an ear-to-ear grin, Kelly also shows off the pink flag around her neck. She gives Michelle an "in-your-face-sucka" look.

MICHELLE

(to Kelly)

That's about what I'd expect from a benighted coquette who makes her living with her body.

Kelly quickly loses her smile and looks confused.

KELLY

I don't even know what that means.

MICHELLE

Exactly.

Artie laughs out loud, then stops himself. He smiles at Michelle in admiration.

Michelle gives Artie a big grin.

Kelly mouths the words, "FUCK YOU, BITCH" to Michelle.

JOHNNY

Ladies, please.

Johnny circles menacingly around Taylor. She looks crushed.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Taylor, you failed your team. You had that thing won. You can't be my soul mate.

Taylor rushes off the set in tears. In her emotional state, she reverts back to her spoiled, rich girl personality.

TAYLOR

This is so totally unfair! I never held a gun before in my life!

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Artie and Sophie watch Michelle, who is a short distance away, reading a bulletin board. Sophie wears a pink paintball outfit with glasses like Michelle's.

Sophie points to Michelle and gives Artie a push. He resists, so she pushes harder.

Artie pushes Sophie back still harder. She gives him a smack on the head and points insistently at Michelle.

Artie finally relents and approaches Michelle, who turns to watch him arrive.

ARTIE

Nice job today, Michelle. You should have won.

Michelle shrugs.

MICHELLE

Next time.

Artie turns away, but Sophie glares at him. Artie turns back.

ARTIE

Hey, look ...

MICHELLE

I want to apologize for running off the other night. It was rude.

ARTIE

I shouldn't have laughed at you. I'm sorry. I was having a rough night. You wanna make a fresh start?

Michelle regards Artie with suspicion.

MICHELLE

What did you have in mind?

ARTIE

You like jazz?

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ARTIE

The Garrett Brown trio is playing at Kirby's tonight? You wanna meet me there?

MICHELLE

That does sound like fun. This isn't a date, is it?

ARTIE

It's not a date. We're just gonna hang out and listen to some music.

Michelle looks Artie over for a moment, then smiles.

MICHELLE

Sure, why not. You know, you're kind of neurotic, but you're one of the few people around here that seems genuine.

EXT. KIRBY'S - NIGHT

An intimate little jazz club in Greenwich Village.

INT. KIRBY'S

A piano trio plays on a small stage surrounded by a number of tables. The room is dark, the tables lit with candles. At the back of the room is a bar, separated from the seating area by a low wall.

There is a smallish crowd scattered amongst the tables.

Artie and Michelle sit at a table for two in a dark corner in front of the wall, enjoying the music.

MICHELLE

This is great. I'm glad I came.

ARTIE

See. Johnny the rocker wouldn't take you to a place like this.

MICHELLE

No?

ARTIE

Trust me. He's not that sophisticated.

Michelle looks disappointed.

MICHELLE

He doesn't seem it. It's too bad.  
I like men who appreciate the finer  
arts.

ARTIE

I come here all the time.

Artie gives Michelle a hopeful smile.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

So, can we be friends?

Michelle looks Artie over, deep in thought, then smiles.

MICHELLE

Okay, friends.

Michelle offers her hand. Artie takes it. They shake, but  
do not let go; each stares longingly into the others' eyes.

ARTIE

Right. Friends.

Michelle leans closer to Artie.

MICHELLE

Strictly friends.

Michelle is in perfect kissing range for Artie. He freezes,  
looks around nervously, then sits back.

ARTIE

Hey, you need a drink? I haven't  
seen the waitress for awhile. I'll  
get us a round.

Michelle has a disappointed look on her face.

Artie grabs the glasses.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Be right back.

Retreating into the bar, Artie flags down the bartender.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

White wine and a scotch and water,  
please.

The bartender nods.

As Artie turns to the stage, Sophie now stands beside him  
dressed exactly like Michelle.

SOPHIE  
Why didn't you kiss her?

ARTIE  
Who are you, my manager?

SOPHIE  
Yes, I am. She likes you. What are you waiting for?

ARTIE  
I'm taking it slow, alright? I don't want to blow it.

SOPHIE  
You worry so much. What could go wrong?

Johnny slips quietly into the club. Seeing Michelle, a big smile lights up his face. He approaches.

Artie, upon seeing Johnny, ducks behind the wall.

JOHNNY  
Hey, Michelle. What's up?

Michelle breaks into a big smile.

MICHELLE  
Johnny! What are you doing in a jazz club?

JOHNNY  
I love Garrett! He's an old friend.

MICHELLE  
Really? So, you like jazz.

Artie peeks over the wall.

ARTIE  
What the hell is he doing here? Every time I'm alone with her, he has to pop up? What, do I have a GPS up my ass?

SOPHIE  
Calm down, I'm sure Michelle will get rid of him.

Artie turns to the bar, where the bartender has put down the drinks. He takes a twenty out of his pocket and puts it down.

ARTIE  
Keep the change.

Artie picks up his scotch and drains it in one gulp. He puts the glass down, paces back and forth, then grabs Michelle's wine. He chugs that as well and puts the glass down.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
I can't believe he's in a place  
like this!

Artie and Sophie peek over the wall and watch. The band prepares to go on a break.

JOHNNY  
Hey, as long as we're both here, I  
wanna show you something.

Johnny approaches the stage. He speaks to GARRETT BROWN, the piano player, a tall, good-looking black man.

Garrett nods with a smile and gives Johnny a soul shake, then steps to the mike.

GARRETT  
Ladies and gentlemen, we'll be  
taking a break, but the star of the  
hit reality show, "Soul Mate",  
Johnny Soul is gonna sit in on  
piano and entertain you.

Garrett steps to the side of the stage.

Johnny slides in behind the piano, joining the drummer and bass player.

ARTIE  
What's he doing? He's a metalhead,  
this is a jazz club.

Michelle sits up in rapt attention. Johnny is sensational. He plays a short, moving improvisation.

Michelle looks astonished and deeply moved. She lifts her glasses and wipes her eyes.

Artie stays low, peeking over the wall at Johnny.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
I can't believe this! I thought  
all he could play was air guitar.  
Now, all of the sudden, he's Oscar  
Peterson!

SOPHIE  
He's really good.

Artie gives Sophie a hard look.

Johnny finishes and takes a bow as the audience erupts in enthusiastic applause. Johnny goes back and sits with Michelle.

JOHNNY  
So, what do you think? Pretty good, huh?

MICHELLE  
Johnny, that was phenomenal! But I thought you played rock. How did you... I mean, when--

JOHNNY  
Man, I love all kinds of music. I started taking piano when I was five. I play jazz, classical, pretty much everything.

MICHELLE  
I had no idea.

Michelle smiles broadly, enthralled by Johnny's talent.

Artie storms toward the door, Sophie in tow.

EXT. CITY STREET

Artie rushes down the street with Sophie.

ARTIE  
You'd think with my track record I'd know better.

SOPHIE  
You should have kissed her when you had the chance.

ARTIE  
What difference would that make? Rich and good-looking always beats smart and funny. It's a fact of life.

SOPHIE  
You are your own worst enemy! Relax, we're not beat yet.

ARTIE

Yeah, I'll relax, alright. I'm gonna go home and drink beer til I forget this mess.

Artie and Sophie turn a corner and arrive at the entrance to a subway station. They head down the stairs.

INT. ARTIE'S BATHROOM - DAY

Artie stands in front of his mirror, brushing his teeth.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

My God, what is wrong with you?

Artie turns and sees Sophie standing in the doorway. She is now dressed like the ST. PAULI GIRL logo, right down to two frosty mugs.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

The St. Pauli Girl? Are you kidding me?

ARTIE

(smirking)

You're lucky you weren't around the other day. I was eating Sun Maid raisins.

EXT. STUDIO - DAY

Artie and Ken stand outside the building near a door, talking.

Sophie, resembling Michelle, stands behind Ken.

KEN

Are you gonna talk to Michelle about what happened?

ARTIE

I told you, I'm finished with that whole thing. We had some fun, but it was nothing serious.

Sophie pulls her glasses off and glares at Artie, mirroring Michelle's common gesture.

Artie turns his head, annoyed.

KEN

So, you're giving up?

ARTIE

I can't take the chance. It's not worth the risk. I mean, she's okay but--

KEN

Okay? She's pretty, intelligent, lots of fun and she loves your sense of humor.

Darrell bursts out the studio door, sees Artie and Ken and approaches.

ARTIE

Right, but other than that, she's got nothing going for her.

DARRELL

Who's got nothing going for her?

Artie and Ken exchange a quick look. Then Artie blurts out:

ARTIE

Annie Oakley.

DARRELL

She's been dead for about a century.

ARTIE

Right, and what destroys a career more effectively than death?

Darrell looks from Artie to Ken with a quizzical expression.

Sophie covers her eyes and shakes her head.

DARRELL

You're a very disturbed individual, Arthur.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

A Food Network type set-up with counters, cabinets, stove, oven and tons of pots, pans and utensils.

Johnny is behind the counter. Michelle sits in front of it. They eat while talking.

Artie and Sophie stand a short distance away.

SOPHIE  
There's Michelle. Now's your  
chance.

ARTIE  
Forget it. She's into her little  
rock star fantasy.

Sophie gives Artie a smack on the back of the head.

SOPHIE  
If I didn't rely on you for my  
existence, I'd kill you. Now get  
over there.

Sophie gives Artie a shove.

Artie approaches the kitchen. Johnny brightens up on seeing  
him. Michelle looks back and smiles.

JOHNNY  
Hey, Artie! Check out the set for  
the cooking contest. Are you  
hungry? We got a lot of food.

MICHELLE  
Hi, Artie.

Artie cautiously sits down next to Michelle. He looks at the  
food in surprise.

ARTIE  
Where did you get the food?

MICHELLE  
Johnny made it.

Artie points to Johnny in surprise. Johnny shrugs with a shy  
smile.

JOHNNY  
Just something I whipped up.

Johnny makes up a plate for Artie, arranging the food like a  
professional chef.

Artie takes a forkful of food and tastes it. He looks  
pleasantly surprised and then eats some more.

ARTIE  
Johnny, this is fantastic!

MICHELLE  
I know, he's a great cook.

JOHNNY  
Just a hobby. I went to culinary  
school about ten years ago.

Artie looks toward the ceiling, shaking his head.

ARTIE  
(to no one in particular)  
Of course, he's a gourmet chef.

MICHELLE  
Isn't that great?

ARTIE  
Oh yeah, that's just wonderful.

MICHELLE  
Johnny was just about to tell me  
how he got the idea for his song  
"Soul Mate".

Artie looks uneasily at Johnny.

ARTIE  
You actually wrote that song?

JOHNNY  
Of course.

Artie looks at Michelle. She smiles and gives him a nod.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
It's about my high school  
girlfriend, Sharon Brennan.

ARTIE  
A crush, when you were a kid?

Michelle gives Artie a scowl.

JOHNNY  
More than a crush, Dude, she was my  
soul mate.

ARTIE  
Am I the only non-delusional--

Artie stops as Michelle pulls off her glasses and glares.

MICHELLE  
So, what happened?

JOHNNY

We were together for about a year.  
God, I loved her. Then her family  
moved. To Oregon.

MICHELLE

How sad!

ARTIE

Why? Oregon's not New York, but  
how bad could it be?

Michelle glares at Artie again.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Hey, did you ever think of looking  
for Sharon? I mean, she is your  
soul mate. I know a good private  
detective.

JOHNNY

I looked her up. She's married.

ARTIE

Happily?

Michelle looks at Artie in astonishment.

JOHNNY

Yeah, she's happy. She's got four  
kids.

ARTIE

Damn! Anyone else?

JOHNNY

What about you, Artie. Don't you  
have someone in your past?

ARTIE

Me? No.

Johnny and Michelle look at Artie skeptically.

Artie looks up, shakes his head and sighs.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Okay. Yeah. Skipper Persinsky.

Michelle and Johnny laugh hard.

MICHELLE

Skipper?

ARTIE

It was a nickname. She looked like Barbie's little sister.

JOHNNY

So, what happened?

ARTIE

She moved to Boston after eighth grade.

MICHELLE

There, see. You guys are not so different.

Artie looks from Michelle to Johnny, then gets up and leaves.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - DAY

Fred sits behind his desk when Artie zips through the door.

ARTIE

Fred, I think you're right. We should get rid of the smart one. She's too dull.

FRED

Are you kidding? We're getting e-mails from intellectuals. They're watching the show, just like you said. You're a genius.

Artie tenses up in frustration.

ARTIE

Yeah, I'm just brilliant. Hey, why don't we at least put her up for elimination. Just to build some drama.

Fred considers this a moment.

FRED

I like it. Tell Johnny I need to see him.

Artie slips out the door, wearing a big grin.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- KITCHEN AREA - LATER

Johnny, in chef's whites, stands in front of the kitchen set.

The Soul Mate Girls stand at the back of the set, except for Michelle and Jeannette. They stand in front of Johnny.

JOHNNY

This was a very tough call. You both had trouble tonight.

The two girls look at each other and then look toward the floor.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

My decision is Michelle ...

At the sound of her name, Michelle looks dejected and steps forward. Jeannette looks relieved.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Get back in line! Jeannette, take off your jacket.

Michelle steps back in relief.

Jeannette tears up, walks to Johnny removes her chef's jacket and hands it to him.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFSSIONAL AREA - LATER

Michelle sits in her chef's clothes.

MICHELLE

I dodged a bullet tonight. I'm surprised I was on the chopping block. It was great seeing Johnny in the kitchen, though. I think a man who can cook is sexy.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Artie watches this on the monitor with great interest.

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Artie and Michelle push a cart together. There are a number of different items in it.

MICHELLE

So you think Johnny wants me out?

ARTIE

He put you up for elimination, didn't he?

(MORE)

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Maybe he's not your soul mate.  
Maybe it's someone different.

MICHELLE

You? I thought you didn't believe  
in soul mates.

ARTIE

I'm just saying.

They stop and Artie picks up a box of spaghetti off a shelf,  
looking at the back of it.

Michelle picks up a different brand.

MICHELLE

Let's get this one.

Artie looks at the box and then back at his.

ARTIE

No, that one's no good. There's no  
story. Let's get this one.

Michelle looks at her box and then at Artie's.

MICHELLE

What do you mean, story?

ARTIE

You know, the history of the pasta.  
Like this:

(reading from the box)

Since 1868, Mama Cellentani has  
used the finest semolina and  
freshest ingredients to make the  
best tasting pasta. Imported from  
Sicily.

Michelle laughs heartily at this.

MICHELLE

That's not real. That's just  
advertising.

ARTIE

I know, but somebody took the time  
to write this. Create the story.  
I respect that. We'll get this  
one.

MICHELLE

(still laughing)  
Okay, it's your meal.

INT. ARTIE'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Artie and Michelle sit on the couch, drinking wine. The remains of the meal they have just eaten are on the table.

MICHELLE

That was an ... interesting meal.

ARTIE

Yeah, my specialty. You ever have char broiled pasta before?

MICHELLE

No, that was a definite first.

ARTIE

I think I used too much marzipan.

MICHELLE

(laughs)

You're not supposed to put marzipan in tomato sauce.

ARTIE

Then I definitely used too much.

MICHELLE

(bigger laugh)

You're a terrible cook.

ARTIE

Yeah, but I'm really good at pouring the wine.

MICHELLE

You spilled half of it on the table.

ARTIE

Well, yeah to aerate it. You know, like the connoisseurs do.

MICHELLE

You have an answer for everything.

ARTIE

The Artie Schneider key to success. I don't have to be good at anything as long as I can talk my way out of it.

MICHELLE

Well, you certainly do that well.  
I don't think I've ever laughed  
this much. You must have been a  
great comedian.

ARTIE

I still am.

Artie leans close to Michelle. She takes her glasses off and Artie backs off, fear in his eyes. Michelle laughs.

MICHELLE

No, it's okay. I'm just a little  
light-headed. From the wine.

Artie leans in again and puts his arms around Michelle.

ARTIE

You sure it's the wine?

Michelle tries to pull back, but Artie pulls her close.

MICHELLE

Artie, no. What about Johnny?

ARTIE

I'll buy him a bottle of wine  
tomorrow.

MICHELLE

No, I mean--

ARTIE

He considered sending you home.  
Forget him.

Artie kisses Michelle tenderly. She responds, then pulls back again.

MICHELLE

I'm confused.

ARTIE

Then I'll do the thinking for both  
of us.

Artie kisses Michelle again. She relents this time, putting her arms around his neck. They continue to kiss passionately.

Sophie appears behind the two of them, dressed like Michelle and wearing a big smile.

SOPHIE  
Took you long enough!

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - DAY

Fred stands outside the control room looking through a script. Jezebel comes running up to him.

JEZEBEL  
Fred. Fred!

Fred turns to her.

FRED  
Hey, Jezebel, what can I do for you?

JEZEBEL  
Ainsley is being a total bitch. She's drunk and keeps calling me names.

Fred points to her fangs.

FRED  
Are those things just for show? Go defend yourself.

JEZEBEL  
Well, I don't know.

FRED  
Don't be afraid, go get her.

Jezebel rushes off. After a moment, a loud SCREAM comes from a distance.

AINSLEY (O.S.)  
Ow! Crazy bitch, I'll kill you!

Fred smiles broadly.

FRED  
That's why I'm the king of reality TV!

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Artie pokes his head out from a door, then scans both ways.

Michelle strolls down the hall toward the door. As she gets to it, Artie reaches out and grabs her by the arm.

ARTIE

Gotcha!

MICHELLE

Artie! What are you doing?

ARTIE

Come here.

He pulls her into the room.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Pitch black with only the sounds of Artie kissing and Michelle resisting.

MICHELLE

Artie! What if we get caught?

Artie flicks a light on revealing a small equipment closet.

ARTIE

Relax. They're all watching Johnny's date with Kelly.

MICHELLE

He's with that bitch?

ARTIE

What do you care?

Michelle wrings her hands nervously.

MICHELLE

We should get out there. We'll be missed.

Michelle opens the door slightly, then peeks out. Seeing the coast clear, she quickly fixes her clothes and hair, then stealthily slips out into the hallway.

Disappointed, Artie slumps against the wall.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

Don't give up, Artie.

Artie turns and sees Sophie, again dressed like Michelle.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

She's just playing hard to get.

ARTIE

Yeah, it starts with hard to get  
and ends with a restraining order.

SOPHIE

You wimp! You used to handle  
crowds of hostile drunks. Remember  
that night in Philly? Go get her.

ARTIE

I think I'd rather go back to  
Philly.

SOPHIE

That's it. You're a dead man.

Sophie reaches for Artie, who backs against the wall.

Mimicking Michelle, Artie fixes his clothes and hair and  
slips out into the hall.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Hey! You forgot the light.

Artie reaches into the closet, flicks the light off and  
closes the door.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Thank you, wimp.

INT. JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM SET -- HOT TUB - LATER

The other Soul Mate Girls watch as the camera crew records  
Johnny and Kelly in the hot tub. Kelly is in a sexy, one-  
piece bathing suit.

Artie walks up and stands with the others.

Kelly kisses Johnny, licks his chin and nibbles on his ears.  
Johnny's eyes are half closed. He is visibly enjoying this.

KELLY

Why don't you open up to me,  
Johnny?

JOHNNY

It's hard, scary. I'd rather kiss.

Johnny kisses Kelly again.

KELLY

Do you think I'm the sexiest girl  
here?

JOHNNY

Uh huh.

KELLY

Send these other girls home now.

JOHNNY

I can't.

KELLY

Why not? It's your show.

Johnny looks away.

JOHNNY

Yeah, my show.

Michelle looks at Johnny, considers his words and gets a look of awareness. Then she whips her glasses off.

MICHELLE

He's being manipulated and she is starting to piss me off!

Michelle storms down the hall.

Artie takes a step after her, then stops when he sees everyone looking at him.

INT. ARTIE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Artie paces around the room, visibly upset. Sophie sits on the couch, dressed like Michelle in the storage room.

SOPHIE

I don't understand you. A wonderful thing has happened.

ARTIE

Wonderful? Are you nuts?

SOPHIE

Would you rather not care about Michelle?

ARTIE

Hey, apathy makes you invulnerable.

SOPHIE

What?

ARTIE

You can't get hurt if you don't care.

SOPHIE

So, are you invulnerable?

Artie stops and gets a dreamy expression for a moment. Then he turns to address Sophie.

ARTIE

I'm in position to be devastated.

SOPHIE

That's my boy!

ARTIE

But I can't get Michelle off her feelings for Johnny. She got so jealous seeing him with Kelly.

SOPHIE

She's just competitive. About the show.

ARTIE

I don't know, Sophie. There's a lot more to Johnny than we thought.

SOPHIE

So what? You're much smarter than he is. And funny as hell.

ARTIE

Women don't care about that.

SOPHIE

She's not just any woman. She's confused. Give her a chance.

ARTIE

You really think so?

SOPHIE

My mission is to help you get a woman and I don't intend to fail.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFESSIONAL AREA - DAY.

Johnny speaks his piece.

JOHNNY

Promotion is a really important part of a musician's career, so I wanted to see if the girls could be helpful to me like that. That's why I picked this challenge.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Michelle, Kelly, Jezebel and Brandi are in a colorful booth adorned with photos of Johnny.

The famous landmark is crowded as usual and a large number of people are at the booth looking at and buying Johnny's CD.

MICHELLE

Johnny Soul's greatest hits! Great music, great price! Grab your copy while they last.

A YOUNG GIRL picks up a CD and hands Brandi a twenty. Brandi takes the CD and puts it in a bag, handing it back to the girl.

BRANDI

Thank you very much. Enjoy it.

EXT. RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

A big sign on the front lawn reads "WESTCHESTER RETIREMENT HOME".

INT. RETIREMENT HOME LOBBY

Heather's team, which includes Ainsley, Phyllis and Bristol, is at their booth, looking bored.

A nurse helps a male senior citizen with a walker tread down the hall.

AINSLEY

This sucks!

She pulls a bottle of tequila from under the table and takes a big swig.

PHYLLIS

Great location, Heather.

BRISTOL

Why are we here again?

Heather answers sheepishly.

HEATHER  
'Cause Johnny was big a long time ago?

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- BOARDROOM - LATER

Johnny sits at a big table dressed in a gray pin-striped suit. Opposite him are Heather and her team.

JOHNNY  
Michelle's team sold over five hundred CD's and you sold two.

PHYLLIS  
Well, I bought one of them.

JOHNNY  
Then you sold one. At a retirement home.

HEATHER  
A real nice lady bought it.

BRISTOL  
Yeah, for her cats!

JOHNNY  
Whose idea was it to set up there?

HEATHER  
Well, we all kind of agreed--

AINSLEY  
Hey, not for nothing, but, I was passed out when you guys had the meeting.

PHYLLIS  
You were project manager, Heather, it was your stupid idea!

JOHNNY  
Is that true?

HEATHER  
Well, yeah, I guess.

JOHNNY  
(with Donald Trump's signature finger point)  
Heather, you're fired!

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Fred, standing between Artie and Ken, has a huge smile on his face.

FRED

This is beautiful, boys! Only steal from the best, right?

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFESSIONAL AREA - LATER

Johnny sits there smiling broadly.

JOHNNY

Michelle's team was the winner today, so since she was the captain, she won some alone time with me.

EXT. GARDEN SET - LATER

A beautiful flower garden with white roses and a statue of Cupid.

Johnny sits on a bench with Michelle while a camera crew records the scene.

Michelle maintains a bit of distance.

MICHELLE

I have to ask you, did you want to me go home after the cooking challenge?

Johnny looks shocked.

JOHNNY

No! Of course not.

MICHELLE

Why was I up for elimination?

JOHNNY

Well, the decisions on this show are ... complex.

Michelle nods knowingly.

MICHELLE

I think I understand. You don't have it easy, do you?

Johnny looks into her eyes. She returns his gaze and slides closer to him.

JOHNNY

It's hard for me, Michelle. I don't have any family. Only child. I've been on my own for a long time.

Michelle looks at him with genuine sympathy.

MICHELLE

What about your parents?

JOHNNY

My father took off when I was two. I never knew him.

Michelle's face shows sadness. She puts an arm around Johnny's shoulders.

MICHELLE

My parents divorced when I was young. I never saw my father much either.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Artie watches on the monitors with Ken, Fred and Darrell.

ARTIE

What the hell is this? He's never talked about his past before.

GARDEN SET

Michelle still has her arm around Johnny. He chokes up, visibly emotional.

MICHELLE

I was at least close with my mother. What about you?

JOHNNY

When I was seventeen, right after "Soul Mate" became a hit, she was killed in a car accident.

Michelle breaks into tears.

MICHELLE

I'm so sorry!

She puts her other arm around a genuinely tearful Johnny and holds him close.

JOHNNY  
I just feel so alone.

MICHELLE  
I know how bad I still feel about my father. It must be awful for you. I feel somehow connected to you.

Johnny puts his head on Michelle's shoulder and they embrace.

CONTROL ROOM

ARTIE  
Why are they discussing this? We didn't plan this, Ken.

He gets no response.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
Ken? Ken?

Artie looks over and sees Ken and Darrell in tears, arms around each other.

KEN  
That's the saddest thing I ever heard!

DARRELL  
I know. I'm going to call my mother when I get home.

ARTIE  
When did this turn into "As the World Turns"?

Fred steps over.

FRED  
Shut up, Artie! This is incredible. We never had a scene like this. The ratings will go through the roof.

Stunned, Artie looks at the monitors and sees Johnny and Michelle locked in a passionate kiss.

ARTIE  
Damn it!

He storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Artie slips out of the office and slumps against the wall. Hearing voices, he creeps to a corner and peeks around it.

Heather backs away from an intimidating Kelly.

KELLY

See you, loser! I'm one step closer to the prize.

HEATHER

You are such a bitch! Did you see Michelle and Johnny together? She's gonna kick your ass.

KELLY

I know how to handle her. I'm gonna win. I get what I want. Always.

Artie pulls back around the corner, a grin spreading across his face.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

A small number of elegant tables arrayed in front of a quaint restaurant.

Artie and Kelly sit at a table, having lunch.

KELLY

I knew it was just a matter of time.

ARTIE

A matter of time til what?

KELLY

Til you hit on me. Every man does, sooner or later.

ARTIE

Kelly, I'm not hitting on you.

KELLY

Please! How could you not? I'm warning you though, I'm not breaking the dating rule. I'm gonna end up with Johnny.

ARTIE  
That's exactly what I want.

KELLY  
Wait a minute. Why do you want me  
with Johnny?

Artie thinks for a moment.

ARTIE  
Johnny's a good friend of mine--

KELLY  
You never talk to him.

ARTIE  
Not on the set. We both have to  
concentrate on our jobs. But I  
care about his happiness.

KELLY  
You do?

ARTIE  
Of course. I want Johnny to end up  
with the best, and that's clearly  
you.

Kelly smiles and flips her hair, clearly buying into Artie's  
flattery.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
We just gotta make sure you have an  
edge over the other girls.

KELLY  
Well, most of those losers don't  
have a prayer. Except Michelle.  
She's the only threat.

ARTIE  
Okay, so what can we do to get her  
out of here?

Kelly thinks for a moment, then breaks into a big, evil  
smile.

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Artie is watching television when Sophie appears, dressed  
like Michelle in the garden.

SOPHIE

What you're planning s wrong,  
Artie.

ARTIE

What I'm planning is smart. I  
gotta do what it takes to win  
Michelle. That's what you told me.

SOPHIE

I didn't mean deceit. Show her who  
you are.

Artie picks up his remote, turns off the television and slams  
it onto the coffee table.

ARTIE

Who I am has never gotten me  
anything but hurt.

SOPHIE

Listen to me, I got you this far.  
Don't do this!

ARTIE

I have to get her away from Johnny.

SOPHIE

Are you that insecure? Show her  
you're the better man.

Artie stands and paces nervously.

ARTIE

Will you let me do what I have to?

SOPHIE

I would advise against it.

ARTIE

Yeah, well, you're just not a war  
time consigliere.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFESSIONAL AREA - DAY

Michelle speaks, agitated.

MICHELLE

I really wasn't happy about this  
swimsuit competition. I don't  
think the focus should be on our  
bodies. Johnny's girl should have  
a little more depth than that.

LATER

Kelly takes her turn with arrogance.

KELLY

How do I feel about the bikini  
contest? You ever hear the words,  
"slam dunk"?

EXT. GARDEN SET - LATER

The camera crew records the swimsuit contest.

Bristol, in a bikini, sits on a bench watching Johnny snap photos with a 35 mm camera.

Ainsley takes her turn, wearing a silver metallic bikini and sporting a very orange looking tan. She staggers around, clearly drunk, then rushes over to a rail, leans over it and vomits.

Johnny looks away, disgusted.

JOHNNY

I told you to lay off the  
margaritas!

Ainsley straightens up, sways and falls to the ground, out cold.

Jezebel comes onto the set in a black leather bikini with huge, ridiculous-looking bat wings on the back.

Johnny looks up, rolls his eyes and gives Jezebel a phony smile. He snaps one photo, then motions for her to sit down.

Jezebel lowers her head sadly and sits on another bench.

Kelly comes out now in a skimpy, hot pink bikini, looking every inch like the swimsuit model she is.

Johnny's jaw drops. He leers at Kelly, and snaps photos rapidly.

Kelly struts around, showing herself off in very sexy poses.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

That's it, Kelly, work it, baby!

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Artie, Ken, Fred and Darrell watch on the monitors.

FRED

I gotta hand it to you, Artie.  
This was a great idea. That Kelly  
is a real stunner.

Artie smiles, very pleased with himself.

GARDEN SET

Johnny snaps another photo of Kelly, then lowers the camera.

JOHNNY

I think we might have a winner, but  
we do have one more girl. Great  
job, Kelly.

Kelly blows Johnny a kiss and sits on the bench, bumping  
Jezebel off it.

Michelle comes out wearing an early Twentieth Century,  
horizontally striped bathing suit, with a lace-trimmed  
bathing cap and carrying a parasol.

Michelle walks around quickly, as in an old silent film. She  
twirls the parasol.

The other girls look at her strangely.

Johnny takes photo after photo.

Michelle does a pose hiding behind the parasol and then  
peeking out from it.

Johnny laughs, clearly enjoying the show.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

This is awesome! Michelle, that is  
so creative. You're the winner.  
There's no contest!

As Michelle curtsies, Kelly looks furious.

KELLY

Are you serious?

CONTROL ROOM

Fred has a huge smile on his face.

FRED

That girl is incredible! Artie,  
you picked a real good one.

Artie turns away and slumps against the wall.

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFESSIONAL AREA - LATER

Jezebel rants away in tears.

JEZEBEL

I can't believe I'm going home!  
Johnny didn't like my vamp suit.  
Ainsley passed out, Michelle is a  
prude, Kelly's a slut--

Jezebel's mouth goes a mile a minute. In her rambling, she accidentally puts one of her fangs through her lower lip. It bleeds profusely and she SCREAMS in pain.

JEZEBEL (CONT'D)

Ow! My lip! Damn, it hurts!

Jezebel jumps up out of her seat and rushes out of the frame.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - NIGHT

Artie and Kelly have a heated discussion.

ARTIE

What the hell happened? Big  
swimsuit model! You were supposed  
to win!

KELLY

I can't help it if Johnny's lost  
his mind.

Unseen by Artie and Kelly, Michelle enters the hallway. She hears the argument and ducks behind a wall, eavesdropping.

ARTIE

I wrote this challenge just for  
you! It was tailor made for you to  
win and Michelle to go home. How  
are you gonna win this thing now?

KELLY

Don't you worry about that. Johnny  
will pick me. I don't lose to any  
woman.

ARTIE

You better not.

Michelle is visibly upset by this. She turns and rushes off down the hall.

EXT. GARDEN SET - NIGHT

Michelle sits alone, crying.

Johnny enters the set. He sees Michelle crying, then approaches.

JOHNNY

Michelle? Are you alright? What's wrong?

Sitting, Johnny wraps an arm around her.

MICHELLE

Have you ever been betrayed, Johnny?

JOHNNY

I guess. Why?

MICHELLE

It hurts, doesn't it?

JOHNNY

Really bad. What happened? Do you wanna talk about it?

MICHELLE

Not really. But I don't want to be alone.

JOHNNY

Okay. Come on, let's go get a drink or something. We'll hang out.

MICHELLE

Thanks.

They stand up and exit, arm in arm.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Artie looks around.

Ken comes down the hall and approaches Artie.

KEN

Artie, I hate to tell you this, but  
I just saw Michelle leave with  
Johnny.

ARTIE

Tell me you're joking.

KEN

I wish I was.

ARTIE

It's happening again.

Artie rushes off.

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sitting on the couch, Artie dials his telephone. Beside him, Sophie, dressed in the old-fashioned bathing suit Michelle wore, looks down at her attire.

SOPHIE

This is actually a cute little  
outfit.

ARTIE

(into the phone)

Yeah, Michelle Carlyle's room,  
please.

(to Sophie)

I hope she's there this time.

(into the phone)

Still no answer? No, no message.  
Thanks anyway.

Artie hangs up and looks over at Sophie.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

She's not there. She's still with  
Johnny.

SOPHIE

We may be in trouble here.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Artie and Ken stand in front of the bulletin board looking over the head shots of the last four contestants: Michelle, Kelly, Ainsley and Bristol.

KEN

None of those other three are  
anywhere near the woman Michelle  
is. If Johnny has half a brain ...

Ken looks at Artie who is glaring at him. He trails off.

KEN (CONT'D)

Sorry.

Michelle sticks her head into the room.

MICHELLE

Excuse me.

(to him)

Artie, can I speak to you in  
private?

ARTIE

Yeah, of course.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Michelle stands restlessly in front of the same storage room  
Artie trapped her in before.

Artie eagerly approaches.

ARTIE

I'm glad you wanna talk. I--

MICHELLE

In here.

Michelle pulls open the door to the storage room, and shoves  
Artie through it.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Michelle turns on the light, then slams the door shut behind  
her.

MICHELLE

I know what you did.

Artie looks at her cautiously.

ARTIE

What do you mean?

Michelle rips off her glasses, her eyes blazing.

MICHELLE

You set up the swimsuit contest so Kelly would win and I would be eliminated.

Artie opens his mouth to protest, but Michelle cuts him off.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Don't deny it. I heard you talking to her.

ARTIE

Well, yeah ... I did. But I did it for you.

MICHELLE

For me? Pushing me away from Johnny just when we made an emotional connection. That was for me?

Artie again tries to speak, but Michelle storms on.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

And what about the integrity of the competition? This is supposed to be a reality show.

Artie tenses up and laughs.

ARTIE

You can't be that naive. Reality? This is television. There is no reality!

MICHELLE

Fine. But what about people's feelings? Don't force Kelly on Johnny. That bitch will break his heart just like the last two winners.

Artie looks around, shaking his head, now angry.

ARTIE

Oh, so poor Johnny will get his heart broken. I don't wanna hear it. That's life! People get crushed all the time. He can deal with it just like the rest of us.

Michelle slips her glasses back on. She calmly folds her arms and leans back against the wall.

MICHELLE

I'm glad you feel that way.  
Because, now, you can deal with it.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE STORAGE ROOM

Fred walks by and, hearing voices, stops outside the door.  
After listening for a moment, he opens it and discovers Artie  
and Michelle.

They stop their argument and look at Fred in surprise.

FRED

What's going on?

ARTIE

Just a creative discussion about  
the show's direction.

MICHELLE

Yes, that's all.

FRED

Sounded like a fight.

ARTIE

No, just a little disagreement.

FRED

Did you work it out?

MICHELLE

Yes, we came to a compromise.  
(to Artie)  
Thank you, Mr. Schneider.

ARTIE

You're welcome, Ms. Carlyle.

Artie and Michelle exit and go off in opposite directions  
down the hall.

After watching them leave, Fred looks like he is deep in  
thought.

FRED

There's a show in there somewhere.

INT. ARTIE'S CAR - DAY

Artie drives with Sophie, who is dressed like Michelle was in  
the storage room.

SOPHIE

I'm starting to think you really can't keep a woman. Why didn't you listen to me?

ARTIE

'Cause I'm an idiot, okay? What's the difference? It's over now.

SOPHIE

Things are pretty messed up, I'll admit, but you can still fix this.

ARTIE

How? She hates me. And she feels closer than ever to Johnny.

SOPHIE

You have to come clean. Tell her why you conspired with Kelly. Tell her you love her.

ARTIE

I can't. It's too late. Besides, I'm afraid.

SOPHIE

Of what? Losing her? If you don't talk to her, you'll lose her for sure. If you tell her the truth, you have a chance to build a relationship.

Artie mulls this over, deep in thought. He speaks cautiously.

ARTIE

I don't know. Maybe she does have a connection with Johnny. Maybe they're a match. How can I overcome that? If he picks Michelle, it's doesn't matter what I tell her.

SOPHIE

Fine. Enjoy the rest of your pathetic life.

Sophie disappears.

EXT. KEN'S PATIO - DAY

Artie and Ken sit at an umbrella-covered table. Ken's laptop is in front of him.

Artie stares off into space.

Ken closes the laptop.

KEN

Alright, Artie, you're too distracted to work.

Artie barely registers what Ken says. He turns to him.

ARTIE

What? I'm listening.

KEN

No, you're not. You're obviously thinking about Michelle. Come on, let's talk.

ARTIE

What do I care about that little intellectual with her head in the clouds?

KEN

You know something? Rachel's right. I'm too easy on you.

Artie stands. He looks agitated.

ARTIE

What's that supposed to mean?

KEN

I have idolized you since we were kids. You can handle anything. Not this time. You're not okay.

ARTIE

Of course I am. I'm an old pro at this. I completely fucked up two relationships and now I'm going for the hat trick.

KEN

You're still blaming yourself for Joanna?

ARTIE

Hey, she wouldn't have cheated on me if I was a better husband.

Ken stands and stalks up to Artie.

Artie turns away from Ken, who steps around in front of him.

KEN

Joanna was a bitch! Period! And nobody deserves to be treated the way she treated you. She used you because she wanted a career she didn't have the talent or drive for. And it killed me to watch it happen!

ARTIE

What about Gillian?

KEN

Gillian is a great lady. You two didn't work out, it happens.

ARTIE

What's the difference anyway?

KEN

The difference is now you love Michelle and you're blowing it because you think you don't deserve her.

ARTIE

Don't tell me how I feel or what I think! I don't need Michelle.

KEN

For once, be straight with me. You're not so unflappable. You're human. You want a woman.

Ken looks Artie right in the eye.

Artie explodes.

ARTIE

Of course I do! I'm so sick of being alone! And, yeah, I do love Michelle. You happy? I said it.

Ken's mouth opens in astonishment as years of repressed emotion comes flooding from Artie.

KEN

Calm down. We'll work this out.

ARTIE

There's nothing to work out! I  
blew what little chance I had.

KEN

You don't know that. Johnny really  
likes Kelly and Michelle really  
likes you.

ARTIE

Not anymore. I drove her away.  
Like always!

KEN

You are seriously scaring me.

ARTIE

Don't worry, Ken. Lose the girl.  
It's what I do best.

INT. ELIMINATION SET - NIGHT

Michelle and Kelly are in place, all smiles.

Ainsley stands in front of Johnny on the stage.

JOHNNY

You're a great girl, but, I'm  
sorry. You're not my soul mate,  
Rainbow.

Ainsley freaks out.

AINSLEY

It's Ainno! Ainno!

She breaks into tears and heads off the set.

AINSLEY (CONT'D)

I can't believe this! I am  
literally floored!

As Ainsley walks toward the exit, she passes Kelly, who  
sticks out a leg and trips her.

Ainsley sprawls to the floor.

KELLY

Now, it's literal!

Ainsley rises and charges Kelly in a fury.

A burly security guard grabs her and drags her off the set, kicking and screaming.

Johnny watches her exit, then composes himself.

JOHNNY

Kelly, Michelle. Congratulations.  
You're the finalists. One of you  
is my soul mate. It's gonna be  
tough figuring out which.

Kelly makes a throat slashing gesture to Michelle, who pulls off her glasses and glares.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Artie watches on the monitor with Ken and Fred. His body English spells defeat.

KEN

Hey, Artie, let's go grab a beer  
somewhere, huh?

Artie just looks at Ken without saying a thing and exits the room.

FRED

You think those girls would agree  
to a boxing match?

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Michelle walks toward the exit when Artie runs up behind her.

ARTIE

Michelle! Wait up, I need to talk  
to you.

Michelle stops and turns toward Artie. She rolls her eyes, then turns toward the door.

Artie rushes toward her.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Wait, please. I have something  
really important to tell you.

Michelle stops and turns to face him. She crosses her arms.

MICHELLE

So, tell me.

ARTIE

Not here. I know a place where we  
can talk alone.

Michelle looks sternly at Artie, who pleads with his eyes.

MICHELLE

You really don't deserve it, but  
okay, let's go.

EXT. GANTRY STATE PLAZA PARK -- PIER - NIGHT

The reflection of a romantic moon stretches across the river  
to the bench where Artie and Michelle sit, their background  
the lights of the stunning Manhattan skyline.

ARTIE

You're right. I shouldn't have  
manipulated the show like that. I  
just wasn't thinking straight.

MICHELLE

Why not?

ARTIE

Because I ...

Artie hesitates. The words are difficult to say.

Sophie appears behind the bench, dressed like Michelle.

MICHELLE

Because you what?

SOPHIE

Come on, Artie. You can do this.

ARTIE

Because I love you.

MICHELLE

Oh, Artie, I have feelings for you  
too.

ARTIE

Really? Well, let's got to my  
place. You hungry? How about some  
artichokes stuffed with Milk Duds?

Michelle laughs hard at this.

MICHELLE

Oh my God, I think you are the funniest person I've ever met.

ARTIE

Not only that, I'm low in cholesterol.

MICHELLE

I have so much fun with you and you're my intellectual equal.

ARTIE

See, we're a good match.

Michelle gazes into Artie's eyes, a serious and somber look on her face.

MICHELLE

But we have different outlooks. You don't believe in soul mates.

ARTIE

Well, no. But I believe in team mates, check mates ...

Michelle tries to hold it back, but she breaks into a smile.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Coffee mate!

Michelle can't help herself, she finally laughs.

MICHELLE

Stop! You're making this so hard.

Artie smiles.

ARTIE

I'm getting to you.

MICHELLE

You've gotten to me. But so has Johnny. He's like a lost puppy. It's very appealing.

ARTIE

You like him better?

MICHELLE

I don't know. All my life, I've wanted to meet my soul mate, and now ... there's two of you. I'm conflicted.

Artie stands and turns away from Michelle, clearly annoyed. She stands and gently turns him back.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
Let's just see what happens.  
Johnny could pick Kelly. She's  
gorgeous and he loves glamor.

ARTIE  
So, I'm plan B?

MICHELLE  
No. No matter what, you're an A,  
Artie.

Michelle kisses Artie gently on the lips and walks away.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Artie and Ken sit at the table looking at the photos of Michelle and Kelly on the bulletin board.

KEN  
I can't believe it's here. Last  
show, end of an era, huh?

ARTIE  
(into space)  
End of everything.

KEN  
Artie, I think--

Ken is cut off as the door opens and Johnny pops in.

JOHNNY  
Hey, guys, I need to talk to you.  
I really have a problem.

KEN  
Sure, Johnny, sit down. What can  
we do for you?

Johnny comes over and sits down.

Artie turns away, uncomfortable with his presence.

JOHNNY  
Man, I just don't know which girl  
to pick. They're both great. It's  
... I don't know.

KEN

Well, did you talk to Fred? I mean, it's your decision, but he's the boss.

JOHNNY

Look, let's drop the pretense. It's not really my decision and it's never been my show. I know that.

Artie turns toward Johnny. He and Ken exchange a look, surprised by this admission.

ARTIE

What do you mean?

JOHNNY

Come on, I'm not stupid. I mean, I play the burned out rock star, but I know Fred calls the shots.

KEN

Well, yeah, but--

JOHNNY

The first two seasons, he basically told me who to pick. I know, the relationships were supposed to fail so we could do a new season.

ARTIE

It wasn't personal. You know how Fred is about ratings.

Johnny gives off a laugh.

JOHNNY

Not personal? It's my life, my feelings.

Ken gives Artie a hard look.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I went along with it because, well, frankly, I need the show, the fame. It's all I have. Pretty pathetic, right?

Ken opens his mouth to speak, but Artie cuts him off.

ARTIE

I don't think it's pathetic. I think I can relate.

JOHNNY

Thank you, Artie. So, who do I pick?

KEN

Well, did you talk to Fred?

JOHNNY

Yeah, he doesn't care. It's the final season, he got the show he wanted. It doesn't matter to him.

KEN

It's really your decision--

ARTIE

Let me think about it. You're meeting the girls' families this week, right?

JOHNNY

Yeah.

ARTIE

Okay. I'll toss it around with Ken and give you an answer when you get back.

JOHNNY

Thanks, that would really help. See you guys.

Johnny lumbers out the door.

Artie looks off into space and speaks out loud to himself.

ARTIE

He'll pick whoever I tell him to.

KEN

Artie, you made this mistake once, don't do it again.

Artie gets up and heads for the door.

ARTIE

Don't worry about it. I know what I'm doing.

Artie rushes out as Ken starts to protest, but stops himself as his friend exits.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Artie wanders aimlessly through an empty part of the park with Sophie, who is still dressed like Michelle on the pier.

SOPHIE

I can't believe you're thinking about manipulating that poor guy.

ARTIE

That poor guy ended my second marriage.

SOPHIE

No, he didn't. What he did was wrong, but Joanna didn't love you anyway.

Artie gives Sophie a hard look.

ARTIE

Fine. But he gets all kinds of women. Why can't I have Michelle?

SOPHIE

Have her? Is she a piece of property? What about what she wants?

ARTIE

What if she wants Johnny?

Sophie puts her arm around Artie's shoulders.

SOPHIE

Maybe she does. They are good together.

Artie steps away from Sophie, stunned.

ARTIE

So, now you're turning on me?

SOPHIE

No, of course not. But let's look at this thing. What did you think when you first met Michelle?

ARTIE

I was shocked that such a bright woman was interested in the show. I was attracted to her intellect.

SOPHIE

Okay. What about when you first saw Gillian?

ARTIE

Gillian? That was different. It was like, wow! Something hit me.

SOPHIE

Maybe there's more to this whole soul mate thing than you realize.

Artie thinks carefully for a moment.

ARTIE

I don't know. Maybe. But I do know, I can't go through it again if I lose this one.

SOPHIE

You always tell people you can handle anything to hide your insecurities.

ARTIE

What's your point?

SOPHIE

You really can handle anything. You survived two divorces. Not everyone could do that.

Artie thinks a moment.

ARTIE

So?

SOPHIE

So, I believe you can handle whatever happens. Think this one through.

EXT. MIAMI - DAY

Modern buildings and palm trees form the city's skyline against the shoreline and crystal blue water.

INT. KELLY'S PARENTS' HOUSE -- DINING ROOM

Bright sunshine filters through the windows of the colorfully decorated room.

Johnny and Kelly sit at one end of a table loaded with delicious looking Cuban food.

Kelly's father, MARCO, early 60's, distinguished, sits at the other end with her mother, ROSA, mid 50's, a small, meek woman. They have distinct Cuban accents.

MARCO

Rosa and I came to America thirty years ago with nothing. And look at us now. Our beautiful daughter living her dream. She will be the winner, no?

KELLY

I'm gonna destroy that bitch, Papa.

Rosa shakes her head sadly.

ROSA

Kelly, please. A lady does not speak this way.

MARCO

My little girl is no ordinary lady. A woman of her beauty can have anything she wants.

Rosa looks unhappy.

Kelly smiles with cockiness.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Johnny, you would be wise to pick Kelly. She would be a great wife.

JOHNNY

Maybe.

EXT. MICHELLE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - DAY

A modest home on a quiet street in suburban Long Island.

INT. MICHELLE'S MOTHER'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM

Conservatively decorated in subdued colors.

Johnny sits on the couch between Michelle and her mother, CAROL, mid 60's, still attractive with sad eyes.

CAROL  
Would you like a glass of iced tea,  
Johnny?

JOHNNY  
Sure, if it's no trouble.

MICHELLE  
I'll get it, Mom.

Michelle gets up and exits the room.

Carol pats Johnny on the shoulder.

CAROL  
You have no idea how much your  
song, "Soul Mate" meant to  
Michelle.

JOHNNY  
She told me she liked it.

CAROL  
That's an understatement. She  
didn't tell you the whole story.

Johnny shrugs.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Michelle had a heart valve  
replacement when she was twelve.  
It was pretty scary for awhile.

JOHNNY  
Oh my God, she never told me.

CAROL  
She has a scar from it. That's why  
she doesn't like to wear a bathing  
suit in public. Anyway, your song  
kept her spirits up. She listened  
to it constantly.

Johnny appears deeply moved.

JOHNNY  
I'm speechless.

CAROL  
I'm afraid Michelle's father and I  
didn't give her the best impression  
of a relationship. She's always  
had this romantic dream of finding  
a soul mate.

JOHNNY

Me too. I've been looking all my life.

CAROL

Well, maybe you two finally found what you've been looking for.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Ken sits reading through some paperwork.

Johnny slips into the room, holding an envelope.

JOHNNY

Hey, Ken. Artie's not around, is he?

KEN

No, he went out.

Johnny hands Ken the envelope.

JOHNNY

Could you give him this please? I need to talk to him.

KEN

Sure.

Johnny turns to go, but stops and turns back.

JOHNNY

Artie's a pretty cool dude, isn't he?

KEN

He's been my best friend for years.

JOHNNY

Why does hate me?

Ken sighs and rubs his head.

KEN

Sit down. We need to talk.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A larger, grander building than Artie's.

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY

Artie stands outside a door, wearing a New York Met T-shirt with the words, "TWO-TIME WORLD CHAMPIONS" on it.

After a moment, Johnny opens the door. He wears a Yankee T-shirt with the words, "TWENTY-SEVEN TIME WORLD CHAMPIONS" on it.

JOHNNY

Hey, Artie, thanks for coming. I really appreciate it. Come on in.

The two men notice each others' shirts and stare a moment.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(with a laugh)

Hey, look at that. We're rivals!

ARTIE

More than you realize.

Artie follows Johnny into:

JOHNNY'S LIVING ROOM

Johnny's place is large and beautifully and conservatively decorated. It looks more like the home of a lawyer than a musician.

Artie walks in and looks around at the place as Johnny closes the door.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

You live here?

JOHNNY

Yeah. Why, you don't like it?

ARTIE

It's beautiful. It's just not what I expected a rock star's home to look like.

JOHNNY

Please! I haven't been a rock star in years. You want something to drink?

ARTIE

No, thanks. Let's get this over with. You asked me here to tell you who to pick, right?

JOHNNY

Well, yeah, but first, there's something I need to tell you.

ARTIE

Okay, what is it?

JOHNNY

I found out why you hate me.

ARTIE

Johnny, I don't hate you. I just--

JOHNNY

Okay, I know why you dislike me. But you don't know the whole story.

Artie takes a single step back.

ARTIE

I really don't want to talk about this.

JOHNNY

We have to. I need to.

Turning, Artie retreats for the door.

ARTIE

No, I don't want to hear it! I'm leaving!

JOHNNY (O.S.)

I never slept with your wife.

Hand on the door knob, Artie stops dead in his tracks. He loosens his grip, then turns and slowly walks back to Johnny.

ARTIE

What?

JOHNNY

I didn't sleep with Joanna. I know you think I did, but it never happened.

ARTIE

She told me you did.

JOHNNY

Yeah, well she was lying. She came on to me, but I said, "Hell, no".

ARTIE

You expect me to believe that?

JOHNNY

Yeah, I do, 'cause it's the truth. Look, I'm not proud of it. I can't say I never banged another guy's woman before. But I would never do that to you.

ARTIE

No?

JOHNNY

No! You, Ken, Darrell, you're the closest thing to family I have. I wouldn't hurt any of you. Especially you, Artie.

ARTIE

What's so special about me?

JOHNNY

I have so much respect for you. You're one of the most talented people I've ever known. When you were doing stand up, I went to see you all the time. You were great!

ARTIE

Really? I never knew.

JOHNNY

You're smart, you're confident. You handle everything.

ARTIE

Believe me, not everything.

JOHNNY

Well, everything I've ever seen.

Artie steps closer to Johnny, deeply flattered.

ARTIE

I'm so sorry, Johnny, all this time, I thought--

JOHNNY

Hey, it's okay, how could you know? I'm glad we straightened that out.

ARTIE

I am too.

JOHNNY  
So, which girl do I pick?

Artie is deep in thought, momentarily distracted.

ARTIE  
What? Oh, yeah, the girls.  
Everything's changed. I gotta  
think about it some more.

JOHNNY  
Oh. I thought you had it by now.

ARTIE  
I'll have an answer for you before  
we shoot the decision. I promise.

INT. ARTIE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Artie slides through the door and turns on the light.

Sophie stands in front of him.

SOPHIE  
That was quite a revelation, wasn't  
it?

ARTIE  
Yeah. He's an okay guy. I  
actually think I could be friends  
with him.

SOPHIE  
You know what you have to do.

ARTIE  
I have to let it play out.  
Michelle and I aren't really ...

SOPHIE  
Soul mates? I thought you didn't  
believe.

ARTIE  
I don't, but ... sometimes, you  
just feel something that can't be  
explained. It wasn't there with  
her.

SOPHIE  
She didn't "wow" you.

Artie moves to his couch and sits. Sophie sits next to him.

ARTIE  
No. She didn't. You did.

Sophie leans back, away from Artie.

SOPHIE  
But I'm not real.

ARTIE  
I know. Which means I'm even more  
screwed up than I thought.

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

The exterior lights are on. A big sign proclaims, "THE SOUL MATE FINALE".

INT. SOUL MATE SET -- CONFSSIONAL AREA

Johnny speaks, seemingly unsure of himself.

JOHNNY  
This was by far the toughest  
decision I have ever had to make.  
I honestly might not know until the  
absolute last moment.

LATER

Kelly, dressed her best, appears smugly confident.

KELLY  
This is in the bag. Michelle's  
really smart, but come on. How can  
Johnny not pick me?

LATER

Michelle, dressed with class, is visibly nervous.

MICHELLE  
What really strikes me is that, no  
matter what, somebody is going to  
get hurt.

INT. STUDIO HALLWAY - LATER

Johnny paces nervously.

Artie walks quickly down the hall toward Johnny, who eagerly turns to him.

JOHNNY

Artie! There you are. I need to know. Who do I pick?

ARTIE

You're gonna make the choice, Johnny. Only you know what you want.

JOHNNY

Oh, man! I've never made an important decision in my life. It was always my mother, or an agent or manager. What if I'm wrong?

ARTIE

You gotta take that chance. Be your own man. All we can do is make the best decisions we can. Whatever happens, happens. You deal with it.

JOHNNY

Can't you give me some help? Who would you pick?

Artie places a hand on Johnny's shoulder.

ARTIE

This isn't even remotely about me. You're a smart, talented guy. You can do this, believe me.

JOHNNY

You think so?

Artie grins.

ARTIE

I have faith in you.

Johnny thinks a moment, then smiles confidently.

JOHNNY

Okay, thanks, man. Come here.

Johnny opens his arms to embrace Artie, who steps back.

ARTIE

I'm not really a hugger.

JOHNNY

Come on, man, we're bros.

Johnny pulls Artie into a big embrace.

Looking uncomfortable, Artie tentatively pats Johnny on the back with both hands.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Artie and Ken stand together.

Darrell directs the technicians.

Fred swaggers over to Artie and Ken.

FRED

It's been a hell of a ride, boys!  
Thanks for everything. I couldn't  
have done it without you.

KEN

It was our pleasure, Fred. I know  
I had fun. Right, Artie?

Artie stares straight at the monitors. He doesn't hear Ken at all.

INT. ELIMINATION SET - LATER

Johnny stands solemnly on the stage as Michelle and Kelly take their places in front of him. Johnny and Michelle are tense, while Kelly looks confident.

JOHNNY

Some people believe that a soul  
mate is someone you are destined to  
be with. Others would tell you  
that's absurd. Everything is just  
random chance. I think the truth  
lies somewhere in the middle.

CONTROL ROOM

Artie and Ken stand together in a corner. A stunned Ken turns to Artie.

KEN

You? Wrote this?

Artie seems annoyed.

ARTIE

I've been through a lot lately,  
okay?

ELIMINATION SET

Johnny continues.

JOHNNY

Nothing is predestined, but, once  
in a blue moon, someone comes along  
and you sense that's she's special.  
You can feel it. It's like, "wow".  
It hits you.

CONTROL ROOM

Ken puts an arm on Artie's shoulder.

KEN

That was beautiful! You're not the  
same guy I grew up with.

Artie shrugs in embarrassment.

ARTIE

Experience changes your  
perspective. Maybe I learned  
something.

ELIMINATION SET

Johnny turns to Kelly.

JOHNNY

Kelly, I've seen so many girls in  
my life, but not many with your  
beauty.

KELLY

Thank you, Johnny.

JOHNNY

You're fun to be with, and I do  
think we click.

Now, he turns to Michelle.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Michelle, you're so smart and  
pretty.

(MORE)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Plus, I feel like I can tell you anything. We connect on a deep level.

MICHELLE

I think we do.

JOHNNY

God, this is so hard.

CONTROL ROOM

Ken gives Artie a quick hug.

KEN

Good luck.

Artie looks at Ken. He appears sad, but calm.

ARTIE

Sorry, kid. This ain't my night.

Ken looks at Artie with real concern.

ELIMINATION SET

Johnny steels himself for the season's biggest moment.

JOHNNY

Kelly, you are awesome, but, I'm sorry, you just don't quite measure up. You're not my soul mate.

Kelly screams and runs off the set in tears.

Michelle's hands come up to her mouth.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

It's you, Michelle. I realize now, I knew it when I first saw you. Please come up here.

Michelle walks up onto the stage, now crying.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Michelle, are you my soul mate?

Sobbing softly, Michelle looks for Artie in the control room window, her face a confusion of emotions. Then, decisively, she looks back at Johnny.

MICHELLE

Yes, Johnny. I love you. I've been waiting years for this moment.

JOHNNY

(smiling and teary-eyed)  
You really are my soul mate.

They kiss passionately, locked in an embrace.

CONTROL ROOM

Artie is distraught, the pain evident on his face and in his posture.

Ken puts an arm around his shoulders.

KEN

I'm so sorry. I don't what to say.

Darrell speaks into a mic.

DARRELL

Cut! That was great. Let's take a break, then we'll shoot the final confessionals.

(to him)

Ken, would you please go find Kelly?

KEN

Sure, no problem.

Ken pats Artie on the back and trots out of the room.

INT. SOUL MATE SET - MOMENTS LATER

Artie stands alone, still distraught.

Johnny and Michelle slowly approach, arm in arm. He smiles excitedly. Her eyes are filled with joyous tears.

Artie does his best to compose himself as they arrive in front of him.

JOHNNY

Hey, Artie, I did it, man. I made the decision. Good choice, huh?

ARTIE

The only choice.

JOHNNY  
I owe it all to you.  
(to her)  
This is an awesome guy, Michelle.

MICHELLE  
Yeah, he sure is.

Michelle gives Artie a big hug.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)  
Thank you. For everything.

ARTIE  
Okay, you two. Go live happily  
ever after.

Johnny and Michelle stroll away, holding hands.

Sophie appears next to Artie, dressed like Michelle.

SOPHIE  
You did a beautiful thing. Look  
how happy they are together.

Johnny and Michelle kiss like newlyweds.

Artie looks at them with moist eyes, but manages a smile.

ARTIE  
It's the right way for this to end.

SOPHIE  
Keep your head up.

ARTIE  
Yeah, I have so much to be proud  
of. I'm a hack writer for a stupid  
reality show, and when I finally  
figure out this whole soul mate  
thing, I realize mine is imaginary.  
So great to be me.

Artie makes a dash for the exit.

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Artie slips silently out the door, his chin scraping the sidewalk.

He walks, head down toward the corner. He doesn't see a woman standing on the corner and he bumps into her.

She is SKIPPER PERSINSKY, late 30's, a dead ringer for Sophie, dressed in a different style than Michelle.

Artie looks up, apologetically.

ARTIE

I'm so sorry, I was distracted.

Artie gets a good look at Skipper and for a moment, appears breathless.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Wow!

He recovers his composure.

ARTIE (CONT'D)

Why are you dressed like that?

SKIPPER

Excuse me?

Sophie appears behind Skipper. The two are identical. Same face. Same hair. Same outfit.

Artie looks from Skipper to Sophie and back and realizes Skipper is real.

ARTIE

Sorry, I, um, thought you were some one else.

Skipper looks closely at Artie and breaks into a smile.

SKIPPER

Artie Schneider?

Artie looks at her in confusion.

SKIPPER (CONT'D)

Think back. Eighth grade. Mrs. Murray's English class?

Artie gets a sudden look of recognition.

ARTIE

Skipper Persinsky?

She laughs.

SKIPPER

No one has called me "Skipper" in years.

Artie smiles sheepishly.

ARTIE  
No, I guess not.

His face brightens as a a memory hits him.

ARTIE (CONT'D)  
Sophie! Your real name is Sophie!  
That's how I came up with ...

Smiling proudly, Sophie gives Artie a "thumbs up".

SOPHIE  
Mission accomplished!

As Artie and Skipper look into each others' eyes, huge smiles on their faces, Sophie blows Artie a kiss, then slowly faces out of existence.

FADE OUT.