

THE HYPNOTIST'S LOVE STORY

Written by

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Based on the book by Liane Moriarty

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SEATTLE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

City lights reflect off the bay. Pike Place teems with life, the Ferris wheel glitters on the pier. And everywhere we look, COUPLES IN LOVE are kissing, holding hands, and having romantic dinners. It's a bit nauseating, really.

ELLEN (V.O.)

We aren't meant to admit, even to ourselves, how badly we want love. The man is supposed to be the icing, not the cake. And so, here I am. A successful, empowered, independent woman. Who is also 38 and single. And starting to think that a cake with no icing has all the appeal of a shit sandwich, minus the bread.

Cue the torqued-up opening chords of the Violent Femmes' "Blister in the Sun," as we WHIP TO --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A glass of RED WINE on the vanity, along with lipstick, eyeshadow palettes, birth control pills. Femmes play from a speaker somewhere. Ellen's pre-date protocol in full swing.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I assure you, the absence of icing on my particular cake is not for lack of trying. But countless dates with countless men the Internet thinks would be good for me have thus far proven fruitless.

Meet the indomitable ELLEN (38), in a bra and panties. She's a beauty - polished, yet bohemian. She holds a DRESS up to JULIA (38), her impish BFF, who sits on the bed.

ELLEN (V.O.)

"Nevertheless, she persisted."

JULIA

That's a sex dress. You minx.
Is tonight the night?

ELLEN

Maybe. It is date number four.

JULIA

Ding ding! Patrick The Single
Father advances to the next round.

ELLEN

He checks a lot of boxes.

Julia squints, the resident skeptic. She treads lightly.

JULIA

So did the ventriloquist. Until we
found out he was a ventriloquist.

ELLEN

Patrick is different.
(off Julia's silence)
He is. Smart, funny. Well-
employed as not-a-ventriloquist.

JULIA

... And he opens doors, and he read
Lean In, and he shares your
irrational fear of ham. He seems
great.

ELLEN

So why are you making your ugly
baby face?

JULIA

Because he could still have a body
in his trunk. Or be weird in bed.
Not good weird. It's my duty as
your attorney to advise caution --

ELLEN

You own a dress shop.

JULIA

Irrelevant.

ELLEN

(raises her right hand)
I hereby acknowledge the possibility
that Patrick Scott is a murderous,
sexual deviant. Happy?

Julia nods, satisfied. Ellen turns to the mirror.

ELLEN (V.O.)

*But I also acknowledge that he just
might be my icing.*

She whips a dress off a hanger, FILLING FRAME. MUSIC UP as --

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ellen walks in, bringing PATRICK SCOTT (38) to his feet at a table near the back. Patrick is both boyish and masculine, warm, charming. He greets her with a sweet kiss.

ELLEN (V.O.)
He even tastes like icing.

PATRICK
Do you have any idea how many heads
you just turned with that entrance?

Ellen demurs, but it's true. She's stunning. As they sit --

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Every guy in here is wondering how
I got you to have dinner with me.

ELLEN
Well. You did say they have the
best sea bass in Seattle.

He grins, revealing a DIMPLE, feigns addressing the room.

PATRICK
Relax, fellas. She's just in it
for the sea bass.

As she opens her menu, Patrick's PHONE rings. Ellen clocks a picture of a cute ten year-old BOY, and the name "Jack."

PATRICK (CONT'D)
It's my son. Probably wants to say
goodnight. Do you mind --?

ELLEN
Of course not. Please.

She fake-studies her menu, eavesdropping, as he picks up.

PATRICK
(into phone)
Hey, buddy. How was practice, did
you wear your new cleats? What
jacket? Well, I'm sure she'll give
it back... You can wear the plaid
jacket tomorrow.

He winks at her, mouths "sorry!" As he talks, his voice
FADES DOWN and Ellen SIGHS dreamily in V.O. --

ELLEN (V.O.)

That dimple. It's like he comes with a special marking to show he's different from all the others.

(then, more stern)

Ellen, be cool. This could be a move he does, he could be talking to Siri.

PATRICK

(into phone)

...Goodnight, buddy. I love you. You know that, right?

ELLEN (V.O.)

Or, maybe, just this one time, and in spite of my extensive history to the contrary, the man in front of me is actually as good as he seems.

Patrick puts his phone away as a WAITER approaches.

PATRICK

Now. Where were we? Oh, yes.

(to the Waiter)

Would you please bring us some wine before my date realizes how out of my league she is?

Her eyes go to his dimple as he smiles at her again.

ELLEN (V.O.)

(melting)

I wonder if dimples are genetic.

Ellen smiles, surrendering to the moment. From here --

SLAM TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Outside the restaurant, looking in - at Ellen and Patrick. It's a jarring, disturbing POV. RACK FOCUS to catch a glint of a REFLECTION - fragments of a profile. And now we're ON THE MOVE. Snaking inside, gliding past waiters - landing at an empty table. Still fixed on Patrick and Ellen.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Back with Patrick as he draws a MAP on a napkin, then sketches a little star at the center. He hands it to Ellen.

PATRICK

I give you, the world through the eyes of an urban surveyor.

ELLEN

(impressed)

So this is what you do? Draw these maps...

PATRICK

I draw the maps, assess the permits, and I tell the architects whether what they want to build is actually buildable.

She admires the map's remarkable detail.

ELLEN

It's beautiful. What's the star?

PATRICK

That's you, Madame Hypnotist.

She shifts, wary, which he clocks, correcting himself --

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Wait. I meant *Hypnotherapist*. There's a difference, right?

ELLEN

There is, but it's usually a little hard for people to grasp...

PATRICK

Try me.

ELLEN

Okay. Hypnotists do those stage shows, you know? Make people cluck like chickens, that sort of thing.

PATRICK

Sounds like more of a parlor trick than therapy. What you do... I mean, you actually help people.

ELLEN

I like to think so.

She nods, smiling to herself. He notices.

PATRICK

What is it?

ELLEN

Just, hearing you say that was...

ELLEN (V.O.)

Incredibly sexy.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

... Refreshing.

He holds her in a lingering gaze, leaning closer.

PATRICK

I confess I would like you to hypnotize me, though.

ELLEN

Sorry. Clients only.

PATRICK

Maybe I should book a session?

ELLEN

Maybe. But I can think of better things to do with an hour alone.

He looks at her, heat rising between them.

Then - his eyes dart over her shoulder. His expression darkens. She clocks his change in demeanor as --

PATRICK

Ellen.

His fork clanks down onto his plate. His neck muscles tense.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I need to tell you something.

ELLEN

Oh?

ELLEN (V.O.)

Oh, no.

She masks her alarm with a quizzical look. Finally --

PATRICK

Actually, will you excuse me a minute?

ELLEN

Of course.

He bolts to his feet. A WAITER points him to the bathrooms. Ellen eyes Patrick's FORK - food still speared on the end.

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

And here I was thinking this was going well. The man literally dropped his fork and ran.

She dabs her mouth with her napkin. Composed. She fingers the NAPKIN with the map. The bright little star.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Did I imagine it? I was fantasizing about having his dimply little baby, for God's sake. No matter. I'll be fine. I'll be over him by Wednesday. Thursday.

She reaches for her wine, utterly bewildered.

ELLEN (V.O.)

What if he is a psychopath? He lied about being a widower? His wife is alive and he keeps her in a shed. Or he's a mobster. On the lam. Now the FBI will come after me and make me wear a wire.

More wine. She glances toward the bathrooms.

ELLEN (V.O.)

If I leave now, I can get in a good cry, and still catch The Bachelor finale.

She takes out her phone, pulls up Uber, considering. Then --

PATRICK (O.C.)

Sorry. You must think I'm a lunatic.

She looks up, smiling falsely. He sits, visibly shaken.

ELLEN

Well, I am a bit curious, Patrick.

ELLEN (V.O.)

"I am a bit curious, Patrick." Who knew I sound like a jolly, middle aged lady when I'm getting dumped?

PATRICK

I didn't want to have to tell you this until... later. But it can't wait. You deserve to know now.

ELLEN

Know what?

PATRICK

That I have a stalker.

He looks at her, grim. A long beat. Then --

ELLEN
Did you just say you have a stalker?

ELLEN (V.O.)
Did he just say he has a stalker?

PATRICK
My ex-girlfriend. When things ended, she started following me.

ELLEN
Your ex-girlfriend follows you. Everywhere you go?

PATRICK
Pretty much. That's why I got up just now, I saw she was here.

He meets her eyes as it lands on her. She nods, realizing --

ELLEN (V.O.)
*A stalker. He got up just now because of his stalker.
(glorious relief)
Which means I'm not getting dumped!*

ELLEN
How long has she been doing this?

PATRICK
Three years. I dated her after Colleen died. Colleen's my wife.

ELLEN
And the stalker?
(off his confused look)
What is her name?

PATRICK
Oh. Uh, it's Sasha.

ELLEN
Is Sasha deranged?

PATRICK
No. She's a fairly normal person in other respects --

ELLEN
Is she dangerous?

PATRICK
(quickly)
No.

ELLEN

How can you be sure? Do you have a restraining order or something?

PATRICK

I tried, but the judge said my complaint "didn't meet the standard to warrant a protective order."

ELLEN

What does that mean?

PATRICK

(with a sigh)

It means she is a terrible nuisance. But not a threat.

Ellen suddenly straightens, her hair standing on end --

ELLEN

You said she's here now?

PATRICK

She was. She left.

Ellen throws a look to the front of the restaurant. We RACE through the room and out the window --

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Where a taxi idles at the curb. A gorgeous HIGH HEEL - Valentino, rock stud, devastating - disappears into a cab. The door SLAMS and the car peels away.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Patrick squirms like a convict waiting for sentencing. He looks at her, his eyes a mix of hope and regret.

ELLEN

Thank you for telling me.

PATRICK

I didn't want to, trust me. I hate talking about her.

ELLEN

Because of all the emotion it brings up?

PATRICK

(scoffs)

No.

(MORE)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Because there's a fascinating woman sitting across from me who is a much more interesting topic of conversation.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I don't know, a devoted stalker of over three years is pretty damn interesting...

PATRICK

But if it means there's a chance you'll see me again? I'll talk about it all night. You must have questions.

He looks at her, bracing - his fear of losing her is obvious. And tremendously endearing. Ellen's expression changes, which he clocks. That heat between them builds again.

ELLEN

Just one, actually.

She leans toward him suggestively.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Do you want to order dessert?

His worried expression dissolves into a smile. They draw closer, their attraction palpable. "Blister In The Sun" resumes as we SMASH TO MAIN TITLES: "**The Hypnotist's Love Story.**"

FADE TO WHITE.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Ellen's phone DINGS. She rolls over in bed, reading a TEXT from Patrick. "I think you hypnotized me after all."

ELLEN (V.O.)

Hypnosis is a bit like falling in love. For it to work, you have to be willing.

Then: "When can I see you again?" She smiles, but doesn't answer him just yet. Off this --

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Ellen is graceful and unpretentious in leggings, ballet flats, flowing cardigan. She fills a bowl with chocolates, fluffs a pillow. Pre-client protocol. The DOORBELL rings.

ELLEN (V.O.)
*I've helped clients conquer
phobias, nervous tics. And of
course... quit smoking.*

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen opens the door to ROSIE (28), beautiful, fragile,
filthy rich. Rosie exhales a column of cigarette smoke.

ELLEN (V.O.)
But again, one must be willing.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Rosie plops into the Eames chair across from Ellen's striped
red and cream winged armchair.

ELLEN
How's it going?

ROSIE
Still smoking like a chimney.

ELLEN
Smoking's just a symptom, we've
known that since your first
session. I was asking about Ian.

Rosie fidgets with her huge diamond engagement ring.

ROSIE
The monster I'm engaged to? Still
marrying him. And thanks for
bringing it up.

ELLEN
It's kind of my job to bring it up.
(reading her notes)
Last week, you said you were ready
to call it off.

ROSIE
Yeah, well. Instead I spent the
day in a bridesmaids' fitting. The
dresses are the ugliest possible
shade of peach. Like baby poop. I
mean, who chooses that?

ELLEN
Have you tried talking to him?

ROSIE

No. He's out of town buying some TV station somewhere. This is the only way I see him lately.

She whips out a FORTUNE MAGAZINE - A distinguished MAN on the cover: "America's Top Entrepreneurs - Ian Roman Exclusive."

ROSIE (CONT'D)

There should be a rule about not putting yourself on the cover of a magazine you own. It's just tacky.

They regard Ian Roman's face on the magazine for a beat.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Rosie's fiancé is the billionaire media mogul who owns the news. TV, radio, print. Unfortunately, he also owns Rosie. And the private man is very different from the public mogul...

ROSIE

Marrying him will kill me faster than smoking, I know it. But if I can't even quit cigarettes, how will I get the guts to leave him?

ELLEN (V.O.)

Ah-ha. Fear of confrontation - that's Rosie's real problem. Also happens to be my specialty.

ELLEN

Why don't we begin?

Rosie nods, settling in. Ellen's voice is low and even.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath. Now, let your eyes close, and imagine you're staring at a wall. It's the exact shade of your bridesmaids' dresses.

ROSIE

(eyes closed)
Great.

ELLEN

Now look down. You're holding a paintbrush. See it? You can repaint. Any color you choose...

ROSIE

I choose blue. Like the ocean.

ELLEN

Blue. Okay. Start painting.

As Ellen talks, we DRIFT out her large picture window to --

EXT. ELLEN'S BEACH - DAY

A quiet stretch of beach, waves rushing up and away, in constant motion... soothing and hypnotic.

ELLEN (V.O.)

(to Rosie)

When the wall is covered in this new shade of blue, you'll be completely relaxed and at ease.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Back with Rosie, Ellen's voice fades down as her inner thoughts become audible in V.O. We cut back and forth between Ellen's serene office and the ocean waves.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I think of fear like a tyrannical toddler. If you give in to it, you empower it. But if you hold your ground, eventually, it'll take its ball and go home. Rosie's inner strength is far greater than her fear of Ian. I just need her to see that...

Ellen slips Ian's magazine out of sight. Rosie's eyes move rapidly behind her eyelids, her jaw grows slack...

ELLEN

And when you awaken, you will be ready to tell Ian what he needs to know, without any fear whatsoever. Have you finished painting yet?

Rosie lifts her INDEX finger - their signal.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Good. Now, let's talk about Ian.

Off Ellen, calm and confident, Rosie in her hands...

INT. YOGA CLASS - DAY

Ellen is mid cobra-pose. Julia cobras right beside her, her face a mix of shock and alarm as she whispers.

JULIA

There are a lot of reasonable reactions to a man telling you he has a stalker. None of them involve ordering dessert.

ELLEN

They were beignets. Hot beignets.

Julia moves into warrior pose, exasperated.

JULIA

Come on, ten years ago you'd have left this guy in the dust by now.

ELLEN

That's probably true.

JULIA

So, what changed?

ELLEN

Me. The game. Don't forget you've been married the last ten years.

A HOT MALE YOGA TEACHER adjusts Julia's positioning.

JULIA

Thanks for the reminder.
(to yoga teacher)
I'm divorced now, just so you know.

She smiles alluringly. Ellen ignores the teacher, continues.

ELLEN

The point is, Patrick is a catch. He still checks every box. He checks boxes I didn't know I had.

JULIA

If that's what this is about, I'm pretty sure there are easier ways to get your "box checked."

Ellen rolls her eyes, strives to sway her cynical friend.

ELLEN

There was this moment, as he drove me home.

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

This old song came on the radio. I turned it up. He turned it up more. Then, he pulled over.

Julia looks at Ellen. Still suspicious, as we --

POP TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

Ellen reacts, surprised, as Patrick suddenly swerves to the side of the road. He looks at her, listening to Ritchie Valens' "We Belong Together." Then he gets out of the car.

WITH ELLEN: now alone with Ritchie's sweet achy voice and twangy guitar riff. Just as she starts to fret --

Patrick appears at her door, opening it and pulling her out. He holds out his hand and she realizes - he's asking her to dance. They start to sway on the grassy median, faces close together under the soft light of the streetlamp...

BACK TO:

INT. YOGA CLASS - DAY

Julia considers this as Ellen moves into another pose.

JULIA

That is pretty hot.

ELLEN

I'm telling you, he's worth it. I really think I can make the stalker thing work.

JULIA

Okay. Then, last question. Your funeral. In the event you are chopped into pieces, I assume you wanna go closed casket?

ELLEN

He swears she's not dangerous.

They switch poses again. Julia looks at her, frowning.

JULIA

Do you have a picture of her?

ELLEN

No.

(off her look)

It didn't come up!

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

And I didn't want to pry. It's clearly hard for him to talk about.

JULIA

So your stalker could be anywhere.

ELLEN

She's not my stalker.

JULIA

I bet that's her right there. Plotting your death during Shavasana.

Julia eyeballs a woman in Tree Pose suspiciously. Off this --

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Ellen and Julia weave through the lingerie section, sifting through bra-and-panty sets.

JULIA

Could you at least get her last name so we can Google her?

Ellen looks at her friend, a hint of a smile.

ELLEN

For the record? That would technically qualify as stalking.

JULIA

Creeping on someone's social media and following them for three years are not the same thing! She's clearly crazy.

ELLEN

Maybe so. But that's not Patrick's fault. He's the victim here.

JULIA

Unless he did something to her to make her this way.

ELLEN

Such as?

JULIA

I don't know. That would've been one of my follow-up questions prior to ordering hot beignets, dummy.

Julia holds up a racy, fire-engine RED lace number.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Here. If you're going to wind up dead in a ditch, at least do so in decent lingerie.

ELLEN

Thank you. You're very supportive.

JULIE

Are you seeing him tonight?

ELLEN

No, I have dinner at my Mom's.

JULIA

I am dying to hear her input.

ELLEN

Please. You know what she's going to say, it's the same every time.

They say it together, imitating Ellen's mom in unison:

JULIA/ELLEN

"It's not *this man* I object to..."

CUT TO:

INT. ANNE'S CONDO - DAY

A stylish mid-century vibe, curated by ANNE O'FARRELL (60s), who regards her daughter while uncorking a bottle of wine.

ANNE

It's pursuit of traditional marriage in general I find so confounding.

Anne is a force of nature. Still a beauty, elegant, and black belt in throwing shade, particularly Ellen's way.

ELLEN

Really? You've never mentioned it.

Anne is perpetually attended by PHILLIPA "PIP" SUTTON (60 - Ellen's "fun aunt") and MELVIN YOUNG (60 - Ellen's best friend of 50 years and resident chef). Pip smiles at Ellen.

ANNE

What is the goal, exactly? Marry, buy a house, become a woman who is very serious about Christmas decorations?

PIP

The goal is love! Which is not easy to find, Anne.

MEL

Especially on the internet, where the phrase "show me a picture of your butthole" qualifies as a pick-up line.

Mel may, in fact, be gay. Ellen smiles affectionately.

PIP

I'm happy for you, Ellen, honey. Enough "down with love," Anne.

ANNE

Love is not the problem. But the patriarchy is very seductive. One must actively resist it.

ELLEN

By sleeping with strangers, say?

ANNE

I make no apologies for the way I conceived you. I wanted a child, and I didn't wish be subjugated to a man for eternity in exchange.

ELLEN

As you've said. To basically everyone, my entire childhood.

Mel and Pip chime in from the kitchen, teasingly --

MEL

"Why, I barely knew Ellen's father!"

PIP

"Didn't even catch his full name!"

Anne stands down. Pip and Mel set dinner on the table.

ANNE

Tell us more about Patrick. You said he has a son?

They dig in - an eccentric, untraditional family.

MEL

How long's he been divorced?

ELLEN

He's not. His wife died not long after their son was born, of cancer --

ANNE

Divorced is better. Very hard to compete with a dead woman.

ELLEN

I'm not competing with her. She died.

ANNE

And had she lived, he might be with her, to this day.

ELLEN

Mom, did you ever hear the phrase "if you don't have something nice to say..."

ANNE

There's another woman in this relationship with you, Ellen, like it or not. Sooner you accept it, the better. Cheers.

Anne sips her wine as Ellen nods, smiling ironically.

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

A vibrant outdoor market. Ellen looks fetching in a pretty sundress.

ELLEN (V.O.)

It's so lovely in the beginning. Even the most mundane things are a thrill, each new detail a window into his world. This is how he likes his coffee. This is how he chooses cantaloupe. This is how he makes me forget, just for a moment...

WIDEN TO REVEAL Patrick browsing beside her. Ellen turns to a fruit display, inspecting the peaches. Chatting with the FRUIT VENDOR. But when she turns around - Patrick is GONE.

ELLEN (V.O.)

... That someone else might be watching.

Ellen scans the market, a slight tension settling in her jaw.

ELLEN

Patrick?

She comes around a corner, her eyes landing on --

EXT. MARKET - FLOWER CART - DAY

Patrick is talking closely with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN (30s) in a sunhat, whose back is to us. Ellen's pulse quickens.

ELLEN (V.O.)

She's blonde. I didn't picture a blonde. Especially not one so thin and perky. Is she his type?

Patrick touches the woman's ARM gently. Ellen clocks it.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I could never be that perky. I could never pull off that hat.

Patrick sees Ellen awkwardly staring. He waves. The WOMAN turns and waves also. He heads toward Ellen, all smiles.

PATRICK

Sorry. I got sidetracked en route to the sourdough.

ELLEN

Who was that?

ELLEN (V.O.)

There's the middle-aged lady again.

PATRICK

Brenda. A mom from Jack's school. She wants me to work the craft fair. I told her it's a hard pass.

Ellen smiles, covering, as we pull back from them to...

ANOTHER POV: In the market, but apart from them. Watching.

EXT. FRUIT STALL - DAY

Now: TIGHT ON A HAND, plucking a peach from a heaping display, squeezing it gently. TILT UP to REVEAL SASHA.

She is, in fact, blonde. And gorgeous in a floppy hat and flowery dress. She SNIFFS the peach deeply, as the GUY (20s) manning the stand watches, captivated by her.

SASHA'S POV: Is on Patrick's hand, as he places it gently at the base of Ellen's spine, guiding her through the crowd.

The Fruit Guy reacts - she's squeezed the peach way too hard, crushing it. She notices JUICE runs through her fingers.

SASHA

Sorry. I get carried away
sometimes.

She hands him the dripping peach. MUSIC UP - "Have I the Right" by the Honeycombs - as we go off Sasha - her gaze fixed on Patrick. Determined.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

A sleek, mid-level architecture firm. Lots of glass and steel, open floor plan, a panoramic view of downtown Seattle.

Sasha strides off the elevator, fierce and fabulous in leather pants and those Valentino heels. She operates with a studied coolness, though there's a fragility behind her eyes that she can't always conceal. She's carrying a PIE.

MICKEY (30s, handsome, smitten,) stands from behind his partition, taking her in - wowza. He smiles.

MICKEY

What do we have today?

SASHA

Peach.

(off his eager look)

All yours.

He takes the pie from her. Sniffs it appreciatively.

MICKEY

In four years, you've never made the same dish twice. You have a gift.

SASHA

Just a hobby. I find it therapeutic.

She smiles and heads to her workspace as he watches her go.

INT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Patrick pulls into the parking lot beside a public soccer pitch with JACK (10, shaggy hair, in his team jersey).

PATRICK

You sure you don't want me to stay?

JACK

It's just a scrimmage. Come for the Brother Rice game next week.

PATRICK

Deal. Good luck, buddy.

Jack shoulders his duffel bag and runs to the field.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - SASHA'S DESK

Sasha's work space is a large drafting board full of drawing tools. A swing-arm architect lamp hovers over blueprints. And a single framed PICTURE. Of Jack holding a soccer ball.

Sasha positions tiny TREES around an intricate SCALE MODEL of a high-rise building. She looks up as Mickey appears.

MICKEY

I was thinking I could buy you
lunch. As a thank you for the pie.

He's actually quite charming, this guy. Sasha turns to her computer, waking it up. She checks her schedule.

SASHA

I have a lunch meeting with the
zoning board on my condos.

MICKEY

Drinks, then? Happy hour?

SASHA

I can't. Sorry.

He nods, a small smile - not his first rejection.

MICKEY

You're a busy woman, that's for
sure.

(moving off)

Thanks for the pie.

Sasha turns to her CALENDAR. MUSIC - unsettling - as we read along with her: "Patrick oil change, Patrick Dentist 12:30, Patrick CrossFit, Patrick haircut, Patrick electric bill due." Sasha's calendar is Patrick's calendar.

She eyes today's date: "JACK SOCCER." Off her, unreadable...

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen opens the door to Patrick, who looks at her, flirtatious. Clocking his vibe, she leans against the door with a playful smile.

PATRICK

Sorry to barge in. But I need some
therapy. It's an emergency.

ELLEN

What seems to be the problem?

They move inside, pulling the door closed. His hands find his way to her hips as he leans toward her ear.

PATRICK

It's this woman I'm seeing. I can't stop thinking about things I want to do to her. Some of them are really inappropriate.

ELLEN

Can you be more specific?

PATRICK

Maybe I could just show you.

She smiles as he kisses her neck. Then - her DOORBELL rings.

ELLEN

(realizing)

I have a client right now.

PATRICK

If you ignore it will they go away?

The bell RINGS again. They laugh, disentangling.

ELLEN

How about a rain check? Tomorrow night. I'll make dinner.

He pulls out his phone, looks at his CALENDAR. Types "Dinner with Ellen" as she smoothes her clothes, pulls it together.

PATRICK

I really hate to leave.

The DOORBELL rings again as we cut to --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Rosie paces. Doesn't even put her handbag down. Ellen settles into her chair, watching Rosie.

ROSIE

Ian says I can't leave.

ELLEN

What?

ROSIE

Whatever you did in our last session worked, apparently, because I talked to him. Told him I didn't want to get married, all of it.

ELLEN

That's goods news.

ROSIE

He doesn't believe I'm serious. He says it's just pre-wedding jitters.

ELLEN

Well. He's entitled to his opinion, however wrong it may be.

Rosie looks at Ellen, conflicted, guilty... lost.

ROSIE

But what if he's not wrong? What if I'm making a mistake?

ELLEN (V.O.)

And, cue the Ian Roman propaganda machine.

ELLEN

What happened?

ROSIE

I watched one of his interviews. And I saw this charismatic man, who's funny, smart, and generous -- did you know he funded a charter school in Dallas? The whole school.

Ellen nods. She slowly opens a file. Reading --

ELLEN

"...Controlling, manipulative, punitive. His verbal attacks are so cruel, sometimes I think I'd prefer if he hit me." These are your words.

ROSIE

But the man in the interview --

ELLEN

That's a persona.

ROSIE

Well, I love that persona. That's who I want to marry.

ELLEN

He doesn't exist. You fell in love with an idea.

Rosie sighs, slumping under the weight of that truth.

ROSIE

If that's all it is, why's it so hard to let go?

ELLEN

Letting go is a process. We can work on it together. But today is a victory, Rosie. You stood up to Ian, and took the first step toward freedom. You should celebrate.

ROSIE

Okay. Can I smoke in here?

Off them, sharing a smile.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Jack runs down the field, red-cheeked, shouting. He fields a pass - dribbles, shoots - scores! He pumps his fist, then heads back to centerfield, wheezing slightly.

He pauses, reaching into his pocket and producing an INHALER. The REFEREE waits as Jack takes a puff. Asthmatic.

And now, we PULL BACK from the field... finding ourselves some distance away, in the parking lot.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Drift up over the hood of a black sedan to reveal SASHA. Watching Jack. As she does, smiling, we --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

CHYRON "Five Years Ago." A banner on the wall reads "Back-To-School Night - Welcome Parents!" PARENTS and STUDENTS mill about. Then, Sasha appears in the doorway, in a sweater and jeans. Her eyes land on FIVE YEAR-OLD Jack.

But then Jack's TEACHER steps in front of her. Blocking her.

TEACHER

Can I help you?

SASHA

Hi. I'm here for Jack.

The teacher regards her with a fixed, false smile. Sasha grows defensive, sensing the teacher's suspicion.

TEACHER

And you are?

JACK (O.S.)

Sasha!

Jack (5) runs over to Sasha, throwing his arms around her.

SASHA

Hi, buddy.

PATRICK (O.S.)

(behind her)

Hi. Sorry I'm late. Work.

He kisses Sasha warmly as Jack hugs his leg.

SASHA

No problem. I was just meeting
Jack's teacher. Sasha.

The teacher shakes Sasha's hand, standing down.

TEACHER

Welcome.

JACK

Do you like my drawing?

He holds up a worksheet drawing that says "MY FAMILY" at the top. Jack's drawn three FIGURES holding hands: "Daddy, Me, Sasha." Sasha studies it.

SASHA

It's perfect.

Jack smiles. Sasha hugs him. Off this happy family --

INT./EXT. SASHA'S CAR - DAY

Sasha is lost in thought, watching Jack playing.

Then - A KNOCK on her window startles her. She rolls her window down for the COACH (50s, burly, clipboard and whistle), who gives her a hard look.

COACH

Mind if I ask what you're doing
here?

SASHA

(taken aback)

I'm watching the game.

COACH
You can't do that.

SASHA
What? Why not?

COACH
I can't have strangers driving in
here to watch the kids, lady.
Makes the parents jumpy.

Sasha's eyes go past him to the bleachers. A handful of
PARENTS casting looks her way.

SASHA
I'm not a stranger, I'm his -- just
ask Jack.

COACH
All parents and caregivers are here
on my list. You are not on it.

Sasha cranes to see Jack - but the coach blocks her view.
She grows alarmed as he pulls out his phone and dials --

SASHA
What are you doing? Who are you
calling?

COACH
Security.

SASHA
Don't do that. I'm going. See?

She puts her car in reverse and drives away, trying to catch
a last glimpse Jack in her rearview. Off her... crushed.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

An upscale gastro-pub, Ellen and Julia's regular spot.

JULIA
No one aspires to be a soccer mom,
you know. Why do you think so many
of us put rum and coke in our
coffee travelers?

Julia refills their glasses from a margarita pitcher.

ELLEN
I'm hardly in soccer mom territory.
I haven't even met Jack yet.
(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I mean, until now, I haven't really thought of him as a person. Patrick having a son was sort of the same as him having a border collie. Or a speedboat.

JULIA

Border collie would be less work. You know Travis won't let me wash his jeans anymore? He says "dirty is the new clean."

ELLEN

How long do you wait to introduce Travis to someone?

JULIA

I do not mention my kid to the men I date.

ELLEN

Why not?

JULIA

Because my dating goals are different from yours. Baggage does not help one get laid.

ELLEN

It's not *baggage*, it's life. It's the reality of dating in your late 30's. People have kids, and alimony, and credit card debt...

JULIA

... And stalkers.

ELLEN

Yeah. And stalkers.

Ellen glances around the bar, just tipsy enough to confess --

ELLEN (CONT'D)

God, I'd love to have a drink with her, wouldn't you?

JULIA

You'd like to have a drink with your boyfriend's stalker.

ELLEN

I'm so curious about her. I have so many questions. Why does she do it? Does she want to reconcile?

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Does she want revenge? Or some
bizarre combination of the two --

Julia clocks Ellen's intensity, cutting her off --

JULIA

Here's a question. What the hell
does she look like?

(then)

You still don't have a picture.

ELLEN

No.

JULIA

So she could be here right now, and
we'd have no idea.

ELLEN

She only follows Patrick.

JULIA

That he knows of.

Ellen looks around the bar again, suddenly on alert...

INT. BAR - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ellen slides the lock closed in her stall as the bathroom
door OPENS and someone steps in. Heels clack on tile.

ELLEN

(calling)

I'm assuming you're sleeping over
if Travis is at his Dad's? Jules?

No answer. Just the sound of the heels, clacking into the
stall next to Ellen's, despite many stalls being available.

Ellen clocks this, pulse racing. Is it her?

Completely forgetting her need to pee, Ellen leans against
the partition, listening. The TOILET flushes, jarring her.
She peers through the crack of her stall, trying to glimpse
the WOMAN washing her hands. She can't get a good look.

Then - an EYE appears on the other side of the door, peering
back at her through the crack. It's Julia.

JULIA

If you're looking for a glory hole,
I think you're doing it wrong.

Ellen rolls her eyes and opens the stall. She looks around, slumping with disappointment - the mystery woman has left.

ELLEN

Did you see someone in here just now?

JULIA

I see two of you...

Julia squints drunkenly. Off Ellen, shaking it off.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Ellen and Julia stumble up the walkway. Ellen digs through her purse as Julia does an urgent pee-pee dance.

JULIA

Hurry up, I gotta pee.

ELLEN

Hang on, they're here somewhere...

Impatient, Julia lifts up a PLANTER BOX on the side of Ellen's front door, producing a HIDE-A-KEY.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

That's for emergencies.

JULIA

This qualifies.

Julia runs in. Ellen follows her as we PULL BACK FROM THEM --

EXT. ELLEN'S STREET - NIGHT

To a car, parked on the opposite side of the street. Engine off, lights off - PUSH closer... someone's inside.

INT./EXT. SASHA'S CAR - NIGHT

Sasha watches Ellen disappear behind the door. Her eyes drift to Ellen's planter box hiding spot. A small smile forms on her lips. Off this --

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Ellen is dressed for work, fluffing pillows, refilling chocolates - her pre-client routine. The DOORBELL rings.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

She opens the door to find a beautiful FLOWER ARRANGEMENT. Gerbera daisies mostly. She picks them up, sighing dreamily.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Sending flowers ahead of tonight's dinner date. Should I even bother to cook, or should we just go straight upstairs for dessert?

Then she scans the street, puzzled. No client in sight.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sasha is immersed in work, drafting a floor plan. Mickey passes by, slowing to admire her work.

MICKEY

I like what you did with the atrium. Very inventive.

She looks up, smiles.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

You going to the gala?
(off her look)
Ribbon cutting for the Aerospace museum. Black tie, open bar...

SASHA

That's tonight.

MICKEY

Some of us are getting together for dinner before. Jerry's coming, even. Says he's bringing his wife.

SASHA

Jerry has a wife?

MICKEY

Right? I'm dying of curiosity.

They share a grin. For a moment, she's a regular person having a regular conversation with a co-worker.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

You should come. We worked hard on that project, we should celebrate.

SASHA

Okay.

They both look surprised. Sasha blinks - didn't entirely mean to say that out loud.

MICKEY

Okay. Great. See you there.

He leaves. Off Sasha, the smile draining from her face.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Ellen happily pushes a cart laden with wine, champagne, pork loin... Then - she stops. The hair on her arms stands up.

ELLEN (V.O.)

You ever get the feeling you're being watched? Because I never have. Until now...

Out of the corner of her eye, Ellen clocks someone QUICKLY DUCK into an aisle. She hesitates, then heads for the aisle, oddly compelled. She wheels past a display stand, revealing--

ELLEN

Rosie?

Rosie peers out from behind a pasta display.

ROSIE

Ellen. I didn't know you shop here.

ELLEN

I don't usually, at least not at this time of day. But I had a no show this morning.

ROSIE

(guilty)

Sorry about that. I meant to call. I need to tell you... I'm not going to see you again. For hypnosis.

Ellen reacts, surprised. Rosie nervously bites her lip.

ELLEN

That's very sudden. What changed?

ROSIE

Ian's back in town. And we've decided to work things out. So, I'm focused on that.

ELLEN

On working things out. With Ian?

ROSIE

Yes. And so far it's been great.

Ellen levels her gaze at her. Rosie offers a tight smile.

ELLEN

It might be easier to believe you if you weren't hiding behind the bucatini right now.

Rosie's face falls. She moves closer to Ellen, low --

ROSIE

He found out I'm seeing you, okay? He thinks you brainwashed me or something. It's better this way.

ELLEN

Better for whom?

ROSIE

You.

(then)

Ian punishes people who get between him and what he wants. I'm trying to protect you.

ELLEN

You don't need to worry about me, Rosie. I can take care of myself. But I would like to discuss this more in session with you.

ROSIE

(faltering)

I know. I just can't, I'm sorry...

ELLEN

One more session. Can we agree to that? You still want to quit smoking before the wedding, right?

ROSIE

(finally)

Alright. But just for the smoking. I have to go.

Rosie scurries away, spooked. Off Ellen, concerned.

INT. SASHA'S LOFT - EVENING

Sasha stands in her walk-in closet. She pulls out a GARMENT BAG. She unzips it, revealing a beautiful beaded gown. Perfect for a black tie affair.

Then - her PHONE CHIMES - her calendar app: "1 New Notification: Dinner at Ellen's, 8pm." Sasha sighs. Closes the app. Looks back to the dress.

She lifts the sleeve of the dress. She makes it "talk" in a high-pitched, cartoonish voice.

SASHA
(as the dress)
Go to the party.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I don't want to.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(as the dress)
You promised you'd leave Patrick alone.

The dress "scolds" her. Sasha looks at the dress with a mixture of guilt and defiance.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(in dress voice)
A promise is a promise.

Off Sasha and her dress, mid-argument.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Ellen, looking ravishing, throws open the door, revealing Patrick, dressed for their date, but looking stricken.

PATRICK
Hi. We have a problem --

ELLEN
What do you mean? What is it?

PATRICK
I have Jack with me.

Patrick gestures toward his CAR - where Jack plays a game on Patrick's phone.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I was dropping him at his friend's, where he's supposed to spend the night. Then the mother calls me. Kid's got the flu or something. I wanted to call, but Jack was in the car with me... so I just came here.

Ellen processes this. A little overwhelmed.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

So, what do you think about Jack joining us for dinner?

ELLEN (V.O.)

I think I endured a Brazilian wax for nothing.

ELLEN

I think it's great! I'm just surprised, that's all.

She smiles, trying to cover, but Patrick sees her hesitation.

PATRICK

Maybe we should reschedule --

ELLEN

No! Let's do it. I'd love to meet Jack.

PATRICK

Really? I know it's a lot to spring on you...

ELLEN

I've got a box of Brownie mix and a fully charged iPad. What could go wrong?

He waves to Jack, who hops out of the car and joins them.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Hi, Jack. I'm Ellen.

JACK

I know. Where's your TV?

PATRICK

Where are your manners?

Jack walks in. Patrick looks at Ellen, they share a grin.

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

An elegant space, marble floors and high ceilings. Passed hors d'oeuvre, string quartet. SASHA stands at the entrance, wearing the beautiful beaded gown, her hair swept up, lovely.

MICKEY

Sasha.

Mickey approaches, handsome in his tuxedo.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

I'm glad you made it.

SASHA

(unconvinced)

Me, too.

He offers her his arm. Off them, walking in --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen plays Monopoly with Patrick and Jack. Ellen catches Jack eyeing the charcuterie platter with suspicion. He looks at her, grins with mischief.

JACK

Can you teach me to hypnotize my friends?

ELLEN

Not in one night.

JACK

My dad said he can't be hypnotized.

ELLEN

Did he, now?

Patrick grins, caught.

PATRICK

All I said is I think some people are more susceptible than others.

ELLEN

The term is suggestible. There's a test for it, actually. Would you like me to give it to you?

Jack gets excited. Patrick looks at Ellen, questioning.

PATRICK

Isn't that against the rules?

ELLEN

Not if my credibility is at stake.
Follow my lead, will you please?

She interlaces her hands as if in prayer, then lifts her index fingers so they're aligned, but not touching. Patrick does the same as Jack looks on.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

I want you to imagine a powerful magnetic force is pulling your fingertips together. You're fighting it, but you can't resist. It's getting stronger. Even stronger. It's too strong. There.

Patrick's fingertips close. Ellen raises an eyebrow.

JACK

Whoa!

PATRICK

That's just -- I was just going along with what you were saying.

ELLEN

Exactly. Most hypnosis is self-hypnosis.

JACK

Do something else!

Patrick shrugs, agreeing. Ellen laughs. Off this --

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

Mickey and Sasha walk through the space, sipping champagne. He watches her look around, taking it all in.

SASHA

This is nice. I don't go out very much.

MICKEY

Well, we should change that. You should let me take you out some time. On a proper date.

Sasha falters, suddenly vulnerable. Mickey clocks this.

MICKEY (CONT'D)

Just think about it. No pressure.

PUSH IN on her - the strings of the quartet grow dissonant. Silverware CLINKS on china, disproportionately loud...

PATRICK (PRELAP)
I don't want to pressure you.

INT. PATRICK'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Patrick sits with Sasha on the couch. He looks nervous.

PATRICK
I know it's only been six months.
And I don't want to rush things. But
when I think about us... And I see
you with Jack... It's just time.

She tilts her head, not sure what's coming next...

PATRICK (CONT'D)
I want you to have this.

He produces an envelope.

SASHA
What is it?

PATRICK
A letter. Colleen wrote it when
she realized she wasn't going to --

He stops short, the words catching in his throat.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
It's a sort of instruction list.
Her wishes, for how she wanted Jack
to be raised.

SASHA
And you want me to have it?

PATRICK
I know you didn't sign up to raise
a five year-old. And Jack is a
handful, as you know --

SASHA
(stopping him)
Jack is more than I could have ever
hoped for. More than I could've
dreamed.

She takes the letter from him, tears in her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
This is what I signed up for.

Off them, in an emotional embrace.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUSEUM GALA - NIGHT

Mickey turns from the bar, toting two champagne glasses. But his smile fades as he scans the room. Sasha is gone.

EXT. ELLEN'S STREET - NIGHT

Quiet, lined with trees and quaint street lamps. CRANE DOWN to reveal Sasha parked outside. Still in her gown. She spies Patrick on the couch. And then - JACK bounces into view. Sasha BOLTS UPRIGHT, shocked - the sight of him in Ellen's house hitting her like a punch.

Ellen holds up a pan of BROWNIES. Sasha clocks the Duncan Hines box on the table. In utter disgust --

SASHA
From a box?

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen and Patrick tidy up. A happy, easy vibe between them.

PATRICK
You were incredible with him.
Tonight was a huge success.

ELLEN
I'm just glad he ate the pork loin.

PATRICK
You're the first woman I've
introduced him to since his mother
died.

Ellen stops, looks at him.

ELLEN
What about Sasha?

PATRICK
I don't count her.

ELLEN
But didn't you live together? For
a couple years? Surely she had a
relationship with Jack --

PATRICK
(sharply)
He barely remembers her.

Ellen reacts to his tone as Jack calls from the hall --

JACK (O.S.)
Dad!

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Patrick and Ellen find Jack putting on his shoes. Jack points to the flower arrangement. Patrick eyes it, uneasy.

JACK
Look. Gerberas.

ELLEN
Oh, thank you for those, by the way. They're beautiful. Did you pick those out with your dad, Jack?

JACK
No.

PATRICK
We didn't send them.

Ellen nods, a pit forming in her stomach. Then --

ELLEN
How do you know what they're called, Jack?

JACK
They're my mom's favorite. We bring 'em to the cemetery for her.

ELLEN
I see. ELLEN (V.O.)
Sasha.

Ellen's eyes dart to Patrick. He reads her thoughts --

PATRICK
It can't be her, she -- I mean, this is over the line --

JACK
Who are you talking about?

Patrick turns to Jack, vibrating with anger.

PATRICK
Go wait in the car.

JACK

Why?

PATRICK

Because I said so!

Clocking Jack's confusion, Ellen puts a hand on his shoulder.

JACK

Did I do something wrong?

ELLEN

No, sweetie --

PATRICK

This is just psychotic. You shouldn't have to look at this!

He reaches for the flowers like he wants to strangle them.

ELLEN

Patrick --

He spins toward her -- and KNOCKS the vase to the floor. It SHATTERS loudly. Water and glass everywhere.

PATRICK

I'm sorry --

ELLEN

It's okay. It was an accident...

ELLEN (V.O.)

It was, right?

Patrick reaches to tidy the mess -- CUTS himself on glass. Cursing, he puts it to his lips. Ellen fights for composure.

ELLEN

I think you should go.

PATRICK

(off her look)

Okay. You're right. Say good night to Ellen, Jack.

JACK

Goodnight, Ellen.

Ellen waves as Jack bounds out the door. Ellen picks up a piece of broken glass. Patrick looks at her, his expression a mix of anger and regret, and heads out. Off this --

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen makes coffee when Julia appears, holding the Seattle Times. She looks at Ellen, disturbed.

JULIA

Boy, did you piss off the wrong person.

ELLEN

What are you talking about?

JULIA

Today's paper. Lifestyle section.

Ellen takes the paper, clocking the headline: "Hypnotherapy - Snake Oil For The Modern Age." She quickly scans it.

JULIA (CONT'D)

The entire article's about exposing hypnotherapy as a hoax. And the reporter refers to you by name.

ELLEN

(reading)

She calls me a con-artist.

JULIA

Twice. What's her deal? Did you cut her off in traffic or something?

Ellen turns back to the front page - the Seattle Times Logo. With a heavy sigh, she reaches for her LAPTOP and pulls up IAN ROMANS'S WIKI page - His smug face staring back at her.

ELLEN

It's not her. It's her boss.

JULIA

(re: the laptop)

Who's Ian Roman?

ELLEN

He owns the Seattle Times. And is using it to punish me for his fiancée breaking up with him, apparently.

JULIA

He can't honestly blame you for that?

Ellen sighs. Julia clicks Ian's profile closed onscreen.

ON SCREEN: A few open WEB PAGE searches: "Reasons For Stalking, A Psychologist's Perspective," "Obsessive Behaviors Explained." Then Julia's eyes go to the gerberas, which Ellen has salvaged and placed on her kitchen island.

JULIA (CONT'D)

So... I think we need to talk about a restraining order.

ELLEN

Against some lackey reporter doing Ian Roman's bidding? I hardly think that would solve my problem.

JULIA

I'm talking about Sasha.
(re: flowers)
Why haven't you thrown those away?

ELLEN

I don't know. They're pretty.

JULIA

Yes. A very pretty reminder that your boyfriend's stalker has your home address.

ELLEN

I work from home. A lot of people have my address.

Julia takes Ellen in, baffled.

JULIA

So you're doubling down on this guy?

ELLEN

I met his son. And it was really great. At least, before the thing with the flowers --

JULIA

The flowers his stalker sent, you mean?

Ellen looks both vulnerable and determined as Julia's eyes narrow - something dawning on her.

ELLEN

I'm not gonna let her ruin this for me. I like him too much.

JULIA

Are you sure it's him you like so much?

ELLEN

What?

JULIA

Admit it, your love life got way more exciting the minute you found out about the stalker. Maybe some part of you is getting off on it?

ELLEN

That's crazy.

JULIA

No, keeping those flowers is crazy.

ELLEN

Fine.

Ellen grabs the gerberas and tosses them in the trash.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Ian Roman is trying to ruin my life. Can we not fight?

Julia lets it go for now. Off them, unsettled --

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Sasha finds Mickey rolling up blueprints. A beat.

SASHA

There's something you don't know about me.

MICKEY

I think there are a lot of things about you I don't know...

She moves toward him, genuine, regretful.

SASHA

I should've told you this sooner. But the truth is, I was involved with someone for a long time. The love of my life, actually. We hit a rough patch, parted ways. And we've tried to move on. But what we've both realized is that it's just not over between us.

MICKEY

Oh. I see.

SASHA

I really like you, Mickey. But Patrick and I are soulmates. And I can't let anything come between us.

She smiles apologetically. Off him, vaguely unnerved --

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE - DAY

Ellen joins Patrick at a small patio cafe, a little guarded.

PATRICK

Thank you for meeting me.

ELLEN

I happen to be free. Another client flaked, thanks to Ian.

PATRICK

I cancelled my subscription to the Seattle Times. In solidarity.

She nods, guarded. He clears his throat, gets to the point.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

I want to apologize for losing it the way I did. I didn't want Sasha to ruin our night, and when I saw the flowers -- she just pushes me to my limits.

ELLEN

I can understand that.

PATRICK

But I know I can't just pretend she didn't exist. But sometimes I wish I could, because --

He reaches for her hand. Meets her eyes.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Because I love this. What we have. And I don't want my baggage to screw it up.

She looks up, touched by the sincerity of his words.

ELLEN

You're not screwing anything up. And anyway, I don't like that word.

PATRICK

What word, love?

ELLEN

No, baggage. I like the other word
very much.

They smile, clearly falling for each other as we GO TO --

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

LOW ANGLE outside Ellen's house. Sasha steps onto the porch, deftly lifts the PLANTER BOX and retrieves the hide-a-key.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SASHA moves into Ellen's kitchen. She finds an APRON, quickly ties it around her waist. She looks around. Then, out of curiosity, she goes to the trash bin, opens the lid.

ANGLE ON: The gerberas, in the bin, necks fatally bent. She sighs, disappointed. Then, she gets to work. MUSIC UP - "You Look Like An Angel" by Elvis over QUICK CUTS:

-- Sasha sifts flour, white particles flying through the air.

-- BANANA PEELS pile up on the counter.

-- An ELECTRIC BEATER plunges into dough, splattering.

-- An egg DROPS to the floor, breaks into a runny mess. Sasha crouches down beside it, tilts her head.

SASHA

(to the egg)

Sorry. You are not on the list.

She steps over the cracked egg, resumes her work.

INT. SASHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Mickey passes by Sasha's empty work station. He makes his way back to his own desk, turns to the workspace next to his. JERRY (50's, jolly) eats a sandwich.

MICKEY

Sasha back from lunch?

JERRY

Not yet, I don't think.

Mickey nods, thinking. Finally --

MICKEY

You remember the guy she used to go out with? He worked for one of the survey firms we use. Patrick something.

JERRY

Yeah... Patrick Scott. Works for Pan Pacific, I think.

MICKEY

Right. Patrick Scott.

JERRY

Why do you ask?

MICKEY

No reason.

Off Mickey, his eyes drifting back to Sasha's empty chair.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Sasha opens the OVEN and pulls out two pans of BANANA BREAD. She wipes a streak of flour from her forehead. Mixing bowls are piled in the sink, the counter's a mess. Sasha transfers the breads to a plate, meticulous, methodical, untroubled.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen digs for her keys in her purse again, on the phone.

ELLEN

(into phone)

Rosie, it's Ellen again. We need to talk. I'd like to schedule that session soon. Please call me back.

She hangs up, flustered. Finds her keys and steps into --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

TIGHT ON ELLEN as she stands in the kitchen. WIDEN TO reveal: The kitchen is spotless. She picks up the newspaper off the kitchen island, and heads for the trash.

ANGLE ON the trash contents: No sign of Sasha. Ellen throws the paper away, turns to leave, then pauses. Sniffs the air.

ELLEN (V.O.)

What is that, banana bread?

SMASH TO:

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

Jack sits at the side of the field, tying his cleats. Suddenly, he looks up - sensing something.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Jack walks through the lot, spotting Sasha parked on the far side. He freezes as she steps out. He looks behind him - the Coach's back is turned - then he runs into Sasha's arms.

SASHA

Hey, you.

JACK

You missed my game.

She closes her eyes, devastated to disappoint him.

SASHA

I know, honey. I tried, but... I made you this. As an "I'm sorry."

JACK

Banana bread.

SASHA

From scratch. Still your favorite?

He nods, devouring it. She strokes his hair. Maternal.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry about the game.

JACK

I thought you weren't gonna come anymore. Because of Ellen.

Sasha's eyes flare with alarm. She quickly covers.

SASHA

I'm not going anywhere. Not ever. Let me worry about Ellen.

Off this disturbing sentiment --

INT. JULIA'S BOUTIQUE - NIGHT

Julia dresses a mannequin in the storefront, talking to her phone, lying beside her on SPEAKER.

JULIA

Did he actually say the words "I love you?"

ELLEN (V.O.)

(on phone)

No. But that was the sentiment.
The word love was said. By him.

JULIA

And I assume you're en route to
further explore that sentiment? By
which I mean have sex finally?

INT. ELLEN'S CAR - MOVING - NIGHT - INTERCUT

Ellen smiles as she drives, dolled up for a date.

ELLEN

Red lace and all.

JULIA

Be sure to leave the window open so
Sasha gets a good view.

ELLEN

Very funny.

JULIA

It's not a joke. Unless you came
to your senses and filed that
restraining order?

ELLEN

'Bye, Jules.

Ellen throws a look to her rearview mirror. Her smile fades.

IN HER REARVIEW: a CAR trails her, headlights off. A little
unnerved, Ellen changes lanes. So does the car behind.

ELLEN (V.O.)

*Of course you know the route I take
to his house. How many times have
you followed me there before now?*

Ellen makes a SUDDEN TURN. The car follows. She quickly
pulls over. The car pulls behind her. She squints in the
rearview - can't see the driver. Finally, Ellen gets out.
So does the DRIVER, as we realize - that's not Sasha's car.

IAN ROMAN (40, imposing) walks toward her. Expensive suit,
designer shoes, cool. Just like his Wiki page.

IAN ROMAN

Ellen. Ian Roman.

ELLEN

I know who you are. Why are you following me?

He smiles at her, magnanimous. Patronizing.

IAN ROMAN

I want to thank you in person, for your interest in Rosie. I know we both want what's best for her. I assure you she's in good hands. And will no longer require your services.

ELLEN

I don't discuss my clients.

IAN ROMAN

Unfortunately, I will need your word that you won't come near her with your brainwashing nonsense ever again.

A discernible menace in his smile now. She meets his eyes.

ELLEN

Publish all the cheap tabloid articles you want. I won't be intimidated --

Then - a switch flips. Rage flares in his eyes. He gets in her face. He's a lot bigger than she is.

IAN ROMAN

That article is just the beginning of what I can do to you.

She draws in a breath, silenced. But he holds up his hands, as if to illustrate he's not harming her.

IAN ROMAN (CONT'D)

Stay away from Rosie. Or I'll see you again very soon.

He backs away from her, disappearing into his car and driving off. Off Ellen, finally exhaling...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - NIGHT

Patrick throws open the door and walks Ellen inside. He puts his arm around her, consumed with worry.

ELLEN
I'm okay, really.

PATRICK
I'm staying with you tonight.
(before she can protest)
My mom is watching Jack, I'm staying.

They head to the living room, landing on the couch.

PATRICK (CONT'D)
Tomorrow I'll put an alarm system in. And we'll file a restraining order first thing. That creep's not coming near you again.

Ellen looks at him, overwhelmed and emotional.

ELLEN
After Ian drove away, I stood there, shaking, thinking a million things. I need to call my mom, Julia, Rosie... but before all that... The first thing I thought? Was "Patrick."

He takes her face in his hands, overwhelmed.

PATRICK
I'm here. I'm not going anywhere.

He pulls her into a kiss - a long kiss, that grows increasingly passionate, the emotion of the night taking hold of them both and pulling us up to --

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Where clothes drop hastily on the floor as they make their way toward the bed, passionate. Suddenly, Ellen stops, her attention drawn over his shoulder. He notices her distraction, slows down a beat, rubbing her bare arms.

PATRICK
You okay?

We see where her attention went - the open window.

ELLEN

Yes.

She kisses him with lust, pulls him toward the window. He pushes her against the wall as we clock her HAND opening the window a bit more.

She grabs him, her legs wrapping around him as he lifts her up. Ellen exhales, clawing at his back - with just the quickest glance toward the window, aroused by the possibility that they're being watched. Off this --

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Dawn just breaking over the bay. Ellen walks along the shoreline, her pant legs rolled up. She skips a few stones.

ELLEN (V.O.)

They say love makes you do crazy things. Maybe Ian loves Rosie so much, he truly lost his mind when she tried to leave. Is that what happened to Sasha? Did she just snap one day? Does she believe that if she holds out long enough, Patrick will come back to her?

Ellen turns to see Patrick walking toward her, carrying two coffee mugs. He wraps his arms around her.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Sorry Sasha, I don't think that's gonna happen.

Off Ellen and Patrick's morning-after glow...

EXT. SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN SEATTLE - DAY

Sasha walks along a busy sidewalk. She slows as she sees a KID with his mother pass by. The KID reaches into his pocket and retrieves an asthma inhaler. As Sasha looks on, we --

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Sasha bursts into the E.R., screaming. She carries 5 YEAR-OLD JACK her arms. He's gasping in shallow, jagged breaths, his eyes wide with alarm.

SASHA

I need help. He can't breathe!
Hang on Jack, just hang on, baby.
(screaming)
HELP ME!

She sobs, in the grips of every parent's worst nightmare.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Hours later. Jack's small body on a hospital bed, oxygen mask over his face. Sasha talks to the DOCTOR at Jack's bedside, when suddenly Patrick bursts in, panicked.

PATRICK

What happened?

Patrick clocks the mask over Jack's face, devastated.

DOCTOR

Your son was in acute hypoxia. He got here just in time.

PATRICK

What?

DOCTOR

Asthma. Sometimes it comes on suddenly. But he's gonna be okay.

Patrick's eyes land on a consent form on the table. Jack's name in the patient section. And in the box labelled "MOTHER" - he notes Sasha's name. He flinches, blurting --

PATRICK

She's not his mother.

The doctor stops. Sasha looks down, unsure how to respond.

DOCTOR

It's just a consent form. We needed a signature to administer the Ventolin. It saved his life --

PATRICK

(darkly, to Sasha)
How could you write that?

The Doctor excuses himself, giving them privacy.

SASHA

I was just trying to help him. I thought this is what you wanted?

Patrick takes a breath. His expression hard to read.

PATRICK

You're right, I'm sorry. I
overreacted. I'm just scared.

SASHA

He's gonna be okay.

They hug, relieved. Then Patrick picks up the consent form.

PATRICK

I'll just go get a new one of
these. Fill it out correctly.

Patrick heads out into the hall. Off Sasha, stung...

EXT. SIDEWALK - DOWNTOWN SEATTLE - DAY

Sasha SNAPS out of her reverie --

PATRICK

What the hell are you doing here?

She smiles as Patrick stands before her, staring daggers.

SASHA

I was just out for a walk.

PATRICK

(yeah, right)
Exactly in front of my office.

SASHA

We need to talk about Jack. Don't
you think it was a little soon to
introduce her to Ellen? I mean,
what were you thinking, Patrick?

PATRICK

That's none of your business.

He glares at her, seething. She tilts her head.

SASHA

What is so special about her? Just
tell me that. What is it about
Ellen?

PATRICK

Don't say her name.

SASHA

Then what should I call her?

PATRICK

You are not in this picture.
Understand? I don't want to see
you, I don't want to talk to you, I
want nothing to do with you.

Despite the harshness of his tone, Sasha is smiling.
Intoxicated by his proximity. She whispers to him --

SASHA

Then why didn't you just keep
walking?

And now Patrick realizes his fatal mistake - he's given her
exactly the attention she wants. Wordlessly, he storms away.

Off Sasha, watching him go. Hardly deterred...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Chyron: "Five Years Ago." Sasha steps outside. After a deep
breath, she pulls out Colleen's LETTER - We catch glimpses
of Colleen's writing: "Kind and generous... discipline... not
spoiled... consideration." Sasha looks up, moved.

SASHA

Beautiful.

She carefully folds the letter, slides it into the envelope.
Then holds it over a nearby ashtray and lights it on FIRE.

A passing NURSE looks concerned as flames engulf the letter.

NURSE

Everything... okay here?

SASHA

Yes. Just something I don't need.

NURSE

Why not just throw it away?

Sasha turns to the nurse, contemplative. Finally --

SASHA

That's probably what Colleen would
do. But I'm not her, am I?

The nurse is confused and weirded out. But Sasha seems
clearer than ever. Off her, striding back to the hospital...

INT. ANNE'S CONDO - DAY

Ellen sits at the table with Anne, drinking a cup of tea.

ANNE
That man could've killed you.

ELLEN
But he didn't. I'm alive.

ANNE
Alive and in love, I dare say.
(off Ellen's look)
Nobody looks this happy after
almost being killed on the side of
the road, dear. This is the
widower, I presume?

Anne raises an eyebrow at her daughter.

ELLEN
Patrick. Yes. And for the record,
I think it's beautiful that he had
a wife, whom he loved deeply. I'm
not threatened by Colleen.

ANNE
Okay... I won't mention it again.

Ellen looks at her mother, considering...

ELLEN
But there is something else about
Patrick you should know.

Off Anne, an eyebrow raised as she sips her tea, waiting...

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - LINGERIE SECTION - DAY

Sasha makes her way to the sales counter, lays a RED LACE
lingerie set - identical to Ellen's - beside the register.

SALESGIRL
Is this a gift?

SASHA
No. It's for me.

SALESGIRL
Big date?

She smiles coyly. The Salesgirl hands Sasha her bag.

SALESGIRL (CONT'D)

Enjoy it.

SASHA

I will.

Off Sasha, breezing out the door --

ELLEN (PRELAP)

You are relaxed, refreshed, and in control.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

Drift through the bright, peaceful office, past the chocolates, fresh flowers ... to find ELLEN, mid-session.

ELLEN

Cigarettes have no hold over you.
You are becoming a non-smoker.
Three, two, one. Open your eyes.

REVEAL Rosie in the Eames chair. She opens her eyes, then looks down at her left hand. The engagement ring is gone.

ROSIE

I can breathe again. You know?

ELLEN

Well, you haven't had a cigarette in almost 72 hours --

ROSIE

It's not that. I mean, it is. But really, it started the minute I gave Ian the ring back.

She takes a deep, pleasurable breath.

ROSIE (CONT'D)

All of a sudden, I could just... *breathe*. And it felt so good, I thought, "I gotta call Ellen. I never want to smoke another cigarette again!"

Ellen chuckles. A beat as Rosie hesitates. Has to say it --

ROSIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for everything.

ELLEN

Don't apologize. You came forward, Rosie. Told your story.

(MORE)

ELLEN (CONT'D)

You exposed Ian for what he is, on the front page of the very papers he owns. I mean, that was --

ELLEN (V.O.)

A revenge so exquisite, it should be in the Smithsonian under glass.

ELLEN

-- Very brave.

ROSIE

I wondered if you'd read the articles.

ELLEN (V.O.)

Read them? I laminated them. Julia thinks I should have placemats made.

Ellen just smiles. Rosie stands, shoulders her purse.

ROSIE

See you next time.

After Rosie leaves, Ellen opens her appointment book.

ELLEN (V.O.)

I was thrilled when Rosie called to say she'd left Ian. And even happier to put her back on my books. Which were wide open, thanks to Ian's attack.

ANGLE ON the appointment book: Mostly empty space.

ELLEN (V.O.)

It's been slow to recover. But I believe it will.

CLOSE ON: The time slot after Rosie's. A name is written. DEBORAH. Ellen refills the chocolates, as is her custom.

ELLEN (V.O.)

People out there need help. So my work will go on.

The DOORBELL rings. Ellen looks up, pleased.

EXT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Ellen opens the door. STAY ON HER, smiling in warm welcome.

ELLEN
Deborah, right? Come on in.

INT. ELLEN'S HOUSE - OFFICE - DAY

We follow Ellen into the office over DEBORAH'S shoulder. Ellen has her back to us, leading us into the office --

ELLEN
In your message, you said you
suffer from chronic pain.
Something about an old wound?

With Ellen's back still to her, Deborah reaches up to adjust a BRA STRAP, peeking out from under her blouse. RED LACE. Unmistakable. She tucks it safely out of view as Ellen finally turns to face her.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
I hope I can help.

Ellen gestures for Deborah to sit. And now we ARC AROUND from Ellen to finally REVEAL DEBORAH - serenely holding Ellen's gaze. Helping herself to a chocolate. It's Sasha.

She smiles at Ellen.

SASHA
Me, too. I have a good feeling
about us.

ELLEN
Why don't we begin?

Off them --

END OF PILOT