

THE PERFECT COUPLE

"PILOT"

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Based on the novel by Elin Hilderbrand

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C/O The Jackal Group and 21 Laps
NETFLIX

BLACKNESS.

The ONLY SOUND we hear is the distant lapping of waves.

The shushing waves grow LOUDER as a few FLECKS OF MOONLIGHT begin to dance amid the darkness.

This is the OCEAN at night. Deep, dark, full of stories forever secreted away by the unforgiving, ambivalent depths.

And just as we start to get our bearings --

BAM! What sounds like A GUNSHOT SHAKES US from our meditative state, and the CAMERA RUSHES to shore, and up the beach, toward a white BEACH TENT set up on the sand, INSIDE:

EXT. OLD MONEY CLAMBAKE - NANTUCKET BEACH - NIGHT

BAM!!!

A CHAMPAGNE CORK is popped, and we hear the collective AAAH! of a glittering, festive crowd. CHEERS! As the champagne is POURED down a PYRAMID of CRYSTAL FLUTES.

WE ARE: In A GRAINY POV VIDEO shot by the videographer at a lavish 60-guest **rehearsal dinner** under a white beach tent. This party looks like it was art-directed by Ralph Lauren himself. Silver platters piled high with lobster steamed in seaweed, glossy ramekins of drawn butter, driftwood centerpieces, sparkling tea lights and beach roses. And at the center of it all is CELESTE OTIS, THE BRIDE.

CELESTE (V.O.)

The best advice I received about my wedding was to find a quiet moment amid the chaos to stop, step back, and take it all in.

As her eyes dart around the tent, she radiates warmth, fierce love, and loyalty. She's an old soul whose face could launch a thousand ships, but she wouldn't want the credit.

CELESTE (V.O.)

Because a video can only capture so much.

Now the CAMERA moves past Celeste, landing on a steel-cut ALL-AMERICAN amid the crowd, in red pants and a whale belt. He TOASTS the CAMERA, amid a bit of hand-held movement:

SHOOTER

You win again, Benji. She's incredible.

A PARTY GIRL in a clingy dress hangs on his arm:

MERRITT

And smart. And fierce. You better treat her right, Mister, or I'll marry her myself!

CELESTE (V.O.)

And it's the only time in your whole life when everyone you love will be together in the same room. Or... the same tent.

They keep dancing as the camera passes the bar, where two of the bride's out-of-place work friends, KARSANG (single mom, 30s) and BRAD (fab and snarky, 20s), sip Dark 'n Stormys, clearly intimidated by the posh surroundings:

KARSANG

Happy wedding eve, Celeste. I had no idea you were marrying a Kennedy.

BRAD

(slurring)
Ishhn't it Winbury?

KARSANG

How many of those have you had?

BRAD

Seven. They're free.

CELESTE (V.O.)

When all the disparate notes of your past, present and future will come together to form one perfect, fleeting chord.

As we move past them, we LAND ON the MOTHER-OF-THE-GROOM-TO-BE, GREER GARRISON WINBURY (50s), elegant, British, rocking the shit out of a vintage Halston jumpsuit.

GREER GARRISON WINBURY

Darlings, we are thrilled for you!
Absolutely tickled pink!

Her catalog-handsome, preppy-New-England-stock, bad-boy-made-good husband, TAG (50s), clinks her Champagne:

TAG WINBURY

To our Boy Scout Benji and his Celestial Celeste! You make us proud.

Their son, THOMAS, a gin-soaked Wall Street type, interjects:

THOMAS WINBURY

Someone has to.

(then, to camera)

Better get TURN'T tonight,
Benjamin! Tomorrow, you're
officially off the market!

He downs the rest of his cocktail and slings an arm around his pregnant, demanding wife. She playfully grabs the lens:

ABBY STOKES WINBURY

No close-ups, I'm a house! Here--
get the bride--

TIME SLOWS DOWN as the CAMERA FINDS Celeste again. She laughs, full-throated, head thrown back, everything else a blurry carousel of life behind her.

CELESTE (V.O.)

So stop. And listen. And try to
memorize that song.

Her polished groom, BENJI WINBURY, sucks the juice from a lobster claw, dribbling down the front of his Brioni shirt. Benji puts an arm around Celeste, pulling her close.

BENJI

I love this woman to death! Did you
get that? To death!

CELESTE

Poor guy!

Celeste blows a kiss to camera. It all looks like the #weddingoftheyear, between two young, genetically blessed people who are supremely lucky in love. They seem to be **The Perfect Couple**. Until:

INT. POLICE STATION - PRESENT DAY

The wedding video is playing on some cheap desktop in a halogen-lit local police station.

CELESTE (V.O.)

Because it won't last forever.

C/U on: a HAND as it clicks and drags the video to a folder marked "EVIDENCE - Summerland Murder." In the B/G, we hear WATER dripping. The CAMERA MOVES through thick one-way glass into:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where we FIND a PUDDLE forming on the floor. It's not just water. It's BLOODY water. We TILT UP past the sopping, blood-stained hem of a wedding gown and land on: CELESTE. The bride.

MUSIC UP: MICHAEL KIWANUKA "ONE MORE NIGHT"

One more night 'til the morning, one more night 'til the day...

She sits on the table, her bare feet dangling and limp. Her hands shaking, and covered in bloody gashes. Her eyes vacant. No more lies in the morning... No more lies in the day...

THE PERFECT COUPLE

INT. DAN GARCIA'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING - PRESENT DAY

A PHONE RINGS in the dark, grey morning of a blue-collar house that backs up on the marsh. DAN GARCIA (50s), a Brooklyn transplant and the local Chief of Police, dumps Folgers crystals into a mug and fills it with hot tap water:

*DAN
(answering)
What is it Carl? Someone blow a
finger off already?*

Dan has fishing gear spread on the counter. Tags still on it.

*CARL (ON PHONE)
Chief, we've got a floater.*

On the fridge, we see a poised SCHOOL PHOTO of a YOUNG WOMAN, 15, who must be Dan's daughter.

*DAN
Well, happy Fourth of July weekend
to you too, Sergeant.*

Dan tosses his lure back in the tackle box as we:

FLASH BACK TO:

THE DAY BEFORE.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING - CHYRON: "ONE DAY EARLIER."

C/U on our bride, CELESTE, as her eyes flutter open. A bright shaft of sunlight falls across her crisp white pillow. She stretches and blinks, emerging from sleep, when her contented smile is interrupted by a sudden FROWN, her brow creased with worry as she stares at something in her line of vision. We RACK TO... a NOTE: "Good Morning Wife to Be! I love you." She gingerly props herself up on one elbow and picks up the note gently, carefully, and we finally see what she does: A LADYBUG, perched on the pillow next to her. She SCOOPS it up and pads out the door in her tattered "Friends of the Central Park Zoo" t-shirt and a pair of oversized boxers...

INT. SUMMERLAND - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

FOLLOW Celeste down the well-appointed hallway, carefully ferrying the ladybug to safety...

EXT. SUMMERLAND ESTATE - MORNING

Celeste emerges into the perfect blue sky day, hurrying down the front steps of a GORGEOUS, cedar-shingled, hydrangea-bedecked SUMMER ESTATE. She thrusts the paper note out in front of her, standing barefoot in the white-shell driveway, but the ladybug doesn't move. She gives it a gentle nudge, and as the bug finally flies away...

GREER (O.S.)

Didn't I give you a robe, dear?

Celeste looks up, startled, suddenly self-conscious, folding her arms over her breasts beneath her thin t-shirt:

CELESTE

Yes! I... love it.

(explaining)

There was a ladybug...

But elegant matriarch GREER GARRISON-WINBURY isn't listening, she's directing traffic as huge floral arrangements are carried in from a series of white vans in her circular drive.

GREER

Straight through to the greenhouse!

We don't want anything to die on

us.

It's the day before an ELABORATE WEDDING and the whole estate is buzzing with the preparations. "Summerland," the Winbury compound, is a manicured, stately beachfront utopia. Celeste ducks out of the way and hurries inside...

INT. SUMMERLAND KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

GOSIA, the Eastern European housekeeper, sorts skinny Perrier cans from the trash to the recycling. Greer swans in from out front, ticking off tasks:

GREER

Gosia? Call the nursery and tell them we may need to switch out the peonies for roses in this heat.

Gosia JUMPS on Greer's command as Celeste enters, incongruous now with her messy bun hair and relaxed vibe, but clad in an uptight, crisp, preppy blue robe with white piping and her new monogram, the Winbury "W" taking center spot.

GREER (CONT'D)

Or perhaps lilies? Roger says they're very popular at Korean weddings.

Celeste smiles and nods politely, but can't help a little joke. She refuses to get neurotic about this wedding:

CELESTE

If it comes down to it, I saw some decent carnations at the Stop and Shop on Salem.

GREER

(horrified)

I-- I can't even consider--

CELESTE

--I'm kidding! I do that. Sorry--

GREER

(not)

Funny.

BENJI, the happy groom, sits at the kitchen island in a similar robe. He opens his arms to Celeste:

BENJI

Good morning, funny girl.

(re: the robe)

I like you in this.

Celeste melts into Benji's embrace, kissing him good morning:

CELESTE

I've never been a robe girl. But I could get used to the pockets.

She demonstrates, pulling her cell phone, a tissue, a protein bar and a Chapstick from her robe pockets with a grin.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(then, to Greer)

I'm sure whatever flowers we end up with will be great. Don't sweat the small stuff, GG Dubs.

BENJI

Celeste never sweats the small stuff.

He drapes his arms around her. He clearly adores her.

THOMAS (O.S.)

Explains why she's marrying you...

Benji's aging-party-boy older brother THOMAS (30s) ambles in, tossing a half-full Coke in the trash Gosia is sorting. She suppresses a snarl as she digs for it. Celeste cannily defends her man:

CELESTE

(re: his bad dick joke)

I mean, size is genetic so...

(gesturing between them)

...brothers. Just saying.

BENJI

Ooh, shots fired--

Benji hi-fives Celeste, grabbing a croissant off a platter and aiming it at Thomas. But Celeste grabs it, taking a bite.

CELESTE

(mouth full)

Don't waste good carbs.

GREER

Wedding diet be damned, hm? Brave girl.

Greer ignores the pastries, popping a vitamin instead. Celeste takes a big ol' defiant bite. When Greer is out of earshot, she mutters to Benji through clenched teeth:

CELESTE

(sotto)

Benji? I swear--

BENJI

--I know. I know.

KARSANG (PRE-LAP)
Supposedly Greer thought the
engagement was a little fast--

CLOSE ON KARSANG (MID 30S) - POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Celeste's female co-worker from the teaser, dressed casually now, coffee in a styrofoam cup, sits at a table in what appears to be a police interrogation room. NOTE: All FREESTANDING CLOSE ONS ARE IN THIS SETTING.

KARSANG
She only met Benji last Spring.
Donor event at the zoo. But he
seemed kinda perfect, I'd lock it
down too.

CLOSE ON BRAD (20s)

Celeste's fabulous male co-worker from the teaser.

BRAD
She's stunning, OK? But she's from
Easton, Pennsylvania. How do I put
this... Monomoy's not her natural
habitat.

CLOSE ON FEATHERLEIGH DALE (50s)

An aging British Socialite. Blunt. In traveling clothes.

FEATHERLEIGH
She jumped feet first into a WASP's
nest. Someone was bound to get
stung.

RESUME:

Benji gently steps between his mother and his bride:

BENJI
Celeste doesn't need to diet, Mom.
She's naturally perfect. Very
annoying.

Celeste laughs, helping Benji keep things light. Greer tactfully crosses out to the pantry. When she's gone, Thomas grabs her enamel pillbox off the counter:

THOMAS
Yum. Party mix.

ANGLE ON: Benji, trying to grab the pills before Greer comes back. Thomas plays keep-away, holding them behind his back.

BENJI

Half those are just vitamins.

THOMAS

But which half? That's the fun.

Thomas DUMPS a pile of pills out on the marble, sorting them like Halloween candy. Greer's youngest, WILL (17), awkward, angry, introverted, shuffles through in a Hotchkiss T-shirt. Thomas flashes him his rainbow handful of pills.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Little prescription roulette
tonight, William? Wanna throw some
Addys in the mix?

Will sees Celeste and self-consciously smooths his hair.

WILL

I sold all mine at school.

THOMAS

Explains your grades, genius.

Will stares at the floor. He does that a lot. Benji grabs the pill box and puts it back where Greer left it.

CELESTE

(kindly, to Will)

Don't listen to him. Deerfield only
let Tom graduate 'cause your mom
and dad bought-- a library, was it?

THOMAS

Let's not indulge in cliches. It
was a new cafeteria.

They all straighten as Greer's husband, TAG WINBURY, strolls through, fresh from his morning swim, in Vilebrequin swim trunks. He's expansive, tan, comfortable with his privilege.

TAG

Ah, good morning my rugged and
rumped lot.

He tousles Will's hair. As Greer returns from the pantry, he grabs and dips her for a kiss. She swats at him, loving it.

GREER

Tag, you're all wet!

TAG

Love is in the air, my darling. It cannot be contained.

Greer's eyes sparkle up at him. He slaps her butt playfully. Will's cheeks redden as he averts his gaze. Thomas notices:

THOMAS

Little consideration for young Will here? Daphne just dumped him. He's two for two now, if you count Mae Pratt.

Greer admonishes Thomas with a look. "Mae Pratt" is clearly a sensitive subject.

GREER

Oh Will, why didn't you say anything?

WILL

(it is)
Because it's not a big deal.

Will glares at Thomas, prickly, as Celeste's CELLPHONE RINGS on the counter. Benji picks it up, checking the caller ID:

BENJI

It's Merritt. Again. Is it healthy, how often she calls you?

When Celeste sees "MERRITT MONACO" flashing on the caller ID, she PALES, and quickly GRABS her phone, excusing herself:

CELESTE

(feigning casual)
Thanks-- I'm just gonna take this--

Benji frowns, watching as Celeste peels off and ducks into:

INT. POWDER ROOM - SAME TIME

Celeste closes and LOCKS the door behind her. Her HAND SHAKES as she stares down at the name, still flashing: "MERRITT MONACO." Celeste takes a SHAKY BREATH, and pushes IGNORE. Suddenly VERY HOT, she loosens her robe, fans her neck, and SPLASHES her face with cool water. After a beat, she straightens and stares in the mirror.

CELESTE

(in the mirror)
You are fucking happy. You are fucking lucky.
(MORE)

CELESTE (CONT'D)

You are in love with Benji. And you
are marrying him tomorrow.

She takes a breath, then CINCHES the robe neatly once again.
After a beat, the sound of a DOOR BELL brings us to:

INT. SUMMERLAND FOYER - MORNING

Gosia opens the door and Greer greets the eager local
jeweler, CAROL (middle-aged bohemian), who brandishes two
colorful, motley fabric pillows adorned with ribbon ties.

CAROL THE JEWELER

Good morning! I come bearing
pillows for ring-bearing!

GREER

(repulsed)
Oh! Did you make them?

CAROL THE JEWELER

You know I love to make you happy.

GREER

Better than making me *unhappy*,
right Gosia?

Greer emits a tinkling laugh and Gosia just looks terrified.

CAROL THE JEWELER

Speaking of, did you like the ring?

GREER

Which ring?

CAROL THE JEWELER

The one Tag bought for you in May?
He took so much care picking it
out. You're a very lucky woman.

She pulls up a photo on her phone: A silver lace thumb ring
with three colored stones. Greer's face falls 10,000 feet.
She has clearly never seen it before, but covers:

GREER

Oh, *that* ring. I'll be honest,
dear, it... wasn't for me.

Carol wilts just as Celeste appears, now dressed and coiffed,
in a boho-chic sundress and gladiator sandals.

CELESTE

Welp, I'm off to scoop Bruce and
Karen at the ferry!

But Greer needs to get out of there before she cracks:

GREER

The girl is coming to do your
lashes in fifteen minutes. I'll go.

CELESTE

(picking her battles)
You know what, sure. Thank you,
Greer.

INT. GREER'S LAND ROVER - MORNING

Greer drives angry, wheels turning a-mile-a-minute. We drink
in the glory of Nantucket as she careens through the
dollhouse town with the cobblestone streets, draped with red
white and blue bunting for the Fourth of July weekend.

GREER

A silver *thumb* ring, for Chrissake?
Who is she, a fortune-teller?

"*I'm a bitch, I'm a bitch, oh the bitch is back...*" Elton
John trills Greer's RINGTONE over Bluetooth:

GREER (CONT'D)

(answering on speaker)
Hello, Enid.

INT. SIMON AND SCHUSTER - LONDON OFFICE - DAY

Greer's posh British editor, ENID COLLINS, is an Iris Apfel
type in her 70's. Cropped silver hair, stylish frames.

ENID

Greer darling! How's that rake of a
husband? Still devilishly handsome?

GREER

Devilish. Yes.

ENID

I don't want to keep you on
holiday, but I wanted to take your
temperature on something.

Framed book covers, ALL DOLLY HARDAWAY MURDER MYSTERIES by GREER GARRISON-WINBURY, with titles like "Death in Greenwich - A Dolly Hardaway Mystery," "Manhattan Murder Files," and "Night Falls on Nantucket" line Enid's office walls. We glimpse Greer's stunning author photo, taken in equestrian gear when she was 30 -- and apparently never updated.

ENID (CONT'D)

The *Times* wants to do a profile on you and Tag ahead of the book launch party next week. An "At Home with America's Favorite Marrieds" sort of thing.

Greer's lip curls involuntarily at the mention of Tag.

GREER

You know, I've been thinking... why not distance ourselves a bit from all this "ideal couple" stuff? It's a lot to live up to.

ENID

We all need something impossible to aspire to, it's why we read fiction.

GREER

I just don't know why anyone is still interested. We've been married for thirty years.

ENID

They're interested *because* you've been married for thirty years! You're their real-life Dash and Dolly. It's part of your mythology.

GREER

But in "real life," *I alone* wrote those books. I think the modern woman appreciates someone who does it on her own, no?

ENID

But Dolly is not a modern woman. And neither are her readers.

GREER

All the more reason to pivot. Drum up some enthusiasm among the younger set?

We glimpse a heavily marked-up manuscript on Enid's desk.

ENID

I dare say that would require more than a *Times* profile.

That hangs there a beat. Greer is hurt.

ENID (CONT'D)

Listen, Greer, you should know I had to beg them to even do this piece. If it were up to me, you'd have a contract with us forever. But the sales have flagged a bit lately, and if this next one isn't a hit...

Greer pulls into the ferry lot and parks. She sits back in her seat, watching the boats in the harbor...

EXT. FERRY - DAY

Celeste's parents, BRUCE and KAREN OTIS, on the ferry, on approach. Karen is Korean, frail with cancer, but formally clad in all her best things, which are a bit worn but freshly pressed. Bruce is dressed all wrong for the weather, in stiff new black jeans and a black-and-teal paisley button down with contrast cuffs. They share a granola bar from her purse, taking in the shoreline. We love them.

KAREN

I made it. Can you believe it?

BRUCE

I still say they coulda done Myrtle Beach. And you don't need a boat to get there.

KAREN

They moved up the wedding just for me. We'll take what we can get.

(then, off his silence)

Hon, we need to be able to talk about it.

BRUCE

I'm able. Just not willing.

KAREN

I can't control the fact that it's going to end. But maybe I can control how it ends--

Bruce loves her so much, he can't bear to discuss it.

BRUCE

--It's not ending today, is it?

Karen squeezes his hand. No. It's not. They need a break from the morbid talk, at least for this weekend. She lightens the mood, taking in the cedar-shingled, white-trimmed mansions lining the shore. The American flags flapping in the breeze:

KAREN

Wow. It looks like a movie set.

(then)

I just want to freshen up...

INT. FERRY BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Karen swallows an Oxycontin from a small toiletry bag in her purse, then checks a separate compartment for a small plastic baggie with Chinese writing and a skull and crossbones (the international symbol for POISON), containing three pills. She counts them out, 1... 2... 3... fingering them guiltily. She's jarred by a KNOCK at the door:

KAREN

Yep!

She quickly DUMPS the plastic baggie in the trash and STASHES the pills, loose, in the FLOWERED TOILETRY BAG, opening the door as she clips on a pair of knockoff Chanel earrings.

BRUCE

You were in here so long I thought you jumped ship.

KAREN

(nervous laugh)

Not yet, dear.

BRUCE

C'mon gorgeous, it's showtime.

INT. GREER'S LAND ROVER - MOMENTS LATER

Greer waits in the Ferry parking lot, still on with Enid:

ENID

We all get put out to pasture eventually, even editors. So let's give the people what they want, while they still want it. Hm?

Greer stares impassively at herself in the rearview.

ENID (CONT'D)

Greer, are you alright?

GREER

Absolutely. Right as rain.

She WIPES a SINGLE TEAR from her cheek as it escapes from beneath her sunglasses, her voice betraying no emotion.

ENID

Oh by the by, a "Broderick Graham" called my office looking for a ticket to the book party. Said he was an old friend?

Greer looks bothered at the sound of that name, but covers:

GREER

Doesn't ring a bell. Enid, I've got to jump. I have more important people to impress today than Simon and Schuster. Ta.

CLICK. She takes off her showy (and real) Chanel earrings and stows them in her purse. She takes a deep breath and pulls a smile from her bag of tricks. She can do this...

EXT. FERRY PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Otises are the only earth tones in the crowd of preppy weekenders. Karen tugs at her headscarf self-consciously when she spots Greer, a vision in white linen and Tom Ford sunnies, making her way toward them.

KAREN

She looks just like her author photo.

BRUCE

Give or take thirty years.
(proudly taking her arm)
You're prettier.

Greer waves, calling out:

GREER

Bruce! Karen! At long last! Yoo hoo!

They WAVE BACK, friendly, all smiles--

BRUCE
(awkward)
Yo... ho ho!

INT. GREER'S LAND ROVER - DAY

Greer prattles on, proudly pointing out the sights in town, as Karen and Bruce attempt to take it all in. We see her AUTHOR PHOTO in a BOOKSTORE WINDOW and a DISPLAY featuring her latest book: *DASH AND DOLLY IN DUBAI: COMING THIS SUMMER!*

GREER
The local shops do make a fuss.
It's very sweet actually. That
little place has a to-die-for
organic beet salad.
(then, remembering Karen's
cancer)
Well, that may be a bit hyperbolic.
Oh and that shop there sells the
most fabulous rare nautical
antiques. It's where I find all of
Tag's Father's Day presents.

With every cobblestone bump, Karen WINCES in pain, clutching the plastic grocery store bag on her lap even tighter. Bruce reaches back through the seats to squeeze her hand.

BRUCE
So you have a boat then?

Greer laughs as if that's a silly question. As she flips her blinker and begins to turn up a private road, we CUT BACK TO:

INT. DAN GARCIA'S KITCHEN - PRESENT DAY

Dan Garcia is dressed for work now. Black button-down shirt. Bad tie. You can take the cop out of Brooklyn... He jots down an address on his grocery list pad, talking on the phone:

DAN
*Yeah, I got it... 333 Monomoy road?
M-hm. Isn't that--*

Behind Dan, we notice a TEENAGE GIRL in a white button down and black skirt with a white apron tip-toeing through the back door and quickly slipping past.

INT. GREER'S LAND ROVER - THE DAY BEFORE

Bruce reads the sign as Greer turns up the private drive:

BRUCE
Summerland?

CLOSE ON FEATHERLEIGH DALE

FEATHERLEIGH
Summerland. Just a cozy 25 million
dollar cottage by the sea.

CLOSE ON KARSANG

KARSANG
Celeste never talked about Benji's
money. I think it embarrassed her.

CLOSE ON BRAD

BRAD
Oh, they're rich. Child sex ring on
a private island rich. "I'm bored,
I'll buy a monkey" rich.
(beat)
Kill someone and get away with it
rich.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME TIME

*Dan's pretty teenage daughter, CHLOE, now looking a lot more
disheveled than her school photo, stares at herself in the
mirror. She lets the shower run, hair hanging in her face,
mascara smeared. She's SHAKING and looks awful, like last
night was a rough one. She JUMPS when Dan knocks:*

*DAN (O.S.)
Hey sweetie? I gotta bounce, but I
think your catering job is getting
called off today.*

Chloe grips the edge of the sink, in sudden dread:

*CHLOE
Called off? Why?*

*DAN
Someone died.*

*CHLOE stares at her reflection, TERRIFIED. She UNTUCKS her
SHIRT, revealing a LARGE AMOUNT of DRIED BLOOD on the hem.*

EXT. SUMMERLAND DRIVEWAY - THE DAY BEFORE

The sun is bright. The sky is blue. Greer pulls up and PARKS in the circular drive. Celeste BOUNDS up to the car. She's got little pads under each eye, and she blows on wet nails:

CELESTE
(opening Karen's door)
Umma!

She THROWS her arms around her mom's neck, then stands back, taking her in. Her voice cracks with emotion, relief:

CELESTE (CONT'D)
You're here.

Karen beams. Against all odds, she *is* here.

KAREN
In the flesh. What's left of it.

Celeste looks worried, noticing how thin her mom has gotten, but she characteristically bats it away with a joke:

CELESTE
Well don't worry, we're gonna fatten you up with a shit ton of lobster this weekend!

KAREN
(in Korean)
Celeste! No swearing!

CELESTE
Sorry Umma. A *poop* ton of lobster.

Karen swats her daughter's arm, but nothing can dampen Celeste's delight that her mom has finally made it to Nantucket, as a receiving line SPILLS out of the house, one preppier than the next. Benji offers refreshments:

BENJI
Fresh farm-stand blackberry mojito?

Karen beams at Benji, handing him the grocery store bag.

KAREN
My handsome Benji! So skinny!
(to Celeste)
You need to feed him!

Inside is a modest FRUIT BASKET in cellophane with a bow.

BENJI

Yum! Fruit! Isn't that nice, Mom?

BRUCE

(proud)

She made me stop at three different supermarkets. Apparently, Stop 'N Shop has the best apples, in case you were curious.

GREER

(taking it)

How lovely, Karen, you didn't need to do that.

KAREN

I'm the mother of the bride! Of course I did!

Karen accepts the mojito. It's heavy in her bony hand.

CELESTE

It's sweet, like a wine cooler, only better. You'll like it.

GREER

(what is that?)

A wine cooler?

CELESTE

It's like a mojito, only worse.

Celeste gamely hoists Bruce's beat-up old army duffel bag. Greer makes a face, which Karen notices. Karen admonishes Celeste: Women like Greer don't carry heavy bags...

KAREN

Celeste, it's too heavy--

SHOOTER UXLEY

--Let me.

SHOOTER UXLEY is the steel-cut guy from the teaser. He's a luxury watch ad come to life: You'd have to be a robot not to melt a little under his gaze. He shakes their hands:

SHOOTER

Shooter Uxley. Benji's best man.

Karen smiles, loving him, as all women do. Surly older brother Thomas rolls his eyes at Shooter's gee-whiz politeness, giving a perfunctory wave from the back:

THOMAS

Thomas Winbury. Not Benji's best man. Though he was mine.

Thomas's wife, Abby, scowls in solidarity, one arm linked through Thomas's, the other hand on her pregnant belly. Now Tag steps forward, shirtless, in fantastic shape for his age, still in his trunks, glistening from his morning swim. A pricy FITNESS TRACKER on his tanned wrist.

TAG

And I'm--

CLOSE ON KARSANG

KARSANG

Tag Winbury. DILF.

CLOSE ON BRAD

BRAD

Daddy.

CLOSE ON FEATHERLEIGH DALE

FEATHERLEIGH

Undiluted, red-hot shag bait.

RESUME:

Tag kisses Karen's hand. She's charmed. Bruce suddenly feels out of place among this sea of Ralph Lauren models.

BRUCE

Handsome must be in the water here.

KAREN

Dash and Dolly Hardaway in real life. Wow. Aren't we lucky?

They all turn as a battered "Old Salt" taxi crunches up the drive, and the dynamic girl we met in the teaser pours out with her bags. The fun bus has arrived, and she's the driver.

MERRITT MONACO

Maid of honor in the house! Where's the goddess bride?

Celeste SPINS, her WHOLE FACE breaking out in a smile when she sees her BEST FRIEND. Merritt drops her bags as Celeste RUNS into her arms. They HUG one another tightly, Celeste pulling her close for a quiet, intimate exchange:

CELESTE

I miss you already, and I haven't even left you yet.

MERRITT

Please. You're never leaving me.

Celeste's eyes sparkle with emotion she holds Merritt at arm's length for a beat, teasing:

CELESTE

I'm going to *Fiji* for a week!

MERRITT

(deadpan)

I'm devastated for you, but somehow I know you'll survive.

(then, seeing the Otises)

Mama K! Bruce the Moose! Mmmm! I've missed you guys so much!

KAREN

Your room is always ready.

Celeste clearly loves how close Merritt is to her parents.

CELESTE

Technically that's still *my* room?

BRUCE

You're the one who decided to get married. Mer bear still needs us.

Celeste grins, seeming more relaxed now that Merritt's here, slinging an arm around her shoulders:

CELESTE

Ahhhh. Ok. It's real now. It's all happening. You guys are here.

BENJI

It's only real *now*? I've been here all along...

Benji is just teasing, but there is a split-second flicker of hurt in his eyes. Merritt giggles, pinching his cheeks:

MERRITT

Awww Benji wenji pudding and pie... just give us our last 24 hours, then I'll reluctantly relinquish my grip.

As they head toward the guest cottages with the bags, Benji starts to come along, but Shooter steps in:

SHOOTER

Go be a groom, buddy. I got this.

Benji shrugs and hangs back, watching them go, as Greer subtly hands off the fruit basket to Gosia with a nod...

INT. BUTLER'S PANTRY - SAME

Gosia places the modest fruit basket on a counter already overflowing with gorgeous bowls of farmer's market produce.

FADE BACK TO:

EXT. SUMMERLAND - DRIVEWAY - MORNING - PRESENT DAY

Dan joins State Police Detective NIKKI HENRY, African-American, no-nonsense, in the driveway with a somewhat shaken OLDER GENTLEMAN in a pastel sport coat with a pocket square.

DAN

Lookin' a little green, Nik. First time on the ferry?

He offers her a takeout coffee and muffin. She waves it away.

NIKKI

Why would people choose to live on a damn island? What are you running from?

Dan bristles. She's hit a nerve. We'll find out why in time.

DAN

--Hey, if it was up to me, we'd keep this local. I don't need Statey breathin' down my neck.

Nikki laughs, taking his ribbing in stride.

DAN (CONT'D)

These people owned about half the island, back in the twenties. Winbury name's on the wetlands preserve from here to Wauwinet.

NIKKI HENRY

What happened?

The older gentleman speaks, a reverent gossip:

ROGER PELTON
Classic American tragedy. Boozy
black sheep gambled it all away.

NIKKI HENRY
(re: the house)
Well, not all.
(introducing herself)
Nikki Henry. Homicide.

They shake. Dan extends a hand to him as well:

DAN
And I'm Dan Garcia, Chief of
Police. I'm relatively new.

ROGER PELTON
Roger Pelton, wedding planner. I'm
relatively old.

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Roger, Dan and Nikki walk down the seagrass-lined path to the beach, where officers are taping off an area.

ROGER PELTON
Got here about ten past six. I
always check my venues first thing,
make sure the rentals were
delivered.

In the b/g, an officer photographs FOOTPRINTS in the sand.

ROGER PELTON (CONT'D)
I came down to check the tent, and
I saw Celeste just standing there
over the body, like a zombie.

Dan kneels for a closer look at the prints. There are faint traces of BLOOD in some of them. He points it out to Nikki, who nods, subtly acknowledging that she sees it too.

DAN
Did you get to know Ms. Otis well?
Planning her wedding?

ROGER PELTON
To tell you the truth, I mostly
dealt with Greer. We go way back to
the chocolate fountain days.

Nikki is tracing the path of the prints with her eyes, distinguishing two sets. She holds up two fingers. Dan nods.

NIKKI

Mm, a chocolate fountain.

ROGER PELTON

I know. Revolting. I swear it was chic at the time.

Nikki and Dan exchange a look. They like chocolate fountains.

DAN

So you do all Mrs. Winbury's parties?

ROGER PELTON

I do all Mrs. Garrison-Winbury's events. Book signings. Fundraisers. I did a murder party for her 50th.

NIKKI

A murder party?

ROGER PELTON

Murder's her favorite. You know, Clarissa in the conservatory with the candlestick? Everyone gets a character, dresses up. It's fun.

Now Nikki notices a wet white terrycloth bathrobe crumpled in the sand. She waves an officer over to bag it.

NIKKI

Which character wears the white bathrobe?

Roger watches as the robe is lowered into a plastic bag.

ROGER PELTON

Oh, those are in every guest cottage.

MATCH CUT *off the stitched "SUMMERLAND" insignia on the robe:*

INT. GUEST COTTAGE - THE DAY BEFORE

Karen wears the same robe, right over her clothes, lying on the bed, as Bruce rubs her feet. Celeste and the handsome best man, Shooter, gamely unpack the Otises' bags.

KAREN

I have died and gone to heaven.

CELESTE

Mom! Let's maybe *not* use that expression?

KAREN

Oh shush. This *is* heaven. Like a five star hotel! Oh... Oh dear--

She gestures to the fresh-cut lilies on the nightstand. Celeste swiftly grabs the vase and places it outside the front door to the little cottage. Shooter frowns, curious:

BRUCE

(explaining)

The smell makes her sick. Chemo.

KAREN

Such a shame. I've always wanted fresh flowers by the bed. So -- like a magazine.

CELESTE

Don't worry, Umma, this whole weekend is gonna be perfect for you. Like a hotel *in* a magazine!

It's clear from Celeste's beaming, sunny determination that her mother's comfort and happiness this weekend trumps all else. Shooter holds up Karen's FLOWERED TOILETRY BAG.

SHOOTER

Where do you want this?

Karen nods toward the bathroom. He heads off with it. Karen watches Celeste, dutifully arranging all her things:

KAREN

For a while there, I worried you were *never* going to get married. Now look at you. The bride! Here comes the bride! Oh, I love it!

Celeste loves seeing her mom this happy. It means everything.

CELESTE

And I love *you*! So. Why don't you change and get comfortable?

KAREN

How can I change when there's a handsome young man in my room?

Karen smiles coyly at Shooter as he comes back in:

KAREN (CONT'D)

Shooter, you have a girlfriend?

Karen laughs as Bruce pretends to hit her with a pillow. Shooter smiles gamely and bows in service:

SHOOTER

If I can get you anything else:
couple tomato sandwiches, mint for
your pillow, just call room
service. Great to meet you guys.

He tips his faded red Titleist baseball cap. When he's gone, Karen shakes her head, sighing:

KAREN

(in Korean)

Merritt should get on that.

CELESTE

Mom!

Celeste swats her mom's arm playfully, but looks bothered.

INT. GUEST BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celeste slips into the bathroom, leaning her back against the door for a long exhale. She stares at herself in the mirror. Finally, she pulls out her phone with shaking hands and composes a text to "MERRITT MONACO:"

CELESTE (TEXT)

I TRIED NOT TO DO THIS. BUT I NEED
TO TALK TO YOU TODAY. ALONE.

Her finger hovers over the "send" button. Is she doing this? She squeezes her eyes shut and SENDS.

EXT. SUMMERLAND POOL - LATER - DAY

The afternoon heat has set in. Insects whine. The sun bakes the slate pool deck. Sweat beads on Merritt's enviable body in a black strappy bondage bikini. She checks her texts, then notices Shooter walking past and hands him her phone.

MERRITT

Hey hottie! Take a pic with me?

SHOOTER

(good-natured)

Hey Merritt, who you trying to piss
off?

MERRITT

If I told you, would it make a difference?

Merritt grins slyly. Shooter shrugs, then notices young Will ambling up from the beach, sweaty, with his lacrosse stick, and calls him over:

SHOOTER

Hey! Billiam! Little help?

Shooter is about to hand Will Merritt's PHONE to take their picture when it RINGS:

SHOOTER (CONT'D)

(re: caller ID)

The Wildlife Fund -- Work call on a Saturday? You hustler.

MERRITT

Oh! Yeah, no. That's... a different kind of work. Can you just ignore?

Shooter holds the phone aloft, teasing, as it rings again--

MERRITT (CONT'D)

Fine-- it's this guy I was seeing on the DL, so I put him in my phone as a work-y sounding thing.

Shooter obligingly silences the phone, nudging Will:

SHOOTER

Hear that, Will? Girls are wily as hell. Keep your head up with the next one.

(to Merritt)

Girlfriend just broke up with him.

WILL

She said she "wanted to date a Winbury," but she "got the dud."

Merritt sees how self-conscious Will is:

MERRITT

Well she sounds like a full IDIOT.

(then)

You know what? Shooter, take one of me and Will. I need a handsome man at my side if I'm going to make all the other girls jealous.

WILL

I'm not sure that's gonna work.

MERRITT

Well *I* am. Ok-- stand here--

She positions Will at her side, nudging the phone in Shooter's hand higher, for a better angle.

MERRITT (CONT'D)

--I'm gonna pretend like you just said something hysterical. Girls like a guy with a sense of humor.

She throws her head back, laughing. Will can't help but laugh too. CLICK! Shooter hands her the phone. She checks it:

MERRITT (CONT'D)

Perfect. Thank you so much.
(then, playing it down)
Oh hey, is it cool if I tag you?
Who knows, maybe a few girls will realize what they've been missing.

WILL

I mean... sure.

Will grins, staring at Merritt with pure puppy love.

INT. TAG'S STUDY - SAME

Hunter green walls. Polished oak bookcases. Tastefully-lit portraits of The Winbury Family. And a GLASS DISPLAY CASE FULL OF ANTIQUE PISTOLS. This room smells of tobacco and Glenmorangie. Greer rifles through Tag's burl wood Regency desk, scanning receipts. Benji stops in from the hall, looking more casual in paint-spattered shorts and bare feet.

GREER

Benji! Hi. I was just...
(covering)
...trying to figure out how much we owe the jeweler.

Benji isn't usually stern with his mother, but something about Celeste brings it out in him. He squares off:

BENJI

You weren't very nice to Celeste this morning. I'd like you to try harder.

GREER

Me try harder? She's the one running around here in your underwear.

Now Greer notices his sandy feet. Benji apologetically rubs at some dried paint on his hands.

BENJI

Sorry. I was in my studio.
(beat)
We could all use a bit less formality around here.

GREER

Is that the modern thing now? No bra, no shoes, no reverence for standard social conventions?

Benji shakes his head, dismayed:

BENJI

I never should have told you she had a girlfriend in college. Her parents don't even know that.

GREER

(defensive)
I *meant* endearing oneself to one's in-laws, Benjamin.

BENJI

She cares what you think, Mom! But she didn't grow up placing value on the same things you do. And I don't necessarily count that against her.

GREER

What "same things?"

Benji sighs, is she going to make him spell it out?

BENJI

Well, pedigree, for one. Who you went to school with? Who's on the guest list for... Malia's wedding on Martha's Vineyard?

Greer's eyes go wide with excitement:

GREER

Is Malia Obama getting married?

BENJI

Not that I know of, but you should have seen your face.

(then)

Celeste is a breath of fresh air. She's brilliant. She's kind. Her family is this tiny unit, them against the world, you know? But they genuinely love each other. It's wonderful to be around.

GREER

As opposed to our family?

BENJI

I didn't say that.

Greer chooses her next words carefully:

GREER

It's clear how much you adore her, darling. I'd just like some reassurance that she's equally enamored of you.

Benji frowns. What is she getting at?

BENJI

What makes you think she isn't?

GREER

Do you know, the first time I came to Nantucket with your father I bought a whole new wardrobe at Harrod's? Taught myself how to crack a lobster. I even read the latest Tom Wolfe in case anyone should bring it up at tea. Of course, that was before I realized your grandfather only read the daily racing form.

BENJI

Is it that she's not trying hard enough? Or is it that she'll never be good enough, no matter how hard she tries?

GREER

Sweetheart, I don't care if she went to Harvard or the University of Miami--

BENJI
(correcting her)
--Miami University of *Ohio*. They
have the best zoology program in
the country, and she had a full
scholarship.

Greer blinks, set back on her heels a beat.

GREER
Now... you see I would know that if
she made any effort to-- to--

BENJI
To what. Impress you?

Greer doesn't want to say yes. But yes.

GREER
To show us she is *invested* in
becoming a Winbury.

Benji is angry.

BENJI
Silly girl. I guess she thought
loving me was enough.

Greer stops rifling. She's found it: Island Jewelers. May 21.
\$1250. "Sweetheart Ring." Jesus. It's humiliating.

GREER
It isn't. Not for the long term.

And as Benji wonders what's bothering Greer, we hear:

CELESTE (PRE-LAP)
It's like she *wants* me to back out.

EXT. SUMMERLAND - POOL - SAME TIME

Celeste has joined Merritt poolside in their white
"Summerland" robes.

MERRITT
Fuck her. She's a snob and a half.
She probably married Tag for the
old money name. Looks better on her
book jackets.

Celeste GUFFAWS, her eyes sparkling with wicked glee.

CELESTE

I called her "GG dubs" this morning
and I swear she would have shit a
brick... if one would fit through
her tight little... butthole.

MERRITT

Ewww! Greer's butthole is not
something I ever wanted to
visualize!
(then)
But now I am. It's definitely
waxed. And bleached.

Celeste LAUGHS again, then becomes conscious of getting too
loud, glancing across the pool at Abby and her friend JULES
(Upper East Side heiress type) sunning themselves on another
set of pool chairs. They whisper amongst themselves.

MERRITT (CONT'D)

Don't worry about them. They're
busy talking shit about me.
(waving at Abby)
I see you, bitch.
(then)
Talk to me. What's really going on?

Celeste rolls on her side, staring intensely at Merritt.

CELESTE

OK. Have you ever felt like you
loved someone so much, you'd
like... kill to be with them?

CLOSE ON KARSANG

KARSANG

**There were rumors at work about
them being more than friends. But
there were rumors about Merritt and
everybody.**

Celeste looks nervous. This confession has been building. She
needs to tell her, but it will Blow. Up. Everything.

CELESTE

I don't know if I feel that way.
About Benji.

Merritt looks genuinely surprised.

MERRITT

This isn't just about his mom sucking, right? Because you're not marrying his mom--

CELESTE

--I know how lucky I am. I do. I mean he's... *Benji*. He's so kind, and so handsome, and so--

MERRITT

--rich--

CELESTE

--Stop, don't do that, I love him. You know I do. But shouldn't I be... like... addicted? Like, when I'm with him, I *need* to touch him. And when I'm not with him, I'm fantasizing about the next time I get to be.

Celeste stares at Merritt, wide-eyed and raw. She seems to be drawing on a feeling very close to the surface.

MERRITT

Ohhh. I know what's going on here.

CELESTE

(nervous)

Y- you do?

MERRITT

Sure. It sounds like you're just getting a little case of cold feet. Which is normal.

That's not what Celeste thought she was going to say. But she stops a moment, considering whether perhaps Merritt is right:

CELESTE

It is?

MERRITT

Totally. I mean, even if it is Benjamin Winbury, committing to one person for the rest of your life is kind of bananas when you think about it. It would almost be weird if you *didn't* question it a little bit.

Celeste likes hearing that. She relaxes a bit, nodding.

CELESTE

You're right. That's all this is.

Celeste tears her gaze away from Merritt, noticing her mom and dad walking hand in hand down the beach. Karen is taking in the sea air, a huge smile on her face.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Plus, my mom is... you know, she's so... *traditional*. Her daughter's wedding is like the Superbowl. Even if I wanted to back out, there's no way I could now.

MERRITT

Bitch, you can do anything you want, and I will have your back all day long. But do you *really* want to call it off?

Merritt stares at Celeste with concern. Celeste steals one more look at her fragile mom, beaming with pride as she and Bruce watch the caterers setting up the tent on the sand.

CELESTE

No... I don't.

MERRITT

Good! 'Cause I got you something--

She pulls two little felted primates from her bag, one in a top hat and one in a veil. Celeste takes them:

CELESTE

Tarsiers cake toppers? I can't believe they make these!

MERRITT

You *have* to go to that sanctuary place in the Philippines and meet one -- but until then, I found this guy on Etsy who does any animal, custom. Now he's as obsessed with those bug-eyed little things as you are.

CELESTE

These "bug-eyed little things" are critically endangered, but they get overlooked 'cause they're not traditionally cute, like pandas.

MERRITT

*I'm traditionally cute, and you
still hang with me.*

CELESTE

(teasing)
For now.

Merritt laughs and swats her with her magazine.

THOMAS (PRE-LAP)

I don't know why you two don't just
go public with your love affair--

EXT. BEACH - BOATHOUSE - SAME

Tag kneels in the sand by a charming little boathouse, oiling his handmade, wooden, two-person kayak and rubbing it with a soft cloth. Thomas approaches, carrying a bucket of cold IPA.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

--that floating toothpick gets more
attention than I ever did. She's a
well-kept woman!

Thomas smiles and indicates the kayak, and the padlock lying nearby in the sand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You've gotta learn to share your
toys.

TAG

I paid a guy in Maine thirty K to
build this "toy." You were free.

Thomas laughs and hands his dad a beer. They cheers. Thomas takes a long, satisfying sip, settling in on the sand. Then:

THOMAS

I need a loan.

TAG

Free at first, anyway.
(re: the beer)
Should've known this was a bribe.

THOMAS

It's just a Band-Aid. I got in a
little over my head with an options
play.

TAG

Christ, Tom. It's not your money to play with.

THOMAS

Oh *I* play with it?

(re: kayak... and more)

Y'know, these little hobbies of yours can get pretty expensive. If I ever thought you were taking on too much risk, I'd have to tell mom.

Thomas has something over his dad. And now Tag knows it. He stands, brushing the sand off the backs of his legs.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Think about it. Let me know.

Thomas heads back toward the house. Tag JAMS his beer into the hot sand, not even wanting it anymore.

EXT. GUEST COTTAGE - LATER

Bruce tip-toes out in a guest robe over his swim trunks, quietly shutting the door behind him.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

He drops his robe on the sand by the water line and PLUNGES into the refreshing surf. The sun glints off the bay as he swims out. Suddenly, he hears his wife calling out behind him.

KAREN (O.S.)

Bruce!

He wipes the salt from his eyes, waving her out. She starts toward him. We are CLOSE ON Karen as she swims. She can see Bruce waving, but the surf is growing choppy. Some water goes in her mouth and she COUGHS. Suddenly, she's struggling. The sun goes behind a cloud. She starts to slip under.

KAREN (CONT'D)

(coughing, choking)

Bruce.... Bruce!!!

INT. GUEST COTTAGE - LATER

Karen STARTLES awake from a nap, breathing hard. She wipes the beads of sweat from her brow. It was just a dream. Bruce has left a note on the bedside table: *Gone for a swim.*

Karen totters to the bathroom, in pain, and paws through her toiletry kit. Her hands shake as she TURNS the bag over, dumping the contents. She shakes an Oxy out of the bottle, swallowing it dry, then hurriedly swipes everything off the counter back into the bag. She's about to shut off the light when she NOTICES a lone pearlescent ovoid pill on the floor. She BLANCHES, leaning over despite the obvious pain, and carefully places it back in her flowered toiletry bag.

INT. CELESTE AND BENJI'S ROOM AT SUMMERLAND - LATER

Celeste sits at her vanity in her bathrobe. Suddenly she hears a BLOODCURDLING SCREAM! She turns and looks out:

POV OUT THE WINDOW: Merritt is on Shooter's shoulders in the pool. They're playing "chicken" against Jules and Will. She watches Merritt, her head thrown back, her tan, sensual body shaking with laughter astride Shooter's muscular shoulders. Celeste stares down at their sexy, flirtatious fun longingly: She wants to be down there, rather than up here. She's STARTLED when Benji appears suddenly behind her:

BENJI (O.S.)

Hey.

Celeste WHIPS around like someone caught red-handed. She lets out a nervous laugh.

BENJI (CONT'D)

You OK? You're all -- flustered.

CELESTE

You startled me. Sorry. And I'm--
you know, doing six million things
before tomorrow--

She turns back to her vanity, organizing her makeup. He watches her warmly for a beat. He loves her completely.

BENJI

You don't need to do a single
thing. You're fucking gorgeous. And
I'm the luckiest guy on earth to be
marrying you.

Well, wow. She smiles up at him. He proudly produces a SMALL PAINTING from behind his back.

BENJI (CONT'D)

Happy wedding eve. It's not totally dry yet.

It's a beautiful, if a bit formal, PORTRAIT of Celeste.

CELESTE

Oh my God! Benji, it's -- wow. Is that me? She's so... like, regal.

BENJI

Welcome to the family.

Celeste is genuinely moved. And he's genuinely talented.

BENJI (CONT'D)

And you are regal.

CELESTE

(smiling)

Yeah, right.

BENJI

No, you are. I've loved other women-

CELESTE

(teasing)

--I'm sure you have--

BENJI

--Just let me say this. I've loved other women. Or, what I thought love was, at the time. But I've never *liked* anyone the way I like you. You know? Yes, you're beautiful, and insanely sexy and all that, but you're also the first one I want to call with good news, because it's not real until you've heard it. And you're the last face I want to see before I turn out the light. I know it's cheesy when couples say "I'm marrying my best friend," but you are. And I am.

And now we know, as does Celeste, there's a reason she fell in love with him. She stands, rising on her toes for a kiss.

CELESTE

I love it when you smell like paint.

She buries her face in his chest, relaxing as she breathes in his smell. More screaming and laughter from down at the pool.

Celeste whips around and CLOSES the window, determined to concentrate on Benji.

She pushes him back on the bed and climbs on top of him, pulling his t-shirt over his head. They kiss, melting into one another with increasing intensity. We get the sense these two have good sex. At least, they have in the past. And today, she's trying to conjure it. Her breath comes faster as he opens her robe. She moves on top of him. It's hot. But when he takes her face in his hands and stares into her eyes, she grows increasingly uncomfortable, not wanting that level of intimacy. She looks away, but he tries again, guiding her gaze back to his. This isn't working. She's trying to fuck, and he's trying to connect. She finally rolls over, staring up at the ceiling. She covers her face with her hands, frustrated and guilty.

BENJI

What's going on? What did I do?

CELESTE

Nothing. You did nothing. You're perfect. And I do not deserve you.

BENJI

Is that what this is about? Feeling inadequate in some way? Because you know I don't care about any of that stuff. I love you. And I love your parents.

Celeste does not love that.

CELESTE

I love my parents too. This has nothing to do with them.

She rolls over and starts pulling on her running clothes.

BENJI

I'm sorry, I didn't mean--

CELESTE

I know what you meant. It's fine.

BENJI

Clearly it's not.

She leaves. Benji sighs, ANGRILY punching the pillow. WHUMP.

EXT. NANTUCKET - BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

WHUMP WHUMP WHUMP. Celeste jogs out her frustration, her feet pounding the wet sand. She doubles over, out of breath, and stops to stare out at the water, as if it might contain the answer she's looking for. She suddenly LETS LOOSE a ROAR of frustration, CLENCHING her fists:

CELESTE
Auuuggghhhhh!!!!!!

EXT. BEACH - VERY EARLY MORNING - PRESENT DAY

We can still hear the echoes of Celeste's barbaric YAWP as Police Chief Dan Garcia stands at the water's edge, as if waiting for a clue. He notices a few errant DROPS OF BLOOD in the sand. They lead him away from the crime scene, up to a deck off the back of the house. He squints, peering through the wooden lattice into the darkened area under the porch.

DAN
(calling out)
Nik?

He shines his phone light through the lattice. WE SEE: An odd-shaped KNIFE, with BLOOD on it, just barely sticking out of the sand. Nikki arrives, peering at it:

NIKKI
Never seen a knife like that.

DAN
Clearly someone didn't want you to see this one either.
(then)
It's an oyster-shucker. The edge is dull, but the tip--
(stabbing motion)
You have to wear this steel mesh glove when you use 'em. One slip, you could lose a finger.

As Nikki gestures to an OFFICER to come bag the weird knife, the SOUNDS OF A PARTY take us:

BACK TO:

INT. BEACH TENT - EARLY EVENING - THE NIGHT BEFORE

CLOSE ON: A steel mesh-gloved hand cradling an oyster. One FLICK of the knife and the shell gives, offering its flesh.

WIDEN TO REVEAL: Chloe, Dan's teenage daughter (whom we last saw sneaking home in the early morning hours) in her "oyster girl" uniform, (White apron, a belt with buckets for empty shells, ice, and sauces.) Chloe hands the oyster to Greer, who downs it in one elegant swallow:

CHLOE
Pemaquids. From Maine--

Greer stares right past Chloe at Featherleigh Dale, the aging British socialite from the interrogation scenes, who is kissing Tag hello. Enthusiastically. As Greer moves off without a word, Chloe quietly finishes muttering her memorized spiel:

CHLOE (CONT'D)
--mildly sweet, known for their
pristine, briny finish...

As we FOLLOW Greer into the crowd, we see that the rehearsal dinner we glimpsed in the grainy wedding video is underway: Sixty well-heeled guests sip summer cocktails under white tents festooned with beach roses and lucite chandeliers.

GREER
Featherleigh Dale, as I live and
breathe! You look wonderful!

She greets Featherleigh warmly, squeezing her hands, and checks for a silver lace thumb ring, but finds none. Tag rattles his ice, melting away deftly, leaving Greer to:

FEATHERLEIGH
I look like a turd on toast. I had to fly *coach* from London. I had something called a "chili dog" at the airport. No fun coming or going, I'm afraid. Plus, the Wauwinet was over-booked, so I'm at the Sand Dollar. Perhaps I shouldn't have come at all, but I'd hoped a little stateside sojourn might snap me out of my funk.

GREER
Funk?

FEATHERLEIGH
I've let myself get mired in an on-again, off-again which is currently off. Again. And the cad is actually *here*, so, I deserve extra pudding.

Greer blanches. Could Tag? *Would* Tag?

GREER

I hadn't realized you were seeing anyone, Feather.

Greer looks around for her husband, who has conspicuously disappeared. Featherleigh looks uneasy, but goes on:

FEATHERLEIGH

Only on the sly. He's married. Serves me right, I suppose.

Greer reacts, her eyes narrowing as she sizes her up:

GREER

Well, just go easy on the Pimm's cups tonight, hm? We all know what you're capable of when scorned.

FEATHERLEIGH

(a sudden sob)
Oh Greer! I'm *so sorry!*

She throws herself on Greer's bosom, getting mascara on her vintage Halston. Greer tenses, anticipating a confession:

GREER

Sorry for what?

FEATHERLEIGH

Oh, for blubbering like an idiot at your lovely party.

Greer icily pushes Featherleigh off, frustrated.

GREER

Ah. Well. I'll survive.

--DING! DING! DING! The toasts are beginning.

ANGLE ON: Maid of honor Merritt as she CLINKS her glass.

MERRITT

Hi! I'm Merritt Monaco. Celeste's maid of honor. And I'm so grateful to be here on the eve of what promises to be a beautiful wedding tomorrow. Celeste is not only my best friend, she's become my family. And I don't have a lot of that.

Merritt fights a sudden wobble in her voice, she hadn't planned to get emotional. Celeste, sitting with Benji, puts a hand on her heart. Benji notices.

MERRITT (CONT'D)

Plus, I've never met anyone who goes so beast mode at karaoke.

Celeste LAUGHS loud. ANGLE ON: Celeste's two zoo coworkers laughing and nodding. Now, they're BOTH wasted.

BRAD

Ice, ice baby--

KARSANG

--Too cold!

MERRITT

But what I treasure most about Celeste is her honesty.

Celeste is SUDDENLY TENSE and GUILTY. She stiffens away from Benji almost imperceptibly on the word "honesty."

MERRITT (CONT'D)

She tells you when you have spinach in your teeth, and when you need to cut back on the selfies. OK, she has to be honest with *me* a lot.

The crowd laughs but Celeste squirms visibly. She whispers:

CELESTE

I'm gonna make sure mom's eating.

She pulls away, leaving Benji alone, and growing annoyed.

ANGLE ON: Greer, who watches Featherleigh Dale downing biscuits smeared with butter. She pushes her own plate away.

MERRITT (O.S.)

It might sound weird to say about someone my own age, but I really do look up to her. Here's to having someone who will love you always, no matter what.

(raising her glass)

To my Celeste and her Benji!

Merritt scans the crowd for Celeste. Benji looks for her too.

Greer drains her glass, then flags down Chloe for another.

NOW FOLLOW: Chloe, who walks to the BAR to grab a fresh bottle of Champagne. She notices a guy in a ruffled white shirt crouching behind the bar, and mutters to him:

CHLOE

These people drink like fish.
Except that pregnant one. I *wish*
she would drink, so I could poison
her.

The guy stands up, tucking a bottle of beer under his blazer,
draped on his arm, and we now realize it's WILL WINBURY.

WILL

That's my sister-in-law.

CHLOE

Oh! Hi. Sorry. You look like the
bartender from the back.

WILL

That's OK. I think a lot of people
have probably fantasized about
poisoning Abby.

He's not joking, but Chloe laughs, loose and affable:

CHLOE

I'm Chloe.

WILL

Will.

He barely looks at her, eyes on the ground.

CHLOE

I saw you on Merritt Monaco's
Insta. Pretty cool.

Will lights up a little and nods, trying hard to match
Chloe's friendly energy:

WILL

Yeah. Merritt's cool.

CHLOE

Are you kidding me? She's *goals*. I
once spent my entire paycheck on
this limited drop hoodie just
because she wore it.

Now Will grins at Chloe, emboldened:

WILL

I'll introduce you, if you snag us
some of those mojitos you guys are
serving and meet me on the beach?

As Chloe giggles, titillated by this older rich kid's attention, we CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - SAME - NIGHT

Celeste has ducked outside the tent, alone.

CELESTE (V.O.)

Sometimes, in the midst of perfect happiness, our instinct is to blow it all up. Maybe we feel we don't deserve it. Or we just want to ruin things before anyone else can.

She surreptitiously pulls out her PHONE and COMPOSES A TEXT to "MERRITT MONACO:"

CELESTE (TEXT)

I NEED TO BE HONEST: I HAVE DOUBTS.

INT. BEACH TENT - SAME

Thomas sways drunkenly on the dance floor, a cocktail in each hand. Suddenly, Abby appears, grabbing his drinks away and scolding him like a naughty child:

ABBY

Have you talked to your dad?

THOMAS

--Relax, I have a plan.

ABBY

You better. Need I remind you, I'm--

THOMAS

--Pregnant? Oh, are you PREGNANT?

He STORMS off, leaving Abby to stew:

CELESTE (V.O.)

...But what I've learned is that we're never really in control when it comes to matters of the heart.

ANGLE ON: Celeste finishing a speech which we now realize has been the source of her voiceover throughout:

CELESTE

...So the best we can do is stop and listen.

(MORE)

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Embrace those ephemeral, harmonic moments that frankly, scare the crap out of us.

The well-heeled crowd laughs good-naturedly. Only Celeste can get away with saying "crap" in a speech at a party like this.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

And this, right now, this is one of those moments. My mom is here, and everyone I love. So, cheers! To this moment and to all of you!

Everyone CHEERS as a teary-eyed Celeste raises her glass.

ANGLE ON: THE RAW BAR. Benji and Shooter toast with beers.

SHOOTER

The girl's incredible dude.

Benji nods, but Shooter notices he's a little on edge.

SHOOTER (CONT'D)

Everything OK?

BENJI

I hope so. She's just... she was a little... off, earlier.

SHOOTER

You don't think there's someone else, do you?

BENJI

(gee, thanks a lot)
I didn't...

Benji watches Merritt hugging Celeste after her speech. Thomas stumbles up, noticing what he's looking at:

THOMAS

Those two ever rubbed nubs?

BENJI

Christ, you're loaded.

Thomas leans on Shooter, swaying and slurring.

THOMAS

Don't worry Benjamin, she's totally into you. And your money.

Now Shooter steps between the two brothers:

SHOOTER

Hey, hey, hey, that's enough.

THOMAS

What? They're all in it for the money. My wife too.

Nearby, Merritt is now dancing a bit more seductively than is appropriate to the occasion. All the men can't help but stare. All the women can't help but notice them staring.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Difference is, Abby *belongs here*.

BENJI

Walk away, Thomas.

THOMAS

She's not--

BENJI (CONT'D)

Walk. Away.

Benji is shaking with rage. Thomas leans in, quietly:

THOMAS (CONT'D)

She's not good enough for you, bro.

Now, Benji GRIPS Thomas HARD by the arm. Shooter intervenes, stepping between them and grabbing Thomas. As Shooter drags him away, he smiles reassuringly over his shoulder at Benji:

SHOOTER

Just gonna get him some air...

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Shooter SHOVES Thomas out on to the darkened beach.

SHOOTER

Someone here's not good enough. But it's not her, you piece of shit.

Thomas LUNGES for him, but misses. Shooter REACTS, PUNCHING Thomas, sending him stumbling backwards, holding his jaw, stunned that Shooter would dare. Shooter turns to go back into the party. Thomas spits blood in the sand.

THOMAS

You just fucked up, man! You hear me?! You fucked UP!

INT. BEACH TENT - NIGHT

Celeste's dad, Bruce, looking uncomfortably preppy in new red pants bought for tonight and a blue blazer, gives his speech:

BRUCE

I'm Celeste's dad, Bruce Otis. And if you've met her, you know why I'd do anything for her. Even stand up here in pants the color of my wife's lipstick. I met Karen when I was stationed at Yongsan.

Celeste sits next to her mom, cracking her lobster for her. Merritt joins them, out of breath and sweaty from dancing.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Day one, I knew I'd grow old with her. She was all I ever needed.

His voice cracks. Karen stares at him, tears shining in her eyes. Celeste and Merritt tilt their heads together, "Aww!" At her table, Greer stares sadly at Tag, who is oblivious.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And then we had a kid. *Nothing* prepares you for that kind of love.

Greer puts a hand on Tag's. She's feeling emotional, and a little buzzed. He grins back, covering her hand with his.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

Karen and I know Celeste is perfectly capable of taking care of herself--

At this, Bruce really fights to keep it together. He meets eyes with Karen, who smiles, encouraging him:

BRUCE (CONT'D)

--But if for any reason we both can't be there for her in the future, it means the world to us that she won't be alone.

Merritt grips Celeste's hand. Benji tries to connect eyes with Celeste across the tent. But she doesn't see him.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And so to you, Benjamin Winbury, I say: Take care of our girl. She is our treasure. To us, she is perfect.

(MORE)

BRUCE (CONT'D)

And you are her perfect match. So here's to the two of you, and your life together.

He toasts. Benji raises his glass, but his eyes are still on Celeste, who is toasting with her mom and Merritt.

BRUCE (CONT'D)

To the perfect couple!

Glasses are raised all over the candle-lit and sparkling tent. There's not a dry eye in the house. Greer looks to Tag for a connection, but he's engrossed in his phone. Her heart sinks. She looks over at Celeste, doting on her mom.

GREER

It's hard not to feel inadequate.

TAG

(not looking up)
How do you mean?

She means their marriage. Their family. Their entire empire. The Otises have nothing. And yet, they have everything Greer doesn't. But she can't say all that, so instead, she says:

GREER

I planned this whole wedding, and Benji isn't cracking *my* lobster.

TAG

You don't *need* anyone to crack your lobster, dear. You never have.

Greer stares at her ne'er-do-well husband: Is that it? If she were needier, he wouldn't be buying jewelry for someone else? Tag holds up his phone, oblivious, pushing his chair back:

TAG (CONT'D)

Back in a sec. I have a work thing I forgot about until just now.

As he leaves, Greer simmers, waving her empty glass:

GREER

Champagne!? Where is the girl?!!!

EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME - NIGHT

Chloe and Will LAUGH out on the beach, stumbling in the sand with a catering tray FULL of mojitos. He GOOFS around, grabbing her SHUCKING KNIFE from its holster on her belt.

CHLOE
Hey! Careful with that!

WILL
Shhhhh!

INT. TAG'S STUDY - LATER - NIGHT

The sun has set outside the darkened window. Tag is in his study with the door closed. He's noticeably RUMPLED, a bit SWEATY and HEATED. He paces, on a phone call with the bank, his voice URGENT and hushed:

TAG (ON PHONE)
I need to know there's enough in the slush account to cover a large check I'm going to have to write tonight.

ANGLE ON: THOMAS, hiding around the corner, still nursing his sore jaw, holding an ANTIQUE PISTOL he has taken from the case. He notices his father's emotional state, listening in on his phone call.

TAG (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
That's right, has to be tonight...

On Thomas, tipsily tip-toeing out, gun in hand, we CUT TO:

INT. BEACH TENT - LATER

Bruce has rejoined Celeste, Merritt and Karen at their table.

CELESTE
Dad. That speech. And I know how much you hate speeches. And red pants.

KAREN
It was beautiful, Bruce.

BRUCE
As long as I didn't embarrass you.

CELESTE
Hey, only *I* can embarrass me.

Bruce laughs as Celeste starts to boogie, doing his "running man" dance, pulling him out on the dance floor. Celeste throws her arms around her dad's neck as the MUSIC SLOWS, leaning a head on his shoulder. But MERRITT, looking pale, suddenly JUMPS up from the table and RUSHES out of the tent.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Oh, Dad, h- hold on, OK?--

Celeste quickly excuses herself, following Merritt out to:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Celeste rushes out to find Merritt SOBBING on the sand.

CELESTE
Mer? What's going on? Are you OK?

Merritt quickly covers, wiping her cheeks.

MERRITT
Sorry. It just hit me all of a sudden.

CELESTE
What hit you?

Merritt looks up at her. She's working up the nerve to say something. Celeste kneels in the sand next to her.

MERRITT
I don't want to lose you. You're the only family I've got.

CELESTE
Why would you lose me? I'll still be here.

MERRITT
I know. Yeah. Sorry.

CELESTE
Is it... something else?

Merritt is clearly burdened. But this is not the time.

MERRITT
(lying)
No.
(then)
What about you? How are you feeling about everything.

Celeste looks around. Ok. Here goes:

CELESTE
Do you think we can be in love with two people at the same time?

This lands on Merritt. She maybe suspected. She treads carefully:

MERRITT

Cel. My God. Really? Who?

Celeste squeezes her eyes shut. She's trembling.

CELESTE

If I say it, I can't *unsay* it,
y'know?

Merritt nods. She tenderly takes Celeste's hands in hers.

MERRITT

It's ok. I think I have a pretty
good idea.

As Celeste's fragile heart hangs in the balance, Merritt's expression darkens ever so slightly as she fiddles guiltily with... A RING... ON HER THUMB. Celeste looks down at the silver ring with three colorful stones as we SUDDENLY REALIZE: HOLY SHIT. TAG'S AFFAIR IS WITH... MERRITT!!!???

CELESTE

Oh... is that new?

BANG! BANG! Celeste and Merritt are STARTLED at what sounds like GUN SHOTS. They CLUTCH each other. BANG! BANG! BANG!

MERRITT

What the--?

And then, the sky ERUPTS in BURSTS of RED, WHITE and BLUE. It's FIREWORKS! It IS fourth of July weekend, after all.

CELESTE

Oh!

MERRITT

Aww!

It's LOUD. It's BRIGHT. Merritt rests her head on Celeste's shoulder as the LIGHTS DANCE off their upturned faces. Other guests emerge from the tent to watch the show: Greer, Abby, Tag, Benji, and even a stumbling Thomas. We glimpse the pistol tucked into his waistband, hidden by his blazer.

Celeste squeezes Merritt's hand as FIREWORKS go off overhead, BANG! BANG! WHOOSH! And then slowly, the light turns grey as the sun comes up and we TILT UP toward the house. One bedroom has a LIGHT ON. WE HAVE CAUGHT UP TO THE PRESENT DAY:

INT. CELESTE'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING - WEDDING DAY

The first fingers of dawn filter in as Celeste stands alone in her room, wearing her wedding dress. She stares in the mirror, seeming to want to memorize this moment. She grabs her cell phone to take a picture, when suddenly, she's DISTRACTED by something out the window...

EXT. THE BEACH - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Celeste emerges on to the cold morning sand in her bare feet, still wearing her dress. She squints, staring toward the water. What... the... ? She starts to walk, then run, to the water's edge, passing a KAYAK, lying UNLOCKED on the sand. As she nears the water, her heart STOPS.

She follows a faint line of BLOOD IN THE SAND to the water's edge, where she CROUCHES, and with shaking hands, turns over the floating corpse of her best friend:

CELESTE

Merritt?! NO! NOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING - LATER

WE'RE BACK WHERE WE STARTED: Nikki and Dan watch Celeste through a window into the interrogation room, where she sits in her wet wedding gown, bloody, cut-up feet dangling.

NIKKI

Someone knows what happened.

DAN

She's a good place to start.

Dan and Nikki exchange a look as we follow their gaze INSIDE the interrogation room, where we can HEAR Celeste's CELL PHONE BUZZING on the table next to her as we SLAM TO:

A SERIES OF QUICK POPS OVER A BUZZY, INTENSE NEEDLE DROP:

INT. TAG'S STUDY - SAME

Thomas quietly places the antique PISTOL back on its shelf.

INT. WILL WINBURY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Will carefully tends to a large bloody GASH on his palm.

INT. BENJI'S BEDROOM - SAME

Benji quietly, intently, flips through a stack of PHOTOS OF MERRITT, casual, laughing, smiling. A whole ARCHIVE of this beautiful girl.

INT. GREER AND TAG'S BEDROOM - SAME - (EARLY MORNING)

Tag sits on the edge of his bed, staring into space. Greer watches from her bedroom window as the CRIME SCENE TECHS drape a sheet over Merritt's body. She turns to Tag, weary:

GREER

It's happening again, isn't it.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - SAME

Back in the interrogation room, Celeste's phone is still BUZZING. She glances down, sees "MERRITT MONACO" on the caller ID, steals a glance at the cops, then flips her phone over, ignoring it. She stares straight ahead, dead-eyed and shivering. And off our haunted bride with quite a tale to tell, we:

END PILOT.