

After a lifetime of playing the field, four friends have to do something
they never thought possible...grow up.

MORRIS D.L. BILL SHEMAR
CHESTNUT HUGHLEY BELLAMY MOORE

THE BROTHERS

There is nothing like
a good woman
to make a brother want
to be a man.



Written and Directed by
Gary Hardwick

FADE IN:

INT. A ROOM

A WOMAN IN A WHITE WEDDING DRESS. Her face is covered by a veil. She holds a BOUQUET OF FLOWERS. The woman turns slowly in her elegance. Suddenly, she drops her bouquet, revealing a SNUB-NOSED .45. She raises the big gun. HER RED-NAILED THUMB cocks the hammer. The gun FIRES!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

DR. JACKSON SMITH, 27, handsome, black and romantically challenged bolts upright in bed in a cold sweat. He checks the clock. It's 3:04 AM.

JACKSON (o.s.)
...then, blam, she shoots my ass.

CUT TO:

INT. A PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A well-appointed psychologist's office. Jackson talks with THELMA WOOLRIDGE, 41, sexy, a black psychologist.

THELMA
What do you think your dream means?

JACKSON
I know what it means. It's about relationships, commitment.

THELMA
You think a committed relationship with a woman is death, Jackson?

JACKSON
Of course not-- it's the beginning of death. It's just hard to figure women out, you know.

THELMA
And so what do you think women want?

JACKSON
That's easy: money, multiple orgasms, and beautiful shoes that don't hurt like hell.

THELMA

(amused)

That's really sexist-- except that part about the shoes. Come on, give me a serious answer.

Jackson thinks, then:

JACKSON

(cynical)

They want commitment, love, I guess.

THELMA

And love is like looking down the barrel of a gun?

JACKSON

Right. See, you meet somebody, you have a little fun, then love drags it's ass into it, things go bad, and people get hurt.

(grimly)

And I'll be twenty-nine on my next birthday.

THELMA

Why does that bother you?

JACKSON

I can't blame my lack of a serious relationship on being a kid anymore. I've broken up with three women in two months. That's not right, is it?

THELMA

Three breakups. Maybe that's why you're so depressed.

JACKSON

It's not the breaking up. It's that I keep failing. I know how to break up with women. You just look them right in the eyes, and tell them the truth.

CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S CONDO - LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Jackson watches TV in a bathrobe eating some chips. On his answering machine, we hear:

WOMAN #1 ON PHONE (o.s.)
 ...I know you're avoiding me, Jack! I
 called the hospital, and there ain't no
 damned midnight medical conference!...

CUT TO:

Jackson in a running suit, stretching.

WOMAN #2 ON PHONE (o.s.)
 ...This is intentional! I will not be
 treated this way! It's unacceptable
 Jackson, you hear me? Unacceptable!
 (pause, then defeated)
 Call me.

CUT TO:

Jackson getting ready to go out to work.

WOMAN #3 ON PHONE (o.s.)
 You ain't shit-You-ain't-shit-You-ain't-
 shit-You-ain't-shit!

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Thelma looks at Jackson knowingly.

THELMA
 So, what do you think ruins your
 relationships with women?

Jackson reacts nervously to this, then:

JACKSON
 When I date a woman, after we get a
 sexual thing going, we start talking
 about making a commitment. I get scared,
 and I just... fall apart.

THELMA
 Sex can cause a lot of trouble between
 people, Jackson. Maybe you should become
 celibate, put the physical behind your
 greater spiritual self.

JACKSON
 Sorry, doc, but my greater spiritual self
 needs the booty.

THELMA
 And this fear happens in every case?

JACKSON
 Yes, and it's more than fear. I get
 frustrated, then scared, then sick,
 physically sick....

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Jackson walks along with a pretty woman. She is talking
 delightedly. Jackson looks upset.

JACKSON (o.s.)
 ... it's like I'm on some train tracks,
 and a big one is coming right at me...
 and I just want to run, run like hell.

Jackson runs to a wastebasket and retches into it. The woman
 is in shock.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - REALITY

THELMA
 Do you think your parents situation has
 anything to do with this?

JACKSON
 No. It's been three years now since they
 split up. I'm all over that.

THELMA
 Do you talk with them about this problem
 you're having?

JACKSON
 Are you kidding? My father is too busy
 gettin' busy with young girls, and mama
 is too busy being pissed off about it.
 Besides, if they knew anything about
 love, they'd still be together, wouldn't
 they?

Thelma takes this in for a moment, then:

THELMA
 Jackson, I have an assignment for you. I
 want you to get back out there and date
 some more. In fact, try to meet a woman
 tonight.

JACKSON
 I'm shooting hoop with the fellas
 tonight. Weekly tradition.

THELMA

Then do it the next night, or whenever.
But next time, open up your heart to her.
Try being a friend before you become her
lover.

JACKSON

I think I can handle that.

THELMA

Excellent. Oh, and if you say twenty-
nine is old again, I'll beat you down.

Jackson smiles shakes Thelma's hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - SAME TIME - ESTABLISHING

The Criminal Courts Building, Los Angeles. Activity is heavy
as people file in and out.

CUT TO:

INT. A COURTROOM

A busy courtroom in the building. BRIAN PALMER, 28, black
and handsome is at the podium. Brian is a player of the
highest order.

CARLA JOHNSON, 33, an attractive black judge. A LARGE
GALLERY is in the court.

CARLA

...motion to suppress denied, motion for
evidentiary hearing denied, motion for
continuance-- denied.

BRIAN

All of my motions denied, judge? Why?

Carla and Brian look at each other. We sense there's
something between them, and it's not good.

CARLA

Your affidavit was not based on credible
facts. This court will not tolerate
that. Motions denied.

Carla gavels. Brian walks away from the podium.

BRIAN

(mumbling)
Bitch.

CARLA
What did you say?

Brian is speechless, busted.

PUSH IN TO: Carla's angry face.

CUT TO:

INT. A HOLDING CELL - LATER

Brian stands at a prison cell door, brooding. A FEMALE BAILIFF walks up.

FEMALE BAILIFF
Come on, the judge is springing you.

BRIAN
About goddamned time.

Brian grabs his jacket and briefcase.

BRIAN (cont'd)
That bit-- woman is crazy.

FEMALE BAILIFF
Try working for her cranky ass.

Brian leaves the lock-up and walks away. Female Bailiff looks at his ass appreciatively and smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. BANK OFFICE - SAME TIME

A PICTURE of Jackson, Brian, two other men we will come to know as DERRICK, and TERRY. The four men are at a picnic, hugging, laughing and holding beers.

A MAN'S HAND. He fidgets with his WEDDING RING. PAN UP to DERRICK WEST, 29, black, married. Derrick is talking on the phone and getting ready to leave.

DERRICK
... I'm meeting The Brothers after work for our game... Yes, we're going to the club afterwards... How can our daughter miss me, when she's asleep?...

Derrick takes the phone away from his ear and sighs.

CUT TO:

INT. A BUSINESS OFFICE - SAME TIME

TERRY WHITE, 28, classically handsome businessman packs his briefcase to leave. SANDRA, a sexy young temp comes in with some papers. She smiles, flirting with Terry.

TERRY
Hey, Sandra.

SANDRA
Hi, Terry. It's my last day as a temp here.

TERRY
Oh really? Well, you've done a great job. I'll tell your agency so.

SANDRA
Thanks. Here's the European earnings report. It just came in.

Terry's PHONE RINGS.

TERRY
Thanks, uh just put it on my desk.

He turns his back on Sandra to answer the call.

TERRY (cont'd) (cont'd)
Terry White... hey, baby... I was just about to go... Yes, it's all set for tonight... Don't worry... Okay, love you, too.

Terry hangs up and turns around to find Sandra has unbuttoned her top. He looks her in shock. She rushes over and jumps on him.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - SAME TIME

Jackson looks down the throat of REDEENA, 5, a little girl with pigtails. He smiles and gives the kid the thumbs up. She returns the thumbs up. Jackson goes to her mother.

JACKSON
Okay, make sure she takes the medicine, and keep her throat warm.

REDEENA'S MOM
Thanks. So doctor, would you like to meet my sister? She's really great.

Jackson's on the spot. Redeena shakes her head "No" in the background.

JACKSON

Uh, I'm kinda off the market right now.

REDENA'S MOM

Oh, too bad.

Jackson gives the mother the prescription. They leave. He checks his watch, then walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

Jackson walks out of the building. TWO WOMEN walk by. He smiles and says hello. The women smile, check him out, then slap five as he passes. Jackson walks over to a Mercedes CLK convertible and gets in.

SLAMMIN' R&B TRACK BUMPS.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - SAME TIME

A COLORFUL BRACELET. PULL BACK TO REVEAL the angry face of A SPURNED BLACK WOMAN, as Brian hurries out of the building. At the foot of the stairs, he's stopped by the Spurned Woman. They argue. Brian walks off as she keeps yelling at him. Brian goes over to his ride, a red Corvette, and gets in.

CUT TO:

EXT. DELL COMPUTERS BUILDING - SAME TIME

Terry walks into a parking lot, turning the heads of women. He gets into a BMW Five Series and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. A BANK - SAME TIME

Derrick walks out of the building. Derrick reacts as his cellular phone RINGS. He answers it. He reacts, frustrated. Derrick keeps talking, arguing as he gets into his Lexus Coupe and drives off.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - LATER THAT EVENING.

A SERIES OF ANGLES as the four men drive down the streets of the city to their destination.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - LATE AFTERNOON

A BASKETBALL swishes the nets of a hoop.

NASTY RAP TUNE!

The Brothers are in a serious two on two game. Terry and Jackson are stripped to the waist. Brian and Derrick wear T-shirts.

A SERIES OF ANGLES: Show them jump, shoot, and sweat, pump and run.

Derrick is quick, agile, and has a deadly jumper.

Jackson is the worst player, but Terry holds him up.

Brian is rough, and very physical.

Derrick dribbles, then passes between Terry's legs to Brian who dunks. Derrick and Brian high five. The fellas all walk off as some other players take the court.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURT - MOMENTS LATER

The game is over. The fellas drink water and takes random shots, layups, and the like.

TERRY

...so when I turn around, this temp unbuttons her top, runs over and jumps right on my shit!

DERRICK

What?! You lying!

Derrick passes the ball hard to Terry.

TERRY

No lie, my brother.

He passes the ball back just as hard.

TERRY (cont'd)

She started talking about how it's her last day, she really likes me, and there would be no strings attached.

JACKSON

Damn, I need to get me a job at your company.

BRIAN

Please, that kinda shit be happenin' to me all the time. So, how was it, Terry?

TERRY

I didn't do it.

The other fellas loudly ad-lib to Terry that they don't believe him.

TERRY (cont'd)

I swear, I didn't. I lectured her about compromising a brother, then I sent her out.

BRIAN

I'm sorry, I would've waxed that ass all over the office. There would've been xeroxes of my nuts on everybody's desk the next morning.

TERRY

Well, I've turned in my player card. Me and my girl, BeBe, have a serious thing. I'm a one woman man.

DERRICK

After only two months of dating?

BRIAN

Terry, you can't change. Remember when you was kickin' it with that girl and her mama, and they both found out?

JACKSON

It was a messed up Thanksgiving at that house.

TERRY

That was a long time ago. I'm not like that anymore.

BRIAN

You know what, I'm changing, too. As of now, I'm through with the sisters.

DERRICK

Here we go again.

BRIAN

I'm serious this time. I'm tired of their shit. Carla-- Judge Johnson locked me up this morning because she is an evil, bitter, black woman.

JACKSON

Brian, you had sex with her, dumped her, then you called her a bitch in her courtroom.

BRIAN

So, what's your damned point, man?

DERRICK

Maybe she had a few other reasons to do what she did.

BRIAN

No, the sisters are just whack. They either have fake-ass hair, they're living in "baby-daddy" world, or they're some big, fat, mam-ma jamma. It's like they're giving out cheese sandwiches with the fake hair and babies. Now, what does that tell you?

TERRY

That you a dumbass. You give up on the sisters, you just giving up on yourself, man.

DERRICK

Word.

Terry and Derrick slap five.

JACKSON

You know, Brian might be right.

TERRY

What? Jack, what's up with you, man?

DERRICK

A woman's color don't mean nothing. It's what's inside that counts.

BRIAN

Now, did your wife tell you that before or after she unscrewed your dick, and put it in her purse? Jack, it's me and you.

JACKSON

Hold up. I'm not going out on the sisters. I just can't find a good prospect, either. I gotta look harder.

BRIAN

Look, we are the single, heterosexual, professional, black men. We are the cream, right?

TERRY

I am. I think you that sticky shit on the bottom of the barrel.

All of the fellas laugh at Brian.

BRIAN

My point is, we deserve the best, and the sisters ain't up to the job.

DERRICK

See, that's why when I met Sheila, I snapped her right up.

BRIAN

That, and she got pregnant on your ass.

DERRICK

We were going to get married anyway. We were in love. Love. You should look that word up in the dictionary. It's after ignorant and before stupid.

They all laugh as they walk off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUMPER'S - EVENING

It's a trendy bar and restaurant in the city. Brian, Jackson, and Derrick line up to get in. There are well-dressed people, mostly black, in line.

CUT TO:

INT. BUMPER'S - WAITING AREA

The interior is elegantly appointed and just as crowded. A HOSTESS is at a podium taking names. Brian, Jackson and Derrick enter.

DERRICK

(checks watch)

What the hell is keeping Terry?

BRIAN

Probably went back to work to finish off that girl who jumped him if he's smart.

JACKSON

Let's get on the list. He'll be here.

They get to the hostess, LAMUZINDAH, 28, a pretty young black woman.

LAMUZINDAH

How many?

BRIAN

Four, please.

LAMUZINDAH

Great. You can wait at the bar if you like.

(flirting)

That's a beautiful suit you're wearing.

BRIAN

(annoyed)

Yeah, thanks.

Brian turns his back on her. LaMuzindah is suitably upset.

DERRICK

Brian, why did you do that?

BRIAN

I told you. I'm done with 'em.

JACKSON

Come on, Brian. She seems nice to me.

BRIAN

Oh, really? Check it out.

Brian turns to the woman, smiling brilliantly.

BRIAN (cont'd)

Excuse me. I'm sorry I snapped at you. I had a hard day in court.

LAMUZINDAH

Oh, you're a lawyer? I used to work for a lawyer.

BRIAN

Really? Cool. I'm Brian.

They shake hands. LaMuzindah smiles sweetly.

LAMUZINDAH

I'm LaMuzindah.

BRIAN

La moo what--?

LAMUZINDAH

LaMuzindah, it means--

BRIAN

Uh huh, listen, my friend here is a pediatrician. I was wondering if you had any kids.

LAMUZINDAH

(nervously)

I-- uh, well actually I do. You wanna see some pictures?

BRIAN

Have a nice evening, baby.

Brian turns and they move on. LaMuzindah is pissed.

BRIAN (cont'd)

The defense rests.

DERRICK

That was just one sister. It was a coincidence.

A FAT BLACK WOMAN with fake-ass hair comes over. She eyes the fellas, smiling.

BRIAN

Coincidence? I think the hell not.

Terry walks up with BEBE FALES, 26, a pretty, young black woman. BeBe is a practical, no-nonsense, girl with a bit of a temper.

TERRY

Fellas, sorry I'm late. What's up?

All the fellas are surprised to see BeBe. They all AD LIB hellos to Terry and BeBe.

JACKSON

We're still waiting for a table.

BEBE

This place is always so crowded.

TERRY

Baby, your secret is showing.

BEBE'S PURSE, has a POLICE BADGE inside the flap. We can also see the butt of A GUN. BeBe flips it down.

BEBE

Oops. Thanks, honey.

BRIAN

(pointedly)

Yo, Terry, nice of you to bring a date.

TERRY
Oh right, but this is different.

Terry looks at BeBe. They share sweet smiles.

TERRY (cont'd)
BeBe and I are getting married!

BeBe and Terry kiss. BeBe shows off her ring.

PAN the shock and horror on the faces of Jackson, Derrick and Brian.

DERRICK
Terry, that's great.

JACKSON
Yeah, congratulations, man.

TERRY
Thanks, y'all.

Terry looks at Brian. Brian is obviously not happy.

BRIAN
(contempt)
I need a drink.

Brian walks to the bar. A beat, then:

BEBE
(pissed)
I have to go to the ladies' room.

BeBe leaves. Terry goes after Brian. Derrick and Jackson follow.

CUT TO:

INT. BUMPER'S BAR.

The fellas go to the bar and settle in. Derrick orders something from the bartender. Terry is hot.

TERRY
Brian, why did you do that to me in front of BeBe?!

BRIAN
I'm sorry, man. I was just shocked, that's all.

JACKSON
I have to admit, I am too, Terry. You were always the most confirmed bachelor out of all of us.

TERRY

I know but--

DERRICK

You used to always say, the only way you'd get married was if it was....

TERRY

Two minutes before I dropped dead. I know, but things change. I changed.

JACKSON

And you just started dating BeBe two months ago.

TERRY

I know, I know. Look fellas, I'll be twenty-eight next year. I think it's time--

JACKSON

Wait. That's not old, is it?

TERRY

No, but how long can you wait? I thought that's what we all wanted. You know, love, happiness, and all that other shit.

BRIAN

Love and happiness? We're talking about marriage here, man.

JACKSON

I mean, maybe fifty is old....

DERRICK

Terry, take it from me, marriage ain't something to just jump into. Sheila and I dated for two years before we got engaged.

JACKSON

Now eighty is old. You're wearing a diaper, slobbering on yourself, can't get your dick hard....

BRIAN

And two months is barely enough time to find out if the booty is right. And this girl carries a gun, you have an argument with her, you'll be gluing your dick back on.

TERRY

What is this, "Piss On Terry Night?"
You're my boys. You're supposed to be
happy for me.

Silence for a beat, then:

DERRICK

We are your friends. We just want what's
best for you, that's all, man.

Terry takes a moment. A seriousness washes over him.

TERRY

I'm ready for this. BeBe is a good woman.
She's sweet, smart, strong and we love
each other.

Silence from the others.

TERRY (cont'd)

(trying harder)

She graduated second in her class at the
Police Academy last year.

More silence.

TERRY (cont'd)

And she's fine.

All the other fellas LOUDLY AD LIB agreement with that
statement. The bartender brings a bottle of champagne.

JACKSON

I'll be twenty-nine on my next birthday,
and I ain't even close to finding
somebody special.

DERRICK

Jack, you're not an old man, okay? Damn.

BRIAN

Well, I ain't getting married. It takes
away the three things men want the most:
freedom, sex and more sex.

DERRICK

You're a lost cause, Brian.

JACKSON

Terry, you're my friend. I love you,
man, and I'm very happy for you.

DERRICK

Me, too. I wish you all the best.

They all look at Brian.

BRIAN

This is fucked up, but you my boy.

TERRY

I'll accept that from you, Brian. Hey, I see champagne. Why are we talking when we should be drinking?

DERRICK

You ain't said nothing but a word.

They all take a glass of champagne.

JACKSON

To Terry and BeBe. May they have love, happiness-- and all that other shit.

They all toast and drink. PULL BACK, showing the scope of the place, and all the people trying to find someone special.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A MALL - DAY

Jackson strolls the mall, window shopping. He bumps into Redeena, and her mother.

REDEENA

Dr. Smith!

JACKSON

How you doin' Redeena?

Jackson stoops to talk to the little girl.

CAMERA POV: Jackson and Redeena laugh with each other. The camera SNAPS the picture.

DENISE JOHNSON, 25, beautiful, black, single and waiting to exhale. She's snapping random pictures in the mall.

Jackson hears the sound and looks over to see Denise. There's an immediate attraction. Jackson says goodbye to Redeena and her mother who walk off.

Denise smiles and takes another picture of him. Jackson smiles.

DENISE

Well, don't just stand there, do something.

Denise takes Jackson's picture as he strikes sexy, then silly poses, they laugh, looking at each other and knowing this moment has been special.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A RESTAURANT - LATER THAT MORNING

Jackson and Denise are having lunch.

DENISE

So, did you know that little girl?

Jackson is thrown by this. He thinks fast.

JACKSON

She's one of my-- students, I'm a teacher.

DENISE

That's nice. I'm a freelance photographer.

(re cameras)

I guess you could see that.

JACKSON

An artist, I like that.

An awkward moment as the smile at each other feeling a great attraction.

DENISE

It's always so hard meeting someone.

JACKSON

I know. I never know where to begin. There's so much game-playing b.s. in relationship these days.

DENISE

I know. Why can't people just be honest?

JACKSON

I don't know.

They share a knowing look, then:

CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Jackson and Denise are kissing heatedly and disrobing.

DENISE

I don't normally do this, I swear....

JACKSON

I was supposed to get to know you, be your friend first....

More clothes fall.

JACKSON (cont'd)

I mean, I really think that we should wait a while....

Denise slips her hand down his pants.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Damn!

They kiss again. From somewhere inside of him, Jackson finds the willpower to say:

JACKSON (cont'd)

Hold up, hold up.

They stop their foreplay.

DENISE

(breathing hard)

Is something wrong? Did I do something?...

JACKSON

No, you're great, beautiful. It's just that... I'd like us to

(this kills him)

get to know each other before we have sex.

DENISE

Oh. Okay, I'm with that. Friendship is important, you know.

JACKSON

Yes, it's the foundation of any relationship that's worth anything.

They pause a moment, then:

DENISE

You know, I've never been with a man who cared this much. It's nice.

JACKSON

Thanks.

He kisses her lightly.

DENISE

You're welcome.

She kisses him back. They kiss again and again, then they fall all over each other again and roll into bed, then drop off onto the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DERRICK'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

SHEILA WEST, 26, tough, domineering wife and mother. Sheila is into a TV program and a bowl of popcorn. Derrick enters in his pajamas.

DERRICK

We gotta get Janel some new books to read her to sleep. I got Dr. Seuss coming out of my ass.

Derrick settles into bed.

SHEILA

So, I suppose Terry's gonna have a bachelor party with a lot of naked hos.

DERRICK

Yep. Never thought Terry would fall. Kinda makes me feel like an old, married man.

SHEILA

This excitement about Terry is a lot of trouble for nothing. He ain't the husband type. He and that Brian have been bed-hopping ever since we've known them. And all of a sudden, Terry's gonna give that up? Please. A crackhead has a better chance in a weight lifting contest.

DERRICK

I thought he was being hasty, too. But Terry has always known what he wanted.

Sheila switches off the TV, turns off the light. She goes to the wall and listens.

SHEILA

Well, it sounds like the coast is clear.

She goes back to bed. She and Derrick start to kiss. Sheila kisses down his chest and stomach to his crotch area.

DERRICK

Yes... yes...

Suddenly, Sheila stops, hesitates then goes back up.

DERRICK (cont'd)
No, no. What's up honey?....

SHEILA
I'm not ready.

DERRICK
What do you mean you're not ready? You promised.

SHEILA
I been thinking about it, and I just-- I can't do it right now.

Derrick starts to get angry. He tries to control it.

DERRICK
Sheila, we've been married for three years, baby.

SHEILA
I know, but---

DERRICK
But what?

Sheila hesitates, then:

SHEILA
It's nasty.

DERRICK
What the fu--!
(catches himself)
Honey, baby. I love you with all my heart and soul. Please, lets try it.

Sheila looks him deep in the eyes, this is the man she loves, the father of her child, then:

SHEILA
No.

Derrick gets up and storms out.

CUT TO:

INT. DEN

Derrick enters, goes to a bar a fixes a drink. Sheila enters.

SHEILA
What are you doing? Why are you drinking at this hour?

DERRICK

Because I'm a grown man, and I can't get head from my own wife!

SHEILA

Why don't you just go into your daughter's room and yell it to her?

DERRICK

(quieter)

Look, we've talked about this. We went to that counselor. We bought those books. You said you were ready.

SHEILA

I know, I know, but I'm psyched out now. I was eating a banana today, and I gagged on it.

DERRICK

Well, don't bite off my banana, and we can get this show on the road.

SHEILA

Derrick, honey--

DERRICK

You know, I do it for you.

SHEILA

I don't ask you to.

DERRICK

You don't stop me, either.

SHEILA

Well, you don't have to anymore, okay?

DERRICK

No, Sheila, that's the difference between us, I don't mind doing it. Hell, I like it.

SHEILA

So, if I had a dick, you would suck it?

DERRICK

What kind of question is that? You ain't no man, and I ain't no woman.

SHEILA

Answer the question. Would you suck my dick or not!

DERRICK
 Yes, I would, with smile on my face, and
 a beer strapped to the top of my
 goddamned head!

Derrick walks back into the bedroom. Sheila follows.

CUT TO:

INT. DERRICK'S BEDROOM

Derrick enters and paces, finishing his drink.

SHEILA
 Derrick, honey, don't be angry. All my
 life I was taught that good girls didn't
 do that. My mother used to tell me that
 if I did it, I'd get cancer. I'm dealing
 with some painful psychological barriers
 here.

DERRICK
 (hatred)
 Your Mama. I bet she's sucked every dick
 from here to Argentina.

Sheila hits him with a pillow.

SHEILA
 My mother is a saint.

DERRICK
 "Saint Suck It!"

She hits him harder.

SHEILA
 Your Mama is senile.

DERRICK
 At least she's got an excuse. Your
 mama's screwed up for no reason.

She hits him again.

DERRICK (cont'd)
 Stop hitting me, woman, before I---

SHEILA
 What? Hit me? Go ahead beat me, Ike. I
 don't want to talk about this anymore.
 I'm going watch TV.

DERRICK
 Fine, go ahead. Run away instead of
 talking about our problems.

Sheila gets up and walks to the door. She turns.

SHEILA

You know, we have a daughter. Are you gonna advise her to go down on her boyfriends?

DERRICK

Yes, right after I tell her it that don't cause cancer!

Sheila throws a pillow at Derrick, hitting him in the face, then leaves. Derrick angrily throws it aside.

CUT TO:

INT. A BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Brian is in bed looking satisfied. Next to him, is JESSE CALDWELL, 24, a pretty white woman.

JESSE

So, you've known me for a year, and all of a sudden you ask me out. What took you so long?

BRIAN

Well, you could say I've been looking for love in the wrong damned places.

There's an awkward silence, then:

BRIAN (cont'd)

Listen, uh---

JESSE

Jesse.

BRIAN

Right, Jesse. I have some work to do, baby so--

JESSE

Sure, I can go. I have an early class tomorrow.

BRIAN

Right, what is it you teach?

JESSE

Self-defense classes-- karate. Look, Brian, I know this was spur of the moment and all, but if you ever want to hook up again, just call me.

Brian is taken aback by this. Jesse gives him a peck on the cheek, and gets up.

BRIAN
Hey, wait. Stay a while.

JESSE
Okay, that's fine, too.

She sits back down.

BRIAN
Jesse, I'm sorry about all that. I guess I'm in a bad mood.

JESSE
I know how it is. Sometimes, I don't want to be bothered either. I don't like to cuddle and all that shit. So, if we were at my house, I might ask you to leave.

BRIAN
Oh, really?

JESSE
Yeah, really. I asked this guy to go one time, and he got mad. He was yelling, and I got scared....

BRIAN
Don't tell me you "karated" his ass.

JESSE
I had to. I didn't know what he was gonna do.

They laugh a little.

BRIAN
You know, I've got some wine. You want some?

JESSE
Sure. Where is it?

BRIAN
In the kitchen.

Brian is about to get up.

JESSE
I got it.

Jesse jumps up to get it. Brian smiles happily and we:

CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S BEDROOM - LATER

Denise and Jackson kiss breathing heavily having just finished making love. They lie together, satisfied.

JACKSON
Good thing my walls are thick.

DENISE
Sorry. I shoulda told you I'm kind of a screamer.

JACKSON
(smiles proudly)
That's okay.

Jackson sits up and looks at Denise.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Denise. I lied to you.

DENISE
Shit! You're married!

JACKSON
No.

DENISE
Gay?

JACKSON
Hell no. I'm not a teacher.

DENISE
Then, what do you do?

JACKSON
I'm a doctor, a pediatrician. That little girl you saw me with was one of my patients.

DENISE
I thought that was a pretty nice car for a teacher. Well, I lied, too.

JACKSON
You have a baby!

DENISE
No, I'm a brain surgeon.

They both laugh nervously.

JACKSON

No, really, I am a doctor. I lied because sometimes, I go out with women and when they find out I'm a doctor they start to trip. Pease forgive me.

DENISE

Okay, but no more lies until we get married.

They laugh at this. A beat of silence. Denise begins to feel uncomfortable.

DENISE (cont'd)

Listen, Jackson, I really don't do this on the first date. I mean, it is not easy to get in my pants, you know. Normally, it would take three, four weeks to get some--

Jackson grabs her hand, stopping her.

JACKSON

Hey, I got carried away, too. I was weak, you know. You're not sorry you came here with me, are you?

DENISE

No this is great. I just haven't had good luck with men. I'm not helping my situation doing things like this.

Jackson thinks, remembering Thelma's advice.

JACKSON

You know, I've had bad luck, too.

DENISE

A handsome, intelligent doctor? I doubt it.

JACKSON

Thanks, but believe it or not none of those things make a damn difference. My problem-- I'm seeing a therapist about it.

DENISE

That's good-- wait. You ain't some kind of "psycho booty-killer" are you?

JACKSON

(laughs)

No, nothing quite that ambitious. I... See... it's hard for me to say.

Denise sees Jackson is in some pain.

DENISE
Wait, I can help.

Denise grabs her portfolio and pulls out some photos.

DENISE (cont'd)
Okay, I learned this in my photography class. Life is like a big set of moments, right? You freeze these moments, put them together, and they'd look like a picture album. Now, I took these last week at a school.

ANGLE ON: A picture of some kids sitting on the steps of a school. It's a rich, golden brown color.

JACKSON
I see you like kids. Why are they brown?

DENISE
They're sepia. I take a shot, and turn it that color. And when it turns, it's so beautiful, the moments of life going through an evolution, like people turning into better versions of themselves. Now, I want you to think of this moment, our relationship tonight. If you tell me your secret, we'd me making that kind of change together.

JACKSON
(amused)
We'd be turning sepia?

DENISE
Doctors are so smart.

Jackson looks at the pictures, then at Denise who smiles at him like an angel. He smiles back, touched by her daring and cleverness.

JACKSON
You crazy, you know that?

DENISE
Maybe, but you're smiling, ain't you?

Jackson takes a deep breath, then:

JACKSON
Okay.
(MORE)

JACKSON (cont'd)

See, when I meet a woman, I get to know her, we become intimate, then when the relationship gets around to commitment I freeze up. I get weird, sick, even.

DENISE

You mean sick in the heart, like confused?

JACKSON

No, sick to my stomach, like throwing up. It's like the world closes in on me. I get anxious, nervous, and I can't concentrate on work, can't relax, I can't do anything that's important to my life. I'm cut off from everything that's vital, like I'm falling into a bottomless pit, and I know the only way to stop it, the only way to save myself, is to cut the woman out of my life.

Denise is shocked to hell by this.

DENISE

Damn-- uh, I can see how that's a problem.

JACKSON

I understand if you want to go.

DENISE

No. I don't scare easy.

JACKSON

It'd be better if you ran like hell.

DENISE

Sorry, but it's too late. I want to help. Let me help you, Jackson.

They kiss each other and start to make love again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMITH HOUSE - ESTABLISHING - EVENING

A big, beautiful home in a fashionable area of the city. New luxury cars are parked on the curb.

CUT TO:

EXT. SMITH HOUSE PATIO

The house is filled with young adults. There's a banner that says: "CONGRATULATIONS, CHERE." MUSIC plays.

Jackson and Denise talk with CHERE, 18, his younger sister. Chere is bright, gorgeous and outspoken.

JACKSON

So, when do you start school?

CHERE

I can go after June. I'm going early and find a nice place to live.

DENISE

Good for you, Chere.

JACKSON

So, did Mama talk to you about men?

CHERE

She did that years ago, Jack.

JACKSON

I didn't say sex. I said men.

CHERE

I'm a strong, black woman. I'm not thinking about no man.

DENISE

You just gotta find the right one. I had to kick down the door to your brother's heart, but I got in there.

JACKSON

Yes, you did, baby.

They kiss.

CHERE

Public intimacy? I have never seen him like this. Girl, you must have Kryptonite in your... possession.

JACKSON

Denise and I communicate. You need to learn this concept.

CHERE

Right. All men are dogs.
(barks)

JACKSON

And you need to stop that foolish mentality. This is life. Relationships are complicated, and serious in the real world.

ADELLE SMITH, fortyish, beautiful, Jackson's mother, walks up. She's a feisty, strong willed woman. She's wearing a short skirt and a seriously low-cut top.

ADELLE

There are my beautiful children.

Adelle kisses them. Jackson looks in horror at his mother's cleavage.

JACKSON

(to Adelle)

Where's the rest of your outfit?

ADELLE

And you would be talking to?...

JACKSON

You. I'm talking to you, Mama. You shouldn't be dressing like that.

ADELLE

How very Freudian of you, son. Now I know I'm looking good.

DENISE

You look fine, Ms. Smith.

CHERE

Yes, you do, Mother.

JACKSON

Mama, why haven't you talked to Chere about men?

ADELLE

Oops, I'll do it right now. Chere, a man only needs three things, and two of them are money.

The women all laugh.

DENISE

Ms. Smith, I wanna be just like you when I grow up.

ADELLE

Call me Adelle. You're so much nicer than the women Jackson used to date.

JACKSON

Mama, please.

ADELLE

Don't fight the truth son, it makes you grow old faster. Not that I would know with my fine self.

JACKSON

Now I know it's time to get on.

Jackson excuses himself and walks on. The women move inside the house.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH DEN

The ladies move inside and walk over to a bar.

ADELLE

So, Denise, I'm sure you probably want to know how to snag my son, how you can tell if he's for real.

DENISE

Actually, Adelle the sisters from my generation don't worry about that. We got it all together, so the men need to figure out how to snag me.

CHERE

Gimme some on that.

Denise and Chere slap five.

ADELLE

Oh, so you don't want to know the secret?

DENISE

I didn't say all that.

ADELLE

Well, there's one sure way to tell if a man really loves you. When it's late, and you're all hugged up on the sofa, eating food, watching TV, and just all over each other. If he will give you his last piece of food. Baby, that's love.

DENISE

Now, I like that.

CHERE

Me, too. It's got sacrifice, protection, the sensuality of eating. I learned all that in my psyche class.

ADELLE

I learned it the hard way.

Jackson walks up with FRED SMITH. He is Jackson's father, tall, dark, handsome, and arrogant.

JACKSON

Hey, look who I found.

FRED

(to Chere)

Congratulations, baby!

Fred hands Chere a little gift box. Adelle ad-libs a stiff hello to Fred.

JACKSON

And this is my girlfriend, Denise Johnson.

Fred and Denise react. We can see there is something between him and Denise. Jackson doesn't pick up on it.

FRED

(covering smoothly)

Nice to meet you.

DENISE

Same here.

They shake hands, Denise looks flustered.

CUT TO:

INT. STREET IN THE 'HOOD - SAME TIME

A street in the inner city. At the curb of a house, is Brian's RED CORVETTE. Next to it is T-BOY, a huge black man.

CUT TO:

INT. BELL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

It's a well-kept home. BELLE PALMER, late forties, hard, bitter, working mother is talking to Brian and his brother TYREL 15. We can see they have different fathers.

BRIAN

Tyrel asked me to come over, mama.

BELLE

Why did you call your brother, Tyrel?

TYREL

You know why. You trippin' again.

BELLE

You had them fools in my house, smoking
dope, drinking and having sex.

TYREL

Didn't nobody have sex.

The door opens. T-Boy pokes his head in.

T-BOY

Yo, Brian some of my boys wanna steal
your car for you.

BRIAN

No. No insurance scams, T-Boy.

T-BOY

Damn. Aw'ight.

T-Boy exits.

BELLE

I want you to tell your friends that this
house is off limits.

TYREL

Why don't you just give me an orange
jumpsuit and some tatoos?

BRIAN

Mama, let's talk about this.

BELLE

He had these neighborhood niggas in my
house, actin' a fool and having sex!

TYREL

I told you, me and LaDonna wasn't doing
nothing, aw'ight?

BELLE

I guess it was raining condoms outside
your bedroom window, or maybe two
squirrels was bonin' with it.

BRIAN

Mama!

T-Boy pops his head back in.

T-BOY

Yo, Brian, my boys say they'll give you
eighty percent of--

BRIAN
I will drive that car into a brick wall
and die before I let them touch it!

T-BOY
So, that means "no", right?
(off Brian's look)
I'm gone.

T-Boy is gone.

BELLE
I don't like him outside of my house.

BRIAN
He's just watching my car, Ma.

TYREL
She don't like nobody but in here them
old ass church ladies.

BELLE
Little Negro say what?!

Belle walks toward Tyrel. Brian moves between them as they yell at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH HOUSE- SAME TIME

Fred and Denise cover their reactions.

CHERE
It's about time you got here.

FRED
I had to make a stop.

ADELLE
Fred, you look good. Almost as good as
me--

Before Fred can respond, URSULA, 27, a beautiful young black woman steps in and takes Fred's arm. Adelle's face cracks.

FRED
Oh, everyone this is Ursula.

URSULA
Bonjour.

Everyone except Adelle AD-LIBS hellos.

FRED
C'est ma famille, Ursula.
 (to others)
 She doesn't speak much English.

ADELLE
 We have got to do something about our
 weak-ass immigration laws.

Denise can't stand it anymore. She needs to get away.

DENISE
 I need another drink. Excuse me.

Denise walks off.

FRED
 I think my date and I could use a
 refreshment, too. Anyone else want one.

No one answers.

FRED (cont'd)
 Okay then. Excuse me.

Fred walks off after Denise. Adelle glares at Ursula.
 Jackson steps between them.

CUT TO:

INT. PARTY BAR

Fred and Denise talk at the bar.

FRED
 Denise, good to see you again.

DENISE
 I'm not sure how good it is, Fred.

FRED
 It is a small world, isn't it? So, what
 are we gonna do about this?

DENISE
 Nothing. We're not going to do anything.
 (sighs)
 Damn, you know he doesn't have one
 picture of you at his place? Why did
 your last name have to be Smith?
 Everybody's last name is Smith.

FRED
 Too late for regrets, Denise. You and I
 can't change what happened between us.
 We should tell him.

DENISE
No, I'll do it. I need to tell him in
my own way.

FRED
Okay. You know, it's good to see you
again.

Before she can say anything, Jackson walks over.

JACKSON
Hey, you over here trying to steal my
girl?

Fred and Denise laugh nervously.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Daddy yo got to come back over before
mama kills your date.

ANGLE ON: Adelle who talks to Ursula while Chere watches,
embarrassed.

ADELLE
... so, the words "stank ho" don't mean
anything to you?

URSULA
Je ne comprends pas.

Fred walks up with Jackson and Denise right behind. He hands
Ursula a drink.

FRED
Here yo go, honey.

Adelle retracts her claws.

CHERE
Mama, can you help me organize my
presents?

ADELLE
Sure.

DENISE
I'll help, too.

They all walk off, leaving Jackson Fred and Ursula.

JACKSON
Daddy, why would you come here with her?
(to Ursula)
No offense.
(to Fred)
You know it only upsets Mama.

FRED
Sorry, but I have my own life now.

JACKSON
So, what do you think of Denise?

FRED
She seems nice. You guys serious?

JACKSON
Getting there.

FRED
That's great. I'm happy for you.

URSULA
Fred, J'ai aller aux cabinets.

FRED
(pointing)
C'est la-bas.

Ursula walks off. Jackson looks at Fred inquisitively.

FRED (cont'd)
Bathroom.

JACKSON
Mama's gonna be upset about this for at
lest a week.

FRED
Your mother and I are divorced. I have
my own life now. She understands that.

Jackson thinks a second, then:

JACKSON
I just don't get it. How can two people
live together, share together for twenty
years and then leave?

FRED
You know why your mother and I split.

JACKSON
I'm not talking about you. I'm talking
about everybody, anybody. How do you
make that kind of investment, then walk
away from it?

FRED
Well, I'll tell you, son. The things you
dislike about your husband or wife are
all there when you marry them.

(MORE)

FRED (cont'd)

But you think your love is strong enough to overcome it. But over time, these things, these little irritations grate at you, chipping away your resistance.

(makes chipping sound)

Then, one day she says: "Pass the butter," and you scream: "To hell with it. I'm outta here!"

JACKSON

Is that what happened? Just time, wear and tear? Erosion?

FRED

Something like that.

Jackson contemplates this, then:

JACKSON

Did I tell you that Terry White is getting married?

FRED

Little Terry? That's great. Your mother and I were best friends with his parents. Until we split up. Now, we have to share them like everything else.

JACKSON

Her name is BeBe. She's a rookie cop.

FRED

That great. You and Terry have been friends since you were ten. So, I guess you're thinking about taking the fall, too, huh?

JACKSON

With this family's luck? No thanks. Marriage is screwed up.

FRED

You don't know that. Me and your mother had some great years. Who knows, your luck could be better than mine. They say talent skips a generation.

JACKSON

I'll keep that in mind.

FRED

You know, you should visit your old man sometimes. I'm always at one of my car dealerships.

Chere walks up smiling and dangling car keys.

CHERE
Daddy, where is it?!

FRED
In the driveway.

Chere gathers her friends and goes outside. Everyone follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Chere screams as she sees a WHITE BMW CONVERTIBLE with a bow on it. She jumps for joy and gives Fred a kiss. Chere gets in the car with her friends and turns on the radio.

A LOVE SONG COMES ON. Adelle walks up next to Jackson. She looks at Fred with contempt.

ADELLE
Promise me that you'll never be like him
with your wife.

JACKSON
Mama, don't let him do this to you.

ADELLE
(sternly)
Promise me.

Jackson considers this, thinking of his problem.

JACKSON
I promise.

Jackson hugs his mother and gives her a kiss.

CUT TO:

INT. BELL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Brian separates Belle and Tyrel.

BRIAN
Tyrel, go outside and help T-Boy watch my
ride.

Tyrel shoots daggers at Belle as he leaves.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Mama, I want you to let Tyrel come and
live with me.

BELLE

No, I told you before. I'm not letting him go.

BRIAN

Why not? It's not like daddy here around anymore--

BELLE

Don't even bring up that fool to me. Left me for some white ho.

BRIAN

She's Hawaiian.

BELLE

If she ain't black, she white.

BRIAN

See, that's what I'm talking about. That's just ridiculous.

BELLE

It's a fact of life.

BRIAN

That's crazy. Latino women--

BELLE

A white woman with a taco.

BRIAN

Oh, so, I guess Asian women--

BELLE

White woman who "no speaky the goddamned English!"

Belle finds a cigarette and lights up.

BELLE (cont'd)

Both of you are just like your daddies. Tyrel is a full of shit low-life, and you're a worthless, smooth-talking pretty boy.

BRIAN

How long are you gonna look at us and see them? All you've ever done was try to kill our spirit-- like they killed yours.

Belle is angry and sad at this.

BELLE

Get outta my house.

BRIAN

When Tyrel gets old enough, he's coming with me.

BELLE

You ain't moving fast enough. Put some speed on, nigga.

BRIAN

And when he leaves, you can stay here alone and yell at yourself.

Belle slaps him hard in the face. Brian reacts, angry, then he smiles bitterly.

BRIAN (cont'd)

And I love you, too.

Brian walks to the door. Belle looks at him, sad and angry.

BRIAN'S POV: He closes the door, shutting her out.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A RETIREMENT HOME - ESTABLISHING

It's a nice looking retirement home in the suburbs. Derrick's Caddy pulls up. Derrick gets out and walks in the building.

CUT TO:

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - THE NEXT DAY

Derrick enters the place. The interior is clean and beautiful, like a really nice hotel. Derrick walks over to a room. Inside, there are several senior citizens watching TV. One of them is MARY WEST, 70, Derrick's mother. Derrick walks over and kisses her.

DERRICK

Hey, Mama. How are you doing?

Mary looks at him for a second, thinks, then:

MARY

Hey, son.

DERRICK

You look great.

MARY

I don't look dead, that all I care about these days.

DERRICK
Mama, don't talk like that. You're gonna live forever.

Mary looks at her son, her boy, then:

MARY
What the hell you talking about, Derrick? Everybody dies. I swear I drank too much when I carried you.

DERRICK
Mama, you drank when you carried me?

MARY
Well, it's not like I was operating heavy machinery or nothing.

Derrick takes a moment, then:

DERRICK
Mama, I want you to come live with me and my family.

MARY
When did you get married?

JACKSON
Three years ago. You were there.

Mary thinks hard, then:

MARY
That's right. We ate chicken. I'm forgetting things again. Must be that damn medicine they give me.

DERRICK
That's right, Mama. It's the medicine.

MARY
How's my grandbaby?

DERRICK
Janel's great. Look Mama, I talked with James and Louise,
(for her benefit)
your other children.

MARY
I know who they are. Are you high or something?

DERRICK
No ma'am. We think it's time you left this place.

MARY
I like it here.

DERRICK
I know Mama, but-- I miss you. And Janel
would love having you around.

Mary thinks about this, then:

MARY
And your wife?

DERRICK
I'm working on that.

MARY
That's right. We don't like each other.
Evil witch. No, I think I'll be staying.

DERRICK
Mama, you shouldn't have to be here. It
was okay when you and Daddy were here
together, but now--

Derrick reacts. He knows he's messed up. Mary is saddened
by this memory.

MARY
Yes, it was different when your father
was alive. Remember when we all went to
the Grand Canyon? Your father didn't
know how cold it was up there, and he
didn't bring a jacket? But he just had
to see it. He froze his ass off. Kept
saying "How can it be this damned cold in
Arizona!"

Mary smiles fondly at this special memory.

DERRICK
Mama how can... how can you remember
that?

MARY
Remember what, son?

DERRICK
Nothing. You just get ready to go have
lunch with me.

Derrick kisses her and helps her up. They walk out of the
room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Jackson holds a two year old baby and talks to its mother.
He takes a medicine dropper.

JACKSON
When you give her the drops, just play
with her, like it's a game.

Denise comes in the open door and sees the following.

JACKSON (cont'd)
(to baby)
Hey, Leslie, here comes the rain cloud,
look, there a drop of rain now!
(makes thunder noises)
Here it comes-- ooh!

Jackson gives the baby the medicine.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Okay, one every four hours.

Jackson gives the mother the kid. He turns to see Denise.

DENISE
You're the best-est rain cloud ever.

JACKSON
Yeah, they had a class in medical school
for that.

They walk out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Jackson and Denise walk into the hallway.

JACKSON
So, what brings you by?

DENISE
You left this on the front table at home
like you always do.

She hands him a pager.

JACKSON
Thanks. Hey, I forgot to tell you, my
father approves of you for what that's
worth.

DENISE
That means a lot to me, actually.

JACKSON

Hold up. You didn't stay over last night. How did you get in my place?

DENISE

I stopped by this morning to get some things. The manager let me in. He sees me there so much, you know.

JACKSON'S POV: Denise's mouth.

DENISE (cont'd)

(scary sounding)

Don't forget, we have our regular thing at the gym. And I'm gonna need you to take me to a shoot next week again....

Jackson grabs his stomach, feeling queasy.

DENISE (cont'd)

(normal voice)

Honey, are you okay?

JACKSON

Huh? Oh, I'm just tired, you know.

DENISE

Okay, I gotta go, but don't forget I'm coming by tonight.

Denise kisses him and walks away. She passes Terry headed toward Jackson they say a brief hello. Terry walks up to Jackson they slap five and say ad-lib hello.

TERRY

I only got a little time for lunch man. Where we goin'?

JACKSON

There's a little place around the way.

Terry notices his friend's down mood.

TERRY

Something wrong, man?

JACKSON

No... well, actually there is. Things are going great between me and Denise.

TERRY

Yeah, I hate when that shit happens.

JACKSON

At first I was getting sick worrying about making a commitment to Denise. Well, I got over that. We're close now.

TERRY

Then what's wrong?

JACKSON

We're too damned close. Now, that's what's making me sick. I thought I'd be out there for a while, looking for the right girl, you know, then boom, she falls right into my lap. All of a sudden, you're thinking about her in everything you do, you're thinking about forever.

Terry thinks, about his pending nuptials.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Forever is some scary shit, man. But I don't have to tell you that, right?

TERRY

No. No, you don't. So, you were miserable without her, and now you're miserable with her. You are in love, my brother.

Jackson considers this simple, yet profound logic.

JACKSON

Dammit. That's what I thought.

TERRY

Come on man, let's go eat.

They walk off together.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT - SAME TIME

A large soul food restaurant in the city. The crowd is predominantly black. Brian and Jesse sit at a table.

JESSE

So, you don't know who flattened the tires on your car?

BRIAN

No. It could be anyone. Lawyers make a lot of enemies.

JESSE

I bet a woman did it. It's how we get back at men. A car is just a big 'ol dick with wheels.

A SHADOW falls on them. Brian looks up into the very angry face of Carla, the judge. Brian is unnerved and embarrassed.

BRIAN

Judge-- I'm having dinner here.

CARLA

You filed a motion with the Chief Judge to have me permanently barred from all your cases.

BRIAN

Yes, I did, but I think you'd agree that I'm right.

CARLA

(to Jesse)
Hi, I'm Judge Carla Johnson.

JESSE

Hi, I'm Jesse.

CARLA

Are you a lawyer also?

JESSE

No, I'm kind of a teacher.

CARLA

Teacher? What's that pay these days?

BRIAN

Carla, there's no reason for this.

CARLA

Sorry. You two have a nice meal.

Carla starts to walk away.

JESSE

What's her problem?

Carla turns back around.

CARLA

Excuse me? What did you say?

BRIAN

Carla, why are you making a scene?

CARLA
I'm not making a scene. We're just two girls talking.

(hard, to Jesse)
Now, what did you say about me?

JESSE
I said, what's your problem?

CARLA
My problem is tired-ass brothers like this. And women like you.

BRIAN
Jesse, let's go. I don't need this. You're out of line, Carla.

Brian and Jesse start to leave.

CARLA
I should have kept you locked up.

Carla gets in Jesse's face, putting her finger right in front of her nose.

CARLA (cont'd)
And you. You women get the whole world given to you, and it's still not enough. You gotta have our men, too.

JESSE
Take your finger out of my face.

CARLA
Or what? What are you gonna--

Carla presses her finger into Jesse's face. Jesse grabs Carla.

BRIAN
Jesse, no!

KARATE YELL!

NEW ANGLE: Carla flies through the air, lands hard on her butt and hits her head on the floor. Brian runs over to Carla and picks her up.

Some black women at a table stand up, glaring at Jesse. One of them comes over and helps Carla up.

JESSE
You all saw it. She hit me first.

STEVE, a big man comes out of the kitchen, carrying a baseball bat.

STEVE
 (to Brian)
 Alright, get your hands off the sister,
 take "Felicity" here and get up outta my
 restaurant.

BRIAN
 I'm trying to help her.

Steve moves closer, lifting the bat.

STEVE
 I'm not gonna ask you again.

Brian leaves Carla to the waitress. He walks to the door.
 Jesse follows.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT PARKING LOT - EVENING

Brian and Jesse walk out of the restaurant. Brian is angry.

BRIAN
 Get in the car.

JESSE
 Why are you mad at me?

BRIAN
 You assaulted a judge.

JESSE
 So, she curses us both out, jabs her
 finger in my face, and you're yelling at
 me?

BRIAN
 You had no right to hit her. It was
 childish. I have a reputation and you
 made me look stupid. You know what? You
 ain't no different than the other ones.

Jesse's eyes widen at this.

JESSE
 What do you mean? What "other ones?"

BRIAN
 Nothing, let's go.

JESSE
 You thought I'd be different from her
 because I'm white?

BRIAN
I didn't say that.

JESSE
Let me tell you something, all us women have one thing in common: we don't like bullshit men.

BRIAN
What the hell are you talkin' about?

JESSE
You're arrogant and self-centred. What happened in there wasn't all about you. Do you have any regard for me?

Brian reacts, hearing Carla's statement coming out of Jesse's mouth. He points a finger at her.

BRIAN
You need to just shut your ass up.

Jesse jumps into a fighting stance.

JESSE
What? You want some too? Come on.

Brian backs off, scared, then he dismisses her. Brian gets into the car and drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A ROOM

A BIG .45. PAN AROUND to see its awesomeness.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Jackson standing in front of the gun, looking terrified. He turns and runs.

The woman's hand pulls the trigger. THE HAMMER hits and the gun FIRES!

CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jackson awakens in terror. A CLOCK reads: 11:11 p.m.

JACKSON
Jesus.

Jackson gets out of bed and dials a number.

JACKSON (cont'd)
Hey.

DENISE (v.o.)
Hey baby. You still working?

JACKSON
No. Listen, why don't you come over?

DENISE (v.o.)
You sure?

JACKSON
Yeah, I'm sure.

Jackson hangs up, breathes deeply and lays back down.

CUT TO:

INT. DERRICK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Derrick is in bed reading a book in bed. THE LIGHTS DIM.

Sheila is in the doorway in a sexy negligee. She goes to a stereo and "DON'T LEAVE ME" by Blackstreet comes on.

SHEILA
We've been mad at each other for too long, baby. Time for some serious making up.

She dances over to him, dropping her robe. Derrick is not having any of this.

DERRICK
Sheila, turn the music off.

Sheila sits next to him and starts to rub on him instead.

SHEILA
Come on, baby. I'm really gonna give it to you.

DERRICK
Give what to me, Sheila?

SHEILA
Well, let's just do it the regular way first, then we can talk about it.

Sheila kisses him, he breaks it.

DERRICK
Not interested.

Sheila moves away from him. She turns the music off.

SHEILA

What the hell is this, Derrick? You haven't touched me for weeks.

DERRICK

I'm tired, Sheila.

SHEILA

I don't believe this. Is that all that's important to you, somebody going down on you?

DERRICK

You just don't get it, do you? We are married. This isn't about sex. This is about what we mean to each other. What do I mean to you, Sheila?

Sheila considers this, then:

SHEILA

No. It's about sex. That's all you men care about.

DERRICK

This is about how I've let you take control of this relationship, and this family. Well, that's all over now-- My mother is coming to live with us.

SHEILA

Oh no, she's not!

DERRICK

I told the home I'm going to terminate her lease. She's coming as soon as I can get her here.

SHEILA

You didn't consult me. I never agreed to this.

DERRICK

You don't have to. I looked in a mirror and agreed with my damn self.

SHEILA

You're just doing this to spite me. Because I won't give you the kind of sex you want. You're just a nasty, freaky freak.

DERRICK

You know, I married you because you were pregnant, and I never once questioned your motive.

SHEILA

We agreed it was the best thing to do.

DERRICK

Did we? Or did you come to me in tears, saying "What are we gonna do? My life is over."

SHEILA

Are you trying to say that I got pregnant intentionally, to hook you?

Derrick looks at her with knowing scorn.

DERRICK

Mama will be here. Get used to it.

Sheila angrily raises a pillow as if to throw it at him. Derrick points a finger at her, deadly serious.

DERRICK (cont'd)

And if you hit me with that, it's gonna take some of them N.A.T.O. Peacekeepers to pull my foot outta your ass.

Derrick goes back to his book. Sheila lowers the pillow, looking at him as if seeing him for the first time. She leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACKSON'S CONDO - TWO DAYS LATER

Jackson and Denise sit all hugged up on the sofa. TWO PLATES sit on a table. Denise's plate is all bones. Jackson has one wing left on his.

DENISE

So, I haven't heard from you in a while. Good thing I caught you in.

JACKSON

Yeah, I've just been trippin' a little lately, but I'm cool now.

He kisses her. Denise thinks a moment. This could be a good time to tell him her secret.

DENISE

Jack, there's something that's been on my mind. Something I want to tell you....

JACKSON

What?

Denise looks at him. She is really stuck on him now. She knows that this is going to be difficult.

DENISE

I don't know how to start....

Jackson can see she's hurting. He takes her hands.

JACKSON

Hey, calm down. Let me help you this time. I have something to say. Remember how you talked about those pictures changing colors?

DENISE

The sepia pictures?

JACKSON

Yeah. Well, I didn't really understand that at first, actually I thought the shit was crazy, but now I know what you were talking about, how a person can change inside, so that it colors everything about him. I changed like that and it's because of you. So, I'm not afraid of a good woman and all that she can bring to a man. I'm not afraid to say I love you, Denise.

Jackson smiles handsomely. Denise is speechless, floored by the revelation.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Now, did that make it easier for you to say what you wanted to tell me?

Guilt overwhelms her.

DENISE

Yes, in fact, it's not even important anymore. I love you, too.

They kiss again. Denise smiles, then nuzzles him. They get all hugged up, then Denise notices THE LAST PIECE CHICKEN on Jackson's plate. She smiles, remembering what she was told about this.

DENISE (cont'd)

You gonna eat that?

JACKSON

Oh.

Jackson grabs the chicken. Denise smiles and extends her hand, then reels in horror as he stuffs it into his mouth. Denise is terrified as Jackson devours her hope.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ADELLE'S DEN - DAY

A TABLE FULL OF OPENED PRESENTS. MOVING TO Adelle and Chere cleaning up from BeBe's bridal shower. Sheila helps, too. BeBe kisses a woman goodbye at the door.

BEBE

Thanks for letting me have my shower here, Ms. Smith. Terry's mother loved it.

ADELLE

No problem. She's been my good friend since Terry and Jackson were kids. Besides, Fred's throwing Terry's bachelor party, and I'm not about to be outdone.

DENISE

I heard that. Jack is saying all the right things to me, but I'm not sure if he means them.

SHEILA

Why do you say that?

DENISE

He said he loved me, then he ate the last piece of chicken while we watched a movie.

The women all gasp.

ADELLE

So, his mouth is spewing diamonds, but there may be a rock in his heart. I'm afraid my son has a lot of his father in him.

BEBE

Maybe I can get Terry to find out what he's thinking. He has his head on straight these days.

SHEILA

Yes, Terry will make a fine husband.

DENISE

"The Brothers" are much too tight for that.

ADELLE

Chere, what do you think?

All eyes are on Chere, then:

CHERE

I say make him tell you. Men always make us pay for their emotional failures. I love my brother, but to hell with his triflin' ass.

ADELLE

(shocked, then proudly)
That's my baby who said that.

SHEILA

That what I do with Derrick. I stand up to him, that's why we're so happy.

CHERE

Shoot, I'm not limiting myself with black men. I'll consider all men. Even ones who are not black.

ADELLE

Like hell you will.

CHERE

But Mama....

ADELLE

Who taught you that?

CHERE

Life. Brothers date other kinds of women all the time. Why should we sit by like idiots waiting for them to bestow their favor on us? Screw that. A white man has all the equipment and twice the cash.

BeBe and Chere slap five and laugh.

CHERE (cont'd)

While we're on this subject of other men, Mama, you need to get you a man and stop pining away for Daddy.

ADELLE

Jesus, what have you been drinking?

CHERE

Mama, it's a new century. Women are saying goodbye to dependency on men. I don't need a man. I have myself.

ADELLE

I wasn't sure until now, but my baby's still a virgin!

BEBE

I can see being weak for your husband, Adelle. He is the man.

Denise is guiltily silent on the subject of Fred.

SHEILA

Yes, he is. Tall, dark, and wealthy.

ADELLE

Fred has always been extraordinary.

CHERE

Daddy is amazing-- but screw him, too. I'm serious mama, you need to reject the pussy theory.

ADELLE

Excuse me?

CHERE

That word was created by men to objectify a woman's sexuality and turn us into property. If you accept that you have one, then a man can own you. I don't. I reject my pussy.

BEBE

Well, can I have it, 'cause I need an extra.

(imitating)

Here baby, hit this one, mama's tired tonight.

The other women all laugh.

CHERE

Okay, okay, but don't say I didn't try to educate y'all.

SHEILA

I say get in his face about it.

BEBE

Yes, direct approach, Denise.

ADELLE

I've got a few years on you ladies so, let me share some wisdom about all this.

CHERE

A few years, mama?

ADELLE

Quiet, little girl. Okay, here it is: women are strength. Not just the givers of life and all that, but more. You see, men don't really know who they are until they know what woman they want-- or even if they want women at all.

The ladies all agree.

ADELLE (cont'd)

But no matter what they choose, it all starts with us. Our job is to recognize that power, and use it wisely. So, I say be bold, Denise. Be fearless and courageous with Jackson. Don't ever be timid about love ladies, because we invented it.

Adelle raises a glass of wine.

ADELLE (cont'd)

To "The Sisters."

They all drink, toasting.

CUT TO:

EXT. ADELLE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Adelle and Denise waive goodbye to Bebe and Sheila who drive off. Chere bounds out of the house.

CHERE

Don't wait up.

She kisses her mother and gets into her car and goes.

DENISE

Adelle, I had something to ask you.

ADELLE

More trouble with Jackson?

DENISE

No. This is about me.

Adelle sees the troubled look on Denise' face. She leads her back into the house.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A FRED'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - WEEKS LATER

A HUGE PAIR OF BREASTS jiggle in a skimpy bra.

SUPERIMPOSE: "ONE MONTH LATER."

PULL BACK TO REVEAL: Terry dancing surrounded by strippers.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - BACHELOR PARTY

Brian sits alone in a chair, still drunk. Terry enters, dancing and laughing with a dancer on his arm.

BRIAN

Well, well. The husband-to-be.

TERRY

Brian, why the hell are you back here?
Come on out in the front.

BRIAN

Hey, let me talk to you for a minute,
man.

(to dancer)

Go on back and run your booty game on
somebody else.

The dancer cuts Brian a nasty look, then leaves. Terry sits with Brian.

TERRY

So, what's up?

BRIAN

Why are you doing this, man?

TERRY

Brian, we been through all this. It's
time I grew up, and you need to be
thinking about the same thing.

BRIAN

Don't do it, Terry. I know you, man. Of
all the Brothers, nobody got more women
than you and me.

TERRY

Why do you want everybody to be a player
for life, like you?

BRIAN

'Cause I am yo' conscience, brotha, the
protector of the truth, guardian of
keepin' it real!

(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)

See, brothers have friendship, that bond, you know. Then under the guise of growing up, they throw it away. I'm just looking out for all of us.

TERRY

If you wanna look out for me, get your butt out there and have some fun.

BRIAN

Okay, fine, but don't come to me when this shit blows up in your face.

Now Terry is angry, but he knows his friend well. Terry holds back.

TERRY

You're just jealous. You wish you could care for somebody. You wish your heart wasn't a cold, hard, rock. You and me messed over a lot of women in our day, but I felt bad about it. You thought it was your right.

BRIAN

Hey, it was. I'm a man, okay? That's what we do, baby.

TERRY

I feel sorry for you. The world is full of wonderful women, and it takes courage to get to them, but you will never see anything beyond your dick. Maybe for you there ain't nothing, and that makes me feel even worse for you.

Terry exits, leaving Brian sitting and brooding.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Derrick enters with RED, a scantily clad dancer about 22. They laugh and hold drinks. Red moves closer then kisses Derrick on the neck. Derrick is aroused and very nervous.

RED

I'm Red. So, whatcha wanna do, honey?

DERRICK

Do? Well, I--

RED
 Don't be shy. I'm very flattered that
 you picked me. There are some nice
 looking women out there.

DERRICK
 I just wanted to-- you know.

RED
 Yeah, I know, but what kind do you want.
 I do everything.

DERRICK
 Everything. What a wonderful word.

They laugh.

RED
 I can even get a friend if you really
 wanna have some fun.

DERRICK
 No, no, that won't be necessary. How
 about a, uh--
 (whispers)
 Head.

RED
 Hmm, well I guess you do know what you
 want.

Red puts their drinks down, then pulls Derrick's pants down
 around his ankles and pushes him on the edge of the bed.

Derrick's ready to let it go all the way, then has a change
 of heart.

DERRICK
 Wait, wait, wait--

RED (o.s.)
 Hold on, baby. Don't come yet!--

Derrick physically stops her. He gets up and stumbles,
 falling on his face.

RED (cont'd)
 Are you okay?

Derrick gets up embarrassed.

DERRICK
 Yes, I'm fine.

Derrick pulls up his pants and sits. Red smiles and sits in
 his lap.

RED
Change your mind? Want something
different?

DERRICK
No-- I mean yes, I changed my mind. I
can't do this. You're beautiful, but I'm
sitting here with you and all I can think
is, I wish you were my wife.

Red considers this statement.

RED
A man can't make his dick do what his
heart can't handle.
(beat)
That'll be fifty dollars.

Derrick is a little shocked, then he smiles and reaches for
his wallet.

DERRICK
I have to say, I like your style.

He gives her the money she walks out, passing Jackson as he
comes in. Jackson looks at Derrick accusingly.

JACKSON
Did you?

DERRICK
I couldn't do it.

Brian enters.

BRIAN
Couldn't do what?

DERRICK
Nothing.
(covering)
I'm gonna look at some more booty.

Derrick leaves.

BRIAN
Nice of your Daddy to loan us his crib
for the party. He's a man after my own
heart. Old, but still fly.

JACKSON
Yeah, he hired all the dancers too.
Dirty, old bastard.

BRIAN

I bet that Denise got all on your case about coming here with all this free booty.

JACKSON

No, she didn't-- 'cause I didn't tell her about the party.

Brian laughs, pointing at Jackson. He stumbles a little. Jackson catches him.

JACKSON (cont'd) (cont'd)

You're drunk.

BRIAN

Damn skippy. And I'm just getting started.

A TOPLESS WOMAN woman walks by with a man.

BRIAN (cont'd)

You know, if we didn't need sex, we wouldn't want women.

JACKSON

Now I know you've been drinking too much. Gimme that.

Jackson takes his drink.

BRIAN

Think about it. Women don't like anything we like. All they do is try to change us, and all we do is try to figure out ways to screw other women behind their backs. The whole thing is cosmically jacked up.

JACKSON

Oh, so you're saying God messed up?

BRIAN

Right. He made us incompatible with women in every way but one: sex. So, if I could invent something else men could bone, I would be a zillionaire.

JACKSON

Why don't you turn gay, then?

BRIAN

Don't make me have to kick your ass, Jack. I'm talking about surrogate poontang, pseudo-vagina, booty on a stick!

(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)
I'd make it disposable, too, so after you
get your freak on, you toss that bad boy.

JACKSON
You gotta drop this cynical attitude.
Look at me, I was a lost cause, then I
met Denise, and it turned me around.

Phone RINGS.

BRIAN
Turned out is more like it.

Phone RINGS.

JACKSON
Call it what you want. I'm happy. What
about you?

Phone RINGS. Brian thinks, then grabs his drink and exits.
Jackson laughs. He is about to leave, when the PHONE RINGS
again. The machine picks up. "FLOAT ON" by the Floaters.

FRED (v.o.)
Hey, it's Fred. State your case.

BEEP.

DENISE (v.o.)
Fred, it's Denise.... Thanks for being
so cool about our situation. I want to
tell Jackson about us, but I want to do
it... Call me when you get this.

Jackson looks at the answering machine like it's Satan
himself. He storms out of the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DENISE'S APARTMENT - THAT NIGHT

The dimly lit apartment of an artsy photographer. HARD,
INCESSANT KNOCKING on the door. Denise comes in half asleep,
and opens the door. Jackson comes in.

DENISE
Hey, baby. What time is it?

He just stares at her with anger and hurt in his eyes.

JACKSON
I heard the message you left at my
father's place tonight.

Denise reacts with embarrassment and guilt. She can barely
look at Jackson.

DENISE

Jack... I was going to tell you.

JACKSON

When?! On our honeymoon? Maybe Father's Day?

(disgust)

I can't believe you played me like this.

DENISE

Give me a chance to explain.

JACKSON

You don't need to explain this. I know why it happened. You are a woman with no discretion about herself whatsoever.

DENISE

Wait, did you just call me a ho?

JACKSON

I did not say that word, but it does seem to be floating around up in here.

Jackson pretends to see the word "ho" circling around Denise.

DENISE

Okay, okay, you have a right to be angry. But listen to me. Your father and I were together long before we met.

JACKSON

He's my father! It doesn't matter when you slept with him.

DENISE

What?! Is that what you think?

JACKSON

You slept with me on the first date, didn't you? I know my father. He's an old school player. I know he hit it.

DENISE

You don't know what you're talking about.

JACKSON

So, he didn't hit it?

DENISE

Jackson, let's not let this come between us....

JACKSON

Come on, it's a simple yes he hit it, not he did not hit it.

DENISE

Can't you see that it doesn't make a difference, now?

JACKSON

Like hell it don't.

DENISE

You're so blinded by your dislike for him, you wouldn't believe anything I said to you.

JACKSON

I think I just got my answer. Peace.

Jackson tries to exit, Denise grabs him.

DENISE

Okay Jackson. You want an answer? Your father and I went out on a few dates before you and I ever met. We ate, we drank, we danced, but we never slept together.

JACKSON

(considers this, then:)
Bull--shit.

He heads out again. She stops him again.

DENISE

You made a real commitment to me for the first time in your life. We broke through your problem. Do you want to walk away from that?

JACKSON

I'm walking away from a woman who lied to me, a woman who deceived and hurt me.

DENISE

I know I was wrong, but it doesn't mean that I don't love you, and it doesn't mean that what we have isn't the real thing. All you have to do is believe me, and we can go on. Don't use my mistake as an excuse to go back to the way you were.

JACKSON

You're being naive, Denise.

DENISE

You couldn't commit to a woman Jackson because you didn't want to ever be like your father, you didn't want to ever hurt a woman like he did your mother.

Jackson considers this, he knows she's right, but he can't get over what she did.

JACKSON

I'll bring your stuff by tomorrow.

He walks out leaving Denise.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

"EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING" by Lauren Hill.

The fellas play ball furiously. Terry dribbles down and raises in a jumpshot. As he releases the ball: FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

Brian walks down the hallway, laughing and talking with friends. Carla comes out of an office, carrying files. She still has A LITTLE BAND-AID on her head.

Carla walks proudly toward Brian and passes without a word. Brian looks after her sadly. As he turns away, she turns to look at him. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. A RESTAURANT - DAY

Jackson and some colleagues eat lunch. His eye catches something.

ANGLE ON: Another table. Denise eats with a friend. She sees Jackson and looks defiantly at him. Jackson's smile fades. Denise gets up and leaves. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

INT. A HOUSE - NIGHT

BeBe sits all hugged up with Terry. Terry seems tentative, distant. BeBe sees the last piece of chicken.

She smiles, asks him about it, then watches in horror as he devours the piece of chicken. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

INT. DERRICK'S HOUSE DAY

Derrick enters from work. She passes by Shelia, kisses the baby and walks on. Shelia goes to him, nagging about something. Derrick ignores her, picks up the kid and walks off with her. The baby waves bye to Shelia. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Brian steals the ball, dribbles down the court, and slam dunks over Terry. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

INT. DOJO

Jesse does a kata. She jump kicks! FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. ADELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Adelle pleads with Fred. He sighs, upset at her words. He says something to her that makes her calm down.

Fred walks off. Adelle turns to see Chere watching her with disapproval. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

The SPURNED WOMAN is by Brian's car. We can see her colorful bracelet as she does something to the hood of the car. She runs off before Brian can see her. He get to his car and notices something on the hood.

PAN TO SEE: Scratched into the hood are the words: "BOW WOW!" FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Brian takes a shot. It hits the rim and all four guys jump up for it. FREEZE AND TURN TO SEPIA.

FRAME SLIDES TO:

EXT. DERRICK'S HOUSE - EVENING

Derrick tries his key, but it doesn't work. He tries it again. Realization washes over him.

DERRICK
Sheila! Open this door!

He hits the door. The door opens, but there's a chain on it. We see Sheila's unsmiling face in the opening.

DERRICK (cont'd)
What the hell is this?

SHEILA
I don't know you anymore. When you're the man I married, you can come back.

DERRICK
Open this door, or I'll kick it down!

Sheila shoves a piece of paper at him and slams the door. ANGLE ON: the paper. It's a RESTRAINING ORDER.

DERRICK (cont'd)
(reading)
Restraining Order?! Open this door!

Derrick kicks the door. Sheila opens the door.

SHEILA
You stay here, and I'll call LAPD to come and break off a nightstick in your ass.

She shuts the door on him. Derrick kicks the door again then, angry and defeated, he goes to his car.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH DININGROOM - LATER THAT EVENING

Jackson walks in. Adelle comes out of the dining room in a tight evening dress.

JACKSON
Mama?

ADELLE

Oh! Jackson, you scared me. What are you doing here?

JACKSON

Just thought I'd drop by. You expecting company?

ADELLE

As a matter of fact, I am, and I'll thank you to make yourself scarce. Instead of being in my business, why aren't you out trying to get back together with Denise?

JACKSON

Believe me, you don't want to know why. She is definitely not the one.

ADELLE

You know, you looked just like your father when you said that.

JACKSON

You just found away to make me leave. I'm out.

Jackson starts to leave, then:

ADELLE

Your father's coming by tonight.

Jackson stops. He turns back to her.

JACKSON

How long has this been going on?

ADELLE

Since your sister's party. He came back to apologize and well, you know how good I was looking.

JACKSON

Well, let me tell you about daddy and your golden girl, Denise. She and daddy had a thing.

ADELLE

I know.

Jackson is taken aback by this.

JACKSON

And you don't care?

ADELLE

No, because nothing happened between them. It was before she met you, and your father is a charming and handsome man. Did it ever occur to you that she saw the same things in you?

JACKSON

I can't believe she sucked you in with that "nothing happened" stuff.

ADELLE

She's not the one who told me. She tried, but your father had already told me everything.

JACKSON

And nobody cared enough to tell me?! Well, what makes you think you can trust daddy any more than I trust Denise?

ADELLE

Because he didn't have to tell me, and I know him.

JACKSON

Mama, you have to quit seeing daddy.

ADELLE

A woman like me just can't go out and find any man. Your father and I are comfortable with each other. And I do have needs, you know.

JACKSON

Aw, Mama, not the needs.

Jackson moves closer to her, looking her in the eyes.

JACKSON (cont'd)

I know it's more than needs, mama. You still love him. Look, I've got time to solve my problems, but you've got to let go of daddy.

ADELLE

No. We had a marriage, love, and children. Nothing is stronger than that.

JACKSON

You'll just get all worked up about getting back together, and he'll run again, break your heart again.

Adelle contemplates this, knowing that it may be true.

ADELLE

Maybe, but it's better than nothing.

Jackson reacts. Adelle places a hand on her son's cheek.

ADELLE (cont'd)

This is me telling you now. Nothing happened between them. That girl loves you. What are you going to do about it?

Jackson says nothing. He kisses Adelle, then leaves.

THELMA (o.s.)

So, you still think about her?

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Jackson sits with Thelma, still troubled.

JACKSON

Yes, every day. Even after what she did.

THELMA

And do you still think she and your father were intimate?

JACKSON

I don't know.

THELMA

If you feel this way, then why not go back to her, talk it out?

JACKSON

I just don't have it in me. I'm too mad, too scared, too everything.

THELMA

Let's explore that.

JACKSON

No offense Doc, but this is my last session here.

Jackson rises. Thelma does, too.

THELMA

You're giving up?

SLOW PUSH TO Jackson.

JACKSON

I know love is supposed to be this great, thing, but I can't get with it.

(MORE)

JACKSON (cont'd)

I go up, Love goes, down, I go left, Love goes right. I say "I'm ready!" Love says "Not yet, fool." Maybe there is love out there, but it's running from me, and I'm not going to chase it anymore. I'm done.

THELMA

Is that the kind of existence you want, Jackson? A life without love in it?

PUSH IN to Jackson as he considers this.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - AFTERNOON

The Brothers play another game of ball against a team with three men and one girl. The fellas are all off their game a little. No one can hit a shot.

Jackson misses an easy layup.

Terry loses the ball and it flies off the court.

The girl flies by Brian scoring a point. Brian is pissed.

The other team scores the winning basket. The fellas walk off the court a little dejected.

JACKSON

Damn Brian, that girl took you to school.

BRIAN

Man, I was lookin' at her titties.

TERRY

Sorry to hear about you and Sheila, Derrick.

DERRICK

I was too.

BRIAN

To hell with her ass.

DERRICK

All right now.

BRIAN

She had no right to do that shit to you.

JACKSON

It was pretty low, man.

DERRICK

Well, that's life.

They sit on the picnic table and break out drinks. Nearby TWO WOMEN sit, eating ICE CREAM CONES, checking them out.

BRIAN

No, that's women. They're always jammin' up a brother, and they complain like we're the bad guys, writing all them man-hating books like "Waiting to Exhale." Well, I'm writin' me a book called: "Breathe Bitch!"

The women are not amused by Brian's joke.

TERRY

Do you always have to use that word like it's synonymous with women?

BRIAN

I use it because the word applies. Take my man Jack here, for instance. Jack thought this Denise girl was something special. He was on a cloud. Mind happy, heart happy, dick happy. But he broke up with her, and why? In the end, she turned into an irritating bitch, am I right?

Jackson struggles with his answer.

JACKSON

Yeah. Yeah, she did.

BRIAN

The defense rests. Bitches.

DERRICK

I don't use the word myself.

TERRY

I still say you have no right to call women names. You need to have some respect, like me.

BRIAN

Oh really?

Brian clears his throat.

BRIAN (cont'd)

"Bitches" by Terry White....

TERRY

Oh, no, not the poem! I wrote that a long time ago, man. I was a kid.

The fellas laugh. They've heard this before.

BRIAN
 (recites)
 I WOULD TRADE THE WORLD AND ALL ITS
 RICHES.
 TO RID MY LIFE OF ALL THE BITCHES.
 TO WATCH THE GAME, JUST EATIN' AND
 DRINKIN'.
 TO SAY "GET OUT MY FACE" WHEN SHE ASKS:
 "WHAT YOU THINKIN'?"
 TO HANG WITH MY BOYS AND
 NOT WORRY A BIT.
 TO GET ME SOME ASS, AND GET ON WITH MY
 SHIT!
 TO HAVE A GOOD LIFE, FREE FROM HER
 FRICTION.
 BAREFOOT, PREGNANT, IN THE
 GODDAMNED KITCHEN!
 BUT THEY HAVE ALL THE
 BOOTY, AND THERE IS THE HITCH.
 AND WITHOUT THEM, WE GET NONE.
 NOW, AIN'T THAT A BITCH?

The fellas applaud. Brian bows. Suddenly, Brian is hit with two ice cream cones. He runs off after the women who threw them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMITH HOUSE - EVENING

Jackson runs up and meets Chere who stands outside the door.

JACKSON
 What's the big emergency.

CHERE
 Mama's having some kind of fit. I think
 it's about daddy.

JACKSON
 I knew it. Okay, you and me are gonna
 end this.

He goes inside Chere follows.

CUT TO:

INT. SMITH HOUSE

It's dark inside. Jackson and Chere enter.

JACKSON
 Mama, you here?

THE LIGHTS COME ON. There is a crowd of people there including Adelle, Fred, and all of the Brothers. There's a big banner which reads: "HAPPY 29TH BIRTHDAY, JACKSON!"

EVERYONE
SURPRISE!

They all come to hug Jackson, shake his hand, etc. Jackson keeps staring at the banner.

CHERE
Sorry, big brother. Boy, it was so easy to fool you.

TERRY
That's 'cause he's gettin' old.

DERRICK
Yeah, the mind is the first thing to go.

BRIAN
And we know what goes after that.

Everyone laughs. Jackson forces a smile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMITH HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING.

The party is still going. Jackson is standing all alone, brooding. Fred comes over.

FRED
You okay, son? You've been moping all night. If I didn't know any better, I think you were having an early mid-life crisis.

JACKSON
Something like that.

FRED
Hell, I'd trade places with you in a heartbeat. Wait until you get my age. That's when your body starts to go crazy. You start losing hair on your head and growing it in your nose and--

JACKSON
Why didn't you tell me you dated Denise?

Fred is shocked by this.

FRED

She asked me not to. You seemed to like Denise, and there was no reason for me to get in the way. I believe you kids call that player hating...

(laughs, then off Jackson's evil look)

Can we talk about this later, after everyone is gone?

JACKSON

Fine. I don't blame you anyway. I knew how you were. So, right now, let's talk about why you're sleeping with my mother.

Fred is rocked again.

FRED

Adelle and I have an arrangement, that's all... damn, son, I'm sorry.

JACKSON

That's the first thing you've said tonight I agree with. You know what I discovered? I'm just like you--

FRED

Well, a father likes to hear that--

JACKSON

'Cause I can't do right by a woman, either.

Fred is hurt by this.

FRED

I guess I deserve that. I haven't been such a good father or friend lately.

JACKSON

I hate it when you do that. When you rationalize your faults. Can't you have one moment of shame about your shit?

FRED

Jack, what's gotten into you?

JACKSON

You did! I'm your son, and I inherited your nose, your eyes, and your ugly contempt for women.

FRED

You don't mean that.

JACKSON

Yes, I do. I lost Denise. I lost her, because you dismantled this family with your arrogance and selfishness, and somehow... somehow, that sickness got into me, and stopped me from believing in her.

FRED

Look, son, have another drink--

JACKSON

Get out of my face. I don't want to talk to your ass anymore.

FRED

I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear that.

JACKSON

Then hear this: go to hell-- now.

FRED

Let me tell you something, boy--

Adelle oblivious of the fight, rushes over and grabs Fred.

ADELLE

Come on, Fred. I want to dance.

Adelle pulls Fred away. Fred dances, doing some fancy stepping, and hip-shaking, but he never stops glaring at Jackson.

Jackson goes over to the buffet table. There, he sees that the cake still has "29" on it. He crushes it in his hands.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUMPER'S - A FEW NIGHTS LATER

Jackson, Brian, and Derrick stand at the bar drinking. The place is crowded as usual. Brian looks around then notices something.

BRIAN

Oh, damn. Jack, turn slowly and look at who just came in.

ANGLE ON: The door. Denise, looking like a million dollars stands there next to CEYNO, a handsome multi-ethnic man. Jackson is speechless. Denise spots Jackson and waves.

JACKSON

I know she ain't bringing that man over here.

Denise walks over with Ceyno.

DENISE
Hey, y'all, this is Ceyno. Ceyno,
Jackson, Brian and Derrick.

Ceyno ad-libs hellos.

CEYNO
Denise, we don't wanna lose our table,
honey.

DENISE
Right. Nice seeing you all again.

Denise and Ceyno walk away. Jackson is mad as hell.

JACKSON
Did you see that? What was he, white?

DERRICK
Naw, I think he was Asian or something.

BRIAN
See what I say? They love to humiliate
a brother.

DERRICK
Please Brian, don't start with that
tonight.

JACKSON
Maybe he was Latino or one of them
Indians. Damn.

BRIAN
Why do you care what race he is?

JACKSON
So I can know how pissed off I should be!
I oughta go over there and pull him out
of that seat.

BRIAN
No. That's what she wants you to do.

DERRICK
Yeah, and he might know karate like that
woman Brian dated.

BRIAN
Listen, why don't we just hook up with
some women here and have us a little
party--

Brian's eyes widen. ANGLE ON: The door. Jesse walks in with A TALL, HANDSOME BLACK MAN.

DERRICK
Damn, it's an epidemic.

Jesse sees Brian. She walks over with her man-- and keeps going.

BRIAN
She snubbed me! Did you see that?

DERRICK
Whoo, this place is hot tonight!

JACKSON
That's it. I'm out.

BRIAN
No, I'm not leaving. She'll think I'm running from her.

DERRICK
Man, I'm separated from my wife, and I'm doing better than both of you.

JACKSON/BRIAN
Shut the fuck up.

Derrick keeps laughing.

CUT TO:

INT. JACKSON'S CONDO - A FEW DAYS LATER

Jackson is working on a laptop when the DOORBELL RINGS. He goes to the door and opens it. Terry is at the door, looking upset.

TERRY
Hey, man.

JACKSON
Terry, you okay?

TERRY
No, no, Jack, I'm not okay.

Terry comes in and goes right for the bar. He fixes himself a drink. Jackson closes the door and walks over to Terry.

JACKSON
So, you gonna tell me what's up or--

Jackson looks at the desperate expression on his friend's face.

JACKSON (cont'd)
No-- Oh, no-- Terry--

TERRY
I can't do it. I was cool until a few days ago. I was at work, I looked at the calendar, it's two weeks from now-- and then, I just-- I think maybe I'm making a terrible mistake marrying BeBe.

JACKSON
It's just cold feet, man, you'll get over it.

TERRY
No, I don't think so.

JACKSON
Terry, why, man? I thought you had your shit together.

TERRY
I did. I thought it was time, you know. But I think I did all of this because I wanted to think I was moving on with my life, but everyday, I'd look in the mirror and I knew it wasn't true.

Terry finishes his drink. He pours another.

JACKSON
So, how did BeBe take it?

TERRY
Bad. She cried, cussed me out, then she wanted to sleep together of all things. Man, you got anything stronger than alcohol?

JACKSON
Terry, I don't know what to say. I'm gonna call the other fellas.

TERRY
No, man, don't do that.

JACKSON
You need to be with your friends at a time like this.

TERRY
Just don't call Brian. I know what he's gonna say.

Jackson dials the telephone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - LATER

The four men casually shoot the ball. MUSIC plays in the background from a boom box.

BRIAN

I knew it.

TERRY

Thanks for being supportive.

BRIAN

I'm sorry, Terry, but I did. I know you, man. You don't want to get married.

DERRICK

Brian, can you have some sympathy for the man? Terry, I know what you're going through. Look, I never told any of you this, but I only married Sheila because she got pregnant.

All the fellas ad-lib "I knew that", "Big ass surprise", and the like.

DERRICK (cont'd)

The point is, I had second thoughts, thirds, and fourths, too. Terry, you've got to search yourself and find a reason to go back to her.

BRIAN

African American, please. How can you say that after what Sheila did to you?

DERRICK

I may have made a mistake, but I made it like a man. I stood up for what was right at the time. Terry should do the same.

JACKSON

I don't know. I think he'd be hurting BeBe and himself.

DERRICK

What kind of friends are you two? Terry needs to do the right thing here.

BRIAN

Terry needs to run like hell.

DERRICK
Brian, shut your woman-hating ass up.

BRIAN
You shut up...

Brian and Derrick face off Jackson and Terry push them apart.

BRIAN (cont'd) (cont'd)
All right, all right. Derrick, I'm sorry man.

DERRICK
Me too.

They hug quickly, still mad at each other.

JACKSON
Okay, no more talk about women. Forget them. There's a whole world out there to discuss.

TERRY
Right. Anybody see the game yesterday?

DERRICK
I did. It was a good game.

BRIAN
Yeah, I think the Lakers got the whip, you know.

An awkward silence then, two beautiful women run by.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Damn, look at that ass! She looked stuck-up, though. Man, women are just evil.

DERRICK
You know, maybe women ain't the problem. Maybe it's us.

The fellas ad-lib disagreement-- loudly. A pause, then:

DERRICK (cont'd)
My wife won't go down on me.

The fellas all react with shock and sadness.

DERRICK (cont'd)
Our relationship isn't strong enough, or she just don't care. Either way, I got dry dick.

A beat then.

JACKSON

Denise went out with my father.

The fellas EXPLODE in reaction.

BRIAN

Your daddy boned Denise?

JACKSON

No, they didn't. It was just a few dates, but when I found out, I lost it and I dumped her.

TERRY

Damn, that's messed up.

JACKSON

It don't matter anymore. I had something special with Denise, and I lost it.

BRIAN

She did it with your daddy. That ho.

DERRICK

Didn't you hear the man say they didn't do it?

JACKSON

It don't matter what happened between them, I said.

BRIAN

Like hell it don't matter. It's bad enough when you find out your father bones your mama, but then your woman, too?

TERRY

Brian, why you always dogging a brother? Can't you just once say something nice?

BRIAN

Okay, I'm gonna dedicate this nice tune to all y'all. It's from the heart.

Brian goes to the boom box. The stereo pumps out "MY NIGGAS" by DMX. Brian mimes along:

BRIAN (cont'd)

JUST 'CAUSE I, LOVE MY NIGGAS,
I SHED BLOOD, FOR MY NIGGAS.
LET A NIGGA "HOLLA WHERE MY NIGGAS?"
ALL I WANNA HEAR,
IS: "RIGHT HERE, MY NIGGAS"....

All the fellas react, laughing and clapping, "Preach it" and the like. They come to life rapping and dancing along.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Derrick and Sheila sit at opposite tables next to their ATTORNEYS. Derrick's mother, MARY, is by his side. Sheila looks sad. She tries to catch Derrick's gaze, but he avoids looking at her. Mary catches Sheila's gaze, smiles and gives her the finger. A MALE BAILIFF comes out of the courtroom.

MALE BAILIFF

Court is now in session.

JUDGE WENDELL NEVILLE enters and takes a seat.

JUDGE NEVILLE

This is a simple matter. Both parties have agreed to a property split and visitation, so unless there's an objection, the order granting the divorce petition is granted.

Derrick and Sheila react, sadly. The judge strikes his gavel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACKSON'S CAR - A DAY LATER

Jackson and Terry ride together, listening to a tune.

JACKSON

So, how is BeBe doing?

TERRY

Terrible. She came over to my apartment this morning, and cried and screamed at me. I had to get out of there, man. She was acting crazy, you know.

JACKSON

I can't blame her, really.

TERRY

And then you know what she did? She followed me to work. I mean, I'm walking in the door, and there she is. And so we do it again, part two.

JACKSON

And what did you say?

TERRY
Nothing. She did all the talking. I
just let her go.

They ride in silence a beat, then.

TERRY (cont'd)
So, why does Derrick want to meet
everyone?

JACKSON
His divorce papers were signed today.
So, I'm thinking he want to get good and
drunk.

TERRY
Damn. I thought he'd be married forever.
Yo, man, why are you turning here?

JACKSON
Going to get Brian. His car is all
messed up.

TERRY
I told him to move out of that
neighborhood he's in. The man is hard-
headed.

JACKSON
It's not where he lives. Some woman is
stalking him. And what's really messed
up is Brian's screwed over so many women,
he doesn't know which one it is.

CUT TO:

INT. DERRICK'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Derrick is about to leave for work. He packs his briefcase.
There's a KNOCK at his door.

DERRICK
Come on in.

The door opens and it's Sheila. She and Derrick look at each
other for a beat, then:

DERRICK (cont'd)
What do you want?

Sheila is silent for a beat, then:

SHEILA
I almost died in that courtroom today.

DERRICK

Look, I have to go--

SHEILA

I went out to a club with my friends the other day. Kind of a freedom celebration.

DERRICK

Sheila, I really have to go.

SHEILA

My single friends kept telling me how great it was gonna be from now on.

DERRICK

I don't want to hear this--

SHEILA

Then, a man came over and asked me to dance.

DERRICK

(jealous)

What man?

SHEILA

Just some guy. Well, he asked me, and I just started crying. Scared the hell out of him.

(laughs)

I ran into the bathroom and all my friends followed. They told me that it had happened to all of them, and then they started telling stories about why their men left them. It was terrible. These women had been disrespected in ways you couldn't imagine. And what could I say? "My husband wanted sex, and to take care of his sick mother." I was ashamed.

DERRICK

So, Sheila, are you... are you saying you want to give it another try?

SHEILA

I'm sorry and I was wrong. I love you, you're my best friend, and I guess sometimes I forget that.

Derrick takes her hand.

DERRICK

I guess tried to hurt you by bringing
mama to live with us without talking it
over with you. I apologize for that.

They hug and kiss.

DERRICK (cont'd)

You know what? We should get married
again, renew our vows.

SHEILA

That's a great idea. Let's do it as soon
as possible.

Sheila starts to unzip his pants. Derrick stops her.

DERRICK

Let's go home. I wanna see my daughter.

They walk out together, then Derrick stops.

DERRICK (cont'd)

Wait. You do know I still want it,
right?

They share a laugh then exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE - LATER

Jackson and Terry get out of Jackson's car.

BRIAN'S CAR. It's a mess. Windshield cracked, doors
scratched and dented. Two tires are flat.

They go to Brian's house and push the doorbell. Brian opens
the door and lets them in.

CUT TO:

INT. BRIAN'S HOUSE

It's an expensively decorated bachelor home. The place is
messy. Brian is wearing a suit with no pants.

TERRY

Come on man, put some clothes on.

BRIAN

Alright, just let me finish getting out
of this suit.

JACKSON

Man, you need to get you a maid or something.

BRIAN

I had one, but it didn't work out.

JACKSON

You had sex with her, didn't you?

BRIAN

Hey, the woman was fine.

They laugh, then:

A SHOT RINGS OUT, SHATTERING A WINDOW.

The fellas hit the floor.

BRIAN (cont'd)

Shit!

JACKSON

Call the police.

TERRY

Damn man, I told you to move out of this neighborhood!

BRIAN

Don't yell at me. I'm not the nut shooting up the house.

JACKSON

Look, let's stop arguing and get to the phone and call the--

BEBE (o.s.)

Terry, I want to talk to you, honey!

A beat, as dread snakes through the three men.

TERRY

Oh, my God. BeBe.

BRIAN

Your woman is trying to kill us!

Another SHOT. A picture falls.

JACKSON

Okay. Terry, talk to her.

TERRY

About what! How many holes to shoot in my ass?

BRIAN

Well, I ain't going out like a punk. I'm going to get her.

Brian gets up.

ANOTHER SHOT. A METAL ASHTRAY IS LIFTED INTO THE AIR by the bullet, then ANOTHER SHOT HITS IT IN MID AIR.

BRIAN (cont'd)

Shit! Shit! Shit!

Brian falls back to the floor quickly.

TERRY

I forgot to tell you. BeBe won the police marksman contest last year.

BRIAN

You had to piss off some bitch from "The Matrix!"

BEBE (v.o.)

Terry, come on, baby. I--

A SHOT.

BEBE

Love--

SHOT.

BEBE (cont'd)

You!

THREE SHOTS.

JACKSON

We could be here a long time.

TERRY

But I know someone heard those shots. They'll call the police.

BRIAN

In this neighborhood? Don't count on that.

JACKSON

I'm going out to talk to her.

Brian and Terry protest.

JACKSON (cont'd)
 Look, if she wanted to hurt us, she could
 have. She just needs to be talked down
 from this.

Jackson moves to the door.

TERRY
 Wait. I should go. I started this.

JACKSON
 No. She's mad at you.

TERRY
 (too quickly)
 Cool, go on, man.

Jackson crawls to the door. He gets up and opens it.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIAN'S HOUSE

Jackson enters the doorway with his hands up. He expresses shock and fear.

ANGLE ON: BEBE. She is wearing HER WEDDING DRESS, just like in Jackson's dream. BeBe is in front of him, in a shooting stance with the gun. She's crying.

JACKSON
 BeBe. It's me, Jackson.

BEBE
 I don't want you, Jack. I want Terry.
 (calling)
 Terry, get your weak-ass out here, or
 I'll shoot your friend's dick off!

Jackson stops, putting one hand over his groin. He takes it away then, advances to BeBe.

JACKSON
 BeBe, please don't do something you'll
 regret. I know how you feel.

BEBE
 Men don't know shit!

JACKSON
 You feel like you're nothing, like you
 want to disappear inside your pain....

Jackson moves closer to her. BeBe cocks the gun.

JACKSON (cont'd)
 ...you look out at the world, and all you can see is the person you want, the love that you thought was yours. I've made women feel that way, and for the first time, it came back on me. I made Denise leave me. I didn't have faith in her, and I let a lot of bullshit blind me to what I've been looking for all my life, and I feel like someone dropped a mountain on my heart....

BeBe's hands shake on the weapon.

JACKSON (cont'd)
 ...If you really love Terry, then losing you will hurt him more than anything else you can do. But he's got to find that out by himself.

Jackson stares into the gun, into Love.

BEBE'S FINGER tenses on the trigger. Jackson holds out his hand.

JACKSON (cont'd)
 Come on now, give it to me.

BeBe lowers the gun and Jackson takes it from her. He hugs her. She cries on his shoulder.

Terry and Brian come out of the house. Brian still has on no pants.

Terry walks to BeBe. A tense beat. She hits him in the chest as he embraces her. She stops and hugs him, crying.

SLOW FADE TO:

BLACK SCREEN: THE WORDS: "THE WEDDING." APPEAR.

CUT TO:

INT. A CHURCH - DAY

It's a big wedding, done in white and gold. It's full of flowers, light and ceremony.

Jackson standing as Best Man.

The bride and groom turn, and we see that it's

FRED AND ADELLE getting remarried.

A SERIES OF ANGLES SHOW: Chere, the maid of honor. Chere cries. Fred smiles, lifts the veil and kisses Adelle. The crowd CHEERS. Adelle gives URSULA a victorious look.

A SERIES OF ANGLES show our other players looking happy at this event.

Fred and Adelle jump over a broom. Then walk down the aisle to a LOUD CHEER and a standing ovation.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECEPTION - MOMENTS LATER

A THREE TIER WEDDING CAKE. It's already been cut. Someone takes another chunk out of it.

NEW ANGLE: A lively wedding reception and party.

People greet Fred and Adelle in a long line. Jackson and Chere stand nearby.

JACKSON

Man, I never thought I'd see this.

CHERE

Me neither, but I'm loving it. Well, I'm going to meet some men. No use wasting the dress, you-know-what-I'm-sayin'?

Fred comes over and takes Jackson aside.

FRED

Just wanted to thank you before things get all crazy around here.

JACKSON

Thank me for what?

FRED

You could say you woke me up. A father is supposed to be wiser than his son. I'm glad this time it turned out not to be true.

Jackson and Fred share a hug. Adelle comes over.

ADELLE

I love it when my men show affection.

Jackson and Fred both kiss her on the cheek, as somebody takes a picture.

NEW ANGLE: Brian is by the cake table. People stand in line to get cake. Brian sees a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN walk up.

BRIAN
How you doin' baby?...

Brian starts his rap.

A COLORFUL BRACELET. The Spurned Woman comes by and casually, pushes Brian into the cake. He hits it, and cake flies everywhere. Brian lays there humiliated as everyone laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. RECEPTION - LATER

The fellas are all hanging at a tall bar table. Brian is wearing a new shirt and pants. Jackson has a mostly eaten piece of cake. Tyrel slaps five with Brian and walks off.

JACKSON
Man, your brother is getting big, Brian.

BRIAN
Yeah. I finally talked my mother into letting him spend some time with me. You know, I'm gonna find out which one of these females pushed me, and her ass is going down.

TERRY
Chill out, man. This is Jack's day.

DERRICK
Right. Congratulations, Jack.

TERRY
Yeah man, I know you must be happy.

JACKSON
I am. It's great.

BRIAN
Your daddy must be on crack to be doin' this again.

Brian looks over at Fred and Adelle, they are the picture of happiness.

BRIAN (cont'd)
But he seems happy, don't he?

DERRICK
Just like me and mine. Me and Shelia are going to Vegas and get hitched again. And let's just say, a brother is gettin' all he deserves these days.

All the guys congratulate Derrick.

BRIAN

Let's have a brother's toast.

TERRY

Raincheck, man. Me and BeBe have to check on a new place for our wedding.

(of Brian's look)

You say one word, and I'll throw your ass into another cake.

DERRICK

I got to get back, too.

Brian complains as Derrick and Terry walk off.

BRIAN

You know what, I am the only real man in this joint. Jack, don't move, I'll be right back.

Jackson notices something. His eyes widen as he sees Denise talking to some people, looking beautiful. Jackson goes over to her.

JACKSON

Hey.

DENISE

Hi.

JACKSON

Denise, I-- can we get together and talk?

DENISE

I don't want to do this, Jack. I only came here because your mother asked me to.

JACKSON

I have to tell you what's happened to me. I can see where I was wrong and--

DENISE

Then I'll leave. There's no more wedding cake anyway, some fool fell into it.

JACKSON

That was Brian. Here, take mine.

Jackson takes his plate. There's just one bite of cake left. Denise sees this and remembers what Adelle said to her. Jackson takes the fork and feeds the cake to Denise, who is in heaven as she eats this symbol of his devotion.

JACKSON (cont'd)

Good?

DENISE

I think that's the best thing I've ever eaten.

Denise regards Jackson, who really does seem sincere.

DENISE (cont'd)

You know, maybe we can talk. We can meet at a restaurant--

Jackson is overcome by her. He kisses her big time. Denise is caught off guard, but can't resist.

DENISE (cont'd)

--or you know, my place might be cool.

Brian walks up with the other fellas and glasses of champagne.

JACKSON

Denise, I need a minute.

DENISE

I'll go mingle. See you later?

JACKSON

For sure.

Denise walks off. Brian gives her a look.

BRIAN

What did the "bone daddy" want?

JACKSON

Brian... forget it. You wouldn't understand. Let's do this thing.

DERRICK

What should we toast to?

TERRY

Love.

BRIAN

Hell no.

JACKSON

To us, fellas.

DERRICK

To The Brothers.

JACKSON/BRIAN/TERRY/DERRICK
The Brothers.

SLOW MOTION: The the fellas toast and drink. In the b.g.,
the crowd taps their glasses and the bride and groom kiss.
The crowd applauds as we: FREEZE, TURN TO SEPIA, then:

FADE OUT.

THE END