

ON THE EDGE

By

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FADE IN :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE - EVENING

From absolute darkness the light comes up progressively, as TWO GUARDS chat near a dark, gothic castle.

GUARD ONE

And then it was said, "Let there be light"...

GUARD TWO

You see? Darkness came before light. Light could only appear out of the darkness.

GUARD ONE

No. Darkness came after light, because it had nothing to compare itself to in order to even be defined as 'darkness'.

GUARD TWO

Maybe there's no 'before' or 'after' Or maybe it's the other way around. Darkness was meant to serve only as a backdrop so that we could see light.

GUARD ONE

One thing is for sure - we define things by comparison. If there's nothing to compare something to, the very thing we describe would not exist.

As the light rises, the two guards are now visible. GUARD ONE is a mature, stocky man in his 40s, with a beard. GUARD TWO is a young man, handsome, with vivid eyes.

The dark castle is magnificent, with several wings. It's a majestic building featuring a marvellous entrance door.

GUARD TWO

What a boring night. No one goes in. No one comes out.

GUARD ONE

Alright. I'll tell you a story about light and darkness. It was told in my hometown for generations.

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE BRIGHT CASTLE - DAY

We can see a lifeless tree in the courtyard. Its branches are held up by sticks that support it. The castle looks identical as the one protected by the guards, but it is much brighter and covered with roses, and has a nice, fairy-tale flair to it.

GUARD ONE
(V.O.)

There is a tree that contains the secret of all creation, of all existence. The tree looks dead, but the legend says that it's not.

(pause)

Its roots look drained, but its size is still quite amazing. It's fruit is said to give eternal life.

(pause)

The federation of light was asked to bring it back to life so it could blossom and bear fruit again.

CUT TO :

INT. THE BRIGHT CASTLE, GRAND HALL - DAY

The representatives of the galaxy are gathered in a grand hall. Different kinds of beings: tall, humanoid blue ones; angelic beings in white clothes; Greys with huge, black eyes; Thooks, passing like ghosts; and even wraiths. In the mix are two elementals - a DWARF and a RABBIT. A huge CAT comfortably lies on a table, purring.

THE DWARF
(to the rabbit)

I don't feel comfortable around those ghosts.

THE RABBIT
They are no ghosts, you silly. They are Thooks. You forget about any encounter with them as soon as you break eye contact.

THE DWARF
Not very handy for establishing a dialog.

THE RABBIT

That's exactly what they are about to avoid.

THE DWARF

What about those ones - at the ceiling?

THE RABBIT

Wraiths. Pure spirit. It's different. You'll never forget if you talk to one.

CERNUNNOS, the master of wild and the mediator of man and nature, is presiding the council.

THE DWARF

Silence! An announcement is about to be made.

Everyone gets quiet, except for the cat. The rabbit looks at the cat suspiciously, but the cat doesn't care, pushing his claws into the table.

Cernunnos comes forward.

CERNUNNOS

Dear friends... A balance in nature has to be restored. I summoned you to meditate on how we might accomplish that. It doesn't concern just our beautiful planet. We all know this planet is connected to the entire network of the Universe, with its endless civilizations and life forms. Anyone who can breathe life into this tree will bring balance to nature and bring us the fruit of eternal life.

(pause)

We've made several attempts, but nothing worked. And we've come to the conclusion that the being who can do it has to come from other dimensions or other worlds.

LIREAM, an angelic being, speaks up.

LIREAM

What's required?

CERNUNNOS

Love. That's all. Down to the very essence of it. Only unconditional love is known to be of such purity.

LIREAM

I see. I'd be honoured to take part in this adventure.

CUT TO :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE BRIGHT CASTLE - LATER

All the creatures are gathered in front of the tree.

Liream looks at his female counterpart, ALIA, nodding for her to join him. Alia nods in consent.

They both approach the tree, encircling it with their hands and joining their arms around the trunk.

A strong beam of light envelopes the tree, as the tree morphs into a hologram and grows larger, bursting with life : green leaves, birds chirp, butterflies. Everyone is mesmerized in awe... except for Cernunnos.

Liream and Alia look up at the tree with admiration, then slowly part their hands and step aside. As they do, the tree slowly returns to its initial, lifeless condition.

CERNUNNOS

It's not about your powers, Liream and Alia. It's about the nature of the frequency that has to awaken the tree.

RABBIT

Passing through pure spirit is the key to any transformation.

WRAITH

Are you referring to me?

The rabbit, suddenly shy, doesn't answer.

WRAITH (CONT'D)

Alright. But we cannot do it in the way you need it to. We only act on pure spirit. Acting in duality isn't of our domain. You'll have to deal with it in your dimension.

LIREAM

If the frequency doesn't match,
does that mean we'll have to
address the darkness? Is that what
you are saying, Cernunnos?

CERNUNNOS

I'm not sure. The dark creatures
of this planet couldn't care less
about revitalizing the tree of
life and wisdom.

One THOOK, passing by as a ghost, materializes so that
everyone can see him. He looks almost like a Grey, but his
head is larger with a line separating the two hemispheres of
his brain.

THOOK

Maybe not from this planet then.
(pause)
We know of one civilization that
is willing to participate.

The Thook projects a reality with reptilian, Orion
constellation creatures (Rigel). It's a blossoming
civilization with reptilians walking around their well-
structured cities. The projection streams from the Thook's
consciousness and plays like a movie in front of all the
audience. Then, the Thook closes his eyes and disappears.
Reality returns, just as it existed before the Thook's
arrival.

RABBIT

(waking up)

The dark creatures of this planet
couldn't care less about
revitalizing the tree of life and
wisdom.

THE BLUE HUMANOID

There's are creatures in the
outskirts of Orion. I remember
seeing them. Like in a dream. But
I know they are willing to help.

RABBIT

I guess we saw the same dream.

THE GREY

We could activate the portal. We
can relate to the Orion frequency.

RABBIT

Let's do it.

CAT

Bad idea.

RABBIT

Do you have a better one?

CAT

I always do. But I'm not supposed to tell.

DWARF

(impatiently)

Shall we do it or not?

The Grey comes forward, spreading his arms, as if looking for the connection. The dwarf takes his hand, then comes Cernunnos, then the rabbit, then the blue humanoid. All hand joined; the circle is complete.

Thooks are still passing through connections and two wraiths are at the ceiling. The whole circle starts VIBRATING and a reptilian IZMAAN from the Thook's vision gradually materialises in the middle of it.

When he fully materializes, the circle stops vibrating and everyone lets go each other's hand.

IZMAAN

Thank you for the opportunity to connect with you.

LIREAM

(to Izmaan)

Izmaan! We are grateful for the opportunity to connect with you again, brother.

RABBIT

Brother... ?

Izmaan shifts his appearance and turns into a dark copy of Liream.

IZMAAN

(to the rabbit)

Yes.

(to Liream)

I still carry our light. You thought I left to join the dark side. I am the transformation, brother. And true transformation

can not be achieved without
becoming what is to be transmuted.

Liream approaches and hugs Izmaan, in deep love. It's clear he has looked forward to this reunion for a long time.

Izmaan taps Liream on the shoulder, then steps back.

IZMAAN

You'll still fight me if you have
to.

LIREAM

And so will you.

IZMAAN

Well, back to your issue, then. I
guess you have something to ask of
me. What is it about?

CERNUNNOS

An energy issue.

IZMAAN

(looking at the tree)

I see. And you think I can fix it?

(pause)

You know too well there has to be
an energy flow into it. Opposite
charges, but with a common root.

CERNUNNOS

This is the key then.

CAT

This is the key.

Izmaan looks at Liream with an inviting gaze. Liream nods and comes forward.

Izmann hugs the tree, whispering the words of enchantment. The tree doesn't react.

Liream approaches the tree from the other side, holding hands with Izmaan around the trunk. The tree starts to burst with life, in a holographic euphoria. Everyone looks astonished.

Gradually Izmaan and Liream part and their hands disconnect. The tree gets back to its 3D drained state.

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE - EVENING

Guard One lies on his back staring in the sky. Guard Two sits by his side, listening.

GUARD TWO

What happened next?

GUARD ONE

No one knows. The legend stops there. I just know that was the closest they got to revitalizing the tree. People say it was amazing.

GUARD TWO

Look...

A silhouette is coming into light.

MELINDA, a dark but very beautiful and charismatic, angelic being with long, black hair and a long, black, elegant coat passes by. She smiles sarcastically when she sees the two guards - as if she knew their conversation - and heads toward the tower.

MUSIC

GUARD TWO (CONT'D)

Do you know her?

GUARD ONE

Not personally... luckily. I don't mess up with karma angels. She is the punishment angel.

GUARD TWO

Is she really that dangerous?

Guard Two starts to approach Melinda. Guard One stops him.

GUARD ONE

Just trust me on this. Don't do it, if you want to live.

Melinda glances at Guard One and continues walking.

GUARD TWO

All creation is love.

GUARD ONE

Love is about transcending light and darkness.

GUARD TWO

So, should there be darkness in
the experience of love?

GUARD ONE

Divine love is about light and
darkness creating a union,
becoming one. That cancels out
polarities and separation. It
seems impossible at first. A cat
chasing their own tail.

(pause)

But they say it's fun.

GUARD TWO

Fun - to make up a dark side just
for that sake?

GUARD ONE

It's a dirty job, but someone has
to do it. Without darkness,
there's no experience. Without
shades there's no painting. Can
you imagine a beautiful painting
called 'white square on white
background?'

GUARD TWO

Some might like that.

GUARD ONE

What a boring night.

MUSIC

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. THE CASTLE CORRIDOR - LATER - EVENING

Melinda walks into a shadowed castle corridor.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Melinda's East wing quarters are minimally furnished, for the
most part empty, with just singular pieces of outstanding
gothic furniture and objects, only serving the practical
needs.

Melinda stands in front of a huge mirror covered with
luxurious velvet cloth. She slightly unravels the mirror. It

shows her reflection as a regular mirror. She gives herself a confident smile.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, LEANDER'S QUARTERS - EVENING

Melinda walks silently into LEANDER'S room. Leander looks about 50 years old, charismatic and intelligent. He doesn't notice Melinda enter.

He is looking at a holographic representation of different planetary systems.

LEANDER
(V.O.)

Free will.

(pause)

There shouldn't be any free will for humans. Their very ability to choose leads to their own destruction. Amazing ! They have the simplest original mechanism: love, and you shall be loved; give, and you shall receive. But they are bored with it. The slightest obstacle, a shadow of temptation...

He makes a splendid, fancifully wrapped present appear in his hand.

LEANDER (CONT'D)
And they will abandon everything for getting...

He blows on the present and it explodes, leaving nothing but the dirty smoke.

LEANDER (CONT'D)
Nothing in exchange.

He LAUGHS.

LEANDER (CONT'D)
Isn't it the absolute proof that I'm the master of this world?

MELINDA
Of course, My Lord.

LEANDER
(surprised)

Melinda, you always walk in so silently.

MELINDA

My apologies, My Lord.

LEANDER

Well, after all, it's just a game. And in every game, someone has to lose.

(pause)

By the way, soon we are going to meet an interesting playing partner.

MELINDA

How may I serve you, My Lord?

LEANDER

The angel of Eliel will pay us a visit. He will probably stay for a while. I would suggest caution, much caution in this game.

MELINDA

When?

LEANDER

Tomorrow. And there's only one gate into our world. If we are lucky, he'll be killed before he reaches us. Passed the gate, that won't be a possibility. That's the contract.

MELINDA

And if the angel passes, what do you want me to do?

LEANDER

You have carte blanche to rid us of this nuisance.

Melinda slightly bows to Leander and leaves the room.

Cut on Leander.

MUSIC.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - MORNING

The huge mirror in the room is still covered with luxurious velvet cloth. Two comfortable armchairs are in front of the mirror.

Melinda is sitting in one of them with her smoking stick, deep in thought.

Her bot, a robot called ROBERT, is cleaning around the quarters. He is peaceful and beautifully made, with short blond hair. Robert looks to be around 25, and the only indication that he is not human is his flat, unchanging expression.

ROBERT

Milady, can I ask you a question?

MELINDA

Sure.

ROBERT

I love you. I have been conceived to have free will and to love. I chose to love you. Unconditionally, fully, beautifully. Like any human. Better than any human. More than any human. More genuinely, generously, blissfully.

MELINDA

(cutting)

You've become old Robert. First of all, that's not a question, that's a statement. And secondly - so what?

ROBERT

Do you feel you could possibly ever love me?

MELINDA

Only if you believed I could and created that reality. But you were not programmed to do that, Robert, you see?

ROBERT

Please allow me some time to integrate this new information. Maybe I am getting old after all, just as you say.

CLOSE ON: Robert, deep in thought.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

By the way, I always wondered, why don't you get old, Melinda?

MELINDA

One only gets old when one believes that we have to. It's a side effect, just like time itself.

ROBERT

What a strange formula. And if I believed anything is possible, would I become like you?

MELINDA

In a sense. Except that you still wouldn't chose to destroy yourself. That's a human privilege.

Cut on Melinda smiling.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Leave me alone now.

ROBERT

This is a day of strange formulas.

Robert leaves as Leander enters the room by the same door.

MELINDA

(to Leander)

Please take a seat.

Leander approaches the mirror and takes the cloth down in one move. The mirror displays a kind of corridor, just like the one in the castle. Leander sits in the other armchair. He sips champagne from a beautiful gothic glass, as Melinda smokes an elegant smoking stick.

MUSIC

In the mirror, a dozen white angels try to go through the corridor but get killed by demons on their way to this gate between the two worlds. When killed, they transform into light. The demons appear out of the thick cloudy air and attack with swords.

One angel, ALICE, seems to get further than the others. She touches the demons and they change colour. Some are paralyzed, some transform into light. Then, she kisses one of these

paralyzed demons on his forehead, and he transforms into an angel himself.

Alice, brave and fearless, seems untouched by any negative emotion. Her increasing brightness prevents the demons from seeing her, so they have no means of attacking her.

Ultimately, Alice makes her way to the end of the corridor and to the mirror.

CUT TO :

INT. INSIDE THE MIRROR - MORNING

Alice's POV:

Alice stands before the frontier, but the mirror is fuzzy on her side, she can't see beyond it. She still tries to peer through, as if wondering what kind of world awaits her.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - MORNING

Melinda sets down her smoking stick and approaches the mirror. She observes Alice studying this new frontier beyond the edge of the mirror.

She can quite clearly see Alice. Except for her blond hair, she physically resembles Melinda. Nevertheless, their surface energy is so roughly opposed that it seems unlikely they would be related in any way.

MELINDA

I expected the guardian angel of
Eliel to be a man.

LEANDER

So did I...

Melinda smiles sarcastically.

MUSIC.

Suddenly, Melinda sees that the last demon is about to strike Alice from behind with a dagger. Alice can't see him.

Melinda reaches through the mirror, grabs Alice's hand and pulls just as the demon swings his blade. The sword rips Alice's clothes but does not injure her.

Now, Alice is inside Melinda's room.

She stares at Melinda. Her breath is taken away. Alice's shining aura fades little by little.

Melinda is smiling confidently.

MELINDA

Hello.

Alice is speechless.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

You should be more careful.

Alice still can't find her words, as she's amazed to see Melinda. Alice scans the room, analysing where she has ended up.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Maybe you want to introduce yourself?

ALICE

Alice...

SMASH CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE CORRIDOR - MORNING

A heavy castle door SLAMS shut.

Leander and Melinda are walking the corridor.

LEANDER

What do you think you are doing?

MELINDA

I heard I had carte blanche. You suggested an interesting game. Let me have some fun.

They stop.

LEANDER

This one is very different from any of the toys you are used to playing with.

MELINDA

Which makes it more interesting.

LEANDER

As long as you succeed.

Melinda looks at Leander with a shadow of surprise.
Leander continues walking. Melinda stays in place.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. THE CASTLE CORRIDOR - DAY

Alice walks dark corridors. The magnificent castle is filled with secret rooms and passages. She carefully opens one door, as if knowing where it goes.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS, WORKING CHAMBER
- DAY

Alice walks into Melinda's working space.

MELINDA
What are you doing here?

ALICE
I wanted to thank you.

MELINDA
Thank me? Do you know who I am?

ALICE
You are the Karma Angel, one of
the reincarnations of...

MELINDA
(interrupting)
Enough.
(pause)
I see you did your homework.

A BEAT as they look at each other.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have come here.

ALICE
Why?

MELINDA
You don't belong here.

ALICE
In this room?

MELINDA

In this world. You should
seriously consider leaving.

Alice wanders around the office and touches some papers on the table. She comes upon a table with a holographic, 5D representation of Earth with all the different cultures. Alice goes through some image files of people in anger and despair.

MELINDA

What do you think you're doing?

ALICE

Do you like what you're doing?

MELINDA

Why shouldn't I?

ALICE

Because you make people suffer.

A BEAT.

MELINDA

Please. It's called karma, honey.
Justice.

ALICE

Love is the only justice that
exists. Don't you believe in it?

MELINDA

I think you miss the point.
There's nothing special about
being good. It's all about staying
good. Give me your hand.

Alice confidently stretches her hand to Melinda. Melinda takes a dagger from her pocket and gives Alice a quick cut through her palm.

ALICE

(screaming)

It hurts!

MELINDA

You bet.

Melinda hands the dagger over to Alice.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Don't you want to do the same to
me?

Alice puts the dagger away.

ALICE

NO. I'll never hurt you. I'll never kill.

Alice examines her hand.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it will heal soon.

Melinda takes a handkerchief out of her pocket and wraps it around Alice's palm.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Why did you save me by the way?

MELINDA

You didn't have any weapon. I don't like stupid accidents.

ALICE

Love is the greatest weapon.
Greater than this.

(raises her bleeding
hand)
It conquers all without any
effort.

Melinda catches Alice's hand and finishes the bandaging. Alice obeys like a kid.

MELINDA

It's slightly more complicated
than that.

ALICE

No - it's not.

Alice approaches Melinda even closer and smiles irresistibly. They stand very close. Melinda is in love with Alice's smile, but tries not to show it.

MELINDA

(almost whispering)
Love has never been of great value
here, unless I missed something
lately. Fear, sex, money, power,
pleasure, comfort. Those are much
more powerful. They motivate
people.

(pause)

Not love.

ALICE
But one can't trust those things.

MELINDA
You don't seriously suggest one
can trust love, do you?

A BEAT.

Alice steps back, thoughtful, looking inside herself.

ALICE
Yes, I do.

MELINDA
(almost laughing)
Well, this could be interesting...

ALICE
What do you mean?

MELINDA
Why not give it a try?
(pause)
Let's say you chose a man...

ALICE
(interrupting)
Capable of great love.

MELINDA
Anyone.
(pause)
He'll be offered a slight
possibility to destroy everything
dear to him. If he accepts, he
will die and you'll lose. If he
stands his ground, I'll spare any
human who has ever loved like him.

CLOSE ON: Alice.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
It's a pretty good deal. If you
really trusted love, you'd accept.

ALICE
I accept.

Melinda smiles.

Alice looks through Melinda's image files. They show different men: A businessman offering a ring to his girlfriend in a fancy restaurant; a rodeo rider trying to impress his girlfriend; a sportsman opening the door of his Ferrari for his girlfriend.

Then there is LUCIANO, a nice young man in his 30s, blond hair, and well built. He's smiling, although with some sadness in his eyes. He is offering a bucket of white roses to a girl and kisses her on her forehead.

ALICE

Is she his girlfriend?

MELINDA

His cousin. Her boyfriend left yesterday. Those are her consolation flowers.

Alice clicks on the file. Luciano is walking on the street. Nearby, boys play football. By accident the ball hits a BEGGAR WOMAN, who sits with her back to the CAMERA. Luciano picks the ball.

MELINDA

I see you like this guy. His name is Luciano.

CUT TO :

EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

Luciano launches the ball back to the kids, then returns to the Beggar, who turns around.

The Beggar is Alice.

LUCIANO

Are you alright?

ALICE

I guess so.

LUCIANO

Can I help you with anything?

ALICE

No. It's alright.

LUCIANO

No - I would like to help.

Luciano leaves 10 euros in the Beggars basket.

ALICE

Thank you.

LUCIANO

Why are you doing this? You're a pretty woman. You could find a job.

ALICE

Well, it's not always that easy.

LUCIANO

Oh, I see.

(pause)

You're not from here. You're a foreigner?

ALICE

Yes.

LUCIANO

Right. Maybe I can help you. I could use an assistant. I'm an accounting manager and I might need help with some simple tasks - if you can learn fast. Here is my number. Call me tomorrow. Let's give it a try. - What do you say?

ALICE

OK. Thank you.

Luciano smiles, then walks away.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S WORKING CHAMBER - DAY

MELINDA

So, what's your decision?

ALICE

I choose him. Luciano.

MELINDA

So be it. Though, I wouldn't choose him if I were you.

ALICE

He has so much love.

MELINDA

(smiling)
Love, self-esteem, opportunism,
passion, jealousy, hate, desire.
So many worlds for the same thing.

ALICE
I guess we just have different
perspectives on feelings.

MELINDA
Yes. But feelings don't change
because we have different
perspectives on them.

ALICE
Why do you like hurting people?

MELINDA
Because people need to be hurt to
move on.

ALICE
People need to be loved to move
on.

Melinda smiles at Alice.

MELINDA
Isn't that the same thing?

ALICE
Not where I come from.

MELINDA
By the way, what's your greatest
passion in your world?

ALICE
To make people fall in love,
rediscover themselves, make them
grow. Unconditionally. What about
your passion?

Melinda gazes meaningfully at Alice.

MELINDA
Exactly the same.

A heavy castle door SLAMS shut.

A BEAT.

Melinda's servant STELLA, a beautiful black girl with curly hair, barges in, interrupting the silence.

STELLA
Melinda, can I have your attention
for a second?

MELINDA
Yes.

STELLA
Lester, Andrew and Mellan are here
to see you.

MELINDA
Let them in.

The 3 boyfriends come in. All three well built, in their early 30s, full of energy.

LESTER is passionate and attentive, but a bit too sweet and sneaky.

ANDREW is strong, jealous and possessive.

MELLAN is intelligent and graceful, but slightly arrogant.

LESTER
Are you alright, dear? I've heard
you hurt yourself. I couldn't
believe it.

ANDREW
Maybe you should take a rest. Let
me carry you to the couch.

He takes Melinda as if she was weightless and carries her to a comfortable couch nearby. Melinda doesn't object.

Mellan stands in the corner, his arms crossed.

MELINDA
Why do you stand there, Mellan?

MELLAN
What happened here?

He gives Alice a suspicious look.

MELINDA
(innocently)
Nothing. And I'm quite alright as
you can see. Why such sad faces?

Let's have some fun! Are you joining me for a party?

MELLAN

Yeah, sure.

LESTER

Wonderful!

ANDREW

Why not?

MELINDA

Shall we take Stella with us?

Stella does a reverence.

MELLAN, LESTER AND ANDREW

Of course!

Alice leaves.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, CORRIDOR - DAY

Alice is walking the corridor. The others LAUGH from behind the door. Alice continues walking, then stops for a second, breathing hard.

Melinda catches up with her. Alice shivers in surprise.

MELINDA

Let's go for a ride on a boat.
Just us.

ALICE

What? And what about your party,
your boyfriends?

MELINDA

They don't mind.

ALICE

How on Earth?

MELINDA

They will be exploring a new...
inspiration. Let's go.

Melinda touches three stones on the castle wall and a fourth dimension opens - Paris, beginning of the 21st century. They step out on the Parisian streets.

CUT TO :

EXT. SMALL BOAT ON THE SEINE RIVER IN PARIS, DECK - DAY

ALICE

Aren't you in love with any of them?

MELINDA

Is it really important?

ALICE

Are you friends then?

MELINDA

Friends? Don't tell me you seriously think I can be friends with a man.

ALICE

Why not?

MELINDA

Because the sexual desire will take over.

ALICE

You are being cruel to say so.

MELINDA

Cruel? Please. Compared to Cleo, I have excellent behaviour.

ALICE

Cleo?

Melinda is holding a red apple that she wants to eat.

MELINDA

Cle-o-pat-ra.

ALICE

You mean Queen Cleopatra was one of your incarnations?

Melinda hands the red apple to Alice with an innocent gesture. Alice shakes her head "no".

ALICE (CONT'D)

Was it true you'd spend a night with any man if he'd agree to be killed in the morning?

MELINDA

Well, not any man. They had to be between 20 and 30, good looking and in good health.

ALICE

(embarrassed)

Well, that's not what I meant. Didn't all these men look for your love at the cost of their lives?

MELINDA

More like a fuck at the cost of their lives. Fun!

Melinda smiles.

ALICE

Was there no one who just wanted to be with you, without having sex?

MELINDA

No. I think they saw no point in giving their lives for just staring at me.

Melinda throws the apple away into the river.

ALICE

Wasn't that heartbreaking?

MELINDA

I don't have a nasty habit of judging things that I once desired. I was bored, and small pleasures can be quite distracting.

ALICE

If I were there, I'd just stay and watch you.

MELINDA

Right. Your beautiful love stories are the ones you don't live, the ones that stay in your imagination. You were not there. And if you were, how long would it take before you wouldn't handle your desire for me?

ALICE
Love doesn't necessarily mean
desire.

MELINDA
Well, I'm sorry to tell you, but
it often does.

ALICE
Either we control our desires, or
they control us.

Melinda leans in close to Alice.

MELINDA
(as if telling a secret)
Feelings are not reasonable. If
you claim to control them, you
must be in denial.

ALICE
(introspectively)
I'm not in denial.

Melinda leans back, puts her elbows on the boat's railing, and
gives her usual, broad, sarcastically confident smirk.

CUT TO :

EXT. A QUIET PARISIAN STREET - EARLY EVENING

Melinda and Alice walking the street near a nice café. The
CAMERA PANS to see Luciano in a café.

MELINDA
Oh, here he is. Would you have a
drink with me and meet our friend,
Luciano?

ALICE
I'm not sure I quite want to do it
today.

MELINDA
Why not? Well... then just wait
here for a while or come in later
if you wish.

Melinda goes inside the café.

CUT TO :

INT. PARISIAN CAFE - DAY

MUSIC

Alice looks at Melinda walking in the café. Melinda looks back at Alice through the café window.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. PARISIAN CAFE - DAY

PAUL and Luciano are having a drink. Paul is in his 30s, handsome, brown hair. His glance is furtive, trying to escape Luciano's gaze, but at the same time profound and introspective.

Melinda sits at a neighbouring table reading a book and having a glass of champagne.

PAUL

Well, look - one can be attracted to a woman in many ways: sexual, emotional, intellectual. I don't know - divine! Anyone is capable of all these different kinds of love. And not necessarily for just one person, you understand?

(pause)

I can't keep up with Frida. I can't promise she'd be the only woman in my life.

LUCIANO

Look, she's my cousin.

PAUL

(interrupting)

I know, she asked you to talk to me.

LUCIANO

No. No. She just called and told me what happened. Gosh, you've been together for seven years now. You were planning to have kids.

PAUL

I can't really afford to have kids. We've talked about that.

LUCIANO

If you love her, you'll find the money. Look how your father

managed it, and life used to be much harder then.

PAUL

Look, I just don't know where I stand. I want an easy divorce. She'll get her share and that's it. I just have to be honest with her and with myself. I still love Frida, but I also love another woman. And to say no to love is to say no to life.

LUCIANO

Well, I guess sometimes one has to say no. If you love all the wonderful women you meet, you still won't be able to manage 200 relationships all at once. That means you have to make choices and stick to your commitment.

Luciano gestures widely with his hands, knocking over a flower on Melinda's table. He picks it up and their eyes meet.

LUCIANO

Sorry about that.

MELINDA

Please - no worries.

LUCIANO

Would you agree with that?

MELINDA

With what?

LUCIANO

That love means one has to make choices and stick to one's commitment.

MELINDA

Oh. I think love doesn't necessarily means commitment. True love or unconditional love should go beyond any obligations, as it's free, per definition. Otherwise, it's not love. Or is it?

Paul gives Luciano a convincing look.

LUCIANO

(to Melinda, restrained)
Thank you.

Melinda smiles and returns to her book.

Luciano goes back to the discussion with Paul.

Melinda's POV: Alice outside the café.

Paul and Luciano leave the table, Luciano leaving his scarf on the chair.

Melinda's POV: Luciano says good-bye to Paul, then Luciano returns to the café.

LUCIANO
Hi, again.

MELINDA
Welcome back.

LUCIANO
I forgot my scarf...

MELINDA
Really?

LUCIANO
No. I wanted to see you.

MELINDA
Why?

Luciano takes a seat at her table. Melinda looks slightly surprised at her uninvited guest.

LUCIANO
(to the waiter)
A glass of red wine, please.

WAITER
Right away, sir. Which one?

LUCIANO
A Bordeaux would be fine. Thank you.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
(to Melinda)
It's about what you said. Have you ever been in a situation where you are committed to someone, but you feel trapped?

MELINDA

Any commitment needs proof.

LUCIANO

What do you mean?

MELINDA

You always have to prove you're in love - there is no presumption of innocence. You are guilty unless you prove otherwise. And once you start chasing an alibi, you never get to the real thing.

LUCIANO

What real thing?

MELINDA

Your freedom.

LUCIANO

What do you mean?

MELINDA

Start with not feeling guilty for being free, and you'll see for yourself.

LUCIANO

That's a dangerous advice.

MELINDA

I didn't say it was risk free.

LUCIANO

I never met anyone like you before. I feel so good with you...

Luciano puts his hand on Melinda's hand on the table. Melinda takes her hand away.

MELINDA

I have to go.

LUCIANO

Can I find you here again? Or anywhere?

As she stands, Luciano grabs Melinda's check on the table.

LUCIANO

Please let me get it.

He looks at the amount: 2,000 Euros.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

It's just one glass of champagne,
right?

MELINDA

Please - don't bother.
(whispering in his
ear)
You shouldn't attempt to buy
what's not for sale.

She leaves 2,000 euros on the table and puts on her coat to
leave.

Luciano, distracted, puts the check in his pocket.

LUCIANO

I really want to see you again.

Melinda shakes her head "no".

Luciano nods and begins to walk out of the café, but bumps
into Alice, who's walking in.

She gives him an understanding look and searches Luciano's
eyes, seeking any sense that he recognises her. He clearly
doesn't, and steps outside.

Alice approaches Melinda.

MELINDA

Oh, hi! I must confess I was
getting bored without your
company.

ALICE

Leave him alone.

MELINDA

Are you afraid? I thought we had a
deal and that you trusted him.

ALICE

You are manipulating his feelings.

MELINDA

I'm breathing some life into his
feelings. And you can't admit that
this "love" of yours is just an
artificial concept.

Melinda is furious and beautiful.

Luciano sees them through the café window. He stops as he can't ignore his feelings for Melinda.

Melinda notices him watching but acts as if she doesn't. Alice, her back to the window, doesn't see him.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

You talk so much about love, but
did you even ever make love?

ALICE

What?

Melinda leans in close to Alice, touching slightly her hair.

MELINDA

Just curiosity. So, did you?

ALICE

It's different where I come from.

MELINDA

How different?

ALICE

Love is everywhere. It is not
associated with any person in
particular.

Melinda touches Alice's hair and leans toward her ear.

MELINDA

That's a pity. So, you don't even
know what it's like.

MUSIC

Alice looks into Melinda's eyes, understanding something is wrong. Suddenly, she turns around and sees Luciano through the window.

ALICE

(hurt, to Melinda)

I see. Bravo for the performance.

Melinda smiles back with her sarcastic smile.

MELINDA

And one more thing: You are the
only daughter of Kristofer

Kammerstein, the financial magnate
who died last month.

ALICE

What on Earth is that supposed to
mean?

Luciano comes back inside. He can't hear them talking from the
distance. Melinda looks at Luciano and acts as if she was
telling Alice something very pleasant.

MELINDA

Well, he left everything to you.
That's what it's supposed to mean.

Alice is searching for her words.

Luciano approaches them.

MELINDA

How nice you came back! I wanted
to introduce you to my childhood
friend, Alice.

LUCIANO

Enchanté. Did you grow up
together?

MELINDA

Sort of. Our fathers used to work
together.

Alice takes a breath to say something to Melinda.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

But I'll have to leave you now.
Have fun.

Melinda leaves.

MUSIC.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. PARISIAN CAFE - EARLY EVENING

Alice and Luciano are talking.

LUCIANO

Do you see her often?

ALICE

Sometimes.

LUCIANO

You are so different from her. You have so much kindness. So much light.

ALICE

So do you.

LUCIANO

The best thing that there is, is to share light, to be kind to each other. To co-create happiness. I wish people could understand and explore that more.

ALICE

So do I. What's your favourite way to help people?

LUCIANO

There's help and then there's the task of bringing more awareness. That's the best help there is.

ALICE

Exactly.

LUCIANO

That's what I've been doing all my life. I'm writing a book.

ALICE

What's the story?

LUCIANO

A guy falling crazy in love with his dream girl. Then, progressively, he takes for granted her attention and beauty and all the happiness he receives. At the end, he's letting her down because of his own pride and deficient self-esteem. She's rich and famous, and he's going to sneak into her life and then walk away with all of her fortune. She'll be devastated, but he won't care less.

ALICE

And then?

LUCIANO

It's so self-destructive that he won't survive his own choices. You know, karma always catches up with us. I thought that would be a nice lesson of awareness. How could anyone destroy the dearest thing he has? It has always amazed me.

ALICE

Exactly.

CUT TO :

INT. PARISIAN CAFE - EARLY EVENING

Alice's personal assistant FREDERICK, comes in. He's a slender man in his early 40s, elegant, restrained. His eyes are kind and gentle, yet he's keen at paying attention to details.

FREDERICK

(to Alice)

I'm afraid Madam could be late for her dinner at Lindberg's.

ALICE

Thank you...

She hesitates.

FREDERICK

It's Frederick, Madam

ALICE

Thank you, Frederick. But I don't really feel like going.

FREDERICK

(discretely)

Might I remind Madam of the importance of Lindberg's plans for Kammerstein Corporation. May I suggest we leave in 15 minutes, so Madam has enough time to comfortably change for her dinner?

ALICE

All right, Frederick. I'll be ready in five minutes.

Frederick retreats.

ALICE

(to Luciano)

Could you come with me? I won't be
at ease alone there.

LUCIANO

Of course, it would be my
pleasure.

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. NEAR A STYLISH MANSION - EVENING

The car stops beside an elegant Parisian mansion with a nice
garden. Frederick gets out of the car and opens the door for
Alice. She gets out and looks at the property.

ALICE

(to Luciano)

Wait for me here. I won't take
long.

CUT TO :

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

Alice enters the luxurious reception hall and looks around
with curiosity. The interior is very stylish, all pastel
colours, yet without excessive luxury.

Alice heads toward a nice staircase.

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, BEDROOM - EVENING

Alice opens the door and enters her room.

It appears to be with fresh flowers and very neat, again all
in white and pastel colours.

Alice smells the flowers, then exits the room.

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Alice opens the dressing door and sees it full of fancy
dresses.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. LINDBERG'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

Lindberg's house is stylish, yet with a dark, old-time flair.
The walls are wooden, and the rooms have less light than
Alice's brand-new home.

Alice and Luciano are at the table with Alfred Lindberg and his wife. Alfred, in his late 50s, enjoys life, is down-to-earth and cares for his family. MRS LINDBERG is in her early 50s, a calm lady living her life as a housewife who takes cards of everything.

Alice wears a stylish short dress. Luciano feels a bit awkward as he doesn't really fit into this picture with his casual clothes.

Cut on Luciano trying to figure out which fork to take for his dish.

Close-up on Alfred Lindberg noticing it.

Cut on Alice using her fork.

Cut on Luciano observing Alice's fork, and then doing the same.

ALICE

(to Lindberg)

It's quite delicious, thank you.

LINDBERG

You are very welcome, my dear. So, think about the offer. It's a lot of money. And I'm being generous, as I owe a lot to your father.

ALICE

I will think about it.

LINDBERG

Luciano, what would you say about a good old cigar?

LUCIANO

Delighted to.

Lindberg and Luciano go to another room.

Alice is alone with Mrs Lindberg. They sit for a while, not knowing what to say.

MRS LINDBERG

So, where are you going to spend your summer, dear? Alfred wants to go to our castle in Tuscany, but I prefer the one in Provence. I love 'le chant des cigales'. Where is your summer estate located?

ALICE
I can't remember.

MRS LINDBERG
Oh, you should, you should.

CUT TO :

INT. LINDBERG'S DINING ROOM - EVENING

AGATHA, Lindberg's daughter, walks in. She has short hair and looks androgynous. Her head in the clouds, though her still-waters-run-deep gaze says she's a rebel. She's very beautiful, slender and high-frequency.

MRS LINDBERG
Agatha, have a seat with us.

AGATHA
(to Alice)
And who are you?

MRS LINDBERG
Oh, it's Miss Kammerstein, don't you remember her father?

AGATHA
Oh, yes indeed.

Cut on Alice's glance. She looks like she needs saving.

Cut on Agatha intercepting that.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
I can't stay, I was on my way to the library. Need to look something up.
(to Alice)
Would you like to join me?
There're some rare masterpieces. I could show you around.

ALICE
(grateful smile)
I'd love to.

CUT TO :

INT. LINDBERG'S LIBRARY - EVENING

Agatha is sitting on the table; Alice is looking in a book.

AGATHA

You were bored in there, weren't you?

ALICE

Well, it's not about your mother. It's me. I don't feel like I quite belong in this world.

AGATHA

That makes two of us.

Cut on Alice.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

You have an eye for detail. That's the oldest book in the library. And my favourite.

ALICE

(reading the book)

Well, that's interesting. Why would they suggest that Lilith was evil?

AGATHA

That's how the story goes in this world.

Agatha slides off the table, putting her right hand on Alice's hip. She gets down on her knees and moves Alice's dress up. Alice puts the book on the table.

Close-up on Alice's hand seizing Agatha's hand that is caressing her hip. Close-up on Alice.

ALICE

That was not the story I was told.

Alice bends in pleased shock, slightly opening her mouth.

A BEAT. Alice closes her eyes in an attempt to seize herself.

Unable to resist, she reopens her eyes and, gently as a feather, starts to caress Agatha's hair with her left hand, her right hand squeezing the table edge.

Only the very top of Agatha's head is visible, along with her hands caressing Alice's hips. It's clear what's going on beneath.

Cut on Alice closing her eyes again, this time as if transported to another dimension.

ALICE (CONT'D)
(prayerful)

Heavens.

As the tension builds, Alice quivers in pleasure, putting both of her hands on the table edge.

Agatha seizes both of Alice's wrists, without stopping.

Alice quivers again, accidentally making the book fall on the floor. Suddenly, we hear a sound of DISTANT FOOTSTEPS.

Close-up on Agatha, paying attention, but quite calm.

Close-up on Alice, who seems stuck between dimensions.

Cut on Agatha pulling Alice's dress down, making sure it all sits as before.

Cut on Alice quickly picking up the book and putting it back on the table.

Agatha jumps back on the table, sitting there as if nothing happened.

AGATHA

Well, I guess designing Lilith as evil was the most 'convenient' version for the collective consciousness, at the time, so to speak - in order to manipulate humans. In this new story, Life became Death, Knowledge a Curse, and Woman became Sin. Pleasure and rightness were beaten back on themselves, to eat away at the soul, as a cancer.

(pause)

Sweet, innocent sex was forbidden, yet coyly acknowledged as irresistible.

A BEAT.

Cut on Alice, still under shock.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

And when Man inevitably succumbed, he was shamed, and Woman was damned for being seductive and beautiful.

(pause)

Curiosity and the thirst for knowledge were savagely punished, and Humanity was severed from the Divine, to live lives of pain and longing.

(pause)

The infinite colours of the world were reduced to black and white, which were then set at war.

Alfred Lindberg comes in. Luciano comes right after Lindberg.

LINDBERG

What are you girls talking about?

AGATHA

I was saying that this Earth, this holy and precious Paradise we all inhabit, was given to Man to rule over in tyranny, to devour and consume, until all is exhausted and extinguished. While Woman, who carries the seed of life and renewal, is made a slave. She who created life and guards the wisdom has a long memory; do not think She will forget.

LINDBERG

(kindly, to Alice and Luciano)
In her rebel mood, as usual.

(to Alice and Agatha)

I don't mean to intrude, but won't you girls like to join us for a nice desert?

Agatha lifts herself off the table, taking the book with her.

AGATHA

It takes some real courage to be honest with oneself. And some honesty is always required to break out of any outdated paradigm. I'm going out, dad.

(to Alice and Luciano)

See ya guys.

Agatha walks out.

Cut on Alice, still in bewilderment.

LUCIANO
(to Alice)
Would you prefer to go for a
little walk outside?

CUT TO :

EXT. OUTSIDE LINDBERG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Alice and Luciano go out of Lindberg's house.

LUCIANO
What are you thinking about,
darling?

ALICE
I don't like the idea of myself
lacking courage or honesty.

LUCIANO
(surprised)
What are you talking about? You -
lacking honesty? Who told you
that?

ALICE
No one. This world feels really
upside-down to me. I can't breathe
here. Take me home.

CUT TO :

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, RECEPTION HALL - NIGHT

Alice is still shivering. She looks anxious.

LUCIANO
You're shivering, my dear.

ALICE
I can't stand up.

Alice almost falls. Luciano catches her, then takes her in his
arms.

LUCIANO
You should lie down, my love.

Luciano carries her upstairs to the bedroom.

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Luciano puts Alice down in the bed.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
Shall I leave you alone?

ALICE
No. Please stay.

MUSIC

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, BEDROOM - MORNING

Luciano and Alice are lying in bed, though it's clear they didn't make love. Luciano is still in his clothes. So is Alice, who is asleep with her arm around him.

Luciano gets up, his movement waking Alice.

LUCIANO
I have to go.

ALICE
Already?

LUCIANO
It's 8-AM, my love. It's a pity I can't stay. I have an interview for a new job - have to be there at 9:30, and I need to go to my apartment and change.

ALICE
What job?

LUCIANO
Accounting manager. I've been looking for a job for the past three months.

ALICE
(slightly confused)
I see.

LUCIANO
What is it?

ALICE
I think I saw you once in a park, you offered a beggar woman to be your assistant.

LUCIANO

Oh yes! Funny you saw me there.
Well, that's one reason more to
hurry with my job search.

ALICE

(understanding)

Why not work for Kammerstein
Corporation?

LUCIANO

No, it's too generous of you. I
can't accept that.

ALICE

Why not? I need someone I can
trust. I'm quite new to this, you
know. You are just perfect.

(pause)

I need your help.

LUCIANO

Right. Then, of course I'll be
there for you. And well... thank
you!

Truly delighted, Luciano gives Alice a kiss.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. KAMMERSTEIN CORPORATION, MAIN OPEN SPACE OFFICE - DAY

Luciano enters the big office space in a transparent
skyscraper. He's talking to one of his male colleagues.

Cut on AMANDA ROTH and CLAIRE LAVOISIERE, two colleagues,
observing Luciano from distance. Both girls are in their mid-
20s, dressed in their professional skirt outfits.

Amanda is very sexy, long dark hair and a red skirt with a
deep opening that lines out her luscious body. Clair is
refined, with a more restrained, grey color palate. But her
high heels, a fancy bracelet on her wrist, and a plunging
neckline in her shirt suggest a passionate nature.

AMANDA

He's kind of cute - our new boss.

CLAIRE

Sure, but he's not my type.

AMANDA

So, who is your type?

CLAIRE

I don't know. As far as I am concerned, all men are incapable of sharing, or even experiencing love that's not based on looks.

AMANDA

Do you hold a degree in philosophy?

CLAIRE

No - only in living out my passions.

AMANDA

Well, this one is taken, anyways.

CLAIRE

What do you know about him?

AMANDA

What everyone knows. Only you missed out on it, taking your New York break for six months.

CLAIRE

Oh, come on. What's going on?

AMANDA

Miss Kammerstein's wonder boy. Started off as accountant manager three months ago, and now he's managing the whole European division.

CLAIRE

Oh, I see.

Luciano comes close to the girls:

LUCIANO

Hello Amanda. Who is this?

CLAIRE

Claire Lavoisère.

AMANDA

She's part of our permanent staff, just back from her New York assignment.

LUCIANO

I see. Luciano Alessi. Nice to meet you.

Luciano and Claire shake hands.

CUT TO :

INT. KAMMERSTEIN CORPORATION, LUCIANO'S OFFICE - DAY

Claire enters the office.

CLAIRE
Here's the report.

The phone RINGS. Luciano picks up. Claire sits in the armchair trying to be discrete.

LUCIANO
(into phone)
Of course, my love.
(pause)
Sure, it's a wonderful idea, I'll join you there. You know I'll do anything to please you.
(pause)
I'll be there at 8. Bye.

Luciano hangs up.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
Sorry.

CLAIRE
It's so nice. I've never seen a man as devoted as you are.

LUCIANO
Yes. Alice is a very nice woman.

CLAIRE
Nicer than anyone you've met?

LUCIANO
I'm not comparing her to anyone. But yes, she's the best thing that's happened to me so far.

CLAIRE
That's interesting.

LUCIANO
What's interesting?

CLAIRE

"So far".

LUCIANO

Don't get me wrong.

Luciano rakes his hands through his hair. He looks tired.

CLAIRE

If you're tired, maybe we can have a drink while discussing the report. You'll feel more relaxed.

LUCIANO

What?

CLAIRE

I'm sorry - I thought you had time till 7 - 7.30. Sorry, maybe I got it wrong.

LUCIANO

No, no. It's... Sure, we can have a drink across the street.

CUT TO :

INT. LA CITY BAR - EARLY EVENING

Claire and Luciano are having a drink.

LUCIANO

So, that's why we have to be so precise with these reports. Otherwise, we'll have to go all the way back again if anything goes wrong, basically tripling the costs...

Luciano's voice fades. Claire listens and stares at him.

After a BEAT...

CLAIRE

Can I ask you a personal question?

LUCIANO

Go ahead.

CLAIRE

How do you feel as a man, to be with a woman who's richer than you?

LUCIANO

What?

CLAIRE

Doesn't it feel awkward to live with a woman who's more powerful than you?

LUCIANO

Well...

(pause)

I guess we don't have any issues with that. I have my own fortune, so I don't really depend on Alice's money.

CLAIRE

And what about this job?

LUCIANO

Look, I'm not lacking in career opportunities. I only accepted this job to help Alice, at least for the time of transition.

CLAIRE

Amazing.

LUCIANO

Why?

CLAIRE

You turn my world upside down. I've never met a man like you. You could have any girl or job you want, but you're so attached to the woman you really love.

LUCIANO

Sounds like a nice compliment. If I'm supposed to feel flattered, then I am. Thank you.

CLAIRE

You're welcome. Though I already regret having asked.

LUCIANO

Why?

CLAIRE

Did a girl fall in love with you
without knowing you were rich?

LUCIANO

I guess so.

CLAIRE

Wasn't that charming?

LUCIANO

Yes, it was. She asked me to be
best man at her wedding.

CLAIRE

Ah! And did you accept?

LUCIANO

Yes, I did.

CLAIRE

You're even more interesting than
I thought.

LUCIANO

And what did you think?

Claire looks at her watch.

CLAIRE

I guess you're getting late.

Luciano glances down at his watch.

LUCIANO

Yes, I am.

CLAIRE

Have a nice evening.

LUCIANO

Thank you.

Claire is looking for her wallet in her purse.

LUCIANO

No, please, leave it to me.

Luciano leaves 100 euros to the table and picks
up his coat to leave.

CLAIRE

It's way too much for two drinks.

LUCIANO
I'm not paying for the drinks. I'm
just grateful for the pleasure of
our conversation.

Claire looks at Luciano speechless.

LUCIANO
See you tomorrow.

CLAIRE
See you.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. BORGO'S RESTAURANT, EVENING

Alice and Luciano are sitting at a candle-lit table in a fancy
restaurant.

LUCIANO
Thank you for thinking about this.
It's so...

ALICE
(interrupting)
Romantic?

LUCIANO
Yes. Romantic.

Luciano takes Alice's hand and kisses it.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
I have a nice idea. Shall we go to
the Caribbean next weekend? Take a
helicopter to do some island
hopping. Or buy a yacht? It would
be fun! There are a lot of nice
estates. If you like it there,
it's a nice location for a second
home. What do you think?

ALICE
That's a great idea. I'd love
that. Spend some time away from
the city. Cuddling and swimming.

LUCIANO
And making love.

ALICE

What about your book? You planned to write on the weekends.

LUCIANO

Right. Well, it can certainly wait a week. I prefer to spend time with you.

ALICE

Should we go home?

LUCIANO

I guess so.

Luciano is putting Alice's fingers in and out of his mouth one by one. Alice takes her hand away and gently caresses his hair, more like a friend.

CUT TO :

INT. KAMMERSTEIN OFFICE, LUCIANO'S OFFICE - DAY

Luciano is working. He clearly has trouble concentrating on his task. Claire knocks on the door.

LUCIANO

Please, come in.

CLAIRE

Here's today's report. I verified it personally. Totally accurate.

LUCIANO

Thank you.

Luciano looks vaguely at the report.

CLAIRE

Sorry, is anything wrong? Did anything go wrong at your dinner last night?

LUCIANO

No. It was perfect. Too perfect.

CLAIRE

Too perfect? Does that exist?

LUCIANO

Now I know it does.

CLAIRE

Want to talk about it after work?

LUCIANO
I guess there wouldn't be anything
wrong with that.

MUSIC

CUT TO :

INT. LA CITY BAR - EARLY EVENING

CLAIRE
You seemed a bit annoyed all day.

LUCIANO
I can't describe my feelings just
yet. It's complicated.

CLAIRE
How complicated?

LUCIANO
I'm confused. And it's not Alice's
fault. She's stellar. It's
something within me. As if what I
have to offer her wasn't enough.

CLAIRE
Are you happy with her intimately?

LUCIANO
I can't comment on that.

CLAIRE
Come on...

LUCIANO
Well... I don't know. Something is
definitely strange. It's as if she
wasn't from this world. Her
instincts are wired differently.
I'm trying to match them, but I
can't. You know what I mean?

CLAIRE
Well, the only thing I know is
that I can't see how a girl
wouldn't be sexually connected to
you.

LUCIANO
Thank you for the compliment.

CLAIRE

I mean it. Maybe you should consult someone on that.

LUCIANO

No, that would be ridiculous. And everything seems fine, I just can't feel that...

CLAIRE

(interrupting)

That you fully own her?

LUCIANO

Yes! My best guess is that there's something with her chakras.

Claire draws an imaginary nimbus around her head with her fingers.

CLAIRE

Like, you mean you have to connect on the 7th floor in order to match.

LUCIANO

Something like that. Or more like 128th floor.

They a LAUGH. Luciano is clearly falling for Claire's seduction.

CLAIRE

Can't you think of anything you can do to fix it?

LUCIANO

No. I guess I should leave it alone.

CLAIRE

An open relationship could be nice to try. Do you think she'd be open for that?

LUCIANO

I never thought of it. But she might consider it. She has a great heart. She's an angel, really. Maybe I'm just not worthy of her. Sometimes that's what I feel.

CLAIRE

Of course you are. You're worthy
of any woman.

Luciano leans toward Claire and kisses her.

The kiss quickly turns passionate. Suddenly, he notices
Melinda sitting nearby and watching them.

LUCIANO

Sorry. I have to go. Looking
forward to seeing you tomorrow.

CLAIRE

Me too.

Claire leaves the bar. Luciano approaches
Melinda.

LUCIANO

You won't tell Alice.

Melinda gives Luciano a surprised look.

LUCIANO

Well, if you do, I'll tell her you
tried to seduce me - that I
refused to give in and you're
taking revenge.

MELINDA

I tried to seduce you? That's not
believable, even for a naïve girl
like Alice. Anyway, don't worry. I
won't tell her. She'll discover
everything by herself. That's more
fun, isn't it?

LUCIANO

She'll never discover anything. It
won't happen again.

MELINDA

Hmmm... My experience rather tells
me that what happened once can
happen twice.

LUCIANO

Then you'll be surprised.

Melinda smiles sarcastically.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

Luciano walks in as Alice plays a white grand piano.

ALICE

How was your day?

LUCIANO

A lot of stress. I can't understand how your father didn't go insane managing all this.

ALICE

Well, eventually he did have a heart attack.

LUCIANO

Yes. I'm sorry.

A BEAT.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

Look, I thought, instead of going to the Caribbean, why don't we spend a month on a great journey? Say, Bali. Sounds romantic, ah?

ALICE

Yes, that sounds nice.

LUCIANO

OK, I'm going to change now. What's for dinner?

ALICE

I have no idea.

LUCIANO

I'll ask the kitchen staff.

Luciano leaves the room.

Alice turns around and sees Melinda seated in the armchair and drinking tea.

Alice walks over and sits in the other chair next to her. She pours herself a tea without saying a word.

MELINDA

Missed me?

ALICE

No.

MELINDA

You've made progress - you've learned to lie. So, how is your new home?

Alice is blushing.

ALICE

Pretty nice, thank you. All my favourite colours.

MELINDA

I did my best.

ALICE

Although, I didn't realise I would personally be a part of the experiment.

MELINDA

Isn't it the best way to put it all to your advantage? For the sake of the purity of the experiment, of course. Now, you guys have the best chance to win.

ALICE

I understand. But I'd prefer to do it without this... glamour, this money.

MELINDA

Does it make any difference for the one who is truly in love? On the contrary, it just eliminates all inconveniences. That's how you like it - omni-present love. No suffering, no obstacles. Or did I misinterpret?

Luciano walks in. He has changed for dinner. He stops, surprised to see Melinda. She notices.

MELINDA

I was about to leave. Have a nice evening.

She leaves the room.

MUSIC

LUCIANO

What did she want?

ALICE
Nothing, we just had a chat.

LUCIANO
A chat?

Luciano takes Melinda's teacup and drinks some of her tea.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
Good tea.

Alice opens the window and fresh air rushes in. She contemplates for a moment, looking out over the nice view of her garden and Paris.

Alice looks at the beautiful flowers on the table beside the window, then looks back at Luciano.

ALICE
Look, I've been thinking. Maybe it's not such a good idea to go to Bali. Let's stay home.

LUCIANO
Sometimes we need new inspiration, to take a fresh breath.

He pulls Alice to himself and holds her tight.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
And it's quite sexy too, don't you think so?

ALICE
You find things aren't sexy enough as they are?

LUCIANO
That's not what I meant.

Luciano wants to kiss her. Alice takes his hand off.

ALICE
Would you still love me if I was ugly, old, poor or just a person you met on the street?

LUCIANO

Of course. If I met you in any random circumstances, I'd remember you forever. Why do you ask?

A BEAT.

ALICE

You know I thought about something. When Kammerstein Corporation is sold, I'll give the money to the poor.

LUCIANO

You mean, like, how much?

ALICE

Everything.

LUCIANO

Everything?

ALICE

Yes, everything.

LUCIANO

But how will we live? Where?

ALICE

We'll find work and rent an apartment. Honestly, why do we need all this luxury to be happy? We just need each other, don't we?

LUCIANO

Look - I think you're tired. Have some rest. Let's talk about it tomorrow.

ALICE

It's not just about us, dear. Think about all the kids who are dying of famine. That money could really change lives. Thousands of lives.

LUCIANO

No one should give away everything. You should think about us, too.

ALICE

I am.

LUCIANO

Alice, you talk like that because, in your entire life, you've never had to work for money. You don't know what it's like.

(pause)

Come on, come here. Let's talk about this tomorrow. Let's not make any crazy moves now. Come here.

ALICE

I love you, but I can't tonight.

LUCIANO

Why not?

Alice goes upstairs.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Damn it!

He sits in the armchair where Melinda was sitting and notices Melinda's notebook. He picks it up.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

(to himself)

She forgot her notebook.

Luciano takes a whiskey, then sits back in the armchair and opens Melinda's notebook and casually flips through the pages.

The script is unlike anything he's ever seen before. He is amazed. When he opens the last page, the page starts to burn.

Melinda's hand appears from behind and closes the notebook. It stops burning.

Luciano looks up to see Melinda standing over him.

LUCIANO

(surprised)

Gosh!

MELINDA

Thank you for finding that.

LUCIANO

What did you tell her?

MELINDA

You look upset.

LUCIANO

Did you tell her about Claire? Did you tell her to give all the money away?

MELINDA

Nothing was further from my mind. Does it bother you? It's not your money, after all.

LUCIANO

You talk as if I was nothing here. Nobody. Just if none of this concerned me at all. I'm living with her, do you understand?

MELINDA

(slight sarcasm)

Oh, I understand. You went through all these huge challenges to get her in the first place. And now you're putting all your efforts into nourishing your beautiful relationship.

LUCIANO

Look, it might seem ridiculous to you. But it's not to me, by far!

MELINDA

Calm down. You have Alice in your possession. I just came to pick up my notebook.

She reaches for it, but Luciano pulls it out of her reach.

LUCIANO

You must understand, I want all of her, her soul included.

MELINDA

Do you really? So, what do you want from me?

She approaches Luciano, standing very close to him.

LUCIANO

Leave us alone.

MELINDA

Do you always feel so threatened
when Alice has a cup of tea with
someone?

Melinda is standing so close, exuding a sexiness. It's as if
she'd allow Luciano to kiss her, if he tried.

The plunging neckline of her dress her dress reveals a
pendant. Luciano is mesmerised by it. He carefully takes it
out of the dress opening to have a look.

The pendant is strange, somewhat like a 2D version of
Metatron's Cube. Melinda retrieves it from Luciano's hand and
takes her notebook.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Good night.

Melinda leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. LUCIANO'S CAR - MORNING

Luciano seems preoccupied. The chauffeur drives slowly.
Luciano's mobile RINGS.

LUCIANO

Yes.

(pause)

Yes Mr. Lindberg.

(pause)

I have my next meeting at 3. I can
be at your place in 30 minutes.

CUT TO :

INT. LINDBERG'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Luciano and Alfred Lindberg are discussing.

LINDBERG

Sorry for this last-minute
meeting. But this is urgent and -
I didn't want to delay.

LUCIANO

I must confess, the timing is not
quite appropriate for any new
business ideas.

LINDBERG

I know.

LUCIANO

What do you know?

LINDBERG

This morning we got information from our source at Kammerstein that Alice wants to donate all the money from the transaction.

LUCIANO

She might reconsider.

LINDBERG

You think you can make her change her mind in two days?

LUCIANO

I think so. I feel awkward discussing this with you. Why did you want to speak to me rather than to Alice?

LINDBERG

Look, I worked with her farther and I wish her all the best. But with all respect she is still a little girl who doesn't know the value of this money. We worked very hard to earn it. She just got it and now she acts like a child who doesn't like her new toy.

LUCIANO

I see.

LINDBERG

The deal is for 3 billion dollars. I set this price because I wanted to be generous. Now all this money given away doesn't make anyone happy.

LUCIANO

Except for a couple of thousand African kids.

LINDBERG

Don't be ridiculous.

LUCIANO

What do you want from me?

LINDBERG

Look. I wanted to give her another chance. I could contribute to a certain process that would result in a stock crash in the next 24 hours that would devalue Kammerstein stock by 95%. In this case I would pay only 150 million for the deal. Maybe such stress might be beneficial for Alice, you know. She might change her mind and be more careful. She'll keep over a hundred million dollars anyway.

LUCIANO

I still don't see why you are telling me all this.

LINDBERG

Because I'll need your help. Her advisors will alert her to the possibility of manipulation. You must persuade her to go on with the deal at the new price.

LUCIANO

And what makes you think I'll do anything like that?

LINDBERG

Well as I said it will benefit everyone. What about 200 million?

LUCIANO

200 million what?

LINDBERG

Dollars. Transferred to your account right after the sale.

LUCIANO

You want me to betray the woman I love for 200 million bucks?

LINDBERG

Alright, 300 million. Remember, this will be your money. No one will know. And who is talking about betrayal? This money is enough to guarantee your happiness with Alice in your present mansion if you wish. And I'll tell you

more, it could be the only way to do so.

LUCIANO

I see.

LINDBERG

I count on you. This is her only chance. Let me know.

Agatha is approaching and hears the tail end of the conversation. She stands next to the entrance, just out of sight so that they can't see her.

LUCIANO

500 million. No less.

LINDBERG

OK. But that's final. And remember - I'm doing it for her.

LUCIANO

No, I am doing it for her.

LINDBERG

Of course, you are.

CUT TO :

INT. ALICE'S MANSION, RECEPTION HALL - DAY

Agatha walks in, waiting for Alice.

A moment later, Alice comes down the stairs and sees Agatha.

ALICE

Well, what a surprise.

Agatha stares intently at Alice.

AGATHA

A pleasant one, I hope.

Alice blushes at the recollection of their previous meeting.

ALICE

Of course.

Agatha approaches Alice. They both half-sit on the table edge.

Agatha leans in for a cuddle and Alice wraps her arms gently around Agatha from behind, interconnecting them across

Agatha's chest. Then she puts her chin on Agatha's left shoulder which she lightly caresses with her right hand.

AGATHA

I came to make sure you're alright. Yesterday I overheard Dad and Luciano discuss some big bucks - like, half a billion. And today this stock market crash. Something strange is in the air. Some sinister stuff. I can feel it. Do you trust Luciano?

Alice lets go of the hug. Agatha turns and looks Alice in the eyes.

ALICE

Yes, I do.

AGATHA

I feel something is really out of place.

ALICE

Don't worry, dear. I'll be alright. I'm not interested in money. I'll just do my best to make the most of it for the charities. But it warms my heart that you care about me. I'll remember that.

Luciano walks in.

LUCIANO

(surprised)

Nice to see you, Agatha. Any news from your father?

AGATHA

No. I just came visit Alice. But I was about to leave.

(to Alice)

See ya.

ALICE

Thanks, again.

Agatha walks out.

LUCIANO

We have to talk.

ALICE

I know.

Alice sits down in an armchair. Luciano does the same.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not sure I want to sell now.

LUCIANO

Alice, listen. To me, the bottom line is this : Do care about this money or not?

ALICE

I care about the kids who are dying of famine.

LUCIANO

But this game is over. Over, you understand? There's no way to get the stock back to its original value.

ALICE

That's not what my advisors say.

LUCIANO

Why would they say anything else? They know that's the only way they keep their jobs - if you refuse to sell. 150 million is still a lot of money. We could live on this money. Or help anyone you want. We just need each other to be happy - you said that yourself.

ALICE

You're right. I will sign the deal with Lindberg for 150 million if you agree we should give it away and start a new life together.

A BEAT.

Close up on Luciano.

LUCIANO

Right. I agree.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. LINDBERG'S OFFICE - DAY

Lindberg, Luciano and four other MEN are sitting at the big table. Alice is signing the papers. Close-up on Lindberg, Luciano, and Alice.

CUT TO :

EXT. LINDBERG'S OFFICE - DAY

Luciano takes Alice's hand and kisses it.

LUCIANO

I'll see you at home in a couple of hours.

ALICE

Our new home. The broker called me just before the meeting.

LUCIANO

Oh, I see.

ALICE

Where are you going, now?

LUCIANO

I have to take care of a few things in the office. It won't take long.

CUT TO :

INT. BANK OFFICE - DAY

Luciano is in the Banker's office, waiting for the Banker to check information on his computer.

BANKER

Yes, the wire has arrived safely.

LUCIANO

And what's the exact amount?

BANKER

The wire has been made in US Dollars. It's 500 million. Would you wish to meet with our investment expert? I could book a meeting for you right away.

LUCIANO

Maybe next week. I'll call you.

BANKER
As you wish, sir. Have a nice day.

CUT TO :

INT. LA CITY BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Claire is waiting for Luciano. She's impatient.

Luciano arrives.

CLAIRE
So, what's up? You told me to
leave the office. But you're not
the MD, you know. I can lose my
job.

LUCIANO
(mysteriously)
Well, I have a surprise for you.
And honestly, I won't mind if you
never go back to this office
again.

CLAIRE
What are you talking about?

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. MANSION, LARGE GARDEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Claire and Luciano are visiting.

LUCIANO
Do you like it?

CLAIRE
What do you mean? I adore it! It's
so... unexpected. Are you serious
about moving in next week?

LUCIANO
Sure. Most of the decoration is in
place. It's just the time we need
to get some of your favourite art.

He hands her his credit card and the business card of an
interior designer named Raphael Stetsky.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)
You could do some shopping or talk
to Rafael here. He's a real
expert.

CLAIRE

You know, it's a dream. But I'm still confused. How are you going to break up with Alice?

LUCIANO

Well, you know that'll take some time.

CLAIRE

That's what all men say. You know, I'm not interested in...

Luciano puts his finger on her lips.

LUCIANO

Look, Claire, this is serious. I am moving in here with you. Just give me some time. Just a month or so. That's not too much to ask, is it? Think about Alice: She just had a major financial shock, moved to a new place, I have to be careful here.

CLAIRE

I understand. One month.

They kiss.

CUT TO :

EXT. KAMMERSTEIN OFFICE - MORNING

Claire is packing up her office.

AMANDA

Seriously, you're leaving? Where would you find a salary as good as this one?

CLAIRE

(smiling)

Maybe I won't have to work.

AMANDA

What? Did you win the lotto jackpot?

CLAIRE

In a way.

AMANDA

Come on!

CLAIRE

Well, it's still a secret.

Amanda is making a sign she'll never tell anyone.

Claire leans in to whisper into Amanda's ear.

CLAIRE

I'm moving in with Luciano.

Amanda is speechless.

CLAIRE

(softly)

In a new mansion he bought for us.
I'm about to finish our bedroom
with the interior designer.

Clair pulls from her purse a bill from the
interior designer and shows it to Amanda.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)

It costs a fortune, but with his
credit card and the help of
Raphael, it's going to be insanely
beautiful.

AMANDA

You're kidding. Did he break up
with Miss Kammerstein?

CLAIRE

Yes, it's over.

AMANDA

I thought he wasn't even your
type.

CLAIRE

(smiling)

Well, I guess I changed my mind.

AMANDA

Congratulations.

Claire leaves. Amanda sits down biting her lips. Then she
notices Clair left a bill on the table along with Raphael's
business card. Amanda takes both from Claire's table.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S NEW APARTMENT, DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Luciano and Alice are eating dinner.

ALICE

You haven't said anything since you came home. Is anything wrong?

LUCIANO

Sorry, I just don't know how to start the conversation.

ALICE

You've changed since we moved here.

LUCIANO

It feels awkward. It's much smaller than the house, isn't it?

ALICE

It has three huge rooms. We don't need more, do we?

LUCIANO

I don't think you should speak for both of us.

ALICE

Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to...

LUCIANO

(interrupting)

Alice... There's something I should have told you before. I don't know how to...

(pause)

Please understand.

Cut on Alice.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

I love someone else. I can't help it.

Alice is speechless, trying to figure out what happened.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

Aren't you angry with me?

ALICE

How could I be angry with anyone who's in love?

LUCIANO

Oh, thank you! I thought you'd understand. Thank you! You're a wonderful person!

He kisses Alice's hands passionately.

LUCIANO (CONT'D)

You're my best friend. You'll always be my best friend.

ALICE

Of course I will.

Alice closes her eyes in pain, but soon opens them with a gentle smile.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. LUCIANO'S NEW CAR - EVENING

Luciano is driving. His mobile RINGS and he answers.

LUCIANO

Hello.

AMANDA

(V.O.)

It's Amanda Roth. I'm really sorry for disturbing you. I just thought there's something you should know about Claire.

LUCIANO

What are you talking about?

AMANDA

(V.O.)

Meet me at Café Rouge.

CUT TO :

INT. CAFE ROUGE - EVENING

Amanda is in a red dress, extremely sexy. They're having their second glass of wine, the other two glasses still on the table.

LUCIANO

Your dress is very nice..

AMANDA

Thank you. I was going to a party,
but I decided I should see you
first.

LUCIANO

You have something important to
tell me about Claire?

AMANDA

I just wanted you to relax first.
And I love talking to you. Didn't
we have a good time?

LUCIANO

Yes, we did.

AMANDA

Well, you know, that's not easy.
I'm very close to Claire, but I
know how important it is to a man
of your position to know who he
can trust. Especially if it's a
person with whom you're going to
spend the rest of your life,
right?

Close-up on Luciano. He looks surprised.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Yes, I know. But I wanted to let
you know something. She's just
doing it for the money.

LUCIANO

What makes you think so?

AMANDA

Well, I was looking for some
papers on her desk and came across
some bills. Quite by chance, you
know. She told me it was for your
new house, but really, does one
buy 25 Chinese vases for one
house? I won't be surprised if 24
of them were given back to the
store and the money was reimbursed
to a whole different account. It's
10 000 dollars for one vase.

LUCIANO

What proof do you have?

AMANDA

Did you see any vases in the house?

LUCIANO

I haven't seen anything yet. We're supposed move in on Monday.

AMANDA

Let's go to the house and you'll see for yourself.

CUT TO :

INT. LUCIANO'S MANSION, RECEPTION HALL - EVENING

AMANDA

Well, you see, I was right. There're no vases here.

She takes a letter out of her purse, puts it discretely on the table.

Then she picks up the letter on the table in front of Luciano.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Look, here's some mail from "Original Chinese Handicrafts". Let's see...

Amanda opens the letter.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Dear Madam, We are happy to confirm that the reimbursement for the returned items has been made to the following account.

Amanda shows the letter to Luciano.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Does this account look familiar to you?

LUCIANO

It's incredible! I trusted her.

Luciano leans back on the café sofa, looking at the ceiling for a while. Then he looks back at Amanda and LAUGHS.

LUCIANO

I'm so stupid! Anyone can rip me off.

AMANDA

That's not true. I think you're too kind. You just have to understand people better.

Amanda leans in toward Luciano. He kisses her passionately.

INT. LUCIANO'S MANSION, BEDROOM - EVENING

Amanda and Luciano are making love.

AMANDA

Look, I'm afraid. What if she comes here tonight?

LUCIANO

Don't worry, she won't.

Amanda looks at Luciano's frozen face. She looks back and sees Claire.

CLAIRE

How could you!

AMANDA

Just stay calm.

CLAIRE

Are you serious?

LUCIANO

Claire, calm down!

CLAIRE

Put your pants on before talking to me!

LUCIANO

Who are you to give orders in this house? I know everything about you!

CLAIRE

What do you know? What did I ever do wrong?

LUCIANO

All the money you've stolen. It's disgusting. Was it really worth it? Just leave.

CLAIRE

What? What are you talking about?

LUCIANO

Leave or I'll call the police.

CLAIRE

What happened here? It's
ridiculous. What about us?

LUCIANO

You should go now. This is my
house. You don't own anything
here. I don't owe you anything.

(pause)

Leave. My lawyer will get in touch
with you.

The door SLAMS. Luciano SIGHS with relief.

Amanda kisses him. He stops her and sits still at the edge of
the bed.

AMANDA

What are you thinking about?

Luciano doesn't answer.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Well, don't worry. Just tell me
what you want.

LUCIANO

Sometimes I don't know what I
want.

AMANDA

Well, we could start with a nice
dinner. I think champagne for 2000
euros would be a good idea.

Amanda holds between her two fingers the check from his first
meeting with Melinda.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I found this in your pocket.

Luciano looks at the check and remembers Melinda.

DISSOLVE TO :

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. PARISIAN CAFE - EARLY EVENING

Melinda is whispering in Luciano's ear, but we can't hear the words.

END FLASHBACK

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S NEW APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Alice and Frederick sit at the table, discussing.

FREDERICK

Madam, before we get to the final details, I wanted to take a minute to thank you, on behalf of our team, for your efforts at helping us keep our jobs with the corporation after the merger.

ALICE

You're welcome, Frederick.

FREDERICK

I'm here to help with whatever you think is necessary for the last arrangements. However, I'd like remind you that it might be quite risky to donate all the funds to this one charity.

ALICE

Look, Frederick - I already made up my mind. I had a meeting with them yesterday. Mr. Flinton explained how hard they work to open schools and provide food for those children. This money will take their help to over 500 villages. I can't possibly say no to that.

FREDERICK

As you wish Madam. Would you please sign here?

He hands her a file with some papers in it.

Alice looks through the papers, she signs them, one by one.

Frederick watches.

She hands the papers back to him.

ALICE

Thank you.

FREDERICK

There're also some issues we have to discuss in regard to the estate.

ALICE

We'll have to discuss that tomorrow. I'm expected at a charity dinner in half an hour. But you won't have to stay overtime - you can go.

FREDERICK

If you wish, I'd be delighted to drive you there.

A BEAT.

ALICE

No, Fredrick. But, thank you.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S NEW APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Frederick places some newspapers on Alice's table. The headlines declare: "Mr. Kammerstein's new love affair" above a picture of Luciano and Amanda.

Two other state "Charity - Miss Kammerstein desperate to save her image after the disaster". Another declares "Behind closed doors - Kammerstein charity financing child abduction".

Alice's hands shake while she's reading the papers. Frederick puts his hand on Alice's hand. She withdraws her hand. Frederick leaves.

Alice drinks a glass of wine. Alice's gaze says she's resisting her anger. She sets the glass on the table, without finishing it. Her energy is so intense that the glass breaks down into pieces as it touches the table.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. ALICE'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Alice is playing piano (Haydn, Piano Sonata No. 39 in D Major, Hob. XVI:24: II. Adagio: 00.00 - 00.43)

As she comes to the end of the page, Melinda's hand appears from behind and turns it. Alice stands up, staring at Melinda.

ALICE

You...

Melinda sits down and continues playing, without looking at the piano sheet nor on the keys. (Haydn, Piano Sonata No. 39 in D Major, Hob. XVI:24: II. Adagio: 02:16 - 02:35)

MELINDA

Were you expecting anyone else?

ALICE

No.

Melinda stops playing the piano and glances at the newspaper headlines.

MELINDA

Aren't you jealous of Luciano?

ALICE

No. He must love her. He did it for love. It doesn't matter whether he's with me or anyone else. Only his feelings matter.

Melinda picks up one of the broken glass pieces.

MELINDA

Right. What happened here?

Alice, breathing hard, presses her back against a nearby wall to brace herself.

ALICE

Tell me, what did I do wrong?

MELINDA

Nothing, my dear. You did nothing wrong. You just feel strange to be on planet Earth. And, unfortunately, you are not quite familiar with the concept of passion.

ALICE

Yes, I am.

MELINDA

Passion is like tango. Do you dance tango?

ALICE
(defiant)
I can always learn.

MELINDA
It's not that easy. Let's see...

Melinda makes appear a gramophone and puts the needle on the old vinyl disk.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
Come here.

PLAYS TANGO "ENTRE TU AMOR Y MI AMOR" (ALFREDO DE ANGELIS)

TANGO MOVEMENT - INTRODUCTION / INSTRUMENTAL

Melinda demonstrates some moves.

Alice can't make the same moves well.

Melinda demonstrates again.

Alice repeats it all perfectly.

Melinda, slightly surprised, smiles approvingly.

The rest of the dance is like a competition.

TANGO MOVEMENT - "¿POR QUE MIRAS ASI, Y NO CONFIAS A MI TUS HONDOS PENSAMIENTOS? SI VOS SABES QUE YO TE SUPE COMPRENDER EN TODOS LOS MOMENTOS."

Melinda is leading, trying to make it more difficult for Alice.

But Alice follows well. Melinda looks surprised.

TANGO MOVEMENT - "NO QUIERO QUE OCULTES NI DUDAS, NI RENCOR, QUE PUEDAN DESHACER NUESTRO AMOR. ¿POR QUE MIRAS ASI, HACIENDOME SUFRIR, Y CASTIGAS MI ALMA?"

Alice starts the beat. She is leading, making some extraordinary moves.

Melinda follows with excitement and ends up with her back to Alice.

TANGO MOVEMENT - "ENTRE TU AMOR Y MI AMOR DEBE EXISTIR LA VERDAD, YA NO PODEMOS JUGAR CON NUESTRAS ALMAS LOS DOS."

Alice hesitates before putting her hands on Melinda's hips.

Melinda takes Alice's hands and places them where they belong.

Alice caresses Melinda.

TANGO MOVEMENT - "ENTRE TU AMOR Y MI AMOR HAY COSAS PARA
PENSAR,
Y UNA PROMESA ANTE DIOS QUE ES IMPOSIBLE OLVIDAR."

Melinda starts the beat, leading. Alice ends up leaning back on Melinda's left hand.

Melinda's right hand follows Alice's body line, from her neck to her leg.

TANGO MOVEMENT - "Y VOS PODES CURARME, CURARME TANTA HERIDA,
SALVANDOME LA VIDA CON SOLO AMARME MAS."

Alice starts the beat. She makes several turns and ends up very close to Melinda, her right hand is on Melinda's cheek.

Melinda puts her right hand on Alice's cheek and Alice's gaze says she wants to kiss Melinda. Instead, she steps back.

TANGO MOVEMENT - ENDING / INSTRUMENTAL

Melinda starts the beat. She makes a sophisticated move. Alice, still disturbed by the fact she wanted to kiss Melinda, can't make the same move properly. She missteps and loses her balance. Melinda catches her, smiling.

MELINDA

You see, you can't do it. What counts in passion is the ability to follow it through until the end.

ALICE

That depends on the end.

MELINDA

(smiling)

Not really. By the way, tonight you could attend a wonderful tango lesson with a great ending. If you wish to, of course. I promise you won't be bored. And I'll have quite a passionate partner.

ALICE

I can imagine.

MELINDA

Luciano.

Alice looks surprised at Melinda.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Are you surprised? I guess it's about time we ended our stupid bet. Shall we expect you to join in?

A BEAT.

ALICE

Sure.

Melinda is about to leave.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Why didn't you get him to be one of your toys from the beginning?

MELINDA

He wasn't worth an argument with you. And he still isn't.

Melinda leaves.

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. COURTYARD OF THE CASTLE - EVENING

Alice is walking in the courtyard. She sees Leander and Melinda from a distance walking and in conversation. She follows them.

CUT TO :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE - EVENING

Alice walks inside the castle.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Alice is in front of a room with a closed door that has a glass opening in it. Alice can't help watching the action through it.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Leander and Melinda are alone inside that room. Leander violently grabs Melinda's shoulder and squeezes so hard that blood trickles out. Yet, Melinda doesn't react to pain.

Close-up on Alice looking, terrified.

LEANDER

You always played with others
people's lives, not with your own.
Our deadline is tomorrow. What do
you think you are doing?

Melinda's coat is hanging beside the door. Alice leans on the wall touching the coat. She accidentally places her hand on the pocket and feels the dagger inside. She takes it out, examines it, then looks back at Melinda and Leander. She holds the dagger firmly, as if getting ready to go into the room and strike Leander.

MELINDA

Luciano will be here in a minute,
and it will all end tonight.

LEANDER

And if you fail?

Melinda gives him a charming smile.

Leander swipes his hand with Melinda's blood over her shoulder and leaves.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE HALLWAY - EVENING

As Leander leaves, Alice hides behind the door so he won't see her.

Melinda leaves the room as well. She closes the door, already knowing that Alice is behind it.

MELINDA

Were you spying?

ALICE

I was waiting for you.

Melinda points at the dagger.

MELINDA

By the way, you can let that go.
It's highly inappropriate to hold

it like that, unless you plan to hurt or kill someone, which is of course far from your intentions.

Alice can't find her words.

Melinda takes the dagger and puts it back in her pocket, then puts on her coat.

ALICE

Someone has to stop all this insanity. Why do you let them hurt you?

MELINDA

What are you talking about? It doesn't hurt.

ALICE

Maybe because you are so used to it!

Alice gently takes the coat off Melinda's shoulder, then touches the bleeding wound. The wound starts to disappear.

Melinda removes Alice's hand.

MELINDA

It hurts like hell.

ALICE

It can't!

MELINDA

Would you do me a favour and learn a couple of things before doing anything like this again?

Melinda's POV: Luciano appears accompanied by a guard

The guard leaves the room and Luciano is waiting there alone.

Melinda sees him through the glass door.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Well, our friend has arrived. I suggest you stay here and wait until our conversation is over.

ALICE

I must speak to him first.

Melinda makes appear a file with papers in it.

MELINDA

You should have a look at these while I'm chatting with him. And, by the way, if... oh well, when he kisses me on the mouth, he'll die. That's the deal.

ALICE

I must talk to him!

MELINDA

Do you call off our bet, then?

A BEAT. Cut on Alice.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I'll warn him. I promise. It will be the choice of free will. Unless you object, of course.

Alice hesitates. Melinda hands her the file and walks into the room where Luciano awaits. Alice can see them through the glass door.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Melinda approaches Luciano.

LUCIANO

Thank you for inviting me. This place is amazing. I don't even know how I got here...

MELINDA

(interrupting)

You are late.

LUCIANO

I couldn't come empty handed. I heard it was your birthday.

MELINDA

You heard wrong.

LUCIANO

I'm glad I did. It makes my present unexpected.

He stands behind Melinda, takes off her pendant, then drapes beautiful diamonds around her neck.

MELINDA

Where did you steal these?

LUCIANO

It's worth over a million dollars
and it's all my money, my queen.
But let's not talk about it. You
look stunning.

Alice watches them from behind the door. Now she realizes she's holding the papers Melinda gave to her. She looks inside and sees the transfer of 500 million dollars from Lindberg Corporation to Luciano.

A look of recognition washes across her face.

MUSIC

Alice's POV: Luciano kisses Melinda on her neck.

Melinda looks at Alice as Luciano continues kissing her shoulders.

Leander comes by and stops to watch with Alice. Leander looks at Luciano as if he were a fish with no chance to escape. Then, he leaves. Alice watches him go.

Luciano wants to kiss Melinda on the mouth. She stops him by putting her finger on his lips.

MELINDA

Let's dance.

LUCIANO

If you wish. Some say I'm a pretty
good dancer.

MELINDA

(smiling sarcastically)

We'll see.

PLAYS TANGO 'ASI SE BAILA EL TANGO', VERONICA VERDIER.

Luciano holds Melinda passionately; his hands travel over her body and she is taking pleasure from it.

When Luciano ends up close to Melinda, he starts to kiss her neck and progress toward her mouth.

Melinda pulls away, continuing the dance. After a moment, Luciano tries again to kiss her on the mouth, but Melinda pushes him away. Luciano grabs Melinda holding her tight.

LUCIANO

Aren't those diamonds worth at least one kiss? Just one.

MELINDA

I already told you - you shouldn't attempt to buy what's not for sale.

LUCIANO

Can't I offer you anything you desire?

MELINDA

There is one thing. But I'm not sure you'd agree.

LUCIANO

I will. Anything I can afford. Just say yes to that kiss.

MELINDA

(mysteriously)

Yes!

MUSIC (dramatic choir)

Luciano tears a bit of Melinda's dress revealing her naked shoulder and gives her a long passionate kiss on the mouth that Melinda returns.

LUCIANO

Well, that's better.

MELINDA

If you say so.

Luciano suddenly looks uneasy. His world is spinning and he lies down on the floor.

LUCIANO

What's happening to me? I feel like I'm dying.

MELINDA

You said, "anything you can afford".

Melinda rips the diamonds off her neck and leaves a small, bleeding cut. She puts the diamonds next to Luciano. He looks terrified.

LUCIANO

I... I loved you...

Then he closes his eyes. Melinda takes his hand to test his pulse. She takes back her pendant from his hand and lets the lifeless hand fall.

Melinda looks back at Alice.

Close-up on Alice. She closes her eyes in pain.

Melinda approaches Alice.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Alice is breathing hard.

Melinda hands her dagger to ALice.

MELINDA

Would you like to use it now?

Alice takes the dagger but doesn't know what to do with it. Melinda takes Alice's hand and leads it so that the dagger points to Melinda's heart. Alice drops the dagger on the floor and runs to the other room.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - EVENING

Robert walks in.

ALICE

(emotional)

Robert...

ROBERT

Yes. I'm here to clean.

Robert begins to clean the room as usual.

ALICE

How do you feel about serving evil?

ROBERT

With all due respect, my Lady, I see no evil here. What I would call evil is on my planet, orbiting Rigel. We don't have any personal choice, only collective consciousness. Melinda isn't evil. She's my light, my angel.

ALICE

Is that just because she has individual consciousness?

ROBERT

Yes. Because she hates you.

Cut on Alice, surprised.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I mean, because she loves you. Love and hate are the same, indifference is the antipode. Didn't you study that in school?

ALICE

I guess we didn't go to the same school.

ROBERT

Did I answer your question?

ALICE

Yes, you did.

Alice gazes at the skies through the window.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. NIGHT CLUB - EVENING

Slow Motion. Dizzy lights that become clearer. The CAMERA moves through a night club.

RELAXING BACKGROUND MUSIC

Melinda is sitting comfortably on a coach in a small lounge at the end of the room, away from the crowd.

LEARA, a beautiful, young girl with luscious, long red hair caresses Melinda's shoulder. Her kind eyes, full of light, hide a deep secret.

Melinda finds it slightly pleasurable, but looks rather indifferent, her thoughts are elsewhere.

Alice walks in and notices Melinda.

Melinda notices Alice and leans to whisper in Leara's ear. Leara stands and walks away as Alice approaches.

Melinda glances at a couple at the table beside her. They stand up and leave and close the door so that Melinda and Alice are alone and isolated from the crowd.

MELINDA

Are you angry?

ALICE

Why did you kiss him?

MELINDA

You upset me. It just so happens that I never kiss first.

A BEAT.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

After all, it was the deal. His love didn't mean anything to him. I won.

ALICE

What you did was pointless and cruel.

MELINDA

I wouldn't be so sure. Just curios - it was a fair win, so, why are you so angry?

Alice sits next to Melinda and draws in a deep breath.

ALICE

Because you make me suffer and it feels strange. Because I can't love you. Because I feel like an idiot and you are the only one who does this to me.

Alice closes her eyes.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Damn it, damn you and damn me!

MELINDA

(satisfied)

Did I ever tell you I find you beautiful?

ALICE

You shouldn't have killed him.

MELINDA

Me? He could have left quite easily, if you weren't so obsessed with this stupid bet of yours. You wanted to trust love, betting on his life. And... if you were smarter with your money, you'd still be partying in your paradise.

ALICE

No, that's not true. I don't want anything that isn't deeply true or that's not for love.

MELINDA

Your obsession with love is amazing.

ALICE

Allow yourself to love and you'll see that anything that has a chance to exist is love, and love only.

MELINDA

(laughing)

It's a strange concept to me. And besides, I have a couple of other things to do before offering my life for this 'love' of yours.

ALICE

No, no... you won't die, you'll just know the truth.

MELINDA

(laughing)

Ah, that old joke! I don't play these games.

ALICE

Trust me.

THUNDER rumbles outside.

MELINDA

Trust? If I fall in love like you,
I'd become like you. How would it
change your feelings for me, by
the way?

ALICE

It'd just be different.

MELINDA

And have you ever considered that
I might not want it to be
different?

Close-up on Alice. She stands up and leaves.

Leara returns with two fancy drinks and sits by Melinda. She
hands one drink to Melinda.

Melinda takes the drink but pays no attention to Leara.
Melinda notices Alice in the crowd, leaning her back against
the wall.

Alice starts to approach Melinda again. Melinda notices and
whispers something to Leara.

In turn, Leara starts kissing Melinda gently on the neck.
Alice comes closer and looks stunned.

MELINDA

(pretend annoyance)

Any other announcement?

ALICE

Just forgot to tell you that I'm
leaving tomorrow.

MELINDA

Bon voyage!

Alice leaves.

Close-up on Melinda. She leans back on the sofa. The serious
expression on her face stops Leara from touching her.

Leara also leans back on the sofa.

LEARA

You're in love with her...

MELINDA

(interrupting)

No.

LEARA

Then why can't we just...

Melinda interrupts Leara by lightly caressing her red hair.

MELINDA

In an hour. In my West Wing
quarters.

Close-up on Leara, breathless.

Melinda takes a sip of her drink. A MAN in the background
makes a discreet sign for Melinda to follow him. Melinda
stands up.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE CORRIDORS - EVENING

MUSIC

Alice is walking the castle corridor. She presses her fist
against the wall while walking so that it bleeds.

CUT TO :

INT. THE CASTLE RECEPTION ROOM - EVENING

LEANDER

She's leaving. That's a victory.
Congratulations.

MELINDA

I think we could have more fun.

LEANDER

What do you mean by that?

MELINDA

Nothing very complicated really.

LEANDER

Can you think of a way to kill
her?

MELINDA

No. You know very well that we
can't break that deal. But after
all, I think it would be even more
interesting if she did it herself,
wouldn't it?

LEANDER

Quite intriguing indeed. I can see
how amusing this will be to you.

MELINDA

Certainly.

Melinda walks out of the room.

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S WEST WING QUARTERS, BEDROOM -
EVENING

Melinda's West wing quarters are lavishly furnished. A variety
of puzzling objects bring in the cosy flair of a home. The
tapestries on the wall and the soft light reinforce the
concept of relaxation and serenity.

Melinda and Leara are lying in bed, partly covered by
beautiful linen. Leara's head leans on Melinda's left
shoulder.

Leara is exhausted from pleasure, still trying to regain her
breath. After a moment, tears start flowing to drop. She sobs
into Melinda's shoulder, putting her left hand around
Melinda's neck.

Melinda, looking energized, stares in the void. She caresses
Leara's hair with her left hand put around Leara's head. With
her other hand, she grabs her nearby smoking stick.

Melinda notices what looked like a self-inflicted wrist injury
on Leara's left hand.

MELINDA

When did that happen?

Leara wipes her tears.

LEARA

Three years ago. I had a dream
that I thought would never come
true. I couldn't cope with my
feelings.

MELINDA

So, did it come true?

LEARA

Now it did.

A BEAT. Close-up on Melinda.

LEARA (CONT'D)
You've been thinking about her. I
can feel it. What's so special
about her?

A BEAT. Close-up on Melinda.

LEARA (CONT'D)
I love you. You won't kill me,
will you?

MELINDA
No.

A BEAT.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
Unless you ask for it.

Leara reaches up to Melinda for a kiss. Melinda returns the
kiss gently and barely touching Leara's lips.

MELINDA (CONT'D)
(gently)
Go tell Mellan I want to make an
announcement tonight.

Close-up on Leara, who looks horrified.

LEARA
De ce pas.

CUT TO :

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE - EVENING

Guard Two is taking off his armour.

GUARD ONE
What are you doing?

GUARD TWO
I'm going in there.

GUARD ONE
You're literally out of your mind.
It's butchery!

GUARD TWO
I know. But something tells me
it'd be different for me. I
believe in miracles, you see.

GUARD ONE

Not with her. You really aren't up to the challenge, you crazy man. She'll kill you. Don't you understand it?

GUARD TWO

You know what? The funniest thing is that, ultimately, I don't care. I want that night with her. And you're just jealous because you're too old and ugly to even be invited in.

GUARD ONE

That's nonsense. I wouldn't have gone, even I were on the list.

GUARD TWO

This desire is stronger than me. I must go. Don't you understand? That's my only chance.

GUARD ONE

Don't you care about life at all?

GUARD TWO

I do. Just wait for me. I'll be back tomorrow morning.

Guard Two leaves, leaving his armour behind.

Guard One throws the armour off the cliff, knowing his colleague will never return.

MUSIC

DISSOLVE TO :

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S EAST WING QUARTERS - MORNING

The CAMERA PANS slows across a bunch of chopped off heads beside the throne.

The CAMERA PANS to MELINDA, who is sitting on the throne, half asleep. She's wearing a long, open velvet cape, and a short, lace night shirt underneath, barely covering her beautiful body.

Guard Two's chopped off head rests between her legs, which are naked and spread wide. Her feet, in high-heel sandals, rest on the shoulder and the knee of Guard Two's headless body on the floor, his arms tied behind his back.

A number of axes and swords are placed beside the throne. An axe, dripping with blood, leans against the throne.

Mellan enters.

Cut on Melinda waking up.

MELLAN

Your breakfast is ready. Shall I order it brought to you?

MELINDA

No. Just champagne.

MELLAN

Of course, Milady. I should have guessed.

Melinda pushes the leaning axe away from the throne.

MELLAN (CONT'D)

(concerned)

You didn't have to do the finishing touch all by yourself.

MELINDA

I know. I just felt like it this time.

Mellan bows and walks to the other corner of the room to talk to maître d'hôtel (inaudible).

Maître d'hôtel leaves and almost immediately returns with a very tall, elegant glass of champagne. Mellan intercepts it, making it clear that he's personally taking it to Melinda.

Mellan approaches Melinda and makes a show of placing the glass in her hand.

Close-up on Mellan as he glances at the dead man's body.

MELLAN

Any announcements for tonight?

MELINDA

No. That'd be it.

MELLAN

They'll be disappointed...

MELINDA

Just tell them they are lucky to be diss-appointed.

She kicks the dead man's head off the throne with her elegant high-heel sandal.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

And tell them what you saw.

MELLAN

If only that could discourage them.

MELINDA

Oh, the wishful thinking.

MELLAN

Yes. And some ego. And...

MELINDA

(interrupting)

Thank you for enlightening me.

Mellan gently slides his finger along Melinda's arm. She shivers and looks at the axe beside the throne. Mellan bows and walks away. Before passing through the door, he turns back.

MELLAN

Anything else, Milady?

MELINDA

Yes. Clean up and call for Alice.
To my West wing quarters.

MELLAN

At once.

Mellan bows. Close-up on Melinda.

DISSOLVE TO :

MUSIC

INT. THE CASTLE, MELINDA'S WEST WING QUARTERS - MORNING

Alice hesitates before opening a door that leads to Melinda's grand hall in west wing quarters. Then she enters.

Melinda sits in her luxurious armchair, smoking an elegant smoking stick. She is very sexy and restrained, as usual.

ALICE

Did you ask for me?

MELINDA

I did. I was glad to hear you hadn't left yet. Have a seat, make yourself comfortable.

ALICE

Would you please stop smoking?
It's poison.

MELINDA

Sure.

Melinda puts the smoking stick aside.

ALICE

What do you want, Melinda?

MELINDA

I'm tired of dealing with humans.

ALICE

What do you mean?

MELINDA

My fate is bound to their fate. They'll never learn. I'll never be free. You were right, it's a dead end. I don't own this job, it owns me. I'm imprisoned. I'm tired of being the mirror image of other people's choices. For once, I want to leave my own life. I want to undo this program. Help me.

A BEAT. Cut on Alice.

ALICE

How can I help?

MELINDA

I thought you already made a suggestion.

ALICE

What suggestion?

MELINDA

You suggested I should fall in love.

ALICE

Ah! It felt like you didn't think it was a good idea.

MELINDA

Don't be cruel.

ALICE

Oh, I'm sorry, I thought that's exactly what you wanted me to be.

Melinda puts her hand around Alice's elbow and walks slowly to another corner of the hall.

MELINDA

I'd like to tell you a story...

(pause)

Once, I made a joke about great darkness being transmuted by just one sacrifice. It appeared I was wrong. And now I have to make up for what I once believed. Because indeed, any darkness can be transmuted by just one sacrifice.

A BEAT.

But... not just anyone's. And only on one condition.

A BEAT.

Cut on Alice, who realises Melinda is talking about her.

ALICE

What... condition?

MELINDA

The one who's willing to do it must be killed by the one he wants to save.

A BEAT.

ALICE

Why?

MELINDA

Oh... it's an old tradition.

Cut on Alice.

MELINDA (CONT'D)

It's just some wine. It won't hurt at all.

A BEAT.

ALICE

Do you want me to drink it?

MELINDA

No, you decide what you want to do.

ALICE

Is that all?

MELINDA

Just one more thing. If you agree to do it...

(whispering)

I wouldn't stand parting from you without living through what we feel for each other.

ALICE

Ah. And in what way?

MELINDA

Making love of course, unless you have a better idea.

Alice glances at the corner of Melinda's bed, visible through the open door in the adjacent room. It's still undone from the evening before.

ALICE

(hurt)

Is it a joke or part of an old tradition?

MELINDA

You are my breath of fresh air in the midst of this smoke, my sip of water in this desert.

(whispering)

I am in love with you. I can feel under my skin how you are dying to touch me, yet stopping yourself from doing so. Come here.

A BEAT.

ALICE

No.

MELINDA

(hurt)

I knew that. I knew you wouldn't.

Melinda heads for the exit.

ALICE

No, wait!

Melinda approaches Alice. She carefully and elegantly unbuttons Alice's coat, all the endless buttons, one by one. Finally, the coat falls and Alice stands in her simple but nice, white, silk night robe.

Alice puts her hand on Melinda's cape, hesitating. She unbuttons by one move the only button on Melinda's cape and it falls down.

Melinda stands in front of Alice in her short, lace night dress, barely covering her body, elegant and beautiful. Melinda waits for Alice to make the first step. Their bodies are identical in beauty.

Alice stands close to Melinda; their shoulders touch and their breaths unite. Alice contemplates Melinda, fascinated. She takes a deep dive into Melinda's eyes, then steps back, goes to the window, grabs Melinda's smoking stick and starts to smoke it.

MELINDA

Come here.

ALICE

It's enough. Is this wine for me?
(smelling the wine)
A good one.

Alice notices the bottle of poison sitting next to it.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Pity it's poisoned.

MELINDA

Yes, indeed.

ALICE

Just one drop would be enough. It kills so slowly and softly. No pain. Thank you.

A BEAT.

ALICE (CONT'D)

And everything you just said was a lie.

Melinda puts her cape on, comes close behind Alice, caresses her hair and her neck, almost kissing Alice on the neck.

MELINDA

Everything I said was true.

Alice closes her eyes.

ALICE

You don't have to do it.

(pause)

You already won.

Alice turns to Melinda and touches gently the embroidery on Melinda's cape.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Close your eyes.

Melinda closes her eyes, waiting for Alice to kiss her.

Instead of kissing, Alice starts to drink the wine. Melinda opens her eyes and sees Alice drinking the wine.

Melinda takes the glass and puts it back on the table. Some of the wine is still on Alice's lips. Melinda wipes the drops of wine from Alice's lips and licks it off her finger.

ALICE (CONT'D)

(frightened)

What are you doing?

MELINDA

I thought you knew better.

ALICE

It's not poisoned.

Melinda smiles gently.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Deep in my heart I knew. But what is it all about? How am I supposed to free you?

MELINDA

You just did.

MUSIC

The sound of a HEARTBEAT as Melinda gently caresses Alice's lips, then leans into giving Alice a kiss. As their lips

touch, a strong beam of light appears between them, dissolving the whole picture.

DISSOLVE TO WHITE:

EXT. COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE - MORNING

Guard One on duty. Bored, as usual.

Suddenly, the courtyard transitions into a higher dimension and we can see that it's the same castle and the same courtyard as in the story Guard One told in the beginning.

The holy tree materialises in the middle of the courtyard. The rabbit, Cernunnos, and the cat are going about their business in the courtyard.

Cut on Guard One. He watches it in awe, not knowing how to react.

Cut on two leaves of the dead tree, yellow and brown, starting to revitalize, becoming green.

The rabbit sees the change first and points to the leaves, jumping up in joy.

RABBIT

Look! Look! It's happening!!!

Cut on Cernunnos. He is smiling and content.

Cut on the cat. He isn't looking at the tree, instead going about his stretching as if nothing has happened.

The two leaves then send their energy throughout the whole tree. A golden liquid starts flowing, with a HEARTBEAT, through those two leaves, to the branches and so on.

The tree revitalizes, then its roots, going deeper. Then, with another HEARTBEAT, those roots go deeper into revitalizing the whole planet.

The planet then shines into the cosmos, revitalizing other planets, shining light through the galaxy, and then through other galaxies, to infinity.

[CREDITS ROLL]

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. GARDEN NEAR THE COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE BRIGHT CASTLE - MORNING

The sound of Melinda's and Alice's LAUGHTER. Alice and Melinda are in a garden of roses, sitting on a beautiful bench. The cat sits nearby, purring and licking his paw.

MELINDA

What's your favourite one?

ALICE

Earth, XVII century. You were a king and I was the mistress of a neighbor king with whom you strategically maintained peace.

MELINDA

Oh, I remember now. Talk about conflicting feelings.

They LAUGH.

ALICE

And another one where you were a beautiful actress. Very unhappy. And I was a delivery boy. Bringing you flowers from other men. Too young for you. I thought I would die.

MELINDA

That's a sad one.

ALICE

Not really. I grew up.

MELINDA

Ah!

ALICE

And became rich.

MELINDA

Happy ending then.

ALICE

No. 'Cause you didn't want me rich and famous. I became like one of your admirers to you.

MELINDA

Anything else?

ALICE

Oh, yes - the one where I crossed the whole Universe looking for you. I learned the language and habits of your planet, but your people couldn't accept me as a being who didn't "belong" there. So, I learned to shape shift. But when I did so, I couldn't get back to the frequency where you actually loved me. And you were longing so badly for it, so you learned to shape shift yourself. That was beautiful.

MELINDA

Ok, tell me the best one.

ALICE

The best is yet to come.

MELINDA

Oh... Is it a secret?

Alice looks at the purring cat, as if asking for permission to tell.

CAT

She'll know anyways.

(stretching)

Go ahead.

ALICE

(mischievous smile)

Crossing the AN portal to the other Universe. It goes beyond the concepts of separation or unity. It's a whole different journey. But one can only attain it after unity is experienced at its core, while still being in the illusion of separation.

Melinda smiles.

MELINDA

Oh, finally I see through your true motivations. And where is this portal?

ALICE

Around Alnilam, Epsilon Orionis.

CUT TO :

EXT. THE UNIVERSE, CONSTELLATION OF ORION

The CAMERA moves to the Orion Belt, focusing on the star in the middle.

MELINDA

(V.O.)

How do you know it's there?

ALICE

(V.O.)

I just know. Even the pyramids on this planet are aligned to it.

CUT TO :

EXT. GARDEN NEAR THE COURTYARD IN FRONT OF THE BRIGHT GOTHIC CASTLE - MORNING

Melinda smells the roses that envelope the bench.

MELINDA

I guess I'm still in love with this Universe. What an ingenious idea for the Source to create the illusion of splitting itself into layers. Like you and I, the first layer of the onion.

ALICE

That's a nice metaphor.

CAT

That's no metaphor, sweetheart. I thought you'd get the concept by now. You're literally one person.

MELINDA

It's such fun.

ALICE

Well, not always...

MELINDA

What has been the hardest thing for you?

ALICE

It's not anymore. What was the hardest for you?

MELINDA

I asked first...

Alice takes Melinda's hand, their fingers inter-cross, and Alice kisses Melinda's hand.

ALICE

(whispering)

Loving you.

They set their two palms against each other, looking like a mirror image of each other.

The camera pans 360° around them, then in the eyes of Alice, then those of Melinda and back to Alice. The close-up gets so narrow we can't tell the difference, who's eyes we see.

Then the camera zooms on one eye. The structure of the eye gradually becomes the nebular in the cosmos.

DISSOLVE TO :

EXT. THE UNIVERSE

The camera embarks on a sweeping journey across star systems. It passes through Orion and moves toward the brilliant star Alnilam (Epsilon Orionis) in the heart of the constellation.

FADE OUT

THE END

[CREDITS ROLL]