

RESTORATION

by
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INT. PLASTIC SURGEON'S OFFICE - DAY

The gentle smiling face of the PLASTIC SURGEON.

GRACE (V.O.)
He's gorgeous. Of course he's
gorgeous. How much confidence would you
have in a plastic surgeon with
psoriasis and a hairlip?

The Doctor pulls up a stool.

DR. FLICKER
Can you please remove your shirt for
me, Grace?

GRACE (V.O.)
Of course. I've been undressing
myself since the night I got married.

The shirt comes off. Dr. Flicker thoughtfully pauses...

GRACE (V.O.)
"Nice tits." You have exactly three
seconds to say "Nice tits."

DR. FLICKER
Well, it's not easy to improve upon
perfection-

GRACE (V.O.)
Close enough-

DR. FLICKER
-but we'll give it a shot, okay?

Dr. Flicker removes a PEN and MARKS her up as he speaks.

DR. FLICKER
Alright, we're going to lift this area
here, tighten these folds, enhance the
line of your cheekbone...

GRACE (V.O.)
All these X's and O's... I feel like a
locker room chalk talk.

DR. FLICKER
(finishing up)
So. What do you say, Grace? Ready
for The New You?

Grace (the camera) slowly angles toward a MIRROR, revealing...

GRACE SCHAEFER, Thirty Nine- looks it and knows it; also looks beautiful but doesn't know it- marked up in PEN like a High School Jock's Term Paper. Black circles ring her BREASTS, sharp topographic LINES layer her neck and face...

GRACE
Will you excuse me for a moment?

DR. FLICKER
Of course. It's down the hall, second door on the right.

She calmly stands and walks out...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... softly closing the door behind her. The moment she is alone, Grace loses all composure and RUNS off down the hall-
-Plowing right into PAM CARSON, an acquaintance.

PAM
Grace!
(at her markings)
Wow- going the Full Monty, huh?

GRACE
(oblivious)
Hmm?

PAM
Hey- I just got the stitches out.
Honest opinion.

She lifts up her sweater, revealing MASSIVE ENHANCED BREASTS.

GRACE
(stunned)
Well, they're... Jesus, Pam, are those breasts or buoys?

PAM
That's the last time I'll hear Josh mention another pair of breasts.

Flicker calls out for Grace, who edges toward the door.

GRACE
Careful where you swing those things Pam, or it'll be the last time he mentions *anything*.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREET - DAY

Grace escapes into the bustle of MIDTOWN MANHATTAN, relieved and completely unaware that she is still MARKED-UP in pen.

GRACE (V.O.)
A woman gets used to it.

WHISPERING from behind.

GRACE (V.O.)
The whispers.

She pulls her collar up high and starts off down the street.

GRACE (V.O.)
At first, it's flattering- you're "sexy" or "stacked," or whatever the hell they say... Then, some point past the cellulite ceiling of your Thirtieth Birthday... it all *changes*.

WHISPERS (O.C.)
Doesn't... Hasn't... Can't...

GRACE (V.O.)
All of a sudden, you're "aging gracefully" or you "look good for your age." Or, even worse... you *don't*.

She stops before the

VAN KLERQUE HOUSE- a historic restored brownstone standing valiantly on its own amidst the neighboring modern structures.

GRACE (V.O.)
Look at her. Isn't she gorgeous?
Before I got a hold of her, she was pushing One Hundred and Fifty.

She delicately runs her hand over the LATTICE RAILING.

GRACE (V.O.)
Now she's Twenty-Nine and holding.

She smooths out a tiny IMPERFECTION with a polishing cloth.

GRACE (V.O.)
Make that Twenty-Eight.

She looks up longingly at the grand building.

GRACE
 No one tells her she looks good for
 her age.
 (sighs)
Bitch.

TITLES: "RESTORATION."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - DAY

TUMULT inside- WORKERS scurry around, touching up, preparing. Two of them position an INFRARED LAMP at the wall at the base of the stairs. GRACE halts beside them.

GRACE
 Easy, boys- strip the paint, not the
 foundation.

They stare, speechless, at her facial MARKINGS.

GRACE
Sprechen sie Deutsch? Come on fellas-
 the benefit's this weekend, not
 sometime after The Rapture.

She brusquely positions the powerful lamp back a few inches, balancing it precariously at the edge of the stair. One can't control his curiosity at the markings:

WORKER
 Excuse me, Mrs. Schaeffer-

GRACE
 Don't argue, Ted. I've been restoring
 homes since... Jesus, someone drive a
 fucking steak through my heart.

An ASSISTANT pulls her aside, brandishing a REMINDER SLIP.

ASSISTANT
 Mrs. Schaeffer, a Dr. Zwick called-
 (notices her marked FACE)
 Egad, what happened to your-

Grace snatches the slip, marching off into the KITCHEN, where

ELAINE ALLEN, her best friend and the Director of Special Events, chats with FRIEDA THOMAS, the caterer.

ELAINE

Grace, this is Frieda Thomas from
Delectable Designs; Frieda, this is
Grace Schaeffer, Historic Houses'
Executive Director-
(notices the markings)
Who has to speak with me in private
this very instant.

She quickly drags Grace into the next room...

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

... where Grace collapses against a polished counter top.

GRACE

I failed, Lainy. I couldn't go
through with it.

ELAINE

I'm aware of that, Grace. And so are
the other nine and a half million
people in this city.

She whips out a POCKET MIRROR, but before she can open it...

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me?

A VERY, VERY HANDSOME YOUNG MAN stands at the door.

YOUNG MAN

I'm terribly sorry to barge in on you
ladies like this-

GRACE

(very sweetly)
Oh please- you didn't barge at all.

ELAINE

(even sweeter)
If you'd barged, we might be upset.

GRACE

But you didn't. So it's no problem.

ELAINE

No problem at all.

An awkward silence... He looks closer at GRACE.

YOUNG MAN
What is that... are you okay?

GRACE
(recoiling)
What? What's what?

YOUNG MAN
Your *face*.

He takes the MIRROR from Elaine and shows it to Grace-
HER REFLECTION: The crisscrossing black felt tip pen lines.

GRACE
(mortified)
Ah. Yes. Of course. That's-

Elaine slyly slips her a HANDKERCHIEF.

YOUNG MAN
Did you just come from the Plastic
Surgeon's?

GRACE
The *plastic*...? Oh, no. You mean
just now? No. I was... I was...
(turns to Elaine)
Where the hell was I?

ELAINE
Not the plastic surgeon's.

GRACE
You see that? Not the plastic
surgeon's.

The three of them stand in silence.

YOUNG MAN
Well... I was just scouting things
out, for Frieda-

Grace shoots a disappointed look to Elaine.

GRACE
He was scouting things out-

ELAINE
For *Frieda*.

BOTH
(under their breath)
Bitch.

He tries to regain their attention:

YOUNG MAN
Yes, I work for her- in the kitchen.

GRACE
(relieved)
He *works* for her-

ELAINE
In the *kitchen*.

YOUNG MAN
And I was wondering how many outlets
you have in here- just to make sure I
have something to plug myself into...
(Grace raises an eyebrow)
The *hotplate*, I mean. Plug in the...
You know, in case I can't find the
right hole...
(beat)
I think I'll leave this to Frieda.

He withdraws as honorably as possible. The women giggle.

GRACE
And here I thought this was going to
end with *my* head in the sand.

ELAINE
Speaking of...

She closes the door for privacy...

ELAINE
Guess who dropped by to bless us with
His Royal Presence?

Grace sobers up, her smile fading.

GRACE
Charles? What the hell was he doing
here?

ELAINE
(facetiously)
Haven't you heard? He's the-

BOTH
"Chairman of the Board of the Historic
House Trust."

They laugh. Elaine takes Grace's hand.

ELAINE

He's not really going through with this, is he?

GRACE

Who knows. He's home, he's gone, he's leaving, he's staying... it's gotten so bad with us, I honestly can't tell the difference.

Elaine notices the REMINDER slip on the counter.

ELAINE

Jesus, Grace! The *Doctor* called?

GRACE

(nonchalantly)

Yeah. I'll call later.

Elaine grabs her arm and leads her out.

ELAINE

Bullshit. You'll call *now*. Go home if you need the privacy.

GRACE

Home? Wait- what about you? Did you hear? When's the date for your-

ELAINE

One medical miracle at a time, dear. And you're coming to this fund-raiser, understand? A dog you don't even have one gets to die *once*, okay?

GRACE

(sighs)

Should've said I'd gotten a cat.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE BROWNSTONE - DUSK

An immaculately decorated brownstone, with exquisite ANTIQUE FURNITURE and fixtures. In the KITCHEN,

CHARLES SCHAEFFER, Grace's estranged husband, on the phone. Mid 40's, in very good shape, and the first one to tell you so. The only chink in his armor is the THINNING HAIR up front, that he styles a mite too aggressively.

CHARLES
 Yes, this is Charles Schaeffer-
**Chairman of the Board of the Historic
 House Trust**, returning your call.

Grace enters without Charles noticing...

CHARLES
 None of them? None?
 (sighs)
 Of course. Thank you, Doctor.

He hangs up the phone and finally notices Grace.

CHARLES
 That was the Doctor.

GRACE
 I gathered as much when you called him
 "Doctor," Charles.

She goes to the BAR to pour herself a drink.

CHARLES
 None of the eggs fertilized. Again.
 I'm sorry, Grace.

She briefly hesitates, a glass of WINE in her hand.

GRACE
 Well. That's not exactly the surprise
 of the millennia, is it?
 (drinks)
 What are you doing home, Charles?
 Your indecision with this is beginning
 to give me whiplash.

She takes her drink into the...

DINING ROOM

... where a mild mannered MAN IN A SUIT sits at the table
 surrounded by important PAPERS.

GRACE
 Who the hell are you?

JAKE LESSER
 (meekly)
 The end of your whiplash.

She spins on Charles, stunned.

CHARLES
 (sincerely)
 I'm so sorry, Grace.

GRACE
 Jesus, Charles. The sex was boilerplate,
 must the divorce be so also?

JAKE LESSER
 (helpfully)
 It's designed to be comforting-
 the uniform structure of the Divorce.
 It's regularity comforts us.

She stares at him. He grins sheepishly.

JAKE LESSER
 Well, it comforts *me*.

Speechless, she storms UPSTAIRS. Charles follows.

CHARLES
 It was only a matter of time, Grace.
 If it wasn't my name on the top of
 that page it would have been *yours*.

IN THE BEDROOM- she halts, her SUITCASE packed.

GRACE
 We can harvest more eggs, you know.

CHARLES
 We've harvested more eggs than the
 entire state of Oklahoma. It hasn't
 done us any good, and you know it.

She grabs the suitcase and starts down the STAIRS.

CHARLES
 We're over, Grace. We've *been* over.
 Let's move on while we still have time
 to do something about it.

As Grace gathers her things by the front door, the lawyer
 approaches pleasantly.

JAKE LESSER
 You know Grace, as an eligible single
 man, I can tell you there's a whole
 wide world out there just waiting for
 a woman of your beauty and
 sophistication.

GRACE
 (looking him over)
 I'm all atwitter.

She throws open the front door and steps onto the LANDING...

EXT. LANDING

TWO CHATTY WOMEN across the street immediately hush when they see Grace with her SUITCASE... Charles joins her in the doorway, and the mask of her confidence falls.

GRACE
 Please, Charles. I know we're not perfect, but we're all I've had.

CHARLES
What have you had? We haven't been close in years. I don't even mean sexually, Grace. We haven't had a thing to say since... you know, since we *lost* it.

GRACE
 (reddening)
 You mean since *I* lost it.

CHARLES
 Since we lost it, Grace. I lost, too.

GRACE
 "We" were pregnant. *I* had the miscarriage. Remember?

She SLAMS the door back in his face.

INT. GREENWICH VILLAGE BROWNSTONE

Just inside, Charles sighs and turns to his lawyer as...

Grace HURLS the door back open.

GRACE
 What the hell am I doing?!

She drops her suitcase and GRABS Charles by the collar.

GRACE
 I paid the down payment. Get the hell out of my house!

She shoves him out.

GRACE

And take your damn lawyer, too!

She boots the lawyer out behind him.

GRACE

Wait a minute.

She stalks out to Charles and tears off his TIE.

GRACE

I bought that tie, too.

CHARLES

For Christ's sake! You bought this suit, Grace- you want *that* back?

GRACE

As a matter of fact, I do.

(he stares)

I'm not kidding Charles.

He smiles, in spite of himself.

CHARLES

You still got it, Old Girl.

GRACE

And you don't want it, Old Boy.

(beat)

Now off with those pants, before I figure out who bought your boxers.

INT. MAX KARLIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MAX KARLIN, 35, answers the door with a gasp.

MAX

What the hell did you do with my sister?

Grace stands in the doorway, distressed and disheveled.

GRACE

I *am* your sister.

MAX

No you're not. My sister's young and beautiful, you old hag.

GRACE

I must have the wrong house, then.

She turns to go. Max grabs her and drags her in.

MAX

Come on in, you silly cow.

INT. MAX'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Grace sits between her brother and MARTIN WEISZ, his lover.

MARTIN

Men are such pigs.

(off Max's look)

Straight men- you're Kosher, Max.

GRACE

I don't know what happened. Charles and I were doing so well.

MAX

I thought you were miserable.

GRACE

Who told you I was miserable?

MAX

You did.

GRACE

Well now I'm *really* miserable.

Martin elbows Max. He reluctantly turns to his sister.

MAX

Well, on the bright side, I don't think you'll be the sole topic of conversation much longer. I have a surprise to tell you.

GRACE

You're gay.

MAX

You found me out.

GRACE

You're getting married.

MAX

Little late on that one, too.

GRACE
You're pregnant.

She laughs. They don't. She stops. Silence.

GRACE
I'm not that far out of the scientific
loop, am I?

MAX
Just the cultural one, sis.

He proudly passes her a PICTURE of two, adorable VIETNAMESE
TWIN BOYS about two years old.

MAX
I'm going to be a Father, Grace.

Grace just stares, clearly taken.

GRACE
They're beautiful, Max.

MAX
We want you to say something at the
Naming Ceremony.

Grace hesitates.

GRACE
At the... there's going to be a...
really? What did Dad say?

MAX
Nothing. He swallowed. Hard.

MARTIN
(gleefully)
What a scandal, right?

MAX
Fuck it, I'm inviting everyone. The
aunts, the cousins...

GRACE
(anxiously)
Everyone...?

MAX
Yeah, it's a big fat sprawling mess.
We were hoping you'd let us use the
Van Klerque House.

Grace visibly tightens up.

GRACE

I really don't think that's a very good idea, Max.

MAX

Why? It's perfect.

GRACE

She won't be ready. Not anytime soon. And even if she was- all those *people...*

MAX

Fine. We'll do it somewhere else.

GRACE

I don't think you ought to do it *anywhere.*

MAX

Why not? What's the problem?

GRACE

Well, it'd kill Aunt Bea, for one thing.

MAX

Bea's *dead*, Grace.

GRACE

And it's a good thing, too. Do you really have to throw it in everyone's face?

MAX

(bristling)

You mean throw it in *your* face, right?

Martin delicately stands.

MARTIN

I think the rumaki's burning.

MAX

Martin, sit.

(he does)

This has nothing to do with Bea, or me, or Dad, or anyone else but *you*, right?

GRACE

I'm happy for you Max, I am, but...
 You don't have to stand there and
 listen to all the whispers, the *looks*
 I'm going to get. I mean, there's
 enough talk about me as it is.
 Couldn't you just, you know... Lie
 low?

Max gawks, astonished.

MAX

I think you should go.

He rises and leads her to the door as she protests:

GRACE

It's not just me, it's common sense.
 A Naming Ceremony? Seriously, Max,
 what will people say?

MAX

"Congratulations."

He closes the door on her.

INT. "THE LADIES ROOM" - NIGHT

Elaine drunkenly leers at a MALE STRIPPER on stage above her,
 while a disinterested Grace winces her way through a DRINK.

GRACE

Have I told you my brother's gay?

ELAINE

You don't have to tell me your
 brother's gay.

GRACE

Why is that?

ELAINE

Because your brother's gay.

GRACE

(sighs)

Have I told you he's having twins?

A man's REAR END is thrust in their faces. Elaine
 absentmindedly stuffs a BILL in his g-string.

ELAINE

Well, why the hell not? Why should straight couples have the monopoly on misery and sleeplessness?

A young COWBOY gyrates beside Grace, who, eyes closed, slips a DOLLAR in his chaps. The Stripper looks closer...

STRIPPER

Hey. You remind me of someone.

GRACE

If you say your Mother, you can give me back that buck, Cowpoke.

The Stripper thinks... then sheepishly gives back the BUCK.

EXT. THE LADIES ROOM - NIGHT

Elaine scouts for a taxi as Grace leans pensively against the wall. Two PARENTS emerge from a RESTAURANT across the street, a young BOY ten years old walks between them.

GRACE

(softly)

He'd be right around the same age.

ELAINE

Who would?

Grace indicates the boy. Elaine immediately sobers.

ELAINE

Yeah, I guess he would be.

Elaine gently joins her friend at the wall. After a silence-

ELAINE

Big deal- so you can't have a kid.

(looks down despondently)

At least you're keeping your tits.

GRACE

Who says I'm keeping my tits? I *hate* my tits.

(beat)

And what are you complaining about- you're getting bionic tits anyway.

ELAINE
 (seriously)
 After my *mastectomy*. Yes, thank you
 so much, Grace.

GRACE
 Sorry.

She winces at her reflection in a window.

GRACE
 Look at me, Lain. Thirty Nine, no kid,
 no husband- I'll have to join a leper
 colony... if they'll take me.
 (deep sigh)
 What the hell am I supposed to *do*?

The women remain silent, lost without a solution...

GRACE
 Can I see her?

ELAINE
 (groans)
 You just saw her. Jesus, Grace, you
 see that damn building every day.

GRACE
 She's all I have. Five minutes, tops.

She grabs Elaine's arm, pleading.

ELAINE
 And you wonder why you have no life.

EXT. STREET - LATER

THE VAN KLERQUE HOUSE... BURNT TO A CRISP.

Grey steam oozes out the shattered windows. The entire
 building's facade is defaced, every brick caked in soot,
 hissing from the still smouldering embers.

GRACE and ELAINE stand, stunned, across the street.

A FIREMAN passes them carrying the INFRARED LAMP Grace had
 been manipulating on the Van Klerque stairs.

FIREMAN
 There's the culprit.

He tosses it on the sidewalk. Grace looks blankly at it, then at the house, then back to Elaine.

GRACE
Well. There's a development.

INT. GRACE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Past intoxicated, Grace fumbles through an overstuffed MEDICINE DRAWER and groans.

GRACE
What am I supposed to do- Kaopectate myself to death?

She grabs a NINO'S PIZZA delivery menu on the refrigerator door, but the NUMBER is smudged with tomato sauce.

GRACE
Oh, for Christ's-

She flails her way to the phone and dials, but instead of 411, she drunkenly dials

9...11

She drops the phone, and lays down on the ground beside it, just missing the first MUFFLED WORDS of the 911 OPERATOR.

GRACE
Hello? I need Nino's on...

She briefly falls ASLEEP. Snaps to- thinking she's already been connected to the restaurant.

GRACE
Hello, Nino? I'm desperate. How soon can you get here?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Where are you, Ma'am?

GRACE
567 Hudson. I need... Quick, okay?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Okay ma'am, what do you need?

Grace stares at the menu on her back.

GRACE
I need... God no, that makes me puke.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
What does, ma'am? What makes you puke?

GRACE
I do! I'm not a Mother, I'm not a
Wife... what the hell *am* I?

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Don't worry, Ma'am. They're on their
way.

Grace places the phone down beside her.

GRACE
Good. Need some... Need some sleep...

OPERATOR (O.S.)
NO! Ma'am! Don't go to sleep!
(pause)
Ma'am?!

INT. GRACE'S BROWNSTONE - MOMENTS LATER

Grace is passed out, snoring soundly...

CRASH! The door is KNOCKED down, and three PARAMEDICS burst
in, SCREAMING.

PARAMEDIC#1
There she is! By the phone!

Grace slightly opens a swollen eye.

GRACE
Whaaa?

They shove an OXYGEN MASK over her face.

PARAMEDIC#1
What did you take? Ma'am? Talk to me!

GRACE
...Take?

PARAMEDIC#1
(to another)
EKG!
(to another)
Look for needle marks!

The THIRD PARAMEDIC comes into focus and Grace's eyes POP:

It is the YOUNG ATTRACTIVE CATERER from the afternoon.

Without hesitation, he savagely RIPS HER SHIRT OFF and runs his hands all over her body, searching for marks.

Grace's eyes get even larger. The EKG begins to SPIKE.

PARAMEDIC#2
Abnormal EKG!

PARAMEDIC#1
CPR, Keller!

The Paramedic, SCOTT KELLER, rips off her mask and HESITATES.

PARAMEDIC#1
Keller!

SCOTT
Mrs. *Schaeffer*?

She can only STARE back, totally stunned.

PARAMEDIC#1
Dammit, Scott!

SCOTT
Pardon me, Ma'am.

Scott thrusts his lips over hers and blows, then pumps her CHEST rhythmically a few times.

Grace COUGHS and begins to come around.

PARAMEDIC#2
EKG stable!

Scott lifts himself up off her. She THINKS a moment...

She luridly ROLLS HER EYES, pretending to PASS OUT.

PARAMEDIC#1
Stay on that CPR, Scott!

Scott leans down, and covers her mouth with his. As he lifts off and presses her chest, she ever so slightly...

SMILES...

INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM- LATER

Grace sits propped up against a pillow with Elaine sitting on a chair beside the bed, hanging on every word.

GRACE

That's nothing. At one point I feigned a seizure and grabbed his ass.

ELAINE

You did *not*.

GRACE

As God is my witness.

ELAINE

I think I'd leave God out of that one.

A KNOCK at the door... It is SCOTT KELLER, still in uniform.

SCOTT

Toxicology is inconclusive, but whatever you ate, that was some nasty reaction you had. I practically had to pry your hands off me with a crowbar.

GRACE

(embarrassed)

Sorry, I didn't know what I was doing.

ELAINE

Of course, if she *had*, that crowbar wouldn't have done you much good.

Grace JABS her with an elbow.

SCOTT

If I hadn't been on duty, who says I'd have *used* one?

The women freeze- is he *flirting*...?

GRACE

If you hadn't been on duty, who says you'd *need* one?

SCOTT

The fingerprints on the seat of these pants.

He smiles innocently and gracefully strides out.

ELAINE
 (eyebrows raised)
 Grace Meredith Schaeffer.

GRACE
 Yes?

ELAINE
 Were you just-

GRACE
 No.

ELAINE
 You weren't just *flirting*, were you?

GRACE
Flirting?
 (grins)
 Don't be ridiculous.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

DR. FLICKER (V.O.)
 Okay. Here we go, Grace...

INT. PLASTIC SURGEON'S OFFICE - DAY

THROUGH GRACE'S EYES: DR FLICKER smiles.

DR. FLICKER
 Now let's take that wrap off your
 chest and see what we have, okay?

GRACE (O.S.)
 We? Buy your own pair, Doc- I paid
 good money for these.

A GORGEOUS ASSISTANT steps in, helping Flicker unwind a THICK
 GAUZE from around Grace's chest area...

DR. FLICKER
 ... Okay... Almost there...

Something SNAPS! Flicker and his assistant FLINCH.

GRACE
 Well...? How do they look?

Flicker is silently contemplative for a moment. Then...

DR. FLICKER
Excuse me. I'd better go raise my
malpractice premium.

He hurriedly exits as Grace's eyes scan the room for a
MIRROR. Finding one, she stands... and sees...

TWO GARGANTUAN BREASTS, the size and shape of wooden clubs,
hanging nearly to her waist.

GRACE
I'm a Russ Meyer wet dream.

INT. PLASTIC SURGEON'S OFFICE - REALITY - DAY

Grace snaps out of the DREAM, DR. FLICKER before her.

GRACE
(rising)
Excuse me.

DR. FLICKER
Nausea again?

GRACE
No. Period. Nasty one, actually.
And I'm a squirter.

He backs far off and she hurries out.

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - DAY

Grace sits pensively in an undamaged chair among the RUINS.

GRACE (V.O.)
"Before you embark on any Restoration,
you must face the fact that the
journey before you is a daunting
one..."

Charred walls, soaked carpets, broken glass...

GRACE (V.O.)
"With so much chaos, such utter
dilapidation, where do you begin?"

SOMETHING catches her eye. She sinks out of the chair, onto
her knees, crawling to a tiny SPOT on the rug, and begins
scratching off the soot with her fingernail...

GRACE (V.O.)
 "Something will occur to you.
 Something *small*..."

Suddenly, she STOPS, struck by a thought...

EXT. "HAIR TECHNIQUES" - DAY

Grace hurries inside...

GRACE (V.O.)
 "... And if there remains any doubt as
 to your plan of attack, take care to
 remember there is no shame in seeking
 sage advice from a trusted source..."

INT. "HAIR TECHNIQUES" - DAY

SHIRLEY KARLIN, early 60's, incredible shape, incredible
 array of cosmetic surgeries, incredibly occupied by a pull-
 down hair dryer, a manicurist and a pedicurist...

SHIRLEY
 So, who's your therapist?

Grace is splayed out in an adjacent chair.

GRACE
 I don't have a therapist.

SHIRLEY
 Well, you're going to need one. No
 children, no husband, no future-

GRACE
 No *Mother*-

SHIRLEY
 Don't be witty, dear. You're single
 now. Men prefer tits to wits.

She grimaces and yanks her hand back from the MANICURIST.

SHIRLEY
 For God's sake! Where'd you go to
 beauty school- the Gestapo?

She delicately offers her hand back to the terrified girl.

SHIRLEY
I'm so jealous, Grace. I remember my
first therapist. Dr. Edward Cain-
that was for sexual promiscuity.

GRACE
(flushing)
Mom-

SHIRLEY
Then there was Beckman for
sleeplessness, Anderson for anxiety,
Williams for depression...

ANOTHER WOMAN pipes in from under another hair dryer-

WOMAN #2
Rosenberg for paranoia.

SHIRLEY
(paranoid)
Who told you I saw Rosenberg?

Another grimace, and she plucks her foot back from the
PEDICURE.

SHIRLEY
Let's trim the cuticle, not the
Jugular, shall we?

PEDICURIST
Sorry, Mrs. Karlin.

SHIRLEY
(to Grace)
Savages. They ought to include a
complimentary transfusion.

GRACE
Why do you subject yourself to this?

SHIRLEY
Girl's got to take care of herself,
dear. Your Father may be an older
man, but he's a *man*, and I'm a First
Wife- which technically makes me
something of an endangered species.

She returns her foot to the pedicurist.

SHIRLEY
Now, about your therapy...

GRACE

Mom, I'm not so sure I need-

SHIRLEY

Private, I know. We'll start you in group. Just please don't mention me, darling. I've got enough trouble keeping my own name out of the mud without being associated with your dizzying array of neuroses.

(points)

Hand me my purse, dear, I've got just the shrink.

Grace picks up the purse, hesitating...

GRACE

Mom, I appreciate the advice, but-

SHIRLEY

Grace dear, do you really want to be single and miserable the rest of whatever life you have left?

Grace grumbles, handing over the purse.

GRACE

Technically, I'm still married, you know.

SHIRLEY

Technicalities don't attract well endowed brain surgeons with yachts.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Grace sits ensconced deep within a leather armchair...

GRACE

Hello. I'm Grace.

VOICES (O.C.)

Hello, Grace.

Grace smiles awkwardly. Long silence.

GRACE

Am I supposed to cry?

DR. DAVID LIEBERMAN, sits across from her in the circle, his attention and enthusiasm clearly elsewhere.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Would you like to cry?

GRACE
Not particularly.

He makes a quick notation in his notebook.

GRACE
Did I just lose points or something?

DR. LIEBERMAN
For what?

GRACE
For not crying?

Silence. He makes another notation.

DR. LIEBERMAN
So, Grace. What brings you to
"Enhancers Anonymous?"

Grace looks out at the assembled PATIENTS.

GRACE
Well, I don't know if any of you here
have self-image problems...

ANGLE ON: A man with a massive CAVERNOUS CLEFT cut into his
surgically enhanced chin.

GRACE (O.S.)
... but lately, I look in the mirror,
and I'm a little unnerved by what I
see...

ANGLE ON: A middle aged woman with MASSIVELY ENHANCED LIPS
framing translucent WHITENED TEETH.

GRACE (O.S.)
You know, when I was younger, people
looked at me, and I loved it...

ANGLE ON: A girl with GROTESQUELY ENLARGED BREASTS.

GRACE (O.S.)
Now they *stare*, and I hate it.

ANGLE ON: A mature woman with a FACE LIFT so intense, her
lips are drawn back into a PERPETUAL GRIN.

GRACE

What? You think that's funny?

MRS. FACELIFT

Funny? Not at all.

GRACE

Then why are you smirking?

MRS. FACELIFT

What makes you think I'm smirking?

Grace looks closer, and realizes her grave error...

GRACE

Did I say *smirking*?

DR. LIEBERMAN

Please continue, Grace.

Grace reclines, centering herself.

GRACE

Well, I'm afraid it's becoming an
obsession. Today I dreamt I had
breasts the size of napsacks-
(to the Buxom Woman)
Not that there's anything wrong with
that. Yours look lovely. On you.

Lieberman interjects, increasingly bored:

DR. LIEBERMAN

Big breasts are usually associated
with one's desire to be noticed... or
not noticed. People are going to look
at you differently now that you're
single, Grace. They're going to look
closer, and the closer they look...
(stares closely at her)
The more they see. And the more they
see, the more they... the more they...

As he looks CLOSER, something about Grace ATTRACTS him.

GRACE

... Yes?

DR. LIEBERMAN

(dreamily)

Hmm?

GRACE
You were saying...?

DR. LIEBERMAN
The first part or the second part?

GRACE
(sighs)
Can we change the subject?

Lieberman gamely refers back to his notes.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Of course, darling. On the phone, you mentioned your anxiety about a benefit-

GRACE
(beat)
Did you just call me *darling*?

DR. LIEBERMAN
When?

GRACE
Now.

DR. LIEBERMAN
No. I said it would be *darling* to change the subject.

GRACE
That's even stranger. Can we please get back to the benefit?

DR. LIEBERMAN
(checking his notes)
Of course- your first public function since the separation.

MRS. EXTREME FACELIFT
God, I remember mine. What a nightmare.

MS. ENHANCED LIPS
The stares, the whispers...

MR. CLEFT CHIN
The utter humiliation.

GRACE
I know. It's suicide, but I've got to take the chance. There's someone there I'd really like to see.

Lieberman's ears prick up.

DR. LIEBERMAN
... A gentleman?

GRACE
(blushing)
Yes.

DR. LIEBERMAN
(covers his mouth)
Slut.

GRACE
WHAT?!

DR. LIEBERMAN
(beat)
Hmm?

GRACE
What did you say?

DR. LIEBERMAN
(pause)
The first part or the second part?

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM - THE FOLLOWING EVENING

Grace before her MAKE UP MIRROR:

GRACE (V.O.)
"The first major step in any Restoration is to take stock of the territory. Refrain from any critical assessments, however, or the looming task at hand will appear insurmountable..."

She grimaces, disgusted, and dabs FOUNDATION over the LINES by her eyes.

GRACE (V.O.)
"It is a common mistake to throw gallons of paint at the cracks and crevices present in any aging structure. To the restorer, these are not blemishes to be obscured, but lines of character to be celebrated..."

She hesitates... Then CAKES on more foundation.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "As for the textile design..."

OUTFITS by the score fly out the door of the WALK IN CLOSET.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "The temptation to update may be strong. Resist it. Fabrics employed to accentuate the surroundings should always be age- appropriate..."

AT THE MIRROR: Grace in an outfit fifteen years too young for her, baring quite a bit of cleavage.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "And while we're on the subject of area accents, beware of "gilding the lily." If something's tastefully attractive in the first place, there is nothing to be gained by shoving it in the face of the audience..."

She PROPS UP her breasts, making them JUT OUT.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "Most of all, take heart that at the completion of your hard work, the results will be more than worth the effort. Remember how far you've come, and rejoice."

Grace considers the final product in the mirror:

GRACE
 What a fucking mess.

REPORTER (V.O.)
 This is Lynn Jennings for New York One at the hottest ticket in town...

EXT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - NIGHT

LYNN JENNINGS stands outside the well lit Van Klerque House as CELEBRITIES and illuminati file into the benefit.

LYNN JENNINGS
 I'm here outside the recently fire-ravaged Van Klerque House, where anybody who's anybody has come to lend their hands and faces to its reconstruction.

MATTHEW BRODERICK AND SARAH JESSICA PARKER pass by.

LYNN JENNINGS
 Matthew, Sarah! With such incredibly
 hectic schedules, this must be a cause
 close to both your hearts.

MATTHEW BRODERICK
 (staring off)
 Hmm? Oh, right. Absolutely.

ANGLE ON: Where Matthew was looking...

GRACE emerging from a TAXI, looking absolutely stunning.

LYNN JENNINGS
 (spotting her)
 And here comes the Executive Director
 of the Historic House Trust, Grace
 Schaeffer, and...

She looks around, clearly searching for Charles.

LYNN JENNINGS
 ... and... Grace Schaeffer.

GRACE
 Yes, we're both here.

LYNN JENNINGS
 And where is that dashing husband of
 yours?

Grace's painted smile melts. The CAMERA stays focused in on
 her, bearing down dispassionately. WHISPERS behind...

GRACE
 (sheepishly)
 He, uh... had to come separately.

Pause. Lynn raises an eyebrow.

LYNN JENNINGS
 ... I see.

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE

Inside, the restoration has already begun. Tarps span the
 most heavily damaged walls, and the rubble that had covered
 the floors has disappeared. The festive touches help...

Grace enters. Every head TURNS. Every conversation HALTS.

She pretends not to notice and quickly retreats out of view to a WINDOW SEAT, where a CURTAIN steals her attention.

GRACE

Look at you- you're a mess.

She removes a small TWEEZERS and SCISSORS from her purse, and begins to groom the curtain.

ELAINE (O.C.)

There she is- the life of every party.

ELAINE comes over and puts out her hand.

ELAINE

I'll take those, thank you.

Grace reluctantly turns over the implements.

ELAINE

Couldn't come up with a good excuse?

GRACE

Don't think I didn't try.

ELAINE

You look incredible, by the way.

GRACE

I'm terrified.
(looks around)
Have you seen him?

ELAINE

(beat)
He just got here. Uhm- Grace-

GRACE

No, not Charles... *Him*.

ELAINE

Oh- the Paramedic Chef?

Grace scopes out the room.

ELAINE

Look- Gracie, there's something you should know...

Grace spots CHARLES.

GRACE
I wonder how he handled that reporter.
Be right back, Lainy.

ELAINE
(concerned)
Grace- wait-

Grace walks over to...

GRACE
Hello, Charles.

CHARLES turns to her, with an odd, sheepish expression.

CHARLES
Uh... Grace-

VOICE (O.C.)
Grace?

BRIANNA CHEEVER, a gorgeous, young twenty-something steps out from behind him.

BRIANNA
Grace Schaeffer! Well, look at you-
you're not wrinkled and frumpy at all.

GRACE
Thank you.
(glares at Charles)
And thank *you*, I suppose.

Brianna protectively grasps Charles' hand, displaying her ownership of him.

BRIANNA
I'm sure this is a bit uncomfortable
for you Grace, but if we're all adults-

Grace looks the young woman over.

GRACE
Are we?

BRIANNA
Are we what?

GRACE
Adults?

CHARLES
Grace-

A CAMERA is thrust before them, LYNN JENNINGS beside it.

LYNN JENNINGS
There you are, Charles!

CHARLES
(right into the camera)
Yes, here he is, folks- **The Chairman
of the Board.**

Grace winces.

LYNN JENNINGS
Your wife and I were looking all over
for you.

BRIANNA
Oh, they're not together anymore.

The whole room FREEZES.

BRIANNA
They're getting *divorced*, actually.

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - HALLWAY

Elaine stuffs a drink into Grace's hand.

ELAINE
Drink first, talk later.

Grace downs the drink, just as A SERVER flashes by.

GRACE
I think that was him.

ELAINE
Him? "*Him*" him?

Grace nods, grabs Elaine's DRINK and downs that one too.

ELAINE
Tell me something- when's the last
time you put a move on a guy?

GRACE
The Jurassic Period.

ELAINE
That's what I thought.
(slaps her back)
Go get 'em, kid.

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - KITCHEN

The SERVER is bent over the oven, checking on a tray of food.

Grace steps forward and gingerly SMACKS the server's REAR.

GRACE

That's for not saying "hello" to me
when I came in.

The server stands and turns...

A YOUNG WOMAN with short hair, dressed in the caterer's
unisex uniform looks back at Grace humorlessly.

FEMALE SERVER

"Hello."

GRACE

(shocked)
Oh dear.

FEMALE SERVER

Get a good feel, did you?

GRACE

No- I didn't- I promise-

The young Woman backs her up.

FEMALE SERVER

You didn't like it? Something wrong
with my ass?

GRACE

I honestly couldn't say-

FEMALE SERVER

Maybe you need another feel.

Takes Grace's HAND and slaps it on her BOTTOM.

FEMALE SERVER

Better?

GRACE

(trembling)
Yes. I can make an informed decision
now. Thank you.

The server storms out past a FILMING "NY ONE" CAMERA...

INT. GRACE'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

ON TV:

Video of Grace's hand on the irate Server's derriere.

LYNN JENNINGS (V.O.)

So as you can see, it was an eventful evening for all. This is Lynn Jenn-

Grace shuts it off, sitting in lonely silence. Her eyes drift to the PHONE. Her eyebrows raise, a devilish PLAN brewing...

INT. GRACE'S BROWNSTONE - LATER

BANG! The door crashes open, and PARAMEDICS file in.

ON THE FLOOR: GRACE lies "passed out" in a sheer NEGLIGÉ, romantic candles all around.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

There she is! By the phone!

The manly men descend...

PARAMEDIC#1

What did you take? Ma'am?

She dramatically struggles to raise her head.

GRACE

Whaa...?

The PARAMEDIC shouts behind him.

PARAMEDIC#1

Achmed! Rip that shirt off and look for needle marks!

GRACE

(one eye opens)

Achmed?

A BURLY BEARDED MAN enthusiastically descends...

INT. HOSPITAL RECOVERY ROOM - LATER

SHIRLEY KARLIN severely contemplates her figure in the hospital mirror.

SHIRLEY KARLIN

Does this mirror make me look fat?

EUGENE KARLIN, Grace's Father, looks up humorlessly from a meticulously folded copy of BUSINESS WEEK.

EUGENE KARLIN

Gargantuan.

Shirley shoots him a look and sits on the bed beside GRACE.

SHIRLEY KARLIN

Remember how thin you used to be
Grace? Like a rail. What happened?

GRACE

Puberty, Mom.
(to her Father)
You didn't have to come down here,
Dad. I told you, I'm fine.

EUGENE KARLIN

Two hospitalizations, a divorce, and a
televised lesbian assault. You're
doing swimmingly, dear.

Shirley drops her voice, delicately...

SHIRLEY KARLIN

Now, hon- the doctor said you tried
to... You know, that you attempted...

GRACE

Suicide?

SHIRLEY KARLIN

SHHHH! For God's sake, Grace.
(whispers)
Well? Did you...?

GRACE

No, of course not.

SHIRLEY KARLIN

(greatly relieved)
Thank God.

GRACE

I didn't realize it mattered so much
to you.

SHIRLEY KARLIN

Are you kidding? Don't you remember all the talk when Nancy Waldrop's daughter did her little hari-kari? You couldn't go *anywhere* without hearing it. The spa, the gym- I couldn't bear it.

Grace looks at her Mother, astonished.

GRACE

Not to worry, Mother. I wouldn't dare be so self absorbed.

SHIRLEY KARLIN

Good. Then let's try to keep on the straight and narrow, shall we?

(sighs)

Especially the *straight*, okay dear? Between you and your brother, I'll have to have another kid just to prove I can squeeze out a sane one.

Eugene finally sets aside his magazine.

EUGENE KARLIN

Is that friend of yours coming Grace, or do I have to sedate your Mother?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Elaine delicately drapes a RAINCOAT over Grace's NIGHTGOWN as they walk down the hall.

GRACE

If you'd been any longer, you might have had to pick me up in the morgue.

ELAINE

(laughs)

I think I can make it up to you. Guess what I found...?

INT. MATERNITY WARD - NIGHT

ROWS OF CONTENTED SLEEPING NEWBORN BABIES

Elaine stares inside, her face plastered against the glass.

Grace, rigid and uncomfortable, stands far back against the opposite wall, so as not to see the newborns.

ELAINE
I wonder how much jail time we'd get
for stealing one of 'em?

Elaine turns to find Grace VANISHED.

ELAINE
Gracie...?

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Grace leans sadly against a TAXI sign, staring off. Elaine emerges and walks delicately over, joining her.

ELAINE
You alright?

GRACE
I'm fine. Go home. You're going to
be spending enough time at this damn
hospital as it is.

Elaine looks back up at the hospital with dread.

ELAINE
Have I told you I'm scared to death
about this?

GRACE
It's nothing, Laine. It's routine.
You're going to be fine, trust me.

ELAINE
(sighs)
What am I going to do without tits?

GRACE
You don't need tits- you're happily
married. Look at me- I'm a middle
aged divorcee without alimony.
I'm the one that needs tits.

ELAINE
I love your tits.

GRACE
I know, but as I said dear, you're
happily married.

They laugh. Elaine kisses her in appreciation and walks off.

A TAXI speeds by. As Grace enthusiastically flags it, her coat falls open, revealing the SHEER NIGHTGOWN underneath.

ACROSS THE STREET: A STERN COP watches her flagging cars as she prowls the street. Shaking his head, he lumbers over...

STERN COP
No luck tonight?

GRACE
Not for lack of trying. I just can't get a bite.

STERN COP
You know the rules, "Trix." Keep it outta sight, or I gotta book 'ya.

He leads her to his car, as Grace slowly realizes...

GRACE
Wait- are you...?
(astonished)
You're arresting me for being a...?

STERN COP
Hooker. Yes, ma'am.

Flattered, she throws her arms around him, KISSING him.

STERN COP
Are you nuts? I'm on duty, Trix!
(leads her to the car)
Make bail after midnight, that's another story...

VOICE (O.S.)
Marvin!

SCOTT KELLER, in his EMT uniform hurries over.

SCOTT
Where you goin' with my Nightcap?

STERN COP
Shit, Scott- she's yours?

SCOTT
For the next ninety minutes.

The cop turns her over to him, grumbling:

STERN COP
Ninety minutes? Damn, I need a raise.

He storms into his patrol car and peels off.

SCOTT
Sorry about that.

GRACE
Don't be. I haven't been mistaken for
someone who has sex in a long time.

COMMOTION by the AMBULANCES, as ACHMED loads an empty gurney
onto the vehicle.

SCOTT
I heard you two intend to announce
your engagement.

GRACE
It's your own damn fault. Where the
hell were you?

SCOTT
Resuscitating a cardiac arrest on East
12th Street.

GRACE
The nerve.

SCOTT
Well, if you don't think Achmed would
mind, perhaps I could make it up to
you. How about dinner- Friday night?

GRACE
(long pause)
Dinner?

SCOTT
After lunch, before breakfast...?

WHISPERS, from the darkness. TWO NURSES are watching them.

GRACE
I like you, Scott, I do, but setting
aside the pure unmitigated terror of
going out on a date for the first time
since Glasnost, both of us know I'm
practically old enough to be your-

He leans in and gives her a single, delicate KISS.

SCOTT
-To be my date Friday night.

He winks and goes. She breaks into a huge, goofy smile... and then, just as suddenly, it PLUMMETS...

INT. ELAINE'S HOME - NIGHT

A loud, insistent KNOCKING at the door. ELAINE paddles to the door in her nightgown and opens it.

GRACE stands terrified in the doorway.

GRACE
I have a date.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The women stare at an unseen television, transfixed, the familiar refrain of cheap PORNOGRAPHY playing. Grace shakes her head, a pen hesitating over a pad of detailed NOTES.

GRACE
What if it's smaller?

ELAINE
You'll be over-prepared.

GRACE
What if it's larger?

ELAINE
I'll throw you a party.
(beat)
What am I saying- if it's larger,
you'll have your own party.

They cackle hysterically like two teenagers...

VOICE (O.S.)
Mom?

The women BOLT up, fumbling around for the remote.

ELAINE
Just a second, honey!

Grace leaps in front of the TELEVISION, just as THEO ALLEN, Elaine's eleven year old son pads in.

THEO
What are you watching?

SCREAMS from the TV.

GRACE
Just an old Horror film, sweetie.

THEO
Is that lady being killed?

Grace peeks behind at the screen.

GRACE
I believe she is, Theo.

Elaine finally comes up with the remote and clicks it off as LARRY ALLEN, Elaine's husband, stalks in wearing his robe.

LARRY
Theo! Get your ass back in bed.

THEO
Ah, c'mon, Dad!

GRACE
It's okay. Let him stay, Larry.

THEO
Thanks, Aunt Grace!
(plops on the couch)
I bet you'd make a great Mom.

GRACE
(pause, quietly)
Thank you, Theo.

Elaine and Larry shoot each other a quick LOOK.

LARRY
On second thought, why don't we go upstairs so I can explain the meaning of the word "tact?"

He drags Theo out. Grace drifts off, and when she returns...

GRACE
I'm calling it off.

ELAINE
Grace-

She crumples up her notes.

GRACE

One night isn't going to change anything. It won't change the fact that I'm dried up. It won't change the fact that I'm Old. Because that's what I *am*, Lainy, let's face it.

(sighs)

I'm Old.

Elaine carefully un-crumple's Grace's notes.

ELAINE

Do you value our friendship?

GRACE

More than life itself.

ELAINE

Well, if you don't go on that date, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live, so help me God.

Grace pauses.

GRACE

Bitch.

She grabs back the notes as Elaine turns the PORNO back on...

ELAINE

Larry said she won some kind of award for this.

GRACE

Yeah... The Purple Heart.

They bust out laughing.

EXT. GRACE'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Scott bounds up the steps, nervously smoothing his hair. Finally he knocks on the door, and it FLIES open: GRACE stands before him in a sleek, stunning evening dress.

GRACE

The tan's fake, I'm wearing tummy-control underwear, and if Fellatio's a Blow Job, it's a job to which I am uniquely unqualified.

(shakes his hand)

GRACE(cont'd)

It was flattering, exciting, but unfortunately, wrong in the Oedipal sense, the Freudian sense, and most importantly, the Common Sense- which is exactly what I'm exercising at the present time. Goodbye, Scott.

She slams the door.

Scott blinks a few times. Knocks again. She opens the door.

SCOTT

Ready to go?

GRACE

Sure. Let me get my coat.

INT. MARCO POLO'S - NIGHT

Scott holds the door open, and Grace enters into the low-lit, chic ambiance of a Mid-Town restaurant. As Scott joins her, she is suddenly aware of many EYES upon her...

And the WHISPERS... "*Older*"... "*Too Old*"...

SCOTT

You okay?

GRACE

Hmm? Fine.

The MAITRE D' greets them without looking up from his reservation book.

MAITRE D'

Good evening...

He looks up. FREEZES. Looks from Grace to Scott. Back to Grace. Forces an uncomfortable smile.

MAITRE D'

Good evening.

GRACE

We've established that. Schaeffer-table for two.

SCOTT

Grace-

GRACE

Let me handle this, Scott.

MAITRE D'
 (searching the book)
 At 7:30...?

GRACE
 (testily)
 Is that surprising? That we would eat
 at 7:30? Or that we would eat- the
 two of us?

SCOTT
Grace-

As Grace's voice crescendoes, the PATRONS begin to notice.

GRACE
 Look, I spot three men, THREE, right
 now, with girls young enough to be
 their *Grandchild*, but God forbid, one
 woman walks in here with a younger
 man, and all of a sudden it's The Day
 the Earth Stood Still!

ONE MAN meekly speaks up.

OLD MAN
 But this *is* my grandchild.

GRACE
 (beat)
 And what a beautiful grandchild she
 is, sir.

Scott leans over to the Maitre D'.

SCOTT
 "Keller," party of two.

MAITRE D'
 Ah. "Keller." Of course.
 (crosses it off)
 Right this way.

The Maitre D' grabs two menus and strides off.

GRACE
 Who says I've lost my ability to make
 an entrance?

Scott laughs and offers her his arm...

INT. MARCO POLO'S - LATER

Scott peruses his menu, as Grace cowers behind hers, shielding herself from the stares of the room.

SCOTT
... Grace?

GRACE
(behind menu)
Hmm?

SCOTT
I was sort of planning on a face to
face dinner... not face to menu.

Grace peeks out over the top.

GRACE
Sorry.

She drops the menu, just as...

BRIANNA (O.C.)
Grace? Grace Schaeffer?

BRIANNA waves from across the room, CHARLES beside her. Grace quickly ducks behind her menu.

GRACE
"There's no place like home. There's
no place like..."

BRIANNA (O.C.)
GRACE!

Grace slowly lowers the menu to find Brianna towering over her in a disturbingly REVEALING DRESS, Charles in tow.

BRIANNA
See, Charles? Told you it was her!

CHARLES
(uncomfortably)
Hello, Grace.

GRACE
(ice cold)
Hello, Charles.

He stands there, awkwardly.

CHARLES
You remember Brianna?

GRACE
Who could forget?
(off her dress)
My, that's quite a getup. Where'd you
find it? Sacks First Avenue?

BRIANNA
(laughing)
There's no Sacks on First- just a
bunch of cheap hookers.

GRACE
(with a wicked grin)
Is that so?

Charles, his eye on Scott, can no longer contain himself:

CHARLES
Well, Grace, aren't you going to
introduce us to your student?

SCOTT
I'm not her student.

Charles suddenly sours, locking eyes with Scott.

CHARLES
Oh. You mean you're...

GRACE
My "Date," Charles. It's not that
Earth shattering, is it?

CHARLES
And you are...

SCOTT
Scott Keller.

CHARLES
Nice to meet you, Scottie. I'm
Charles Schaeffer...

GRACE & CHARLES
... **"Chairman of the Board of the
Historic House Trust."**

Charles glares at Grace, who bats her eyelashes back.

CHARLES
So, Scottie- where did you two
lovebirds meet?

SCOTT
Well, we met briefly at her place of
work, but our first real time together-
(innocently)
Where was that again, Grace?

GRACE
(grins)
On my Kitchen floor.

SCOTT
Oh, that's right.
(back to Charles)
On her kitchen floor.

Charles reddens and firmly takes Grace's arm.

CHARLES
Will you excuse us for a moment?

SCOTT
Sure thing, *Charlie*.

He leads her a few feet away, growling:

CHARLES
Jesus, Grace! He's young enough-

GRACE
-to be my Brianna. You have one. I
want one, too.

He takes a quick anxious scan of the room.

CHARLES
Do you have any idea how many of our
friends are here tonight?

GRACE
Your friends, Charles. I don't see
any of mine.

CHARLES
You're humiliating yourself.

GRACE
I'm humiliating you.
(beat)
And I think I like it.

Charles bolts off with a huff, dragging Brianna with him.
Scott rises to get Grace's chair, and they sit.

SCOTT
Charming fellow. And she's a delight.

GRACE
They make a lovely pair, don't they?

SCOTT
We ought to send them over a bottle of something.

GRACE
How about hemlock?

SCOTT
Hemlock it is. Oh, waiter?

She laughs, as he flags over a waiter...

EXT. MARCO POLO'S - NIGHT

Grace and Scott emerge into the crisp bright city night.

GRACE
It's so beautiful out here.

SCOTT
(looking at her)
I couldn't agree more.

Grace shakes her head, almost sorry for him.

GRACE
I think we have different ideas on what constitutes Beauty, Scott.

SCOTT
Try me. What do you find beautiful?

GRACE
Aside from you?

SCOTT
Aside from me.
(beat)
And thank you, by the way.

GRACE
You're welcome.
(thinks)
Well... I think babies are beautiful.

SCOTT
I agree wholeheartedly.

She looks up. The EMPIRE STATE BUILDING towers above.

GRACE
And the Empire State Building at night-
I know that's the tourist in me, but I
do so love to see it lit up like that.

SCOTT
No argument here.

GRACE
... And the Van Klerque House. I know
she's a mess right now, but I think
the Van Klerque House is absolutely
beautiful. It's difficult to explain.

SCOTT
So show me.

GRACE
(beat)
At this hour?

SCOTT
Show me.

Grace hesitates, suddenly anxious.

GRACE
Some other time, okay? In the
daytime. She looks so much better-

SCOTT
You don't have to impress me, Grace.
I'm *already* impressed.

Grace looks at him askance... Smiles...

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - NIGHT

Grace delicately steps inside. Scott joins her in the
darkened FOYER, both of them remaining deferentially silent.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Unlike recent construction, older homes have their own distinct personality..."

The interior, showing signs of recovery, is dimly lit from within by a warm auburn glow, illuminating three pathways- the SALON, the DINING ROOM, and an elegant STAIRCASE.

GRACE (V.O.)

"In the foyer, she'll be coy, testing your intentions. Are you drawn to the austerity of the formal dining room? Or do you gravitate more toward the elegance of the salon, seeking conversation, music, depth of feeling? Or perhaps, instead, you savagely lumber past, barging up the stairs to the bedroom..."

Scott enters the SALON. Impressed, Grace follows...

IN THE SALON

Scott marvels at the elegant surroundings- a piano, a small table for conversation, a fireplace. Grace ties back the billowing, luxurious red CURTAINS from the windows.

GRACE

(whispers)

I only pull these back at night.

SCOTT

Why? They're so dramatic.

GRACE

The interior dyes are too delicate. Sunlight degrades them.

SCOTT

This might be a stupid question, but isn't the point of Restoration to bring something *into* the light?

Silence.

GRACE

No one likes a genius, Scott, particularly an attractive one.

She takes his arm, leading him into the middle of the room. He looks at her- into her eyes- but instead of a kiss, she points above them, where...

AN EXQUISITE RELIEF PLASTERWORK radiates in circles out from around the gas CHANDELIER, rippling over the ceiling.

GRACE (V.O.)

"A true gem hides her most delicate treasures right under your nose- or over it. Closer inspection will award you with hitherto unnoticed vistas..."

As they look up, Scott leans in and softly KISSES her NECK. She steps back, flushing, and walks back toward the foyer.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Once you are attuned to her, however, you have earned her trust..."

Scott steps toward the dining room, but Grace takes his hand and instead leads him UPSTAIRS.

GRACE (V.O.)

"...and she will guide you further on the tour herself..."

At the top of the stairs, Grace hesitates, the door to the BEDROOM stands before them at the end of the hall, shut.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Sometimes, the bedroom is hidden, fortress-like, guarded by the floor plan. It acts as a Keep, an inner Sanctum, a final impenetrable barrier from the cares of the World..."

INT. VAN KLERQUE BEDROOM

Grace stands anxiously at the foot of an elegant four post BED, which is enshrouded in lush flowing curtains.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Because of its remoteness, the bedroom can languish for ages, and although this means fewer recent additions must be removed, what remains is often severely deteriorated from the cruelty of neglect..."

Scott reaches out and lowers a DRESS STRAP off her shoulder. She quickly pins his hand.

GRACE

What if my body's not enough for you?

SCOTT
Your body's *not* enough for me...

He gently slips the DRESS off her, and it floats to the floor, leaving her naked before him...

SCOTT
But it's a nice start.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

They grapple naked on the bed, tearing up the primly made sheets. Scott rolls onto his back, leaving Grace straddling him. She quickly rolls back over, placing him on top. He rolls again, setting her back on top of him.

GRACE
I don't... I don't know what to *do* up here. I never have.

SCOTT
Do what feels good.

GRACE
What if it doesn't feel good to you?

SCOTT
Don't worry about me.

GRACE
It's sort of difficult- you're right beneath me.

Scott TEARS a strip of fabric from the CURTAIN.

GRACE
(gasps)
That's an original textile from the nineteenth century!

SCOTT
Then it's about time someone put it to good use.

He ties it around her eyes, BLINDFOLDING her.

GRACE
Oh.
(she moves on top of him)
Oh. I like that.

She centers herself and continues, her face flushing with the joy of her own pleasure...

GRACE (V.O.)

"Although the bedroom may be the point of most egregious disrepair, it's restoration can often times be the most satisfying, surprising even the seasoned restorer with the extent of its redemption..."

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

Grace has collapsed on her back, spent, the fabric blindfold bunched down around her neck. Scott is on his side, propped up on an elbow, lightly running his hand over her STOMACH.

SCOTT

You've never had children, have you?

Grace STIFFENS.

GRACE

Why would you say that?

SCOTT

You're perfect- women with children are always a little soft right here.

Grace rolls away to her other side.

SCOTT

I much prefer your stomach.

GRACE

To what- to the stomachs of all the women with children you've fucked?

SCOTT

That's not what I meant. I was trying to compliment you.

GRACE

Don't bother.

She barges out of bed with the sheet covering her body and angrily rips off the makeshift BLINDFOLD.

GRACE

I can't believe I let you desecrate a hundred and thirty year old antique.

She storms out the door and slams it behind her.

BANG! She bursts back in, breathless.

GRACE
(whispers)
Get dressed!

SCOTT
What?

She throws his clothes in his face.

GRACE
Coming... They're... People!

SCOTT
Now?

GRACE
Yes! Here! Now! Dress!

He stumbles out of bed, fumbling into his clothes...

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - HALLWAY

ELLEN DAVIDSON, the Managing Director of the Historic House Trust, strides down the hall to the BEDROOM DOOR...

SOMETHING THUMPS to the ground just inside. She quickly opens the door and walks in to find...

GRACE beside the bed, fully dressed in her COCKTAIL DRESS, pretending to repair the RIPPED DRAPE over the bed.

ELLEN
Grace? What on Earth are you doing here at this hour?

GRACE
I might ask you the very same question.

ELLEN
I'm opening up for the final masonry work. What about you?

GRACE
(beat)
Fixing the canopy.

ELLEN
In a cocktail dress?

GRACE
I take my work extremely seriously,
Ellen, and I dress seriously when I
perform it.

ELLEN
(respectfully)
Of course. I'm sorry.

Ellen notices the BED SKIRT, which BULGES curiously...

GRACE
Don't touch that!

Ellen quickly retreats, chagrined.

ELLEN
Jesus, Grace- you have to let go
sometime, you know.

GRACE
Let go? Of what?

ELLEN
This house. You're the best, Grace,
no one denies it, but when it's time
to move on, you always pull a Michael
Jordan.

Grace cocks her head curiously.

GRACE
"Final" masonry work? Did you say...
Who told you it was "final?"

ELLEN
They did. They're almost done.

GRACE
(erupting)
They're nowhere *near* done! They have
to re-do the planters, the tubs need
refinishing...

Grace storms out, Ellen protesting behind her. After a few
moments SCOTT climbs out from under the bed, grumbling.

SCOTT
Don't worry about me. I'll just let
myself out the back.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Lieberman moons over Grace, increasingly infatuated, as she finishes her rant during a private session...

GRACE

They think I won't finish the project.
That I never leave unless they change
the locks on me.

(silence)

What do you think?

DR. LIEBERMAN

I think I saw you goose a woman on New
York One last week.

Grace stares at him.

GRACE

I'm not sure I like private sessions
any better than the group ones.

DR. LIEBERMAN

Give it time, Darling.

GRACE

But I don't feel I'm making-

(beat)

Did you call me "darling" again?

DR. LIEBERMAN

(changing subject)

You said you had a date last night.

How did that go?

She sighs and shifts around uncomfortably.

GRACE

It didn't go particularly well.

DR. LIEBERMAN

(barely hiding his glee)

I'm so sorry to hear that.

GRACE

It wasn't him. He was terrific.

DR. LIEBERMAN

... In bed?

GRACE

Oh, no- I didn't mean that.

DR. LIEBERMAN
 (relieved)
 Ah, yes. Of course.

GRACE
 (dreamily)
 Although he was.

DR. LIEBERMAN
 You *slept* together? On the first
 date?

He furiously scribbles a WORD and dramatically underlines it.

GRACE
 Did you just write "slut?"

DR. LIEBERMAN
 No.

GRACE
 Let me see.

DR. LIEBERMAN
 Continue with your experience.

She tries to find the words, but the usual ones don't come...

GRACE
 A man's orgasm is a given. It's
 automatic- par for the course. Do you
 have any idea the kind of pressure
 that puts on a woman? God forbid he
 can't get there... and even when he
 does, what kind of *accomplishment* is
 that for us? He can achieve the same
 result in half the time with a bottle
 of soft soap and a Macy's lingerie ad.

She sighs deeply and drifts off...

GRACE
 So, to have that taken out of the
 equation, just once. To have the
 evening defined not by his orgasm, but
 by its insignificance... You begin to
feel other things more clearly. The
 softness of your skin as you brush
 over his, your warmth as you envelop
 him, the exquisiteness of your depth,
 not the insistence of his length...

She looks over and snaps out, concerned.

GRACE
Are you alright?

ANGLE ON: LIEBERMAN, sweating profusely.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Fine. Couldn't be better.

He quickly crosses his leg, covering his rising crotch.

DR. LIEBERMAN
So, all that sounds pretty darned good
to me- what's the problem?

GRACE
His age, for one thing.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Well- as you know, older men...
(indicates himself)
...hold a great deal of eroticism for
a younger woman like yourself.

GRACE
Oh, no doctor- he's younger.

Lieberman sits up straight.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Oh...? How much younger?

GRACE
A decade. Give or take a decade.

Lieberman smiles, his manhood no longer questioned.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Oh *really*?

GRACE
What? What "really?"

DR. LIEBERMAN
It's perfectly obvious. You're
discarded by a peer so you start
fiddling around with this infant.

GRACE
(bristling)
I'm not fiddling! I like him!

DR. LIEBERMAN
Then why didn't it work out?

GRACE
 MAYBE IT DID WORK OUT!
 (pause, softly)
 Maybe that was the problem.

She looks up, filled with the revelation.

GRACE
 It's been so long since someone *looked*
 at me. Since someone wanted me. It
 just seems so unbelievable, and I get
 so distrustful, so nervous, so
 embarrassed.
 (determined)
 I don't want to screw this up. Isn't
 there something I can take? Isn't
 there something you can give me?

He quickly scribbles a PRESCRIPTION and passes it over.

GRACE
 (perplexed)
 What's this?

She displays his PICTURE OF A CRUDELY DRAWN HEART.

DR. LIEBERMAN
 My heart. It's in your hands.

She stares at him, speechless...

JAKE LESSER (V.O.)
 Charles, Grace- here are your copies
 of the summary judgement...

INT. JAKE LESSER'S LAW OFFICE - DAY

JAKE LESSER passes out the DIVORCE FORM from the head of the
 table, Charles on one side, Grace on the other.

GRACE
 (reading)
 "Irreconcilable?"
 (laughs)
 I'll say.

Charles looks up somberly from his copy.

CHARLES
 Glad to see you're taking this so
 well, Grace.

GRACE

Oh, come on Charles- I'm taking your
IRA, not your sense of humor.

Lesser guffaws and quickly covers his mouth.

JAKE LESSER

Excuse me.

He excuses himself. The moment the door closes, his MUFFLED
LAUGH is heard. Charles flushes angrily.

CHARLES

You've changed, Grace.

GRACE

Considering you loved the "old me"
enough to leave me, I'm surprised you
say that with a negative connotation.

CHARLES

Just tell me...

(drops his voice)

Is he... You know, is he...?

GRACE

Is who what?

CHARLES

Your boyfriend. Is he... Is he good
in...

GRACE

In *bed*?

Charles winces.

GRACE

Do you want to know if he's good, or
do you want to know if he's *better*?

CHARLES

(thinks)

To be perfectly honest, I don't think
I want to know *either*.

Grace nods, impressed:

GRACE

Good for you, Charles.

He tips an imaginary hat, grabs his paperwork, and stands.

CHARLES
Goodbye, Grace.

GRACE
Goodbye, Charles.
(points to the paper)
And congratulations.

CHARLES
(chuckles)
Thanks. See you at your Dad's house
for Max's Bon Voyage.

He nods respectfully and goes. Grace remains frozen, then...

GRACE
"Max's Bon Voyage?!"

CUT TO:

INT. MAX'S HOUSE - DAY

Max stands in the doorway, cowering.

MAX
I thought you two were cordial.

Grace glowers back angrily from the threshold.

MAX
He was a good friend to me, Grace. To
me *and* Martin.

She glares.

MAX
What's this going to take? Cash
bribe? Ice cream? Shopping spree?

EXT. DELECTABLE DESIGNS - DAY

Scott Keller wipes the flour off his hands, turning his
attention to a MIDDLE AGED COUPLE in the store.

SCOTT
So, folks, what are we tasting today?
Appetizers? Deserts?

GRACE (O.S.)
How about "Just" Deserts?

The couple turns, it is GRACE and MAX. Scott stiffens.

SCOTT

Well ma'am, as I'm sure you're aware,
that's a dish best served cold.

GRACE

Serve it up. I've got it coming.

SCOTT

Fine.

Scott indelicately slams a DESERT PLATE before them.

SCOTT

(points)

This here's our "You Loved Me and Left
Me" Marzipan-

(points)

That's our "Haven't You Heard of a
Phone" Flambé-

(points)

And finally, our world famous "You
Must Be Out of Your Fucking Mind
Bringing Your New Boyfriend By After
Leaving Me With My Strombolli In My
Hand" Huckleberry Pie.

Grace stares, agape. Max points to another desert.

MAX

Then that must be your "I'm her Gay
Brother Who'll Forgive The Incest
Implication, But Expects An Apology
For The Straight One" Souffle.

SCOTT

(beat)

No, that's Crow... And I think I'll go
eat some. Excuse me.

He retreats back through the swinging door to the KITCHEN.

GRACE

(simmering)

Well. I'm not going to take this
lying down.

She storms into the kitchen after him.

MAX
Honey, if you'd taken it lying down,
you wouldn't be in this mess in the
first place!

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Scott is deeply involved with dough, ignoring Grace.

GRACE
I said I was sorry, didn't I?

SCOTT
(coldly)
No.

GRACE
(explodes)
Well, I'M SORRY!

She storms back out.

INT. DELECTABLE DESIGNS - CONTINUOUS

Max is wolfing down the arranged deserts as Grace plows back into the tasting room, Scott hot in pursuit.

SCOTT
Hey- you don't get to be the angry one
okay? I'm the one who got left butt
naked in a strange house, remember?

Max spits out a pastry.

MAX
You left him *naked*? Grace, you have
officially fallen off the pedestal I
placed you on Thirty Five years ago.

Grace angrily stalks over.

GRACE
You weren't there, Max. He had it
coming!

MAX
(recoiling)
Okay. He had it coming.

Now Scott threatens, sandwiching Max between them.

SCOTT
Me? What the hell did *I* do?

MAX
Jesus, I don't know.
(to Grace)
What the hell did he do?

GRACE
He touched a nerve.

MAX
(turns to Scott)
You touched a nerve.

SCOTT
I touched a neutron bomb.

MAX
(to Grace)
You blew your top, kid.

GRACE
He mentioned kids, Max.

MAX
Oh.
(pause, to Scott)
She can't have kids.

Scott pauses thoughtfully, softening.

SCOTT
I didn't know. I'm sorry. Tell her
I'm sorry.

MAX
(to Grace)
He's sorry. You should have told him.

GRACE
I know. I think I might have handled
it badly.

MAX
(to Scott)
She knows she fucked up.

SCOTT
She didn't fuck up. It was a
miscommunication.

MAX
(to Grace)
Grace?

GRACE
(agonized)
I fucked up. We were doing great and
I fucked it up.

Scott steps around Max.

SCOTT
I'm still here, aren't I?

Max tries to re-assert himself between them.

MAX
Excuse me-

Grace steps toward Scott, brushing Max back.

GRACE
Sure- you're here now... but for how
long?

MAX
(annoyed)
Excuse me- we're in the middle of an
argument here, folks.

SCOTT
(ignoring him)
Grace- you have to entertain the
possibility I won't be horrified by
you.

She stares at him in silence. Nods.

SCOTT
At least until I *am*, right?

She finally laughs. He leans in to gently kiss her.

Max throws up his hands in frustration and returns to a half-
gored plate of cannolis, grumbling...

MAX
There goes a perfectly good argument.

EXT. EUGENE KARLIN'S MANSION - SATURDAY NIGHT

A well dressed couple emerges from a sleek sedan, and a VALET slips behind the wheel. The couple enter through the large, open door into EUGENE KARLIN'S MANSION, where an small festivity is in full swing. Over the entrance, a BANNER:

"BON VOYAGE!"

INT. EUGENE KARLIN'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Servers float through the guests, offering various delectable appetizers.

GRACE and SCOTT walk together through the small crowd, whispering to each other about the guests...

GRACE

Okay, let's see- the wax figure with the martini is Dad's partner Alan, the attractive couple with matching moustaches are Max's neighbors-

SCOTT

I think I've got it- the stodgy embalmed ones are your brother's friends and the flamboyant gay ones are your father's.

GRACE

Careful, or its off to bed without your supper, young man.

SCOTT

So long as it's off to *bed*...

She smiles and leads him into...

THE LIVING ROOM:

... where MAX and MARTIN chat in a small circle with friends. Grace walks in just as a PREGNANT WOMAN announces:

PREGNANT WOMAN

Oh, Frank and I are just following your lead, Max. We don't want to be the only couple at the party without a kid on the way.

They all laugh... and HALT, all eyes on Grace...

She grabs Scott's hand tightly, as she hears the whispers...

VOICES (O.S.)
Old... Too old...

GRACE
 (blurts out)
 I know what you mean. Scott and I
 were thinking about trying ourselves.

Max, Martin, and especially Scott, freeze.

MAX
 Trying *what*, Grace?

GRACE
 Right, Scott?

SCOTT
 (stammering)
 Uhm... yeah, we... *what*?

EUGENE KARLIN suddenly appears in the circle.

EUGENE KARLIN
 (intrigued)
 Is that so, Grace? I had no idea you
 two were so far along.

GRACE
 Well... Scott just has to finish up
 his medical residency...

SHIRLEY KARLIN materializes excitedly.

SHIRLEY KARLIN
Residency? Did someone say *Residency*?

EUGENE KARLIN
 You at Metropolitan or County, Scott?

All eyes shift to Scott.

SCOTT
 ...Uh...

He turns to Grace, whose eyes implore him desperately.

SCOTT
 Metropolitan.

SHIRLEY KARLIN
 (impressed)
 Gracie, darling- you didn't tell me
 there was a *Doctor* in the house!

Eugene looks closer at Scott, intrigued.

EUGENE KARLIN
 And you two are *trying*, you said?

SCOTT
 (pause)
 Well, we're *going* to. Yes. After we-

GRACE
 Well, we'd have to get...

SCOTT
 We'd have to be...

EUGENE KARLIN
 Married.

SCOTT
 Of course.

GRACE
 That's the idea.

EUGENE KARLIN
 (a light goes off)
 And then Grace would have... I mean,
 the child would be... a *real*...

Shirley gathers his drift and lights up herself.

SHIRLEY KARLIN
 Well! What did you say you were
 drinking, Scott?

Shirley takes Scott's arm and walks him off. Eugene looks at
 his daughter for a long moment.

EUGENE KARLIN
 I'm impressed, Grace.
 (pause)
 I'm not used to that.

He follows Scott and Shirley to the bar.

Max looks over at Grace, shaking his head.

MAX

You have many years of intensive therapy ahead of you, sis.

He leaves with a disapproving Martin.

Grace snatches a drink off a nearby platter and starts after Scott, but she is cut off by a tipsy ELAINE.

ELAINE

What happened tonight? I thought we were meeting up for drinks.

GRACE

Sorry, Lainy. Scott and I just had time to grab a drink at his place.

ELAINE

(hurt)

Well, maybe the four of us can do something later tonight?

GRACE

Tonight? Mirabel offered us her place on the island tonight.

Elaine's face flushes crimson red.

ELAINE

I go in next week, Grace.

GRACE

I know.

ELAINE

To the hospital.

GRACE

I know-

ELAINE

For a *double mastectomy*, Grace.

Grace hesitates, torn.

GRACE

I just want to see him as much as I can before he figures me out and runs. You understand, right?

ELAINE

Running out of time? Yeah- I understand that perfectly.

GRACE

It's *surgery* Lain, not slaughter.

Elaine stares, speechless. Grace spots Scott walk into the DINING ROOM.

GRACE

We'll have some girl time. Soon.
I promise.

She rushes off. Elaine looks after her...

INT. DINING HALL - LATER

The guests boisterously dine around a long table in the middle of a formal dining hall.

GRACE gingerly sits down beside SCOTT.

GRACE

Okay. What's the damage?

SCOTT

To be perfectly honest, I was pretty steamed, but after speaking to your Parents for five minutes, and defending you for four of them, I find myself overcome with the overwhelming urge to wear a stethoscope.

Grace stares at him, totally enamored. She leans in...

MAX (O.S.)

Can you pass the salt, Sis?

Max grins back from directly across.

GRACE

Sure thing, Baby Brother.

She narrows her eyes at him and passes it over, as...

UNDER THE TABLE

A HAND sneaks onto Grace's BARE KNEE. She lifts it off, and places it back on SCOTT'S THIGH.

BACK ABOVE:

Grace mock-glares at Scott, who shrugs innocently.

UNDER THE TABLE:

The HAND returns to her knee. She grabs it, and this time, moves it slowly up her thigh.

BACK ABOVE:

Max catches on, and purposefully drops his FORK.

MAX

Whoopsie.

He quickly peeks under the table...

UNDER:

Grace throws off Scott's hand, just as MAX comes into view.

ABOVE:

Max emerges from under the table, grinning at Grace.

MAX

Enjoying the meal, Grace?

She forces a weak smile and shoots a quick look to Scott: "knock it off."

UNDER:

The HAND returns.

ABOVE:

Grace reddens, violently grabs it under the table and YANKS it onto Scott's thigh...

... dragging CHARLES across her, as it is HIS HAND.

Scott looks over at a very embarrassed Charles.

CHARLES

Superb stitching. Who's your tailor?

Grace bites her lip, snickering.

GRACE

Excuse me.

She quickly stands and rushes out, giggling.

SCOTT

Excuse me.

He nonchalantly follows. CHARLES jealously watches him go.

CHARLES

Excuse me.

He excuses himself, out past a still-simmering Elaine.

ELAINE

Excuse me.

She hustles out past Max, who can stand it no longer.

MAX

Excuse us.

He grabs Martin and they hurriedly join the chase...

INT. HALLWAY

Grace turns a corner and catches her breath. A HOUSEKEEPER calls to her from the Kitchen.

HOUSEKEEPER

Excuse me, Ms. Schaeffer, telephone.

GRACE

For me?

She curiously walks into...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

... and picks up a phone.

GRACE

Hello?

DR. LIEBERMAN (O.C.)

Grace?

GRACE

Dr. *Lieberman*?

DR. LIEBERMAN (O.C.)

What's wrong? You missed your session this week.

GRACE

I didn't miss it. I skipped it.

DR. LIEBERMAN (O.C.)
That's incredibly self destructive of
you, Grace! You're in an extremely
precarious situation-

GRACE
Goodbye, Doctor.

She hangs up the phone and JUMPS, startled, as...

DR. LIEBERMAN pops around the corner, CELLPHONE in hand.

DR. LIEBERMAN
This is *exactly* the kind of wild,
irresponsible behavior that worries
me.

GRACE
(astonished)
My behavior worries you? How did you
get in here? This is a private party.

DR. LIEBERMAN
I'm a full service psychologist.

GRACE
I don't want full service! I don't
want *any* service!

DR. LIEBERMAN
Fine- screw the psychology!
(grabs her)
Just kiss me, you Divine Perfection of
a Woman!
(falls to his knees)
I can't stand it anymore! Put me out
of my misery- kiss me, beat me, bite
me- I only exist to serve you!

He hurls himself on her feet, kissing her toes, her ankles...

GRACE
Get up, doctor, please! Only
Freudians grovel.

Grace turns away in disgust...

SCOTT stands at the door, staring. Lieberman's kissing
slows, as he realizes he is being watched. He stands, and
straightens himself up, clearing his throat.

DR. LIEBERMAN
Well. This must be "he."
(to Grace)
Perhaps I had better go.

GRACE
Perhaps that's best.

He strides off. Grace looks at Scott, deeply embarrassed.

GRACE
Want me to explain?

SCOTT
(amused)
Not until *after* I've eaten.

She laughs, relieved. He moves closer.

SCOTT
I was worried. I thought you might
have choked on a crouton back there.

Grace's voice lowers...

GRACE
Oh, I'm fine... Although...
(she grabs him)
I was wondering if you could help me
with a different sort of emergency.

SCOTT
Oh?

GRACE
My lips are on fire. I don't imagine
you could put them out, could you?

GRACE
(grins)
I suppose it can't hurt to try.

He kisses her furiously for a long moment.

GRACE
That's it? They're still burning.

SCOTT
So's my reputation as a mild mannered
boyfriend if we get caught with our
tongues down each other's throats.

GRACE
 (beat)
 You go first.

SCOTT
 Right.

They leap into each others arms, kissing passionately. At once, they lurch apart and start off separately- Scott through the door, and Grace back through the kitchen...

INT. WET BAR - CONTINUOUS

... where she runs into EUGENE fixing himself a drink at the wet bar.

EUGENE KARLIN
 He's not a doctor, is he Grace?

She hesitates.

GRACE
 Not yet. He's still got his-

EUGENE KARLIN
Residency, right?

She falls silent.

EUGENE KARLIN
 Are you embarrassed about him, Grace,
 or are you embarrassed about *you*?

He grabs his drink and leaves.

She stands frozen. Sighs, turns, and SMACKS right into CHARLES, spilling his drink all over his suit.

GRACE
 Oh my God, Charles- your suit. I'm so sorry.

He grabs her and pulls her to him.

CHARLES
 Screw the suit! Stop torturing me! I can't stand it anymore! I want you back, Grace!

GRACE
 (half laughing)
 Charles?! What about Brianna?

CHARLES
 ...Who?

GRACE
Brianna, the girl you replaced me
 with?

CHARLES
 All I did was beat you to the punch,
 and you know it. You've wanted to
 leave me ever since we lost the-

Grace violently pulls away from him.

GRACE
 Stop it, Charles! I don't want to
 hear it! I mean it!

CHARLES
 You think you're the only casualty?
 You laugh at my "Chairman of the
 Board," but honestly, Grace, what else
 do I *have*? My youth is gone, my
 marriage wasted... Look at me. I'm
 empty, Grace- I'm done. My life is
 over.

(pause)
 I just want someone on my arm when I
 walk into a restaurant on a Friday
 night. Does that make me so terrible?

Grace looks at him, at the sadness on his face...

GRACE
 No, of course not, Charles. You're
 not terrible-

He abruptly grabs her, KISSING her passionately, just as
 MAX, MARTIN and SCOTT come around the corner.

MAX
 Say, Gracie- look who we...
 (sees them)
 ... found. Whoops.

Grace quickly disentangles herself from Charles.

Scott just stares sadly at her before he slowly walks off.
Max and Martin sheepishly follow.

Grace spins, glaring at Charles.

CHARLES

Don't hate me because I-

GRACE

If you say "love you," I'll pull out
your tongue with a tweezer.

INT. FRONT HALL

Grace desperately threads through the revelers.

GRACE

Excuse me, did you- did anyone see
where Scott went?

DRUNK GUEST

I think I saw him with Max and
Martin... checking the cake, I think.

Grace rushes for the two large SLIDING DOORS at the end of
the hall which lead into the SALON, slipping through one...

INT. SALON - CONTINUOUS

... and closing it behind her. She turns into the room,
smacking right into ELAINE.

GRACE

Jesus Christ, you scared me!

ELAINE

I've been looking all over for you. I
need to talk to you.

Grace scans the room- finding nothing save a giant table
filled with DESERTS crowned with a large CAKE.

GRACE

Dammit- did you see him?

ELAINE

(vacantly)
Him who?

GRACE

Scott.

(narrows her eyes)

Did Larry get you plastered on fuzzy navels again?

ELAINE

No. Maybe. Why?

Grace gives up and turns to focus on her friend.

GRACE

Look, I know you're anxious about the surgery next week, I do, but I just can't talk at this particular moment.

Elaine takes a step and lowers her voice.

ELAINE

I've been watching you and Scott all night, and I've got to tell you, Grace, it's making me- I can't believe this- it's making me *jealous*.

Grace nods compassionately, hugging her friend.

GRACE

That's only natural, doll. Don't beat yourself up over it.

ELAINE

It doesn't make you uncomfortable?

GRACE

Nothing you could ever do could make me uncomfortable.

ELAINE

(brightening)

Really? You mean that?

GRACE

Try me.

Elaine KISSES Grace flush on the mouth.

GRACE

(bolts back)

What the hell was *that*?

ELAINE

(moving in)

I can't stop thinking about you-

GRACE
 (retreating)
 Oh, for God's sake!

ELAINE
 Ever since your divorce, I see you in
 a whole new light.

GRACE
 Well, TURN IT OFF! That's not a good
 light. It's not a good light at all!

Elaine flips off the LIGHT.

GRACE
 (in the dark)
 NOT *THAT* LIGHT!

INT. HALL

EUGENE and SHIRLEY have gathered the entire party.

EUGENE KARLIN
 And now, ladies and gentlemen- the
Piece De Resistance...

He throws back the doors and flips on the light, revealing...

GRACE AND ELAINE, lips locked. They bolt apart, turning to
 the flabbergasted CROWD.

SHOCKED SILENCE.

SHIRLEY KARLIN
 So... Who's ready for cake?

FADE OUT.

DR. FLICKER (V.O.)
 Just breathe normally, Grace. This
 will all be over before you know it...

FADE IN:

INT. PLASTIC SURGEON'S OFFICE - TIME UNDETERMINED

Grace lies on an operating table, a MASK over her mouth. Her
 eyelids are just about to flutter closed when she hears a
 DOOR open and VOICES. She groggily lifts her head to find...

A DOZEN ROTUND MIDGETS waddle into the room.

GRACE
What the hell are they doing in here?

DR. FLICKER
Your liposuction.

DR FLICKER hands them each a long STRAW, and they position themselves around Grace. She turns, terrified, to the

PORTLY MIDGET beside her.

GRACE
Will there be much discomfort?

PORTLY MIDGET
None at all. Fat's pretty easy to digest. We're used to it.

GRACE
No, *me*. Discomfort for me.

PORTLY MIDGET
Oh. Gee. I wouldn't know-
(calls to another)
Hey Walter- you ever had liposuction?

WALTER
Liposuction? What the hell for?

PORTLY MIDGET
(to another)
What about you, Betty?

BETTY
Are you kidding? Do I look like I need liposuction?

PORTLY MIDGET
Anybody in here had liposuction?

The chunky midgets fall silent. He turns back to Grace.

PORTLY MIDGET
Sorry, lady. Can't help you.

They crowd around her HEAD.

GRACE
Wait- what are you doing?

PORTLY MIDGET
Sucking out the fat.

GRACE
 What about my hips? My thighs? My
 ass?

BETTY
 What about them?

GRACE
 ... They're FAT!

BETTY
 (sorry for her)
 Poor thing. There's nothing wrong
 with your hips, hon. The fat's
 between your ears.

They descend around her upper skull, loudly slurping...

INT. PLASTIC SURGEON'S WAITING ROOM - REALITY - DAY

Grace blinks awake in the middle of a CROWDED WAITING ROOM. She sighs and plays with a few MAGAZINES on the table before picking up a "NEW WOMAN" and thumbing gloomily through it.

The first article: ***"The top ten things wrong with your body, and the top ten things to do about it."***

She sighs and tosses the magazine aside, mindlessly gazing out into the room. A WOMAN is gazing off as well, and their eyes meet. The woman salutes her with an introduction...

WOMAN
 Tummy Tuck.

GRACE
 Tit Job.

They nod and smile. ANOTHER WOMAN looks up from a "REDBOOK."

WOMAN #2
 Botox.

GRACE
 Nice to meet you, Botox.

ANOTHER looks up from her make up mirror.

WOMAN #3
 I'm Electrolysis.

GRACE
 I'm sorry.

"Electrolysis" sadly nods. They all return to their magazines. Grace suddenly hurls hers down.

GRACE

This isn't going to change anything, is it? I mean, aside from the genital topography, we're going to be the same neurotic basket cases that walked in here, right?

ELECTROLYSIS

Pretty much.

GRACE

(long pause)

So what's the *point*?

They stare at each other, stumped...

EXT. MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

The four women FLEE out the door.

Grace passes PAM CARSON on her way in. Her CHEST has now grown to ENORMOUS proportions.

PAM

Grace!

GRACE

Pam. Wow.

PAM

Yeah- I've taken 'em up a notch.
(displays her breasts)
What do you think of me now?

Grace takes a thoughtful breath...

GRACE

When I met you, Pam, I thought you were petty, vacuous and narcissistic.

PAM

(pause)

And now...?

GRACE

I think you're petty, vacuous and narcissistic.

PAM
 (beat, confused)
 Oh. Okay. Thanks.

Grace nods respectfully and starts off.

PAM
 Oh- have you seen Elaine yet?

GRACE
 (curtly)
 No. Elaine and I haven't really been
 talking lately...
 (beat)
 What do you mean "yet?"

PAM
 Well, since the surgery...
 (she hushes, embarrassed)
 Oh. I'm sorry. I thought you knew.

GRACE
 (dazed)
 Knew? What?

PAM
 About the...

GRACE
 (remembering)
 ... Oh my God- the mastectomy!

PAM
 And the-

GRACE
 Reconstruction! Jesus, I totally...
 Excuse me.

She rushes off, flagging a TAXI...

GRACE (V.O.)
 "Just as the original construction of
 a home is fraught with mistakes, so
 are they unavoidable in its
 restoration..."

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Grace flies out of the taxi and through the entrance...

GRACE (V.O.)
 "Begin by immediately taking
 responsibility for the miscue..."

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

She warmly embraces THEO, Elaine's son.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "... so your time can be better spent
 on the necessary repairs and not
 wasted assigning blame..."

INT. SURGERY WAITING ROOM - DAY

Grace lies in the HOSPITAL BED next to an anxious ELAINE,
 softly stroking her friend's hand.

GRACE (V.O.)
 "... Because, lest we forget, even the
 strongest, most enduring structures
 can be forever damaged by a single act
 of momentary carelessness."

Elaine winces at the FLAT CHEST beneath her gown.

ELAINE
 Where have I gone? I never thought
 the little fuckers were anything
 special, but, for Christ's sake, they
 were *mine*.

GRACE
 The new ones will be yours too.

ELAINE
 It's not the same thing, Grace.
 (sighs)
 Larry hasn't said anything since the
 surgery. Poor guy- he's such a Tit
 Man. He must be suicidal.

LARRY cheerfully walks in, freezing at the sight of Grace.

LARRY
 Well, well, well- if it isn't my
 favorite Kissing Cousins!

ELAINE AND GRACE
 Shut up, Larry.

Larry produces two BAGS. The first:

LARRY
 Western bacon cheeseburger, as
 requested, M'Lady...
 (holds up the other bag)
 And look what you left last time you
 were here. I thought you might want
 them- just for old times' sake.

He tosses the BAG at her feet with a THUMP.

ELAINE
 (gasps)
 Oh my God.

GRACE
 (breathless)
 That's not-

ELAINE
 (horrified)
 Get them OUT OF HERE!

He reaches into the bag...

LARRY
 But I thought you missed them-

ELAINE
 DAMMIT, LARRY- I MEAN IT!

... and removes two small NECK PILLOWS.

LARRY
 Fine, I'll take them home.

Elaine grabs one and throws it at him.

ELAINE
 Jesus, Larry! Asshole!

They all break into laughter. When it subsides:

LARRY
 Nice to see you, Grace.

GRACE
 Nice to be seen, Larr.

LARRY
 You heard from Scott?

GRACE
(long sigh)
Not a word. Can't blame him. The guy
gave me at least four strikes.

LARRY
You could always call him, you know.

Grace shrugs. Larry shakes his head.

LARRY
Well, I'm going to go see what larceny
my son has gotten into.

He robustly SPANKS Elaine on her BOTTOM.

ELAINE
(gasps)
What was *that*?

LARRY
I believe I spanked your bottom, dear.

ELAINE
And what on Earth possessed you to do
that?

LARRY
I'm an Ass Man, darling- just trying
to act appropriately.

ELAINE
You are *not* an Ass Man.

LARRY
I am *such* an Ass Man. You know damn
well I'm an Ass Man.

ELAINE
(aggravated)
Then what the hell am I doing getting
a tit job?

LARRY
I don't have the slightest idea. You
said you wanted tits, so we're getting
you tits. Jesus, I don't care.
There's no metastasis- you think I
give a shit about anything else?

Elaine's jaw drops. She leaps off the bed.

GRACE
Where are you going?

ELAINE
I'm calling this damn thing off.

She turns back at Larry, GLOWING.

ELAINE
Did you hear that, Grace? My Larry's
an Ass Man.

She floats out. Grace turns to Larry, eyebrow raised.

GRACE
Since when are you an Ass Man, Larry?

LARRY
(pause)
I've always been an Ass Man, Grace.

Elaine dances back in, falling into Larry's arms, blanketing him with kisses. Grace respectfully retreats outside...

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... softly closing the door behind her. Suddenly she cocks her head, hearing something down the hall...

GRACE (V.O.)
"And then, fellow restorers... we come to it. That piece you keep setting aside for another day, the one for which no solution springs to mind..."

She walks down the hall, slowly but with great purpose.

GRACE (V.O.)
"We can put it off as long as we want, ladies and gentlemen, but eventually..."

INT. MATERNITY WARD HALLWAY

She stands frozen, once again, her back against the wall.

GRACE (V.O.)
"Eventually it must be *faced*."

She slowly peels herself away from the wall, and takes a few shaky steps to the WINDOW. Inside:

A DOZEN NEWBORN BABIES.

YOUNG MAN (O.C.)
They're so beautiful.

A YOUNG MAN stands a few feet away.

GRACE
(almost reverently)
Yes. They really are.

He points to a BABY BOY in an incubator close to the window.

YOUNG MAN
That's my son.
(he shakes his head)
My son.

He plasters his face against the glass, enchanted.

YOUNG MAN
Do you have any children?

GRACE
No. Not yet.
(beat)
I mean no, I don't. I'd like to.

YOUNG MAN
(overcome)
It's incredible.

GRACE
I'm sure it is.

As she watches him, her smile wanes and she slips away...

YOUNG MAN
Hey-

She turns back.

YOUNG MAN
You're Grace Schaeffer, right?

GRACE
(quizzically)
Do you know me?

YOUNG MAN
I know your work. I'm a huge fan.

GRACE
 (absolutely stunned)
 Well, I'm... Thank you.

YOUNG MAN
 All that history... to make it
 breathe, to give it life... What an
 incredible life you must lead.

She stares back, speechless. He smiles and returns to the glass... and after a time, she joins him, staring inside...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - A FEW WEEKS LATER

CHARLES emerges from a TAXI, GRACE follows him out. They stand on the sidewalk, gazing up at the home.

GRACE
 It had to be *here*, of all places.

CHARLES
 It was generous of you to offer it.

GRACE
 It was *insane*.

He laughs and offers his arm, as they start up the stairs.

GRACE
 Thank you for indulging me with this.

CHARLES
 Of course. Although considering our mutual state of shame, I'm not exactly sure who's hiding behind whom.

Grace hesitates, full of dread...

GRACE
 The last time these people saw me, I had another woman's tongue down my throat.

CHARLES
 Please don't remind me. I've spent many a sleepless night trying desperately to recall that very image.

She shoves him playfully and takes his arm again, as they walk up the stairs toward the front door.

At the THRESHOLD, she suddenly halts.

GRACE
Charlie? I think I need to go the
rest of the way on my own.

CHARLES
You sure?

GRACE
Pretty sure.

She smiles nervously and walks inside...

CHARLES
Say, Gracie-
(she turns back)
You still got it, Old Girl.

GRACE
(smiles)
And you never *lost* it, Old Boy.

He bows to her. She returns the salute, takes a deep breath,
and strides inside...

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - DAY

The foyer is filled with the twittering excited din of family
and friends. When GRACE hits the doorway,

AN IMMEDIATE HUSH quiets the hall. WHISPERS.

Grace puts her head down and pushes through...

MAX AND MARTIN stand midway up the STAIRCASE, Max in mid-
speech. Guests are gathered beneath, crowded in the hallway
and spilling into both the drawing room and the salon.

JASON AND JACOB, their recently arrived two year-olds, stand
wobbling to either side, eyes wide and excited.

MAX
... how wonderful it is to have you
all with us as we welcome Jason and
Jacob into our lives. In sincere
appreciation, we hereby solemnly swear
to get you all stuffed, drunk, and
home before your favorite prime time
television show-

EUGENE KARLIN (O.C.)
 -All on Grandpa's dime!

The crowd laughs and turns to

EUGENE KARLIN, who, contrary to his other appearances, looks slightly, surprisingly... happy.

MAX
 My poor Father. He always hoped to some day balance a grandchild on his knee. Little did he know he'd have one for each kneecap.

EUGENE KARLIN
 Good thing I just got them replaced!

The guests laugh.

EUGENE KARLIN
 Enjoy everyone! We'll begin when the... *What* is he exactly...?

MAX
 He's a *Shaman*, Dad-

EUGENE KARLIN
 -When the Shaman arrives for the Naming... or The Men in White Coats arrive for my son- whichever comes first.

The guests laugh and devolve into smaller groups. Eugene beams, accepting their congratulations until...

GRACE threads toward him taking him aside.

GRACE
 I'm impressed, Dad. You've really risen to the occasion.

EUGENE KARLIN
 Which occasion is that, Grace?

GRACE
 The naming of your gay son's Vietnamese children with his also-gay lover.

EUGENE KARLIN
 (coolly sips a martini)
 Oh, I gave up worrying about Max's exploits a long time ago.

EUGENE KARLIN(cont'd)

You, on the other hand, continue to provide all the public humiliation a Father could ever need, my dear.

He downs his martini as Grace stands, shocked.

EUGENE KARLIN

Besides, right now your brother could be a world famous Liza Minnelli impersonator, for all I care...

THE TWINS gallop over, draping themselves around his legs.

EUGENE KARLIN

(smiles)

... He's made me a *Grandfather*.

He squats down, playing with the children.

Max and Martin come up beside her. The three of them watch him, astonished.

MAX

I know. I keep expecting Dad to tell us about his visit with the "Ghost of Christmas Past."

JACOB waddles over, fascinated with Grace.

MARTIN

I think Jacob's staring at you, Grace.

EUGENE KARLIN

(unimpressed)

Must be the sequins.

Max kneels behind Jacob and points him her way.

MAX

Go give your Aunt Grace a kiss.

Grace stiffens nervously.

GRACE

Max, you don't have to-

MAX

Come on, Jake-

GRACE

Really, the poor kid-

MAX
 (gently pushes him)
 Go ahead...

Jacob waddles over to Grace, looking up at her.

GRACE
 (squatting down)
 He's not a toy, for God's...

He puts his arms around her neck, melting her.

GRACE
 ... sake.

She lights up, completely unself-consciously. Jacob plops his head against hers, giving her cheek a tiny delicate kiss.

GRACE
 (looks up at Max)
 Did I tell you about my visit with the
 Ghost of Christmas Past?

They all laugh. Grace stands, lifting Jacob into her arms.

MAX
 It fits you, sis.

MARTIN
 It does, Grace. Absolutely.

Eugene watches dispassionately.

EUGENE KARLIN
 Well, nothing to be done about *that*,
 right?

He lifts Jacob away from her and walks off.

All eyes on Grace, and she shrinks beneath them...

WHISPERS
Too old...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - LATER

In the middle of the salon, MAX and MARTIN stand proudly to either side of the TWINS, as...

A LAOTIAN BUDDHIST SHAMAN quietly intones in lightly accented English, the guests packed into the room around them...

SHAMAN

... but remember, when we name the Child, we name the *Parent* as well- for when we assume the sacred responsibility of Parenthood, we define ourselves in a whole new context...

Grace watches from the back, transfixed, but finds it increasingly harder to concentrate, as the WHISPERS around her grow increasingly LOUDER...

WHISPERS

So humiliating... At her age...

Suddenly they STOP. SILENCE.

Grace looks up. Max and the Shaman are staring at her.

SHAMAN

Ms. Schaeffer...?

The entire crowd is waiting...

GRACE

(remembering)

Yes. Sorry.

She walks to the center of the room, unfolding a SPEECH. After she can put it off no longer, she slowly looks up at the crowd... All EYES on her...

GRACE

I have to admit, I usually feel a good deal more comfortable in this house with a tool in my hand, so please excuse me if I suddenly drop to my knees and try to sand the floor with a cocktail frank.

Chuckles. She takes a deep breath and continues...

GRACE

I told Max it was unconventional for the sister to give the blessing at a naming ceremony- but then again, I told him it was unconventional to marry a man during The Rocky Horror Picture Show, and he didn't listen to me then, either.

Chuckles- louder. She relaxes a little, moving on...

GRACE

Then again, isn't it "conventional" for a relationship to fail? Isn't it conventional for a couple to give up on adoption after agency upon agency turn them down? Isn't it conventional to distance yourself from the kind of community that whispers spitefully behind your back?

WHISPERS.

GRACE

Isn't it conventional to *resent* them- just a little?

(turns to Max)

Not for Max. My brother is the most unconventional man I know... And I couldn't be prouder of him for that.

He bows to her, deeply touched.

GRACE

And so, I humbly accept his request in the name of my own well documented and all too public battle with the forces of convention.

Laughter, she turns to the twins beside Max and Martin.

GRACE

Jacob and Jason: I wish you health and happiness, I wish you laughter and contentment, I wish you the reward of your dearest dream... But most of all, I wish you the strength to be as unabashedly unconventional as these two ***miscarriages*** standing so proudly beside you.

A stunned GASP from the crowd.

Unaware of what she's said, Grace happily folds up her speech... and FREEZES.

GRACE

Did I just say...?

WHISPERS. Sharp and low.

WHISPERS
Embarrassing... Humiliating...

She struggles to speak:

GRACE
 I... What I meant to say was...

WHISPERS
At this age...

GRACE
 I didn't...

WHISPERS
Doesn't... Hasn't... Can't...

Grace's head droops under the massive barrage.

GRACE
 I can't...

WHISPERS
I can't...

Something CLICKS. She slowly looks up, right into the faces of her accusers, but oddly enough...

THEIR MOUTHS ARE ALL SHUT...

Yet somehow, the WHISPERS hiss on...

GRACE
 What I meant to say was...

WHISPERS
I can't...

GRACE
 I can't...

WHISPERS
I can't have...

GRACE
 I can't have children.

SILENCE.

GRACE
 (softly)
 I can't have children.

She gazes at the nearly restored HOUSE around her...

GRACE

And everything I've done- my career,
my marriage, even my divorce- they've
all done a pretty good job of taking
my mind off that.

Grace wipes a thick bead of SWEAT from her brow.

GRACE

But the point is, folks, my Mother
never had a career, and she never
restored a home, and she never gave an
interview.

She looks over at her Mother, respectfully.

GRACE

But when my Mother's done with this
life, she'll die a *Mother*.

(pause)

And I'll die an Executive Director.
Or a Divorcee. Or a Wife...

(beat)

Or maybe I won't.

(she stumbles)

And maybe I'll just... *die*.

She FAINTS, collapsing hard onto the polished floor.

SCREAMS. Commotion. Her Father is the first to her side...

EUGENE KARLIN

Gracie? GRACE?!

She does not respond, as the crowd envelops her still body...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BRIGHT PLACE

Soft light gently bathes Grace's placid face.

HEAVENLY VOICE (O.C.)

Grace...? Grace...?

Grace slowly blinks open her eyes...

GRACE

How the hell did I end up in Heaven?

SCOTT smiles warmly down at her inside AN AMBULANCE.

SCOTT
Just lucky, I guess.

She reaches out and he gives her his hand.

SCOTT
We were across town, but I grabbed the call. I figured it might be you.

GRACE
(winces)
Oh God. What did you think when you heard it?

SCOTT
"She could have just called."

She chuckles, and then the TEARS flow.

SCOTT
(comforting her)
Okay. It's okay.

GRACE
I miss you. I do. I don't understand it. I think you're young, I think you're *really* young, I think you're *too* young-

He covers her face with an OXYGEN MASK.

SCOTT
I think you *think* too much.
(pause)
Don't tell me what you think. Tell me what you want. What do you want, Grace?

She removes the mask.

GRACE
I want a child.

He nods, stroking her hair.

SCOTT
I know you do.
(pause)
But what else do you want?

GRACE

What else...?

(pause)

I don't know. I've never...

She looks off, astonished.

GRACE

That's funny.

(beat)

I never thought about it.

Then... ever so slightly... she smiles...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - DAY

The house is finally FINISHED. All the tools put away, the floors polished, the rooms immaculately arranged.

GRACE (V.O.)

"A Restorer is a vagabond. Every home is temporary, transient, just one single point on an infinite journey."

Grace emerges from deep within, a bag swung over her arm.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Every chapter, no matter how exquisite it may be, must eventually come to its proper end. That's not cruelty... That's Art."

She sets her bag down at the FRONT DOOR, and turns around for one last look at the house.

GRACE (V.O.)

"Beware of the temptation to linger. You are an artist- defined not by past masterpieces, but by the idea of the masterpiece to come..."

Satisfied, she picks up her bag, opens the door, and steps outside, closing the door firmly behind her...

EXT. VAN KLERQUE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

GRACE (V.O.)

"Perhaps moving on is easier if we remember no project is ever truly complete- there's always one more crack to fill, one more layer to strip..."

She removes a KEY and LOCKS the front door.

GRACE (V.O.)

"I think, perhaps, that is precisely what makes our profession so beautiful. We complete the last home in the next one, and the next one in the one after that..."

She walks down the stairs and out the gate...

GRACE (V.O.)

"All of them- forever incomplete..."

Disappearing off down the street...

GRACE (V.O.)

"And all of us-
(pause)
Forever *completing*."

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END