

StarStruck

screenplay by
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WGAw #864040
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DREAMY FADE IN TO A WASHED-OUT SERIES OF SHOTS OF:

EXT. MANN'S CHINESE THEATER - NIGHT

A movie premiere is in full swing at the famed Hollywood Boulevard theater. A red carpet bordered by velvet ropes leads from the street to the entrance and these ropes are lined with PAPARAZZI and REPORTERS. Many FANS hang around.

As STARS walk the press gantlet a large black limousine pulls up out front.

INT./EXT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS

Viewed from behind, a handsome COUPLE exits the limo, their faces obscured - he tall and blonde, she svelte and brunette, both in their early 30s.

Together they walk up the carpet. The man basks in the attention of the assembled while she seems less comfortable. Together they project the image of a couple gingerly, gracefully balancing respectable acting with international celebrity.

Much excitement as they walk down the carpet hand in hand, their faces still unseen, nodding and waving to the adoring assembled. Just outside the ropes E! Channel REPORTER addresses a TV camera.

The paparazzi go mad, clicking away furiously. The couple treads the red carpet as the camera concentrates on the woman.

DREAMY DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OVER LOS ANGELES - DAY

A big fat helicopter glory-shot of L.A., from downtown to the hills and the Hollywood sign and west toward Century City's skyline.

ELLE (V.O.)

When you move to Hollywood from Connecticut or Iowa, or wherever you're from, you're flush with hope and optimism. But if you're smart, that feeling is tempered by the understanding that the odds against you are long, and that before you lies little but hard, humiliating work until you either get a break or give up and go home.

MONTAGE:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A GIRL of five or six in a ballet class; a few years older, the GIRL standing at a bus stop in the rain holding a violin case and an umbrella; and performing in the Eighth Grade play at a grammar school.

ELLE (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Whether you've been raised to play by the rules, or to be heartless and conniving, you're convinced that your outlook and methods will be rewarded.

Now a YOUNG WOMAN, she rehearses a stage play at a low-rent performance space; plays a succession of roles in ridiculous costumes (e.g., a flower, a damsel in distress, and finally in black-face); and does grunt-level stage work, hammering sets and sweeping up.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I, however, was born here and raised in the industry, so you'd think I'd've known that conniving and heartless was the only way to go. But I was nevertheless brought up with the opposite view: that perseverance and goodness would, regardless of success or failure, be their own rewards.

She walks along the row of overpriced boutiques on Robertson, a small white bandage covering her nose.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I had decided at an early age that I wanted to be an actor. Not a paying-the-bills commercial actor, or rich-but-vapid and working on a TV series, but an actor in feature films-- an artist.

The young woman takes an acting class with a limited number of FELLOW-STUDENTS and an OLDER MAN with a long grey pony-tail instructing them.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

But it never happens right away and so you bide your time on the lower tiers, convincing yourself it's all part of paying your dues, reminding yourself how lucky you are...

In a gym, she sweats in a thong leotard, tights and leg-warmers as she does aerobics and lifts weights under the supervision of a PERSONAL TRAINER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

--that most people never even get to follow their dream, or are so handsomely rewarded for failing.

A quick succession of doors slam in her face; then an equally quick succession of DIRECTORS, some male some female, shake their heads "No" at her as she performs in humiliating auditions that test her range of over-acting.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

But what I was told to do to succeed, I came to believe, was rarely what I needed to do to make it. Since the work you do to get by or move up the ladder can always go to shit, you can be suddenly left with nothing. No options. The ratings tank or the press decides they need someone new to love or loathe, and there's no place left to go but down.

She drives the streets in a number of progressively less crappy cars...The last being a big yellow SUV.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

Here is about where my story gets interesting. Sometimes when I look back I wonder if I could have done anything different, made other choices along the way, yet ended up exactly where I am. It all seems so random now. Welcome to Los Angeles.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOVING VEHICLE - DAY

Seen through the windshield of a late-model Mercedes SL convertible-- top down-- winding through the languorous curves of PCH north of Malibu, the young woman-- ELLE HATHAWAY-- and MIKE FOOTE exude professional confidence and capability. The dynamism of their dress and styling augments the (literally) incredible youthful precociousness unique to filmed fiction: She, sexy-but-sensible, shoulder length mouse-brown hair pulled up in back; he, a modest silk shirt, Dolce & Gabanna sunglasses, and driving gloves.

ELLE

I don't think this guy's up to anything...at least for now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIKE

You're probably right. But Chief is Chief, and with a known perp hot on the heels a citizen of this magnitude..

ELLE

Yeah. I tell you, though, the Undercover Celebrity Stalker Patrol just doesn't operate like it used to.

MIKE

Maybe so, but--

As they round a curve, Elle looks and points right.

ELLE

Look! There he is!

A speeding black Chevy Suburban with darked-out windows appears behind them, menacingly close.

Mike turns to look behind. Elle looks up and screams:

ELLE (cont'd)

Watch out!

Mike turns to face the road and his expression morphs to sheer terror.

ELLE & MIKE

AAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!

He opens his door and leaps out. She keeps screaming and covers her face. The Benz flies off a cliff, flying toward the ocean. From the rear windshield of the plummeting SL, the Suburban is seen screeching to a halt at the edge of the cliff.

PULL BACK to reveal that this "car crash" has been witnessed through the viewfinder of a motion picture camera.

CRANING UP and over the CAMERA OPERATOR's shoulder, the set of a long-running, top-rated, high-production-value, network prime-time television program appears in all its splendor and with all its associated accoutrements: lots of lights, stands, etc., and the shell of the SL before a "blue screen."

Mike dusts himself off beside the car. Elle gets out and walks around to him and shakes his hand.

ELLE

(teasing)

I love a man who does his own stunts.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIKE
(playing along)
Aw, shucks.

ELLE
See you next week, then.

MIKE
Uh...right.

She walks away and through the moving human obstacle course that is a show wrapping for the week. A couple of the CREW wear t-shirts and/or hats reading "LAPD 90046 CREW". They toss her compliments amid their machinations. She passes a slacker-dressed twentysomething in big black plastic glasses doing nothing. It's DEAN REILLY, a writer.

DEAN
I love what you do with my words,
gorgeous.

ELLE
You make it so easy, Dean.

She keeps walking to the giant soundstage door and steers toward a bearded, overweight man wearing a viewfinder around his neck, a t-shirt-sweater-vest combo, Dockers, Mephisto walking shoes and a backwards Kangol cap. It's GEOFF TRUMP, directing this episode, surrounded by STAFFERS firing questions at him.

Seeing Elle, he speaks to her over the crowd.

GEOFF TRUMP
I know what you're thinking..

ELLE
Does it matter what I think? You're the
creator of this show, Geoff, you tell me.

GEOFF TRUMP
Relax, honey, it's television. Anything
can happen.

ELLE
(disbelieving)
Sure, sure.

GEOFF TRUMP
Keep that focus, 'Kay?

ELLE
Sure, Geoff. Thanks.

INT. MAKE-UP TRAILER IN BASECAMP - LATER

Elle opens the door and enters, followed by a MALE M/U ARTIST. Elle slumps into the m/u chair closest to the door. The other chair is occupied by HENRIETTA KLEIN, a totally hot red-headed vixen, 20s, another actor on the show, getting made up.

HENRIETTA

Hi ya, Elle.

Elle grunts in her direction.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Hey, FYI: You're fucked.

ELLE

Like I need to hear it from you.

HENRIETTA

I was just--

ELLE

Just shut up, Henrietta, all right? Thanks.

Elle lays her head back in the chair and the m/u artist goes to work removing Elle's face.

EXT. STUDIO LOT ALLEYWAY - LATER

Elle exits the trailer to night falling on a narrow alley between sound stages. A golf cart whizzes by. Loud VOICES from one side attract her attention. She halts to see what's going on.

She looks to see a MAN in his 30s, unshaven in a drab sportcoat, struggling with two SECURITY GUARDS in uniform who have him by both arms. The man is a breathing caricature of a hard-boiled reporter, right down to the crushed fedora and crooked lower lip.

They're dragging him in Elle's direction.

MAN

You guys are in a heap of shit, you know that?

SECURITY GUARD #1

You got no visitor's pass, pal.

MAN

You know who this is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECURITY GUARD #2

I don't care if you're the Pope, you're not authorized to be here.

MAN

This is Charlie Satchel, of *Hollyworld*, goddammit! Charlie's on assignment!

SECURITY GUARD #1

Whatever, dude, you're getting booted off the lot.

As they pass Elle, Charlie recognizes her and calls to her.

CHARLIE

Elle! Elle Hathaway! Tell them...

Elle clearly doesn't know who he is and wouldn't help this creep if he were drowning, not without a visitor's pass.

They go by and Elle crosses the alleyway, entering a long flat beige building through a side door.

INT. PRODUCER'S OFFICE SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Scripts cover the shelves and papers litter the perpendicular desks of ANNIE, the gorgeous young assistant to Stan Wolff, the show's producer. Elle enters.

ELLE

Hi, Annie. Is he in?

ANNIE

Yeah, I think he's on the phone.

As the assistant calls in to him, Elle eyes a call sheet on her desk.

INSERT: In the box marked "Talent," the names do not include Elle's.

Annie hangs up with one hand and whisks the sheet away with the other.

ANNIE (cont'd)

That's not approved yet.

Fake smile.

ANNIE (cont'd)

He just got off. Go right in.

She goes in to the adjoining office.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A white-haired teddy bear of a man in a blue blazer, the nonsensically garrulous STAN WOLFF rises from behind his megalithic desk, his arms opening wide.

STAN WOLFF
BAAAYYY-BEEEE! How's my finest, oldest
actress on "LAPD 90046"?

ELLE
Great, Stan, great.

He comes around the desk and crushes her in a bear hug.

STAN WOLFF
That's what I like to hear, sweetheart.
I love your attitude!

ELLE
I'm trying to keep it, Stan, but under
the circumstances...

STAN WOLFF
I know just how you feel, sweetheart,
just how you feel. When I was a P.A. on
"Bonanza" they called me one morning,
said they didn't need me for a week. I
thought I was fired or something. Turned
out Lorne Greene had a visa problem, had
to go back to Canada and get his shit
straight. Soon I was back on the set,
and look at me today!

ELLE
That's not quite analogous to an actor's
character going over a cliff in a
speeding Benz, Stan.

STAN WOLFF
You don't know what's at the bottom of
that cliff, sweetheart! Could be a giant
pillow factory below that cliff.

ELLE
On a rocky Malibu shore, Stan?

STAN WOLFF
I'm exaggerating to make a point,
sweetheart, come on! Run with me! What
I'm saying is, you know how this stuff
works. You're horribly injured.
Possibly-- I'm not going to lie to you--
grotesquely disfigured. But this is
television, anything can happen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE

I realize that, but...

STAN WOLFF

Look, you know how far Dean has come along here; he's really grown into this. And his instincts have been right-on, Nielsen-wise.

ELLE

Dean is behind this?

STAN WOLFF

He just thought your character's arc could use a little intrigue at this point in the season.

ELLE

That ungrateful piece of shit! I *got* him this job! I gave him his first break!

STAN WOLFF

Relax. It's not like he's out to get you, honey; he's trying to do what's best for the show. What's good for the goose is good for the gosling. You've got to keep your best chin forward, sweetheart. The truth is, nothing's been decided.

ELLE

So what you're saying is, I *could* die.

He starts ushering her out the door.

STAN WOLFF

Everything's gonna work out for you, I promise.

ELLE

I guess I'm going to have to take your word on that.

STAN WOLFF

That's exactly right. Now come back and see me sometime, wontcha?

ELLE

Sure, Stan.

He slaps her too hard on the back and shuts the door behind her. Still standing in its jamb, Elle regards the assistant, on the phone leaning back in her Aeron chair and giving the English royal wave. Elle smiles politely.

EXT. CREATIVE TALENT AGENCY BUILDING - DAY

The big, ugly building looms, glistening, over the intersection of two prominent boulevards.

INT. CTA OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The office is sparsely furnished, dominated by a large black lacquer and glass desk. Elle sits on the edge of an overstuffed chair in front of her agent, MARTY GLASSMAN.

Marty is always moving. He paces in a constantly shifting orbit around Elle, making it impossible for her to keep her eyes on him. Marty's hands are also always in motion; gesticulating, scratching his almost entirely bald head, in and out of his pockets, etc.

ELLE

I can't fucking believe it, Marty, they're trying to kill me off!

MARTY

Sweetheart, sweetheart...All things happen for a reason. You know this may be the best thing for you right now.

ELLE

Quit bullshitting me, Marty. Name one actor axed from a TV series who's got a legitimate feature career. I've hit the ceiling.

MARTY

I have some things in the pipeline, sweetie, good things.

ELLE

Yeah, right, fucking commercials or something.

MARTY

Have you considered theater?

ELLE

You're serious?

MARTY

It'll be great. The smell of the grease-paint, the thrill of opening night jitters. Ah, theater.

ELLE

L.A. theater is a joke Marty. It's a *total* joke...I mean, it's worse than porn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

It's not *that* bad.

ELLE

I saw something at the Geffen recently and Annette Bening was the only person who could remember her lines.

MARTY

So if it's good enough for Annette Bening...

ELLE

That's not the point. I don't give you eight percent--

MARTY

Um...that's something I've been meaning to tell you, we're upping it to twelve.

Elle glares at Marty and he starts moving around the office again.

ELLE

OK, I don't give you *twelve* percent for *theater*. I'm trying to go up the ladder, Marty, not down.

INT. PINOT HOLLYWOOD - BAR - NIGHT

Elle sits at the bar in the back of the restaurant staring into a Manhattan. A TV in BG shows Elle in an episode of "LAPD 90046."

As she contemplates her drink a tall, very handsome, Armani-clad man, SY, her boyfriend, arrives at her side, startling her. Sy almost never uses pronouns.

MAN

Hey, baby, what's up? Look like crap, by the way.

ELLE

Thanks, Sy, I had a bad day. How 'bout a kiss?

She offers her lips and he kisses her on the cheek.

SY

So what happened?

ELLE

It looks like "L9" is killing me off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SY
 Star's falling, huh? That sucks.
 (this registers)
 So anyway, just came by to say, headed
 home.

ELLE
 I thought you were staying at my place
 tonight.

SY
 Can't do it. Have to be in early, check
 on some market shit. Walk me out?

Elle nods. Sy turns and heads down the hall. Elle sighs and
 gets up and follows.

EXT. GOWER & SUNSET - NIGHT

They stand waiting for their cars.

ELLE
 So?

SY
 What?

ELLE
 Do you want to come over?

SY
 Listen, Elle, have to be honest. Things
 are a little weird at the office. Shit
 hitting the fan. So, no.

A gleaming black Porsche Carrera pulls up; Sy gets in.

SY (cont'd)
 Call tomorrow?

ELLE
 Yeah. Bye.

Sy speeds off, leaving Elle alone on the curb.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS/ELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Behind the wheel of her yellow Cadillac Escalade, Elle drives
 up to a modest-but-chic stucco house improbably balanced on a
 slope of Beachwood Canyon.

She pulls in front and gets out, collecting her Kate Spade
 bag. She gets the mail and opens the gate.

INT. ELLE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elle is dialling her phone on speaker-phone. It rings and picks up.

VOICEMAIL-LADY (O.S.)

Mailbox one you have one new message. To hear--

Elle presses "one".

STAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hi Elle, it's Stan. Listen, at that meeting I was on my way to when I saw you, it was decided that Beth wouldn't survive the car crash...that she isn't going to make it. Guess you better start looking for other work. But you've still got a couple scenes to shoot on the hospital set, so I'm sure I'll see you 'round. So that's it for now...'bye, sweetie.

Elle hangs up.

ELLE

A goddamn phone call.

EXT. HANCOCK PARK - DAY

Elle drives down a side street in Hancock Park. She pulls her Escalade into the driveway of a run-down Craftsman house with an overgrown garden, stopping behind a beige 1982 Plymouth Reliant K.

ELIOT HATHAWAY, her father, 75, with unruly white hair, wearing madras pants, a wife-beater and slippers, emerges from the front door.

ELIOT

I don't know why you think you need all that power under the hood.

ELLE

Dad, I know your K-car is a source of great pride to you, but stop.

This is good-natured teasing. She kisses him on the cheek and he welcomes her inside.

INT. DAD'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

It's dark and cluttered and littered with photographs of a younger Eliot with a beautiful woman; the two of them and their young daughter; and Eliot socializing with Hollywood luminaries of the 1940s and early '50s-- Gregory Peck, Clark Gable, Lew Wasserman, Bette Davis, Army Acherd, Sam Goldwyn. A dusty Oscar statuette rests amid the disarray.

ELLE

Did you pick up your new prescription on time?

ELIOT

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ELLE

You're fine, then?

ELIOT

Fine, fine, fine. What's new in Hollywood?

She avoids his eyes.

ELLE (V.O.)

Telling him would only prove his point-- sometimes I think his *only* point-- that life in Hollywood is, to quote him quoting someone else, "nasty, cold, brutish and short."

ELLE (cont'd)

How would I know? They don't tell me anything.

ELIOT

That good, huh?

ELLE

We shot the crash. Just hints in the latest batch of scripts.

ELIOT

See, they're doing it to you, now.

ELLE

Dad, stop.

ELIOT

Now you'll see what I've been talking about...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE
And talking, and talking...

ELIOT
...they string you along till they're done
with you, then...

He makes a throat-slitting motion.

ELLE
Dad, the Red Scare was a long time ago.

ELIOT
So long ago they're giving Oscars to name-
namers now!

ELLE
Just drop it, OK?

ELIOT
Dropped.
(pause)
How is it with that trader guy you've
been seeing for too long?

ELLE
I don't know.

A cell phone RINGS...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM SET - DAY

...and RINGS. The following conversation is heard over a
MONTAGE:

On the set of "L9", Mike, in character as Elle's character's
partner, stands by a hospital bed in which Elle lies
unconscious and covered in bandages and casts from head to
toe. Her LEFT leg is in traction.

ELLE (V.O.)
Hello?

MARTY (V.O.)
It's Marty. Good news-- audition!

ELLE (V.O.)
(brightening)
Great, what for?

Shooting a second hospital-set scene, Elle again lies
motionless in the bed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(This time it's her RIGHT leg in traction.) Mike's character and the "Doctor" chat and occasionally motion toward Elle. The doctor shows him some charts and he nods and looks glum.

MARTY (V.O.)
It's with Massey Hall. I'll messenger
you the sides.

ELLE (V.O.)
OK. Is there anything you can tell me?
I hear he's a bit weird.

MARTY (V.O.)
I'm not gonna lie to you: He's
difficult. Everyone knows this. But
what can you do? Just be you, and be
good. So call me if you don't get it.

A third scene: a NURSE is taking some blood. The leg in traction has switched back to the LEFT.

ELLE (V.O.)
Won't you know before me?

MARTY (V.O.)
The sides, dearie, the sides.

ELLE (V.O.)
Oh, right, OK. Bye!

END MONTAGE.

INT. SY'S PORSCHE / ELLE'S TYPHOON - EVENING

SPLIT SCREEN: Elle on her StarTac/Sy on his Nokia 8860, wearing Oliver Peoples sunglasses.

ELLE
'S'up, baby?

SY
Sweetie! 'S'Happening?

ELLE
Look, I was calling to see if you wanted
to get together?

SY
Ummmm...

ELLE
I had a crappy day at work and could
really use some cheering up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SY

Here for ya, sweetie, know it.
 (he looks down into his lap)
 Things looking down right now, though.

ELLE

For you too? I'm sorry to hear that, Sy.

Nothing from him.

ELLE (cont'd)

Well what about this weekend?

SY

I'll call you!

ELLE

OK. Talk to you later.

They hang up. The split moves, eliminating Elle from the screen and revealing beside Sy a gorgeous BRUNETTE with a close-cropped haircut, a couture suit, and a hand in Sy's crotch.

They smile at each other.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SONY STUDIOS LOT - DAY

The majestic, white columns of the entrance to the Sony lot reflect the bright sun of a Culver City afternoon.

Elle's car nears, pulling into a spot across the street from Sony. The camera SPINS to show a run-down, dingy building with faded and torn awnings, ignored take-out menus stuck in the metal gate and a smattering of bad graffiti.

Elle gets out of her car and goes to the door of the dingy building. She presses the intercom and is buzzed in.

INT. GENERIC PRODUCTION OFFICE - LATER

Pair after pair of the feet of seated WOMEN indicate the odd mixture of boredom and anticipation that permeates an audition waiting room. Some flex an ankle to swing sandals off their toes, some tap on the floor, some are motionless. The last pair belongs to Elle.

A door opens and a young ACTOR in tears emerges ahead of a WOMAN with a clipboard, who yells:

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

Elle Hathaway!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elle notes her tearful predecessor as they pass one another.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elle enters upon two MEN, one a generation younger than the other, seated at chair-desk thingys that belong in someone's fifth grade classroom. The older guy, the fearsome MASSEY HALL, writes on a legal pad and doesn't look up. The other does when Clipboard-Woman enters behind Elle and stands over by the men. A video-camera records the proceedings.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

OK, Elle? The character you're reading today is that of Veronica Chase, editor of *British Vogue*. She's just returned to work after maternity leave, and is enjoying lunch with a colleague. OK?

ELLE

OK.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

So how long have you been back at work?

ELLE

(British accent)

Not even a week. You knew I'd waste no time in seeing you soon as I was in the office.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

And you knew you'd find me here.

ELLE

Mmm. Seems I missed nothing while I was gone; I think they could do the whole book without me.

The director hasn't looked up from his legal pad.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

Great. Now let's move on to an earlier scene, in which your boss asks a favor. Ready?

Elle looks over at the director, annoyed at/confused by him.

ELLE

Ready.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

Veronica, hi, listen, I haven't got time to meet with this American. Will you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Oh, terrific, I can hear all about the changing of the guard for two hours...

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

Very good, Elle! We're very impressed.

Still not one iota of interest or acknowledgment from Massey.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN (cont'd)

And now, the phone conversation. Do you have that?

ELLE

I do.

Elle looks again at Massey, still not paying attention.

CLIPBOARD-WOMAN

Whenever you're ready.

Elle clears her throat and looks to Hall, still ignoring her.

ELLE

I'll get it!...Hello...Oh, Will, hello, how are you?

Suddenly she drops out of character and picks up a book from a nearby table. She throws it through the window, SMASHING it. This gets the director's attention.

ELLE (cont'd)

Excuse me, but can you give me one fucking good reason why I should even fucking be here if you're not going to fucking pay attention?

MASSEY

No.

Elle storms out of the room, SLAMMING the door. But her purse is caught so she has to open it again. They look at her. She SLAMS the door again, for emphasis, but this time she closes it so hard it doesn't latch and swings open again. They see her walk off.

EXT. SUNSET PLAZA - DAY

Elle passes the sidewalk tables along the row of overpriced, mediocre restaurants on the north side of the mistitled development. She stops before reaching Cravings, where she spies Sy and the brunette Mobile-Hand-Job-Giver at one of the tables, looking at menus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She's not exactly crushed by this development, but her expression shows that she's adding it to her list of woes. Elle stays where she is and turns her back. Sy takes no notice.

Elle looks around, taps her foot, looks at her watch. Finally she pulls her cellphone out of her bag and dials.

ELLE

Where the fuck are you, Marty?

MARTY (O.S.)

Who is this?

ELLE

It's Elle-- your lunch appointment?

MARTY (O.S.)

I don't have lunch with you today, I don't have lunch with anyone today.

ELLE

Marty, you're an agent: you have lunch with someone every day.

MARTY (O.S.)

Sorry, sweetheart, I guess Crystal just forgot to tell me.

ELLE

Well, I can wait. I'm at Sunset Plaza.

MARTY (O.S.)

Sweetheart, I'm way on the Westside. I'm on my way to Santa Monica for a thing.

ELLE

All right, whatever. We'll do it another time.

MARTY (O.S.)

Definitely.

Elle hangs up and puts the phone away as she walks toward her car. After a few steps she reaches back into her bag and dials the phone again.

VOICE (O.S.)

Marty Glassman's office?

ELLE

Crystal, it's Elle. Did you tell Marty about our lunch today?

INT. AGENCY - OUTSIDE MARTY'S OFFICE - DAY

CRYSTAL would be a pretty hot young Korean woman if it weren't for her orthodontic head-gear, outside of which and with great complication she wears a Madonna-headphone thing with a foam-padded mike in front of her mouth.

She turns toward her computer screen and reaches for the mouse.

CRYSTAL

Of course I did! It was on his schedule, and I reminded him when he left here, around eleven I guess it was? Let's see here... twelve-thirty at Cravings, right?

ELLE (O.S.)

Yeah. Well, he blew me off.

EXT. SUNSET PLAZA - PARKING LOT - DAY

Back on Elle next to her car.

CRYSTAL (O.S.)

I apologize on his behalf, Elle; that shouldn't have happened. I guess he just forgot about you.

ELLE

OK. Thanks.

EXT. ELLE'S HOUSE - LATER

Elle's car approaches and parks outside her house.

INT. ELLE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Elle is checking her messages on speaker-phone.

SY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Um, yeah, Elle, Sy. Just calling to say...Don't think we should see each other anymore. Isn't really going anywhere, right? Sorry.

Elle disconnects, at a loss.

ELLE

The phone is, once again, not my friend.

EXT. CENTURY CITY SKYLINE - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the glass-and-steel skyscrapers. CLOSE IN on one of them, toward a window on an upper floor.

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Elle walks from the elevator bank to a tall reception desk, behind which is a RECEPTIONIST wearing another headset.

Behind the receptionist is a wall with letters hung on it that read in a stylized logo, "Century Realty Advisement Partners, LLP" and below that, in italic, "Hedging Your Funds Since 1998".

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning, may I help you?

ELLE

I'm Elle Hathaway, here to see Kenneth Chadwick.

The Receptionist looks a little worried.

RECEPTIONIST

Just a moment. If you could wait over there.

She indicates a nearby pair of love seats facing each other across a coffee table. Hologram art hangs on the wall above. Elle goes and sits.

The Receptionist dials an extension and speaks in hushed tones, furtively glancing in Elle's direction as she does so.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

(to Elle)

It'll just be a moment.

ELLE

OK.

While she waits she looks at a copy of *Forbes* on the table. The cover shows a guy who looks like a bike messenger standing beneath a shower of cash, and reads: "The Internet Economy: A Sure Bet."

She's just about to pick it up when two SUITS, 40s, each in a monochrome shirt-and-tie combo (one blue, the other purple), walk up to her.

BLUE

Miss Hathaway?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Yes?

BLUE

I'm Fred Segal, this is Ron Herman, we're both partners here. Could you come with us please?

ELLE

Fred Segal and Ron Herman?

FRED

That's correct.

ELLE

Where's Kenny?

RON

If you could just come with us, Miss Hathaway, we'll be happy to explain everything.

This is a little bizarre, but she doesn't have much choice.

ELLE

OK.

Fred Segal and Ron Herman lead her to a conference room with glass walls and a glass door adjacent to the reception area.

Once the door closes behind them, they're inaudible. Fred motions for Elle to sit. She declines, folding her arms. Fred Segal and Ron Herman take turns talking and Elle's expression turns from curious/nervous to astonishment to rage.

The receptionist looks on, sympathetic. She sighs and her phone RINGS.

INT. C.R.A.P. - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Fred Segal and Ron Herman are patiently explaining something to Elle.

FRED

So you see, there was really nothing we could do.

ELLE

Nothing? Don't you have any oversight of these guys?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RON

We do, of course we do, but only to a degree.

ELLE

"Only to a degree." Where the fuck is Cape Verde, anyway?

FRED

It's an island off the west coast of Africa. Portugese.

RON

But I'll reiterate, that's just a theory about his intended destination. We found some web pages about the place on Kenny's computer.

Elle starts really freaking out, breathing heavily and pacing.

ELLE

I can't fucking believe this.

FRED

I'm sure we were as shocked as you are feeling right now.

ELLE

But I'm sure you didn't have all your money invested with Kenny, did you?

RON

As you know, Miss Hathaway, we recommend all our clients keep a cash reserve in an FDIC-insured account.

ELLE

Yeah, well, until the other day I was making a hundred grand a week, so I didn't think that was so crucial.

FRED

I understand.

ELLE

I mean what the fuck was he doing investing in some Internet start-up anyway? I thought this was a real estate fund!

FRED

(didactic)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRED(cont'd)

Well, the nature of a hedge fund, you understand, is to diversify--

ELLE

All right, whatever.

FRED

--so that when one investment goes *down*, another necessarily goes *up*..

RON

Look, Miss Hathaway, we don't enjoy this any more than you do. We've had to go through with this with each of Kenny's clients, and--

ELLE

Yeah, I'm sure you're just in fucking *agony* over it.

She storms out. Fred Segal and Ron Herman shrug at each other, not really very sympathetic at all.

EXT. ELLE'S HOUSE - DAY

Two vans are in the driveway when Elle approaches her house. She parks on the street and gets out.

She sees that all of her possessions are strewn across the lawn: her furniture stacked carelessly, her clothes in piles on the ground. Elle's taking it all in when she is startled by a MAN in cover-alls and baseball cap.

EVICTOR

Excuse me, ma'am, could you sign here?

ELLE

What the hell is going on?

EVICTOR

You've been evicted, ma'am.

ELLE

Huh?

EVICTOR

Says here your rent hasn't been paid in six months.

ELLE

(under her breath)
Kenny, you bastard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The man thrusts his clip-board at Elle as two more overall-clad MEN exit the house and get in the vans.

EVICTOR

Well I guess we're all finished here, if you could just sign...

He presents her with a clip-board and she signs violently and shoves it back at him.

EVICTOR (cont'd)

I'm real sorry about this, Ms. Hathaway. I'm a big fan of yours...I have your poster in my bathroom.

EXT. GOWER ABOVE MELROSE - DAY

A small U-Haul truck rolls down from the hills past the Paramount Pictures lot.

INT. U-HAUL - CONTINUOUS

Elle drives with her father beside her.

ELIOT

So there's one thing I don't understand: shouldn't your paycheck from "L9" keep the wolf from the door?

ELLE

Umm...

ELIOT

I mean, how can you be getting evicted?

ELLE

I didn't want to tell you before Dad, I couldn't face it, but the truth is I know what's happening to my character: she's dead. I'm done on the show. In fact I think I might be done, period.

He nods grimly and they drive on in silence.

EXT. ELIOT HATHAWAY'S HOUSE - DAY

The truck pulls up in front of Eliot's house. Elle gets out of the driver's side and Eliot, feebly, out of the passenger's.

They go round the back and re-emerge seconds later, Elle carrying two stacked boxes and Eliot a small desk lamp.

INT. ELLE'S BEDROOM AT ELIOT'S - DUSK

Elle sits crying on her bed in a tiny, dark, dusty room surrounded by her boxed-up life.

EXT. THE IVY - PATIO - DAY

A WAITER'S hand appears in frame to whisk away a restaurant-bill folder with a credit card sticking out of it. WIDEN to reveal Elle sitting at the two-top by herself. It's a brilliant sunshiney day, and rays of light beam onto the patio. Her half-eaten plate of food rests before her.

ELLE

I had no business eating at the Ivy. I guess partly I was keeping up appearances, and partly I was in denial of my dire financial circumstance.

As Elle looks around, she notices she's the only person there dining alone. Everyone else is either a couple cooing at one another, a suited duo in power-lunch mode, or an adult child with a parent. At last a waiter appears.

WAITER

(condescending)

I'm sorry, Miss Hathaway, your card was declined.

ELLE

Oh, whoops. Can I have it back though?

WAITER

Actually, the restaurant is being instructed to keep it.

ELLE

OK, um, let me give you another one..

WAITER

Actually, I'm afraid we can only accept cash.

ELLE

Fine.

She fumbles through her wallet and produces some cash, then gets up. The waiter SNIFFS audibly at her meager tip.

EXT. THE IVY - VALET AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Elle stands on the curb. Her car pulls up and the ATTENDANT steps out; she slides him a bill and gets in.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She puts the key in the ignition and suddenly the thing goes haywire: she has somehow set off the alarm.

ECU of each door locking automatically.

Then the HORN bleats, ALARM SIRENS wail, all the lights flash on and off. Elle is startled and fiddles with the key, trying to turn it off.

ELLE (V.O.)

That sound was like an alarm clock going off in my head-- I woke up and it was finally clear to me something had to be done.

EXT. THE IVY PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Patrons are interrupted by this cacophony. At first they try to ignore it.

ELLE (V.O.)

Due to the fact "L9" had just axed me without warning...

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle, increasingly frustrated, starts pushing the button on the alarm-clicker on her keychain, to no avail. She futilely tries turning the ignition and adjusting the gearshift.

ELLE (V.O.)

...and considering that co-workers and "friends" alike had treated me like shit pretty much the entire time...

EXT. THE IVY PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Patrons are now noticing her flustered state and lean over to their dining companions, pointing and smiling, trying polite subtlety.

ELLE (V.O.)

...And that my father had been chased out of the business by a bunch of paranoid, money-grubbing, power-greedy suck-ups...

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She keeps flicking switches and pushing buttons. The windshield wipers flutter back and forth; wiper-fluid sprays all over the windshield.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE (V.O.)

And me? I'd done exactly as told and look where it had gotten me-- rock-fucking-bottom.

EXT. THE IVY PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Patrons are now openly pointing and laughing at her.

ELLE (V.O.)

I couldn't go down any further; there was only one conclusion to reach.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She tries the locks, but they don't open for her. Now crying, she pounds the steering wheel with her fists, then, finally giving up to being utterly trapped by this machinery, she collapses her head on the steering wheel.

ELLE (V.O.)

Something had to change.

She takes one last heaving sigh and lifts her head.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

But what?

EXT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The HORN and ALARM continue to wail.

FADE OUT.

EXT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

Elle drives up to her dad's. Outside sits a truck towing an empty trailer. As Elle exits her car a MAN in cover-alls gets out of his truck and walks straight to Elle.

REPO MAN

Elle Hathaway?

ELLE

Yes.

REPO MAN

I'll take those.

Repo Man grabs Elle's keys from her and gets into her car.

ELLE

What the hell?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPO MAN

Car's been repo'd lady. Shoulda' made your payments.

EXT./INT. SEEDY HOLLYWOOD STREET/LES DEUX CAFES - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING of the impossible-to-find exterior of Les Deux Cafés. Slowly MOVE through the nondescript parking lot, into the garden, past assorted FABULOUS PEOPLE, inside, through the back hallway, eventually reaching the bar in the rear.

ELLE (V.O.)

Having just lost my job, as well as, it seemed, my boyfriend and possibly my agent, maybe it was delerium that led me to her.

Passing people as the camera makes its way along, snippets of their conversations are picked up. The first is from a TALL SKINNY BLOND at a round table on the patio:

TALL SKINNY BLOND

Well, right now I'm waitressing at the Four Seasons, but what I really want to do is turn tricks.

Pass by her.

ELLE (V.O.)

On the other hand, it really said something that my resources at this point were such that I was forced to rely on someone I didn't even really have a relationship with.

Moving inside, a COUPLE shares a bottle of wine:

MAN

I looked at a great Mediterranean-style villa; the house was perfect, but in the wrong zip code.

Continuing deeper into the restaurant, Elle goes on:

ELLE (V.O.)

But clearly she was doing *something* right: still on the show, and dating an A-list actor.

In the hallway waiting for the bathroom, two GUYS IN LEATHER JACKETS are talking:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WRITER

The writing's been really slow for me lately-- my friends aren't being very funny so I don't have any dialogue to rip off.

Finally arriving at the bar, Elle sits by herself on a stool tapping a finger against her half-empty Manhattan. She checks the door and smiles, seeing who she's waiting for.

ELLE (V.O.)

But for whatever reason I'd called Henrietta asking her to meet me at this industry watering-hole.

It's Henrietta, accompanied by CHAD HUNT-- 30, extremely handsome, tall, blonde-- her boyfriend. PATRONS part for him and-- even in the most star-packed restaurant in blasé Hollywood he gets this reaction-- whisper among themselves and half-try not to stare.

Henrietta clearly loves this. They see Elle and join her at the bar. Henrietta is totally fake.

HENRIETTA

Hi, darling, how are you? Have you been waiting long?

ELLE

No, not at all.

HENRIETTA

Good. Do you know Chad?

ELLE

I don't think we've met. Hi.

CHAD

Hey, howzitgoin?

ELLE

Good, thanks.

(to Henrietta)

So thanks for coming. I guess you were probably pretty surprised to hear from me, after how I acted in make-up the other day.

HENRIETTA

Honey, don't sweat it. Heat of the moment, I understand. And you're under a lot of pressure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE

Tell me about it.

HENRIETTA

Us talent's gotta stick together, isn't that right, Chad?

CHAD

Word.

HENRIETTA

So what's on your mind? You said on your message you wanted to pick my brain about something.

ELLE

Yeah, well...

HENRIETTA

Wait. Sorry, do you need to go to the ladies' room, cuz I sure do.

ELLE

Uh, yeah, OK.

HENRIETTA

Oh, but wait--
(to Chad)
--we can't leave you alone.

CHAD

It's cool, there's a guy I know from the agency over there.

HENRIETTA

Great!

They all get up and move off, Henrietta and Elle in one direction, Chad in the other.

Patrons furtively look to see where Chad is going, and when he drops in on a TRIO, the group is drunk on its public fabulosity.

INT. LES DEUX CAFES - LADIES' ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They enter, it's empty. Henrietta goes straight for a stall and holds the door open.

HENRIETTA

Come on in, I've got party favors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Um, OK.

She follows into the now-cramped space and Henrietta closes and locks the door.

Henrietta pulls a cocaine vial out of her purse and unscrews its top.

HENRIETTA

(all coked-up and feeling bad)
 Elle, I'm sorry about that comment the other day. I was trying to warn you and it just came out bitchy.

She starts feeding herself spoonfuls and offers some to Elle.

ELLE

(lying)
 Um, thanks, I'm on E already.

HENRIETTA

Cool! So what's on your mind?

ELLE

(as Henrietta keeps feeding herself spoonfuls)
 Oh, well, you know the situation I'm in and, I don't know, I just thought, well, you've got a lot more experience in this town than I do, and, well, I'm not looking for a pep talk, or anything, I just wondered, you know, if you had any advice or anything.

HENRIETTA

(now feeding Elle)
 Oh, sweetheart, I know *just* how you feel. I've been there, believe me, it's *awful*. But you know what?

She's interrupted by the CONVERSATION of two WOMEN entering the ladies' room.

HENRIETTA (cont'd)

Later, OK?

Elle nods, grateful not to have to do any more coke. Henrietta replaces the contraband and opens the stall door.

Elle and Henrietta get curious/knowing looks in the mirror from the two intruders as they go out the ladies' room door.

INT. LES DEUX CAFES - BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

Henrietta leads Elle toward Chad, whose audience LAUGHS in a fake, flattering way at something he has said. On the way over to him:

HENRIETTA

Let's talk about this another time, all right? I don't think this is the place you want to be discussing your career problems, y'know?

ELLE

Sure.

They are just outside the circle around Chad. Henrietta grabs Elle close to her and speaks in her ear.

HENRIETTA

And Chad doesn't know about me doing coke, got it?

Elle nods at her as Henrietta flashes a huge, rehearsed smile at the group.

CHAD

Honey!

(to group)

Look, it was great running into you, but we gotta jet.

SYCOPHANT

Sure, great to see you, too! Thanks for coming over!

CHAD

Bye.

He directs the women toward the exit.

EXT. LES DEUX CAFES - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The three of them emerge from the ivy-covered arch separating the parking lot from the dining patio. Charlie Satchel suddenly materializes and gets right up in Elle's face so close that she GASPS and almost runs into him.

CHARLIE

Elle Hathaway, what are you doing here?

ELLE

What? Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE

Charlie Satchel, of *Hollyworld*. Hear your time is up at "L9".

ELLE

Get away from me.

She tries to step around him but he moves in front of her, impeding her progress.

Chad immediately steps between them.

CHAD

You heard the woman, get away from her!

CHARLIE

Hiya, Chad; Charlie Satchel, of *Hollyworld*.

CHAD

I know who you are, you scumbag, and I told you to leave us alone.

He shields Elle from Charlie, who creeps off back into the shadows.

CHAD (cont'd)

(to Elle)

You OK?

Elle nods. Henrietta looks jealous.

Chad hands his ticket to the VALET. The valet scurries off.

CHAD (cont'd)

(to Henrietta)

Sorry to rush you out of there, but I have a very limited tolerance for that type of scene. Not that I feel like you dragged me here, honey.

Henrietta smiles.

ELLE

You can't even go to Les Deux without getting gawked at?

CHAD

Not anymore. I hate it.

ELLE

That sucks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHAD

In fact, I'd rather go to some dive than a place like this, packed with shmoozers. Give me an industry-free-zone any day.

HENRIETTA

I thought you liked those guys.

CHAD

I did, and then I got famous and they started treating me differently.

ELLE

That's too bad.

CHAD

I have a little game I play, where I make the stupidest joke I can think of and see if people laugh. Never fails.

Chad's Jaguar XK8 pulls up.

CHAD (cont'd)

Listen, I know you guys wanted to hang;
(to Elle)
Do you want to come over to our place for dinner next week?

ELLE

I'd love that.

CHAD

Thursday work?

ELLE

Thursday it is.

CHAD

Great, bring some wine and I'll cook.

ELLE

Can't wait, honestly.

HENRIETTA

Where's your car?

ELLE

Er, I parked on the street.

CHAD

Should we drive you there? This isn't the greatest neighborhood...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELLE

Thanks, no, it's OK. I'm right over there.

CHAD

OK, see you Thursday!

HENRIETTA

See you, hon.

She gives Elle a kiss, gets into the Jag, and it drives off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELIOT'S K-CAR - DAY

Elle drives, not looking her best. She tries to roll up the window and the handle pops off in her hand.

She starts looking for parking but finds none. Finally she finds a spot and pulls in. She then starts hunting around the car for something. In the ashtray she finds a dime.

She stares at the dime for a moment and then throws it against the windshield. It rebounds and hits her in the face.

Recovering, she looks up and sees Massey Hall and Dean Reilly, the writer from "L9", getting into a beautifully restored gold '72 Pontiac GTO just ahead.

Intrigued, Elle re-starts the K-Car and follows them into traffic.

EXT. CITY STREET - LATER

Elle still follows the Pontiac. Massey stops his car at a stoplight, and Elle pulls up alongside.

INT. MASSEY HALL'S MERCURY - CONTINUOUS

Massey and Dean sit together in the car oblivious to Elle's presence. Massey's radio blares and they have to speak over it. Elle's window is down so she can hear every word.

MASSEY

So you know that Elle Hathaway chick?

DEAN

Yeah, from "L9".

MASSEY

She really sucks, doesn't she?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEAN
TV actress, what do you expect?

They both laugh.

ELLE (V.O.)
What's that line about the world working in mysterious ways? Because here before me was the source of my original problem-- Dean the ingrate-- coupled with the embodiment of everything wrong with the system with which I had thus far so graciously cooperated-- Massey and his unapologetic pretension. I just had to give them a piece of my mind.

ELLE (cont'd)
(to Massey and Dean)
That's really fucking nice, guys. You're a couple of real gentlemen.

Massey and Dean turn to her with horror-stricken looks on their faces.

DEAN
Oh my God.

ELLE
I knew you were scum--

Massey, distracted and panicking, inexplicably stomps on the accelerator of his car and the GTO speeds into the intersection.

The light is still red for them and traffic streams into the intersection from the left. One car swerves and avoids Massey and Dean--just barely. But a garbage-truck suddenly enters the intersection and hits the GTO broadside at full speed, crushing it.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle is truly shocked and horrified.

ELLE
Holy shit...

FADE OUT.

EXT. CHAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Elle pulls into the driveway of a very chic, in a sparse/minimalist sort of way, contemporary-design home.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elle, Chad and Henrietta hang in the kitchen, Chad sauteing something in a pan and Henrietta and Elle drinking Chardonnay. Henrietta smokes.

HENRIETTA

He's rich, he's hot *and* he cooks. What more could a woman ask for?

ELLE

Brains and a sense of humor? I don't know.

HENRIETTA

No thanks.

The three of them laugh.

CHAD

Y'all are fucked up.

HENRIETTA

Well, what are you looking for in a woman?

CHAD

If you think I'm falling into that trap..

HENRIETTA

It's no trap.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

The three of them are sitting at the table. They have finished eating and are lounging at the table, drinking wine. Henrietta smokes nervously, apparently coked up. She hasn't touched her food.

CHAD

So are you any relation to Eliot Hathaway, the writer?

ELLE

He's my father, as a matter of fact.

CHAD

Really?! Because I was watching "This Green Valley" on TCM the other night..

ELLE

He won the Oscar for that, '54.

CHAD

Whatever happened to him?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

He got blacklisted and hasn't sold a script in forty years.

CHAD

I'm sorry to hear that.

ELLE

It's been really hard for him; he's never really gotten over it. But enough about me: Chad, tell me, what's it like being the shit, the talk of the town, what's it like being you, Mr. A-list?

CHAD

As compared with?

ELLE

I'm sorry?

CHAD

Well I can't tell you what it's like being me, because I've only ever been me, so I have nothing to compare it to.

ELLE

But you can still have an opinion on how you like your life.

CHAD

But that's a different question entirely.

ELLE

OK...and do you have an answer?

CHAD

Sure...Some aspects are great and some suck. I mean, it's wonderful to be given heaps of money to do something you'd probably do for free if given the chance, but then again I've had fans break into my house with the intent of stealing an unflushed stool, so...

ELLE

Thank God we don't have to deal with that, right Henrietta? We get less money, but no breaking and entering.

Henrietta's mind is elsewhere.

HENRIETTA

Huh?...Sorry, I was spacing, what were you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHAD

Just the nature of fame, Hen, jeez, stay with us.

HENRIETTA

Sorry...excuse me for a second.

She rises from her chair and heads for the bathroom.

ELLE

She all right?

CHAD

I think so...I don't know. We've been fighting a bit more than usual lately.

Elle is somewhat taken aback by Chad's sudden forthrightness.

ELLE

That's a shame.

CHAD

I mean, I want to start having kids, and I wonder if she's really ready for that type of thing.

ELLE

Hmm...

CHAD

Why am I telling you all this?

A beat as the two of them wonder what just transpired. A muffled BUMP comes from the other room followed by an ominous guttural GURGLE.

ELLE

What was that?

They look at each other and fright passes over them. Elle starts to get up but Chad quickly rises.

CHAD

I'll go check on her.

ELLE

OK.

Church bells RING.

EXT. UNKNOWN - DAY

CU on a big iron bell clapping. CRANE DOWN to ESTABLISHING of a church.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

A PREACHER sermonizes in a monotone O.S. as those paying their respects try to look like they're listening:

Assembled are the cast and crew of "L9" as well as older executive/ agent-TYPES, and young and beautiful FRIENDS of the deceased. All the men wear Helmut Lang; the women, Prada.

...Except for Henrietta's droll, Midwestern FAMILY in the front row. Elle sits beside Chad, just behind them.

PREACHER (O.S.)

...For we remember Henrietta not as she died, but as she lived: generous, kind, thoughtful, selfless. Talented, beautiful, ambitious, yet grounded. She never forgot her roots, or neglected an opportunity to help those in need...

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Elle is walking down the steps of the church. Lots of MOURNERS dressed in black mill around in front.

Lurking just outside one of the groups of mourners is Charlie Satchel, holding a small notebook and pencil. He inserts himself into a group and interrupts.

CHARLIE

'Scuse me. Charlie Satchel, of *Hollyworld*.

MOURNER #1

Why don't you fuck off?

CHARLIE

Charlie wants to ask a few questions.

MOURNER #2

Have some class.

CHARLIE

Class doesn't get Charlie any stories.

He skulks off and approaches another small cluster, who close ranks and turn their backs on him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He shuffles off to another group and this time physically grabs a WOMAN by the arm. She shakes him off and is shielded by a male COMPANION.

Elle sees Marty's assistant Crystal taking to a WOMAN in a severe Prada number and very pointy witchy-poo shoes. Crystal spies Elle exiting and waves to her.

CRYSTAL

Elle!

Elle goes to Crystal and the woman.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)

Elle, this is Marge Chapman, she's a casting director.

ELLE

Hi, Marge, pleased to meet you.

They shake.

MARGE

And you! I've seen you on "LAPD 90046," you're great.

ELLE

Thank you, I appreciate that.

MARGE

Well, now that you're looking for other opportunities, a friend of mine, D.S. Simmons, is casting a piece-- a very feminist sort of gangster film-- I think there might be something in there for you.

ELLE

That would be great.

MARGE

Terrific, I'll put you in touch.

(a beat)

By the way can you believe what some people are wearing to this? I saw Edward Sears wearing an *ebony* suit. I guess he doesn't know *ebony* and black are two *different* colors.

CRYSTAL

Some people.

Elle rolls her eyes at Marge's comment but then smiles when she looks to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE

Yeah. Shame about Henrietta.

MARGE

(shrugging)

Twelve Henriettas got off the bus this morning. Her star was falling anyway.

Elle is now truly shocked. BOOM quickly up from her astounded face to take in the entire scene in front of the church:

It looks more like a party than the sombre event that it should be. In fact it is a shmooze-fest, people yucking it up, exchanging business cards, telling stories and slapping backs. HOLD on this for a moment.

ELLE (V.O.)

Henrietta's body was barely cold and this vampire was already dissing her. I mean, I know I as much as killed her, but have some decency.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Charlie's apartment building, which sits on a North-South Hollywood street crowded with generic cement-block constructions. His is pink. The apartment doors are all on the exterior.

INT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The apartment is a mess: empty Chinese take-out containers, a pot of coffee with mold growing in the bottom, and periodicals *everywhere*.

All the walls are bare but one, which is covered with tacked-up photos of Charlie posing with every celebrity imaginable. But they're not posing with him. In fact, the pictures are obviously ambushes: in each, Charlie holds the camera with outstretched hand and the subject looks befuddled.

Charlie stands holding a remote control to his chin. The TV he's watching shows the last ten seconds of the video of Elle's audition with Massey Hall. He freeze-frames on Elle hurling the book through the window, looks at her expression a moment, then presses rewind.

Charlie looks from the screen to the coffee-table where two newspaper articles lie. Their headlines read: "MASSEY & REILLY TRASH-COMPACTED-- Foul Play Not Suspected In Car Crash" and "'L9' STAR OD'S."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks back to the TV, stops rewinding the tape and starts to watch the end of Elle's audition again.

EXT. BASIX - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the cheap restaurant-cafe with a mostly gay clientele on a corner of Santa Monica Boulevard in West Hollywood.

INT. BASIX - DAY

Elle stands with the RESTAURANT MANAGER. He shakes his head.

MANAGER

Listen, Ms. Hathaway, I can't hire you to wait tables...I mean you're a well-known actress. I might have some hostess shifts coming available in a month or two, but even that...Can't you go do an info-mercial or something?

EXT. LANTANA CENTER - OLYMPIC BOULEVARD - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the long, low office building that houses Skywalker Sound, production offices, editing facilities, etc., as well as the restaurant L.A. Farm. It looks like a concrete skyscraper turned on its side.

A tighter shot shows Elle walking up to a door to the building. She's chewing something. As she opens the door, she crumples up the wrapper from a Payday bar and deposits it in the trash can/ashtray by the door.

INT. LANTANA CENTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

In one of the generic office suites, Elle is meeting with a director, CINDY DRUTZ (40s, frumpy), her casting director, D.S. SIMMONS (30s, of indeterminate gender), and their producer, CLAY FINCHER, a loud, tubby, older prick with a toupée who looks out of place whenever he's not on the golf course.

D.S.

We all loved your tape, Elle. I'm so glad Marge connected us.

CINDY

D.S. is right-- we loved it.

CLAY

As you know, it'd be a bit of a risk going with someone in TV for this part.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Yeah, I guess I can see that.

CINDY

But what is film about if not taking risks? Am I right, D.S.?

D.S.

Completely!

ELLE

So what you're saying is...

D.S.

We're ready to take you on board!

CLAY

Provided one small thing...but not too small, I hope.

They look at him quizzically, not sure what he means by this.

CLAY (cont'd)

Miss Hathaway, have you seen the latest draft, with the nude scene?

CINDY

Wha--?

Clay turns his head toward Cindy and quiets her. D.S. is paralyzed at the thought of what's coming.

ELLE

Uh, I read the one dated yesterday, the goldenrod draft.

CLAY

Cindy, what comes after gold? It goes blue, pink, yellow-- actually, forget it. Elle, would you take off your blouse?

ELLE

Excuse me?

CLAY

We need to see the goods.

Cindy and D.S. are in an impossible situation, hating Clay but employed by him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE

With all due respect, Mr. Fincher, I don't think that's gonna happen. Cindy, is there really a sex scene?

CINDY

Well...

CLAY

Oh, clam it, Cindy, there's always a sex scene in my movies.

He stands and moves toward Elle with a lecherous leer.

CLAY (cont'd)

C'mon now, honey, don't be shy.

ELLE

Mr. Fincher, I'm not--

CLAY

Oh, yes you are. C'mon, up she goes.

He reaches for her blouse; she's backed against the wall.

D.S.

Clay, this is--

CLAY

Pipe down, I've been watching this chick on TV for three years and now I wanna see her tits!

Elle sidesteps him and shuffles to the door to escape.

CINDY

Elle, please, you don't--

ELLE

I don't need this!

CLAY

Yes you do, now show me your tits or the part goes to someone who will!

D.S.

Clay!

CINDY

Look, this is ridiculous. Elle, the part is yours, you don't have to do this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLAY

As long as I'm cutting the checks she does. Now let's see 'em. Or else.

A moment as Elle stands with her back to the door, gripping the door handle, actually considering doing it for a second.

ELLE

No, thanks.

She turns around and opens the door.

CINDY

Wait--

Clay grabs for Elle's hand and gets only the door handle. D.S. protests as well, but Elle is gone.

CLAY

Damn.

Clay absent-mindedly scratches his head as Cindy comes out of her shocked stupor.

CINDY

What were you--

Clay removes his hand from his face and looks at it, terrified.

CLAY

Oh, no...she ate nuts.

D.S. and Cindy are flustered by this non-sequitor.

CINDY

What the hell is the matter with you today?

ANGLE on Clay. His hand and face are already covered in red splotches and large hives.

CLAY

She ate nuts! I am allergic to nuts! Really fucking allergic to...NUTS!!

Clay continues to swell and change color like Veruca Salt in "Willie Wonka" as D.S. and Cindy look on in horror.

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - DAY

Marty's face is polished and glowing as he sits behind his desk talking on the phone, repeatedly tossing a pen end-over-end with his right hand. Elle sits on his desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hangs up.

ELLE
Long time no see.

MARTY
It hasn't been *that* long.

ELLE
Sure it has.

MARTY
OK, sorry but I called you in to give you some good news in person: I learned this a.m. that you're up for the lead in "Voyage to Venus"-- an as-yet unwritten action movie set on the fourth planet.

ELLE
Really?! Who else are they looking at?

MARTY
A few people. Susan Chandler...

ELLE
Susan Chandler? She's a *period* actor. A *British* period actor.

MARTY
That she is. But they like your action background on "L9".

ELLE
I can't believe Susan Chandler is up for this. Mira Sorvino, OK, but...

MARTY
Just be glad you don't have to work with Chandler; she's a colossal bitch. To say nothing of her *horrible* B.O.

ELLE
Marty!

EXT. L'ERMITAGE HOTEL - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the discreet Beverly Hills hotel.

INT. L'ERMITAGE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Chad sits facing forward on a love seat, looking down at the table in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elle is beside him, her leg crossed in his direction and one hand on the sofa behind him. They drink Perrier.

ELLE

There must be things you wish you'd said, since it happened so suddenly.

CHAD

Yeah, but probably not what you're thinking.

ELLE

Umm...

CHAD

The thing is, I've been feeling really terrible--

ELLE

Of course you have--

CHAD

No, let me finish. The thing is, I was trying to find the courage to break it off with Henrietta, and I've been feeling so guilty because her death gave me this...this huge sense of relief.

ELLE

Oh, that's awful.

CHAD

I know. I feel like shit about it. There's like a second layer of sadness, and guilt and regret.

ELLE

I can totally see that. Look, Chad, don't beat yourself up...

CHAD

I just, I have to tell you, a big part of what got me feeling that way, I mean I was definitely thinking about it before, but meeting you had something to do with it.

ELLE

Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHAD

Absolutely. Meeting you showed me there were other people out there, other kinds of people who might understand me in a way that Henrietta never did. Or even tried to.

ELLE

I'm--I'm--

CHAD

Speechless?

ELLE

Something like that.

CHAD

I mean it wasn't *you* exactly, it was more what you represented. Is this making sense?

ELLE

Sure it is.

They look at each other; there's equal parts desire and fear.

INT. ELLIOT'S K-CAR - LATER

Elle drives. She has the radio CRANKED. She SINGS along and dances in the seat as she maneuvers through L.A.-- obviously enjoying herself for the first time in a while.

EXT. STUDIO ENTRANCE / VISITOR GATE - DAY

Elle drives up to the security booth and is greeted by a crotchety, snarling old GUARD. It feels more like Checkpoint Charlie than a corporate headquarters.

GUARD

Yes?

ELLE

Good morning. I'm Elle Hathaway, here for a meeting with Francis Beckman?

The guard says nothing, disappearing into his booth and checking his list. Without a word, he opens the gate.

Elle smiles and waves as she goes by but gets no reaction.

INT. ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - LATER

A door in front of the desk of the geeky young male ASSISTANT-
- 20s, glasses, flustered-- opens and Elle enters.

ELLE

Hi, I'm Elle Hathaway. I guess I'm a
little early.

ASSISTANT

No problem, Miss Hathaway, he should only
be a minute. Have a seat.

ELLE

Thanks.

She sits. The assistant rises from his chair and lifts a
book from his desk. Beneath it is a manila folder which he
picks up with his other hand. He puts the book down on
another section of the desk and moves to leave the room.

ASSISTANT

Back in a minute.

ELLE

OK.

VOICES are heard from the area of the desk, sounding like
they're coming from a radio. Elle looks confused. She
regards the desk and realizes the assistant has placed his
book on a button on the intercom, enabling her to hear the
conversation from within Beckman's office.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

So the script should be ready in a week
or so; the other thing I feel you should
know is that we're only looking at one
other actor for the part, Elle Hathaway.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Never heard of her.

Elle is looking mischievously intrigued.

INT. BECKMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

We are now inside the studio executive's expansive office.
The male voice belongs to FRANCIS BECKMAN, 45, graying and
possessive of a regal bearing. The female is the infamous
SUSAN CHANDLER, 26, beautiful, bitchy and incapable of making
eye contact.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BECKMAN

She's been on a top-rated TV show for some years, "LAPD 90046." Very impressive.

SUSAN

A TV actor? Are you fucking kidding me? You're seriously considering passing *me* over for a TV actor?

She nears his desk and he is visibly disturbed by an offensive odor. He rises, trying to be casual.

BECKMAN

The studio feels that audiences might more easily relate to her in an action role.

SUSAN

Relate to whom?, is my point. I've never heard of her, and I'm-- me!

She tries to get close to him again, and his eyes start watering. He backs away and covers his nose (pretending to scratch it) to deliver the next lines.

BECKMAN

I understand *perfectly*. However, some of the money people wonder if audiences are accustomed to seeing you in a space-suit rather than period costume.

SUSAN

Ha! I'm an *actor*, Francis, not a...a... stuffed animal.

Beckman is as confused as we are by the distinction.

SUSAN (cont'd)

Well, I'm supremely confident that your *executives* will see the wisdom in casting *me* instead of some...some...

INT. ASSISTANT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Elle half-stands and reaches over to the desk.

SUSAN (V.O.)

...*amateur*.

Elle pushes the book off the intercom button to terminate the transmission, and quickly sits back down-- just as the assistant walks back in. She smiles innocently at him.

EXT. URTH CAFE - MELROSE AVE. - DAY

Elle sits alone outside at an umbrellaed table with a tea service atop it at this upscale, star-frequented coffee house. She reads *Variety*.

Suddenly Charlie Satchel vampirically looms up behind her as though appearing from the vapors.

CHARLIE

Hello, Elle Hathaway.

Elle is startled, nearly dropping the magazine she holds.

Charlie makes no move to come around to face her so Elle must crane her neck drastically in order to find out who has addressed her. The sun is also behind him and thus Charlie appears as a dark silhouette to Elle, who squints trying to see him.

ELLE

Hello? Who is that?

CHARLIE

Charlie Satchel.

ELLE

Who? Do I know you?

CHARLIE

From *Hollyworld*.

Charlie stays where he is so Elle is forced to swivel her chair to face him. Now her face is eye level with his crotch and she must look up to speak to him which of course blinds her as the sun streams over Charlie's shoulders and directly into her eyes.

ELLE

Doesn't ring any bells.

CHARLIE

Well it should.

ELLE

Why is that?

CHARLIE

Because shortly Charlie Satchel is gonna ring your bell. Then everyone will know Charlie Satchel's name.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Well, Charlie Satchel, I'm at a loss. I don't know what to say, I mean I've never been threatened in quite this fashion before. I'm curious as to how I'm to have my bell rung, as you put it.

CHARLIE

Charlie Satchel will make this quick, Elle, as he knows the time of an over-rated, quickly-aging, unemployed hack is in high demand these days. In short, Charlie Satchel has found you out. The "mishaps" and "tragedies", as the press has reported it, that have surrounded "LAPD 90046" and you of late are indeed connected. Connected through you. And Charlie Satchel has almost enough to go to the authorities with--

ELLE

Excuse me, but what the hell are you talking about?

CHARLIE

I'm talking about how you murdered Henrietta Klein with a bad batch of cocaine, and how you set up Massey Hall and Dean Reilly for that accident. You had motive and opportunity, didn't you? As soon as Charlie get incontrovertible proof-- and Charlie Satchel's proof is *always* the incontrovertible kind-- that you knew Clay Fincher was allergic to nuts, and thereby *caused* his gruesome death...you're through. Charlie's onto you, Elle Hathaway. Watch your next step, because Charlie is. Good day.

Charlie quickly bounds down the steps of the cafe's patio, across the sidewalk and into the crosswalk on Melrose.

ELLE

Hey, wait...

A bus passing between Elle and Charlie barely misses him. Then the bus is gone and so is he.

Elle contemplates this accusation.

ELLE (V.O.) (cont'd)

I almost believed him. Had I killed them? Had I wanted them dead? Did I facilitate it? I can't say I miss any of them, or regret what happened.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE(cont'd)

In any case, Charlie Tuna had given me
the greatest idea in the world.

EXT. STUDIO BACK LOT - DAY

A Victorian-era street scene provides the set for a period film in production; horse-drawn carriages with DRIVERS in top hats line the street.

ELECTRICIANS hang lamps on stands and larger rigs overhead, GRIPS set flags and construct various objects, CAMERA ASSISTANTS and OPERATORS line up shots and rehearse camera movement. CAST in period dress stand around.

STUNT-PEOPLE inflate a large air-bag, designed to cushion a stunt person's fall. A bank of video monitors are set up some distance away.

Huddled around the monitors are Susan Chandler, a couple of other CAST-MEMBERS (all in full period garb), THE 1ST A.D., mustachioed and hyper, THE D.P., a woman holding a light-meter, and the DIRECTOR, a boyish woman in her 30s. She nods to the 1st A.D. and he lifts a megaphone to his lips.

1ST A.D.

OK people, we are-- ROLLING!!

VOICE (O.S.)

Speed!

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)

Sound speed!

1ST A.D.

Annnnd...ACTION!!

A momentary pause and then a huge explosion erupts from the alley, followed immediately by the STUNTMAN flying through the air in Victorian costume, flailing his arms as he soars toward the air-bag.

A series of shots, from all possible angles and at every film speed, ten times longer than anything John Woo has ever indulged in, of the stuntman catapulted through space away from the erupting fireball.

Susan intently watches the flickering images on the monitors before her.

Cast and crew react with horror at what's coming.

The stunt-man overshoots the airbag and lands squarely on the completely oblivious Susan Chandler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Cast and crew are horrified. The stunt-man lies on top of Susan and her crushed director's chair. Everyone immediately rushes to the scene-- everyone except the 1st A.D.

1ST A.D. (cont'd)
Check the gate!

1ST ASSISTANT CAMERA OPERATOR
Checking the gate!

Pandemonium ensues as the set goes mad. People are yelling, gesticulating, rushing around, bumping into one another, brandishing useless fire extinguishers, summoning the waiting ambulance, etc. A WOMAN running to the scene in high-collar costume holds over her head an orange life-buoy from "Baywatch."

Incredibly, the stunt-man rises on his own power.

STUNTMAN
I'm fine, I'm fine. It's cool.

He stands and dusts off his costume. The 1st A.D. looks O.S. at Susan.

1ST A.D.
She's dead.

EXT. STUDIO BACK LOT - NEARBY - MOMENTS LATER

Elle skulks off, away from the mayhem, occasionally looking over her shoulder.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

People file into the same church at which Henrietta's funeral was held. Church bells RING.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

The same preacher stands before the same type audience.

PREACHER
...For we remember Susan not as she died,
but as she lived: generous, kind,
thoughtful, selfless. Talented,
beautiful, ambitious, yet grounded. She
never forgot her roots, or neglected an
opportunity to help those in need...

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A helicopter WHIRS in BG, its searchlight occasionally illuminating the room. The doorbell RINGS. She goes to answer it.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - FRONT HALL - CONTINUOUS

Elle opens the front door to reveal Chad, a sheepish smile on his face. Elle cracks a smile herself.

ELLE

Hey, what are you doing here?

CHAD

What do you think?

ELLE

I know, I just...I'm surprised.

CHAD

Pleasantly?

ELLE

That remains to be seen.

They stare at each other in maximum flirt mode.

CHAD

So can I come in?

ELLE

I guess.

Elle turns and walks into the living room. Chad follows.

ELLE (cont'd)

You'll have to excuse my living situation. I'm staying with Dad right now.

CHAD

Is he around? I'd love to meet him.

ELLE

It's bridge night, he's out with the fellas.

CHAD

Another time maybe. So do I get a hug?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elle stops and opens her arms. Chad steps to her and embraces her. Instead of letting go completely he holds her out in front of him and gazes at her longingly.

The helicopter outside nears, growing louder so they have to shout over it.

ELLE
Have a seat.

CHAD
What?

ELLE
(over the helicopter)
Have a seat!

Chad sits. She takes a seat facing him.

ELLE (cont'd)
So?!

CHAD
So!

A beat as Elle looks hard at Chad.

CHAD (cont'd)
I've been thinking a lot about us!

ELLE
What?!

CHAD
I said, "us"! What do you think about us!

ELLE
I like "us"! "Us" is good!

CHAD
Can I ask something?!

ELLE
Anything!

CHAD
I'm sorry I'm so awkward about this, but I just don't want this to come out wrong, or for you to take this the wrong way...I don't want to seem like the popular guy in high school looking for something on the sly with the girl from the...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The helicopter instantly quiets, making Chad's shouted delivery suddenly awkwardly loud.

CHAD (cont'd)
TRAILER PARK!

ELLE
Is that what I am?

CHAD
Of course not...Look, Elle, I want to try being with you, but the whole--

The helicopter suddenly comes back, so these next words can only be lip-read.

CHAD (cont'd)
--fucking star machine..

She's not sure she caught that.

CHAD (cont'd)
(now loud)
I want us to be together, but let's ease into it! Just keep it quiet for a bit! I want this, but I want it to be ours, not for...

The helicopter disappears...

CHAD (cont'd)
PUBLIC CONSUMPTION!
(now quiet)
Am I making sense?

ELLE
You're still making sense, yes.

CHAD
Good, I --

ELLE
Chad, it affects all of us, fame, in different ways. Could I approach you? Journeyman TV hack pursues A-list star? No. So don't apologize.

Elle gets up and goes to him and sits on his lap, staring into his eyes. They kiss and then break.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHAD

I just wanted you to know, this isn't a rebound, it's not me freaking out about Henrietta and not knowing how to express it. It was there before. But let's go slow, OK?

ELLE

Um-hmm.

They gaze at each other a moment longer.

CHAD

There's something else I wanted to mention, too...

ELLE

Yeah?

CHAD

I met this guy the other night...and your name came up and I said I knew you and he said he'd love to take an informational meeting with you, and I was wondering if you were interested?

ELLE

Well, who is he?

CHAD

Oh, right, Mitchell Hartman.

ELLE

The WWE Mitchell Hartman?

CHAD

Yup.

ELLE

I'll take a meeting with that guy any day of the week.

CHAD

Now, I wouldn't give him my personal recommendation, in fact he seemed like kind of a dick, but a studio chief is a studio chief.

ELLE

I don't care if he has two heads.

CHAD

Great I'll set it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ELLE

Thank you, Chad, that is very sweet.

CHAD

You're welcome. I'm gonna go now.

ELLE

OK. Come back soon?

They rise together and hug.

CHAD

I'll call you.

Chad walks toward the front hall and leaves. After the door closes Elle flops on the couch in disbelief.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - DAY

Eliot's K-Car sputters past with the traffic.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle drives, bobbing her head to the radio. Her phone RINGS and Elle picks up.

ELLE

Hello?...Marty!...What?!

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marty paces and talks into his headset, waving his arms as he talks.

MARTY

They want you for a call-back on "Journey to Jupiter".

ELLE (O.S.)

I thought it was "Voyage to Venus."

MARTY

Don't argue with me. Same place, Thursday at three.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle drives.

MARTY (O.S.)

Soon as Chandler...met her untimely demise, you moved into the top slot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Wow. I don't know what to say.

MARTY

Say, "Thanks, Marty."

ELLE

Thanks, Marty...I gotta go...Yeah, bye.

Elle hangs up and shakes her head in disbelief.

EXT. WORLD WIDE ENTERTAINMENT BUILDING - DAY

The WWE building at the corner of Olive and Riverside in Burbank blinds passersby with copper-hued reflections of the morning sun.

INT. WWE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Elle is led down a hallway by a short, long-haired WOMAN in her late 20s. They come to a door with a placard on it, reading "MITCHELL HARTMAN, PRESIDENT". The woman stops and opens the door.

WOMAN

Please, have a seat. Mr. Hartman will be in in a moment.

ELLE

Thanks.

INT. MITCHELL HARTMAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Elle walks into the office-- a fairly ordinary room with a large window overlooking the L.A. River-- and the woman closes the door behind her.

Elle sits in one of the two black fabric chairs that face the desk. She fidgets, practicing poses both informal and prim, unsure of how to present herself to the still unknown Mr. Hartman.

She assumes a sexier posture, then notices something about the room: an entire wall is covered with pictures of hot air balloons. Hot air balloons aloft, hot air balloons aground, hot air balloons with people breaking champagne bottles on their carriages.

As she's pondering the photographs MITCHELL HARTMAN, 40s, a balding and paunchy Brit, opens the door and scuttles into the room like a crab.

They shake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARTMAN

Elle Hathaway, I presume?

ELLE

Yes.

HARTMAN

I'm Mitchell Hartman, a pleasure.

ELLE

Likewise.

HARTMAN

Probably wondering about the pictures.

ELLE

What? Oh, yes, I-

HARTMAN

Rather vainglorious pursuit I've found myself quite involved in.

ELLE

Apparently. Do you...travel...in those things? I mean, is it like a sightseeing thing or...

HARTMAN

Hardly! I shouldn't say that; the view from a balloon circumlocuting the globe is quite magnificent.

ELLE

Circumnavigating the globe?

HARTMAN

Yes, I had hoped to be on the first team to circumlocute in '99 but my wife became pregnant...

ELLE

Oh!

HARTMAN

...So I'll instead be the first to circumlocute solo.

ELLE

The first balloonist-- solo balloonist-- to circumaviate?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HARTMAN

Yes, the first solo circumlocution. I launch this Saturday, in fact.

ELLE

Is that so? Well, I'm glad I caught you before you...launched?

HARTMAN

Indeed. So what can the WWE do for you?

ELLE

Or, conversely, what can I do for WWE?

HARTMAN

I'm sorry?

ELLE

You make movies, Mr. Hartman. I act. It seems we need each other. That we could be mutually beneficial to each other--

HARTMAN

Chad Hunt set this up, didn't he? How do you know him?

ELLE

I know him through a woman I used to work with on "LAPD 90046." She--

HARTMAN

I see, and why did he want us to get together?

ELLE

Well, Chad suggested we meet and, uh...as I said earlier--

HARTMAN

I must confess I don't understand. He knows my policy.

ELLE

Your--

HARTMAN

My policy: I hire Gwyneth, Sandra or Julia. Without one of them above the line, nothing gets greenlit.

ELLE

I see--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HARTMAN

I'm considering lengthening the list by one--
one of the Kates, maybe.

ELLE

Well, then.

HARTMAN

Quite.

Elle stands, not knowing what else to do, and extends her hand.

ELLE

Mr. Hartman, it was very good to meet you.

They shake.

HARTMAN

And you, Ms. Hathaway.

Elle walks to the door.

HARTMAN (cont'd)

Oh, say "hi" to Chad for me, won't you?

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFF - DAY

A brilliant, blustery California day along the coast north of Santa Barbara. A verdant cliff-side bluff is the launch site for Mitchell Hartman's quixotic effort to solo circum-whatever the globe in a hot-air balloon.

The balloon is tied by ropes to stakes all around it. ONLOOKERS crane their necks behind a makeshift barricade. JOURNALISTS quack before video-cameras. GROUNDS CREWMEN in uniform Patagonia jackets scurry about.

Some distance away, Elle lurks behind a bush, hiding.

Hartman is in the balloon's basket, basking in his imminent triumph. He wears a different-colored, but same model, Patagonia jacket, and mirrored sunglasses. The aircraft's heating rig idles, its blue flame inflating the huge balloon.

Elle produces a wrist-rocket: a plastic "Y"-shaped thing about eight inches in height, with a piece of nylon around its shaft that extends to her wrist, Velcroed there for stability, and a section of surgical tubing between the wings with a leather patch at its center. Basically a high-end slingshot.

The crowd is counting down to launch; the crew waits at each stake with axes in hand, ready to let it fly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CROWD
Five! Four! Three!

With her other hand Elle produces a martial-arts throwing star: four inches in diameter, with five sharp points. It glistens in the sunlight.

The balloon's tanks ignite furiously, sending flame high up.

CROWD (cont'd)
Two! One! LIFTOFF!

At the cue, the crewmen and -women lower their axes, SNAPPING each rope simultaneously. The balloon rises, slowly at first, then impressively gains altitude and floats majestically toward the cliff's edge.

Elle fires the wrist-rocket. She watches hopefully.

The throwing star hits the balloon dead center, causing a terrific RIP. It rapidly deflates.

And the balloon falls, picking up speed in its descent over the edge till no longer visible.

EXT. ELLE'S FATHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Eliot's K-Car pulls up in front. She exits the car and walks toward the front door.

INT. ELLE'S FATHER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Elle pokes her head through the front door.

ELLE
Hello?! Dad?

She enters the house and goes into the living room where her father is sprawled out on the floor, looking deathly ill but breathing. He opens his eyes and CROAKS at her.

ELLE (cont'd)
Oh, Jesus!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CEDAR SINAI HOSPITAL - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the hospital complex across the street from the Beverly Center.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Eliot Hathaway occupies a bed in a semi-private room. He's ill but awake, flipping channels on the TV. Elle enters with a smile.

ELLE
Hi, Dad! How are you feeling?

ELIOT
Watching television is making me sicker.

She draws the curtain between his bed and that of the sleeping PATIENT with whom he shares the room.

ELIOT (cont'd)
It is really unbelievable what passes for entertainment these days. Absolute crap.

ELLE
Tell me about it.

ELIOT
But are you part of the problem, or part of the solution?

ELLE
If you want to make an omelette, you gotta break some eggs.

ELIOT
That's a rationalization.

ELLE
I'll go if that's what you want.

ELIOT
No, what I want is for you to listen. To understand what I've been trying to tell you about this town. What it does to people. How it has treated you. What it has done to us.

ELLE
Talk about rationalization. I wore hand-me-downs and ate nothing but peanut-butter sandwiches in some crappy public school because you wanted to take a stand...to do what you believed in. Now I'm trying to do what I need to do for me...for us. For art.

An awkward moment as they regard each other.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DISSOLVE TO:

INSERT:

Spinning *Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety* magazines announce in large-font banner headlines the balloonist's death: "Picture Prexy Plummets"; "Fond Farewell For Feature Father"; "Worldwide's Wazoo Wilts".

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

Elle stands holding *The Hollywood Reporter*. One of the headlines from above is on the cover.

CLOSE IN on an article.

INSERT: It reads: "According to a spokesman for WWE, no decision has been made on a replacement. But sources tell the *Reporter* that Hartman's famous "Big-Three Only" policy is history."

Elle smiles guiltily.

NEWSSTAND PROPRIETOR

No reading the trades, lady. You gotta buy that.

She agreeably fishes in her bag for her wallet.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The building that houses the offices of *Hollyworld* sits on the south side of Sunset Blvd. just west of Curson Avenue.

The prominent architectural feature of the white, Art Deco building is a long undulating staircase that runs down its face, giving the edifice a wave-like, aquatic feel.

The traffic on Sunset streams by in what seems like an endless flow.

INT. "HOLLYWORLD" - DAY

A noisy, fluorescent-lit floor of the building is the tabloid paper's newsroom. It's overcrowded with grey cubicle-dividers in which youngish REPORTERS type away on outdated computers.

96 DOLLY along a row of these to a corner of the room, where 96
there's a big metal door with a push-handle marked "EXIT"
overhead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door opens and Charlie Satchel carelessly exhales a last hit of a cigarette, some of its toxins escaping into the workplace whence it is forbidden. He stamps out the butt on the stairwell floor and starts walking toward his desk, the door closing on its own behind him. He's carrying some clippings from his newspaper.

Arriving at his cubicle (which is a total mess and absent any personal items whatsoever), he places the clippings on the desk. They are four, detailing "MASSEY & REILLY TRASH-COMPACTED-- Foul Play Not Suspected In Car Crash"; "'L9' STAR OD'S"; "MOVIE SET CATASTROPHE: Actress Killed In Freak Accident"; and "WWE HEAD'S TRAGIC FALL."

Satchel breathes a heavy sigh, furrows his brow and scratches his unshaven chin.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Elle stands at the counter in front of a cutting board assembling a sandwich. The phone RINGS.

ELLE
I'll get it!

Elle takes the receiver off the old, black, wall-mounted rotary phone.

ELLE (cont'd)
Hathaway residence?...Oh, hi Marty.

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marty paces frantically, tossing a pen to himself over and over.

MARTY
Two words for you, baby: Golf. Movie...What do you mean you don't know how to golf, it's on your bio.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ON Elle.

ELLE
Yeah, and so is snowboarding and I've never even done that.

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ON Marty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARTY

Unimportant. What is important is this: Golf movie, set on the LPGA tour. Lesbian love/coming-out story. Produced by Kevin Costner...Yes that's right...Well apparently he desperately wanted to do another golf movie but couldn't get one with him in it off the ground so he took another approach to it, and apparently the studio loves it. They want to look at Molly Spinneman, Tess DeCosta, and you. That's all I know at this point.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ON Elle, she gives a Tiger Woods-like victory arm-pump.

ELLE

Sounds great, Marty, thanks for the news...Yeah call me with anything else.

Elle hangs-up and the wheels in her brain are already turning.

ELIOT (O.S.)

Who was that?!

ELLE

My agent.

ELIOT (O.S.)

Whatever he told you, he's lying.

Elle rolls her eyes and goes to the sandwich she was making. The phone RINGS again. Elle reaches for the receiver.

INT. MARTY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

ON Marty as he was.

MARTY

Good news, Molly Spinneman just dropped out of the running. Took a lesbian golf TV series shooting in New Zealand, so it's just you and Tess.

EXT. WILSHIRE COUNTRY CLUB PARKING LOT - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the upscale golf-and-tennis club's parking lot, half-full of freshly-waxed, expensive vehicles. Contrasting with them is the K-Car.

On the lot's edge is the golf course's driving range, where a few WEST L.A. PREPPIES are THWACKING away at balls. They all suck.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle sits in the driver's seat squinting and peering, trying to see something in the distance.

EXT. DRIVING RANGE - CONTINUOUS

Elle's POV: Among the golfers is TESS DECOSTA, a late-20s, gorgeous brunette, dressed in signature Anneka Sorrenstam golf gear. Her huge, custom leather golf-bag is embroidered with her name. A ONE-ARMED GOLF COACH holding a five-iron watches her hit. He gives a few words of instruction.

The One-Armed Golf Coach taps a ball into position for Tess on the artificial turf hitting mat. Tess swings retardedly and the ball spits forward a few feet.

O.A.G.C. taps over another ball and Tess sets up again.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

From Elle's POV, the One-Armed Golf Coach sets up a ball for himself while speaking to Tess and swings a mighty swing with his one arm, sending the ball soaring and perfectly straight.

Tess shakes hands with the One-Armed Golf Coach. O.A.G.C. walks off and Tess starts putting her stuff away in her bag.

EXT. WILSHIRE COUNTRY CLUB PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Tess walks to the parking lot and approaches her car, BEEPING it unlocked.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle steps out of her car.

EXT. WILSHIRE COUNTRY CLUB PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS
MUSIC OVER:

With the door still open, she looks at Tess:

She's opened the trunk and stands there with her golf bag.

Elle keeps one eye on her while putting on some golf gloves. She then folds the driver's seat forward and pulls out of the back seat a big-ass golf club: a brand new Big Bertha driver, its club-head the size of a...really big golf club head.

She shuts the door and looks around to check her surroundings: the parking lot is empty but for the predator and prey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOVE with her, hand-held from behind and looking over her shoulder, as she closes in on Tess. Tess lifts the bag into the trunk and shuts it.

Elle's pace quickens to meet Tess as she steps to the driver's side door. She's about to open it. MUSIC intensifies. Elle hoists the golf club over her shoulder, grimaces, and is about to swing it down on Tess' skull with all her might when...

Tess bursts into flames, spontaneously combusting, and is immediately incinerated, reduced to nothingness. MUSIC DOWN.

Elle blinks, disbelieving, and lowers the club, stunned.

A pile of ashes and a set of car keys are all that remain on the pavement. Elle starts to walk off, but turns back. She kneels to the pile and picks up a handful of the ashes, letting them fall through her fingers.

EXT. CHAD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Chad's house. Crickets and cicadas SING.

INT. CHAD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chad and Elle are cooking.

CHAD
So how's your dad?

ELLE
Oh, he got out of the hospital yesterday, I meant to tell you.

CHAD
That's great! So he's on the mend?
Great.

ELLE
Yeah, great.

CHAD
You don't sound like you mean that.

ELLE
Oh, no of course I do.

CHAD
Is it something else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Elle turns to him, thinking.

ELLE
Yeah, Chad it is, actually.

CHAD
What?

ELLE
Essentially. I'm at a complete loss...*professionally*. Without you I'd be totally lost. But, basically, I have no career, and I'm only getting broker.

CHAD
Well...I wonder if you have to ask yourself if you want a *career* or to *act*.

ELLE
(slightly annoyed)
What?

CHAD
Do you want celebrity or to practice a very special craft? Not to put too cheesy a spin on it.

ELLE
(annoyed)
OK, Chad this is the wrong approach. I had a jarring day and this whole "special craft" crap isn't exactly what I need right now.

CHAD
I'm not trying to be a dick here, Elle, but I honestly think it is what you need to hear. Do you want to be an actor, or a--

He makes a sort of self-mocking, broad, overly-dramatic gesture with both of his arms.

CHAD (cont'd)
--a *star*.

An awkward silence as Elle glares.

ELLE
Both, frankly. Yes, I love the craft, Chad, but I do have bills and I want to work at the pinnacle of that *craft* with the most talented fellow *artists*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHAD

Touché. How about theater?

ELLE

L.A. theater is a joke, Chad, you know that.

CHAD

Not all of it.

ELLE

OK for what reason should I pursue theater?

CHAD

First, it will keep you working at what you do and refocus you. Second, it may be a form of reinvention for you, a new way of presenting yourself to this town.

ELLE

I've got a lot going on right now, though.

CHAD

Like what?

ELLE

Like I'm waiting to hear from Beckman about that thing Susan Chandler was up for, and once Mitchell Hartman's replacement is named..

CHAD

So you're waiting. Waiting is not acting.

She rolls her eyes.

CHAD (cont'd)

I'm serious, Elle. Part of me is jealous of your situation and I'm not trying to romanticize it.

She emerges from the cupboard with a small spice jar.

ELLE

You may not be *trying* to...Listen, it's easy for you to say this, up on the hill, driving your Jag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CHAD

Just as it is for you to say what you're saying from your perspective. But I don't think you realize how fuckin' ridiculous my life can get sometimes. I mean, today for instance: You wouldn't believe what Sherry was telling me.

ELLE

Sherry's your...publicist?

CHAD

Yeah. She said with the new movie coming out, and it being what she termed a "watershed" role--

ELLE

'Cause you're playing sort of a bad boy?

CHAD

Exactly. And with Henrietta's death, I needed-- how did she put it?-- oh yeah, a "more solid female foundation."

ELLE

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

CHAD

Look, you're missing the point. I'm trying to tell you...

ELLE

No, I think I'm getting the point perfectly: She doesn't like your girlfriend.

A pot on the stove starts to boil over. Chad grabs it by the handle to move it off the burner, forgetting to use a pot holder.

CHAD

Ow! Fuck!

He shakes his hand and puts in his mouth.

CHAD (cont'd)

From a publicity perspective.

Now Chad goes to the sink and runs cold water over the burnt hand. Elle has not moved to help him or changed her expression to sympathize.

ELLE

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

(over the sound of running
water)
Which is a pretty goddamn significant
perspective in your life, isn't it?

CHAD
Elle, take it easy. I'm just--

ELLE
Breaking up with me?

CHAD
You're being absurd.

ELLE
I'm being absurd? I'm being absurd?

CHAD
Yes.

ELLE
So this is about me now. This is *my*
fault that *your* publicist is trying to
meddle in *our* personal life.

Pause. Simultaneously they smell something. Chad moves from
the sink to open the oven door. Smoke billows out when he
does.

This time he remembers the pot holder and uses it to pull out
the center rack, revealing the burnt remains of a pot roast.

CHAD
This is ruined.

Elle starts untying her apron and heading for the door.

ELLE
Yeah, no shit.
MUSIC OVER:

EXT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Elle drives Eliot's car into the driveway, gets out and goes
inside.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - ELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

She enters her bedroom dejectedly and turns on a light. She
closes the door and looks around the walls decorated pretty
much as it was the day she moved out: a Culture Club poster,
a picture in a silver frame of her with her mom, another
picture on the wall of a pre-teen Elle atop a pony, smiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She looks at the bookshelf: it's lined with almost nothing but Samuel French editions of classic works of theater: "The Cherry Orchard," "The Glass Menagerie," "The Crucible," etc. Her fingers scan a row and come to rest upon "Equus," which she removes.

She plops down on the bed and starts reading it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - ELLE'S ROOM - LATER

Elle finishes "Equus", tosses it on the floor, reaches to the bookshelf nearby, pulls out another play and starts to read.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BLVD. - DAY

Eliot's car pulls into a parking space in front of The Hudson Theater, a dumpy, low-rent space. Elle gets out of the car and approaches. A hand-written sign on the door reads: "Hedda Gabler Auditions Today. Non-Represented Welcome." She pauses before it a moment and takes a deep breath.

ELLE (V.O.)

Chad was the obvious influence, certainly. But I can trace it back to when I saw the ashes of Tess DeCosta on the asphalt: I had seen myself in some weird way, and it frightened me.

She opens the door and enters.

INT. HUDSON THEATER - LATER

Elle is onstage with a scruffy-looking ACTOR. They are exchanging lines, the scruffy-guy with a maniacal frantiness. They stop and look out toward the seats.

ELLE (V.O.)

I had started something that had spun out of control. Now I had to stop it. But first I had to stop myself, and to do that I needed grounding. I knew that the theater, much as I had mocked it, could be that foundation.

The DIRECTOR, who has been watching from the audience, bounds up onto the stage nodding encouragement to Elle as he approaches her, arms wide.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - LATER

Elle beams with joy as she drives.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Eliot sits in an arm chair reading a magazine.
MUSIC DOWN.

Elle bursts through the front door into the front hall OS.

ELLE (O.S.)

Dad?!

ELIOT

Yes?

Elle pokes her head into the room puckishly.

ELLE

Just call me "Hedda."

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

At breakfast Elle rehearses lines with Eliot, both of them in robes and PJs, and both eating cereal.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - ELLE'S ROOM - LATER

Elle is again in her bed, reading another play.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - ELLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Elle again practices her lines, this time alone as she paces her room.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - ELLE'S ROOM - LATER

Elle sits in her bed reading a worn Samuel French copy of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler".

EXT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

A straight-on shot of Eliot's bungalow and the front lawn in the foreground. Early morning light. Birds may be heard CHIRPING.

The front door opens and Elle emerges in a nightgown, her hair a mess. She squints at the light and scratches her head. She bends down to pick up the newspaper, and when she stands up again, she looks forward:

A hungry pack of REPORTERS rushes her, yelling questions. Parked on the street behind them are a half-dozen TV news satellite trucks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER #1

Elle Hathaway, how do you feel about being accused of murder?

ELLE

Wha--?

REPORTER #2

The accusations published in today's Hollyworld are quite inflammatory. Do you--

REPORTER #3

Is there any truth to Charlie Satchel's charges?

Everybody's screaming.

ELLE

Wait. Wait! WAIT!

Everyone silences.

ELLE (cont'd)

What the hell are you talking about?

All the reporters start talking at once.

ELLE (cont'd)

One at a time!

REPORTER #1

Hollyworld writer Charlie Satchel claims that you're responsible for the deaths of Massey Hall, Dean Reilly, Susan Chandler and Mitchell Hartman. Any comment?

Elle stammers, unable to muster a reply.

ELLE

I'm sorry, I've got a rehearsal to go to.

INT. HUDSON THEATER - NIGHT

Elle is onstage rehearsing "Hedda Gabler" with another ACTOR. In the back is a MAN, 40s, looking like Ted Kaczinski or Steve McQueen in "An Enemy of the People"-- wild, unkempt hair, bearded, glasses, overweight, wearing a sportcoat, watching intently.

ACTOR

"So it must have been his wallet."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

"It must have been. And it was there, then, that he was found?"

ACTOR

"Yes, there. With a discharged pistol that had gone off in his breast-pocket. The shot had wounded him fatally."

ELLE

"In the chest - yes?"

ACTOR

"No. It hit him in the stomach."

ELLE

"That too! The ridiculous and the sordid lies like a curse on everything I so much as touch."

From the rear of the theater emerges a MAN, 40s, who is a conglomeration of TV detective-show detectives: He wears Columbo's raincoat, Kojak's bald pate, Jack Lord's skeptical visage, Sipowicz's mustache and beer belly-- and speaks in Andy Griffith's drawl. He's accompanied by a uniformed COP.

MAN

Elle Hathaway?

DIRECTOR

Excuse me, this is a closed rehearsal!

MAN

Not to me it ain't.

(producing badge)

Detective Cole, LAPD homicide. Elle Hathaway, you're under arrest.

A collective GASP escapes from those present. Detective Cole and the cop approach the stage.

ACTOR

What on earth for?

DETECTIVE COLE

For the murder of Henrietta Klein. Come on, honey, rehearsal's over.

ELLE

But that's ridiculous. I...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DETECTIVE COLE

You can incriminate yourself all you want
downtown, let's go.

The uniform climbs the steps to the stage, takes Elle by the arm and leads her back down.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BOULEVARD PAWN SHOP - DAY
MUSIC OVER:

A seedy pawnshop slumps on the southwest corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Gardner Avenue. Its gaudy and cluttered facade is not out of place in this eclectic neighborhood.

Eliot Hathaway's shitty K-car pulls up in front and parks.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He looks at the pawnshop window with its cheesy guitars, broken amplifiers and chintzy clothing displays, then at the seat beside him:

A blue felt bag from Tiffany, its drawstring wrapped around the neck of an Oscar statuette that sticks out.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot emerges peering into an envelope full of bills.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREETS - MOMENTS LATER

Eliot's car whizzes by. He's in a hurry getting on the 101 South at Santa Monica and Western.

EXT. METROPOLITAN DETENTION CENTER - LATER

The scary edifice lurks over the 101 at the corner of 7th and Alameda, downtown.

INT. METROPOLITAN DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Eliot sits in the waiting area for released prisoners, the now-empty envelope in his lap.

A cage-covered red light on the wall above a door marked "RELEASE" illumines. The door opens from the inside revealing a burly female CORRECTIONS OFFICER and Elle.

Elle rushes to her father who has a hard time standing. As he rises the empty envelope flutters to the floor. They hug and then Elle helps Eliot toward the exit.

MUSIC DOWN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FADE OUT.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

In her room at her Dad's house, Elle wades through her boxes of stuff. She finds a file folder and extracts from it a piece of paper, placing it on the card table next to her computer.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Charlie sits at a morning talk-show set with a HOST interviewing him.

HOST

We're back on "Good Morning L.A." with Hollyworld magazine reporter Charlie Satchel, who has just published a scandalous article charging actress Elle Hathaway, formerly of the hit ATV series "LAPD 90046", with the murder of a number of her colleagues. Charlie, thanks for being here.

CHARLIE

Charlie's glad to be here, Helen.

EXT. HUDSON THEATER - DAY

VOYEURS are lining up outside the theater. Some have brought lawn chairs, radios, coolers and other things to help them pass the time. A theater EMPLOYEE carrying a backpack makes his way to the door. He unlocks it and the people in line start yelling questions at him.

VOYEUR #1

Is this the play Elle Hathaway is in?

VOYEUR #2

What time does the box office open?

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

ANGLE on the sheet of paper: a print-out of the trajectory calculations for rigging the accelerator "accident" on the set of Susan Chandler's period drama.

ANGLE on the computer screen: Elle closes the document containing the calculations and drags that document to a floppy disk from her hard drive. She moves the copy on her hard drive to the trash and selects "Empty Trash." She ejects the disk and puts it and the hard copies of the calculations in a manila envelope.

EXT. HUDSON THEATER - DAY

One of the people in line holds a tiny TV; others are hovered around him. They're watching Charlie.

The TV shows Charlie, in another studio, with a Los Angeles backdrop behind him, sitting with an earpiece in his ear and looking into the camera.

CHARLIE

That's exactly right, Beth, and viewers of "This Morning" will be likewise stunned to learn that Hathaway not only disposed of a writer and a director who had wronged her, but noted actress Susan Chandler, who was up for a role Hathaway wanted...

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

Elle's ass sticks out of a closet in the front hall. She dumps a few items on the floor behind her, including the Big Bertha golf club she didn't end up needing. She rummages for something in the unseen storage space then extracts herself holding the wrist-rocket and a couple of throwing stars.

INT. ANOTHER TV STUDIO - DAY

Before a different L.A. backdrop, Charlie looks ever more comfortable in his new role as morning-talk-show star guest du jour. The earpiece dangles slightly from his ear.

CHARLIE

And that's the most amazing thing, Brad: Hathaway's sheer cold-bloodedness in her execution of these deeds. She pretended to be a friend to Henrietta, even while she was planning to murder her and steal her boyfriend, superstud Chad Hunt.

EXT. HUDSON THEATER - DAY

COPS have shown up to deal with the expanding crowd outside the theater. They're engaged in keeping them on the sidewalk, setting up orange cones to deflect traffic around the scene, etc.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - DAY

Elle composes a document in QuarkXpress: a fake receipt from an auto-body shop listing parts and repairs to a van.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the items listed is "receipt gold paint from front bumper & hood". The name on the "receipt" reads "Charlie Satchel". Finishing, she prints the document.

Elle stares at her printer as it does its job. She grabs the paper and looks it over. Elle loads all the evidence she has accumulated into a brown cardboard box: The fake receipt, the wrist-rocket and throwing stars and the manila envelope containing calculations and floppy disk.

INT. ELIOT'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER

She lifts the box and is moving to the door when the phone RINGS. She stops to decide whether to answer it or not, then puts down the box and gets to the phone on the third ring.

ELLE

Hello?

VOICE (O.S.)

Elle Hathaway?

ELLE

Yes?

VOICE (O.S.)

This is Dr. Herbert Moore; I'm calling from Cedars-Sinai. You are the daughter of Eliot Hathaway?

Elle's getting nervous about what's to come.

ELLE

Yes?

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

I'm very sorry, ma'am, but Mr. Hathaway suffered a massive stroke today.

ELLE

What?! But he just left here!

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

I'm sorry, ma'am. He collapsed at the Silent Movie Theater; the manager called 911, but there was nothing the paramedics could do. He was pronounced upon arrival.

Elle can only stutter as tears form in her eyes.

DR. MOORE (O.S.) (cont'd)

I'm sorry, but I have to ask you as sole surviving relative to come down and I.D.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. MOORE(cont'd)

the body. Official procedure, you understand.

ELLE

Um...yes, of course.

DR. MOORE (O.S.)

Will you be able to make it down tonight?

But Elle's not even listening.

INT. ELLE'S CAR - LATER

Elle drives stiffly through the Hollywood night. Tears stream down her cheeks. The box full of clues is beside her.

EXT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Elle pulls up across the street from Charlie's pink building.

EXT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Elle steps up to a door carrying the box and knocks.

No answer. She produces a lock-picking device, looks around, opens the door and enters.

INT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A light is on. Elle moves quickly to the computer on his messy desk. Wearing latex gloves, she inserts the floppy disk and starts copying documents onto his hard drive.

Done with that she removes a file from the box. From the file she removes the car receipt. INSERT of it. She rubs the receipt on the keyboard of Charlie's computer, puts it back in the folder, looks around and finds a filing cabinet. She inserts the file into the cabinet.

From the box she extracts the wrist-rocket and throwing stars. She starts opening doors until she finds a closet.

She places the wrist-rocket and the throwing stars in the pocket of a coat which hangs within.

She picks up the box, turns to the door, surveys the scene and takes a deep breath.

ELLE

(exhaling)

Sorry, Charlie.

And she's out the door.

EXT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Elle's car is on the street a few doors down.

INT. ELIOT'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Elle sits in the driver's seat waiting and looking forlorn. She reaches into her Kate Spade bag and removes her wallet, extracting from it a photo of her father. She's looking at it when Charlie's beat-up van drives by.

The van parks in a carport under his building and Charlie emerges.

Elle watches this, waits till he's inside his apartment, then starts the car and drives off.

EXT. STRIP MALL PARKING LOT - LATER

Elle's car pulls up and she gets out, goes to the pay phone, drops a quarter in and dials.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Detective Cole works at his desk in a deserted station house. His phone RINGS.

DETECTIVE COLE

Hello?

ELLE (V.O.)

(parody of muffled criminal
voice)

I think Charlie Satchel might have
something to tell you about the Chandler
and Hartman murders. 343 North Curson.

EXT. MINI-MART - NIGHT

Elle hangs up the phone and walks to her car. She gets in and pulls out of the parking lot and is gone.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Detective Cole is still at his desk.

DETECTIVE COLE

Hello?

The line is dead. Detective Cole looks at the handset curiously then hangs it up.

EXT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Detective Cole and a pair of UNIFORMED COPS stand at the door of Satchel's apartment. Detective Cole knocks.

DETECTIVE COLE
Charlie Satchel?

CHARLIE (O.S.)
Who wants to know?

DETECTIVE COLE
Fuckin' LAPD, that's who. Open up.

Satchel appears through a crack in the door, behind the security chain.

CHARLIE
Let's see a badge.

Detective Cole dutifully produces his badge.

DETECTIVE COLE
Satisfied?

CHARLIE
Can't blame Charlie for being careful.

DETECTIVE COLE
Whatever. Let me in.

Charlie does as instructed and the three Johnny Laws go inside.

INT. CHARLIE SATCHEL'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The detective occupies Charlie with questions while the officers poke around.

DETECTIVE COLE
So I got a hunch you may know something more about the Chandler case than you're letting on.

CHARLIE
You mean you got a *tip* Charlie Satchel knows more than he's letting on.

DETECTIVE COLE
A *hunch*.

Charlie sees the uniforms going through his stuff and protests.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLIE

Hey, you can't do that!

DETECTIVE COLE

You let us in, we can do whatever we want. Evans v. Atlanta, 1983. Go ahead, look it up.

Charlie sighs dejectedly. One of the cops speaks up.

COP #1

Uh, Boss, think I got something here.

He holds up the file folder Elle planted. Detective Cole comes over.

CHARLIE

Hey, you planted that!

DETECTIVE COLE

Shut up!

(to Cop #1)

What is it?

COP #1

Looks like calculations of some kind.

DETECTIVE COLE

(to Charlie)

All right, buddy, what's the big idea?

CHARLIE

Unghflwhkk...

COP #2

(looking in the closet)

Detective! You better take a look at this.

He turns around, holding the wrist-rocket and throwing stars.

COP #2 (cont'd)

Goddamn serial murderer.

DETECTIVE COLE

Call downtown and get a warrant over here. We're doing this by the book. Soon as it gets here, I want you to go through everything-- cabinets, computer, *everything*. Got it?

COP #1

Got it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DETECTIVE COLE
 (to Charlie)
 You're coming with me.

He grabs the incredulous Charlie Satchel by the arm and escorts him to the door.

CHARLIE
 But-

DETECTIVE COLE
 Yeah, yeah, let me guess: You were set up, right?

CHARLIE
 Right!

DETECTIVE COLE
 By who, Elle Hathaway?

CHARLIE
 I don't know!

DETECTIVE COLE
 Asshole.

EXT. HUDSON THEATER - NIGHT

A spotlight swirls from its spot directly in front of the theater entrance. Traffic has been blocked off in both directions. COPS try to control the large and boisterous CROWD. Television trucks with satellite dishes are parked across the street.

INT. HUDSON THEATER - SAME

In the theater proper, Elle is onstage taking final bows following what was, judging from the AUDIENCE's enthusiastic response, a tremendous performance.

INT. HUDSON THEATER - BACKSTAGE - LATER

Outside a door with a star and a placard with the name "Elle Hathaway" on it, well-dressed STARFUCKERS are pleading with a SECURITY GUARD for entry.

STARFUCKER #1
 But we went to high school together!

STARFUCKER #2
 I'm her dealer!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SECURITY GUARD

Sorry folks, I got instructions: only
cast and crew admitted.

Chad pushes his way through the crowd. The Security Guard
sees him.

SECURITY GUARD (cont'd)

With the exception of Mr. Hunt here.

CHAD

Thanks.

The Security Guard turns and opens the door slightly,
shielding the narrow crack from those who would barge
through. Chad squeezes himself in.

INT. HUDSON THEATER - ELLE'S DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The NOISE outside is nearly silenced when the door closes
behind Chad. He sees Elle sitting before her vanity, in a
robe with a headband on and cold-cream all over her face.
She removes it slowly through this scene; they only look at
each other through the mirror.

CHAD

You look surprised.

Elle shrugs.

CHAD (cont'd)

Didn't I ever tell you what a big Ibsen
fan I am?

Still nothing.

CHAD (cont'd)

Elle, you were terrific. Really
tremendous.

ELLE

C'mon, Chad, what are you doing here,
really?

CHAD

I've been thinking of how I could get you
to realize how ridiculous you were being.

ELLE

Come up with anything?

CHAD

Not really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELLE

Was I being ridiculous? Because I really hope that's the case.

CHAD

Elle, I only told you about Sherry as an example of what I loathe about this town. About what I am.

ELLE

You could have called, you know; it's been awhile.

CHAD

Would you have talked to me?

ELLE

No.

CHAD

That's what I figured. Listen, can we just fucking forget Sherry. Because I really miss you.

She pauses and stares at him a moment. Then she stands, turns and throws her arms around him, getting cold cream on his cheek.

ELLE

I missed you too. But I want you to fire that bitch.

CHAD

Fired.

A KNOCK at the door.

ELLE

Yeah?

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

(talking through the door)

Sorry, Miss Hathaway, there's a guy here who looks a helluva lot like Trent Materine the last time he was photographed, plus twenty years.

ELLE

Who's he say he is?

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)

Trent Materine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ELLE
(whispers to Chad)
Who the hell is Trent Materine?

CHAD
(also whispering)
"Dust on the Butterfly's Wings"?

ELLE
Never heard of it.

CHAD
Let him in. Trust me on this.

ELLE
(to Security Guard)
Let him in.

The door opens a crack and in walks the shady figure who's been watching Elle rehearse.

MATERINE
Thanks.

CHAD
Thank you. "Dust" was the movie that made me want to become an actor.

MATERINE
Thank you for saying so. It made me want to become a hermit.

CHAD
I can understand that.

MATERINE
Miss Hathaway, I'm Trent Materine. I'm looking to do another picture-- this is all for us and these four walls, of course-- and I've been watching you rehearse, and I saw tonight's performance, and I want you for the lead.

ELLE
I'm flattered, but I want to do a script my father wrote.

CHAD
Honey, don't push your luck here..

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ELLE

No, I'm putting my foot down for once.
My next role will be one created by my
father.

MATERINE

And he is?

ELLE

Eliot Hathaway.

MATERINE

The "This Green Valley" Eliot Hathaway?

ELLE

The very same.

MATERINE

You drive a hard bargain, but I'm
committed to you, so...

ELLE

OK, then. Shall I send you some scripts?

MATERINE

Sure.

He produces a business card.

CHAD

(to Elle)

So, any men in any of these scripts?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Detective Cole sits at his desk poring over files marked
"HATHAWAY, ELLE" and "SATCHEL, CHARLIE" while he eats a
sandwich with one hand. In BG a TV plays the film's opening
scene on the E! network.

REPORTER (V.O.)

And here comes Elle Hathaway, who may
have only come up on your radar when she
was wrongfully accused of the now-
infamous Charlie Satchel murders, but was
in fact a main player in "LAPD 90046" for
many years. Tonight she is joined by her
new boyfriend, the brightest star in
today's Hollywood Milky Way, Chad Hunt.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER(cont'd)

Elle, by the way, has just been signed to star in Pinnacle Pictures' next blockbuster, a film directed by Trent Materine and written by her late father...

Cole finishes his sandwich and leans back in his cheap uncomfortable chair, chewing the last bite. He crumples the sandwich wrapper in a ball and tosses it to a garbage can.

On the TV the flashes from the PAPARAZZI'S cameras sparkle away and slowly consume the screen as the CAMERA moves in on it and we...

FADE TO WHITE.