

EXT. CEDAR FALLS, IOWA - ESTABLISHING SHOTS - DAY

It is a beautiful fall day in the small town of Cedar Falls, Iowa, a university town with a friendly atmosphere. The houses are small but cute, the shops are modern enough to avoid looking too much like a stereotypical movie "small town," the university itself is bustling with activity...

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

...and on this beautiful day, we arrive at a nice small town Protestant church...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

...where a somber funeral service is in progress inside. There are perhaps a hundred people present as we look on from the back of the church at the closed casket ceremony.

In the front row of the ceremony, RICHARD CARR sits alone in mourning. He is in his early or mid 40s, good looking in a sad, haggard way, wearing a dark suit and staring forward stoically as a hymn is sung around him.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - DAY

In a fantastically stylish condominium overlooking a mountain view, we meet ALPHONSE, late 40s, dressed in quite a dapper fashion, stylish designer suit and tie, immaculate grooming, a set of diamond earrings gleaming from his ears. He is sorting mail at his marble coffee table as he speaks into a cell phone.

A certain letter catches his attention, which he immediately withdraws from the pile...

ALPHONSE
Can I call you back?

He hangs up and takes a close look at the impeccable feminine handwriting, before opening the letter.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The ceremony is drawing to a close, and people are starting to file out of the sanctuary. Richard takes a step up to the coffin, touches it briefly, then turns to leave.

EXT. SPEEDBOAT ON THE OCEAN - DAY

On a gorgeous sunny afternoon, a speedboat floats lazily in sight of an excellent beach.

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Loud goth rock music is pumping out of the speedboat's stereo, as two young toughs - FIONA and MALCOLM - laze about on vacation. Fiona is in her late twenties, with enormous, wild black hair, stark and colorful makeup, stylish sunglasses, and a bikini vaguely reminiscent of chain mail. She lounges at the back of the boat, smoking a cigarette.

At the front of the boat, Malcolm fishes through a cooler for some fancy beers. He is tall, muscular, heavily tattooed, with spiked blond hair and a gold chain around his neck.

Fiona's cell phone, sitting next to her on the bench, rings.

FIONA
(shouting)
Hey, turn the music down!

MALCOLM
(shouting back)
What?

FIONA
Turn the music down!

MALCOLM
What?

FIONA
You jackass, turn the fucking music down!

MALCOLM
What?

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Richard stands outside the entryway to the church, shaking hands of people who are leaving, a gracious, smiling figure.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alphonse holds an elegant handwritten letter in his hand as he speaks urgently into his cell phone.

ALPHONSE
Did you get a letter from Marion?

EXT. SPEEDBOAT ON THE OCEAN - DAY

The music gone, Malcolm sits down next to Fiona and offers her a beer, which she refuses as she sits up.

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FIONA

We haven't checked our mail in a few days.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - DAY

ALPHONSE

Check your mail and call me back.

He hangs up, then stares out his balcony window, very concerned.

EXT. SPEEDBOAT ON THE OCEAN - DAY

Fiona hangs up her phone, irritated, and takes the beer from Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Who dares interrupt our vacation?

FIONA

That was Alphonse.

MALCOLM

Ah, shit.

FIONA

We gotta go back.

MALCOLM

We just fucking got out here.

FIONA

Don't whine. You sound like a girl.

MALCOLM

(deliberately whining)
But Fiiiiiiiiioooooooooona...

FIONA

Drive the boat, bitch.

Moments later, the speedboat is RACING OFF TOWARD THE BEACH with Malcolm at the helm, grinning crazily as he accelerates beyond safe limits.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

As the remaining attendees mill about in front of the church, head for their cars, etc., Richard is approached by a young FUNERAL DIRECTOR in a crisp suit.

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They exchange a few words, then Richard withdraws an envelope and hands it to him. The man nods, then disappears into the crowd.

Moments later, the PASTOR of the church approaches and shakes Richard's hands. Richard has an envelope for him as well...

INT. PARLOR - DAY

We are in a dark, mysterious parlor, where MEXICO SANTIAGO D'AMORETTO and a female CUSTOMER sit at a small table, with Tarot cards spread out between them. Mexico is in her late 30s or early 40s, dressed in a smart, colorful business-style suit, hair stylish and immaculate, attractive in an offbeat fashion. She is a consummate professional as she reads the fate of the poor older woman across the table from her.

MEXICO

...which is how I know he's cheating.

CUSTOMER

(softly)
Oh my god.

MEXICO

But that's not the worst part, I'm afraid. Look at how you have the Tower intersecting the eight *here*, and notice the eight is *inverted*. I can't imagine a worse arrangement, unfortunately, this is very very bad, because it signifies that you've got-- oh, can you hold on?

(she pulls out her cell phone and answers it)
Hello?

(pause, then to her customer)
You'll have to excuse me for a second, dear.

The customer is left alone with a stricken look on her face.

INT. PARLOR - BACK OFFICE - DAY

Mexico steps into her business office, a small closet-sized room with a desk, a filing cabinet, and miscellaneous office supplies - as well as a rack of PISTOLS and SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONRY on the back wall.

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MEXICO

Alphonse, it's been so long since I heard your dulcet voice! I figured you must have finally decided to chase your dream of joining the Vatican secret service.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alphonse is not amused by Mexico's jocularly.

ALPHONSE

Cute. Did Marion write you?

INT. PARLOR - BACK OFFICE - DAY

Mexico glances at a small pile of unopened mail on her desk, and immediately begins sorting it. She comes up with an envelope addressed in a familiar feminine handwriting...

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - DAY

The funeral ended, Richard goes to his car - a beat-up old Volvo - and climbs inside.

Moments later, he is roaring off toward home.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

From atop a hill, we look down on a picturesque city street in Cedar Falls. Amidst the trees and the well kept lawns and the beautiful houses, we notice one EXTREMELY LARGE, DARK HOUSE on the corner of this street. The other houses on this street are definitely nice, but this house seems outrageous in its splendor. A brick wall surrounds the property. Richard's Volvo pulls up to the gate, which opens automatically, and Richard speeds up the driveway.

SLOWLY MOVING CLOSER AND CLOSER, we see the house was once most likely quite impressive but has begun deteriorating visibly: a lawn that isn't kept, battered lawn ornaments, weathered paint, etc. The impression given is one of a Gothic mansion of sorts, yet its apparent eeriness is due more to abandonment than any sense of deliberate menace.

We continue moving closer and closer as Richard heads into the house, slowly FLOATING OVER THE LAWN until eventually we arrive at the house's attic window. We enter the house via this attic window...

INT. MANSION - ATTIC - DAY

...and find ourselves in the attic itself, exposed beams and woodwork and insulation, mounds of old clothing and books and artifacts, dust and cobwebs, old furniture and memories, and we CONTINUE MOVING, from the attic window down through the ceiling beams and through the attic to the open attic doorway...

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - DAY

...down a ladder into a spare bedroom, out into a hallway, and from here, we FALL SLOWLY DOWN the center of a vast, magnificent central stairwell, down to the main floor of the house...

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

...and SLIDE INTO the living room. SLOW SWEEP of the room shows us dust and disarray, a mess that has been growing for some time now, and also, pictures on the wall of Richard and his lovely wife MARION in happier days...

...and one of these photos gives us a portrait of Marion wearing an astonishingly elegant and beautiful BLOOD RED PARTY DRESS, with her hair done up in spectacular style, wearing fancy jewelry, and smiling out of the picture frame at us...

...and then we are MOVING THROUGH the living room, over the classic black grand piano...

INT. MANSION - DINING ROOM - DAY

...and into the dining room, where a beautiful mahogany table is the centerpiece of a glorious room, practically a museum set with mirrors on all the walls and elegant crystal on the mantle above the fireplace. But we are STILL MOVING...

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

...through a small hallway, and into the enormous kitchen. A large cooking island is the centerpiece of the professionally styled kitchen, with stainless steel appliances standing out in stark contrast to the mess the room has become: piles of dishes, many empty bottles of beer, etc. Richard removes an imported beer from the fridge, opens it and takes a drink, then sets the beer down and removes his jacket and tie.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - DAY

Alphonse's bedroom is a spartan affair, with little decoration of any kind beyond the king-sized bed and a very modern looking wardrobe.

Alphonse is already packing clothes into a small travel bag.

ALPHONSE

She's already paid us. Check your bank account. She wired it in directly.

INT. BEACH BUNGALOW - DAY

As Malcolm stands on the balcony of a small but gorgeous beach hut, nursing a beer, Fiona paces back and forth on her cell phone, a letter in her hand. Their bungalow is trashed as though they've been partying there for weeks, but there are also some signs these are not your average vacationers: racks of fancy electronic gear, stacks of DVDs that go to the ceiling, a big rack on the wall that holds two dozen FANCY KNIVES...

FIONA

I am not going to Cedar Falls, Iowa, for fuck's sake.

MALCOLM

(overhearing)
Iowa?

Fiona shushes him.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - DAY

Alphonse is insistent...

ALPHONSE

She's paid us, and she says it's important.

INT. BEACH BUNGALOW - DAY

FIONA

If it was that important, why didn't she tell us what the goddamn job was?

CONTINUED:

MALCOLM
 (coming in off the
 balcony)
 What the fuck is in Iowa?

Fiona shushes him again, more violently this time.

INT. CONDOMINIUM - BEDROOM - DAY

Alphonse closes up his travel bag.

ALPHONSE
 Don't be an idiot, Fiona. You
 don't commit the details to paper.
 We're going, and that's final.
 I've already spoken to Mexico.

INT. BEACH BUNGALOW - DAY

A look of fierce hatred crosses Fiona's face.

FIONA
 Oh that's just great. Me and the
 super bitch, together again at
 last.

MALCOLM
 I mean, I realize corn has to come
 from *somewhere*--

FIONA
 (to Malcolm)
 Will you shut the fuck up?

She smacks him upside the head.

MALCOLM
 (shouting right back)
 Dammit, don't spill my beer on the
 carpet! Were you born in a goddamn
 trailer park?

INT. MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - TOWARD EVENING

We're HOVERING NEAR THE CEILING, as Richard changes clothes, out of his suit and into something more comfortable, jeans, a nice shirt, etc. The bedroom is quite beautiful, with a king sized bed and a fireplace, and a love seat near the windows. Piles of clothes scattered about the room, however, obscure some of the room's attractiveness. A bedside stand holds a wide array of fancy crystal snifters of alcohol.

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The shot near the ceiling is shaky, jerky, and can't quite come to focus on Richard...

Richard grabs a bottle of brandy from the bedside stand.

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - TOWARD EVENING

Slowly Richard makes his way down the grand stairwell. We follow him from above and behind, the same shaky view we saw before, perhaps even slightly distorted, as though something is watching Richard just out of his perception...

INT. MANSION - STUDY - TOWARD EVENING

Richard finally arrives in his private study, an elegant sitting room with bookshelves stacked with solemn volumes, a fireplace on one wall, great leather chairs that dominate the room. On the mantle above the fireplace is a beautiful portrait of Marion, a striking young woman with beautiful eyes. We HOVER ABOVE Richard as he raises a quiet toast to her.

The shot seems to DISSOLVE INTO CHAOS moments before we...

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. MANSION - AFTERNOON

The weather has taken a turn for the dramatic: it is pouring down rain, lightning and thunder filling the sky in a typically midwestern summer thunderstorm. The rain is absolutely impressive in its intensity.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Richard is working in the kitchen, wearing a very nice casual sweater and blue jeans, chopping vegetables for dinner. A buzzer sounds, and Richard looks up.

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - AFTERNOON

A SMALL VIDEO MONITOR near the front door gives us a view of who is at the gate. A nondescript rental car has arrived, and we can make out Alphonse leaning out the window, pressing the buzzer. Richard reaches for an intercom and presses the talk button.

RICHARD

Can I help you?

ALPHONSE (O.S. ON INTERCOM)

Hi, I'm here to see Marion.

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Richard pauses, collects his thoughts.

RICHARD
Do you have a delivery for Marion?

ALPHONSE (O.S. ON INTERCOM)
No, I'm a friend of hers. She's
expecting me. Is she around?

RICHARD
You'd better come in.

Richard presses another button, and in the video monitor, we see the gate start to swing open for Alphonse.

I/E. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Looking out the grand living room window, Richard sees Alphonse pull in and park behind his Volvo.

EXT. MANSION - FRONT STEPS - AFTERNOON

Alphonse hurries to the door, getting entirely soaked in the process.

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - AFTERNOON

Richard opens the door just as Alphonse reaches up to knock.

ALPHONSE
(very polite)
Hi, Marion invited me... is she in?
Are you the... butler?

RICHARD
(laughs politely)
No, we don't have a butler. I'm
the husband.

He offers his hand to shake, which Alphonse takes. We can't help but notice Alphonse's slightly confused look.

ALPHONSE
Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I'm
Alphonse Bernoulli. Didn't you--

RICHARD
(charming)
Yeah, we used to have a butler, but
I canned him for drinking my brandy
on the job.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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RICHARD (CONT'D)
Well, that, and I caught him
wearing my wife's clothes, but I
might have forgiven him for that if
he wasn't stealing my brandy. I'm
Richard. Come on in out of the
rain.

INT. MANSION - FOYER - AFTERNOON

Richard closes the door behind Alphonse, graciously takes
Alphonse's coat.

ALPHONSE
Thank you.

As Richard hangs the coat up in a closet, Alphonse takes a
look at his surroundings and is duly impressed.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)
This is an incredible house.

RICHARD
Oh, you've never visited?

ALPHONSE
I've never had the chance.

RICHARD
I'll give you a tour later, but I
just started dinner. You're
welcome to join me. I make a mean
pasta sauce, and I do mean 'mean.'

ALPHONSE
That sounds lovely. Is... Is
Marion--

Richard is heading off down the hallway, with Alphonse
keeping pace.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Richard strides in confidently and heads to the far side of
the kitchen.

RICHARD
You want any coffee or beer or
anything?

ALPHONSE
Yes, thank you, a beer would be
wonderful.

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RICHARD

Sit down, make yourself
comfortable.

Alphonse moves to the kitchen table and has a seat as Richard grabs a beer from the fridge. Alphonse looks about the place, taking in details, glancing into the dining room...

Richard brings a couple of beers to the table and sits down opposite him. Alphonse takes his and has a sip, eyeing Richard, Richard returning the stare and trying to be gentle.

ALPHONSE

Is... is Marion out? I know I'm a
little early, but I couldn't...
wait to see her.

RICHARD

(gently)
When was the last time you spoke to
Marion, Mr. Bernoulli?

ALPHONSE

Alphonse.

RICHARD

(smiles)
Alphonse.

ALPHONSE

(a slight pause, then he
smiles)
The last time I spoke to Marion...
would have been a few months ago, I
spoke to her on the telephone. But
I recently received a letter from
her. She asked me to visit her
here, since it's been... quite some
time since we've seen each other.
(pause, smiles)
I wasn't expecting to see you, she--

RICHARD

Yeah, I was supposed to be in
Minneapolis right now, at a
conference. She always invited
friends over when I went out of
town. She hated being alone.

ALPHONSE

Is something wrong?

(CONTINUED)

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RICHARD

I'm not sure how to tell you this,
so I guess the simple direct
approach will have to do.

(pause)

Marion's dead. She was killed in
an accident.

At first Alphonse seems to register no reaction. His gaze
remains fixed on Richard -- the bearer of bad tidings -- for
an unusually long time...

ALPHONSE

(quietly)

When did this happen?

RICHARD

About a week ago.

ALPHONSE

What kind of accident?

Richard makes as if to answer, but Alphonse interrupts.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)

(genuinely disturbed)

No... Why don't you wait to tell me
the details. I'm not at all sure I
can... manage this right now.

And as the news sinks in, slowly but surely Alphonse becomes
more visibly disturbed by the news, letting his gaze drop...
the formality of his demeanor seems to loosen just a bit...

RICHARD

Were you a close friend of
Marion's?

ALPHONSE

(looks up slowly)

Indeed. We took our university
studies together. We've kept in
good contact throughout the years,
but... it was not unusual for me to
go months on end without hearing
from her.

RICHARD

I'm very sorry.

Richard reaches across the table and places his hand on
Alphonse's arm, a small gesture of comfort.

(CONTINUED)

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Then he gets up, heads back to the cooking island, to resume chopping vegetables.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You just missed the funeral by a day. We had the service yesterday. I'm sorry I couldn't track down all of her old friends.

ALPHONSE

(trying to collect his wits)

I... there are others coming to see Marion... arriving some time tonight...

RICHARD

You're welcome to stay and wait for them, if you like.

ALPHONSE

I'm terribly sorry about the intrusion... at a time like this...

RICHARD

No, no, don't worry about it, Alphonse. You were a friend of my wife, you're more than welcome to stay. Your friends, too. I wouldn't mind the company to be honest.

ALPHONSE

I greatly appreciate it.

RICHARD

Did you travel far?

ALPHONSE

Yes, I... I came from Italy.

RICHARD

Holy moly. Ever been to Iowa before?

Alphonse shakes his head.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Welcome to the great breadbasket of these here United States. I'll make sure you get a big bowl of corn flakes in the morning.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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RICHARD (CONT'D)
(getting up from the
table)

Listen, make yourself at home.
I'll go make up some guest
bedrooms, then I'll fix us some
pasta and I'll make sure you get
enough beers tonight, how's that
sound?

ALPHONSE
Yes, that would be wonderful.

As Richard heads for the door, he stops and turns to face Alphonse again. Alphonse sits at the table, slowly wringing his hands together, doesn't notice Richard looking back at him. Richard pauses only a moment, then turns and briskly makes his way out the door.

And then, abruptly, we are once again HOVERING near the ceiling, watching ALPHONSE at the kitchen table, the camera shaking with tension and anticipation. Alphonse looks up to where the camera is...

...and seeing nothing, he turns back to his beer, has another deep, long sip.

INT. MANSION - DINING ROOM - TOWARD EVENING

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Dinner is served: Alphonse and Richard sit on opposite ends of the giant dining room table. There is pasta, bread, and of course, good wine.

RICHARD
Can I get you another glass of
wine?

ALPHONSE
Yes, thank you.

RICHARD
Catch.

Richard takes the bottle next to him and slides it down the length of the polished table. Alphonse catches it neatly.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Good job! Marion and I used to
love doing that. It's the only
damn reason we kept this ridiculous
table. "Pass the salad, sweetie."
Zoom!

(MORE)

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RICHARD (CONT'D)

Sometimes one of us would miss and a main course would go flying all over the floor.

ALPHONSE

The pasta sauce is fantastic.

RICHARD

(happy for the complement)
Thanks! It's literally something I pull out of my ass every time I decide to make it. I have a lot of good recipes up there, believe it or not. So you and Marion were close? I'm sure she told you all about me.

ALPHONSE

She painted a fair portrait of you for me, yes.

RICHARD

(completely affable)
I've completely lost track of most of my old college pals. Bunch of bums anyway, it's amazing I graduated. Did you come to the wedding? She had something like 4,000 friends at the wedding, but the only ones I remember are the ones who wore very slinky dresses.

ALPHONSE

No, sadly I was working at the time and couldn't be there.

RICHARD

What is it you do for a living?

ALPHONSE

I'm an independent contractor.

RICHARD

Yeah?

ALPHONSE

(nods)
Professional consulting work. It's a very... lucrative business. I set my own hours and my own rates. I enjoy the freedom. Are you still a professor at the university here in town?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD

Uh huh.

ALPHONSE

And what do you profess?

RICHARD

Philosophy. Ethics and morality, that sort of thing. Important questions like, "If the Pope shits in the woods, is it a *holy shit*?" You want dessert? I got strawberries. They're organic, which I guess means they're better than the solid plastic strawberries I've been getting.

ALPHONSE

No, no thank you.

(he finishes a glass of wine, pours yet another)

This is an amazing house you have here.

RICHARD

Yeah. Come on, grab your drink, let's take the tour.

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - EVENING

Richard and Alphonse walk slowly down a grand hallway, glasses of wine in hand. The hallway opens into eight or ten different rooms, and is furnished in a grand old style, small tables holding fancy vases, paintings of parents and grandparents and other ancestors on the walls, dimly lit chandeliers.

RICHARD

Marion's dad was ambassador to Liechtenstein. He made a killing in some business deals while he was there, and built this house as soon as he quit. This is where Marion was raised. Look, here's Marion's old bedroom.

INT. MANSION - CHILD'S ROOM - EVENING

A perfectly preserved teenager's bedroom awaits the two of them as they step through the door. Posters from Marion's youth still adorn the walls, pop stars of the day. A beautiful origami mobile is suspended over the bed.

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Alphonse only takes a single step inside. He is deeply moved. They turn to go, and the door closes quietly.

A sudden unnatural breeze blows through the room, and the origami mobile begins SPINNING WILDLY...

INT. MANSION - BILLIARD ROOM - EVENING

An absolutely stereotypical, classically furnished, rich person's billiards room, with a gorgeous table in the center, and a wet bar near the window.

RICHARD

We never ever, ever, ever, ever,
ever, ever, ever used this room.

(pause)

Sure is pretty though, isn't it?

Alphonse nods.

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

As they come out of the billiard room, the doorbell buzzer sounds.

RICHARD

Ah, I bet your friends are here.
How many people are coming? Enough
for a really rowdy shindig?

ALPHONSE

Three.

RICHARD

Hmm. I suppose the right three
people and enough bourbon and we
could manage a really rowdy
shindig.

ALPHONSE

I'm not much in the mood for a
rowdy shindig.

RICHARD

Excellent. It will be rowdy and
surly, too.

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - AFTERNOON

The video monitor shows a soaking wet young woman - MIA - huddled in the pouring rain next to the gate, no car in sight, no umbrella, just a thin-looking coat wrapped around her.

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RICHARD

That one of your friends?

Alphonse shakes his head.

Richard presses the talk button on the intercom.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

MIA (V.O. ON INTERCOM)

(frustrated and relieved)

Oh, God, I hope so. Listen, my car broke down about a block down the road, and my cell phone's battery is dead, and no one else on the block is home, and I just need to use someone's phone to call Triple A and get out of the rain for a while, can I do that? Can I do that here?

(pause)

Hello?

RICHARD

(to Alphonse)

See, in a big city like, I don't know, Minneapolis or something, I would have to have my bodyguard go out and beat her up. But here in Iowa, I can be friendly and invite her in. That's part of Iowa's charm, that we're all stupid like that.

(into intercom)

Sure, come on in.

He buzzes her in.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Alphonse stands near the window, gazing out into the storm. Mia is finishing up a phone call. She is an insanely attractive young woman, dressed in college student thrift store fashion. She hangs up just as Richard arrives with a steaming mug of hot apple cider, which he graciously offers her.

MIA

Oh, man, thank you *so* much.

(she sips eagerly)

Fucking yum!

(MORE)

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MIA (CONT'D)

So I talked to Triple A. They say it could be hours before they have any trucks. Apparently this storm has caused a lot of wrecks tonight. Would you mind if I stuck around til they call back?

RICHARD

Not at all. Actually if you like, I have some warm women's clothes upstairs, you could take a nice hot shower and get your body temperature back to a sane level.

MIA

Right on, dude, that sounds perfect.

As they leave....

MIA (CONT'D)

This place is huge! It's the size of Mason City for god's sake!

RICHARD

No no, Mason City has that big mall now.

MIA

Oh, right, right...

CROSS FADE TO:

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Alphonse is alone, playing something jazzy and menacing on the grand piano. The doorbell buzzer sounds.

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - EVENING

Alphonse sees another rental car in the video monitor. Malcolm is at the wheel of the car. Alphonse buzzes them in through the gate.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Alphonse leads Malcolm and Fiona into the living room, which they take in with some minor appreciation. Malcolm is wearing an extravagant, almost Victorian outfit, mostly black, a cape, sunglasses, black fingernails, extreme boots. Fiona wears similar neo-Gothic apparel, but is more vampish, with cleavage and heavy makeup.

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They scope the living room out with practiced eyes, as though anything in the room were fair game to be stolen.

MALCOLM

This is a nice place, Alphonse. I never ever thought I'd get a chance to visit Iowa of all places, but this ain't so bad after all.

FIONA

Where's the super bitch?

ALPHONSE

She hasn't arrived yet.

MALCOLM

Of course, there's nothing but corn in this state, which always reminds me of "Children of the Corn," which is why I don't eat corn, because that movie was *fucked up*, but that's not Iowa's fault.

FIONA

And where's Marion?

ALPHONSE

I have some...unfortunate news.

Fiona and Malcolm turn their complete attention to Alphonse.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)

Marion is dead.

A long silence follows. We can judge from Fiona and Malcolm's expressions that they are both disturbed by the news...

FIONA

How? When did it happen?

ALPHONSE

According to her husband, she was killed in an accident a week ago.

(pause)

I'm sorry I couldn't contact you earlier. I only found out myself when I got here.

FIONA

(stunned)

What happened to her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALPHONSE

I haven't yet asked about the details. Apparently we just missed the funeral.

MALCOLM

Well, I guess that means we can leave, right? No sense hanging around if--

ALPHONSE

We were paid in advance, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Marion's dead. She ain't gonna notice.

FIONA

We don't even know what we're supposed to do. She was supposed to tell us tonight, which clearly ain't gonna happen.

Long pause.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Let me guess. We're gonna ask Mexico to try to figure out Marion's last wishes, right?

ALPHONSE

That's exactly what we're going to do. We were paid in advance for this job, and I intend to see it through. Is that understood?

FIONA

Don't get snippy with me.

She sits down at the piano just as Richard enters.

RICHARD

I see more of Marion's friends have arrived. I'm Richard. Marion's husband.

ALPHONSE

This is Malcolm, and Fiona.

Malcolm strides up to Richard, shakes his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MALCOLM

This is a really nice place you got here.

RICHARD

Thanks.

MALCOLM

And it's in *Iowa*. I just never would have guessed that.

RICHARD

We do have architecture here.

MALCOLM

(to Fiona)

See, I never would have guessed that. I figured everyone here lived in *barns* or something.

FIONA

What happened to Marion?

Richard is about to answer, when the doorbell buzzer rings.

RICHARD

Hold that thought.

FIONA

Oh, I will.

Richard turns to leave...

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - EVENING

On the video screen, Richard sees another nondescript rental car at the gate. We recognize the driver as Mexico. He presses the talk button.

RICHARD

Are you here to see Marion?

MEXICO (V.O. ON INTERCOM)

No, Richard Carr, I'm here to see you.

A confused look crosses Richard's face as he buzzes her in.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Fiona grabs Malcolm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIONA

C'mon, let's case this joint.

MALCOLM

Oooh, I like it when we case joints. I get that *naughty* feeling I like so much.

They exit the living room through the dining room, leaving Alphonse alone with his thoughts. He watches them go, then turns back to the window.

I/E. MANSION - FOYER - EVENING

Richard opens the door for the glamorous Mexico, glamorous despite the rain. Her outfit is considerably more fashion vogue than the crisp professional attire we last saw her in.

MEXICO

Hello, my name is Mexico Santiago d'Amoretto. I take it you're Richard Carr?

Richard can only stand and gape. We watch Richard and Mexico stare each other down for a few moments, Mexico wearing a delicious smile. He is surprised to realize that he finds her quite attractive.

MEXICO (CONT'D)

Marion's husband, the professor? I'm so pleased to meet you, you have no idea how much I've heard about you over the years. And of course, you were supposed to be somewhere else tonight, weren't you? Let me see...ah yes, a conference in Minneapolis, I believe. And it's not like you to miss a professional opportunity like that...something must have come up, am I right? Something that, say, prevented Marion herself from answering the door for an old friend? I mean, I can assume she's not just...*tied up* somewhere is she, no, not at all, this is something much more serious, now isn't it...

Richard stares at her in complete astonishment as she rattles off this laundry list of details about his life...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...and Mexico decides to take a step toward him...

MEXICO (CONT'D)

The polite thing to do would be to
invite the lady in for a drink.

Richard considers this request, and slowly a dazed smile
appears on his face.

RICHARD

Would you like to come in for a
drink?

She feigns surprise, fakes a demure smile and pose, and says:

MEXICO

Why, I'd simply love to...

And she sweeps past him into the house...

INT. MANSION - FOYER - EVENING

Richard closes the door behind her. She stops in the foyer,
takes a look around, and finds herself quite impressed by the
interior design...

MEXICO

Why, Richard, this is quite the
place you have here. I couldn't be
more impressed.

He helps her out of her coat and hangs it in the closet...

MEXICO (CONT'D)

Something's wrong here, though, I
can feel it. Something is
definitely wrong...And yet you seem
so composed. It's quite an
astonishing trait.

(pause)

Are we intruding on you in any way?
I know your...your sorrow must be
very very deep...

RICHARD

What are you--

MEXICO

(cuts him off)

Sshhhh, don't worry about me, I'll
be fine. Could you get me a drink?

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mexico appears, followed by Richard, each of them holding a glass of brandy.

MEXICO

It's been such a strenuous day. I feel like I've been working for three weeks straight without so much as a coffee break.

She takes a sip, appreciates it deeply, smiles.

MEXICO (CONT'D)

This, of course, beats coffee by a mile.

Alphonse turns from the window, notices almost immediately the flirting between Mexico and Richard.

ALPHONSE

I see you've met Richard.

An intense, almost threatening look passes between Alphonse and Mexico...

Mexico smiles at Richard.

MEXICO

Yes, we've met.

Richard returns Mexico's smile.

INT. MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Fiona and Malcolm enter and start poking around Richard's personal belongings. A shower stops in the master bathroom. A set of dry women's clothes is laid out on the bed. Fiona picks up the underwear, looks at Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Those are nice, you should get some.

FIONA

You think he's already got a girlfriend?

MALCOLM

The funeral was yesterday.
(pause, shrugs)
Maybe that's where they met.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Picking up chicks at your dead wife's funeral, that's smooth. I wouldn't have pegged him as a smooth operator per se, but then I guess the rules are different in Iowa.

Mia emerges from the bathroom, wrapped in a towel, and promptly screams in sudden shock. Fiona, startled as all hell, immediately pulls a small pistol and points it at Mia's face, which causes Mia to scream again. An awkward pause follows. Then:

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Looks like someone needs to switch to decaf.

FIONA

Shut the fuck up already.

She puts her pistol away.

MALCOLM

Well, she's definitely hot, I'll give him that much.

FIONA

I said shut up.

MIA

(very calmly)

I'm sorry... Do you guys live here, or...?

MALCOLM

We're out of town guests.

MIA

Gotcha, well look...

(nervous laugh)

I'm just here until Triple A shows up. My, my car broke down, and I... Wow, you know, I'm just, I'm naked and you guys are...

Fiona stalks out. Malcolm lingers behind.

MIA (CONT'D)

And you guys have guns, I mean, you know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MALCOLM
Don't let her fool you, that was
just her cigarette lighter.

FIONA (O.S.)
Let's go, asshole!

And Malcolm wanders out, grabbing a bottle of whiskey off the night stand as he goes.

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Fiona and Malcolm make their way down the stairs, as Richard rushes up stairs to investigate Mia's scream.

MALCOLM
Hey homeboy, is this what passes
for whiskey around here? I mean,
do you actually drink this stuff?
Is it for polishing furniture?
What's the story here?

Richard snags the bottle away from Malcolm.

RICHARD
No, this is not for polishing
furniture.

Malcolm snags the bottle back.

MALCOLM
Easy there, big fella!

FIONA
Who's the screaming chick?

RICHARD
That's Mia.

FIONA
It's a little soon to start dating,
isn't it?

RICHARD
We're not dating.

FIONA
Oh perfect, casual fucking, that
makes it all better.

She stalks off down the stairs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

I'm not--

MALCOLM

(aside to Richard)

No, no, don't try reasoning with her. That just pisses her off.

Malcolm starts off after Fiona.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Tell you one thing, though, that chick up there is HOT...

FIONA (O.S.)

Will you shut up?

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Mexico comes into the dining room through the living room doors, followed by Alphonse. She is moving slowly, attempting to take in the "ambiance" of the room, and of the house.

MEXICO

So. Marion's dead. How did she die?

ALPHONSE

I have no idea.

MEXICO

I'll figure it out soon enough. Tell me what you know about her husband.

She moves around the piano, studying it.

ALPHONSE

I don't like this asshole at all. He's a smarmy little professor in a hick little town. He's hardly mourning at all. He just lets me in, cooks me dinner, gets me drunk like this is any day of the week. What a prick.

MEXICO

What is he supposed to do? Tell Marion's friends to get lost?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALPHONSE

He's acting like his pet dog died,
for Christ's sake! He should show
some respect! He's upstairs
dressing up some complete stranger
in *her clothes!*

MEXICO

You need to take a deep breath
here, or I'm putting you in time
out.

Alphonse practically growls, before shutting up and
retreating to his glass of brandy.

MEXICO (CONT'D)

I've never been hired by a dead
woman before. She must have left
instructions for us somewhere.

ALPHONSE

How do you know?

MEXICO

(irritated)

If you don't trust me to do my job,
don't drag me to Iowa, sweetheart.
Now Richard obviously has no idea
why we're here. We need to keep it
that way. I'll... keep him
entertained.

ALPHONSE

You're already taken with our host,
I see.

MEXICO

As you were taken with his wife?

(pause)

It's all business. I'll get to
know him, and see what I can
uncover. Perhaps your *flunkies*
could search the house for
anything Marion might have left
behind?

ALPHONSE

This had better work, Mexico.

MEXICO

You two were very close. Don't let
it skew your judgment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Fiona and Malcolm suddenly enter from the dining room, directly behind Mexico.

FIONA
(seemingly good-natured)
You guys aren't making plans
without us *flunkies*, are ya?

MEXICO
Fiona--

Fiona smiles wide, plops down in a nearby chair. Mexico is obviously very ill at ease.

FIONA
No, hey, don't mind me, your
friendly neighborhood *flunky*, I'll
just sit here and *flunk around* or
something while you big kids do all
the talking.

MEXICO
I see you've finally graduated from
charm school, Fiona, and what an
improvement, I must say.

Malcolm sits down at the piano and begins plunking out a very rudimentary "Purple Haze."

FIONA
(still smiling her fake
smile)
Nice. We thought we'd join you two
for the essential planning stages
of this operation. After all, it's
Marion's last request and we think
it deserves out complete and total
attention. Right, Malcolm?

MALCOLM
(not really paying
attention)
Huh, what? Oh. Yeah. What she
said.

MEXICO
With all due respect... I believe
the "planning stages" are under
control.

Fiona draws her pistol from her coat, slowly, deliberately.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Malcolm's eyes grow wide...

Alphonse looks on with no expression...

Mexico attempts to seem unaffected...

FIONA

Tell you what, Mexico. Why don't
you let me be the judge of that?

And with that, she takes out a cigarette, and uses the pistol
-- actually a cigarette lighter -- to light up her smoke.

MALCOLM

I still think that's neat, Fiona.
You know, I saw a store once you
could get a phone the shape of a
can of Budweiser...

Fiona levels him with a dirty look...

Alphonse steps between Fiona and Mexico and takes control.

ALPHONSE

Quit acting like schoolgirls. I
want this house searched top to
bottom. I want to know why Marion
hired us. You two can kill each
other once the job is finished.

FIONA

Gee, that's swell of you, Al.

MALCOLM

Come on, Fiona, let's finish casing
the joint. We might find more
women's undergarments.

Fiona makes sure to shoot Mexico a vicious stare, before she
and Malcolm head out toward the grand stairwell.

MEXICO

I swear, Alphonse, this may be that
woman's last night on earth.

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Malcolm and Fiona charge up the stairs.

FIONA

All I'm saying is the super bitch
is *toast.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALCOLM

Just what are you trying to say?

FIONA

She's fucking *toast*.

MALCOLM

No, but how do you *really* feel?

FIONA

Shut the fuck up!

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - EVENING

Malcolm and Fiona reach the top of the stairwell and begin slowly moving down the hallway. They begin to hear voices from the master bedroom at the end of the hallway. Fiona motions for Malcolm to keep quiet, and the two of them duck into a nearby room to hide.

Mia and Richard come out of the master bedroom, Mia wearing Marion's clothes and chatting amiably. They walk slowly down the entire length of the hallway toward the stairwell.

MIA

(rambling a little bit)

So then I came here, thinking, you know, you don't find heroin in Iowa, for God's sake. I had to get my act together. I mean, I was losing more weight than I ever should have, my skin was this pale shade of *bleah*, if it wasn't for Flintstones chewable vitamins I'd probably be dead by now.

RICHARD

Sounds like you had a lot of fun in California.

MIA

Oh yeah. Fun fun fun til my dealer took the needle away. But you know, I came out the other side, which I guess is one of those life affirming stories you always see in Reader's Digest or something.

(pause)

This house is huge. I think I'd get the creeps if I had to live alone in a house this big.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

You think the place is haunted or something?

MIA

No, I'm just saying it would *feel* weird to have all these rooms to myself.

(pause)

Can I ask what happened? To your wife, I mean.

RICHARD

Her name is Marion.

MIA

Right. Can I ask what happened to her? Or would that be too forward? I mean, I know we just met.

RICHARD

I think we should talk about something else.

MIA

Yeah?

RICHARD

Yeah. I like talking about you. That's a lot more enjoyable.

MIA

(smiles, blushes)

Well, I'm pretty good at it. I could probably keep you busy all night. Keep you busy talking, I mean.

RICHARD

Right, right...

They head down the stairs.

Malcolm and Fiona emerge from one of the side rooms. They whisper to each other.

FIONA

He is totally macking on her.

MALCOLM

It's disgusting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FIONA
Marion's been dead a week.

MALCOLM
He's a sick, sick man.

FIONA
Doesn't he have any *respect*?

MALCOLM
Of course, that chick is HOT...

FIONA
Shut the fuck up!

Behind them, two rows of candleabras down the side of both walls suddenly LIGHT UP without explanation.

Slowly, Malcolm and Fiona turn to face the hallway.

FIONA (CONT'D)
Were those candles burning before?

MALCOLM
(slowly)
Clearly they must have been
burning.

Long pause.

FIONA
Okay. Let's go search that
jackass's bedroom.

INT. MANSION - BOTTOM OF STAIRWELL/FOYER - EVENING

Richard and Mia come down the stairs together, as Alphonse is moving toward the front door.

MIA
(flirting)
So if Triple A never calls, I might
have to spend the night.

RICHARD
That would be tragic.

MIA
It would be very sad.

They stop when they notice Alphonse at the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD
You leaving?

ALPHONSE
I'm getting my things out of the
car.

RICHARD
Need any help?

ALPHONSE
I can manage.

Mia realizes Alphonse is staring at her with serious animosity, and she becomes slightly uncomfortable.

MIA
You know what? I left my purse
upstairs, and there's... something
I need in it. I'll just... go back
and grab it.

She scampers back up the stairs.

ALPHONSE
You don't waste any time.

RICHARD
Excuse me?

ALPHONSE
Marion's been dead a week, and
you're already flirting up a storm
with two complete strangers.

RICHARD
I'm just being friendly.

ALPHONSE
Friendly my shiny Italian ass.
(slightly sinister)
I suppose it may surprise you, some
of the company Marion kept.

RICHARD
(almost defensive)
Is that so?

ALPHONSE
In some ways, I'm sure you hardly
knew her at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD

(pause)

Is that so?

Alphonse hesitates.

ALPHONSE

I'm sorry. I'm just a little irrational right now, that's all. I never got a chance to say goodbye. I even missed the funeral.

RICHARD

(sympathetic)

It's all right.

ALPHONSE

That kind of... *closure* is so important.

(pause)

I'll just go get my bag.

He heads out the front door, letting it slam shut behind him.

Richard notices Mexico standing in a nearby doorway; she has observed the entire interchange.

MEXICO

Don't mind Alphonse. He means well.

RICHARD

Is that what he means?

MEXICO

Well, he usually means *something*, I can't always keep track. Can I have another brandy?

EXT. MANSION - DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Alphonse makes his way through the pouring rain to the trunk of his car. He opens it to reveal an enormous stockpile of weaponry: shotguns, automatic rifles, hand grenades. He digs through until he finds a pistol that he likes, which he then sticks in his belt.

ALPHONSE

(muttering to himself)

Smarmy Iowan asshole...

INT. MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Mia charges into the master bedroom - and unexpectedly finds Malcolm and Fiona rifling through Richard's dressers. A very tense pause follows...

MIA

Please don't pull a gun on me. I'm just here to get my purse.

MALCOLM

(reassuring)

Don't worry, she's not going to pull a gun on you.

FIONA

(shrugs)

I *might* pull a gun on her.

MALCOLM

You don't *need* to pull a gun on her.

FIONA

I'm not saying, I'm just saying.

MIA

Is this... *normal* in Iowa? Searching through people's stuff, is that what people do for fun around here or something? I mean, I know cow tipping probably gets old.

MALCOLM

We were good friends of Marion's. We're just... exploring her house.

MIA

It looks like you're exploring her underwear drawer.

MALCOLM

Well--

FIONA

See, that kind of shit makes it much more likely that I *will* pull a gun on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean it, I'm just... I just came from LA. I didn't know the scourge of violent crime has already reached the heartland, but I promise I'll be good. In fact... I've got some pot in my purse, and I would be happy to share it with you. More than happy. Delighted.

Very very slowly, Mia reaches for her purse on the floor.

MALCOLM

I do have to warn you, if anything resembling a tiny pistol comes out of that purse, we *will* have to kill you. That's not really a threat, it's more like a public service announcement.

She produces a marijuana pipe, offers it to Fiona.

MIA

It's from California.

Fiona takes the pipe, smells it, is practically overwhelmed by the stench.

FIONA

We're a little busy right now.

She hands the pipe back to Mia.

MIA

(preparing to light up)
Busy doing what?

MALCOLM

Exploring the house, remember?

MIA

Right on. This place rocks. Can I come with?

Fiona and Malcolm exchange glances. Malcolm shrugs.

FIONA

As long as you keep your mouth shut.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA

I'm really good at keeping my mouth shut. I swear. I am. Honest.

I'm very quiet.

(pause)

Really.

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Richard pours Mexico another brandy from the small wet bar.

MEXICO

This is a wonderful place you have here. When Marion invited us to Iowa, I must say I was entirely skeptical, but you've convinced me. Iowans can be such perfect hosts.

RICHARD

Yes, it's as though we have nothing else to do with our lives.

He hands her the drink, pours his own.

MEXICO

I imagine, I imagine.

(changing the subject)

Do you have a smoke I could borrow?

RICHARD

I don't, actually.

Mexico shrugs, pulls a cigarette case out of her purse, and takes out her own cigarette, which she lights but never smokes.

MEXICO

I suppose you must be terribly curious about how we all knew your wife.

RICHARD

Not terribly curious, no.

MEXICO

(hurt)

Not in the slightest? I'm not interesting to you?

RICHARD

Oh, of course you're interesting to me, Mexico Santiago d'Amoretto.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You out of all these people I find exceptionally interesting.

MEXICO

Your wife's presence is practically palpable in this house.

RICHARD

(instantly suspicious)

Oh really?

MEXICO

I'm a very sensitive person. I've considered that it might be you, that you are wearing her presence around with you, that the force of your memories and your mourning and your longing for her are generating these sensations I'm feeling. That would be a perfectly plausible explanation.

RICHARD

This was her house. It's a family house. She loved this house. She swore she'd never leave Iowa as long as this house stood.

MEXICO

You can feel her here wherever you go. It's amazing how far a person's grasp can reach, isn't it? From across the great divide, she is still somehow with you. In a way, that's entirely romantic and wonderful. And in a way, it's almost macabre, isn't it?

RICHARD

(laughing despite himself)

You have no idea.

MEXICO

(having some idea)

Oh, of course not.

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - EVENING

Malcolm and Fiona moving slowly down the hallway, with Mia staggering along in between them, high as a kite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA

My first marriage only lasted as long as it did because he always had enough junk handy to keep me plastered to the couch in an opiate haze.

Fiona stops at one of the rooms, peeks inside.

MIA (CONT'D)

Eventually though he kicked it one night after a big shipment came in that made him just a widdle too happy.

FIONA

What's that mean?

MIA

He hit the escape hatch, and there he went.

MALCOLM

That's hard core.

MIA

Well, hard core is not getting rid of the body til we ran out of his junk. What's in there?

FIONA

Looks like a dressing room or something.

MIA

Oooh, fucking A, maybe I can find some better threads.

She heads into the room.

MALCOLM

(appreciative)

Raiding the dead chick's clothes, that too is hard core.

FIONA

Do you ever shut the fuck up?

They follow after Mia.

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Alphonse slips into the room. Richard doesn't notice him at first.

MEXICO

I hope we're not too much trouble.

RICHARD

No, no, we used to have guests all the time. You shoulda seen the enormous parties we'd throw. People would come for miles, travel cross country to spend a few hours at her parties.

(pause, notices Alphonse)

Did you ever see her favorite party dress?

Alphonse shakes his head.

Richard smiles.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Ahh... She had this amazing blood red party dress. It would floor you from a mile away.

INT. MANSION - DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

They arrive in a large, lavender dressing room, where several round clothes racks sit empty save for dozens of hangars. Empty, that is, except for one BLOOD RED PARTY DRESS, hanging alone.

Mia spots the dress.

MIA

Holy moly.

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Richard's eyes are lost in memory.

RICHARD

You should have seen her in this dress. She practically became another person. I packed up most of her clothes and stuck them up in the attic, but I just couldn't bear to put away the red dress. I can still smell her on that dress.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD (CONT'D)
(looks at Alphonse)
Am I making you uncomfortable?

Alphonse remains alone in the doorway.

ALPHONSE
I think I need to know how she
died. I want to know more about
this accident.

Richard takes a deep breath as Mexico looks on, unnerved.

RICHARD
Well, let's start from the
beginning. Do you know what a
threshing machine does?

INT. MANSION - DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

As Mia fondles the dress, Fiona speaks softly to Malcolm.

FIONA
Where are the rest of her clothes?

MALCOLM
Maybe he packed 'em up.

FIONA
Maybe he packed up *all* of her shit.

MALCOLM
So we just need to find all the
boxes.

FIONA
Where would *you* keep a bunch of
boxes?

MALCOLM
Attic maybe?

A loud shout, recognizable as Alphonse, comes from the
downstairs. Fiona and Malcolm immediately tense up, then
sprint out of the room.

MIA
Hey, wait!

She heads for the door. A rush of wind fills the room and
causes the red dress to SWIRL MYSTERIOUSLY in midair. Mia's
eyes grow wide, and she slowly backs into the hallway.

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - EVENING

Fiona and Malcolm sprint down the hallway and vanish down the stairwell. As Mia enters the hallway, the two rows of candles on the walls behind her MYSTERIOUSLY EXTINGUISH...

...and Mia smiles...

INT. MANSION - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Alphonse charges into the dining room, with Mexico right behind him.

MEXICO

Will you please calm down?

ALPHONSE

Did you hear what that asshole just said?

MEXICO

It was an accident!

ALPHONSE

For Christ's sake, he described it like he was telling me what happened last week on "Days of our Lives!"

MEXICO

He's probably in shock!

ALPHONSE

He's probably hiding something! I don't trust this asshole at *all!*

MEXICO

I trust him.

ALPHONSE

Oh really.

MEXICO

He sincerely misses her.

ALPHONSE

You can tell all that just by flirting with him? Why don't you go ahead and *screw* him and find out what the *fuck* we're supposed to be doing here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fiona and Malcolm charge in.

FIONA
What the hell is going on?

ALPHONSE
You ever heard of a threshing
machine, Fiona?

FIONA
A threshing machine?

ALPHONSE
It's some *Iowa* thing, apparently.

MEXICO
(almost pleading with
Alphonse)
Marion is *here*... I can feel it.

FIONA
(completely disgusted)
Excuse me, I hate to break this
news flash to you, but Marion is
dead.

MEXICO
Thank you for the update, Connie
Chung, but I am well aware of the
situation!

MALCOLM
Girls, girls, you're both pretty.

FIONA
Oh, *now* I get it. Psychic Santiago
is going to make some kind of
severely long distance call and
figure out Marion's last wishes, is
that it?

ALPHONSE
That's enough, Fiona.

FIONA
Did you bring your big ol' Ouija
board, or are you just going to dig
up her fucking grave and ask her?

ALPHONSE
I said, that's enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FIONA

You people are OUT OF YOUR FUCKING MINDS!

MALCOLM

Hey, hey, *inside* voices, *inside* voices...

MEXICO

Alphonse, I'm telling you, she's still here, in this house, and I know I can reach her, I just need more time.

FIONA

For fuck's sake--

ALPHONSE

That is ENOUGH!

FIONA

Will you please explain to me--

ALPHONSE

I don't have to explain myself to you! You are hired muscle, and you will DO AS YOU ARE TOLD, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

In a lightning fast move, Fiona pulls an actual pistol twice the size of her lighter, and aims it at Alphonse's head.

A beat later, Mexico's own pistol is trained on Fiona; and Malcolm has a ghastly looking knife in his hand, ready to be thrown at Mexico. There is a long, awkward pause.

MALCOLM

(softly)

Well, now. There's a lot of love in this room.

A strange look suddenly crosses Mexico's face.

MEXICO

Quiet!

Silence... We switch to a jerky, hovering shot above the room, watching them from above, seeming to zero in on Alphonse...

Alphonse can actually feel it: a presence, watching him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MALCOLM

What is it? Some kind of strange disturbance in the Force?

MEXICO

(calmly, whispering)
She's watching us. Right now.

MALCOLM

Can she, like, see through clothes and stuff? Because that would be very creepy if she could see me naked.

FIONA

Would you please shut the fuck up?

The hovering shot swirls about the room, panicked, then dives down through the floor.

Alphonse and Mexico both seem to follow the spirit with their eyes, down toward the floor.

MEXICO

Did you feel that?

Alphonse nods.

MALCOLM

Hey, I'm feeling it. Probably just second hand smoke from that stank bud. Zowie! So are we going to kill each other here or what?

FIONA

Let's get something straight. I cared about Marion as much as any of you did. Marion knew about respect. Marion didn't treat anyone like 'hired meat.' Which is something you, Alphonse, seem to have missed.

ALPHONSE

Don't tell me about Marion.

FIONA

(she puts away her weapon)
Malcolm and I are out, dig? We don't need this level of unprofessional behavior. It's bad for our reputation, see?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FIONA (CONT'D)

We finish up what we came here for - whatever it is Marion wanted us to do - and then we're gone. And if you try to talk us out of it, I'll show you just what kinda damage 'hired meat' is capable of.

And with that, she stalks off...

MALCOLM

I think... we're all just a little bit upset about Marion, and maybe when this all blows over, we can all go out for a nice evening of karaoke and just laugh about all this...

Mexico stalks out of the room.

ALPHONSE

(clearly upset)

Your partner's insane, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Nah, she's not insane.

ALPHONSE

She's totally insane. Did you see her just pull a gun in my face? She's flat out insane.

MALCOLM

She's not insane. She's just Fiona.

ALPHONSE

I'm telling you, you better watch out, because that woman is insane.

MALCOLM

Well... she might be a *little* insane.

(holds his thumb and
finger apart the
slightest bit)

But that's why I love her!

He turns to go.

INT. MANSION - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Alphonse sits at the piano and plays something outstandingly staccato and dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richard enters, with two drinks.

RICHARD

You need a refresher?

ALPHONSE

You know, Richard, I admire your courage at a time like this. You're so in control of yourself. You've already *moved on*, as it were.

RICHARD

I haven't moved anywhere.

ALPHONSE

(not hearing him)

Of course, it makes sense that a professor like you, someone well versed in philosophical schools of thought, would be able to take control of his life, of his mourning. Obviously you of all people realize how reality is, on a fundamental level, completely *mutable*...

RICHARD

Oh yeah. I tell myself that every day. I wake up, climb out of bed, jump in the shower, say, "Richard, you realize, don't you, how completely *mutable* reality is." It makes the day fly by so much faster.

Alphonse slams his hands on the keyboard abruptly, then turns to face Richard.

ALPHONSE

I want to know just exactly what happened with this threshing machine.

Richard sets a drink down for Alphonse.

RICHARD

No, no, look. I don't particularly want to talk about Marion right now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD (CONT'D)

With all these guests in the house, surely you can understand if I'd just like to kick back and have some fun? I mean, your friends seem like the wild and crazy type.

(expansively, perhaps a bit drunken as well)

We can talk later, Al. Why don't you just relax? You're all welcome to stay as long as you like. One thing this household has always been known for is its good old-fashioned, midwestern hospitality. I get all kindsa folks stopping by: Old Ned from down at the hardware store who comes over for breakfast a coupla times a week, or the kids down at the university who threw parties here when my wife and I weren't looking, or even Crazy Harriet from across the street, with all those, with all those rhubarb fucking pies of hers. Of course, you people are definitely the strangest bunch I ever seen, but what the hell...

(derisively)

...you must just be from the *big city*, right?

(laughing loudly)

I mean, all that shouting in the dining room just now... Is this how everyone behaves in *Des Moines* or wherever the hell these people are from?

ALPHONSE

You ever wonder where your wife went sometimes when she was off on one of her week long escapades around the world?

RICHARD

She liked to travel. Sometimes we traveled together. Sometime she traveled alone.

ALPHONSE

Sometimes she was with *us*. Do you understand that? There are probably a *lot* of things about Marion you never knew, never suspected.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Alphonse turns back to playing the piano.

RICHARD

A threshing machine uses a large rotating knife to cut grain. Some are pulled by a tractor. This one happened to be self-propelled.

And with that, he goes, leaving Alphonse alone with his fury. What Richard does not see are the silent tears now forming in Alphonse's eyes, the realization of Marion's death compelling him toward deeper and deeper sadness...

...and as he pounds on the keyboard once more, a HUGE CRASH OF THUNDER sounds outside, and a series of pictures FLY OFF THE WALL and smash against opposite walls...

...Alphonse jumps to his feet, stunned.

ALPHONSE

Holy mother of God... She *is* still here...

INT. MANSION - 2ND FLOOR GRAND HALLWAY - EVENING

Malcolm and Fiona come out of one of the rooms they've just searched.

MALCOLM

This is the most fucked up gig I ever been on. This is even more fucked up than that time in Bora Bora.

FIONA

What time in Bora Bora?

MALCOLM

You remember that time, with the... with the stolen jewels, and the dead cops?

FIONA

Oh, right. Yeah, that was fucked up.

MALCOLM

And didn't those fucking candles used to be lit?

They reach the top of the stairwell, Fiona pointedly ignoring him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIONA

I don't get it. There's got to be
a third floor attic, but where--

Suddenly, voices from the kitchen drift up the stairwell.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Sshhhh... Sounds like the super
bitch.

They start to creep down the stairs to get a better listen.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - EVENING

Richard pulls a bottle of red wine off the wine rack, and
grabs a couple of glasses.

RICHARD

So who are you guys really?

He pours the wine slowly, and she doesn't answer.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You may as well tell me. I mean,
you're probably just going to
vanish into the night when this
storm is over, right?

(pause)

That *is* the reason you're all
staying, right? Terrible storm,
delayed flights out? Or do you
just really like my company?

Mexico takes a deep sip from her glass, then looks him right
in the eye.

MEXICO

We're professional assassins. The
four of us. I hope that doesn't
bother you. I'm absolutely
positive that your Iowa neighbors
would simply be horrified by the
thought, but it's true.

Richard blinks, trying to make sense of her.

RICHARD

Assassins?

MEXICO

And I happen to be a psychic.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD
A psychic?

MEXICO
Yes.

RICHARD
What does that mean exactly? You read people's minds, and then you kill them?

MEXICO
I can feel Marion's spirit in this house, and I can tell that you're hiding something.

Abruptly, Richard tries to leave, but Mexico blocks him, puts her hands on his chest.

MEXICO (CONT'D)
What's going on here, Richard? You can tell me. You can trust me.

RICHARD
Let me get this straight. You four maniacs are assassins.

MEXICO
Right.

RICHARD
And you happen to be a psychic.

MEXICO
Exactly.

RICHARD
Why the hell are you people here?

MEXICO
That's what I'm trying to find out.

RICHARD
Well, if her spirit is still in the goddamn house, have you tried *asking* her?

MEXICO
Yes, actually.

RICHARD
And what did she say?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEXICO

(smiles)

She seems to be saying ask you.

RICHARD

That's just adorable. Can you ask her where that one silk shirt is I really like? I haven't seen it in months.

MEXICO

I'm serious!

RICHARD

So am I! I love that shirt!

He tries to get around her, but she stops him, presses him closer.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Aha, you have other tricks up your sleeve.

MEXICO

I can tell how strong her feelings are for you.

RICHARD

Oh really.

MEXICO

Yeah, they're crazy strong.

The windows in the room start rattling.

MEXICO (CONT'D)

Like she never got 'em all out of her system.

The silverware and pots and glassware all around begin to rattle. Richard glances about nervously...

...a serious swirling SHOT FROM ABOVE tells us that someone is definitely participating in this interaction from sight unseen...

MEXICO (CONT'D)

I think she's still trying to express those feelings.

RICHARD

I think she is too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MEXICO

Do you have any idea why she wanted us here?

RICHARD

I think she's just sad you missed the funeral.

...the swirling shot from above DESCENDS INTO THE ROOM from the ceiling...

...and suddenly the dishes in the sink ERUPT in an explosion of shattered pieces...

...Richard and Mexico drop to the floor in sudden shock...

...and then the swirling dives through the floor and is gone once again...

Slowly, Richard and Mexico climb to their feet. They take in the scene for a silent moment. Then:

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Okay, you did that, right?

MEXICO

What?

RICHARD

With your, with your *psychic powers*. That was pretty impressive.

MEXICO

Richard! I had nothing to do with that!

Richard detaches from Mexico and heads out one of the kitchen doors toward the dining room.

RICHARD

Listen, if you do get hold of Marion, will you please patch the call through to my study? I'm going to finish getting really, really drunk.

And he exits. A frustrated Mexico turns to grab her glass of wine...

...to find an angry Fiona standing in the other kitchen doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FIONA

I don't know what you think you're up to, Santiago, but from here, it smells like shit.

Mexico is cold as ice.

FIONA (CONT'D)

(suddenly seething)

You sit out there and tell some complete fucking nobody all about our business. Now he knows exactly who we are and what we do. Very smart, Santiago, very fucking smart.

(pause)

I know you're trying to screw him. You trying to screw me too?

MEXICO

This is none of your business.

FIONA

We don't even know what this job is, and already I don't like the way it's turning out.

MEXICO

You aren't paid to have an opinion.

FIONA

It's my ass on the line, I'll throw in my opinion for free.

At that moment, just before something significantly nasty happens, Mia saunters into the room.

MIA

(to Fiona)

Oh, there you are, I've been looking for you.

She looks around, sees the two women glaring at each other, and decides to offer some advice.

MIA (CONT'D)

Hey, maybe it's just me, but I really think I'm feeling some kind of seriously heavy vibe between you two, am I right? I mean, it's subtle, but it's definitely there, right?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MIA (CONT'D)

Listen, I didn't know Marion. But I can tell by the way you all move so *passionately* that she was an incredible woman. Am I right?

(pause)

Come on, am I right?

FIONA

(grudgingly)

Yeah.

MEXICO

(grudgingly)

Yeah.

MIA

Well, if there's one thing Marion's death can do, it's bring you two together. Now here - hold my hands.

She holds out a hand to each of them. They do not move.

MIA (CONT'D)

Come on, trust me. Hold my hands, you guys.

Very very slowly, Fiona & Mexico each reach out and take one of Mia's hands.

MIA (CONT'D)

Now close your eyes.

Mia closes her eyes; Fiona & Mexico continue glaring at each other.

MIA (CONT'D)

Good. Now I just want each of you to take a deep breath and think about what Marion meant to you. Okay? Think. Think. Just visualize. Visualize that place inside you where your memories of Marion live. Good. Now say to each other the first word that comes into your minds.

FIONA

Kill.

MEXICO

(simultaneously)

Hate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MIA
 (smiles and opens her eyes)
 Great! That's excellent, that really felt honest, you know? You two are awesome, do you know that?
 (pause)
 Okay, you guys can let go now.
 (pause)
 Guys, you're hurting me.

They let go of her hands.

MIA (CONT'D)
 (to Fiona)
 I think I've got some pot upstairs in my purse. You wanna join me?

FIONA
 I don't smoke pot.

MIA
 (not particularly subtle)
 No, I think you *really* wanna join me.

FIONA
 (raises an eyebrow)
 Oh yeah?

MIA
 (still whispering)
 Uh huh. Come on.

She starts out of the kitchen, stops, turns back:

MIA (CONT'D)
 Come on!

Fiona smiles at Mexico as if to say, "We'll finish this later," and then follows Mia out of the room.

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Malcolm sits on the bottom of the stairs, on his cell phone.

MALCOLM
 That little fucking rat skipped town with my entire Moody Blues collection. I oughta pop off his kneecaps with a fucking shrimp fork.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fiona and Mia saunter past on their way up the stairs. Malcolm covers the phone and whispers to Fiona.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

What's up?

FIONA

We're gonna have some girl talk.

MALCOLM

Girl talk? Can I come?

FIONA

No.

MALCOLM

I'll be sensitive and giggly, I promise!

They ignore him and head up the stairs. Malcolm returns to his phone call.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Yeah, listen, Mahatma, if you see that little dogfuck, peel his eyelids back and piss in his brainpan, you do that for me?

Mia and Fiona head up the stairs, Malcolm in the background.

MIA

Your boyfriend is cool.

FIONA

He's all right.

MIA

Just all right?

FIONA

(shrugs)

He's really accurate with a throwing knife, even if the target's moving.

MIA

(nods approvingly)

A girl's gotta have standards.

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Mexico surprises Richard as he pours himself another brandy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEXICO

Sorry, I don't mean to chase you
around the house.

RICHARD

You can chase me all you want.

Mexico smiles.

MEXICO

There's a lot going on in this
house tonight.

RICHARD

There certainly is.

MEXICO

I can feel Marion. I can feel a
lot more... I can feel Marion's
parents, too. They used to live
here, didn't they?

RICHARD

(nods)

Her mother died in her sleep
upstairs.

MEXICO

I *knew* it, I knew I could feel more
than just Marion in the house.

RICHARD

You're pretty good at this psychic
stuff. Wait, wait, let me try.

(he pretends as though
he's "thinking" very
hard)

You want another drink.

MEXICO

I'm getting very close to too tipsy
for my own good.

RICHARD

Excellent. I'll get you drunk,
then I'll take advantage of you.

He pours her a brandy.

MEXICO

(pretends to be shocked)

Little ol' me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD

(getting close to her)
I have to tell you, I'm surprised
you haven't figured out yet why
Marion invited you all here.

She stops as she takes the drink from him.

MEXICO

What do you know about it?

RICHARD

(shrugs)
It's just a hunch.
(pause)
I think Marion probably wanted you
guys to kill me.

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Alphonse comes upon Malcolm still talking on his cell phone
at the bottom of the stairs.

MALCOLM

And another thing, the next time he
goes off on one of his "Sgt.
Pepper's is better than Abbey Road"
rants, I want you to put a knife
right in his eye for me, all right?
I am so sick of that bullshit.
(to Alphonse)
Is it time to leave yet?

ALPHONSE

No. I need your help.

MALCOLM

(into the phone)
Mahatma, I gotta go, my boss wants
me to type a memo for him... Of
course I know how to type, you
jackass. Call me later.

Malcolm hangs up the phone, and Alphonse leads him away...

INT. MANSION - 1ST FLOOR SERVICE HALLWAY - EVENING

...down a back hallway on the first floor, past a laundry
room, a service closet with shelves of china, etc., to a tall
locked door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALPHONSE

Open that.

MALCOLM

Si, senior.

Malcolm removes a small lockpick set from his jacket and immediately goes to work on the lock.

ALPHONSE

You know, our jobs would all go a lot smoother if your partner wasn't out of her fucking mind.

MALCOLM

Look, I admit the whole thing with the gun in your face was a little on the testy side. But you need to look at it from her perspective, okay?

ALPHONSE

And just what exactly is her perspective?

MALCOLM

(with a straight face)

Well - her perspective is that Mexico is a super bitch, and you're an idiot for listening to her.

(before Alphonse can react)

Hey, hey, I said it was *her* perspective.

ALPHONSE

And what's your perspective?

A loud click and Malcolm opens the door...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT STAIRS - EVENING

From the bottom of the stairs, we look up at Alphonse and Malcolm in the doorway, the rest of the stairwell in darkness. The two of them peer down the stairs at us.

MALCOLM

Et VOILA!

Malcolm withdraws a small pen flashlight from his jacket, turns it on, and the two of them start quietly down the stairs...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Slowly Alphonse and Malcolm proceed through the eerily quiet basement. Alphonse finds a light switch eventually, and turns it on. The light is dim and bare, coldly illuminating an immense unfinished basement.

We follow Alphonse and Malcolm through the basement, past mounds of strange antique artifacts, musty pieces of furniture, and dozens of boxes.

MALCOLM

Look at all this crap. I bet we could make ten whole dollars at the flea market.

ALPHONSE

Why would he keep this basement locked?

MALCOLM

To keep snoopy assholes like us from poking around?

ALPHONSE

Start opening boxes.

INT. MANSION - DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

Mia and Fiona enter, with Mia leading Fiona past the blood red party dress to the large walk-in closet at the far side of the room.

MIA

And then I wound up getting married to my dealer, basically. That happened when I was 16.

FIONA

You quit school?

INT. MANSION - DRESSING ROOM - CLOSET - EVENING

The door opens, and Mia pulls the string on the light, revealing a completely empty walk-in closet.

MIA

Yeah, it's hard to go to school when you're on heroin. First of all, in gym class, everyone sees your track marks and that is just not cool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIONA

I bet.

MIA

And anyway, once you've been addicted to heroin, you've learned everything there is to know about life.

FIONA

Such as?

Mia closes the closet door behind the two of them.

MIA

Such as, life pretty much consists of one existential tragedy after another, so why put up with it?

FIONA

Yeah, I see where you're coming from. Look, what the fuck are we doing in this closet?

Mia points at the ceiling. Fiona looks up...

...to see a large panel on a hinge, with a small drawstring hanging down.

MIA

You were looking for the attic?

FIONA

What the hell were you doing in the closet?

MIA

(bashfully)

I was looking for more of Marion's cool clothes.

Fiona smiles, reaches for the string.

INT. MANSION - ATTIC - EVENING

Fiona and Mia climb the stairs, Fiona leading with the same kind of pocket flashlight that Malcolm carries.

FIONA

(as she peers around)

So what are you doing in Iowa?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA

I wanted to get cleaned out. I don't trust the methadone clinics on the coast, though. They're run by Moonies or something.

FIONA

Society's crumbling, I tell ya.

MIA

Don't I know it. I was going to stay with my brother for a while, but then I came across *this* place. This Richard guy is a different story entirely.

Fiona finds a light switch and turns it on.

The entire attic is in a state of severe disarray. Most of Marion Carr's personal effects are stuffed in overflowing boxes which are scattered all about -- clothing, knick knacks, etc.

MIA (CONT'D)

Oh, wow...

The presence of Marion is practically palpable as we scan across the items, open scrapbooks, and so on.

FIONA

You like Richard?

MIA

Well, we just met tonight, but... it's as though he's got *all* this... *presence* collected about him, you know?

FIONA

Yeah, I noticed something like that.

MIA

You did? Really?

FIONA

Uh huh. I thought it was his cologne.

MIA

(disappointed)
Oh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They start looking through boxes, with Mia focused on some of the clothing, and Fiona looking for something else...

MIA (CONT'D)

Tell me a secret. What happened between you and that Mexico chick?

FIONA

She tried to seduce a boyfriend of mine, years back.

Fiona shoves a few boxes around, then finds a few that are heavier than the others, and begins tearing them open.

FIONA (CONT'D)

Not Malcolm. The asshole before Malcolm. She almost got away with it, too, because of her *strange mental powers*. But I caught her. I should have killed her right then, but we had business the next day. So I killed him instead.

MIA

That's harsh.

FIONA

Yeah, well.

She stumbles across a box full of what appear to be journals, and withdraws one slowly.

FIONA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Hello, Marion...

She flips it open and begins reading.

Mia comes up beside her wearing one of Marion's jackets.

MIA

Reading a dead woman's journals? Isn't that kinda creepy?

FIONA

You're wearing her clothes, and you call this creepy?

MIA

I know, it's a joke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Mia grabs one of the journals and starts flipping through it as well.

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Alphonse continues wandering slowly through the enormous basement while Malcolm tears opens boxes in the background.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

Hey wow, a whole box of romance novels! I'll rip out the dirty parts and save 'em for ya, all right?

Something catches Alphonse's eye: another door against the far wall.

MALCOLM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Holy shit, there's hot lesbian action in this one, Al, your favorite!

Alphonse tries the door. Naturally, it's locked.

ALPHONSE

Malcolm, get over here.

Malcolm sidles up next to Alphonse, holding dozens of paperback pages.

MALCOLM

Fucking hell, this basement is the size of Disneyland.

He goes to work on the lock.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Of course, they had the good sense not to build Disneyland in Iowa...

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Richard and Mexico have set their drinks down, and are on the verge of a very physical moment.

MEXICO

(softly)

Why would she want you dead, Richard?

RICHARD

I caught her having an affair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Mexico's eyes widen.

MEXICO

And?

RICHARD

Well, I got pretty upset. I'm a very passionate person.

MEXICO

I can tell.

RICHARD

You know all about this, don't you.

MEXICO

I do.

RICHARD

Marion would run off for weeks at a time, and what was she doing?

MEXICO

Having an affair...

RICHARD

Running off with assassins, trotting around the globe...

MEXICO

Sleeping with Alphonse...

RICHARD

(nods)

Sleeping with that prick Alphonse.

She shakes her head.

MEXICO

How'd you find out?

RICHARD

I got drunk one night and read her journals. Very interesting reading.

INT. MANSION - ATTIC - EVENING

Mia's eyes are wide as she and Fiona both read separate journals.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIA

Holy shit, Marion was sleeping with Alphonse?

Fiona nods.

MIA (CONT'D)

Why would you cheat on a guy like Richard with a creepy guy like Alphonse? It's like trading a block of hash for some ditchweed or something, you know?

FIONA

You really like that pencilneck?

MIA

Sure. I'd rather sleep here than at my brother's house, that's for sure.

FIONA

It's always about money. Marion probably slept with Alphonse because he's loaded.

MIA

Marion had a house like this and she wasn't loaded?

FIONA

Of course not. Her parents blew the family fortune.

MIA

(reconsidering)

Hmm, maybe I don't wanna sleep with Richard after all.

FIONA

(shrugs)

He might be good in bed.

Then suddenly, Fiona's eyes lock on a specific passage in the journal she's reading, and her face grows cold.

Mia removes Marion's jacket, tosses it back on the pile.

MIA

Jesus, I sure can't get a break. Here I was thinking sugar daddy all the way.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MIA (CONT'D)

There has *got* to be a way for me to convert being young and sexy into being young, sexy, and incredibly rich, too.

FIONA

I don't fucking believe this.

Mia turns back to Fiona.

MIA

What is it?

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - HIDDEN ROOM - EVENING

Malcolm succeeds in unlocking the second door. He opens it and aims his flashlight inside.

Malcolm's light flits across what seems to be some kind of mahogany cabinet against the far wall.

MALCOLM

There's something in there. Can't tell what it is. This room is like a cave.

Slowly Alphonse steps through the doorway.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Is there a light in there?

Alphonse glances about, and finds a single bulb hanging from a cord from the ceiling. He pulls the string and the single bulb lights up, showing us...

...an ELEGANT MAHOGANY COFFIN resting on a pedestal against the far wall in this otherwise empty chamber.

ALPHONSE

(whispering)

Mother of God...

Even Malcolm seems disturbed.

MALCOLM

Okay, I admit, I am an extremely perverted man, but even I can't think of a single reason for that coffin to be down here.

(pause)

Wait, I take that back.

Alphonse reluctantly draws closer to the coffin...

INT. MANSION - STUDY - EVENING

Richard has his arms around Mexico.

MEXICO

I don't want to kill you, Richard.

RICHARD

Good, cuz I don't want you to kill me.

MEXICO

Everybody's searching the house right now. If Marion left even a hint-

RICHARD

-that I was turning violent? That she feared for her life?

MEXICO

Why didn't she just *leave* you? Why did she want you dead?

RICHARD

I'd read her journals, Mexico. I know *all about* you crazy fucking assassins. I know all about the people you've whacked. I even know about Alphonse's dream to join the Vatican secret service.

MEXICO

And I suppose you know about me, too.

RICHARD

I know a few things about you, yeah.

Their eyes are locked on each other.

MEXICO

I've got to get Alphonse out of here before he finds anything.

(pause; suddenly her face clouds, and she starts to panic)

I think he's found something.

RICHARD

Come on, I'll show you myself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MEXICO

Then you want to get out of here?
You and me maybe?

RICHARD

That's starting to sound like a
fine idea...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - HIDDEN ROOM - EVENING

As Alphonse reaches out to touch the coffin, the light on the end of the cord begins to SWING BACK AND FORTH behind him.

MALCOLM

Uh, Al, I think you better turn
around...

Alphonse touches the coffin as though he intends to raise the lid, and the light bulb suddenly begins SWINGING LIKE CRAZY...

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Come on, get out of there!

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Alphonse and Malcolm back out of the hidden room in a hurry...

...only to realize a WIND IS BLOWING through the entire basement...

MALCOLM

What the hell is going on around
here?

And suddenly BOXES ARE BURSTING OPEN, PAPERS ARE FLYING, the entire basement is turning into a whirlwind of debris...

...and Alphonse and Malcolm make a mad dash for the stairs...

INT. MANSION - 1ST FLOOR UTILITY HALLWAY - EVENING

Alphonse and Malcolm emerge from the basement and slam the door behind them.

MALCOLM

Okay, that was very fucked up.

ALPHONSE

Who do you think was in that
coffin?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALCOLM

What are you talking about?

ALPHONSE

What kind of asshole keeps a coffin
in his basement?

MALCOLM

Count Dracula?

Alphonse slams Malcolm against the wall.

ALPHONSE

Don't you get it?

Slowly Malcolm shakes his head.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)

That's *Marion* down there. It's her
fucking *ghost* in this *house*.

Alphonse releases Malcolm, who straightens his clothes
nervously.

MALCOLM

(slowly)

I see, I see. And this doorway
here isn't the doorway to the
basement, it's the doorway to the
Twilight Zone. I gotcha.
Everything is so much clearer now.

ALPHONSE

You still don't get it.

Once again, Malcolm shakes his head slowly.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)

That prick Richard *killed his own
wife*.

MALCOLM

Oh, now, come on. Aren't you
leaping to a big conclusion here?
I mean, just because Marion hired
us to do a mysterious job and then
we show up and she's dead from a
threshing machine accident and
there's a coffin in the basement
and supernatural activity all over
the house doesn't mean--

(pause)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Well, no, I guess it *does* mean that.

ALPHONSE

Go find Fiona. We need to finish this prick off.

MALCOLM

Right.

Malcolm heads off in a hurry, leaving Alphonse staring at the basement door.

ALPHONSE

(to himself)

I was *robbed* of her presence. That bastard is going to *pay*...

He heads back into the basement...

INT. MANSION - MASTER BATHROOM - EVENING

Mia slowly turns the water faucets in the shower stall in a kind of dreamy slow motion.

Her face is transfixed as the water begins to pound against her skin, her eyes closed, hands sweeping her hair back.

And then, with the shower pounding in the background, we slowly realize the blood red party dress is hanging on a hook across the bathroom, SOFTLY SWAYING TO AN UNSEEN BREEZE...

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Malcolm meets Fiona on her way down the main stairwell.

MALCOLM

There you are. You're not going to believe-

FIONA

Shut up and read this.

She hands him a page out of one of Marion's journals.

FIONA (CONT'D)

For the last eight years, every time Alphonse lined up a job for us, he and Marion stole *fifty fucking percent* off the top before we ever even knew about it. We've been getting *half* the money we could have gotten, all that time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MALCOLM

I don't get it. This just has an address for a bank in Liechtenstein and an account number.

FIONA

Half an account number. They've been sticking the money in a secret little account, those little fucking lovebirds. But Alphonse doesn't trust anyone, not even her, so he sets it up like this: he knows the first half of the bank account number, she knows the second half. Any time they want to make a deposit or a withdrawal, they each have to call in separately with their own half of the account number, and some vice president will authorize the funds transfer.

MALCOLM

You've got to be shitting me.

FIONA

I'm not shitting you. Alphonse is a dead man. Actually, first we get his half of the fucking account number out of him, *then* he's a dead man.

MALCOLM

Ahhhh.... Then you can call as Marion...

FIONA

...and you can be Alphonse. I bet if we beat the living shit out of him, he'll tell us.

Abruptly, they realize Richard and Mexico have entered the foyer, effectively stopping all dialogue.

RICHARD

So. I hear you folks are assassins.

Long, awkward silence.

FIONA

Yeah, so what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MALCOLM
 (over the top of Fiona's
 line)
 No, of course not.

Fiona turns to Malcolm and shoots him a look.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 (to Fiona, annoyed)
 What?
 (to Richard)
 I mean, sure. Of course. Yeah,
 we're assassins.

INT. MANSION - MASTER BATHROOM - EVENING

Mia slowly removes the blood red dress from its hanger...

...and slowly slips it on over her head...

INT. MANSION - STAIRWELL - EVENING

Long silence, as Fiona and Richard stare at each other coldly
 from across the room.

MALCOLM
 (starting to get a little
 uncomfortable)
 Uh, Rich...listen, I hate to ask
 you this, but...you got a staring
 problem or something?

RICHARD
 I want you people out of my house.

FIONA
 I bet you do. We got some business
 to wrap up first.

RICHARD
 Fine. You can show yourselves out.

Slowly he walks past them into the back of the house, with
 Mexico trailing slightly behind, and Fiona and Malcolm
 watching them closely the entire time. Finally Richard and
 Mexico are gone.

MALCOLM
 There's something else you should
 know. Richard killed his wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIONA

Good. That's one less conniving
fuck that I have to kill myself.
Come on.

And they move to follow Richard...

MALCOLM

Ladies and gentlemen...members of
the press...I believe it's time to
kick some ass...

INT. MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Mia, in the red dress, OBSERVED FROM A FLOATING POINT ABOVE
HER, high up in the corner of the room near the ceiling,
turns and faces us directly. She smiles at the presence
there...

And then slowly, the camera begins to ZOOM IN to Mia, and
Mia's smile slowly fades...

...and suddenly Mia's expression changes entirely, and her
posture changes, as she slowly *becomes* Marion...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Richard and Mexico come down the stairs, and Richard makes a
deliberate line toward the hidden room.

Mexico enters slowly, making her way across the basement,
doing her best to remain unmoved by the strange sounds
emanating from all corners of this room. She moves as though
she is almost compelled despite herself to investigate this
part of the house; the piles of artifacts that once belonged
to Marion are strange and fascinating, and she picks up a
couple of them as she walks, examines them carefully. This
room is entirely uncomfortable to her, and yet she must stay
long enough to find out why.

Finally she stops dead in her tracks, peering into the hidden
room with her mouth wide open; she is genuinely shocked and
surprised by what she sees.

RICHARD

You should take a look in there.

Mexico hesitates at the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD (CONT'D)

It's not a pretty sight. Not as pretty as it used to be. I did the best I could, of course, but...

Mexico turns to him slowly with a tense expression on her face. Then, she enters the hidden room...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - HIDDEN ROOM - EVENING

Mexico slowly makes her way into the hidden room, past the swinging light bulb, toward the coffin.

MEXICO

You and your wife have quite a relationship, Richard Carr.

RICHARD

We certainly do, Mexico Santiago d'Amoretto.

She turns to him suddenly.

MEXICO

Can I see her?

Richard nods, and joins her at the coffin. He opens the lid slowly, so that the lid soon blocks him from our view.

Mexico, POV INSIDE THE COFFIN, as she looks in, directly at the camera, and a sudden, stark look of disgust comes over her face.

Richard looks nonplussed, standing next to the coffin holding the lid open.

RICHARD

I couldn't have her embalmed in this condition, so I had her shellacked.

Mexico frantically backs out of the room, as though she might vomit.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Whatsa matter? I thought you were used to dead people.

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Mexico scrambles out of the hidden room...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

...and bumps directly into Alphonse.

ALPHONSE
What'd you see in there?

MEXICO
(startled)
Nothing.

ALPHONSE
Who's in the coffin?

MEXICO
(shaking her head)
It's empty.

ALPHONSE
Don't make me kill you too.

Richard slowly ambles out of the hidden room. Alphonse immediately draws his pistol and points it directly at Richard's head.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)
You sadistic fuck-

RICHARD
Takes one to know one.

Alphonse takes a step toward Richard, and then Mexico interrupts:

MEXICO
Alphonse, stop!

He turns, keeping his pistol pointed at Richard...

...and sees Mexico aiming her own pistol at him.

ALPHONSE
Have you lost your fucking mind?

MEXICO
Maybe.

ALPHONSE
He killed Marion!

MEXICO
(shrugs)
It happens.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MEXICO (CONT'D)

(to Richard, attempting to
be casual)

Is that what a threshing machine
does to people?

RICHARD

(nods)

I had to cart the pieces out of the
corn field in a Hefty bag.

MEXICO

Nice.

RICHARD

It was the least I could do. She
said she never wanted to leave this
house.

MEXICO

That's so romantic.

ALPHONSE

(barely controlled rage)

Have you lost your fucking mind?

MEXICO

Look, no one has to die tonight.

ALPHONSE

What are you talking about?

MEXICO

Richard and I are getting out of
here.

ALPHONSE

Are you *protecting* him?

MEXICO

(smiles at Richard)

What can I say? He's my kind of
killer.

Richard returns Mexico's smile, clearly amused at Alphonse's
distress.

FIONA (O.S.)

All right, enough of this bullshit!

And suddenly we realize that Fiona and Malcolm have arrived
on the opposite side of the enormous basement, Fiona with her
pistol trained on Alphonse, and Malcolm with his throwing
knife in hand, aimed at Mexico.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ALPHONSE

(to Fiona)

Would you do something about her,
for Christ's sake?

MEXICO

Fiona, you don't understand-

FIONA

Everyone just shut the fuck up. I
understand everything I need to
understand. I understand that
somebody's been ripping me off for
eight years, ain't that right,
Alphonse?

And a look crosses Alphonse's face that confirms his guilt.
He backs slowly away from Mexico, keeping his pistol trained
on Richard...

...and Fiona begins moving away from Malcolm, keeping her
pistol trained on Alphonse...

MEXICO

What does that mean, "ripping you
off"?

FIONA

Bankenverband Schleswig-Holstein,
does that ring any bells, Alphonse?

ALPHONSE

Now let's get something straight--

FIONA

*WHERE'S THE REST OF OUR FUCKING
MONEY?*

ALPHONSE

There were legitimate management
fees--

And then a WIND once again begins blowing throughout the
basement, and everyone falls deathly silent for a moment...

Stray pieces of paper and clothing float gently through the
air...

The lights flicker once or twice...

...and then, someone's BEAUTIFUL LEGS begin descending the
basement stairs...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Alphonse's eyes grow wide...

A frightened look crosses Mexico's face...

Even Malcolm seems completely out of his element...

The legs belong to Mia, who slowly and quietly descends the stairs wearing Marion's blood red party dress, her hair done up exactly like Marion's in all the pictures, gorgeous jewelry around her neck and hanging from her ears. She moves slowly, deliberately, as though possessed. The dress blows in the mysterious wind.

Mia smoothly makes her way to the center of the room, all eyes on her as she moves, a kind of confidence in her that we haven't seen before, as though the new "costume" suits her much better than her old one...

She takes a place amidst the boxes and furniture, glances around at the swirling debris in the air, and smiles.

ALPHONSE (CONT'D)
(in quiet disbelief)
Marion...

MIA
Sssshhh...

Suddenly, the WIND INTENSIFIES, a ROARING SOUND begins to fill the air, and a pained look crosses Mia's face.

MIA (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Alphonse!

And then, the LIGHTS SUDDENLY GO OUT, leaving us in the dark basement with the roaring sound growing louder...

FIONA
Malcolm, get your flashlight out!

MALCOLM
I'm looking-- fuck, I dropped it...

MIA
Alphonse!

A GUNSHOT rings out.

RICHARD
You MISSED me, Alphonse, you hear that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MEXICO

Richard, where are you?

A single light comes up directly above Mia, illuminating only Mia. It only lasts for a moment.

MIA

(pained)

Alphonse, help me!

The light goes out again, and ANOTHER GUNSHOT rings out.

MALCOLM

Would everyone please stop shooting already?

FIONA

I want that bank account number,
Alphonse! I want my fucking money!

RICHARD

You better tell her, Alphonse, I
think she's serious!

The light above Mia comes up again - except it isn't Mia standing there at all. It's MARION CARR - dressed in her blood red party dress - a violent wind whipping the dress and the debris all around her...

MARION

Don't let them kill you,
Alphonse... Tell them what they
want to know...

And the lights go black once more, and there are several more gunshots...

Fiona finds her flashlight! Within moments, she has pinned Alphonse in the beam, illuminating him for everyone to see...

...he turns and fires at Fiona, knocking the flashlight out of her hand as he hits her in the arm...

...but Mexico has managed to find Alphonse, and she fires, the gunflash clearly visible...

...and then suddenly, Mexico screams in pain and we hear someone hit the floor...

...and then Alphonse cries out:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

ALPHONSE

Eight nine four three eight two
seven five! That's it! Now leave
me alone!

One more shot rings out - Alphonse screams in pain and we hear another body crashing through boxes to the floor.

FIONA

(screaming)
Malcolm! Let's get out of here!

MALCOLM

I am all about getting the fuck out
of here!

INT. MANSION - 1ST FLOOR UTILITY HALLWAY - EVENING

Malcolm and Fiona come barrelling up the stairs. As they charge into the hallway, we see that Fiona has been shot in the shoulder.

MALCOLM

You okay?

FIONA

I'll live, let's just get to the
car before the Amityville Horror
whacks our asses...

EXT. MANSION - DRIVEWAY - EVENING

In the pouring rain, Malcolm and Fiona charge to their car.

MALCOLM

I swear, I don't ever want to hear
about Marion Carr again. And those
Time/Life books on the supernatural
you ordered? I'm gonna *burn* those
suckers...

And they climb inside and drive the hell off, literally SMASHING THROUGH the front gate to get out...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

A long, quiet moment follows. The wind and roaring slowly die down, the tension dissipates, and eventually we retreat into an unexpected silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eventually, the original, full basement lights come back on. We see Richard standing near a light switch, surveying the entire scene.

Nearby, lying on the floor with a knife in her throat and a surprised look in her eyes, is a very dead Mexico.

Across the room, with a bullet wound in his forehead, is a very dead Alphonse.

EXT. RENTAL CAR - EVENING

With Malcolm at the wheel, he and Fiona speed off away from the mansion.

FIONA

(reciting to herself)

Eight nine four three eight two
seven five. Eight nine four three
eight two seven five.

MALCOLM

We are going to be totally rich,
aren't we?

FIONA

For the love of God, will you shut
the fuck up? Eight nine four three
eight two seven five...

INT. MANSION - BASEMENT - EVENING

Richard removes a pen from his pocket, and quickly writes a number on his hand: 8 9 4 3 8 2 7 5

In the center of the room, we see Marion Carr in a blood red party dress, letting her hair down...

...and from a nearby old-fashioned wardrobe, the doors swing open and Mia emerges, wearing an identical blood red party dress.

MARION

Did you get the number?

RICHARD

I got it.

INT. MANSION - KITCHEN - EVENING

Richard, Marion and Mia slowly enter, one at a time, exhausted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Richard immediately heads to the wine rack, grabs a nice bottle, and pulls three glasses down. Marion and Mia sit quietly at the kitchen island, and Richard delivers the glasses.

MARION

So let's just make sure we covered all the bases.

Mia nods.

MARION (CONT'D)

You showed Fiona the fake journals?

MIA

Yup. She totally thinks she's looking for a bank in Liechtenstein.

MARION

Excellent. You were marvelous, sweetie.

MIA

(smiles)

I can act like my mom when I need to.

MARION

And we did actually get the other half of the account number from Alphonse?

RICHARD

We did. He was shitting bricks down there, with Fiona, Mexico, me, and the ghost of Marion Carr all hunting his sorry ass.

MARION

Perfect.

MIA

And of course, Grandma played her part perfectly. Mexico could feel you in the house the whole time, but she totally got your vibe confused with Grandma's ghost. It worked just like you thought it would.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARION

Mexico was good, but she was never
that good.

RICHARD

(raising a toast)
To Grandma.

Mia and Marion raise their glasses as well.

MIA

To Grandma.

MARION

I'll miss you, Mother. But thanks
for the help.

We see, one last time, the eerie, jagged, swirling shot from
near the ceiling, swirling around above them before vanishing
down through the floor, rattling all the windows as it goes.

RICHARD

We leave for Liechtenstein in two
days. We have a lot of cleanup and
packing to do before the government
takes the house.

MIA

What are we going to do with
Grandma's remains?

RICHARD

Bury them right next to that
murdering old Grandpa of yours.
That'll really piss him off.

They laugh quietly...

INT. MANSION - MASTER BEDROOM - EVENING

Richard packs his clothes into a large suitcase. Marion
sidles up behind him, wraps her arms around him.

MARION

You know I only slept with him for
the money.

RICHARD

I know. It still galls me a little
bit, but seeing his dead body in
the basement makes me feel a little
better.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARION

He was one of the best assassins in the world. They all were. That's why they made so much money. Even the Vatican used them.

RICHARD

I know, I know...

MARION

Look at me, Richard.

He turns in her arms to face her.

MARION (CONT'D)

We're going to live like royalty for the rest of our lives, and Mia will never have to worry about anything ever again.

RICHARD

I know, I know. It was worth it.

(pause)

I just wish I'd gotten a chance to sleep with Mexico before they killed her. That would have made it fair.

Marion pauses, unsure if he's joking...

...but his slowly emerging smile reveals that he is indeed joking.

MARION

God, I love you, Richard...

And as they embrace...

EXT. MANSION - EVENING

...we slowly PULL BACK away from the house, reversing the earlier shot where we first arrived here, and eventually fade to black.