

CAST-OFF

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: 11 February 2011

CAST-OFF

By

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Original script for a feature film

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1 INT. LONDON COUNCIL FLAT - NIGHT

A beep. The sound of a breathing pump.

Fade in on a profusion of tubing and machinery in a dreary London council flat. A young hand squeezes a pale, wrinkled one.

Amidst the rhythmic medical machinery, JACQUELINE (30s; steadfast) holds a silent, motionless vigil at the bedside of her unconscious, dying MOTHER (70s; sickly).

A NURSE (40s; matronly) arrives, checks the old woman's vitals and machine monitors, shakes her head gently, and passes on silent condolences to Jacqueline, frozen.

2 INT. LONDON COUNCIL FLAT - SUNSET

The room is silent, the medical paraphernalia gone. The sun sets through the open curtains. Jacqueline stares. An old grandfather clock chimes in the corner. The bed's empty. She picks up her tog bag, a suitcase, and closes the door behind her.

3 EXT./INT. LONDON FLAT - NIGHT

Jacqueline opens the door to her flat, trudges in with her luggage.

4 INT. LONDON FLAT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dumps her bags at the foot of the bed, pulls the curtains closed.

5 INT. LONDON FLAT KITCHEN - DAY

A television is on somewhere; a kettle boiling. The kitchen sink's stacked with dirty mugs, spoons, dishes.

Old, fluffy slippers. Jacqueline stands in her dressing gown, flannel pyjamas, her unwashed hair bundled in a dishevelled ponytail.

She stares out the kitchen window, mechanically pouring the contents of a soup packet into a mug; half-looking, adds hot water. She spills some on her hand, sucking in air between her teeth, wincing.

6 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The curtains closed, the room dark - save for some lamps. Old newspapers cover one side of a couch, an empty ice cream container on top: the bunker of a shut-in.

She pushes some clothes off a chair, sinks into it, her knees to her chest, her hands cradling the steaming mug - zoned out.

Eventually, catching a whiff of the soup, her gaze is broken. Frowning, she realises she has no appetite for it, puts it down on the coffee table, sits for a moment, just staring.

She returns her knees to her chest, slowly starts to squeeze them tighter to herself as a tear rolls down her cheek. She drops her head to her knees. Fade out to her gentle rocking and sobbing.

7 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - SAME TIME

An upper-middle class Cape Town home: an open plan lounge and kitchen, both with connections to the passageway that leads to the bedroom and its en suite bathroom. Jacqueline's one-time lover, DIANE (30s; vixen), sits at the dinner table on her laptop, a glass of red wine in one hand, the half-full bottle nearby.

A large framed university graduation photo protrudes from a box, filled with pictures, letters, a University of Cape Town sweater. It's a night for reminiscing: she sits on Facebook, scanning and uploading old memories.

In one picture, a group of five young women sit at a table: student nightlife revelry. The younger - more carefree - face of Jacqueline beams at the camera in the middle, squeezed cheek-to-cheek in an embrace with Diane and others.

Diane "Tags" their names - we see "Jacqueline Harris" - then clicks back to her desktop for the next photo: Jacqueline dressed as Johnny Depp in "Pirates of the Caribbean". She laughs spontaneously, smiles an awkward half-smile, hesitates, clicks again.

The same party: Diane dressed as Diane Keaton in "Annie Hall", her head thrown back laughing, as Jacqueline kisses her neck, their hands entwined. She lingers on it, reliving something, biting her lip.

The nostalgia's interrupted by a man, calling from the bathroom.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.S.)
Honey...honey, can you make sure
I pack -

Momentarily guilty, she looks over her shoulder, shuts her laptop quickly, shouts back.

DIANE
Coming!

8 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The shower's on in the en suite bathroom. On the bed, a half-packed overnight bag lies open, a pilot's uniform laid out beside it, including a pilot's cap.

On the side of the bed, Diane anxiously wraps a plastic bag - a mix of rough and cut diamonds - in masking tape several times.

She glances quickly at her watch, then the shower, reaches for the overnight bag, turns it upside down. She pries apart the base, pulls open a false bottom, places the package inside. The man's voice sings with gusto a Shania Twain hit.

JOHN (O.S.)
Man! I Feel Like A Woman!

It makes her smile, relieving her anxiety somewhat. They shout at each other through the scene.

DIANE
(banging on the door)
Move it, Shania, you're gonna
miss your plane!

JOHN (O.S.)
What time is it?

DIANE
(shaking her head)
Late! The time is late.

Despite this, he keeps up the singing, making her laugh.

JOHN (O.S.)
I'm going out tonight - I'm
feelin' alright / Gonna let it
all hang ouuuut...

DIANE
You'd better make that flight -
I'm not putting up with Nashville
Nancy all weekend.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.S.)

Aw, honey...

(singing another)

Don't freak out until you know
the facts / Relax / Don't be
stupid, you know I love you...

9 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT TERMINAL - MORNING

Smart, shiny, black men's shoes click on the white tiles.
The black overnight bag is by his side.

From behind, the pilot is dressed in black pants, a black
jacket with the four gold captain's epaulettes on each
shoulder, a black pilot's cap beneath his left arm.

He walks into the terminal amidst a stir: customs and
security arresting members of a crime syndicate.

Officials pay him no mind.

10 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - SAME MORNING

A hand nurses a coffee cup, shaking slightly. It's
STEPHANIE (30s; bitter), sitting opposite a pilot, his
back to us, his cap on the table. He stands up.

JOHN

Excuse me...just gonna...wash my
hands...

JOHN (40s; dapper) pulls the napkin off his lap, folds it
neatly, puts it down carefully on the table next to his
plate. He makes to leave, then stops. He picks up his
overnight bag, puts it on his chair.

JOHN (CONT.)

Will you just watch it for me?
You know how sentimental I am
about this old thing...cos Di
gave it to me.

Stephanie nods, smiling, her countenance softened, her
gaze on him until he's out of sight.

Her movements suddenly sharp and focused, she
surreptitiously puts his bag on the seat next to her,
beneath the surface of the table and draping tablecloth.

She takes a clean butter knife, quickly wedges the bottom
off, reaches her hand inside, pulls the false bottom
loose, her eyes still on the bathroom entrance.

She feels around inside - one eye on the bathrooms, the
other scoping the café customers.

(CONTINUED)

Her hand recognises something - relief and satisfaction on her face. She pulls out the taped-in package, puts it immediately into her handbag. She carefully reattaches the false bottom, the bag's base, and casually puts it back on his seat.

Her hand shaking more noticeably now, she pulls a hip flask out her handbag, looks around furtively, pours a healthy tot into her coffee. Looking around again - seeing no one watching - she shrugs, adds more. She puts it away, brings the coffee to her lips, takes a big sip, her eyes closing with satisfaction.

Moments later, she opens them, smiling as John returns. He picks his bag up from his chair, puts it on the ground. He sits down, his head tilting to one side, smelling something. Oblivious, Stephanie raises her cup to him, takes another big sip as his eyes narrow.

11 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - DAY

Diane's on Facebook, again. She updates her status on the home page: "Reminiscing 'bout the good ol' days..."

She scrolls down through her friends' updates, stops: "Jacqueline Harris is rejoining civilization...sort of..."

We see the comments under Jacqueline's status:

"(Bella Arendse) Fell off my radar there...what's up sweetie-pie?"

(Jacqueline Harris) Sorry...haven't been in touch with anyone...my mom died last month after an awful battle with MND (Motor Neurone Disease). Looking to pick up the pieces of my life again...she's no longer in pain but I am."

12 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - NIGHT

When John arrives home, cap beneath his left arm, Diane's at the same spot as before: dinner table, staring at her laptop - Facebook. She's on Jacqueline's "Profile". She offers a quick half-wave, anxiously returning her bitten thumbnail to her mouth.

His shoulders sink: he knows the score. He puts his keys down on a metal tray on the table by the door, picks up a pile of unopened mail.

Diane is still distracted, her eyes on the screen.

DIANE

How was...good, um, flight?

He nods without looking up - quietly seething, grumbling.

JOHN

Talk about addiction, I mean...

He's well into a conversation beneath his breath, when he spots something that stops him. He separates it.

JOHN (CONT.)

Some of these are urgent, you know?

He rips open an envelope, reads the contents, annoyed.

JOHN (CONT.)

F-final warning? Diane...

He holds the letter up - wordless remonstrations - awaiting her response. But her eyes only flit from the screen - a half acknowledgement - before going back.

DIANE

Uh-huh, yeah...

He exhales loudly, throws his cap onto the couch, resigned to his fate with a slight head shake. He takes a moment, then trudges over. He leans down and she pushes her cheek to him, eyes still glued to the screen.

JOHN

Love you...

He waits for a second, then kisses her cheek.

DIANE

Uh-huh...

He spots some designer shopping parcel deliveries in the corner, almost hidden by the chairs, his eyes suddenly alert. He gestures towards them, grumpily.

JOHN

Honey, those better not be what I think they are...

Diane's momentarily distracted from the screen.

DIANE

Uh, what honey?

Seeing his gaze directed at the poorly hidden bags, she waves him off dismissively.

DIANE (CONT.)

Oh please! Those are ancient.
(turning on the innocent charm)
I'm being a good girl...no spending sprees.

He looks less than convinced, grumbling en route to the passageway, loosening his tie roughly with one hand.

She half-waves to his back, still biting a thumbnail. Resolved, she takes a breath, clicks "Poke" on Jacqueline's Facebook "Profile". She gets up, hesitates, starts to turn around - stops - sits down.

The screen reads: "Poke Jacqueline? You are about to poke Jacqueline. She will be informed of this on her home page." She looks down, indecisive, her hand tapping the keyboard. Finally, she clicks "Poke".

13 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - SAME TIME

We fade in on dim street lighting through unclosed curtains: Jacqueline's flat.

In the darkness, her face illuminated by her laptop, she sits in the same spot, on the same chair, staring at the same screen: her Facebook home page.

Her eyes drift to the mug, still on the coffee table, the clothes shoved onto the other chair, the newspapers on the couch, the empty ice cream tub.

She takes a deep breath, clicks the "Messages" icon, clicks "Send a New Message". She pauses. Types "Diane", clicks on "Diane Mezzler". She stops: bites her bottom lip, breathes deeply, clicks "Subject", types "Donkey's years".

She stares at it, seems satisfied. Clicks on "Message", exhales, types: "Never thought I'd hear from you again...technically still haven't...a poke isn't communication..."

14 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - DAY

Diane eats a dark red apple, her laptop on the kitchen counter near the knife block and apple bowl. There's a glass trophy nearby, shaped like a sail. We hear a Facebook "Chat" notification, Diane laugh, type.

"Inbox" message from Jacqueline: another old varsity picture. Shot glasses in hand - complete with flaming surfaces - ready for a hot and crazy down-down.

She laughs, types some more in "Chat", each person's line of dialogue being preceded by their "Profile" picture. We see her "Profile" picture: her and John at sunset; Jacqueline's: looking away from the camera, pensive.

15 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - SAME TIME
Jacqueline opens the picture: screams, starts laughing.

16 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT
Diane's speaking to Jacqueline on the landline.

DIANE
Jac, you should come out here...

17 INT. LONDON FLAT BEDROOM - SAME TIME

DIANE (O.S.)
...for a holiday...

Jacqueline breathes in slowly, deeply, her eyes wide, toying with the notion: excited but restrained.

DIANE (O.S.)(CONT.)
...get away from the drudgery of dreary London...

Her fingers coil themselves in the telephone cord.

DIANE (O.S.)(CONT.)
...come have some fun in the sun...

She twists her lip, biting the inside.

DIANE (O.S.)(CONT.)
...it'll be just like old times...it's Cape Town, baby!

18 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT BOARDING GATE - NIGHT

Plane ticket in hand, a jacket over her arm, Jacqueline waits in line. She's noticeably anxious, her hand to her mouth, distracted. She's jumpy when someone taps her shoulder to point out the queue's moved.

She manages only a nervous, weak smile as she hands her boarding pass to the smiling crew member.

19 INT. AEROPLANE CABIN - NIGHT

A LITTLE BOY (five; bullied), hell-bent on revenge, chases his BIG BROTHER (seven; sadist) down the aisle, disturbing passengers, shaking their heads. They almost knock over a RELUCTANT MOTHER (20s; exhausted), rocking her nine-month-old. The baby's face is red, it's mouth open: wailing. People look over infuriated, others put their

(CONTINUED)

headphones on. One man puts his entire pillow over his face and ears in desperation.

The boys run on, past a passenger's enormous, heaving belly. Covered in crumbs and chip pieces, he's encroaching upon his neighbour's seat - her hands frustratedly wringing a rolled up magazine in her lap. Squeezing from the other side, an elderly hand enthusiastically points out people in a photo album.

We see all three now. On the left, a heavily OVERWEIGHT MAN (40s; borrowed time): sleepmask, mouth wide open - snoring, some drool - bulges onto his neighbour.

On the right, an overly proud GRANDMOTHER (70s; zest for life): jabbering away, animatedly narrating her photo album - at turns grabbing her neighbour's arm or patting her leg - drawing attention to more gush-worthy snaps.

Trapped between this two-pronged assault, Jacqueline stares ahead - her features frozen in a pained expression - her only relief: strangling the life out of her in-flight magazine.

20

INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

John's in the en suite bathroom, the door ajar as he shaves at the sink. Diane, still in pyjamas, stands blow-drying her hair in the long mirror on the closet door. We see them both, but neither of them one another. He grunts responses as she shouts over the hair dryer.

DIANE

My old varsity friend...

JOHN

Mmm?

DIANE

Remember, I told you about her -

He leaves the bathroom, a white face towel around his shoulders, absent-mindedly wiping off shaving cream: perplexed. She turns off the dryer to style her hair.

DIANE (CONT.)

I'm sure I told you...I know I did.

He shakes his head impassively. She cocks her head for an instant, her lips pursed in supposed concentration, but the moment passes quickly and she brushes it off.

DIANE (CONT.)

Anyway, she's arriving today.

(CONTINUED)

Still preoccupied, he's hunting for something in the bedroom. Without looking away from the mirror, she nods towards the bathroom.

DIANE (CONT.)
Left cabinet, top shelf.

JOHN
Mmm...

He opens the cabinet, smacks on some aftershave; she's moved onto makeup. He exits, looking more focused but still confused.

JOHN (CONT.)
And that warrants makeup,
and...the...

Struggles for the right word, gesturing towards her general direction, distractedly hunting again.

JOHN (CONT.)
...the do?

She rolls her eyes. Absent-mindedly, he plants a habitual peck on her cheek.

JOHN (CONT.)
Always look great to me.

21 INT. AEROPLANE CABIN - SAME TIME

People stand up, preparing to disembark, but the plane's packed, so there's no movement. Jacqueline's managed to get to the overhead lockers first. Reaching up, a passenger bumps her from behind and she goes head first into the crumb belly.

She tries to get up, only to put her hand in his lap, bringing a broad smile to his drool-caked mouth. As she tries to escape, Grandmother grabs her arm, pointing at her album.

22 INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM CAROUSEL - SAME MORNING

The hordes descend. She does her best to survive the scrum.

DISSOLVE TO:

Half the flight has completed the final obstacle. Not her.

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

A handful remain. A few bags finally emerge, her face lights up, only to watch her only company grab their bags before they even reach her side, and disappear.

Just as she sits on her trolley - her hands to her face, ready to cry - an AIRPORT EMPLOYEE (30s; grimy), in a fluorescent yellow bib, comes over to ask her to follow him. She sighs, resigned, and eventually complies.

23 INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT BATHROOM - SAME MORNING

Frantic brushing. She spits, rinses, looks up, still holding the toothbrush, studying herself in the mirror: haggard. She looks at her watch, panics, tries to fix her hair, gives up. Leaning against the basin on both arms, she drops her head, sighing loudly.

Two YOUNG WOMEN (20s; label divas) enter, spot the toothbrush, scoff. Flushing. An OLDER WOMAN (40s; worldly) exits a stall, shoots a glance at Jacqueline and sniggering Young Women, sussing things out immediately. She washes her hands next to Jacqueline, taking a quick glance at her, still oblivious.

She takes out lipstick, applies it, presses her lips together, dabs at a corner with her finger, her eyes on the mirror. She glances at Jacqueline again, turns, holds out her lipstick to her.

24 INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ARRIVALS - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline appears, rosy-lipped, a skip in her step. She's no match for Diane - a bombshell in a brand new outfit - standing out amongst the waiting crowd. She spots Jacqueline first, waves enthusiastically.

When she reaches Diane there's an awkward moment of hesitation - mostly Jacqueline's doing - before Diane gives her a hug. Jacqueline exhales, her eyes closed for a moment, relieved.

25 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - NIGHT

John sits alone, his cap on the table, uninterestedly nursing a cup of coffee: a forlorn figure. He looks at his watch.

26 INT. CAPE TOWN RESTAURANT - SAME TIME

Jacqueline and Diane chat over coffee. Diane's animatedly pointing out pictures from a photo album. Her expression changes from amused to nostalgic, more subdued.

We see: the two of them, grinning, holding a sailing trophy, with a thick metal base and glass sail above. She looks at Jacqueline, who smiles: it's a special memory.

She pages on, gets caught up in the moment again, grabs Jacqueline's hand, excitedly reliving memories.

Jacqueline nods, smiling, before her gaze returns to Diane's hand on hers.

27 INT. CAPE TOWN HOTEL CORRIDOR - SAME NIGHT

Jacqueline struggles gamely with her luggage - none of which has wheels. Finally reaching her door, she battles to pull out her key card, dropping her handbag, the contents spilling out. She sighs, defeated.

28 INT. CAPE TOWN HOTEL CORRIDOR - SAME NIGHT

She leaves her room, almost bumping into Big Brother now chasing Little Boy, tearing down the corridor. An approaching MAID (30s; defeated) swerves, narrowly missing them, tipping her cart. Towels, toiletries and cleaning supplies cascade onto the carpet.

Jacqueline hesitates but leaves. She stops, turns around, and walks back.

She kneels down to help but the maid instinctively grabs the towel. Jacqueline offers a soft smile, picks up another towel, hands it to her. Self-conscious, the maid wipes away a tear. They tidy in silence, side by side.

29 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE/KITCHEN INTO PASSAGEWAY - ANOTHER NIGHT

John enters, his cap beneath his arm, putting his keys down on the metal tray, picking up the stack of mail in one fluid, habitual motion. He looks up: his shoulders sink.

Diane stares at her laptop, nursing a glass of red wine at the dinner table, the half-emptied bottle nearby, alongside the sailing trophy. Her eyes remain glued to the screen throughout the scene.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE

Hi honey.

He walks over - grumpy - gives her the customary peck on the cheek, bristling as he notices the screen. Resigned, he only grumbles to himself through the scene.

JOHN

Facebook...I'm married to bloody
Facebook.

He goes to the kitchen, opens the fridge mechanically, stares: whatever he'd hoped to find isn't there.

DIANE

What's that honey? Good flight...

He shakes his head: irritated and bitter.

JOHN

Only chance of getting a poke is
if I log on, I suppose...

DIANE

(distracted, not listening)
Uh-huh...

He stares into the fridge a moment longer, drops his head, slowly nods and closes it, accepting his lot. He pulls at his tie knot with one hand, still annoyed, en route through the lounge into the passageway.

JOHN

(without looking back)
Your mate never pitched the other
night.

Diane suddenly breaks the laptop's spell: alarmed, as John's voice trails down the passageway.

JOHN (O.C)(CONT.)

(mostly to himself)
Stood up. Suppose she was
probably on Facebook, too...

Panicked, she slams the laptop closed, grabs her cellphone, finds the number, dials the landline. Pacing, her panic quickly transforms into fury.

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

Hello?

DIANE

What the hell is going on?

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

Diane?

DIANE

What happened?

(pause)

Hello?!

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

(sighs)

Di, there were all these..cops...customs, those sniffer dogs, security...I don't wanna go to jail...and -

DIANE

Are you drinking again?

(pause)

Well, are you?

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

(crying)

...someone sent this, uh, letter...it was in red..."I know what you doing and you better stop"...

(sobbing now)

...hand delivered...at my house, Di - my house!

DIANE

Oh, please! That could've been your crazy neighbour upset about the fucking hedges for all we know!

(exasperated)

Dogs can't even smell it! They're diamonds, not drugs! Y-you not even smuggling, don't even handle the cash, just deliver the shit!

STEPHANIE (O.S.)

(crying hysterically)

I c- I can't, just can't...

Diane slams the phone down. John comes through drying his face.

JOHN

Who was that?

Still bristling, she slowly composes herself, not wanting to alarm him. She makes a drinking motion with her hand.

DIANE

Oh, y'know...Stephanie...

He shakes his head, annoyed.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Felt like a right tit sitting
there...enduring those
insufferable, pitying glances
from the waitresses...

She dabs at the water on his nose.

DIANE

Don't you worry, I'll sort her
out.

30 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - MORNING, LATER THAT WEEK

Diane leans back, smiling, as John pecks her cheek. She stands at the kitchen counter in her dressing gown, her laptop open: Facebook.

He opens the fridge, pulls out some juice, takes a sip, makes a face, starts hunting for the "Best Before" date.

JOHN

Been spending a lot of time
together, you and, um...

She closes her laptop, tidies up the counter, putting some mail in a pile near the sailing trophy.

DIANE

Jacqueline.

She picks up the sailing trophy, looks at it longingly: proud, nostalgic. He nods, taking another sip.

JOHN

When do I get to -

He makes the same face again: juice is definitely funky. Diane grins, puts the trophy back down.

DIANE

Saturday, taking the boat out.

The trophy has a heavy metal base and solid glass structure above, shaped in the sail of a yacht: "National Intervarsity Yacht Challenge PAIRS - 1st".

JOHN (O.C.)

As long as you're not...expecting
me to -

DIANE (O.C.)

(laughing)
Are you kidding? She knows more
'bout sailing than I do!

31 EXT. YACHT ON OPEN OCEAN - SATURDAY

John seems in a reflective mood, sitting alone and drinking a beer, looking out to sea. Laughter.

He turns to look: the women joke, working the sail and rigging. He shakes his head, stops: looks at Diane's hand lingering on Jacqueline's back, takes another sip, pensive.

Jacqueline turns to face Diane, spotting John. She stops laughing, suddenly uneasy. Diane sees Jacqueline's face, turns around to look, laughs and waves at him.

He raises his beer, takes another sip. Diane turns around to face Jacqueline once more, but he holds his gaze on Jacqueline: long enough to make it awkward.

32 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - NEXT NIGHT

Dim lamp lighting reveals Jacqueline and Diane sitting at the dinner table, a bottle of red wine between them, three-quarters empty.

Diane takes Jacqueline's hands from her lap, squeezes them, gesticulating and pleading playfully.

DIANE

But you have to stay...you'll never have this much fun...in London...

(an affected British accent)

...your summer forecast: heavy rain...with some light rain on Sunday. But by Monday...

(pausing for dramatic effect)

...we should see heavy rain again.

It's silly but Jacqueline giggles - her eyes transfixed - her face glowing in affection for Diane: being seduced.

There's an awkward pause after the performance: now two people holding hands. Jacqueline looks from their hands to Diane, back to their hands. The tone turns earnest.

DIANE (CONT.)

(squeezing Jacqueline's hands)

Stay.

Jacqueline looks away - flattered but unsure of herself - shaking her head, overwhelmed. She pulls a hand away, raises it to wipe away a happy tear. Diane deliberately and slowly takes her hand again, looks into her eyes. The silent question fills the air.

(CONTINUED)

Jacqueline shakes her head in disbelief, overcome by Diane's intensity. She turns away, looking for an answer - thinks of something - pulls her hands away, crosses them over her waist, shaking her head.

JACQUELINE
Can't afford it...this party
lifestyle had to end, eventually.

Diane takes her hands again. Jacqueline doesn't resist, but keeps her eyes on her lap.

DIANE
(slow and low)
What if it didn't?

Intrigued - still confused, insecure - she looks up.

JACQUELINE
W-what do you mean?

DIANE
Jac, I need someone I can trust.

33 INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NEXT MORNING

In uniform, his cap in his hand, John and Jacqueline exchange hugs, then John and Diane. His cap beneath his left arm, he excuses himself, leaves. Jacqueline's eyes follow him nervously. Diane watches him go, takes Jacqueline's hands, looks at her intently.

DIANE
Just think about it.

34 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

Jacqueline's face is illuminated - by both joy and her laptop screen. She slaps her knee, her head rocks back laughing: Facebook, a recent photo - both of them making funny faces in gorilla poses - with some baboons behind them at Cape Point.

35 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - MIDDAY

Jacqueline stands, hands on hips, looking at the newspapers, mugs, laundry lying everywhere. She starts to tidy up, very reluctantly.

36 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - SAME TIME

Diane sits at the dinner table, clicking at her laptop, a glass of red wine dangling. She takes a long sip.

DIANE

Ooh...

Online shopping: shifting between multiple sites, clicking "Add to basket" regularly, zipping through clothes, shoes, accessories. It's designer stuff: not cheap. She stops - gleeful - on the Nine West website.

We see several credit cards now, layed out on the table, her fingers dancing over them playfully, before finally selecting one.

DIANE (CONT.)

Now which of my little...I think, you!

Not a care in the world, she types in her details.

37 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline picks up a mug, smells it routinely and pulls back like it bit her nose off. She holds it away from herself, at arm's length, en route to the kitchen.

DISSOLVE TO:

The lounge somewhat tidier now, she picks up a newspaper, revealing her laptop. She sighs, picks up the laptop, puts it down on the nearby table. Still holding the paper, she sits down, exhaling loudly. She looks at the headline, makes a disapproving face, looks away.

Her eyes fall on the laptop on the table. She stares at it: it's calling her but she's trying to resist. She looks away, then quickly at it again, then away. She gets up, storms off.

Moments later, she returns, sits down. Composing herself, she takes a deep breath, reaches for it, opens it, logs on, eyes wide.

Facebook. She clicks on "Chat": three friends are online - none of them Diane. Her shoulders slump.

DISSOLVE TO:

Jacqueline's head is initially obscured by the laptop screen. Concentration etched on her face, she frowns, rubbing an earbud at some stubborn keyboard dirt.

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

Illuminated by the screen, the room dark now, she sits - holding the ear bud in front of her eyes - as she closes one, then the other: boredom rock bottom. With one eye open, she notices something on screen, tries to focus on it, straining with one eye. Shaking her head at her stupidity, she opens the other eye. Her eyes grow wide, her face suddenly energised as she types, feverishly.

Each person's line of "Chat" dialogue is preceded by their "Profile" picture. Diane's is the Cape Point gorilla pose now; Jacqueline's the one of her and Diane dressed as Jack Sparrow and Annie Hall, circa 2000. The top of the "Chat" screen reads "Diane Mezzler".

Jacqueline: "Where have you BEEN?"

Chat alert. "Retail therapy...then sitting in sun @Waterfront...eating ice cream. Yummy :)"

She frowns, disappointed, types: "Oh."

Chat alert. "U?"

She hesitates, exhales deeply, types: "I miss you."

Chat alert. "Me 2"

A smile creeps across her face. But she's fighting it.

Types: "Weather horrid...been a total shut-in."

Chat alert. "Cum 2 Cape Town ;)"

Annoyed, she says each word as she types: "You know I can't afford it. Haven't worked since Mum got ill. Just had a holiday. Where's the cash coming from?"

She looks briefly authoritative, almost triumphant.

Chat alert. "Weeeeell...thought Id made u offer u couldnt refuse...just say yes...then lotsa bux 2 cum visit ;)"

She bites her bottom lip, mulling over this.

Types: "Why can't you come HERE for a visit?"

Chat alert sounds immediately. "Married"

Chat alert. "& u dont exactly make it sound appealing ;)"

She sighs, nodding to herself.

Chat alert. "U know how I feel about u"

Her eyes drop. She sighs: she's 'the other woman'.

38

INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - NIGHT

Jacqueline orders a coffee. She turns around as John looks up from his newspaper, his cap on the table: they spot each other. She comes over, seems excited. He's more subdued as he gets up to give her an awkward hug.

JOHN

This is...nice surprise.

Jacqueline's gushing and self-conscious simultaneously.

JACQUELINE

Yes...lovely!

JOHN

(motions for her to sit)

What are you doing here?

He pulls out his cellphone as he's speaking, starts to type a quick message as she sits down.

JACQUELINE

Just...dropping a friend off.

JOHN

(distracted with cellphone)

Oh, what flight?

JACQUELINE

(a bit panicked)

Uh...M-Madrid.

He puts his phone away in his pants, looks up at the electronic flight information board, spots a flight.

JOHN

Nice, beats here hey?

JACQUELINE

Heathrow or the country as a whole?

JOHN

(chuckling)

I don't know...but I'm here about this time every week if you do like the airport.

JACQUELINE

I -

His cellphone starts ringing and he holds up a finger.

JOHN

Uh, sorry, gotta take this.

(CONTINUED)

But he struggles to get his phone out his pocket, turning into a bit of a spectacle as the chorus of Shania Twain's "I'm Gonna Getcha Good!" starts belting out from his pants, drawing glances and sniggers from amused patrons.

JOHN (CONT.)

I, uh -

JACQUELINE

It'll be our secret...

She holds her forefinger to her lips, smiling. He nods, grateful, as he finally gets hold of his phone and leaves. The moment he's out of sight, her entire demeanour changes. Awkward and frantic, she grabs his bag. Then, more wary of other patrons, she eases it onto the chair next to her, beneath the table cloth.

She tries to pull the base open but can't. Her eyes flash panic. She looks up to see John still talking, gesticulating, his back to her in the distance. Looking back, her eyes spot the table knife. She takes it, wedging open the base.

39 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - NIGHT

John Cougar Mellencamp's hit "Jack & Diane" plays in the background. Diane sits at the dinner table in dim lamp lighting: alone, a two-thirds emptied bottle of red wine nearby, a glass in her hand, hovering between toying, drunken fingers. Her laptop's open nearby - Facebook - but she's preoccupied with her cellphone.

She's staring at the small screen, labouring over typing a text message. Finally, triumphant, she presses send, downs the rest of her wine, puts the glass down clumsily, struggles to get up.

40 INT. LONDON FLAT BEDROOM - SAME TIME

A cellphone beeps loudly, the screen lighting up in the darkness. A moan. A hand reaches for it. Lying face down, Jacqueline brings it close to her face, reads: "Jac! Rockin out 2our song! I miss ur tits u have great tits"

Suddenly wide awake, she turns on the bedside lamp, sits up, rubs her eyes, reads the message again. Types.

41 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Loud music: "Jack & Diane". The cellphone lights up on the table and a message pops up: "Are u drunk?"

Diane dances to the music, wild and uncoordinated.

42 INT. LONDON FLAT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline sits staring at her cellphone. Moaning, she throws her head back into the pillows and the phone into a pile of clothes nearby. She turns out the light: heavy sigh.

43 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR/LOUNGE - DAY

Jacqueline knocks on the front door, straightening her short skirt. Diane opens up. Jacqueline walks straight in past her - blasé - wheeling her new luggage behind her, nonchalantly signalling the taxi driver to leave.

Noticing shopping parcel deliveries of designer clothes and shoes - including Nine West - she stops.

JACQUELINE
Someone's been busy...

DIANE
W-what...what the - what are you
doing here?

She walks out the door, half gesticulating after the taxi.

DIANE (CONT.)
W-wait, uh...

JACQUELINE
(coolly)
So happy to see me - shall I come
back another time?

DIANE
But I -

JACQUELINE
Well, I've been diligently saving
my earnings from our little
venture and I felt I deserved a
treat. So...
(she slaps Diane's bum)
...I'm visiting for the week...
(coily)
...or longer, if you give me a
good reason to stay?

DIANE
But...w-what'll I tell John?

Jacqueline wheels her luggage towards the passageway.

JACQUELINE
That's your problem...
(she stops, turning over her
shoulder to add)

(CONTINUED)

...oh, P.S. I'm staying in your spare room. Don't forget my good night kiss. Or I'll come get it myself.

44 EXT. YACHT DECK, CAPE TOWN YACHT CLUB - SUNSET

Seagulls cry, water laps gently against moored yachts.

It's poker night - No Limit Texas Hold 'Em: a green felt table, different coloured stacks of poker chips, two decks of cards. A nearby table has snacks, some beers.

White plastic chairs surround the poker table, some people stand admiring the sunset: chatter, bonhomie.

DISSOLVE TO:

The sky's darker now. Christmas lights line the main mast overhead, some temporary lights added for the game.

They're playing: some chatter, laughter. Diane's arm is around ANGIE (30s; homewrecker), her other hand patting Angie's thigh as she throws her head back, laughing, having a fabulous time.

45 INT. YACHT CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Between hands, JIMBO (40s; harmless) comes down into the cabin, approaching John in the kitchen area and fridge. John opens, hands him a beer. Jimbo nods 'thanks' but is distracted, tipsy - trying to be subtle: a hushed voice.

JIMBO

Are you seeing this?

JOHN

(getting more beers)

Uh, what? How much cash you're dropping? Yeah, I see that every week.

JIMBO

Funny...

(through clenched teeth)

...are you seeing this?

John shrugs, shakes his head. Jimbo sounds desperate.

JIMBO (CONT.)

The heat, man...

John stares at Jimbo, puzzled, his one eye narrowing, holding his gaze as he takes another sip. Jimbo's excited and frustrated simultaneously.

(CONTINUED)

JIMBO (CONT.)

Threesome!

He looks doubtful, sizing Jimbo up and down, taking his remarks a bit more seriously. Bemused, John pats his shoulder.

JOHN

Buddy, I just don't like you that way. But I'll take the compliment.

JIMBO

Not me!

(abandoning self-restraint)

Three words: ménage à trois! Two words: lucky bastard! One word: pictures!

(with desperation)

Please?

John closes his eyes, shakes his head, makes to push past him. But Jimbo grabs his arm, more urgent now.

JIMBO (CONT.)

She's up for it - I'm telling you - all you have to do is convince Diane...

John stops, looks at Jimbo's hand on his arm. Jimbo looks down at his hand, takes it off, apologetically. John looks at him disapprovingly, takes the beer from him.

JOHN

I'm cutting you off.

Jimbo rolls his eyes, raises his hands to the heavens.

46 EXT. YACHT DECK - CONTINUOUS

John and Jimbo take their seats, John eyeing him warily, Jimbo's attention jostling between what little remains of his final beer and excitedly following the developments of his threesome fantasy across the table.

JIMBO

(distracted, to Jacqueline)

So, how long you staying?

She turns to look in the same direction as him.

JACQUELINE

Just a week...

(bitterness, irritation)

...maybe less, at this rate.

(CONTINUED)

On the other side of the table, Diane - drunk, laughing giddily - is very affectionate, her hands all over Angie. It's noticeable to everyone there but only Jacqueline shoots daggers; John seems unperturbed.

DIANE

(giggling, to Angie)
 I have this...habit...
 (she smiles coyly)
 ...of locking myself out my own house...
 ('whispering' loudly)
 ...I'll tell you where we keep the spare...
 (pointing at her drunkenly)
 ...because women you can trust...men? They're all cheats - every last one of them.

Jimbo tries his luck, putting his arm around Jacqueline, but she quickly removes it without taking her eyes off Diane. She's seething now. Jimbo makes a big eyes, raised eyebrows face to John who just shakes his head at him, taking another sip.

DISSOLVE TO:

Water laps gently at the side of the yacht, the dry dock creaking nearby. Music's playing.

John's quiet and distant, seemingly keeping an eye on both Diane and Jacqueline, neither of whom are paying any attention to him. Involved in the final stages of a hand, John squeezes his eyebrows together with his left hand - rubbing both eyes at once - seemingly stressed, tired.

It's a three-way showdown: PAUL (40s; jerk), Jimbo and John. Despite Paul's emphatic conviction he had John beat, it's John who's raking in the winnings. Jimbo shakes his head good-naturedly. Paul throws his cards down, shaking his head over John.

PAUL

I can never tell what this guy's thinking, let alone what cards he's holding...

JIMBO

(grinning)
 One night he got pissed, told me his secret.

Paul's eyes open wide, expectant. John shoots a little glance at Jimbo that makes him hesitate but he carries on anyway.

(CONTINUED)

JIMBO (CONT.)

Everyone's got tells. H-he said
the trick is...

Paul edges closer in his seat, waving an arm - annoyed at the chatter from the other side of the table: he doesn't want to miss a word. Jimbo's chuffed with his captive audience, while Angie deals a new hand - still flirting, winking at Diane.

JIMBO (CONT.)

...you gotta mix in the truth
with the lies...
(turning to face John)
...that way, no one ever knows -
for sure - if they're getting
truth...or lies.

We see Jacqueline's face: she's been listening, watching. She's studying John's face for a response. He just smiles shyly, arranging his winnings dispassionately.

JOHN

Just lucky I guess.

PAUL

(testy)
Every fucking week?

John shoots Paul a deadly look. He looks uncertain, then backs down, reaching for his wallet, sheepish.

PAUL (CONT.)

'Suppose it doesn't help I'm a
kak player?

Jimbo laughs awkwardly, picking up his new cards, his eyes darting between John and Paul. John just nods, takes Paul's R200 note, allocates the chips. Paul, distressed, picks up his new cards, looks over to Jimbo, who shrugs, relieved he's not the target of John's displeasure.

JACQUELINE

(blurting out)
I'm all-in, blind.

John looks up at her for quite a while. Other players - quieter now - look from Jacqueline to their new cards and, muttering, all fold in turn. Angie, drunk - her arm around Diane - laughs loudly at her 'joke'.

ANGIE

I'm all-out!

Jacqueline's seething: trying so hard to ignore them.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.C.)

Call.

There's some commotion at the table, excitement, disbelief. John shows no emotion.

Jacqueline - entirely sober - shoves her chips into the centre, without announcing a total. Paul points this out.

PAUL

Whoa, ladies...easy on, you can't

-

John puts his hand on Paul's arm, his eyes fixed on Jacqueline.

JOHN

I've got her covered.

PAUL

Yeah, but if you lose you're gonna have to match up -

JOHN

(quietly)

I wouldn't worry about it.

PAUL

But, did you even look at your cards? It's not chump change she's putting in th-

John turns over his cards, without looking. He shows jack-9, unsuited. Paul starts to smile, excited to see his adversary take a beating. Jacqueline turns her cards over disinterestedly. She shows 7-9 unsuited: an even weaker hand.

Jimbo starts laughing as he deals out the community cards, Paul becoming increasingly worked up by the situation. Neither player hits a card and neither's watching: Jacqueline's watching Diane; John's watching Jacqueline. He takes the large pot with just jack high.

PAUL

(to anyone who will listen)

But how, h-how can he call that?

John just shrugs, starts arranging his winnings. Jacqueline stands up. Pushing her chair back hard, it topples sideways. Jimbo makes the raised eyebrows face.

Diane doesn't even seem to notice. This only makes Jacqueline more upset. She storms off to the cabin. John excuses himself, goes after her. He comes back a few moments later, sits down casually.

(CONTINUED)

JIMBO
Everything okay there, boss?

JOHN
(uninterested)
Must have caught something on the
flight, not feeling well. Whose
deal?

47 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE/KITCHEN THROUGH FRONT
DOOR INTO GARDEN - NEXT DAY

Diane sits at the dinner table, holding her forehead,
rubbing her eyes, clearly hungover. She holds her hand to
her mouth instinctively: false alarm - just a burp.

JACQUELINE (O.C.)
What am I doing here?! I feel
like an idiot!

Diane stares vacantly ahead, moaning, not even turning to
face her accuser.

DIANE
Mmm...

Diane's in the foreground; Jacqueline, the background:
eyes fiery, face flushed, gesticulating wildly.

JACQUELINE
What am I flying half way around
the world for?!

Diane's finally had enough. She whips her head around,
snaps at her.

DIANE
Oh don't be so bloody dramatic,
Jac! People do it all the time...

Diane shakes her head, turns away from her again.

DIANE (CONT.)
...God, John does it every week.

Mere mention of his name makes Jacqueline seethe: she's
furious, yet Diane doesn't even turn to face her.

JACQUELINE
John? John! Okay, let's talk
about John, I -

DIANE
If you want to shriek at him,
too, you're gonna have to wait
till he gets back from the shops.

JACQUELINE

Oh really? Well, maybe I should...I think I will tell him.

Diane turns slowly to face her, staring her down, coolly.

DIANE

What's to tell?

JACQUELINE

What's to tell?

She stands with her right hand on her hip, her left hand in the air, thumb raised, denoting one.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

For one thing: you're smuggling diamonds - conflict diamonds - in his luggage, every week, Di!

Unfazed, Diane gets up, goes to the kitchen, talking as she does, her back to Jacqueline.

DIANE

Oh please, you're so not gonna tell him that...

She pours a glass of water from the tap, opens a cupboard, looking for something.

JACQUELINE

Oh, really? Why wouldn't I? Please, tell me: you with all the fucking answers!

With relief, Diane eventually finds what she wants, pops two into her mouth, drinks, and swallows the pills.

Jacqueline's standing, hands on hips, ready to pounce. Diane's blasé attitude is only making it worse.

DIANE

Because, my dear, your hands are just as immoral as mine.

Jacqueline raises her right hand, finger pointing, about to launch into an attack but Diane continues, ignoring her. She's calm and focused and as she talks, Jacqueline realises she's cornered and slowly lowers her hand.

DIANE (CONT.)

How d'you think he's gonna react when he finds out that was no accident: you just bumping into him at the airport...that these friendly meetings have all been a con - to use him - so you can pocket some cash?

Eyebrows raised, she's confident her point can't be trumped.

Jacqueline looks down, trying to regroup. Thinking of something - her face animated once more, her posture inflated - she speaks softly and slowly, her eyes fiery.

JACQUELINE

Immoral hands, hey? You're right.
I should just tell him how you
fucked me - in his bed - every
time I've been here.

Diane whirls around, her face flushed, eyes wild, pushing her seat over as she gets up. Jacqueline's hit the jackpot: satisfaction washes over her face.

DIANE

You - wouldn't - dare!

Jacqueline takes a few, slow steps until she's right in front of Diane, coolly staring down her fiery gaze.

JACQUELINE

Now...I'm no poker player...but
I'm pretty sure that beats the
shit out of a little bit of
smuggling.

Eyeball to eyeball: two cats poised before conflict. Jacqueline doesn't break her gaze; Diane realises she's serious.

But, for an instant, Jacqueline's eyes flash fear: it's all Diane needs. She launches at her, Diane grabbing her hair, tussling as they scream at each other through the scene.

DIANE

You fucking bitch, I'll kill you!

JACQUELINE

Leeeeeet go of me! You - crazy -
bitch!

They tumble onto the couch, Diane on top in a blind rage, hitting out at her; Jacqueline covering her face, trying to push Diane off. Eventually, she succeeds by scratching Diane's face. Shocked, Diane stops.

DIANE

Owww! You cunt!
(pointing to the door)
Get out! Get out of my house! Get
out!

Jacqueline's shell-shocked, regretting scratching her, but also frightened. She hesitates. Diane grabs a nearby lamp, pulling on it, but the plug sticks in the wall.

Jacqueline makes for the door as Diane struggles to pull it out, shouting to herself.

DIANE (CONT.)

Fuck! Fucking kill you, I'll kill you!

Eventually, she throws the lamp in vain against the open door, Jacqueline long since gone. It ricochets off the door, falls to the floor, just cracking. She collapses in a heap on the couch, aimlessly re-hashing her throw with her right arm. She starts to sob. We slowly move towards the open front door, the birds chirping outside.

DISSOLVE TO:

Through the still open front door, we see the garden is darker, quieter now, when John returns. His footsteps on the path slow as he nears the door, then speed up again, panicked as he appears in the doorway.

JOHN

Diane! Diane!

He drops the grocery bags on the ground. The dark red apples roll onto the floor next to the cracked ceramic lamp. He looks quickly around the room - perceiving no threats - he steps over the lamp, rushes to Diane, puts his arm around her, notices her scratched face, careful not to press his shoulder against it. She slowly collapses into him, moaning softly between sobs.

DIANE

That bitch...that bitch...that bitch.

JOHN

It's okay, it's okay...

He strokes her hair, looks around the room, trying to take in what's happened. We move back, eventually settling on the lamp and dark red apples on the floor.

48 INT. CAPE TOWN HOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

Jacqueline stands in her hotel room, phone to her ear.

JACQUELINE

Please! Di - Di! Just listen to me!

(CONTINUED)

She opens her mouth to speak but Diane's yelling at her. She bangs her fist against the side of her leg, wipes her nose, sniffs, wipes a tear: she's beside herself but doing her utmost to stay calm.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I was jealous about the other night...I-I...Di, you know, you know how that...your flirting...how it always upset me...

The response isn't good. She starts to wave her free arm: wanting words that won't come, hearing things she can't handle. She collapses, sits on the edge of the bed, rubbing her fist again and again against her leg, her desperation rising.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Let me explain! Di - Di, I'm sorry! Diane!

She starts sobbing, drops the phone by her feet as the disconnected call signal sounds.

49

INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CAFÉ - MORNING

They sit at a table, Jacqueline imploring, beseeching with her gaze; Diane distant, removed with hers: a silent duo in a space filled with hugs, laughter, clinking cups. Jacqueline finally summons up the courage to break the tension.

JACQUELINE

Th-thank you, for coming...

She looks down, searching - anywhere - for words to make this right again.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I know what I said upset you...I'm-I'm sorry...

She tries to reach Diane's gaze, turning her head this way and that. But Diane looks past her, punishing her.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I would never do that to you, I...

She reaches for Diane's hand on the table, holds it lovingly. But it's cold and lifeless. Her eyes panicked, she grows increasingly desperate for any affirmation as she offers one final, pleading declaration.

(CONTINUED)

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

...I-I love you.

Diane turns to face her. She looks at her hand, beneath Jacqueline's. For a few precious moments there's hope. But Diane clinically removes it, looks away. Jacqueline starts sobbing but tries to contain herself, gets up, leaves the table, distraught. Diane signals the waiter for the bill.

50 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - NIGHT

A hand squeezes a used tissue, rolled into a ball, and eventually releases it. Sniffing.

The laptop's keyboard holds a pile of four or five used, rolled up, white tissues.

In the glow of the laptop screen, a tear rolls down Jacqueline's cheek. Facebook.

51 INT. LONDON FLAT LOUNGE - DAY

Same scene: Facebook open but daylight now. Sniffing.

The lounge resembles the shut-in environment after her mother's death: newspapers, clothes, mugs. Jacqueline's sniffing punctuates the conversation, her voice pitiful.

JACQUELINE (O.C.)

B-but, I-I don't understand,
w-why is she doing this to me?

(a flash of anger)

Again!

Jacqueline sits with her legs pulled up against her on the couch, her left arm holding them tight, a rolled up, used tissue squeezed in her left hand, her legs shaking.

An old, mutual university friend, BELLA (30s; long-suffering), does her best to reason with her.

BELLA (O.S.)

Jacqui, sweetheart, you know how
she is...she hasn't changed,
sweetie.

Her cheeks tear-stained, her eyes and nose red, she stammers between sobs.

JACQUELINE

B-but...w-why, I don't
under-understand, why? Wh-

(CONTINUED)

BELLA (O.S.)

Oh, sweetie-pie...you knew she'd never leave him, you knew it couldn't work, you know how she is.

Her fist squeezes the used tissue tighter, her legs shaking harder in unison with her sobbing.

BELLA (O.S.)(CONT.)

Oh, sweetie...

52 INT. LONDON FLAT KITCHEN INTO LOUNGE - NIGHT

Fluffy slippers shuffle against the kitchen floor. Baggy tracksuit bottoms, an old sweatshirt emblazoned with "University of Cape Town" and dishevelled hair scrunched into a hasty ponytail: the life and times of a depressed shut-in. Jacqueline's teaspoon falls to the floor.

From behind, we see her staring at the kitchen clock. It reads five past nine.

Shocked, her hand still 'holds' the dropped teaspoon. She drops her mug into the sink noisily, dashes out.

She shuffle slides into the lounge towards the dinner table, frantically lifting up clothes and newspapers until she finds it: her cellphone. It confirms the time: she's very late. She dashes from the lounge.

Clothes are flung through the bedroom doorway.

JACQUELINE (O.C.)

Aargh! Is anything clean?!

53 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - NIGHT

John looks up from his newspaper.

Jacqueline's flushed, glistening face: out of breath but trying to pass it off as nothing, she pauses to breathe at inappropriate moments throughout the conversation.

JACQUELINE

Hey...you, how was...your flight and...stuff?

Her hair covered with a green beanie; her outfit a yellow woolen sweater with dark red corduroy pants, and certain - recognizable - fluffy slippers.

JOHN (O.C.)

Never mind me, how's your evening?

(CONTINUED)

He wipes his lip with a napkin, his voice deadpan.

JOHN (CONT.)

Irie?

She frowns, confused: doesn't get it.

JACQUELINE

Oh, y'know...Heathrow: highlight
of my week.

He looks at his newspaper, his cap to one side on the
table: commenting in passing, his head nods towards her
feet.

JOHN

Those look comfortable.

Her eyes show alarm. She quickly looks down and up again,
her face mortified. She rallies, bravely nonchalant.

JACQUELINE

Oh, that? I, uh, have this
ingrown toenail...thing.

She sits: self-conscious, awkward. Then, looking down at
her clothes, she grabs her beanie - pictures the colour.
Finally she gets it: throwing her head back in laughter.
She grabs his hand, struck by an idea.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Let's go karaoke some reggae!

He shakes his head as people look over at the commotion.

JOHN

Karaoke is Japanese for 'awful
din'. Not even the highest doses
of Miss Mary Jane could ever make
it tolerable.

We back away: a few people drink coffee, eat cake, chat,
scattered sparsely around the café's tables. She seems
completely relaxed, comfortable, laughing with him now.

54 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - NIGHT

Another evening: café's buzzing, filled to capacity.
John's in his pilot's uniform, his cap on the table.
Jacqueline's in different clothes, engrossed in
conversation, her back to us. She touches his hand,
laughs.

He knocks over his coffee, excuses himself to get
something to wipe it with. Chuckling, she waves him off.
Even he starts to see the funny side as he leaves.

With her on the far left, him departing on the right, she casually, completely relaxed, reaches for his bag.

55 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT CAFÉ - NIGHT

Jacqueline's in different clothing, sitting alone at a table, the café half-full: another evening.

She stirs a cup of coffee, absorbed by her book. She seems contented, looks up.

His pilot's cap beneath his left arm, John looks haggard, depressed: far from his usual composed self. Concerned, she almost stands up to help him sit or take his bag.

He slumps into the chair, slopping his cap onto the table. His face seems tense, irritable around the eyes.

JOHN
(almost to himself)
Coffee.

Jacqueline signals to a CAFÉ WAITRESS (20s; student) then turns her attention immediately back to John: she puts her hand on his, her forehead creased. She stays like that, just watching him stare down at the table. She rubs his hand, her voice gentle and soft.

JACQUELINE
Come on, out with it.

John shakes his head: bitter, sullen. Squeezes his eyebrows together with his left hand - rubbing both eyes at once - exhausted.

They stay like that for a few moments - him stewing in despair - before Jacqueline turns playful.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
I think...

She takes his cap, which makes him look up, mournfully, as she pretends to model it, striking poses.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
(tapping his nose)
...this...is the kind of
problem...

He looks a little intrigued, slowly being won over, by her energy and his growing curiosity.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
...we need to throw some alcohol
at.

She takes his hand, still wearing his cap, camping it up, drawing smiles, giggles from the patrons. She throws down some money. He just grabs his bag in time as she drags him off. Café Waitress, arriving with John's coffee, watches them go, perplexed.

56 INT. LONDON PUB - SAME NIGHT

They sit in silence in a room full of banter, pondering their drinks. His cap on the table, John swirls the ice cubes in his tumbler of whisky.

JOHN

She always leaves the mail. Fuck, if I've asked her a hundred times. Opened it up - I told her, I said: those cards are for emergencies only. Two hundred and sixty thousand rand worth of online-fucking-shopping emergencies! And it's not just that...the drinking - every day - she's not even trying to hide it anymore!

John finally looks up at her. She drops her gaze: this won't be easy. She keeps her eyes on the back of her hands as she slowly unloads her secret.

JACQUELINE

Did Di ever tell you how we met? She made me wait...till our second year. That was our first time...sleeping together. Broke up, end of final year. But that wasn't our last time together.

She catches a sob in her throat, tries her best to stifle it, her hands clambering at her mouth to stop her quivering lip. She brushes a lone tear away, ashamed.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I'm so sorry - not that kind of woman, I'm not! I just couldn't - she was so...and I was so - I just couldn't, say...no. I am so, so sorry.

He's completely impassive, taking this information in. Slowly she starts to compose herself, her chest still heaving in those sob spasms. She can't look at him.

JOHN

That day...the yacht club: me, at a yacht club! I thought I'd never love another woman.

(CONTINUED)

Something comes across him, he inhales deeply, sighs. His mouth twitches. He pokes his whiskey, takes a big sip.

JOHN (CONT.)

You didn't cheat on me; she did.
She broke vows; you never owed me
anything.

JACQUELINE

There's more.

JOHN

There always is.

She reaches for his bag, puts it on its side. Takes a knife from the table, wedges the base open. He listens to her instructions, puts his hand inside. His expression changes. She nods. We see his eyes go wide, feeling inside, his hand emerge, holding a parcel: gawks at it.

She says something, takes it from him, sheepishly, puts it in her handbag, and awkwardly closes the base again. He slowly runs his hand through his hair, holds his forehead, grabs his drink, takes a lengthy sip, almost finishing it. After a while, Jacqueline downs hers.

He squeezes his eyebrows together with his left hand - rubbing both eyes at once. She motions with her head: let's get out of here. She drops some cash on the table, puts her handbag over her shoulder, grabs his bag with one hand, his hand with the other. They leave.

57

EXT. CURRY QUEST STAND, LONDON STREET - SAME NIGHT

A motley assortment of nighttime revellers: leathers, tattoos, colourful Mohawks, piercings, rigger buggers, university girls, yuppies, and John and Jacqueline.

They stand in an orderly line along the pavement, patiently awaiting the services of an INDIAN COUPLE (40s; devoted) who hover over an assortment of Indian foods in aluminium serving tubs embedded in their simple - but colourful - stand, with gas heaters below.

JACQUELINE

Doesn't look like much...but it's spectacular, trust me - if you can handle it hot, that is? And don't worry: queue moves quickly.

JOHN

(distant, distracted)
How does she do it? Who in Zimbabwe, where? I thought you needed some...certification now, to stop blood diamonds.

(CONTINUED)

The queue shuffles forwards.

JACQUELINE

Kimberley Process? They call 'em KP's...you can pick up blank ones from most African states for a small bribe. Then it's just a matter of getting them to Europe where they're cut, then re-sold in the States: completely kosher again.

JOHN

But how does she even get the diamonds?

She orders for both of them - pointing out certain dishes, not others - and pays while she explains.

JACQUELINE

Just an ordinary Afrikaans guy - suit and tie...Pieter. There's a dispute over the Marange diamond fields: massive deposit, massive dispute. And while the government fights with multinationals, illegal miners make hay - if the army doesn't shoot them first.

JOHN

And you're okay with all this?

They get their food, start to eat as they walk. She exhales loudly.

JACQUELINE

Honestly, no. But I'd lost my job, looking after my mother at the end. I was desperate. I guess I also thought - hoped - maybe Di and I might...I'm sorry.

JOHN

We're way past sorry. And she just told you all this?

JACQUELINE

Well, you know about the drinking...in vino veritas.

JOHN

She never said where the money is?

Jacqueline stops, shakes her head slowly, eyes vacant: breathes in, exhales slowly.

58

INT. LONDON KARAOKE BAR - SAME NIGHT

In a booth with a low table lamp, they ponder recent developments. There's music playing so they have to speak up a bit. She's wearing his cap once more. It's drawing looks.

JACQUELINE

To her you're this debonair pilot, travelling the globe...you realise she's obsessed about you cheating on her: she doesn't stop.

JOHN

Ironic isn't it? She smells my shirts for perfume, checks them for long hairs...the amount of fights...will you pl- at least take that off.

He reaches for it, weakly. She slaps his hand, playfully.

JACQUELINE

Not till you gimme a smile.

Jacqueline catches the eye of the KARAOKE WAITER (30s; showgirl). He arrives at the table, a Cher lookalike and dressed the part: sequins and such, complete with long, straight, black wig. John, depressed, doesn't look up.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

A, uh, glass of red...
 (waving her hand
 reassuringly)
 ...ag, house red's fine,
 aaaand...
 (gesturing at John with her
 head)
 ...for my morbid friend over
 here, uh...whisky?

He nods, without looking up.

KARAOKE WAITER

Whisky? Any whisky?

JACQUELINE

Ja.

Karaoke Waiter starts to leave but John - still looking down - chimes in, holding up two fingers together, horizontally.

JOHN

Johnnie Walker - Green - two fingers, soda water on the side, three blocks of ice.

(CONTINUED)

Karaoke Waiter nods, scribbling it down as John finally looks up. His jaw hangs open - shock, not awe - realising something, staring alarmed. Addressing the question generally, he sounds pained.

JOHN (CONT.)

This isn't a normal bar...is it?

Jacqueline shakes her head eagerly, positively giddy at being found out and being there to savour every inch of his torment. John, realising - mortified - struggles to even say the word.

JOHN (CONT.)

It's a, a -

KARAOKE WAITER

Karaoke bar, doll!

John lowers his head slowly, starts to pound it gently against the table. Jacqueline perks up even more, nodding excitedly, clapping to herself, like a Girl Scout.

KARAOKE WAITER (CONT.)

(posing, enthusiastic)

Divas night: I'm on at ten!

JACQUELINE

(beaming)

We wouldn't miss it...

(taps the back of his head)

...would we?

Karaoke Waiter beams back with a wink, struts off. John stops banging his head, his voice muffled by the table. Gleeful, she's looking past him, excited.

JOHN

I'm in hell.

JACQUELINE

Maybe...but it has a soundtrack.

Behind John, a Japanese accent comes through the speakers, striking the opening lines of Celine Dion's "All By Myself".

With the soft opening words slowly building anticipation, John starts banging his head against the table again - immediately recognising the fate awaiting his ears.

JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN

When I was young / I never needed
anyone / And making love was just
for fun / Those days are gone /
Livin' alone I think of all the
friends I've known / When I dial
the telephone / Nobody's home...

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Please tell me he's not in drag.

Bright lights flash, engulfing the small black stage in a white glow - all in perfect timing with the swell in music. A JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN (50s; his own half-sister) - barely five feet tall - is in an outrageous silver dress, heels and Celine Dion wig, complete with requisite mascara and make-up finishings: he's in heaven, his voice surging now for the big chorus as the crowd starts to whistle and clap.

JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN

Hhhall-byeeee-myeee-ssseeelf...

Having had just about enough torture, John pops up to deliver a barbed remark for Jacqueline's benefit.

JOHN

I can think of one good reason.

Jacqueline shakes her head at him, confused. He rubs his right ear dramatically.

JOHN (CONT.)

I said I can think of a good reason why he's all by himself.

JACQUELINE

(a begrudging smile)

Oh, shush! She's lovely.

Jacqueline's entranced by the stage, now reduced to a spotlight. Karaoke Waiter arrives, drops off the drinks, winks. John picks his up immediately - finishes it neat - the full soda can still on the table. He puts the tumbler down, roughly, makes that 'keep it coming' gesture which Karaoke Waiter acknowledges, amused.

DISSOLVE TO:

John - tipsy - sits in the middle, his arms around Karaoke Waiter and Jacqueline. Karaoke Waiter is out of his Cher wig, which is now on John; John's cap now on Karaoke Waiter; Jacqueline in the Celine Dion wig. All have their drinks raised.

Japanese Businessman, bald, points a camera.

JAPANESE BUSINESSMAN

'Diva' on three: one...two...

KARAOKE WAITER,

JOHN, JACQUELINE

Diva!

Camera flashes.

59

EXT. LONDON STREET, OUTSIDE KARAOKE BAR - SAME NIGHT

Jacqueline almost falls in the doorway as they leave, wearing his cap once more. He's drunk; she's blotto. She clumsily plants a big kiss on his cheek.

JACQUELINE

Sht-shtarting to see why she
chose you inshtead.

John looks taken aback, confused. She doesn't notice, trying to put her high heel back on her foot.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

We were happy, sho h-happy...

She gives up on the heel, and it falls to the ground. She's recalling fond memories: her eyes glaze over, moisten. She snaps out of it abruptly, spinning round to face him, holding his suit lapels for balance.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

(poking at his chest)

Then you rock up at the
yacht...thingy...then -

She lets go of his lapels to clap her hands together, almost falling back from the force of it as the cap falls off her head. He catches her upper arms.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Thanksh...

(to no one in particular)

...then I'm out...

(slapping her palm against
his chest)

...and you're in.

She smiles a silly, drunken, goofy grin, her tale at an end. He just looks at her. Suddenly, pulling her hands to her face, she feels the effect of her words, of painful memories, bursting into tears. He pulls her in, her one hand still clutching his lapel. She wipes her nose with it. He strokes her hair gently, speaking softly.

JOHN

I'm sorry she hurt you.

Composed again, she looks up, shrugs with drunken exaggeration. Then starts to cry. She collapses into him again, the same lapel functioning as a tissue once more, as John hails a passing cab. The CAB DRIVER (50s; urgent) screeches to a halt somewhat.

CAB DRIVER

All right there, mate?

(CONTINUED)

John tries to get her to speak sense but she's tickets: fumbling in her purse for her hotel key card, finding it, dropping credit cards and some coins on the sidewalk, while the cabbie gets antsy.

CAB DRIVER (CONT.)

Sorry! Sorry, do we have a decision there, mate? I'm working, I'm working here...

Reluctant, John acknowledges him. Uncertain, somewhat frustrated, he picks up her credit cards, starts on the change - thinks better of it - grabs his cap and, annoyed, gets into the cab with her.

60 INT. TAXI CAB - CONTINUOUS

She's immediately almost asleep on his shoulder as John gives instructions judging from the large hotel insignia on the key card.

61 INT. LONDON HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT

John stands there, looking from the spacious double bed to the small couch. He frowns, mulling things over, starts playing with his wedding band. She groans.

JOHN

Couch looks pretty uncomfortable...

JACQUELINE

Mmm...

JOHN

(gesturing towards the bed)
Maybe I should -

He grabs at his stomach and dashes for the bathroom, slamming the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

Bathroom door opens: John emerges, much the worse for wear, still holding his stomach. He looks towards the bed: Jacqueline's fast asleep. He sighs.

62 INT. LONDON HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Jacqueline rolls over in bed, mouth open, hair everywhere. Toilet flushes. Phone rings. She moans. Phone rings. Bathroom door opens, then hurried footsteps, a sigh. Hand picks up the phone as Jacqueline lies there, comatose: the alcohol has been unkind.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.C.)

Hello?

There's a long silence, he continues.

JOHN (O.C)(CONT.)

Hello?

The line goes dead. She rolls over, moans, opens her one eye askew as John frustratedly slams the phone down. She rolls away. He's in a white vest, white boxers, leaning over the bed now.

JOHN (CONT.)

Did, did you order a wake-up call?

(louder)

Did you-

She sits up - gingerly - starts to shake her head 'no' but the hangover pounces. She holds her head in both hands, diligently trying to shake it in response.

JOHN (CONT.)

How are you feeling?

She looks at him for a moment: a giant frown - one eye open, the other afraid of sunlight.

JACQUELINE

What, what happened...after the, uh, bar? Can't remember...

He runs through his recollection of events perfunctorily as he winces, trying to rub his neck: it doesn't help.

JOHN

After the cabbie stopped outside, you lobbed twenty quid at his head and just took off...after a, a stray cat. You just kept yelling 'Cat', like it would miraculously come to you...like you were Audrey Hepburn or something.

JACQUELINE

(nostalgic, to herself)

Rusty...

JOHN

I'm not even sure there was a cat!

He gets up, walks away, his voice trailing behind him.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.C.)(CONT.)

By the time I caught up with you,
got back...cabbie was long gone.

He comes back with a bagel, sits on the edge of the bed, looking at it dubiously. She sits up, holding the blankets to her chest, suddenly alert.

John, weak just at the thought of it, turns bitter, sarcastic.

JOHN (CONT.)

Then, of course there were my
four hours of bonding with your
toilet.

JACQUELINE

W-where did that come from?

JOHN

Where do you think, Sherlock?
Your goddam marvelous curry
stand!

She points at the bagel, his irritation going unnoticed.

JACQUELINE

I mean that.

Holding up the bagel, he looks at it - frowning, rubbing his stomach - unconvinced it's a good idea, after all.

JOHN

Oh, Room Service...I can't, you?

She nods eagerly and he hands it to her, making a face as he watches her eat it - queasy once more.

He gets up, comes back with juice, sits down, stares at it, grimacing: nope. She looks on expectantly. He hands it to her.

But he can't take his eyes off her, or concentrate. He makes that mimicking face your mouth makes when you're watching someone else do something that seems unnatural or unappealing.

But she seems more alert now, with something in her stomach. He turns serious, more focused.

JOHN (CONT.)

Who knows you're staying here?

She shakes her head, her mouth too full to speak.

JACQUELINE
(eventually)
Just Di.

He goes for a follow-up, his hand raised, but soon drops it again: her next mouthful in progress. He squeezes his eyebrows together with his left hand - rubbing both eyes at once - exhausted, before running out of patience.

JOHN
Look! How does this all work?

She makes that head rocking face - side to side - chewing her mouthful. Finally she starts, still swallowing, talking in between.

JACQUELINE
Said customs would never catch on: pilots are last people they check...and - even if they did - base of your overnight bag's gotta lead lining...shows up blank on an X-Ray...way any normal base would - only yours weighs more.

JOHN
(to himself)
Sniffer dogs have no scent to pick up.

JACQUELINE
(teasing)
Why so interested, suddenly...hmm? Curious George?

He shakes his head, stops, bites his lip. He looks down, mulling things over, starts playing with his wedding band.

JOHN
What, uh, what sort of...money...

JACQUELINE
(giving serious thought)
Well, I'd obviously go half-and-half: doubt I'm getting that with her...

JOHN
(non-committal)
Yeah, but, I mean, suppliers and
-

JACQUELINE
Oh I've met people, y'know, through Pieter...I mean, if we wanted, we could set something
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACQUELINE (cont'd)
up...yeah. Plenty people want to
move product out of Zim.

JOHN
(nodding, pensive)
And this?

JACQUELINE
The drop?

He nods. She takes a deep breath, thinks for a while.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
I come into the hotel - just for
the scheduled nights, pay
cash...I meet you, get the
package, check out the next
morning, meet the contact...hand
it over.

He nods slowly, taking it in. His eyes study the floor,
dart around. Jacqueline can't help but comment, her free
hand on her hip moving from side to side, making a mock
serious face with firm lips, her voice lowered.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
So serious...

We stay on her face as the humour drains out of it. It
must be another of John's withering looks.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
(softly, almost to herself)
Sorry...

John stands up, pacing and gesticulating, hammering his
point home: he really means it.

JOHN
If Diane asks you anything about
this drop, you say it went off as
usual.

JACQUELINE
W-why would she? As long as her
payment comes through from them,
she doesn't care.

JOHN
Well she might this time...and
you're gonna have to convince her
there was a guy in your room.

She shakes her head, chuckling.

JACQUELINE

She'll never buy it...she got
jealous sometimes...y'know, some
of my mates, but...she was always
the switch-hitter, not me.

Realizing it was insensitive, her tone subdued.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

S-sorry...didn't mean to...

JOHN

(unfazed)

Well, you gonna have to sell it,
or think of something better.

Jacqueline shrugs, a little annoyed: not making sense.

JOHN (CONT.)

I think that was her on the
phone.

The life drains out of her face, she closes her eyes.

JOHN (O.C.)(CONT.)

Now let's get going...if she
hears you're late for the drop
she'll know something's up.

She nods, shell-shocked, eyes wide: it's a sobering
experience.

63 INT. CAPE TOWN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Diane's waiting for John. He looks very taken aback,
breaks off from his crew. She's in a swanky new outfit.

JOHN

This is a nice surprise.

Diane gives him a big hug and a kiss.

JOHN (CONT.)

Tell me what I did right...so I
can do it again.

DIANE

(chuckling)

Hungry? I'm treating you to your
favourite...got that corner table
booked at Savvy Sushi, yes?

John nods, pleased as he looks at her. But when she takes
his arm, walks by his side, his face's wary, strained. She
looks up at him again, and he adds a quick smile.

64 INT. SAVVY SUSHI - SAME NIGHT

Some way into the meal, they're just a quiet, married couple with not much left to say. Diane's distracted with her cellphone, clicking now and again.

DIANE
How was your...trip, anyway?

JOHN
Y'know: same old same old. Why?

Looking up, he turns frosty as he notices her staring at her phone, trying to multitask.

JOHN (CONT.)
Whatcha doing?

DIANE
Uh, just checking...

JOHN
What?

DIANE
Uh, y'know, just Facebook.

He rolls his eyes, breathing in deeply, shaking his head: he's furious but she's completely unaware.

DIANE (CONT.)
And Jacqui?

He's brusque, preoccupied with his food.

JOHN
Yeah, fine.

She puts her cellphone down. He hears the sound, looks up, but something in her expression troubles him. He drops the salmon sashimi in the soy sauce, making a mess.

JOHN (CONT.)
Fuuuu-! Can I just get through
one meal without...Jesus!

Diane's not reacting: whatever's on her mind, she's not letting it go. Awkward now, his temper showing, he dabs at his trousers roughly with the napkin. Just as soon - he stops. Cooled down, he tries to move the conversation on.

JOHN (CONT.)
Uh, did you guys ever, uh, make
up...after that, y'know, poker
night?

(CONTINUED)

DIANE
(staring him down)
You know, she's mad because I
chose you over her.

He over-compensates, chuckling.

JOHN
Oh, really? It looked like you
chose Angie.

DIANE
What the fuck's that supposed to
mean?

Heads start turning in the restaurant, a conveyor belt
sushi bar in the background. She's not backing down.

DIANE (CONT.)
Where were you this trip?
(bluffing)
I tried calling your cell.

JOHN
No you didn't.

She bristles, temporarily defeated, withdrawing: he's not
taking the bait. But he's not happy, either.

JOHN (CONT.)
New outfit I see...what'd that
cost?

She glares at him.

65 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - SAME NIGHT

John's Skype chatting with Jacqueline on his Apple laptop
while Diane's in the bathroom. He's looking over his
shoulder, listening out for the end of the shower.

Types. "(Dear_John1) did diane contact you?"

Message alert. "(Jac_Sparrow) Why would she?"

Message alert. "(Jac_Sparrow) Haven't said two words in
weeks."

Types. "(Dear_John1): she's onto something"

Diane, a towel tucked up above her chest, walks straight
over to John who tries, awkwardly, to close the screen.
Diane seems to only be interested in one thing, running
her hands through his hair, eyeing him seductively.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE

Oh, baby, I'm not mad with
you...honey bear just gets
jealous...you're such a
catch...and I know how women can
be...

Her back to us now, her towel drops "accidentally" to the floor - a finger to her cheek, a bent knee: a naughty Marilyn Monroe.

She slowly lifts a leg, plants it deliberately on the other side of him, sliding down into a straddle.

The seduction in full swing, she rocks playfully on his crotch, her bedroom eyes gazing at him, her arms around his shoulders, neck. The Skype chat's still open.

Grinning until now, John suddenly pecks her on the cheek, clicks the touch pad, shuts the laptop behind her.

JOHN

Let me shower first, honey...been
a long day.

Diane sighs exaggeratedly and shrugs, disappointed. John picks her up by her thighs, eases her off him, bends down to get her towel, hands it to her.

DIANE

Seriously?

JOHN

(shrugs innocently)
You'll catch cold...
(then earnest)
...nothing sexy 'bout getting
sick.

He makes to leave but slaps her bottom. She squeals exaggeratedly.

DIANE

Okay, but honey bear needs some
lovin'...

He blows her a loud kiss as he leaves. She sighs, wraps herself up in the towel, checks over her shoulder. She sits down, opens up the laptop: all business now. She hesitates a bit, unfamiliar. She goes to "Safari", clicks; scans options, goes to "History", clicks; scans, goes to "Today", clicks; goes to "Skype", clicks. The login page comes up. She slams the laptop closed.

DIANE (CONT.)

Fuck.

66

INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Diane's at the sink by the window, filling up the kettle, when hands come up from behind and around her. She melts back into them, his head by her neck, kissing her.

JOHN
 Sorry 'bout last night,
 honey...you know how I crash
 after a flight.

Her expression immediately sours: she doesn't buy it.

DIANE
 Those hedges really need a trim.

He stops kissing her neck, pulls back a bit, his eyes twitch briefly: he knows that tone.

JOHN
 O-kayyy...I'll get right on that.

But he carries on kissing her. She drops the kettle in the sink, splashing a little, rips away from him, grabbing a hand towel, barely drying her hands, throwing it at his chest.

DIANE
 You know, you say that...but when do you ever actually get 'round to doing it...you can't just say you'll do something then always be too tired to actually do it. I have needs, too.

Trying to catch up, palms raised defensively, he's deep into damage control.

JOHN
 Okay, okay, I'll cut the freaking hedge. Jeez...where the shears anyway?

DIANE
 Oh fuck the shears! Bad carpenters always blame their shears!

Taken aback, confused, he starts to walk out, eyebrows raised, then stops. He turns around, a little annoyed.

JOHN
 Tools. A bad carpenter blames his tools.

Incensed by the criticism, she stamps her foot on the floor, pointing away from the kitchen: a screaming, enraged dictator.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE

Cut the fucking hedge, just cut
the fucking hedge, cut it!

He looks at her for a moment, dumbstruck. Then leaves, his head shaking, sighing heavily.

67 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Grumbling, he struggles to find the shears, his backside sticking out from the Wendy house, tools clanging about.

He finds the shears, pulls them out, stands up. He stops, sees Diane standing there, hands on hips, looking set to explode. A deer in the headlights, he looks from her to the shears, back to her: a little afraid.

JOHN

I was just...hard to find
these...was just annoyed
because...so much junk...

Her eyes are pure rage. She crosses her arms roughly, her top lip twitches briefly: a micro-snarl. John panics.

JOHN (CONT.)

...uh, I think you're
right...about the hedges, uh,
sorry...good it came up...

The show of apologetic cowering seems to push her over the edge. Think: wailing banshee. She shrieks at him.

DIANE

Just cut - the fucking - hedge!
Don't talk to it, don't explain,
don't apologise -

By now their neighbour, STAN (80s; impish), is peering over the fence behind her. He makes a face - wide eyes, pursed lips: a show of support, camaraderie with John. But Diane sees the look on John's face, spins around. Stan tries to hustle away, but he's old and he's done for.

She roars, grabs the shears from John, charges at the fence after Stan, John coming after, trying to calm her but afraid to get in her way.

DIANE (CONT.)

I see you, old man, I see you!

He's just audible as he shuffles away with his walking stick, waving his arm, trying for a protest of ignorance.

(CONTINUED)

STAN

My ears are bad...I didn't see anything...passion is good in a marriage.

He's out of range by the time she gets there, her dressing gown flowing in the breeze. Frustrated, she lets out an animal yell, and throws the shears over the fence. There's a splash as it lands in the old man's pool.

Pause.

STAN (O.C.)(CONT.)

(just audible)

Good heavens.

68 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN/LOUNGE INTO PASSAGEWAY/LOUNGE
- MORNING

John rubs his back, waiting for the coffee pot to fill. Diane comes in, sullen, gloomy: not a morning person. He goes to hug her, his voice sing-song.

JOHN

Good morning my Diane...

She waves him away. Improvising, he morphs his hug into a grab for the fridge door.

JOHN (CONT.)

I'll just get, uh, the, uh...milk, shall I?

(turning around)

Should be ready any min-

She takes the coffee pot - not yet finished - pours herself some, leaves the pot on the sink, pads out the kitchen in slippers. She slumps in a chair at the dinner table, opens her laptop, types something briefly, sighs.

He contemplates saying something, thinks better of it. Instead, sighing, he gets a glass, some water from the tap. He hesitates, then takes the long route round to the lounge.

He appears from the passageway at the couch, sits: his couch - a ruffled pillow and blanket nearby.

JOHN (CONT.)

(feeling his lower back)

Fortunately this couch is fan-tastic.

DISSOLVE TO:

(CONTINUED)

Night: the lights are on. John sits on the same couch, picks at his teeth, finds something, pulls it out, leans his head back to look at it. He gets a fright when his cellphone SMS alert sounds: a deep, male, Xhosa voice - "Hayibo!"

Cellphone screen - "Jacqueline H: What's happening?!"

He moves the book off his lap, types.

69 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT BOARDING GATE - SAME TIME

Jacqueline in a familiar setting: distracted in a queue of passengers, anxiously waiting to board, cellphone in hand.

Message alert. "John Mezzler: being punished".

Types: "You think she knows? Never contacted me about hotel call. That why you're in trouble?" and clicks to send. The queue shuffles forward.

Cellphone screen: "Sunday 30 January 2011 9:02PM". The alert sounds, message pops up. "John Mezzler: not entirely sure...quite possibly for unruly hedges"

She snorts, amused, types: "?" clicks to send. More shuffling.

Message alert. "John Mezzler: my sentiments exactly - you?"

She types, just a few people ahead of her now. She's fidgety and nervous as she puts her cellphone away.

70 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Diane stands at the basin, flossing. She opens the medicine cabinet, spots something - reaches in, picks it up, holds it for a moment - her eyes downcast. His aftershave bottle to her nose, she inhales; exhales, frustrated.

71 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Message alert: "Hayibo!" John's cellphone - "Jacqueline H: Waiting to board Cape Town flight. Meeting Zim contact Wednesday. Arranged for mate to meet you at Heathrow."

Diane appears from the shadows in the passageway.

DIANE
(deadpan)
Are you coming to bed or what?

(CONTINUED)

He quickly lowers his cellphone, taken aback. Recovering swiftly, he points to himself: me?

An unimpressed glare replies.

He gets up, starts towards the passageway, stops. She almost walks into the back of him. He makes a fawning, apologetic gesture, reaching for his pillow on the couch. Even she has to see the funny side, slapping his bum as he hurries down the passageway towards the bedroom.

72 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BATHROOM/BEDROOM INTO PASSAGEWAY INTO LOUNGE THROUGH FRONT DOOR - MORNING, MONDAY

A pilot uniform's is laid out on the bed: life returning to normal. Diane sits at the foot of the bed, filing her nails: her nose twitching, inspecting, disapproving of offending imperfections. John's in the shower, humming some barely audible tune.

The shower stops, he steps out, still humming: it's Shania Twain's "You're Still The One". Drying himself, he starts to sing softly.

JOHN

They said: 'I bet they'll never
make it' / But just look at us
holding on / We're still together
still going stro-

He stops mid-lyric, the building climax cut short.

Diane stands, nail file glinting in her lowered hand, the key card from Jacqueline's room - the large hotel insignia emblazoned on it - in her raised hand.

John's eyes stretch wide with panic, inhaling: he knows instantly what it is, exactly what it means. He swallows, rallies, strolls out the bathroom: casual.

JOHN (CONT.)

What you got there?

DIANE

(ice cold)

Again.

Drying his hair, he stops, shakes his head: a little confused. She hasn't moved an inch.

DIANE (CONT.)

(agonizingly slowly)

Try. Again.

JOHN

Honey, I don't know what...that
is.

DIANE

One. More. Time.

JOHN

Okay...

He moves forward, scrutinizing it, nods.

JOHN (CONT.)

That, m'lord, appears to be a
hotel key card. The defence
rests.

She's not buying it. He looks at the bedside clock, pulls
on white boxers, a white vest, and sits on the bed putting
on black socks.

JOHN (CONT.)

Look, honey, whatever it is you
want me to say, I just don't have
time right now for...for
whatever...this...is.

He starts to get up. She moves forward quickly, pushing
him back down. His eyes flash violence, so much so that
she steps back, hesitates. He sees his chance. Grabbing
his white shirt and black tie, he gets up - storms through
the house - half putting his shirt on, shouting as he
tramps down the passageway.

JOHN (CONT.)

It's always fucking something,
isn't it? Jesus Christ...

She comes after him, anxious but still fiery, ready for
war. He turns suddenly, yells inches from her face such
that she blinks involuntarily, pulls away a bit.

JOHN (CONT.)

...if I could just be goddamn
perfect, life would be swell...

He starts storming again, she follows him into the lounge,
still furious. He reaches the front door, opens it
roughly, banging it against the wall, stops.

He walks towards her. She backs away, staring him down at
the same time. He gesticulates wildly, both hands
addressing his rage to the walls, ceiling.

JOHN (CONT.)

Garden shears anyone? How about a
key card?

(CONTINUED)

(holds his hand to his ear)
What's that, Sybil? No I fucking
love it...

He turns to face her once more, tapping his head.

JOHN (CONT.)
...when you go
completely-batshit-fucking-crazy!

Toe-to-toe again - having braved the worst, she's not about to back down - her finger in his face.

DIANE
I called her hotel room!

JOHN
(shaken, but still loud)
You call- you called her
room...whose room...s-so what?

She gets right into his face, genuinely menacing.

DIANE
I know your fucking voice,
asshole!

His eyes waver, a micro-movement: the hesitation's all the confirmation she needs. With all her might - and both hands - she pushes his chest. He loses balance, falls over a chair, gets up, clutching at his falling tie. He's suddenly completely out of his depth.

She points to the door - yelling - her face blood red.

DIANE (CONT.)
Get - out! Get out, get out, get
the fuck out...go!

His eyes dart about, flustered, scared for a moment. When he hesitates, she comes again, pushing him through the open front door, slamming it wildly. Fingers clenched in rage, she screams at the shut door.

73 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

He's wounded, not beaten, but things have definitely taken a turn for the worse. Desperate, he yells at the roof.

JOHN
Y-y-you...bitch!

Becoming aware of his surroundings now, he looks down: a man in white boxers, a white vest, black socks.

(CONTINUED)

Stan turns away quickly with his hosepipe, pretending not to have noticed anything. He starts to whistle, softly: a ridiculous, misplaced, whimsical tune. John snorts.

The door opens. He turns around quickly to face it just as his pilot's jacket gets thrown onto his face. He pulls the jacket off immediately, only to raise his defences again as his bag comes flying at his head. The door slams shut.

JOHN (CONT.)

Pants! I need fucking pants...you
crazy bit-

The door opens: his pants thrown past him, as the door slams. He picks them up, trying to put his leg in, losing balance, falling over, muttering to himself.

JOHN (CONT.)

For fuck's sake!

He gets up, looks around. Stan's mouth hangs wide open, fascinated by the drama - the hosepipe's stream of water falling noisily against his house windows instead of the garden. Spotted gawking, again, he quickly looks away.

John glares, finishes buttoning his shirt, pulls on his jacket roughly, the tie still hanging loosely around his neck. He tucks his shirt in, fuming.

JOHN (CONT.)

(looking down, realising)
Hell-llo! I need shoes...

He gestures in frustration to Stan: women! Stan, caught gawking once more, is still watering those windows.

JOHN (CONT.)

(yelling to the sky)
Can't go to work in my socks,
dear!

The door opens and Diane comes storming out. Stan averts his eyes, starts backing away, waving his crotchety, free arm in defence, his hosepipe's stream going everywhere. He looks back again - seeing Diane now in the garden - he ditches the hosepipe altogether to maximise the speed of his walking stick shuffle.

She throws shiny shoes at John's head, then groin, both making glancing blows as he tries to protect himself. The door slams.

It opens again, only for John to watch his cap go flying overhead, landing in the bushes. The door slams and John's eyes wince in unison. He just stands there in his socks, holding a shoe, breathing heavily, the abandoned hosepipe splattering into the pool next door, the birds chirping.

74 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET/JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR -
DUSK, MONDAY

A quiet summer's evening: barely a fluttering leaf outside. An OLD COUPLE (70s; soulmates) walk hand in hand, she chattering away as he smiles warmly at her.

They walk past a parked car. Behind the windscreen, someone's hunkered down: watching - sunglasses on - a cold, removed expression. Jacqueline checks her watch.

75 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS - NIGHT,
MONDAY

Shiny, black shoes click on the tiles, a black overnight bag on his right side.

PA SYSTEM LADY (O.S.)

This is an information
announcement for flight BA462,
from Johannesburg, running 15
minutes late, arriving
approximately eleven thirty.

Alongside the pilot, his cap on his head, the crew chat and joke, walking towards routine security screening.

But this time, there's a hold-up. The flight attendants crane their necks to try see what's going on. John, behind them, adjusts his cap.

Inching closer in the crawling queue, it becomes clear: they're checking flight crews - all of them.

As the crew chatter, the black overnight bag slowly advances with John's shiny, black shoes towards the inspection area. He's clearly familiar with the FIRST SECURITY OFFICER (40s; pie-lover) and SECOND SECURITY OFFICER (30s; coarse).

JOHN

(very James Bond)
Gentlemen, I'm not feeling the
love...

FIRST SECURITY OFFICER

Well, I can tell you I'm not
either: you think I wanna start
my week checking up on our own -
and last thing at night?
Bollocks!

JOHN

In that case, let me get the
first round and let's get out of
here. Single malt is calling...

(CONTINUED)

SECOND SECURITY OFFICER
No can do. Comes right from the
top: tip-off's the word. But you
didn't 'ear 'at from me. Lookin'
sharp tonight, cappy.

JOHN
One must keep up appearances.

Second Security Officer's gloved hands take the bag.

SECOND SECURITY OFFICER
Good lord, man! What you got in
'ere: your bleeding bowling
ball?!

John chuckles just as First Security Officer's hand stops
his colleague's gloved hands from opening it, returns it.

FIRST SECURITY OFFICER
Oh, for fuck's sake, come on
John, get a move on you
shitter...boss's not watching.
How's that lovely Diane of yours?

JOHN
(dryly)
Still crazy.

FIRST SECURITY OFFICER
(chuckling)
Ah, must be: married you, didn't
she?

Laughter. The bag moves with John's progress. High heels
clack on the tiles nearby as the women chatter.

FEMALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.C.)
I'll need a right stiff one after
that! Think I want them plods
asking me why I'm carrying a
certain battery-operated device,
girls?

Laughter. Followed by a voice from a distance.

STEVENS (O.C.)
I'm sorry, terribly sorry,
captain, if you would please,
this way. No, that's fine ladies,
on your way, just the captain,
thank you.

76

INT. HEATHROW CUSTOMS INSPECTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Slight background noise. Think: light bulb tinnitus.
Bright, fluorescent lighting: two plain chairs, a table.

The back of Security Supervisor Stevens is in the foreground, John in the background - folded arms - the bag at his feet. Stevens motions to the table. John picks up the bag and throws it noisily onto it. Stevens, unmoved, motions to a chair. John's face offers nothing, his voice flat.

JOHN

I'm fine.

Stevens motions again, ushering: the air of an Italian waiter about him. John stands. STEVENS (20s; passive aggressive) nods softly, smiles ever so politely, insists.

STEVENS

Please.

John's eyes glare for a few moments. Exhaling loudly, he sits, his cap still on. Stevens nods gently, pleased by this progress. He pulls on latex gloves.

Stevens moves the bag deliberately in front of John, then works methodically through predetermined steps: he unpacks the bag, laying the contents out in an orderly fashion on the table. Finished, he holds his hands together, surveying the developments.

He nods: that wasn't so bad, was it? John's mouth twitches: he loathes this. Stevens slowly re-packs the bag: neatly, economically, and zips it closed. John gets up, the chair legs squeaking loudly against the floor as he pushes it backwards. Stevens raises an index finger.

STEVENS (CONT.)

One moment, please.

John sits, exhaling hard. Stevens' gloved hands manipulate the bag, slowly turning it on its side, its base nearest John. He produces a pocket knife with a wooden handle and places it next to the bag.

John's face is suddenly uncertain, genuinely anxious.

Stevens' gloved hands pick up the knife and open the glinting blade. He places it back on the table. His eyebrows raise: may I? John's hand swishes: go right ahead. Stevens closes his eyes, nods.

(CONTINUED)

Stevens' right hand picks up the blade, his left holding the bag firmly, its leather squeaking softly. Careful, deliberate, Stevens wedges the blade in at the base. He pauses, swivels it abruptly, and effortlessly pops the base off. His gloved hands meet, close the blade, place it down once more.

John's eyes grow wider.

Stevens turns his face in the opposing direction of his exploratory movements within the bag, his concentrated expression facing John.

John's eyeballs dart about: what is it?

Stevens' eyes drop. He exhales, removes his hand. John stands abruptly, his chair grating loudly, eager to leave. He looks down, shakes his head: the same gloved finger halting his exit. He sits. Stevens picks up the knife, hesitates, puts it down.

Stevens faces John once more, his hands feeling inside the base. John pulls back: disgusted by his proximity, but Stevens pays him no mind. Stevens' eyes dart to one side. Then: clunk. He stops, removes a partition, carefully placing it alongside the knife.

John's eyes dart towards the partition, back to the bag.

Stevens' eyes move as he feels inside, expectant. Then, a frown, a cheek twitch, a slight head shake. He withdraws his hand abruptly, up-ends the bag roughly, holds it up to the light: nothing!

A tiny smirk creeps into the corner of John's mouth, a touch of triumph smoothing the hostility in his voice.

JOHN

Can I go now?

Stevens holds his hand to his mouth in disbelief. He turns, shell-shocked, a wan smile: a pained delivery.

STEVENS

Yes, of course. My apologies, for the delay. It's just...a matter of...procedure, you understand?

JOHN

Do I?

Stevens' cheek twitches. He reaches to replace the partition and base, but holds them for a moment: nagging doubts.

John grabs the partition, throws it in, snaps the base on, and heads for the door - all in one motion. He opens the door roughly, stops, turns around: ice cold menace in his eyes. He tosses the knife. Stevens - still shaken - reacts quickly, catches it.

JOHN (CONT.)
 (doffing his cap at him)
 Nice try.

He slams the door.

77

INT. LONDON RESTAURANT - SAME NIGHT

John sits alone in a booth - stewing - still bristling from earlier, watching ice rotating in his whisky.

RUBY (30s; ditzy) slides into the booth, the table between them. He looks up long enough to spot her drink: colourful, straw, fruit garnish, umbrella. He shakes his head while she looks around conspiratorially.

RUBY
 Um, hey, so...let me ask you a, uh, question. Which came first: the chicken or the egg?

JOHN
 (resentful, deadpan)
 Which came first? The rooster did.

She nods slowly, softly repeating it to herself. Still unsure of herself, she looks around anxiously.

RUBY
 The rooster...right.

Clutching her drink - still scanning the room - she tries in vain to get the straw to her lips, eventually having to stop 'casing the joint' to look where it is. John shuts his eyes, shakes his head. Her tone is hushed.

RUBY (CONT.)
 Uh, yeah a, uh, Mister Sparrow sent me?

JOHN
 (overcome with frustration)
 Mister? What? Jesus, y'know what, just shut up...sit there and shut up...just - stop - talking.

Still looking around cagily, she's not even aware of the snub. Slowly her eyes return to him.

(CONTINUED)

RUBY

So, just to be clear: you are the
pilot?

His face drops, looks down: his dark suit - the four gold epaulettes of captain - his cap on the table.

JOHN

No. I'm going to a fancy dress party later. Wanna come?

She looks flattered, bashful, runs her hand through hair with a bit of a nervous laugh: lost.

RUBY

Uh, o-kay...so, as I was saying, Sparrow told me-

JOHN

(brash)

She's gone to Cape Town to iron out some issues with the supplier...so I'm - stuck - with - you.

RUBY

So...how do we do this?

JOHN

(biting sarcasm beneath thinly veiled enthusiasm)

Ever dress up as a pilot? It's fun, you should try it. Take my cap...

(points over his shoulder)

...in the ladies'.

He hands it to her. She seems flattered by the gesture. He shakes his head, closes his eyes briefly: no.

RUBY

(using air quotes)

Oh! I must try it on...

He closes his eyes, sighs, his hand to his brow.

78

INT. LONDON RESTAURANT BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door's marked with a large playing card: queen of hearts. She enters, checks the bathroom's empty, pays the BATHROOM ATTENDANT (20s; diligent) to get lost, locks the door. On the sink, she pries open the inside of the cap's top, reaches inside. Her eyes smile, feeling something. She pulls it out: diamonds.

79 INT. LONDON AIRPORT HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT, WEDNESDAY

JOHN (O.C.)
 (pretty peeved)
 So, met your mate the other
 night...
 (pause)
 ...seriously: could you have
 found someone thicker? I mean, if
 you really tried...

80 INT. JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR, CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET -
 SAME TIME

She's doing her damndest not to laugh. Throughout the scene, her cellphone lights her cheek, talking in the dark: we can't see where she is.

JACQUELINE
 John, she's completely
 dependable...one hundred percent
 reliable...best of all: she's not
 gonna get any clever ideas...

81 INT. LONDON AIRPORT HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN
 (pacing into view)
 You got that right.

She laughs. Eventually seeing the humour, he chuckles a bit, recalling events in amused disbelief.

JOHN (CONT.)
 She called you Mister Sparrow...I
 mean what kind of an alias
 requires a sex change?

JACQUELINE (O.S.)
 Look, John, I'm going to have to
 spend more time in Cape Town from
 now on, liaising with suppliers.
 Face it: she's the new me at
 Heathrow. Best you get used to
 it.

JOHN
 That's what I'm afraid of.

They laugh a bit before he continues, puzzled.

JOHN (CONT.)
 Meeting go okay today? Where you
 anyway? It's pretty late.

(CONTINUED)

JACQUELINE (O.S.)

Why?

JOHN

Tried your hotel now.

JACQUELINE (O.S.)

Uh, ja, took it off the hook to try sleep...no luck.

Pacing again, he thinks of something else, rubbing the back of his neck, his expression suddenly dead serious.

JOHN

Listen...so you're gonna be there all week, including Friday...uh, the weekend?

82 INT./EXT. JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR/CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET - CONTINUOUS

JACQUELINE

At least, probably much longer. John, look, she's completely safe

-

JOHN (O.S.)

No, I'm not talking about that anymore. Listen...

Her expression changes, a frown suddenly.

JACQUELINE

John, is everything...okay?

JOHN (O.S.)

Yeah, yeah, completely...just, uh, what are your plans...this weekend?

JACQUELINE

(puzzled, then teasing)

John...are you...hitting on me?

JOHN (O.S.)

No, no...um...

JACQUELINE

Look, I'm not gonna see Diane if that's what you worried about? I've made that mistake for the last time: I get that now.

JOHN (O.S.)

Uh, yes, exactly...I, uh, just don't want you getting hurt,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.S.) (cont'd)
again...I know that's been
really, uh, hard on you.

JACQUELINE
(still a bit puzzled)
I'm a big girl.

Pause: awkward silence. She frowns.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
Listen, uh, John, I really need
to get going -

JOHN (O.S.)
Oh, yeah, me too...I'm bushed,
need some serious shut-eye...

JACQUELINE
Yeah, get some rest. It's only
Wednesday: far too early in the
week to be so stressed out
already.

JOHN (O.S.)
(with mock annoyance)
Yeah, yeah...see ya.

She hangs up. Slowly we join her view: a familiar street.
Down the road, lights on either side: Diane's driveway.

83 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET/JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR -
MORNING, FRIDAY

Through the windscreen, we see leaves gently blow along
the road. A hand taps the steering wheel, music playing,
until an annoying voice cuts in.

RADIO DEEJAY (O.S.)
It's the weekeeeend, baby!
Friday's here at last and -

A hand switches it off. Jacqueline checks her eyes in the
rear view mirror. She drinks coffee - her familiar parking
spot - just staring: Diane's house.

DISSOLVE TO:

The street lights are on. The passenger seat's full of
crumbs, junk: a magazine, a half-eaten pie, a packet of
chips, a can of soda, and an empty coffee cup. She checks
her watch. In the distance, a car approaches the house,
headlights on, left indicator flashing, another car
behind.

84 INT./EXT. DIANE'S CAR/CAPE TOWN HOUSE DRIVEWAY -
CONTINUOUS

A car revving. Diane's concentrating face. The gate opens as she slowly enters the driveway, switches off. The neighbour's dogs to the left start barking up a storm, continue through the scene.

A car follows immediately behind, preventing the automatic gate from closing. Two men in balaclavas quickly emerge. The FIRST ATTACKER (20s; athletic), on the right, pulls her out of the car, and pushes her to the ground in one powerful motion, holding her there. The dogs go bananas. Diane screams, hysterical.

DIANE

Please! No! Please! Just take it,
please, no, take the car...my
purse, take it...don't kill me!
Please!

The SECOND ATTACKER (30s; heavysset) coolly brandishes a gun. She tries to push her purse to him, but he throws it away, and barks at First Attacker.

SECOND ATTACKER

Shut her up!

First Attacker covers her mouth with his gloved hand. Second Attacker moves the gun to her temple.

85 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET - CONTINUOUS

A car comes careening down the street: hazard lights, headlights, hooting wildly.

86 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE DRIVEWAY INTO
STREET/JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Spooked, and instantly aware of being blocked in, they ditch Diane, get into their car, reversing wildly, almost backing into the screeching-to-a-halt oncoming car. They speed away as Diane screams and screams.

DIANE (O.C.)

Help me! Someone help me...help!

Jacqueline's face is pale; her knuckles clenched white, tight on the steering wheel; the car idling, hazard lights blinking, headlights on. She starts to cry, forces herself to move, opens the car door, leaves it in the road - still running - and dashes into the driveway. The dogs bark and bark.

87 INT./EXT. JOHN'S CAR/CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT

John's nearing home. The leafy street's completely peaceful, unlike just a few hours earlier. He switches on his right indicator, passing a familiar parking spot, now empty.

He frowns, stopping outside the opening, sliding gate. A rental car is parked in the driveway behind Diane: there's no room. A bit concerned, he reverses, carefully parking on the street. He locks it, beeps it.

He comes back, checks the car door's locked. Beeps it once, again, looks up and down the street, checks the handle again, and leaves.

88 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Diane sits, her head in her hands, weeping softly; Jacqueline rubbing her back. On the kitchen counter - next to the knife block, bowl of dark red apples and some mail - her laptop's open: Facebook. Current status: "Just survived attempted hijacking - a wreck :("

JACQUELINE

(soft, gentle)

Drink some more of your tea,
Di...it'll help...trust me...just
another sip or two.

Diane does so, sniffing quietly, half-sobbing still. Jacqueline, trying to lighten the mood, nods downwards.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Those are cute. Nine West?

Pretty, decorative, designer sandals: ruby red.

DIANE

Mmm, love them.

JACQUELINE

How much?

Diane, still sniffing, stops her sobs momentarily, caught up in her tough talk.

DIANE

The car they can have; these
they'd have to kill me for!

Jacqueline snorts. Diane laughs, in spite of herself, the humour catching her by surprise. Both of them grin, relishing a moment of levity in the tension.

(CONTINUED)

Jacqueline's back in the foreground, Diane sits at the counter in front of her. John emerges silently from the dark background of the lounge into the bright kitchen. Jacqueline gets a shock, grabs her chest, lurching back.

Diane looks up, dashes around the counter, launches herself at John, squeezing his neck in her embrace - blabbering, hysterical suddenly.

DIANE

(between sniffs and sobs)

I did what you said...I told him,
uh, I said...I-I told...I said to
take it, uh...take the car, I-I
said, I promise, take the car, I
said it!

His cold eyes look down from Diane and up to Jacqueline, her back in the foreground.

JOHN

(quietly)

It's okay...it's okay now...it's
okay...they're gone...it's
okay...you're safe now.

DISSOLVE TO:

Still emotional, Diane's replaying the events, looking down mostly, describing them to no one in particular. She's the apex of a triangle: John in front to the left, still in the lounge doorway; Jacqueline in front to the right, leaning against a cupboard next to the passageway entrance. Their eyes move from Diane to each other: both with questions they haven't had chance to ask.

DISSOLVE TO:

DIANE

(still short of breath)

...y'know I was just so
lucky...if Jac hadn't decided to
surprise me with a visit...who
knows what might have happened?

She shivers at the thought of it, turns to Jacqueline, smiling gratefully.

DIANE (CONT.)

My friend...

Diane walks over, rubs Jacqueline's arm, who smiles briefly before, uncertain, she looks down. Diane's gushing but sincere: any bad blood seems buried.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE (CONT.)

Her timing couldn't have been better if she planned it herself.

JOHN

(eyebrows raised, to Diane)

Really?

(coolly, to Jacqueline)

A visit...that is lucky timing.

John and Jacqueline study one another for a moment; Diane notices, doesn't get it, frowns. She's calmer, her nose and eyes red, but otherwise okay. A lull in conversation, Diane turns to the sink for a glass of water.

Finally, John breaks the silence nonchalantly - an odd, wry smile. Jacqueline looks up immediately.

JOHN (CONT.)

So I had an interesting evening, too...well, earlier this week...

DIANE

(stops drinking)

Really? What happened, honey?

JOHN

Flew in, as per usual...tired, crabby...Monday night...

Diane makes a sympathetic face, reaches over the counter, rubs his arm, then leans back against the sink, listening intently. Monday's fight seems a distant memory.

JOHN (CONT.)

Ag...probably just making a big deal of nothing...just an inconvenience really...

DIANE

No. You listened to me, now I want to listen to you...isn't that right, Jac?

Jacqueline raises her eyebrows, smiles at Diane. It disappears quickly as she returns her gaze to John. He smiles weakly, refolds his jacket on the counter.

JOHN

It's just the strangest thing...I know they've been tightening up security...suppose it's good...

DIANE

No, go on...

(CONTINUED)

JOHN

Maybe it's just my imagination...

He looks squarely at Jacqueline.

JOHN (CONT.)

...but I could have sworn they were looking...for something, particular...

Diane frowns.

JOHN (CONT.)

...and particularly me.

Jacqueline's eyes narrow, concern spreading across her face; Diane's suddenly edgy; John: blasé.

DIANE

But, there was nothing to find, right? I mean -

JOHN

Of course not.

Then, checking herself, glancing briefly at Jacqueline, she over-compensates with a nervous chortle.

DIANE

What could you...possibly be carrying...that they'd be, uh, looking for?

The phone rings. Diane launches herself off the sink, explaining quickly as she exits.

DIANE (CONT.)

It must be Judy...told her to call back later...

Jacqueline studies John - calmly brushing some lint off his jacket sleeve, ignoring her. Diane can be heard indistinctly, talking in the bedroom. Jacqueline's patience eventually wears thin, her voice urgent, hushed throughout.

JACQUELINE

What - that's it? Ruby told me she got the package.

(she waits for him)

So you weren't checked?

JOHN

(cold stare)

Fortunately I have some...friends on staff...they gave me a heads-up, before we left.

(clipped, accusatory words)
Good thing I moved it, isn't it?

She's increasingly agitated by his cryptic replies.

JACQUELINE
What the fuck is going on?

JOHN
(poker face)
You tell me. They sure knew just where to look...

JACQUELINE
What...d'you mean, what - in the base? They knew? B-but how?

JOHN
(not missing a beat)
I'd sure like to know.

JACQUELINE
Wait - what, you think I told them?

John nods, gently smug, with downturned lips.

JOHN
Maybe...

His icy, withholding demeanour just enrages her: she gesticulates wildly at her chest.

JACQUELINE
(loudly)
What the hel-
(softer)
What the hell would I stand to gain by doing that?

JOHN
(ice)
What would you stand to gain by visiting Diane?

JACQUELINE
Right...so I tip-off customs -
(then, softer)
...implicating myself...
(louder once more)
...then I arrange a hijacking -
then I interrupt it!

She stands there for a moment, furious, letting her words take effect, before turning loud, vitriolic.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
What'd I do on the second day:
make the land animals?

John laughs, her frustration amusing him no end.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
(indignant)
Why would I do all that?

JOHN
(cool, disinterested)
Couldn't say...lack of
alternatives perhaps? Maybe you
crave the credit, the attention,
of a good rescue?

John stares her down. She holds his gaze, not wanting to give in, but eventually does. They stand like that for a moment. He snorts softly, ridiculing her fury. She looks up resolved, her confidence growing.

JACQUELINE
Well, it strikes me as a helluva
coincidence that customs search
you and a few days later your
wife gets hijacked. You're having
a bad week.

John snorts, louder. Jacqueline's eyes dart about, pieces coming together, gathering momentum.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
And it strikes me it's a helluva
weird hijacking...

She's giving no credence to keeping her voice down now, smacking one hand against the other.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
...didn't want her car; didn't
want her cash, credit cards;
didn't want her cellphone...just
what kind of hijacking is that?!

John shakes his head: smug, unfazed. But Jacqueline's revved up, keeps going, dripping defiant sarcasm.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
What are they: some weird
Buddhist hijackers not interested
in material gain? Or's it just
their hobby?

Jacqueline, turning her head to and fro, angrily plays out both parts of her imagined, over-the-top scenario.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I'm bored, let's go hijack someone. / Oh, okay, but we have enough cars. / Ja, I know, just wanna work on my technique.

It's not intended as humour but John laughs out loud - mostly as insult, belittling her anger. She sneers, pointing her finger at him. He's utterly composed.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Bullshit! This reeks of bullshit.

JOHN

Well you seem to know an awful lot about their M-O for someone who's protesting her innocence quite so fiercely -

JACQUELINE

(pointing at herself)

I got that from her, you jerk!
I'm the one who's been sitting here for hours, calming her, talking to the cops...

DIANE (O.S.)

(from a distance)

Hey, what is all the racket about, I'm trying to -

JACQUELINE

(half to herself)

...asshole.

She arrives in the kitchen to see Jacqueline furious, red-faced, head shaking. John switches gears, effortlessly summing up the situation, his head shaking, suddenly disgusted with Jacqueline: he baits her.

JOHN

Go on...go on: tell her!

DIANE

Tell me w-what?

Things are unravelling quickly for Jacqueline: she seems flustered, shaken by John's turnabout, holding her fingers to either side of her temples, uncertain. Her eyes dart around: too much happening at once.

JACQUELINE

I'm, I'm not so sure anymore
this was just a botched
hijacking.

(she takes a deep breath)

I think...it just seems too
deliberate, Di, too planned.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE
(a little scared now)
P-planned...what? I d-don't
understand...

She edges closer to John, uncertain, eyeing Jacqueline warily. He nods to Diane as she approaches, putting herself beneath his arm: a couple once more.

DIANE (CONT.)
Look, let's all just take a bit
of a breather...it's been a
helluva evening and -

But Jacqueline shakes her head in disbelief, defiant.

JACQUELINE
No! Someone wanted you dead...
(emotional at the thought)
...if I hadn't turned up when I
did...

She reaches for Diane, but Diane hesitates, looking to John, who shakes his head disappointedly at Jacqueline. Diane turns, trying to reason with her: real tenderness and concern in her voice.

DIANE
Jac...babe, what are you saying?

Diane turns back to look at John, desperation in her eyes. He steps in. Jacqueline's increasingly panicked, distraught, very much alone: it's her versus them and she's not winning. John turns authoritative.

JOHN
Jacqui...this isn't the UK: this
shit happens every day here. We
all want someone to blame...but
this...
(shakes his head in disgust)
...this conspiracy nonsense is
taking things too far!

He eases Diane behind him with one hand, shielding her. Diane's grateful but concerned about her friend, eyeing her still. As he speaks, Diane can't help but move to his side to see her friend's reaction: she's worried about Jacqueline, alone in the corner, crying now.

JOHN (CONT.)
(matter-of-factly)
I'm sorry to have to say this,
Jacqui...as much as I hate to...I
think you tipped off customs, I
think you wanted them to
find...something...

(his voice trails off)
 ...maybe you just can't handle
 that Di and I are together...I
 just don't know anymore...

Jacqueline stares, gobsmacked. He turns to Diane, her face panicked. He looks down, seemingly jaded, before uttering a thought so vile it makes him recoil with disbelief.

JOHN (CONT.)
 Could she have...could she have
 planned this and just lost her
 nerve...so she interrupted it?

Jacqueline looks up, shaken from her tormented paralysis by the absurdity of the accusation. Raging, pointing at her chest, she advances towards John, yelling.

JACQUELINE
Me? Me!

Still ice cool, he slowly raises his eyebrows, palms.

JOHN
 Who else?

As John steps to the side to protect Diane, the growing realisation on her face quickly transforms her panic into blind fury as she screams at Jacqueline.

DIANE
 You fucking bitch...how could
 you?!

JACQUELINE
 You believe that?!

Lightly restrained by John, Diane points at her, slowly stepping closer, her teeth gritted with rage.

DIANE
 And one more thing: you stay away
 from my man - he's my husband -
 you keep your filthy, slutty
 hands off him!

JACQUELINE
 (crying with stress)
 What? What are you talk- is this
 about the hotel? What did he tell
 you? Di, I promise, nothing
 happened, I would never -

Wailing banshee encore, Diane launches herself at Jacqueline, taken completely off guard. Hitting out wildly, she curses Jacqueline, partially restrained by a half-willed effort by John.

DIANE

I'll kill you, I'll kill you,
I'll fucking kill you!

Jacqueline falls to the floor, unable to defend herself, covering her face with her arms, whimpering between screams. Diane stands raging over her, John holding her back by her arms like a Jerry Springer stagehand.

From deep within Diane comes a final, furious, guttural warning. Think: Linda Blair in "The Exorcist".

DIANE (CONT.)

Get out. Get out of my house. Get
ooout!

Unable to wrest her arms free - frustrated by Jacqueline's panicked immobility - she tries to kick at her, repeatedly, until Jacqueline gets up stumbling, terrified and runs out crying.

89 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - DAY

Sound of a newspaper being turned. The back of a spread Sunday Times. As the page turns again, we see John.

After a moment, Diane enters, humming: her hair tied up in a bandanna, dark red gardening gloves on, jeans rolled up like Huck Finn.

As she walks past him, without looking, she puts out a hand to gently run it through his hair. Almost simultaneously, he puts out a lazy hand to touch her passing bum as he yawns.

JOHN

You're going to -

DIANE

Ja, with the -

JOHN

Just be careful of the -

DIANE

I know, behind the -

JOHN

(absent-mindedly)
Avo tree.

90

INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BATHROOM/BEDROOM INTO PASSAGEWAY INTO KITCHEN/LOUNGE - EARLY MORNING

From the open door to the en suite bathroom, we hear John - at the top of his lungs in the shower - performing his rendition of the chorus of Shania Twain's "Ka-Ching!"

Diane, sits at the dressing table, styling her hair, a hair dryer on her lap. To the side are a collection of new designer shopping parcel deliveries. The shower stops. We still hear his singing as we slowly leave the bedroom and move down the passageway.

JOHN (O.C.)

Can you hear it ring / It makes
you wanna sing / It's such a
beautiful thing - Ka-ching! /
Lots of diamond rings / The
happiness it brings / You'll live
like a king / With lots of money
and things...

By the time we reach the kitchen, he's just finished the chorus as the hair dryer starts up in the bedroom. We slowly move in on the wooden knife block on the counter, some dark red apples. Vibrating. A cellphone lights up, moving slightly with each vibration.

Soon, the chorus of Shania Twain's "I'm Gonna Getcha Good!" starts belting out in ascending volume. The hair dryer stops in the background.

DIANE (O.S.)

Shit!

She comes bolting through, appears then disappears from view, as she runs past the kitchen. She stops, reverses into view. She spots it, vibrating on the counter, dives for it. She's out of breath but chuffed to have made it.

DIANE (CONT.)

Hello?

It's dead. She looks down at the screen: "1 Missed Call - UNKNOWN". She frowns, puts the cellphone down, starts trying to extricate the comb from her hair: it's gotten tangled in her mad dash and it takes a while.

Just as she becomes immersed in the task, the message alert sounds, loudly: "Hayibo!" It makes her start. Annoyed, she picks up the cellphone. The screen reads: "1 New Voice Message". She hesitates over the voicemail speed dial key as she stares at the screen: her curiosity piqued. The shower door slams in the background. It gives her a fright and she accidentally presses it.

(CONTINUED)

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (O.S.)
You have one new voice message.

She holds the cellphone to her ear, anxious, her eyes alert.

JOHN (O.S.)
Jesus! What the - ? Diane!

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (O.S.)(CONT.)
First message...

Diane's eyes shift around. Then: a menacing voice.

SECOND ATTACKER (O.S.)
We pitched: some crazy bitch
turns up, hooting - not our
problem. Deal was: half up front,
half after. Way I see it: we're
due 20k. Got till tomorrow. Or
what you two planned for your
wife's gonna happen to your
girlfriend.
(pause)
Got it?

He hangs up. Diane's eyes are wide.

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (O.S.)
To delete this message, press -

JOHN (O.S.)
Diane! That fucking clock of
yours!

She gets a fright again, pressing the keypad, the cellphone still to her ear.

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (O.S.)
Message deleted. End of n-

She hangs up, her hand still raised holding the phone, just as John bursts into the kitchen: eyes wild. He's mostly dressed but looks untidy. She instinctively rears up against the counter, but he's too frantic and preoccupied to notice.

JOHN
Keys...keys...wh-

He stops suddenly. Squinting, he slowly approaches the dishwasher, bends down, comes up holding keys: wet.

JOHN (CONT.)
What the fu-?

Then, remembering his hurry, he spins around, grabbing the cellphone from Diane, wagging his index finger in her face. She's frozen, still wide-eyed.

JOHN (CONT.)

I'm getting rid of that clock the
moment I get back!

He pecks her on the cheek and leaves towards the lounge. Still shaking his head, he grabs his overnight bag off a chair by the dinner table, then disappears from view. Diane's frozen.

JOHN (O.S.)(CONT.)

And - for God's sake - get some
sun! You look as pale as a Pommy!

The front door slams.

91 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET - SAME MORNING

Jacqueline pulls up, parks outside. She looks around quickly, climbs onto and over the wall without too much trouble.

92 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Still looking around cagily, she lifts up a pot plant and feels around beneath it: nothing. Then the next one: nothing. She stops, stands up. Her eyes rolls upwards, remembering something. She starts to look around the entrance.

Pot plants, a little Buddha statue, a limestone Cupid, some rocks, the mat. Then the rocks again, then a lighter, grey one. Jacqueline's hand picks it up. She turns it upside down: it's hollow inside. Her eyes widen as she feels around, then light up - got it!

She pulls out the key, brushes her hand off, pushes it into the lock, and turns it: it clicks open. She eases her way in. Facing the door, she closes it quietly, and turns around delicately.

Diane stands, knees bent, shaking - her gaze both terrified and crazed - a cricket bat in her hands, raised above her head.

Jacqueline - shocked - crashes back into the front door, grabbing at her chest, suddenly out of breath.

JACQUELINE

Jesus Christ! What the fuck -
what are you doing here?

(CONTINUED)

DIANE

I live here, you psycho bitch!

Edging her way past Diane, palms raised, she looks around.

JACQUELINE

You home alone?

DIANE

What - why the fuck - I'm holding
a fucking cricket bat you f-
you...F-Froot Loop!

JACQUELINE

I hear you, Di, I really do...
(then, repeating softly to
prove her point)
...Froot Loop.

Diane continues to circle around the moving Jacqueline, knees still bent, cricket bat still raised: crazed expression intact. Jacqueline stops moving and checking: seems satisfied now - more casual, curious even.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Isn't that thing kinda getting
really heavy?

Diane still has the crazy eyes but she's taking strain.

DIANE

No! Kind of...my shoulder's
hurting a bit...

She suddenly notices her defences slipping, the bat dropping, and raises it quickly again.

DIANE (CONT.)

Wait! What the fuck are you doing
here?

JACQUELINE

I didn't think you'd be here.

Diane makes a 'what the fuck?' face.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Y'know, I though you'd be at
that...that early morning, uh,
Pilates thing.

Diane turns calmer, distracted by the memory - its visceral nature making her wince a little in disgust.

DIANE

No, stopped going...instructor
was weird...really sweaty.

(CONTINUED)

JACQUELINE
 (matter-of-factly)
 Pity...would've helped with those
 shoulders...

She considers this momentarily before returning to her
 panic.

DIANE
 Mmm...wait - what the fuck are
 you doing in my house?

JACQUELINE
 (embarrassed, cornered)
 I was coming...
 (shaking her head, defeated)
 I was gonna get Pieter's
 number...
 (ashamed, sighing)
 ...from your diary.

DIANE
 Pieter? Pieter who - diamonds
 Pieter? B-but why?

Jacqueline's shoulders slump and she exhales deeply,
 looking down: the jig is up. She presses her lips together
 on one side, exhales slowly again: so reluctant to speak.
 Eventually she looks up at Diane, sincerity and concern in
 her face.

JACQUELINE
 Di, there's something I-I have to
 tell you.

She walks towards Diane, palms raised non-threateningly,
 but Diane backs away, swishing the bat.

DIANE
 You two want me dead: you planned
 it! I know everything!

Jacqueline stops shaking her head: wide-eyed surprise.

JACQUELINE
 I don't want -
 (then a concentrated frown)
 Wait - you said 'two'...

DIANE
 (nodding, nervous)
 Ja...so?

JACQUELINE
 (encouraged, pointing)
 You said 'you two'!

DIANE
(nodding, eyes wild)
You and John: I know everything!

JACQUELINE
Wel- how - what do you know?

DIANE
I spoke...I heard the -

At her recollection of the voice - and of the attack - she breaks down into a sob, starts crying uncontrollably.

Jacqueline, palms raised once more, slowly backs away, speaking slowly and calmly as she does.

JACQUELINE
Di, I'm just...going to stand...over here. I'm not gonna move. Just tell me...what you know.

Diane wipes at her tears - moving her brow and the top of her shirt sleeves together, unwilling to release the bat - her words coming between sobs, before she breaks down again.

DIANE
Voicemail...his phone...that, that voice -
(then angry)
It was him!

Jacqueline tries to calm her: palms raised, voice steady.

JACQUELINE
Okay, okay. Why...did you say... 'you two'?

She has to stop to think, halting her tears briefly - her breathing staggered - before breaking down again.

DIANE
Wh- because, that man, he said -

JACQUELINE
(her voice low and slow)
What did he say, Di?

DIANE
(through angry tears)
That you planned it, together! To kill me!

Jacqueline closes her eyes and exhales, relief flooding through her. She drops back against the wall, sliding to the floor - almost smiling - before covering her face with her hands, her body pulsating with tearful relief: silent, shuddering sobbing that Diane mistakes for laughter.

DIANE (CONT.)

You think this is funny?

She charges at Jacqueline - standing over her, bat raised, head shaking, face red, breath heaving - anger and confusion flashing through her eyes. Jacqueline looks up, tears falling down her cheeks: she doesn't try defend herself. Diane is overcome with frustration.

DIANE (CONT.)

What the fuck is going on?!

Jacqueline reaches out and grabs Diane's legs, lying at her feet, weeping, as Diane's patience wears thin.

DIANE (CONT.)

(with rising panic)

Jac..Jac! Jac!!

JACQUELINE

(beseeching, both hands
pulling at her own chest)

Don't you see? I stopped it: me!

Her legs free again, Diane steps back - shakily - dropping the cricket bat. She starts to fall, catches the chair's arm on her way down, collapses to the floor on her bum. Her eyes dart around: recalling, thinking. She shakes her head, stunned.

Jacqueline looks up, slides the cricket bat away towards the door and dashes over, collapsing in her lap, hugging her. Diane's too stunned to react, other than reflexively putting out one arm to catch her, the other arm propping herself up, her eyes wild. Jacqueline cries, buried in her lap.

Eventually - without looking - still shocked, Diane's other arm comes around Jacqueline, too. We back away.

93

INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - SAME MORNING

We see the knife block, dark red apples, propped up mail, then Diane's laptop - closed. Jacqueline sits near the fridge, Diane leaning against the sink on the other side of the counter. She's holding a jar of Nutella chocolate spread in one hand, and licking a teaspoon in the other, as Jacqueline reaches over for the jar.

(CONTINUED)

JACQUELINE

John?

Diane hands over the jar mechanically, habitually.

DIANE

Maybe tomorrow. Probably end of the week.

Jacqueline takes a massive scoop with her own teaspoon, careful not to lose any, and closes her eyes as she tastes the chocolatey goodness. Diane starts to laugh.

JACQUELINE

What?

DIANE

(still chuckling)

You. Parked outside in the street all day, playing stakeout. Except, instead of donuts...you'd have Nutella.

Jacqueline's enjoying the jibe and plays along, grinning good-naturedly, before realising what she's said.

JACQUELINE

Listen, you: if I hadn't been playing cops and robbers, you'd be roadkill!

(then, mortified)

Oh shit! I didn't mean that - Di, I'm so sorry.

Diane offers a sad, brave smile, shaking her head: it's fine. She looks down, contemplating what might have been: sombre, pensive. Then, thinking of something, Jacqueline chuckles to herself. Diane's intrigued, looks at her: what? Jacqueline shakes her head, self-consciously.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

You're gonna get a kick out of this...just get ready to laugh it up...

DIANE

(grinning now)

What?

JACQUELINE

It wasn't just luck...my interrupting the hijack - attack - whatever.

Diane's eyes narrow, suddenly serious, withdrawing slightly.

(CONTINUED)

DIANE

W-what do you mean?

Jacqueline sighs, more earnest now herself - uncertain, anxious - her eyes studying the floor. Finally she comes out with it, reluctantly.

JACQUELINE

I was, I was...watching you.

Diane shakes her head softly: she doesn't understand. Jacqueline takes a deep breath, coming out with it louder than expected.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I was stalking you, alright? I'm a crazy stalker.

Diane's expression starts to shift but Jacqueline is still deep into confessional mode.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I would park outside the house when I was in Cape Town...sometimes I'd spend the whole day out there...it's fucked up, I know.

Finally she plucks up the courage to look up, only to see Diane laughing: it's a long overdue tension release. Bit by begrudging bit, Jacqueline starts to accept the humour in it, reluctantly laughing at herself.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I even went to the goddam Waterfront trying to find that stupid bench you sat on eating ice cream...I was desperate!

Diane's laughing so hard now, she can't get the words out. Eventually, she stops, wiping her eyes and holding her sides.

DIANE

Ah, babe...that's the sweetest thing I've heard in years!

Things start to settle and Diane gets reflective once more.

DIANE (CONT.)

A day for confessions, huh?

Jacqueline smiles, a little ruefully. Then - thinking of something - she clears her throat, just a little tentative.

JACQUELINE

Did you...y'know, customs?

DIANE

No!

JACQUELINE

Okaaaay...

It's an awkward silence. She's about to speak when Diane beats her to it - loud and angry - like it's being forced out of her.

DIANE

I was angry, okay! I w-

JACQUELINE

Why would you do that?! You -

DIANE

I was drunk, I was so -

JACQUELINE

Jesus, I don't care! Fuck, Di!
You didn't just put him at risk,
you put yourself at risk - you
put me at risk! What the fuck?
How could -

DIANE

I found the key card, alright!
From your hotel...I heard his
voice, Jac.

JACQUELINE

So what?!

DIANE

Oh fuck you! You wouldn't have
thought the same thing?

Jacqueline backs down finally, conceding the point, as silence ensues. But she's still bristling. Eventually, Jacqueline grumbles to herself, beneath her breath.

JACQUELINE

Still the dumbest move, ever.

DIANE

I know, alright! I know. I
married the psychopath, I tipped
off customs: I'm a fucking
douche! Okay?

Jacqueline can't help but laugh a bit, Diane catching on.

JACQUELINE
(teasing)
Double douche...triple d-

DIANE
(mock anger)
Oh fuck off...cow.

94 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

An open suitcase, already half-packed, with an empty tog bag beside it and orderly piles of folded clothing, socks, underwear and shoes on the bed.

JACQUELINE
Jeez, you weren't hanging around, were you?

DIANE
(a bit touchy)
If you found out your husband tried to kill you, would you?

JACQUELINE
(sassy)
Babe, I'd never be dumb enough to marry a dude in the first place.

Diane smiles weakly, in spite of herself, before turning contemplative, her head shaking gently.

DIANE
Would have done anything for him...
(sighing at the thought)
...I loved - thought I loved him...
(facing the awful truth)
...I did.

Jacqueline exhales, turns around, picks up a small teddy bear off the bed and, sitting down, looks at it. Trying to change an awful topic, Diane looks around the bed at her piles.

DIANE
What else?

Jacqueline holds up the teddy playfully, in front of her face, making it move as if it were talking.

JACQUELINE
(in a silly voice)
What about me?

(CONTINUED)

But Diane is weak. She shakes her head, disconsolately. Jacqueline, crestfallen, looks at the teddy, bites her lip, sighs softly. After a moment or two, she picks up an older topic again, trying to follow once more: incredulous.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

So...it was all his idea - from the start - he told you to rope me in?

Diane packs piles into her bags through the rest of the scene, taking trips to the cupboard for clothes still on hangers. Jacqueline lies down on the bed nearby, holding the teddy bear above her. Diane gives in to her shame.

DIANE

He said you'd be more reliable if you felt we had a secret bond.

JACQUELINE

(begrudgingly)
Well, he was right.
(then, with disbelief)
But he never told you he was smuggling with me?

DIANE

(shivering at the thought)
He clearly had plans that didn't include me.

Jacqueline suddenly sits up, thinking she spots something in the cupboard, her uncertainty turning to exclamation.

JACQUELINE

Isn't that my rain jack-
(pause)
I love that jacket!

DIANE

Me too.

She lies back down, grumbling playfully.

JACQUELINE

(almost to herself)
Little thief...
(then with mock concern)
...could've gotten wet.

DIANE

(grinning)
I'll make sure to pack it then.

JACQUELINE
Fucking better.

DIANE
(surveying her plans)
So, I've got everything now?

JACQUELINE (O.C.)
(dryly)
Don't forget your cricket bat.

DISSOLVE TO:

Clothes are strewn on the floor, drawers open and empty: a whirlwind scene. Diane - her face red and tear-streaked, her hand in her hair - is beside herself. Jacqueline's voice is filled with shock, panic.

JACQUELINE (O.C.)(CONT.)
What do you mean 'you don't
know'?

Diane starts tearing through the cupboard: nothing. She slams it shut, turns to the closet, rummaging wildly: it's no use. She stands there for a moment, just staring into it, then closes it softly, defeated for now, her back to Jacqueline.

DIANE
I asked him...he said it was
for...in case anyone ever...broke
in...something went wrong...I'd
be protected...by my ignorance,
he said...

JACQUELINE
(gesticulating)
But he had to give you - what did
you live on when he was away?

Diane turns around, and starts to cry, ashamed.

DIANE
He...he gave me an allowance...
(then, angry)
Wh-why d'you think I used all
those fucking credit cards? He
never told me, Jac! I don't know
where the money is!

Diane slumps down, sitting at the foot of the closet - forlorn - her eyes closed, shaking her head. Jacqueline kneels down beside her, her voice calmer.

JACQUELINE
Di, just think about it,
slowly...did he ever, did he ever
say...anything...something?

(CONTINUED)

Diane just drops her head, sobbing softly. Jacqueline sighs heavily and sits down next to her. Slowly rubbing Diane's leg, she looks away, scanning the room, talking to herself.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

Where is it?

95 INT. HEATHROW AIRPORT LOCKERS - SAME TIME

John - his cap beneath his arm - closes up a locker. He turns around, humming to himself, throws the key up softly, catches it.

96 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

JACQUELINE

(rallying, standing up)

Okay...here's what we're going to do.

She takes Diane's hands, trying to encourage her to stand up but she won't. She looks into Diane's eyes, resolved.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

We're going to get out of here, now.

But Diane's even more obsessed now. She pulls her hands away, gesticulating, shaking her head wildly and raging to herself before looking up at Jacqueline: fiery red eyes.

DIANE

No! I have to find it - it has to be here! He couldn't put it in the bank: where else could it be?

JACQUELINE

You were already half-packed and on your way out the door when I got here. What's changed? Grab your shit and let's go!

DIANE

No! That fucking bastard! I earned that money. I got Stephanie, I got you...

Then - realising the implication of her words - she stops raging, suddenly subdued: her voice soft, ashamed.

DIANE (CONT.)

Sorry.

Jacqueline shakes her head: it doesn't matter.

JACQUELINE

Let's go. Please.

Diane starts shaking her head again, an angry tear rolling down her cheek.

DIANE

If I have to tear this whole, fucking house apart, I will. But that bastard is not keeping all that money!

Jacqueline's losing patience now and running out of ideas.

JACQUELINE

And what if you don't find it, what then?

Diane stares blankly at the carpet, stubborn till the end.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

What about John, what if he comes home?

Diane looks at her watch, more engaged now, confident.

DIANE

No. He left just over an hour ago.

JACQUELINE

So?

DIANE

Jac, it's an international flight: you do the math.

Jacqueline exhales, loudly. Then, thinking of something, she perks up, at first struggling to get Diane's attention.

JACQUELINE

Okay, babe...babe, you're right, okay? We're not getting anywhere without some cash.

She nods to Diane who starts to nod with her: finally they're on the same page again.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

But I've got about twenty grand in the hotel safe...some rough diamonds...it's not much, but it'll get us a st-

DIANE

I'm not leaving until I find it.

JACQUELINE

Babe, you've got thirty minutes, maybe thirty-five...but when I get back here - money or no money - we're leaving. Understood?

A little taken aback, Diane nods to herself, slowly.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)

I'll hoot twice when I'm back.

DIANE

(nodding, vacantly)

I'll open the gate.

Finally Diane seems to start to gather her senses as Jacqueline makes to leave, her tone conciliatory.

DIANE (CONT.)

Anything you want?

Jacqueline shakes her head, then stops, thinking of something: her face softened, sentimental. She turns around.

JACQUELINE

The trophy, don't forget our trophy.

Diane smiles back, nodding her recognition, eyes moist.

97

INT. CAPE TOWN HOTEL BEDROOM/BATHROOM - SAME MORNING

A television is on. A tog bag, stuffed with a few clothes, sits on the bed. The electronic safe's keypad beeps, then the metal clunks as it opens. First, a plastic bag with rough diamonds, then several stacks of R200 notes land on the bag.

Jacqueline emerges from behind the cupboard door, does a quick check, dashes into the en suite bathroom, grabbing toiletries. In the bedroom, the television to the right, Jacqueline moves in and out of view in the bathroom.

SKY NEWS ANCHOR (TELEVISION)

Your top stories this hour: record snows in Europe are causing havoc with airline commuters. Heathrow is the latest airport to shut down: all of both it's outgoing and incoming flights...

(CONTINUED)

We hear a glass bottle drop and shatter. She comes tearing in and reads the screen blurb: "Heathrow closed until further notice due to snow delays." Panicked, she moans to the screen.

JACQUELINE

No, no, no...

She wheels around, grabs her bag en route - only careful to shove the diamonds and cash inside, her clothes spilling onto the floor as she races to the door.

98 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN SUBURB STREETS/JOHN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

John admires the sunny, leafy streets, tapping his hand against the steering wheel, singing the chorus of Shania Twain's "I'm Gonna Getcha Good!" - he's in a great mood.

JOHN

I'm gonna getcha, it's a matter
of fact / I'm gonna getcha,
don'tcha worry 'bout that / You
can bet your bottom dollar, in
time you're gonna be mine / Just
like I should - I'll getcha
good...

99 INT. JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

The engine's revving extremely high and she's hooting loudly, swerving, her tyres screeching. She has her cellphone to her ear, panic-stricken.

100 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BATHROOM/BEDROOM INTO PASSAGEWAY INTO KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We hear the muffled sound of a cellphone ringing as we survey the bedroom, eventually taking in its likely location beneath some shirts near the teddy bear. There's no one there.

Diane crosses the doorway inside the en suite bathroom. She's singing softly to herself - Shania Twain's "Don't Be Stupid (You Know I Love You)" - as she enters the bedroom once more, standing in front of the closet door mirror, looking at her outfit briefly.

DIANE

Don't freak out until you know
the facts / Relax / Don't be
stupid, you know I love you...

She's packed: a full tog bag by the open suitcase. Her face brighter, her energy improved, her movements faster, more focused: freedom beckons.

(CONTINUED)

She takes one last sweep around the ransacked bedroom - even more chaotic than when we last saw it - ending on the teddy. Just as she crawls across the bed to get it - she stops - listening as she hears the neighbour's dogs barking.

Something hard at her knee distracts her. She picks up the shirts, finds her phone. She studies it: frowns, disappointed. "1 Missed Call - Jac". The front door opens, slams shut. Diane happily tosses the phone onto the clothes and dashes out.

Diane almost skips down the corridor: confident, happy. She hears the keys on the kitchen counter, pauses outside, ruffles her hair and - holding onto the door frame - leans into the kitchen dramatically with the top half of her body, her eyes initially closed, seductively.

DIANE

That was quick, babe...

We see the surprise and panic as she opens her eyes. She loses her grip on the door jam and falls comically to the floor.

DIANE (O.C.)(CONT.)

Ow.

Slowly she gets back to her feet: she's terrified.

John stands in the kitchen, head down - distracted - looking through some mail.

JOHN

That was a nice greeting...not sure about the dismount though.

He pulls at his tie, loosening it, and we push in on his hand, his knuckles, pulling at the knot. He grins.

JOHN (CONT.)

Heathrow's completely snowed in - no flights in or out. Madness!

He puts the opened mail back against the others, next to the dark red apples and knife block.

JOHN (CONT.)

(enjoying his good fortune)
I mean...it's to die for out there - just beautiful - and I still get a 'snow day'!

The landline starts ringing in the bedroom and lounge. He pushes past her, pecking her cheek. She shuts her eyes, destroyed. He shouts to her as he walks down the passageway en route to the bedroom, his voice stopping cold upon arriving.

(CONTINUED)

JOHN (O.S.)(CONT.)

Honey, won't you get that...and,
uh, think I forgot to close the
gate: would you mind?

(laughing)

Snowed in - I mean - what ne-

The landline stops ringing. John's footsteps come quickly back down the passageway. He bursts into the kitchen - his entrance alone causing Diane to back up against the counter - his eyes wild, flashing rage for just a moment. He stops. Diane's cellphone starts ringing in the bedroom. Then stops.

The landline starts ringing again. His head tilts ever so slightly - in the direction of the ringing - some realisation in his eyes. He looks down, then up at Diane: cold, focused. She looks petrified but his poker face gives nothing away.

When the landline stops ringing again, no one moves and no one breaks eye contact in the piercing silence. Finally, he speaks: his tone completely flat, every word deliberate.

JOHN (CONT.)

Diane...are you going somewhere?

He slowly takes a step closer. She looks panicked, frozen.

JOHN (CONT.)

Diane, it looks like you're going
somewhere.

She nods slowly, wide-eyed, terrified. He nods with her, soothingly: his eyes cold, as he reaches out a hand to squeeze her shoulder. She cannot help but flinch slightly at his touch, his voice reassuring.

JOHN (CONT.)

Well, then...I'm just in time for
a proper goodbye.

DISSOLVE TO:

We see John in his white shirt from behind, washing his hands in the kitchen sink. He stops suddenly - closing the tap - his head to one side, listening for something.

101

EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET INTO
DRIVEWAY/JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline's rental car approaches the house. The brake lights flash bright red as the car screeches slightly. The only noise is the running engine. We advance towards the car, moving faster the closer we get, until we're by the

(CONTINUED)

driver's side window: her breathing heavy, the car's engine idling. The gate's open.

Spotting the car, the dogs next door start barking wildly, and continue through the rest of the scene. Her eyes dart around: panic. She spots something on the wall, grabs her cellphone. We see her dial, looking back to the wall as she does.

The sign on the wall is a grey shield with two, black eyes on it and simple, blue lettering - "Neighbourhood Watch (021) 555 4382".

She holds the phone to her ear while it rings, says something quickly, nods and hangs up. She puts her phone down, her hand to her mouth for a moment, uncertain. She finds some resolve, slowly eases the car into the driveway. She slams on the brakes.

Hidden from the outside by the wall, John's car is parked on the lawn. She panics, snatching at the glove compartment, rummaging inside through rental information and service manuals, eventually producing a card with emergency numbers. Her finger scrolls down: "Police Flying Squad". She grabs for her cellphone, knocking it onto the passenger seat footwell.

Just as she starts fighting with her seat belt to release herself to try reach it, there's a knock at the window. John stands outside the car - in a fresh, blue shirt now - dead eyes, just a bit out of breath.

JOHN

Come inside.

He holds his gaze, daring her to decline. She weighs up her options quickly, then turns off the engine. He opens the car door. The dogs bark and bark and bark.

102 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

John pushes the front door open and she walks cautiously inside, in front of him. Her eyes search the room, for something - any sign - of Diane. The door closes. He surprises her, walking ahead of her.

103 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

John's already seated at the kitchen counter, ringing the back of his neck. Jacqueline appears, wide-eyed in the doorway: her advance overly cautious.

JACQUELINE

J-John...what's going on?

(CONTINUED)

He doesn't look up, his words slightly muffled by his head in his hands, his voice strained and cracking.

JOHN
Sh-she's left me, she's finally
done it: she's left me.

Jacqueline's face flashes some hope: eyes darting, then a deep, slow breath. She moves closer, putting a hand on his shoulder, her eyes still desperately scanning for clues.

Her gaze wheels around the kitchen, twice running past the knife block, dark red apples, cellphone, a stack of letters.

He's sniffing. His hand reaches to his shoulder, takes hold of hers. She freezes. He turns to look at her - his eyes red, distressed - shaking his head in disbelief.

JOHN (CONT.)
Can you believe it? Left me...

She shakes her head. Gathering his thoughts, he stops.

JOHN (CONT.)
Jacqui...w-what are you actually
doing here?

Her eyes dart about, reaching in her head for something.

JACQUELINE
I, uh...
(she sighs)
...I'm afraid it's a bit
silly...you see I, uh, lent Di
this rain jacket of mine...really
amazing jacket, great for sailing
and, y'know...she just never
returned...
(she chuckles
self-consciously)
...bitch.

He stares at her for a long time, nodding softly, cold eyes. He drops his head again, shaking it softly, before starting to unload once more, angry.

JOHN
Had this terrible fight, about
something stupid...can't even
remember how it start-

He turns to face her again, wide-eyed.

JOHN (CONT.)
...she just took off...left,
didn't even take her bag - gone:
just like that!

Just then, his cellphone starts vibrating on the counter, startling her: Shania Twain warming up for the big chorus of "I'm Gonna Getcha Good!" He shakes his head as the cellphone slowly moves along the table, bumping the letters over, exposing the sailing trophy behind it.

We see it's heavy metal base and solid glass yacht sail: "National Intervarsity Yacht Challenge PAIRS - 1st".

Her eyes register alarm. But John's preoccupied, reaching for - looking at, then finally ignoring - his cellphone. She pats his shoulder comfortingly, her eyes still glued to the trophy.

The dogs start barking outside. She looks towards the front door, distracted. John notices, his tone self-assured.

JOHN (CONT.)

Don't worry about it, they'll stop just now.

But the barking just gets progressively louder, more frenzied. John squeezes his eyebrows together with his left hand - rubbing both eyes at once - exhausted. Jacqueline frowns, studying him: she's seen that look before.

At the barking's zenith, John bursts up from his chair suddenly, causing Jacqueline to back away, quite wary.

JOHN (CONT.)

Those fucking dogs!

But, just as soon, it starts to die down. John stands there - frozen - just bristling for a few seconds as Jacqueline looks on wide-eyed, her hand to her mouth. He sighs heavily, sitting back down and starts his eye-rubbing again. No sooner has he done so than there's a pounding at the front door. Jacqueline starts involuntarily, her nerves already jangled. John winces.

JOHN (CONT.)

(less convincing)

Don't worry, they'll go away.

There's a silent pause. John sighs: right at last. But the pounding starts all over again - only louder. He pounces to his feet once more: fuming, gesticulating, shouting.

JOHN (CONT.)

Go away, alright?! Just - go - the fuck - away!

He glowers at Jacqueline for a moment, as much as if to say: this is your fault! The pounding stops. Jacqueline, still frozen to the spot, just holds up both palms,

protesting innocence. John closes his eyes, breathes in: the tension ebbing once more. Only to be ratcheted up again by a voice at the door, getting progressively louder.

RIC (O.S.)
Neigh-Neighbourhood
Watch...h-hello?

He shakes his head, his eyes closed; the voice even louder.

RIC (O.S.)(CONT.)
Hello!

John opens his eyes - persecuted: why is this happening?

RIC (O.S.)(CONT.)
(a touch officious)
Should you fail to identify
yourself, I shall be forced to
alert the authorities.

John's mouth drops open, staring at nothing in particular. The voice is softer, yet triumphant.

RIC (O.S.)(CONT.)
Very well then.

John bolts for the front door through the lounge.

104 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

John grabs at the latch and handle simultaneously, swinging the door open, but staying inside, his face red, exasperated.

JOHN
What?!

His back to us, a walkie-talkie to his right ear, a clipboard between his belly and outstretched left arm, RIC (20s; self-important) swivels around.

Unfazed by John's tone and - without looking up at him - Ric awkwardly rests his walkie-talkie where the clipboard meets his belly, scribbles on a card, and hands it to John, proudly.

RIC
Good morning, sir.

105 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN INTO PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

She listens in on the conversation for a moment - seems convinced - and edges into the passageway.

Slowly, still looking over her shoulder, she makes her way carefully down the passageway, each step - despite her care - making that characteristic hard, wooden sound.

106 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

As John reads the card, Ric bends his head to the side, trying to peer inside, switching off the walkie-talkie, placing it back in its holster on his belt. John - irritated - does his best to block Ric's view while studying the card, annoyed.

It's neat printed message contrasts with his name, scrawled in pencil. It reads: "Your Friendly Neighbourhood Watch. Unity is strength. Crime, the problem. Vigilance, the solution. My name is...Ric. Let me strengthen your community unity."

He reaches, leaning over the card, pointing to his name.

RIC

It's short for Richard.

107 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bedroom is ransacked - but even worse than before - clothes everywhere and almost every cupboard door and chest drawer open. Diane's half-packed suitcase is still on the bed, the full tog bag beside it.

Even the teddy bear is still there, next to it. She walks towards it, picks it up. Just stares at it, symbolic now: one last, shared moment. Still looking around the room, she puts it down again, gently, not noticing Diane's cellphone.

She hesitates: it's an overwhelming scene. Paralysed, she puts both her shaking hands out before her, makes fists: stop this! She forces herself to get moving, nodding as she speeds up.

108 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ric holds out his right hand but John, testy, ignores it.

JOHN

Can I help you with something?

(CONTINUED)

RIC

On the contrary, sir, I am here to assist you.

He takes a deep breath and clears his throat.

RIC (CONT.)

At the most recent Neighbourhood Watch General Council Meeting - or GCM - I was unanimously appointed to the post of VO - or Vigilance Officer - in our community patrol. It is in that capacity that I visit your place of residence today.

John - urgent now - tries to return the card.

JOHN

Look! I can't right now, I -

109 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the open cupboard, Jacqueline quickly finds her rain jacket, puts it over her arm. There's some relief in securing her alibi, but it's short-lived. She listens intently: seems to feel satisfied that John is still busy at the front door.

She's about to leave when she treads on something. She looks down: one decorated, designer sandal - ruby red. She bends down, picks it up, hesitates: something's not right. She spins around, looks at the room again. We see her eyes dart about, then roll to the side: piecing something together.

110 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Ric's into a rehearsed routine, showing no sign of stopping.

RIC

In the course of any given day, there can be any of several safety concerns affecting a domicile such as yours.

John, looking over his shoulder quickly, tries to return the card again, firmly.

JOHN

I'm sorry - look, I'm sorry but -

Ignoring John, his back to him, he takes a pencil from behind his right ear as he continues, pointing with the non-sharpened end towards the front wall.

(CONTINUED)

RIC

Being attuned to all matters
security related...and upon
observing the boundary of your
abode, I felt it critical that I
alert you - as a matter of
urgency - to th-

JOHN

Enough!

John steps forward to return the card and - in doing so
forcefully - accidentally knocks the clipboard out of the
unprepared Ric's hand. His pencil and clipboard clatter on
the paving. Ric spins around, his right hand on the
walkie-talkie at his waist, his left hand outstretched.

111 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Slowly, deliberately, Jacqueline turns around, all her
movements now measured, careful. Still holding the sandal
in one hand, she puts her other on the closed closet's
handle, its mirror reflecting her fearful expression. We
see her eyes as she listens for John's voice.

112 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

RIC

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you
to calm down!

John steps forward, picks up the clipboard, seeking a
remedy.

JOHN

Look, it was just an accident, I
didn't mean to -

Ric is having none of it, waving his outstretched left
hand and struggling with his right to get his
walkie-talkie.

RIC

Sir! Sir, I'm going to have to
ask you to step back, please.

He bends down, his hand still on his walkie-talkie, his
eyes on John, and collects his clipboard. The pencil,
however, is out of reach. Without breaking his gaze, he
tries to get it with his outstretched shoe, wary of
getting any closer.

113 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Her hand still on the closet handle, Jacqueline steels herself, taking a big breath: it's now or never. She pulls the closet door open. We see the ruby red sandal slowly fall to the floor.

Diane lies dead, her eyes glazed over. Her legs - partially covered by a bloodstained, white towel - tucked awkwardly to one side to fit into the cramped closet. One designer ruby red sandal sits on top of the towel.

She's been stabbed several times throughout her chest and abdomen, her clothing stained with an obscene amount of dark red blood. More grotesque: the murder weapon - the large chef's knife - is lying in her lap, partially wrapped in a bloody, white shirt: this was an interrupted murder.

114 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

JOHN
(moving closer still)
Look, it's just been a
misunderstanding, I -

RIC
Sir, do not advance!

John looks over his shoulder - momentarily frustrated - then forces himself to calm down, cool and charming once more.

JOHN
Ric, I'm sorry. I was just trying
to return your card, that's all.

Ric seems to accept this, nodding, a touch embarrassed.

RIC
Just gave me a scare that's all.
(then, rallying bravely)
Occupation hazard, I guess.

115 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline falls to her knees, her mouth wide in a silent, anguished wail that immediately brings tears. She covers her mouth, instinctively looking away: it's a horrific scene.

But she has to: she turns back. We push in hard on Diane's cramped legs, her wrists bent at an awkward angle; the stab wounds - each one; the glazed, vacant stare.

116 EXT./INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

JOHN

I'm really sorry, Ric, and I understand. I'm just in the middle of an important, uh, business call - your timing couldn't be worse.

RIC

Oh, of course, I completely understand. You should have just said so.

JOHN

So, uh...we're good?

Ric nods before pointing matter-of-factly to the driveway as John retreats inside.

RIC

We got a call that your gate had been left open. I live just around the corner, so I thought I'd come by myself.

John sighs, shaking his head: relief, disbelief. He holds up his palm: 'thanks' and makes to close the front door.

117 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM INTO PASSAGEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline's horrified, shaking her head from side to side, crying. Bending over, holding her stomach, she rocks to and fro on her knees. She's near hyperventilating. She closes her eyes, opens them again, needs to scream - panics - shoving the rain jacket deep into her mouth to muffle her anguished wail.

Jacqueline runs her hand through her hair, wipes away some tears roughly and makes two fists in front of her again. She makes herself look at them - not Diane - as her breathing starts to slow. She shakes herself roughly: pull yourself together!

She gets up, wipes her eyes, closes the closet door - not looking this time - puts the rain jacket over her arm, and leaves.

John walks straight into her. She makes an apologetic gesture, holding up the jacket - the darkness of the passageway masking her face - and walks quickly past him. John leans to try look inside the bedroom, thinks better of it, and goes after her.

118 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline stands at the sink, her back to us. She grabs a glass, fills it from the tap, drinks most of it.

JOHN (O.C.)
Are you okay?

She doesn't answer, taking her time to finish the water.

John's eyes widen. He looks quickly from the knife block, and back to Jacqueline at the sink. He starts to move towards the counter, the knife block.

Just then, she spins around, clearly upset. She puts the glass down - hard, on the counter - halting his move. She dabs at her eyes, self-conscious of her tears.

JACQUELINE
Shit. L-looks like a hurricane
blew through there.

She manages a half-chuckle. John's nostrils flared, his eyes wide, he eventually seems to ease.

She walks over to him, leans against him, sobbing softly, trying to control it, her voice breaking.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
I just miss her, y'know? I know
she hated me...I know I told you
I was done with her...

She pulls back from him, still clinging to his shirt with her hands, tears running down her face: heartbreaking sorrow.

JACQUELINE (CONT.)
...but I lied, I lied! She was
the great love of my life and
I'll always love her.

John's not quite sure what to do or say, but seems less panicked overall. He leaves her there, goes to open the door that leads to the back - and the paved swimming pool area - and motions for her to come, his voice soothing.

JOHN
Get some fresh air...come on,
it'll help: I promise.

She manages a half-smile, her tears coming under control. She walks towards him, then hesitates, stops. She looks from the knife block, to the trophy. John hesitates at the door in the background. She picks up the trophy. John, seeing this, turns around to open the door.

119 EXT. PAVED SWIMMING POOL AREA - CONTINUOUS

JOHN
 (sighing deeply)
 I never understood why she cared
 so much about that piece of junk.

She follows behind him, sniffing, the jacket still over her arm, the trophy in her hands. His back to her, he looks at the serene, cool, blue water of the pool. We see the Kreepy Krauly pulsing its way - chug, chug, chug - around the bottom. We hear her chuckle between sniffs.

JACQUELINE (O.C.)
 How could you? You never
 understood...sailing...
 (then, vicious)
 ...and you never understood her!

She raises the trophy up as high as she can, the rain jacket falling from her arm - as she lets out an animal, primal scream - thrashing the trophy against the back of his head. He collapses to the ground, one arm splashing into the pool.

She stands there over him, the trophy in her hands, with heaving, wild breaths. She hesitates for a moment, tries to push him with her foot into the pool, but he's heavy.

She bends down, picks up the rain jacket, at turns sobbing and breath heaving, close to hyperventilating. She looks at him again, panicking about what to do, then turns and runs. John, in the foreground, doesn't move.

120 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacqueline comes barreling into the bedroom, out of breath, still sobbing, her breathing laboured, shallow. She rifles through Diane's suitcase, tossing clothes out frantically: it's not there! She looks around, looks back down, tears into the tog bag roughly. Eventually she finds the lanyard with security pass and keys attached, and holds it in her mouth.

She turns around, stops - steeling herself at the closet door - then pulls it open, screaming through gritted teeth holding the lanyard. She bends down, wiping her eyes to try see.

She wraps her hand in the jacket and - with a heart-wrenching, primal wail - she reaches in, but she cannot look. She feels around until she recognises it - removing the white shirt and large chef's knife together - careful not to touch either, wrapping them up in her rain jacket. She goes barreling out.

121 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She bursts into the kitchen, eyes wild: John's body is gone. Her eyes sweep over the kitchen, stopping on the bloodied trophy, toppled on its side on the counter. She grabs it and leaves.

122 INT./EXT. JACQUELINE'S RENTAL CAR/CAPE TOWN HOUSE DRIVEWAY INTO STREET - CONTINUOUS

The dogs are going berserk. She slams the car door shut, starts the engine: first time. Engages reverse, stalls. She tries again, making an indecipherable wail, looking over her shoulder to reverse.

She spins around just in time to see John clambering onto the bonnet - clearly still groggy - his hair and forehead bloody. She screams at him wildly, the lanyard falling from her mouth.

She reverses, but he holds on. Seeing him still on, she panics - braking hard. He loses his grip and slides upwards, towards the windscreen, his bloodied head smearing across it. For a moment they just look at each other through the glass as she freezes, wide-eyed. He starts to move across the bonnet towards her door.

She slams the car into first gear - revving loudly and surging forwards - rear-ending Diane's car and sending John tumbling off the bonnet and onto Diane's boot, hitting his head against the rear windscreen, cracking the glass.

She slams the car into gear, reverses wildly into the street - the gears grating loudly - and stops, then speeds off, tyres screeching.

123 EXT. CAPE TOWN YACHT CLUB QUAY - SAME MORNING

Carrying her tog bag, she swipes the card at the security checkpoint gate and runs onto the quay. She quickly finds the mooring and releases the tie ropes of the yacht.

124 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN INTO PASSAGEWAY INTO BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

John sits at the kitchen counter, dazed, holding a cloth to his bleeding head. He gets up calmly, goes to the sink and carefully washes his hands. Finished, he dries them methodically, leaves, walking slowly down the passageway and into the bedroom.

He matter-of-factly peers inside the open closet, his face expressionless.

(CONTINUED)

We push in on the missing shirt and knife.

His eye twitches - a brief grimace - but that's it.

He stands with his back to us, contemplating Diane's body. Her bloodied corpse still visible, he calmly turns around and carefully unpacks the suitcase on the bed, picking up the clothing from the floor and shoving it all into drawers. He packs the suitcase away in the cupboard and closes the door carefully. He walks out, passing her corpse without so much as a glance.

125 INT./EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

He stops in the doorway, puzzled. A cricket bat lies on the floor to the side of the open front door. He walks through the doorway, looks around. The light grey, hollow rock is set apart from the others. He picks it up with a kitchen cloth and throws it through the window near the door handle.

126 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

He sits quietly on the couch. His nose twitches. He stares vacantly, rubs his nose, picks up the phone, dials.

127 INT. YACHT CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Wood creaking. Scrubbing. Sniffing. Half-sobs. A packet lies open on the ground: the bloodied, white shirt and knife inside. We slowly move up her body to the kitchen sink.

Tears rolling down her cheek, she sniffs and sobs, scrubbing furiously at her jacket. She's not winning. She slides down, her back against the cupboard, the stained jacket on her lap, crying, the cabin creaking with the ocean movement.

A few moments later, she half-stops, noticing something across the cabin, on the same low level. With intermittent sobs, she crawls over, pulls out an expensive, black carry-on bag.

She wipes her eyes, the distraction helping to slow her tears. She wipes at her eyes again, zips the bag open. Her eyes grow wide - shocked, confused - her sobbing briefly halted.

128 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE STREET - THAT NIGHT

Blue, flashing lights and police vans are lined up in the road outside the house.

129 INT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Police are interviewing John at the counter. Stan stands behind him: an emotional, sympathetic expression, shaking his head gently, his hand on John's shoulder, while John mimics being hit over the head, then discovering Diane in the closet.

He starts to cry and the SENIOR OFFICER (40s; hardened) shakes his head in sympathy and waves him away. A JUNIOR OFFICER (20s; diligent) leads John out.

130 EXT. CAPE TOWN HOUSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

A policeman carefully brushes on powder, fingerprinting the door handle, an ambulance is parked in the driveway. John's cellphone message alert sounds, loudly: "Hayibo!" Distracted, he looks over at the black ambulance crew, then realises.

Impassive, he pulls it out his pocket. The display reads - "Jacqueline H: Got murder weapon. Got money. Got you." He turns pale, grimaces, clicks "Delete". As the ambulance crew look on in the background, John looks up into the moonlit sky.

131 EXT. YACHT ON OPEN OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

We hear a yacht stripping through the ocean. From the moon, we move down the massive sail to the deck. As it billows, we can just make out Jacqueline - now and then - from behind, in the background, holding onto the railing and looking out over the ocean. There's something on the chair to the left. Throughout the scene, we don't see her face.

In the foreground on a table, her cellphone lights up, beeping loudly next to the open, black leather, carry-on bag.

We move across the wooden deck with her. Her hand picks up the cellphone - "Message Sent" - and drops it into the carry-on bag: filled to the brim with a lot of cash, and zips it up. From behind, we see her pick up her iPod, put the earphones in, find the right song. "Jack & Diane" starts playing softly.

"Little ditty about Jack and Diane..."

(CONTINUED)

Her back to us, we see she's changed into a clean shirt, her jeans rolled up like Huck Finn. Her bare feet pad to the edge of the yacht. She stops, picks something up off the chair, then sits down, her feet hanging over the edge, something beside her. She picks it up. Louder now, the lyrics of the song are distinct.

"...Diane's sittin on Jackie's lap / He's got his hand between her knees / Jackie say: 'Hey Diane let's run off / Behind a shady tree / Dribble off those Bobby Brooks / Let me do what I please'..."

She looks down at something: the sailing trophy in her lap. We just stare at it with her for a few moments. She sniffs, lifts a hand up, to wipe away a tear probably. Her hand returns to the trophy, and she holds it out beyond her knees.

"...And Jackie say / Oh yeah life goes on / Long after the thrill of livin' is gone / Oh yeah say life goes on / Long after the thrill of livin' is gone, they walk on..."

We slowly back away, until we finally catch the moon at the top, her sitting on the yacht's edge at the bottom.

Splash, as she drops the trophy into the ocean.

Fade out.

TURBULENCE

The *Cast-off* Exegesis

By
Gregory Paitaki

Foreword (and apologia)

Flying by the seat of my pants
→ February, 2011

“Necessity, who is the mother of invention.” – Plato

“Concerning taste, it is not to be argued.” – Latin proverb

I would like to have written – in detail – about the economic, sociological, psychological, cultural and literary influences and inspirations for *Cast-off*. But that would have been dishonest. Had I claimed to be aware of such factors, I would have been taking liberties: using hindsight to account for things that evolved mainly from one of two unpretentious origins: necessity or taste (on occasion, both).

I could, nevertheless, perform an intellectual autopsy: reducing the work to its foundations or components, tracing their evolutionary path from fledgling first steps to flourishing finish. And it would be an honest – albeit clinical – account of the deceased: orderly, sterilized, dissected. But it would also be inescapably devoid of visceral richness and fullness of meaning.

Conversely, I might detail midnight rendezvous with a fickle mistress: at once a temptress, soothsayer and muse; who would shower me with creative cloudbursts one night, only to abandon me in a barren dust bowl the next; one day an exquisite symphony, the next a clanging tin; rising to the heights of touching heaven’s own hand, before descending to the depths of communion with Camus. It, too, would prove an honest – albeit irrational – account: part dream, part nightmare. But it would be adrift, set in an ethereal space, untethered to consciousness as we know it.

In any event, pathologists are inappropriate: here lies no corpse; I am not Michelangelo or Meursault; *Cast-off* neither the Sistine Chapel, nor *The Stranger*. But somewhere between tall tales and truth; between brooding thunderclouds and silver linings; between blacksmith and wordsmith, confusion and clarity, fear and fun; sits just an ordinary chap going tap-tap-tap at the slab on his lap.

Those ancient sayings, in their modern forms, sum up humble origins best – both forced and flighty – because necessity truly is the mother of invention and there really is no accounting for taste. This exegesis of *Cast-off* is named, after all, for what really produced it: the turbulence of the journey itself.

GP
Cape Town,
1 February 2011

1. Start from the beginning

1.1 *Ill-conceived*

→ February, 2009

It's hot and humid in the overcrowded classroom and the stubborn air refuses to budge. Without wind – or even a draft – the summer heat hangs like a blanket over us. Through the haze, the screenwriting lecturer enjoins us to produce an original crime fiction synopsis for a feature length film. How? By scouring the local newspapers – for narrative nuggets, quirky quips and stranger than fiction fables – that can then be mined for screenplay stardom. Once selected, we're to transpose three of these – previously unrelated – news items into one, cohesive storyline that will grip crime-addicted viewers across South Africa and abroad. Simple enough.

I dutifully pour over two weeks' worth of newspapers and cut out about fifteen articles – of varying lengths and content – that seem to have the right credentials. They range from dogs that sniff out cancer, to the sale of meteors, and a rise in trampoline injuries. Evidently I have no idea just what “the right credentials” are. So, in the end, I rely upon that clandestine process that underpins so much of academic and creative endeavour: I pick the three I like best.¹

- ☞ A satiric take on the second *SAA* crew in recent weeks to be caught smuggling drugs in their personal luggage (Hayibo.com, 2009: page unknown).
- ☞ A yachting couple's run-in with a gale-force south-easter, forcing them to take shelter in a Robben Island bay (DuPlessis, 2009: page unknown).
- ☞ And, finally, a rather grim piece about “exit guides” that warrants further explanation. Associated Press (2009: page unknown) refers:
 - ✍ “Joining the Final Exit Network costs \$50 [then (R496)] and the privileges of membership include this: when you're ready to die, the organisation will send you two ‘exit guides’ to show you how to suffocate yourself using helium tanks and a plastic hood.”

Them's some fine nuggets in them thar hills.² The links were self-evident. No? Me neither. So, when I sat down to write the synopsis, I had only the vague idea that a helium-induced death would involve drug smuggling and a yacht. I cannot claim to understand just what occurred during that fateful hour-and-a-half that lazy, Sunday afternoon. But, afterwards, it resembled a feeling of coming to, amidst blood and lots of screaming: I'd given birth to a crime fiction work of art, an immaculate conception.

1.2 *Immaculate rejection*

→ February/March, 2009

If only the lecturer had asked us to write a film synopsis. He hadn't. He'd asked for an hour-long episode of a television crime show: a none too insignificant detail all my classmates seemed to know. Careful not to scrunch the *Oscar* acceptance speech in my left pocket, I sat down with a whimper: it had all seemed so promising. Academic

¹ See Appendix I.

² With a nod to Laurel and Hardy's (1934) short film of the same name.

ignominy followed a few weeks later with the lecturer's jaundiced evaluation: "[T]his is not ideal for an hour episode, although it is a good story." (Not good enough for more than a mediocre grade, mind you.) I wouldn't be troubling the creative minds at *CSI*, *Law & Order* – or the *Academy Awards* – anytime soon.

2. New whine; old wineskins

2.1 *Use what you got*

→ February, 2010

Almost a year to the day later – gasping once more in the February heat – I meet with my supervisor, Dr. Meg Rickards, to discuss my screenplay ideas. Top of that list is my incomplete (read: abandoned) children's story about a boy with the worst luck. Ever. I hold her interest until I mention the talking animals: that draws a wince – and something about ballooning animation budgets in an emaciated South African film scene. So, is it makeable, she asks? Either way, it's far too practical a concern for me to have even considered. Deflated, I wander – noncommittal – through a few other options, most of which I can barely raise enthusiasm for. Stone last on the list is *Dear John*: a drug smuggling love triangle peppered with helium deaths.³ It's absurd.

2.2 *Down low on the QT*

→ February – April, 2010

Besides, this meeting had never officially occurred: my supervisor was still on maternity leave and thus technically *incommunicado* for all intents and purposes (barring the worthiest of exceptions). Our clandestine correspondence continued via unofficial email for the next two months, while I wrestled with (i.e. did my best to resist) the inexorable march of a certain story to the top of the list (mostly because of the feckless or nonexistent progress of its rivals). Every email exchange seemed to inch *Dear John* forward into an unassailable lead. Whether I had accepted it or not, it was by now the de facto winner of *Survivor: Screenplay SA*. The tribe had spoken.

2.3 *Dead on arrival*

→ Mayday! 2010

So it was that, by the time Dr. Rickards was officially back on university dime, my own baby had been gestating for almost three months already (and fifteen in total): it was high time for a delivery. Baby's first steps were memorable, but in that sort of tottering, faltering, cringing, painful sort of way. And – with what turned out to be only the most nascent grasp of *Dear John*'s character – all that came out were jumbled, apologetic, self critical, snatches of scenes; sentences running out of steam, stopping suddenly – colliding – like minibus taxis.

In short: it was the worst pitch ever. It resembled a newsreader whose teleprompter had malfunctioned and was having to pad, and stretch out every sentence – live on air. My baby was premature at best, stillborn at worst. Time of death: 12 o'clock; Wednesday, 5 May 2010; room A114, UCT. However, being well versed in the art of

³ See Appendix II.

childrearing (and still in good nick from recent maternity leave), Dr. Rickards was able to administer CPR and attach *Dear John* to life-saving ICU support, involving large doses of reassurance and encouragement. As well as intravenous Hitchcock.

3. Hitch to the rescue

3.1 *Condition: critical, unstable*

→ May, 2010

Part and parcel of this regimen of reassurance and encouragement entailed praising *Dear John* for her Hitchcockian qualities. (Yes, dear John is male but the gender of the story itself is female; just go with it.) Dr. Rickards thus prescribed a serious diet of Hitchcock films as part of her palliative approach to treating my condition. Her first prescription required that I consume a few seminal films and call her in the morning (in a week's time). Now, Hitch – to my unending great shame – was still a largely unknown commodity to me. The little I knew of him was based on certain pop-cultural references about *Psycho*: Norman Bates and his mother⁴ and the infamous shower scene.⁵ I knew of the moniker “Master of Suspense” and had sat on the carpet as a kid – glued to the screen, petrified – watching *Rear Window* with my parents. But that's where both my education – and cinematic enlightenment – had ended.

So, that same day – still smarting from my dead in the water delivery – I hunted down a copy of *Vertigo*, rented it and watched it: utterly spellbound. (A month later I would watch *Spellbound* – fortunately, without any reciprocal vertigo.) My diary of that fateful Wednesday reflects that, after watching *Vertigo* for two hours, I watched it again – with the commentary on (another two hours). And then again – with the commentary off (another two hours). All in all, six hours: I didn't want to miss a thing. Gobsnacked, the only other note I recorded was about the extended sequence where Scottie tails Madeleine for the first time: “He believed in the visuals! I timed it: from 16 min – 26 min, i.e. for TEN MINUTES, there is NO DIALOG.” I was hooked.

After *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, my diary reflected the heady nature of the experience: “I do really enjoy the style of HITCHCOCK films. I will be happy to write something that is similarly a simple, suspenseful, human tale.” I was pleasantly surprised to be enjoying these “old” films, their style resonating with me. People who know me well struggle to recommend films to me, yet Dr. Rickards had spotted a subterranean affinity in me that I didn't even know existed. I felt fortunate: Hitch had moved me. Things were looking up; the treatment was working.

⁴ Giving away both my age and – quite possibly – incurably poor taste in music, this refers to a track by one-hit wonders *Goddess*, on “The Sexual Album” (1992). The song is titled – with their characteristic sledgehammer subtlety – *Sexual*: “(...) Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine / Marc Anthony and Cleopatra / Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio / Lady Marian and Robin Hood / Tarzan and Jane / **Norman Bates and his mother** / They all have one thing in common / At some point in time she turned to him / And spoke those unforgettable words / Sexual, let's get sexual / Let's get sexual / It's only natural (...)”

⁵ Billy Joel's 1989 “Storm Front” album included the #1 hit: *We Didn't Start the Fire*, chronicling historical events from the 1940's to the end of the eighties. The 1960 section of the track referenced one of Hitch's greatest masterpieces, complete with trademark screeching violins briefly audible in the background: “(...) U-2, Syngman Rhee, payola and Kennedy / Chubby Checker, **Psycho**, Belgians in the Congo / We didn't start the fire / It was always burning / Since the world's been turning (...)”

3.2 *Synchronicity, serendipity or fate?*

→ May/June honeymoon, 2010

The third Hitch in as many days was *Rope*. Two, young, high society men: Brandon, a psychopath, and Phillip – both patsy and pawn in Brandon’s scheme – decide to strangle a friend with a rope, just to see if they can get away with it without their school professor, Rupert, putting the pieces together. The symmetry of the characters with those in *Dear John* was a curious coincidence. The film’s tension revolved around three people with varying degrees of control, deception and comprehension. Screenwriter, Arthur Laurents, had Brandon, Phillip and Rupert; I had John (sociopath), Diane (patsy/pawn) and Jacqueline (who uncovers everything). By month-end I had feasted on a dozen Hitchcock films and was feeling as creatively engorged as the suspense master was portly.

4. Let’s cut to the chase...

4.1 *Enough with the jokes*

→ Foreword (and apologia) revisited

My adventure of actually writing *Cast-off* is not something I can easily describe. I experienced enormous difficulty writing this exegesis and it left me feeling angry and blocked. It was the kind of struggle I tried to preface – somewhat euphemistically – with my foreword (and apologia). I’ll state it more plainly here: I find the expectation of a creative explication – or, to use an earlier phrasing, the autopsy approach to a creative journey – both invasive and violating. And I resented having to fulfil it as part of the degree requirements.

My creative process doesn’t give me literary signposts or film influences: I simply write what comes – an outpouring from my unconscious. I don’t know why what comes, comes. I can offer only an incomplete and simplified account of what is a complex, often mysterious and inexplicable process that I make no claim to understand. But even if I did understand it, any description would be mere snippets and windows: it would neither be possible nor appropriate to provide a full account given the constraints of both length and personal privacy.

I believe the rather nebulous rationale for the exegesis requirement itself demands – at the very least – further development and clarification of expectation. I am yet to be convinced why an exegesis is deemed necessary to begin with. Better yet, the university ought to have the courage of its convictions and recognise that a screenplay stands alone and doesn’t need supporting documentation just because it’s a creative endeavour in an academic environment.

Because, if a university just cannot abide dropping its coat-tails in creative pools for fear of catching something unseemly and improper (read: deemed insufficiently intellectually rigorous), then it shouldn’t claim to offer screenwriting as an academic course – or a screenplay as the subject for a master’s thesis – to begin with. It’s as if a university must remain the exclusive domain of academia and that creative pursuits somehow cheapen, dilute or tarnish that purity.

You can't have your cake and eat it. If the university wants people graduating in screenwriting then acknowledge that product: a screenplay – alone – as the thesis. And take off the training wheels that are an insult to the enormous amount of time, effort and rigorous dedication that a feature length screenplay demands. (He climbs off the soapbox, coughs, and brushes dust from his boots.)

4.2 *Let's just all take a deep breath, shall we? Rome won't fall today*

→ Start from the beginning, again

So, to start over a little less combatively: I cannot tell you why John is a sociopath any more than I can tell you why Jacqueline is gay and Diane can't decide. I don't think about the relevance of homosexuality when I'm writing. Though, in hindsight, the presence of homosexual and bisexual love does make the traditional love triangle far more intricate and compelling.

John got his name from my original story and title *Dear John* – a play on both the break-up letter and the charm of the sociopath. But that's about it. I don't even know why Jacqueline and Diane got the names they did. I don't actually know a Jacqueline. Or a Diane, for that matter. I didn't know anything about John Cougar Mellencamp or his music. And I had picked Jac(queline) and Diane's names long before I came across the song.

If pushed for some analysis, I might say that I think it's interesting that these women, when in a same-sex relationship, might have battled to find "their song" and so were forced into ultimately co-opting a heterosexual one. I think it might comment on the limiting relationship options of our socio-sexual menu. But that strikes me as someone else's reading, or – at least – my reading of someone else's work. I could readily analyse someone else's work for meaning but to do so on my own work strikes me as contrived, solipsistic navel-gazing and the height of ridiculous reflexivity.⁶ Especially when even I – as the author – can only offer such notions in speculative hindsight.

And while there is a theme of communication running through the story, it's also just the reality of the modern world. Why *Facebook*? You could argue it's topical, or that it's just the modern reality. Personally? I'm not even on *Facebook*, nor is Meg. I had to get extended, patient tutorials from my girlfriend, Nicole, in order to even write those scenes.

4.3 *Necessity and taste*

→ A simple recipe

What's in a name after all then? Meg pointed out that both *Dear John* (the original story) and *The Pilot Plan* (the working title for the first three drafts) were too on the nose and gave the game away because they pointed to the member of the trio ultimately pulling the strings. Stephen – a writer friend in Scotland with whom I had discussed the story – SMSed me to tell me a title that had been nagging him: *Cast off*. He felt it applied to the various unwanted relationships and characters being jettisoned, as well as foreshadowing the final yacht escape.

⁶ Like writing your own foreword and afterword.

I just wanted to tell a compelling, gripping story that would entertain me: I wouldn't survive writing something I found boring. And while I thoroughly enjoyed Hitchcock, I don't particularly seek out thrillers at the cinema. I like to cry, laugh or think – preferably all three. Remember: this story was originally born out of the necessity of a crime fiction class and the exercise of creating a crime narrative from newspaper reports: *that's* the reason I wrote a crime thriller.

Once necessity is afloat, there's a moment to enjoy the view or to choose where to look. But even then, one is quickly hemmed in by further narrative necessities born out of preceding choices. Until, eventually, there are actually very few choices of preference/taste left that would not alter – in a knock-on/consistency effect – other, interconnected aspects of the final product. For me, it was an ongoing cycle of necessity and taste until there's nowhere left to turn without reinventing the wheel or plagiarising yourself.

My original taste was for a story about three relationships: a wife and her girlfriend, that wife and her husband, and – finally – between that husband and the girlfriend. I wanted there to be segues within – and transitions between – these three relationships, at different stages in the story, with any given relationship dominating the other two for a time.

4.4 *Diamonds, drugs, trust and love*

→ Everything's a commodity

It was a story about relationships, about deception, manipulation and love. And I wanted these characters to deceive and manipulate one another, just as the audience would be deceived and manipulated as they tried to figure out who really was dominant and pulling the strings. The diamonds, then, were really just a commodity for this deception and manipulation to swirl around, an axis for interaction within this web of relationships.

While I did some research on diamond fields in Zimbabwe and on smuggling techniques for both drugs and diamonds, it was never going to be a story about smuggling. Smuggling itself was completely incidental. The only danger – as I saw it – was that, if the smuggling didn't seem believable, the audience would not buy into the tension or other elements of the story, like the relationship transitions. The reality, however, is that it's not difficult to smuggle things like diamonds. In fact, you could make the case that the most dangerous part is for those extracting them from the host African country; air freighting it – whether personally or by “mule” – is a bit of a doddle for the criminally minded.

I started out with drugs being the merchandise of choice (as in the *SAA* newspaper example – albeit satirical, based on actual events). Then I shifted it to drugs and diamonds and then – following lengthy discussions with Meg and other co-conspirators – finally to just diamonds. I stuck my heels in for quite a while on keeping it to drugs. I don't know if it was a creative reason or just stubbornness. The consensus seemed to be that two commodities (one for Diane and Jacqueline, and another for Jacqueline and John) would be just too confusing.

The penalties are far less severe for diamond smuggling, they require fewer underworld connections and they're practically just far simpler to smuggle. I think the argument may have been that this was the most believable option. As for me, my taste always tended towards the simplest path anyway: I never wanted the smuggling to overshadow the deception and manipulation. *Cast-off* is a story about relationships, not a heist film.

5. Screenwriting 101

5.1 *Back to basics*

→ Getting the fundamentals right

From early on in the process, Meg flagged the issue of the protagonist. In my inexperience and ambition, I had composed a story in which there would be no one protagonist, but rather three different ones whose perspective we would follow at different times. While she said she had occasionally seen this pulled off – in films by accomplished writers and directors – she warned me that it was a significant hurdle to overcome while writing my first feature film. Even in 120 minutes, it could be difficult to tell one character's story effectively – that is, without too shallow a representation – let alone three characters' stories. I resisted; she persisted. It took quite a while for me to even admit to myself that shallow representations would bother an audience, that they would feel emotionally cheated.

My screenwriting coursework at master's level (and watching a lot of films) was really my only preparation for my thesis. And I grossly underestimated the structural difficulties and creative demands of writing a feature length project. When I tried to explain my frustration and overwhelming insecurity to my friends, I would say: You can love art, you can study it, read up about it; you can have intense discussions with artists about their work; and you can pour over hundreds of works at the finest art galleries around the world – but none of that means you can put paint to canvas and produce anything half-decent yourself.

So I backed down on my shifting protagonists model. I realised – despite watching an enormous amount of film and reflecting on it at length, both with friends and alone – that this, in itself, could never ensure I would write a good film. I had watched films as an audience member – not as a screenwriter. And I had composed a story as a screenwriter, not as an audience member. But I needed to write a film now as an audience member. And audiences need someone to follow and to identify with: someone with whom they can go on the journey with, as Meg put it.

5.2 *Panic mechanic*

→ Stalling isn't only bad for planes

When I wrote my first, very rough step outline, I included statements like “the wife becomes distant from the girlfriend” or “the husband and girlfriend get closer.” They were my envisaged segues and transitions, those shifting relationship tides I discussed before. They were both crucial to the story and essential components of my vision: absolute non-negotiables. Saying “they grow closer” is fine, but it doesn't get you anywhere near what that actually looks like. Ideally, you want those segues to be so

seamless, that you're not even aware as an audience that they're happening: you just feel yourself shifting.

I was blocked for weeks about how to accomplish this. It felt like that high school kid who dreams of scoring the winning try in the rugby derby but who never pitches for practice. I had plenty of desire – even a vision – but that alone doesn't give you anything on the page. I so badly wanted these shifting allegiances but was terrified that I didn't possess the skills and wherewithal to accomplish it. I spoke to Meg, I spoke to friends, to my father – to almost anyone who would listen. And brainstorming's great, but it doesn't put anything on the page, either. In the end, this quote really does capture it best: "Writing is the fine art of applying the seat of your pants to a chair."⁷

Meg advised me to ring-net a few hours: a sacred space with the cellphone switched off. And Stephen (he of the title brainbox) said to write without reflecting for five days. On the sixth day: edit. On the seventh: rest. (And you'll feel like a god. Alas, no.) These proved to be important guidelines for me. But, in the end, what really helped was giving myself permission to ignore everything anyone else had ever suggested, to ignore every competing wish and inspiration that was ripping me apart and just write. Free writing saved me.

5.3 *Master of the universe*

→ Free writing comes at a price

When I was a little chappie, my favourite toys for many years came from a television series called *Masters of the Universe*. I could play for hours with friends enacting various scenes of conflict and strategy between our various teams of action figures. You created, or co-created with your friend, an entire world in which these battles took place, even though they were actually just in the lounge with competing fortresses constructed out of chairs with the cushions raised (for a roof to your lair).

But being master of the universe for your screenplay can be, at turns, both creatively empowering and awfully claustrophobic. Claustrophobic because every little voice and idea screams to you at once: after all, you are the master of the universe, so why choose this and not that? If you just need the husband and girlfriend to get closer, why should it happen this way and not another? Many competing ideas seem to have little noticeable difference anyway, especially when they could all do the job adequately. So it becomes the tyranny of choice, or – more aptly – the paralysis of choice.

Sometimes, though – and especially when free writing – you just pick the one that comes. And then your story builds around that one, like ivy creeping up a wall – irrespective of its merits. When someone asks why you picked that one or points out that it's not a good choice after all – that there are better solutions – you're in a bind. Every subsequent element in the story now builds on that choice and even though it wasn't one that was particularly important to you, it got the job done and you just needed something to get the job done.

⁷ I've seen and heard it in various forms, attributed to Mark Twain and several other authors. But I've been unable to authoritatively decipher its true origins from these conflicting sources. For the purposes of this exegesis – suffice as to say – it's not mine.

Outsiders – and by that I mean, anyone other than me – would come up with these crazy suggestions for the screenplay, these pearls of free association. But all I would be able to see is everything it would alter in the script. And the worst part is that, often, you didn't particularly like the original solution anyway but now it's a massive undertaking to write in a replacement idea and re-arrange all the interlinked, toppled dominoes. Being master of the universe comes at a cost.

6. Panel beating 101

6.1 *But it's my world!*

→ Problems of the first order

Having a tendency to describe everything I “saw” led to me being too pushy, using too novelistic a style and overwriting the script. I would write down where the characters were standing in the room, what their expressions were, what they did while they were speaking or thinking – even what they were thinking about or reacting to internally. Parenthetical comments, particularly, were singled out for being excessive.

This overflowed into choices that Meg argued would be made by actor and director – not screenwriter – where my specific details would be interpreted as being those of far too controlling and bossy a writer. What's more, I battled with trusting both my own writing and the audience's reading of it. I dubbed this my sledgehammer/subtlety complex. And when I overbalanced, it made for confusion from too gentle a touch or writing three scenes where just one would do.

I had to be regularly reminded that screenwriting is about telegraphic language and not novelistic descriptions of a character's feelings or conflicts, but rather about what happens and – above all – what we see. By my second draft, Meg had reduced this admonition to four letters: HDWK? She wrote it so many times in my feedback that I walked into a meeting with her with the four letters and accompanying question mark printed boldly on a piece of paper, stuck to my forehead. Their meaning: **How Do We Know?** (I guess that was my way of telling Meg that I knew: enough already!)

What I felt were delicate, nuanced descriptions of complex thoughts and inner turmoil were lambasted with: “HDWK?” or “What do we SEE?” or “Show us, don't tell us!” Meg tried to remind me that she was pleased with my drafts, that they required little feedback, which was uncommon for initial drafts. But, despite her generous reassurances and encouragement, I nevertheless experienced these meetings as onslaughts on my richly textured universe, my ornate calligraphy reduced to the coarse, functional lettering expected of a screenplay.

6.2 *Would that actually happen – no, I mean, really?*

→ Problems of the second order

The second camp of panel beating issues tended to concern action or dialogue that was not realistic or believable; problems of logic; and the use of *deus ex machina* as a narrative device, or – put differently – insufficient agency on the part of the characters

themselves. Believability “debates” were really just Meg peppering me with questions: “Would someone do that? Do you do that? Does someone you know do that?” and me carefully studying my shoes, or the floor.

I had scenes where both Jacqueline and John spoke to themselves, muttering away: they were funny, they were endearing – and they were at times when it was important to keep building audience identification with their characters. But they had to go. Meg called this a question of “killing your darlings” and was ruthless when it wasn’t believable or didn’t measurably move the narrative forward. She was always right: an incredibly annoying character trait but great for tightening one’s story.

As for the others in this camp – logic and *deus ex machina* – this was feedback that particularly frustrated me. Meg, like a headmistress combing through terrified children’s hair – searching for offending knits or lice with a ruler– would *always* find something. And I loathed her for it. For two reasons: one, because she would almost always be proved right; and, two, because they were almost always incredibly difficult for me to find alternative solutions for. It’s not really possible to relay these struggles without recourse to actually being present during one.

6.2.1 [A worked example]

Let’s say I take the example of the three of them fighting in the kitchen – the signature scene. In order for that to happen, a series of events must have occurred in all the characters lives to build up to that tension.

Jacqueline needs to be at the house (despite no longer being on speaking terms with Diane). Plus, Diane needs to have survived something very serious.

If Diane doesn’t survive it, she won’t be in the scene. And if it’s not serious, there won’t be something significant for Jacqueline to comfort her over and for Diane to be grateful to her for – in so doing papering over the cracks in their relationship.

So we get Diane to be “hijacked” and have Jacqueline interrupt it and save her. But why was Jacqueline there just then? And why was Diane attacked just then?

Well, it’s because I need that to happen in order to keep advancing the story, the tension and the various character arcs on towards the kitchen scene. But that alone is insufficient. Meg’s dictum, again: All central actions must, preferably, be caused by the characters concerned – with their own agency – as opposed to convenient appeals to chance. Moreover, the characters themselves must have good reasons to justify their own behaviour – and screenwriter’s necessity isn’t one of them. Ergo, injudicious appeals to *deus ex machina*.

So, in order for Jacqueline to be there to interrupt it, she must be waiting outside the house – but without her being there for the purpose of interrupting an attack that she couldn’t have known about. Her presence must be deliberate, as opposed to incidental.

For Diane to be hijacked at that moment, someone must have arranged it – for it, too, cannot just happen by chance. If Jacqueline interrupts it, it must be John who organises it. For John to arrange it, he must be seriously aggrieved about something. So, what is his reason?

And so on and so forth: an explication of the creative journey – necessity, with a dash of personal taste/preference.

Afterword

Maybe I am just a grease monkey after all...

→ ...a lesser university graduate for my creative ambitions

Ask me to account for the world of thinking that informs my creative process (that's academic speak for exegesis), and I feel unprepared or – at least – unremarkable. I think I had a white-collar supervisor, far more proficient than I in the craft of storytelling and writing for the screen. I think I was a blue-collar worker, leaving my boss's office – lunch pail in tow, grubby hands and grime beneath my nails – together with a laundry list of problems to correct in the machinery of the story. I would go back and toil on the mechanisms, trying to get all the components to gel and work in unison, always cognizant and wary of the flaws my boss would find that I couldn't – or wouldn't – see.

If you ask me: Maybe I am more grease monkey than artisan, more panel beater than craftsman, more blacksmith than wordsmith. But compare this to more traditional academic pursuits and I'll tell you: I don't think for a second my dissertation was any less difficult, demanding or honourable, or that I am any less worthy a Master of Arts graduate because of it. But that's just me; word's still out on the university.

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Appendix I: Prime Matter

28/2/09 Weekend Argus

'Exit guides' charged in assisted suicide case

JOINING the Final Exit Network costs \$50 (R496), and the privileges of membership include this: when you're ready to die, the organisation will send two "exit guides" to show you how to suffocate yourself using helium tanks and a plastic hood.

The Georgia-based organisation says it is providing an invaluable and humane service. Authorities call it a crime.

Four members of the Final Exit Network, including its president and its medical director, were arrested this week and charged with assisted suicide in the death of 58-year-old John Celmer last June at his home near Atlanta. Investigators said the organisation may have been involved in as many as 200 other deaths around the country.

"The law is very clear, and they clearly violated it," said Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokesman John Bankhead.

The arrests came after an eight-month investigation in which an undercover agent posing as someone bent on suicide infiltrated the Final Exit Network. It was started in 2004 and claims 3 000 members, donors and volunteers nationwide, and has long operated in the open. It has its own website, and its leaders have held news conferences and appeared at paid speaking engagements.

The group's members bristle at the term assisted suicide, saying they don't actively aid suicides, but support and guide those who decide to end their lives.

"We're just there to help," said Jerry Dincin, the group's vice-president, who was not arrested. "People insist upon it. They want to do what they want to do. They're suffering, and if they have intolerable pain, then they want to sometimes get out of that intolerable pain."

Celmer did not appear to be seriously ill. While his mother said he had suffered for years from throat and mouth cancer, court documents quoted his doctor as saying he had made a "remarkable recovery" and was cancer-free at the time of his suicide. Authorities said he may have been embarrassed about his appearance after jaw surgery.

Also, his doctor told investigators that Celmer was in pain because of arthritis, but that it could have been lessened if he had taken his medication properly and stopped drinking and smoking.

Georgia authorities arrested the group's president, Thomas Goodwin, and member Claire Blehr. According to investigators, Goodwin and Blehr were with Celmer when he died, each holding a hand, and the two cleaned up the scene afterward by removing the hood and the helium tanks. - AP

The finance ministry says the country can avoid a deep recession by embracing South African Airways' new business model of exporting illicit narcotics directly to major transit hubs. A spokesman said it was high time taxpayers got a return on their involuntary investment in the international drugs trade.

Two SAA crews have been arrested for trying to smuggle narcotics into the UK, and this morning Finance Ministry spokesman Shekel Sepeng said, "We don't have exact numbers but it seems to be pretty clear that everyone's doing it."

"That's a lot of crews, and an awesome quantity of drugs. We're talking tons. Entire Boeing 747s stuffed to bursting with A-grade s**t."

He said it was time South Africans benefited from the drug trade.

"Clearly SAA is a major cartel in the international narcotics business but, even though the SA taxpayer has been bailing them out for years, none of that sweet sugar has trickled down to the man on the street."

He said the Finance Ministry was confident SAA's trafficking system could be successfully expanded as it already seemed to have an efficient business model in place.

"As far as we can tell they take your suitcase, throw it over the wall to baggage handlers who rip it open and auction your clothes to the highest bidder, and then they replace your suitcase with a massive brick of skunk."

However, he said SAA would need to boost its intellectual capital if it was to lift South Africa out of an impending recession. "The problem is that we also seem to be dealing with startlingly stupid people."

"Any air crew can get bust trying to smuggle coke and marijuana into Heathrow. But for another crew to get caught just a few weeks later, when they know Heathrow officials are looking out for dodgy SAA crews, well that's just borderline retarded."

An SAA spokesman confirmed they were meeting to discuss a way forward. "It's just a standard get-together in a warehouse. As far as I know they're actioning a strategy to grow SAA's market share on UK routes. Something about leaving horses' heads in the beds of BA executives."

Yacht rescued in relentless weather

STAFF WRITER

THE NATIONAL Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) lent a helping hand to a stricken yacht yesterday, after high winds forced the sailing vessel to shelter at Robben Island.

The 10.05m yacht Relentless found the often gale-force southeaster that swept the Cape yesterday a bit too relentless and took shelter in Maori Bay, Robben Island.

The vessel took a pounding from the wind while returning to Cape Town from Dassen Island, said Pat van Eysser, station commander of the NSRI's Table Bay station.

There were two Cape Town couples aboard the yacht. Van Eysser said their rescue craft Spirit of Vlacom was launched to assist the yacht. It was towed to Table Bay Harbour.

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Best of HAYIBO.COM
Weekend Argus
21/2/09

CAPE ARGUS
23/2/09

Appendix II: *Ill-conceived*

Dear John

A husband and wife. **John** is an airline pilot. Without his knowledge, his wife, **Diane**, has been smuggling cocaine in his luggage. Diane uses a connection in London, **Jacqueline**, who operates through Heathrow airport. Jacqueline uses her feminine charm, and innocent meetings in hotel restaurants, to remove the items from a secret compartment in John's luggage without him ever knowing. He vaguely remembered her as his wife's university roommate when a "chance" encounter in Heathrow led to coffee. And then more frequent meetings, until eventually, nowadays, she meets him for his every arrival at Heathrow.

* * *

Jacqueline was indeed Diane's university flatmate. They had met at the yacht club while studying at Cambridge. A romance blossomed but ended when, after the briefest of courtships with a nondescript male classmate (John), Diane proposed, and they married. Jilted, Jacqueline nonetheless kept in contact. Years later, Diane begins contacting her former lover with increasing frequency. Late-night phone calls from the privacy of the study in the couple's now South African home, reveal a wife supposedly very unsatisfied in both her marriage and financial standing. On the other end of the phone, an exhausted and distracted Jacqueline nurses an unhealthy old woman, while clinging to her hope of rekindled romance with Diane. Until, one night, Diane proposes a plan that could make them both extremely wealthy. Driven by her longing to reconnect with her first love, Jacqueline reluctantly acquiesces. Moreover, while Jacqueline's sickly mother is no longer around, her exorbitant medical bills are.

On a clandestine visit to South Africa, with John away on a flight to Brazil, Jacqueline argues with Diane. She longs to be with her love once more. But, increasingly, it is becoming apparent that Diane has no intention of starting up the romance anew. At university, Diane used her then lover in an elaborate cheating scheme that had Jacqueline sleeping with administrative staff to forge their exam results and copy exam papers for them both. Jacqueline feels these old resentments resurfacing. Now, as then, Diane has succeeded in insulating herself from culpability, getting others to do her dirty work. The only difference is this time she also has her innocent husband doing her illicit bidding, but without his even knowing, and with Diane again protected from any risk.

Jacqueline, slighted again, and for the final time now, vows revenge. John has grown increasingly enamoured but has never been unfaithful to his wife. He is far too sweet, devoted and naïve, and this despite her evident alienation of affection. Even Jacqueline's heart has softened towards him despite her best efforts not to get involved. She begins to wonder how she can possibly take revenge without implicating dear John. A man so grateful to her for all the company and comfort she has provided on his lonely trips abroad, that he is as

loyal to her as anyone. She suggests to him that he encourage Diane to use his next trip away to take one herself. Jacqueline offers that it might help the marital tension and lift Diane's spirits. John suggests this to his wife.

While John is away on yet another extended stopover in South America, Jacqueline plans an exotic yacht trip, just her and Diane. Her claimed intent is to apologise for her moody behaviour during their last fight and to renew her commitment to their business arrangement. Diane, no one's fool and somewhat wary, leaves a note for her husband saying that she is taking a trip on his advice, that she does love him and is sorry she has been so distant. On the trip, Jacqueline drugs Diane just enough to overpower her and place a plastic hood over her head, suffocating her with helium. It was in this manner that she helped her ailing mother euthanize herself. While Diane slowly suffocates, Jacqueline curses Diane's callous disregard for her struggle and care for her ailing mother and the abuses and bitter disappointment of their failed romance. She dumps the body.

The "Dear John" letter is still on the table when Jacqueline returns to remove all trace of her ever having been in the couple's home. John is due back later that evening. She is hurried and frantic, but she spots Diane's letter to John. Using her carefully preserved collection of Diane's university love letters as a guide - that she always keeps with her - she types a note as Diane, saying she is leaving John, confessing to the smuggling, and that she can no longer live with herself, the truth or her husband. The signature is indistinguishable from Diane's, one useful application of years of unrequited devotion.

Weeks pass. Jacqueline has been comforting John, having moved to South Africa, "transferred" by her company. Meanwhile, she has continued to seek out new connections that might function as the recipient for her smuggling in Heathrow. Visiting John regularly, things have become sufficiently comfortable that she is now house-sitting his home while he is away. On another of his long stopovers in South America, Jacqueline is alone when a **female technician** comes round to check up on the house's security equipment. John had never mentioned it. Jacqueline panics when she sees the technician going to the study, the same room where she typed Diane's "suicide note", and where Diane made her long-distance phone calls to Jacqueline.

Meanwhile John is meeting with some men in a South American setting, followed by handshakes and then seemingly innocuous customs wave-throughs with his personal luggage. Back in South Africa, over wine-soaked flirtations, Jacqueline manages to charm the butch technician into revealing some tricks of the trade and even into deleting material recorded online from the night of the letter forging. Over a second bottle of wine, Jacqueline passes out temporarily. She comes to briefly as she is being gassed with helium, but the plastic sack around her head muffles her weak screams as the technician remarks to her that it is a neat technique: her mother was very fortunate.

The SAA baggage handler, recognisable as the “security technician”, winks at a *British Airways* captain, coy and awkward, as he strolls past with his crew, nudging and teasing his reluctance to respond. The captain is John. She initials, and then clears for shipment, a large wooden coffin marked: Do not open unless authorised by customs. In a Heathrow airport restaurant, a different woman is comforting the stoic widower. When she eases his luggage aside to make space to better comfort him, he instinctively grabs at the bag, pulling it closer. She is taken aback. He hesitates, overcome with self-consciousness and affected shyness, then offers that the bag had always meant a lot to his wife.