

THE PERFECT COUPLE

By

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February 12, 2009

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INT. RIALTO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Dinner party consisting of close friends and relatives gathered around several tables. We focus in on JACK, a handsome journalist, somewhat shy and reserved, dressed in regular business attire. He begins to stand, holding his drink to EDWARD and CLARISE.

JACK

A Toast! To my best friends Edward and Clarise.

(pauses)

I have known Edward and Clarise since college where they were often referred to as the perfect couple.

(reflective smile)

It seems like a lifetime ago.

Jack pauses for a moment as he looks at Edward, an attractive lawyer with his father's firm who has gained most things in life through family wealth, feels quite deserving of all good things. Edward takes all things for granted and seems very much into himself.

JACK (cont'd)

Edward, you were always the one the other guys wanted to be like. You had it all, man. Football, grades and of course, choice of the girls.

Jack pauses as he looks fondly at Clarise, a beautiful young woman, meek in nature. Unconcerned with appearances, she usually wears small framed glasses instead of contacts, carelessly fixes her hair in a braid and dresses in business attire. She is the complete opposite of Edward.

JACK (cont'd)

Clarise, you were always the one all the other guys wanted, period.

Laughter from dinner guests.

JACK (cont'd)

Unlike Edward, you were always more reserved, focusing on your studies and helping others in just about every crusade to hit campus. You have a beautiful heart Clarise. You are also one of my dearest friends.

Jack now looks out at all the dinner guests.

JACK (cont'd)

Here we are several years later and they have finally decided to tie the knot.

Jack lifts his glass higher as he looks at Edward and Clarise.

JACK (con't)

Here's to Edward and Clarise, the perfect couple. May life always be good to you as you find true happiness.

Applause from dinner guests.

Jack sits back down at the table next to Edward and leans close to him.

JACK

(joking)

You definitely don't deserve her man.
She's too good for you.

EDWARD

Of course I deserve her, Jack. You
know the MVP always walks away with the
best girl, my friend.

Jack stands, leans over the corner of the table and kisses Clarise on the cheek.

JACK

I'll be back in a couple minutes.

EDWARD

(jokingly)

Don't get lost now. You promised to
give us a ride home tonight.

Jack exits the room.

Edward, looking completely bored, rises from his seat to visit family and friends at the other tables.

Clarise is left alone at one end of the table, looking as though she would rather be anywhere else.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NEXT MORNING

Clarise heads from the kitchen doorway through the dining area leading to her balcony. She carries a breakfast tray with coffee and toast, wearing an oversized bathrobe.

We see Edward in the background racing all over the apartment getting ready for work.

EDWARD

Clarise, have you seen my Brioni tie?

CLARISE

It should be in your closet with the other dry cleaning I picked up yesterday.

Clarise exits the apartment through the French doors leading to her balcony.

EXT. CLARISE'S BALCONY - MORNING

Clarise sets the tray on the patio table and begins pouring a cup of coffee. She sits in a chair and hooks her heels on the edge. Clarise holds her coffee cup on her knees and stares off into the city.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Clarise, I didn't see my tie. Can you help? I am really running late and I can't miss this meeting.

CLARISE

(mutters to herself)

Did you even try looking for your tie?

As Clarise rises from her chair we see a neighboring balcony to the right of hers.

Jack is sitting at a table on his balcony drinking coffee, working on his laptop.

JACK

(with a smirk)

Careful, he might hear you.

CLARISE

(grinning, she turns to Jack)

Oh shut-up Jack!

Clarise leaves the balcony, enters apartment (O.S.) to find Edward's tie.

Jack now leans back in his chair, stares at Clarise's balcony and drinks his coffee. Living next to Clarise and Edward for years, he has become quite familiar with their morning routine.

Clarise now returns to the balcony and resumes her place. She looks up at Jack who smiles mischievously.

CLARISE

(smiling)

It's not funny, Jack. He just doesn't know how to do anything for himself.

(quietly, to herself)

I can't imagine someone actually hiring him for legal matters.

JACK

(laughing now)

Clarise, he's making you spoil the shit out of him. If you don't put your foot down now, it's only going to get worse.

CLARISE

You're just now noticing this Jack? He's always been this way. I think he gets it from his mother. His whole family thinks the world revolves around them.

JACK

Why do you put...

Edward storms onto the balcony, half frenzied. He grabs a piece of toast and stuffs half of it into his mouth. Edward pours a cup of coffee and begins to gulp it down.

EDWARD

(looking at his watch)

I'm late, shit. I don't know what time I will be home tonight, maybe late.

Edward looks across the balcony to Jack. Raises his hand to wave.

EDWARD (cont'd)

Hi neighbor, Bye neighbor.

Edward exits the balcony. We hear footsteps (O.S.) through the the apartment, car keys rustling and finally the apartment door opening then closing.

Clarise looks across to Jack with a look of disbelief on her face.

CLARISE

Just like his mother!

JACK

(trying to be funny)

No “good morning honey, I love you, gotta go” or anything.

CLARISE

(smugly)

What a guy.

JACK

(mischievously)

Hey, he said hi to me anyway.

CLARISE

He always did like you better.

JACK

Stand up to him Clarise. Just remind him that you’re not like his family.

CLARISE

Sure Jack. Life would be great if it was that easy, but it's not.

JACK

Clarise, you never stand up to anyone. You let everyone walk all over you. You do whatever they ask.

CLARISE

That's just because I'm nice.

JACK

No, it has nothing to do with just being nice. Sometimes you just have to say N-O. You let Edward walk all over you. You let his mother walk all over you. You can't live the rest of your life like that. Before you know it, you'll be old and miserable.

CLARISE

(sarcastically)

Thanks, Jack. I really didn't need to hear that.

JACK

(getting serious)

Then do something about it! You are my best friend, Clarise. I've watched you mope around here for weeks. No one should be that depressed two months before they get married. You should be happy.

CLARISE

(gazing off into the city,
looking rather sad)

Everyone says I'll be happy in a
couple of months, once I'm married.

JACK

Clarise, how on earth do they know
if you will be happy in a couple of
months? Do they know what you go
through day in, day out?

CLARISE

(being flippant)

OK smart guy, since you seem so
concerned, what do you suggest?

JACK

Maybe it's time you took a break from
life to re-evaluate what's important
to you.

Clarise begins clearing the table. It's apparent that she is not
happy.

CLARISE

How is it we started talking about
my happiness anyway? This began
with Edward's inability to pick out
his own clothes in the morning.
Your best friend, remember?

JACK

Which brings us right back around to what I said earlier. You don't have to put up with it Clarise. Change him now or you will forever regret it.

CLARISE

Jack, it's too late. I can't change him now. He's always been like this. He comes and goes as he pleases. His parents think he's the greatest thing on earth. Sometimes I wonder if they only want me around so they can have their perfect little grandchildren.

JACK

Do you hear what you're saying? You're accepting his bad habits before you even marry the guy. You should be bringing any and all problems to Edward's attention now, before you get married.

CLARISE

I don't have a choice Jack. It's just the way he is. His family would kill me if I tried to change a thing.

(sarcastically)

His mother is planning the perfect little wedding.

JACK

Clarise, it's not too late. Just
tell him to change or else.

Clarise rises from the table to leave, still flippant.

CLARISE

Or else what Jack?

JACK

(grinning)

Tell him if he doesn't wise up,
you'll give him the boot and start
looking for someone else.

CLARISE

Funny, Jack. Very funny.

Clarise exits balcony (O.S.), leaving Jack alone.

INT. CITY PUB - MIDDAY

Edward is sitting at a table in the corner with a lunch plate and
a beer.

Jack walks in and heads straight for Edward's table.

EDWARD

Hey Jack my boy, didn't think you
were going to make it.

JACK

Sorry I'm late. I had to stop by
the office.

EDWARD

I cannot comprehend how someone can
sit most of the day banging out text
on a keyboard to make a living.

JACK

It's called writing my friend.

EDWARD

I've got to mix with people.
You know, at the office, on the
streets, in the bar.

Edward grabs a passing WAITRESS with his two hands and pulls
her on to his lap. He and the waitress share a laugh.

EDWARD

(speaking very close to the
waitress' face)

Can I have another beer, darling?

(he looks at Jack)

How about you Jack?

JACK

Yeah, thanks.

Waitress leaves to get the order.

Edward watches her leave grinning from ear to ear.

JACK

(pointing to the waitress)

You really ought to think about
kicking the habit.

EDWARD

(grinning, still gazing at
the waitress)

Never.

JACK

What about Clarise?

EDWARD

(still grinning)

What she doesn't know, won't hurt
her Jack.

JACK

You love her don't you?

Edward leans towards Jack, now a little annoyed by Jack's
questioning.

EDWARD

(more serious)

Yeah? What's that got to do with
anything? Hey, I like women Jack,
what's wrong with that?

JACK

(almost dumbfounded)

I like women too Edward but you're
the one getting married.

EDWARD

Look, it doesn't affect my relationship
with Clarise.

(pausing to finish his first beer)

And speaking of women, when are you
finally going to settle down?

JACK

(half joking)

I'm still waiting for that special
someone. Besides, my job keeps me
busy enough right now.

Waitress approaches the table and delivers Jack and Edward's
order.

INT. JACK'S PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jack and his DAD are sitting at the kitchen table, playing chess.
Jack's MOM is at the sink, washing the dinner dishes.

Judging by the kitchen, it's apparent that Jack came from a typical
middle class family.

JACK

Pop, are you happy with your life?

Jack's Dad looks at him strangely, then looks at the chess board to determine his next move.

JACK (cont'd)

What I mean is, you and Mom have been married 30 years. You've worked all these years, you had a couple of kids, are you happy with life?

DAD

I guess I can't complain Jack. It's just life. Hasn't been bad so far. Our health is good, our kids are doing OK. Why would you ask something like that Jack?

JACK

I dunno.

(pauses)

I see other people, other couples...

(pauses again)

I just often wonder that's all. Do you think Mom's happy?

DAD

(shrugs his shoulders)

I suppose. She never complains anyway.

(laughs a little)

DAD (con't)

Except when your sister married
that mechanic from Jersey.

(moves his chess piece)

But now, your mother has her
grand-kids, she's happy again.

JACK

Did you and Mom hash out any
differences you had before you
got married?

DAD

(reflective)

I don't know that we really had
any differences. Certainly not
any major ones that I recall.

JACK

I see a lot of unhappy people out
in the world - friends, co-workers,
people that probably shouldn't be
married. Instead of trying to iron
things out, they just go through life
in a haze thinking that's all life is
going to offer them I guess.

DAD

(joking)

What, you wanna be a shrink now?
Journalism getting a little boring?

JACK

I just don't understand why people don't speak up when things aren't right. Or worse, they walk into a relationship with known problems.

(moves a chess piece)

Two of my best friends are about to be married. I can't think of a marriage more doomed to fail.

Jack's mom approaches the table with coffee cups and sits down.

JACK (cont'd)

(looks at Mom)

Thanks Ma.

Jack continues his conversation with his Dad.

JACK (cont'd)

They don't belong together. They have serious problems now and they haven't even made it down the aisle.

MOM

Who are we talking about here?

JACK

Edward and Clarise.

DAD

Your old room mate?

JACK

Yeah.

MOM

Oh, They're so cute together. They look like the perfect couple.

JACK

Everyone says they're the perfect couple. I think even Edward and Clarise are fooled into believing it. I live next door to these two remember? They're not the perfect couple. He treats her like a doormat and chases other women. She never speaks up, she doesn't complain. I don't think He's ever done anything just to make her happy.

MOM

There are always little ways to make each other happy. I think that's why your father and I haven't killed each other after all these years.

JACK

Are you really happy Mom?

MOM

(she thinks for a moment)

We were never the Rockefellers' or anything, but your father always made sure we had little extra things. Do you know your father used to always buy me roses every week?

(reflective smile)

He never forgot. He knew I loved roses.

Jack and his Dad focus more on their game.

MOM (Con't)

If there was ever a time when he couldn't buy roses, he would go and find wildflowers instead.

DAD

When people get married, they should love and respect each other. If you love someone, you should do nice things for them.

(briefly pauses)

Your supposed to be the Best Man at their wedding. Why don't you tell Edward how you feel?

JACK

I am the Best Man, Pop. But that doesn't give me the right to alter someone's life. Who's to say I know what's right anyway?

MOM

So you sit back and let two friends of yours make a big mistake? I think I agree with your father, Jack. If it were me, I would have to say something. Why live next to two miserable people?

JACK

Actually, it's only Clarise that's probably miserable. Edward always gets what he wants out of life. It's Clarise that's about to make a big mistake.

Jack rises from the table and pushes in his chair, preparing to head out the door.

JACK

I gotta go. Thanks for dinner Ma, it was great.

(kisses Mom on the cheek)

Next week Pop, maybe we'll get a whole game in.

DAD

OK son, we'll see you later.

MOM

Drive carefully Jack.

Jack exits through the back door to the driveway (O.S).

EXT. JACK'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Jack sits at his table working on his laptop. He looks across to Clarise's empty balcony. He tries to focus on his work but is drawn back to the empty balcony and the muffled sounds of conversation coming from Clarise's apartment.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward's parents, sister and aunt are seated around the dinner table with Edward.

Clarise is serving dessert and coffee.

Edward and his dad FRANK are talking about the law firm while Edward's mother, sister and aunt discuss details of the wedding.

LAURA, Edward's sister is reviewing a copy of a bridal magazine.

SYLVIA, Edward's mother is reviewing a caterer's menu with SIMONE, Edward's aunt.

As Clarise serves coffee she stands over each guest, lingering long enough to realize that her entire wedding and reception is being taken over by Edward's family. What happened to tradition?

Clarise feels regret creeping in as she contemplates her future in-laws. Clarise looks briefly at her French doors leading to the balcony as if to think about the conversation she had earlier in the day with Jack.

SIMONE

Clarise darling, you know Jacques has the very best Venison au Poivre, I don't see how you could consider anything else.

CLARISE

(trying to sound firm)

I would really prefer the Long Island Duck or even Chicken Cordon Bleu. Many people don't care for Venison.

Clarise's mind is already made up. She cannot allow others to plan her reception dinner.

SIMONE

There is an unwritten rule when Jacques caters a wedding and he's very tough to get. I'm certain he would insist on the Venison. It is his signature dish you know.

SYLVIA

(speaking to Simone)

Edward simply loves Jacques' Venison. We must have that. Perhaps we can ask Jacques to prepare a few Salmon or Chicken plates for those that don't want Venison.

LAURA

(hands Sylvia a magazine)

Mom, look at these centerpieces.
These would look fabulous at the
head table. Actually, they would
look great on all the tables.

Clarise rolling her eyes, knows she won't have much of a say in
how her reception is put together.

Clarise begins clearing various things off the table then retreats
to the kitchen (O.S.) as her future in-laws continue their
conversation.

Edward and Frank are still engrossed in their discussion about the
the firm, completely ignoring Simone, Sylvia and Laura.

INT. CLARISE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clarise begins cleaning the kitchen, listening to the ladies plan out
her reception in the next room. Clarise feels tension and frustration
building as she realizes that she's not really happy. Jack was right.
People in Clarise's circle are making all the decisions for her.

The dinner conversation now includes Edward and Frank. The
entire group becomes a little louder, clearer to Clarise, almost
overwhelming.

Clarise now stands with a dumbfounded smile in the doorway
between the kitchen and the dining room where the guests are
seated.

No one notices Clarise standing in the doorway. They continue planning details as if she didn't even exist.

Clarise has had about all she can stand for an evening.

CLARISE

(trying to interrupt)

Excuse me.

(louder)

Excuse me, but when do I get to decide what I want at my reception?

(pauses)

I greatly appreciate your efforts and welcome your suggestions, but this is my wedding, my reception.

SYLVIA

(somewhat aghast)

I believe the wedding is for you and Edward, dear.

CLARISE

(backing down)

Your right Sylvia, I'm sorry.

(a little braver)

But the fact still remains that Edward and I seem to have no say in the planning.

Clarise motions with her hands to Edward as if to say "back me up".

CLARISE

Edward?

EDWARD

(surprised at her outburst)

You know me Hon, whatever makes you happy.

CLARISE

(sarcastically)

Well thank you Edward. It's nice to know you'll be there when I need you.

SYLVIA

Clarise dear, you're just getting a little anxious. We just want what's best for you. You will have a lovely wedding. You shall be the envy of all your friends and colleagues.

SIMONE

You are putting in so much time at the office, you will only stress yourself out looking over all the details anyway. Just leave everything to us. We promise it will be perfect.

LAURA

I thought you were leaving Reed Publishing once you got...

CLARISE

(upset, cuts Laura off)

I'm not leaving Reed. Where did you ever hear that?

FRANK

Clarise, you won't need to be gainfully employed anymore. You can now become a lady of leisure.

SIMONE

Clarise, you can join us at the club, you will love it. I am sure you will meet some wonderful new friends there.

Laura begins to scoff. Anyone knows that the club is not a place the younger women can really appreciate.

LAURA

Yeah, you can sit around in the lounge all day nursing margaritas, watching your life pass you by or sit in the spa and wait for the really good looking masseur.

SYLVIA

(scowling)

That's enough Laura.

(looks at Clarise)

The ladies of the club also get involved in local charitable events. It's not a place we go to watch our lives pass us by.

CLARISE

(addressing entire group)

I love my job. I have no desire to leave. The Reed's are wonderful to work for. They treat me very well. They...

SYLVIA

What about children? You cannot expect to maintain the schedule you now have and raise children.

SIMONE

(jokingly)

Raise Children? She probably doesn't leave enough time in the day to conceive children.

CLARISE

Please, lets not talk about my career or the children that Edward and I may or may not have. This is obviously a discussion Edward and I missed.

(now looks at Edward)

Or maybe I'm the only one that missed it.

Clarise begins to realize these people aren't just planning her wedding, they are indeed planning her life.

Edward grabs Clarise's hand, and holds tightly. He tries to act as though he's quite concerned and attentive to her feelings.

EDWARD

Well Clarise, of course we're going to have kids. It's just a fact of life and I really don't think you need to work for the Reed's anymore. Maybe you could start by cutting back some of your hours and....

Clarise looks like she is about to blow a fuse. She forcefully withdraws her hand from Edward's grip. She begins backing away towards the French doors leading to her balcony.

CLARISE

(speaking quietly to herself)

What is happening to my life?
Everything seems so out of control.

Mixed conversation heard in the background as Clarise continues to back away.

Edward is trying to get Clarise's attention.

Sylvia and Simone try to get Edward's attention, assuring him that Clarise is simply stressed.

Laura decides with all the confusion, this is probably as good a chance as any to ask her dad Frank for a new car.

SYLVIA

Clarise, let me make an appointment for you to see Dr. Hardy. I'm sure he can give you something to help alleviate the anxiety you must be feeling.

SIMONE

Oh, he can fix you right up dear. You'll feel better than ever in no time.

Clarise, still moving slowly backwards, closer to the French doors, trying to reason everything out.

Edward's family thinks Clarise is having a nervous breakdown.

CLARISE

(quietly to herself)

I cannot believe these people.
How did my life get like this?

Sylvia begins digging through her planner to find Dr. Hardy's home number.

Edward's family begins to get louder as they talk about what Clarise needs. Clarise's name is heard repeatedly in their conversation. They try to call her back over to the table.

Clarise is about to snap, she spins and walks the remaining couple of feet to the French doors.

Clarise begins to open the doors to exit the room, feeling frustrated and overwhelmed.

CLARISE

(loudly, desperate for peace
and quiet)

Will everyone please just leave me alone!

EXT. CLARISE'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Clarise closes the doors behind her. The city outside is shockingly quiet. Clarise stands on her balcony and stares out at the city lights.

Downstairs from Clarise is MRS. MAGALDY. A “Must know everyone’s business” type neighbor. Mrs. Magaldy seemingly has voiced a few complaints in her time.

MRS. MAGALDY (O.S.)

Clarise! What on earth has gotten
in to you?

CLARISE

(almost rehearsed)

Sorry Mrs. Magaldy. I didn’t mean
to disturb you.

Mrs. Magaldy is heard (O.S.) leaving her balcony and returning to her apartment.

MRS. MAGALDY (O.S.)

(her voice trailing off)

Why couldn't I have gotten quiet
neighbors like Mildred?

CLARISE

(growls in frustration)

Why me?

Frustrated, Clarise begins rubbing her forehead with the palms of her hands to ease the tension. She turns and sits down on the cool cement of the balcony, drawing her knees up under her chin. She stares out at the city.

As Clarise sits on the cement, you hear a quiet laugh coming from Jack's balcony. Jack has been outside the whole time, trying to get some work done.

Clarise looks over at Jack, sees him looking at his laptop, but laughing quietly.

CLARISE

(distressed)

This isn't funny Jack.

Clarise grabs a nearby pillow from a chair and whips it over the balcony at Jack.

Jack ducks, the pillow flies over his balcony to the street below.

JACK

(peers over the balcony towards
the street)

Nice shot. Sylvia might be a little
upset. She just bought those for you.

CLARISE

Oh Jack, what am I going to do?
Everything is so out of control.

JACK

Maybe you're just beginning to realize
what you're getting yourself into.

CLARISE

I've known Edward and his family
for years. Why would I feel like
this all of the sudden? Why now?

JACK

Because the entire time you've been
with Edward, you have only seen his
family at social affairs. Now they are
about to become your family. Are you
sure you're ready for that kind of invasion?

CLARISE

(a little hysterical)

It's not like I can stop them. They're
planning out every aspect of the
wedding and reception. They could
care less what I want.

JACK

Did you put your foot down?

CLARISE

Sure did.

JACK

And?

CLARISE

Now they think I need a shrink, thanks very much! Sylvia is trying to make an appointment for me to see the family shrink. They're certain a few drugs will make everything OK.

(sarcastically)

I shouldn't need to worry about the details of my wedding when I have a whole tribe of people willing to do it for me.

Clarise removes her glasses and tosses them on the table.

JACK

Clarise...

CLARISE

(upset, cuts Jack off)

Maybe they're right. I could just be stressing out. I could be getting cold feet. Maybe I should just pop a few pills like they do and everything will be all right. Maybe...

JACK

(cuts Clarise off)

Maybe they're wrong and maybe you're
the one who's right.

Clarise doesn't even seem to hear Jack, she appears to be in
a world all her own.

CLARISE

Have you ever felt like your life
is just...

(pauses, changes thought)

Sometimes I feel like I'm on this
big merry-go-round. It just spins
around and around...

Clarise gets up from the cement and moves to the right side of
her balcony. She sits in her usual chair, drawing her knees up to
her chest.

JACK

Clarise, listen...

CLARISE

(not listening to Jack)

Except now, it's like it's spinning
out of control. It won't stop spinning.
You start to feel really sick. You just
want to get off but you can't.

Clarise props her elbows up on her knees, covers her face with
her hands and begins to rub her pounding forehead.

CLARISE (con't)

Eventually, you just feel like you're going to puke.

(pauses a moment)

Have you ever felt like that Jack?

Jack finds this rather funny, he's wondering if maybe Clarise hasn't just fallen off her rocker after all.

JACK

(odd smirk on his face)

No.

CLARISE

You're my best friend in the whole world Jack, tell me what to do.

Jack moves to the left side of his balcony, getting closer to Clarise.

JACK

(very concerned)

I can't tell you what to do Clarise, it's your life.

Clarise stares out at the city lights, while Jack studies her face for a moment.

JACK

Will you give me a straight answer if I ask a personal question?

CLARISE

(half smiling)

Maybe.

JACK

Why are you getting married?

Do you even love Edward?

CLARISE

(teasing)

Which question did you want the
straight answer on?

JACK

(not quite understanding her)

What?

CLARISE

You wanted a straight answer to a
personal question.

JACK

(still not understanding)

Yeah?

CLARISE

Well, you just asked two questions.
Which one do you want the straight
answer on?

JACK

(now smiling)

Funny, smart-ass.

CLARISE

I don't know and I'm not sure anymore.

JACK

(momentarily forgot his questions)

Excuse me?

CLARISE

I guess I really don't know why I'm getting married. It just seemed like the next step to take. Everyone thinks that we're so perfect together, I guess I never really gave it enough thought.

JACK

(mocking)

That's a wonderful reason to marry someone.

(pauses, continues to mock)

Everyone says we should just get married, so lets get married, what a great idea.

CLARISE

Pretty stupid, huh?

JACK

(quite serious)

It's not stupid Clarise. You just got caught up in something I'm sure thousands of other people get caught up in. I don't think enough people really think this marriage thing through too well.

Jack pauses a moment, then moves even closer to Clarise. His face is right next to hers.

JACK

(quietly)

You didn't answer my other question.

CLARISE

Yes I did.

JACK

(looking rather puzzled)

When?

CLARISE

Right after you called me a smart-ass.

Jack now tries to remember what Clarise said, somehow the answer got lost in the conversation.

Clarise assumes that he must not have heard her. She turns her head towards Jack, resting her head on her knees, arms wrapped around her legs. Her face is now just a few inches from Jack's face. She stares blankly at Jack's balcony.

CLARISE

(quietly)

I said I'm not sure anymore.

Jack studies her face again. He brushes back stray hairs which cover the side of her face.

JACK

Then you probably need to end this thing before it's too late, Clarise. You're talking about spending the rest of your life with someone you're not even sure you love. You're getting married and you have no idea why.

CLARISE

It's already too late Jack.

Jack puts his hand on her arm.

JACK

It's not too late.

Clarise breaks into a mischievous grin and looks directly at Jack.

CLARISE

(joking)

OK smart-ass, you go tell them, I'll wait right here.

Jack smiles.

French doors to Clarise's balcony open suddenly and Edward comes bombing outside.

EDWARD

(rude as usual)

Clarise, what's gotten into you?
Everyone's worried you're going off
the deep end here. Come back inside
before you catch pneumonia.

Edward grabs one of Clarise's arms and tries to raise her to her feet. He looks at Jack.

EDWARD (cont)

Hey Jack, come on over, say Hi to
the family.

JACK

(looks at his watch)

Actually, I was about to call it a
night, man.

EDWARD

No, no come on.

(motions his arm to say,
"Come one over")

Come on. Just for a couple of
minutes anyway.

CLARISE

(looks at Jack with a smirk
on her face)

Yeah, Jack. Come on over and
say Hi to the family.

JACK

(returning the same smirk
to Clarise)

All right, all right, just for a few though.

Jack packs up his laptop and heads into his apartment.

Edward and Clarise prepare to head inside their apartment.

EDWARD

(looking at the patio chairs)

We're missing a pillow Clarise, have
you seen the other chair pillow? My
mother just bought those for us.

CLARISE

(unconcerned)

Um, no. I don't know where it is at the
moment.

Edward and Clarise enter their apartment.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Simone, Sylvia and Laura are still at the dining room table looking
through magazines and menus. Small talk can be overheard as the
ladies discuss more wedding and reception plans.

Edward and Clarise walk past the table to the adjoining living room area. Edward sits on the sofa in front of the TV.

There's a knock at the front door. Knowing that it's Jack, Clarise moves to the front door and opens it just enough to get her head through.

CLARISE

(smiling, speaking quietly
to Jack)

Are you sure you want to come in?
You never know what these people are
capable of.

Clarise opens the door all the way to let Jack in, who is now smiling as well.

CLARISE

Edward, Jack is here.

EDWARD

(taps the sofa)

Jack, buddy. Come on over and have
a seat. Do you want something to
drink? You know everyone already.

Jack, Frank, Simone, Sylvia and Laura exchange hellos, good to see you again small talk.

Jack makes his way to the sofa and sits next to Edward.

Simone, Sylvia and Laura continue their small talk.

Clarise moves through the dining area and heads for the kitchen.

LAURA

Where are your glasses Clarise? You look so different without them.

SYLVIA

You're always laying them down somewhere. I'm surprised you don't lose several pairs a year.

CLARISE

(uninterested in conversing)

They just bother me sometimes.

Clarise's cat ROMEO enters the living room area, which is clearly visible from the dining area. Romeo is a very large, long-haired cat who bull-dozes his large head into the things or people he likes. Romeo heads straight for Jack and slowly pushes his head against Jack's knee.

Edward leans over to shoo the cat. Edward doesn't like Romeo.

EDWARD

Hey cat, pssst. Get out of here. Go find a mouse or something.

JACK

He's OK, really. I don't mind.

EDWARD

(loudly)

Clarise, will you come put this oversized rat of yours in another room?

JACK

(correcting Edward)

Please.

EDWARD

What?

JACK

You really should try to say please more, Edward.

EDWARD

(still trying to shoo the cat away)

Why?

JACK

(referring to the cat)

Really, he's fine, he's not bothering me.

EDWARD

Well, he's bothering me. The mangy mutt always takes the best spot on the bed. I have to wrestle him off the bed damn near every night.

Clarise slowly makes her way from the kitchen.

SYLVIA

Really Clarise, you don't expect to keep that monster once you have children do you?

SIMONE

I once heard that a cat had climbed into a crib and suffocated a baby.

(pauses)

They're too evil looking if you ask me.

EDWARD

No, he's not staying for much longer.

Clarise enters the living room area and scoops Romeo up off the floor and holds him in her arms.

CLARISE

(addressing everyone)

This is ridiculous. House cats don't kill babies.

SYLVIA

I hardly think yours is a normal house cat dear, he's rather more like a moose.

Various people laugh quietly at Sylvia's joke.

Jack and Clarise's eyes make contact for a moment. Jack has a big smirk on his face, somewhat amused by the conversation.

CLARISE

Romeo is a great cat. He's not going anywhere.

(quietly, looks into Romeo's eyes)

You're such a good boy, aren't you.

Feeling more composed, Clarise sits on the love seat near the sofa. She holds Romeo, who now begins to rub his head back and forth on Clarise's forehead.

Romeo stops his nuzzling then licks Clarise on the forehead as if to kiss her.

CLARISE

OWW Romeo, stop that. That hurts.

Clarise eases the cat to the floor and rubs her forehead.

Jack seems to be the only one who notices.

SYLVIA

Clarise darling, I called Dr. Hardy's house. He wasn't home but his wife said that she is sure he can see you tomorrow morning.

CLARISE

Sylvia...

Clarise pauses. She tries to carefully control her words.

CLARISE (con't)

Honestly, I'm fine.

(looks at everyone in the room)

I'm really fine.

EDWARD

(stares sternly at Clarise)

It's probably just pre-wedding jitters
mom. Give her a couple months, she'll
settle right down.

Clarise glances at Jack, she rolls her eyes then gets up off the love seat, scooping Romeo off the floor and begins heading for the bedroom.

Edward, Jack and Frank stare at the TV.

SIMONE (O.S.)

Don't worry Clarise. You'll be just
fine in no time at all. Before you
know it, you and Edward will have
a couple of kids, you won't have
to work, you'll be in the burbs
somewhere.

Clarise continues walking towards the bedroom, ignoring everyone.

LAURA

(joking, she laughs)

Yeah, a couple of kids and before you
know it, your hips will be the size of Texas.

SYLVIA

That's enough Laura.

Edward and Jack look at each other after Laura's statement then look at Clarise as she walks into one of the bedrooms. Edward and Jack turn back to each other again and make a strange face as if they both envisioned Clarise with huge hips.

FRANK

Jack, how are things at the Globe?

JACK

They're great Frank. Joe's still running the show.

FRANK

He's a good man. I wish Joe devoted more time these days to golf though. I think his sailing buddies have convinced him the water is better than any green.

EDWARD

(points to the TV)

Jack, check out this replay.

JACK

No, I can't, I really have to go.

(taps his watch)

Early AM meeting tomorrow.

Jack hits Edward on the shoulder like "see ya later", then rises from the sofa.

EDWARD

All right buddy, I'll see you
tomorrow then.

Jack moves to shake hands with Frank.

JACK

Frank, always a pleasure.

FRANK

Jack, good to see you again and
give my regards to Joe.

Jack begins to leave, passing the dining table where Simone, Sylvia
and Laura are conversing.

JACK

Ladies....

SIMONE

Oh, don't tell me you're leaving so
soon. You just got here.

JACK

I know, I'm sorry. I've got an
early morning meeting. I promised
Edward and Clarise I would stop in
for just a minute.

They exchange goodbyes.

JACK

(waves goodbye)

Edward, Frank...

Edward and Frank wave as Jack opens the door to exit the apartment. Jack looks back at the bedroom where Clarise has retreated. The bedroom door is shut. Jack exits the apartment and shuts the door behind him.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Clarise is in the kitchen. She wears her old favorite bathrobe as she scurries around the kitchen fixing a breakfast tray, setting up coffee and toast. Romeo follows her steps wherever she goes.

Edward walks in the kitchen.

EDWARD

Clarise, have you seen my gray
pin striped jacket?

Clarise rolls her eyes after Edward's question, like some things never change. She begins to head for the French doors.

CLARISE

(monotone, don't care attitude)

Try on the back of the bedroom door.
I think it just came back from the
cleaners. I didn't have time to put
anything away yet.

Edward heads for the bedroom.

Clarise steps out onto the balcony. She appears far less frazzled than the night before.

EXT. CLARISE'S BALCONY - MORNING

As Clarise walks onto her balcony, she notices a single white rose on her patio table. A quirky smile passes over her face. She looks over at Jack's balcony and sees him working hard on his laptop.

JACK

(being facetious)

Good Morning. Sleep well?

CLARISE

I slept great thanks. Probably one of the better sleeps I've had in a long time.

JACK

(still facetious)

Thanks by the way for leaving me alone with your future in-laws.

CLARISE

Sorry Jack. I didn't plan it that way. I just couldn't handle them anymore. I was about to blow a fuse.

She picks up the rose to examine it. It is a perfect rose. Clarise looks at Jack.

CLARISE

What's the occasion?

JACK

(cynical)

What makes you think I left it there? Maybe Edward left it for you.

CLARISE

(laughs)

Not a chance.

JACK

I just thought you might need something to help cheer you up. You had a pretty rough night from what I saw.

CLARISE

Well, this does cheer me up. It's beautiful. Thanks Jack.

JACK

(now more serious)

He doesn't do anything nice for you, does he.

CLARISE

Not if he can help it.

JACK

So, what are you going to do?

CLARISE

About what Jack?

JACK

About life. Remember our little conversation last night?

Clarise pours a cup of coffee, sits in her chair and draws her knees to her chest. She stares off into the city, looking as though she has slipped into her own little world again.

CLARISE

I think I'm going to take a cruise Jack.

JACK

(grinning strangely)

What's that got to do with your life?

CLARISE

I don't know, maybe a lot. I hope to do a lot of thinking, a little soul searching while I'm gone.

JACK

The cruise your boss takes everyone on?

CLARISE

Yep. Margaret and Matthew have been after me for the past couple of years to go and I keep turning them down. I'm going to do it this time though. I just called my office so they could get me on at the last minute.

JACK

When do you leave?

CLARISE

(grinning)

The day after tomorrow.

JACK

What about Edward?

CLARISE

(smiles, looks at Jack)

I wasn't going to invite him.

Edward storms onto the patio, cussing at the cat that is forever laying in doorways. He lays his keys on the patio table then pours some coffee.

EDWARD

Clarise, did you remember to make reservations at Casa Romero for Saturday night?

(waves to Jack)

Morning Jack.

CLARISE

(doesn't even look at Edward)

Reservations were made, everything's all set.

EDWARD

Will you be able to get my suit fixed in time?

CLARISE

I won't have time, I've got...

EDWARD

(rudely interrupts)

Clarise, I need that suit. This is one of the most important dinners of the year. This is one good reason why you need to think about cutting your hours back at the office. You never have enough time for anything anymore.

CLARISE

(irritated)

Edward, I cannot cut back my hours, the Reeds need me. I can't just up and say "Hey my fiancée can't seem to find another suit for his dinner party, is it OK, if I let the Macy project fall behind schedule?"

EDWARD

Clarise, this is no time for sarcasm.

CLARISE

Edward, I'm leaving in two days with the Reeds.

EDWARD

(taken way back)

What do you mean leaving?

You can't leave Clarise. I thought we dismiss these trips each year.

It's a company cruise, a total waste of time. I can't just walk out on my clients for a cruise you know.

CLARISE

You don't have to Edward. I'm going solo on this one.

EDWARD

(overreacts)

I'm not about to let you on a ship with a bunch of perverted people who drink from morning till night...

(pauses)

Where on earth is this coming from Clarise? What would possess that brain of yours to think of such a thing?

(more pompous)

You don't do well on your own Clarise, remember?

Edward looks at Jack, who's trying hard not to look too interested in the conversation.

EDWARD (con't)

Tell her Jack. She can't just get on a ship and take off to who knows where.

CLARISE

Leave Jack out of this. It's got nothing to do with him.

EDWARD

(still pompous)

You're being ridiculous Clarise.

CLARISE

(standing her ground)

Edward, I need this trip. I need time to think.

EDWARD

(getting hysterical)

Think? What is there to think about Clarise?

CLARISE

(more determined)

Your family Edward. Your family, the wedding, the reception, our lives, MY LIFE.

EDWARD

(very cocky)

Your life? What's that supposed to mean? What's wrong with your life Clarise?

(pauses briefly)

And what's wrong with my family?

CLARISE

(quietly)

Well, I can see this is really going well.

Clarise picks up Edward's key ring from the table and proceeds to remove one of the keys under the table, out of Edward's immediate view. She then puts the keys back on the table rather loudly so Edward will notice. He does.

Edward looks completely blown away. He thinks she has lost her mind. He picks up his keys to examine them.

EDWARD

Look, you're just under a little stress, we all are. There is no need to go running off to God knows where, just so you can think Clarise.

CLARISE

Edward, there are just too many things that aren't in our favor at the moment.

EDWARD

(ignoring her)

Do you realize how much time and effort my family has put into this wedding?

CLARISE

(so much for being nice)

On second thought Edward, I've already done all the thinking I care to do about your family and about us.

EDWARD

(looking strangely at his keys)

Why is my apartment key missing, Clarise?

CLARISE

(standing strong)

It's my apartment Edward, remember? My apartment, my key.

EDWARD

(realizing where this is going)

Clarise?

CLARISE

Edward, I can't marry you.

Jack can barely contain his grin in the background.

EDWARD

Clarise, don't do this. Let's go see Dr. Hardy. He can help you with this. You're just getting anxious. He...

CLARISE

(abruptly cutting in)

I don't love you Edward.

Clarise tries to remain focused, determined she's going to end this now and not let Edward talk her out of it, he talks her out of everything.

EDWARD

Clarise..

CLARISE

Edward, please. I've thought a lot about this already. We don't love each other.

EDWARD

Clarise, of course I love you. We're the perfect couple, remember?

CLARISE

(determined to finish)

No, I don't think you do love me.
You never back me up on any issues
which are important to me. I don't
want you or your family running my
life, telling me to quit my job, get
rid of my cat. I love my job Edward.
I love my cat.

(losing steam)

You never care about what I want.

EDWARD

Clarise, please don't...

CLARISE

Edward, please. I can't marry you.
I don't want to marry you.

EDWARD

Clarise...

CLARISE

I'll make sure to pack your things.
I'll send them wherever you need
them.

EDWARD

(getting cocky again)

What about my parents? What am I
supposed to say to them? They had
everything planned.

CLARISE

(cutting Edward off)

You know, you're exactly right. They did have everything planned. The problem is Edward, I don't want what they have painstakingly planned.

Clarise pauses a moment, she's running out of courage. Remorse begins setting in, but she refuses to back down.

CLARISE (con't)

Tell them I'm sorry, but I just can't do it Edward. I'm sorry.

Clarise retreats into the apartment (O.S.), leaving a bewildered Edward standing on the balcony.

EDWARD

(turning to Jack)

Did you know anything about this?

JACK

(happily shocked)

Sorry man, she just surprised the hell out of me.

EDWARD

Well now what the hell am I supposed to do?

Edward now leaves the balcony to enter the apartment (O.S.).

Jack smiles ever so brilliantly, completely ecstatic by what he has just witnessed. He begins to work again on his laptop.

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

Jack is seated at the bar nursing a beer.

Music is playing loud, various couples are dancing.

Edward is in the background trying to make out with some WOMAN. He's all over her. Life goes on.

Music stops, Edward returns to the bar, without his newly found female friend and sits next to Jack.

EDWARD

So?

JACK

So, what?

EDWARD

(completely wasted)

How long do you think I should give her?

JACK

(looking back at WOMAN)

The blonde?

EDWARD

No man, Clarise. How long should I give her to settle down? She's supposed to be my wife. I can't just let her dump me, so close to the big day, right?

JACK

She sounded pretty serious friend.

EDWARD

(slurring his words).

Naw, it's just cold feet.

JACK

I dunno man, she sounded pretty sure. Hey where are you going to stay now?

Edward drops his head on Jack's shoulder, very drunk.

EDWARD

Well, with you of course, friend.

JACK

Oh no you don't. You can't stay with me. Having Clarise pissed at you is one thing. But I'm not going to piss her off more by having you stay at my place.

EDWARD

Aw come on, you're not going to throw me out on the street are you?

JACK

Why don't you just call one of the hundred or so lady friends you have listed in your little planner. I'm sure one of them will say yes. Until then, your parents have what, like 6 extra bedrooms?

Jack moves Edward's head off his shoulder. He tries to prop him up leaning the opposite way.

Edward leans too far over the other side. His head now rests on the bar.

Jack pulls a business card from Edward's pocket and writes an address on the back. He give's the card to the BARKEEP with money for a cab.

JACK

This is his parent's house. Can you make sure he's put in a cab.

BARKEEP

Sure, no problem, man.

Jack pays the bar tab and leaves the bar.

EXT. JACK'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Jack is working on his laptop. His attention is focused more on Clarise's balcony, and more importantly, Clarise. Should he go over? Should he wait? He knows she's home. He can hear the muffled sound of music coming from her apartment.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clarise is flying through her apartment, grabbing Edward's things along the way, packing. She is happy.

A small collection of boxes sits by her door, waiting for instructions on where to send Edward's things.

We see Clarise for the first time in jeans, faded out sweatshirt, hair barely hanging onto her braid, glasses back on. She pours herself a glass of wine and heads for her balcony.

EXT. CLARISE'S BALCONY - NIGHT

Clarise walks onto her balcony. Music now pours out onto the balcony since she opened the doors. She sees Jack. They smile at each other. Clarise sits in a chair close to Jack's balcony.

Mrs. Magaldy is heard shuffling around on her own balcony below.

MRS. MAGALDY

Clarise, is that you dear? Where is that loud music coming from?

CLARISE

Sorry Mrs. Magaldy, my bad.

Clarise removes her glasses and tosses them on the table.

MRS. MAGALDY

If you put on some Sinatra or something it might not be so bad, but...

CLARISE

(getting up from her chair)

I'll turn it down Mrs. Magaldy.

Clarise enters her apartment (O.S.) to turn her stereo down.
She then returns to her seat on the balcony.

CLARISE

(now without neighbor
interruptions)

Hi Jack.

JACK

That was quite a show this morning.

(grins)

I found it most entertaining.

CLARISE

Do you think I was too harsh?

JACK

(a little laugh)

Not at all.

(pauses briefly)

I didn't think you had it in you
Clarise. I'm very proud of you.

CLARISE

I didn't think I had it in me either.
It just came out. I couldn't stop it.
I just hope I didn't make a mistake.

JACK

I think you did the right thing. The two of you would have been miserable together.

Jack moves to the left of his balcony, closer to Clarise, separated only by the cement wall surrounding each balcony.

JACK (con't)

You were the sorriest couple I've ever seen. I just didn't know how to tell you. My hope was that somehow you would have discovered it on your own.

CLARISE

(she touches Jack's arm)

Thanks for being my friend Jack. I'm so glad you live next door.

JACK

(trying to be funny)

I'm glad your name is on the lease to that apartment and not Edward's. I don't think I could handle living next door to just him.

CLARISE

He'd probably have a different woman over here every night.

JACK

Yeah, you're probably right.

Jack and Clarise just stare off into the city lights.

Music is softly playing in the background.

CLARISE

Now what?

JACK

What do you mean?

CLARISE

Now what am I supposed to do?

I don't think I've ever been
single, living alone, you know?

JACK

You'll get used to it.

CLARISE

What do I do with my life now?

JACK

You just keep living life like
you have been. The only difference
is that now you're free to do what
you want. You have no one trying
to control how you live or how you
think.

CLARISE

Somehow you become dependent on what was. It's been going on for so long.

(pauses)

I've been trying to see what my life might be like now without Edward, but it's like I'm staring at a blank page. I don't know what's ahead.

JACK

Most normal people see that same blank page Clarise.

(pauses)

Do you really want someone to tell you how to live?

CLARISE

(shrugging her shoulders)

That's all I know, I guess.

JACK

You're a glutton for punishment.

OK, I'll tell you what to do next.

Clarise shoots Jack a smile.

JACK (con't)

You go on the cruise. Loosen up a little, have a great time. Come back with a nice tan and all those funky beads in your hair like everyone else does. Then you start your life over.

CLARISE

(wrinkles her nose a little)

I'm not sure the tan or the beads are quite my style, Jack.

JACK

No, that wasn't your style when you were with Edward. What the hell, make up your own style now Clarise.

CLARISE

We'll have to see about the style thing.

They stare at each other for a moment.

CLARISE (con't)

I better go. I have to finish packing Edward's things before he comes back crying or something. Then I might start to feel guilty.

JACK

Don't let him make you feel guilty. He doesn't deserve you. You dumped him, just leave it alone.

Clarise gets up from her chair and prepares to head back into her apartment.

CLARISE

I'll see you tomorrow then.

JACK

Good night, Clarise.

CLARISE

(smiles)

Good night.

Clarise enters her apartment (O.S.) and closes the door.

Jack remains outside just staring at Clarise's balcony.

INT. CLARISE'S OFFICE - NOON

Clarise is shuffling paperwork on her desk, trying to finalize any remaining projects before the cruise.

MARGARET, the boss's wife walks in. She's a charming, well-to-do older lady, who adores Clarise.

MARGARET

A little bird told me you will
finally be making one of our trips?
Whatever changed your mind?

CLARISE

(looking rather embarrassed now)

I kind of dumped Edward. We really
just weren't right for each other
Margaret. I thought this trip would
give me the time to think clearly
about my future.

MARGARET

Good Heavens child, are you all right?

CLARISE

I couldn't be happier with my decision Margaret. It was the right thing to do. Now, I just need to look ahead, get on with my life.

MARGARET

I certainly hope you don't consider another job when thinking about your future Clarise. You know we couldn't live without you here.

They both head out of Clarise's office.

INT. OFFICE HALLYWAY - NOON

Clarise and Margaret proceed down a hall to a lobby /reception area.

CLARISE

Oh Margaret, I love my job. I don't think I would ever consider working for anyone other than you and Matthew. You treat me like royalty here.

MARGARET

You are royalty here my dear. Just you wait until we get to the islands. We will spend our days shopping - my treat!

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - NOON

Clarise and Margaret enter the reception area to find Jack entering the lobby.

Jack and Clarise smile at each other. Both are equally surprised to run into each other in the lobby.

JACK

(with a smile)

Hi there.

CLARISE

(very surprised, happy look)

Hi yourself.

Clarise turns to Margaret.

CLARISE

Margaret, I'd like you to meet a good friend of mine. This is Jack Smith. Jack this is Margaret Reed.

MARGARET

Jack Smith, one of my favorite Globe columnists. I feel I know so much about you already.

JACK

It's a pleasure to finally meet you. Clarise often talks about you and your husband.

MARGARET

You know she's like a daughter to us.
We love her dearly and our clients
adore her.

(she takes Clarise by the arm)

We will enjoy our cruise even more
now that she's finally decided to go.
Jack, would you care to join us?

Clarise looks curiously at Jack. Neither of them expected
this.

JACK

No, thanks really for the offer.
Clarise needs to take this trip on her
own. She could probably use a little
peace and quiet right now.

MARGARET

Well, maybe next time then.

(looking at Clarise)

I'm afraid I've got to run.
You know how punctual Matthew is
with lunch.

Margaret pats Clarise on the side of the arm as she begins to leave.

Margaret says goodbye to Jack and walks back down the hall towards
the offices.

Clarise begins going through phone messages and finds three from
Edward.

Jack is standing right behind Clarise, looking over her shoulder as she crumples up the messages and throws them away.

JACK

Speaking of lunch, are you free? You want to grab a bite to eat?

CLARISE

(puzzled look, smiling)

You came all the way out here to see if I was free for lunch?

JACK

Actually I was in the area on business. I was a little worried about you, so I stopped in, OK?

Clarise begins to wonder about Jack's motive and finds it difficult to respond with anything intelligent.

CLARISE

(shrugs her shoulders)

OK.

Pleased by her response, Jack smiles then reaches for Clarise's arm and they head for the door.

JACK

(matter of factly)

OK.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clarise and Jack are standing in the kitchen.

CLARISE

You sure you don't mind feeding
Romeo?

JACK

We already went over this. I don't mind.

They both look down towards the floor. Romeo is sitting between both of them, staring up at Jack.

JACK

Besides, I think he kind of likes me.

CLARISE

OK, his food is here. His..

JACK

(stopping her)

I can handle it, don't worry about
him. Just remember to leave your
balcony doors unlocked. I'd rather
climb over the balcony than risk
bumping into one of your ex in-laws
should I walk out your front door.

Clarise moves around the kitchen, picking up, ensuring all is in order before her trip.

JACK (con't)

Everything packed?

CLARISE

Haven't even started yet.

Clarise leaves the kitchen and moves to the living room, tidying up.

Jack follows Clarise.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Clarise continues cleaning while Jack takes a seat on the sofa.

JACK

At least you don't need to bring
much on a cruise. What, a bikini,
shorts, that's about it.

CLARISE

(looking oddly at Jack)

I don't think I even own a bathing suit.

JACK

I'm sure you can get one on the ship.
Do you have a ride to the airport?

CLARISE

Yeah, Margaret is sending her car
for me.

(smiles)

If you're offering though, you can
pick me up when I return.

Clarise now heads towards a bedroom, scooping Romeo up on the way. The cat just hangs over Clarise's shoulder as she walks down the hall.

CLARISE

(to Romeo)

I'm going to miss my baby.

Clarise enters one of the bedrooms. She's heard (O.S) unzipping a suitcase.

Jack follows Clarise to the bedroom and stands in the doorway. This is really the first time he's ever seen the back half of her apartment, her bedroom.

INT. CLARISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clarise sits Romeo on her bed and begins digging through her closet trying to decide what to pack for her trip.

JACK

He's going to be just fine. I'll take good care of him. Maybe I'll hang out here once in a while when your gone so Romeo and I can catch a movie or something.

CLARISE

I don't know what I would do without you Jack. You're so good to me.

Jack gazes around the room.

JACK

I certainly hope you wouldn't have married Edward if I wasn't here.

CLARISE

I don't know, I suppose I might have.

JACK

No you wouldn't. You're a smart girl. You would have realized it was wrong on your own.

Clarise is still digging through her closet.

CLARISE

No, I don't think I would have Jack. You helped me see things as they really were. You challenged me to analyze my life - what I liked and didn't like about it. Without that, I probably would have just gone through with the wedding. Then I would probably get hooked on anti-depressants like the rest of Edward's family. It would not have been a very happy life.

Clarise pauses then looks at Jack.

CLARISE

You saved me from a horrible life Jack.

JACK

You saved yourself Clarise. Maybe
I just helped you to see it from a
different angle.

Clarise moves close to Jack with an armful of clothes. She
innocently kisses Jack on the cheek, then backs away.

CLARISE

Thanks Jack.

As Clarise backs away, Jack touches the side of her face. Jack and
Clarise stare curiously at each other for a couple of seconds.

Jack pulls Clarise close and gently kisses her.

Clarise begins to back away again.

Both flustered, Jack and Clarise over-talk the other.

CLARISE

(a little disoriented)

I'd better finish...

JACK

Yeah, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to...

CLARISE

It's OK, don't worry about it.

JACK

(a little embarrassed)

I'm going to sit on the couch, OK?

CLARISE

Yeah, go ahead. I'll be done in a couple of minutes. I don't know what to wear on a cruise anyway. Knowing Margaret, she'll buy me a bunch of clothes.

Jack sees Clarise grab a few business suits from the closet as if she's considering them for the trip. He begins to laugh.

JACK

No, Clarise. Don't even consider bringing business attire.

He takes the three suits from Clarise and throws them on the bed.

CLARISE

(now smiling)

I thought you were going to sit on the couch Jack. Go. Go on.

Clarise pushes him to the door.

Jack exits the room.

Clarise rummages through her dresser, pulling things out, then throwing most items back in the drawer. She pulls out a few items and packs them in her suitcase.

JACK (O.S.)

You want something to drink?

Clarise hears Jack but is too deep in thought to answer as she opens more dresser drawers, looks blankly at the drawer's contents and shuts them again.

Jack is now standing again in the doorway to Clarise's bedroom.

JACK

Do you want something to drink?

CLARISE

(absentmindedly)

Oh... yeah...

(pauses)

Yeah, thanks. Oh! There's some wine on the kitchen counter.

JACK

(peering into suitcase)

OK, what did you decide to bring.

CLARISE

(smiles, closes suitcase abruptly)

None of your business.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jack and Clarise now move to the living room area.

Clarise scoops Romeo up and sits on the sofa.

Jack continues to the kitchen area and returns with glasses of wine. He sits on the sofa near Clarise. He then watches as Romeo begins his head-butting ritual with Clarise.

JACK

I've never seen a cat so in love with someone.

(pauses briefly)

Is that why you named him Romeo?

CLARISE

(grins)

When I found him as a kitten, he was a mess. He was rotten dirty. His fur was all matted down. But he had the most incredible eyes. I knew that once he was clean and he grew up big and strong, he'd break every feline heart around the block.

(pauses)

That's why I named him Romeo.

JACK

Was Edward ever your real life Romeo?

CLARISE

(scowls)

Never.

(pauses)

Why on earth did I ever go out with him? He was your friend Jack, why didn't you warn me?

They pause for a moment, thinking about their college days.

CLARISE

I remember finding this note in my book bag from Edward. It was some old poem he had copied. At the bottom of the poem, he asked that I meet him at Mike's Coffee Shop.

(pauses a moment)

I would have turned him down, he really wasn't my type anyway.

JACK

What made you go?

CLARISE

(still reminiscing)

My room mate. She insisted on it. She said he was by far the best catch on campus. I guess I should have sent her in my place.

JACK

(smiling)

You probably should have.

CLARISE

I get so angry with myself for wasting all these years on nothing. I feel like I've just gotten older but I haven't even lived yet.

(pauses briefly)

All these years with Edward and he's not even my type! Looking back now, I don't think we ever really loved each other.

JACK

Don't think of the time spent as wasted Clarise. You've learned a lot. You're definitely more assertive now.

(smiles coyly)

I certainly can't imagine anyone controlling you anymore.

CLARISE

(not really listening)

Jack, we knew each other a week before I met Edward. Why didn't we ever go out?

JACK

We just never asked each other I guess.

CLARISE

Yeah, but why? We get along so well. We probably would have made a great couple in college.

Clarise continues as if she were almost conversing with herself now.

CLARISE (con't)

Well, I've never asked anyone out in my life. I wouldn't know what to say to a guy?

JACK

I was too chicken.

CLARISE

(not sure she heard him right)

What?

JACK

(still chicken)

I wanted to ask, but I was too chicken.

I never wanted Edward to meet you
because I knew he'd move right in on you.

CLARISE

(shocked, she stares at him)

I never knew that, why didn't you
ever say anything?

JACK

(college heartache returns)

Within a week, you were already
gone. You started dating Edward,
everybody loved the creep. I never
thought I had a chance after that.
I certainly wasn't like Edward. I
couldn't compete with Crimson's MVP.

Clarise rests her chin on Jack's shoulder. She studies his face
closely for what seems to be the first time.

CLARISE

You're too damn sweet Jack.

EXT. CLARISE'S FRONT DOOR - MORNING

Clarise is rushing to get her luggage out the front door. She shuts the door on one of her luggage tags and screeches in frustration.

Jack grabs her keys, reaches around Clarise to unlock the door.

For some reason, Clarise fails to release her grip from the luggage, making it more difficult for Jack to help get the door open again. They become comically entangled like a scene taken from a Laurel and Hardy movie.

JACK

Are you sure you've got everything?

CLARISE

I guess.

(pauses)

If I missed anything, it couldn't have been all that important.

JACK

Did you lock your balcony doors?

CLARISE

Yeah, I think so, why?

JACK

(grinning)

Because you weren't suppose to.
How am I going to feed Romeo?
I don't want to be seen coming and
going by your ex in-laws.

Jack finally opens the door.

Clarise jumps over the luggage and heads for the balcony. She
unlocks the French doors and spins back around.

A car horn is beeping outside the apartment building (O.S.).

JACK

Come on, you're going to be late.

CLARISE

All right, all right.

(she pets Romeo's head)

Bye, you big booger.

Jack picks up the luggage and waits for Clarise to pass through the
the door. He then shuts the door, checking to make sure it's locked.
Jack and Clarise bomb down several sets of stairs before reaching
the bottom level of the building.

Jack and Clarise exit the building.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - MORNING

A black limo is waiting outside for Clarise.

Jack hands the luggage to the DRIVER who is standing at the car's open trunk. Jack turns to Clarise and puts his hands on her shoulders. He looks into her eyes for a moment then kisses her on the forehead.

JACK

Have a good time, OK? And bring
me back a bottle of good rum.

CLARISE

OK, I will. Bye.

Clarise gets in the car, waves goodbye and the car takes off.

Jack stands on the street for a moment and watches the limo pull away. He wishes now he took Margaret up on her offer to go on the cruise.

INT. SYLVIA AND FRANK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sylvia, Frank and Edward are in the dining room eating dinner. They look a little odd seated at a huge table which could easily fit a large dinner party. They talk about Clarise of course.

SYLVIA

Edward, it's been four days, she's
just being ridiculous.

FRANK

Perhaps she'll come to her senses
once she gets this cruise out of her
system.

EDWARD

(still in shock)

She took my key to the apartment.
She packed all my things.

SYLVIA

(interrupting)

I told you she needed to see Dr.
Hardy. I don't think any of this
would have ever happened.

HOUSEKEEPER enters the room with a cordless phone, she heads
towards Edward.

HOUSEKEEPER

Mr. Ryan, sorry to bother you sir. I
have a telephone call from Ms. Clarise.

EDWARD

(abruptly)

No, that's fine, I'll take it.

Sylvia and Frank stare at Edward who gets up from the table and
exits the room.

INT. SYLVIA AND FRANK'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

We follow Edward down a hall and out a side door to a large patio overlooking a huge manicured lawn.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

Clarise is sitting at the head of a bed in her cabin. She is wearing a bathrobe, hair wrapped in a towel.

EDWARD (O.S.)

(rudely)

Clarise? Where are you?

CLARISE

Well hello to you too, Edward.

EDWARD (O.S.)

(still rude)

Where are you?

CLARISE

(slightly sarcastic)

I'm out on the Atlantic Ocean somewhere.

The cruise, remember Edward?

EXT. OUTDOOR PATIO - NIGHT

EDWARD

Clarise, everyone is worried sick about you. Why don't you come back home. You can catch a flight at the next port.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

CLARISE

Look, I just called to see if you're all right. I didn't call to be badgered. I'll return to Boston when the cruise is over.

EDWARD (O.S.)

I'm not all right Clarise. I have to face countless friends and family members who are beginning to think you have completely lost your mind. My mother thinks you have fallen off the deep end Clarise.

CLARISE

Well, I can see this call was a big mistake. I think I'm going to say goodbye now Edward.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Clarise, wait, please.

(perhaps the first time he said please to her)

I still want you back.

CLARISE

(trying to be strong)

I can't marry you Edward. I don't love you. We would make each other miserable.

EXT. OUTDOOR PATIO - NIGHT

EDWARD

(looking rather remorseful)

I need you Clarise. You help keep
my life sane.

(desperately losing)

I can't function day to day
without you. I love you Clarise.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

Clarise begins to feel guilt setting in. Edward can always twist
her emotions. Tears form in her eyes.

CLARISE

I can't do it Edward. I don't love
you.

(pauses)

I'm sorry.

EXT. OUTDOOR PATIO - NIGHT

EDWARD

(getting rude again)

Clarise, you're being ridiculous.
We had everything planned. You
can't just throw it away like that.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

CLARISE

(no more guilt, he's a jerk)

Now I'm really going to say goodbye Edward.

EDWARD (O.S.)

Clarise...

CLARISE

(cutting Edward off)

Goodbye Edward.

Clarise hangs up the phone.

EXT. OUTDOOR PATIO - NIGHT

Edward is left standing on the patio looking rather irate. He calls Clarise's name into the phone a couple of times, trying to believe they were temporarily disconnected. Frustrated, Edward heads back to the house.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

Clarise begins checking phone messages. There are two messages which she listens to over the speaker phone. One is from Margaret, the other from Jack.

MARGARET (O.S.)

Clarise darling, this is just
a reminder for tomorrow morning.
We should leave the ship at 8:30.
There are a couple of shops we must
hit. I'll stop by your cabin in the
morning.

A tone is heard indicating the end of the first message.

JACK (O.S.)

Hey you, it's Jack.

CLARISE

(mimicking a reply)

Hi Jack.

JACK (O.S.)

I just called to see how it's going so far.
You don't have to call back, it's nothing
urgent. Call me tomorrow if you can.

Another tone is heard indicating the end the second message.

Clarise looks through her planner for Jack's number. She picks up the phone and dials his number. She gets Jack's answering machine.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Clarise's voice is heard over Jack's answering machine as she leaves a message.

CLARISE (O.S)

Hi, it's Clarise and I guess we're
playing phone tag.

Jack is coming through the front door with the mail. He is somewhat out of breath from hurrying to the phone. Jack answers the phone before Clarise hangs up.

JACK

I'm here, sorry about that. I was
just out checking the mail.

CLARISE (O.S.)

Hi there.

JACK

(very big smile now)

Hi yourself. Are you having fun yet?

CLARISE (O.S.)

Well, I don't know if I'd call it
fun, but it's OK.

JACK

You're supposed to be out dancing,
playing the slots or something.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

Clarise takes the towel off her head and starts running a comb
through her hair.

CLARISE

No, I really haven't gone anywhere.
I brought some manuscripts with me
and I've been trying to review them.

JACK (O.S.)

(surprised)

Clarise, you're not supposed to bring
work with you. You need to go out and
have a good time. You know, do stuff
you don't normally do - that's what most
people do on cruises. I just assumed you
were out partying when I called earlier.

CLARISE

No, I could never go out alone. I would feel like a total idiot. The Reeds are hanging with some other people right now.

(pauses)

I was actually on the phone when you called.

JACK (O.S.)

Not with your ex I hope.

CLARISE

Yeah, afraid so.

JACK (O.S.)

Why Clarise?

CLARISE

I just wanted to make sure he was OK. I felt bad about how I dumped him.

JACK (O.S.)

Big mistake. You know he will do anything to weasel his way back into your life.

CLARISE

(a little depressed)

He's already tried.

Jack can detect a sadness in her voice.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JACK

Clarise, it would be the biggest mistake of your life. Please don't tell me you would even consider it.

CLARISE (O.S.)

No, I couldn't now Jack, he pissed me off. The jerk was actually yelling at me over the phone. He said I was being ridiculous.

JACK

Yeah, that's Edward. I'm glad you didn't cave in.

CLARISE (O.S.)

(sounding a little better)

Besides, I think I could get used to this freedom thing.

JACK

Just don't get too used to it Clarise. You may end up bumping into someone someday and really fall in love.

CLARISE (O.S.)

(not really listening)

Oh, I almost forgot, how's Romeo?

JACK

He's fine. Probably a little lonely.
He's not eating his food. He just licks
the gravy off the plate and walks
away, what's up with that?

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - NIGHT

CLARISE

(smirks)

That's just the way he's always been.

JACK (O.S.)

Listen, it's getting late. I better
let you go.

CLARISE

OK, I've got an early morning shopping
trip with Margaret anyway, so I'll say
good night.

JACK (O.S.)

I'll talk to you soon. Have fun.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack sits on the sofa, looking over a TV guide. Nothing on.
He looks curiously at Clarise's entertainment center. Jack
notices some tall books stuffed beside the TV.

Jack moves in front of the TV and kneels down. Curious, he
pulls the books out. They're scrap books of sorts.

Jack looks over at Clarise's CD player and turns it on. He sits on the floor, back against the entertainment center and begins thumbing through a book. He smiles here and there as he flips the pages.

We see Jack touch a couple of the photos and newspaper clippings. There are various clippings showing Edward in his college days, dressed in a Harvard football jersey.

We see other photos of Jack and Edward. Clarise stands in the photos between the two. Jack smiles.

Romeo approaches. He plows his large head into the entertainment center, moving closer to Jack.

JACK
(looks at Romeo)
You miss her too, huh?

Romeo heads for Jack and begins to rub his head on Jack's knee. Jack leans forward to make eye contact with the cat.

JACK
Why do you do that?

Jack scratches the cats head.

Romeo pushes his head against Jack's and the cat begins to twist his head back and forth as he does with Clarise.

INT. CRUISE SHIP CABIN - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

Clarise once again is sitting on the bed in her bathrobe, towel wrapped around her head like the night before. She's looking a little more tanned now, several days into the cruise.

Clarise answers a ringing phone.

CLARISE

Hello?

JACK (O.S.)

Hi again. I wanted to find out what time you need to be picked up tomorrow.

CLARISE

(digging through her planner)

I'm on American flight 680 from Miami. I'm supposed to arrive just before 5:00 PM. Just meet me in front of Logan at 5:30 or so.

JACK (O.S.)

I can meet you at the terminal.

CLARISE

No, no. You don't need to fight all those suits flying home for the weekend. Besides, you don't have to worry about parking if you just wait out front by the baggage claim. I'll find you.

JACK (O.S.)

Did you have a good time shopping
with Margaret?

Clarise holds up a bottle, looking at the light from the desk lamp
barely shining through.

CLARISE

Actually, I had a blast with her.
I did find a really nice 151 for you.
I think you'll like it.

JACK (O.S.)

Why aren't you out partying or something.
It's your last night on board.

CLARISE

Margaret's kept me busy shopping and
mingling every day, I'm, pretty worn out.
I think I'm just going to crash.

JACK (O.S.)

Just let me know if your flight changes.

CLARISE

I will. Good night, Jack.

JACK (O.S.)

(quietly)

Good night.

INT. LOGAN AIRPORT, LUGGAGE CAROUSELS - DAY

We see a very different Clarise. She's in torn, faded jeans, casual top, tanned and looking happy.

As Clarise begins pulling her bags from the carousel, a hand reaches to grab Clarise's arm. It is Margaret.

MARGARET

I am so glad you decided to come with us dear.
The tan looks fabulous on you.

CLARISE

Margaret, I really had a wonderful time.
I don't know how to ever thank you.

They hug.

MARGARET

Oh, don't bother. It was a joy just
to have someone to shop with. Are you
sure your ride will be here Clarise?
I can still have my driver take you back.

CLARISE

(answering quickly)

No, no really Margaret, he'll be
here. Please don't worry about it.
Now go on to your next terminal,
before Matthew starts to panic.

MARGARET

Hawaii, here I come, bye love. I'll see you in a week.

CLARISE

OK, OK. Have a great time. I'll see you soon. Be sure to call to let me know how your real vacation is going.

They wave goodbye. Clarise heads for the nearest exit. She puts on her sunglasses, feeling pretty good. Back in Bean Town. She smiles. There is a little spring in her step as she heads out the doors.

EXT. LOGAN AIRPORT - DAY

Clarise looks at the cars lined up for passenger pick up. To her right, there are only four cars, no Jack. She heads to the left, dragging a luggage cart behind her.

Jack is leaning up against his car, waiting for Clarise. He's looking at the crowds of people pouring out of the airport heading for their cars or shuttles. As he peers through the crowd, he sees Clarise, or he thinks it Clarise anyway. He smiles curiously.

After realizing it is Clarise, completely out of character in torn jeans and a tan, his curious smile turns into a full blown grin. He shakes his head slowly in disbelief. He likes what he sees, a lot.

Clarise has spotted Jack's infectious grin. She walks up to him, they now stand face to face.

CLARISE

(half joking, a little unsure)

You're laughing at me, aren't you?

Jack tries hard to wipe the grin off his face but finds it difficult.

JACK

No, I'm not laughing at you.

Jack grabs both of Clarise's arms and holds them out to the sides, checking out the new and improved Clarise.

JACK

You look incredible.

Jack releases her arms and turns to open the trunk.

JACK

(with a laugh)

Is this all yours? You only left with two bags. What did they do, reproduce on board?

CLARISE

No, that's Margaret's fault.

(pauses)

I hope I'm as fun to be around when I'm her age.

JACK

You probably will be.

Jack shuts the trunk of the car. He then approaches Clarise. Jack puts his hands on each side of her face. He's more serious now.

JACK (con't)

I'm glad you're back.

Jack hugs Clarise closely, maybe too close.

Clarise starts to step back and senses a new found attraction towards Jack. Clarise tries to brush the feeling off. It would be too weird dating a best friend, wouldn't it?

CLARISE

(big sigh)

OK, Jack. Take me home. I need to see my baby.

JACK

Home it is then.

They get into Jack's car and drive off.

INT. CLARISE'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Clarise is on the sofa rummaging through some of her bags from the trip.

Jack is returning from the hallway where he left most of the luggage.

Romeo is sitting next to Clarise on the sofa, just staring at her.

Romeo begins his ritual by rubbing his head into Clarise.

Jack sits on the other end of the sofa and watches them.

JACK

Tired?

CLARISE

No, I actually feel completely energized.
I'm glad to be back though.

JACK

No more calls to Edward?

CLARISE

(laughs)

I don't think I'll be talking to him
any time soon. He was such a jerk
the last time I called him.

JACK

Did you eat dinner on the plane?

CLARISE

(looking oddly at him)

From Miami? They don't feed you.

JACK

(gets up from the sofa)

Good. Let's go somewhere then.

CLARISE

I've gotta change first. I'm not
exactly dressed for dinner...

JACK

(cutting her off)

You're fine. We don't need to go to L'Espalier or any place like that.

Jack grabs her hand to lift her off the sofa.

Clarise picks up a bottle from one of her bags.

CLARISE

Oh, here. Check this out.

Jack takes a bottle from Clarise's hand.

JACK

(grinning)

Great. Now, I just need to pick up some Coke on my next trip to the store.

INT. CHARLEY'S SALOON - NIGHT

Clarise and Jack finish with their meals.

A WAITER begins clearing several plates, silverware.

JACK

It's still early, you want to go downstairs?

CLARISE

(shaking her head "No")

I really want to just snuggle up in my own bed with my own pillows and Romeo by my side.

JACK

It's still early Clarise, come on.
Come with me. I bet you didn't do
this even once on your trip.

CLARISE

Jack, no, it's been forever.

Jack stands and begins to gently pull Clarise by her arm trying
to get her to stand up.

JACK

Come on. I'm sure it hasn't been
that long.

(grinning)

Come on, let's have some fun.

CLARISE

All right, all right, all right.
Don't pull my arm from it's socket,
OK?

Jack continues pulling Clarise by the arm.

Clarise is now rubbing her shoulder, pretending it's sore after all the
tugging.

Jack and Clarise walk towards a staircase and then descend down the
stairs.

INT. CHARLEY'S SALOON, DOWNSTAIRS BAR - NIGHT

Jack and Clarise sit at a small table in a very packed bar.

A WAITER sets two drinks in front of them and leaves.

Slow music begins to play in the background.

JACK

OK, that's our cue.

Jack stands, grabs Clarise's hand and starts to pull her to her feet.

CLARISE

Jack, I really don't feel like dancing.

JACK

Sure you do, it'll be fun.

Clarise and Jack head for the very small and over-crowded dance floor and begin to dance.

Jack pulls Clarise closer as they dance.

JACK

(gazing into her eyes)

This feels pretty good.

CLARISE

What, dancing in a very small, over-crowded bar?

JACK
(sarcastically)
Funny.
(now serious)
I meant dancing with you.

They start to dance a little slower. Jack moves closer to Clarise.

JACK (con't)
Holding you.

Before Clarise has a chance to say anything, Jack kisses her gently on the forehead, then on the cheek and finally plants one on her lips.

Clarise tries to back away, then begins to laugh a little.

CLARISE
Doesn't this seem a bit odd, Jack?

JACK
(quite serious)
Not at all.

Jack begins to kiss her again.

Clarise tries to stop him again, finding the situation rather comical. She smiles.

CLARISE
What if Edward finds out?

JACK
(still quite serious)
We won't tell him.

Jack tries to kiss Clarise again.

CLARISE
Wait... Jack...

Jack is still trying to win Clarise over before she has too long to think about it. He manages one more kiss.

CLARISE
Jack...
(pauses briefly)
Please, wait a minute.

Jack wasn't quite prepared for Clarise's reaction. Knowing he's not getting anywhere fast, he stops trying to kiss her.

Jack and Clarise stop dancing and just talk.

JACK
(now smiling smugly)
What Clarise?
(pauses)
I'm not worried if Edward finds out.

CLARISE
(getting serious)
You're his best friend!

JACK

(smiling)

Well, maybe not once he finds out.

CLARISE

He will kill us Jack.

JACK

(back to serious)

Clarise, he lost you because he was a jerk. He treated you like a doormat while he chased other women around. If he finds out, I don't care if he's pissed. It no longer concerns him.

(pauses)

I was too chicken to ask you out in college and I couldn't live with myself if I let another opportunity pass by.

CLARISE

He will never speak to you again.

Jack prepares for another round. He closely studies Clarise's eyes, lips as he once again moves closer to her.

JACK

That wouldn't kill me.

Jack begins to kiss Clarise, pulling her very close.

Clarise doesn't resist this time.

INT. CLARISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jack and Clarise's silhouette are seen standing in the dark as they make out. The city lights outside are shining through the window.

JACK

I love you.

(pauses, staring into
Clarise's eyes)

I have always been in love with you.

CLARISE

(jokingly)

You know, you could have saved us
both a whole lot of grief over the
years if you had just asked me out
back in college.

JACK

I can't tell you how often I've
regretted it. I was so afraid you
would say no.

Clarise gently touches Jack's face. She now kisses him.

Things get pretty serious for a moment.

Jack and Clarise break from a kiss and begin to laugh out loud as they both look towards the floor.

Romeo's silhouette is now seen. He is standing with his hind legs on the floor, front paws touching Clarise and Jack as high as the cat can reach.

JACK

Do you think he's jealous?

CLARISE

(picking up the cat)

Come here baby.

INT. CLARISE'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Clarise is standing at her bedroom door leading to the hallway. She sets Romeo on the floor in the hall.

CLARISE

That's my good boy. Now go take a nap or something.

Clarise remains in the bedroom and shuts the bedroom door.

THE END