

UGLY BETTY - PILOT



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PILOT EPISODE

by

Silvio Horta

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(PILOT)

12.16.05

ACT ONE

TITLE CARD: "UGLY BETTY" slams on screen with a thundering boom before we open tight on...

HER. 24. Overweight. Bushy unibrow. Coke bottle glasses. Hairspray caked bangs. If beauty is defined by symmetry, Betty looks like a bomb went off at Disney Hall. She nervously clutches her briefcase as she sits inside...

INT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS - HUMAN RESOURCES WAITING ROOM - DAY

All muted tones except for Betty's hideous, flaming red Jacklyn Smith pantsuit. A beautiful AMAZON sits next to her, fervidly texting on her Sidekick. She's wearing a poncho. Betty looks at her, smiles sweetly.

BETTY

I like your poncho. My dad got me one in Guadalajara.

The Amazon whips her head around.

AMAZON

Milan. Dolce & Gabbana. Fall.

BETTY

Oh.

HR GUY

Betty Suarez?

Betty looks up to find a nebbishy HR GUY looking out over the interviewees. She stands up.

BETTY

Hi! That's me.

She smiles broadly revealing a mouth full of metal. The HR Guy stares at her like a bug.

BETTY

Should I follow you?

The HR Guy looks her up and down.

HR GUY

Actually...there's been a mistake.

BETTY

A mistake?

HR GUY

All the entry level positions we were hiring for. They've been filled. I'm sorry.

As he turns to walk away, we stay on Betty, deflated. She looks up, stares at the framed magazine covers on the walls. Everything from travel and cooking to highfalutin literature and fashion. She quickly steels herself.

ANGLE ON HR GUY walking down the hallway...

BETTY

SIR!

She's suddenly walking alongside him, upbeat and determined.

BETTY

While you got me here I thought I could tell you a little about myself.

The HR Guy could not be any more annoyed.

BETTY

Magazines are my passion, ever since I was a kid, and I can't imagine a more amazing place to start my career than Meade Publications.

The HR Guy not so gently grabs her elbow, starts easing her toward the bank of elevators.

BETTY

I know most of your magazines inside out. I try to devour as much as I can.

HR GUY

Clearly.

BETTY

And I've learned so much through them. About culture, politics, people. Stuff so beyond my world, like, I can tell you who had the biggest yacht in St. Tropez this year. Or why Gwyneth gets depressed. Or how to make a raspberry souffle.

She's out of breath but trying to get as much in as she can.

BETTY

I've got a good grasp on the business end too. Circulation, distribution, ad sales.

(beat)

I have tons of ideas. I'm always jotting stuff down on the subway.

As she pulls some papers out of her briefcase, we notice an elegant, suited OLDER MAN (60's) watching Betty from afar, intrigued by her moxie.

BETTY

Up and coming writers and photographers, internet synergy...

The HR Guy looks at her, exhausted.

BETTY

But I'm getting ahead of myself. All I really want sir is a chance -- in ANY position or publication.

He pushes her into an open elevator, hits the "DOWN" button.

HR GUY

Goodbye!

BETTY

(desperate)

I can type 100 words a minute!

As the doors SLAM SHUT on her mid-sentence, we CUT TO:

A PIXELATED TELEVISION SCREEN. The splashy, techno-driven intro to "Fashion TV News Daily" begins. Uber-stylish, black British host NEAL DELONGPRE stares gravely into CAMERA.

NEAL

Good evening. The topsy-turvy world of fashion is in a dizzying state of mishigas after an unforgettably dramatical week.

(facing another camera for added emphasis)

Celebrity studded funeral services were held today for Fey Sommers, the much loved and hated Editor-in-Chief of fashion bible Gloss magazine.

VIDEO MONTAGE of hyper-thin, surgically enhanced FEY SOMMERS: sitting front row at a fashion show;

sipping champagne at a function; on a city street as PETA activists dump a bucket of red paint on her fur coat. FREEZE FRAME on her face as she says "What the fuck?" Chyron reads "? - 2006"

NEAL (V.O.)

Sommers died unexpectedly last week while undergoing routine liposuction.

INT. FUNERAL - DAY (NEWS CLIP)

A tall, regal BLONDE WOMAN (early 50's) delivers a eulogy. Chyron reads: WILHELMINA SLATER.

WILHELMINA

(somber)

Fey lived for beauty...and she died for beauty...

NEAL (V.O.)

It was the bitch slap heard 'round the world when longtime Gloss Creative Director Wilhelmina Slater was passed over for the top spot in favor of Daniel Meade...

VIDEO MONTAGE of DANIEL MEADE (30), polished, masculine, incredibly handsome. Very JFK Jr. We see him: arm in arm with a beautiful woman; Playing touch football shirtless; at a paparazzi filled function with another beautiful woman.

NEAL (V.O.)

The nominally experienced son of Meade Publications owner Bradford Meade.

INT. STUDIO - NIGHT

NEAL

On the eve of his first day on the job, the whole of the fashion world is wondering: can the notorious manwhore translate his talent at bedding women into dressing them?

MAN (O.S.)

(heavy Mexican accent)
Put Channel 23 on!

The channel switches to a cheesy TELENOVELA. A quivering, teary-eyed LATINA BEAUTY in maid's uniform points a gun at a suited LATINO STUD.

LATINA BEAUTY

Me has matado mi alma! [You have killed my soul!]

BEAT. He grabs her face, plants a deep, wet kiss. Over-the-top music swells as the gun drops from her hand. Pulling back, we find ourselves inside...

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A tiny cluttered Queens rowhouse. JUSTIN, a 12 year-old who appears effeminate to everyone except his immediate family, holds the remote and pouts.

JUSTIN

I hate this.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Justin you can watch Fashion TV. later, when your aunt Betty is babysitting. Come have some flan.

Justin walks toward the adjacent dining area where we find Betty, her very pregnant older sister HILDA (sporting an "Ask Me About Herbalife" pin) and their father IGNACIO (60's) who wears a janitor uniform. They're just finishing dinner.

JUSTIN

I don't want flan. I'll get fat.

HILDA

Don't be silly honey, you're a boy. It doesn't matter if you're fat or not.

(beat)

So Ronnie is getting the Windstar.

IGNACIO

(eyes glued to telenovela)
Does it have airbags?

HILDA

It's a 2003, of course it has airbags. And leather seats.

BETTY

(strained)
That's great.

IGNACIO
(changing subjects)
How was your interview Betty?

BETTY
Good! I think they were really
impressed.

Hilda stares at her, knows her well.

HILDA
You didn't get it.

BETTY
Well, they'd already hired everyone
they needed.

IGNACIO
(shaking his head)
I don't understand. You're smart,
prepared. Someone should've begged
you to come work for them the day
you graduated.

BETTY
Well five months isn't that long --
in the scheme of things.

HILDA
The job market is crazy, especially
in that field.
(beat)
Betty, have you thought about
exploring other options? Maybe
there's something else you'd like
to do where you'll have more
control, flexibility --

BETTY
Hilda, I'm not gonna sell
Herbalife.

HILDA
I'm not saying that necessarily.
It's just, okay, if and when you
finally get a publishing job, then
what? 45 minutes on the 7 train --
each way, every day. Horrible pay.
Slaving away for hours. No time
for family, friends, relationships.

IGNACIO
This career is Betty's dream.

A beat.

HILDA

Well I hear someone else has some big dreams too.

BETTY

What are you talking about?

HILDA

Justin, tell Betty what her boyfriend was saying the other night.

We notice Justin making a t-shirt with his Bedazzler set.

JUSTIN

Walter was on his cell and said something like "I want to spend the rest of my life with her."

Ignacio looks at Betty.

IGNACIO

He wants to marry you?

Betty looks surprised, shakes her head.

BETTY

He hasn't said anything but maybe that's why he's been acting so weird.

JUSTIN

Would you do it?

BETTY

I don't know -- I haven't really thought about it.

HILDA

Well, I think he's a catch. Flan?

Betty stares at it. She really wants it.

BETTY

I'm going to pass.

HILDA

Wow -- everyone's on a diet tonight.

IGNACIO
 (grabbing plate)
 I'm not.

Just then a knock on the door.

BETTY
 It's him.

Betty gets up to open the door and we meet her boyfriend WALTER TABACHNICK. Looks wise, they're about evenly matched. He waves at the family, says hello.

BETTY
 You're just in time for dessert.

WALTER
 I already ate. Um, Betty, can we go outside and talk?

Betty looks back at Hilda who smiles, prods her on.

BETTY
 Um, sure.

As she nervously steps onto the front porch with him, CAMERA pulls up above...

EXT. BETTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Looking out over her working class Queens neighborhood, the New York skyline just a pale glimmer in the distance. Suddenly, CGI shot as CAMERA HURLS FORWARD until...

WE APPEAR TO BE HOVERING RIGHT OVER MIDTOWN MANHATTAN. Pulling back through floor to ceiling windows we find ourselves inside...

INT. DANIEL MEADE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Spacious and sleekly furnished. We find DANIEL MEADE leaning back in his desk chair. His eyes are shut but he appears to be in a state of blissful meditation.

MAN'S VOICE
 How do you like your new office?

His eyes shoot open. The OLDER MAN we saw earlier watching Betty from afar is standing in the doorway.

DANIEL

You scared me.

(beat)

Will you give me a few minutes? I have some things to wrap up before I leave.

Bradford turns to leave when he sees a pair of panties dangling from the pussy willow arrangement. He grabs them.

BRADFORD

Interesting decorating motif.

Just then we see something rustling under Daniel's desk. Bradford stares. Daniel looks down, mumbles something, and from under his desk emerges the Amazon that was sitting next to Betty in HR.

DANIEL

Father, I'd like you to met my new assistant Charmaine.

BRADFORD

Charmaine, I'm sure you can finish giving dictation later...I need to have a chat with my son.

Off a red-faced Daniel...

BETTY (V.O.)

I don't understand.

EXT. BETTY'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Betty sits on a rickety chair, crushed.

WALTER

It's just not working out.

Betty nods, processing this then, then:

BETTY

You know, I just read an article about this. Having doubts around the one-year mark is perfectly normal and expected. It just takes a little work but we can get through this.

Walter is silent.

BETTY

Like...we've never gone away
anywhere and it might be good, even
if just for the weekend. I've seen
some good deals online.

Betty looks to make sure no one's around, then whispers.

BETTY

And you know, in the bedroom,
there's things we can try to, you
know, spice it up.

(beat)

There's also counseling. Not far
from here there's a place, not
expensive at all that --

WALTER

(cutting her off)

I'm in love with someone else.

Beat.

BETTY

Oh.

WALTER

I'm so sorry.

An awkward silence.

WALTER

Well, I um, --

BETTY

It's okay Walter. You don't have
to say anything else.

Walter nods, turns to walk away.

WALTER

Good luck. With everything.

She forces a smile for a moment before turning away, looking
like her heart's been ripped from her chest. As she walks
through the front door...MATCH CUT TO:

A DOOR slamming open. Daniel and Bradford walk out onto...

EXT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS BUILDING - ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A breathtaking 360 degree view of the city. A helicopter sits on the helipad, waiting.

BRADFORD

This building is a testament both to the success and failure of this company and family. 50 stories. 100,000 tons of steel. An architectural gem.

(beat)

Two people died during construction. A welder who knew all the dangers when he took on the job. And your brother.

Daniel looks at his emotional father.

DANIEL

I know you were grooming him to take over. And I know you didn't expect that responsibility to ever fall on my shoulders. But I need you to please start having some faith in me and my abilities.

BRADFORD

How can I when you seem to be more focused on chasing tail than selling magazines? I don't need to tell you this company has a lot of enemies, both inside and out. Gloss is a stepping-stone for you, but an important one. You succeed at this...your place in the company is assured. You fail...well the magazine will survive, Wilhelmina can easily take over. But for you, it could be the end of the line.

The words send a chill down Daniel's spine. Bradford motions toward the helicopter pilot who opens the door. He hands Bradford a martini as he steps in. As he takes a hard sip.

BRADFORD

I don't want this Charmaine woman working for you.

The helicopter blades start to WHIR.

DANIEL

I think I'm perfectly capable of hiring my own assistant.

BRADFORD

The money we paid out to the two who claimed sexual harassment would point to the contrary -- and I don't care if they came on to you first. You need someone who's good. And someone you won't wanna screw if your life depended on it.

DANIEL

And who exactly do you have in mind?

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Betty sits on the couch, gorging on leftover flan while quietly watching a re-run of "Girlfriends" with her nephew. As she shoves a big, heaping glob into her mouth...

JUSTIN

You sure you're okay?

BETTY

Mmm-hmmm. I'm fine.

The phone RINGS. She motions for Justin to pick it up.

JUSTIN

Hello?

(to Betty)

A guy from Meat Publications.

A beat -- huh? Then Betty's eyes widen.

BETTY

Meade.

She swallows hard, grabs the phone.

BETTY

This is Betty Suarez. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. You serious? Of course I can start tomorrow. What magazine is it for? Gloss.

She looks at Justin who, without missing a beat, reaches into his backpack, pulls out the latest issue.

BETTY

Yes, I'll see you first thing.
(hanging up; happily in
shock)

Assistant to the editor-in-chief.

They start flipping through the magazine together and we catch glimpses of the content: models, couture, beauty tips.

JUSTIN

I didn't know you wanted to work at
Gloss.

Betty sees the title of an article: "DUMPED: Why It's Your Fault." She shuts the magazine.

BETTY

Well it definitely wouldn't have
been my first choice. But it
doesn't matter. It's a Meade
Publication. If I do well there, I
can go anywhere in the company.

JUSTIN

Well, just try and dress
fashionably. Do you have anything?

Betty thinks a moment. Something hits her.

BETTY

Actually I do.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - LOBBY - DAY

ELEVATOR DOORS OPEN TO REVEAL...

BETTY. Smiling. Confident. And wearing her Guadalajara tourist poncho that literally has "GUADALAJARA!" splashed across the front. No one except Betty would mistake this for D&G.

As she steps into the ipodesque lobby, the RECEPTIONIST's jaw drops.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh. My. God.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - LOBBY - DAY

Betty walks toward the headset-wearing receptionist AMANDA (late 20's). Unlike most of the natural beauties gracing the framed Gloss covers on the walls, Amanda's a knockout who's had to work at it: tireless hours at the gym, dermatologist, Jenny Craig. She smiles politely.

AMANDA

Hi, you the "before"?

BETTY

Huh?

AMANDA

Before and after stomach stapling.
The photo shoot?

BETTY

I'm working here.

Amanda stares at her. We hear a tinny voice on the headset saying, "Are you there?" She CLICKS off.

AMANDA

For?

BETTY

The new Editor-in-Chief.

She continues staring -- this does not appear to be computing for Amanda. Betty is getting annoyed.

BETTY

Can you please tell me where to go?

AMANDA

Yeah, follow me.

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - BULLPEN - DAY

Amanda leads her through the half-empty offices.

AMANDA

Everyone's in the conference room, Daniel's about to start his first staff meeting. I'm Amanda by the way.

BETTY

Betty.

AMANDA

FYI Betty, assistants are usually here before their bosses.

BETTY

Oh, I was filling out paperwork in H.R. and --

AMANDA

Just try not to let it happen again. So where do you come from?

BETTY

Queens.

Amanda looks at her like she's retarded.

AMANDA

What job were you doing.

BETTY

Well aside from internships and part-time work to pay for school...this is my first real job.

AMANDA

That's interesting. I was told I didn't have enough experience for the position. It's over there.

She points to the conference room, huffs off. Betty takes a moment, looks toward the closed door.

BETTY

(to herself)

You are an attractive, confident, intelligent businesswoman.

She starts for the room, shoulders back, head held high. She's a little wobbly in her heels but she's doing her best.

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The entire staff is gathered, going around the table stating their name and title. A spikey-haired stoner guy with a slow speaking cadence is up.

GEOFF

Geoff Walker, art de --

JUST THEN, Betty walks through the door, trips in her heels, falls flat on her face.

GEOFF

-- partment...are you okay?

ANGLE ON END OF THE TABLE -- Betty's head pops up. She looks out over the 40 intimidating fashionistas all staring at her, deathly quiet.

BETTY

Yes! I'm fine. Heel broke. All good, I got sneaks in the bag.

(beat)

Um, hi. I'm Betty Suarez, assistant to the Editor-in-Chief.

ZOOM IN ON DANIEL -- at the other end of the table, staring at her, completely mortified. *This is his new assistant?*

Betty sits at one of the empty chairs lined up against the wall.

DANIEL

Well, before we continue --

As Betty adjusts in the chair, we hear a god-awful SCRAPING sound as the chair back pushes up against the wall. She catches herself, stops.

DANIEL

Um, before we continue, I gotta confess I'm probably not gonna remember all your names and titles just yet.

Some CHUCKLES.

DANIEL

But I promise I'll get there. I wish I wasn't coming in as the new guy under such terrible circumstances. I know I have some awful big --

HIS POV -- he sees Betty. She smiles at him, almost blinding him with her braces.

DANIEL

Teeth.

(catching himself)

Shoes -- shoes to fill.

(MORE)

DANIEL (cont'd)

But I can't tell you how excited I am to be working with such an amazingly talented, dedicated staff. And I wanted to take the moment to talk a little about my vision for --

Just then the door FLIES OPEN and in tromps WILHELMINA SLATER. Huge, dark sunglasses. Blazing Pucci print scarf around her head. Exquisitely tailored Chanel suit. If Leona Helmsley's sperm fertilized Jackie O's egg, this would be their love child. Trailing behind her, preppy, perfectly put-together, bitchy male assistant MARC.

WILHELMINA

(unwrapping scarf)

So sorry I'm late.

She stops in her tracks, pulls off her sunglasses. Looking out over everyone, hurt in her eyes...

WILHELMINA

Oh...you began without me.

DANIEL

I'm sorry Wilhelmina I --

WILHELMINA

SHHH. Marc. Gift.

Marc runs over to Daniel, hands him a gift box.

DANIEL

Thank you. As I was saying --

WILHELMINA

Aren't you gonna open it?

ON BETTY -- intently observing the interaction. Daniel takes a moment, opens the box. A glass paperweight engraved with the date and Daniel's name.

WILHELMINA

(beaming)

Baccarat crystal. To commemorate your first day.

DANIEL

(staring at it)

Thank you. But it's Daniel, not Danny.

WILHELMINA

WHAT?

She glides over, stares at the mistake, completely calm.

WILHELMINA

I am hellaciously upset Marc.

MARC

Ohmigod I'm so sorr ---

WILHELMINA

SHHHHH.

(to Daniel)

Purge this from memory. Please.

DANIEL

AS I WAS SAYING --

WILHELMINA

(taking a seat)

Well I think we have to discuss the Renata Cosmetics supplement.

DANIEL

Renata Cosmetics supplement?

WILHELMINA

The biggest ad buy of the year and the only paid layout editorial ever works on.

Betty makes sure to take notes on this.

DANIEL

I'm sure Renata will love what we come up with.

WILHELMINA

Daniel, you don't understand. Given the new circumstances, Renata needs to sign off on the spread *before we go to print. Obviously* we're all here to help you succeed and we've been working on several ideas. Continued ad buys from Renata will make the publishing side of Gloss and your father very, very happy.

Before Daniel can say another word, Wilhelmina's hijacking of the meeting continues.

WILHELMINA

Now Daniel, I don't know if you're aware, but we close book in less than two weeks. We all need to get back to work to make this, the very first issue with your name on the masthead, SPARKLE.

(beat)

Everyone, lets not dilly dally -- our Editor needs us.

She stands up and everyone follows suit. As Marc walks past Betty...

MARC

Killer poncho.

BETTY

Thanks!

As soon as she turns around, he mimes vomiting. Betty approaches Daniel who looks as though he's just been castrated.

BETTY

Mr. Meade I just wanted to personally introduce myself. I'm sorry for the accident and my tardiness -- HR kept me down there forever -- but I'm not making excuses and I promise I will always be here before you or anyone else. Is there anything in particular you'd like me to do right now?

ON DANIEL -- appearing shell-shocked, both from the meeting and her appearance.

BETTY

Well, um, I know you have a lot on your plate. Maybe I can start by putting together a list of the staff with their pictures to help you remember them. Um, okay, well I'll --

Heels in hand, Betty awkwardly turns and walks out. Off Daniel staring at the diminutive "Danny" on the paperweight...

CUT TO:

SMALL, BLOODY PUNCTURE MARKS.

WILHELMINA'S VOICE
Are you getting the crease under
the hairline?

MARC
Yes Willie.

INT. WILHELMINA'S OFFICE - DAY

Reveal Marc injecting Botox into her forehead.

WILHELMINA
Twenty years Marc.

Marc's face -- here she goes again.

WILHELMINA
No one has worked harder. Better.
I have bled for this magazine.
Helped turn it into the icon it is
today. And now that nasty,
nepotistic son of a bitch gives MY
job to to --

MARC
His son.

WILHELMINA
A self-absorbed lothario punk who
knows NOTHING about fashion.

Wilhelmina looks up at Marc, vulnerable.

WILHELMINA
Tell me the truth...is it because
I'm getting old?

MARC
ABSOLUTELY NOT.
(beat)
Though maybe just a tad more
between the brows.

He jams the needle into her face.

MARC
What are you going to do?

Wilhelmina thinks about this.

WILHELMINA

Nothing. I have a feeling he'll need no help falling flat on his face.

MARC

Well he's well on his way. I mean could you believe that assistant? This is Gloss, not Dog Fancy.

(beat)

Done.

Wilhelmina gets up, stares in the mirror. Even though her forehead is still bloody, she smiles to herself, pleased. Marc holds up the syringe -- there's just a tiny bit left.

MARC

What should I do with the leftover?

WILHELMINA

All yours.

Marc is positively giddy. Just then Wilhelmina's cell phone rings. She looks at the display.

WILHELMINA

Give me a moment Marc.

He leaves the room.

WILHELMINA

How are you recovering?

(beat)

Well I'm sure you'll be better once everything starts coming to a boil here.

INT. GLOSS - BULLPEN - DAY

Betty sits at her computer, putting together the list of employees with their pictures. Behind her we see Daniel in his office talking to another man.

AMANDA

What are you doing?

BETTY

Making an employee list for Daniel.

AMANDA

(staring at screen)

Ugh, I hate that pic of me. My pores look so Cameron D. You don't need it. Daniel knows exactly who I am. Who's he in with?

BETTY

Craig Dawson, the photographer.

AMANDA

Ooooh -- he's gonna do the Renata supplement, isn't he? Craig's amazing, he's shot like everything.

BETTY

I know. They seem to be good friends.

AMANDA

Yeah, there'd been some drama -- Daniel hooked up with Craig's ex-girlfriend a couple of years ago, but they're fine now.

Amanda stares at Craig through the office window.

AMANDA

(bragging)

We went out for like a week. And they don't call him the tripod just 'cause he's a photographer if you catch my drift.

Off Betty, desperately not wanting to hear any more...

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel's sitting with CRAIG DAWSON (30's). Loud, brash, good-looking...he's the photographer equivalent to Warren Beatty's hairdresser in "Shampoo." As he flips through a portfolio of photographs and sketches.

CRAIG

No. No. Too down. Too out.
Can't go there. All of this SUCKS.

DANIEL

That's what I thought.
(taking a moment)
Craig, can I trust you with something?

CRAIG

Of course man, you know you're like my bro.

DANIEL

Look, I don't think anyone wants me here. Especially Wilhelmina.

CRAIG

Well, that's no secret.

DANIEL

She's trying to send me on a wrong direction with these ideas.

CRAIG

Well I'll tell you what the right direction is: HARD.

DANIEL

Hard?

CRAIG

Hard. Edgy. A little lewd but not lascivious. Metaphorically the crack of the ass versus the whole thing...you know what I mean?

DANIEL

Um -- kinda. You have any ideas?

CRAIG

Like, a million. But we should keep things on the Q.T. -- you don't want these people mucking things up.

Daniel nods. Just then, the door opens. Betty.

BETTY

Sorry to interrupt. Would you like me to get you lunch?

DANIEL

No, but you go ahead.

BETTY

(to Craig; sweetly)
Um, I just wanted to say what a big fan I am of your work. That Traveler layout with the tiki torches was so gorgeous.

(MORE)

BETTY (cont'd)
Reminded me of a Hiroaki piece I
saw once in this Japanese magazine.

Craig is taken aback, like he's been caught.

CRAIG
I don't know what you're talking
about. I don't look at other
photographer's stuff.

BETTY
Oh. I wasn't saying -- um, I
should go.

As she shuts the door, we can tell Craig is steaming.

CRAIG
Okay dude, what's the story here,
I know the type of women you hire.

DANIEL
My father made me.

CRAIG
You're kidding me.

DANIEL
Look, she appears to be good.
Capable. A go-getter.

CRAIG
FUGLY. Listen to me, you are the
editor-in-chief of Gloss Magazine.
Image is everything in fashion. Is
that what you want representing
you? Paparazzi taking your picture
and *she's* standing behind you? NO.

DANIEL
I can't fire her, Craig.

CRAIG
Well what if she quits?

DANIEL
And how do I get her to do that?

CRAIG
Beat her down. To a pulp.

Off Daniel...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS CAFETERIA - DAY

A sleek, gorgeous space that's more SoHo eatery than office cafeteria. Tracking through the assorted food stations, we find Betty at the grill. The server plops something on her tray. She stares at it.

BETTY

I'm sorry, I said a hamburger.

SERVER

Right.

ANGLE ON TRAY -- there's just a tiny beef patty wrapped in lettuce leaves there.

BETTY

Where's the bread?

From his look, she might as well be speaking Klingon. He pulls out some skinny breadsticks, tosses it on her tray.

SERVER

NEXT.

As Betty moves through the cafeteria alone, it's like being back in high school. The various cliques of the magazine world all huddled together under one roof: Pastel clad "socials" from the upper crust lifestyle magazine; Intellectual snobs from the literature one; gay men with too much hair product from the GQ equivalent. Betty doesn't quite fit in with any of them. Just then...

WOMAN'S VOICE

Hey you.

Betty turns over to find a homely woman in a Mary Kate Olsen/Bag Lady style outfit waving at her.

CHRISTINA

(raspy New York accent)

Betty, right? Daniel Meade's assistant.

BETTY

(taking a seat)

How do you know?

CHRISTINA

Oh, everyone knows everything around here. I'm Christina, I work in the Closet.

BETTY

Closet?

CHRISTINA

Where all the clothes are kept. I keep track of things, act as in-house seamstress. Sometimes they even let me keep the crappy stuff from last season but I have to improvise 'cause everything's a size zero. Voila...

She points proudly to her outfit --- silk paisley and Scottish tartan -- obviously two dresses sewn together. Betty nods, impressed.

CHRISTINA

Anyway I like it 'cause I'm mostly by myself, away from the Chic-ees

BETTY

Chic--ees?

CHRISTINA

The bitches that work at Gloss. Hey girls!

We meet two more women: tall, gangly NANCY and sassy, morbidly obese ZELDA.

CHRISTINA

Zelda, Nancy, this is Betty.

ZELDA

Aaah, you're the one working for Daniel.

BETTY

Right. What do you guys do?

NANCY

Floater -- anywhere the company needs me, I'm there.

ZELDA

Phone subscriptions.

(beat)

Close your eyes, I'll show you.

As Zelda purrs her sales pitch, we realize her voice could not correspond any less to her actual appearance.

ZELDA

Sir, each issue of "Metropolitan Dude" is full of wonderful features, informative reviews and photographs of some of the most beautiful women in the world. Like me? They wish they looked like me. Now give me your credit card number stud...

As everyone laughs, Betty keeps her eyes shut.

ZELDA

Baby girl, you can open your eyes now.

NANCY

So how are the Chic-ees treating you?

BETTY

Um, well everyone appears to be pretty nice so far.

They all look at one another, burst into laughter.

BETTY

I'm serious. Oh, there's Marc.

She waves, smiles.

ANGLE ON MARC -- one eyebrow is normal, the other is pointing straight up, Kidman-like...that's all the leftover Botox could cover. Through his clenched, toothy grin...

MARC

Look, it's the bizarro version of "Sex and the City."

He's walking with Amanda, post-lunch. She starts cracking up.

AMANDA

Stop it, I'm gagging.

MARC

(serious)
Take advantage and go upchuck this minute.

Amanda nods intently and runs to the bathroom.

BACK TO THE GIRLS

CHRISTINA

Well Betty, we're all proud of you.

NANCY

Definitely a coup landing such a high-profile gig...especially given Daniel's reputation.

BETTY

Which is?

They look at one another.

ZELDA

Well how do I put this politely?
The man's a DOG.

NANCY

Loves the models.

CHRISTINA

Dates them, sleeps with them, hires them to be his assistant... sometimes all three at once.

BETTY

Oh.

ZELDA

Not that you're not adorable.

NANCY

Not at all.

CHRISTINA

But not exactly the type he usually hires. But maybe now, in his new position, he's finally growing up.

BETTY

Well I just really want to impress him. I was thinking of putting together my own mock version of this ad layout he has to do -- so he can get a sense of my taste and abilities.

NANCY

Showing a little initiative...not a bad idea.

CHRISTINA

Well if there's anything you need for it, we're here for you. You've got access to next season's stuff if you want it.

NANCY

I can actually get a hold of art and graphics from the other magazines.

Beat. They stare at Zelda.

ZELDA

What? They're not talking pictures.

(beat)

Tell you what? I'll help you with other stuff. First and foremost where to find food that's actually gonna fill you up around here. Cooking magazine on floor 15? Mmm-mmm.

They laugh.

BETTY

Thank you all so much.

Just then, her phone RINGS.

BETTY.

(answering)

Yes Daniel. I'll be right there.

(standing)

I have to get back. It was great meeting you.

CHRISTINA

See you Betty.

Not having taken a bite of her burger, Betty goes to grab one of the to-go containers.

ZELDA

So how long do you give her?

NANCY

Two weeks tops.

They glumly shake their heads.

INT. GLOSS BULLPEN - DAY

Betty turns the corner to find Daniel, standing over her desk.

BETTY

Hi.

He stares at her to-go container.

DANIEL

Is that *food*?

From his tone, he might as well have said *filth*. BEAT. She throws it in the wastebasket.

BETTY

No.

He heads toward his office. She follows him.

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

DANIEL

I need a helicopter.

BETTY

Okay.

DANIEL

In 15 minutes.

Betty stops. Looks at the clock: 1:30.

BETTY

Um, all right. By any chance do you know where I can book a helicopter last minute?

Daniel glares at her.

BETTY

I'm sorry, I'll uh --

As she turns to walk out.

DANIEL

Betty. I can smell the *food*.

As Betty goes for the wastebasket to get the burger out of here...

NOTE: MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - BULLPEN - DAY

ON THE CLOCK: Less than a minute left to go. Betty's on the phone, frantic. Suddenly she slams it down. Appears beaten. Daniel walks out of his office, is about to scream at her when Betty points behind him:

IN THE WINDOW, we see a helicopter pulling up toward the roof. Daniel's taken for a loop. He can't believe she was able to accomplish a seemingly impossible task.

INT. BETTY'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's 3 a.m. A grumpy Ignacio nudges Betty awake, hands her the phone. She suddenly bolts upright, starts writing things down on a notepad with the heading "Daniel's Nocturnal Thoughts."

INT. GLOSS - BULLPEN - DAY

Betty is scanning online sales data on Renata Cosmetics, cutting and pasting facts and figures. Suddenly, Daniel slams his coffee cup on her desk, starts screaming at her about it not being hot enough.

EXT. SEEDY NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Trannies, drug dealers, gangbangers, BETTY. She's skittish as she makes her way down the street, reading a note that says, "Daniel's Favorite Bakery" with an address. She stops in front of it -- it's out of business, has been for a while. Just then, GUNSHOTS -- she ducks. Looks up. It's a kid walking past with a PSP game console.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We're tight on a Post-It which reads, "Betty - can you buy candles for dad's b-day cake?" Pulling away, we find Betty, preparing to take digital pictures of an of-the-moment outfit from the Closet. Justin smacks a brooch from her hand, accessorizes it with his own choices. Clearly, the fashion aspect of this project is not her forte.

INT. RACQUETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Daniel is playing with Craig. He motions to her that he needs the sweat-drenched towel he's making her hold. She runs toward him just as Craig hits the ball, SMASHING her on the head.

INT. GLOSS BULLPEN - DAY

Betty is at her desk, swamped with work. An IM pops on her computer screen. It's from Walter. "Can we talk?" Betty is taken aback, can't seem to deal with it right now. She clicks off. Just then, Nancy walks past, drops off a CD-ROM labeled "Luxury Location Stills." Off Betty's grateful smile...

NOTE: END MONTAGE SEQUENCE.

EXT. TRIBECA CITY STREET - NIGHT

A freezing night. Betty, bundled up in a goose-down jacket, sits on a bus bench across from Daniel's building, a homeless man sleeping next to her. She's on her laptop, laying text next to a photoshopped image of a model. Her cell phone RINGS. Its Hilda.

BETTY

Hi --

HILDA

Where are you Betty?

BETTY

Still working.

HILDA

You forgot didn't you?

Betty gasps.

BETTY

Oh my God, dad's birthday. I was so busy I --

Just then, something catches her eye.

BETTY

Look, I gotta go, I'll be there as soon as I can.

CLICK. He hangs up, annoyed that nothing seems to be getting to her. He looks out the window, sees her shivering in the cold. We can see a pang of guilt in his eyes. He's about to call her back when the door opens -- the gorgeous woman is walking in.

DANIEL
(smiling)
Perfect timing...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Betty looks at her watch: 9:30. She looks miserable. Just then, she sees Wilhelmina walking out of a nearby restaurant and toward a waiting town car. She stops, stares at her.

WILHELMINA
Netty?

BETTY
Betty.

WILHELMINA
'You're waiting for a *bus*?

BETTY
Um. Yeah.

WILHELMINA
Well, I'd offer you a ride but I don't think we're going in the same direction. Stay warm!

She jumps into the car and...

INT. TOWN CAR - NIGHT

Looks down toward the floor.

WILHELMINA
Get up you idiot she didn't see you.
(beat)
Now give me some love.

Before we see who's else is in there, we pull away, left only with the sound of slobbery kissing.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Betty opens the front door. It's dark.

BETTY

Hello?

Remnants of a party but everyone's gone or asleep. Betty walks toward the one lit table lamp, finds a note. "We left you a piece of cake. It's in the fridge -- Hilda." As Betty collapses on the couch, exhausted and frustrated...

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. GLOSS BULLPEN - DAY

Betty's trying to keep up with Daniel as he marches through the office, cell phone in one hand, blackberry in the other.

DANIEL

(into earpiece)

Totally on the brink. It's gonna be major.

He climbs into...

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors almost close on Betty.

DANIEL

I'm on my way to set as we speak...hello?

The signal's dropped. He yanks the earpiece out. An awkward silence as the elevator glides down, just the two of them. Something's on Betty's mind.

BETTY

Exciting day.

He looks at her.

BETTY

Um, with the photo shoot.

No response from Daniel.

BETTY

Daniel, I was just wondering if you had a chance to look at that e-mail I sent you last week. The one with my idea for the Renata supplement.

The elevator doors open. Daniel wastes no time stepping out.

INT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS LOBBY - DAY

Betty catches up to him.

BETTY

Obviously you decided to go in a different direction, but if you have any feedback, just 'cause I'm trying to learn as much as I can and --

DANIEL

Not Gloss.

BETTY

Okay. Any specifics?

DANIEL

The specifics are...it's just not Gloss.

They step out to...

EXT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS BUILDING - DAY

Where Daniel's town car is waiting.

DANIEL

(clicking on blackberry)

Betty, I really don't have time for this.

BETTY

Right. I'm sorry.

DANIEL

(staring at message on Blackberry)

Damn it. They forgot one of the outfits. Go up to the Closet and bring it over to set.

Betty turns back around.

BETTY

(under her breath)

Please.

As she turns to walk back inside, Daniel checks his blackberry again.

ANGLE ON SCREEN -- the e-mail in-box. Sitting there, unread, is Betty's e-mail entitled "Renata Supplement Idea." With a quick click he sends it to the Trash folder before stepping into his town car.

INT. CLOSET - DAY

Less of a closet than a giant, crammed boutique. Racks upon racks of incredibly beautiful and expensive clothes, shoes and accessories.

We follow Betty as she slowly walks through the room. Even for someone not into fashion, it's an impressive sight. She sees a dangling price tag. Takes a look. Her eyes widen. Just then we see Christina.

CHRISTINA

Feel the fabric on that thing.

Betty runs her fingers over the funky, dark dress.

BETTY

Kind of rough.

CHRISTINA

That's 'cause it's burlap.
Basically, you're talking \$7,000
for a designer potato sack.

BETTY

(shaking her head)

I can't believe people buy this
stuff.

CHRISTINA

I can't believe they wear it.

(laughing)

And usually just once before they
chuck it to make room for next
season. But that's fashion. And I
gotta say, I do love it.

(beat; giving her outfit a
once over)

You're not much into it, huh?

BETTY

Fashion? Not really. I love
magazines. Always have.

(beat)

When I was a kid, my dad worked at
a newsstand. After my mom died I'd
go there after school, spend hours
just reading everything I could.
Even if I didn't understand the
articles, I loved looking at the
pictures. All these beautiful,
amazing places, people.

(MORE)

BETTY (cont'd)

So different than 150th and Flushing Boulevard, you know? I always said I wanted to own a magazine someday...which I know sounds out there but --

CHRISTINA

Hey...not as out there as saying you want to be a designer. You should see some of the reactions I get -- from my family, the people here. So I just keep to myself, quietly do my thing...it'll happen.

(beat)

How's it going?

Betty takes a deep breath, shines her best smile.

BETTY

It's good. You know. Challenging. More challenging than I imagined. But I'm learning a lot. I think. And I just have to roll with the punches and I think I'll get used to it.

Christina stares at her.

CHRISTINA

Brutal, huh?

Betty's smile crumbles, she nods.

BETTY

I just -- nothing I do is ever good enough. He treats me like dirt. Everyone does. I know I don't really fit in. But I'm trying so hard to do a good job and it just doesn't seem to matter.

Christina looks down. There's something on her mind.

BETTY

What?

CHRISTINA

Betty, I wasn't sure whether to tell you or not but...I think it's best if you know.

BETTY

Yeah?

CHRISTINA

Nancy was down at Human Resources. Some of the people there were talking. And apparently, Bradford was the one who wanted to hire you.

BETTY

(excited)

Bradford Meade knows who I am?

CHRISTINA

(with difficulty)

He made Daniel hire you because he didn't want his son to be tempted to sleep with his assistants anymore.

A beat.

BETTY

Oh.

CHRISTINA

I'm sorry Betty.

Betty shrugs her shoulders, forces a smile.

BETTY

Well I guess that explains a lot.

CHRISTINA

Betty --

BETTY

No, it's okay. You know, I should be grateful, I got my break. It's not always easy for everyone. I guess this is just how it was supposed to work out with me.

(beat)

I should get going.

Christina hands her the plastic wrap covered outfit.

CHRISTINA

Hang in there okay? And if you need anything...

Betty nods, walks out.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Camera tracks through the bustling photo studio. Stylists, assistants, models all frantically running around. Through the haze of smoke in the background, we can make out some of the set which consists of burnt out, crashed cars.

Camera lands on WILHELMINA arriving, Marc in tow. She rips off her sunglasses, surveys the scene. Just then, Daniel walks past.

DANIEL

So what do you think?

WILHELMINA

Darling, I give you a big, fat
"F"...

(beat)

For fabulous.

DANIEL

Thank you Wilhelmina.

As he keeps walking, we see Wilhelmina turn to Marc, roll her eyes.

ANGLE ON DANIEL approaching a pissed off Craig.

CRAIG

Traffic or hangover? Did anyone read the contract to her? She needs to be here for the test shots.

DANIEL

What's going on?

CRAIG

Izabela, the Brazilian model -- she's late. This is a crazy complicated shoot and I need her dressed and ready right now.

DANIEL

They're test shots -- lets just use a stand-in.

CRAIG

No no, she's too specific. I need someone with her skin tone. Someone like...

He scans the room and his eyes land on...BETTY, just walking in.

CRAIG

Her.

DANIEL

Funny.

CRAIG

(smiling)

Bet ya she'll quit before she does it.

Off Daniel, thinking about it...

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Betty is making her way through half-naked, six foot tall beauties when Daniel steps in front of her.

DANIEL

Betty, I'm glad you're here.
Listen, we've got a crisis and need your help.

BETTY

Okay.

DANIEL

One of the models hasn't shown up.
And we need someone to stand in for her...

(re: outfit in her hands)
In wardrobe.

BETTY

(hitting her)
You want me to do it?

He nods. She pulls the plastic off the outfit...there's barely anything there. Betty looks at it.

DANIEL

Well?

Betty looks over at the outfit, the models, then stares at Daniel. It's a long, silent stand-off.

BETTY

This is what you want me to do?

DANIEL

Yes.

A beat. Without saying a word, Betty turns, marches away. The plan appears to have worked. Daniel takes a deep breath, turns around. From the look on his face, it's clear he's not exactly proud of this.

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Craig is changing a lens. Daniel walks over.

DANIEL

She quit.

CRAIG

Good -- Now who do we use?

Suddenly, a HUSH falls over the crowd. Everyone turns to stare at something.

ANGLE ON WILHELMINA -- she's on her cell phone when something catches her attention.

WILHELMINA

Oh no she didn't.

We now see what everyone is staring at: BETTY, walking toward set in the awful, skin-baring outfit. Head high, stoic. Daniel stands there in shock that she went through with it. Betty looks at Craig.

BETTY

(firmly)

Where do you want me?

CRAIG

(speechless)

Um. Right there is fine.

He sandwiches her in between a couple of tall, thin, imposing models.

CRAIG

(to gaffer)

I see a shadow -- move that light over to the right thank you.

Craig starts taking test shots.

CRAIG

Great. Movement, ladies. That's right. Sexy. More. More. More. You're devouring the camera with your eyes.

ANGLE ON BETTY -- FLASHES reflecting in her glasses. She jumps a little each time, like she's being shocked. We can hear people guffawing, snickering. Her lips start quivering.

ON DANIEL -- this is going too far. He turns to Craig.

DANIEL

Stop it.

CRAIG

Why? She's pretty good. Give me a little more *coquette* Betty.

DANIEL

STOP IT.

The models next to Betty can't help but burst out laughing. Betty can't take anymore, storms off, grabbing her bag on the way out.

Daniel follows her.

DANIEL

Betty wait --

EXT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

Betty steps into the street.

DANIEL

Betty --

BETTY

(eyes welled up)

This is what you wanted isn't it? To humiliate me. To make me quit. God forbid you had to work with the ugly girl they forced you to hire. Well...congratulations.

Off Betty, walking away...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. NEW YORK SKYLINE - DUSK

An establishing shot of the city fades to...

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DUSK

Tracking through the elevated, Queens bound 7 train, we find Betty sitting alone, her Guadalajara poncho barely covering the outfit from the photo studio. A LITTLE BOY stares at her.

LITTLE BOY
(innocently)
Are you a stripper?

His mother grabs him, tells him to shut up. Betty looks away, staring sadly at the commuters on their way home from office jobs.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Betty walks in to find her father sitting in his Lay-Z Boy, leg propped up on a stool, ice pack pressed to his forehead. She rushes over to him.

BETTY
What happened?!?

IGNACIO
I'm fine.

Hilda appears.

HILDA
He fell at work.

IGNACIO
It wasn't at work.

HILDA
No, even better. He'd stepped out to get some coffee so now worker's comp says they're not gonna cover anything.

Ignacio shrugs his shoulders, looks at Betty.

IGNACIO
Dios mio, what are you wearing?

BETTY

Nothing.

IGNACIO

Obviously.

He goes to stand up. Before his daughters can say anything.

IGNACIO

No one is going to the bathroom
with me!

He hobbles with crutches toward the bathroom. As Betty grabs
a robe to cover herself...

BETTY

Why didn't you call me?

HILDA

You cell went straight to
voicemail. They told me at work
you weren't there -- that
receptionist is very rude by the
way. You never call any of us
during the day, so what am I
supposed to do?

BETTY

I'm sorry.

HILDA

You know that was the first time
since mom died we haven't all been
together for dad's birthday.

BETTY

I know. And I feel horrible about
it Hilda. But it's just been so
crazy.

Hilda shrugs her shoulders.

HILDA

I guess it's just hard for me to
understand the point of this
ambition.

BETTY

What do you mean?

HILDA

Betty, owning magazines, running media companies, all this stuff you want to do, it doesn't happen for people like us unless you're like J. Lo. or something. The reality is, most of these people at the top went to Harvard not Queens College. And they come from money. I mean, it's not like your boss got to where he's at because he worked hard for it.

Betty can't say anything.

HILDA

Betty, you were dating a really good guy, who I'm sure you can work things out with if you try. I mean, you're 24 now. Don't you want to get married? Have kids? Raise a family?

BETTY

Maybe one day. But those are your dreams Hilda, not mine. There's other things that are more important to me right now.

HILDA

And how's that working out for you? 'Cause honestly I've never seen you looking more miserable in my life.

(beat)

Look, I gotta pick Justin up at the sitter. You think you can take care of dad, try and deal with his HMO?

BETTY

Yeah...I think I got some free time.

HILDA

Okay good. I'll see you later.

As Hilda walks out, we stay on Betty, thinking...

DANIEL (V.O.)

We're so thrilled to have you here Renata.

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Editors and execs are gathered for the Renata Cosmetics presentation. We meet RENATA (no last name), a wild-maned, crispy skinned Italian woman chain-smoking Parliament Lights. We notice a little rodent-like dog sticks out of her purse. Daniel stands at the head of the room.

DANIEL

Why don't we just let the pictures speak for themselves.

Renata smiles as she pets her dog, feeds him a milkbone. We notice Wilhelmina next to her, anxiously awaiting.

Daniel motions to an assistant and the room goes dark. To a thumping disco beat, photos are projected on a wall-sized screen at the end of the room. They're edgy all right: Cars crashed into building, lampposts, each other. Grime covered models lay sprawled on the pavement. On the front hood of the cars, under the tires. Suddenly --

RENATA

SMETTERE!

The music slams off. Renata jumps to her feet.

RENATA

(heavy accent)

Dis is freekin' joke, right?

DANIEL

Um. No.

RENATA

You stupido! All of you stupido!

She WAILS like a banshee as she smashes her bottle of Pellegrino against the window. She tears out of there followed by her gaggle of minions. The room is shocked silent. An ashen Daniel speaks first.

DANIEL

What just happened.

A long PAUSE.

MARC

Well, Renata's probably still a little sensitive about the accident.

DANIEL

Accident?

MARC

Oh. You didn't know. About a month ago she backed her Hummer into twelve people outside the Roxy -- apparently she was pissed at the bouncer when he didn't let her dog in. No one was seriously hurt but she's gotten some bad press.

Daniel looks to Craig.

CRAIG

I had no idea.

DANIEL

Why didn't anyone say anything?

Everyone shifts around uncomfortably. Geoff, the guy we met in the first conference room scene speaks up.

GEOFF

You didn't include us in the concept and...well we thought you knew what you were doing.

A BEAT.

DANIEL

You can all go.

Everyone hightails it out of there except Wilhelmina. She looks at Daniel pitifully, envelops him in her arms.

WILHELMINA

Oh Daniel. You know my door has been open to you since the beginning. If you didn't like my ideas...I would've happily worked with you on others. It's all about teamwork at Gloss. But sometimes we have to learn things the hard way.

She looks at him intently, brushes the hair off his forehead.

WILHELMINA

It will all work out. I look into your eyes and I see...a phoenix, rising from the ashes!

She kisses him on the cheek, walks off. BEAT. The one phone in the conference room begins RINGING rather ominously. Daniel takes a moment, picks up.

DANIEL

Yes?

(beat)

Hello father. I'll be right up.

INT. BRADFORD MEADE'S OFFICE - DAY

Daniel stands before Bradford, looking like a chastised child. In the background, we notice Nancy working in the outside office.

BRADFORD

Renata doesn't just want to cancel the Gloss supplement...she's considering pulling advertising in every single one of my magazines.

(beat)

Is it true you worked on this alone, didn't consult Wilhelmina or anyone else?

DANIEL

I can explain. I had a very strong feeling she wanted to sabotage me.

Bradford rolls his eyes.

BRADFORD

Jesus, Daniel. The only person who sabotaged you is yourself.

Beat. Daniel looks down.

DANIEL

I'm sorry I let you down.

BRADFORD

I'm sorry I keep hoping you'll be something you're clearly not.

Daniel takes a moment, absorbs the stinging words.

DANIEL

Look, I can fix this. I'll call Renata, present her a new idea.

BRADFORD

There's no time.

DANIEL

I'll do it tomorrow.

Off Bradford staring at him...

INT. MARBLE BATHROOM - EVENING

A bottle of Cristal is popped open. Reveal a smiling Wilhelmina inside a votive candle-lined bubblebath. As she pours two champagne flutes, the phone RINGS. She hits speaker.

WILHELMINA

What?

MARC'S VOICE

He called *again* looking for you.

WILHELMINA

What part of UNAVAILABLE does he not understand?

MARC'S VOICE

I'll let him know.

She clicks off.

WILHELMINA

He really should've come to me earlier.

Pull back to reveal...CRAIG, lying in the bathtub with her.

CRAIG

It wouldn't have made any difference would it?

WILHELMINA

Not really. To teamwork.

CRAIG

To revenge.

They CLINK glasses. As Craig leans in and they begin kissing passionately...

INT. DANIEL'S OFFICE - EVENING

Daniel sits at his desk alone. He stares down at a notepad where he's been brainstorming ideas. He appears frustrated. Just then, Amanda walks in, clutching some papers.

AMANDA

So I talked to HR and it's really easy. They just need you to sign this payroll transfer form and I can start working for you ASAP.

Daniel looks at her.

DANIEL

Amanda, can we talk about this another time?

AMANDA

Okay. I just thought --

DANIEL

Please.

She turns and walks out, shutting the door behind her. Daniel looks at his computer screen. His e-mail program is open. There's one message sitting in the trash folder...Betty's. He drags it out, opens it.

The e-mail reads: "I photoshopped these from existing photographs. I was researching Renata and her company, thought she might respond. Looking forward to your thoughts!" He clicks on the attachment.

HIS POV -- as he scrolls through them, he appears both surprised and impressed. Off Daniel...

CUT TO:

A TELEVISION SCREEN, filling frame. The cheesy telenovela we'd seen earlier. The same Latina Beauty, now in sexy "poor" clothing, sits in a confession booth. We can make out the chiseled good looks of the priest on the other end.

LATINA BEAUTY

Perdona padre pero he pecado.
[Forgive me father, I have sinned.]

PRIEST'S VOICE

Cuentame...[Tell me.]

LATINA BEAUTY

(eyes welling up)
Me he enamorado...con un cura.
[I've fallen in love...with a priest.]

As she sobs, we cut to the other side, where the HOT PRIEST sits, staring longingly at her picture. As he presses it to his chest, over the top music swells and we...

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Pull back to find Ignacio on his Lay-Z Boy completely entertained.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Betty's in the kitchen, frying a steak while talking on the phone. There's some papers on the counter in front of her.

BETTY

That's right, it's the same case number I gave you last time I called, before you put me on hold for an hour. Now I have the physician's statement I can fax you if you can just give me the -- no don't put me on hold again --

Suddenly, hold music. It sounds like that Chumbawumba song from the late 90's. She puts the call on speakerphone, stares down at the half-burnt steak in the frying pan.

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Betty walks in.

IGNACIO

That smells good.

BETTY

It's burnt.

IGNACIO

(staring at it)

It's well done. How did it go with the HMO?

BETTY

Still working on it.

He looks at her, trying hard to mask her frustration.

IGNACIO

I'm sorry mi amor. I feel terrible. I wish I didn't have to be such a burden.

BETTY

Dad, you are not a burden.

IGNACIO

Yes I am. And you've always been so good to me. So strong. Patient. Optimistic. Just like your mother was.

She smiles tenderly at him. There's a KNOCK on the door. Betty walks over, opens the door to reveal...WALTER.

WALTER

Why haven't you responded to my IM's?

BETTY

I've been busy.

WALTER

Hello Ignacio.

Ignacio gives a half-hearted wave.

WALTER

I need to talk to you Betty. I made a terrible mistake.

Betty stares at him.

BETTY

I thought you were in love with someone else?

WALTER

No -- it was this, momentary lapse of sanity. I swear. Look, can we just talk? Please.

BETTY

Walter, not right now.

WALTER

Why not?

DANIEL'S VOICE

Betty.

We see Daniel walking up through the front yard. Walter's eyes widen.

WALTER

Are you dating someone else?

BETTY

Just go. Please.

Daniel nods hello to Walter. Puts a kind hand on Betty's arm. Walter stares at this, eyes filled with jealousy.

DANIEL

Hey.

BETTY

(to Walter)

GOOD BYE.

Betty shuts the door.

BETTY

What are you doing here?

DANIEL

I wanted to talk.

Betty stares at him.

BETTY

This is my father Ignacio. Ignacio this is/was my boss, Daniel.

IGNACIO

The one who was calling at 3 in the morning?

DANIEL

That's right.

Just then we hear a voice on the kitchen speakerphone (the call that was holding).

BETTY

I gotta get that.

As she runs into the kitchen, Daniel looks around the living room, taking in Betty's world. Yearbook Editor of the Year plaque (national winner). Academic trophies. Clippings from her work in college. There's a wall of pictures: Betty's family, pictures of a young Betty with her mom.

ON IGNACIO -- he's not eating, just staring at Daniel suspiciously.

IGNACIO

You look way too young to be anyone's boss.

DANIEL

I've gotten that before.

(beat)

This is Betty's mother?

IGNACIO

Yes, that was right before she died.

DANIEL

Oh. I had no idea.

IGNACIO

Car accident -- when Betty was a little girl.

Daniel nods. Betty walks back in. As Ignacio gets re-engrossed with the telenovela, they have some privacy...

DANIEL

Nice place.

BETTY

Yeah, we're just in between interior designers.

DANIEL

Really?

BETTY

No.

DANIEL

Right. It's a joke.

(beat)

Betty, I'm sorry. You didn't deserve what I put you through. I listened to the wrong people -- about a lot of things. But I have no one to blame but myself.

BETTY

I appreciate that Daniel. But you're gonna leave here, get chauffeured back to your Tribeca loft and I'll still be out of work, dealing with problems you could never really understand.

DANIEL

Try me...we've all got problems.

BETTY

And what are yours? Which restaurant you're going to eat at tonight? What model you're going to sleep with? Try spending the day on the phone with a crappy HMO to get 'em to pay for your dad's hospital visit. Or working odd jobs while you go to school so you can help pay the rent each month. Making all these sacrifices just to be rejected left and right 'cause you don't look a certain way.

DANIEL

Well, at least you don't have to spend your whole life living in someone else's shadow. Never measuring up no matter what you do. I know I can't compare my problems to yours but they're mine. Nothing's ever easy.

Betty takes this in.

DANIEL

Look, I never saw that layout you made until tonight. I thought it was smart. And beautiful.

BETTY

Thank you.

DANIEL

I want to show Renata your idea. Giving you credit for it. And I want you to come back, be my assistant. And I promise you, things will be different.

A long pause.

BETTY

I really need to think about it.

DANIEL

Well you have tonight. Otherwise,
I'll probably be out of a job as
well.

As he walks out, we stay on Betty processing this.

IGNACIO

You'd be stupid if you don't do it.

Betty looks at him, smiles.

BETTY

God you're nosy.

IGNACIO

And right.

BETTY

Did you believe him? You really
think things are gonna be
different?

Ignacio takes a moment.

IGNACIO

I have no idea. But Betty, nothing
worth anything ever comes easy.
Trust me.

(beat)

Don't let this opportunity pass you
by.

Off Betty...

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

TIGHT ON a yapping dog.

RENATA

Quiet baby.

Pull back to find Renata sitting in a cloud of her own cigarette smoke. Sitting at the table is the entire senior staff of Gloss including Wilhelmina. Bradford is there as well. We watch Daniel drink down his whole water bottle as he stares at the door.

RENATA

Well?

He stands up, obviously nervous.

DANIEL

(soft-spoken)

Um, well, I have --

RENATA

I can't hear you.

DANIEL

Um, I have no visuals to show you at the moment but I wanted to discuss, in general, the new approach. Softer. Less edgy. More...natural.

WILHELMINA

Which is what, Daniel?

DANIEL

Well if I can, without being specific about anything, um...

Everyone shifts in their seats uncomfortably. Just then --

BETTY

Sorry I'm late.

She's walking through the door. She looks at Daniel and he smiles at her, relieved. As she connects her laptop to the A/V equipment...

BETTY

Um, there was obviously no time for a new shoot so what Daniel's going to show you is just a mock up.

She dims the lights, starts the presentation. Pictures appear on-screen: Betty and Walter making out at Coney Island; Betty munching on a hot dog, ketchup dripping down her chin. The room is aghast. Betty rushes over, types on the computer.

BETTY

Wait -- um, I'm sorry. Wrong file. Hold on. Here we go.

Now we see the images for the first time. Model "mothers" in the middle of mundane domestic activities with their young daughters: cooking, grocery shopping, vacuuming. They're quite gorgeous and especially poignant given that Betty lost her mother when she was young. Betty gives Daniel a look...TALK.

DANIEL

Um, in order to show the softer side of Renata Cosmetics we're using the concept of mothers and daughters. Focusing on those small, special moments that are usually taken for granted. We've heightened them, trying to infuse them with a beautiful, nostalgic aura.

Everyone looks back at the poker-faced Renata. She nods.

RENATA

I just had a daughter. I do none of those things but I understand.

(beat)

Why would this appeal to our customers?

Daniel looks at Betty. She pulls out some papers.

BETTY

Um, if I may just 'cause I have the statistics right here. Everyone assumes your demographic is extremely young but there's been tremendous brand loyalty since you launched.

(MORE)

BETTY (cont'd)

Meaning the same people who were teenagers when they started using your products, well, like you, they're now settling down and having children. 58% to be exact.

Renata nods. Wilhelmina stares at Betty, picking up on her brightness.

RENATA

Will this be ready on time?

DANIEL

Of course. Do you want to approve images or models beforehand?

RENATA

No, just don't make it too sappy. Have a picture where they're pulling their hair or biting each other.

On that she puts out her cigarette and heads out, again trailed by her minions. Betty looks at Daniel -- did that go well? Daniel smiles. Betty exhales, relieved. She smiles, glowing in a way we haven't seen before.

ANGLE ON WINDOW TO HALLWAY -- a furious Amanda stands outside, watching Betty back at work.

BRADFORD

Good work.

DANIEL

This idea was actually --

BETTY

-- Your best one.

WILHELMINA

(smiling)

Indeed. Welcome back Boss.

As she turns to walk away, the smile wipes from her face...

INT. LARGE OFFICE - DUSK

Everything square inch appears to be covered with a thin film of sheeny, Saran Wrap like plastic. Wilhelmina walks in. She squints, the sun is so bright.

WOMANS VOICE

Did you wash your hands?

WILHELMINA

Of course.

WILHELMINA'S POV -- We see a WOMAN sitting behind a desk, wearing a medical face mask and obscured by the shadow of the setting sun. She extends her hand. Wilhelmina shakes it.

WOMAN

I just heard.

WILHELMINA

It's a setback. But it's only a matter of time. Once he's out...the company's ours for the taking.

WOMAN

Well, it seems to me you'll need to focus on the real brains here. That damn ugly assistant.

The woman pumps some antibacterial gel on her hands, looks down at a picture of Daniel in one of the fashion trades. Betty stands behind him.

WOMAN

What's her name?

As we go tight on Wilhelmina, over-the-top, telenovela-like music SWELLS and carries through the next couple of beats.

WILHELMINA

Betty.

INT. GLOSS MAGAZINE - BULLPEN - DAY

Amanda stares jealously at Betty's desk.

AMANDA

Betty.

INT. WALTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Walter staring at a picture of her on his nightstand.

WALTER

Betty.

EXT. MEADE PUBLICATIONS BUILDING - SUNSET

Betty is walking out alongside Christina and Zelda.

DANIEL

Betty!

She looks over. Daniel's about to get in his town car. He motions for her to come over.

BETTY

I'll see you guys tomorrow.

DANIEL

You should've let me tell them it was your idea.

BETTY

Daniel, as long as you know what I did...I don't need to take the credit.

Daniel looks at her, smiles.

DANIEL

Thank you.

BETTY

You're welcome. So, I've confirmed lunch for tomorrow -- your 3:15 with the graphics department is set. The feature editor wants --

DANIEL

Betty, tomorrow morning, it's okay.

He smiles at her. Betty smiles back. CAMERA lingers on her eyes as she looks at him. We can sense she's feeling something more for him. BEAT.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Daniel, come on.

Betty looks back. There's a girl waiting in the town car.

DANIEL

Good night.

Betty nods, walks away, glancing back as his town car one last time as it drives off. As she heads toward the subway entrance, we pull up and above her, losing her in the throng of New Yorkers...

END OF ACT SIX