



IDENTICAL SHADOWS

Bernard Mersier

BLACK SCREEN:

"What is beauty without looks?"

~Bernard Mersier~

BEAR (V.O.)

Tonight, I'm hosting a little party.  
But before the first glass is poured,  
ask yourself... 'Why do men and women  
cheat?'

FADE IN:

VIDEO CALL - DAY

REBECCA appears onscreen, with her brunette hair tied into a ponytail.

A light blush colors her cheeks, with tears glossing her green eyes, covering her mouth, emotional.

REBECCA

Oh my God... I love it.

MYRON (O.S.)

It's your weekly upgrade. It had your name written all over it.

REBECCA

Baby, I love you. What time are you coming home?

MYRON (O.S.)

I love you too, honey buns. I got a few errands to run, but I'll be back in time. We won't be late for the party.

REBECCA

You're helping me clean up, right

MYRON (O.S.)

I told you I would.

REBECCA

Okay. Be safe out there. I love you.

MYRON (O.S.)

I love you too.

The call ends.

**INT. JEWELRY STORE - CONTINUOUS**

MYRON, mid-30s, dressed in a tailored suit, stands by the glass case.

He's the definition of a gentleman. Blond hair perfectly styled, crystal-blue eyes, and a face cameras would fight to photograph.

A jewelry worker stands behind the counter, smiling.

MYRON

I don't know if you could hear her,  
but... she loved it.

JEWELRY WORKER

That's wonderful. Will you be  
purchasing it today?

MYRON

Yes, ma'am. I will.

JEWELRY WORKER

Great. Step over here with me.

They walk to the register.

JEWELRY WORKER (CONT'D)

Your total comes to fifty thousand  
even.

Myron opens his leather wallet, and pulls out a black card, handing it over.

She runs the card.

His cheeks flush from the emotional high.

She returns the card, receipt, and a pen.

The ring box is placed in a small bag.

JEWELRY WORKER (CONT'D)

Love is a beautiful thing. I'm happy  
for you both.

MYRON

She's the love of my life. Thank you.  
Have a great day.

He takes the bag and exits.

Myron walks by the people in the mall, heading toward the exit.

INTERCUT WITH:

**EXT. MALL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS**

Blue skies.

People coming and going.

Myron pauses outside, inhaling deeply as he lets his love for Rebecca fill his chest.

He heads to his black 2020 Porsche, unlocks it, and gets in.

He places the ring bag on the passenger seat, buckles up, and stares out at the people walking by.

MYRON (V.O.)

I gave Rebecca my undying devotion  
with no hesitation. She was everything  
I thought I needed. Looking back...  
she completed me, but only for a  
moment.

He starts the car, rolls the windows down, and turns on the radio.

A vibrant beat plays as he merges into light traffic, tapping the door rhythmically.

MYRON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As a man, I'll say this. We'll say  
anything and do anything, not always  
for pleasure... but for the story. Women  
say, 'All men are dogs.' And I agree.  
Stray dogs will hump and eat anything,  
the same as some men. When I met  
Rebecca, I knew she wouldn't be loyal,  
but I still wanted her.

He stops at a red light.

A car pulls up and inside the car a couple is kissing.

MYRON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Look at them. He doesn't know how many  
men she's been with. Or maybe he does

and doesn't care. I met Rebecca at a swinger party, so what does that say about me? I own four businesses, work as a lab tech assistant, and I think I'm pretty damn good in bed. Knowing all of this, while she's been with me the only thing that changed was her bank account.

The light turns green.

He drives on.

MYRON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Truth is... sharing my wife with other men doesn't faze me. I shared my last one, too. Call me weird. But deep down, I still haven't earned her love.

(Laughs lightly)

I don't want a divorce, ending up having to split half of everything I've earned. No thanks.

(Soft chuckle)

You're probably thinking, 'Just cheat already.' Well, when it comes to cheating...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. JAZZ BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Live music.

Low lighting.

Couples talking and sipping drinks.

At a corner table, RAYVEN, a stunning Latina in her 30s, sits drinking a Grand Margarita.

Her sheer dress reveals flawless curves.

Light brown eyes, long black hair in a ponytail. Minimal makeup, but she doesn't need much.

She scans the room, clearly just wanting to drink in peace. Her glossed lips meet the glass, an invitation for a kiss.

RAYVEN (V.O.)

Men think we stay after they cheat because the sex is good. See, when a woman cheats, it's smooth. Men don't

get it. Sex isn't what keeps us around. We stay because we haven't found someone more secure than the man who betrayed us. So we let him think he's the only one we'll ever need.

Rayven finishes her drink and searches for a waiter.

GREGORY approaches, placing his drink down, taking a seat.

Gregory is smooth, brown-skinned, mid-30s.

He has on a pinkie ring and thick gold chain, with deep-cut waves.

His gaze says he thinks he's a player.

GREGORY

How's everything over here?

RAYVEN

Like every other woman in here.

GREGORY

And that would be?

RAYVEN

Waiting on a drink, avoiding conversation without substance.

GREGORY

Damn, baby girl, no need to be so cold.

RAYVEN

It's the weak approach that makes me cold. You expected me to say something that would lead you to say, "Can I buy you a drink?" Right?

GREGORY

Nah. I was gonna introduce myself, then ask you your name. Why buy a drink for someone I don't know?

He laughs, hoping she'll crack a smile.

RAYVEN

(Fake laugh)

You think I'm easy, don't you?

GREGORY

No.

RAYVEN

Yeah, you do.

GREGORY

Why would you say that?

She holds up her left hand, showing a wedding ring.

RAYVEN

This. You saw it and didn't ask if I'm married or just wearing it to fend men off. That means you think I'm easy.

Gregory sips his cognac, silent.

GREGORY

Judging by the attitude in your voice, I should probably leave a happily married woman alone.

RAYVEN

My tone made you think I'm married?

GREGORY

Yeah.

RAYVEN

Then why do you think I'm sitting here alone?

GREGORY

You're more than welcome to tell me.

A waitress walks up just as Rayven is about to respond.

WAITRESS

Sorry for the wait, ma'am. They act like I'm the only one working here tonight.

RAYVEN

It's okay, sweetheart. Take your time.

WAITRESS

Thank you. What can I get you?

RAYVEN

A Grand Margarita with salt and sugar

on the rim, and three thin slices of lime.

WAITRESS  
And for you, sir?

RAYVEN  
Bring him two double shots of Marancheville.

Gregory blinks, caught off guard.

WAITRESS  
Okay. One Grand Margarita and two double shots of Marancheville. Got it.

RAYVEN  
Yes, ma'am.

The waitress walks off.

GREGORY  
Well, damn.

RAYVEN  
What?

GREGORY  
Something simple would've worked.

RAYVEN  
Then you should sit with a simple woman.  
(Sips her drink)  
Besides... The next rounds are on you.

GREGORY  
(Smiling)  
Impressive.

RAYVEN  
(Sighs)  
Do you know that men are only good for a few things, especially if a woman can solve the problem herself.  
(She leans forward)  
So... am I easy, or am I married?

THE BAND returns to the stage, joined by a slim, captivating female poet.



She's wearing a fitted dress and her natural hair flares out in a beautiful Afro.

The crowd quiets as the lights dim and the spotlight hits her.

FEMALE POET

I hope everyone's having a good time tonight.

Applause.

The waitress comes back, placing their drinks down on the table.

Rayven takes a sip from her drink, winking at Gregory.

RAYVEN

Answer that question after her performance.

FEMALE POET

That's beautiful. Now bear with me on the title of this piece. You might've been here before... or maybe you're still on this road, searching for the exit. This one's called, 'Chasing Death.'

Applause.

The band sets the tone with a moody jazz riff.

She closes her eyes, feeling the rhythm, and begins.

FEMALE POET (CONT'D)

Gentle cold words chasing your clammy bones... Death, you don't know how much I love you, wishing you would love me. You gave me a world of orgasms I could handle, Every emotion expressed as I'm manhandled. Death... you tease me with your allure. Eyes closed. My heart froze. You almost took my soul.

Rayven listens, sipping her drink, nodding with solemn agreement.

FEMALE POET (CONT'D)

You creep in and out of my life,

silent like my shadow. My heart leapt  
 when you cuddled me under your cloak.  
 Naively, I mistook it for love, never  
 seeing the joke. But now... I'll show  
 you why you should've loved me. I'm  
 moving on to greener pastures,  
 realizing all you ever wanted... was  
 my emotion in the hereafter. Death...  
 my dear death... life could've been  
 better if you accepted 'us' instead of  
 'self.'

She finishes.

The crowd applauds.

She bows and walks off.

Rayven takes another sip, still processing the poem.

GREGORY

That was beautiful.

RAYVEN

After hearing her words... Can you  
 answer my question?

GREGORY

Well...

They continue their conversation over drinks.

RAYVEN (V.O.)

Her words are still lingering in my  
 mind. But women like me, we prefer  
 what money can buy. We know no man...  
 except maybe the first will ever love  
 us just for us.

(Scoffs)

Why can't men be honest? Just say,  
 'Your beauty and body are all I'm  
 interested in.' But no... they dress  
 it up in wordplay and think we're  
 buying it because...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS**

Buzzing background noise.

MARQUEZ, a muscular Latino in his 30s with a sleek ponytail, finishes a set on the bench press.

He moves to the ropes, flexing and warming up.

MARQUEZ (V.O.)

When you know your body's right, it ain't vanity... it's confidence. Women say they want a provider... but let's be real. With a hard body and the right look, by the time she asks what you do for a living... you'll already be finishing up diggin' her out.

He scans the gym, locking eyes with JASLYIN, a Puerto Rican bombshell in tight spandex.

She's flawless, despite being covered in sweat.

They both grab ropes.

MARQUEZ

This might sound like a line, but—

JASLYIN

If it sounds like a line, it is. But I'll listen.

MARQUEZ

Your body is insane. Do you come here often?

JASLYIN

I'm here now. So what does it matter?

MARQUEZ

Because I've never seen you here before, and damn.

JASLYIN

Exactly. Go back to when you never noticed me.

MARQUEZ

Why are beautiful women always so mean?

JASLYIN

Because men like you call every thick woman 'beautiful,' hoping it'll break the ice. Just say, 'I wanna hit and

quit.' Be honest.

She starts her rope workout.

He smiles and starts his.

MARQUEZ

I'm not trying to hit. I just wanted to have a conversation.

JASLYIN

Everybody wants something. Sometimes prayers get answered. In your case... I don't see that happening.

They pick up the pace.

MARQUEZ

The conversation you think I want isn't the one I was aiming for.

JASLYIN

Then what do you wanna talk about?

MARQUEZ

Gym stuff. Favorite workout. Strength or toning. Stuff like that.

JASLYIN

Huh. I expected something cornier.

MARQUEZ

Because you're used to boys with bad lines. But when a man just wants to compliment and talk civil, you react like you just did... shocked.

JASLYIN

(Laughs)

You get points for that one.

MARQUEZ

(Laughs)

How many?

JASLYIN

If you couldn't tell from my tone, then you don't need to know.

MARQUEZ

Kinda hard to tell. You're breathing

just as hard as I am.

JASLYIN

Can you tell the difference in a woman's tone... during sex?

MARQUEZ

Where'd that come from?

JASLYIN

Same place your answer will come from.

MARQUEZ

Damn. Yeah, I can tell the difference during sex.

JASLYIN

So what's the difference right now?

MARQUEZ

Working out is about control, stamina, and appearance. Sex is about pleasure... a release.

JASLYIN

So, they're the same.

MARQUEZ

Explain.

JASLYIN

These ropes... we control them, like the rhythm of sex. Speeding it up, slowing it down. There's your stamina, pleasure and release. Health and beauty...

She slows her pace.

He follows.

JASLYIN (CONT'D)

When two people climax together with locked eye contact... That's when you see beauty no words can describe. That's how you build a healthy relationship.

She sets her ropes down.

So does he.

MARQUEZ

You just blew me away with that.

She wipes her sweat, stepping in close, tapping him on the chest.

JASLYIN

Playa to playa... You wanna know why I finally decided to work out with you?

MARQUEZ

Tell me.

She holds up her left hand, pointing at his.

JASLYIN

We're both married. So... are we gonna act like these rings can actually stop anything?

Marquez is tongue-tied.

She places a finger on his lips.

JASLYIN (CONT'D)

Think about it. I'm about to grab some water. You want a bottle?

MARQUEZ

Yeah.

JASLYIN

And since I know you're gonna stare at my ass... I'll put a little extra bounce in it to help you decide.

She winks and walks off.

MARQUEZ (V.O.)

Meeting a woman who matches your mindset is an instant turn-on. Marriage can get boring. Same positions, same moans. Even when you mix it up, it still feels the same. Sometimes, all you want is someone new to talk to. Not even for sex. Just for something fresh.

(Laughs)

But if you're not careful, that new 'friend' becomes more. And just when you think you got away with murder...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS**

Rebecca is sitting alone at a table piled with books.

She's petite, wearing jeans and a tee.

A cup of coffee steams beside her.

The book in her hands shows a couple in intimate embrace. Its title reads, 'My Love Is Your Lies.'

REBECCA (V.O.)

Men think we're easily replaceable, as if we can't return the favor. When we don't parrot their words, they fantasize about a new woman... the prettier fantasy they can control.

(Laughs)

He'll never admit it... until anger erupts. Then silence slams shut like a prison door, and he vents in bed... pounding faster than a New York minute. Next thing you know, he's bragging, 'It was so big, you could barely take it.' In your mind, you're like 'sir, this pussy was designed to create life.' It can handle whatever is pushed inside it. But if you're going to hammer me, mix in some tenderness, so I don't end up as dry as concrete.

Rebecca closes her book, stacks it, and down the rest of her coffee.

As she walks over to the trash can to throw the cup away, we see the front of her shirt.

It says, 'It's A1.'

There's an arrow coming out of the mouth of a skull pointing down.

After throwing the cup away, she heads to where the doughnuts and coffee are sold.

While Rebecca contemplates looking at a tray of fresh doughnuts, Cashier #1 greets her with a smile.

CASHIER #1  
How's the book so far?

REBECCA  
Brilliant. She cuts straight to the point. It has me hooked.

CASHIER #1  
Want another coffee?

REBECCA  
Yes, please. And two strawberry doughnuts with chocolate glaze.

CASHIER #1  
Coming right up. Same coffee as before?

REBECCA  
Exactly.

Rebecca pays.

Cashier #1 makes her coffee and gets her doughnuts.

CASHIER #1 (CONT'D)  
Wait till the end. It'll blow your mind.

REBECCA  
I believe it. Thank you for suggesting it to me.

She takes her order, and returns to her seat. She bites one of the doughnuts, and sips her coffee before picking the book back up.

REBECCA (V.O.)  
What are women these days? Are we no longer the glowing spark in a man's eye? We invited them into our world, and filled them with lies. Now the lies feel like our truth.  
(Flips the page, eats another bite)  
What if we told men the truth up front? 'I only wanna fuck like you.' He'd still take the offer, but he'll want it right then and there. And don't dare insult his ego about his performance. He'll call you every nasty name under the sun. So we stay



silent, clinging to what we thought was heaven, only to find it was hell. When we confide in friends and family, they hit us with the same fucked-up story. So, what's our next move when the illusion shatters?

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BEAR HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The layout of the room is exquisite.

Bear is in his mid-thirties, with an athletic build and a bald head.

Wearing black jogging pants, the golden-brown-skinned man has a look of arrogance.

A tattoo of the world with a crown resting on it is on the left side of his chest.

He's lounging at a polished table.

A bowl of ice, a bourbon bottle, and a glass sit before him.

He drops three ice cubes into the glass, and pours some bourbon.

BEAR (V.O.)

I know many men like me wanna know the real reason why women cheat. Women ask, 'Why do men cheat?' They swear they don't know... But they can list a thousand reasons a man 'ain't shit.'

He downs the bourbon and pours another.

He gets from the table with the glass in hand, making his way into the living room.

The room exudes calm.

Bear walks to the patio door and looks out.

BEAR POV

A pristine wooden deck, sleek stereo, pool and a fire pit.

BEAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

From the start, everyone hunts for

'perfection' in love. After a hot first night, or even a lame one. The idea of perfection builds inside one of them. The other person is clueless because they only wanted one thing. And if that fails, they just move on saying, 'well, at least I hit that.'

(Laughs)

Men and women do it, so don't think I'm biased. Insecurity drives us astray. A relationship should feel like home. Cozy, secure. If you knew their flaws at first... why'd you stay?

Bear takes a sip and then makes his way toward the front door.

Reaching the front door, he steps to the side, opening the curtains.

A sigh of relaxation is heard as he stares at his black-on-black 2020 Escalade parked in the driveway.

BEAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

People will damn near break themselves trying to keep someone happy. But who's truly at fault? The desperate one for love, or the one who knows they'll never find someone else like the person they had?

He downs the glass and then places it on the table.

Just as he gets ready to walk out the door, he pauses when he hears Nicole singing.

He sighs deeply, looking at his empty glass.

Picking up the glass, he goes back into the dining room.

Nicole enters the room.

Although she's short in height, the woman in her mid-thirties definitely makes it look good.

Her skin complexion is mocha with long brown dreadlocks, bedroom chinky soft brown eyes and a lovely body.

She has an attitude because Bear isn't paying her attention.

She walks over and stands beside him.

NICOLE  
(Southern accent)  
Baby, I'm stepping out for a minute.  
I'll be back before the party.

Bear pours more ice and bourbon.

BEAR  
I heard you.

NICOLE  
You're not gonna ask where I'm going?

BEAR  
You're not a child.

NICOLE  
If I said I'm going to see my side  
nigga, you'd be all up in my face.

BEAR  
(Laughs, sipping)  
We both know that's a lie. Why are you  
still here?

NICOLE  
Real talk? If another man gets your  
attention, don't cry when you find me  
gone.

Bear chuckles and looks at her outfit approvingly.

BEAR  
Judging by that fit, you'll have  
plenty of attention. You're golden.

NICOLE  
Fuck you, Bear.

She pushes his head and storms away.

BEAR  
I already fucked you this morning.

NICOLE  
And it was the last time! You enjoyed  
it more than me.

BEAR  
Come here.

She stops, breathes, then returns to him.

He opens his arms.

She hugs him as he grabs her ass.

BEAR (CONT'D)

What's wrong today? You can't take a joke?

NICOLE

Because you always think some shit is funny, and I don't know when you're being serious.

BEAR

Do you really think I'd let another man have this ass?

NICOLE

My ass? That's the only reason why you're with me?

BEAR

Oh my God, is your period about to come down?

NICOLE

See? That's the bullshit I'm talking about.

She tries to push him off, and he holds her tighter while laughing.

BEAR

Calm down, damn. You know I love you. Why are you acting all crazy and shit?

NICOLE

You need to start showing it more than you do these little lame ass jokes.

BEAR

We can go upstairs, and I can show you better than I can tell you.

NICOLE

Man, let me go.

BEAR

(Laughs)

Aight, I quit. Where are you about to go?

NICOLE

And you care now, because?

BEAR

Now who's on the bullshit?

NICOLE

(Smacks her lips)

I'm going to the mall to find something for the party.

BEAR

Do you have enough money to get everything you need?

NICOLE

(Soft laugh)

I can always use some more.

BEAR

You know where to find it.

With a smile, she gently places her hand between his thighs, slowly moving it up towards his crotch.

Just as he starts to get excited, she moves it to his left pocket.

She reaches inside and pulls out a wad of money.

BEAR (CONT'D)

You know you're wrong for that brief tease?

NICOLE

How can I be wrong and I'll handle this problem I made sprout later?

BEAR

I love you, Southern Jelly.

NICOLE

(Gives him a kiss)

I know you do, jerk-face. I'll be back in a few.

They release each other.

When she turns around to walk away, he gently slaps her on the ass.

She looks back at him and winks before slapping herself on the ass with some force.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

You know I don't like that weak shit.  
Do better, Bear.

She blows him a kiss and then walks out of the room.

Bear takes his seat, picking up his glass.

BEAR (V.O.)

When you have a real one on your side, you gotta make her feel special. She's the one who'll ride for you harder than your workers, family and friends. Yeah, they say, 'We got your back.' But when crunch-time comes, you'll see 'em just like the air you exhale on a summer day. Makes you wonder why I don't treat her like a Goddess.

(Takes a sip)

Despite knowing she's loyal, she still has the tendency to slide off with someone else because she swears up and down I'm always with another bitch. So, I make her feel special but not a top priority. It's not like I can't find another rider. It's because...

INTERCUT WITH:

**EXT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS**

Jaslyin is sitting alone, scrolling through her phone.

A croissant sandwich and a cup of tea are on her table.

The expression on her face is indecisive, keeping her eyes locked on the screen.

**INSERT PHONE SCREEN**

We see pictures of her when she was big, but she's enjoying herself.

Somewhat of a smile creases the side of her face, releasing a slight chuckle.

Placing her phone down, she picks up her tea and takes a sip.

JASLYIN (V.O.)

I wonder if I'm the only woman who'll admit that when she first fell in love, she lost her self-love. Everything in your world became nothing, and everything he wanted became your universe. In my eyes, I knew my weight wasn't healthy, but at least I was happy.

She takes a small bite of her sandwich, chewing slowly.

JASLYIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I started 16/8 intermittent fasting, thinking he'd finally pay me some serious attention. I didn't realize I was fueling the fire becoming the shape he truly preferred. My weight went up and down as I stressed myself into circles, while he kept treating me the exact same.

Her phone buzzes.

She glances at it with dread.

JASLYIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I can never look like anything less than perfection, though the flaws shine through my eyes and echo in my pretend voice. When I started perfecting my body and appearance, I thought he'd be the first to notice my progress. But it wasn't him. It was his friends.

(Bitter laugh)

Those same friends who complimented me more than he ever did became my normal. Of course, I know they only wanna fuck me, but for those brief moments when I receive their compliments, I actually feel like a woman. But why would I sleep with his friends knowing they'll tell, and he'll leave me before he'd leave them?

(Scoffs, shaking her head)

That's why I sleep with people who live nowhere near my neighborhood. You can only use toys and your own hand for so long before you crave a tongue and the real thing. That's something your man should deliver without question.

Her phone buzzes again.

She picks it up reluctantly.

**INSERT - PHONE SCREEN**

Mami, get your sexy ass home, I got a surprise for you.

She sighs with visible disgust before taking another bite.

JASLYIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Men never give you the compliments and love you deserve unless you're stepping out. A man wouldn't need to feel insecure if he showed us the attention other men show us, proving he's proud of the woman on his arm.

(Sighs)

But we never say these things because we settle for what we get. A few gifts, 'I love you' texts, and sex that leaves us feeling like concrete because we're nowhere near as wet as we could be. It goes back to what I said. Somewhere along the way, women lose their self-love, and it causes men to say shit like...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS**

A dimly lit hole-in-the-wall bar.

Hip-hop music pulses in the background.

MONTREAL and SHAWN are playing pool for shots.

MONTREAL, mid-thirties, tall, dark-skinned and muscular, sinks the eight ball with confidence.

MONTREAL

Didn't I tell you I was gonna beat



that ass? Didn't I tell you?

SHAWN, mid-thirties, light brown-skinned and slender, downs his shot with a grimace.

SHAWN

It's about time you won one, nigga.  
I've been tapping that ass since we  
started playing.

MONTREAL

(Laughs)

Keep talking that bullshit while you  
rack them balls.

SHAWN

Happy niggas kill me, I swear.

Shawn begins racking the balls methodically.

MONTREAL

Now that you mention it, run that shit  
back you were talking about earlier.

SHAWN

What shit? I've been talking since we  
got here.

MONTREAL

That theory you got about females.

Shawn finishes racking and steps aside.

SHAWN

How can you love someone without  
loving yourself? How can you claim  
you're in love with someone without  
knowing them like you know yourself?  
The things they should be paying  
attention to are just mirages to them.

Montreal breaks the balls with a sharp crack.

MONTREAL

I'm feeling that.

Shawn lines up his shot.

SHAWN

Consider the source.

He takes his shot.

MONTREAL

What made you come to that conclusion?

SHAWN

Because of the weak shit these dudes are telling them. 'I'll pay all your bills. You'll never need anything. You're a beautiful queen with a body of perfection. I'll never hurt you or lie because I love you.' Wet wipe lies, speaking commandments of what they believe is truth, and women eat it up like gospel. Strong beliefs in what they hope is true, knowing deep down it's all lies.

MONTREAL

What makes this interesting is you got a wife, but you're talking all this real shit.

SHAWN

What's your point?

MONTREAL

You're talking about other women, but not your own.

SHAWN

She ain't no different from the next. But since we're not discussing her, I got nothing to say about her.

MONTREAL

That's kinda fake, don't you think?

SHAWN

No faker than what you tell those bitches so you can get some pussy.

MONTREAL

(Laughs)

I must have pushed a button. I don't say fake shit to bitches.

SHAWN

Make yourself believe that.

Shawn's phone buzzes.

He pulls it out, checking the screen.

MONTREAL

(Laughing)

This nigga mad.

SHAWN

Nowhere near it. Come on. B is ready to start the party early.

MONTREAL

Bet. Let's roll.

SHAWN

But back to my point. You do lie to those hoes to get some pussy.

MONTREAL

Nigga, please. No man should ever lie to get some ass. Listen, sex is like communication. If the communication is off, you're not clapping those cheeks.

SHAWN

Sexual communication consists of more than just the act, unless of course she's easy and doesn't take accountability because...

INTERCUT WITH:

# **INT. CLOTHING STORE - CONTINUOUS**

KIRA is standing outside a dressing room.

The woman in her mid-thirties has a peanut butter complexion and a sharp bob haircut.

Despite her petite frame, she commands attention in her colorful halter top and fitted leggings.

KIRA (V.O.)

Why should women take accountability for our actions when men believe we're easy, and we see them as quick cash? Fair trade if you ask me. But they get all psycho after breakups, turning into stalkers. If you had a completely submissive woman, why did you ruin it? Men have no clue what they want. And after all the fun, we're nothing more

than the average bitch anybody can hit. That's one of the reasons why we cheat. Men are unappreciative once they get the goods.

She knocks on the dressing room door.

KIRA

Girl, hurry up.

NICOLE (O.S.)

Don't rush greatness.

KIRA (V.O.)

When men cheat on us, we put up Oscar-winning performances with tears and dramatics. But that's so we can keep getting what we want, stroking his ego, making him feel powerful.

Inside the dressing room, Nicole is posing in front of the mirror wearing a fitted dress.

She's stunning but carries hidden sorrow behind her confident facade.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Experiencing the warmth and rush from a woman's pleasure is something very few men have truly experienced. A lot of men will be quick to say they have, but they don't know that we're thinking about the one who made us respond effortlessly. So how can he tell the difference? That only comes with knowing every curve to touch and taste.

She turns at different angles, examining herself critically.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A woman's body is pure pleasure. Delicate and intoxicating. She can provide sensations you'll never be able to explain if treated right. How can I say that when I allow Bear to treat me like a back-alley two-dollar whore? How can any woman who's been with multiple men say such things?

She steps out of the dressing room.

Kira looks impressed as Nicole does a few poses.

KIRA

Bear is gonna love this.

NICOLE

Bear has nothing to do with me getting something I feel comfortable in.

KIRA

Okay, but I know you're getting it for him because he loves seeing you in clothes like this.

NICOLE

Everything doesn't revolve around what he wants and says.

KIRA

(Laughs)

Girl, stop playing.

NICOLE

Does it show off everything right?

KIRA

The only thing it doesn't show is your print. Other than that, it's doing what it's supposed to do.

NICOLE

That's all it needs to do then. It's hard enough fighting off these thirsty ass niggas as it is.

KIRA

(Laughs)

See, you're cute with a body, but you ain't all that.

NICOLE

(Laughs)

Haters love talking just to hear themselves talk. It's okay, I still love you.

KIRA

Baby, I'm far from a hater. Men love pretty thick women, but skinny women do it better, and it's deeper and wetter.

Kira does a quick provocative dance.

Nicole steps back, laughing.

NICOLE

You're a whole hot mess.

KIRA

We're still hitting the shoe store,  
right?

NICOLE

We never leave the mall with clothes  
without getting shoes to match. Now  
that I think about it, we're hitting  
the jewelry store too.

KIRA

For what?

NICOLE

You'll see. Stop talking so I can  
change.

Nicole goes back into the dressing room, still laughing as  
she removes the dress.

In her powder blue lace lingerie, we see a tattoo of a fierce  
grizzly bear on her left breast with 'I love my Bear' in  
elegant script underneath.

Across her hip line, from left to right, flows a tattoo of  
melting cotton candy with "Cotton Candy Splash" woven through  
in calligraphy.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Back to what I was saying. We can say  
that because we know the truth about  
why we engaged with those different  
men. And for some reason, every man  
except the very first one we made love  
to are all the same. But, as you can  
see, my Bear has my heart. If you're  
wondering about the cotton candy  
tattoo... down there lies the only  
sweetness my man loves savoring with  
every taste bud, washing it down with  
my natural essence.

She pulls on her pants, jumping slightly to get them over her  
hips.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Then again, some women might have an exception when speaking about the man who took their virginity. He was probably the one who understood the texture and priceless value of a woman's body. Or he was just like the men women complain about but can't live without.

She puts on her shirt.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But every woman knows the real reason why they didn't stay with their first. Most say because the sex was trash, but how would you know if you were a virgin? Most would say it's because he started treating them like shit, but you knew he would do that before you decided to sleep with him.

She gathers her purchases and purse.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's why you keep attracting the same type of men but swear you want a good man. You're basing your worth on how you'll hook a man, not seeing that if you keep giving out the same thing over and over, the value decreases. Whoever was the first man to say you had some good pussy, an ignorant switch in your head flipped on, and now look at your body count.

She blows herself a kiss in the mirror and exits.

Nicole and Kira approach the cash register.

The store buzzes with other customers.

KIRA

Who's coming over tonight?

NICOLE

The usual crew. Myron, Rebecca, Marquez, Rayven, and whoever they bring or Bear calls over.

KIRA

They're a party by themselves. I'm surprised they're all still together.

NICOLE

(Laughs)

Look who's talking.

CASHIER #2

Your total is \$600.

Nicole pulls out her leather wallet, and scans through her cards before selecting one.

KIRA

What do you mean, 'Look who's talking?'

NICOLE

Single people are always talking shit about people in relationships or marriage. The little drama they go through compared to all your drama is nothing.

The cashier tries not to laugh at their conversation.

CASHIER #2

Here's your card, ma'am.

KIRA

Drama isn't involved in my life, boo. Those dudes are just mad because I don't wanna stay with them.

NICOLE

That's what people call 'drama.'

KIRA

Not if you don't pay them attention.

The cashier can't hold back anymore and starts laughing, causing Nicole and Kira to join in.

CASHIER #2

(Laughing)

I'm sorry, but that definitely counts as drama.

NICOLE

See? She's a trip, ain't she?



KIRA  
Y'all don't have to agree with me. The  
truth hurts.

The cashier hands them their designer bags.

CASHIER #2  
(Still laughing)  
You're right. Ladies, enjoy the rest  
of your day.

NICOLE You too.

KIRA You too.

They exit the store into the bustling mall.

NICOLE  
I'll get you some help, okay?

KIRA  
Get those niggas trying to keep a  
beast on a chain some help.

NICOLE  
This girl.

YOUNG DUDE #1 (O.S.)  
Damn, y'all fine.

They stop and exchange confused looks.

Two young men in their early twenties approach wearing urban clothing, with baby dreads and cocky grins.

Nicole and Kira wink at each other, snickering under their breath.

NICOLE  
We're fine, huh?

YOUNG DUDE #1  
Don't act like y'all don't know. And I  
see y'all making that bread like us.  
We should put something together.

NICOLE  
I've never been called fine before. So  
if you were trying to 'put something  
together,' you blew it by insulting  
me.

Young Dude #2 and Kira cover their mouths, stunned.

YOUNG DUDE #1

My bad, baby. I had no intention of insulting a beautiful queen.

NICOLE

There's no crown on my head.  
'Beautiful' and 'baby' are insults too. But never mind that. Y'all making that bread, right?

YOUNG DUDE #1

You know it.

NICOLE

Right here, no questions asked, let's play 'Big bank takes little bank.'

Young Dude #1 stands speechless. Nicole opens her purse, revealing a chrome pistol.

His eyes widen as she shakes her head and pulls out a thick roll of cash.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

I don't know exactly how much this is, but you can tell it's not a small amount. Between you and your friend, if y'all can pull out more than what I'm holding, I'll give you this money and some pussy anywhere in this mall. That's why you approached us anyway, right?

YOUNG DUDE #1

(Stuttering)

I—I uh, I don't think we can—

NICOLE

Y'all knew that when you saw these bags. But you figured it'd be an easy catch because getting pussy these days is simple even when you don't pay for it.

YOUNG DUDE #2

Damn!!!

KIRA

Damn!!!

NICOLE

Calm down the unnecessary scene.

Here's some wisdom from a real one.  
There's only one thing I love my lips  
wrapped around, and the taste leaves  
me completely satisfied. I know you  
wanna call me a bitch, but what you  
don't understand is I'm used to that  
word from random guys I turn down, and  
from my man when we're fucking or when  
he's pissed at me.

YOUNG DUDE #1

I wasn't about to call you—

NICOLE

Yes, you were, because that's what men  
do when they get rejected. Don't let  
what you saw in my purse scare you.  
What you should be scared of is my man  
standing behind you, ready to fuck you  
up.

Young Dude #1 starts to turn around.

Nicole gently cups his face, stopping him.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

There's the problem with you young  
dudes. Y'all act without thinking. Not  
all women need their men to protect  
them because we can handle our own.  
But if my man were around, this  
conversation wouldn't have happened.  
You understand?

Young Dude #1 is unsure how to respond.

Young Dude #2 and Kira are watching intently.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Do you understand?

YOUNG DUDE #1

Yes. Yes, I understand.

NICOLE

Good. Now I know your mother taught  
you manners, so how do you leave a  
woman's presence?

YOUNG DUDE #1

Have a nice day, ma'am.

Nicole considers this for a moment, then cracks a slight smile.

NICOLE

That's acceptable. You young boys need to learn manners and stop being followers. The outcome won't always be this pleasant.

Both young men nod and turn to leave.

Nicole clears her throat loudly, getting their attention.

They turn back, confused.

Nicole removes the rubber band from her money, counts out several hundreds, and extends them.

Young Dude #1 looks suspicious, slowly approaching.

After hesitating, he takes the money and pockets it.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Women pay for dick, just like y'all pay for pussy. I'm only giving you my money so y'all can actually say you got some bread. Women don't work hard for money because we own the factory, letting the workers make the bread for us. Have a nice day, gentlemen.

Kira bursts into laughter as the young men walk away.

Nicole signals her to quiet down, noticing people recording.

NICOLE (CONT'D)

Look at these people recording. If those guys would've tried to fight us, what do you think they would've done?

KIRA

You're right. But goddamn, you destroyed their entire existence and gave them money to stunt with. You're a boss.

NICOLE

My Bear is the boss. I just hold my ground when he's not around. Let's hit the jewelry store and grab some food.

KIRA  
But I need help?

NICOLE  
Yes, you do.

They continue laughing as they walk through the mall.

NICOLE (V.O.)  
That encounter is a key reason why men don't respect women. Women today fall for that weak 'You're fine, you're a queen' bullshit because he looks good and claims he can take care of them. But as you just saw, when you pull that ho card, the whole scenario changes. Men will forever think women are easy, and women don't recognize they make it easy for them. My Bear ain't shit, but he'll never let anything happen to me. When you're a woman like me, you learn what your man teaches you and accept the bullshit he puts you through. But there is a breaking point. And that breaking point comes when...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. MYRON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A spacious, well-furnished living room that's been trashed.

Dishes, cans, chip bags, overflowing ashtrays, and liquor bottles cover every surface.

Shoes and clothes are scattered across the floor.

The TV shows a paused video game.

Rebecca enters, covering her face in dismay.

She takes a deep breath and begins cleaning, gathering dishes, heading toward the kitchen.

In the elegant kitchen, more chaos awaits.

Open food containers, wrappers, crumbs everywhere.

She loads the dishwasher methodically.

REBECCA (V.O.)

Despite your man and his friends  
making the mess, we clean it up. While  
cleaning, we think back to when the  
relationship started. Romantic dates.  
Incredible foreplay that healed our  
bodies, ending with endless euphoria.  
But now... now we barely go out. If  
dinner happens, we're preparing it.  
But just like these dishes, we allow  
it because we love this lifestyle.

She finds serenity in the washing rhythm.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Clearing your mind from the bullshit  
your man has said or done isn't easy,  
but you do it. If you don't, you'll be  
the only one looking crazy. Some of us  
don't clear our minds, feeding into  
his foolishness, knowing he gets pure  
enjoyment from our anger.

After finishing the kitchen, she heads down the hallway to  
the bathroom.

She opens the door and clicks her tongue disapprovingly.

Clothes are everywhere.

An open toothpaste tube.

A used washcloth in the tub.

The toilet seat is up.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When you're in a relationship... Well,  
you're single, but you go along with  
the relationship title. You already  
know you'll be picking up after your  
man physically and mentally. A  
disgusting mess that wasn't there in  
the beginning. Everything doesn't stay  
the same, and here we are...

She tosses clothes into the hallway and starts cleaning.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

After everything's cleaned up, we  
believe we're back at the beginning,

in love all over again. Only now we know he's lying, but we let him believe we're buying the lies. This is minor if you want to live well, but the breaking point is crucial. Yet women like me refuse to break until the lifestyle breaks.

She finishes cleaning and steps into the hallway, collecting dirty clothes.

MYRON (O.S.)  
Honey, I'm home!

REBECCA  
(Under her breath)  
Hooray.

Myron approaches for a hug and kiss.

She pushes him back.

MYRON  
What's wrong?

REBECCA  
Do you see what I'm doing?

Myron looks at the clothes in her arms.

MYRON  
You're about to do laundry?

REBECCA  
Which is part of the cleaning you said you'd help with.

MYRON  
(Laughs)  
I said that?

REBECCA  
Nope. You sure the fuck didn't.

She moves past him toward the basement.

He follows.

MYRON  
What's wrong with you? You were happy all day when I was texting you, and

now you have this attitude out of nowhere.

REBECCA

I have an attitude because I believed my husband would help with the cleaning. But why should he help when he has his own personal maid?

They reach the finished basement with its own bar.

A pile of clothes sits by the washer and dryer.

Rebecca transfers clothes from washer to dryer, adds fabric softener, and starts a new load.

MYRON

You know I don't see you as the maid. I've been out all day buying things for you. How can I spoil you if I'm cleaning?

She looks at him with a sarcastic smile.

REBECCA

Baby, you're so sweet. This conversation reminds me of this laundry. You know why?

MYRON

Why?

REBECCA

Clothes are beautiful when you first buy them. But after you wear them, they get dirty and you lose interest because you want new ones.

MYRON

Wait, wait. You're not thinking about—

REBECCA

No, I'm not talking about leaving you.

MYRON

Then what are you—

REBECCA

You used to be romantic. You helped with everything around the house. Hell, we had fun. But now... now it's



just like these clothes. You pile  
excuse after excuse, then feel like  
buying me something cleans everything  
up, ready to get dirty again.

She starts the machines.

Myron stands speechless.

She folds her arms, staring at him expectantly.

The silence stretches.

Finally, she walks to the bar, grabs a shot glass and an  
expensive tequila.

Myron sits at the bar as Rebecca pours and downs a shot, then  
another, then another.

He reaches for her hand.

MYRON

Don't you think you should slow down?

REBECCA

Nope. Shouldn't you be heading  
upstairs to find something to wear?

MYRON

Listen, Becca. I know things have been  
a little lopsided lately.

REBECCA

A little?

MYRON

Okay, maybe a lot. But I'm willing to  
do whatever you need to make it like  
it was in the beginning. What do you  
need me to do?

Rebecca sighs, pulling her hand back.

She pours and downs another shot.

She closes her eyes, letting the alcohol settle, then shakes  
her head.

REBECCA

Why would I tell you what you should  
already know?

MYRON

Rebecca, you know how much I love you.

REBECCA

Love isn't expressed by buying me things just so I'll stop complaining about the love you don't show.

MYRON

Rebecca, I promise you here and now, things will return to how they were in the beginning.

REBECCA

There's that promise I hear at least six times a week. Can you just get ready so we can go?

MYRON

The party doesn't matter when it comes to making sure you're happy. All I want to do is—

REBECCA

Myron, please. You don't want the chaos we're going through to be obvious when we get there.

Myron starts to speak but instead, he walks away.

He stops, looking back as she pours another shot.

He shakes his head, pulling out the ring box, walking back, placing it on the counter.

He walks off.

Rebecca downs her shot while watching him leave.

She stares at the ring box.

REBECCA (V.O.)

Of course, what I said about buying things to express love was a lie. I'll never decline what he buys me, but sometimes I wish he would show me the love he showed when we met. When men see women downing shots like I just did, they instantly think they'll get some pussy that night.

(Bitter laugh)

That's how Myron and I met. A swinger party turned into romance in his eyes. Me? I saw him as a higher meal ticket than the man I was with at the time. When we first started dating, I loved him, not his money. After marriage and the lovemaking died down, I became every name in the book. But to this day, he swears he loves me.

She picks up the ring box, and tears form in her eyes.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Let me explain what I meant about our relationship being like laundry. One thing you think about while doing laundry is the painful memories you're washing away. Then when you create new ones, you're right back down here washing those away as quickly as you made them. You can compare just about everything in life to your relationship. Or lack thereof.

(Smiles)

In the end, it's all about morals. Women like me don't believe in morals because we'll do anything to obtain and keep this life. Who needs morals when you can buy and do whatever you want? That irritating emotion called 'love' shows up here and there, but money makes it disappear. That emotion almost got in the way of this gorgeous ring.

She looks toward the stairs.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

While I'm telling him to get ready, I need to do the same. He's upstairs complaining, but feeling guilty at the same time. Most men display they don't give a damn about us, but as soon as we mention leaving or show interest in another man, the first thing they do is...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. MARQUEZ HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The bedroom screams luxury. Marble surfaces, expensive furniture, floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the city.

The balcony door stands open, letting in a gentle breeze.

From the bathroom comes the sound of running water.

Marquez is standing before a full-length mirror in his designer boxers posing, admiring himself with the kind of self-obsession that borders on worship.

MARQUEZ

(To his reflection)

Look at that masterpiece. Million-dollar face, million-dollar body, and the bank account to match. Women line up for a taste of this perfection.

(Flexes)

Rayven hit the lottery with me. Hell, I'm doing her a favor letting her breathe the same air as me.

He laughs, a sound devoid of warmth.

MARQUEZ (CONT'D)

She should be grateful. A man like me doesn't usually waste time on damaged goods.

RAYVEN (O.S.)

(Slurring, bitter)

Oh, she's grateful alright. Grateful for a husband who makes love to mirrors instead of his wife. Grateful for a man who gives himself more compliments than he's ever given her.

(Dark chuckle)

Yeah, my luck's just fucking golden.

Marquez freezes mid-pose.

Rayven emerges from the shadows by the wall, clutching a martini glass like a lifeline.

MARQUEZ

How long have you been standing there, spying on me?

RAYVEN

Long enough to watch you worship at  
the altar of your own reflection. Long  
enough to see you fall in love with  
something that ain't worth the  
worship.

Marquez scoffs, returning his attention to the mirror.

MARQUEZ

Put the drink down, Rayven. Drunken  
stupidity isn't welcome in my house.

He resumes posing, dismissing her entirely.

RAYVEN

(Moving closer)

The alcohol isn't talking, baby. This  
is pure, unfiltered truth.

She places a hand on his shoulder, leaning close to his ear.

RAYVEN (CONT'D)

You wanna know why I drink so much?

MARQUEZ

(Not looking at her)

Because you were a drunk when I found  
you. The only difference is now you're  
drinking top-shelf instead of bottom-  
barrel poison.

Rayven's grip tightens on his shoulder.

RAYVEN

Every morning I wake up next to you, I  
ask myself the same question. Why did  
I agree to this prison sentence?

Marquez finally turns to face her.

MARQUEZ

You know exactly why. Look at me.  
(Gestures to his body)  
Look at the lifestyle I provide.  
Remember that first night? You  
couldn't get enough.

RAYVEN

(Bitter laugh)

You really think it was your looks

that got me in bed that night?

He steps in, confident.

MARQUEZ

Even if it wasn't...

(Kisses her cheek possessively)

Once you got a taste of what I'm  
working with, you've been addicted  
ever since.

Rayven takes a long sip from her martini, then laughs, a  
sound sharp enough to cut glass.

RAYVEN

Baby, your dick is like your ego.  
Oversized and you don't know what the  
hell to do with either one. But I  
guess for women easily impressed by  
packaging instead of performance...  
Well, you have every right to be the  
conceited asshole you are.

Marquez's expression hardens, jaw clenching.

MARQUEZ

Rich words from a woman with more  
miles on her than a rental car. It's  
hard to satisfy something that can't  
feel anything anymore.

Rayven continues laughing, reaching up to pat his cheek  
condescendingly.

RAYVEN

There it is. The classic line every  
inadequate man uses. Just admit you  
don't know how to satisfy a woman  
properly.

Marquez grabs her wrist, his grip firm but not yet painful.

His voice drops dangerously low.

MARQUEZ

You forgot the rules about touching my  
face? Do it again...

(Gets nose-to-nose)

And that average face of yours gets  
rearranged, and you won't make it to  
tonight's party.

RAYVEN  
(Unflinching)  
Big tough guy.

MARQUEZ  
Do you need a reminder of what  
happened last time you tested me?  
(Kisses her cheek mockingly)  
Get your drunk ass in the shower so we  
can leave. I'll be in the basement.

He shoves her backward.

Rayven stumbles but catches herself on the bed, her martini  
spilling across the silk sheets.

MARQUEZ (CONT'D)  
This broke bitch forgot who she was  
dealing with.

Marquez exits.

Rayven sits on the edge of the bed, staring at the spilled  
alcohol soaking into expensive fabric.

She looks at herself in the mirror across the room.

Slowly, she stands and begins to undress, her movements  
mechanical.

She poses in front of the mirror, mimicking Marquez's earlier  
routine.

RAYVEN (V.O.)  
When a man can't handle the truth, he  
resorts to violence or disrespect.  
Sometimes both. But women like me... we  
accept it, knowing damn well we don't  
have to. It's what happens when you  
stop recognizing the woman in the  
mirror.  
(Sighs deeply)  
You become a different person every  
day, but you can never wake up as who  
you were before you met him. And what  
does he offer in return? What makes us  
jump through these flaming hoops while  
he stays exactly the same?

She covers her face with both hands, leaving only her eyes  
visible.

A single tear escapes before she quickly wipes it away, shaking off the moment of vulnerability.

Moving to the walk-in closet, she opens the door to reveal rows of designer clothes and shoes.

A rainbow of expensive fabric and leather.

RAYVEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sorry you had to see that moment of weakness. Can't be mixing myself up with other women when women like me only have one emotion... greed.

She spreads her arms wide, embracing the material wealth.

RAYVEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This is why we jump through those hoops. The clothes, the cars, the money. These are the only things that love us back. It reminds me of when I first met him. That wallet of his was impossible to resist.

(Devilish laugh)

But tonight? Tonight this woman's gonna be the sexiest bitch at that party.

With renewed energy, she heads to the bathroom.

RAYVEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

'Sexiest bitch.' Not 'the most beautiful woman' but, 'the sexiest bitch.' There was a time when women called themselves beautiful. But following a man's blueprint is easier than standing as a strong woman. If we were strong, we'd look different and act different, instead of molding ourselves into whatever satisfies his ego.

(Scoffs)

'Beautiful.' Ask a man what that word means when he says it, and he'll either lie, make a joke to throw you off, or just compliment what already stands out like you don't have eyes. You wanna know the first thing that pops into a man's brain when he calls you beautiful?



**INT. BEAR HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Bear is sitting on the couch with Montreal, drinking and smoking as music plays softly from an old stereo system.

Montreal scrolls through his phone while Bear reaches for his cigarettes.

MONTREAL

(Showing his phone screen)

Man, look at this beautiful woman right here.

Bear glances over while lighting his cigarette.

BEAR

She looks like every other woman you've shown me. From the neck down, sure. But what else?

MONTREAL

What else do I need?

BEAR

(Takes a drag)

See, you're part of the problem. Soon as you see ass and tits, suddenly she's 'beautiful' and all that. But when she turns you down, you're in your feelings calling her all kinds of names.

MONTREAL

She shows the goods, I'm getting the goods. And getting turned down ain't my problem. Even if I gotta pay for it, I keep the price reasonable.

BEAR

(Laughs)

This fool.

MONTREAL

Check my track record. Ask those bitches about how I turn regular beds into waterbeds.

BEAR

You think that's because of your skills? Or because she's thinking about the nigga who actually made her

cum? In your case, she's probably thinking about the money you're spending.

MONTREAL

Nah, man. It's all me. No daydreaming about other dudes or the cash.

Shawn enters carrying a beer in one hand and a glass of liquor in the other.

SHAWN

I'm with Bear on this one. If she wasn't a virgin, she already had different sizes and shapes inside her. Women adjust to whatever they're dealing with. That's how they can push out multiple babies. So yeah, he's got a point.

Shawn takes a seat on the opposite couch.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

What makes you think it's your performance and not someone else she's fantasizing about? Or the money?

MONTREAL

Y'all can doubt all you want. I showed you the videos.

BEAR

(Chuckles)

I've seen plenty of porn too. They put on an act, just like in your videos.

Shawn laughs, taking a sip of his beer.

MONTREAL

Don't hate because I'm turning these bitches out.

BEAR

That's funny. Makes me think about how sex changes everything between people. It can go from good to bad, bad to good. Once that climax hits or doesn't happen, everything shifts. Either you never hear from them again or end up cheating.

SHAWN

Truth in those words.

MONTREAL

(Laughs)

I bet you do agree. You're the only married one here, and you're still out here messing with other women.

BEAR

Real facts. Why is that, Shawn? Not judging, just curious.

SHAWN

You can't have a solid relationship when the other person only gives fifty percent of who they are.

BEAR

Meaning what?

SHAWN

Having a body and good looks doesn't help with emotional support or mental connection.

MONTREAL

(Laughs)

Emotions? You don't seem like the emotional type. I remember how you used to treat women back in the day, and emotions were nowhere in your vocabulary.

SHAWN

That's exactly why you mess around with so many women. You're scared to be vulnerable.

MONTREAL

I tell them straight up, 'It's just for tonight.'

SHAWN

(Laughs)

And then you go home and write love poems, wishing you could find something real.

BEAR

(Laughs)

Don't forget about that shit.

MONTREAL

Nah, that's just my creative side. I'm good with words. But I can't love a bitch with a higher body count than mine.

SHAWN

Your problem is social media. Keeping tabs on exes and women you want to sleep with, believing everything they post. Some might be true, but most of it's bullshit.

BEAR

True. But what does body count have to do with anything? I never understood niggas who always speak on that.

MONTREAL

Would you marry a woman the whole neighborhood fucked?

BEAR

Honestly? Yes. What's wrong with that?

SHAWN

Damn, you're brave.

MONTREAL

Yeah, you're on some other shit with that answer.

BEAR

I'm on some other shit?

MONTREAL

Yes.

SHAWN

Yes.

BEAR

You only know what a woman tells you and what you see, right?

MONTREAL

Where are you going with this? I don't see this ending well.

Bear takes a sip and lights another cigarette, nodding

thoughtfully.

BEAR

Niggas be quick to get between a bitch thighs, tongue-kissing forbidden places, eating ass and everything else. So, how many other niggas do you think released their seed in or on every part of her body?

MONTREAL

Hold up, I don't be—

SHAWN

Don't even let that lie leave your mouth. You stay with your face between a bitch thighs and in their ass.

BEAR

Sitting here trying to front.

MONTREAL

Alright, so what? I still ain't cuffing a hoe.

BEAR

But if she doesn't tell you about her past, how would you know?

MONTREAL

The streets don't lie.

Bear and Shawn burst into laughter.

BEAR

That's part of what's fucked up in the world. The streets lie more than the people you're sleeping with. Things go wrong because people say 'I heard from so-and-so.' When the truth comes out and so-and-so ain't around to clarify the lies, who gets hurt? The fool who believed the gossip.

MONTREAL

What's that got to do with hoes?

BEAR

(Takes a drag)

Women and money are the main things keeping the streets full of truth and

lies, and they never mix right. Men lie about getting pussy just like they lie about everything else. Depending on the character, money either makes the lie stick or gets used to convince other niggas to spread the lies.

(Another drag)

By the time the truth comes out, either the woman's dead for exposing the lie because the dude got mad and killed her, or the liar ends up dead because if you'll lie about pussy, you'll lie about anything. Two things that shouldn't mix have the streets filled with confusion.

SHAWN

Okay, since you're up here talking all this truth... What do you know about Nicole?

MONTREAL

Yeah, let's hear it.

BEAR

I know I was her first. I don't know what number I was when we got back together, but I know I'm her last.

Silence fills the room.

Bear sips his drink and takes another drag.

SHAWN

You were Nicole's first?

BEAR

Yep.

MONTREAL

And then y'all broke up, and you don't know how many men she was with? Even if she wasn't with anyone else, why did you take her back?

BEAR

She doesn't know how many bitches I was with either, so what's the difference?

SHAWN

None of that matters. Why did you take her back?

BEAR

Besides her being real, willing to ride with me to the end? You never lose all your feelings for your first true love because that person knows you best.

MONTREAL

Nicole is your first real love?

BEAR

That's right. Actually, she's my only love.

SHAWN

So what caused the breakup?

BEAR

Unlike you two, I can admit I wasn't shit back then. It wasn't about not knowing what I had. I just didn't give a damn about having it. That's another reason why relationships fail. Men worry about body counts like they can change the past. Women worry about whether a man's gonna love how she fucks. So yeah, a man will treat you like shit if that's all you seem to care about.

SHAWN

So Nicole came back because?

BEAR

Nicole came back because—

NICOLE (O.S.)

He's the only man who appreciates my worth the same way I appreciate his.

All three men turn around, surprised.

Nicole and Kira are standing in the doorway with shopping bags.

Nicole smiles warmly at Bear, who tries not to blush as he sips his drink.

MONTREAL  
What up doe?

SHAWN  
What up doe?

NICOLE  
I see y'all started the party without  
us.

MONTREAL  
(To KIRA)  
Come over here and talk to me.

KIRA  
(Rolls her eyes)  
Boy, please stop trying. It's never  
gonna happen.

MONTREAL  
Let's see what you say after a few  
drinks.

KIRA  
The same thing, if not worse.

Everyone laughs.

During the laughter, Kira and Shawn exchange a quick,  
meaningful glance.

NICOLE  
What was this conversation about that  
involved my name?

BEAR  
I was telling them why I love you.

NICOLE  
Right. Well, love of my life, can I  
get a few minutes of your time?

BEAR  
I don't see why not.

Montreal stands, chuckling as he sips his drink.

MONTREAL  
She's about to put you in the  
doghouse, buddy.



BEAR  
(Laughs)  
Fuck you.

Montreal approaches Kira, trying to put his arm around her waist.

She puts her hand up, stopping him, and walks away.

He follows.

SHAWN  
I'll leave you lovebirds to it.

NICOLE  
(Sarcastically)  
You're too kind.

SHAWN  
(Laughs)  
I know, right?

Shawn exits with his drinks.

Nicole approaches Bear, setting her bags on the couch before straddling him and wrapping her arms around his neck.

NICOLE  
You were telling them how much you love me?

BEAR  
To be real, they were asking about your body count and all that extra shit.

NICOLE  
And what did you tell them?

BEAR  
What they needed to know. I was your first, and I'll be your last.

NICOLE  
(Worried)  
You didn't tell them about—

BEAR  
That's not their business.

NICOLE

Thank you.

They kiss tenderly.

BEAR

What did you get at the mall?

NICOLE

You'll see when everyone gets here.

BEAR

(Laughs)

You're making me wait?

NICOLE

(Laughs)

If you could wait to take my  
virginity, waiting to see what I  
bought shouldn't bother you.

BEAR

Did you get me anything?

NICOLE

Was I supposed to?

BEAR

(Laughs)

Like that?

NICOLE

Yup.

He playfully slaps her ass.

BEAR

(Chuckles)

Get off me then.

NICOLE

That's what I'll be telling you after  
you see my outfit.

BEAR

We'll see. But for real, you didn't  
get me anything?

NICOLE

I don't know, let me check.

She leans over, rummaging through one of the bags before pulling out an expensive jewelry box with a blue ribbon.

Bear's eyes light up as he takes the box and removes the ribbon.

Inside is a Cuban link platinum chain with a medallion shaped like the bear tattoo Nicole has on her chest.

BEAR  
Holy shit.

NICOLE  
Take it out, let me see how it looks.

He pulls out the chain, still speechless.

Nicole takes it and places it around his neck with care.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Do you like it?

Bear looks at her with glossy eyes.

BEAR  
I love it as much as I love you.

NICOLE  
(Kisses him)  
You better love me more.

BEAR  
(Smiles)  
I'll think about it.

She hits him lightly on the chest.

NICOLE  
Whatever. Let me go get dressed.

She stands, gathering her bags and prepares to walk away.

BEAR  
Southern Jelly.

She stops and turns around.

BEAR (CONT'D)  
You know I'll always love you, right?

NICOLE  
My heart only belongs to you.

She exits.

Bear picks up his glass and finishes his drink.

As he reaches for another cigarette, a single tear falls.

BEAR (V.O.)  
A lot of you are probably mad right  
now about the truth I just spoke. Some  
of you are probably thinking 'it's  
about time somebody said it.' But  
you're still lying to yourself.  
Conversations like this ruffle  
feathers because people get upset  
about truth or hate that it was  
spoken. But none of that matters when  
you're focused on staying happy.  
(Lights cigarette)  
When you allow love into your heart,  
you start thinking differently.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BEAR HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The bedroom is soft and intimate decorated baby blue and white.

Nicole enters and places her bags on the bed.

She moves to the dresser, and opens a drawer filled with various pieces of sexy lingerie.

Her eyes hold a look of intimacy as she sorts through them.

NICOLE (V.O.)  
Sex makes the world go round.  
Something we all love but don't  
necessarily enjoy. Yes, there's a  
difference. I appreciate that my Bear  
didn't tell them the real reason we  
broke up was because I cheated. Yes, I  
cheated first on the love of my life.  
(Sighs)  
At first, I thought I was doing it for  
a better lifestyle. Truth is, he  
wasn't giving me the attention I felt  
I deserved. Women try to rush men into

loving us, not seeing that it drives them away because they don't know how to express what we're looking for. Yes, I had my share of men when we broke up, but... none of them could complete me on every level like my Bear.

She selects a few pieces and sets them aside.

NICOLE

I'll let him choose which one I should wear.

Moving to the bed, she pulls out the dress from her shopping bag.

NICOLE (V.O.)

Knowing you're about to have a long night of food, drinks, loud conversations, and getting ignored. The bright side is your girls will be there getting the same treatment, so you won't be the only shadow in a dark room.

(Soft chuckle)

Technically, they're not my girls, including Kira. They're women looking for upgrades, willing to do anything to get them. If I wasn't so focused on my Bear, they'd try to get him behind my back. Women will gossip about your past but stay close because of what you have now. No different from men and their followers.

(Laughs)

It's almost time, so let me get back into character. The created freak who only cares about looks, body, and money. If people only knew this was an image, and that I truly love my Bear.

She picks up the dress and heads to the bathroom.

FADE OUT:

**INT. BEAR HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

The dining room has been transformed.

An impressive spread covers the table.

Various cheeses, dips, vegetable platters, desserts, seafood, steaks, champagne, and elegant glassware.

Rebecca, Rayven, Kira, and several other women of different ethnicities and sizes sit around the table in seductive attire, hair and makeup flawless.

Various men move around the table making plates, completely ignoring the women.

The women's attitudes are visible as they watch the men serve themselves and walk away, but they make sure not to let it show.

Nicole enters wearing her new dress with matching shoes.

The women notice and smile.

Fake but practiced.

NICOLE (V.O.)

A table full of lost souls and money-hungry hoes. Each ego is bigger than the other, but we all pretend to be friends. How do we tolerate each other when we all feel the same way? Well, who else can we relate to?

As the women chat, Nicole prepares to get food.

Bear approaches, tapping her shoulder with an empty plate, and a beer in his other hand.

She looks at him.

He hands her the plate and steps back.

The embarrassment is visible as she moves around the table, loading his plate.

When she returns, he takes the plate and hands her the beer.

She opens it.

When she leans in for a kiss, he takes the beer and walks away.

From the corner of her eye, Nicole notices Rebecca and another woman shaking their heads, laughing quietly.

Nicole clears her throat loudly, gaining everyone's

attention.

Awkward silence fills the room.

The doorbell rings.

Jaslyin and Sanchez enter.

Jaslyin is wearing something casual with sex appeal.

SANCHEZ, the handsome Puerto Rican is wearing a button-up and jeans.

JASLYIN  
(Whispering)  
What the hell did we walk into?

SANCHEZ  
No idea.

Nicole points at Rebecca.

NICOLE  
What the fuck were you bitches  
laughing at?

Rebecca takes a sip of her drink.

REBECCA  
Excuse me?

NICOLE  
You can excuse yourself out of my  
house if you don't tell me what was so  
funny.

Bear returns and approaches Nicole, but she puts her hand up.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
Not right now. It's because of you  
this bitch thinks she found something  
amusing.

Bear steps back politely, sipping his beer.

NICOLE (CONT'D)  
I'm waiting for an answer.

REBECCA  
Apparently you've had too much  
tonight, especially since you're

claiming this is your house. But call me a bitch again, and I'll show you something.

The other women remain silent, sipping their drinks.

NICOLE

Come over here and show me what you know, you freak... BITCH!

Rebecca slams her hands on the table and stands up, ready to charge.

The other women jump up, holding her back.

Nicole stands with a smile.

During the chaos, Marquez enters to see what's happening.

He and Jaslyin make eye contact, both amazed to see each other.

They quickly try to act like strangers.

Rayven catches their body language.

RAYVEN

Is this the bitch who has your attention these days?

MARQUEZ

What are you talking about?

Rayven stands and maneuvers through the chaos, getting in MARQUEZ's face.

RAYVEN (CONT'D)

(Pointing at Jaslyin)

You know what I'm talking about! I saw how you two looked at each other! She's the reason why you're not fucking me anymore?!

While Rayven and Marquez argue, Sanchez turns to Jaslyin.

SANCHEZ

What the hell is she talking about?

Jaslyin looks at Sanchez with an attitude, putting her hands on her hips.



JASLYIN

Are you really about to start some  
shit with me over some words from a  
drunk bitch?

SANCHEZ

She didn't say the shit for no reason.  
What's going on?

JASLYIN

Fuck you and this weak-ass party you  
brought me to. You treat me like shit,  
and I'm always on my knees for you.  
Kiss my ass.

She turns to leave.

Sanchez grabs her arm, causing her to turn around and shove  
him.

JASLYIN (CONT'D)

Don't put your fucking hands on me!  
You're trying to show off for these  
people, and the show you wanna  
perform, you really don't want.

SANCHEZ

Who the fuck do you think you're  
talking to?!

JASLYIN

You're the only motherfucker in my  
face, so that means what?!

As the chaotic scene continues into a mini-brawl, Bear  
watches, laughing and sipping his beer as he exits.

The living room is occupied by Montreal, Shawn, Myron, and  
other men drinking, laughing and smoking.

Bear takes a seat laughing, grabbing a cigarette.

BEAR (V.O.)

This is what happens when you invite  
people you claim are friends, knowing  
damn well you can't stand each other.  
Why didn't I say something when Nicole  
put her hand in my face? Because she  
can handle herself, and that's why I  
took her back. What man wants a soft  
woman who says 'I'm in your corner'

but stays in the corner when shit goes down?

Myron approaches Bear with concern.

MYRON

Is that Nicole and Rebecca arguing like enemies?

BEAR

Sure is.

MYRON

Why didn't you break it up?

BEAR

Same reason you didn't rush in when you first heard them getting loud. You don't give a damn about her anyway, so why are we having this conversation?

Myron is silent, then smiles.

MYRON

(Laughs)

Yeah, you're right.

BEAR

When the drama calms down, they'll be cool again. Don't let that ruin your fun, my guy.

MYRON

Right. Let me fix another drink.

Myron walks away.

Bear takes a drag.

BEAR (V.O.)

My Southern Jelly loves these parties. She thinks the outcome will be different, and I go along with it because I love a good laugh. This is why people don't get along. You hang around fake people who smile in your face but show their true colors when there's an audience.

(Laughs)

A gathering of fake people pretending to be real. When shit gets real beyond

arguments and fights, everyone wants to squash the beef. It wouldn't be beef if everyone minded their business. But that'll never happen because people need to stay in others' business while their own lives spiral out of control.

Bear sips his drink and laughs, taking another drag.

The living room fun continues while the dining room chaos is still audible.

FADE TO BLACK:

BLACK SCREEN:

NICOLE (V.O.)

That argument shouldn't have occurred. We've all seen our men embarrass us in some form. Some cases are worse than others, going as far as showing explicit sex videos. Despite the fact I cheated on my Bear, he never went as far as posting or showing our sex life on the internet. Yet, the bitch I was arguing with was trying to keep what she saw a secret so she could tell people later on, adding her own little twist. Some people thrive on drama and gossip because that's all they know.

**INT. MYRON HOUSE - SHOWER - LATER**

Steam rises around Myron as he stands motionless under the cascading water.

His palms press against the tile wall, with his head bowed in defeat.

MYRON (V.O.)

Some days I wonder... What do you give a woman who's had everything? Been through everything? Can you really accept her past without it eating you alive?

He lifts his head, with water streaming down his face.

MYRON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Of course you can't. But you pretend

because desire got you here, and  
getting out... that's the hard part.  
So what happens when cheating thoughts  
consume you, but love keeps you  
chained?

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. MYRON HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The bedroom feels trapped in time. Antique furniture and heavy curtains.

Rebecca lies under the silk sheets, filing her nails with mechanical precision.

The TV drones, but her eyes burn with resentment.

REBECCA (V.O.)

He didn't defend me tonight. He still  
sees me as that girl that's easy and  
available. Yet he buys me a new  
wedding ring every week like jewelry  
can erase my history.

She examines her nails, then glances toward the bathroom.

REBECCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What he doesn't get is if I wanted to  
go back to my old ways, I'd just do  
it. No hiding, no games. Men love  
playing victim when their own choices  
backfire.

Myron enters wearing only a towel as water still glistens on his shoulders.

Rebecca's eye roll could cut glass.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS**

Dim lighting, smooth jazz, and the scent of expensive whiskey.

Montreal leans into an attractive brunette who's clearly calculating every drink he's buying.

Her smile is practiced, professional.

MONTREAL (V.O.)

Shawn called it. I don't open up to women. I'll tell 'em I accept their past, then as soon as I get what I want... community pussy, you know?

He signals the bartender for another round.

MONTREAL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She's probably thinking the same about me. That's why God invented alcohol... liquid courage with a side of bad decisions.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. MARQUEZ HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

Rayven is sitting alone at a glass table, with a vodka bottle as her companion.

Mascara streaks tell the story of hours spent crying.

The kitchen feels cold, sterile like a museum of a marriage.

RAYVEN (V.O.)

Men think alcohol is the master key to our panties. Never mind if we were molested, drugged or raped. They see wet holes, not wounded souls.

She takes a shot straight from the bottle.

RAYVEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We're precious as air until they get bored. Like tonight. The way he looked at her. That energy. Why can't he show me that respect?

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. MARQUEZ HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Marquez is sitting on the bed's edge in his boxers, staring at his glowing phone.

Soft music can't mask the tension radiating from every pixel on his screen.

**INSERT - PHONE SCREEN**

Half-naked photos of Jaslyin fill the gallery.

MARQUEZ (V.O.)

Living with an alcoholic is hell. She was right about me and Jaslyin. Nothing happened yet, but the connection's real. Still, I should leave it alone.

He scrolls through more photos.

MARQUEZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Boredom hits differently when your sex life's nonexistent and every conversation's a fight. But chasing someone new... one night of maybe satisfaction, and then feelings will complicate everything.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - CONTINUOUS**

Candles flicker across marble surfaces.

Kira is reclining on black lace, feeding herself chocolate-covered strawberries like a goddess accepting offerings.

KIRA (V.O.)

We call men dogs afraid of love, but where's our accountability? I'm here for his money, maybe his size if it matches my expectations.

She bites into another strawberry, as the juice stains her lips crimson.

KIRA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Married or messing with married people... we're all using each other wrong. The difference is, women catch feelings after giving themselves away. We act like men, then wonder why they have the upper hand.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. PENTHOUSE SUITE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Shawn stares at his reflection, with guilt carving lines around his eyes.

The mirror shows a man wrestling with his demons.

SHAWN (V.O.)

Why argue with someone who can't satisfy you when satisfaction's a phone call away? But if she's willing to help destroy my marriage, what's stopping her from destroying me next?

His reflection seems to judge him.

SHAWN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

None of it matters at that moment. Mutual satisfaction, mutual destruction. But the guilt... it eats you alive, and you take it out on the one person who doesn't deserve it.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. SANCHEZ HOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS**

The treadmill's rhythm matches Jaslyin's heartbeat as she runs nowhere.

Her earbuds pump melancholy directly into her soul, and it shows in every step.

JASLYIN (V.O.)

Women claim they hate their first love for everything except the truth. Meaning he wasn't who we believed we needed, so we moved on, seeking better.

Her pace increases like she's running from her memory itself.

JASLYIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Currently, my man knows about my ex, but he makes sure he stays buried. Because he knows if the first love returns, we're gone.

INTERCUT WITH:

**EXT. SANCHEZ HOUSE - BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Sanchez is lounging in his chair like a king surveying his domain.

Latin music drifts from hidden speakers while the fire

crackles in the stone pit.

His drink catches the flames' reflection.

SANCHEZ (V.O.)

Sex seals relationships. Truth creates  
lifelong connections. Dark secrets  
allow you to keep fucking even after  
you move on. I know Jaslyin feels this  
way about her ex.

He swirls his drink, ice clinking.

SANCHEZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She says she was happier before me...  
bullshit. I saved her from killing  
herself slowly. But she talks that way  
to make me jealous, and honestly? It  
works.

The fire pops, sending sparks into the night.

SANCHEZ (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Why do I treat her like arm candy?  
Because she allows it. My arrogant  
truth? I'm terrified that if she and  
her ex reconnect, he'll take her back.  
And I won't fight over leftovers.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BEAR HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Nicole is wearing blue lingerie, with a cognac glass in hand.

She's a vision of controlled sensuality watching mindless  
television.

NICOLE (V.O.)

After the fake friends, good food, and  
liquid courage, what's left? You wait  
for your man to come and tear up your  
box. Not all women get that type of  
treatment, but Bear leaves me  
speechless.

She sips her cognac, savoring both taste and anticipation.

NICOLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I still feel unloved though. He only  
touches me when he's in the mood. Men



never admit when women break their hearts. They're too proud. But broken hearts heal differently. They remember...

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. BEAR HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Bear studies his reflection like reading scriptures.

BEAR (V.O.)

What do you give a woman who's seen everything? Can you accept her past without throwing it back in her face? Of course you can. Niggas act like their dick was the first dick she ever had. Digging through someone's history seeking what you already know makes you look stupid. Why torture yourself if you claim to love the person you're with? Nicole had her share during our separation, just like I had mine. We don't weaponize unchangeable history. People do that because they're picturing their partner's freaky moments with others, getting sick to their stomach.

He chuckles, but it's hollow.

BEAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The key is maintaining what you have so they won't share that freaky shit with someone else, then kiss you, claiming to love you. So what can you give her? The same thing she gives you. True love gets true love back. If she's still hoeing, be a hoe like her or leave.

Bear walks into the bed and sits on the bed.

Nicole smiles, taking another sip.

NICOLE

Movie time? Or did you have other plans?

BEAR

I just wanna lay here with my woman.

Whatever happens before we sleep...  
it'll happen naturally.

He adjusts his pillow and settles back.

Nicole leans over and kisses him, her kiss tastes of cognac and promises.

NICOLE

Baby.

BEAR

What's good?

NICOLE

I love you.

BEAR

And I'll always love you.

The screen fractures into a mosaic of intimate moments:

Rebecca and Myron cuddled under covers. He's at peace, but she's still simmering with resentment.

Shawn and Kira are beneath silk sheets, as the television's glow paints their guilt blue.

Montreal is with his conquest, both of them using each other with practiced efficiency.

Rayven and Marquez are in bed with depression thick as fog, staring at anything but each other.

Jaslyin and Sanchez are in matching pajamas, with the distance between them measured in unspoken truths.

Bear and Nicole find temporary peace in each other's arms.

BEAR (V.O.)

So why do people cheat? It's not for any reason you heard tonight. They cheat because they discover too late they're locked down with someone they share nothing in common with. It's easier keeping someone than getting rid of them.

The laughter in his voice carries bitter truth.

BEAR (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 After all the bitching and unnecessary  
 drama, what happens? These identical  
 shadows sleep together, wake up, and  
 perform the same dance.

All screens fade to black.

FADE TO BLACK:

"Deception is the true enemy in a relationship."  
 ~Bernard Mersier~

END CREDITS: