THE BELLES

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INT. PRESENT DAY - CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA - MORNING

OVER OPENING CREDITS:

We're very, very close up on a gold Delta Delta Delta sorority necklace sitting above a pair of exceptionally tan, exceptionally perky breasts.

But these aren't just any perky breasts, they're *royal* perky breasts - and they belong to MARGO ALEXANDER, a pageant queen.

Pulling back, the blond, resplendent MARGO sits at a vanity mirror grooming herself; the sheer velocity of her sexuality and her innocence together is staggering. Her "Miss Charleston" banner hangs on her mirror.

MARGO shakes a can of hairspray, preens and slips into dainty high heels.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MIDTOWN NEW YORK CITY - CONTINUOUS

One YELLOW CAB smashes into another with a crash. Steam rises from a manhole. Horns honk as drivers give the finger.

INT. ANN'S MESSY APARTMENT

This is where we meet ANN ALEXANDER, twenties, a disheveled brunette with a streak in her hair. ANN's in New York City. She doesn't use hairspray. Her velocity isn't staggering.

We spy on *her* morning rituals in her drab apartment. A "**Women are equals, not sequels**" poster hangs next to an NYU diploma. An elliptical machine sits in her corner.

ANN "brushes her teeth" with her finger and gargles, and then dresses in LAYERS OF BLACK. There may be a woman under there, but no one really knows.

ANN slides her feet into clunky black shoes and heads out.

END OPENING CREDITS

CUT TO:

EXT. BAXTER, BURNAM, DREXEL INVESTMENTS - NYC - THAT MORNING

INT. ANN'S PRISTINE OFFICE - SAME TIME

A HAMMER sits atop a desk with no other personal effects.

ANN, behind it, interviews a terrified FINANCIAL ANALYST.

ANN
Work/Life Balance?

He nods. ANN raises one eyebrow, fixing him with a look.

ANN (CONT'D)
The Work/Life balance here is that work is your life...
(Voice gets louder)
...And you have no life other than work. So it's balanced.

FINANCIAL ANALYST
(Stammers) No...life?

ANN
(On a roll) The funds that we manage make the world go 'round, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There *is* nothing else. So while you were out...
(Looks at his resume)
...Setting up the Jones Beach Intramural Volleyball Team, I was putting together a deal that single-handedly boosted the GNP of Peru.

MR. DREXEL, the owner of the firm, approaches ANN's door holding a magazine. She glances at him and then at the almost-crying FINANCIAL ANALYST with a closed look.

ANN (CONT'D)
But thank you for coming in.

ANN twirls the HAMMER and bangs it on her desk, and the FINANCIAL ANALYST scurries out past MR. DREXEL, sniffling.

MR. DREXEL looks at his watch in ANN's doorway.

MR. DREXEL
Ninety seconds, "Hammer." I'm impressed.

ANN
(Makes a face)
You shouldn't be. The guy spent...
(Looks at his resume)
Two years in the Peace Corps and has a *family* in Connecticut. He'd get eaten alive here.

MR. DREXEL makes a face in agreement.

MR. DREXEL
Well, nonetheless, we're all quite impressed with *you*, Miss Alexander.

MR. DREXEL comes into ANN's office. She nervously twirls the hammer, wondering where this is going.

ANN
Just doing my job.

MR. DREXEL
And a fine one at that. Your dedication hasn't gone unnoticed.
(Pregnant pause)
How would you like a promotion?

ANN
(Lighting up) Really?

MR. DREXEL comes nearer to ANN's desk, nodding.

MR. DREXEL
Really. With a raise, a bonus...
(Points out the door)
...And the big office.

She's so excited she's almost speechless.

ANN
I don't know what to say!

MR. DREXEL
Say 'Yes.'

She stands and shakes his hand, enthused.

But MR. DREXEL still has a card to play.

MR. DREXEL (CONT'D)
Great. So I'll have HR process your temporary move to South Carolina.

ANN, dumbfounded, DROPS THE HAMMER onto her desk with a BOOM!

ANN
South *Fucking* Carolina?! Me?

He nods at her, eyebrows raised.

ANN (CONT'D)
Why?

MR. DREXEL
(Crosses arms) Ever heard of the Porter family?

She shakes her head.

MR. DREXEL (CONT'D)
Started out in tobacco but they've been in shipping since the 1800's. Now *they've* jumped ship and are looking for a new firm to manage their fund.

She sits down, closes her eyes and shakes her head.

ANN
But...I'm a New Yorker! My first word was "taxi!" What am *I* going to do in The South?!

MR. DREXEL
You're going to convince the Porters that even though they've never used a firm outside Charleston, Baxter, Burnam, Drexel will manage their money more prudently from New York than someone right down the street.

ANN
Are there even streets there?

MR. DREXEL becomes earnest.

MR. DREXEL
Look, Ann. When we needed someone to work through the holidays, you did it. You rescheduled surgery to complete a merger. You've never let anything stand in your way of your professional commitments - not scheduling, not a relationship, not family, not even the gym...

ANN
I work out at home so I don't waste time.

MR. DREXEL
(Nodding)
You're the best there is.
(Pauses)
And I've always asked you to do things because I've always known that I can count on you.

Her face shows that she's still not convinced.

MR. DREXEL (CONT'D)
...You have the highest pitch to conversion rate in the office.
(Sweet-talking)
(MORE)

MR. DREXEL (CONT'D)
Getting them on board would mean a lot of money for the firm, and all you have to do is get down there and sign them, like you always do. Then you can come back and everything I've offered is yours.

ANN
(Softening)
Jesus. The South. The *Porters*.

MR. DREXEL nods and hands her a *Town & Country* magazine, open to an article on the family; the photo shows a very formal, proper group. ANN studies it, reading aloud.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Reading) The model of Southern propriety, Mr. and Mrs. Haywood Porter III have a long tradition of community philanthropy. Gross.
(Rolls eyes)
Their handsome son Haywood Porter IV is shown here rebuilding a barn in South Central Charleston.

ANN makes a disgusted noise.

He tries to get her back on track.

MR. DREXEL
They're an important family and could be a very important client. We feel you're just the right "hammer" to nail them down, Ann. Plus, I did a little digging...
(Looks her in the eye)
...and at it seems you have family there...Which makes you an even *more* logical choice.

ANN
Family I haven't seen since I was *twelve*!

He shrugs. ANN wrinkles her brow, thinking.

ANN (CONT'D)
And if I say no?

MR. DREXEL
It would be a shame to see others at this company who have far less talent than you do...
(Meaningful look)
...Rise above you.

ANN gets his drift. Her competitive drive kicks in.

ANN
Holy *Crap*.
(Shakes her head)
South Carolina.

She puts her face in her hands, relenting.

ANN (CONT'D)
Yeah...I've got a cousin...
(Hand motion)
...*Down* there. I guess I'd better call her.

He nods, satisfied.

MR. DREXEL
Good. The sooner you wrap this up, the sooner you'll be back. Your initial meet-and-greet is set for one week from today, so you'll have the next few days to put together a plan.

ANN
Wait. So they don't know anything about me? I'm just going to this hoe-down blind?!

MR. DREXEL turns to leave. As he does, he says:

MR. DREXEL
It'll be fine, Miss Alexander. It can't possibly be that different.

CUT TO:

INT. THE TROTT MANSION - CHARLESTON, SC - PARLOUR - SAME TIME

MRS. TROTT, fifties, and one of Charleston's most socially-viable wives, sits in her parlour with two other WIVES. The ceiling above shakes violently, making the chandelier swing.

MRS. TROTT
Excuse me.

She starts up the stairs.

INT. THE TROTT MANSION - UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

MRS. TROTT throws open the doors to the bedroom of her Prince Charming-looking rascal son, JOHN EDWARD TROTT, twenties, revealing him in a vigorous coitus with a naked ADELAIDE, who is handcuffed to the headboard. MRS. TROTT isn't fazed.

JOHN EDWARD
(Turns halfway)
A little privacy here, Mother?

MRS. TROTT crosses her arms and taps her toe.

MRS. TROTT
Oh, get off your high horse. It's my house, dear boy.

JOHN EDWARD begins to dismount.

JOHN EDWARD
Thanks for the reminder, as always.

MRS. TROTT
(Peeks around him) And speaking of getting off the horse...

MRS. TROTT gives a snooty little wave.

MRS. TROTT (CONT'D)
Hello, Adelaide. I do hope you're enjoying your Horizontal Refreshments.

ADELAIDE, handcuffed, wiggles the comforter up and waves.

JOHN EDWARD throws a pillow over ADELAIDE and stands, naked, to address his mother.

MRS. TROTT (CONT'D)
We need to talk.

JOHN EDWARD
(Rolls eyes)
I'll pull out the file.

MRS. TROTT puts her hands on her hips and leans forward.

MRS. TROTT
John Edward, this behavior has to stop. And it will.

JOHN EDWARD
(Annoyed) I have a guest, Mother.

MRS. TROTT gets a superior look on her face.

MRS. TROTT
I have guests too, dear, so I'll make this quick. I've got an ultimatum for you.

CUT TO:

INT. MOE'S CROSSTOWN PUB - CHARLESTON - THAT NIGHT

JOHN EDWARD, colorful PEMBERTON WILKINSON, and bespeckled lawyer KIT WESTINGHOUSE sit at the neighborhood bar.

JOHN EDWARD
So my mother says,
(Mocking her voice)
'I've got an ultimatum for you, dear boy.'

PEMBERTON rolls his eyes and looks at KIT.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK, TO JOHN EDWARD'S ROOM. EXACTLY AS WE LEFT THEM.

MRS. TROTT
Your father and I are concerned.

JOHN EDWARD
Can we do this later? I'm sure you'll still be concerned then.

He motions to indicate ADELAIDE, still handcuffed to the bed.

MRS. TROTT
I can take it if you can.

JOHN EDWARD
(Smirking) Very well.

MRS. TROTT
Your complete lack of focus and near constant parade of floozies...

ADELAIDE
(Insulted) Hey!

MRS. TROTT gives her "a look."

MRS. TROTT
I'm sorry, dear, but it's 9:30 am and you're secured to a headboard.

ADELAIDE shrugs, conceding. MRS. TROTT looks again at her son.

MRS. TROTT (CONT'D)
We're losing faith in your decision making abilities.

JOHN EDWARD
So what are you saying?

BACK TO PRESENT DAY - MOE'S CROSSTOWN

The guys lean forward, engrossed.

KIT
So what is she saying?

JOHN EDWARD
She's saying...

BACK TO FLASHBACK IN JOHN EDWARD'S BEDROOM

MRS. TROTT
Your father and I have decided to withhold the early release of your inheritance until we can be more confident in your choices.

BACK TO MOE'S CROSSTOWN - PRESENT DAY

PEMBERTON
Bum bum BUMMMMM...

KIT leans back in his chair and raises his eyebrows.

KIT
So what are you supposed to do?

As the WAITER brings their drinks, a table full of Belles MARGO ALEXANDER, TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE LOGAN catches JOHN EDWARD's eye. JOHN EDWARD fixates on MARGO as he talks. She notices and discreetly begins to eavesdrop.

JOHN EDWARD
I'm supposed to find a nice, serious *career* girl, so my parents think I'm settling down. No more money 'til then.

PEMBERTON
What exactly does she mean by "nice"?

JOHN EDWARD shrugs and rolls his eyes. MARGO is riveted by the conversation about his sitution.

JOHN EDWARD
Someone who doesn't masturbate without their church gloves on?

MARGO feels JOHN EDWARD's eyes on her and decides to turn, "innocent."

MARGO
(Southern friendly)
John Edward Trott! How are you?

PEMBERTON looks her over, analyzing her outfit.

PEMBERTON
He's abysmal. He has to find a serious girl who doesn't have the clap or he'll have to go to work. Know anyone?

MARGO
Well, um, I'm not...
(Changes course)
...Let's talk later.

She turns away quickly.

PEMBERTON
I guess she has the clap.

KIT leans toward JOHN EDWARD and motions around the room.

KIT
Out of all the girls you've met, you can't think of *one* career-oriented woman who fits the bill?

JOHN EDWARD
Not that'll please my mom, and without convincing her, I've got no chance.
(Shakes his head)
Seriously. Where am I going to find a girl like that *here*?

INT. ANN'S APARTMENT - NEW YORK CITY - LATER THAT NIGHT

ANN goes bananas on the Elliptical machine in her apartment while she watches CNBC.

A Charleston Chamber of Commerce website is on her laptop and devoured Chinese takeout containers are on her desk.

CNBC ANCHOR
Up next, a segment on the resilience and majesty of New York... The city that *no one* wants to leave.

ANN makes a noise and flips off the TV with her remote, jumping off the machine.

Suddenly she spies a fortune cookie from her meal and snaps it open, looking for wisdom about her upcoming challenge.

ANN
(To herself)
Need all the help I can get.

She extracts the fortune: "Go South."

ANN (CONT'D)
These are rigged.

She tosses it and fumbles around for another cookie, cracking it open to the second fortune: "Always Obey Your Mother."

She makes a face and fishes out a locket from her neck, revealing a picture of her mother.

The inscription: "Push the Open Door." Even gone over a decade, Mother still knows best.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Shakes her head) But is *this* plan really the open door, Mom?

She snaps the locket shut and switches on her TV to a commercial that features a man dressed up as a chicken wearing overalls, thrashing in hay.

ANN stares at it, horrified, and puts her head in her hands.

ANN (CONT'D)
I can't do this.
(Wails)
I'm going to die in South Carolina!

Her neighbor yells through the wall.

ANGRY NEIGHBOR
Fuck you, lady!

ANN
(Wailing)
I'm gonna miss it here so much!

CUT TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT - MID DAY WEDS - ONE WEEK LATER

Planes fly, carrying people to and from the Big Apple.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - GATE AREA - SAME TIME
Airport gate reads: Charleston, SC, flight # 1885

The gate area is filled with SOUTHERNERS heading home and moody NEW YORKERS on Blackberries. ANN, all in CLUNKY BLACK, flops down, looking for her ticket. She blocks the walkway.

A PINK SOUTHERN LADY and a BIG SOUTHERN MAN, standing in the boarding area, stare at ANN in horror as she rummages around.

PINK SOUTHERN LADY
It's just too tacky to talk about.

BIG SOUTHERN MAN
(Nodding) Nothing is more tacky than being tacky.

ANN finds her ticket, revealing a photo and information for her cousin MARGO ALEXANDER, in Charleston. MARGO and ANN are twelve in the snapshot. ANN picks up her cell and sees "Two Missed Calls" from MARGO herself. She shakes her head and pushes a button.

CUT TO:

EXT. BIG WHITE ORNATE CHURCH - CHARLESTON - SAME TIME

INT. BIBLE STUDY GROUP AT THE CHURCH

COUSIN MARGO, in a dress, sits in a circle holding a hymnal next to her redheaded "frenemy" TERRIBLE TORI, who wears an almost-sexy getup. OLD LADIES sit with them sing a drowsy version of "The Old Rugged Cross."

Suddenly MARGO's cell phone rings.

COUSIN MARGO
(Answering) Hello?

TERRIBLE TORI shoots MARGO a dirty look and points upward to God. MARGO rolls her eyes.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Oh, who are *you* kidding, Tori? You "Did the Do" in exchange for a Ralph Lauren sofa.
(Into the phone)
Ann?

BACK TO:

INT. JFK AIRPORT - INSIDE THE TERMINAL

ANN, looking like death, makes a face at the Southern travelers as she talks into the phone.

ANN
You don't need to be so concerned about me, Margo. Thanks for the Google Maps info, the link to the Charleston Chamber of Commerce and the jar of...

COUSIN MARGO
(Through the phone) Gooseberry Jam.

ANN
(Continuing)...Gooseberry Jam, but you can stop worrying. If I can get from Flushing to Battery Park without my contacts on, I can find my way to a meeting in *Charleston*.

BACK TO:

INT. BIBLE STUDY GROUP AT THE CHURCH

MARGO makes a face that says otherwise.

COUSIN MARGO
OK...well, if you need anything, I'll be down the street and a phone call away...

ANN sees that her flight is boarding.

ANN
Gotta go.

She hangs up on MARGO.

BACK TO:

INT. BIBLE STUDY GROUP AT THE CHURCH

MARGO hangs up and holds her phone, confused.

COUSIN MARGO
She says she's flushed herself to something called a battery park and doesn't need any help.

TERRIBLE TORI mouths "whatever." MARGO shrugs.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLESTON - DUSTY FARM ROAD - THREE HOURS LATER

ANN stands on a dirt road flanked by cows, holding directions that say "1100 Orchard" as her Yellow Taxi pulls away.

A sign reading "1100 Orchard" is tacked to a rotting fence.

A long Cadillac ambles down the road past her and then grinds into reverse, heading backwards toward ANN.

ANN inches sideways toward it. A blond BELLE in the back sticks her head out the window.

BACKSEAT BELLE
Need some help?

ANN, suspicious of friendliness, eyes her.

ANN
I'm looking for 1100 Orchard. A...
(Looks at her directions)
...Red brick building with a clock on it. The Peninsula Grill.

The BACKSEAT BELLE lights up as cars drive by, kicking up dust with their tires.

BACKSEAT BELLE
Oh, this is just plain old 1100 Orchard. You want 1100 Orchard Parkway. Easy as creamed corn. You just walk down this road to the white clapboard house on the corner - that's Judge Green Jr.'s House.

ANN stares at the road and then back at her.

ANN
Judge Gr—

BACKSEAT BELLE
(Nodding)
Now don't go all the way to Judge Sr.'s house or that'll confuse you for sure because Judge Sr. died last year and the Bernards bought it. They're the oil Bernards and not the department store Bernards.
(Makes a face)
Their sons are just ruining those beautiful wood floors in that house.

ANN tries to follow along, eyes wide and nodding.

BACKSEAT BELLE (CONT'D)
Those floors have been there since Judge Sr.'s mama made her debut, although...
(Leans in, sotto)
...His mama was considered fast so my mama wouldn't really have anything to do with her. Lord knows how he made judge with the way she ran around.

ANN stares at her, trying to move it along. A cow moos.

ANN
And The Peninsula is...

BACKSEAT BELLE
Right across the street from that.

BACKSEAT BELLE smiles, and the Cadillac window rolls up. The car pulls away from a dazed ANN, who calls after her.

ANN
If you could just...

But she's gone in a cloud of dust. ANN hitches up her bags and starts walking down the endless, dusty road.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PENINSULA GRILL - LATER

An elegant, red brick building with an awning.

INT. THE PENINSULA GRILL - PRIVATE DINING ROOM

MR. and MRS. PORTER, late fifties and elegant, sit in a finely appointed private dining room. MRS. PORTER has a large cross around her neck; Baxter, Burnam, Drexel folders sit in front of them.

MR. PORTER
They seem to think highly of her in New York...

MRS. PORTER looks huffy and glances at her watch.

MRS. PORTER
I'm assuming she's not managing the assets of the Father *Time* estate.

He puts his hand on his wife's arm.

MR. PORTER
Darling, we're leaving for Sea Island and we do need to get this sown up. The Trust board won't wait forever and we can't have them picking someone for us.

She nods, conceding.

INT. THE PENINSULA GRILL - MAITRE D STAND - MOMENTS LATER

ANN stomps into the elegant room. The snooty, closeted Maitre D looks her over with distaste, taking in her unfeminine exterior and sweaty, dusty countenance.

MAITRE D
(Dismissive) I'm sorry, the trans-gender center has moved.

ANN
(Gives him a hard look) I'm meeting the Porter party. Ann Alexander.

The MAITRE D jumps back a little, looking at his reservations book and then back at ANN's appearance.

MAITRE D
Oh my! The powder room is—

ANN
(Cuts him off) I'm fine.

He raises one eyebrow and looks her over.

MAITRE D
Are you?

She stares him down, also raising an eyebrow.

MAITRE D (CONT'D)
(Sighs, reluctant)
Very well. Right this way.

He leads her to the private dining room door.

INT. THE PENINSULA GRILL - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As we left them. A small spread is set up with coffee, tea and a water pitcher.

MR. PORTER
Let's give her a chance. The approach she's presented is the most conservative, prudent and financially sophisticated I've ever seen.

Suddenly the door swings open, revealing ANN. A cloud of dust follows her, like Pig Pen.

MRS. PORTER sneezes.

MR. PORTER (CONT'D)
Ah, here she...is?

MR. PORTER jumps up to close the door for ANN, who hands him a five dollar bill as a tip. MRS. PORTER gasps and her husband sits once again.

MRS. PORTER
(Sotto, to herself) I need some Neosporin just looking at her.

ANN grabs a napkin, dunks it in the water pitcher, wipes her grubby hand and thrusts it out. The PORTERS stare.

ANN
Ann Alexander.

MR. PORTER takes her hand, even though he doesn't want to.

MR. PORTER
Haywood Porter. A...pleasure. This is my wife, Delia.

ANN plops down in a chair. Suddenly a uniform-clad WAITRESS enters with a teacup. She approaches ANN to set it down.

WAITRESS
May I?

ANN looks up, shrugging.

ANN
Whatever blows your skirt up.

MRS. PORTER almost jumps.

The waitress leans in, about to pour. Then ANN snaps her fingers, changing her mind and spooking The WAITRESS.

ANN (CONT'D)
Actually - can I have coffee?

Shock registers on MRS. PORTER's face.

MRS. PORTER
(To ANN) *Please*.

ANN looks at the WAITRESS, snapping and pointing at MRS. PORTER.

ANN
She wants some too.

MRS. PORTER
(Shakes her head) No, dear, I was suggesting a new approach for you.

ANN doesn't get it. MR. and MRS. PORTER exchange a glance.

MR. PORTER
Well. How was your trip in?

She motions to herself.

ANN
Well, I'm *here*; no thanks to the roads or people. Jesus!

MRS. PORTER grabs the cross around her neck.

MR. PORTER clears his throat, picks up a folder and turns the conversation as the WAITRESS goes for coffee.

MR. PORTER
So, we've looked over the proposal submitted by your team, and the approach and numbers are very convincing.

ANN
Convincing?!

The WAITRESS approaches with coffee and pauses. ANN looks up at her and makes a "Rapido!" motion with her hand. She pours.

ANN (CONT'D)
I scrubbed those numbers like a crime scene.
(Opens a folder, pointing)
See, I did a little rearranging, and I found that with a few changes, the net cash provided by the operating activities of your foundations and investments, or your free cash flow, doubles after Q2 and continues with 35% quarter-over-quarter growth.

THE PORTERS are impressed.

ANN (CONT'D)
With potential returns like these, I defy you to find something that doesn't work for what you want to do.

MR. PORTER
(Taken aback) Yes. Well. There *is* actually something I'm concerned about.

ANN makes a face, thinking she's reading his mind.

ANN
I think I know what you're referring to.

The PORTERS look at one another, relieved. She barrels on.

ANN (CONT'D)
You're worried that because I'm only one person, I'm not going to be able to give you the time and attention you need. Well, you shouldn't be, because I gang banged with my team back in New York on this and they're all up to speed.

The Porters eyes go wide, horrified.

ANN (CONT'D)
And we have plenty of resources, so anyone I bring on the account that doesn't do it for ya, I can just chop them up and serve them to someone else.

The WAITRESS runs away, fearful.

MR. PORTER
(Stuttering) Uh, that...won't be necessary. The plan is solid. We've just never worked with a firm from New York, which is why we wanted this chemistry check meeting. And now that we've met you...

He looks at his wife.

MRS. PORTER
Now we're *very* concerned. About the fit.
(Leans forward)
Who is your family, dear?
Did you debut?

ANN squints, not understanding, and shakes her head.

MRS. PORTER (CONT'D)
Your social group? Are you enfianced? Do you think could you possibly understand the dynamics of our place in a community like this?

ANN
(Stops her) Mrs. Porter. My mother died. My cousin Margo lives here, but I have no siblings. And I didn't premiere.

MRS. PORTER
Debut.

ANN
Whatever. And my whole life is work, so why the Hell do I need to be...enfianced?

MRS. PORTER's mouth drops open as ANN barrels on.

ANN (CONT'D)
We're talking about your money, not an engagement party. And I'll work for your family, 24/7.

MR. PORTER looks her over almost softly as she talks. He sees something in her, even under all the muck. He takes a breath.

MR. PORTER
Miss Alexander.
(Dawning on him)
Cousin to Margo Alexander.

ANN looks up at him, a bit dazed, and nods.

MR. and MRS. PORTER look at one another, pleased.

MRS. PORTER
Margo is a lovely girl. A most... *Proper* girl.

MR. PORTER
(Nodding, thinks)
You know, Ann... We're off for a week's vacation this afternoon. I appreciate your passion, and your credentials are impeccable, so I'm willing to say...let's meet again in one week on Wednesday and after you've had a chance to...
(Looks at MRS. PORTER)
... Confer with your cousin... Let's see if we can find more synergy. If we can't, then...

ANN
(Nods) I understand.

MR. PORTER
Whomever we select needs to understand not only the numbers but the spirit of our decisions. We've been in this community too long not to make investment choices that benefit it. We're willing to go with an outsider, but...

He looks her squarely in the eye.

MR. PORTER (CONT'D)
If you're going to work with us you must *try* to behave like an insider.

ANN takes a defeated breath. It's time to call MARGO.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PENINSULA GRILL - LATER

MARGO drives toward The Peninsula Grill; TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE sit in the front and back seats. All are dressed in pastels; MARGO also wears a satisfied look.

COUSIN MARGO
I *knew* she'd need our help.

ANN sits on the curb, waiting to be picked up.

TANCY JANE
(Craning her neck) Is that her?

COUSIN MARGO
Where?

TANCY JANE
(Pointing)
The one that looks like she went to school behind a refrigerator.

COUSIN MARGO squeals, stops the car, and they all run to ANN, throwing their arms around her.

COUSIN MARGO
Cousin Ann! My heavens! It's you!

ANN, not used to girlfriends, is blank with discomfort.

THE BELLES
We're so tickled!

ANN pushes them away, extricating herself.

ANN
Wow. I do *not* swing that way.

ROSE ALICE, prim, looks at ANN's black getup.

ROSE ALICE
Pleased to make your acquaintance. I'm Rose Alice Logan.
(Squints at ANN)
Was it a "theme day" at work?

ANN looks at herself, not understanding that compared to them, she looks like the Grim Reaper.

ANN
Wearing all black keeps the grime, smog, exhaust and garbage that get on you when you walk to work from showing. We all look like this in New York.

ROSE ALICE
I'm not sure that's true.

MARGO gives ROSE ALICE a stern look and opens the driver side door.

COUSIN MARGO
Come on, girls.
(Hops in)
Let's show Ann what Charleston's all about.

They all get back into the car and MARGO speeds away. TANCY JANE, aggressive, extends her hand from the back seat.

TANCY JANE
I'm Tancy Jane.

ANN cocks her head and takes her hand, shaking it.

ANN
Tancy?

TANCY JANE
Well, yes, it's a family name. I'm a twin except for my glove compartment, because I'm multi-orgasmic. My sister's name is Fancy.

ANN blinks hard and turns around to face TANCY.

ANN
(Wrinkling her brow)
Fancy and Tancy?

ROSE ALICE
(Proud) There's one Tancy in almost every generation.

ANN looks as though ROSE ALICE is speaking Japanese and turns around to face front.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
(Softly) Really. There is.

MARGO puts her dainty, tanned hand on ANN's mannish forearm.

COUSIN MARGO
You know, Ann, I don't think we've seen each other since your dear mama finally found relief.

ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE both make sympathetic sounds.

ROSE ALICE
Mine passed two years ago.

ANN doesn't know whether they're talking about mothers or kidney stones.

ANN
(Turns to MARGO)
Are we talking about my mother?

COUSIN MARGO
May she rest.

MARGO AND THE BELLES
(In unison) Amen.

This is all too much for ANN. She rests her head back as the car maneuvers up to Moe's Crosstown Pub.

ANN
(Sotto to God) Help me.

CUT TO:

INT. MOE'S CROSSTOWN PUB - HOMECOMING WEEK - MOMENTS LATER

Sorority girls mill about. ANN stomps through the doors as MARGO and THE BELLES float next to her. Every eye in the room moves to the glow that's attached to the ladies. Homecoming banners abound.

MARGO points to some stools at the bar.

COUSIN MARGO
Shall we?

They take their seats, and something disturbing happens. ANN knocks on the bar.

ANN
Shot of Patron, right here.

The bartender places a shot of tequila in front of ANN.

TANCY JANE
Holy hemorrhoids in a handbasket.

ROSE ALICE
(Gasping) So unladylike. I would sooner die than do a shot.

ANN licks salt and shoots it as the others stare in horror.

COUSIN MARGO
I might already be dead.

MARGO shakes her head and tries to get on track.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Tell us about your day.
(Then, to THE BELLES)
Ann had a big meeting today with the Porters.

SORORITY girls pass by, bouncy and perky. They wave at MARGO.

ANN
Boy, were they ever *weird*.
(Whistles to BARTENDER)
Yo! Can we get a pizza over here?

THE BELLES are aghast as another shot is set up.

ROSE ALICE
What do you mean *weird*? The Porters are a *lovely* family.

ANN fishes out a tissue and blows her nose, honking loudly.

ANN
They really didn't get me, and they *have* to if I'm gonna close this deal. They're home in a week and I have to convince them to pick me over all the other firms so I can get back to New York.
(Shakes her head)
This place is fucking *bananas*.

ROSE ALICE opens her eyes wide.

ROSE ALICE
Well, Charleston is not New York.

ANN takes out an ugly brown lipstick and applies a coat.

TANCY JANE
(Shakes her head, staring)
Oh, honey, no.

ANN
(Closing the top)
I mean, I know you people have a "way" you do things here, but what's the big deal? None of it really matters.

ROSE ALICE
(Aghast) The big deal?

TANCY JANE goes pale.

TANCY JANE
None of it matters? Don't you even care about tradition, Ann?

COUSIN MARGO
Ladies! Stop it! She just got here!

TANCY JANE can't help it.

TANCY JANE
Yes, but Margo, she's your people! We have to help her before she goes and makes a fool of herself!

The BELLES all lean away as ANN's pizza is served. MARGO takes a deep breath and looks right at ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Tell us what happened.

ANN stacks one piece atop another as she talks.

ANN
He acted like I was Jack the Ripper and she corrected my speech. They seriously looked at me like I was an alien.

TANCY JANE
(Pokes at pizza) Well, I mean...

ANN takes a huge, horselike bite.

ANN
I run a 200 million dollar fund in New York. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from NYU. What am I doing wrong?

ANN takes a sip of her shot and snaps at the BARTENDER, handing off her glass.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Irritated) This is 50 percent water.

TANCY JANE
(Staring) You need a serious Southern makeover if the Porters are *ever* going to "get" you.

ROSE ALICE's eyes light up.

ROSE ALICE
Yesssss!

ANN
(Groans) A makeover?

TANCY JANE
(Nodding) But first we need to assess the damage.

TANCY JANE looks at a group of uptight-looking KAPPA girls across the bar and then fixes the group with a satisfied look.

TANCY JANE (CONT'D)
(Convinced) She'll take a test.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLESTON COUNTRY CLUB - GOLF COURSE - SAME TIME

JOHN EDWARD, PEMBERTON and KIT finish up a round of golf. They sit on the green in carts; JOHN EDWARD kisses and tells.

KIT
(Shaking his head)
Jesus, man. Right against the net?

JOHN EDWARD waves his hands like "Voila!"

JOHN EDWARD
Made a significant donation into the club's tennis department.

KIT, in a separate cart, shakes his head, disgusted.

KIT
That court is dead to me.
(Turns to face him)
Don't you ever get sick of meaningless...tennis matches?

JOHN EDWARD waves to a group of girls and looks at PEMBERTON.

JOHN EDWARD
See why he's in a separate cart?
(To KIT)
(MORE)

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Look, Counselor, if it wasn't for my mother and the impending doom of work, I would *never* change.

KIT looks at JOHN EDWARD and shakes his head.

KIT
But then you would never grow.

JOHN EDWARD
(Points at KIT) Exactly.

He peels out in his cart.

BACK TO:

INT. MOE'S CROSSTOWN PUB - EXACTLY AS WE LEFT THEM

COUSIN MARGO
(Intrigued)
What do you mean 'a test?'

TANCY JANE
We give her challenges so we know how extensive her Southern renovation will need to be.

Relenting, ANN waves her hand. They light up.

COUSIN MARGO
Please excuse us. Quick huddle.

ANN chews as the BELLES huddle; the BARTENDER stares at her. The girls break.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
OK, so we've narrowed it down to Relating, Men and Tradition. One challenge in each category.

ROSE ALICE suddenly becomes Bob Barker in a sundress.

ROSE ALICE
Your first challenge will be in the "Relating" category.

People in the bar begin to take notice of what they're doing.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
To win this category you must get yourself invited to sit with the Kappas over there for one drink.

She points to the snobby-looking group. ANN puts her hands on her hips.

ANN
So I'm supposed to go and horn in on their conversation?
(Rolls eyes)
I don't even have to run the data on this to tell you the outcome.

TANCY JANE
(Not budging) I don't know about the data, but how do you not *know* that Delia Porter is a seventh generation Kappa with no ties to any other house?

ANN
Because I have a life.

TANCY JANE gives her a superior look and stares her down.

TANCY JANE
Well, I guess you don't need our help after all, then.

ROSE ALICE crosses her arms.

ANN looks from one BELLE to the other, staring them down in return, and then breaks, snatching her pocketbook.

ANN
Fine. Whatever it takes to get me home.

ROSE ALICE
(Sotto, to MARGO)
Should we tell her about the...

COUSIN MARGO nudges ROSE ALICE.

COUSIN MARGO
Here she goes.

ANN hovers around the Kappas but they box her out, all around the table and back. ROSE ALICE gasps.

ROSE ALICE
It's like a sorority slinky!

Finally, a KAPPA hands her an empty glass and a five.

KAPPA
Another white wine, please.

ANN
(Annoyed, snaps)
I'm in finance, Blondie.

COUSIN MARGO
Oh, that's gotta hurt.

And the KAPPAS close the circle once again.

ROSE ALICE
At least she made five dollars.

ANN gives up, stomping back to MARGO and THE BELLES.

ANN
God, Kappos are bitches.

COUSIN MARGO
Kappas.

ANN
Whatever.

MARGO AND THE BELLES
(Hugging) Tri-Delt forever!

ANN leans in and cuts in on the sisterly revelry.

ANN
Can we just get this over with?

TANCY JANE
Faster than a nervous virgin.

TANCY lures the bartender over with her eyes.

TANCY JANE (CONT'D)
Oh, Mr. Bartender?

MR. BARTENDER approaches, melting in her presence.

BARTENDER
It's Robert, ma'am.

TANCY JANE
Well then, Robert, would you mind ever so much if we borrow a few pieces of your patterns?

ANN looks from one BELLE to the other.

ANN
Patterns? What patterns?

ROBERT ducks under the bar and hands off a roll of velvet filled with various silverware. TANCY unfurls it.

TANCY JANE
This category is "Tradition."

TANCY pulls out three very different forks and holds one up.

TANCY JANE (CONT'D)
Can you tell me what this is?

ANN
(Triumphant) A fork.

TANCY JANE cocks her head.

TANCY JANE
Yes, but what *kind* of fork. What pattern?

ANN
(Stares at it) Um, regular?

THE BELLES look faint. ROSE ALICE bolsters herself.

ROSE ALICE
Thank goodness my Grandmother isn't alive to see this.

TANCY pulls out a fork with a more ornately patterned handle.

TANCY JANE
Let's try again. What's this.

ANN
(Exasperated)
I told you. A fork. A curly fork.

ROSE ALICE
(Bursting)
Chrysanthemum! It's the Chrysanthemum pattern.

ANN stares at the BELLES and points to the silverware.

ANN
All of these have a name?

THE BELLES nod vigorously. ANN frowns.

ANN (CONT'D)
Am I done yet or what?

MARGO shakes her head.

ANN (CONT'D)
Fine. I might as well follow this to the death.

ROSE ALICE
(Wrinkling her nose)
No one says "death" here, Ann. It's morbid. We prefer "passed."

TANCY JANE
Or dearly departed.

ROSE ALICE
Or going on to their final rest.

TANCY JANE points.

TANCY JANE
Ooh, good one.

Suddenly MARGO's phone rings; the name "SC TAX OFFICE" appears and her face darkens. She hits "ignore" and turns back to the girls.

COUSIN MARGO
Ladies.

TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE come to attention.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
The last category is "Men."

ANN rolls her eyes.

TANCY JANE
I knew she was a lesbian!

ROSE ALICE
(Nods) The shoes...

ANN
(Exasperated) I'm not a lesbian!

MARGO shakes her head at THE BELLES.

COUSIN MARGO
OK, Ann. The challenge. Lure a man over to you with nothing but your eyes. Let charm ooze through them.

ANN
That'll never work.

COUSIN MARGO
Of course it will. Watch.

MARGO points her breasts out and gazes into the crowd alluringly. Immediately a HANDSOME MAN comes over.

HANDSOME MAN
Buy you a drink, pretty lady?

She waves him off and leans in to ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
You can do it. Ooze charm. Use your ladybits like a weapon.

ANN tries to mimic MARGO but looks like a stormtrooper.

Suddenly she screams and grabs her eye.

ANN
My contact!

ROSE ALICE
She needs it all. Cabbage soup to candied nuts.

ANN puts her hands on her hips, not buying it.

ANN
But who cares about silverware and dating! This stuff doesn't help me with the Porters!

TANCY can't believe what she's hearing.

TANCY JANE
But *this stuff* is Charleston, Ann, and the Porters are nothing if not all about this town. They've *never* cottoned to outsiders.

ANN takes a deep breath, almost giving in.

ANN
But you guys *must* have jobs. You can't have time to Southernize me.

COUSIN MARGO
Real estate is bunk and I need something to take my mind off my finances, anyway.

ANN looks at TANCY JANE.

TANCY JANE
Just turned in my thesis.

ROSE ALICE
Mama had money.

ANN puts her head on the bar. MARGO pats her on the back.

TANCY JANE
Trust us, Ann.

MARGO keeps rubbing ANN's back.

COUSIN MARGO
Have a little faith, Cousin.

ROSE ALICE
Yeah. Have a little faith, Annie.

ANN looks up sharply at the change of her name to “Annie”.

COUSIN MARGO
OK. We’ll meet at your hotel at 8 am sharp. We’ve only got seven days, and there’s a lot to arrange. We’ll need an escort, and I think I have just the person.

TANCY has goose bumps. She shows ROSE ALICE.

ROSE ALICE
The makeover tingle?

They squeal and head out. ANN‘s not ready for this.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANN’S HOTEL ROOM - 8 AM THURS - NEXT MORNING

COUSIN MARGO, TANCY JANE bang incessantly on ANN’s hotel room door. JOHN EDWARD stands back, uninspired.

ANN finally answers, wearing New York Jets pajamas.

ANN
(Almost yelling)
My God, with all the banging I thought it was the Grim Reaper coming to take me to my final rest!

COUSIN MARGO
(Spunky) No, silly! It’s us. We’re ready to start your makeover!

MARGO motions toward JOHN EDWARD.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT’D)
And we brought your training partner.

ANN and JOHN EDWARD take one another in. Hate at first sight.

ANN
This guy?! He’s worse than the Porters.

JOHN EDWARD, annoyed and grossed out, turns to leave. MARGO makes the “money” signal with her fingers.

He extends a hand.

JOHN EDWARD
(Rolling eyes) John Edward Trott.

MARGO jumps in, leaning toward ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Of the Charleston "Trotts." It's Homecoming Week, and John Edward has *kindly* offered to help in your transformation.

TANCY JANE stands on her tiptoes from behind JOHN EDWARD.

TANCY JANE
John Edward's not any sort of threat because he's from an old Southern family and can only marry one of his kind, Annie.

ANN
(Wrinkles her nose)
Shouldn't he be out sexually harassing someone? And when did everybody start calling me Annie?

JOHN EDWARD crosses his arms; MARGO makes an irritated noise.

COUSIN MARGO
You'll need a practice date for nearly everything we're doing this week. And he'll drive us.

ANN
Oh.

She puts out a sweaty hand. He tries not to recoil.

ROSE ALICE
(Leans in) And we told him, and he doesn't mind that you're a lesbian.

ANN
I'm not a—
(Straightens herself)
I'll be right back.

ANN goes into her room. JOHN EDWARD raises his eyebrows.

JOHN EDWARD
Does she know why I'm here?

MARGO turns to face JOHN EDWARD.

COUSIN MARGO
No, and we're not going to tell her. She needs to fit in so she can close a deal, and you need to help someone else for a change while also making your mother happy. Everybody wins.

ROSE ALICE tilts her head, looking toward ANN's room.

ROSE ALICE
She's really not a lesbian?

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE JOHN EDWARD'S MERCEDES-BENZ - MOMENTS LATER

ANN, all in BLACK again, rides in the backseat with MARGO and TANCY JANE. ROSE ALICE is in the front seat.

JOHN EDWARD pulls up to a Tea Room and jumps out to open ANN's door. Unfortunately, she goes for the door herself and they struggle, nearly taking John Edward's arm off.

TANCY JANE
(Watching, horrified)
My God, is she on 'roids?

EXT. THE "TIME WELL SPENT TEAROOM" - A FEW MINUTES LATER
A charming wooden sign swings outside a clapboard building.

INT. THE "TIME WELL SPENT TEAROOM"

Everyone sits at a round table. JOHN EDWARD and ANN avoid touching. They are attended to by VERY PROPER WAITERS.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie, so we can get a sense of your general skills, John Edward is going to take you on a mock date.

JOHN EDWARD rolls his eyes.

ANN
Is that like a mock trial?

TANCY JANE
Exactly.

COUSIN MARGO motions with her hands at JOHN EDWARD and ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Go and enter the room again.
(Looks at JOHN EDWARD)
Take it from there.

JOHN EDWARD and ANN stand to re-enter, still avoiding touching as they head outside. Again, they struggle at the door until she finally capitulates.

TANCY JANE
A bumpy start.

ANN clomps back in with JOHN EDWARD. Once at the table, JOHN EDWARD stands next to ANN's chair and pulls it out for her. She plops into the next chair over.

ROSE ALICE
It's like watching a skunk at a wedding reception.

TANCY JANE
Seeing this just stripped the polish *right off* my toenails.

MARGO jumps in, with a loud whisper.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie! Get up! When he pulls it out you *sit in it*.

ANN finally does as told. JOHN EDWARD is dazed. PROPER WAITERS enter bringing plates of tomato sandwiches, fried okra, turnip greens and catfish.

ANN
What's all this?

JOHN EDWARD pops fried okra into his mouth; MARGO playfully slaps his hand. MARGO turns to ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
For the next six days, in an effort to cleanse you of New York, Annie, you will eat nothing but foods indigenous to the South.

ANN pokes at the catfish with a fork.

ANN
What is that? Squirrel?

COUSIN MARGO
(Indignant) No, Annie, it's catfish. Squirrel is out of season.

ANN rolls her eyes.

ANN
Oh. Well that's a relief.

ROSE ALICE
You're going to feel so much better when you get the MSG and exhaust fumes out of your system.

ANN
Great. So this is like an exorcism.

She grabs a piece of okra, sniffs it, and puts it in her mouth. Just as quickly, she spits it out. Seeds go flying.

ROSE ALICE
(Shocked) Annie!

Everyone in the room gasps, grossed out.

JOHN EDWARD
(Head to the sky) Damn you, Mother.

COUSIN MARGO
(Sotto, to JOHN EDWARD)
It's just a week.

Suddenly JOHN EDWARD's cell phone rings. It's:

MRS. TROTT
Are you out spending our money?

JOHN EDWARD rolls his eyes and covers the mouthpiece.

JOHN EDWARD
(To MARGO) Speak of the Devil. Excuse me, please.

He steps away from the table to take the call. MARGO continues to teach ANN about Southern cuisine.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Actually, Mother, I'm doing a philanthropy project with Margo Alexander, if you must know.

MRS. TROTT
(Impressed) Well, this is a first.

JOHN EDWARD
And I've met someone, a career girl. She's...

JOHN EDWARD looks to ANN at that moment to see her licking a napkin to clean off her tongue. He winces.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
...Passionate about what she believes in.

MRS. TROTT
(Pauses, shocked) My goodness. Maybe you'll bring her to the St. Cecelia Ball next week, and we can put all this behind us?

He watches ANN across the room and takes a deep breath.

JOHN EDWARD
I just hope we're able to make it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POODLE'S PEDICURE PALACE - AN HOUR LATER

ANN, MARGO and THE BELLES sit in a row as PEDICURISTS tend to their toenails. ANN's PEDICURIST uses large tools and wears three layers of gloves, a plastic apron and a surgical facemask; the rest of the technicians wear pink uniforms.

ANN
So the chair pulling and small talk...that's really what people do here on dates? It's so polite...

The BELLES are confused.

ROSE ALICE
It's the proper way.

COUSIN MARGO
(Cute smile) I don't think that's what Annie's asking.

Suddenly ANN's pedicurist tickles her feet by accident. ANN almost kicks her in the face, and the PEDICURIST grabs ANN's foot in a death grip, re-positioning it. She yelps.

ANN
Jesus! This isn't the UFC!
(Then, leans in)
Yeah. I mean, with all the rules and regulations, does anyone ever...

COUSIN MARGO
Have sex? (Coquettish) Of course.

The girls all smirk and lean in, conspiratorial.

ROSE ALICE
The sexual revolution came late to The South, but...(Looks at them) We all have Horizontal Refreshments.

ANN's not sure what that means.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
(Helpful) Roll in the Hay, Spin the Turnip Truck...

ROSE ALICE's PEDICURIST jumps in, nodding.

ROSE ALICE'S PEDICURIST
...Put the Pig in the Blanket, Flour the Cake Pan, make a Dirty Place Setting with Grandma's China...

TANCY JANE
...Mount the Dragon with St. George and his Horse, Ride the Roast Beef Bus...

MARGO wrinkles her nose at TANCY and points at ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
But not at first. There's a...sliding scale.

The PEDICURISTS look at one another. MARGO lowers her voice and continues, everyone leaning in.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
It's like "bases". First you Give Him Some Sugar.

ROSE ALICE examines her pedicure.

ROSE ALICE
That's basically kissing, with cheek but without tongue. And after that, if he's nice - opens your door, asks about your family - then you might move on to Necking.

ANN
Like in the 50's?

COUSIN MARGO
(Nods) Then if you keep on dating, you Play the Flute...

MARGO looks at ANN, and makes an obscene hand motion that looks half blow-job and half orchestral. ANN stops her.

ANN
Thanks. I got that one.

COUSIN MARGO
...And then you Give Him the Gift. That's when you Do the Do.

TANCY JANE looks at MARGO.

TANCY JANE
(Points) You skipped one. You have to Wrap the Engagement Present before you Play the Flute or Give Him the Gift.

ANN
Wrap the Engagement Present?

COUSIN MARGO
Right. (To TANCY) Show her.

TANCY picks up a bottle of Acetone polish remover and starts to massage the sides, giving the bottle a hand job. She then massages it harder, mimics wrapping it in paper and ties an imaginary bow around each side.

ANN
Wow. That's quite a gift.

The girls lean in, fascinated as she picks up the pace, continuing to massage the bottle up and down.

And then...the Acetone squirts out the top in a stream. TANCY puts the bottle back discretely.

TANCY JANE
Shame when that happens.

ANN
(Shakes her head) Wow. With all the steps, I'm surprised you guys haven't gone extinct.

Suddenly, ANN's technician tickles her again and ANN clocks her with her foot, knocking the bottle of red nail polish out of her hand and sending it flying.

The bottle sprays the nearby area with splashes of red. TANCY JANE stares at ANN and then the polish, eyes wide.

TANCY JANE
I think she needs to stay clear of the Flute or the Turnip Truck for a *long* time.
(Rolls eyes)
Imagine the massacre.

COUSIN MARGO
(Nods) We've got to show her how to use her legs correctly first.

CUT TO:

EXT. MISS B'S SCHOOL OF TAP, BALLET AND CHARM - LATER

The ladies plus JOHN EDWARD walk to the window of a ballet studio filled with MISS B and her young female STUDENTS practicing full court bows for their royal debuts. They peer in from the bushes.

COUSIN MARGO
Have you ever been in the presence of true grace, Annie?

ANN
I did see Elton John in concert.

MARGO makes a face and turns to JOHN EDWARD, who is already distracted by a photo text from ADELAIDE of her breasts.

ROSE ALICE leans in to ANN as they watch the group of women bow from the waist down to the ground in one swoop, touching their foreheads to the floor. It's amazing.

ANN wrinkles her brow and looks at ROSE ALICE, confused.

ROSE ALICE
They're debutantes, practicing for their coming out presentation.

ANN's face lights up, remembering this from her conversation with the Porters. Inside, MISS B isn't satisfied.

MISS B
Let's go again, everyone.

The STUDENTS try again, and ANN watches them perform this seemingly *impossible* task.

Everyone's mesmerized...

ROSE ALICE
(Weepy) It gets me every time.

...Except JOHN EDWARD, who has his phone down his pants and is taking a photo of his Dingle to text back to ADELAIDE.

As Miss B inside makes adjustments, ANN zeros in on the precision with which the students move. She turns to face ROSE ALICE.

ANN
(Realization) So people really *do* take this stuff seriously.

ANN's phone beeps. She extracts it, reading the screen:

TEXT MESSAGE
Reminding you that this deal is important for us - and you. Get it done. C. Drexel.

Reading it, she furrows her brow and looks from the DEBUTANTES through the window and back to the phone.

Suddenly, ANN's knees buckle and her demeanor changes.

COUSIN MARGO
(Turning) You OK?

ANN grabs hold of the nearest bush.

ANN
(Weakly) I'm woozy. And the lack of Chinese food is making me want to fight for the Confederacy.

MARGO elbows JOHN EDWARD hard. He looks up quickly, puts his phone away, and instinctively tries to bolster ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Quick, the New York is leaving her system and we need to get her home.

ANN swats him away.

ANN
No! I don't want your date rape-y hands all over me.

JOHN EDWARD
Fine by me.

But as he lets her go and she stumbles, his male instinct kicks in. He grabs her, and for once, she doesn't resist. Faint, she puts her arms around him and rests her head.

ANN
(Softly)
Will ya'll fetch me some iced tea?

The BELLES squeal, excited.

COUSIN MARGO
It's working!

CUT TO:

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN EDWARD carries ANN upstairs and lays her down. MARGO and THE BELLES continue the brainwashing and place photos of General Lee and Tara all around her bed. ROSE ALICE puts a lace hanky over ANN's head.

COUSIN MARGO
(Like a "healer")
Just relax, Annie. Take a nap and let The South wash over you.

ANN drifts to sleep as the girls quietly retreat.

INT. INSIDE COUSIN MARGO'S HOME - KITCHEN - A BIT LATER

MARGO, finally alone, glances quickly upstairs and extracts a pile of bills from a breadbox where they've been stashed.

She opens an outrageous bill from the tax assessor. Her demeanor visibly dims, and she puts her head in her hands. A large lien will be placed on the house if it isn't paid.

COUSIN MARGO
(To herself, morose) Heavens.

MARGO's as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room of rocking chairs.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
What would Scarlett do?
(Closes her eyes)
Deal with it tomorrow.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TIFFANY & CO. JEWELRY STORE - TOWARD THE END OF THE DAY

Later, after ANN's nap, she clomps around Tiffany & Co. with MARGO and THE BELLES. They stop in the silverware section.

ANN
(Annoyed)
Not again with the stupid silver.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie, silver patterns provide the basis for how we express ourselves through nature's most important abundance. I have thousands of pieces!

ROSE ALICE
(To ANN) You want an abundant life, don't you?

ANN shrugs. The ladies all look into the glittering case.

COUSIN MARGO
(Points) Now, I am a Francis I.

TANCY JANE
As am I.

She points to another pattern with an ominous look.

COUSIN MARGO
This is the Acorn pattern. Beware of the Acorn girl, Ann.

ANN looks from one girl to the other, eyes wide.

ANN
Why? Who is she?

ROSE ALICE
(Deep breath) Acorn girls are *very* disorganized. And they drink beer straight out of the can!

The girls nod solemnly. Then ANN points out an ornate spoon.

ANN
Wait...Chrysanthemum!

ROSE ALICE
(Nearly faints) There's a light at the end of this slimy tunnel yet!

Suddenly TERRIBLE TORI slinks in the door in tight pants. MARGO and THE BELLES gasp. ROSE ALICE grabs ANN's arm.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
Can you believe she's so tacky?

ANN
Who is she?

The BELLES all roll their eyes.

TANCY JANE
(To ANN) It's Terrible Tori. John Edward keeps trying to get her to open her biscuit, but she's playing hard to get. He can't have her.

ANN gets a strange twinge and turns her head, looking at her.

ANN
Really? He likes her?

Then she snaps back to reality and turns back to TANCY.

ANN (CONT'D)
What do you mean *can't have her*?
This is America! He has free will!

MARGO AND THE BELLES
(In unison) No he doesn't.
(MARGO hits their arms)
SHHH! Act natural!

ANN whistles to feign breeziness. TANCY JANE elbows her as TERRIBLE TORI swings over, superior.

TERRIBLE TORI
Hello, ladies. Hello, Tancy Jane.

TANCY JANE smiles like she wants to kill her.

TERRIBLE TORI (CONT'D)
Doing a little window shopping?

COUSIN MARGO
("Polite") My cousin Annie here has recently come to town from New York City and we're showing her around.

TERRIBLE TORI focuses on ANN, crinkling up her mouth.

TERRIBLE TORI
Well, isn't she sweet?

MARGO and THE BELLES gasp, horrified.

TERRIBLE TORI (CONT'D)
Y'all take care, now.

TERRIBLE TORI slinks away, a sly smile on her face.

ANN
(Surprised) That was kind of her.

COUSIN MARGO
(Furious) How *dare* she!

MARGO grabs ANN and begins to drag her out of the store.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Come on. Emergency session.

MARGO and THE BELLES leave the store in a huff.

ANN
(Shaking her head)
I really don't get this place.

CUT TO:

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ANN sits on the bed as MARGO and THE BELLES instruct her. A giant white pad is on an easel, with these words on it:

LOVELY, PRECIOUS, DARLIN', CUTE, SWEET, NICE.

ANN
(Pointing)
So you're telling me these words don't really mean what they mean?

The girls all nod and ANN points at MARGO. ROSE ALICE reads "Southern Living" magazine and TANCY tries on makeup at the vanity.

ANN (CONT'D)
And you can be harsh to people but you just can't *seem* like you're being harsh to people?

COUSIN MARGO
But not all these words are bad.

MARGO walks over to "LOVELY" and circles it with a marker.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
...For example, "Lovely" is the top compliment you can get.

TANCY JANE
(From the vanity) As in, "She comes from a lovely family."

ROSE ALICE
A top, top compliment.

MARGO then circles "PRECIOUS" and "DARLIN'".

TANCY JANE
Also high compliments.

MARGO turns to ANN, pointing at her with the marker.

COUSIN MARGO
But when you get to "cute", things get dicey.

ANN widens her eyes and scoots back on the bed, intrigued.

ANN
What happens?

TANCY JANE
“Cute” is not exactly a high compliment, but not a complete put-down either.

ROSE ALICE
(Piping up)
But “sweet” is the kiss of death.

MARGO and THE BELLES all nod solemnly.

COUSIN MARGO
Yeah, it is. The absolute kiss. If the Porters call you “sweet”, you should just pack up and head out.

They all pausing, taking it in. ANN’s wheels are turning.

ANN
I’m still not 100% sure I get it. Use it in a sentence.

COUSIN MARGO
(Clears her throat)
“I don’t know her well, but she seems perfectly sweet.”

ANN
(Gets it)
Terrible Tori *was* being a bitch!

TANCY points at ANN.

TANCY JANE
Try saying that again, but say it like a Southern Belle this time.

She thinks it over, cocking her head.

ANN
Her tight pants weren’t particularly my style but...

They give ANN encouraging glances.

ANN (CONT’D)
...I’m sure she’s very sweet?

COUSIN MARGO
(Excited) I think she’s getting it!

ANN continues, jumping from her place on the bed.

ANN
Her blackheads formed the *cutest* pattern?

MARGO and THE BELLES squeal and jump, and ANN joins in.

ROSE ALICE
Extra credit!

ANN
(Twirling)
I did it! I was a totally huge bitch with a smile on my face!

TANCY JANE
(Beaming) I think she's ready for her first challenge tomorrow.

MARGO hands ANN a thick binder labeled, "Silver Patterns." ANN rolls her eyes.

COUSIN MARGO
Oh. And watch this.

She hands her a DVD of "Gone With the Wind."

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S HOTEL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

ANN lays in bed with the silver patterns notebook and watches "Gone With the Wind" intently, talking back to the TV. She points with the DVD cover.

SCARLETT
(Movie)
What trouble are you talking about?

ANN
She's talking about Ashley, Scarlett. You know that.

MAMMY
(Movie)
You know what I's talkin' bout. I's talking 'bout Mr. Ashley Wilkes.

ANN
I told you!

MAMMY
(Movie)
He'll be comin' back to Atlanta, and you sittin' there waitin' for him. He belongs to Miss Melanie...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TARA - LATER THAT NIGHT - ANN'S DREAM

ANN, dressed as Scarlett O'Hara, sits at Tara. Suddenly TERRIBLE TORI, dressed as Melanie Hamilton, crashes in.

TERRIBLE TORI/MELANIE
John Edward is mine! You leave him alone, you two-bit Yankee.

ANN/SCARLETT
But you can't marry him! He's your cousin! It's disgusting!

Just then JOHN EDWARD, dressed as ASHLEY enters frame.

JOHN EDWARD/ASHLEY
She's right, Melanie. I love you, Annie.

He takes ANN/SCARLETT in his arms and kisses her. TERRIBLE TORI begins smashing teacups. ANN awakens with a start.

CUT TO:

EXT. "SIP 'N' SEE" - CHARLESTON COUNTRY CLUB - NEXT DAY

ANN, MARGO, ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE walk up a grassy knoll to "the club." MARGO and THE BELLES wear tea dresses, and ANN wears black pants, a cardigan and a dark low ponytail.

ROSE ALICE looks ANN over and then plucks off her headband, placing it on her.

ANN
(Touching her head) Hey!
(Then, grimly)
I really don't want to do this.

COUSIN MARGO
We only have five more days to reconstruct you before your meeting, and this 'sip 'n' see' will be a great experience.

Southern Belles pass to and fro. ANN frowns and points.

ANN
But what am I supposed to say to these people? And what are we ‘seeing’ as we sip?

COUSIN MARGO
(Leans in)
A ‘sip ‘n’ see’ is where we look at the latest awards and trophies the Country Club members have won, and we have tea. It’s a charity event.

ANN gives her a quizzical look.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT’D)
(Hand motion) Pretend it’s a meeting. Talk to people. And John Edward will be there if you need him.

ANN, remembering her dream, blushes.

ANN
(Gruffly) Why would I need him? I don’t even like the guy.

They look at her strangely.

COUSIN MARGO
Well, he’ll be there.

ANN
(Rolling her eyes)
Way to make it worse.

TANCY JANE
Just don’t say anything crude.

ROSE ALICE
And not that you would, but don’t bring up the Civil War. Some people still hold a grudge.

ANN cocks her head, surprised. MARGO continues to “help.”

COUSIN MARGO
And if all else fails, just ask them about their families by saying, “Who are your people?” It means, “Tell me about yourself.”

ANN nods. The ladies approach a table with name tags that is manned by MRS. TROTT and a grand woman called THE YANKEE. ROSE ALICE gives a tiny nod toward MRS. TROTT.

ROSE ALICE
(Sotto, to ANN)John Edward's mother is at the table with The Yankee.

MRS. TROTT notices ANN, MARGO and the BELLES, looking up.

MRS. TROTT
Hello, ladies.
(Looks at MARGO and ANN)
Miss Alexander, is it your week to escort one of the orphans?

MARGO takes a step forward.

COUSIN MARGO
Mrs. Trott, this is my cousin Annie from New York. She'll be accompanying me today.

MARGO looks proudly at a frowning ANN.

MRS. TROTT
(Looking ANN over)
Let me get you a name tag.
(Sotto, to THE YANKEE)
She's one of yours, I see.

THE YANKEE raises her eyebrows at MRS. TROTT.

THE YANKEE
I've been here since I was seven, Trott. My ancestors are buried all over The South after that Syphilis outbreak in 1809.

MRS. TROTT
(Disagreeing politely)
You're still from New York.

She writes ANN a name tag that says, "Annie from *New York*."

CUT TO:

INT. "SIP 'N' SEE" - THE PORTER CLUBHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER
General atmosphere: proper, upscale, inbred.

The Country Club Porter Clubhouse has been decked out for the "Sip 'n' See" in pink and seafoam green. The tablecloths are green, and the ATTENDANTS wear dresses and bow ties of pink. ANN sees the name PORTER on the plaque and rolls her eyes.

Throughout the room are trophies and awards on small tables, and the center table features a punch bowl. The server's gloves and shoes match the punch.

A GREETER waves, ushering ANN, MARGO and THE BELLES through

the doorway. ANN doesn't know what to do with the wave, so she high-fives her as she walks through.

COUSIN MARGO
(Elbowing ANN)
My Lord. This isn't Animal House.

CUT TO:

INT. "SIP 'N' SEE" - CLUBHOUSE - BUFFET LINE - CONTINUOUS

ANN stands in line at the buffet table to get some tea. JOHN EDWARD is behind her and MARGO is in front of her.

Scattered around are TANCY JANE, ROSE ALICE, KIT, PEMBERTON and various other COUPLES, all holding tea cups and admiring the trophies and ribbons.

JOHN EDWARD leans in to ANN in line.

JOHN EDWARD
You came out of your coma, I see.

ANN
(Rolls her eyes) Unfortunately.

JOHN EDWARD looks around at the scene, and smiles at her, almost feeling kinship.

Distracted by this, ANN doesn't see an ATTENDANT behind the buffet table hold out an antique finger bowl to MARGO.

ATTENDANT
Miss Margo.

MARGO dips her fingers in it to clean them and wipes them on a cloth proffered to her before she takes a tea cup. This is lost on ANN.

Then, one of the ATTENDANTS holds out an antique finger bowl to ANN, next in line.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
Miss—

But ANN swipes it and, to the room's horror, *drinks* it.

Everyone in line watches as ANN hands the cup back to the ATTENDANT. MARGO, pale, pulls ANN toward a small cocktail table. JOHN EDWARD, ROSE ALICE, TANCY JANE, and KIT follow.

CUT TO:

INT. "SIP 'N' SEE" - CLUBHOUSE TABLE - CONTINUOUS

WAITERS bring plates of deviled eggs to the table. ANN frowns and pokes at one with her finger.

Suddenly, TERRIBLE TORI slinks to the table with a few BITCHY BELLES and stands by MARGO, "ignoring" JOHN EDWARD.

TERRIBLE TORI
Margo, I see you've brought your *visitor*.
(Looks ANN over)
She certainly must have loads of inner confidence to wear that outfit. I applaud her.

ANN frowns, knowing it's an insult. MARGO crosses her arms.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie is *very* confident and is here on a very important job.

They trade barbs as though ANN isn't even there.

TERRIBLE TORI
That explains the lack of time for grooming and etiquette.

COUSIN MARGO smiles a venomous/polite smile and turns to ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Some of us have been together in Charleston so long, Annie, that we've become casual with our manners.

TERRIBLE TORI
Yes, most of us are not immigrants.

JOHN EDWARD is struck with...*sympathy*? He turns to TORI.

JOHN EDWARD
(Chewing an egg)
America isn't that old, Victoria. We all came from somewhere else.

That shuts her up; she and The BITCHY BELLES turn on their heels in unison and walk away. ANN turns to JOHN EDWARD.

ANN
(Quietly) Thank you.

ANN, struggling to think of MARGO's lessons fidgets and bumps the trophy, sending it flying across the table.

PEMBERTON nearly chokes on his deviled egg as KIT rescues it, setting the trophy back upright. MARGO leans in.

COUSIN MARGO
(Whispering) Use your words, Annie.

She thinks of something.

ANN
So, um, who *are* you people?

The faces at the table go ashen.

COUSIN MARGO
(Grabs ANN) Excuse us.

MARGO and THE BELLES scuttle ANN to the powder room.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB POWDER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MARGO instructs ANN, standing above her.

COUSIN MARGO
Say it correctly this time.

ANN
(Hand on forehead) Who are *your* people. Who are *your* people.

The ladies try to calm ANN down but she's distraught.

ANN (CONT'D)
I'm such a mess! I can't do this!

COUSIN MARGO
It's only been a few days, Annie.

ANN
It's just that in New York, people say what they mean and spit on you. What you see is what you get there.

She looks at MARGO and THE BELLES, who gloss their lips.

ANN (CONT'D)
I guess I need this more than I thought I did. Maybe the Porters had a point.

THE BELLES
(In unison) Oh yeah.

INT. OUTSIDE THE POWDER ROOM

The girls walk back into the room toward the rest of their group, smiling at one another. ANN is comfortable for once.

JOHN EDWARD watches from his spot, his eyes resting on ANN as she passes the GREETER, no high-five this time. She approaches JOHN EDWARD, who holds out a finger bowl.

JOHN EDWARD
(To ANN) Thirsty?

ANN playfully punches him on the arm, and TERRIBLE TORI watches, her interest piqued as JOHN EDWARD pays attention to ANN. MARGO takes note with glee, elbowing TANCY, looking ANN over and forming a plan.

ANN
(Leans into him) Thank you for being so generous and helping me.

JOHN EDWARD looks guilty.

Suddenly MRS. TROTT and THE YANKEE approach the table, and ANN decides to try out her conversation skills on MRS. TROTT.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Picking up a fork)
This silver is lovely.

MARGO gives her a "good job" look.

MRS. TROTT
Yes, dear. They hid this from the Yankees during the War Between the States, you know.
(To ANN and THE YANKEE)
No offense.

MRS. TROTT takes JOHN EDWARD's arm.

MRS. TROTT (CONT'D)
Come, dear, I need your help. Mr. Bradford's gotten into the Clubhouse brandy again and I can't get him away from the muskets.

He makes a face and gives the girls a quick wave.

COUSIN MARGO
We'll debrief later.
(To girls)
Time for us to head out anyway.

ANN's eyes trail after JOHN EDWARD. MARGO notices as the girls all prepare to leave the veranda.

TANCY JANE
So we'll see you later, at Moe's?

COUSIN MARGO
Actually, we're making a pit stop.

She takes ANN by the arm. They all exit frame.

CUT TO:

EXT. LULAKATE CLOTHING STORE - A BIT LATER

The mailbox is painted with a portrait of Dolly Parton.

INT. LULAKATE CLOTHING STORE

The four ladies approach the shopkeeper, LULAKATE.

LULAKATE
Hello, Miss Margo. Is it your week to escort the orphans again?

ANN turns to MARGO.

ANN
Why do people keep saying that?

TANCY JANE points to ANN's clunky CLODHOPPERS.

COUSIN MARGO
Actually, Lulakate, I'm here for my cousin here. She has a big meeting and nothing to wear.

ANN realizes what's about to happen.

ANN
(Stepping backward)
Oh, no. You're not making me over into some fluffy bunny.

LULAKATE motions to the security guard at the front of the store and gives him a nod. He drops the metal security gate in front of the window with a thud!

MARGO taps her toe, looking at ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Oh, hush up. You don't have to look borderline homeless to be strong.

ANN
(Shakes her head) This is kidnapping.

TANCY JANE locks her hand on ANN's arm.

TANCY JANE
This is necessary.

ANN
(Struggling) I'll file charges.

TANCY JANE
Good luck getting a judge to take your side with that moustache.

They guide ANN to a dressing room as she cry-walks.

INT. GWYNN'S OF MOUNT PLEASANT GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

ANN stands with a basket as MARGO, ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE fill it with toiletries. TANCY JANE picks up two loofahs.

TANCY JANE
Regular, or Extra Strength?

MARGO grabs one and puts it in the basket.

COUSIN MARGO
Concrete if they have it.

ROSE ALICE comes over with a box of hair color and holds up ANN's hair and skunk stripe to make sure the browns match.

ANN
My highlight is fashionable.

ROSE ALICE
(Makes a noise)
You look like wildlife.

TANCY takes her arm and clears a shelf into the basket.

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANN sits at MARGO's vanity while MARGO applies hair color to her head and TANCY JANE works on her nails. ROSE ALICE puts some outfits together. There are wax strips on her moustache. TANCY touches one of the strips and gives MARGO a look.

TANCY JANE
These are ready.

MARGO and TANCY stand on either side of ANN and put their fingers on the moustache wax. ANN makes a face.

COUSIN MARGO
It's better if you relax, Annie.
Less bruising.

ROSE ALICE nods and looks up from the other side of the room.

ROSE ALICE
Yeah, my aunt clenched and looked like Joseph Stalin for a week.

ANN tries to relax, but as they each get ready to pull, she screws up her face again.

They pull the wax. A scream rings out.

CUT TO:

INT. MOE'S CROSSTOWN PUB - LATER THAT NIGHT

JOHN EDWARD sits at the bar joking with PEMBERTON and KIT.

JOHN EDWARD
(Shaking his head)
I've never seen anything like it.

PEMBERTON hits KIT's arm for emphasis and shivers.

PEMBERTON
This coming from the guy who confirmed, with photos, that there's a woman with three vaginas living in the area.

Suddenly the door to the pub swings open, revealing MARGO, THE BELLES and ANN, all in dresses. They float through.

ANN has been transformed. Her hair flows; she no longer has a moustache. JOHN EDWARD's mouth drops open. MARGO leans in.

COUSIN MARGO
(Sotto) You look beautiful. And strong.

ANN looks at MARGO, appreciative.

PEMBERTON
(Motions) Fresh meat for you boys.

KIT and JOHN EDWARDS's mouths drop open, staring at ANN.

JOHN EDWARD
(Eyes wide) Go down, *Moses*.

ANN, suddenly coquettish, sidles up next to him as MARGO and THE BELLES stand back and watch.

ANN
Oh, hello, John Edward.

JOHN EDWARD does a double take. He looks at MARGO who smiles, self-satisfied. KIT puts out his hand quickly, breaking in.

KIT
Kit Westinghouse. Pleasure to meet you, ma'am.

ANN
Kit! We've met!

PEMBERTON and KIT look at her closely, squinting.

ANN (CONT'D)
(They still don't get it)
Annie from New York?

They both jump backwards. MARGO smiles, enjoying this.

JOHN EDWARD's phone suddenly buzzes as TERRIBLE TORI's number appears on the screen. JOHN EDWARD, paralyzed, looks at ANN and then at his phone and hits "ignore." He jumps up, suddenly chivalrous.

JOHN EDWARD
Get you ladies a drink?

COUSIN MARGO
(Pleased)
Please. White wines for everyone but me. I have an early meeting.

The ladies find a four-top and pull a chair for JOHN EDWARD, not noticing as a piece of paper falls from MARGO's purse.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
(Sotto, to the group)
Let him sit next to Annie.

ROSE ALICE and TANCY give each other a knowing glance. JOHN EDWARD approaches with drinks, suddenly in conquest mode.

JOHN EDWARD
So, Annie, what did you think of the Sip 'n' See?

ANN
I thought it was a clusterfuc—

MARGO clears her throat loudly and kicks her under the table.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Understanding) I don't think I did a great job, but I'm learning.

Just then, a HANDSOME STRANGER approaches ANN. She turns.

HANDSOME STRANGER
Excuse me, may I buy you a drink?

ANN's shocked. JOHN EDWARD's head swivels to them, eyes wide.

ANN
I do already have one, but you could walk me to the powder room.

He nods and ANN and the HANDSOME STRANGER walk together. ANN makes an excited face over her shoulder. MARGO and THE BELLES all sigh romantically.

ROSE ALICE
(Hand on heart) I'm so proud.

TANCY JANE
I would mount him like a picture in a scrapbook.

JOHN EDWARD
(Irritated) Who is that guy?

JOHN EDWARD's phone buzzes again, it's TERRIBLE TORI. He hits "ignore", and as he turns his attention to the man talking to ANN, he sees something on the floor. It's a bill that belongs to MARGO.

He reads it, looking at MARGO quickly.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLESTON NATIONAL BANK - NEXT DAY - SAT MORNING

Through the picture window at the bank, we see MARGO sitting at the desk of a loan officer at her meeting.

INT. CHARLESTON NATIONAL BANK - SAME TIME

A businesslike female loan officer questions a nervous MARGO.

LOAN OFFICER
We'll need a list of assets to assist you properly.

COUSIN MARGO
(Thinking)
I was a three-time champion at the Miss Charleston Corn Oil Pageant.

LOAN OFFICER shakes her head.

LOAN OFFICER
Stocks? Bonds? Precious metals?

COUSIN MARGO
(Hopeful) I have my Grandmama's silver...

LOAN OFFICER
(Looking down) I'm sorry, that doesn't qualify. How about *other* assets. Do you own your car?

MARGO shakes her head sadly.

LOAN OFFICER (CONT'D)
Afraid I don't have good news.

COUSIN MARGO
(Devastated)
Thank you for your time, Ma'am.

She gets up sadly and walks to the door. As she does, we see that TERRIBLE TORI, weighed down with shopping bags, has seen this transaction through the window, brimming with gossip.

EXT. HOMECOMING TAILGATE PARTY - NEXT DAY - SUN AFTERNOON

A TAILGATE TENT STANDS IN THE UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT, WITH A BUFFET SPREAD. THE ATMOSPHERE: SPIRITED AND CELEBRATORY.

Bridge tables are set up, and University old-timers in Homecoming garb mill about.

At one bridge table sit MARGO, ROSE ALICE, ANOTHER BELLE and MRS. TROTT. At another are ANN, TANCY JANE, TERRIBLE TORI and THE YANKEE, who deals.

TERRIBLE TORI
(Looks at her hand) Tancy Jane, what's the number of your controls?

TANCY JANE
(Politely bitchy)
I'm sorry, we made no agreement for that asking bid. Denied.

TERRIBLE TORI rolls her eyes and turns her attention to ANN.

TERRIBLE TORI
So, Annie, tell me, aside from Margo, *who* are your people again?

ANN barely looks at her as she surveys her cards.

ANN
The Alexanders, from New York City.

TERRIBLE TORI
Not Yonkers?

TANCY knocks on the table in a bridge maneuver.

TANCY JANE
Alert. Bid.

THE YANKEE gives ANN a private wink.

THE YANKEE
Oh yes, the Alexanders from New York City. They're bagel people, aren't they?

ANN
(Also bluffing) *Huge* bagel people.

TANCY JANE
(In on it) Bigger than my aunt's nipples when she was breast feeding.
(Looks at TORI)
Poor thing went through an entire case of Bag Balm.

TERRIBLE TORI gets a reptilian glint in her eye over her cards.

TERRIBLE TORI
(Not missing a beat)
Well, then maybe you should take some of your family's big bagel money and help your poor cousin.

ANN and TANCY whip their heads, confused, to face TORI.

TANCY JANE
What are you talking about?

TERRIBLE TORI
(Pleased)
It's true. It's all over town.

ANN and TANCY JANE get confused looks on their faces. A WAITER brings a plate of deviled eggs, breaking the moment.

ANN
(Examining the egg)
What are in these, anyway?

TANCY JANE
Egg yolks, mayonnaise and pickle relish. *No* Miracle Whip.

ANN raises her eyebrows.

THE YANKEE
Believe me, if you don't make them properly, with mayonnaise, you *will* be discussed.
(Then)
(MORE)

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
So, Annie, you were saying that the Alexanders are bagel people.

The table continues to play cards. ANN nods.

ANN
Or, *were* bagel people, really. It was my mother's family. She passed when I was twelve.

THE YANKEE
I'm so sorry. New York is a hard place for a girl to be without her mother.

ANN glances at THE YANKEE.

ANN
Would you like to see her picture?

THE YANKEE
(Touched) I would be honored.

ANN takes the locket from her neck and hands it to THE YANKEE, who looks at it meaningfully and hands it off to TANCY JANE.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
(To ANN) She was precious.

They all begin tallying their scores on their cards.

ANN
Thank you. I'm starting to see that I missed out on some things that girls learn from their mothers. It's probably why I turned to my studies instead of social stuff.

The locket suddenly ends up in TERRIBLE TORI's hands and she looks from the locket to ANN.

TERRIBLE TORI
You're a lot alike.

ANN is shocked that she's being friendly. Then:

TERRIBLE TORI (CONT'D)
Neither of you has the feminine touch.

ANN rolls her eyes and THE YANKEE gasps at TORI.

TERRIBLE TORI (CONT'D)
Well, it's true. Poor Annie is just like Oliver Twist!

THE YANKEE looks at ANN's bridge score and then at TORI.

THE YANKEE
Well, it looks like Oliver Twist just smoked your ass, Victoria.

TERRIBLE TORI looks at the score card, horrified.

ANN
(Smiling daggers) I played bridge for scalps in the orphanage.

Suddenly a shadow falls over ANN. It's:

JOHN EDWARD
Hi, Annie. Ladies.

ANN turns to see JOHN EDWARD. All the women at the table affect their most poised postures. He looks at the scores.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Looks like you're cleaning up.

THE YANKEE
I should've placed a bet with my bookie.

JOHN EDWARD
(Leans into ANN) Would you like to take a walk? I'd love to show you the stadium.

THE YANKEE and TANCY give her an encouraging nod. TERRIBLE TORI's eyes narrow, jealous. ANN hams it up for her benefit.

ANN
That would be a real treat, John Edward. I'm *so* glad you're here.

JOHN EDWARD helps her from her chair. ANN looks back at THE YANKEE, who gives her a wink. TERRIBLE TORI stares at them as they exit frame.

TERRIBLE TORI
(Jealous) Excuse me.

TORI flies out of her chair and into the rest room. MARGO winks in TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE's direction. ROSE ALICE leans into TANCY.

ROSE ALICE
The makeover, the manners, the perfect amount of nice mixed with bitchy...I think Annie's almost ready for the Porters.

TANCY JANE smiles, looking after her, and pulls Lysol from her purse and "disinfects" TORI's area.

TANCY JANE
We gave her more tricks than a fancy hooker...(Pauses)...So I just hope they're ready for *her*.

CUT TO:

EXT. EMPTY UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL STADIUM - MOMENTS LATER

The stadium is in Homecoming Prep mode. ANN and JOHN EDWARD walk through the empty stadium aisles. She leans into him.

ANN
I think you may be close to having Tori right where you want her.

He gives her a quizzical look, stopping.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Duh!) She's *jealous*.

Suddenly JOHN EDWARD's phone rings. It's ADELAIDE. ANN nods for him to answer.

JOHN EDWARD
(Answering) Hey Adelaide.
(Then)
Sorry, don't need any of that today. Thank you for calling.

He hangs up, shaking his head.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
It really *is* a buyer's market.

It's the first time he's turned easy sex down. He walks, thinking. ANN looks at him.

ANN
So. Let's see...
(Takes a deep breath)
Who are your people?

He makes an impressed face as she picks up the lingo.

ANN (CONT'D)
What's it like being one of the famous "Charleston Trotts?"

JOHN EDWARD puts his head back to the sky. He pauses.

ANN (CONT'D)
You can tell me.

JOHN EDWARD
I get good tables in restaurants, but...

He makes a pained face. ANN raises her eyebrows.

ANN
Sounds ideal. They always seat me next to the men's bathroom.

JOHN EDWARD
(Shyly) You won't understand.

ANN
Try me.

They stop and sit in two seats in the upper deck. Below, decorations for Homecoming are being installed.

JOHN EDWARD
Even though I joke about never wanting to change, sometimes it feels like my entire life has already been decided.

He keeps going, looking straight ahead.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
It's like, when you're around the same people your whole life, they never really see you anymore. You never *get* to change.

She looks at him.

ANN
You never get a chance to go away for Summer break and reinvent yourself before the next school year.

She blushes.

ANN (CONT'D)
Without much of a female influence, I obviously got a late start on the "reinventing" part for myself, but I saw my classmates do it... Leave in June one way and show up in September a completely renovated person. We call that a rebounding stock at work.
(Points at him)
But *you* haven't been able to get out of your own shadow and see where you are yet.

He's shocked. She really "gets" what he's saying.

JOHN EDWARD
Yes!

ANN
(Nodding)
The further away I get from New York, the more I see it, too. It's such a struggle to get anything done there, you sort of have to commit to an "idea" of who you are and then point yourself at it, full speed, or you won't get anywhere.

Suddenly she's embarrassed. She looks at him.

ANN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. Am I talking too much?

JOHN EDWARD
No! I like it!

ANN blushes and continues, not knowing how to respond. They stand and start to head back to the tent. He keeps talking.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Like, no matter what I want...
(Looks her over)
...It doesn't matter. No one would believe me, because they think they already know everything about me.

ANN's armor begins to fall even more and she smiles.

ANN
Well, for what it's worth, I think you've even changed in the week I've known you.

He gives her an appreciative glance.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Shyly) You know, this is the first time I've ever had family and friends around, and you guys have finally made me understand what all the fuss is about.

JOHN EDWARD
Really?

ANN nods. Then she sees TERRIBLE TORI ahead in her eyeline, whispering to another BELLE near the tent.

ANN
Hey, if you really want to make her jealous, here's your chance.

ANN motions to TORI. Suddenly JOHN EDWARD takes ANN's chin.

ANN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

JOHN EDWARD
(Smiling)
What you said. Making her jealous.

Then he kisses her, a long deep kiss. TERRIBLE TORI stares. Near her, a giant decorative parade float in the shape of a deviled egg is being constructed. ANN comes up for air.

ANN
I hope they made that deviled egg properly.

JOHN EDWARD smiles at her, amused and enjoying himself.

JOHN EDWARD
Annie, I know you have your meeting Wednesday and then you're leaving...

She makes a face at "leaving."

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
But...will you be here for Homecoming?

ANN
(Nods) I go back a couple days later.

JOHN EDWARD
Then would you like to go to the Game with me?

She's shocked. She puts her hand on her heart and nods.

ANN
John Edward Trott, of the "Charleston Trotts", I'd love to.

TORI, fuming, crosses her arms and kicks the deviled egg.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOMECOMING TAILGATE PARTY - LATER

ANN and JOHN EDWARD approach the tent, finding everyone cleaning up except for MARGO. ANN is very red and flushed.

She looks around and grabs TANCY JANE's arm. TANCY turns.

TANCY JANE
You're all red. Did you just...
(Blow job hand motion)
...Play the Flute or something?

ANN grabs TANCY's hands to stop her.

ANN
Please. I just learned how to let someone open the *door* for me.(Pauses) Where's Margo?

TANCY JANE
She took off about twenty minutes ago. Something about her family.

ANN wrinkles her brow.

ANN
But *I'm* her family. Where'd she go?

TANCY JANE
(Shrugs) I don't know. She seemed stressed.

ROSE ALICE, cleaning one of the tables, leans toward ANN.

ROSE ALICE
If she said she needs her family, there's only one place she could be.

CUT TO:

EXT. DELTA DELTA DELTA HOUSE - TEN MINUTES LATER

The majestic sorority house glows with sisterhood.

INT. DELTA DELTA DELTA HOUSE - MARGO'S OLD ROOM

Everything in this frilly room is emblazoned with the Delta Delta Delta logo. Photos show happy sisters smiling.

ANN comes through the door, surprising a weepy MARGO, who sits on the bed.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie! How'd you know I was here?

ANN smiles, trying to sound soothing.

ANN
A little Belle told me.
(Looks her over)
I'm worried about you, Margo.

COUSIN MARGO
(Frowns) We still haven't even gotten you to use a curling iron correctly and you're worried about me?

ANN walks into the room and puts her hands on her hips. As she crosses the threshold a singing doll plays the Tri-Delt pledge song.

ANN tries to quiet the doll without maiming it.

ANN
(Frowns) What is this that I heard about you needing money?

MARGO stands and smooths herself. She ignores the question.

COUSIN MARGO
How about some tea, Annie? We can go into one of the common areas.

ANN puts her hands on her hips and spies a pile of bills on the bed under a giant pillow with the DDD symbol on it.

ANN
Answer me. What's going on?

ANN starts toward the bills and MARGO finally crumbles, bursting into tears.

COUSIN MARGO
I'm so scared I'm gonna lose the house. It's been in our family for generations!

ANN looks for a tissue and finds a DDD monogrammed hanky.

ANN
What happened? You still have a job, don't you?

COUSIN MARGO
Of course! But real estate's not exactly a hotbed of activity these days.

She sniffs delicately.

ANN
(Conceding) Fair enough. But...

MARGO closes her eyes and shakes her head, trying to make sense of it herself. She begins to break down.

COUSIN MARGO
I'm just so bad with unpleasantness, you don't understand. The bills...

ANN
Of course I understand. Your defense mechanisms are just prettier than mine.

MARGO shakes her head and looks up at ANN, guard down.

COUSIN MARGO
I'm the first woman in my family to live alone at 23...

ANN clears her throat defensively. MARGO looks at her and covers herself with a Delta blanket.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Well you know what I mean. Daddy took care of Mama, and so on. It was even that way with yours.

ANN nods and looks at a photo from MARGO's pledge year.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
But I wanted to make sure I could take care of myself, because things aren't what they used to be.
(Pauses, looking at her)
How did you find out?

ANN
Who do we know that has a small heart and big ears?

MARGO wrinkles her nose in disgust.

COUSIN MARGO
I even went to get a loan but I didn't have any assets. All I have is my Corn Crown and Grandmama's silver, but it's not enough.

ANN suddenly begins to pace the room, thinking.

ANN
Actually, cousin, it might be.

COUSIN MARGO
(Confused) Have you been eating poison Sumac? I can't sell my crown, Annie. I'm not Fergie!

ANN points at MARGO, determined.

ANN
Do you know what my mom used to say when I didn't know what to do?

COUSIN MARGO
Put the fork down?

ANN moves the blanket and puts her hand on MARGO's shoulder.

ANN
No, she said, "Push on the open door, Ann. Because that door shows you the path."

COUSIN MARGO
I don't understand.

ANN goes into business mode, pacing faster.

ANN
How many pieces of silver would you say you have?

COUSIN MARGO
(Thinking)
Probably five thousand. Why?

ANN
And the barn in back, that belongs to the house, too?

MARGO nods. ANN, excited, pulls a calculator from her purse and begins typing.

ANN (CONT'D)
OK, so five thousand pieces at...(Typing)...And the price of silver is...

She looks at MARGO reassuringly.

ANN (CONT'D)
I may not know curling irons, but I know finance. And Margo, I know I haven't been here long, but...

She turns to face her and puts a hand on her arm.

ANN (CONT'D)
...Even though the past, like the house and your silver, is important, sometimes you have to give up a little of it to make way for the future.

MARGO looks scared, but she's listening.

ANN (CONT'D)
I trusted you, and I'm ready for my meeting in a few days.
(Looks at MARGO.)
Now you have to trust me.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAGNOLIA PLANTATION & GARDENS - TUESDAY

ANN sits in a historic plantation garden working out her plan to help MARGO. Polite people have tea on small tables.

Suddenly her cell phone rings, breaking into the tranquil scene. She answers.

ANN
Hello, this is Annie.

CUT TO:

INT. BAXTER, BURNAM, DREXEL - SAME TIME

It's a chaotic New York scene at ANN's old office. People yell; papers fly. MR. DREXEL is on the line.

MR. DREXEL
(Frantic) Sorry, I'm looking for Ann Alexander. It's Charles Drexel.

BACK TO:

EXT. MAGNOLIA PLANTATION & GARDENS

ANN sits up straight on her stool.

ANN
It's me, Mr. Drexel!

MR. DREXEL
Oh. Ann. Didn't sound like you.

ANN
(Concerned) Is everything OK?

BACK TO:

INT. BAXTER, BURNAM, DREXEL

MR. DREXEL tosses a stapler at someone in his office.

MR. DREXEL
(Makes a noise)
Just checking in to see if you're ready to claim the scalps tomorrow and head back to civilization.

She gets a wistful look on her face, looking around at the orderly garden and polite people.

ANN
(Not very enthused)
Yep, ready to head back to...civilization.

MR. DREXEL
Good. Your new office and the other important things will be "hammered out." Let me know your travel details when you have them.

She reaches over, smelling a gardenia from a nearby bush.

ANN
(Sotto) The...important things.

MR. DREXEL
(Not hearing) What's that?

ANN
Nothing, Mr. Drexel. I just said I guess I'll be...home soon.

CUT TO:

INT. MARGO'S BEDROOM - PRE-PORTERS MEETING - WED MORNING

Margo and THE BELLES pick up their red rat-tailed combs as they get ANN ready for her meeting. She's impeccable in makeup and a shift dress from Lulakate.

TANCY JANE sits on the bed and ROSE ALICE, comb between teeth, works on ANN's makeup. MARGO fusses with ANN's hair with her comb and quizzes her.

COUSIN MARGO
So what do you do when you walk in?

ANN counts on her fingers.

ANN
I let him get the door, I sit in the chair, I tell Mrs. Porter she looks lovely. Not nice, but lovely. I ask for tea, not coffee, and compliment the silver.

TANCY JANE points and opens her mouth, but ANN's already on the case. ROSE ALICE comes around and sits by TANCY; they're so absorbed they look like they're watching a play.

ANN (CONT'D)
At which point I comment on the pattern, as long as it isn't Acorn. I inquire about their travels before I talk business. And...

The girls look at one another.

ANN (CONT'D)
...And I ask how their people are.

MARGO, tears in her eyes, does a little jump.

COUSIN MARGO
Oh, Annie, I'm so proud! They're going to love you!

TANCY JANE
(Looks her over) You turned out so wonderful, I might even Wrap your Engagement Present.

ANN swats her and preens a little at the "new her" in her reflection. Then looks at the BELLES.

ANN
You were right, Margo. I've never felt stronger.

MARGO puts her arms around her.

COUSIN MARGO
Girls, our work here is done.

But not *entirely*.

ANN
(Inspects herself)
Can I have a little extra height?

MARGO, hearing this, squeals as ROSE ALICE picks up a comb again and starts to tease.

COUSIN MARGO
I'm so proud of you! You're a real Southern woman now!

TANCY JANE nods, instructing ROSE ALICE.

TANCY JANE
The higher the hair, the closer to God. And the Porters.

MARGO looks at ANN, sad, and puts her hand on ANN's arm.

COUSIN MARGO
But then it makes Annie closer to going back to New *York*.
(Turns to her)
Oh, Annie, I wish you could stay!

The BELLES all make noises that they agree with MARGO, and ANN looks at them, thinking.

ANN
In a weird way, I've been dreading this meeting.

MARGO looks at her, eyes wide.

COUSIN MARGO
Why? Do you not feel prepared? Do we need to go back to Tiffany's?

ANN
(Shakes her head) No, I just mean...kind of what *you* said. Once I do this deal, then it's time to leave. And — I never thought I'd say this, but...thanks to all of you, I don't think I'm ready.

ROSE ALICE's eyes light up, and she clasps her hands.

ROSE ALICE
Do you think there's a chance you really could stay?

ANN shakes her head, really considering it.

ANN
I just don't know. Either way, I still have a few days, and...
(To the BELLES)
I have some things to take care of before I go.

CUT TO:

INT. PENINSULA GRILL - PRIVATE DINING ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

ANN sits and waits, early, looking over her papers. Suddenly the door to the dining room opens, revealing THE PORTERS.

They stop short, look at her, and look at one another. MR. PORTER speaks up, unsure of what's going on.

MR. PORTER
I'm sorry, but we've reserved—

ANN gets up to shake his hand, cutting him off.

ANN
Lovely to see you again, Mr. Porter.

Realization dawns on him, and he smiles proudly.

MR. PORTER
And you as well, Miss Alexander.

As MR. PORTER pulls out ANN's chair and she sits, ladylike, MRS. PORTER gives her husband a happy, relieved look over ANN's shoulder.

INT. PENINSULA GRILL - ENTRYWAY - AFTER THE MEETING

ANN stands at the doors to The Peninsula Grill with the PORTERS, mid-meeting. MRS. PORTER puts a hand on ANN's wrist.

MRS. PORTER
We'll have our attorney draw up the papers, dear.

ANN
I'm looking forward to it.

The PORTERS leave, and the snotty MAITRE D looks from ANN to the reservation book and pauses, shocked as he remembers how she used to look.

MAITRE D
(To himself) Noooooooooooooo!

ANN, right behind them, throws a newly-learned zinger at the MAITRE D as she walks out.

ANN
That new hairstyle is *awfully sweet,* you know.

He gasps, and as soon as the door shuts, he picks up a silver serving tray and looks at his hair.

INT. TROTT MANSION - THAT NIGHT

JOHN EDWARD stands in the parlour holding old photographs in one hand and his phone in the other as he talks to ANN.

A bucket with paint brushes and sponges sits on the sofa.

JOHN EDWARD
OK. I've got everything. She'll love some of these photos.
(Pauses, looks around)
(MORE)

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
See you tomorrow. And Annie...
(Pauses)
I'm really glad we're going to the game before you have to leave.

As he hangs up his phone rings again, bringing TORI's number up. He clicks "ignore", pleased with himself.

Suddenly he hears his parents' voices in the other room. He tiptoes toward them and moves closer to the wall.

MRS. TROTT
I just don't want our money going into someone's g-string.

JOHN EDWARD frowns.

JOHN EDWARD
(Sotto, to himself)
Because that's *clearly* what I'm about these days.

MR. TROTT
His lack of direction is worrisome.

MRS. TROTT
Oh, he has direction all right, it's just always pointed into some girl's cookie.

JOHN EDWARD looks at the photos and bucket, angry.

JOHN EDWARD
(Sotto, to himself)
What's the point?
(Looks at parents' photos)
They'll never change, and she's leaving anyway.

He throws down the stack of items for the Margo project. Hearing it, MRS. TROTT suddenly appears in the parlour.

MRS. TROTT
(Surprised) John Edw—

He looks at her and storms out of the room, his will broken.

JOHN EDWARD
I'm going out for cookies.

He puts his phone to his ear and calls TORI.

CUT TO:

EXT. ANN'S HOTEL ROOM - FRI MORNING BEFORE THE GAME

Three fists knock on ANN's door simultaneously. ANN opens, and we see TANCY JANE, PEMBERTON and ROSE ALICE outside. They wear overalls and ponytails and carry paint cans.

ANN looks around.

ANN
Where's John Edward? He said he would bring some things.

PEMBERTON
(Shrugs) Old habits pass away hard, I guess.

ANN shakes her head.

ANN
I'm not going to let that stop us.
(Nodding, with purpose)
Ready?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BARN BEHIND MARGO'S HOUSE - A FEW MINUTES LATER CUE TRIUMPHANT MUSIC FROM "2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY."

All four walk purposefully toward the barn.

CUT TO:

INT. INSIDE THE BARN - TWO HOURS LATER

TANCY JANE, PEMBERTON and ROSE ALICE crookedly paint the walls a fabulous mint green. PEMBERTON directs them.

PEMBERTON
The bleach has clearly gone to your brain stems. The other way.

ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE shift their paint rollers.

ROSE ALICE
(Struggling)
You know, it's really uncool of John Edward to ditch us like this.

TANCY JANE
Margo is *much* more important than being Tori's roast beef bus ride.

INT. INSIDE THE BARN - FAR CORNER - CONTINUOUS

ANN and MARGO sit at a table inside the barn. ANN goes over the plan with her. She points at the silver patterns book.

ANN
So we sell these patterns piece by piece or by the set, because I have a feeling there's also a big replacement business.

COUSIN MARGO
Except Acorn, which nobody buys.

ANN
Right. So, the Acorn pattern we melt down. And at $28.44 an ounce, that disorganized, beer-drinking pattern might just save this place.

MARGO looks at ANN with tears in her eyes, about to cry.

COUSIN MARGO
Thank you for helping me make a little room, Annie. For the future.

Just then, a horn honks, and ANN stops her.

ANN
Save it. The best part just arrived. Come on.

ANN drags MARGO out to the front of the barn, where THE YANKEE is instructing one of her workmen to reveal a gorgeous painted sign on the barn that reads:

THE FORK AND THE HAMMER

EXPRESSIVE SILVER AND COLLECTABLES

EST. 1858

REFURBISHED 2013

MARGO bursts into tears, overjoyed.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Tears in her eyes)
We open the day after tomorrow.

MARGO turns to ANN and THE YANKEE.

COUSIN MARGO
But how will we advertise?

THE YANKEE and ANN look at one another and then MARGO, smirking.

THE YANKEE
Something I like to call a little "word of mouth awareness."

COUSIN MARGO
(Amazed) How did you two do this?

THE YANKEE puts her arms around both ANN and MARGO as the sun shines down.

THE YANKEE
Never underestimate a New Yorker, my dear.

CUT TO:

INT. THE YANKEE'S FABULOUS TOWN CAR - CONTINUOUS

THE YANKEE talks on her phone to MRS. TROTT inside her car.

THE YANKEE
Oh, the poor, poor thing...It's supposed to open the day after tomorrow, and it's guaranteed to be a train wreck...We *must* go and see.

THE YANKEE hangs up, smiling to herself. MRS. TROTT, from inside her mansion immediately dials:

TERRIBLE TORI
(Eyes lighting up)
Oh, I can't wait to see *this*.

TERRIBLE TORI calls the Kappa Kappa Gamma house. KAPPA answers.

KAPPA
Kappa, wanna yappa?

KAPPA gives a nod, hangs up, and gets on the house intercom.

KAPPA (CONT'D)
Sisters...Misfortune alert...

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY - BEFORE THE GAME

ANN, MARGO and THE BELLES sit in MARGO's bedroom grooming themselves. TANCY JANE has foils in her hair and reads a Tiffany & Co. catalog. MARGO tweezes.

COUSIN MARGO
(Excited) To think, after Homecoming when you get married to John Edward, it was all my doing.
(MORE)

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
(Giggles)
You better register for your wedding at The Fork and the Hammer.

ROSE ALICE
(Hand on heart)
It's so exciting.

TANCY peeks around the catalog.

TANCY JANE
So exciting.

The timer for TANCY's highlights dings. MARGO jumps up to rinse her. ANN turns her own head from side to side. Something's missing.

Then she picks up a comb and begins to tease her own hair. The girls all squeal.

ANN
(Smiling) I know, I know. I'm a *real* Southern woman now.
(Then, to MARGO)
And you're a real business woman now. A real business woman who can take care of herself.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUSIN MARGO'S HOUSE - ONE HOUR BEFORE THE GAME

A well-groomed but still manly finger presses the doorbell.

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S LIVING ROOM

The ladies squeal as MARGO smooths her dress and answers.

It's TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE's dates, bearing monstrous mum corsages.

COUSIN MARGO
(Hostess-y) Come in, gentlemen.

They come through the door and kiss their dates on the cheek; then place the mums on their wrists.

MARGO smiles and sits on one sofa next to ANN; the other four sit on a facing sofa. Uncomfortable.

THIRTY MINUTES PASS.

Now MARGO's date has arrived and is on the sofa between MARGO and ANN. The group reaches for conversation. TANCY JANE'S DATE clears his throat.

TANCY JANE'S DATE
So...The Paula Deen sex tape...Anyone seen it?

Everyone makes a face, nodding.

ROSE ALICE'S DATE
Butter and flour *everywhere*.

Uncomfortable silence again.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FOOTBALL STADIUM - LATER

JOHN EDWARD and TERRIBLE TORI walk toward the football stadium, pushing their way through the madding crowd.

TERRIBLE TORI
Sweet little foreigner. And Margo. Used to be a queen and now she's just...poor.

JOHN EDWARD looks at her, seeing her true colors.

JOHN EDWARD
(Snaps) Those are my friends.

To his relief, KIT and PEMBERTON cross in front of them. PEMBERTON still bears paint on his arm from earlier. JOHN EDWARD yells.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Hey! Kit!

KIT, seeing them, comes over. He looks at TERRIBLE TORI, surprised.

KIT
Hey.
(Confused)
Where's...

TORI jumps in, proud.

TERRIBLE TORI
Annie? Oh, he ditched her. We came to an understanding.
(Looks at him)
Didn't we?

JOHN EDWARD frowns, ignoring her, and looks at PEMBERTON.

JOHN EDWARD
What's on your arm?

PEMBERTON puts his hands on his hips, triumphant.

PEMBERTON
Paint. I did actual hard labor today. Very salt-of-the-Earth, don't you think?

JOHN EDWARD hangs his head. KIT won't drop it.

KIT
(Worried) Seriously, man. You didn't just leave her, did you?

JOHN EDWARD looks up at KIT, guilty.

BACK TO:

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S LIVING ROOM

AN HOUR HAS PASSED, and still no JOHN EDWARD. There's no denying the truth: A glum, dazed ANN has been stood up.

MARGO looks at TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE.

COUSIN MARGO
(Gently) You all go on.

MARGO gently pushes them all out the door.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Annie would've wanted you to enjoy Homecoming.

They make noises, not wanting to desert her. MARGO speaks quietly to them at the door.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
She needs a little Southern comfort.

ROSE ALICE blows her a kiss on the way out the door, and ANN slumps on the sofa in a miserable ball with deflated hair and raccoon eyes. Tears stream down her face.

MARGO puts her arms around ANN and rocks her.

ANN
(Sobbing)
I'm the butt of everyone's jokes, Margo. Look at the New Yorker pretending she's like us.
(Sniffs)
This is why I never got involved in all that dating baloney, because work can't stand you up like a guy can.

(MORE)

ANN (CONT'D)
(Looks at her)
He’s not even my type, but it still hurts.

MARGO pulls away and looks directly at ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie, you’re not a joke!

Her heart breaks, looking at her cousin, who cries harder.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT’D)
What you did for me out there, well, I must say, it was like Scarlett taking care of Tara.

ANN raises her eyebrows, even in her misery.

ANN
(Sniffing)
Thanks, Margo, but you know as well as I do that this was a mistake.

COUSIN MARGO
But can’t you see how far you’ve come?

MARGO stands in disbelief.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT’D)
You signed the Porters! You’re a great success!

ANN
(Sob-talking) I just want to go back to New York where it’s safe!

MARGO looks her in the eye evenly.

COUSIN MARGO
Ann, you listen to me. John Edward was wrong, not you. You are wonderful, beautiful and most of all, you are family. And family sticks together.

ANN looks up at MARGO, who prepares to walk out the door.

ANN
Where are you going?

MARGO puts on her car coat.

COUSIN MARGO
To take care of a little family business.

She closes the front door.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. THE TROTT MANSION - LATER - NIGHT

The magnificent door opens, revealing a morose JOHN EDWARD. MARGO, on the other side, taps her foot, displeased.

Maybe it's due to her new business and hustle, but suddenly, MARGO is struck with some New York attitude of her own.

COUSIN MARGO
(Angry) You have a lot of nerve.

JOHN EDWARD shrugs.

JOHN EDWARD
I was just trying to be who I am.

She turns, looking him in the eye.

COUSIN MARGO
Ditching a good person for a weasel in tight pants is who you are?

JOHN EDWARD
Oh come off it, Margo. You know me.

COUSIN MARGO
(Points at him) Yes, I do know you. I saw you changing into a decent and honest man. I was proud of you.

This stops him in his tracks, shocked.

JOHN EDWARD
You were?

JOHN EDWARD looks at MARGO, who nods. Even angry, there are sparks between them. He shakes his head.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
I don't think anyone's ever said that to me before.

She leans in the doorway, still defiant.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COUSIN MARGO'S HOME - SAME TIME

KIT leans in MARGO's doorway and presses the bell, holding a giant Homecoming mum.

ANN comes to the door and peeks through, seeing him standing outside with TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE.

ANN
Go away, guys. It's late.

TANCY slides a silver spoon under the door. She looks at it.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Sniffles) It's Francis I. So what?

TANCY JANE
So open the door, New York. We brought the game to you.

She opens the door. TANCY holds ice cream, KIT holds the mum, and ROSE ALICE holds a plastic crown.

KIT AND THE BELLES
Welcome Home!

BACK TO:

INT. THE TROTT MANSION

MARGO comes through the door into the house.

MRS. TROTT is eavesdropping around the corner.

COUSIN MARGO
You know, it may look like Annie needs all the help, but when people are in trouble, she's the one who steps up. She's the classiest person here in Charleston. And John Edward, of the famous "Trotts", you should be ashamed of yourself.

MRS. TROTT raises her eyebrows.

MRS. TROTT
(Sotto, to herself)
Now that's my kind of girl.

JOHN EDWARD puts his hands on his hips, trying to justify.

JOHN EDWARD
It was only a game.

MARGO steps toward him.

COUSIN MARGO
It was a Homecoming game to you, but it was an big step for her. Do you know what that girl did for me?

JOHN EDWARD nods.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
She saved me, John Edward. She saved my life.

He finally cracks, sitting down on the sofa, making a noise.

JOHN EDWARD
You're right.

MRS. TROTT smiles from behind the wall.

MRS. TROTT
(To herself) Good boy.

COUSIN MARGO
(She taps her toe)
And here, I thought you were becoming a gentleman.

His mouth is agape. She sashays out.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
I think I speak for all the famous "Alexanders" when I say...

And she slams the door in his face.

BACK TO:

INT. COUSIN MARGO'S LIVING ROOM

KIT, ROSE ALICE, TANCY JANE and a still-messy ANN eat ice cream on the sofa. The giant mum is pinned to ANN's dress.

ANN
I can't face him again.

She takes a giant spoonful and passes the quart to TANCY, who digs in as well.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Mouth full) I'm a failure.

They all lean back and look at her, shocked. TANCY passes the ice cream and spoon to KIT. He takes a bite and swallows.

KIT
Are you kidding?

She shakes her head. ROSE ALICE puts her hand on ANN's arm.

ROSE ALICE
Annie, you're the only person here who's actually...*done* anything.
(MORE)

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
You have a big job *and* big hair! Who cares about John Edward!?

ANN stops them.

ANN
I mean... It's not like I thought we were a perfect match or anything... but I'm still humiliated anyway.

She points at them and wipes her eyes.

ANN (CONT'D)
And you're wrong.

TANCY JANE
About what?

ROSE ALICE swipes the ice cream and takes a dainty bite.

ANN
That I'm the only one who's done anything around here. YOU guys have taught me more about life in a week than I learned in two years of business school.

KIT looks at her, proud, and squeezes her shoulder.

KIT
They're right, Annie. Forget about Trott. It's his loss.

TANCY JANE
With your job *and* that hair, you might just find a Pig for your Blanket *yet*. He could walk through the door at any time. Now...
(Looks at the group)
...We have a big day tomorrow, but there's one more thing before we all go home and get some sleep.

TANCY JANE stands and takes the crown from ROSE ALICE. Then she pulls ANN to her feet.

TANCY JANE (CONT'D)
To the real Homecoming Queen!

TANCY puts the crown on ANN's head. ANN takes a funny faux-bow, cheering up.

KIT AND THE BELLES
To Queen Ann!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FORK AND THE HAMMER - GRAND OPENING - NEXT MORNING

The inside of the barn is immaculate. ANN, MARGO and THE BELLES wait; ANN's eyes are still puffy.

MARGO grasps ANN's hand nervously.

COUSIN MARGO
Do you think anyone will be here?

ANN uses MARGO's signature line.

ANN
(Winks) Have a little faith, Margo.

TANCY looks at her watch and squeals.

TANCY JANE
It's time.

The ladies swing open the double doors to the barn.

And outside, it's a madhouse. The crowd and line sweep across the yard and all the way down the block.

Suddenly, ROSE ALICE rings a cowbell.

ROSE ALICE
(Yelling) The Fork and the Hammer is open for business!

The girls are mobbed as the throngs enter. TANCY JANE greets people, and even in her misery, ANN's face shines at MARGO's.

TANCY JANE
(Calling out)
Welcome to The Fork and The Hammer.

THE CROWD presses her against the wall. They're a hit.

AN HOUR LATER -- MARGO writes profit amounts on a sheet under the register. The day's take so far looks healthy.

THROUGHOUT THE DAY -- The Ladies refill iced tea glasses and chat with customers. People mill about the barn, shopping.

INT. THE FORK AND THE HAMMER - NEAR CLOSING TIME

The barn is cleaned out.

Suddenly a male frame walks into the barn toward ANN, who is cleaning up. It's JOHN EDWARD. Her face breaks into a scowl.

ANN
(Sharply) I'm sorry. We're closed.

ANN turns away. He leans closer to her.

JOHN EDWARD
(Almost pleading)
I didn't come to buy silver. I came to give you this. I'm sorry, Annie.

He hands her a thick envelope with her name in calligraphy across the front. MARGO, TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE huddle behind them, whispering to one another in play-by-play.

ROSE ALICE
He's handing her something.

ANN hands it back to him without even looking at it.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
She's handing it back to him.

ANN maintains a firm stance.

ANN
I don't want it.

JOHN EDWARD
It's an invitation to the St. Cecelia Ball. I would be honored if you would be my date.

MARGO and THE BELLES gasp.

ROSE ALICE
It's an invitation to the St. Cecelia Ball!

MARGO turns to ROSE ALICE and TANCY.

COUSIN MARGO
He would be honored if she would be his date!

ANN puts her hands on her hips.

ANN
What, so I can wait around for you not to show up?

TANCY JANE
(Pointing) Ooh, burn!

ROSE ALICE
(Covers TANCY's mouth)
SSSSHHHHHHHHHH!

JOHN EDWARD
Ann, I was wrong. I just...

She turns to face him.

ANN
(Sputtering)
You just what? Kiss us girls from out of town and then stand us up?

COUSIN MARGO
He kissed her!

ROSE ALICE
SSSHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

JOHN EDWARD flails his arms, almost yelling.

JOHN EDWARD
No! It wasn't like that!

ANN puts a few remaining things in a box and turns away.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
Annie, listen to me!

He grabs her arm.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
That day at the stadium. I felt like me and not a..."Trott!"
(Looks at her)
You're different. And I like you.

Then JOHN EDWARD's face changes.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
But...there's something else. I decided after last night that it really was time for me to try to be a better person for once. To be...honest. I have to tell you something.

COUSIN MARGO
What is he doing?

He gets a serious look on his face.

JOHN EDWARD
(Deep breath)
I made a promise to my mother.

ANN looks at him, confused.

COUSIN MARGO
(Face falls) Oh no.

MARGO walks toward them, signaling JOHN EDWARD to be quiet.

ANN
(She furrows her brow)
A promise?

ANN turns to MARGO.

ANN (CONT'D)
What is he talking about?

JOHN EDWARD
My mother told me to find a serious girl to date or I'd lose my inheritance. And so I told her...

The lights go on in her head and she motions to herself.

ANN
...That you'd found one. And that's why you were helping me. To help yourself.

He nods. ANN turns to MARGO.

ANN (CONT'D)
Did you know about this?

MARGO starts to backpedal, revealing that it's true.

COUSIN MARGO
It wasn't like that, Annie.

ANN
(Crosses her arms) You both made a plan and put me in the middle? I thought you said we would stick together.

ANN looks at JOHN EDWARD.

ANN (CONT'D)
You didn't even like me, did you?

JOHN EDWARD
Annie...You've changed me - you've changed all of us. And by the time—

She turns to MARGO, cutting him off.

ANN
I trusted you.
(Looks at them)
I trusted you *all*. I thought for the first time I'd found...real friends.
(Shakes her head)
I was wrong. I never should've come here.

JOHN EDWARD puts his hand on her arm. She shakes her head.

ANN (CONT'D)
You two deserve each other.
(Heartbroken)
I'm gonna take a walk.

She takes off her work gloves, turns and begins to walk down the sidewalk. MARGO and THE BELLES follow her close behind, scuttling in a group in their high heels. ANN turns around.

ANN (CONT'D)
Alone! I walk alone!

They frown, stopping. MARGO calls out.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie, wait!

But she ignores her.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHARLESTON SIDEWALKS - CONTINUOUS

ANN walks down the idyllic sidewalks of Charleston, sniffling. Passing Miss B's School of Tap, Ballet and Charm, she walks to the same window in the bushes and peers in.

Watching the future debutantes inside learn to bow and thinking about everything she's learned, she suddenly becomes weepy, seeming to channel ROSE ALICE.

ANN
(Misty) Gets me every time.

Then she shakes it off.

CUT TO:

INT. ANN'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANN, still sniffling and surrounded by her suitcases, licks an ENVELOPE with MARGO's name on it. She looks at the DVD cover of "Gone With the Wind" and the silver patterns notebook, and her eyes fill with tears.

She picks up her phone, scrolling to "Charles Drexel."

ANN
(To herself) They have to have deviled eggs in New York *somewhere*.

She calls MR. DREXEL with the push of a button.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COUSIN MARGO'S HOME - HER MAILBOX

ANN puts the letter atop MARGO's mailbox and walks away, miserable and wiping her eyes. Just then, a horn honks. It's:

THE YANKEE
(Calling out the window)
My dear, you look like the last pea at pea-time.

ANN waves her off.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
Don't you wave me away, little miss. Get in the car.
(Pauses)
I've got Ben & Jerry's at home.

ANN thinks, and then gets into THE YANKEE's car. THE YANKEE, wearing overalls and a hat, peels out. ANN looks at her.

ANN
Why are you wearing that outfit?

THE YANKEE
Because I need help tending my garden, and you're cheaper than the day laborers that hang around in front of The Home Depot.

ANN
(Gasping) You tricked me?

CUT TO:

INT. THE YANKEE'S OUTDOOR GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

ANN and THE YANKEE stand in THE YANKEE's giant garden. ANN leans on a hoe. They have iced teas and baskets.

ANN
You said you had *a* garden, not *Madison Square* Garden.

THE YANKEE shrugs, taking a sip.

THE YANKEE
Where did you think fresh vegetables came from?

ANN
The Korean deli on the corner.

Thinking about New York, ANN begins to cry anew.

THE YANKEE
(Rolls eyes) What? What is it now?

ANN
Everywhere I go I'm out of place! I can't believe I thought I could do this. I'm such a fool!

THE YANKEE puts her hand on ANN's to calm her and then bends to pick okra.

THE YANKEE
You know, Annie, I admire you.

ANN
(Almost choking on tea)
You admire *me*?

THE YANKEE
(Nodding)
Yes, I do. Fitting in here...

THE YANKEE looks at ANN and begins to use her tools to break up the dirt.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
Hoe, child.

ANN
(Indignant) I'm not!
(Looks at THE YANKEE)
Oh.

She begins hoeing as well as THE YANKEE continues.

THE YANKEE
(Smacking dirt)
If I hadn't been so young when we moved here, I couldn't've done it. All the pomp and circumstance.

ANN takes a deep breath, nodding and thinking.

ANN
(Admitting to herself)
I couldn't have gotten through it without Margo.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COUSIN MARGO'S HOME - MAILBOX - SAME TIME

MARGO, on her front doorstep, opens the letter on her mailbox from ANN. She reads, pausing and putting her hand over her mouth, about to cry.

She picks up her cell to call THE BELLES. She's frantic.

COUSIN MARGO
(Wailing, into phone)
Code pink! Code pink!

BACK TO:

EXT. THE YANKEE'S OUTDOOR GARDEN - AS WE LEFT THEM

ANN picks okra and throws it in a basket.

THE YANKEE
The thing is, Ann, there is structure in every place. New York has their version, too.

ANN's face acknowledges that this is true.

ANN
(Nods) My first semester at NYU, I didn't know the difference between The East and West Village. And I couldn't say "Houston."

THE YANKEE
See? Everywhere has their rules. But the thing is, if we get caught up in seeing the outside of everything, we forget that on the inside, we all want basically the same things. Freedom. Deviled eggs. Family. Which...

THE YANKEE stands and leans on her hoe.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
...Is where forgiveness comes in.

ANN
(Grimaces) Forgiveness. That's the hard part.

ANN fingers the locket around her neck, thinking.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE COUSIN MARGO'S HOME - HER MAILBOX

MARGO, distraught, sits on her front stoop with a glass of iced tea, her cell phone, and the opened letter on her lap.

Suddenly a pink car with the vanity license plates "PROPER" squeals to the curb, startling MARGO.

She stands as ROSE ALICE gets out of the driver's side with TANCY JANE in tow and they huff their way up the sidewalk.

TANCY JANE
(Panting) We got your message. What do you mean 'she's leaving?'

MARGO sniffles and holds up the letter as they approach.

COUSIN MARGO
She's going back, and it's all because of me!

ROSE ALICE
What?!

MARGO thrusts out the letter. ROSE ALICE looks at it and back at MARGO.

COUSIN MARGO
All this time I thought we were helping her fit in. I never thought about what *she* might need to make her feel at home. She's my family!

ROSE ALICE puts her hand on MARGO's arm.

ROSE ALICE
Our family.
(Pauses)
We have to convince her that this is where she belongs.

MARGO stares at ROSE ALICE, eyes wide.

COUSIN MARGO
But how? It's too late!

ROSE ALICE
What would she like?
(Looks at them)
Pizza?

COUSIN MARGO
(Shakes her head) Not enough.

TANCY JANE breaks in, thinking.

TANCY JANE
Actually, that's not bad.

She touches MARGO's arm.

TANCY JANE (CONT'D)
Girls, I have an idea.

TANCY grabs MARGO's iced tea and, channeling ANN, slams it as if it were a shot of Patron.

BACK TO:

EXT. THE YANKEE'S OUTDOOR GARDEN - AS WE LEFT THEM

ANN finishes a sip of tea and wipes her lips.

THE YANKEE
No, forgiveness *isn't* the hard part, Annie. It's part of being a family, and it's an opportunity.

ANN
(Crinkles her forehead) It is?

THE YANKEE nods.

THE YANKEE
Yes, because you can look at forgiveness as you giving yourself the chance to be the person you want to be in your head.

ANN
(Repeating it)
The person I want to be in my head.

ANN pauses and reluctantly nods, fooling around with the hoe.

ANN (CONT'D)
But they made a bet about me. That's...

She thinks of the right word, and then comes up with it.

ANN (CONT'D)
..Tacky!

THE YANKEE
Yes. But sometimes family *is* tacky.

THE YANKEE examines a plant.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
Don't you think people deserve a second chance? You weren't quite the Queen of Sheba...

ANN
(Relenting) You're right. I was a wreck.

THE YANKEE picks a tomato off a plant, handing it to ANN.

THE YANKEE
You were practically road kill, my dear, but we gave you a chance. So give them one. Deep down, all they wanted to do was help.

ANN nods, taking a deep breath.

THE YANKEE gives her a smile and then thinks about something.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
So you said "no" to John Edward Trott, huh?

ANN nods.

THE YANKEE (CONT'D)
Well, you're a real Southern Belle now, city girl.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE ANN'S HOTEL - LATER

ANN walks up the sidewalk to her hotel, calmer.

And suddenly, she sees a crazy sight.

MARGO, dressed as The Statue of Liberty, stands behind a table and chairs set up with bagels, pizza and Chinese food. A fire hydrant sits next to the table alongside bags full of garbage. TANCY JANE and ROSE ALICE wear all black.

ANN stops, smiling, and puts her hand over her mouth.

ANN
What's all this?

MARGO spreads her arm like the Statue.

COUSIN MARGO
(Like a tour guide)
Welcome to New York.

ANN's mouth drops open.

ANN
Oh my God.

MARGO rushes to her, her costume dragging along the sidewalk.

COUSIN MARGO
Annie, I'm so sorry! I should've realized how big these changes were for you. Please don't leave!

ANN
(Points)You guys are wearing black!

ROSE ALICE smiles, proud.

COUSIN MARGO
See, you don't have to go back, because everything you need is right here!

MARGO taps TANCY JANE.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Show Ann what you worked out.

TANCY JANE steps up and begins to speak in a Brooklyn accent.

TANCY JANE
("Tough") Yo, yo, Mutha Fucka, can I take the 1 train outta Penn Station?

Then ROSE ALICE makes a weird face. ANN starts to giggle.

ANN
What's she doing?

COUSIN MARGO
(Proudly) She's trying to spit on the sidewalk.

ANN puts her hand on her heart.

ANN
(Touched)
And you did all this for me?

COUSIN MARGO
We wanted you to feel like this was home! We don't want you to go!

ANN pauses, softening, and turns to MARGO.

ANN
I don't really want to go.

COUSIN MARGO
(Still pitching)
And there is *plenty* of opportunity for a competent finance professional like yourself to manage the old money of some of Charleston's finest residents.

ANN begins to nod and smile.

ANN
That I definitely *do* know now.

COUSIN MARGO
So you'll stay?

ANN pauses, looking over the spread.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry about John Edward, Annie. It really wasn't like it seemed, it was more like killing two birds with one stone. I knew he could help you get acclimated.

ANN grabs a bagel and points it at her.

ANN
But you also knew about the situation with his mother.

COUSIN MARGO
(Nodding) It just went way further than I expected.

ANN
It was only one kiss. And I would never really fall for a guy who would go through all that and not even close The deal and get the money.
(Looks at MARGO)
John Edward's charming when he wants to be, I'll give that to ya.

COUSIN MARGO
(Blushing) He is, isn't he? I even found myself falling for him a little.
(Looks at her)
Annie, I'm so sorry.

ANN puts her hand on MARGO's shoulder.

ANN
Margo, look at what you did for me. I came here with nothing but a job, and now I have a family.

MARGO's shoulder relaxes and she puts her Statue of Liberty arm around her. ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE run around, constricting her in a hug.

ANN (CONT'D)
(Laughs) OK, OK, I'll stay!

They all cheer. ROSE ALICE looks at her.

ROSE ALICE
So what are you going to do about the ball? And work? You're supposed to go back.

MARGO looks at her, imploringly, as ANN extricates herself.

COUSIN MARGO
This is like a royal decree, Annie. When you get asked to the St. Cecelia Ball, you *go*.

TANCY JANE
(Nods) I would go. I would go with anyone.

ROSE ALICE
I would've even gone with Abe Lincoln.

MARGO and TANCY JANE gasp.

ROSE ALICE (CONT'D)
You know, before the Civil...

ANN
(Shakes her head)
I just can't. It's not my scene.

MARGO and THE BELLES make noises.

COUSIN MARGO
But Annie, just think about it.

ANN turns to MARGO.

ANN
Actually, I have. And I think you should go, Margo. In my place.

COUSIN MARGO
(Shocked) Me?

ANN nods, smiling at her. A “General Lee” car drives by on the street and plays the song from “The Dukes of Hazzard.” ANN looks at it, shaking her head.

ANN
I can’t believe I’m doing this.
(Then, to MARGO)
Come on, you said it yourself. You sort of love John Edward.

A light goes on.

ROSE ALICE
She *is* the only person he takes direction from.

COUSIN MARGO
(Conceding)
I did slam the door in his face.

ANN
See, you’ve already had your first fight!

MARGO pauses and looks at ANN.

COUSIN MARGO
You really don’t want to go?

ANN
No.
(Pauses)
But about work...I do have a little business to discuss with you.

She pulls out a chair from the card table for MARGO.

ANN (CONT’D)
Come into my office before you get all dressed up, will you?

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRYWAY AT THE ST. CECELIA’S SOCIETY BALL - LATER

Ladies wear long dresses and elbow-length gloves.

MARGO, gorgeous, walks in to find an elated JOHN EDWARD.

COUSIN MARGO
(”Stern”) I told you on the phone, I’m just doing a favor to my cousin Annie.

He looks her over, appreciatively nodding and smiling.

JOHN EDWARD
Ah yes, Cousin Annie. Finally in working order, huh?

COUSIN MARGO
(Mock Fierceness) Oh, stop smiling. We have to whip you into shape too.

He raises his eyebrows.

JOHN EDWARD
I certainly look forward to *that*.

As they sweep into the ballroom area and swish by MRS. TROTT, she leans in, whispering in his ear:

MRS. TROTT
I'm not sure how you got her, but do whatever you can to keep her.

JOHN EDWARD
Nor am I, Mother. Nor am I.

She winks at him, their prior disagreements forgotten. This is, after all, The South, and family is family.

CUT TO:

INT. FORK AND THE HAMMER - ANN'S NEW OFFICE - LATER THAT WEEK

ANN places a makeshift name plaque reading "Ann Alexander, CEO, The Fork and the Hammer", a photo of her with MARGO and THE BELLES, and of course, the hammer from her office in NYC, on top of a folding table-cum-desk in a corner of the barn.

Suddenly, there's a knock on the barn door and it opens. It's JOHN EDWARD, holding a box from Tiffany & Co. She's shocked.

ANN
How did you know I was here?

JOHN EDWARD
Word travels fast in Charleston. See, there's this new girl in town, someone we're all really proud of...
(Comes closer to her)
...and she's a new type of Southern Belle. Started a business with her cousin. And she's tough.

She play-punches him and he laughs.

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
See?
(Hands her the box)
(MORE)

JOHN EDWARD (CONT'D)
I wanted to give you this. Something to remind you that we're all here for you - the girls, Kit...even me.

She opens it, finding a silver letter opener, and gasps.

ANN
(Tears in eyes) It's Chrysanthemum!

JOHN EDWARD
Margo said you'd like it.
(Then)
I'm so sorry, Annie. And I really am proud of you. You've done an amazing job.

She looks at him, softening.

ANN
I'm proud of you, too, Trott.
(Pauses)
Maybe there's hope for both of us yet.

He puts his hand out, smiling and nodding.

JOHN EDWARD
Friends?

ANN
(Shakes her head) Not good enough.

His smile fades. Then *she* smiles and sticks out her hand.

ANN (CONT'D)
Family.

Suddenly MARGO's voice comes through from outside the barn.

COUSIN MARGO
Can we come in yet?! We're dying!

ANN
(Beaming)
Come in!

Then MARGO, THE BELLES and KIT fill the barn, encircling ANN. MARGO pokes at the letter opener.

COUSIN MARGO
(Squealing) It's your first family heirloom!

ANN hugs MARGO tight. JOHN EDWARD looks at the letter opener.

JOHN EDWARD
What's Chrysanthemum, anyway?

ANN
(Rolls eyes) Oh, you have *so* much to learn.

The group laughs and hugs, snug as a bug in a rug.

Then suddenly, the revelry is broken by a KNOCK ON THE BARN DOOR...

...And a disheveled, lost, NEW YORK GUY, dressed all in black and a New York Jets cap, steps inside.

NEW YORK GUY
(Loud) Yeah, can I get a little FUCKING help here? I don't know where the HELL I'm going!

He sees ANN and is instantly heartstruck...and it's clear by her expression, she feels the same.

TANCY JANE raises her eyebrows at ANN.

TANCY JANE
There's your *Pig*, Blanket.

COUSIN MARGO
Looks like it's your turn, Cousin.
(Smiles)
Do you remember all your lessons?

ANN turns to her, heart in her throat and tears in her eyes.

COUSIN MARGO (CONT'D)
Oh, Margo...
(Encircles her in a hug)
...If there's anything I've learned about being a Southern Belle, it's the most important lesson of all.
(Teary smile)
You can call someone sweet or change your mind about your silver pattern, but you never... *ever*... forget who your people are.

As the group hugs and swirls about the barn, we sweep back to see ANN turn to give long-winded directions to the smitten NEW YORK GUY.

And then as ROSE ALICE and TANCY JANE gossip breathlessly behind her, we sweep even further back to see COUSIN MARGO kiss JOHN EDWARD on the cheek, take his hand, and show him around the barn - a bit of the past...

...With plenty of room for the future. *