

Lonely Birds and shadow Figures

a psycho thriller in **three acts**

by

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CHARACTERS

JESSICA: 42 year old secretary. Appearance: slim, tall, over-styled for office work (flawless but too much make-up, red lips, diva-ish coiffed hair, perfectly manicured fingernails. Wardrobe: office chic (satin blouse, tight pencil skirt, high heels, wears too much jewelry.)

BETTY: 35 year old secretary. Appearance: stout, average height, minimalistic style (a hint of nude lip gloss and mascara, straight hair tied back in a ponytail.) Wardrobe: casual office look (flower print blouse, chinos, ballerina flats, one ring.)

MESSENGER: Age: Thirty-something. Appearance: tall, slender, boyish, windswept hair. Wardrobe: messenger gear, hoodie, jeans, sneakers.

TED (Just voice.): Age: Thirty-something. Sound of voice: nervous, tries to be flirty, obsessive/fixated, good-natured.

SETTING

In an office building. A large screen is placed in the office, referencing time, showing pieces of imagery in between. Overbearing gray its overwhelming neon and reflects onto various suits that are hung on coat hangers and blend into the surroundings like camouflage.

ACT 1.

(The stage is empty. The curtain is drawn. Only the telephone conversation is audible.)

JESS

So, why are you calling?

TED

Why I'm – isn't that obvious?

JESS

No, not really.

TED

I'm calling because of you, because of us.

JESS

Okay...

TED

You know, it's been a year.

JESS

Really? Already? It seems so long ago. Like years, plural...

TED

Yeah well it's been exactly a year. You remember, don't you?

JESS

But that was back then. I mean, so much can happen...

TED

So?

JESS

So... what?

TED

How about dinner?

JESS

I'm not really hungry - in the evenings. Thank you.

TED

We could go for a drink?

JESS

I don't drink...anymore. Sorry.

TED

Breakfast? Don't tell me you don't eat breakfast.

JESS

No, I eat breakfast...sometimes.

TED

So, that's a yes?

JESS

Well, it's a maybe actually.

TED

An actual maybe!

JESS

See, I get up early and then I'm a mess for about an hour, like, literally I won't talk for the first half hour and then it's just grunts and sighs until the hour is up. You don't want to even get a glimpse of that horror story.

TED

I could get you after the exorcists' hour, Emily Rose.

JESS

The what? Who? This is Jessica, you know...

TED

Yeah I know - it's just a – anyway. What do you say? Around nine?

JESS

Nine! I'm already in the office by nine. I said I get up early, didn't I.

TED

Is there any chance, of getting a little more precise, maybe? Please?

JESS

I get up at six o'clock. I am out of the house by seven thirty.

TED

Well, then I'll be there at seven. We'll go and get a cup of coffee. Talk. Get to know each other...The old fashioned way.

JESS

This isn't old fashion?

TED

Not really. I'm in the subway, squashed between a... (Whispers.)...big fat hairy guy and what seems to be an old cat lady.

JESS

Ugh! Disgusting. Listen. I gotta go.

TED

No, wait! Just...Just tell me what you would like and I'll arrange it...

JESS

I don't know...

TED

...buy it!

JESS

(Laughs.) Oh Ted...

TED

(Softly)...or kill it.

JESS

(Angrily.) Oh Ted! Stop it! You're awful...Disgusting.

TED

I was just kidding.

JESS

Well I wasn't...

TED

So?

JESS

(Pause.)

I'll be at El Rincon for dinner and drinks with a few work colleges this evening. You know where that is?

TED

I'll find it, don't worry. See you later?

JESS

(Sighs unexcitedly.) I guess...

TED

Okay. Bye then.

(No reply. Both telephones hang up.)

CURTAIN:

(Early morning. 9am.)

JESSICA, a mid- thirty-something (or rather an anonymous late-thirty-something) is seated at her desk. Her computer is on, the screen shows a seemingly endless amount of open charts, numbers, statistics. JESSICA leans back and taps on BETTY'S cubicle.

JESSICA

(Whispering loudly.) What are you going to wear tonight?

BETTY

(Insecure.) I guess, I'll wear...this?

JESS

(Laughs.) Oh that's funny! You're so funny!

BET

(Shyly.) Yeah. Can you imagine? Like this?

(Attends to her blouse with a tissue, searching for possible spots.)

JESS

Guess what!

BET

What?

JESS

Guess who called?

BET

Who?

JESS

You at least have to try once...

BET

Oh, okay. Your mom?

JESS

My mom?! God no. Haven't heard from her since...Actually, I can't remember when.

BET

Oh I'm sorry. I didn't mean to -

JESS

She's such a bitch! I wish she'd rot in hell.

BET

Oh! Okay...

JESS

No this guy, Ted. Of all people! Just this morning. Can you imagine?

BET

Who's Ted?

JESS

Ted!

BET

Okay...?

JESS

(Laughs.) Oh common...I must have talked about him a million times. Or at least referred to him, as an example of unflattering sorts...

BET

No, no, I don't think you ever mentioned a -

JESS

Met him last year...On one of those online dating platforms...He didn't have a picture in his profile...Chatted with him for a couple of months, few calls, then I deleted my account...He was always trying to get me to go out with him and then I always bailed on him or lied to him. Best thing though, is to forget him. It's fun for about a minute. You know: getting the guy all high on hopes is kind of exiting and then...Then it gets sad and who wants to be sad over someone who's so sad himself, right?

BET

Yeah, I suppose?

JESS

I said I'd meet him at El Rincon this evening...

BET

But aren't we going there this evening?

JESS

(Quickly.) Oh yeah, totally!

(Pause.)

Anyway – you know what I told him last time I ran into him? I said he should try exactly in a year. I said that I was too wound up with my job and my recent break-up...That I was too emotionally confused, insecure and unstable to hook-up. But maybe in a year.

BET

Were you?

JESS

Was I what?

BET

Confused, insecure and stuff...

JESS

No, of course not! You can be so naive when you've not been fed, honey. Do you want my power bar?

BET

No, no thank you.

JESS

The more you add to the story, the more distressed and helpless you seem, the more he'll believe every word that passes through your gorgeously pursed lips. Guys like him do anyway.

BET

I don't get it.

JESS

Oh sweetie. That's okay. You don't have to. Just get this: He may be disappointed on the verge of depressed and his heart may or may not drop to the bottom of El Rincon's' floor tonight but he will keep trying and asking and he might even start begging. That is, more than he has already.

BET

But why would you do that? Isn't that sort of -

JESS

(Tending to her work.) - Sort of what, hon?

BET

I dunno. Cruel?

JESS

(Turns around at once.) Not as cruel as all those losers out there who pretend and promise and lie and cheat and act so high and mighty and then never call or text or even fucking say hello, when they see you in the mall with their stupid beloved mother of their children. I can't tell you how many times one of those pretentious sons of bitches have tried to fool... -

(Pulls herself together, straitens out her suit.)

- ...Women like us. Luckily enough, it hasn't happened to me yet. But, there are so many of us out there who have been treated like shit and no one cares or takes... -

BET

-...Revenge?

JESS

-...Charge. I am taking charge of the situation. Because, who knows? This Ted might just turn into another one of them.

BET

He doesn't sound like it...

JESS

They never do, Sweetie. They never do.

BET

So what's your plan?

JESS

There is no plan. There's nothing left to do but ignore his calls and voice mails and e-mails and texts and letters to my home and to the office.

BET

He sounds a bit...creepy.

JESS

He's desperate, that's all. He waited exactly a year to call me. I mean, who does that?

BET

(Excitedly.) I watched this show last night. It was the last episode of 'Love Instantly'.

(While BETTY talks about the show, imagery of the last episode is shown on screen.)

It's like one of those bachelor shows but it takes place throughout the course of only one day. So this guy, Nick, invites all these women to his home but then instantly falls for this girl, Sharon. (I didn't think she was that pretty but I guess it's a matter of taste) -

JESS

(Yawning loudly.)

BET

Anyway. So there were all these tasks for the girls (some running, fighting and eating revolting things to prove their love to him) but Nick didn't want to go on with the show. He said he had found his girl and was absolutely sure. Then they ran off together. Left the show, left everyone behind. They didn't even care about the ten grand, which was supposed to go to the winner at the end.

JESS

(Bored.) Uhum. Do you really watch that shit?

BET

It's actually quite good, if you believe in it.

JESS

(Laughs.) Believe in what? Scripted reality?

BET

No, love.

JESS

Yeah, well. I suppose that's what we're all out for, right?

BET

It's the only thing we should be out for, in my opinion.

JESS

When's the last time you've dated?

BET

Well...

JESS

Well? Last date, last fuck?

BET

Jess!

JESS

There's a difference if you've been out on the battlefield yourself or if you've discretely watched others get beaten and torn apart from the security of your couch...-

BET

-...I think...-

JESS

-...while you stuff yourself with popcorn and chips...-

BET

-...that's none of your...-

JESS

-...and get fatter and lonelier and more insecure because you've gotten fat and unsociable.

(BETTY stares at her, tears flush her eyes, she runs out of the office. OFF.)

JESS

(JESSICA tends to her monitor, types.)

It's her own bloody fault. I mean, come on. Love Instantly?! Bunch of retards. Who cares?! Do her some good. Roughen'er up. For heaven sakes – Love Instantly.

(A MESSENGER with a bouquet of flowers in a vase enters the office, walks over to JESSICA'S cubical.)

MESSENGER

A delivery for a Betty Walsh?

(JESSICA doesn't look up, merely points to the back of her. THE MESSENGER puts the flowers on BETTY'S desk and returns to Jessica.)

MESSENGER

Would you please sign for Miss Walsh?

(JESSICA takes the pen without paying attention to the MESSENGER, then recognizes the flowers.)

JESS

For whom are these?

MESSENGER

For a Betty Walsh? Isn't this her desk?

JESS

Yes it is but...

MESSENGER

Well then it would be really great, if you could sign right...here and here.

JESS

(SHE stares at the bouquet, carelessly scribbles her signature onto the clipboard.)

MESSENGER

Thank you Mam, have a nice day!

(Messenger OFF.)

JESS

(Absently.) Yeah, you too.

SHE gets up, looks around the office to see if either BETTY or anyone else is nearby watching, then inspects the flowers.

Well, well. Look at these....A little pompous, if you ask me...

(SHE takes and flips open the attached card and reads.)

To my dearest, most beautiful Betty. With love, yours truly. No signature.

(Pause.)

(Chuckles.) Looser! Probably the bagel guy. Since, her being his best customer.

JESSICA sees that BETTY is about to return and quickly sits down again, still holding the card.

BETTY comes back into the office, looking distraught, her face partially smudged with eye make-up. She walks over to her cubical, purposely looking the other way, to ignore JESSICA. She sees the flowers, her eyes light up. She touches the petals gently, leans in to take-in their scent. Her face changes instantly; brighter.

BET

(Excitedly.) Lilies! Are these for me?

JESS

Now they are...

BET

What do you mean?

JESS

They were sent to me. Listen to this: To my dearest, most beautiful Jessica. With love, yours truly. No signature. Can you believe this jerk?

BETTY'S face falls immediately from a perky high, to a devastated low. She sits and turns her chair, her back facing JESSICA.

JESS

Oh come on! Ignoring me? I didn't mean it like tha-at! It's not my fault that you always take things the wrong way...

BET

(Turns around angrily.) Calling me fat and ugly and lonely? How does that lead to taking it the wrong way?!

(Turns her back on JESSICA, her eyes begin to dwell up again.)

JESS

Firstly, you never really caught on to my sense of humor -

BET

(Turns around.) Sense of humor! Don't make me laugh now! You're as cold and indifferent as an ice cube!

Do you ever hear yourself talk?

JESS

Listen. I know, I may have come off as a bit harsh and, as you so eloquently put it – cold, but I am clearly on your side. Why would I have placed this lovely bouquet (that was sent to me just minutes ago) on your desk, knowing Lilies being your favorite?

BET

I told you that?

JESS

Of course you told me! How long have we been working together? Cubicle next to cubicle. Three years?

BET

It's more like seven.

JESS

Well it surely feels like I've gotten to know a completely different Betty Walsh today.

(Pause.)

I mean, don't you think you might have something to say? After all, I am your friend. And we all need some of those now and then.

BET

(Guiltily.) God, I'm sorry. I really didn't mean to yell at you. It was just, what you said was so...

JESS

Let's just say, for peace sake, we both said some mean things.

BET

Yeah, I suppose we did.

JESS

That's better. Now! What do you think I should do with this?

(Holds up the card.)

(Gleefully.) Burn it? Tear it up or simply put it through the shredder?

Late afternoon, 4pm.

BETTY and JESSICA are typing away on their computers. Only the sound of the clack, clack, clack of the keys-pads and the double clicking of the mouse are audible. In between, the sound of telephones ringing in the distance. An office 'symphony'. This continues until JESSICA stops her work, pushes her chair back and stretches.

JESS

God I could use a drink!

(Yawns.)

What about you?

BET

(Absently.) Uhum, me too...

JESS

I'm really sorry we can't go out for drinks this evening.

BET

(Turning around at once.)

But I thought we were all going to head to El Rincon later? For tapas and tequila...

JESS

Didn't you get the e-mail?

BET

What mail?

JESS

You didn't get the e-mail. I told them to tell you. Great. Now I have to. Listen: Don and James told me during lunch that they're heading to a sports bar...Change of plans. Said they're screening a 'very important' soccer match. Something England against something Germany. And who needs to see that, right?

BET

Oh. But we could go? Would be kinda...different.

JESS

To a sports bar? You're kidding. Stuffed in a gloomy, smokey room? Seating at a sticky table amongst those...Neanderthals? Belching and producing apelike noises, that is, when they're not molesting the 18 year old waitresses. What a night that would be! No hon, I don't think so...

BET

But we could go out together...How about, if we'd go to El Rincon and...Make it a girl's night out! That would be fun, right?

JESS

First of all, we're clearly no longer girls. Second of all, we're not going to represent those types of women who hunch up together like starving birds during a winter storm. Especially not on a Friday. Pathetic. It will look like we're lost. Desperate. We'd at least need a group of four. Minimum. Plus, I really want to avoid running into that Ted. Remember? I told him I was going to be there.

(Pause.)

You get that, right?

BET

Yeah, totally. That would be...awkward.

JESS

Totally. Awkward.

BET

So...then I guess we'll just make it another time?

JESS

I'm afraid we'll have to, hon. Besides; I think I have an episode coming along.

BET

Your period?

JESS

No, not my period. A bloody migraine.

BET

I'm sorry... My great aunt suffered from migraines. Could only be in complete darkness and absolute silence. Laid there, three days straight. Don't know how she got through it, let alone raised my mom. Started in her mid-twenties but luckily, it went away in her mid-thirties. Just like that.

(Snaps her fingers.)

Gone.

JESS

Well then let's just hope for the exact same thing for me, when I reach that age...

BET

Yeah. Fingers crossed.

The suits are shifting back and forth, the lighting in the back lowers down to simulate the sun setting to evening. Spotlights are shut off one by one, leaving the suits hanging still in the dark.

(Later that evening, 6pm)

Most lights in the office are out; the gray suits submerge into dark, are barely visible in the back. JESSICA is holding up a pocket mirror and applying make-up, eyeliner and lipstick at her desk, which is strewn with files and papers, a diet soda can and sandwich wrapper. She adjusts her hair, checks herself from different angles, and zooms in and out of various parts of her face. She turns around to BETTY who is standing tidying her papers, closing files and powering down her computer. JESSICA looks at BETTY while she is doing so. JESSICA holds the pocket mirror and starts reflecting light onto BETTY'S backside until the moment that Bet turns around.

JESS

Did anyone ever tell you that you have nice hair?

BET

(Turns around.)

(Puzzled.) No. I mean, my mom always said -

JESS

(Looks at herself in the mirror.) That's a blessing, good hair. Look at mine. All brittle and the roots are showing again. I just had it done two weeks ago. I look like an old bag.

BET

No you don't. You look lovely. One can hardly see the gray.

JESS

(Controls herself.) Well, at least I still have my figure. Tits are still firm, so's my behind. Feel it.

(She gets up for BETTY to feel her behind.)

BET

(Hesitates but then touches JESSICA'S behind twice with her index finger.)

Yes I can confirm, it's still very firm. Can we go now? Are you ready?

JESS

Yes, I just want to go wash my hands quickly. Will you tidy up here for me, please? I swear if I see any more profile charts, I'll jump straight out of the window.

BET

We're on the ground floor.

JESS

(Angrily.) Will you or won't you?

BET

Go on. But hurry. I'll be done in five.

JESSICA puts her make-up paraphernalia into her handbag and leaves for the bathroom. JESSICA OFF.

BETTY starts organizing various sheets into their according files, files them in the file cabinet, shuts down JESSICA'S computer, scrunches up and throws the wrapper into the waste basket, then takes the can and tries to throw it into the waste basket from afar but misses. She goes to pick it up, sees something inside the basket. She reaches for it and produces the card that was attached to the bouquet of flowers. She looks at the front cover which shows an image of a puppy. BETTY smiles.

BET

You can't help it, now can you? You're just a poor little thing, aren't you? If you were mine, I'd cuddle you all day and tell you how much I love you. I'd take good care of you.

BETTY looks up and around, then wipes off the card with a tissue, kisses the cover and puts the card into her shoulder bag. She inhales the scent of the flowers, touches the petals gently. She takes one last glance around.

BET

(Addressing her shoulder bag.) See? I told you the mean old bat wouldn't be ready.

(BETTY goes OFF.)

On-screen imagery:

We are looking up to an apartment window. We see light inside, but only in one room, possibly the living room. We see a SHADOW that gets cast from the light. The FIGURE starts moving, dances. The tune is simple, rhythmic. We see the arm of the SHADOW FIGURE, its hand, which is holding something. The SHADOW FIGURE keeps moving in and out of our sight. The camera zooms in a little more but the SHADOW FIGURE suddenly disappears. We focus on parts of the interior that are now visible to us; a shelf filled with books and bric-a-brac, the headlight that isn't illuminated. We move carefully to the window on the right, the lights are off. We sway to the left, passing the lit room, to the next window. Again, we see nothing but darkness. We're just about to turn away, when we see the SHADOW FIGURE who is standing in the dark near by the window. The SHADOW FIGURE is looking at us. We zoom in on its eyes - such fearful, tender eyes. THE IMAGERY BLENDS OUT.

ACT 2.

Monday morning, 9 am.

Busy office noises; people taking calls, telephones ringing, copy machines firing way in close distance. BETTY is seated at her desk, already in the middle of work. She types, looks at a sheet of paper, and then types again. JESSICA enters the office, wearing a pair of overly large sunglasses, looking somewhat disheveled. In one hand she carries a coffee-to-go, in the other her raincoat. She walks over to her cubicle, throws her coat onto the chair, glances around the busy room and sighs unmistakably. She slumps dramatically into her chair, resting her head on its back, still wearing the sunglasses.

JESS

God! What a miserable day. And it hasn't even started yet!

(BETTY'S still typing away, doesn't respond, and doesn't look up.)

JESS

How I wish time would make an exception for me today and speed it up a little. I can't bear it. All this noise...All these idiots. If only I hadn't used up all my vacation days...I would kill to have the day off. Seriously, I'd get rid of that guy from the 8th floor like that! You know, that moron who always tries to 'accidentally' feel me up, while we're in line in the canteen...

(JESSICA swivels her chair around towards Betty, who isn't reacting.)

JESS

Bet? Hello-o?! Anyone there?

(She knocks on the low Plexiglas divider, BETTY looks up.)

BET

Oh hey! How are ye? Didn't see you come in.

JESS

Did you even hear what I was saying?

BET

(Returns to her screen.)

No, not really. Sorry. I'm just so busy. All this has to be done by this evening. Don't know how I'll ever get through this...

(BETTY gestures to the pile of files on her desk.)

(JESSICA swivels her chair around again, placing her coffee-to-go on her desk next to the three files that lay beside her computer, smiles.)

JESS

Looks like there's a hopeful side to misery after all!

(Sips her coffee, adjusts her sunglasses.)

Guess what?

BET

(No response, typing.)

JESS

Calling Betty Walsh. Jessica Bates calling Betty Walsh. Need immediate confirmation. Over and out.

BET

(Smiling.) Betty Walsh: present but very busy. Over and out.

JESS

Common now. Guess what I did over the weekend. And more so - with whom I did it.

BET

(Still typing.) I'm guessing something naughty.

JESS

More dirty than naughty, actually.

BET

(Stops typing.) Oh Jess, please spare me. Just this time. You know I'm not into that kind of filthy talk.

JESS

I'm not out to gossip, I'm just about to reveal how relieved...

BET

No, don't!

JESS

....I am...

BET

Jess, I mean it!

JESS

...to have been laid! Not, that is has been that long for me to say it was a revelation but he did enlighten me twice, if you know what I mean.

BET

You're awful.

JESS

No, I'm normal, Betty. That's what normal people do: They go out for after hour drinks and potentially hook up. You'd know that if you'd ever crawl out of your nutshell.

BET

(Slowly turns around.)

I thought you were going home last Friday? You said you were coming down with an episode?

JESS

Oh yeah, no, the guys called last minute....Said they were going to another bar down town. That's men for ya, huh? Always up for a surprise.

BET

What about the headache?

JESS

Thank God - it was a false alarm.

BET

So, you did go out after all.

JESS

If you think, I forgot about you – I didn't. But we were already heading there...it was on such short notice...you know how it is sometimes.

BET

Apparently not...You know, me being stuck in a nutshell and all.

JESS

Listen: I did think of calling you once we were there but I was quite certain you were already home, all cozy in bed and so I didn't want to disturb you. That's all. You're not mad now, are you Silly?

BET

No, no it's okay. I believe you.

(Returns to typing.)

JESS

So anyway...I was just about to order the next shot when this handsome Latin, bull of a man come towards me and asks me to dance. I did take a couple of Salsa lessons back in the days but I mean – wow! He whirled me around like there was no tomorrow. I swear to you – gravity was suspended...Body against body, while we obeyed to the rhythm of the night...

BET

Sounds like straight out of one of those telenovelas...

JESS

Oh it was better than that. Stronger, more passionate than any words could ever describe...Trust me- no one could ever capture such sensuality, let alone have the luck to experience it...

BET

What was his name?

JESS

His...-

(Pause.)

(Defensively.) Roberto.

BET

And what does he do for a living?

JESS

What he...- What does it matter what he does for a frigging living?

BET

Well, I just thought you might have asked.

JESS

No, I didn't. We exchanged names, phone numbers and body fluids. Boy...You really know how to ruin a story...

BET

Sorry. You're right. I guess it would destroy the mystery, if you'd know him before sleeping with him...

JESS

My my...We got up with the wrong foot today, huh? And stepped into some sarcasm on your way here. You know its bad luck to interrupt a sex story, especially when you're not the one recounting it...

BET

Why do you think I wouldn't have one to tell?

JESS

(Laughs.) Oh well then please do...Common, tell me about that one night back then. I'd love to hear all about it.

BET

Actually, I was married. Therefore, there were quite a few nights.

(Holds up her hand so JESSICA sees the ring on her ring finger.)

JESS

(Takes off her sunglasses.)

Get outta here! You never told me you were married?!

BET

For a while, but then again, that was quite a while ago, so...

JESS

You can't stop there. How long were you married? Why did you divorce? Did he cheat on you? That son of a

-

BET

No, he didn't cheat on me. He died.

(Pause.)

Plain and simple as that.

JESS

Oh gosh. Oh dear. I'm so sorry.

(Pause.)

(Eager/gossipy.) What did he die of?

BET

Let's just say, it wasn't short nor painless or peaceful. He was far too young, left too soon.

(Pause.)

But what I was trying to say was that I'm practically still married. So my nutshell is actually me, still being married in my mind.

JESS

But you can't go living on like that, can you? I mean, how long are we talking about? A year?

BET

More like eight.

JESS

Eight years! That's way too long to mourn, Sweetie. Really. You got to get out there. Have some fun! He wouldn't want you sticking around all day, thinking about and clinging to the past...

BET

Well, I do try to, sometimes. I get ready, put on a nice dress and some lipstick or a nice blouse, just like last Friday. I really thought we'd be going out that evening. But then, you know, stuff happens and I end up going back home. I don't really mind, though. In fact, I'm more relieved than sad or disappointed. It seems more like an exercise to be amongst others, to chat, have those typical "casual" conversations. I get sweaty and uncomfortable.

(Pause.)

(Quickly adds.) Except of course, with you and some others familiar faces around here.

JESS

Gosh that's so sad. But it still doesn't make it right. I bet he'd be shocked to see that you're coiling up under a weight that should have been lifted from you a long time ago...

BET

What do you mean?

JESS

Well, you sound guilty and...suppressed. You come across as so...so...uptight and...sad.

BET

(Insecure.) Really? But I don't feel that way at all...

JESS

I know when I see a suffering woman and you my dear, are suffering. Clearly you need a reality check. Let me be the one to do so.

BET

I'm not sure if I...-

JESS

You've been a widow for the longest time. During those five years...-

BET

Eight.

JESS

During those eight, miserable years you have gained weight, have lost nearly all your attractiveness and self-

esteem. And for what? For what, I ask you!?

BET

I miss him.

JESS

That is because you can't stop thinking about him over and over again. Times change, honey. Change with them!

BET

I don't want to forget him.

JESS

But you want to trade the fictional life in your head, with the actual one you are supposed to be living, instead? Sounds all wrong to me...

BET

I think that everyone chooses their way of life. Bit by bit. It doesn't all happen at once. I didn't intend to become more reclusive or shy than I was to begin with. But it happened. Day after day, year after year and you somehow slip from one routine into the next. From one skin into the next. We all do fall into those routines but mine just probably doesn't sound as desirable or chic as other ones do.

JESS

(Indifferent.) Well then I can't help you either.

BET

Excuse me?

JESS

Well, you sound like you've made up your mind about whatever is going on up in there. So...

(SHE cuts off the conversation, turns and attends to her files.)

BET

It must be real easy for you.

JESS

(Preoccupied.) What's that?

