

MANHATTAN UNDYING

an original screenplay by

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INT. MAX'S STUDIO - MORNING

Lights, backdrops and a camera mounted on a tripod.

Max paces the studio, checking adjustments here and there. Occasionally glances towards the door.

Walks over to his desk -- a list of women's names written down at different time intervals.

Glances at his watch, then at the door again --

Nothing.

INT. MAX'S STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Max, sitting at his desk. Picking away at a salad.

As he eats, an answering machine plays back messages.

AUTOMATED FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 This is a call to collect an unpaid
 bill -- there will be no further
 attem--

Hits the "DELETE MESSAGE" button. Goes back to eating.

DR. WILSON (V.O.)
 Mr. Sterling, this is Dr. Wilson
 calling. I was hoping that we
 could schedule another appointment
 to review your options concerning
 treatment.
 (beat)
 Regarding the insurance situation,
 maybe I can work something out
 with the hospital--

Taps the "DELETE MESSAGE" button.

ANDREW (V.O.)
 I heard about your casting call.
 I still think you're an asshole
 for going through with this. You
 don't need to prove anything to
 anybody.
 (beat)
 Please. If just for all the years
 that I've had to put up with your
 bullshit, please get help.

The answering machine BEEPS. No more messages.

Max throws his trash away. Takes a sip of water. Looks at his watch. Then -- a KNOCK at the door.

Quickly gets up and walks over. A redhead standing outside. This is MEGAN (20s).

Max opens the door.

MAX
 Hey. Glad you could make it.
 You're the first to show up.

MEGAN
 Oh. I am? Ah, well yeah. I
 haven't done a sitting since
 college, but I'd thought I'd give
 it another try.

MAX

Yeah. That's great. Please, come on in.

Megan follows Max into the studio. Looks conspicuously at the mess.

MEGAN

You sell your work anywhere?

Max squats to check a light.

MAX

Just here.

MEGAN

Oh.

Max smiles. Stands up. Walks over to the tripod.

MAX

I'm not much of a photographer, but I'd like to take a few preliminary shots of each model before making a final decision. If that's alright with you, let's--

Megan looks back towards the mess.

MEGAN

Ah, you know...I think I might pass. I'm sorry. Thanks for the offer though.

She walks out.

MAX

Uh, sure. Thanks. Thanks for coming.

INT. MAX'S STUDIO - EVENING

Max stands in the doorway. Looks at his watch. Sighs.

On the sidewalk, occasional passerbys walking quickly to their next destination.

He closes the door. Walks back to his desk.

Leans over. On the list, a string of names with "NO SHOW" next to them.

MAX
(softly)
Dammit.

Then -- in a soft English accent --

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Max Sterling?

Max turns. Squints, trying to see --

MAX
Yeah, come in --

He looks at the list --

MAX (CONT'D)
I didn't have any appointments
listed after nine. Were you
scheduled for earli--

She steps partially into the light.

Not just beautiful. Bewitching.

Tall. Slender. Porcelain skin, lustrous black hair.

Wearing a scarf over her head. Stylish sunglasses. A silver
screen movie star.

VIVIAN
Still looking for a model?

Max takes a moment to pick his jaw up from the floor.

MAX
Yes, of --

A faint laugh.

MAX (CONT'D)
Of course.

She nods. Looks over at the photography equipment.

VIVIAN
I thought that this was for an oil
painting --

Max realizes he's staring.

MAX

Oh -- oh yeah.

(beat)

It is for an oil painting, but
I've been taking shots of each
model bef--

VIVIAN

No photography.

Max laughs, slightly taken aback.

MAX

Well, I don't see what the--

VIVIAN

No photography.

(beat)

If you don't like it, I'll just
leave now.

She turns. Starts to walk towards the door.

Max puts his hand up --

MAX

No -- wait!

She stops.

MAX (CONT'D)

You win. No photography.

She turns around. Takes a look at the cramped confines of
the studio --

VIVIAN

I'll come once a week. Only at
night. Three hours only.

MAX

Ah, lighting will be a problem at
night.

VIVIAN

Not if you want to work with me.

Max backs off.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I expect to be paid at the start
of each session, in cash only. No
exceptions.

MAX

I can do that.

VIVIAN

You will never ask me out on a date, you will never follow me and you will never ask questions about my personal life.

(beat)

Is that understood?

Max can only raise his arms up in surrender.

MAX

Understood.

Vivian nods.

VIVIAN

This time, next week then.

Turns to walk out the door.

MAX

Can I at least get your name?

She stops at the door. Turns her head.

VIVIAN.

Vivian.

(beat)

A pleasure to have met you Mr. Sterling.

She walks out into the night.

Max just stands there. Numb.

MAX

Wow.