

FADE IN:

EXT. COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - NIGHT

A **MALE STUDENT**, 20, steps out of the campus library. A backpack slung over his shoulder. As he walks away from the library, the lights inside go out, indicating closing time.

The Student walks across the shadowy campus, a familiar path for him. In the distance, behind him, footsteps and muffled voices are heard. As he turns to look, two **FIGURES** race past him. He's unable to make out who it is, but watches as they disappear behind several large bushes.

Just then, an anxious and out of breath **POLICE OFFICER** stands several feet away from the Student, aiming his gun at him.

POLICE OFFICER
Stop right there!

The Student nervously puts his hands up. As he does this, his backpack slides off his shoulder. When he goes to lift it back, it looks as if he's pulling something out of it.

POLICE OFFICER
Put your hands where I can see them!

The Student innocently takes a step forward.

MALE STUDENT
I was just walking home--

The Police Officer pulls the trigger. A blast of gunfire.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE BACK IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EARLY MORNING - A YEAR LATER

The city crowd is moving in all directions. From a dark subway hole a sea of more people emerge. Among them is **LAURA WELLS**, a 19 year old with tomboy beauty.

She's a cute, hip, blonde wearing tight jeans, a white tank top and leather jacket. A weighty-looking backpack hangs over her shoulders. She's plugged into her iPod, and whatever is coming through her headphones is putting a bounce in her step.

We follow her down crowded streets. She knows each of them well, and the short cuts that eventually lead to the campus of Columbia University where she passes a cast iron statue of Rodin's "The Thinker," and enters a building.

INT. LECTURE HALL - SAME MORNING

It's filled with sleepy Students. Only a handful are actually "present."

At the front of the class is **FRANK OTTERMAN**, a middle-aged professor of English. He's friendly, smart and bored. He has seen better days...and better classrooms.

He leans on his desk, aimlessly twirling a yardstick in one hand while reading a poem by Emily Dickinson.

FRANK

Because I could not stop for Death-
He kindly stopped for me-
The Carriage held but just Ourselves-
And Immortality.

He glances up momentarily to see who is still with him. Anyone?

FRANK

We slowly drove-He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure, too,
For His Civility-

He looks up again. Now even he is as bored as his students. He looks at his yardstick. A slow grin comes across his face. He puts down his book, and slowly starts to walk up amongst his lazy Students.

FRANK

(from memory)

We passed the School, where
Children strove
At recess-in the Ring-

He stops near the back of the class still twirling his yardstick then lifts it like a sword.

FRANK

You know, in my younger days I
taught Cyrano. I would stand
on my desk and act out scenes.

(smiles) Of course, that was way
back in my much younger days.
(realizing no one
is listening)
When my students were younger,
too. (to himself) And awake.

Laura, sitting behind him, watches and listens to him
carefully. A Jock nearby looks up at him.

FRANK
You've heard of Cyrano, right?

JOCK
Yeah. Sort of.

FRANK
(disappointed)
Sort of. (quotes) What is a
kiss, when all is done?
(with mock pomposity
and good humor)
Five dollars to the person who
can answer that.

LAURA
A signature acknowledged, a
rosy dot over the i of loving.

FRANK
That's right!

He happily spins around to see Laura. As he does this, he
knocks over the backpack that was on her desk.

Panicked, Laura quickly reaches for it, but Frank gets to it
first. He's surprised by its weight.

FRANK
Heavy!

Laura grabs it from him.

LAURA
Books.

She tucks it snugly on her lap; relieved it's back in her
possession.

FRANK
What's your name?

LAURA

Laura.

FRANK

See me after class, Laura.

LAURA

(suspicious)

Why?

FRANK

I owe you five dollars.

As he walks gallantly back to his desk, he playfully knocks several of his male students heads with the yardstick, "waking" them up.

FRANK

Oh, sorry. Pardon me. Didn't mean to wake you. Sorry.

The class ends. The students quickly rise and walk out.

FRANK

Don't forget...there will be a quiz on Ms. Dickinson's poem next time!

He looks up and sees Laura making her way out of the classroom through the back door. He attempts to call out to her, but stops himself.

EXT. FRONT OF LEWISOHN HALL - LATER

Students file out. Leaning against the wall of the building is **SHOOTER**, a scruffy looking, 20-year-old street dealer. He sucks on a cigarette, eyeing the Students with contempt.

When Laura steps out of the building, Shooter, walking with a limp, quickly catches up to her. Laura sees him.

LAURA

What are you doing here?

SHOOTER

Looking for you!

LAURA

I had class.

SHOOTER

What class?

LAURA
English.

SHOOTER
No, I mean *what class*, Laura?

Laura gives him a frustrated look and keeps walking.

SHOOTER
If Benny finds out about this—

LAURA
He won't.

Shooter looks at her, unconvinced.
INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Laura and Shooter stand in front of an apartment door in this dark and dingy hallway. A JUNKIE comes around a corner. He eyes them suspiciously then keeps going.

Laura waits until he's out of sight then knocks. The door opens a crack and **CARLOS**, a hardened drug dealer, appears.

LAURA
Benny sent us.

Carlos checks out Laura then Shooter. He opens the door and lets them in.

INT. DEALER'S APARTMENT

An sound system takes up an entire wall. Fine furniture fills the room. Carlos stares at Laura. Laura is uncomfortable, but has learned to hide it well. This is her job, and here she is all business.

JIMMY, an older, tattooed dealer enters from another room. He's wearing only sweatpants and expensive gold chains. He has a threatening look to him, but acts like a real charmer. He sees Laura and is taken aback.

JIMMY
Whoa! What the hell is this?

CARLOS
Benny's drop.

JIMMY
You? (laughs) You look like
Britney fucking Spears!

CARLOS
I think that's the point.

JIMMY
(realizes then laughs)
Benny. Benny, Benny!

Laura, used to this reaction, but also bored by it, stoically removes the backpack from her shoulders, plops it on the table and unzips it.

She begins pulling out kilo bundles of cocaine and heroin, and expertly tosses them on the table. A grin comes across Shooter's face as he watches.

Carlos picks up a kilo, tears a hole in a corner, dips his pinky in and tastes it. He looks at Jimmy and smiles. Laura zips up her backpack and takes a step back.

JIMMY
Is that all of it?

LAURA
Yeah.

Jimmy, takes a step forward and snatches the backpack from her. He rips it open, digs inside and pulls out a notebook.

JIMMY
What's this? Your drop list?

Laura grabs it from him. And her backpack.

LAURA
That's none of your business.

JIMMY
Oh, ho! Britney has attitude.
(laughs) I like it!

He looks over at Carlos and gives him a nod. On cue, Carlos goes to a dresser, opens it and pulls out four large stacks of money wrapped in rubber bands. He hands them to Jimmy.

Jimmy holds them out for Laura. Laura takes them and stuffs them in her backpack. Watching her, Jimmy dips his finger in the kilo bag again and rubs the coke on his gums.

JIMMY

You want a taste before you go?

Shooter is ready to say yes, but-

LAURA

(quick)

No.

Shooter gives her a disappointed look. Jimmy laughs.

JIMMY

Well, hey, if you change your mind...
or if you're maybe looking for
something more tasty..

He grabs his crotch and smiles. Laura, expressionless, slides the backpack on her shoulders.

She tugs at Shooter to follow her out. Eyeing the cocaine on the table, he reluctantly does.

EXT. FRONT OF BUILDING

Shooter limps a step behind Laura, disappointed.

SHOOTER

Why'd you say no?

LAURA

Because that shit will kill
you, Shooter.

They approach his car, a beat up Mustang. As he gets in, something down the street catches Laura's eye.

LAURA

Hey, I'll meet you back at Benny's.
I want to check something out.

SHOOTER

Okay, but give me the money. I
want to bring it to him.

LAURA

(knows better)
No, some other time.

She heads down the street. Frustrated, Shooter gets in his car and peels out.

EXT. STREET

Laura comes upon a used record store. She enters.

INT. RECORD STORE

No one is in this cramped store except for the goateed Clerk behind the counter reading a comic book.

She finds her way to the "Easy Listening" section, and starts to flip through a row of Dean Martin records. She pulls one out. On the cover is a picture of Dean in his younger days, cool and confident. Smiling, she holds it up to the Clerk.

LAURA
How cool was he, huh?

The Clerk ignores her. Laura looks wounded, but it passes. She puts the record back and walks out.

INT. BENNY'S PLACE - LATER

A nice sized loft somewhere on the lower east side. It's cluttered with worn furniture, stereo and video equipment. The perfect 'hang-out' for a drug dealer and his cohorts. In a far corner is a kitchen. In it, making a stew is **NELSON**, a friendly dealer in his late 30's who is tired of the game, but is now too old to get out.

Engrossed in his cooking, he bends down looking for something in a lower cabinet. Suddenly, Laura appears at the counter.

LAURA
Hey!

Nelson quickly stands banging his head on the counter.

NELSON
Damn it, Laura! You're like a cat, you know that? In and out without making a sound!

He rubs his head. Laura tries not to laugh as she slips off her backpack and tosses it on the counter.

LAURA
Where's Benny?

NELSON
Out. He'll be back later.

Nelson grabs the backpack, unzips it, and takes out the stacks of money. Smiling, he removes the rubber bands and begins to count. Laura watches, disinterested.

NELSON
The drop went okay?

Laura nods.

NELSON
Was Jimmy cool?

LAURA
Yeah.

NELSON
Were you cool?

LAURA
Always.

NELSON
(grins)
That's my girl.

He finishes counting the money then reaches for the backpack.

LAURA
It's all there in front of you.

NELSON
I trust you, honey. But you know Benny. He'll ask.

LAURA
I've been doing this for over a year, and he still doesn't trust me.

NELSON

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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