FADE IN:

EXT. SWIMMING POOL – JACK TAYLOR’S MANSION – DAY

Camera flashbulbs blink on a lifeless body, face down, floating in water.

JACK TAYLOR’s voice narrates his tale.

JACK (V.O.)
In a factory town where people make and live off illusions, I never found much use for reality.

EXT. GRAUMAN’S CHINESE THEATRE – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

JACK (V.O.)
I had flown on a kite to the sun.
And basked in a golden statuette’s glow.

In a camera len’s reflection, a YOUNGER Jack smiles at a barrage of camera bulb lightning flashes.

Flashbulbs blink on Jack Taylor, then age 35, in a black tuxedo and bowtie. At a movie premiere, he stands on a red carpet.

JACK (V.O.)
But the bigger the light, the deeper the shadow. In the end, I found myself in pitch darkness – when the light ran out.

ANOTHER PREMIERE – NIGHT

But Jack, weathered face, now age 45, wistfully watches others on the red carpet, as Photographers ignore him.

Another camera flash explodes in the night – washing out the entire scene.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFÉ – BEVERLY HILLS – DAY

Jack looks at his coffee with lifeless, tired eyes.
JACK (V.O.)
In this town, you’re only as good as your last picture. It’s been a while for me. You want to make something again. You need to.

His eyes watch the quiet street - Rodeo Drive – with its motion picture billboards, and elegant boutique clothing stores.

JACK (V.O.)
But no matter how many pictures and how much money you make – sometimes you can’t get financing for your latest. And then you’re afraid. Afraid they’ll forget who you are. My career was dead. Cold. Decomposing.

EXT. RODEO DRIVE BOUTIQUE STORE – ACROSS THE STREET

JACK (V.O.)
And then, I saw her.

FLORENCE, age 25, a beautiful, wildly bohemian girl, dashes breathlessly out of a Rodeo Drive boutique store. Stolen clothes spill out of a bag, and scatter on the pavement.

Two STORE DETECTIVES race after her. One lags out of breath behind. But the other catches up and tackles her to the ground. She fights and kicks, as they pick her up.

The Slower Detective takes a swift kick in the groin, knocking the wind out of him.

Jack’s eyes follow Florence. She stares at him with a defiant smile, as they parade her by. He grins admiringly, and follows them.

They roughly escort her into the store.

INT. BEVERLY HILLS, RODEO DRIVE BOUTIQUE STORE – DAY

Jack rushes in. As he passes SHOPPERS, a STORE CLERK stops him.

STORE CLERK
Hey, weren’t you a producer or something?
Jack nods and politely smiles.

JACK
I hope I still am. Where’s the manager’s office?

The Clerk points to it. As Jack continues past, others recognise him.

CUSTOMER
Famous?

STORE CLERK
Jack Taylor. Once upon a time, a movie producer.

STORE OFFICE

Florence sits with quiet defiance. The STORE MANAGER is reaching for the telephone.

Jack excitedly rushes in. The Manager pauses dialing.

JACK
There’s no need for the police. It’s really all my fault. I put her up to it. She’s an actress, researching her role as a shoplifter. She’s amazing.

The girl, Florence, looks with surprise at Jack. He quickly winks at her. A wide smile slowly lifts up from the corner of her mouth. Her bright, intrigued eyes stare into his.

The Manager is not smiling. He lets out an impatient deep breath.

Jack passes his card, and extends a handshake that the Manager refuses.

JACK
Even now, she won’t break character. Method actress. Sorry about all this. I’ll pay for the clothes now, and --

The Manager shakes his head. Jack sheepishly continues.
JACK
We can all laugh at this?

The Store Manager looks away, bored, reaching for the telephone.

Jack raises his voice, irritated.

JACK
Put the phone down.

The Manager sneers and continues.

JACK
Put it down!

The Manager is dialing.

Jack kicks the Manager’s groin. Then decks and floors him. He takes the girl by the hand.

THROUGH THE STORE

They bolt past surprised looks with dropped jaws, knock over displays, and pass the door.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS – STREETS – DAY

The two Store Detectives run after them.

Huffing and puffing, Jack and Florence look behind, then at each other.

The Detectives are gaining. Jack points ahead to his sports car.

He nervously drops his car keys. She swoops up the keys, and presses. The car alarm turns off, and doors unlock.

EXT./INT. SPORTS CAR

They both rush in, just as a Detective reaches for Florence. The car peels out. A car window rolls down.

Florence gives the finger to the Detectives, both bent over, struggling for air.

INT. SPORTS CAR – DRIVING

Jack and Florence are both gasping to breathe, hysterically laughing their heads off. She joyfully extends her hand.
FLORENCE
Florence Desmond.

INT. RESTAURANT RESTROOM - EVENING

The stall door slams hard, as they kiss wildly, and ravage each other with unconcealed excitement.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

Lightning from a camera flash.

Jack and Florence step hurriedly past PHOTOGRAPHERS’ brilliant flashes in the night.

Jack marvels at Florence lost in ecstasy, as her eyes excitedly and hungrily take in the media circus. Photographers brush past him to shoot her.

INT. WILSHIRE BLVD PENTHOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

An opulent apartment. Past a window with a panoramic Wilshire Boulevard view, and a jazz piano, Photographers snap shots of Jack with Florence on his arm.

JACK AND FLORENCE’S TABLE

Flash freeze frames on their hands, with gold wedding bands on their fingers.

Florence blows a hot kiss to the cameras.

Jack raises and clinks glasses with her.

Suddenly, a distinguished man in his 60s, stops by. A crowd surrounds him. Jack pauses.

Florence’s keen smile holds JERRY GOLDWYN’s attention.

Jack looks away with disinterest. Camera bulbs flash on Jerry kissing Florence’s hand. Then he gracefully steps away past more flashes.

Florence watches in awe, and turns to Jack.

FLORENCE
Who was that?

Jack nonchalantly pours two drinks, and hands one to her.
JACK
Jerry Goldwyn.

He downs his drink with a vengeance.

FLORENCE
Studio executive Goldwyn?

JACK
The legend himself.

Florence looks again in awe at Jerry. Then at Jack, who looks away with disdain, reaching for the bottle. She snatches the bottle away.

FLORENCE
Jack, this man can put you back in the game. Did you send him your new script?

Jack grabs the bottle from her.

JACK
He wouldn’t be interested.

FLORENCE
Why not? How do you know?

She retakes the bottle. He sulks.

FLORENCE
You have to try, Jack. This could be your moment. Your comeback.

Jack looks at her, staring proudly at him. Then at Jerry continuing to walk away.

FLORENCE
You’re Jack Taylor. Go get him.

He grins and nods.

JACK
That’s why I married you.

She sends him off with a kiss. He follows after Jerry into the next room.
PENTHOUSE’S PARLOUR

Jack catches up to the studio executive legend. They shake hands.

    JACK
    It’s been a while, Jerry.

    JERRY
    Congratulations, Jack. Your new wife is a darling.

For moments, both look silently at each other. Then Jack musters his nerve, and goes into passionate salesman mode.

    JACK
    (excited)
    Listen, I have a new script that may be your studio’s next tent pole.

    JERRY
    Unlike your last one?

Jerry casually looks past him, resumes walking. Jack awkwardly continues, following.

    JACK
    But I did hit a few out of the ballpark for you.

Jerry ignores Jack, and pauses for a Photographer. Then marches on at a faster pace. Jack keeps up, his passionate salesman waning.

    JACK
    It’s been a while. I know it’s awkward. But let me send it. Just have a look at it.

Jack forces an uncomfortable smile.

Jerry grins.

    JERRY
    Excuse me, Jack. Another engagement.
Jack’s smile evaporates, as Jerry rushes out. The lights, cameras, and action all follow him. The door closes. Abrupt total silence. Jack is alone and devastated.

Moments later, sad Jack snorts lines of cocaine.

PENTHOUSE’S BAR

The room is bathed in red neon theme lights. STEVE HUNTER, 20s, handsome, eyes Florence sipping her drink. She turns, smiling, catching his gaze.

The martinis keep coming. Florence and Steve drink, gazing at each other. He slides closer to her. Jack arrives nearby, wiping his nose.

Through Jack’s cocaine-heightened viewpoint, Steve leans closer to Florence, as if about to kiss, passing her his card.

Jealous Jack pushes past guests, and scuffles with an equally aggressive Steve. He surprises Steve with a swing that knocks him to the floor.

Florence’s sharp eyes widen at Steve on the floor, and his card in her hand.

Steven Hunter – Actor, with his contact number.

Florence pockets Steve’s card, grinning impishly at him unconscious on the floor.

Guests witness the fight, remarking on Jack’s hot temper and violence, as he leads Florence away by the hand.

MASTER BEDROOM

Jack and Florence fight.

FLORENCE
Cool it, Jack.

JACK
What’s going on here? You send me off to that jerk, Goldwyn, just so you could make out with some loser actor?

FLORENCE
Jack, stop!
JACK
Are you trying to get rid of me?
Suddenly tired of me if I don’t bring home a studio deal? Why am I losing you? Why?

FLORENCE
Stop it now! You’re paranoid.

Jack violently throws a vase into the wall.

JACK
I saw it. I know what I saw. I don’t want to lose you. I can’t stand it, if --

Florence puts a finger on Jack’s lips.

FLORENCE
Shush, Jack. You’re not losing me. Not at all. There was nothing going on. How can you even think that?

JACK
I don’t know what to think. What to believe.

Her hand moves from his lips, and rests on his heart.

FLORENCE
Believe I’m yours. And yours alone. No one else’s. Trust me.

She stares sharply into his eyes, leads him by the hand into a closet, and whispers.

FLORENCE
Come here. Show me. Show me you trust me.

CLOSET

With intense eyes on each other, she draws him in toward her. They hungrily kiss – before the door closes him in.
EXT. MANSION – SWIMMING POOL – EVENING

Past the antique iron gate, and elegant stately house, Florence glides through the silvery reflective water, as Jack gives a REALTOR a tour around the house.

He calls to her.

JACK
Florence, we have company. This is Mr. Bendix, the realtor.

Florence steps out of the pool, wears her robe, and shakes hands with their guest. She looks with a puzzled frown to Jack, who turns briefly to BENDIX.

JACK
Excuse me a moment.

They stroll away from the realtor.

FLORENCE
What’s going on?

JACK
I’m selling our house.

Shock passes Florence’s face.

FLORENCE
Why?

JACK
To finance my next film.

FLORENCE
Is this wise? No one in this town uses their own money. Is this film, is any film worth losing this house, and possibly everything else for?
JACK
Do you remember what you said?
This could be it. The one that
puts me back on the map. My
moment. If Goldwyn isn’t smart
enough to produce it, if nobody
else will back it, we’ll sell the
house if we have to. We’ll make it
ourselves.

Florence looks with disbelief at Jack, who smiles
uncomfortably at her.

JACK
I know how much you love it here.
But it’s just a house. We’ll get a
condo. We’ll still have each
other. We can do this. We can do
anything.

FLORENCE
But we shouldn’t do anything
hasty.

JACK
Hasty? I’ve waited so long for
this. To be back in the game. I
can’t sit on the sidelines any
longer. I just – I can’t anymore.

Jack implores with fiery eyes.

JACK
If we don’t believe and invest in
ourselves – who will?.

Florence recovers from her shock, and holds Jack.

FLORENCE
Try Goldwyn again. For me. And if
it’s really the only way, we’ll go
for it.

Jack kisses Florence. She grins.

He resumes touring the house with Bendix.
Dread returns to Florence’s face. She watches, lost in her thoughts, while bright daylight colours fade to a red sunset. And then to dark night shadow.

INT. MANSION BEDROOM – NIGHT

Florence glimpses Steve Hunter’s card in her hand.

EXT. MANSION – SWIMMING POOL, NEXT DAY – LATE AFTERNOON

Florence, seductive in her bikini, sips a drink, and makes a call.

FLORENCE
Any news from Goldwyn?

INT. PRODUCTION COMPANY OFFICE – LATE AFTERNOON

Jack is stressed, as he answers his phone.

JACK
I tried Goldwyn again. He won’t even take my call. But we don’t need any of them. We’ll do it ourselves.

EXT. POOLSIDE – LATE AFTERNOON

Florence is speaking on her phone, while amused by something unseen, her attention divided.

FLORENCE
I missed you all day. Come home soon.

JACK (O.S.)
(from the phone)
Usual time. Love you.

Florence sets down her phone, and smiles, as Steve lustily eyes her.

EXT. LOS ANGELES STREETS/HOLLYWOOD HILLS – EVENING

Driving home, Jack shifts into higher gear. His car screams past on a Hollywood Hills road.
EXT. POOLSIDE - EVENING

Florence and Steve are kissing. They talk between kisses. She glances at her watch, as she strokes his hair.

FLORENCE
You like it when women put up a fight. Don’t you?

Steve’s eyes widen.

STEVE
I love to play rough.

EXT. MANSION, DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Smiling Jack arrives home, parks on his driveway, and exits out of his car. He walks through to his pool.

POOLSIDE

Reflected in Florence’s eye – Jack is walking to her. Just then, she initiates rough play with her lusty lover, resisting him. He tries to pin her down.

Jack nears his swimming pool, and overhears Florence and Steve.

FLORENCE
(afraid)
What are you doing? Stop. Get off me.

Jack is shocked, catching Steve forcing himself on his wife.

JACK
Get off my wife.

Jack violently pulls him off her. Steve is more shocked than Jack.

STEVE
It’s not what you think.

Florence weeps. Jack holds and comforts her.
FLORENCE
He arrives at the gate, saying he wants to apologise to you. He won’t leave. And attacks me.

STEVE
No, that’s not what happened.

JACK
Are you calling my wife a liar?


STEVE (screaming)
She’s lying!

Jack’s full anger rises. He whips him across the face again. Steve is bleeding, his hand pressed to his face.

Afraid & desperate, Steve attacks Jack, wrests for the gun.

For a moment, Steve may shoot Jack. Steve, with his finger on the trigger, is forcing the gun to Jack’s temple.

But Jack knocks the gun out of his hands. The gun lands in the bushes. Enraged, Steve throws Jack to the ground, and pummels him. He leaves Jack, his mouth bleeding, dazed on the ground.

Steve runs after Florence.

Jack struggles up. He sees Steve chase his frightened wife. He picks up his gun in the bushes. He rushes after Steve.

POOLSIDE

Steve pins Florence on the ground, his hands on her throat, choking her. Jack approaches with weapon raised.

He fires. The first round causes Steve to release Florence. Then he fires again, angrily emptying the clip.

He drops the weapon in shock, as Steve falls into the pool, his lifeless body floating.

Jack watches, stunned, while Florence holds him.
She kisses Jack, and softly whispers.

**FLORENCE**

Thank you.

Horrified, Jack silently stares at the floating body. Then turns away.

**FLORENCE**

Should I call 911?

Jack, his eyes empty, nods.

Minutes later, L.A.P.D. DETECTIVES & OFFICERS arrive at the pool. As Jack watches, a gloved Officer picks up the handgun.

A DETECTIVE swiftly handcuffs Jack.

**JACK**

What is this? Why are you -?

His frightened, weeping wife watches, as Jack hears his Miranda rights.

**JACK**

Why have you cuffed me?

**POLICE DETECTIVE**

According to your wife’s statement, you violently murdered a houseguest, in a jealous rage.

Shocked, Jack looks sick.

**JACK**

She said that?

**POLICE DETECTIVE**

Affirmative, sir.

Jack is hit hard - hurt and anxious.

**JACK**

No. No. This can’t be. Why would she say that? The man was attacking my wife. He might have killed her. I was protecting her and myself.
Jack turns to Florence. The Detective watches cautiously.

**JACK**

Florence! Straighten this out. He thinks I --

Jack stares into Florence’s cold hard eyes, before she hides them behind sunglasses.

She walks away, appearing distraught.

**JACK**

Don’t do this to me!

He trembles with fury, raising his voice.

**JACK**

You psycho bitch! What game are you playing?

He lunges after her.

The Detective and other POLICE OFFICERS try to grab Jack. He yells in anguish to them.

**JACK**

She set me up. She lied.

In a blind rage, Jack kicks a Policeman in the groin, and headbutts another, knocking him into the pool. He is clubbed with a nightstick, as others restrain him.

The wet Officer gets out of the pool, and drags away Jack, bruised, bleeding, and in tears. He sees Florence watching behind a window, closing the curtains.

**EXT. MANSION GATE - EVENING**

An unmarked police car drives Jack away.

Meanwhile, back through the gate - past skinny tall Southern California palm trees - the body floats in the pool, as a Photographer shoots it.

A flashbulb blinks like mini lightning.
JACK (V.O.)
The store I man
ager I assaulted,
the slime ball who made a pass at
my wife, all came back to haunt
me. Mad Jack Taylor has an awful
temper. The whole town knows it.
The papers say it. My wife, under
oath, said it too. The jury
convicted me for murder.

Flashback ends.

INT. PRISON CELL – NIGHT

In jail, Jack’s face is half-lit, and half in shadows.

JACK (V.O.)
California’s Community Property
Law looted me, handing her my
house and assets. To my surprise,
I didn’t care. My life and career
had already been over. But she let
me live again, for just one more
moment.

The light in Jack’s cell slowly fades out.

JACK (V.O.)
I once lived in a factory town
where people make illusions. I
never found much use for reality,
where I now live in darkness,
dreaming of the light. And of her.

EXT. EXOTIC FARAWAY RESORT BEACH – DAY

Florence, in sunglasses, sips a drink.

FADE OUT:
The End.