

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

FADE IN:

EXT. URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A sunny L.A. morning. A row of shops, including Tina's Café, Books Galore, and Tim's Tobacco Shop.

EXT. TINA'S CAFÉ - DAY

In the plate glass window, a man's reflection: about 30, nice-looking. This is PAUL SINCLAIR.

INT. TINA'S CAFÉ - DAY

KELLY CARPENTER, attractive, late 20's, sits across from STEVEN KINSLOW, about the same age, good-looking in a hard sort of way. Kelly is dressed for work, and Steven wears tattered jeans and a tee shirt. Their faces are tense.

STEVEN

You're overreacting. As usual.

KELLY

You were kissing her!

STEVEN

She was kissing me, Kelly.

KELLY

And you just hated it, right?

Kelly stands up. She checks her reflection in a mirror across the room and brushes her hair back from her face.

KELLY

(continuing)

You haven't changed, Steven.
You never will. I don't have
time for this. I have to get
to work.

ANGLE ON THE MIRROR:

Kelly hurries out of the coffee shop just as Paul opens the door.

ANGLE ON KELLY:

Kelly stumbles into Paul, and he takes hold of her shoulders to steady her. Their eyes meet.

PAUL

You okay?

Kelly nods, struggles to recover her dignity.

KELLY

Fine. Thanks.

She rushes out the door. Steven tosses some money on the table and follows.

EXT. TINA'S CAFÉ - DAY

Steven catches up with Kelly and grabs her hand, roughly.

KELLY

Let me go!

STEVEN

Not 'til you let me explain.
She's nobody, Kelly, she -

KELLY

Oh, like that makes all the
difference.

She pulls away from him, but he holds tight to her hand, bends her thumb back.

KELLY

Goddamn it, Steven, let me go!

Her voice is loud; people notice. Paul starts to move closer.

Steven looks around, sees he's attracting attention. He releases Kelly's hand.

STEVEN

Okay, baby. You want me to let
you go? You got it! Just don't
come running after me when
it's dark and you're lonely.

KELLY

I won't. I promise.

She turns and goes into Tim's Tobacco Shop. Steven watches her, and behind him, Paul Sinclair watches both of them.

INT. DRAMA-LOGUE OFFICES - DAY

Phones ring incessantly. Several people sit at metal desks, typing or answering the phones. GARY VAN ZANDT, an attractive man in his early 30's, raises his head as Kelly enters, looking frazzled. Gary is stylishly dressed, meticulously groomed.

GARY

You're late.

KELLY

Tell me something I don't know.

DIANA GILETTE enters from her office off the main room. Diana is in her 50's, tall and thin, with a severe face and silver-blond hair pulled straight back.

DIANA

Kelly! Where's your interview with Julian Prince?

Kelly sits down and turns on her computer.

KELLY

It's almost ready, Diana.

Diana comes up close to Kelly, in her face.

DIANA

'Almost' isn't good enough! I need to see it now.

She folds her arms and glares at Kelly. Gary picks up a ringing phone and makes a face at Diana behind her back.

DIANA

I should never have let you have this interview.

Diana looks at her watch.

DIANA

(continuing)

Ten minutes, Kelly. If I don't have it by then, you're back to taking casting.

Diana stomps off and slams the door to her office. Kelly types furiously, winces when her sore thumb hits the keyboard. Gary finishes his call and hangs up.

GARY

So where were you?

Kelly's eyes are fixed on the computer screen.

KELLY

Steven.

GARY

Steven! I thought he was history!

Kelly doesn't answer, just presses some more keys. The printer next to her lights up. She reaches over and pulls the pages out, smiling.

KELLY

There. At least I made the conceited asshole sound human.

Kelly gets up and takes the pages into Diana's office. She opens the door without knocking.

EXT. DRAMA-LOGUE OFFICE - DAY

Kelly and Gary stand on the walkway beside a metal trash dumpster, smoking cigarettes.

KELLY

I mean it this time, Gary. Steven and I are through.

GARY

Where have I heard that before?

KELLY

I know. It's hard. I don't connect with anyone else the same way. I don't get the same feeling.

Gary takes Kelly's hand and inspects her thumb, then shakes his head.

GARY

That feeling is called pain,
Kel.

He strokes her hand, looking sad. Kelly pulls her hand away and sighs.

KELLY

Nobody cares about me the way
you do. I wish you were
straight, Gary. Maybe -

Gary is uncomfortable with the direction they're headed. He snaps his fingers.

GARY

Listen, I have something to
take your mind off Steven.

Kelly lights a cigarette from the one she smoked to the filter and tosses the butt away. She blows a thick cloud of smoke at Gary.

KELLY

I'm all ears.

GARY

I know this really great
magician, Martin Chance, and -

KELLY

Never heard of him.

Gary frowns and grinds out his cigarette on the side of the dumpster.

GARY

Will you let me finish one
little sentence, please?

KELLY

(laughing)
Sorry. But not everyone's a
magician wannabe.

GARY

(patiently)

You are a hard person to be nice to, sometimes.

Kelly shrugs and motions for him to continue.

GARY

Anyway, Martin's writing a book about magic, and he needs help.

KELLY

Why? Is he illiterate?

GARY

He's not real good at writing. So last night I told him about you. I thought maybe you might be able to work with him and -

KELLY

Ghostwriting? For some old fart from Vaudeville?

GARY

He's not old, and he's not from Vaudeville. Listen, Kelly -- you're always talking about how broke you are. And you're a good writer. If you'd stop squandering yourself on creeps who-

Kelly drops her cigarette and glares at Gary, arms akimbo.

KELLY

Lay off!

GARY

Okay, but will you give it a try? Go meet him tonight, I'll set it up. See what you think. If you decide it won't work, I'll never mention it again.

KELLY

Hah! I know you -- you'll keep harping on it forever.

Gary draws an "X" on his chest.

EXT. MARTIN CHANCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A neighborhood of large, imposing homes. Martin's house is a Tudor style, lots of shrubs, wrought iron fencing. The porch light is on, and Kelly's shoes click up the walkway. She holds some copies of *Drama-Logue*. As she reaches the door, MARTIN CHANCE opens it. Martin is around 40, tall, salt-and-pepper hair.

KELLY

Martin Chance? I'm Kelly
Carpenter.

She holds out her hand.

MARTIN

You're late.

Kelly looks at her watch.

KELLY

Only a couple of minutes.

Martin stands aside and motions her into the house.

INT. MARTIN CHANCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is high-ceilinged and elegant. Posters of Harry Houdini, Dai Vernon and Harry Blackstone adorn the walls.

Martin gestures to a velvet wing chair, and Kelly sits. Martin sits opposite her, a low table between them.

MARTIN

You're not what I expected.

Kelly cocks her head and studies him.

KELLY

Neither are you.

Kelly takes a pack of cigarettes from her purse.

MARTIN

You can't do that if we're
going to work together.
Haven't you heard of the
dangers of second-hand smoke?

KELLY

I'm too busy dealing with the dangers of first-hand smoke.

She puts the cigarettes back in her purse.

KELLY

(continuing)

And I haven't decided if I want to work with you. Show me some magic first.

MARTIN

Excuse me?

KELLY

Go on -- show me. If you're as good as Gary says you are, then I'll let you see how good I am.

She holds up the *Drama-Logues*.

Martin laughs. He opens a drawer on the table and takes out four large coins and a deck of cards. He places the coins on the table, forming the corners of an imaginary square, and covers each with a card. Then he smiles at Kelly.

MARTIN

Let's see if we can make the coins disappear. Put your hand on one of the cards.

Kelly complies. Martin taps the back of her hand.

MARTIN

(continuing)

Now lift the card, please.

Instead, Kelly seizes Martin's wrist and turns his palm upward, revealing a coin.

KELLY

Gotcha.

Martin scowls.

KELLY

Try again -- show me some good magic.

MARTIN

First I'd like to see your work.

KELLY

I hope Gary didn't exaggerate my talents.

Martin picks up the deck of cards and shuffles it absentmindedly as he looks at her.

MARTIN

All he said was that you're a good writer and that if I could get past your tough little bitch act, you're a lot of fun.

Kelly laughs nervously. She hands him the *Drama-Logues*.

KELLY

I marked the pages for you. Have a ball.

Martin reaches for the papers slowly, his face expressionless.

KELLY

And while you do that, I'm going to have a cigarette, whether you like it or not.

MARTIN

Then smoke outside.

He gets up and goes to the French doors which open onto the patio. Kelly follows. There is a large piano in the corner, with a young girl's photograph on it. Kelly checks out the photo.

MARTIN

My daughter.

KELLY

She's very pretty. Does she live here?

MARTIN

No.

Martin opens the door. Kelly shrugs and walks out.

Martin resumes his seat and starts reading. His eyebrows go up; he is clearly impressed by what he reads.

EXT. MARTIN CHANCE'S HOUSE - PATIO - NIGHT

Kelly lights a cigarette and paces back and forth.

MARTIN (O.S.)

You write very well.

Kelly's head goes up. She looks toward the house.

KELLY

Thanks.

She paces back and forth some more. Finally she grinds out her cigarette and goes back inside.

INT. MARTIN CHANCE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kelly approaches Martin. He looks up and solemnly hands the papers back to her.

MARTIN

I think you could do a decent job with my book.

KELLY

How gratifying. Now let's see if you're as good a magician as I am a writer.

Martin stares at her, stroking his chin, as if trying to make up his mind about something.

MARTIN

Come with me.

He stands up and motions her to follow him.

INT. ROOM IN MARTIN CHANCE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The room is filled with artifacts: a stuffed owl, a bird cage, pieces of maple furniture, magician's props. In a corner of the room is an old, free-standing mirror with an intricate wood frame. Martin points to it.

MARTIN

(very serious)

This is a magic mirror. It has powers.

KELLY

Yeah, yeah -- go ahead.

Martin takes a toy calico cat from one of the tables and gently tosses it toward the mirror. As the toy makes contact, the mirror's surface shimmers, and the toy disappears.

Kelly looks at Martin, walks around the mirror.

KELLY

Cool. How'd you do it?

MARTIN

(smiling mysteriously)

It's not done yet. Wait.

He holds out his right hand.

MARTIN

Here, kitty, kitty. Here, kitty.

The mirror's surface shimmers. A shape coalesces. A live calico cat emerges from the mirror, saunters up to Martin and sits at his feet, looking up at him and purring. Martin picks up the cat.

MARTIN

Hello, Sabrina. Did you have a nice trip?

He rubs the cat's chin.

Kelly checks out the mirror again.

KELLY

Come on, tell me -- how'd you do that?

MARTIN

Maybe it was real magic.

KELLY

There's no such thing.

MARTIN

Really?

KELLY

I don't think I like you very much.

The cat jumps down and scampers out of the room.

MARTIN

The feeling's mutual. But I'd say we're equally matched in our crafts. Shall we start working now?

Kelly checks her watch.

KELLY

It's late. And I have to work tomorrow. How about Friday night?

MARTIN

Fine. Come right from work, and I'll feed you.

Kelly cocks her head and studies him.

KELLY

I hope you're a good cook.

MARTIN

Go home now. I've had enough of you for one day.