

5. THE SCREEN TEST

David is sitting in a restaurant in Westwood. He looks outside the window and observes the sights. He is wearing a summer-weight cream-colored silk blazer,

He sees her walk by. He follows her down a long sidewalk block. He sees it as a tracking shot. The director David Sims already imagines her under the film lights. Jenna Davis is the vision of loveliness. She has the radiance of a thousand suns. He can feel her heat even from this distance. He shields his eyes.

He rushes to catch up with her, "Have you ever taken acting lessons?"

"I 'm in a class right now." She doesn't share her experience in Birmingham. This is the majors

"Do you have a reel?" He wants to know about her experience

He knows the saying, "Never take a chance on an unknown." But just the word from him is enough.

"This girl is the picture of perfection. I can get her off my mind. She is positively regal." He is talking to the head of the studio. He is hesitant to follow David's advice.

She is worried that she is only being used by David. She has heard about stories like this before. A young girl gets ruined by a worldly director. He mines her for her fledgling talent and then throws her to the wolves.

"You don't even know me. I've only done a student film. And now you're telling me you want to risk a major film on an unknown. I don't believe you."

"All I'm doing is getting you an audition. You'll have to make it by my casting director before I even take a look at you. But I can't see that being a problem. You have to go see Ben. He's my acting coach. I don't want you doing the scene until he's had a chance to work with you."

In his inner eye he can see her art. And it that vision that he is going to communicate to the public. Her rather crude talent had been a hit in Birmingham. But she was such a local phenomenon. David Sims recognizes those elements that are enduring. Jenna has already tried to exploit a certain outrageous quality about her image. He has her tone down this. She needs to focus in a way that she never has before. Up until this point, she has only been a child. He is pulling her out of her cave and shining the light upon her. He is offering her immortality.

She is completely under his spell. In fact, she is mesmerized with the possibility of her own renown. Before she was working with such uncertain elements. David Sims knows how to purify. He can distill the essence that will make her adored by millions. She has held men in her power and assumed her natural powers. But she only came to face her own shortcomings. He is about to reveal an invincibility in her being.

Sims genius is the rather unassuming quality of his technique. If observed from too closely it might seem overly artificial. But these mannerisms are meant to get under the skin. One glance at her smile, and everyone wants to know her. If left to her own devices her rather ordinary aspirations would have eventually devoured her. He is able to remove her from her own appetites, and project her inward qualities for all to see.

David Sims becomes the artist breathing life into his inert sculpture. One kiss of his genius and the electric current sends the life force through matter. The inorganic becomes

completely organic. The naive is transformed into the worldly. Everyone wants a piece of the new Jenna Davis.

Her hair now falls slightly over her forehead. It hangs there in a precarious gesture that invites the viewer. Her pouty lips say kiss me. Her fans can only worship at this altar that displays her image. They all feel that they know her. They want to be with her. They want to touch her. They want her to give them eternity.

All the associated belief is David Sims. And he learns to convey this for the camera. Of course, she has such natural talents. But without his direction, she might appear over zealous. His skill is allowing her to pull back just slightly. On screen, this makes her larger than life. But she is not intimidating. She is totally herself. She becomes the character.

Jade Weston is Jenna Davis. A girl from Atlanta, she moves to New York with all the dreams of the ingenue. But the pace is too much for her. She has traded her soul for all the worst of the city. And it takes a true heart of gold to get it back.

Sims never loses his vision for the character. It is not just a story. It is a visual concerto where the soloist Jenna Davis woos her viewers.

Vic Haygood is her costar. He was born to work in the film industry. His presence dominates the screen. The chemistry between Vic and Jenna is astounding. The film will earn millions upon millions. The film is the ideal vehicle to introduce a new face.

Vic collects actresses like a prince collects thoroughbreds. He keeps his stables full, and the horses bray all night waiting for his return from another midnight ride with one of the rivals.

Jenna has fantasized about Vic since she was a young girl. When she was thirteen she has his picture above her bed. She would kiss her finger and then touch it to the poster. She hoped that magic might communicate her love to wherever he was far away.

Their first exchange has none of the wonder that she has expected.

He is staring at her. She feels as if she's on the department store shelf, "You're different. You're pure."

She blushes.

"I've been with a man before. I may be inexperienced as an actor. But I'm not inexperienced as a woman."

"A girl with all the answers. I like the free-spirited type."

"Mr Haygood. I'm not a type."

She knows that she would melt if he only touches her. All her intrigues in Birmingham are only child's play compared to what he has in store for her. This is hardly the kind of thing that a girl can turn down especially an up and comer like Jenna."

When David catches wind of it all, he is not so generous. He pulls her off the set and summons her to his office.

He begins his lecture, "I see that he's taking an interest in you. This has to stop."

"David, is this personal or professional advice? I'm a grown woman."

He contradicts her, "A woman maybe. But you have a lot of maturing to do if you think that you're going to get along in this city."

David trades in his experience. He has a continental air. He's more of a slow burn. But he has always gotten what he wanted. He's not going to be upstaged by one of his actors

"I hope that you didn't put me in this picture just so that you could sleep with me."

“It wouldn’t be the worst of my indiscretions.” His smiles creeps her out.

The sheer power of David Sims is overwhelming. He can make a career out of nothing. But he can also destroy someone’s chances in Hollywood. She doesn’t want to run back to summer stock in Mobile or worse.

David arranges to meet her after the day’s shooting. They are at a classy restaurant that often takes years to arrange a reservation. David has carte blanche there. It is his city.

He feels that he is sitting across from the goddess that he has created with his own imagination. He has never beheld someone so full of life, so ready to take on the world. She has been reborn under his tutelage. She appreciates his guidance, but she does not want to submit to his will. She already believes that she has an enchantment that extends way beyond his resources.

Jenna is still so naive in the ways of the studio. Sure, times have changed. The power of the independents have drained some of the big studios reach. But they still needs the majors for distribution. That is where the David Sims come in.

Jenna is under the illusion that she has created a special bond with Vic that will last beyond this picture. Vic only considers her a supplement to his own talent. Sure he has learned how to flatter her to the heavens. But he is the consummate actor. He has come to believe his own bull.

Jenna does not realize how much she still has to learn. Once she became ruthless in Birmingham, she figured the world would just fall at her feet. These big boys won’t fall just by blowing on them. She needs to bring down the hammer.

As they come out of the restaurant, a light mist gathers. It brings out the color in her cheeks. He has never looked at anyone so fresh. Her energy flows through her, and he can feel it just by looking at her.

She has always found him over-bearing. She feels that he is an out of control parent. But at this moment, she notices in him the magnetism that makes him such a force in this city. She wants to be part of that electricity. It will only make her more formidable. She grabs his hand as he leads her to the car.

By the time that they make the car, the rain is falling more steadily. That desire to stay dry is punctuate by something more primal. All this time she has been resisting David. At this moment, she can think about nothing else. He has created a belief for her. And now that belief takes over her heart. She stretches out so that he can kiss her.

He has thought about this moment since he first visualized her on the set of one of his pictures. Now she is real for him. Her youth is so appealing. She is flesh and blood. His desire is inflamed.

He barely thinks about his wife at home. It only complicates things. This is a perfection that he has never known. The ideal marriage of mind and body. He cannot let this opportunity run by him. He seizes her and pulls her close.

They kiss as the rain falls in torrents. They don’t even try to seek shelter in the car. Her clothes accent the shape of her body. All pretense of modesty is gone. He can sense the naked form underneath.

He takes her to an apartment that he uses when he has to work late and doesn’t want to return home. She feels so bad playing along with his misdeeds. She feels that she has little to be

ashamed of. She doesn't know his wife. She might as well not exist.

He has such plans for her. He sees her in many more films. And he can offer so much to her career. She hates being so vulnerable. And she did everything that she could to resist. But she gives in to him. For the time being, she accepts the plans that he has worked out for her. She will be the actress that he wants her to be. She won't make a move without consulting him. In exchange, she expects all the trappings of fame. She wants to radiate golden light.

At the premiere, Jenna is the lovely little darling that David wants her to be. He finds a studio hack to accompany her to the event, some no-name actor who hardly threatens David's plans. He is with his wife. She is oblivious to all her husband's machinations.

The film is a hit at the premiere. And the critics love it. But the larger audience isn't sure what to make of an old-fashioned love story. It's not the Vic Haygood action flick that they have come to expect. However, by the second week the picture is setting box office records.

Jenna hits the talk show circuits. The hosts love her frankness and down-home charm. She plays up her roots even though she is starting to adapt the ways of a Hollywood veteran. Everyone predicts great things for her. She is so cooperative, hardly the temperamental megastar that so often populates the airways.

She continues to see David. She can't be the playgirl that she had adapted so well to her persona in Birmingham. She almost feels like a kept woman. Sure she has her own place. But she is at David Sims's beck and call.

She buys a modest house with a small pool. She is learning to enjoy her success. But she finds that it is difficult to go anywhere by herself. Young men approach her and tell her their life stories. Girls ask her for tips on how to be sexy.

Jenna's next picture is standard mystery fare. A newlywed wakes up on her honeymoon to find her husband missing. The detective is played by Will Jackson, a well known draw. The American audience loves Jenna's innocent appeal. And the picture is a minor hit.

Jenna continues to be in David's court. But she wonder what will happen when his Midas touch yields only lead. She remembers what he told her in the heat of battle, "You'd be nothing if it wasn't for me. I made you, and I can break you."

She is now doing everything in her power to prepare for that fateful day

Her success proclaims, "The public loves me. There is nothing that anyone can do to stop me."

Men pledge their livesw to her. She can't take that sort of adulation any more. It actually seems to sap her strength. She learns to keep her worshipers at a distance. Worse, David talks about leaving his wife for her.

"You're talking silly. We have fun just the way that it is. You shouldn't make it more than it is. You don't want to kill it."

He criticizes her, "You like this arrangement. It give you the chance to see other men."

"What other men. My life is an open book for you. Look around my place."

He takes a quick look around as if he can discover something on quick inspection. She has planted a seed. He begins to get more jealous. He excuses it as the motivation finally to effect a divorce with his wife.

He remembers the love that he shared with Caroline when they first met. This was before his great success. He had just graduated law school. And he had dreams of making the world a

better place. He has become just the sort that he hated as a boy. Caroline is his only trace of the old David Sims.

Now he wants to cut that off. She has criticized some of his decisions. He has continued to accrue success after success. But there is a ruthlessness to everything that he does. They only became distant when she began to call him on his public behavior. He has never been overtly cruel to her. He decides that he has to hide more and more of himself from her.

In the back of their minds, they hope for reconciliation. A long vacation would give them the motivation to patch things up. But while the sore festers, it gets worse. Something is rotten in David Sims, and it has spread to his household.

Jenna loves his ambition. As long as he is at the top of his game, she wants to play along. It's not just the privileges. There is something genuine about his wishes for the film industry. Nevertheless, all his vision requires him to crack the whip. It will all come back in the end. He recognizes how his fate hangs in the balance.

David Sims is the perfect character from one of his pictures. And in the first few reels, he demonstrates all the bravado that brings admiration to a skillful executive. But his path of gold only covers up the skeletons. Jenna considers black magic to bring those skeletons to life. That may eventually be her only recourse.

"I've finally told my wife that I want a divorce."

She looks at him, "You're not doing this for me. It's your life.

"I want you to be more a part of my life."

"I can't!"

He is in a state of disbelief, "I have done everything for you. You can't treat me like this."

She is incensed, "You've treated me like a fine object all along. Have you any idea how I fee?."

He is brazen, "I created you. I know how you feel."

"If you know how I feel, then you'd know that I don't love you."

"What are you saying?" he realizes that he is losing his grip over her.

"I've been with Vic Haygood all this time."

"Vic is still married. And he's with his wife all the time."

She corrects David, "When he's not with his wife, he's with me."

"And you think that's going to last. The only thing that ever lasted for Vic Haygood is a hangover. And he got rid of that after a couple of days of drinking. You're last year's news as far as he's concerned. Haven't you been looking at the tabloids?"

She is even more angry, "I get my news from the horse's mouth itself."

"And the horse is ailing. Wise up, girl. It's a fling!"

"What about you? You're even stupider. You're giving up a marriage of fifteen years to be with a paramour. Does that make you a romantic, or just a bloody fool?"

She has reduced the great movie tycoon down to size. She watches him crawl at her knees. On the other hand, she realizes that it's not a good idea to cross him. She knows that he will try to make his revenge sweet.

He leaves her alone for a couple of days. Things are not so pleasant. She learns that a major role that she has been counting on has been given over to an unknown.

Jenna is temporarily at a loss. Her winning streak is in danger of coming to an end. She calls her agent.

“I need some work quick.”

“Jenna, you have to be patient. There’s a rumor all over town that David Sims wants to shut you out. I don’t know what you did to him. But you better watch out.”

She challenges her agent, “It’s not the fifties anymore. No one has that sort of power. I can do an indie. I can go to Europe.”

He informs her, “David still can damn up all distribution. We’ve got to rethink your career.

Now she is totally confused. She has never faced an obstacle on such a large scale. It seems as if the whole world is now against her.

Jenna knows an assistant director who is planning to do his own picture. He’s already raised about six million. With Jenna’s name on the project, they should be able to get enough to put things into production.

The script is sent over to her on the internet. She prints out the pages and starts to learn the lines. It’s the story of a family reunion in Mississippi. It’s perfect for Jenna.

They plan to do a lot of the shooting on location. Jenna sets up a schedule for herself that will match when she is needed on the set.

As she is about to leave, she gets a call from the screen writer.

“Jenna, I’ve got some bad news for you. One of the studios bought out my picture. And you’ve been replaced. It was all part of the deal. I know that you were going to put up your own money. But I couldn’t turn them down. I have to get this thing out there.”

She has her suspicions about the studio. Maybe David can only throw his money in the air for so long. The winds won’t blow his way forever.

Jenna’s agent gets her some work temporarily on a TV show. She is replacing a well known actress who has bowed out at the last moment. Things happen so quickly that David can hardly react. Jenna is an instant hit. Her girl-next-door quality is a match for the small screen. The producers love her so much, that they can hardly yield to David’s wishes.

Jenna wants to get back into the movies. But she will have to put her career on hold. At least she is still working in the industry.

She wants to get to the bottom of things. She has barely survived David’s first assault. In his second offensive, he may be cut-throat. She feels that she will have to confront him face to face. Her agent has already warned her against such foolishness. But Jenna is not listening.

She drives around for a couple of hours trying to devise a plan. She can’t wait for something worse to happen. She needs to know what David has up his sleeve.

Oblivious to Jenna’s scheming, David has his own plans. He can hardly stay idle. Since Jenna’s departure he has done everything possible to find a replacement. He wants someone with some of the same sweetness as Jenna. But her replacement needs a little more of an edge if she is going to do battle in a the thick of the skirmishes to come.

The champagne has been cooling. And the master has come up with the master plan to shake up the world. He has his newcomer. And he is going to break her in a way that no actress has ever debuted on the Hollywood scene.

He arrives at his apartment with flowers for his new belle. And she is there ready to eat

him alive.

He comes in to see her spread naked on his bed in his garden of iniquity. Daddy is ready to do the dirty work. Unfortunately Jenna's wandering has finally brought her to the exact same place. She walks in to see the master himself jump on top of who else but Sammy. The world has come full circle.

Everybody fires at the same time, "What are you doing here?"

The toast of University of Alabama dramatics has finally gotten her wish. She is now bubbling under in Hollywood. But her fate depends on the rather unsteady hand of David Sims. It is questionable if he can work the same magic particularly with Jenna Davis standing over him and taunting him.

"Come on, kids, put on your clothes unless you want Sammy to give her Oscar winning performance in the buff."

Sammy temporarily enjoys her triumph. She is scoring points against her former friend and rival.

Jenna has a tasty answer, "Sammy, you've finally arrived. A real triumph. Let just say that you're not just doing things behind my back anymore. ."

David sneers back, "If you think it's worthwhile to just show up like this, this is only going to worsen things for you."

"I don't know about that. Sammy and I might just come to an understanding without you. By the way, Mr. Sims, you should probably put on your clothes. That little thing is getting cold as far as I can see."

Jenna tosses his clothes back at him. After all, what can he really do that he hasn't already done? Now, Sammy is on the job, things are only going to look up for David Sims,

He puts on his shorts. But he can't decide if he really wants to get dressed. He still expects some action with Sammy. On the other hand, she is putting her clothes on. She feels humiliated enough. She wants a career. But Jenna has thoroughly embarrassed her. She is going to have to talk to her agent and reconsider her options.

Sammy ducks out before the shit really hits the fan. She knows that she can always come to pick up the pieces. Now it is a one on one match between Jenna and David. David might have all the resources of the industry at his disposal, but now he is one unfortunate guy in his shorts sitting on his own bed. Jenna is intimidating.

"What do you want to do now?" he asks. "Castrate me?"

"That would be an idea!"

They both burst out laughing. He hold up his hands, "Truce!"

She smiles, "David, I'm not sure. What are you going to tell Sammy when she comes back. That she can clean up the apartment."

"Why didn't you show up at the house?"

"I know that your wife still has it. I figured you'd be doing your dirty deeds here. After all, you've had to recover after my absence."

"We've got a bed and some champagne. We don't want it to go to waste."

"So you want me to pour it on you and light it. I didn't know your imagination was that good."

She has really pinned him to a wall. He wants this all to end. He continues to believe

that he can battle her to the end. He just isn't looking too good at the moment.

On her way out, Jenna grabs the chilled bottle. It will do her for the road. When Sammy comes back, they can share Dr. Peppers. That is how it should be!

Once David's new picture finally comes out, it is a disaster. The only thing that the critics can find in its favor is the new face. Samantha Greer. It's not enough to make a career, but it is a beginning. From that point on, Samantha has only one goal in mind. She needs to catch and surpass her former friend. The gloves are off.

David is hardly ruined. But his string of successes is broken. The studio curtails some of his power. He can make actresses. But he can no longer break them. The execs make sure of that.

"You were an idiot to let Jenna get away!"

All of them repeat the same condemnation. Jenna realizes that her cutting knife really did the trick.

Jenna's reunion with Sammy is hardly what she expected. She can sense that Sammy is trying to chase her down. But Jenna is the household name. Sammy is still only an also ran.

If Jenna is to hold her position, she needs to make another picture. The TV season is done. Jenna is not sure if she wants to renew. And David's failure has opened up the film market for Jenna. She is suddenly hot property again.

She makes a bold career move. She plays a Southern matriarch who guides her family from the post-bellum period into the twentieth century. She is a progressive voice who shows courage in situation after situation. She even stands up to a lynch mob that is harassing her community. She is finally rewarded with the right to vote!

The story is a huge success. A legend seems to gather around Jenna Davis. She wins a couple of best actress awards at different festivals. She is the darling of the critics. Meanwhile, Sammy is cast in a passable romantic comedy. She starts to fancy her costar. That only proves to be her undoing.

The short lived affair comes down to a feckless showdown.

She kisses him impetuously.

"I'm with you now. I want it to stay like this forever."

He wants more, "Can't you put it into words? Can't you promise?"

She crosses her heart, "I want to. But I don't know how I'll feel tomorrow. We can change things. We can change how we feel about ourselves," she states. She has never been so compromising."

He tells her, "But that won't last. I'll only expect something from you that you can't give,"

"You could stay. For the moment, you have what you need. And we can make it mean so much more." She only has to listen to herself to realize how laughable she sounds. She has been brainwashed by her own stupidity.

After trying to do the same with fellow actors, Jenna finds a man that she can finally trust. For once, she believes her search is over.

Adam isn't even in the industry. She meets him at a natural food store. He teaches history. She has never met anyone who appears as grounded as he is.

It is only a short while before she moves in with him. She keeps her place to be safe. But

she has her clothes over at his place. And she's there most of the time. She even befriends his pet cat. It all seems too ideal.

He makes dinner for her when she has a late day on the set.

"You're just fantastic," she tells him.

She hardly understands a guy who isn't punishing her for something that she's done wrong. She realizes that she has done too much living in such a short time.

He gives her a massage as she settle off to sleep. He is such a gentle lover. He gives without expecting anything in return. A couple of times she doesn't come home after work.

"I fell asleep in my trailer. I just had such an early call that it wasn't worth it coming home."

For the most part, he believes her stories. When she is off, they live life to the fullest. He reads her poetry. He feeds her. They take baths together. It is a world of harmony.

One night he is at the door when she walks in. "Where were you, Jenna?"

"I was doing a scene."

"The director called looking for you. You're becoming more and more erratic. Is something wrong?" he asks. "You don't hate me, do you?"

She has her own answer, "I don't want to be perfect. I'm a sinner, and I like myself the way that I am. I can't be any better than this."

"Quit lying to me. Or at the very least, quit lying to yourself."

She begs off the relationship, "You're just too real for me. I'm not like that anymore. I just feel that you're spying on me to see if I'm going to do something wrong."

She's not used to such love. She can't tolerate. She digs the dissonance.

After she finishes her next picture, she takes all her stuff and goes back to her place. She separates from Tom. She tries to forget his name.

The tabloids start to link her to Vic again. He is trying to patch things up with his wife. But Jenna is the terror that has come in between the two of them. There is little that the wife can do. There are forces beyond the control of either Vic or Jenna.

"You should have got a divorce a long time ago," Jenna scolds him.

"I thought all that was fake. I'd just go back to Shirley. This time it's not going to happen. We're totally on the outs."

Their reality is even more lurid than the tabloids can capture. They are together in her trailer, in the car, in a restaurant bathroom. Vic is in total denial that is happening. He knows his marriage is falling apart. He maintain his pretense of Shirley. She knows. That is why she leaves town and goes to see her sister in Wyoming.

The tabloids are all over the play by play. Every minute detail. Jenna feels that she can set her schedule by what she reads.

"Vic, maybe we are meant to be together." Jenna states the obvious.

He pins her against the wall of his cabin and kisses her. Neither can resist the moment.

"This is a disaster," he tells her afterwards.

"I didn't think that I was that bad."

"That isn't what I meant."

He wants to believe her innocence. She knows how to manipulate him and his marriage to Shirley. He really is the clown that the tabloids portray.

At the same time, Jenna is wasting her time with this fool. There is really no one that can inform her different. She doesn't have a friend to tell her that she is making a mistake. It's not like the days when she drank Dr. Pepper with Sammy. Somewhere Sammy is out there to do maximum damage.

The reason why Vic is the choice candidate for the tabloids is because he remains every girl's dream date. He manages to live off this illusion. It was the very thing that first gave life to Jenna's career. Even though she is fooling around with him now, she really has little hold over him for the future. He can tell her about his dead marriage with Shirley. But she is the very prop that he needs for his fun and games. Any girl can mend his broken heart. After all, his wife is as cold as ice.

In the tabloids, Jenna starts to become the target of record. She is the devil woman destroying the paragon of American virtue. This Jezebel must be purged from the Hollywood film community. Once Jenna is brought down, her successor in his bed will be the next target. No one is safe.

Mr. Morality even considers a series of adventure pictures that will help sustain his heroic pose. The image of Vic is laughable. No wonder every girl wants him. He is invincible. No accusation can be sustained against him. The guilt passes from harlot to harlot. The sin is passed in from female. Vic is only a victim of their painted disguises.

So it with ultimate irony that the Pollyanna of Jenna is replaced by the more severe Eve the Temptress as played by Sammy. Sammy realizes that her career has never really taken off. She could use a real boost. What a better way to stick it to Jenna.

In some run down bar somewhere, a bitter David Sims is still trying to revive himself with one more deal. As broken as he is, he does everything that he can to cast Vic Haygood opposite Samantha Greer. True to form, Jenna again surprises Sammy *in flagrante delicto*. Jenna can see the flashes go off in her head.

Jenna wonders what caused her to leave Tom. And now she has been so quick to turn her back on Vic. She might as well have thrown in her into Sammy's arms. As she closes the door on their love nest, Jenna realizes that she cannot leave herself as vulnerable as Sammy. Jenna has a legacy to sustain. She needs to remain a legend.

Samantha pulls Tony close. She is ready to share all the deviant techniques that she has learned ascending the cinematic ladder. For her, it is no stairway to heaven. Quite the opposite. The gold on these stairs is mightily tarnished. That hasn't stopped her lovers from aspiring to their own private nirvanas. Paradise is in such short supply in a looking glass world. And the screams of a raging tiger in the night do quite a bit to turn the hardened skeptic into a true believer. They only have to spend a few minutes on their knees before her until worship is automatic and eternal. Such is the new faith.

The only question is who will crack first. Will Samantha find Tony the infinite bore that he truly he? It only gets worse when he starts to talk about his own religious enlightenment. Or will Tony realize that another gold digger has her claws into him and seek quick spiritual release? Ah, it goes down so well, all that malarkey.

In a few months, the billboards for Jenna's new picture dwarf the ads for Sammy's movie. It's Vic and Sammy playing silly detective buddies. Jenna has gone the Bette Davis way. She is dramatizing betrayal on the screen in an update of *The Letter*. Much of the film has been

shot on location in Thailand. It offers Jenna the chance to turn away from all the silliness in Los Angeles.

Sammy adjusts herself to the modest gains of her new film. But it is Jenna who really shines in tinsel town. Down deep, Sammy is green with envy. What nefarious plot might she have up her sleeve. She's already stolen pretty well every guy that Jenna's been with. She can hardly inflict such damage again. She needs a knock out punch in an arsenal that is all but depleted.

Jenna can hardly occupy herself with such negativity. She has a career to nurture. She has more offers than she knows what to do with. For the time being, she can let the tabloids worry about her love life. She's got other fish to fry.

Jenna's success seems to have made her more and more immune from her own life. It is an unusual road that she has walked up to this point. She tries to keep her ears to the ground to notice the most minute changes in her environment. At the same time, she has to nurture the image that has provided her with such renown.

For every Jenna Davis, there are thousands of Samantha Greer's clawing to take that step up. Every rumor, every pound lost or gained, every snapshot taken is another step in the shifting hierarchies of stars and also rans. The fate of all these characters churn in the giant maelstrom until the actors and actresses realize that they are skeletons without souls who cannot escape the sewer of their own ambitions. Even the scenarios that were so familiar in their own lives become the same situational comedies ground through over and over again. Each screen kiss engenders a million imitations in back-alleys and cheap motels. The neon lights flicker out waiting for another repair job to be completed. If she can just hang on one more night, help is on the way!