

GRAY AREA (SHORT FILM)

Written by

James Barnes

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

AUTUMN GRAY, 35, owns a floral shop. She's handling arrangements for a customer. The CAMERA focuses on Autumn and we FOLLOW her around, as she completes her task. She MARVELS at the finished product, and holds it up to view.

AUTUMN
What you think?

The CAMERA PANS across the shop and we see LEILA STOUGHTON, 30, Autumn's business partner. She's WATERING a section of PLANTS when she turns to see what Autumn designed.

LEILA
(smiling)
...I think she'll love it.

AUTUMN
Really?

LEILA
Yes. You put the right touch on it.

(phone ringing)

AUTUMN
I'll get it.

Autumn ANSWERS the store phone.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
(on the phone)
Autumn's Flower Shop, this is Autumn speaking... Well, good morning, Ms. Parker! I just finished putting your basket together... Oh most certainly! I'm heading out now... No problem, I'll see you soon... Ok bye...

She HANGS UP the phone.

LEILA
Ok that's it- that lady's starting to creep me out now.

AUTUMN
I know, right? How do she know when to call? It's like she always spying on us.

LEILA
Yep- just like old ladies do.

They share a LAUGH.

AUTUMN
Be nice. Ms. Parker's our best customer.

LEILA
I'm just saying, she could give us a little more time.

AUTUMN
Time is money, Leila...

Autumn GRABS the BASKET and heads out.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
And off I go! You'll be ok while I'm gone?

Leila WINKS at her.

LEILA
Depends on how long you take.

AUTUMN
(smiling)
I'll be quick.

Leila SMILES at Autumn as she watches her EXIT the shop.

EXT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

Autumn gets in her car. She sits the BASKET in the seat next to her. She starts the ignition and PLACES her hands on the steering wheel. She notices her WEDDING RING and PLAYS with it. She closes her eyes and we CUT TO:

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

Leila's playing with the RING on her finger. She RESUMES her task but then the phone rings.

(phone ringing)

She ANSWERS.

LEILA
Autumn's Flower Shop, this is Leila speaking...

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON GRAY, 34, is a pharmaceutical sales rep. He just dropped off some samples at a doctor's office. He's calling to check in with his wife.

MILTON

Aye, what's happening Leila?

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

LEILA

(uninterested)

Hi Milton.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON

What you been up to these days?

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

LEILA

Look, your wife just left, ok, and I know *I* can't help you so...what do you want?

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON

Damn! What's with the hostility? You need to check that shit.

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

LEILA

Yea? And *you* need to be there more for your wife.

MILTON

What?

LEILA

You cheating, huh?

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON

No. I'm working, alright? And she know that. Besides, I'm coming home tonight.

INT. AUTUMN'S FLORAL SHOP. DAY. - FRIDAY

LEILA

Yea, ok. I'll give her the message. Bye.

She HANGS UP the phone.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON

No wait-

He looks at his phone and CHUCKLES. We CUT TO:

EXT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE. DAY. - FRIDAY

Autumn is leaving Ms. Parker's office.

AUTUMN

Thanks again, Ms. Parker!

(Autumn's phone ringing)

Excitement fills her eyes when she see that its her husband calling her.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

(on the phone)

Hi honey!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON

(on the phone)

Hey baby, what's going on?

EXT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE. DAY. - FRIDAY

AUTUMN
(on the phone)
Nothing, just making a delivery,
and missing you, of course.

MILTON
(through the receiver)
You know I miss you too, Autumn.

AUTUMN
(on the phone)
When are you coming home Milton? I
need you babe. I need some of that.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON
(on the phone)
I know you do. I'm flying in
tonight, ok? Already got the
ticket.

EXT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE. DAY. - FRIDAY

AUTUMN
(on the phone)
...I love you Milton.

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

MILTON
(on the phone)
...I love you too Autumn. I'll see
you later, ok?

EXT. MS. PARKER'S OFFICE. DAY. - FRIDAY

AUTUMN
(on the phone)
You promise?

We see a CLOSE UP on the RECEIVER.

MILTON
(through the receiver)
...I promise.

Autumn ENDS the call. Then we CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL CENTER. DAY. - FRIDAY

Milton ENDS his call. Then another CALL comes through. He ANSWERS it.

MILTON

(on the phone)

What's up, boss? ...You're kidding me, right?! ...Hell yea! When do I go?! ...Are you serious man?!
 ...No, no absolutely, I will be there... Hey thanks a lot, Joe.

He ENDS the call, his mood completely DEPLETED. We CUT TO:

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

The mood is set: scented candles are lit, lights are dimmed, and music is playing low in the background.

The CAMERA slowly PANS around Autumn as she sits on the couch alone. She's dressed up in her sexy, but playful lounge attire. Her face shows DISAPPOINTMENT. She picks up a GLASS OF WINE and GULPS the small amount that's left. And then--

SMASH! She SHATTERS the empty GLASS against the wall, and BREAKS DOWN in tears. Moments later, *KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!* There's someone at the door. She grabs a TISSUE and WIPES her eyes as she gets up to get the door. She STRAIGHTENS herself up. She OPENS the DOOR. She realizes who it is and TURNS back in.

AUTUMN

Not now Leila.

Leila comes inside and closes the DOOR.

LEILA

Autumn, sweetheart...are you crying?

Autumn SITS on the couch, and Leila FOLLOWS.

AUTUMN

He promised me, Leila. He promised.

Leila shakes her head.

LEILA

Let me ask you something Autumn...
 Do you really love him?

AUTUMN

...What?

LEILA

I said, do you *really* love Milton?

AUTUMN

Look around...I set all this up for him, Leila. Why does he keep doing this? Is it me? Am I not a good wife?

LEILA

You stop that right now, you hear me? You're the perfect wife. You just got the wrong one beside you.

Autumn PUTS her head down and Leila WIPES her tears. Autumn is UNAWARE that she's ENJOYING the comfort, but Leila SENSES it.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Come on...we're going out tonight.

AUTUMN

Ung h ungh Leila...you know I don't go to clubs.

LEILA

But you will tonight. You are going to take your mind off of *Milton*, and we're gonna have a blast. What do you say?

Autumn SNIFFLES as she thinks about it. Then she FLASHES a SMILE, and gives a slight NOD.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Come on, let's get you changed.

She HELPS Autumn up and checks out her outfit.

LEILA (CONT'D)

On second thought...

AUTUMN

Girl, come on.

Leila CHUCKLES to herself as she FOLLOWS Autumn.

INT. NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

(music playing)

The CAMERA pans around inside the nightclub. The music and the strobe lights respectively set the vibes. We see everyone dancing and seemingly enjoying themselves. It's packed. The dance floor is packed, the bar is packed, the front entrance is packed. Through a crowded bunch, Autumn and Leila EMERGE past security. They're both dressed in fancy, attractive outfits. Autumn looks around.

AUTUMN

(loudly)

So this what people do in the clubs? Get drunk and jump around?

LEILA

(loudly)

Pretty much. Come on, let's get you a drink.

They WALK over to the bar together, and SIT down in two unoccupied seats.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(to the bartender)

Two pink raspberry cosmos.

As they wait for their drinks, they ATTRACT TWO (2) MALES to their area.

MALE #1

Excuse us but, Why are you two beautiful ladies not on the dance floor?

They CHUCKLE and GLANCE at each other.

LEILA

Sorry, we're not from around here.

The two MEN GLANCE at each other and SMILE.

MALE #2

Neither are we.

Autumn and Leila FLASH a SMILE at each other. Then we CUT TO:

A SHOT of all four of them on the dance floor. Leila is close up on her dance partner. Autumn is evidently enjoying herself. She completely forgot about Milton, and she's seductively dancing with her partner. Leila sees Autumn getting loose.

LEILA
Yea girl! That's it!

Autumn is loose, dancing all over her partner. In the midst of everything, she OBSERVES Leila pop a PILL. Leila OFFERS when she catches Autumn looking.

LEILA (CONT'D)
(to Autumn)
Want one?

We see a CLOSE UP of Autumn as she HALTS her dance moves to CONTEMPLATE on it. Then we CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT - FRIDAY

Leila ENTERS the room with her partner kissing on her neck, and pushing her inside. Autumn's partner gives her a piggyback ride and they GALLOP inside. Leila and her partner are locked in each other's arms, kissing and rubbing. They TUMBLE together on one of the double beds.

AUTUMN
Damn girl! Y'all don't waste no
time- Ahh!

Autumn is softly DROPPED on the other bed by her partner. He turns around and faces her with a SMILE on his face. He licks his LIPS, and slowly unbuckles his belt, as Autumn BITES her LIP and SMILES. With a CLOSE UP on Autumn, she looks over to Leila, who's passionately MOANING with pleasure, and deeply ENTRENCHED in the sex. She MOANS louder and louder, and Autumn's SMILE slowly FADES AWAY. Now she's being undressed by her partner. The drug effect is wearing off, and her mind is slowly beginning to clear up. Her partner leans over and kisses on her neck and her body. For a moment, Autumn ENJOYS it. Then suddenly, her PHONE rings - which is in her PURSE, across the room. She SNAPS out of it and attempts to get up.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I need to get that.

MALE #2
Chill, just let it ring.

AUTUMN
No, it's probably my husband.
Excuse me-

MALE #2
Wait- Ya husband?!

AUTUMN

Yes, my husband. Now can I get up?

MALE #2

No. You stay right there.

He forcibly keeps her down as she attempts to get up.

AUTUMN

Hey! Hey! What are you doing?!

MALE #2

Let's see what kind of wife ya
husband *really* has...

AUTUMN

No, Stop! Get off of me! Let me go!

He SLAPS Autumn but it has no effect. He's attempting to penetrate her as she SCREAM and FIGHTS BACK. Leila and her partner HALT their activities.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Let me go! You're hurting me! Stop!

Autumn SCREAMS louder. She's trying her best to defend herself. Then suddenly, Leila's partner comes over and throws his boy off of Autumn.

MALE #2

Aw come on, man-

Carl gets in his face.

MALE #1

Yo, what the fuck's ya problem?!
You that desperate for some pussy?!

MALE #2

Whatever yo.

Male #2 has nothing else to say. He GETS dressed and EXITS the room. His boy looks at Autumn and then Leila. Then he reluctantly FOLLOWS behind. Leila OBSERVES Autumn as she's left alone, crying on the bed, curled up, looking battered and defeated. Leila approaches Autumn and tries to console her.

LEILA

Hey sweetie-

AUTUMN

Get away from me! Get away from me!

Autumn CRIES OUT as Leila just OBSERVES.

(phone ringing)

Autumn's phone is ringing in her purse. She quiets down while Leila RETRIEVES it. It's Milton. She ANSWERS.

LEILA
 (on the phone)
 Well hello there, you piece of
 shit!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. AIRPORT. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

MILTON
 (on the phone)
 ...Leila?

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

LEILA
 (on the phone)
 You should've been home with your
 wife this time instead of one of
 them hoes.

INT. AIRPORT. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

MILTON
 (on the phone)
 ...Wow. Ok, first of all, my flight
 was delayed, alright-

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

LEILA
 (on the phone)
 You wanna know something? You are
 the worst, you know that?

INT. AIRPORT. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

MILTON
 (on the phone)
 Yea, whatever. Why am I talking to
 you? Where's my wife?

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

Leila looks over at Autumn, who's still curled up and crying.

LEILA
(on the phone)
She can't talk right now.

INT. AIRPORT. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

MILTON
(on the phone)
What? Leila, lemme speak to Autumn.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

LEILA
(on the phone)
She don't wanna talk to you!

INT. AIRPORT. NIGHT. - FRIDAY

MILTON
(on the phone)
Stop fucking playing Leila and lemme speak to my wife! You're always in the got damn way! You just hate to see us together, don't you?! But guess what? Me and Autumn, we're always gonna be together, alright? Whether you like it or not! ...Hello? ...Hello?

Leila hung up on him. We see a CLOSE UP of Milton when he says:

MILTON (CONT'D)
(surprised)
This bitch...

WE CUT TO:

THE NEXT DAY...

EXT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE. DAY. - SATURDAY

A taxi pulls up to Autumn's house. Milton steps out and grabs his suitcase from the trunk. The cab drives off and Milton is left isolated, staring at the place he calls home. He takes a deep breath and then he approaches the front door.

At the door, he SEARCHES for his keys. He can't find them.

MILTON
 (scoffs)
 You gotta be kidding me.

He HESITATES before he KNOCKS on the door. No response. He KNOCKS again. This time, the lock UNLATCHES and Autumn OPENS the DOOR, semi-exposed.

MILTON (CONT'D)
 (smiling)
 Hi baby...

Autumn just STARES at him, with a BLANK FACE.

MILTON (CONT'D)
 ...can I at least bring these bags
 inside?

Autumn OPENS the DOOR and stands behind it. Milton takes a DEEP BREATH and WALKS inside. We CUT TO:

INT. AUTUMN'S HOUSE. DAY. - SATURDAY

Milton puts his bags down.

MILTON
 Look Autumn, I know you're upset,
 and I'm sor-

AUTUMN
 You promised me, Milton. And you
 said you would never break your
 promise.

MILTON
 I know Autumn, but guess what? I
 got promoted!

Autumn is not impressed.

...Ok, well I had mandatory
 training to attend in order for me
 to fully accept the promotion. I
 couldn't turn that down.

AUTUMN
 Well congratulations Milton. I'm
 really happy for you.

MILTON

Well, thanks baby. Hey we both winning, alright?

Autumn is looking away as if she's uninterested. Milton APPROACHES her and turns her head in his direction.

MILTON (CONT'D)

Look at me... You already know what I do this for Autumn. I do this for us baby. For you and me. I wanna get you that big dream house you want.

She holds back her SMILE.

MILTON (CONT'D)

And have some little Grays running around, tearing up the place.

She CHUCKLES.

MILTON (CONT'D)

(smiling)

See? Come on baby... Look Autumn, I'm really sorry that I stood you up this weekend. But I can't turn down Sales Manager. And then, they told me I had mandatory training that same night. What was I suppose to do?

AUTUMN

And that was your biggest goal.

MILTON

Exactly! Now I'm in a better position to prosper. I'ma be making more money. We can start planning for our future and-

AUTUMN

But you're never home, Milton.

MILTON

...I know baby, but listen-

AUTUMN

And you promised me. You promised me that you would never break your promise.

MILTON

I know Autumn, and I'm sorry. Like,
I don't know what else you want
from me.

Autumn creates space between her and Milton.

AUTUMN

Well I have a suggestion...

MILTON

What's that?

AUTUMN

(shrugs)
...How about a divorce?

Milton puts his hands on his head in disbelief.

MILTON

...Wait, you're serious?! You want
a divorce because I broke a fucking
promise?!

AUTUMN

No sweetie...

Suddenly, Leila appears from out the back room. She has on
just a robe, as if she stayed the night. She walks over to
them as they STARE.

LEILA

(to Autumn)
Hey baby.

Autumn and Leila share a very sensual, french kiss in front
of Milton, as he helplessly looks on in awe.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You good?

Autumn SMILES as she looks over to Milton.

AUTUMN

(to Milton)
That's why.

Milton is left standing in AWE.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END