

Desquamation

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FADE IN:

A blinding light.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL DECK - DAY

DONNA (late 20s) in sunglasses and a swimsuit, smears gobs of lotion on her legs. Not so much on her arms. Some youth is still on her side, but from the looks of her, she overdoses on perfection.

"Perfection" includes the Suede Bejeweled Sandals beside the lawn chair and a designer handbag with her name embroidered in small emeralds.

She puts in her earphones, fidgets with her playlist. Leans back, relaxes.

She dozes iff. Songs blend into one another.

Beads of sweat crawl on her left arm.

INT. HOUSE - DEN - NIGHT

Donna, now in jeans and a t shirt, paces around in those high priced sandals. She's obsessed with her left arm.

JEFF (early 30s) slips on his tie. He watches Donna with growing curiosity.

DONNA

I'm pretty sure it's an insect bite. Or a bee sting.

JEFF

Which is it?

DONNA

One or the another.

JEFF

Sorry, I don't see it. Is on your funny bone?

DONNA

(annoyed)
Come here and take a look.

JEFF

Probably nothing.

DONNA
It's something.

JEFF
Come on, let's get going. You going
to go out like that?

DONNA
I'm not going anywhere. Not until I
know what this is.

Jeff strides to her. She raises her arm, nearly bumping him
with her elbow.

JEFF
I don't see it.

DONNA
Just above the elbow.

Jeff leans in, gets a close look. He blinks a few times,
squints. Smiles. Kisses the arm.

JEFF
There. All better.

DONNA
You didn't even look.

JEFF
It's nothing. A little redness,
like a small burn.

DONNA
A *burn*?

JEFF
If it bothers you, cover it up.

DONNA
"Cover it up."

JEFF
You scratching at it -

DONNA
I didn't scratch anything.

JEFF
Whatever you were doing is only
going to make it worse. Come on,
get ready. Steve and Dawn are
expecting us.

BATHROOM

Donna, examines her left arm in the mirror. Frowns.

Applies a tube of aloe vera gel.

Pops an ibuprofen. Turns on the COLD water, fills up a paper cup. Down the hatch.

Checks her arm again.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Upscale and warm color decor, with a hint of blacklight - just enough to make it look trendy.

Jeff and Donna on one side of a table, STEVE and DAWN (both early 30s) on the other. Despite the company, Donna struggles to keep attention to the others. All conversation goes in one ear and out of the other.

Donna focuses on a dinner candle and the hypnotic flame.

She cranks her neck. Slightly annoyed.

Steve puts a cigarette in his mouth, zips out a lighter. Flicks it. Dawn transfixed.

Dawn snaps her fingers jokingly in front of Donna.

DAWN

Earth to Donna.

DONNA

I was thinking about something else.

DAWN

You alright?

DONNA

Why wouldn't I be?

DAWN

Okay...

JEFF

She was out tanning, got sunburned.

DONNA

I don't know how. I must of put gobs of that lotion on. And it was an insect bite.

Mosquitoes, spiders,
Wasn't a burn.

Jeff shrugs.

STEVE
(jokes)
Spiders aren't insects.

DONNA
Whatever. Damn thing did a number
on my arm.

DAWN
Should have swatted it. That's what
I would have done.
(nudges Steve)
Or have somebody do it for me.

JEFF
It's a burn. She's been checking it
out every hour on the hour.

DONNA
If it was a burn, I'd go to after
hours, get it looked at.

DAWN
Maybe you should do that anyway.

Donna swallows, takes a big gulp of water. Her hand shakes.

INT. CLINIC - NIGHT

A FEMALE NURSE (40s) examines Donna's arm. The mark is more visible, a oval shape. The Nurse shines a light on the area.

Small bits of peeling skin. Blisters.

DONNA
Do you know if it was a spider
bite?

NURSE
It's a small sunburn. Already
starting to peel.

DONNA
Impossible.

NURSE
It is what it is. You here with
anyone?

DONNA

My fiancée Jeff. He's in the lobby.
Why?

NURSE

Just wondered if you drove here.

DONNA

You don't think I should be
driving?

NURSE

I didn't say that. But your blood
pressure was a bit high. You're
sweating a bit, acting nervous.

DONNA

I'm fine.
(beat)
What are you doing?

NURSE

Back of your neck.

DONNA

What about the back of my neck?

NURSE

Got burned there too.

On the back of Donna's neck, redness and bits of peeling
skin.

DONNA

How can they be peeling? It's too
soon for that.

NURSE

Then they happened before today.
How often do you tan?

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

In a silk nightgown, Donna rises. The alarm clock on her cell
phone reads 2:30. She nudges a snoring Jeff, who is in
pajamas.

Like magic, a pattern fades ghost-like on Jeff's pajamas. The
pattern resembles vintage sun faces. Like the Sun Mascot of
Raisin Bean but not as happy.

Jeff snoozes away.

BATHROOM

LIGHT FLASHES ON

Bow the length of a soda can, the burn mark on her arm freaks her out. She bites her lip, disgusted. Grimaces in pain as she turns her neck, leans in towards the mirror.

The neck burn - now a streak that creeps to part of her right shoulder. Bigger than when she seen it in the clinic.

Peeling skin. More than before.

She grabs a tube of lotion, rubs her neck. She presses too hard, breaks a blister.

Water oozes out. Blood next.

A drop of the red paints the sink.

She stumbles back. She grabs on the counter, balances herself.

Turns the sink handles. Catches herself quick - and lets only the cold water run.

Washes her hands, the blood away.

Howls in anger.

JEFF (O.S.)

What the hell?

Donna flings open the cabinet. Knocks things aside.

JEFF (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hell's going on?

Donna rips open a Band-Aid, applies it to her open wound.

JEFF (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Everything okay?

DONNA

It's not okay!

Jeff knocks on the door.

JEFF (O.S.)

Come on, open up.

DONNA

I'll be there in a minute!

JEFF (O.S.)
Let me help.

DONNA
In a minute!

Jeff opens the door.

JEFF
Wrong. It's not going to wait. We talked about this. We had an understanding. Was I wrong?

DONNA
No. Of course not.

JEFF
Seriously? I mean, feels like it.

DONNA
Steve was about to light up. I didn't hear you say anything. You take me to a place with candles. So, yeah, if you want to be wrong. You were.

JEFF
Your idea, the candles. You told me you can handle it. As for Steve, he just forgot. Now -

DONNA
- look at my arm. My neck -

JEFF
I'll talk to Steve. Remind him. You. You are going to calm down. Calm down and listen.

DONNA
It won't stop spreading. My skin is peeling like an onion, now I'm bleeding.

JEFF
From the burns?

DONNA
Yes, Sherlock, From the sunburns.

JEFF
You should have- I should have tried harder. I failed. I messed up.

You weren't ready for the sun, I thought you were. You were doing well. Forgive me.

DONNA
I didn't mean -

JEFF
No. It's my fault. Alright? Now, cool down. Repeat your motto, what your group taught you.

DONNA
It's all in my mind.

JEFF
What else?

DONNA
Don't let my fear control or define me.

JEFF
Once you're healed, and you will heal, we start again. Day one. We won't rush it this time. Alright?

Jef leans in, turns off the faucet.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donna rests with an ice pack under her neck. She drifts off to sleep. Jeff, awake, cannot get back to sleep.

JEFF (CONT'D)
It's all in your mind. Let the fear rest in peace.

Rests his hand on her shoulder. Stares at the arm wound, now bigger, strands of skin dangles off.

FADE OUT.