

Crime d'amour

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An experiment: no sequence delineations. This step outline was written primarily to note the differences between the film and Brian De Palma's Passion, which is a remake.

Isabelle and Christine, her boss, are working together on a project in Christine's house. "We make a good team," says Christine, who gives Isabelle a scarf.

After Isabelle comes up with a new idea for a project at work and prepares a brief for an account, Christine sends her to Cairo to present it to clients. Also in Cairo is Philippe, Christine's lover, who works with them in the same office.

Isabelle does a good job in Cairo. While there, she sleeps with Philippe.

Back in Paris, it's clear that Isabelle does much uncredited work for Christine, who openly steals Isabelle's idea. "It's not a betrayal," Christine tells Isabelle. "It's teamwork. I believe in you. You have real talent. I made the most of it." Isabelle isn't much troubled by Christine's behaviour, but when Daniel, a colleague, tells her about a project from Washington, she doesn't tell Christine.

Isabelle and Christine drive to a party, where they meet Jacques. "Same again this weekend?" he asks Christine. "No Cairo chore to get out of?" Isabelle is bothered by this. "I sent you to take my place," Christine tells her, "because I trust you." Isabelle leaves the party and goes directly to Philippe's apartment.

At the office, Christine asks Isabelle about the project from Washington. Isabelle equivocates.

Christine asks Philippe how he is going to make amends for his "financial chicanery." Philippe asks for some time to pay the money back. "Time is running out," Christine tells him. She signs a statement that protects her from his crimes and puts it in a file of relevant paperwork. Christine lets Philippe know that she knows about him and Isabelle.

Daniel encourages Isabelle to work on the Washington project – without Christine.

Philippe tells Isabelle that they have to break off their relationship. Isabelle, upset, turns to the Washington project, which proves a success. Christine is furious.

Philippe tells Isabelle that Christine forced him to break up with her, and that she wants to destroy Isabelle.

Daniel shows Isabelle paperwork about Philippe's financial indiscretions, including the statement Christine signed.

Christine throws a party for the company executives, where she publicly humiliates Isabelle.

Christine shows Isabelle an email she sent from Isabelle's computer, which reads: "I'll never forget what you did. I'll make you pay one way or another." Christine threatens to fire Isabelle.

Isabelle calls a doctor friend and picks up a collection of pills. She makes sure that Daniel sees her taking a pill at work.

Isabelle, wearing gloves, makes a copy of the paperwork regarding Philippe, puts the copy in a locked cupboard in her office, then after work goes to see a film called *Dernier Rivage*.

Isabelle notices three knives on the wall of her kitchen.

Again in the office, she makes sure that Daniel sees her taking a pill at work.

A staged photograph of Christine and Isabelle, wearing her scarf, along with some business associates, is taken in the office.

Isabelle cuts out a small piece of the scarf.

Because it is raining, Philippe gives Isabelle a lift in his car. She asks if she left her scarf at his place. He says no. Isabelle says that she must have lost it.

At lunch with colleagues at work, Isabelle takes more pills. Daniel finds one of the pills and keeps it.

Isabelle puts the copy of the paperwork she made in an envelope.

She visits her sister out of town, and bemoans all her bad relationships. She brings the envelope with her, and asks her sister for a favour.

Back home, she goes into her garden shed. Isabelle is seen by her neighbour standing on a chair pruning roses. She bangs on the chair with her foot.

She goes to the cinema and sees *Dernier Rivage* again.

Christine, at home after a party, is stabbed to death by Isabelle. Isabelle places into Christine's hand the small piece of the scarf, goes through Christine's wallet, breaks a few things, and dips Christine's finger in her own blood and writes "Isa" on the floor. She places everything she takes from the house in a bag, which she throws into a nearby pond. The next morning she calls Daniel and tells him she doesn't feel well and won't be in the office today. At 3pm the police show up at her house. Before she answers the door, she pulls up the sleeve of her pajamas to reveal scratches on her arm. She tells the police she took some sleeping pills but that she hasn't slept. They tell her that Christine has been stabbed. Isabelle admits that she and Christine hadn't been on good terms. The police find her pills, and take her to the police station, where they show her the threatening email that Christine wrote. They mention the party where Christine humiliated her and show her a photo of "Isa" written in blood. The piece of the scarf they have found matches exactly the scarf that Isabelle is wearing in the recent photograph taken of her in the office. The police ask Isabelle where she was the night Christine was killed. "At the cinema," she says. She is charged with Christine's murder.

Isabelle is encouraged to confess to the crime. When asked if she killed Christine, she says, "I think so, yes." She asks for her medication.

Isabelle is locked in a cell.

A woman comes forward and tells the authorities that Isabelle bought a carving knife from her.

Flashback: Isabelle arguing with the woman in a store.

Isabelle's sister visits her in prison. "Don't forget what I asked," Isabelle tells her. "That's all you have to do."

Isabelle tells her lawyer that she wants to retract her confession, and that she originally confessed because she was overmedicated. "I wanted it all to stop," she says. "I was so tired."

Isabelle is shown the piece of scarf. She says that she did have a scarf like that, but that she lost it. She asks the authorities to search her house again. They do so, but find nothing.

Isabelle is shown the knife that was used to kill Christine. She says that she did buy a similar knife but broke it the following day. "I forget what I did with it," she says.

Flashback: Isabelle compares the knife she just bought with one of the three in her kitchen. It is exactly the same. She jams the knife into a radiator and breaks a piece off the blade.

Daniel watches news reports about the murder case on television.

Isabelle breaks down crying, insisting she didn't kill Christine. The authorities say that she is the only viable suspect and again show her the threatening email. She says that she never wrote the email, and that Christine sent it to herself from Isabelle's computer. "She was at war with me," says Isabelle. Her lawyer says that there are several people who can testify to Christine's harassment of Isabelle. "Nothing you say is supported by the evidence," the authorities tell Isabelle.

Isabelle asks Philippe to visit her in prison. "I forgive you," she tells him, before adding that she knows all about his financial troubles. "I planned to use it to get back at you." She tells him to pick up the paperwork from Daniel's office.

Philippe destroys the paperwork.

Isabelle's lawyer gives Daniel a letter. "She can't trust anyone else," the lawyer tells him. In the letter, Isabelle asks Daniel to go to the cinema with a photograph of her and ask if anyone recognises her. The ticket seller does.

Flashback: Isabelle offering candy to the ticket seller and people waiting in line at the cinema.

Daniel talks to the police, who begin to question Isabelle's guilt. The policeman in charge notes that Isabelle described the whole film to him, so clearly she stayed until the end, which would give her an alibi.

Flashback: Isabelle talking to the ticket seller. She goes into the auditorium but walks straight out the back door.

The police question Isabelle and ask why Christine would have written "Isa" in her blood. "She hated me so much," says Isabelle. She says that the scratches on her arm didn't come from fighting with Christine.

The police question Isabelle's neighbour.

Flashback: Isabelle, in her garden standing on a chair pruning roses, kicks the chair until it collapses under her. She falls to the ground. The neighbour asks if she is OK. She shows him the scratches on her arm.

Flashback: Isabelle goes into the garden shed and cuts through one of the chair legs so it will fall apart when she stands on it. She places the knife in a spot in the shed where it will be found.

The policeman searches the garden shed. He finds the knife.

Isabelle's lawyer insists she is innocent. The authorities note that the issue of the scarf is still not resolved. She says that if her scarf is found it will be intact,

without a piece missing. Her lawyer asks if Isabelle can go to the house to look for the scarf herself.

In the house, she finds the scarf behind a drawer. It is intact.

Flashback: Isabelle buying a scarf.

Isabelle, released from prison, goes home. The news reports that she is the victim of “a series of wicked coincidences.”

Daniel watches the news reports on television at home.

Isabelle’s sister takes the train into Paris, wipes the envelope that Isabelle gave her clean of fingerprints, and places it into a postbox.

Isabelle returns to work. She receives a phone call from the company banker who says he has received an anonymous package that contains details of Philippe’s financial crimes.

Isabelle asks Daniel to arrange a meeting the next day of all company executives to discuss the Washington project. During the meeting, the police arrive and arrest Philippe. He is charged with Christine’s murder. His car is searched and they find the scarf with the piece missing.

Flashback: Philippe’s car, the day he gives Isabelle a lift in the rain. She tucks the scarf with the piece missing under the passenger seat.

The authorities explain to Isabelle how they believe Philippe got away with it for so long.

Isabelle travels to Washington, where her presentation is a success. She and Daniel have a drink together. He pulls out one of the containers of pills, empties a pile into his hand, and eats them. “Strong stuff,” he says of the sugar pills Isabelle had been taking the whole time to fool people. “You’ll never be like her,” Daniel tells Isabelle. “She was capable of killing, but not of love.”