ALINE

a screenplay
based on the life of Aline Bernstein

by Jeannine Dominy

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CREDITS OVER:

The seductive, vibrant jazz of the Roaring Twenties.

The CREDITS float over a series of images representing the work of Aline Bernstein and Thomas Wolfe. Examples might include: an elegant ink and water color sketch of Cleopatra (Helen Hayes' costume designed by Aline Bernstein); the cramped, smudged script from a manuscript page of Look Homeward, Angel; the credit page from a playbill: The Little Foxes, costumes by Aline Bernstein; the cover art from the first edition of The Web and the Rock; a poster advertising The Dybbuk.

The credit sequence should evoke, through music and graphics, the time and achievements of the film's protagonists.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

1 EXT. PARIS - DAY - 1925

A title card reads: Paris. August, 1925.

The camera pauses before a grand hotel, moves up the steps and through the doors.

ALINE (V.O.)
People often speak of "finding love," as if it were a lost trinket or a buried treasure. As if you had to look for love. That's not it at all.

2 INT. HOTEL - MONMARTRE

Navigating the crisscrossing streams of bellboys, doormen, maids and guests, we push through the thickening crowd to the vortex, and find: ALINE BERNSTEIN. It is hard to place her age, she possesses a rare combination of youthful exuberance and mature poise. And above all an astounding magnetism, evidenced in every fluid yet deliberate gesture.

ALINE (V.O.)
Love happens. Love happens to you, like a natural disaster, an act of God. Love happens without regard for your say so, your convenience, even your desire. It happens. That's all.

Surrounded by stacks of suitcases and trunks, she counts out and directs them for departure while simultaneously bidding numerous fond farewells with kisses and hugs and parting gifts. She has a way of making everyone feel as if they were the center of her attention, even in the midst of so much activity.

ALINE (V.O.)
I have been lucky. Love has happened to me twice. By an accidental cruelty both loves happened at the same time.

ALINE
I wish I could take all of Paris with me...this one and this one go to the baggage compartment, that to my stateroom--

CONCIERGE
Madame Bernstein, your call to New York has come through.

Aline pushes through the mess and grabs the phone as and TERRY HELBURN arrives, her husband OLIVER trailing behind supervising the luggage. Aline waves.

ALINE
Theo, yes darling, I'm leaving even as we speak. I'll see you in New York in five days.

A doorman motions to a trunk and she nods yes.

ALINE
Tell the kids and Ethel I can't--
wait!

The bellboy stops, confused.

ALINE
What? Of course I can't wait to see you, but I've got run, Theo.
(sends him a kiss)
Au revoir.

She tosses the phone to the concierge and charges to the trunk.

TERRY
Aline, if we don't leave, the ship'll sail without us.

ALINE
Would another week in Paris be so bad? I have to show you--

She rummages under a pile of plays, sketch pads etc. and pulls out a Turkish damask vest of a deep blue violet color.

ALINE
(continuing)
I bought it late last night off a street vendor. Isn't it the most marvelous color you've ever seen? I'm going to match it for the Dybbuk costumes.

TERRY
Perfect.

Aline puts it back and locks the trunk. Fishes in her purse and hands a wad of money to the concierge, winking at a bellboy. Loudly:

ALINE
Make sure everyone gets a cut.

Terry pulls her towards the door. They're almost out, when:

CARL
Aline.

A wealthy gentleman enters, blocking them. Terry gives Aline a look. Aline shrugs and moves off with the man.

TERRY
(admiring; to Oliver)
If she could bottle the hold she has on men it'd be worth a fortune.

In the corner, Aline bids good-bye to Carl.

CARL
I'll miss you. Paris through your eyes is a different place.

ALINE
We had a lovely time.

He hands her a box containing a bottle of obscenely expensive brandy with a card saying "Bon Voyage."

ALINE
Thank you Carl.

CARL
May I call...when I'm in New York?

ALINE
It wouldn't be the same.

OLIVER (O.S.)
Aline!

CARL
Raise a glass and think of me.

ALINE
I will.

He grasps her hand in farewell. Watches her scurry into the waiting car. Aline waves as the car pulls into traffic.

3 EXT. DOCKS. CHERBOURG - DAY

The ocean liner *Olympia*. Aline and her entourage climb from the car and join the swarms crowding the docks.

One passenger stands out. He's a head taller than anyone else, a huge man with strangely frightened eyes that dart about, uncomfortable at the proximity of all these people. The effect is of an elephant hemmed in by armies of mice. He carries a battered suitcase and a satchel full of papers. This is THOMAS WOLFE.

ALINE (V.O.)
Later he would write of our meeting: "He turned and saw her then, and so finding her was lost, and so losing self was found." Love happened to Tom like everything else about him: on a large scale.

Claustrophobic, Tom pushes to the rail, colliding with Aline.

ALINE
I beg your pardon, I'm so sorry--

Her eyes move with astonishment up his huge frame, resting on his dark, penetrating eyes. She squints against the sun's glare. Offering her radiant smile she moves on, exchanging an amused look with Terry over this brooding, immovable giant.

Watching her go, he takes a pen from his inside pocket and jots notes on a scrap of paper. (This is Wolfe's most consistent mannerism, throughout the film. He's always taking notes on scraps, napkins, anything at hand.) He strains to see more of her.

4 EXT. OLYMPIA. DECK CAFE - DUSK

Deck lights glimmer against fading sky and calm sea. Aline lounges in a deck chair, cocktail in hand. There's an easy elegance to her attire, a vivaciousness in her manner. She fits her time: the Roaring Twenties, in all that era's energy and glamour. Among the crowd gathered about her are: Terry and Oliver, looking very Nick and Nora-ish; James, languid with a Fairbanks mustache; and Yvonne, icy deb turned flapper.

JAMES
If Bertrand had written <u>On Marriage</u> five years ago he'd have saved me a fortune in alimony.

YVONNE
That's hardly the point.

JAMES
It's the most pressing point for me.

TERRY
Russel's not disparaging marriage, just redefining it

ALINE
That's right, the same as Isadora and Emma Goldman and all of us tried to do fifteen years ago.

TERRY
Shush darling you're showing our ages.

ALINE
He's merely stating marriage should be a mutual bond of respect and love between two people, not a form of sexual slavery.

OLIVER
Sexual slavery my--foot. I should be so lucky.

TERRY
It's the women who are enslaved, dear.

OLIVER
Oh.

ALINE
It's economics. Men have always had mistresses. Because they could afford them. Now the fairer sex can vote, and earn a living, who knows? Hmm? Perhaps marriage will have to be about love, not ownership.

JAMES
Meaning fidelity.

YVONNE
For one.

JAMES
Balls. Human nature's jealous to its core. Always has been, always will be.

TERRY
(watching Oliver peer down a blond starlet's shirt)
Indeed.

ALINE
Oliver dear.

OLIVER
Yes...What, what?

Laughter.

5 EXT. LOWER DECK. STAIRS - DUSK

NICK DEMPSEY wears a silk polka dot ascot and no socks. He would be hatefully social if he weren't so harmless. And basically decent. He heads up the steps to the first class cafe. Turns and calls to Tom.

NICK
Act like you belong.

TOM
I don't belong.

Nick rolls his eyes. Backtracks, pulls Tom up the steps.

6 EXT. CAFE - DUSK

Nick marches them into the cafe as if they owned the place. Slickly skirts the Maitre'd, surveying the room. Tom tries to run back down the stairs but Nick keeps a firm grip on him. Wolfe catches sight of Aline.

TOM
It's her.

NICK
Who? Terry!

Spotting Terry he charges across the floor. He plants a smooch on each cheek.

TERRY
Slumming it in first class again Nick? I don't know how you manage it.

Nick gives her a mock-scolding look and kisses Aline.

NICK
Can't you teach her to be more like you, Aline? Ever gracious, without airs?

TERRY
Be nice or we'll tell the maitre'd you snuck up here again.

Tom thinks she's serious and edges away.

NICK
She's joking, Tom. Everyone, I want you to meet a friend of mine, Thomas Wolfe.

The name registers on Aline. She cranes round to see him.

NICK
(continuing)
He's so tall I thought he could use an airing from those tourist class cages they call rooms.

TERRY
Planning to sleep out here, Mr. Wolfe?

Nick draws Tom through the crowd.

ALINE
Did you say Thomas Wolfe? Pull up a chair.

There's no room, so Aline makes room next to her. A waiter serves a fresh round of drinks but inadvertantly skips over Tom.

TERRY
I'm Terry. This is Aline. Oliver. James. Yvonne--
(forgetting someone)
Oh never mind, you'll never remember them all, God knows I don't.

ALINE
You didn't get a drink. Waiter!
(instant service)
What would you like, Tom?
(he's tongue-tied)
How about a champagne cocktail.

YVONNE
Where are you from, Tom?

TOM
I've been living and teaching in New York. NYU.

ALINE
Where'd you get the lovely Southern drawl?

This sets him even more off-balance.

TOM
Asheville.

JAMES
Asheville, Asheville, have I been there? That's Carolina hill country isn't it? Family trees don't fork and all that.

Smug city chuckles all round. Tom colors. Very wry:

TOM
Clod-hoppers' central. Sucking corn liquor and kissing cousins.

ALINE
Weren't your parents cousins, James?
(more chuckles)
I suspect Asheville's not at all the mountain backwater we provincial Yankees like to think.

YVONNE
You Aline, provincial? About as provincial as God.

Tom is smitten by Aline's valiant defense of him, her ease with groups of people, her charm. He speaks to her quietly.

TOM
Nick's right. You do have a way with people.

ALINE
Comes from being in the theatre I suppose. Everyone's a study.

TOM
You're in the theatre?

ALINE
Why so surprised?

TOM
I just wouldn't have taken you for--you seem so--genuine.
(pause; Aline's perplexed)
I'm afraid I don't think much of the theatre.

ALINE
Then why are you writing plays, Mr. Wolfe?

TOM
What do you know of my plays?

ALINE
They are too long by half. You are too in love with your language. But then such language.

Tom is thunderstruck to realize that Aline knows, and praises, his work.

JAMES
(gesturing a tray)
Canapés, Aline? Tom?

Aline takes one.

TOM
You've read my work?

ALINE
I have Welcome to Our City open on my nightable.

TOM
You are a witch. I feel the hex begin.

Aline laughs, good naturedly.

ALINE
Hardly. I'm a theatrical designer.

NICK
(butting in)
Only the finest theatrical designer in New York.

YVONNE
Have you had any plays produced, Tom? Any we might have seen?

Tom gets flustered and embarrassed. Quietly:

TOM
I've been teaching, and...

Aline comes to the rescue, covering for him.

ALINE
I've been trying to get my theatre to produce his latest play.

TOM
(stunned and wide-eyed)
Will they? Produce it?

ALINE
Don't get excited just yet. We're a shoestring, experimental theatre. And your play's very long and complicated.
(an afterthought)
It reads rather like a novel.

Tom looks defeated. Gulps his drink.

ALINE
(continuing)
I didn't mean to offend you--

Someone reaches in between them for an ashtray.

ALINE
(continuing)
It's a fine piece of work. You should be very proud.

Tom studies her to see if she's on the level.

JAMES
(standing)
Aline, coming to dinner? Nice to meet you, Tom.

Aline rises to join the others. Tom gets up too, a little frantic at the abrupt ending. Aline extends her hand.

ALINE
It was a pleasure meeting you Mr. Wolfe. I'm sorry we couldn't have talked longer.

Tom shakes her hand. As she's about to go, he pulls her back, almost violently. Startling her.

TOM
Meet me later. Please. I'll be on the B deck at Midnight.

He looks at her looking at his grip on her arm. Loosens it.

TOM
(continuing)
If you don't mind coming down to my level.

Aline gives him a look. Offers no definitive answer. She follows the others out, glancing back at him before she disappears through the doors. Tom, it is obvious, is smitten.

7 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The orchestra plays jazz. Aline's at a table with the Helburns and several others. Black tie. The remains of a gorgeous meal.

TERRY
I see you've made another conquest, Aline. Poor thing.

ALINE
He's a baby.

TERRY
Baby Goliath, maybe.

ALINE
Terry!

TERRY
With the face of an angel.

ALINE
Demented angel, maybe.

They chuckle like schoolgirls.

Oliver lures his wife out to dance. One of the men asks Aline

but she demurs. The table empties but for her. She watches the people swirling round the dance floor. A waiter offers her another champagne. She demures.

WAITER
Back in Prohibition country tomorrow, Madame.

ALINE
You have a point.

She takes the drink, closes her eyes and listens to the music.

FLICK
Never seen you sit one out before. Do me the honor of a dance?

Aline opens her eyes. One of the band members. Slicked back hair, thin mustache, a kinder face than one at first thinks.

ALINE
Not tonight. But would you play me something sweet?

FLICK
My pleasure.

Flick whistles a low signal to the band, flips his wrist loosely. The guy on the bass viol raps on his instrument, and the band breaks into a soft melody as Flick saunters over and takes up his sax. Aline listens for a bit. Makes a decision. Gets up and heads across the floor. Waves at Flick. He winks.

8 EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Aline emerges into the night air. We can hear the music from the dining room. Heads down the stairs. He's there.

ALINE
So. You want to discuss your play?

TOM
No. Yes. I mean...that's not why I asked you here.

ALINE
Why did you ask me here then?

Tom tries to answer truthfully but can't. Fidgets. Paces. In desperation, with a feeble effort at nonchalance, even challenge:

TOM
What precisely do theatrical designers do?

Aline raises an eyebrow, surprised. Jokingly grandiose:

ALINE
I create visual illusions that transport the audience into the writer's world.

TOM
If the playwright's any good the language should do that.

ALINE
Your language is fine, I don't know why no one will produce it. Maybe you need a set designer.

TOM
You're mocking me.

ALINE
No...Don't be angry. I only meant there's no shame in learning a little from someone else.

TOM
There's nothing anyone can teach me. We're born alone and we die alone.

ALINE
Do you really believe that?

TOM
You don't?

ALINE
I believe each makes his own way in the world. But we can still learn. We can still teach.

Tom looks at her intently, studying her.

TOM
Would you...teach me?

ALINE
What would you like to know?

TOM
(slowly)
You. Your thoughts. How you see things. What you've done in the world.

ALINE
Not so very much. I haven't written a play.

A beat.

TOM
I was wrong. You're never alone. You're loved. You have that magic about you.

ALINE
Yes, I am loved. Why shouldn't I be?

Gaze meets gaze. She's challenging him. Tom's face flickers with pain. There's something violent and smoldering behind his gentleness. The kind of desire that's irresistible. But to her surprise he reaches a tentative hand to touch her face.

TOM
How are you possible? Did your mother cheat and lie with an angel?

ALINE
(embarrassed)
Is that a line from one of your plays?

TOM
(hurt)
It will be.

ALINE
I've hurt you. That wasn't my intention.

A beat. For all his cynicism Tom finds he believes her.

TOM
I saw you board at Cherbourg. I watched you. You bewildered me.

ALINE
Why?

TOM
Your--animation. Your openness. Your ease around so many people. Your whole presence commands love. I envy you.
(pause)
Am I right, or do you think that's a line from a play too?

It's Aline's turn to feel hexed.

ALINE
Would you like a brandy, Mr. Wolfe?

TOM
(ashamed)
I have no money.

ALINE
Can I offer *you* a brandy?

He glances toward the lounge.

TOM
The bar's just closed.

Aline weighs up her gathering terrors.

ALINE
If you promise not to move, I'll see what I can do.

Aline backs toward the door. Tom leans against the rail, smoking.

9 EXT. DECK B - NIGHT

Aline rounds the corner carrying Carl's brandy and Tom's script. She's surprised and relieved to see he's still there. With the aid of a deck boy he has set up a table with two snifters and two deck chairs by the railing. Seems Tom's settling in for the night.

ALINE (V.O.)
There, in the middle of the ocean, heading home to Theo, I felt love happen for the second time. What drew me to Tom, what compelled me most that first night, was his hunger. For me. But also, it seemed, for the whole wide world. He wanted everything.

She raises the bottle. The deckboy discreetly disappears. Tom opens and pours. Aline raises her glass, not to Tom at first but to Carl.

ALINE
To absent friends.

TOM
I don't have any.

She laughs.

TOM
(continuing; not laughing)
It's true.

She stops laughing. Opens the play. He closes it on her. Holds her gaze, making it clear this is "getting acquainted time".

TOM
Can you cook?

ALINE
What an odd question.

TOM
It's not odd. You're so glamourous--but--earthy too. I imagine you cooking.

ALINE
I am the best damn cook I know. Next question.

TOM
You're a Jew.

ALINE
Question or accusation?

TOM
Where were you born?

ALINE
New York. Born and raised.

TOM
Wealthy.

ALINE
I grew up in a boarding house.

TOM
So did I!

ALINE
Wasn't it a wonderful? The warmth and food and people. I loved it.

TOM
I hated it.

ALINE
(silence; regroups)
My father was a Shakespearean actor. Joseph Frankau.

TOM
Still alive?

ALINE
Died of a heart attack when I was seventeen. My mother died when I was eleven. Cancer. It was a gorgeous family, it just didn't last very long.

TOM
Who took care of you?

ALINE
I worked my way through art school. I'm a painter by training and a designer by profession.
(pause)
I have a husband and two children. My son's almost your age.

She searches for a reaction. Tom moves away. She's expecting the worst. Instead he surprises her.

TOM
My father was a stone cutter. He was a good cutter, a real artist, except the only lucrative use for such a talent in Asheville was carving tombstones.
(pause)
My mother couldn't wait until he carved his own.

ALINE
Were their lives so empty?

Silence. Tom still isn't looking at her.

TOM
Most of the time I think we're all of us just sleepwalking, waiting for someone to wake us up and teach us how to live. And then you walk into my life.

Aline is visibly shaken. Softly:

ALINE
I wish I could touch that hurt.

TOM
(turning, grabbing her)
Teach me how to be alive, Aline. Teach me everything you know.

His clutch hurts her and he loosens it. Aline moves away to the railing. He follows. Waits.

ALINE
Being drunk on life when everyone else is sober...After a while it seems a curse...But with you...

She turns to him. He takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. She kisses back.

ALINE
I have to go.

TOM
Ask me to come with you.

ALINE
I can't.

TOM
Then don't go. Please.

She backs away. Aline makes a momentous decision: She stays. She settles into the deck chair.

DISSOLVE TO

10 EXT. DECK - DAWN

The brandy bottle is empty. They're both lying, gazing at the sky. Offshore a foghorn cries. Aline's eyes flicker, registering the dawn. She leans over Tom. He smiles at her.

ALINE
I thought you were asleep.

Tom touches her hand to his cheek.

TOM
Not possible.

She does not withdraw her hand. They sit like this a while, until, overwhelmed, Aline turns her gaze towards the lights of approaching Manhattan, glimmering in the pre-dawn mist.

ALINE
Beautiful, isn't it? The city. The lights. It's my city. I love every stone of it. There's nothing like it in the world.

TOM
I think your New York is very different from mine.

Aline fidgets, embarrassed. The real world is fast approaching and neither of them knows how to part. As the light begins to break she picks up his play. Collects herself. Reluctantly Tom rises. Escorts her to the stairs. They pause. Aline smiles awkwardly.

ALINE
Come to my theatre, Tom. Come see our play.

She holds out her hand. He takes it in both of his.

ALINE
Good-bye--night--morning.

She chuckles at her own confusion. She pulls away, his hand releasing her's only reluctantly. She moves down the steps. Looks back once. Squinting against the sun rising behind him. He just stands there. Watching her go. She hurries away.

11 EXT. DECK - DAY

The hordes on the dock wave and yell. Aline joins Terry, sandwiched in the crowd waiting to disembark. It's a sweltering August day.

ALINE
Morning, dear. Where's Oliver?

TERRY
How should I know, he's only my husband. Speak of the devil.

A rather hungover Oliver joins them, bags in hand. Kisses his wife. Their banter implies they have an open marriage, but they are wryly good humored and affectionate with one another.

TERRY
Who got lucky? The starlet or the heiress?

OLIVER
Both. And who enjoyed the pleasure of my charming wife's company?

TERRY
(tickling him under the chin)
Well you might ask.

OLIVER
Being cagey, dear? You know how that riles me.

He bites her neck affectionately, pulls back with a grimmace, clutching his head.

OLIVER
Oof. Why'd you let me move so fast?

TERRY
Why indeed.
(lighting him a cigarette)
And you, Aline? Conquer Goliath?

ALINE
More like Goliath conquered me.

TERRY
Be still my pittering heart. I thought he was more of a brooding, Heathcliffe type. I'd have never taken him for a male Venus.

OLIVER
Adonis.

TERRY
What?

OLIVER
A male Venus would be Adonis. Or is it Eros?

TERRY
Whatever. So fess up dear, what was it like?

ALINE
It's not what you think, Terry. We talked. About everything and anything, it was marvelous, I'd swear I made it up except I have the bruises to prove it.

She rubs her sore arms. Terry eyes her over her compact.

TERRY
I thought you said you just talked.

ALINE
He gets a bit emphatic.

TERRY
And where was he "emphatic-ing"?

ALINE
On deck. We stayed up on deck all night.

OLIVER
Haven't I heard this before?

The rail drops and the they're pushed forward as the crowd disgorges onto the docks.

ALINE
(to herself, softly)
Not like this. Never this.

Aline looks vainly for Tom as she is carried forward.

12 EXT. GANGPLANK - DAY

Aline spots her family, waving enthusiastically: THEO, her husband, a distinguished man in his early fifties, rather paternal compared to his flamboyant younger wife; EDLA and TEDDY, her daughter and son, eighteen and twenty-one; and ETHEL, her younger sister, quiet but impeccably dressed. Aline composes herself and waves back.

13 EXT. DECK - DAY

Tom, towering above everyone else, searches for Aline. He spots her joining her family.

14 EXT. DOCKS - DAY

Aline hugs and kisses her family. They walk back to the car together, as the chauffeur and porters fetch the trunks and cases.

THEO
By God it's good to have you back.

Aline surveys Edla, who's riding clothes and monocle are her latest teenage affectation.

ALINE
What's this?

EDLA
They're all the rage now, mother.

ETHEL
I haven't dared break it to her that monocles and riding crops have been around since the Dark Ages.

EDLA
Oh aunt Ethel--

TEDDY
(helping the chauffeur)
My theory is she thinks it'll impress the college boys.

EDLA
(pulling a face)
Was Paris glorious?

ALINE
You first. What have I missed?

TEDDY
I got a job.

ALINE
Where?

THEO
With me.

ALINE
Teddy! How marvelous, do you love it, darling? Are you enjoying it? Imagine. Two princes of Wall Street in the same family.

Aline gazes at her family adoringly. So proud of them.

ALINE
(continuing)
I missed you all.

She sweeps them all into an embrace.

15 EXT. GANGPLANK - DAY

As Tom moves onto the docks we realize there is no one there to meet him. He watches Aline sadly from a distance. Watches the Bernstein's pile into the car and drive away. He trudges off.

16 EXT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

A turn of the century brownstone on West End and 78th. Huge windows glow with light and warmth.

17 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Fireplaces, book-lined walls, antiques, paintings, polished wood and absolute comfort. Aline's family's gathered about her, mooning over the open trunks of artifacts and presents. Edla unwraps a gauzy party dress.

ALINE
...it was the most dazzling exhibit. These two prudish society dames were threatening to have it closed down for impropriety, so I turn to Terry and say loudly that come the revolution these two will be the first to go, and next thing they're running out shrieking about the Bolsheviks and the Bastille--Edla! It looks marvelous on you!

Edla twirls around, watching the delicate fabric float.

EDLA
I'll wear it to the freshman dance, oh mother, I'll be gorgeous.

ALINE
(wistful)
Edla. You're all grown up.

EDLA
Father has a present for you too, mother.

Theo hands her an intricate blueprint.

THEO
This is for you, my darling.

ALINE
What? What is it?

THEO
It's a house. Our country getaway.

ALINE
Theo it's beautiful. It's...
(pause; she's speechless)
All I brought you was a book.

She holds out a package in brown paper marked "Charring Cross Booksellers, London". Theo unwraps it and finds an exquisitely bound and illustrated edition of Shakespeare's sonnets.

THEO
But such a book.

Theo kisses her adoringly on the forehead.

ETHEL
If you all don't come now this feast I've engineered won't be fit for consumption.

Everyone heads for the dining room.

18 INT. ALINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Aline lies cradled in Theo's arms. He kisses her and gets up, reaching for his robe.

THEO
Good night love.

ALINE
Sleep here tonight.

Aline reaches for him. There is no question she loves her husband deeply. He stays.

19 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE - DAY

The bustle and flavor of Henry Street. The sign across the red brick Georgian building: NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE. Aline darts through the traffic, arms loaded with materials.

20 INT. PLAYHOUSE - DAY

On the stage several workmen carry flats. She heads into the back and up the stairs. People greet her with "Hello Aline," "Good to see you back Aline," etc. Others trail her to her office.

21 INT. ALINE'S OFFICE - DAY

A huge drafting table covered in sketches of costumes and set designs; a cutting table; stacks of books, fabrics, and costumes clutter the room. DAVID VARDI, short and wiry and pulsating with energy, crashes into the office.

VARDI
(kisses her on both cheeks)
I need to see your preliminary designs so we can go over the staging. Frank wants to know how many of last season's flats need to

-more-

VARDI (cont'd)
be dismantled and how in God's name you're going to create a gothic synagogue on the budget we've got--

ALINE
That's for me to worry about, Vardi, not you or Frank. Let me go over my sketches and then we'll meet--

AGNES MORGAN, the production manager, enters as WHITEY, their stagehand, shuffles in with a stack of mail and phone messages.

AGNES
Aline can you be ready for a production meeting at five?

ALINE
I can be ready at four. Thank you Whitey.

WHITEY
Horace Liveright's called six times to see if you've made a decision about doing his modern dress Hamlet.

ALINE
I haven't even made a decision about a cup of coffee yet.

AGNES
All right, everyone out. Now.

Agnes herds everyone out amid protests and whines. But coffee miraculously appears.

AGNES
You too Vardi, out.

Agnes shuts the door as Aline sits at her worktable and rips open one of the envelopes. The heading reads, in large letters: Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers Local Number 829. Agnes comes up and Aline tosses her the letter as she reaches for the phone.

AGNES
(reading)
"Mrs. Bernstein, We regret to inform you that your request to sit for the Union exam has been denied..." How many times does that make it, five?

ALINE
Six. Theatrical designers wouldn't even be in the Union if I hadn't campaigned for it.
(to the phone)
Mr. Johns, would you tell me please
-more-

ALINE (cont'd)
what part of your specifically male anatomy you use for designing?... Yes, this is Aline Bernstein...Well if that's not the point what is the point?...

Aline holds the phone away so Agnes can hear him yelling.

JOHNS (ON PHONE)
Mrs. Bernstein, we're trying to save you the embarrassment, you're simply not equipped--

ALINE
How can you know what I'm equipped to do?...Look Mr. Johns, you can let me take that exam and offer you proof of my credentials fair and square or you can resign yourself to hearing from me once a day everyday for the remainder of your chairmanship. Good day.

Aline hangs up the phone. Opens her briefcase and spreads out several exquisite sketches.

ALINE
(continuing)
That ought to ruin his morning. Tell me what you think of these sketches I brought back from Prague. For the opening scene we'll create a backdrop something like this...

She and Agnes huddle excitedly over the drawings, Aline's animated voice fading to a whisper as we

CROSSFADE TO

22 INT. PLAYHOUSE WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Aline kneels on the floor pouring over blueprints as the set is constructed around her, hammering and nailing echoing amid planks and scrims. Aline gets up and pulls a tape measure from her pocket. She climbs one of the ladders.

ALINE
We need I'd say four inches less for the light to come just right.

She hops down, adjusts one of the panels, grabs a hammer and nail and tacks it down. The angle of shadow changes dramatically. Frank nods approval as she hands the hammer back to him, noticing his watch. She moves to the phone in the hall.

ALINE (ON PHONE)
Theo, I'm going to be late. You better eat without me.

23 INT. BERNSTEIN PARLOR - NIGHT

Theo smiles as he cradles the phone, glancing at the clock. It's 8:45. Ethel sits in the room with him doing needlework. Shakespeare's open on the table next to his brandy.

THEO (ON PHONE)
We've already eaten, darling.

Ethel watches placidly, mouthing something to him.

THEO (ON PHONE)
(continuing)
Ethel wants to know how it's looking.

24 INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

As Aline talks into the phone she leans out, spotting a well tailored man walking in: HORACE LIVERIGHT.

ALINE (ON PHONE)
Like something that's going to be gorgeous one day. Kiss Teddy for me. Sleep well.

HORACE
Where's Aline!

ALINE
I'm right here, Horace.

Aline returns to her work. Horace comes up alongside her.

HORACE
Magnificent!
(pause, admiring)
So why haven't you said yes to Hamlet?

ALINE
I can't say yes to Hamlet.

HORACE
Can't or won't?

ALINE
Your theatre is a guild signatory. I've been refused admission to the union.

HORACE
Why?

ALINE
(gathering her breasts)
Because Gilbert Johns thinks these impair my ability to design.

Horace turns crimson. But he's furious.

HORACE
I'll hire you anyway. Johns can go to hell.

Aline smiles to herself. Whitey shuffles by. She calls without looking up from her notes.

ALINE
Any evening mail, Whitey?

WHITEY
No ma'am.

We see Aline's face register thoughtful disappointment, just for a moment, then return to work.

ALINE
Try something for me, will you fellas? Frank, could you go up and man the lighting box? Thank you.

Frank moves off. Signals when he's ready.

ALINE
(continuing)
Give me three babies down here.
(lights click on)
And four blue and red overhead. O.K. double the filter upstage right.

Aline stands back and looks at it skeptically. People stop what they're doing and watch. She's aglow with the shimmering lights as she searches the air and the play of light and shadow.

ALINE
Put a red on number two.

The filtered light comes up and the whole stage is instantly bathed in a shadowy, mystical tint. Several people gasp.

ALINE
(pleased)
You can almost touch it.

Horace applauds and others join him.

25 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Long past midnight. Aline enters. The house is quiet. She heads upstairs.

26 INT. ALINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dumps her briefcase, pulling off her shoes. Quietly opens the door adjoining Theo's room. He's fast asleep. Closes it and pads to her bathroom. Turns on the water while undressing and throws herself on the bed, glad to be horizontal. Rolls over and

reaches for her night table drawer. Pulls out Tom's tattered play manuscript. A light tap and Ethel peaks in offering mugs of steaming milk.

Aline hops up, patting the bed and turning off the bath water. She changes into her robe as they speak.

ALINE
Ethel, do you...I mean...I know I have no objectivity on this. Do you think Teddy's health is strong enough...with his weak heart...to survive the pressures of Wall Street?

ETHEL
Aline, he's fine.

ALINE
But what did the doctor say?

ETHEL
Like mother like son. He'll be more heartsick if he doesn't work.

Aline nods weakly and joins Ethel.

ALINE
Touché.

They sit cross legged on the bed like teenagers. Obviously they do this often. Ethel pulls a letter from her pocket and hands it to Aline.

ETHEL
We got a letter from Edla today. She adores school.

ALINE
She have a beau yet?

ETHEL
Several.

ALINE
How's yours? When's Charles coming?

ETHEL
For the fall line.

ALINE
Aren't you two ever getting married?

ETHEL
We're happy the way we are, thank you.

ALINE
Mm hmn. Charles's stuffy old family won't let him move to the States, eh?

Ethel's expression implies this is true.

ALINE
(continuing)
Why don't you move to Paris?

ETHEL
I don't want to live in Paris.

ALINE
Afraid we'd be lost without you?

ETHEL
Well wouldn't you?

ALINE
Yes, sister dear, but we'd manage.

ETHEL
You asking me to move out?

ALINE
(swiping her with a pillow)
Course not!
(serious)
I want to see you happy.

ETHEL
I am happy.

Ethel stands. Aline settles back, opens Tom's play.

ETHEL
Goodnight.

27 INT. ALINE'S OFFICE - MORNING

Aline bends over her work table. Whitey enters.

WHITEY
Looks like someone sent you War and Peace.

She takes the mail and studies the bulging, smudged envelope. Rips it open and pulls out a dozen pages tightly crammed with appalling script. She rummages through them. Runs to the door to catch Whitey.

ALINE
Whitey? Have a ticket for the Follies tomorrow night delivered to a Mr. Wolfe at the Albert Hotel. Thanks.

She returns to her desk and spreads out the letter.

ALINE
(reading, imitating)
"Whatever else the world may say of me, I have never truckled to the mob." Truckled? Truckled?

She can't helping laughing at the absurd pomposity of it.

28 INT. ALINE'S DRESSING ROOM - EVENING

She scrubs herself in the bath with the vehemence of a woman about to meet someone who matters.

She holds different dresses before the mirror. Several are piled on the bed. Reprimands herself.

ALINE
This is rediculous.

29 INT. PARLOUR - NIGHT

Teddy's playing jazz on the gramophone. Aline dances in, clipping on an earing and kissing Theo goodbye.

ALINE
Sure you won't join me, darling?

THEO
It's been too long a week to start braving the threatre crowd dear, I haven't the fortitude.

She tries pulling him into a Charleston.

THEO
Call me when there's a waltz on.

He kisses her good-bye. She does a few steps with Teddy, kissing him good-bye and floating out the door.

30 EXT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

The marquis reads: THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS THE 1925 GRAND STREET FOLLIES. HELD OVER TWO EXTRA WEEKS!

People of all types crowd into the theater, from immigrants in shabby corduroy to uptown types in black tie and evening gown. Aline stands before the doors, searching the street for Tom.

Aline's just turning away when a taxi pulls up. Tom's huge figure emerges. Tom's POV: we start at her feet and travel up her lushly female figure, ending on her eyes. Tom finds her breathtaking. She holds out a hand.

ALINE
I'm so glad you came.

31 INT. PLAYHOUSE - SAME

Aline leads Tom to their seats. He settles in ready for pre-theatre chit chat. Aline doesn't sit.

ALINE
Be right back.

Tom watches, a little confused, as she heads backstage.

32 INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Aline transforms. To look at her you wouldn't think she had a head for anything but work. Despite the evening clothes.

33 INT. PLAYHOUSE - SAME

The theatre is silent. Tom tries to spot Aline in the darkness. The curtain opens on a stage full of stairs and ladders going nowhere from which Hamlet leaps and bounds in comic parody. Just as the audience roars with its first laughs Aline slips into the seat next to Tom.

ALINE
(whispering)
The follies parody most of the theatre around town. This one's a spoof of Barrymore's rather acrobatic Hamlet.

34 INT. PLAYHOUSE LOBBY - NIGHT

Aline stands with Tom in the lobby, fans congealing around her.

ALINE
Alfred Lunt, this is Tom Wolfe. A playwright.

As Lunt moves off an awed Tom mouths to Aline: "Alfred Lunt"?

MRS. LOEB
Just marvelous, as always.

WOOLCOTT
Aline, you're a genius.

ALINE
This is Thomas Wolfe, a talented young playwright I know you'll be hearing much of in the future. Tom, this is Alexander Woolcott.

TOM
The critic?

Aline chuckles at Tom's naiveté. Woolcott shakes his hand.

WOOLCOTT
Yes, well, somebody has to do it.

Woolcott bids goodnight to Aline and glides off. She can see Tom sweating with discomfort. Running a finger inside his collar. She slips her arm through his and leads him away.

35 INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Inside is smoky and quaint, with the coziness of a forbidden Prohibition haunt. The table's cluttered with the remains of a fine meal. A third bottle of Chianti's almost dead.

TOM
What's the time?

ALINE
Just past midnight.

TOM
(shyly)
It's my twenty-fifth birthday today.

ALINE
Why didn't you tell me?

She motions the maitre'd. Whispers something.

ALINE
So, Mr. Thomas Wolfe. What would you like for your birthday?

TOM
Fame.

ALINE
That's dangerous. Fame as an end in itself.

TOM
I want proof. That I'm a writer. A real writer.

ALINE
What's the difference between a writer and a real writer?

TOM
Real writers get produced.

The maitre'd reappears with a split of brandy and a waiter bearing two espressos and some wicked looking dessert.

ALINE
It takes time.

TOM
Time! I haven't got time.

ALINE
You've got a lifetime.

TOM
It doesn't take long for a life to be over. I know, I've seen it happen.

He gulps back a shot. He has a strange, driven fear about him. Her eyes trace his every feature. She sits back.

ALINE
You will be famous, Tom. You'll write and touch people in ways they never imagined possible.

TOM
Will I?

ALINE
You won't have to live in a hotel anymore, you'll have a home, where you belong.

TOM
Is there such a place?

ALINE
It'll be a beautiful home. With a beautiful study. A fireplace. Walls lined with books.

TOM
I won't be alone there, will I?

ALINE
You'll have a family. A family who loves you.

TOM
You'll be there. You'll be my family.

Aline looks at him hard. She can't answer, so instead she kisses him on the cheek.

36 INT. CAB - NIGHT

Tom and Aline climb into a cab. They pull out into traffic.

TOM
Two stops, please. 78th street first.

They sit quietly, their hands just touching, praying it will be the longest cab ride in the world.

CROSSFADE TO

37 EXT. CAB - NIGHT

The cab pulls up on Aline's street. Tom escorts her out. Waits until she's safely inside. He looks wistfully up at her lovely home, the dim light left on for her. He saunters back to the cab. Hesitates. Pulls out a bill and hands it to the cabbie.

TOM
Never mind.

The cab pulls away. Tom sets off on foot, hands deep in his pockets, a solitary figure on the deserted street.

38 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wearily Aline enters her house, dumps her hat and gloves. Finds Theo reading in the parlor.

ALINE
Theo!

THEO
Couldn't sleep after all. Care to join me for a brandy?

She crosses and sits.

THEO
Eventful evening?

ALINE
The show ran smoothly. I had a late dinner with a new playwright I've found. I think he's quite remarkable. His name's Thomas Wolfe.

Aline looks at Theo, tracing every line and curve of his face, a visual rhyme to the earlier scene with Tom. Where Tom had drive and passion, Theo has strength, serenity, a humane quality uncommon in most people. He catches Aline watching him and they exchange a quiet smile. She reaches a hand to him and he grasps it with familiar warmth. She leans towards him, yearning in her eyes. He kisses her forehead.

THEO
Shall I read to you my love?

That's not what she wanted. She smiles, shakes her head. Leans back, closing her eyes. Theo returns to his book.

39 INT. PLAYHOUSE - EVENING

Aline has a mouthful of pins. She's kneeling on the stage pinning a billowy number on a young actress. Frank's on a scaffold adjusting a scrim.

FRANK
How far do you want it Mrs. B?

ALINE
Mmmm mmm mm.
(takes pins out)
Take it back two feet Frank.

ACTRESS
(swaying and flapping)
This feels heavenly, Aline. Like I'm wearing nothing.

ALINE
It's supposed to, you're a ghost.

Aline motions the girl to twirl.

AGNES
Think we can pack it in for the night?

ALINE
You all go on. I'll lock up.

Good nights from all as the lights click off. Back stage Aline pulls off her smock. Collects her briefcase. Emerges into the empty, darkened theater. When she looks up she sees Tom moving down the aisle towards her.

TOM
I had to come. I'm sorry--I--

Aline puts her fingers to his mouth to silence him.

ALINE
You don't ever have to explain yourself to me.

Tom looks at her as though she'd just saved his life. And then he scoops her up and kisses her.

TOM
Now I've found you I can't imagine a world without you in it.

Aline pauses, catching her breadth. Quietly coming to grips with her decision. She leads him to a couch. Gently takes his hand and lifts it to her buttons. Overwhelmed, Tom's huge hands fumble with the delicate fabric. And there, in the darkened theater, stage lights spookily illuminating Aline's sets, they make love.

It should be remembered in this scene that Aline is not coy, not simpering, not a swooning "girl". She's a mature and confident and passionate woman. To Tom she is at first an almost sacred gift. As she becomes real to him he becomes himself - raw power harnessed only by a poet's sensitivity.

ALINE (V.O.)
It was not Tom's vast need, nor even his terrible loneliness that made me take him in my arms that night. It was, simply, his desire. Tom laid claim to my heart with a force like nature's fury, and gave me his own with a courage I had not thought possible.

As they lie cradled in one another's arms, Aline traces the lines of his face.

ALINE (V.O.)
I could not deny such a love. I had longed for it all my life. If Theo was my compliment, Tom was my match. Passion for passion, hunger for hunger. God forgive me, I wanted them both.

Tom sweeps her up in his arms.

DISSOLVE TO

40 INT. NEW YORK UNIVERSITY - DAY

Tom strides around the class, handing out compositions. His students hang on his words. "Lycidas" is on the board.

TOM
It's not enough to read it, you must hear it. "Look homeward, angel, now, and melt in ruth."

STUDENT
What does "ruth" mean?

TOM
Grief. Remorse. Sorrow. He's yearning. Yearning for the home he left, or lost, or never truly had. Yearning for the home his very nature forced him to rebel against.

The bell rings. As they swarm out Wolfe calls two over.

TOM
Mr. Schultz. Miss Kopaski. I made a few notes for you on your last compositions.

He hands them each a stack. Twice the size of the compositions. They exchange a look. Wolfe grabs his things and bolts.

41 EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Late fall. Aline sits on a bench, unpacking a picnic basket. Aline treats food like art, to be savored exuberantly. Tom appears.

ALINE
Look at that. I defy you to find a better sandwich in all Manhattan.

As they eat Tom watches the food, watches Aline. Anyone remember the dinner scene from Tom Jones? It's driving him nuts. But there are people everywhere. Finally he jumps up and drags Aline after him.

42 INT./EXT. ALBERT HOTEL - DAY

Tom leads Aline up the ratty stairwell. The landlord emerges from his lair off the lobby.

43 INT. TOM'S ROOM - DAY

Tom opens the door. The sight that greets them makes Aline gasp and Tom remember himself. It's a pigsty. Aline walks in, looks about, sits gingerly on the single bed covered with clothes and leftover dinners and overflowing ashtrays. And countless books. Tom surveys his domain in a new light. Aline's elegance sets it in an even worse perspective. He lights a cigarette.

TOM
I shouldn't have brought you here. It makes the whole thing cheap and disgusting.

ALINE
(holds out her hands)
I don't feel cheap.

Tom hears a noise and turns quickly. The landlord's in the door. He can see Tom's hulking frame and a woman's legs behind.

LANDLORD
This is a respectable hotel, Wolfe. I won't have any improprieties here. Not in broad daylight

Aline gets up. Her elegance and refined demeanor startle him.

ALINE
And just what improprieties are we suspected of?

LANDLORD
I'm sorry ma'am. I didn't see you properly, I thought...

He's speechless under her drilling gaze.

ALINE
The only impropriety around here is the upkeep of this dump. I ought to report you to the tenants' association.

She slams the door on him. Fuming. Flops on the bed.

ALINE
Nosy, puritanical bastard.

Tom laughs. He bends to kiss her. Just as their lips meet the sound of a pot hitting the wall echoes through the room. Sounds of a fight from the adjoining apartment can be heard through the paper thin walls.

Aline laughs. Tom bends to kiss her again. Another pot. Aline laughs harder.

TOM
How long can we last with no place to go?

Aline pulls him back, kisses him gently. The pots continue.

44 EXT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

The marquis reads: Premiering December 15th: The Dybbuk.

45 INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

The performance in progress. Aline, Theo, Teddy, Edla, Ethel and Charles, her French lover, occupy house seats. Tom sits down the row. He leans forward, glances at Aline, at Theo, back at the play. Aline leans out, checks out Tom, her husband, then back to the play.

On stage a ghostly wraith possesses the soul of a young lover. The sets, music and lighting are otherworldly, a mixture of modern innovation and historical accuracy.

46 INT. CHILD'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A party in full swing. Tom enters, looking lost. Aline spots him. Extricates herself from a group and glides over. Kisses his cheek. Ethel notices from across the room. A wry look flutters across her face. Aline leads Tom over.

ALINE
Everyone, I'd like you to meet Thomas Wolfe. An extraordinary writer.

TOM
(pale with embarassment)
Oh...Aline..

ALINE
Tom Wolfe, I'd like you to meet my sister Ethel. Charles, Ethel's charming beau and business associate.

Handshakes all round. Ethel watches them like a hawk.

ALINE
Teddy and Edla, my son and daughter.

They're his contemporaries. Tom's turning green.

TOM
(awkward)
Hi!

He fumbles for a cigarette. Aline places her hand on the shoulder of a man whose back is to them. The man turns: Theo.

ALINE
Theo, I told you about Tom Wolfe.

Tom burns himself on his match.

ALINE
(continuing)
Tom, my husband Theo.

Theo extends a hand. Gracious and warm. Tom shakes it. Theo whips out an expensive lighter and lights Tom's cigarette. With the three of them standing there, the contrast is fascinating. Theo, several years older than Aline, is distinguished, dashingly handsome but gentlemanly. Very much a creature from another, more aristocratic era. A cultured European from a world of chivalry, honor, responsibility, noblesse oblige in its best sense. Tom is much younger, raw edged, fiery and passionate and dissatisfied, the twenties' answer to the angry young man, a whirlwind of seething passions and blind desires. And Aline in the middle, a combination of both, more questioning than the elder, more poised than the younger.

THEO
It's a pleasure to meet you Mr. Wolfe. Aline speaks very highly of you.

TOM
Does she?

THEO
She tells me emphatically you are the thing itself. A true poet. Very rare. I envy you.

Tom is drowning in Theo's graciousness. He wants to hate this man. Suspects he hates him more for making it so impossible.

MAN
(dragging Aline away)
Aline, I loved it. I have a project you must consider--

TOM
You're a banker, correct?
(Theo nods)
German.

THEO
I emigrated to this country when I was a little younger than you.

They hear a peel of ringing laughter and look over at Aline.

THEO
(continuing)
But it wasn't until I met Aline that America became home for me.

TOM
(jealous and guilty)
I'm surprised she had time with her career.
(gulping back his drink)
The freedoms you afford your wife must have cost your family dearly.

THEO
When our son was twelve he caught strep throat. It spread and damaged his heart beyond repair. The specialist said he'd be lucky to last the month. Aline wouldn't accept that. She built him a sun porch and sat by his bed every day for two years, keeping him alive by the sheer force of her will. That was ten years ago.

Tom looks down. Truly humbled.

THEO
(continuing)
I dare say her freedom, as you put it, has given our family much more than it has cost.

Teddy steps up, bringing Theo and Tom fresh drinks.

TEDDY
(friendly as ever)
So, Mr. Wolfe, here's to seeing your play on the stage next.

TOM
You're very kind, but that's pretty unlikely.

TEDDY
Nonsense. You must be good, mother's a tough critic.

Tom peers over his glass at this smiling young man. He's saved by the arrival of Alexander Woolcott.

WOOLCOTT
Always a pleasure, Theo. Teddy. Mr. Wolfe. Good to see you again. How're the plays coming?

Tom blushes scarlet, shrugs off the question. But he's obviously flattered to have been remembered.

Woolcott raises a glass to Aline in toast.

WOOLCOTT
Aline. Beautiful. Your finest work yet.

Theo and Tom both beam with pride. Aline is on top of the world. Believing, for a moment, she really can have it all.

47 INT. ALINE'S ROOM - MORNING

Theo enters carrying a breakfast tray and a stack of morning newspapers. He sits on the bed and opens the reviews as Aline munches toast. Reads to himself, goading her.

ALINE
(expectant)
Well?

He peers at her then returns to reading, prolonging her suspense. With a sly smile:

THEO
"Aline Bernstein weaves tapestries of pure magic with her sorceries of light and color."

ALINE
Not bad.

He kisses her between mouthfuls. They read together.

DISSOLVE TO

48 EXT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - SEVERAL DAYS LATER

Aline greets the mailman. Shuffles eagerly through the mail. Rips a thick letter open. Sits on the stoop and reads.

ALINE (V.O.)
Driven away by the warmth of my family--

49 INT. TRAIN. NORTH CAROLINA - DAY

The rattle of the tracks. Tom sits on a train staring listlessly at the passing mountains.

ALINE (V.O.)
--Tom fled home to his own.--

50 EXT. JULIA WOLFE'S BOARDING HOUSE - DAY

A rambling, incoherent structure, paint chipping. The cheaply constructed sore thumb on a solidly middle class street. A sign over the porch reads: The Old Kentucky Home. Tom pauses before it then trudges up the walk.

ALINE (V.O.)
(continuing)
--Time and again he would go back there--

51 INT. JULIA'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Tom's mother JULIA, a wiry, pinched woman with a brisk manner, and his sister Mabel, sullenly voluptuous with slightly crazed eyes, bustle back and forth between the kitchen and crowded dining room, feeding the borders. His two brothers mooch about, picking at the food. Everyone's bickering.

Tom sits in the corner, a plate of overboiled food on his lap and a glass of flat beer. His mother alternately ignores him and suffocates him with overwheening affection, his siblings prod and poke. He moves to the window, seething with inarticulate rage. Walks out the back door.

ALINE (V.O.)
(continuing)
--searching for a connection he never found, for a safety he could hardly imagine. Like a child rooting at an empty breast--

52 EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Tom stops before a mud-encrusted headstone. With a handkerchief cleans it off as best he can. We see the words "William Oliver Wolfe" emerge. He brushes off the adjacent tomb: Benjamin Wolfe, 1890-1918. He takes flowers from another grave and places them on the graves of his father and brother.

ALINE (V.O.)
(continuing)
--knowing he should find solace there and bewildered that there is none. And so he came back to me--

53 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT. ALINE'S WORKROOM - DAY

The room is airy, with huge windows, but outside we can see the construction from new high-rises blocking the light. The newspaper on the desk is marked with red circles. Aline is folding Tom's letter and slipping it back into the envelope.

ALINE (V.O.)
(continuing)
--and I became his home.

Theo comes in.

THEO
Taking a break?

ALINE
My eyes hurt.

THEO
(gesturing toward the modern skyscrapers)
These damned ugly monstrosities are stealing all your light.

ALINE
I've got a gorgeous vista of burgeoning concrete.

THEO
Obscene isn't it?

ALINE
You're the financier in the family, darling. These industrialists are your clients.

THEO
I became a financier to preserve a world, not steamroll over it.

As they talk Theo checks out her current work. She stands by him, pointing things out. Occasionally he nods. They have the familiarity, the unspoken ease of people who have lived and worked together for many years.

ALINE
Since The Dybbuk I've been getting so many offers for shows, and what with my office at the Playhouse being so cramped, and the light blocked here by noon, I thought I'd rent a workspace. A nice airy loft with light all day. Near the theater so I can go back and forth. I thought I could share the expenses with Tom Wolfe. He needs a place to work and can't afford it.

THEO
The budding playwright. Rather tall, wasn't he?

ALINE
Mm. If only his confidence could match his altitude.

She slips her arm around him as he bows over a sketch.

54 EXT. NYU - DAY

It's snowing. Aline paces nervously, waiting. Finally students pour out of the building, Tom among them. He strides over to her, enveloping her in a passionate embrace.

TOM
Water in the desert.
(kissing her; deeply affectionate:)
My little Jew.

ALINE
Why do you call me that?

TOM
(surprised)
It's exotic. That you're Jewish. I thought you were proud of it.

ALINE
I am.

Aline dismisses her unease. They links arms and walk.

ALINE
How was home?

TOM
(sarcastic)
My family displayed their customary and magnificent genius for futility and misery.

ALINE
Well. I'm about to display my customary genius for finding gems in the most unlikely places.

She drags him across the street.

55 EXT. EIGHTH STREET - DAY

An old building on a dilapidated street.

56 INT. LOFT - DAY

The stairwell looks like a demolition sight. But when she swings open the door on the top floor they step into a gorgeous loft. Airy and spacious, with lots of light, huge windows, a skylight, wood floors and old fashioned moldings, a large bay window seat. It's uncared for, but underneath the dust and grime it has all the grandeur of old New York.

They stand in the middle of the room. Aline says nothing, watching for Tom to realize what's happening.

TOM
What?

ALINE
It's mine.

TOM
Yours?

ALINE
Ours if you like.

Awkward silence. Aline continues nervously.

ALINE
I've rented it. That part's my office, and if you like you can have that part to write in. It's two minutes from NYU and the theatre. And there's a gorgeous farmer's market, one block south. Won't it be grand?

She waits anxiously for his response. He looks about.

TOM
To write in, or to live in?

She throws her arms around him. He picks her up and spins her.

TOM
One condition. You let me pay my share.

She pulls a face but he covers it with kisses.

57 EXT./INT. LOFT STAIRS - DAY

Spring. Aline races up the steps, carrying baskets of food and books.

58 INT. LOFT - DAY

The loft is transformed. One area is set up with a drafting table for Aline. The rest is beautifully if simply furnished. Tom's books topple in piles round his work place.

Aline enters, full of new love's excitement. Tom meets her at the door. This is ritual for them now. As she places the baskets on the table, showing him the books she brought him and wafting the rich foods invitingly, he removes her clothes and carries her to the bed.

59 INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Aline cooks. Across the room she can see Tom in the bathroom shaving as he recites to her.

TOM
"To see a world in a grain of sand,
and a Heaven in a wild flower, Hold
Infinity in the palm of your hand,
and Eternity in an hour."

ALINE
(looking up)
Browning. My father loved Browning.

Half done, one side of his face still covered in lather, he comes back to the kitchen. He takes her chin in his hand and turns her face, holding it, looking into it.

ALINE
(becoming self conscious)
What? What?

He memorizes her features, reminding himself she's real, she's there, she's with him.

60 INT. LOFT - EVENING

An indoor picnic. All the windows and skylight are open. A breeze touches the curtains. The first stars and city lights flicker. Soft classical music fills the air. Candles glimmer. The remains of a gorgeous dinner cover the table. Bowls of fruit and biscuits, glasses of ruby wine. Aline lounges in a silk kimono, sketching. Tom writes, using the top of the fridge as a desk.

TOM
"For him she was the perfection of
womanhood, eternally female, his
goddess and muse. He loved every
curve of her body, every line of her
flower shaped face. She was
timeless, the harvest of all desire."

ALINE
That's beautiful.

TOM
That's you.

Aline, for once, is speechless.

61 INT. UNION HALL - DAY

Men file into a room, stopping at a trestle table, where an official logs them in and hands each an exam.

Aline appears at the desk. Without looking up one man holds out a hand to accept her slip. She ignores him and tries to take the exam form.

The man looks up. Exasperation doesn't begin to describe his reaction.

JOHNS
Go home, Mrs. Bernstein.

ALINE
You'll have to have the police carry me out. I'm taking this exam.

People stop what they are doing to watch.

JOHNS
Mrs. Bernstein, you are embarrassing yourself.

ALINE
No, I am not. I am embarrassing you.

JOHNS
You are not eligible to sit for this exam.

ALINE
Why not? Because I am a woman? Would you like to explain to me the difference between us and what relevance it has to this profession?

Johns looks away embarrassed. Turns to the next person.

JOHNS
Next?

Aline addresses the crowd.

ALINE
Could anyone in here please tell me the difference between a man and a woman?

No response. The whole room is staring at her.

ALINE
No?
(turns to Johns)
Shall I show you?

She starts unbuttoning her shirt.

JOHNS
Mrs. Bernstein. Mrs. Bernstein please!

She continues disrobing until Johns, desperate, covers her with an exam. She snatches it from him.

ALINE
Thank you.

She pads to her desk, doing up her buttons. Begins the exam.

62 EXT. UNION HALL - EVENING

Aline is among the many drained men staggering out of the building. Theo waits for her with the car. And flowers.

ALINE
Theo, what are you doing here?

THEO
A six hour exam, I thought you deserved an escort.

He kisses her and opens the door.

THEO
Besides, we're due at the Loeb's in an hour and I wanted to be sure you'd show.

Aline groans, pulling a face.

JOHNS
Bernstein!

Theo turns.

JOHNS
(continuing; to Theo)
Can't you keep better control of your wife?

THEO
(serene but cool)
Mr. Johns, long before Aline Frankau did me the honor of becoming my wife, she was a very capable and talented *adult*. She still is.

They climb in the car and pull out, waving at a peeved Johns.

63 INT. LOEBS' DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A formal banquet. Of the stuffy variety. A dozen businessmen and their tightlipped wives. Ellen's the matronly type, Silvia's a society dame, Harold's portly and Carl's all gentleman.

ELLEN
So if you get into this--
(with distaste)
union--why on earth would you continue at the Playhouse? Broadway means better money, better resources-

ALINE
I believe theatre is for everyone, not just the rich. The Neighborhood Playhouse is the only theatre in this city committed to that.

SILVIA
I know it's very *de rigeur* attending shows at the Playhouse these days, but it's such a dreadful neighborhood, I don't know how Theo can allow you to go there everyday.

ALINE
It's not for Theo to allow me or not. And it's not a bad neighborhood, just an immigrant one. Most of them Jewish refugees, not unlike my grandparents and yours.

Silvia blushes. Theo tenses. As a maid clears the dishes Carl Loeb stands at the head of the table, taps a glass.

CARL
Now that we've plied you with wine and appealed to your appetites, I'm hoping you're all feeling quite generous. As you know, this dinner is to raise a special campaign fund for the next president of the United States, Herbert Hoover.

Aline scowls at Theo.

HAROLD
Count me in, Carl.

CARL
Thank you Harold. Silvia.

THEO
Put me down for the usual.

CARL
Good man Theo. My thanks Aline.

ALINE
Don't thank me, Carl, I'm voting for Al Smith.

Silence. Theo grimmaces. Aline notices all eyes on her.

ALINE
Personally I don't understand how even the Republicans can be short-sighted enough to vote for a man as tiny-minded as Herbert Hoover.

CARL
Perhaps we should adjourn to the den for this part of the evening, rather than boring the ladies--

ALINE
We're not bored, Carl, we've had the vote for ten years now, remember?

THEO
(rising)
Yes but some of us would like a cigar.

The table disperses. The men head for the den, the women for the parlor as a maid rolls out coffee, brandy and sherry. Aline, not thinking, follows the men until Theo turns at the door and gives her a look.

ALINE
Oops, I forgot. Republicans still segregate.

She turns and glides into the parlor, shutting the doors with a sly look. She is not unaware that for all her outspokenness she is the most desired woman there.

64 INT. BERNSTEIN CAR - NIGHT

Aline and Theo ride in silence. Theo's pouting.

ALINE
Do you want me to not have an opinion of my own, is that what you want?

THEO
Perish the thought.

Aline mulls. Snuggles up to him until he has to smile.

65 EXT. MARKET - DAY

Aline moves through the farmer's market selecting carefully from the succulent fruits and vegetables. Tom carries the basket. Sulking. She turns to face him. Waits him out.

TOM
I saw you and Theo in the society pages today.

ALINE
Is that what this is about?

Pause. He fishes in his bulging pockets for a crumpled letter. Tosses it to her. She smoothes it open but he grabs it back and throws it in the gutter.

TOM
Don't bother. Another rejection.

ALINE
We'll submit your play somewhere else.

TOM
There is nowhere else. I've submitted it everywhere worth bothering with. That was the last.

ALINE
It's not the only play you'll ever write.

TOM
When do I have time with my teaching? Anyway it doesn't matter. It's garbage.

He drops the basket, scattering half the contents. Digs in his pockets and pulls out handfuls of the scraps and napkins containing his notes. Tosses them on the ground.

TOM
All garbage. Why did you tell me I could do this? Why did you tell me I was a writer?

Aline bends down and retrieves her purchases.

ALINE
You are a writer. What I don't know is if you're a playwright.

TOM
Don't play with me.

ALINE
Don't you play, Tom. You're so in love with the *idea* of being a writer you've forgotten what writing requires. You don't know anything about the theater, you never did.

TOM
Three years at Harvard means nothing?

Aline continues her shopping.

ALINE
That's academics, that's not theater. Theater is a collaborative medium,
-more-

ALINE (cont'd)
and collaboration's hardly your strong suit. It requires a very disciplined kind of writing. What I don't understand is why you didn't turn to writing novels long ago.

Tom stops. She's hit a nerve.

TOM
Novels scare the bejeezus out of me.

ALINE
Your imagination needs the scope of a novel. I think you should try.

He mulls this over. He trails after her. She takes a bite of celery and hands him some.

TOM
I'm not hungry.
(pause; takes it)
Maybe just a little of that. And that. And maybe this.

He grabs a plum and takes a bite out of it. Aline smirks.

66 INT. LOFT - DAY

Tom lies on the couch writing. Stops scribbling. Stews. Scribbles. Gets up and paces. Leans against the fridge and writes. Goes great guns then stops. Eyes Aline. Feeling his stare she looks up. He comes over. Bends over her, studying her sketches.

TOM
(caressing her hair)
My little Jew. I'd give my right arm for a little of your focus and precision.

She demonstrates for him, a swift line here, a color there, and the sketches change from elegant to regal to jaunty. He picks up her hands and studies them. She lifts his and kisses them.

He pulls her over to the bed. They lie there, looking up through the skylight.

ALINE
My aunt Nana always insisted the best way to talk to someone you care about was lying down. You can say things you never would upright.

TOM
You know we've never woken up together?

ALINE
I've been invited to London this summer to design a production at Sadler's Wells.

Tom rolls away from her. He's about to pout when:

ALINE
(continuing)
Would you like to come with me?
(pause)
You could consider it an advance on your novel. Three months. No teaching. Just writing. And me.

Tom rolls back on top of her and covers her with kisses.

67 INT. ALINE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Aline and Ethel pack steamer trunks, clothes strewn everywhere. Theo glides in bearing drinks.

ETHEL
It's dispicable when our best and brightest have to go abroad to work because of our own damn unions.

THEO
Careful Ethel, you're sounding like a Repulican.

ALINE
I know I passed that exam. They'll have to let me in. In the mean time being asked to Sadler's Wells is no small potatoes.

She holds up two dresses for Theo's perusal.

THEO
The blue-green. I always liked that one.

She sits on his lap.

ALINE
You're alright about my going this summer, Theo?

THEO
You go to Europe every summer, why would this be any different?

She rests her cheek against his gratefully.

DISSOLVE TO:

68 EXT. ENGLAND. COUNTRYSIDE. CAB - DUSK

Aline and Tom ride in a cab through the lush English countryside.

ALINE (V.O.)
It must seem unbelievable that I, a solidly married woman, set off so easily for Europe with my lover. But ours was an uncommon era: the Roaring Twenties, the Jazz Age. We who had seen the Great War believed that life was fleeting, that freedom was a duty, that love meant more than marriage and the only fidelity was truth. We did not lie. I had not yet learned--would not learn for a long time--that love is not so simple as honesty.

Aline reaches for Tom's hand.

69 EXT. COTTAGE - DUSK

The car turns down a country lane and pulls up in front of a charming cottage. They get out and look about, breathing deeply the sweetly scented air. As the driver unloads their luggage Aline buries her face in wisteria. Detects a whiff of something else and pulls back the bushes: sheep. In miles of green pasture.

ALINE
Absolute peace. No noise. No chatter. No people except when you want them.

TOM
I thought you loved all the people and clutter of you're beloved New York.

ALINE
I do but I can love both, can't I?

She skips inside.

70 INT. COTTAGE - DUSK

It's a perfect English Eden. Aline opens the latticed window and honeysuckle tumbles onto the window frame.

TOM
You don't have to go home tonight.

She takes his hand and leads him up the stairs.

71 INT. COTTAGE. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Tom creeps out of bed and tiptoes into the bathroom.

72 INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Quickly and quietly he brushes his teeth, washes his face, combs his hair.

73 INT. COTTAGE. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

He slips back into bed. Propped on his elbow, he watches Aline sleep. Amazed that she's here with him. Her eyes flutter open and she snuggles close to him.

ALINE
Good morning.

TOM
Yes. It is.

74 EXT. COTTAGE DAY

Tom sits on the back stoop, drinking coffee and snooping through the newspaper. He hears a bicycle bell and looks up. Aline's riding past.

ALINE
It's a glorious day. Come out, Tom.

He steps onto the drive. She rides around him.

ALINE
You don't use those muscles nearly enough. They'll atrophy.

He takes up the other bike and clambers on. It's a bit too small for him and his knees jut out like a chicken's.

TOM
I haven't ridden a bike since I was a kid.

ALINE
(laughing at him)
It's too small for you.

TOM
I'll manage.

He races out past her.

75 EXT. MEADOWS - DAY

Aline and Tom bike through the gorgeous English countryside. Racing, laughing, singing, fighting the hills. Topping one they roll into a herd of sheep. Large, beautiful woolly creatures swarming about them. Stubborn as bedamned. Dogs barking, herding their wards. Shepherds languid and amused as Aline and Tom teeter on their bikes and find themselves surrounded and herded along. And soon they're all howling with laughter.

76 INT. COTTAGE - EVENING

Aline pads into the parlor with a tea tray. Tom's dozing by the fire. She curls up on pillows by his chair, places her head in his lap. He lays his hand on her cheek.

77 EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING

Aline waits on the platform. Boards the train.

78 EXT. SADLER'S WELLS - MORNING

Aline walks into the grand building.

79 INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

Tom trundles down, half asleep. Snoops, smiling, through the breakfast and instructions Aline left him. Pours himself a coffee from the thermos she filled for him.

80 INT. SADLER'S WELLS - DAY

Aline reviews designs with several theatre people on the bare stage.

81 INT. COTTAGE. DINING ROOM - DAY

Tom sits at the dining table, blank paper before him, happy and eager.

A series of shots, weather and clothes indicating different days:

Tom writes. Stops. Balls the page up and tosses it.

Tom writes. Balled up pages lie in piles around him.

Stacks of paper everywhere. Tom mopes. Smokes. Scribbles large X's across his pages. Restless and frustrated.

82 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DUSK

The whistle blows. The train pulls in and pours forth its weary passengers. Aline, schlepping armloads of fabrics, designs and scripts skips happily off the train.

83 INT. COTTAGE. PARLOR - EVENING

Aline bursts in carrying her work and a basket of groceries. Exuberant. Tom's sprawled on the couch. She kisses him but he doesn't budge.

84 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

She dumps her things and starts dinner. Talks to him through the open door.

ALINE
I saw the most wonderful designs today for a West End play, really inspiring.

TOM
You're late.

ALINE
The meeting ran over and then I stopped at the butcher. I found us a perfect set of lamb chops.

TOM
That's the third time this week.

ALINE
Lamb chops?

TOM
That you're late.

Aline tenses. Living with Tom isn't as idyllic as it sounded in theory. She pulls out a bowl of trifle stashed in the fridge. Glides into the parlor and forces a spoonful on him.

ALINE
Bribery.

Reluctantly he takes it. Chews. Swallows. Smiles in spite of himself.

85 INT. PUB - NIGHT

Aline plays darts. Tom sits in a booth, a little drunk, idly scribbling on a napkin. Several other damp, stained napkins are covered with his scrawl. He rips this last up as Aline comes over with a fresh pint. She sits. Picks up the shredded napkin.

ALINE
There a paper shortage?

TOM
Lautrec sketched on napkins.

ALINE
He was also 5'2 with a gimp and a social disease.

Tom smiles. Briefly.

TOM
Don't sweat it, Aline. Ain't worth the trouble.

He plonks his wet glass down in the middle of the napkins.

86 INT. COTTAGE. BEDROOM - MORNING

Tom awakens, hungover, to the sound of a car horn.

87 EXT. COTTAGE - MORNING

Aline, decked in hat and sunglasses, sits at the wheel of an open touring car, riding the horn. Tom appears at the upper window, lighting a cigarette.

TOM
What's this?

ALINE
I hired it. Get your clothes on handsome, we're going to London.

TOM
We? What about your job?

ALINE
It's Saturday.
(Tom squints at her)
Come on. Best cure for cabin fever is getting out of the cabin.

Tom finally smiles. Disappears inside.

88 EXT. LONDON. CHARRING CROSS - DAY

Tom wanders the bookstalls of the bustling street.

89 INT. SHOP - DAY

Aline keeps one eye on Tom through the window as she furtively purchases several beautiful leather ledgers.

90 EXT./INT. SAVILLE ROW - DAY

A very posh men's store. Aline watches as Tom is fitted for a suit. The one he's trying is miles too small. A short, meticulous clerk struggles to measure Tom.

CLERK
This will be extra.

91 INT. THE SAVOY - DAY

Teatime. A waiter watches, fascinated, as Tom devours an entire plate of finger sandwhiches. Aline chuckles.

92 INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

Aline wanders the abbey. Finds Tom in Poet's Corner. Kneeling by Milton's grave. Hushed and reverant.

93 EXT. CAR - NIGHT

Aline glances at Tom. He's quiet and withdrawn.

94 INT. COTTAGE. PARLOR - NIGHT

A fire in the hearth. Aline sketches. Tom looks up from his work. Watches her. Rises and paces. Thumbs through a pile of her drawings, so precise and fluid.

TOM
Nothing stops you, does it. Your discipline's not human.

Aline smiles, keeps working.

ALINE
Be patient with yourself Tom, you'll get there.

The more she works, the angrier Tom gets.

TOM
How do you know that?
(she looks up)
Do you never have doubts?

ALINE
About you? No.

Tom storms about, ready to burst. But there's a quality to his rage--and hurt--we've never seen before. This isn't a tantrum. This matters--profoundly. Aline gets very still. Like someone in the company of a very powerful wild animal. She has to find a way to reach him. She cannot allow the man she loves so much to hate himself so utterly.

TOM
About me, about you, about anything. You never waiver, you have such purpose, I pretend to have purpose, blustering about, the writer extraordinaire, ordained with the quill divine, but the doubts gnaw at me constantly, that I can't do it, that I can do it but it won't matter, they never go away, they drown everything else out, but you, you just go on, all the damn time...

Tom's breathless, speechless with helpless misery and anger.

ALINE
Courage isn't lack of fear. It's indifference to it.

TOM
Then I am a coward. I can't. I can't do it, I can't write a novel, I can't write anything--

ALINE
You've been writing for weeks.

Suddenly he tosses all his papers.

TOM
Oh, yes, indeed. You could fill a warehouse with all the paper I spew out. But it doesn't add up to anything, Aline. I can't turn it into anything.

He continues to toss his pages about the room as Aline scrambles after them, desperately trying to save them.

ALINE
Stop it.

TOM
It's junk, all junk.

ALINE
This book is mine, I won't let you destroy it.

He fights her for the pages, ripping them to shreds, until finally they're both on the floor in a pile of paper. Tom's exhausted and desperate.

TOM
Tell me how to do it, Aline. Tell me how.

Very quiet:

ALINE
Give me your secrets. The ones that hurt.

This drills him. He falls into her arms and weeps.

95 INT. COTTAGE. KITCHEN - MORNING

Tom trundles down. Finds his usual gorgeous breakfast. But on the plate is a present. He rips off the paper: the ledgers Aline bought him. He fingers them tenderly.

96 INT. SADLER'S WELLS - DAY

The previously bare stage is now half finished. Aline works diligently, directing the construcition.

97 INT. COTTAGE - DUSK

Aline bursts in, throwing her stuff on the table. Nervous.

ALINE
I'm so sorry darling, the meeting went over and I missed the early train.

She throws stuff round the kitchen in an effort to get the dinner started ASAP. Barrels into the dining room with some thrown together hors d'oeuvres.

ALINE
Tom--

She finds him bent over his ledgers. He looks up and smiles.

TOM
Hi love.

He returns to his work. Aline's jaw drops. She glides back to the kitchen, amazed and pleased.

CROSSFADE TO

98 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom's in the same position. Still intently working.

99 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aline talks quietly on the phone.

100 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Theo's on the phone.

THEO
Goodnight love. Send you a kiss.

He hands the phone to Ethel.

ETHEL
You're all right then darling?...One of these summers we're going to have to come with you...stay well...Call next month...

Ethel hangs up. Pensive. Pours herself and Theo a brandy. But she fumbles and spills some. Theo looks up from his book.

THEO
It's all right you know, Ethel. You shouldn't worry.

Ethel brings over the brandies. Determined to protect him.

ETHEL
I'm not worried.

THEO
(pause)
A nature as rich as Aline's needs more than--being a wife can give her. I knew that when I married her. She loves us, and she's happy. What more could you ask?

ETHEL
I could ask that she be here.

THEO
What, sitting around, doing needlepoint? That wouldn't be Aline.

She puts on a smile for him.

101 INT. COTTAGE. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Aline hangs up. Stares at the phone for a beat. Tiptoes towards the dining room. Tom doesn't notice. She heads upstairs.

102 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aline awakens. Tom's not beside her. She reaches for the clock. It's three a.m. She rises and pads down the hall. From the top of the stairs she can see the light still burning in the the dining room. She smiles and pads back to bed.

103 INT. COTTAGE - MORNING

Aline comes downstairs. The dining room's empty. She moves into the kitchen. A rather clumsy breakfast has been laid for her. And on her plate are three of the ledgers. She fingers them delicately.

She looks up with a start. Tom's sitting on the stoop smoking. He hasn't been to bed.

ALINE
May I?

He nods. She opens them up and starts reading.

DISSOLVE TO

104 INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Tom watches from the parlor. Aline's still reading as she speaks on the phone.

ALINE
...I absolutely can't come in today...just follow the blueprints...mmhm.

She hangs up and wanders off, still reading.

DISSOLVE TO

105 INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Aline's sitting on the bed, holding the ledgers. Tom comes in. Nervous. Smoking.

TOM
What didn't you like?

ALINE
Coming to the end.

TOM
No really.

ALINE
Really.

She kisses him tenderly. And what ensues is the tenderest and most exquisite love scene of their lives together.

106 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

A series of shots: Aline sketches; cooks; putters in the English garden, pruning the flowers or picking berries; and all the while Tom writes...in the dining room, in the parlor, on a chair in the garden.

ALINE (V.O.)
We were innocents hiding from the adult world of worry. I watched as Tom wrote happily, with confidence, without pain. Writing for me, giving me all he had. Time seemed only ours. Even as we both came to suspect love had changed. We had changed without knowing it.

Aline feeds him the strawberries she's picked wild, popping them in his mouth without talking while he works.

107 INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Through the windows we can see it's late summer. Aline's reading Tom's novel. Absorbed. Tom finishes another ledger and flips it shut. Adds it to the pile. It's obvious he's written a tremendous amount. But he's looking pretty glum. He shifts restlessly. Again. And again. In that way people do when they want someone's attention without asking for it.

TOM
Aline, I can't go back.

She looks up. Shocked.

TOM
(continuing)
I can't go back until the novel's finished.

Aline puts down her reading. Thinks. Hard. She paces. Tom waits for a reaction.

ALINE
Stay as long as you need to.

She takes up her bag, withdraws pen and check book, sits.

TOM
I can't accept any more from you.

ALINE
Yes you can.

Tom rushes over, full of gratitude and kisses.

TOM
I'll repay you. I will.

ALINE
(pause)
I'm going to miss you terribly.

The realization of their separation only now occurs to him.

TOM
Stay here with me.

ALINE
I can't.

TOM
You keep me sane.

ALINE
My work's in New York.

TOM
You care more for your work than for me.

ALINE
If I asked you to choose between your writing and me, what would you choose?

TOM
That's different.

ALINE
How different? How?
(Tom pouts)
You think your works more important than mine, is that it?
(silence)
It is, isn't it?

TOM
No. It's just...I'm trying to do something really important here...something you inspired me to do, and I can't do it without you.

ALINE
Like water and air. Your asking me to make an impossible choice.

TOM
We have to make impossible choices sometimes, don't we?

Ouch. That cuts her. She reaches for him but he shakes her off. Hurting her deeply. He moves into the dining room and pours a drink. Smokes and sulks.

Moments later Tom hears music from the gramophone. Aline comes in, dressed up like a femme fatal, a Twenties flapper replete with long cigarette, red lipstick and spangles. She slithers across the room, singing to him, dancing round him, stripping vampishly down to her satin camisole. We must rely here on "Aline's" comic genius.

TOM
I won't. You won't make me laugh.

ALINE
Oh yes I will. That's my job.

She's too good. And too irresistible. It's impossible for him not to crack up.

108 INT. RESTAURANT - SOUTHAMPTON - DAY

A foghorn cries mournfully. Aline, in traveling clothes, sits with Tom at a table by a window with a view of the cliffs and ships docked in the harbor. Both are red-eyed and tense. Playing with their untouched food.

TOM
Marry me, Aline.

Aline's breath catches in her throat.

ALINE
That's impossible.

TOM
It's not impossible to divorce Theo, he'd never deny you anything. And it's not impossible to marry me. It takes a blood test and a piece of paper.

ALINE
I can't.

TOM
Won't.

ALINE
All right. Won't. Tom, I'm twenty years older than you.

TOM
I've told you over and over that doesn't matter, you're timeless to me.

ALINE
It doesn't matter now. And maybe it won't matter next year, or even ten years from now. But someday it will, you'll want a family, you'll want your youth back, and you'll blame me for taking both.

TOM
I don't believe that's why. Love's a selfish animal. It wants what it wants no matter who pays. The fact that you're here with me instead of home with your husband's proof of that.

Low blow. Aline gasps. Tries to hide her tears.

ALINE
I have always been honest with you. I won't leave my family. I love them. But it is a very different love from what I feel for you. Not greater, just different.

TOM
Why do you bother to love me at all.

ALINE
I couldn't not.

Silence.

TOM
I guess there's no hope for us then.

Aline tries to calm her shaking but finally, overwhelmed, gestures helplessly and flees the restaurant.

109 EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Aline leans against the wall, crying her heart out. Tom walks up. Watches her. Reaches for her. She pulls away, hiding her tear-stained face. He tries again and she crawls into his arms.

TOM
I didn't mean it. I could never leave you. Never. I promise.

110 EXT. DECK - DAY

Tom and Aline are in a desperate clutch while all around them people are revelling, streamers flying from ship to dock. A boathorn clangs.

STEWARD
Last call. All ashore that's going ashore.

Aline and Tom part reluctantly. She watches as Tom retreats down the gangplank. He stops on the dock. His eyes lock on Aline's. The ship slowly moves from the dock. But it is Tom who turns away first and walks off.

CROSSFADE TO:

111 EXT. STREET - BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Exiting the car, Aline and Theo link arms as they climb the steps.

112 INT. OFFICES OF BERNSTEIN AND LOEB - DAY

Several men are crowded round two open windows. One of them beckons Theo as he walks by. Theo pushes through to see. A democratic rally's blocking traffic on Wall Street. And who's on the band box but Aline.

ALINE
Ladies, be independent, don't vote with your husbands, vote for Al Smith! The thinking woman's candidate!

CARL
I see your wife's back in town, Theo.

Theo rolls his eyes. But he's pleased.

THEO
Yes. Yes she is.

113 INT. PLAYHOUSE - NIGHT

Aline pours over her designs. Frank and the workmen hammer away as she directs them. Agnes watches, skeptical.

AGNES
What is it?

ALINE
I'm calling it a scenery hull.

AGNES
A what?

ALINE
A scenery hull. Look.

With Frank's help she shows Agnes how the device lets them change scenes rapidly and smoothly.

ALINE
You'll have the smoothest Cherry Orchard in town.

Aline sees Theo striding down the aisle.

ALINE
(continuing)
Theo, what are you doing here?

THEO
Came home from work and found this.
(holds up a letter)
It was addressed to Mr. A. Bernstein.
I think they meant you.

Aline rips the envelope and reads.

ALINE
I'm in the union!

Cheers all around. She throws her arms round Theo.

THEO
Congratulations, "Mr." Bernstein.

FRANK
It's about time.

Agnes scavenges some champagne and pops it with fanfare.

CUT TO

114 INT. COTTAGE. ENGLAND - DAY

The previously quaint cottage is now a wreck. Shutters are drawn

against the daylight. Tom lies sprawled on the couch under a pile of clothes. Empty bottles and overflowing ashtrays surround him like the remains of small encampments.

A bang at the door rouses Tom. First a groan then his head burrows its way out from under the clothes. He staggers up. Opens the door on a plump maid carrying a basket of groceries.

MAID
(bustling in)
Mrs. Bernstein sent me. Thought you might need help looking after the place--
(stops; stunned at the sight)
She wasn't kidding.

She eyes Tom quizzically. Picks up clothes strewn in her path and yanks open the blinds on her way to the kitchen. Tom squints. Calling after her:

TOM
You got anything in that basket for a hangover?

He sinks on the couch. Listens to her rattle pans around.

CUT TO

115 EXT. UNION HALL - NIGHT

A grungy part of town. The glossy car looks out of place as the chauffeur helps Theo and Aline out.

A rough-looking man in shirtsleeves sits on a stool by the door watching them. He bars the entrance when they approach.

GUARD
Sorry. Union members only.

ALINE
But I am a union member.

GUARD
Impossible lady. No women allowed.

Aline presents her letter and union card.

ALINE
Look. Aline Bernstein. You'll make me miss my own induction if you don't let us in.

The man studies the i.d. and Aline. Repeatedly.

GUARD
Beg pardon, ma'am.

He opens the door and ushers them in.

116 INT. UNION HALL - NIGHT

The room is packed. All men. In shirtsleeves and boisterous as hell. The noise subsides into astonished silence as Aline takes her seat. Theo waits in the back.

JOHNS
We'd like to welcome the following new members to the Brotherhood of Union Local 829.

As Johns reads the roll call, the men next to Aline offer her cigarettes and chewing gum continually in an effort to have something to say to this glamorous lady in their midst.

JOHNS
Brother Bernstein.

Aline stands. Glances excitedly in Theo's direction. He blows her a kiss. Frank claps and hoots and at his instigation the whole room erupts into cheers.

117 EXT. UNION HALL - NIGHT

As the Bernstein's exit they are bombarded by the press, all jabbering at once.

REPORTER
Mrs. Bernstein, how does it feel to be the first woman allowed in the Union?

REPORTER
Will this open the doors for other women, and will they follow?

REPORTER
Mr. Bernstein, as a member of management, how do you feel about having a wife in the workers union?

REPORTER
What difference will this make for you and what will it prove?

Theo kisses her hand. Aline stops.

ALINE
It proves that a woman capable of doing a job as well as a man deserves professional respect. And that makes all the difference in the world.

118 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Aline and Theo having a quiet moment. A fire in the hearth. Him stroking her hair. Cradling his brandy. Music on the gramophone. Her union card propped up on the table.

THEO
The looks on their faces.

ALINE
Fun wasn't it?

THEO
I'm so proud of you, Aline.

She raises her face to his. Basks in the unambiguously generous adoration evident in his eyes. So different from Tom.

ALINE
Theo--

She wants to speak. Doesn't know how. Theo rubs the furrow from her brow.

THEO
No worries. Not tonight. This is your night.

ALINE
(smiles; caresses him)
I love you. I do.

THEO
I know.

He kisses her forhead.

119 EXT. ARMONK. UPSTATE NEW YORK - DAY

Late fall. The house is almost complete. Charles saunters across the lawn to the half finished gazebo. Finds, to his amusement, the entire Bernstein family on their hands and knees, comparing tile colors.

TEDDY
I think it should be burnt sienna.

ETHEL
Burnt umber.

THEO
Brown.

TEDDY
The light does fall nicely on the brown.

ALINE
You're all wrong, it should be terra cotta.

Charles chuckles. They all look up.

TEDDY
Charles! I thought you'd left for Paris.

CHARLES
I got a week's respite. To my great delight.

Ethel, never demonstrative, doesn't get up, but she grins hugely. Charles surveys the gazebo.

TEDDY
Father's gazebo.

THEO
For dodging the theater talk when it gets too thick.

CHARLES
Nice. But I'd go with the terra cotta.

ALINE
No, it is Theo's gazebo.
(kissing Theo's head)
Brown it is.

Teddy and Ethel protest the decision. A Western Union man arrives bearing a cable for Aline.

MAN
Telegram for Mrs. Aline Bernstein.

Silence. Aline gets up and signs for it. Rips it open: COMING HOME MY DARLING STOP DEC 20 STOP MEET ME DOCKS STOP TOM. She clutches it to her briefly then slips it in her pocket. Turns to her expectant family. A very awkward moment. She tries hard for a tone of nonchalant honesty.

ALINE
From Tom Wolfe. He's coming back from England next month. Hopes I can get him published now.

Silence again. Charles taps out a cigarette, surveying the situation with the amused eye of a sophisticated European. Ethel's tightening jaw. Teddy's deliberate innocence. Theo's generous calm. We can see Charles's immense respect for him.

THEO
That would be marvelous, dear.

She smiles gratefully at her husband. Moves to join him.

CHARLES
I still say terra cotta.

The tension finally breaks. Charles gets on his knees, joining in, and the fray begins again.

120 EXT. DOCKS - DAY

Aline waits on the dock, bundled against the cold. When she spots Tom she skitters back and forth along the dock. Seeing this, his somber face roars laughing. Rushing to her he kisses her long and hard. Holds out a duffel bag. The finished novel.

TOM
For you.

121 INT. LOFT - DAY

Aline's on the bed with the dozens of ledgers spread around her. She wants to devour them whole. Tom wants to devour her whole.

122 INT. LOFT - EVENING

Aline closes the last ledger and bends over a sleeping Tom. A tear drops from her face onto Tom's cheek.

123 EXT. BOYD LITERARY AGENCY - DAY

"Boyd and Boyd Literary Agency" is lettered on the door. Tom paces on the sidewalk before the entrance, chain smoking.

124 INT. BOYD LITERARY AGENCY - DAY

Aline sits in a plush, book lined office as a receptionist brings her and JOHN BOYD coffee. Manuscripts cover the desk.

ALINE
He's an extremely talented writer. Remarkable. A tremendous discovery for any firm, the find of a lifetime.

JOHN
Hand it over. You know I'll gladly read any of your protegés.

She dumps two hulking satchels on the horrified man's desk.

JOHN
Aline--

ALINE
He knows he'll have to do a little cutting.

Gingerly he opens the satchels and fingers the manuscript.

JOHN
A little cutting? Aline, it's eleven hundred pages.

ALINE
I promise it's worth it.

JOHN
Has anyone else read it?

ALINE
(reluctantly)
A few. I don't believe any of them finished it or they would have said yes.

JOHN
What did they say?

ALINE
What difference does it make, they were wrong.

John looks at her. Weary just thinking about it.

JOHN
I'll give it to Madeleine to read.

ALINE
(ecstatic)
Thank you John.

JOHN
Don't thank me. We're getting divorced. This is revenge.

125 EXT. WEST 78TH STREET - NIGHT

A light snowfall isn't stopping people from scampering about the streets with party favors and noisy greetings.

126 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The accoutrements of a New Year's Eve dinner. 1929. The Bernstein clan are lounging, sated, around a gorgeous table as the maids clear the dishes. Charles is there.

THEO
Mary, that was superb.

ETHEL
So who's taking which party?

ALINE
Where's the list?

Ethel retrieves it from the sideboard and places it before her. Aline gets up and looks over her shoulder.

ETHEL
I'll take the Goodman's of course.

CHARLES
And the French embassy ball.

EDLA
I want Jack Benjamen's.

ETHEL
(ticking it off)
So Edla's got the Benjamen's.

TEDDY
(raising an eyebrow)
I'll go with Edla. Keep an eye on her.

Edla mock scowls in sisterly disdain and Teddy winks at her.

ALINE
We'll never cover them all if we pair up.

THEO
I don't believe there's a line in Emily Post stating every New Year's invitation must be accepted.

ALINE
No, but there's a line in Aline Bernstein's rules of good living never to ignore friends on holidays.

ETHEL
How about the Loeb's?

ALINE
Ohh, I love the Loebs but it'll be full of the Wall Street set and deadly dull.

THEO
I'll take the Loeb's. And any of the other "Wall Street set".

ALINE
Thank you darling, valiant of you. I just know if I went I'd have an uncontrollable urge to dance naked on the coffee table.

EDLA
That would be an interesting sight, mother.

ALINE
I'll give you the benefit of the doubt and take that as a compliment.

The maid brings in champagne offerings for the various events, and coats for everyone. Theo helps Aline into her's.

ALINE
(continuing)
I have to make an appearance at the Fine Arts Ball. I'll try and get to the Lunts' and the Algonquin.

ETHEL
I've got a better idea. Why don't I take the Lunts' and the Loebs' and then Theo can escort you to the ball?

It's a very deliberate move on Ethel's part. Only fleetingly does Aline's face register unease, covered quickly with a smile.

ALINE
Shall we do that, darling?

Theo looks at her gently.

THEO
No, no. I think we'll leave it the way it is. All those artistes in one place gives me heartburn.

Ethel scowls but Charles drags her out.

127 INT./EXT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

As they head down the steps to their various cars and cabs:

ALINE
We'll all have champagne at dawn!

128 INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Tom sits alone, watching out the bay window. A can of beans and a half bottle of scotch are all the dinner he's had. He's in his tux, sans jacket and tie. A pile of rejection letters sit on the cushion next to him: "Not suitable for us at this time, blah blah..." He sees a cab pull up and Aline get out. She hurries across the snow covered street.

He stubs out his cigarette and throws out the leftovers, hides the liquor bottles, bundles away the letters. Lights some candles in an effort to make the place more festive.

Aline bursts in, champagne raised.

ALINE
Didn't I tell you I'd make it by midnight?

Tom takes the bottle and helps her out of her coat.

Aline pushes the windows wide open and lifts her face to the gush of cold air. Tom pops the champagne.

ALINE
Listen.

Suddenly the city is alive with chimes, ringing in the new year.

ALINE
To your novel. Happy 1929 my darling.

Both drink. Tom leans over and kisses her.

TOM
I love you.

They kiss again. Passionately.

129 EXT. FINE ARTS BALL - NIGHT

Well dressed people glide between cabs and the entrance to an elegant building. Moving closer we find two of the people entering are Tom and Aline. She slips her arm through his.

TOM
(surprised)
Am I your date?

ALINE
Of course.

Tom covers her hand with pleasure. They disappear inside.

130 INT. FINE ARTS BALL - NIGHT

A gorgeous ballroom, packed with people. Elegant tables on an upper mezzanine surround the large dance floor. An orchestra plays. Black tied waiters glide smoothly by, bearing trays of never ending champagne. Despite the elegance, it borders on risqué, a replica of the infamous Parisian Beaux Artes balls of the 1920's.

Aline and Tom take their seats at a large table as Terry and Oliver rise to dance. Cheek-kissing all around.

TERRY
Greetings kids. Happy new year.

They glide off. As Tom takes two glasses of champagne:

TOM
Why don't they get closed down?

ALINE
Because the mayor's in the corner.

She motions to a heavy, cigar smoking man at a far table, belting back more than his own ration of illegal champagne.

Lynn Fontanne, the glamorous stage actress, waves frantically at her from two tables down.

ALINE
I must say hello. Come with me?

TOM
You go ahead.

ALINE
(patting his hand)
I won't be long.

She darts over to Lynn's table. Tom can see her being embraced by everyone, drawn into their conversations. He looks around the table. Everyone is on the dance floor. Shy and uncomfortable, he downs his champagne. Downs Aline's. Beckons the waiter for another.

CROSSFADE TO

Tom and Aline dancing, whirling dizzily to the music. For part of this they seem in heaven. For part Tom seems overly aware of every look they receive.

CUT TO

An affected-looking man slithering away from the table. Tom sits next to Aline, trading empty glasses for full. He's drunk. The more they talk about writing the more he seethes.

WOMAN
Personally I think he's gone a bit commercial.

ALINE
His first book was quite good.

TERRY
Yes but have you read his latest? It's so minimal it's hardly there.

OLIVER
I gather he's trying to write the way Bellows painted, claiming to possess no artistic tricks. Calling himself a primitive.

TOM
He looks about as primitive as Oscar Wilde eating a crepe suzette.

Oliver splutters with laughter. Nick Dempsey approaches, looking a little dandyish in dress and rather drunk, but good humoredly so.

NICK
Aline--
(surprised)
Tom! You're running in fast circles these days. Don't have to sneak into first class with Aline around.

He throws his arms about her, grabs a chair and pushes himself between her and Tom.

TERRY
I can see you're ringing in the New Year in fine form, Nick.

NICK
(grabbing champagne from a passing waiter)
One has to take it where one can get it in this age of temperance, doesn't one?
(gulps it down)
I'm telling you dear, this country's getting more and more puritanical by the minute.

OLIVER
(looking about at the extravagant festivities)
I don't know, I'd say folks are holding their own.

NICK
Mmm, well, let's hope. Tell me Aline, has that daughter of yours broken my heart and married someone else yet?

ALINE
You had your chance, Nick.

NICK
I suppose I did. I blew it.
(turning to Terry with mock-confidentiality)
I think I blew it on purpose. You see I was really in love with her mother. Isn't she exquisite?

Aline laughs it off but Tom is not amused.

TOM
Take your hands off her.

Nick is oblivious to the hostility brewing in Tom's corner. As the orchestra switches tunes Nick jumps up and hauls Aline with him, pulling her into a dancing embrace.

NICK
You must dance with me.

Tom gets up, towering above Nick. Pulls them apart.

TOM
You have no business touching her like that.

Nick's too lightheaded to take this seriously.

NICK
Relax, old sport.

He turns back to Aline. Tom hauls off and belts him, sending him sprawling across the table. Nick shakes himself then lunges at Tom and a brawl breaks out. Aline tries to get between them. Neither she nor the men at the table (those who dare) can get Tom off Nick. Aline switches tactics.

ALINE
Tom please, I want to dance with you. Come dance with me, please.

Some gentleness in her voice reaches him. He lets Nick go and moves quietly off with Aline.

At the bottom of the steps Tom moves toward the dance floor, but Aline drags him to the exit.

TOM
I thought you wanted to dance.

131 INT. CAB - NIGHT

Aline's fuming. Tom reaches to touch her but she shakes him off.

TOM
Aline. Aline, what have I done?

ALINE
Are you so drunk you can't remember? You humiliated me. You humiliated yourself. Not to mention splitting that poor boy's lip.

TOM
He shouldn't have touched you. You shouldn't have let him.

ALINE
He's a child.

TOM
You said the same of me.

ALINE
I helped him in the theatre, that's all--

TOM
Who don't you help?

ALINE
Where did it come from, this jealousy? It's horrible.

TOM
You cheat on your husband, why not cheat on me.

Aline gasps. A silence. She composes herself.

ALINE
Don't get possessive on me, Tom. It's the one thing I can't bear. I won't be owned by you or Theo or anyone.

They ride in silence. Softly:

TOM
Do you still love me?

Aline turns to him, tears in her eyes.

ALINE
Do you need to ask?

He crumples into her arms. The truth comes out.

TOM
Worthless as I am?

ALINE
Don't say that--

TOM
But I am worthless. The book's worthless, it's all worthless.

132 EXT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - EARLY DAWN

A weary Aline climbs out of her cab.

133 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - DAWN

Aline walks in. Unprepared for the joyous family gathering awaiting her in the living room.

THEO
Aline!

He rises and brings her champagne. She puts up the best smiling front she can. Raises her glass. A valiant effort.

ALINE
Happy New Year everyone.

134 INT. LOFT - DAY

Aline enters carrying her briefcase. Finds Tom packing. He glowers at her but continues his task, moving back and forth between armoire and suitcase as he speaks, while Aline unpacks what he's packing whenever he's not looking

ALINE
Where are you going?

TOM
Anywhere but here.

ALINE
So you're giving up.

TOM
Yup. I'm giving up my failures. The novel. You. Us.

ALINE
So now we're a failure.

TOM
I'm an unpublished writer and an unmarried lover. What's that sound like to you?

ALINE
Beside the point.

TOM
Ha. Let me guess. It's not the fame that matters, it's the writing. It's not the legal status of the relationship, it's the love shared. I haven't even paid my share of the rent for six months. You're the only person who reads my work, the only person who pays my bills. If it weren't for you I'd cease to be.
(finally catches her unpacking his suitcase)
Will you stop that!

She doesn't stop.

ALINE
And just how are you going to pay for these travels?

TOM
I haven't forgotten how to go third class.

ALINE
Didn't your mother pay for that too?

Ouch. Tom flinches as though he's been kicked.

ALINE
(continuing)
You think the world owes you success? Talent's nothing if you haven't got stamina.

TOM
Obviously I don't have stamina. Not
-more-

TOM (cont'd)
to go on fighting these foolish, petty people who wouldn't know a good book if it walked up and bit them in the nose.

Now she stops. Composes herself. Heads for the door.

TOM
Where are you going?

ALINE
If there's anything I can't stand, it's self pity.

She walks out, slamming the door. Tom, furious, picks up the case and hurls it a cross the floor, spewing the contents.

135 INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Tom's drunk. Surrounded by a group of young, pretty coeds dressed in the scanty fashions of the late twenties.

ALINE (V.O.)
It is an odd flaw of human nature, that while we want freedom for ourselves, we secretly wish those we love might forego their own and remain ever bound to our heart's desire.
(pause)
The others. They happened. Some I knew about. Some I only guessed at. Every rejection slip came to seem a harbinger of our defeat. The more Tom expected of the world, the more he punished me for the world's indifference.

Pouring himself another shot, Tom spills some on his suit. One of the women reaches over to wipe it off.

WOMAN
You'll ruin your suit.
(fingering the fabric)
It's beautiful.

Tom leans back, away from her touch. Mumbles angrily, more to himself than her.

TOM
A gift from my keeper.

WOMAN
What?

He doesn't answer. She picks up his notebook. He notices her snooping through it. Grabs it back, nearly spilling the booze. But she refuses to let go.

TOM
Don't touch that.

WOMAN
I've never touched a writer's notebook before. There's something, I don't know, sexy about it.

They're huddled close, fighting over the book, and she's on a mission to seduce him. Tom pauses and looks at her for one lucid moment. Thinking of Aline. Comparing. Drinks away the thought.

136 INT. LOFT - DAY

It's not the young woman naked in bed with Tom, it's Aline. They're making up, wholeheartedly.

TOM
You were right you know. About stamina. About everything--

She silences him with a kiss. Sun pours through the skylight across them. Tom, content, untangles from her and gets up. Aline stretches. Hugging the pillow. Happy. Until she notices something on the pillow slip. She rubs it with her finger and sniffs. Face powder. She shakes off the thought. Reaches for her kimono. As she's getting up she finds, caught up in the sheets at the bottom of the bed, a silk stocking. Ripped.

Aline carries the stocking like a broken limb. Tom looks over happily.

ALINE
Who's is this?

Tom's smile fades. He panics for a moment. Regroups.

TOM
It's yours.

ALINE
Mine are more expensive. And I'd have remembered doing this!

She thrusts her hand through the heart-breakingly telling rip. He rushes over to her but she backs away, around the bed, winding the stocking furiously in her hands.

ALINE
For how long, Tom? How many women? How many times?

TOM
No times, Aline, there are no other women but you, honestly, this is our place, mine and yours--

ALINE
Don't lie to me. I found face powder, on my pillow. I don't use face powder.

She hurls the pillow at him. Yelling, defiant:

ALINE
(continuing)
I don't need it!

TOM
Aline please, I didn't--

ALINE
You don't even have the guts to tell me the truth--

He runs over the bed and grabs her. She beats against him, but he won't let go.

ALINE
Liar! Liar liar liar liar liar--

At last she breaks down and lets herself be held by him.

TOM
I love you, Aline. I do. Love you.

He holds her until the crying quiets.

137 EXT./INT. CHILD'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An opening night party. Crowded and buzzing. Snippets of conversation, fabulous production, long Broadway run, etc. The crowd squeezing into Aline's table keeps growing.

WOMAN
Aline darling, where have you been hiding? I haven't seen you in ages, since...oh my, the new year's debacle at the Fine Arts Ball. Who was that character?

NICK
(cradling his jaw)
The one with the stunning right hook?

ALINE
Nick, I'm so sorry. I don't what got into Tom that night. He's so talented--

OLIVER
Talented enough to justify being a bore and a bully?

NICK
Ha. Not unless he's Hemingway, and even then I'm not convinced.

TERRY
Now there's a question for you. What price art.

ALINE
Is any price too high?

HORACE
Depends on whether you're the one being sacrificed to it.

WOMAN
I, for one, don't relish being anyone's sacrificial lamb. Lucky my husband's a second rate artist.

Terry gives Aline a look. As much as to say: take heed. They speak low, camouflaged by the music and laughter:

ALINE
Relax, darling. I'm not the sacrificial type.

TERRY
No, but for once in your life you've met your match. Only he doesn't play fair.

ALINE
I can handle Tom.

TERRY
And Theo?

ALINE
I don't recall you worrying over much about Oliver during your various liaisons.

TERRY
Oliver had his own diversions. Theo doesn't travel in our world, he never did. It's amazing the two of you ever married to begin with. And he's too honorable to force your hand, whatever he may feel.

ALINE
Theo doesn't want me to leave.

TERRY
Does he want you with Tom?

ALINE
He wants me happy.

TERRY
Which you're not.
(silence)
Maybe Theo means more to you than you know. And maybe loving Wolfe isn't much fun anymore.

ALINE
I didn't get into this for fun.

TERRY
There was your mistake.

Terry squeezes Aline's hand. Turns back to the table chatter.

138 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Theo's heading upstairs when the phone rings. He sighs, as if he knows who it is. Picks up the hall phone.

THEO
Bernstein residence. She's not back yet. Yes I'll tell her.

Theo scribbles a message while he speaks. Heads for the stairs, pauses, detours into the sitting room. Pours himself a brandy. Lights a cigar. He is quiet, self contained, but we must see his pain very clearly in this moment. With drink and cigar he flips out the light and heads upstairs.

139 EXT./INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Aline enters. Notices the pile of messages on the hall table. Picks them up: half a dozen of them. All late. All from Tom. All in the same meticulous handwriting. The last two marked "urgent". She scrunches the notes, furious. Heads upstairs.

She stops before Theo's door. Is about to knock. But doesn't. Rests her head sadly against his door.

140 INT. BERNSTEIN DINING ROOM - MORNING

The family's at the breakfast table. Aline enters. Tentative but putting up a good show. Teddy and Ethel try to mask their embarrassment. Theo looks up from his paper. His eyes meet hers with a new, quiet sadness. Then he looks away. She realizes in that painful moment how much Theo knows about her and Tom. She sits down and starts breakfast. Tries.

141 INT. DINING ROOM. ARMONK - DAY

Aline and Ethel work with the construction crew. Aline demonstrates with paint on a wooden plank.

ALINE
See, boys, if you paint the walls
-more-

ALINE (cont'd)
this scarlet first--and then cover it with two coats of this lighter shade of blue--you get exactly the pale, glowing color I have in mind.

She beams at the crew, who are honestly impressed.

MARY
Telephone Mrs. Bernstein. Mr. Wolfe.

Aline hesitates, continues her painting.

ALINE
Tell him I'll ring back, please. The color's never drab, it changes constantly with the sunlight.

MARY
He insists on speaking to you now.

Aline glances at Ethel. Embarrassed, she excuses herself. Ethel can see her on the hall phone, talking intensely.

ALINE
I don't know where you get these ideas...I'm with my sister for God's sake.

Ethel moves outside the French doors.

142 EXT. ARMONK - DAY

Aline joins her sister. Helps hose off some brushes.

ETHEL
Aline, have you gotten in over your head?

ALINE
Have I neglected Theo in any way, has the family suffered--

ETHEL
I'm not talking about the family. I don't want you hurt.

ALINE
I can handle my own hurt.

ETHEL
You may think so.

Aline doesn't want to be having this conversation. But she's no coward. She looks out at Theo, reading in his gazebo.

ALINE
Ethel, do you believe a person can be in love with two people?

ETHEL
No.

ALINE
I was afraid of that.

ETHEL
But I believe you may think you are.

ALINE
I know myself better than that.
(pause)
I know it's hell. I know it's worth it. And I know I'll take the consequences when they come. And I know I'll try to make sure I'm the only one who truly pays for it.

ETHEL
No one's invincible, Aline. Not even you.

ALINE
I'll take that chance.

ETHEL
You will never find a more generous, loving husband than Theo.

ALINE
I'm not looking for another husband.

ETHEL
Then what are you looking for?

ALINE
Something I never had in my life with Theo. Passion. I had to know, just once in my lifetime, what that felt like.

Ethel falls silent. The maid comes to the doors.

MAID
Telephone, Mrs. Bernstein.

ALINE
Tell Mr. Wolfe I'm out.

MAID
It's not him, it's Madeleine Boyd.

Aline's eyes light up.

143 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Aline carries her briefcase, groceries and some fresh flowers. Rounding the corner she looks up towards the loft. What she sees

stops her: the silhouette of a woman. She freezes. Turns and walks a few steps away. Stops. Turns back and hurries toward the building, tears streaming down her face.

144 INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Aline bursts in.

ALINE
You bastard!

The scene that greets her stops her in her tracks. Sitting about the loft eating leftovers and drinking cheap wine are two men and a very plain woman. Tom gets up. Kind:

TOM
These are some old colleagues of mine from the English Department. John, Ted, Susan. Aline.

Handshakes. Aline regains herself with remarkable aplomb. She hands over the basket. He kisses her. Quietly:

TOM
You never smile anymore. That's my doing.

ALINE
No. It's mine.

She sits down and he brings her a drink.

ALINE
Madeleine Boyd called me. She gave the book to Maxwell Perkins at Scribner's. He wants to meet you.

Tom freezes up at mention of the novel.

TOM
I couldn't be less interested in what Mr. Peter's--

ALINE
Perkins.

TOM
--what Mr. Perkins has to say. Another parasite no doubt.

Even his colleagues look flabbergasted.

MAN
Tom...

ALINE
You little fool. Do the names Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ring Lardner mean anything to you?

He stares at her stunned. Pulls her into his arms. The others crowd around excitedly, all back-slapping and handshakes.

145 INT. LOFT - MORNING

Aline walks in carrying her briefcase and a box from Bergdorf's. Tom, in his rumpled suit, lies passed out on his bed. The remains of a party, including food and several empty bottles of bootlegged corn liquor, are scattered about.

ALINE
Tom!

She hauls him up and shakes him awake.

ALINE
Tom, it's almost noon. You've got to be at Perkins's office in less than an hour.

Tom moans. Grumbles. Finally rouses. She pulls him into the bathroom. Turns on the water. He hovers. Hangover hell. Splashes his face and lathers it. She charges into the kitchen to make coffee. He follows her out, razor in hand. Illustrating the two second shave while he watches her sponge his jacket. Aline tosses him the box.

ALINE
Put on a clean shirt and this.

He opens it. A gorgeous silk tie, matching his suit.

ALINE
And try not to get shaving cream on it.

TOM
It's gorgeous.

ALINE
So was your new suit until you slept in it.

Aline plunks the coffee in front of him.

ALINE
Drink. Fast.

Tom gulps it down while Aline fixes his tie.

146 EXT. PERKIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Aline pulls a still groggy Tom out of the cab and virtually carries him into Scribner's gorgeous Fifth Avenue offices. Straightens his tie and jacket. Pushes him in. From the sidewalk she watches through the three story glass front as Wolfe climbs the spiral staircase. She turns and heads downtown.

147 INT. PERKINS OFFICE - DAY

Tom enters. Maxwell Perkins sits behind a large, meticulously arranged desk. He is a handsome man in his fifties, demure, soft-spoken. Tom's eyes move to the shelves. Hundreds of titles, among them works by Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Lardner, Benchley. Tom's heaping manuscript sits on the table between them. Perkins stands and reaches across the desk and shakes Tom's hand with enthusiastic welcome.

148 INT. LOFT - EVENING

Aline's making dinner. Tom bursts in. She looks at him expectantly. Tom nonchalantly lights a cigarette.

TOM
He said it was brilliant--

ALINE
I knew it--

TOM
But. He said it needs revisions.
(snoops through the food)
He wants to cut several hundred pages. Otherwise he won't publish it.

Silence.

ALINE
What did you say?

TOM
No, absolutely not.

ALINE
Oh Tom, you didn't...

TOM
(pause)
No, I didn't.

ALINE
You mean--Scribner's is publishing it?

His face gradually breaks into an impish grin.

TOM
Yes.

He picks her up, exultant, and carries her to bed.

TOM
Yes yes yes yes yes yes.

Kissing her with every yes.

149 INT. BERGDORF GOODMAN'S - DAY

A very posh fitting room. Ethel gives instructions to some underlings. Teddy humors Aline's fashion sense, raising his arms and turning as a fitting assistant pokes and prods him. Ethel comes over. She and Aline manipulate their conversation around Teddy's forays into the dressing room.

ALINE
I told you he was a genius. I discovered a genius.

ETHEL
You always did have a flare for the dramatic.

ALINE
Can't you be a little pleased, Ethel? I know you don't trust him. I know--

Ethel fires a sharp look at her as Teddy emerges. Pause. Aline shakes her head at the suit and he disappears back inside.

ALINE
He's a true American poet, maybe the voice of his generation.

ETHEL
If he's so talented what's he need you for?

ALINE
I spotted his gift and helped him use it. Fought to get him heard. And I won, I changed the face of American literature. Do you know how that feels?

ETHEL
(walking towards an emerging Teddy)
We'll have to start calling you Aline de Medici.

Fussing with the jacket an assistant has pinned on him, Ethel accidentally sticks him. He yelps.

TEDDY
And Teddy de pincushion.

Ethel calms herself. Aline holds up a bolt of white linen. Deliberately changing the subject.

ALINE
How about a white linen suit for summer?

TEDDY
They don't allow white in banks mother. Too pure.

Ethel rolls her eyes. Aline pats him smugly.

ALINE
Damn straight. But it's time they started. We'll have one made for Theo too, see if we can't start a trend.

TEDDY
Father? In white?

ALINE
Do him the world of good.

Teddy grabs the bolt and wraps the fabric round his head like Lawrence of Arabia. Gives his best mock-seductive he-man look.

TEDDY
Valentino lives.

Ethel's stern face breaks into a laugh as two staid women walk in and stop, appalled at Teddy's antics. Aline and Teddy pull faces at Ethel, mimicking the two outraged hens.

150 INT. LOFT - DAY

Aline reads Tom's revisions. Pen in hand. The manuscript is stacked in piles on the table before her. Tom's pacing about with the section he's working on. Obviously frustrated. Aline finishes the chapter. Worried.

ALINE
Tom, it's longer than it was before you revised it. You're supposed to be cutting.

Tom explodes. Hurls the pages in his hand across the room.

TOM
I don't give a damn what I'm supposed to be doing. Perkins is cutting my balls off with these revisions.

ALINE
I thought you said you trusted him.

TOM
So I changed my mind. A hundred pages here, two hundred there, he's chopping sections out like they were nothing.

ALINE
He hasn't chopped much from the
-more-

ALINE (cont'd)
central story. I thought you agreed it needed to focus on the young man. No digressions.

TOM
I want the digressions, they're my digressions damn it.

Aline weighs up how to handle this. Opts for the usual best route with Tom: food. She heads for the kitchen and rummages in the fridge. Whips up something scrumptious. Sure enough, Tom gets curious. Comes over. His anger fading. He trails her as she moves to the living room and parks herself on the couch, food in her lap. She feeds him.

ALINE
You will look again at Max's notes, and decide rationally why he asked for the changes. No reflex dismissals. Then you will decide if you agree, and those revisions you are comfortable with you will then make accordingly. You will do this because you want to get published and you want the book you publish to be mature and well crafted. Got it?

Tom nods docile acquiescence as she offers him another mouthful.

151 EXT. SCRIBNER'S BOOKSTORE - MORNING

Another fall. The beautiful Fifth Avenue bookstore.

152 INT. SCRIBNER'S - MORNING

Before opening. Tom and Aline watch the clerk open a box of Look Homeward, Angel. They clutch hands excitedly.

The clerk takes the first two copies and gives them to Tom and Aline.

ALINE
This is the best reward possible.

Tom grabs the book from Aline and writes furiously. Aline waits impatiently. He hands her back the book. Under the printed dedication "To A.B." she reads Tom's personal dedication:

ALINE
"To Aline Bernstein. In my twenty-ninth year, I present her with this, the first copy of my first book. This book was written because of her and is dedicated to her. When my life seemed desolate, when I had little faith in myself, she brought me friendship, comfort, and love."

Aline is touched beyond words. He leans over and signs it. She reaches up and hugs him. He kisses her. They look over at the clerks arranging copies in the window.

The doors are unlocked. Customers enter and snoop through the display of Tom's book as Aline and Tom watch excitedly.

153 EXT. NEW YORK - DAY

The Crash. Paper boys hawk the tragedy in loud voices. News commentators with strident voices predict misery over the radio waves. Broken bodies lie covered on the sidewalks. Traffic jams choke the streets. Tears and panic and shouts everywhere.

154 EXT. WALL STREET - DAY

Aline gets out of a cab and hurries past police cars and ambulances into the offices of Bernstein and Loeb.

155 INT. BERNSTEIN & LOEB - DAY

A harried secretary motions Aline into Theo's office. Theo, calm as can be, comes to greet her with a kiss.

ALINE
I couldn't help but come, Theo.
(he hugs her to him)
Is it as bad as you predicted?

THEO
For most people worse. Much worse. We can't begin to imagine the devastation yet. We've had three suicides in this building already.

Aline sinks into a chair, horrified.

ALINE
Their poor families.
(covers Theo's hand)
Theo--I've been broke before, I can be broke again. Promise me--you won't do anything desperate.

He bends to her. Caressing her cheek. A beat.

THEO
We'll be fine. Have to tighten our belts a little, but nothing serious.

ALINE
My good clever darling, however did you manage it?

TEDDY
(entering)
Dad's slow, quiet style is sharper than it looks.

Aline jumps up and hugs Teddy.

THEO
I want you to go home now. It's no day to be out on the streets.

He puts his arm around her and escorts her out.

156 INT. LOFT - SAME DAY

Aline bursts in. Tom's pouring over piles of letters.

ALINE
Isn't it dreadful? Why don't you have the news on?

She dumps a stack of newspapers and clicks on the radio. Tunes through static to a panicky voice reading dire reports of the market crash.

TOM
Look Aline. Fan mail. Heaps of it just sent over from Scribner's.
(rummaging)
I've got one here from Sinclair Lewis saying it's the stuff of greatness--

ALINE
Tom, don't you care?

TOM
Care about what?

ALINE
The stock market crashed. Banks are failing, the treasury's failing.

Tom turns back to his mail.

TOM
What's that got to do with me?

ALINE
The country's bankrupt.

TOM
Serves them right. I hate rich people.

ALINE
I'm rich and you've been enjoying it just fine.

TOM
Just helping you spread the wealth.

ALINE
This is going to hurt the workers as much as the rich, Tom. It's a depression, not a revolution.

TOM
(pausing)
I'm sorry for that, Aline. I am. But I can't lose this moment. Not for anyone. I'm a published writer. Finally. I've actually said something, meant something to all these people.

He holds up handfulls of fan letters. Aline sighs. Cranks up the radio and heads for the kitchen to make coffee.

157 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - NIGHT

A party in full swing. A down home affair with hearty food and kegs of beer. Even Theo's without a tie. The guests range from still wealthy to rather ragged. Aline does her best to make sure anyone looking a little wan gets heaping plates of food. In the corner Alexander Calder unpacks cases holding his famous circus mobile. Theo swills his beer. Positively merry.

THEO
Takes me back to my German childhood.

ALINE
You're very good to put up with my whims, Theo. I know this isn't quite your style.

They notice one of Theo's banker friends and his wife distastefully trapped in a conversation with one of Aline's bohemian crowd. It's very funny.

THEO
Want to know a secret? I'm enjoying it.

TERRY
(kissing them hello)
Trust Aline to respond to the worst Depression in memory with a party.

ALINE
People need cheering up. A lot of them need food. I intend to throw as many parties as I can to see they get it.
(offers up a delicious plate)
There's a whole room full of paintings in the back Terry, all out

-more-

ALINE (cont'd)
of work artists. See if you can't shame some of the Republicans in the room into buying a few.

TERRY
Aline darling, these days even the Republicans are broke.

THEO
She's been doing this at every business dinner I take her to. Hawking friends' paintings.

ALINE
And why not? They're getting a bargain and the painters are getting a few sorely needed bucks. Would you look at that gravy? That's a Rembrandt brown if I ever saw one.

She spoons the steaming stew into bowls. The bell rings again and a crowd of noisy guests stream in, barreling over the other guests and showering Calder with demonstrative greetings.

Theo takes the ladle and draws Aline into a graceful waltz. They glance at Edla and her beau showing off an engagement ring. At Teddy laughing in another corner.

ALINE
Most people have lost so much. And we have everything.

Across the room Oliver notices Wolfe enter. Touches his wife's arm. Wolfe looks about shyly. Praising fans surround him. Edla notices the commotion.

EDLA
What's he doing here? Did mother invite him? I bet she did. I can't believe she'd actually put father through the humiliation of having that man in our house.

TEDDY
Edla. I have yet to meet the man capable of humiliating father. Or anyone who could love him more completely than mother.

EDLA
That's not the point.

CHARLES
You Americans are so puritanical.

ETHEL
Meaning?

CHARLES
Meaning so what if Aline's lover's here?

Ethel looks daggers at him.

CHARLES
(continuing)
In France, marriage is a comfort. Not a prison sentence.

ETHEL
This isn't France.

Theo and Aline are still dancing, oblivious to Wolfe's entrance.

CALDER
Kindly watch where you're going.

He looks up and sees it's Aline and Theo. They stop.

CALDER
Oh, pardon me Mrs. Bernstein. But I need to clear this space.

Theo and Aline exchange amused looks and back off. To their horror Calder and one of his friends roll the gorgeous carpet, take a large bag of sawdust and cover the floor with it. Aline and Theo retreat to a group of their friends.

HORACE
Why ever did you let Alexander Calder take over your home?

ALINE
He was complaining he couldn't find a place big enough to show his circus. I wanted to help. I'm sorry Theo.

Theo's amused. Picks up one of the circus lions and roars at them. Calder scowls. Theo puts it back with a mock "worried" look. Chats with Horace as Terry pulls Aline away.

TERRY
Aline, I hate to break it to you but Tom's here.

Aline smiles and looks around for him.

ALINE
Oh good, he came.

TERRY
You mean you invited him?

ALINE
Of course. It was Theo's idea.

TERRY
Ah. A show of solidarity.

ALINE
Terry, things will be different now. Tom's book's been published.

As if that were the answer to everything.

TERRY
I hope you're right dear. Truly.

Aline goes happily to greet Tom.

ALINE
I'm so glad you came.

TOM
It's a regular hit parade of New York's literati.

ALINE
Of which you are now one.

Tom moves with Aline away from his fans. Glances about until he locates Theo turned away from them.

TOM
Only you. It's outrageous you know. Thinking you can have us both here.

ALINE
But I do have you both here, don't I?

She hooks her arm through his and drags him into the party.

ALINE
Come on. There's some people you should meet, good publicity for the novel--

TOM
Aline. Max doesn't think--we shouldn't--publicly...never mind.

ALINE
Alex! Isn't it wonderful? Tom's novel's a hit!

Several people surround them, shaking Tom's hand.

DISSOLVE TO

158 INT. BERNSTEIN APARTMENT - LATER

The same party, hours later. Calder's circus is a spectacle to behold. Wire animals and structures and people uncannily evoke an intricate, massive, performing three ring circus replete with trapezes and flying swings. But it has taken over the entire

living room. Furniture's piled in corners, carpets rolled, and Calder's guests have taken over all spectator space. Everyone else congregates in the halls and kitchen.

Aline and Ethel come in. They stack plates with food to take back. One of Calder's guests shushes them. Aline pulls a comical face at Ethel, tucks two bottles of champagne under her arm and heads for the kitchen.

159 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aline and Ethel distribute food and drink to perplexed guests holed up in the kitchen.

ETHEL
Isn't it the most God-awful thing you ever saw?

The kitchen erupts in laughter and chatter.

ALINE
(still laughing)
Look at the talent though. It is formidable.

HORACE
Sawdust all over your polished floors and carpets. He's making a shambles of your house.

OLIVER
Theo must want to shoot him.

ALINE
Does Theo look concerned to you?

Theo's happily engaged in a discussion in the corner.

TERRY
The man's a saint.

ALINE
Mm. But a handsome saint, wouldn't you say?

Wolfe watches Aline dole out drinks and food as he chats with a crowd by the far door.

WOMAN 1
--really quite something. Aline always said your talent was a sure thing.

TOM
Aline's been very good to me. I couldn't have done it without her.

WOMAN 2
So it's true Aline got you into Scribner's? What a coup!

Ouch. Tom excuses himself abruptly. Wanders out into the hall. Across the room, Aline notices his exit.

160 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Tom enters the library. Shuts the door. Takes the place in. Comfortable chairs and couch, floor to ceiling bookshelves, hundreds of beautiful books. Pictures of Aline and Theo's life in silver frames across the fireplace mantle. He looks around. Runs his hands over the leather bound volumes. Pulls one out. The inside flap is inscribed "To Theo, with love, Aline, 1910."

161 INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Theo enters, surprised to find Tom. Tom looks up startled, like a trapped animal. Theo is serene. Even welcoming. Pours them both a brandy.

THEO
You've found my weakness.

TOM
You have a beautiful collection. Best I've ever seen.

THEO
I thought I could beat time with what's written in these pages. If I could just read enough, glean enough from their words, I could live my young man's life with an old man's wisdom.

Tom studies him with unwilling admiration.

TOM
I daresay you've succeeded.

THEO
In some ways perhaps. But I know my limitations. I do my job and I do it well, but I'm not an artist like you or Aline. That's a gift I was not given. And could not buy.

He takes a copy of Look Homeward, Angel from the shelf, holds it toward Tom.

THEO
Perhaps you'd sign it for me.

Nervously, Tom takes it. With trembling hand writes "To Theodore Bernstein with highest regard, Tom Wolfe." Hands it back.

TOM
I didn't know you'd read it.

THEO
With great...
(smiles)
if at times unwilling pleasure.

He opens the book, searches for a passage.

THEO
(continuing; reading)
"To him she was the most beautiful woman that ever lived, a creature of incomparable loveliness to whom all other women in the world must be compared. After all the blind tormented wanderings of his youth, that woman would become his heart's center and the target of his life."
(closes the book)
I wish I'd written that.

A beat. Aline breezes in.

ALINE
Darling, I've been looking for you--

Which darling? An awkward moment. Which she handles gracefully.

ALINE
You two hiding from the crowds? Come along.

She motions them to follow and walks out. Both men follow her with their eyes. Then meet one another's gaze. Acknowledging, for the moment at least, their mutual love of this woman, and the hold she exerts on them both.

TOM
Your wife is an uncommon woman.

THEO
Yes, she is. I dare say we're both very fortunate to know her.

Tom lowers his eyes into his brandy, knocks it back. They walk out together.

162 INT. LOFT - NIGHT

Tom's lying on the couch in his shorts smoking. And drinking.

GIRL (O.S.)
I didn't know you could draw too.

TOM
I can't.

A naked girl lounges over Aline's desk and studies the drawings. Fingers the meticulously arranged tools, leaving them out of place.

GIRL
These look pretty good to me.

She holds up one attractive design. Tom watches her. Tosses Aline's kimono to her.

TOM
Put this on.

GIRL
Nice. For me?

TOM
No. Just wear it.

The girl raises an eyebrow, but slips it on--leaving it open--and moves back to him. Climbs on top.

Aline walks in, a basket of vegetables and wine over her arm. She stops dead. Tom and the girl look at her. She half turns as if to go and then, to our surprise (and hers) she moves to kitchen. Deposits her purchases. And takes up her position at her worktable. The girl, flummoxed, tries to cover herself.

GIRL
Ohmygod. What's going on.

ALINE
Nothing, dear. Carry on.

GIRL
This is sick.

Tom gets up, literally dropping the girl on her butt. He approaches Aline, looking confused and apologetic.

TOM
Aline...

ALINE
Save it.

TOM
It's nothing.

ALINE
That's the problem.

TOM
She's nothing.

GIRL
He-ey!!

ALINE
Then why is she here?

TOM
You're the one with the husband.

GIRL
Oh man.

The half-naked girl scrambles about, collecting her clothes. They ignore her.

ALINE
This is about Theo? He'd be so touched.

TOM
You, of all people, can hardly ask for fidelity.

ALINE
It isn't how many. It's how. I at least love my lovers. You love your misery.

TOM
It's familiar.

A beat. The tone has changed. The girl, half-clad, bewildered, and ignored, shakes her head and leaves.

ALINE
I thought it would be different. Now that you're published. That you're a success.

TOM
What success do you see, Aline? The one hit wonder? My advance is gone. I'm dirt broke. Max is losing patience. I haven't made a single deadline. When will you see me, Aline? When will you see that I'm a fraud?

ALINE
To yourself. Not to me.

Tom sits. Hangs his head. Aline stands above him, wanting to reach to comfort him, not knowing if she'll be rejected.

163 INT. PERKINS' OFFICE - DAY

Max pours over Tom's jumbled papers. Tom smokes and paces.

TOM
I hurt, Max.

PERKINS
(without looking up)
You know my feelings on the matter.
(silence)
I want to submit these pieces as short stories or novellas.

TOM
Aline. She got me to write a novel when my plays failed. She got me published. I've never achieved anything for myself. My family was right, I'm worthless, always have been. Like my drunk of a father. It was all her.

PERKINS
I published Thomas Wolfe, not Aline Bernstein, thank you very much. And I must say I find it insulting that you have so little faith in the integrity of my judgement.

TOM
Sorry Max.
(pause; he comes and sits)
She'll never leave him. And I can't leave her.

PERKINS
(uncomfortable)
Your private life is not my business.

TOM
But it is. My private life is where I write.

PERKINS
(pause; reluctant)
You know my feelings on the matter.

Tom's face darkens as he watches Max return to the manuscript.

CUT TO

164 INT./EXT. BANK - DAY

Aline hurries out, tucking a five hundred dollar bill into her purse. She hails a cab.

165 INT. LOFT - HALL - DAY

In the hall Aline takes out her key and overhears:

JULIA (O.S.)
...novel's not finished, not a red cent in the bank. Where's it all
-more-

JULIA (O.S.) (cont'd)
gone? Is that Perkins man cheating you? You're useless on your own Tom, a thirty year old child--

Aline goes in.

166 INT. LOFT - DAY

Aline finds Tom's mother hovering over him. Tom's eyes lock on hers. Embarrassed in front of his mother.

TOM
(really snide)
Mother, dear, this is Mrs. Bernstein, whom you've heard so much about. Aline, my devoted mother.

Aline extends a hand. And Julia's cordial.

ALINE
Mrs. Wolfe.

Julia eyes Aline's elegant clothes and jewels.

ALINE
I didn't realize Tom was expecting you, I'd have prepared--

JULIA
Not necessary, Mrs. Bernstein. I came to look after him.

Tom flinches. Aline looks confused.

TOM
Perkins and Madeleine Boyd are ruining my life. And it's your fault, you sent me to these people.

JULIA
Tom, don't excite yourself.

ALINE
I don't understand.

JULIA
They're hoarding my money.

TOM
They're turning my work into junk. Cutting it into dime novels.

ALINE
If there's a problem I'll willingly talk to them for you.

TOM
Will you Aline? Will you do anything for me?

ALINE
(quiet)
You should never mock love.

Tom's on the verge of tender reversal but Julia pounces. With her bony hands she prods and pushes Aline right out of the loft.

JULIA
Love? How dare you talk about loving my son, a man practically your children's age. What could you want him for at your age? Or maybe you've been stealing from him too? I warned Tom about big city Jews like you. Isn't one of you wouldn't skin your own grandmothers for a nickel.

ALINE
(fumbling in her purse for the bill)
I was bringing him this, does that look like stealing?

JULIA
Paying for his services, were you? You're a disgusting, licentious woman and I want you out of here. Now. Get out.

Aline, stunned, can't bring herself to physically fight the old lady. She looks to Tom. He's turned away, smoking, making no move to help her.

ALINE
Tom?

Slowly he turns, his eyes locking on hers.

TOM
What is it?

ALINE
In case you missed it. You're making a choice now.

TOM
Yes. I suppose I am.

Tom coolly turns away. Julia shoves her out and slams the door.

167 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Aline hears Julia laughing inside.

168 EXT. STREET - DAY

Aline walks, tears staining her face. The streets are strewn with the destitute. Victims of the Depression. She pulls the five hundred dollars out and hands it to a sad-eyed, emaciated woman and child sitting on a front stoop.

169 INT. ALINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aline sleeps fitfully. It's three a.m. A shrill ring and she snaps awake. Fumbles for the phone. Her voice changes from anxious to angry to resigned.

ALINE
Yes?...Do you realize the time...Can't you handle it?...No. No police. I'll be right there.

170 EXT. PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

Aline jumps out of a cab.

ALINE
Wait here.

171 INT. MEN'S ROOM/LOBBY. PLAZA - NIGHT

Aline hurries into the lobby. A clerk meets her and leads her to the men's room.

CLERK
I apologize, Mrs. Bernstein. But Mr. Wolfe insists he won't leave without seeing you. If you hadn't come I'd have had to have him arrested and you know the press...

The aging doorman and adolescent bellhop are futilely trying to pull Tom off the floor where he's lying down in protest. Drunk. Ranting. The minute he sees Aline he staggers up like a bull to a red flag. She backs away, luring him out.

TOM
You think I couldn't have done it alone, don't you, my little Jew? But I'll prove you wrong. I'll prove everyone wrong. you're all parasites feeding off me, I don't need you--

He lunges for her and stumbles. Looks up at her as he pulls himself to his feet. As if his falling were her fault too.

TOM
I been hexed. A Jewish hex. You with your rich, Jewish husband and
-more-

TOM (cont'd)
your rich, Jewish children. All warm and happy with one another. You're in control of everything, aren't you?

He manages to grab her this time, manhandling her with a mixture of brutality and love. The clerk, doorman and bellhop between them barely manage to get him off her--enraging him more. He shakes them off with one powerful twitch.

TOM
Maybe that Kraut will wipe you guys out and free me too.

Aline's eyes widen with horror. He studies her, gauging the effect of his words. Realizes he's got her. Smiles slightly.

TOM
(bellowing)
Three cheers for Hitler! Three cheers for Hitler!

Aline hauls off and belts him. In the nose. Hard. He's so drunk and surprised he topples over.

ALINE
That's the last time you ever call me my Jew.

She steps aside. Looks at the gape-faced attendants.

ALINE
(continuing)
Get him in the cab.

They drag Tom to the doors. The hulking cab driver strong arms him, hauling him up and pushing him into the cab. Tom shakes his head, trying to clear his vision.

TOM
Aline! Don't let me go.

Aline stands shivering on the steps as she watches Tom's face peering mournfully at her through the back window of the retreating cab.

172 INT. THEATER - DAY

A dress rehearsal. Aline's on stage adjusting several cast members' costumes. Going about her work with absolute efficiency. But as she pins a hat, tears stream down her face. No one says a word, their respect for her is obvious. She continues as if nothing were happening.

ALINE
You'll need poppies around the hat band, like so. That'll be charming I think.

Terry and Agnes sit in the audience watching the rehearsal. They exchange a look. Concerned, resigned.

173 EXT. SCRIBNER'S - DAY

A light rain. Aline stands outside the window, watching unseen the gathering of fans and reporters surrounding Tom and Max. She steps inside.

174 INT. SCRIBNER'S - SAME

Tom smiles and signs autographs and flirts shyly, particularly vulnerable to the women. Basking in his fame.

REPORTER
How does it feel Mr. Wolfe? Being short-listed for the Pulitzer?

TOM
I owe it all to Max. For believing in me. All any writer needs is someone to believe in them.

Aline blinks back the tears. Watches Max shyly beam at the praise, the two of them so pleased with themselves. She turns and walks out.

175 INT. ALINE'S ROOM - DUSK

Aline stares out the window. A bottle of gin on the table. She's drunk. She wanders out.

176 INT. CENTRAL PARK - DUSK

Aline wanders through the park. As the lights come on the park looks magical. People in love seem to be everywhere.

177 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Theo finds the empty gin bottle. Ethel walks in.

THEO
Do you think I put too much faith in the age difference?

ETHEL
No. I think Aline did.

Ethel takes the bottle from him and throws it out.

ETHEL
Why don't you stop her, Theo?

THEO
It's not for me to stop her.

ETHEL
You're her husband.

THEO
What would you have me do, Ethel? Force her to be with me when I know her heart's with someone else? Allow me some dignity. If she stays with me it must be because she wants to.

ETHEL
She doesn't know what she wants.

THEO
I trust that whatever she's doing she has her reasons. Something's laid hold of her, I know that much. Perhaps it's my fault. Her world's bigger than mine, I could never give her what she's given me. What I could give her was an anchor in the storm. That's what I've done and that's what I'll go on doing until she asks me to cut her free.

ETHEL
And what do you get in all this?

THEO
To go on loving her.

178 EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Aline's parked on a bench. A patrolling officer notices her wiping tears and drinking from a flask. He approaches.

At first Aline sees only the tall body, not the face. She thinks it's Tom and looks up hopefully. Sees it's not.

OFFICER
You waiting for someone, ma'am?

ALINE
Yes...he'll be coming soon...

Realizes what she's saying. Gets embarrassed.

OFFICER
It's not safe for a lady here so late. You'd better let me take you home.

Reluctantly she gets up. He leads her away.

179 INT. BERNSTEIN HALL/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Aline enters and straggles wearily to the kitchen. Makes coffee. Takes an aspirin and sits bowed at the table, disgusted with

herself. Theo pads in. She doesn't notice until he's standing before her. Touches her gently. Aline's eyes well up at the sight of him.

ALINE
Why have you never asked me, Theo? About Tom?

THEO
You told me what you wanted me to know. More than that's not my business. I'm not your chaperone.

ALINE
But you're my husband, and I'm your wife.

THEO
And I trust my wife.

Aline explodes.

ALINE
Well stop! Stop trusting me, stop keeping me up here on this pedestal, worshipping me like I could do no wrong--it's obviously not true!

THEO
I don't believe I've kept you on a pedestal.

ALINE
Of course you have, and yourself as well. Damn it Theo, why don't you yell at me? Shake me, challenge me, hit me for Christ's sake--do something, anything, just stop being so damn noble!

THEO
Would that make any difference?

ALINE
It might to you.

THEO
I think you're confusing me with someone else.

Ouch. Seething and deliberately provoking:

ALINE
No. I could never confuse the two of you. Wolfe hates me for loving you, why don't you hate me for loving him?

THEO
(in pain, almost yelling)
Because I love you. He loves his need of you.

Aline stops. A beat. Quietly:

THEO
(continuing)
Because if loving you well means letting you go, I will.

Aline stares at him. And then pounds him.

ALINE
No! No, damn you no, no--

Her arms move round his neck and she weeps against him. He clutches her. It's the first time we've seen them embrace with passion rather than tenderness. Theo whispers into her hair.

THEO
I don't want to lose you.

ALINE
I will never leave you.

THEO
I'm frightened, Aline.

ALINE
So am I.

THEO
I'm frightened by your hurt. I see it destroying the very spirit we love so. I feel so powerless to help you. I can't stop this. Only you can know when it's done.
(she looks up)
Whatever this passion is, whatever hurt that's gnawing your heart to dust--you must go on anyway. Everything depends on those who go on anyway.
(Aline looks away)
You must get to the other side of this. I'll be there when you do.

180 INT. ALINE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT - SAME

Aline scrubs herself in the shower.

Aline pins up her hair, buttons on a clean smock, smooths her face.

ALINE (V.O.)
Theo was right. It was destroying
-more-

ALINE (V.O.) (cont'd)
me. All my life I'd fought for independence. Now I hardly recognized myself...

181 INT. ALINE'S OLD STUDIO - NIGHT - SAME

Aline works like a dervish, pulling out sketches and blueprints, toiling half the night over her drawing table.

ALINE (V.O.)
And that's what I feared most: what I had become. I didn't know how to go on. I didn't know how to be alive without Tom.

Exhausted, Aline drops her pencil. Moves to the window. Looks out past the skyscrapers, wondering where Tom is. Bows her head hopelessly.

182 INT. SPEAKEASY - NIGHT - SAME

Tom hangs over a ledger Aline gave him. The page is blank. And Tom's drunk. Can't take the blankness anymore so he slams it shut. Across the room a couple giggles, absorbed in each other. Tom stares at them, head jutting forward, his eyes bulging with hostility.

BARTENDER
Last call folks.

Tom staggers up and heads out, away from the couple.

183 EXT. SPEAKEASY - SAME

As Tom reels down the steps he bumps into a passing couple. Seeing another loving couple enrages him further. Out of the blue, Tom belts the guy. The woman shrieks. Several bystanders descend on Tom. They beat him to a pulp. A police siren disperses the gang. Tom lies slumped against a hydrant, bleeding, clutching his cracked ribs.

TOM
Aline. Aline.

The police help him up.

184 INT. CHATHAM HOTEL - DAY

The restaurant buzzes with the lunch time crowd. Aline sits at a table with the actress Helen Hayes and a producer.

HELEN
I'd love something in the vein of those costumes you did for Lynn Fontanne in <u>The Doctor's Dilemma</u>--

Aline sees Maxwell Perkins and F. Scott Fitzgerald enter. Instantly distracted, the chatter from her own table fades.

HELEN
Aline. Aline!

Aline jolts back to the table. Deadly white.

ALINE
Excuse me. Please. I'm very sorry.

She gets up and makes her way across the crowded room.

ALINE
Pardon the intrusion. Mr. Fitzgerald, I believe.

Perkins looks up. Throughout the brief exchange he becomes increasingly uncomfortable, even priggish. Fitzgerald, uneasy as he is, finds Aline riveting.

ALINE
For a literary man, Mr. Perkins, you have a sinfully conventional view of the world.

PERKINS
I don't recall expressing my views on the world to you.

ALINE
Tom hinted often enough you disapproved of us.

PERKINS
You are a married woman, Mrs. Bernstein.

ALINE
Did you tell Tom to stop seeing me?

PERKINS
Tom is a very young man, Mrs. Bernstein.
(a loaded pause)
And a very distracted one. I suggested he get away to focus on his work.

ALINE
Tell me. Has he produced anything in this splendid isolation?
(silence)
Has he made one deadline?

PERKINS
We have confidence in him.

ALINE
(smirking just a little)
I hope your condfidence is justified.
Good afternoon, gentlemen.

Aline walks proudly back to her own table. It's obvious from Fitzgerald smiling into his drink that he likes her. Which annoys Max even more.

FITZGERALD
What say we sick Zelda on Tom, and I'll fill in with Mrs. Bernstein.

CUT TO

185 INT. ARMONK. LIVING ROOM - DUSK

The house looks gorgeous, full of flowers from Aline's extensive garden, the French doors and windows flung open on the huge lawn. All the Bernstein's are there, and the Helburns, lounging. Aline's serving up a very decadent dessert. Trying to be her old self.

ALINE
(to Terry first)
Taste that, and tell me if it isn't the culinary equivalent of a Shakespearean sonnet.

TERRY
(swooning)
Heaven.

OLIVER
You've created quite a scandal with this latest production of yours. What's all the fuss?

ETHEL
It's about a prostitute. Trying to raise and educate a child.

OLIVER
Can't see the harm in that.

TERRY
They say Aline made her too much an "eternal female" rather than a social deviant. The district attorney is closing it for "tending to corrupt the morals of youth."

ALINE
I hope I'm not causing you too much embarrassment downtown, darling.

THEO
(grinning)
Don't worry about it, love. It's good for their blood pressure to get stirred up a bit.

TERRY
Theo Bernstein, I think you enjoy bringing a little scandal into the hallowed halls of conventional Wall Street.

TEDDY
(coming in and bee-lining for the desert)
Long as he can blame his bohemian wife, right Dad?

THEO
Absolutely. Aline's saved me from what would otherwise have been a tediously impeccable existence.

Aline feeds him a spoonful of dessert.

OLIVER
Ah, the truth will out.

ALINE
Now if I could just get you to vote Democratic.

ETHEL
Oh no. No political discussions.

Aline heads for the kitchen.

186 INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Aline starts making coffee. Hears a rattling and turns. Drops the coffee grounds. Tom's standing in the back door. He still bears the bruises of his beating.

Tom crosses the room swiftly and grabs her, kisses her passionately. He is out of his head with confusion. Both of them are, and throughout the scene they alternately clutch and pull away from each other.

ALINE
My family--

TOM
I had to come--
(holding her)
I don't know what to do, Aline.

It's almost too much temptation for her to bear. She returns his kisses avidly.

TOM
(continuing)
Forgive me. Come back.

ALINE
So you can leave again.

TOM
I won't, I promise--

ALINE
Don't use the word "promise" ever again. You have no conception of its meaning. To you it's an expedient, filling the black gap in your heart.

TOM
(getting angry)
I need you back.

ALINE
(covering her ears)
No you don't.

TOM
(pulling her hands away)
You'll listen, I'll make you listen.
(shouting)
I'll make them all listen--

ALINE
(her anger rising)
Leave my family out of it--

TOM
I'll tell them what kind of a woman you are--

ALINE
I know who I am and what I feel and what I've tried to be, and you will never corrupt that.

TOM
And who have you been, Aline? My lover, my mother, my mistress--

ALINE
Myself.

TOM
Mrs. Theodore Bernstein.

ALINE
For better or worse.

TOM
For richer and richer. That's it

-more-

TOM (cont'd)
isn't it? That's why you wouldn't marry me. I couldn't give you all this.

ALINE
(stunned to calm)
Is that what you think?

TOM
What else?

ALINE
I loved you. I can't do any more than love you.

TOM
That isn't enough.

For the first time Aline realizes this, sadly, is true.

ALINE
I know.

Calmly Aline moves to the back door and opens it. He stares her down. Not budging. Smirking.

Tom blinks. It's slowly dawning on him she's serious. His bravado turns to fear.

TOM
I need you--we need each other.

ALINE
(nods slightly, ruefully)
The need's so great it's pushed out all desire.

For all his twisted psyche, Tom's no dummy. He knows exactly what she means. He touches her cheek.

ALINE
(continuing; slow, precise)
I can't love you anymore.

He grabs her desperately, with overpowering force. His violence contrast with her quiet control.

TOM
You can't not love me.

ALINE
I know.
(but nevertheless:)
Please go.

His force has no power against her stillness. Slowly he lets her go. Pain etched in his face. Starts to leave, pauses.

TOM
Goodbye, Mrs. Bernstein.

He turns away. Aline doesn't look after him. She closes the door. Leans against it. Tears staining her face. Trying to compose herself. She mops up the spilled coffee grounds. Ethel appears at the inner doorway. Obviously everyone heard.

ETHEL
After all this, you still love him.

ALINE
(because she let him go)
Perhaps better than before.

ETHEL
He'll never stay, and he'll never leave you alone.

This stops her. Sobers her. All but her grieving eyes remain motionless for what seems to Ethel an endless pause. Ethel's about to walk out when Aline's soft voice stops her.

ALINE
It's over. It is.

Aline prepares the coffee. Her hands trembling. She turns the burner on under the coffee pot.

CUT TO

187 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Aline enters carrying a tray of coffee and cups. No one mentions what they all heard. Only their gestures show how solicitous they are.

Aline gently kisses Theo on the forhead.

ALINE
I'm tired. I'm going to lie down now.

He squeezes her hand as she walks away.

188 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Aline takes a deep breath. The sound of a car honking impatiently brings her to the window. She sees Tom still standing by the cab, watching the house. Tom enters the cab. Aline watches it pull away.

She opens the cabinet. Takes out a vial of sleeping pills.

A light tapping. Theo's voice, softly, through the door:

THEO (O.S.)
Aline? Aline. May I come in?

Aline calmly pours out a handful.

Sound of Theo's hand, trying the knob. It's locked. Aline gulps the pills. The knocking resumes, louder.

THEO (O.S.)
Aline!

Aline sinks to the floor, listening. She closes her eyes. Lies out flat. Letting go.

FADE TO BLACK

189 INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

At first, all we see is a glaring light. Then vague figures, some in nurses caps, and whispered voices. The glare is a hospital lamp. The images become liquid. Then everything's blank.

ALINE (V.O.)
Love had been merciless. Death, oddly, was more gracious. At her border I found I had a choice. It took only will. I would not allow my life, my other life, my first life, to end. Death granted me safe passage back.

190 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Aline awakens in a hospital bed with sunlight streaming through the window. She stares at the dust motes dancing in the warm rays. Then realizes she's alive and a nurse is bathing her forehead. She speaks hoarsely, every breath a strain. But she hasn't lost her sense of humor.

ALINE
I dreamed I was swimming at the bottom of a pond. I guess you're the pond.

DOCTOR
You're very lucky.

ALINE
Why do people always say that in situations like this?

DOCTOR
You're all in one working piece. Barely. And miraculously I might add.

ALINE
Ah. So it's a relative thing. Luck I mean.

DOCTOR
You nearly died you know. You still could. I've done all I can. The rest is up to you.

ALINE
I'm here, aren't I?

He smiles and opens the door and beckons quietly. Ethel waits by the door. Theo moves to the bed. Awaiting a cue. She raises her fingers weakly. He takes her hand and holds it to him, covering it with kisses. She squeezes his hand and he looks up at her. Understanding she's truly back.

THEO
Welcome home.

ALINE
(meaning so much more)
Thank you.

Ethel leaves them be.

191 INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Tom waits patiently. Ethel walks in. Freezes. Tom stands.

ETHEL
She doesn't want to see you.

TOM
(nodding)
I just want to know. Is she okay?

Ethel's taken aback. He's so meek. So completely sincere.

ETHEL
She will be.

He closes his eyes, taking a grateful breath. Looks at Ethel.

TOM
Thank you.

He shuffles out.

192 INT. THEATRE - DAY - WEEKS LATER

Aline's in her workshop, bowed over a set design. Hears a knock. Looks up and is shocked to find Maxwell Perkins in her door. Holding flowers.

PERKINS
Mrs. Bernstein.

ALINE
Aline. Isn't it time we became friends, Max?

PERKINS
I'd like that.

He comes over nervously. She buries her face in the blossoms.

MAX
Should you be working so soon?

ALINE
It's what I do. Couldn't not.

He looks at her work. Puzzles over her instruments.

ALINE
(continuing)
You put a triangle against a T-square and you have an incontrovertible fact. I like incontrovertible facts. They keep me sane.

PERKINS
(pause)
Tom's not well.

ALINE
I'm sorry to hear.

PERKINS
He left Scribner's you know. Harper's is putting out his next book.

ALINE
I heard. I wasn't surprised. Don't be offended. I heard Tom say how grateful he was to you. His gratitude's always double edged. It inevitably leads to his--how does he phrase it in the novel--
(good humored mocking)
"embarking on the mighty stride of changes, his cruel and relentless disentanglements from all that bound him." It's never pleasant.

Perkins laughs.

PERKINS
Aline, I owe you an apology. I know now what it's like to be pulled into Tom's orbit. His overwhelming need, followed by disavowal, merciless but never entire.

ALINE
I wasn't pulled, I came. So did he. He still calls you?

PERKINS
Yes but his new editor gets the credit.

ALINE
(joking)
Give it time.

PERKINS
Let me finish. I know he would not have given the world what he has had it not been for you. Only now can I imagine what it must have cost you.

Slowly, Aline smiles. Recognized. Finally.

ALINE
He was right to love me. And I was right to love him.

Max agrees. A touch ruefully. With some of her old glint:

ALINE
And we were right to call it a day.

DISSOLVE TO

193 EXT. FIFTH AVENUE - DAY - TWO YEARS LATER

Aline's walking down the street in a summer dress and hat, looking well again. Unexpectedly she finds Tom walking in the crowd ahead of her. She reaches a hand to touch his shoulder but thinks better of it. He turns and heads into the Gotham Bar. She looks after him. Continues on her way, a bittersweet smile fluttering across her face.

ALINE (V.O.)
I saw Tom again two years later. Odd being so close and him not knowing. I let him walk on. Love, that had happened so harshly, now seemed so simple: It was sufficient that he was in the world, even if it was not mine.

194 INT. BOOKSTORE - EVENING

Tom's at a crowded reception, signing copies of The Web and the Rock. But every outside demand seems to take him from the task he'd rather be doing: scribbling a letter in a notebook. He works feverishly, and on-lookers whisper, enthralled at the sight of this handsome, passionate, obsessed man. Until one notices him dab his sweating brow for the umpteenth time, squint with pain, close his eyes and reel slightly.

WOMAN
Mr. Wolfe? Mr. Wolfe, are you all right?

Tom looks up at her. Blankly. Then collapses.

195 INT. JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL - DUSK

An unconscious Wolfe is wheeled out of the operating room, his head bandaged. Perkins and Julia wait expectantly. Julia's distraught so the doctor takes Perkins aside.

DOCTOR
An old tuberculosis lesion seems to have shed into the bloodstream. He has tubercles all over his brain. There's nothing we can do.

Tom's family mulls about. His eyes open and Perkins moves to him. Tom raises himself weakly and searches the room. Hoarse:

TOM
Where's Aline? I want Aline. I want my Jew.

PERKINS
She's coming, Tom.

Tom smiles, lies back down. Closes his eyes. For the last time.

196 EXT. ARMONK - DUSK

The whole Bernstein family sits out on the lawn in the dusk, sipping cocktails and enjoying the evening. Edla's fiancé is there, and Terry and Oliver putter at badminton. A look passes over Aline's face, as if she has sensed something. She hears a phone ring.

197 INT. ARMONK - SAME

Aline picks up the receiver.

ALINE
Yes?

MAX (ON PHONE)
He's dead.

ALINE
I know.

198 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - SAME

Perkins holds Tom's last letter to Aline. His voice eventually blends with and then becomes Tom's.

PERKINS
These words belong to you, Aline.
(he reads)
"I can now say to you what I never could before. Thank you. Through you, I discovered a new world..."

Perkins' voice fades. Tom's voice rises and finally finishes the speech:

TOM (V.O.)
...I discovered a new world. I loved you with my life, you are mixed into my blood...

199 INT. ARMONK - DUSK

Aline listens calmly, trembling just a little. Her family and sprawling lawn and the cool evening sky are visible through the French doors.

TOM (V.O.)
When I die, if they cut me open, they will find one name written on my brain and in my heart. It will be yours.

Aline quietly replaces the receiver. She walks out, a little dazed but mostly just very still.

200 EXT. ARMONK - DUSK

Gaiety, laughter and chatter surround her. She glides quietly past it, down to the end of the garden. Those who notice, sense to let her be. Her gestures are a little choked, tears well in her eyes, and yet she's peaceful as she looks up at the evening sky, making peace with her grief.

ALINE (V.O.)
I have only my memories of Tom now. And his books. There will always be his books. I am happy. But for all of the cruelties, for all the errors of arrogance and frailty, I would not have missed our time. I learned to love better for having loved Tom. I learned to live more fully for having loved, and been loved, with such mysterious passion.

She smiles--just a little--and turns back towards the laughter.

THE END