

DESERT BLOOM

Story by

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Third Draft
Revised

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Producer
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1. INT. OPTOMETRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

1.

A beautiful eye emerges from darkness, blinks, and rapidly dilates as a drop of fluid splashes into it. FADE TO BLACK.

DECEMBER, 1950

The Korean Conflict edges to the brink of a Third World War. Chinese Communist troops have crossed the Yalu River into Korea, trapping the vastly outnumbered American forces at Changjin Reservoir. As the nation mobilizes for war, President Truman secretly authorizes the Atomic Energy Commission to commence testing of Atomic weapons in the desert north of Las Vegas, Nevada.

FADE TO:

BLACK. Two small circles of light appear, white dots in the midst of blackness. The circles grow, merge; a fuzzy eye chart becomes recognizable. A clicking sound and the letters on the chart blur. We hear a YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE:

YOUNG GIRL

Worse.

Click again: the chart comes into sharper focus.

YOUNG GIRL

Better.

Another click and the letters blur slightly.

YOUNG GIRL

Worse.

2. EXT. DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS - DAY

2. *

Blinding desert sunlight. ROSE CHISMORE, thirteen, tall and gangling, exits the optometrist's office and enters the flashing neon and hustle of downtown Las Vegas. Coins bang against tin, YOUNG SOLDIERS play nickel slots, "FROSTY THE SNOWMAN" blares to the crowd of tourists, soldiers, and gamblers. Rose squints through lavender framed, butterfly-shaped glasses.

Like a cautious drunk, Rose walks tentatively, unaccustomed to the way the world looks through her first pair of glasses. She wears a man's white shirt, untucked with the sleeves rolled up, baggy jeans with rolled cuffs. She walks under a twelve foot long hot dog that protrudes over the sidewalk like a huge erection; she doesn't seem to notice.

2. CONT.

2. CONT.

A block away, the flashing neon of the big casinos. Rose sneaks looks at herself in passing windows, studying how she looks in glasses.

3. EXT. PALACE THEATER - DAY

3. *

Rose stops to look at the movie posters in glass cases: "COMING ATTRACTIONS!" "Out of the headlines...and into your heart! The REAL Korea Story! Of Guts and Glory! Of Courage and Combat! Of Hope and Heart! THE STEEL HELMET!" Rose moves to JOAN OF ARC, starring Ingrid Bergman. She studies Ingrid's flawless beauty, delicately upturned nose, turning slightly so she can see her own nose reflected in the glass case. It seems over-sized and poorly shaped in comparison. She sighs, turns away, bangs on the door. No one answers. Rose peers inside. The lobby is empty.

Rose steps out to the sidewalk and looks up above the theater marquee to a small second floor office window.

ROSE

Hello? Momma, it's Rose!

No response. Confused, Rose turns away.

4. EXT. DESERT AT EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

4. *

Rose walks in a quiet, desolate area, scraped and graded for a housing subdivision. At the sharp edge of the newly-poured concrete sidewalk the desert begins, white sand and creosote brush sloping toward barren mountains.

Rose stops under a small, scraggy desert tree. Her POV as the leaves come into focus: for the first time in her life she can see their distinct shapes. She's delighted and immediately begins experimenting, removing her glasses: the leaves blur into a diffuse splash of green light.

5. SCENE OMITTED

5. *

6. EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

6.

Rose crosses an open expanse of asphalt, approaching a small gas station in the desert. ROSE'S POV as JETS suddenly scream low overhead, and then race toward the horizon. We hear multiple EXPLOSIONS.

*

Rose looks around. No customers, no attendant in sight. The station is immaculate, beautifully kept. Rose looks around. A sign squeaks in the wind: "JACK'S DESERT GAS." Rose's eyes come to rest on two feet sticking out from underneath a government van. She takes off her glasses.

6. CONT.

6. CONT.

ROSE
(to the feet)

Daddy?

O.S. VOICE
(under car)

A man is 100 yards due south of a bear. He walks 100 yards due east, then faces due north, fires his gun due north and hits the bear.

A man in an immaculate, white service uniform comes wheeling out from under the car, gives Rose a military-like salute.

JACK
What color is the bear?

JACK CHISMORE, wiry and intense, is Rose's stepfather. Rose works out the positions of the man and the bear.

ROSE
Say you're the bear and I'm the man. And that's north...and the hunter walks to the East..
(steps off a few feet)
The man couldn't hit the bear. He'd miss by a hundred yards.

JACK
He hits the bear.

Rose shakes her head, stumped. A SPORTSCAR races into the station. A SHOWGIRL in skimpy costume and high heels gets out and runs into the restroom.

JACK
I'll give you a hint: there's only one place in the world the bear could be. And it's cold.

ROSE
How cold?

JACK
Very, very cold.

ROSE'S POV as she squints at ROBIN, a good-looking boy in a BOY SCOUT UNIFORM pedaling into the station on a bike. Robin waves and parks his bike. Rose closes her eyes, concentrates.

ROSE
If you're the bear...and you were sitting on the north pole...

Jack grins: she's getting it.

6. CONT.

6. CONT.

ROSE

It wouldn't matter which way the man walked, the bear would always be to the north! So the bear's white: he's a polar bear.

They laugh as THREE IDENTICAL LIGHT GREEN '49 PLYMOUTH SEDANS - government cars - wheel into the station. Men pile out the cars, head to the restrooms, coke machine, office. As Jack hurries to the cars, we see he walks with a limp.

Rose slips on her glasses to get a better look at Robin, who has started washing a car windshield. He's Rose's age, good-looking and graceful.

JACK

Rose! We need a couple Nevada maps!

Rose continues watching Robin as she heads toward the station office. He suddenly JUMPS UP, touching an overhanging sign.

7. INT. GAS STATION OFFICE - DAY

7.

TWO MEN IN SUITS - SCIENTISTS - play the station slot machine. Rose enters, looking for the maps. She steals looks at the men, squinting without her glasses, curious.

8. EXT. GAS STATION PUMPS - DAY

8.

Jack stops to clean a smudge off one of his sparkling pumps.

JACK

Took eleven-three; dollar ninety-two cents. Where you fellas headed?

The DRIVER looks over at an ARMY COLONEL, who nods.

DRIVER

Out to the Gunnery Range.

We can see ROSE TALKING TO THE SCIENTISTS playing the slot machine in the office.

JACK

Been a lot of you fellas through here lately. Like desert country?

Jack winks slyly to let them know he's joking.

JACK

Got something going out there, huh? Something to do with Korea?

8. CONTINUED

8. CONT

The COLONEL gets out, stretches his legs, looks around the station, doesn't answer.

JACK

A good friend of mine died at Changjin two weeks ago. We were in World War II together - under Patton. Guess you guys didn't figure ~~guys~~ didn't figure on the Chinese coming in, huh?

Rose comes running up with the maps. Jack nods to the cars.

JACK

One a piece. Got water?

The Colonel shakes his head. Rose gives a map to each driver, trying not to stare. She slips her glasses on with studied casualness. Her POV as she stares at the important-looking men. They are easterners by their looks, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, perhaps, or SCIENTISTS. Jack grabs a water bag, hands it to Rose. She fills the bag, watches Robin checking the oil nearby. She slips off her glasses.

ROSE

Hi, Robin.

ROBIN

Hi. Hey, Mr. Chismore, think this fan belt's too loose?

JACK

(testing the belt)

Naw. Careful you don't get your uniform dirty.

ROSE'S POV as the TWO SCIENTISTS from the station office exit. The CAMERA MOVES IN on their conversation.

1ST SCIENTIST

How can he hit the bear?

2ND SCIENTIST

You're the one that went to M.I.T.

JACK'S POV. The men by the restroom gather around as the 1st scientist pantomimes shooting the bear. Jack eyes them suspiciously as he polishes the side mirror by the Colonel.

8.CONT.

8. CONT.

The men by the restroom laugh.

JACK

Look like science types.

COLONEL

I'm not in a position to say.

JACK

Bet you a coke they're Jewish. No offense - I can spot any nationality.

(leans close)

You don't have to say yes or no.

(lowers voice)

The government's building some kind of defense plant out there, isn't it?

That's why all the science types, huh?

The Colonel stares straight ahead, doesn't reply.

JACK

I read quite a bit. You know, True Magazine, Police Gazette. I keep up on things. I got an idea what you'll be making out there.

The Colonel shifts uncomfortably; Rose ties the water bag to the front of the car; the SHOWGIRL runs out of the ladies restroom and dashes to the waiting sportscar. Jack looks around, leans close to the Colonel, lowers his voice.

JACK

Jets. Long range bombers...

(a beat)

These Atomic bombs, you gotta fly high and get the hell out of there fast.

That's why all the jets and bombing out at Nellis every night, right?

The Colonel stares at Jack, then waves the driver forward. The car moves out onto the highway. Jack watches for a moment, then heads back to the lube bays. The scientist stumped by the bear puzzle gives Rose a helpless quizzical look. She smiles, shrugs, and runs to catch up with Jack.

9. INT. GAS STATION LUBE RACKS - DAY

9.

A car is elevated on the lube rack. Jack starts to work under it. Robin sweeps up. The lube area, like the rest of the station, is spotless, gleaming. A radio plays.

Jack notices a grease spot on Robin's boy scout uniform. He goes to a nearby wall rack and selects a spotless white service station uniform.

*

9 CONT.

9 CONT.

JACK

Here, you can wear mine.

Robin proudly puts on the oversized uniform. "JACK" is stitched across the front. He looks happy and ridiculous.

ROSE

Momma wasn't at the Palace today.

Jack nods and unscrews the crankcase plug. A stream of thick black oil drains out into a funneled drum.

JACK

She's at the Cortez now. In the hotel part, not the casino.

He wipes his hands, quickly changes the subject.

JACK

Those guys who were just in here, did you see how big their heads were? And how they all wore glasses. I think they're...scientists.

ROSE

Well, they couldn't figure out the bear puzzle. I asked them.

Jack looks at Rose. A smile breaks slowly across his face.

10. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - DAY

10.

Rose emerges from the "LUCKY ACES TRAILER COURT" and crosses the sideyard of a house on the edge of a vacant desert lot. A mongrel dog snarls at a passerby, then wags his tail at Rose. She strokes TUFFY'S chin, hugs him.

Across the street, a middle-aged woman, MRS. OLAWSKI, rakes sand in an exotic garden of cactus and desert plants. A sign in her window advertises: "Ada's Real Estate and Palm Reading. Fortunes Told." Rose stares for a moment at a cactus plant silhouetted against the blinding white stucco wall, then hurries up the steps into her house.

11. INT. CHISMORE BATHROOM - DAY

11.

Rose looks in the mirror, staring at herself in glasses. Her sisters, DEE ANN, 11, and BARBARA JO, 9, crowd in beside her.

ROSE

Don't you think they make my nose look smaller?

11 CONT.

11 CONT.

DEE ANN

A lot smaller.

BARBARA JO

How can glasses make your nose smaller? That's stupid.

Rose looks down at Barbara Jo, fixes her with a haughty glare.

ROSE

You don't know anything about fashion, do you?

BARBARA JO

(tossing her head and leaving)

Huh!

DEE ANN

Well, I think they're cute.

Dee Ann exits. Alone, Rose experiments, pushing her nose upwards, trying to make it smaller, more feminine. She finally gives up, cleans her glasses, flushes the used tissue down the toilet. It makes a RATTLING SOUND. Rose lifts the tank lid, sees A PINT BOTTLE OF VODKA lying on the bottom.

O.S. VOICE

Yoo-hoo...girls.

Rose replaces the lid, leaving the bottle undisturbed.

12. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - DAY

12. *

LILY CHISMORE, slender, middle thirties, outdated 40's hair-style, puffs on a Camel cigarette as she enters the kitchen. The girls help with her shopping bags as Rose enters.

ROSE

Hi, mama. How do you like working at the Cortez?

LILY

(putting away groceries)

Just fine, sweetheart - pays more than what the Palace did. I'm in the hotel part.

Rose waits for Lily to see her glasses, but Lily sees a PINT OF VODKA hidden in the pantry. Upset, she pushes it from view and closes the door. She hugs the girls suddenly.

*

LILY

All good things come in threes!

12 CONT.

12 CONT.

Lily hurries out. Rose sighs, takes her glasses off.

13. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - NIGHT

13.

A stream of liquid pours into the sink; Lily empties the contents of the pint bottle of vodka down the drain. She hides two empty bottles at the bottom of the kitchen garbage.

CUT TO:

Lily prepares dinner. IT TAKES HER ABOUT 15 SECONDS. First, she shakes a can of Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup into a saucepan; a thick yellowish-white gelatin oozes out, splattering in gobs into the pan; then she scoops canned tuna in with the Cream of Mushroom and mixes them together; finally, she pours Uncle Ben's Minute Rice out of the box into a pan of boiling water, puts a lid over the top.

LILY

Dinner's ready!

14. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

14.

The girls sit at the table, white mounds of tuna-mushrooms-over-rice piled on plates in front of them.

LILY

In bed, lights out, at 8:30. No radio until you finish the dishes, okey-dokey?

The girls nod. Lily heads for the door, carrying two plates wrapped in wax paper.

15. INT. GAS STATION OFFICE - NIGHT

15.

Jack sits in the darkened office, lights out, staring out at the desert. JETS scream low overhead. The DISTANT THUMP OF ARTILLERY can be heard. Jack switches on the radio, spins the dial to a perky pop tune, "A Bushel and a Peck." He switches it off. The dull thump resumes. He flips the radio on, spinning the dial across the empty band to KENO and another pop tune, "Marshmallow World." He doesn't like it either, and turns it off. A SONIC BOOM rattles the glass. Jack turns the radio on loud as it can go.

16. EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

16.

"Marshmallow World" BLARES LOUDLY from the darkened station. Lily gets out of her car and walks cautiously toward the open service bays, squinting into the blackness.

16. CONT.

16. CONT.

LILY
Daddy? Yoo-hoo?

She turns off the radio. SILENCE. Jack appears soundlessly behind her.

JACK
I'm right here.

Lily jumps, startled.

LILY
What're all the lights out for?

JACK
I don't know.

LILY
You don't know? Who turned them out?

JACK
I did...I needed a break, that's all.

LILY
(cheerfully)
No rest for the weary!

She flips on the lights as she enters the station office.

17. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - NIGHT

17.

Rose washes the dishes; Dee Ann dries. "A Bushel and a Peck" plays from a radio in the living room.

DEE ANN
You missed a spot. Right there.
See?

Rose squints at the dish, nods, starts to wash it again. "Harbor Lights" comes on the radio.

ROSE & DEE ANN
Harbor Lights!

They run out of the kitchen, leaving the dishes.

18. INT. GAS STATION OFFICE - NIGHT

18.

Lily studies Jack's eyes and movements. He's tired. His limp is more pronounced, but he's not drunk. Several more
LOUD EXPLOSIONS.

18. CONT.

18. CONT.

LILY

They're busy as beavers on the
bombing range tonight, aren't they?
Your leg's bothering you, isn't it?

JACK

It's OK.

Lily clears Jack's desk, moving several clipped out NEWS
STORIES and PHOTOGRAPHS off to the side.

LILY

I've never seen anyone like you
for reading and clipping.

JACK

That's how I keep on top of world events.

LILY

Well, you forget about the world for a
minute and sit down here and have some
nice warm food. It'll perk you right up.

They sit down before flattened white mounds of Lily's tuna-
mushroom-rice. Jack pushes his plate away.

JACK

I'm not hungry. Truman makes me
mad as hell.

LILY

Waste not, want not.

Jack lights a cigarette and leans back in his chair. Pause.

*

LILY

I got the results back from the
doctor today. He says I'm fine.

(a beat)

He wants you to come in for a checkup.

JACK

There's nothing wrong with me. I got
two more government cars to service
today.

*

LILY

It's just a checkup.

18 CONT.

18 CONT.

JACK

Did my "Great Thinkers" book come today?

LILY

No, not yet. Jack, maybe he can find out what's wrong.

JACK

What did you tell him about me?

LILY

Nothing. Just that we've been trying for a long time, that's all.

JACK

The only thing wrong with me is my leg. And that's got nothing to do with whether you can get pregnant.

LILY

I didn't say it did.

JACK

You don't know the first thing about human physiology, do you?

LILY

I only went because I know how much you want a baby of your own...

Lily dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief. Jack gets up and leaves the office.

LILY

Jack, honey...

CAMERA follows Jack into the GARAGE BAYS. He begins to clean off his work bench. Something catches his eye. He looks up, angry: Lily's white handkerchief waves from the doorway.

LILY O.S.

Yo-hoo, Jack? Honey?

19. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

19.

Rose sits at her dresser in Wonder Woman pajamas, undoing her braids, brushing out her long black hair, reading a WONDER WOMAN comic book. Dee Ann and Barbara Jo are asleep.

19 CONT.

19 CONT.

(SCENE TRIMMED)

*

Footsteps sound on the porch. Rose switches off the light, and slips into bed.

20. INT. CHISMORE BATHROOM - NIGHT

20.

Jack removes the lid from the toilet, looks inside: no bottle. He stands there, nervous, on edge, trying to remember. He opens the bathroom closet, removes an economy-sized bottle of Listerine Mouthwash. He takes a long drink, letting it pour down his throat, draining the bottle. Beads of sweat stand out on his forehead.

At the sink, Jack washes his hands thoroughly, inspecting them for any sign of grease or dirt, rubbing vigorously to remove the slightest trace of uncleanness. Noticing a slight discoloration under a finger nail, he digs away at it with a nail clip. His hands shake slightly.

21. INT. LILY & JACK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

21.

A nightgown lays carefully spread out on the bed. Lily fluffs up the pillow, smooths out a crease on the bedspread. The decor is not exceptionally romantic. Lily holds the nightgown up hopefully in the dresser mirror.

22. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

22.

Jack enters a small room at the end of the hall. A large radio sits in the middle of a small work bench. On the wall behind are two framed citations awarding the Purple Heart to John Francis Chismore, a Bronze Star (bravery in combat), a photo of General Patton, a huge photograph of Boulder Dam, and a gun rack with three rifles.

There is a huge collection of clippings, photographs, and headlines: "RUSSIA COULD INVADE ALASKA, Pilot says," "DID ATOMIC SPIES GIVE STALIN THE BOMB?," "REDS HURL ARMED WOMEN AGAINST ALLIES IN KOREA," Jack adds another clipping to his collection: "U.S. PLANES STRIKE AT ENEMY HORDES."

A change comes over Jack here: compulsiveness gives way to reverence and ritual. He wipes a smudge with a rag, then folds the rag carefully, returning it to its proper place. He turns the radio on and in a few moments we hear its undulating frequency hum. A SPANISH VOICE comes through.

22. CONT.

22. CONT.

RADIO

"Esta es El Radio Nacional de Cuba,
jugando los canciones populares de
Los Estados Unidos! Y ahora, el
numero uno! Un Bushel y Un Peck!"

"Bushel & a Peck" begins; Jack instantly turns the dial. We hear a faint but intelligible BRITISH VOICE doing a comedy routine. Jack tunes it.

BRITISH RADIO VOICE

'The rope broke....'

(hysterical laughter)

'and the barrel....'

Jack laughs. JETS SCREAM OVERHEAD, followed by a jolting SONIC BOOM, DROWNING OUT THE RADIO and RATTLING THE WINDOW. Jack flinches, pales, covers his ears with fists clenched so tightly his knuckles show white. He remains motionless. The comedy routine and laughter play on.

23. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

23.

TIGHT SHOT as a phonograph needle is set down carefully on a spinning record: loud DJANGO REINHARDT jazz guitar, STEPHAN GRAPPELLI fiddle, frantic, disjointed, blasts into the room.

24. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - NIGHT

24.

Jack searches the cupboard, looking for a bottle. He gives up, slams the cupboard door. He staggers, his eyes dart around the room, rest on unwashed plates left on the counter. He sweeps the plates onto the floor. They shatter. Another sweep; more dishes crash. LILY appears in the doorway, dressed in her nightgown.

LILY

Daddy...

JACK

Look at this. Dirty dishes!

LILY

I'll get it in the morning, honey.
Come to bed, sweetheart. Early to
bed, early to rise, makes a man
healthy, wealthy, and wise!

Jack lashes out again: more dishes crash to the floor.

25. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

25.

Rose and Dee Ann are awake, listening to the sounds of crashing dishes. Dee Ann comes to Rose's bed.

DEE ANN

I have to go.

ROSE

Hold it.

DEE ANN

I can't.

ROSE

Yes you can. Concentrate.

Rose says this with fierce willfulness: she can hold it.
Dee Ann climbs into Rose's bed, crying.

DEE ANN

Harbor Lights came on and I
forgot to finish the dishes!

Rose tries to comfort Dee Ann and herself with a whispered story, a prayer to peace and safety to shut out the shouting.

ROSE

Remember when daddy burned down the trailer in Barstow? Grandma sent for us then, didn't she? And that time in Grey Fork? Remember? So we'll go to Grandma's this Christmas. We'll ride Blackie and feed the chickens....

(more shouting)

and drink hot milk before we go to bed at night. Starr and Uncle Pete will be there and we'll have so much fun! The safest place in the whole world is behind the stove at Grandma's.

Jack's voice grows more enraged. Rose fights back panic, forces calm into her voice.

ROSE

How do you spell perceive? Remember: 'i before e, except after c.' Per-
ceive: p-e-r-c-e-i-v-e. Maneuver...

We hear Jack's unintelligible ranting, closer, and Lily's softer, pacifying voice, pleading.

LILY O.S.

Jack, please...Jack!

25. CONT.

25. CONT.

We can hear Rose and Dee Ann's breathing. Footsteps coming closer. The door flies open and Jack stands there, a dark silhouette in the doorway. Barbara Jo stirs awake, rubs her eyes, Dee Ann cries, Rose is silent, terrified.

JACK

Who left the dirty dishes?

JACK

Did you leave them out, Rose?

He moves toward the bed, standing over the girls. Rose stares at him with wide, unblinking eyes, frozen.

JACK

Answer me!

Rose winces but continues staring at him. Jack grabs Rose by the wrist, jerks her out of bed, drags her across the floor.

26. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - NIGHT

26.

Jack throws Rose into the kitchen, slamming her against the stove. The look on her face is pure fear. She closes her eyes. Jack stares at her, chest heaving, shaking with rage.

JACK

Clean it up.

Rose gets down on the floor and starts picking up the pieces. Jack stands over her, struggling to gain control of himself, shaking as he forces his clenched fists to open. We hear LOW GROWLING. Tuffy, the dog, moves protectively to Rose's side.

JACK

You think you're too good to do dishes, is that it? You'd rather have your mother do them?

ROSE

No, sir.

JACK

Then why didn't you do them?

ROSE

I did most of them.

JACK

Most of them? Is that what you're supposed to do?

26. CONTINUED

26. CO

ROSE

No, sir.

JACK

Do you think you can do them all?
Or is that too much to ask?

ROSE

I can do all of them.

JACK

Well, thank you.

Jack turns and leaves. Tears run noiselessly down Rose's face as she cleans up the broken plates.

27. EXT. STREET TO SCHOOL - DAY.

27. *

Rose, in jeans, cuffs rolled, white shirt, sleeves rolled, loafers, white socks, walks with SHELLEY, dressed the same.

SHELLEY

You know what he wants me to do? Take carpet samples to show Liberace. God! Just think how you'd feel if you were Liberace and...and someone special you invited for Christmas Eve showed up with a bunch of rug samples?

ROSE

It's not very thoughtful.

SHELLEY

No wonder my mom's divorced him 4 times.

ROSE

Rita's parents got divorced 16 times. They have to call the Courthouse sometimes because they can't remember whether they're married or not.

SHELLEY

I can't wait for Christmas.

ROSE

I'm probably going to my grandma's for Christmas. Me and my sisters go almost every year, she'd miss us if we didn't.

(SCENE TRIMMED)

27. CONT.

27. CONT.

SHELLEY

I'd like to meet your grandmother
someday. She sounds like a wonderful
person.

ROSE

She is.

SHELLEY

You don't have to be famous to be a
good person.

Rose nods solemnly.

28. EXT. 5TH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

28.

Rose and Shelley wait outside 5th Street School as BLACK
LIMOUSINES pull up; BURLY MEN in dark suits escort CHILDREN
OF BIG CASINO OWNERS onto the school grounds..

SHELLEY

He's late again.

ROSE

Maybe he won a lot of money last night.

ACROSS THE STREET CATHOLIC GIRLS walk in pleated skirts,
white blouses, knee socks, and saddle oxfords.

SHELLEY

Aren't their outfits awful?

Rose squints across the street but can only see moving
shapes. She puts on her glasses; Shelley grimaces.

SHELLEY

Those are your new glasses? Purple! God.
Nobody at school has frames like that.

ROSE

(haughtily)

I don't want to look like everyone
else, that's why I got them. How would
you like it if you had to wear a
uniform to school everyday like the
Catholic girls?

They shake their heads at such humiliating regimentation:
skinny Rose and buxom Shelley, like a pair of imperfectly
matched bookends, are dressed identically down to the number
of rolls on the sleeves of their white shirts. All the
public school girls are dressed the same.

28. CONT.

28. CONT.

AN AGING BLACK CADILLAC pulls in behind the sleek limousines and Rose and Shelley go to meet it. A short dark Jewish man, MR. MOSOL, gets out and waves to the girls.

MR. MOSOL

Zoroastrianism!

ROSE

Z-o-r-o-a-s-t-r-i-a-n-i-s-m.

Mr. Mosol opens the door for his daughter, MERYL. Rose and Meryl wave, not to interrupt Mr. Mosol.

MR. MOSOL

Boy, you're really something. How'd you get so smart?

Mr. Mosol puts his arm around Rose and she beams.

SHELLEY

They don't ask proper nouns in the spelling bee, anyway.

There is a splattering sound and a white spot appears on the hood of Mr. Mosol's car: a lone seagull flies away.

MR. MOSOL

What kind of a seagull is it, that flies 600 miles just to bomb my hood with flegel drech? Why my hood? Why not on a big shots?

(cleaning it off)

Maybe it's good luck, huh? What do you think, Rose, is it good luck? For a seagull to come so far, it's a good sign, isn't it? Think of the odds...

Mr. Mosol believes that it is good luck, but he's also playing it for laughs with the girls. Rose giggles. The school bell rings; Rose looks disappointed.

MR. MOSOL

Go on, don't be late.

MERYL

Bye, Dad.

ROSE

Bye, Mr. Mosol, see you tomorrow. Good luck! (to Meryl) I wonder why your dad's so nice? Maybe gamblers who are Jewish make good fathers.

28. CONTINUED

28. CON

Rose, Shelley, and Meryl join a crush of students moving toward the school entrance. Rose towers over most of the boys. She watches as ROBIN, the tallest of the boys, politely holds the door for a cute blonde girl, then jumps up to touch the door frame.

29. SCENE OMITTED

29.

30. INT. MRS. MURATORE'S HOME ROOM - DAY

30. *

Rose recites the Pledge of Allegiance, staring at a STOCKY BALDING MAN in his forties who stands next to the teacher.

CLASS

"One nation, Indivisible, with
Liberty and Justice for all."

As the class sits down, Rose passes a NOTE to Meryl: "Can I stay over at your house tonight?" Meryl reads it as MRS. MURATORE, the teacher, addresses the class.

MRS. MURATORE

No arithmetic test today, class.
(cheers)

We have a visitor, Mr. Brandal, who's
going to tell us all about Civil
Defense and take us to the Fun Room
to get our blood tested.

Groans. MR. BRANDAL smiles at the class. Meryl looks at Rose and shakes her head, "no."

31. INT. FUN ROOM - DAY

31. *

MR. BRANDAL stands over a boy curled up under a desk.

MR. BRANDAL

Remember, first duck, then cover.
And don't forget, kids, don't look at the
flash.

Mr. Brandal nods to a large woman wearing a Red Cross uniform - MISS EPHLAND. She nods to her volunteers. Testing begins. Rose stands in the blood test line next to Shelley.

ROSE

Wouldn't it be fun if I stayed at
your house tonight?

31. CONTINUED

31.CON

SHELLEY

My mom won't let anyone stay over
on a school night. Besides, you
asked Meryl first. Ugh, blood.

BOY

It's so they know what kind of blood
to give you when we get A-bombed
by the Russians.

ROSE

My dad says the Russians don't have
very many A-bombs yet. That's why we
should A-bomb them first, before they
do it to us.

(a beat)

We could study spelling.

SHELLEY

She'd still say no.

A uniformed RED CROSS VOLUNTEER sits at the testing table.

VOLUNTEER

Name?

ROSE

Rose Chismore.

The volunteer flips through file cards as MISS EPHLAND
announces a special class for girls, "First Aid in An Atomic
Attack." CLOSE ON Rose as she stares at the paraphenalia on
the testing table: test tubes, cotton swabs, bandaids, a
bottle of alcohol. She looks scared. She doesn't notice the
boy ahead of her has left and that it's her turn.

NURSE

Sit down, please.

Rose looks down at the empty seat, the waiting NURSE. She
sits down, the nurse takes her hand, pricks Rose's finger
with a needle, squeezes several drops of blood onto a slide.

NURSE

Next.

32. INT. CAB - DAY

32.

TIGHT SHOT on a makeup mirror as a beautiful BLONDE applies
red lipstick to her mouth. The CABBIE admires her through
his rear mirror. The cab hits a bump, smearing the lipstick
on her teeth. She laughs and rubs it off with her finger.

33. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - DAY

33. *

The cab pulls up outside the Chismore house. The woman gets out, looks up at the huge antenna rising above the roof.

BLONDE

This must be the place. Jack's always gotta have the biggest antenna in town.

She laughs an infectious laugh that makes the cabbie smile.

34. SCENE OMITTED

34.

35. INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

35. *

Rose waits inside the SHOE DEPARTMENT, staring out the window at her house across the parking lot - afraid to go home. JACK'S PICKUP IS PARKED OUT FRONT. Rose sticks her feet under the scope of a foot X-ray machine, stares at the outline of her feet, shoes, and bones. She looks up as JACK CROSSES THE YARD TO HIS PICKUP, gets in, and drives off. Rose takes off running.

36. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

36.

Rose enters, out of breath. Billie Holiday sings "Lover Man (Oh, Where Can You Be?)" to the empty living room. Rose puts on her glasses, scans the room: no one seems home.

ROSE

Hello?

36. CONT.

36. CONT.

The beautiful blonde woman appears in the doorway, wearing a stylish red satin dressing gown. She looks like a Goddess.

ROSE

Starr!

Rose runs to her and they embrace. They hold the hug for a long moment before STARR stands back to look at Rose.

STARR

God, you've grown!

ROSE

The human beanpole.

Starr laughs her free, lilting laugh; Rose laughs with her.

STARR

That's what they said about your Aunt Starr. Wait 'til you fill out a little, then see what they say.

Starr drags on a Chesterfield cigarette as she studies the skinny, flat-chested, stoop-shouldered teenage girl standing in front of her; she searches for some words of reassurance.

STARR

Your glasses look nice, honey, they really do. They've got.....style.

ROSE

You really think so?

STARR

Very sophisticated.

Rose looks relieved, grateful; in matters of style, Starr's word is final.

STARR

C'mon, I'm decorating.

37. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

37.

As quickly as Lily can make Tuna Rice Cassarole, Starr transforms the Sears decor into a temple of feminine beauty; vases of long stem red roses, silky robes, satiny dresses, warm colors. The dressing table is a dense forest of dime store makeup - Maybelline mascara, Cutex nail polish, Ponds. Cold Cream.

STARR

You just missed your dad. He was helping me move a few things around.

37. CONT.

37. CONT.

ROSE
(sitting down on the bed)
He hates me.

STARR
He doesn't hate you, Rose.

Starr pours herself a drink from a bottle of Canadian Club on the dresser. Rose sits silently.

STARR
I don't suppose it's easy to be
stepdad to three girls.

ROSE
I guess not.

STARR
Most men wouldn't try.

ROSE
I know. Where's Uncle Pete?

Starr winces at the mention of Pete's name, takes a quick sip of her drink, and recovers gracefully.

STARR
Your Uncle Pete and I are getting
divorced, honey.

ROSE
(upset)
But why?

STARR
Not now, honey, OK?

Rose looks forlorn, disconsolate. Starr comes over and touches her on the shoulder, a gesture of comfort.

ROSE
I won't ever see him again, will I?

Starr turns away suddenly, bites her lip, looks like she might cry. She walks to the dresser and refills her glass.

ROSE
Does Grandma know?

Starr nods her head, remains silent. Rose can see now that Starr is upset. She tries to bolster her spirits.

ROSE
Uncle Pete will call before your 42
days are up. I bet he will.

37. CONT.

37. CONT.

STARR

No, honey, he's not going to call.
(holding up glass)
42 days. They do everything quick
in this town, don't they?

Starr sits down in front of the dresser mirror and begins to brush her long hair.

ROSE

I don't like Pete anymore.

STARR

Don't say that, honey. Your Uncle
Pete's a nice guy.

ROSE

(changing subject)
Don't you think glasses make my
nose look smaller?

STARR

Nothing's wrong with your nose:
you just look more sophisticated.

Back on the terra firma of fashion, Starr relaxes.

STARR

A little eye shadow would bring out
the hazel in your eyes.
(lightly applying some)
Now look at that.

Rose studies herself in the mirror as Starr heads out to the
LIVING ROOM to put on a new record.

STARR

Better take that eyeshadow off before
Lily sees it.

As Starr sorts through a large stack of records in the
background, ROSE IMITATES STARR in the mirror. "SENTIMENTAL
JOURNEY" starts to play: Rose watches as Starr closes her
eyes and sways with the rhythm.

As Rose goes through a series of Starr poses, the front door
slams: we hear girlish shrieks - Rose's sisters have arrived.
Rose pouts to make her lips look fuller; she sighs at the
results, begins to remove the eye shadow, but changes her
mind. Tossing her head casually---like Starr---she turns to
greet her sisters as they burst into the room with Starr.

38.

38. *

SCENE OMITTED

39. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

39.

Lily's POV as she enters what used to be her bedroom. A card game is in progress; much giggling and laughter. The girls greet their mother without getting up.

GIRLS

Hi, Momma.

DEE ANN

Look, Rose is playing cards.

LILY

My, my, gambling.(interested, leaning closer)
Nickel limit?

STARR

C'mon, sit in for a hand.

LILY

No, you go ahead and have fun.

I've got to get dinner on. I see
you're moved in.

Lily doesn't like Starr's flamboyant redecorating. We can sense tension between the two very different sisters.

STARR

It was awfully nice of you to
give me your room.

LILY

With all you've been through, I
wouldn't want you to have to stay
in the little room. Besides, Jack
and I are happy anywhere. We don't mind
the small room. Careful with the

39. CONT.

39. CONT.

LILY

(continued)

furniture, though, Jack and I just
bought the bedroom suite at Sears.

Lily pronounces "suite" as if it were "suit."

STARR

I will.

LILY

Seems like the only time I see my
sisters anymore is when they come
to get divorced.

Rose holds her head away, so Lily can't see her eye makeup.

LILY

Is something wrong, Rose?

ROSE

No, momma.

LILY

Well, look at me then when I talk to you.

Rose slips on her glasses and turns to face her mother.

LILY

Oh, what...interesting frames, honey.
Rose Chismore! What's on your eyes?
You get that junk off this instant,
before your father sees it.

(to Dee Ann and Barbara Jo)

You two: go set the table. Go on.
I got nice new dishes from Sears -
for Starr.

The girls leave with the new plates. Rose rubs off the last
bit of eye shadow.

LILY

Let's take a look at you. That's
better, young lady. Now, go on, go
help your sisters.

Rose leaves. Lily closes the door.

40. EXT. CHISMORE SIDE YARD - DUSK

40.

Jack pulls into the sideyard and parks as Robin dribbles a
basketball, fakes an imaginary defender, hooks a shot against
a hoop nailed to the LUCKY ACES trailer park sign, catches
the rebound, and turns to greet Jack.

*

40. CONT.

40. CONT.

ROBIN

Hello, Mr. Chismore.

JACK

(preoccupied)

'lo, Robin.

ROBIN

Who was the best General: Eisenhower
or MacArthur?

JACK

Patton. Patton was the best.

A strong, swirling WIND STORM has come up, blowing in off the desert, filling the air with dust and sand, enveloping them. We can barely see Starr in the background, looking out her window at Jack and Robin. She turns away. Her POV: the girls have lined up in the LIVING ROOM to greet Jack. *

JACK

He drove right by me in his jeep once,
six gun in his holster and that riding
crop of his... 'Georgie,' we called him...
Got out and walked right next to me,
b.s.'d like a regular guy---Patton!

ROBIN

What was the landing like?

JACK

Patton didn't have anything to do with
the landing. If he had, it would've
been different. War would've been
over in '44 if they'd left him alone.

(with pride)

No army'd ever moved like the 3rd.
50 miles a day! - supply had to
parachute in our gas and ammo we moved
so fast. Krauts thought we were the
dogs of hell. The French girls...
well, you're too young for that.

(smiles, remembering
the French girls)

If they'd let Patton keep going,
we'd have made Berlin in '44 and the
Commies wouldn't own half of Europe.

ROBIN

What about Omaha Beach?

JACK

I hate beaches. Any kind of beach.
Ocean, too.

40 CONT.

40 CONT.

ROBIN

The Communists have the 10th pinned down at Hungnam beach right now.

JACK

I know. The same unit that got hit by the Communist at Changjin. They should let MacArthur use the A-bomb - like in Japan.

He leaves suddenly. As he climbs the porch steps, the wind slaps the screen door open and closed, rattles the windows, piles sand up against the door sill.

41. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DUSK

41.

Lined up neatly by age and height, the girls greet Jack as he comes through the door.

ROSE

Hi, Daddy.

JACK

(smiling broadly)

How are my girls?

Starr stands in her doorway, sipping a drink, watching the greeting ritual. Lily calls in from the kitchen.

LILY O.S.

Dinner in a jiffy, daddy!

Barbara Jo squeals with delight as Jack lifts her into the air and swings her around. He sets her down and immediately holds out two hands, fists closed, in front of her.

JACK

Guess which hand?

Barbara Jo points to the right. Jack opens the hand slowly: it's empty. Barbara Jo grabs the other hand.

BARBARA JO

That one!

JACK

Say please.

BARBARA JO

Please.

Barbara Jo pries Jack's fist open and grabs the coins. Dee Ann and Rose wait, hoping to share in Jack's good mood.

41. CONT.

41. CONT.

JACK

I don't have anything for you two.

ROSE & DEE ANN

That's OK.

He laughs, hands a song book to Dee Ann and stamps to Rose. Dee Ann throws her arms around him; Rose is delighted, but less demonstrative. Starr laughs from her doorway.

STARR

Don't I get anything, Jack?

42. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

42.

Lily brings in casserole dishes; the girls wait in position behind their chairs. Jack arrives in a starched white shirt. With inebriated dignity, he scans the table, nods approval; the girls sit down. Wind sprays sand against the house, like pellets from a shotgun. Lily draws the girls close.

*

LILY

I want you to be extra nice to Starr.
She's been through a terrible ordeal.

The girls nod as Starr saunters in wearing a provocative red cocktail dress and holding a drink. Jack follows her entrance with his eyes. There is something shocking and brazen about Starr's open drinking and obvious sexuality.

Jack surveys the table like a General before battle. He reaches over, taps Rose on the back with the flat side of a knife---a command to improve her posture; she straightens up.

LILY

(passing casserole to Starr)
Going out tonight, I see.

STARR

My first date. Nice guy. Met him in
the divorce line at the courthouse.

(winks at Rose)

Great place to meet men.

LILY

You think that's a proper dress for
a first date?

STARR

Gosh, I hope not. Why do you think
I'm wearing it?

42. CONT.

42. CONT.

LILY

You can attract a man with a dress
like that but he won't stick around
long after he gets what he's after.

Starr eyes flash angrily, but her voice remains calm, sweet.

STARR

Whatever would that be, Lily?

The food is served in silence. Once again, everything
Lily's prepared is white: creamed noodles, creamed corn,
iceberg lettuce wedges with mayonnaise and ketchup dressing.
Rose eats quickly but with flawless manners, as if to get
her food down before something happens.

BARBARA JO

We got our blood tested at school today.

LILY

Don't talk about blood at the table, dear.

More silence, forks scrape against plates. Outside, the
wind howls louder and sprays sand against rattling windows.

STARR

What a wind storm.

JACK

You should've come in the Spring:
cactus blooming, not much wind, not
too hot. Vegas is beautiful then.

LILY

She's not on vacation, Jack.

JACK

'Course, it'll never be like it was
before Bugsy Seigel and the mob took
over. Nice little town. They divided
it up, you know. Jews took Vegas,
Wops got Reno. Half and half.
What's the population of Nevada?!

The pop quiz is part of Chismore family life.

DEE ANN
110,000?

BARBARA JO
Two million, two
hundred and seven!

ROSE
163,000?

JACK

163,383.

The 383 matter to Jack. Starr winks at Rose.

42. CONT.

42. CONT.

LILY

You oughta see all the science types
down at the Cortez.

STARR

They're putting in a big defense
plant, some men were talking about it
in divorce line.

LILY

(a dirty look at Starr)
Well, if you ask me, they're trying to
figure out a system to beat the house.
All they do is hang around the tables.
Gambling.

JACK

(mysteriously)

I know what they're doing.

LILY

Well? What?

JACK

I heard it on the short wave from
out on the gunnery range. I'm not
at liberty to say what it was about.

(a beat)

It's classified information - top secret.

LILY

They don't put top secrets on the
shortwave, do they? Where anyone can
hear it?

JACK

(to Starr)

My antenna's bigger than KENO'S,
I can hear everything. Wasn't even
in code, they should have put it in
code. No wonder the Russians steal
our secrets.

LILY

You can't tell us anything about it,
Daddy? Just a teeny hint? Wild horses
wouldn't drag it out of me, honey. Promise.

Jack deliberates. He enjoys being in command.

JACK

I can't say. Sorry.

Lily and the girls are disappointed. We hear a high-pitched
sound, repeated at short intervals.

42. CONT.

42. CONT.

STARR

What's that?

LILY

Jack! You promised!

STARR

What is it??

JACK

We got some bats nesting up in the porch eves.

STARR

(terrified; hysterical)

Bats!

Jack gets up, walks across the living room to the front door. He opens the door, stares out into the darkness: the eii-eii call of the bats is louder. He closes the door.

JACK

I'll have to figure out the proper plan of attack against the bats. Traps, maybe.

LILY

They're dirty, diseased animals! A little boy died in Reno...

JACK

That was Plague. From feeding squirrels. Bats don't carry Plague. They carry rabies. Just remember, your squirrels carry Plague; your bats carry rabies.

Lily looks like she's going to faint.

LILY

Did you hear that girls? Your daddy says stay away from squirrels.

(a beat)

That was rats wasn't it, that cause the Plague?

JACK

Squirrel is just a rat with a bushy tail. Look it up.

More silent eating. Starr winks at Rose; Rose stares down at her plate.

STARR

Don't Rose's glasses look nice, Jack?

42. CONTINUED

42.CON

Jack's POV: Rose's glasses look hideous. Starr turns her most charming smile on Jack.

JACK

They look OK.

43. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

43.

Jack sits listening to DUKE ELLINGTON'S "TAKE THE A-TRAIN," looking in on Starr as she gets ready to go out. An ENCYCLOPEDIA sits on his lap, opened to "Bats." Jack gets up and goes to Starr's DOORWAY, watches as she puts on makeup and perfume. Starr glances at him in the mirror. He stands there a moment, then walks away without a word. Outside, a horn honks the opening bars to the "Yellow Rose of Texas."

44. INT. GIRL'S ROOM - NIGHT

44.

Rose and her sisters look out the window: a long white Cadillac convertible, steer horns mounted on the hood, is parked under a pool of light from the LUCKY ACES trailer court sign. A handsome man in a cowboy dress suit holds the door for Starr. They embrace lightly, Starr climbs in, HANK WILLIAMS croons "YOU'RE GONNA CHANGE (OR I'M A-GONNA LEAVE)."

BARBARA JO

He must be rich.

ROSE

Of course, he's rich. You'd be rich too if you owned the biggest ranch in Texas.

DEE ANN

He does?

Rose nods, watches, enthralled, as the Cadillac pulls away.

45. INT. MRS. MURATORE'S HOME ROOM - DAY

45. *

Rose returns to her desk with an envelope as MRS. MURATORE calls out students' names and hands out envelopes in the background. TIGHT SHOT: Rose removes I.D dog tags, standard military type, with her name, birthdate, blood type. She slips the chain around her neck.

MRS. MURATORE O.S.

Pablo Herrera...John Lavine...
Sally Haskell...

(SCENE TRIMMED)

46. EXT. LAS VEGAS STREET - DAY

46. *

Rose, Meryl, and Shelley stop outside the El Cortez Hotel on their way home from school. Rose waves through the window at Lily, who works behind the check-in desk. Rose can't get her attention, and continues on with her friends. The CAMERA HOLDS ON the crowded lobby.

47. INT. EL CORTEZ HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

47.

Government officials and military men sit before a bank of microphones and a crowd of reporters. The taciturn Colonel from the first gas station sits silently as an AEC SPOKESMAN talks to reporters. He points to a large map of Nevada on a easel. The SCIENTIST stumped by the bear puzzle notices Rose walking past and excuses himself.

AEC SPOKESMAN

The testing area is extremely remote,
separated from Las Vegas by a high
mountain range, over 5,000 feet.

The SCIENTIST hurries past gamblers playing slots, black jack
and craps. *

48. EXT. EL CORTEZ HOTEL - DAY

48. *

Rose fiddles with her tags.

ROSE

My dad says the Russians don't care
enough about Las Vegas to waste an
A-bomb on it. So they went to all the
trouble with these tags for nothing.
It's kind of dumb.

The scientist bursts out the door, calls after Rose.

SCIENTIST

Hey! How can he hit the bear?

(SCENE TRIMMED)

48. CONT.

48. CONT.

ROSE

It's a polar bear.

She turns away. The SCIENTIST mutters to himself and goes back inside.

49. INT. EL CORTEZ HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

49.

LILY, flushed with excitement, talks on the phone as the SCIENTIST rushes back to the podium.

LILY

Hello, daddy? I bet you'll never guess who's in the lobby of the Cortez. No, not Ava Gardner...no, not Frank Sinatra...you're getting warm...

The SCIENTIST takes the pointer, clears his throat, and assumes a dignified, authoritative manner.

SCIENTIST

In addition to the high mountains and the prevailing westerly winds, radiological teams have determined that the vast area of the test site - over 640 square miles - will allow any radioactivity to disperse entirely within the test range. There is no radiation danger to civilians outside the test area. In fact, Las Vegas residents won't be able to see, feel, or hear the tests.

50. INT. SHELLEY'S MOTHER'S BEDROOM - DAY

50.

TIGHT SHOT. A brush applies thickly-lacquered pink nail polish onto a little fingernail. Pop music plays.

WIDER SHOT. Rose touches her little finger against Meryl's, then Shelley's. TIGHT ON three intertwined little fingers, all with bright pink nails.

ROSE

Ia oda earswa yba yma inkpa inkiepa,
ota everna isska a oyba, ona atterma
atwha...

MERYL, SHELLEY, ROSE

Ia oda earswa yba yma inkpa inkiepa,
ota everna isska a oyba, ona atterma
atwha...

50. CONT.

50. CONT.

They giggle and roll onto the floor, STAND ON THEIR HEADS.

ROSE

I think the Pink Pinky Club should
volunteer for the Red Cross class.
All in favor, say aye.

SHELLEY

I just thought we weren't supposed
to kiss boys.

ROSE

Don't you want to help humanity?
And save people from the Communists?
All in favor, say aye.

SHELLEY

I don't know, I guess so.

MERYL

Aye.

They stand on their heads silently for a moment, dog tags
dangling in front of them.

ROSE

You're smarter when you stand on your
head, because all the blood goes to
your brain. You never forget some-
thing when you learn it standing on
your head. And it's good for your
complexion. Spell "correspondence,"
Shelley.

SHELLEY

(rolling upright)

Spell it yourself, smarty. Besides,
Mrs. Muratore isn't going to let you
take the spelling bee standing on your
head, anyway.

Rose and Meryl start laughing. They collapse onto the floor
and lie there, giddy and gasping. Shelley laughs, too.

51. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - DAY

51.

Jack, Lily, and Starr play cards at the table as Rose comes
through the front door. "GOOD NIGHT, IRENE," the Weaver's
big hit plays on the radio. Lily handles her cards expertly.

ROSE

Hi everybody.

LILY

Hit me. Did you hear about the
A-bomb, honey?

51 CONT.

51 CONT.

STARR

What A-bomb?

LILY

Got a hunch, bet a bunch. I see your nickel, and I'll raise you twenty-five. I was there when they announced it, 'amidst the clang and clatter of the slot machines.' You don't think the A-bomb will scare the gamblers away do you, daddy?

Jack shakes his head and throws chips into the pot.

STARR

I'll stay, that's 30 to me.

ROSE

What A-bomb?

LILY

You knew all the time, didn't you, Daddy? Way before they made the announcement.

Jack half nods; we can tell he didn't know.

ROSE

What announcement?

JACK

Well, for once Vegas is in the news and it's not for gambling and divorce...

LILY

Or...doubtful pleasures. And there'll be lots of work. And gas to sell, daddy.

"GOODNIGHT, IRENE" ends. Everyone listens.

ANNOUNCER

Everybody's talking about A-bombs, but heck, we're not scared, we're proud! Las Vegas is doing its part in the fight against communism! But you don't have to wait for the A-bomb to catch a great show in Las Vegas! The famous, fabulous Mills Brothers are singing nightly at the fabulous Desert Inn. And here's their big hit, "Daddy's Little Girl!"

JACK

OK, let's see what you've got.

51 CONT.

51 CONT.

We hear the Mills Brother's sing "Daddy's Little Girl."

LILY

Two pairs. 8's and 6's. Read 'em
and weep.

JACK

(throws down his cards)
Pair of aces, wired.

LILY

Your deal, honey.

As Lily rakes in the pot, Jack pulls out his nail clip and begins to clean his finger-nails. He looks preoccupied.

LILY

You knew, didn't you, Daddy?

Jack gets up, shrugs. Rose watches as he walks down the hall to his RADIO ROOM, closes the door.

52. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

52.

Starr sits up in bed, half-awake, Rose comes in with a cup of coffee and the morning newspaper.

STARR

Thanks, honey.

Rose sits on the edge of Starr's bed staring at the headline: "VEGAS RANGE TO SPEED A-WEAPONS" in huge caps and sub-headed, "Heck, We're Not Scared!" Rose fingers her dog tags..

ROSE

Now I know why they gave us these tags.
It's so they know who we are if -

STARR

Keep it inside your blouse, honey,
the chain's ugly.

(noticing Rose's
pink finger)

Didn't quite finish the job there,
sweetheart.

ROSE

That's the way it's supposed to be.

STARR

It is? One pink finger?

ROSE

It's a club...sort of.
The Left Pink Pinkie Club.

52. CONTINUED

52.CON

(SCENE TRIMMED)

*

STARR

What kind of club is that?

ROSE

Well...it's a...it's a secret club.

STARR

Secret, huh? Well, we all have secrets.

Pause. Starr doesn't press.

ROSE

We just promised not to kiss boys.
We only have three members.

Starr nods, doesn't laugh. She looks appraisingly at Rose's dress: the same outfit of blue jeans, white shirt, pigtails.

STARR

Don't you have anything else to wear?

ROSE

It's what everyone wears.

Starr gets out of bed, starts rifling through her closet.

STARR

You're not everyone, you're special.

53. SCENE OMITTED.

53. *

54. INT. MRS. MURATORE'S HOME ROOM - DAY

54. *

The late bell rings. There is much excited chatter about "the A-bomb." Rose walks into the classroom as heads turn to follow her late entrance. Her hair is unbraided -- brushed out, it reaches to the middle of her back, thick and lush. She wears one of Starr's expensive blouses, a matching skirt, light lipstick and eye makeup; nothing gaudy, but the effect is stunning - she seems like a different girl.

54. CONT.

54. CONT.

Rose glances at Robin as she sits down. He looks at her as if for the first time. They nod self-consciously.

MRS. MURATORE

Take out a piece of paper and number
it from one to twenty-five.

Sounds of shuffling papers as kids look for a clean sheet;
Rose doesn't have paper and has to borrow from Meryl.

MRS. MURATORE

Freckle...bayou...

Rose frantically searches her purse for a pen.

MRS. MURATORE

codger...envir---

A HIGH-PITCHED WAIL drowns her out. A long, frozen moment, then students dive for cover under their desks. Mrs. Muratore, a hand shielding her eyes, pulls the thick drapes closed, shutting off light from the bank of windows. In the semi-darkness, the room becomes very still.

CLOSE ON ROSE. She is huddled beneath her desk, head and chest tucked snugly against her knees, hands clasped behind her head. She peeks out: curled bodies of classmates, a forest of desk and chair legs, darkness. The SIREN wails. Rose shakes slightly; her dog tags sway back and forth in front of her eyes. She grabs the tags and holds them tight, closes her eyes, curls into a tight fetal ball.

55. EXT. 5TH STREET SCHOOL - DAY

55.

A caravan of ARMY TRUCKS rumble past. Quiet beat, then the doors fly open - boys in shirtsleeves and girls in summer dresses stream out - Rose, Meryl, and Shelley among them. Robin follows a few steps behind.

ROBIN

Hi, Rose. Hot day, huh?

ROSE

Hi. Uh-huh. Sure is.

Awkward silence.

MR. MOSOL
(O.S. VOICE)

Hey, kids! Over here!

Mr. Mosol stands beside his black caddy, waving.

56. INT. MR. MOSOL'S CADDY - DAY

56.

Mr. Mosol is upset.

MR. MOSOL

You mean they make you get down
on the floor?

MERYL

It's just a drill, daddy.

MR. MOSOL

I don't like it.

57. EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

57.

Jack stands on a ladder, painting a huge sign - "JACK'S ATOMIC GAS. WELCOME, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION." "Free placemats for AEC Employees." Jack sips at a pint, stops painting to stare as the army trucks rumble past.

Mr. Mosol's caddy pulls in at the pumps, ringing the service bell. Jack backs down the ladder, walks unsteadily toward Mr. Mosol's cadillac. Rose sees he's been drinking, sinks down in her seat.

JACK

'lo, Al. Fill 'er up?

MR. MOSOL

No, no, I'm almost full, dollar's fine...Hey, look here, I got the best speller in Nevada in the back seat.

ROSE

Hi, daddy.

JACK

'lo, honey.

ROBIN

Hi, Mr. Chismore. Need any help?

JACK

'lo, Robin. Not today.

Jack gestures proudly to his sign.

JACK

Not bad for an amateur, huh?

Mr. Mosol stares at it and shrugs.

57 CONT.

57 CONT.

(SCENE TRIMMED)

MR. MOSOL

I don't like this A-Bomb business. *

JACK

The scientists know what they're
doing. *

(leans in close)

You heard of the Hydrogen bomb? Makes
an A-bomb look like a firecracker.
Maybe we'll be the first, right here
in Nevada.

MR. MOSOL

No...they wouldn't do that.
Would they?

Jack shrugs, heads off to pump the gas. He tries to get the gas nozzle into Mr. Mosol's tank, but misses on his first two attempts, spilling gas all over the side of the car.

INSIDE, we see Mr. Mosol cover his eyes. On the third try, Jack makes it. He comes around to the front of the car, tries to open the hood but can't find the latch. Meryl and Shelley fight off giggles as Jack bends down to get a closer look at the latch. Mr. Mosol gets out to help.

MR. MOSOL

It's a little tricky.

Jack loses his balance and has to grab the hood ornament to keep from falling. Shelley and Meryl burst out giggling. Jack jerks the hood upward; it somehow comes free, banging him in the head. Shelley and Meryl giggle louder.

57. CONT.

57. CONT.

ROSE
(angrily)

What's so funny?

SHELLEY AND MERYL

Nothing.

They keep giggling. Rose is silently furious, embarrassed.

ROSE

He has a bad leg. I don't make fun
of Liberace, do I?

Shelley can't stop laughing.

ROBIN

You wouldn't think it was so funny if
your dad had gotten wounded in the
war like Mr. Chismore.

MERYL

I'm sorry.

Meryl tries to stop; Jack stumbles and she breaks out
giggling again.

ROBIN

I bet your father wasn't even in the war.

MERYL

He was too.

SHELLEY

I suppose your dad's a big hero.

ROBIN

My dad is dead. He got killed in the
war.

Silence.

58. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - DAY

58.

The black caddy pulls up and stops. Robin and Rose get out.
Rose is still furious, won't even look at Meryl and Shelley.

SHELLEY AND MERYL

Bye, see you at school.

Rose acts as if they don't exist.

MR. MOSOL

Sure you don't want a cone, huh?

58. CONT.

58. CONT.

Rose nods "no." Mr. Mosol waves; the caddy pulls away.

ROBIN

Boy, it's hot for December.

ROSE

Seventy-nine, it said on the thermometer at school.

(awkward silence)

I think it's a record.

ROBIN

Want to go swimming tomorrow?

ROSE

In December?

ROBIN

It's warm enough, why not?

59. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

59.

Rose sits on Starr's bed.

ROSE

I don't know how to swim.

STARR

That's okay. He asked you because he likes you not because he thinks you're a great swimmer.

ROSE

I don't have a swimsuit, either.

STARR

(teasing)

No swimsuits in Vegas, huh?

Rose tries not to laugh, but can't resist Starr. Barbara Jo and Dee Ann enter the room, sit down on the bed. Starr shuffles a deck of cards, starts to deal.

BARBARA JO

Pete has a little boy, doesn't he?

Starr stops mid-deal, losing her composure.

ROSE

Barbara Jo! He does not!

BARBARA JO

He does, doesn't he? I heard you tell momma about it. What's his name?

59 CONT.

59 CONT.

Starr composes herself; resumes dealing, outwardly calm.

STARR

His name is Matt. He's five years
old...and he looks just like Pete...

Starr falls silent.

BARBARA JO

You can't have babies, can you?

STARR

(after a pause)

No. I can't have babies.

60. EXT. FLAMINGO HOTEL AT POOLSIDE - DAY

60.

Rose lies on a towel in a single piece bathing suit. We notice that her chest has a slightly more than natural swell. Robin is splashing and showing off in the water.

ROBIN

Come on in!

ROSE

I just ate. I don't wanna get a cramp.

Robin dives under the water and takes off swimming like a dolphin. He's a graceful and powerful swimmer.

A SMALL CROWD has gathered at the other end of the pool to watch BATHING BEAUTIES with GEIGER COUNTERS strapped to their hips parade before NEWS PHOTOGRAPHERS. A HAIRDRESSER at poolside ("Atomic Coiffures by Gee-Gee") creates mushroom cloud coiffures with wire frames, cocktail waitresses serve "Atomic Cocktails," as a PUBLICIST tries to turn the upcoming A-bomb tests into a sexy tourist attraction; Rose toys absent-mindedly with her dog tags.

PUBLICIST

For the latest in Atomic Age fashion...
The beautiful Las Vegas girl of today...
wears Atomic Age accessory apparel
to any affair. For a romantic evening...

(a model in a slinky
dress parades by)

Or for a day of Las Vegas Fun in
the Sun! Yes, our Las Vegas girl
comes ready and well-equipped...

A beautiful, well-endowed model in a bathing suit stops in front of the publicist, smiles seductively beneath a banner, "MISS A-BOMB, 1950."

60. CONT.

60. CONT.

PUBLICIST

But careful, fellas---some of these
beauties are too hot to handle!

(his Geiger counter
ticking loud and fast)

See what I mean?

The audience laughs. The showgirl smiles coyly, strikes a sexy pose, pirouettes and walks off.

Starr, her TEXAN, and several movie stars---TARZAN, DANA ANDREWS, and AVA GARDNER---come laughing and talking to a reserved table at the poolside. Starr, as beautiful and shapely in a bathing suit as any of the MISS A-BOMB CONTESTANTS, scans the pool area. She spots Rose, waves, and starts over, accompanied by Ava and Tarzan. Robin is still trying to get Rose in the pool.

ROBIN

Come on, try it, it's great.

Rose reluctantly tests the water with her toes.

ROSE

(returning to her towel)

It's freezing.

ROBIN

It's not either freezing.

Several models parade by in ATOMIC COIFFURES, their hair formed into the shape of a mushroom cloud; the publicist's hype drones on. A SUNBATHING WOMAN turns to her HUSBAND.

*

WOMAN

Oh, look dear, Ava Gardner and Tarzan.
Who's that blonde?

Starr, Ava, and Tarzan pick their way through sunbathing, starstruck bodies. WE WATCH FROM ROBIN'S POINT OF VIEW as Starr introduces Rose to Ava Gardener and Tarzan. THE CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSER as Ava asks Rose a question.

AVA

You want to learn, don't you?

Rose looks at the water and at Robin, afraid, eager, embarrassed. She shakes her head.

ROSE

It's too cold. I can't.

Starr nudges Tarzan; he yells to Robin.

TARZAN

Hey, Robin, want to play some ping-pong?

60. CONT.

60. CONT.

ROBIN

Me? Sure, Tarzan.

Ava takes Rose by the hand and leads her off toward the shallow end; Robin climbs out of the pool, and goes off with Tarzan. They glance back at each other as they're led away by their respective movie stars.

IN THE POOL. Rose follows Ava down the steps and into the water, tucking her hair into her bathing cap, looking scared but eager.

AVA

It's all breathing. Take a deep deep breath. Then blow it out. Inhale...exhale.

Rose takes a deep breath, pinches her fingers over her nose, lowers her head into the water; noisy air bubbles pop to the surface; Tarzan yodels faintly in the distance.

61. EXT. FLAMINGO POOL - DAY

61.

Rose and Robin horse around in the pool together. Robin sprays Rose; she sprays him back, laughing. He dives under water, grabbing at her legs. Rose laughs and swims off for a couple strokes, comes up sputtering but laughing.

ROSE AT POOLSIDE holds her nose and jumps feet first into the pool. She hits the water hard and comes up out of breath, watching with horror as her small foam rubber falsie bobs and floats across the surface of the pool.

Robin surfaces, laughing, unaware of Rose's dilemma; she paddles after the bobbing piece of foam rubber, her own waves keep forcing the falsie away, out of reach. Getting into deeper and deeper water, she begins to wallow. A hand reaches out and grabs the elusive foam rubber: it's Ava. She helps Rose to poolside, shielding her from view as Rose fumbles nervously, trying to put the foam back into place.

ROSE

You saved my life.

AVA

That's not what I saved.

Ava smiles. And swims away.

62. EXT. "STRIP" STREET - DAY

62.

Rose and Robin, still in bathing suits, walk along an empty stretch of "the strip": desert, bisected by a line of black

62 CONT.

62 CONT.

asphalt. It's warm and they walk quickly, bare feet on the hot sidewalk. Robin stops and throws a towel down; they both stand on it, cooling their feet.

ROSE

Ava Gardner is so beautiful---and she doesn't wear any makeup.

ROBIN

Tarzan better stick with swimming and the movies. He isn't so hot at ping-pong.

ROSE

He's a good actor, though.

ROBIN

Yeah.

They pick up the towel and head off over the hot sidewalk.

63. INT. GIRLS' ROOM - DAY

63. *

Rose enters, shivering in her bathing suit. She goes to the window and peeks through the curtains. ROSE's POV: Robin's young and attractive mother, DELORES, takes down laundry, laughing easily with her son; there is something graceful, effortless, and relaxed about them both.

Rose turns from the window: Jack is standing there, bleary-eyed, like he's been sleeping off a drunk. Rose steps back.

ROSE

Hi, Daddy.

JACK

Where have you been?

ROSE

Swimming.

Jack notices Rose's I.D. tags. Rose stands stiffly as he examines the tags, turning them over in his hands. She flinches as he reaches out to touch her; Jack just taps her gently, almost shyly on the shoulder, turns and walks away.

64. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

64.

Jack switches on the bulb light hanging over the work bench, turns on his radio. He drinks from a bottle of Canadian Club - Starr's brand. A PHOTO lays on the bench: Jack with an army buddy, their arms around two young women. The photo is inscribed, "Jack and Jimmy, London, 1944." Jack scrawls "December 3, 1950, Changjin Reservoir," under Jimmy's

62 CONT.

62 CONT.

picture. He stares at the photo, then opens his work bench drawer, digs around and comes up with a set of MILITARY DOG TAGS: his own. He stares at them, lets them fall, looks at other PHOTOS of friends taken during his services days, then tries to focus on a LARGE MAP OF THE ATOMIC TEST SITE now hanging on the wall beside the war clippings. *

He's oblivious to the loud static on the radio as he takes a long drink, his head tilted back, gulping down C.C. like water. Losing his balance, he falls backward, tries to grab the bench but catches the edge of the radio instead. Everything goes, radio, Jack, newspaper, stool, I.D. tags, the bottle of C.C.

Jack is out cold on the floor, unconscious. The only sound is the hum and static of the radio. We hear a knock at the door and Rose's voice, OFF-SCREEN.

ROSE

Daddy? Are you all right?

Rose stands at the door, knocking. She's afraid to go into Jack's radio room: forbidden territory. Finally, she turns the knob, pushes the door open.

Jack lays on the floor, not moving. Rose stands frozen for a moment, then kneels down beside her father, putting her hand on his chest. The heartbeat is strong and she relaxes a little. She stares at him a moment, then tentatively places her hand against his cheek, a gesture that is both tender and curious. She can't resist the rare chance to look at her father at close range, unafraid. After a few moments, she pulls her hand away, and runs out of the room.

FADE TO BLACK

65. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

65.

Lily comes through the front door, looking exhausted, unhappy. She crosses the living room to Starr's room. She stands silently in the doorway.

STARR

How is he?

LILY

They say they have to hold him for awhile. His blood alcohol was 3 and a half times legally drunk.

STARR

Jesus.

(a quick beat)

He'll be okay.

65. CONT.

65. CONT.

Starr comes to embrace and comfort her sister, but Lily pulls back. Silent beat. Lily removes the bottle of Canadian Club from her purse. She hands it to Starr.

LILY

Here, I think this belongs to you.
One more swallow and he would have
been dead.

Lily exits. Starr sighs, walks over to her dresser, pours herself a drink from the bottle, sits down on the bed, sips.

66. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

66.

Two matching WHITE SAILOR SUITS lay spread out on the floor, like chalky corpses. We hear the whirr of a sewing machine and Lily's voice as she softly sings.

LILY

"You make me happy when skies
are gray..."

ROSE ENTERS, wearing her Wonder Woman pajamas, sleep still heavy in her eyes. ROSE'S POV as Lily sings.

LILY

"please don't take my Sunshine away..."

ROSE

Hi, Momma.

LILY

Morning, honey.

ROSE

Is Daddy okay?

LILY

Your daddy is just fine. He just needs
a rest, that's all. Come here, sweet-
heart, I've got a surprise for you.

Lily proudly holds up a white sailor suit, almost finished.

LILY

Isn't it darling? Matching sister suits!

67. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

67.

Rose enters, turns on the light. The radio lies on the floor along with several tubes and tools. Rose picks it up and lifts it onto the bench. She spots Jack's dog tags on the floor, studies them for a moment, then sets them down on the

67. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

67. *

Rose enters, turns on the light. The radio lies on the floor along with several tubes and tools. Rose picks it up and lifts it onto the bench. She spots Jack's dog tags on the floor, studies them for a moment, then sets them down on the work bench. She looks around - at the Purple Hearts above the radio, the lethal-looking rifles, the Police Gazette magazines with their pictures of women in torn blouses and white brassieres trying to escape black-booted Nazis.

CLOSE ON ROSE. She puts on her GLASSES to study Jack's wall of war news clippings. Her POV of the large map of the Atomic Test site hanging beside the collage of clippings.

Rose opens the bench drawer, peeks inside, looking for clues, trying to comprehend the mystery of her father. TIGHT SHOT ON a photo of Jack as a young man - bright-eyed, fresh-faced, a huge smile. She studies the photo, fascinated. ANOTHER TIGHT SHOT: a newspaper clipping about a dance contest Jack won.

Rose closes the drawer, turns on the radio. Nothing happens. Her eye is drawn to the PHOTO on the bench of Jack with his army buddy and two girls: "Jack and Jimmy, London, 1944." She stares at Jack's scrawled date written below Jimmy's picture: "December 3, 1950." Beneath it, another PHOTO of a YOUNG SOLDIER with a date scrawled, "August, 1944."

68. EXT. LUCKY ACES TRAILER COURT - DAY

68. *

Rose and Robin sit quietly underneath the LUCKY ACES trailer court sign. Rose strokes Tuffy's back. They don't say a word.

69. INT. RADIO STORE - DAY

69.

CLERK

No wonder it doesn't work. You've got four dead tubes. Try these, see if they don't do the trick.

He puts four new tubes down on the counter in front of Rose.

70. EXT. RADIO STORE - DAY

70.

It's pouring rain, a desert cloudburst. Rose stands inside the doorway, watching the raindrops hitting the window and running down the glass. She steps into the rain, stands getting drenched, enjoying it. She sticks her tongue out,

70.CONT.

70. CONT.

tasting the rain, then takes off running, splashing in the puddles forming instantly in the downpour.

71. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

71.

CLOSE SHOT. The prongs of a radio tube slide into place. We hear rain spattering against the window, the slow roll of THUNDER. Rose turns on the radio. After a few moments we hear crackling static. She fiddles with the tuner and emerging almost magically comes a full-throated ITALIAN ARIA. Rose turns the sound up loud. The ITALIAN VOICE booms out, filling the radio room and the house. Rose listens, delighted.

72. INT. CHISMORE HALLWAY - DAY

72.

The ARIA continues. The radio room door opens and Rose dances down the hallway, singing loudly in nonsense-Italian: a free-spirited, impulsive, frivolous, slightly goofy adolescent girl.

Rose pirouettes and goes careening off through the house, making up funny nonsensical lyrics in English-Italian as the music builds to a rousing crescendo.

73. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

73.

Rose comes spinning in and collapses on Starr's bed giggling and exhausted as the last notes fades. Starr looks at Rose with amusement and mock concern.

STARR

Spring a leak, kiddo? Or just
naturally wild like your Aunt Starr?

ROSE

Naturally wild, I guess.

Another aria has begun. Rose sighs, becomes philosophical.

ROSE

I wonder what makes somebody act mean?
Sometimes I think he's the meanest man
in the world.

STARR

He's not the meanest, honey.

ROSE

Sometimes I wonder...maybe there's
just one little thing - that if you
knew what it was, and you did it...
it'd make a person happy, just like

73. CONT.

ROSE

(continued)

that. You know, like when the Girl
kisses the frog and the frog turns
into a Prince. You just have to
figure out what it is.

73. CONT.

74. INT. PALACE THEATER - DAY

74.

"ALLIES STRIKE BACK IN KOREA!" is emblazoned across the
SCREEN, accompanied by dramatic martial music. Rose and
Robin munch popcorn. Dee Ann and Barbara Jo sit a few seats
over. NEWSREEL shots of the evacuation at Hungnam as Robin's
hand creeps nervously toward Rose's and touches.

NARRATOR

Outnumbered 6 to 1 and numbed by biting
winds and bitter sub-zero cold, the
troops of the Free World dig in...and hold!

Rose's hand closes tightly around Robin's as dramatic footage
of tanks, jets, artillery, bursts across the screen: two
kids holding hands - one whose father was killed in war, the
other's wounded and mentally scarred, watch the war. Rose
closes her eyes during the worst parts: shots of cold,
miserable, wounded American GI's, the retreat from Changjin.
Rose is upset. Robin maneuvers to put his arm around her.

Rose bolts from her seat just as Robin's hand tentatively
touches her shoulder. CAMERA HOLDS on Rose as she flees up
the aisle, followed by the booming voice-of-God baritone of
the NARRATOR, as the newsreel shifts to sunny Las Vegas.
The matinee audience of mostly kids whistle and applaud.
Meryl and Shelley see Rose leaving.

NARRATOR

Far from the frozen trenches and
fighting GI's of Korea, American
scientists converge on warm, sunny Las
Vegas. Their job: the development of
tactical atomic weapons for possible
use in Korea. Yes, America's Playland
is well on its way to becoming an
Atomic boom town - in more ways than one!

Shots of bathing beauties by the Flamingo pool give way to
military convoys and desert encampments. Rose stops at the
lobby doors, wipes a tear away, turns back, stares at the
screen.

75. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

75.

Rose brushes Starr's thick auburn blonde hair. Starr's music box plays Tchaickovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers." Tuffy sits on Starr's bed.

STARR

I wonder what's keeping your mom?

ROSE

When she sings 'You Are My Sunshine,' she gambles - just like she did when my first dad left. I can't remember him, just the song.

STARR

You were only four, honey. But you've got his eyes. He -

ROSE

(cutting Starr off)

"I Walk Alone," that's the one I'm afraid of. Last time she sang it, she didn't come home for three days. 'Sunshine,' she just gambles.

The music box winds down and stops: Rose gives the brush to Dee Ann who takes her place brushing Starr's hair.

ROSE

First thing she'll say when she comes in is, 'no rest for the weary.' That means she lost.

STARR

What does she say if she wins?

ROSE

She never wins.

Starr laughs, scratches Tuffy's stomach; he's in love.

76. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

76.

Lily enters the dark living room, closes the door behind her quietly. She crosses the room to Starr's door, calls softly.

LILY

Starr...

77. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

77.

STARR

Yes?

LILY O.S.

I'm home. No rest for the weary.

Starr and Rose burst out giggling, but try to stifle it so Lily won't hear; Starr bites down on her finger to stop.

78. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

78.

Starr and Lily sit smoking in the semi-darkened dining room.

STARR

He's over the worst part. If he can keep off the booze, he'll be fine.

LILY

It's his nerves, they're shot... the war...the station...Jimmy...

STARR

Quart a day doesn't help.

Lily turns slowly and fixes Starr with a hard glare.

LILY

You're one to talk.

STARR

I can handle it.

LILY

All Jack needs is a little rest. Even heroes have to rest. I told him, 'Every path has a puddle, daddy.'

Lily verges on tears. Starr says nothing, lights another cigarette. Lily's matches say: "The Frontier Club."

STARR

Sneaky, sneaky. The Frontier Club, huh? How'd you do?

LILY

None of your beeswax.

STARR

How bad?

78. CONT.

LILY

\$800 cash. \$350 more in markers.

STARR

\$800? Where did you get \$800?

LILY

(almost in tears)

I was just trying to win him a nicer station...for Christmas... The bank was going to foreclose. I had to sell it.

STARR

Oh, God...Well, they can't make you pay the markers.

LILY

If I was that type a person, what do you think I'd do with a sick husband in the hospital who still thinks it's World War II every night? 42 days, that's all it'd take. But he's mine. "For better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part." He's my Jack. God, I miss him.

79. INT. JACK & LILY'S TEMPORARY BEDROOM - NIGHT

79.

The room is small, joyless. A bed is set against the wall. Lily crawls in, switches off the light. CLOSE ON Lily. She stares at the ceiling, crying.

80. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

80.

Rose looks embarrassed in a sailor suit and cap, posed with bow resting on fiddle strings. In matching sailor suits and caps, Dee Ann, on piano, and Barbara Jo, on slide guitar. Lily stands beside a PHOTOGRAPHER, shouting instructions.

LILY

Just move in a little closer to your sister, Rose. That's it! Perfect! Who do they remind you of?

The photographer looks at the girls, shakes his head.

LILY

The Andrews Sisters!

PHOTOGRAPHER

Oh yeah.

80 CONT.

80 CONT.

LILY

Would you like to hear them play
"I've Got a Lovely Bunch of Coconuts"?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Maybe later.

Tuffy sits on the piano bench beside Dee Ann, a Christmas bow for a collar, growling at the PHOTOGRAPHER. A handmade sign says, "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" Rose looks embarrassed.

LILY

Smile, Rose, honey, look happy.
(singing)
"Oh, it isn't any trouble just to
s-m-i-l-e. No, it isn't any trouble
just to s-m-i-l-e."

Embarrassed, Rose forces a smile.

LILY

That's it! Now look up, you're
nose looks bigger when you look
down like that.

Rose looks up, but off to the side.

LILY

Rose! Hold still and look at the
camera. This is for Daddy remember?

PHOTOGRAPHER

OK, big smiles now.

Rose smiles weakly. There is a sudden BRIGHT FLASH of light as the bulb explodes. The action FREEZES for an instant on the three girls in their matching sailor suits.

81. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

81. *

Lily and the girls' trim the tree. Lily wears new clothes and looks terrific. She hangs an oddly-shaped ornament. CLOSER SHOT reveals that it's a WORK BADGE: a photo of Lily, "UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE, ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION."

LILY

Well, look what I found on the tree!
Look what Santa brought!

The girls gather around and look at Lily's badge.

81 CONT.

81 CONT.

LILY

I had to swear an oath and everything.
It's the best job in town. But the
biggest Christmas present of all is ...
daddy's coming home!

*

Barbara Jo jumps up and down, Dee Ann bites her lip
nervously, Rose is reserved. Lily gathers them around her on
the sofa.

LILY

Daddy promised he'll never take another
drink. I know: he's said it before.
But remember when I was gambling all
the time? I quit didn't I? If I can
do it, so can daddy. I told him how
good you girls have been. I told him,
"Promises don't butter the bread, the
proof is in the pudding." Daddy said
he just wants a chance to prove it.
Will you give daddy a chance?

The girls all nod. Lily gives them a hug.

82. SCENE OMITTED

82. *

83. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

83.

The three girls, scrubbed, combed, and wearing pretty dresses, are lined up in front of Starr, who straightens a collar here, puts a hair back in place there.

STARR

Now, Jack's probably going to be a little nervous, so don't you be, OK? And for God's sake, don't say anything about your daddy losing the station.

We hear engine sounds; Starr looks out the window.

STARR

He's here!

The girls scramble to their positions.

83a. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - DAY

83a.

Jack and Lily climb up the stairs. Jack looks healthy.

83b. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

83b.

The girls are poised with their musical instruments as Jack and Lily come through the door. Rose nods to Barbara Jo.

BARBARA JO

We practiced a song for when you came came back so you'd know we missed you.

Rose nods her head, sets time, and the girls try to play "Bushel and a Peck." Lily begins to cry.

GIRLS

I love you, a bushel and a peck, a bushel and a peck, and I love you all to heck. I love you all to heck, a bushel and a peck, a bushel and a peck and a hug around the neck.

They play poorly and sing worse, but Jack is moved.

84. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

84.

Lily, Jack, and the girls in a classic 50's American Christmas scene: the family surrounded by a litter of opened presents. Starr sits off to the side, smoking. Jack and Lily puff away; a blue haze hangs. Jack sips coffee as Lily demonstrates the proper use of a microphone she got for him.

84. CONT.

84. CONT.

LILY

See, you just press this button, daddy.
And then you talk. Just think, you
can talk to people all over the country.

The doorbell rings and Starr gets up to answer.

LILY

You ever seen a more handsome man?

STARR

(winks)

Once I did - in the movies.

She opens the door. A delivery boy stands on the porch with
a huge bouquet.

DELIVERY BOY

Flowers for Starr.

STARR

"Merry Christmas to the most beautiful
Starr sparkling in the heavens. All My
Love William." Isn't that sweet?

ROSE

They're beautiful.

Starr's eyes widen as she notices a diamond necklace wrapped
around the rose stems.

STARR

Oh, my God. Look. Aren't they the
most beautiful things you've ever seen?

The girls gather around Starr. Lily feels left out.

LILY

I have the best Christmas present in the
world. A wonderful husband and three
sweet girls.

STARR

Look, Jack.

Starr comes over to show the diamonds to Jack. Lily suddenly
throws herself into Jack's lap, awkwardly and heavily.
Trying her best to look vampish, she nibbles at his ear.

LILY

You look so good I could eat you up.

Jack looks at Lily like she's crazy; the girls and Starr
stare dumbfounded. Lily is embarrassed. She gets up
awkwardly from Jack's lap, smoothes down her hiked up skirt.

84. CONT.

LILY

84. CONT.

What's everybody looking at?

Jack stands, sips his coffee, and withdraws down the hall, carrying his microphone; Rose and Lily watch him go.

85. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

85.

Jack enters. Several boxes filled with tools and personal belongings from the gas station are stacked to one side. Jack plucks out one of his shirts, tries to smooth out the creases. He moves to his radio. The photo of himself with Jimmy and the young girls is on the bench. Jack pushes it to the side. *

He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes. We can sense homecoming has been tense for him; he appreciates the refuge of his radio room. Calmer now, he notices a screwdriver out of place and returns it to its proper position; a pair of pliers are also out of place and Jack grabs them angrily, jams them into their proper slot. He turns on the radio, waits for it to warm up.

Jack plugs in the new microphone, holds the mike to his mouth, clears his throat. He's obviously nervous, puts the mike down, tunes the receiver. He takes the photo of Jimmy, lays it at the bottom of his drawer, and slowly closes it: a form of burial.

86. INT. CHISMORE HALL - DAY

86.

Rose walks down the hall toward the radio room. We can hear the radio coming through the door. Rose knocks.

ROSE

Can I come in?

The radio cuts off in mid-sentence. Silence. The door opens. Jack stands there.

ROSE

Is it working OK? Your radio, I mean.

JACK

All right.

ROSE

It wasn't working...I got the tubes and everything...That's my present...

Silence. Long beat.

86 CONT.

JACK

Don't mess around with it again, OK?

86 CONT.

ROSE
(hurt)

OK.

She turns and walks away. Jack closes the door.

87. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

87.

Rose sits silently on the couch, Dee Ann and Barbara Jo argue over a game, Lily pushes Christmas debris into a pile on the floor, Starr smokes. Jack comes in, sits across from Rose.

LILY

Did you talk to somebody, daddy?

Jack shakes his head. He looks over at Rose.

JACK

(good-naturedly)

Boy, you sure were out of tune on "Bushel".

He laughs. It's as close as he can get to an apology. He clears his throat, tries again.

JACK

Who'd like to go for a drive out to Boulder Dam Sunday?

BARBARA JO AND DEE ANN

I would!

Mel

Rose stares down at the floor, doesn't say a word. Jack clears his throat.

JACK

I know I'm not the easist person in the world to get along with.

He forces a smile; this is excruciating for him.

JACK

But I've...a lot's happened, and I've had a chance to think things over the last week or two...and I've come to the realization...my standards are too high - I can't expect everyone to be perfect. That's why I drank; out of the frustration. Well, that's over and done with. From now on, I'm going to be more easy going.

87. CONT.

87. CONT.

CLOSE ON Rose: she's still angry, hurt, and not in a forgiving mood. Lily, eyes filled with love and tears, rushes to embrace her husband; Dee Ann and Barbara Jo join in the family hug. Rose stays on the couch, staring at the floor.

88. EXT. BOULDER DAM - DAY

88.

Jack, Lily, and the girls stand on the edge of the dam, looking down on the Colorado River far below.

JACK

We're standing on top of 724 feet of poured concrete, 660 feet thick on the bottom, 45 feet across on top. The biggest concrete dam in the world, 4,400,000 cubic yards of cement, 6.6 million tons.

Jack speaks with a kind of hushed reverence and wonder.

JACK

The Golden Gate was a piece of cake.
This is man's greatest engineering feat.

Jack hurries across the highway to the reservoir side of the dam, moving quickly despite his bad leg. Lily and the girls hurry after him. Rose, grim-faced, lags behind.

Jack stares out across the lake. The waters of Lake Mead, blue and serene, lap gently against the dam; not a ripple disturbs its placid surface. The girls stare at their father. Jack hurries back across the highway, heading toward the dam tower and elevator. Rose continues to lag behind. Lily looks back, gestures for her to hurry up.

89-90. INT. BOULDER DAM TURBINE ROOM - DAY

90.

DEEP IN THE BELLY OF BOULDER DAM. A high pitched electrical whine combines with the deep bass rumble of surging water and giant, whirring turbines: the sensation is of overwhelming power. The Chismore family stands with a small tour group in the middle of a cavernous vault. The gleaming, polished floor seems to stretch endlessly; far away, at the other end of the room, are the massive generators.

TOUR GUIDE

We are now six floors below the surface of the Lake...

90. CONT.

90. CONT.

Jack listens with the wonder of a pilgrim at his most revered shrine. His eyes move over the room, taking in every detail.

TOUR GUIDE

The turbines you see at the end of the vault generate 1,344,800 kilowatts of electrical power. But the main function of Boulder Dam is river control...

Rose lags, separate from the group. Lily, losing patience, drops back to talk to her.

LILY

A girl who gets all wrapped up in herself makes a mighty small package.

Rose says nothing, stares sullenly ahead. Lily gets angry.

LILY

Your father's trying to be nice. He's been through hell and all you can think about is yourself.

(Rose remains sullen)

All right, if you can't be civil, go back and sit in the car.

Rose turns to leave. Lily grabs her by the elbow.

LILY

I'm disappointed in you, Rosalee Chismore.

TOUR GUIDE

Before the dam was completed in 1935, flooding cost millions of dollars and countless lives...Next to the Atomic Bomb, Boulder Dam is man's greatest engineering feat.

Jack puts his hand down on the smooth floor, feeling the power of the dam---the struggle between raging water and concrete. His hand shakes with its vibrations.

JACK

God, feel that power.

Lily and the girls put their hands down next to Jack's. Only Rose remains standing, aloof and proud.

91. EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DUSK

91.

The Chismore car drives down a narrow strip of two lane highway, a fine line slicing through the vast desert stretching off on both sides. We hear the girls singing.

91. CONT.

91. CONT.

BARBARA JO AND DEE ANN

Oh, Dan can't you see/ that cool, green tree/
with the water waiting there for you and me/
with...water.

JACK

Waaaa-ter.

BARBARA JO AND DEE ANN

Cool, clear, water.

JACK

Waaaa-ter.

92. INT. DESERT HIGHWAY - CHISMORE CAR - DUSK

92.

Jack drives, while Lily conducts Dee Ann and Barbara Jo, her
hands waving in slow, fluid arcs.

BARBARA JO AND DEE ANN

He's a devil not a man and he robs the
burning sand of...water.

JACK

Waaaa-ter.

Jack glances in the mirror: Rose stares silently out the
window at the passing desert.

93. EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DUSK

93.

The car disappears into the vast Southern Nevada desert.

94. EXT. ACROSS STREET FROM GAS STATION - NIGHT

94.

Jack drives past the station, but doesn't look at the sign -
his name has been painted over - "Ed's Atomic Gas."

Rose lies in the backseat. She studies her father's
silhouetted profile.

95. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

95.

Rose removes the radio tubes that were her gift to Jack. A
clock shows the time: 2:15 AM. Her face is set and angry:
it is a deliberate act - a child's rage at rejection.

96. EXT. 5TH STREET SCHOOL LAWN - DAY

96.

Rose sits with Meryl and Shelley eating lunch. Behind them, 6th grade girls play hopscotch, boys dodge ball.

SHELLEY

You should see Liberace's house.
White carpet, white drapes white
tables, white piano, white walls.
He's even got a white dog and a white
cat, and he wears white pants, white
shoes, a white---

A deafening AIR RAID SIREN sounds, drowning out Shelley and the noisy playground din of young voices. Rose reacts immediately, throwing herself face down on the lawn and covering her head with her hands. Across the playground children fall to the ground, cover their heads.

WIDESHOT: the playground is littered with kids lying face down on the ground, motionless. No human sound.

CLOSE ON ROSE. Clutching her I.D. tags in one hand, covering her head with the other, she softly spells words to herself.

ROSE

Maneuver: m-a-n-e-u-v-e-r.
Irascible: i-r-a-s-...

97. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

97.

The family is eating dinner.

LILY

It's the best job I've had since Basic Magnesium back in the war. Pays twice what I got at the Cortez and it's exciting---being part of the bomb test and all. Isn't it something, your mom working for the AEC?

JACK

So when are they going to drop the first one, pretty soon?

LILY

I don't know...it's secret. You know it is. It says so in the papers and everything.

Jack glares at her; Lily knows something he doesn't.

97. CONT.

97. CONT.

LILY

I took an oath. My lips are sealed.
I couldn't say if I knew. And I don't.

JACK

Well, I can find out easy enough. They
blab everything on the radio. All I
have to do is tune in the military
channel. I'd probably know already,
except I've been too busy to listen.

Close on Rose: she squirms at the mention of the radio.

LILY

You wouldn't want to put money on
that, would you? I mean, if I
still gambled.

JACK

I can tell you the day and the hour.

LILY

You're lucky I don't bet anymore,
daddy.

Lily is in torture; she wants to bet badly. Silent eating.

JACK

There's a nice little station in
town. If I can get a good price on
it, I'm going to make an offer on it.
I'll bring Jimmy in partners when
he gets back from Korea.

Everyone at the table stares at Jack.

LILY

Jimmy's dead, daddy. You know that.

Awkward silence.

JACK

We would have kept that station
neat as a pin. Clean. I bet we
would have had the most sanitary
station in the state of Nevada.

*

Rose stares at her father. More silence. Lily pretends
nothing's happened.

97. CONT.

97. CONT.

LILY

We're hiring like crazy, honey. Why don't you come to work for us? It pays a lot better than the station ever did, and it's not such hard work. They need mechanics to run the generators and you're the best in town.

JACK

I don't do casino work and I don't do government work. I don't care what they pay.

LILY

I talked to Mr. Johnson about you and he said he'd be glad to have you aboard, a war hero and all. I'm his secretary and he's in charge of just about everything.

JACK

He can't be.

LILY

Well, he is.

JACK

Nope. Einstein, Oppenheimer...all of 'em are Jews. They wouldn't put a guy named Johnson in charge, he wouldn't have a prayer.

Silence. Everyone waits to see if Jack's outburst will become a tirade. He glares at Lily; she changes the subject.

LILY

Going out with your Texan again tonight?

STARR

No, not tonight.

LILY

Come to think of it, I haven't seen him around much lately.

STARR

Oh, he's around. He'll probably call tonight.

LILY

Nothing wrong, I hope.

STARR

No, nothing at all.

98. SCENE OMITTED

98. *

99. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

99.

Jack listens to "Mood Indigo." A newspaper lays across his lap, headlined in huge Caps: "SEOUL FALLS TO REDS!" Starr's door is open. She comes into view, wiggling into a glamorous purple sequinned gown, then turning in front of the mirror, checking the fit. Jack looks at Starr for a moment, then averts his eyes as she straightens her nylon seams. As he leans back and closes his eyes, Rose and Dee Ann come through the living room.

JACK

Rose!

ROSE

Yes, sir?

JACK

Come here. Who's playing?

ROSE

Duke Ellington.

JACK

That's right, Duke Ellington. The greatest composer since Beethoven. And he's a nig- a Negro. Listen.

The honeyed music, rich, full of pain and beauty, plays. They listen in silence until the record ends.

JACK

That's the only thing in the world that matters, right there. Even if the Commies take over.

He pats his lap for Rose to sit down. She does, reluctantly.

JACK

You don't believe me, do you, what I said about things being different? Everybody else does - your mother, Dee Ann, Barbara Jo. You don't. Well, that's OK. You don't know what I can do when I set my mind to it. It's just a matter of self-control.

99. CONT.

99. CONT.

Jack is struggling to maintain it. Rose is simultaneously hopeful and terrified - the scene plays on that edge.

JACK

The night I married your mother you hit me over the head with a frying pan. Some honeymoon. Little 9 year old girl, had to climb up on a chair to hit her stepfather over the head with a frying pan. Sort of got us off on the wrong foot, didn't it?

Jack laughs softly. His voice is calm and soothing, almost seductive. Rose nods, but is still afraid.

JACK

It took guts. I like that. You didn't understand, you thought you were protecting your mother. That's good, that's what I'm trying to do: protect my family. No hard feelings.

Jack extends his hand. They shake. Impulsively, Rose leans down and kisses him on the cheek. At that moment, Starr comes breezing into the room, sexy and glamorous in her purple, sequined gown. She models it for Rose and Jack.

STARR

Well, how do you like it?

ROSE

It's gorgeous.

STARR

What do you think, Jack, think Bill will like it?

There's insecurity in Starr's voice; she wants to be reassured that she's desirable.

JACK

Well, I can't speak for another man, but I like what I'm looking at.

Lily comes out of the bathroom as Starr pecks Jack on the cheek. Jack is flustered, embarrassed. He nods self-consciously, and then retreats to the male sanctuary of his radio room. Starr shrugs, heads back to her room.

*

100. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

100.

Jack switches the radio on: nothing happens. He looks to make sure it's plugged in, then tries the power switch again: nothing. His movements are full of nervous energy.

101. INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

101.

Rose walks down the hall to her room. She looks at the radio room door, then back at Lily. They nod good night. Rose closes her door. Lily walks to Jack's radio room. She starts to knock, then decides not to. She begins to sing.

LILY

"More than you know/man of my heart
I love you so/Lately I find/
you're on my mind/more than you know...
Maybe you're right/maybe you're wrong,
Man of my heart/I'll string along..."

101a INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

101a.*

Starr taps her fingers on her dresser table, looks out the window, sighs, and begins undressing.

102. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

102.

Rose is awake, listening to Jack and Lily's voices in the next room. Silence, then a mattress creaks rhythmically. Rose pulls back the covers, gets out of bed.

103. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

103.

Rose, dressed in her Wonder Woman pajamas, puts the tubes back in the radio. She's very nervous, fumbling. The door suddenly swings open behind her and she jumps, terrified.

JACK

What are you doing?

Rose is so scared she can't find air to speak, can't move.

JACK

Go to bed. It's OK. Go to bed.

Rose runs out of the room. Jack sits down at the radio, turns it on: it works. He smiles to himself, realizing what Rose has done. He turns the radio off, stares at the map. *

FADE TO:

104. INT. CHISMORE HOUSE - NIGHT

104.

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF THE SILENT, DARKENED HOUSE AT NIGHT: the radio room, the girls sleeping...Jack wanders out of his bedroom, naked, in a walking nightmare, talking to himself.

105. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

105.

The door flies open; Rose jerks awake. Jack stands in the middle of the room, silhouetted in the light from the

105. CONT.

105. CONT.

doorway. Rose stares wide-eyed at her father, naked. His eyes dart around the room, as if looking for a place to hide. Lily runs into the room, tries to guide him out, but Jack drops to the floor, crawls under a dresser table.

LILY

Jack, you're home, Jack. You're home!
(seeing Rose awake)
He'll be OK, honey, it's a nightmare.

JACK

(softly, urgently)
Get down! Get down!

Lily crawls under the table and cradles Jack in her arms.

LILY

It's OK, daddy. Give me a blanket,
Rose. He'll be OK. It's OK, daddy,
it's OK.

Rose pulls a blanket off the bed, takes it to her mother, who tries to cover Jack.

ROSE

Daddy, it's us.. It's us, daddy.

Jack is beginning to pull out of it. Fear gives way to confusion, then humiliation. Jack tries to cover his nakedness; sobs cough up from inside him uncontrollably. He turns and flees out of the room. CLOSE ON Rose, stunned, staring.

106. INT. 5TH STREET SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

106.

Rose stands with a dozen KIDS at the front of the class.

TEACHER

Hors d'oeuvre.

The teacher nods to Rose. Rose closes her eyes and spells the word silently to herself, then outloud.

ROSE

H-o-r-s - end word - d-'-o-e-u-v-r-e.

CUT TO:

LATER. Only Rose and one other GIRL, the archetypal smart kid, are left standing.

TEACHER

Eleomosynary.

106. CONT.

106. CONT.

The girl shuts her eyes, concentrates. We see her lips moving. She opens her eyes and begins to spell the word.

GIRL

E-l-l-e-o-m-o-s-y-n-a-r-y.

TEACHER

Incorrect.

The girl looks stunned. The teacher nods to Rose. She closes her eyes, concentrates.

ROSE

E-l-e-o-m-o-s-y-n-a-r-y.

TEACHER

Correct.

Meryl and Shelley applaud; Rose breaks into a broad smile.

107. INT. FUN ROOM - NIGHT

107.

The Fun Room floor is littered with adolescent girls, bandaging and being bandaged. Rose wraps Meryl's leg.

ROSE

That's it, just keep very still.
Everything's OK. Everything's fine.

Rose speaks in a soft, almost hypnotic voice, reminiscent of Lily's voice with Jack.

MERYL

Don't forget my party Saturday, OK?

Rose nods distantly, intent on her work; Meryl notices Rose's strange behavior.

MERYL

Are you OK?

Rose nods. MISS EPHLAND, the Red Cross lady, shouts instructions to the girls about special procedures for radiation wounds. Shelley files her nails impatiently.

SHELLEY

C'mon, let's go!

Rose doesn't seem to hear, concentrates on Meryl's bandaging.

SHELLEY

Rose! What are you, deaf? C'mon, Halls
of Montezuma is playing at the Palace.

107 CONT.

107 CONT.

Rose gives Shelley a stern, disapproving look.

ROSE

What if Liberace got wounded by an A-bomb and you were the only one that could save him, but you couldn't because you didn't pay attention at Red Cross class because you wanted to go to a dumb war movie? How would you feel then?

108-109. SCENES OMITTED

109.

110. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

110.

Jack - in reading glasses - pours over papers at the dining room table. Lily looks on from across the table.

JACK

If I get him down to \$1500 tomorrow, I'll buy before he changes his mind.

LILY

We don't have \$1500.

JACK

How much do we have?

LILY

\$200.

Jack knows immediately what happened. Lily starts to cry.

LILY

I'm sorry, daddy. I'm sorry.

Jack walks out.

110a. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - NIGHT

110a. *

Jack sits on the porch steps. He stares across the parking lot at a liquor store sign that flashes on and off.

111. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

111.

Starr leads, Rose tries to follow, as they rhumba back and forth across the living room.

STARR

1,2,3; 1,2,3; 1,2,3. That's it.

ROSE

What about the jitterbug?

STARR

Go to any night club, honey, they rhumba.

111. CONT.

111. CONT.

ROSE

I'm not going to a night club. I'm going to Meryl's dance party.

STARR

Okay, okay, jitterbug then.

Starr shouts the name of a record to Dee Ann and Barbara Jo.

ROSE

(glumly)

Robin's the best dancer in 5th Street school.

A fast record comes on.

STARR

Turn it up!

Dee Ann increases the volume. It makes Rose nervous. She looks down the hall to Jack's room.

ROSE

He's been in there all afternoon. I don't like it when he spends so much time in there.

Starr jitterbugs and Rose awkwardly imitates her movements.

STARR

Good, good. Hey, Jack, come dance with your daughter!

ROSE

He'll get mad...Starr!

Starr laughs, jitterbugs DOWN THE HALL TO THE RADIO ROOM.

STARR

C'mon, Jack, she needs to practice with a man. (yells to girls)
Put on a waltz! C'mon, Jack, have some fun.

We can hear some kind of muffled radio transmission. The "TENNESSEE WALTZ" begins to play. Starr OPENS THE DOOR and drags Rose into the radio room.

112. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

112.

Jack stands before the huge map of the test area north of Las Vegas. He draws concentric rings emanating outward from the center of the test area. He finishes a ring, glares at Rose

112. CONT.

112. CONT.

and Starr, then begins another, larger concentric ring. Starr keeps dancing, tries to push Jack and Rose together good-naturedly.

STARR

C'mon, Jack. Just once, for Rose.
Then back to the war room.

Jack ignores her, draws the last ring, in thick, bright red crayon. It includes Las Vegas. Rose watches, trying to understand the meaning of his map. Starr keeps dancing.

JACK

All right. One dance.

Jack switches off the radio and takes Rose by the hand.

113. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

113.

They dance awkwardly at first, keeping a proper distance between them. Gradually, Jack moves more freely. Despite his bad leg, he dances with surprising grace and confidence. It's a side of Jack we haven't seen before: for a few moments, he forgets himself in the music, carefree.

STARR

You're good.

Dee Ann and Barbara Jo laugh delightedly at the sight of their father and older sister dancing together.

JACK

(suddenly quits)
Leg's bothering me.

STARR

C'mon, just one more? You were great.

JACK

(glances at watch)
The AEC weather stations call in
their reports now. I don't want to
miss it.

Jack heads down the hall toward the radio room.

STARR

I swear, a little fun scares that man
to death.

Rose's POV as Jack closes the radio room door.

114. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - NIGHT

114.

Lily looks down the hall to Jack's radio room.

LILY

Well, let's eat. He'll have to do with leftovers.

Lily and the girls sit down to eat. The radio room door opens and Jack exits, walks down the hall and across the living room to the front door.

LILY

Dinner's ready, daddy.

JACK

Go ahead.

He goes out.

115. EXT. 5th STREET LIQUORS - NIGHT

115.

Jack stands outside 5th Street Liquors, his hands in his pockets. Above him a neon bottle tips up and pours neon liquor into a cocktail glass, over and over. Jack turns and goes into the store.

116. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

116.

Jack drinks and writes in numbers on his test site map beside each concentric ring, followed by the abbreviation, "kt." for kiloton - which grow larger with increasing distance from the test site. The radio plays mostly squawk and static and indecipherable fragments of routine communications from test site work crews.

117. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

117.

Rose stands on a chair while Starr pins the hem of her party dress. She leans out so she can see down the hall to Jack's radio room.

ROSE

What's he doing in there? He's been in there all afternoon. Isn't it cut kinda low in back?

She looks at her plunging back in the mirror.

117. CONT.

117. CONT.

STARR

(pins in her mouth)

That's the idea. You don't have
much up front to show so we show
off that beautiful long back of yours.
Turn around, honey.

Starr scrutinizes, shakes her head. She goes to the dresser
to make a drink: it's empty. She holds the bottle up.

ROSE

What's wrong?

STARR

Nothing. I guess I finished it. All
you need is a little something up front.

ROSE

Oh, no, not after what happened last time.

STARR

I'll put in double stitches. You
want to look good, don't you?

118. INT. RADIO ROOM - DAY

118.

Jack stares at his map. His movements are jerky, nervous as
he reaches behind the radio bench, fishes around, comes up
with a bottle. He disconnects a speaker wire from the radio
in the process. The radio goes dead.

Jack flips the radio power switch on and off: nothing. He
checks the plugs and tubes: everything looks fine. He
drinks, slaps the side of the radio hard. Still nothing.

He loses his temper, an almost childish rage. He throws a
pair of pliers, a screw driver, looks for something to hit.
He picks up the radio, raises it above his head to smash it,
but stops himself. He rips the war clippings from the wall.

119. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

119.

Rose looks at herself in the mirror as Starr scrutinizes her
chest. There is a modest, realistic swell, subtle but
effective.

STARR

Perfect! They don't look like
anti-aircraft guns and they don't
look droopy. Just right.

Rose turns at various angles, checking herself out in the
mirror. O.S. we hear a door close.

119. CONT.

119. CONT.

JACK O.S.

Rose!

120. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

120.

Jack paces angrily. Rose hurries out in Starr's robe.

JACK

What did you do to my radio?

ROSE

Nothing. I didn't do anything, I promise.

Jack is fighting to control himself, clenching and unclenching his fists.

JACK

You've been in my room, haven't you?

ROSE

No, daddy.

Jack starts to walk away, suddenly stops.

JACK

You're lying. Go to your room.

Rose starts to go, then stops.

ROSE

I didn't do anything. Starr's not finished fitting my dress...

JACK

You don't need a dress, you're not going anywhere.

ROSE

That's not fair.

JACK

What did you say?

ROSE

It's not fair.

Jack hits her hard across the face. Rose's head jerks back from the blow; a trickle of blood comes from her nose.

JACK

Go to your room.

Rose doesn't move. Jack hits her again, harder.

120. CONT.

120. CONT.

ROSE

No. It's not fair!

Starr comes out of her room as Jack raises his hand again; Rose runs from the room. Starr starts after Rose but Jack stops her.

JACK

She's being disciplined.

They stare at each other for a long moment.

STARR

For what? She's 13 years old!
For christsakes!

Jack glares at her, doesn't move. Starr turns angrily, stalks back to her room.

121. INT. GIRLS BEDROOM - DUSK

121.

Rose lies on the bed face down. We hear a door slam. Rose goes to the window: As Jack climbs into his pickup, Lily arrives in her car, waves at him to stop. He speeds off.

Rose sits on her bed, holding a photograph of her grandmother against her stomach. An angry welt puffs out under one eye. A knock at the door and Lily enters. She hugs Rose; then wipes at the tears that roll noiselessly down Rose's face.

LILY

Nothing dries faster than a tear.
There! See, all dry!
(a pause)
Your daddy left awfully upset, honey.

ROSE

I hope he goes away and never comes back. He's not my 'daddy'.

LILY

Don't say that, honey, you don't mean it.

Lily sees the bruise forming beneath Rose's eye. She reaches out, touches it, suddenly turns away, angry. She walks to the window and looks out, fighting tears.

LILY

I'm sorry, honey. If he starts drinking again, we'll go to a motel.

Lily stares out the window for a long moment. She sees a neighbor and closes the drapes.

*

121. CONT.

121. CONT.

LILY

He wouldn't have done it if he'd been sober. He wouldn't. Remember the night daddy had the bad nightmare? That's what makes him drink: nightmares and bad memories. They're so... inconsiderate. Someday, they'll just go away. They will. After black clouds, comes fair weather.

Lily turns back into the room: the incident is forgotten.

LILY

I've got to get back to work, honey, I'll get in dutch if I don't.

She pats Rose on the head, leaves. Rose lies on the bed, motionless. A beat. The door opens, Starr enters.

STARR

Are you OK, honey?

ROSE

No.

STARR

I thought you were going to a party.

ROSE

I'd get killed if I went.

STARR

I won't say anything if you don't.

Rose turns to face Starr; an angry welt puffs out under one eye, the beginnings of a blackeye.

ROSE

I can't go like this.

STARR

(inspects eye professionally)

Sure you can.

122. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

122.

Close on Rose's face as Starr brushes makeup over the bruise under Rose's eye. Magically, the bruise disappears.

STARR

There! Good as new.

Dee Ann and Barbara Jo hover in the background as Rose studies her face in the mirror. The bruise is barely

122. CONT.

122. CONT.

detectable. Starr applies the finishing touch, slipping a pair of sunglasses on Rose.

STARR

Good for crying, bruises, hangovers, insomnia, and illicit rendezvous. Say you just got your eyes checked, nobody'll know the difference. Let's put your hair up and you're all set.

123. INT. MOSOL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

123.

The party is just beginning: girls on one side, boys on the other. In her backless dress, sophisticated hairdo, padded bust and sunglasses, Rose stands out from the other girls - even in Las Vegas. She casts nervous sidelong glances at Robin as she talks with Meryl and Shelley. Robin finally starts toward her; Rose panics, turns urgently to Meryl.

ROSE

Put on one of my Aunt Starr's rhumba records. Quick!

ROBIN

Want to dance, Rose?

Rose tosses her head casually like Starr.

ROSE

Let's see what the next one is.

An XAVIAR CUGAT rhumba record comes on.

ROSE

That's more like it.

ROBIN

My mom loves to rhumba.

He leads Rose out onto the floor. There is an awkward moment as Robin puts his hand on Rose's bare back, but Robin is a confident, graceful dancer and Rose follows his lead. They rhumba across the floor as the other kids look on. Mr. Mosol brings in a bowl of punch from the kitchen, stays to watch, sensing something isn't right with Rose.

CUT TO:

The party is in full swing, the floor crowded with jitterbugging 13 and 14 year olds. Mr. Mosol fills two cups with punch and hands one of the cups to Rose.

123. CONT.

123. CONT.

MR. MOSOL

Could I have your autograph? You must be a movie star...

ROSE

I just had my eyes tested...
So, I'm supposed to wear these.

They stand together quietly, both feeling awkward.

MR. MOSOL

People wear sunglasses when they don't want to be seen.

ROSE

I had my eyes tested.

MR. MOSOL

Sure. You OK? Everything OK at home?

ROSE

Fine.

MR. MOSOL

Sure?

ROSE

Yeah, I'm sure.

Awkward beat. Mr. Mosol tries another approach.

MR. MOSOL

Hey! The spelling bee! You won!
What'd I tell you? You got city finals coming up soon, huh?

ROSE

(distracted)

Uh-huh.

Rose hasn't played her side of the game. Neither have anything to say. They stand silently.

MR. MOSOL

I wore sunglasses all the time when I was a kid - to cover blackeyes. Got hell beat out of me at home every day from the time I was eight, 'til I was 15. 'Course, getting your eyes checked, that's different.

(earnestly)

But if you need anything, anytime, you come see me or Mrs. Mosol, OK?

Rose nods distracted, looks out across the dance floor.

123. CONT.

CUT TO:

123. CONT.

The lights are dimmer now. Rose jitterbugs with Robin; her face is vibrant, alive, as she dances across the floor.

124. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - NIGHT

124.

Rose smiles, waves goodbye to Robin and his mother, goes into the house. They wait until she is safely inside.

125. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

125.

Django Reinhardt plays as Rose enters. Starr looks up from a game of soitaire, gestures urgently for Rose to duck into her room. A door slams at the end of the hall; we hear Jack's footsteps. Rose freezes. Jack turns into the bathroom; Rose races into Starr's room.

126. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

126.

Rose undresses in the dim light. She puts on one of Starr's satin nightgowns and slips into bed. She lies there with Tuffy, staring at the ceiling, listening to Django Reinhardt playing loudly in the next room. The door suddenly opens, spilling light across the bed. Rose freezes.

STARR

(whispering)

It's OK, honey, it's me.

Rose relaxes. Starr comes over and sits on the bed.

STARR

Have a good time? I told you, didn't I? Still in the pink pinkie club?

Rose nods. They're quiet for a moment.

ROSE

When you get married, can I come live with you?

STARR

He hasn't asked me.

ROSE

He will.

Starr musses Rose's hair, says nothing. The Django Reinhardt record ends; Starr kisses Rose.

126. CONT.

126. CONT.

STARR

Go to sleep.

127. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - NIGHT

127.

Jack sits on the porch, staring into the night, sipping from a pint. It's cold, his breath makes little clouds and his cigarette tip glows. Inside, Duke Ellington's "MOOD INDIGO" begins to play. The door opens and Starr comes out, sipping a drink. Jack points out across the lights of Vegas.

JACK

That's where it'll go off, right out there.

STARR

You won't be able to see it from here, we're too far away.

Jacks snorts, says nothing. A young couple walk arm in arm into the wedding chapel across the street. *

STARR

Well, that's what they said on the radio. Maybe you know more than the government.

JACK

Maybe.

STARR

Can I say something?

JACK

Free country.

STARR

You can't hate pain away. Love is better. You could be a King here, Jack. There's nothing the girls wouldn't do for you.

JACK

I discipline Rose when she needs it. Maybe I can keep her from being a whore.

Jack glares at Starr through small, angry eyes. Starr laughs.

STARR

Don't squint your eyes and act tough. I'm not Lily.

Jack grabs Starr by the arm. They stare head to head for a long moment before Jack slowly lets go. Starr doesn't blink, kisses him tenderly on the forehead.

127. CONT.

127. CONT.

STARR

Share a little of that bottle with
a friend?

Jack passes Starr his bottle. Love and hate sit on opposite
sides of the porch, staring into the night, sharing a bottle.

128. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

128.

Starr lies in bed awake. She glances over at the photo of
herself with Bill, then stares back at the ceiling. A beat.
"THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS" sounds softly in the night. Starr
raises up. Rose stirs in her sleep. "YELLOW ROSE" calls
again. She smiles and slips quietly out of bed.

129. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

129.

Rose is awakened by the sound of rain drumming against the
window. Starr's side of the bed is empty. Rose gets up and
walks to the window, stares out at the rain. We hear Jack's
voice carrying from the next room.

Rose checks her bruise in the mirror, touches it gingerly,
then goes to the door, opens it slightly and peeks out.
Jack, Lily, and the girls sit at the dining room table.

130. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - DAY

130.

Jack lectures Lily with drunken authority.

JACK

You mean to tell me you work for the
AEC and you don't even know what $E=mc^2$
squared means?

Jack sips coffee and thumbs through a "Great Thinkers" book,
"Einstein, Relativity, and the Atomic Bomb".

JACK

E equals energy, m stands for the mass,
and c stands for the velocity of light.
Get it?

LILY

I've got to get to work, Jack.

131. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

131.

Rose quietly closes the door. She looks around the room. It
looks empty without Starr. Rose is suddenly seized with fear
that Starr has gone. She rushes to the closet: Starr's

131. CONT.

131. CONT.

suitcase and clothes are still there. Relieved, Rose reaches out, touches Starr's purple gown, lays her head against it.

132. INT. CHISMORE DINING ROOM - DAY

132.

Rose slips quietly out of Starr's room, dressed in one of Starr's blouses. Lily looks up.

LILY

Your cereal's getting soggy, honey.
Is your Aunt Starr up yet?

Rose shakes her head.

JACK

In an A-bomb, they bombard the nucleus
with electrons and split the atom;
matter changes into energy. That's
the whole deal in a nutshell, you ask
your Mr. Goldstein---

LILY

Johnson, Mr. Johnson.

JACK

$E=mc^2$ squared. Nobody knew - until
Einstein figured it out.

The front door opens. Starr wobbles a little as she crosses the living room, more beautiful than ever.

STARR

Mor-ning!

LILY

Are you trying to make a liar out of
me? I have to sign a piece of paper
that says you lived here every day.
It's the law, and I have to swear to
it---or you don't get the divorce.

STARR

(eyes on floor, contrite)
I'm sorry, it won't happen again.

LILY

I should hope not.

Starr heads off to her room. At the door, she turns and gives Rose a big wink. The doorbell rings. Jack goes to the door, opens it: Mr. Mosol stands there nervously.

132. CONT.

132. CONT.

MR. MOSOL

Hello, Jack...is the little lady in?
I wanted to talk to her a minute...
If it's OK.

JACK

(glaring at him)

Lily, it's for you.

Lily goes to the door, Jack heads back to the table.

LILY

Come in, Mr. Mosol.

MR. MOSOL

That's OK, I only have a minute.

(seeing Rose)

Hi, Rose. Sorry about last night. I -

ROSE

(interrupting)

It's OK. I didn't want to go to the
party, that's all. So I stayed home.

Mr. Mosol is confused, but nods as if in agreement. Rose
glances over at Jack, who stares at her suspiciously.
Barbara Jo smiles mischievously, knowing Rose's secret.

MR. MOSOL

(to Lily, lowering voice)

I was thinking...I guess you know when
they're going to drop it, huh?

Lily glances back at Jack, who resumes lecturing the girls.

JACK

If you could get at all the power
that's in the atoms in this salt
shaker, you'd never have to buy gas
for the rest of your life.

LILY

That's classified, Mr. Mosol. You
shouldn't even ask me that.

ROSE

We're going to be late, daddy.

She gets up; the girls follow her lead to the door.

132. CONT.

132. CONT.

MR. MOSOL

I know I shouldn't...it's just, I want to know when it's going to be so I can send my wife and daughter to Los Angeles for a few days.

LILY

Mr. Mosol. The bus trip's more dangerous than the A-bomb.

MR. MOSOL

(looking miserable)

I know. Couldn't you just give me a hint?

ROSE

Bye, momma.

LILY

Go on, get in the car, girls, I'll drop you off.

The girls go out. Rose stands ON THE PORCH, listening.

LILY

(lowers voice)

Don't tell anyone I told you. I haven't even told Jack. There's a light above the AEC office. If it's green...it means there'll be a test within 24 hours. If I were you, Mr. Mosol, I'd check it tomorrow.

Mr. Mosol hugs Lily impulsively.

LILY

Mr. Mosol!

REACTION SHOT ON JACK: he's heard. REACTION SHOT ON ROSE: she's heard also.

133. EXT. STREET OUTSIDE CHISMORE'S HOUSE - DAY

133.

Rose and her sisters walk to Lily's car. Next door, MRS. OLAWSKI works in her garden. She waves for the girls to come over. Rose goes, reluctantly; Dee Ann and Barbara Jo stay. Mrs. Olawski points to a rocky, sandy area of her GARDEN.

MRS. OLAWSKI

I gathered desert primrose seeds last Spring.

Rose is not interested, wants to leave.

133. CONT.

133. CONT.

MRS. OLAWSKI

The seeds won't sprout until there's enough rain. That way they won't die before they have a chance to bloom. They can grow where anything else would give up. I still have some seeds left - I'd like for you to have them. I have them right here...

Mrs. Olawski reaches into her housecoat and sprinkles a few seeds into Rose's hands. Rose puts them in her jacket pocket. In the background, Lily comes down the steps.

ROSE

(hurrying away)

Thanks. I've got to go now.

MRS. OLAWSKI

Plant them in your yard! They might grow.

ROSE

(turning back)

Do you know creosote bush makes a poison that kills everything that tries to grow next to it?

Rose runs to Lily's car and gets in. Jack stands on the porch watching as they pull away.

134. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - DAY

134.

Starr sits at her dresser with a drink. Rose and Tuffy sit on Starr's bed, watching Starr in the mirror. Django Reinhardt plays. Starr's speech is slightly slurred.

STARR

We almost eloped, but we both had two days before our 42. That's why he hasn't called. He doesn't want to mess up when we only have two days left.

Tuffy pirouettes on his hind legs, following Starr's circling hand. Jack sits in the living room, cleaning his rifle, listening to Django. The doorbell rings, Jack goes to answer.

STARR

Your Aunt Starr once taught an Armadillo to roll over and sit.

DELIVERY BOY O.S.

Flowers for Starr!

Starr hugs Tuffy and hurries out to the living room.

135. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

135.

Starr walks like a lady to the flower boy, who hands her a beautiful bouquet of a dozen roses.

STARR

I'm making a wish.

Jack cleans his rifle as Starr reads the accompanying note silently to herself, then turns away, crying.

ROSE

What's wrong?

Starr can't answer, drops the roses, runs into her room. Rose looks at the note: "Had to return to Texas on business. Hope we can get together again next trip. Affectionately, Bill." Several one hundred dollar bills stick out. Rose runs after Starr. ROSE'S POV from the doorway: Starr sobs quietly, her head resting on her dresser, amidst cold creams and makeup. Tuffy does repeated pirouettes at her side. *

136. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

136.

Lily sits on the girls' bed.

ROSE

I feel so bad for Starr, momma.

LILY

Starr will be OK, honey, go to sleep. We'll have a divorce party to cheer her up, how's that?

Lily kisses the girls and goes out.

ROSE

Where are your I.D. tags, Barbara Jo?

BARBARA JO

I left them in the bathroom.

ROSE

Go get them.

BARBARA JO

I don't need to wear them at night.

ROSE

Do you think A-bombs only go off in the daytime?

136. CONTINUED

136.CON

Barbara Jo sighs and trudges off to the bathroom.

ROSE

And don't forget to brush your teeth.

CUT TO:

LATER. The lights are out, the girls in bed, still awake.

DEE ANN

I can't sleep. I'm scared.

BARBARA JO

(pugnacious)

I'm not. I'll kick that A-bomb if it comes around here.

ROSE

Shhh. Go to sleep. Stop being silly.

CLOSE ON Rose: she spells words silently to herself.

137. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - NIGHT

137.

Rose, in her Wonder Woman pajamas, fills a large jar with water, screws the lid on tightly, places it on the counter beside several other water jars. She works quietly.

138. INT. GIRLS ROOM - NIGHT

138. *

Rose puts the water jars in the back of the closet. We see that she has a small cache of canned goods, including peaches and mushroom soup.

Starr appears in the doorway.

STARR

Rose? Want to sleep with me tonight?

139. SCENE OMITTED

139. *

140. INT. STARR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

140.

Rose and Starr sit up together in bed, Rose in Starr's satin nightgown. Starr smokes a cigarette and sips bourbon.

140 CONT.

140. CONT.

Tuffy is curled up between them. Rose watches the minute hand touch 12 on the night table clock.

ROSE

You get your papers tomorrow.

Starr smiles, flattered that Rose kept track.

STARR

Keeping count, are you?

(toasting)

Forty-one down; one to go;
adios, Pedro.

They giggle. Starr's giggling could easily become tears. Rose becomes very serious.

ROSE

Starr?...I love you as much as Grandma.

Starr kisses Rose on the cheek, switches out the light. They snuggle under the covers: Starr and Rose, the Goddess and the girl, two manes of thick hair, one black, one blonde. Starr turns over, restless: she stares up at the ceiling, wide awake. Beat. Starr raises up, listening.

STARR

Did you hear that?

Rose shakes her head.

STARR

Listen.

Starr hums the melody of "Yellow Rose."

ROSE

I don't hear anything.

Starr slips out of bed.

141. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - NIGHT

141.

Starr stands on the porch steps, staring out at the empty street. Rose stands in the door, watching.

142. EXT. STREET - DAY

142.

Rose and Meryl walk home from school.

142. CONT.

142. CONT.

MERYL

I've got to go to Los Angeles on the bus tonight. My dad's making me. He thinks the A-bomb's going off tomorrow. Isn't it dumb?

Rose doesn't answer.

MERYL

We leave right after the spelling bee. Hope you win.

ROSE

Thanks.

They stop in front of Rose's house. Wordlessly, they clinch pink pinkies. Meryl gives Rose a hug. Rose runs up the steps and into the house.

143. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

143.

Rose stands in the living room. Django Reinhardt plays on the record player, signaling Jack's presence. Rose puts on her glasses and looks down the hall to Jack's radio room. The door is open, but the room looks empty.

We hear Starr's laughter. Rose starts toward her room, but stops when she hears Jack's voice. Rose's POV: Starr stands against her dresser, holding a bottle behind her back - a tease game. Jack reaches around her, trying to get at it. She pushes him away - but it's an erotic game. She bites at his finger - part passion, part tease, part real hostility. Jack grabs her, begins kissing her neck; she responds, kissing him back. Rose stands frozen, looking on in horror.

ON STARR as she catches a glimpse of Rose and pushes Jack away. Jack turns---father and daughter stare at each other for a long moment, then Rose bolts for the door.

144. EXT. LAS VEGAS STREET - DAY

144.

Rose walks down the street, tears stream down her face.

ROSE

(concentrating)

Sequester: s-e-q-u-e-s-t-er.

Xenophobia: x-e-n-o-p-h-o-b-i-a.

145. INT. LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

145.

Rose stands on the stage with six other kids. The SUPERINTENDENT of Clark County Schools speaks.

145. CONT.

145. CONT.

SUPERINTENDENT

And now, I present to you, the
finalists in the 11th Annual Citywide
Las Vegas Spelling Bee Championships!
May the best speller win!

Nervous applause as the CAMERA DOLLIES across the earnest and
proud faces of parents in the audience. Mr. Mosol challenges
the audience to bet in a loud voice.

MR. MOSOL

\$50 says the tall girl in purple
glasses wins.

HEAVY-SET WOMAN

You're on.

JACK stands outside the open back door, watching.

The CAMERA DOLLIES across the faces of the children, ending
on Rose. She is impassive as the audience of proud parents
applaud and flash bulbs explode. Mr. Mosol, Meryl, and
Shelley wave at Rose; she just stares straight ahead.

Scraping chairs, coughs - a nervous hush falls over the
audience. The SPELLING BEE MONITOR moves to the front.

MONITOR

Thank you, Superintendent Knox.
The first word is...chaffeur.

The monitor nods to Rose, the first in line. In the audience
we can see Mr. Mosol trying to make side bets. Rose stands
quietly, not responding. The monitor repeats the word.

MONITOR

Chaffeur.

Rose's voice is flat, unemotional, automatic.

ROSE

Chaffeur. C-h-a-f-f-e-u-r.

MONITOR

That's correct.

Mr. Mosol beams, nods triumphantly to his betting opponent.

MONITOR

Calliope.

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS, compressing spelling, ending with
Rose and two other kids left on the stage.

145. CONT.

2ND BOY CONTESTANT

145. CONT.

Loquacious. L-o-q-u-a-t-i-o-u-s.

MONITOR

I'm sorry. That's misspelled.

The boy leaves the stage. Only Rose and one other contestant remain.

MONITER

Sarcophagus.

BOY FINALIST

S-a-r-c-o-p-h-a-g-u-s.

DISSOLVE ON CLOCK FACE FROM 4:15 to 4:45, SUPERIMPOSED ON A SERIES OF DISSOLVES: ROSE AND THE BOY FINALIST SPELLING.

MONITOR

Chaparral.

ROSE

Chaparral. C-h-a-p-a-r-r-a-l.

ROSE'S POV: SHE SPOTS JACK AT THE BACK OF THE GYM.

MONITOR

Mensch.

BOY FINALIST

M-e-n-c-h-e.

MONITOR

That's incorrect.

(to Rose)

Mensch.

Rose is flustered, her concentration gone since seeing Jack.

ROSE

Would you repeat the word, please?

MONITOR

Mensch.

Long pause. Rose's face is blank. Panic is setting in.
REACTION SHOT ON Mr. Mosol who spells the word to himself.

ROSE

Mensch.

Long pause. The audience senses that something is wrong.
Rose clears her throat. She looks away from Jack to Mr.
Mosol - and begins to spell.

145 CONT.

ROSE

145 CONT.

M-e-n-s-c-h.

MONITOR

That's correct.

Rose stands alone on the stage as the audience applauds. She looks uncomfortable, self-conscious. Mr. Mosol, Meryl, and Shelley cheer wildly. Rose finally smiles.

Jack slips out the back door.

146. EXT. LAS VEGAS HIGH SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

146.

Jack walks alone. His expression is strangely wooden, immobile. We continue to hear applause from the gymnasium.

P.A. SYSTEM

I present the 11th Annual Citywide
Las Vegas 8th Grade Spelling Bee
Championship Blue Ribbon to
Rosalee Chismore!

On Jack's face: a look that might be pride.

147. EXT. DESERT - DAY

147.

Rose walks alone through a silent, barren, empty landscape. She sits down and stares across the desert, beautiful in the soft late afternoon light. She begins to cry.

148. INT. NED'S FURNITURE STORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

148.*

HIGH ANGLE SHOT ON ROSE as she sits motionless on the living room sofa, drained. SILENCE. She stares vacantly at her surroundings. Her expression is wooden, immobile.

CAMERA PULLS BACK SLOWLY revealing more of Lily's living room - the coffee table, matched set of chairs, cheap rug. The SHOT GETS WIDER, SOUND COMES UP, and SWELLS IN VOLUME - a man crosses the living room pushing a washing machine. It dawns on us that Rose is not at home, but sitting in the FURNITURE STORE display room.

Rose gets up as the CAMERA PANS with her through the home furnishings department. She squints out the store window, barely able to make out her house across the lot and Jack's pickup parked out front.

148. CONTINUED

148.CON

Rose puts on her glasses. LONG LENS ANGLE ON THE CHISMORE PORCH. Jack installs a weathervane, with a barometer attached. Two large floodlamps point into the yard.

149. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DAY

149.

Dee Ann and Barbara Jo string a banner - "Happy Divorce, Starr." Starr comes out of her room, very drunk, lost.

STARR

Where's Rose? I want to talk to Rose.

The girls don't know. Starr wanders back to her room.

150. INT. NED'S FURNITURE STORE - DUSK

150.*

Rose's POV on the house as the front door opens and her sisters come out onto the porch. They follow Jack to his pickup. They drive off; Rose takes off running.

151. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DUSK

151.

Rose runs across the living room, down the hall. Billie Holiday sings "Ain't Nobody's Business If I Do."

152. INT. CHISMORE KITCHEN - DUSK

152.

Rose quickly packs a suitcase with of mushroom soup, water, crackers, canned peaches, and flashlight. She glances over her shoulder often, afraid she'll be caught.

153. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - DUSK

153.

Rose throws her Red Cross nursing book, Wonder Woman pajamas, stamp collection, the photos of Ava Gardner and her grandmother, and assorted clothing into the suitcase.

She leaves a note: "Dear Dee Ann and Barbara Jo: Water, soup, and peaches are in the closet in case something happens. I'm going to see Grandma. Love, Rose."

*

154. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - DUSK

154.

Starr stands there as Rose drags the suitcase into the room. For the first time, Starr is not beautiful, her face swollen from drink and tears.

STARR

Hi, honey.

Rose doesn't answer, won't look at Starr.

STARR

Don't be mad at me, honey. It wasn't what you thought, sweetheart, we were just kidding around...Please, I feel so bad...

Starr begins to cry. She tries to put her arm around Rose, but Rose pulls away.

ROSE

Tell mamma I went to Grandma's.

Rose hurries across the living room. Starr stuffs a twenty dollar bill in Rose's jeans pocket.

STARR

I'm sorry, honey. Starr messes everything up.

Rose opens the door: LILY, JACK, AND THE GIRLS STAND ON THE PORCH, ABOUT TO ENTER. Lily stares at Rose's suitcase.

LILY

Where are you going with that suitcase?

Rose looks down at the floor. Lily looks at Jack - he avoids her eyes.

ROSE

I don't want to live here anymore.
I want to go to Grandma's.

Lily takes Rose's suitcase, moves into the living room.

LILY

Go to your room, girls.

Dee Ann and Barbara Jo leave.

LILY

What do you mean you don't want to live here? What makes you say such a terrible thing, Rose Chismore?

154. CONT.

154. CONT.

Rose looks at Jack, then at Starr. Long, tense moment as she deliberates, weighing revenge against her own guilty feelings, hurting her mother, Starr. She doesn't answer.

JACK

She's just excited. She won the spelling bee this afternoon.

LILY

What spelling bee?

JACK

The district finals. She's the best speller in Las Vegas.

LILY

That's wonderful, honey - but it's no reason to run away.

Rose looks at the floor. Lily tries to think...

LILY

It's not because of the other day, is it, honey? When you made daddy mad?

ROSE

(staring at Jack)

That's not why.

LILY

Then why?

Rose doesn't answer; Lily starts to go through her suitcase.

JACK

Every kid runs away. It's just - life. Don't get worked up about it and spoil tonight for everybody. It's not everyday you get to see an A-bomb go off. It's...it's history.

LILY

My mushroom soup! What are you doing with my mushroom soup? Oh, Jack, my little girl's running away! My baby! Why?

STARR

(blurting it out, words slurring)

We had a couple of drinks, Lily. Rose got the wrong idea.

154. CONT.

154. CONT.

Lily looks from Starr and Jack. Her face turns pale, then red with indignation.

LILY

Go to your room, Rose.

Rose runs from the room. Long, silent, moment. Lily can't speak, her face full of pain and disbelief. Jack slips away down the hall TO HIS RADIO ROOM.

LILY

My own sister...after my husband.

We hear RADIO fragments, mostly unintelligible; AEC communications - weather, wind, time, test preparations.

LILY

Thought you were so special with your rich Texan. You're nothing special--- Las Vegas is full of whores. You're probably the only one in Vegas who'll spread her legs for a couple dozen roses.

Starr tries to retreat to her room, but Lily cuts her off.

STARR

(tears pooling)

Who gave you roses? Nobody gave you roses, did they? You hate someone to have a little fun, don't you?

Jack comes back into the living room carrying his RIFLE, a GUN CLEANING KIT, AMMUNITION, and a BOTTLE. He tips the bottle up, takes a long drink, watches.

LILY

I want you out of here. Do you hear me?

STARR

(trying to be dignified)

All right, Lily. I'll pack.

*

Lily is enraged now. She stalks into STARR'S ROOM and begins throwing Starr's clothes and belongings into the LIVING ROOM. She sweeps Starr's cosmetics off the dresser.

CLOSE ANGLE ON ROSE watching from the hallway. She knows an explosion is coming and that she can't stop it. Jack spreads out a clean white cloth on the living room floor, lays his rifle down on it. His movements are precise and deliberate. He pulls back the breech, rubs an oil rag inside the mechanism, then along the shaft. The ritual smells and metallic sounds of gun cleaning seem to calm him.

154. CONT.

154. CONT.

Lily emerges with Starr's suitcase, overflowing with Starr's cosmetics and clothes. She throws them at Starr.

LILY

Get out!

Starr bends down and tries to pick up her things, crying softly. Lily turns on Jack.

LILY

Why?

Jack cleans his rifle, doesn't reply. Lily grabs his bottle.

LILY

You bastard.

ROSE

Momma, don't...momma, please.

Rose comes into the room as Jack heads to the front door.

LILY

Why? Why? How could you do it?
How could you?

JACK

Don't pick a quarrel, pick a banjo
instead.

LILY

You want a child of your own? What
a laugh. How can you have a child?

Lily laughs. Jack turns, grabs Lily and shakes her hard.

JACK

Shutup.

Rose hides potential weapons - the cake knife, ashtrays, etc.

LILY

The big war hero, shooting blanks.

Lily laughs. Jack slaps her hard across the face. Lily tries to hit him back. Rose stands helplessly, watching as her mother is beaten. Starr tries to protect Lily. It's a vicious, drunken, stumbling, swearing, free for all.

154. CONT.

154. CONT.

Dee Ann and Barbara Jo peek into the room as Starr tries to pull Jack off Lily; Jack won't let go - all three adults land in a pile on the floor. Jack has a hand on Lily's throat. Rose looks on in horror. She sees JACK'S RIFLE lying against the sofa. The beating continues. Rose reaches down, grabs the gun, points it at Jack.

ROSE

Stop it! Stop it!

A long moment passes before Jack registers that Rose is pointing a gun at him. He scrambles to his feet. Rose backs up, but keeps the gun on Jack.

JACK

No bullets.

Father and daughter stare at each other down a gun barrel. Rose drops the gun to her side, slumps down on the sofa. Silence. Jack gets up slowly, seeing what he's done. The only sound is the distant squawk of the radio.

JACK

Momma? Momma? Get up, momma.

He reaches out, but is afraid to touch Lily. She tries to sit up. THE DOORBELL RINGS. Starr tries to help Lily; Lily pushes her away. THE DOOR BELL RINGS AGAIN.

JACK

Go away!

Silence, then loud KNOCKING. Rose gets up suddenly and hurries toward the door.

JACK

Get back here!

Rose opens the door and Mr. Mosol and four POKER BUDDIES come into the room, followed by two tall, heavily madeup Vegas SHOWGIRLS. It's the first time we've seen anyone but family members inside the Chismore house.

Mr. Mosol looks at the scattered clothing, the overturned chairs, all the signs of a brawl. Jack glowers at him.

MR. MOSOL

(putting an arm around Rose)

Is everything OK here?

LILY

(fixing herself in a pocket mirror)

We'll be all set in a jiffy, Mr. Mosol.

You're a little early, that's all.

154. CONT.

154. CONT.

Lily's recovery is remarkable, like a prizefighter who somehow always staggers upright before the ten count.

*

MR. MOSOL

How about you, champ? OK?

Rose nods, then scurries around, picking up. Starr smiles vacantly. Rose puts her SUITCASE inside the hall closet.

MR. MOSOL

Hi, Jack. Everything OK?

Jack glares angrily at him, rubs the rifle barrel with a rag. One of Mr. Mosol's poker buddies takes a position beside Jack.

MR. MOSOL

Hey, what kind of gun you got there?
It's a beauty. Look at this rifle,
Nick. What is it, German?

JACK

(nods, mood changing)

Yeah: 41-W Semi-Automatic.

It is a beauty, isn't it?

(opens the breech)

Listen to that. Krauts could make a
weapon, you got to give them that.

Jack hands the rifle to Mr. Mosol, who gives it back to Jack.

MR. MOSOL

It's a beauty, all right.

JACK

(taking Mr. Mosol aside)

Did you tell these people about
tomorrow morning? Do they know?

MR. MOSOL

I put Meryl and Mrs. Mosol on the bus
for Los Angeles tonight, but I didn't
tell anybody why, I swear.

Jack scrutinizes Mr. Mosol's gambler friends.

JACK

I'm set up to monitor everything.
Wind velocity, direction, baro-
metric pressure. If the wind blows
the wrong way, I'll know. If the
Russians try something, I'll hear
it on the shortwave. I even got a
geiger counter from Army Surplus.
The main thing is to keep the morale
up. Can I count on you?

154. CONT.

MR. MOSOL

Sure thing, sure.

Rose's POV: Jack slaps Mr. Mosol on the back. They seem to have become friends.

MR. MOSOL

Jack, Starr, Lily, I've got some friends
I'd like you to meet. Nick the Greek...

NICK THE GREEK and Starr exchange greetings.

MR. MOSOL

Lenny from New York...Fay and Flame
dance at the Flamingo...great artists.

LILY

Hello, Faye...Flame.

Jack nods to Mr. Mosol, heads down the hall, rifle in hand. Mr. Mosol watches him go, then turns back to Rose. She's upset, trying not to show it. His eyes go to the faint yellowing bruise, barely visible, under Rose's eye.

LILY

Don't just stand there, sweetheart,
offer our guests some cake.

ROSE

Would you like some cake?

More people are arriving, mostly night friends of Starr's.

155. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

155.

Jack listens to AEC reports from the test site as he laces up his army boots. He's wearing a brown khaki shirt - the first time we've seen him not wearing white.

RADIO

"Winds aloft, very light, variable
to 40,000, surface calm. Inversion
about 17,000 feet. Conditions ---"

Heavy static wipes out the rest of the report. Jack scribbles down the figures on a clipboard. He whistles "Mademoiselle from Armentieres." He looks up, startled as Mr. Mosol enters the room, closes the door behind him.

MR. MOSOL

If I see another bruise on Rose,
I'm coming after you. I just wanted
you to know. I don't care how many
guns you've got.

Mr. Mosol turns and leaves the room before Jack can reply.

156. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

156.

It's beginning to look like a real party. Starr cuts the cake ("HAPPY DIVORCE STARR" has been written in icing across the top.) She's the center of male attention again, laughing, flirting with Nick the Greek.

Rose stays apart from the festivities. Mr. Mosol brings Rose a piece of cake, tries to cheer her up.

MR. MOSOL

1st place in District! Boy, you're something! You might win State!

ROSE'S POV as Jack comes into the room, clipboard and Encyclopedia Britannica in one hand, rifle in the other. Everyone eats cake, drinks punch. He surveys the room, refers to the Encyclopedia.

*

JACK

We've got a problem with bats here, so If anyone would like to help me out, I sure would appreciate it. Bats have teeth - big, white teeth - and they can bite and have rabies, so I'm only asking for one volunteer.

*

Everyone stares for a long moment - no one volunteers. Jack nods, turns, and strides crisply out the door.

MR. MOSOL

(reassuring Rose)

It's OK.

STARR

Want ice cream on your cake, honey?

Rose shakes her head. She pulls back the window curtains and looks out at her father. ROSE'S POV: Jack monitors the weathervane, jots down figures on a clipboard.

LILY

Rose, why don't you play "You Are My Sunshine?" for Faye and Flame. They're entertainers. No? Well, how about "Lovely Coconuts" then?"

Rose nods "no" again.

LILY

(to Faye and Flame)

They sound just like the Andrews Sisters.

157. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - NIGHT

157.

Jack sits down in his porch chair. He pulls back the breech and drives a cartridge into the chamber. We hear the sharp metallic sound of the breech closing. Jack lays the rifle across his lap, ready, in a posture that should remind us of every GI before battle. He lights a cigarette.

Inside, a piano begins to play: "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." Jack stares out into the night, a man protecting his domain. The weathervane changes directions, creaking, pushed by the shifting winds. Starr's voice emerges from the others.

STARR

"When laughing friends deride,
tears I cannot hide..."

The piercing, high-pitched CRY OF THE BATS cuts through the music. Jack cocks his head, listens. Darkness, sounds of flapping bat wings. He slips on his flashlight, moves it along the roof eaves, searching. *

158. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

158.

Rose watches through the window as Jack and starts down the steps, staring up into the porch eaves. A string of firecrackers go off down the street.

STARR

"I, of course reply, when a lovely
flame dies, smoke gets in your eyes..."

Jack spins around quickly, raises his rifle, aims, fires off two rounds. Rose turns from the window.

STARR

(swelling crescendo)

"Smoke/gets/in/your/eyes..."

The room is silent, each man wishing Starr were singing to him. Starr doesn't know what she's done. Rose crosses the room to Mr. Mosol. They hug goodnight.

ROSE

Night, Mr. Mosol.

MR. MOSOL

Night, honey.

ARRIVING PARTYGOER

There's a man out there with a rifle.

158. CONT.

158. CONT.

STARR

Oh, that's Jack.

Rose's POV: Lily is deep in a card game with Mr. Mosol's friends. Behind cards, Lily is Queen, in command.

ROSE

Night, momma.

LILY

Night, honey. Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite! We'll wake you up for the A-bomb, sweetheart.

STARR

Night, Rose.

ROSE

(still cold)

Night.

Mr. Mosol launches into a version of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" as Rose heads down the hall. She grabs her SUITCASE and runs into the bathroom.

159. INT. CHISMORE BATHROOM - NIGHT

159.

Rose closes the door. We hear the piano and Mr. Mosol in the background. Rose tries to open the bathroom window: it won't budge. She pushes with all her might: it finally breaks free. Rose pushes her suitcase out, and climbs out.

160. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - NIGHT

160.

Rose leaps to the ground, grabs her suitcase, and takes off running toward the LUCKY ACES TRAILER COURT. *

She throws pebbles at ROBIN'S WINDOW. His face appears. Rose gestures silently for him to come down.

161. EXT. ROBIN'S TRAILER AT LUCKY ACES COURT - NIGHT

161. *

Rose sits on her suitcase, upset. She wipes her eyes.

ROBIN

What do you want to run away for?

Long moment of silence.

161. CONT.

161. CONT.

ROSE

I just do.

ROBIN

You can't go all the way to Reno
by yourself.

ROSE

Would you come with me?

ROBIN

To Reno? In the middle of the night?
I can't - you can't go out in the
desert like that.

Rose picks up her suitcase and starts off. Robin watches,
angry, guilty, worried.

ROBIN

Hey, wait a minute!

He takes off after her. Rose stops, looks at him hopefully.
Robin grabs her suitcase.

ROBIN

I won't let you go. It's too dangerous.

They tussle and tug. Robin is stronger but Rose is indig-
nant, determined, all 95 pounds tugging fiercely.

ROSE

Let go!

The tug of war continues until Robin's dignity is too wounded
to continue: fighting with a girl. He lets go. Rose
clutches the suitcase tightly. TIGHT CLOSEUP's on both as
they look at each other.

162. EXT. DOWNTOWN LAS VEGAS - NIGHT

162.

Rose and Robin walk through Casino Gulch, downtown Las Vegas.
Flashing neon, slot machines clanging, streets filled with
gamblers, revelers, young soldiers on leave. Rose and Robin,
utterly out of place, weave amongst them, unnoticed.

163. EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - NIGHT

163.

Rose stares in through the darkened window of the bus
station. It's closed.

164. EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

164. *

Rose and Robin run across the station platform, past small groups of soldiers waiting for the next train. A young soldier says goodbye to his sweetheart. The mood is wartime melancholy at the end of 48 hour leave. Rose and Robin check the schedule board. The train to Reno has been "Cancelled Until Tomorrow."

164a. EXT. BLACK SECTION OF TOWN - NIGHT

164a.

Rose and Robin cross the tracks and go through a black area of town.

165. SCENE OMITTED

165. *

166. EXT. HIGHWAY ON EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

166.

Rose and Robin emerge from the moonlit desert onto a highway at the edge of town. They walk past the Las Vegas City Limits sign - "population 13,553" - and sit down on the suitcase to rest. A huge sign says, "WELCOME TO LAS VEGAS!" Robin throws pebbles at it.

ROBIN

When we get to your grandma's, I'll call my mom.

ROSE

You can go back if you want to. Nobody's stopping you.

ROBIN

Have you ever heard of "the one-eyed killer?"

Rose shakes her head, "no."

ROBIN

Well, I can't leave you out here alone. It's too dangerous.

Robin looks at Rose hopefully. Beat.

ROBIN

He picks up hitchhikers and then he murders them. All they know is, he's got one eye.

ROSE

I'm not going home.

ROBIN

Jeez!

166. CONT.

166. CONT.

Robin gets up and leaps at the "Welcome to Las Vegas" sign in frustration. He manages to touch the frame of the billboard. Rose tries to think of something nice to say.

ROSE

Boy, you can really jump.

It's the best thing she could say. Robin smiles, flattered. A battered truck approaches; Rose sticks out her thumb, the truck brakes. We hear bleating sheep, black noses poke through the truck slats. Rose and Robin run to the truck.

167. INT. SHEEP TRUCK DRIVING - NIGHT

167.

A rough and wind-burned SHEEP RANCHER drives in silence. Rose sits in the middle, staring straight ahead. The rancher reaches over and switches on the radio. "Marshmallow World" plays.

168. EXT. HIGHWAY NEAR TEST SITE - NIGHT

168.

A police and military roadblock ahead stops all traffic.

DRIVER (SHEEP RANCHER)

Goddammit.

Cars are turning around and heading back to Las Vegas. An AEC SECURITY OFFICER comes to the window.

AEC OFFICER

Road's closed 'til morning.

DRIVER (SHEEP RANCHER)

Christ.

The driver turns the pickup around and heads back toward town. Rose stares ahead at the highway leading back home, then looks back at the roadblock, then out the window at the desert blackness.

ROSE

Let me out.

DRIVER (SHEEP RANCHER)

What?

ROSE

I want to get out.

DRIVER (SHEEP RANCHER)

(pulling to the side)

OK.

168. CONT.

168. CONT.

ROBIN

You can't get out here!

DRIVER (SHEEP RANCHER)

He's right.

ROSE

I'm not going back home.

She gets out. Robin stays in the car.

ROBIN

I'm not staying out there all night.
If you want to, that's your business.

ROSE

Go back then, see if I care. You
didn't want to come with me anyway.

Rose is very scared. She grabs her suitcase, hesitates,
hoping for another tug of war. Robin doesn't move. ON the
driver as he turns and stares: he has only one eye.

ROBIN

Go on, stay, see if I care.

He slams the door shut. Hope drains out of Rose's face as
she watches the truck pull away. Suddenly it brakes to a
stop. Robin gets out angrily, gives Rose a nasty look, kicks
at the asphalt as their ride drives away.

ROBIN

Darnnit, Rose!

The truck taillights grow smaller and dimmer, disappearing
down the highway. Silence. Reality sinks in.

ROBIN

Now what?

ROSE

Wait 'til they open the road.
(small voice)
Are you mad?

ROBIN

They won't open it 'til morning. What
do you think?
(car lights approach)
C'mon.

He starts off into the desert. Rose looks out into the vast
darkness. She doesn't move. A coyote HOWLS.

168. CONT.

168. CONT.

ROSE

Let's stay by the highway.

ROBIN

They'll see us. You want to get caught? C'mon, let's go.

ROSE

Not that way, that's the bombing range.

ROBIN

(impatient, authoritatively)
It is not: that's the bombing range
on the other side.

ROSE

Are you sure?

ROBIN

Yeah, I'm sure.

They walk into the dark and silent desert.

169. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - NIGHT

169.

Jack sits on the porch staring into the night. The wind has picked up, swirling - the weathervane spins around crazily. Jack gets up and heads back into the house.

170. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

170.

Jack scans the room. Lily plays cards with Mr. Mosol's gambler friends. Starr flirts with Jimmy the Greek, Dee Ann and Barbara Jo are curled up asleep on the couch.

JACK

Where's Rose?

LILY

She went to bed, daddy.

Jack heads down the hall.

171. INT. GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

171.

Jack enters the girls' room. It's foreign territory: he looks out of place. Rose's bed is empty.

Jack looks through Rose's things: the photo of Starr, a clipped out Norman Rockwell, Saturday Evening Post portrait of a happy American family, Rose's note to her sister's saying she's going to grandma's.

172. INT. CHISMORE BATHROOM - NIGHT

172.

Jack opens the BATHROOM DOOR, stares at the open window, the curtain billowing gently in the night breeze.

173. EXT. DESERT NEAR TEST SITE - NIGHT

173.

Rose and Robin walk into the dark, silent desert, passing a sign that says, "Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range. DANGER!" They don't see the warning and continue out into the desert.

ROBIN

Far enough, I guess.

They sit down on the bare, hard-packed desert ground. DESERT SILENCE. Not a sound. They look around, uncomfortable. The night sky is clear and star-studded. Their breath condenses in small clouds. It's cold. Robin looks around.

ROBIN

It's going to be cold.

ROSE

I brought a blanket.

CUT TO:

174. INT. JACK'S PICKUP - NIGHT

174.

Jack drives hard, passes a sign, "RENO, 380 miles." His foot is pressed to the gas pedal. The pickup rattles and whines.

CUT TO:

175. EXT. DESERT NEAR TEST SITE - NIGHT

175.

Rose and Robin sit quietly, uneasily.

ROBIN

There's snakes out here.

ROSE

It's too cold for snakes. Want something to eat? It'll perk you up. Geez, I sound like my mom.

Robin nods; Rose rummages in the suitcase, searching for the food she packed away. She flicks on a flashlight and finds crackers, tuna, pears, mushroom soup and a can opener.

175. CONT.

ROSE

It'll go off right over there, on the other side of those mountains.

ROBIN

No, it's not, it's over that way.

ROSE

Well, it's a long ways away.

ROBIN

We'll probably be asleep when it goes off. Too bad we'll be about the only ones to miss it. My mom was going to wake me up early. She was going to have hot chocolate and donuts and everything. It's supposed to be a 100 times bigger than Hiroshima.

Rose opens a can of mushroom soup.

ROSE

Maybe that roadblock and everything is just a drill, like at school. Maybe it won't be tomorrow at all. Maybe you'd have gotten up for nothing. That's what I think. Just dip the tuna into the mushroom soup. See? It's good.

They eat silently for a moment.

ROBIN

Your dad's going to be mad.

Silence. Rose wipes at the corner of her eyes.

ROSE

(solemnly; a life vow)

If I have kids, I won't ever hit them.

They're silent for a moment.

ROSE

The soldiers at the station, they're going to Korea, aren't they?

Robin nods.

ROSE

I saw newspaper clippings in my dad's drawer once. He won a dance contest, a long time ago.

175. CONT.

175. CONT.

175. CONT.

ROBIN

My dad tried out for the St. Louis Cardinals.

She fiddles nervously with the flashlight.

ROSE

Will you come and visit me at my grandma's sometimes?

ROBIN

You're not going to live there, are you? I mean, all the time?

Rose shines the light into the desert, surveying the terrain around their campsite.

ROSE

I don't know.

ROBIN

You better turn that light off, they'll see it.

Rose turns off the light. It's very dark and silent.

ROSE

I'm glad you're here. I'd be really scared if you weren't.

Rose leans close to Robin. A beat.

ROBIN

I lied about the one-eyed killer. They caught him already.

Rose shivers; Robin puts his arm around her. Quiet moment.

ROSE

Anybody else would have gone back to Las Vegas and left me out here. You're probably the only boy in 5th Street School that wouldn't.

Rose snuggles close to Robin. They attempt their first kiss, clumsy, self-conscious, tender: real, not cute.

175.CONT.

175. CONT.

When they break off the kiss, we can hear their breathing, as much from nervousness as passion. Rose leans her head on Robin's shoulder, two huddled figures in the desert. Silence.

They lie down, pull the blanket over them. Robin puts his arm around Rose. They lie quietly. The wind begins to blow, swirling around them, spraying sand.

CUT TO:

Car lights stop on the highway. Doors open and flashlights pan the darkness. We hear a SQUAWKING radio, unintelligible, piercing the desert silence. Another set of lights pull up and stop, more flashlights sweep across the desert. Rose sits up to look, Robin pulls her back.

ROBIN

Get down.

He throws his arm over Rose's shoulders protectively. Several moments pass before we hear the rhythmic, whapping blades of a low flying HELICOPTER. A searchlight sweeps the desert floor methodically.

CLOSE ON Rose, her eyes shut tight, face frozen with fear as the bright light of the helicopter sweeps across her face.

Rose gets up and begins to run, Robin takes off after her. The helicopter search light bathes them in hot, blinding light. Like a rabbit caught in headlights, she tries to change directions but can't elude the blinding light. The helicopter swoops lower, the sound of slapping blades becomes deafening, the wind blowing Rose's hair and whirling dry desert brush in a machine-made dust devil. Her glasses fly off - she runs wildly, blindly.

Headlights bounce across the desert, hot white eyes in the darkness, converging on Rose. Trapped, she falls to the ground, covers her head with her hands. The beam of light from the sky holds steady; Rose lies motionless in the circle of light, pinned, like an exotic insect in a display case. It begins to rain.

176. INT. JACK'S PICKUP - NIGHT

176.

SHOT THROUGH the rain-spattered windshield, slapping wipers, as Jack closes on a knot of AEC security cars parked by the side of the road. It's pouring rain now. Rose, soaked, her hair stringy; is being led to one of the cars by an AEC OFFICER. A SECOND OFFICER escorts Robin.

177. EXT. HIGHWAY NEAR TEST SITE - NIGHT

177.

Jack jumps out of the pickup and runs through the pouring rain toward Rose and the AEC OFFICER. CAMERA STAYS IN LONGSHOT: we see Jack gesturing but we can't hear the conversation over the pounding rain.

The CAMERA MOVES CLOSER. They shout over the downpour.

AEC OFFICER

I have to get clearance for you
to take custody!

JACK

(angry)

She's 13 years old, she weighs 95
pounds, she's an A-student. She's
the best speller in 5th Street school.
Why don't you guys go fight the
Communists, instead of picking on 13
year old girls?

ROSE

I want to go to my grandma's.

The rain pours down harder. Jack glares at Robin.

JACK

Did he bother you out there, try
to touch you or anything?

Rose pulls away from Jack; Jack yells at the officer.

JACK

She's the best speller in the state
of Nevada! She won the district
spelling bee!

AEC OFFICER

Come on, get in, we'll settle this
inside.

Rose is shivering, miserable. She doesn't want to get in.

ROSE

My glasses are out there.

JACK

(blaming the officer)

Her glasses are out there!

Jack stares out into the vast desert. A beat. He takes off running with a limping skip gait into the desert.

177. CONT.

177. CONT.

AEC OFFICER

Hey! You can't go out there!
Stop!

Jack doesn't stop. The officer runs to his car, reaches into the front seat and comes out with a rifle. He aims it out into the desert, toward Jack.

AEC OFFICER

Halt!

Rose lurches at him and deflects the rifle. It discharges into the ground.

AEC OFFICER

What do you think you're doing!?

Rose is too scared to answer, on the verge of tears.

AEC OFFICER

I wasn't going to shoot your father,
honey. It was a warning shot -
for his own good.

(irritably)

C'mon, get in.

*

178. INT. AEC CAR - NIGHT

178.

Rose and Robin sit in the back seat, Rose squinting out the window into the darkness. Rain drums hard against the roof.

AEC OFFICER

We're cutting it close...

He glances nervously at his watch - 2:55. He taps the steering wheel, then leans hard on the horn. Nothing. He flicks the headlights off and on, illuminating the desert. Still nothing. He glances nervously at his partner.

Rose and Robin slide their hands across the seat. Their hands touch, squeeze, hold.

179. EXT. DESERT NEAR TEST SITE - NIGHT

179.

TIGHT SHOT. A beam of light pans through sheets of pounding rain, across rocks, brush, cactus, sand. The light passes

179. CONT.

179. CONT.

something that might be the frames, then pans back and holds:
ROSE'S GLASSES. Jack hands close around them. The rain stops.

180. INT. JACK'S PICKUP - NIGHT

180.

Jack turns the ignition key; the engine turns over, starts.

OFFICER

Drive straight through, understand?
Get the hell out of here.

181. EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

181.

Jack drives fast, Rose and Robin sit quietly. The pickup
rumbles and whines.

182. EXT. CHISMORE HOUSE - NIGHT

182.

The pickup pulls up and Jack gets out. He glares at Robin as
he waits for Rose to come around.

JACK

I thought you had some sense.

He takes Rose by the arm and leads her to the house. She
turns back to look at Robin. Their eyes meet - he waves.

183. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

183.

Jack and Rose enter, dripping wet, muddy, exhausted. Mr.
Mosol stops plinking out a melancholy tune on the piano.
Lily rushes to embrace Rose.

LILY

Thank God.

She says nothing more, no proverbs, homilies, chastisements.
Starr's POV on Rose. The Goddess and the Girl look at each
other for a long moment. Starr knows by instinct that
something important has happened to Rose. She leaves Nick
the Greek's side and goes to Rose. They embrace tightly, and
hold on. Starr leads Rose away.

STARR

C'mon, honey.

Relief at Rose's return gives the party new life. Mr. Mosol
returns to the piano. Jack heads out to the radio room.

184. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

184. *

Jack takes Rose's glasses out of his pocket and studies them. They're muddy and scratched. He sticks them in his pocket, and begins to pace back and forth. The AEC countdown has begun, but Jack pays no attention to it. CLOSE ON his face: he's crying. Jack packs a duffle bag.

185. INT. CHISMORE BATHROOM - NIGHT

185.

Starr soaps Rose's back. We can hear party noises.

STARR

Isn't Nick handsome?

A knock at the door.

NICK O.S.

The night is young. Are you going to spend it in the bathroom?

STARR

Rose and I are having a talk.

NICK O.S.

How can I get anywhere with you if you're inside the bathroom all night? It makes it tough on a guy.

Starr loves to be courted, laughs. It's Starr's free, lilting, infectious laugh. Rose smiles to hear it.

STARR

Keep your shirt on, will you? I'll be out in a minute.

ROSE

Go on.

Starr gives Rose a kiss and hurries out.

186. SCENE OMITTED

186. *

187. INT. CHISMORE HALLWAY - NIGHT

187.

Rose steps into the hallway. The party is still going, Starr and Nick the Greek waltz around the living room. Starr is in love again, radiant, beautiful. Rose smiles.

187. CONT.

187. CONT.

JACK O.S.

Rose? Would you come here a minute?

188. INT. RADIO ROOM - NIGHT

188.

Rose walks into the radio room.

RADIO

"We've reached full power hold. It's
F minus 160 seconds. Put on goggles
or turn away."

They stand on opposite sides of the small room. Silence
except for the radio. Rose notices the duffle bag.

RADIO

"F-minus 150 seconds."

We can hear people singing "Goodnight, Irene." Jack finally
reaches into his pocket, pulls out Rose's glasses. He fogs
them with his breath, rubs them clean with his shirt, and
gives Rose her glasses back.

ROSE

Thanks.

JACK

Thanks for fixing the radio.

RADIO

F-140 seconds. Put on goggles or
turn away.

JACK

Just now, I was
thinking I'm the one that should
go to Reno. You'd all be better off.

RADIO

F-130 seconds. Put on goggles or
turn away.

ROSE

You couldn't go to Reno. You had my
glasses.

JACK

(laughs; then serious)
Well, you've got them now.

RADIO

F minus 120 seconds...

188. CONT.

188. CONT.

A beat. Anyone else would hug, but not Jack and Rose. Jack gets up, walks purposely to the closet, removes a hanger with his station whites. He starts to change out of his combat clothes, into his clean, starched, station whites..

JACK

That was something, wasn't it? Making those AEC guys wait while I looked for your glasses.

Jack laughs; it's genuine. Rose laughs with him.

189. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

189.

Rose comes into the living room. The party is gathered around the piano singing "Goodnight, Irene."

MR. MOSOL

"...Sometimes I get a great notion,
to jump in the river and drown."

(chorus)

"Goodnight, Irene, goodnight, Irene,
I'll see you in my dreams."

Lily continues playing cards. She has a huge pile of chips in front of her. Lily deals quickly.

LILY

I'm winning! Daddy, come look! One more hand. Keep playing, keep playing.

Lily hurries into the kitchen.

RADIO

F minus 80 seconds.

190. INT. CHISMORE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

190.

Lily re-enters with cups of cocoa on a tray. She goes to Barbara Jo and Dee Ann who sleep on the sofa in pajamas.

LILY

Rise and shine! A-bomb time!
Hot cocoa!

She waves the aroma of the hot chocolate under their noses. The girls force their eyes open.

191. EXT. CHISMORE PORCH - PREDAWN

191.

It's still dark, but the faintest violet light shows in the east. People are beginning to come out onto the porch - Jack

carries Barbara Jo in his arms. Lily, Dee Ann, and Starr follow. They stare across the parking lot.

Lily serves hot chocolate to the girls, makes sure they are buttoned up against the cold. Across the street, other families have gathered on their porches, drinking coffee, cocoa, and eating donuts. Mr. Mosol, Nick the Greek, and people from the party stand in the front yard, all facing the same direction.

RADIO

F minus 40 seconds.

Rose comes out onto the porch, joins the family. She stands motionless and silent next to Starr, squinting across the parking lot to the test site north of town. WIDESHOT: they all stand watching, waiting.

Rose cleans her glasses quickly, puts them back on. She can see clearly now across the lot to the horizon. The CAMERA SHOOTs through her frames. Long beat, then a bright flash of glaring blue-white light illuminates their faces. Rose covers her eyes, then opens them. Rose's POV: the light fades and a swirling cloud rears higher and higher in the dawn sky, dwarfing the mountains and fanning out into a multi-colored mushroom cloud that towers over the Sears & Roebuck parking lot and store.

BARBARA JO

It's beautiful.

CLOSE ON Lily as she stares, speechless. The family stands staring, motionless and silent. Rose draws nearer to Starr, their arms go around each other.

LILY

Well, that's that!

JACK

(glancing at his watch)
Seven minutes til the shock wave.

LILY

There won't be a shock wave, daddy.
We're too far away.

She starts to go in, but no one follows. SILENCE. The mushroom cloud hangs in the air, drifting, changing shape; people slowly wander off. Soon the porch steps and front yard are empty; across the street, families go back inside their houses.

A cab drives up, stops in front of the house. NO SOUND PLAYS as Starr hugs and kisses the girls, pets Tuffy. Lily gives Starr a big hug and a smile. Starr climbs into the cab,

191. CONT.

191. CONT.

waves through the window as it pulls away. Tuffy chases Starr's cab down the street.

Dogs begin to bark in the morning stillness. Barbara Jo, Dee Ann, and Lily go back inside the house. Rose and Jack remain, staring at the cloud. A wind begins to blow, skittering dust and sand across the parking lot. Suddenly, the roaring, rolling SHOCK WAVE HITS. The window behind Rose explodes, dogs bark, alarms ring. Rose stands in awe as power beyond all human dimension surges across the desert sky.

CLOSE SHOT: Jacks' hand searches out Rose's. He touches her hand, squeezes tightly for the briefest instant.

Jack straightens himself, runs a comb through his hair, fixes the crease in his pants, and heads off down the street, a surreal white figure in the soft dawn light.

Rose is alone, staring at the drifting, dissipating mushroom cloud. She removes her dog tags from around her neck and THROWS THE TAGS AS FAR AS SHE CAN INTO THE SEARS ROEBUCK PARKING LOT. Slightly embarrassed, she looks around to see if anyone has seen what she's done. Next door, Mrs. Olawski works in her yard, her back turned to the drifting cloud. Rose remembers the desert primrose seeds. She reaches into her jacket, picks them out, cradling the seeds in her hand. There is something child-like and full of hope in the way that she scatters the seeds in the barren front yard.

The first rays of morning sun hit the porch: Rose stares up at the drifting, dissipating atomic cloud. CAMERA HOLDS on Rose alone on the porch. She adjusts her purple-frames on the bridge of her nose, stares out at her world. FADE OUT.