

"GABY BRIMMER"

An Original Screenplay by

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Based on the life of Gabriela Brimmer

Property of: G. BRIMMER PRODUCTIONS
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Produced by Pinchas Perry

Directed by Luis Mandoki

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TITLES AND CREDITS OVER:

I. INT: MASTER BEDROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY 1947

It's seven o'clock a.m.

Shadows and light spots coming through a window covered by heavy curtains.

It's an atmosphere sequence. What's important are the objects, not the people: Photographs, books, furniture, and every single detail telling us something about the BRIMMER family. MIGUEL and SARI's figures move like shadows between things, even out of focus. They're not our subject. We only see them partially, maybe crossing the frame for an instant, and we also hear them moving around saying something absolutely casual. They are waking up and getting out of bed.

The first thing we see is a picture frame with a black and white photograph hanging on the wall. SARI and MIGUEL BRIMMER, a young Jewish couple, are getting married outdoors in pre-war Vienna. A RABBI blesses them.

Another photograph: MIGUEL BRIMMER and his FATHER, dressed in former Austrian clothes, smiling, surrounded by children.

There are some other family photographs on the wall, but camera does not spot on them.

MIGUEL'S NIGHT TABLE

A table lamp: A Rainer M. Rilke's book: His letters. A German version. There is a pencil on it and a newspaper cut out inside it. Besides the book, there is a glass of water and a watch. MIGUEL's hand picks up the watch and takes it out of frame. MIGUEL sits on the bed's edge. We only see a reference of him. He lifts the glass of water and walks away, crossing the frame.

SARI'S NIGHT TABLE

Beside it, SARI is making an effort to wake up (reference of her). On the night table: a lamp, a medical review, three letters from different countries (at least one of this comes from a foreign health institution), cigarettes, matches and an ash tray with a lot of cigarette butts.

There are two photographs under the glass that covers the night table: 1) A group of JEWISH REFUGEES posing aboard a steam ship. SARI and MIGUEL are among them. 2) MIGUEL stands next to a donkey. Jungle in the background.

SARI'S DRESSER

Through the mirror, we can perceive SARI. She is out of focus, lying on the bed. She sits down.

On the dresser: a portrait of SARI and DAVID, the BRIMMER's son, a blond and smiling child, when he was two years old. Perfumes and make-up implements. A small box showing some jewels inside. Through the mirror, SARI gets out of bed and leaves frame.

END OF TITLES AND CREDITS.

CAMERA CLOSES on two jasmines in a small chinese pot.

SUPERIMPOSED:

MEXICO 1948

DISSOLVE TO:

II. INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY 1947

A large lace veil fills with light. Music increases in presence. This is GABY'S POV a few months after birth. The veil covers the entire crib. Light and music diminish and then are gone as the door which let them in closes.

A white silhouette comes and goes. The veil softens everything. The SILHOUETTE approaches the crib, reaches over it, and pulls the veil aside.

It's a NURSE who wipes the baby's unseen face with a damp cloth. SARI comes up behind her.

SARI
I'm going to try again. Help
me hold her still.

NURSE
Yes, ma'am.

The NURSE lifts GABY and wraps her in a flannel blanket to contain her spastic limbs. She brings her against SARI's breast. SARI holds GABY's head firmly to position her for breast feeding.

CLOSE ON SARI

whose eyes are half closed. Abruptly she winces in pain. She makes an adjustment. There is a moment of inability before SARI cries out and pushes GABY away.

NURSE
It's no use, ma'am. She can't
control herself.

SARI
(very shaken)
Yes. We seemed to be doing
better yesterday and I thought ...

NURSE
I know. But it's no use. I'll
give her the bottle.

SARI
Clean her up and change the
diaper. I'll have the girl
bring you a cup of coffee.

SARI exits. The NURSE has a peculiar expression between pity and satisfaction. She undresses GABY, who still unseen, begins to cry in a strange, stifling voice.

III. INT: DINING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - SAME MORNING

DAVID, of three years of age, is eating breakfast with MIGUEL, who is absorbed in the newspaper. DAVID is actually just playing with his food.

DAVID
I don't want pancakes, I want
cereal.

MIGUEL
Come on, David, eat your food.

A MAID walks in and puts a pot of coffee on the table,
then returning to the kitchen. DAVID starts banging his
spoon against his plate.

DAVID
I want cereal. I don't want
pancakes.

MIGUEL takes DAVID's plate patiently and goes into the
kitchen.

SARI comes downstairs dressed to go out and sits next to
DAVID. She is made up but has obviously been crying.

MIGUEL returns with the same plate of food and puts it
in front of DAVID. He has cut the pancakes into pieces
and added milk.

MIGUEL
Here is your cereal.

DAVID looks at it suspiciously.

MIGUEL
C'mon, eat it. You wanted cereal,
right?

DAVID starts eating his pancakes uncertainly. SARI is
lost in thought.

MIGUEL
Let's not go through the same
melodrama this morning.

SARI
I didn't say a word.

MIGUEL
(kindly)
Sari, this can't go on forever.

SARI
(upset)
Show a little concern. Your
attitude is part of the problem.
Do you think it makes me happy?
I have to try ...

MIGUEL

You have tried. Now you're just
being ridiculous.

DAVID starts clanging his spoon against the pitcher of
orange juice, making a racket in response to his parents
bickering. MIGUEL returns to the newspaper.

SARI

David, stop it!

(to Miguel)

You don't care. As far as you're
concerned everything is fine as
it is.

MIGUEL stands and puts on his jacket. He kisses DAVID
on the head.

DAVID

Why is mommy crying?

MIGUEL stands by SARI who won't look at him. He
caresses her shoulder. She turns, upset and angry.

MONTAGE OF GABY'S MEDICAL TREATMENT AND PHYSICOTHERAPY

The following images are from GABY'S POV without ever
seeing her entirely. They reconstruct the first years
during which enormous effort was spent trying to
rehabilitate her and better her physical control.

SARI's voice is heard OS over the montage:

SARI (OS)

My second child, Gaby, was born
at a Mexico City hospital on
September twelfth, 1947. She
was a beautiful blonde baby with
clear blue eyes, completely normal.
She weighed seven pounds. On
the third day while I was recovering
the first symptoms appeared. The
diagnosis was cerebral palsy.
The doctors said it was a result
of my husband and I having incom-
patible Rh blood types. Our
first child, David, had been born
perfectly healthy. After three
years no one could tell me if the
cerebral lesion had affected Gaby's
intelligence or not.

A A stream of high pressure water hitting GABY's legs.
TWO NURSES hold her still.

B Orthopedic devices fixed onto GABY's legs which
attempt to walk. A DOCTOR and NURSE assist her.

C An X-Ray is taken of GABY's legs.

D Another DOCTOR observes an X-Ray of GABY's thorax.
SARI stands beside him.

E Smoking dry ice is rubbed against GABY's legs. Many
hands hold her down on a marble surface.

F A EUROPEAN DOCTOR attempts to make GABY vocalize with
poor results.

G A DOCTOR looks at an X-Ray of GABY's head and brain.

H Orthopedic devices of many kinds on the legs, torsos
and feet of many children. SARI observes the spectacle
from a window with a NURSE beside her.

GABY amidst the other CHILDREN spots SARI and tries
clumsily to walk toward her.

SARI close.

V. INT: LIVING ROOM AT A FRIEND OF THE BRIMMERS' HOUSE -
NIGHT - 1950

A cocktail party of MARRIED JEWISH IMMIGRANTS of between
thirty and fifty years of age. A dark MEXICAN MAID
serves apple strudel to the GUESTS.

SARI is discovered next to her sister BETTY and
brother-in-law OTTO. OTTO takes a piece of apple
strudel with delight.

OTTO

Don't tell me she made this too?

SARI laughs with the others.

BETTY

Try it with your eyes closed and
you'll see a little fraulein with
golden hair and rosy cheeks.

While the others come closer to try the strudel, BETTY
watches SARI who is smiling. She takes her lightly by
the arm, away from the GROUP.

BETTY

This is how I like to see you,
Sarileyn. You look well. You
need to go out more, have fun,
socialize. Don't tie yourself
down, it's not right.

SARI looks at her SISTER blankly.

CUT TO:

MIGUEL

is talking to an attractive WOMAN on the other side of
the room. He turns to look at SARI who is obviously
quite upset by what BETTY is telling her.

MIGUEL'S POV

BETTY talks emphatically, SARI shakes her head.

CUT TO:

CLOSE - SARI

SARI

Please, Betty, no.

BETTY (OS)

I'm a doctor and your sister and
believe me I'm just trying to
help. She'll never know the
difference between being at home
with a nurse and an institution
... it's not only your life, Sari,
you have another child, and
Michel....

SARI breaks away from her SISTER and edges through the
party to the exit. PEOPLE stare at her, try and stop
her to say hello, but she ignores everyone and makes
her way to the door.

CUT TO:

MIGUEL

sees SARI leaving. He excuses himself quickly and
follows her out the door.

VI. EXT: FRIEND OF THE BRIMMERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

MIGUEL catches up to SARI and stops her in the yard.

MIGUEL

Sari!

VII. INT: BRIMMER HOUSE, BATHROOM AND MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

MIGUEL brushes his teeth in a worn pair of silk pajamas. He watches himself in the mirror. SARI comes up behind him in her nightgown and hugs him, her hands on his shoulders. She is very upset and trying to hold it back.

MIGUEL

Wait a minute.

He stoops to rinse his mouth.

MIGUEL

Did you brush your teeth?

SARI

No, in a minute.

(pause)

Maybe Betty is right, Michel.

MIGUEL

Your sister is pretty persuasive.
Too bad she's so goddamn tactless.

He turns and gives her a brief hug, then kissing her on the forehead before going into the bedroom.

SARI

What if she could learn to talk
over there? She's three years
old ...

MIGUEL grunts dubiously.

SARI

Your pajamas are getting very thin
in the rear.

MIGUEL

I know. And I don't know when
I'll get to buy another pair. The
ones you got me here feel like
sandpaper. Fortunately, no one
sees them but you.

SARI smiles and joins him in bed.

CLOSE ON SARI AND MIGUEL LYING WITH THEIR FACES CLOSE
TOGETHER

SARI kisses MIGUEL softly on the side of the face.

SARI

It worries me. I want you to decide about this. I'm tired of making all the decisions. Betty is going back to San Francisco the day after tomorrow.

MIGUEL

There's nothing to decide, she's staying here. I think Gaby has had enough doctors for a lifetime. We've tried Switzerland, Houston and every quack in Mexico. There's always going to be a better hospital, a great doctor and on and on. Gaby needs emotional care now.

SARI

That sounds very noble. But what if she could learn to talk over there ... ?

MIGUEL

That again. When are you going to learn that that's a fairytale; goddamn it, Sari.

SARI

You look so cute when you're upset.

MIGUEL

I'm not upset.

SARI

Yes you are.

MIGUEL

We aren't going to get rid of our guilt by overcompensating Gaby medically. We're a family, Sari, and Gaby's one of us. We have to accept her for what she is.

SARI

The truth is we have no idea what she is. Or who she is.

MIGUEL

Well, we certainly aren't going to find out if she's way off in Baltimore. Let's be honest about

(MORE)

MIGUEL (contd)

it: Gaby has made our lives so complicated over the last three years that I've grown to think of her as a sore that I'd rather not remember. Unless we start dealing with her as a human being and our daughter, I'll never love her. I don't love Gaby, Sari, and neither do you. I resent her and you feel incredibly guilty. Neither of us has a daughter, we have a problem. If we want to have a daughter then for God's sake let's treat her like a daughter.

SARI

How can we get to know our daughter if she can't communicate with us? That is what this is all about, Michel.

MIGUEL is silent.

VIII. EXT: ROOF, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA, a beautiful girl of Indian origin, hangs diapers on a long clothes line. The Brimmer's house is her third work since she arrived from her distant home town, three months ago. Although she is unexperienced and shy -she has just reached seventeen- and not having studied even junior school, her only weapon to survive in this urban culture is her fine and deep natural intuition.

From the neighboring roof, another MAID, who is washing clothes by hand, looks at her with curiosity.

SARI arrives accompanied by the NURSE, who takes one of the diapers from the line.

NURSE

They're not her size, ma'am,
that's why they give her the
rash ... she should be able to
control herself at three.

The MAID next door observes them.

SARI and the NURSE approach FLORENCIA, leaving the wet diaper on the line.

NURSE (contd)

I'll need a dry diaper in half-
an-hour, Florencia. There's none
left.

FLORENCIA tests a diaper but it's still wet. She takes it to a sink beneath an overhang and tries to squeeze it dry.

The voice of the neighbor MAID surprises her.

MAID

Hey!

FLORENCIA turns.

MAID

You're new around here, aren't you?

FLORENCIA

I started last week.

MAID

Where are you from?

FLORENCIA

Maquixco.

MAID

Maquixco....? That must be far away.
Is your family there?

FLORENCIA

Yes.

FLORENCIA turns around and starts hanging diapers again.

MAID

I also came by myself four years ago.

FLORENCIA tries to hide herself behind the diapers to avoid conversation.

But the MAID moves to another place so she can keep FLORENCIA in sight. They repeat this twice.

MAID

I used to cry all Sunday long during the first year. I had no one to talk to, no place to go, you know, but now I'm gonna get married and work at a food store: just eight hours a day and back home...

The MAID checks there's nobody around and goes to the point.

MAID

Listen... Is it true about the little girl? Why so many diapers?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer.

MAID

They say she doesn't have arms and that her head is backwards.

(quieter)

You know, they're Jews. They don't believe in God.

FLORENCIA walks to the exit with the diaper in her hand.

MAID

Do they treat you well?

FLORENCIA

Yes.

FLORENCIA exits.

The MAID stares after her.

IX. INT: HALL, SECOND FLOOR, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA is studying a floor polishing machine. The door to GABY's room is closed.

FLORENCIA plugs the polishing machine onto the wall, holds it firmly and moves the switch on. The machine drags her around the hall, until it knocks accidentally against GABY's door leaving it ajar. FLORENCIA takes control of the machine without turning it off. She looks inside GABY's bedroom surreptitiously.

FLORENCIA'S POV

The contrasting light barely delineates the NURSE, sitting with GABY in her arms, trying to feed her. She tries to force her to eat, but GABY rejects the spoon by pushing it away with her left foot.

FLORENCIA lets herself be pulled away by the polishing machine.

A moment later, the NURSE exits GABY's room carrying a covered dish of food and a bag of dirty diapers. She passes FLORENCIA on her way downstairs.

FLORENCIA watches her obliquely until she's out of sight. She turns off the floor polisher and goes to GABY's door.

X. INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA enters with fear and curiosity. The atmosphere is heavy in the poorly lit room.

In the semi-darkness opposite the door is a large crib. FLORENCIA approaches quietly. A CHILD's gurgling is heard. She hesitates, then slowly goes directly to the crib. Something moves beneath the sheets.

FLORENCIA looks without moving. Finally, slowly, she pulls the sheet aside. Her face shows amazement as she discovers GABY's body with her eyes. She reaches out hesitantly, leaning over the crib, and takes one of the tiny arms. It's inert. She touches GABY's face tenderly, unable to speak.

A sudden gurgling makes her start, and then smile. She seems to respond to GABY's unseen smile.

GABY's face is SEEN for the first time, smiling; she is a beautiful little girl, blonde with blue eyes.

Together, there is an affectionate meeting of eyes. A moment of silence and intensity. FLORENCIA caresses GABY again, running her hand along her cheek.

XI. INT: LIVING ROOM AND STAIRCASE, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

The NURSE opens the swinging door to the kitchen and looks inside.

NURSE
Florencia?

No answer. She lets the door close and climbs the stairs to the second floor.

NURSE
Florencia?

XII. INT: HALL, SECOND FLOOR, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA closes the door to GABY's room. She takes the handle of the floor polisher and turns it on. It pulls her forward.

The NURSE stops nearby, somewhat suspicious.

NURSE
(over the polisher's noise)
I left the diapers soaking.

FLORENCIA nods without raising her head.

The NURSE looks at the floor around the polishing machine.

NURSE
Don't you know you've got to spread
wax before you polish!

FLORENCIA realizes she has forgotten. She turns off the machine.

The NURSE disapproves her with a gesture and enters GABY's room closing the door behind her.

XIII. INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY VERY CLOSE

The NURSE bends over to adjust the sheets in a perfunctory manner.

XIV. INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

DAVID, five years old, freshly bathed and in pajamas, eats dinner at the kitchen table. FLORENCIA serves him. SARI and MIGUEL are seen through the swinging door having coffee and talking quietly.

The NURSE enters the kitchen, leaves GABY's covered dish on the table and goes out.

FLORENCIA looks at the dish curiously. She opens it with DAVID watching her. GABY's food hasn't been touched. FLORENCIA puts it away in the refrigerator.

DAVID
(whispering)
It's 'cause the toads.

FLORENCIA looks at him intrigued.

DAVID (contd)
(confidentially)
It's 'cause when she was born,
the toads were furious. There
was one that was called I don't
remember how and he would eat anybody
even if he wasn't hungry at all.
Gaby got so scared that she stayed
that way. That's why my mom
doesn't know what to do. 'Cause
Gaby can only get better when the
toads are gone.

DAVID continues eating. FLORENCIA watches him.

XV. INT: FLORENCIA'S ROOM (SERVANT QUARTERS) - NIGHT

Silence. A print on the wall of the Virgin of Guadalupe and two photographs of FLORENCIA's family. By the bed a small night table, lamp, flowers. FLORENCIA listens, sitting on her bed in a nightgown. Then she gets up and leaves the room.

XVI. INT: DINING ROOM AND LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are out. It is quiet and dark. The kitchen light goes on, the door opens, and FLORENCIA comes out, barefoot, in her nightgown.

She listens and waits. Then, hesitant, makes her way to the stairs. She looks up and then back at the door to the street. She goes up silently.

CUT TO:

XVII. MIGUEL AND SARI'S ROOM

MIGUEL and SARI sleep.

CUT TO:

XVIII. GABY'S ROOM

Darkness. Just enough light from the window to distinguish the figure of the NURSE asleep in a bed beside GABY's crib.

GABY seems to sleep. FLORENCIA comes stealthily to the crib and looks at her.

GABY turns -- she's awake. Her eyes meet those of FLORENCIA, who lifts a finger to her lips. She leans to uncover GABY.

GABY watches her.

FLORENCIA turns an instant to observe the NURSE. Then, without hesitating, she takes GABY up into her arms. GABY makes a noise. FLORENCIA puts a finger over the GIRL's lips and goes to the door, watching the sleeping NURSE all the while.

XIX. INT: HALL AND STAIRCASE, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA descends the stairs carrying GABY through the darkness, stepping carefully. She talks very softly as she goes.

FLORENCIA

We'll do like my little sister,
the littlest: I used to take
her to see the pines and the oaks,
and the stones, over there close to
the house. Look, look, I'd say,
do you see the bird in that tree?

XX. KITCHEN

FLORENCIA enters with GABY, still talking softly.

FLORENCIA (contd)

-- my little sister would look
and the bird would fly away.
What color was it, I'd ask? Red,
she'd say; and it made me happy
to know we saw it the same way.

FLORENCIA sits down at the kitchen table with the thermal dish of GABY's food before them.

FLORENCIA (contd)

-- But when my older brother was killed
they sent me here all alone to work --to
the city. And my sister whispered into
my ear: the bus is silver and I looked and
said, no, it's grey. But we didn't have
time to agree any more.

Very naturally, FLORENCIA uncovers the dish and, filling the spoon with food, brings it to GABY's mouth.

But GABY doesn't want to eat. She pushes back at FLORENCIA's arm with her left foot.

FLORENCIA dodges the foot and gently tries again.

GABY laughs at the predicament and again resists with her left foot.

FLORENCIA tries again. But GABY smiles and repeats the game. This time FLORENCIA takes the foot in her hand and shakes it in a gesture of negation. It's a spontaneous, instinctive action.

FLORENCIA
(gently shaking Gaby's
foot)
No, no, no -- you say "no, thank
you". No, thank you.

GABY looks on curiously. Now FLORENCIA makes a nodding gesture with the foot.

FLORENCIA
Or yes, please.
(she repeats the
negative gesture)
No, thank you.
(and the affirmative)
Or yes, please.

GABY smiles. FLORENCIA brings the spoon to GABY's mouth again.

FLORENCIA
Yes, please ... ?

There is no answer, just a searching look from GABY. FLORENCIA removes the spoon.

FLORENCIA
Then you say: no, thank you.

She takes GABY's left foot and makes it negate. Then, standing, she carries her to a canary's cage and removes the covering cloth. GABY looks at the sleeping canary. Abruptly FLORENCIA brings the spoon up against the cage.

FLORENCIA
What do you think, Panchito,
yes, please?

GABY laughs. FLORENCIA watches her and avails the moment to bring the spoon to her mouth.

FLORENCIA
Yes, please?

GABY hesitates. She is twisted by a spasm of excitement as she extends her foot in a nod of affirmation. FLORENCIA, taken aback, waits with the spoon in her hand for the spasm to subside.

It does, and GABY again affirms with her foot. FLORENCIA smiles and brings the spoon to her mouth. GABY eats.

FLORENCIA gives GABY another bite, and then another. GABY eats without complaint. Suddenly they hear something. FLORENCIA turns to the kitchen door to see --

The NURSE watching through the door window. She enters, shocked and angry.

NURSE
How dare you!! What the hell
do you think you're doing?!

The NURSE takes GABY aggressively, leaving FLORENCIA frightened and intimidated.

- XXI. GABY, also disconcerted, cries out loudly. The NURSE leaves the kitchen with GABY in her arms. But GABY cries out again, more loudly, and the NURSE is forced to return while she tries to quiet her. GABY keeps screaming and crying, her body twisted with spasms.
- XXII. The NURSE looks at FLORENCIA with hatred.

NURSE
Look what you've done!

SARI glances through the kitchen door window for an instant before entering. GABY is kicking the NURSE and crying hysterically.

SARI
What're you doing here?! What's
going on?!

NURSE

(bitterly)

The maid took the girl from her
crib while I was asleep. I found
her here.

FLORENCIA is paralyzed.

FLORENCIA

... I just wanted to feed her ...

SARI

You took her out of bed at two
in the morning to feed her?!

MIGUEL enters in his bathrobe. The NURSE looks at
FLORENCIA accusingly, feeling SARI's support.

MIGUEL

What's happening, Sari?

GABY continues crying uncontrollably. It's hard to
hear the talking.

SARI

(to the nurse)

Take her upstairs, Victoria.

GABY continues crying as she is taken out and up the
stairs.

SARI

(to Florencia)

I don't know what your intentions
were, but if it happens again you'll
have to find another job...

While SARI talks to FLORENCIA, MICHEL notices the thermal
dish of GABY's food --it's almost empty.

SARI (contd)

She's just a very sick little girl.
She's not like any other girl...

FLORENCIA is devastated.

SARI turns to leave, but MIGUEL stops her.

MIGUEL

Sari --.

SARI stops and turns back.

MIGUEL

(to Florencia, pointing the plate)
Did she eat all this just now?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer; finally she nods.

SARI looks at the plate, astonished, not knowing what to say, changing her attitude. Her eyes meet MIGUEL's

FLORENCIA remains looking at the floor.

MIGUEL turns again to the plate. He smiles, understanding.

SARI sits down slowly, utterly moved. FLORENCIA, by her side, remains as still as the plate.

XXIII. INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

PENUMBRA

CLOSE ON GABY's face. She is awake but her expressions show no control; they seem random and incomprehensible.

Her small twisted torso is followed down to her hands: fisted inwardly and absolutely immobile, fingers blanched and thin.

STILL CLOSE, MOVING FURTHER DOWN her body to her right leg and foot. There is no movement at all. It is underdeveloped with practically no muscle.

STILL CLOSE WE FINALLY DISCOVER GABY'S LEFT FOOT:

awake, sensitive, feeling its way along the serrated filigree of the sheet. Pulling it outward and back between her toes. All her conscious will showing in the sure movements.

XXIV. EXT: BACK YARD, BRIMMER HOUSE - MORNING

It's a beautiful day. Large trees, heavy with foliage, break us the sunlight.

XXV. INT. EXT.: MIGUEL'S STUDIO/BACK YARD, BRIMMER'S HOUSE - MORNING

SARI's hands guide GABY's left foot along letter of the alphabet drawn on a board.

SARI

(spelling with Gaby)
The g-r-a-s-s i-s g-r-e-e-n.

On its own, GABY's foot repeats the sentence, spelling it out.

SARI
 (reading as Gaby spells)
 T-h-e g-r-a-s-s i-s g-r-e-e-n
 -- very good, Gaby.

SARI is full of excitement and enthusiasm. Her anxiety has found a way, her guilt has turned into a make shift teaching activity.

A dark hand writes laboriously in large clumsy letters:
 "The grass is gren". PULL BACK TO REVEAL FLORENCIA
 concentrating as she also learns to write.

SARI
 Let's see, Florencia.
 (she takes the paper)
 Good, except green has two E's.

SARI smiles. From a distance the THREE WOMEN make
 an island of color in the garden.

SARI (OS)
 What color are my eyes?

CLOSE ON SARI. GABY looks at her intently; FLORENCIA
 as well.

GABY's foot moves along the letter on the board.
 FLORENCIA reads:

FLORENCIA
 (reading)
 B-L-U-E.

SARI watches FLORENCIA, smiling at her effort.

SARI
 Good, very good Flor! You're really
 improving!... and you Poupée...
 (She takes GABY's left foot and holds it)
 (To Florencia)
 She's doing incredibly well for her
 age... I'm sure she can learn as much
 as any child.
 (To Gaby)
 I'm absolutely sure you can, my love...

GABY stares at SARI as if she were trying to understand the
 meaning of her Mother's enthusiasm.

FLORENCIA smiles influenced by SARI's contagious optimism.

XXVI. INT: KINDERGARTEN, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

CHILDREN'S fingers covered with bright colored paint draw on large pieces of paper. PULL BACK TO REVEAL CHILDREN, three to five years old, all of them handicapped. Some have polio, others are mongoloid, others have cerebral palsy. As we move through them WE DISCOVER GABY, the most handicapped of all, seated against FLORENCIA and drawing with her foot covered in yellow paint. Shouting, laughter, the KIDS play with their paints.

The TEACHER goes from one CHILD to the next looking at their drawings. She stops at GABY and FLORENCIA.

TEACHER

That's pretty ... what is it?

FLORENCIA

It's a garden with the sun shining.
But she made the grass red.

GABY smiles proudly.

CLOSE ON THE DRAWING: A large yellow ball in a maelstrom of red.

XXVII. INT. EXT.: MIGUEL'S STUDIO/GARDEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Between bushes and flowers, we see GABY and FLORENCIA swinging themselves slightly, each one in a different swing. It's late and it's a gray afternoon. FLORENCIA has a racket in her hands.

We see part of GABY's body going back and forth strapped to the swing.

TITLE IN BLACK: FOURTEEN YEARS LATER

XXVIII. INT. EXT.: CLASSROOM/PLAYGROUND, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY
1964

CLOSE ON GABY. From silence begins a murmuring mixed with the sound of an electric typewriter. GABY is discovered in a wheelchair next to FLORENCIA in a class for handicapped teenagers. FLORENCIA reads quietly from a text written on the blackboard, while GABY writes it on an electric typewriter with her left foot. We hear laughter and the voices of other STUDENTS.

THE OTHER STUDENTS

An older version of the previous scene; all handicapped with diverse problems. Some write down the dictation, others throw papers, another sleeps on his textbook, most of them talk and pay little attention.

The TEACHER, a robust woman with a kind face, reads at her desk, accustomed to everything.

CUT TO:

The school bell rings for recess. GABY still hasn't finished the dictation. In the bustle of the other STUDENTS leaving we see GABY and FLORENCIA still at work. CARLOS, a sharp faced young man, leaves the class on crutches followed by his CRONIES.

CARLOS
(to Gaby and Florencia)
See if you can finish that by
next year.

Laughter.

CUT TO:

The classroom is empty except for GABY and FLORENCIA. FLORENCIA continues reading the blackboard text; GABY writes slowly.

FLORENCIA
(reading slowly)
... and it was the Malinche who ...

GABY turns off the machine and pushes herself back with her foot.

FLORENCIA
We have to finish this, Gaby.
The exam is coming.

GABY doesn't respond.

FLORENCIA doesn't know what to do. Finally, she copies the rest of the text herself, writing carefully.

CLOSE ON GABY: upset, angry, frustrated.

EXT: REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

The STUDENTS come out at the end of the day. TWO GROUPS form around the exit while they wait to be picked up.

In one of the groups is FERNANDO, a boy GABY's age in a motorized wheelchair. He has cerebral palsy too, but is able to move his hands and upper body. He tells a story to the OTHERS. It's evident that he's the center of the GROUP.

The other GROUP forms around CARLOS.

GABY exits pushed by FLORENCIA. They wait for SARI on the sidewalk. No one approaches them and they're out of both GROUPS.

The BRIMMER's Mercedes Benz parks by them and they get in. SARI drives.

INT: MERCEDES BENZ - DAY

GABY is in the back seat with FLORENCIA. The Mercedes pulls up in front of a high school.

GABY'S POV - THROUGH THE CAR WINDOW:

DAVID, now eighteen, talks and flirts with an ATTRACTIVE GIRL. He sees the car and parts company with the GIRL, waving to a few FRIENDS as he approaches. He gets in front, beside SARI, with a pile of books and a tennis racket.

DAVID
Hey, Gaby, Flor. Mom, I need
the car tonight.

INT: BRIMMER HOUSE, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

MIGUEL, SARI, DAVID, FLORENCIA and GABY are seated at the table eating dinner. FLORENCIA feeds GABY very naturally. SARI has only coffee and smokes very nervously.

MIGUEL
Sarileyn, please, blow the smoke
the other way.

SARI does so.

SARI
(to David)
Have them come over here.

DAVID
They were here last week, Mom.
C'mon.

SARI
I don't care. You've been out
all week. It's the least you
can do to stay home one night of
the week.

DAVID
I had basketball practice yesterday.

SARI

Until eleven thirty? You stay
home tonight and that's final.

DAVID sighs. FLORENCIA reads what GABY spells on the
alphabet board.

FLORENCIA

(reading)

L-e-t h-i-m g-o o-u-t. I d-o-n-t
c-a-r-e ...

SARI

That's not the point -- I think
we should spend at least one
night a week together.

MIGUEL

Gaby's right. Nobody wants
forced company.

DAVID

Now I'm the bad guy.

SARI

Just stay home. One night a
week can't kill you.

DAVID

(fed up)

God! Can't I live my own life
around here! You'd think I was
still in grade school!

He leaves the table in anger.

SARI

Who the hell does he think he is?

No one answers.

The eating continues in awkward silence.

INT: GABY'S ROOM AND BATHROOM - MORNING 1964

GABY'S POV

FLORENCIA bathes GABY with a sponge in a well -practiced
tender and careful ritual, as if she were playing with
a doll, talking freely, feeling at ease.

GABY's naked body is stiff and only moves in spasms.

FLORENCIA

I know how you feel. It's like when my aunt took me from the bus station to that first house and went back to our home town leaving me alone in a humid room, in the cellar.

FLORENCIA brushes GABY's teeth holding her mouth opened with one hand and washing with the other.

FLORENCIA

You just pray and the Virgin of Guadalupe will always look after you.

FLORENCIA carries GABY's naked body to the bedroom which is darker and only lit by the morning sun through venetian blinds. She lays her on a bed and takes a moment to assemble her wardrobe from a nearby dresser.

FLORENCIA sits beside GABY and, holding her foot, tries to put on a sock.

GABY resists violently, protesting loudly and kicking away FLORENCIA's hand.

FLORENCIA

Gaby, you have to get dressed.

FLORENCIA tries to put a shirt on GABY but GABY writhes spasmodically and kicks her away. FLORENCIA stops, not knowing what to do.

PULL BACK to reveal SARI, watching from the doorway.

SARI

What's the matter with her?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer for an instant.

FLORENCIA

Nothing, mummy, everything's alright.

GABY reacts denying.

SARI

What's wrong poupée? Do you feel well?

GABY says no with her foot.

SARI

(To FLORENCIA)

Did you take her temperature?

FLORENCIA
Yes, she's fine.

SARI
What's the trouble, Gabylein?

SARI sits down on the bed, by GABY's side.

SARI
Is it school?

FLORENCIA
She says she doesn't want to go to school any more.

SARI
That's O.K. You can stay home. One day or two won't make any difference.

FLORENCIA
It's not only that. She doesn't want to do anything.

SARI
(To GABY)
Are you annoyed with somebody....?
(Pause)
Was it something we said in the car?
I know I sometimes get out of my mind,
every now and then I find myself expecting
something to happen a certain way, even
though I'm sure it won't...

FLORENCIA is looking at GABY.

SARI stand up a little embarrassed, caressing GABY's face.

SARI
Maybe I'm making a mountain of a molehill,
as your father always says --you look
tired, you've been going up and down
all week long. I think you'd better stay
home if you want to. Flor can make your
favorite french toast, and you can have
breakfast in bed and watch T.V....

SARI turns on the T.V. (Cartoons sound track)

SARI
Great! The cartoons are on. Give her a
good breakfast, Flor. I'll be back in an
hour.

SARI leaves

GABY shakes her foot against the bed.

FLORENCIA hurries to turn off the T.V. She sits down by GABY's side.

The house is strangely desolate. From outside the sounds of the day are heard coming through the window: birds, traffic, voices, laughter, the various calls of the street vendors.

FLORENCIA

God has a reason for everything he does, Gaby. You know that. I've already told you. Or you believe things are just like that for no reason? No, Gaby, you can't just give up like that. (She touches Gaby's face softly) (Whispering almost inaudibly) Please, Gaby, come on.

XXXIII. INT: MIGUEL'S STUDY, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

MIGUEL reads in a easy chair with classical music on the stereo. There is a knock on the door.

MIGUEL

Come in.

FLORENCIA enters timidly.

FLORENCIA

Excuse me, sir. I wanted to talk to you about Gaby ...

MIGUEL lowers his book.

MIGUEL

Sit down, Flor

XXXIV. EXT: BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

It's very late. There is a single light on in the Brimmer house. The neighboring houses and the street are dark

XXXV. INT: HALLWAY SECOND FLOOR AND MIGUEL'S STUDIO - BRIMMER HOUSE - SAME TIME

The house is dark and silent. Only the ticking of the grandfather clock and the hum of the refrigerator are heard.

MIGUEL appears at the end of the second floor hallway pushing GABY in her wheelchair. He brings her into his study where a single light is on by the couch. He fixes GABY's alphabet board onto her chair and sits down beside her.

MIGUEL

So.

GABY is immobile.

MIGUEL

Tell me what's going on.

GABY spells on her alphabet board, her foot moves slowly. MIGUEL reads.

MIGUEL

(reading)

N-o-t-h-i-n-g.

MIGUEL leans back and sighs. Finally, with an undercurrent of anguish at his inability to reach his daughter, he begins to speak.

MIGUEL

Things aren't that simple, my dear Gabriela. You will always think that the rest of the world has it easy because you have it so hard. Only that's not really true. Our limitations may be less apparent but they are just as real -- and maybe more dangerous because they are less visible.

MIGUEL gets up and moves OS.

After a moment of silence, music begins softly. MIGUEL has put a record on the stereo. It is Beethoven's 4th Piano Concerto. It begins slowly, gently, with piano solo, and then increases in splendid harmony taken over by the orchestra. MIGUEL returns to GABY's side.

MIGUEL

Beethoven heard nothing when he wrote this music. Nothing! How is it possible? Because he did hear it, Gaby. He heard it here --
(he touches his head)

MIGUEL (contd)

He did hear it and that is magic.
A very peculiar type of magic
shared by human beings. Think
of it: Physically we're no better
than apes. The difference, the
real difference is here. In the
music of Beethoven, Mozart and
Brahms. In the imagination of
Kafka. In the fantastic world
of Van Gogh, Einstein, and Spinoza.

GABY lifts her foot and spells on the alphabet board.

MIGUEL

(Reading)

T-h-e di-ff-e-r-e-n-c-e is I c-a-n-'t
e-a-t a b-a-n-a-n-a by m-y s-e-l-f.

(Responding)

I refuse to pity you. What do you
suppose I felt when I had to leave
Austria, our farm? Look: these were
the hands of a farmer who loved his
land, now they're the hands of a stupid
salesman who owns a shop. But I didn't
give up. Do you think I've never been
tempted to give up?

(Pause)

We invent limitations for ourselves
that don't exist. What is difficult
is to tell the difference between which
are real and which are just our own fears.

GABY starts spelling again.

MIGUEL

(Reading)

I'm a-f-r-a-i-d o-f t-r-y-i-n-g.
I-t h-u-r-t-s t-o-o m-u-c-h b-e-c-a-u-s-e
I n-e-v-e-r g-e-t a-n-y-w-h-e-r-e

(Responding)

So what do you propose to do?

GABY doesn't respond. MIGUEL gets up and walks around
the room.

MIGUEL

I would say you have no choice, but that's
a lie. I can't decide for you, Gaby.
You have choice and that's precious. That's
something to remember every minute and every
hour.

MIGUEL (contd)
 (GABY spells. MIGUEL reads)
 B-u-t m-y c-h-o-i-c-e-s l-e-a-d
 n-o-wh-e-r-e. I a-l-w-a-y-s e-n-d
 u-p w-h-e-r-e I s-tar-t-ed.
 (Responding)
 Do you really think so?
 (Pause)
 Do you want to stay home every day?
 Is that what you'd like to do with your
 life?

GABY doesn't respond.

MIGUEL (contd)
 Fine... I won't force you to do
 anything. From now on you stay
 home. I'm serious.

MIGUEL leaves the room. GABY is left alone.

CUT TO:

HALLWAY

FLORENCIA stands in the doorway of MIGUEL's studio.
 Through the door the music is heard. FLORENCIA is a
 silhouette against the light at the end of the hall.

INT: GABY'S ROOM BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY'S POV, from her chair: the window is opened. It's
 a shiny day.

CLOSE ON GABY

Alone, motionless, as if she were still listening MIGUEL,
 arguing with him. She is suddenly shaken by a spasm.
 She stretches her left foot to touch the floor and starts
 pushing herself towards the bedroom door.

INT: KITCHEN BRIMMERS HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA is cooking a meal. We don't see her face.

INT: HALLWAY SECOND FLOOR - BRIMMERS HOUSE - DAY

GABY pushes herself on the wheelchair towards the edge of
 the stairs.

CLOSE ON GABY.

Whose incomprehensible face is brimming with tears that roll down her cheeks. She looks at the vacuum in front of her. It seems she is going to push herself downstairs. GABY reaches the edge of the stairs and stops pushing herself. Suddenly her chest heaves and she gives an eerie, almost inhuman scream which gets louder and more frightening.

INT: KITCHEN - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY'S scream penetrates the entire house. FLORENCIA stops in the middle of the kitchen. The scream transforms her features.

She rushes out.

INT: STAIRS - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA runs upstairs. She stops half way up to see FLORENCIA'S POV

GABY is bended on her wheelchair, away from the stairs.

INT: CLASSROOM, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

GABY and FLORENCIA sit alone in the classroom. FLORENCIA reads aloud from a text about Emperor Maximillian. The OTHER STUDENTS are heard outside talking and laughing.

INT: HALLWAY, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

FERNANDO, in a motorized wheelchair with a bicycle horn on the side, races with CARLOS who takes large strides with his crutches. STUDENTS move out of the way as they round the corner. FRIENDS of each of them shout support.

In the next hallway are several INVALIDS. FERNANDO honks his horn and they clear out except for a mongoloid boy, "EL CABEZÓN," who rocks back and forth as he walks.

FERNANDO
Watch it, Cabezón!

He barely dodges him. FERNANDO turns sharply into the classroom door with CARLOS following close behind.

INT: CLASSROOM, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

FLORENCIA and GABY turn as FERNANDO and CARLOS enter in a great commotion of falling chairs.

FERNANDO
Parnelli Jones wins the Indy 500!

The OTHER STUDENTS file in and arrange themselves in chairs.

LATER

A picture of Emperor Maximillian is tacked to the blackboard by the TEACHER.

The STUDENTS talk, read magazines, throw papers and jostle each other.

TEACHER

Carlos, I want you to explain the fall of Maximillian. What happened, who was involved and why?

GABY turns on the typewriter and begins to type.

CARLOS stands and, leaning on his crutches, tries to read what GABY writes. EL CABEZÓN tries to hide himself from the TEACHER behind GABY.

TEACHER

How about you, Ezekiel?

EL CABEZÓN stands up fastidiously and shakes his head. CARLOS sits down, watching GABY surreptitiously.

He stands again and raises his hand.

CARLOS

Teacher -- Maximillian was killed by a firing squad by Benito Juarez in Queretaro.

TEACHER

Very good, Carlos.

FLORENCIA stands indignantly.

FLORENCIA

He copied it from Gaby, Teacher. I saw him reading it!

Whistling, laughter, papers fly.

GABY looks at CARLOS and begins to type.

CARLOS

(to Florencia)
Very good, Flor! And who told Gaby? With you around even a wheelchair knows the answers.

FLORENCIA contains her fury. GABY types amidst the shouting and disorder.

TEACHER
Enough, quiet!!

GABY touches FLORENCIA with her foot. FLORENCIA takes the typed page from the machine and reads aloud.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
Teacher ... Maximillian was
killed by parasites.

Laughter from all sides; FERNANDO claps; the TEACHER tries to silence them.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
A parasite is someone who lives
off others, like Carlos: something
useless.

FERNANDO applauds -- more to make noise than anything else. The TEACHER is getting angry.

CARLOS
Parasite?! Look who's talking!
Ha! Ha!

TEACHER
Shut up! All of you, QUIET!!
-- or we won't go to the pool!
Quiet ... !

No one obeys.

CARLOS approaches FLORENCIA and, leaning on one crutch threatens her with the other.

CARLOS
The thing you've got there doesn't
think or understand anything. It
just writes what you tell it to.

GABY's body twists in a spasm of pain.

FERNANDO comes behind CARLOS and grabs his arm, twisting it backwards until CARLOS falls onto his knees.

FERNANDO
Apologize, asshole! Or I'll
break your arm!

CARLOS shouts in pain. Everyone talks at the same time.

CARLOS

Let me go, son-of-a-bitch!

FLORENCIA

Let go of him, Fernando!

TEACHER

That's enough! Stop it! Now!!
Stop it! Fernando! Carlos!

FERNANDO and CARLOS fall onto the floor amidst the chairs, kicking, punching and shouting.

GABY watches. The other STUDENTS shout, supporting one or the other.

TEACHER

Stop it! I'm warning you!

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON FERNANDO, sweating, his lip cut and bleeding.

EXT: RECESS PLAYGROUND, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

The STUDENTS play in a small space with high walls. GABY and FLORENCIA are isolated by the door to the building.

FERNANDO approaches in his motorized wheelchair and stops nearby.

FERNANDO

(casually)

What's happening, Gaby.

GABY pulls herself closer to him with her foot, then placing it on his shoe in a gesture of friendship.

FLORENCIA watches.

EL CABEZÓN, who is playing nearby, sees them and points, mocking:

CABEZON

(sarcastic)

Fernando has a girlfriend!
Fernando has a girlfriend!

Laughter and whistling. FERNANDO jerks himself away and accelerates his motorized wheelchair.

CARLOS, loitering nearby, shouts as he passes.

CARLOS
(sarcastic)
How romantic!!

FERNANDO
Go fuck yourself.

EL CABEZÓN laughs with the others.

CLOSE ON GABY, ALONE.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

The light is low. FLORENCIA sits knitting in silence. There is a textbook on the nearby table, opened and underlined.

CLOSE ON GABY

who is in her wheelchair with her back to FLORENCIA and the door.

Her left foot caresses her right calf, slowly, sensually.

MIGUEL enters with a package in his hand. He approaches GABY and puts his hand on her arm. GABY's foot stops moving.

MIGUEL
I brought you something. It's
one of my favorite books. Read
it and tell me what you think.

FLORENCIA
Thank you, sir.

MIGUEL
Sleep well.

CLOSE ON GABY'S FOOT

which again begins its soft caressing movement while MIGUEL exits.

FLORENCIA's gaze strays to GABY's foot and remains there.

INT: MASTER BEDROOM - BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

MIGUEL enters the room. SARI is cleaning the make-up from her eyes.

MIGUEL swallows a pill, dissemblingly.
SARI perceives it.

SARI
That's the third, Michel, isn't it

MIGUEL
Old cars need additives.

SARI stands up annoyed.

SARI
Old cars ...? Your heart needs a rest,
not nitroglicerine.

MIGUEL
Too many miles of bad roads, Sarylein...

SARI
And too many miles ahead...
(She caresses his face tenderly)
I need you, Michel...
(She kisses him)

MIGUEL looks straight into her eyes.
SARI fears something, but she can't tell.

MIGUEL
What is it, Sari?

SARI
We're still young, aren't we?

MIGUEL
Are you afraid of something?

SARI
I don't know... I guess it's... well...
I suppose the children have grown, Michel
and... I need you more than ever...

She embraces him as if she needed protection.

INT: GABY'S ROOM - BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

GABY keeps on caressing her right calf, sensually.
FLORENCIA'S gaze strays to GABY's toot and remains there.

FADE OUT

INT: CLASSROOM, REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

The TEACHER finishes organizing a pile of report cards.

TEACHER
... I've gone over all the final
exams and I'm happy to say everyone
has passed.

A tired applause. FLORENCIA smiles at GABY. The CLASS is in its usual disorderly mess.

FERNANDO looks around at the others, disturbed by something.

FERNANDO
(aggressive)
Now what, Teacher?

She's not sure what he means.

CARLOS and EL CABEZÓN, who have been talking behind a pornographic magazine, look up to see what's going on.

TEACHER
(looking for obvious answers)
The certificate is so you can continue studying.

FERNANDO
You think anyone takes this school seriously? ... Carlos, how many times have you repeated fifth and sixth grades?

CARLOS
None of your goddamn business.

FERNANDO
Why?

CARLOS
What's the matter with you? Lose your marbles or what?

FERNANDO
I'll tell you what. We've graduated twice from sixth grade already. If we keep it up we'll be fifty years old and still in sixth grade.
(to the teacher)
You want to know why? Because you give us these stupid grades out of pity. They don't mean a fucking thing.

The CLASS quiets into awkward silence. GABY begins writing, oblivious to FLORENCIA's inquisitive look.

FERNANDO
I heard yesterday how Anita's mom asked you to please graduate
(MORE)

FERNANDO (contd)
her since she'd get depressed
if her BROTHER graduated and
SHE didn't. After all who cares
-- 'cause the poor handicapped
little girl will never get any-
where anyway ... big deal ...
who cares, right?

GABY finishes writing during the previous dialogue.
FLORENCIA takes the sheet from the machine and reads.
The OTHER STUDENTS look on more seriously.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
The Greeks threw the handicapped
off the tarpein rock to get rid
of them.

FLORENCIA sits down, confused.

FERNANDO is ready to break.

FERNANDO
Great idea! Excuse me, I'm
getting out of here.

He steers his chair to the door and opens it.

FERNANDO
C'mon, Gaby! Let's get out of
this zoo.

The silence is dense. No one moves. FLORENCIA puts
her hand on GABY's leg.

The TEACHER looks directly at FERNANDO.

TEACHER
I hope you're satisfied with
upsetting everyone. We'll take
an early recess and continue
later. Class dismissed.

No one moves. FERNANDO remains by the door.

Finally, CARLOS stands, staring at FERNANDO, then the
OTHERS, and without a word, walks out of class on his
crutches.

EL CABEZÓN follows with less ceremony.

GABY and FERNANDO exchange a glance through the movements
of the other STUDENTS who begin to leave in silence.

INT: GABY'S ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON GABY'S TYPEWRITER AND FOOT

There is a half-written page in the carriage. GABY's foot picks over the keys and the following words appear, continuing the letter:

"Fernando, I'm falling in love with you, even though you probably don't care."

GABY smiles, then her expression changes; a spasm takes over. She verbalizes unintelligibly.

FLORENCIA sits close by sewing. She responds to GABY by pulling the half-typed page from the machine. She reads it for a moment, disturbed. GABY makes a loud protest; her foot negates. FLORENCIA puts the letter away with some other typed pages.

GABY protests again. FLORENCIA looks at her. She retrieves the letter, crumples it, and puts it into the wastepaper basket where there are several others.

GABY signals the typewriter. FLORENCIA inserts another page in the carriage.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON GABY'S FOOT

continuing typing. There is another half-written page in the machine. We discover the last sentences GABY has written:

"No one can tell us what our limitations are. Why can't we have a relationship like normal human beings?"

GABY's foot continues typing:

"We have the same needs, Fernando."

GABY crosses out the last sentence with the X key.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA throws away another crumpled page.

FLORENCIA
Gaby ... It's late. Let's go to
bed ...

GABY's foot negates. The clock on the desk shows 12:56.

CUT TO:

GABY is still writing. FLORENCIA gets ready for bed in her nightgown, waiting for GABY to finish. GABY ignores her.

The following text is SUPERIMPOSED over the IMAGE as though it were being typed on top of it.

TEXT

Dear Fernando,
I've been thinking about what you said
on the day of the exams. The problem
is that most of the kids in that
place don't care. They like to be
treated like babies.

EXT: REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

The HANDICAPPED STUDENTS mill near the exit.

GABY slows her wheelchair with her foot as she is pushed out of the center by FLORENCIA. She changes her trajectory towards the group around FERNANDO.

The TEXT continues SUPERIMPOSING ITSELF:

TEXT

Unless we demand something better
nothing is going to change. It would
be easier if it were two of us.

FLORENCIA stops the wheelchair and gives FERNANDO a letter.

INT: ZIMMERMAN HOUSE AND BATHROOM - DAY

The door to a large bathroom closes. FERNANDO pushes in the button, locking it.

He opens Gaby's letter and begins to read it.

CLOSE ON THE END OF THE LETTER

"What do you think about normal public school? The normals have nothing over us intellectually. We can't let them put our minds into wheelchairs too. I hope to get to know you better,

your friend,
Gaby Brimmer"

FERNANDO hears footsteps outside in the hall. He flushes the toilet and puts the letter into his pocket.

EXT: TENNIS COURTS, JEWISH ATHLETIC CLUB - ANOTHER DAY

DAVID, 19 years old, is winning a tennis tournament. He wins a point and the spectators applaud, SARI and MIGUEL among them. In front of them, by the first tier of bleachers, are GABY and FLORENCIA.

FERNANDO arrives with his mother, MRS. ZIMMERMAN. MRS. ZIMMERMAN finds a seat and FERNANDO remains in front of her in his motorized wheelchair.

FERNANDO sees GABY. After a moment of deliberation he starts his electric wheelchair toward her. He arrives next to GABY and stops. SPECTATORS turn to look at them.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN stands to see where FERNANDO has gone. FERNANDO is extremely self-conscious. GABY meets his gaze for an instant and then turns away involuntarily.

She makes a sign to FLORENCIA who then pushes her toward the exit. FERNANDO is left behind. There are shouts and applause at the end of a point well played. MIGUEL sees FERNANDO.

MIGUEL
(to Fernando)
Hey, think fast!

He throws him a chocolate bar which falls between his legs.

ADJACENT PARK (ISRAELI ATHLETIC CLUB)

In the contiguous park, FLORENCIA pushes GABY toward a shady spot of tall trees and shrubs.

FERNANDO follows them at a distance, alone.

FLORENCIA stops GABY in the shade and FERNANDO arrives soon afterwards, stopping beside GABY.

CUT TO:

GABY and FERNANDO wait for FLORENCIA to leave but FLORENCIA doesn't move. Finally, GABY spells on her alphabet board. FLORENCIA reads but doesn't say anything.

FERNANDO
What did she say?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer. FERNANDO leans forward to read himself. GABY spells with her foot.

FERNANDO

(reading)

L-e-a-v-e u-s a-l-o-n-e f-o-r-
a-m-o-m-e-n-t n-a-n-n-y

He looks up at FLORENCIA, smiling, a little stunned by his own words. Embarrassed, FLORENCIA goes off a little ways from where she can still see them.

FERNANDO is very nervous at being left alone with GABY. She looks at him very directly.

FERNANDO

I got your letter, Gaby.

(beat)

You're right., I agree with you
all the way. But the problem is
my parents ...

GABY spells with her foot. FERNANDO reads:

FERNANDO

(reading)

W-h-y?

(responding)

Well, you know. They'd think it
would be cruel for me to go to
a normal school.

GABY continues.

FERNANDO

(reading)

A-n-d w-h-a-t d-o y-o-u
t-h-i-n-k?

There is an awkward pause. FERNANDO looks away and then at GABY. She can barely hold his gaze for an instant before her head turns involuntarily.

FERNANDO

I want to go. I just don't think
it would be easy.

Silence. FERNANDO smiles. GABY continues.

FERNANDO

(reading)

W-o-u-l-d y-o-u p-r-e-f-e-r t-o-
s-t-a-y i-n t-h-a-t c-i-r-c-u-s?

FERNANDO laughs.

FLORENCIA watches them from nearby.

CUT TO:

TENNIS COURTS

MRS. ZIMMERMAN gets out of her seat and looks for FERNANDO. She exits glancing coldly at SARI and REGUEL as she does.

CUT TO:

ADJACENT PARK
GABY AND FERNANDO

GABY slowly brings her foot against FERNANDO's ankle. She touches him beneath his pant leg.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA, alone, pulls on blades of grass.

CUT TO:

FERNANDO looks around intimidated. Then, gradually changing attitude, somewhat clumsily, he leans over GABY and caresses her face lightly. It is a moment of great tenderness.

FLORENCIA's voice makes them jump.

FLORENCIA
Fernando's mom is coming.

They separate and FLORENCIA rejoins them. MRS. ZIMMERMAN arrives out of breath and bothered.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
What's going on here?

No one answers.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
You're missing the best part of the game. Let's go.

FERNANDO follows his MOTHER in his motorized wheelchair. GABY and FLORENCIA stay behind.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY (RAIN)

GABY is alone by the telephone table. She knocks the receiver from its cradle with her foot, leaving it hanging. She dials a number laboriously. The sound of the call going through and ringing.

FLORENCIA appears in the doorway, watching GABY.

INT: HALLWAY, ZIMMERMAN HOUSE - DAY (RAIN)

MRS. ZIMMERMAN answers the phone.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Hello? Hello? Who is this?

She hangs up and leaves, disappearing down the hall.

FERNANDO leans out of another doorway and looks around. Seeing his MOTHER is gone, he goes to the hall phone, pushing his chair manually as quietly as possible.

He dials a number.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY (RAIN)

GABY alone, waiting. The phone rings. FLORENCIA enters and answers.

FLORENCIA
Hello? Yes, just a moment, Fernando.

She sets the phone on a table the height of GABY's head, and bringing her next to it, leaves.

INT: ZIMMERMAN HOUSE - DAY (RAIN)

FERNANDO talks quietly on the hall phone.

FERNANDO
Are you there, Gaby?

GABY's voice answers unintelligibly.

FERNANDO
It's good you called.
(beat)
Was it you?

GABY answers unintelligibly.

FERNANDO
I've been thinking about you. I've
got a great idea ...

CUT TO:

MRS. ZIMMERMAN'S ROOM - SAME TIME

MRS. ZIMMERMAN listens on an extension phone seated at her dressing table. She covers the receiver.

INT: FINE RESTAURANT - DAY

A WAITER serves an elegant round table at which are seated: GABY, FLORENCIA, SARI, FERNANDO, and MRS. ZIMMERMAN.

SARI

Miguel has been talking about that, too.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

(laughing)

Could you imagine them in sleeping bags? Men are so childish ...

The WAITER fills their wineglasses. GABY touches FERNANDO with her foot beneath the table. Both FERNANDO and FLORENCIA are uncomfortable.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

(lifting her glass)

I'd like to propose a toast to our star students ...

SARI and FLORENCIA join MRS. ZIMMERMAN in raising their glasses. FLORENCIA gives GABY a sip which runs down the side of her mouth.

SARI

We brought you here because we have a surprise for you. We're organizing a junior high school at the rehabilitation center so that you'll be able to continue studying.

GABY and FERNANDO are stunned. There is an awkward moment.

FERNANDO

We don't want to go back to that place.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN ruffles FERNANDO's hair affectionately.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

We know about that, Son. Mrs. Brimmer and I have thought a lot about this and we are very proud of you and Gaby. It's a wonderful dream and we agree that you have the right to keep studying.

SARI

But we have to be realistic.

FERNANDO looks suspiciously at GABY and then his mother.

SARI (contd)
Fernando, Public school is impossible
for many reasons --

SARI's words jolt FERNANDO.

FERNANDO
(interrupting)
Gaby, did you tell them anything?

GABY negates with her foot, FLORENCIA shakes her head
simultaneously.

SARI
We thought you wanted to continue
studying ... so --

FERNANDO
What's going on here? How did you
find --
(to Mrs. Zimmerman)
You read my letter, didn't you?

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
(caught)
That's not important. Everyone
agrees that your friendship is
something beneficial. We think
that --

FERNANDO
(interrupting)
I don't care what you think!

GABY has been spelling at the alphabet board but
FLORENCIA hasn't had the opportunity to read her words.

FLORENCIA
Gaby wants to say something.

SARI
(ignoring her)
Fernando, they wouldn't let either
of you in. And if they did it would
be so difficult -- I mean just to
catch up with the other kids' rhythm ...
There's no way --

FERNANDO
You don't have the right to do
this!

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MRS. ZIMMERMAN

We're supporting you! On Saturday we're going to have a PTA meeting about the special school.

FLORENCIA breaks in and reads GABY's words.

FLORENCIA

Gaby wants to say something.
(reading)
W-e d-o-n-t w-a-n-t s-p-e-c-i-a-l
s-c-h-o-o-l-s w-i-t-h m-e-n-t-a-l-
l-y r-e-t-a-r-d-e-d s-t-u-d-e-n-t-s.
I-n s-t-u-d-i-e-s w-o-a-r-e t-h-e
s-a-m-e a-s t-h-e n-o-r-m-a-l-s

SARI

The same!? What can you do on your own, Gaby, by yourself?

FERNANDO

You don't understand a goddamn thing! We don't want special schools! We don't want special anything! You don't learn anything there! Everyone passes whether they study or not!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Fernando! Let's discuss this calmly ...

FERNANDO

Calmly?! With someone who steals my personal letters?! Who the hell do you think you are?! I can't even breathe without you poking into it!!

FERNANDO pushes himself back and runs his electric wheelchair away from the table. FLORENCIA and GABY exchange a glance as MRS. ZIMMERMAN gets up from the table.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN

Fernando! Where do you think you're going?!

FERNANDO doesn't answer, running his wheelchair as fast as it goes toward the exit. He hits a series of five steps. The wheelchair almost flips at each step. WAITERS, MRS. ZIMMERMAN and SARI all run to him, stopping him however they can.

GABY and FLORENCIA are left alone at the table. FLORENCIA straightens GABY in her chair and tries to relax her.

FERNANDO's shouting and cursing reaches them from the other end of the restaurant.

EXT: REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

It is recess. The handicapped kids play seen through a chain-link fence. A GUARD stands at the gate to the street.

FLORENCIA approaches the exit pushing GABY. FERNANDO follows close behind. They stop at the GUARD.

FLORENCIA
They have a doctor's appointment.

The GUARD opens the gate and they go out. They recede down the sidewalk with the GUARD looking after them.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUSY CITY STREET - DAY

FLORENCIA hails a cab on a busier street. She lifts GABY and then FERNANDO into the back seat, folding the wheelchairs afterwards. She gets in front and the cab drives off.

EXT: INNER COURTYARD, PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

FLORENCIA pushes GABY across the huge concrete courtyard.

FERNANDO glides along beside them in his electric wheelchair. THREE TEENAGE STUDENTS walk toward them. They stare at FERNANDO and GABY as they pass. FERNANDO sees their morbid curiosity and feels extremely uncomfortable.

They reach the staircase to the main entrance. FLORENCIA leaves them by the side and goes up alone. She knocks at an exterior door reading: ADMINISTRATION. A SECRETARY opens and looks at FLORENCIA condescendingly.

FLORENCIA
I came for the application forms,
Miss ...

SECRETARY
The continuing education school
is at night.

FLORENCIA
No, not for me, for them.

She points to GABY and FERNANDO who wait at the foot of the stairs. The SECRETARY is disconcerted. FLORENCIA hands her a folder.

FLORENCIA
These are their certificates from primary.

The SECRETARY accepts them reluctantly.

SECRETARY
Come in for a minute, please.

FLORENCIA waves back to GABY and FERNANDO and goes in.

INT: ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

FLORENCIA follows the SECRETARY who looks over GABY and FERNANDO's papers as she stops at her desk. She walks to a rear office.

SECRETARY
(as she goes)
Just a moment, please. Wait there.

The SECRETARY'S VOICE speaking with a man in the rear office. The MAN LAUGHS.

FLORENCIA listens. Suddenly she sees application forms in a pigeon-holed desk next to the entrance. She takes several, folds them, and puts them into her purse.

CUT TO:

EXT: COURTYARD, PUBLIC SCHOOL - DAY

GABY and FERNANDO are close together in their respective wheelchairs. FERNANDO becomes very uncomfortable as increasing numbers of STUDENTS come out of classes; he is embarrassed to be seen with GABY.

FERNANDO
I'm going to look around a little bit.

He starts his electric wheelchair away from GABY, toward the other side of the courtyard.

CUT TO:

INT: ADMINISTRATION OFFICE, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

FLORENCIA waits by the door as the SECRETARY returns.

SECRETARY

I'm sorry, but these certificates aren't acceptable here.

(hands them back)

You'd have to start at the main office of the Department of Education and bring a medical report. They give an exam to re-evaluate non-incorporated schools.

FLORENCIA

Yes, thank you.

CUT TO:

EXT: PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

FLORENCIA comes down the stairs and sees GABY alone. FERNANDO has seen FLORENCIA and he returns to GABY's side.

FLORENCIA

I got the application forms.

GABY smiles. FERNANDO laughs nervously, taking GABY's hand.

FERNANDO

Great, let's get out of here.

They leave, disappearing into the gathering STUDENTS.

INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI enters through the swinging door looking for FLORENCIA.

SARI

Florencia?

The kitchen is empty. SARI stops and listens. From the adjacent servants quarters comes the sound of slow typing. SARI follows the sound out of the kitchen.

EXT: PATIO AND SERVANTS QUARTERS, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

The typing is closer, very slow and uneven. SARI stops at the door to FLORENCIA's room and listens. She opens it slightly.

INT: FLORENCIA'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY
SARI'S POV

FLORENCIA is bent over GABY's typewriter, wearing glasses and typing intently with one finger. She fills out the junior high school application forms.

SARI can't believe what she sees. FLORENCIA jumps when she discovers SARI behind her. SARI reads the typed application.

SARI
Where on earth did you get this?!
(looking more carefully)
What's going on?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer, staring at the machine.

SARI (contd)
No, Nanny. You can't do this. You're going to fill them with false hopes, why?

FLORENCIA remains mute. SARI exits, leaving the door opened.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI enters and looks inquisitively at GABY and FERNANDO who are playing checkers. She takes some papers from GABY's desk and looks through them.

GABY and FERNANDO watch her.

FLORENCIA stops at the door and looks in. SARI turns to her.

SARI
What did they tell you about applying?

FLORENCIA
Well, they didn't ... they just gave me the forms to fill out ...

SARI
That's it? Just like that?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer. GABY and FERNANDO exchange a glance.

SARI
You went and they told you "welcome! We have everything ready so that a paralytic can come in her wheelchair and go to public school; we have special classrooms on the ground floor, special bathrooms, special teachers, and students who are dying to have them for classmates, just fill out these forms -- no permits necessary."
(beat)
Is that what they told you?

FLORENCIA is silent.

SARI

No, Gaby, Fernando, believe me, it's not that easy. And it would just get worse. Forget about public school. They just aren't going to let you in. Believe me, for God's sake. I know what I'm talking about.

FERNANDO

(without much conviction)
You don't know what you're talking about. They have to accept us like any Mexican citizen.

SARI shakes her head.

SARI

I wish it were true.

SARI leaves the application forms on the table and exits.

FLORENCIA sits down beside GABY. She looks ashamed and defeated. GABY lifts her left foot and pushes FLORENCIA's knees back and forward, encouraging her.

FERNANDO

Yeah Flor! C'mon! This was only the first round. We've got her ahead, we'll find a way.

But FLORENCIA keeps looking at the floor.

INT: BATHROOM - MASTER BEDROOM - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI closes the door and turns on the water. She looks in the mirror, her doubt beginning to show.

INT: BUREAUCRAT'S OFFICE, D.E.P. - ANOTHER DAY

The BUREAUCRAT is a large man with a bushy mustache. On his desk are typical little portraits of his family.

BUREAUCRAT

The big problem is that your daughter went to a school that isn't incorporated in our system.

SARI

There must be a way around that.

BUREAUCRAT

My suggestion is that she'd do best to continue in a specialized school.

SARI

But there isn't a special junior high school!

BUREAUCRAT

(shrugging)

I'm sorry, ma'am.

INT: OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE D.E.P. -
ANOTHER DAY

A GREYING BUREAUCRAT sits at a large board room table, facing SARI and MIGUEL. There is no one else in the room.

MIGUEL

She was the top of her class. She gets bored with special schools because they go very slowly.

The BUREAUCRAT is uncomfortable with the BRIMMERS' obstinance. SARI is getting angry.

SARI

Please understand! My daughter is not mentally retarded! She has cerebral palsy and that doesn't affect her intelligence! She is the one who sent us here!

GREYING BUREAUCRAT

(kindly)

Mrs. Brimmer, I'm not deaf. We're sympathetic to your problem. But we have regulations which we can't get around no matter what we do.

SARI

(infuriated)

In other words a handicapped person has no right to go to public school!

GREYING BUREAUCRAT

I didn't say that. I was just trying to make a -- suggestion. To go to public school your daughter would have to pass an equivalency exam

(MORE)

GREYING BUREAUCRAT (contd)
 of the entire first six years of
 primary. And that's almost impossible
 for normal children -- we've had
 many such cases, children from the
 provinces, people who lose their
 papers -- and I'm talking about
normal children; imagine what would
 happen with your daughter.

MIGUEL
 If Gaby passes this equivalency exam
 she could get in -- is that right?

GREYING BUREAUCRAT
 (caught)
If she were to pass, yes. But she
 won't pass the exam, Mr. Brimmer.
 You'll get her hopes up just to
 hurt her. Why waste her and your
 time?

MIGUEL
 Because she has the right to try.
 If she fails she fails like anyone
 else. But she has the right to try.
 Don't you agree?

The BUREAUCRAT is silent.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI comes in the front door looking depressed and
 exhausted. She takes off her coat, drapes it over a
 chair, and sits down to take off her shoes.

CUT TO:

SARI, barefoot, climbs the stairs and is surprised to
 find FLORENCIA sitting near the top.

SARI
 What's the matter, Flor? What're
 you doing here?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer. SARI looks at her inquisitively.

SARI
 Where's Gaby?

FLORENCIA is silent. SARI, perturbed, climbs to the top
 of the stairs and opens the study door quietly.

SARI'S POV:

GABY, half-undressed, assisted by FERNANDO, slides out of her wheelchair and onto the floor. FERNANDO is also half-undressed and he pulls her to him awkwardly. They kiss and embrace. FERNANDO pushes their wheelchairs away toward the walls. He begins unbuttoning GABY's pants. SARI closes the door.

Strangely moved, she stares at the closed door. After a moment of deliberation she goes back to FLORENCIA who hasn't moved from the stairs. SARI takes her by the shoulder.

FLORENCIA turns, expecting a reprimand, but SARI's expression is not aggressive.

SARI
(softly)
You and I are going for a walk, Nanny.
(holding out her hand)
Let's go...

Together, they descend the stairs.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT: ADMINISTRATION OFFICE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

The same SECRETARY who discouraged FLORENCIA a few days ago, turns around to see...

FLORENCIA who enters the office.

FLORENCIA
I've come for two application forms
for an equivalency exam.
(she opens up a folder)
Here are the certificates and the
photographs ...

The SECRETARY looks at the photographs remembering what it is all about.

FLORENCIA stares at her, smiling.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY's foot draws geometrical formulas with difficulty. On a nearby desk are a pile of textbooks marked, opened, and underlined.

FLORENCIA draws a fourth formula on a portable blackboard.

FERNANDO copies it almost as fast as FLORENCIA sets it down. He glances at GABY who is still working on the first one.

FERNANDO
C'mon, Blondie. We'll be here
all night.

FLORENCIA looks at him, annoyed.

CUT TO:

LATER

FLORENCIA is exhausted; another book is opened by the blackboard.

GABY and FERNANDO seem no to have moved, the remains of an improvised dinner are on the floor.

FLORENCIA
Fernando, the capital of Hungary?

FERNANDO
Budapest.

FLORENCIA
Good. Gaby, the capital of Thailand?

Gaby signals on the alphabet board, FERNANDO reads:

FERNANDO
(reading)
B-A-N-G-K-O-K.
(responding)
That was easy.

FLORENCIA
Good, Gaby. Fernando, the capital
of Zaire.

FERNANDO
Son of a bitch! That's a tough
one! Why do you give me all the
hard ones, Flor?

GABY laughs.

FERNANDO
(to Gaby)
Alright then, you answer it.

GABY spells on her alphabet board but FERNANDO ignores
her and uses the time to think. GABY vocalizes a protest.
FLORENCIA watches the development with concern.

FERNANDO
(to Gaby)
Wait a minute, will you?
(pause)
I've got it: Kinshasha!

FLORENCIA assents with a dry smile. She meets GABY's
eyes for an instant.

LATER, SEMI-DARKNESS

GABY and FLORENCIA are in parallel beds separated by a
night table with a reading lamp and alarm clock. Street
light comes through the windows.

CLOSE ON FLORENCIA

awake and still. GABY verbalizes unintelligibly OS.
FLORENCIA listens.

FLORENCIA
I didn't understand what you said,
Gaby.

GABY tries again.

FLORENCIA
(softly)
No we won't. Don't worry about it.

CLOSE ON GABY

who verbalizes again: something longer and very strained.

FLORENCIA (OS)
It won't be easy for him either.

THE TWO BEDS

GABY verbalizes again. For a moment there is no answer
from FLORENCIA.

FLORENCIA
(upset)
Don't ask me that; I don't know.

The room again is silent.

FLORENCIA (contd)
Stop thinking so much. You think
everything can be solved by thinking.
Let God decide what's right.
(beat)
What's important is school, not
Fernando. You have to get your
feet on the ground and stop
dreaming.

EXT: STREET AND THE BRIMMERS' MERCEDES BENZ - DAY

The Mercedes moves wildly in reverse, heading directly
for a tree.

INT: MERCEDES BENZ - DAY

MIGUEL grabs the wheel from the passenger seat.
FLORENCIA is driving.

MIGUEL
The brakes! Hit the brakes!!

FLORENCIA's foot slams down on the brake. The car
screeches to a halt.

MIGUEL

(wiping sweat)

Slowly, Florencia. Go slowly. Let's try it again: clutch -- good. Now put it in neutral -- no that's third.

(corrects the position)

Okay, now ... start it up.

FLORENCIA starts the car.

MIGUEL (contd)

First now. And, good, let the clutch up slowly, and accelerate ...

FLORENCIA, with an expression of speed and terror, her eyeglasses on, clutches the steering wheel and accelerates. The car jerks forward.

MIGUEL holds onto the dash.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA looks over a few written pages checking them with a textbook. GABY and FERNANDO wait.

FLORENCIA

Fernando -- where did you get that frogs are mammals?

FERNANDO

What do you mean where did I get it. Didn't you know that?

SARI has been watching at the door without being seen. She smiles sarcastically.

FLORENCIA, unsure of herself, checks in another textbook. GABY looks at her amused. FLORENCIA gives up and closes the book.

FLORENCIA

It doesn't matter, I'll check it later. Let's go over the conjugations.

She shifts a pile of books to the side and opens another. SARI's voice surprises them.

SARI

What's the matter, Fernando? Why don't you tell Florencia where you read that about frogs?

FERNANDO is taken aback.

SARI (contd)
Well, did you read it or invent it?

FERNANDO
I didn't invent anything ...

SARI
Is that what you're going to answer
tomorrow at the exam?

FERNANDO
I did read it. And they are mammals.
They have four feet like all the
mammals.

SARI nods slowly, smiling sarcastically.

SARI
And what're you, then? What type
of animal are you?

FERNANDO realizes his mistake and shrugs:

FERNANDO
Well, I'm a four-wheeler. Can't
you see?

SARI laughs despite herself.

INT: SCHOOL CLASSROOM, PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

TWO PROFESSORS sit behind a large desk. PROFESSOR I
reads a newspaper. PROFESSOR II fidgets, glancing at
his watch.

GABY waits in her wheelchair with an electric typewriter
at its base. FLORENCIA is seated next to her. It's
quiet and uncomfortable.

SARI smokes nervously by the classroom door.

PROFESSOR II
I think we'd better start,
Mrs. Brimmer. It's almost ten.

SARI
Let me call Fernando. I'll be right back.

CUT TO:

EXT: CITY STREET AND PHONE BOOTH - DAY

SARI, seen from outside the glass enclosed phone booth,
makes a call. She begins talking calmly and gets more
and more agitated as the conversation goes on. She hangs
up furiously.

CUT TO:

INT: SCHOOL CLASSROOM, PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

SARI returns. She looks at GABY who hasn't budged.

SARI

No one answers, Gaby.

FLORENCIA arranges GABY's hair, trying to calm her.

FLORENCIA

It must be traffic.

A door is heard opening and closing in the hallway.
FLORENCIA and GABY turn to look.

Something approaches rolling over the floor. PROFESSOR II
also turns to look.

A JANITOR walks by the door pushing a bucket and mop
on casters.

GABY pushes herself back from the typewriter.

SARI turns to the PROFESSORS:

SARI

Alright. Let's start.

GABY is stunned. PROFESSOR II writes on the blackboard:
"Conjugate with personal pro-noun."

GABY makes an unintelligible verbal protest and kicks
herself away from her typewriter.

PROFESSOR I looks at SARI uncomfortably. GABY is
pushing herself toward the door.

SARI

(to Gaby)

No. Whatever happened with Fernando
will be worked out later. You're
going to start alone.

GABY continues pushing herself. FLORENCIA stands.

Both PROFESSORS are totally disconcerted.

SARI stops GABY and returns her to her place in front
of the typewriter, holding her there.

SARI

You're not going anywhere, Gabriela.
If you leave this classroom it's
all over.

GABY negates. SARI has had enough.

SARI
This isn't a goddamn game! You
either take the test or stay behind
with the others. And if you don't
see that clearly, I do!

SARI nods to the PROFESSORS:

SARI (contd)
Anytime, gentlemen.

There is some confusion between the PROFESSORS.

PROFESSOR II
You'll have to wait outside,
please.

FLORENCIA hesitates and then exits behind SARI.

CUT TO:

HALLWAY

FLORENCIA and SARI look through the classroom window.

CUT TO:

CLASSROOM

PROFESSOR II faces GABY attempting to act normally.
He clears his throat and begins to talk, accentuating
his words as though he were talking to a simpleton.

PROFESSOR II
The first subject. Conjugate
these three verbs ...

GABY gives no response whatsoever.

The PROFESSORS exchange an incredulous look.

PROFESSOR II (contd)
Personal pro-noun ... understand ... ?

GABY twists spastically. The two PROFFESORS try to
contain their discomfort.

GABY turns to see FLORENCIA.

FLORENCIA's eyes meet GABY's, as if she were telling her
something, giving her the strenght to go ahead. GABY
remains motionless, feeling that strenght, as if she were
hypnotized by FLORENCIA's dark eyes. Abruptly GABY
smiles and turns to the typewriter.

CLOSE ON GABY'S FOOT

Turning on the typewriter and, with little pause, beginning to write.

PROFESSOR II sits down, relieved. PROFESSOR I continues staring.

GABY's foot pauses for a moment, oscillating over the typewriter, and then continues writing.

FLORENCIA watches through the window. Behind her SARI smokes, also watching.

EXT: ZIMMERMAN HOUSE AND STREET - DAY

FLORENCIA pushes GABY up to the ZIMMERMAN's front door and rings the doorbell. It is a large luxurious house.

INT: ZIMMERMAN HOUSE - DAY

MRS. ZIMMERMAN approaches down a long elegant hallway.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
(surprised)
Gaby!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN'S POV - GABY AND FLORENCIA
wait in the foyer.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (OS)
Fernando isn't home. He had to have some analysis done -- he got very sick and I think it's his nerves. Some things affect him too much.

She stammers before GABY's immobility. GABY spells and FLORENCIA reads.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
Y-OU AF-FE-CT HI-M T-O-O MU-C-H.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN reacts nervously. GABY is visibly upset.

FLORENCIA (contd)
(reading)
LE-T H-I-M L-IV-E H-I-S L-I-F-E.
W-H-E-RE IS H-E?

HIDDEN CORRIDOR

FERNANDO listens without being seen. He looks exhausted and extremely upset.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (OS)
Leave him alone, Gaby. Fight your
own battle ...

CUT TO:

HALLWAY

MRS. ZIMMERMAN continues:

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (contd)
-- but don't drag along someone
who isn't as strong as you are.

FERNANDO approaches behind MRS. ZIMMERMAN without being
seen.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN (contd)
Leave him be ... please.

FERNANDO's voice surprises them.

FERNANDO
Quit the bullshit, Mom!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN turns angrily.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
What're you doing here?!

FERNANDO
(coming closer)
They wouldn't let me go, Gaby.
They've had me locked in here
-- I was gonna --

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
(interrupting)
That's not true and you know it!
He didn't want to go and he's
right.

FERNANDO explodes:

FERNANDO
It was you! You made me! You
didn't lock me up, but you kept
telling me I wouldn't be able
to do it! That it's too late,
that Dad will be furious, that
it'll just make you suffer seeing
me there! That Gaby is a brat
and a bad influence!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Fernando!! Calm down!

FLORENCIA reads what GABY has signalled during the preceeding dialogue.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
Y-O-U CA-N D-O I-T, F-ER. THE
EX-AM IS EA-SY --

FERNANDO
I can't! I can't do anything!!
Why don't we get married and I
can send my mother to hell!!
Then I could do it! But alone
it's impossible! Alone I can't
do anything!!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN takes her son into an embrace.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Don't say that! You're not alone,
my son.

FERNANDO breaks.

FERNANDO
(interrupting)
I can't!! I can't, Gaby!!
Enough!! Leave me alone! Leave
me alone!!

GABY shakes her foot in negation. MRS. ZIMMERMAN is close to tears.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
(to Gaby)
Who do you think you are?! You
don't fool me for a second! You
just push people around, use them,
because that's all you know how
to do! I'm sick of you and you don't
scare me at all!

MRS. ZIMMERMAN pushes GABY and FLORENCIA toward the door, opening it. GABY's face is wet with tears.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Out!! Take her, Florencia!! Out
of my house!!! Get her out of
here!!

FERNANDO goes wild knocking things over. He takes a lamp across a shelf of glass figurines smashing them onto the floor.

MRS. ZIMMERMAN
Fernando! Stop it! Stop it,
son!!

FLORENCIA gets GABY out of the house.

EXT: STREET AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY 1965

It's early morning. A plaque gives the name of the high school.

The BRIMMERS MERCEDES BENZ pulls up by the main entrance. FLORENCIA is driving with GABY seated beside her.

STUDENTS arrive, shouting, joking and smoking cigarettes. A STUDENT points GABY out to his BUDDY:

STUDENT
Look, here comes your girlfriend ...

FLORENCIA pushes GABY through the front double doors. It's the first day of classes.

EXT: PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL COURTYARD - DAY

The PRINCIPAL finishes his speech. A band begins to play the Mexican National Anthem somewhat out of tune.

A LARGE MASS OF STUDENTS are assembled in the courtyard. In the back, isolated as they always have been, GABY and FLORENCIA watch the proceedings. There is no other wheelchair in the entire group.

INT: JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A PROFESSOR enters the classroom haughtily, hardly glancing at the STUDENTS.

PROFESSOR
Good morning, class.

STUDENTS
(together)
Good morning, teacher.

The STUDENTS stand while the PROFESSOR arranges his books and puts on a pair of bifocals. He writes the name of a text book on the blackboard.

PROFESSOR
I want you to buy this book in addition to the text book. I don't like unique points of view or easy tests. If you pass this course it'll be because you've studied --

Turning to the CLASS he sees GABY for the first time, in her wheelchair beside FLORENCIA. He tries to contain his shock but is unable to regain his former composure. He takes off his glasses to see her better.

FLORENCIA is very embarrassed; there are murmurs, looks, giggling.

The PROFESSOR returns to his desk, uncomfortable and bothered. He reads the roll call.

PROFESSOR
Alonso?

ALONSO raises his hand.

ALONSO
Present.

PROFESSOR
Alvarez?

ALVAREZ
Present.

PROFESSOR
Benitez?

BENITEZ
Here.

PROFESSOR
Brimmer?

GABY lifts her foot, FLORENCIA responds.

FLORENCIA
Present.

All eyes turn to them. The PROFESSOR pauses briefly to glance at them anew. He returns to the roll call.

PROFESSOR
Correa?

CORREA
Here.

PROFESSOR
Devoto?

DEVOTO
Present.

EXT: COURTYARD, JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

It's recess and GABY and FLORENCIA are alone watching GROUPS OF STUDENTS talk and socialize.

FOUR GIRLS from GABY's class, about thirteen years old, watch her from a distance.

LUPE
Go for it, Terry ...

TERRY
Why me?

LUPE
You're so full of it.

TERRY
No, don't you see? They're thinking or something ...

They look at GABY and FLORENCIA who stare at the OTHER STUDENTS, bored and depressed.

LUPE approaches GABY, followed by the OTHERS. She faces FLORENCIA brazenly.

LUPE
Her name's Gabriela, huh?

FLORENCIA
Yes.

LUPE
Why's she like that?

FLORENCIA
I don't know.

GABY signals with her foot, but FLORENCIA doesn't take notice.

TERRY
How'd you get here?

FLORENCIA
We drove.

GABY bumps FLORENCIA with her foot. FLORENCIA reads what GABY signals on the board.

TERRY

Wow, check it out! She's writing!

LUPE

Was it polio?

TERRY

What you mean polio? Look at her hands, it must've been something worse. It's not contagious, is it?

FLORENCIA hasn't had a chance to speak GABY's words.

TERRY

What did she say?

FLORENCIA

She said, what are your names.

TERRY

(in a circle)

Lupe, Eugenia, Luisa and me, Terry.

LUPE

Does she hear? And understand everything?

The school bell rings. FLORENCIA nods.

TERRY

What a drag, we got to go to class. See you after school, then?

GABY makes an unequivocal yes with her foot.

FLORENCIA

She says, yes.

EXT: STREET AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

KIDS come pouring out of the door, laughing, shouting, flirting, lighting cigarettes, crowding into the street.

GABY and FLORENCIA wait next to the Mercedes, looking for --

TERRY and LUPE, who come out with a GROUP OF FRIENDS.

FLORENCIA approaches them hesitantly, but stops when she sees that --

TERRY and LUPE, having seen them waiting, walk in the opposite direction, waving goodbye as they go.

FLORENCIA is left in the middle of the street amidst the bustle of STUDENTS. She returns to GABY, and without a word, puts her into the car.

GABY stares expressionless at the milling STUDENTS.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

GABY sits motionless in front of SARI who reads to her from Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude.

GABY isn't listening.

CLOSE ON SARI -- reading. Abruptly she stops in mid-sentence and lifts her eyes.

GABY is staring at her very directly.

CLOSE ON GABY's foot nudging against SARI's calf.

SARI
Gabileyn ...

Smiling she takes the foot in her hands.

SARI (contd)
You're getting bored, aren't you?

With a subtle gesture GABY negates. SARI's expression changes.

SARI (contd)
What is it?

INT: HIGH SCHOOL BATHROOM - DAY

GABY's wheelchair is parked in front of a toilet stall, empty. TERRY and LUPE are heard talking nearby.

LUPE
I don't think it was cool.

TERRY
So, what do you know?

LUPE makes up her eyes with exquisite care in front of the mirror. Next to her, leaning against a sink, TERRY brushes her hair.

LUPE
You're a beast.

TERRY answers with the mysterious romantic air of a thirteen year old.

TERRY
You think that after all I went through with Jimmy I could still believe in love and all that crap?

GABY is carried from the toilet stall and put in her wheelchair by FLORENCIA. She is listening to the GIRL's gossip.

LUPE (OS)
I'm just warning you.

As GABY is pushed by the GIRLS she reaches out with her foot and touches TERRY.

TERRY
Hi -- Gabriela! How's it going!
Fine ... ?

GABY signals on her alphabet board, but FLORENCIA doesn't read it. LUPE watches.

LUPE
Look, Terry, she writing to us ...
(reading)
I - W-A-N-T Y-O-U T-O MA-K-E
M-E U-P.
(to Terry)
Hey, she wants us to make her up.
(to Florencia)
It's okay, isn't it?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer.

TERRY
(to Gaby)
Hey, we're gonna make you into
a knock out.

All but FLORENCIA laugh.

CUT TO:

LUPE applies lipstick to GABY's lips. GABY's mouth won't keep still and it runs over.

CUT TO:

TERRY paints GABY with purple eyeshadow.

GABY is smiling, glad of the attention.

CUT TO:

LUPE styles GABY's hair extravagantly.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA watches with contained fury.

GABY looks like a whore.

INT: HALLWAY, PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

GABY, very made-up and smiling mischievously, glides along the hallway pushed by --

FLORENCIA, angry and embarrassed by the amused looks from STUDENTS.

EXT: ISRAELI ATHLETIC CLUB - DAY

WAITERS move through the tables where CLUB MEMBERS drink and eat in bathing suits and tennis clothes. CHILDREN play, throwing each other into the pool.

MIGUEL, in tennis clothes, pushes GABY toward the pool and away from the CROWD.

GABY slows her wheelchair with her foot. MIGUEL stops.

MIGUEL
What's the matter?

GABY points with her foot: some distance away is FERNANDO, alone beneath a large tree.

MIGUEL pushes GABY toward him.

FERNANDO watches them approach blankly, as though from a dream.

MIGUEL
(arriving)
Hey, guy, how're you doing?
(beat)
Why haven't we seen you at the house?

FERNANDO doesn't answer. GABY signals on the alphabet board and MIGUEL leans over to read:

MIGUEL
 (reading)
 I-V-E M-I-S-S-E-D - Y-O-U,
 F-E-R.

FERNANDO doesn't answer. His hands tremble without his former control. Finally, unable to withstand the tension, he speaks to MIGUEL.

FERNANDO
 I've got to go -- some friends
 are waiting for me ...

He starts his electric wheelchair in the direction opposite the pool.

FERNANDO (contd)
 Goodbye, Gaby.

GABY and MIGUEL watch him go.

MONTAGE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL, AND
 UNIVERSITY

A MIGUEL looks into GABY's room. It's daytime and raining. GABY sits by the window looking out.

B FLORENCIA reads a textbook to GABY in a corner of the school courtyard. It's recess and they're alone, as usual. Suddenly GABY turns herself with her foot until her back is to FLORENCIA. FLORENCIA stops reading. STUDENTS pass and look at them.

C GABY types in her room. In a nearby chair FLORENCIA reads a textbook. She is very tired and her eyes keep closing. GABY writes without pause.

D 1966. DAVID and THREE LONG-HAIRED FRIENDS play cards, drink beer, and smoke cigarettes. GABY is discovered sitting next to FLORENCIA who holds her cards so she can see. Laughter and an intimate atmosphere. GABY is accepted here.

E FLORENCIA carries GABY in her wheelchair up a flight of stairs. STUDENTS pass and watch but no one offers help.

F MIGUEL explains something to GABY from an illustrated textbook. FLORENCIA listens attentively behind her.

G 1967. SARI reads a typed page which she returns to FLORENCIA. She smiles approvingly.

H GABY's foot typing.

I Junior high school graduation. The PRINCIPAL indicates a GROUP OF STUDENTS seated on a raised platform, GABY is among them.

PRINCIPAL (OS)

I want especially to congratulate the students who have excelled beyond what was demanded of them for the past three years. They've shown discipline and imagination and entered into the stronghold of knowledge.

PARENTS claps throughout the CROWD, among them SARI and MIGUEL. FLORENCIA stands near the platform watching proudly.

J A graduation dinner at the BRIMMER's house celebrating GABY. MIGUEL, SARI, DAVID, OTTO, BETTY, GABY, FLORENCIA and VARIOUS OTHERS are present. GABY is seated at the head of the table. A toast is offered -- all stand. GABY smiles, happy.

K 1968. Archway with the engraved name of a HIGH SCHOOL.

L FLORENCIA, trying with extreme concentration to copy a trigonometry exercise in a high school classroom. GABY sits next to her in her wheelchair looking on.

M 1970. University of Mexico. Entrance with murals and escutcheon.

N FLORENCIA searching for GABY's name in a list of students enrolled under the heading: "Journalism." GABY is next to her in her wheelchair with books piled in her lap. STUDENTS go by and stare as always.

INT: UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - DAY

A dignified PROFESSOR lectures to his CLASS. GABY and FLORENCIA are in the front row.

PROFESSOR

... thus the world around us is experienced as a series of instructions, which, as they're "communicated" to us -- and I'm referring to biological information as well as cultural -- function in a manner not dissimilar to the program of a computer ...

GABY listens with an expression of disagreement. She nudges FLORENCIA with her foot and FLORENCIA raises her hand.

The PROFESSOR finishes.

PROFESSOR

... Norbert Wiener has described the world as "billions of messages which are available to whoever takes interest" ...

(he sees Florencia's raised hand)

Any questions ... ?

GABY signals on the alphabet board. FLORENCIA reads aloud with her glasses on.

FLORENCIA

(reading)

A - C-OM-PU-T-E-R F-R-O-G-R-A-M
I-S D-E-S-I-G-N-ED T-O E-E
U-T-I-L-I-Z-ED BY A - MA-CH-I-NE.
O-N T-H-E OT-H-E-R HA-N-D, T-H-E
W-OR-L-D-S IN-F O-R-M-A-T-I-O-N
IS IN-T-E-R-P-R-E-T-E-D S-U-B-J-E-CT-
IV-EL-Y BY E-A-CH O-NE O-F US --
H-O-W-E-V-E-R W-E AR-E A-B-LE ...

There is unrest and discomfort as the STUDENTS wait for GABY to finish. LUIS, a striking young man, in sixties dress, watches the spectacle with interest from the back of the classroom.

The PROFESSOR responds tolerantly.

PROFESSOR

That's a level we're not interested in, Miss Brimmer. Take, for example, Pavlov's dog, which has been proven experimentally: as it sees the circle or ellipse, the dog knows they mean pain or pleasure, and for the time being, are very important for his survival --

LUIS has raised his hand. He stands and interrupts the PROFESSOR.

LUIS

Excuse me, sir. But your examples are tendentious and they negate the cultural, social and historic aspects of perception and communication.

The PROFESSOR throws his chalk against his desk.

PROFESSOR
Examples! Please, illustrate
your arguments with examples ...

FLORENCIA raises her hand. The CLASS looks on.

PROFESSOR
(not pleased)
Yes, well ...?

FLORENCIA
Gabriela says she has examples.

LUIS smiles, amused. The PROFESSOR gives an involuntary
gesture of forced patience.

FLORENCIA
(reading, her glasses on)
Y-o-u a-r-e a-n --
(she reads in silence, feeling
embarrassed)

PROFESSOR
Go ahead. What is she saying?

FLORENCIA doesn't respond.

GABY kicks FLORENCIA with her left foot and spells on the
board.

FLORENCIA hesitates.

The PROFESSOR gets upset.

LUIS looks at him. Then back at GABY and FLORENCIA.

FLORENCIA gazes at the PROFESSOR.

PROFESSOR
Come on, we're waiting for you.

GABY kicks her again.

FLORENCIA reads outloudly, very embarrassed.

FLORENCIA
 (reading, her glasses on)
 Y-O-U A-R-E A-N EX-A-M-P-L-E,
 M-Y DE-A-R PR-O-F-E-SS-O-R.

The STUDENTS' faces are passed over one by one, as GABY's monologue continues.

FLORENCIA (contd)
 (reading)
 I-F Y-O-U F-U-C-T-I-O-N-E-D A-S
 W-E-L-L A-S A C-O-M-P-U-T-E-R
 Y-O-U-D P-R-O-G-R-A-M TH-E D-A-T-A
 I G-I-V-E Y-O-U, B-U-T N-O.
 D-O-N-T W-O-R-R-Y M-O-S-T P-E-O-P-L-E
 O-N T-H-I-S P-LA-N-E-T D-O-N-T
 W-A-N-T T-O I-N-TE-R-P-R-E-T A-N-Y
 I-N-F-OR-M-A-T-I-O-N E-X-C-E-P-T
 W-H-AT T-H-E-Y F-I-N-D A-C-C-E-P-T
 A-B-L-E. T-O-O B-A-D B-U-T I-M
 H-E-R-E T-O P-U-T I-T B-E-F-O-R-E
 Y-O-U-R N-O-S-E-S E-V-E-R-Y D-A-Y,
 M-Y F-R-I-E-N-D-S.

There is a strange embarrassed laughter when GABY and FLORENCIA finish.

LUIS smiles at them from across the classroom.

FLORENCIA sits down, feeling very uncomfortable.

INT: UNIVERSITY HALLWAY AND STAIRWELL - DAY

STUDENTS pour out of the classroom. FLORENCIA pushes GABY down the hall, toward the stairwell.

LUIS edges forward to catch up to them. As he reaches them, FLORENCIA lifts GABY in her wheelchair, preparing to go down stairs.

LUIS

Hi, Gabriela, my name is Luis.
Listen, you were great with that
pedantic ass. They're not used
to people thinking here.

FLORENCIA begins slowly descending the stairs with GABY
and the wheelchair in her arms.

LUIS

(to Florencia)

-- Can I give you a hand?

He takes hold of the other side of the wheelchair.

FLORENCIA

No, thank you, it's easier
alone.

She leaves him standing on the stairs. LUIS watches and
then calls after them.

LUIS

Maybe another day we could get
together. I'd really like to
talk to you, Gabriela.

GABY makes an affirmative gesture with her foot. LUIS
catches it and decides to follow them.

LUIS

(to Florencia)

What's your name?

FLORENCIA

Florencia Morales.

GABY listens.

LUIS

Have you been with Gaby a long
time, Florencia?

FLORENCIA

Well, yes.

FLORENCIA's unresponsiveness makes LUIS ill at ease.
OTHER STUDENTS go by watching the encounter. They reach
the exit doors. GABY tries to vocalize, but FLORENCIA
pushes her out obliviously, leaving LUIS behind.

INT: MERCEDES BENZ - RUNNING SHOT - DAY

GABY and FLORENCIA return from the university. FLORENCIA
speaks sternly as she drives. GABY ignores her.

FLORENCIA

You shouldn't say those kind of things to the professor. Or do you think that someone is really going to care about you just because you're able to say a couple of pretty intelligent things?

GABY lifts her foot and turns the car radio on as loud as it gets. FLORENCIA snaps it off immediately.

FLORENCIA

What do you want to do? Make the same mistake twice?

GABY again turns the radio up full blast, leaving her foot firmly planted against the dial.

FLORENCIA tries to turn it off, but she has to concentrate on driving. The noise is painful.

FLORENCIA steers the car to the side of the street.

EXT: BUSY CITY STREET - DAY

The Mercedes Benz pulls over abruptly. FLORENCIA gets out and walks away.

Inside, with the radio still on full blast, GABY sits absurdly still holding the dial with her foot.

FLORENCIA waits in front of the car. PEOPLE yell at them for blocking traffic.

Suddenly the horn begins honking continuously. FLORENCIA ignores it, but as PEOPLE gather to look, she reaches in and removes the car keys. The horn is cut off, but the radio continues full blast. FLORENCIA waits with her arms crossed, indifferent to the PEOPLE and traffic. GABY sits inside with tears streaking down her face.

INT: UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - ANOTHER DAY

GABY and FLORENCIA sit together at a long desk studying.

GABY has a reference book open on her lap. There is an oppressive silence in the huge library.

LUIS has seen them from an adjacent desk. He comes over.

LUIS

Gaby, I wanted to see if you were interested in doing that essay for tomorrow together -- on Marshall McLuhan ... What do you think?

GABY turns to FLORENCIA and vocalizes a loud protest. Several STUDENTS turn to look at them.

GABY angrily indicates the spot where her alphabet board is usually fixed to her wheelchair. It's not there.

LUIS looks at FLORENCIA inquisitively.

LUIS

Where's the board she had?

FLORENCIA

I didn't bring it today.

LUIS

But why not?

GABY vocalizes another loud protest. The LIBRARIAN turns disapprovingly with the OTHERS. FLORENCIA is extremely embarrassed.

FLORENCIA

It's just I forgot. I had to carry so many books ...

GABY looks at LUIS impotently. LUIS intimates the situation.

INT: DINING ROOM - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA stands next to GABY attempting to feed her, but GABY turns her head, refusing to eat.

MIGUEL stops eating to watch them.

SARI and DAVID also take notice.

SARI

What's the matter, Poupee -- Florencia?

FLORENCIA doesn't answer. GABY pushes herself backwards, away from the table. SARI leans over to see GABY signaling on her alphabet board.

SARI

(reading)

F-L-O-R-E-N-C-I-A C-O-N-T-R-O-L-S
M-E. S-H-E W-O-N-T L-E-T M-E
L-I-V-E ...

GABY's words have affected everyone.

SARI

What's the matter, Nanny?

FLORENCIA stares at the table without answering.

SARI

(reading)

S-H-E A-S-P-HYX-I-A-T-E-S M-E.

I- C-A-N-T -- S-T-A-N-D -- H-E-R

A-N-Y-M-O-R-E.

The eating ceases. No one knows what to say.

SARI

Gaby?

FLORENCIA's discomfort increases.

SARI (contd)

(reading)

S-H-E I-S- J-E-A-L-O-U-S-- O-F-

P-E-O-P-L-E W-H-O -- G-E-T -

C-LO-S-E - T-O - M-E.

FLORENCIA leaves the table and goes to the kitchen, closing the door behind her.

SARI

Nanny! Come back.

FLORENCIA doesn't answer. MIGUEL observes in silence.

SARI

Don't you think you're exaggerating, darling?

GABY negates with her foot.

SARI

(to MIGUEL)

I think this has to do with Florencia; she doesn't have anyone outside of the house, no friends, boyfriend, nobody that I know of --

INT: KITCHEN - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA listens SARI's voice (OS)

SARI (OS) (contd)

And besides, I can understand why the problems start now at the University.

DAVID (OS)

So what do you want, Gaby? Do you want Mom to take you to classes?

INT: DINNING ROOM - BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI is annoyed but ignores DAVID.

SARI

Gaby is growing, Michel. And it's hard for Florencia to keep up.

DAVID

(very sarcastic)

Of course! It's almost impossible! You know, the most brilliant minds of the Twentieth Century are Jewish ... so --

SARI

David, stop it!

MIGUEL rings the little bell, summoning the maids.

DAVID

That's what you're always saying, Mom. And that it's proven, too.

SARI

I'm not talking about that.

DAVID

Then what're you talking about?

MIGUEL rings the bell again. No one comes. Finally, FLORENCIA opens the door and speaks from there.

FLORENCIA

Yes, sir ...

MIGUEL

Come here, please.

FLORENCIA goes to the table hesitantly. MIGUEL takes her wrist in his hand. SARI is nonplussed.

MIGUEL

Florencia ...

FLORENCIA glances quickly at GABY.

MIGUEL (contd)

... you're fired ...

No one can believe it. FLORENCIA tries to go, but MIGUEL detains her by the wrist.

SARI
Michel! What're you doing!

MIGUEL
(ignoring Sari)
I suppose it's true that you no longer understand Gaby's classes?

A heavy silence.

MIGUEL (contd)
Why are you here, Florencia?
Why have you stayed all these years?

GABY signals on the alphabet board but no one looks.

MIGUEL
Because you don't have anyone.
Is that why?
(glances at Gaby)
Is that why you take her to the University, dress her, bathe her, feed her day in and day out ... ?

FLORENCIA breaks apart.

FLORENCIA
No, sir. The people who are friendly to Gaby just do it out of morbid curiosity and then they leave. It's always been that way, ever since junior high.

MIGUEL
And what did you expect? That they approach her out of divine inspiration or what?

MIGUEL's words cut her off. SARI is ready to break as well. All composure is gone at the table.

MIGUEL
Sit down and eat, Florencia.

FLORENCIA
No thank you, sir. I'm not hungry.

MIGUEL
Sit down, please, for once.

FLORENCIA goes back to GABY's side instead. She is about to continue feeding her.

MIGUEL (contd)
No. You sit down and eat.

FLORENCIA obeys and sits next to GABY.

MIGUEL (contd)
Go ahead, serve yourself.

FLORENCIA does so with all eyes on her.

MIGUEL (contd)
Sarileyn. Feed Gaby. Please.

SARI comes next to GABY and begins to feed her very awkwardly. GABY looks at her FATHER without understanding. Silence.

INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA washes dishes.

SARI looks in the swinging door. Their eyes meet for an instant. FLORENCIA lowers hers immediately.

SARI
Is there any coffee made?

FLORENCIA answers dryly:

FLORENCIA
No.

SARI doesn't know what to say. She finally exits in silence.

FLORENCIA continues washing dishes.

EXT: ROOF, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

Morning time. White sheets hanging from a rope. There is no one around. Just a slight wind.

INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI enters the kitchen looking for FLORENCIA

SARI
Florenxia ... Nanny ...

She sees a couple of empty milk bottles on the floor. Something's wrong. She turns around.

EXT: PATIO AND SERVANTS QUARTERS, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI opens FLORENCIA's room door to find out FLORENCIA is gone.

The walls are empty. The wardrobe too.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY is looking at the window, on her wheelchair

GABY'S POV

The window with the curtains closed. FLORENCIA'S bed is empty.

SARI opens the door, anguished.

GABY turns to see her.

SARI
What happened? Where's Florencia?

GABY doesn't answer.

SARI
She left, didn't she?

GABY doesn't move.

SARI sees a puddle beneath the wheelchair. GABY has urinated in her clothes.

SARI stares at the puddle, blankly.

EXT: DUSTY ROAD, MAQUIXCO - DAY

A beaten up OLD BUS stops surrounded by a cloud of dust.

An OLD WOMAN carrying a card board box, gets off.

A COUNTRY MAN and his WIFE carrying a handful of squawking chicken, get on.

The BRIMMER'S CAR approaches stumbling on the uneven road.

MIGUEL drives. GABY is by his side.

A road signal indicates the name of the town: "MAQUIXCO"

It's a small town, almost uninhabited. Just a few adobe buildings lost in a wide desertic zone.

MIGUEL stops the CAR while the BUS leaves.

EXT: FLORENCIA'S HOUSE - DAY

It's an adobe building. MIGUEL knocks at the door. He checks the address in his note-book and turns to see the surroundings. There's only the wind blowing along the lonely and dusty streets.

GABY waits inside the CAR.

A nine years old Indian girl opens the door and stares at MIGUEL.

MIGUEL

Does the Morales family live here?

The GIRL doesn't respond. She looks at MIGUEL for a while and closes back the door.

MIGUEL turns to see GABY.

- The door opens. A grey haired Mexican Indian comes out. He is DON LORENZO MORALES, FLORENCIA'S FATHER.

MIGUEL

Good afternoon, sir. We're looking for Florencia Morales. Does she live here?

DON LORENZO looks at MIGUEL and turns to see GABY. Then back to MIGUEL.

DON LORENZO

I'm Lorenzo Morales, at your service.

INT: FLORENCIA'S HOUSE - DAY

DOÑA MARIA is cooking mexican tortillas on a rural cooking stove. She's FLORENCIA's mother.

DON LORENZO and MIGUEL are talking by the table.

MIGUEL

--Yes, we got here in nineteen forty two on Veracruz.

DON LORENZO

(remembering)

-- Forty two -- nineteen forty two --

(to his wife)

Where were we in nineteen forty two?

DOÑA MARIA
I was here, you were in Mexico City.

DON LORENZO
That's right. I went there to see if
we could improve. But it didn't work
out. It was just the same. That radio
over there was all I brought back.
(he points an old radio)
And it's still working.

GABY is on her wheelchair, surrounded by three CHILDREN
who stare at her with curiosity.
FLORENCIA is next to GABY, feeling awkward, nervous.

MIGUEL (OS)
And why did people leave this town?

DON LORENZO
Because here you never know when it is
going to rain or when will the Government
care about us. So, people just prefer to
go to Mexico City to try out --

DOÑA MARIA interrupts them. She handles two plates with
"tacos" to MIGUEL.

DOÑA MARIA
Please serve yourself, Mr Brimmer.
(she looks at GABY)
Miss Gaby --

GABY is shaken by a spasm.

The CHILDREN are amazed.

FLORENCIA hesitates.

MIGUEL stands up holding GABY's plate.

FLORENCIA also stands up.

FLORENCIA
I'll feed Gaby, sir.

GABY gazes at FLORENCIA.

FLORENCIA takes the plate and sits beside GABY. She starts
feeding her in front of her own family.
Everyone is staring at them.
MIGUEL smiles.

EXT. MAQUIXCO STREETS - DAY

FLORENCIA slowly pushes GABY in the wheelchair alone the lonely streets.

FLORENCIA

I can't go back, Gaby. Your parents have been very good to me, and I owe them a lot. But your mother is right. I can't keep on going to the University with you. You need someone with more education than me.

GABY verbalizes unintelligibly, shaking herself.

FLORENCIA

No, Gaby. I've already helped you as much as I could, if I go on with you I won't be helpful any more. I could even be an obstacle for you

GABY vocalizes again, spasmodically.

FLORENCIA stops pushing the wheelchair and looks at GABY's alphabet board.

FLORENCIA

What do you want?

FLORENCIA waits.

GABY moves her left foot slowly until she reaches and scratches her right ankle.

FLORENCIA is becoming impatient.

GABY's foot stops.

FLORENCIA

We better go back home. Your father may be worried about you.

GABY's foot spells on the alphabet board.

FLORENCIA

(reading)

F-o-r-g-i-v-e m-e, N-a-n-n-y

FLORENCIA remains silent. GABY stares at the floor.

FLORENCIA

There's nothing you have to be sorry about. You didn't do anything wrong. Things are the way they are and that's it.

GABY's foot springs toward the alphabet board.

FLORENCIA

(reading)

T-h-e-n I w-i-l-l s-t-a-y h-e-r-e

w-h-i-t-h y-o-u i-n M-a-q-u-i-x-c-o.

I b-r-o-u-g-h-t m-y s-u-i-t-c-a-s-e.

FLORENCIA remains silent, utterly moved.

INT: ENTRANCE BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

The street door is opened. GABY enters on her wheelchair, smiling. Her suitcase is on her knees. FLORENCIA comes behind pushing the wheelchair. MIGUEL comes after them.

SARI stands in front of the door, utterly moved. She leans to kiss GABY.

SARI

Poupée, my Gabyleyn.

SARI looks at FLORENCIA with a warm smile.

SARI

Florencia --

She intends to embrace her but FLORENCIA remains cold with no smile, no friendly attitude, nothing. SARI kisses her, feeling the distance.

SARI

Welcome back, Flor--

FLORENCIA

Thank you, Mrs. Sari.

She enters pushing GABY's chair while SARI kisses and embraces MIGUEL, both watching GABY and FLORENCIA as they enter the house together.

EXT: UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - DAY

FLORENCIA locks the CAR and pushes GABY through the dense aisles of parked CARS. Their path zig-zags toward the University entrance.

LUIS sees them from a distance. He goes into the parking lot to intercept them.

LUIS

Florencia!

GABY looks for him. LUIS comes up an aisle of CARS.

LUIS
Hello, Gabriela. Where have you
been? How's it going, Florencia?
I've got something for you since
several days ago. Has Gaby been sick
or something?

Before they can reply he shows her a silver plated
chain with clips on each end.

LUIS (contd)
I'd like to talk. Class doesn't
start for fifteen minutes.

FLORENCIA looks at the little chain suspiciously.

LUIS (contd)
Let me see your glasses.

FLORENCIA hesitates but gives him her glasses. LUIS
affixes the clips to the ends while GABY and FLORENCIA
look on. Then, without hesitating, he puts the chain
over FLORENCIA's head so that the glasses hang on her
chest.

LUIS (contd)
Good invention, huh?

GABY laughs and stretches in her wheelchair. She then
signals on the alphabet board. FLORENCIA reads:

FLORENCIA
(reading)
Thank you, Luis.

FLORENCIA smiles, embarrassed.

FLORENCIA
Yes, thank you. I'm sorry.

LUIS smiles too.

LUIS
No problem.

He shows the contents of a manilla folder to GABY.
Inside are various newspaper clippings.

LUIS
This is for you to read, Gaby.
They're articles I've gotten
published. See what you think.

He leaves the folder on her lap.

LUIS (contd)
Okay. I won't hold you up.
Be seeing you in class -- bye,
Florenxia.

LUIS goes quickly, making his way through the parked cars.

FLORENCIA, surprised and ashamed, glances at GABY who responds with a mocking smile.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA, her glasses dangling from the chain, looks through the clippings LUIS gave GABY. She shows one to GABY, but GABY negates with her foot.

A soft light illuminates the typewriter at GABY's feet with a half-written page in the carriage. It is very quiet.

FLORENCIA shows her another clipping which GABY reads intently. She turns on the typewriter and writes while FLORENCIA holds the clipping for her to see.

CLOSE ON GABY

concentrating.

Suddenly, from the BRIMMER's bedroom, SARI's voice is heard.

SARI (OS)
(desperately)
Michel!! Michel!!

FLORENCIA listens in shock. GABY stops writing.

SARI (OS, contd)
Oh, God, no!! Please! Nanny!!
Florenxia!! Michel!

FLORENCIA runs from the room, leaving the contents of the folder scattered on the floor.

SARI (OS, contd)
Michel!! Oh, no!! Michel!!
Nanny!! Come quickly!!

GABY turns off the typewriter.

GABY'S POV:

FLORENCIA crosses in front of the door running down the hall and stairs. Voices, shouting, the phone rings.

GABY tries to push herself through the door with her foot, but the chair wedges against something, leaving her stuck. Doors slamming, the car starting, SARI crying, the phone keeps ringing.

EXT: JEWISH CEMETERY - DAY

Tombs with the Star of David. A GROUP OF MOURNERS at MIGUEL's grave. The MEN wear yarmulkes. An old TURKISH RABBI presides over the ceremony.

DAVID, next to SARI, reads from the Kaddish. Gradually WE DISCOVER BETTY, OTTO, MR. AND MRS. ZIMMERMAN, and VARIOUS OTHERS. Behind them, alone, stands FLORENCIA with a rosary in her hands, praying.

GABY isn't present.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

Beethoven's Fourth Concerto on the record player at high volume. The phone rings incessantly.

GABY, alone and upset, sits in her wheelchair in front of the garden window.

The record ends. Automatically it begins again. The phone stops ringing.

GABY stares outside. Broken sunlight comes through the trees. The music commences anew.

LATER - NIGHT

A mirror reflects the living room in semi-darkness. GABY is alone in the same place. The music continues.

BETTY and BERTA cover the mirror with a black cloth, quietly, carefully.

Another mirror is also covered.

LATER STILL

OTTO and BETTY come in the front door. There are VARIOUS FRIENDS in the living room and SARI is seated between them. Low voices, low light, silence. BETTY and OTTO come in and kiss SARI affectionately.

SARI glances up at --

FLORENCIA coming downstairs to the kitchen.

SARI follows her with her eyes.

INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA puts the kettle on the stove. SARI comes in behind her.

SARI leans against the counter not knowing what to say.

SARI
Where's Gaby?

FLORENCIA
Upstairs.

SARI looks for FLORENCIA's eyes but FLORENCIA won't look at her.

SARI
She's got to go to the University tomorrow.

FLORENCIA
Tomorrow is Sunday, Mother.

SARI nods.

FLORENCIA watches the flames on the stove. SARI watches her, wanting to go to her.

SARI
He really loved you.

FLORENCIA comes to SARI, taking her into an embrace and not letting go.

SARI
What're we going to do now?
What're we going to do, Nanny?

FLORENCIA holds her silently. Someone looks in the swinging door and then lets it close.

INT: SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

The hall is empty. From the living room SARI is heard talking.

SARI (OS)
I can't do it, Betty. It's too much responsibility to bear alone -- with Michel it was different. Gaby wouldn't have been able to do what she's done without him. It's too much
(MORE)

SARI (OS, contd)
responsibility. David should
have the opportunity to go to
Israel. He has his life to live --

GABY appears, awkwardly pushing herself through her
doorway into the hall, listening.

BETTY (OS)
It'll all work out, Sari. You
need to rest.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

DAVID enters, as OTTO, SARI and BETTY have tea in
the living room. SARI and BETTY are in black.

FLORENCIA brings out cookies and clears the dishes.

OTTO
Well, if you won't come to San
Francisco, think about the
retirement home in Cuernavaca.
It's not just any place, it's a
good Jewish establishment with
an excellent reputation. The
director is a friend and he'll
help us.

DAVID
You're still thinking about that?
I don't see how you could imagine
putting Gaby away with that
bunch of senile refugees.

BETTY
We have to be practical, David.
Who'll be responsible for Gaby's
future? You? From Israel?

DAVID
That has nothing to do with it.
What's happening here, Mom?
(raising his voice)
I can't figure you out. You've
spent so many years fighting so
that Gaby would be the finest
handicapped woman alive, the
Mexican Helen Keller, and now
all over a sudden you want to
stick her into an asylum. So much
effort on everyone's part to
end with this?

FLORENCIA listens to DAVID's words and stops at the
kitchen door.

SARI
(Spanish)
I haven't decided anything!

BETTY
(English)
Your mother needs support, David.
She's tired and so is Florencia.
What we're proposing is fair for
everyone. Your father's absence
is going to be felt very strongly
and soon. And someday Florencia
and Sari will be gone, too. Let
her decide what's right -- unless
you're willing to stay in Mexico
and care for your sister.

INT: SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY has listened to the entire conversation.

INT: CAFETERIA, UNIVERSITY - DAY

STUDENTS grouped at tables, talking, drinking coffee,
laughing, in a smoke heavy, noisy tile room.

LUIS at a table with other RADICALS, talking excitedly.

FLORENCIA enters looking for LUIS with perplexity.

She spots him and brings GABY to a nearby table.
FLORENCIA goes to LUIS's table and stands there until
the conversation ceases and all eyes are on her.

FLORENCIA
Excuse me, Luis. Gaby asked
me to invite you for a coffee ...
(beat)
Now. She's over there.

LUIS'S FRIENDS look with curiosity at FLORENCIA, LUIS
and GABY.

GABY watches from the other table.

CUT TO:

LUIS has joined them at the other table. FLORENCIA
gives GABY some coffee.

LUIS
So what's happening, Gaby?

GABY reaches out with her foot and LUIS shakes it as if it were a hand, smiling. GABY begins signalling on her alphabet. FLORENCIA reads.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
I N-E-E-D A- J-O-B ...

LUIS isn't sure what she means.

LUIS
A job?

GABY affirms with her foot.

LUIS pauses to think.

LUIS
(to himself)
A job.
(to Gaby)
What kind of a job?

GABY twists in a spasm of enthusiasm. Several PEOPLE turn to look. LUIS smiles, somewhat uncomfortable.

GABY signals, FLORENCIA reads:

FLORENCIA
(reading, stumbling a little)
N-O-T A-S A B-O-L-S-H-O-I
BA-L-LE-R-I-N-A, D-A-R-L-I-N-G.

INT: LUIS'S APARTMENT - DAY

FLORENCIA looks around, curious and embarrassed by the chaotic student lifestyle: cigarette butts, beer bottles, typewriter on the floor, books and magazines everywhere, a mattress on the floor, and revolutionary posters on the walls.

LUIS talks on the phone as she looks.

LUIS
(over the phone)
-- Well, you can stop looking.
I've got someone who'll write
that cultural column and do a
great job.

LUIS winks at GABY, his arm around her.

HECTOR (OS)
(over phone)
Have him come in tomorrow at
lunchtime.

LUIS
That's gonna be tough ... You'll
have to trust me on this one.

HECTOR (OS)
(over phone)
Are you fucking around or what?

LUIS
Hey, wait a minute -- slow down
there, who do you think you're
dealing with?

HECTOR (OS)
(over the phone)
How'm I supposed to hire somebody
I haven't met?

LUIS
You give me the topic and I'll
give you a sample column next
week, alright? Just so you can
see the quality.

HECTOR (OS)
(over the phone,
sarcastic)
Give me a break. Alright. You're
responsible, though. Give me a
call tonight.

LUIS
Okay, chief.

He hangs up with a conspiratorial smile.

LUIS
(to Gaby)
It ain't gonna be easy. Just
imagine when he finds out that
on top of it you're Jewish and
a woman.

GABY lays her foot on LUIS's knee. He takes it in
his hands smiling.

FLORENCIA looks on blankly.

MONTAGE: (SOUND OF GABY'S TYPING OVER)

A GABY's foot writing energetically.

B FLORENCIA reading Marshall McLuhan with difficulty.
GABY listens, attentive.

C GABY and FLORENCIA in the University library. A LIBRARIAN brings a pile of reference books. FLORENCIA takes them away.

D GABY typing.

E A bookstore. GABY indicates a book with her foot. FLORENCIA buys it.

INT: NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

HECTOR, a young man in a fashionable suit, looks through a few typewritten pages on his desk. LUIS seated opposite him, smokes a cigarette.

HECTOR

This is very strange, but it's interesting. It comes close to being corny, but somehow about half-way through it takes off and really grabs you. Pretty profound stuff. How old is this guy, anyway?

LUIS

Not a guy.

HECTOR's tone changes.

HECTOR

A girl ... of course. I should've known.

LUIS

Not quite.

HECTOR

She from the University?

(raises eyebrows)

Nice ... ?

LUIS decides to play along.

LUIS

She'll be here any minute. You tell me what you think.

HECTOR

(slyly)

Well, if we give her the spot she'll have to have a change of style ... You get my meaning ... ?

Someone knocks.

LUIS

She's here.

HECTOR

(straightening his tie)

Come in.

The SECRETARY looks in.

SECRETARY

Gabriela Brimmer, sir.

HECTOR

Send her in.

The SECRETARY leaves. FLORENCIA pushes GABY into the room in her wheelchair.

HECTOR is dumbfounded. He doesn't know which of them is GABY.

LUIS stands.

LUIS

This is Gabriela Brimmer and her companion Florencia Morales. Gaby; Hector Bulle Goyri, Director of the Cultural Section.

GABY lifts her foot in a gesture of greeting. HECTOR responds half-reaching out, absolutely nonplussed.

EXT: OLD AGE HOME - DAY

Sign in Hebrew and Spanish:

"CUERNAVACA HOME FOR THE ELDERLY"

A NURSE pushes a VERY OLD WOMAN in a wheelchair through the tropical compound gardens.

Other ELDERLY MEN and WOMEN, all EUROPEAN JEWS, are scattered about on benches out of the sun. Some talk to themselves, others sleep, read or just stare into space.

BETTY and SARI walk together to an area in the rear of the grounds where a small single floor dwelling is being built.

BETTY

(German)

You'd just have to furnish it and make it cozy. No stairs -- and it has a special bathroom for

(MORE)

BETTY (contd)
Gaby. It's perfect. The architect will take care of everything. I think this is the best thing Otto and I could give you.

SARI looks at the walls doubtfully. She turns on seeing the NURSE and the OLD WOMAN go by.

INT: HALL AND STAIRWELL, UNIVERSITY - DAY

LUIS climbs the stairs two at a time. He almost knocks over a PROFESSOR and TWO STUDENTS who round the corner in casual conversation. He catches GABY and FLORENCIA just before they enter a classroom.

LUIS
(out of breath)
Gaby, Flor ...

They stop and turn.

LUIS (contd)
They're gonna publish it, Gaby!
A few minor changes and that's it.

GABY laughs and her body arches in a spasm of joy.

LUIS
The whole editorial staff was knocked out, asking who you are, where you came from ... Hector is saying they'll lose their jobs if they're not careful.

FLORENCIA and GABY both smile as they listen to LUIS. GABY tries to vocalize but LUIS can't understand her. FLORENCIA translates:

FLORENCIA
She wants to know when to write the next one.

LUIS
(taken aback)
Wait a minute, baby, it's not that easy. Do you know how many people here would kill to have an article published?

GABY answers with silence. LUIS is getting annoyed.

LUIS

What did you expect? To start off as the senior columnist at the Excelsior? You've got to pay your dues. Like anybody else.

GABY vocalizes again. FLORENCIA doesn't answer LUIS right away.

FLORENCIA

She says she doesn't understand.

LUIS

Doesn't understand? They're going to publish your article with a few changes!

GABY negates with her foot. She meets his eyes.

LUIS

No what? Your work is good, that's why they took it.

GABY speaks again unintelligibly.

FLORENCIA

She says no, they're doing it out of pity.

LUIS

You're wrong. Newspapers aren't that generous. If they want it, it's because they can use it.

He looks GABY in the eye. Again she negates with her foot.

LUIS

What you don't understand is that there's a big difference between a single article and a weekly column. When it gets down to the line they want to hire someone who's less controversial -- that's it.

LUIS looks to FLORENCIA for support, then to GABY.

LUIS

You've got to understand that when you're dealing with a weekly column they get very touchy.

INT: LUIS'S CAR, RUNNING SHOT - NIGHT

LUIS drives an older, rattling VW Bug. GABY sits next to him in the front seat. The wheelchair is folded in back with a lot of books and junk. FLORENCIA isn't there.

LUIS

What a mess. You should've told me from the beginning you wanted to become independent. We could've done things differently. I could be your front man and you could write with a pseudonym -- Gabilondo or something ...

GABY laughs at the idea.

LUIS (contd)

That's not bad: Gabilondo -- see, it's just a matter of finding the right angle. Things work out.

LUIS drives through light traffic relieved that GABY's mood is on the upswing. GABY extends her foot upward in an enthusiastic affirmative gesture on realizing that LUIS's proposition is a possibility.

LUIS (contd)

Let's celebrate the new partnership -- Hold on there, Gabilondo.

LUIS does a sudden u-turn practically throwing GABY off her seat. GABY laughs happily and LUIS holds her shoulder as he drives.

INT: TROPICAL DANCING CLUB - NIGHT

A TROPICAL BAND plays "salsa" music as a packed dance floor bobs to the music.

LUIS pushes GABY into the crowd of DANCING COUPLES in her wheelchair. PEOPLE turn to look in bewilderment. As they pass through the throng, a FESTIVE MAN, a little drunker than the others, takes GABY's wheelchair from LUIS and dances with it toward the center of the floor, making her zig-zag to the music. The FESTIVE MAN'S COMPANION takes LUIS by the hand and they dance nearby. LUIS is clumsy and has trouble keeping up but is having a great time. GABY laughs in ecstasy.

INT: KITCHEN, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA knits at the kitchen table, making an effort to stay awake. Her look is lost in worry.

EXT: BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

SARI parks the car and gets out carrying a large envelope.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA reads to GABY, somewhat haltingly.

SARI barges into the room carrying two large graphic drawings.

SARI
I got the drawings of inside of
the house -- look.

She shows them to GABY and FLORENCIA.

SARI (contd)
There'll be a little bar over
here, the stereo goes here, and
this will be a library type niche.

SARI realizes that her enthusiasm is lost on them.

SARI (contd)
-- it's a beautiful house with
a view of the gardens. When you
see it you'll love it -- believe
me.

GABY does not respond at all.

SARI (contd)
It's for the best, Poupée.

GABY speaks unintelligibly. SARI shakes her head.

SARI (contd)
I don't understand, Gaby.
(beat)
I want you to consider one thing:
what'll happen when I'm gone? Tell
me, what'll you do then?

GABY signals on her alphabet board, FLORENCIA reads.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
I'll become a whore.

SARI
I'm serious, Gabylein.

GABY continues signaling.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
So am I.

SARI
I'm tired of your whims! You
can't always do what you want --
you've got to think about Nanny
and me; we're tired.

GABY signals, FLORENCIA reads.

FLORENCIA
(reading)
Y-O-U D-ON-T R-E-A-L-I-Z-E
T-H-A-T I- CA-N G-E-T - A -J-O-B
A-N-D -E-V-E-N H-A-V-E - A -
CH-I-L-D - I-F I- W-A-N-T.

SARI tries to get ahold of herself, trying not to hurt
her DAUGHTER.

SARI
Nanny, you never talk. Speak
your thoughts for once.

FLORENCIA
I don't know, Mommy. I don't
know what Gaby needs --

GABY turns toward FLORENCIA in anger.

SARI
No, Nanny. You have to say what
you think. Not what you're
supposed to say. This is a decision
the three of us should make
together. And it's either one
way or the other.

GABY's foot lashes out, kicking SARI in the thigh.
SARI cries out in pain and then grabs GABY's foot
violently. She is about to answer the blow when she
comes to her senses. She gets up and leaves the room.

GABY watches her leave.

FLORENCIA
You don't do that, Gaby. After
all, she is still your mother.

GABY negates with her foot.

FLORENCIA

You can't deny it. She is just trying to do what's best for you.

FLORENCIA begins to break internally. She leaves the room without awaiting an answer.

GABY is left alone, looking at the door, impotent and furious.

INT: HALL AND LUIS'S APARTMENT - DAWN

The door opens. Luis, wearing pajama bottoms and no shirt, having just been woken, is surprised to find GABY and FLORENCIA at his door.

LUIS

Jesus, I thought it was the milkman. What's going on? What the hell're you doing here at this hour?

FLORENCIA is mute. LUIS is too tired to think.

LUIS

Alright, c'mon in, then.

FLORENCIA waits. She hands him a typed page.

LUIS takes it, totally confused.

LUIS

What's this, the next article?

FLORENCIA looks ready to run off. LUIS searches her face for a clue.

FLORENCIA

I'll be back in a little while.

LUIS

What d'you mean you'll be back in a little while? What's wrong with you two? You wake me up in the middle of the night and I've got no idea what's going on. C'mon in, Flor. Have a cup of coffee at least.

But FLORENCIA shakes her head and exits down the hallway to the stairwell without looking back.

LUIS, still half asleep, glances at the typed page and back at FLORENCIA as she goes.

He brings GABY into his apartment and slams the front door with his foot.

LUIS
Gaby, Gaby, Gaby ...

He brings her chair next to the table which is piled with books and papers in apparent chaos. LUIS pulls up a chair and sits next to her.

LUIS
(reading aloud from
the typed page)
I always have to bend over backwards
to get even a little of what I
want. When I need to run, I
crawl; when I need to scream I
can barely make a sound ...

GABY puts her foot on his leg, carressing him.

LUIS looks at her, relieved.

LUIS
Is that all you're upset about?
Jesus, when I try and write a
novel I barely eke out a paragraph
-- I think I'm gonna strike it
rich but it turns out I can
barely afford to put gas in my
car -- let alone change the oil.
Goddamn it, Gaby, you only want
to play for high stakes and the
more you bet the more you can
lose. Really.

GABY stares directly at him without responding. LUIS continues to read when GABY brings her foot up to his crotch.

LUIS
(reading)
My feelings are so strong that
I want --

He breaks off and finishes the sentence in silence.

LUIS
Jesus Fucking Christ!! I swear,
you ought to be able to talk.
Seriously, Gaby, sometimes I
(MORE)

LUIS (contd)
 get the feeling that you're
 laughing at all of us, that
 you're gonna get out of your
 wheelchair and say
 (stands up)
 "See you later, suckers" and walk
 away.

He goes into the bathroom. GABY is left alone while
 the SOUND of him peeing is heard through the open
 door. He talks from there.

LUIS (OS)
 Wouldn't be bad, would it? I
 can't, Gaby. I can't tell you
 yes and I can't tell you I'm gonna
 think about it.

He flushes the toilet and comes out buttoning his fly.
 He combs his hair with a brush that just seems to mess
 it more.

LUIS
 You know what Florencia told me?
 That it didn't matter what I did
 as long as I didn't disappear.
 What am I supposed to do? Make
 love to you? Get you pregnant?
 (aggressively)
 You're not satisfied with getting
 an article published -- or ten
 articles! You're not satisfied
ever, with anything ... are you?!

LUIS gets hold of himself. He sits by GABY and takes
 her foot in his hands.

LUIS
 Forgive me, Gaby. I didn't mean
 to hurt you. Let's find Florencia.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

GABY sits before the window looking out, immobile.

The telephone is silent on a nearby table.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER, NIGHT

GABY hasn't moved. It's almost dark and no lights are
 on. The house is silent. A soft corner light goes on.

119
It's FLORENCIA at the night table. The telephone remains silent. FLORENCIA comes to GABY, looks at her silently, and then leaves the room.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

FLORENCIA sews near GABY who is again seated by the window. The Beethoven Fourth Concerto is heard coming from the lower part of the house.

INT: LIVING ROOM, BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

The Concerto is playing at full volume. The door opens and SARI enters carrying bags of groceries. She looks around, worried -- There is no one in the living room or kitchen. She leaves the groceries on the couch and climbs the stairs quickly.

INT: GABY'S ROOM - DAY

SARI stops at GABY's open door and looks inside.

SARI
Why aren't you at the University?

FLORENCIA
She wouldn't go.

GABY is silent and immobile. FLORENCIA continues sewing.

SARI approaches GABY and stops behind her wheelchair. She doesn't know what to do. She strokes GABY's hair gently.

SARI
Poupee. Why wouldn't it happen to you ... ?

INT: OLD AGE HOME, COMMUNAL DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A fine wine glass fills with wine. Alone, at a little table set with fine silver and tablecloth, an OLD JEWISH WOMAN makes a toast to her imaginary companion.

OLD JEWISH WOMAN
To your health, Moshe. Do you like this soup? I had them make it special, just for you.

FLORENCIA, dressed in her maid's uniform, hair cropped close to her head, watches the OLD WOMAN curiously while she is served a plastic tray of food. Behind her an OLD MAN puts out his tray to be served. FLORENCIA sees the tattooed numbers on his wrist.

FACES OF THE ELDERLY

who eat at other tables. The simplicity contrasts sharply with the first OLD WOMAN. These are tired, senile faces, some of them toothless. They eat in annoyed silence, helped by NURSES.

EXT: OLD AGE HOME, GARDENS - NIGHT

FLORENCIA crosses the gardens carrying the tray of food.

INT: GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE HOME - NIGHT

SARI eats a bowl of soup. FLORENCIA feeds GABY. They have the same short haircut. A light makes a bright circle on the table, the rest of the room is in semi-darkness. It's a small house decorated with contemporary furniture and Mexican ornaments. They eat in silence.

In the distance, outside, a violin plays a melody of Zoltan Kodaly.

SARI breaks the silence.

SARI

That's Itzhak, the old man who
plays the violin. He used to
play in the Lerner String Quartet.

GABY's eyes remain on her food, she doesn't respond to SARI. FLORENCIA feeds her mechanically.

SARI is aware of their bitterness. She looks at her DAUGHTER and continues eating uncomfortably.

FLORENCIA has to almost force GABY to eat. She seems drugged and absent.

SARI tries to break the ice again.

SARI

I've been looking into the Open
University, Gaby. You could
study here, at home, take the
time you need and then just take
the final exams ...

She sees FLORENCIA's difficulty in feeding GABY. GABY's head hangs loosely, senselessly.

SARI (contd)

Are you listening, Gaby? What's
wrong with her, Nanny? She doesn't
look right.

FLORENCIA
(without looking up)
She took four Valiums.

SARI
Four ... ?

SARI stands and comes next to GABY, taking her face
in her hands. GABY is out of it.

SARI
(dismayed)
But why did you give them to
her? They're no good, they depress
her.

SARI moves GABY's head without any response.

FLORENCIA
I didn't do it, Mommy. It was
her. I just gave them to her --
but it was her.

SARI can't believe what she is hearing. She shakes
her head.

FLORENCIA (contd)
She said she couldn't take it
anymore. That she doesn't want
anything, except that I get her
out of here.

GABY responds vaguely on hearing FLORENCIA.

SARI
No, Nanny. She has to get used
to it. We've already talked
about this ...

SARI extends her hand.

SARI
Give them to me. The Valium.

FLORENCIA
They're in the room.

SARI looks again at GABY and then exits to GABY's room.

FLORENCIA continues trying to feed GABY, but GABY
turns her head absently.

FLORENCIA
Don't worry, Mommy is nervous.
You'll see, it'll work out.

INT: LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM, GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE
HOME - DAY

Sun enters through the window that opens on the gardens.

Through the glass, in the distance, a NURSE IS SEEN
pushing GABY across the communal gardens.

The ELDERLY sleep and move slowly across the grounds,
some of them in wheelchairs.

Inside, FLORENCIA sits at the kitchen table staring out
the window.

SARI's voice brings her to reality.

SARI
What's going on, Nanny?

SARI sits next to her at the little table.

FLORENCIA
(without lifting her
eyes)
I don't know, Mommy ... Nothing.

SARI takes her hand, her expression showing concern and
worry.

LATER, LATE AFTERNOON

Through the same window, a NURSE walks across the
gardens with determination. The ELDERLY are gone.

The sound of slow typing is heard close by.

GABY types by the window. FLORENCIA enters and stops
behind GABY's wheelchair.

FLORENCIA
Dinner is ready, Gaby.

GABY stops. She presses the margin return making the
page eject jerkily from the machine. She pulls it out
with her toes and extends it to FLORENCIA. FLORENCIA
reads it without expression while she brings GABY's
wheelchair to the dining room table. She leaves the
typed page on the table as GABY is arranged to eat
a plate of cauliflower with sauce and a glass of milk.
FLORENCIA begins to shake perceptibly.

FLORENCIA
(anguished)
I can't, Gaby. We can't do that
to Mommy. We can't ...

DETAIL OF THE TYPED PAGE:

TEXT

GET ME OUT OF HERE!! NANNY!!
FOR GOD'S SAKE GET ME OUT OF
HERE!! GET ME OUT GET ME OUT
GET ME OUT GET ME OUT OF HERE
PLEASE!! NANNY!! GET ME OUT OF
HERE!! PLEASE PLEASE I CAN'T
STAND IT!! GET ME OUT! OUT!
OUT! OUT! OUT! (etc.)

The table shakes and dishes crash to the floor. Milk runs over the table marring the page.

FLORENCIA returns from the kitchen. Terrified.

GABY leans over the table with a malicious smile, covered with cauliflower, everything has been turned over. She stares fixedly at FLORENCIA in a searing challenge. FLORENCIA reacts to the mess. Automatically she crouches and begins picking the food off the floor.

GABY continues staring, covered with food. She begins banging her foot violently against the table.

FLORENCIA freezes. For the first time hatred distorts her features. She breathes fast, looking ready to hit GABY.

GABY stops the banging. She opens her mouth imperatively, asking for food.

FLORENCIA doesn't move.

GABY opens and closes her mouth like a puppet. Smiling maliciously.

Finally, FLORENCIA takes a piece of cauliflower from GABY's lap and places it aggressively in her mouth. GABY opens her mouth again without having chewed or swallowed.

FLORENCIA puts another piece of cauliflower in her mouth. GABY keeps her mouth opened, mocking, food falling out of it.

FLORENCIA again stuffs it with food.

Suddenly we see SARI standing in the doorway, watching with horror. GABY is a mess, covered with food, her mouth full.

FLORENCIA gasps when she sees SARI, realizing she has been watching. Immediately she begins cleaning GABY up.

SARI is ashen.

TITLE IN BLACK: "ONE YEAR LATER"

INT: TELEVISION ROOM, OLD AGE HOME - DAY 1971

The room is characterless and modern. A group of ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN sit before a suspended T.V. watching a Mexican soap opera. One by one, the tired, old, senile FACES are passed by until FLORENCIA is found, knitting mindlessly.

Beside her is GABY, staring off into space. Both of them are pale, tired, bitterness drawn on their features.

EXT: TELEVISION ROOM, OLD AGE HOME - DAY

Through a window. GABY and FLORENCIA are seen amidst the ELDERLY. Blue TV light on their faces.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL BETTY

who looks in at them. Next to her is SARI, looking older and more weary, distant.

BETTY

They look relaxed. It's a decent place.

INTERCUT BETWEEN SARI, BETTY AND DIFFERENT FACES AND EXPRESSIONS OF THE ELDERLY WATCHING TV.

SARI

(Nodding. Distant)

Clean, silent, ordered, neat, quiet -- look at them: they get them out of their beds, feed them, bathe them-- they put them back into bed, as if they were little animals -- Do you remember the zoo in Vienna?

BETTY

Sari, why can't you ever get rid of your guilt?

SARI

I think I'm beginning to feel envious of them.

BETTY

C'mon, Sari, please. Can't you for once in your life stop seeing everything through a dirty rotten glass?

SARI

You know, Betty: since we were children, the world could be breaking apart and you wouldn't even realize it. That's why I always admire you so much.

BETTY

Sorry, Sari, but the role of the victim doesn't really fit you. Why do you always have to be so pessimistic?

SARI

Pessimistic? Of course I'm pessimistic. What are you talking about? That's my occupation. Sari Brimmer: a pessimistic. I have cancer, and I'm going to die. That's the truth, isn't it? Why should I pretend anything else?

BETTY

You know cancer can be controlled in many cases, Sari. That's why you're coming to San Francisco.

SARI

What worries me is leaving them here. They don't belong here, whether you want to see it or not.

BETTY

Did you tell her?

SARI

No, I didn't. I just told them I was going to San Francisco with you, for a week.

BETTY

How do you think she will react?

SARI
I don't know. She will not know.

INT: TELEVISION ROOM - OLD AGE HOME - DAY

CLOSE ON GABY

Her eyes watching the TV set, distant.

INT: CORRIDORS, OLD AGE HOME - EVENING

The long, white, antiseptic corridors through the main building, look like a desolate labyrinth. There are OLD MEN and WOMEN here and there loitering with nothing to do. Sounds of coughing, slow shuffling steps, OLD PEOPLE who breathe with difficulty, someone screaming in a distant room, low lost voices; all amplified until it is almost unbearable.

FLORENCIA slowly pushes GABY in her wheelchair -- there is no hurry. The following text is SUPERIMPOSED with the type and cadence of a typewriter.

TEXT
Is this what you said God was
preparing for us? Where are your
children, Nanny? The husband who
you didn't marry? The town, the
house, the family, the memories?
I need you, but you can't help me.
I give you exactly what I don't want:
security, a life that need not to be
lived. I wonder if God sent me here
to take the place of every one of
those things, so you can live through
me, like a jailer who feeds himself
through his prisoner's misery.

INT: GABY'S ROOM, OLD AGE HOME - NIGHT 2:00 AM.

It's dark and hard to tell who we are seeing.

FLORENCIA, VERY CLOSE, sleeping.

CLOSE ON CLOCK: 2:24 A.M.

CLOSE ON GABY

She is awake, her eyes wide and brilliant. She makes vocal noises trying to wake FLORENCIA, but FLORENCIA is deeply asleep.

SLOW APPROACH to FLORENCIA as the sounds of GABY's voice get louder and more desperate. FLORENCIA doesn't wake up.

GABY is exasperated. She pushes herself with her foot until she twists and falls to the floor. She pushes herself to FLORENCIA's bed vocalizing frantically.

FLORENCIA is still asleep. Suddenly GABY's foot bangs against the side of the bed. FLORENCIA wakes terrified.

FLORENCIA

Gaby! Gaby! What happened to you,
my baby?!

FLORENCIA lifts GABY, bringing her back to her bed. GABY twists spastically and continues vocalizing unintelligibly.

FLORENCIA

You had a nightmare, baby. It'll
go away in a minute ...

GABY negates with her foot. She talks to FLORENCIA unintelligibly.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON SARI

sleeping. There is a knocking at the door. SARI doesn't wake. The knocking continues louder until SARI wakes.

SARI

Who is it?

FLORENCIA (OS)

(through the door)

It's me, Mommy. Gaby wants to
talk to you. She asked me to wake
you up ...

SARI gets up and puts on her bathrobe. She opens the door, discovering FLORENCIA behind GABY in her wheelchair. GABY twists on seeing her MOTHER.

SARI
(exhausted)
What's the matter? What's so
urgent?

GABY vocalizes nonsensically and signals on her
alphabet board.

FLORENCIA
(very awkwardly)
She fell out of bed and is very
upset. She says she has to talk
to you ...

SARI is perplexed. She pulls FLORENCIA into her room
leaving GABY at the door.

FLORENCIA and SARI whisper on the other side of the
room. GABY vocalizes loudly in protest. FLORENCIA
turns.

SARI
It's alright, Poupee.

FLORENCIA brings GABY next to SARI, who sits on her
bed. FLORENCIA leaves the room and closes the door.

GABY signals on the alphabet board. GABY CLOSE.
SARI's voice:

SARI
(reading)
I S-H-O-U-L-D - L-O-V-E - YOU,
B-U-T I- H-A-T-E Y-O-U- I-F-
Y-O-U-D-O-N-T T-A-K-E- M-E-
O-U-T- O-F- - H-E-R-E I-L-L
A-L-W-A-Y-S H-A-T-E Y-O-U.
N-A-N-N-Y- C-O-N-T-R-O-L-S
M-E A-N-D Y-O-U --- C-O-N-T-R-O-L-
H-E-R.

CLOSE ON SARI

SARI
Gabileyn, my love. Did it ever
occur to you that there might
be something more than what you
feel ... ? Everything is black
and white to you. You're only
thinking of the present. What'll
happen when I'm gone ... ? And
Nanny won't be around forever
either. What you need is a place
where you can count on the help
you'll need for the rest of your
life. You could be alone sooner
than you think ...

CLOSE ON GABY

and then her foot which is negating.

SARI

(reading)

I- D-ON-T WA-N-T S-E-C-UR-I-T-Y.

I- W-AN-T T-O- L-I-V-E.

CLOSE ON SARI

SARI

That's not right, Gaby! You only ask. We're the ones who have to act! We push you, feed you, take you to the bathroom. We even talk for you. And I'm not going to be able anymore. I want you to understand that this place is a compromise. I'm not old or handicapped, I'm here because of you.

GABY signals with her foot.

SARI

(reading)

Y-O-U-R-E- -H-E-R-E B-E-C-A-U-S-E-

Y-O-U-R-E A-F-R-A-I-D. A-N-D

Y-O-U-R- F-E-A-R- S-T-O-P-S-

B-O-T-H O-F- U-S F-R-O-M-

L-I-V-I-N-G--

SARI has tears in her eyes.

SARI

Right now I need for us to be here. Please, try and understand. We've always been patient with you, Gaby; be patient with me this once.

GABY signals with her foot.

SARI

(reading)

P-A-T-I-E-N-T U-N-TI-L--

W-H-E-N?

GABY continues signalling, but SARI isn't looking anymore.

SARI

Enough, Gaby. Let's go to sleep. Nanny! Come, please! The debate can continue tomorrow.

HALLWAY

FLORENCIA pushes GABY back to their room. She lifts her from the chair and puts her into bed, tucking in the covers.

FLORENCIA

You never think of her, Gaby.
You don't care what happens --
and she needs something too.

CLOSE ON GABY

who looks ready to explode inside.

INT: SARI'S ROOM, GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE HOME - DAY

SARI takes clothes from drawers and packs a suitcase. Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto plays in the living room at high volume.

INT: LIVING ROOM, GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE HOME - DAY

GABY sits in front of the stereo. (Beethoven continues.)
FLORENCIA is cleaning the house meticulously.

SARI comes in with her suitcases, leaving them by the door. She goes to the stereo and turns it down.

SARI

You can't even hear it that
loud, Poupee.
(to Florencia)
Did you call?

FLORENCIA

Yes, Mommy, they'll be right here.

SARI

Good. I'm just going to get
ready ...

She goes into the bathroom leaving the door ajar.

SARI (OS)

When I get back we'll see what
we can do about the University,
Gaby. What do you want me to
bring you?

FLORENCIA

Whatever you like, Mommy.

A horn honks in the street.

FLORENCIA
They're here.

SARI comes out combed and made up.

SARI
I'm going. Take care of
yourselves ... Be good, Gaby ...

She kisses GABY and then FLORENCIA.

FLORENCIA
Goodbye, Mommy.

CLOSE ON GABY

watching SARI go. FLORENCIA pushes her to the window.
SARI CAN BE SEEN leaving the gardens.

CLOSE ON FLORENCIA

She fights to hold back her emotion.

INT: GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE HOME - EVENING

FLORENCIA finishes bathing GABY, who is naked in the bathtub. She lifts her stiff body up, and holding her upright, dries her with a towel in a well-practiced ritual.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA combs GABY's hair in front of a dresser mirror.
GABY is somnambulistic. A loudspeaker echoes through the streets outside.

LOUDSPEAKER
(Spanish)
The Queen of Cuernavaca! Come
one, come all to choose the Queen
of Cuernavaca at the Constitutional
Plaza ... The Queen of Cuervanvaca!!!
(becoming more distant)
Vote for Maria Christina! The
most beautiful flower in the city!!!

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA is cleaning the house although it is already clean.

Typing comes from the next room.

CLOSE ON GABY'S FOOT

writing.

CUT TO:

GABY's foot holds down the power return key of the typewriter. The carriage slams backward repeatedly until the page falls out. The X key is pressed next, causing a continuous machine-gun-like clatter. GABY's foot jams against the keys violently.

CLOSE ON GABY

She looks ready to explode. With an extreme effort she pries the typewriter from its perch, causing it to flip onto the floor. She begins to kick the garden window violently but it doesn't break.

FLORENCIA, listening, rushes over.

FLORENCIA

Gaby?!!

She is interrupted by shattering glass as she enters the room.

FLORENCIA

Gaby!! My baby! What're you doing!! Oh God, no!!

She rushes to GABY and pulls the wheelchair back while GABY continues kicking the broken glass stuck all over her bleeding foot. FLORENCIA screams in despair, GABY writhes back and forth in spastic pain.

INT: AMBULANCE, RUNNING SHOT - NIGHT

The ambulance speeds through the streets with the siren wailing. The city lights streak across FLORENCIA's face which APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS in tear-stained horror.

INT: EMERGENCY ROOM, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

TWO ORDERLIES push GABY into an operating room on a rolling stretcher.

INT: WAITING ROOM, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The ADMITTING ORDERLY, a young man in white with gold-rimmed glasses, fills out a registration card on a typewriter.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
What's the girl's name?

FLORENCIA stands by the reception window totally distraught. DOCTORS, NURSES and a constant flow of PEOPLE pass behind her. It's noisy and chaotic.

FLORENCIA
Her name is Gabriela Brimmer.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
Who are you?

FLORENCIA
I take care of her ...

The ADMITTING ORDERLY looks at her questioningly.

FLORENCIA (contd)
She has cerebral palsy. She can only move her left foot. I take care of her.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
Family?

FLORENCIA
Her father is dead. Her mother is away -- out of Mexico.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
How old is she?

FLORENCIA
Twenty-eight.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
Address?

FLORENCIA
We live at the home, the old age home on Morelos Street ...

ADMITTING ORDERLY
What exactly happened to her?

FLORENCIA doesn't know what to answer.

ADMITTING ORDERLY
Was it an accident or what ... ?

CLOSE ON FLORENCIA

CUT TO:

HOSPITAL TELEPHONE OPERATOR

The OPERATOR hangs up and turns to FLORENCIA.

OPERATOR
I've tried three times, ma'am.
No answer.

INT: EMERGENCY ROOM, HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A NURSE accompanies FLORENCIA. GABY is asleep on a cot with her foot bandaged. FLORENCIA is left in the cubicle with GABY, the NURSE exits. She looks at GABY very moved, unable to touch her. The NURSE ret. rns.

NURSE
You're very lucky. There are deep wounds, but they didn't reach the tendon. When she wakes up you can take her home. The doctor will be right in to talk to you.

EXT: OLD AGE HOME - NIGHT

The Mercedes Benz parks by the front entrance. FLORENCIA gets out and unfolds GABY's wheelchair. She opens the rear door and lifts her out and into the chair.

A GROUP of the STAFF and some ELDERLY RESIDENTS approach to see what happened.

INT: GABY'S HOUSE, OLD AGE HOME - NIGHT

A photograph of MIGUEL on the bookcase. FLORENCIA joins GABY at the little dining room table.

FLORENCIA
You're tired. Let's go to sleep.
(beat)
Is it hurting?

GABY doesn't respond at all. She stares into space. FLORENCIA pushes the wheelchair toward their bedroom but stops when she sees a puddle beneath it. GABY has urinated in her clothes.

FLORENCIA
Oh, baby. What'd you do ... ?

GABY doesn't respond.

FLORENCIA continues into their bedroom. She leaves GABY alone for a moment and goes to the window, trying to control herself.

Her hands tremble as she returns to undress GABY.

GABY seems lifeless. FLORENCIA moves her like a puppet.

CLOSE ON FLORENCIA

Her features contract in an effort to control herself. She tries to continue undressing GABY but is unable. Something breaks inside her and the pent-up emotion pours out in an almost silent sobbing. She can't control it. Her face is wet with tears. Her sobbing grows, accumulating strength until it is shaking her body. She stumbles to the bathroom leaving GABY half-naked in her wheelchair.

GABY watches her.

FLORENCIA, behind her in the bathroom, can't stop crying.

LATER

GABY is asleep in bed. The room is dark.

FLORENCIA is awake. She looks exhausted but with something different in her eyes. She lifts herself to see GABY.

FLORENCIA leaves the bedroom in her nightgown. She goes into SARI's room and turns on the light. She goes directly to SARI's dresser where there are photographs of the whole family. We see one of GABY and FLORENCIA together, smiling.

FLORENCIA, up on a little stool, pulls down an empty suitcase.

INT: GABY'S ROOM - OLD AGE HOME - NIGHT

The light turns on falling on GABY's face. She is asleep and doesn't react immediately.

OS we hear noises of drawers and objects been moved around. GABY wakes up. She is back to the noises. She makes an effort to turn around.

GABY'S POV

The ceiling. CAMERA tilts down until we spot FLORENCIA packing the suitcases. Her "tempo" has changed, she seems to be full of energy.

GABY stares at her, perplexed.

FLORENCIA feels GABY's eyes and stops. They remain looking at each other in a new and affectionate meeting of eyes. It's a moment of silence and intensity.

EXT: CUERNAVACA/MEXICO CITY - HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The BRIMMER'S CAR goes around a long curve that descends toward Mexico City. A sea of lights spreads across the valley.

EXT: BRIMMER HOUSE - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

The CAR pulls into the driveway. GABY is lying down on the back seat. FLORENCIA gets out and unlocks the front gate, opening it. There is a sign on it reading: "For Rent".

INT: BRIMMER'S CAR, BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

The CAR stops in the garage.

CLOSE ON GABY

in the back seat, immobile but very awake.

FLORENCIA

I'll be right back.

INT: BRIMMER HOUSE - NIGHT

FLORENCIA enters and looks around. The house is dirty, unfurnished; there's no rug or any sign of habitation. There are marks on the walls where paintings used to be.

FLORENCIA leans against the wall, taking her head in her hands.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA tries a phone she finds on the kitchen floor, but the line is dead.

INT: PIZZERIA - NIGHT

GABY eats pizza in her wheelchair. FLORENCIA feeds her, wipes her, and eats as well. They are surrounded by many PEOPLE eating, laughing, and drinking at other tables. FLORENCIA bites her pizza portion. GABY gazes at her and lifts her foot pushing the pizza into FLORENCIA's mouth. Then she laughs noisily.

PEOPLE stare at them as if they were on exhibit. GABY stares back at them until they turn away.

INT: PUBLIC TELEPHONE CENTER OF MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

It's a big, noisy, vaulted room with phone booths lining both walls. In the center is an office where OPERATORS dispatch calls. MEXICANS line up in large numbers.

LOUD SPEAKER

Florencia Morales -- call to San Francisco in cabin number eight.

CLOSE ON CABIN NUMBER EIGHT

which is empty. FLORENCIA arrives pushing GABY before her. She goes into the cabin. The noise makes it impossible for her to talk with the door opened.

FLORENCIA

Hello?! Hello?! Where am I calling?! Yes, Mrs. Sari, I can't hear you, wait a minute please.

FLORENCIA shuts the cabin door, leaving GABY outside. They see each other through a small window in the door.

CLOSE ON GABY

looking at FLORENCIA. PEOPLE pass in front of her, temporarily blocking the view.

CLOSE ON FLORENCIA

talking. She then listens for a long while. Suddenly her expression changes as she is extremely affected by what she hears.

FLORENCIA'S POV: GABY

stares at her without understanding.

INT: BRIMMER HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (2:00 A.M.)

FLORENCIA sleeps heavily on the living room floor, covered by an old blanket.

Very gradually GABY is discovered in her wheelchair, awake in the semi-darkness. She is in her usual spot by the garden window. The large empty house is full of shadows.

GABY stares into the darkness.

The following text is SUPERIMPOSED ON THE IMAGE with the cadence of a typewriter. The silence is complete.

TEXT

How can I scream when I can't
talk? How can I love incarcerated
in a sleeping body with the seed
of a woman inside? How can I
cry when self-pity would stop me
from living? Nanny cries because
Mommy has cancer, but my eyes
are dry.

INT: FLOWER MARKET - DAY
CLOSE ON GABY

moving, gliding through a landscape of thousands of flowers. FLORENCIA's hands push the rails of the wheelchair. The motion stops.

CUT TO:

An affirmative gesture of GABY's foot, still bandaged.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA paying for a large bunch of purple flowers.

CUT TO:

A YOUNG MEXICAN BOY carrying so many flowers that he can't see where he's going.

CUT TO:

GABY's foot gesturing again.

CLOSE ON GABY

between bouquets. GABY vocalizes insistently.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA looking at GABY seriously.

FLORENCIA
That's enough, Gaby.

GABY's foot negates.

CUT TO:

FLORENCIA buying still more flowers.

EXT: MERCEDES BENZ, PUBLIC MARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

CROWDS OF PEOPLE mill around, trucks unload merchandise, noise and movement in the bright morning sunlight.

GABY is sitting in the front seat of the Mercedes Benz which is totally full of flowers.

FLORENCIA folds the wheelchair and puts it into the trunk. She gets in the driver's seat, barely able to fit amidst the flowers. She looks exhausted and emotionally drained. Suddenly her head lowers until it rests against the steering wheel.

INT: MERCEDES BENZ, PUBLIC MARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

GABY watching FLORENCIA.

CLOSE ON GABY'S FOOT

still bandaged, reaching over to FLORENCIA. FLORENCIA's feet next to the brake and accelerator. GABY's foot hooks onto FLORENCIA's calf and pulls her over.

FLORENCIA lets herself go to GABY. She holds her and rests her head on GABY's breast. GABY moves her head back and forth over FLORENCIA.

EXT: MEXICO CITY AIRPORT - DAY

SARI exits the terminal doors. She looks tired and older. She gets into a taxi with her suitcases.

INT: TAXI - RUNNING SHOT MEXICO CITY - DAY
CLOSE ON SARI'S EYES

sad and distant. She doesn't see the city passing around her.

INT: BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY

Daylight pours through the curtainless windows. The big empty house is a kaleidoscope of different color flowers put everywhere. Bouquets in bottles, jars, boxes, and many just laying on the floor and stairs. It is apparent that GABY and FLORENCIA have been camping in the house several days. The sound of slow typing is heard. The doorbell rings.

FLORENCIA comes from the kitchen to the front door. She opens it and finds SARI there with her suitcases.

FLORENCIA
Oh, Mommy ... !

SARI embraces her.

SARI
It's alright, Flor. Let me see Gaby.

SARI sees the flowers everywhere which are impossible to ignore.

FLORENCIA
Gaby did it. They're for you.
She made me spend almost all the money you left us ...

SARI doesn't know what to say. She looks around in disbelief, imagining and recreating all that happened since her departure.

She continues on to the den where GABY types in front of the window with her back to the door.

SARI
(as she enters)
Gabileyn, how are you, Gabileyn ... ?

She squats to take GABY's bandaged foot in her hands.

SARI (contd)
How is your foot?

Their eyes meet and they both smile. FLORENCIA stands behind, watching. SARI shows a complexity of emotion and thought in her steady gaze. She gets up, and with her hand on GABY's shoulder she turns to FLORENCIA.

SARI (contd)
We can't live like this, Nanny.
At least some furniture and vases
... Where have you two been
sleeping ... ?

SARI laughs. The THREE WOMEN together.

INT: BRIMMER HOUSE - DAY 1981

The house is newly furnished and decorated but with a different, lighter feeling. GABY, SARI and FLORENCIA sit around a table eating bread and cheese. OVER THE IMAGES of SARI talking, laughing, FLORENCIA responding, GABY watching, CUT cheese and bread, GABY's foot signalling and FLORENCIA reading, the following text is SUPERIMPOSED with a typewriter's cadence.

TEXT

Again we lived together in the house in Mexico City. My mother sold the cottage at the old age home and I continued studying for a while. In May, 1977, I adopted a newborn baby and named her Alma Florencia Brimmer. In 1979 my mother had a book published based on my writing together with the author Elena Poniatowska, in which I tell the story of my life. In December of 1982 my mother died of cancer.

CLOSE ON SARI

eating, laughing ...

DISSOLVE TO:

The text continues OVER THE FOLLOWING SCENE:

GABY SEEN FROM BEHIND, writing facing the window. Sound of slow typing.

TEXT

Alma Florencia is seven years old now. She goes to school and takes
(MORE)

TEXT (cont'd)

piano lessons. Florencia takes care of her upbringing and I see to her education. We live in the San Angel section of Mexico City.

The CAMERA BEGINS A SLOW APPROACH, CIRCLING GABY FROM A DISTANCE, SHOWING first her profile, and then gradually, FACING her directly. This is the REAL GABY BRIMMER. Behind her, a LITTLE MEXICAN GIRL of seven plays IN AND OUT OF FRAME. This is ALMA BRIMMER. The REAL FLORENCIA MORALES enters, accommodates a sheaf of Gaby's typed pages, and then leaves in silence. GABY BRIMMER continues typing without pause. ALMA plays behind her, IN AND OUT OF FRAME.

DISSOLVE TO:

CRAYON DRAWING BY ALMA BRIMMER OF A WHEELCHAIR WITH A VASE OF MULTICOLORED FLOWERS ON IT.

FINAL CREDITS AND MUSIC SUPERIMPOSED

FADE OUT.

THE END