

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

A Screenplay

by

James L. Brooks

Based on the novel by
Larry McMurtry

REVISED Second Draft
March, 1982

A black screen at the lower left hand corner of which shines a small clown's face. It is barely noticeable as we BEGIN TITLES.

The music is bright but not so full that we don't discern with ever increasing awareness the off-screen voices of a man and a woman, AURORA and RUDYARD GREENWAY. We hear the downstairs front door close as AURORA arrives home and shouts upstairs to her husband. "I can't stand being a mother." "Give it a chance. It's only been a week." "Are you still in that tub?" "The doctor says I'm supposed to soak." "Have you gotten out to check her?" "Yes, she's fine. How was your evening?" "Everybody was having fun tonight and all I got to do was worry about the baby." Her footsteps approach; her conversation continues. We hear one more exchange between husband and wife. "Aurora, you've just got to stop imagining that something terrible is happening to her all the time." "I know, I know." The door at screen right opens and we now can recognize from the light flowing in from the hall that we are in a baby's room--the clown's face a small night light. The infant is in a hand worked, excellent and therefore memorable crib. AURORA'S back is to the camera--her rear end a large one, perhaps tempting to some--and her back-lit outline is round and cushy. She tosses off one more comment to her husband. "She is just about a week old. How endless is the fascination supposed to be?" And now she turns towards the room and is facing the camera still illuminated from behind--the mother's form we may all remember framed in the doorways of our rooms as we lay helpless and needing. AURORA stands still for a beat and then, in a tone fearful but firm, says her first on screen words.

AURORA

Rudyard, she's not breathing.

RUDYARD'S VOICE

Oh, not again.

The lump under the pink blanket behind the light wooden bars of the crib is not budging.

AURORA

No, this time she's dead.

RUDYARD'S VOICE

She's asleep.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

AURORA

It's crib death.

RUDYARD'S VOICE

(annoyed)

Aurora, it's just that she hasn't
slept today.

AURORA

Maybe.

The thirtyish mother pads quietly to her infant
daughter's crib and coos softly.

AURORA

Emma...Emma?

The infant lies still. AURORA leans over...then
hikes herself up by placing her foot on the mattress
so she fully leans over the bars--gracelessly to place
her ear almost atop the infant's chest. She had heard
something but doubt still lingers. Very deliberately
AURORA pinches the infant who instantly begins wailing.

AURORA

(now more herself)

There, that's better.

She moves swiftly from the room and exits without a
thought of pacifying the crying baby. As she closes
the door.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. GREENWAY HOME - EIGHT YEARS LATER

2

A two-door, dark car arrives. From the driver's seat
steps a man of 40 in a dark blue suit and cowboy boots.
He was RUDYARD'S employer. He holds a hand out to
assist ROSIE DUNLOP, AURORA'S maid for years and, though
she doesn't know it, the last white maid in Houston.
She refuses the hand and concentrates on the next one
out, folding back the front seat for EMMA GREENWAY--
misshapen for a child of eight--her legs too short,
her hands too thick--that sort of thing--hair, unusually
stringy, is even worse after the sweaty and emotional
funeral, a black ribbon hangs lifeless in her tresses.
She too refuses help and indicates that the man should
instead help the next occupant. That's AURORA, who
emerges in black, one hand held by the man, the other
by her maid. The first thing she does on emerging from
the car is to remove her shoes. She has her arm around
her young daughter as she moves barefoot across the lawn.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

Thank you, Rosie.
 (then to man)
 Thank you.

AURORA is totally composed. The man stands there granite strong, West Texas' best.

MAN

Glad to help. He was about the most dependable man who ever worked for me.

She starts for the house holding EMMA by the hand as ROSIE goes on ahead.

AURORA

It was nice knowing you.

EMMA

(to man)

Bye.

MAN

I'm real sorry about your daddy.

EMMA

Me too. I loved him. He stuck up for me sometimes.

MAN

Hey.

(Emma turns)

Take care of your momma.

EMMA shifts uncomfortably as her mother looks at her, wanting the man's words to register.

3 As they enter the house, AURORA walks straight to the mantle over the never used fireplace where there is a framed picture of EMMA as a baby with her mother and a framed picture of RUDYARD. AURORA takes down the picture of RUDYARD. Then suddenly AURORA reacts having just thought of something. 3

ROSIE

What's wrong?

AURORA

I just remembered Rudyard wanted to be cremated.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

AURORA sighs briefly and shakes her head at her forgetfulness.

EMMA

(entering scene)

What are you going to do with Daddy's picture?

AURORA

I don't think we should leave it on the mantle. There comes a time when we have to stop living in the past.

EMMA

Can I have it?

AURORA hands it to her daughter. ROSIE loving the child from the doorway of the dining room where she is already setting the table for lunch. We follow EMMA past the stairs to the first floor room that is hers.

4 INT. EMMA'S ROOM - DAY

4

There is a zoo's worth of stuffed animals, a cheap record player, an original cast movie soundtrack of "Wizard of Oz" in evidence, very little free space. EMMA stands over the table next to her bed containing a lamp and several of the stuffed animals. She removes two of her favored ones, a dog and a panda bear, and puts her father's picture in their place. She must remove one more animal to make room.

5 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

5

So feminine it's hard to believe a man shared this room until this evening. A small, original Renoir hangs prominently over the dresser. The bed is large and soft. A window seat, also cushy, overlooks the back garden. AURORA sits in her nightgown at the window seat. Her bed has been turned down but she cannot quite bring herself to go to it; she is angry at being upset. She rises and goes to the door.

6 INT. AURORA'S HOUSE - STAIRWELL

6

As she marches down and enters her daughter's room. She goes directly to the child, turns on the lights.

AURORA

Emma...Emma, wake up.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

What's wrong?

AURORA

I just feel so tense. And I wondered how you felt. Do you want to sleep in my bed?

EMMA

No, thank you.

AURORA

Oh.

EMMA

(a beat, then)

Do you want to sleep in my bed again?

AURORA

Yes. All right.

As EMMA makes room and AURORA slides in next to her griping about the number of stuffed animals, she glances at her daughter's limp, stringy tresses.

AURORA

What will we ever do with your hair?

She turns out the lights.

7 EXT. AURORA'S BLOCK - DAY (EIGHT YEARS LATER)

EMMA, her hopeless hair, unaided by the style of the day, is the kind of high school girl whose near dumpiness seems only a minor hindrance because she so totally accepts it. She is walking with her best friend, PATSY CLARK. PATSY is a bright, blonde Bayou Club beauty. She is athletic, warm and sensitive, seemingly perfect in every way with even the good grace to have a bit of a tortured soul. As they arrive at the house, there is some activity next door.

PATSY

Hey, Emma, what's that?

EMMA

We have an astronaut moving in next door.

PATSY

Which one?

(CONTINUED)

7

CONTINUED:

7

EMMA

Garrett Breedlove.

PATSY

Judy has one on her block too. I'll wait for you. I don't feel up to handling your mother today.

EMMA

It would be nice to have a mother somebody liked.

She enters the house.

8

INT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY

8

As EMMA enters, ROSIE is cleaning.

EMMA

Where is she?

ROSIE

(matter of factly)

She's out back with that old fart who's trying to get into her pants.

EMMA

Thank you, Rosie.

She exits.

9

EXT. AURORA'S BACKYARD - DAY

9

A good lawn--a garden AURORA cares for, trees to give her privacy from her River Oaks neighbors--another aspect of AURORA'S perfect nest.

AURORA can now be fully and clearly seen for the first time without veil or shadows. She is nearing 40 and she has a rather simple method for appearing younger. She allows herself to be courted by much older men. Standing over her as she reclines in her chaise is EDWARD JOHNSON. He's 56 years old. He's here to assert himself but once more AURORA is putting him through some trying paces.

EDWARD

I might not be able to get away later--Tahiti might make a difference for us. Why don't you face up to the fact that you have certain biological needs?

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

(absently)

Because I don't. I might have romantic ones, though.

EDWARD

Well, I might not be a poetic man, but I know that...

AURORA

(interrupting)

Don't be so sure.

EDWARD

Huh?

AURORA

How long since you've tried to be romantic? If you could manage it, I might think about things like Tahiti.

She rises from her chaise and leans over to examine her flowers. Even with her back to a man, there is something flirtatious about her.

ON EDWARD.

He's suspicious of the offer but decides to attempt collaring a muse for the first time in his life.

EDWARD

Aurora?

AURORA

Hmmm?

EDWARD

The breeze just caught a wisp of your hair. It was lovely to see.

AURORA smiles tightly--at least he tried.

EDWARD

(emboldened as he looks at her ass)

I imagine if I could see your eyes now, the sunlight would be reflecting their color.

AURORA is puzzled by this one. She turns to question it and sees that EMMA has been standing there watching.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

Hello.

EMMA

Hi. Hello, Mr. Johnson.

AURORA

(to Emma)

You're not getting hair on your lip?

EMMA

(exasperated)

Nooo.

AURORA

Oh, good...It was just a shadow.

EMMA

(worried)

You sure?

AURORA

Yes. It's fine.

EMMA

I wanted to borrow the car. I got invited over to the Bayou Club.

AURORA

(to Edward)

We'll be right back.

As they walk away, EMMA anxiously checking her lip with her finger.

EDWARD

Don't worry. I'll just wait here in the lush and heavy air.

EMMA

I can't believe how you tease these men. They've got feelings, too.

AURORA

Oh, you always make too much of the wrong things.

EMMA (now 21) posing in a bridal dress. She is flushed, tickled to the core that the dress is so fantastic. She

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

has never looked so beautiful. PATSY is wearing a new maid of honor dress while AURORA sits observing. She is trying to be a good sport and not dampen the spirits. It is a difficult chore for her.

EMMA

Well, isn't it something how much fun this is?

(noting cap)

...nobody will see my hair.

AUROPA

You look very nice.

(to saleswoman)

How much is it?

SALESWOMAN

Four hundred and eighty dollars.

AURORA groans so loudly it jolts the salesgirl.

EMMA

It is too much, isn't it?

AURORA

Well, Neiman's isn't the only place to look for a wedding dress. And it isn't like we're having a lot of people.

EMMA

(accepting)

Yeah, I guess, and just to wear once.

PATSY

(suddenly to Emma)

Emma, it's my wedding gift to you.

(to salesgirl)

She'll take it.

AURORA and PATSY exchange a look. PATSY will not be cowed.

11 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

11

Two lit windows. One upstairs where we can make out the figure of AURORA'S pacing--through the other window, we can see two young women.

12 INT. EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

12

PATSY and EMMA are in pajamas, the stuffed animals still in evidence. "King and I" is playing as EMMA ties

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

together a stack of original cast albums, some blues, some jazz vocals. EMMA'S a mark for a good lyric. PATSY is rubbing a Marlboro back and forth between her fingers, the tobacco running out into an ashtray. She now begins to stuff the empty cigarette with marijuana. The wedding gown and maid of honor's dress hang prominently in the background.

PATSY

You getting nervous yet, Emma?

EMMA

No. It feels so natural. Is something wrong with me?

13 INT. AURORA'S ROOM - NIGHT

13

She sits at her window seat eating from a box of chocolates. She is troubled. She sighs, rises and starts downstairs.

14 INT. EMMA'S ROOM

14

The girls are smoking their revised Marlboro. Mary Martin is singing "Cockeyed Optimist" from "South Pacific."

PATSY

I feel a little foolish getting stoned to hear Ethel Merman.

EMMA

Mary Martin. You're crazy if you smoke these in a car, Patsy. The Texas troopers have gone crazy. Flap knows this one fella in the English department where a trooper was following him so he swallowed his grass--so they scraped his tongue and used that as evidence. He's going to get five years.

PATSY

(Patsy has not been listening)

This is the last time we'll be like this.

EMMA

I just plain refuse to get into that kind of thinking. Oh, God, this is the last time we'll be like this, isn't it?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(hugging)

But we'll always love each other
and our babies will be best friends.

As they hug.

PATSY

It's always meant so much to me
that someone as nice as you loved me.

EMMA

(sobbing)

Oh, Patsy, give me a break.

There is a knock on the door.

AURORA'S VOICE

Emma?

Instantly the two girls part and grab four aerosol cans
and spray the room, a can in each hand.

AURORA'S VOICE

Open the door.

EMMA

You can't come in.

AURORA'S VOICE

What do you mean?

EMMA

(to Patsy)

What the hell? I'm getting married.

She opens the door. The marijuana cigarette in her
mouth. PATSY hysterical in the background.

EMMA

What is it, Mom?

AURORA

(annoyed)

Oh, really. I need to talk to you.

We hear her walk away. EMMA is curious and a bit
apprehensive.

PATSY

Maybe she's going to tell you how
to have sex.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

EMMA

She's only an expert on how to avoid it.

(Patsy laughs)

Oh, I shouldn't say things like that. I didn't mean it.

She bites her tongue.

15 INT. DOWNSTAIRS AREA - NIGHT

15

To show EMMA a bit wobbly, pause near the living room getting the small pulse of pleasure she always receives from taking in the original Klee painting which hangs prominently there--a few sharply angled lines, some black, some grey and some red.

16 INT. AURORA'S ROOM

16

AURORA sitting under her favored painting--that small Renoir of two handsome women wearing hats and gowns. She looks grim.

AURORA

Would you want me to be silent about something that's for your own good even if it might hurt a little?

EMMA

Yes, ma'am, I sure would.

She dashes out, closing the door behind her. We hear her laughing, giddy--high on life, Texas weed and her own wit. AURORA is thrown by the totally unexpected behavior. She starts after EMMA who reappears, still having a great time.

EMMA

What is it, Momma? I really would like to get some sleep so I can look halfway decent tomorrow.

AURORA can't say what she has to in this atmosphere. Sulky and beleaguered, she retreats to the comfort of her window seat. It looks out on her garden; it is soft and well-cushioned and safe.

EMMA

(babying her)

Come on, what is it?

(CONTINUED)

She moves to join her. AURORA looks at her examining her daughter's face, liking the eyes, the round cheeks, distressed with the limp hair.

AURORA

I was sitting here trying to concentrate on what wedding gift to get you...

(Emma waits her out)

For a second, I thought of my mother's Renoir...

(Emma waits)

So I've been trying--trying to ignore the truth.

(launching in)

I am totally convinced that your getting married to Flap Horton tomorrow is a mistake of such proportions that it would cripple your destiny and make wretched your life.

EMMA doesn't know what hit her.

AURORA

Flap is limited, he has no imagination. Even at this age, all he wants is a secure teaching job. He's not that attractive... his teeth...

EMMA

You don't know anything about me. Shut up...just shut up or I'll get you back. Just how can you do this to me now? How can you? How can you? How can you? How can you?

AURORA

Because I'm your mother and I know you're not special enough to overcome a bad marriage.

EMMA

(shocked--crazy mad)

Oh. Oh. Ooooooo. I'm going to get you back.

AURORA

Will you stop taking what I'm saying personally? Use your brain. I'm telling you the truth.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

I can get you on your looks. You're so worried about aging--well?... You know your neck's losing shape...

AURORA'S remarkable gifts for self preservation come into play. With muscles never before needed nor flexed she moves to stifle her daughter's rage.

AURORA

No. You will not do this.

EMMA

I'm not that scared of you. You know, your rear end...

AURORA

No. I mean it. This is a crossroads for us. Don't make a mistake. Do you want to stay my daughter or not?

Almost literally AURORA is shoving her daughter's words back down her throat. Wills lock only briefly before EMMA'S gives way.

EMMA

(calmer)

You're just so awful to me.

AURORA

That's more like it.

EMMA

Thank God for Flap Horton for getting me out of here.

She starts out then wheels on her mother.

EMMA

If this is your attitude, I don't think you should bother to come to the wedding.

AURORA

I think you're right. The hypocrisy was bothering me too.

EMMA exits in disbelief.

EMMA

My own mother's not coming to my wedding.

AURORA

Now I suppose you're mad at me.

17 EXT. AURORA'S STREET - DAY

17

A yellow '69 XKE convertible, it's top down, is forced to move slowly behind a beer delivery truck. In the truck are ROSIE and her husband, ROYCE. In the car are GARRETT BREEDLOVE and an 18-year-old girl. GARRETT is a once famous astronaut for the United States of America. He is in his mid 40's and sexy. He's an easygoing over-achiever who truly believes that life can be simple and fun. GARRETT and his date are hung over from a night of carousing.

18 ANGLE ON AURORA.

18

In a housedress as she stands barefoot on her front lawn, a garden tool in hand. She is looking with undisguised contempt at the former national hero as he pulls into the driveway immediately adjacent to her own, as ROYCE steers his truck into AURORA'S driveway. It conceals BREEDLOVE'S car from our view. AURORA quickly shifts her attention to ROSIE as she steps from the truck.

ROSIE

No matter what my kids do to me,
I hope I'm never such a stump as
to not be at their wedding.

AURORA

They don't seem to have weddings--
they just have christenings, don't
they?

ROSIE

Don't get me pissed at you. You're
having a hard enough time.

AURORA nods, a bit downcast.

ROSIE

(continuing)

Just do me a favor and give me a
while before I have to feel sorry
for you.

AURORA

How was it?

ROSIE

Let me get changed and I'll tell
you everything.

ROYCE has gotten down from the truck and hovers into view. His beer belly is fabulous--the buckle of his belt pointing straight down to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE

(disgusted)

Oh, Royce wanted you to see
him dressed up.

She looks at him.

ROYCE

(loving Aurora's attention)

I just wanted to say congratulations
and that the bride looked almost as
pretty as her momma.

AURORA

Thank you. I'm pleased you dropped
by.

ROYCE

I'm pleased that I did, too. Good-
bye, then.

ROSIE starts for the house, loathing ROYCE for finding
AURORA so attractive. ROYCE backs the truck up
revealing GARRETT'S XKE. He and the young woman have
passed out in the car, their heads laying together, the
girl's hand resting on his crotch. There is a NASA
sticker in the window shield. AURORA takes in this
picture post card from the second level of hell and
then advances on the car. She taps the young blonde
girl gently on the shoulder.

AURORA

Miss...Miss...

The hungover girl mumbles incoherently--the chain
reaction to AURORA'S pushing her shoulder is to have
the girl's hand jiggle the man's privates.

AURORA

(shaking harder)

Young woman...young woman...?

(to man)

Child molester?

GIRL

(mumbling sexily as she feels him)

Uh-oh, here goes the rocket.

AURORA, shocked, shakes her violently. The girl's eyes
open and focus on this angry woman old enough to be
her mother.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

Listen carefully! You've passed out in a good neighborhood this time. Wake him up and get him inside! But give me a second. So far I've avoided meeting him and I'd like to keep it that way.

As she moves to her house.

This is a garage apartment in the area around Rice University--poor housing to some--a "find" to graduate students of which FLAP HORTON is one. There are stairs leading up to the door and an area at the top of the stairs with just enough room for a somewhat rusty porch swing. Houston is built on a swamp. It is tropical; the air is extraordinarily sensual and, for EMMA, sitting outside on one of those humid, fragrant summer nights is part of what being Houstonian is all about. So she sits here now with her new husband, still half dressed in the clothes they were married in, a bit drunk from champagne, with their belongings inside awaiting the setting up of housekeeping if energy ever strikes. Their clothes are dirty from the porch. They are somewhat sweaty as they eat from a Kentucky Colonel carton. FLAP finishing off some corn-on-the-cob. FLAP is 23 and looks like a nice guy.

EMMA

I'm glad we didn't try to do a honeymoon.

The phone begins ringing.

EMMA

She's going crazy. I'll make her wait till noon tomorrow. That's about all she could take.

FLAP

You're totally justified to stay clear away from her forever.

EMMA

Oh, she just came apart because I was leaving and she was feeling more alone.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

(as if to a simpleton)

Emma, your mother boycotted your wedding. She hates your husband and she only holds you in medium esteem.

EMMA

"Medium esteem"--you're so cute.

20 FLAP stands and helps her up, finishing some corn-on-the-cob. She gives him a little kiss and hand-in-hand they walk across their threshold. Books are stacked in piles, most of them paperbacks. As they move past the stacks. 20

EMMA

Wouldn't it have been strange if one of us married someone who didn't like to read? And there must be millions of interesting people in the world who just don't like to read. I feel so totally good about us. I hope I get pregnant tonight.

FLAP

It would be nice. I love the way you look. You're so nice and round.

Now FLAP tosses his corn away and embraces her in good-natured sexuality and moves her towards the mattress lying on the floor without boxspring.

EMMA

(between kisses)

The only thing I don't like about sex is that it always means the end of a conversation.

Now they go at it on the mattress, the windows open, lamps on at the other end of the room provide illumination. When FLAP gets horny, it would never occur to him to close doors or shut out lights. But he pauses for some atypical foreplay, kisses her body, touches her, they grin at each other.

EMMA

(impressed with his foreplay)

Well, aren't we being leisurely tonight?

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

She holds his head to her chest, gives it a sudden squeeze. Then a wave of tenderness as he begins to kiss her friendly buds. The phone, finally after some 35 rings, stops.

EMMA

It's just a shame that my mother's too arrogant to ever admit how wrong she was about you and how lovely and wonderful you are.

But now she pauses because the SOUND of FLAP sucking the corn from his teeth between kisses of her breast is distracting her.

21 ON FLAP

21

Pausing over the breast, making the noise that's somewhere on the graph between annoying and plain disgusting. His nose wrinkled in concentration as he tries to suck loose another kernel. He finally does and busies himself once more with EMMA'S breast, then feels her staring down at him.

EMMA

(swatting him)

What are you doing?

He realizes suddenly and they both laugh.

FLAP

(embarrassed and pleased with himself)

Come on, it's not that terrible.

He picks at his teeth. A kernel of corn falls to EMMA'S breast as she flicks it away.

EMMA

Flap, for God's sake. What's the opposite of romantic?

22 EXT. EMMA'S APT. - MORNING

22

From the record player, we hear Ethel Merman and Russell Nype singing "I Hear Music" from "Call Me Madam".

23 INT. EMMA'S APT. - DAY

23

EMMA and FLAP have just finished having sex again.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

That is the strangest music to
have sex to.

EMMA

I know.

He smiles and reaches next to him for a paperback book. The phone starts ringing from the kitchen. FLAP makes a sour face. EMMA decides to answer it. Scampering from the bed, she is wearing one of FLAP'S T-shirts and nothing else.

24 INT. EMMA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

24

EMMA picks up the phone.

EMMA

(into phone)

I'm not ready to forgive you.
I'm happy--leave me alone. I
don't want to talk now.

She starts to hang up, then reconsiders.

EMMA

(continuing)

Oh, did you see the table cloth
Rosie made me? Oh, it's beautiful.
No, not yet. I thought omelettes.
No, I'll do them sort of Tex-Mex.
I don't feel like talking now. No,
I mean it. That was the worst thing
you ever did to me.

FLAP comes padding in shirtless, zipping up his jeans
as EMMA sees him.

EMMA

(continuing into phone)

Well, I think you owe my husband an
apology. Well, until you do tell
it to my husband, I'm not going
to listen to any of your gossip.
He's right here.

FLAP gestures he wants no part of the phone. EMMA mimes that he must do this. He shakes his head. Finally she wins the silent debate, FLAP taking the phone. EMMA'S concentration on his end of the conversation is extraordinary.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

(into phone)

Hello, Mrs. Greenway...No, ma'am,
I'm not enjoying your predicament.

EMMA

(shouting towards phone)

Momma, be nice. I'm not kidding.

FLAP

(overriding her)

As a matter of fact, I don't need
or desire an apology. All I want is
for you to understand and appreciate
my position, to respect our marriage
and to maybe wait another 15 minutes
before you call in the morning.

(he grins)

Yes, I guess I've said my piece.
Okay. I'll put her on.

EMMA gives him a big kiss. Takes the phone.

EMMA

Hi. Isn't he great?

25 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - MORNING - ONE YEAR LATER

25

The legend ONE YEAR LATER appears on the screen. AURORA is still asleep though the sun is shining in and from the television set, left on from the night before, we can see the TODAY SHOW with Hugh Downs as host. There is noise outside--vulgar, male "walla". She gets up and walks to the window.

26 EXT. STREET - AURORA'S POV

26

An all night party breaking up at GARRETT'S house. A motley group of spent revelers saying goodbye to him at the door. He accepts their embraces while holding a waste basket full of empty liquor bottles in the other hand. Now he restrains one girl, bidding her to stay; she nods acquiescence. She waits for him while he happily goes around to the side of the house--the driveway adjoining AURORA'S--removes the lid from one of his main garbage cans to empty his container into it. He misses. The bottles crash. He looks at the mess, then does some twinkle-toed broken glass running back to the girl. She laughs.

27 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM

27

As she looks at him with disgust. Her attention is once more arrested.

- 28 EXT. STREET - AURORA'S POV 29
- ROYCE'S truck pulls to the curb. ROSIE gets out one door, ROYCE the other. He reaches into the cab and loads her with some shopping cartons, then looks up.
- 29 ROYCE'S POV 29
- AURORA in her nightgown, pink folds of satin, white lace straps, the goddess of middle-age come to haunt his next erotic beer dream.
- 30 ON ROYCE AND ROSIE 30
- As she follows his glance while burdened with packages, then looks back at AURORA, still visible. She gestures for AURORA to step away from the window, which AURORA does. She nudges ROYCE sharply.
- ROYCE
(defensively)
Even a priest can look.
- ROSIE
Is that why you drove me today--
to catch a glimpse of your dreamboat?
- She marches off towards the house.
- 31 ANGLE ON KITCHEN DOOR. 31
- ROSIE can see AURORA dialing the phone. ROSIE balances the carton and struggles with the key, all within plain sight of AURORA who makes no effort to help her. Finally AURORA hangs up and busies herself with breakfast rather than open the door for ROSIE.
- 32 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 32
- As ROSIE enters.

AURORA
(into phone)
Hi, it's me. I don't want to
drive in this rain. Would you
pick me up?

ROSIE
Why don't you just show Royce your
bosoms and get it over with?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

AURORA

(fuming)

Instead of being upset with me,
why don't you realize that this is
apparently how desperate I've gotten
for a little male approval?

ROSIE

(guiltily)

I didn't think of that.

33 EXT. HOUSTON SHOPPING MALL - DAY

33

Sheets of rain are falling. Women waiting in the slim
shelter of the department store awning for men to
pick them up in the car...Traffic is heavy--the pick-up
area three and four cars deep.

34 INT. EMMA'S CAR - DAY

34

As she maneuvers towards the area--four cars from the
curb. She beeps. AURORA gestures for EMMA to get
her car closer.

EMMA

(yelling)

I can't. You're just going to
have to get a little wet.

35 EXT. HOUSTON STREET - DAY

35

Pouring rain--EMMA'S old, clearly run-down car in late
afternoon rush hour traffic.

36 INT. EMMA'S CAR - DAY

36

AURORA, her packages in her lap, notes a bit of water
running into the car from the top of her window.

AURORA

Look at this--it's raining in.

EMMA

(broadly sarcastic)

Well, heavens.

She is straining to see out, wiping at the fogged
windowshield with her hand.

37 EXT. INTERSECTION - DAY

37

As the light changes, EMMA'S car entering.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

AURORA'S VOICE

Emma, stop!

The car's brake locks and it hydroplanes as it spins in a wide arc.

EMMA'S VOICE

(frightened)

Oh, Goddammit!

AURORA'S VOICE

We don't need language like that now.

The car comes to rest blocking two lanes.

38 INT. CAR - DAY

38

The engine is silent. EMMA takes a breath of relief, tries to start the car; it will not turn over. AURORA shakes her head in disapproval. EMMA grimaces at her mother's attitude then puts her hand on the door handle.

EMMA

We'd better get out of here.

AURORA

Why do I have to?

EMMA

It's too easy for another car to plow into us.

39 EXT. CAR - DAY

39

EMMA gingerly getting out the driver's side, no protection from the rain, the cars rushing by. A hand reaches through the passenger's window, an umbrella opens; AURORA steps out being ever so careful as she switches the umbrella to the other hand, steps gingerly to the street, is startled by a passing car and falls face down into the street. As EMMA rushes around the car towards her, the spray from the wheels of a passing truck drench AURORA, the packages she was carrying moisten and open showing the garments she purchased. As EMMA struggles with her mother, they look up and react:

40 THEIR POV

40

A short man in a cowboy hat and boots expertly and calmly setting down flares, his car parked a few feet behind them. Already the flares are having a good effect as the passing vehicles give wider berth. He walks over

(CONTINUED)

to them now, a shy Texan named VERNON DAHLART. Right now he helps her to her feet; she is dirty and wet and staggered by her fall, but, even so, the muddy mess of a woman flashes a smile, laughs at herself, pulls the wet dress a bit more snug against her breast.

VERNON

You're not hurt or anything, are you?

AURORA

No.

EMMA

Thanks for stopping. What's your name?

VERNON

Vernon Dahlart. So you ain't hurt?

AURORA

No. I'm very grateful. My name's Aurora Greenway and this is my daughter, Emma, and I won't blame you if you don't forgive us for the way we look.

VERNON

I'm just glad you weren't hurt.

AURORA

I just don't know what we do now.

VERNON

Well, I own some garages, so let me phone from my car. I'll have your car picked up and fixed up and arrange for a loaner for you and I'll run you on home and there's some blankets in the back and a thermos of hot pea soup and one of vegetable.

AURORA

(overwhelmed)

Thanks.

AURORA takes VERNON'S arm. EMMA following, they walk to his car. He tugs nervously at his ear.

AURORA

Don't tug at your ears like that. You'll stretch your earlobes.

VERNON

I get the fidgets around ladies.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

AURORA

So you're in the garage business?

VERNON

I got eight or nine businesses that
I look after when I'm in Houston.

AURORA

Where else do you go?

VERNON

Alberta.

41 A car comes by. VERNON ducks AURORA down and takes 41
the spray full in his face. She didn't get it,
however, prompting him to say with sincerity:

VERNON

That was close.

AURORA

What's in Alberta?

VERNON

Oil.

She turns to see EMMA to see if she heard.

EMMA

I guess we're dropping me off first.

42 INT. VERNON'S CAR - DAY

42

As EMMA gets in the back seat, AURORA in the front.
While VERNON circles the car, they have the oppor-
tunity to take in the two phones, the TV set built in
the back, the safe between the two front seats, the
front dashboard of cowhide, the kind with the hair
still on it. VERNON gets into the car.

EMMA

What a car.

AURORA

(touches cowhide)

Except for this--how'd that happen?

VERNON

(chagrined)

My idea.

They move off.

43 EXT. EMMA'S APT. 43

As they drop her off. And drive off.

44 INT. VERNON'S CAR 44

AURORA, a blanket around her, sipping soup.

AURORA

Where do you live?

VERNON

Right here mostly when I'm in town. The seat becomes a bed and I own a six-story parking lot so I just park up top. I keep a hotel room for clothes and cleaning up but I'm on the go out of state a lot. I have a pack of nieces and nephews down here, though, that I get fun out of. That's my family and my top men work out of Houston...I might change that though because of...whew...what's happening here?...I never talked so much about myself in my life.

45 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY 45

As VERNON'S car pulls up.

VERNON

This it?

AURORA

Yes. Why do you look so upset?

VERNON

I guess I wish we weren't strangers.

AURORA

I'm giving a dinner for some family on Wednesday. Are you free?

VERNON

Lord, yes.

AURORA

(a smile)

Let's walk a little. I'll show you my garden while there's still some light.

He pops a knuckle.

AURORA

I wish I didn't make you so nervous.

EMMA

My mother gave me money to shop so
I wouldn't look poor next to Patsy.
I got you something.

FLAP'S VOICE

Oh, is Patsy going to be there
tonight?

EMMA

(annoyed how this pleases him)
Yesss. You want to dress better?

FLAP enters. He is dressed for the dinner. A sport
coat and slacks. FLAP enters the bedroom as EMMA
snips the tags.

FLAP

Aw, come on.

She hands him a box. He opens the cover and finds a tie.
He is annoyed.

FLAP

How often do I wear a tie?

EMMA

Tonight you are.

FLAP

You didn't get that tie for me.
You were worried about how I'd
look to your mother. I wish
you'd stop being such a quisling
where she's concerned.

EMMA is hurt as she looks at him.

EMMA

Every time I feel really happy,
you turn perverse on me.

FLAP

(disbelief)
And buying that tie made you happy?

EMMA

Yes. Yes. I wish you would under-
stand that because you really don't.
It made me very happy describing your
jacket to the salesman, thinking how
it would go absolutely perfectly with
what you're wearing...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

EMMA (CONT'D)

(she picks it up and holds it against his outfit to see)
 ...which, by the way, it certainly does. It was a goddamned Mardi Gras buying you that tie and you're too dumb to understand that kind of happiness.

FLAP

I'm sorry. I was terrible. Going to your mother's always makes me a little irrational.

A car horn sounds from outside. FLAP moves towards the door.

FLAP

(calling)
 We're coming, Dad.

EMMA

(exasperated)
 Do you like the tie?

FLAP

Sure.

EMMA

(pleased)
 I knew you would.

47 INT. AURORA'S HOME - NIGHT

47

As she opens the door to admit the three HORTONS--FLAP, EMMA and FLAP'S father, CECIL. He's wearing a good suit that doesn't look like it belongs on him. AURORA is wearing a long green gown and some silver jewelry. In a series of quick cuts they go through a ritualistic inspection.

48 ANGLE ON AURORA

48

As she quickly checks out her daughter's hair.

49 ANGLE ON EMMA

49

Catching her mother's disapproval.

50 ON AURORA

50

Looking at the dress, nodding that she likes it.

51 ON EMMA 51

Acting like her mother's opinion doesn't matter.

52 ON AURORA 52

As she notes FLAP'S tie.

53 ON FLAP 53

Uncomfortable because despite his own considerable independence, he always feels cowed by his mother-in-law.

54 ON AURORA 54

Her well-cared-for hand swallowed by CECIL'S.

AURORA

Come in. How are you, Cecil?

CECIL

I always look forward to being here.
I never know what I'm eating but
you can't beat it for tasty.

As AURORA closes the door.

55 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 55

ROSIE is passing a tray with goodies. She's smoking. AURORA is guiding CECIL through the room. VERNON enters with a drink in each hand. Never, at any moment, do his eyes leave AURORA. At one point PATSY stares at him as he drinks in AURORA.

PATSY

You like her, huh?

He doesn't hear her. Because at that moment AURORA laughs at something. VERNON loves her laugh, his eyes shine, he shakes his head in utter wonderment at how perfect the laugh is.

VERNON

(to himself)

Lord, she's somethin'.

PATSY

(louder)

You like her?

VERNON is startled. He turns to face PATSY.

VERNON

(a bit mortified)

Does it show?

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON AURORA AND CECIL AND FLAP.

AURORA

(to Cecil)

I'm making shrimp creole and I'm not serving bread. I don't think it will be possible for you to sop the plate clean the way you always do.

CECIL

I'm too good for you to stop with any meal.

AURORA

Well, we'll see.

FLAP

Don't make fun of him.

AURORA

Really, every time you get two sips of a drink in you, you start looking for a way to confront me. Don't do it in my house.

CECIL

What's going on? Leave her alone. She's fine to me.

AURORA

Let's sit down--Patsy, Vernon. Patsy, find Emma.

56 EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

56

ROSIE, smoking, has a tray of drinks beside her as she and EMMA sit with feet up on the back porch. They are drinking.

ROSIE

So he stays away four whole days and when he comes back, he doesn't even stay awake long enough to rub my back.

EMMA

Want me to rub it?

ROSIE

Would you?

EMMA gets up, stands behind ROSIE and rubs her back as PATSY comes up.

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE

He used to give me such a good lovin'--wild but polite. Remember how I used to tell you when you was young?

EMMA

My favorite stories.

ROSIE .

You was always the best child I knowed. I always feel bad inside that I love you more than my...own. Anyways, after he fell asleep, my throat just closed on me. I got the choking feeling. You know what I'm talking about?

EMMA

No.

ROSIE

(surprised)

Oh, good.

PATSY now decides she can interrupt.

PATSY

You mother's serving.

ROSIE

Let's go.

She walks briskly inside. PATSY and EMMA walking in behind her. EMMA feeling natural. For her the episode with ROSIE was not particularly special but PATSY, as happens to her with some frequency in this friendship, feels shallow next to EMMA. There is a half-beat of alienation as PATSY walks alongside her.

EMMA

You okay?

PATSY

Yes.

She puts her arm around PATSY'S shoulders as they walk in.

FLAP is feeling fairly wanton as he looks at PATSY. When she becomes aware of this:

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

FLAP

(to Patsy)

Emma says you helped her pick out
the tie for me. I really like it.
Thanks.

58 ON AURORA

58

Seated at the head of the table, VERNON and CECIL on
either side. She catches VERNON staring at her intently
and pushes his face a bit so it is pointing in another
direction. She, in turn, is fixed on the spectacle of
CECIL using a prawn to mop up the very last traces from
his plate. He is really into it, dipping the prawn in
the gravy and slurping it dry, then re-dipping it.

CECIL

(mouth full)

And you thought I couldn't do...

AURORA

I'm sorry but I just can't understand
you if you talk with your mouth full.

CECIL

Sorry.

He takes the food from his mouth and holds it in his hand.

CECIL

(continuing)

Now I was saying...

(breaks into laugh)

Just wanted to see your face.

He chuckles and replaces the food in his mouth.

59 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

59

As EMMA and AURORA, some thousands of clean-ups to their
credit, work with smooth precision on this one. But
AURORA keeps a steady eye on her daughter since they
are handling the good china.

AURORA

Careful. Did Vernon say a word?
Isn't it just my luck to get someone
who has no idea how to handle me? I
don't like being worshipped until I
earn it. What's wrong with you?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

It does get my goat that my husband
lusts after my best friend.

(calming)

Maybe my temper is due to nature.

(she turns to her)

There is some good news. I'm
unofficially pregnant.

AURORA

(quickly)

What do you mean?

EMMA

I didn't get the test back but
you know me, I'm never late.

(on Aurora's look)

I'm going to get so mad if you're
not happy for me. I mean it.

AURORA

And what about meeee? What about
my being a grandmother?

EMMA

What's wrong with that?

AURORA

(suffering)

Nothing. It's wonderful. It
just might not be true.

EMMA

I think it is so you might as well...

AURORA

(angry but clenched)

But maybe it's not. So let's not
start the celebration prematurely.

She stalks out the side door leading to the front yard.

60

AURORA walks the lawn barefooted under the stars.
This moment staggers her. She moves into a darker
area so that we can just see her, but we hear her
sighing, collecting herself. Suddenly she is illumi-
nated by headlights as a long Lincoln pulls in the
bordering driveway.

60

ANGLE ON CAR

As it stops. We see that GARRETT is in the passenger
seat sitting beside two beautiful and beautifully

(CONTINUED)

dressed young women. They are almost as young as the girls we've seen him with earlier but there is a great difference. They are privileged, upper strata young women. The world owes them a living and it has shown every intention of paying up.

DORIS

Do you need some help?

GARRETT

I'll let you know after I stretch my legs.

He opens the car door and falls flat on his face. He laughs. DORIS leans out the window. She has obviously had her hands full with him for a good part of the evening.

DORIS

(leaning out the window)

You're bleeding.

GARRETT

That's okay. Come inside.

DORIS

No, thank you.

GARRETT

Safety in numbers.

DORIS

No, thank you.

GARRETT

What is there to be afraid of?

AURORA has almost forgotten herself and her problems to take a few steps closer where she stands taking everything in.

DORIS

Afraid???

GARRETT

Well then, Doris, why not come in?

DORIS

Because you're much older than the boys I date, because you're drunk, because when I went there tonight to see a United States astronaut give a lecture, I didn't expect him

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DORIS (CONT'D)

to prowl after us all night long. I expected a hero, not some silly flirt who has to keep his jacket open because his belly's getting too big.

GARRETT

(hopefully addressing other girl)
Lee Anne, would you like to come in?

LEE ANNE

You'd better tend to that cut.

The car moves off. He grovels about trying to get to his feet.

GARRETT

(mumbling a judgement)
This wasn't a good time.

He tries to pull himself up by grabbing a full garbage can. Instead it tips over. Garbage is on him, he is bleeding considerably, grunting in genuine pain that has sobered him instantly as the heavy metal cans crashed against his head. Now AURORA steps out. He sees her.

GARRETT

Will you give me a hand?

AURORA

Give you a hand? It's all I can do not to step on your face.

She steps over him and crosses to the house.

GO TO BLAC

61 INT. LARGE COLLEGE AUDITORIUM - DAY

The entire audience is made up of young women. They being addressed by a somewhat older, but decidedly Eastern, woman.

SPEAKER

And what we're talking about today is not just for women who do their shopping on Fifth Avenue or Rodeo Drive...

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

ANGLE ON EMMA AND PATSY.

EMMA is holding an adorable infant, her first born, TOMMY. PATSY sits alongside her, somewhat intent.

EMMA

Where's Rodeo Drive?

PATSY

Beverly Hills.

EMMA nods.

SPEAKER

(continuing)

Don't make the mistake of thinking this movement is for those women out there. This will impact on your lives.

TOMMY starts crying. EMMA attempts to shush him. She is embarrassed.

EMMA

Tommy--sssshhh.

SPEAKER

(continuing)

The final tyranny is not how the established order views us but how we can be made to view ourselves.

TOMMY'S crying is now so pronounced that EMMA excuses herself, stepping over several other women.

SEATED GIRL

He's sweet looking.

EMMA

Thanks. Wish he was quieter.

And now she reaches the aisle.

SPEAKER

I said before there are three things you can do immediately and easily to improve the quality of your life. Now I'll tell you what those three things are. Number one...

EMMA is at the head of the aisle. She pushes open the door with one hand, steps out and the door closes behind her and her squalling baby.

62 EXT. AURORA'S BACK YARD - DAY - TWO YEARS LATER

62

Where we can see TOMMY, now a toddler, moving after ROSIE, who darts away from him.

ROSIE

Come on, run harder.

AURORA'S VOICE

He's so fat.

EMMA'S VOICE

No. His legs will grow a lot this year.

AURORA'S VOICE

That won't make much difference if you keep stuffing him with food.

63 INT. AURORA'S LAUNDRY ROOM

63

Where EMMA is doing her clothes. Her mother looking out the window at her grandson. The SOUND of a phone ringing. EMMA picks it up.

AURORA

(continuing)

If it's Vernon, tell him...

EMMA

...that you're out.

AURORA

...that I'm resting.

EMMA

(into phone)

Hi, Flap...Oh--where? No, I don't want to wait to hear. Tell me.

(suddenly down)

My. Oh, you did not expect I'd be happy--let's be honest with each other before we have to start pretending. Look, my mother's right here trying to look disinterested. So I'll see you later. I know. Everything will be fine.

She hangs up. The phone is barely on the cradle, then:

AURORA

How long are you going to keep this a secret?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

The only school that's accepted Flap as an associate is in Des Moines. We're going to have to move there for the fall semester.

AURORA has a dark moment, then mutters to herself.

AURORA

He can't even do the simple things-- like fail locally.

EMMA is briefly pissed at her mother.

64 (OMIT SCENE)

64

65 EXT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - DAY

65

The U-Haul is filled and attached to the rear of the HORTON'S car. Stacks of books and records as always. PATSY'S car and AURORA'S Cadillac are in evidence as are the two women and ROSIE.

FLAP holds TOMMY by the hand as they look with curiosity at the women doing their leave-taking. AURORA is waiting with growing impatience for ROSIE to finish hugging and kissing EMMA goodbye. Just as they seem to have finished their last squeeze, one of them gets the need for just one more; it's almost an informal reception line with the reception growing colder as they move from EMMA to TOMMY to his father.

ROSIE and EMMA are locked in still another embrace.

AURORA

Rosie.

ROSIE

(taking orders)

Okay.

(to Emma)

Be sweet, honey.

EMMA

Okay. And make Momma drive you home when you work late. Have some fun sometimes, too.

PATSY steps up to EMMA and they embrace.

PATSY

Well, Ems...I didn't expect to be this devastated.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED:

65

EMMA

I sure did.

They hug.

ROSIE kisses TOMMY who tries to avoid the kiss. She grabs his head in both her hands and gives him one on the mouth.

ROSIE

He's got himself the sweetest lips.

PATSY hugs the child--ROSIE nods to FLAP--AURORA leans her face towards FLAP; he kisses her once, leaning forward to barely brush her cheek with his lips; they don't touch. PATSY gives him a hug; he squeezes a might too hard.

PATSY

Be good to her or we'll get you.

FLAP

Not you too, Patsy.

66 ON AURORA

66

Poised before her daughter.

EMMA

(teasing)

Don't act brave. I know you're going to go to pieces without me to nag.

AURORA

Well, I'm glad somebody's able to be in a joking mood.

She gives her daughter a hug as EMMA moves back.

EMMA

That's the first time I stopped hugging first.

She hugs her mother again. They break and she looks at her--then shakes her head in disapproval.

AURORA

Get yourself a decent maternity dress.

EMMA

(grinning)

You had to get one in.

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED:

66

AURORA

She thinks it's me. It's not.
 (turning to others)
 You're her friend, Patsy, tell her.

She moves to her grandson. He stares at her. They
 are not close.

AURORA

Well, Tom.

She pats his head absently.

TOMMY

Goodbye, Aunt Aurora.

TOMMY gets in the back of the car. FLAP and EMMA in
 front. ROSIE starts to cry. AURORA looks at her with
 disapproval so ROSIE moves off to enter AURORA'S car
 and cry in private.

PATSY

Write as soon as you get there
 so I know your address and all.

EMMA nods, not able to speak.

67 EMMA'S POV FROM INSIDE CAR

67

PATSY and AURORA standing just a few feet apart. AURORA
 is a bit more vulnerable than we might have imagined and
 a bit less than we'd hope.

AURORA

(to Emma)

The phone bill is going to be enormous.

EMMA smiles at her mother. AURORA backs off, but before
 the car pulls out, EMMA beckons PATSY over to the car
 for a private word.

68 ON AURORA

68

Overhearing what EMMA is saying.

EMMA

Do me a favor. Look in on my mother
 once in a while.

PATSY

I think she's glad she finally
 doesn't have to see me anymore.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

68

EMMA

No. You interest her.

PATSY

Okay. Be happy. I love you.

EMMA

Me, too.

They kiss through the open window.

FLAP

Can we go now?

EMMA

(wanting a last, long look)

Okay. But go slow.

FLAP hits the accelerator, burning rubber. They move quickly out of sight.

69 AURORA AND PATSY

69

Standing several feet apart. Their first moment ever together without EMMA as intermediary. From the look on AURORA'S face, it is obvious to PATSY that she has overheard. An awkward pause, then:

PATSY

I really would like to come see you from time to time.

AURORA

(nicely, even warm)

I think we both know I'm not old enough to need a welcome wagon and you've got too much going for you to be one.

PATSY

Oh, Mrs. Greenway.

She shakes her head and walks. We can almost see the minute beat where AURORA decides not to linger and look back at the apartment her daughter lived in as a bride and young mother.

70 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

70

As AURORA'S car comes to the curb to drop ROSIE off.

71 INT. CAR - DAY

71

ROSIE crying, AURORA can't bear it. She leans across ROSIE to open her door.

AURORA

Here's your bus stop. Will you get out?

She shoves at her.

ROSIE

Don't push me when I'm crying.

AURORA

It's not the end of the world.

ROSIE

It's the end of your world. Emma's the only one who can take ya.

AURORA

That's right, I don't have a devoted husband like yours to comfort me.

ROSIE

(fiercely mad)
Oh, you shit-head.

AURORA

Just get out.

ROSIE gets out of the car, gathering herself. She shouts at AURORA as she drives away.

ROSIE

Looks like we're going to get along wonderful without Emma, don't it?

72 INT. FLAP'S CAR - NIGHT

72

EMMA looking for the right radio station, FLAP driving.

FLAP

Honey.

She looks at him.

FLAP

I think it's going to be good for us to be away from your-- our families.

EMMA nods, edges closer to him.

(CONTINUED)

TOMMY

I miss Houston.

EMMA

You don't know how lucky you are.
Everybody wants to go to Des Moines.
People come from all over the world
to get one look at Des Moines before
they die. Some people think it's
the best city in Iowa.

FLAP grins at her.

TOMMY

I know you're teasing. Texas is
the best.

EMMA gets on her knees and begins to fix up a bed for
TOMMY in the back seat. As she does so...

EMMA

Stop worrying. We're going to see
terrific new things.

As she turns back, her eye is caught by something
out the window.

73 EMMA'S POV

73

A sign lit by a billboard lamp. It reads "You are
now leaving Texas."

74 BACK TO EMMA

74

Her eyes filling with tears. She is surprised and a
bit embarrassed by her reaction. She turns to FLAP,
pointing at the tears in her eyes, feeling foolish.

EMMA

Well, look at me.

75 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - EVENING

75

AURORA upset--barefoot. Walking her backyard, working
the garden. We hear a man running, whooping, then the
splash of water, then swimming, then a man emerging
from a pool. AURORA does not approve.

AURORA

(yelling for quiet)
Will you please...If you will...?

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT, toweling himself, naked to the waist, at least from what we can see, comes to the fence separating the property.

GARRETT

Sorry. I just took a sauna and you can't help yelling when you hit that cold water.

She nods and continues puttering, unnerved by his near presence.

GARRETT

(continuing)

You're not going to ignore me when I speak directly to you?

AURORA

I'm not ignoring you. What am I supposed to say? Okay. I suppose it is hard not to yell when you hit that cold water.

He grins, muses whether to confess something to her. She has turned away.

GARRETT

Hey.

AURORA

(turning)

Hey?

She almost looks straight at him but is unable to and busies herself again.

GARRETT

Well, what is your name--Aurora?

AURORA

Yes.

GARRETT

You want a shock?

AURORA

Not especially.

GARRETT

They were going to have this NASA dinner at the White House. Some

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT (CONT'D)
 cosmonauts and all of us and I was thinking there was nobody I could take. Because everybody I flew with, their wives would have given me bitch bites up and down my back if I showed up with one of my regular girls and I don't know anyone their age. And then I thought, I could ask my next door neighbor.

She looks at him with astonishment.

GARRETT
 (continuing easily)
 Then they canceled the evening. But I was really going to ask you out for a minute there. In spite of everything. Isn't that a shocker?

AURORA
 Sure. Imagine you having a date with someone where it wasn't necessarily a felony.

GARRETT
 (having fun)
 What would you have said if I'd asked you--seriously?

AURORA--just a bit unnerved--thinks for a beat, then:

AURORA
 I would have said I'd like to see the White House.

GARRETT
 So you would have gone. Well, Aurora, I'm the one who ended up shocked.

AURORA
 (smiling despite herself)
 Good night.

She starts in.

GARRETT
 What the hell? You want to have dinner out sometime?

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

(too fast)

No. No, thank you.

GARRETT

Lunch. Don't ladies like you have lunch a lot?

She turns, suspecting she's being teased, ready to be angry.

AURORA walks to her shoes and picks them up. She wiggles her toes in the grass, looks at the attractive, grinning man. 76

AURORA

You know, your manner isn't--there's something like you think you're toying with me.

GARRETT

Yes, I'm playing with you, Aurora. Want to play? Have Lunch.

She crosses to him, then stopping a few feet away.

AURORA

See, that's just the element I mean. If you want to have lunch at some restaurant to have a more pleasant atmosphere around the neighborhood, I'm not going to say no, but...

GARRETT

Okay, then. We'll try it.

AURORA

But first, let's...

(on his grin)

I'm not fooling, first, let's clarify...

GARRETT gestures to her.

GARRETT

Come here. We're too far apart to talk.

She moves closer to the fence trying to seem amused and patronizing when she actually feels terrified and 16 years old.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

(dripping sex)

Now, since you've agreed, let's save the rest of it. I know how you feel. There were countdowns when I had second thoughts. But I figured once you've said you'll do it and they strap you in and you're in the hands of something bigger and more powerful than yourself, you might as well look forward to the ride.

AURORA

I'm not going. There's really something wrong with you.

She half-runs to the house. GARRETT chuckles.

77 EXT. SMALL PARK - SMITH COUNTY, KANSAS - CLOSE ON SIGN 77

It fills the screen and tells us that we are at the exact epicenter of the United States--the middle of it all. We ARM UP and BACK from the plaque embedded in the ground and see the three HORTONS posing for a picture being taken by a young Japanese. TOMMY is biting his fingers to the quick. EMMA and FLAP have their arms around each other. They look young and frightened and lost.

On this image, we:

GO TO BLACK.

78 EXT. HORTON HOUSE - DES MOINES - SIX A.M.

78

We are looking through bug splattered glass--the windshield of the HORTON'S car, the bug bodies so prominent that they lend irony to EMMA'S first comment on her new home.

EMMA

It looks pretty.

79 INT. HORTON HOUSE - DAY

79

The house is simple, close set on either side by very similar homes. FLAP begins toting the many boxes inside while EMMA struggles to manage TOMMY'S absolutely dead weight out of the rear seat of their two-door car. Finally, she gets him on her shoulder and moves on wobbly legs towards the front door of her new home while her husband carries in two stacks of books. There is in her a growing excitement. This far away from her mother, there comes a vague feeling of extra power, a kind of maturity.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA'S happy. As they get into spoon-style sleeping position. Even though the shade is down, the sun is rising and the room is fairly well illuminated.

EMMA

God, I'm exhausted.

FLAP

You ever made love in Iowa?

EMMA

(turning to him; she's tickled)
Even after all that driving.

(a few kisses then)

It's great that Tommy's room is all the way in the back, and we can get noisy when we want to.

FLAP

You get to do that little high pitched squeak of yours.

EMMA

(swatting him)

Honestly...how about you?

(imitating him, she shouts)

Oh my God--here I go again. Yes!
Yes! Yes!

FLAP

(sexy, soft)

Oh, God, here I go again. Yes--yes--yes.

EMMA

(surprised, shy)

You know your voice just made me wet.

(suspicious)

How come you know how to make your voice like that all of a sudden?

(sudden flash)

You know we can't hear Tommy either.
I'll check him.

She gets out of bed. He scowls at her. Before he can say a critical word...

EMMA

(continuing)

.I'll just be a second. Don't get pissy.

80 ON EMMA

80

As she moves through the house made maze-like by cartons and boxes. She stops at TOMMY'S door, then deliberately catches herself and stops herself from entering. As she walks back to her own room.

DISSOLVE TO:

81 SAME HOUSE - SIX MONTHS LATER

81

Some furniture has been purchased, the place homey. Notably different from Houston as FLAP has moved from poor student to poorer teacher, his furnishings have kept pace. We are looking at TOMMY who is taking on the sophistication of an aging toddler. We HEAR FLAP and EMMA'S conversation from their bedroom, as does TOMMY, who is not especially interested. They are talking in loud whispers.

FLAP'S VOICE

I have eight or nine papers left to grade--this isn't love; it's selfishness.

EMMA'S VOICE

It's been almost a week since we've been together. We've never gone a whole week.

82 INT. HORTON'S BEDROOM

82

EMMA in bed pulling her dressed husband's arm. Even though they each have conflicting priorities at this moment, this is more fun than argument. The reason they are whispering is apparent in the background where we see EMMA'S old crib holding her baby, TEDDY.

FLAP

Sure, we've gone a week.

EMMA

(releasing him)

Only during the real pregnant months. Forget it. Just do me a favor. Don't make me feel silly and I won't make you feel guilty.

FLAP

Fair enough. I have to hurry.

83 INT. HORTON'S OUTER ROOM

83

As FLAP gives his son a kiss on the way out.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

Be a good boy.

TOMMY watches his father leave, then watches his mother enter from the bedroom. She is blowing her nose, having just cried a bit. TOMMY is about to speak then HEARS the noise of his father returning. FLAP takes EMMA by the hand.

FLAP

Let's hurry.

EMMA

(gleeful)

I absolutely love that you came back. I absolutely love it, you have no idea. I feel like you've saved our lives.

(to Tommy)

We'll have breakfast in a minute, honey.

The bedroom door closes behind them. TOMMY walks to the door and outside.

84 EXT. HORTON'S HOUSE - DAY

84

As TOMMY sits on the steps we HEAR the faint sound of a woman's squeak.

DISSOLVE TO:

85 SAME SCENE - FIVE YEARS LATER

85

TOMMY is now ten. TEDDY is five and wearing at least part of the outfit we saw on TOMMY in the previous scene. They are sitting in front of the house and HEARING the off-stage argument their parents are having.

FLAP'S VOICE

I don't know why you don't get a job if you're so worried about money.

EMMA'S VOICE

What am I going to do with the boys?

FLAP'S VOICE

It's supposed to be a great day when you get tenure.

EMMA'S VOICE

We don't have enough money to pay the bills now. All tenure means is we won't have enough money forever.

(CONTINUED)

TOMMY begins to walk off.

 TEDDY
 Mommy said to wait right here.

 TOMMY
 You stay if you want.

TEDDY is torn, reluctant to disobey his mother but unable to resist scurrying after his brother.

As they move down the block.

 FLAP'S VOICE
 Then I don't see why you can't ask your mother for money.

The boys are both upset, TEDDY seeking camaraderie, TOMMY withdrawn.

 TEDDY
 Tommy?

 TOMMY
 I don't want to talk.

 TEDDY
 What do you want to do?

 TOMMY
 (flaring out)
 How about punching each other in the stomach and seeing who can hit harder? You want to do that?

TEDDY looks at him, disappointed. There is a half-second attempt to stare him down, then:

 TEDDY
 Maybe later.

EMMA comes out of the house in the distance, distraught, looks up and down, spots her kids and comes marching towards them. TEDDY sees her and runs towards her, hugging her hard. She hugs him back. She is 30 years old and obviously distraught. She comforts TEDDY and eyes TOMMY who has refused to budge. 87

 EMMA
 I'm sorry we had a fight but it's over now.

TOMMY nods.

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED:

87

EMMA

(continuing)

I told you to wait out front though.
Why'd you go down here? Answer me,
Tommy.

TOMMY

(challenging)

I didn't want people to think we
lived there.

EMMA is made more angry than guilty by the remark.

EMMA

Okay. We'll let you say one really
mean thing to your mother each year.
So that'll do till you're eleven.

TOMMY

You're driving Daddy away.

EMMA

Don't make me hit you on the street.

They walk to the car.

88 INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

88

EMMA pushing a full basket, her sons in tow. She
pauses at the frozen food bin.

EMMA

(to Teddy)

You have never eaten Texas style
gumbo.

TEDDY

(excited)

No, can we?

He nudges TOMMY to join in the lobbying but TOMMY,
though dying for anything with the word "Texas"
attached, remains aloof.

EMMA

Why not? It's a good time for a treat.

She takes some frozen shrimp, reacts to the high price,
and drops it in her basket.

TEDDY

Yay!

(CONTINUED)

88 CONTINUED:

88

TOMMY gestures he should take it a bit more calmly.
His brother's exuberance embarrasses him.

89 OTHER ANGLE - CHECKOUT STAND

89

As the checker rings up the sale, a few people
waiting in line behind the HORTONS. The checkout
girl rings up the total.

GIRL

Forty-four dollars.

EMMA digs at her purse, stalls for a time while
digging for additional money.

TOMMY

(mortified)

You don't have enough money?

EMMA

(to girl)

I have thirty-eight dollars and
forty cents. I guess I'll have
to leave some things here.

The girl rolls her eyes. EMMA surveys what she's
bought. As she does, the girl addresses her colleague
at the next counter.

GIRL

(loudly)

Could I have the register key?
She doesn't have enough money.

TOMMY stands a few steps off. TEDDY clings to her.
He suspects he's supposed to be mortified.

EMMA

(to sons)

There's nothing wrong with this.
I just took the wrong purse.

She hands back the TV Guide. The girl deducts 25 cents.

GIRL

Forty-three dollars and
seventy-five cents.

EMMA feels at her hair, gives back the conditioner.

GIRL

Forty-one dollars and thirty-five
cents.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA examines the remainder. She needs the meat and produce. She gives back a package of miniature candy bars.

TOMMY

You promised I could get something.

EMMA

I'm not giving back real food.

TOMMY

Give her this.

He indicates a box of Mydol.

EMMA

No way.

EMMA hands back the candy bars. She has just taken candy from her baby.

GIRL

Forty dollars and thirty-five cents.

TOMMY

(squawking)

Mommy!

EMMA quickly takes a single bar from the rack and hands one to TOMMY.

GIRL

Forty dollars and forty-five cents.

She looks at TEDDY who does not complain. EMMA takes another candy bar from the rack and gives it to TEDDY.

GIRL

Forty dollars and fifty cents. We're going in the wrong direction.

EMMA

(to girl)

Will you please stop being so god-damned nasty? That's not going to make this any easier. We're both people, you know.

GIRL

(somewhat muted)

Forty dollars and fifty cents.

TEDDY offers his mother his candy bar.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (2)

89

EMMA looks up. She has just been deeply touched by her son's action. There's something wrong with you if you don't want to hug her just now.

MAN'S VOICE

Mrs. Horton.

90

SAM BURNS, a man in his early 50's, stands there, a bottle of ginger ale sticking out of the paper bag he carried under his arm, with a great desire to rescue EMMA from embarrassment: It's not the sort of thing he does well.

90

SAM BURNS

I'm Sam Burns from the bank.

(jogging her memory)

I turned you down on the second on your house?

EMMA

Of course. I knew who you were.

SAM BURNS

Could I help make up the difference here?

EMMA

Sure. I'll get it back to you tomorrow. Thanks.

He starts to hand the girl some money. There is the merest of hints that he may have had a few drinks.

SAM BURNS

(to girl)

You're a very rude young woman. I know Douglas from the Rotary and I can't believe he'd want you treating customers badly.

GIRL

I don't think I was treating her badly.

SAM BURNS

Then you must be from New York.

She hands him his change.

SAM BURNS

Thank you, miss.

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED:

90

GIRL
 (mumbling, broken)
 ...welcome.

He hefts her bundles and they exit.

91 EXT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

91

As the four of them walk towards the car.

EMMA

It was starting to feel like the worst time I ever had. I wouldn't have thought it was possible to get cheered up so fast. I'm grateful.

SAM BURNS

No problem.

They smile, eyes meet. They shy from the contact, then resume it. Two people who never flirt are discovering what they've been missing.

TOMMY

(sharply)
 Mommy. Mommy!

EMMA

Just give us a second. Wait over by the car, honey.

(Tommy starts to speak)

Wait over by the car, honey.

(He starts to speak again)

(Emma loudly)

Wait over by the car, honey.

(He opens his mouth; Emma ups her volume)

Wait over by the car, honey!!!

(Before he can speak, Emma goes full out to assert her will)

Over by the car. Over by the car.

Now! Now! Now!

92 Throughout this confrontation TEDDY has been trying to get TOMMY moving and now he finally does. SAM smiling after them.

92

SAM

Nice boys. You're great with them too.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

I think all three of us are going through a stage...

(a beat then)

Hey. Thanks again.

SAM

No thanks required. I've had a lovely time.

EMMA

Me too.

They seem to have just had a retroactive date. There is enormous reluctance to draw apart before confirming the contact.

EMMA

I'll get the money back to you.

SAM

Don't bother yourself. You could just drop it in the mail.

EMMA

To the bank?

SAM

Sure. You could even use a check-by-mail envelope...

(a daring moment)

...or you could come in. Whichever.

EMMA

Maybe I'll just come in sometime.

SAM

That would be fine.

93 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

93

AURORA enters bearing a tray--coffee, fresh rolls and small chocolate cakes. She sets the tray down near her window seat, plumps a pillow, gets in position and picks up the phone.

94 INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - DAY

94

It is quite early. She is looking out her front window. The alarm clock goes off in the bedroom. Almost simultaneously, the phone starts to ring.

95 INT. BOYS' ROOM - DAY

95

EMMA

Tommy, Teddy, move it. I have
no time to fool with you.

96 INT. EMMA'S ROOM - DAY

96

Only one side of the bed looks slept in. She picks up
the phone so that it stops ringing and then before
saying anything puts it down, turns off the alarm
clock, then returns to the phone.

EMMA

(anxiously)

Hello...Oh, hi, Mother. Could we
talk later? I've got the boys to
get off. It's not a good time for
me to be on the phone.

97 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - DAY

97

AURORA

Don't be so inconsiderate.

There is a splash. She looks and can see to next door
where GARRETT is doing energetic laps. She closes
the window to shut out the sound.

AURORA

(continuing)

I've gotten myself all set for a
good talk with you. You have
almost an hour to get the boys
off. What's wrong?

EMMA

Nothing.

AURORA

Will you stop this and just tell me?!

EMMA

(suddenly)

Okay, Mother. I'd like you to loan
me some money. I really and truly
need it. Will you?

A beat.

EMMA

Don't you be quiet. You know how
hard that was for me to ask. Say no
if you want; just don't be quiet.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

(tenderly compassionate)
I'm sorry, Sweetheart. I was just thinking.

EMMA

(softening)
Thinking what?

AURORA

How much I hate to part with money.

EMMA

I wouldn't ask if...well, don't yell, but I really think I may be pregnant again.

AURORA

Oh, no. And I suppose you're going to go ahead and have it.

EMMA

Yes, of course. What's happening to you, anyway?

AURORA

Don't act like it's so terrible. I keep hearing about bright young women who are having simple abortions and getting wonderful jobs. You can go right next door to Colorado and get one.

EMMA

I don't know why I tell you anything. I seem to like you less and less.

AURORA

That's because I'm the only one who tells you the truth. How is your life going to get better if you keep having children with that man? How? What miracle is going to take place to rescue you?

EMMA

Leave me alone.

(then mad)

I need money. Why not just give me my painting to sell? You always promised me the Klee.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

That's your security. I'm not going to let you use it for rent.

We hear the sound of the front door close.

EMMA

(beaten)

Mom, let's not do this. I'll speak to you later.

AURORA

If the money really...

EMMA

No. Don't give me the money. It would make you crazy.

AURORA

(realistically)

Yes, it would.

EMMA

Call me tonight if you want...
Goodbye...

98 She hangs up as FLAP enters--unshaven. 98

She walks to him, studies him. He is scared. She sniffs at his fear.

FLAP

What's wrong?

EMMA

Where've you been all night?

FLAP

I'm sorry, Ems. I fell asleep on that big sofa at the library again. I don't know what's wrong with me.

EMMA

Okay.

FLAP walks to her, pats her belly, trying to avoid her gaze.

EMMA

(low)

I'm on to you.

FLAP

I'm not doing anything.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

You are too.

FLAP

I hate seeing you this unhappy.
You don't know how much I...

EMMA

Don't change the subject.

FLAP

What's the subject?

EMMA

(ominous)

That I'm on to you.

They look at each other.

EMMA

You wouldn't try to look so
innocent unless you were guilty.

FLAP

You always get paranoid during
your first months.

He starts to walk away. She blocks his path.

EMMA

(quietly to him)

If you are doing something and you're
trying to make me feel like I'm crazy
because I am bearing our child, then
you may have just sunk to a point so
low you may never recover. You may
have just panicked, Flap, and trying
to save yourself, you have thrown out
your character and principles. The
only way you can possibly redeem
yourself and be the man God intended
you to be is to take the responsibility
and admit anything that you may have
been doing tonight. If you don't do
that now--right now--you are a lost
man, a shell, a bag of shit dust.

FLAP is uncertain. EMMA'S gaze is unwavering, then
the phone RINGS. FLAP grabs it.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

(happily)

Oh, hi--Aurora. How are you? Yes,
she's right here. It was nice
hearing your voice again.

He hands her the phone and exits. EMMA looks after him.

DISSOLVE TO:

99 INT. AURORA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

99

Gathered around the table, a birthday cake in the center, are AURORA, VERNON, the BANKER who wanted to take AURORA to Tahiti on Page 6, and a new face, the newly widowed DR. DOUGLAS RATCHER, a family physician--he delivered TOMMY. The BANKER is finishing, reading a poem he wrote especially for the evening while AURORA busies herself licking the icing from some of the burnt out candles.

BANKER

And so another birthday for a gal
named Aurora Greenway.
Even though 50, she still takes my
breath away.
Mere mortals just gaze as she lights
up their sky.
A heavenly object--a siren's cry.

The poem has come from his heart. He looks at her.

BANKER

You're the best...Happy Birthday.

DR. RATCHER

You're not lying about your age,
are you?

AURORA

Of course not!

DR. RATCHER

I thought you were 52. Come on,
Aurora, how do you expect to fool
the family doctor?

She stares at him.

DR. RATCHER

(kindly voice of reason)

I'm just saying it's better for you
emotionally to tell everyone your age.
We'll all still like you just as much.

100

She looks at him, staggered that he's pursuing it.
 ROSIE has entered with more coffee. She is enjoying
 AURORA'S predicament.

100

VERNON

It seems to me she said her age.

AURORA

Thank you so much, Vernon. Now...

DR. RATCHER

My point is the number doesn't
 matter, but the effort to conceal
 it does.

AURORA

(to Rosie)

He's still talking about it.

ROSIE

Dr. Ratcher...

DR. RATCHER

Damn it--I'm trying to do some
 good here. The way to adjust to
 old age is...

AURORA is on her feet. She flees towards the kitchen.
 RATCHER goes after her. ROSIE grabs RATCHER in a
 bear hug from behind.

ROSIE

Doctor, you're a might confused
 now because of being recently
 widowed. So let me go after her.

101 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

101

As ROSIE enters.

AURORA

(agitated)

He wants me to accept old age--
 that man's a lunatic.

ROSIE

I thought it was good he only
 caught you on two years.

AURORA

(considering)

Yes, there was that. But Rosie, I'm
 starting to go. That's why I have
 such a miserable lot of suitors.

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE

Vernon's nice.

AURORA

He never even thinks about touching me.

ROSIE

(babying her)

Come on, you don't want to be touched that much anyways.

AURORA

(enjoying spooking Rosie)

Don't pretend you're not worried about some of the same things--veins and sunken eyes and shuffling along on tiny footsteps. Admit it. It's my birthday. Let's be close.

ROSIE

Okay, let's. It's a sin before God that you don't know how lucky a woman you are. And if you don't start showing some gratitude soon, you're going straight to hell.

She takes a pitcher of coffee and exits to the living room. AURORA sits for another beat, takes off her shoes and exits through the kitchen door leading outside.

102 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

102

In her stocking feet she walks her lawn. In the background we can see her guests gathered at the window staring at her.

103 AURORA'S POV

103

The three male faces in the window--VERNON, the IDIOT DOCTOR, the PATHETIC BANKER--slim pickings.

104 ON AURORA

104

As she looks across at the astronaut's house, through the side window, we get a glimpse of his moving from view, apparently cooking. Now with sudden and extraordinary purpose, she runs across the lawn to his door where she rings the bell. Waits, then nervously backs up several steps.

GARRETT'S VOICE

Yeah? Be right there.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED:

104

She backs up some more so that she stands her ground strangely in the shadows a good ten feet away when GARRETT opens the door. He's in his 50's now. His face and body show it. His blessing is that he's blissfully unaware of that fact. He is wearing one of those short velour bathrobes with nothing on underneath.

105 ON GARRETT

105

At first he doesn't see her, then does.

AURORA

I was curious whether you still wanted to take me to lunch.

GARRETT

I don't remember when we were supposed to...

AURORA

(argumentative)

A few years back you asked me to...

GARRETT

(incredulous)

A few years...

AURORA

(overriding)

...lunch and I wanted to know if the invitation still exists.

GARRETT pauses. She stares daggers from the dark. He then takes the easiest out.

GARRETT

Why not?

AURORA

When?

GARRETT

Tomorrow?

AURORA

All right.

She walks back to her house, GARRETT looking after her.

106 EXT. RIVER OAKS CORNER - EARLY MORNING

106

You'd have to be a native to spot the bus stop--hardly a marker--just countrified roads where the buses know

(CONTINUED)

to wait. Now a crowded bus stops. Nine black women get off, then ROSIE. As she walks past one house, a black maid is in front picking up the morning paper.

ROSIE

Hi, Etta.

ETTA

My youngest got knifed right in his leg at school yesterday.

ROSIE

Royce found himself a new slut and he's saying this time he might not be back.

ETTA

You know something? I'm gettin' to hate days like this.

ROSIE nods in agreement.

106A INT. AURORA'S HOUSE

106A

As ROSIE enters. She hears some noise from the kitchen. AUROPA is in a slip talking on the phone to EMMA. The breakfast table is covered with make-up items and a mirror has been set up. She is almost wildly energetic, perhaps even happy.

AURORA

(into phone)

Emma, don't be an idiot. Of course he's seeing someone else. Catch him, confront him and leave him. Well, are you happy the way things are?

(to Rosie)

Good morning.

(into phone)

Rosie just came in. I'm going to have to move.

(to Rosie)

I can't be late for the beauty parlor when they finally agreed to open early.

She hands the phone to ROSIE and charges out.

ROSIE

(into phone)

Hi, honey, how's the baby doing?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE (CONT'D)

(pleased)

Oh, no kidding. Well, when we going to see you all?

(delighted)

Really? Well, I'll keep my fingers crossed. Oh, big deal. So she's having lunch with the astronaut. I've got better things to worry about. It will serve her right if she loses Vernon.

107 INT. AURORA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - HOUSTON

107

GARRETT waiting at the bottom of the staircase. She comes down. She is clearly giving this her best shot, dressed just so, her hair a tribute to its dresser, delicately and perfectly done.

AURORA

Hello, Garrett. Let's get going. I'm starving...

(nervous)

...and there are no hidden meanings in that.

108 INT. EMMA'S OLD STATION WAGON - DAY - DES MOINES

108

As it moves into a parking place at a shopping center in Des Moines. She gives herself a quick onceover in the cracked rear view mirror. This is interrupted by the horn beep from the next car. An incredibly brief beep, like a man coughing ever so slightly to let someone know he's there. EMMA looks over.

109 EMMA'S POV

109

SAM BURNS getting out of his car trying not to show the strain of being more nervous than he's been in...ever. His grin is too wide. He is shrugging with his face, a sort of helpless gesture of raising his eyebrows and ears. He's a lucky man for he is approaching one of the few women around who would find his machinations endearing.

SAM BURNS

We both got here the same time.

EMMA

How are you? Nice to see you.

SAM BURNS

It's always so nice to see you. I can hardly believe it.

(CONTINUED)

109 CONTINUED:

109

EMMA

(touched)

You too.

In an attempt to seal this romantic juncture, SAM BURNS looks away and pats her on the back. They move towards the restaurant.

110 EXT. GARRETT'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

110

As GARRETT opens the door of his yellow Corvette and AURORA slides in, with some difficulty. The top is down. Now GARRETT gets in, puts on his seat belt, glances at her as she pats at herself.

GARRETT

If you mind the open air, I can...

AURORA

No, don't worry. Grown women are prepared for life's little emergencies.

She removes a scarf matching her outfit. As she ties it in place, they pull out.

111 EXT. HOUSTON HIGHWAY - DAY

111

An eight track playing loudly to override the force of wind in the open car. GARRETT is relaxed. He shouts over the wind to her.

GARRETT

(grinning)

Us going out together. Not bad.

AURORA is trying to be inconspicuous as she holds onto her scarf. She turns to give him a tight returning smile. The scarf flies off and her carefully created mane whips wildly in the air.

AURORA

Would it be too much trouble to put the top up?

GARRETT

The top's home in my garage.

She takes this in. The CAMERA shows the huge, expansive sweep of road yet still ahead of them.

112 INT. RESTAURANT LADIES ROOM - DAY

112

AURORA using every muscle in her arm to brush the knots out of her hair while overhearing two apparently young women converse with each other from behind two adjoining closed toilet stalls.

WOMAN NUMBER ONE

I know two girls who use it. They say it's 96 percent safe, better than a diaphragm but not as good as the pill. It should work; it was invented in Germany.

WOMAN NUMBER TWO

But what do you do with it?

WOMAN NUMBER ONE

You push it in and it sort of melts. It gets real hot, but...

AURORA

(exploding)

Just quiet, please, until I leave.

The girls are shocked into silence, AURORA exits.

WOMAN NUMBER ONE

Well, who was talking to her, anyway?

113 INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

113

As she slips into her chair across from GARRETT. He grins at her politely.

Four younger women are seated at a nearby table. GARRETT glances over.

AURORA

(explaining)

That's very rude--to look at other women when you're with me.

GARRETT

I think we're going to have to get drunk.

AURORA

I don't get drunk and I don't care for escorts who do.

GARRETT

You suggested this, so trust me on this one thing. You just got to have some drinks.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA
(mulling)
To break the ice?

GARRETT
To kill that bug you have up your ass.

She starts to take offense but he is grinning at her, perhaps giving her some test.

AURORA
(to passing waiter)
I'll have some bourbon, preferably
Wild Turkey.

GARRETT
(enormously pleased)
Aurora, you're not fun by any
chance, are you?

AURORA
I don't think you should worry about
that yet. Impatient boys sometimes
miss dessert.

114 INT. COFFEE SHOPPE - DES MOINES OUTSKIRTS - DAY

114

The lights are brighter than the restaurant we just left. This place is not designed for leisurely dining or mid-day rendezvous. It is fast-order functional, kids with ketchup on their faces, but there is a knotty pine bar in the back which is where we find SAM BURNS and EMMA. They are holding hands in the shy manner of decent people preparing for mortal sin. SAM is being overwhelmed by both his good fortune and inner guilt. He is between a rock and a soft place.

SAM BURNS
You know, the thing I didn't expect
was that there would be moments where
I forget to be scared someone will
see us together.

EMMA
Don't be so scared. Contemplating
sin is all we've done.

SAM BURNS
I'm glad that you've been contem-
plating it too. I didn't know that.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

After all these lunches...all this hand holding.

SAM BURNS

Emma, I'm not going back to the bank this afternoon. I have to go out and inspect a new home. It's pretty far out and it's empty.

A silence.

EMMA

I have to pick up the kids at five.

SAM BURNS

Oh--okay. I understand. Don't give it a thought.

(then)

It's only about a 25 minute ride each way. I could get you back here at 4:30 for sure...I'm really badgering you. I'm sorry.

EMMA

(touched/amused)

You're not badgering.

SAM BURNS

Emma, I haven't made love to a woman for almost three years.

EMMA

How come?

SAM BURNS

(embarrassed)

My wife has a disc problem in her back and she can't take having... any weight on her.

EMMA

(puzzled then)

I hope you don't mind my asking this. Well, have you ever thought of her getting on top?

SAM BURNS

Oh, she wouldn't do that.

EMMA

She might surprise you.

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED: (2)

114

SAM BURNS

I don't think so. That would be so unlike her.

EMMA

Did you ever ask her?

SAM BURNS

(ruefully)

Ask her? About six hundred times.

EMMA laughs out loud.

115 EXT. IOWA HIGHWAY - DAY

115

As SAM BURNS' Fairlane moves along between rows of corn fields. It is being routinely passed by other cars.

116 EXT. HOUSE - DAY - LONG SHOT

116

As EMMA gets out of her side of the car and moves up the walk, then waits. SAM finally getting out from behind the steering wheel and walking towards her.

SAM

This might be terrible to ask, are you thinking about your husband at all?

EMMA

I was a little.

SAM

We can go back right now.

EMMA

No, stop it, Sam. I want to do this. I'm glad I don't know for sure whether or not Flap's been with somebody else. I'd hate to worry whether I was just doing this to get even.

117 EXT. HOUSTON HIGHWAY - DAY

117

As GARRETT'S convertible at about 30 mph sways along the waterside roadway connecting Galveston and Houston. Large ships in the background. GARRETT is sitting atop the driver's seat steering with his feet. AURORA, reluctantly playing his accomplice, one of her feet on the gas pedal, an awkward reach from her side of the car. She must shout to make herself heard over the wind.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

I'm not enjoying this.

GARRETT

Give it a chance.

AURORA

I'm stopping.

GARRETT

What?

She puts on the brake. He falls over the windshield, flipping onto the hood of the car, then bouncing off to the side onto the grassy shoulder of the road. He lies there. AURORA runs toward him, a bit panicked.

AURORA

How are you?

He moves. There are some bruises. She is bending over him.

AURORA

(continuing)

It's not my fault, but I'm sorry.

GARRETT

If you wanted to get me on my back, you just had to ask.

118 He grabs her and pulls her down. Kissing her, she 118
begins to come close to relaxing in the embrace, then
GARRETT sticks his hand inside her blouse and into
her bra. She pulls quickly away but his hand is stuck
there at an awkward angle.

GARRETT

My hand! My hand!

AURORA

Get it out of there.

GARRETT

I can't! I swear it's breaking.

AURORA

We were almost having a good time.
Why did you have to do this?

GARRETT

I'm sorry. Please, God, anything.
Bend down.

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED:

118

She bends over and he extracts his hand. The wrist is severely sprained.

AURORA

Why did you have to get drunk?

GARRETT

I'm not drunk any more. The pain sobered me up. Let's go.

He starts back towards the car rubbing his wrist. He keeps walking. AURORA, vulnerable, realizing if she doesn't hurry, he'll actually leave her alone, hurries to catch up. It is striking to see her, for the first time, tagging after a man.

119 INT. EMPTY HOUSE - IOWA - DAY

119

In the corner of an empty room between their two overcoats lie SAM BURNS and EMMA. They are squeezing each other making squeezing noises, a happy energized afterglow.

SAM BURNS

God bless you, Emma.

EMMA

(grinning)

You look so nice and happy.

SAM BURNS

God bless you, Emma. I just feel so wonderful. I just feel so...

(sudden yelp)

Excuse me.

He laughs. Then again fervently.

SAM BURNS

God bless you, Emma.

(back to earth)

Oh, I shouldn't use the Lord's name.

I guess he made us all sinners though.

I'm so afraid we'll get caught. But it's not right to say that, is it?

EMMA

(unconvincing)

No, it's okay.

SAM BURNS

Because I am afraid someone will catch us.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Sam, we're out here where even I don't know where. Who's going to see us?

SAM BURNS

I didn't mean today. I meant next time. I was thinking Thursday.

She smiles.

SAM BURNS

(realizing)

Oh, I guess I am a fool, honey.

EMMA

Give me a kiss.

They kiss. EMMA hugs him, her face pressed against his coat.

EMMA

It felt so good being with you.

SAM BURNS

(wonderment)

I wanted to hear you say that and was ashamed of myself for wanting something like that-- then you say it.

120 EXT. EMPTY HOUSE - DAY

120

As EMMA and SAM exit the house and walk towards the car, arm in arm.

121 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY

121

As GARRETT, still pissed, walks her to her door.

AURORA

Would you like to come in?

GARRETT

I'd rather stick needles in my eyes.

AURORA

Everything would have been fine if you hadn't gotten drunk.

He looks at her contemptuously.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

I didn't want you to think I was like your other girls.

GARRETT

Not much danger in that unless you curtsy on my face real soon.

AURORA

What is it that makes you try so hard to shock and insult me? I really hate that way of talking which you must know, so why do you do it?

She has a point. He considers it.

GARRETT

I tell you, I don't know what it is about you, Aurora, but you bring out the devil in me.

He smiles. She looks at him--she's flustered. He starts to go.

AURORA

I suppose just because I'm not Little Miss Round Heels, you're not going to call.

He turns.

GARRETT

Little Miss Round Heels?

AURORA

Well, what do you call a woman who falls over and has sex after a first date?

GARRETT

Sweetheart.

She laughs despite herself. He is pleased at his joke.

AURORA

Oh, look at you. You're so proud of yourself.

GARRETT

See you around.

121 CONTINUED: (2)

121

He keeps walking across the lawn to his house. AURORA walks towards her own, sneaking a few coy looks that are wasted for GARRETT never breaks stride, entering his house and closing the door leaving AURORA awash with uncertainty sighing with the impossible thrill of it all.

DISSOLVE TO:

122 INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

122

EMMA is warming formula in the kitchen. We can see the boys through the doorway leading to the living room when the telephone rings.

TEDDY

(into phone)

Hello. What? What?

(to Emma)

It's for you, Mommy.

EMMA

Ask who it is.

TEDDY

(into phone)

Who is it?

(to Emma)

It's the bank.

EMMA takes the formula out.

EMMA

Tommy, feed this to Melanie.

He enters.

TEDDY

Could I...

TOMMY

Let him.

EMMA

(continuing)

Give this to Melanie.

(louder before he can squawk)

Tommy, give this to Melanie.

(still louder before he can squawk)

Tommy, give this to Melanie.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

He takes the formula. EMMA walks through the living room, picks up the phone and takes in into the bathroom.

INTERCUT BETWEEN:

123 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

123

She sits on the side of the tub.

EMMA

(into phone)

Hello? I can hardly hear you.

124 INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

124

SAM BURNS stands with washer-dryer working.

SAM

I'm in the laundry room so nobody could hear me.

EMMA

But I can't hear you either.

SAM

Oh...Wait a minute, we're getting a quieter cycle.

The spin cycle stops and now he lowers his voice.

SAM

(continuing)

Can you hear me now? Good. Is it bad to call?

EMMA

No, I am definitely in the market for sweet talk.

TEDDY starts knocking on the bathroom door.

TEDDY

Mom, I have to go. Really.

EMMA

Just a second.

She opens the door. TEDDY enters and starts to pee while looking over at his mother.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

(to Teddy)

Ssh. Ssh.

He looks confused as to how to make pissing quieter. Then, seeing she means it, he aims for the side of the bowl. From the muted sound, we know he has succeeded.

EMMA

(into phone, continuing)

What were you saying?

SAM

Just how absolutely good I feel. And even though I'm scared--and we've committed adultery--no matter what happens, I'm just so grateful to God or the devil for letting me feel this way again.

EMMA

I'm sure glad you told me.

125 TEDDY reaches to flush. EMMA gestures him away, fearful the noise of the flush will break the mood. 125

TEDDY

But you told me always to...

She moves him out.

TEDDY

Can I hold Melanie?

EMMA

Yes.

EMMA picks up the phone again.

EMMA

Sam?

SAM

(nervously)

Is everything okay? Can you talk?

EMMA

Yes.

SAM

I've just been thinking how great it would be if we could be with

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SAM (CONT'D)

each other sometimes--or just once
even--in a real room with a real
bed and...

OPERATOR

(cutting in)

I have an emergency call from
Mrs. Aurora Greenway in Houston,
Texas for Mrs. Emma Horton.

SAM

Oh, no...

EMMA

It's okay, Sam, she always does
that when the line's busy.

OPERATOR

Will you release?

SAM

Yes, of course, operator. We
were just talking.

EMMA

Speak to you later.

She hangs up and the phone rings immediately.

EMMA

Hi. How'd it go?

126 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

126

She is wearing a bathrobe and eating a chocolate eclair.

AURORA

The astronaut's impossible. An
arrogant, self-centered, and, yes,
somewhat entertaining man--who has
realized his ambition and is at
last forever a spoiled child.

EMMA

(pleased)

Talk about your match made in heaven.

AURORA

You'd think so, wouldn't you? But
I really think he's just not going
to have any more to do with me.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Aw, why?

AURORA

I don't want to tell you.

EMMA

Is it because you won't go to bed with him?

AURORA

On a first date.

EMMA

Well, it's hardly a first date, Mom... He's been living 10 feet away for 20 years. I mean why don't you at least talk about the real reason?

AURORA

I don't know what you mean.

EMMA

That it's been about that long since you've done it.

AURORA

Shut up! I mean it!

EMMA

Oh, come on.

AURORA

No, come on.

EMMA

It's just us.

AURORA

I'll hang up.

EMMA

(giving in)

Okay.

127 There is an uncomfortable silence. EMMA, taking the phone and re-entering the living room. TOMMY is on the sofa reading. TEDDY is holding MELANIE HORTON. She is an extraordinary beauty. Her looks command tribute. She is a living aesthetic.

127

EMMA

You want to say hi to the kids?

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

AURORA

Well, I'm not exactly in the mood to play granny right now.

EMMA

Okay. Sorry I upset you. So long.

She hangs up.

AURORA stands there in the middle of the room. She walks to her window and opens it...

128 HER POV

128

Over the fence she can see GARRETT doing laps in his pool.

129 AURORA

129

Taking a bit of her éclair and then throwing it into a waste basket. She is experiencing the first gnawing stages of an anxiety threatening to escape and ravage her after decades of quiet. She crosses to a dresser and searches for a particular nightgown, finds it. She sits, nightgown on her lap, and goes through the phone book. She writes down a number which she finds, all the while through the open window we HEAR GARRETT doing his laps. She takes off one earring and tosses her head a bit to get the receiver just right before dialing. The phone rings until eventually we hear the SOUND of laps stop. We hear the muffled voice of GARRETT at the other end saying, "Hello".

AURORA

(her voice not behaving)

Hello, Garrett. I was just sitting here realizing that I'd never shown you my Renoir. Would you care to come over and see my Renoir? Oh, stop it. You know Renoir's a painter. Sometimes it's really stupid to pretend you're stupid. I am saying what I mean. I'm inviting you to look at my Renoir. Yes, it happens to be in my bedroom. Don't cackle. Do you want to see it? Whenever you like. You could come right now or be a fool. See you in a bit then.

(suddenly uncertain)

If I don't answer the bell, the back door's open.

(CONTINUED)

She hangs up, holds herself briefly. The excitement so great that it's unwelcome. She stands and crosses to the bathroom, more frightened than she expected.

We remain in the bedroom area where we HEAR the rustle of satin and then the doorbell ring.

AURORA'S VOICE

Oh, my--he ran it?

She rushes from the bathroom dressed in her nightgown and carrying a largish mirror which she sets up near the door GARRETT will soon enter. Now she turns off the light, moves quickly back to the doorway of the bathroom and poses, backlit, in the doorway trying to make out her image. The nightgown is simple and sexy. Then we HEAR GARRETT on the stairs. She rushes across the room, takes the mirror back inside the bathroom. There is a knock on the bedroom door. AURORA enters wearing a bathrobe over her nightgown.

AURORA

Garrett?

GARRETT'S VOICE

Sure.

She opens the door. He is wearing wet swimming trunks.

GARRETT

(apologetically)

I was doing laps when you called.
Lucky for you I'd only done eight.

He grins at her. She turns her back on him and looks up at the painting as he approaches from behind. He puts his hands on her shoulders.

GARRETT

I like the painting. I like
everything in here.

(into her ear)

Relax, baby, it's going to be great.

She wheels on him, sputtering in indignation, feeling genuinely and deeply reduced and insulted.

AURORA

Just who do you think you're talking
to like this? Don't you realize
I'm a grandmother!

And with that she takes his face and gives him a stunning, open-mouthed, expert kiss. They break. He is staggered.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

It's not flattering if you look too surprised. Just give me a minute.

Her self-image buoyed by her own actions, she moves towards the bathroom pausing to scoop up a perfume atomizer from her dresser.

GARRETT waits, a hand reaches around to turn off the light and then we see AURORA as she posed earlier, backlit and intriguing.

GARRETT

I like the lights on.

AURORA

Then go home and turn them on.

He accepts her conditions and stands waiting in the shadows. She moves towards the bed. In the darkness we can see him stepping out of his elasticized swim trunks, hopping a bit as he fails to release the second leg smoothly while AURORA turns back the covers and slips inside. He joins her under the covers.

GARRETT

This is the softest mattress I've ever been on!

AURORA

Well, coming from you...
(then a whispered secret)
I always like to splurge on bedding.

We hear a rustle and see him start to move with enormous energy.

AURORA

No.

(a small kiss)

Let's lie still for a while.
All right?

EMMA and FLAP asleep, her arm over his chest. TOMMY and TEDDY enter. TEDDY begins to move towards his mother's side of the bed to wake her. TOMMY restrains him and leads the way to FLAP. In the b.g. now that the door is open, we hear a fierce, barking cough.

(CONTINUED)

TOMMY

Dad? Dad?

He awakens terrified, making noises of fear for a second so that the boys, alarmed, back off. EMMA remains asleep.

FLAP

(a whisper)

What's wrong?

TEDDY

(soft)

Melanie's sick--hear her?

FLAP listens for a second, then jostles EMMA vigorously.

FLAP

The baby's sick.

EMMA is sleepily but nonetheless quickly on the move. In the instant before she's awake she has already covered a good deal of floor space and mumbled some comforting words. Now, awake, she turns the lights on at the door, turns to FLAP, sitting in bed.

EMMA

You coming?

FLAP gets out of bed.

131 INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

131

Which has been turned into a nursery. As EMMA turns the lights on and hears MELANIE'S seal-like cough and notes the baby's limbs are going.

EMMA

I need a thermometer.

FLAP, standing in the doorway, starts to think about where the thermometer might be. TEDDY dashes to a drawer, tearing at things inside.

EMMA

(to Teddy)

Don't get frantic.

He brings the thermometer. TOMMY, an old hand, gives her a nearby bottle of Vaseline.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP walks to her, his manner suggesting that it is she who is in danger of becoming unglued. He takes the baby; EMMA sticks the thermometer in. She stands there holding it. TEDDY is patting the baby consolingly. TOMMY is loitering in the doorway.

EMMA

Teddy, she doesn't even feel that hot. You go ahead to bed.

TEDDY

I won't be able to sleep, so why can't...

EMMA

Please. I'll come in soon...

FLAP

Come on, boys, it's bad enough we're making this a drama. It's not going to qualify as high drama.

The boys exit.

EMMA

I'm sure it's the croup.

(on Flap's expression)

Remember Tommy had it twice...

(on Flap's expression)

...a throat infection and we had to steam him...

(on Flap's expression)

...maybe you were at the library.

EMMA sitting on the toilet seat, MELANIE in her lap, gorgeous even in sickness. FLAP turns on the hot water full blast as the steam begins to gather.

FLAP

How long do we keep her here?

EMMA

What are you going to do-- go back to sleep?

FLAP

I just asked how long.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Until her throat clears or I lose
four pounds, whichever comes first.
About twenty minutes. I don't
know. We'll see how she sounds...

FLAP leans against the sink...

FLAP

I've been offered a job.

EMMA

Why didn't you say something?

FLAP

I wanted to think about it. It's
head of the English department at
Kearney State College at about the
same money.

EMMA

Where is that?

FLAP

Nebraska.

EMMA

I want to stay here.

FLAP

You don't like it here. Why do you
want to stay all of a sudden?

EMMA

The kids, school, the housing thing,
the baby, the cars, pediatricians,
the kids...I just want to stay here.

FLAP

It's head of the department.

133 INT. EMMA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

133

The boys going off to school. EMMA, not having slept
all night, kettles boiling on the stove to provide some
mist for MELANIE, whose cough sounds better. EMMA
picks up the phone.

134 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

134

She lies there staring at the far wall, her body along-
side one of this nation's heroes. Her arm rests on

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

her sleeping lover. She seems to be smiling. The phone rings. She picks it up before it finishes a single sounding and talks in a whisper.

AURORA

(into phone)

Yes, operator. I'll accept the charges if it's important.

INTERCUT WITH:

135 EMMA'S KITCHEN

135

Steam and MELANIE and croup.

EMMA

What do you mean if it's important?

AURORA

I'm running a little behind schedule.

She laughs atypically, then stops herself.

EMMA

You don't know the night I had.

AURORA smiles a bit, wondering whether to confide her own night.

EMMA

(continuing)

Melanie has the croup. Naturally it happened about two a.m. I still haven't been to sleep and I don't know whether he means it or not, but Flap's talking about moving us to this small college in Nebraska. And I tell you, Mom, I think Sam's become someone I...well, that I at least need a little, you know?

AURORA

(whispering)

I'm lying here next to the astronaut.

136 ANGLE ON GARRETT

136

His face turned towards us and away from AURORA. His eyes click open at the mention of his occupation. While in Des Moines EMMA forgets her own life on hearing this awesome news.

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

EMMA

Are you really?

AURORA

Um-hmm.

EMMA

(boldly)

How was it?

AURORA

I'll speak to you later.

EMMA

Okay, I'll let you go. So long.
I feel so good for you.

EMMA hangs up. Her spirits buoyed. She checks out her baby daughter, sees that she's looking better, says some words of encouragement, i.e., "Well, we're bouncing right back, huh, Melanie?" Turns off the kettles, wipes away some perspiration and resumes her own day.

137 EXT. RIVER OAKS BUS STOP - DAY

137

The bus stops--ROSIE gets off. A bit lifeless as she begins her day. There is a beep; she looks over to see VERNON and brightens?

ROSIE

When did you get back from Odessa?

VERNON

Just.

She gets in the car.

138 INT. VERNON'S CAR - DAY

138

She pats his hand, happy to see him. She luxuriates a bit. This brief ride in the expensive, gadget-filled car is a high point.

139 THEIR POV

139

AURORA and GARRETT, their backs to VERNON, walking slowly arm-in-arm. ROSIE looks over to VERNON to see how he's taking it.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

VERNON

(simply)

Whoever it is is one lucky bastard.

ROSIE

Oh, you are the best little man,
Vernon.

140 EXT. HOUSTON NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

140

AURORA and GARRETT walking.

GARRETT

You understand that I see other
women, don't you?

AURORA

I didn't think we were engaged.
Your ego, really.

141 OTHER STREET

141

GARRETT

Should we eat in?

AURORA

You're saving a fortune on me.

GARRETT

I'll cook...three weeks and you
haven't seen my place.

AURORA

My best instincts had me avoiding it.

142 EXT. AURORA AND GARRETT'S HOUSES - NIGHT

142

We can see GARRETT cooking through the side window. A
beat and the front door to AURORA'S house opens and
she moves across the lawn. She knocks, GARRETT'S
door opens, she enters.

143 INT. GARRETT'S KITCHEN

143

Steak, fries and a bottle of wine.

144 INT. GARRETT'S LIVING ROOM

144

AURORA aglow, the living room filled with astronaut
memorabilia--pictures, a piece of rock, a NASA flag, a
model of a missile. AURORA now stares at a moon globe
with raised surfaces denoting the craters of the moon.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

(proudly)
What do you think?

AURORA

(easily)
Well, I think it's sad that you think you need this to impress girls.

GARRETT

(angrily)
Need it? Sometimes it isn't enough. I don't think there's a thing wrong with using all your assets.

AURORA

Except it turns your profession into a sex trap.

GARRETT

Oh, come on. We all use whatever we have. I earned it. It's as much a part of me as anything else.

AURORA

I didn't realize I was tripping over such a deeply felt principle.

GARRETT

(agitated)
Man, how many men have you had to step on to get on that high a horse? But you're not so different, believe me, you're going to ask me very soon what it was like out in space just like every dolly does and I'll give you my stock answer and you'll love it. You'll see. You'll ask. So don't act like it's nothing to you.

A silent beat. He a bit perturbed at himself for letting her get under his skin.

AURORA

(flustered--backing down)
Well, of course, I'm curious about what it was like out there.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

(immediately)

It's a long, long, long way away
and when you're there you feel that
you've got a long, long, long way
to get back. It's not much different
than being out in a field in west
Texas except the sky is black and
you keep thinking how far away you
are from people.

AURORA

That's your stock answer.

GARRETT

And it's true.

AURORA

And you always leave it at that.

GARRETT

I wouldn't know what else to say
and that happens to be all they
require.

145 INT. GARRETT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

145

He is in AURORA'S arms, the moonlight filtering through the window. GARRETT, for now anyway, feels understood, challenged, loved. He is talking about himself in the manner of a hungry man having his first meal in months. She is, as he will later comment, a girl you can really talk to.

GARRETT

You know what bothers me? None of us ever got together one night, closed all the doors and compared notes on the experience. You'd swear there was a rule that we had to pretend it wasn't the fun that it was--that if we started saying just how much fun it was they wouldn't let anybody go up anymore. I even got a little talking to for laughing through a transmission once.

AURORA

(fascinated)

Keep talking.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

And you do sense the speed. I remember looking out the window...

(catching himself)

I'm like somebody with a belly telling stories about Korea...

AURORA makes a motion that he should stop that stuff and continue.

GARRETT

(continuing)

Anyway, at this one point, I could see part of the spacecraft and tell that it's whistling across the ground, but it doesn't make a sound so that the one thing you can hear, the only noise in the world, is your heartbeat. It's indescribable, or I just can't tell it better--but that was my moment--the one that doesn't go away. You know what I mean?

AURORA

Yes. This is my moment.

He shifts uncomfortably.

AURORA

(continuing)

Don't get nervous.

He laughs.

146 EXT. FARM - DAY

146

It is sunny, warmth returning. Iowa cornfields in the near distance. EMMA is driving SAM this time as her old station wagon moves along the lengthy dirt road to this empty farm house and barn.

The car stops, SAM BURNS opening the door for EMMA. As they move around to the back of the wagon and tug at an old child's mattress of EMMA'S which they have packed for love making.

EMMA

It's so strange not having her call. You sort of get into the habit of the phone ringing at 8:00 A.M. sharp. It's almost as if the things happening to me now aren't official because she hasn't given me the business over them yet.

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED:

146

SAM hefts the mattress on his shoulder and they walk towards the house. SAM is also carrying a briefcase. As they pass the barn, they look over at it...

147 INT. BARN - DAY

147

EMMA looking inside, then up at the hay loft. SAM comes up behind her. She looks at him, he grins, puts down the mattress and they both move up to the loft.

148 LOFT AREA - DAY

148

The romance of Iowa--sun, hay, shadows, legends of farmers' daughters and plow boys dance in our couple's thoughts. EMMA lies down on the hay.

EMMA

I just love it when I get to do something I always wanted to and never figured to.

As he takes a radio from his briefcase and hanger with pants-holder. EMMA has begun to undress.

SAM BURNS

That's how I feel every time we're in each other's company.

EMMA moves towards him...

EMMA

I've just got to grab your ears when you say things like that.

She grabs his ears holding his blushing face.

SAM BURNS

Why?

EMMA

Because you're so cute.

SAM laughs heartily.

149 OTHER ANGLE, looking up to the loft

149

The radio playing some music. SAM'S suit and shirt and ties neatly hung from the rafter.

150 ANGLE ON OPENING

150

EMMA and SAM BURNS emerge scratching like crazy, leaning against a post to scratch spots, then scratching each other's backs.

- 151 EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - DAY 151
The wagon in the driveway. She puts the kids' mattress inside the garage.
- 152 INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - DAY 152
Empty. She goes from room to room, then exits.
- 153 EXT. DES MOINES STREET - EVENING 153
EMMA walking and searching near the English building of FLAP'S college. She stops.
FLAP, his back to her and us, but we recognize the winter jacket. He is talking with what appears to be intimacy to a tall, attractive woman in her late 20's, a colleague. They are under a street light. The girl has her hand up to FLAP'S face. They are clearly lovers. Her name is JANICE.
- 154 EMMA 154
Her suspicions confirmed. The truth jolts her and turns her mean. She advances on the couple with the stealth of Indians and wronged, plump women.
- 155 EMMA'S POV 155
Now she is close enough to make out murmured voices.
JANICE
Will you please, please, please,
please stop telling me this is
just a crush?
FLAP'S MURMURED VOICE
(a little chuckle)
Janice, the whole fun in getting
mixed up with somebody unavailable
and a little older is that sometimes
you get to hear what's really going on.
JANICE
(amused)
That's wonderful, Flap, you are such a...
- 156 EMMA leans forward from a few feet away and shouts in 156
a wild rush.
EMMA
...incredible asshole.
She turns away. He reacts.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED:

156

FLAP
 (to Janice)
 Excuse me.

157 ON FLAP

157

As he turns and begins to run after his outraged wife and we SEE for the first time that he has their beautiful baby in a pouch over his chest. The baby is making it enormously difficult for FLAP to catch up with EMMA because he has to keep his hand on MELANIE to keep her from bouncing around too much. Though not long--this is our chase scene.

FLAP
 (calling)
 Emma--Emma. Goddamn it, you're going to ruin us.

158 ON EMMA

158

Fleeing but listening.

FLAP
 (more calling)
 You're a spectacle, Emma.

159 ON FLAP AND MELANIE

159

FLAP, a bit over the edge with guilt, shame and fear. MELANIE having the best time she has ever had in her life.

160 ON EMMA

160

As she rounds a corner, breathing hard, she sneaks a little look back at her husband and child. She slows, looks again, stops and faces FLAP.

EMMA
 Stop jiggling her. She's going to throw up!

FLAP slows to a walk, catches his breath. EMMA walks quickly and ignores FLAP while checking out the baby strapped to his body.

FLAP
 Your timing was great. You caught us before we did anything.

EMMA looks at him briefly and contemptuously. He has insulted her intelligence.

(CONTINUED)

160 CONTINUED:

160

EMMA

Give me the baby!

She starts yanking at the pouch straps.

EMMA

(difficulty with straps)
I'm taking the car. I'm taking
the kids and going to Houston.

FLAP

You don't know if I did anything.

EMMA

I know what you did and why. You
did it to forget you're a failure.

FLAP

That's your mother talking.

161 EMMA, overwrought, now holds MELANIE in both hands and 161
gestures with the infant as if it were her hand.

EMMA

(pointing baby at herself)
That's me talking!

FLAP

You don't know what I did with her.
(slyly)
I don't know what you do when you're
out on your afternoon drives.

EMMA rolls her eyes as if having heard the most
preposterous sentence she has ever suffered.

EMMA

(almost friendly)
You're lucky I'm going off. I'd
sure make your life hell if I
stayed around right now.

With that she walks off and FLAP wisely lets her go.

162 EXT. SMITH COUNTY, KANSAS - DAY

162

EMMA driving, the baby in a car seat, the boys in back
wearing seat belts, and the junk attendant to traveling
with three kids scattered about them. EMMA is wearing
her old, faded "U. of T." tee-shirt.

EMMA

That's the middle of the country.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED:

162

The boys turn to look. So, by coincidence, does the baby.

163 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

163

The car moving along.

164 INT, CAR - NIGHT

164

Junk food wrappers abound.

TEDDY

(to Tommy)

Hey, look. Isn't that great?

165 HIS POV

165

An illuminated sign--"WELCOME TO TEXAS". With some billboards and motels and blackness beyond.

TEDDY

(impressed)

So that's what it looks like.

166 INT. AURORA'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

166

ROSIE peering out the window.

ROSIE

(low)

I think this is them.

AURORA

You say that every two seconds.

167 ROSIE dashes out the side door. EMMA begins beeping the horn. GARRETT'S door opens. By the time she comes into the driveway ROSIE is right alongside the car looking at MELANIE.

167

ROSIE

Well, talk about your beautiful.

168 ON AURORA

168

Pausing in the driveway separating her house from GARRETT'S. AURORA is flushed, excited, trying to contain it.

AURORA

Come see Emma and her children.

GARRETT

No. You don't need an outsider right now.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA
You're not an outsider.

GARRETT
I'll see them later.

EMMA is out of the car several feet away.

EMMA
(calling)
Mom.

AURORA
(torn)
Just a second. I'll be right there.
This is Garrett--you remember.

EMMA
(calling)
Oh, sure. Hi.
(trying to help her mother's cause)
It's very good to see you, very good.

169 GARRETT waves. He would like not to be here.

169

GARRETT
(uncomfortably)
Your mother's been looking forward
to this.
(to Aurora)
Go ahead.

AURORA
Anything wrong?

GARRETT
No.

AURORA
I'll be over later. They're probably
tired anyway and want to get to sleep
early.
(suggestively)
And I'd like to get to bed early.

TEDDY
(calling)
Grandma! Grandma! Grandma!

170 AURORA shushes TEDDY while maintaining a tight smile. 170
She senses GARRETT'S discomfort but this is no time
to deal with it.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

(to Garrett)

See you later.

She starts towards her family. ROSIE is just finishing her first round of emotional embraces. She is on TEDDY and in the process of making a discovery which delights her and she announces to the world.

ROSIE

This one likes to squeeze.

AURORA goes to TOMMY. She kisses him and TEDDY and they have a none-too-good embrace.

AURORA

Where's the baby?

EMMA

(ironically)

Hello.

AURORA

(hugging half-heartedly)

Well, I talk to you every day.

171 . EMMA takes her mother over to the passenger's side of 171
the station wagon where MELANIE is still strapped in
her car-seat.

EMMA

She loved the drive.

TEDDY

(proudly)

She didn't cry once.

They open the door, AURORA feasting her eyes. EMMA reaches for her.

AURORA

You have your hands full. I'll take her.

As AURORA lifts the gorgeous infant.

EMMA

I keep thinking she looks a little like you.

AURORA

A little? It's like looking in the mirror.

172 INT. EMMA'S OLD BEDROOM - NIGHT

172

Where a rollaway has been added to EMMA'S old bed. TOMMY and TEDDY are in bed, AURORA and EMMA alternating tucking and kissing. They turn the light out and then stand together framed in the doorway saying their goodnights.

173 INT. AURORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

173

The two women in flannel nightgowns sharing the window seat having milk and cookies.

EMMA

You know, you just look wonderful.

AURORA

(sincerely)

You look terrible. No one wants a girl who looks washed out and tired all the time.

EMMA

Well, Sam likes me the way I am and Flap doesn't notice, so it really doesn't matter.

AURORA

It's just your pattern that you finally take this small step away from Flap and it's towards this unavailable, married, older Iowan.

EMMA

How's it with you and the astronaut?

AURORA

He has a name.

EMMA

(impressed)

Well, you do like him?

AURORA

No, I tell you it's so strange to find out relatively, relatively late in life that sex is...

EMMA waits anxiously. Her mother looks at her a beat-- then a somber flash of confession.

AURORA

(continuing)

Emma, I'm moth to flame. This affair is just going to kill me.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

(touched)

Maybe not. Why do you think that?

AURORA

(tears showing; her voice breaking)

I didn't know I'd start to need him.

EMMA moves to embrace her mother and in hugging jiggles the milk she is holding. It spills on them. The tender communion ends with AURORA returning to her role.

AURORA

Honestly, Emma.

(looking at nightgown)

I just got this. You're too old to be this clumsy.

174 EXT. PATSY'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY

174

Top River Oaks stuff this house. The back yard is lush and deep. It has a swimming pool with a 12-foot slide and decking and a rather substantial tree house. PATSY, some seven years older than when we last saw her, is sitting next to EMMA in a cushy chaise lounge, holding and marveling over MELANIE while, in the background, TOMMY and TEDDY are having a terrific time swimming with PATSY'S daughter, MEG, who is just between the two boys in size and age. TOMMY is notably more animated and joyous than we've seen him. PATSY is still a knockout, though no longer a natural one. EMMA watches with pleasure as her blonde friend cuddles her blonde daughter.

EMMA

You look more like her mother than I do.

175 MEG runs up to PATSY, shivering from swimming. EMMA 175
grabs a towel for her.

MEG

(to Patsy)

Mommy, can we have lunch?

PATSY

Yes.

(calling to boys)

What do you want to eat?

TOMMY

Anything I want?

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

175

PATSY
(calling)
Sure.

TOMMY
(quickly)
Gumbo?

EMMA
I always promise to make it for
them but you just can't get the
fish back home.

As the two women continue towards the house, PATSY
carrying MELANIE.

EMMA
Do you miss Los Angeles? Was it
great to be there?

176 INT. PATSY'S KITCHEN

176

MELANIE playing on the floor, PATSY slicing fresh shrimp.

PATSY
It was interesting dating Jews
after the divorce. They are so
different.

EMMA is nibbling as she helps prepare the gumbo ingredients.

EMMA
I haven't noticed that.

PATSY
In Los Angeles they were so anxious
to make you feel as if they under-
stood your secret thoughts better
than anybody. Damned if they didn't
sometimes.

EMMA
That does sound good. I do that
with Sam and he gets such a kick
out of it.

The phone rings, PATSY answers it.

PATSY
(into phone)
Hello? Oh, hi, Flap. I'm fine.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PATSY (CONT'D)

God, it's been so long. Oh, I guess I look older like all of us. Yes, I have a whole new daughter and husband you haven't met.

(she laughs and then glancing at Emma changes her laugh to a look of disapproval over what Flap has said)

You sound the same and I'm not sure that's such a good thing. Yes, she's right here. Oh, she has not. We have other things to talk about besides you.

She hands the phone to EMMA.

EMMA

(coldly into phone)

Hello. Fine. They're fine. She's fine. I've told everybody in Houston that you're terrible and nobody wants to see you again. Oh, don't worry. I'm half-kidding. What's up? Feeling contrite?

EMMA'S expression darkens. She is shaken.

EMMA

I can't believe you did that to us.

She wipes some sudden tears from her eyes. PATSY moves closer, questioning.

EMMA

(continuing)

I think you're spiteful, Flap, and I don't know when in hell that happened to you. Goodbye.

She hangs up.

EMMA

He accepted the job in Kearney, Nebraska. So we have to go on back and move by next week.

PATSY

I don't know why you don't leave him.

EMMA

(gathering her thoughts)
Me neither. Honestly!

177 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

177

The station wagon packed, the kids saying their last goodbyes solemnly entering the car. ROSIE handing them packages of food for the trip. EMMA and AURORA kiss on the cheek, ROSIE hugs EMMA.

ROSIE

Raising kids in Nebraska, my God.

EMMA gets in, tears in her eyes, drives away. ROSIE stands there with AURORA.

ROSIE

I thought Flap was just dumb
but he might be a son-of-a-bitch.

AURORA sighs. ROSIE follows her gaze to the house next door.

ROSIE

(with disapproval)

See you tomorrow.

She starts off towards her bus stop. AURORA waits a beat then takes off her shoes and heads across the lawn to her house.

178 GARRETT comes out of the house. He is subdued,
ill-at-ease.

178

GARRETT

Aurora?

AURORA

Well, hello, stranger. Has it only
been two days?

GARRETT

Can we go someplace and talk?

AURORA

My garden.

They stroll back towards the garden--AURORA feeling that "choking feeling"--she keeps looking, waiting for him to notice that she's anxious and lighten the mood. When she does catch his eye, he breaks off the contact.

179 GARDEN AREA

179

GARRETT

You probably know what I'm going
to say.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

Maybe not. I hope not.

GARRETT

You're some kind of woman, but I'm the wrong kind of man and it doesn't look like my shot at being the right kind is as good as I was hoping.

AURORA

Are you intentionally sounding like an idiot to make this easier for me?

GARRETT

Well...

Several beats, she looks at him, he shifts embarrassed. Some code insisting that he can't leave until she dismisses him.

AURORA

(continuing low)

You don't even know that you're going to miss me.

GARRETT

Look, I don't want to blow smoke up your ass.

AURORA

What a relief.

GARRETT

It's just that I'm starting to feel an obligation here that makes it rough, especially when I live right next door. I started to feel like I had to watch what I was doing in my own house. I hope you know that my feelings for you are...

She looks at him hard--he breaks off.

GARRETT

(continuing)

You really don't like me.

AURORA

I just wish you'd go take a flying screw for yourself.

(CONTINUED)

179 CONTINUED: (2)

179

GARRETT

(utter sincerity)

I am going to miss you. I do feel
bad.

AURORA

You're lucky. I feel humiliated.

She is nakedly pained and angry as she looks at him. It's unsettling and there is a trace of real anguish in GARRETT as he awkwardly exits. We hold on AURORA for a beat then:

180 EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - DES MOINES

180

As her car pulls up, the kids run to see their father. FLAP emerges from inside and embraces the boys, moves over to greet MELANIE, all the while avoiding contact with EMMA.

FLAP

(conciliatory to Emma)

I've been packing for us all week.

FLAP kisses MELANIE who reacts with delight.

EMMA

She sure remembers her daddy.

FLAP

You going to stay mad?

EMMA

(ironically)

Yes, I thought being uprooted with
my children without my consent was
at least worth a pout.

She walks towards the house, loaded down.

FLAP

It's the head of the department.

181 OMIT SCENE

181

182 EXT. PARKING LOT - COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

182

The setting for their first nervous meeting. We see EMMA'S car arrive at the spot next to SAM'S car, the area illuminated by the coffee shop and adjacent stores. SAM gets out of the car. He looks at EMMA sitting behind the wheel. She's a little jumpy about

(CONTINUED)

getting started because there's last minute packing to do. He walks over to the car, leans in.

EMMA

Don't cry, Sam.

SAM BURNS

(muffled)

I'm sorry, honey. Just give me a second.

She digs into her purse and hands him some Kleenex which he uses with his back to her.

SAM BURNS

(continuing)

Don't know what I'll do.

EMMA

Oh, my.

SAM

I bought a going away thing for you and I forgot to bring it. Dottie's right. I'm a born bumbler.

EMMA

Oh, you are not.

SAM BURNS

Can I have a picture of you?

Wiping away some tears, she goes through the junk of her glove compartment hurriedly, opens her wallet. And removes a picture.

EMMA

This is all I have--Flap's in it.

SAM BURNS

I don't mind.

She hands it to him, drives away.

The HORTON family, overloaded U-Haul behind their overloaded station wagon going through Nebraska. We see them stop for gas at a filling station and HEAR the play-by-play of the University of Nebraska football game. Then from every roadside inn they pass, fast food

(CONTINUED)

183 CONTINUED:

183

restaurant they stop at, roadside home, other auto-- from every place where people gather, eat at or reside in on a Saturday afternoon in the fall, we continue to HEAR the radio commentary of the "Big Red" football team. After SEVERAL CUTS showing the obsession of the state with its football team.

184 EXT. KEARNEY STATE COLLEGE - DAY

184

A campus which would consider "functional" a compliment. EMMA is walking with MELANIE, now aged two, toddling alongside wearing her best dress. They turn into one of the older buildings, the English department.

185 INT. ENGLISH DEPARTMENT - DAY

185

A perfect older, white-haired ELDERLY SECRETARY is seated behind a desk. She is genuinely delighted to see the new arrivals.

ELDERLY SECRETARY

Good morning, Emma. Hi, baby.

MELANIE

Hi, Evelyn.

EMMA

She wanted her daddy to see her dressed up for the doctor.

ELDERLY SECRETARY

He should be here any minute.

The door opens and a familiar looking woman enters.

WOMAN

Will you please tell Mr. Horton...

But now EMMA has turned and seen her. The woman reacts quickly.

WOMAN

(continued)

Never mind.

She exits. But EMMA breaks after her, MELANIE following as best she can.

186 INT. LONG HALLWAY - DAY

186

It is heavily trafficked with students and faculty.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

(calling)

Don't make me run after you.

The young woman turns, the same young woman EMMA caught FLAP with in Des Moines, JANICE. EMMA looks at her, now certain who she is.

EMMA

How long have you been here or are you the reason we moved to Nebraska?

JANICE

I think Flap should talk to you. I've been telling him so. I shouldn't say anything before he does, except that I don't think there's an emotion you're having that I couldn't validate.

EMMA

Well, if he wants to talk, just tell him his wife and his baby will be at the doctor's getting their flu shots.

187 INT. DR. BUDGE'S OFFICE - DAY

187

DR. BUDGE is an overweight version of a Norman Rockwell G.P. He has just finished giving MELANIE her shot and she is crying and screaming.

EMMA

Come on, Melanie. It's all over. If it makes you feel better, I have to get a shot now myself.

MELANIE calms and smiles. The doctor swabs her arm and then begins moving it, looking underneath. EMMA indicates a box of lollypops.

EMMA

(to doctor)

Can I give Melanie one of these?

The doctor nods and continues to examine her. Then stops, his attention focuses on her arm. EMMA leans to give the lollypop to MELANIE.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

If my husband calls, they'll let us know, won't they?

DR. BUDGE

You have a lump in your armpit. How long has it been there?

EMMA

I don't know. Melanie, stop kicking that cabinet.

MELANIE gives the metal file cabinet one more little kick, then stops.

DR. BUDGE

There are two of them, not very big though. I have to be out of town for a week and I hate to leave them that long because they're going to have to come out and be looked at.

EMMA

Goodness. Do I have to be scared?

DR. BUDGE

All it means if you're scared is that you'll be that much happier when it turns out to be nothing.

EMMA nods, managing a smile. She takes MELANIE by the hand.

MELANIE

Mommy should get a pop too. For her shot.

EMMA

That's right.

The doctor hands her one. She unwraps it and puts it in her mouth.

188 INT. AURORA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

188

AURORA sitting at the table alone, the light on.

AURORA

(into phone)

I know what it is. You don't keep yourself up so your sweat glands have stopped up. It's a cyst.

189 INT. PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

189

EMMA in the booth with MELANIE.

EMMA

He says he could almost do the operation in his office but I'll go in overnight.

AURORA

Do they have good hospitals in Nebraska?

EMMA

Sure. So I shouldn't worry, right?

AURORA

It's a cyst--it's right where your oil glands are and they've stopped up because you've never learned what to eat or how to wash.

EMMA

Okay, thanks. Oh, say hi to Melanie.

She hands MELANIE the phone.

190 INT. FLAP AND EMMA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

190

FLAP standing there taking in the news.

EMMA

What's her name?

FLAP

Janice. What did the doctor say?

EMMA

I told you. The scariest thing was that he wanted to do it so fast. Janice--straight hair.

(imitating Janice)

"I can't say anything until he does." I'm going to get myself one of Patsy's Jews if you don't watch out.

FLAP

But that thing he said about feeling good when it turns out to be nothing. I think that's a good indication, don't you?

EMMA

(scolding)

I'm not going to make you feel better, Flap. I'm just too mad.

- 191 EXT. AURORA'S BACK YARD - DAY 191
 VERNON sitting outside, fidgeting.
- 192 INT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY 192
 AURORA looking out at him. She has just finished dialing the phone.
- AURORA
 Hello, Flap. Have you heard anything?
- 193 INT. EMMA'S KITCHEN - DAY 193
 FLAP cooking hamburgers for the kids, sheltering the phone so he has privacy.
- FLAP
 No. Then Emma hasn't called you either?
- AURORA
 No. How are the children?
- FLAP
 I wish I was so carefree.
- AURORA
 Yes, well, they have nothing to feel ashamed about.
- FLAP
 You always seem to lose your manners around me, Aurora.
- AURORA
 Oh, stop. Let me know if you hear.
- She hangs up.
- 194 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY 194
 As she walks out to the garden. And finds GARRETT and VERNON talking over the back fence. She stands frozen for a moment then decides to walk over to them.
- AURORA
 Do you two know each other?
- VERNON
 We was just seeing to that.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

Vernon was just telling me that
Emma's in the hospital for tests.
What kind of tests?

AURORA

(ignoring him)

Vernon, why don't we go inside?

VERNON leans forward to give her some sotto advice,
pulling at her arm some to get her ear down to his range.

VERNON

I think you'd feel better if you
talked to him about it.

AURORA

(to Garrett)

They're taking a biopsy.

GARRETT grimaces broadly as if just suffering an
incredibly sharp stomach pain.

AURORA

What's wrong with you?

GARRETT

Sorry. Nothing. I'm squeamish
about words like "biopsy". It's
just a thing with me. Go ahead.
I'm sorry.

But his expression remains enormously strained. VERNON
looks at him with distaste.

VERNON

Let's go inside.

He starts to escort her away, then turns to GARRETT.

VERNON

I don't know why you'd feel squeamish
about anything. Didn't you fellas
have to piss and dump down a tube
in your leg?

AURORA laughs, pats VERNON on the back. He grins broadly
and modestly. AURORA looks at GARRETT with challenge.
But GARRETT, damn him, endures justified ridicule with
some grace.

(CONTINUED)

194 CONTINUED: (2)

194

GARRETT

I'm sorry you're going through this,
Aurora.

She nods and starts back towards the house.

195 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NEBRASKA - NIGHT

195

EMMA lying there, playing with her hair, looking at THE WALTONS. DR. BUDGE enters. He sits on the bed. For the merest beat EMMA avoids dealing with him, then looks his way.

DR. BUDGE

Dear, you have a malignancy.

We hold several beats to study EMMA'S reaction.

196 INT. AURORA'S KITCHEN - DAY

196

AURORA hangs up the phone. ROSIE is busy nearby.

AURORA

(to Rosie)

Our girl's in trouble. She has a sort of cyst that turned out to be malignant. She has to go to a hospital in Lincoln.

The two women embrace. ROSIE does with ease something she has never done before. She kisses AURORA on the cheek.

ROSIE

You're not leaving me here. Somebody's got to take care of those kids of hers.

197 EXT. WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN HOSPITAL - LINCOLN

197

Shot establishing perhaps the only hospital in the country with a presidential loser buried on the premises.

198 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE AT HOSPITAL - DAY

198

PATSY sits alongside AURORA. PATSY is wearing a fur coat and looks dazzling. This is a new doctor, DR. MAISE. He is too calm. He also cannot seem to control his eyes from clicking over to PATSY occasionally. AURORA not missing this aspect of the interview.

(CONTINUED)

DR. MAISE

We'll release her in a few days.
We do more and more on an out
patient basis. We won't need to
take her back here at all unless
the illness escalates.

AURORA

But you're not telling me anything.

DR. MAISE

I think I am. I'm trying to.
What are you confused about?

AURORA

How is she?

DR. MAISE

I always tell people to hope for
the best and prepare for the worst.

AURORA

(dumbfounded)

And they let you get away with that?

DR. MAISE

(dealing with her)

Look, this is a serious condition.
The chances of a response are going
to be about one in three. That's
not as good as we'd like, but if you
do get a response, it could be quite
meaningful.

199 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

199

MAISE, AURORA and PATSY walking along.

DR. MAISE

(to Patsy)

Are you going to stay in Nebraska long?

PATSY

I don't think so.

DR. MAISE

(daring a witticism)

It's too bad. I was thinking of
marching you through the wards to
give some of our male patients
the will to live.

(CONTINUED)

199 CONTINUED:

199

He snickers at this but not until AURORA wheels and stares at him.

AURORA

I keep on telling myself your personality has nothing to do with your abilities. That is true, isn't it?

DR. MAISE

I'm sorry. It might have been a bad joke but you're wrong to take the attitude that everything is so desperate and serious now and it's not going to do your daughter any good to get those signals.

PATSY

I think he's right--Aurora.

AURORA

(giving in)

Well, we're not with Emma right now.

PATSY

But when we are?

AURORA

Of course.

They enter her room.

200 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

200

She's reading the kids' letters and enjoying herself. AURORA and PATSY enter with broadly fixed smiles on their faces.

EMMA

What's wrong now?

PATSY and AURORA smile with some sincerity at their transparency.

AURORA

(sitting on the bed)

I just get so frustrated with the doctor. But it all boils down to you're getting out of here tomorrow and you won't have to stay here again.

EMMA

Unless it spreads more. But I tell you I don't feel sick.

(CONTINUED)

200 CONTINUED:

PATSY

I think you can tell more about your condition yourself than they can. Hey, I want you to come to New York for a visit. My treat.

EMMA

Well, we'll see. You have to read the kids' letters. Teddy says he can't sleep but Melanie can. Tommy says he doesn't think there's anything to be "really concerned about".

PATSY

I mean it. You have some time before you have to see the doctor again. Spend a few days in New York.

AURORA

I don't think it's a bad idea for you to have a vacation by yourself. With Rosie and I here, you might as well take advantage of the freedom.

EMMA

I'm not like one of those kids they take to see Disneyland before the end, am I?

AURORA

Oh, stop it?

201 EXT. 59TH STREET BRIDGE - NIGHT 201

A lovely evening.

202 INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT 202

PATSY in the back seat with EMMA, who looks strange in this setting.

PATSY

Look, Emma.

203 THEIR POV 203

New York City lit up.

204 ON EMMA 204

Delighted.

EMMA

I can't believe I'm here.

PATSY and EMMA and three other women in their late 20's or early 30's are being seated at a large round table. The East River traffic just a few feet away, the Brooklyn Bridge overhead, the city beyond, a piano player at work on the atmosphere. There isn't a Welsh coal miner who wouldn't instantly guess which of the five women was the rube. EMMA is out of her element, but there is enough inner security to make her only vaguely uncomfortable in the midst of these well-groomed, seemingly-sure-of-themselves contemporaries.

PATSY

(making introductions)

Emma, this is Lizbeth.

EMMA

Hi, Elizabeth.

LIZBETH

Hi. It's Lizbeth.

EMMA

Isn't that what I said?

LIZBETH

You said Elizabeth with an "E".
It's Lizbeth.

EMMA

Two names--Liz Beth?

LIZBETH

No, one name--Lizbeth. It doesn't matter.

PATSY

And this is Jane.

EMMA

Thank heavens.

She gets a nice little laugh.

PATSY

And this is Victoria.

Following waiter to the table some 60 minutes later. He lays down coffee for all but EMMA who has also ordered an incredibly gooey dessert. There is a good deal of intelligent, though nonetheless chirpy, chatter.

(CONTINUED)

The women are just finishing examining two photographs--
EMMA'S of her kids and LIZBETH'S of hers.

EMMA

(to Lizbeth)

I love the uniform their school
gives them.

LIZBETH

Well, yours are wonderful. They
make me feel like I'm going
through one of those old Saturday
Evening Posts--the little girl's
incredible.

PATSY

And don't think she doesn't know it.

EMMA

Patsy and her...have a real thing...
(thinking then)
Well, with the boys too.

PATSY nods calmly.

VICTORIA

(to Emma)

You going to wait till she's in
school before you go back to work?

EMMA

I've never really worked.

A half-beat of silent, shocked reaction.

JANE

(firmly and democratically)

Well, that's okay.

EMMA

Thanks.

EMMA starts to eat her dessert and then feels all eyes
on her. She stops a spoonful of the stuff and sees
her diet-conscious table mates looking on ravenously.

EMMA

Anybody want some?

They all say "no".

207 EXT. RIVER CAFE PARKING LOT - DAY - LONG SHOT

207

Breezy, right on the water. PATSY talking to her three New York friends as they wait for taxis. The mood seems different. Two of the women genuinely aghast, and then the conversation stops abruptly with the exclamation, "Oh, that poor thing" hanging in the air.

208 ON EMMA

208

As she approaches the taxi uncertain with the three of them staring at her.

EMMA

What's wrong?

LIZBETH

Nothing.

A cab approaches. Suddenly, the women are pressing too hard to seem natural.

VICTORIA

(shaking hands)

It was a great honor meeting you, Emma. I hope you have a wonderful time here.

JANE

I think those beautiful children are lucky to have you for a mommy.

PATSY

Go ahead. You girls take the first one. We're not in a hurry.

LIZBETH

(to Emma)

You sure?

EMMA nods, a bit down. PATSY is embarrassed. Their cab pulls away.

EMMA

You just told them, huh?

PATSY

(nods)

You don't mind, do you?

EMMA

No, of course not.

209

She walks to the water's edge. EMMA starts to cry. This young Texas woman, this midlander, standing on an alien coast smack in front of one of the world's sophisticated cities, feeling sorry for herself for the first time.

209

PATSY

Emma. , Please, no...why?

She walks quickly after EMMA.

EMMA

Oh, it's not you, Patsy. I like people knowing. I mean why not? But, oh, I'm getting tired all the time and sometimes I get pains in different places...

(now agitated)

And why do your husband and those women have to walk on eggs like that when they know?

EMMA is getting mad.

EMMA

Can you just tell them it's okay to talk about cancer? I mean it's not so terrible. In less than two hours they were saying how two of them had had abortions and three of them had been divorced and how one of them hasn't spoken to her mother in four years and how one of them has her "little Natalie" at boarding school because she has to travel for her job--well, hell, Patsy--hell!! If that's okay to talk about...

(suddenly remembering)

Oh, and there was the one with the yeast disease that was afraid it was vaginal herpes at first...If all that's fit conversation for lunch and everyone is still thought to be perfectly all right, then what is so God awful unspeakable about my little tumors?

PATSY

Sure, of course. What do you want me to do?

EMMA

Well, tell them it's not so tragic. People do get better. Tell them it's okay to talk about the cancer.

210 INT. PATSY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

210

A few couples, well dressed but casually seated around PATSY'S living room. MEG, PATSY'S daughter, kissing her mother and father good night. PATSY'S husband, JACK, is a good looking, well-connected, young partner at Solomon Brothers. They are drinking and eating little chili canapes that PATSY'S made. One of the women fills a silence.

WOMAN

(brightly and conversationally)

Patsy tells us you have cancer.

PATSY laughs so suddenly she spits out her little chili dog. It virtually flies across the room. EMMA breaks up laughing with her.

WOMAN

We should really talk later. I'm a nutritionist and my husband's with Ticketron.

EMMA nods and exits to terrace.

211 EXT. PATSY'S TERRACE - NIGHT

211

An attractive, 5'5", intense man, PHIL, who's often told he looks like Rick Dreyfuss, is standing close to her smoking a joint.

PHIL

Want a hit--maybe to help with the nausea?

EMMA

No. I think that's only if you're having chemotherapy.

PHIL

Were you feeling anything tonight?

EMMA

Sick, you mean?

PHIL

No. Between us.

EMMA

Not really. But I liked that you sit forward in your chair like you're very interested in what people are saying but it's really so your feet will touch the floor. It's sweet.

(CONTINUED)

PHIL

I wouldn't be bringing up the cancer
but Patsy said it was okay.

EMMA

It is okay.

PHIL

I work for her husband. My older
brother had cancer and now he's fine.

EMMA

What kind did he have?

PHIL

Skin cancer.

Before she can say anything.

PHIL

(continuing defensively)

I know. That's the best kind.

(a beat)

I'd really like to take you out
sometime.

EMMA

I'm sorry. I have to go back very
soon and Patsy has a lot planned--
Broadway shows and things--and I'm
married and have three kids--and
there is the cancer.

PHIL

Yeah, I figured it was a long shot.

They stand for a beat.

EMMA

Excuse me.

She walks in. PATSY is standing with her husband.

PATSY

You don't feel like meeting somebody
right now who had a mastectomy, do you?

EMMA

(polite)

Maybe in a bit.

212 INT. MEG'S ROOM - NIGHT

212

MEG, PATSY'S daughter, is sitting up in bed reading.
EMMA walks in.

EMMA

How you doing?

MEG

Fine.

EMMA picks up the phone and begins to dial.

MEG

Will you tell Tommy I said hi?

EMMA

I'll do better than that. I'll
tell him you have a crush on him.

MEG

Aunt Emma, you wouldn't.

EMMA laughs, then hangs up the phone, thinks for a
beat, then:

EMMA

Meg?

MEG

Uh-huh?

EMMA

From your point of view, having
lived in three or four places,
how is it being in New York?

MEG

Well, I think it's my favorite
because no matter what you're
fond of, they have it.

EMMA

Not if you like nature.

MEG

Yes. Because we have a house in
East Hampton that's right on the
ocean and has woods out behind.

EMMA

And you have fun here as a kid and
all?

(CONTINUED)

212 CONTINUED:

212

MEG

Oh, yes.

EMMA takes this in and dials.

EMMA

(into phone)

Hi, Mom...

(listens)

Well, you know how Tommy is. Look, they're having this party for me so I can't talk long but I'm thinking of coming back a couple of days early.

213 EXT. SHOT - BRYANT HOSPITAL - LINCOLN

213

214 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

214

EMMA and her mother enter carrying a little suitcase containing personal toiletries, a radio, etc. A woman a few years younger than EMMA is in one of the room's two beds. Even in bed, with the covers up, she seems a bit too big and gawky. Her name is MELBA.

MELBA

Hi.

EMMA

Hi.

AURORA nods.

MELBA

(to Emma)

You going to be in here?

EMMA

Uh-huh. My name's Emma.

MELBA

I'm Melba Lanke. My husband, Dick, is the high school basketball coach.

DR. MAISE walks in. He nods to AURORA, then draws the curtain separating EMMA'S area from MELBA'S.

DR. MAISE

Excuse us a moment.

215 ON MELBA'S AREA

215

AURORA and EMMA now shut off from view.

(CONTINUED)

DR. MAISE

Melba, there are certain options you have to consider on the kind of treatment we'll be following. We need to decide whether to operate.

MELBA

What do you think, Dr. Maise?

DR. MAISE

Well, the problem is that if we don't operate, the chances are one in four of achieving a cure. But if we operate, the chances of a cure become one in two.

MELBA

(heartened)

Oh.

DR. MAISE

But the chances of surviving the operation are two in three.

MELBA

Oh. So if we just keep on doing what we're doing, my chances are one in three.

DR. MAISE

(correcting)

One in four.

MELBA

One in four--sorry.

DR. MAISE

That's okay.

MELBA

What's one in three?

DR. MAISE

There is no one in three. The chances of surviving the operation are two in three.

MELBA

(trying)

One in three if we don't do any...

DR. MAISE

(patiently correcting)

One in four.

(CONTINUED)

MELBA

Why do I keep getting that wrong?
One in four if we don't do anything...

DR. MAISE

Right.

MELBA

(encouraged)

Two of three if I have the operation...

DR. MAISE

(coaching)

But...

MELBA

(she knows this one)

...the chances of surviving the
operation are one in two.

DR. MAISE

That's right.

MELBA laughs a bit flushed with her success at having gotten it down. DR. MAISE opens the curtain separating the two areas. EMMA and AURORA agape. MELBA looking over at them as soon as the doctor exits.

MELBA

I should have written it down.

216 EXT. HOLIDAY INN - LINCOLN, NEBRASKA - NIGHT 216

As a cab leaves AURORA off at her hotel. The sign contains a provocative message: "Home of the Pleasure Dome."

217 INT. HOLIDAY INN - NIGHT. 217

As AURORA walks past the reception desk where first by din and then by actual sight we see:

218 INT. PLEASURE DOME - NIGHT 218

A monument to a certain type taste. It has a giant indoor area with a sweating indoor pool, some matted and torn artificial turf serving as a miniature golf course, ping-pong tables, shuffleboard and scores of pinball machines, all of it covered by a plastic top creating an eerie translucence. Most of the rooms at this Holiday Inn have balconies facing out on the Pleasure Dome. So it is a weary AURORA we see climb up to the balcony and open the door to one of these rooms.

(CONTINUED)

219 INT. AURORA'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT 219

She closes the door but still there are the chorus of pinball bells which cannot be shut out. She sits on the bed.

220 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY 220

AURORA, dressed colorfully, is supervising the two men hanging AURORA'S Renoir and Klee. She also squeezes her armpit periodically. EMMA is in bed. She is genuinely cheered by the additions.

EMMA

(looking at paintings)
I can't believe you did this.

AURORA

Sure.
(to men)
Be careful. Those paintings are worth more than you'll make in your lifetime.

The men turn and react.

EMMA

(sotto)
You treat them like that, they're going to start pissing in my soup to get even.

221 INT. HOLIDAY INN COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT 221

AURORA eating a desultory meal with VERNON. There is so little to say. He is concerned for her. She catches him looking at her at one point as she unconsciously squeezes her armpit. She stops and pats his hand in reassurance.

222 INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT 222

AURORA at the nurse's station. There is a large clock prominent in the background which reads seven minutes past eight. AURORA is extraordinarily agitated, hyper, manic.

AURORA

It's after eight. Give her the pain shot.

NURSE

Mrs. Greenway, I was going to.

(CONTINUED)

AURORA

Then go ahead. It's after eight.

NURSE

Just a few minutes.

AURORA

Why should she have to have the pain right now? It's time for her shot.

NURSE

You act like...

AURORA

She only has to hold out till eight. Give her the shot.

NURSE

Your attitude isn't...

AURORA

We'll talk later. Give her the shot.

NURSE

If you're going to behave like...

AURORA

(screaming)

Give her the shot.

The nurse looks wide-eyed. AURORA too did not anticipate her outburst. The nurse scurries towards EMMA'S room.

223 INT. EMMA'S ROOM - DAY

223

EMMA lying in bed, the doctor sitting at her bedside. EMMA looking intelligent and relaxed despite the doctor's words. His manner is not the least bit emotional. A professional rendering facts.

DR. MAISE

The response to the drugs we've tried isn't what we'd hoped. But there are investigatory drugs which we are willing to utilize. However, if you become incapacitated or it becomes unreasonable for you to handle your affairs for a block of time, it might be wise to make some decisions now so that your areas of responsibility don't become notably disordered.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

223 CONTINUED:

223

DR. MAISE (CONT'D)

(he looks at her for half a beat)

Any questions?

EMMA

No.

She looks off, lost in the fact that she will not survive her illness. The doctor hesitates, not sure she's gotten the message. She senses this.

EMMA

(continuing)

I know what you're saying. I've got to decide what to do with the kids.

224 INT. RESTAURANT - HOLIDAY INN - LINCOLN - NIGHT 224

225 INT. HOLIDAY INN - LOBBY 225

Following AURORA into the Pleasure Dome.

226 INT. PLEASURE DOME - NIGHT 226

She stands watching TOMMY and TEDDY swim in the indoor pool. They are having a fine time. TEDDY hops out and, giggling, pretends he's going to push AURORA in. TOMMY calls to his brother from the pool.

TOMMY

Pushing Grandma in isn't a half bad idea.

AURORA

(to Tommy)

You'd better not. I'm not kidding. Push your father in if you want.

TOMMY gets out of the pool and advances ominously on AURORA. She fixes him with a look, but just then there is a call from the balcony surrounding the Pleasure Dome.

VOICE

Aurora.

AURORA looks up.

227 HER POV 227

There, near the pinball machines, a flight bag beside him, is GARRETT.

228 ON AURORA 228

She walks towards the stairway, GARRETT down the stairs. They embrace.

229 AURORA AND GARRETT 229

She is trying very hard and with noteworthy success not to cry.

AURORA

Well, whoever expected you to be a nice guy?

They embrace.

230 OTHER ANGLE 230

Showing VERNON watching them, suffering, at the very least, enormous discomfort, since PATSY and ROSIE are looking at him and actually verbalizing their feelings as they say softly and almost in unison.

ROSIE, PATSY

Awww.

He looks around and walks off in the opposite direction. ROSIE makes a simple statement of fact to PATSY.

ROSIE

I have a real shot at him now.

231 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY 231

As AURORA and GARRETT walk.

ON GARRETT.

Getting the willies in the hospital.

AURORA

You can wait in that little reception room. She said she really loved that you came and the way you did it.

232 INT. RECEPTION ROOM - DAY 232

As GARRETT lights up, visibly more relaxed and sits down next to an older working man wearing a sports jacket over his house painting togs.

GARRETT

How you doing?

(CONTINUED)

232 CONTINUED:

232

MAN

Fine. They just opened up my wife's neck.

GARRETT blanches. AURORA enters the background but stands silently watching. She is amused.

MAN

It turned out to be a big tumor--the size of a crenshaw melon but benign.

GARRETT

(woozy)

Well, great.

233 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

233

ROSIE and MELANIE visiting. EMMA is caressing MELANIE'S long, thick, blonde hair. ROSIE, awkward, out of her element, and still trying to postpone fully dealing with EMMA'S condition.

EMMA

God, how I miss washing this mane of hers. Wherever did she get it from?

ROSIE

(downcast)

Oh, you and your thing about hair.

(brightening)

The other day Melanie was asking about where she came from and I told her to ask her momma.

MELANIE

I know.

EMMA

Who told you?

MELANIE

I came from in there.

She points to EMMA'S stomach.

EMMA

Teddy told you, the blabbermouth.

ROSIE gets up and walks towards the exit. As she does so she hears EMMA say to MELANIE.

EMMA

You love your Aunt Patsy?

MELANIE.

Yes.

234 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

234

As ROSIE steps into the corridor. She stands for a moment, then HEARS EMMA and MELANIE singing a song together and begins to cry.

235 INT. LINCOLN AIRPORT - DAY

235

Where AURORA sees GARRETT off. They embrace and as part of the embrace, he grabs a good handful of her rear end.

GARRETT

Take care of yourself. I'll call you. I'm glad I saw Emma.

AURORA

I'm sure your being there meant a lot to h...

(catching herself, then directly)

It meant a lot to me.

(now briskly)

I'm at the hospital all the time or I'll call you. No, then if you're with someone, you'll have that funny sound in your voice. Oh, I don't care. Who cares? Thanks for coming. I love you.

They hug again holding each other's rears.

236 AURORA starts away from him, stops.

236

AURORA

(calling)

Garrett.

He stops, she walks to him.

AURORA

I can't help being curious. Do you have any reaction to my telling you that I love you?

GARRETT

I was just inches from a clean getaway.

AURORA

Well, you're stuck now so you might as well face up. You're old enough to tell and I'm old enough to hear your reaction to my saying "I love you".

(he hesitates)

Tell me. Really.

(CONTINUED)

GARRETT

(distressed, then honestly)
All I can think of is my stock answer.

AURORA

Which is?

GARRETT

(with style)
I love you too, kid.

AURORA

(enjoying him)
Why is it the most fun you have
is always at my expense?

He hefts his flight bag, grins, musses her graying hair
a bit and exits.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

237 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

237

AURORA and EMMA each in their own thoughts. A trace of
a smile on AURORA'S face. Now AURORA looks at her daughter.

AURORA

Why are you always looking out
the window? Is it to avoid me?

EMMA

Oh, everything isn't always about
you. I have a lot to figure out.

AURORA

Let's not fight so much.

EMMA

(honestly)
What do you mean? When do we fight?

AURORA

You amaze me. I think of us as
always fighting.

EMMA

No, that's just from your end,
because you're never satisfied
with me.

AURORA looks at her. EMMA goes back to mulling.

AURORA going through the line, looking with extraordinary distaste as people in front of her have food plopped into their plates, wet glops covered with thick syrups. She addresses the black woman behind the counter.

AURORA

You don't put any gravy on the cottage cheese, do you?

WOMAN

You crazy?

AURORA

I'll have some cottage cheese and some whole wheat toast.

WOMAN

You want gravy on the toast?

AURORA

No, thank you.

The woman hands her the food. AURORA walks with her tray. She sees PATSY with the three kids just finishing a meal. PATSY looks tanned and gorgeous. They are all wearing ski clothes. They greet each other. TOMMY, a perfunctory hug; TEDDY, a squeeze; MELANIE, utterly kissable. TOMMY puts down a different water glass in front of AURORA.

TOMMY

Can we go back to the shop?

PATSY nods.

PATSY

Wouldn't you know? I take them away skiing and the most excited they got is when they found this novelty section in the gift shop. Do you think they should see their mother today?

AURORA

I'd wait.

PATSY

I told Emma I thought Melwnie should be with me, and the boys too if she wants. She didn't want to discuss it until she'd had a chance to go over it with poor Flap.

AURORA

I'm going to raise the children.

PATSY

We'll see. I didn't want to do anything behind your back. That's why I wanted you to know I've spoken with Emma.

AURORA just looks at her. It is not a friendly look.

PATSY

It's silly for us to dislike each other now, isn't it?

AURORA

Maybe not.

PATSY

Well, I'm not mad at you.

She exits.

240 OTHER ANGLE 240

TEDDY and TOMMY spying on AURORA'S table from afar.

241 ON CASHIER'S DESK 241

FLAP, a huge tray of food and two books under his arm, is just about to set himself down at an empty table for respite. He sits, props up the book, savoring 15 minutes of ease and peace but now he looks up.

242 FLAP'S POV 242

His mother-in-law. She is looking at him.

243 ON FLAP 243

As reluctantly and dutifully he folds his book, hefts his tray and walks to AURORA'S table. FLAP is wearing the distinctive tie EMMA bought for him with AURORA'S money years ago.

FLAP

Hello.

AURORA

Hello.

FLAP

Did you see her yet today?

AURORA

I was with her most of last night and today--as usual.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP

Well?

AURORA

She wants to die--and sometimes I do too.

AURORA sips some water; it dribbles down her chin.

FLAP

I haven't talked to the kids yet. I'm not sure how much they realize. They know something bad is happening.

AURORA

Patsy wants to raise Melanie and maybe the boys. Don't you think they should be with me?

FLAP

What can you be thinking? I'll raise them. They are mine.

AURORA did not expect this. She sips her water. It dribbles down her chin. Absently, she wipes the water away.

AURORA

You don't have the resources.

FLAP

You can't make an argument out of this.

She is growing angry and trying not to. She sips some water; it runs down her chin. The problem of getting water to stay in her mouth is beginning to vie for her attention.

AURORA

Raising three children and working full time and running after women requires a lot more energy than you have. You've always had a knowledge of your own weakness--don't lose that quality now that you need it most.

She sips and dribbles. FLAP rises, watches AURORA dab at her chin.

FLAP

You have no right nor any invitation to discuss where or how my children live...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

243 CONTINUED: (2)

243

FLAP (CONT'D)

(realizing)

That's a...what do you call it?...
a dribble glass. You're drinking
from a dribble glass.

He looks around along with AURORA.

244 THEIR POV

244

The kids looking on. AURORA is pissed; FLAP is proud
of his brood.

245 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

245

FLAP is seated beside her bed.

EMMA

From what the doctor says, I think
we have to have...

(ruefully)

..."the talk" now.

FLAP looks at her, then away. Some quality he doesn't
have may be expected of him. But now he turns back
and holds her gaze.

FLAP

(baring his soul)

Do you know how much I hate the
idea of losing you?

EMMA

Yes.

FLAP

(frustration venting)

Nobody seems to know that but you...

He calms, sits down, starts to speak, almost doesn't.

EMMA

(encouraging)

What?

FLAP

Oh. Just thinking about my identity
and not having one anymore.

(bittersweet irony)

I mean who am I if I'm not the man
who's failing Emma?

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

You didn't fail me.

FLAP

Let's not talk about this. I feel like I'm sucking after forgiveness-- which I probably am.

EMMA

You weren't any more terrible than me...

FLAP

Except for the cheating.

EMMA

Oh, let's not do this. We had our problems, Flap, but it wasn't over whether we loved each other...

Oh, look, I didn't even notice...

(she fingers his tie, moved by the gesture he made in wearing it)

Honestly. Oh, gosh. And it was really buried away. I know the mess it must have been for you finding it.

He grins. There is a strange but uncommonly easy intimacy between them. As they relax, this visit begins to have some of the elements of a good time.

FLAP

The house still isn't in one piece. It was in the last box I looked in.

EMMA

I'll bet.

FLAP

(loving her)

You're so easy to please. I don't know why I couldn't do more of it.

EMMA

(a beat then)

I feel so sorry for you. What are you going to do?

FLAP

I love teaching English. I'll be all right.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

I'm so glad we're talking. I just am. It just means so much to me that we can still feel like this--so much. Honest. Wow. Thank heavens.

FLAP

(amazed at her)

I swear.

She grabs one of his ears and holds it affectionately.

EMMA

Listen, I am getting tired. Just tell me, hon, do you really want to raise them?

He looks down, thinks, then at her.

FLAP

I never thought I was the sort of man who'd give up his kids.

EMMA

I don't think you want that much work. You have no idea what it takes. As hard as you think it is, you'd end up wishing it were that easy.

He thinks.

EMMA

Patsy and Momma can afford help. That makes a very big difference.

FLAP

Where do you want them?

EMMA

I don't want them living with Janice.

FLAP

(hesitantly)

She's not so bad.

EMMA

Oh, yes she is--for my kids she is.

She takes his hand.

EMMA

(continuing)

I think they'd better not stay with you, honey.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP is scared and ashamed.

FLAP
I'll really miss them.

EMMA
Yes, you will.

FLAP
Maybe we should let Patsy take them.
It would be easy for me to work
research summers in New York.

EMMA
No. Patsy only really cares about
Melanie. I want them with Mother.
I'll make sure she lets you see
them and have them and help decide
things for them.

FLAP sighs.

FLAP
(ruefully)
I guess they should be with your
mother. I probably have that coming.

EMMA
Bring the boys to see me tomorrow,
will you? That one's been waiting
there for me. It's time I did it.

246 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

246

PATSY is putting some make-up on EMMA, getting her
spruced up for her boys.

PATSY
Is it terrible to say that I just
can't stand seeing your mother get
her hands on that little girl? I'd
just love to raise that little girl.

EMMA
I'd let you. But Teddy can't spare her.

PATSY pauses. She always adores the way EMMA thinks.
She is heavy-hearted but is working against the emotion,
trying to supply energy to her friend's hospital room.

PATSY
I suppose Melanie will manage all by
herself no matter who takes care of her.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Keep an eye on Teddy, though. Okay? He's going to take this so damn personally. Tommy's been trying not to need me for years but Teddy's going to be so scared without me.

Tears come. PATSY dries them, does some patch work with the make-up. Then she patches herself.

PATSY

He's so like you, Teddy. A real innocent.

EMMA

I wasn't so innocent.

PATSY

I really wish you wouldn't use the past tense. Anyway, I'm having the kids visit a lot. She can't fight me on that.

EMMA

I'll make sure she doesn't. Thanks for helping me stall but you'd better send them in.

PATSY

Do I get to say something ever?

EMMA

Oh, we don't have to...

PATSY starts for the door, turns.

PATSY

There's just this. Besides loving you, I don't think you realize how I've depended on you. You're my touchstone, Emma.

She exits. EMMA sits there alone preparing to tackle the final task she has set for herself, her farewell to her children. At this moment she is thinking hard, concentrating on how she will deal with this. She is at work. We HEAR the door open. She looks over towards it.

EMMA

Hi, boys.

247 HER POV

247

As TOMMY and TEDDY enter their mother's room. TOMMY steeling himself, his younger brother already in tears. He moves quickly to his mother and buries his head in the covers. TOMMY is enormously uncomfortable and rigid. TEDDY is a bit out of control because suddenly, here with his mother, he feels comfortable enough to say what he's been thinking since she was hospitalized.

TEDDY

I love you and I miss you. And,
oh God, I want you to come home.

He lifts his head and takes some breaths; EMMA pets him, looks almost a bit stern at TOMMY and gestures him to come closer.

248 ON TOMMY

248

As he hesitates for half a beat, then walks to the bed. She touches his face.

EMMA

You both look so gigantic to me.
And I must look pretty bad to you.

TEDDY is so shocked with her appearance he can't answer, just look embarrassed. TOMMY shows a small measure of grace.

TOMMY

Not so bad.

249 ON EMMA

249

Strangely she feels deep appreciation for TOMMY'S words.

EMMA

You both need a haircut. You have,
both of you, beautiful eyes and I
want people to see them. I don't
care how long it gets in back but
clip those bangs. They're too long.

TOMMY

That's a matter of opinion.

EMMA

Just keep the hair out of your eyes.

TOMMY

Are you getting well?

EMMA

Uh-uh.

(CONTINUED)

TEDDY'S eyes dart, as if looking for escape.

EMMA

(continuing)

...I'm sorry about this. But I can't help it. And I can't talk to you too much longer or else I'll start to get real upset. But we had lots of years and we did a lot of talking--and some people don't get that... Listen, I want you to make a lot of friends. And don't be afraid of girls--they're going to be so much help to you, I swear.

TOMMY

We're not afraid of girls. What makes you think that?

EMMA

Well, you might be later on.

TOMMY

I doubt it.

TEDDY

(sobbing to Tommy)

Why don't you just shut up?

TOMMY

(half-heartedly)

You shut up.

EMMA

Shhh. Come on. Teddy? Give me a kiss.

They kiss on the lips. TEDDY kisses her a few extra times and so does she. She does the last extra kisses in a way which makes him smile. She gestures to TOMMY who kisses her cheek quickly. He is tortured and somehow being stiff and foul is simpler for him right now.

EMMA

Tommy, be sweet. Be sweet, please. Don't keep pretending you dislike me. That's silly.

TOMMY

(strained)

I like you.

(CONTINUED)

EMMA

Then will you listen to me especially hard?

TOMMY

What?

EMMA

You'll listen close?

TOMMY

I said, what?

EMMA

(petting his arm)

I know that you like me. I know it. But for the last year or two you've been pretending you hate me. I love you a lot, as much as I love anybody, as much as I love myself. And in a few years when I haven't been around to be on your tail about something or irritating you, you're going to remember my buying your baseball glove when you thought we were too broke, and how I read you those stories and let you goof off instead of mowing the lawn... lots of things. You're going to realize you loved me. And maybe you're going to feel badly because you never told me. Don't. Because I already know you love me. So you must not ever do that to yourself. Okay?

TOMMY pauses. His brother looking at him with hope and urging that he says "I love you". He doesn't.

TOMMY

Okay.

EMMA

Good. You'd both better run along now. Take care. I was scared of this, but I think it went really well, don't you?

The boys nod.

250 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

250

AURORA seated with MELANIE on her lap as the boys enter the scene.

(CONTINUED)

250 CONTINUED:

250

AURORA

Come on, your father's back at the hotel.

251 MOVING SHOT - CLOSE ON TOMMY

251

As he moves along, glancing back occasionally.

252 EXT. HOSPITAL GROUNDS - DAY

252

AURORA making conversation to soothe TEDDY who keeps lapsing unexpectedly into tears or sniffing. TOMMY lags behind, pausing, looking back at the hospital, then catching up.

AURORA

You know, I was speaking to this boy back in River Oaks where I live and he was telling me how great the Cub Scouts are in Houston, just about the best there are.

TOMMY

(simply)

We never were Scouts. Our mother was too lazy to check it out.

AURORA'S hand hits him so hard that he is knocked down and several feet away by the blow. MELANIE giggles nervously. TOMMY starts to scamper away. AURORA goes after him. He almost runs for it. She has him by the arm. Finally, he stops struggling; he starts crying. AURORA comforts him. Gentler than we've seen her.

AURORA

That's a boy. I just can't have you criticize your mother around me.

253 INT. EMMA'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

253

One light on. FLAP dozing in a chair. AURORA seated across the room, looking at EMMA, who is on even more life support systems, and now EMMA looks back. Her mother smiles at her with quiet and mystic reassurance--their final communication. EMMA turns; AURORA looks out the window. The door opens, a nurse enters. She checks EMMA. This is the same nurse who had the run-in with AURORA. She's a bit reluctant to approach her. She touches FLAP, who awakens.

NURSE

Mr. Horton. She's gone.

(CONTINUED)

FLAP gets to his feet. He looks at AURORA, who rises.

AURORA

I'm so stupid. After all she's been through, I thought I'd feel relief when she went...Oh, my sweet little thing...

(a wail)

Oh, Emma...please.

She catches herself, looks at FLAP, sadness flowing again. He stands quite still, something approaching dignity.

AURORA

(continuing)

There's nothing harder, is there?

She looks at FLAP again, a step and they are in each other's arms, AURORA kisses his brow, he kisses her back. They look towards the bed. Then:

AURORA

Let's go.

FLAP opens the door, waits for her; she gestures that he should go first. An instant where she looks back from the doorway.

FADE OUT:

TO END TITLES OVER:

254 EXT. AURORA'S HOUSE - DAY

254

As the last of the three limousines return from EMMA'S funeral.

255 INT. AURORA'S KITCHEN - DAY

255

ROSIE, PATSY and AURORA preparing some food. They argue with AURORA and each other about who should not be doing this.

256 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

256

GARRETT, VERNON, the BANKER, the DOCTOR, TOMMY, TEDDY, MELANIE, FLAP, PATSY'S husband, MEG, CECIL HORTON and SAM BURNS, off by himself, lost until PATSY comes up and begins to tell him how much EMMA cared about him. The casual, mournful, unstructured conversation of our characters, as they drink, eat and talk about EMMA and inevitably about her mother as well. This to continue as we finally...

FADE OUT.