

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

screenplay adaptation by

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Our story begins in 1965, on a hot afternoon in August.

FADE IN:

EXT. IOWA LANDSCAPE - DAY

Rolling green hills, lush farmland, vast open space. Not a house or sign of life in sight. On a long dusty road, a TRUCK is driving across the screen. Clouds of dirt follow in its tracks - its motor, the only sound we hear.

INT. TRUCK - DAY.

FRANCESCA JOHNSON is sitting in the front seat of the pick-up truck. Her expression is distant. Her eyes are sad, as if hiding a burden she can hardly bear. Her husband, RICHARD JOHNSON, is driving.

RICHARD

You feeling better Franny?

FRANCESCA

Yes. I'm fine. It's just this heat I think.

He nods, satisfied. He turns on the radio as the VOICE OF DINAH WASHINGTON sings a bluesy, haunting love song, "I'LL CLOSE MY EYES".

DINAH WASHINGTON

(SINGS)

"I'LL CLOSE MY EYES ... TO EVERYONE
BUT YOU ... AND WHEN I DO ... I'LL SEE
YOU STANDING THERE..."

(CONTINUES)

RICHARD

(surprised)

What station is this?

FRANCESCA

It's a Chicago station. I found it the other day.

RICHARD

Kinda pretty. Is this uh ... jazz kinda singing?

FRANCESCA

(nicely)

I don't know. Can we turn it off? I have such a headache.

RICHARD

Sure.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Richarde shuts it off. Francesca turns her face away from him to look out at the vast expanse out of the countryside.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

The truck stops in front of a isolated FARM HOUSE. A wooden gate stands twenty yards from the front door. A barn and a hot house sits on either side, surrounded by acres and acres of beautiful pasture.

CAROLYN JOHNSON, a sixteen year old girl, steps out from the vegetable garden with an arm full of vegetables. She watches her parents exit the truck.

Francesca carries her groceries, walking briskly through the front gate and entering the house.

Richard grabs a bag of feed from the flatbed and strolls more leisurely. When he walks through the front gate, he notices something on the ground and picks it up. It is a BUTTON with RED MATERIAL surrounding it. As if it had been torn from a piece of clothing. His daughter approaches him.

RICHARD

Your mother isn't feel well. I want you to help her out tonight with dinner.

(she nods)

Tell Michael to put this feed away.

He puts the feed bag down. She exits. He enters the house.

INT. FRONT HALL - DAY.

Richard enters the front hall opposite the stairs to the second floor. To his left is the living room. To his right, through an archway is the kitchen. He moves towards the stair when he suddenly hears the kitchen radio turned on and "I'LL CLOSE MY EYES" continues. It puzzles him. He looks to the kitchen. Francesca is obviously there but we can't see her. He is about to call to her when his son, Michael, yells:

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Dad! You bought the wrong feed!

RICHARD

(irritated)

What?!

He exits through the house to the back door.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

The family - Francesca, Richard, Carolyn and their seventeen year old son MICHAEL - are eating supper. No one speaks.

FRANCESCA

So what are you going to do with the prize money?

CAROLYN

I don't know. I might save up for one of those hi-fi stereo players like Peggy has.

Francesca nods. Silence again. She asks her son:

FRANCESCA

Are you seeing Betty tonight?

MICHAEL

(eating)

Nah.

Silence. She is used to her son's one syllable answers.

RICHARD

Oh! Frannie, is this yours?

He places the button with red material on the table. Hiding her surprise, Francesca takes the button.

FRANCESCA

You found it! I got my dress caught on that damn gate. You must have eyes like a hawk.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

You must all be tired. You got home so early. What time did you leave Illinois this morning?

RICHARD

'Bout 4:30.

FRANCESCA

Well you should all go to bed early. I'll do the cleaning up.

This last remark she addresses to her daughter. Everyone returns to their silent eating.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT.

The house is asleep and dark except for a bright light coming from the kitchen. Carolyn quietly exits her bedroom in her nightclothes. She was awakened by noises coming from the kitchen downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN -

She enters to find the lights are on. An empty cake pan and a half-used bowl of frosting sitting unwashed in the sink. She hears the motor of the truck being turned on. She moves to the front hall and looks out through the door to see:

The truck driving away. She calls out:

CAROLYN

Mom!

But she gets no response. She stands there wondering where her mother could possibly be going this time of night, as we -

DISSOLVE TO:

THIRTY YEARS LATER. SAME LOCATION.

Carolyn, thirty years older, stands in the same doorway of the same house thinking back to that evening her mother acted so strangely.

A LAWYER is unpacking a briefcase in the living room off the front entrance.

Carolyn sees a car with Florida plates driving up to the house. She smiles.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

Carolyn steps out of the doorway and heads for the car, out of which exit her brother Michael and his country girl wife BETTY, a stout buxom chatterbox. Both boast Florida tans and fashion styles.

MICHAEL

(to Carolyn)

Explain to me again why we didn't do this in Des Moines in an air conditioned office?

CAROLYN

Mom's orders.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
Lawyer here?

CAROLYN
(nods)
I have some sandwich fixings if
you're hungry.

BETTY
(proudly)
No, we just had lunch at the hotel
with my brother and his new wife. She
told me all the dirt. I forgot how
interesting things can get around
here. It was so good to see them. The
last time we visited they were in
Europe. He is doing so well. He
ordered champagne. For lunch! I
nearly died.

MICHAEL
I nearly died when we split the bill.

BETTY
Michael doesn't understand. People
who make the kind of money my brother
makes don't carry money on them. They
keep it all in various accounts.

MICHAEL
Then we should have had lunch at the
bank.

Carolyn tries not to laugh. Betty shoots him a dirty look,
then stops to take in the house and it's surroundings.

BETTY
Boy. It sure has been a long time.

MICHAEL
(correcting her)
We were here two Christmases ago.

BETTY
Well that's a long time.

MICHAEL
It's not that long.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

BETTY
(suddenly upset)
Well why don't I just say black so
you can say white!
(to Carolyn)
Don't be surprised to find you're
brother hasn't changed an iota. He
hardly ever talks and when he does
it's in that tone! You should have
heard him at lunch - not two words
until the bill came and then he says,
"Worth every penny".

MICHAEL
(defensive)
SO!

BETTY
(angry)
You said it in that tone! Like you
were angry at me, at my brother, at
the world for forcing you to eat a
nice lunch!

MICHAEL
Oh Jesus.

BETTY
(starting to cry)
I simply can not stand that tone!

CAROLYN
(sympathetically)
Come inside. You're just tired from
the trip.

She comforts Betty who indulges in the attention.

BETTY
I am so sick and tired of apologizing
and not knowing what I've done!

CAROLYN
I'm sure you haven't done anything.
Have some iced tea. How are the kids?

MICHAEL
We dropped them off at Betty's mom.
Where's Steve?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

CAROLYN
(uncomfortably)
He's not coming.

Betty suddenly stops crying and focuses on abrasively focuses on Carolyn's problems.

BETTY
Aw, is he still cheating on you hon?

Carolyn suddenly loses sympathy for her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY.

The lawyer hands Michael a document.

LAWYER
Just sign here as having received the contents from the safe deposit box.
(Michael does)
And this one, which clears the bank of all further responsibility for the contents.

Betty whispers to Carolyn.

BETTY
This is kind of exciting. You think we'll find out your mother had secret millions lying around?

Carolyn smiles weakly. Michael hands back the papers.

LAWYER
All right. Why don't we begin.

He takes out Francesca's Last Will and Testament.

LAWYER (Cont'd)
Your mother has been interred at Lakeside Funeral Home until arrangements can be made.

MICHAEL
(to Carolyn)
I thought everything WAS arranged.

CAROLYN
Well, there's a problem.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
What problem?

LAWYER
Your mother left explicit
instructions that she wished to be
cremated.

MICHAEL
Cremated?!

BETTY
Eeeww!

CAROLYN
I know. I don't understand it either.

MICHAEL
When did she decide this?

LAWYER
(reading will)
Apparantly just before her death.

MICHAEL
Well that's crazy. I don't know
anybody who gets cremated.

BETTY
My Jewish friend's grandmother did.

MICHAEL
Well no one in my family did! Dad
bought cemetary plots at Oak Ridge.
One for him, one for mom.

LAWYER
It clearly states in the will -

MICHAEL
I don't care what it says! Maybe Mama
was delirious, you know. She didn't
know what she was saying. If she
wanted to be cremated, why the hell
did she let dad buy two plots, huh?

LAWYER
Well, she was very specific. She
wanted her ashes to be thrown over
Roseman Bridge.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

MICHAEL
WHAT!

BETTY
How bizarre!

CAROLYN
Mr. Peterson, are you sure mama wrote all this?

LAWYER
Well it was notarized, and witnessed by a Mrs. Lucy Delaney. Maybe you can ask her.

MICHAEL
Who the hell is Lucy Delaney?

CAROLYN
I remember a Mrs. Delaney but Mama told me years ago she died.

MICHAEL
Well I don't care if it's legal or not, we're not cremating her and throwing her all over some bridge where we can't even go visit her because she's going to be blown all over the place like an ashtray.

BETTY
Not to mention people driving over her and doggies doing their business-

MICHAEL
(interrupting)
We're not doing it! I'm not even sure it's Christian.

BETTY
Maybe it's an Italian thing. Their mother was Italian.

MICHAEL
Doesn't matter. Move on.

The women dare not object. The lawyer raises his eyebrows and continues:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

LAWYER

Well, we'll come back to that. Shall
we open the box.

JUMP CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER.

C.U. SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX.

A key is inserted and the lid is opened. There are many
papers, deeds, etc. Michael begins sorting through these.

Carolyn notices a manila envelope addressed to her mother,
postmarked 1965. She opens it up to find TWO LETTERS and A
PHOTOGRAPH - FRANCESCA standing NEAR A COVERED BRIDGE, her
hair wind blown, her expression serene, beautiful and sad.
SHE WEARS A RED DRESS with buttons down the front.

CAROLYN

Michael look - I've never seen this
picture of mama. Have you?

Betty and Michael look over her shoulder. He shakes "no".

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

It was in this envelope from 1965.

BETTY

She's not wearing a bra.

(takes bridge photo)

This is Roseman bridge in case
anyone's interested.

Interested yes, but no one thinks anything of it. Michael
returns to the other papers. Betty takes the photograph for
further examination. Carolyn opens one of the letters and
begins to read.

The following dialogue is heard OS, as CAMERA ANGLES ON
CAROLYN reading one of the letters:

BETTY (Cont'd; O.S.)

It's a beautiful picture of her.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(to lawyer)

Why are there two deeds here?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

LAWYER (O.S.)

One is for the original parcel your father bought and this one is for the additional acres he purchased in '59.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

And this?

LAWYER (O.S.)

Those are bills of sale from the equipment your mother sold in ...

(CONTINUES OS)

Throughout their conversation, we focus on Carolyn as she reads and her expression sinks into one of shock and confusion. She flips to the last page of the letter to read who it is from. She can't believe her eyes.

BETTY (O.S.)

What's that?

Carolyn jumps a little, so engrossed in her discovery. She lies.

CAROLYN

Oh just a old letter from a friend.

BETTY

(laughs)

No treasure maps, huh.

CAROLYN

(laughs nervously)

No.

Betty starts inspecting knik knacks around the house she might be able to take. Caroline looks to Michael.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

Michael.

MICHAEL

(reading documents)

Yeah.

CAROLYN

Michael.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (5)

MICHAEL
(irritated)
What!?

CAROLYN
Come here a minute.

Michael crosses impatiently to Carolyn. Carolyn looks around to the others, then guides him OS into the kitchen for privacy. He protests.

MICHAEL
What? Where are we going?

They exit. Alone with the impatient Lawyer, Betty examines a vase as she pumps him for info.

BETTY
Did she say anything in there about
me? Leaving me anything in particular?

LAWYER
No.

Betty prattles on as she examines each item, much to the lawyer's dismay, hiding her resentment and hurt.

BETTY
I didn't expect so. She never liked
me. It's OK. I always knew. Thought
we married too young. Nobody broke
his arm - that's what I said but you
know mothers and their sons. Also,
she never liked the fact of us moving
to Florida although that's where the
opportunities were. Couldn't deny
that. Suppose we should have visited
more but you know she hardly ever
made an effort to come to Tampa. Not
even to see her grandchildren. She
was a cold woman. They say Italians
are hot blooded but not her. She was
cool as ice.

(picks up a
candlestick)
She leave these to anyone?

Michael and Carolyn re-enter the living room. Michael's expression now matches Carolyn in disbelief.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (6)

BETTY (Cont'd)
What's going on?

MICHAEL
Um ... we were just wondering how it might be better if me and Carolyn went over the stuff by ourselves. Not keep you two waiting around. I'll contact your office about the legal work.

Grateful, the lawyer packs up to leave.

BETTY
I don't mind waiting.

MICHAEL
Well there's a lot of boring stuff to do. Lists of people we have to write to. Find mama's relatives addresses in Italy - stuff like that.

BETTY
Well I can help.

MICHAEL
I said NO!

That came out a bit aggressively. Betty is hurt.

MICHAEL (Cont'd)
Why don't you go to your mothers. Or back to the hotel. Sit in some air conditioning. Take a bath.

BETTY
(near tears)
I do not need instructions from you to bathe!
(gets her bag)
I knew you'd do this! I knew I'd come all the way here and be shut out as usual! I came to be here for you! I didn't have to come!
(genuinely hurt)
Lord knows I was never much welcome in this house before. Apparantly dead or alive, nothing's changed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (7)

CAROLYN

Aw Betty.

Carolyn feels badly for her. An impatient Michael refuses sympathy. Embarrassed, Betty starts to exit then stops at the mantle.

BETTY

Carolyn - you want these candlesticks?

CAROLYN

No. You can have them.

Betty grabs them both and exits. Carolyn looks at him disapprovingly. Michael takes the letter from her hands.

MICHAEL

Now what's this about?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Sitting at the kitchen table, Carolyn is in the middle of reading the letter to Michael.

CAROLYN

"... going over and over in my mind every detail, every moment of our time together and I ask myself, "What happened to me in Madison County"? I struggle to put it together in a way that allows me to continue knowing we're on separate roads. But then I look through the lens of my camera, and you're there. I start to write an article and I find myself writing it to you. It's clear to me now we have been moving towards each other, towards those four days, all our lives-

MICHAEL

(rises)

Goddamn sonofbitch! I don't want to hear anymore! Sonofabitch! Burn the damn thing! I don't want to hear it! Throw it away!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Carolyn continues reading silently. Michael's curiosity gets the best of him:

MICHAEL (Cont'd)
What's he saying now?

CAROLYN
Well he just goes on about how if
mama ever needed him, she could find
him through the National Geographic
magazine. He was a photographer. He
promises not to write again. Then all
it says is ...
(beat)
I love you ... Robert.

MICHAEL
Robert! Jesus! I'll kill him.

CAROLYN
That would be some trick. He's
already dead. That's what this other
letter is.
(takes letter and
skims)
From his attorney. He left most of
his things to mama and requested ...
(she stops)

MICHAEL
What?

CAROLYN
That he be cremated and his ashes
thrown on Roseman Bridge.

MICHAEL
DAMN HIM! I knew mama wouldn't have
thought of that herself. It was some
damn perverted ... photographic mind
influencing her! When did the bastard
die?

CAROLYN
82.

MICHAEL
Wait a minute! That was three years
after daddy. Do you think ...?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

CAROLYN

I don't know. I'm completely in the dark here. That's what I get for moving away.

MICHAEL

This happened way before we both got married. I ... I can't believe it.

(then, innocently)

You think she had sex with him?

Carolyn cannot believe he is this dense.

CAROLYN

(sarcastic)

My Lord. It must feel real nice living inside your head with Peter Pan and the Easter Bunny.

MICHAEL

Don't talk to me like that. She was my mother for Christsakes. And now I find out she was ... She was a - !

CAROLYN

Don't say that!

MICHAEL

Well what am I supposed to think?

CAROLYN

I can't believe she never told me? We spoke at least once a week. How could she do that?

MICHAEL

How did she meet him? Did Dad know? Anything else in that envelope?

CAROLYN

No, I don't think so. I -

She dumps it over and a SMALL KEY FALLS OUT. Pause, as Carolyn and Michael look to each other - they grab the key and run out of the kitchen, almost comically falling over each other in their obsession to put this puzzle together.

A SERIES OF JUMP CUTS -

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

From one lock to another as they try to find the keyhole that fits the key - they try closets, attic doors, jewelery boxes, night tables, vanity drawers ... Finally -

INT. BEDROOM - DAY.

At the foot of their parents bed sits an WALNUT HOPE CHEST, covered with a tapestry. Michael and Carolyn look to each other first, before one removes the tapestry and the other tries the key. IT FITS. They open the chest to find:

Camera equipment, a chain with a medallion that reads "FRANCESCA", three leather bound notebooks - and a sealed envelope with "Carolyn or Michael" written on it.

CAROLYN/MICHAEL

You read it!

Carolyn relents. She takes out the letter and reads:

CAROLYN

"January, 1987. Dear Carolyn. I hope you're reading this with Michael. I'm sure he wouldn't be able to read it by himself and he'll need some help understanding all this, especially the parts about me having sex ... "

Insulted, Michael pulls the letter out of her hand and defiantly attempts to read it aloud himself to disprove his mother's claim. But after looking at a few lines, he surrenders and hands the letter back to his sister.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

"First, and most of all, I love you both very much and although I feel fine, I thought it was time to put my affairs, excuse that word, in order."

MICHAEL

I can't believe she's making jokes.

CAROLYN

Sshhh. "After going through the safety deposit box, I'm sure you'll find you're way to this letter. It's hard to write this to my own children. I could let this die with the rest of me I suppose.

(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

CAROLYN (cont'd)

But as one gets older, ones fears subside. What becomes more and more important is to be known - known for all that you were during this brief stay. How sad it seems to me to leave this earth without those you love the most ever really knowing who you were. It's easy for a mother to love her children no matter what - it's something that just happens. I don't know if it's as simple for children. You're all so busy being angry at us for raising you wrong. But I thought it was important to give you that chance. To give you the opportunity to love me for all that I was ..."

Carolyn and Michael look to each other like two school children about to take a difficult exam. They continue.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

"His name was Robert Kincaid. He was a photographer and he was here in 1965 shooting an article for National Geographic on the covered bridges of Madsion County. Remember when we got that issue and looked at those bridges we'd seen for years but never noticed? How we felt like celebrities? Remember when we started getting the subscription?

They don't remember.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

I don't want you to be angry with him. I hope after you know the whole story, you might even think well of him. Even grateful.

MICHAEL

Grateful!?

CAROLYN

(reads)

"... It's all there in the three notebooks. Read them in order.

(more)

CONTINUEL

CONTINUED: (2)

CAROLYN (cont'd)

If you don't want to, I suppose that's OK too. But in that case I want you to know something - I never stopped loving your father. He was a very good man. It's just that my love for Robert was different. He brought out something in me no one had ever brought out before, or since. He made me feel like a woman in a way few women, maybe none, ever experience ...

MICHAEL

That's it!

Grabbing the letter, he starts putting everything back in the trunk.

CAROLYN

What are you doing?

MICHAEL

This is crazy. She waits til she's dead to tell us all this. Well, I got news for you. She was my mother. That's enough for me. I don't have to know who she was.

CAROLYN

Well I'd like to read them.

MICHAEL

No. We're going to lock this up and-

CAROLYN

STOP IT!

(Michael freezes)

I want to read them! If you don't want to then just leave. But don't you push me around like I'm some mule you paid for - I already GOT A HUSBAND!

Michael is stymied.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Carolyn opens the first notebook which is dated AUGUST 1965. Michael sits beside her with a cup of coffee.

CONTINUEL

CONTINUED:

CAROLYN

(reads)

"I suppose his coming into my life was, in many ways, prepared for weeks, maybe even months before. There was a restlessness I feeling. Out of the blue and for no apparant reason. There's nothing more frightening to a woman whose been settled down for almost twenty years than to suddenly feel unsettled. I don't know when it started ... I do remember one night in particular, a little over a week before Robert arrived ..."

CAROLYN'S VOICE BECOMES FRANCESCA'S VOICE AS WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

1965.

INT. JOHNSON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Richard is fast asleep while Francesca sits up in bed reading.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

"It was late at night after a long day. Your father was tired - fighting all afternoon with that new equipment Roger Harrison convinced him to buy. But I wasn't tired. Lately, I could hardly sleep more than two hours a night. I was reading some John O'Hara novel, skimming the words, turning the pages without absorbing what I was reading. My mind was far away. And no matter how I tried, I couldn't call it back."

Francesca closes the book and turns off the light. She nestles into the bed and tries to sleep. After a beat, she opens her eyes and turns on the light. As she gets out of bed she awakens Richard.

RICHARD

What time is it?

FRANCESCA

Late. Go back to sleep.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

RICHARD
Where you going?

FRANCESCA
I'm not tired. I thought I might
finish Carolyn's skirt.

RICHARD
Now?!
(checks clock)
It's after eleven.

FRANCESCA
I can't sleep.

RICHARD
Again? Maybe you should see a doctor.

FRANCESCA
I'm not sick Richard. I'm just not
tired, now go back to sleep before
you're up for the whole night too!

Francesca exits. Richard nestles under the covers, mumbling:

RICHARD
If you're not sick, how can it be
contagious?

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT.

Francesca sits at her sewing machine, working on Carolyn's skirt. When the thread runs out, she checks her sewing box for another spool of that color. Not finding it, she rises and walks to an opened closet. She pulls on a light cord and checks her supplies.

There are shelves of boxes, crates, old clothes and shoes all crammed together. She pulls out one shoe box and an entire stack of items tumble off the shelf onto her head.

FRANCESCA
Damn it! ... SHIT!

She looks at the mess and decides it's time to re-organize.

LATER:

The clock reads 2:30 AM. The closet has been emptied.
Francesca rummages through box after box.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Two huge piles have been created - one for items to be thrown away, another for items to be kept. Francesca is wiping the bare shelves down with a rag and some cleanser. Looking up to the bottom of the next shelf, she notices A SHOULDER STRAP hanging, wedged between the wall and the shelf. Pulling over a stool, she steps up to be eye level with the shelf.

It is an OLD HANDBAG - of a style not seen since the forties when she was a young girl. She pulls it down to examine. It is very dusty and worn, but the snaps still work. She places it against her side to see if it would still be fashionable. She opens it and finds an old lipstick - reading the bottom where the name of the shade is located.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Ha, they don't even make this color anymore.

She exits the closet and moves to an old mirror, trying the lipstick on. As she decides whether or not she likes it, a thought occurs to her ... she remembers something.

She crosses back to the handbag and feels the inside for a compartment hidden by a flap of material and a snap. She unsnaps it and an old BLACK & WHITE PHOTO slips out. She looks at it's image - two young people against an Italian background. Francesca is twenty years younger with her arms around a handsome, black haired charmer named -

FRANCESCA (Cont'd; V.O.)

"Niccolo. I couldn't remember the last time I had seen that face. And then the memories wouldn't stop. Like an avalanche ..."

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK -

EXT. NAPLES COUNTRYSIDE - DAY. 20 YRS. EARLIER.

A hot, breezy summer day. A young vibrant Francesca is storming through an open field, angry, while Niccolo calls after her in pursuit.

THE FOLLOWING SCENE IS PLAYED IN ITALIAN WITH SUBTITLES.

NICCOLO

Francesca! Francesca! Where the hell are you going?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA
Leave me alone!

NICCOLO
You play these games and I'm supposed
to follow - run after you like a
schoolboy. Well, I'm not! I'm fed up!

Niccolo stops. Several yards ahead of him, Francesca stops and turns. Suddenly, she storms back towards him until they are face to face.

FRANCESCA
So that's it! You just give up!

NICCOLO
What "give up"? You agreed with them!
Mommy and Daddy said stay away from
me and you said all right. What am I
supposed to do?

FRANCESCA
Fight for me!

Niccolo grabs her violently -

NICCOLO
ENOUGH! You don't know what you want!
Stop looking for me to tell you! STOP
IT!

Francesca knows he's right. He releases her.

NICCOLO (Cont'd)
We can go back now and end it or we
can go back and you tell them off.
This is your choice! Not mine. But I
won't do this anymore. This is for
children!

Frustrated and sad, Francesca sits upon the ground. Niccolo knows she cannot face her parents yet he looks sympathetic.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAWN. 1965.

Francesca sits on the back porch in her bathrobe, looking out over the pasture as if she were watching the previous scene happen right before her eyes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

In the pasture stands NICCOLO as he was twenty years ago. Memories have overlapped. A field in Naples is now a pasture in Iowa and Niccolo is as real to her as the grass. He is staring at her seated on the porch of her Iowa home, a woman twenty years older than when he knew her. He smiles.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

"I had forgotten this. I had somehow remembered it being more his fault, his decision. Then I remembered we made love in that field before we left for home. And I remembered it was my idea. I remembered tearing his shirt and biting his body, hoping he would kidnap me. I had forgotten that too. And I wondered, as I sat there ... how many other things I'd forgotten."

RICHARD (O.S.)

Frannie.

Startled, Francesca turns as if she were caught in the act. Richard is fully dressed, prepared to start the day. Francesca turns back to the pasture - NICCOLO IS GONE.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - EVENING.

It is a week later. Francesca is making dinner. A COUNTRY STATION is tuned in on the radio.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

"The following week was the Illinois State Fair. The two of you were going with dad to exhibit Carolyn's prize steer. It was the Sunday night you left. I know it sounds awful but I couldn't wait for you all to leave. You were going to be gone until Friday. Four days ...

(beat)

Just four days ..."

Francesca's expression looks as if she needs a break from her family for more like four years.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Michael! Carolyn! Richard! Dinner!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

She sets down a bowl of potatoes, a plate of sausages, coffee and corn as one by one her family enters and sits down.

Michael enters through a screen door from the back, letting the DOOR SLAM shut.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
Michael, what did I tell you about
that door?

Richard enters after Michael, letting the DOOR SLAM the same way. Francesca is about to say something, but gives up.

Everyone begins eating - in complete silence.

When Michael can't open the ketchup bottle, Francesca grabs it, palms the top skillfully and twists it off. She hands it back to Michael who makes no comment.

When Richard scans the table for something that obviously isn't there, Francesca is up out of her seat before he can ask, at the fridge, grabbing the sour cream, closing the fridge and back at the table with incredible swiftness.

When Michael moves his big arm to reach for the salt, he knocks over his cup and saucer, which Francesca catches with both hands before they hit the floor. Her reflexes are like a trained athlete.

Finally, Francesca is able to sit and sip her coffee. She watches her teenage daughter fill her plate with a blank expression that lets nothing slip through - no indication of all the tempests of emotions that go through a teenage girl.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
You excited about going, Carolyn?

Without looking up, Carolyn fakes a smile. Looking at her, Francesca remembers Carolyn as a three year old girl :

FLASHBACK.

In the same kitchen, THREE YEAR OLD CAROLYN runs around her mother's feet completely naked, squealing with delight as Francesca flicks her with water from the tap.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

Francesca watches as Carolyn eats in silence, distant, locked in her own secret teenage thoughts and dreams.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

Francesca then looks to her son, shoveling food into his mouth at an alarming rate. She attempts a conversation.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
How was your date last night?

MICHAEL
(w/o looking at her)
OK.

FRANCESCA
What's her name?

MICHAEL
Betty.

FRANCESCA
What's she like?

MICHAEL
OK.

Silence. Frustrated, Francesca has a FANTASY -

FANTASY:

Francesca picks up a blunt butter knife, rises out of her seat, grabs her son and shoves the knife at his throat:

FRANCESCA
Do you like her?

Michael finally reacts with more than one word - frightened for his life.

MICHAEL
Uh ... Yeah. Yeah. She's real nice.

FRANCESCA
Well what's nice about her? Tell us!

MICHAEL
Well she's ... she's real pretty and
... and she's got a cute shape ...
she's a good sport, ya know, for
laughs and
(desperate)
... she loves fried chicken wings and
beer.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA
(madly)
Isn't that nice? You should bring her
home to meet us!

FANTASY ENDS.

Francesca looks at Michael in disgust.

RICHARD
We better get moving.
(to Francesca)
You sure you don't want to come?

Francesca looks at Richard with complete conviction.

FRANCESCA
I'm positive.

RICHARD
I'm going to miss you.

FRANCESCA
It's only four days.

He gives her a sweet peck on the lips. Francesca smiles,
anxious for them all to leave.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT.

Alone, dressed in her bathrobe, Francesca checks the front door. She crosses to the living. Noticing two throw pillows on the floor, she arranges them neatly on the couch. She sits herself in an easy chair then flicks on a reading lamp and opens her book. After five seconds, she closes the book. She crosses to the TV and turns it on, then turns it off before the picture tuned in.

She turns and leans on the TV, flicking the ON/OFF switch on and off as her mind wanders. She gets an idea. She crosses to the hi-fi and looks through several albums she got from her Columbia Record Club. But nothing inspires her and she quickly loses the desire for music. She's antsy. She has this time alone and she doesn't know how to spend it.

She walks through the dining room, passing a china closet filled with fancy dishes and glasses. She stops. Shoved in the corner behind is an old, un-opened bottle of BRANDY. She removes it, setting atop the dining table to open it.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

But when she catches a reflection of herself in the window opposite her, she stops. She sees a lonely, frustrated woman in a tattered bathrobe anxious to open a bottle of liquor. Deflated, she returns the brandy to the cupboard and exits.

EXT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT.

Francesca sits on the porch with a book in her lap, gazing out over the pasture. It's a hot night. She opens the top of her robe a bit. Feeling the air against her skin, she decides to open it a bit more. She gets an idea.

Standing, she looks to see if anyone is around - though rationally she knows there isn't a soul for miles. She turns off the porch light. With a brave and daring impulse, she sheds her bathrobe and stands naked under the night sky. The air feels good against her body. She opens her arms up against the night sky and moon like an Indian priestess.

Suddenly, she starts hitting her body as mosquitoes begin attacking her bare torso. Thwarted, she quickly covers herself with a robe and runs into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

Francesca trudges into the kitchen. As if on automatic, she takes the coffee pot and fills it with water. She gets the coffee and begins spooning it out. She stops. She gets the idea of taking herself out for breakfast and dumps the coffee pot out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET; WINTERSET - MORNING.

A one street town. On either side are rows of storefronts, an old coffee shop/diner, a bank, a medical center, a newspaper building, a courthouse and a movie theatre showing CAT BALLOU. The steeple of the local church is the highest structure, towering over the town from the end of Main Street.

INT. COFFEE SHOP/DINER - MORNING.

Dressed in jeans and a light summer blouse, Francesca sits alone - treating herself to breakfast and the paper. Some of the gossip news includes rumors of Frank Sinatra, 49, marrying Mia Farrow, 19; Cary Grant 61, marrying Dyan Cannon, 27. Francesca shakes her head in disbelief at such news.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

She tries to continue reading but is distracted by the loud conversation in the booth beside her:

TWO MIDDLE AGED WOMEN and ONE MIDDLE AGED HUSBAND sit after breakfast dicussing the local gossip.

ELEANOR

Oh this heat! Times likes this I wish we took that offer from your brother and moved on up to Michigan.

HENRY

They got heat in Michigan.

ELEANOR

Not this kind of heat.

HENRY

Heat is heat.

ELEANOR

Heat is not heat! There's different kinds! And this heat is much hotter than what they got in Michigan. You go and call your brother and see if he don't say the same thing.

HENRY

I'll get right on it.

MRS. DELANEY, an attractive well-off woman in her forties, enters the shop and heads for the counter.

GLADYS

(whispers)

Mrs. Delaney.

(Eleanor looks)

Did you hear the latest?

ELEANOR

No, what?

GLADYS

Apparantly, she caught them.

(Eleanor gasps)

Ran right into them in Des Moines in the middle of her shopping.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ELEANOR

Oh, what a horror. Poor woman. That Redfield girl's got no business showing her face in daylight.

GLADYS

I don't know how that tramp stands living here. No one can bear even speaking to her. She has no friends.

HENRY

Well nobody put a gun to his head.

ELEANOR

Oh shut-up! It's the woman whose in control of these situations. Men don't know which end is up til a woman points.

Mrs. Delaney acts as if nothing is wrong. Yet, she knows everyone knows and everyone knows she knows they know, yet no one says a word. She sits at the counter.

MRS. DELANEY

Just coffee please.

Francesca hears the gossip continues in hushed tones:

GLADYS

See. Money don't buy happiness. I must say, she's taking it well.

ELEANOR

I'd kill him. Him and that Redfield woman. Together. First one then the other. And then I'd laugh.

GLADYS

I'd laugh first then I'd kill them. Make sure they heard me laughing.

Eleanor nods. Not being able to stand it, Francesca rises. She must pass them on the way to the counter, in order to pay. Eleanor immediately stops her.

ELEANOR

Francesca! So, everybody got off OK last night?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA
Yes thanks.

GLADYS
What you going to do all alone for
four days - a woman of leisure?

FRANCESCA
Oh, you know there's always something
to be done. Have a good day. Henry.

Henry nods back. As she exits OS, they whisper.

ELEANOR
She's changed.

GLADYS
Oh yes.

ELEANOR
She used to be so friendly.

HENRY
Maybe she's going through "the
changes".

Eleanor hits him in the chest!

ELEANOR
What do you know about "the changes"?

HENRY
Well I didn't know they was a secret
club.

ELEANOR
Don't talk about what you don't know.
Besides, she's too young for "the
changes".

GLADYS
My niece had "the changes" when she
was thirty-one.

ELEANOR
No. What a tragedy. What happened?

GLADYS
(wisely)
She changed.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

At the counter, Francesca pays up. She looks to Mrs. Delaney and tries to smile, but Mrs. Delaney works hard at not making eye contact with anyone. Suddenly, she rises telling the waitress -

MRS. DELANEY
Excuse me for a moment, I left
something in the car.

She exits quickly. Francesca pays up as the waitress adds:

WAITRESS
Poor woman.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP/DINER - MORNING.

Francesca exits and heads for her truck. As she crosses from one corner to another, she notices down the side street -

MRS. DELANEY sitting alone in her own car, SOBBING. Unable to bear the humiliation, she stole herself away to cry.

Francesca wants to help but feels useless. She quickly heads for her truck.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

Francesca sits on the front porch with some iced tea, trying to cool herself off. It is a scorcher. She is barefoot, her blouse hanging out of her jeans, her hair fastened up by a tortoise shell comb.

Camera begins a slow move into Close-Up, as she sips her tea and lets her mind wander. WE INTERCUT HER FANTASIES WITH HER ON THE PORCH:

FANTASY: Back in town, Francesca slides into Mrs. Delaney's car. She embraces the woman who cries into her arms.

- Francesca on the porch.

FANTASY: Mrs. Delaney's car is surrounded by townspeople staring into it. Francesca hugs Mrs. Delaney closer to her in defiance.

- Francesca on the porch.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FANTASY: Mrs. Delaney's car drives up to a train station. She and Francesca exit with suitcases. They are surrounded by news reporters as they make their way to the train.

REPORTER

Mrs. Johnson! Mrs. Johnson! Is it true Cary Grant has proposed to you?

FRANCESCA

Yes. And I've accepted.

REPORTER

What about his engagement to Dyan Cannon?

FRANCESCA

I said to him Cary you're being ridiculous. You're more than half her age. He said no one had ever been that honest with him and he fell in love with me.

REPORTER

What about your husband?

FRANCESCA

I'm very sad but Richard said that since it's Cary Grant, he completely understands. I'm also taking Mrs. Delaney away from this town. She'll be living with Cary and I in Beverly Hills.

She boards the train with Mrs. Delaney.

END OF FANTASIES.

Tired of her fantasies, Francesca looks up to the sun to clear her mind. It is blinding. When she looks back out onto the road, her vision is momentarily blurred. Until, slowly, out of the blur, she sees:

A TRUCK driving toward her house, kicking up dust, like some phantom appearing through the etheric plane. Francesca isn't even sure it's real. She sips her cool drink & blinks to regain her vision. The truck slows down and turns into her driveway. Francesca watches with suspicious curiosity as:

The truck stops and ROBERT KINCAID steps out. Flashing his blue eyes in her direction, he smiles and says:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

Sorry to bother you but I've got a feeling I'm lost.

Francesca remains guarded.

FRANCESCA

Are you supposed to be in Iowa?

ROBERT

(laughs)

Yeah.

FRANCESCA

Well you're not that lost.

He laughs. She puts down her tea and crosses to him.

ROBERT

I'm looking for a covered bridge out this way ... uh ... wait a minute -

He looks through a small notepad for the name. Francesca finds herself scanning his body.

FRANCESCA

Roseman Bridge?

ROBERT

That's it.

FRANCESCA

Well you're pretty close. It's only about two miles from here.

ROBERT

Oh, terrific. Which way?

Pause as Robert awaits directions and Francesca scans a sudden impulse.

FRANCESCA

Well, I can take you if you want.

Robert is pleased, but a bit surprised as is Francesca who anxiously recants:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
Or I can tell you. I can take you or
tell you. It's up to you. I don't
care. Either way.

Robert smiles finding her sudden nervousness charming.

ROBERT
Well -

Suddenly, from the opposite direction of the road, A CHEVY
barrels by. The driver, FLOYD, toots his horn.

FLOYD
Howdy Francesca.

FRANCESCA
Hey Floyd.

He drives off. Francesca knows they've been seen. Slightly
annoyed by Iowain neighborliness, she turns to Robert and
with some defiance says:

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
It'd be better if I show you I think.

ROBERT
If I'm not taking you away from
anything.

FRANCESCA
No. I was just going to have some
iced tea then split the atom, but
that can wait.
(he smiles)
I just have to get my shoes.

Robert watches her as she turns and heads back to the house.
He watches her lift her blouse and tuck it into her jeans,
revealing her shapely hips and buttocks. He turns back to the
truck and notices the mailbox - MR & MRS RICHARD JOHNSON. He
nods as if he knew all along and begins to make room on the
front seat for Francesca.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE -

Francesca is slipping on her boots when she suddenly stops.
"What am I doing?", she asks herself silently.

EXT. JOHNSON DRIVEWAY -

Francesca approaches the truck. On the door, she reads:
KINCAID PHOTOGRAPHY, BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON.

Robert is clearing away paper cups, banana peels, paper bags, photography equipment. In the back, Francesca notices a cooler and a guitar case.

ROBERT
I wasn't expecting company. Let me
get this out of the way.

He hauls a case of film from the front to the back. Francesca notices his tanned, muscular arm move in one graceful sweep.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
OK. All set.

Francesca smiles. They both get into the truck.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Now, where are we going?

FRANCESCA
Out, then right.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADISON COUNTY ROAD - DAY.

As the truck drives, we see no one else in sight.

INT. KINCAID'S TRUCK -

They drive in silence. Francesca is enjoying the breeze against her face.

ROBERT
Pretty country.

FRANCESCA
Hmm-mmm.

She looks out at the vast expanse. It depresses her.

ROBERT
There's a wonderful smell about
Iowa - very particular to this part
of the country. Do you know what I
mean?

FRANCESCA
No.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

I can't describe it. I think it's
from the loam in the soil. This very
rich, earthy kind of ... alive ...
No. No, that's not right. Can you
smell it?

FRANCESCA

(shakes her head)

Maybe it's because I live here.

ROBERT

That must be it. It's a great smell.

Francesca wants to know more about him.

FRANCESCA

Are you from Washington originally?

ROBERT

Uh-huh. Lived there til I was twenty
or so and then moved to Chicago when
I got married.

FRANCESCA

Oh. When did you move back?

ROBERT

After the divorce.

FRANCESCA

Oh.

ROBERT

How long you been married?

FRANCESCA

Uh ... ha ...

(can't remember)

Umm ... long time.

ROBERT

You don't look like a native, if you
don't mind my saying so.

FRANCESCA

No, I don't mind. I'm not from here.
I was born in Italy.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

Well, from Italy to Iowa - that's a story!

(Francesca smiles)

Whereabouts in Italy?

FRANCESCA

Small town on the Eastern side no one's ever heard of called Bari.

ROBERT

Oh yeah Bari. I've been there.

FRANCESCA

(surprised)

No, really?

ROBERT

Oh yeah. Actually, I had an assignment in Greece and I had to go through Bari to get the boat at Brindisi. But it looked so pretty I got off and stayed for a few days. Breathtaking country.

Francesca is overcome by the idea of such freedom.

FRAN

You just . . . got off the train because it looked pretty?

ROBERT

Yeah. Excuse me a sec.

He reaches over with one arm, brushing slightly against her thigh. He opens the glove compartment and pulls out a pack of Camels and a Zippo lighter.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Like one?

Francesca, who doesn't usually smoke, accepts.

FRANCESCA

Sure.

She takes a cigarette out of the pack. Robert drops the pack and, with the same hand, flicks open the Zippo and ignites it. Francesca leans over. The road is bumpy and a breeze blows through both windows.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

She cups her hands around his to shelter the flame. She feels his skin for a brief moment.

She sits back and enjoys the ride and her cigarette as Robert lights up. Silence. They drive.

ROBERT
So, how long you've been living here?

FRANCESCA
Long.
(changes subject)
You just got off the train and stayed
without knowing anyone there?

ROBERT
(laughs)
Yeah.

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAY.

The truck stops. They exit. Robert takes out some equipment.

ROBERT
This won't take long. I'm shooting
tomorrow morning. I just need to do
some prep work.

FRANCESCA
I don't mind waiting.

He smiles and takes his equipment to the bridge. Francesca slowly follows. She watches his body move. Catching herself, she stops.

Robert sets up a tripod in the small ravine beneath the bridge, pointing a view finder up as he plans his shots. Francesca walks through the bridge, noticing lovers names scrawled on the inside: CATHY & BUDDY 4 EVER ... ROSIE AND HANK TIL THE END OF TIME. Through a crack in one of the wooden planks, Francesca watches like a voyeur as Robert works. She sees him take out a handkerchief and wipe the sweat off his neck, then inside his shirt and around his chest. Without knowing where Francesca is, Robert speaks aloud:

ROBERT
Is it always this hot?

Francesca moves quickly away from the plank, like a Peeping Tom who's been caught.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA
This time of year.

ROBERT
Would you do me a favor and go to the truck? Inside that leather bag with the pockets is a package of lens cleaners. Would you grab me one?

Francesca obliges, grateful for something to occupy her.

Inside the truck, she scans for the leather bag. She sees it next to a duffel bag. The bag's zipper is opened. She glimpses inside at Robert's personal things - clothes, socks, underwear, shaving kit. Life magazines from July and August, one depicting the death of Aldai Stevenson; the other a cover photo of the Watts riots. She grabs the leather bag and opens it.

At the bridge, Francesca looks for Robert in the ravine but he is gone. She looks through the bridge to the other end and sees only the tripod. No Robert. She walks through the bridge and out the other end. She finds Robert bent over, picking flowers.

FRANCESCA
Oh there you are.

ROBERT
OH! You caught me.

He rises with a bouquet of wildflowers for her.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Thanks for your help.

Francesca smiles, not knowing how to take this.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Men still give women flowers don't they? I mean, as a sign of appreciation? I'm not that out of date am I?

FRANCESCA
No, not at all -
(suddenly)
except those are poisonous.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

WHAT!

He flings the flowers down. He wipes his hands furiously.

FRANCESCA

I'm sorry. I was kidding.

Robert looks at her with a shocked smirk, secretly liking her strange behavior.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

I'm sorry. I don't know what - I'm sorry. Really. They're lovely.

She begins picking up the flowers.

ROBERT

(smiling)

Are you by nature a sadistic person?

FRANCESCA

No, I'm not.

(trying not to laugh)

I don't know why I said that. I've been in a very ... strange mood all day. I've never done anything like that before. It's .. I'm just ...

(looking for excuse)

Well, you know, the whole world is just ... going nuts.

Robert looks at her like she's nuts. Francesca tries to dig herself out of her hole. Robert enjoys offering no help.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

What with those riots in Los Angeles and people burning draft cards and ... Adlai Stevenson dying last month.

She rises with the flowers. Robert gives her a friendly pat on the arm.

ROBERT

Shouldn't let things get to you so much.

He continues with his work. Francesca expresses relief and embarrassment behind his back.

INT. TRUCK - LATER.

Driving back, Francesca sits with her feet up on the dashboard. Robert drives while he fiddles with the radio. All he can find are country stations.

FRANCESCA
Looking for something in particular?
There's not much of a selection.

ROBERT
I found this Chicago station before.
Wait a minute ...
(he tunes it in)
Here it is.

We hear a BLUES SINGER with a sax arrangement.

FRANCESCA
Oh that's nice.

ROBERT
Want another cigarette?

FRANCESCA
Sure.

Francesca's having a great time.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

Robert's truck drives down the road and into the driveway.

ROBERT
Well, thank you for all your help
Mrs. Johnson.

FRANCESCA
Francesca.

ROBERT
Francesca. Robert.

Francesca nods, as if to say hello and goodbye in the same moment. She gets out of the car, closes the door, then asks:

FRANCESCA
Would you like some iced tea?

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Robert fiddles with the kitchen radio, tuning in to the Chicago station. Francesca is making iced tea. Robert sits back down at the kitchen table.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA
Lemon?

ROBERT
Sure.

With her back to him, Robert never takes his eyes off her. She turns and crosses to him, with the tea.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Thanks.

Francesca smiles and sips her own. She watches him gulp down the tea so fast, some of it dribbles down the side of his face and neck. Francesca finds it sexy. He empties it.

FRANCESCA
Would you like another one?

Robert nods and he pulls out his cigarettes.

ROBERT
Mind if I smoke?

FRANCESCA
(at the sink)
Not at all.

Robert lights up as he watches her fix another iced tea. He watches her slip off one boot, then the other - never missing a beat of her preparation. He can't help eyeing her body. When she returns, she also has the flowers he picked for her arranged in a Casper the Friendly Ghost jelly glass. She places them on the table and sits.

ROBERT
Sure you want to keep those in the house?

FRANCESCA
I'm so sorry about that. It was rude. I think I just got nervous for some reason.

ROBERT
I thought it was funny.

She likes that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCESCA

Where are you staying while you're here?

ROBERT

A little place with cabins. The something-Motor Inn. I haven't checked in yet.

FRANCESCA

And how long are you here for?

ROBERT

As long as it takes. I might stay a week. No more I don't think. Where's your family?

FRANCESCA

My husband took the kids to the Illinois State Fair. My daughter's entering a prize steer.

ROBERT

Oh. How old?

FRANCESCA

About a year and a half.

ROBERT

No, your kids.

FRANCESCA

Oh. Michael's 17 and Carolyn's 16.

ROBERT

Must be nice having kids.

Francesca looks at him and FANTASIZES SAYING:

FANTASY:

FRANCESCA

Not any more. It's awful. They're awful. I can't stand them.

END OF FANTASY:

But in reality, Francesca chooses instead to say:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
They're not kids anymore. Things
change.

ROBERT
Everything does. One of the laws of
nature. People are always so afraid
of change. But if you look at it like
it's something you can count on
happening, it's actually a comfort.
Not many things you can count on for
sure.

FRANCESCA
I guess. Except I'm one of the people
it frightens.

ROBERT
I doubt that.

FRANCESCA
Why?

ROBERT
Italy to Iowa? I'd call that a change.

FRANCESCA
(explaining)
Richard was in the army. I met him
while I was living in Naples. I
didn't know where Iowa was. I only
cared that it was America. And of
course, being with Richard.

ROBERT
What's he like?

As Francesca thinks of an answer, she looks over to the
entranceway between the kitchen and the front hall and sees:

FANTASY:

Richard standing there in his underwear, reaching over his
shoulder.

RICHARD
Franny, could you clean out my boil
again?

END OF FANTASY:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

Francesca answers Robert, half of her still in fantasy-

FRANCESCA
He's very ... clean.

ROBERT
Clean?

FRANCESCA
(catching herself)
No. I mean yes he's clean but he's
also other things. He's a very hard
worker. Very honest. Very caring.
Gentle. Good father.

ROBERT
And clean.

FRANCESCA
Yes. Very clean.

They drink. Francesca thinks she sounds like an idiot.

ROBERT
So you must like Iowa I guess.

Francesca looks at him. She wants to tell the truth but
holds back.

FRANCESCA
It's ... uh ... uh ...

She stops. Robert smiles.

ROBERT
Go ahead. I won't tell anyone.

Surprised, Francesca looks at him oddly - as if he already
knows and is giving her permission.

FRANCESCA
It's ...
(tries again)
I ...
(finally)
I hate it!

She covers her mouth, like a reflex - worried someone heard.
Robert just smiles and nods.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (5)

Francesca is so taken by his understanding and acceptance, she lets the flood gates open, speaking faster than her mind can keep up -

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

(without a pause)

I hate it! I hate it! I HATE IT! I hate the corn and the dust and the town and the cows and that SMELL that you love! I hate the people. Everybody knows everybody's business I mean it's nice now and then, they're always there to help out but that's just it, it's like they're waiting for something awful to happen to help out and when nothing awful is happening then they just sit around and TALK about what IS happening which is none of their business. I want to kill them sometimes for how cruel they can be -

Camera begins slowly moving out to a wider angle ...

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

- everybody's talking about poor Mrs. Delaney whose husband is having an affair with that Redfield woman and "isn't it a shame", and "isn't it awful", and the truth is THEY'RE LOVIN IT! Poor woman can't even be cheated on without the grocery man knowing about it - no one respects anyone's privacy. You're not even safe in your own home! They think they can just walk right into your house because they BAKED you something. It's like they have a secret password and YOU CAN'T KEEP THEM OUT! I live in fear of that door opening and having a peach cobbler shoved at me ...

(CONTINUES MOS IF
NEEDED)

Throughout this rapid fire monologue, Camera has moved to a WIDE ANGLE as Robert just sits and listens, letting her get it all off her chest. She continues as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM -

Francesca is lying on the couch as Robert places a cold cloth on her head. Her "confession" took a lot out of her.

ROBERT
Feeling better?

FRANCESCA
Much.

ROBERT
Is the dizziness gone?

FRANCESCA
I think so.

She sits up. She feels exposed. But also, relieved.

ROBERT
I better go. You sure you're all right?

(she nods)
It's been a pleasure. Sincerely.

FRANCESCA
I feel so embarassed.

ROBERT
Why? You uncorked a bottle. From what I can tell, I got here just in time. Any later and you'd have made the front page, running down Main Street naked, smoking Camels out of your butt.

FRANCESCA
(laughs)
But I ... We don't even know each other.

ROBERT
(sincerely)
You have no reason to feel ashamed. You haven't said anything you don't have a right to. And if anybody tells you different - you just send them to me.

She smiles. He turns to exit.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Better get my stuff.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Francesca surprises herself. She doesn't want him to go.

FRANCESCA

Would you like to stay for dinner?

(he turns)

There aren't many choices in town and
... anyway, you'd have to eat alone.
So would I.

ROBERT

That's very nice of you. I don't get
many dinner invitations on the job.
It would be a welcome change. Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER.

Francesca rushes in and starts to disrobe, getting ready to shower and change for dinner. She glances out the window and sees:

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE -

Robert is at the water pump. His shirt is off and he is washing himself. (WE INTERCUT THE TWO).

Francesca finds herself staring, a bit open mouthed. He has a muscular, firm body. She watches how the water cascades over his body. How he seems so unashamed, so "in his skin", moving with such strength and grace.

Robert pauses and looks out over the open pasture. The cold water feels good. Since the pump is in the back of the house, hidden from the road, no one can see him. He decides to take off his pants and cool himself further.

Francesca begins watching this in shock until she has to literally pull herself away from the window with such a force that she rams herself into a chest of drawers, knocking over an array of perfume bottles and a mirror. She deftly catches a falling bottle and freezes. Taking a breath, she pulls herself together.

FRANCESCA

This is ridiculous. Stupid!

She replaces the bottle and heads for the bathroom quite composed, then, without warning, makes an immediate 180 degree turn and heads back to the window to sneak a peek.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Seeing him, she gasps.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
Oh my God.

Watching him, she is possessed by some very frightening feelings and runs from the window, into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - EARLY EVENING.

Francesca is gathering some vegetables for dinner, from her garden. Robert is at his truck, in his pants, changing into a fresh shirt.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Francesca is cutting up vegetables. Robert enters with some of his gear.

ROBERT
I'm just going to put some of this
film in your fridge. Heat isn't too
forgiving out there.

He does. On the radio, TONY BENNETT sings "WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS". Robert approaches Francesca.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Can I help?

FRANCESCA
(surprised)
Help cook?

ROBERT
Sure. Men cook. We don't all eat
bananas with our feet, ya know.

FRANCESCA
(laughs)
OK.

They stand side by side. Francesca hands him a stack of carrots and a knife.

MONTAGE:

Tony Bennett's up-tempo tune plays over a series of images of Francesca and Robert talk and prepare dinner.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

- Four hands side by side, cutting and chopping. Occasionally, a hand brushes against another as it reaches for something.
- Robert's hand gently touching Francesca's waist as he reaches around her for an onion.
- Robert lighting Francesca a cigarette.
- Robert brings in his cooler through the screen door. HE MAKES SURE IT DOESN'T SLAM. FRANCESCA MAKES A NOTE OF THIS.
- Robert opens the cooler and removes two cold beers, tossing one to Francesca.
- Francesca opening a new tablecloth and spreading it out on the table.
- Francesca handing Robert plates from the shelf, their fingers only barely touching.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING.

Robert and Francesca are in the middle of dinner. But instead of the usual silence that surrounds Johnson family eating, Francesca is mesmerized by Robert as he manages to eat and tell a story. The scene begins with a LAUGH FROM FRANCESCA.

ROBERT
(laughs)
... No, wait, it gets better.

He stands up and acts it out for her.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
You have to get the full picture here. I have three cameras around my neck, a tripod in one hand and my pants down around my ankles. I thought this was a private bush. I look up and this gorilla, this female gorilla, is staring at me with what can best be described as the most lascivious expression I've ever seen on a female with so much body hair.
(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT (cont'd)
(Francesca laughs)
I freeze. Cause that's what they tell
you to do. In this position. She
comes towards me and ... and she ...
(he stops awkwardly)

FRANCESCA
What?

ROBERT
She starts sniffing me.

FRANCESCA
Oh my God ...
(laughs)
You're blushing.

ROBERT
It's still a very sensitive memory
for me.

FRANCESCA
Then what happened?

ROBERT
We got engaged.

FRANCESCA
Oh you!...

She throws a napkin at him.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)
None of this is true!

ROBERT
No, it is. Except for the engagement
part. She wouldn't have me, although
I still get a Valentine every year.

Francesca is laughing so hard she can't breath. Robert loves
making her laugh.

FRANCESCA
You ought to write these stories down.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

Nah. I've tried. My writing's too technical I think. Problem of being a journalist too long is you stop giving yourself permission to invent. I better just stick to making pictures.

FRANCESCA

"Making pictures". I like that. You really love what you do, don't you?

ROBERT

(nods, smiles shyly)
I'm kind of obsessed by it, actually.

FRANCESCA

Why, do you think?

ROBERT

I don't know if obsessions have reasons. I think that's why they're obsessions.

FRANCESCA

You sound like an artist.

ROBERT

No. I wouldn't say that. National Geographic isn't exactly the hub of artistic inspiration. They like their wild life in focus and without any personal comment. I don't mind really. I'm no artist. I'd faced that a long time ago. It's the curse of being well adjusted. I'm too normal.

FRANCESCA

(supportively)
I don't think you're normal.

He looks at her in surprise. She catches herself again.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

I didn't mean that the way it sounded.

ROBERT

Well lets just call it a compliment and move on.

(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

ROBERT (cont'd)
(changes subject)
Did you love teaching?

FRANCESCA
Sometimes. When there was a particular student who made a difference. I know they're all supposed to, but it's not true. You tend to single out one or two you think you can contribute something to.

ROBERT
And did you?

FRANCESCA
I'd like to think so. I know one of them went on to Medical school.

ROBERT
Why did you stop?

FRANCESCA
My children. And Richard didn't like my working.

ROBERT
Do you miss it?

FRANCESCA
I don't know. I've never thought about it ... what was the most exciting place you've ever been to? Unless you're tired of talking about it.

ROBERT
You're asking a man if he's too tired to talk about himself? You don't get out much, do you?

Francesca smiles, a little embarrassed.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
I'm sorry. That was ...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANCESCA
(overlapping)
No. It's alright. I just meant, it
might be a little dull for you,
telling all this to some housewife in
the middle of nowhere.

ROBERT
This is your home. It's not nowhere.
And it's not dull.

Francesca smiles again, this time relieved.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Lets see - my favorite place ...

Francesca settles in to listen, never taking her eyes off of
him.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
Well, it's the obvious choice but I
think I'd have to say Africa. It's
another world. Not just the people
and the cultures but the land, the
colors you see at dawns and dusks -
and the life there. It charges every
molecule of air.

Francesca is fascinated, being drawn into his imagery.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
It's tangibile - the moment to moment
of life and death, the co-habitation
of man and beast, of beast and beast,
who'll survive, who won't - and
there's no judgement about it. No
right or wrong or imposed morality.
It's just life. It's a voyeurs
paradise really because those animals
don't want anybody in their business.
You can watch but at a distance.

(excited)
I remember one time I was on a truck
headed for the Niger.

Lights begin to dim as Francesca is so taken in by his story,
she begins to actually see what he is describing.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (5)

ROBERT (Cont'd)

We were driving north. The truck was old so I guess the sound of the motor muffled this kind of rumbling in the distance - until finally, it was upon us like - like a hundred thunder claps all at once ...

C.U. on FRANCESCA as WE BLEND THE SOUNDS OF AFRICA and -

CUT TO:

EXT. AFRICA - DAY.

Robert and a Driver are in a truck driving north. Robert turns to look out the window and sees;

A HERD OF GIRAFFES AND GAZELLES AND WATERBUCKS AND ZEBRAS are running in the grasslands to the right of the truck. Robert excitedly instructs the driver:

ROBERT

Get us closer!!

The driver veers off towards the stampede as Robert opens his door and make his way to the flatbed part of the truck with his camera. The truck takes its position within this breathtaking force of wildlife, as giraffes, zebras and gazelles surround it - all going in the same direction.

Robert stands in the truck, shooting as fast as he can. The truck races to keep up with the animals. Robert is so pumped he can hardly catch his breath. Suddenly, the force and beauty of these creatures causes him to lower his camera. He is unable to film it because it overwhelms him. He just stands there in awe and lets out a primal scream. The animals gradually veer off to where the truck can no longer follow. Robert watches them disappear into the distance.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Francesca has seen all of this in her mind. Robert smiles at her, sensing how in tune with the story she was.

FRANCESCA

My God. How I'd love to see that.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

They have safaris for tourists now.
Maybe you can convince you're husband.

Francesca smiles. There is an awkward pause between them.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

It's a beautiful night. Would you
like to go for a walk?

FRANCESCA

Well it's kind of buggy out there.

ROBERT

(rises)

Have no fear. This Shoshone Medicine
Woman taught me how to make bug
repellant tea out of tree root.

FRANCESCA

You drink bug repellant?

ROBERT

No, you rub it on you. I have some in
the truck. Don't go away.

She shakes her head. He runs out the screen door, not letting
it slam. Francesca looks like a teenager with first date
excitement.

EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT.

Francesca and Robert walk through the pasture. She sniffs her
arm.

FRANCESCA

Smells like dirt.

ROBERT

You get used to it.

FRANCESCA

When?

ROBERT

(laughs)

You want to go back in?

FRANCESCA

No. I'm alright. It's working.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Silence. They walk. It is a beautiful night.

ROBERT

You've got it all right here, you know. It's just as beautiful as any other place I've seen. God, it knocks me out.

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

(indicating the night)

This. " ... Of what I call God and fools call Nature". Who wrote that?

FRANCESCA

Umm I don't know. I can look it up.

ROBERT

I'd appreciate it. I like knowing who I'm stealing from. If you can't create art I think the least you can do is recognize it around you, don't you think? There is ...

(genuinely affected)

...so much beauty.

She watches him with great appreciation. He smiles at her. Instead of looking away, their eyes remained locked for a moment. There is clearly an attraction. They simultaneously look away and continue walking.

Francesca's heart is beating a mile a minute yet she can't deny she is enjoying herself. Walking side by side in silence, Francesca turns back occasionally to look at her house as they get further away from it. Suddenly, the more distant the house becomes, the more frightened she starts to feel. Something inside her knows she's going too far with this man - too far from home. Although a part of her wants it, she is surprised to find a larger part of her finds it too unknown. She stops.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

What's wrong?

Francesca looks confused for a moment, not knowing what she wants. She can't move. She searches for a way out.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCESCA
Would you like some coffee? Or maybe,
some brandy?

Somehow Robert can sense her uneasiness. He obliges.

ROBERT
How about both?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Francesca moves about the kitchen preparing coffee - dropping the coffee pot basket, spilling the grounds. She acts tense. Robert sits at the table opening the brandy bottle Francesca almost opened the night before, aware of her mood.

Francesca gets the coffee going then sets the table with cups and saucers.

ROBERT
You sure you won't let me help you
with those dishes?

FRANCESCA
(coldly)
No. I'll do them later.

ROBERT
Francesca?

FRANCESCA
What?

ROBERT
Are you alright?

FRANCESCA
Yes.

ROBERT
Francesca?

FRANCESCA
What?

ROBERT
We're not doing anything wrong, you
know.

Francesca freezes. He has read her mind again.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT (Cont'd)
(smiles)
Nothing you can't tell your children
about.

Once again, he relieves her of fear and anxiety. He hands her
a glass of brandy ...

CUT TO:

1995

INT. KITCHEN - DAY.

Carolyn and Michael have come to the end of a notebook.

MICHAEL
He's getting her drunk. That's what
happened. Jesus, maybe he forced
himself. That's why she couldn't tell
us.

CAROLYN
Oh, he did not. He's such a nice guy.

MICHAEL
Nice? He's trying to sleep with
somebody's wife.

CAROLYN
I don't think so. Not yet anyway. And
besides, something like that doesn't
make you a bad person. He reminds me
of Steve in a way. Steve's weak,
immoral and a liar but he's still a
real nice guy. He just shouldn't be
married.

(laughs)
At least not to me. You getting
hungry? I'm hungry.

Michael nods, then speaks with sincere compassion.

MICHAEL
I had no idea it's gotten that bad,
sis.

CAROLYN
Oh don't feel sorry for me. Please.
No one's forcing me to stay.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL
Then why do you?

CAROLYN
And do what? Live alone? Go back to school? Find someone else? Start a magazine for confused women? ... What if I can't do any of those things?

Michael can't answer her. Carolyn looks through the cabinets.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)
There's not much here to make.

MICHAEL
Let's go into town and get a bite.
We'll take the books with us.

Carolyn nods. Michael looks for the next notebook, checking the dates.

INT. CAR - EARLY EVENING.

Michael drives as Carolyn opens the next notebook and reads:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
"We sat sipping brandy. I thought if anybody walked through the door now there'd be no explaining it. But I didn't care. And I loved that I didn't care. I almost wanted it to happen. Then there'd be no turning back. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to know his secrets. How he lived this life of his. We talked about his wife and I was jealous - not of her - but of his leaving. His fearlessness. He knew what he wanted. How did he do that?"

CUT BACK TO:

1965

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Francesca sips her brandy. Robert sits in the easy chair.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA

Do you mind if I ... ask you why you got divorced?

ROBERT

Not at all. I wasn't around much ... So why did I get married? Well, I thought it was a good idea at the time. Have a home base. Roots. You can get lost moving around so much.

FRANCESCA

So what happened?

ROBERT

I never got lost. For some reason, I'm more at home everywhere than at one place. So I decided I'll think of myself as some kind of world citizen. I belong everywhere and nowhere. I'm kin to everyone, and no one in particular. See, once you get into the habit of not needing anyone, it's kind of hard to break.

FRANCESCA

You must get lonely at times.

ROBERT

Never touch the stuff. I've got friends all over the world. Good friends I can see when I want, if I want.

FRANCESCA

Woman friends too?

ROBERT

I'm a loner, I'm not a monk.

Francesca averts her eyes, before continuing her investigation.

FRANCESCA

You really don't need anyone?

ROBERT

No, I think I need everyone! I love people. I want to meet them all!
(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT (cont'd)

I just think there are too many out there saying "This is mine", or "She's mine". Too many lines have been drawn. World's breaking apart because of man's weakness for some testosterone conquests over territory and power and people. He wants control over what deep down he knows he has no control over whatsoever and it scares him silly.

FRANCESCA

Why doesn't it scare you?

ROBERT

I embrace Mystery. I don't know what's coming. And I don't mind.

FRANCESCA

Do you ever regret it? The divorce, I mean?

ROBERT

No.

FRANCESCA

Do you ever regret not having a family?

ROBERT

Not everybody's supposed to have a family.

FRANCESCA

But - how can you just live for what you want? What about other people?

ROBERT

I told you, I love other people.

FRANCESCA

But no one in particular.

ROBERT

No. But I love them just the same.

FRANCESCA

But it's not the same.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

ROBERT

That's not what you're saying. I know it's not the same. What you're saying is, it's not as good. Or it's not as normal or proper.

FRANCESCA

No, I'm just saying -

ROBERT

(interrupting)

I'm a little sick of this American Family Ethic everyone seems to be hypnotized by in this country. I guess you think I'm just some poor displaced soul doomed to roam the earth without a self-cleaning oven and home movies.

FRANCESCA

(irritated)

Just because someone chooses to settle down and have a family doesn't necessarily mean they're hypnotized. Just because I've never seen a gazelle stampede doesn't mean I'm asleep in the world.

ROBERT

Do you want to leave your husband?

Francesca is completely stunned and thrown off guard.

FRANCESCA

No. Of course not.
(rising, upset)

Beat. Awkward silence. Suddenly there is tension between them.

ROBERT

My mistake. I apologize.

FRANCESCA

What made you ask such a question?

ROBERT

I thought that's what we were doing - asking questions.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANCESCA

(defensive)

I thought we were just having a conversation. You seem to be reading all this meaning into it. Meanings I must be too simple to uh ... interpret or something.

ROBERT

I already apologized.

Silence. Robert remains seated. Francesca remains at the sink.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

It's getting late.

(rises)

Thank you for dinner.

Pause. Francesca feels badly.

FRANCESCA

Listen, I'm sorry I -

ROBERT

No, no. Forgive me. I made a mistake. It was an inappropriate thing to ask.

FRANCESCA

(shrugs it off, then:)

... I feel like something's been spoiled now.

Robert smiles and crosses to her. He takes her hand into both his hands.

ROBERT

It's been a perfect evening. Just the way it is. Thank you.

Francesca smiles. The possibility of a kiss hangs in the air between them until Robert turns to get his film out of the fridge. As he exits through the screen door, he stops.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

One thing though - don't kid yourself Francesca. You're anything but a simple woman.

He smiles and exits, catching the screen door before it slams.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (5)

Francesca doesn't move for a moment then crosses to the door as if to run after him when she is stopped by the PHONE RINGING. She picks up.

FRANCESCA
Hello? ...

RICHARD (ON PHONE)
Franny?

FRANCESCA
Richard, hi.

RICHARD (ON PHONE)
How are you?

FRANCESCA
Fine. Everyone settled in OK?

RICHARD (ON PHONE)
Just fine. We're all in one room.
Michael's on the couch and
Carolyn's ...
(CONTINUES...)

She hears Robert's truck door open and close. She hears the motor being turned on. She half-listens to Richard.

FRANCESCA
Uh-uh ... good ... Hmmm...

She hears the truck driving away as Richard continues:

RICHARD (ON PHONE)
We got our position in the Fair. Not
bad although I would have liked to be
third which is not too early and not
too late. But I told Carolyn not to
worry ...
(CONTINUES, IF NEEDED)

CUT TO:

INT. FRANCESCA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Francesca exits her bathroom, in her bathrobe, shutting the light. She is brushing her hair and thinking of Robert. She sits on the edge of the bed. She sees her reflection in a mirror on the closet door.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

She stands and takes her robe off. She steps forward to look at her body - running her hands gently around her curves, her neck, down the side of her thighs, her face, her breasts.

She shuts off the lights and gets into bed under the covers. She closes her eyes and tentatively begins to explore her body. It is awkward for her but we can see her trying to let herself go. Until she opens her eyes in frustration. It's no good. She can't do it. She feels ashamed. The shame turns into anger.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Francesca sits at a writing table with two large books opened before her containing literary quotations. She searches for the line Robert mentioned in the pasture.

A NOTE sits before her as well. On it reads: "Robert. Again, I'm sorry for last night. Would you like supper again tonight after you're finished. I'd like it very much if I were one of those good friends you have in the world. Anytime is fine - Francesca ... P.S. By the way, "Of what I call God and Fools call Nature" was ..." She writes the name BROWNING.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - NIGHT.

Francesca is tacking A NOTE for Robert to the bridge. She considers taking it down a moment later but decides not to. She gets back into her truck and drives away.

WIDE ANGLE OF BRIDGE - NIGHT.

DISSOLVE TO:

WIDE ANGLE OF BRIDGE - DAWN.

The view of the bridge goes in and out of focus until we realize we are seeing it through Robert's camera lens.

Once the focus is set, Robert notices something is tacked onto the bridge. He crosses to it hurriedly - time for the perfect shot is running out - pulls it down, thumbtack and all, and shoves it into his pocket, unread. He returns to his camera to take his shots.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - MORNING.

Francesca is making her bed when she hears a truck driving down the road. She looks out the window to see:

Robert's truck. However, it passes right by her house.

Francesca's spirit sinks. She feels silly, ashamed and rejected. She sits on the bed.

FANTASY:

Inside the truck, Robert drives by the house and chuckles to himself at the foolishness of some boring, frustrated housewife. Francesca's note has been crumbled and stuffed into a dirty ashtray.

END OF FANTASY:

Francesca enters her bathroom, slamming the door behind her.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING.

Francesca sits at the kitchen table in her bathrobe with a cup of coffee - a comic portrait of shame and self-pity. Her hair is a mess, she hasn't showered or dressed and she stares into space while listening to the bluesy Chicago radio station.

The sink is full of dirty dishes she refuses to clean. Beside it is an ashtray of butts from the night before. She carries it over to the table and begins fingering for a butt to smoke in desperation. She lights up and stares into space.

FANTASY:

Robert is in Africa talking to TWO ZULU TRIBE MEMBERS. THE DIALOGUE IS SUB-TITLED IN SWAHILI:

ROBERT
(laughs)
...and then she tacks this note on
the bridge asking me to have dinner
with her again!

One Zulu turns to the other and remarks:

ZULU
How pathetic.

END OF FANTASY:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Francesca puts out her cigarette and suddenly gets an idea. She goes to the phone, reads a number off of a slip of paper and dials.

FRANCESCA (ON PHONE)

Hello? ... Is Richard Johnson staying there? ... No, I don't want to leave a message. Maybe you can help me - I'm his wife and I live in Winterset Iowa - I wanted to surprise them by driving up tonight. What would be the fastest route, the Interstate? ..Huh-huh... Hold it, let me get a pen.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAY PHONE; GAS STATION - LATE MORNING.

Francesca's note is opened in Robert's hand. Her phone number is written after the 'P.S.'. He stands in the pay phone getting a busy signal from Francesca's line. He hangs up disappointed.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

Francesca, dressed and packed, prepares to leave. She checks her purse to make sure she's got everything. She grabs her bag and exits.

A few beats later, THE PHONE RINGS. But she doesn't return. IT RINGS AGAIN. We hear Francesca's truck door open and close. IT RINGS AGAIN. We think Francesca is on her way, until:

We suddenly hear her burst into the house and see her leap for the phone.

FRANCESCA

Hello?

INTERCUT -

INT. SLOW BEND SALOON/RESTUARANT - DAY.

Robert is at another pay phone.

ROBERT

Francesca?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA
(out of breath)
Yes! Hi.

ROBERT
Am I interrupting anything?

FRANCESCA
No. I was just ... No.

ROBERT
I'm sorry I didn't call sooner but I
just read your note. I stuffed it
into my pocket. The light was fading
and I had to get my shot.

FRANCESCA
(relieved)
The light was fading. Huh-huh.

ROBERT
I would love to come for dinner.

FRANCESCA
(smiles)
Wonderful. Uh ...

ROBERT
Listen, I have to shoot Cedar Bridge
until a little after sunset. I want
a few night shots. Would you like to
come with me? If you're interested ...

FRANCESCA
Oh sure. Great.

ROBERT
I'll pick you up.

FRANCESCA
No. I'll drive myself. I have a few
errands. I'll meet you there.

ROBERT
OK. See you later.

FRANCESCA
Yeah. See you later.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

Francesca is thrilled. Her mind races with a list of things she must do before tonight. She opens a cabinet, removes a coffee can and empties it of her house money. She quickly counts it, then shoves it into her purse.

EXT. ON THE ROAD - DAY.

Francesca drives past a sign marking DES MOINES as the next town.

INT. SLOW BEND SALOON/RESTAURANT - DAY.

The second of two eating establishments in Winterset. A lunch time crowd fills the place. Robert is seated at the counter. He can sense their are eyes on him, wondering who this stranger is and what's he doing here. He knows the whispered conversation is about him.

A MIDDLE AGED COUPLE talk at table.

WIFE

Thelma told me he checked into the Motor Inn and the bill goes to National Geographic Magazine.

HUSBAND

National Geographic? What the hell's he doin here? We ain't got no naked pygmies to take pictures of.

WIFE

He's takin' pictures of the bridges.

HUSBAND

Ain't no pygmies there either.

Robert wants to finish his lunch as quickly as possible. At that moment, someone enters the restaurant and all the conversation stops. He overhears one waitress turn to the other and whisper -

WAITRESS

God. It's Lucy Redfield.

Both the Waitress and Robert (though more subtly) turn to see:

THE REDFIELD WOMAN. But instead of being the harlot we might think, she's actually a rather plain, demure looking woman - not nearly as fancy or pretty as Mrs. Delaney herself.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

As she crosses to the counter. Robert immediately picks up on the vibes in the room. He notices all the patrons stare then turn away to whisper. The Waitress behind the counter ignores her. A Customer eating at the counter places a bag on an empty stool beside her, so the Redfield woman can't sit down near her.

Robert and the Redfield woman's eyes meet. She is clearly uncomfortable. She turns, about to leave, when Robert clears his cameras off of a stool next to him and offers:

ROBERT

Got room right here if you like.

She is surprised at his courtesy. Others are astounded. Some disgusted. She accepts his offer and sits beside him.

REDFIELD WOMAN

Thank you.

ROBERT

Hot out there today.

She nods and smiles. The Waitress tosses a menu at her and slams down a glass of water, then moves on down the counter. The Redfield woman tries to act casual, glancing through the menu. Robert subtly scans the room as all eyes are on them, then turn away.

Robert returns his glance back to the Redfield woman who is now only pretending to read the menu. She is so embarrassed. She wants to leave but can't move.

WAITRESS

Well, are you ordering anything!?

Her harsh tone startles the Redfield woman as well as Robert. Gathering her dignity, she responds.

REDFIELD WOMAN

No. Thank you. I've changed my mind.

She politely nods to Robert, gathers her things and exits. Robert looks to the Waitress, as a SECOND WAITRESS enters frame.

SECOND WAITRESS

I'd've thrown that water right in her face.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

WAITRESS
Poor Mrs. Delaney.

The Waitress walks OS leaving the Second Waitress facing Robert, who looks at her curiously. The Second Waitress looks back as if to say, "What business is it of yours?" and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. DES MOINES - DAY.

A metropolis compared to Winterset.

Francesca exits a liquor store with a bottle of wine in a paper bag. She also carries a bag of groceries as she heads down the street to her parked truck. She passes a DRESS SHOP and stops.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. WINTERSET - DAY.

Robert enters a General Store. He buys a six pack of beer for his cooler and approaches the counter for the Cashier.

CASHIER
That all?

Robert nods. He decides to have some fun and test the waters a little bit.

ROBERT
Isn't it awful about poor Mrs.
Delaney?

With this, the dam bursts -

CASHIER
Tragic is more like it. The pain that woman has been subejcted to by that no-good husband. I never liked him. Known him for years. People say he's quiet. Well, it's the quiet ones that can sneak up behind you and stab you in the back. I heard yesterday, that she confronted him. Gave him the ultimatum and you know what he did?-(CONTINUES AS NEEDED)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Robert stands astounded, listening to this diatribe of gossip.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DES MOINES DRESS SHOP - DAY.

Francesca sits in her slip, alone in a dressing room, with several dresses strewn about. The panic of indecision has set in. She looks at herself in the mirror and begins to doubt that seeing Robert is a good idea. Or perhaps she's imagining something that isn't there. And what about Richard?

MEMORY:

A few years back. Francesca is dressed up for some formal affair. She heads down the stairs. Richard is waiting in the hall, in a suit and tie. He looks at her admiringly.

FRANCESCA

Ready. You have the keys?

But Richard doesn't answer. He's just staring at her. Francesca stops. Richard looks at her like a little boy.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

What's the matter?

Richard is obviously impressed by how she looks, but he can't say anything. He just smiles shyly and shakes his head to say nothing is wrong and opens the door for her.

END OF MEMORY:

Francesca feels guilty when a SALESWOMAN enters with a pretty summer dress.

SALESWOMAN

How about this one?

Francesca examines it. She likes it. But the guilt...

FRANCESCA

I don't know. I haven't bought a dress for myself in so long.

(saleswoman nods)

I mean, I'm just buying a dress. It's not a special occasion or anything. I'm just shopping. Just shopping for a new dress, that's all.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

SALESWOMAN
(completely
understands)
That might work. And if he's still
mad, just tell him you could have
done better but you married him out
of pity. That's always works for me.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON.

Francesca enters with her new dress, groceries and wine as
the PHONE RINGS. She puts everything down to answer.

FRANCESCA
Hello?

INTERCUT ROBERT at a pay phone.

ROBERT
It's Robert.

FRANCESCA
Oh hi. Look, I'm running a little
late, but I'll still ...

ROBERT
(w/difficulty)
Listen, don't take this the wrong way
but - I'm wondering if this is such
a good idea.

Francesca's heart sinks.

FRANCESCA
Oh.

ROBERT
I uh ... I had lunch in town today.
Happened to cross paths with "that
Redfield woman". I apologize. I
thought you were half-joking about
that.

FRANCESCA
Oh. I guess you got the whole story.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

The cashier at the general store was very generous.

FRANCESCA

I think he's running for town crier next year.

ROBERT

I now know more about their affair than I remember about my marriage.

(seriously)

Francesca, the last thing I want to do is put you in any kind of situation that would ... even though we know it's just - I mean it's nothing like that, but if anybody saw us or ...

(can't finish)

FRANCESCA

(disappointed)

I understand.

(touched)

That's very kind of you.

Silence. Both want to meet. Both experience the idea of not seeing each other ever again in this brief moment. Someone has to say something to save it - but who will it be?

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Robert?

ROBERT

Yeah?

FRANCESCA

I want you to come.

Robert is relieved.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

I'll meet you at the bridge just like we planned alright. Don't worry about the rest of it ... I'm not.

ROBERT

Alright. See you there.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

Francesca smiles and hangs up. In that moment, Francesca realizes consciously what she is doing and what she wants.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEDAR BRIDGE - DUSK.

Robert is already there, working. He checks his watch, anxious for Francesca to arrive, when he hears a truck driving up. He looks to see Francesca stop and get out. By their expressions we can tell how glad they are to see each other.

FRANCESCA

Sorry I'm late. Richard called.

ROBERT

Oh, how is he?

FRANCESCA

Fine. They're all having a good time.
How many more shots do you have?

ROBERT

Couple. Want to help?

She nods. He extends his hand. She pauses, then takes it. He leads her to the bridge. Walking away from camera, they say:

ROBERT (Cont'd)

I should stop off at the motel to
clean up before dinner.

FRANCESCA

Well, I have plumbing at my house.

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING.

Francesca enters. Robert is in the bathroom, in the shower, with the bathroom door slightly ajar. His clothes are laid on the bed with his bag beside them. A fresh shirt is folded. Francesca takes his dirty shirt and decides to clean it. As she exits, her eye can't help roaming toward the bathroom door. For a moment, she pauses to listen to the sound of the water as it hits his body.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Francesca is busy preparing dinner. Robert enters, cleaned and dressed.

ROBERT
Can I help?

FRANCESCA
Actually no. I've got everything under control. I'd like to clean up myself a bit. I'm going to take a bath. Dinner'll be ready in about a half hour.

ROBERT
How about if I set the table?

FRANCESCA
Sure.

ROBERT
Would you like a beer for your bath?

FRANCESCA
(surprised)
Yes, that'd be nice.

Robert gets her one.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER.

Francesca lounges in a tub with a beer poured into a wine glass. She finds it very elegant. She takes a deep breath, thinking "What's going to happen tonight?".

INT. KITCHEN - LATER.

Robert is at the radio when Francesca enters in her new dress. She looks beautiful. And it's all over Robert's face.

FRANCESCA
What's wrong?

Unlike her husband, Robert has an answer:

ROBERT
Absolutely nothing. You're just sort of a knockout in that dress.

She smiles and crosses to the stove.

FRANCESCA
Table looks beautiful.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

He can't take his eyes off of her. On the radio we hear DINAH WASHINGTON begin to sing "IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO" - a beautiful, blusey lovesong. Francesca pulls out a pan of hot rolls as THE PHONE RINGS. Francesca moves toward it with a roll, which she tosses to Robert. He burns his fingers and he smiles at her joke. The song plays throughout.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Hello? ... Hi Madge?

Francesca and Robert do not take their eyes off of each other throughout the call. Robert takes a bite of the roll.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Huh-huh ... Nothing, just making myself some dinner ... No what? ... Oh...I heard about him. Yeah, I hear he's some kind of photographer.

(Robert smiles)

No, I didn't ... Huh-huh... Hippie? I don't know, is that what hippies look like? ...

Robert steps closer to her, purposely reaching across her body for a napkin.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Oh he is, huh? Well don't tell Floyd, he'll be out with a shotgun ...

She notices a crumb on Robert's mouth and wipes it off. Robert takes her hand and holds it, lowering it to his side.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

Well listen, I have a pot boiling. I've got to go ... No they don't get home until Friday morning ... Well maybe I'll give you a call. Ok. Bye.

She hangs up. The two are now almost face to face. Robert raises her hand up and slips his free one around her waist. They begin to dance to the song. The kitchen lights have not been turned on since the sun went down. The sky, a dark orange and majenta, illuminates the room through the window. They never take their eyes off of each other. Suddenly, Robert stops.

ROBERT

You're shaking. Are you cold?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

Francesca shakes her head. They dance a bit more, but Francesca is shaking which makes it difficult. They both stop. Robert places his huge hands on either side of her face, gently stroking her hair away from her cheek. He whispers:

ROBERT (Cont'd)

If you want me to stop, tell me now.

He brushes his cheek and face softly against hers. Francesca rubs hers against him. She can barely breathe.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Francesca - I won't be sorry. I won't apologize for this.

FRANCESCA

Nobody's asking you to.

THEY KISS. Hands gently explore. Their bodies touch. Their lips never spend more than seconds away from each other. Robert gently slide his hands down her breasts and torso, exploring every inch of her. Francesca grips his massive back, sliding up to his neck and hair. Robert lifts her leg and presses it against his hip, kissing her neck and shoulders. Francesca starts to lose herself, clutching his head at her breast then pulling him up to her mouth once again.

CUT TO:

1995

INT. SLOW BEND CAFE - PRESENT DAY. EVENING.

The same saloon/restaurant of twenty-five years ago has been turned into a modern cafe yet the original charm is still there.

Carolyn and Michael sit in a booth, with half-eaten dinners before them. Carolyn has been reading the book to Michael when she looks across from her to find - Michael looking like a little boy who is fighting not to cry.

CAROLYN

What's the matter?

Michael shakes his head. He can't or won't explain. He's too upset. His eyes tear up. Carolyn feels badly for him.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

I'm going to get some air.

He exits. Carolyn smiles sympathetically. Somehow this last passage of their mothers doesn't affect her in the same way. She returns to the book but first asks a passing waitress, with great urgency.

CAROLYN

Can I smoke here?

The waitress nods. Carolyn needs a cigarette for the rest of this. She opens her bag to get her pack. Inside her bag she notices a BUSINESS CARD. She picks it up to read IRA NEWMAN, attorney. Divorce. Pre-Nuptials. Marital Litigation. She pauses for a moment. Then, tossing the card back inside, she lights her cigarette and takes a drag. We follow the curls of smoke up as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

1965

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM -

Camera moves down curls of smoke, to reveal:

Robert and Francesca in each others arms, under a blanket on the living room floor on a bed of couch pillows, smoking a cigarette after lovemaking. Francesca seems miles away - feelings of regret and guilt creeping in.

ROBERT

Are you comfortable?

(she nods)

Do you ... want to move to the bedroom?

FRANCESCA

No. I can't. Not yet.

She can't bring herself to go into her husbands bed.

ROBERT

You you want to eat something?

FRANCESCA

Are you hungry?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

No.

Silence. Robert shifts his body to face her.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Honey. Are you all right?

She looks at him and starts to cry, shaking her head. The room is filled with memories of her family. She nestles in his arms. He holds her. She closes her eyes.

FRANCESCA

Take me somewhere.

ROBERT

What?

FRANCESCA

Right now. Tell me someplace you've been - someplace on the other side of the world. Anywhere but here.

ROBERT

(thinks, then:)

How about Italy?

FRANCESCA

Yes.

ROBERT

How about Bari?

FRANCESCA

Yes. Tell me about the day you got off the train.

ROBERT

Have you ever been to that station?

FRANCESCA

Yes.

ROBERT

You know that little place nearby with the striped awning that sells sandwiches and little pizzas ...

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCESCA
(excited)
And arraccinos and zeppolis. Yes! I
know it!

ROBERT
I sat outside and had coffee.

FRANCESCA
Where? Near the doorway or near the
front of the church?

ROBERT
Near the church.

FRANCESCA
(closes her eyes)
I sat there once. It was hot. Like
today. I'd been shopping. I had all
these bags around my feet I kept
having to move everytime the waiter
came by ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANDWICH CAFE; BARI - DAY.

Francesca sits at the outdoor cafe in Bari with shopping bags
around her feet. She re-arranges them as the waiter passes
by, mumbling something vulgar under his breath. When she
looks up - Robert is standing there. She smiles. He offers
her hand. She takes it and rises. They leave the cafe.

MONTAGE :

Francesca and Robert together against the breathtaking
backdrop of the Italian countryside.

EXT. BARI COUNTRYSIDE - DAY.

On a lakefront, Robert and Francesca make love.

WE INTERCUT WITH :

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - EVENING.

FRANCESCA AND ROBERT MAKING LOVE ONCE AGAIN.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

The two transport themselves together to another place, where there is no familial memories surrounding them to interfere.

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNSON PORCH - NIGHT.

The two sit in bathrobes on the porch looking out over the pasture. They have plates of dinner on their laps. They eat voraciously.

ROBERT

Do you have anymore of the stew?

Chewing, Francesca nods and leans over, picks a pot off the porch and ladles some more onto his plate. Too much falls out and it spills onto the robe.

FRANCESCA

Oh, I'm sorry.

ROBERT

It's OK. It's not that hot anymore.
Thank God.

Francesca hands him a dish rag. Robert wipes off the food revealing his bare leg. She reaches over and touches it. He looks at her and smiles. She leans over and kisses him passionately until, suddenly, she pulls away. She looks upset. She rises and moves away to look out to the pasture. Robert can sense what is wrong.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

You think too much, you know that?

FRANCESCA

I just feel like I'm getting a little
... out of control that's all. It's
kind of frightening.

ROBERT

Why?

FRANCESCA

Why!? Because, I'm having thoughts I
hardly know what do to with. I ...
can't seem to ... stop them.

ROBERT

Nobody's asking you to.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Francesca looks at him and understands he is giving her full permission to explore whatever she wants. Hesitantly, she crosses to him and takes his plate away. She stands before him, leaning him back into his chair. She slowly, tentatively, opens her robe. She strokes his hair, then caresses his head and gently guides it between her legs.

1994

INT. SLOW BEND RESTUARANT - NIGHT.

C.U. on an ashtray filled with cigarette butts as Carolyn anxiously lights another. These last entries have over stimulated her. She calls to the waitress abruptly:

CAROLYN

Can I get another cup of coffee
please?

When she looks up, she sees Michael has returned. He sits.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)

Where did you go?

MICHAEL

Bar across the street.

CAROLYN

Have you called Betty?
(he shakes his head)
Maybe you should.

MICHAEL

I found out who Lucy Delaney is.
(She looks interested)
Remember the Delaneys from Hillcrest
Road?

CAROLYN

Yeah. But I thought she died.

MICHAEL

He remarried. Apparantly they were
having an affair for years.
Apparantly the first Mrs. Delaney was
a bit of a stiff.

CAROLYN

You mean - she didn't like sex?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

(nods, then simply:)

I bet mom could've helped her.

CAROLYN

Boy. All these years I've resented not living the wild life in some place like Paris and all the time I could've moved back to Iowa ... Are you drunk?

MICHAEL

Not yet. You want to go?

CAROLYN

I think I better. Between the book and the coffee, I'm this close to raping the busboy.

EXT. IOWA LAKEFRONT - NIGHT.

Michael and Carolyn have parked in a secluded area near a lake. Some place where the moonlight and the scenery create a beautiful backdrop. They sit on the ground, leaving the headlights and the radio on. They are getting drunk sharing a bottle of whiskey.

MICHAEL

I used to love this place. I used to take Kathy Reynolds down here.

CAROLYN

You never dated Kathy Reynolds!

MICHAEL

Not officially. Her and Steve Kendall were pinned at birth. But I was crazy about her. And for about three months, I managed to catch her during her "exploring" stage.

CAROLYN

I never knew that.

MICHAEL

(sadly)

Nobody did.

CAROLYN

Was this during Betty?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL

Everything was during Betty. God we were so young. Why did we think we had to do it all so fast? I've never cheated on Betty. Not once we were married I mean.

CAROLYN

Did you want to?

MICHAEL

Only about a thousand times. What do I do now? "What's good enough for mom is good enough for me?"

CAROLYN

(pissed off)

What gets me is I'm 46 years old. I've been in this crummy fucking marriage -

MICHAEL

Carolyn!

CAROLYN

(ignores him)

- for over twenty years because that's what I was taught - you stick with it! Normal people don't get divorced. I can't remember the last time my husband made love to me so intensely that he transported me to Europe, for Christ's sakes - quite frankly I don't think he ever did! And now I find out in between bake sales, my mother was Anais Nin!

MICHAEL

What about me! I feel really weird. Like she cheated on me, not dad. Isn't that sick? I don't mean I wanted to sleep with her or anything but - ya know - being the only son. You're sort of made to feel like you're the prince of the kingdom, ya know? And in the back of your mind, you kind of think your mother doesn't need sex anymore because she has you.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

CAROLYN
You're right - that is sick.

They drink.

MICHAEL
If she was so unhappy, why didn't she
leave?

They look to each other without an answer. Then
simultaneously they reach for the notebooks.

MICHAEL (Cont'd)
Can I read it now? I think I'm ready.

Carolyn offers him the book then lays back in a relaxed
position in order to listen. Michael flips to an ear marked
page.

MICHAEL (Cont'd)
What paragraph were you up to?

CAROLYN
(casually)
She just made him perform oral sex on
the porch.

Michael freezes. He loses his nerve. Carolyn helps.

CAROLYN (Cont'd)
Go ahead Michael. You've got to do
this. Just think, "Today I am a man".

Michael nods and takes another swig. He reads:

MICHAEL
"I'd never had a man make love to me
that way before"
(stops)
Oh Jesus.
(continues)
"I couldn't believe the feelings
bursting inside of me. As if I had
opened some forbidden Pandora's box".

Camera begins to move to wide angle as Francesca takes over:

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA

"It seems, thinking about it now, that in those few days I lived a completely different life as a completely different woman. What was recognizable as me before Robert was gone. We decided to spend Wednesday away from Winterset. Away from Madison County. Away from pastures and bridges and people too familiar and reminders too painful. We let the day take us where it wanted ..."

1965

INT. DES MOINES MOVIE THEATRE - DAY.

VIVIEN LEIGH is walking down a ships stairs in the 1965 film "SHIP OF FOOLS". She is alone on screen. She walks, slightly intoxicated. Suddenly, Charleston music plays out of nowhere and she begins to dance, by herself, without any self-consciousness.

In the movie theatre, Robert sits with his arm around Francesca like teenage lovers. Her head is nestled in his chest as she eats from a bag of popcorn. Robert barely keeps his eyes on the screen, staring at Francesca and stroking her hair.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DES MOINES STREET - DAY.

Francesca and Robert walk hand-in-hand, window shopping and taking in the sights. For Francesca, it is as if she is seeing everything for the first time.

INT. BOOK STORE -DAY.

Robert introduces Francesca to the photography section, showing her a book of one of his favorite photographers, Walker Evans. Francesca admires one photograph in particular - a mother and child during the depression.

FRANCESCA

Oh that one is beautiful. Look at their expressions. As if the camera weren't on them at all. As if they had no strength left to hide what they were feeling.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT

He's a genius. They're not
photographs - they're stories, entire
histories captured in moments.

FRANCESCA

I bet you could do a book.

ROBERT

No. I couldn't.

FRANCESCA

Why do you say that?

ROBERT

Because I already tried once.

Francesca is surprised. She senses his disappointment.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

It's no big deal. I know how to work
a camera, how to make it "make
pictures" - but I don't know how to
make it make art.

(laughs)

At least that's what six publishers
said. To take what we see of this
world and give it back with a bit of
ourselves in it. It's a mystery to me.

FRANCESCA

(smiles, supportive)

But you don't mind.

ROBERT

(smiles)

No, I don't mind.

She brushes his hair away from his face affectionately. As he
looks at another book, she notices their reflection in a
mirror. She puts her arm through his. They look like a couple
to her - two people who belong together.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY.

Francesca and Robert have an elegant lunch.

FRANCESCA

What were you like when you were
younger?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

ROBERT
(smiles)
Trouble. Why?

FRANCESCA
(laughs)
I just wondered. Why were you trouble?

ROBERT
I had a temper.

FRANCESCA
What were your parents like?

Pause. Robert doesn't reply. She looks at him curiously.

ROBERT
I can't do this, honey.

FRANCESCA
What?

ROBERT
Try and live a lifetime before
Friday. Cram it all in.
(shakes his head)

This is the first time either has mentioned their time clock.
Francesca nods, understandingly.

Across the room, Francesca notices A MOTHER having dessert with her FIVE YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, a pretty little girl in a fancy yellow dress. The Mother rises and exits to the ladies room while the little girl continues eating a large sundae.

Francesca smiles. As the girl licks a spoon of fudge, she sees Francesca looking at her and smiles back. Robert watches the silent exchange as he eats. Francesca makes a funny face at her. The Little Girl giggles as she spoons more ice-cream. Unfortunately, she spoons too much and the ice-cream falls on her pretty dress. She tries to take it off her, but she slips through her fingers and stains her even more. She looks at Francesca as if she's about to cry. Francesca smiles.

FRANCESCA
Excuse me a minute.

Robert watches her cross to the little girl and kneel beside her. He sees her consoling the little girl while taking a napkin and dabbing it in the water glass.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

She helps the girl carefully wipe away the mess, all the while calming her. The Mother re-enters the scene and shakes her head at her daughter. The daughter is afraid of being reproached but the Mother is smiling. She and Francesca begin talking. She thanks Francesca. Robert sees the two mothers exchanging a moment of common experience and brief friendship. The Mother and daughter take their leave as Francesca says goodbye and returns to the table. Robert looks at her lovingly. Francesca returns to her meal - but suddenly she is no longer hungry. Robert sense something is upsetting her.

ROBERT

You're somewhere else, where?

FRANCESCA

Just that it's been a perfect day and that I'd like to skip my fancy dessert and go home after this.

ROBERT

Uh-huh. And?

FRANCESCA

(beat)

You're right, you know. We don't have much time.

Uncomfortable silence hangs between them. A waiter passes by.

ROBERT

Check please.

OS, as the MOTHER YELLS:

MOTHER

REBECCA! REBECCA!

Both Robert and Francesca look to the voice.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY.

The MOTHER, stands on the street frantically calling for her daughter.

MOTHER

REBECCA!

The Maitre'd, Francesca and Robert exit the restaurant.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MOTHER (Cont'd)
Oh my God ... !

FRANCESCA
What happened?

MOTHER
I was paying the check. She ran
outside. I told her to wait for me
right here! Oh God, where is she?
Rebecca!

The sidewalk is filled with people. Francesca looks to Robert. He recognizes the concern in her expression. Going home will have to wait.

ROBERT
I'll check down here. Someone call
the police.

The Maitre'd goes back inside. Francesca comforts the Mother.

FRANCESCA
Think for a second. Is there
someplace she said she wanted to go?

MOTHER
I don't remember!

EXT. STREET -

Robert searches through the street, poking in and out of storefronts, looking across the street.

EXT. RESTAURANT -

Francesca and the Mother search in the opposite direction.

EXT. STREET -

Through the crowds of people, Robert looks across the four lane Main Street to a LARGE CITY PARK. He crosses to it.

INT. RESTAURANT - AN HOUR LATER.

Francesca sits with the Mother as TWO POLICEMEN take down a description. The Mother is crying. A Waiter brings over some water for her. The Maitre'd stands by.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MOTHER

She was right outside. I turned my head for a second.

POLICEMAN

When was this?

FRANCESCA

About an hour ago.

MOTHER

They're not going to find her!

FRANCESCA

Yes they are.

At that moment, the Mother looks up and cries:

MOTHER

REBECCA!

She jumps out of her seat as all turn to see:

Robert holding the little girl in his arms, entering the restaurant. He carefully hands her over to the mother. The two wrap their arms around each other. Francesca looks to Robert, loving him even more now.

FRANCESCA

Where was she?

ROBERT

Across the street. She went into the park and got turned around and didn't know her way out.

MOTHER

You crossed the street by yourself?!

REBECCA

(crying)

It was a green light.

The Mother is too relieved to be mad. Robert sits down.

MOTHER

Thank you so much!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT
(frazzled)
I need a drink.

Everyone laughs out of relief. Francesca wraps her arm around his shoulder and kisses his forehead. He kisses her back.

INT. TRUCK - DUSK.

Robert drives as Francesca sits inside his arm. Neither speak.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DUSK.

Francesca calmly leads Robert up to her bedroom.

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM -

Naked, Francesca guides Robert into bed beneath the covers. They begin to make love - softly, lovingly - like a couple that are beyond the erotic, discovery stage; a couple that have been together and in love for years.

LATER -

Francesca puts her arm around him as he nestles his head to her breast. Francesca strokes his hair as Robert closes his eyes.

ROBERT
I don't know why I'm so tired all of a sudden.

FRANCESCA
Long day. Go to sleep.

ROBERT
Am I too heavy for you?

FRANCESCA
No.

Robert settles into her. But Francesca is wide awake. Something is on her mind - "Tomorrow? What happens after tomorrow?".

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING.

Francesca is serving Robert breakfast, then sits down beside him. Silence. We can sense some tension between them - this being their last day together.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Francesca seems ingeniously friendly. Robert is suspicious.

FRANCESCA
Sleep all right?

ROBERT
Yes thanks.

FRANCESCA
Good. More coffee?
(he nods, she pours)
Robert, I hope you don't mind my
asking but I feel like I should.

ROBERT
What?

FRANCESCA
Well, these ... women friends of
yours ... all over the world. How
does it work? Do you see some of them
again? Do you forget others? Do you
write them now and then? How do you
manage it?

Her facetiousness startles Robert.

ROBERT
I ... What do you mean?

FRANCESCA
Well I just want to know the
procedure. I don't want to upset your
routine ... Do you want any jam?

ROBERT
(insulted)
Routine! I don't have a routine. And
if you think that's what this is-

FRANCESCA
Well what is this?

ROBERT
(upset)
Well, why is that up to me? You're
the one whose married. You told me
you have no intention of leaving your
husband.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCESCA

To do what? Be with someone who needs everyone and no one in particular? I mean what would be the point. Would you pass the butter?

ROBERT

I was honest with you. I told you who I was.

FRANCESCA

Yes. Absolutely. You have this habit of not needing and that it's hard to break. I understand.

(beat)

Of course, in that case, why sleep - you don't need rest or for that matter eat, you don't need food.

She takes his plate away from him, rises and throws it into the sink.

ROBERT

What are you doing?

FRANCESCA

(sarcastic)

Gee, I don't know. I guess I'm not cut out to be a World Citizen who experiences everything and nothing at the same time.

ROBERT

How do you know what I experience?

FRANCESCA

(angry)

I know you! What can this possibly mean to anyone who doesn't "need" meaning -

(mocking)

"Who goes with the Mystery" - who pretends he isn't scared to death.

ROBERT

Stop it!

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA

You have no idea what you've done to me, do you? And after you leave, I'm going to have to wonder for the rest of my life what happened here. If anything happened at all! And I'll have to wonder if you find yourself in some ... housewife's kitchen in Romania if you'll sit there and tell her about your world of good friends and secretly include me in that group.

ROBERT

What do you want me to say?

FRANCESCA

(nonchantly)

I don't want you to say anything. I don't need you to say anything.

Robert rises, knocking his chair aside.

ROBERT

STOP IT!

FRANCESCA

Fine. More eggs or should we just fuck on the linoleum one last time?

ROBERT

(GRABS HER)

I TOLD YOU! I won't apologize for who I am.

FRANCESCA

No one's asking you to!

ROBERT

I won't be made to feel like I've done something wrong.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANCESCA

(angry)

You won't be made to feel! Period.
You've carved out this little part
for yourself in the world where you
get to be a voyeur, a hermit and a
lover whenever you feel like it and
the rest of us are just supposed to
feel so incredibly grateful for the
brief time you've touched our lives!
WELL, GO TO HELL! It isn't human not
to feel lonely - it isn't human not
be afraid! You're a hypocrite and
you're a phony!

ROBERT

(cries out)

I DON'T WANT TO NEED YOU!

FRANCESCA

WHY?

ROBERT

BECAUSE I CAN'T HAVE YOU!

FRANCESCA

WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

He throws a cup at the wall. It breaks apart. Covering his
face, Robert turns away from her as he holds onto the sink.
Francesca reaches for him but he pulls away, embarrassed.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

(softly)

Don't you see, I've got to know the
truth Robert. I've got to know the
truth or I'll go crazy. Either way.
Just tell me. But I can't act like
this is enough because it has to be.
I can't pretend I don't ... feel what
I feel because it's over tomorrow.

Robert, keeping his face from her, tries to tell her:

ROBERT

If I've done anything to make you
think that what's happened between us
is nothing new for me - is some
routine - then I do apologize.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (5)

FRANCESCA

What makes it different Robert?

Robert turns to face her. He is so hopelessly in love he can hardly find the words. His eyes fill up with tears.

ROBERT

Because ... if I even think about
tomorrow - if I ...

(voice cracks)

even think about leaving here without
you - I'm not sure I can ... that I-
(He shakes his head)

He can't even finish. He kneels down before her wrapping his arms around her and burying his face into her body. Francesca starts to cry - out of happiness, out of pain - holding onto him as if for dear life.

FRANCESCA

Oh God ... what are we going to do?

She kisses him - over and over, not wanting to be even an inch apart. As if any space between them might separate them forever.

Suddenly, OS, they hear a CAR DRIVE UP to the house. They panic. Francesca runs to the window to see:

MADGE, a girlfriend, has come for a visit. Madge is holding a homemade dessert.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd)

No. No. Where's your truck?

ROBERT

Behind the barn. I better go.

Francesca turns to him - speechless - not wanting him to go.

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Don't worry. I meant upstairs.

He exits. Francesca gathers herself and heads for the front entrance, quickly cleaning up the plates.

INT. FRONT HALL - DAY.

Francesca opens the door to Madge.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA

Madge?

MADGE

Hi. I made some brown betty. I sent
Floyd off to town with the boy. I said
(entering)

"Floyd, I'm going to visit my
girlfriend and spend the afternoon
and that's all there is to it. He
said whose going to make lunch? I
said I'm taking a sick day. Eat at
the diner" - isn't that hilarious.

(MOVES INTO KITCHEN)

He didn't dare raise an eyebrow - I
don't even want to tell you how late
he was out last night with those good
for nothings from the Sandford ranch.
I am so sorry honey I let two days
pass before I came by but with the
boy home the time just escapes me.
Have you heard from Richard? How's
the fair? God, it's hot.

Following her into the kitchen, Francesca doesn't know which
question to answer first.

EXT. PORCH - LATER THAT DAY.

Madge and Francesca sit facing the pasture beside a table
with coffee and brown betty. We parachute into the middle of
the scene.

MADGE

... I said to her, "what's the point
of summer school if all he's going to
do are these art projects. The boy
needs so much work in math and his
spelling is a nightmare ...

(CONTINUES...)

Francesca isn't listening. Her mind wanders.

FANTASY:

FRANCESCA

Madge. Please. Something's happened.
I've met someone.

(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA (cont'd)
I've fallen in love in a way I've
never thought could happen my entire
life. It's our last day together. I
feel like I'm going to die when he
leaves. Please. Help me.

MADGE
Oh honey. I'm so sorry. But you've
got to be grateful for even feeling
the little you've be given. Believe
me. Go to him. Don't let him leave
without these few precious hours
you've got left. And if you need
anyone to cry on, you know where I am.

END OF FANTASY:

Madge shoves a plate at her.

MADGE (Cont'd)
More brown betty?

Francesca takes the plate. She can't think straight.

MADGE (Cont'd)
... Anyway, I'm glad that's over
with. Sara doing so well though.
Everyone thought I was crazy having
them so far apart but ...
(CONTINUES...)

FANTASY:

Francesca stands behind Madge, as the latter chatters on MOS.
She calmly picks up the brown betty and, from behind, shoves
it into Madge's face and holds it there, trying to suffocate
her with it. Madge struggles.

END OF FANTASY:

Francesca's mind race as Madge continues:

MADGE (Cont'd)
... without one lesson. The
instructor couldn't believe it. So,
who knows - she may have talent.
How's Carolyn doing? What are her
plans for next year?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

Francesca realizes this is her moment. She holds her head and leans over, unsteadily.

MADGE (Cont'd)
Honey, what's wrong?

FRANCESCA
I don't know. I woke up a little dizzy. I didn't sleep well. I think I need to lay down.

MADGE
You want me to call the doctor?

FRANCESCA
No, no - I just didn't sleep well. I'm not used to sleeping alone. And this heat ... Would you mind?

MADGE
No, of course not. I'll just clear up.

FRANCESCA
No, leave it. I'll do it later. Listen, maybe you and Floyd can come for dinner on Saturday. I'm sure Richard'll have so many stories to tell you both about the fair and all.

MADGE
Oh that'll be nice.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY.

Francesca enters to find Richard, laying on the bed fully clothed. She sits beside him. He strokes her arm, then guides her to lay down. Once she's in his arms, he speaks.

ROBERT
Come with me.

Francesca knew he was going to say this. Either answer she gives frightens her.

FRANCESCA
Hold me.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

She turns to him and they embrace. Robert, however, fears only one response. On the soundtrack, we hear the song "DARN THAT DREAM".

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING.

The song continues over the next few images. Camera slowly pans from the radio, upon which the song is playing, to a beautifully set table and candles. It arrives on Robert preparing dinner.

INT. BEDROOM -

Camera pans the room from TWO OPENED SUITCASES, as Francesca packs to leave. She moves about the room as if with blinders on - focused on her task, refusing to take in any signs or memories that might hinder her. She is wearing A RED DRESS, with BUTTONS down the front.

INT. KITCHEN -

Robert stands at the sink rinsing out some utensils. Waiting for the water to turn hot, he looks out through the window above the sink. He sees a beautiful view of beautiful night. He pauses as it strikes him that this is a view Francesca has seen a million times - that soon she would not see ever again.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING -

Camera follows her as she exits the bedroom with her suitcases, then walks down the hall to the stairs, then down the staircase to the front hall.

She quietly sets the suitcases down, hearing the radio and Robert in the kitchen. She pauses, then enters the living room. One of the throw pillows has fallen off the couch. She replaces it then takes a moment to look about the room. She slowly sits down on the couch.

WE HEAR VOICES OF THE PAST, auditory memories conjured up by each stick of furniture Francesca sees.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
Michael, get off the back of that
chair! What did I tell you!

WE HEAR HIM FALL AND BEGIN TO CRY.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA (Cont'd; V.O.)
Are you all right honey. Let me see...

The sounds of Christmas music ... of toddlers running and laughing ... A birthday party for Carolyn ...

CAROLYN (V.O.)
Mama look - look at the dress Aunt
Patty sent!

RICHARD (V.O.)
Franny, BONANZA's on!

ROBERT
Francesca?

Francesca snaps out for it and turns to find Robert.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
I've got dinner.

She smiles.

INT. KITCHEN -

They eat by candlelight. Neither speaks. Neither is very hungry.

ROBERT
Would you like a beer?

She smiles and shakes her head. Robert opens a bottle and takes a sip.

ROBERT (Cont'd)
You know what I'd like to do before
we leave? I'd like to take a picture
of you - at Roseman bridge. Maybe
just as the sun's coming up.

FRANCESCA
Yes. I'd like that.

Pause. Robert smiles back and takes another sip. Then, knowing full well what hangs heavy between them, he asks:

ROBERT
Tell me why you're not coming with me?

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

Francesca stops pretending to eat. She looks at him, having forgotten how well he can read her.

FRANCESCA

No matter how I keep turning it around in my mind - it doesn't seem like the right thing.

ROBERT

For who?

FRANCESCA

For anyone. They'll never be able to live through the talk. Richard will never be able to. He doesn't deserve that. He hasn't hurt anyone in his life.

ROBERT

(getting aggressive)

Then he can move! People move!

FRANCESCA

His family's lived for for almost a hundred years. Richard doesn't know how to live anywhere else. And the kids ...

ROBERT

The kids are grown! They don't need you anymore. You told me that. They hardly talk to you.

FRANCESCA

No, they don't say much. But Carolyn's 16. She's just about to find out about all this for herself - she's going to fall in love, she's going to try and figure out how to build a life with someone. If I leave what does that say to her?

ROBERT

What about us? What about me?

FRANCESCA

You've got to know deep down that the minute we leave here, it'll all change.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBERT

Yeah. It could get better.

FRANCESCA

No matter how much distance we put between us and this house, I bring with it with me ... And I'll feel it every minute we're together. And I'll blame loving you for how much it hurts. And then even these four days won't be anything more than something sordid and ... a mistake.

ROBERT

(desparately)

Francesca listen to me. You think what's happened to us happens to just anybody? What we feel for each other? How much we feel? We're not even two separate people anymore. Some people search their whole lives for it and wind up alone - most people don't even think it exists and you're going to tell me that giving it up is the right thing to do? That staying here alone in a marriage, alone in a town you hate, in a house you don't feel apart of anymore - you're telling me that's the right thing to do!?

FRANCESCA

We are the choices we've made Robert.

ROBERT

(rises)

TO HELL WITH YOU!

He turns his back on her.

FRANCESCA

Robert. Please.

(desparate to explain)

You don't understand - no one does. When a woman makes the choice to marry, to have children - in one way her life begins but in another way it stops. You build a life of details.

(more)

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANCESCA (cont'd)

You become a mother, a wife and you stop and stay steady so that your children can move. And when they leave they take your life of details with them. And then you're expected move again only you don't remember what moves you because no one has asked in so long. Not even yourself. You never in your life think that love like this can happen to you.

ROBERT

But now that you have it -

FRANCESCA

I want to keep it forever. I want to love you the way I do now the rest of my life. Don't you understand - we'll lose it if we leave. I can't make an entire life disappear to start a new one. All I can do is try to hold onto to both. Help me. Help me not lose loving you.

She embraces him. He wraps his arms around her. He whispers.

ROBERT

Don't leave me. Don't leave me alone.
Please.

This breaks her heart, knowing how hard it is for him to say this. She holds him tighter, until -

ROBERT (Cont'd)

Listen. Maybe you feel this way, maybe you don't. Maybe it's just because you're in this house. Maybe ... maybe when they come back tomorrow you'll feel differently. Don't you think that's possible?

FRANCESCA

I don't know. Please ...

ROBERT

I'm going to be here a few more days. I'll be at the Inn. We have some time. Let's not say any more now.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANCESCA
No. Don't do this.

ROBERT
I CAN'T SAY GOODBYE YET! We'll leave
it for now. We're not saying goodbye.
We're not making any decision. Maybe
you'll change your mind. Maybe we'll
accidentally run into each other and
... and you'll change your mind.

FRANCESCA
Robert if that happens, you'll have
to decide. I won't be able to.

She cries in his arms. He kisses her as if for the last time.
Then, quickly, separate himself and leaves the house.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE -

Robert walks briskly towards his truck not wanting to look
back. He gets in, starts it up and drives away.

Francesca exits the house and watches the truck recede into
the distance. She stops when she reaches the front gate,
leaning against it. She murmurs to herself -

FRANCESCA
Keep going. Please.

The truck drives away. Then, suddenly, STOPS. Francesca's
heart quickens. She watches as the truck stands on the road
in the distance. As if Robert was deciding to turn around or
keep going. Francesca waits. Suddenly, the door to the truck
flies open and Robert exits. Francesca loses all restraint.

She opens the gate but her dress is caught on it. Robert
stands by the truck. Francesca tears at the dress, ripping
off a button which falls to the ground. She runs down the
road. Seeing her, Robert runs towards her as well.

They grab each other furiously. For these few moments, all
considerations are gone. As he kisses her, he murmurs:

ROBERT
I forgot to take your picture.

She laughs through her tears as they continue to kiss. Camera
pans up to the road beyond Robert's truck.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

WE SEE RICHARD'S TRUCK DRIVING TOWARDS THEM. For a moment it seems as if they will be caught until we realize RICHARD'S TRUCK IS BEING SUPERIMPOSED as the LIGHT GRADUALLY BRIGHTENS TO REVEAL:

MORNING.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE -

Richard, Michael and Carolyn drive down the road toward the house. Robert's truck, and all traces of him, are gone.

Francesca steps into the doorway in a house dress to welcome her family home - wondering how this will feel.

INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - EVENING.

The Johnson family has dinner as FRANCESCA NARRATES:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
You all came home. And with you, my
life of details.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE -

Everyone is doing various daily chores.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
A day or two past and with each
thought of him, a task would present
itself like a life saver, pulling me
further and further away from those
four days.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING.

Francesca is reading. Richard watches TV.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I was grateful. I felt safe.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINTERSET; MAIN STREET - DAY.

Richard and Francesca drive up to the general store to buy groceries. Francesca heads for the store as Richard crosses the street.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA
Want anything special for dinner?

ROBERT
Hmmm. How about that brown sugar meat
loaf you make?

FRANCESCA
(smiles)
OK.

She enters the store.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY.

Francesca makes small talk with the grocery lady as she buys what she needs.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY.

Francesca places a bag of groceries on the front seat of the truck, then gets in herself to wait for Richard. She takes a deep breath and removes a handkerchief from her bag to wipe the sweat from her face. She freezes -

Through the windshield, she sees ROBERT standing beside his truck across the street, staring at her. Her hearts stops. For a moment, she isn't even sure he's real.

The town moves about it's business around them. But neither notice or care. Whatever safety or forgetfulness she felt is gone. Her feelings burst through. She sits there helpless before him - willing to go or stay depending on what he did.

He begins walking towards her. She prepares herself. Her life will change - it has to. There's no turning back.

But the closer Robert gets, the clearer he can see that she is crying. And he stops.

Without any words, he realizes what taking her with him would mean. With just a glance, he sacrifices her. With their eyes locked in the middle of Main Street - in front of the whole town - they smile and say goodbye.

Robert returns to his truck. He drives off down Main Street, taking the first left.

Moments later, Richard throws the feed bag into the back of his truck and gets in. Francesca is wiping her eyes.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

He doesn't notice. He drives off in the same direction as Robert.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
For a moment, I didn't know where I was. And for a split second, the thought crossed my mind that he really didn't want me - that it was easy to walk away.

As they pass the corner where Robert made his left turn, Francesca turns to look and sees:

ROBERT'S TRUCK IS PARKED just off the corner. As if he had to drive away to get out of sight, but couldn't bring himself to drive any further.

The sight of him hiding there breaks Francesca's heart, she turns away from her husband to hide the tears.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

WE REPLAY THE OPENING SCENE FROM THE MOVIE:

Carolyn is in the yard picking vegetables. Her parents drive up in their truck. She steps out with her bag of groceries and walks briskly into the house. Richard follows more slowly with his bag of feed, stopping at the gate to pick up the button from Francesca's red dress.

INT. KITCHEN -

Francesca enters and places her groceries on the counter. She tries to compose herself. She sees the radio before her. She turns it on. THE DINAH WASHINGTON SONG "I'LL CLOSE MY EYES" evokes every feeling of love and loss within her. She begins to cry.

She hears Richard enter the house. She stands out of sight, holding her hand to her mouth to muffle her crying. She hears:

MICHAEL (O.S.)
Dad! You bought the wrong feed!

RICHARD
What?!

She hears Richard exit the house.

EXT. LUCY REDFIELD'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

A hand knocks on a door. LUCY REDFIELD opens it to find Francesca standing there with a cake.

FRANCESCA

Hi. I'm Francesca Johnson. I just feel awful I haven't come to visit sooner. I hope I'm not interrupting anything. Is it too late?

Lucy is shocked and moved at the same time.

LUCY

No. Not at all.

FRANCESCA

I was wondering if ... maybe you'd like some company.

(almost manic)

I baked a cake!

Lucy looks at the cake. She's a little dazed by all this.

LUCY

Uh ... sure. Please. Come in. I'll make coffee.

Francesca enters. Lucy closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. IOWA LAKEFRONT - DAWN.

Michael continues reading beside Carolyn as the sun rises.

MICHAEL

"We became inseparable Lucy and I. The funny thing is, I didn't tell her about Robert until years later. But, for some reason, being with her somehow made me feel it was safe to think about him. To continue loving him. The town loved talking about the two of us but we didn't care. And neither did your father. Which I thought was a lovely thing. I received Robert's letter and my photograph soon after. I always wondered if your father found them. I was never quite sure ..."

CUT TO:

CONTINUED

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING.

At dinner, Richard remembers the button he found.

RICHARD
Oh, Franny is this yours?

Francesca sees the button. She speaks her original lines MOS
as HER NARRATION is heard:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
I almost told him. In that moment I
felt as if I couldn't hold it back.
If he really loved me maybe he'd
understand.

She returns to her meal. The family eats in silence.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd; V.O.)
But love won't obey our expectations.
It's mystery is pure and absolute.
What Robert and I had, could not
continue if we were together. What
Richard and I shared would vanish if
we were apart. But how I wanted to
share this. How would our lives have
changed if I had? Could anyone else
have seen the beauty of it?

INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - NIGHT.

Francesca moves about the kitchen with a frantic pace as she puts the finishing touches on a cake. Placing the frosting bowl in the sink, she hears someone upstairs exiting their bedroom. She quickly gathers the cake and her bag and exits through the screen door.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT.

Fighting tears, she walks to the truck from around the house. She gets in and starts it. She vaguely hears her daughter from the front door:

CAROLYN
Mom?

But she doesn't acknowledge it and drives away.

EXT. MOTOR INN - NIGHT.

Her truck approaches and then speeds past the Inn where Robert is staying. We can see his truck in the parking lot.

CONTINUED:

1979

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - NIGHT.

And older Francesca cares for a sickly Robert. He lies in bed beside an array of medicines and tonics. She wipes his forehead with a cool cloth as he takes his pills.

FRANCESCA

Better?

He nods. She smiles. She shuts off the light and lays beside him.

RICHARD

Franny?

FRANCESCA

Hmmm?

RICHARD

I just want to say ... I know you had your own dreams. I'm sorry I couldn't give them to you. I love you so much.

Francesca turns to him. She is so touched, tears fill her eyes. She nestles close to him, wrapping her arms around him.

1982

EXT. DES MOINES -

Francesca eats at the same restaurant she shared with Robert.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

After your father died, I tried to get in touch with Robert but found out he had left the National Geographic soon after he Madison County. No one seemed to know where he was. My only connections to him were the places we'd been to that one day. And so each week, I'd re-visit them.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY.

Francesca greets a UPS man with an envelope and a package.

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CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
And then one day, I received the
letter from his attorney, with a
package.

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM -

Francesca reads the letter informing her of Robert's death. She then unwraps the package to reveal a MEDALLION with her name inscribed and A PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK; a published collection of black and white photos by Robert Kincaid entitled "FOUR DAYS". Beautiful, dramatic black and white representations of love and passion, loneliness and pain, and union . On the front page there reads an inscription "FOR F.":

ROBERT (V.O.)
"There is a pleasure in the pathless
woods ... There is a rapture on the
lonely shore ... There is society
where none intrudes ... By the deep
sea and music in its roar ... I love
not man the less, but Nature more ...
From these our interviews, in which
I steal ... From all I may be, or
have been before... To mingle with the
Universe and feel ... What I can
ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal"

The quote is Byron's. She smiles with pride as she cries.

CUT TO:

EXT. IOWA LAKEFRONT - EARLY MORNING.

Michael sits with his arm around Carolyn as they look out over the lake. The notebooks are closed, but Francesca's narrations continues over the next few scenes:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
There has not been a day since that
I have not thought of him. When he
said we were no longer two people, he
was right.

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM -

Carolyn, looking through her mom's closet, finds the summer dress she bought in Des Moines to wear for Robert.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

We were bound together as tightly as two people can be. If it hadn't been for him, I don't think I would have lasted on the farm all these years. Remember that dress of mine you wanted Carolyn - the one you said I never wore. Well I know I was silly. But to me, it was as if you were asking to wear my wedding dress to go to the movies.

Carolyn smiles as she holds the dress before her.

INT. MOTEL - DAY.

A tired Michael finds his way through the motel to his room.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

After reading all this, I hope you can now understand my burial request. It was not the ravings of some mad old lady. I gave my life to my family. I wish to give Robert what is left of me.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -

Michael enters to find his two children watching TV and an angry Betty folding clothes.

CHILDREN

Hey Dad!

He looks at them lovingly, then at Betty who angrily motions for him to follow her into the bedroom.

She slams the door behind him and talks in an irate whisper:

BETTY

You have been out all night long! Do I have a right to ask where you've been or is this a family secret?

Michael just looks at her. He gently takes her hand.

MICHAEL

No. No more secrets.

He kisses her hand. Betty is floored.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED:

MICHAEL (Cont'd)
Do I make you happy Betty?
(she is stunned)
Because I want to. I want to more
than anything.

He gently kisses her cheek then embraces her. Betty - for the first time in her life - is utterly speechless.

INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM -

Wearing her mother's dress, Carolyn sits on the bed holding the phone, waiting for Steve to pick up. In her other hand, she holds the divorce lawyers card.

CAROLYN (ON PHONE)
(gently)
Hi Steve? It's me... Good. You?
...Listen, we have to talk ... Well,
how about now?...Uh, no - I've
decided I'm going to stay for a
while...I don't know how long...No,
I won't be coming back ... I'm not
angry Steve. I'm not angry at all...
(smiles)

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAY.

Michael and his family stand beside Carolyn and a Priest.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)
"I gave Lucy his photography book. If
you're interested, take a look. If my
words still leave somethings unclear,
perhaps his pictures can illuminate.
After all, that's what an artist does
best ..."

Michael receives the urn from the priest. He and Carolyn walk away from the group towards the bridge. They stop. Carolyn removes the lid. Michael sets his mother's ashes free.

FRANCESCA (Cont'd; V.O.)
"I love you both with all my heart.
Do what you have to to be happy in
this life. There is so much beauty."

THE END.