

DOG STAR

FADE IN

EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - MAINE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The state highway winds its way through the hilly Maine countryside. CARLENE WATERS, 30, roars down the road, driving too fast in her sexy red sports car, wind blowing her hair.

Ahead, she sees a DOG standing at the side of the road. She slows a little and swerves out to make sure she doesn't hit it. She looks closely at the Dog (it just happens to be your favorite mid-sized breed - bigger than a terrier, smaller than a Great Dane - personally, I see a smart-looking mutt) and then guns her engine as she drives past.

The Dog watches her disappear around a curve, then trots after her.

EXT. TELEPHONE POLE - DAY

At the top of the pole, NICK STILLIS - 30, handsome - checks the million wires inside a major junction box. Below Nick, CORKY HAVERS leans into his harness - two years younger, likes to talk and drum on things. He lightly, rhythmically, taps the cross-bar with a couple of screwdrivers.

CORKY

Tell me how a couple of squirrels can almost bring down the town's entire phone system. Why the hell do they chew on these damn things, anyway? Wire can't taste all that good.

NICK

Probably why they call them squirrels. Hand me up some of the eighteen gauge...

CORKY

(covering the mouthpiece
on his handset)
Shoosh! You better plug in and
listen to what we got here.

Nick hooks his handset into the junction box - heavy breathing, panting and moaning - serious phone sex at its best. Nick is momentarily caught up in the call.

CORKY (cont'd)

(whispering)
Can you believe that Maxine?
(MORE)

CORKY (cont'd)

What I wouldn't give for a late night call from her.

NICK

(yanking his phone out of the box)

All right, all right. You know it's a federal offense to listen in on private lines.

CORKY

(still whispering)

Oh, sure, right, Mr. holy-than-thou, like you never listened in on anybody.

NICK

I do not listen! I never listen. And if I ever did, it was official business to divert an impending disaster.

Corky ignores Nick and listens to the phone sex.

Nick quietly slides his leg around the pole and kicks Corky's foot off the pole's brace. Corky drops like a rock - his harness stopping him hard after about a foot.

CORKY

(shouting)

Damn, are you crazy? You could've killed me!

PHONE SEX

Yes, baby, yes, but what a way to go...

After a beat, the two men burst out laughing while Corky dangles on the pole like a baby in a backpack. Nick disconnects the live line.

Below them, the red sports car purrs to a stop.

CORKY

Hey, Carlene!

CARLENE

What the heck are you doing?

Corky grins, still dangling, loving the straight line.

CORKY

Oh, just hang...

CARLENE
 (walks on his joke)
 Got it. Got it. Nick! I need to see
 you later.

Both Nick and Corky are surprised.

NICK
 Me? Later? Sure...I mean...when?
 Where?

CARLENE
 As soon as you can. At my shop.
 Today!

Before Nick can respond, she kicks the car into gear and
 squeals off.

CORKY
 Man, that is some hot stuff.

He looks up and laughs at Nick's expression.

CORKY (cont'd)
 The car, man, the car! Jeez, dude,
 how come every time that lady
 speaks to you, you act like some
 squirrel has been chewing on your
 wires?

Nick scowls and shoves Corky's harness with his foot. Corky
 swings out a little and then back to the pole. Corky pulls a
 crimper out of his belt and hands it up to Nick. He starts
 drumming on a glass insulator with his screwdrivers.

CORKY (cont'd)
 Can you tell me something?

NICK
 What?

CORKY
 I mean, I know you guys dated back
 in high school.

NICK
 Oh, Jesus. Here we go. Yes, one
 date.

CORKY
 Yeah, that's what I mean. The
 captain of the football team and
 the class president. The prom. The
 perfect night. The perfect date.

NICK
You forgot "the full moon."

CORKY
Yeah, all that. And then you said something to her. And she's been pissed at you ever since.

Nick tosses the crimper at Corky, mostly to shut him up, but Corky, deftly catching the tool, doesn't take the hint.

CORKY (cont'd)
I mean, pissed. This ain't just idle curiosity, boss man. Saturday is the Big Day for me. I've got until Saturday to figure out everything that life has to offer.

NICK
That should be a bit of a challenge.

CORKY
Just tell me what it was. I don't ever want to say those words, whatever they were. Please, man, what was it you said? What did you say that could piss off a woman for twelve years?

NICK
Hey, there, puppy.

CORKY
What?

Then he realizes that Nick is looking down at the road. The Dog looks up at them.

CORKY (cont'd)
Hey, mutt. How you doin'?

He drums a little flourish on the insulator. The Dog turns and trots across the road to the back of the "Maine Telecom" truck.

CORKY (cont'd)
No, poochie. Nothing in there, o.k?

The Dog pulls out a two-foot section of copper pipe and drops it on the pavement. It PINGS as it bounces.

CORKY (cont'd)
Well, if you wanna play catch,
little doggie, you're gonna have to
bring the pipe up here.

The Dog looks up at Corky, picks the pipe up and drops it again. The metal RINGS again.

CORKY (cont'd)
What are you doing, boy?

The Dog trots off in the direction that Carlene drove away. Corky looks up at Nick.

CORKY (cont'd)
You have any idea what that was
about?

NICK shrugs and watches the Dog trot away.

NICK
Haven't got a clue. Go on down.
I'll be done here in a minute.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The Dog looks back as Corky climbs down the pole, and then trots on.

It tops a small hill and stops to look down into a small sea-side town. It's New England traditional at its best - wide tree-lined streets, a pretty park in the center of town and a sheltered cove filled with small craft of all types. Past the light house, the ocean gleams to the horizon. Neighborhoods stretch out to the hill the Dog stands on.

It trots down the hill toward the town, passing the "Welcome to Anchor Bay" sign.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The Dog trots down a wide sidewalk, glancing streetward as Nick and Corky drive by. Voices coming from STILLS' BARBERSHOP catch the Dog's attention and it stops and peers in the open front door.

INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY

Irascible old JOHNNY STILLS, wearing a white barber's tunic, is cutting OLD MAN MILLER'S hair and talking to his son, CHARLES, a handsome 25 year old. No one notices the Dog.

JOHNNY

Oh, baloney. I ain't trying to push you into nothing. And I ain't being disrespectful of your privacy neither. All I said was that your Mom and me would like some grand-kids someday.

CHARLES

I can remember when you told me that all you wanted was for me to find the "right someone" and settle down.

JOHNNY

Well, that was a long time ago.

CHARLES

And I did it, right, Dad?

JOHNNY

Listen...

CHARLES

I did it, right?

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You did it. You found someone. Good for you.
(to Old Man Miller)
Tilt forward a little.

CHARLES

Yes, good for me. Now, how is the kitchen re-model coming along?

Johnny's demeanor brightens considerably.

JOHNNY

I got to admit. That guy does a great job. He just put in the counters today. They're...well, they're perfect.

CHARLES

What did I tell you?

JOHNNY

You were right.
(to Old Man Miller)
O.k., straighten up.
(to Charles)
(MORE)

JOHNNY (cont'd)

Who would have thought when you two were playing football together in high school that he'd end up being such a great carpenter? The man is a gosh darn artist.

ROBERT, 25, strikingly handsome in his carpenter clothes, ENTERS through the back door.

ROBERT

My ears are ringing. Are you two talking about someone I know?

CHARLES

Hey, Robert. Dad was just telling me...

JOHNNY

I was just telling him that the kitchen looks good. Real...

Robert and Charles EMBRACE. Robert pulls away from Charles and looks him in the eye.

ROBERT

Did you talk to her?

Charles starts quivering with excitement, almost jumping up and down.

CHARLES

Yes.

ROBERT

And? And? Come on! What did she say?

CHARLES

Yes.

ROBERT

Yes?

CHARLES

YES!

Charles and Robert both cheer with delight and leap into each other's arms. Johnny, looking everywhere in the room but at Charles and Robert, shakes his head vigorously.

JOHNNY

Oh sheesh. Oh for criminy sake.

Old Man Miller pulls the cloth off and stands, also avoiding looking at the two men. He hands Johnny money.

OLD MAN MILLER

Geez, look at the time. Gotta go.

He's pretty spry as he nearly runs out the door. The Dog moves out of his way and then looks back into the shop.

JOHNNY

My god. Would you two calm down a little? What's going on?

Still hugging, they turn to Johnny.

CHARLES

I waited to tell you until I was sure.

He exchanges a look with Robert.

ROBERT

It's Carlene. She's going to sell her place to us. We're going to...

Overcome by emotion, Robert runs forward and sweeps Johnny into a big hug.

JOHNNY

Oh, for...listen...I...that's...

Johnny isn't sure where to put his hands, but finally Robert's joy gets through to him and he pats the man on the shoulder.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

Now, that's great. Great. Why don't you tell me all about it?

Gently disengages Robert and takes half a step backward.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

Why don't you sit down over there and tell me all about it?

Robert, still swept up in joy, grabs Johnny's arms.

ROBERT

Can I...can I call you "Dad"?

Johnny tries so hard to maintain a smile, but it's hard.

JOHNNY

Listen, that's nice. But why don't
you just call me...

BARNEY

Hey, poochie.

BARNEY, the chubby, pith-helmeted mailman, ENTERS. The Dog looks up at him, woofs a little, then walks away.

BARNEY (cont'd)

It's the uniform. Drives 'em nuts.
So, what's going on? Something I
should know about?

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

The Dog trots down the sidewalk, passing Old Man Miller limping along. When it comes to the doorway of "Betty's Antiques and Restorations," it looks up and down the sidewalk and walks into the store.

INT. BETTY'S ANTIQUES - DAY

The Dog ENTERS and immediately turns to the right, where there is a space between a dresser and a cupboard full of old toys. The antique store is a combination dusty old junk store and classy antique emporium. Some tacky stuff and some truly elegant pieces. At the moment, BETTY, 60's, down-to-earth and yet inherently classy herself, is showing a RICH TOURIST, his WIFE and their TODDLER some beautifully restored antique iron bed frames.

BETTY

We do all restoration work in
house. That's a powder enamel,
baked on.

TOURIST

Looks terrific.

BETTY

It'll last and last. We can widen
the frames to queen and king size.

WIFE

That's great, but we're really
interested in the armoire over
here.

They walk over to a large, gorgeous, dark wood armoire. The Toddler pulls on Mommy's hand, wanting to go look at the neat pile of Teddy bears. Distracted by the armoire, she lets the little tyke go.

WIFE (cont'd)

I love this.

BETTY

Me too. It's an original Berenson.
It's solid cherry. Here, smell
this.

She pulls open a drawer and both she and the Wife smell the inside of the drawer.

BETTY (cont'd)

Faint, but you can smell it.

WIFE

Lovely. How much are you asking?

BETTY

Actually, I'm not sure I want to
sell it.

As this conversation continues the Toddler heads right for the open door, toward the street.

WIFE

Oh, honey, this is just perfect for
the country house.

TOURIST

It would look splendid in the
master.

The Toddler almost makes the door. The Dog, with an air of resignation, rises and steps in front of the Toddler.

BETTY

Well, these Berensons are always
part of a set. I've been looking
for years for the other piece.

TOURIST

Well, if you're holding on to it
for yourself, why is it in the show
room?

The little guy can't stop and runs right into the Dog's furry side. The Toddler bounces off and plops down on his diaper. The Dog looks at him for a second, then goes back to its little niche.

BETTY

No, it's not that. I'll sell the
whole set, but not until its
complete.

WIFE

Well, can we give you a card?

The Toddler clambers laboriously to his feet, grinning ear to ear. He trundles over to the Dog, who sighs heavily. The Toddler throws his arms clumsily around the Dog's neck and hugs it tightly.

TODDLER

Doggie.

BETTY

Sure, leave me your card. If I ever find...

Old Man Miller ENTERS the store, stepping past the Dog and the Toddler without noticing them.

OLD MAN MILLER

Betty! I just heard...

TODDLER

Doggie!

WIFE

Sammy!

She hurries over to her son and picks him up. The kid is so happy about his new friend.

TODDLER

Doggie!

WIFE

You know, you should keep dogs on a leash.

Betty can't see the Dog from where she is standing.

BETTY

If I owned a dog, I would.

WIFE

(icy)

Are we ready, dear?

She EXITS, sneering at the Dog on the way out.

TODDLER

Bye bye, doggie!

TOURIST

Well...uh...thank you.

BETTY
I'll call you if...

TOURIST
Yes, that would be fine.

He EXITS. Old Man Miller barely sees them go, he's so eager to talk to Betty.

OLD MAN MILLER
Carlene! Is it true about Carlene?

The Dog EXITS.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

As the Dog trots down the sidewalk, RICK and RUTHIE, two 11-year-old kids, zip by on their skateboards. Each of them is holding a baseball bat and, as they roll along, they bounce a baseball back and forth from bat to bat.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Nick, standing near the passenger side window where Corky is sitting, tops off the gas tank. Both of them are enjoying a conversation with BETHANY, the stunning 21-year-old mechanic.

CORKY
So, yeah. It's one of those concert thingies on Thursday night. Bethany, you wanna go with me?

BETHANY
You mean like on a date?

CORKY
Exactly like a date. Identical. You couldn't tell them apart.

Bethany leans forward, her overalls straining a bit to contain her. She cups Corky's chin.

BETHANY
You know I've always had a soft spot in my heart for you, Corky.

Corky's eyes widen - suddenly it's looking pretty good.

CORKY
No kidding?

BETHANY

But...aren't you kind of ... uh ...
engaged ... sort of ... to my ...
uh ... big sister?

Corky thuds back to reality.

CORKY

Well, we wouldn't necessarily have
to tell her, would we?

Bethany laughs. When she takes her fingers from Corky's face,
they leave grease marks.

BETHANY

How about you, Nick? You got a
date?

NICK

Not yet. You asking?

Bethany takes a breath to speak (she may very well be
preparing to say yes), but there is a double THUMP from the
other side of the truck. A baseball rolls out and hits Nick's
foot. He picks it up.

NICK (cont'd)

What the heck?

He and Bethany hurry around the truck and see Rick and Ruthie
in a tangle on the pavement, bats and skateboards in a heap.

NICK (cont'd)

Rick! Ruthie! Are you all right?

RICK

122.

RUTHIE

123. I was counting.

RICK

Well, so was I.

Bethany shakes her head.

BETHANY

These two are all right. I'll go
ring you up.

She trots off toward the office. Nick and Corky and even 11-
year-old Rick can't help but watch her go.

RUTHIE
Oh, for crying out loud.

Nick, embarrassed, clears his throat and helps the two children up.

NICK
122 what?

RUTHIE
123! 123 bounces bat-to-bat.

RICK
It was only 122, but we were on our skateboards.

NICK
You guys have to be more careful than that. You could hurt yourselves.

RICK
Naw, we're careful. We always watch where we're going!

NICK
You ran into my truck!

RUTHIE
Well, he has a point there, air head.

RICK
I guess so, pin brain.
(to Nick)
Well, it's really just a way to practice our concentration, like you said, Coach. Concentration is everything.

RUTHIE
You always say that.

NICK
That's because it's always true. But the trick is what you concentrate on. When you're on the street, you concentrate on all those big metal things, you know the ones I'm talking about. Right?

RUTHIE
Like, the cars?

RICK
And the trucks?

NICK
And the choo-choo trains, if you're
anywhere near the tracks.

He tosses Ruthie the baseball. The two kids grab their bats,
right their skateboards and are off in an instant.

RICK
See you tomorrow, Coach!

NICK
Watch where you're going!

He watches them for a moment. Behind him, the Dog jumps up
into the bed of the truck. Nick turns just as Bethany
approaches with his receipt.

BETHANY
Here's your receipt. You guys going
down to Roma's?

NICK
You got it. Want a ride?

BETHANY
Naw, Bernie said he was going to
bring his '64 Mustang in. Man, that
'64. I'm dyin'.

NICK
Have fun, sweetie. See you later.

Bethany leans over to look in at Corky.

BETHANY
I'll tell Sis you said "Hi!"

Corky blushes, then winks at her. Bethany, straightens, winks
at Nick. Nick gets into the truck and starts the engine. As
he drives away, Bethany sees the Dog in the back of the
truck. She grins and waves.

BETHANY (cont'd)
Woof woof!

Corky leans out of the truck window and howls at the moon.

Suddenly Bethany remembers something and shouts after them.

BETHANY (cont'd)
 Hey! You guys! Did you hear about
 Carlene?

They are too far away. The Dog winks at her, though.

EXT. ROMA'S PRETENTIOUS DINER -DAY

Nick parks the truck under a sign reading, in artistic script: "Roma's Pretentious Diner". What was once a typical tin diner has been expanded, enhanced and decorated into a classy joint that still celebrates its diner heritage. The tables on the patio have a great view of the bay below.

As he and Corky get out of the truck (and the dog hops down from the back) Nick sees ROMA DIPASCO - mid-30's, gorgeous in a been-there-done-that way - talking to TED PETERS, very handsome in his expensively casual clothes. Ted shakes Roma's hand and walks away. Nick watches Ted go, puzzled.

Roma spots Nick and Corky and waves. The two men grab a table closer to the building, leaving the view to the tourists. The Dog ambles around the enclosing shrubbery until it is close to the table.

Corky knits his eyebrows over all the French words on the menu. Roma nods and smiles to some tourists and approaches the table.

ROMA
 Hey, there...

NICK
 Was that...what's his name?

ROMA
 (a little exasperated)
 Hello, sweetheart.

She leans over and gives him a very warm kiss. He finally responds, but can't get his mind off Ted.

NICK
 It was, wasn't it?
 (then a little
 embarrassed)
 Hi, gorgeous.

ROMA
 Good to see you too. Yes, it was.

NICK
 What the hell is he doing in town?

ROMA

You know, I just plain forgot to ask him. Him being from the big city and all, I figured he must have some sort of Master Plan, and that it must be Top Secret.

NICK

Sorry, it was just a surprise to see him.

She tousles his hair.

ROMA

Not to worry. Now, what can we get you fellas for lunch?

Corky looks timidly up at her.

CORKY

Uh...Roma, any way I can get a cheeseburger?

ROMA

Sure, bouillabaisse it is.

CORKY

And fries?

ROMA

Veggie Jubilee salad.

CORKY

And a big, thick, chocolate...

ROMA

...bottle of sparkling lime water.

Corky sinks into his chair - he knew all along what was going to happen.

CORKY

Ice. I want ice with the water.
Lots of ice.

ROMA

You bet. Anything you want.
(to Nick)
And you, sir?

NICK

I'll take the special.

ROMA

Good choice. I gotta run, boys. Be back in a few.

She has seen some more tourists hesitantly approaching the diner. She greets them effusively and guides them to a good table.

CORKY

Man, just once. Just once I wish she'd actually write down what I order and actually...

An expensive sedan drives past the diner, Ted Peters at the wheel. Both Nick and the Dog watch him drive past.

NICK

Damn, it was him.

CORKY

It was who? Who was it?

NICK

Ted Peters. It's been seven years.

CORKY

Ted Peters? Who the hell is Ted... Jesus! You mean Ted? That Ted?

CHARLES

You bet "that Ted."

Charles (Nick's brother) and Robert have approached the table. They are still flushed with the excitement of the news that they shared at the barbershop.

ROBERT

You gentlemen mind some company?

CORKY

Hey, guys. No, sit down. You know who just walked outta here?

Charles and Robert sit.

ROBERT

Sure do. In fact, we've got some news. Big news. Nick... Well, I'll let your little brother tell you.

NICK

Well, come on, Little Bro. What's going on?

CHARLES

It's great, Big Bro. It's really great.

SAME - ACROSS THE PATIO

Roma talks to NANCY, a young waitress cleaning the tables with a roll of paper towels.

ROMA

Keep 'em spotless, hon. Noon rush is just about to hit.

NANCY

You bet, Roma. You want me to...

From across the patio, Nick's voice is loud and clear.

NICK

What?

Roma and the Waitress exchange a look. The paper towels roll across the table.

Nick stands at the table. This time his voice attracts the attention of the diner customers.

NICK (cont'd)

When?

The towels unroll and the cardboard cylinder falls to the ground and rolls under a bush.

ROMA

I better check this out.

She heads toward Nick's table.

SAME - BACK AT NICK'S TABLE

NICK

I gotta go.
(to Roma)
I'll be back later.

He hurries past Roma toward the truck. The Dog watches him.

Roma almost shouts after Nick, but instead turns and sits down at the table. Corky picks up two spoons and starts nervously drumming on the edge of the table.

ROMA

What's up with him? Is he all right?

As they speak the Dog (still on the other side of the bushes) starts to follow Nick, then hesitates as Nick climbs into the truck. The Dog takes a couple steps toward the truck, looks back into the patio, takes another step toward the truck, and then pushes through the bushes into the patio.

CHARLES

Oh, he's fine. He just found out about us and Carlene. You've heard?

ROMA

I've got the basics. I saw Ted Peters a few minutes ago.

Corky taps away quietly with the spoons.

CORKY

Man. Man oh man.

The Dog runs around the inner edge of the bushes and picks up the cardboard tube from the paper towels.

CORKY (cont'd)

You sure everything is going to be all right for Saturday?

ROMA

Sure it will. Why shouldn't it be?

Suddenly Corky's drumming takes on a DIFFERENT TONE. The Dog has stepped up beside him and slipped the cardboard tube under his spoons. He drums a little more.

CORKY

What the hell? Hey, pooch.

Everyone else is watching Nick drive away. They don't see the Dog. The Dog looks up at Corky for moment, cocking its head. Then it runs off.

CORKY (cont'd)

Damn.

ROBERT

Maybe we ought to follow him.

ROMA

No, he'll be all right.

Corky tries drumming on the tube again, then puts the spoons down and picks up the tube.

CORKY

He's just surprised, that's all.
It's been a surprising day.

He squints through the tube as if it were a telescope and focuses on the Dog as it runs after the truck. Then he swings the tube to one side and sees the waitress Nancy close by.

CORKY (cont'd)

Nancy! Hey, listen...

NANCY

Corky, you hit on me yesterday.

CORKY

Have you changed your mind yet?

NANCY

(to Roma)

Jesus, Roma, how many days 'til
Saturday?

EXT. MAIN STREET -DAY

Nick drives up Main Street, the Dog running a block behind. The Dog spots an alley leading away from the street, doubles its speed and vanishes into the alley.

INT. NICK'S TRUCK

Up ahead, Nick sees Carlene talking to Ted in front of "Pop's Pet Shoppe." They briefly hug and Ted gets into his fancy car. He drives off just as Nick approaches. Carlene, not seeing Nick, walks around toward the back of the store.

EXT. SIDE OF "POP'S PET SHOPPE" - DAY

The Dog skids to a stop next to Carlene's red sports car, parked beside the store. WANDA ERICKSON - 25, bright and vivacious - dumps a trash bag into a dumpster as Carlene approaches.

CARLENE

Wanda, would you sweep out the dog
houses and stuff in front of the
store?

WANDA

You bet, Carlene.

CARLENE

And when you're done there, take
the rest of the afternoon off.

(MORE)

CARLENE (cont'd)

In fact, what the hell, take the rest of the week off. You must have a ton of things to do.

WANDA

I'll take this afternoon, and thanks, but you're gonna need me around her for the next couple days. And don't worry about me. I've got it all under control.

CARLENE

You're a gem.

WANDA

Haven't I always said so?

They walk toward the front of the store.

EXT. FRONT OF POP'S PET SHOPPE - DAY

They round the corner just as Nick gets out of his truck.

CARLENE

Nick.

NICK

Carlene. Hi, Wanda.

WANDA

Hi, Nick.

Long, uncomfortable silence. Wanda rolls her eyes.

WANDA (cont'd)

Ri-i-i-ght. Well, I have some work to do. If you two will excuse me?

A row of pre-built dog houses and other pet equipment stands in a row along the front of the store. Wanda grabs a broom leaning against the door and pointedly looks at Carlene until Carlene steps to one side.

CARLENE

Let's go inside. I've got something to tell you.

NICK

I talked to my brother a few minutes ago. And I saw Ted Peters driving away just now.

CARLENE

Well, then...

They head into the store. Wanda watches them go, shaking her head. She turns to straighten a dog house. When her back is turned, the Dog ducks into an empty dog house and lies down.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE - DAY

Carlene and Nick ENTER. It's a very nice upscale pet store - puppies, kitties, hamsters, goldfish and one great big macaw that barks like a dog.

MACAW
Woof! Woof! Woof!

CARLENE
Sit!

The bird shuts up.

NICK
So...

CARLENE
So. I have to do the noon feeding.
Do you mind?

NICK
Not at all.

CARLENE
Hand me that bag of dried fruit. I
don't know why telling you this is
so weird...

Nick hands her the fruit and she starts sprinkling it into cages of hamsters and parakeets.

NICK
You're leaving?

CARLENE
Yeah, I guess so. Your brother and
Robert...well, they made me an
offer. They want the store.

NICK
That's nothing new. Charles has
made offers before.

CARLENE
Well, things just fell into place
this time.

NICK
This is where Ted comes in.

CARLENE

Well, yes...this is where Ted comes in.

She sprinkles dried fruit into the goldfish tank. Neither of them notice.

NICK

And what brought Mr. Perfect back to town?

CARLENE

Hey! What the hell is your problem? If I want to sell my store and get my life on the road, that is my business.

NICK

Well, you've been talking about it long enough!

CARLENE

That's right. It's time I did something about it! Hand me that lettuce.

Nick hands her a head of lettuce. She starts shredding the lettuce - into the kitten cage.

NICK

Uh...that's lettuce.

CARLENE

No kidding.

She reaches into a pen, grabs a really big bunny and puts the bunny into the kitten cage.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Ted has an opening. His company is expanding.

The big bunny settles in to eat the lettuce. The little kitties prepare to attack. The bunny isn't worried.

NICK

Well, yeah, but Ted...

CARLENE

There's nothing wrong with Ted!

NICK

I know. I know. But he let you down before.

Nick hands her a sack of seeds for the mice. She pours it into the puppy cage. The puppies bound forward, hungry, but start whimpering when they smell the seeds.

CARLENE

No, I let him down. I let me down.
He wanted me in Boston. He was just getting started.

Nick hands her a leather chew toy. She looks at it, distracted, and hands it to the macaw.

MACAW

Woof! Woof! Woof!

CARLENE

Sit!

EXT. FRONT OF PET STORE -DAY

Wanda is half cleaning the dog houses and half listening to the argument inside. Barney, the pith-helmeted mailman, walks up, carrying a handful of mail.

BARNEY

Are those two at it again?

WANDA

Oh, hey, Barney. Yeah, so what else is new? You heard about Carlene?

BARNEY

Wonderful invention, the barbershop. Better than CNN. Got the whole story. Here you go.

He hands her the mail.

WANDA

Thanks. Well, maybe with her moving on, they both might get a little peace and quiet.

BARNEY

Hmm, could be. Well...

He tips his helmet. Wanda turns back to her cleaning and Barney walks away.

VOICE

So what is the problem between the two of them?

The VOICE is close enough to Barney's that Wanda doesn't notice the difference. She puts down the mail and sticks her head into a dog house, busy cleaning, and doesn't turn to answer.

WANDA

Oh, God, you know the story. Nick said something to her a million years ago and they've been fighting ever since.

VOICE

But Nick's a nice enough guy, how bad could it have been?

WANDA

I have no idea. I've tried to get Wanda to tell me what the hell happened, but she just won't open up. He drives her nuts, though. He just walks in the door and she gets angry.

VOICE

What about Nick?

WANDA

I've never heard him say a bad word to anybody. Sweetest guy in town. Sweeter than the doofus I'm gonna marry.

VOICE

Saturday is the big day, eh?

WANDA

Yeah, unless I strangle the idiot before then. He's really freaking out.

VOICE

But you love him...right?

WANDA

Yeah. Hell, yes. He doesn't know how lucky he is.

Nick and Carlene's voices echo out from inside.

NICK (O.S.)

But he makes toys, for crying out loud!

CARLENE (O.S.)

He runs the third largest novelty manufacturing company on the East Coast! Give me that dog food.

NICK (O.S.)

O.k., so they're cheap toys!

A bird chirps angrily.

CARLENE (O.S.)

He's giving me a break! He's giving me a job. This is my chance! I'm getting out of here!

Wanda pulls her head out of the dog house and notices that there is no one standing near by. Barney is a block down the street. Carlene bursts out the front door, dragging Nick after her.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Look! Look right there! There it is!

NICK

What? What are you talking about?

CARLENE

It's right under your truck.

NICK

What?

CARLENE

The road! It's right at your feet. You take one step and you're on the road. It will take you anywhere. It goes everywhere. It starts right in front of the place you're at and it flows to all the places that you've never been.

NICK

What's wrong with right here?

CARLENE

Nothing is wrong with here. This is a lovely town. I love this town. But you've never understood. I've spent my whole life here. There's so much more. So much more!

NICK

You went away...

CARLENE

To school. And then Gramps died and left me the pet store. Look at that! "Pop's Pet Shoppe." Do I look like a "Pop's" to you? God bless him, but eight years ago I made a choice. I could have gone with Ted then, but I came back to the store. Well, now I've done that. And now I've got another chance. Your brother and Ted have given me another chance. And I'm taking it!

NICK

I...

CARLENE

Why am I hollering at you? Your whole life is locked away in your uncle's barn and it always will be. And that's fine...for you. Just be glad for me, Nick. O.k? And if you can't be glad for me, then be glad for your brother.

NICK

Well, hell, Carlene, I'm glad for both of you...

CARLENE

Good. Listen, I'm sorry. I don't know why we... why this should be hard. It just is. I'm leaving, Nick.

NICK

Yeah. Well...me too. When are you going to tell the team?

CARLENE

Oh, hell. I didn't think of that. Well, at Thursday's game, I guess. See you later, Nick.

She walks back into the store. Nick and Wanda stand silently for a moment, then he looks at her, shakes his head and digs his keys out of his pocket. As he walks to his truck, the Dog emerges from the dog house, walks over to the passenger door and sits, looking expectantly at Nick.

Nick, puzzled at first, smiles.

NICK

What the hell? You wanna come
along, boy?

He opens the passenger door and the Dog jumps into the truck.
With a look back at the store, Nick gets in and drives off.

Wanda walks to the edge of the curb and lowers her foot
toward the road. Before it touches, she pulls it back.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

Carlene looks at a picture of a kindly old man smothered with
a flock of parakeets. She touches the man's face with her
finger.

The animals are all disturbed, making noises behind her. She
looks around the room and sees all of the wrong food in the
wrong places.

CARLENE

Oh, for crying out loud.

She picks up a scoop and skims some dried fruit off the
surface of the goldfish water.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Every freakin' time... Damn it!

She throws the scoop with its wet dried fruit across the room
and stomps out the front door.

EXT. FRONT OF PET SHOPPE

CARLENE

Wanda! There's...there's...

WANDA

Fruit in the goldfish bowl?

Carlene looks at her, surprised, then laughs.

CARLENE

Well, I scooped most of it out.
Everything is wrong in there, would
you...

WANDA

Got it. You go.

Carlene starts for her car.

WANDA (cont'd)

Why don't you two just get a room?

CARLENE

What?

WANDA

You and Nick. Just get it over with.

Carlene struggles for words and can't find any. She almost runs to the sports car. She hops over the door into the car and within a second zooms out into the street.

WANDA (cont'd)

What the hell did he say to you!

No way Carlene heard her. Wanda goes into the store.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

Wanda takes a quick look around. The kittens are all ineffectively attacking the big rabbit, which chews its lettuce calmly. Wanda takes the rabbit out of the cage, shaking kittens off of it.

WANDA

Aw, this ain't so bad. Last time he was in here, I was picking blue budgies out of the rafters.

MACAW

Woof! Woof! Woof!

WANDA

Sit!

The bird shuts up and angrily gnaws on its doggie chew toy.

EXT. NICK'S TELEPHONE POLE - DAY

Nick drives up the highest hill in the county and parks his truck at the top. With practised ease he slings his harness and climbs up the pole. The Dog watches him all the way up. At the top, Nick settles into his harness and looks out over the incredible vista. He can see everything: the river, the town, the lighthouse, and the ocean beyond. Across the river, a mile away, the red sports car speeds over a hill.

EXT. UNCLE JACK'S FARM - DAY

Nick drives along a country lane that follows a wide river. He turns onto a gravel driveway and drives up a hill past a big white farm house. He stops in front of a big red barn.

Between the house and the barn UNCLE JACK - 65, dressed in coveralls and straw hat - is hitting golf ball after golf ball toward a small dock poking out into the river downhill fifty yards away. A little pennant with the number 18 on it flutters at the end of the dock. None of Uncle Jack's balls come anywhere close to the dock.

Beside Uncle Jack sits a titanic, bristling, vicious-looking dog.

Nick and the Dog get out of the truck.

UNCLE JACK

Nick.

NICK

Uncle Jack.

The mean dog snarls when it sees the Dog, but a look from Uncle Jack shuts it up. The Dog ignores the mean dog.

Nick opens oversize barn door and lets the Dog enter first.

INT. BARN

Nick and the Dog ENTER. The inside of the barn is clean, its walls lined with hundreds of tools. In the center of the room, raised up on a wheeled platform resting on steel rails leading to the entrance, is a new fishing skiff, tightly crafted, but unexceptional.

The back half of the barn is separated from the front by a large canvas drapery.

The Dog walks slowly around the craft, taking it in.

NICK

Looks pretty good, huh?

The Dog takes a sniff of the freshly constructed hull. Nick pulls a small scaffolding over next to the boat. The Dog stands next to the scaffolding and looks up.

NICK (cont'd)

Go for it.

The Dog confidently climbs the steep steps up to the foredeck. It walks to the point of the bow and looks out through the barn doors.

Nick picks up a rope attached to the wheeled undercarriage and hauls the boat until its wheels bump up against the chocks at the end of the rails and the bow protrudes through the open doors.

The Dog, from its elevated vantage point looks over the valley and the river flowing past the bottom of the hill.

Robert ENTERS from behind the drapery at the back of the barn, wearing his carpenter's belt, wiping his hands on a rag.

ROBERT

Hey, Nick.

NICK

Hi, Robert. Hey, sorry I ran off like that this afternoon. That's really good news about the pet store.

ROBERT

Well, nobody's signed any papers yet.

NICK

I talked with Carlene. She's going to do it. You can count on it.

ROBERT

Well, I sure hope so. But...well, hell, Nick. We grew up next to the ocean. We know all about surprises, right?

NICK

The biggest surprise about Carlene is that she's still here. She's doing it, Robert.

ROBERT

Sounds good to me. Well, I gotta head out.

NICK

Everything o.k?

ROBERT

Oh, it's just great. You did great. I just can't stop tinkering with it. You know. See you later.

He EXITS.

Nick picks up some pieces of trim and climbs up onto the skiff. He picks up a tool and starts attaching the trim to the bow.

NICK

She's right, huh? Building boats in
a barn. Pretty lame.

EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - MAINE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Carlene drives fast, expertly, a bit too fast, but in complete control. She tops a small hill and drives down to a T-intersection. At the intersection sits a small produce stand run by BERT and IVY, two elderly farmers. A half mile from the stand, a major highway hums with traffic.

Carlene stops at the stand. Bert gets up from his chair under a tree and ambles over to the bins of fruit and vegetables.

BERT

Howdy. Ain't seen you in a spell.

CARLENE

(surprised)

I've been pretty busy. I'll take a
half dozen of these apples.

As Bert bags the fruit, Ivy approaches.

BERT

You know, I was thinking about you
the other day.

CARLENE

Thinking about me?

BERT

That's right. Just a couple of days
ago, hey, Ivy?

IVY

That's about right.

BERT

Just wondering why we hadn't seen
that fine lady in the hot red car
for a spell.

CARLENE

Well, I don't...

BERT

You're from over in Anchor Bay,
right?

CARLENE

That's right. Do you pay this close
attention to all of your customers?

BERT

Oh, just the ones we see more'n
once.

IVY

Every time you come here, you have
so much on your mind.

BERT

You like to drive, don't you?
That'll be a dollar.

He hands her the apples. Carlene hands him a dollar.

CARLENE

Yeah, I do. I like to drive. I like
to move. Especially when I'm
thinking. I like to be moving.

IVY

You have a lot on your mind today,
don't you?

CARLENE

Yes. A lot of big changes coming
up.

IVY

There's an old Chinese curse...

CARLENE

"May you live in interesting
times."

BERT

You know, Ivy, I've heard you say
that a hundred times. I never have
understood it.

CARLENE

Why don't you put your fruit stand
over near the big highway? You'd
get a lot more customers over
there.

BERT

Too noisy.

IVY

Too dusty.

CARLENE

Too...interesting.

BERT

Oh. Oh. I gotcha. Yup, you got a point there.

Carlene holds out an apple.

CARLENE

You want an apple?

BERT

One thing I have plenty of, young lady, is apples.

CARLENE

I'd like to give you one of mine.

BERT

Well, since you put that way, I'd be pleased.

He takes the apple, rubs it against his shirt and takes a bite.

CARLENE

(to Ivy)

How about you?

IVY

Oh, no, honey, not with my store-boughts. But thank you.

CARLENE

I have to be going. I probably won't be back for a while, so thanks for... Well, thanks.

BERT

You be careful out there on the road. Are you travelling alone?

CARLENE

I'm not sure. Maybe. Maybe not. Goodbye, now.

IVY

Bye, hon. Keep your eyes open.

Carlene gets into her car and drives off. Bert takes another bite of his apple.

BERT

Well, I'll be switched, Ivy, a pretty young vixen just tempted me with a ripe, red apple.

IVY

Dream on, you old coot.

He laughs and kisses her on the forehead.

INT. BARN - EVENING

Carlene's car stops out front. Nick, dangling over the bow of the skiff, attaching trim, listening to a boom box, doesn't hear the car. The Dog, lying on the floor beneath him, watches Carlene ENTER.

CARLENE

Nick?

Nick notices her and switches off the radio.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Nick. That's a nice looking boat.

NICK

Oh, yeah. Thank you.

CARLENE

I mean it. I knew you were building boats, but I guess I pictured little canoes or something. How long have you been working on this one?

NICK

About a year. It's almost done. I do about one a year. More than a hobby; less than a job.

He wanted her to laugh. She doesn't.

CARLENE

You bet.

She notices the Dog.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Oh. Is this your dog?

NICK

I'm not sure. Are you my dog, boy?

The Dog doesn't respond. Carlene pets him, checking him out professionally.

CARLENE

He ought to have his tags on.

NICK

You want to check out the boat?
Come on up.

CARLENE

Sure.

She climbs up the scaffolding, the Dog following.

ON THE DECK

CARLENE

It looks great. Feels very sturdy.
You do all this?

NICK

Robert helps me with some of the
fancier woodwork, but really, yeah.

CARLENE

Nice boat... and it's in a barn.

NICK

Haul up a trailer, roll it out on
the track, and it's gone.

CARLENE

What about you? Did you ever think
about going with it?

NICK

Sail around the world?

CARLENE

Well, yeah, or how about moving to
Boston and building boats full-
time?

NICK

Shh. Listen.

They are silent for a moment.

NICK (cont'd)

Did you hear that?

CARLENE

Hear what?

NICK

Nothing. There's nothing to hear.
Move to Boston? I'm building a
boat.

(MORE)

NICK (cont'd)

I'll sell it for a little bit of money and then I'll start another one. And I'll never hear a horn honking, or a siren go by, or smell the pollution in the harbor.

CARLENE

I'm not like you, Nick. I love this town, and all the people here, but it has never felt like enough to me. I've always wanted to see other places.

NICK

Home isn't enough.

CARLENE

Home. What a word. I wonder what it means. You feel it, though? This place, this town is home to you? You feel connected to it?

Nick thinks it through for a moment before replying.

NICK

Yeah, I guess so. Something here completes me. I can feel it. It's something outside of me, but I feel it inside, too. I want to be close to it. I would never want to leave it.

He takes a step toward her. She almost jumps away.

CARLENE

Well that's great. That's great for you. I mean it. There's nothing wrong with that.

NICK

But you...

CARLENE

I have to go! I have to see! It's quiet in the barn, yeah, but, Jesus, Nick, there are many quiet places. And some damned noisy ones. How am I going to know where home is if I don't go looking for it?

NICK

When you find it, it'll be right where everybody finds it.

CARLENE

Oh, spare me! Listen, this is a great boat, really. I envy the guy who buys it. I'm leaving. I'm moving to Boston. All right?

Nick doesn't know how to answer that.

CARLENE (cont'd)

And even if it isn't all right. Get some tags for that dog!

Carlene climbs down and EXITS. The Dog follows her. Nick sits down. From the door, the Dog watches Carlene drive away.

EXT. GRAMMY'S BOARDING HOUSE - EVENING

Carlene parks her car in front of the well-maintained Victorian and walks in.

INT. GRAMMY'S BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY

As Carlene ENTERS, BARB MILLER, mid-30's, arranges flowers in the foyer.

BARB

Howdy, Sis.

CARLENE

Hey, Sis. Is Ted in?

BARB

He's upstairs. I'm just on the way up. I'll tell him you're here.

Barb heads upstairs. Ruthie ENTERS, all 12-year old enthusiasm.

RUTHIE

Auntie Carlene!

CARLENE

Hey, slugger. You getting psyched for tomorrow?

RUTHIE

(quoting Carlene)
Centered. Focused. Alert.

CARLENE

Pitching arm?

RUTHIE

The ball wishes to fly true and fast. All I have to do is let it.

BOTH

Kee-yah!

They both do a karate move that ends with the backs of their hands touching one another.

TED

Whoa!

Ted ENTERS. Ruthie and Carlene bow to one another.

RUTHIE

Bye! See ya tomorrow!

Ruthie EXITS. Carlene sees the question on Ted's face.

CARLENE

Secret feminine ritual. I want you to take me out to dinner.

TED

Sure. Glad to. There was something at Roma's that I thought I'd...

CARLENE

No, we're going down to Portland. I'm driving; you're buying. And we're going to talk some more.

TED

Sounds great.

They head toward the door.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

The bow of the boat protrudes out under the night sky. Nick and the Dog lie on a large pad on the foredeck, looking up at the stars. A pick-up truck drives up to the barn. Roma gets out.

ROMA

You up there, Nick?

NICK

Right here. Keep it clean, though, I'm not alone.

ROMA

What?

He doesn't reply, but he winks at the Dog. Roma climbs up the scaffold and steps out onto the bow.

ROMA (cont'd)
Who...oh, hey there.

She kneels down and scratches behind the Dog's ears.

ROMA (cont'd)
So what are you two dawgs doing up here?

NICK
Star-gazing. How about you?

ROMA
Oh, just had a hunch you might need a little company tonight. It's been quite a day, huh?

NICK
You know, there's an ancient Chinese curse...

Roma lunges forward and kisses him hard on the lips. Nick is only surprised for a second, then he responds. After a long, steamy moment, they break. Nick glances over at the Dog.

NICK (cont'd)
Buddy, why don't you go chase some rabbits or something?

The Dog looks at them long enough that Roma notices. When she looks around the Dog sighs and pads over to the scaffolding. Then they get back to kissing. We'd better leave them alone for a while....

INT. BARN

The Dog trots to the draperies in the back and pokes its head around the cloth. It stands for a long moment looking at whatever is back there. Then it heads for the barn door and EXITS.

EXT. UNCLE JACK'S FARM - NIGHT

The Dog prowls around on the hill leading down from the barn, checking out the terrain, sniffing here and there. Occasionally it looks up at the bow of the boat, protruding from the barn.

Suddenly, the Dog stops sniffing the ground and puts its nose in the air. With a quiet "woof", it runs off into the night.

INT. CARLENE'S SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

She drives expertly through the velvet night, Ted relaxed in the passenger seat, enjoying the ride. The top is down.

TED

You miss this in the city.
Darkness. Stars.

CARLENE

You sure I'm going to like it
there?

TED

You talk like you've never been.
Sure, you'll like it. It's
different. Busy. Exciting.
Sometimes too much. But you can
always get away for while.

CARLENE

And the job you're offering me...

TED

Carlene, I told you. The company is
taking off. We're growing like
crazy. I can use your experience,
your sensibilities.

CARLENE

It's a job, right? Nothing else.

TED

Your office is in the Production
Center, across from the plant. I'm
up in the administrative offices,
two miles away.

CARLENE

You know what I mean.

TED

I can guarantee you this. You'll
see me the first couple of days as
you're getting settled in. After
that you won't see me for at least
three weeks - I'll be putting
together next year's line of toys.
Then, I promise you, one day I will
come over and ask you out to
dinner. And if you say yes, and if
dinner turns out to be a date, I
won't fight it much.

CARLENE

I just don't want any misunderstandings.

TED

Carlene, eight years ago, when you decided not to move to Boston with me, you broke my heart. You know that.

CARLENE

Yeah, I know that. I didn't mean to.

TED

Well, time passed. I've been married. I've been divorced. When this position opened up, I thought of you. I own the company. Would I have travelled up here to recruit you personally if you hadn't been my college sweetheart? No. Would I offer you this job if you couldn't do it? No. Take the next left.

Carlene glances at him.

CARLENE

You haven't forgotten much, have you?

She turns the car off the highway onto a single lane road leading up a hill.

EXT. LOVER'S LOOKOUT - NIGHT

Several cars, their windows steamed up from the inside, are parked on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The moon beams brightly down; the lighthouse on the point flashes regularly.

The sports car parks a short distance from the other cars. Carlene and Ted get out and walk to the edge of the overlook.

After a moment, Ted puts his arm around her. After another moment, she leans into him.

TED

It was a leap of faith for me to come here. I had no idea what your reaction would be.

CARLENE

Did I surprise you?

TED

As a matter of fact, yes. I wondered if you'd trust me.

CARLENE

I've always trusted you.

She pulls away and looks up at him.

CARLENE (cont'd)

You understand, don't you? You understand why I stayed? Why I let you go.

TED

Timing. Everything is timing. Your grandfather died. Your grandmother couldn't handle the both the pet store and the boarding house. You had a freshly printed degree in business. All I had to offer was a struggling start-up a long way from home.

CARLENE

I couldn't leave her. I had to...

TED

I know. I know. But it's surprising to me.

CARLENE

What is?

TED

Well...that you're still single, I guess.

CARLENE

Oh my god. You mean Nick?

TED

Uh-huh.

CARLENE

What is it with everyone and Nick?

TED

You forget. I was standing right there. I was working up my courage to ask you to the Senior Prom when he beat me to it.

CARLENE
Oh, for crying out...

TED
I saw the look on your face.
Heaven. You were walking on rose
petals straight up to Heaven.
Everybody saw it. All of us. The
whole school.

CARLENE
Good grief. Well, it didn't turn
out that way, did it?

TED
You see that green SUV over there?

He indicates a vehicle on the far edge of the clearing.

CARLENE
Yeah?

TED
That's right where I was parked,
that night, after the prom.

CARLENE
I remember you telling me that.

TED
Me and Cissy Friedman. She saw
Nick's car drive up and she made me
stop whatever it was I was doing.
We watched you two get out and walk
to the edge of the cliff. Do you
know what she said?

CARLENE
Cissy?

TED
She grabbed my hand real hard and
she said, "My God, they're going to
jump."

CARLENE
What?

TED
No joke. And the funny thing is - I
halfway believed it myself. There
was something about the way you two
were holding on to each other.

(MORE)

TED (cont'd)

Like the cliff didn't matter. Like nothing mattered.

CARLENE

Listen to yourself.

TED

I know. It sounds goofy. But it was such an odd feeling. The moon was so full that night. I could see you both so clearly. I envied Nick so much. I liked Cissy, but he was looking out over that ocean with you. With you.

Ted walks to the edge of the cliff. Carlene follows him. He turns to her. Incredible vista of the shore and the ocean.

TED (cont'd)

And he took you in his arms. He didn't look like a high school kid. He looked like ... I don't know ... James Bond, or something.

CARLENE

You've lost your mind.

TED

No, there was something about the way that he touched you. And then he looked at you and he said something.

Carlene nods and looks out over the ocean.

TED (cont'd)

Whatever he said, I watched your back stiffen until I thought it would break. For a second, I thought you were going to hit him. Then you almost ran back to the car.

Carlene sighs.

CARLENE

Here it comes.

TED

I can't stand it. What the hell did he say to you? What could piss you off that much? It was prom night, for crying out loud.

CARLENE

That was twelve years ago. It's not important. In fact...

She grabs Ted and pulls him into a passionate kiss. Two or three hours later they surface for air.

TED

Is that some kind of bribe?

CARLENE

Is it working?

TED

Last time I ever ask, I swear.

They kiss again. A couple of cars honk their horns.

CARLENE

This is getting to be a habit. We better get out of here. Years from now, people will be asking me what it was you said to me.

TED

God, I hope so.

They walk back to the car and get in. Carlene starts the engine.

CARLENE

So, whatever happened to Cissy Friedman?

TED

(a little embarrassed)
Uh...she's our West Coast sales rep.

CARLENE

Why am I not surprised?

They drive away, revealing the Dog, watching them go. Then it trots off.

EXT. UNCLE JACK'S FARM - NIGHT

The Dog gallops through the grass on the hill below the barn entrance. Suddenly, it is stopped by a threatening growl. Uncle Jack's mean dog emerges from the shadows, thirsty for blood and advancing with its teeth bared.

The Dog sits, panting from its run, and stares at the mean dog. The mean dog suddenly stops.

It takes a moment, but bit by bit the mean dog's aggressive air vanishes. Finally, it sits down and then lies down and just looks up at the Dog.

The Dog yips shortly and trots toward a shed. The formerly mean dog follows it. They disappear around the corner of the shed.

The two dogs reappear, working side-by-side, dragging a large plank across the grass. They drop it, drag it a little more to orient it properly, and then trot back to the shed and drag out another long plank.

INT. BARN

Nick and Roma lay side by side in the dark, breathing heavily and looking up at the stars.

NICK

There it is. That one right down there.

He points toward the horizon. A single bright star gleams through the haze.

ROMA

What?

NICK

My favorite star. Down near the horizon. Close to the earth, but bright. And it's always right there.

ROMA

I like the view from your boat.

NICK

Well, it's not really my boat. I built it to sell it.

ROMA

Can you really let it go?

NICK

I've built and sold other boats.

ROMA

True, but this time seemed a little different. You've been spending so much time up here. I wondered if you would decide to hold on to this one.

NICK
No, I don't think so. Not this one.

ROMA
And then?

The silence goes on long enough for Roma to turn toward him.

ROMA (cont'd)
Nick? What then? Will you start
another boat?

NICK
No. Not another boat. I don't know
if I want to build another boat.
Roma? Maybe I should just... Do you
think I should just...

ROMA
The word you're looking for is
"leave." You want to say that
you're thinking about leaving.

NICK
Yes. Do you think I should leave?

Roma laughs gently and brushes his hair back from his eyes.

ROMA
Nick. You'll never leave here.

NICK
You're wrong. I can go any time I
want. There's nothing holding me
here.

He suddenly realizes what he has said and looks at Roma.

NICK (cont'd)
Roma, I didn't mean...

ROMA
Nick. Nick. I know. I love you,
Nick. And, even though you've never
actually said it, I know you love
me.

NICK
Roma...

ROMA

Shh. There's been times when you were there for me, and times when I was there for you, and we've always been there for each other. I'm comfortable with that. We may not be the love story of the century, my precious Nick, but we're friends. Good friends. And good lovers. And I know this about you - this is your home; you won't be leaving it.

NICK

(getting angry)
I'm going to do it.

ROMA

Well, if you can do it, I'll be the first to cheer you on and the last one waving goodbye. But I'll believe it when I see it.

Nick, angry, says nothing. Roma puts her sweater on and stands up. Over her shoulder, past the bow of the boat, the nearly full moon reflects off the quiet waters of the river. The two dogs busily dig something halfway down the hill.

ROMA (cont'd)

I think that what you want is right here, Nick. God, look at it. Isn't it beautiful?

She leans over, kisses him firmly on the lips, grabs the rest of her clothes and EXITS.

Nick sits up and looks at the glowing river and his favorite star.

NICK

Damn.

INT. BETTY'S ANTIQUES - EARLY MORNING

Betty puts on a light jacket and picks up a broom. She bangs the broom handle with considerable force on the ceiling to the store.

BETTY

Nick! Let's roll!

Nick pokes his head in through the door.

NICK
Hey, lady keep it down. People are
trying to sleep.

BETTY
Oh! I thought you were upstairs.
Didn't you come in last night?

NICK
Naw, spent the night on the boat.
I've been doing some thinking. I
want to....

BETTY
Let's get on the road. Auction
starts at seven.

She grabs her purse and they EXIT.

EXT. BETTY'S ANTIQUES

As they walk toward Betty's pick-up, the Dog approaches and
waits patiently by the driver's side door.

BETTY
Anybody you know?

NICK
Yeah, we're getting to be old pals.
Morning, fella.

Betty opens the truck and the Dog hops right in. Nick gets in
on the passenger side.

INT. BETTY'S TRUCK

The Dog cuddles up close to Betty, eager to make friends.
Nick tries to scratch it behind the ears, but the Dog huffs
impatiently. Betty scratches it and it tail-thumps with
delight.

BETTY
You just gotta have the touch.

NICK
Watch him. He's running some kind
of con on you.

Betty laughs and they drive away.

LATER - ON THE ROAD

As they drive, Betty bonds with the Dog.

BETTY

So why do I have a feeling that you want to talk about Carlene?

NICK

Not quite. But she is the one that started me thinking.

BETTY

Does it bother you that she's leaving?

NICK

Me? No. Not really. She's always wanted to. I guess I'm surprised she's stayed around so long. But she said some things...

BETTY

And?

NICK

And I think maybe she's got a point. Maybe it's time I... I don't know... got off my butt and...

BETTY

Hit the road?

NICK

Yeah. Hit the road.

BETTY

I don't see that happening.

NICK

I've pretty much made up my mind.

BETTY

I'm sure you have. And I'm glad for you. But...

NICK

But you don't think I have it in me.

BETTY

I think that the best thing a person can do is find where their heart needs to be. Whatever that means. Staying in one place out of fear is wrong. Hitting the road just to prove a point is wrong, too.

NICK

Well, I'm not trying to prove anything.

BETTY

Maybe not. But I've known you all your life and I don't think I've ever seen a person belong where they are the way you do.

NICK

Stuck in Anchor Bay for life, eh?

BETTY

Do you feel stuck? Have you ever felt stuck?

NICK

Stuck? No. But all of a sudden I feel... well, I feel... sort of small. You know? Incomplete, maybe.

BETTY

Nick, if you can complete yourself out there somewhere, I'll be glad to buy your bus ticket. But I have a hunch everything you want is in Anchor Bay, right in front of your eyes.

The Dog snuggles closer to her, almost purring.

EXT. AUCTION HOUSE - DAY

Betty pulls into the crowded parking lot. As soon as she opens the truck door, the Dog leaps out.

BETTY

Hey!

Without a backward glance, the Dog runs across the parking lot and disappears toward the small town.

NICK

Hey, when you gotta go, you gotta go...

BETTY

We gotta go.

She grabs his arm and drags him to the auction house.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET - DAY

The Dog lopez past a PRETTY GIRL, then stops and watches her turn left, away from the big white house on the corner. The Dog cuts across the yard and disappears around the house.

EXT. YARD - DAY

A HANDSOME YOUNG PAINTER in a red shirt is up a ladder, painting the side of the house. The Dog skids to a stop, then leaps up and hits the ladder. Startled, the painter drops his brush. The Dog grabs up the brush and runs back the way he came.

EXT. TREE-LINED STREET

The Dog catches up to the Pretty Girl and jumps up on her. Paint from the brush drips on her. She tries to push the Dog away, but only succeeds in getting more paint on herself.

GIRL

Hey! Hey!

The painter comes running around the corner of the house.

PAINTER

Hey!

The Dog drops the brush and tears off, not looking back. The Painter runs up to the Girl. They look at each other for a long, swirling moment, then they both bend to pick up the paint brush, their heads very close one another. The Painter takes a deep breath and they straighten up. They smile, standing very close.

BOTH

Hey.

EXT. AUCTION HOUSE - DAY

As an auctioneer rattles out his cajoling numbers, Betty and Nick prowl among some nautical items. Nick holds up a couple of pieces, but shakes his head and puts them back.

A few yards away someone exclaims in surprise at a loud THUMP. Betty and Nick don't notice and head toward the lines of furniture, paying attention to the bed-frames and dressers. An oddly proportioned dresser draws her attention. She looks at it, but then shakes her head. The top plank is too large; the lines are all wrong.

VOICE

Smell the drawer.

She looks at Nick.

BETTY

What did you say?

He just shrugs and shakes his head. She looks around, but can see no one else nearby. Curious, she pulls out a small drawer at the top of the dresser, holds it up and smells it. Her eyes widen. She looks around to see if anyone is paying attention to her.

BETTY (cont'd)

Nick. Come here.

She hands him the drawer and then starts examining the dresser more closely. She looks up under the top plank and sees that it is clamped on - obviously added long after manufacture.

BETTY (cont'd)

Well, I'll be damned. Nick.

She indicates what she has found. His eyes widen. They both look around nervously and then walk quickly away from the dresser.

A sharp-eyed BUYER sees their furtive movements and heads toward the dresser. Suddenly he hears a lot of scrabbling and whining from a large wardrobe near him.

BUYER

What the...

He opens the cabinet door and the Dog bounds out, leaping for joy at being freed and jumping up and down on the Buyer. Under the affectionate onslaught the Buyer forgets the dresser and tries to get away from his new Best Friend.

INT. BETTY'S TRUCK -DAY

The big dresser rides on the back of the truck. The Dog sits close to Betty and relishes her attentions.

BETTY

I still can't believe it. And nobody noticed that it was a Berenson!

NICK

How the heck did you spot it? I would never have picked it out.

BETTY

Well, I... It was the strangest thing...

But she can't bring herself to mention the voice.

BETTY (cont'd)

I don't know. Something just made me look closer. I should know better by now - you have to see past the veneer. It's going to take a lot of work. You'll give me a hand, won't you? If you've got time before you light out for the territories, that is.

NICK

Smart-alecky old broad.

She punches him on the arm. The Dog sighs and snuggles in.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE - DAY

Carlene is cleaning out the bunny's cage. On the other side of the shop, Charles and Robert are roaming around the place, making plans for when they take over. They are very excited and have no idea that Carlene is listening in.

CHARLES

The first thing we do is paint. I mean everything. Liven it up a little.

ROBERT

No kidding. Something light, airy. This place still feels as if Pop owned it.

CHARLES

And we clean out that storage area in back. That will be the office. I can still do a bit of my CPA work in there, until we transition completely.

ROBERT

You want a window?

CHARLES

A window! Yes!

ROBERT

I'll put in a window. Oh! Oh! I just remembered! I had a flash last night.

CHARLES

I was there, remember?

ROBERT

Every minute. No, I mean I had a great idea last night. About the store.

(starts pacing out an area)

This room is too big. When we get it rearranged, we'll have some extra space. I say we put in a wall, right about here, and set aside some space for a...

CHARLES

A what?

ROBERT

A grooming center! Stylish cuts for the Pet Set.

CHARLES

I love it. Can you groom pets?

ROBERT

Not a chance, but surely we can find someone who can.

Carlene is happy for them, but also a bit irritated that they want to change everything.

Ted ENTERS.

TED

Hey, everybody. Hi, Carlene.

ROBERT

Ted! Can you cut dog hair?

TED

What?

CHARLES

You know, make a poodle look like god's gift to Park Avenue?

TED

Uh, no.

Robert and Charles shrug and turn back to their conversation.

TED (cont'd)
What was that about?

CARLENE
Big plans in the domesticated
animal business. Evidently I've
screwed the whole place up and only
they can fix it.

TED
Separation anxiety?

She almost responds angrily, then smiles and nods.

CARLENE
Yeah, I guess so. Hey, in a couple
of days, the place is theirs.

The macaw starts barking.

MACAW
Woof! Woof! Woof!

CARLENE
Sit!

Ted laughs out loud. Carlene picks up a doggie chew toy.

CARLENE (cont'd)
Damn bird thinks it's a mutt. Here,
try this.

Ted is too aggressive in shoving the chew toy at the bird.
The bird backs all the way to the end of its perch, flapping
its wings fearfully.

TED
C'mon, Polly. Got a nice chew toy
for you.

The bird screams loudly, not sounding like a dog at all.

CARLENE
You're just freaking him out, Ted.

Ted steps away.

TED
Yeah, sorry, I'm lousy with
animals.

CARLENE

Sometimes you have to let them get used to you. Give them a little time. The direct approach scares them.

TED

Yeah, I know. That's always been my problem. I prefer the direct approach. Works better with people, I guess. Speaking of which, let's go get some breakfast.

CARLENE

Hey, sometimes the direct approach freaks me out a little, too.

TED

O.k.

(beat)

Gee, isn't it a pretty day? My that's a lovely color on you. Let's go get breakfast.

CARLENE

(laughs)

Well, it could use a little work. Sorry, got I've got a ton of stuff to wrap up here, and I've something this afternoon, too.

TED

O.k., I'll go check out Roma's famous omelettes. Are they really famous?

CARLENE

Best I've ever had. Go for the fresh mushroom and feta.

TED

Sounds great. See you later.

As he walks toward the door, he hangs the chew toy on the macaw's perch. Ted EXITS. The bird sidles over to the toy, hooks it with a claw and flicks it to the floor.

MACAW

(staring at the door)

Woof! Woof! Woof!

CARLENE

Sit!

EXT. UNCLE JACK'S FARM - DAY

Uncle Jack is still smacking golf balls into the river. The mean dog perks up its ears as Nick's truck enters the drive. When Nick stops, the Dog jumps out. Both dogs run downhill toward the river. Nick waves to Uncle Jack and opens the barn door. He stands and stares at the boat for a moment.

Behind him, halfway down the hill, both dogs dig furiously.

INT. BARN

Nick ENTERS and crosses to the counter. He starts carving a nameplate. The template reads: "I'm Sirius"

EXT. BALL PARK - DAY

Corky and Carlene drive into the parking lot at the same time, he in his beat-up muscle car and she in her hot red roadster. Both of them pull burlap bags full of balls and bats out and walk toward the backstop together.

CORKY

Hey, Carlene. You really going to do it?

CARLENE

What about you? Saturday is your wedding day. Are you really to do it?

CORKY

Listen, about that. I...

CARLENE

You're not going to hit on me, are you?

CORKY

Whoa! Are you kidding? No way!

CARLENE

Like you haven't been hitting on every other girl in town.

CORKY

Sure I have. Fella's got a right to find an "out", doesn't he? But you? I don't think so.

Carlene frowns a little, not liking the sound of that.

CORKY (cont'd)

No, I was going to ask you if you were going to be taking that sweet ride with you.

CARLENE

My car? Yes, it's going with me.

CORKY

Damn. I do love that car. Feels good just watching it drive by. I'll miss it.

CARLENE

Don't get all mushy on me, now.

A van-load of kids, boys and girls, including Ruthie, scampers across the parking lot, drawing Carlene's attention. She hands Corky her bag and turns to the kids.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Hey, you Eagles. Are we ready to do some warm-ups?

The kids respond with cheers and they run off to the outfield with Carlene.

Corky takes both bags to the backstop and empties them, leaning half a dozen bats against a bench. He grabs a home plate and walks over to the batter box to fasten it down. It takes him a moment to get the hook-up right and when he looks up, the Dog is watching him.

CORKY

Hey, Spot. How's it hanging?

The Dog regards him for a second, then walks slowly over to the bench. It's wagging tail brushes the bats, knocking them all over. Then it picks up a stick and bounds quickly back to Corky. It drops the stick at his feet and bounces eagerly around.

CORKY (cont'd)

Somebody forget your Ritalin today, Rover? O.k.

He picks up the stick and throws it high and far. The Dog bursts into incredible speed, makes a fantastic leap and catches the stick on the fly. It races back toward Corky, stopping only to drag the stick across the bats lying on the ground. Different bats make different sounds. The Dog drags the stick back over the bats in reverse order and then trots over and lays the stick at Corky's feet. The Dog looks up at Corky.

CORKY (cont'd)
 Helluva catch, boy. Let's try it
 again.

Corky hurls the stick. The Dog just watches it fly away, then
 walks slowly over to the bench and lies down.

CORKY (cont'd)
 I'm throwin', boy, but you ain't
 catchin'.

The Dog snorts impatiently.

A van parks in the lot. Nick and lots of kids get out. Many
 other kids are arriving on bikes and getting ready for a
 Little League game. Nick carries another bag of gear into the
 infield.

Carlene runs toward home to snag a poorly thrown ball and
 sees Nick.

CARLENE
 Oh, hey Nick.

NICK
 Carlene. When do you want to make
 the announcement?

CARLENE
 What? Oh, right. Let's wait until
 after the game, you think?

NICK
 Sounds good to me.

CARLENE
 Nick, I think I need to apologize
 to you.

NICK
 Oh, no, there's no...

He's interrupted by KID #1 running up.

KID #1
 Coach! Can I use the aluminone bat
 today?

NICK
 If you can say it, you can use it.

Kid #1 runs off.

CARLENE

No, I've been rude. I don't want to leave...

KID #2 runs up to Carlene.

KID #2

Coach! I forgot my glove!

CARLENE

Well, you can borrow Ruthie's, can't you?

KID #2

But she's a girl!

CARLENE

So are you. Get used to it.

Kid #2 runs off.

NICK

Carlene, whatever it is between us is probably not going to be settled in the last two days that you're here.

CARLENE

I...well, I don't like to think that there are any bad...

NICK

You don't want to leave any unsettled issues? You want to leave with clean conscience?

CARLENE

Damn it! There's nothing wrong with my conscience. I just...

More kids run up.

NICK

Maybe we better talk after the game.

CARLENE

O.k., yes. Don't go anywhere, o.k?

NICK

Isn't that the whole problem?

The kids surround them, clamoring with questions. Carlene looks confused for a second, then focuses on the kids. Nick gathers his team and leads them to the backstop.

NICK (cont'd)
O.k., Chipmunks, let's get...

RICK
Coach! Did you check and see if we could change our team name? We hate being "Chipmunks"!

TEAM
Yeah! It sucks!

NICK
Well, I called the National Bureau of Character Construction, Youth League Division...

That draws Carlene's puzzled attention.

NICK (cont'd)
...and they said there were only two names left: Chipmunks and Spuds. Which do you prefer?

He winks at Carlene and she laughs, in spite of herself.

TEAM
Spuds!?!?!? No way!

The kids jump him and knock him to the ground.

MONTAGE - BALL GAME

The Dog watches the high energy Little League game. Rick and Ruthie are opposing pitchers. Nick and Carlene are good coaches and don't let squabbles escalate into trouble.

As the game progresses, Carlene occasionally catches a glimpse of Nick coaching his kids - he is kind to a kid who makes an error, shows a kid who struck out how to hold the bat, tells a joke to his team that has them in stitches, frowns and shakes his head at a kid taunting an opposing player. He's a great guy, and she can plainly see that.

At any given moment that Carlene is not looking at Nick, he's often glancing at her. The sun always seems to catch her hair just right. She is similarly adept at handling her team - encouraging, friendly, knows the game inside out.

Meanwhile, Ruthie is having a heck of a pitching day. She is striking them out left and right, even makes a great catch from the mound.

END MONTAGE

The Dog trots away from the ball field.

EXT. GARDEN SECTION OF PARK - DAY

Sitting on a bench are two old people, obviously long married, looking in different directions, paying no attention to one another.

The Dog trots around behind them, heading toward a rose garden. Very carefully, it reaches in and nips off a bright red rose. Carrying the flower, the Dog approaches the bench from behind. It slips the rose up between the slats of the bench between the two old people. The Dog trots off, not looking back.

After a moment, the old lady's hand brushes the flower. Surprised, she picks it up and smells it. She slides closer to the old man and takes his hand. It's his turn to be surprised. He looks at her and then smiles and puts his arm around her shoulders.

EXT. BALL PARK

Ruthie is at bat, supremely confident. Rick studies the signals the catcher is flashing at him.

RUTHIE

C'mon, pitcher. Hit me with your best shot!

Rick winds up and pitches, hard as he can. He blows it. Ruthie can't duck fast enough and the ball hits her on the shoulder, hard enough to knock her down.

RICK

Ruthie!

Rick, Nick, Carlene and lots of the kids run to her. She is all right, but she blinks back tears of pain.

CARLENE

Ruthie, let me see your arm.

RICK

I didn't mean to hit you!

Carlene lifts Ruthie's arm.

RUTHIE

Ow! Well, you hit me good, you pin-headed idiot!

CARLENE

O.k., settle down. Corky! Get me an ice pack!

He's way ahead of her and is already running up with the pack. Carlene applies it to Ruthie's arm, helps her to her feet and guides her back to the bench.

RUTHIE

I'm o.k. I can pitch.

CARLENE

I know you're o.k. You'll just bruise up a little. But you're done pitching for today.

RUTHIE

No! Please. I'm o.k.

CARLENE

Nope. You're on bleacher duty for the rest of the game, young lady.

RUTHIE

(to Rick)

Why don't you get some glasses, you spastic!

She slumps on the bench, glowering. Rick, crushed, walks back to the mound. Nick pats him on the back.

NICK

She's mad, Rick, she'll be o.k.

RICK

I don't need glasses.

He shakes off Nick's comforting hand and picks up the ball.

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME

The game is over. Rick's team has won. Nick leads them in the cheer:

TEAM

Two! Four! Six! Eight! Who do we appreciate? Eagles! Eagles! Eagles! Yay!

The teams form two lines and run past each other, cheerfully high-fiving each other. Of the kids, only Rick isn't smiling.

Ruthie doesn't join the ceremony. Holding the ice pack to her shoulder, she walks away across the field. Rick watches her go, but is afraid to join her.

Nick, too busy with the other kids to notice the Rick/Ruthie dilemma, looks at Carlene, who nods.

NICK

Kids! Kids! Hey, everybody. We have an announcement to make!

Both teams gather around. Carlene takes a deep breath. It isn't easy for her to say what she has to say.

KID #1

Is this about you leaving?

CARLENE

(surprised)

Yes. Yes, it is. You already know?

KID #2

Oh, hell, everybody knows. I mean... oh heck, everybody knows.

Carlene and Nick exchange a glance; he's as surprised as she is.

KID #3

We got you something.

KID #4

Sally's mom did it at her store.

KID #5 hands Carlene a nicely wrapped box. Tears in her eyes, she doesn't know what to say.

KID #3

Well, open it!

She does. The kids crowd around. It's a lovely medallion on a blue ribbon, engraved with a picture of a woman on a road stretching to the horizon. Carlene reads the inscription out loud:

CARLENE

"The Road Goes Ever On" Oh, you guys, I don't know what to say.

KID #2

"Thanks," usually works for me.

One of the kids takes the medallion and hangs it around Carlene's neck. She wears it very proudly.

BOTH TEAMS

Two! Four! Six! Eight! Who do we
appreciate? Carlene! Carlene!
Carlene! Yay!

They all crowd around her, pressing into a Big Group Hug. Then, shouting goodbyes and wishing her luck in Boston, the kids start grabbing up their gear and heading to bikes and mini-vans. After several hugs and high-fives, Carlene is left standing with Nick and Corky. She looks at Nick, but can say nothing and walks away.

EXT. NEAR BACKSTOP

Corky heads toward home plate, burlap sack in hand. The Dog ambles up to him, woofs and looks toward the benches. Corky follows the Dog's gaze and notices MAXINE, a really sexy young lady, sitting on a bench.

CORKY

(under his breath)
You're right, boy. Woof!

She smiles at him and then whistles at the Dog. The Dog trots over to her and gladly accepts a good ear scratching. Corky looks around and then trots over to her.

CORKY (cont'd)

Hey, Max.

MAXINE

Hey yourself, Corky.

CORKY

So what's going on?

Maxine stands.

MAXINE

I've got something I want to talk
to you about. Come here a minute.

She saunters toward the trees. Corky looks around guiltily and follows her.

From across the field, Carlene watches Corky panting after Maxine.

EXT. IN THE TREES - DAY

Maxine is waiting for Corky when he arrives. They cannot be seen from the ball field.

MAXINE
You know, Corky...

She moves in very closely and puts her hand on his shoulder.

MAXINE (cont'd)
...I'm the only girl in town you
haven't hit on recently.

CORKY
Hey, I was just... well, you know.

MAXINE
You ought to try your luck. I might
surprise you.

Corky swallows hard. Jackpot! He grins and his hand comes up.

EXT. BALL PARK - DAY

Carlene glances again at the trees, but then shrugs impatiently and turns away. Suddenly, the Dog is right in front of her. It drops a baseball at her feet.

CARLENE
Hey, fella. Not now, all right? I
have to...

The Dog whines loudly.

CARLENE (cont'd)
Oh, all right. Just once, though.

She picks up the ball and cocks her arm, ready to throw away from the trees. Just as she throws it, the Dog steps in between her legs and she trips, falling down.

CARLENE (cont'd)
Watch it, fella!

The ball bounces toward the trees where Corky and Maxine are doing whatever it is they're doing.

Barking joyously, the Dog bounds over to the ball and picks it up. Then it just stands there, at the edge of the trees, staring at Carlene.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Well, fetch! Bring it here, boy!
C'mon. C'mon. Oh, for crying out
loud.

The Dog hasn't moved an inch.

She walks over to the Dog. It drops the ball and steps away. Puzzled, she bends over to pick the ball up and hears voices in the trees. She almost walks away, but she can't do it. She has to get closer and hear what is going on.

She creeps softly past a tree and then pulls aside a bush until she can see Corky and Maxine.

The two of them sit on a log. Maxine is trying to be polite, but she is really bored and really disappointed.

CORKY

I'm just freaked, that's all.
Sometimes she says stuff that just
scares the hell out of me. This is
commitment. This is long term. I
don't mean to be a jerk, but it's
weird. And she seems to take it all
for granted, like it's the most
natural thing in the world. How am
I supposed to act?

Carlene pulls back and lets the bush fall back into place. She breathes quickly, and looks around as if she doesn't remember where she is. Slowly she turns. The Dog sits there, looking at her. It barks once and then trots away.

Nick approaches her, carrying bags of gear.

NICK

Well, now's as good a time as any.

Carlene looks confused.

CARLENE

Uh, not right now, o.k., Nick.
We'll... uh... we'll talk later.

She hurries off, leaving Nick puzzled.

EXT. SWING SET

Rick sits on a swing, dejected. A LITTLE GIRL swings happily next to him.

LITTLE GIRL

You gotta push harder!

She's really soaring, but Rick barely moves.

LITTLE GIRL (cont'd)
Push with your legs! Doggie!

The Dog approaches Rick, a baseball mitt in its mouth. It drops the mitt in the dirt and then looks at him.

LITTLE GIRL (cont'd)
What a pretty doggie!

RICK
Hey, that's Ruthie's mitt.

He picks up the glove and regards the Dog for a moment. But he can't think of anything to say except:

RICK (CONT'D) (cont'd)
Thanks, boy.

Rick runs off. The Little Girl hops down off the swing and embraces the Dog.

LITTLE GIRL
Pretty doggie!

The Dog seems to enjoy the clumsy embrace and licks the girl's face. The GIRL'S MOTHER looks up from her book. Concerned, she walks toward her daughter.

GIRL'S MOTHER
Honey, don't grab the doggie.

The Little Girl steps back and pats the Dog's head.

LITTLE GIRL
It's o.k., Mommy. He's a good dog.

The Dog trots off. The Mother picks up her little girl and puts her on the swing.

LITTLE GIRL (cont'd)
Push me high, Mommy!

The Mother smiles and pushes her daughter very high.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

The river, wide and powerful, flows into the bay. The lighthouse on the point marks the boundary of the shimmering ocean. Ruthie stands at the bank. She has a forked branch with a few leaves on it tied to a string. Something small and white floats in the current.

She throws the branch into the water and then pulls it in, capturing the egg-like object. At her feet are several of the white things.

Rick approaches, carrying her mitt. When she bends to pick up her latest catch, she sees him.

RUTHIE

Hi.

RICK

Hi. I brought your mitt.

RUTHIE

Cool. Thanks. The river's full of them again.

RICK

How many have you got?

RUTHIE

A dozen so far. You want to help?

RICK

Sure.

She throws the branch out into the water, catching another object. She pulls it in and Rick bends down to pick it up.

RUTHIE

Don't fall in. The current is strong here.

RICK

I'll be careful.

He snatches the object out of the water and holds it up.

RUTHIE

Golf balls. Day after day. Golf balls. Where do you suppose they come from?

RICK

I didn't mean to hit you, Ruthie.

RUTHIE

I know. I'm sorry I called you a spaz.

RICK

I'd never hit you on purpose.

RUTHIE

I know that. You're still a
pinhead, though.

Rick smiles and gets ready to fetch the next golf ball that she is hauling in.

RICK

Yeah, I know. So are you.

RUTHIE

Maybe they're magic golf balls,
escaping from indentured servitude.

RICK

(reaching for the next
ball)

Come on, little fella. You're free
now!

EXT. BALL PARK

Alone on the field, Nick makes a final check for equipment, drops a few items in his bag and heads for his truck. He looks up at the sky - massive beautiful white clouds. He gets in the truck and drives away.

EXT. NICK'S TELEPHONE POLE

The sun nears the horizon. Nick leans into his harness at the top of the pole and absorbs the miles of scenery that he can see from his high vantage point.

EXT. THE STILL'S HOUSE - EVENING

The Stills house stands on a large corner lot. Big, nice house, windows lit as darkness gathers. Nick parks his truck on a side street and approaches the house from the side. Charles and Johnny sit on the front porch.

CHARLES

What about "Four-Legged Friends"?

JOHNNY

How about "The Pet Shoppe"? That's
what it is. It's a pet shop.

CHARLES

We're changing the whole place
around, Dad. We need a new name.

JOHNNY

I say it's a pet shop, and you
should call it what it is.

CHARLES
Maybe "Fur Trade"?

JOHNNY
You gonna wear buckskin? Criminy,
"The Pet Shoppe"!

CHARLES
"Mutt Hut"?

JOHNNY
"Pet Shoppe"!

Nick smiles and walks toward the back of the house. He almost trips over the Dog. It cuddles his leg and he bends down to pet it. Voices come out of the kitchen window. Nick looks up and sees his mother, ALICE, and Roma working in the kitchen.

ALICE
I can't tell. Cumin?

ROMA
I told you. I'm not telling you.

Roma takes a sip from a pot bubbling on the stove.

ALICE
Coriander?

ROMA
Well, whatever it is, I haven't got
the right stuff in it.

ALICE
Roma! This is delicious!

ROMA
It's all right, but it needs
something. I'd like to serve this
at the wedding, but not unless I
can make it...

ALICE
Perfect. You remind me of Robert.
This kitchen would have been
finished three months ago if he
hadn't been so picky.

ROMA
He did a great job.

ALICE
It's wonderful. It's like getting a
whole new house.

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)

But I would been happy with a little less a little sooner. But between the kitchen here and whatever he and Nick are working on...

ROMA

You mean the boat? Robert has been working with Nick on the boat?

ALICE

Oh, nobody's telling me anything. But those two have something going on. A word of wisdom for you, Roma. Don't ever try to out-last Nick on anything. He's the most patient man I've ever known. Why, even as a boy...

Nick walks away from the window. He puts his finger to his lips and beckons the Dog to follow him. They go into the back yard where Nick sits on a swing.

NICK

Yeah, you got to know when to stop listening, eh, boy?

The Dog is looking away, apparently not listening. Nick laughs.

NICK (cont'd)

You got it, fella. Hey, look up there.

Without looking at Nick, the Dog looks to the southern sky, at the bright star glowing near the horizon.

NICK (cont'd)

The moon will be up in a while, but right now that's the brightest star in the sky.

Nick leans back in the swing and takes a deep breath.

NICK (cont'd)

God, it's nice here.

The Dog takes a couple of steps and sits, looking at the star.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Roma ENTERS, carrying the main dish. Seated at the table are Johnny, Alice, Uncle Jack (who never speaks), Charles and Nick. A place is set for Robert, but he hasn't arrived yet.

ROMA

Well, it isn't perfect, but...

ALICE

It's fine. You just taste it and see. You're going to love it.

Robert ENTERS through the kitchen.

ROBERT

Don't listen to them, Roma. Nothing less than perfect is ever acceptable.

He kisses Roma's cheek and takes his seat. He grabs Charles' hand.

ROBERT (cont'd)

Speaking of perfect...

The two men kiss.

JOHNNY

Oh, criminy.

Charles shows a flash of irritation, but Robert squeezes his hand, shutting him up. He takes the serving bowl from Roma and dishes some onto his plate.

ROBERT

What about the kitchen, Alice? How was it?

ALICE

Robert, you did a great job with the kitchen.

ROMA

I'll second that. You're the master.

Robert tastes the food.

ROBERT

My god! Roma, you don't think this is perfect?

ROMA

No, it needs...something. I'm not sure exactly what.

ROBERT

Well, I take back what I said before. Perfect or not, this is way more than acceptable. What do you think, Johnny?

JOHNNY

It's great, absolutely delicious.

CHARLES

(challenging tone)

What about the kitchen? How do you like the kitchen?

JOHNNY

(getting angry)

Robert did an absolutely brilliant job in the kitchen. I never said anything less.

ALICE

Johnny...

CHARLES

But woodworking is such a manly thing. How could...

ROBERT

Charles...

JOHNNY

Oh, just stop. Call the damned store anything you like. Get the chip off your shoulder. I'm not trying to run your life any more.

CHARLES

But it drives you nuts, doesn't it? You can't forget the fact...

JOHNNY

The fact that my son is as gay as a tree full of parrots? No, I can't forget that.

Nick, Charles and Robert all exchange a glance. Then...

ALL THREE

Caw! Caw! Caw!

They flap their arms like birds. For a second, Johnny is angry, then he grins and shakes his head.

JOHNNY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Very funny.

ROMA

All right, you clowns. A little respect, please. The focus here is on the food, right?

ALL THREE

Right!

ROMA

And you don't want to miss the special desert, right?

ALL THREE

Right?

ROMA

And only good little boys get desert, right?

ALL THREE + JOHNNY

Right!

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Johnny comes out of the house, followed by Uncle Jack, both of them carrying a bowl of strawberry shortcake with lots of whipped cream. They sit on a porch swing. Johnny takes a bite and shivers with pleasure. The Dog trots up onto the porch. Uncle Jack fills a finger with whipped cream and lets the Dog lick it off. The Dog lies down at his feet.

Robert comes out onto the porch.

ROBERT

Mind if I join you?

JOHNNY

Of course not. Have a seat.

Robert sits and takes a bite of dessert.

ROBERT

God, that's good.

JOHNNY

The lady can cook.

Pause.

JOHNNY (cont'd)
Maybe I owe you an explanation.

ROBERT
Johnny, you don't owe me anything.

Johnny absently pets the Dog.

JOHNNY
The thing about being a parent is this: you think that all you care about is that your kids grow up strong and happy. But underneath that is the definition you have in your head about what happiness is. You understand what I'm saying?

ROBERT
Yes, I do.

JOHNNY
It isn't that you think it's the right way or the only way, it's just a picture you've got in your mind, that's all. I took the pretty wife and the rambunctious grand-kids for granted. They're not a goal, or some kind of ideal - I just sort of took them for granted.

ROBERT
And then I came along.

JOHNNY
I'm sorry, Robert, but it has nothing to do with you. Let me tell you something about me.

(deep breath)
At eighteen, all I wanted to do was get out of this town. There were a lot of ways to do that, so I chose one. I didn't go to college; I didn't run off with the circus. I enlisted in the Marines.

ROBERT
I didn't know that.

JOHNNY
Went to war. Got an unpleasant glimpse of some of the bad things the world has to offer.

(MORE)

JOHNNY (cont'd)

And I lived through it and came back here and fell in love and I never left this town again. Never saw any reason to.

(leans toward Robert)

You see, Robert, I do have a prejudice. I just plain don't like men much. That's what really bugs me. I always pictured this sweet little blonde girl that my boy would marry.

ROBERT

And I don't fit that dream very well, at all, do I?

JOHNNY

(laughs)

You sure as hell don't. But you are one of the finest people I have ever known. I said that when you were my son's friend in junior high, and I'll say that today, now that you're my son's...

ROBERT

Lover.

JOHNNY

Lover. Just treat him right, that's all. He has the right to the best that the world has to offer. Give him as much of that as you can get your hands on.

ROBERT

I'll try. I will try.

JOHNNY

I know you will. And so will Charles. I may not think much of men as a species, but my sons, both of them, are very good men. Probably their mother's doing.

The Dog stands and walks away, down the front steps and into the night.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

Do you have any idea whose dog that is?

EXT. TELEPHONE POLE - DAY

Nick and Corky work high up on a pole.

NICK

So, are you all ready for tomorrow?

CORKY

Tomorrow? What about tonight?
Aren't you in charge of my bachelor
party?

NICK

Got it all in hand.

CORKY

And?

NICK

Sorry, son, big surprise.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

Carlene and Wanda feed the pets.

CARLENE

Are sure you don't have things to
do today?

WANDA

It's fine. I'll take off this
afternoon. We walked through the
ceremony this morning. All I have
to do is survive the party you guys
are throwing for me tonight.

CARLENE

What makes you think...

WANDA

In fact, don't you have to meet
Roma in a few minutes?

Carlene checks her watch.

CARLENE

Cripes! You're right. You don't
mind, do you? I'll be right back.

WANDA

Take your time.

Carlene EXITS and as her car roars off, the Dog looks in the front door of the shop. It watches Wanda for a moment. The macaw notices the Dog and starts barking.

MACAW
Woof! Woof! Woof!

WANDA
Sit!

The Dog EXITS.

Wanda works for another moment and then a gigantic CRASH from outside. She runs out the door.

EXT. FRONT OF PET STORE - DAY

The neatly stacked dog houses and kitty poles outside are in a heap.

WANDA
Damn!

She leans over and starts picking up kitty poles. Behind her, the Dog sneaks into the store.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

The Dog ENTERS. The macaw stares at it nervously. Puppies jump on the side of their cages, wanting to play. Kitties mew plaintively. The Dog stands in the middle of the store, undecided. It look at the phone. It looks at the macaw. It looks at the phone. It looks at the macaw. Phone. Macaw.

EXT. TELEPHONE POLE -DAY

Nick and Corky still working. Nick completes a set of wiring connections and plugs in his handset. It rings.

NICK
What the....

He clicks the receiver on.

NICK (cont'd)
Uh...hello?

He frowns and looks at Corky.

NICK (cont'd)
(to Corky)
Line's open.
(into phone)
Hello?

Pause, as he listens.

NICK (cont'd)
 What? What was that? Could you
 repeat that?

Corky clambers up and they both listen into the phone.

VOICE
 What is True Love?

Corky grins at Nick and shrugs.

NICK
 O.k., I'll bite. What is True Love?

VOICE
 If you were in Heaven, True Love is
 the only thing that could make you
 leave.

The line clicks dead. Nick and Corky stare at one another.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

Wanda ENTERS. As she rounds a counter, she sees the Dog and the macaw. The Dog is standing almost upright; the macaw is leaning close to the Dog. It looks as if the Dog is whispering something into the bird's ear.

WANDA
 Hey! What's going on?

The Dog dodges around her and runs out of the store. Wanda tries to catch it, but it is out of sight before she makes the door. She walks up to the macaw and looks it deeply in the eye.

WANDA (cont'd)
 Is that how you learned how to
 bark?

The bird opens its beak, but doesn't make a sound. The "phone off the hook" signal starts beeping. Puzzled, Wanda picks up the handset of the phone and replaces it.

EXT. CORKY'S HOUSE - EVENING

It's a nice little two-bedroom bungalow in a nice neighborhood. Music plays through the open front window. Corky roams the front porch, banging on everything with a pair of drumsticks - flower pot, mailbox, porch swing. He's very good at it.

Nick's truck and another car pull up out front. Nick, PAUL, JIM, DAVE and GREG get out. Nick carries a large bag.

CORKY

Hey, you guys! I was beginning to wonder if you'd blown it off!

GREG

Mr. Bachelor-Man's Send-Off Party? I don't think so.

JIM

You still going through with it?

CORKY

Hell, yes. She's the perfect babe, ain't she?

DAVE

The way I hear it, you've hit on every girl in town in the last couple of weeks.

PAUL

And missed with every one of them.

CORKY

Almost every one.

PAUL

Big talker. Think you've found True Love, eh?

Nick and Corky exchange a glance.

DAVE

True Love, my eye. It's that honeymoon night this boy is after. What are your plans?

CORKY

Other than the obvious?
 (manly guffaws all around)
 Well, the wedding is late and the party will probably run all night...
 (more guffaws)
 ...so we're just gonna crash here tomorrow night and take off Sunday morning.

Jim adopts a reverent attitude and stares at the house.

JIM
So this is the Temple of Marital
Mysteries.

CORKY
Yeah, I've got it all set up in
there.

DAVE
I'll bet. Scented lube in every
room!

PAUL
Stack of "special" videos!

GREG
Velcro wall!

All of the guys stare at him.

GREG (cont'd)
Hey! I think it'd be cool!

NICK
Let's see the Palace of Pleasure.

CORKY
Sure! Beer's inside anyway.

They all whoop and run for the door.

INT. CORKY'S HOUSE

From the living room, the open floor plan reveals many of the rooms of the house. Flowers everywhere. Candles on any open surface. A long flowing canopy over the bed. It's a romantic dream cottage. The guys are surprised, but they all nod their heads in approval. Dave pats Corky on the back.

DAVE
Looks great, man. She'll love it.

GREG
No motion lotion?

CORKY
(sheepish)
Well, there's some in the bed side
stand.

JIM
(from the kitchen)
Jesus!

(MORE)

JIM (cont'd)
 (takes a bottle from the
 refrigerator)
 Dom Perignon!
 (and holds up two
 champagne flutes)
 And crystal! Chilling!

PAUL
 You are a god.

CORKY
 Yeah, yeah, yeah. So what's the
 plan?

Nick sets the bag down.

NICK
 O.k., in honor of our dear friend
 and his upcoming nuptials...
 (applause)
 ...we have assembled in this bag
 all the essentials to begin the
 definitive bachelor party. Thus
 prepared, we will then proceed to
 Party Central and get things
 rolling!

CORKY
 I like the sounds of that!

NICK
 Your approval is of no concern -
 your fate is in our hands.

Chorus of cheers. Nick starts pulling things out of the bag.

NICK (cont'd)
 First. A bottle of cheap perfume.
 Next. Crimson lipstick. Feathers
 freshly pulled from a boa. False
 eyelashes. Tassles, two. A handful
 of sequins. Nylons with runs in
 them.

CORKY
 Everything except the stripper.

NICK
 That's right. Smear'd on a shirt,
 poured on trousers, stuck into the
 random pocket...evidence of a night
 of sin. More trouble than any new
 groom can handle.

CORKY

But no stri... Hey! I get it!

His buddies all grin.

CORKY (cont'd)

We're going bowling!

Cheers all around. Greg grabs the lipstick and smears some on Corky's collar.

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE

Carlene, Charles, Robert, Wanda, and a BANKER stand around the counter, papers spread, pens in hand. All the animals are completely silent and watching them. Carlene looks around the store.

CARLENE

It's tough. It's tougher than I thought it would be.

CHARLES

Do you need time? I mean, this all happened pretty fast.

CARLENE

Like pulling off a band-aid, right?

ROBERT

Well, yeah, if you are truly ready to pull off the band-aid.

CARLENE

You know how it is. You want something for so long and when it finally comes, it scares the hell out of you.

WANDA

Are you sure you really want to do this? Are you truly ready to leave?

Carlene, startled to hear it stated so plainly, looks a bit panicky.

BANKER

Everything is in order, Carlene. It's a good offer.

CARLENE

(to Charles and Robert)
I know it is. I just...

ROBERT

Carlene...

CARLENE

Tell you what. Leave the papers.
I'll sign them later.

Both Robert and Charles try not to look disappointed. Carlene sees right through them and takes their hands.

CARLENE (cont'd)

It's just jitters. Give me tonight,
all right? I'm sorry, but it's a
big step. Let it soak in tonight.
O.k?

CHARLES

Take your time. This has to be
right for everyone.

ROBERT

You ladies are almost late for your
party, right? Go. Have a hell of a
night. We can talk tomorrow.

CARLENE

Leave the papers here, o.k?

BANKER

That will be fine. The money is in
escrow. As soon as you sign, I'll
get the check to you.

CARLENE

Thank you. I'm sorry.

ROBERT

Not a problem.
(he hugs Carlene)
Wanda, have a great party tonight
and we'll see you tomorrow. The Big
Day.

CHARLES

Seems like a lot of Big Days
happening around here all of a
sudden.

WANDA

If my freaked-out beau survives his
bachelor party, then who knows?

EXT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

The Dog sits outside the entrance, waiting patiently. A man comes out of the building. Unseen, the Dog slips in.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY

It's a small-town bowling alley, but two lanes are brightly decorated for the bachelor party. The guys are whooping it up, having a heck of a time. The Dog trots over and watches them bowl.

It starts to get excited, the balls rolling down the alley really catching its eye.

Nick sets up, rolls a perfect strike to the cheers of his pals and turns to walk back. The Dog is right there, trembling with excitement. This Dog wants to bowl!

NICK

Hey, boy. You want to bowl?

He kneels and extends his hand. The Dog raises its paw and puts it into Nick's hand. Nick examines it.

NICK (cont'd)

I got bad news for you, fella. You have no opposing thumb. You have to have an opposing thumb to bowl.

The Dog woofs. In the next lane, Corky, his shirt covered with smeared lipstick, his hair a mess and a nylon stocking dangling from his back pocket, sets up.

CORKY

See, watch this, doggie.

Corky hurls the ball. The Dog trembles with excitement, almost running down the lane.

CORKY (cont'd)

You think you can do that, boy?

NICK

Hey, I've got an idea. Jim, get me one of those kiddie balls.

Jim hops over the bench to the ball rack and finds a child's ball, lighter weight and marked with two large, colored triangles. He tosses it to Nick. The Dog is bouncing all over the place.

Nick sets the ball down by the foul line.

NICK (cont'd)

O.k., here's the deal. I think that
if you...

The Dog bumps against him, knocking him aside with an impatient woof. Nick backs off, signalling his friends to silence and watching the Dog.

The Dog calms down, focuses, concentrates on the ball, the lane, the pins. Then it puts its nose to the ball and starts it rolling. It chases the ball down the lane, nudging it, speeding it up. At the last minute, the Dog slides to a stop and the ball smacks into the pins, knocking about half of them over. Bowlers all over the building holler encouragement. The Dog yips in joy and runs back to the ball return machine, waiting for the ball to return.

NICK (cont'd)

Greg, we've got a player. Add the
pup to the score sheet.

The guys cheer. The Dog's ball returns. Nick picks up the ball and heads for the foul line, the Dog bouncing along behind.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Carlene and Wanda lean against the balcony, drinking wine, looking out over a large city. The nearly full moon shines, but city lights wash out the stars. From inside the room, slow music plays.

WANDA

Moon looks great, but I can't see
any stars at all.

CARLENE

It was strange. I haven't had any
trouble thinking about it. My mind
is... was... is made up. Until
tonight. I just couldn't sign.

WANDA

You better be sure.

CARLENE

I thought I was.

WANDA

As long as I've known you, you've
wanted to go.

CARLENE

Heck, as long as I've known me I've wanted to go. But suddenly, I wondered if that is what I've really wanted all this time.

WANDA

I don't understand.

CARLENE

Me neither. The thought just came to my head that there was something else that I wanted. That my desire to get out was just... I don't know... hiding something else?

WANDA

Like what?

CARLENE

I have no idea. The store? The animals? My family? I've always felt a responsibility for those things. The kids on the softball team gave me this. I love it.

(she's wearing the medal
as a necklace)

But they had no trouble accepting that I was leaving.

WANDA

You wanted them to ask you to stay?

CARLENE

Is that what I really want? All this time, have I been threatening to leave just so people would ask me to stay?

WANDA

(realizing something)
Jesus!

CARLENE

What?

WANDA

Uh...nothing.

CARLENE

And the funny thing is...nobody has asked me to stay. All I've gotten is support. "You go, girl!"

WANDA

Bummer. I hate it when I get support.

CARLENE

(laughs)

Yeah, I know. So I go back to that perfect little town with all its perfect people that I love so much and I sign those papers and cash that check and move to Boston and start my new high-powered upwardly mobile job.

WANDA

Or not.

CARLENE

Or not.

She turns and looks through the door into the room. Inside, Bethany is dancing very closely with a man wearing only a purple thong and cowboy hat.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Isn't that supposed to be your dance?

WANDA

I always preferred firemen.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Betty sits on a couch with a man wearing only a thong and fireman's helmet.

FIREMAN

I guess it was my mother. She had the best taste in furniture. Antiques wall-to-wall. I grew up sleeping on a Freeman design brass bed.

BETTY

Incredible. Well, you ought to see my shop. I just got a new Berenson dresser and a matching armoire.

FIREMAN

Berenson. Wow. What great pieces.

BETTY

It needs a lot of restoration.

FIREMAN

You need any help? I'm cute in a thong, but I know my way around a shop.

BETTY

A stripper who knows how to strip?

FIREMAN

(laughs)

Yeah. I'm good at it, too. Both of 'em.

BETTY

Well, there's a guy who lives upstairs who usually helps me out, but why don't you give me your number, just in case?

She digs in her purse and he reaches inside his G-string. They both hold out cards. Betty laughs.

FIREMAN

Well, you never know who you're going to meet.

They exchange cards.

BETTY

Mmm. Still warm. So what's your favorite? What kind of furniture do you really like to work on?

He looks embarrassed.

FIREMAN

You'll think I'm putting you on.

BETTY

What? Which... Oh, no. You're kidding!

FIREMAN

I swear. I've always liked them best. No joke.

Betty laughs out loud.

BETTY

Really? Honest to god?

FIREMAN

I swear.

BETTY
Your favorite is... Chippendales?

FIREMAN
It's the lines, the exquisite
craftmanship...

But Betty is laughing too loud to listen.

INT. CORKY'S CAR - NIGHT

Nick is driving along a dark country road, with Corky in the passenger seat and the Dog between them. Jim and Paul are in the back seat. The car rattles and the engine doesn't sound so good.

NICK
Corky, my man, you need a new ride.

CORKY
Tell me about it.

NICK
And you need a different perfume.

CORKY
Hey, you bought it.

The Dog starts barking.

CORKY (cont'd)
Yeah, everybody's a critic. Come
here, you mutt!

He hugs the Dog close.

CORKY (cont'd)
How about this guy! Best new bowler
in the canine league!

JIM
Well, it helps when you can
actually run down the lane with the
ball.

CORKY
You're just pissed 'cause he beat
you.

JIM
Hey! One lousy game. I had too many
beers. I wasn't trying.

CORKY

The dog beat you!

The Dog starts jumping up and down, barking. It bumps repeatedly into Nick.

NICK

Hey, can somebody take the pup?

Jim reaches forward and takes hold of the Dog. The Dog freaks, jumping all over the place.

NICK (cont'd)

Well, damn...

He pulls the car over to the side of the road and stops.

EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - NIGHT

Nick gets out of the car and looks back in.

NICK

Let him go, you guys. Come on, boy.
Come on. It's o.k.

Suddenly, a fast-approaching car swings around the corner, its headlights washing over Nick. At that moment, the Dog leaps out of Corky's car, stumbles and sprawls in the road, directly in the path of the oncoming car.

NICK (cont'd)

Jesus!

He leaps for the Dog, grabs it, and throws it out of the way. But he slips and falls as he does so.

CORKY

Nick!

Nick struggles to his feet, but the car is too close. He's gonna get hit!

INT. CARLENE'S SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Carlene and Wanda are in the oncoming car. Nick rises up from the road, right in front of her. She can't avoid him.

CARLENE

Oh my god!

A tawny blur from the side of the road - Nick knocked to one side - a heavy THUMP - something flies into the ditch - Carlene slams on the brakes.

EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - NIGHT

Carlene's car screeches to a stop. She and Wanda get out and run toward Nick. He is lying in front of Corky's car. The guys pile out of Corky's car.

CARLENE

Nick! Jesus! Nick!

Corky is the first to reach Nick, but Carlene yanks Corky up and away and drops by Nick's side. His forehead bleeds a little.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Nick!

NICK

I'm o.k., I think. I hit my head on something.

CORKY

The fender. Look at the dent!

WANDA

Corky!

Corky finally notices Wanda.

CORKY

Babe!

They sweep each other into a big hug.

CARLENE

You're o.k? You're really o.k?

NICK

I think so. I just bumped my head. You didn't hit me. I hit Corky's car. Something knocked me out of the way. Hey! Where's the dog?

EXT. BUSHES - NIGHT

The Dog can see all of them through the branches of the bushes. It lies on its side, breathing heavily. Slowly, painfully, unable to rise, it drags itself deeper into the bushes, away from the glare of the headlights.

EXT. TWO-LANE BLACKTOP - NIGHT

Nick gets unsteadily to his feet.

CARLENE

Are you sure you should move?

NICK

Really. I'm o.k. But does anyone see the dog?

Carlene stays close to Nick, but the other guys start looking in the ditch for the Dog.

Corky pulls away from Wanda.

CORKY

Maybe we should look, too.

Wanda sniffs Corky, her nose wrinkling, and then fingers his collar, looking at the smeared lipstick. Corky sheepishly pulls a black nylon stocking from his back pocket. Wanda's eyes narrow and she looks up at Corky.

WANDA

Did you guys go bowling?

Corky grins widely and hugs her close again.

Nick, leaning on Carlene, and the other two guys search up and down the ditch.

NICK

Pup! C'mere pup! C'mon, boy!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POP'S PET SHOPPE - NIGHT

Carlene ENTERS, alone. She's tired, smudged with dirt. She turns on a single light and looks down at the papers on the counter. She slides them around, reading a little. She picks up a pen and puts it down.

CARLENE

Maybe it's my destiny...

MACAW

Destiny!

The bird is at the edge of shadow, twitching with excitement. Carlene looks at the bird, surprised. All of the animals shuffle in their cages.

CARLENE

What did you say? Destiny?

MACAW
Destiny! Destiny!

CARLENE
That's right. Destiny. Good bird.

MACAW
Destiny is... Destiny is...

CARLENE
What? What is Destiny?

MACAW
...what you let happen.

CARLENE
What?

MACAW
Destiny is... what you let happen.

Carlene looks around, puzzled, and realizes that all of the animals are staring silently at her.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Corky and Wanda, resplendent in tux and gown, stand before the altar. Nick is the Best Man; Carlene the Maid of Honor. The church is full - a by-the-book wedding with all the trimmings.

PRIEST
And what God hath brought together,
let no one put asunder.

Nick and Carlene exchange a look.

Corky takes his bride in his arms and kisses her. The massive pipe organ starts to play and Corky looks up at the array of pipes.

CORKY
Wow! Yeah!

He nods toward them and Wanda looks up as well. She looks back at him, puzzled, but he seems to have figured something out.

CORKY (cont'd)
You know, gorgeous, I'm gonna love
you forever.

Startled, Nick and Carlene stare at one another.

Wanda smiles and pulls Corky in very close and whispers something in his ear.

The priest clears his throat. Corky and Wanda have long missed their cue for the walk down the aisle. But they hug for a moment longer. When they come up for air, they are smiling hugely and proudly stride down the aisle.

Behind them, Nick and Carlene have to link arms and follow. They hesitate, but finally make contact with one another. They both seem very embarrassed about something and they don't look at one another.

Roma watches them go by. She wants to reach out and touch Nick, but she forces herself not to. She seems ready to cry. She stares after them for a moment and then remembers something and, moving carefully but quickly past the people in her row of pews, heads for a side exit.

EXT. CHURCH - EVENING

As Roma drives by the church the reception lines are going on strong.

EXT. BEACH - ESTABLISHING SHOT - EVENING

The beach is set up for a huge party: a dining pavilion, a bandstand, lights and streamers, a deck for dancing. The light house shines at the mouth of the bay and the ocean glimmers beyond. It is a warm, beautiful night and the water is calm.

Bethany and a couple of other people put the finishing touches on their stage decorations - a modernistic look with PVC pipes of differing lengths girding the stage. Quite pretty.

INT. DINING PAVILION - EVENING

Nancy has set up all the cooking apparatus and pots are steaming as Roma ENTERS. Several other servers are setting up place settings. One whole table is devoted to a miraculous cake.

ROMA

How is everything?

NANCY

Great. How was the ceremony?

ROMA

Lovely. Everything was perfect. Folks will start arriving any minute. Is all the flatware out?

NANCY

I'm on it.

Nancy hurries off. Roma samples the main dish (the same thing she served at the Stills house). She shakes her head a little; it still isn't perfect. Outside the band starts tuning up. Roma looks around the tent and sees that everything is in good order. She strolls over to the side of the tent and looks out at the band and the people arriving.

Johnny and Alice Stills, in tux and gown, are already dancing, even though the music isn't really going yet. Roma smiles and turns back to the food. The back fabric of the tent moves as if a wind blew through, but there is no wind.

When Roma gets behind the serving table, she sees what looks like a dry, bushy weed lying on the table next to the kettle. Puzzled, she picks it up to throw it away, then stops. She holds it up to her nose. Smells great. She crushes a dry leave between her fingers and smells it. Not bad. She looks around the room and, somewhat guiltily, sprinkles some of the dried herb into the kettle. She stirs it a bit and takes a taste.

ROMA

My god.

She crumbles some more leaves and sprinkles them into the pot. When she looks up, Ted is there.

TED

So what's for dinner?

ROMA

Oh, hi Ted. Here try this.

She holds out the spoon. He tastes it.

TED

Damn! That's excellent. Is that your recipe?

ROMA

Yeah, it is now. You like it?

TED

It's great. Have you ever thought of... well, listen, I'm a part investor in a big convention facility down in Boston. Have you ever thought about expanding your horizons a bit?

ROMA
You need a chef?

TED
I didn't think so until a minute ago. Let's talk a little later, o.k?

ROMA
Sure. It's going to get busy for a while here.

TED
Has the wedding party shown up yet?

ROMA
Any minute. If I see Carlene, I'll tell her you're looking for her.

TED
Thanks. See you later. Wait a second.

He grabs a punch cup and ladles some of Roma's sauce into it. He walks away, eating.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Corky and Wanda dance their spotlight dance under the brilliantly full moon. Let's give them a nice, long moment. The entire town looks on, Nick and Carlene included. After a moment, Nick steps on the stage and up to the microphone.

NICK
Ladies and gentlemen. I give you the bride and groom, Corky and Wanda!

Loud applause all around. Corky and his bride take a bow.

NICK (cont'd)
And the next dance is for the wedding party.

All the groomsmen and bridesmaids meet on the dance floor. Nick and Carlene slowly approach one another. After a second's hesitation, they step close and start dancing.

CARLENE
We haven't had much of a chance to talk since last night. That scared me to death.

NICK
Me too. I think that dog...

CARLENE
I guess I thought you would always
be here.

He pulls away a little and looks at her.

NICK
Carlene. Nobody will always be
here.

She pulls him back, holding him close.

CARLENE
I know that. I understand that. I
just...

She suddenly breaks away and runs from the dance floor,
pushing her way through the crowd. Nick stands there, looking
lost and confused. Corky sees Nick's discomfort and leaps up
on the stage.

CORKY
Hey, you guys! This is my wedding,
not the end of the world! The moon
is full and we're at a party! Let's
go!

The band fires up and suddenly the floor is full of dancing
revelers. Wanda joins Corky on the stage and they prove
they're the best dancers at the party.

In the crowd, Charles and Robert head for the dance floor.
They bump into Johnny and Alice on the way.

ROBERT
Come on, you two. Things are just
getting started.

ALICE
No, no, just a little fast for my
thin blood. You two have fun,
though.

CHARLES
Dad, what the heck are you wearing?

He indicates the brightly colored shirt Johnny has on under
his tux. Johnny grins.

JOHNNY
Why, I thought you'd never ask.

He opens his tux and reveals an incredibly gaudy Hawaiian shirt filled with red and yellow parrots.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

It's my favorite. It's a tree full of parrots!

Stunned silence and then everyone is laughing. Charles and Johnny hug, then Robert joins and pulls Alice in.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

All right, all right. Criminy. We're just headed out of here, but listen, there's something I want to say.

Charles and Robert lean in to hear.

JOHNNY (cont'd)

I hear you guys might be wanting to do some fancy dog trims at your shop.

CHARLES

Well, if it is our shop...

ROBERT

Where did you hear that?

JOHNNY

Listen, a barbershop is better than CNN. I heard. Anyway, I've been cutting hair for 30 years, I imagine I can make a poodle look like God's gift to Park Avenue. Time I branched out a little.

CHARLES

Dad.

They embrace while Robert and Alice tearfully look on.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Away from the noise and lights, Carlene takes off her shoes as she walks through the sand. She sits on a rock and looks out at the bay. Ted approaches.

TED

Hey, Carlene.

CARLENE

Oh. Hi, Ted.

TED
Room for two?

He indicates the rock.

CARLENE
You bet. Have a seat. I need to
talk with you, anyway.

Ted sits and looks out over the water.

TED
Gorgeous. Hard to imagine leaving.

CARLENE
I've been imagining nothing else
for such a long time.

TED
But you're not coming to Boston,
are you?

Carlene sighs deeply.

CARLENE
Ted...

TED
Don't worry about it. I knew it was
a long shot when I came up here.

CARLENE
It isn't you.

TED
I know that, Carlene. It isn't me.
It might have been me eight years
ago, but it isn't me now.

CARLENE
You're a good guy, Ted.

TED
Yeah, I guess so. But, good or not,
not many of us get a second chance.
You basically have to hope that you
are there and ready when that first
chance comes around.

CARLENE
I'm sorry.

TED

Don't be. I have a feeling... well,
let's just say that I don't think
you have much reason to be sorry.
At least not to me.

He stands and holds out his hand.

TED (cont'd)

Friends?

She takes his hand and stands up.

CARLENE

More than that.

She hugs him. He cherishes it for a moment, then pulls away.

TED

I wish you the best. But I need to
go find someone to dance with me.
Goodbye, Carlene.

CARLENE

Goodbye, Ted.

He walks away, then stops and turns.

TED

Oh, and by the way. I figured it
out. I know.

CARLENE

You know what?

TED

I know what he said to you that
night. Under that full moon.

He walks away.

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

Corky and Wanda are dancing up a storm. Right in front of the stage Bethany is dancing with the Cowboy stripper from the bachelorette party. He is fully dressed, but still wearing the hat.

Corky waves at the drummer and the drummer tosses Corky a couple of drumsticks. Corky starts doing drum solos on every surface the stage has to offer. He sweeps the drumsticks across the different lengths of PVC pipe that Bethany set up. His eyes light up.

CORKY
I get it, pooch!

Bethany gets it, too.

BETHANY
Just lift them up! They come right
out!

Corky sticks the drumsticks in his cummerbund and starts pulling out lengths of piping. Wanda grabs a guitar rack and a framework for an electric piano and she and Corky arrange the pipes. The drummer throws her a pair of sticks and suddenly Corky and Wanda are playing an incredible rhythm beat on the piping. Each length of pipe makes a different note - half xylophone and half tom-tom. The band backs them up and the crowd goes wild.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Carlene sits on her rock, staring out to sea as the music echoes from the party. The lighthouse casts its beam over the bay.

A dog comes trotting out of the darkness and passes in front of Carlene. She watches it go by. Suddenly, she straightens up and looks up on the bluff. The lighthouse beam sweeps across the top of the overlook and she sees someone standing up there. She looks at the party lights, then starts walking toward the bluff.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Carlene picks her way up the steep trail to the top of the bluff.

EXT. LOVER'S LOOKOUT - NIGHT

Carlene reaches the top of the trail and walks to where Nick is standing. They both look out at the moon over the ocean for a long moment.

NICK
We've been here before.

CARLENE
Having you been waiting all this
time? Waiting for me?

NICK
(surprised)
Yeah. Yeah, I guess I have.

He turns toward her, but she stops him.

CARLENE

No. Don't look at me. It's easier if...

(swallows hard)

You've always been there, haven't you? Even when I wasn't looking, it was always you right over my shoulder. No matter what I did, there you were, watching me. Watching over me.

Nick has tears in his eyes.

CARLENE (cont'd)

It isn't the town. It isn't the people. I love them, but I could leave if that was all it was. It's the stars, it's the quiet, it's the cool ocean breeze at night. It's you standing right beside me. Loving me. That's what I can't leave. That's what I never want to leave behind.

She turns toward him and he turns toward her and they are in each other's arms and everything is beautiful and perfect and they know it. She whispers to him:

CARLENE (cont'd)

The trouble was that I believed every word you said that night. I still do.

NICK

So do I.

CARLENE

If you say it again, I won't run this time.

NICK

Promise?

CARLENE

I promise.

Nick takes a breath...

At the edge of the clearing, the Dog noses a bush aside and slowly pushes its head through. It watches Nick and Carlene embrace on the edge of the world. He says something to her and they melt into each other. The Dog lies very slowly down.

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

Corky and Wanda are playing a slower number, but the "musical" pipes are quite the hit. Ted approaches the stage.

TED

Did you guys invent those?

CORKY

You bet!

WANDA

(struck by inspiration)

They're called Boomwhackers!

TED

You know, if they were made of different colors, and packaged right, you could sell a million of them.

CORKY

You got a point! Now all we need is a big toy company to sign us up!

Ted grins and hops up on the stage.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Nick and Carlene walk slowly toward the party. Right at the edge of the light, Nick takes her into his arms.

NICK

There's something I have to show you. Meet me at the barn.

CARLENE

Do you want to go now?

NICK

Right now. It's important.

CARLENE

Then let's go.

They walk toward the party. When they start encountering people, they let go of each other's hands and separate. Roma sees them walking together. Carlene sees Roma and heads toward her. Nick heads for the stage.

CARLENE (cont'd)

Roma...

Roma smiles and hugs her.

ROMA
Don't be silly.

EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

Corky, Wanda and Ted bang away on the Boomwhackers. Nick approaches the stage.

NICK
Corky!

CORKY
Yeah, bud?

NICK
I gotta take off.

CORKY
Will you be back?

NICK
Sometime.

CORKY
O.k. See you later.

He's immersed in his playing and never really looks at Nick. Wanda, however, leaps off the stage and throws her arms around Nick, hugging him tightly.

NICK
Whoa, what's that for?

WANDA
You're good people. You take care.

NICK
Congratulations, Wanda. To both of you.

WANDA
Thanks!

She hops back on the stage. Ted catches Nick's eye, smiles and nods. Nick returns the gesture and then walks away. Suddenly Corky remembers something.

CORKY
Yo! Nick!

NICK
Yeah?

CORKY

You never told me! What was it I should never say?

NICK

Too late, pal, you already said it!

Nick EXITS and after a moment, Corky goes back to drumming with his lovely wife.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Nick gets out of his truck and pulls open the barn door. As the door opens, he hears a metallic clink. A wrench lies on the ground in front of the runners. Puzzled, Nick picks it up and tosses it to one side.

Down the hill in front of the barn no fewer than four dogs push rocks around, dig in the dirt or drag boards around. Nick doesn't notice them.

Carlene's sports car drives up. She reaches into the back seat and pulls out two bottles of champagne and two glasses. Nick smiles at her.

CARLENE

A girl should always be prepared.

NICK

You are beautiful.

They embrace and kiss.

CARLENE

So you wanted to show me something on this boat of yours? Oh, wait a second. The boat is gone.

The fishing skiff is gone. Nick smiles at her.

NICK

Truck drove up this morning with a trailer. Loaded it up and off it went. I've got something else to show you.

CARLENE

What?

NICK

First, look there. Look at the river.

They gaze at the river, lit by moonlight. Nick's star hangs over the horizon.

CARLENE

It's beautiful.

NICK

It's right at your feet. It will take you anywhere. It goes to the ocean and then on to all the places that you've never been.

Carlene looks up at him, stunned, recognizing the speech she gave him earlier about the road.

CARLENE

What are you saying, Nick?

NICK

Just one more thing...

He leads her into the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

He strides along the steel railings to the hanging canvas drapery and yanks it aside, revealing a magnificent boat. A gleaming 36-foot mahogany, teak and brass masterpiece ready to sail anywhere in the world.

CARLENE

Nick! My god!

NICK

I started it three years ago. Robert helped me with the most delicate woodwork, but I pretty much did it all myself. Always intended to sell it for a lot of money. But now...

CARLENE

It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. It's ready to...

He kicks aside the clamps on the undercarriage of the boat and starts wheeling it toward the door. The name-plate "I'm Sirius" has been affixed to the stern.

NICK

Carlene. We can take this boat anywhere. Anywhere in the world. Right now. Tonight. Will you go with me?

She stares at him, her eyes wide, all of her dreams coming true.

CARLENE

Nick...

NICK

We've found each other, Carlene. As long as we're together, we're home.

He hauls on the rope, sending the boat to the end of the runners, fully expecting it to stop. It doesn't.

The boat bursts through the chocks at the end of the runners; the bolts lay scattered on the floor.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

The boat almost flies out the door of barn. On the hill below, the dogs yelp and bark and run for cover. Nick and Carlene run out of the barn after the boat.

The boat, still sitting on its undercarriage, bounces down the hill. Planks have been laid across gullies, rocks have filled holes in the ground, bumps have been dug and scattered until flat. The boat sails serenely down the hill, bouncing a little, but rolling straight. It trails a single, long rope that Nick races after, trying to grab.

At the river's edge, the boat bounces into the air, leaving the undercarriage behind, and hits the water with a tremendous splash. Its momentum carries it into the stream.

Nick catches the rope and digs in his heels. Carlene grabs on and pulls as hard as she can. At least four dogs, including Uncle Jack's formerly mean dog, grab sections of the rope and the combined efforts of all of them bring the boat to a stop, with Nick, Carlene and the dogs standing on the river's edge.

The boat swings around and, pushed by the current, gently nudges up against Uncle Jack's little fishing dock. A small bucket of golf balls on the dock tips over and the balls roll into the river and float away.

Nick and Carlene look at each other in shock, and then begin to laugh. The dogs run off, barking happily.

INT. ROMA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Roma snaps awake and looks at the clock. It's still early. Someone is in bed beside her. Cautiously, she lifts the blanket and peers to see who it is. It Ted. She smiles as memory returns and tenderly replaces the blanket.

She gets up, pulls on some clothes. Ted stirs.

TED

Roma?

ROMA

Go back to sleep. I have to check on something. I'll right back.

TED

Will you cook me breakfast?

ROMA

You bet.

TED

I'm in heaven.

He's asleep again.

Roma EXITS.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Roma drives past a well-kept house. She looks at the front door. There's a stack of papers taped to the front door window with a big X of duct tape.

INT. ROBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Robert gets out of bed, quietly so as not to disturb Charles and heads for the kitchen. As he passes the front door, he sees the big stack of papers taped to the door. He peers closely at them. He can plainly see a signature that reads: "Carlene Waters." He walks toward the kitchen, then suddenly whoops at the top of his lungs and runs back toward the bedroom.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Roma drives past Corky's bungalow. Sitting at the curb is Carlene's sports car, tied up in a big red bow. As Roma passes, Corky bursts through the front door, followed by Wanda, and runs to the car.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Roma drives up to the barn. Nick's truck is parked there. The hill has a long, boat-carved scar in it. Nick's tux and Carlene's gown hang, streaked with dirt, in the barn door. The barn is empty. The boat is gone. Uncle Jack is there, with his golf clubs and his dog.

Uncle Jack hits a golf ball into the river. The formerly big, mean dog brings him another and he sets it up. He nods to Roma.

UNCLE JACK

They took off.

(he hits the ball)

There you go, little fella.

(the dog brings another ball)

You know, Nick said the damnedest thing...

Roma looks down to the river.

ROMA

I know. I know what he said.

The river flows ever on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARIS BOULEVARD - DAY

It's raining in Paris, people scurrying for cover. Getting drenched in the middle of the storm are two very attractive young people, GILLES and MARIE. In French, they sadly argue about something. He pleads with her, but she waves him off. While he is still speaking, tears in his eyes, wanting to keep her with him, she turns and walks away, fumbling with her umbrella.

Gilles walks away in the other direction, dejected, uncaring about the rain.

Finally, unable to get her umbrella open, Marie steps into an arched doorway to escape the downpour. After a moment, she looks up at the sky to see if the rain is going to stop. Then she decides to go anyway, but a quiet -woof- stops her. She looks in the corner of the doorway.

The Dog looks up at her.

She kneels down, tears in her eyes and pets the Dog. The Dog looks past her to the street.

The rain stops. The sun gleams off the Eiffel Tower.

LONG SHOT - Marie and the Dog leave the doorway together.

FADE OUT.