YOU CAN'T LEAVE HALF WAY THROUGH

NB: This scene can be played under credits.

EXT. Idyllic beach, romantic setting for two six year-olds, JOE, a boy and SUZI, a girl. They are struggling across the sand with serious intent and great sympathy for each other. They are not running.

JOE
I can run faster.

SUZI
I can run faster.

JOE
I can run faster than you.

SUZI
Not with flip flops.

The words 'flip flops' suddenly excite Joe.

JOE
Flip flops.

He throws himself on sand and thrashes like a fish.

JOE
Flip flop fish! Fish flop! FISH!

SUZI
You know your mother...

JOE
You mean MY mother or yours?

Suzi lays back on sand and looks up.

SUZI
Have you asked her why there's a sky?

JOE
Millions of times.

She throws sand at him. He jumps her, they roll in the sand. Pure and simple joy of wrestling hugs. They lie on sand.

SUZI
You going to get undressed?

JOE
No, it's too cold.

SUZI
You know when you were born?

JOE
Yes?

SUZI
What were you wearing? What did you have on? I was wearing the wrong shorts. Not swim shorts. I can't believe you hate going in the water.

JOE
Water's too wet. Know what I hate more?

SUZI
School!

JOE
I really really really hate school!

They pick themselves up, knowing they're wanted somewhere and start to trek across the deserted beach.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, DEVON BARRACKS — DAY

FX: BRASS BAND PLAYING MILITARY MUSIC.

A company of recruits await inspection. Twenty percent are women. Grim-faced COLONEL leads the inspection party. A female, CAPTAIN HETTY, follows him.

Close up on FLO, African-American girl, feminine, graceful unexpectedly hopeful, with a streak of hair escaping her hat. The Inspection Party approaches. Flo, against regulations, pushes hair back. The Colonel passes her. Captain Hetty stops.

CAPTAIN
How's it going?

FLO
Oh, you know!

Captain Hetty winks at her, but passes on.

FLO
Not how I thought it was going to be.

EXT. TRAINING TERRAIN, DEVON BABSCOMB - DAY

Company Four, soldier by soldier, assault the target with bayonets. The target is a straw-stack. Flo runs up to target. Target moves. She hesitates. A MAN is hidden in the straw-stack. She sees him, but doesn't stab. She runs back to make another assault. Again he moves.

FLO
I can't kill you if you move.

The man turns his eyes to the sky and falls back with a laugh.

FLO
Sorry!

INT. WOMEN'S BARRACKS — DORM ROOM - NIGHT

WOMEN RECRUITS sit on their beds in their underwear, army uniforms cast aside.

MAUREEN, well-built, happily munching, enters and pins up a list on the board. Recruits watch her hungrily. They crowd to read the results; jostle to get a good view. Various reactions.

SUSAN, short, stocky, broad-faced, is angrier than most. She leaps on her bed.

SUSAN
I deserve a better rating than that.

Murmured assent.

INT. WOMEN'S BARRACKS, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Flo is oblivious to bunk noise. She's conducting a small personal experiment with a glass.

FLO
Closed circle. That's it! I'm pregnant.

She checks instructions again.

FLO
Positive!

INT. WOMEN'S BARRACKS, DEVON - NIGHT

Flo enters calmly. The women have settled back, digesting the news. They watch as Flo passes where results are listed.

SUSAN
Aren't you going to read the results?

FLO
I know them already. I just did the test.

SUSAN
Sorry!

FLO
No need to be sorry.

She holds up glass.

FLO
I'm pregnant.

SOUNDS of shock and sorrow are heard.

SUSAN
We'll get him! We'll make him pay.

MAUREEN
Who is he? Someone at the camp?

FLO
It's a guy back home...before I left. But it's a sign. That I'm not cut out for the army.

Women's faces plainly show they agree with her.

SUSAN
And she hasn't even seen her placement. Will someone tell her she failed bayoneting?

FLO
Someone's telling me I've passed ‘Living'!

EXT. AVALON NIGHT CLUB, BIG CITY - Night

Red Mazda RX 7 draws up, impressing the people in line.

ANTHONY emerges. He is a tall dark-haired and conventionally handsome man with sombre vulnerable eyes. He hands keys to valet.

INT. AVALON NIGHT CLUB, BIG CITY - NIGHT

FX: TECHNO-BEAT MUSIC.

Anthony makes his way through crowd of bright young people, raising his hands to slap five with friends and beautiful women.

Women he doesn't know deliberately block his way. Other women kiss him in passing. He makes his way to the bar where a group of women adjust themselves to get a better look at him.

BARTENDER, a dramatic young beauty in low-cut black, leans close up to get his order. He whispers in her ear. She solemnly nods and pushes three drinks, already made, towards him.

BARTENDER

Two from the same woman.

ANTHONY
Do I know her?

Bartender shrugs. Anthony spins round to watch a group of women and toasts all of them.

INT. HEARING ROOM, DEVON BARRACKS — DAY

The Colonel sits flanked by a MAJOR, and Captain Hetty.

Flo sits opposite.

FLO
I've learned a lot about efficiency and discipline.

Captain Hetty lowers her eyes and clears her throat.

FLO
But having a baby is important, don't you agree?

Colonel signs paper.

Captain Hetty goes to say something but words fail her. Flo backs towards door.

FLO
And I had a wonderful time. Thank you!

She exits. Captain Hetty gets up to slam door shut after her, causing a picture of the regiment to fall off the wall.

EXT. DEVON BARRACKS - DAY

FEMALE DRIVER in uniform drives a jeep through the barracks. Flo, in a skirt and blouse, sits beside her. They stop to be passed by guard. He hands her back papers.

GUARD
Hope you have a boy.

FLO
Me too. But why?

GUARD
Boys have more fun.

Female Driver, enraged, deliberately over-revs jeep and swerves out at high speed.

FLO
(shaken but smiling)
I want a boy too.

INT. URBAN WASTELAND - CAFE — DAY

WINNIE, a heavy-featured-footed waitress and Anthony's stepmother, is serving Anthony a greasy-spoon breakfast.

ANTHONY
So how is dad? Not that I care.

WINNIE
You only come for the fine food.

ANTHONY
He's lucky to have you, Winnie.

WINNIE
Some of have to put up with him.

ANTHONY
As long as he treats you okay.

WINNIE
Me he treats fine.

ANTHONY
Where are the customers? He been cheating them again?

WINNIE
You know him, just can't seem to give change for a twenty.

ANTHONY
I know, it's always a ten according to him.

GEORGE, Anthony's bulging and bug-eyed father, appears in the doorway, carrying plastic shopping bags.

GEORGE
Where are your friends? I told you to bring your famous friends. Do something for the family business.

ANTHONY
I'm meeting a friend here.

GEORGE
A girl, I bet.

He crosses without greeting Anthony and disappears into kitchen.

ANTHONY
What happened to this place?

WINNIE
We got shut down and had to refurbish.

ANTHONY
I didn't notice.

George enters to stack stuff behind the counter.

ANTHONY
The 'closed' sign's still on the door.

George goes to the door to change it, giving Anthony a searing look. At the door he meets Flo, who is entering.

FLO
Hello! Remember me? Friend of Anthony's

She puts out a hand to George, who doesn't move.

GEORGE
No Freebies.

WINNIE
Hello, Flo, never thought I'd see you this side of next Christmas, not after you joined up.

FLO
They let me go. The Army think they're better off without me.

ANTHONY
Surely they don't just let you go!

FLO
Under certain circumstances.

WINNIE
Want a job here?

FLO
Can't afford to be a waitress here.

She hungrily picks at Anthony's food.

WINNIE
What do you want to eat?

Winnie pours Flo coffee.

FLO
Oh, no coffee thank you!

WINNIE
You two talk, I'll keep him busy.

She follows George into the kitchen.

FLO
Let's go somewhere else.

ANTHONY
Only one place to go around here. If you're not terminally depressed.

EXT. A STRETCH OF WATER IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

Anthony and Flo walk along the water. Then they stop to talk.

ANTHONY
You want me to be a father? A Dad? No, no, no! You can't make me do this.

FLO
I can't make you, no.

ANTHONY
I have no say in this?

FLO
You've had your say. You've just said it.

ANTHONY
Have you any idea what you're taking on?

FLO
It's going to be okay.

ANTHONY
It was only once, one stupid time! Of all the times we made out last summer it was one stupid, one last time...

FLO
Thanks! I love you too!

Flo turns and runs along the water. Anthony chases after her. They walk a safe distance apart but in the same direction.

FX: VOICE-OVER: VOICES OVER ANTHONY AND FLO WALKING, TALKING: — CONT.

Four-year old Joe and Suzi as in scene one. A sense of play.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Must be dark before you're born.

JOE VOICE-OVER
No sun. You can't see anything.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Can you hear anything?

JOE VOICE-OVER
I don't think so.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
And warm, it's warm.

JOE VOICE-OVER
How do you know?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
It's ever-so ever-so warm.

Close-up of Flo and Anthony as they walk and talk.

FLO
I take it you don't want to marry me, then?

ANTHONY
What? No, never! I never said that. Sorry! Sorry!!!

Flo walks backwards, waving goodbye to him. He stands still. Flo's disappointment shows on her face as she turns.

INT. URBAN WASTE-LAND CAFE - LATER

Anthony is drinking coffee at the counter, with renewed desperation.

WINNIE
Whose baby is it then?

ANTHONY
Mine, I suppose.

WINNIE
Lotta guys to choose from on an Army base.

ANTHONY
Flo was here in August.

GEORGE
If the baby's yours, you're getting married!

ANTHONY

I can't marry her. I have a girlfriend. Or two.

Anthony takes out his wallet and pictures of twenty different women fill the credit card pockets.

GEORGE
You're a whore, that's who you are.

WINNIE
They're old news.

ANTHONY
She's going ahead anyway. Regardless of what I think. We don't have to get married.

GEORGE
If you're having my grandson you do.

ANTHONY
You marry her then.

George goes to punch Anthony out of habit. As always Anthony does his habitual duck but not quickly enough. He dabs his cut cheek. And George lands another one on the other cheek.

ANTHONY
Thanks Dad, true to form Dad.

Winnie puts her head in her hands, helplessly, as ANTHONY slams door. George returns to his newspaper on the counter.

EXT. SPIRES OF A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -DAY

Long shot of bright, young, rich students crossing the quadrangle. Flo, cheaply and artistically dressed, is easily spotted among them.

CLOWN JUGGLER smiles at her, she smiles back in sympathy.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS — TREE-LINED AVENUE - DAY

Flo walks down avenue holding two paper cups. Two students angrily have to stop their discussion to walk round her on the path.

INT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS -MUSEUM -DAY

Flo approaches the desk, above which is written 'Tickets'. She puts coffee in front of MARGE, the receptionist. MARGE, a neat and conventionally dressed woman is old for her age, cynical and depressed. She is Flo's mother.

MARGE
Glad you're back from that old army! Sight for sore eyes!

FLO
No sugar, right?

MARGE
Given it up. Apparently sugar's worse for you than heroine.

Marge adds some brandy from a flask.

FLO
What about that?

MARGE
Horrible quiet day. Students are all having exams.

FLO
Aren't you going to ask me about it?

MARGE
No doubt you'll tell me.

FLO
I don't want to discuss it.

MARGE
You're not having it then. You are? You want to go ahead and make my mistake.

FLO
I'm your mistake, mum!

MARGE
You know what I mean. Have something hot.

She pours brandy into Flo's cup.

FLO
You don't have to do anything. I can manage.

Customers want tickets for the Museum.

MARGE
I'm dying for a cigarette.

FLO
Go on, then.

MARGE
You're a darlin'.

She gets cigarette out her bag before she leaves her post.

MARGE
This I'm quitting, this I'm definitely put a stop to.

FLO
It's not cigarettes you need to quit.

Marge runs out to smoke. TWO OLDER LADIES enter to buy tickets.

FLO
Can I help you?

Two older ladies buy tickets for the Museum.

FLO
Don't miss the glass flowers.

INT. BIG CITY CAMPUS MUSEUM — GLASS CASES - LATER

Flo, waiting for her mother, looks at fossils, then at flowers.

She's done this many times before. She suddenly notices... a tender Iris, purple, arrogant, beautiful. She presses her face up close to glass. Tears cloud her vision.

Marge comes up behind her, taps her on the shoulder.

MARGE
Let's have pizza, if that won't remind you too much of Anthony.

FLO
It's not his fault. Not really. Just don't try and talk me out of it.

MARGE
As if.

Marge squeezes her affectionately as they exit into the student's quadrangle.

INT. BIG CITY BANK - OFFICE BATHROOM — DAY

Anthony carefully applies some make-up to the cut on his cheek. He exits the bathroom and walks through the bank to his prestigious desk at the back. He takes up paper work.

ANGIE, a pert nineteen year old girl, clicks up to him in high heels and puts more papers on his desk.

ANGIE
You look miserable.

ANTHONY
(Smiles grimly)
That must be because I am. Does that turn you on?

ANGIE
It's a challenge.

She clicks away. Backs up. Goes forward again. Backs up. Anthony stares straight ahead: he has seen her antics but chooses to ignore them. For once he has no come-back. He puts his head down and takes up his work.

MIRIAM, an older smart-suited woman, walks by on the way to her desk.

ANTHONY
What did you say?

MIRIAM
Nothing!

ANTHONY
I heard you thinking about me!

MIRIAM
And what was I thinking?

ANTHONY
Nothing complimentary.

MIRIAM
Just so long as you keep your head down.
(*sotto voce* as she exits)
I know you like doing that.

INT. BIG CITY HOTEL — TOP FLOOR — MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

BRADLEY, the Manager of the Milton Hotel, is getting out brochures of Milton Hotels around the world to show Flo who sits across the desk as if amazed at his every word, which she is, but not for reasons he'd appreciate.

BRADLEY
If you do well with us, you could work anywhere. It's a team effort. That's how we make the whole enterprise work. You do mean to make this a career?

FLO
(too sincerely)
I'm really interested in making it a career.

BRADLEY
With someone like yourself, who can speak English, the sky's the limit. You can start straight away on a trial basis.

FLO
Paid I hope?

BRADLEY
At the trial rate.

FLO
I think this job's exactly what I've been looking for.

BRADLEY
Glad to hear it.

He leans across the desk to shake her hand.

INT. BIG CITY HOTEL — ROOM CORRIDOR - DAY

Flo, in maid's uniform, is pushing her chambermaid cart down the corridor past open doors of dirty rooms. We hear giggles and rapid talk in Portuguese. She turns the corner to find two maids and a male-maid laughing. When they see her, they greet her with hand gestures. JOSE, a young slim and dark male-maid, approaches to practice his English.

JOSE
You like it here?

FLO
Okay. How about you?

JOSE

You don't want to be waitress?

FLO
Can't be a waitress.

JOSE
More money.

The girls nod eagerly.

FLO
I can't. I'm...

She points to her stomach and 'grows' it. Surprise and excitement all round, the girls hug her. Flo is pleased.

FLO
That's the best reaction so far.

INT. SEVENTEENTH STOREY STOCK BROKER'S OFFICE — DAY

RUTH, a smartly-dressed self-assured young woman with a condescending voice, sits behind her desk. She holds a remote and is flashing figures on a screen in front of MRS. SHEILA PASKINS, a bewildered middle-aged woman with untidy hair.

RUTH
You should look at sectors that have been badly hit by the current news.

The client does not look convinced.

MRS. PASKINS
Don't forget I have ethical considerations.

RUTH
Food stocks interest you? Food Futures?

MRS. PASKINS
Only non-GM.

RUTH
Oil, Arms and Water. What about water?

MRS. PASKINS
Not sure I'm following...

RUTH
If you want to bulk-up your portfolio, you've got to...

Ruth breaks off when her inner sanctum is violated. IAN JARVIS, an irate businessman in his blustering forties, bursts in.

RUTH
Can I help you?

IAN JARVIS
Your bad advice, that's what I want to talk about.

RUTH
Just a minute, I'm with a client.

IAN JARVIS
I was a client...

Ruth turns to excuse herself to Mrs. Paskins but then notices there is smoke coming from her coat.

RUTH
Is your coat on fire, Mrs. Paskins?

MRS. PASKINS
Oh my, look at that. I thought I put my pipe out.

She fluffs her coat, making more smoke.

RUTH
I think you better go downstairs before you activate the fire alarm.

She ushers Mrs. Paskins out and offers Ian a line of cocaine. He takes it conspiratorially. She licks some up.

RUTH
I remember you signed a high risk statement...

A fire alarm sounds. Ruth abruptly shuts off screen and gives Ian Jarvis a grin.

RUTH
Fire Alarm. Talk on our way down.

She pushes him out the office. He reluctantly follows.

IAN JARVIS
I've had some really bad advice from you and I want to know what you're going to do about it.

RUTH
Advice, you say?

IAN JARVIS
Okay, recommendations!

INT. SEVENTEENTH FLOOR STAIRWELL OF TOWER BLOCK — DAY

Ruth is leading the way, Ian Jarvis following. She opens phone.

RUTH
(to Doctor on phone)
Hello? Oh it's you Doctor, I'm busy now but...what? WHAT? I can't be. Are you sure?

She reaches the exit door and opens it with a big push, trips and falls to the ground. Ian Jarvis steps over her.

RUTH
(to Doctor on phone)
What do you mean I'm pregnant? I can't be!

Ruth looks up to see the entire population of the building filing out and surrounding Mrs. Paskin's whose coat is billowing smoke. Ruth ruthlessly pushes through the crowd.

RUTH
Are you all right?

FIREMEN push her away, and cover Mrs. Paskins with a blanket.

RUTH
(to phone)
Doc, Doc, are you there? Does my husband know about this?

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — RECEPTION DESK — DAY

Many patients come and go, some trying to smoke. RICHARD, an easy-going laid-back intellectual from Ghana with an engaging grin, looks less than his forty years. He is trying to come to grips with an intransigent receptionist without raising his gentle voice, only slightly accented.

RICHARD
Maternity clinic? Where pregnant women go. Gyno Department, Gynecologist's offices. The women's section.

RECEPTIONIST
(an automaton)
First left, go straight, staircase, second right.

RICHARD
Thank you!

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — WAITING ROOM — LATER

Richard sits next to Ruth, his wife. He hands her magazines, she throws them on empty seat next to her. She is busy texting.

RUTH
I feel sick.

Flo, clutching several forms, joins the waiting room. Flo notices the waiting room full of expectant mothers and equally expectant fathers. She humbly takes a single seat. Ruth gets out her laptop and starts tapping. RICHARD nods at Flo, acknowledging their similar racial ethnicity.

FX: VOICE OVER:

ANNOUNCER
Mr. and Mrs. Ferrara.

Ruth closes her laptop and exits with Richard following.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — DOCTOR'S OFFICE — DAY

The Doctor behind his desk faces Richard and Ruth.

DOCTOR
Now I'm confused, do you or do you not want this baby?

RUTH
Not me, I don't but Richard does. And he wants a girl.

DOCTOR
We can't arrange that, I'm afraid.

RUTH
But I thought you could now. I thought it could be arranged in vitro.

DOCTOR
Not now you're pregnant...
(before RUTH can speak)
but even if you weren't already pregnant it cannot be done, legally.

RUTH
(to RICHARD)
Do you understand that?

RICHARD
I guess!

EXT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — CORRIDOR — LATER THAT DAY

Flo, looking lost, is walking down the corridor, clutching a few more papers. She suddenly comes to a waiting area and is surprised by Marge, her mother.

MARGE
(hugging her)
There you are, they paged you but you never answered.

FLO
Thanks for coming Mum, but I have to get back to work.

MARGE
I thought you were done by eleven.

FLO
I took on some kitchen work. They were short.

EXT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL PARKING LOT AND STREET — DUSK

Flo walks out the hospital. Marge follows.

MARGE
You don't have to drudge like a donkey if you're preggers. I have money.

Flo gives her a look. Obviously not the case.

MARGE
Here have some.

She pulls out some twenties from her purse.

FLO
What are you doing?

MARGE
Take them. You know I worry. Don't want you to have my life.

FLO
I won't. I'm not you.

MARGE
How can I say I think you're doing the wrong thing without making you feel unwanted?

FLO
You can't.

Flo disappears down the escalator, Marge watches her.

EXT. BIG CITY STREETS — LATER

Flo and Marge go their separate ways. They navigate escalators, streets, traffic.

FX: VOICE-OVER: VOICES OVER MARGE AND THEN FLO: CONTINUOUS.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
That's my gran. Don't like her.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I like her.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
She's always crying.

JOE VOICE-OVER
She cries a lot. But you cry a lot too.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
I don't cry like that.

JOE VOICE-OVER
You scream!

Close-up of Flo as she gets on a bus.

JOE VOICE-OVER
That's my mum.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
She's my mum.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Do you like her?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
She's REALLY sad.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I love my dad.

INT. BIG CITY SUBURB, RICHARD/RUTH'S HOUSE — KITCHEN — DAY

Ruth is irritated at having to clean dishes, shoves them in dishwasher violently. Richard is unpacking groceries.

RUTH
I still don't understand how I can be pregnant.

RICHARD
People try for years to have babies.

RUTH
I don't do babies. I told you that. How do you think it happened?

RICHARD
In the confusion of moving? Extra-fertile?

RUTH
At least we can afford a nanny.

RICHARD
Nanny?

RUTH
You and I both work!

RICHARD
No nanny! If you're having the baby, we're looking after it.

RUTH
Who'd want me for a mother?

RICHARD
Your child?

RUTH
If I can't get decent help, I'm not having it.

RICHARD
Let's talk about this.

RUTH
You're not making me change my mind.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL - GYNECOLOGY WAITING ROOM - DAY

Suburban pregnant women read magazines. RUTH, her laptop open, is on phone.

RUTH
(on phone)
Of course you're a valued client Mr. Shonabi and I asked my manager, but I never got the number of shares I was promised.

RUTH
(to other women)
Excuse me!

Still on phone Ruth automatically picks up woman's magazine and tosses it down.

RUTH
(on phone)
I don't think you can sue me for negligence because I didn't get the stock to offer it to you. Now, if you don't mind, I'll take another call.

She clicks off and takes a deep breath.

RUTH
(To other women)
They never understand.

Richard enters and takes his place next to Ruth.

RUTH

Where did you park? New York City?

RICHARD
(vaguely)
Miles away!

RUTH
Did you write the address?

RICHARD
Yes, yes!

He searches in book bag for paper.

RUTH
Look at the wait in here, and I have an important meeting in half an hour!

RICHARD
You're not seeing the doctor?

RUTH
Doesn't look like he's got time to see me.

RICHARD
After I parked?

RUTH
He knows I'm pregnant. Tell him we're not having it and let me know the details.

The other women cannot help over-hearing.

RICHARD
See him before you decide.

RUTH
It's not my decision, it's yours.

RICHARD
Only because you don't want...

RUTH
Tell him how you feel about it.

Richard gives an embarrassed look at women.

RICHARD
If you want it that much you'll have to agree not to…

RUTH
Are you giving me an ultimatum?

The women look shocked and about to slit Richard's throat.

RICHARD
No.

They fall silent. Richard struggles with his conscience.

RICHARD
Okay, okay, you can have a Nanny! If you want the baby, I agree we can — sometimes — have a nanny.

RUTH
Great! But why do I need to see a doctor?

RICHARD
To see if everything checks out.

RUTH
What did women do before doctors? I have work to do.

Ruth is at the door. Richard stops at door for dramatic effect. He turns back to the women.

RICHARD
What do you think? Should we have it?

ONE WOMAN raises her hand and nods encouragingly. Other women stare in shock and horror.

RICHARD
The ayes have it.

He grabs Ruth, and sits her back down. A couple again.

INT. BIG CITY CAMPUS - UNIVERSITY BOOKSHOP - DAY

Touring the shelves of CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION, Richard and Flo are researching the same topic. A MALE STUDENT sees Richard.

MALE STUDENT
Great game last night. NBA!

RICHARD
I don't think we've met.

Student shrugs, Richard and Flo exchange looks. People often make that kind of ethnic mistake. Richard joins Flo and over-looks the books she's buying.

FLO
Those I've been recommended.

RICHARD
Take your pick; I'll buy the rest.

FLO
I was going to read them in the shop. I can't afford to buy them.

RICHARD
Good idea, I'll do the same. I doubt my wife'll have time to read 'em. You were at the clinic.

Flo nods and smiles, they self-consciously go to different tables in order to read.

INT. BIG CITY CHURCH — BASEMENT - DAY

People check into alternative medicine workshops and classes. Pregnant women and their partners are delegated to

the Sunday School area of the church, with small chairs and tables.

SHERRY, a tall long-haired blond who wears toga-draped styled clothes, is the instructor. The class is lying on yoga mats on the floor. She walks round 'relaxing' them.

FX: VOICE OVER: JOE AND SUZI'S VOICE-OVER:

SUZI VOICE-OVER
So we're inside our mothers?

JOE VOICE-OVER
I like playing that game.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
We're inside our mothers and we can't see anything because we're in this...

JOE VOICE-OVER
Box. Bag and it's all dark.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Can't hear... or anything.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I don't like that.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Like being in bed under the covers.

JOE VOICE-OVER
YES! I like that but...

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Like a little ball!

They both giggle.

EXT. BIG CITY PARK - DAY

SHERRY has taken her group into the park.

SHERRY
If only we could read nature's patterns, how wise we'd be. If only we appreciated nature's wonders, how rich we'd be.

The class obediently looks around at the trees.

SHERRY
Take your partner's hand and breathe.

Couples take each other's hands, close their eyes and inhale deeply. The women are four or five months' pregnant. Flo is there and so are Ruth and Richard.

SHERRY
Let your partner, him or her, take you for a walk. You are blind, let your partner take you on a magical mystery tour. One of you close your eyes. You are 'blind'.

Each couple 'blindly' follows her instructions.

FX: PHONE RINGS

Ruth runs to answer it and Richard walks into a tree.

SHERRY
Phones off!

Flo does 'trust' exercise with another single older woman, ANNA.

ANNA
I can't believe I'm doing this.

FLO
Is this your first child?

ANNA
Of my own. The rat I married had three of his own, so I raised them and then he ditched me for a younger woman. I got my revenge and went out with a younger man. Got myself pregnant before he ran off. Now I'm a single unwed mother at fifty.

FLO

I didn't think that was possible.

ANNA
(indicating SHERRY)
Yeah, she can talk about Nature's plan!

SHERRY
(to class)
Trust, trust. That's what life and especially birth, that's what it's all about. Trust your partner, but most of all trust yourself. Now you're going to change partners because you are also going to have to trust strangers.

Flo and Richard couple up.

RICHARD
How many months?

FLO
Four and a half!

RICHARD
Ruth's about the same.

She now takes a turn, leading him.

FLO
How did you get on with the books?

RICHARD
There should be a degree program.

Ruth runs up wildly waving phone, nodding positively.

RICHARD
Meet my wife, Ruth, who's still having good days at the office.

Women nod hello to each other.

SHERRY
You will hear about Lamaze Leboyer, Bradley, Dick-Read, Kitzinger, all methods from which you can choose. Hypno-birthing has become very popular. Mothers don't even remember giving birth it's so painless. Of course some women

believe they've been hypnotized enough already. It's your personal choice! Personally I'd recommend a warm tub and an aqua birth but I've yet to have a kid. Don't forget it's your body, your special experience. Now open your eyes, sit up and take your partner's hand. Express how you feel.

Flo and Anna grimace with a smile at each other.

SHERRY
Let this be a time of great feeling. Feeling is healing! Healing is feeling. Take a long look at your partner as if you've never seen them before. Take a good look at your significant other.

One WOMAN slaps her PARTNER'S face. Flo and Anna laugh. The other couples look scared.

INT./EXT. BIG CITY SUBURBS - RICHARD'S CAR - DAY

Flo and Richard in his station-wagon slowly drive by houses in a suburban neighborhood. He is looking for landmarks.

RICHARD
There, I recognize that tree! I swear I live here somewhere around here. We rented last week.

FLO
Is there a map?

RICHARD
I thought this was your hometown?

FLO
I always get lost in the burbs. They all look alike.

RICHARD
Ah, here it is. There's the tree.

He turns into the driveway of a bungalow, almost hitting tree.

INT. RICHARD AND RUTH'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruth is stenciling designs of balloons on the fresh paintwork. She has not restrained herself to the living room, through the hallway, up the stairs, balloons are stenciled everywhere.

RICHARD
(dismayed)
What have you been doing?

RUTH
(through her teeth)
Where have you been? You've been ages.

FLO
We got lost. Er...I like the balloons.

Richard gives Ruth a despairing look and takes shopping into kitchen. Ruth follows, defiantly.

RUTH
What the fuck do you think you're doing? I'm pregnant!

RICHARD
Flo's train was late.

FLO
Sorry!

RUTH
I can't be here by myself. I can't be alone in the house, waiting for you.

RICHARD
You could have worked.

RUTH
It's Saturday.

RICHARD

When do you not work Saturday?

RUTH
I can't work when I don't know where you are!

INT. RICHARD AND RUTH'S HOUSE — LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruth, Flo and Richard are sitting with coffee cups. Ruth is still not happy.

RICHARD
Ruth said she felt the baby last night.

RUTH
Little farts in my stomach.

RICHARD
(to get women together)
Flo says she wants to be pregnant forever.

RUTH
I'm sure it could be arranged. But if natural childbirth's anything like as painful as that class, it's not for me.

RICHARD
(to FLO)
Ruth wants to be unconscious through the whole thing.

FLO
I'm sure it could be arranged.

Ruth unexpectedly laughs and nods. Richard tentatively laughs with them. Puts his arm round Ruth and hugs her. Flo watches.

Flo get up to inspect their plants, which are in poor shape. Ruth and Richard watch.

FLO
Have they been moved? Plants don't like being moved.

RICHARD
They didn't survive the journey very well. Can you help?

FLO
(Referring to plants)
Needs re-potting! Can you remember which direction they were facing in your last house?

Richard and Ruth eye each other, negatively.

EXT. BIG CITY BANK — PARKING LOT — DAY

Flo crosses the parking lot to get to the bank.

Anthony exits from bank with ROSE, the high-heeled bank clerk. They cross the road to his red Corvette. He sees Flo. She waves hopefully. He sits in car. She comes to his window.

FLO
Hi.

Anthony makes a deliberate point of getting out car to talk to her. He leans back on car.

FLO
I'm not trying to follow you, I came to get some money out the bank and close my account because I don't want to keep seeing you.

ANTHONY
Close your account here and open one at another branch. You don't have to change banks, just branches.

FLO
I'd rather change banks, thanks.

ANTHONY
Fine!

He opens the door of the car.

FLO
Bye!

ANTHONY
How are the pre-natal classes going?

FLO
Tonight we're going to be frogs. Good position to give birth in. If you wanna come?

ANTHONY
To be a frog?

FLO
You can be the handsome prince.

ANTHONY
Okay then.

He gets in car and drives off. Flo heads for the bank.

INT. BIG CITY HEALTH-FOOD RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Sherry's Class Night Out. We hear comments, without necessarily knowing who makes them. "California Style", "No hard liquor", "Organic fruit". Anthony, Ruth and Flo are sitting near each other, eating. Richard enters with parcel under his shirt. He takes champagne out and puts it on table.

RICHARD
We're celebrating.

Others notice the champagne, drain their fruit juices and pass him their glasses to pour champagne.

SHERRY
Pregnant woman are not allowed alcohol, it goes right through the fetus.

FLO

I was pickled in alcohol according to my mother.

ANNA
I've been dying for a glass all night.

SHERRY
Just one small one.

RUTH
This is it, then? Your grant came through?

RICHARD
Better than that! They're starting on toroids and rotating magnets.

FX: TELEPHONE:

Ruth picks up.

RUTH
Sorry, sorry, soooorrry! I'm busy, can't talk now. I'm with my husband.

SHERRY
What are we celebrating?

RICHARD
My trip to Nova Scotia!

RUTH
(mid-champagne sip)
When?

RICHARD
Before you're due, don't worry.

RUTH
You can't go 'till after.

RICHARD
No, better to go before.

ANNA
What are you boffins up to now?

RICHARD

A cave is a mass of intense atmospheric noise, very much like the womb. Radio communication is usually non-existent due to *in situ* magnetic noise.

SHERRY
That's what I've been telling you, the baby feels every wave coming through. Which reminds me, does anyone want to buy my BABY BACH?

She displays the CDs, especially to Anthony.

ANTHONY
Hey, that's a good idea. I like Bach.

SHERRY
It's to play to the baby in the womb.

ANTHONY
What about it Flo?

FLO
I'm not sure I want him to hear classical stuff.

SHERRY and Anthony exchange flirtatious looks.

RUTH
(to Richard)
What am I supposed to do while you're doing this experiment?

RICHARD
I won't be more than a couple of weeks. Maybe a month.

RUTH looks through her date-book.

RICHARD
I'll be back in plenty of time.

RUTH
I'm not sure I should be celebrating.

Flo catches Anthony and SHERRY flirting.

RUTH
He can't just leave! Can he?

Flo gets up and leaves. No one notices. Ruth grabs Sherry for an answer. Sherry hardly responds.

SHERRY
(looking at Anthony)
I perfectly understand why you want to have him around.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL - PATIENT EXAMINING ROOM - DAY

Flo, her belly showing her six months, is in white paper gown. DOCTOR shows her the ultra-sound screen.

DOCTOR
He's got his back to us, so you can see his backside but...

FLO
It's a boy, then? A boy?

DOCTOR
That's what the tests say, we can't see from here.

FLO
I want a boy.

DOCTOR
The tail has disappeared, see.

FLO
The tail?

DOCTOR
We all have one at an early stage. If you're born with them, they're surgically removed.

FLO
I want a boy so much it hurts.

DOCTOR
Then you should be happy.

INT. BIG CITY HIGH RISE - ANTHONY'S BACHELOR PAD — DAY

Anthony and Sherry are getting excited in the bed, he is about to climb on top of her.

FX: TELEPHONE:

He turns away from her to answer it. From her point of view, she traces his long sinewy back.

ANTHONY
(replaces receiver)
I see. Thanks. Flo's having a boy.

SHERRY
That's great news. Another little Anthony. And looked after by someone else. Good idea!

ANTHONY
As long as she doesn't tell my dad.

She stops his concerned look with a kiss.

INT. CITY SUBURB - RUTH AND RICHARD'S HOUSE, BEDROOM — Night

Richard and Ruth are in bed, he's nodding off over an academic-looking tome, she's reading business magazines. She prods him awake.

RICHARD
What? Pickled onions again?

RUTH
Sorry.

He turns to his side of the bed and produces a jar.

RUTH
What am I going to do without you?

RICHARD
Keep them on your side of the bed.

Ruth tries to get the onions with her fingers. Richard offers a fork from his bedside table. She munches actively. Richard puts his head under the covers on Ruth's belly. Suddenly he throws off the bed-covers.

RICHARD
Just remembered my dream. It was my daughter, this little girl wearing rabbit ears.

RUTH
Sounds like something out of Alice...Alice, have we got that on the list?

Richard retrieves list from bedside table and adds to it.

RICHARD
Do you know Alice is Ecila backwards?

RUTH
Ecila. Put that on the list.

RICHARD
When I come back from Nova Scotia you'll be in your seventh month.

RUTH
Oh no, you can't, that's too risky.

RICHARD
Is it okay to have sex in your seventh month?

RUTH
According to Sherry, the fetus likes it.

RICHARD
That's the best news I've had to-day.

He carefully gets on top of her to give her a sensual kiss.

INT. BIG CITY AIRPORT - DAY

RUTH and Richard at gate. He is loaded down with an

enormous backpack. She carries a guitar case.

FX: FLIGHT 603 TO NOVA SCOTIA FINAL BOARDING AT GATE 11

They kiss, she waves him goodbye. He rushes back.

RICHARD
My guitar!

RUTH, distressed, passes guitar to him.

RUTH
I'm gonna miss you!

They hug. He exits. Ruth waits a moment, and then staggers to a seat. She drops into it, apathetic, depressed.

INT. BIG CITY CHURCH - BASEMENT, PRE-NATAL CLASS — DAY

Sherry is no longer in control of the class. As if they sense her betrayal of Flo, they are in a mutinous frame of mind.

ANNA
I don't feel I've learned anything.

Women mutter agreement.

SHERRY
Signs of nervousness, which is good. Time to get serious and confront our fears with a nice scream. Follow me. I'll start. AHHHHHH!

Mutiny, silence.

SHERRY
Come on, after me. AAAHHHH!

HELEN
Can we talk about pain?

RUTH
You've told us about every method there is, but I haven't learned any that is pain-free.

SHERRY
There aren't.

HELEN
The hospital isn't going to give us hot tubs, that's for sure.

Suddenly rebellious, the women take up the refrain.

PAT
You promised us we could have painless childbirth.

SHERRY
There's no such thing, this is a *natural* childbirth class.

HELEN
Natural means with pain?

PAT'S HUSBAND
Then we're in the wrong class?

HELEN'S HUSBAND
I want my money back.

SHERRY
There are voodoo ceremonies you can do.

The women are eager to know about them.

SHERRY
(cautious now)
But Pat's husband won't approve.

PAT'S HUSBAND
Natural childbirth is one thing, going back to superstition, no.

SHERRY
I'm only trying to help your wife. It won't be you trying to squeeze a bowling ball out through your mouth.

Pat and Ruth scream, in mutual sympathy.

FLO
You're making me feel worse, not better.

Everyone murmurs agreement and scrape back their chairs to leave.

SHERRY
Look, come with me and you can see for yourself. To the Hospital!

EXT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL PARKING LOT — DAY

Sherry's class group outside to investigate the hospital. They look apprehensively at the thirty-storey building.

SHERRY
This is where most of you will be coming, so familiarize yourself with the building and when you go up to the Maternity Ward, insist you want your chosen method of delivery.

Flo watches Anthony's car drive up. Sherry steps smartly towards Anthony's car and gets in.

RUTH
You're not coming with us?

SHERRY
Got another class. Sorry!

Anthony and Sherry drive off. Flo watches.

RUTH
Isn't that...?

FLO
No one I know. Let's go and see what's in store for us.

RUTH

Can we have a drink first?

They break from group and walk down street, passing street jugglers. One of them is wearing a full-clown mask-face. Ruth is entranced by him as he is decorated with balloons. Flo tugs her away.

RUTH
They look happy, man.

They walk by CONSTRUCTION WORKERS and get whistled at.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Nice asses!

CONSTRUCTION WORKER
Wanna come up here?

RUTH
Can't you see we're pregnant?

Construction workers smack their lips, for them it's a turn on.

INT. BIG CITY GENERAL HOSPITAL — RECEPTION - LATER

RECEPTIONIST is a bored robot.

RECEPTIONIST
Twenty-seventh floor!

RUTH and Flo are pushed to one side by intensive-care patient on stretcher, doctors and nurses.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL - MATERNITY WARD - LATER

RUTH and Flo pass pregnant women ranked according to belly size. A woman in a wheelchair grabs them.

DELIVERED WOMAN
It was a wonderful experience. Only forty-nine stitches, and I didn't feel a thing. I had to tell someone, I hope you don't mind.

RUTH dials phone.

RUTH
(to phone)
How's the market?

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL - BIRTHING ROOMS - LATER

FX: SCREAMING.

Nurse runs by them.

NURSE
You shouldn't be here.

FLO
Who's that?

NURSE
She's fine. If you want to view a Caesarian section, next room. She's an AB negative but he's a super doctor, super, super. We've only got the best here.

FLO
What's his name?

Nurse rushes away.

FLO
(to RUTH)
Caesarean.

RUTH
Oh, like Caesar? Did he have one?

FLO
Maybe his mother!

A nurse rushes by with a trolley, containing phials of blood.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — ELEVATOR - LATER

They step into a elevator.

RUTH

I don't want to be pregnant. I've changed my mind.

FLO
Little late.

RUTH
Look it's like this, I'm not anti-pro-choice. I'm pro-pro-choice and I'm choosing not to have a baby or be a woman at all. I want the operation to change my sex. They do it all the time. If I'm going to have any sort of operation, that's the one I want.

Shocked passengers have got in the elevator for her last lines.

EXT: BIG CITY STREET — DAY - LATER

RUTH spots the Caribbean-styled BE HAPPY bar. She drags Flo into the dingily lit bar.

INT. BIG CITY - BE-HAPPY BAR - LATER

Reggae music. FLO and RUTH make for the bar. Behind the bar, SOKI, a handsome man with colorful cap, smiles at them.

FLO
Tequila Sunrise!
(remembering)
Without the tequila.

RUTH
Bloody Mary with everything twice over. Heavy on the sauce.

RUTH
(to Flo)
This one last time!

SOKI, with a smile, squirts extra Tabasco sauce into the drink. Flo sits uneasily on barstool and watches men play pool. RUTH drinks. She spits out towards bartender, who ducks.

RUTH
What was that?

SOKI
You said, hot.

RUTH
Sauce, alcohol, not Tabasco!

SOKI
Alcohol not good for you.

RUTH
And this is? It's too hot!

SOKI
Hot, hot, hot!

Customers repeat in time to the beat, "Hot, Hot, Hot". They laugh at Flo and RUTH and dance round them.

RUTH
And there's no alcohol in it.

SOKI
(Waving no no finger)
Not, not, not!

FLO
Not, not, not!

OTHERS
Hot, hot, hot!

Ruth gives in and drinks up.

RUTH
At least we're near the hospital.

SOKI

You have'n yer babies in that place?

FLO
What's wrong with that?

SOKI
Not for me to say, no, but woooah, woman came in here last year, like yous, never left. Never even left!

He has Ruth and Flo's attention.

FLO
There's no choice unless we risk a home birth.

SOKI
By yourselves? No, that's no way, no siree, if I were you I'd go visit my mother? She can make you feel good.

FLO
She's a midwife?

SOKI
Better. Knows more than that. She's medicine woman. In old times women had no problems.

FLO
Where is your mother?

SOKI
She lives up north.

FLO
Ruth, let's go find his mother.

RUTH
I'm not going anywhere, I'm carrying another person. Extra baggage.

FLO
I've never met an American Indian, Native, Original Tribes Person.

SOKI
Some of us are Canadians.

RUTH
Canada? Richard's gone there.

SOKI
You'll have the best. My mother's a Sachem, Iroquois Nation.

RUTH
(to FLO)
Why don't we go?

FLO
Change of mind?

RUTH
Go and get Richard. You don't know him; once he's on an expedition down a cave he's harder to reach than Osama Bin Laden.

FLO
But we have to know where we're going.

SOKI
Sure. I'll draw you.

He takes out napkin and starts to write directions.

RUTH
Are we crazy or what?

FLO
(overly official)
I have no other plans.

RUTH
We'll take off together. Thelma and Louise!

EXT. NOVA SCOTIA — RUTH'S CAR WINDS DOWN AN EMPTY ROAD — DAY

INT. CLOSE-UP FACES OF FLO AND RUTH, ECSTATIC.

EXT: NOVA SCOTIA — SCENE JOURNEY FROM RUTH AND FLO'S POV.

VOICE-OVERS OF SUZI AND JOE DURING THIS SCENE JOURNEY.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Where do we begin?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
There, in your belly-button. Before that, there was this Bagel…

JOE VOICE-OVER
And before that your mother and father.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
And God of course!

JOE VOICE-OVER
Yes and dogs, don't forget. Don't forget dogs.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
I won't.

JOE VOICE-OVER
You're in your mum's tummy and then…

SUZI VOICE-OVER
What about your dad?

JOE VOICE-OVER
He's at work.

EXT. VIEW OF NOVA SCOTIA, HILLS, SEA, CAPE BRETON.

Ruth and Flo stop the car and get out to look at the view.

FLO
Miles and miles of beauty!

RUTH
Makes me feel like actually HAVING this baby! Where are we on the map?

Flo reaches for the map to study it. She holds it upside down.

RUTH
It helps to have it up the right way.

FLO
(rubbing her eyes)
I can't read it. I can't see...I can only read half the words. Oh my god, I'm going blind.

Ruth screeches car to a halt. FLO puts one hand over one eye. Then hand over the other.

FLO
I can't see! I can't see!

RUTH
Which eye's not working?

FLO
(heartbroken)
I'll never be able to see my baby.

RUTH
Don't jump to conclusions. Can you see anything?

FLO
I can only see half of everything.

RUTH
(reversing)
Hold on, we'll get you to a doctor. There has to be one, even in this wilderness.

FX: MASSIVE ACCELERATION
Car zooms off down the road.

INT. NOVA SCOTIAN VILLAGE, DOCTOR'S OFFICE — DAY

FX: RATTLE OF TEA CUPS

Doctor's wife, FIONA, a middle-aged woman with a bush of grey hair is giving Ruth some tea.

FIONA
How exciting!

RUTH
(on phone)

What day is it?

FIONA
Saturday, which is why the doctor's home. Good for you.

RUTH
(clicking phone off)
Damn, that's why they're not answering. My husband's phone won't be working, he's down a cave around here. I'm trying to get his support team.

FIONA
So exciting!

DOCTOR, a withered man of sixty, enters with Flo behind him.

FLO
It wasn't my eyes at all, they're fine. It was my blood pressure.

DOCTOR
Because she's a wee bit pregnant.

FIONA
So exciting! And this lady's she is too, and looking for her husband.

Ruth finds map and points, showing Doctor and Fiona.

RUTH
Now that's not far from here, is it?

FLO
We've been told there's an Indian Reservation around here and we have the name of someone who...who may have some alternative ideas...you know, about delivering.

She is embarrassed to go any further with the doctor.

DOCTOR
Oh you don't want to go running off the map in your conditions.

FLO
She's a professional. A sachem.

DOCTOR
The Reservation is private and they like it that way. No doctors up there! And you could be needin' one soon.

RUTH
I'm not here to have my baby. I'm here to find Richard. There are caves around here? Right?

DOCTOR
I saw some people coming out of the old smuggler's caves last week.

RUTH
That'll be him, Richard, my husband.

DOCTOR
But they're not there now. I went up to see a cow yesterday.

FIONA
He's not a vet, but he helps them out sometimes.

EXT. NOVA SCOTIA, A ROCK MOUNTAIN PATH, ABANDONED HUT — NIGHT

Ruth's car pulls up. They both exit with difficulty. They kick remains of a fire, go to edge of cave. Ruth calls RICHARD....

FX: ECHO OF RICHARD....

They get back into the car.

INT. NOVA SCOTIA - MOTEL, RECEPTION DESK - NIGHT

Motel Receptionist GERTIE's a woman with bright yellow hair and a lime-green pantsuit.

GERTIE
Can I help you?

RUTH
A room, one room.

GERTIE
You're not about to have your babies?

FLO and RUTH
No, no, no. We just want a room.

GERTIE
You're not running away from your husbands?

Gertie hands them room key.

FLO
We're looking for the Reservation. Iroquois nation.

GERTIE
There's no Indians around here.

FLO
Indian methods of child delivery. Or local methods. Any method will do. Where do you have babies around here?

GERTIE
In the hospital.

Ruth and Flo take the key and exit.

EXT. NOVA SCOTIA - MOTEL - NIGHT

FLO

Hurry up with that key. I'm all wet, I've wet myself. Omigod, my water's broken. Let's get in the room, quick.

RUTH
Don't panic, I'm sure you've got time, you've probably got hours.

Flo doubles up in pain.

RUTH
Don't move. Stay right there. I'll get you a doctor. I promise!

INT. MOTEL, RECEPTION DESK - NIGHT

Ruth runs in, disturbs GERTIE who's playing patience.

RUTH
We need a doctor, quick. The doctor down the road. It's coming.

GERTIE
You can't have your baby here.

RUTH
Believe me, she doesn't want to.

GERTIE
(getting on phone)
This will cost you extra.

INT. NOVA SCOTIA -MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

RUTH eats Chinese food with Gertie and the Doctor, who looks even older with a bib round his neck because he has a sloppy manner of eating.

GERTIE
I told you it was good. These spring rolls are the best.

Ruth pokes the spring rolls, already been fried a few times.

RUTH
The best?

DOCTOR
Best for miles around.

FX: FLO'S SCREAMS OF PAIN EVERY FEW MINUTES FROM NEXT ROOM.

RUTH
Why aren't you in there?

DOCTOR
Nothing I can do at this stage.

INT: NOVA SCOTIA — MOTEL BEDROOM — Night

Flo is writhing with childbirth pain. She solves the screaming problem by stuffing her mouth with blankets.

FX: VOICE-OVERS DURING FLO'S AGONY.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Then we have to come out.

JOE VOICE-OVER
And that's TERRIBLE.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
They like it though. I wouldn't but they do.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Out the bottom!

SUZI VOICE-OVER
You're not supposed to say that.

JOE VOICE-OVER
If it was me, I'd laugh, ha ha, like that.

SUZI VOICE-OVER

Me too. And I'm a girl.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Do you want to be a girl?

INT. NOVA SCOTIA -MOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

GERTIE
They think the Indians up here have the secret of painless childbirth.

DOCTOR
No such thing.

RUTH
They do it with hypnosis.

DOCTOR
For the simple reason that human heads, at one stage of our evolution, grew too big for the human female's opening. Unlike the other animals, you see…

FX: FLO SCREAMS LONG AND HARD.

INT. NOVA SCOTIA -MOTEL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Flo is in the last phase of childbirth, her face covered in sweat but still triumphant. She punctuates final contractions of her uterus with operatic-like arias.

FLO
LAAAA, MEEEEE, SOOOOO,DOOOO...

RUTH
(wiping her forehead)
You've shoulda been a Diva.

FLO
(in between pants)
I want to. I want to be a singer.

RUTH
Go ahead, go for it.

FX: A VERY LONG SATISFYING SCREAM.

DOCTOR
Got it! Ahhhh, that's it! All present and correct. A beautiful baby girl.

He holds her up. Flo screams.

FLO
No, no, that can't be right. A boy, the doctor said I was having a boy.

DOCTOR
Doctors make mistakes.

RUTH
It looks healthy, that's the main thing.

FLO
(clutching Ruth)
I don't want a daughter. I want a boy.

DOCTOR
Don't worry, she'll soon change her mind.

INT. NOVA SCOTIA - MOTEL RECEPTION AREA — Night.

Gertie, Doctor and Ruth are finishing remains of Chinese meal.

GERTIE
Who'da thought this motel would be someone's birthplace?

RUTH
How do you want us to pay you doc?

GERTIE
You don't have to pay the doctor!

DOCTOR
(embarrassed)
Oh not much, you know...

RUTH
Why not? It's his job and he did a good job. I have credit cards.

DOCTOR
You can't pay me by credit card.

RUTH
Cash then.

She pulls out an over-stuffed wallet.

DOCTOR
(quickly)
I'd prefer cash.

EXT. NOVA SCOTIA - MOTEL PARKING LOT — DAY

Flo staggers out motel with baby, supported by Ruth on phone.

RUTH
(she dials)
Richard, where are you?
(beat)
Oh hi Bob, where's my husband? I'm up here looking for him.
(beat)
I know you packed up, I saw that but where is he now?
(beat)
Oh on a plane flying home, great! Great! No, don't tell him anything!

She sits exhausted for a moment before revving and reversing.

INT. BIG CITY BANK, ANTHONY'S DEPARTMENT - DAY

Anthony urbanely ushers through with a client to his desk. Rose, the high-heeled bank clerk, clicks up to him.

ANTHONY

Who is it?

ROSE
A woman called Ruth called, she says your baby's been born, mother and child doing fine. It's a girl!

ANTHONY
Thank you.
(beat)
Who's Ruth?

Rose groans, client and other clerks make disapproving faces.

EXT/INT. NOVA SOCTIA, SCENERY, INSIDE THE CAR - DAY

FLO
I really don't want a daughter.

Flo puts a disinterested baby to her breast.

FLO
You see that's why she's not interested in me.

A car cuts in on the inside. RUTH swerves the car back onto the median, and aggressively gives the finger.

RUTH
That take-away food is beginning to bite, I've got terrible digestion.

FLO
(suddenly alert)
That's a sign! You're going into labor.

RUTH
I'm not having the baby in this Godforsaken hole.

FLO
If we hurry we can catch the doc.

Ruth revs the car. They skid across the road and land in a ditch. They clamber ungainly out. A heavy truck rumbles by and picks them up. The driver picks them up to reach his cab.

INT. NOVA SCOTIA - MOTEL, MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ruth is screaming on the bed.

RUTH
A spinal, I want a spinal. And a Vodka tonic.
(she sees DOCTOR)
Why him? Is he the only doctor in the world?

Flo and Gertie stand by.

FLO
You don't want a spinal. Breathe, try to breathe.

DOCTOR
Keep her still. If I miss I could paralyze her for life.

Flo and Doctor try to contain her in order to direct the needle.

GERTIE
I'm going to write to the local radio station about this. Two in one night. Can you give me you name and address?

FLO
Please, not right now.

Doctor pushes them away.

FLO
What's he doing now?

GERTIE
Episiotomy! I had one. That's when they cut you open to yank the baby out. Don't hurt much, not at first.

More groans from Ruth until Doctor triumphantly holds up baby.

GERTIE
Twins?

DOCTOR
Don't push your luck.

He gives baby to Flo.

FLO
Girl or boy?

DOCTOR
Lovely boy.

FLO
(slightly put out)
Fantastic!

INT./EXT NOVA SCOTIA, CAR ON ROAD - DAY

On the backseat two infants in Motel sheets. Outside snow flurries. Flo drives.

RUTH
You said you couldn't drive.

FLO
I can drive, can't pass my test. Don't worry.

She puts the car in reverse.

FLO
It's beginning to hurt down there.

RUTH
Take something for the pain.

FLO
Better not.

EXT. BACK FROM NOVA-SCOTIA — FLO AND RUTH'S CAR — NIGHT/ MORNING

FX: VOICE-OVER JOE AND SUZI.

JOE VOICE-OVER
We're twins, aren't we?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
No.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Are too...

SUZI VOICE-OVER
You are how old?

JOE VOICE-OVER
Same age as you.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
But our birthdays are on different days.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Only one day different. Same year.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
If we were both born on the SAME day... then we'd be twins.

RUTH
Richard, Richard...

One of the babies cries.

FLO
Gotta stop to nurse.

RUTH
Why hasn't he called me back?

FLO
(breastfeeding)
He could be out of range.

RUTH
You're so goddamn reasonable!

FLO
You okay?

RUTH
I'm bleeding, I'm lactating and I'm depressed. I'm not even going back with the baby Richard wants. He wants a girl. Why can't he have what he wants? They know how to change the sex.

FLO
(news to her)
What do you mean? Not in the womb?

RUTH
Before it gets there, in vitro. They're keeping it a secret.

FLO
Why?

RUTH
Against the law! But you know the rich brats buy off doctors and get what they want.

In the back of the car, one of the babies cries.

FLO
I think that's mine.

She stops the car and Ruth hands her the baby.

FLO
Try and get some sleep.

She nurses baby and looks out at the snow flurries.

EXT. MAJOR ARTERY - APPROACHING BIG CITY — MORNING

Car joins morning traffic and the traffic grinds to a halt.

INT. FLO AND RUTH'S CAR IN TRAFRIC JAM - MORNING

Ruth is driving now and Flo's asleep in the back. Ruth squirms in her seat, tired and in pain. Suddenly she reaches for her bag and takes out notepad. She writes on it:

'For once in your life,
get what you want.'

She looks in rear-view mirror. Flo is still asleep. Ruth smiles to herself. Taking advantage of the stopped-traffic, she swaps the babies and tucks the note inside Flo's bundle.

EXT. BIG CITY HOUSING BLOCK — THE CAR DRAWS UP - DAY

RUTH
Is this where your mother's lives? At least you have her.

FLO
Come in, or do you want to get home?

RUTH
Richard must be there by now.

FLO
Are you serious about me being your nanny?

RUTH
I'll call you. I think it'd be great.

FLO
Don't forget.

She exits, Ruth drives off.

INT. STAIRCASE OF HOUSING BLOCK — DAY

Flo mounts slowly carrying baby. Before she reaches top, Marge appears, carrying a small suitcase.

MARGE
You're home already and you've had the baby. I...Why didn't you... when...?

She backs into the door of her place.

FLO
Baby came early. Eight months.

MARGE
Babies come when they're ready.

FLO
A girl.

MARGE
Ahhh, look... I was just on my way to check myself in because I wanted to be smart and sassy by the time you arrived.

FLO
I'm here now.

MARGE
You're breast-feeding, right? Going okay? Easy in that case.

FLO
She seems to take it okay.

MARGE
I've booked in, they're expecting me. You don't need to look after me as well as a baby. I just have to get myself right.

FLO
Okay, okay, go...

MARGE
I'll come back a new woman. That's what I'm hoping. Completely new woman.

She clatters down the stairs. Flo sees empty vodka bottles.

INT. BIG CITY SUBURB - RICHARD & RUTH'S HOUSE, BABY'S ROOM - DAY

RUTH looks contented as she puts baby in cot. Bottles are ranged along the counter. She takes down instruction book.

RUTH
Okay, baby girl, this is our big moment together before Richard comes and takes over.
(reads book)
Make yourself comfortable before feeding baby.

She switches on the television and puts baby to her breast. The baby resists.

RUTH
It's a nipple, okay?

Baby cries. Ruth tries other breast. No good. She grabs phone.

RUTH
Richard, it's your turn now.

INT. BIG CITY HOUSING PROJECT - FLO'S BEDROOM — DAY

Flo undoes the sheet and sees the note.

'For once in your life, get what you want'

Flo is puzzled.

FLO
What's that supposed to mean?

Flo lays baby on the bed to change her. It is a boy.

FLO
Oh my god, I've got the wrong baby. Ruth, Ruth...there's been a mistake. Oh my god, is that what she meant by the note? She's mad!

Flo attacks her bags, and rummages in them.

FLO
Where's her phone number? I wrote it on a yellow post it. Where did I put it?

Flo searches frantically as baby cries. She picks up baby and tries to put him to the breast. At first she doesn't succeed but then she does. Pleased with herself, she drops onto a chair and gives herself over to the task.

INT. BIG CITY UNIVERSITY, RADIO LAB — DAY

Richard is ensconced in a room plug-full of electronic equipment. He is deep in charting graphs and recordings of his sound-research data.

FX: TELEPHONE:

RICHARD
(On phone)
Ruth, I've been worried sick. Where are you? Stay right there, I'm coming right home.

EXT. BIG CITY UNIVERSITY CAMPUS, QUADRANGLE — DAY

Richard crosses quadrangle at a good clip, still on the phone.

RICHARD
You've had the baby early and I wasn't there! But I wanted to be there.

He reaches a busy intersection.

RICHARD
A girl? Oh darling...that's wonderful. I can't wait to see her.

Almost in tears and totally oblivious to the street, he crosses busy street. Cars miraculously avoid him.

EXT. BIG CITY STREET OUTSIDE FLO'S HOUSING BLOCK - DAY

FX: PNEUMATIC DRILL DIGGING HOLE IN STREET
Anthony's red car is blocked. He climbs out car and walks past.

ANTHONY
Refreshing noise!

He tries lock on wire gate to Housing Block, but it is frozen. He jumps over.

EXT. TOP WINDOW, FLO'S HOUSE - ANTHONY'S P.O.V.

Flo appears with baby. Anthony sees her and waves. He goes to battered door, sees line of broken bells; tries in vain to make one ring. No one is around. Anthony backs up to look up at window. Flo does not appear. He exits to rescue his car. This time, carefully swinging his legs over fence.

EXT. BIG CITY STREET OUTSIDE HOUSING BLOCK — DAY

Flo trudges down street with baby in backpack.
Still in his car, Anthony sees her and waves her down.
She walks on. He gets out car and catches up with her.

ANTHONY
What's with you?

FLO
I'm going shopping. There's nothing in the house.

INT. BIG CITY SUPERMARKET — CAFE — LATER

Anthony and Flo are nursing paper-cups of hot coffee.
Supermarket bags and baby beside them.

ANTHONY
I don't believe you, you're nuts! Is that my daughter or not?

FLO
No, I told you. She's not yours. It's not even a she, it's a boy. And it's not my baby. He belongs to someone else. A friend of mine. At least, I think she's a friend.

Anthony is trying not to eye the waitresses, trying to concentrate on what Flo's telling him.

FLO
Are you even listening?

ANTHONY
You're not explaining it coherently.

FLO
Because I'm upset.

Flo, angry, gets up to leave. Anthony chases her down. She runs, he pulls her back, sits her down, gives her coffee.

ANTHONY
So this isn't my daughter. She belongs to Ruth whose number you've lost! Of all the crazy mix-ups!

FLO
I'm waiting for her to call.

ANTHONY
Can we go and find out where she lives?

INT. BIG CITY SUBURB - ANTHONY'S CAR — DAY

ANTHONY
Does this look familiar?

FLO
I get mixed up out here, suburbs all look the same.

ANTHONY
Have you remembered her last name?

FLO

Eddy something, but that may be Richard's last name.

ANTHONY
You are a total flake.

FLO
What about your girlfriend? Sherry, who took the pre-natal class, she'll know.

ANTHONY
She left town, went home and I've no idea where she came from. But what about the Church where you had your classes?

FLO
They must have some record.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - LATER THAT DAY

FEMALE VICAR, an older woman, her face ready to beam with Light.

VICAR
I'm glad you caught me, I was on my way home.

She goes to filing cabinet, and searches drawer.

VICAR
Here we are. Sherry Downing. 400 Mason Terrace.

ANTHONY
That's where she used to live! Don't you have another number for her? Her home number.

VICAR
She went back home, after a romantic disappointment, I believe. Is that a little one from the class? Ahhhhhh… we forget how small they are!

FLO
And you've no idea where she's from, originally?

VICAR and ANTHONY
No, no…

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HOUSING BLOCK - LATER

Kids hang around in the snow. Anthony forces wire gate open.

FLO
She'll call, I know she will. I was going to help her take care of her baby. Be her nanny!

ANTHONY
Looks like you are already.

FLO
She's got my daughter, and I don't trust her to be a fit mother.

Anthony throws a snowball in despair.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS, OPEN PLAN OFFICE — DAY

CLARA PETTIGREW, an overweight policewoman of fifty, is trading fun-punches with her young sidekick, IAN, a scrawny twenty-old.

IAN
I can't get my head around this story. See if you can.

CLARA
You can't deal with women. Can you?

IAN
(punching back)
She's nice enough but...

CLARA
You don't get it!

IAN
I told her to go to Missing Persons but she seemed to think a kidnapping crime has been committed.

Clara shakes her head and leaves him to office work.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS, SMALL SIDE OFFICE — DAY

Flo and Anthony wait, with baby. Clara enters, with file.

CLARA
Your baby's been kidnapped, you say?

FLO
The trouble is we don't even know their last names, or the university he works for. But you must be able to find him, at least. He's some sort of professor, academic.

CLARA
And this is all your proof that this baby isn't yours? Of course, there's DNA tests.

ANTHONY
They live in this city, in the suburbs somewhere. My girlfriend only went once and doesn't remember the house.

FLO
But you'll be able to find Richard, surely. He's an academic from Africa.

CLARA
We'll cover the schools, colleges and universities. But if they're new here, could be on sabbatical!

ANTHONY
You sure that was his name? I thought it was Roger.

FLO
No, no! Richard. He was studying sound waves in caves, or something.

CLARA
And both children are African-American.

FLO
Yes, and that's all they have in common.

CLARA
Ummm...I still think you ought to check Missing Persons.

ANTHONY
We will but a crime has definitely been committed. She swapped the kids.

CLARA
What woman in her right mind would swap her child?

FLO
She wasn't in her right mind, she was a businesswoman.

CLARA
What did she do?

FLO
Something in finance, with figures.

CLARA
(to Anthony)
Did you ever see this woman?

FLO
I can see you don't believe me.

CLARA
Look, when we find them there's a simple DNA test so keep your hopes up. Are you the father?

ANTHONY
I am, yes. Right, Flo?

CLARA
As I said, simple DNA test.

She can't wait to usher them out.

ANTHONY
(to Flo)
We've got to take care of this ourselves.

EXT. BIG CITY PARK — MISTY RAIN - DAY

On the trees are torn posters which read, HAVE YOU SEEN MY BABY!

Richard, reading while he pushes, is making his way past the park. Flo, who looks like she's been encamped on a park bench for several days, spots him. With a yell, she jumps up and grabs her baby and runs up to grab him. She is so overcome with joy, she cannot speak.

RICHARD
It's...Flo, isn't it? How are you? How's the baby?

FLO
Yours, your baby!

RICHARD
Ours is doing fine, thank you. When Ruth told me what you two had been through, I had to laugh. Is anything wrong?

Flo holds out her baby to him.

FLO
Take him, he's yours. Look at him. He's yours.

RICHARD
Are you okay? Perhaps we should go inside somewhere.

INT. PARK CAFE — LATER

FLO
Didn't Ruth tell you she swapped them?

RICHARD
It's very hard to believe. But if you're right, there's a simple DNA test.

FLO
I've called the police and everything

Emotion suddenly overcomes Richard.

RICHARD
If it's true...I mean, what you must have been through.

FLO
I thought at first it was a joke but then she never called me. She said you wanted a daughter.

RICHARD
I wanted a daughter but a son would have been fine. She got it so wrong.

FLO
Can I come with you?

RICHARD
What the hell did she think she was doing?

FLO
We'll swap them back, and no harm done. Hopefully.

They carefully exchange babies and hold each other's children, acknowledging some connection. Flo does not want to give her daughter back but Richard insists.

FLO
This is my phone number and address.

She gives him the poster she has been putting on the trees around the park. He sees the effort she has gone to, and is again overcome. He hugs her. She hugs him back. They have difficulty extracting themselves. Hormonal overload.

RICHARD
I'm going to put it right. Trust me. I know you wouldn't... I know you're a very special person. Believe me, I

know your worth.

FLO
Thank you, Richard and that's my baby.

He nods, and in a cloud of emotion they part. Richard clings to the poster.

EXT. STREET NEAR PARK — LINE OF CARS - LATER

Richard opens back car door to put baby inside. He does so. He opens front. He is oblivious to being in the middle of the road, dancing in and around the car putting things in the trunk.

FX FIRE ENGINE ALARM.

Speeding down the street the fire engine driver sees Richard. The fire engine tries to avoid him but Richard changes direction in order to catch the poster which has flown out of his hand. Fire engine driver steps on brakes.

FX SCREECH OF BRAKES

Fire engine tips over and skates along street, dragging Richard with it

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — TOILET — DAY

Close-up of rectangular air vent out of focus. Slowly it comes into focus. Two hands, one wearing a wedding ring, press against the vent. It is Ruth, recovering her vision.

FX CLATTER

Ruth turns to look. Her phone has dropped into bowl.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — CORRIDOR — LATER

Ruth stumbles into a seat. Through a glass wall we can see a doctor talking to two grey-haired people, MR. AND MRS. EDELSON, Ruth's parents. They exit soberly and approach Ruth. Mrs. EDELSON shakes her head. Mr. EDELSON goes to hug Ruth. Ruth turns away and folds into a fetal position. The doctor comes up and offers Ruth a plastic bag containing

Richard's personal possessions, his wallet and keys. He tries to give it to Ruth. She refuses to take it.

RUTH
You don't understand. Moron! I'm not taking his things. He's going to need them when he comes back. Get it! WHEN HE COMES BACK!

Mrs. EDELSON quietly takes Richard's things.

INT. BIG CITY HOSPITAL — MATERNITY WARD — BABY DEN — DAY

Lines of baby all different shapes and sizes, looking out. One baby is older than the rest. NURSE picks up baby and shows Mr. and Mrs. EDELSON who are looking through the glass.

NURSE
It's obvious which one is yours. They change so quickly.

She picks up baby and hands it to Mrs. EDELSON.

NURSE
She's fine. A good pair of lungs.

MR. EDELSON
Have you forgotten how?

MRS. EDELSON
You know I have, but I'll manage.

They look across to Ruth, walking around in a blind daze.

INT. BIG CITY HOUSING BLOCK — FLO & MARGE'S — DAY

Marge is trying to interest Flo in the baby.

MARGE
I can't believe in this day and age, two people can just disappear!

FLO
It's my fault again. AGAIN! I didn't get his address. I trusted him. He wanted me to have the right baby, I know it.

MARGE
(sudden thought)
You weren't drinking?
(beat)
We'll find them. Don't worry!

FLO
Meanwhile my daughter's growing without me. She's my DAUGHTER. She was beautiful!

Marge tries to embrace her. Flo moves away.

FLO
You don't know. You never wanted me.

MARGE
That doesn't mean I wanted to lose you.

FLO
You probably wanted a boy.

MARGE
You've got that wrong smartie-pants. Given the choice, I'd have said, a girl.

FLO
Why did I want a boy? I can't even remember now.

EXT. BIG CITY ROAD OUTSIDE FLO'S HOUSING BLOCK — DAY

Anthony drives up. He tries lock on wire gate but it is frozen locked. He jumps over.

EXT. TOP WINDOW — ANTHONY'S P.O.V.

Flo appears with baby. Anthony sees her and waves. He goes in open door and bounds up the dirty staircase.

INT. BIG CITY HOUSING BLOCK — FLO & MARGE'S — LATER

Flo is putting on her coat, as if in a dream.

ANTHONY
Where are you going?

Flo exits. Anthony turns to Marge.

MARGE
She wants to earn some money.

ANTHONY
Why? My dad wants to see the baby.

MARGE
But...

ANTHONY
I know. But he won't know the difference.

EXT. BIG CITY URBAN STREET - GEORGE'S DINER — DAY

GEORGE is loading groceries into the diner for the day. Winnie is on the phone. She puts it down. Smiles and nods.

EXT. BIG CITY URBAN STREET — GEORGE'S DINER - NIGHT

Anthony drives up. He opens door for Flo and baby. There are a number of down-market cars packed tightly together.

FLO
Is it a party?

ANTHONY
I've never known him give a party.

INT. BIG CITY URBAN DINER — NIGHT

Customers are well into free lobster and beer. They are barely interested in entrance of Anthony, Flo and baby.

GEORGE
Meet my grandson! Everyone listen up! This is my grandson.

ANTHONY
Not yours!

GEORGE
He's mine, because you wouldn't have had him if I hadn't had you!

Anthony shakes his head. Winnie takes Flo and Joe round to introduce them to the gang.

INT. BIG CITY URBAN DINER — BACKROOM — LATER

George does not like what he's just heard.

GEORGE
So this boy's not yours!

ANTHONY
I had a daughter. But we don't know where she is. The police are looking.

GEORGE
The police?

ANTHONY
We're also looking.

GEORGE
I suppose she's a slut. Any woman who'd go out with you. You're a slut, so she is too.

ANTHONY
Take that back.

GEORGE
Punk.

ANTHONY
This is the last time you'll insult me.

George stands up but before he lands a punch Anthony lands one. WORKMEN in overalls, hold Anthony off his Dad. George stands and faces his son, whose arms are now pinned behind him.

GEORGE
(pointing to Anthony)
My own son!

INT. BIG CITY HOUSING BLOCK — FLO & MARGE'S SITTING ROOM — DAY

Joe, at six months, sits in a high chair wielding a spoon. Marge spreads out papers on sofa and pours over them. We see headlines circled 'BABY KIDNAPPED' — 'MOTHER STILL SEARCHES FOR HER KIDNAPPED CHILD'

MARGE
Someone's got to see this. Either Richard or Ruth: they can't both have stepped off the planet.

Flo enters from kitchen area with some blended food for Joe.

FLO
Now you're going to like this, Joey, I promise.

MARGE
You're not weaning him already?

FLO
It's time.

FX: VOICE OF JOE AND SUZI: A SERIOUS CONVERSATION:

While VOICE-OVER continues we see a collage of family photos from the first three years, especially at their birthdays. Ruth and Flo sometimes look sad in the photos, not the children.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Can you remember?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
No. What?

JOE VOICE-OVER
Being a baby.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Nope. I remember...nope.

JOE VOICE-OVER
Do you remember when you were a girl?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
I am a girl.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I know but before...before you were a girl?

SUZI VOICE-OVER
Before being born?

JOE VOICE-OVER
Before that.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
I can remember being a fairy.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I was a piano, a big piano.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
You can't have been.

JOE VOICE-OVER
I was too. I was.

SUZI VOICE-OVER
You don't remember.

INT. RETIREMENT COMMUNITY BEACH HOUSE, PATIO — DAY

Mr. and Mrs. EDELSON play with three-year old SUZI on patio.

MRS. EDELSON
Look how happy she looks.

MR. EDELSON
Look how happy you look!

Mr. EDELSON dives into the pool.

MRS. EDELSON
You'll soon be doing that, Suzi. You up, yet, Ruthie? Suzi wants to say hello. Go for a swim.

Ruth enters, a different person. Her head is shaved, she's lost weight. Her eyes do not focus with any relief on anything.

RUTH
(not looking at Suzi)
Hi, baby.

MRS. EDELSON
Going to Group today?

RUTH
Going to Group isn't going to bring Richard back. I need more than that.

She slumps in the poolside chair and stares into space. Her father, Mr. EDELSON pops up in the water.

MR. EDELSON
Where's Suzi? She wants a swim.

Mrs. Edelson holds out Suzi to Ruth.

MRS. EDELSON
Give her to Pops.

Ruth tries to take Suzi but cannot quite do it. Turns away.

INT. BIG CITY BANK — ANTHONY'S IMPRESSIVE OFFICE - NIGHT

Anthony is using the computer. Flo has her study books spread out and is seriously involved in them.

ANTHONY
Don't know why you want to study psychology.

FLO
Because I want to know the difference between raising your own child and someone else's.

ANTHONY
Any difference?

FLO
Obviously.

ANTHONY
I like him better not being mine.

FLO
Next month, my daughter will be three years old and so will Joey.

INT. BABY AND TOY STORE, SUBURBAN SHOPPING MALL - LATER

Flo puts toys in shopping cart. Beyond her aisle, Anthony pushes cart with baby on his shoulders seemingly without motion. He's standing on a skateboard.

Flo inspects baby clothes. Anthony picks a quilted coat.

FLO
You don't have to buy things for him.

ANTHONY
I know.

They continue down the aisles, with Anthony recognizing toys and piling them into cart.

FLO
He's not even your kid.

ANTHONY
Good! I won't be able to screw him up.

Anthony throws toys in the cart, including hockey skates.

FLO
He's not old enough!

ANTHONY
Almost.

FLO
Hockey's dangerous.

ANTHONY
Not if you're bigger than the other guys.

Joe aims ball at Anthony. Anthony picks it up. Joe throws it again.

ANTHONY
No.

The throwing and picking up are repeated as they go to the line.

CASHIER, a big chested older woman, recognizes Anthony.

CASHIER
Hi there! Tony, isn't it?

ANTHONY
Don't think I know you.

CASHIER
Yes you do.

Joe throws ball at Cashier's face. Anthony turns on him.

ANTHONY
NO YOU... YOU...
(controls himself)
Don't do that! It's not polite.

Flo smiles approvingly as Anthony gets ball. He gives it back to Joe, with a warning look. Flo smiles at him.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT, ANTHONY'S CAR — DAY

ANTHONY
I'm going to give up my job at the bank and find her for you. I'm going into the detective business.

Flo throws her arms round Anthony and they enjoy a proper kiss.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — PATIO — DAY

Patio decorated with balloons for Suzi's birthday. Big cake.

'THREE YEARS OLD TO-DAY'

Suzi and friends bounce and scream with pure delight in a Bouncy Castle on the patio.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — FRONT DOOR — DAY

A CLOWN, in traditional harlequin costume rings doorbell. Ruth opens door. Stares at clown. Clown takes a bird from her hair. Ruth smiles for first time since Richard's death.

EXT. TWO STOREY HOUSE IN SUBURB OF TWO STOREY HOUSES — DAY.

Anthony is at the door of house. MRS. BURTON, a faded and depressed-looking, woman shakes her head sadly at him.

EXT. SINGLE FAMILY HOUSE IN RURAL AREA - DAY.

MR. and MRS. LANGONI, a vibrant young couple, are shaking their heads vehemently at Anthony. Anthony leaves. Mr. Langoni runs after him, shaking his fist.

EXT. COUNTRY MANSION DRIVEWAY — DAY.

Anthony checks his list walking up long driveway. NANNY, a European-trained nanny, exits from house with small daughter. Anthony walks towards house, eying the daughter carefully. Nanny covers the flirtatious daughter's eyes as they pass.

INT. COUNTRY MANSION — HALLWAY — LATER

RUTH BARKAM, a tall imposing woman, shakes her head.

RUTH
My name may be Ruth, but my husband's name isn't Richard.

ANTHONY
(exhausted)
That's what they all say. You are the last on my list!

RUTH
My first name is Ruth, but I'm always called by my second name, Bitsy. No one even knows 'Ruth'.

ANTHONY
Bitsy!
(recovering himself)
Much cuter.

RUTH
You see... You may be looking for a woman whose...

ANTHONY
(Getting it)
...whose second name is Ruth!!!

INT. BIG CITY POLICE STATION, DETECTIVE INSPECTOR BURT GULL's INNER OFFICE - DAY

Anthony and Flo sit across from Gull.

GULL
I'll have them do another search for you. But Ruth could just be a name she called herself, in school.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — PATIO — DAY

Decorated for Suzi's birthday, even bigger birthday cake

'TO-DAY YOU ARE FOUR'

Suzi and friends play at arts and crafts, sometimes stealing each other's material.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — FRONT DOOR — DAY

A clown rings the doorbell. Mrs. EDELSON opens the door.

MRS. EDELSON
You remembered her birthday at least.

Clown follows Mrs. EDELSON in.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — PATIO — DAY

Clown comes out and does a few tricks for the kids, before taking off clown mask and hat. It is a smiling Ruth.

RUTH
It's me!

Suzi starts to cry and runs towards Mrs. EDELSON.

MRS. EDELSON
(defending Suzi)
You can't be surprised. She's forgotten who you are after a year!

EXT. BIG CITY SHOPPPING MALL — ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

Flo and Joe shopping. Joe is transfixed by busker playing guitar. Flo cannot drag him away.

JOE
I want one, I want one of those.

FLO
Next birthday. I promise.

INT. BIG CITY MUSIC STORE — COUNTER — DAY

A BEARDED YOUTH is showing some guitars to Marge and Flo. Joe is playing the keyboard.

MARGE
Where'd he learn how to play like that?

BEARDED YOUTH
He's got showered, he's got showered with the gift.

Flo puts guitars down.

FLO
I can't afford a keyboard.

BEARDED YOUTH
Why don't you rent something? I'd guess anything...

He gets down miniature violin. Joe leaves piano and takes violin reverently. Bearded Youth smiles at him. Joe smiles back.

BEARDED YOUTH
Take it on trial. If he doesn't play, bring it back.

EXT. RETIREMENT COMMUNITY SHOPPING STRIP — DAY

Anthony's car cruises down the street, stops. Mother and child stop. Mother points. Anthony's car moves off.

INT. BEACH HOUSE OF MR. AND MRS. EDELSON — KITCHEN — DAY.

Mrs. EDELSON pours coffee. She gives Anthony a cup. Anthony takes it, putting aside his list.

ANTHONY
You have a daughter called Golda Ruth?

MRS. EDELSON
That's right.

ANTHONY
Sometimes called Ruth.

MRS. EDELSON
We called her Golda, after the Prime Minister, but they made fun of her at school.

ANTHONY
Excellent, excellent! And the name of her husband?

MRS. EDELSON
Doesn't have one. Isn't married.

ANTHONY
Sorry to hear that, I mean...

MRS. EDELSON
The telephone company wants this information?

ANTHONY
To get the discount, yes.

He sees Suzi in the patio.

ANTHONY
And that's your granddaughter is it?

MRS. EDELSON

Suzi, yes, but she's not old enough to have a phone.

He rises to formally shake Mrs. EDELSON's hand. Catches sight of a silver-framed wedding photo of Richard and Ruth.

ANTHONY
Who's that? I mean, I thought...

Mrs. EDELSON looks impatient and annoyed.

ANTHONY
It's a nice picture. Caught my eye because he looks like a high school friend of mine.

Mrs. EDELSON looks suspicious.

ANTHONY
(Mock thinking)
What was his name...

MRS. EDELSON
How do I know?

ANTHONY
Richard!

MRS. EDELSON
(sighing)
It was. He was Ruth's husband.

ANTHONY
(excited)
Divorced?

MRS. EDELSON
Dead.

ANTHONY
Sorry to hear that, but…but… RICHARD! This is it! HALLELUJAH!

He runs out into patio, to see Suzi.

MRS. EDELSON
Hey, hey, come back.

She quickly picks up the phone and dials.

MRS. EDELSON
(*sotto voce*)
Get me the police, quick.

INT. BIG CITY POLICE STATION — INNER OFFICE — DAY

Flo is waiting behind the desk. Burt Gull enters.

FLO
Anthony's found them and been arrested.

GULL
She could deny everything. And it could be some time before...

FLO
We're planning to go this weekend.

GULL
I'll see if I can get a trip booked. There could be trouble with them.

INT. INTERCITY TRAIN — TRAIN CARRIAGE — DAY

Marge, Flo, and Joe, with bags and picnic, are in train. Joe is thrilled and constantly changes his seat.

FLO
Joe, Joe, you're exhausting me. Play something on the violin. I told you if we got you a violin you'd have to practice.

MARGE
He can't play on the train. He has to hear himself.

Marge breaks open picnic hamper and grabs Joe's attention.

FLO
Is that beer?

MARGE
Non-alcoholic. Meeting up with that woman I've gotta have some sort of drink. If I ever murder anyone, she'll be the one. Slap her face!

FLO
You won't do anything like that, promise.

MARGE
Sooner murder than look at her.

FLO
What's all this about? Are you a Christian or not?

MARGE
Sometimes religion isn't enough.

FLO
Apparently, she lost her husband.

MARGE
She didn't lose her MIND, did she?

FLO
Maybe. Maybe it's like that. I don't know. And neither do you. We've never had husbands!

MARGE
Where'd you get THAT sting in your tail? That's not like you, Miss Meek and Mild.

FLO
I'm not, don't call me that.

MARGE
'Course it's true. What you put up with...

FLO
Not any more! I'm not going to lose Joe.

MARGE

You won't. I'll see to it.

JOE
I don't want to leave you.

MARGE
You won't, no one's taking you away from us.

JOE
You won't let them take me away.

FLO
No, no, I promise. Then why are we going?

MARGE
To get your daughter. Without giving him up!

FLO
Perhaps we should go back.

MARGE
Not without giving that woman some of my grief, I'm not.

Joe starts to cry, Flo comforts him.

FLO
She's not my daughter now. Joe's mine. My son.

MARGE
So, you want to go home?

FLO
(shaking her head)
She's my DAUGHTER!

INT. MUSEUM AND CLOWN SCHOOL — ENTRANCE HALL/LOBBY — DAY

Ruth shows Suzi and her parents Tom Thumb's Museum. They walk through circus exhibits, some are frightening.

RUTH
Now I'm going to show you something truly amazing.

She shows them pictures and wax model of Tom Thumb, his actual size of sixteen inches.

RUTH
See Suzi, he was only sixteen inches high. But perfect in every other respect, a miniature human being and a very smart businessman. Held his own with the circus crowd and made a fortune.

SUZI
Are you a clown now?

RUTH
And you can book me for your friends' birthday parties.

Mr. EDELSON
You've got some explaining to do about Suzi's birth.

Mrs. EDELSON
Your father wants to hear your side of the story.

INT. MUSEUM AND CLOWN SCHOOL — CAFETERIA — LATER

Mr. and Mrs. EDELSON are confronting Ruth with the 'swap'. She shrugs.

RUTH
I thought I was doing something good. We were both disappointed and I didn't want to disappoint Richard... She never got back to me.

MRS. EDELSON
But don't you think you should consulted her?

RUTH
After Richard died...at first I couldn't remember it happened. Then when I did remember I thought it was okay. I didn't know Flo was looking for me.

MRS. EDELSON
She didn't even know your last name.

RUTH
I didn't know hers. I gave her my phone number.

MR. EDELSON
We've done everything for Suzi and now we find out she isn't even our blood.

MRS. EDELSON
And now this boy, he's our blood.

MR. EDELSON
Who says we have to have this boy?

RUTH
I'm getting a headache.

MRS. EDELSON
Suzi's given your father another chance. He wasn't around much when you were growing up.

MR. EDELSON
Suzi's ours! You understand that?

Suzi runs up to Mr. EDELSON.

SUZI
Don't cry pops.

He hugs her tight, fighting back tears.

INT. TRAIN — CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Flo, Marge and Joe are asleep. Flo's hand reaches out to hug Joe tighter.

INT. BEACH COMMUNITY POLICE STATION — DOORWAY — DAY

Burt Gull and Anthony run down the steps of police station.

ANTHONY
How dare they lock me up. No charge, no evidence! — as if I'm a threat to national security? Me? Me? Someone who works for a bank!

BURT GULL
Steady on, son!

ANTHONY
Don't call me son!

BURT GULL
I thought I came here to help.

He crosses his road. Anthony realizes Burt Gull is leaving.

ANTHONY
Where are you going?

BURT GULL
Done my job.

ANTHONY
Aren't you coming to the big face-off?

BURT GULL
I've done my job.

ANTHONY
(knowing it's inadequate)
Thanks, thanks.

EXT. BEACH COMMUNITY'S CHILDREN'S PARK - DAY

The two families approach each other. They take each other's measure and observe each other. Suzi breaks rank first and runs to climber. Marge marches ahead eager to attack Ruth.

MARGE
What do you have to say for yourself, Miss? Where have you been hiding?

Flo runs to look at Suzi.

FLO
You've got my eyes.

Flo tries to hug her. Suzi screams and puts her tongue out. Flo stalks Suzi who's clearly afraid of her.

MARGE VOICE-OVER
How are we going to explain to the kids?

MR. EDELSON stalks Joe, who looks very unhappy about this.

MRS. EDELSON VOICE-OVER
Is that my grandson?

Joe runs to Flo for protection. Suzi runs to Mr. EDELSON

MARGE VOICE-OVER
You stole my granddaughter. That's criminal!

MRS. EDELSON VOICE-OVER
You took our grandson; I knew nothing about that.

MARGE VOICE-OVER
I've got a GRIEF! Three years, it's been and how's my granddaughter to know her mother, or who I am? Someone's got to pay for that.

Mr. EDELSON grabs Suzi.

MR. EDELSON
No one's paying for anything!

MARGE

That woman has INJURED me and mine!

RUTH
I have a name. And I'm sorry.

MARGE
That's not enough!

MR. EDELSON
We don't have to talk to you.

MRS. EDELSON
We do, I'm afraid.

ANTHONY
We came to resolve this matter.

MARGE
(to RUTH)
So how are you gonna do that?

RUTH
That's not my problem.

FLO
It was your fault.

RUTH
You told me to.

FLO
I did no such thing.

RUTH
Your body language did.

FLO
Then go back to school for body-reading, you got it WRONG!

MARGE
You deserve to be punched one!

Mrs. EDELSON screams.

ANTHONY
No hysterics, they're not gonna help. Can we go somewhere else and talk this over, Mr. Edelson?

MR. EDELSON
Any time you like.

ANTHONY
Suzi's my daughter.

MR. EDELSON
Who says? Emotionally I'm her father. She calls me pop.

ANTHONY
I'm her father!

MR. EDELSON
Are you married to her mother? Registered with the P.R.O?

ANTHONY
Performing Rights?

MR. EDELSON
That's right. Parental performing rights.

Flo and Mrs. EDELSON joins them. Marge and Ruth are at a stand-off.

FLO
She's my daughter.

MR. EDELSON
You can't uproot her now. At this age?

ANTHONY
What age then?

MR. EDELSON
At no age, none, I'm not having her hurt.

ANTHONY
What about Flo's hurt?

MRS. EDELSON
The children shouldn't be hurt.

ANTHONY

Your daughter should have thought of that before she stole her.

RUTH
I didn't want her, I didn't want a kid. Richard did.

MRS. EDELSON
She's in shock. Doesn't know what she's saying.

ANTHONY
I think she does. She should never have had a kid.

Shocked gasps from everyone.

FLO
Ruth obviously doesn't want them, I do. Both of them.

MR. EDELSON
Can you stop thinking of yourself and think of them, Suzi, your daughter?

FLO
I am. I want her to know that I do want her, I, her mother, don't you think that's....

RUTH
Oh my god, what a mess! I never thought...

MARGE
You never thought, you never FELT, in your entire life!

RUTH
Richard, Richard, why didn't I die too?

MARGE
Of course, you'd prefer to die - instead of feeling anything!

ANTHONY
Bashing away at each other isn't going to solve anything. Let's take a closer look.

FLO
Look at them.

They turn to look at Suzi and Joe sitting on top of a climber with their arms round each other.

FLO
We've got to do at least as good.

EXT. RETIREMENT COMMUNITY EDELSON'S BEACH HOUSE — ENTRANCE-DAY

FX: VIOLIN, A SWEET SIMPLE WALTZ BY DIMITRI SHOSTOKOVICH

Joe plays the waltz on the violin. The remains of a home-cooked meal on the table. Everyone has eaten.

Suzi walks around the diners and shows off her yoyo.

MR. EDELSON
(to Joe)
Can you play that again, son? You may not know this, but I used to play the violin.

RUTH
Richard, Richard, Richard... if only he was here.

MRS. EDELSON
That's your very wonderful father, Joe. Who used to play the guitar. You've got music from both sides.

Marge tries to contain a loud sob. Everyone is embarrassed. Joe stops playing violin. Marge is crying. She struggles to speak.

MARGE

I had to work. Anyone thought of that? How it was for me having to WORK and find people to look after my baby, Flo. Babysitters, foster parents, good people who looked after her, while I could NOT! NO MONEY! Understand? And we swore, didn't we, darling, that would never happen to her kid. She'd look after it herself. We swore! But this is what happened. Four years old and her daughter doesn't recognize her. Four years we can never get back.

Stunned silence as everyone digests this.

FLO
But I came out all right in the end, Mum. At least I hope.

Murmur of assent, admiration.

ANTHONY
But she's right, it's a tragedy so far. It's not going to continue.

FLO
There is a simple solution. I will move down here with Joe and they can live together as brother and sister, even if they don't live in the same house. They can sleep over.

MARGE
Where does that leave me?

FLO
You can come down too, mum. You could use a change of pace.

MRS. EDELSON
What if they don't like each other? What if they're not best friends.

MR. EDELSON
They won't have a choice.

ANTHONY
Like any other brother and sister, they'll have to put up with each other.

JOE
Is she my sister?

SUZI
I don't want a brother.

FLO
More like a cousin.

MR. EDELSON
He doesn't even know he's Jewish.

SUZI
I thought I was Jewish.

ANTHONY
We'll see. And what about Richard? That side of Joe's family, as if all this isn't complicated enough.

Ruth goes and gets her photo album. She hugs it to herself, unable to let it go. Anthony gently takes it from her.

MRS. EDELSON
He came from a big family who miss him as much as we do.

Ruth opens photo in album. Pictures of large family gatherings. Flo and Anthony look on politely. Ruth gives it to Marge. Marge reluctantly looks but then with increased interest.

MARGE
Who is that woman? What's her name?

RUTH
Let me see, I think her name's Deidre, she's Richard's Great Aunt.

MARGE
And they're all from Africa?

RUTH
Ghana!

MARGE
She looks like my cousin.

They all look.

FLO
She could be, for all we know.

MARGE
From where? Ghana! I'd like to go there.

MRS. EDELSON
If she was a cousin of some sort, that would mean Joe and Suzi were related.

MR. EDELSON
Sure it helps...blood relations. And we're all related in some way.

INT. MUSEUM AND CLOWN SCHOOL — ENTRANCE HALL/LOBBY — DAY

Ruth is giving Marge, Flo and Anthony a tour Tom Thumb's Museum. Suzi and Joe lag behind the group, and hold each other's hands tightly. Joe drags Suzi to a corner behind a large cut-out of TOM THUMB the legendary circus performer/owner.

JOE
Are we going to get married?

SUZI
No, no, silly. We can't.

JOE
We can. We're not brother and sister.

SUZI
No because we're something like cousins.

JOE

That means we can.

SUZI
No, stupid!

JOE
Who'd want to marry you anyway?

Ruth, Marge, Flo and Anthony look frantically among the exhibits for Joe and Suzi. They find their hiding place behind the cut-out and pull them out. Hugs all round.

EXT. RETIREMENT BEACH COMMUNITY - BEACH — LATER

Joe and Suzi run into sea. They stretch out in shallow waves, kicking up water.

JOE
FISH! Fish flops, fish!

SUZI
You know your mother...

JOE
You mean MY mother or yours?

Suzi looks up at sky.

SUZI
Have you asked her why there's a sky?

JOE
Millions of times.

Anthony and Flo, an eye on Joe and Suzi, walk by themselves along the shore.

ANTHONY
Never wanted a kid, now I've got two.

FLO
Can you move here? Get a job in a bank down here?

ANTHONY
For how long?

FLO
As long as you want.

ANTHONY
I'll think about it.

FLO
This is your last chance. The very last time, I'm going to ask you to marry me.

Anthony grins and hugs her. They kiss. Suzi and Joe turn to look at them. They make disgusted faces and giggle.

THE END