

FADE IN:

EXT. SMALL TOWN, COMMERCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Sunset over tree lined streets, two story buildings.

Cluster of SMALL STORES, one with SIGN:

DUFF'S SPACE

Advertising

"You Can Trust The Duffs"

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE - DAY

On the wall behind the FRONT COUNTER, a CLOCK shows 4:55 PM.

Grey walls and floor, 15' x 15' -- no furniture.

Ten foot long FRONT COUNTER, opposite the Front Door.

TWO CUSTOMERS stand at the Counter completing transactions with THREE WOMEN at the "sales" side of the Counter.

The THREE WOMEN, very pretty and petite, dressed fashionably in business suits:

DONNELLA DUFF (40), long brown hair,

LU FORTE (30), short brown "piecie" hair,

SUE GRIMBLE (50), short blond "piecie" hair.

The three Saleswomen scramble to conclude business with the Customers at the Counter and on the phones.

Each Saleswoman wears a SMILING FACE NAME TAG over her heart, although none of the women are smiling.

ANOTHER WOMAN bends down to count money in a CASH DRAWER, behind the Front Counter -- then stands up straight, she is:

CELIA CRAPSEY (40), long black hair, much taller than the others, dressed more casually / flamboyantly, in striped knee-length culottes, camisole top and high heeled sandals.

WENDIANNA DUFF (38), long blond hair, petite, very pretty woman in a business suit, enters from the Back Door, hands Celia some CASH.

WENDIANNA

Get this to the bank. Fifteen
hundred. From the new recycle guy.

Celia exits the Counter, toward the back, quickly returns.

CELIA
 Wendianna, this is sixteen hundred.
 There's sixteen hundreds, here.
 Look --

Wendianna hurries toward the Front Door, her kitten heels clip the linoleum floor, smartly.

WENDIANNA
 Just do it.

Celia hurries toward the back of the store -- her long, graceful strides make her seem almost airborne.

LU
 (wearily)
 Sixteen hundred dollars for recycle stuff? Tell me, where do I sign up?

Sue tries to stifle nervous laughter.

Lu shakes her head then shuts her mouth.

DONNELLA
 (annoyed)
 Could we get a little work done today, Lu?

DONNELLA (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 Celia! Would you watch where you walk, please?

WENDIANNA (O.S.)
 Hurry up with that list of cancellations!

The LAST CUSTOMER holds the Front Door open as he exits.

A loud BUZZER SOUNDS.

LAST CUSTOMER
 My ad will run in Sunday's paper?
 And on The Soup Pot's placemat?

DONNELLA
 Absolutely.

Last Customer closes the Front Door, the buzzer stops -- he reopens the Door.

LAST CUSTOMER

What about the placemats at the Diner,
next door? Could you put a coupon
for me on that?

The buzzer sounds again (the door is held open),

DONNELLA

The stupid Diner doesn't put ads on
their placemats. Stupid, I know.

The Last Customer shrugs, notices the buzzer, finally, exits.

Quiet.

SUE

(softly)
Five o'clock.

Lu and Sue quickly, quietly, straighten their Work Stations
at the Counter, turn the Open sign in the Front Door to
Closed, etc.

Outside the windows, DARKNESS rapidly falls.

The town looks empty, very still.

Donnella puts a phone customer on hold, yells --

DONNELLA

Celia! Got the cancellations list
done?

Celia reenters from the back.

CELIA

Me? Did you want me to -- okay, one
second. I just gotta get this to
the bank.

Celia holds up a large, sealed, BANK DEPOSIT ENVELOPE,
Donnella groans.

CELIA (CONT'D)

For Wendianna. Wendianna said.

DONNELLA

Nothing like waiting 'til the last
minute.

CELIA

Sorry 'bout that. Thanks, Donnella.

Trying to hurry, SUE gathers her pocketbook, moves quickly
toward the Front Door.

At the Counter a stack of BROCHURES falls to the floor.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I got it, Sue!

Celia bends down in a "Swan Lake" move to pick up the brochures.

SUE

Thanks Celia, see you all in the morning...

Sue stops short in the Front Doorway as --

Wendianna reenters.

Sue laughs nervously, a violent NERVOUS TIC shows on one side of her face.

SUE (CONT'D)

I pick up my grandkids. Okay, Wendianna? 'night, Wendianna.

Sue waits half a second, cringing.

Sue exits.

Wendianna mimics Sue's tic.

DONNELLA

One minute past five, good old Sue's out the door. Spike head.

CELIA

Wendianna, I told you, right? There was a hundred more in there than you said?

Donnella grits her teeth.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I can call the recycle guy in the morning --

WENDIANNA

Just -- I'm busy. Just get it to the bank before it closes, please, is that too much? Can you do that?

Celia exits, toward the BACK.

Lu finishes her close-up-shop chores, exits through the FRONT DOOR, locks the door behind her.

LU
 (softly)
 'Night.

FRONT DOOR SHUTS

DONNELLA
 Ass wipe.

WENDIANNA
 Wait!

Wendianna exits through the BACK DOOR.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - NIGHT

Celia lies face down in a water-filled DITCH.

She struggles to lift her head out of the shallow water.

Darkness -- a FIST on the back of Celia's neck pushes her down each time her shoulders arch and her hands claw at the soft earth.

Through a film of water:

Darkness -- someone stands beside Celia's limp form --

Someone stands to the side, opens the Back Door.

The REFLECTION on the Back Door Window shows Wendianna's untroubled face.

LATER

Celia drags herself out of the ditch, rolls over on the ground, exhausted.

She struggles to sit up, pushing back her hair, gasping for breath, etc.

The Back Door opens, Donnella exits the store, walks towards Celia.

DONNELLA
 Uh... Celia?

Celia looks up, she's trembling violently.

Donnella reopens the Back Door, calls in.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)
Wendianna, you better come out and
see this, it's Celia.

WENDIANNA (O.S.)
Quit it, Donnella...

DONNELLA
You better!

Wendianna exits the store, stands beside Donnella, sees Celia.

WENDIANNA
What the -- Celia? What happened!

Celia gasps, struggles to stand up, looks around helplessly.

CELIA
Wendianna! I don't know!

WENDIANNA
What did you do?

CELIA
I must of --

DONNELLA
Here, let's get her out of there,
Wendianna, you call nine one one.

WENDIANNA
Um, what?

Donnella pulls on Celia's wrists, pulls her to her feet --

As Celia turns, Donnella pushes her down again, into the
ditch, holds her head under the water.

DONNELLA
Hold this.

Wendianna sighs, kicks off her shoe, puts her foot on the
back of Celia's neck, pushes her weight -- with surprising
force -- on that foot.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)
Got her? Now, hold her while I find
something...

Donnella pulls some heavy BOARDS from a Garbage Dumpster --
she signals to Wendianna to move away.

As Wendianna steps away, Celia lifts her head and gasps --

Donnella instantly strikes the back of Celia's head with a board.

Celia falls back down -- Wendianna repositions her so her face is in the water, again.

Donnella piles boards on top of Celia's motionless body.

WENDIANNA

I don't know, is there enough water?

Donnella walks away from the ditch, pulls on Wendianna's arm.

DONNELLA

Plenty. Come on, Mom's waiting.

EXT. TRAILER PARK - NIGHT

Celia, drenched and muddy, unlocks and opens the door of a trailer.

She stands at the entrance, gazes inside, leans against the door frame, slides down, sits on the ground.

LATER

Car lights reveal Celia in the doorway.

Car door opens, closes, distant voice.

HARRY JILBEAR (60s) exits the car, approaches the trailer.

HARRY

Miss Crapsey?

Celia looks in his direction.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Is that you, Celia?

Celia shields her eyes as Harry flicks on a flashlight.

CELIA

Is that who?

Harry squats beside her.

HARRY

What -- did you fall in the inlet?

CELIA

(confused)

I'm all muddy!

HARRY

I can see that.

Harry helps her to her feet.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Isn't your trailer on the other side,
around the corner, there?

CELIA

Did they move it?

HARRY

Looks like you had the key, alright.

Harry helps her to walk inside -- puts a light on, closes
the door.

INT. CELIA'S TRAILER, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Celia stares ahead -- she's trembling.

Harry's voice is calm, soothing.

HARRY

You know, I forgot you moved over
here when you married old James,
rest his soul.

CELIA

James died.

Celia slides back to the floor, sits in a huddle.

HARRY

Now, now.

CELIA

(tearfully)
I really miss James!

HARRY

I know you do, honey.

CELIA

Harry? Harry Jilbear? You know
that James's died, right?

Harry half carries Celia to the COUCH --

Celia curls up frantically, scatters the cushions with her
long legs.

The living room is modestly furnished, many books and
bookcases.

Harry sits on the edge of the couch.

HARRY

Almost two years ago, right? You miss him a lot, I can see that.

She closes her eyes, seems fast asleep, quickly jolts upright.

CELIA

It wasn't 'cause he was old, you know, he got run over.

HARRY

Hit and run, wasn't it?

Celia suddenly concentrates on Harry's face.

CELIA

You weren't around here then, you went away someplace, right?

HARRY

Back to school, if you can believe it.

CELIA

James left you one of his fulgurite specimens.

HARRY

Yes, he did.

Celia blinks a few times then gazes at her own fingers -- fingers waving, her speech sounds cartoonish --

CELIA

Fused... tubes of sand... with lightning bolt inclusions...

HARRY

That's right...

Celia sits up, slightly.

CELIA

You were here for the funeral, weren't you...

Harry nods.

CELIA (CONT'D)

First James and then Conroy... Conroy Duff.

Celia pronounces each syllable as if for the first time.

HARRY

James and Conroy were just about my
two best friends...

Celia sighs and snuggles into a corner of the couch, falls
asleep.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I guess.

Harry moves to a chair, regards Celia.

LATER

Celia wakes up on the couch, looks around, confused.

The chair Harry sat in is empty.

There's a NOTE taped to the top of the couch.

Note:

I'll come by later, hope you feel better, Harry.

Celia looks at the note in amazement, rubs her head, blinks,
starts to fall back to sleep.

She sits up, frantically reaches for the phone, makes a call.

CELIA

Oh, God, Wendianna, answer --

She tries to straighten her hair and clothes as she waits,
notices the dried mud all over herself.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Wendianna? Oh, God, I'm so sorry I
didn't call.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Wendianna drops the phone on the floor, stares at it, picks
it up again.

WENDIANNA

Celia? What --

INT. CELIA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CELIA

I know I should have called, I know
that's the rule to call if you're
going to be late or sick --

Celia brushes at her filthy clothes with her hand then looks in amazement at her filthy hands.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. I just woke up, I don't even know -- wait, is it only five?

Celia picks up a CLOCK from a table nearby, struggles to focus her eyes.

CELIA (CONT'D)

In the morning? Okay. Okay. Okay. Thanks, Wendianna. I'm really sorry.

She hangs up the phone, rubs her head, walks slowly toward a bathroom.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Darkness outside the Front Windows, Wendianna hangs up the phone slowly, looks around, nervously.

The FRONT DOOR of the Store opens, Donnella enters.

DONNELLA

You know what you're going to do and say, right? Don't screw this up, Wendianna.

WENDIANNA

Donnella? Donnella?

DONNELLA

Don't you go all freaky on me now, Wendianna, I'm warning you... what...

WENDIANNA

That was Celia, on the phone.

DONNELLA

Oh, crap. Don't you go all freaky.

Wendianna bolts toward the Back Door, Donnella follows, angrily.

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - DAY

Darkness outside, birds chirping, a few stores start to open.

WENDIANNA

(whispers)

Donnella! Look!

Across the ditch, the boards lay scattered.

Donnella follows Wendianna to the ditch -- groans -- bends down and pushes some boards out of the way.

WENDIANNA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

No, wait! If she's still in there,
we're not supposed to find her!

Donnella looks up at Wendianna's near-hysteria and groans again.

DONNELLA

Well, what do you want me to do,
Wendianna, you say she's on the phone
and now you tell me --

Donnella suddenly pushes the remaining boards aside to reveal -- the empty ditch.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

Okay, so she got out.

Headlights illuminate the back of the store. A SLEEPY EYED CUSTOMER yells from his car in the street.

SLEEPY CUSTOMER

You open? Donnella? I gotta change
my ads for this week, it's all a
mess --

DONNELLA

No problem, come on inside.

WENDIANNA

Come around to the front of the store,
we're just opening --

SLEEPY CUSTOMER

Sorry, girls, thanks, I really mean
it --

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Lu, Sue, Donnella and Wendianna (in tailored business suits, name tags) work at the Counter and phones.

Celia (groomed, charmingly attired) enters hurriedly.

CELIA

Sorry I'm late -- well, not late but
not as early as usual. Sorry I called
you so early, Wendianna.

Wendianna glances up.

WENDIANNA

Remind me later that I need to talk
to you, Celia.

Nobody else acknowledges Celia's presence.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - LATER

A long, narrow room with four empty desks.

Celia works at the fifth desk -- Wendianna enters, Celia
jumps.

WENDIANNA

Yankees won, last night. You like
the Yankees, right?

CELIA

Wendianna! You know I love the
Yankees.

Wendianna sits at the fourth desk, she turns the chair so
she can see Celia.

Wendianna brushes off bits of dust at the back of Celia's
desk, rubs her fingers on an imperceptible spot.

WENDIANNA

Oh, right. My Mom's got a doctor's
appointment this week, right?

CELIA

Tomorrow at ten.

WENDIANNA

Went out for Italian food, last night.
You ever have pesto sauce?

CELIA

Oh, I love --

WENDIANNA

What time's my Mom's appointment?
What did you say, tomorrow?

Donnella enters.

Wendianna's demeanor turns colder. She and Donnella stand
over Celia.

DONNELLA

I just came from the bank, Celia.

Donnella and Wendianna watch Celia's reaction.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

That sixteen hundred dollar deposit
never got there, yesterday.

CELIA

What sixteen hundred dollar deposit?
Who was the check from?

DONNELLA

It was cash!

WENDIANNA

You said you would get it to the
bank for me! Just before five!

CELIA

I don't remember any cash, yesterday!

DONNELLA

Come on, Celia, look at your notes
or your receipts or something!

WENDIANNA

Sixteen hundred dollars!

CELIA

Guys! Let me think! Jesus!
Wendianna, I don't remember anything
about any sixteen hundred dollars.

DONNELLA

Cash.

WENDIANNA

You sure?

DONNELLA

Cash, Celia! Hundred dollar bills!

WENDIANNA

You sure you don't remember --

CELIA

I went to the bank in the morning.
No sixteen hundred dollars cash!

WENDIANNA

Gee, well maybe... maybe I didn't
give you the money, I thought it was
you --

CELIA

It wasn't! I know it wasn't.

DONNELLA

(annoyed)

Oh, come on now, Wendianna, was it
or wasn't it!

WENDIANNA

It was really busy...

Donnella throws up her hands in mock despair, watches Celia's
reaction.

DONNELLA

Give me a break, I'm out of here.
Let me know when you know what you're
talking about, Wendianna!

Donnella exits.

Wendianna sits down, slumps, shows weariness and helplessness.

She laughs and covers her face with her hands.

CELIA

(sympathetically)

Forget it. It will turn up.

WENDIANNA

Now I feel like an idiot. Sorry I
reamed into you, you know I didn't
mean it.

CELIA

Sure, I know.

Wendianna laughs, slaps her own head, lightly.

WENDIANNA

Boing! See? Empty inside.

Celia laughs, pats Wendianna's shoulder.

CELIA

You're just tired, you've been staying
late too much!

Wendianna rubs her temples, sadly.

WENDIANNA

There's just so much, too much to do
all the time, I can't remember
everything.

CELIA

Let's think about yesterday, you
tell me what you did and I'll make a
list. We'll figure it out!

Celia nods determinedly and makes columns on a piece of paper.

Wendianna smiles, watches Celia.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Lu and Sue move paper squares on POSTER boards across the
Counter --

LU

Okay, this is perfect, don't even
breathe and I'll transfer it all --

The sound of small STOMPING FEET and JANGLING JEWELRY.

ELLE DUFF (70), petite, with a tight blond French twist,
wears a red business suit and large smiling face name-tag,
enters, angrily --

Sue and Lu hold their breaths.

Elle regards them suspiciously.

ELLE

What are you supposed to be doing?

SUE

Oh, hi, there, Elle. Don't you look
nice, in red...

ELLE

(louder)
I said, what are you two doing?

SUE

Well, this is how we put the grid of
available space on the computer...

Lu groans, almost noiselessly.

ELLE

Excuse me, excuse me if I'm mistaken
about what it is we're selling here --

Her voice gets increasingly louder, more sarcastic.

ELLE (CONT'D)

I thought we were selling advertising
space! I thought I bought chunks of
space on every hand-out and --

Elle reaches under the Counter, grabs a fistful of brochures.

ELLE (CONT'D)
-- placemat and Bro-Shore!

She shakes the brochures dangerously close to the mock-up poster boards.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Because somebody was so sure that
the old fashioned way of printing
out our own fliers was old hat!

Elle throws the brochures in her hand to the floor.

She looks coldly at the poster boards, slides the paper squares around, picks up some of the squares.

ELLE (CONT'D)
What's this, a... a sixty sixth of a
page?

Elle stares daggers at the poster board.

ELLE (CONT'D)
What are we selling, here, a quarter
inch of space for advertising?

Elle transfers the stare to Lu and Sue.

LU
(reluctantly)
It's an introductory offer --

ELLE
I buy ten square feet of advertising
space! With the understanding that
somebody here can sell it to --

Lu and Sue look at the floor, mortified.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Oh, I don't know, customers? People
that want to advertise something?

Lu and Sue stay still -- Elle pushes a few pieces of paper to the floor, exits.

Lu and Sue reassemble their mock-up boards, silently.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Elle enters a narrow, dark Storage Room, next to the "Front Room" -- no furniture -- shelves on two walls.

Elle regards a COFFEE MAKER on a shelf --

She dumps the used coffee grounds from the filter, directly into the pot, replaces the pot on the burner.

ELLE

They can drink on their own time.

Elle exits the Storage Room.

INT. FOOT OF THE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Elle passes the doorway that leads back to the Front Room, glares indiscriminately through that open doorway --

-- continues toward the STAIRS.

An old fashioned SCHOOL BELL stands on a shelf near the STAIRS --

Elle sticks out her TONGUE at the bell.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Celia works at her desk, alone in the room.

Elle enters the Office -- throws her PURSE across the floor, grabs a chair back and leans against a wall, gasping.

Celia catches the flying purse just as it crashes into her ankles.

Celia flinches as she lifts up Elle's purse -- she seems to lose her balance for a moment.

CELIA

(slowly)

Elle, I would have met you downstairs
and helped you carry.

Elle breathes heavily, hand on her own throat.

ELLE

Well, I called you.

Celia stands up and returns the purse to Elle.

Elle recovers her normal breathing, quickly.

Elle slams her purse and some folders onto a desk.

Celia returns to her chair, sits quietly, distracted -- she rubs the back of her neck, unconsciously.

CELIA
God, you called me? Did you ring
the bell?

ELLE
Yes, I rang the damn bell!

Elle glares challengingly at Celia.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Whatever you were doing must be more
important than helping me.

Elle confronts a wall CALENDAR, rips off the month page,
wads it in a ball and throws it backwards, so it hits Celia.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Oops, so sorry.

Celia jumps, picks up the crumpled paper, realizes it's
nothing, tosses it in the garbage.

Elle attacks the monthly planning sheet on a desk BLOTTER.

ELLE (CONT'D)
You write notes all over everything,
looks like kindergarten!

Elle fusses with another desk blotter.

Celia gathers her wits and concentrates on the paperwork on
her desk.

Elle disrupts the desk that Celia is working on, pulls out
the drawers.

CELIA
(patiently)
Elle... you want me to move to another
desk?

Elle slams the drawers closed. Her voice rises.

ELLE
I am the owner, I don't think it's
too much to ask for a little respect
around here...

Elle sighs dramatically, and rubs the WALL, as if to remove
a spot, returns to hunt in Celia's desk drawers, and back to
the spot on the wall.

Celia picks up her work and moves to an empty desk.

Elle follows Celia, starts to hunt in that desk, too.

Celia, on guard, asks anyway --

CELIA
Can I help you find something?

ELLE
(bitterly)
Can you? I doubt it. Would you? I
doubt it.

Elle speaks into her CELL PHONE.

ELLE (CONT'D)
(sweetly)
Wendianna? Can you come help Mommy?

Elle snaps her phone shut -- stands, hand on hip.

Sound of tapping foot steps on stairs.

Wendianna enters the Office.

WENDIANNA
Why didn't you help her, Celia?

Elle waves dismissively.

Wendianna gives Celia a desperate look -- Celia returns a
comforting smile and nod.

CELIA
Everything's fine. Doesn't your Mom
look nice? You look so pretty in
red, Elle.

Elle ignores Celia, suddenly assumes an authoritative stance,
sits at one of the desks and points to another chair.

ELLE
Sit down here, Wendianna. Sit.

Wendianna sits.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Tell her to go.

Wendianna looks up, meekly, at Celia.

WENDIANNA
Celia? Give us the office for a few
minutes, okay?

CELIA
Of course.

Celia exits calmly, not bothered.

Elle holds her finger to her own lips, as Celia's footsteps on the stairs fade away.

Wendianna looks in the direction of the door, shakes her head and shrugs.

Elle taps her own mouth with that pointing finger, raises one eyebrow, thinking.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Lu and Sue attend to a few CUSTOMERS at the Counter.

Celia stands out of the way.

Lu glances toward Celia.

LU
No gaping wounds.

CELIA
Always a plus.

SUE
(quietly)
That old witch is dangerous.

CELIA
Let's not be anti-old. Or anti-witch.

Celia keeps her knees loose, bobs and weaves, slightly.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Anybody want coffee?

LU
Me. Two creams.

SUE
Me, two creams, too. Rinse out my
mug, here, please, please, please?

Celia takes a dirty mug from under the Counter.

A CUSTOMER at the Counter watches Celia.

CUSTOMER
What, you got a pot right here?

CELIA
You want a cup?

CUSTOMER

No, I don't drink coffee. Why don't
you girls get your own? Make poor
Celia do all the work?

Customer winks at Celia.

LU

Believe me, we're giving her a break.

SUE

(quietly)
What's Elle got today, bull whip?

LU

Cat-o-nine-tails?

CELIA

Oh, poor kitty with nine tails...

Celia exits the Counter, walks to the Storage Room.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Celia pulls one of the light cords -- reveals --

Metallic shelves filled with file boxes, concrete walls and
floors, bare bulbs in the ceiling with string cords.

Celia reaches for the coffee pot handle, pulls back her hand,
suddenly, looks distraught.

She mumbles to herself, shakes her head.

Celia holds up the COFFEE POT, the layer of grounds at the
bottom breaks apart.

Celia speaks softly to herself, encouragingly.

CELIA

Stay up on your toes, ready for
anything...

Celia shakes the grounds from the coffee pot into the garbage.

She carries the pot to a small sink in a wall.

Celia rinses out the pot -- she flinches.

She looks around, suddenly, confused -- turns off the faucet,
abruptly -- looks at the water dripping from her hands.

She quickly wipes her hands on a paper towel, makes a fresh
pot of coffee.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

CUSTOMERS chat at the Counter, Harry is among them.

HARRY

There she is -- hi, Celia.

Celia looks up, smiles.

CELIA

Here I am. Hi, there, Harry Jilbear.
Good to see you.

Celia reaches over the Counter, Harry smiles and shakes her hand.

The other Customers, as well as Lu and Sue, regard this exchange with interest.

HARRY

Glad to see you looking so good. I mean, better. I mean, even better.

CELIA

You, too.

HARRY

You want to go get a cup of coffee with me?

SUE

We got --

LU

Leave 'em alone.

CELIA

I'm working. I can't now.

HARRY

How 'bout dinner, later, I could wait for you at the Diner, next door, would that be alright?

LU

Big spender, Harry.

SUE

Yeah, the Diner.

HARRY

Is that okay, Celia?

Celia smiles, somewhat surprised.

CELIA

I don't know how late, sometimes I
work late... but okay, sure, okay.

HARRY

That'd be great, I'll wait for you.
I'll see you there.

Harry exits.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The light in the Storage Room seems softer.

Celia takes four creamers from a small styrofoam container,
adds cream to the coffees.

Celia holds two cups of coffee, starts to leave -- stops,
puts the coffees down, on a shelf.

She walks a few steps out of the Storage Room, to the foot
of the steps, picks up the SCHOOL BELL, gives it a good RING --
bright but not shockingly loud.

CELIA

(quietly)
That's better.

She looks around with renewed confidence -- then retrieves
the coffees, exits to the Front Room.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - CONTINUOUS

Celia brings cups of coffee to Lu and Sue.

Phone rings at the Counter.

LU

Celia, she wants you upstairs.

CELIA

Who died and made her boss.

Celia laughs giddily, exits.

CELIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Don't mind me. I'm just... kooky
today...

Lu and Sue, at opposite ends of the Counter, heads down, say
nothing.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Celia passes Wendianna on the stairs -- Wendianna covers her face in a show of embarrassment and apology.

CELIA
I know, Wendianna.

WENDIANNA
She's my Mom.

CELIA
It's all fine.

Celia reaches to pat her shoulder --

Wendianna hurries away, seemingly overcome with humiliation for her mother's behavior.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Celia enters the office.

Elle works quietly at the second desk, she picks up a phone when Celia enters, doesn't acknowledge Celia.

Celia watches Elle for a moment, then --

Celia slides her work papers from the second desk as quietly as possible, returns to work at her own desk.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - NIGHT

No customers, lights dimmed, Lu wipes the Counter, straightens her work area.

Celia (with jacket on, purse over her shoulder) counts the money in the CASH DRAWER, locks it.

CELIA
Night, Lu.

CELIA (CONT'D)
(calls)
See you in the morning, Donnella.

Wendianna enters.

WENDIANNA
(upset)
Celia! I told you I needed to talk to you, you were supposed to remind me!

CELIA
Okay, we can talk now, if you want.

Celia puts down her purse.

WENDIANNA
Not when I'm swamped! I'm begging
you, remind me tomorrow, first thing.

CELIA
Okay, Wendianna.

Wendianna dashes upstairs.

Lu and Celia exchange looks, Celia exits the store.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Celia looks anxiously toward the Diner, next door -- Lu leans
out of Duff's Space's Front Door.

LU
Elle's calling for you, upstairs.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Celia sighs as she hurries back up the steps.

A faint DING of the School Bell on the shelf sounds as Celia
runs up each step.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Wendianna, Donnella and Elle sit in the center of the room --
although Celia towers over them, they barely look up.

ELLE
Were you leaving so soon, dear?
Could you spare us a few minutes?

Celia slouches, tries to make eye contact.

CELIA
Sure, sure. It's after five.

DONNELLA
(mutters)
Comes in late whenever she feels
like it...

Elle laughs, heartily.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)
Kidding!

Donnella grins, coldly, crosses her legs and swings the top leg impatiently.

WENDIANNA

Celia? It's about, it's about the --

DONNELLA

Money.

ELLE

The sixteen hundred dollars, dear.
You took it to the bank but it never
got there. Why is that?

CELIA

Oh, no.

Celia looks around for another chair, there aren't any.

ELLE

Did something happen so you couldn't
go to the bank, dear?

CELIA

I didn't go.

Donnella leans forward, accusingly.

DONNELLA

You didn't go to the bank?

WENDIANNA

Didn't you take the new brochures to
the bank, Celia?

ELLE

You didn't forget, did you, Celia?

They all look steadily at Celia.

CELIA

I went to the bank, I always go to
the bank, everyday, sometimes twice
a day.

DONNELLA

So you must still have the sixteen
hundred dollars, right?

Elle folds her arms, looks at her daughters.

ELLE

I guess I'll have to take this whole
office apart, myself, since she's
refused to help us.

WENDIANNA

Maybe you could look in your wallet,
Celia.

CELIA

In my wallet! I wouldn't have put
it in my wallet, Wendianna!

Celia starts to shiver, she pulls her jacket closed.

DONNELLA

Wendianna wasn't even sure she gave
it to you --

CELIA

That's right!

WENDIANNA

I'm pretty sure.

ELLE

(angrily)

Wendianna's got herself exhausted
with overwork, you ought to help her
more, Celia!

Celia starts to look faint.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Get something! She's going down!

Donnella pulls a large, filled trash basket toward Celia,
guides her, backwards, toward it.

Celia sits on top of the trash, sinks down a little.

Celia rubs her forehead.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Headache, dear? You've got yourself
all upset.

DONNELLA

You're white as a sheet.

WENDIANNA

White as a boiled egg.

ELLE

What's got you so upset, dear, tell
us, we'll help you.

Celia gets out from the garbage basket as gracefully as
possible.

She stands and smiles.

CELIA

The thing is, I never got that sixteen dollars. But it's missing and now we have to find it.

DONNELLA

Sixteen hundred. Were you supposed to meet Harry for dinner?

ELLE

Well, isn't that nice. Harry Jilbear? Too bad you can't leave the older fellows for girls their own age.

WENDIANNA

Nobody meant to upset you, Celia.

ELLE

Wendianna works much too hard, you've got to see that.

WENDIANNA

You probably got upset seeing Harry, right? Reminds you of James? Celia?

ELLE

Well, of course it does. You don't have to tell me! I've been a widow a lot longer than you have!

CELIA

(carefully)

That's true. That's very true.

DONNELLA

So, now, what? We're just out sixteen hundred dollars?

CELIA

I'm going to figure it out. One way or another.

Donnella, Wendianna and Elle watch Celia, carefully.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm going to go through all of the deposit slips from the past week, maybe I put the wrong date on --

WENDIANNA

And --

DONNELLA

You think you can find it, that way?

CELIA

I do. I do think so. I'm actually very certain that I can.

DONNELLA

Well, then, okay! That's all settled.

Wendianna and Donnella stand, abruptly, walk toward the Office Door, maneuvering Celia out, as they go.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Donnella, Wendianna and Celia descend the stairs -- as Celia reaches the bottom, Donnella and Wendianna go back up.

Celia turns to say good night, they're gone.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Celia and Harry sit at a small table, near a wall. Celia rubs her head.

HARRY

So, they didn't actually accuse you of stealing, or anything.

CELIA

No, in fact, they seemed to go out of their way to be, you know, not accusing me.

HARRY

Uh huh.

Celia waves this subject away.

CELIA

You know, working for a family, you're always on the outside.

HARRY

But you being married to James...

Harry leans slightly onto the table, watches Celia's face.

HARRY (CONT'D)

We were like brothers -- myself and James and Conroy, that's Donnella and Wendianna's Uncle Conroy --

Celia smiles and nods.

CELIA
 But I went to work for them, I mean,
 Conroy, Elle, Donnella, Wendianna --

HARRY
 The Duffs.

CELIA
 Right, I knew the Duffs almost a
 year before I met James.

Harry watches Celia and smiles.

HARRY
 Oh, that's right, you and James met --

CELIA
 On a bus going to a Yankees game.

HARRY
 How about that...

Celia smiles, she suddenly looks relaxed and beautiful.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 You still go to ball games? I mean,
 I was thinking, I mean --

WAITRESS approaches their table, points her pencil at Celia.

WAITRESS
 American cheese on toasted whole
 wheat.

CELIA
 With lettuce.

WAITRESS
 Of course.

HARRY
 I'll have the same.

WAITRESS
 (smiling)
 Get a room!

Harry laughs. Waitress exits.

HARRY
 When I told the Waitress that I was
 waiting for you she said "Oh, the
 lady that always wears the culottes!"

Harry laughs, Celia looks thoughtful.

CELIA

Me? I don't always wear culottes.

Harry waits, as if for a punch line.

Celia's eyes race around the room.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I like them very much --

She nods.

CELIA (CONT'D)

It's not like a skirt, you don't
feel the airiness between your legs.

Harry realizes he's unintentionally made Celia feel defensive.
He clears his throat.

CELIA (CONT'D)

It's like wearing really loose
trousers, swingy loose trousers.

Celia's eyes look directly and deeply at Harry, much to his
surprise.

The Waitress returns to the table -- Harry jumps.

WAITRESS

Two ice teas?

Celia nods, solemnly.

The Waitress exits.

CELIA

Bull fighters ought to wear culottes,
you know what I mean?

Harry concentrates.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Instead of those tight pants. That
would show real nerve. When the
fabric swirled around them.

Celia nods dramatically, decisively.

The Waitress brings ice teas and sandwiches to their table.

HARRY

Thank you.

CELIA

Looks good.

Waitress exits.

Harry starts to eat. Celia starts to talk very fast.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I hope you're not going to say you're selling the fulgurite that James left you in his will --

HARRY

No. I wanted to talk about last night --

CELIA

I hope you're not going to say you lost it -- the fulgurite...

HARRY

No, I've got it right here.

Harry lifts a gold chain around his neck that was hidden under his shirt, shows --

PIECE OF FULGURITE ENCASED IN GLASS

He holds it up so the jagged tube of hardened sand shows in a small glass pendant.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I appreciate James giving me such a fine gift.

CELIA

That's how he meant it. It's just sand, of course. Struck by lightning.

Harry puts the pendant back under his shirt.

HARRY

A precious thing.

CELIA

I used to wear some of mine, too, but now I keep them home, where I can see them.

HARRY

You go out much at night, Celia?

Celia eats a big bite of her sandwich.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Local bars and such?

Celia keeps eating, shakes her head.

HARRY (CONT'D)

When my wife died, that was almost twenty years ago, I was a regular bar fly.

CELIA

James told me how all alone you were.

HARRY

Well, we lost the baby she was going to have and then Hannah, my wife --

CELIA

Your wife died, too.

HARRY

I know how bad it can be.

CELIA

You've done great, since then, Harry.

HARRY

Oh, I don't know --

CELIA

James and I visited your Hannah's grave one time, when we were at Pirate Apple Island.

HARRY

Is that so? Hannah's family had that old family plot out there.

CELIA

I love that kind of thing, all those carved angels and weathered stone.

HARRY

I used to go out there more often...

CELIA

You all used to fish out there, right?

HARRY

We did that, alright. Me, James, Conroy. Clark died a long time ago, of course... Clark was --

Celia nods enthusiastically.

CELIA

Clark was Donnella and Wendianna's father.

Harry takes his wallet out of his pocket, digs out an old photograph.

PHOTOGRAPH: THREE MEN WITH FISHING GEAR -- ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER'S SHOULDERS, SMILING.

HARRY

Here you go, here's me and James --

CELIA

James!

HARRY

And that's Conroy, their Uncle Conroy.

Celia nods, swallows some ice tea.

CELIA

(brightly)

Conroy was a real nice guy. It's funny I didn't see you much, back then.

HARRY

What was it, ten years ago, you started working at Duff's Space?

FLASHBACK

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - DAY

Celia (dressed in shorts and t-shirt, spunky and sassy looking) enters through the Front Door -- Wendianna, Donnella, Elle and CONROY DUFF (70) work at the Counter.

CELIA (V.O.)

Nine years ago.

Celia approaches the Counter, smiling -- waits.

Wendianna finally looks up at her, smiles.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I was wondering if I could talk to somebody about --

WENDIANNA

Be with you in a minute.

CELIA

That's okay.

Conroy, at the end of the Counter, comes forward.

Wendianna passes a Brochure about advertising rates across the Counter to Celia.

Celia smiles.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I just want to ask you about "Cold Cruel World" --

END FLASHBACK

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Harry sits up, coughs lightly into a paper napkin.

CELIA

That little magazine, started in the fifties, I guess.

HARRY

I know what it was, you weren't a protester, were you?

CELIA

Me?

Now Celia gulps, needs to wipe her face.

HARRY

I know people didn't like it because of the girly pictures --

CELIA

And the articles.

HARRY

Well, yes, it was a "build a better bomb shelter", Anti-Communist little circular --

CELIA

I know! I know!

FLASHBACK

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Celia, on the customer side of the Counter, chats with Conroy, who stands behind the Counter.

CELIA (V.O.)

And people were really scared about nuclear war and trying to help each other get ready --

CONROY

(smiling)

If you want to know about "Cold Cruel World", you want me.

CELIA

Great! I know you're busy, so if later is better for you --

ELLE

(dryly)

Clams on the half shell.

CONROY

Now's fine. You're not going to say you don't like the pictures...

CELIA

No, I'm not.

ELLE

Must be a high tide.

CONROY

Back in the nineteen fifties people didn't have the internet, you know --

DONNELLA

(dryly)

Swim little fishies --

CONROY

You come around, back here, what's your name, sweetheart?

Conroy leads Celia around the Counter.

CELIA

I'm Celia Crapsey.

CONROY

Well, it's very nice to meet you, Celia Crapsey, I'm Conroy Duff, that's my sister-in-law, those are my nieces --

Celia and Conroy exit the Counter, smiling.

Elle, Wendianna and Donnellla avoid looking at them.

ELLE

High tide brings the stink of the whole ocean.

END FLASHBACK

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

HARRY
Elle didn't take to you, right away.

Celia laughs.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Right. But I know Conroy was fond
of you.

CELIA
He was a good guy. And he loved
that I was interested in the nineteen
fifties --

HARRY
And he did love to "hold court".

CELIA
Oh, wow, he was a talker!

They laugh.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE DINER - NIGHT

Harry points his key toward an SUV, the locks open. Celia
opens the passenger door.

CELIA
This your car?

HARRY
Naw, I just take whatever one my key
opens.

They laugh, they're getting chummy.

CELIA
How's that working out for you?

Harry opens the driver's door, catches sight of Celia, in
the moonlight.

HARRY
Real good. Real good. Maybe we
could go get a drink somewhere? I'd
like to talk some more...

Celia suddenly notices the darkness.

CELIA
You know, it's late.

She slams the door shut, backs away from the SUV.

HARRY

I meant coffee. We could go for coffee.

Celia waves and disappears into the darkness, in the direction of her trailer.

CELIA

(calling)

I'll walk home from here. Night, Harry. Nice seeing you.

She's gone.

Harry angrily mutters to himself, slaps the SUV door.

HARRY

Hold the door for a lady. What the heck's wrong with me.

Harry gets in his SUV, drives away.

INT. HOTEL FRONT DESK - NIGHT

DESK CLERK hands a room key to Harry -- Harry sighs, takes the key, slides it back.

HARRY

Maybe I'll just take a stroll around town.

The Desk Clerk shrugs.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Anything stay open, around here?

DESK CLERK

Diner. Library. Library stays open 'til midnight, I think.

Harry nods, exits the Hotel.

INT. CELIA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Celia enters, locks the door behind her.

She's angry but not sure why -- she sees herself in a mirror, seems dissatisfied with her silhouette and her outfit, especially the culottes.

Bruises show on her neck and arms, she doesn't acknowledge their existence.

She takes a right-handed batting stance, poses in the mirror.

CELIA
Gotta be a good bad-ball hitter.

She chokes up on the imaginary bat.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Just make contact...

She moves away from the mirror -- takes short swings around the living room.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Right through the infield... right
over the shortstop's head...

She stops swinging as she approaches a CORNER CABINET with shelves behind a glass door.

She gazes dreamily at grey, branched pieces of FULGURITE, lovingly preserved in jewelry boxes.

She calms down, seems happy.

EXT. CELIA'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Harry stands outside, hands in his pockets. As he looks up, the lights in the trailer go dark.

Harry watches another moment, then walks away.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Celia enters, CUSTOMERS watch her walk in.

Lu and Sue work at the Counter.

LU	SUE
Have fun with Harry?	How'd your big date go?

CELIA
Fine. We talked about James.

Nobody believes her.

Celia walks past the Counter, heads for the office upstairs.

She wears a straight skirt, today, very flattering to her figure, everybody notices, nobody says anything.

She scoops up some empty boxes, stray brochures as she walks by.

Lu, on the phone, catches her eye, nods a "thanks" -- Celia smiles, exits.

LATER

Celia, Lu, Sue and Donnella work at the Counter -- each with a poster board on the Counter -- each talks on the phone.

LU

I can give you a wonderful two inch column in the McGeeHee Sunday Times, that'd be perfect for your ad --

SUE

Yes, you'll want a border, for a cut out coupon --

DONNELLA

Center of the page is prime space, I'm offering it to you, but I gotta know now, I mean right now --

CELIA

Block letters are easier to read, yes, I think that's important, too --

A Customer, MRS. DAWN (80) enters the store.

Mrs. Dawn carries a PLATE OF COOKIES, brings them to the Counter, places them in front of Celia.

Celia, still on the phone, smiles with surprise and glee.

Mrs. Dawn puts a finger over her own mouth, acknowledges that Celia can't talk to her.

Celia finishes with her phone call -- Mrs. Dawn reaches over the Counter and squeezes Celia's hands.

MRS. DAWN

I finally got rid of those dumbbells!

Sue, Lu and Donnella stop what they're doing for a moment.

CELIA

Good for you!

MRS. DAWN

Got 'em out of my house! Good riddance!

Celia glances at the stares from the Salesladies at the Counter.

CELIA

Mrs. Dawn had some exercise equipment to sell, we put an ad in "The Three Corners Gazette" --

MRS. DAWN

Sold! Sold and outta my basement!

Mrs. Dawn squeezes Celia's hands again.

MRS. DAWN (CONT'D)

You have a cookie, Celia, it's good for you, made with love.

Mrs. Dawn exits, waving.

CELIA

Thank you, Mrs. Dawn!

Celia unwraps the plate of cookies, pushes them toward the middle of the Counter.

Sue and Lu POUNCE on the cookies, eat excitedly, each stuff a few cookies in their pockets --

Sue and Lu break into a happy-dance behind the Counter.

SUE

So good, good, good!

Sue and Lu giggle.

DONNELLA

(roars)

I don't want that on my Counter!

Donnella grabs the plate and dumps it into the garbage.

Lu, Sue and Celia stare in disbelief.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

(furiously)

That old bag's trying to get me fat!
Who's she think she is bringing crap
like that here!

Sue reaches into the garbage, grabs some cookies.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

You want to drop dead of a heart
attack? You ever think about those
grandchildren once in a while?

Sue stands still, then starts to sputter with rage.

Donnella drags the Garbage Can out of the Front Room.

Lu and Sue look like they're going to cry.

Celia nods silently to Lu and Sue, signaling "everything's alright" -- Celia exits the Counter.

INT. BACK DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Celia passes Donnella returning with the empty Garbage Can -- Donnella's grin is cold, mocking.

CELIA

(calmly)

Mrs. Dawn might want her plate back.

Celia brushes past Donnella, coolly.

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Celia walks past the ditch, past the stack of branches, rusted pipes and pieces of wood.

Celia reaches into the Garbage Dumpster, retrieves the PLATE -- reaches in again, holds up the School Bell.

Her brow furrows, thoughtfully.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Celia puts the Plate and the School Bell in the back of a drawer in her desk.

The telephone intercom BUZZES fitfully.

DONNELLA (O.S.)

Celia! Phones are ringing at the Counter!

Celia stands, exits the Office, slowly.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE COUNTER - MOMENTS LATER

Phones ring -- Sue and Lu get back to work.

Donnella slams the Cash Drawer shut, with a bang.

DONNELLA

(shrieks)

I don't want any crumbs around here, either!

Sue and Lu answer phones.

SUE
 (weakly)
 Duff's Space...

LU
 (quietly)
 Duff's Space, this is Lu speaking,
 how can I help you today...

Celia returns to the Counter, answers a ringing phone.

CELIA
 Duff's Space -- you wanna sell it,
 we wanna tell it!

Lu and Sue hide smiles -- Donnella looks painfully bored.

EXT. BEACH FRONT - LATER

Celia walks on the BOARDWALK --

She slides her hand along the metal railing -- spray from the high tide puts waves in her long, black hair.

Harry, driving down Ocean Avenue, pulls over, parks.

He climbs up to the Boardwalk -- yells to Celia, twenty feet ahead of him.

HARRY
 Celia!

Celia turns around, smiles, hangs onto the railing.

Harry takes a deep breath to shout over the sound of the ocean waves -- but says nothing.

Celia smiles like a dazzlingly beautiful, patient, sea goddess.

Harry tries again, to speak.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 So... you like to walk on the
 boardwalk? On your lunch break?

Celia opens her arms toward the ocean, smiles broadly.

CELIA
 I love to walk on my lunch break!

Harry walks nearer, still holds back a little.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 Not everyday. Not always the same
 thing, everyday!

HARRY
 Not "the lady that walks at the beach" --

CELIA
 In culottes.

Celia walks a few paces toward Harry, slowly.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 I guess it's okay to be kooky but
 I'd hate to be predictably kooky.

Celia turns back, resumes walking -- Harry keeps pace with
 her -- keeps looking at Celia and the ocean.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 Feels good to walk. I've been kind
 of sore all over, lately.

HARRY
 Maybe you fell from the boardwalk,
 that night.

Celia regards him quizzically.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 That's how you got all muddy, I mean.

CELIA
 (uncomfortable)
 It's no big deal.

Harry takes a breath, not sure how to proceed.

HARRY
 You got time for a sandwich?

Celia shakes her head, starts walking and talking faster.

CELIA
 I don't recommend the "bread bowl"
 with soup, at the Diner.

HARRY
 Is that right...

CELIA
 It's fraudulent. And soggy.

HARRY
 Soggy bread bowl.

CELIA
An inedible mess of squishy bread-
like ooze.

Celia starts to look tense.

HARRY
Not appetizing.

CELIA
People always think "well, biscuits!"
but it's the antithesis of biscuits.

HARRY
Not a biscuit.

CELIA
You think it's going to be a nice
bready-biscuity thing to sop up the
soup with but --

HARRY
Inedible ooze.

CELIA
Exactly.

Celia walks close to the railing, slides her arm across the
top until she and Harry reach the West Avenue Pavilion --

They leave the Boardwalk, wait for an opening in the traffic
to cross the street and walk back toward town.

Harry looks around, suddenly.

HARRY
Is this where James died, around
here?

CELIA
Uh-huh, there.

Celia points, casually up the street a little way.

CELIA (CONT'D)
One time we're down here and I had a
big, floppy hat on and some kids
were laughing at me --

Harry takes her arm as they cross the street.

CELIA (CONT'D)
And James said to me "My dear, your
beauty can be disruptive, but that's
just a fact of life."

Celia laughs, apparently now at ease.

Harry releases her arm as they reach the curb. He smiles, suddenly happy.

They walk.

EXT. ON THE STREET - DAY

Celia and Harry slow down their fast pace as they approach Duff's Space.

Harry searches for another topic.

HARRY

I never understood that name "Duff's Space", what is it they sell, anyway?

CELIA

Space! -- in publications, to advertise.

HARRY

I know, but don't people just buy advertising space straight from newspapers and publishers?

Celia smiles, nods, holds her finger to her lips.

HARRY (CONT'D)

What, that's something -- don't talk about?

CELIA

Of course people can buy ads from the publishers, but we sort of make it easier for them.

Harry smiles, takes the opportunity to stand close to Celia as she speaks, quietly.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Duff's Space buys the ad space outright, so the publishers are happy --

Celia pulls Harry out of the way of some passers by, on the sidewalk -- Harry smiles.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Duff's Space has to deal with the individual customers, collect the money, etcetera.

HARRY

Yadda yadda...

Celia's face shows mild impatience.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Etcetera.

CELIA
I've got to get back to work.

Harry searches for something to say.

HARRY
And you're not a Saleslady, right?

CELIA
No, I'm the bookkeeper! I just fill
in at the Counter when we're busy.

HARRY
You pretty much run the whole place,
yourself!

Celia puts her finger to her lips, again.

Harry nods, conspiratorially, returns the sign.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Our little secret.

Celia enters Duff's Space through the Front Door.

Harry waves through the Front Window and calls through the
glass.

HARRY (CONT'D)
See you later?

Harry looks around, smiling --

HARRY (CONT'D)
And I can try to remember where I
left my car...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - NIGHT

The office CHAIRS are turned over, on the DESKS.

Elle, Wendianna and Donnella sweep the floor with small
brooms.

DONNELLA

The Egg Barn wants seven hundred up front for eighteen inches of space on their placemats.

ELLE

No can do. No got.

WENDIANNA

Borrow it from the Cold Cruel World account.

DONNELLA

Hands off Cold Cruel World.

ELLE

(coyly)

You girls don't have that kind of money in that account, do you?

DONNELLA

It's working capital.

WENDIANNA

We should use it!

ELLE

We should! Let's use it!

DONNELLA

(roaring)

I said hands off!

Donnella's eyes clench, and her chin juts out in anger.

She throws her small plastic broom on the floor, and exits, huffily.

Wendianna and Elle make exaggerated scowls at each other and giggle.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE COUNTER - DAY

Celia, Donnella, Wendianna, Sue and Lu work at the Counter, all standing, all talk on phones.

SUE

I can get you three quarters of a page in the "Three Corners Gazette" --

LU

Sure, people really do read the ads on placemats --

WENDIANNA

We can take the picture ourselves,
sure we've got cameras --

DONNELLA

I'll need you to pay, up front --

CELIA

Or you could try two small ads,
they're very cute.

WENDIANNA

Sure! A picture only takes like, a
second! It's just bing-bing! Like
that! You don't even have to look!

Donnella rolls her eye --

Sue starts to giggle, wearily.

SUE

Bing-bing...

Donnella gives her a cold stare, Sue shuts her mouth.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE STORE - DAY

OPHILIA LONGSDALE (15) and several YOUNG GIRLS walk down the
sidewalk, stop in front of Duff's Space.

The girls all wear t-shirts with matching logos and carry
hand made BADGES that read:

GO THREE CORNERS CHEERLEADERS!

OPHILIA

They'll probably give me something.

GIRLFRIEND 1

I thought we were going to get a
soda someplace.

OPHILIA

Yeah, but, there's a lady that works
here that saved my life, like when I
was a little girl?

GIRLFRIEND 2

Oh God, yeah, under the boardwalk.

GIRLFRIEND 1

(falsetto)
And the water was rising!

OPHILIA
And I died. Oh, wait, I didn't die.

GIRLFRIEND I
And now every time they see you they
give you money?

OPHILIA
Pretty much.

GIRLFRIEND I
Lucky ass you. We'll wait at the
Diner.

Girls depart, Ophilia enters Duff's Space.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Ophilia approaches the Front Counter, meekly.

Celia squeals, races around the Counter to embrace Ophilia.

CELIA
Ophilia!

Ophilia endures the hugs and fussing patiently.

CELIA (CONT'D)
Look how beautiful you are!

Ophilia smiles demurely -- Celia fusses happily, with
Ophilia's hair.

CELIA (CONT'D)
What's up. You want something to
eat?

OPHILIA
Um, no.

Ophilia holds up the fundraising sign and shrugs
apologetically.

Celia excitedly accepts a badge, counts out cash from her
own pocket and hands it to Ophilia.

CELIA
Wendianna? Want to --

Wendianna ducks out of sight, only Sue stands at the counter.

CELIA (CONT'D)
It's okay. I'll talk to them.

OPHILIA
Thanks, Celia.

Ophilia hugs Celia, warmly, rests her head on Celia's shoulder a few moments.

CELIA
Beautiful baby girl, beautiful baby girl.

Ophilia departs, turns back at the doorway.

OPHILIA
Thanks.

Celia, enchanted, watches her Ophilia leave.

Celia returns to the Counter.

SUE
You have a daughter?

CELIA
No! That's the little girl I found that time, under the boardwalk!

SUE
Ophilia Longsdale? The little girl lost under the boardwalk? With the hurricane waves?

Celia smiles, eyes shining, eager to talk about this event.

SUE (CONT'D)
I was down there, too, looking for her that day!

Lu returns to the Counter.

LU
Wow, she got grown up!

SUE
I'll never forget that day!

CELIA
It was the most --

Donnella and Wendianna return to the Counter, followed by Elle -- everyone abruptly gets back to work.

Celia looks absurdly happy and content.

LATER

Harry enters Duff's Space, can't take his eyes off of Celia, who is still glowing, happily.

Harry approaches the Counter.

LU

What is this, "Interrupt Celia Day"?

Lu and Sue chuckle.

Celia finishes a phone call, sees Harry, smiles.

HARRY

I know you're busy --

CELIA

I was just going to deliver new brochures down the street!

Celia reaches under the Counter, gathers BOXES filled with advertisement covered brochures.

Harry hurries to assist her.

HARRY

Maybe I can help you do it!

Lu and Sue laugh out loud.

CELIA

That would be awesome, Harry!

Celia and Harry exit the store through the Front Door, carrying boxes.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Dozens of violets have sprung up through cracks in the sidewalk -- Celia points to them ecstatically.

HARRY

Pretty. I'll pick them for you, if you want --

CELIA

Oh, no. But we can look around town and see if they're all over.

Harry smiles, agreeably.

CELIA (CONT'D)

So you worked in the flower district, how long, a long time?

HARRY
Twenty years, yup. James got me my
first job, there.

They walk.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Long hours, you know.

CELIA
Oh, sure.

HARRY
James got a kick out of, the
excitement, I guess, you know, every
day was different --

CELIA
And you had a job with a newspaper,
too, right? You still do that?

HARRY
Stringer, yeah. But I do some writing
on my own, too --

Harry trips on a bump in the sidewalk, Celia grabs his arm.

CELIA
Careful, Harry!

HARRY
Gotta watch where I'm going.

Harry smiles at Celia.

HARRY (CONT'D)
I keep getting distracted by the
pretty scenery!

Celia smiles and gazes at the stores and cars going by.

HARRY (CONT'D)
I meant --

CELIA
Sometime I'd like to read some things
you've written, maybe, okay?

HARRY
Sure!

CELIA
Here's the drug store, we can leave
some brochures here.

They enter a store.

EXT. ON THE STREET - LATER

Harry and Celia walk, still carrying boxes.

HARRY

Sure, I remember that day, I was out there looking for the little girl, too. Ophelia Longsdale, right?

CELIA

Sweet little thing.

Celia smiles proudly, in spite of herself.

HARRY

How'd you know to look in that spot under the boardwalk, everybody was taking boats out, running around --

CELIA

When I got to the Boardwalk, just like I always do --

HARRY

Right, just walking --

CELIA

Right, I could see these lines of people, streaming out over the sand, and the only place nobody was looking was under the boardwalk, right there --

HARRY

Under the West Avenue Pavilion. Because everybody had already looked there.

CELIA

Right, but she'd been holding on to the pier, further down, and --

HARRY

And she got washed back into that little opening.

CELIA

It was filling up with water so fast, she was so brave!

HARRY

And you got her, you saved her.

CELIA
So, naturally I feel a kinship.

HARRY
How could you not?

CELIA
You always feel responsible for
somebody when you help them, don't
you?

HARRY
Of course. Everybody does.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE STORE - LATER

Celia and Harry return to Duff's Space. Harry, about to
push open the Front Door, stomps on the empty boxes.

CELIA
Careful, a buzzer rings if you hold
the door open!

HARRY
Oh! What's the point of that?

CELIA
Nobody ever said. Everybody hates
it. Well, back to work. See you
later.

Celia waves and quickly enters Duff's Space.

Harry waves and walks away with smashed cardboard, as if
that's what he wanted to do all along.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

An old building, bright lights above the desks make the world
outside the windows appear dark.

A female LIBRARIAN (45) sits at the Circulation Desk. Harry
leans down to speak quietly to the Librarian.

HARRY
Do you know if you have a book by
Harry Jilbear?

The Librarian peeks over her glasses, types into her computer.

LIBRARIAN
J-I-L-B-E-A-R?

Harry nods, proudly.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

No. Yours? Lots of people self
publish, but we can't get every single --

HARRY

Oh, no, of course not --

The Librarian nods, bemused but sad.

Harry tries to return the nod with the same expression --
then indicates by gesture that he will work at the computer.

The Librarian nods, again -- less sad, more bemused.

LATER

Harry sits at a small side table, works at a DESK TOP COMPUTER --
he squints at the SCREEN, mutters as he types --

He recognizes an image on the screen.

SCREEN IMAGE: COLD CRUEL WORLD, MAY, 1957

Harry studies the pages on the screen.

SCREEN IMAGE: PICTURES OF "FALL-OUT SHELTERS"

SCREEN IMAGE HEADLINE: HOW LONG WILL CANNED GOODS LAST AND
WHAT ABOUT WATER

Followed by

SCREEN IMAGE: PICTURE OF PIN-UP GIRL, IN SHORT SHORTS AND
HALTER TOP, BENDING TO FILL A METAL LOCKER WITH CANNED FOOD,
CAPTION: DON'T FORGET THE TUNA!

Harry continues to read.

SCREEN IMAGE: SEARCH ENGINE ENTRIES FOR "COLD CRUEL WORLD"

Harry frowns as he reads the screen.

The Librarian approaches Harry's desk, bends over to speak
quietly to him.

LIBRARIAN

You're not allowed to access
pornographic sites at these computers,
sir.

Harry looks up at her, in surprise.

The Librarian smiles and shrugs.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

A light comes on at my desk.

HARRY

Sure, but... I didn't think this would qualify, not by a long shot.

The Librarian pushes Harry slightly to the side and sits at the edge of his chair.

LIBRARIAN

Let's just see...

She and Harry peer at the screen and jolt away from it.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

Pretty hard core, I'd say.

HARRY

Gee, I'm sorry. It's an old magazine... must be under new ownership or something.

The Librarian types and searches, quickly.

LIBRARIAN

Let's just see... "Cold Cruel World" right? It's owned and operated by Wendianna and Donnella Duff.

The Librarian and Harry exchange looks of surprise.

LIBRARIAN (CONT'D)

Wendianna and Donnella? Right over there at Duff's Space? I thought they sold advertising space.

Harry looks uncomfortable -- he slides off of the chair and stands, leaning on the table.

HARRY

I guess --

LIBRARIAN

Must be a side venture they've got.

A MAN on the other side of the room waves his hand to attract their attention.

MAN IN LIBRARY

You talking about "Cold Cruel World"?
What a piece of trash.

The man walks over to Harry and the Librarian -- he places his hand over his heart, earnestly.

MAN IN LIBRARY (CONT'D)

I love pornography as much as the next guy, but that stuff, with the frozen animals --

LIBRARIAN

And dead women! Well, they look dead!

MAN IN LIBRARY

And one thing after another getting rammed up the backside.

The three look at the screen a moment, unsmiling.

HARRY

It does stick to a theme.

INT. DINER - DAY

Harry and the Librarian sit at a table, drink coffee.

HARRY

I just wonder if Wendianna and Donnella really know what they've got themselves involved with.

LIBRARIAN

Well, sure, they'd have to know! Did you know their Uncle Conroy?

Harry nods.

HARRY

Old Conroy would have jumped off the jetty if he'd seen what they've done. And taken those two with him.

LIBRARIAN

He would have thrown them out on the street! Cold cruel world, indeed...

The Waitress brings over two pieces of pie.

WAITRESS

Oh, you talking about that "Cold Cruel World" shit?

Harry and the Librarian nod -- the Waitress slides onto the edge of Harry's chair.

Harry tries to conceal his surprise.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

And it isn't even lively porn, or
funny porn, just sick, sick, icky
shit!

The Waitress breaks off a piece of crust from Harry's pie
and eats it.

The Librarian nods, thoughtfully, eats.

Harry picks up his fork, eats the pie from the point end,
the Waitress keeps eating the crust.

INT. DUFF'S SPACE OFFICE UPSTAIRS - DAY

Elle, alone in the office, fusses with papers on Celia's
desk, looks into the drawers, lifts out a bottle of water,
shakes her head in disapproval.

Elle continues looking into the drawers of the other desks,
under the blotters, between folders -- she pulls out a copy
of a current issue of "Cold Cruel World".

Elle looks coolly at the small magazine, takes it to her own
desk, sits down to study it.

As Elle turns the pages, her face shows plain confusion and
then horror, back and forth.

FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS

Donnella, Wendianna and Celia enter.

DONNELLA

No more discounts on half pages.

Donnella grabs a pen from a desk.

CELIA

Except to schools and nonprofits,
right? Hi, Elle!

DONNELLA

No! What do we need with them,
anyway!

Wendianna runs a comb through her hair.

WENDIANNA

I'll go pick up the, you know,
package.

DONNELLA

Come right back.

WENDIANNA

I might have to stop at my stylist...

Donnella and Wendianna exit.

Celia walks toward her own desk, takes a second look at Elle.

CELIA

Elle? Everything okay?

Elle looks up from her desk, unsmiling, uncharacteristically quiet.

Celia bends down to make eye contact.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Are you okay? You want me to get
the girls?

Elle shakes her head, almost unperceptively.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You want water?

Celia nods, encouragingly --

Elle gazes into Celia's eyes, pitifully.

Celia takes a bottle of water and a paper cup from her own desk drawer -- fills the cup, hands it to Elle.

Elle slowly takes a sip, color returns to her face.

ELLE

Have you seen this?

Elle hands "Cold Cruel World" to Celia.

Celia looks at it with surprise, opens it, examines the pages -- sits down.

A look of PAIN crosses Celia's face, then coldness, no expression.

Celia examines the Cover and the Inside Cover more carefully.

CELIA

Well, obviously somebody is... using
this title... and putting out this
trash.

Elle takes another sip of water, watches Celia.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'm sure you've got a lawsuit, here.
Even if you don't still hold the
copyright, look at the cover, it's
meant to look like, like --

ELLE

Like --

CELIA

Somebody's deliberately copying your
old masthead, and name, and set up,
and... even using Wendianna and
Donnella's names!

Celia throws the magazine down in disgust.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You're going to have to bring a
lawsuit! Just to clear your good
name!

Elle nods, slowly.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Shall I go round up Donnella and
Wendianna? Oh, you know their going
to throw a blue fit when they see
this.

ELLE

No.

CELIA

God, I don't want to tell them,
they're going to be so upset.

ELLE

You think so? Oh, of course. Of
course they are.

CELIA

I don't blame you for being upset.

ELLE

Yes, I am upset. I don't want to
talk about it anymore.

CELIA

Okay, you want me to --

Elle suddenly gets to her feet, stuffs the magazine into her
purse, exits the office.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 You want me to --

Elle shuts the door behind her.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 I'll just... go back to work...

Celia sits quietly a moment, rethinking -- shakes her head, gets back to work.

EXT. ON THE STREET - LATER

Celia carries two armloads of BROCHURES, goes in and out of stores, refilling display cases, etc.

Harry, driving by, stops, parks, runs to join her.

HARRY
 Can I help?

Celia looks up, blankly, doesn't smile.

Harry takes one of the bundles, walks with Celia.

CELIA
 (abruptly)
 When James died his ashes were shipped back to his family's mausoleum, in Richmond, that's what he wanted.

HARRY
 Okay...

Celia frowns, looks angry.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 That sounds like you did the right thing --

CELIA
 People try to do the right thing all the time! That's what I think.

Harry listens, prepared to agree.

Celia and Harry enter a SHOE STORE --

INT. THREE CORNERS SHOE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Celia hurriedly refills the brochure holders, near the door.

SHOE STORE OWNER
 Hi, Celia! Thanks!

Celia looks up, suddenly, tears in her eyes, she waves and smiles at the Shoe Store Owner.

CELIA
Oh, you're welcome!

Celia and Harry exit the Shoe Store.

EXT. ON THE STREET - CONTINUOUS

Celia walks quickly, sniffs, wipes her eyes with her hand, stands up straighter to address a problem.

CELIA
I never thought there was anything wrong with Betty Boop.

HARRY
Nor I.

CELIA
(carefully)
That's the kind of sketches they used to use in "Cold Cruel World".

HARRY
Yes, I guess it was, I thought of it as kind of a poor man's Betty Grable.

CELIA
(sincerely)
Not offensive, right?

HARRY
Not to me!

CELIA
Not to her, either --

HARRY
Betty Grable? Betty Boop? No, no, I never thought so --

Harry's trying to follow along.

Celia dashes into the next store, a few CUSTOMERS enter and exit, Harry waits on the sidewalk.

Harry looks through the store window, looking for Celia.

Celia returns, unsmiling.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Celia, did Donnella or Wendianna
ever talk to you about the new version
of "Cold Cruel World"?

Celia looks as though she'd been slapped.

CELIA

Of course they didn't!

HARRY

Well... no! Of course not!

They both look confused then --

Celia looks a little calmer, as though she didn't have to
worry about that anymore.

They continue walking.

EXT. CELIA'S TRAILER - LATER

Celia and Harry stand looking at the front door of Celia's
trailer.

CELIA

You helping me was really nice.

HARRY

It was my pleasure.

CELIA

Well, thanks, Harry.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You want a soda or
something?

HARRY

Could I come in and wash
my hands?

CELIA

Sure!

They enter Celia's trailer.

INT. CELIA'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sound of toilet flushing, Harry emerges from bathroom, wiping
his hands with a paper towel.

Celia sits up straight on her couch -- she looks anxious,
about to spring to her feet.

CELIA

I have this feeling that I should
have some really good clean sex,
right now.

Harry listens, the paper towel falls from his hands.

CELIA (CONT'D)

James and I used to have really great sex in the shower. You want to?

HARRY

Okay...

Celia pumps her fists in the air.

CELIA

I'll go get the beach towels!

Celia jumps up -- Harry jumps back.

HARRY

You know what?

Celia digs into a CLOSET, gets towels and shower gel -- she looks over at Harry, who is suddenly pointing to his wrist watch.

HARRY (CONT'D)

I just remembered.

Celia holds the towels in her arms.

CELIA

You sure? 'Cause I'm really motivated! I really want to redeem good sex --

HARRY

I wish I could, I mean I really wish I could --

Celia walks him to the door.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Rain check?

CELIA

Rain check it is.

Harry exits.

Celia closes the door, carries the towels to the bathroom -- sniffs the shower gel.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Anyway, I got aroma therapy. Mmmm, almond macaroon...

LATER

Celia, in bathrobe, exits the bathroom, blots her hair with a towel -- she looks thoughtful.

She sits on the couch, wonders what's wrong.

She looks at a PHOTOGRAPH OF JAMES on the end table.

PHOTOGRAPH: SMILING OLDER MAN IN HAWAIIAN SHIRT, ARMS FILLED WITH FLOWERS

She sits quietly, thinking.

The setting sun reflects on glass surfaces.

In the Corner Cabinet, with the Fulgurite, the School Bell and Cookie Plate stand, proudly.

INT. DINER - NIGHT

Celia, in Capri pants, tunic top, high heeled gladiator sandals, sits at a table, lost in thought.

Her wet hair hangs in braids.

Harry walks up to the table.

HARRY

Um.

CELIA

Hello, Harry.

HARRY

Timing is everything, I guess, huh...

Celia realizes he's waiting for an invitation -- she motions for him to sit down.

He does -- the Waitress approaches.

WAITRESS

Two cheese sandwiches?

CELIA

Um, Cinnamon roll.

HARRY

Two. And coffees.

Celia nods.

WAITRESS

Gosh, you two are cute.

Waitress exits.

Harry tries to sort his thoughts, fails.

CELIA

So, anyway, you were telling me about writing. Is that what you... work on, now?

Celia leans her elbows on the table.

HARRY

(uncomfortably)

Well, I work with authors, compiling their research.

CELIA

Oh.

HARRY

Matter of fact, I finished working on a book not too long ago.

CELIA

Well, that's something! What's it about?

HARRY

Well, it's difficult to explain. It's nonfiction.

Harry waits a moment to see her reaction.

CELIA

Okay. That covers a lot of territory.

HARRY

True. It's about... human behavior.

Celia gives him a "that still covers a lot of territory" look.

HARRY (CONT'D)

You see, the idea is --

CELIA

What's the name of it?

HARRY

"Baby Proof".

Celia sits up, interested.

Harry sits up, too, gaining momentum.

HARRY (CONT'D)

It's based on the idea... that people are inherently protected... by their own natural limitations.

CELIA

Meaning what, exactly...

HARRY

Well.

Harry makes a thoughtful face, then shrugs, then speaks anyway.

HARRY (CONT'D)

An adult might look out a window and want to put out his arms and fly. But a baby wouldn't do that.

Celia's eyebrows go up.

Harry uses his best academic lecture voice.

HARRY (CONT'D)

A baby has instinctive, self preserving knowledge --

Harry's hands climb imaginary steps.

HARRY (CONT'D)

That gets lost as he or she matures --

CELIA

Oh, bunk.

Harry, half expecting that reaction, leans back, his hands drop to the table.

HARRY

It's... it's based on these studies --

CELIA

So, what, so the baby only tries to do what is actually possible for it to do?

Harry nods a vague "that's not all there is to it".

CELIA (CONT'D)

And... adults don't get more creative as they acquire experience, they just forget their infantile instincts?

HARRY

See, the studies show --

CELIA

What about toddlers? And Middle-School kids? You think they just get progressively less sensible?

Harry smiles.

HARRY

That would explain the behavior of High School kids.

Celia ignores that remark.

CELIA

I mean, I'll grant you that kids are reckless, but I don't think it's a steady, progressive... progression!

HARRY

This is what the studies show -- people don't get braver as they get older, they get stupider.

Celia sits back, away from the table.

Celia looks at Harry and shakes her head.

The Waitress approaches their table -- Celia stands, takes one of the cinnamon buns, frowns at Harry, exits.

The Waitress serves Harry, picks up the second cup of coffee and sips it, exits the table.

EXT. ON THE STREET - NIGHT

Celia vigorously opens the Diner door, but as she closes it behind her, all of the energy seems to go out of her.

She slowly walks in the direction of her trailer.

MOMENTS LATER

A CAR pulls over to the curb ahead of her, the passenger door opens, Donnella, dressed in black, leans across the front seat.

DONNELLA

Celia! I thought that was you, come on, get in.

Celia has to look twice to recognize Donnella, in the car.

CELIA

That's okay --

DONNELLA
(imploringly)
Come on, please! My Mom's all upset
and Wendianna's freaking out --

Celia leans into the car, studies Donnella's face, gets in.

INT. DONNELLA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Donnella drives -- she looks hungrily at the cinnamon bun in Celia's hand --

Celia breaks it, passes half to Donnella, who wolfs it down.

DONNELLA
(chewing)
My Mom's all twisted up about that
stupid magazine -- I don't even know
what's going on.

Celia sighs, deeply.

CELIA
Oh, poor "Cold Cruel World". You
have got to take somebody to court!

Donnella speeds through an intersection -- several cars horns
blow indignantly.

DONNELLA
Hey, right, sure. What nobody
understands is that my Dad started
that rag and it's all still in his
name.

CELIA
But somebody's hijacked it!
Somebody's made it into garbage!

Donnella swerves to avoid people on bicycles, but doesn't
slow down.

DONNELLA
Nobody understands! It's not that
easy to fix! You didn't know my
Dad!

Donnella drives from the main street to a back road, still
going fast.

CELIA
Well, I knew your Uncle Conroy, and
they were both friends with James.

DONNELLA

I was always surprised that you married James instead of my Uncle Conroy.

Celia does a double-take.

CELIA

Conroy and I never dated.

DONNELLA

(casually)

Well, some people thought you were...

CELIA

We'd go out for coffee, sometimes --

DONNELLA

And then you go and marry his best friend, that was crushing.

CELIA

(amazed)

Conroy was happy for me and James!

DONNELLA

He was devastated. He never got over it.

Celia tries to explain, patiently.

CELIA

You see, James and I just had so much in common. I mean, we both loved the Yankees, and lightning, and fulgurite --

DONNELLA

You don't know.

Celia shakes her head and laughs lightly.

CELIA

Anyway, if something was on your Uncle Conroy's mind, he'd tell everybody about it.

DONNELLA

Well, yeah. Not everything, though.

Celia starts to answer, stops.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

My Dad really messed us up, when he died. And Uncle Conroy, what a joke.

CELIA

What do you mean? He worked hard.
He did everything --

DONNELLA

You didn't really know him, you didn't
know any of them, really.

Celia shifts in her seat, impatiently.

CELIA

Where are we going, anyway?

DONNELLA

West Allen.

CELIA

What's out there besides farms and
the old bog iron mill?

Donnella glances over at Celia, sighs deeply and glances at
Celia, again.

DONNELLA

Here's the thing. My Dad dumped a
lot of old inks and solvents and
stuff out there, out in the sticks.

CELIA

Okay...

DONNELLA

Okay? I thought you'd be all, "hey
that's toxic stuff"!

CELIA

Well, is it?

The scenery outside the car is now all woods.

DONNELLA

Of course it is! I been wracking my
brains to figure out what to do about
it!

CELIA

Oh!

DONNELLA

"Oh!" she says, "oh!"

CELIA

What is it you think you can do?

DONNELLA

Well, I haven't figured that out yet!

CELIA

Do you know where he dumped it?

DONNELLA

All over, he dumped that stuff all over. It was all empty land back then.

CELIA

And he couldn't know how toxic it really was.

DONNELLA

Oh, he knew!

CELIA

Anyway, were you thinking about warning people or something?

DONNELLA

That's the thing, I don't even know if it's still toxic, or maybe it's all, you know, washed away...

CELIA

So...

DONNELLA

So I figure you and I can run some tests, on the soil and water, just random tests and get an idea.

CELIA

That's good thinking.

DONNELLA

I got some, you know, basic science stuff, in the back there --

Celia looks into the back seat -- small boxes of test equipment.

CELIA

Excellent.

Celia smiles, eager to do something productive.

DONNELLA

You might ruin those "Greek goddess" sandals, though.

CELIA
They're pretty tough. Ties around
the ankles.

Donnella finally drives down a dirt road and parks in the woods.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

DONNELLA
Okay, this will do, grab some of
those boxes.

Celia gets out of the car, into darkness, opens the back seat door.

CELIA
You got lights or something, Donnella?

DONNELLA
Quiet, you got to be careful, there's
lots of weirdos around here, back
woods types, religious cults...

CELIA
Should we --

DONNELLA
You just take those little swabs and
test the soil around, different
places.

Celia fishes around in her purse for a flashlight.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)
I'll go over there and test the swampy
water. Got to watch out for snakes,
I guess.

CELIA
Be careful!

Donnella departs.

Celia points her small flashlight down, nods as she reads the test equipment instructions in the dim light.

She squats down, scoops up a soil sample, places it carefully in a vial.

She concentrates as she prints tiny letters on a label, and attaches it neatly to the vial.

She scoops up another sample.

DONNELLA

(distant)

Come on down further this way.

Celia finishes carefully labeling the next sample, then packs up the tiny vials, casts her flashlight beam ahead of her, journeys on.

Celia continues collecting soil samples for a few minutes, becomes more comfortable in the surroundings.

DONNELLA (CONT'D)

(distant)

Celia? Try down this way.

Celia packs up and quickly moves on -- in the distance is an old Farmhouse, further on, an RV.

Celia stretches her back, glances up at the stars -- a SHOT rings out, not far away.

All noise in the woods stops -- Celia looks toward the Farmhouse.

CELIA

Donnella?

Her voice sounds too loud in the quiet.

Another SHOT is fired.

Celia hides behind a big tree trunk, she circles it, peers through the darkness.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

Celia climbs up the tree, keeps climbing -- she looks down toward the farmhouse.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A WOMAN runs from the Farmhouse, looks around -- a MAN follows her.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

CELIA

(yells)

Watch out! There's somebody out here with a gun or something.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Woman and Man look up and around -- they both have guns.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

Celia hugs the tree, hides in the branches.

CELIA

(whispers)

You don't smell toxic --

Celia sniffs the tree bark, sniffs the air.

CELIA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

What the heck's the matter with everybody?

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

On the ground, in the distance, branches separate as someone moves through them, into the darkness.

EXT. TREE - CONTINUOUS

Celia's tree shakes violently -- someone is hacking at it with an ax.

Celia leaps to a neighboring tree -- keeps climbing horizontally, from branch to branch, tree to tree.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Woman puts lights on around her house, points her gun and calls out.

FARM WOMAN

I think whoever it is went further this way, that's the way I heard it!

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Sound of WATER RUSHING --

Celia hangs on to the last tree, its branches reach over a stream.

SHOTS are fired from different parts of the Woods.

Celia climbs down to a branch ten feet from the ground --

She holds her breath and JUMPS into the flowing water.

EXT. STREAM - CONTINUOUS

Celia swims to the surface and over to some rocks at the ragged shore line.

She swims carefully down the shore line, hanging on to rocks when she can -- she pauses to catch her breath.

CELL PHONE RINGS.

Celia fumbles in her pockets, retrieves her phone, spits out a mouthful of water.

CELIA

Hello? Listen, I can't really talk now, would you meet me at the West Allen Tavern?

She snaps her phone shut.

In the distance, STREET LIGHTS.

Celia swims a little further down, climbs out of the water, trembling with cold --

She holds her jaw still with her hands.

She takes a deep breath, calms herself.

EXT. SHORE LINE, WEST ALLEN - CONTINUOUS

Celia keeps her head down and walks as quietly as possible toward a large, lighted BUILDING, visible in the distance.

She closes her eyes a moment, shakes some water out of her ears.

Her teeth resume chattering, she chokes on an unexpected sob --

She tightens her hands into fists, jabs the air, tries to concentrate.

FLASHBACK

EXT. BEACH FRONT - DAY

Sound of pounding waves, in the background.

Celia, distraught, sits on a curb -- a few cars go by on Ocean Avenue -- Conroy Duff sits beside her, great distress on his face.

Celia lightly rubs the curb, with one hand.

CELIA

I never really understood about making shrines and, you know, Holy Ground and like that... but now I do...

Conroy cries, silently.

Then, Conroy clears his throat, forces his voice to be firm.

CONROY

You won't be alone, Celia, honey,
you never have to worry.

Celia cries.

Conroy pauses while a look of pain ages his face, miserably --
then continues --

CONROY (CONT'D)

And when you just need to talk and
remember James... you come to me.
You know that...

CELIA

I know, Conroy.

Celia gets to her feet, helps Conroy to stand.

Celia and Conroy lean on each other, tears on their faces as
they walk away.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. SHORE LINE, WEST ALLEN - CONTINUOUS

Celia, dripping wet, walks stealthily in the shadows.

VOICES

Celia stops short -- mens' and womens' voices rise in the
distance, Donnella's voice among them.

Celia stays in the shadows, keeps walking, away from the
voices.

EXT. WEST ALLEN TAVERN PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Harry paces around the gravel covered parking lot, under the
"West Allen Tavern" SIGN.

He stops, walks quickly towards Celia, drenched and shivering
in the shadows.

CELIA

Should we get a table or a booth?

Harry puts his jacket around her shoulders.

HARRY

I'm parked just over here.

Harry opens the SUV door for Celia, waits 'till she's got the seat belt on, closes the door, carefully.

INT. HARRY'S CAR - NIGHT

Celia seems to be holding her breath.

Harry starts the SUV -- he looks over to Celia -- the worry on his face mixes with sadness.

The night seems thick and oppressive -- swallows up even the lights on the dashboard.

CELIA

Will you take me home? I don't want to talk right now, okay?

Harry nods, tries to find a casual tone.

HARRY

Maybe we can stop at the hospital or something.

Celia reaches for the door handle.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Okay, straight home.

Celia closes her eyes, puts her head back.

Harry drives.

LATER

Celia sits up, looks ahead, through the front windshield.

CELIA

Wait, what's going on at Duff's Space?

HARRY

Nothing, forget it.

CELIA

Harry, there's lights on in the back, there!

HARRY

I'm sure it's fine.

CELIA

Pull over!

HARRY

Celia!

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)
 You're still shivering and maybe you
 hit your head. I think we should go
 to the hospital --

As Harry slows to make a left turn, Celia slips off her
 seatbelt, opens the door and jumps out.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 Celia!

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

DARKNESS

Celia stumbles to Duff's Space's Back Door, she's frantic --

MONTAGE OF CELIA'S FEARS

-- Strange dead animals and frozen, fallen people from "Cold
 Cruel World".

-- Images of Donnella, Wendianna and Elle emptying garbage
 cans onto Celia's desk.

-- Images of Ophilia Longsdale and friends roaming the
 streets, lost, swallowed up by a tidal wave.

-- Images of Farm Man and Woman with guns and axes.

END MONTAGE

Celia slips, falls near the ditch in back of Duff's Space --
 she picks up a piece of a rusted pipe from the ground.

Someone runs toward her, from the side of the building, it's
 Harry.

HARRY
 What the hell are you trying to do
 to me, girl?

Celia looks up with fierce eyes, she holds the pipe like a
 machete.

Harry stops short, shows his empty hands.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 I just want to be sure you're okay!

The Back Door of Duff's Space opens, Wendianna exits.

WENDIANNA
 Is Mom out here?

HARRY AND CELIA

No!

Celia gets to her feet -- starts walking, stumbling, toward her trailer (a block and a half away, around the corner).

EXT. UNLIT STREET, BACKYARDS - CONTINUOUS

Harry walks with Celia, who still holds the piece of pipe.

Celia blurts out --

CELIA

You know what happened the first day
I started working here full time?
Wendianna fainted. Unrelated to my
starting to work here --

Celia walks slower, breathing harder, she starts shivering again.

HARRY

Damn, you left my jacket in the car
when you jumped out.

CELIA

Well, I'm sorry.

Harry carefully puts his arm around her shoulders.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Nobody did anything, Elle just
screamed and screamed, everybody
else just looked like they didn't
want to get any of it on them --

HARRY

Any --

CELIA

But I! I got some cold water and
paper towels --

Celia, shaking violently approaches her trailer.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I put cold water on her forehead and
her wrists! I just kept talking and
talking and telling her everything
would be alright --

A rolling GARBAGE CAN momentarily blocks her way --
neighborhood dogs start BARKING.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 I felt like I saved her life! I
 know it's stupid.

Harry shakes his head.

EXT. CELIA'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

CELIA
 And Donnella seemed nice, well,
 competent, anyway, and Elle was,
 well, weird but I figured her name
 is Elle and --

The TRAILER DOOR stands open a few inches -- jagged GASHES
 radiate around the knob.

Harry shields Celia with his arm, halts her forward motion,
 takes out his cell phone.

Celia stares at the broken Front Door.

CELIA (CONT'D)
 My favorite singer is Ella Fitzgerald,
 and my favorite fashion model is
 Elle MacPherson, and my favorite
 animal is the elephant --

HARRY
 Naturally.

CELIA
 So, I thought I had a chance. That
 I could belong there...

Harry's cell phone is non responsive.

Harry, about to say something sensible, gets distracted
 looking into Celia's beautiful eyes.

GUN SHOT

Wendianna runs toward Celia's trailer, away from Duff's Space,
 yells to Harry and Celia.

WENDIANNA
 She's got a gun!

Harry throws his hands up in the air, Celia runs back toward
 Duff's Space.

WENDIANNA (CONT'D)
 What's she doing going that way?

Harry shrugs and follows Celia.

Celia opens her eyes wide, as she runs.

FLASHBACK

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - NIGHT

Celia carries the BANK DEPOSIT POUCH, exits the Back Door.

Wendianna follows her out.

WENDIANNA

Wait, how much was it, fifteen hundred?

Celia turns back to Wendianna, doesn't stop walking.

CELIA

Sixteen hundred. Sixteen hundred-dollar bills.

WENDIANNA

Well, let me count it again, give it to me.

CELIA

I can just make the bank before it closes, Wendianna.

Lights go out inside of Duff's Space.

Back Door opens, Donnella approaches, from darkness.

DONNELLA

(grimly)

So now, you're telling us what to do? Oh, no, I don't think so.

CELIA

It's all sealed up in the deposit pouch!

DONNELLA

So, open the damn pouch.

Celia shakes her head, rolls her eyes.

CELIA

Okay fine! I just wanted to get it to the bank --

WENDIANNA

(shrieks)

Gimme that money!

Wendianna grabs at the DEPOSIT POUCH and pulls Celia off balance.

Celia starts to fall toward Wendianna.

Wendianna lets go of the Pouch -- she seizes Celia's arm, flips her over her shoulder, down to the ground.

Celia lands hard, the breath knocked out of her -- she tries to stand, gasping.

Donnella lunges out of the shadows and brutally kicks Celia in the back --

Celia falls, into the ditch --

Donnella kicks Celia, half a dozen more times.

Wendianna watches, transfixed.

Celia tries to pull herself up, starts to lift her head.

Wendianna picks up the Deposit Pouch.

DONNELLA

You don't tell me what to do --

Donnella, staring, brings her fist down on the back of Celia's neck.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BEHIND THE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Celia arrives at the back of Duff's Space, the piece of pipe falls from her hands.

Celia wraps her arms around her ribs, suddenly feels pain.

In the darkness, Celia walks gingerly near the ditch.

Darkness, dim light from inside Duff's Space.

Donnella, in black, appears from the shadows outside the Back Door -- holding a GUN.

Donnella makes a "Ttt-ttt" sound of disapproval.

DONNELLA

(exasperated)

Celia! Crawls out of the water,
crawls out of the mud... just look
at you!

Donnella gawks at Celia, points the gun at her.

Celia struggles to breathe -- yet manages to keep her knees loose, she bobs and weaves.

CELIA

Well -- you were wrong about these
sandals --

GUNSHOT bursts from inside Duff's Space.

Donnella's gun flies from her hand.

Donnella looks annoyed, BLOOD flows from her neck --

Donnella falls to the ground.

CELIA (CONT'D)

-- falling apart. Donnella?

Harry runs -- pushes Celia to the ground, protects her with his body.

MORE GUN SHOTS from inside Duff's Space --

Elle stands in the Back Doorway, with a GUN.

Donnella, injured, rolls toward cover in the shadows.

Elle reloads the gun.

Harry STANDS, waves his arms.

HARRY

Elle, honey, it's all over --

Celia grabs a jagged TREE BRANCH from the ground and hurls it at Elle's ankles -- Elle topples to the ground.

Wendianna leaps out of the darkness, pounces on her mother, pins her arms behind her back, holds her down.

WENDIANNA

I see you Donnella! Don't you run
out of here!

Donnella, bleeding lightly, tries to sneak away in the darkness.

Harry groans then follows Donnella -- she kicks his shin --

Harry twists her arm behind her back and calls the Police, on his cell phone.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

Flashing Lights --

POLICE OFFICERS arrive at the back of Duff's Space.

Wendianna objects to a pat down search.

POLICE OFFICER
Wendianna? You just relax, okay?
We just want to see who's got guns.

Police and Police Cars from neighboring towns arrive.

BRIGHT LIGHTS inside and outside of Duff's Space.

MOMENTS LATER

Police Officers carry VIDEO CAMERAS, COMPUTERS and STACKS OF MAGAZINES out the Back door.

WENDIANNA
(shrieks)
Freedom of the Press! Somebody call
News Twelve New Jersey!

MOMENTS LATER

More Flashing Lights -- but they don't seem to penetrate the darkness.

Elle, in handcuffs, sits in the back seat of a Police Car.

FEMALE POLICE OFFICER
Ambulance is on the way.

Another POLICE OFFICER wraps a blanket around Elle.

ELLE
(bitterly)
Nobody could ever stand in their
way, those girls of mine...

Elle suddenly looks old and confused.

ELLE (CONT'D)
Who ever you were, you were gonna
get run over...

A POLICE OFFICER reads Miranda Rights to Donnella, holds her by the wrist as FIRST AID WORKERS bandage her wounds.

Celia stands near the Police Car where Elle sits.

CELIA

Elle --

Celia's speaks softly.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Did you kill James?

ELLE

You can thank Donnella for that, she was trying to kill her Uncle Conroy, got James, instead --

CELIA

Why? Why kill Conroy?

ELLE

Oh, something about money, I guess.

Elle makes a sign of dismissal.

ELLE (CONT'D)

James did look a lot like Conroy.

CELIA

Yes, I guess he did.

Elle laughs, near hysteria.

ELLE

Two days after they kill James, Conroy drops dead. Heart failure.

Elle laughs.

ELLE (CONT'D)

(mutters)

Evil, evil, evil, evil --

Celia shakes her head.

ELLE (CONT'D)

Yes! Evil!

CELIA

What about... before. Before all the bad stuff happened...

ELLE

Before? Before... all the bad stuff happened...

Elle quiets down, looks a little more peaceful.

A Police Officer nods appreciation to Celia.

CELIA

You sure you got the gun away from her, right?

POLICE OFFICER

We did. You know any other next-of-kin we could call?

HARRY

Cousins. In Portland. Bill and Monica Duff.

CELIA

On Livermore Street... I sent out their Christmas cards...

A Police Officer puts a blanket around Celia's shoulders.

POLICE OFFICER

You want the medicals to have a look at you, Celia? That might be a good idea.

Celia shakes her head, walks a few steps away -- Harry goes with her.

CELIA

I knew them for nine years. I knew they hated everybody. I just didn't think anything of it.

HARRY

Some people are just -- oh, Jesus, I don't know...

A POLICE DETECTIVE approaches Celia and Harry.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Neighbor just said the Duff girls attacked Celia on a previous occasion. Is that right, Celia?

Celia nods.

Harry looks stunned, like that's the last straw.

POLICE OFFICER

We'll need you to make a statement.

CELIA

I should have known. They killed James. By mistake. I should have known!

HARRY

How about in the morning, Officer,
would that be alright?

Police Detective nods, moves on to the next problem.

POLICE DETECTIVE

Sure. Up to you, Celia.

Celia nods.

CELIA

And Conroy found out and died. Of a
broken heart.

LU'S CAR pulls up among the Police Cars -- Lu gets out and
tries to survey the damages.

Celia sobs, briefly, starts to move away, the blanket falls
to the ground --

Harry doesn't know what to do --

HARRY

Did I tell you that I think you're
absolutely right about my book?

CELIA

(sniffling)
No, you didn't...

HARRY

Well, I am. Sure you're right, I
mean.

Celia gets the blanket from the ground, holds it in her arms,
looks Harry squarely in the eye.

CELIA

See that's the awful thing, I still
can't tell if somebody's lying to
me!

Harry nods, searching for words.

HARRY

Look, James was like a big brother
to me. You let me be, like... not
like a brother...

CELIA

I know...

POLICE OFFICER

I need somebody to sign a receipt --

WENDIANNA

I'm not signing anything! I want my lawyer! I want to make a statement to the Press!

Lu approaches the Police Office.

POLICE OFFICER

Lu? You work here, right?

LU

That's right. I'll sign.

Lu scans and signs the paperwork -- the Police Officer murmurs thanks and moves on to next problem.

Lu glances back at Duff's Space, winces -- then speaks calmly, directly to the building.

LU (CONT'D)

Worse things have happened.

Lu turns and speaks to Harry, no trace of pretense in her voice.

LU (CONT'D)

Harry? Any help you could give us, tomorrow, I'd be glad --

HARRY

You got it, Lu.

Lu's eyes glisten, but she doesn't start to cry until she looks into Celia's eyes.

Lu gasps and sighs.

LU

Will you come back, Celia? I'll bring a plate of cookies --

CELIA

(laughs)

And we can get some holy people to drive out the bad energy.

Celia and Lu hug, cry.

CELIA (CONT'D)

A Priest, a Rabbi and a Shaman walk into a store...

Lu and Celia giggle, hug again, the blanket ends up in Lu's arms, she folds it, nodding.

Police Car takes Wendianna --

Ambulances take Elle and Donnella.

Harry holds Celia's arm, walks her away from the flashing lights.

HARRY

You okay to walk?

Celia wrings some water from one of her braids.

CELIA

I'm better than okay.

Harry lifts Celia's arm around his own shoulders.

HARRY

Oh, I know that.

FADE OUT:

THE END