

OLD LOVE LETTERS

by Jürgen Großmann

Cold open.

NEW YORK - A PARK - EARLY EVENING IN SUMMER

VIEW THROUGH BINOCULARS

Joe, a man in his late forties, brawny for his age, is lying on a hill in a park. It's summer and warm outside. He has binoculars and is watching a young woman (in her mid-twenties) sitting on a bench some 200 yards away. The woman's legs are naked. She is wearing a plunging neckline. He is focusing his binoculars on her, checking out different parts of her body.

JOE

Oh yeah, this is it. There's my baby.
Young. Wild. Insatiable. Fresh. Smooth
skin. Hair long and shiny, no split
ends.

He drops his gaze to her chest

Not bad at all. Both of them. The legs
are...

His gaze slides slowly along her bare legs; the young
lady is wearing shorts)

...loooong.

A pair of legs in jeans crosses the view. One second
later the legs of the young woman move in the direction
the crossing legs went.

Damn.

(He drops his binoculars so that green grass can be seen)

CUT TO CLOSE-UP ON JOE'S FACE

JOE

Look at that bastard hitting on her!

He raises his binoculars again.

That son of a b....

CUT TO

VIEW THROUGH THE BINOCULARS

He sees a woman in her late forties; she is sitting at some distance to the young woman. It's Nancy, his wife. In the following he watches her while she seems to talk to the young woman besides her.

JOE

...bank manager in Boston who is the most boring guy I've ever met, and a total geek when it comes to football. Plus he eats up all the cookies before I get one, when he visits us for Christmas. I love you, honey. I really do. But why can't a guy marry a woman without marrying her family, too. You are wonderful - except on the days when you act like the-color-of-the-napkins-doesn't-go-with-the-table-cloth mother? I like it that you make our life cosy. But I hate that it's dull. I can't stand it anymore. I need...

He shifts to the young woman.

All rights, let's tackle this one.

He starts walking down to the park bench. Opening credits with the camera following him, showing him from behind. He walks in a large circle so that he ends up facing the bench with the two women from the back. As he walks, he does some warm-up exercises, shaking his arms, stretching, running with his hands on his head, etc.

Finally he gets to the bench. The ground behind it is slightly raised so he can jump across without much effort from behind and sit between the two women on the bench. He jumps and hunkers down right away. The music of the opening credits stops.

JOE

(He looks to both sides.)

Ladies. It's too nice a day to be alone.

ANGELIQUE

(The young woman)

Do you know this guy?

NANCY

Yeah, he does look familiar. I remember a scene where he is standing by my side, and this a figure in drag asks me something and I say 'I do'. Or was that just a nightmare?

JOE

(To Angelique.)

There is nothing more enjoyable than a loving wife.

(To Nancy)

The gallery closes at six. We better get going. I still want to go for a swim afterwards, you know, work out.

NANCY

What are you talking about? You don't swim.

JOE

I didn't used to. I do as of today.

NANCY

What?

ANGELIQUE

Come on, give him a break. I heard that older men's skin does not age in the water since it is already so wizened and shriveled, you know, with age and whiskey and cigarettes. Oh,

(To Joe)

I'm Angelique. I just met your wife.

JOE

(Flirtatiously.)

Angelique. Great. French name.

ANGELIQUE

Yeah, my parents are into everything French. We never just had coffee but 'café au lait,' no bread but 'baguette'. I grew up with 'femme fatales', 'amour fou' or how about a 'ménage-a-trois.'

JOE

Sounds great. Whatever that is. As long as it is not dull. You are...

ANGELIQUE

What?

JOE

Not as d... d... f...f...., ah, French as... not as, no, you are, you are as French as your parents. Yeah, that's what you are.

Angelique looks at him both confused and somewhat intrigued.

NANCY

Were you in the sun for too long? It seems like it damaged not only your skin. Where have you been and what were you doing with those stupid binoculars.

JOE

Oh, I was over just there by the car. And that's where I picked up these... I wanted to see whether they still work.

NANCY

And do they?

JOE

Yes, they do.

Aiming at her with binoculars.

Oh, no. Everything is so big, much too big.

Nancy stands up.

NANCY

Ok, we're off. Sorry Angelique, it was nice talking to you but we have got to go. It's hard enough to find time with him as it is, what with all his swimming sessions, you know.

She looks at Joe, requesting that he come with her.

ANGELIQUE

Sure.

Joe jumps from the bench and remains in a squat position. Angelique looks at him laughing, she seems to find him funny.

Make a good choice - as you did before.

EXT - A CAR - EARLY EVENING

Joe and Nancy are sitting in their car. Joe is driving. A moment of silence.

NANCY

What was that all about in the park?

JOE

There were children playing, the sun was shining, old people hanging around waiting for the end...-

(Yelling at another driver)

Come on, let's go - ...of the day.

NANCY

No kidding. Well, I was talking about this old guy

(Looks at him)

loitering around, lusting after girls way too young for him. And what is up with that stuttering "d...d...f...f..." and that leap?

JOE

What are you trying to say? Maybe the sun damaged my brain too much.

NANCY

(Starts out seriously, then gets angry)

We have been married for a long time. I am not saying too long. I like our life together. But what is up with you? Since spring has started, you have been different. Well, spring does change people, and sometimes I wish you got the itch, too.

He looks at her.

But not the way you have been acting
these days!

(Yells)

Stop!!!

He brakes hard as they're heading toward a red traffic
light.

I can tell when a man staring at women
has something on his mind, this
desperate yearning, you know, that
particular glint in his eyes.

He stares into her eyes.

A mixture of lust and sadness.

He resumes driving.

You have it, and you have had it for
young women. Women way too young.

(Switches to a softer tone)

There were times when you used to look
at me like that. I miss that.

Puts her hand on his thigh.

What is going on with you?

JOE

I don't know.

NANCY

What the hell!

She pinches his thigh. He grimaces as if in pain

(Very agitated)

What do you mean you don't know?

You don't know? Well, there are just a
few phrases a woman doesn't want to
hear from her husband. Such as "If you
act like this, you remind me of my
mother," "I think our neighbor has
some good diet recipes for you?" or "I
don't know!"

JOE

Are you all right?

NANCY

Men write books big as 12 piece cereal
monster packs about the future of the
human race in the next hundred years,

molecular structures or damn numbers
to the power of ten thousand, and then
go around and say "I don't know" when
it comes to their own damn feelings!
Now, why don't you write a book about
that!

JOE

Who should...

NANCY

(Not paying attention to him)

No, forget it. That is not going to
happen. A woman couldn't write it
since she doesn't understand. And a
man would make it really short. Just
one sentence "I don't know". Could you
write such a book?

JOE

I don't... No. I can't. I'm sure. I
know. I know! I know that I can't.

NANCY

Well then, just tell me what the hell
is going on with you.

JOE

I don't know...

(Pause; Nancy looks angry)

CLOSE ON JOE

JOE

... what can I say. It's...

CUT TO

EXT - STAIRS IN FRONT OF A COLLEGE - DAYTIME

A flashback: Joe walks down the stairs in front of the
college where he works, slips and falls; a female student
can be vaguely seen in the background;

BACK TO

CLOSE ON JOE

JOE

like...

BACK TO

EXT - STAIRS IN FRONT OF A COLLEGE

Flashback continues: he falls and the student leaps behind him to catch his fall. Afterwards he is lying on the stairs with his head in her lap.

CLOSE ON JOE

JOE

... like...

BACK TO

EXT - STAIRS IN FRONT OF A COLLEGE - DAY

Third part of the flashback: he looks the student directly in the face and smiles.

BACK TO

CLOSE ON JOE

JOE

...looking at the stars. A clear blue sky. So wonderful and peaceful. The stars are shining and sparkling. Just gorgeous.

NANCY

So which is it now? A clear blue sky by day or a starry sky at night?

JOE

Both.

NANCY

You're strange. Can't you see this shining clear blue starry day sky when you look at me?

JOE

(Looks at her):
Not with my eyes open.

INT - A GALLERY/A DESK - EARLY EVENING

At the gallery. Joe and Nancy in front of a desk, with a slightly gay looking salesperson standing on the other side.

NANCY

It's fairly simple. My husband here is a complete idiot when it comes to art. The things he likes are usually really awful. But as a liberated woman I wouldn't want to exclude my man from my decisions about the nice things in life.

SALESMAN

That's very wise.

NANCY

He gets a chance to approve of the paintings I select. He even gets to veto my selection--well, sometimes.

SALESPERSON

Just like the president.

NANCY

Is that right...

JOE

Hello? I'm right here, you know. As it happens I can tell good art from bad. This photograph for example...

He takes a photo standing on the desk, showing a young man

...is very nice.

SALESPERSON

This is our employee of the month. Archie, our janitor. He is so good.

Begins to speak with a tender tone of voice, suggesting that he is enamored with the man in the picture; he looks at the photo and touches his face.

The way he cleans the floors, so gently, in this sensitive environment, surrounded by all this art. It is as if he were caressing the broom...

NANCY

(Clears her throat.)

I tell you what, why don't you go and show my husband something that will keep him entertained, and then the two of us will look through the catalogues. He will tell us what he has to say afterwards.

SALESPERSON

Sure, Ma'am. Would you please follow me, Sir. You will enjoy it.

He leaves the desk and heads into another room. Turns to Joe.

You must have a good relationship with your mother.

Joe looks confused.

INT - A ROOM FULL OF PICTURES - NO DAYLIGHT

A room full of pictures. Some are hanging on the wall, some are standing on the floor. A man, who appears to work in the gallery, is handling the pictures (like unwrapping them). All of the paintings show the Madonna, mostly with the child.

SALESPERSON

We are putting together a Madonna-themed art show in a church. It's a charity project. Mr. Sunderhill is in charge but he won't mind your hanging out over here.

MR. SUNDERHILL

Sure. Just have a look around.

JOE

(To salesperson)

Thanks.

SALESPERSON

You're welcome.

Salesman leaves.

JOE

After a few moments of hesitation, but not looking at the pictures

So, these are all paintings.

MR. SUNDERHILL

(Pointing at one still wrapped in paper)

Except this one, this is just paper. (Pause). But then maybe we'll find a painting inside.

JOE

I guess so. (Pause) Do you like this stuff, I mean all this...art.

MR. SUNDERHILL

I'm working in a gallery so I suppose I like art. In fact I LOVE paintings.

JOE

Why are you being so cynical? You don't have to like what your company deals in. Just look at me, I work at a college and I don't even like students.

MR. SUNDERHILL

I see. But to tell you the truth: I don't like hearing that. Maybe you should think about getting a new job.

JOE

Why would I? I like my job. I just don't like students. Actually I don't like young people at all. Nor children, for that matter.

Mr. Sunderhill is staring at him.

Oh, I don't teach. I'm in management. Financial issues, you know. Human resources, hire and fire, that kind of stuff. You have got to be tough in my job. Liking students would just distract me from what I need to do.

MR. SUNDERHILL

Which school do you work for?

JOE

Lincoln College. Why are you asking?

MR. SUNDERHILL

My daughter is looking at colleges for next year.

JOE

I could put in a word for her.

MR. SUNDERHILL:

I don't think that's going to be necessary.

JOE

Well, never mind.

Looking around at the pictures

Almost all of them show the Madonna with the child. Baby Jesus, I assume.

MR. SUNDERHILL

Yes, probably. He was her most famous child.

JOE

(Looking for a moment at a picture showing the Madonna with the child)
Did she have other kids?

MR. SUNDERHILL

I'm no bible expert but as far as I know: Nobody knows. Why are you asking?

JOE

Because, you know, he is looking at her so admiringly. Looking up to her. Which would make sense for an ordinary child but not for a divine child. You know Jesus is - almost like God. He is just a child in this painting, and as a grown-up he'll be God. But I mean, God as a child is God already, isn't he. So why is he looking up to her? She's just a regular woman.

MR. SUNDERHILL

Sometimes a woman can be like a god for a man. Even more.

JOE

I know what you mean - I remember my wife, when I saw her the first time in that red, hot skirt. We went out for dinner, we were flirting, dancing,... That night was divine.

MR. SUNDERHILL

That's not what I meant. - You know, I see what you mean...

JOE

Oh, I'm glad.

MR. SUNDERHILL

... But I don't think that that is the reason why Jesus is looking up to her in the painting. I think he's all right with it but he doesn't care. His gaze has nothing to do with young women in red, hot skirts and the pleasure they can give a man in one divine night.

JOE

What is it all about then?

MR. SUNDERHILL

About what a mature woman can give to a man - not only to a child. It's not just the mothering. A young woman in a skirt is like a shining star but she needs a dark firmament to sparkle. A mature woman can be a shining star in a bright blue sky. Attractive, but at peace with herself.

(Pause)

Sorry, I have got to leave. Actually we're closing but you can stick around until Mr. Raphael comes to get you.

Mr. Sunderhill leaves the room, and Joe's eyes follow him out.

CUT

INT - A ROOM FULL OF PICTURES - NO DAYLIGHT

Nancy comes in. Joe is sitting on the floor, looking at the paintings.

NANCY

Sorry, Darling. I took us a while. Actually the gallery already closed but Mr. Raphael said he would stick around until you have decided whether you are going to veto my choices or not. He said he would do this service to the president.

JOE

Oh good. (Pause). You know what, though? It's okay. I trust you. I trust your choices. I'm sure they are fine. I'll look up to the pictures you have picked. (Smiles) I will just look up to you.

NANCY

Oh, thanks for your confidence. I'm flattered. I hope my choices live up to that. Let's hurry up anyway. You don't want to miss your swimming.

JOE

Oh, forget swimming. I can think of a much better workout than that.

NANCY

All right, we'll see.

INT. - JOE'S AND NANCY'S APARTMENT - SUNSET

Joe and Nancy enter the apartment. It's nice and spacious, bathed in the light of the setting sun. The kitchen opens to the living room.

NANCY

You didn't say a word all the way home. You didn't even answer the doorman when he was trying to talk to you about the game. I've never seen you like this. What's wrong?

JOE

Nothing. I'm fine. No need to talk. I am enjoying myself.

NANCY

Enjoying what?

JOE

Whom?

NANCY

What?

JOE

Not 'what' but 'whom'.

NANCY

So, whom?

JOE

Guess.

NANCY

I don't know.

JOE

You.

NANCY

Oh.

JOE

Are you glad?

NANCY

Yes. (Pause). Yes, I am. I'm not used to it but yeah, I'm glad. Why don't you stay right here while I cook dinner.

JOE

Sure. I will.

Nancy starts cooking dinner. Joe watches her for a few seconds. Then he walks toward the stereo, looks through the CDs on a shelf.

Should I put on some music?

NANCY

Sure.

JOE

I'll pick one for you.

Romantic, swinging music starts playing, with a good dance beat. Joe goes to the window, looks out. He sees

some young women in the street, returning from shopping, having fun (chattering, giggling). He pulls a piece of paper out of his pants pocket. He looks at it but one cannot see what is written on it. He leaves it on the windowsill. - Nancy starts to hum or sing along with the music. Joe notices it and turns around to her. Now Nancy begins to chop and cook to the beat of the music. Joe smiles.

NANCY

Did I ever tell you that I used to hate dancing when I was a girl? I would listen to all this classical music. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. But nothing with rhythm or zest. Nothing to dance to.

In the next few lines Nancy segues from working with the beat of the music to actual dancing.

But then my mother suggested I take up ballroom dancing. A "young lady" had to know how to dance. No amount of pleading would sway her. She could be very stubborn. And wise.

She starts dancing.

Because I ended up going to the class, and was lost about an hour later. Lost in the rhythm and in movement, in the flow of the music, and of myself and my dance partner all over that dance floor. It's really all about your partner. To feel in synch with him. It's all about...

During the last few lines she dances toward Joe and stops directly in front of him

... your partner.

JOE

What was his name?

NANCY

I don't remember.

JOE

How come? It seems that he was pretty important to you, so you should remember his name.

NANCY

He is not important anymore. He's history. I don't need him anymore. I found you. Who cares about the past? That would be irrational. And I'm rational. A romantic but rational.

JOE

You sure are.

They look each other in the eyes for a few seconds; then they kiss.

NANCY

Let's have dinner first, and then...

She disentangles from him and returns to cooking dinner. He follows her a few seconds later, approaching her from behind, turns her around and presses her against a cupboard (or the like) as he raises her hands above her head.

JOE

So you prefer a hot meal to a hot man?

NANCY

But it's your favorite dish.

JOE

Meat loaf?

NANCY

You got it.

JOE

And afterwards

NANCY

We'll see

JOE

How long is it going to be?

NANCY

About 30 minutes before dinner. Fifteen minutes to eat. Another fifteen to do the dishes.

J

OE

Skip the dishes.

NANCY

Ok, it's 45 minutes then. Starting now.

JOE

I'll be back in about thirty.

NANCY

Where are you...?

JOE

(Interrupting her)
A surprise.

NANCY

Don't be late.

Joe takes his keys and leaves the room. Nancy busies herself with her kitchen tools and then goes to the window and watches the car with Joe inside drive off. Her hand sweeps over the windowsill and finds the piece of paper. She looks at it: it is a phone number. She thinks for a moment, then goes to the telephone and dials the number. A female voice, Maria:

MARIA

Hello.

NANCY

Who is it?

MARIA

Who is talking?

NANCY

(Stumped)
This is... the pizza service. We've got your number but not your address.

MARIA

It's 180 Remsen Street, Brooklyn Heights. But I didn't order any pizza.

NANCY:

Isn't this 528-3055?

MARIA

No, this is 528-3054.

NANCY

Oh, I'm sorry, I made a mistake.

MARIA

No problem, bye.

NANCY

Bye.

She thinks for a moment and then leaves the house.

INT. - MARIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Joe knocks on the door of the apartment. Maria opens the door. It is the woman who appeared in Joe's fantasy of the scene on the college stairs. She is in her early twenties, black hair; she acts very agitated.

MARIA

Joe! I didn't expect to see you tonight.

She goes into the small apartment. He follows her and closes the door, but then waits by the door. She walks over to the couch to continue working on her toenails.

Come on in. I was doing my toenails. I didn't know you were coming, otherwise I would have ordered something for dinner. Not that I was going to cook anyway.

She shivers with disgust.

Actually I was talking to the pizza service on the phone but they had called the wrong number.

She looks at her toenails, wondering if anything is missing. Gets up and goes to the bathroom.

(On her way to the bathroom)

But then on the other hand - if we skip dinner, we might have more time for something else.

Turning to him she looks at him seductively. Then she enters the bathroom.

JOE

It's over.

MARIA

(From the bathroom)

I can't hear you.

She comes back with another bottle of nail polish. She sees his very serious face.

JOE

I said, it's over

MARIA

What do you mean? Between us?

JOE

Yeah.

MARIA

What's wrong with you? You come to my apartment, don't even say hello, you just walk in, watch me paint my toenails, I make you a sexual offer and then you tell me 'It's over?' What kind of an asshole are you?

JOE

A big one?

MARIA

A huge one! Just don't think I am going to make it easy for you. It's not enough to admit that you are an asshole. You have got to tell me why. Why are you such a huge asshole?

JOE

I love my wife.

MARIA

Oh, give me a break! That is such a platitude. I don't care about your wife! I want to know something about you.

JOE

This IS me. It's me who loves her.

MARIA

Oh, my God. Don't tell me you are one of those guys whining: "I am going back to my wife because I owe her so much." "You have got to understand; she's the mother of my children".

JOE

We don't have children. We couldn't have any.

MARIA

I know. I'm sorry.

JOE

But that's not the point. It is... me. I miss her. I had this yearning for you. I really did. But if I stay with you, I am going to lose her. can't have that happen.

MARIA

(Sarcastically)

Oh, I'm deeply moved. Tell me more.

JOE

I need her. I yearn for both of you, but I need only her. I have learned that to need somebody is a way of desiring them. It's different than what we have.

MARIA

What exactly would that be? Nothing but sex. Getting on top of a fresh juicy body spreading her legs for some old shriveled up guy?

Joe sits down on a chair.

JOE

I do have feelings for you. Of course I liked the sex. But I did feel something above the belt, too. It was not just an in and out job. It was about you, not only your body. I'm

grateful for that, and I won't forget that.

MARIA

Oh, so you are grateful? Maybe I should be grateful, too? You think so? You think I should be grateful, do you? Are you thinking at all? What gives you the right to decide for both of us that it's over?

JOE

As I said... It was magic when it first started. But for every beginning there is an end. That's the nature of things.

MARIA.

Sounds like a fuckin' lecture about fuckin' death. Why would I want to hear that?

JOE

Please understand.

MARIA

I guess, at your age you like to think that death can be valuable, this big thing. Because it could happen anytime . You slip on a staircase, with nobody there to catch you. Your head hits a rock. An internal bleeding in the brain. You're dead within seconds.

JOE

Maybe.

Joe stands up.

MARIA

What good would your old loving wife be then?

JOE

She would grieve for me. Not because I'm her father or brother, somebody she didn't pick but who just happened to be there. She would grieve for somebody she had deliberately picked

out, although she could have gotten a better deal.

MARIA

I bet.

JOE

My death would change her life. She wouldn't be able to forget me.

MARIA

Unlike me. I promise I'll forget you the second you leave this apartment.
(Pause. Soft tone.)
So you think your wife loves you that much?

JOE

I hope so.

A knock on the door. Joe opens. It's Nancy. They look at each other.

JOE

It's over. I have ended things.

NANCY

I don't care what you have ended. I care about what you've started.

JOE

Honey, let me explain.

NANCY

Shut up.

JOE

Don't do that to me. Forgive me. It's over, it's history. You can trust me.

NANCY

Never again.

MARIA

I recognize your voice. You were on the phone. The pizza service.

Joe motions to her to shut up.

NANCY

I ask you one last favor. Don't come home before midnight; give me time to pack some things for the first few days. I'll get the rest later. You are not going to see me again for the rest of your life. I'm done with you.

She walks out. Maria goes to the door and closes it.

MARIA

Midnight. That's four hours to kill. This could be getting pretty long. What do you think about some goodbye sex?

JOE

Shut up

MARIA

This might be the last you get for a long time.

JOE

I said: Shut up.

She touches him, kisses him.

MARIA

You may be a horny old bastard but you've always been a good lover. Channel your anger into sexual prowess and this could become an unforgettable, divine night - before you are not going to see me for the rest of my life either.

Joe looks at her for a while and then leaves.

EXT - STREETS OF NEW YORK - EVENING

Several shots of Joe driving around in his car. He comes to a red light and brakes so hard that the wheels of his car are squeaking. A group of young women about to cross the street (similar to the one in scene 6 when he gazes out of the window) yell at him. He looks shocked and distressed. When the lights turn green, he drives across the intersection, parks his car and walks into a cafe.

INT - A CAFE - EVENING

A large cafe; too bright. Not a nice place. Not many guests. Joe is sitting in an armchair in the background, by himself. Waitress 1 is just leaving his table, he can be seen in the background. She is walking toward the camera to the bar where waitress 2 is waiting.

WAITRESS 1

Table 10 needs a coffee and a doughnut.

She looks to Joe.

So what do you think, what is he? Type 1 or type 2?

WAITRESS 2

Type 1: the hard working family man. Someone who has been doing everything for his family for the past twenty years.

WAITRESS 1

Who works overtime week after week. Paid off his house.

WAITRESS 2

Someone who plays with the children and is a good father and husband.

WAITRESS 1

And now she is leaving him like the ungrateful bitch she is and is whining about how he bores her.

WAITRESS 2

And she takes the children with her. So, he merits all the compassion we can summon.

WAITRESS 1

Or is he type 2?

WAITRESS 2

Meaning: he just turned 50. Realizes that this concept of a "midlife crisis" is actually a good excuse for finding someone younger. And so he finds one -

WAITRESS 1

They always find someone -

WAITRESS 2

Just mindless sex, a quick in and out
job.

WAITRESS 1

But then his wife finds out, and the
chick gets tired of him. And they both
dump him.

The waitresses both look at him; then look at each other.

WAITRESS 1 AND 2

(Nodding to each other):

Type 2.

WAITRESS 1

Give me one of yesterday's doughnuts.

Waitress 2 gives waitress 1 an old doughnut; waitress 1
pours a cup of coffee out. Waitress 1 walks to Joe's
table and serves him his coffee and doughnut without a
word. He looks despondent. Waitress turns around and
walks back. He takes a bite of his doughnut and grimaces
with disgust. Waitress smiles .

INT - JOE'S AND NANCY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe enters the empty apartment. He tosses his keys on the
table. He goes to the kitchen counter and tries some of
the meat loaf, which is still in a Tupperware container.
He goes into the bedroom and looks into a wardrobe where
there is now a gap between the clothes. He goes into the
bathroom and gazes at the empty space on the toiletry
shelf. He sniffs her used towel, which is recognizable as
Nancy's (by "hers" in large letters, pattern should be
peculiar, easy to recognize). He goes to the bar, grabs a
bottle of whiskey, opens it and takes a hearty swig.

INT - THE DOOR OF JOE'S AND NANCY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Next morning. Carl, a man of Joe's and Nancy's age, is
heading to the door of their apartment. He knocks on the
door. No reaction. He knocks again and when there is no
reaction again he tries to open the door and finds it
unlocked. He enters the room.

INT - JOE'S AND NANCY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The light in the room indicates that it is dawn but still somewhat gloomy. Joe is sitting in a chair in the middle of the room, dressed as the evening before, and is holding a cup of coffee in his hand.

CARL

Have you been sitting like this all night?

JOE

Oh no. From midnight to three I was sitting here with a bottle of... oh I don't remember, something, but I drank it very deliberately. Then I sat for another two hours without the bottle because it slipped from my hand.

Carl looks at the floor where there is a bottle of whisky.

CARL

I see.

JOE

At five I got up for a pee. Then I slept for three hours. Ten minutes ago I got up again to make myself some coffee. And now I have been sitting here like this. You see my life is damn changing.

CARL

What are you going to do now?

JOE

I think, I'll get up again and, I'm not sure, either puke all over the counter in case I don't make it to the bathroom or I say hello to the big white telephone.

CARL

Do you need a hand?

JOE

With what? Holding my hair?

Joe is nearly bald.

Is that what you came for? To give me a hand? What did you come for? You've never been here this early in the morning.

CARL

Nancy called me. She told me what happened and asked me to check on you.

JOE

She called you? Who does this woman think she is? My mother?

CARL

Joe.

JOE

Does she have fun humiliating me? She leaves me, within seconds, hits me, hurts me, and then she magnanimously looks out for me.

CARL

She's your wife.

JOE

A wife who is making it perfectly clear that I'm a miserable worm and she is the righteous lady. Oh that makes me want to puke even more now.

CARL

You have done some pretty bad things.

JOE

True, I have. I'm human, you know. So I do things that are not OK. I am almost fifty. I have lived half of my damn life.

CARL

Probably more than a half.

JOE

(Makes a gesture to shut him up)

I am scarred, I have open wounds - and holes that need to be filled. That's why I may sometimes do things that are not perfect.

CARL

I understand, but if what you do is really bad, if you really hurt people, you have to live with the consequences.

JOE

I do. I am taking the consequences. I'll take them right after I have slept for a 24 hours. Are you on your way to work?

CARL

Yeah.

JOE

Tell them I'm taking a couple of days off.

CARL

Sure.

JOE

Thanks.

He gets up, goes into the bedroom and falls on the bed. Carl takes the phone and dials a number. The voice mail of a cellular phone can be heard.

CARL

Nancy, it's Carl. I'm at your apartment. He's here but he is not looking too good. I'm not sure if he can handle it. You really got to him. If you want me to keep you posted give me a call. Bye.

He goes to the bedroom door.

MUSIC STARTS

INT - BEDROOM OF THE APARTMENT - MORNING

Carl looks at Joe snoring and leaves the apartment. Again shot of Joe, then shot of a clock radio by the bed displaying 8:20 am.

CUT

INT - BEDROOM OF THE APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Clock radio displays 5:20 pm. Joe is still snoring but now wakes up.

INT - JOE'S APARMENT - EARLY EVENING

Joe is sitting at the dining table in his underwear and greedily gulping down a lot of food. Some of the meat loaf Nancy made for him, some pickled herring, some chocolate, and he drinks a large glass with something like aspirin in it. He burps. Then he heads to the bedroom again.

CUT TO

INT - BEDROOM OF THE APARTMENT - EVENING

Joe falls on the bed and begins to snore.

CUT TO

INT - BEDROOM OF THE APARTMENT - MORNING

Shot of the clock radio. It is 8:20 am. Joe wakes up, stares blankly in front of him, seems to think. .

CUT TO

He has got up and does some push-ups -

CUT TO

and sit-ups.

CUT TO

Then he takes a shower. -

CUT TO

INT- BEDROOM OF JOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

He stands in front of his open wardrobe, a towel around his hips and looks for some clothes.

CUT TO

INT- JOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Dressed in a very bright hue (white shirt) he stands thinking and looking at the dirty dishes. He just piles them up and puts them into the sink. He leaves the apartment.

EXT. - A PORSCHE DEALERSHIP - DAY

The Porsche dealership is shown from the outside. Joe is talking to a salesperson. The salesperson shows him to a vehicle. Joe gets into the Porsche and pretends to be driving.

EXT. - JEWELRY STORE FROM THE OUTSIDE - DAY

A jewelry store (apparently in the high price category) from the outside. A salesperson is presenting a large tray of jewelry to Joe.

CUT TO.

CLOSE ON THE TRAY

Expensive and modern looking watches.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON JOE

Joe is shaking his head.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON TRAY

The tray is displaying watches, seemingly from the pre-World War II period.

CUT TO

INT. JEWELRY STORE - DAY

Joe takes a watch and seems to like it.

EXT. - A PET SHOP FROM THE OUTSIDE - DAY

A pet shop from the outside. Joe comes out with a dog.

INT. - JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joe is sitting in the chair in his apartment and training the dog to jump up on his lap.

MUSIC STOPS

There is a knock on the door.

JOE

Come in.

Door opens and a worker of a moving company walks in.

WORKER

Nancy Adams?

JOE

Do I look like her?

WORKER

We're coming for the furniture.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joe is on the phone. Workers of the moving company are carrying things out of the apartment. They are wearing T-shirts emblazoned "On the move" in the front and a telephone number in the back.

JOE

Did she ever call you back? Did she want to know how I am doing?

(Pause)

I can't believe it. We've been married for 21 years.

A Latino looking worker is passing through with two large lamps in his hands. Joe takes the phone off his ear

(To the worker)

Not both. Just one. One is mine. Don't you know how to count?

The worker pauses but looks disinterested.

(Very accentuated to the worker)

Do you understand me?

(Pause)

Oh, never mind. Just go ahead.

He puts the phone back to his ear.

What? 23 years? Of what? Marriage? Big deal. Let me give you a good piece of advice: never ask a math teacher to be your best man.

He hangs up the phone (maybe pressing a button on a wireless phone). The worker to whom he was talking earlier is looking at him. Joe points toward the telephone.

Math teacher. He could teach you how to count.

WORKER

(In Spanish, subtitled)

Someone should teach you what counts in love. You weirdo.

EXT. - A PARK IN NEW YORK - DAY

Joe is sitting on a park bench. He seems relaxed. The dog is sitting next to the bench. There is a path passing by the bench at a few yards distance. A young woman is walking along the path. She stops and looks at the ground. She sees something, picks it up and looks at it. It's a chain of Porsche keys. She looks around to see who may have lost them and sees Joe. She walks toward him.

WOMAN 1

Excuse me. Is this yours?

She is standing close to Joe and is holding out the keys right in front of his face.

JOE

Joe is checking his pants pocket. Then he grabs the keys and looks at them with the woman still holding on to them.

Yeah, it looks like these are my keys. At least my make of car. Where did you find them?

WOMAN 1

Right over there. On the path.

JOE

How did they get there?

WOMAN 1

I don't know.

JOE

Well. Anyway, would you like to sit down? Don't say you don't have time. It's...

He looks at his watch.

Not late at all.

WOMAN 1

What a nice watch.

She sits down.

Where did you get it?

JOE

My father gave it to me. He died when I was a boy. The only thing he left me is this watch. This watch and my love of pets. Roamer!

He slaps his thigh and the dog jumps up on his lap.

WOMAN 1

Oh, what a sweet puppy. Don't tell me your father left him to you as well.

JOE

No, he didn't. But you know, when we're alone and we talk, he speaks of James Dean, so he could be the same age. In fact, I got him from the pound. I felt so sorry for him.

They look each other deeply in the eyes. She is attracted, he shows signs of triumph.

INT. - A ROOM IN A STUDENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

We see them lying in bed, apparently after having made love. He is lying on his back; she is lying in his arm.

WOMAN 1

That was great. Unlike anything I have ever experienced. You may not be as passionate as some young hunk...

Joe looks a little hurt.

...but your technique is brilliant. That of an experienced lover.

She lifts her head and looks at him.

You must be tired.

JOE

(Again looking a little angry)

No. Why would I be? Are you?

She is putting her head on his chest again.

WOMAN 1

I am. Let us sleep for a little bit.

JOE

Sleep, baby.

She closes her eyes. He looks around and his gaze stops on an arrangement of teddy bears on a shelf. He looks disturbed, confused, and disgusted all at once.

EXT. - A PARK IN NEW YORK - DAY

Music. The same procedure is happening as before. He is sitting on a park bench. A young woman comes her way, finds the keys, etc....

INT. - A ROOM IN A STUDENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joe is lying in a bed with his latest lover, apparently after having made love. They are looking at each other.

WOMAN 2

I'm so happy I met you. I don't usually do this on the first date. But you're so different. You're mature and decent. You are not going to hurt my feelings.

He smiles in a way showing that he is probably going to hurt her feelings, but feels somewhat guilty about that.

JOE

Never.

WOMAN 2

Let's just sleep together for a while.
Like a real couple.

She reaches under her pillow and grabs a teddy bear. She hugs Joe and closes her eyes. He looks at her disapprovingly.

INT. - A ROOM IN A STUDENT APARTMENT - DAY

Joe is in bed with another young woman. She is riding him, still wearing her bra. A blanket is wrapped around her hips. She is holding the Porsche keys in her mouth.

She takes the keys out of her mouth.

WOMAN 3

Have you ever thought about having a threesome?

JOE

(Widening his eyes with excitement)
Oh, sure, I don't mind.

The woman pauses for a moment and reaches under her bed. She is holding a teddy bear in her hand.

WOMAN 3

Ta dah! This is Peter. He is one horny little beast!

Joe looks very disgusted.

CUT

The woman is lying in her bed, sleeping. He is standing by the bed, dressed, and is putting his watch on. He looks at her. The teddy bear is lying somewhere on the bed. Joe takes it and puts it in her arm. Close-up of his face. He looks like he doesn't know what to do now.

EXT. - PARK IN NEW YORK - DAY

CLOSE-UP ON JOE SITTING ON A PARK BENCH

His face is still the same like before. A voice from the besides him.

ANGELIQUE

Hi, what a nice day to go swimming,
don't you think?

CLOSE ON BOTH

Joe is sitting on one side of the bench. Angelique is on the other end. She is wearing a sundress, button down in front. Joe turns his head toward her.

JOE

Haven't we met before?

ANGELIQUE

In fact, we have. Angelique. Remember? France. Baguette. Café au lait. Menage a trois.

She looks at him like she wants to flirt with him.

What happened to your wife?

JOE

We're separated.

As he is looking at her, his facial expression changes. It looks like he has an idea.

She dumped me. It happened that same night we met for the first time.

ANGELIQUE

(Smiling)

Oh! I'm so sorry. Did she have a good reason?

JOE

Not yet.

She checks him out with tempting eyes from the face down his body. She grabs his arm with the watch.

ANGELIQUE

Nice watch. French. It clearly is time.

JOE

Do you have teddy bears?

ANGELIQUE

I'm not a little girl.

INT. - ANGELIQUE'S APARTMENT - DAY

They are in Angelique's apartment. Joe is pressing her against a wall. She is clasping his neck and is putting her legs around his hips. They kiss. He seems to feel a

sudden pain and holds his back. He stops kissing her but tries to pretend that he is not in pain.

JOE

You have a wide bed. Why don't we use it?

ANGELIQUE

Ok, sure.

He puts her on the bed. She still has her legs around his hips. He struggles to carry her this way. Having dropped her on the bed, he breathes hard.

ANGELIQUE

So does this mean I turn you on like no other woman?

JOE

Yeah, one could say so.

He kisses her. Then he begins to unbutton her dress. He opens it and sees a tight bodysuit with a cute bear and the phrase "WWF - Save the bears." He looks shocked. Obviously confused, he begins to pull away from her and from the bed.

JOE

(Stuttering)

You didn't tell me about that.

ANGELIQUE

About what?

JOE

The teddy bears.

She looks at her bodysuit.

ANGELIQUE

So what? It's for charity, for a political campaign.

JOE

There are bears.

ANGELIQUE

Yeah, they are. I'm a political woman
You aren't a polluter by any chance?

JOE

It's not about politics. Just the bears. Just the teddy bears.

He gets up, grabs his clothes and leaves.

EXT. - STREETS OF NEW YORKS - LATE EVENING

Joe is walking through the streets. It's a street with shops. He looks melancholy and turns his view from time to time to the shop windows. Finally he comes to the cafe he was in before. He stops and looks inside. Waitress 1 is standing at the bar, writing. He looks at her. After some time she notices him and looks at him. She greets him. He looks at her a few more seconds until she leaves the bar to go to a table.

INT. - JOE'S APARTMENT - LATE EVENING

Joe's apartment. He is sitting on a stool at the kitchen counter with a pen and stationary. He writes two words, then thinks for a moment, then writes a few more words but then crosses them out again. He looks confused, thinks. Then he gets up, paces up and down the room agitatedly. He stops and looks at a wall. He walks quickly to the wall, leans against it with his stretched-out arms, his hands at the height of his head. It looks like he is standing with Angelique in the previous scene.

Nancy appears in the same position as Angelique earlier. He suddenly looks strained and drops his head. He doesn't look at her. She looks serenely and motherly down to him.

JOE

O my god, we're never going to be like this anymore. Damn it.

NANCY:

Oh sure, honey, we may.

He looks up at her, surprised.-

CUT

Same scene, with two cupboards to both sides of her and her thighs resting on them. He looks confused.

NANCY

Look, so what if we need a little help? It feels just as good, though. I feel just as good. Don't you?

JOE

I do, too.

She disappears but he is still standing at the table, confused, and looking around. Then he is walking back to his chair, looks at the stationary again. He starts to write something, crosses it out, writes some more, crosses it out, ... -

CUT

CLOSE ON THE PAPER

There are several first words (all crossed out), such as: "I don't know," "I miss," "it is," "when I," "I am sorry for," "how are you,"...

CUT

CLOSE ON JOE

Joe is writing as the camera moves through the apartment, capturing memorabilia, such as pictures.

JOE'S VOICE:

I'm not going to use a new sheet. I'll just leave it like it is so you can see how hard it is for me to explain and to apologize. I know you don't like me saying this but the thing is: I simply don't know. You are good for me. But there is something important inside me that I am not finding in our relationship. It might just be that we are getting older but it may something different, too. I would like to find out. I would rather find out with you, rather than without you. I know I am asking a lot but since we have loved each other for such a long time, I am asking anyway. Forever, your husband Joe.

He takes an envelope from a sideboard, puts the letter inside, looks at the envelope, seems baffled and looks a little angry.

Darn!

INT. - JOE'S APARMENT - MORNING

Next morning. Joe is leafing through the phone directory.

JOE

O..., O..., "On the move".

He takes the phone, says the number out loud as he is dialing.

Hello, this is Joe Adams. (Pause) No, I'm not a customer. But my wife was. (Pause) Her name? Nancy. (Pause) No, I don't want to... Wait!

(Pause. He looks bothered, while waiting)

No, I don't want to file a complaint. I just want to know where you delivered the furniture for Nancy Adams.

(Pause)

What do you mean, it is not at your discretion to tell me?

(Getting angry)

Listen, you...

(Pause)

A superior? Sure, let me talk to your boss.

CUT TO

INT. - AN OFFICE. - MORNING

A manager who looks like a sensitive person is on the phone. He is standing in front to his desk.

MANAGER

I understand, Mr. Adams.

(Pause)

Joe. But we have rules for instances like this.

(Pause)

Of course it is not an "instance," but your "damn marriage" we're talking about. Listen, I'm sorry but I really can't help you.

(Pause)

Mr. Adams? Mr. Adams? Oh no. Don't cry. Mr. Adams. Please don't cry.

He sits down in a chair, puts one hand to his head. He seems anxious.

Mr. Adams, listen. There may be a way after all. It seems like your wife didn't move very far away, and we actually go over to her area quite frequently. If you send us the letter, we'll make sure to get it to her. With some delay, but she'll get it. Would that be okay?

(Pause)

Perfect.

(Pause)

You're very welcome.

He hangs up the phone and heaves a sigh.

EXT. - A MIDDLE-CLASS HOME IN THE SUBURBS OF PHILADELPHIA
- MORNING

A moving truck of the company "Move on" approaches the home. A young, strong looking worker gets out of the car and walks to the entrance door. He rings the door bell.

CUT TO

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nancy is wearing nothing but a men's shirt much too large for her. She scurries through the corridor towards the door, licking jelly from her finger. The upper buttons of her shirt are open.

NANCY

I'm coming.

She opens the door.

CUT TO

EXT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - MORNING

CLOSE ON ENTRANCE DOOR, OVER SHOULDER OF WORKER

His broad shoulders can be seen, and Nancy is obviously both confused and liking what she sees. She doesn't say anything, though she should.

CUT TO

Shot from the side so that both their faces can be seen.

WORKER

(Waiting for her to say 'hello,' but now starting the conversation since she doesn't).

I have a letter for you, Ma'am.

NANCY

I already took care of the bill.

WORKERS

Oh, this is not from our company.

Nancy takes the letter, looks at it.

NANCY

Ok. Thanks.

WORKER

Sure. Bye.

NANCY

Bye.

CUT TO

CLOSE UP

The worker turns around and walks to the truck. Nancy checks him out for a moment and then closes the door.

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nancy walks down the hallway, opening the letter. She walks into the kitchen, sits down, puts her feet on the chair and reads the letter. She is holding it in one hand, a cup of coffee in the other. First she raises the cup to her lips but then is unable to drink because she is touched by what she is reading. When she is finished reading the letter, she drops it to the floor and stares in front of her. Her mood changes into being angry. Finally she crumples up the letter. A man, Jay, about 25, enters the room. He looks like an easy-going but down-to-earth guy. He is wearing a Philadelphia Eagles T-shirt.

JAY

Hey.

NANCY

Hey.

Jay takes a cup of coffee and leans against the kitchen cabinet.

JAY

What were you reading?

NANCY

A letter.

JAY

That's what I thought. From whom?

NANCY

An old friend.

JAY

Old?

NANCY

(Smiling.)

Yes, one could say that. He's in the past.

JAY

Hm, I suppose you got it just now. I heard the door bell. Did they send it express?

NANCY

No, somebody from the moving company I had hired from New York dropped it off for me.

JAY

So, it's not from an old friend then but from your husband?

NANCY

What are you talking about?

JAY

Look, I'm not stupid, and besides, I am writing my dissertation on crime mysteries. I learn from them, I'm a kind of Sherlock Holmes, you know.

NANCY

Oh, I didn't know that.

JAY

First who else would remember the name of the moving company you hired, second who would be desperate enough to use them to send a letter instead of ordinary mail, very likely because he does not have your new address and...

NANCY

Third

JAY

...finally who else could upset you so much that you crumple up the letter right after you read it and get this sheepish look on your face as you are having right now.

He drinks from his coffee.

Which, by the way, I think is adorable.

NANCY

You're right. The letter was from Joe. But don't worry, it doesn't mean anything. It's over, no matter what he writes.

JAY

Oh, I don't mind. There are only two alternatives: The one is that 21 years of marriage...

NANCY

23.

JAY

..., whatever, don't mean a thing to you. In which case this would just be a simple rivalry between two men.

NANCY

How exciting!

JAY

A fifty year old college administrator who sucks in both his job and his personal life and cannot compete with

this smart, sensitive, good looking
guy half his age, the upcoming star of
the Foreign Language department of the
University of Pennsylvania...

NANCY

Don't forget to breathe.

JAY

...whose nearly finished doctoral thesis
is already considered ground-breaking
and who is going to get tenure in no
more than five years as surely as you
look totally hot in that shirt.

NANCY

Oh, do I?

He drinks from his coffee.

JAY

And then of course the other option
is: he and your marriage still mean
something to you. In which case I
stand no chance anyway.

Nancy gets up, goes to him, hugs and kisses him.

NANCY

Sometimes you can be so sensitive, so
romantic. And other times you are so
awfully rational and heartless-

JAY

But you like it, don't you?

NANCY

I do.

She kisses him. Then she starts to move them both out of
the kitchen, upstairs into the master bedroom of the
house.

FOLLOW THEM UPSTAIRS INTO THE BEDROOM.

NANCY

From the very first moment.

She kisses him.

You were standing in front of that
evening literature class with all the

female students hanging on your every
word...

She kisses him.

...and the rest of your body and you
ruled them,

She kisses him.

kept the fire burning but it was so
hot that no one dared approach that
stage

She kisses him.

while the master was performing.

They arrive in the bedroom.

JAY

You dared.

NANCY

I'm almost fifty. I have got nothing
to lose.

She pushes him onto the bed, climbs on top of him, and
kisses him.

JAY

Has this happened to you the first
time?

NANCY

What?

JAY

That you fell in love with someone
twenty years younger than you?

She thinks for a moment and gets up, heading to the
bathroom.

FOLLOW HER TO THE BATHROOM

NANCY

No... Actually... I was 24...

As she says this she is taking a toothbrush and putting
toothpaste on it. Now she is speaking with the toothbrush
in her mouth.

I was visiting with my cousin during
the summer. She lived in Seattle, and

I had not seen her in years. She had a young boy who was four, and it was love at first sight. We were inseparable the whole time.

She finishes brushing...

We had so much fun. We would take trips to the countryside, sit together in a dark cave by romantic light of a poor candle and talk,

...and rinses her mouth with water.

...we would lie in bed, cuddling... It was one great summer.

She comes back into the bedroom and goes to the closet.

JAY

And what about now? Have you dumped him or is he yet another competitor?

She takes off the shirt and puts on a bra. We see her from behind.

NANCY

The last time I saw him was four, five years ago; he was a senior in high school. I had just gotten there, was standing in the kitchen, talking to my cousin, and this deep voice from behind said 'Great butt, aunt Nancy!'

She touches her bottom and turns around.

I turned around and saw this six feet tall, 180 pound bear of a man teasing me.

JAY

So you need a much bigger cave for a romantic candle light dinner now.

She continues to get dressed. She says the following in an increasingly emotional and lively manner. Two or three shots on Jay, who is obviously enjoying her story.

NANCY

Oh, but he had a better idea. He thought it'd be great to invite his old aunt Nancy to watch a game on TV with his friends. I spent one long evening on a sofa with some 180 pounds

of testosterone on my left and 180 on my right. I drank more beer and ate more chips that night than ever before. But the worst was the conversation, or should I say the undefinable noises remotely resembling language, like those of a bunch of gorillas in heat. Don't ask me what words they used. As we got back to my cousin's place I rushed to the dictionary to check whether the English language actually does have words with more than four letters.

JAY

You're wonderful.

NANCY

She is smiling and looks out the window, where the sun is shining.

Wonderful like a new day. Starting right now.

(She spreads her arms and knocks over a vase standing on the windowsill).

Fuck!

She laughs out loud.

INT. - AN UPPER CLASS APARTMENT IN PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Nancy is showing a woman, Barbara, into the apartment. The apartment is very nice in a somewhat old-fashioned way. They enter the first room. Barbara is about as old as Nancy but she looks a tad older, i.e. more conservative. She is dressed in a conventional, but very elegant costume. She seems to be in a bad mood.

NANCY

So, what do you think? I know what people say about real estate agents but I never lie to my clients. This really is something special.

Barbara looks around. During the following dialogue Nancy leads Barbara through the apartment. Barbara looks at the rooms without real interest.

BARBARA

(Melancholy and disinterested)

Oh, I know it's beautiful. Thanks, but I think this is just not a time in my life where I can appreciate nice things.

NANCY

Barbara, it was the right thing to separate from your husband. But then you sometimes forget the reasons, and that's when it's hard.

BARBARA

You're probably right. I was always hoping he would change. When we got married, he was only interested in sports, cars, and his buddies. But I loved him.

NANCY

Oh I know, Barbara.

BARBARA

When the boys were small, he would play sports with them all the times. It was great. But it was not about the boys. It even got worse when they grew up. It's almost as if he is avoiding me.

NANCY

Oh, Barbara. He just doesn't deserve you. He never did.

BARBARA

How can you say that? You don't even know me; I'm just another client to you. It's not easy to deal with the consequences of a decision like that, you know.

NANCY

In fact, I do. I left my husband a couple of weeks ago.

BARBARA

Oh, I didn't know that. What happened? You don't look like a woman who is going through that?

NANCY

It's because...--I have a lover.

Here she enters again the first room.

BARBARA

Oh.

NANCY

A 25-year-old lover.

BARBARA

Oh. Oh okay.

NANCY

It helps, it really does help. I mean, it's not like I am using him. I do like him. He's special. But it does help, too.

BARBARA

It would, wouldn't it. But how would I find one? It is not like you just run into them on the street like that. And I'm a bit out of practice as far as hooking up with someone.

Nancy is looking helpless and groping for a good answer, when there is a knock on the still open door. A man, Paul, in his mid-twenties, intellectual looking, attractive, knocks on the door and enters the room.

PAUL

(To Nancy.)

Hi, my name is Paul. I live on this floor. So are you interested in this place?

NANCY

Oh no, not me, I'm the realtor.
Barbara is the one.

BARBARA

I'm the one.

Paul holds out his hand for Barbara to shake.

PAUL

Hi, Barbara. I'd be glad to know a woman in my neighborhood with a taste in fashion.

Barbara is looking at her clothes.

BARBARA

You think so.

PAUL

Oh yeah, the colors match perfectly. Unlike the stuff my last girlfriend was wearing. Women your age definitely have better taste.

BARBARA

Let's skip " your age," and I say "thank you."

PAUL

It's a pleasure

Paul smiles at both of them and leaves.

Barbara seems a bit cheered up and is looking around.

BARBARA

You know, I think I'll take it after all.

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, FIRST ROOM - DAYTIME

Nancy is entering her office. It has two rooms: one is her room, the other one (with a large window to the street) is for her assistant, Stacey. Stacey is sitting at her desk, working on the computer. She seems very sad, almost crying. She is in her late twenties and looks a bit naïve. Her clothes are fairly revealing.

NANCY

Hi, Stacey.

STACEY

Good morning, how are you?

NANCY

Fine. Any calls?

STACEY

Jay. He left a message.

She gives Nancy a piece of paper. Nancy takes the paper and looks at it: "Call me."

NANCY

Ok, I'm in my office.

STACEY

(Sounds sad.)

Sure.

Nancy is heading to her office but turns to Stacey for a moment, concerned about her.

CUT TO

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, SECOND ROOM

Back in her room she sits down at her desk, takes the telephone and dials a number. While waiting she gazes toward the open door from where a soft sobbing can be heard.

JAY

(On the telephone.)

Hello.

NANCY

Hi, it's me. You wanted me to call you.

JAY

Yeah, I have to tell you something.

NANCY

What is it?

JAY

I love you.

Now loud sobbing can be heard from Stacey's office, and Nancy is distracted by it.

NANCY

What?

JAY

I said I love you.

NANCY

(Sounding and looking businesslike)

Oh ... and so you asked me to call you
just to tell me this?

(Switching to a more romantic mood
and smiling).

That's so cute of you.

Again sobbing from the other room.

(Resuming her businesslike tone.)

But listen, I've got to take care of
something here. Talk to you later,
bye.

She hangs up the telephone.

(Shouts)

Stacey!

Stacey walks into the room. She is teary-eyed.

STACEY

Yes..

NANCY

What's going on with you?

STACEY

(Sobbing more strongly.)

He dumped me.

NANCY

Who is that? Your boyfriend?

STACEY

(Sobbing even more strongly.)

Yes.

NANCY

Why?

STACEY

(Now really crying.)

Because I cheated on him.

NANCY

You did what? With whom?

Stacey comes to the desk and hands Nancy a photo she took
out of a pocket in her dress.

STACEY

With him.

Nancy is looking at the photo. It shows a fiftyish man in an expensive suit leaning against an expensive car. He does not look like a philanderer but rather like a decent, reliable man.

NANCY

Stacey! What were you thinking?

STACEY

I don't know.

Nancy is looking at her disapprovingly.

NANCY

Well, listen, this was just an affair. You still love your boyfriend and you want him back. You do, don't you?

STACEY

No.

NANCY

You want to be with this guy?

She is pointing at the photo.

STACEY

Yes.

NANCY

And is he serious? Is he married?

STACEY

No. He said he had been waiting his whole life for the right woman. And I'm that woman.

NANCY

So then, why are you crying?

STACEY

I don't know.

NANCY

Listen, I think it would be better if you took the day off. Would that help?

STACEY

I don't know.

NANCY

Stacey!

STACEY

(Weeping less.)

It might.

NANCY

Go home, have yourself a nice day,
relax, take a bath and come back
tomorrow.

STACEY

Thank you very much, Mrs. Adams.
You're so good to me.

She walks out, still sobbing. Nancy gazes at Stacey as she is leaving.

INT. - A RESTAURANT - DAYTIME

Nancy is sitting at a table with another woman her age. It's her friend Kate. They are having lunch. Kate is very agitated, extravagant.

KATE

I'm so happy you moved to
Philadelphia. Did I already mention
that?

NANCY

You did.

KATE

Now we can see each other so many
times.

She puts her arm on Nancy's.

I missed my old friend Nancy.

NANCY

I know.

KATE

Of course, I shouldn't be happy since
the reason you moved is so sad. What
makes it worse: I liked Joe.

NANCY

You mentioned that, too.

KATE

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sure I did. Nancy, we have known each other since college. We are like an old couple that is having the same conversations over and over. Was it like this with Joe in the end?

NANCY

Sort of.

KATE

Maybe that's the destiny of marriage. (Sad voice.)
Maybe that's why I never got married. (Pause. Self-confident.)
That's a good reason. - You know, I liked Joe from first the time I met him. You had arranged this meeting at a bar...

NANCY

With the red curtains matching my skirt.

KATE

...to ask my advice whether or not you should marry him. Oh, you were crazy about him. He proposed to you after just one month, and you were in all seriousness considering saying "I do."

NANCY

No.

KATE

What do you mean, no?

NANCY

I was considering it. But I wasn't considering it seriously.

KATE

Look, I'm the one telling the story here. Anyway, I checked him out

thoroughly and gave you my well
thought-out recommendation: Go for it.
Was I wrong?

NANCY

No, you weren't. We had some great
years. But then he changed. He stopped
being the romantic guy he used to be.

KATE

Just like any married guy.

NANCY

He became lethargic, and stopped doing
the things he used to do before. At
least with regard to me, as I now
know.

(Pause)

Maybe he never got over the fact that
we couldn't have kids.

KATE

I was so sorry that you never could
have kids.

NANCY

Yeah, that was pretty bad. But if I
managed to get over it, why didn't he?
I mean, it's harder for a woman. A man
can always find another woman and try
to have a baby with her. - I wonder if
he was having his affair because of
that?

KATE

Women can do the same.

NANCY

Do you think that is why I took up
with Jay... No, I'm...

KATE

You couldn't have kids anymore.

NANCY

Oh no, not physically, I'm not that
old. But... No. It's just....

KATE

Why?

NANCY

He's so interesting. He is young, handsome, sexy. He has a sense of humor; he is smart, educated. He gives me the feeling that I'm still desirable. Not despite my age but because of my age.

KATE

I know I shouldn't but: I envy you.

NANCY

Have you never been interested in younger men?

KATE

Nope. But maybe I should be.

A waiter, a young man, is coming to their table and serving them wine. He stumbles and pours some wine on Kate's clothes.

WAITER

Oh, sorry. I'm so sorry.

He apologizes and tries to awkwardly clean her dress with a napkin, and as he does so he touches her breasts.

KATE

Oh, stop that!

She says it with a smile as if she is actually enjoying it.

WAITER

Oh, of course, I'm sorry, I'll let you do it. It is my fault, both the stumbling and the fumbling. Oh my god, what am I saying!

Kate is looking at him as if she is very intrigued. He returns her gaze and also seems interested.

WAITER

Let me get you some more wine. Some better wine. Our best wine. Will that be okay?

Nancy and Kate are nodding. He leaves.

NANCY

Do you sometimes have déjà vus?

Kate is not paying attention to what Nancy is saying and is following the waiter with her eyes.

INT. - BEDROOM IN NANCY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Nancy and Jay are naked in bed. They are lying across from each other. Between them is a chessboard they are looking at.

NANCY

Make your move.

JAY

Don't rush me. I don't have a husband with whom I played chess for twenty years. Nonetheless, I'm about to checkmate you.

He is still thinking, while she's obviously getting annoyed.

NANCY

So, do you think we are entering an era of mixed-age relationships?

JAY

Are you trying to distract me?

NANCY

No, it's just that I saw three instances of it today. Can this be happening just by coincidence?

JAY

Sure.

NANCY

So, you think it is just coincidence: who falls in love with whom?

JAY

Yep.

NANCY

That's crap.

JAY

No really, ideas of what is considered beautiful and loveable have been changing all the time. You're the victim of contemporary preferences. If I had lived back in Rubens' times...

He takes the king and the queen from the chess board and puts them close together.

I would never have felt attracted to you. Much to skinny.

He takes king and the queen from the chess board, put them apart.

If I were Amish, I would come close to you only when you are wearing a hat.

He exchanges the queen with a pawn, puts it close to the king.

As an ancient Greek I'd prefer boys, and if I were Romeo...

He tries to find an appropriate chess piece, and then since he can't find one takes on of her fingers.

... I'd be into a thirteen-year old teenager whom I incidentally met at a ball.

NANCY

That's how you see it?

She gets up, wrapping a blanket around her body. He changes his position on the bed.

So, if Juliet had been not a thirteen-year old beauty but a, say, almost fifty-year old castle and palace realtor, Romeo would never fall in love with her because it was just not as convenient to be into someone other than a young virgin.

JAY

Yeah.

NANCY

You don't believe in the mysterious, mighty power of love that can transcend time and space and everything else?

JAY

I've heard about it - but I have also heard about seven dwarves living in the deep forest with a young woman without ever touching her, and while I love the story I don't really believe it.

NANCY

If there were dwarves, it could happen.

JAY

And if there was a fifty-year old castle and palace realtor, Romeo might fall in love with her?

Nancy gets back into bed, crawls over to his side, and gives him a kiss.

NANCY

Well, you did.

JAY

I mean, nowadays.

NANCY

It could happen anytime, anywhere.

JAY

So I'm right.

She straightens up.

NANCY

What?

JAY

It all happens by accident, at any time, anywhere. Nobody can predict it. So, no. I don't think we are entering an era of mixed-age relationships.

NANCY

What you are saying makes no sense.

JAY

Nor do you. But maybe that's the nature of love.

He moves toward her and kisses her. As they kiss he stumbles on the chess board and all the pieces fall down. He looks at it.

Chaos everywhere.

INT. - BEDROOM OF NANCY'S HOUSE - MORNING.

Next morning. Nancy is sitting at a dressing table in her bedroom. She is putting on her make-up. Jay is standing in the door.

NANCY

You're still here. Aren't you going to your place to change before work?

JAY

Yeah, I was just about to take off. But I wanted to talk you first. About an idea I have.

NANCY

What idea?

JAY

You know, a colleague in my department is planning to put on "Romeo and Juliet" with his students for Christmas week. And I just can't get this wild idea out of my mind...

NANCY

What wild idea is that?

JAY

What if Juliet were played not by a young girl but by a mature woman?

NANCY

And Romeo?

JAY

As usual.

NANCY

What's the point you would like to make with that?

JAY

That love is timeless. Independent of everything.

NANCY

Oh. That's beautiful. Sometimes you can be so sweet. - You should talk to your colleague about that. I'm really no expert in literature.

JAY

But you told me that you played theater in college. And that you loved it.

NANCY

So what?

JAY

I thought you could play the part of... Juliet...

Nancy looks at him, intrigued, but then she continues with her makeup, looking uninterested.

NANCY

I'm flattered but: No.

Seems to think about it.

Except - (smiles) Romeo is cute.

JAY

Ok, why don't you think about it. I am going to talk to Ken.

Jay turns around to leave. Nancy turns to him.

NANCY

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.

EXT. - OUTSIDE NANCY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jay is leaving. He gets into his car in front of the house and drives off. There is a truck of the moving company turning around the corner and coming toward him. The vehicles pass each other and Jay is looking at the truck. He stops his car to watch the scene unfolding. The truck stops in front of the house; another brawny driver gets out of the truck and rings the doorbell. Nancy opens the door; he hands her a letter and leaves. Her gaze

follows him, and she smiles. Close on Jay, who is also smiling.

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM - LATE MORNING

Nancy is on the telephone-

NANCY

You're kidding. I mean, young handsome waiters may be wild but he didn't do that with you. I couldn't even talk to Jay about this.

Listens.

You mean, I should just do it? He might think he is going out with a slut.

Listens.

Well, I would mind. - Anyway, the reason I called you is to tell you something. I got another letter from Joe. I told you, I hated his first one.

She starts to search for the letter on her desk.

All his whining and begging for forgiveness. How pathetic is that! But this one is better. Listen.

She takes the letter.

CUT TO

INT. - KATE'S APARTMENT.

Kate is sitting in a chair. She is holding an empty glass in her hand. During Nancy's monologue her lover, the waiter, comes and takes away the glass, brings it back and starts to cuddle with her but she tries to shake him off since she is moved by Joe's letter.

NANCY'S VOICE

(Through the phone)

Dear Nancy, you didn't reply to my letter. I understand but I think you are making a mistake. It is not only that I deserve a reply,

(Off Screen)

it would be better for you as well. You can't just put our marriage behind

you like a ruined vacation; it's not like ten days of rain you can choose to forget and have fun with your new, sunny guy. It does not work that way. How do I know you have a new guy? I don't know; I am just guessing. You're too wonderful to not attract someone. So kick that damn bastard in the butt and tell him to make you write me. Tell him it's the only way you can get rid off me.

BACK TO

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, SECOND ROOM

I'm starting to get into this. What do you think?

BACK TO.

KATE'S APARTMENT, CLOSE ON KATE

Kate is still moved by what she just heard and is fending off her lover's advances.

BACK TO

NANCY'S OFFICE

A light lights up on the telephone.

NANCY

Oh I'm sorry, I've got another call. Can you hold on for a second? -

She presses a button on the telephone. Listens.

What, he liked the idea? He wants to talk to me? Good. Tonight?

(She is getting excited.)

Sure, that will be fine. Sorry, I have Kate on the other line.

Presses another button.

Kate, I'm going to be Juliet.

Listens.

Yes, Romeo's Juliet. Isn't that incredible?

Listens.

What? The letter? You liked it? Me too, me too. Kate, I'd better get going. Off to the library. Bye.

Hangs up the phone, smiles and put her hands to her chest in a theatrical pose.

CUT TO

KATE'S APARTMENT

Kate is confused. Her lover is still trying to cuddle though she is not responding, but she also isn't fending him off anymore, lost in thought.

INT. - THE STAGE OF A SMALL THEATER IN A PUBLIC BUILDING
- EVENING

Jay is leading Nancy onto the gloomy stage; a weak spotlight is shining center stage.

NANCY

I thought we were going to meet at a restaurant or something and talk. I didn't think it was going to be an audition.

JAY

Oh, come on. Ken just needs to know how you'd do this.

NANCY

And is he actually watching? I don't see anybody.

She is looking at the first few rows in the auditorium.

CUT

CLOSE-UP ON GUY IN THE FIRST ROW

Ralph, the actor playing Romeo, is sitting in the first row. He is in his mid-twenties, tall, muscular, goatee. He is reading a book.

BACK TO

THE STAGE

JAY

(Pointing to the back of the auditorium)

He's over there. The guy pacing back
and forth.

CUT

CLOSE-UP ON BACK OF AUDITORIUM

Ken is nervously pacing back and forth in the back of the
auditorium. He is hard to see. He's in his late twenties,
looks like an intellectual.

BACK TO

STAGE WITH JAY AND NANCY

JAY

He's an artist, you know.

NANCY

I would never have guessed.

CUT

CLOSE-UP ON KEN AND STAGE OR SWITCHING BETWEEN THE TWO

KENNETH

Why do you want do this?

NANCY

I think it'd be fun.

KENNETH

Fun? What are you talking about? I am
talking about theater. Emotions. Great
emotions. Love, suffering, pain.
You're talking about fun?

NANCY

Sorry, I just thought, I...

KENNETH

That's okay! Don't think too much.
Listen! Jay's idea is not bad. It
opens up a new dimension. Of course I
will have to work on it but before I
do I have to know: Are you going to be
able to do it? Are you able to act out
desire? Act out love? Do you still
have the energy, the drive, and the
sensuality? Yeah, you know, Juliet is

a volcano ready to erupt, pure pent-up
sexuality. Can you express that?

BACK TO

STAGE

Jay has left the scene. Only Nancy is left on the stage.

NANCY

(Insecure.)

I can try.

Shows some poses of loving and of a woman wooing a man,
but not convincingly.

KEN

Jay! -

Jay enters the scene, is just standing without doing
anything. Nancy is looking at him and starts hitting him
without a word. She moves closer to him and touches him.
She is acting very convincingly. Finally she is standing
behind Jay and speaking in his ear in an erotic manner. -

NANCY

And now, my love, tell Mr. Director
that I want to meet my Romeo. Right
here and right now.

CUT TO

CLOSE TO YOUNG MAN IN THE FIRST ROW

He smiles and enters the stage. He is very handsome.

RALPH

That would be me. Ralph.

CUT TO

STAGE

Ralph offers his hand for a handshake.

RALPH

Nice to meet you.

Nancy looks at him, obviously attracted.

NANCY

(Speaks loud to Ken.)

Did I get the part? I really want to do it.

INT. - AUDITORIUM OF THE THEATER - EVENING

Nancy and Jay are standing in the back of the auditorium. In the background Ken and Ralph are talking. Nancy touches Jay's chest.

NANCY

Thank you so much for doing this. I think I'm really going to enjoy it. I am going to have so much fun.

JAY

You like him.

NANCY

Yeah, he's hot.

JAY

He is.

NANCY

Jay, it might be a silly idea, but with all this talk about timeless love, old Juliet with young Romeo, all those things happening around me...

JAY

Yeah?

NANCY

Do you think I could seduce Ralph?

JAY

Oh.

NANCY

There is no reason to be jealous. I won't. But do you think I could?

JAY

If you could, you'd be the most extraordinary Juliet in the whole universe.

NANCY

Why? It can't be that hard.

JAY

Look.

Points with his head to Ralph.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON RALPH AND BOYFRIEND

Ralph is standing with another guy now, Philip, and kissing him. Philip is shorter than Ralph, athletic, and has very short hair.

BACK TO

CLOSE ON NANCY AND JAY

NANCY

Oh!

First looks shocked, then smiles.

That just makes it more challenging.

A girl is passing by, in her early twenties, tight T-shirt, busty.

LAUREEN

Hi.

NANCY

Hi. -

(To Jay)

She's cute, too.

JAY

Yep.

NANCY

Who is she?

JAY

She is the assistant director.

NANCY

Oh, I seeeeee.

EXT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

View from the outside of the house into the living room. Nancy is pacing back and forth, reading from a book. She seems to be practicing her lines.

CUT TO.

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY.

She is just declaiming the last few words. The door bell rings. She goes to the door, opens.

CUT TO

EXT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Another strong worker is standing outside, wearing a tank top, sweating. The truck of the moving company is in the background.

CUT TO

EXT. - NANCY'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE DOOR- DAY

WORKER

I have a letter for you, Ma'am.

NANCY

Thank you. (Pause.) It's a hot day today. Can I get you some water?

WORKER

I would appreciate that.

Nancy leaves for a moment, comes back with a glass of water.

WORKER

A large glass, too. Thanks.

He drinks about half of it. Then looks at the glass, shrugs in apology.

I'm sorry, it's just too much. Too large.

He hesitates whether or not to hand her back the glass. Finally, inspired, he pours the water over his head. Water is running down his body. Nancy seems intrigued.

This feels good on a hot day. Thanks, but I'd better take off. Bye.

Gives her the glass and leaves. Nancy's eyes are following him. The worker who brought the previous letter looks out of the window of the front passenger seat and waves to her.

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Nancy enters her living room, opens the letter. She begins to read, but then seems to have an idea and raises up her head. She stretches her body and strikes a theatrical pose. She starts to read it in an exaggerated manner, as a declamation, with irony, but in the course of the monologue she slowly shifts to a more personal way of reading, moved.

Dear Nancy, I still don't see why you are not replying? What do you want me to do? I could look back on all the good times we had but that would be pathetic. That's what a man would do who lives in the past, who glorifies the past rather than envisioning something new. That man would be history. I want to talk about the future.

I just can't see it without you. It is not that I am kneeling in front of you, screaming and weeping. This is just a matter of fact, and I want you to know about it. I'm looking forward to your reply. Love Joe

CUT

INT. - STAGE IN THEATER

A series of scenes showing the rehearsal of the play. Focus on scenes with Nancy and Ralph, with Ken giving instructions, acting fidgety. Ralph and Nancy seem to get along pretty well. In the last shot the scene ends with Nancy in Ralph's arm, looking at him love struck.

INT. - THE THEATER, A CORRIDOR WITH DOORS

Nancy and Ralph are standing close to each other. She touches him.

NANCY

(Romantic.)
Romeo.

RALPH

(Matter-of-factly.)
Ralph.

NANCY

Even better.

RALPH

What is it? I have an appointment.

NANCY

I thought about - us.

RALPH

The last scene was fine. You were looking very emotional. But you should go see an ophthalmologist; your right eye is red.

Nancy touches her right eye very softly.

No, the other one. The right one from my view.

Nancy leads her hand to his cheek. He looks confused. She kisses him. At first he doesn't react, but then he returns the kiss. -

RALPH

Wow. For about 0.7 seconds I was thinking I was enjoying this. Which for someone 100% gay like me is a very long time. Congratulations.

NANCY

(Smiling and a bit insecure.)
I'm not sure I really want to know this but I'm wondering if I could change your mind if I tried a little harder.

RALPH

I really don't think so. Unless you can offer this.

He pulls her to a door, opens it and enters the room with her.

CUT TO

INT. - A SMALL ROOM IN THE THEATER

In the room the young man Ralph kissed before (Philip) is standing naked and with a rose in his mouth. Nancy is

staring at him, first at his face, then she lowers her gaze and her eyes widen.

Philip first tries to talk with the rose in his mouth, which is unintelligible. He takes the rose out of his mouth.

PHILIP

What's are you looking at? It just shows that my boyfriend arouses me. Don't straight couples do that?

NANCY

I don't. - I can't. Jay sometimes does... I... but not as

She is acting as if she was impressed by the size That's.... Oh my God, I'd better get out. -

She leaves the room, Philip is looking bothered, Ralph amused.

INT. - CORRIDOR OF THE THEATER

Nancy is standing in the corridor. First she is confused; then she seems to think of something. She takes her cell phone out of her purse and dials a number.

NANCY

Jay, it's me.

Ken appears. She looks at him.

(Into the phone)

Hold on a second.

(To Ken)

Have you been here the whole time? Did you see everything?

KEN

(Sheepishly)

Not what happened inside there.

NANCY

Ok. Hold on a minute, I'm on the phone.

She turns away.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON NANCY'S FACE

NANCY

(Whispering)

Have you ever thought about welcoming
me naked with a rose in your mouth.

CUT TO

LIVING ROOM OF NANCY'S HOUSE

Jay is sitting on the couch, reading a magazine

JAY

(Confused)

No.

BACK TO

CLOSE ON NANCY

NANCY

Could you?

BACK TO

CLOSE ON JAY

JAY

(Still baffled)

Yes, sure.

BACK TO

CLOSE ON NANCY

NANCY

Fine. I have to hang up now. See you
soon.

She turns to Ken.

CUT TO

CLOSE UP NANCY AND KEN

NANCY

(Domineering).

Kenneth.

KEN

Nancy. I did see what happened, right here, not in there, but I saw what you were trying to do. And I want to say that I really admire you for it.

NANCY

Thank you.

KENNETH

(Sounds unassertive in the beginning of his monologue, then more and more arrogant in an intellectual way.)
Yes, it was so brave. Hopeless - believe me - but so brave.

NANCY

Thank you.

KENNETH

That's what is at the heart of the play. What is love is about? You have to be brave, you must fight for it again and again, even though it's hopeless. You never get what you yearn for. We all end up in desperation.

NANCY

Do we?

KENNETH

Yeah. This is what I want us to show: that love is like life, there is no hope, only despair. You can do it.

NANCY

Ah.

KENNETH

I've seen it. A woman your age can really testify to this desperation. And now I've seen that you also have courage. That's good, great, beautiful.

NANCY

Thank you, Ken. Thank you very, very much.

KENNETH

Sure.

EXT. - IN FRONT OF THE THEATER - EVENING

Nancy gets into her car in front of the building. It's almost dark and raining slightly, October weather. When she is seated, Ken is passing in front of the car but doesn't look at her. She is staring at him angrily. Turns on the radio. A loud voice is announcing the six 'o'clock news. She changes the station to aggressive heavy metal music and starts the car.

FOLLOW NANCY IN THE CAR

Close on her face, still angry. She is passing a stand selling roses in the street. She looks at it and her face relaxes. She begins to smile and changes the station to romantic music.

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE - ENTRANCE AREA

Nancy enters her house, slips off her shoes.

NANCY

Jay.

JAY

(From the living room)

I'm here.

CUT TO

LIVING ROOM

Nancy is standing in the door. Jay is sitting on the couch, reading a book. She is looking at him with both disappointment and some excitement. Jay is still looking at his magazine.

NANCY

Have you thought about my idea?

JAY

Yes.

NANCY

And?

JAY

I'm still thinking about it.

He gets up.

FOLLOW HIM INTO THE KITCHEN

He goes into the kitchen; she follows him. He puts something in the microwave, presses a button and looks out of the window. She gazes angrily at him.

JAY

Oh, look, more mail. It's the moving company. It's not their time though.

Nancy is hesitant to go to the door.

Do you want me to get it?

NANCY

No.

She leaves the room with the beginning of a smile.

FOLLOW HER IN THE ENTRANCE AREA

She looks in the mirror and arranges her hair, straightens her skirt. The doorbell rings. She opens the door.

CUT TO

OVER NANCY'S SHOULDER

A short, scrawny young guy is standing there, with the truck in the background, visible in the streetlight.

The young man raises the letter he has in his hand.

GUY

(Insecure.)

We missed you this morning.

He hands the letter to her but is not standing very close to her.

I'm new at this job. It's my first day.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON NANCY

NANCY

Okay.

CUT TO

CLOSE UP NANCY AND BOY

She takes the letter. Both are standing there for a moment not knowing what to do.

BOY

Bye.

NANCY

Thanks. Bye.

The young man turns and leaves.

CUT TO

POINT OF VIEW NANCY

The guy turns around several times, looking at her. He goes to the back of the truck and raises his arm. A strong arm pulls him very quickly up into the truck, almost like a jump.

CUT TO

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE AREA

Nancy closes the door and turns around. She opens the letter and looks at it. It has only two words: "Write me." Jay appears.

JAY

So what is he saying?

NANCY

Just two words.

JAY

Like what? Fuck you? Beat it?

Nancy looks disgusted.

NANCY

Something along those lines. Excuse me. I'm going to my bedroom. Just make sure the door is locked when you leave.

She goes upstairs. Jay looks irritated.

JAY

Sure.

INT. - BEDROOM OF NANCY'S HOUSE

Nancy is in her bedroom. She is sitting at a table, a pencil in hand. In front of her a piece of paper. She is thinking; then she starts writing. When she is finished, she folds the letter and puts it in an envelope. She is writing the address on the envelope.

FOLLOW HER INTO THE BATHROOM

She goes into the bathroom next door and runs herself a bath. While the water is running, she goes to a shelf with towels and, smilingly picks one with "His" on it, in the same pattern like the one with "Hers" picked by Joe earlier.

EXT. - A LETTER BOX IN A PHILADELPHIA STREET

Nancy is walking down a street, drops the letter in a letter box, keeps walking with a pensive look on her face and a smile.

INT. - CORRIDOR OF JOE'S BUILDING, A ROW OF MAILBOXES

Joe takes a letter out of his mailbox. He turns over the envelope. Nancy's return address can be seen. Joe opens the letter and reads it.

JOE

(Shocked)

What?

INT. - JOES'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

Joe is on the phone.

JOE

Carl? Do you still have your photo equipment? Yes? I would like to ask you a favor. And let me be clear about this: Whatever happens, I want you to stay my best friend. Don't think badly of me.

INT. - JOES'S APARTMENT - LATE EVENING, CLOSE ON ENTRANCE DOOR

Carl enters the apartment, carrying a big suitcase.

CARL

Joe?

CUT TO

DOOR TO THE BEDROOM

Joe appears in the door, naked with a rose in his mouth.

CUT TO

CLOSE UP OF THE ROOM

Carl turns away and averts his eyes.

CARL

(Screaming)

Oh no, no. Yikes. Get the hell away from me, for Christ's sake. What do you think you're doing? No, no.

JOE

It gets even worse. Did you bring the magazines I asked you for?

Carl is still averting his eyes.

CARL

Oh no, no. This is not happening. I am married. I have a wonderful wife and two kids. Whatever is going to happen here, I'm no part of it.

JOE

(Erotic)

Oh Carl, I need you tonight.

CARL

Listen. The camera has a timer. You get dressed, right now, and I'll show you how it works and then you can do on your own whatever you want to do or whatever you think you have to do.

JOE

Sure.

CARL

And we're not going to mention this for the rest of our lives.

JOE

No problem.

INT. - JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joe is in his apartment; he is sealing an envelope with heavy-duty tape. Nancy's address is on the envelope. He is writing in bold pen: "Personal. Do not open unless authorized."

INT. - A POST OFFICE - DAY

Joe is in a post office, waiting in line. He is holding the envelope in his hand by his hips. An attractive woman from behind him is staring at him. He notices her and smiles. She returns the smile and lowers her gaze. She seems to be looking at the envelope, and her smile gets wider. He looks at the envelope, confused and alarmed. He then notices that his zipper is open. He zips it up and looks at the woman. She is still smiling.

INT. - JOE'S BUILDING, HALLWAY WITH MAILBOXES

Joe is standing by his mailbox and is opening it. He takes out a few letters, looks at them and is disappointed. An old woman is passing behind him.

OLD WOMAN

Good evening, Mr. Adams.

CUT TO

INT. - JOE'S BUILDING, HALLWAY WITH MAILBOXES

Joe is looking disappointedly at some letters he just took out of his mailbox. A young woman is passing behind him.

YOUNG WOMAN

Hi Joe. How are you?

CUT TO

INT. - JOE'S BUILDING, HALLWAY WITH MAILBOXES

Joe is looking disappointedly at some letters he just took out of his mailbox. A middle-aged man is standing next to him.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Why don't you just give it up? It's
only ever junk mail and bills.

CUT TO

INT. - JOE'S BUILDING, HALLWAY WITH MAILBOXES

Joe is looking through his mail and finds a letter from
Nancy. It is a thick envelope.

INT. - JOE'S APARTMENT

He has opened the letter. He pulls out a photo out of
Nancy laughing. Then he finds her letter. Her voice,
while he is reading:

CUT TO

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

NANCY'S VOICE

Dear Joe,
I thought it would be only fair, if
you also got a picture from me. Not
quite as embarrassing as yours, of
course. You see me looking at your
photos. As you see, I like them very
much and I am proud to be married to a
man who has the balls to do that kind
of thing.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON JOE

He is smiling.

BACK TO

THE PHOTO

You can trust that I'll never show
them to anyone, although I'd really
like to. Some people would be very
envious.

CUT

CLOSE UP ON SCENE WITH NANCY ENJOYING HERSELF WITH JAY IN
A BED LOOKING AT A BOOK OR SOMETHING

NANCY'S VOICE

To tell you the truth: The picture
might also show me asking love to my
new beau.

CUT

NANCY AND JAY HAVING A PILLOW FIGHT

NANCY'S VOICE

You guessed right. To make matters
worse, he is young. But in some
respects he just cannot hold a rose to
you...

CUT

JAY IS DRAGGING NANCY TO THE BED

NANCY'S VOICE

...but I have a lot of fun with him,
and I want to give him time.

CUT

CLOSE ON JOE

NANCY'S VOICE

Nonetheless you do deserve a chance.
Write to me, every day, until
Christmas, and then I will make a
decision about our future. I know,
it's a lot to ask but then you have
done me very wrong.
Love, Nancy

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM - DAY

Nancy is talking on the phone.

NANCY

Oh Kate, you bad girl. Jay isn't that
passionate. I tried a couple of days
ago but I didn't work. Maybe he is not
the one. I even wrote to Joe.

CUT TO

INT. - A POOL IN A PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Kate is sitting in a lawnchair. She is wearing a swimsuit
and is talking on her cell phone.

KATE

Oh girlfriend, just don't do anything you're going to regret. I know I always spoke in favor of Joe. But now I have got new experiences. And it's definitely worth the wait.

She waves to the waiter whom she met earlier. He is at the bar ordering a drink.

It was me who made it happen. It was not always like this. Oh, I can't even tell what we did yesterday.

BACK TO

NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM

NANCY

You not only can, you must. I'm your best friend. You have to tell me everything.

BACK TO

KATE AT THE POOL

She is looking at some teenage girls close to her who seem to be listening to what she is saying.

KATE

Believe me, I can't. Not right now, anyway.

BACK TO

NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM

NANCY

You're a wuss! - But maybe you're right. I mean Jay is young, just not young in a passionate kind of way.

She takes a picture of Jay out of a drawer of her desk.

That's what I like about him, actually. I don't want someone who always goes "Let's stay in bed all day!" That's great one day but then it gets really old.

BACK TO

KATE AT THE POOL

KATE

What do you mean: bed? There are plenty of other places...

She motions to the young girls to go away, and they amble off, slowly.

I'd really like to tell you all the places we've used...

BACK TO

NANCY IN HER ROOM

NANCY

...but you can't right now, I understand. Just make a list and fax it to me. In the meantime I'll think about how I can egg on Jay to be a little more aggressive. There have to be ways and means.

BACK TO

KATE AT THE POOL

KATE'S

(Happy that she can finally speak)
Ways and means? Oh, I can tell you all about means... And ways, too!

BACK TO

NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM

Stacey walks into the office with a letter in her hand. Nancy seems glad to be interrupted.

NANCY

Kate, listen, I have to get going. Stacey just walked in.

She hangs up the phone and looks at Stacey. What's going on?

STACEY

The mail just got in and I saw this letter, and the sender. It's your husband, isn't it? I thought you'd like to see it straight away.

Stacey hands the letter to Nancy.

NANCY

Okay.

She looks at Stacey as if she should leave.

Thank you.

STACEY

(With her voice cracking.)

Is it from your husband?

NANCY

Ex-husband. Yes, it is.

STACEY

That's so cute. He still misses you
and writes you letters.

She sits down, crying.

NANCY

Yes, he is a decent person.

STACEY

I wish I had such a man.

NANCY

What happened to Mr. Expensive Suit or
should I say Mr. Outrageously
Expensive Car?

STACEY

He dumped me.

NANCY

Why?

STACEY

Because I cheated on him.

NANCY

With whom?

STACEY

My boyfriend.

NANCY

Who?

STACEY

My ex-boyfriend.

NANCY

The one who dumped you since you were cheating on him with Mr. Expensive?

STACEY

Yes.

NANCY

So then, everything worked out fine. You're back with your boyfriend again and Mr. Big Car found someone else, who trusts that he had been waiting for her all his life.

STACEY

But no, he dumped me.

NANCY

Who did?

STACEY

My boyfriend.

NANCY

You mean your ex-boyfriend?

STACEY

Yes.

NANCY

How come?

STACEY

Because he found out that I cheated on Walter with him.

NANCY

Walter is Mr. Check Out My Car?

STACEY

Yes.

NANCY

So your ex-boyfriend/boyfriend dumped you because you betrayed Mr. I-prefer-

young-chicks with him, with whom in turn you betrayed him, your boyfriend/ex-boyfriend that is, in the first place.

STACEY

Yes.

NANCY

That's too way complicated for me.

STACEY

That's what he says, too.

NANCY

Your boyfriend?

STACEY

Yes. He says, I'm too complicated. He says he can't handle me. When he was at the Air Force he managed to flew an F-15, but he says he can't deal with me.

NANCY

Stacey, men may be experts in everything: fighter planes, computers, engines, space shuttles and whatever they're still going to invent to avoid time with us, but they are never experts in women.

STACEY

Never?

NANCY

Never.

STACEY

So there is no hope?

NANCY

Not if you expect them to do the right thing without instruction. You have to tell them.

STACEY

But I don't know what.

NANCY

Then think about it. Why don't you
take the day off?

STACEY

Thank you. You're so kind to me.

NANCY

Sure.

Nancy takes Stacey by the arm and leads her into the
first room to Stacey's desk.

FOLLOW TO THE FIRST ROOM

Barbara is entering the room. She seems to be in a hurry.
Nancy gives Stacey her purse and leads her to the door.

NANCY

Ok, go home, relax and think about
what I told you.

STACEY

I will.

Stacey leaves the building.

NANCY

(To Barbara.)
Barbara

BARBARA

What's with her?

NANCY

Have you ever heard about the endless
saga of men and women?

BARBARA

That's why I'm here.

NANCY

Oh great, you're next in line. Let's
go into my office.

BARBARA

No, wait, I want you to look out the
window.

Nancy looks out the window.

Do you see the shop on the other side
of the street?

NANCY

The bookstore.

BARBARA

No, not that one. The one to the left.

Nancy is looking at a lingerie store, called "(For Day)
and Night."

NANCY

The lingerie store?

BARBARA

Yes. Guess what, I met there with
Paul.

NANCY

Paul... You mean, Paul the neighbor?

BARBARA

Yes.

NANCY

Did he ask you to meet him there?

BARBARA

No.

Pause. Nancy looks puzzled.

It was me who asked HIM to meet me
there.

NANCY

Barbara, what are you talking about?

BARBARA

Listen, I'm not here to discuss that.
I'm here for something much more
important.

NANCY

Meaning...

Barbara takes two bra panty sets out of her coat pockets.
One red, one blue.

BARBARA

What do you think: this one or that one? Blue as the sky and the color of my eyes or red as sin?

NANCY

Oh, I don't know.

BARBARA

C'mon. I need to know. Paul is really sensitive about colors. One time I nearly missed out on sex because I wasn't wearing a green set went we went to the woods to do it there.

NANCY

That doesn't make it any easier.

Jay enters the office. Barbary and Nancy are a bit irritated, Jay cool.

JAY

The red one. Definitely.

BARBARA

Are you sure?

JAY

Positive. If you hold it another ten seconds without leaving the room I'm going to take you right here.

BARBARA

Oh good, that's exactly what I'm looking for.

She kisses the red one and leaves the building to the street.

NANCY

How did you know it's for her?

JAY

Not your size. Too big.

NANCY

Thanks.

JAY

Let's go to your office. Now.

CUT TO

NANCY'S ROOM

They enter her room. Nancy goes to her chair. As she passes the desk she sees Joe's letter and hides it under some papers.

JAY

Sit down.

Nancy sits down on the chair.

Not there. On top of the desk.

NANCY

What?

Jay comes around the desk. Nancy changes from chair to the desk. Jay is standing in front of her.

JAY

Here. Now.

He starts to unbutton his shirt.

NANCY

You know, Stacey is supposed to be working in the other room.

JAY

That's what I had hoped for. But this works out just fine.

NANCY

Are you sure?

JAY

As sure as a man can be.

CUT

Jay and Nancy are standing by the desk, both buttoning up their shirts.

NANCY

So, see you tonight - love.

Jay smiles at her and leaves the room. Nancy sits down and, after a brief moment of reminiscing what just happened, she begins to search for Joe's letter. Her desk is looking fairly ruffled. When she finds the letter, she

blows on it as if removing dust or dirt. She opens the letter and reads it.

JOE'S VOICE

Sweetheart, you've given me quite an assignment here. This is why I am using your business address - and because I don't want this damn young fucker to come close to my letters.

Nancy looks both embarrassed and amused.

You know that I am not a good writer. I could never come up with some amazing hook for each letter. I need a plan. Here it is: In each letter I am going to lay out what I would like to do with you every day after we have gotten together again at Christmas. It's easy for me to do. I have so many plans.

This was the prologue to the book. See the first chapter tomorrow.

Much love Joe

Nancy lowers the letter and seems touched.

INT. - THE THEATER - EVENING

Scene of rehearsal of the play.

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM.

Stacey brings a letter to Nancy's desk weeping; she is wearing a sweater for fall.

INT. - A FITTING ROOM IN A DEPARTMENT STORE

Nancy and Jay are kissing in the fitting room of a department store. A woman accidentally opens it, watches the scene and looks slightly upset. Jay and Nancy doesn't mind.

Int. - Nancy's office, first room - day

Nancy enters the office coming through the door of her room. Stacey, wearing a warm sweater for winter, looks up from her desk and gives her a letter.

INT. - A TAXICAB - NIGHT

Nancy and Jay are making out in the back seat; the driver watches the scene and looks annoyed. Jay doesn't mind, Nancy does a bit.

INT. - THE THEATER - EVENING

Scene of rehearsal of the play.

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, FIRST ROOM - DAY

Stacey is sitting at her desk. Nancy comes in from the street, a heavy winter coat with some snow on it. Stacey is waving a letter to her.

EXT. - A LARGE PUBLIC CHRISTMAS TREE

A Santa Clause brushes aside some branches and sees Nancy and Jay kissing. He shakes his head disapprovingly. Jay is still happy with it, Nancy looks to be ashamed.

INT. - A SMALL ROOM IN THE THEATER BUILDING

Jay and Nancy are kissing inside a closet of the theater building, Nancy in her Juliet costume.

NANCY

Have I told you that Ken likes my acting because a 'woman of my age' can show desperate love so much better?

JAY

Forget him. He is the one who is desperate since he hasn't gotten any in months.

NANCY

I can see why. After about thirty-seven sentences into his lecture without any chance of interrupting him any woman would run away.

JAY

Can you imagine how desperate he'd be if he knew what we're doing here?

NANCY

I love the way you think.

She stops kissing him.

Jay, he's not totally wrong.

JAY

Why? We've had an amazing time.

NANCY

True, but this cannot last forever.

JAY

Trust me. It will.

NANCY

No, this is not what life is about.
Believe a mature woman. Something can
always crop up.

The door opens and Lauren glances into the room. She's shocked.

LAUREEN

Oh, sorry. I didn't know. Sorry.

NANCY

Don't worry. We have just finished.

Nancy leaves straightening her tousled hair. Lauren looks at Nancy, then at Jay admiringly.

LAUREEN

Wow.

EXT. - IN FRONT OF THE THEATER BUILDING

In front of the building. There is snow. Nancy seems to be waiting for a car. Barbara and Kate are coming out of the building, chatting. They see Nancy and walk over to her.

KATE

Hi Nancy.

NANCY

Hi Kate.
(To Barbara.)
Hi Barbara.

KATE

Do you two know each other?

BARBARA

She's my realtor.

KATE

She's my best friend.

NANCY

And how do you know one another?

She is pointing at both of them.

BARBARA

We are victims of the same fate.

Nancy looks puzzled.

KATE

The fate of someone whose relationship is over at Thanksgiving.

NANCY

What's that?

KATE

Have you ever been in a relationship filled with passion and oomph, and then, for Thanksgiving, he doesn't want you to visit with his family because he is ashamed of you.

BARBARA

Which is very common among couples made-up of middle-aged women and younger men.

Nancy is still looking confused.

KATE

We met in this women's discussion group over here. It turned out that that something similar happened to both of us. Oh well. At least it has brought us together. What about you and Jay?

BARBARA

Did he invite you to visit with his family for Thanksgiving?

NANCY

No, they live in Detroit and he didn't want to drive this far. We stayed with friends of his here in Philadelphia.

Barbara and Kate look at her meaningfully.

He had a long phone conversation with
his mother.

Barbara and Kate both lay their hand on Nancy's arm.

Let's go, it's a long way.

KATE

Talk to him.

BARBARA

You really should.

Kate and Barbara leave.

NANCY

But, Barbara, what about the bras?

Barbara turns around.

BARBARA

I'd lend them to you, I really would.
But, Honey, they are too big for you.

Jay comes out of the house. Goes over to Nancy.

JAY

Who was that? Friends of yours? I
would love to meet them some time. I
actually don't know any of your
friends. Sometimes I think you're
ashamed of me.

NANCY

Am I?

They get into the car.

INT. - CAR.

Nancy and Jay are in the car. Nancy is driving.

NANCY

Jay, about Thanksgiving. Was it really
because of the long distance that we
didn't go see your family?

JAY

(Nervously.)
My mother is pretty conservative, you
know.

NANCY

Oh. What about yourself?

JAY

I'm not like her. - But I'm her son.

NANCY

I understand. - Listen, we had a wonderful few weeks. I felt like ...

She rolls her eyes...

but I think we should take it easy for a while. Move on to, say, regular things.

JAY

What do you mean? Why?

NANCY

It's Christmas season.

JAY

What?

NANCY

You know, I'm a little conservative myself. And it's a sacred time, a period of calm and tranquility and relaxation, not of grunting, groaning and passionate cries.

JAY

Ok. Calm. Relaxed. Silent night, holy night. Fine. Christmas.

NANCY

Or what would be even better: Let's take a break.

JAY

A break?

NANCY

Yeah, not see each other quite so much. Until the show. Let me focus on the play. Let me dedicate my life to art for a while.

JAY

As long as it isn't old Art Goldstein
from your neighborhood. It's seems
strange, but it's ok. I can do it. I
can be dedicated to art. Good old Art.

INT. - THE THEATER AUDITORIUM

It's crowded with people. Christmas music. People are
greeting, hugging and kissing each other. Joyful
atmosphere. Some snippets of conversation indicating that
Christmas is only a few days away (like "Just three days
till Christmas and I still haven't bought all my gifts").

INT. - BACKSTAGE

We see actors walking around nervously or reciting text
of their part. Background noise is coming from the
auditorium.

CUT

CLOSE ON NANCY

In her Juliet costume.

JULIET/NANCY

I will kiss thy lips;
Haply some poison yet doth hang on
them,
To make die with a restorative.

CUT

CLOSE ON RALPH

In his Romeo costume.

ROMEO/RALPH

I can tell you; but young Romeo will
be older when
you have found him than he was when
you sought him:

CUT

CLOSE ON KEN

In a costume as apothecary

APOTHECARY/KEN

(Overacting)

Such mortal drugs I have; but Mantua's
law
Is death to any he that utters them.

CUT

CLOSE ON NANCY

Nancy sees Jay and Laureen standing together, chatting
and teasing each other. She seems to pick up on the clues
that Jay and Laureen are dating.

NANCY

She will kiss thy lips.
Happy poison left for me.

A guy is running around and shouting

GUY

Let's start. Let's start.

The background noise from auditorium is dying down, as
well as activity among actors. They turn silent and are
standing around waiting for a speech.

KEN

Ok, guys. We're putting on the
greatest love story of the world. We
owe it all our passion. We owe it the
power of love. Romeo, Juliet, you are
the ones who win or lose the game.
Ralph, if Nancy doesn't do it for you,
think of Philip. Nancy, if Ralph
doesn't do it for you, think of ...

Looks at Jay standing close to Laureen, Nancy follows his
gaze

...whomever you usually think of. God
bless the theater...and those who
serve it.

A guy in costume passes Ken and the prologue can be heard
from the stage. Nancy and Jay are looking at each other.

INT. - THE STAGE

Act 1, scene 5. Ralph is acting fine. Nancy is acting
terribly, like a desperate and disenchanting woman.

ROMEO

(To Juliet)
If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is

this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready
stand
To smooth that rough touch with a
tender kiss.

JULIET

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand
too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims'
hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers'
kiss.

CUT TO

BACKSTAGE

The other actors are looking appalled.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON KENNETH

He is totally distraught.

CUT TO

AUDITORIUM, CLOSE ON BARBARA AND KATE

Barbara and Kate are in the audience looking at each
other, puzzled.

FADE TO

STACEY NEXT TO THEM

Stacey is chewing her fingernails.

INT. - STAGE

Act two, scene two. Nancy is still acting terribly.

JULIET

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou
Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my
love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

INT. - BACKSTAGE

Kenneth is pinning Jay against a wall. Ken is very upset.

KEN

I thought she knew. I wouldn't have said "whomever," if I had known that you didn't bother telling her. She is ruining my play. You have to stop her.

JAY

I didn't want to tell her before the show.

KENNETH

What for? She's an old woman. It wouldn't be the first time in her life she's been dumped. She could have handled it. But not just one minute before the most important evening of her life.

JAY

Aren't you making this too big a deal?

KEN

(Furiously)
Hell, no! -
(Calmer)
Ok, I'll tell you how it works. During the intermission you tell her something that makes her feel fine.

JAY

What do you mean?

KENNETH

Because then she'll be brilliant in the second part and afterwards we'll explain this contrast to the first part as a director's gimmick, as highlighting... oh whatever. Nobody is going to understand but they are used to this. It's art.

JAY

What do you want me to tell her?

KENNETH

I don't know. Lie to her.

JAY

I cannot lie to her.

KENNETH

Look, we're in a theater. We're putting on a story that never happened and which could never have happened this way. It's all a big lie. Books are lies. Theater is a lie. Movies are a lie. All of art is a damn lie. So: lie - to - her.

INT. - A ROOM IN THE THEATRE BUILDING

Nancy is in her dressing room, crying. Jay enters the room.

JAY

Hi.

NANCY

Get out of here.

JAY

I know you're upset. And your acting is awkward.

NANCY

I don't care about the damn play. I don't give a damn about theater. And I really don't give a damn about love.

JAY

I can see your desperation.

NANCY

(Shouting.)

I'm not desperate.

JAY

I mean not like a 50-year old woman. I mean desperate like a young woman.

NANCY

What do you mean?

JAY

I saw your acting and it touched me.
Really. And it was me who did this to
you. I didn't mean to do that.

NANCY

But you did.

JAY

Yes, because I forgot something.

(Pause)

When I was in high school I had this
crush on a girl. L...issy. I asked her
out. It was my first time; so it
wasn't easy for me. She was happy
anyway. We went on a couple of dates
but we weren't really dating. We
didn't go far, just a few shy kisses.
Once my friends saw us and made fun of
me. Because Lissy... I liked her, but
she... well let's say, she was not very
attractive. The kind of girl boys make
jokes about. So I dumped her to hang
out with my friends again. I remember
the way she looked at me when I told
her. It was desperation, the sadness
of a little broken heart. On the stage
you were looking just like her, and
it's like her that you are looking at
me right now. I promised myself to
never do this to a woman again, but I
forgot and I have done it again. I'm
sorry. Can you forgive me?

NANCY

Yes, I can.

Goes over to him and kisses him.

Now, I can show them what love means.

Nancy leaves the room as Jay is looking on, feeling
ashamed.

INT. - THE STAGE

Stage. Act 3. Scene 5. Nancy's acting is brilliant.

JULIET

Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near
day
It was the nightingale, and not the
lark,
That pierced the fearful hollow of
thine ear;

CUT TO

BARBARA AND KATE IN THE AUDIENCE

They look impressed and moved by the play; they look at
each other and nod.

FADE TO

CLOSE ON STACEY

Stacey is overacting her being touched.

BACK TO

THE STAGE

NANCY/JULIET

Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-
tree:
Believe me, love, it was the
nightingale.

ROMEO/RALPH

It was the lark, the herald of the
morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what
envious streaks.

CUT

THE STAGE

Act 5. Scene 3.

NANCY/JULIET

(...)Thy lips are warm.
Yea, noise? then I'll be brief. O
happy dagger!
This is thy sheath;

CUT TO

BARBARA, KATE, AND STACEY

Crying.

BACK TO

THE STAGE

NANCY/JULIET
there rust, and let me die.

CUT TO

JAY BACKSTAGE

Jay is watching the scene from side stage, sad. Music while shot. Music fades, words from stage:

PRINCE
(...)Go hence, to have more talk of
these sad things;
Some shall be pardon'd, and some
punished:

CUT TO

THE STAGE

PRINCE
For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet

CUT TO

CLOSE ON NANCY

CUT TO

CLOSE ON JAY

and her Romeo.

BACK TO

THE STAGE

Great applause. Actors go to the forestage and take their bows. Switching shots between actors, audience, and Barbara, Kate, and Stacey (still crying).

RALPH
Masqueraded as a simple apothecary:
the director of the play.

Leads Ken to the front.

The only man in the group who always knows what to do and who keeps the secret of knowing the true nature of love.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON STACEY

Stacey who seems to be impressed by the description of Kenneth.

CUT TO

INT. - BACKSTAGE

The actors go backstage. Laureen runs to Nancy, gives her a hug.

LAUREEN

Oh Nancy, you were so wonderful. So full of love. Now that I've found my Romeo, I want to be a Juliet like you.

She turns to Jay, hugs him and kisses him. He kisses her back. Nancy is shocked; she walks over to them. She looks at Jay furiously and slaps him in the face. Ken separates them.

KENNETH

Nancy, I'm the one to blame; it was my idea. It was only about the play. A tribute to art.

(To Jay)

By the way: I like the story you told her. We should make a play out of it.

Nancy lifts her hand as if to slap him, hesitates for a moment as if she were deciding against it, then makes a fist and hits Ken with it. Then she leaves the place.

INT. - NANCY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Nancy is in her living room. She is still wearing her costume, and she is still furious. She's looking around, takes a pillow from the couch and a belt or a rope which she fixes somewhere on the ceiling. She punches the pillow like a punching bag, maybe even kickboxing.

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - NIGHT

Nancy is in the shower, trying to relax.

INT. NANCY'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nancy is sitting at a table in the bedroom, wearing her bathrobe. She takes a swig from a glass with a drink, staring out of the window. Then she takes a pen and a piece of paper and starts to write.

EXT. - AT LETTER BOX IN FRONT OF NANCY'S OFFICE.

She throws the letter in the box, then heads into her office.

INT. NANCY'S OFFICE, FIRST ROOM

Ken is in the first room.

NANCY

What are you doing here?

KEN

I'm not here to see you. I gave Stacey a ride to work.

Stacey enters the room from a door on the side (maybe the bathroom). She looks embarrassed.

NANCY

Oh. Great. Excellent. That's going to be fun.

Heads to her room. Kenneth and Stacey both look confused.

INT. - NANCY'S OFFICE, HER ROOM - MORNING

Nancy goes to her chair, sits down, turns it and looks out the window. The sun is shining through the window.

INT. - JOE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Joe is in his apartment. He is sitting in the same chair as before and in the same position as Nancy in the scene before. A closed letter can be seen on the table. There is a knock on the door.

JOE

Come in.

Carl enters the room.

CARL

Hey, I hope this is not any more of that naked business.

JOE

She sent the letter with her decision.

CARL

And?

JOE

I haven't opened it yet. I just
couldn't. Can you read it for me?

CARL

Sure.

Carl goes slowly to the table with the letter, takes it
and opens it.

JOE

Not everything. Just the decision.

Carl is reading.

CARL

I'm sorry.

JOE

What is she saying?

CARL

You said you didn't want to hear
everything.

JOE

Isn't a man allowed to change his
mind?

CARL

Dear Joe,
Thank you very much for all your
letters. I made my decision even
before I got all of them. Your letters
were beautiful, I loved them.
Unfortunately I was also having the
best time with Jay in the weeks
before.

JOE

Jay.

CARL

Of course we have also had our problems, which seem to be serious.

JOE

Yeah!

CARL

So we finally broke up tonight. It happened in a theater: I slapped him and made it a truly dramatic scene. I was very clear about my position, and I'm proud of that.

JOE

That's my girl.

CARL

So, in fact,

NANCY'S VOICE OFF

I am free now. But I am also tired. I now know that I can still feel the passion of a young woman but it has gotten harder than before. Nearly fifty years of life have left their marks. I must rest now, without a man. However, should I ever be looking for love again, you will be my first choice.

Much love Nancy

JOE

Not in my worst nightmares would I have imagined for it to end like this.

CARL

Joe. I'm so sorry. Maybe we can...

Joe gazes at Carl, gets up, takes a jacket and leaves the apartment. Carl sits down, sobbing, looks around, sees a Santa Claus hat, takes it and puts it on. Close on him. His eyes show that he is thinking.

INT. - A CAFE - NIGHT

The same cafe Joe has visited before. He is sitting at the same table. Waitress 1 from the first time is sitting

on the other side of the table with a coffee pot in her hand.

WAITRESS 1

Still alone? Still suffering?

Joe gazes at her.

It's been six months now, hasn't it.

Joe is still gazing.

That's enough. You deserve something better.

She takes a paper bag out of her coat.

Here. I'll give you my personal doughnut. Not one from this place; you can't eat those. I bought this at the bakery on the other side of the street. They are good.

Joe grabs the bag, takes the doughnut out and takes a bite from it.

JOE

Very good.

WAITRESS

When you were here in the summer, had you just cheated on your wife?

JOE

I had.

WAITRESS

But you didn't do it again.

JOE

Just three times after she left.

The waitress looks at him, then reaches for the doughnut.

WAITRESS

May I.

She licks her finger and sticks it in the doughnut making a hole in the dough. Then she takes a mustard tube from the middle of the table and puts mustard in the doughnut. She hands it to Joe.

Eat it.

Joe takes it and takes a bite.

You are an asshole, but you deserve
one last chance.

JOE

What should I do?

WAITRESS

I have no idea. But it's Christmas
time. Trust in Santa Claus.

EXT. - IN FRONT OF NANCY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Next morning. It's the morning of Christmas Eve. Carl is
sitting in his car, in the street of Nancy's office,
observing it. Stacey is just entering the office, then
Nancy.

CUT

CLOSE ON CARL, SLEEPING IN HIS CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

He wakes up, it's getting dark outside. He sees Nancy and
Stacey leaving the office. They hug and leave in
different directions. Nancy gets into her car and drives
off. Carl follows her.

EXT - IN FRONT OF NANCY'S HOUSE. - EVENING.

Carl watches Nancy go into the house.

CUT.

He approaches the house, gazes through a window, sees her
sitting at the table, eating. She looks sad. He turns
around and looks at the house on the other side of the
street. He sees the owner of the house open the door to a
group of people with a large package. They are laughing
and hugging. He starts the car, drives down the street
and around a corner.

EXT - IN FRONT OF NANCY'S HOUSE. - MORNING.

Next morning. It's a sunny day. We see the street of
Nancy's house. A truck of the moving company comes around
the corner where Carl left the day before. The trucks
stops in front of the house and all four workers appear
before they get out of the truck. They take a very large
box with a bow from the truck and carry it to the house.
They ring the doorbell. Nancy opens the door.

WORKER 1

Ma'am.

He points at the box.

It's a little bigger this time. But we
have a message as well.

They stand in a line and begin to sing to tune of "Should
auld acquaintance..."

Should...

NANCY

Stop it, stop. What the hell are you
doing?

WORKER

Ma'am. We are movers, not singers.
This is very, very hard for us. So:
don't interrupt us.

He takes a tuning fork and a large screw-wrench out of
his overalls, hits the fork against the wrench, listens
to the fork and sings a tone to the other workers.

Should the old husband be forgot
and never brought to mind
'Cause he was cheating a few times
like others of his kind
An old poor guy, my dear,
an old poor guy,
forgive him, if you can, forgive,
that old poor guy.

NANCY

This is the most stupid thing I've
ever heard in my life.

WORKER

Ma'am, I don't mean to be rude, but in
our job we get to see lots of houses,
and lots of things. And believe me:
there are freakier things than this
out there.

They look at each other.

NANCY

And now what?

WORKER

Open it.

NANCY

How?

WORKER

Oh, sorry.

He nudges another worker who takes scissors out of his overalls. She takes them and cuts the ribbon. Then another worker takes a chisel out of his overall and hands it to Nancy.

NANCY

Are you serious?

The worker who gave her the chisel just shrugs. Nancy uses the chisel and pries the box open with some effort but fairly easily. The lid comes off, she steps back due to the impetus. Nancy stands still and looks at the workers. One of them points inside the box. She looks inside and sees Joes cowering in it.

JOE

I could blame Carl, who came up with this, but I take full responsibility.

(Pause)

You know, he had heard about this song from a guy who sent himself to his girlfriend in a package. As a gift, as a surprise, since he loved her so much. And then...

NANCY

What happened?

JOE

Actually it's a tragic song. Let's skip this part.

NANCY

What happened?

JOE

He wrapped the package too well, so she couldn't open it. She got angry, furious, finally took an axe, stroke at the package. So, they split forever because he was split down the middle.

NANCY

My goodness, how sad.

JOE

I brought the guys with me to be safe.

NANCY

Are you that scared of me?

Joe stands up.

JOE

Yes. I'm scared that you don't want me anymore. Don't do that to me.

NANCY

Why shouldn't I?

JOE

Because I enjoyed the first part of our life so much. I had a bad time last year and could not appreciate what I have got, but now I'm so eager to live the second part with you. With you.

(Pause)

I'm sure it might be even the better part. We were so young when we got married. We knew what this feels like and wanted to enjoy it together. We knew what to expect. Now we're entering a new stage and we don't know what is lying ahead of us. That's exciting. It can be hard sometimes but also full of miracles. I don't want to experience even one of them without you.

NANCY

How can I be sure that you are being serious? It's Christmas morning, you are feeling your love and you're promising things. Are you going to keep your promises?

JOE

Do you feel your love?

NANCY

I do.

JOE

It's not about Christmas. Let's put it this way: I will be there for you for the rest of our life - except on Christmas. On Christmas I'm going to hang out with these guys

Looking at the workers.

and leave you alone or with your mother or a friend or whomever. What do you think?

Pause. Nancy is thinking. He looks at the workers.

Guys, you are with me, aren't you?

WORKER 1

Sorry, but I have a wife...

WORKER 2

I'd like to, but if I get permission....

Worker 3 makes gesture of pardon.

WORKER 4 (THE SLIM ONE)

I'm free.

NANCY

At least you got funnier than you used to be. I like that. Some people say in the second part of your life eating is the sex of your life. I don't want to get fat. Let it be humor for us.

Joe motions to one of the workers, who takes a rose out of his jacket and hands it to Joe. Joe is kneeling inside the crate.

JOE

I love you - from the bottom of my crate.

Nancy is laughing. Joe is smiling and motions to the workers. They lift Nancy up and put her in the box. She kneels in front of Joe. They look at each other. Kiss.

JOE

Home?

NANCY

Home.

The workers lift the crate and carry it to the truck, whistling a Christmas song. Music sets in. Joe and Nancy are laying down in the crate, kissing. Workers lift the crate into the truck and close it. They get into the truck. The truck leaves, in the back it says "Merry Christmas."

THE END