THIRTY SOMETHING

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FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY
ACT ONE

FADE IN:

A BLACK SCREEN

We HEAR two PEOPLE GIGGLING, trying to be quiet.

WOMAN (V.O.)
There's not enough time--

MAN (V.O.)
Shhh, there is time--

BEGIN TITLES OVER:

WOMAN (V.O.)
Wait -- I heard her--

MAN (V.O.)
You did not hear her.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Shhh!

Silence. They're listening. Then:

WOMAN (V.O.)
You're right, I didn't hear her...

Sound of a ZIPPER. He starts to laugh appreciatively.

QUICK CUT:

A RESTAURANT --

where WE NOW CAN SEE these two people -- though what we're seeing took place several years ago. He's MICHAEL STEADMAN, twenty-nine here, Jewish, intense, funny. She's HOPE MURDOCH, twenty-eight, Episcopalian, intense, funny. This is their first date, intense, funny.

MICHAEL
....ask what the other person does, that takes three minutes.

HOPE
Then who do we both know and where do you live, that's another four.

MICHAEL
Which exhausts all possible human conversation and the salad hasn't even come yet... and two

(MORE)
MICHAEL (cont.)
hours later you're dropping her
off and the guy is thinking
should I kiss her -- maybe I
should've already kissed her --
and she's thinking I hope he
doesn't kiss me--

HOPE
--or else why doesn't he kiss me
am I too fat?

MICHAEL
So, what, he kisses her? Okay,
best case, she likes it, which
means... sometime in the next
three weeks they....

HOPE
Do the terrible deed--?

MICHAEL
Right, so best case, they're
still speaking to each other the
next morning... Then what?? two
months later they're living
together...?

HOPE
Which means she wants to get
married and he's--

HOPE
--afraid to commit.            MICHAEL
--afraid to commit.

MICHAEL
And so they get married. And
three kids later they're both
having affairs and they get
divorced.

HOPE
And their friends, who fixed
them up in the first place, tell
them they knew it would never work.

MICHAEL
Which is why I never do this.

HOPE
Me neither.....
They eye each other -- embarrassed, interested, skeptical.

MICHAEL
So... how do you know Ellyn?

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS continue OVER)

The two people are moving to the bed.

MAN (V.O.)
(bumps himself)
Oowwww. I'm turning on the light.

WOMAN (V.O.)
NO -- you'll wake her.

MAN (V.O.)
Then close the door--

WOMAN (V.O.)
Then how would we hear her?
(bumps herself)
Oowwww.

He starts to laugh.

A NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

where Hope and her best friend, ELLYN, sip drinks as various
MEN cruise them.

HOPE
-- Not so well. Ellyn, I don't
know. He's really funny, he
makes me laugh--

ELLYN
That's worth something...

HOPE
And it's true, he is this basically
very nice person.

ELLYN
But...

HOPE
It's the unknowability of people.
We get to be our age and we're
so set in our ways. Last night
the argument was about where you
sit in a movie theatre...

(MORE)
HOPE (cont.)
(on Ellyn's look)
He wears polyester shirts. Am I supposed to have a relationship with somebody who wears polyester shirts...?

ELLYN
They're not even blends?
(on Hope's look)
Can we get down to real issue here?

HOPE
I don't know, sex is....
(muses)
actually pretty not too bad.

ELLYN
So he's really funny, he's really nice and he's great in bed.
(shakes her head)
You're right. Forget it.

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)
The two people can be heard getting undressed.

MAN (V.O.)
What is this?

WOMAN (V.O.)
What is what?

MAN (V.O.)
There's no thing.

WOMAN (V.O.)
It unhooks in the front.

MAN (V.O.)
What are you trying to do, spoil my technique?

WOMAN (V.O.)
All that practice in high school gone to waste...

QUICK CUT:
OUTSIDE A COUNTRY CHAPEL

where Michael is urgently prodding his best friend, GARY. Both wear dark suits.

MICHAEL
You have to go through with this, everybody's in there waiting for you--!

GARY
You don't realize what a step this is for me, I've never even attended a wedding before.

MICHAEL
If you wimp out now, you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

GARY
But maybe this is wrong, maybe we're all making a terrible mistake. It's not too late to stop it!

Michael pulls him up the steps.

MICHAEL
(soothingly)
Now we're going in there and taking up our positions just like we did in rehearsal. I'll be right there next to you-- And when the Rabbi and the Minister ask you--

HE OPENS THE DOOR

revealing a chapel full of people, waiting. And Hope, resplendent in a wedding dress.

MICHAEL
--all you do is hand me the ring. You can do it, Gar, that's why you're my Best Man.

Michael touches Hope's arm in passing and starts down the aisle.
BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

Things are continuing.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
What's that?

HOPE (V.O.)
It's my foot, what did you think it was?

MICHAEL (V.O.)
I thought it was an animal.

HOPE (V.O.)
An animal?

MICHAEL (V.O.)
You know, like a squirrel or something, a turtle.

HOPE (V.O.)
You are so seriously deranged. Oowwww. What are you doing?

MICHAEL (V.O.)
It seems weird that I can't feel anything when I touch it. I've been around this foot so long it feels like it should be mine.

HOPE (V.O.)
(after a pause)
I can feel it...

QUICK CUT:

AN EMPTY LIVING ROOM --

Empty except for stacked cartons and other evidence of recent moving-in. Michael and Hope -- languorous, drifting back to sleep -- are in a sleeping bag in the middle of the floor.

MICHAEL
Get me food.

HOPE
Get me food.

MICHAEL
Please.

HOPE
Okay, I'm getting up, uuhhhaaahhh, I'm walking now, here I go. I'm entering the kitchen.
MICHAEL
Would you mind remodeling it while you're in there?

HOPE
A new stove...and a dishwasher!
Elves came in the night and rewired our electricity.

MICHAEL
Did they leave a microwave?

HOPE
A very big microwave.

They continue to just lie there.

HOPE
Why do I have to go to the bathroom?

MICHAEL
Oh, boy, get me food.

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

Things have gotten a little more serious here in the dark.
The sound of kissing.

WOMAN (V.O.)
.....Ohhh. I really miss you.
Don't you kind of like this in the dark?

MAN (V.O.)
Mmmmmnn.

WOMAN (V.O.)
I really like this.
(silence)
Mike? Are you okay?

MAN (V.O.)
I love you.

A long silence.

WOMAN (V.O.)
We're so lucky.

QUICK CUT:
A DEMENTED-LOOKING SALESMAN

in the middle of his spiel.

SALESMAN
You wanna talk construction? How
about aircraft aluminum, how
about -- feel the rubber in
these tires--

We PAN over to reveal the object of his pitch. A BABY STROLLER:
Aprica's newest model, we wouldn't be surprised to find a
twelve cylinder engine under the canopy.

PAN further to discover MICHAEL, who stares in disbelief:

MICHAEL
Three hundred and sixty-four
dollars...for a stroller?
(looks around)
Hope?

PAN still further to discover an extremely pregnant Hope, bent
double over the highchairs, doing Lamaze breathing.

HOPE
Hee-hee-hee-hee--

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (FINAL CREDITS OVER)

The SOUND of heavy breathing, not unlike that of the cut
before. Things here are nearing their proper conclusion.

HOPE (V.O.)
Yes, yes, ooh, yes, don't stop--

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Honey, oh God--

HOPE (V.O.)
Wait.
(he doesn't)
Waitwaitwait -- STOP.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
Why are you stopping--?
(silence, then:)
Oh, no.....

Now we HEAR IT. In another room, a BABY is starting to CRY.

MICHAEL (V.O.)
It's not bad yet -- she'll go
back to sleep.
HOPE (V.O.)
Right. Let's hurry.

The lovemaking continues. Then the CRYING turns into a WAIL. We hear a dual sigh.

A LIGHT GOES ON and WE SEE them now: MICHAEL and HOPE, in the present tense. He's still got his hand on the lamp switch, his eyes closed in frustration. She starts to get up.

HOPE
(kisses his head)
How silly we be.

A NICE KITCHEN

It was nice, but now it's a total wreck. And past the undone dishes and yesterday's food and spilled dog kibble and unraveled paper towels -- WE SEE the reason for the wreck:

JANE STEADMAN, aged five months...

She's sitting in her high-chair, watching what could be a ping-pong game, but what is in actuality her PARENTS simply trying to get through the morning. Hope is attempting to feed her while talking on the phone; Michael is making his breakfast.

HOPE
(into the phone)
He did not say that............
Melissa--!

MICHAEL
No Rice Chex--?

HOPE
(into the phone)
You call him right back--

MICHAEL
I thought we had Rice Chex.

HOPE
(to Michael)
Honey, there's no Rice Chex, I'm sorry, I didn't get to the store.
(to the baby)
Julesetta, please eat this--

MICHAEL
(real grief; to
the baby)
No Rice Chex, Ninsky, what am I going to do?
HOPE

(into the phone)
Are you kidding, I can't eat any cereal............ Because I'm so fat.

MICHAEL

You're not fat.

HOPE

(into the phone)
I keep promising Michael I'll go to the gym, but it's so hard.

MICHAEL

Will you stop it with the gym---
(looking in refrigerator)
Now where's the milk?!

HOPE

Honey, I'm really sorry, there's no milk either.

(into the phone)
I can go to the gym, it won't kill me.

MICHAEL

Go if it makes you feel better.

HOPE

(into the phone)
He says he doesn't but he does.

MICHAEL

I don't think you're fat!

HOPE

But you think I could lose some weight?

MICHAEL

(closing his eyes)
I refuse to get in trouble for things that I'm not even thinking but may or may not have worried that I might think at some earlier time and felt guilty about and therefore might show on my face even though I DON'T THINK YOU'RE FAT.

HOPE

(into the phone)
He thinks I'm fat.
Michael throws up his hands and goes back to the refrigerator.

MICHAEL
How would Raisin Bran taste with formula...?

MICHAEL'S OFFICE

Michael on the phone, pacing. ELLIOT, his partner, sits on the sofa, listening and making appropriate faces. Gathered in the doorway, several CO-WORKERS conspicuously eavesdrop.

MICHAEL
--All right, you know what, forget it... No, just forget it.
(listens a moment)
Because it's sleazy, Mr. Teller, hasn't that occurred to you...?
No, no, you miss my point. I love their campaign, but it's their campaign. You don't rip off somebody else's campaign--
(listens again)
Mr. Teller, I don't care what their sales were afterwards, it's plagiarism!

Elliot, meanwhile, pulls a pillow over his head and begins to hum in order not to hear what is about to transpire.

MICHAEL
Oh yeah...? Well, one of the privileges of being "a bunch of amateurs", is we still have the illusion of doing our own work and having a little integrity which I now see any further association with your business -- or in fact you personally -- would make me sick to my stomach and throw up...!

Michael hangs up and notices his co-workers gaping in astonishment.

MICHAEL
...What? We're not allowed to have principles around here? We'll find other business, there're other accounts out there... C'mon, let's get back to work, Jeannine, shut the door on your way out...
He waits until they have gone, then takes the phone cord, wraps it around his neck, and falls across his desk.

MICHAEL
Aaaahhhgghhhhh...

Elliot walks over and picks up the phone dangling from Michael's neck.

ELLiot
Mr. Teller? Hi, Mike's partner
Elliot. Uh, Mike's had an
unfortunate accident and he's
dead, and I just wanted to tell
you how much I like the idea of
stealing a Clio Award-winning
campaign and especially how much
I like the idea of two hundred
thousand dollars because without
that two hundred thousand dollars
our company is going out of
business and my partner forgot
that and that's why he's dead.

MICHAEL
Why didn't you stop me...? This
is your fault. I'm going to
lose my house, my wife is going
to leave me, my kid will be
expelled from daycare.

ELLiot
Your kid? I have two kids.

MICHAEL
I can't take this, I never
respond well to pressure, that's
why we left Bernstein-Fox in the
first place.

ELLiot
I thought it was because you
don't respond well to authority.

MICHAEL
That, too.  
(jumps up suddenly)
I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I'M TOO
YOUNG TO RUN A BUSINESS, YOU HAVE
TO BE GROWN UP TO RUN A BUSINESS.
(lies back down)
I got two hours and forty-five
minutes of sleep last night.
ELLIOIT
(looks at him)
You'll get used to it.

MICHAEL
Do you get used to, like, having no REM periods, like North Korean brainwashing camps where they wake you up as soon as you start to dream?

ELLIOIT
She doesn't sleep through the night yet?

Michael gets up and starts to pace.

MICHAEL
She wakes up, she cries, I wake up. She goes back to sleep, I'm awake. And the thing is, I love her so much. I go in there sometimes, literally I am going to strangle her, and there she is, "Hi, Daddy, look at this smile I have for you! Aren't I cute? Don't you feel guilty for thinking those bad thoughts about me?"

Elliot now lies down on the desk beside Michael.

ELLIOIT
Wait'll it's two kids.

MICHAEL
Did I just make the dumbest mistake of our lives...?

ELLIOIT
Yes.

MICHAEL
What would you have done?

ELLIOIT
(thinks)
...The same thing.

CUT TO:
GUMBY PLACEMATS

or

SNOOPY PLACEMATS

That is the question... Hope is looking between them, unconsciously rocking the baby on her hip, oblivious to the SHOPPERS around her in the DEPARTMENT STORE.

HOPE

Is he waving at you? Is gumby nice, is he waving at you, Buber? Look at Snoopy, he's a doggy, do you see the doggy, look at the doggy, honey. Do you want doggy or gumby, Mommy wants doggy because gumby is weird, Mommy didn't like things like gumby when she was little because clay wasn't supposed to move.

She looks up. A SALESMAN is staring at her...

A RESTAURANT

Crowded and loud with people hurrying through lunch. Hope is trying to deposit some of her paraphernalia while she apologizes.

HOPE

I was right across the street, I don't know what happened, I was early, and then I saw these incredibly cute socks and all of--

Her smiling friend is ELLYN GRALNICK, Hope's best friend for twenty years.

ELLYN

Hope. Sit.

Hope is trying. After the diaper bag, the Snuggly, then the bottle out of the diaper bag, then the baby in the stroller, now the baby is crying in the stroller.

WAITRESS

Can I get you something to drink?

Hope looks from the baby to the waitress.

HOPE

Uh, not right now. Thanks.
People are looking as Hope picks up the baby and tries to simulate a normal person looking at a menu, but can't hold the menu if she's going to give a bottle to the baby, which is the only thing that will make the baby stop crying...

ELLYN
I am so tired. We're in the office 'til ten every night now. Look at these bags under my eyes.

Hope stares at her, dumbfounded: E[EL]lyn is tired...?

ELLYN
You know how many people are under me, are you ready for weirdness? Twenty-seven.

HOPE
You're kidding me.

Hope has to stand up to try to get the baby to stop crying.

ELLYN
She's okay?
(Hope nods)
She's so cute. All of a sudden Gannon thinks I'm God's gift to health planning.

HOPE
How's your stomach been?

ELLYN
(laughs)
Terrible. Really, it's total stress. Total stress. I told him I'm quitting in six months. I cannot take this kind of...politics, maneuvering, it's all maneuvering.

HOPE
You should quit.

ELLYN
I am gonna quit.

HOPE
There are so many other things you can do.
(to the baby)
What is it, Nanie? Why don't you take the bottle?
(MORE)
HOPE (cont.)
(to Ellyn)
We're trying pre-weaning, we're trying the concept of maybe, sometimes, drinking from a bottle instead of Mommy.

Ellyn smiles and watches Hope struggle with the baby for a moment.

ELLYN
You know what I've been thinking about lately? I'd like to open some kind of store, like a bicycle store, something like that. I imagine that would be a quieter existence.

Hope gives up; she sits down and unbuttons her blouse.

HOPE
I think it would end up being the bicycle rat race.

ELLYN
You think it's me.

HOPE
I think you don't know how to take it easy.

Amazingly, the baby is still crying.

HOPE
I don't know what's going on here. Buber, are you okay? Please stop crying...
(to Ellyn)
It's so embarrassing.

Ellyn shakes her head, dismisses the notion.

ELLYN
Maybe if I take a year off, and try to make myself more available to life...

Hope puts her head down, covers her eyes for a moment.

HOPE
I'm really sorry, I'm gonna have to take her home. I don't know what this is.
ELLYN  
(trying to cover annoyance)  
You don't think it'll just stop?

HOPE  
Ellyn, it's not gonna just stop.  
I'm sorry. I've been looking  
forward to this, to being a  
grownup for one hour.

ELLYN  
(indicates the other patrons)  
You know it's none of their  
business if the baby's crying...

HOPE  
It's not them! Something's  
bothering her, I can't just  
ignore it.

ELLYN  
Okay. Look, you go, we'll just  
do this again, next week or  
something. Maybe you can even  
get a sitter.

HOPE  
Right, I'm sorry, really. I'll  
call you tomorrow, sweetie.  
God, I really miss you.

ELLYN  
I miss you too. Go, it's okay,  
I'll take care of this.

Hope, all her equipment gathered, pushes off. Leaving Ellyn,  
who sits for a moment trying to concentrate on the menu, but  
is finally too annoyed to continue.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL AND HOPE'S LIVING ROOM

As Michael walks in to find Hope sitting there with another  
friend, GARY.

MICHAEL  
Uh, oh, look who's here. What  
are you doing here?

GARY  
I'm making a play for your wife,  
what does it look like I'm doing?

MICHAEL  
Making a play for my wife.
GARY
I am making a play for your wife.

MICHAEL
Take my wife.

GARY
I am taking your wife.

Michael kisses Hope.

HOPE
Who's dealing with dinner because
I'm not dealing with it.

MICHAEL
Are you staying for dinner?

GARY
Are you?

MICHAEL
Where's Jazooki?

HOPE
Asleep.

MICHAEL
Is she supposed to be asleep now?

HOPE
If you wake her up, I will slit
your throat.

MICHAEL
But won't she be awake later?

HOPE
Then we'll deal with it later.

GARY
Listen to you people, this is
disgusting, should she be asleep,
should she be awake? What is
she, a showdog? Lighten up here.

MICHAEL
What do you know?

GARY
I was a baby once.

HOPE
Once?
They laugh, somehow because she said it.

GARY
Hey, I'm not wimped out like you people. There's gotta be more to life than getting a baby to sleep. What are you, joined at the hip?

The front door is opening.

HOPE
Just the breast, Gar'.

GARY
Ooh, don't say that word.

Another friend, MELISSA, bursts into the living room. Melissa, whose life, were it read, would satisfy even the most ardent admirer of soap operas...

MELISSA
(to Hope)
Thank God you're here.

MICHAEL
I feel the same way.

MELISSA
You won't believe this. I have to get something to eat first.

She is heading for the kitchen.

MICHAEL
Hello, Melissa...

MELISSA
I hate you, you have a male appendage.

GARY
Have you checked recently, I wouldn't be too sure.

IN THE KITCHEN

Melissa is rummaging through the refrigerator. Hope catches up.

HOPE
What happened?
MELISSA
He went to New York last weekend? His mother was sick? Guess who he slept with?

GARY
His mother.

MELISSA
Darlene MacKinnon.

HOPE
(mouth opening)
You introduced him to Darlene MacKinnon.

MELISSA
I introduced him to Darlene MacKinnon because he desperately needed background on the redevelopment plan for Brooklyn Heights. Can you believe he then slept with her?

HOPE
It doesn't matter who he slept with, he shouldn't have been sleeping with anybody.

MELISSA
It matters to me who he slept with -- I was doing him a favor, let him pick up his own floozies.

HOPE
Melissa, he's supposed to be in love with you, it doesn't matter who he sleeps with, he shouldn't be doing it at all.

MELISSA
Will you let me be mad at what I want to be mad at. I'm not up to being mad at him for sleeping with anybody. I want to exhaust being mad at him for sleeping with Darlene MacKinnon. The bitch.

HOPE
I thought you liked her.

No answer is necessary. Gary enters the kitchen and puts a playful arm around Melissa's throat.
GARY
Know what you need? A change of venue. Let's go backpacking.

MELISSA
What a great idea...

GARY
We'll go backpacking, you'll forget about this sleazebag, you'll see the error of your ways...

HOPE
I can't believe he's even saying the word backpack.

GARY
It wasn't so bad.

MICHAEL
No worse than the Donner party.

MELISSA
Wait a minute, it wasn't so bad. So Gary and I argued a little.

MICHAEL
You tried to stab him with a tent pole--

MELISSA
He deserved it, he was breaking up with me.

GARY
You were breaking up with me.

MELISSA
But we're past that now, aren't we, adorableness?

GARY
Absolutely, honey-lips.

MELISSA
I think this is a great idea. Look at you guys, you're so tired, you need a break, come on, we'll all go backpacking.

HOPE
I don't think we can take the baby backpacking, can we?
GARY
Who said anything about the baby? Just the four of us, like before, only fun.

MICHAEL
Who would we leave her with?

HOPE
It's not like I can leave her with my parents.

GARY
Find a babysitter. She's not gonna be traumatized.

HOPE
We will.

MICHAEL
Guys, I don't know....

GARY
Come on, this is your chance for fun and adventure, rekindle that romance you once knew. Don't be wimps.

HOPE
Stop it, I hate that word. We have responsibilities, that's all. How's that for a word?

Because they really are friends, Gary backs off.

GARY
Re-- re-- resp--- respo---

Everyone laughs.

CUT TO:

THE BABY, IN HER CRIB

A sleeping angel. Michael and Hope lean over the bumpers, watching her.

HOPE
(almost painful)
She's so pretty.

MICHAEL
I know.
(they watch)
What if she grows up ugly?
HOPE
I think about that too.

MICHAEL
I guess she'll deal with it.
'Course you're not ugly, that helps.

HOPE
(kisses him)
Thanks...

IN THE BEDROOM

Michael falls on the bed.

MICHAEL
I am so tired. So completely, overwhelmingly, utterly, totally, unbelievably.... Ucchhh....
(imitating his mother)
Miiilikke... Did you do your homework, Mike? Mike? Is your business going bankrupt? Your brother's business isn't going bankrupt.

HOPE
You're not going bankrupt.

MICHAEL
You don't know what I did today.

She puts her forehead against the wall...

MICHAEL
I self-destructed us, start packing, the movers are coming tomorrow. I blew off the Teller account.

HOPE
Good, I'm proud of you. Teller's a yutz.
(on his look)
You said you don't want to compromise, so don't.

MICHAEL
Thank you. How old do we have to be before Janey can support us...?

Hope starts to unbutton her blouse.
HOPE
Ellyn, meanwhile, is totally strange. "There's no screaming child here that everyone in the entire restaurant is staring at." She didn't even want to hold her...

MICHAEL
Why don't you talk to her about it?

HOPE
How can I talk to her about it?

Michael watches her as the blouse comes off.

MICHAEL
She's been your friend for 47 years, just tell her you're upset about how she's been acting.

HOPE
Ellyn and I don't deal with each other that way.

MICHAEL
Ellyn and you don't deal with each other.

HOPE
Thank you.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry.

She is taking off her pants. He is no longer tired. He puts his hand on her back.

MICHAEL
Let's go backpacking.

HOPE
Michael--

MICHAEL
We're allowed to have a life, aren't we...? There's nothing wrong with spending one night away from your kid after six months.

She goes to get a nightgown.
HOPE
(at a loss)
What am I going to do, interview babysitters, how do you interview babysitters?

MICHAEL
You interview them.

He watches as she pulls the nightgown over her head.

HOPE
"Do you know how to handle a genius, are you totally kind and wonderful and patient and have there been any child molesters in your family for the last twelve generations?"

MICHAEL
(quasi-casual)
So, you're tired...?

HOPE
(doing it:)
I just want to get in bed and sink down and oohhhhh....

She has curled up around her pillow. With her eyes closed:

HOPE
You're not tired.

MICHAEL
No, I'm kind of keyed up, I don't know. Don't worry about it.

She uses her last ounce of energy to move six inches to kiss his shoulder.

HOPE
(mumbling)
I'll think about babysitters tomorrow, if I think about babysitters today I'll go crazy. After all, tomorrow is another day.

She's asleep. He's not.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

A DINNER TABLE

At Elliot and Nancy's house. Everyone is eating chicken and salad. Hope is trying to have a conversation with Nancy, Elliot's wife. She's lovely, a year or two older than Hope, and has the beatific look of someone on Thorazine; this is an illusion, however -- she's merely exhausted and wishes she was on Thorazine.

Why...? She has two kids.

BRITTANY, the eighteen month-old, is in her high chair, food all over her face. ETHAN, an intense four year-old, is next to her, attacking her with Masters of the Universe figures. Janey sits in a sassy-seat, observing the tumult.

NANCY
I know. I enrolled Ethan in nursery school when he was one and they laughed at--

(grabs his hand)
Ethan... ETHAN... Not so rough around your sister.

HOPE
You're kidding me.

MICHAEL
That covers third quarter overhead, I don't know what we do then...

ELLIOIT
Go back to Teller and beg his forgiveness...

MICHAEL
Not...in...a...million years. I'd get on my knees at a bank first.

ELLIOIT
I went to Wisconsin with a guy at First Federal, he used to be a freak, I have pictures of him dancing naked at Woodstock, we could blackmail him.

MICHAEL
I was supposed to go to Woodstock but I got tonsilitis and my girlfriend decided to go anyway because we were so free and of course she met this other guy and eventually married him, but they're divorced now so I feel better.

Ethan KNOCKS Brittany's milk cup out of her hands. It goes
flying onto the dinner table, spewing milk in several directions, flooding Hope's plate. Nancy doesn't miss a beat, just starts cleaning it up.

NANCY
Did he spill your milk, honey?
Mommy'll get you more.
(to steve)
Honey, can you take him for a while?

ELLIOT
Young man, what did I tell you about bothering your sister?

Nancy leaves the table with Brittany, Elliot leaves the table with Ethan. Hope and Michael are left alone together.

HOPE
Oh, hi... Still here? I thought you two had retired to the drawing room for brandy and cigars.

MICHAEL
We're just dealing with man stuff here and don't you worry your pretty little head about it.

HOPE
You guys get to play with each other all day and talk about work, couldn't we just be people at dinner?

ETHAN
has squirmed out of his father's grasp and careens back into the room. He dumps DISGUSTING GOOP all over Michael.

ETHAN
I dropped you in the Slime Pit. Now you're eaten straight through to your bones.

THE CAR - LATER

As Hope and Michael settle into their seats, Jane asleep in the back. They sit there as if frozen in shock.

HOPE
...It wasn't that bad.

MICHAEL
It was worse.
HOPE
Stop it.

MICHAEL
Is that us in three years...?

HOPE
(giving in)
She didn't finish one sentence
the entire night.

MICHAEL
Why do houses with kids have to
be sticky...?

HOPE
What are we going to do?

MICHAEL
Exploit the downtrodden working
class. Get help. HIRED... A...
BABYSITTER.

THE GREEN AND PURPLE SPIKED HAIRCUT
of a heavy-metal groupie, now lounging on Hope's sofa.

GROUPIE
--like once with my baby brother,
I once dropped him, I like
dropped him, it was sort of the
second story but it wasn't that
high-- and like he was okay
because, you know, babies' bones
are really soft, its' so cool.

HOPE
sits across from her, open-mouthed, trying to restrain herself
from chasing this alien out of the house with a broom.

HOPE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Ellyn, dressed in a striking business suit, busily picking up
clothes and toys, straightening the quilt and pillows. Meanwhile,
off-camera, THE DOORBELL IS RINGING.

ELLYN
You can't just leave them standing
out there.

HOPE
Yes, I can, then they'll go away.
WE DISCOVER

Hope, curled up in the corner, her arms over her head. Ellyn comes to kneel beside her, absentmindedly brushing off a fuzzball of doghair that clings to her wool skirt.

ELLYN
Hopey, these people can find other jobs, if you start being guilted out about each one you'll be a basket case.

HOPE
Too late.
(on Ellyn's look)
Meanwhile, do you remember what we used to do, do you remember what you fed little Joey Jacobs to make him sick so his parents would come home so you could go see the Who?

ELLYN
Castor Oil is not dangerous.

HOPE
(suddenly remembering)
Oh, God, Linda Gimpel... I used to tell her that Dracula was coming to get her and she'd cower under the covers from seven o'clock on so I could make out with Billy Dubin...
(gasps)
In her parents bedroom.

ELLYN
You made out with Billy Dubin...?

HOPE
--and we were good. These young people today, they have no values, they're all on drugs...

ELLYN
...and listening to that degenerate rock and roll.

They look at each other and start to smile. The doorbell RINGS again. Hope shakes her head in resignation.

HOPE
I'll get it.

CUT TO:
A FOUR HUNDRED POUND WOMAN

out of a Fellini movie, sitting on Hope's couch...

CUT TO:

A CHAIN-SMOKING SCHIZOPHRENIC

Her black hair, tangled and matted over her forehead, sitting
on Hope's couch...

CUT TO:

A FIFTY YEAR-OLD NAZI NANNY

blonde hair in pigtails -- holding the baby upside down while
demonstrating a more efficient burping technique.

CUT TO:

A FRESH-FACED, LOVELY COED

Pepsodent smile, caring eyes, great tits.

COED

--three younger brothers, and of
course my baby sister, she's
five now and so cute -- which is
why pediatric nursing is still
my dream: I just love kids.

CUT TO:

HOPE

closing the front door, smiling, as the coed leaves. Then:

HOPE
(to Ellyn)
Absolutely not. No way.

ELLYN
(stupified)
With her background, with those
credentials?

HOPE
With that body?

CUT TO:

AN OUTDOOR PLAZA

where Elliot and Michael have grabbed a hot dog and are walking
back to work. There are BEAUTIFUL WOMEN everywhere.

MICHAEL
...have to do something -- why
don't we advertise ourselves.
Yeah, we could--
He trails off as a leggy secretary passes by.

MICHAEL
--because... people should see
the kind of work we do. I mean
we gotta be aggressive or we're
going to be in the toilet. We
have to---

Again, he loses his train of thought, this time as two young
women in workout leotards brush by them.

MICHAEL
--be really aggressive if we...
(stops himself, incredulous)
What is going on here...?

ELLIO T
See, it's like this. Bunch of
australopithecines out on the
savannah, right?
(imitates one: grunts)
The ones who win out are the
ones who can spot like a great-
looking australopithecine rear
end at four hundred yards. And
the australopithecine girls,
they're really into it, they're
thinking, hey, any guy that can
see me from two miles off and
beat up all these other apes
must be a hell of a hunter, so I
think I'll wave my rear end a
little, catch his attention.
Two million years later, what do
you got? A bunch of guys in
ties and jackets supposed to be
working, and what are they
doing, what are you doing?

Michael is staring at yet another woman.

MICHAEL
Looking at women on the street.

ELLIO T
Exactly. That's called evolution.

MICHAEL
What I don't understand is, what
are we supposed to do about it?
I mean, it's just there, right,
and we're supposed to suffer?
Ignore it? Have an operation?
ELLIOlT
I don't know.

MICHAEL
What do you do?

ELLIOlT
(pauses)
What does anybody do?

MICHAEL
Well... I guess some people... do something about it.

ELLIOlT
Naahh.

MICHAEL
Would you ever do it?
(on Elliot's look)
The real question is, would you ever tell me?

ELLIOlT
Would you?

MICHAEL
I would tell you -- I'd have to tell somebody.

ELLIOlT
That's the truth.

So?

MICHAEL
So what?

ELLIOlT
Have you?

MICHAEL
Have you?

ELLIOlT

MICHAEL
NO! HAVE YOU?

Elliot doesn't answer. Michael stops in his tracks.

MICHAEL
Wait a minute. Excuse me? Wait a minute.
(looks at him)
Wait a minute. EXCUSE ME?
ELLiot

Never mind.

MICHAEL

When?

(pause)

I don't believe this.

(pause)

With who? I do not believe this.

ELLiot

It was hardly anything.

MICHAEL

NOW. Everything. Right now.

ELLiot

It was last year, it was somebody--

(he stops)

Never mind, I really don't, I really can't talk about this.

MICHAEL

It was somebody what--? Oh, God, it was somebody in the office, oh, God, it was Cheryl Eastman.

ELLiot

I really don't want to talk about this.

MICHAEL

You slept with Cheryl Eastman.
You slept with Cheryl Eastman? Where? At the office.

ELLiot

No. It was someplace else.
Really, it was no big thing.

MICHAEL

How many times?

ELLiot

(long pause)

Six.

MICHAEL

Six occasions or six acts?

ELLiot

Occasions.

In shock, Michael sits down on a bench.
MICHAEL
You had an affair. I don't believe it.

ELLIO T
Is that what an affair is? I thought I was just having a protracted nightmare.

He sits down next to Michael.

ELLIO T
Do you know how hard it's been not to talk about this? I don't know, I just, I didn't know how to begin telling you.

MICHAEL
(shaking his head)
And it was probably great, too.

ELLIO T
I'm telling you it was not great. The first time we did it was the most humiliating night of my life and after that it settled into being merely horrible.
(thinks about it)
Okay, the second time was pretty great, but after that it was horrible.

Michael looks at his friend, who seems at this moment like

MICHAEL
Does Nancy know?

ELLIO T
I don't even know. It's like, our lives were so busy and she had, I don't know, started to lose interest in sex, and I guess I was mad, or having two kids was too hard, but it's like once I did this -- before this I couldn't even buy a present for her without ending up babbling what it was. I could not keep a secret from her. And all of a sudden, I'm lying, I'm making up things, and the worst thing is, it's totally easy, like some psychopath was lying around inside me just waiting for this chance to jump out.
some shell-shocked veteran, just returned from a hideous and violent war...

MICHAEL
So you’d recommend this to all your friends as a worthwhile experience....

ELLIOIT
See the problem is, once you do it, now it's real, now it's this thing that's with you, and you can't tell her about it, and what you get...is this...abyss... between you, and you have no idea how you're going to ever cross it.

HOPE AND MICHAEL'S LIVING ROOM

As Michael comes in at the end of the day.

MICHAEL
June, I'm home.

HOPE (V.O.)
In here, Ward.

IN THE KITCHEN

Michael finds Hope feeding the baby. He kisses both, though finding Jane's face beneath the food is not an easy trick.

HOPE
We're painting faces again.

MICHAEL
Hi, Nanie, hi, Banie, hi, Lanie. You look disgusting.

HOPE
(sing-song)
How was work?

MICHAEL
I never talk about work at home.

HOPE
Stop it, what's going on?

MICHAEL
Work is wonderful, work is thrilling, I'm completely fulfilled and well-paid.
He walks out with the mail. The baby yells for more food. Or bangs the table. Or waves the spoon. Or does something, we hope.

HOPE
Who asked you?

THE MOST DELICIOUS MOMENT OF THE DAY

as Michael settles into his favorite chair and devotionally holds before him the two catalogues, among his life's greatest pleasures: The Sharper Image and the L.L.Bean catalogues...

As he prepares to plunge into the latest forty-eight function automatic telephone:

HOPE (V.O.)
Honey, do you think you could give her a bath?

CUT TO:

JANE SPLASHING IN THE BATHTUB

While Michael laughs. There are those moments in having a kid that are so pure and so joyous that it's hard to tell who's having more fun, the child or the grown-up child.

MICHAEL
And then I splash you, and Oh, No!, you splash me! -- TIDAL
WAVE, Aaaaaahhhhh--

Hope appears, drawn by the laughter. In her arms, a pile of freshly-laundered towels.

HOPE
(hands him a towel)
Who's taking the bath?

He gives her a look most parents share, a kind of conspiratorial shock at the beauty and wonderfulness of their offspring.

HOPE
(shaking her head)
All day...

MICHAEL
(quietly)
I'm like reeling...

HOPE
Do all kids radiate light, or is it just her...

These feelings are too strong, too overwhelming to even talk
about. She shakes her head and starts out.

MICHAEL
Vait. Vait. So, sit... I not
getting chance to talk vit you.

She perches on the toilet.

MICHAEL
Babysitters...?

Hope slumps against the tile.

HOPE
Can't we talk about it later?

MICHAEL
That bad...?

HOPE
We're never going to have a
babysitter, we're never going to
leave the house, we're never
going to have a life— until
she's thirty and then she can
babysit for us.

She gets up and walks out of the bathroom. Michael doesn't
quite know what to say. Jane GURGLES AND SPLASHES.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL

tiptoes out of the baby's room and ever so gently closes the
door -- leaving it open just a crack.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

He finds Hope, passed out on the sofa. Not knowing quite what
to do, he stands there for a moment looking at her.

THE KITCHEN

looks like a grenade has exploded.

THE REFRIGERATOR

is bare of all save baby food, formula and black lettuce.

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Michael sits on the arm of the sofa.
MICHAEL
Honey, are you hungry?
   (pause)
Honey?

Groggily, Hope half opens her eyes.

HOPE
   (mumbles)
   ...just need to rest for a
   minute.

MICHAEL
Yes, but... Never mind.

A long beat. The vibrations reach Hope and rouse her unwillingly.

HOPE
Sorry I didn't get to the market.
There's frozen stuff I think.

MICHAEL
Fine.

He gets up to walk away. Now she knows something's really wrong.

HOPE
What?

MICHAEL
   (stops)
Are you gonna want to eat, or what?

HOPE
   (prickly)
I just wanted to rest for a minute.
Go ahead and eat.

MICHAEL
   (starts out, stops)
Do you know where the soup is,
it's kind of hard to find anything
in there.

HOPE
I didn't have a chance to clean
up, I'm sorry. You can clean up,
too.

MICHAEL
I just put her to bed, I gave
her a bath, I come home from
work, what, you think I don't do
anything all day...?
HOPE
Well, what do you think I do all day. I cleaned up three times today, I just haven't cleaned up since five o'clock so it's a mess in there.

MICHAEL
Never mind. Sorry. Go to sleep.

He starts to walk away, but doesn't get far--

MICHAEL
What, you met all these babysitters and none of them were any good?

HOPE
Exactly.

MICHAEL
How many?

HOPE
(grudgingly)
Seven.

MICHAEL
And, what, they were too old, or were they weird, or what?

HOPE
You want to interview them, you stay home all day and interview them, you stay home with her all day and try to figure out what she needs every five minutes. If we get somebody really old, does that mean she's not gonna walk her around enough, or just put her down and let her cry, and if she doesn't speak English, I don't know, maybe she'll know what to do in an emergency but maybe she won't. If she's really young, does, is she really responsible, and when the baby chokes, what-- who's she gonna call? And today when she's crying for an hour and I don't know what to do and I finally got her to stop, you think somebody else is gonna be able to...

By now, the tears are flowing freely. Michael is stunned by her intensity. He's realizing, perhaps for the first time,
just how strung out she really is.

MICHAEL
(moved)
She cried for an hour...?
(going to her)
What do you think it was?

HOPE
(swallowing)
I don't know. Nothing. I gave
her orange juice, maybe it upset
her stomach. There was no more
apple juice because I'm a terrible
mother and didn't get to the store.

MICHAEL
Oh, honey...
(sighs)
Why don't you just go to bed
now. I'll clean up. If you get
hungry later, I'll get you
something.

Reluctantly, grudgingly, but finally with real intensity, she
hugs him.

HOPE
I'm sorry. I don't know why, I
just get so upset about this
stuff.

MICHAEL
(gently)
Shhh... We'll find a babysitter.

She kisses him, gets up and starts toward the bedroom.

HOPE
I just need to sleep a little.

Left alone on the sofa, Michael watches her go, more than a
little unnerved by what just happened.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Michael is watching Sesame Street. The baby isn't; she's on the floor looking the other way, putting blocks in her mouth. Hope looks up from the paper and smiles at her husband.

HOPE
I hope you're enjoying that.

MICHAEL
I have a crush on Maria.

The PHONE RINGS. Michael answers it.

MICHAEL
Hello...... I told you never to call me here....... When?....... All right, I can't wait.
(covers the mouthpiece)
Gary wants to buy equipment today. Should I get sleeping bags?
(listens)
Shut up.
(to Hope)
He says now we don't need the kind that zip together anymore.

HOPE
Ha, Ha, Ha. Do we really need new sleeping bags...

MICHAEL
Jules, you're the one who swore you'd never sleep in those things again. Anyway, you have to spend a lot of money before you go camping, it's the law.

HOPE
We don't even have a babysitter yet.

MICHAEL
We will...
(looks at her)
Honey, what's the matter, do you really not want to do this...?
HOPE
(trapped now)
...Get sleeping bags.

MICHAEL
(into the phone)
You're on. We'll spend lots of money, we'll buy knives.

HOPE
You have enough knives.

MICHAEL
A man never has enough knives.

THE FRONT DOOR

As Michael hurries out.

HOPE
Have lots of fun in the real world...

MICHAEL
I'm not in the real world, I'm in an office.

HOPE
Where people eat solid food.

MICHAEL
You want to go in my place? I'll stay home with the baby.

HOPE
Okay.

They look at each other. Sure... He kisses Hope and the baby.

MICHAEL
Goodbye my beautiful girls. Why am I always late, will you tell me that?

He's gone. The PHONE IS RINGING.

IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN --
Hope answers it.

HOPE
Hello--

INTERCUT -- IT'S ELLYN
ELLYN
I've been thinking all night and
I've made a decision.

HOPE
Okay...?

ELLYN
You need to go back to work.

HOPE
Oh, God. Thank you for making
my morning.

ELLYN
Really. I've never seen you
like you were yesterday. You're
really suffering and you need to
find a way out of it.

HOPE
Ellyn, I am not suffering. I'm
having a perfectly delightful
life taking care of my child.
I'm sorry if that's no longer a
defensible activity.

ELLYN
I got scared yesterday when I
saw the circles under your eyes.
This whole thing is taking a
toll on you and it pains me.

HOPE
What, you want me to give her back?

ELLYN
No! I want you to do something
for yourself! Is that a crime?

Hope closes her eyes: Ellyn is making sense now...

ELLYN
When's the last time you went to
a movie, or went shopping for
yourself, or I don't know, did
anything for yourself.

HOPE
Shopping, there's a concept...

ELLYN
I think you should call Shilliday
again, it can't hurt. Ask him
if you can go back part time even.
HOPE
Shilliday is out of the question. He was furious enough when I got pregnant. "This job takes total dedication."

ELLYN
Then sue the bastard. That's illegal.

HOPE
Goodbye, Ellyn.

ELLYN
I'm saying all this because I love you you know that, goodbye...

JUMP CUT: HOPE
Falling on the bed, face down. Defeated. She lies there for a moment, then picks up her head.

JUMP CUT: HOPE
In her closet as she violently pushes hangers around. She finds a dress and pulls it out.

JUMP CUT: HOPE
In front of a mirror as she tries to put it on. It's too tight.
A DIFFERENT DRESS

goes on...

AND ANOTHER --

Hope is peering at herself from different angles. She really looks quite fine, but obviously doesn't think so herself. Finally, she finds a pose that seems right, a defiant, slightly pouty pose. It's not a mother's pose, it's tougher than that.

The baby starts to cry...

CUT TO:

A SPORTING GOOD STORE - DAY

As Michael and Gary look at sleeping bags.

GARY
Here we go: Minus ten degrees.

MICHAEL
Are you kidding, we'd roast in that thing.
GARY
I forgot, you carry a supplemental female heating system.

MICHAEL
Oh, right, and you've never gotten laid backpacking...
(Gary shrugs mysteriously)
Haven't you?

GARY
You mean did I ever take a woman backpacking, or did I ever meet a woman backpacking and then have sex?

MICHAEL
I never even thought of that. Forget it, I don't want to know.

GARY
It was great -- she was with these two other girls who were stopping because they were out of shape. She was like on the American ski team, you know, mean she was...healthy. That's the thing, you know, healthy women, they really get into it. Plus, their bodies are totally flexible.

(Michael nods)
So we were together a couple days, but then she was gonna meet these guys to go hang-gliding off the side of the mountain, so I figured sex is one thing, death is another...

(looks at a parka)
So how is it after she has a baby? I hear, you know, there are some anatomical changes...

MICHAEL
(shakes his head)
Same as ever.

GARY
At least she's beautiful. I think she'll lose the weight.

He walks off, leaving Michael to stare after him.

CUT TO:
A PILE OF CAMPING EQUIPMENT

forming in Michael and Hope's HALLWAY: sleeping bags, canteens.

JUMP CUT. The pile is bigger: parkas, a mess kit.

JUMP CUT. The pile is bigger still: a new tent, boots.

JUMP CUT. The pile is huge: fishing equipment, lanterns, etc....

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR

As Nancy hands over a bag full of baby clothes to Hope.

HOPE
....that's really sweet.

NANCY
I had to hide them from the kid.
The only time she pays any
attention to her clothes is
after she outgrows them and I
try to give them away.

Michael comes through the living room.

MICHAEL
I can understand that. Hi, Deb.

NANCY
I hear you're going camping.

HOPE
Some year.

NANCY
Under the stars, no kids...
Sounds so romantic it's obscene,
if you ask me.

MICHAEL
(grabbing Hope)
It is, isn't it?

HOPE
Rocks under your sleeping bag,
blisters, mosquitos, bears
attacking you in the middle of
the night.

MICHAEL
No kid to get up and feed...

That shuts her up.
NANCY
(on her way out)
I want to hear every illicit detail.

HOPE
Thanks again for the clothes.

Nancy leaves; Hope closes the door, looks at the clothes.

HOPE
Wasn't that nice?

MICHAEL
Are they sticky?

HOPE
Stop it.

Hope starts going through the clothes.

MICHAEL
That was weird.

HOPE
What?

MICHAEL
She really seemed interested in whether we were having sex.

HOPE
Why is that weird?

MICHAEL
I don't know. I guess I don't think of her as being very interested, that's all.

HOPE
When are you going to understand that everybody's interested?

MICHAEL
Some people are more interested than other people.

HOPE
Can we please not hear about how women are biologically programmed to be less interested in sex?

MICHAEL
No, no, even among women, some of them are more interested than others.
HOPE
And Nancy's not interested?

Michael has idiotically set a trap for himself, then walked directly into it.

MICHAEL
I don't know if she's interested.

HOPE
You just said she's not interested.

MICHAEL
I said I think she's not interested.

HOPE
(looks at him)
What did Elliot tell you about Nancy?

MICHAEL
Elliot didn't tell me anything about Nancy. I can't have my own opinions?

HOPE
Why do you have that look on your face?

MICHAEL
I don't have a look on my face.

HOPE
He told you something about Nancy.

MICHAEL
He told me nothing about Nancy. I swear on my mother's grave.

HOPE
Your mother's not dead, you told him something about me--

MICHAEL
I told him nothing about you, stop this.

HOPE
Michael, you are the worst liar in the world, there is something you're obviously not telling me and I think you should tell me.

MICHAEL
There's nothing to tell.
HOPE
Okay... Nancy's not interested in sex...

(nope)
Nancy's frigid.

(nope again)
Elliot is frigid.

MICHAEL
Impotent.

HOPE
Elliot is impotent?!

MICHAEL
No, no, no. Men are impotent, women are frigid, you said Elliot was frigid.

HOPE
Elliot's not impotent--

MICHAEL
Never mind, okay, just never mind, I don't know why you always have to do this.

He tries to turn away. All of a sudden, Hope gets it.

HOPE
Oh, God. He had an affair. Oh, no. Did he really?

MICHAEL
Can we just forget this?

HOPE
He had an affair and Nancy doesn't know, and oh, God... Was it one affair? Just tell me if it was one.

(Michael is silent)
Michael, this is really upsetting, please tell me if he's a total jerk or if this is just something that happened, which would make him only somewhat of a jerk. Damn.

She sits down.

MICHAEL
It was one thing, and apparently it was pretty awful.
HOPE
Good. Serves him right.

MICHAEL
Hope.

HOPE
This is not what I needed to hear today. Why did you tell me?

Michael can only shake his head: why did you tell me...

MICHAEL
(finally)
I didn't have an affair.

HOPE
Are you sure?

MICHAEL
You want me to check and make sure?

HOPE
Yes.

MICHAEL
(thinks)
I'm sure.

They look at each other.

THE KITCHEN
Where Melissa is happily feeding the baby.

MELISSA
--and here...comes...the airplane!
(to Michael and Hope)
What a good baby. Is every baby this good? I want this baby.
Can I have her?

Michael and Hope sit there, exhausted, smiling.

MELISSA
I know, I know... How am I ever going to have a baby? I'm dating babies.

CUT TO:

MICHAEL AND HOPE'S BED
Where all three of them are now snuggling, having put the baby down for the forty-third time.
Except it's hard for Michael to exactly snuggle, since he's surrounded himself with papers and sketches from work.

From the HOUSE next door, we HEAR throbbing ROCK AND ROLL.

HOPE
--Are you crazy, I love your body.

MELISSA
It's totally out of proportion.

MICHAEL
Let me see...

They both lunge for him, wrinkling his papers in the process.

MICHAEL
Hey, hey, I'm working here.

HOPE
Just wait 'til you have one, you'll learn about proportion. And stretch marks. And gravity.

MICHAEL
Would you tell her how great she looks?

MELISSA
I tell her every day. I tell her how great her kid looks, I tell her how great her life looks...

(listening)
Oooh, I love this song. Let's go next door and crash this party.

MICHAEL
They're eighteen.

MELISSA
Young meat.

HOPE
(laughs)
That's no joke, the older brother is really cute.

MELISSA
Get him over here.

(yells)
Hey, kid, you want to meet a horny thirty-two year-old...?

(back to them)
Can't you ask him to babysit or something...?
Michael and Hope laugh.

HOPE
He's an illiterate zombie.

MELISSA
(sinks down on the bed)
...At least he isn't married.
(turns overs)
So, who is going to stay over when we go backpacking?

HOPE
(stretches)
Oh, God... Do you remember when we were eighteen...? How can they be eighteen, we're eighteen.

MELISSA
Who is going to stay over?

MELISSA
I actually lied about my age last week. I told some guy I was born in '56. I don't know anybody who was born in '56.

Michael, meanwhile, has rolled over close to Hope, is giving her a significant look.

MICHAEL
Who?

HOPE
(mouthing)
Not now.

Michael moves even closer. Melissa mistakes his intentions completely and laughs.

MELISSA
(getting up)
You guys are disgusting, can't you wait till I'm out the door. Good bye.

HOPE
Don't go, Melissa.

MICHAEL
Go, Melissa.

As Melissa starts out, Hope jumps up, escaping Michael's grasp.
HOPE
I'll walk you to the door.

CUT TO:

THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Next door, the MUSIC still THROBS. Michael and Hope lie there, absolutely still. Hope rolls over and sees that Michael is also awake. She puts her forehead on his chest.

HOPE
Twelve...Twenty...Four. She will wake up in one hour and thirty-six minutes.

He doesn't say anything.

HOPE
You okay?
(no response)
You're still mad.
(no response)
I told you I would start looking for a sitter again on Monday. Let's just drop this?

MICHAEL
(re the music)
I'm calling the police.

HOPE
It's Friday night. They're allowed to have a party on Friday night.

MICHAEL
--You led me to believe you were working on this and you weren't, I mean, what am I supposed to think?

HOPE
You assumed I was working on it--

MICHAEL
Oh, come on--

HOPE
You could've asked me, you could've tried to help.

MICHAEL
You want me to look for a sitter, I'll look for a sitter, but watch out, 'cause I'll find one--
HOPE
I don't want to find a sitter...?

MICHAEL
You don't want to go.

HOPE
What does that mean?

Next door, some DRUNKEN SCREAMS accompany a new song.

MICHAEL
I'm going over there.

HOPE
You're not going over there. They're kids. We were kids, too. Remember?

MICHAEL
I just think you don't want to go.

HOPE
I don't know what I want. You don't think I want a night alone with you? I wouldn't mind a night by myself either. I just don't know if I'm ready to leave her.

MICHAEL
We're talking about one night.

HOPE
It's not one night, it's a whole attitude. I have to be so available to her all day, every minute, and I don't know how you turn that off, I don't know if I'm supposed to turn that off, maybe that's what being a good mother is. Ellyn thinks I'm too good a mother, you think I'm going to end up like Nancy -- everybody's a critic. I only know that Jane's happy, and why aren't I allowed to be proud of that?

MICHAEL
Okay, so we won't go.
HOPE
(after a long pause)
Is that terrible? Do you hate me?

MICHAEL
I don't hate you. If you're not ready to go, we won't go.

They lie there for a moment.

HOPE
Just tell me I haven't become my mother.

Outside the MUSIC still pounds. Suddenly, Michael bolts up and storms outside.

ON THE PORCH
He stands in his underwear, screaming.

MICHAEL
TURN OFF THE MUSIC, HEY, TURN OFF THE MUSIC...!

    (laughter o.s.)

HEY, YOU LITTLE TWERP, YOU WANT ME TO COME OVER THERE AND BEAT YOUR FACE IN...? TURN OFF THE GODDAMNED MUSIC--

INSIDE

Crying, Hope watches her husband.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

GARY AND MELISSA

Looking directly at us.

GARY

Really?

MELISSA

It's okay...

GARY

No, it's okay... You guys do what you have to do.

MELISSA

I mean this is a tough time...

Hope and Michael stand there abjectly, opposite them. WE'RE in MICHAEL AND HOPE'S LIVING ROOM:

HOPE

It's not like we don't want to go.

MICHAEL

(swallowing it)

It's just... I don't think it can work right now.

GARY

Guys, it's okay.

HOPE

It's really okay?

GARY

It's really okay. I mean people have kids, priorities change, old friends don't mean anything anymore, Elliot and Nancy'll drop by, you'll all change some diapers...

(pats their shoulders)

I understand.

MICHAEL

Gary--

MELISSA

(clipped)

Well, we're going to go now...
HOPE
Look, are people mad here?

GARY
(really not mad)
I'm not mad, I never liked you people anyway.

HOPE
Melissa?

MELISSA
I'll call you when we're back okay?

She hurries out. Gary, Michael, and Hope raise eyebrows at each other.

GARY
What's twelve years of friendship anyway?

He goes. Hope closes the door in dismay. Michael pulls out a samurai sword and commits seppuku...

CUT TO:

SPORTING GOODS STORE

As Michael returns the sleeping bags.

MICHAEL
No, no, they're fine, we just, we hadn't realized we had these other sleeping bags and, uh, they really weren't as good, I mean these have these great velcro here and--

SALESMAN
(tolerant)
All I need is your receipt...

WOMAN
What temperature do those go down to--?

Michael turns to find a lovely, ATHLETIC GIRL caressing the smooth nylon of the bag.

MICHAEL
I think they, uh, I think they go down to minus ten.
WOMAN
Really? I need a warm bag, I get so cold when I sleep.

MICHAEL
Yeah, me too.

She smiles at him and turns to the salesman.

WOMAN
Do you have these in that burgundy color I saw back there?

She's no longer aware of Michael's presence, but he continues to watch her as she heads back with the salesman....

OUTSIDE THE STORE

Michael is just leaving as she hurries out, carrying a large bag.

WOMAN
I bought the kind that zip together, just in case you wanted to come with me...

She is so beautiful. Ever so slowly, he reaches out to touch her face.

REALITY

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

Michael still standing there at the cash register, watching her disappear forever into the back of the store.

CUT TO:

KIDS, LARGE AND SMALL

Swarming around the LOCAL PARK. Mothers, old and older, try to relax while maintaining radar contact with their children.

HOPE

sits there watching the older kids careen -- a vision of the future.

ELLYN (V.O.)

Feels strange to be in a park without tear gas.

Hope looks up to see Ellyn, as always, dressed in one of her striking suits.
HOPE
Janey, look who came to see us.
How'd you find us?
(looks at her)
Is everything okay?

ELLYN
I really, I wanted to see you, because... something weird is going on and I'm... upset about it...

HOPE
Ellyn...

ELLYN
(laughs nervously)
It's not terrible, I don't know, it just occurs to me we haven't spoken in six days...

HOPE
I've been thinking about that, too.

ELLYN
I guess you're mad at me.

HOPE
No, really... Oh, Ellyn... My life... everything's chaos...

ELLYN
And you don't feel like you're ready to do anything about it...?

Hope looks at her old friend.

HOPE
Okay, I don't really get this, did you come here to yell at me--

ELLYN
I'm not yelling at you, I'm asking you. I called you and gave you what I thought was a good way to change the--

HOPE
What you thought--

ELLYN
--situation you're in and then you don't call me for six days.
There's no turning back now:

HOPE
Ellyn, you don't understand the situation I'm in now.
(Elllyn looks at her)
I don't sleep at night, my husband is mad at me.... I'm...
I'm caring for this....creature who's....of me. There's this...
connection I've never felt before, with anyone. I don't
know how to separate from that and I don't know if I want to.
And I don't think you want to understand that.

ELLYN
I can understand that.

HOPE
Lynnie, you don't even look at her. You don't ask about her,
you don't play with her. You hardly acknowledge her existence.

Ellyn looks as if she's been struck. She's really hurt.

ELLYN
(long pause)
Okay. What was.... I saw you two days after she was born, and
a week after, and 10 days after, and I don't believe this.

HOPE
You saw me. You didn't see her.

ELLYN
What the hell was the present I bought her?

HOPE
Ellyn, you bought her a book of
Arthur Rackham fairy stories, it
was beautiful, I loved it -- but
she won't read it till she's
ten, look, I don't want to
criticize your present, it was a
wonderful present, I'm just
saying -- please don't get
defensive -- she's in my life
now. You can't look the other
way or pretend she's not there.

(MORE)
HOPE (cont.)
She's a part of me. If you want to have a relationship with me, she just comes along -- I can't change that.

Ellyn looks away, eyes tearing up.

ELLYN
I'm a part of your life too. I have prior claim. You can't just turn away from...people who care about you--
(shakes her head)
This is like in high school when you would get a boyfriend and then, oh, where's Hope.

HOPE
(gets it now)
Lynnie, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

ELLYN
(crying now)
I'm not exactly ignorant of the looks.

HOPE
What looks?

ELLYN
Poor Ellyn can't find a man, poor Ellyn is too committed to her career which is a load of bull.

HOPE
I never say that stuff.

ELLYN
Can we just be honest after all these years. You think it.

The stand in silence.

HOPE
What, we're not supposed to be friends anymore? I can't accept that.

ELLYN
Who's saying that? Can't I be upset, can't we both be upset?
HOPE
(starts to smile)
You know I can't deal with conflict of any kind.

Ellyn looks at her friend of so many years...

ELLYN
I know.
(sighs)
Maybe we're just going our separate ways.

HOPE
That sounds awful.

ELLYN
Can't we go separate ways and still be friends? Can't we just respect what the other person is doing?

HOPE
I respect you so much. Do you respect me?

ELLYN
Don't you understand? I do respect you, I'm jealous of you.

HOPE
But I'm jealous of you--

ELLYN
Oh, God...

Two grown women hugging on a park bench amidst screaming children...

CUT TO:

ELLiot AND MICHAEL

in their office. Elliot's prostrate on the sofa, Michael's slumped in his chair. They stare at one another for a moment, very bummed out.

Finally, Michael produces a bottle of Bushmill's from a drawer, takes a swig, caps it, and tosses the bottle to Elliot.

MICHAEL
...We'll do it, we'll get it over with and it'll be done.
ELLiot
By the time we get through with
the campaign, nobody'll be able
to tell it was a rip-off.

MICHAEL
(kicks the telephone)
He didn't have to be so damn
patronizing about my apology: "I
know you kids got principles,
that's what I like about ya', you
wanna do your thing..." I HATE
THIS. What are we doing here?
Why did we start this company?

ELLiot
To do our thing.
(on Michael's look)
We won't always have to deal
with sleazeballs like Teller.
We'll deal with higher class
sleazeballs.
(looks at him)
We'll come back to fight another
day, but right now we have two
wives, three kids, four cars, two
mortgages, a payroll. And that's
life, pal. You be de breadwinner
now.

MICHAEL
Is that what I am...

THE LIVING ROOM
is dark as Michael enters the house. Light SPILLS from the
baby's room. He walks into the hallway and looks in on:

HOPE
who is rocking Janey to sleep. Michael stands in the shadows
for a moment watching them, and then moves quietly away.

IN THE DARKENED LIVING ROOM - LATER
Hope walks in to find Michael sitting alone, staring into the
shadows.

HOPE
I didn't hear you come in.

Michael just shrugs. She looks at him with concern.
HOPE
There's food. I got to the store...
(he nods, silence:)
You want to be alone.

MICHAEL
I don't know what I want, Hope,
all I know is...I don't know what
I want.

She comes over to him.

HOPE
You're angry about not going.

MICHAEL
No, no, you were right, there's
no way we were going backpacking...

HOPE
I just freaked out. We'll go
next time.

He doesn't answer. She can see that he's still upset.

HOPE
Michael...?

MICHAEL
(finally)
I crawled back to Teller today.
I took the account.

HOPE
I don't understand...

MICHAEL
(fierce)
We almost went bankrupt, Hope.
I was scrambling... I did each
day this week, trying to figure
out a way around this, and
I....couldn't. So I sold out.

HOPE
(touches him)
Honey.... Why didn't you tell me?

MICHAEL
I tried to tell you--

HOPE
You made jokes about it--
MICHAEL
Because you don't want to hear it and I don't blame you. I'm supposed to deal with this stuff. I earn the money now.

HOPE
I don't expect that of you, Michael. I don't want us to be our parents. We're a team.

MICHAEL
You do expect it. What are you going to do, go back to work now when you don't want to?

HOPE
Yes, if I have to. You're doing this incredibly brave thing and I don't want you to have to compromise because of me.

MICHAEL
It's not you, it's... all of this, it's just not...according to plan.

HOPE
But our lives are so full now and we have a wonderful baby who we love so much, and who needs us.

Michael puts his hand over his face.

MICHAEL
(finally)
Then why do I feel so terrible...? God, I hate people who talk like this. I know we're lucky. I've just been so angry and I don't know, embarrassed, because I feel like a two year old and you're not paying enough attention to me, or rubbing my head at night, or cooking or taking care of me like you used to. And I see you being this incredible mother to Jane and I know that's one of the reasons I married you in the first place and I feel unbelievably guilty for even having any of these feelings, on top of which I've got nobody to talk to about them

(MORE)
MICHAEL (cont.)
because you've always been my
best friend and I've always--
(he is choking up)
--told you everything, only now
I can't because they're all about
you and I'm afraid you'll hear
it and just explode, or kill me.

HOPE
(gently)
You can tell me.

MICHAEL
No, I can't. It's too... hurtful.

She waits, but he almost can't go on.

MICHAEL
I don't want to be this...tortured
couple, I don't want to be Elliot
and Nancy. I don't want to be
attracted to other women.

HOPE
Are you attracted to other
women...?

MICHAEL
(long pause)
Yes.
(sighs)
Not really.

Now she sighs.

MICHAEL
I'm sorry, I admit it, I really
liked our life. I liked the
fact that you were...beautiful
and you were exciting and you
had a dirty mind, and..... you
were there for me.

She shakes her head ruefully, not about to explode at all...

HOPE
Don't you think I want to be
thin and interested in sex every
night and exactly the way I was
before...?
(his silence means yes)
I do. But I might need some
help, that's all, you might have
(MORE)
HOPE (cont.)
to remind me sometimes. And it'll never be perfect, can you accept that?

He is nodding, so relieved to hear her say these words.

HOPE
But Michael, we have to learn how to talk about all this or else it's gonna get us.

MICHAEL
People have had babies before, why is this so hard...?

HOPE
We expect too much. Because we've always gotten...too much. (gently)
I think all our parents had a meeting in 1946. "Let's all have lots of kids and give them everything they want so they can grow up and be totally messed up and unable to cope with real life."

Michael slowly slides off the sofa until his head is resting on her knee.

She rubs his head.

FADE OUT.

THE END