

Rev. 09/07/94 (Blue)
Rev. 10/12/94 (Pink)

THE BRIDGES OF MADISON COUNTY

by

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WARNER BROS./AMBLIN/MALPASO

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FADE IN:

1

EXT. JOHNSON FARMHOUSE - DAY

1

CAROLYN, mid-40s, is standing in the doorway of the farmhouse watching a car drive up the road towards her.

A LAWYER is unloading a briefcase from the trunk of his car.

As the car approaches, Carolyn smiles. She steps out of the doorway and heads for the car, out of which exit her brother MICHAEL and his country girl wife BETTY, a stout buxom chatterbox. Both boast Florida tans and fashion styles.

MICHAEL

(to Carolyn)

Explain to me again why we didn't do this in Des Moines in an air conditioned office?

CAROLYN

Mom's orders.

MICHAEL

Is that the lawyer?

CAROLYN

(nods)

I have some sandwich fixings if you're hungry.

BETTY

(proudly)

No, we just had lunch at the hotel with my brother and his new wife. She told me all the dirt. I forgot how interesting things can get around here. It was so good to see them. The last time we visited they were in Europe. He is doing so well. He ordered champagne. For lunch! I nearly died.

MICHAEL

I nearly died when I had to pick up the check.

*
*

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

BETTY

Michael doesn't understand.
 People who make the kind of money
 my brother makes don't carry money
 on them. They keep it all in
 various accounts.

MICHAEL

Then we should have had lunch at
 the bank.

Carolyn tries not to laugh. Betty shoots him a dirty
 look, then stops take in the house and its surroundings.

BETTY

Boy. It sure has been a long
 time.

MICHAEL

(correcting her)
 We were here two Christmases ago.

BETTY

Well, that's a long time.

MICHAEL

It's not that long.

BETTY

(suddenly upset)
 Well why don't I just say black so
 you can say white!
 (to Carolyn)
 Don't be surprised to find your
 brother hasn't changed an iota.
 He hardly ever talks and when he
 does it's in that tone! You
 should have heard him at lunch --
 not two words until the bill came
 and then he says, 'Worth every
 penny.'

MICHAEL

(defensive)

So!

BETTY

(angry)
You said it in that tone! Like
 you were angry at me, at my
 brother, at the world for forcing
 you to eat a nice lunch!

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED: (2)

1

MICHAEL

Oh, Jesus.

BETTY

(starting to cry)

I simply cannot stand that tone!

CAROLYN

(sympathetically)

Come inside. You're just tired
from the trip.

She comforts Betty, who indulges in the attention.

BETTY

I'm so sick and tired of
apologizing and not knowing what
I've done!

CAROLYN

I'm sure you haven't done
anything. Have some iced tea.
How are the kids?

MICHAEL

We dropped them off with Betty's
mom. Where's Steve?

CAROLYN

(uncomfortably)

He's not coming.

Betty suddenly stops crying and abrasively focuses on
Carolyn's problems.

BETTY

Aw, is he still cheating on you,
hon?

Carolyn suddenly loses sympathy for her.

CUT TO:

2 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

2

The Lawyer hands Michael a document.

LAWYER

Just sign here as having received
the contents from the safe deposit
box.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

2

CONTINUED:

2

LAWYER (CONT'D)

(as Michael does)

And this one, which clears the bank of all further responsibility for the contents.

Betty whispers to Carolyn.

BETTY

This is kind of exciting. You think we'll find out your mother had secret millions lying around?

Carolyn smiles weakly. Michael hands back the papers.

LAWYER

All right. Why don't we begin?

He takes out Francesca's Last Will and Testament.

LAWYER

Your mother has been interred at Cedar Heights Funeral Home until arrangements can be made.

MICHAEL

(to Carolyn)

I thought everything was arranged.

CAROLYN

Well, there's a problem.

MICHAEL

What problem?

LAWYER

Your mother left explicit instructions that she wished to be cremated.

MICHAEL

Cremated?!

BETTY

Eeeww!

CAROLYN

I know. I don't understand it either.

MICHAEL

When did she decide this?

(CONTINUED)

LAWYER
(reading will)
Apparently just before her death.

MICHAEL
Well, that's crazy. I don't know
anybody who gets cremated.

BETTY
Lots of people do.

MICHAEL
Well, no one in my family did! Dad
bought cemetery plots at Prairie
Hills. One for him, one for Mom.

LAWYER
It clearly states in the will --

MICHAEL
I don't care what it says! Maybe
Mom was delirious, you know. She
didn't know what she was saying.
If she wanted to be cremated, why
the hell did she let Dad buy two
plots, huh?

LAWYER
Well, she was very specific. She
wanted her ashes to be thrown off
Roseman Bridge.

MICHAEL
What?!

BETTY
How bizarre!

CAROLYN
Mr. Peterson, are you sure Mom
wrote all this?

LAWYER
Well, it was notarized and
witnessed by a Mrs. Lucy Delaney.
Maybe you can ask her.

MICHAEL
Who the hell is Lucy Delaney?

CAROLYN
I remember a Mrs. Delaney but Mom
told me years ago she died.

(CONTINUED)

*
*

2 CONTINUED: (3)

2

MICHAEL

Well, I don't care if it's legal or not, we're not cremating her and throwing her off some bridge where we can't even go visit her because she's going to be blown all over the place like an ashtray.

BETTY

Not to mention people driving over her and doggies doing their business --

MICHAEL

(interrupting)

We're not doing it! I'm not even sure it's Christian.

BETTY

Maybe it's an Italian thing.
(to Lawyer)
Their mother was Italian.

MICHAEL

Doesn't matter. Move on.

The women dare not object. The lawyer raises his eyebrows and continues:

LAWYER

Well, we'll come back to that.
Shall we open the box?

JUMP CUT TO:

2A SAME SCENE - CLOSE ON SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX - MOMENTS
LATER

2A

A key is inserted and the lid is opened. There are many papers, deeds, etc. Michael begins sorting through these.

Carolyn notices a manila envelope addressed to her mother, postmarked 1965. She opens it up to find two letters and a photograph -- Francesca standing near a covered bridge, her hair wind-blown, her expression serene, beautiful and sad.

CAROLYN

Michael, look -- I've never seen this picture of Mom, have you?

Betty and Michael look over her shoulder. He shakes "no."

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED:

2A

CAROLYN

It was in this envelope from 1965.

BETTY

She's not wearing a bra.

(takes bridge photo)

This is Holliwell Bridge, in case anyone's interested.

Interested, yes, but no one thinks anything of it. Michael returns to the other papers. Betty takes the photograph for further examination. Carolyn opens one of the letters and begins to read.

The following dialogue is heard O.S., as CAMERA ANGLES ON Carolyn reading one of the letters:

BETTY (O.S.)

It's a beautiful picture of her.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

(to Lawyer)

Why are there two deeds here?

LAWYER (O.S.)

One is for the original parcel your father bought and this one is for the additional acres he purchased in '59.

MICHAEL (O.S.)

And this?

LAWYER (O.S.)

Those are bills of sale from the equipment your mother sold in...

Their conversation continues O.S. Throughout their conversation, we FOCUS ON Carolyn as she reads and her expression sinks into one of shock and confusion. She flips to the last page of the letter to read who it is from. She can't believe her eyes.

BETTY (O.S.)

What's that?

Carolyn jumps a little, so engrossed in her discovery. She lies.

CAROLYN

Oh, just an old letter from a friend.

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED: (2)

2A

BETTY
(laughs)
No treasure maps, huh?

CAROLYN
(laughs nervously)
No.

Betty starts inspecting knick-knacks around the house she might be able to take. Carolyn looks to Michael.

CAROLYN
Michael.

MICHAEL
(reading documents)
Yeah?

CAROLYN
Michael.

MICHAEL
(irritated)
What!?

CAROLYN
Come here a minute.

Michael crosses impatiently to Carolyn. Carolyn looks around to the others, then guides him O.S. into the kitchen for privacy. He protests.

MICHAEL
What? Where are we going?

They exit. Alone with the impatient Lawyer, Betty examines a vase as she pumps him for info.

BETTY
Did she say anything in there about me? Leaving me anything in particular?

LAWYER
No.

Betty prattles on as she examines each item, much to the Lawyer's dismay, hiding her resentment and hurt.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY

I didn't expect so. She never liked me. It's okay. I always knew. Thought we married too young. Nobody broke his arm -- that's what I said, but you know mothers and sons. Also, she never liked the fact of us moving to Florida although that's where the opportunities were. Couldn't deny that. Suppose we should have visited more but you know she hardly ever made an effort to come to Tampa. Not even to see her grandchildren. She was a cold woman. They say Italians are hot blooded but not her. She was cool as ice.

(picks up a candlestick)

She leave these to anyone?

Michael and Carolyn reenter the living room. Michael's expression now matches Carolyn in disbelief.

BETTY

What's going on?

MICHAEL

Um... we were just wondering how it might be better if Carolyn and I went over the stuff by ourselves. Not keep you two waiting around. I'll contact your office about the legal work.

Grateful, the Lawyer packs up to leave.

BETTY

I don't mind waiting.

MICHAEL

Well, there's a lot of boring stuff to do. Lists of people we have to write to. Find Mom's relatives' addresses in Italy -- stuff like that.

BETTY

Well, I can help.

MICHAEL

I said no!

(CONTINUED)

2A CONTINUED: (4)

2A

That came out a bit aggressively. Betty is hurt.

MICHAEL

Why don't you go to your mother's?
Or back to the hotel. Sit in some
air conditioning. Take a bath.

BETTY

(near tears)

I do not need instructions from
you to bathe!

(gets her bag)

I knew you'd do this! I knew I'd
come all the way here and be shut
out as usual! I came to be here
for you! I didn't have to come!

(genuinely hurt)

Lord knows I was never much
welcome in this house before.
Apparently dead or alive,
nothing's changed.

CAROLYN

Aw, Betty.

Carolyn feels badly for her. An impatient Michael
refuses sympathy. Embarrassed, Betty starts to exit,
then stops at the mantle.

BETTY

Carolyn -- you want these
candlesticks?

CAROLYN

No. I'd like you to have them.

Betty grabs them both and exits. Carolyn looks at
him disapprovingly. Michael takes the letter from her
hands.

MICHAEL

Now what's this about?

CUT TO:

3 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

3

Sitting at the kitchen table, Carolyn is in the middle of
reading the letter to Michael.

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

'... going over and over in my mind every detail, every moment of our time together and I ask myself, "What happened to me in Madison County?" I struggle to put it together in a way that allows me to continue knowing we're on separate roads. But then I look through the lens of my camera, and you're there. I start to write an article and I find myself writing it to you. It's clear to me now we have been moving towards each other, towards those four days, all our lives --'

MICHAEL

(rises)

I don't want to hear anymore!
Burn the damn thing! I don't want
to hear it! Throw it away!

Carolyn continues reading silently. Michael's curiosity gets the best of him.

MICHAEL

What's he saying now?

CAROLYN

Well, he just goes on about how if Mom ever needed him, she could find him through the National Geographic Magazine in Washington, D.C. He was a photographer. He promises not to write again. Then all it says is...

(beat)

I love you... Robert.

MICHAEL

Robert! Jesus! I'll kill him.

CAROLYN

That would be some trick. He's already dead. That's what this other letter is.

(takes letter and
skims)

From his attorney. He left most of his things to Mom and requested...

She stops.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

What?

CAROLYN

That he be cremated and his ashes
thrown off Roseman Bridge.

MICHAEL

Damn him! I knew Mom wouldn't
have thought of that herself. It
was some damn perverted...
photographic mind influencing her!
When did the bastard die?

CAROLYN

'82.

MICHAEL

Wait a minute! That was three
years after Daddy. Do you
think...?

CAROLYN

I don't know. I'm completely in
the dark here. That's what I get
for moving away.

MICHAEL

This happened way before we both
got married. I... I can't
believe it.

(then, innocently)

You think she had sex with him?

Carolyn cannot believe he is this dense.

CAROLYN

(sarcastic)

My Lord. It must feel real nice
living inside your head with
Peter Pan and the Easter Bunny.

MICHAEL

Don't talk to me like that. She
was my mother, for Christ's sake.
And now I find out she was... She
was a --

CAROLYN

Don't say that!

MICHAEL

Well what am I supposed to think?

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (3)

3

CAROLYN

I can't believe she never told me? We spoke at least once a week. How could she do that?

MICHAEL

How did she meet him? Did Dad know? Anything else in that envelope?

CAROLYN

No, I don't think so. I --

She dumps it over and a small key falls out. Pause, as Carolyn and Michael look to each other -- they grab the key and run out of the kitchen, almost comically falling over each other in their obsession to put this puzzle together.

3A SERIES OF JUMP CUTS

3A

FROM one lock TO another as they try to find the keyhole that fits the key -- they try closets, attic doors, jewelry boxes, night tables, vanity drawers... Finally --

4 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

4

At the foot of their parents' bed sits a walnut hope chest, covered with a tapestry. Michael and Carolyn look to each other first, before one removes the tapestry and the other tries the key. It fits. They open the chest to find:

Camera equipment, a chain with a medallion that reads "FRANCESCA," three leather bound notebooks -- and a sealed envelope with "Carolyn or Michael" written on it.

CAROLYN/MICHAEL

You read it!

Carolyn relents. She takes out the letter and reads:

CAROLYN

'January, 1987. Dear Carolyn. I hope you're reading this with Michael. I'm sure he wouldn't be able to read it by himself and he'll need some help understanding all this.'

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Insulted, Michael pulls the letter out of her hand and defiantly attempts to read it aloud himself to disprove his mother's claim. But after looking at a few lines, he surrenders and hands the letter back to his sister.

CAROLYN

'First, and most of all, I love you both very much and although I feel fine, I thought it was time to put my affairs, excuse that word, in order.'

MICHAEL

I can't believe she's making jokes.

CAROLYN

Sshhh. 'After going through the safety deposit box, I'm sure you'll find your way to this letter. It's hard to write this to my own children. I could let this die with the rest of me I suppose. But as one gets older, one's fears subside. What becomes more and more important is to be known -- known for all that you were during this brief stay. How sad it seems to me to leave this Earth without those you love the most ever really knowing who you were. It's easy for a mother to love her children no matter what -- it's something that just happens. I don't know if it's as simple for children. You're all so busy being angry at us for raising you wrong. But I thought it was important to give you that chance. To give you the opportunity to love me for all that I was...'

Carolyn and Michael look to each other like two school children about to take a difficult exam. They continue.

CAROLYN

'His name was Robert Kincaid. He was a photographer and he was here in 1965 shooting an article for National Geographic on the covered bridges of Madison County.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

Remember when we got that issue?
How we felt like celebrities?
Remember when we started getting
the subscription?'

They don't remember.

CAROLYN

'I don't want you to be angry
with him. I hope after you
know the whole story, you might
even think well of him. Even
grateful.'

MICHAEL

Grateful!?

CAROLYN

(reads)

'... It's all there in the three
notebooks. Read them in order.
If you don't want to, I suppose
that's okay, too. But in that
case I want you to know something
-- I never stopped loving your
father. He was a very good man.
It's just that my love for Robert
was different. He brought out
something in me no one had ever
brought out before, or since. He
made me feel like a woman in a
way few women ever experience...'

MICHAEL

(cuts her off)

That's it!

Grabbing the letter, he starts putting everything back
in the trunk.

CAROLYN

What are you doing?

MICHAEL

This is crazy. She waits 'til
she's dead to tell us all this.
Well, I got news for you. She
was my mother. That's enough for
me. I don't have to know who she
was.

CAROLYN

Well, I'd like to read them.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (3)

4

MICHAEL

No. We're going to lock this up
and --

CAROLYN

Stop it!

(as Michael
freezes)

I want to read them! If you don't
want to then just leave. But
don't you push me around like I'm
some mule you paid for -- I
already have a husband!

Michael is stymied.

5 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

5

Carolyn opens the first notebook which is dated AUGUST
1965. Michael sits beside her with a cup of coffee.

CAROLYN

(reading)

'It was the week of the Illinois
State Fair. The two of you were
going with Dad to exhibit
Carolyn's prize steer.'

Carolyn's voice becomes Francesca's voice as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

6 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - EVENING

6

FRANCESCA is making dinner. A BLUES station is tuned in
on the RADIO.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'I know it sounds awful, but I
couldn't wait for you all to
leave. You were going to be
gone until Friday. Four days...

(beat)

Just four days...'

Francesca's expression looks as if she needs a break
from her family for more like four years.

FRANCESCA

Michael! Carolyn! Richard!
Dinner!

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

She sets down a bowl of potatoes, a plate of sausages, coffee and corn as one by one her family enters and sits down.

Michael enters through a screen door from the back, letting the door slam shut.

FRANCESCA

Michael, what did I tell you
about that door?

Richard enters after Michael, letting the door slam the same way. Francesca is about to say something, but gives up.

Carolyn enters and crosses to the kitchen RADIO. Leaning on the counter, she turns the dial to a COUNTRY station. This clearly irritates Francesca, but she knows there is no point in arguing.

Everyone sits and begins eating -- in complete silence except for the song.

When Michael can't open the ketchup bottle, Francesca grabs it, palms the top skillfully and twists it off. She hands it back to Michael, who makes no comment.

When Richard scans the table for something that obviously isn't there, Francesca is up out of her seat before he can ask, at the fridge, grabbing the sour cream, closing the fridge and back at the table with incredible swiftness.

When Michael moves his big arm to reach for the salt, he knocks over his cup and saucer, which Francesca catches with both hands before they hit the floor. Her reflexes are like a trained athlete.

Finally, Francesca is able to sit and sip her coffee. She watches her teenage daughter fill her plate with a blank expression that lets nothing slip through -- no indication of all the tempests of emotions that go through a teenage girl.

FRANCESCA

You excited about going, Carolyn?

Without looking up, Carolyn fakes a smile. Francesca then looks to her son, shoveling food into his mouth at an alarming rate. She attempts a conversation.

FRANCESCA

How was your date last night?

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

MICHAEL
(without looking
at her)

Okay.

FRANCESCA
What's her name?

MICHAEL
Betty.

FRANCESCA
What's she like?

MICHAEL
Okay.

Silence. Frustrated, Francesca looks at Michael with dismay.

CUT TO:

7 INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

7

Francesca is packing Richard's suitcase. Richard is at his bureau. He is trying to open a drawer but it's stuck.

RICHARD
Damn drawer!

Francesca crosses to him and ushers him aside. Holds onto the drawer nobs, she looks at Richard, pauses, then does a funny jolt with her body that makes the drawer slip out easily.

FRANCESCA
You can't get mad at it.

RICHARD
(to bureau, joking)
I'm sorry. I shouldn't have yelled. May I get a handkerchief, please?

Francesca chuckles as she closes up the suitcase. Richard takes out a handkerchief from the drawer and closes it.

FRANCESCA
You should stay away from anything too spicy.

(CONTINUED)

7

CONTINUED:

7

Words are no longer required. They read each other's minds.

FRANCESCA

And I want you to promise me...

RICHARD

I swear. Only filters and no more than half a pack a day. I got my orders.

FRANCESCA

(defensive)

Doc Reynolds said you'd be a lot better off --

RICHARD

I know, I know. I'm kidding. You sure you don't want to come?

Francesca looks at Richard with complete conviction.

FRANCESCA

I'm positive.

RICHARD

What are you going to do for four days as a woman of leisure?

FRANCESCA

Same thing I do as a hired hand, only with less help.

Francesca realizes this has hurt Richard's feelings. She smiles.

RICHARD

I won't be able to sleep ya know. Can't sleep without you next to me anymore.

FRANCESCA

It's only four days.

He gives her a sweet peck on the lips. Francesca touches his face gently.

CUT TO:

8

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

8

Francesca waves as her family drives down the driveway in their truck, kicking up a cloud of dust.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

When the dust fades, the truck is gone, out the driveway and on the road.

Francesca turns and heads back to the house. As it slowly comes into view from atop the corn husks, she stops. She knows the house is empty now. She feels both relief and uncertainty.

9 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

9

Alone, dressed in her bathrobe, Francesca checks the front door. She crosses to the living room. Noticing two throw pillows on the floor, she arranges them neatly on the couch. She sits herself in an easy chair then flicks on a reading lamp and opens her book. After five seconds, she closes the book. She crosses to the TV and turns it ON, then turns it OFF before the picture tuned in.

She turns and leans on the TV, flicking the ON/OFF switch ON and OFF as her mind wanders. She gets an idea. She crosses to the hi-fi and looks through several albums she got from her Columbia Record Club. But nothing inspires her and she quickly loses the desire for music. She's antsy. She has this time alone and she doesn't know how to spend it.

She walks through the dining room, passing a china closet filled with fancy dishes and glasses. She stops. Shoved in the corner behind is an old, unopened bottle of brandy. She removes it, setting atop the dining table to open it, then quickly changes her mind and returns the brandy to its lonely spot on the shelf.

CUT TO:

9A INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS ACTION

9A

She walks into the kitchen and leans on the counter to turn ON the RADIO. She stands just like her daughter as she tunes in the BLUES station.

She sits at the Formica table with a glass of milk and listens. A DOG SCRATCHES at the screen door. Francesca rises to let him in.

FRANCESCA

Where've you been!? They already left, ya know -- you missed them.

(CONTINUED)

9A CONTINUED:

9A

He sits by her chair at the table. She sits down. He leans into her. She scratches his head.

FRANCESCA

I don't know why you're so sweet on me -- you know I don't like you.

Of course, she does like him, she's just in a teasing mood. The MUSIC PLAYS. Francesca softens as she pets him.

FRANCESCA

You like this song?

CUT TO:

10 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

10

Francesca, wearing a simple house dress, has two rugs hung over the porch. She is beating them to get the dust out. It is a hot day. She stops to wipe her brow. She grabs a glass of iced tea from off the porch, takes a sip then presses the glass against her chest. Francesca looks up to the sun to clear her mind. It is blinding.

When she looks back out onto her driveway, her vision is momentarily blurred. Until, slowly, out of the blur, she sees:

A truck driving toward her house, kicking up dust, like some phantom appearing through the etheric plane. She sips her cool drink and blinks to regain her vision. The truck comes down her driveway and stops halfway. Francesca watches with suspicious curiosity as:

The truck stops and ROBERT KINCAID steps out. Flashing his blue eyes in her direction, he smiles and says:

ROBERT

Sorry to bother you but I've got a feeling I'm lost.

Francesca remains guarded.

FRANCESCA

Are you supposed to be in Iowa?

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

ROBERT

(laughs)

Yeah.

FRANCESCA

Well you're not that lost.

He laughs. She puts down her tea and crosses to him.

ROBERT

I'm looking for a covered bridge
out this way... uh... wait a
minute --

He looks through a small notepad for the name. Francesca
watches him intently.

FRANCESCA

Roseman Bridge?

ROBERT

That's it.

FRANCESCA

Well you're pretty close. It's
only about two miles from here.

ROBERT

Oh, terrific. Which way?

FRANCESCA

Go that way and you will come to
Cutter's where you turn left.

ROBERT

Cutter's?

FRANCESCA

Cutter's farm. Small house close
to the road. Big mean yellow dog.

ROBERT

Oh. Okay.

FRANCESCA

Yes, and then you just take that
road until it forks -- I think
less than half a mile.

ROBERT

Which fork?

(CONTINUED)

10

CONTINUED: (2)

10

FRANCESCA

The right and you go -- no. Not that fork, excuse me. Then you pass Peterson's -- Peterson's farm, and by the old schoolhouse you go left. It would be easier to tell you if the roads were marked.

ROBERT

Sure would.

Pause as Robert awaits directions and Francesca scans a sudden impulse.

FRANCESCA

Well, I can take you if you want.

Robert is pleased, but a bit surprised as is Francesca who anxiously recants:

FRANCESCA

Or, I can tell you. I can take you or tell you. It's up to you. I don't care. Either way.

Robert smiles, finding her sudden nervousness charming.

ROBERT

If I'm not taking you away from anything.

*

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (3)

10

FRANCESCA

No. I was just going to have some
iced tea then split the atom,
but that can wait.

(as he smiles)

I just have to get my shoes.

Robert watches her as she turns and heads back to the house. He turns back to the truck and notices the mailbox -- MR. & MRS. RICHARD JOHNSON. He nods as if he knew all along and begins to make room on the front seat for Francesca.

11 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - SAME

11

Francesca is slipping on her shoes when she suddenly stops. "What am I doing?" she asks herself silently.

12 EXT. JOHNSON DRIVEWAY - SAME

12

Francesca approaches the truck. On the door, she reads: KINCAID PHOTOGRAPHY -- BELLINGHAM, WASHINGTON.

Robert is clearing away paper cups, banana peels, paper bags, photography equipment. In the back, Francesca notices a cooler and a guitar case.

ROBERT

I wasn't expecting company. Let
me get this out of the way.

He hauls a case of film from the front to the back. Francesca notices his tanned, muscular arm move in one graceful sweep.

ROBERT

Okay. All set.

Francesca smiles. They both get into the truck.

ROBERT

Now, where are we going?

FRANCESCA

Out, then right.

CUT TO:

The truck bounces along on the rock road, lime dust filling the air. Kincaid and Francesca ride in silence. The truck passes a small farmhouse, and a large angry yellow DOG races alongside, SNARLING and BARKING.

Robert looks at Francesca and grins.

ROBERT

So far, so good. This way?

FRANCESCA

That way.

He follows her directions.

ROBERT

There's a wonderful smell about Iowa -- very particular to this part of the country. Do you know what I mean?

FRANCESCA

No.

ROBERT

I can't describe it. I think it's from the loam in the soil. This very rich, earthy kind of... alive... No. No, that's not right. Can you smell it?

FRANCESCA

(shakes her head)

Maybe it's because I live here.

ROBERT

That must be it. It's a great smell.

Francesca wants to know more about him.

FRANCESCA

Are you from Washington originally?

ROBERT

Uh-huh. Lived there 'til I was twenty or so, and then moved to Chicago when I got married.

FRANCESCA

Oh. When did you move back?

ROBERT

After the divorce.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

Oh.

ROBERT

How long you been married?

FRANCESCA

Uh... ha...

(can't remember)

Umm... long time.

ROBERT

Are you from here originally, if you don't mind my asking.

FRANCESCA

No, I don't mind. I'm not from here. I was born in Italy.

ROBERT

Well, from Italy to Iowa -- you don't look particularly Italian.

(as Francesca smiles)

Whereabouts in Italy?

FRANCESCA

My mother was Austrian. We lived in a small town on the Eastern side, no one's ever heard of called Bari.

ROBERT

Oh, yeah, Bari. I've been there.

FRANCESCA

(surprised)

No, really?

ROBERT

Oh, yeah. Actually, I had an assignment in Greece and I had to go through Bari, to get the boat at Brindisi. But it looked so pretty, I got off and stayed for a few days. Breathtaking country.

Francesca is overcome by the idea of such freedom.

FRANCESCA

You just... got off the train because it looked pretty?

ROBERT

Yeah. Excuse me a sec.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED: (2)

13

He reaches over with one arm, brushing slightly against her thigh. He opens the glove compartment and pulls out a pack of Camels and a Zippo lighter.

ROBERT

Like one?

Francesca hesitates.

FRANCESCA

Sure, I'll have one.

She takes a cigarette out of the pack. Robert drops the pack and, with the same hand, flicks open the Zippo and ignites it. Francesca leans over. The road is bumpy and a breeze blows through both windows.

She cups her hands around his to shelter the flame. She feels his skin for a brief moment.

She sits back and enjoys the ride and her cigarette as Robert lights up. Silence. They drive.

ROBERT

So, how long you've been living here?

FRANCESCA

Long.

(changes subject)

You just got off the train and stayed without knowing anyone there?

ROBERT

(laughs)

Yeah.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAY

14

The truck stops. They exit. Robert takes out some equipment.

ROBERT

This won't take long. I'm shooting tomorrow morning. I just need to do some prep work.

FRANCESCA

I don't mind waiting.

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED:

14

He smiles and takes his equipment to the bridge. Francesca slowly follows. She watches his body move. Catching herself, she stops.

Robert sets up a tripod in the small ravine beneath the bridge, pointing a view finder up as he plans his shots. Francesca walks through the bridge, noticing lovers' names scrawled on the inside: CATHY & BUDDY 4 EVER ... ROSIE AND HANK TIL THE END OF TIME. Through a crack in one of the wooden planks, Francesca watches like a voyeur as Robert works. She sees him take out a handkerchief and wipe the sweat off his neck, then inside his shirt and around his chest. Without knowing where Francesca is, Robert speaks aloud:

ROBERT

Is it always this hot?

Francesca moves quickly away from the plank, like a Peeping Tom who's been caught.

FRANCESCA

This time of year.

ROBERT

I have some cold drinks in a cooler if you'd like.

FRANCESCA

Oh. Would you like one?

ROBERT

Not right now thanks.

Francesca heads back to the truck, grateful for something to occupy her.

14A

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE/INT. TRUCK - DAY

14A

Inside the truck, she scans for the cooler bag. She sees it next to a duffel bag. The bag's zipper is opened.

She glimpses inside at Robert's personal things -- clothes, socks, underwear, shaving kit. Life magazines from July and August, one depicting the death of Adlai Stevenson, the other a cover photo of the Watts riots. The guitar leans against the cooler. She grabs a soda from out of it.

14B

EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE

14B

At the bridge, Francesca looks for Robert in the ravine but he is gone.

(CONTINUED)

14B CONTINUED:

14B

She looks through the bridge to the other end and sees only the tripod. No Robert. She walks through the bridge and out the other end. She finds Robert bent over, picking flowers.

FRANCESCA

There you are.

ROBERT

Oh! You caught me.

He rises with a bouquet of wildflowers for her.

ROBERT

Thanks for your help.

Francesca smiles, not knowing how to take this.

ROBERT

Men still give women flowers don't they? I mean, as a sign of appreciation? I'm not that out of date, am I?

FRANCESCA

No, not at all --
(suddenly)
-- except those are poisonous.

ROBERT

What!

He flings the flowers down. He wipes his hands furiously.

FRANCESCA

I'm sorry. I was kidding.

Robert looks at her with a shocked smirk, secretly liking her strange behavior.

ROBERT

(smiling)
Are you by nature a sadistic person?

She laughs as she helps him pick them up.

CUT TO:

15 INT. TRUCK - LATER

15

Driving back, Francesca sits with her feet up on the dashboard.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

Robert drives while he fiddles with the RADIO. All he can find are COUNTRY STATIONS.

FRANCESCA
Looking for something in particular?
There's not much of a selection.

ROBERT
I found this Chicago station --
before. Wait a minute...

FRANCESCA
It's 1410.

Robert reacts with surprise, then tunes it in. We hear a BLUES SINGER with a sax arrangement.

FRANCESCA
That's nice.

ROBERT
Want another cigarette?

FRANCESCA
Sure.

Francesca's having a great time.

16 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

16

Robert's truck drives down the road and into the driveway.

ROBERT
Well, thank you for the
kindnesses, Mrs. Johnson.

FRANCESCA
Francesca.

ROBERT
Francesca. Robert.

Francesca nods, as if to say hello and goodbye in the same moment. She gets out of the car, closes the door, then asks:

FRANCESCA
Would you like some iced tea?

CUT TO:

17 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

17

Robert fiddles with the kitchen RADIO, tuning in to the Chicago station. Francesca is making iced tea. Robert sits back down at the kitchen table.

FRANCESCA

Lemon?

ROBERT

Sure.

With her back to him, Robert never takes his eyes off her. She turns and crosses to him, with the tea.

ROBERT

Thanks.

Francesca smiles and sips her own. She watches him gulp down the tea so fast, some of it dribbles down the side of his face and neck. Francesca finds it sexy. He empties it.

FRANCESCA

Would you like another one?

Robert nods and pulls out his cigarettes. Robert lights up as he watches her fix another iced tea. He watches her slip off one shoe, then the other -- never missing a beat of her preparation. He can't help eyeing her body. When she returns, she also has the flowers he picked for her arranged in a jelly glass. She places them on the table and sits.

ROBERT

Sure you want to keep those in the house?

FRANCESCA

I'm so sorry about that. I... ha
... I don't know why I said that.(changing the
subject)

Where are you staying while you're here?

ROBERT

A little place with cabins. The something-Motor Inn. I haven't checked in yet.

FRANCESCA

And how long are you here for?

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

As long as it takes. I might stay a week. No more I don't think. Where's your family?

FRANCESCA

My husband took the kids to the Illinois State Fair. My daughter's entering a prize steer.

ROBERT

Oh. How old?

FRANCESCA

About a year and a half.

ROBERT

No, your kids.

FRANCESCA

Oh. Michael's 17 and Carolyn's 16.

ROBERT

Must be nice having kids.

FRANCESCA

They're not kids anymore. Things change.

ROBERT

Everything does. One of the laws of nature. People are always so afraid of change. But if you look at it like it's something you can count on happening, it's actually a comfort. Not many things you can count on for sure.

FRANCESCA

I guess. Except I'm one of the people it frightens.

ROBERT

I doubt that.

FRANCESCA

Why?

ROBERT

Italy to Iowa? I'd call that a change.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

FRANCESCA

(explaining)

Richard was in the Army. I met him while I was living in Naples. I didn't know where Iowa was. I only cared that it was America. And of course, being with Richard.

ROBERT

What's he like?

FRANCESCA

He's very... clean.

ROBERT

Clean?

FRANCESCA

(catching herself)

No. I mean yes he's clean but he's also other things. He's a very hard worker. Very honest. Very caring. Gentle. Good father.

ROBERT

And clean.

FRANCESCA

Yes. Very clean.

They drink. Francesca thinks she sounds like an idiot.

ROBERT

So you must like Iowa I guess.

Francesca looks at him. She wants to tell the truth but holds back.

FRANCESCA

It's... uh... uh...

She stops. Robert smiles.

ROBERT

Go ahead. I won't tell anyone.

Surprised, Francesca looks at him oddly -- as if he already knows and is giving her permission.

Francesca is so taken by his understanding and acceptance, she lets the flood gates open, speaking faster than her mind can keep up --

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

(without a pause)

I'm supposed to say, 'Just fine. It's quiet. The people are real nice.' All of that's true, mostly. It is quiet. And the people are nice, in certain ways. We all help each other out. If someone gets sick or hurt, the neighbors pitch in and pick corn or harvest oats or do whatever needs to be done. In town, you can leave your car unlocked and let your children run without worrying about them. There are a lot of good things about the people here, and I respect them for those qualities. But...

Francesca hesitates, lights a cigarette and looks across the table at Kincaid.

FRANCESCA

It's not what I dreamed about as a girl.

Kincaid is silent for a moment.

ROBERT

I scribbled something in my notebook the other day for future use, just had the idea while driving along. That happens a lot. It goes like this: 'The old dreams were good dreams; they didn't work out, but I'm glad I had them.' I'm not sure what that means, but I'll use it somewhere. So I think I kind of know how you feel.

Francesca smiles at him. For the first time, the smile seems warm and deep. She surprises herself. She doesn't want him to go.

FRANCESCA

Would you like to stay for dinner? There aren't many choices in town and... anyway, you'd have to eat alone. So would I.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (4)

17

ROBERT

That's very nice of you. I don't get many dinner invitations on the job. It would be a welcome change. Thanks.

CUT TO:

18 INT. BEDROOM - LATER

18

Francesca rushes in and starts to disrobe, getting ready to shower and change for dinner. She glances out the window and sees:

19 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - SAME TIME

19

Robert is at the water pump. His shirt is off and he is washing himself.

We INTERCUT the two.

19A INT. BEDROOM

19A

Francesca finds herself staring. He has a muscular, firm body. She watches how the water cascades over his body. How he seems so unashamed, so "in his skin," moving with such strength and grace.

19B EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE

19B

Robert pauses and looks out over the open pasture. The cold water feels good. Since the pump is in the back of the house, hidden from the road, no one can see him.

19C INT. BEDROOM

19C

Francesca continues studying Robert until she has to literally pull herself away from the window with such a force that she rams herself into a chest of drawers. Taking a breath, she pulls herself together.

FRANCESCA

This is ridiculous.

She heads for the bathroom, quite composed, then, without warning, makes an immediate 180 degree turn and heads back to the window to sneak a peek.

(CONTINUED)

19C CONTINUED:

19C

Watching him, she is possessed by some very frightening feelings and runs from the window, into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

20

Francesca is gathering some vegetables for dinner from her garden. Robert is at his truck, in his pants, changing into a fresh shirt.

21 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

21

Francesca is cutting up vegetables. Robert enters with some of his gear.

ROBERT

I'm just going to put some of this film in your fridge. Heat isn't too forgiving out there.

He does. On the RADIO, TONY BENNETT sings "Wrap Your Troubles In Dreams." Robert approaches Francesca.

ROBERT

Can I help?

FRANCESCA

(surprised)

Help cook?

ROBERT

Sure. Men cook.

FRANCESCA

(laughs)

Okay.

They stand side by side. Francesca hands him a stack of carrots and a knife.

21A MONTAGE

21A

Tony Bennett's up-tempo TUNE PLAYS OVER a SERIES of IMAGES of Francesca and Robert as they talk and prepare dinner.

A) Four hands side by side, cutting and chopping. Occasionally, a hand brushes against another as it reaches for something.

(CONTINUED)

21A CONTINUED:

21A

- B) Robert's hand gently touching Francesca's waist as he reaches around her for an onion.
- C) Robert brings in his cooler through the screen door. He makes sure it doesn't slam. Francesca makes a note of this.
- D) Robert opens the cooler and removes two cold beers, tossing one to Francesca.
- E) Francesca opening a new tablecloth and spreading it out on the table.
- F) Francesca handing Robert plates from the shelf, their fingers only barely touching.

END OF MONTAGE.

22 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

22

Robert and Francesca are in the middle of dinner. But instead of the usual silence that surrounds Johnson family eating, Francesca is mesmerized by Robert as he manages to eat and tell a story. The scene begins with a laugh from Francesca.

ROBERT

(laughs)

... No, wait, it gets better.

He stands up and acts it out for her.

ROBERT

You have to get the full picture here. I have three cameras around my neck, a tripod in one hand and my pants down around my ankles. I thought this was a private bush. I look up and this gorilla is staring at me with what can best be described as the most lascivious expression I've ever seen on a body with so much hair.

Francesca laughs.

ROBERT

I freeze. 'Cause that's what they tell you to do. In this position. It comes towards me and... and...

He stops awkwardly.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

It starts...

FRANCESCA

Oh, my God...

(laughs)

You're blushing.

ROBERT

(mock hurt)

It's still a very sensitive
memory for me.

FRANCESCA

Then what happened?

ROBERT

We got engaged.

She laughs.

FRANCESCA

I hope it was a female gorilla.

ROBERT

I hope so, too. We still write.

Francesca is laughing so hard she can't breathe. Robert
loves making her laugh.

FRANCESCA

You ought to write these stories
down.

ROBERT

Nah. I've tried. My writing's
too technical I think. Problem of
being a journalist too long is you
stop giving yourself permission to
invent. I better just stick to
making pictures.

FRANCESCA

'Making pictures.' I like that.
You really love what you do, don't
you?

ROBERT

(nods, smiles shyly)

I'm kind of obsessed by it,
actually.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

Why, do you think?

ROBERT

I don't know if obsessions have reasons. I think that's why they're obsessions.

FRANCESCA

You sound like an artist.

ROBERT

No. I wouldn't say that. National Geographic likes their wild life in focus and without any personal comment. I don't mind really. I'm no artist. I'd faced that a long time ago. It's the curse of being well-adjusted. I'm too normal.

FRANCESCA

(supportively)

I don't think you're normal.

He looks at her in surprise. She catches herself again.

FRANCESCA

I didn't mean that the way it sounded.

ROBERT

Well, let's just call it a compliment and move on.

(changes subject)

Did you love teaching?

FRANCESCA

Sometimes. When there was a particular student who made a difference. I know they're all supposed to, but it's not true. You tend to single out one or two you think you can contribute something to.

ROBERT

And did you?

FRANCESCA

I'd like to think so. I know one of them went on to medical school.

ROBERT

Why did you stop?

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

My children. And Richard didn't like my working.

ROBERT

Do you miss it?

FRANCESCA

I don't know. I've never thought about it... what was the most exciting place you've ever been to? Unless you're tired of talking about it.

ROBERT

You're asking a man if he's too tired to talk about himself? You don't get out much, do you?

Francesca smiles, a little embarrassed.

ROBERT

I'm sorry. That was...

FRANCESCA

(overlapping)

No. It's alright. I just meant, it might be a little dull for you, telling all this to some housewife in the middle of nowhere.

ROBERT

This is your home. It's not nowhere. And it's not dull.

Francesca smiles again, this time relieved.

ROBERT

Lets see -- my favorite place...

Francesca settles in to listen, never taking her eyes off of him.

ROBERT

Well, it's the obvious choice but I think I'd have to say Africa. It's another world. Not just the people and the cultures but the land, the colors you see at dawns and dusks -- and the life there. It charges every molecule of air.

Francesca is fascinated, being drawn into his imagery.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (4)

22

ROBERT

It's tangible -- the moment to moment of life and death, the co-habitation of man and beast, of beast and beast, who'll survive, who won't -- and there's no judgment about it. No right or wrong or imposed morality. It's just life. It's a voyeur's paradise really because those animals don't want anybody in their business. You can watch but at a distance.

Robert smiles at her, sensing how in tune she is with his feelings.

FRANCESCA

My, God. How I'd love to see that.

ROBERT

They have safaris for tourists now. Maybe you can convince your husband.

Francesca smiles. There is an awkward pause between them.

ROBERT

It's a beautiful night. Would you like to go for a walk?

FRANCESCA

Yes. That would be nice.

He gets up and opens the screen door for Francesca, not letting it slam. Francesca looks like a teenager with first date excitement.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. PASTURE - NIGHT

23

Francesca and Robert walk through the pasture. It is a beautiful night.

ROBERT

You've got it all right here, you know. It's just as beautiful as any other place I've seen.

FRANCESCA

What?

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

(indicating the night)

This. 'The silver apples of the moon, The golden apples of the sun.'

Francesca looks at him with surprise.

FRANCESCA

W.B. Yeats, 'The Song of Wandering Aengus.'

ROBERT

Right. Good stuff, Yeats. Realism, economy, sensuousness, beauty, magic. Appeals to my Irish heritage.

She watches him with great appreciation. He smiles at her. Instead of looking away, their eyes remain locked for a moment. There is clearly an attraction. They simultaneously look away and continue walking.

Francesca's heart is beating a mile a minute yet she can't deny she is enjoying herself. Walking side by side in silence, Francesca turns back occasionally to look at her house as they get further away from it. Suddenly, the more distant the house becomes, the more frightened she starts to feel. Something inside her knows she's going too far with this man -- too far from home. Although a part of her wants it, she is surprised to find a larger part of her finds it too unknown. She stops.

ROBERT

What's wrong?

Francesca looks confused for a moment, not knowing what she wants. She can't move. She searches for a way out.

FRANCESCA

Would you like some coffee? Or maybe, some brandy?

Somehow Robert can sense her uneasiness. He obliges.

ROBERT

How about both?

The room is illuminated by a single light over the kitchen sink. Francesca moves about the kitchen preparing coffee -- dropping the coffee pot basket, spilling the grounds. She acts tense. Robert sits at the table opening the brandy bottle Francesca almost opened the night before, aware of her mood. There are two brandy glasses in the cupboard that Robert takes down.

Francesca gets the coffee going then sets the table with cups and saucers.

ROBERT

You sure you won't let me help
you with those dishes?

FRANCESCA

(coldly)

No. I'll do them later.

ROBERT

Francesca?

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

Are you alright?

FRANCESCA

Yes.

ROBERT

Francesca?

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

We're not doing anything wrong,
you know.

Francesca freezes. He has read her mind again.

ROBERT

(smiles)

Nothing you can't tell your
children about.

Once again, he relieves her of fear and anxiety. He hands her a glass of brandy, raises his glass to shoulder level and moves it toward her.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

ROBERT

To ancient evenings and distant
music.

Francesca takes a short breath, touches her glass to his
and smiles a little.

They sit in comfortable silence, enjoying their brandy
and coffee, smoking a little. The soft sounds of a hot
summer night fill the air -- a PHEASANT CALLS from the
fields, a DOG BARKS twice in the distance, CRICKETS
quietly SERENADE and a moth flutters against the sink
light.

CUT TO:

1995

25 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

25

Carolyn and Michael have come to the end of a notebook.

MICHAEL

He's getting her drunk. That's
what happened. Jesus, maybe he
forced himself. That's why she
couldn't tell us.

CAROLYN

Oh, he did not. He's such a nice
guy.

MICHAEL

Nice? He's trying to sleep with
somebody's wife.

CAROLYN

I don't think so. And besides,
something like that doesn't make
you a bad person. He reminds me
of Steve in a way. Steve's weak,
immoral and a liar, but he's still
a real nice guy. He just shouldn't
be married.

(laughs)

At least not to me. You getting
hungry? I'm hungry.

Michael nods, then speaks with sincere compassion.

MICHAEL

I had no idea it's gotten that
bad, sis.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

25

CAROLYN

Oh, don't feel sorry for me.
Please. No one's forcing me to
stay.

MICHAEL

Then why do you?

Carolyn laughs to herself -- she can't explain it to herself. She looks through the kitchen cabinets and gasps.

CAROLYN

Oh, my God! I don't believe it.

MICHAEL

What?

Carolyn pulls out a newly bought jar of Fluffernutter.

MICHAEL

Wow. I bet it's been here since
we were kids. You could probably
spackle walls with it.

CAROLYN

No, look -- the expiration date is
this year. She must have bought
it recently. And it's not opened.

MICHAEL

She never ate this stuff. We used
to have to beg her to buy it for
us, remember?

Realizing her mother did buy it for them, Carolyn's eyes fill up a little, her mother's death striking her for the first time.

26 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

26

Over Fluffernutter sandwiches on white bread and coffee, Carolyn reads from the second notebook.

CAROLYN

'We sat sipping brandy. I thought
if anybody walked through the door
now there'd be no explaining it.
But I didn't care. I wanted to
be like him. I wanted to know his
secrets. How he lived this life
of his.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

26

CONTINUED:

26

CAROLYN (CONT'D)

We talked about his wife and I was jealous -- not of her -- but of his leaving. His fearlessness. He knew what he wanted. How did he do that?'

CUT BACK TO:

1965

27

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

27

Francesca sips her brandy. Robert sits across from her.

FRANCESCA

Do you mind if I... ask you why you got divorced?

ROBERT

Not at all. I wasn't around much... So why did I get married? Well, I thought it was a good idea at the time. Have a home base. Roots. You can get lost moving around so much.

FRANCESCA

So what happened?

ROBERT

I never got lost. I was more at home everywhere than at one place. So I decided to think of myself as some kind of world citizen.

FRANCESCA

You must get lonely at times.

ROBERT

Never touch the stuff. I've got friends all over the world. Good friends I can see when I want, if I want.

FRANCESCA

Woman friends, too?

ROBERT

I'm a loner, not a monk.

Francesca averts her eyes, before continuing her investigation.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

You really don't need anyone?

ROBERT

No, I think I need everyone! I love people. I want to meet them all!

FRANCESCA

That's the thing about Iowa. You pretty much meet the same kind of person over and over so when Mrs. Delaney's husband is having an affair with 'that Redfield woman' the whole town wakes up.

ROBERT

I just think there are too many out there saying, 'This is mine,' or, 'She's mine.' Too many lines have been drawn.

FRANCESCA

Doesn't it scare you?

ROBERT

I don't know what's coming. And I don't mind. I embrace mystery.

FRANCESCA

Do you ever regret it? The divorce, I mean?

ROBERT

No.

FRANCESCA

Do you ever regret not having a family?

ROBERT

Not everyone's supposed to have a family.

FRANCESCA

But -- how can you just live for what you want? What about other people?

ROBERT

I told you, I love other people.

FRANCESCA

But no one in particular.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

No. But I love them just the same.

FRANCESCA

But it's not the same.

ROBERT

I know it's not the same. What you're saying is, it's not as good. Or it's not as normal or proper.

FRANCESCA

No, I'm just saying --

ROBERT

(interrupting)

I'm a little sick of this American Family Ethic everyone seems to be hypnotized by in this country. I guess you think I'm just some poor displaced soul doomed to roam the earth without a self-cleaning oven and home movies.

FRANCESCA

(irritated)

Just because someone chooses to settle down and have a family doesn't necessarily mean they're hypnotized. Just because I've never seen a gazelle stampede doesn't mean I'm asleep in the world.

ROBERT

Do you want to leave your husband?

Francesca is completely stunned and thrown off guard.

FRANCESCA

No. Of course not.

She rises, upset. Beat. Awkward silence. Suddenly there is tension between them.

ROBERT

My mistake. I apologize.

FRANCESCA

What made you ask such a question?

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED: (3)

27

ROBERT

I thought that's what we were doing -- asking questions.

FRANCESCA

(defensive)

I thought we were just having a conversation. You seem to be reading all this meaning into it. Meanings I must be too simple to uh... interpret or something.

ROBERT

I already apologized.

Silence. Robert remains seated. Francesca remains at the sink.

ROBERT

Roseman Bridge at dawn, I'd better get going.

(rises)

Thank you for dinner.

Pause. Francesca feels badly.

FRANCESCA

Listen, I'm sorry I --

ROBERT

No, no. Forgive me. I made a mistake. It was an inappropriate thing to ask.

Francesca shrugs it off.

FRANCESCA

I feel like something's been spoiled now.

Robert smiles and crosses to her. He takes her hand into both his hands.

ROBERT

It's been a perfect evening. Just the way it is. Thank you.

Francesca smiles. The possibility of a kiss hangs in the air between them until Robert turns to get his film out of the fridge. As he exits through the screen door, he stops.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

Thanks for the evening, the supper, the walk. They were all nice. You're a good person, Francesca. Keep the brandy toward the front of the cupboard, maybe. it will work out after awhile.

He smiles and exits, catching the screen door before it slams. Robert takes a few steps down the porch and turns.

ROBERT

One thing, though -- don't kid yourself, Francesca. You're anything but a simple woman.

Francesca doesn't move for a moment, then crosses to the door as if to run after him, when she is stopped by the PHONE RINGING. She picks it up.

FRANCESCA

Hello?

RICHARD (V.O.)

Franny?

FRANCESCA

Richard, hi.

RICHARD (V.O.)

How are you?

FRANCESCA

Fine. Everyone settled in okay?

RICHARD (V.O.)

Just fine. We're all in one room. Michael's on the couch and Carolyn's... (continues)

She hears Robert's truck DOOR OPEN and CLOSE. She hears the MOTOR being turned ON. She half listens to Richard.

FRANCESCA

Uh-uh... good... hmmm...

She hears the TRUCK DRIVING AWAY as Richard continues:

RICHARD (V.O.)

We got our position in the fair. Not bad, although I would have liked to be third which is not too early and not too late. But I told Carolyn not to worry... (continues, if needed)

CUT TO:

28 EXT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT

28

Francesca sits on the porch with a book in her lap, gazing out over the pasture. It's a hot night. She opens the top of her robe a bit. Feeling the air against her skin, she decides to open it a bit more. She gets an idea.

Standing, she looks to see if anyone is around -- though rationally she knows there isn't a soul for miles. She turns off the porch light. With a brave and daring impulse, she sheds her bathrobe and stands naked under the night sky. The air feels good against her body. She opens her arms up against the night sky and moon like an Indian priestess.

Suddenly, she starts hitting her body as mosquitoes begin attacking her bare torso. Thwarted, she quickly covers herself with a robe and runs into the house.

CUT TO:

29 INT. FRANCESCA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

29

Francesca is in front of a full-length mirror, her robe opened, applying Calomine lotion to insect bites. Suddenly, she stops to notice her body.

CAMERA ANGLES OVER her shoulder. It is the first time in years she has actually stopped to look and touch her body, running her hands gently over her curves, her neck, down the side of her thighs, her face, her breasts. She stops. She closes her robe and shuts off the light. She sits on the bed.

She gets an idea and crosses to a jewelry box on her bureau. She searches through it, then removes a section to reveal another compartment. It is filled with things she hasn't worn in years -- out of date earrings, pins, etc... Lying amongst these items is an Italian-looking medallion on a chain. She holds it lovingly and puts it on. Crossing to the window, she looks out and she sees the water pump Robert used that day.

CUT TO:

30 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

30

Francesca sits in her bathrobe at a writing table with a note in front of her. On it reads, "If you'd like supper again, 'when white moths are on the wing,' come by tonight after you're finished. Anytime is fine."

CUT TO:

30A EXT. IOWA ROAD - NIGHT

30A

A warm, clear, summer night. The sky is full of stars. Francesca, still in her bathrobe, is behind the wheel of her car. The headlights cut through the darkness as Jack the collie runs ahead.

31 EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - NIGHT

31

The car headlights light the way as Francesca walks bare-foot towards the bridge. Jack lopes on ahead, checking things out.

Francesca tacks the note for Robert to the bridge. She considers taking it down a moment later, but decides not to. She gets back into her car and drives away.

CUT TO:

32 INT. FRANCESCA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

32

Francesca is asleep in bed. At the sound of Robert's old pickup TRUCK DRIVING by, she stirs and opens her eyes. She listens until the sound of his WHEELS FADES OUT, then smiles and settles back into sleep.

CUT TO:

32A WIDE ANGLE - BRIDGE - DAWN

32A

The view of the bridge goes IN AND OUT OF FOCUS until we realize we are seeing it THROUGH Robert's camera lens.

Once the FOCUS is SET, Robert notices something is tacked to the bridge.

EXT. BRIDGE

He crosses to it hurriedly -- time for the perfect shot is running out -- pulls it down, thumbtack and all, and shoves it into his pocket, unread.

He returns to his camera to take his shots.

CUT TO:

33 INT. KITCHEN - LATER THAT MORNING

33

Francesca sits at the kitchen table in her bathrobe with a cup of coffee -- a comic portrait of shame and self-pity.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: 33

Her hair is a mess, she hasn't showered or dressed and she stares into space while listening to the bluesy Chicago RADIO station.

The sink is full of dirty dishes she refuses to clean. Beside it is an ashtray of butts from the night before. She carries it over to the table and begins fingering for a butt to smoke in desperation. She lights up and stares into space.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. JOHNSON FARM - NOON 34

Francesca is hoeing weeds in her vegetable patch, not far from the house. Suddenly, she stops working, and looks toward the house. Is it the telephone? She listens carefully, doesn't hear anything and goes back to her hoeing.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. COURTHOUSE SQUARE - DAY 35

Kincaid, in an outdoor phone booth, looking up a number.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. JOHNSON FARM - SAME TIME 36

Francesca drives a tractor pulling an empty hay wagon down the lane and into the barn. When she turns OFF the ENGINE, she cocks her head towards the house, thinking she hears the PHONE again. This time she does -- a FAINT SOUND coming from inside. She hurries down from the tractor and runs toward the house.

CUT TO:

37 EXT. PHONE BOOTH - SAME TIME 37

Kincaid in the booth. PHONE is RINGING.

CUT TO:

38 INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - SAME TIME 38

Empty. PHONE RINGING away LOUDLY. Francesca bursts through the door and grabs the phone, out of breath.

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED:

38

FRANCESCA

Johnsons.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Hi. This is Robert Kincaid.

Francesca catches her breath and leans against the counter, unsure and anxious about what is coming next.

INTERCUT BETWEEN the two.

ROBERT

Got your note. W.B. Yeats as messenger and all that. I'm sorry I didn't call sooner, but I just read it. I stuffed the note into my pocket because the light was fading and I had to get my shots.

*
*
*
*
*

FRANCESCA

(smiles, relieved)

The light was fading.

*
*
*

ROBERT

I accept the invitation, but it might be late. The weather's pretty good, so I'm planning on shooting the Holliwell Bridge this evening. It could be after nine before I'm finished. Is that all right?

*
*

Francesca frowns but manages to keep her voice from betraying her disappointment.

FRANCESCA

Oh sure, get your work done; that's what's important. I'll fix something that'll be easy to warm up when you get here.

ROBERT

If you want to come along while I'm shooting, that's fine. It won't bother me. I could stop by for you about five-thirty.

Francesca pauses, then decides.

FRANCESCA

Yes, I'd like that. But I'll drive my pickup and meet you there. What time?

(CONTINUED)

38

CONTINUED: (1A)

38

ROBERT

About six. I'll see you then.
Okay? Bye.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

Francesca is thrilled. Her mind races with a list of things she must do before tonight.

She opens a cabinet, removes a coffee can and empties it of her house money. She quickly counts it, then shoves it into her purse.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. ON ROAD - DAY

39

Francesca drives past a sign marking DES MOINES as the next town.

CUT TO:

40 INT. SLOW BEND SALOON/RESTAURANT - DAY

40

One of two eating establishments in Winterset. A lunch time crowd fills the place. Robert is seated at the counter. He can sense their eyes on him, wondering who this stranger is and what's he doing here. He knows the whispered conversation is about him.

A MIDDLE-AGED COUPLE talk at table.

WIFE

Thelma told me he checked into the Motor Inn and the bill goes to National Geographic Magazine.

HUSBAND

National Geographic? What the hell's he doin' here? We ain't got no naked pygmies to take pictures of.

WIFE

He's takin' pictures of the bridges.

HUSBAND

Ain't no pygmies there either.

Robert wants to finish his lunch as quickly as possible. At that moment, someone enters the restaurant and all the conversation stops. He overhears one WAITRESS turn to a SECOND WAITRESS and whisper --

(CONTINUED)

WAITRESS

God. It's Lucy Redfield.

WAITRESS #2

(whispering back)

Apparently Mrs. Delaney caught them.

The First Waitress gasps.

WAITRESS #2

Ran right into them in Des Moines in the middle of her shopping.

Robert's curiosity gets the better of him and he subtly turns his head to see:

The REDFIELD WOMAN. But instead of being the harlot we might think, she's actually a rather plain, demure-looking woman.

As she crosses to the counter, Robert immediately picks up on the vibes in the room. He notices all the patrons stare, then turn away to whisper. The Waitress behind the counter ignores her while the Second Waitress heads to the kitchen. A customer eating at the counter places a bag on an empty stool beside her, so the Redfield Woman can't sit down near her.

Robert and the Redfield Woman's eyes meet. She is clearly uncomfortable. She turns, about to leave, when Robert clears his cameras off a stool next to him and offers:

ROBERT

Got room right here if you like.

She is surprised at his courtesy. Others are astounded. Some disgusted. She accepts his offer and sits beside him.

REDFIELD WOMAN

Thank you.

ROBERT

Hot out there today.

She nods and smiles. The Waitress tosses a menu at her and slams down a glass of water, then moves on down the counter. The Redfield Woman tries to act casual, glancing through the menu. Robert subtly scans the room as all eyes are on them, then turns away.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED: (2)

40

Robert returns his glance back to the Redfield Woman who is now only pretending to read the menu. She is so embarrassed. She wants to leave but can't move.

WAITRESS

Well, are you ordering anything!?

Her harsh tone startles the Redfield Woman as well as Robert. Gathering her dignity, she responds:

REDFIELD WOMAN

No. Thank you. I've changed my mind.

She politely nods to Robert, gathers her things and exits. Robert looks to the Waitress, as the Second Waitress ENTERS FRAME.

WAITRESS #2

I'd've thrown that water right in her face.

WAITRESS

Poor Mrs. Delaney.

The Waitress walks O.S., leaving the Second Waitress facing Robert, who looks at her curiously. The Second Waitress looks back as if to say, "What business is it of yours?" and exits.

CUT TO:

41 EXT. DES MOINES - DAY

41

A metropolis compared to Winterset.

Francesca exits a liquor store with a bottle of wine in a paper bag. She also carries a bag of groceries as she heads down the street to her parked truck. She passes a dress shop and stops.

CUT BACK TO:

42 EXT. WINTERSET - DAY

42

Robert enters a general store. He buys a six pack of beer for his cooler and approaches the counter for the CASHIER.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

CASHIER

That all?

Robert nods. He decides to have some fun and test the waters a little bit.

ROBERT

Isn't it awful about poor Mrs. Delaney?

With this, the dam bursts --

CASHIER

Tragic is more like it. The pain that woman has been subjected to by that no-good husband. I never liked him. Known him for years. People say he's quiet. Well, it's the quiet ones that can sneak up behind you and stab you in the back. I heard yesterday, that she confronted him. Gave him the ultimatum and you know what he did?

(continues as needed)

Robert stands astounded, listening to this diatribe of gossip.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

43

Robert comes around Main Street to get into his truck when he sees a 1957 Chevrolet a few spaces down from his. The Redfield Woman is sitting behind the wheel, the windows rolled up and she is sobbing. CAMERA MOVES IN ON Kincaid as he fixes on this moment.

CUT BACK TO:

44 INT. DES MOINES DRESS SHOP - DAY

44

Francesca sits in her slip, alone in a dressing room, with several dresses strewn about. The panic of indecision has set in. She looks at herself in the mirror and begins to doubt that seeing Robert is a good idea. Or perhaps she's imagining something that isn't there. And what about Richard?

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

Francesca feels guilty when a SALESWOMAN enters with a pretty summer dress.

SALESWOMAN

How about this one?

Francesca examines it. She likes it. But the guilt...

FRANCESCA

I don't know. I haven't bought a dress for myself in so long.

(off saleswoman's nod)

I mean, I'm just buying a dress. It's not a special occasion or anything. I'm just shopping. Just shopping for a new dress, that's all.

SALESWOMAN

(completely understands)

That might work. And if he's still mad, just tell him you could have done better but you married him out of pity. That always works for me.

CUT TO:

45 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

45

Francesca enters with her new dress, groceries and wine as the PHONE RINGS. She puts everything down to answer.

FRANCESCA

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH Robert at a payphone.

ROBERT

It's Robert.

FRANCESCA

Oh, hi. Look, I'm running a little late, but I'll still...

ROBERT

(with difficulty)

Listen, don't take this the wrong way, but -- I'm wondering if this is such a good idea.

(CONTINUED)

Francesca's heart sinks.

FRANCESCA

Oh.

ROBERT

I uh... I had lunch in town today.
Happened to cross paths with 'that
Redfield Woman.'

FRANCESCA

I guess you got the whole story...

ROBERT

The cashier at the general store
was very generous.

FRANCESCA

I think he's running for town
crier next year.

ROBERT

I now know more about their affair
than I remember about my marriage.
(seriously)

If it's a problem for you to see
me tonight, given the curiosity of
small town people, don't feel
pressured to do it. I'm not
always so bright about other
people's reactions and the last
thing I want to do is to put you
in any kind of situation that
would...

FRANCESCA

(disappointed)

I understand.

(touched)

That's very kind of you.

Silence. Both want to meet. Both experience the idea of
not seeing each other ever again in this brief moment.
Someone has to say something to save it -- but who will
it be?

FRANCESCA

Robert?

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

ROBERT

Yeah?

FRANCESCA

I want you to come.

Robert is relieved.

FRANCESCA

I'll meet you at the bridge just like we planned, alright? Don't worry about the rest of it... I'm not.

ROBERT

Alright. See you there.

Francesca smiles and hangs up. In that moment, Francesca realizes consciously what she is doing and what she wants.

CUT TO:

46 EXT. HOLLIWELL BRIDGE - DUSK

46

Robert is already there, working. He checks his watch, anxious for Francesca to arrive, when he hears a car driving up. He looks to see Francesca stop and get out. By their expressions we can tell how glad they are to see each other.

He extends his hand. She pauses, then takes it. He leads her to the bridge.

CAMERA begins to PULL BACK and HOLD ON the scene. Kincaid is in his element, moving about with ease as he works to capture the gorgeous light. Francesca is enjoying watching this performance -- his grace, the way the muscles in his forearms are working, the way he moves his body. As Kincaid moves into the creek and then up the other bank, she walks through the bridge to the other side. When she comes out the other end, he is crouched down and pointing a camera toward her. He shoots three shots in rapid succession as Francesca walks toward him. She grins in mild embarrassment. Robert smiles back and continues his work.

CUT TO:

47 INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

47

Francesca enters. Robert is in the bathroom, in the shower, with the bathroom door slightly ajar.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

His clothes are laid on the bed with his bag beside them. A fresh shirt is folded. Francesca takes his dirty shirt and decides to clean it. As she exits, her eye can't help roaming toward the bathroom door. For a moment, she pauses to listen to the sound of the WATER as it hits his body.

48 INT. KITCHEN - LATER

48

Francesca is busy preparing dinner. Robert enters, cleaned and dressed.

ROBERT

Can I help?

FRANCESCA

Actually no. I've got everything under control. I'd like to clean up myself a bit. I'm going to take a bath. Dinner'll be ready in about a half hour.

ROBERT

How about if I set the table?

FRANCESCA

Sure.

ROBERT

Would you like a beer for your bath?

FRANCESCA

(surprised)

Yes, that'd be nice.

Robert gets her one.

49 INT. BATHROOM - LATER

49

Francesca lounges in a tub with a beer poured into a wine glass. She finds it very elegant. She takes a deep breath, watching a few drops of water fall from the shower head.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I realized that he had been here just a few minutes before. I was lying where the water had run down his body, and I found that intensely erotic. Almost everything about Robert Kincaid had begun to seem erotic to me.

50

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

50

Robert is at the radio when Francesca enters in her new dress. She looks beautiful. And it's all over Robert's face.

FRANCESCA

What's wrong?

Robert's voice is a little shaky, a little rough, but his admiration is genuine.

ROBERT

If you don't mind my boldness, you look stunning. Make-me-run-around-the-block-howling-in-agony stunning.

She smiles and meets his gaze, reveling for a moment in his reaction.

On the RADIO, we hear DINAH WASHINGTON begin to sing, "If It's The Last Thing I Do" -- a beautiful, bluesy lovesong.

The PHONE RINGS. Francesca makes no move to answer it on the first RING, or the second. In the long silence between the second and third RINGS, Robert takes a deep breath and looks down at his camera bags.

Francesca is finally able to move across the kitchen to answer the phone. Robert quietly takes a seat, his back to Francesca. The SONG PLAYS throughout.

FRANCESCA

Hello? ... Hi, Madge.

Francesca reaches out, casually smooths out the collar on Robert's shirt, then leaves her hand on his shoulder. *

FRANCESCA

Huh-huh... Nothing, just making myself some dinner... No, what?... Oh... I heard about him. Yeah, I hear he's some kind of photographer. *

She can feel the muscle running from his neck along his shoulder to the back of his collarbone. She is conscious of how warm his body feels through his shirt. Madge babbles on.

FRANCESCA

No, I didn't... Huh-huh... Hippie? I don't know, is that what hippies look like?...

(CONTINUED)

Robert slowly shakes his head and smiles. He sits perfectly still, not wanting to make any noise that would make Madge wonder.

FRANCESCA

Well, listen, I was just getting ready to step into a bath when you called so I better run... No, they don't get home until Friday morning... Well, maybe I'll give you a call. Okay. Bye.

Francesca hangs up, reluctant to move her hand from his shoulder. Robert takes it in his, rises and turns to face her. He slips his free hand around her waist. They begin to dance to the song. The kitchen lights have not been turned on since the sun went down. The sky, a dark orange and magenta, illuminates the room through the window. They never take their eyes off each other.

ROBERT

You're shaking. Are you cold?

Francesca shakes her head. They dance a bit more, but Francesca is shaking, which makes it difficult. They both stop.

Robert places his huge hands on either side of her face, gently stroking her hair away from her cheek. He whispers:

ROBERT

If you want me to stop, tell me now.

He brushes his cheek and face softly against hers. Francesca rubs hers barely breathing.

ROBERT

Francesca -- I won't be sorry. I won't apologize for this.

FRANCESCA

Nobody's asked you to.

They kiss. Hands gently explore. Their bodies touch. Their lips never spend more than seconds away from each other. Robert slides his hands down her breasts and torso, exploring every inch of her. Francesca grips his massive back, sliding up to his neck and hair. Robert lifts her leg and presses it against his hip, kissing her neck and shoulders. Francesca starts to lose herself, clutching his head to her breast, then pulling him up to her mouth once again.

CUT TO:

1995

51 INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - EVENING

51

Carolyn and Michael are at the yellow Formica. Carolyn has been reading the book to Michael when she looks across from her to find -- Michael looking like a little boy who is fighting not to cry.

CAROLYN

What's the matter?

Michael shakes his head. He can't or won't explain. He's too upset. His eyes tear up. Carolyn feels badly for him.

MICHAEL

I'm going to get some air.

He exits. Carolyn smiles sympathetically. Somehow this last passage of their mother's doesn't affect her in the same way.

DISSOLVE TO:

1965

52 INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM

52

Robert and Francesca in each others arms, under a blanket on the living room floor on a bed of couch pillows. Francesca seems miles away -- feelings of regret and guilt creeping in.

ROBERT

Are you comfortable?
(off her nod)

Do you... want to move to the
bedroom?

FRANCESCA

No. I can't.

She can't bring herself to go into her husband's bed.

ROBERT

You want to eat something?

FRANCESCA

Are you hungry?

ROBERT

No.

(CONTINUED)

Silence. Robert shifts his body to face her.

ROBERT
Are you all right?

She looks at him and starts to cry, shaking her head. The room is filled with memories of her family. She nestles in his arms. He holds her. She closes her eyes.

FRANCESCA
Take me somewhere.

ROBERT
What?

FRANCESCA
Right now. Tell me someplace
you've been -- someplace on the
other side of the world.

ROBERT
(thinks, then)
How about Italy?

FRANCESCA
Yes.

ROBERT
How about Bari?

FRANCESCA
Yes. Tell me about the day you
got off the train.

ROBERT
Have you ever been to that
station?

FRANCESCA
Yes.

ROBERT
You know that little place nearby
with the striped awning that sells
arraccinos...

FRANCESCA
(excited)
... and zeppolis. Yes! I know
it!

ROBERT
I sat outside and had coffee.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: (2)

52

FRANCESCA

Where? Near the doorway or near
the front of the church?

ROBERT

Near the church.

FRANCESCA

(closes her eyes)

I sat there once. It was hot.
Like today. I'd been shopping.
I had all these bags around my
feet I kept having to move every
time the waiter came by...

DISSOLVE TO:

53 EXT. JOHNSON FARM - DAWN

53

Francesca and Robert are making love outdoors in an area
far behind the house hidden by corn stalks...

The two transport themselves together to another place,
where there are no familial memories surrounding them
to interfere.

CUT TO:

54 EXT. JOHNSON PORCH - MORNING

54

The two sit in bathrobes on the porch looking out over
the pasture. They have bowls of oatmeal on their laps.
They eat voraciously.

Robert leans over, picks a pot up off the porch and
ladles some more onto his plate. Too much falls out and
it spills onto the robe. Francesca giggles. Robert
glares at her jokingly.

Francesca hands him a dish rag. Robert wipes off the
food revealing his bare leg. She reaches over and
touches it. He looks at her and smiles. She leans over
and kisses him passionately until, suddenly, she pulls
away. She looks upset. She rises and moves away to look
out to the pasture. Robert can sense what is wrong.

FRANCESCA

I feel like I'm getting a little
out of control. It's kind of
frightening.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I had thoughts about him I hardly knew what to do with. And he read every one. Whatever I felt, whatever I wanted, he gave himself up to. And in that moment, everything I knew to be true about myself up until then was gone. I was acting like another woman -- yet I was more myself than ever before.

Francesca looks at him and understands he is giving her full permission to explore whatever she wants. Hesitantly, she crosses to him and takes his plate away.

She stands before him, leaning him back into his chair. She slowly, tentatively, opens her robe.

CUT TO:

EXT. MADISON COUNTY ROAD - DAY

Francesca and Robert are driving, smoking cigarettes and listening to MUSIC.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'We decided to spend Wednesday away from Winterset. Away from Madison County. Away from pastures and bridges and people too familiar and reminders too painful. We let the day take us where it wanted...'

EXT. IOWA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The truck is parked against a breathtaking vista. Francesca and Robert sit on the ground nearby eating lunch as Robert shows Francesca a collection of some of his photographs. They are beautiful and show a wide range of skill.

FRANCESCA

Oh, that one is beautiful. Look at their expressions. As if the camera weren't on them at all. They're not photographs -- they're stories, entire histories captured in moments. You should be published. Your own collection.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

No one would buy it.

FRANCESCA

Why do you say that?

ROBERT

Because that's what six publishers told me.

Francesca is surprised. She senses his disappointment.

ROBERT

It's no big heartache. Whatever makes an artist look like an artist to the world -- is just a feature I don't have.

FRANCESCA

Maybe you have to convince yourself first. Maybe you do have to ask why it's an obsession.

He smiles and considers what she is saying. She takes the chain with her medallion off from around her neck and puts it on Robert.

ROBERT

What's this?

FRANCESCA

I remembered I had this, the other night after you left. It was made in Assisi. My aunt gave it to me on my seventh birthday.

Robert looks at the medallion with "For Francesca" engraved on it. He is very moved and nods gratefully.

CUT TO:

The truck drives up to a roadhouse.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A musician friend of Robert's told him of a place off the Interstate. A place, Robert assured me, no one I knew would see us.

CUT TO:

Francesca and Robert enter the smoke-filled roadhouse. No one would recognize them here because it is an all-black club. Only slight notice of the couple is taken as they sit at a table and order drinks. Francesca is loving it -- she can't take it in fast enough -- bodies dancing, laughing, the band jamming. It's like she stepped into another world.

SAME LOCATION - LATER

Over drinks, they talk.

FRANCESCA

What were you like when you were younger?

ROBERT

(smiles)

Trouble. Why?

FRANCESCA

(laughs)

I just wondered. Why were you trouble?

ROBERT

I had a temper.

FRANCESCA

What were your parents like?

Pause. Robert doesn't reply. She looks at him curiously.

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

I can't do this. I'm sorry.

FRANCESCA

What?

ROBERT

Try and live a lifetime before Friday. Cram it all in.

Shakes his head. This is the first time either has mentioned their time clock. Francesca nods, understandably.

A black female blues singer is on stage singing "If It's the Last Thing I Do." Robert gestures for Francesca to take his hand and he leads her onto the dance floor.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

They hold each other close as they dance. Something about the song affects Francesca deeply. We watch the entire dance, starting with the joy of their being together to the slow realization by Francesca that their time is running out.

CUT TO:

59 INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

59

Robert is in the living room making up the floor again with blankets and pillows. Francesca enters. He stops. She extends her hand. He takes it and she leads him upstairs. He stops before they ascend.

ROBERT

Are you sure?

Francesca nods and brings him upstairs to her bedroom.

60 INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

60

Francesca guides Robert into bed beneath the covers. They begin to make love -- softly, lovingly -- like a couple that are beyond the erotic, discovery stage; a couple that have been together and in love for years.

CUT TO:

1995

61 EXT. SIDE PORCH OF JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

61

Carolyn sits on the porch with the notebook on her lap, thinking to herself. She decides she needs a cigarette and searches through her bag. Finding her pack and lighter, she stops -- simultaneously discovering a business card from a matrimonial lawyer; pre-nups, divorce, estate planning. She fingers the card in her hand, pauses, then looks up upon hearing Michael's car return home.

CAROLYN

Where did you go?

MICHAEL

Bar in town.

CAROLYN

Have you called Betty?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

CAROLYN (CONT'D)
 (as he shakes
 his head)
 Maybe you should.

MICHAEL
 I found out who Lucy Delaney is.
 Carolyn looks interested.

MICHAEL
 Remember the Delaneys from
 Hillcrest Road?

CAROLYN
 Yeah. But I thought she died.

MICHAEL
 He remarried. Apparently they
 were having an affair for years.
 Apparently the first Mrs. Delaney
 was a bit of a stiff.

CAROLYN
 You mean -- she didn't like sex?

MICHAEL
 (nods, then simply)
 I bet Mom could've helped her.

CAROLYN
 Boy. All these years I've
 resented not living the wild life
 in some place like Paris and all
 the time I could've moved back to
 Iowa... Are you drunk?

MICHAEL
 Not yet. You want to get out of
 here for awhile?

CAROLYN
 I think I better.

62 EXT. IOWA LAKEFRONT - NIGHT

62

Michael and Carolyn have parked in a secluded area near a lake. Some place where the moonlight and the scenery create a beautiful backdrop. They sit on the ground, leaving the headlights and the RADIO ON. They are getting drunk and sharing a bottle of whiskey.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I used to love this place. I used to take Kathy Reynolds down here.

CAROLYN

You never dated Kathy Reynolds!

MICHAEL

Not officially. Her and Steve Kendall were pinned at birth. But I was crazy about her. And for about three months, I managed to catch her during her 'exploring' stage.

CAROLYN

I never knew that.

MICHAEL

(sadly)
Nobody did.

CAROLYN

Was this during Betty?

MICHAEL

Everything was during Betty. God, we were so young. Why did we think we had to do it all so fast? I've never cheated on Betty. Not once we were married, I mean.

CAROLYN

Did you want to?

MICHAEL

Only about a thousand times. What do I do now? 'What's good enough for Mom is good enough for me'?

CAROLYN

(pissed off)
What gets me is I'm in my forties. I've been in this crummy fucking marriage --

MICHAEL

Carolyn!

(CONTINUED)

CAROLYN

(ignores him)

-- for over twenty years because that's what I was taught -- you stick with it! Normal people don't get divorced. I can't remember the last time my husband made love to me so intensely that he transported me to Africa, for Christ's sakes -- quite frankly I don't think he ever did! And now I find out that in between bake sales, my mother was Anais Nin!

MICHAEL

What about me! I feel really weird. Like she cheated on me, not Dad. Isn't that sick? You know, being the only son, you sort of feel like you're the prince of the kingdom. And in the back of your mind, you kind of think your mother doesn't need sex anymore because she has you.

CAROLYN

You're right -- that is sick.

They drink.

MICHAEL

If she was so unhappy, why didn't she leave?

They look to each other without an answer. Then simultaneously they reach for the notebooks.

MICHAEL

Can I read it now?

Carolyn offers him the book, then lays back in a relaxed position in order to listen. Michael flips to an ear-marked page.

MICHAEL

Did I miss anything important?

CAROLYN

Well, she just took him up to her room and --

MICHAEL

Dad's room?

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (3)

62

CAROLYN

You can skip this part. Start here.

Michael nods and takes another swig. He begins to read:

MICHAEL

'Robert lay asleep in the bed. I was up all night that night. What happens tomorrow? By the end of that day, he would leave and everything new and unknown that had become so familiar would be gone...'

DISSOLVE TO:

1965

63 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

63

Francesca is serving Robert breakfast, then sits down beside him. Silence. We can sense some tension between them -- this being their last day together. Francesca seems ingenuously friendly. Robert is suspicious.

FRANCESCA

Sleep all right?

ROBERT

Yes, thanks.

FRANCESCA

Good. More coffee?

(as he nods,
she pours)

Robert, I hope you don't mind my asking but I feel like I should.

ROBERT

What?

FRANCESCA

Well, these... women friends of yours... all over the world. How does it work? Do you see some of them again? Do you forget others? Do you write them now and then? How do you manage it?

Her facetiousness startles Robert.

ROBERT

I... What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

Well, I just want to know the procedure. I don't want to upset your routine... Do you want any jam?

ROBERT

(insulted)

Routine! I don't have a routine. And if you think that's what this is --

FRANCESCA

Well, what is this?

ROBERT

(upset)

Why is that up to me? You're the one who's married. You told me you have no intention of leaving your husband.

FRANCESCA

To do what? Be with someone who needs everyone and no one in particular? I mean, what would be the point. Would you pass the butter?

ROBERT

I was honest with you.

FRANCESCA

Yes. Absolutely. You have this habit of not needing and that it's hard to break. I understand.

(beat)

Of course, in that case, why sleep -- you don't need rest; or for that matter eat, you don't need food.

She takes his plate away from him, rises and throws it into the sink.

ROBERT

What are you doing?

FRANCESCA

(sarcastic)

Gee, I don't know. I guess I'm not cut out to be a world citizen who experiences everything and nothing at the same time.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

How do you know what I experience?

FRANCESCA

(angry)

I know you! What can this possibly mean to anyone who doesn't 'need' meaning --

(mocking)

'Who goes with the Mystery' -- who pretends he isn't scared to death.

ROBERT

Stop it!

FRANCESCA

After you leave, I'm going to have to wonder for the rest of my life what happened here. If anything happened at all! And I'll have to wonder if you find yourself in some... housewife's kitchen in Romania if you'll sit there and tell her about your world of good friends and secretly include me in that group.

ROBERT

What do you want me to say?

FRANCESCA

(nonchalantly)

I don't want you to say anything. I don't need you to say anything.

Robert rises, knocking his chair aside.

ROBERT

Stop it!

FRANCESCA

Fine. More eggs, or should we just fuck on the linoleum one last time?

ROBERT

(grabs her)

I told you! I won't apologize for who I am.

FRANCESCA

No one's asking you to!

ROBERT

I won't be made to feel like I've done something wrong.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

(angry)

You won't be made to feel! Period.
 You've carved out this little
 part for yourself in the world
 where you get to be a voyeur, a
 hermit and a lover whenever you
 feel like it and the rest of us
 are just supposed to feel so
 incredibly grateful for the brief
 time you've touched our lives!
Well, go to hell! It isn't human
 not to feel lonely -- it isn't
 human not to be afraid! You're a
 hypocrite and you're a phony!

ROBERT

(cries out)

I don't want to need you!

FRANCESCA

Why?

ROBERT

Because I can't have you!

FRANCESCA

What does that have to do with it?

He throws a cup at the wall. It breaks apart. Covering his face, Robert turns away from her as he holds onto the sink. Francesca reaches for him but he pulls away, embarrassed.

FRANCESCA

(softly)

Don't you see, I've got to know
 the truth, Robert. I've got to
 know the truth or I'll go crazy.
 Either way. Just tell me. But I
 can't act like this is enough
 because it has to be. I can't
 pretend I don't... feel what I
 feel because it's over tomorrow.

Robert, keeping his face from her, tries to tell her:

ROBERT

If I've done anything to make you
 think that what's happened
 between us is nothing new for me
 -- is some routine -- then I do
 apologize.

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA

What makes it different, Robert?

Robert turns to face her. He is so hopelessly in love he can hardly find the words. His eyes fill up with tears.

ROBERT

Because... if I asked myself right now why I make pictures, the only reason I could come up with -- the only reason it seems I've been anywhere and done anything -- was to bring me here. Right now it looks like the only thing I've done all my life was to make my way to you. And if I even think about tomorrow -- if I ... even think about leaving here without you -- I'm not sure I --

He shakes his head. He can't even finish. He kneels down before her, wrapping his arms around her and burying his face into her body. Francesca starts to cry -- out of happiness, out of pain -- holding onto him as if for dear life.

FRANCESCA

Oh, God... what are we going to do?

She kisses him -- over and over, not wanting to be even an inch apart. As if any space between them might separate them forever.

Suddenly, O.S., they hear a CAR DRIVE UP to the house. They panic. Francesca runs to the window to see:

MADGE, a girlfriend, has come for a visit. Madge is holding a homemade dessert.

FRANCESCA

No. No. Where's your truck?

ROBERT

Behind the barn. I better go.

Francesca turns to him -- speechless -- not wanting him to go.

ROBERT

Don't worry. I meant upstairs.

He exits. Francesca gathers herself and heads for the front entrance, quickly cleaning up the plates.

64 INT. FRONT HALL - DAY

64

Francesca opens the door to Madge.

FRANCESCA

Madge?

MADGE

Hi. I made some brown betty. I sent Floyd off to town with the boy. I said --

(entering)

-- 'Floyd, I'm going to visit my girlfriend and spend the afternoon and that's all there is to it.' He said, 'Who's going to make lunch?' I said, 'I'm taking a sick day. Eat at the diner' -- isn't that hilarious.

(moves into kitchen)

He didn't dare raise an eyebrow -- I don't even want to tell you how late he was out last night with those good-for-nothings from the Sandford ranch. I am so sorry, honey, I let two days pass before I came by but with the boy home the time just escapes me. Have you heard from Richard? How's the fair? God, it's hot.

Following her into the kitchen, Francesca doesn't know which question to answer first.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. PORCH - LATER

65

Madge and Francesca sit facing the pasture beside a table with coffee and brown betty. We PARACHUTE INTO the middle of the scene.

MADGE

... I said to her, 'What's the point of summer school if all he's going to do are these art projects. The boy needs so much work in math and his spelling is a nightmare...

Madge continues. Francesca isn't listening. Her mind wanders.

Madge shoves a plate at her.

(CONTINUED)

MADGE

More brown betty?

Francesca takes the plate. She can't think straight.

MADGE

... Anyway, I'm glad that's over with. Sara's doing so well, though. Everyone thought I was crazy having them so far apart but...

Francesca's mind races as Madge continues:

MADGE

... without one lesson. The instructor couldn't believe it. So, who knows -- she may have talent. How's Carolyn doing? What are her plans for next year?

Francesca realizes this is her moment. She holds her head and leans over, unsteadily.

MADGE

Honey, what's wrong?

FRANCESCA

I don't know. I woke up a little dizzy. I didn't sleep well. I think I need to lay down.

MADGE

You want me to call the doctor?

FRANCESCA

No, no -- I just didn't sleep well. I'm not used to sleeping alone. And this heat... Would you mind?

MADGE

No, of course not. I'll just clean up.

FRANCESCA

No, leave it. I'll do it later. Listen, maybe you and Floyd can come for dinner on Saturday. I'm sure Richard'll have so many stories to tell you both about the fair and all.

MADGE

Oh, that'll be nice.

CUT TO:

66 INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY

66

Francesca enters to find Robert lying on the bed fully clothed. She sits beside him. He strokes her arm, then guides her to lie down. Once she's in his arms, he speaks.

ROBERT

Come with me.

Francesca knew he was going to say this. Either answer she gives frightens her.

FRANCESCA

Hold me.

She turns to him and they embrace. Robert, however, fears only one response.

CUT TO:

67 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

67

MUSIC PLAYS OVER the next few images. CAMERA SLOWLY PANS FROM the RADIO, upon which the SONG is playing, TO a beautifully set table and candles. It ARRIVES ON Robert preparing dinner. He stands at the sink rinsing out some utensils. Waiting for the water to turn hot, he looks out THROUGH the window above the sink. He sees a beautiful view of the night. He pauses as it strikes him that this is a view Francesca has seen a million times -- that soon she would not see ever again.

CUT TO:

68 INT. BEDROOM - SAME TIME

68

CAMERA PANS the room FROM two opened suitcases, as Francesca packs to leave. She is wearing a red dress, with buttons down the front.

She moves about the room as if with blinders on -- focused on her task, refusing to take in any signs or memories that might hinder her. Francesca tries to open one of the bureau drawers and it gets stuck. She pauses for a moment, then gathers her bags.

CAMERA FOLLOWS her as she exits the bedroom with her suitcases, then walks down the hall to the stairs, then down the staircase to the front hall.

69 INT. FRONT HALL/LIVING ROOM

69

She quietly sets the suitcases down, hearing the RADIO and ROBERT in the kitchen. She pauses, then enters the living room. One of the throw pillows has fallen off the couch.

She replaces it, then takes a moment to look about the room. She slowly sits down on the couch.

Robert appears in the doorway and stands there looking at her until she sees him and smiles.

ROBERT

I've got dinner.

CUT TO:

70 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

70

They eat in silence. Neither is very hungry.

ROBERT

Would you like a beer?

She smiles and shakes her head. Robert opens a bottle and takes a sip. The silence between them is becoming awkward.

Pause. Robert takes another sip. Then, knowing full well what hangs heavy between them, he asks:

ROBERT

You're not coming with me, are you?

Francesca stops pretending to eat. She looks at him, having forgotten how well he can read her.

FRANCESCA

No matter how I keep turning it around in my mind -- it doesn't seem like the right thing.

ROBERT

For who?

FRANCESCA

For anyone. They'll never be able to live through the talk. Richard could never get his arms around this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

He doesn't deserve that. He
hasn't hurt anyone in his life.

ROBERT

(getting
aggressive)

Then he can move! People move!

FRANCESCA

His family's lived here for almost
a hundred years. Richard doesn't
know how to live anywhere else.
And the kids...

ROBERT

The kids are grown! They don't
need you anymore. You told me
that. They hardly talk to you.

FRANCESCA

No, they don't say much. But
Carolyn's 16. She's just about
to find out about all this for
herself -- she's going to fall
in love, she's going to try and
figure out how to build a life
with someone. If I leave, what
does that say to her?

ROBERT

What about us?

FRANCESCA

You've got to know deep down that
the minute we leave here, it'll
all change.

ROBERT

Yeah. It could get better.

FRANCESCA

No matter how much distance we put
between us and this house, I bring
it with me... and I'll feel it
every minute we're together. And
I'll blame loving you for how much
it hurts. And then even these
four days won't be anything more
than something sordid and... a
mistake.

(CONTINUED)

ROBERT

(desperately)

Francesca, listen to me. You think what's happened to us happens to just anybody? What we feel for each other? How much we feel? We're not even two separate people anymore. Some people search their whole lives for it and wind up alone -- most people don't even think it exists and you're going to tell me that giving it up is the right thing to do?

FRANCESCA

We are the choices we've made, Robert.

Robert rises and turns his back on her.

FRANCESCA

Robert. Please.

(desperate)

You don't understand -- no one does. When a woman makes the choice to marry, to have children -- in one way her life begins but in another way it stops. You build a life of details. You become a mother, a wife and you stop and stay steady so that your children can move. And when they leave they take your life of details with them. And then you're expected to move again only you don't remember what moves you because no one has asked in so long. Not even yourself. You never in your life think that love like this can happen to you.

ROBERT

But now that you have it --

FRANCESCA

I want to keep it forever. I want to love you the way I do now the rest of my life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

FRANCESCA (CONT'D)

Don't you understand -- we'll lose it if we leave. I can't make an entire life disappear to start a new one. All I can do is try to hold onto us both. Help me. Help me not lose loving you.

She embraces him. He wraps his arms around her. He whispers.

ROBERT

Don't leave me. Don't leave me alone. Please.

This breaks her heart, knowing how hard it is for him to say this. She holds him tighter, until --

ROBERT

Listen. Maybe you feel this way, maybe you don't. Maybe it's just because you're in this house. Maybe... maybe when they come back tomorrow you'll feel differently. Don't you think that's possible?

FRANCESCA

I don't know. Please...

ROBERT

I'm going to be here a few more days. I'll be at the inn. We have some time. Let's not say any more now.

FRANCESCA

No. Don't do this.

ROBERT

I can't say goodbye yet! We'll leave it for now. We're not saying goodbye. We're not making any decision. Maybe you'll change your mind. Maybe we'll accidentally run into each other and you'll change your mind.

FRANCESCA

Robert, if that happens, you'll have to decide. I won't be able to.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED: (4)

70

She cries in his arms. He kisses her as if for the last time. Then, quickly, separates himself and leaves the house. Looking back toward the house at Francesca:

ROBERT

I'll never say this any other time, to anyone, and I want you to remember it. This kind of certainty comes only once and never again. No matter how many lifetimes you live.

71 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE

71

Robert walks briskly towards his truck, not wanting to look back. He gets in, STARTS IT UP and drives away.

Francesca exits the house and watches the truck recede into the distance. She stops when she reaches the front gate, leaning against it. She murmurs to herself --

FRANCESCA

Keep going. Please.

The truck drives away. Then, suddenly, stops. Francesca's heart quickens. She watches as the truck stands on the road in the distance.

As if Robert was deciding to turn around or keep going. Francesca waits. Suddenly, the door to the truck flies open and Robert exits. Francesca loses all restraint.

She opens the gate but her dress is caught on it. Robert stands by the truck. Francesca tears at the dress, ripping off a button which falls to the ground. She runs down the road. Seeing her, Robert runs towards her as well.

They grab each other furiously. For these few moments, all considerations are gone.

CAMERA PANS UP TO the road beyond Robert's truck.

We see Richard's truck driving towards them. For a moment it seems as if they will be caught until we realize Richard's truck is being SUPERIMPOSED as the light gradually brightens to reveal:

72 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - MORNING

72

Richard, Michael and Carolyn drive down the road toward the house.

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED: 72

Robert's truck, and all traces of him are gone.

Francesca steps into the doorway in a house-dress to welcome her family home -- wondering how this will feel.

CUT TO:

73 INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - EVENING 73

The Johnson family has dinner as Francesca narrates:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

You all came home. And with you,
my life of details.

CUT TO:

74 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY 74

Everyone is doing various daily chores.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

A day or two passed and with each
thought of him, a task would
present itself like a life saver,
pulling me further and further
away from those four days.

CUT TO:

75 INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING 75

Francesca is reading. Richard watches TV.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was grateful. I felt safe.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. MAINSTREET (WINTERSET) - DAY 76

A light rain is beginning to fall.

Richard and Francesca drive up to the general store to buy groceries. Francesca heads for the store as Richard crosses the street.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

FRANCESCA
Want anything special for dinner?

RICHARD
Hmmm. How about that brown sugar
meat loaf you make?

FRANCESCA
(smiles)
Okay.

She enters the store.

77 INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

77

Francesca makes small talk with the grocery lady as she
buys what she needs.

CUT TO:

78 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

78

The rain has gotten heavier.

Francesca places a bag of groceries on the front seat of
the truck, then gets in herself to wait for Richard. She
takes a deep breath and removes a handkerchief from her
bag to wipe the raindrops from her face. She freezes --

THROUGH the windshield, she sees Robert standing in the
rain beside his truck across the street, staring at her.
Her heart stops. For a moment, she isn't even sure he's
real.

The town moves about its business around them. But
neither notice or care. Whatever safety or forgetfulness
she felt is gone. Her feelings burst through. She sits
there helpless before him -- willing to go or stay
depending on what he did.

He begins walking towards her. She prepares herself.
Her life will change -- it has to. There's no turning
back.

But the closer Robert gets, the clearer he can see that
she is crying. And he stops.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

78

Without any words, he realizes what taking her with him would mean. With just a glance, he sacrifices her. With their eyes locked in the middle of Main Street -- in front of the whole town -- they smile and say goodbye.

Robert returns to his truck. He drives off, down Main Street.

Moments later, Richard throws the feed bag into the back of his truck and gets in. Francesca is wiping her eyes.

He doesn't notice. He drives off in the same direction as Robert.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

For a moment, I didn't know where I was. And for a split second, the thought crossed my mind that he really didn't want me -- that it was easy to walk away.

78A EXT. WINTERSET STREET - DAY

78A

Their momentum brings them up right behind the old pick-up, and sitting high in the Chevy, Francesca can see a black tarpaulin lashed down tight in the back, outlining a suitcase and guitar case wedged in next to the spare tire lying flat. The back window is rain-spattered but part of his head is visible.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Robert leaned over as if to get something from the glove box. Eight days ago he'd done that and his arm had brushed across my leg. A week ago I had been in Des Moines buying a new dress.

RICHARD

That truck's a long way from home. Washington State. I'll bet it's that photographer they been talkin' about at the cafe.

Francesca doesn't respond. She is struggling to fight back her tears.

78B EXT. TWO-WAY STOP - DAY

78B

They follow Kincaid a few blocks north to where 169 intersects with 92 running east to west. It is a two-way stop with heavy cross traffic, complicated by the rain.

(CONTINUED)

78B CONTINUED:

78B

For maybe twenty seconds they sit there.

Francesca's hand moves to the door handle.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

Since Robert Kincaid had driven away from me last Friday, I realized, in spite of how much I thought I'd cared for him then, I had nonetheless badly underestimated my feelings. That didn't seem possible, but it was true. I had begun to understand what he already understood.

Francesca sits frozen by her responsibilities, staring at that back window harder than she has ever looked at anything in her life.

RICHARD

What's he waiting for?

Francesca looks up to see that traffic has cleared in all directions. But Robert doesn't move. Francesca knows he is going through the same thing as she is in that moment. And then she sees:

Robert, knowing Francesca is watching, takes off the medallion and hangs it on his rear-view mirror -- touching it gently, as if he were touching her.

Richard BEEPS his HORN lightly. But Robert's truck just sits there. Francesca's eyes begin to tear up. Her hand grips the door handle. She doesn't have the strength to stay -- and she doesn't have the strength to leave.

Suddenly, Kincaid's left signal light comes on. In a moment he'll be gone.

Richard fiddles with the Chevy's RADIO.

Robert slowly eases his old pickup into the intersection heading west, lowering his window to help with visibility. Francesca squints through her tears and the rain and fog and sees the faded red paint on the door: "Kincaid Photography -- Bellingham, Washington."

As Robert completes the turn, Francesca can see his hair blowing in the wind from the open window. He begins to accelerate down 92 and rolls up the window.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'Oh, Christ -- oh, Jesus Christ Almighty... no!'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

78B CONTINUED: (2)

78B

FRANCESCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The words were inside of me. 'I was wrong, Robert, I was wrong to stay... but I can't go. Let me tell you again why I can't go... Tell me again why I should go.' I heard his voice coming back down the highway...

ROBERT (V.O.)

This kind of certainty comes only once, and never again, no matter how many lifetimes you live.

Richard takes the truck across the intersection heading north. Francesca looks for a moment past his face toward the old pickup's red taillights moving off into the distance. A huge SEMI-TRAILER RIG ROARS into Winterset, spraying a wave of water over the last cowboy.

FRANCESCA

(whispers)

Goodbye, Robert Kincaid.

She begins to cry openly. Richard looks over at her.

RICHARD

What's wrong, Franny? Will you please tell me what's wrong with you?

FRANCESCA

Richard, I just need some time to myself. I'll be alright in a few minutes.

Richard TUNES IN to the NOON LIVESTOCK REPORTS, looks over at her and shakes his head.

CUT TO:

79 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

79

The rain is beginning to back off. Richard's truck drives up. Francesca steps out with her bag of groceries and walks briskly into the house. Richard follows more slowly with his bag of feed, stopping at the gate to pick up the button from Francesca's red dress.

CUT TO:

80 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

80

Francesca enters and places her groceries on the counter. She tries to compose herself. She sees the RADIO before her. She turns it ON. The DINAH WASHINGTON SONG, "I'll Close My Eyes" evokes every feeling of love and loss within her. She begins to cry.

She hears Richard enter the house. She stands out of sight, holding her hand to her mouth to muffle her crying. She hears:

MICHAEL (O.S.)

Dad! You bought the wrong feed!

RICHARD (O.S.)

What?!

She hears Richard exit the house.

CUT TO:

81 INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

81

At dinner, Richard remembers the button he found.

RICHARD

Oh, Franny, is this yours?

Francesca sees the button. She speaks to Richard MOS. The scene continues and her narration is heard:

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I almost told him. In that moment I felt as if I couldn't hold it back. If he really loved me, maybe he'd understand.

She returns to her meal. The family eats in silence.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

I was grateful for the silence that night. I realized love won't obey our expectations. Its mystery is pure and absolute. What Robert and I had, could not continue if we were together. What Richard and I shared would vanish if we were apart. But how I wanted to share this. How would our lives have changed if I had? Could anyone else have seen the beauty of it?

CUT TO:

82 INT. JOHNSON KITCHEN - NIGHT

82

Francesca moves about the kitchen with a frantic pace as she puts the finishing touches on a cake. Placing the frosting bowl in the sink, she hears SOMEONE UPSTAIRS exiting their bedroom. She quickly gathers the cake and her bag and exits through the screen door.

CUT TO:

83 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - NIGHT

83

Fighting tears, she walks to the TRUCK from around the house. She gets in and STARTS it. She vaguely hears her daughter from the front door:

CAROLYN

Mom?

But she doesn't acknowledge it and drives away.

CUT TO:

84 EXT. LUCY REDFIELD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

84

A hand knocks on a door. LUCY REDFIELD opens it to find Francesca standing there with a cake.

FRANCESCA

Hi. I'm Francesca Johnson. I just feel awful that I haven't come to visit sooner. I hope I'm not interrupting anything. Is it too late?

Lucy is shocked and moved at the same time.

LUCY

No. Not at all.

FRANCESCA

I was wondering if... maybe you'd like some company.

(almost manic)

I baked a cake!

Lucy looks at the cake. She's a little dazed by all this.

LUCY

Uh... sure. Please. Come in. I'll make coffee.

Francesca enters. Lucy closes the door.

CUT TO:

85 EXT. IOWA LAKEFRONT - DAWN

85

Michael continues reading beside Carolyn as the sun rises.

MICHAEL

'We became inseparable, Lucy and I. The funny thing is, I didn't tell her about Robert until years later. But, for some reason, being with her somehow made me feel it was safe to think about him. The town loved talking about the two of us but we didn't care. And neither did your father. Which I thought was a lovely thing. I received Robert's letter and my photograph soon after. I always wondered if your father found them. I was never quite sure...'

CUT TO:

1979

86 INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

86

An older Francesca cares for a sickly Richard. He lies in bed beside an array of medicines and tonics. She wipes his forehead with a cool cloth as he takes his pills.

FRANCESCA

Better?

He nods. She smiles. She shuts off the light and lies beside him.

RICHARD

Franny?

FRANCESCA

Hmmm?

RICHARD

I just want to say... I know you had your own dreams. I'm sorry I couldn't give them to you. I love you so much.

Francesca turns to him. She is so touched, tears fill her eyes. She nestles close to him, wrapping her arms around him.

CUT TO:

1982

87 EXT. IOWA COUNTRYSIDE

87

Francesca picnics at the same spot she shared with Robert.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

After your father died, I tried to get in touch with Robert but found out he had left the National Geographic. No one seemed to know where he was. My only connections to him were the places we'd been to that one day. And so each year on, on my birthday, I'd re-visit them.

CUT TO:

88 EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - DAY

88

Francesca greets a UPS man with an envelope and a package.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

And then one day, I received the letter from his attorney, with a package.

89 INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM

89

Francesca reads the letter informing her of Robert's death. She then unwraps the package to reveal a medallion with her name inscribed and a photography book; a published collection of black-and-white photos by Robert Kincaid entitled Four Days.

Pressed between two pages, the note Francesca left for Robert on Roseman Bridge. We only see the words "white moths are on the wing." On the front page there reads an inscription, "FOR F.":

ROBERT (V.O.)

'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods... there is a rapture on the lonely shore... There is society where none intrudes... By the deep sea and music in its roar... I love not man the less, but Nature more...'

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED:

89

ROBERT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

'... From these our interviews, in which I steal... From all I may be, or have been before. To mingle with the Universe and feel... What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.'

The quote is Byron's. She smiles with pride as she cries.

CUT TO:

90 INT. FRANCESCA'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

90

Michael and Carolyn enter. He rummages through the cupboard, finding that bottle of brandy, now almost empty.

MICHAEL

There is enough for two drinks.
Want one?

CAROLYN

Yes.

Michael takes the only two brandy glasses from the cupboard and sets them on the yellow Formica table. He empties Francesca's last bottle of brandy into them. The notebooks are closed, but Francesca's narration continues over the next few scenes.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

There has not been a day since that I have not thought of him. When he said we were no longer two people, he was right...

91 INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM - DAY

91

Carolyn, looking through her mom's closet, finds the summer dress she bought in Des Moines to wear for Robert.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

We were bound together as tightly as two people can be. If it hadn't been for him, I don't think I would have lasted on the farm all these years. Remember that dress of mine you wanted, Carolyn -- the one you said I never wore.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

FRANCESCA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Well, I know I was silly. But to me, it was as if you were asking to wear my wedding dress to go to the movies.

Carolyn smiles as she holds the dress before her.

92 INT. MOTEL - DAY

92

A tired Michael finds his way through the motel to his room.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

After reading all this, I hope you can now understand my burial request. It was not the ravings of some mad old lady. I gave my life to my family. I wish to give Robert what is left of me.

CUT TO:

93 INT. MOTEL ROOM

93

Michael enters to find his two children watching TV and an angry Betty folding clothes.

CHILDREN

Hey, Dad!

He looks at them lovingly, then at Betty, who angrily motions for him to follow her into the bedroom.

She slams the door behind him and talks in an irate whisper:

BETTY

You have been out all night long!
Do I have a right to ask where
you've been?

Michael just looks at her. He gently takes her hand and kisses it.

MICHAEL

Do I make you happy, Betty?
(as she is
stunned)
Because I want to. I want to
more than anything.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

He gently kisses her cheek, then embraces her. Betty -- for the first time in her life -- is utterly speechless.

CUT TO:

94 INT. JOHNSON BEDROOM

94

Wearing her mother's dress, Carolyn sits on the bed holding the phone, waiting for Steve to pick up. In her other hand, she holds the divorce lawyer's card.

CAROLYN

(on phone; gently)

Hi, Steve? It's me... Good.
 You...? Listen, we have to talk
 ... Well, how about now...? Uh,
 no -- I've decided I'm going to
 stay for a while... I don't know
 how long... I'm not angry, Steve.
 I'm not angry at all...

She smiles.

CUT TO:

95 EXT. ROSEMAN BRIDGE - DAY

95

Michael and his family stand beside Carolyn and a Priest.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'I gave Lucy his photography book.
 If you're interested, take a look.
 If my words still leave some
 things unclear, perhaps his
 pictures can illuminate. After
 all, that's what an artist does
 best.'

Michael receives the urn from the priest. He and Carolyn walk away from the group towards the bridge. They stop. Carolyn removes the lid. Michael sets his mother's ashes free.

FRANCESCA (V.O.)

'I love you both with all my
 heart. Do what you have to to be
 happy in this life. There is so
 much beauty. Go well, my
 children.'

FADE OUT.

THE END