

Red Sky

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WGA Registered

[Author's Note: The AMANDA character was written for Meg
Ryan.]

FADE IN:

EXT. VARIOUS/SAILBOAT - EVENING

AMANDA sails into Los Angeles harbor in a 50 foot sailboat. The camera follows her in, first from the sky, then down on the deck and finally in close-up. Amanda (43) has no makeup on and her hair is windblown, but even so she is attractive. It is evening and there is a red sky behind her. She is firm and certain with each motion and brings the boat to the dock under sail.

EXT. DOCK - EVENING

BRIAN watches AMANDA from the dock, and helps guide the boat alongside. He reaches on board and grabs one of the neatly coiled ropes and anchors the bow to the dock. Brian walks back toward AMANDA shaking his head.

BRIAN

You're the only one I know that
still sails 'em all the way in.

AMANDA gets out of the boat and ties up the stern.

AMANDA

It's a sailboat, Brian, why
wouldn't I sail it in? There's
plenty of wind.

BRIAN leads the way into the small office on the dock.

INT. BRIAN'S OFFICE - EVENING

BRIAN

Yeah, I know you can do it. My
only concern is that someone
around here will see you do it and
think they can, too. Then I have
to clean up the mess.

AMANDA helps herself to a cup of coffee.

AMANDA

Then only rent to sailors.

BRIAN
(Scribbling on the desk.)
There are few sailors who can
handle a boat like you.

BRIAN tears a check loose and hands it to AMANDA.

BRIAN (cont'd)
Say, I've got a ketch that needs
to go to San Diego next week.
Interested?

AMANDA
Probably. I have to check my
messages first. I'll get back to
you this afternoon.

EXT. DOCK - EVENING

BRIAN walks AMANDA out the door.

BRIAN
Why don't you get a cell phone?
You can get almost all your
calls...

AMANDA
The day I take a phone sailing
will never come, Brian.

AMANDA looks at the check then pauses to look at the harbor
and the deep red sky. AMANDA waves the check.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Thanks. Red sky. Looks like a good
day tomorrow. See, ya.

AMANDA walks off.

BRIAN
Take care.

BRIAN looks after AMANDA and smiles. He looks up at the
sky, then turns and attends to the sailboat.

I/E. VARIOUS/GREEN DOOR - NIGHT

Rain is falling and AMANDA runs on the street briefly, then she slips into a doorway. She passes a well-muscled, TATTOOED MAN who sits in a small chair. He nods at her and she walks past. She continues along a dark corridor and enters a room with bright lights and makeup mirrors. Three scantily clad GIRLS sit at the mirrors primping and fluffing. They pay no attention to her. Amanda passes through into a small room with a few lockers. She opens one, and begins to undress.

INT. GREEN DOOR - NIGHT

In the GREEN DOOR strip club, a tall, leggy BRUNETTE is dancing on a stage surrounded by men. She stoops in front of one and spreads her legs. He hands her a dollar.

AMANDA carries a tray full of drinks. She is dressed in very tight jeans and a black stretchy top. Her hair is carefully brushed and she is wearing lots of makeup. She is almost unrecognizable from our earlier view of her. She arrives at her destination, a table full of college guys leering at the brunette. She begins to unload the drinks. Her voice is upbeat and flirtatious.

AMANDA

Okay, guys. That's one scotch on the rocks, two Dos Eques, a screwdriver and a bourbon and seven. Who's the bourbon and seven?

AMANDA flashes the guy who reaches for it a big smile.

AMANDA (cont'd)

That's \$32.50.

CUSTOMER #1 takes out his wallet and hands AMANDA two twenties.

CUSTOMER #1

I got it. Keep the change.

AMANDA

Thanks fellas.

Amanda stuffs the money in her jeans and picks up the tray.

CUSTOMER #2

You a dancer?

AMANDA

No. I just serve.

CUSTOMER #2

Too, bad. You could have helped me win a bet.

AMANDA

(Smiling big.)

How's that?

CUSTOMER #2

(Leering at her breasts.)

I bet him that you were a real blonde.

AMANDA

That's sweet. But seeing me on stage wouldn't have resolved the issue.

CUSTOMER #3

(Puzzled.)

How's that?

Amanda leans close to the table.

AMANDA

'Cause boys, I'm shaved as clean as a baby's bottom.

Before they can react, AMANDA turns, tosses her head and walks away with an exaggerated swing to her hips. The boys are seen hitting each other on the arm and yelling for her to come back.

I/E. VARIOUS/CHICAGO - DAY

JOE CARLSON (47) drives in his car on the freeway. Background of Chicago. Dirty, late winter scene. GRAY throughout. On the radio, the weather forecast: snow and sleet. JOE pulls into an underground garage and rides up the elevator alone. He walks along an empty hall to an apartment door and opens it. He steps in and stops. We hear indistinct voices. JOE moves forward. The sounds become clear. A woman's voice near climax. "Yes, yes, yes." JOE's face is expressionless. He looks around the

small living room and out into the gray, dark sky. His face reflects the same dullness as the scene. He goes to the door of the bedroom, and puts his hand on the doorknob but stops. The sounds of sex peak then stop. Joe turns and walks back to the living room, looks again at the gray landscape and then walks slowly and deliberately out of the apartment.

INT. AUDITION STAGE - NIGHT

AMANDA is on stage with MATT, they are doing a scene from Shakespeare, scripts in hand, but not reading from them.

AMANDA

Husband, let's follow, to see the end of this ado.

MATT

First kiss me, Kate, and we will.

AMANDA

What, in the midst of the street?

MATT

What, art thou ashamed of me?

AMANDA

No, sir, God forbid; but ashamed to kiss.

MATT

Why, then let's home again. Come, sirrah, let's away.

AMANDA

Nay, I will give thee a kiss now pray thee, love, stay.

MATT

Is not this well? Come, my sweet Kate. Better once than never, for never too late.

STEVE (O.S.)

Cut! That was good. Lynn, why don't you and Mark do your scene now.

AMANDA walks off stage. MATT (27) follows her.

MATT
That felt really good...

AMANDA
Huh?

MATT
The scene, I mean. It felt really natural.

AMANDA
It should. We've been through it a million times.

MATT stares at AMANDA.

AMANDA (cont'd)
What?

MATT
I was just thinking that we seem to have a lot of chemistry together.

AMANDA
Yes. I think we do. You're a good actor, Matt. You're really comfortable with your lines...

MATT
No. Ah. That's not what I was getting at.

AMANDA
Oh?

MATT
I was wondering if you'd like to come to a party with me this weekend. Some friends are...

AMANDA
This weekend? Oh, I'm sorry, Matt. I've got to work.

MATT

Oh, well. Well how about dinner
sometime next week then?

AMANDA

Oh, Matt, thanks. That's nice, but
I've got a paper due next Friday
and a test on Monday.

MATT

The following week?

AMANDA

Matt, why don't I just let you
know when I can make it. Okay?

MATT

Yeah, sure. Okay.

AMANDA watches MATT walk away and turns to find STEVE
(28)approaching.

STEVE

Say, Amanda. Wait a minute.

AMANDA

What is it Steve? I'm going to be
late for work.

STEVE

Sure.

STEVE puts his hand up to block her exit.

STEVE (cont'd)

I was just wondering if you wanted
help with your term project. You
could come over to my place and we
could work on them together...

AMANDA

(Cautiously.)

That's a very generous offer,
Steve, but I think I'm done.

STEVE

Well then....

DARREL (O.S.)

Steve! Where do you want me to store these props....

STEVE
(Ignoring the interruption.)
Like I was saying...

DARREL (O.S.)
Steve! What ...

AMANDA
Sounds like something you need to take care of. I've really got to run. See you Thursday.

AMANDA slips under STEVE's arm and escapes into the hallway. She looks back, annoyed.

STEVE
Jesus, Darrel, can't you handle...
(voice fades away) anything. I've got...

EXT. IN FRONT OF ALEX'S HOUSE - MORNING

JOE is by his car. His son ALEX (27) holds two-year-old TIMMY.

ALEX
Dad, I don't understand why you think you have to leave.

JOE
Alex. I'm not leaving. I'm going. I'm going someplace new. I don't know if you can understand, but I need to go someplace where I'm not who everybody thinks I am. There's nothing for me here. Except you and Kathy and the kids. I'll visit. You can visit. We'll talk on the phone and send email.

ALEX
Timmy's birthday is in three weeks. Why don't you...

JOE

And your birthday is four weeks
after that and then it's this and
then it's that. No, Alex.
There's no easy time to make an
exit. Don't look so sad. I'm not
dying. I'm going on an adventure.

JOE climbs in the car and starts the engine.

ALEX

Don't pick up any hitchhikers.

JOE

Have I ever picked up a
hitchhiker?

ALEX

No. Call me when you get to your
hotel.

JOE

I'll call you when I get to Tulsa,
day after tomorrow.

ALEX

I wish you had a cell phone.

JOE

Yeah, like that will ever happen.
Goodbye, Alex. Kiss Jenny for me.

JOE pulls away waving. He watches his son and grandson
disappear in the rear view mirror.

I/E VARIOUS/OKLAHOMA - DAY

JOE drives on the highway and sees a gas station ahead.
The country is flat. He looks at the gas gauge, less than
1/4 tank. He takes the exit and pulls into a service
station. While he's pumping gas, he's approached by a KID
(19).

KID

Hey, mister, can I catch a ride?

JOE

(Trying not to look at
him.)
I don't know.

KID
I'm only going a few miles? To
the Rome exit. That's where I'm
headed. Trucker I was riding with
had to ditch me. Afraid he might
get caught by the company.

The KID flashes a big grin and a puppy-dog look.

JOE
Yeah, sure. I guess it's okay.

JOE finishes filling and waits for the receipt at the pump,
then climbs in the car.

KID
You're from Illinois?

JOE
Chicago.

KID
You a salesman?

JOE
No. I'm heading to L. A. You
ever been there?

KID
Sure. I travel a lot. Mostly by
thumb.

KID holds up his thumb and flashes a big grin.

JOE
Well, this is my first time
driving. Any words of wisdom...

Shot of Joe's CAR leaving the gas station.

INT. JOE'S CAR - DAY

They are on the highway further down the road.

KID
Take this exit.

JOE
I thought you wanted to ...

JOE looks toward the KID and sees he has a knife.

KID
Take this exit.

JOE
Okay.

JOE takes the exit and stops at the top of the ramp. The road is deserted. Nothing around for miles.

KID
Gimme your cell phone.

JOE
I...I...I don't have one.

The kid frisks JOE quickly with his free hand.

KID
How much money you got? Cash.

JOE
Ah. I guess a couple hundred.

KID
Let's have it.

JOE
Okay. Take it easy. I'll give you the money.

JOE takes out his wallet and tries to hand it to the KID.

KID
You take out the money. Hurry up.

The KID is looking around apprehensively. JOE takes out the money.

JOE
There's just under three hundred.

JOE hands it to the KID. The kid takes the money.

KID

Here.

The KID passes a fifty back to JOE. Joe looks at the money.

JOE

Huh?

KID

You're going to take that entrance across the way there. Don't try to turn back and look for me, and don't call the cops. If you call the cops and I get stopped, I'm going to tell them you picked me up for sex. You got that? I'm going to tell them I gave you what you wanted and you paid me. That's how I got the money. You don't want your family finding out you pick up young men for sex do you?

JOE

(Dumbfounded.)

No. No, I don't.

The KID eases out of the car.

KID

Now get out of here. Thanks for the lift.

The KID slams the door. JOE puts the car in gear, pulls across the highway and drives down the on-ramp, watching the kid through the rearview mirror.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING

JOE is on the phone. Through the picture window is a view of a busy street.

JOE

No of course not. I haven't picked up any hitchhikers. I know it's dangerous. No. Don't worry.

I'm fine. I'm enjoying the trip.
Yeah. Okay. You too. I'll call
as soon as I get to Vegas. Bye.

JOE hangs up the phone and looks emptily out the window at
the passers-by.

EXT. THE GRAND CANYON - DAY

JOE leans over a rail to view the Grand Canyon; newlyweds
next to him do likewise.

GROOM

Can you believe it? I'm going to
be in charge of the whole West
coast operation.

BRIDE

And in a few years, you'll make
vice president.

GROOM

Yeah, maybe. But that's a big
step. I'll probably have to stay
where I am for more than a few
years. You know, I think we
should wait to start a family. I
mean, if I'm really going to make
it, I've got to really work the
job.

BRIDE

Of course. I'm not ready yet
either. I like my job. There's a
chance that June will resign.
She's been really unhappy lately.
I'm in line for that. Me and that
creepy Justin.

GROOM

You're way better than him.

BRIDE

Of course, but I'm not sure Peter
knows that. Justin buddies up to
him a lot. Golf and stuff. I
can't compete with that.

GROOM

Sure you can. I'll help. Hey, we need a picture. Where's the camera. (To Joe) Mister, would you take our picture?

JOE

Sure.

JOE waits for them to get into position.

JOE (cont'd)

Say "Yes, sir."

They look at him oddly. He takes their picture and hands the camera back.

EXT. HIGHWAY - EVENING

It's dusk. Joe comes through the mountains. L. A. is stretched out for miles, the lights blend with the sunset. Dense smog and traffic.

I/E. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joe carries bags up an outside staircase. He fumbles with a key and opens a door. He enters a small one-bedroom apartment, drops the bags and crosses to a sliding door. He opens it and walks out. The wood creaks and he looks concerned. JOE'S P.O.V. -- Several buildings block his view, but between them, light shimmers on the ocean.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JOE on the phone.

JOE

Yeah, I've got a view of the ocean. It's small, but just fine. I'm renting month to month, so if it doesn't work out, I'll move. Hey, put Jenny on. Hi, Jenny. What're ya doing?

INT. BURGER KING - DAY

Joe enters a Burger King and approaches the counter. A pimply faced 16-year-old appears.

BK KID
Can I help you, sir?

JOE
Yes. I'd like to see the manager.

BK KID
(His face goes suddenly
pale.)
Is anything wrong?

JOE
No. I saw the Help Wanted sign in
the window and ...

BK KID
(Disappearing.)
Kevin, there's a guy up here about
the job.

Kevin appears. He's all of 19 years old. Looks Joe up and down as he approaches.

KEVIN
Can I help you?

JOE
Yeah. I saw your help wanted sign
and I'd like to apply.

KEVIN
It only pays \$8.50 an hour. Late
shift. Four till closing.
Monday, Wednesday, Friday and
Saturday.

JOE
That's fine.

KEVIN
(Slowly.)
Okay. I'll get you an
application.

INT. BURGER KING - DAY

At a table in the mostly empty Burger King. Kevin is reading the application; looks impressed.

KEVIN

Wow. I wish I had your job history. How come you want to work here? (Quickly.) I mean, it's a great place to work. There's lots of potential for advancement. After you've been here awhile, you can participate in a health care plan and lots of other benefits. But you seem overqualified.

JOE

Well. I a... I got tired of what I was doing. I'm looking for a change. Something that I can do evenings.

KEVIN

Well, I've got to run it passed the owner. But as far as I can see, there won't be a problem. Why don't you plan on coming in tomorrow at seven and I'll start training you in. Don't come early. It's a zoo around here until then. I'll call if there's a problem.

JOE stands up along with KEVIN.

JOE

Okay. See you then.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

JOE is getting a tour of the kitchen. He's taking orders at the counter, sliding orders across the counter, shouting into the back for a Big Mac, taking drive-up orders.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

JOE is at the beach, sitting on a big towel, watching everyone. It's very crowded. Young college girls stroll by in their tiny suits. Joe sucks in his stomach and looks over his book to watch them. A few seconds later a young mother comes by with her two children. Joe looks up from his book to watch her pass, too. A few seconds after that, a woman in her 40's walks by. Joe looks up to watch her pass, as well. He looks after her the longest.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

JOE is in the kitchen. It's very busy. He's wearing a hat that says "Assistant Manager."

JOE

Nancy, the fries are up. Jan,
waiting on that special.

BILLY

Mr. C., can I take tomorrow off.
I've got a....

JOE

Sorry, Billy, I need you. I've
got no one to cover for you at the
drive-up.

BILLY

(Depressed.)
But....

JOE

I'll tell you what. You find
someone to work for you, and I'll
let you off.

BILLY

(Disappearing.)
Hey Pearl, how'd you like to pick
up some extra hours?

JOE

Still waiting on that number 5.
Come on, people. What's the hold
up?

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

The restaurant is empty. Joe is at the counter and sees a lone figure approach and enter. It is Amanda.

JOE
Can I help you?

AMANDA
Coffee. Black.

JOE
Would you like to try...

AMANDA
(Impatiently.)
Just the coffee, please.

JOE
Okay.

JOE goes to the coffee dispenser and looks back over his shoulder. Amanda is searching her purse, pulling out coins and laying them on the counter. The coffee spills over the side and burns Joe.

JOE (cont'd)
Ouch!

AMANDA looks up and JOE looks away, pours another cup.

JOE (cont'd)
One coffee, black.

AMANDA
Thanks.

AMANDA takes the cup and goes to a far booth near the window, puts on glasses, pulls out a text book and begins reading. BILLY appears next to JOE.

BILLY
Don't waist your time, Mr. C.
She's cold as ice.

JOE
What do you mean?

BILLY
She's mean. She comes in here
two, maybe three times a week

after the bars close. She gets a coffee, reads in the corner for a half-hour till her bus comes, then leaves. I've tried to talk to her, but she's not friendly.

JOE

She's a little old for you isn't she?

BILLY

I like older women.

JOE looks at BILLY confused.

JOE

Okay. You done cleaning out the grease traps?

BILLY

Almost.

JOE

Well, why don't you finish.

JOE waits for BILLY to leave, then looks at AMANDA. He takes a rag from the counter and goes out onto the floor and begins to clean tables. He works his way toward Amanda and finally to the table next to her. She seems unaware of his presence; her nose is buried in the book.

JOE (cont'd)

Interesting book? (No response. Joe clears his throat.) That book looks interesting.

AMANDA looks up, annoyed.

AMANDA

What?

JOE

I said, that looks like an interesting book.

AMANDA returns to her book.

AMANDA

I do not date fast-food employees.

JOE
I'm actually the assistant
manager.

AMANDA looks up at JOE with disdain.

AMANDA
I do not date fast food employees
of any rank. Do you mind. I came
in here for coffee. If I wanted
to chat, I'd have brought someone
interesting along to chat with.
Okay?

JOE backs away.

JOE
Yeah. Okay. You're the customer.

JOE goes back behind the counter and BILLY joins him.

BILLY
What did I tell ya?

JOE
They don't come any bitchier than
that.

BILLY
No, they don't.

JOE goes back to work, but continues to watch AMANDA who eventually looks at her watch, puts away the book and glasses, and gets up, leaving the cup on the table. As she passes the counter, she ignores Joe.

JOE
Have a nice evening.

AMANDA looks back and gives JOE a dirty look. Joe watches as she crosses the parking lot to the corner and arrives just as a bus arrives. She gets on and is gone.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT/ALEX'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

JOE leans on the rail of his lanai on the phone with ALEX. Action moves back and forth with speaker.

Alex is in his living room. Feet on the table. Behind him,
JENNY (4) colors.

ALEX

Anyway, I thought I'd get your
take on things. I mean, I know
it's not exactly what I want, but
it is a step up and the money is
good.

JOE

I don't know Alex. I guess I'd say
stay where you are. You seem to
like it. Money's not everything
it's cracked up to be.

ALEX

Yeah, I know. Still, it would be
nice to have a little more cash to
spread around. Kathy's been
hinting that we need a bigger
house. I'm also afraid if I let
this one pass, I won't get asked
again.

JOE

There's nothing wrong with your
house. You can always add on, or
fix up the basement.

ALEX

I know. Hey, are you going to
make it home for Thanksgiving? We
were hoping you would.

JOE

No, I'm not. Yeah, I know I said
I'd try. I can't get away from
work. I haven't been on the job
long enough to take time off at
the busy season. What am I going
to do? I...I got invited to this
friend's house. Yeah, I'll miss
you too. Give Jenny and Timmy each
a kiss from me. Tom and Greg are
going to visit in a couple of
weeks. Yeah, it will be nice to
see them. No. I don't think I'll

make it home for Christmas either. Why don't you plan a vacation out here in February. You always like to go someplace warm. I'd love to take Jenny and Timmy to Disneyland. Okay. Well, think about it. Yeah, I suppose I'd better go too. Alex. Give that promotion a hard look before you jump on it. Okay. Well, I gotta go. Oh, nothing much. Just a walk along the beach. I try to get to the ocean every day. Yeah, me too. Bye. Have a great Thanksgiving. Say Hi to everyone. Bye.

EXT. L.A. STREET - DAY

JOE is in his car, in a run-down part of town. He passes a church with a sign to welcome all to a free Thanksgiving dinner. There are a number of people going in: a woman and several children, an old man, a lady with a walker, a heavily bearded man. Suddenly, Joe sees AMANDA walk toward the door. He cranes his neck, uncertain at first if it is her, but it is. He drives around the block and parks in front of the church. He watches as a few more people go inside. Finally, he turns off the radio and goes in.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

Inside the church basement, a number of long tables are set up and decorated for Thanksgiving. JOE stands at the back of the room and looks around. He pays close attention to the serving line. There is a woman there, faced away, who is the same size and shape as Amanda, but as she turns he sees it is not her. Then he hears someone laugh and looks to find AMANDA at a table with a black woman and her two children. The man with the scruffy beard is seated there, too. He's staring at his food and eating mechanically. Amanda puts her pie next to him. He looks up. Amanda smiles at him warmly. He returns to his food without any other acknowledgement. A family pushes past Joe who still watches the scene. He follows them into the line, still looking.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - DAY

JOE approaches the table where AMANDA is seated.

JOE
Is this seat taken?

AMANDA smiles up at JOE. She gives no indication that she recognizes him.

AMANDA
No. Sit down. Happy
Thanksgiving. I'm Amanda. This
is Eleanor (indicating the black
woman) that's Terrance (indicating
the black boy) and that's Lorisa
(indicating the black girl).
And...

AMANDA turns her attention to the scruffy looking man.

AMANDA (cont'd)
...I believe this is Bob, or Rob.
I'm not sure.

JOE
Hello, everyone. I'm Joe. It's
nice to meet you all. Happy
Thanksgiving.

ALL
(except the bearded guy)
Hello.

AMANDA
(To Eleanor.)
There's a free clinic on
Jefferson. Go early. They get
really busy later on, but if you
go early, there's hardly ever a
wait.

ELEANOR
Thank you. I've been worried
about him ever since that
accident.

AMANDA

Oh, I'm sure it's nothing. But just the same, I'd check it out. (To Terrance) Do you like the pie? I'll get you another piece if you want me to.

TERRANCE

(Bashful.)

No thank you, ma'am.

AMANDA

(Enthusiastically.)

You've got to keep your strength up. You want to grow big and tall. (To Lorisa) How about you?

LORISA

I'd like more turkey, if it's all right.

AMANDA

Of course it's all right.

AMANDA takes LORISA's plate and hurries off, JOE's eyes follow her. She returns almost immediately.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Here you are.

LORISA

Thank you.

AMANDA

You're welcome. (To Joe) You're not eating your peas. Don't you like peas?

JOE

(Awkwardly.)

I'm not big on peas. Or vegetables for that matter.

AMANDA

Oh, but you need your vegetables. Green vegetables especially. Look, Terrance ate all his peas, and so did Lorisa. You don't want them to show you up do you?

JOE puts a fork full of peas in his mouth and chews.

JOE

Yummy.

AMANDA gives JOE an odd smile.

AMANDA

(To Eleanor)

So you're from Cleveland. I'll bet you're glad you're not there now. I heard it's going to be really cold in the Midwest for the next week at least. Do you have relatives still in Cleveland?

ELEANOR

Only the children's father, and he never came around enough to make it worth while to stay. I'm just glad we came when we did. I got a job right away, but...whew ... it sure is expensive here.

AMANDA

I know. Isn't it impossible?

JOE

(To Amanda)

Are you from L. A.?

AMANDA looks JOE over before answering.

AMANDA

Oh, I wish I'd been born here. I just love it. The weather's great. There's always something going on. There's the ocean. It's just so alive. Where are you from? No. Let me guess.

Amanda scrunches up her face.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Tulsa? No that's not it. You haven't got that Okie drawl. Chicago?

JOE
Very good. How...

AMANDA
(Smiling.)
Oh, it's no big secret, I saw you
in your car outside. You had
Illinois plates. Chicago seemed
like a safe guess.

JOE
Ah. Yeah...

AMANDA
(Looking at her watch.)
Oh, my. I forgot. I have to go to
work.

AMANDA stands.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Happy Thanksgiving everyone.

ALL
(except the bearded guy)
Happy Thanksgiving.

JOE looks after AMANDA as she leaves.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

AMANDA walks in and orders coffee from BILLY. JOE comes
from the back just as she gets her cup and walks to her
usual seat. She pulls out a book and begins to read as
before. Joe looks after her. Billy, notes the look on
Joe's face.

BILLY
Don't bother.

JOE
Huh?

Billy looks impish.

BILLY
I found out where she works.

JOE

Where?

BILLY

At the Green Door.

JOE

What?! No. No way. She's not ...

BILLY

I saw her go in the employee
entrance last night.

JOE

But...

BILLY

Ted was with me. Ask him. Wish I
was old enough to go in. I'll bet
she looks....

JOE

Spare me the details, Billy. She's
too old to work at the Green Door.

BILLY

Okay, don't believe me. I'll bet
she hooks on the side.

JOE

Billy! Don't go spreading rumors.
Maybe she was there for some other
reason.

BILLY

Yeah, right. Say. Why don't you
go ask her where she works. Why
do you think she's always coming
in so late? I'll bet...

JOE

Bye, Billy. Go sweep the
storeroom. I'll watch the front.

BILLY

(mad)
Okay, boss!

BILLY stomps away. JOE watches AMANDA and waits on customers until she leaves.

INT. AUDITION STAGE #1 - DAY

Amanda reads on stage for a part. She wears reading glasses.

AMANDA

...Kevin. It you don't get your room clean, you're not going out. I don't care. Well, maybe you should.

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

That was nice. How tall are you?

AMANDA

Five-six.

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

How old are you?

AMANDA

What does that have to do with it?

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

I'll ask the questions.

AMANDA

I'm thirty...five.

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

You don't look old enough to be this kids mom. You look more like a sister-type.

AMANDA

I can wear different make-up and dress for the part. That's what acting is...

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

I know what acting's about. A little advice. Lose the attitude; it's not helpful. Have you ever done any modeling?

AMANDA

Modeling?

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

Yeah. I've got a friend who's
always looking for ...

AMANDA

I'm not interested in modeling
right now. I'm auditioning for a
part.

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

No you're not.

AMANDA

I beg your pardon.

DIRECTOR #1 (O.S.)

You're done. Next.

INT. AMANDA'S BATHROOM/STAIRS AT CARL'S - NIGHT

AMANDA is in the bathtub, on the phone with MOLLY (22), her
daughter.

AMANDA

I'm sure if I'd a slept with him,
I'd have gotten the part. No,
Molly, I'm not sleeping my way to
the top. Anyway, I'm not that good
in the sack. What did you call
about?

MOLLY walks up the stairs as she talks.

MOLLY

Are you sitting down?

AMANDA

Actually, I'm soaking in a tub.

MOLLY

Guess what?

AMANDA

(Apprehensive.)

What?

MOLLY

Phillip proposed to me! I'm
getting married!

AMANDA stares straight ahead.

MOLLY (cont'd)

Mom?

AMANDA

But you don't graduate till
June...

MOLLY

Oh, we're not getting married
until August.

AMANDA

Well that certainly is exciting
news, but don't you think....

MOLLY

Mom, don't. I know what I'm
doing. Phillip and I have been
going together since our freshman
year...

AMANDA

I know that, honey. I just
thought you'd take some time after
graduation to find out what it is
you want to do.

MOLLY

I WANT to get married! I need to
know what I can count on you for.

AMANDA

Well, Molly, you know I don't have
much mon...

MOLLY

That's not what I mean! Dad's
paying for everything. But I need
help with planning. There's a
million things I need to do and I
don't know what to do about them.

I need someone to help me. Will you help me, mom?

AMANDA

Molly, of course I'll help. I'll do everything I can. I can fly in anytime. When would you like me to come? Three weeks? Okay. Yes. I can't wait to meet him. Make reservations at a nice place. My treat. I can afford that at least. Yes, I'll see you in three weeks. Okay. Bye, honey.

AMANDA pushes the off button, drops the phone on the floor and lets herself sink completely under the water.

EXT. THE GREEN DOOR - NIGHT

JOE stands in front of the Green Door; he looks up and down the street.

INT. THE GREEN DOOR - NIGHT

JOE seats alone at a small table. A young girl dances at the table next to him, but he pays no attention. He looks around. His eyes light on AMANDA, who talks to a table full of guys in suits. Two of them are oriental and smile at her and bob their heads. Amanda is smiles too. Amanda finishes with them and returns to the end of the bar. Joe gets up and moves to a table near the men. A moment later Amanda returns from the bar with drinks. After serving the men, she turns and sees Joe at the table.

AMANDA

(Cold.)

Hello. What'll it be?

JOE

Hi.

AMANDA

What'll it be?

JOE

Remember me? Thanksgiving?

AMANDA
(Glaring at him.)
Are you trouble?

JOE
What?

AMANDA
Are you following me?

JOE
Of course not, I....

AMANDA
See that guy over there?

AMANDA indicates a HUGE MAN with biceps the size of legs.

AMANDA (cont'd)
He takes care of all the problems
in here. If you've....

JOE
Wait, slow down. I'm not stalking
you. I just came in for a beer.
No one was waiting on me over
there. I saw you here and moved
over. That's all. Honest.

AMANDA
(Still suspicious.)
Okay, what'll it be?

JOE
A beer.

AMANDA
What kind of beer?

JOE
What have you got on tap?

AMANDA
Budweiser.

JOE
What else?

AMANDA

That's all. You want bottled
beer, take your pick.

JOE
I'll have a scotch.

AMANDA
You don't want a scotch.

JOE
Why not?

AMANDA
All we serve is rot-gut whiskey.
Have a Budweiser.

JOE
Okay. Bring me ...

Before JOE finishes AMANDA is on her way to the bar. Joe
watches after her.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Amanda sits at the kitchen counter; she is on the phone.

AMANDA
Yes, Sheila, of course I can do
it. I'll borrow some of my
roommates stuff. She's twenty-
two. Yes, I know I'm over forty.
I remember my birthday. I don't
have Alzheimer's. Look, I can
play a 24-year-old. Especially a
24-year-old hooker. Have you ever
seen a 24-year-old hooker? Trust
me. They look a lot older than me.
I see them prance almost every
night. Yes. No. Come on. Just
call her and ask her to give me a
chance to audition. Sell me.
That's what you're suppose to do.
No, I won't argue with her. I
already apologized to you for
that. He was a jerk. He was
about to ask me if I'd be
interested in porn... No, okay

he's not into that. I'm sorry.
Just please get me the audition.
That's all I ask. Just try.
Thanks Sheila. I appreciate it.

Amanda hangs up and looks out at the apartment, littered with clothes.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Okay, what does a 24-year-old
hooker wear to an audition.

AMANDA picks up a very skimpy dress from a pile on the floor and holds it up.

AMANDA (cont'd)
I wonder if I can get my hair into
a ponytail?

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joe lies on the sofa; he is on the phone.

JOE
Yeah, that is a hefty raise. Are
you sure you want to travel that
much? I was lucky, I never had to
do that much traveling. Yeah, it
can be fun at first, but the
guys... Well, think long and hard
about it. Me? Not much. Still
hitting the beach every day. No.
No. There are lots of very
attractive women out here but I'm
not ... Yes. Yeah, well there is
this one woman I'm thinking of
asking out. Is she nice? Yeah, I
think so. Once you get to know
her.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

Joe is behind the counter at Burger King when Amanda walks in. She doesn't acknowledge him.

AMANDA
Coffee. Black.

JOE
Sorry, we're out of coffee.

AMANDA
What?

JOE
(Smiling.)
Just kidding. One coffee, black,
coming right up.

JOE pours the coffee.

JOE (cont'd)
So how's the wife and kids?

AMANDA
Huh?

JOE
Just an expression. How's life
treating you?

AMANDA
Just fine, thank you.

JOE passes the coffee to AMANDA and refuses the dollar.

JOE
On the house.

AMANDA
(Annoyed.)
Thanks.

AMANDA takes her coffee and goes to her usual table, opens a book and begins to read. JOE looks around a bit and finally comes out from behind the counter and approaches Amanda. As he arrives at her table, Joe leans over to look at the book.

JOE
Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.
That's pretty heavy stuff.

AMANDA puts the book down.

AMANDA
Do you mind?

AMANDA picks up the book again.

AMANDA (cont'd)

It's a classic. Not as action filled as the Captain Marvel comics you're used to. But ...

JOE

Hey, wait a minute. Just because I work here doesn't mean I'm illiterate. I have read the Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and many other poems, and most of the classics. I worked on the college newspaper and served as assistant editor my senior year. I graduated near the top of my class. Until last year I was the MIS manager for a multinational corporation. I don't read Captain Marvel!

AMANDA looks at him coolly.

AMANDA

So what are you doing here?

JOE

(Calmer.)

I ... I ... Back in Chicago things weren't going the way I wanted them to. It was like my life had taken it's own course and I was just being sucked along. I felt like I needed a fresh start. A chance to start over, do things the way I wanted, not just follow along because I had to or because it was the thing to do at the time. That's what brought me here. I'm starting over. I'm doing what I should have done twenty years ago.

AMANDA looks at him for a long time.

AMANDA

So... It's Joe isn't it?

JOE

Yeah.

AMANDA

So Joe, tell me, how long have you wanted to be an assistant manager at Burger King?

JOE

(Hurt.)

Hey. I didn't come out here to be an assistant manager. I'm just doing this to make some money until...

AMANDA peers at him.

AMANDA

To make money until when?

JOE

Till I decide what it is I want to do. Anyway, you're just a waitress. Who are you to get on my case? You were there for the free turkey...

AMANDA

I'm not a waitress; I'm an actress. I wait tables to pay the bills. I wasn't at the church for the turkey. I was doing research for a part I'm auditioning for.

JOE

An actress, huh? What have you been in? Anything I've seen?

AMANDA

I've been in fifteen feature films including: Antonio's Wake, Frontstreet, Last Ride, and Salmon Creek.

JOE

Really?

AMANDA

In fact, I have an audition tomorrow for a part in a new Tom Mason film.

JOE
I'm impressed.

AMANDA looks at her watch.

AMANDA
I have to go, now. Goodbye.

JOE
Goodnight.

JOE watches as AMANDA leaves and watches through the window as she boards her bus.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

JOE waits at a gate. The passengers deplane. Suddenly Joe sees his friends TOM and HELEN, GREG and MARY. They share hugs and handshakes and kisses.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

TOM and GREG come to join JOE seated on a large sofa. Tom looks around the place.

TOM
Well the weather is sure a lot better than back home.

GREG
I'll say. There was freezing rain when we left. I thought we were going to get grounded for sure.

JOE
Where are the girls?

TOM
You know. They've got to unpack and freshen up. So, buddy, how's life treating you? Got a girl tucked away somewhere?

TOM watches a couple of YOUNG WOMEN pass by.

TOM (cont'd)

There sure are a lot of attractive women around.

JOE

Yeah. It's amazing how good women look without parkas and mukluks.

GREG

No. Seriously. You seeing anyone?

JOE

Naw. Not yet. I...

TOM

Hey, buddy. You've been out here six months already. You mean to tell me you haven't scored yet? What are you waiting for? You got to get back in action, Joe. You're not thinking of hanging up your guns are you? You're way too young for that.

GREG

Hey, Tom. Give him a chance. New town and everything. He'll get there.

JOE

To be honest with you, I haven't really even been looking.

TOM

So what have you been up to? Where're you working?

JOE

I'm just ...I'm just staying out of trouble. I've got a job at Burger King...

TOM

What? Burger King? What kind of money can you make there...

JOE

I'm not looking for money, Tom...

TOM

Obviously. But

JOE

Tom, I just wanted something to pay the bills. Something low stress that gives me my days free.

TOM

But Burger King? Come on...

JOE

No, really. It's not that bad. I pull the late evening shift. I have all morning and afternoon to lay around on the beach and ...

TOM

And what? That's what you've been doing for six months? Come on Joe, what's that? I thought you were going to make a new start out here. I thought we'd find you working for one of them dot coms or something. I figured you'd be driving a convertible and have some blonde California babe hanging on your arm. Sounds to me like you're just passing time? What's your plan, Joe? You gotta have a plan!

JOE looks pensive, then sees HELEN and MARY approaching.

JOE

Hey, here come the girls. I know a great little place by the beach. Come on you'll love it.

The GIRLS join the GUYS and they all rise and leave.

INT. JOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

JOE and TOM and HELEN and GREG and MARY have just entered Joe's small apartment. They look around. Mary and Helen head to the lanai.

JOE

It's all I really need. I've got a view. It's only two blocks to the beach. I've got great neighbors, although the Newton's downstairs sometimes party pretty hard. But they always invite me. So, it's not like I have to put up with...

TOM stands, surveys the place, he frowns.

TOM

Listen, Joe. I know you were burned out when you left. I was happy for you after what Loraine did to you and all. But, God, Joe. No offense, but you're living in a hole, working at Burger King, and going nowhere fast!

GREG

Tom, take it easy. It may not be what you'd want, but if this is what Joe wants, it's okay for awhile. It's not like he's going to do this forever. Is it Joe?

JOE

(Slowly.)

No.

TOM

But you said you didn't have a plan. Do you have one? What're you going to be doing in five years, Joe? Or five months for that matter? Why don't you come back with us? I know Gary would take you back in a minute. He's been whining to me about the new guy on a daily basis. Come home,

Joe. Don't stay out here and become a...a...a beach bum.

GREG

Tom!

TOM

Well, that's where he's headed. He's just marking time. Not connected to anything or anybody. Isn't that right Joe? You could just pick up and disappear, nobody'd even notice would they? Joe, that aint' right. You're too nice a guy. Too smart a guy to just ...just...exist!

GREG

Tom, I think you should sit down and have a beer and relax. Joe's got plans. He's not going to become a beach bum. He's got Alex and Kathy back in Chicago and little Jenny and Timmy. He's just taking a breather that's all. Just a breather.

TOM falls into a chair.

TOM

There's more to living than breathing, Joe. That's all I'm saying. If you're going to stay out here, you need to get connected. Get a real job. Get a girlfriend. Join a club. You told me you were coming out here to get a new start so you could do some of those things you always wanted. Jeez, Joe, how long have you wanted to be an assistant manager at Burger King?!

JOE says nothing. He looks down at his beer and runs his finger around the rim slowly.

HELEN (O.S.)

Greg, come out here. The moon is full!

MARY (O.S.)

Come on all of you. It's a beautiful night.

GREG and TOM get up, but JOE stays on the couch; he looks at his beer and runs his finger around the rim slowly.

EXT. JOE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Joe is sitting on his lanai on the phone with his son as he watches the sunset. He looks tired.

JOE

Yeah, they left this morning.
Yeah, it was great to see them. I don't think so. Yeah, Tom told me. No. Oh yeah, that much huh? Well I can understand why... Oh, you did? Well congratulations! Really? That would be great. Can you bring Kathy and the kids? No. Yeah, I suppose. Well it would really be great to see you. Let me know if it pans out. Yeah, sure, put Jenny on. Hi, Jenny...

INT. DRESS SHOP - DAY

A SALESWOMAN zips MOLLY up in a wedding dress. Molly spins and stands in front of AMANDA who sits in a chair.

MOLLY

I think this is the one. What do you think?

AMANDA

I think it's lovely. It's what you think that's important. If you like it, you should get it.

MOLLY

I'm asking your opinion, mother! Do you like it better than the

first one? Is the bodice too high?

AMANDA

They're both beautiful. You're lovely. You'll look beautiful in any of these dresses.

MOLLY

Mother! That's not what I want to hear. I need help. Which one do you think is the best? I can't make a decision.

AMANDA

It's your decision....

MOLLY

Oh, God. I knew I should have brought Gran with me. Why can't you help me? What's the matter with you? I'm asking you to help me with a simple little thing, and all you can do is tell me to make my own decision. (Near tears.) What did I bring you for. If you weren't going to help me, why did you come along? (To the saleswoman.) What do you think? Which one looks best on me?

SALESWOMAN

I'm afraid I agree with your mother, dear. I think you'll look stunning in any of the ...

MOLLY

Ugh. Never mind. Bring that one!

MOLLY stomps off followed by the SALESWOMAN with the other dress.

EXT. BLUE HOUSE - DAY

JOE is on a ladder, painting. He stops and looks thoughtfully, then puts the brush in the paint can and

pulls up a clipboard on a string to which a pen is attached by a string. He writes, ponders, writes, ponders, rereads what he has written then lets the clipboard fall and picks up his brush. A moment later he repeats the same action.

INT. AUDITION STAGE #2 - DAY

Amanda is under bright light at an audition.

DIRECTOR #2 (O.S.)
What part are you reading for?

AMANDA
Veronica.

DIRECTOR #2 (O.S.)
Veronica?

AMANDA
Yes, Veronica...

DIRECTOR #2 (O.S.)
You're too old. We're looking for someone younger for that part....

AMANDA
I can dress younger. I just came from...

DIRECTOR #2 (O.S.)
Yeah, yeah. But we're looking for someone younger, younger. Next. Jenny, lets keep it moving. I want to finish casting today.

AMANDA walks off stage past a line of 20-something girls. She looks hard at them, pressing her lips together to stifle her anger.

INT. AUDITION STAGE #3 - NIGHT

Amanda is under bright lights again at an audition

AMANDA
...after everything you did, you thought I'd be able to...

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
Thanks. That's all we need. I
think you're too young for the
part.

AMANDA
Too young?

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
Yes. We're looking for...

AMANDA
It says she's forty-three. I'm
forty-three!

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
Really? You look a lot younger.
Shelly, who's ...

AMANDA
I can dress down. I ...

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
Look, you're not right. I'm
looking for someone mousier. A
little heavier. More motherly.

AMANDA
I can gain weight. I've got a
married daughter for Christ's
sake!

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
I'm sorry. You're not what we're
looking for.

AMANDA
I can play the part. I'd be great
in the part. Just give me a
chance to come back...

DIRECTOR #3 (O.S.)
No. Come on, there are people
waiting. Getting me pissed off
isn't going to get you the part.
Thanks, but no thanks. Shelly,
who's next?

EXT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

JOE pulls up in his car. Through the window he sees AMANDA who sits alone. Joe gets out of the car.

INT. BURGER KING - NIGHT

Joe walks in and approaches the counter. Billy smiles at him.

BILLY

Hey, Mr. C., how're you doing?

JOE

Good, Billy. Let me have a coffee. Black.

BILLY

Sure thing.

BILLY gets the coffee and returns quickly.

BILLY (cont'd)

(In a low voice.)

I'm really sorry you quit, Mr. C. The new manager's a real asshole. Are you thinking of coming back?

JOE

No. Just thought I'd stop for a cup of coffee. Sorry to hear...

NEW MANAGER (O.S.)

Billy, get back here and clean the grease traps. Let Mary handle the counter.

BILLY

Better go. See ya.

JOE

Take care.

Joe walks over to the table where Amanda reads.

JOE (cont'd)

Hi.

AMANDA looks up.

AMANDA
(irritated)
Hello.

JOE
Do you mind if I sit down?

AMANDA
I already told you, I don't
date...

JOE
I don't work here anymore.

AMANDA
Oh? That's nice. What do you do
now, telemarketing?

JOE
No. As a matter of fact, I'm a
writer.

AMANDA
(Confused.)
A writer? Who do you write for?

JOE
I'm freelance.

AMANDA
Oh, you're a freelance writer.
You went from assistant manager at
Burger King to freelance writer
just like that? What have you
written?

JOE
A couple of short stories.

AMANDA
Yeah? Who published them?

JOE
(Slowly.)
Actually, they're not published
yet. They still need a little
work...

AMANDA

So, you're an unpublished
freelance writer looking for a
date? Am I suppose to be
impressed?

JOE

No. I just thought...

AMANDA

What did you think? That I'm
desperate for a date? I'm not.
And if I was, what makes you think
I'd find an unemployed assistant
manager -- who may or may not
write -- any more interesting
than an employed assistant
manager? Well?

JOE

I'm not unemployed. I'm a
painter.

AMANDA

(Cynically.)

You paint too?

JOE

Houses. I'm painting houses to
pay the bills. It gives me
freedom so I can work when I want
and write when I want. Just like
your job at the Green Door.

JOE looks hurt and gets up slowly.

JOE (cont'd)

I guess I made a mistake. I
thought we had something in
common. That we were both trying
to make some sort of mid-life
correction or something.

JOE leans over the table. AMANDA backs off slightly.

JOE (cont'd)

Maybe I haven't finished a story
yet, but I'm working at it. It's

hard work. I'd forgotten how hard it is to think without being told what to think. To be creative. (Joe straightens up.) Oh, by the way, I saw you're movies. At least the ones you mentioned. I had to watch 'Frontstreet' twice before I realized you were the lady in the taxi speeding by. Not exactly a starring role. You didn't have a talking role in any of them, and you weren't on the credits either. Who do you think you are to look down your nose at me?

JOE begins to zip up his jacket and walk away.

AMANDA

(Yelling after him.)

I had a talking role in "West Palm Avenue" and in "Passing Lane Killer." And I was in the credits. My stage name is Anne Carroll. I've got an audition next Wednesday for a speaking roll. It's a supporting role.

Joe pauses at the door and looks back.

JOE

Good luck. (Joe exits yelling.)
Break a leg!

INT. AUDITION STAGE #4 - DAY

Amanda is in front of bright lights at an audition. She holds a script.

AMANDA

(From the script.)

And what if I did? Was it so wrong? Can't you understand how difficult...

DIRECTOR #4 (O.S.)

(Loudly.)

Thank You. That's enough. Julie,
I need to take a short break, I'll
be back in about ten minutes.

Amanda walks off stage, dejected.

MALE ACTOR
He's not very sensitive is he?

AMANDA
Huh?

MALE ACTOR
He's not sensitive. The director.

AMANDA
No. No he isn't. Good luck.

MALE ACTOR
Thanks.

EXT. GREEN HOUSE - DAY

JOE is up on a ladder painting. AMANDA appears below.

AMANDA
Hi.

JOE looks down, surprised to see AMANDA.

JOE
What do you want?

AMANDA
I came to apologize.

JOE
Yeah.

AMANDA
Yeah. I'm sorry about the other
night. I'm generally not that
mean. I'd had a rough day.

JOE
I know how that goes. Hey. How'd
you find me?

AMANDA

I got your address from the kid at Burger King. Your neighbor said you were working in the neighborhood, so I just walked around until I saw someone painting a house. You've got competition. There are two guys over on Palisades and another guy on 4th. They both have fancy trucks.

JOE

Yeah, but I can beat their price. Low overhead.

JOE descends the ladder.

JOE (cont'd)

How did the audition go?

AMANDA

Huh?

JOE

The audition. You said you had an audition for a speaking part...

AMANDA

They were looking for someone younger.

JOE

That's too bad.

AMANDA

Well, I just wanted to say I was sorry.

AMANDA begins to walk away.

JOE

I was just about to break for lunch. Can I buy you a cup of coffee or something?

AMANDA

I've got to go to work.

JOE

Okay. I understand.

AMANDA continues to walk away.

JOE (cont'd)

How about dinner?

AMANDA stops and turns. Hesitating.

AMANDA

Why do you want to buy me dinner?
Except for Thanksgiving and today,
I've been very rude to you. Are
you into that?

JOE

No! Not me. I'm just a dull
normal kind of guy. I just think
we have something in common,
that's all. Have dinner with me
and we can find out. You can read
my short stories and tell me if
they're any good.

AMANDA

What makes you think I know good
stories from bad?

JOE

I've seen you reading books. You
can read. The rest is just 'yeah,
I like it' or 'jeez this sucks.'

AMANDA

(Slowly smiling.)

Okay, but you should know I never
sleep with anyone on the first
date.

JOE

Do you every have second dates?

AMANDA

(Smiling.)

No, not usually.

JOE

It's just dinner. Honest.

AMANDA

Okay. I'm off at eight. I'll meet you at The Dock. Do you know where that is?

JOE

Sure. It's down by the marina. Okay. Eight o'clock at The Dock.

AMANDA

See ya.

JOE

See ya.

JOE watches AMANDA walk down the street.

INT. THE DOCK RESTAURANT - EVENING

JOE sit at the bar with his drink. He looks at his watch. AMANDA appears from his blind side.

AMANDA

Okay. So I'm late. What are you drinking?

JOE

Scotch.

AMANDA slides into the chair next to him.

AMANDA

A writers' drink. (To the bartender.) Lou, I'll have a tequila sunrise.

LOU

Coming right up, Amanda.

JOE

You know the bartender?

AMANDA

I'm a regular.

JOE

Really? You work at a bar and hang out at a bar. Do you have a problem?

AMANDA

No. I come here now and then. Sorry I'm late. I missed the 7A; had to wait for the 12.

JOE

I take it that's bus-rider jargon.

AMANDA

You don't take the bus?

JOE

Not since I got my driver's license a million years ago.

AMANDA

You should. It's a great place to observe people. Both on and off the bus. It's a whole other world from the L.A. of fast cars and freeways.

JOE

Really?

AMANDA

Yeah, really.

JOE

So, what do you know about fast cars and freeways? Did you use to drive?

AMANDA

When I first came here, I drove. I didn't like it much. No interaction with people. Just staring ahead trying not to kill or be killed waiting for the light to change or someone to move over or speed up or take the off-ramp. I like the bus better.

JOE

So it's not because you're some
sort of tree-hugger?

AMANDA

Nope. I'm not a tree-hugger. But
I'm not an environmental clod
either. Say, did you get a table?

JOE

No. I was waiting for...

AMANDA

There's one open on the deck.
I'll be right back.

AMANDA jumps off the bar stool and heads for the MAÎTRE D'.
They chat as Joe watches and then Amanda returns.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Follow me. The table is ours.

EXT. THE DOCK RESTAURANT - EVENING

JOE settles into a chair on the deck.

JOE

Nice view. It pays to be a
regular I see.

AMANDA

It pays to be female, blonde and
cute.

JOE

That's interesting.

AMANDA

What?

JOE

Your comment. I would have
guessed you were a more liberated
woman.

AMANDA

I am liberated. I'm just not
stupid. I didn't make the rules, I

can't change the rules, but I can use them to my advantage.

JOE

Whoa. I think I'd better be careful. You sound a little...

AMANDA

Ruthless?

JOE

Actually I was going for merciless. But ruthless will do.

AMANDA

A girl's got to do what a girl's got to do. How's your scotch?

JOE

Good. It's hard to ruin scotch. That's why I like it. How's the tequila sunrise?

JOE picks up the pupu menu.

AMANDA

Wonderful. You like calamari? They do great calamari here.

JOE

I was thinking more nachos or onion rings.

AMANDA

Go with the nachos. The onion rings are straight out of the box. Liz, could you bring us some nachos, and another round?

JOE

Whoa! I just got started.

AMANDA

Don't worry. They're slow. By the time your drink comes, you'll be looking all over for it.

JOE

I saw those other movies.

AMANDA

What movies?

JOE

The ones you had talking roles in.
You were good.

AMANDA

Thanks. The movies sucked though
didn't they.

JOE

Yeah. Big time. That's what the
fast forward button is for. Got
any more auditions coming up?

AMANDA

There's always an audition. Hey!
You said you were going to bring
your stories. I don't see any ...
Were you ...

JOE

No, no. I left them out in the
car. I thought it would be kind
of uncomfortable... Me sitting
here while you read my stories.

AMANDA

Were you afraid I wouldn't like
them?

JOE

No.

AMANDA

Were you afraid I'd find a
spelling error?

JOE

No.

AMANDA

Bad grammar?

JOE

No!

AMANDA

So you're not afraid of rejection?

JOE

No more than the next guy. I asked you out didn't I?

AMANDA

Point taken.

AMANDA pauses to watch a large yacht go by.

JOE

So where are you from originally?

AMANDA

You know that yacht has a cruising range of almost 300 miles. That's not bad. You could get to San Diego in about eight hours.

JOE

You know a lot about boats?

AMANDA

A bit. I prefer sailboats. Do you sail?

JOE

The last time I sailed was at Boy Scout camp about a ... half a billion years ago. I got my merit badge though, so technically I guess I do know how to sail. But I don't think anyone would want to go out on the water with me. You're a sailor?

AMANDA

I'm from Oklahoma.

JOE

Oklahoma? Where in the world did you learn to sail in Oklahoma?

AMANDA

Do you know who stared in Grapes of Wrath?

JOE

(Confused.)
Henry Fonda I think.

AMANDA
You get an A. Can you name anyone
else in the film?

JOE
Walter Brennan, I think, and ...

AMANDA
Wrong. But lots of people give
that answer. Do you know who won
a supporting Oscar in that movie?

JOE
I haven't a clue.

AMANDA
Jane Darwell won best supporting
actress for her role in Grapes of
Wrath. I haven't found anyone who
knows that though. Except for a
few egghead type movie critics.
Do you know the name of the woman
who played in all the Marx
Brother's films?

JOE
No...

AMANDA
It was Margaret Dumont.

JOE
Okay. Now I remember...

AMANDA
How about the ...

JOE
Where are you going with this?

AMANDA
Oh, no place. Someday I'd like to
run into someone who actually
knows the names of some of the

women who were in lots of movies,
but didn't have starring roles.

JOE

Well, I don't know that I could
name that many men...

AMANDA

Walter Brennan, Barry Fitzgerald,
Dean Jagger, Edmond O'Brian, Burl
Ives, George Kennedy...

JOE

Okay. I get your point. Maybe
women aren't as well represented
or remembered as men in the
movies.

AMANDA

Why do you think that is?

JOE

I don't know.

AMANDA

Neither do I. But it sure is
irritating.

LIZ brings the nachos.

AMANDA

Thanks Liz.

LIZ

Do you want to order dinner?

AMANDA looks at JOE who makes a face at the huge mountain
of nachos.

AMANDA

No, Liz. I think we'll just have
the nachos tonight. Thanks. (To
Joe) I hope you're hungry.

JOE

There goes the old cholesterol.
(He digs in.) So you still
haven't told me how you learned to
sail in Oklahoma.

AMANDA

My father was a sailor and we had a sailboat when I was growing up. Oklahoma may not be coastal, but it has quite a few man-made lakes. When I first moved to L.A. I got a job working crew. I thought it might help me make contacts in the business.

JOE

Did it?

AMANDA

Not really. A lot of Hollywood big shots own boats, but not many of them really sail them. They just keep them around for show. And when they do go out, they rarely put up the canvas. So, who's your favorite writer?

JOE

I guess I'd have to say Hemingway?

AMANDA

Hemingway? Are you kidding? He didn't know how to write! Now Joseph Conrad, there's a writer...

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

AMANDA and JOE walk across the parking lot and arrive at Joe's car.

AMANDA

(Laughing and giggling.)
...So anyway, she sits on the chair and the whole thing collapses.

JOE

(Laughing hard, ending in a snort.)
On the dog?!

AMANDA

(Breathless with
laughter.)
Yes! The poor thing. It didn't
know what hit it.

JOE
Oh, Jeez.

Joe unlocks the door of the car.

JOE (cont'd)
Well here we are. Say, let me give
you a lift home. It's late.
You've been drinking. You don't
really want to take the bus, do
you?

AMANDA
You've been drinking, too. Should
you drive?

JOE
I only had two drinks. I'm fine.

AMANDA
I don't know. My mother warned me
about getting into cars with men.
But what the hell, she's not here.

AMANDA gets in the car.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Besides, I can take care of
myself.

JOE gets in the car.

JOE
You know, I'll just bet you can.

CAMERA ZOOMS OUT TO SHOW CAR DRIVING AWAY.

JOE (V.O.) (cont'd)
So which way do I go?

INT. JOE'S CAR - NIGHT

In front of Amanda's apartment building.

JOE

It looks like a nice place.

AMANDA

I've got a roommate. A girl from the Green Door. Well. Thanks for dinner.

JOE

We should do this again. You know any other interesting places?

AMANDA

All the places I know are interesting.

AMANDA gets out of the car.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Goodnight.

JOE

Goodnight.

JOE watches AMANDA as she walks toward the apartment building. Suddenly she turns around and comes back.

AMANDA

(Talking through the open window.)

Would you like to see my apartment?

JOE

Yes, I would.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

As they enter the apartment, JOE stops. The apartment itself is very much like Joe's, except the place is a mess. There are clothes everywhere, and there are dishes piled in the sink. It looks like a 14-year-olds room.

AMANDA

Have a seat.

AMANDA picks up a pile of clothes on the sofa and drops them in a pile on the floor next to it. She heads to the kitchenette.

AMANDA (cont'd)

I don't think I have any scotch.
How about a screwdriver? I know I
have vodka, and I always have
orange juice.

JOE

Ah, I'd better not. I have to
drive and ...

AMANDA is already fixing drinks.

AMANDA

Drive? Where are you going?
Don't you know what it means when
a woman asks you up to her
apartment after a date?

AMANDA returns with two tall glasses. She hands one of them to Joe and shoves aside some magazines so she can place the other one on the coffee table.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Here. I'll just go slip into
something more comfortable if you
don't mind. Jackie won't be home
till late.

JOE

(Hesitantly.)

Thanks.

JOE watches AMANDA leave the room, and then takes a large gulp of the drink and looks around. He cautiously picks up a pair of underwear that is near him and tosses it toward the pile that Amanda put on the floor. He takes another drink, leans back and stretches his arms out along the back of the sofa. A self-satisfying smile spreads across his face. In the other room he hears noises and water running and then the toilet flushes. Amanda reappears wearing a large, red oversize football jersey with the number 69 on it.

AMANDA

Well? What do you want to do now?

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

JOE is on the bed asleep. The doorbell rings angrily. Joe wakes up and climbs slowly out of bed, looks around at the messy apartment, rubs his eyes.

JOE

Amanda?

JOE pulls on his pants. The doorbell continues to ring.

JOE (cont'd)

Amanda?

Joe stumbles to the door and opens it. GRAN, a 65 year-old woman pushes past him.

GRAN

Where is she?

GRAN looks about in shock at the place.

GRAN (cont'd)

Who the hell are you? (loudly)
Amanda? Amanda where are you?
Where is she?

JOE

(Bewildered.)
I don't know where ...

GRAN

Who are you? Some low-life, has-been actor, I'll bet. Look at this place! How can she live like this? What are you doing here? You don't live here do you?

JOE

No. I ...

GRAN

God. How could this happen. She was such a pleasant child.

GRAN looks disgustedly at JOE.

GRAN (cont'd)

She had so much to offer. She was a wonderful wife. She had a loving and generous husband. A good provider. Carl gave her everything she wanted. Clothes, cars, vacations. He absolutely adored her. But that wasn't enough. That wasn't what she wanted. She wanted to be an actress! And now look what's happened. She's whoring around with unshaven men living in a filthy apartment! She's all but abandoned her daughter! Did you know she was a teacher? Her student's loved her! Absolutely adored her. Everyone adored her. She was so full of love and life and ... She gave it all up for this? (Turning on Joe.) What do you do?

JOE

(Hesitantly.)

I'm a writer...

GRAN

A writer? God a mighty! She's sleeping with a writer. What kind of stuff do you write? What have you written?

JOE

I...I...haven't published anything yet...

GRAN

A 50-year old unpublished writer! That's wonderful. Just wonderful. My beautiful daughter is sleeping with an unpublished 50-year-old writer, living in filth and ... and... oh shit. Where is she?

GRAN slings a bra from the back of the sofa onto the floor.

JOE

I don't know. I just woke up and
...

GRAN
Just woke up? It's almost noon!
You lazy, filthy, no good son-of-
a-bitch.

GRAN steps up to JOE.

GRAN (cont'd)
Let me tell you. You better not
mistreat my daughter. If I every
find out you're hurting her, I'll
pull your balls off! Do you hear?

GRAN pushes JOE aside and makes for the door. Turning
back.

GRAN (cont'd)
Did you hear what I said? I'll
tear you're balls off if I find
out you're hurting my Amanda.

GRAN turns and disappears, she lets the screen door slam.

GRAN (O.S.) (cont'd)
I'll be back. Tell Amanda I'm
coming back!

JOE looks around the apartment.

JOE
I think I better go.

INT. THE GREEN DOOR - DAY

JOE walks in. AMANDA is standing at the bar with her tray
waiting for her order.

AMANDA
Hello.

JOE
Hi.

AMANDA
What's up? You look worried.

JOE

You're mother stopped by this morning.

AMANDA

(Laughing.)

I'll bet that was fun! Sit down. I'll get you a drink.

JOE

No. I've got to get to work. I just wanted to warn you. She said she was coming back.

AMANDA

Thanks for the warning. Where are you working?

JOE

I'm working on a two-story over on 30th and Mulholland.

AMANDA

Maybe I'll stop by after. I don't think I'll go home for awhile.

JOE

I don't blame you. If you want, you can lay low at my place.

AMANDA

Thanks, but I should probably face the music. She flew all the way in from Tulsa just to yell at me. She'll just camp out till I do come home and the longer I wait, the more difficult she'll make it. But thanks for the offer.

JOE

Sure.

JOE starts to leave.

JOE (cont'd)

What time are you off?

AMANDA

About six.

JOE
Come by and I'll buy you dinner.

AMANDA
Okay. But it's my treat. You
picked up the last one.

JOE
That's okay...

AMANDA
I insist.

JOE
Okay. See you later.

AMANDA
Bye.

EXT. THE DOCK RESTAURANT - EVENING

They are at the same table as before.

JOE
Were you really a teacher?

AMANDA
Yes. Why?

JOE
I don't know. I just... What
grade did you teach?

AMANDA
Tenth and eleventh grade English
and theatre.

JOE
The boys in your class must have
suffered greatly.

AMANDA
Huh?

JOE

I remember what it was like to have a pretty teacher in high school. It was hell.

AMANDA

Do all boys and men think only of one thing?

JOE

Until the age of ... Yes they do.

AMANDA

I have to take a boat to San Francisco. Want to come along and keep me company? You can write and I'll sail. Or I can teach you to sail. You did say you were a non-sailor?

JOE

When do you leave?

AMANDA

Day after tomorrow. It'll only take a couple of days. Might provide good background for a future novel. You don't get seasick do you?

JOE

I haven't in the past. But then I've never slept on a boat. Is it big?

AMANDA

It's a fifty footer. About as big as one person can handle. If you don't want...

JOE

No. No. I'd love to go.

AMANDA

Good. You bring the scotch, vodka, orange juice and some snacks. I'll pick up the rest of the food. Be at the dock at 8 o'clock sharp on Thursday.

JOE

Okay.

WAITER brings their dinner and drinks.

EXT. DOCK - MORNING

AMANDA is already on the sailboat; she checks sails and watches JOE approach.

AMANDA

You're late.

JOE Looks at his watch.

JOE

Only two minutes. I couldn't find a place to park.

AMANDA

Oh. I should have told you to park over there. I forgot. That's the advantage of taking public transportation. Come aboard. Let's shove off.

JOE

Aye Aye, captain.

EXT. BOAT - DAY

Under sail; the city behind. Joe comes up from below deck.

JOE

Nice. What does something like this cost?

AMANDA

Maybe two hundred, two fifty.

JOE

(Whistles.)

Must be nice. Hey. You really look like you know what you're doing there.

AMANDA

You better hope so. Do you want to take the wheel?

JOE
You think that's wise?

AMANDA
It's not a 747. The worst thing you can do at the moment is steer too far into the wind. Just keep the compass at 240 and you'll do fine. I want to check the ladies room.

AMANDA shows JOE the compass and gives him the wheel. She waits while he gets the hang of it, then heads below deck.

JOE
What do I do in an emergency?

AMANDA (O.S.)
Just let go of the wheel and get out of the way. It'll turn into the wind and spill the sail. Don't worry! You're doing fine. It's a clear day, a moderate wind and I'll only be gone a minute. Sheesh. Men!

EXT. BOAT - MORNING

Joe is at the wheel. The sea is up, the sails are full. Amanda appears from below. Her hair is wet and she is combing it through with her fingers.

AMANDA
See. You're a natural.

AMANDA looks up at the sails.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Luffing a little. Steer 10 degrees west.

JOE moves the wheel, the sail begins to shake.

AMANDA (cont'd)
West! I said West!

JOE compensates and the sail fills.

AMANDA (cont'd)
That's it. You just need to get
your directions. I made coffee.
Do you want some up here?

JOE
Yeah. Black. No cream or sugar.

AMANDA
Okay.

AMANDA disappears.

AMANDA (O.S.) (cont'd)
You want something else? I
brought some bananas.

JOE
A banana sounds great. Is there a
donut down there.

AMANDA (O.S.)
No! How about some granola?

JOE
With nuts?

AMANDA (O.S.)
Yeah, there's nuts in it.

JOE
Okay.

Amanda reappears with two mugs of coffee (steaming) two
bananas, and a baggie of granola. She sits next to Joe and
puts her foot on the wheel.

AMANDA
I'll take it.

JOE relinquishes the wheel and takes the coffee.

JOE
Thanks. Where are we now?

AMANDA

I'll do the math later, but I'd guess about 150 miles south of San Fran. We're pretty close to half way. If the wind holds, we'll make it about noon tomorrow.

AMANDA looks at the sky.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Weather looks solid.

JOE
I thought I saw a whole rack of instruments and radios and stuff down there. Can't you get a weather report?

AMANDA
Oh, I don't use all that newfangled stuff. That's for sissies. I navigate by the stars and read the weather from the sky and sea.

JOE
Really? I'm impressed.

AMANDA
I'm kidding, but I don't trust the electronics gear. You're always hearing about people getting in trouble 'cause their gear goes out. I only use the gear when I'm in trouble.

JOE
Does that happen often?

AMANDA
No.

AMANDA points at the bow.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Looks like we've got an escort.

A pod of DOLPHIN are riding the boats prow. JOE stands up.

JOE

I knew I should have brought my camera!

AMANDA

Oh relax. Enjoy the moment. People take too many pictures they never look at anyway. I'm not a big fan of pictures.

JOE

That seems an odd thing for an aspiring film actress to admit.

AMANDA

I suppose. But films aren't life. What people do on camera isn't what they do in real life. It's drama. Or comedy. Or something else. Film imitates life, but it's not life.

JOE

I think some people think it is.

AMANDA

Did you know that Jessica Allen was 42 before she got a decent role in films?

JOE

Is she one of your role models?

AMANDA looks at JOE curiously.

AMANDA

No. It's just a bit of trivia. You think I'm crazy trying to break into film at my age don't you?

JOE

No. No. But I think it's not the easiest thing to do.

AMANDA

And breaking into print is?

JOE

(Thoughtful.)

No. I don't suppose that's any easier. So why are we doing it? I was a successful middle manager and it sounds like you were a successful teacher and wife. What went wrong? Lots of people are trying real hard to achieve what we threw away.

AMANDA

You feel that way?

JOE

What way?

AMANDA

That you've thrown something away?

JOE

Don't you?

AMANDA

No. I haven't thrown anything away. Being a film actress is just the next step in my life. It's a goal. You can't reach goals without going somewhere or leaving something behind. But that's not the same as throwing things away. I don't regret anything in my past. I was a good wife, a wonderful teacher, and a great mom. Actually, I'm still a great mom. At least I think so. My mother and my daughter may have a different view. But just because that's what I was doesn't mean I have to continue to do it forever. People change. Life shouldn't be a matter of getting somewhere and taking root. It should be dynamic and different. Everyone I used to know was trying to get someplace where life was easy. They thought if they could get there, they'd be happy. But they never were. Life shouldn't be easy. I'm very happy

with difficult. I like getting up in the morning and not knowing what the day will bring.

JOE

So you like change?

AMANDA

Not for its own sake. But change is part of everything. Look at the sea; it's constantly changing. But you have to be part of it to notice. If you own a house a mile from shore, the sea looks pretty much the same every day. There are days when you can see whitecaps and there are days when it's stormy. But mostly it looks the same. If you live on the beach, you begin to notice how different it is every day. Some days it's calm, some day's its rough, some day's it's crazy. There are even days when you leave your house and go inland to get away from it. But when you're ON the water you don't just see the change, you're part of it. If it's calm, you enjoy it. If it's stormy, you have to deal with it. There's no safe harbor in the middle of the ocean.

JOE

Did you by any chance minor in philosophy?

AMANDA

No. Now go up front and check the lines. We've got to come about. And just in case you were wondering; yes, that means a change in course.

JOE

Aye. Aye. Captain.

EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

It's dark. AMANDA and JOE are cuddling behind the wheel.

AMANDA
Should we go below?

JOE
In a minute. I'm enjoying the moment. Looks like clouds on the horizon.

AMANDA
Yeah. The sea's come up a bit since sundown.

JOE
I didn't notice any change.

AMANDA
You're not a sailor yet.

INT. BOAT CABIN - NIGHT

It's dark. Sexual sounds (grunts, moans). Suddenly an alarm goes off and a mechanical voice begins talking.

VOICE (O.S.)
(Difficult to hear.)
Squall line moving Northwest to Southeast. Location 36 degrees North, 122 degrees West. Moving 40 to 50 knots. Small craft warning. General advisory...

AMANDA jumps out of bed and begins dressing.

JOE
What is it?

AMANDA
We've got to go topside. There's a squall coming at us. Get dressed as quick as you can and make sure you wear your life vest.

JOE jumps up and begins pulling on his clothes.

JOE
Should I worry?

AMANDA
You always worry in high seas.
Just make sure when you get on
deck you keep yourself tethered to
the safety lines. Remember what I
told you about them?

JOE
Absolutely.

AMANDA
Come on.

EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

The seas are huge and it is raining hard. AMANDA and JOE are in orange rain gear. Amanda is at the helm. Waves are washing the deck. The wind is howling.

AMANDA
(Yelling.)
Joe! Joe! You've got to go
forward and lower the jib. We've
got too much sail!

JOE
What?

AMANDA
Go forward and lower the jib!
Remember how I showed you?

JOE
Are you serious?

AMANDA
Yes, I'm serious!

JOE slowly and cautiously makes his way to the foredeck. He is almost washed overboard half a dozen times. He manages to take in the jib and secure it and then make his way back.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Take the wheel! I've got to lower
the mainsail.

JOE
What? I don't know...

AMANDA
Just keep us headed into the
swells...into the wind. You can
do it.

JOE
Amanda. I don't think I should...

AMANDA
I've got to lower the sail or the
mast will snap. If the mast
snaps, we'll be dead in the water
and we'll capsize! Do you want to
capsize?

JOE
Give me the wheel.

JOE takes the wheel and AMANDA makes her way to the mast.
She tries the power wench, but it won't budge. She finds
the manual crank and begins lowering the sail, but it
sticks. Amanda looks up at the mast and back at Joe. She
begins to climb.

JOE (cont'd)
What are you doing? Are you
crazy?

JOE's distraction allows the boat to slip sideways in the
water. The boat heels-to roughly. Amanda grabs the mast.

AMANDA
(Yelling.)
Into the swells. Into the wind,
Joe!

JOE
Damn. Damn. Damn.

JOE forces the wheel hard. The boat turns back into the
swells. The wind tears at the sail hard and the mast pops
back up, nearly throwing AMANDA overboard.

JOE (cont'd)

Amanda! I don't know what I'm doing. Get back here! Come back and take the wheel.

AMANDA continues up the mast and finds the place where the sail is stuck. She kicks at it with her foot and it pops free. She shimmy's down the mast quickly and lowers the sail with the power wench. She returns to the wheel.

AMANDA

Okay. I've got it.

JOE sinks back into the seat next to her. He looks drained.

JOE

All I could think was what would I do if you washed overboard.

AMANDA

I didn't.

JOE

I know you didn't. But

AMANDA looks up at the streamers on the top of the mast.

AMANDA

I think that's the worst of it. Winds coming 'round. We're on the back side.

EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

Their rain gear is gone; both AMANDA and JOE have towels around their shoulders. Amanda is holding the wheel with one hand and fluffing her hair. The seas are noticeably calmer, but there is still a strong breeze.

AMANDA

Why don't you go put out the jib again. We can make good time in this wind.

AMANDA looks to the West and points.

AMANDA (cont'd)

There's the edge of the squall
line. See?

Joe follows her finger. Then gets up.

JOE

Yeah. Well. That was exciting.
Does this happen often?

AMANDA

Now and then.

JOE

What would you have done if I
hadn't been around to take the
wheel?

AMANDA

I don't know. I would have just
lashed it down, I guess. Or maybe
I would have tried to ride it out.

JOE

But what if the mast had snapped?
What would've happened?

AMANDA

I suppose I'd have had to start
the diesel.

JOE

The diesel?

AMANDA

Yeah. You know. The motor? This
boat has a motor. All boats of
this class have auxiliary motors.

JOE

(puzzled)

Wouldn't it have been easier to
ride out the squall with the
motor?

AMANDA

This is a SAIL boat, Joe. Why
would I want to start the motor?

JOE

Because it would have made more sense?

AMANDA

What do you mean, 'made more sense?'

JOE

I mean, it would have been less dangerous. We wouldn't have had to run around the deck lowering sails and risking our lives.

AMANDA

I think you're being a little melodramatic, Joe. It wasn't that bad. It was just a squall. It only lasted half an hour at most. I've been in worse weather for much longer. Two years ago, I was in a...

JOE

But it would have been easier to handle the boat with the motor, wouldn't it?

AMANDA

There was no reason to use the motor. We did fine with the sails...

JOE

So the motor's just like the electronics gear to you? A nuisance?

AMANDA

Yes. If you're going to sail a boat, then you SAIL it.

JOE

No matter what?

AMANDA

Joe. That's not what I mean. There are times when I batten down the sails and cruise with the

motor. But let me ask you. What would we have done if we'd stowed the sails, started the engine, and then the engine had stalled during the squall? What would you have done then?

JOE
Is that likely?

AMANDA
It's happened. It's happened to me.

JOE
What did you do?

AMANDA
I went below deck, closed the hatch and prayed.

JOE
Did that work?

AMANDA
Well. I didn't turtle. But I was banged up by the time the storm was over, and the boat was a mess inside and out. I had to call for a tow.

JOE
That wasn't enough to put you off sailing?

AMANDA
Why? Because it got hard? Because it was dangerous? I didn't think you were such a sissy.

JOE
I'm not a sissy. I just... I just... I think there are some things you take risks with and other things you don't.

AMANDA

It's because you haven't sailed enough. It's like getting thrown the first time you ride a horse. Do you fall in love with riding? Of course not. But if you don't get back on the horse, the horse wins and you lose. You have to get back on the horse to prove to yourself that it's your decision not to ride, not the horses! It's the same with sailing! Shit, Joe, it's the same with everything!

INT. CARL'S HOUSE - DAY

AMANDA is on the phone in the den of Carl's house (her ex-husband). MOLLY enters the room and plants herself impatiently in front of Amanda.

AMANDA

I love it. Really. I do. No, I haven't gotten my big break yet. You're telling me.

MOLLY begins to tap her foot.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Listen Jen, I have to go. Molly's waiting for me. She's still making changes to the seating. Yes. You too. Yes, I promise I'll call. Bye.

AMANDA hangs up the phone and looks at MOLLY.

AMANDA (cont'd)

It's rude to interrupt someone's phone conversation. I just wanted to talk to Jen before I left. What is it?

MOLLY

The caterer just called, and their supplier can't get the chocolates to them by tomorrow. They want me to select an alternate choice.

Either sherbet or wafers. What should I tell them?

AMANDA
What do you think?

MOLLY
Uggh!

MOLLY stomps from the room.

MOLLY (cont'd)
What do I think? What do I think?
I think you're useless. Why don't you go back to L.A.? What did you come for? You're my mother. You're suppose to help me with these things! That's what mothers do! Gran? Gran? Where are you?

INT. CHURCH DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Molly is dressed for the wedding and waiting. The last bridesmaid slips out the door and closes it carefully behind her leaving Molly and Amanda.

MOLLY
You better go, too. They have to seat you before we can start.

AMANDA
I know. I know. My, you certainly look beautiful.

MOLLY
Thank you. I'm glad you came.

AMANDA
Did you think I wouldn't? Why wouldn't I?

MOLLY
Daddy said...

AMANDA
He's a poop. Don't pay any attention to him. He's mad at me.

(Amanda shrugs her shoulders.) I suppose he has a right.

MOLLY

I get mad, too, sometimes. Gran says you're going to wake up someday and be very sorry for leaving.

AMANDA

Gran doesn't understand. I may wake up some morning and decide I don't want to do what I do anymore, but I will never ever be sorry for doing it.

MOLLY

You better go.

AMANDA

Yes. I should.

AMANDA kisses MOLLY on the cheek and gives her a hug. She begins to leave and stops with her hand on the doorknob.

AMANDA (cont'd)

You know Molly, it's not too late to change your mind.

MOLLY

What? What are saying? Change my mind about what. About getting married? Are you crazy? There's a church full of people out there, some of whom flew thousands of miles to be here. I've got a sit-down dinner for two hundred ready to be served and travel reservations and ... and ... Are you nuts? How can you stand there two minutes before my wedding -- the wedding I have planned meticulously for eight months -- and tell me it's not too late to change my mind? Of course it's too late to change my mind! That's what's wrong with you. You don't think of anyone else. Just you.

Oh, I've decided I don't want to be a wife and mother anymore. I think I'll go become an actress. Adios. Goodbye. See ya. Gran is right! You're just a grown up adolescent. You don't have a clue how to be an adult. To take responsibility. To make a commitment and stick with it! Mother, you are holding up my wedding. Will you please leave so that you can be seated and we can start. And please, please, please don't tell me again that it's not too late to change my mind. I'm not like you. I have no intention of changing my mind. Not now. Not in the future. Now go!

AMANDA opens the door.

AMANDA

Remember Molly, it's never too late.

MOLLY

Uggh!

EXT. GARDEN OF CARL'S HOUSE - EVENING

After the wedding. AMANDA sits at a table with a half-dozen women talking and laughing.

AMANDA

...so then this guy who's only a few years older than Molly asks me out.

WOMAN

What did you say?

AMANDA

What could I say? I said yes! (Surprised faces.) What better way to I find out what kids do at parties these days.

WOMAN

What was it like?

AMANDA

Pretty boring really. A lot of kids drinking. Some doing drugs. Heavy petting. Not too different from the parties we went to in college. Except they all seemed so serious. It was odd. It was like they were working at having a good time. They were playing at partying, not really partying at all.

WOMAN

Did anything happen?

AMANDA

You mean did I sleep with him? No, I didn't. I thought about it, but it would've been too weird. I think he told everyone that we had.

WOMAN

Did he ask you out again?

AMANDA

Once. But I declined. Do you want to hear...

CARL appears behind AMANDA and puts his hand gently on her shoulder to get her attention.

CARL

Your presence is requested by the photographer over at the main table.

AMANDA

Excuse me.

AMANDA gets up and walks with CARL.

CARL

I didn't get a chance to tell you how beautiful the mother of the bride looked today.

AMANDA

Thank you, Carl. That's very gallant. You look very dashing yourself. And Jessica looks wonderful as well. Have you been seeing her very long?

CARL

About six months now.

AMANDA

Is it serious?

CARL

I don't know. It could be. Molly's had me so involved with this wedding that I honestly haven't had time to think about it one way or the other.

AMANDA

She seems nice.

CARL

She is. She's been very helpful. Molly seems to like her. Even Gran likes her.

AMANDA

Gran likes her!? You'd better grab her quick before she gets away!

CARL

(Laughing.)

So what about you? Are you seeing anyone?

AMANDA

Just one guy, Joe. But it's ... I'm very busy with auditions and stuff.

CARL

Oh, I suppose. Are you making any progress?

AMANDA

Some. It's not easy breaking in. There are a lot of very talented young people trying to break in. It's just that much harder when you're a few years older.

CARL

I imagine there's a number of actors and actresses...

AMANDA

They call both sexes actors now.

CARL

Oh. Seems I read that there are a number of actors of both sexes who are starting to think about retirement by the time they hit your age. Are there many parts for women your age?

AMANDA

In film? Not many. But I'm not in charge of that. I just show up at auditions and give it my best shot. What happens after that is out of my hands.

CARL

Doesn't it get you down? The rejection, I mean.

AMANDA

Sometimes. It's part of the business. You have to take the good with the bad.

CARL

Still, it must get awfully hard being alone.

The PHOTOGRAPHER comes and grabs AMANDA's arm.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Please. I need you here. And
sir, if you'll just stand on the
other side. Thank you.

EXT. YELLOW HOUSE - DAY

Joe is up on the ladder painting. Amanda appears below.

AMANDA

Hi.

JOE

Hi.

AMANDA

My roommate is moving out.

JOE

Oh?

AMANDA

Are you interested in changing
your place of residence?

JOE

You bet.

AMANDA

Give your notice.

JOE

Okay.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The phone rings. Joe reaches over Amanda to get it.

JOE

Hello? Yeah, Hi. That's okay.

JOE looks at the alarm.

JOE (cont'd)

I should be up now anyway.

JOE climbs out of bed and walks into the living room.

JOE (cont'd)
No. How'd it happen. When's the
funeral. Saturday? Of course
I'll come. I'll let you know
after I get a flight. Bye.

Joe hangs up.

INT. CHICAGO AIRPORT - DAY

JOE arrives at the baggage area where ALEX and JENNY are
waiting for him. He hugs Alex and picks up Jenny and gives
her a big kiss.

JOE
Wow! Have you ever gotten big,
Jenny.

JENNY
I'm almost five.

JOE
I know! Wow!

JENNY
What did you bring me?

JOE
(Laughing.)
It's in my suitcase. Come on
let's see if we can find it.

INT. HOME OF DEAD FRIEND'S SON - AFTERNOON

The place is crowded with relatives and friends. People
can be seen out in the yard as well.

ALEX
Hey, Dad. Come over here. I want
you to meet someone.

JOE excuses himself from a MAN and WOMAN with whom he's
been talking and walks over to ALEX who stands with an
attractive WOMAN about Joe's age.

JOE
Hello.

ALEX

Dad, this is Kathy's aunt. You might have met at the wedding, but...

JOE

Sure I remember you. Natalie. Right? You're from Buffalo. Your husband Allen works for Kodak.

NATALIE

I'm afraid Allen past away last year, but you're right about Buffalo. How kind of you to remember.

JOE

Oh, I'm sorry to hear about Allen. I only met him the one time. He seemed very nice.

NATALIE

Oh, he was. Just wonderful. I miss him a lot. But life goes on. Your son tells me you've moved to L.A. Why on earth would anyone move there? Isn't it crowded and dirty and ...

JOE

Well, Chicago's not exactly farm country is it? No, L.A has its faults, but I like it. Lots of sunshine, although there is the smog. And I like the ocean. Have you ever been there?

NATALIE

No. I suppose I shouldn't say bad things about a place I've never been. Actually, I haven't been many places at all. Allen and I planned to do a lot of traveling after he retired. He'd have been eligible this year, you know...

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - DAY

JOE and ALEX are sitting on the deck watching JENNY and TIMMY play with the DOG.

JOE

Well, give it time. It takes
awhile to fit into any new job.

ALEX

It's just that I spend so much
time on the road. They said I'd
have to travel one week a month.
It's been more like two...
sometimes three. Kathy is already
tired of it.

JOE

Give it time.

JOE looks around.

JOE

I like the new place. It's a
great yard for Timmy and Jenny.
Kathy seems to like having her own
car. You've just got to let
things shake out, son. Give it
time.

ALEX

Yeah, you're right. Dad, do you
ever think about coming back to
Chicago?

JOE

Sometimes. I miss you and Timmy
and Jenny, and Kathy, of course.

ALEX

Are things getting serious with
you and Amanda?

JOE

No. I wouldn't say that. But
she's a lot of fun. She's got way
more energy than me.

ALEX

Would she come back with you?

JOE

Huh?

ALEX

Maybe if you moved back, she'd come with you. You said she was having a tough time as an actress.

JOE

I don't think...

ALEX

Okay, okay, I'm pushing. You're not ready yet. Say, how about another brat.

JOE

Okay. I think I'll have another beer, too. You want one? I'll get 'em.

ALEX

Yeah. Thanks.

INT. ALEX'S HOUSE - DAY

JOE is in the living room on the phone.

JOE

Hi, Amanda. It's me. Just thought I'd let you know I decided to stay an extra couple of days. I won't be back until Wednesday. I forgot a key, so leave one in the usual place if you you're not around then. I...miss you. See ya soon. Goodbye. Call me if you want. I left Alex's number by the phone.

JOE hangs up, but he continues to stare at the phone for a moment.

INT. AUDITION STAGE #5 - DAY

AMANDA is in front of a camera with KELLY (27) another actress; both have a script in hand and read their lines.

AMANDA

No! I don't care what you think of us. Douglas is the only one that matters to me. I've changed my life to ...

KELLY

...but you can't ignore it! He's cheating on his wife. He'll cheat on you, too. Can't you see that Madeline? Can't you see that?

KEITH (55), director, walks into the scene.

KEITH

Cut. Cut. Okay let's take a break here and then we'll go over the scene in the library.

KELLY walks off and AMANDA approaches KEITH.

AMANDA

I want to thank you again for giving me the part. I know you went out on a limb ...

KEITH

Hey. Forget it. You're good. You know your lines; you come prepared. That's thanks enough. (To the cameraman.) Stan, let me see that replay. (To Amanda.) Grab a sandwich. You look hungry.

AMANDA

(Confused.)
Thanks.

AMANDA walks over to a table where there is food. KELLY is looking at the fruit.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Do I look undernourished to you?
Maybe I need a little blush on.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

JOE enters the apartment. It looks trashed. He drops his bags and begins cleaning up.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - LATER

AMANDA enters the apartment, which is clean now. JOE is putting the last of the dishes in the dishwasher. Amanda goes to the refrigerator and gets a pitcher of ice tea, goes to the cupboard and gets a glass. She fills the glass and leaves the pitcher on the counter.

AMANDA

Guess what?

JOE

What?

JOE returns the pitcher to the refrigerator.

AMANDA

I'm in a Tony Markus film?

JOE

Who?

AMANDA

Tony Markus. He did 'Semblance of Order,' 'Night Spirit.' You've seen those haven't you?

JOE

Yeah. So you got a role? What is it?

AMANDA

It's not huge, but I've got a dozen lines. I'm Madeline, the lead's cousin. I turn up dead seven minutes into the film, but it's a real part!

JOE

It certainly is! Congratulations. Hey, we should celebrate!

AMANDA

Okay. Where should we go. The usual?

JOE

Heavens no. This is an auspicious occasion. We should go someplace fitting. How about the Brown Derby.

AMANDA

That's for tourists. How about Mexically Rose. I like the Margarita's there.

JOE

I was thinking steak. Or at least seafood. It's my treat. How about Bret's. They make those cosmopolitans you like.

AMANDA

Okay. But I want to change. Maybe I'll take a shower. Do you think we need a reservation?

JOE

On Wednesday? I'll call. You get cleaned up.

AMANDA

Okay. You call.

AMANDA leaves her glass on the coffee table and disappears into the bathroom.

JOE

Did you notice I cleaned up?

AMANDA (O.S.)

Yeah, why?

JOE

Why? Because I was afraid of what might be living here with us.

AMANDA (O.S.)

(From the bathroom, water is running.)

What?

JOE

Never mind.

INT. BRET'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Amanda and Joe sit near a window looking out at the ocean. Bret's is a nice place and they are both dressed up a little.

AMANDA

Anyway. He gave me a compliment today, too.

JOE

Really?

AMANDA

Yes. He said I was good and that I knew my lines. He implied that that was important to him. Do you know what a great contact this is? Jessica Mallory is the female lead and Robert Tanner is the male lead. I haven't met either of them yet. Not that I will. I mean the way they shoot, unless you're in the scene with someone you don't even get to meet them. Still, they may be on the set. We had a run through today. I thought it went really well. Kelly -- she's the actress I do most of my lines with -- she's really good. We seem to have some chemistry, too. The timing was right from the very beginning. Of course, that says a lot for the writing. I don't remember who the writer is. I guess I should. I'm sorry.

JOE

Hey. Don't apologize to me. I didn't write it. Huh. Maybe I should try a screenplay. What do you think?

AMANDA

A screenplay? Why not. Just make sure you write a part in it for me.

JOE

Of course. I'll make the lead a female sailor -- an adventuress sailing around the world in search of lost treasure. How's that?

AMANDA

I don't think I'll audition. Why don't you write a screenplay about two aging actresses vying for the same part, each aware that this may be their last chance to do something significant.

JOE

And they are friends. So it's hard for them to compete with one another.

AMANDA

And one of them has just lost a daughter to drugs.

JOE

And the other has a husband who cheats on her and treats her like dirt.

AMANDA

And they both have deep secrets they're afraid will come out before the part is cast.

JOE

And one of them has six fingers.

AMANDA

And there is a growth on the other one's back that she has to keep covered!

JOE

What do you want for dinner?

AMANDA

I'm having the Scampi and a Caesar salad. But first I'm having another drink.

JOE

I think I'll have red meat and fried potatoes.

AMANDA

Savage.

JOE

Someone has to be politically incorrect.

AMANDA

How do you think I'd look as a redhead?

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

JOE is in the kitchen, cooking. AMANDA is looking through a magazine on the living room couch. She is wearing a pair of readers.

JOE

Do you want a bun on your burger?

AMANDA

No. But I want a slice of tomato and some lettuce, pickles, onion...

JOE

One California burger sans bun coming right up. How about fries?

AMANDA

No fries. Did you make a vegetable?

JOE

Broccoli.

AMANDA

I'll take lots of broccoli. Do we have any sweet and sour sauce?

JOE
For the broccoli?

AMANDA
Yeah.

JOE
I'll look.

Phone begins to ring.

AMANDA
I'll get it. Hello. Yes,
speaking. (Her voice shows
obvious concern.) What?

JOE
What is it?

AMANDA waves her hand at Joe angrily and focuses on the phone. Tears well in her eyes.

AMANDA
No. No. I understand.
Obviously, I'm disappointed.

AMANDA stiffens and fights back tears. Her voice is flat and even now.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Thank you for letting me know.
Yes. Thanks. I'll do that.
Thanks.

AMANDA returns the phone to the coffee table and then explodes.

AMANDA (cont'd)
God damn it! God damn it!

AMANDA picks up a picture and throws it across the room. It explodes on impact.

AMANDA (cont'd)
Mother fucking assholes...

JOE
What is it? What's wrong?

Tears begin to pour down AMANDA's face.

AMANDA

They cut my part! The motherfucking writers cut my part completely out of the motherfucking picture.

AMANDA picks up another picture and is about to hurl it also, but stops and sets it down. She shrinks to her knees and sobs. Joe rushes over and kneels next to her.

JOE

Jeez, I'm sorry, Amanda. I'm...

AMANDA pushes him away.

AMANDA

Get away. Get away from me.

AMANDA struggles to her feet, quickly wipes the tears from her eyes and composes herself.

AMANDA (cont'd)

It's okay. That's the way it is. They cut Kelly's part, too.

AMANDA looks toward the kitchen.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Are you burning dinner?

JOE looks at AMANDA helplessly.

JOE

Dinner's okay.

AMANDA

I don't like my burgers well done.

JOE

Amanda, it's okay to be angry. You're disappointed...

AMANDA

That's part of the business. That's just part of the business. At least I didn't wind up on the

cutting room floor! Assholes.
Assholes!!

AMANDA picks up a script lying next to the phone and tosses it across the room.

AMANDA (cont'd)
They're all assholes!

AMANDA makes for the kitchen.

AMANDA (cont'd)
I need a drink. Where's the vodka? Do you want a drink?

JOE
Yeah. That sounds good. Let's forget about supper and sit out on the deck and get hammered.

JOE joins AMANDA in the kitchen where Amanda is digging around in the cupboard.

AMANDA
I don't want to get hammered. I just want a drink. I'm not hungry anymore.

AMANDA finds the vodka and slams it on the counter.

AMANDA (cont'd)
You know what?

JOE
What?

AMANDA
Let's go get a drink at Lennie's. I don't feel like sitting around here. I want to watch the water and see the sunset.

JOE
That sounds good to me. Let me put this stuff away.

AMANDA
I'm going to go fix my face.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

AMANDA is on the phone. JOE is just coming in.

AMANDA

Okay. Great. I'll be there at
4:30 sharp. What? Yes, I can do
that. Of course.

AMANDA waves an envelop at Joe. He comes over and takes
it. Looks at the return address. His face shows interest.

AMANDA (cont'd)

And thanks again. Tell Marcia
thanks too.

AMANDA hangs up.

AMANDA (cont'd)

Well, open it!

JOE slowly opens the envelope. He begins to read out loud.

JOE

Dear Mr. Carlson. Thank you for
your submission, but...

JOE tosses the letter onto a pile of magazines. AMANDA
picks up the letter and reads it through.

AMANDA

I'm sorry, Joe.

JOE

That's okay. I didn't expect
Esquire to publish it anyway. It
was a long shot. I'll just submit
it someplace else.

AMANDA

How about Playboy?

JOE

How about the Utley Reader?

AMANDA

What?

JOE

The Utley Reader.

AMANDA

What's that?

JOE

It's a pseudo intellectual mag.
Likes pretentious stuff.

AMANDA

Joe. Your story was not
pretentious!

JOE

No? Well maybe not. What's for
dinner?

AMANDA

Let's go to Lennie's and watch the
sunset and have a drink or two.

JOE

Okay. Seems like we've been going
to Lennie's a lot.

AMANDA

You've got to have someplace to
go.

JOE

Yeah. Someplace.

EXT. LENNIE'S RESTAURANT - EVENING

Outside by the sidewalk.

JOE

So when I came in, you were on the
phone. Did you get an audition?

AMANDA

Yes, I did!

JOE

That's great. What's it for?

AMANDA

Actually, it's a supporting role for an independently produced film about a family that dissolves under the pressure of drug addiction and unemployment.

JOE

A supporting role, huh. Independent you said? I guess that means it doesn't pay anything.

AMANDA

Not a sou.

JOE

You know any of the players?

AMANDA

Only Kelly. Remember? The girl that was in the film...

JOE

That got cut.

AMANDA

Yeah. Anyway, it's worth an audition. Did you know Sarah Thomas got her first break in an independent film for which she got absolutely buttkiss?

JOE

I did not know that.

AMANDA

Now you do.

The drinks arrive. JOE holds up his glass and they toast.

JOE

To success. And failure.

AMANDA

That's a curious toast.

JOE

Well, without failures, you don't appreciate success.

AMANDA

Hum. You may be right. I only wish we could toast more successes and fewer failures.

JOE

That time will come. That time will come.

EXT. BROWN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

JOE is on the ladder, painting. AMANDA appears below with a letter in her hand.

AMANDA

You got a letter.

JOE

Hi. Since when do you deliver mail?

AMANDA

I wasn't doing anything. I think you missed a spot over there.

JOE

Yeah. I'll get it later.

AMANDA

It's from that magazine.

JOE

Which one?

AMANDA

The Utley Reader. It's addressed to Mr. Joseph Carlson. It doesn't look like a rejection. Feels more like a contract.

JOE slides quickly down the ladder.

JOE

Give me that.

JOE tears open the envelop and reads it quickly.

JOE (cont'd)

They want to publish my story!

AMANDA

Which one?

JOE

You know, the one about the boy and his father. The one that reminded you of "The Rocking Horse Winner."

AMANDA

I really liked that one. I told you it would sell. How much do they pay?

JOE

They don't pay cash. They pay with copies.

AMANDA

Oh. So what! It's still a legitimate magazine isn't it?

JOE

Yeah, it is.

AMANDA

And it gets read by a lot of people?

JOE

Circulation is over 10,000. Or so they say.

AMANDA

Well, let's celebrate. I'll buy.

JOE is still looking at the letter.

AMANDA (cont'd)

What are you waiting for. Get cleaned up. It's almost four...

JOE looks up at the house.

JOE

I'd sort of like to finish...

AMANDA

You can finish tomorrow. Come on. This is big. Your first published story! You can't just blow that off, Joe. Remember what you said 'you've got to celebrate the successes.' Let's celebrate.

JOE

Okay. But let me clean up a little.

AMANDA

Okay. I'll head over to The Dock. Meet me over there as soon as you can.

JOE

Don't you want to wait and ride with me?

AMANDA

I need the exercise. Besides, if I hang around here all I get to do is watch you clean up. I'd rather spend time by the water.

JOE

Okay. I'll be along as soon as I can.

JOE begins to pick up a few things until AMANDA is out of sight. Then he climbs up the ladder and begins to paint.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

In bed. All the lights are off.

AMANDA

Joe? Are you asleep?

JOE

No.

AMANDA

I forgot to tell you, I have an audition on Tuesday. It's for that Schwarzenegger film.

JOE

Really? What's it called?

AMANDA

It's just a bit part. The character gets killed off almost as soon as she's introduced.

JOE

Any lines?

AMANDA

Three. But they'll probably cut two of them.

JOE

What does your agent say?

AMANDA

I'm a shoe-in.

JOE

That's good.

AMANDA

She says that all the time.

JOE

Oh.

AMANDA

Do you want to go see that new movie with Kevin Allen?

JOE

'Silent After Dusk?'

AMANDA

Yeah.

JOE

Okay. Have you read any reviews?

AMANDA

No. You know I don't pay any attention to them anyway. You can learn a lot from bad films, too.

JOE

If that's true, I'm a fucking genius. I watch bad films all the time. Why is that?

AMANDA

Because you keep hoping they'll get better. You can't believe people spend millions of dollars producing trash.

JOE

Yeah, I suppose.

AMANDA

How's the story going?

JOE

It's not.

AMANDA

Writer's block?

JOE

Loser's block.

AMANDA

Joe...

JOE

I haven't written anything good for months.

AMANDA

I liked that piece about the old woman...Ester.

JOE

I don't know how to finish it.

AMANDA

It seemed finished to me.

JOE

It's too...neat. It should be grittier. Too much symbolism. It's like I'm trying too hard.

AMANDA

Just send it off. Let someone else take a look at it. You're too close to it.

JOE

Maybe.

AMANDA

Okay. When you're ready.

JOE

I'm starting to fade. I've got to close my eyes. Goodnight.

AMANDA

Okay. Goodnight.

JOE turns away from AMANDA, but his eyes don't shut.

EXT. DOCK - EVENING

AMANDA casts off. BRIAN is on the dock, so is JOE.

AMANDA

I'll be back day after tomorrow.

JOE

Be careful. Sure you don't want me to come?

AMANDA

If you want to come, jump on. I can manage just fine.

JOE

I think I'll pass. Unless you think you'll need me.

AMANDA

Looking west. Red sky at night, sailor's delight.

JOE

Okay, then. Have a safe voyage.

AMANDA

I'll be fine. See you Thursday.

BRIAN

You're not going?

JOE

No. I'm not much of a sailor.

BRIAN

Yeah. If you're not comfortable on the water, you're better off on shore.

BRIAN walks into his office and JOE stays and watches AMANDA sail away.

EXT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

JOE is sitting on the deck watching the ocean at sunset. He is alone. There are many sailboats on the water - perhaps a regatta, perhaps not. Joe is sipping a drink and reading a letter written with crayon. He holds up a picture and looks at it. It is TIMMY holding a puppy.

INT. AMANDA'S APARTMENT - DAY

AMANDA enters. She is humming brightly. JOE is sitting on the sofa looking pensive. She sees him and stops.

AMANDA

Hi.

JOE

Hi.

AMANDA

What's wrong?

JOE

I'm going to be 50 years old next week.

AMANDA

Oh, that. Don't worry about it. Everybody gets to be 50 sometime...if they're lucky.

JOE

Amanda. I'm going to be a 50-year-old struggling almost completely unpublished writer who paints houses.

AMANDA

And that's bad?

JOE

Yes, it's bad. How can you say that? Of course it's bad! It's horrible!

JOE stands up and begins to pace.

JOE (cont'd)

Amanda, I can't do this anymore. I can't go on like this. I can't go on pretending to be something I'm not!

AMANDA

What aren't you, Joe?

JOE

A writer! I'm not a writer! I'm a middle-aged man with a silly teen-age dream of becoming something I haven't the talent, or intellect, or passion for! I'm making a fool of myself!

AMANDA

I don't think you're being foolish.

JOE stops pacing and turns on her.

JOE

Of course you don't! You're in the same boat as me. How long have you been out here trying to break into pictures? How long? And what have you accomplished? You've done a few walk throughs, a couple of lines here and there. A commercial. Amanda, you're not going to make it! It's too late

for you. It's too late for both of us. We missed our chance. It's time we accepted that and move on...

AMANDA

(Angry.)

Move on? What do you mean, move on?

JOE

Amanda. I've decided that I'm going back to Chicago. I've got an opportunity to get my old job back, see my family... Amanda, I want you to come with me. I want you to come back with me.

AMANDA is silent. She looks at JOE as if she's never seen him before.

AMANDA

Come back with you?! You want me to come back to Chicago with you? Get a job teaching English and working with struggling young actors? Is that what you want? You think I should do that?

JOE

Yes. Yes. I think you should do that. I can make you happy, Amanda. Come with me. I love you, Amanda, but I can't keep playing this game. I need more than this. It's too hard.

AMANDA

What's too hard?

JOE

Trying to keep some stupid fantasy alive...

AMANDA

(passionately)

Stupid fantasy! You think my life is a stupid fantasy? Listen, Joe,

it may be a fantasy to you, but it's not a fantasy to me! This is my life. This is the path I have chosen. If you don't want to be here, then go! Leave. But don't ask me along and don't tell me how to live. You said you want me to come back with you. That's not back for me, Joe. Back for me isn't Chicago. It's friends and neighbors and small shops I grew up with. It's a little town where I've got a daughter and a son-in-law, an ex-husband, a mother, and dozens of friends. It's a schoolhouse and a classroom and young people who I tried to help to be what it was they wanted to be. Back for me is a small theatre where I watched with envy the talented and not so talented spread wings that no one had clipped. That's back for me, Joe! That's where I'd be safe and comfortable and sheltered and loved by friends who fill up their lives with gardens and golf and tea-parties! I have no intention of going back there, Joe! And I have no intention of going back with you, either.

AMANDA pauses. There is a single tear in her eye. She begins again more slowly and calmly.

AMANDA (cont'd)

This is my home, Joe. This is my life. If it's hard, it's hard. If I fail, I fail. But I'm not going back, Joe, because there is no back. My life moves in one direction only. And it is my life, Joe. This isn't something I'm trying out. This is it. It may not be the life you want, but it's my life. And if you don't like it, then ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

The camera shows two hands illuminated only by the light from the screen. A man's hand covers a woman's hand.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

I don't want to leave without you.

Camera pulls back to show JOE's face (noticeably older) intent on the screen.

AMANDA (O.S.)

(Passionately.)

I don't want you to leave. But you can't stay if you think it's all a charade. I thought you wanted this? I thought this was your dream as well as mine?
(beat) You seemed happy.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

I...I...was happy. And I thought this was what I wanted. But now... Come with me.

AMANDA (O.S.)

No. No. I can't. I won't. This is where I belong. This is my home.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

(Long Pause.)

I'd better go then. I've got a car waiting.

AMANDA (O.S.)

Yes, I guess you'd better go.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Goodbye... My love.

Music swells off screen and the camera pulls back further to reveal JOE is with JENNY - now a young girl 12 years old. Lights come up a bit and people begin to stand up. Joe stares ahead.

EXT. MOVIE THEATRE - NIGHT

JOE and JENNY exit the theatre. It has been raining and there are puddles to cross.

JENNY

Did you really date Anne Carroll,
Grandpa.

JOE

Yes, I did. We were very good
friends.

JENNY

I don't know if I believe you.

JOE

I think Uncle Tom and Aunt Helen
met her once. Ask them.

JENNY

Wow! Just think. If you'd stayed
together, you could be married to
a real movie star. Is Anne
Carroll married?

JOE

Yes. I believe she is.

JENNY

Do you think she'd talk to you if
you called her?

JOE

I don't know. That was a long
time ago. We never stayed in
touch.

JENNY

Did you ever sleep with her?

JOE

That's not the kind of question
young ladies asks. And it's not
the kind of question a gentleman
answers.

JENNY

She's really good isn't she
grandpa.

JOE

Yes she is. She's very good.

JENNY

When I grow up, I think I'll be an
actor.

JOE

It's very hard to be an actor.

JENNY

I'm not afraid of hard work.

JOE

No. Good. It seems to me you
wanted to be a veterinarian last
week.

JENNY

I can change my mind.

JOE

Yes. At your age, you can change
your mind as many times as you
like.

JENNY

When you lived in L.A., where did
you work?

JOE

I painted houses.

JENNY

Really?

JOE

Really.

JENNY

How did you meet Anne Carroll,
painting houses? Did you paint
her house?

JOE

No. But I sailed with her for awhile? By the way, her real name is Amanda.

JENNY

I didn't know you could sail.

JOE

I'm not much of a sailor. But I sailed once with Amanda Jackson.

JENNY

Was she a good sailor?

JOE

She was quite a good sailor. I'm sure she still sails.

JENNY

I think I'll take sailing lessons next summer.

JOE

That sounds like a fine idea. Hey, how about some ice cream.

JENNY

Okay. But I think I'll get yogurt. Ice cream's too rich for me. Besides, if I'm going to be an actor, I need to watch my figure.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THEATRE - NIGHT

The camera pans up to reveal the marquee of the theatre which reads "Red Sky" starring Anne Carroll and Thomas Drew.

FADE OUT.