

RUBY'S MICHIGAN MILITIA

by

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EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The CAMERA moves over Lake Michigan viewing gray clouds and waves tumbling slower than real time. A killer wave crashes on a pier, then the CAMERA moves on shore as we pass the western beach of Lake Michigan. Stinging rain pelts the lens and mud-gray fills the horizon as we follow the Grand River to the depressing blue-gray of Spring Lake. The CAMERA passes dying cattails and brown snake-grass as it moves onshore. Then a charcoal strip of asphalt drags us along a country road to a small cemetery where broken, fallen leaves spin in a whirlwind.

EXT. UNKEPT CEMETERY - LATE SATURDAY AFTERNOON

On a drizzly afternoon a dozen mourners surround MILLIE'S open grave. PREACHER AARON drones on with a sermon nobody cares to hear.

PREACHER AARON
(reading notes not-so
subtly hidden in Bible)
Even though she never married or
produced children, Mildred Cardinal
VanDries was loved by multitudes.

The Preacher's voice fades into the background as the CAMERA pulls in on JEANNE, a conservatively dressed woman in her late forties, who seldom wears makeup and imprisons her hair in a ubiquitous bun.

JEANNE
(whispering to herself,
but glancing around at
the few in attendance)
Apparently that multitude . . .
(shaking with cold)
. . . could not brave the Michigan
weather.

In the background, the Preacher shifts into the obligatory recruitment drive.

PREACHER AARON (V.O.)
I know that right now Millie is
with our heavenly father.

Standing next to Jeanne, a tall, worn-out gentleman in his seventies leans toward her.

WALTER
I doubt if the preacher knows where

his own wife is right now, let
alone anyone who is dead.
(frowning eyebrows as if
examining a specimen)
Did you know her well?

JEANNE
His wife?

WALTER
(staring at coffin)
No, Millie.

JEANNE
I have not seen her in thirty
years, but I miss her dearly.

PREACHER AARON (V.O.)
If any of you have not taken Christ
as your personal savior . . .

WALTER
(wrinkling nose at
Preacher)
Why are Bible thumpers more
pernicious than telephone
solicitors?

JEANNE
(smiling)
He is just doing his job. Doing
what he thinks is right.

WALTER
(frowning, disgusted)
Funny how doing one's job seldom
equates to doing what is right. As
the former is usually the excuse
for not doing the latter.

JEANNE
Weren't you the Fruitport science
teacher? I remember-

WALTER
Long time ago . . .

They retreat to their separate worlds as the coffin is
lowered into the ground. Jeanne turns away to conceal a
single tear. She only speaks when she notices Walter staring
at her.

JEANNE
Did you know her well?

Before he can answer a young girl hands them both a rose and
they join the line of onlookers tossing roses on top of the

casket. Most seem in hurry.

WALTER

(dropping his rose like a
used handkerchief)
Didn't really know her at all. Only
thought I did. I have made my
living examining everything and
everyone through a microscope, but
how little I saw.

When Jeanne reaches the casket she lowers to her knees and slowly releases her rose - her hand remaining open as if reaching out for Millie.

PREACHER AARON

(stepping between them,
his sermon having already
faded into nothingness)
God knows everything about all of
us. Forgive as the Lord forgave
you.

Jeanne turns toward the Preacher with her mouth open, but she doesn't speak. Then she glances at RUBY, a big woman standing at the other end of the onlookers. Ruby glares at Walter, who turns away. Then she and Jeanne make eye contact like old friends. Jeanne smiles at her, only to see Ruby break away as if she had remembered some long forgotten grudge or petty jealousy.

As Ruby turns away, a camera flash captures the moment. The EXECUTOR, wearing a GQ suit, stuffs the camera under his coat and hurries away.

EXT. WALKWAY FROM UNKEPT CEMETERY - LATER

As the mourners trudge away in a line, with Jeanne beside Walter, the EXECUTOR calls to them.

EXECUTOR

(shouting to group)
Everyone is invited to join us in
the rectory for a brief memorial
brunch.

Jeanne stares as if she wants to decline, but can't find an acceptable excuse.

WALTER

Come along. I'm sure this won't
keep you long.
(furrows eyebrows)
Have you traveled far?

JEANNE

Not nearly far enough.
(glancing back at open
grave over her shoulder)
Nor soon enough.

After Jeanne passes the CAMERA, it zooms in on the grave, now abandoned.

TANIS, a man of Jeanne's age with several pronounced scars, approaches the hole and throws a glass rose on top of the coffin. The glass shatters.

Tanis staggers to the open hole, glances around to be sure nobody is watching, then relieves himself into the grave.

INT. FUNERAL RECTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Series of Shots of Jeanne trying to interact with the others - Walter, Preacher Aaron and Tanis, but mostly they ignore her and seem to be waiting for permission to leave. When Jeanne approaches Ruby, the big woman bolts for the door.

Finally, Jeanne walks up to Walter, who is staring at the party dip as though he's seen something unpleasant floating in it. He is clutching a book titled The Myth of The Big Bang as if it were his salvation.

JEANNE

(pointing at the book)
That is not hard core pornography
is it?

WALTER

(defensively)
No it's-
(realizing she intended
her comment as a joke)
Maybe it is simply a titillating
theory for craggy old men who have
long ago ceased banging.

JEANNE

(pointing at back wall)
Like them? Would you say?

Jeanne points at a collection of photographs on the long back wall of the rectory. The photos memorialize Millie's life, from early days as a blushing, if not cute high school nurse, to her wrinkled, weather formed face as she attends her garden after retirement.

Dozens of dower adults and crying children occupy the photos with her.

Walking slowly, Jeanne and Walter inspect the photographs.

WALTER

Maybe they're all experiencing jet lag, like yourself.

(realizing a possible faux pas)

Not that you look-

JEANNE

(smiling)

I surely have grown an extra set of crows feet for the occasion. Millie is probably the least worse for wear in our little group.

(realizing her possible faux pas)

Not that I am saying you-

WALTER

(laughing too loud)

Millie had a connoisseur's eye for unique friendships.

They stop at a picture of Millie surrounded by two gangbangers with tatoos and nose rings. One is Tanis when he was a teenager - bright green hair.

JEANNE

We are a rare and elite group.

The next photo is a campfire, with a younger Millie and two young girls. One is a SKINNY GIRL, the other a PUDGY GIRL. They have matching short haircuts, like two friends who wanted to be sisters - or two childhood lesbians in waiting. Jeanne touches the photo as if in recognition, then moves on.

When they reach the end of the pictures, the photograph taken of them at Millie's grave site has already been framed and hung. They both stare at it, but neither comments.

Then Jeanne steps back and examines the later photographs.

JEANNE

Had Millie been ill a long time?

WALTER

(at first shaking his head, then nodding tentatively)

Thirty some years, I suppose.

JEANNE

And me too busy helping the unhelpable to remember a friend.

WALTER

A cancer of the soul-

JEANNE
(concerned, leaning toward
photo)
Was she in chemotherapy?

WALTER
Her festering bore no treatment.
Something you should understand.

Jeanne stares at him like she wants to argue, then glances down at her watch.

Without another word she grabs her rain coat and heads for the exit, then stops and stares out the window at Millie's grave.

I/E. OUT WINDOW TOWARD GRAVESITE

An elderly grounds keeper shovels sand on top of Millie.

INT. FUNERAL RECTORY

As Jeanne stands transfixed, Walter approaches.

JEANNE
Do you think Millie can sense the
dirt hitting her?

WALTER
What?

JEANNE
Or feel mother earth engulfing,
smothering and suffocating her? Do
you think the outside world slowly
fades from her hearing, muffled
with each grunting shovel thrown?
(suddenly emotional)
You are the scientist, how many
tons of dirt does it take to bury a
friend?

WALTER
I don't think you can measure human
interactions that way.

JEANNE
Then how many days, weeks, years .
. . how many forgotten birthdays?
(shrugging it off)
And after all of that, if not for a
direct order from my boss and my
shrink, I probably would not have
come back to town?

(unhappy smile)
Millie surely had an eye for unique
friendships.

Walter is speechless.

Clutching her coat, Jeanne hurries out the door.

I/E. HOTEL SHUTTLE BUS TO AIRPORT - DUSK

The bus diesel engine IDLES like something has come loose, as Jeanne drags her huge leather rolling suitcase up the steps. She wrenches it down the aisle then up by a window, where she lays her raincoat across the suitcase and drops beside it.

The bus is empty, except for one other passenger, who she doesn't look at. She leans back, then cringes when he speaks to her.

WALTER

You know, that was about the only
thing those Dutch ever got right.

JEANNE

Excuse me?

WALTER

The suitcase. It's all wrong. Much
easier to carry -- easier on your
back -- if they designed luggage
like that little Dutch girl with
the water buckets on a pole across
her shoulders.

JEANNE

A pole?

WALTER

You've never seen-
(pantomimes holding water
buckets on pole across
his shoulders)
They distribute the weight against
both sides of the body.
(beat)
A simple design. An elegant
ergonomic answer. An engineering
solution which transcends this hum
drum existence of ours.

JEANNE

First the Big Bang and now
erotically balanced buckets. I envy
you scientist types for being so
passionate.

(nodding slowly)
Millie VanDries was Dutch, was she
not?

WALTER
(waves his hand
dismissively)
A lot of Willamienas around here.

Walter seems at a loss for words, his eyes focused off into
the distance.

As Jeanne settles into the seat, she notices that Walter is
flicking a small glass figurine of a shark against his hand.

JEANNE
Where did you get that?

WALTER
(stopping mid-flick and
staring at figurine)
It was a gift from-

JEANNE
A student admirer?
(touching glass fish
necklace she wears)
I have had this as long as I can
remember. My father gave it to me .
. . .
(pause)
Somehow . . .

WALTER
Reflections from the dark.

JEANNE
Excuse me?

WALTER
Nothing. Just the words from an old
song.
(beat)
Funny the mental clutter we
accumulate.

JEANNE
(eyes roll up to ceiling,
like deep in trance)
The song . . . like ashes from a
warm fire and reflections from the
cold dark.
(thinking again)
I can not seem to remember the rest
of it . . .

WALTER

Maybe there isn't anything more.

JEANNE
(with conviction)
Or quite possibly there is.

Walter shrugs.

Suddenly, the color drains from Walter's face. His skin seems to sag and he appears older. Then he settles back into the vinyl seat like a commuter-bear preparing for hibernation. He closes his eyes.

Jeanne continues to stare at him. When she finally turns toward the window, she sees the BUS DRIVER approaching.

WALTER
Oh sweet death deliver my beloved
Millie to a quiet place.

JEANNE
Are you suggesting she wanted to
die?

WALTER
It is no more illogical to welcome
death, than to fear it.

JEANNE
What are you not telling me?

Walter doesn't reply, having returned to the catatonic world of the hibernating commuter bear.

Jeanne considers their conversation, then she stands, grabs her raincoat and drags her suitcase toward the door.

Walter furrows his eyebrows as he watches her, but he doesn't say another word.

As Jeanne plops her suitcase onto the pavement, the BUS DRIVER steps in and pulls the door closed. The bus drives away, with Walter peering out the window at her.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Jeanne has that what-do-you-mean-you-don't-have-a-room look on her face as she waits at the hotel desk.

HOTEL CLERK
(typing and staring at old
fashioned, green CRT)
It's late fall, nearly spring. Come
summer you couldn't find standing
room in this lobby. Most people

manage to lift a six ounce
telephone receiver and let us know
they're coming.

JEANNE

I only checked out ten minutes ago.
Can you not simply give me back my
old room?

HOTEL CLERK

Your room? You think you owned that
room? How many calls you make in a
day? Would it hurt you to make one
more?

JEANNE

(standing her suitcase and
pulling the handle out as
tosses raincoat over
shoulder)
Should I have called from your
driveway?
(walking away)
Any other hotels, bed-and
breakfasts . . .

PREACHER AARON

(approaching)
Whoever wants to save his life will
lose it - just as you have. So you
might as well get back on your
plane.

JEANNE

Excuse me?

PREACHER AARON

The way of your heart is clear.
(shaking finger)
God can see through you.

JEANNE

(eyeing him)
And who appointed you as God's
personal spokesperson?

PREACHER AARON

(walks past her and
continues out door)
All our righteous acts are like
filthy rags.

Jeanne releases the suitcase, which drops onto the tiled
floor. Preacher Aaron disappears out the door. Watching,
Jeanne seems quite bewildered, as if to say - was that a
threat?

HOTEL CLERK
(scurrying around counter
to help with her luggage)
I've found it. Wait. Wait.

JEANNE
Found what?

HOTEL CLERK
Your reservation. It was misfiled
under another section.

JEANNE
What other section?

HOTEL CLERK
That woman they hired for the
morning shift, what a scatterbrain.
(grabbing luggage and
rolling to check-in desk)
If she'd stay off the phone for
five minutes, she could get
something right for a change.

JEANNE
But I did not make a reservation.

INT. SMALL COMMUTER AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Walter stares silently out the fogged-over window. Faces seem
to form outside on the glass, then vanish.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The Hotel Clerk swings the door open, then rolls Jeanne's
luggage in front of the closet. He snatches the dollar Jeanne
holds out for him.

HOTEL CLERK
If you need anything, just give us
a-

JEANNE
A six ounce call. Yes. I remember.

The Hotel Clerk closes the door as he steps out.

Then Jeanne settles in. She lays her purse-satchel on the bed
and hangs her raincoat in the closet. She unzips a
compartment of her rolling-suitcase and unloads conservative
clothes and business suits.

With machine like precision she empties the underwear and

stockings into the chest-of-drawers. Finally, she pulls a long, silk nightgown from a compartment, shakes out the wrinkles and lays it across the bed.

Crossing into the bathroom, she starts a steaming bath.

EXT. SMALL BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Walter approaches his home like a tired peddler, with a worn suitcase under one arm. He stops at the front door, glancing up at a capstone which the shadows transform into a hideous gargoyle. For a moment, the gargoyle resembles himself. Then it is just a capstone and he continues through the door.

INT. HALLWAY OF BUNGALOW - MOMENTS LATER

Clicking on a dim overhead light, Walter drops his suitcase by the door, hangs his keys on a rack, then scans the room as if he expects to confront a prowler. He sticks his head into an adjoining room, but does not turn on the light. He waits, but nothing happens.

Then he crosses to a closet and whips the door open. An umbrella falls out at him, causing him to jump.

After forcing the door closed, he scans the room again. When no prowlers nor demons present themselves Walter turns off the light.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dressed in her hedonistically flowing, transparent nightgown, Jeanne applies makeup, does her nails, and brushes out long flowing hair as though preparing for a liaison she's probably never experienced.

INT. OVERSTUFFED WORN LEATHER RECLINER - NIGHT

Lit only by the glow from a cigarette, Walter sits silently in his worn leather chair. The cigarette glows. The smoke swirls into darkness. Peace . . .

Until lightning CRACKS!

Walter jumps to his feet, then runs to a window.

WALTER
(to the night)
What do you want from me?

Another CRACK sends him stumbling to a key holder rack. He grabs his keys, snatches his still-packed suitcase and rushes out the door. As he trudges down the sidewalk to his car, he shakes his fist at the next bolt of lightning.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Now Jeanne's demeanor is more whimsical. She glissades across the room and swings open the French doors to her balcony. A cool breeze billows sheer curtains like flowing cotton candy.

Suddenly her mood changes to apprehension. Jeanne pans the room.

JEANNE

Who is there?

She peeks out into the darkness, her head ominously exposed to any axe murderer who might lop it off.

She pulls back into the room, turning and looking toward mounds of heavy curtains on either side of the French doors - could someone be hiding there? She steps back.

Then she glances at the space beneath the bed, as if to say - is it big enough to conceal a burglar? Finally she focuses on the bathroom - hadn't she left that light on?

JEANNE

(little girl's voice)

Come out, come out, whatever you are?

Jeanne turns a circle, looking from the bathroom to the dark space beside the dresser, to the closet, back to the balcony, the curtains, the bed, back to the bathroom. She repeats her circle, turning faster and faster and faster.

After several turns, she drops to the floor and pulls her knees in close to her body, rocking gently, as if she might cry.

JEANNE

(to an imaginary or real visitor)

Why can you not leave me alone?

She stands, then turns slowly. CAMERA pans the empty room. The curtains billow in a wave-like fashion, then settle down as the air stills. She is alone.

Hurrying to the table, Jeanne lights a tall white candle in a silver holder. Flanking the candle, two long stemmed glasses are filled with bubbling champagne. Between the champagne

glasses is the glass fish figurine that she wore earlier.

JEANNE

(lifting champagne and
toasting an imaginary
lover - or is he simply
hiding)

Do you think I get this way for any
nobody?

For a moment, we see a huge forearm of a Popeye like sailor
push back the curtains. The arm is covered with tatoos of
flames - simple tatoos a child might draw. A moment later
only the curtains remain - settling down. Is the sailor
lurking somewhere or was he an illusion?

Then curtains billow again, as though a ghost or the wind is
communicating. The cool breeze hits Jeanne's chest and she
massages the exposed skin with her free hand. However it
isn't her own hand she feels, but the caress of an imaginary
lover.

JEANNE

Finally you touch me.
(sipping champagne)
I was beginning to believe your
devotion was no more than hot air.
(spinning faster, rawer)
One more man of men. One more
passing nothing in the night.

Then her ruminations are interrupted by a CRACK outside the
window. She rushes onto the balcony, expecting to see another
hotel patron splattered below.

Instead, another CRACK of lightning illuminates the distance -
trees and sailboats moored at the dock and waves crashing . .
. and maybe a man on the end of the dock.

Startled, she drops the champagne glass, which shatters.

Jeanne leans over the railing, straining her eyes to see into
the darkness.

The lightning CRACKS again, backlighting a lunatic a hundred
feet from her balcony, staring up at her. Could it be the man
from the funeral -- Tanis?

Feeling exposed, Jeanne turns away. As she does, the
lightning CRACKS again, revealing a man-less dock.

She backs into her room and partially closes both French
doors. Then pulls the heavy curtains over them.

Glancing around the still empty room, she calls out as if she
shares the room with another.

JEANNE
(turning)
So where have you gone?

Turns toward the remaining champagne glass.

JEANNE
Maybe you were mere tropical
passion and tepid devotion.
(beat)
Exploding with affection when high
pressure surges from the south,
then petering to nothing when your
fury is spent.

The curtain billows around her, temporarily imprisoning her
in a cocoon. As she extricates herself she sees a DARK HAIRE
D WOMAN sitting at the table. The woman lifts the second glass
of champagne and sips.

JEANNE
Not you. Not again.

Once more the curtains billow around Jeanne. When she frees
herself, the Dark Haired Woman is gone. The champagne glass
is empty. Was she an illusion? Then where did the champagne
go?

Jeanne turns off the light.

JEANNE (O.S.)
My way lucent - on mere knowledge
of which phantasms to embrace and
which to subjugate. But alas, I
maunder in gloom.

Darkness. Only night sounds remain.

INT. RESTAURANT - SUNDAY MORNING

Walter sits alone at a small table, waiting for a waitress to
take his order. He sips on orange juice as he reads from his
book titled, The Myth of The Big Bang.

JEANNE (O.S.)
I thought you left on the last
airplane to civilization.

WALTER
(glancing up from his
book)
When you ran off, it set me to
thinking.

JEANNE

I did not run, but-
(beat)
Well, I hope you did not alter your
plans on my account.

WALTER
(motioning to chair)
Plans are not always ours for the
planning.

JEANNE
I would not want to intrude on your
solitude.

WALTER
Nonsense. My life is too close to
sensory deprivation for my taste.

JEANNE
(pointing at his book)
Fortunately, you have that sultry
book to read.

WALTER
(holding up book)
Scientists have a harder time
abandoning their myths than the
religious fanatics.
(beat)
Scientists use the Big Bang to re
create the very god superstitions
they abandoned with education.
(frowning eyebrows)
Why do we struggle so hard, then
throw it all away with the
celestial equivalent of a flat
earth?

JEANNE
(sitting)
Fear, I suspect.

WALTER
Fear of knowledge?

JEANNE
More likely, fear of the truth.
Fear of change - the pain of
learning something new.
(glancing up toward
heaven)
Fear of leaving one more rusty myth
behind. If you have not noticed,
people wrap themselves in myths
like portable wombs.

WALTER

They don't need their pathetic Big Bang god to know there is more - a universal universe, not created or destroyable by anything. And, in fact, does that not make it a quintessential god? So by abandoning dogma, they find divinity.

Before he can proceed, the perky waitress arrives, her liter plus bosoms threatening to burst forth in response to an adequate tip or stimulating bit of humor.

WAITRESS

Are we ready to order?

WALTER

We are, but my friend was settling in as you arrived.

WAITRESS

I can come back. If you need-

JEANNE

That is quite okay. Please fetch me some black coffee and toast.

WAITRESS

And you sir?

WALTER

Not much. Eggs sunny side up. Three pieces of toast. Hash browns grilled brown, but not burnt. Four pieces of Canadian bacon.

(glancing at table)

Oh, and a refill on my orange juice, but in a clean glass. And a glass of water.

JEANNE

Not much?

WAITRESS

(writing on pad)

I'll put that order right in.

As the waitress bounces off, Walter empties his orange juice and pads his mouth with his napkin.

WALTER

So it surprises you that science has fallen into disrepair? Angels like Galileo or Thomas Jefferson -- willing to face imprisonment for the truth or for human rights -- surface only every thousand years.

Between their appearances the world is filled with Mussolini, McCarthy and Bush. Education is replaced with religious dogma. Human rights with flag waving.

JEANNE

Are you implying contemporary diplomats to be deaf, dumb and blind.

WALTER

Quite the opposite. At least with politicians and diplomats, they have to fashion new lies to keep up with the times, or they are thrown out on their ear.

(beat)

Or strung up with the next revolution. It is the scientists and educators who are the true criminals.

JEANNE

You sound like a bit of an anarchist.

WALTER

No!

(thinking)

Maybe. Any scientist worth his salt has to be an anarchist of a sort. He has to challenge current wisdom. When he loses that, he might as well turn his telescope in for stained glass.

(deep breath)

But enough about science and politics. What do you do when you are not interred in intellectual black holes like this?

JEANNE

(shifting to introspective tone)

Unfortunately, I have always been interred in, as you say, intellectual black holes like this.

(sadness)

I was with - am with - the diplomatic corps.

(forcing a smile)

But it seems that somewhere along the way I lost touch. And they are considering throwing me out on my ear.

The Waitress returns and places water on the table, Jeanne and Walter wait until she moves on.

WALTER

(leaning over table)
I'm sorry.
(beat)
I didn't mean-

JEANNE

You were probably correct.
(forcing another smile)
I should take solace in the fact
that they did not string me up.
(not making eye contact)
Although, I believe a certain
preacher might have that intention.

WALTER

Seems like something one would be
sure about.

JEANNE

Words are the tools of my trade.
Unlike science, there is no one
dictionary with the correct
definition.
(beat)
Words evolve like men. They twist
and turn and blow with the wind.
(beat)
And, at any time, what a man says
exists on a dozen levels -
(staring into distance)
What he means, what he feels, what
he wants you to hear, what he would
really like to tell you, what he
believes he should say, and that is
before the listener puts her spin
on it.

WALTER

Why don't we just pass a law or
something?

JEANNE

To define something more fluid than
water? To define something no two
people agree on?

WALTER

(forcing a smile)
Than I guess we are stuck with
never knowing if a threat is a
threat, or a promise a promise.

JEANNE

Or the truth, the truth. Is that not what you scientists always strive for?

(standing and dropping tip on table)

I do not know about you, but I plan to spend my time here getting to know the truth about Millie.

WALTER

Better late than never?

JEANNE

An act of futility.

(glancing away)

Not better than anything. Useful to no one, especially Millie.

WALTER

Then why bother?

JEANNE

I have dedicated my life to futility. Why change now?

WALTER

Is that a common complaint among diplomats?

JEANNE

A very dedicated group-

WALTER

Are any of them your true friends?

JEANNE

Friends . . .

WALTER

You know, those people who have a place for you when you'd otherwise be staying in a hotel.

(frowning)

Someone who doesn't want anything but your company.

JEANNE

My profession requires a certain professional detachment.

(reconsidering)

Millie. She was my friend. Quite possibly the only one I've ever known. But I can't remember much about her.

WALTER

Then how do you know-

JEANNE

(remembering)

I recall snippets. I'd make excuses to see the school nurse. Then we'd drink milk and cookies.

WALTER

I've always wondered about Millie's relationships with the young girls at the school.

JEANNE

(in memory land, not listening to Walter)

I'd wander to her house and she'd pick a bowl of wild strawberries in the summer.

(frowning, recalling a confusing memory)

There was once . . . I snuck into the old shed behind her house and watched her for hours.

WALTER

(now he frowns)

What shed? Her house sat all alone in the middle of a field.

JEANNE

Funny-

(biting lip)

I remember a shed. But you know, since I've been back, I realize that many of my memories are suspect.

(glancing around)

All I know for sure is that this was a quaint little town and a peaceful time of my life. I've often dreamed of settling down here.

WALTER

Well . . .

(pausing as if he's not sure what he should say)

Well, take a look around. Maybe you'll find a dream house. Or maybe you'll find the truth.

JEANNE

What truth is that?

WALTER

Whichever one you will allow yourself see.

(focusing on Jeanne's
glass fish necklace)
The truth is usually apparent to
others, but transparent to
ourselves.

JEANNE

I have to go.
(glancing at watch)
I always try to make it to church
while I'm on the road.

WALTER

(shaking head)
I thought you smarter than to
succumb to the myths of religion.

JEANNE

Religion is based on faith,
something that you wouldn't-

WALTER

I believe the correct term is
'blind faith'.
(beat)
Required to overcome the inherent
incongruity of all current
religions.

JEANNE

You don't know what you are talking
about-

WALTER

Take Judaism - it forces us to
accept that God was once a racist
who loved only Jews.
(grinning)
Or the tower of Babel pissed God
off by rising a half dozen stories.
Never mind that we now build
hundred story buildings or fly jets
through the sky with impunity or
blast rockets straight through
primitive man's heaven.

JEANNE

Maybe God doesn't want man to know-

WALTER

There is no journey to God which
doesn't travel the road of truth.
More than anything, God must be
truth.

JEANNE

You can't talk like that-

WALTER

I'm not criticizing God, I'm criticizing the little demigods created by man.

(laughing)

We're in an infinite universe with billions of stars and planets. Did God send his son to every one? Did he have other sons, maybe daughters, second cousins, high school friends that he sent to save the other planets?

(now crazed like a zealot)

That 'save the Earth' thing made sense to ignorant people who pictured the Earth as the center of the universe.

JEANNE

(to God or the gallery)

I'll agree that everyone has a destiny to explore their own spirituality.

We have a duty to search for something bigger - less safe than the world we were born in.

Scientists are not immune, just smug.

Walter shrugs, then focuses on eating his food and ignoring Jeanne.

I/E. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Still shaking her head about her exchange with Walter, Jeanne piles into a rental car.

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS OF SMALL TOWN - DAY

Jeanne sees a run down neighborhood - four-by-fours with their hoods up, hillbillies drinking beer on their porches and tattooed teenagers clumping in groups and blocking traffic.

Several times she spots a PUDGY GIRL and a SKINNY GIRL skittering about town in a blue '62 Chevrolet.

EXT. GAS STATION

When she stops at a gas station to fill up her rental, she speaks with a ROUGH WOMAN with teeth missing.

JEANNE

(replacing nozzle on pump,
hesitating, then speaking
to woman)

When did the area get like this?

ROUGH WOMAN

(looking around)

Hell, ain't changed in forty year.

Jeanne pauses, nods, then hurries inside to pay. As she steps through the door the Pudgy Girl and the Skinny Girl pass her coming out.

The Pudgy Girl glares at Jeanne in passing, then picks up a can of gas, drops it into the back of the blue '62 Chevy and rushes off.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY

Jeanne's rental car pulls into the parking lot of a church.

I/E. RENTAL CAR

She pauses and watches the dressed-up people wandering in. Then she grabs her purse and heads in herself.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT

As Jeanne walks the CAMERA follows her like a stalker.

Then it pulls in on Walter sitting behind the wheel of an old brown station wagon and watching from the back of the parking lot.

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM

Jeanne stands in the middle of the congregation as they sing from a hymnal. The faces around her rage in silent anger.

INT. CHURCH PULPIT

Preacher Aaron castigates the audience.

PREACHER AARON

We see the work of Satan every day
in the news.

(pause to eyeball

audience)
We see Satan in our Arab brothers
who follow a false god - a god of
war.

INT. CHURCH AUDITORIUM

The congregation stares transfixed, except Jeanne who seems startled, like a cockroach under a midnight kitchen light.

PREACHER AARON
We see Satan when the Iraqi people
resist the holy army of America.
For our struggle is not against
flesh and blood, but against this
dark world.

CLOSEUP ON JEANNE

We hear a voice that only she hears.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
(sarcastically)
Where do those A-rabs get off,
thinking they should run their own
lives?

Jeanne glances around frantically, worried that the voice will somehow implicate her with its disparaging remarks.

INT. CHURCH PULPIT

PREACHER AARON
We have been left with no choice
but to put on the armor of God.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
Better known as the oil vendetta or
would it be a crusade?

Again, only Jeanne seems to hear the voice.

PREACHER AARON
Contrary to reports in the world
press, this is not an invasion for
gain, but a mission of love.

Jeanne quits looking around and buries her face in her Bible.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
Haliburton's love for oil money.

PREACHER AARON
It is a call by God.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
Which god? Surely not me.

I/E. MIDDLE EAST - SERIES OF PICTURES - DAY

Flashing through her brain - or is it on a screen behind the preacher - Jeanne sees a series of scenes from Iraq or Iran or somewhere on the world stage - a stealth bomb vaporizing a family as they eat a meal together, a man pulling himself along in a ditch by his hands as his legs end in stumps and an American prison guard relieves himself on three prisoners, who have been stripped naked and bound together. In the background the song Onward Christian Soldiers plays.

FATHERLY VOICE (V.O.)
(directly to Jeanne)
Such scenes of brotherly love -
quite literally, I should say.

Then Jeanne sees a vision of the Dark Haired Woman from her room. The woman pours gasoline on a sleeping Arab man, then ignites him using a long wooden match. Jeanne recoils from the shocking scene, stands, then runs outside.

FATHERLY VOICE (V.O.)
Something to warm your cockles.

INT. CHURCH PULPIT

Preacher Aaron stares at her as she leaves.

EXT. LAKESIDE PARK ALONG SPRING LAKE CATTAILS - MOMENTS LATER

Jeanne paces back and forth frantically, smoking a cigarette like it is a joint.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
There, there my child. Tell me what troubles you so.

JEANNE
Leave me alone.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
Is that any way to speak with God?

JEANNE

Buzz off.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
But I am the voice of light-
(adding quickly)
-and truth. Did I mention truth?
(beat)
Would it come across better if I
impersonated George Burns?

Jeanne turns away, suppressing a tear.

FATHERLY VOICE (O.S.)
Why are you so concerned?

JEANNE
Don't you understand?

FATHERLY VOICE
I understand everything, it's just
the details that elude me.
(sighs)
I touch of senility can set in
after a trillion years or so.
(beat)
Could it be that those people
remind you of yourself?

Jeanne shakes her head in horrific denial.

As the CAMERA pulls back, a brown station wagon sets with the
driver watching Jeanne - who is completely alone.

I/E. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Jeanne is driving back to her hotel. She cradles her cell
phone under her chin while negotiating a turn.

JEANNE
Hello Doctor Schultz? Sorry to
bother you at home-
(listening)
Well, honestly, I don't see why we
have to meet here. I can come back
to the city.
(listening)
What is wrong with your office?
(listening, shaking head)
Fine.
(shaking head)
Fine
(beat)
If that is what you want. I will
see you here on Friday.

Tosses phone onto seat and pulls car into hotel parking lot.

JEANNE
(to God or at least the
sky)
I need to get out of here!

I/E. OUTSIDE RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Jeanne stares up at the 1960's style, Spartan architecture of an ancient Holiday Inn.

JEANNE
Home sweet home for a while longer.

I/E. OVER THE STEERING WHEEL OF A BROWN STATION WAGON

The CAMERA watches Jeanne walk to her room.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MONDAY MORNING

Jeanne wakes with a start, staring up at a dirty, cracked ceiling. The sound of a bulldozer about to crash into her room sends her running to the window. The bulldozer turns out to be a cigar boat revving its engines at the dock.

She pulls the curtains shut, then drags herself into the bathroom, grabbing her cell phone along the way.

INT. SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Jeanne is talking on the cell phone as she steps into the shower. She holds the phone at arm's length, trying to keep the water out.

JEANNE
Hello boss. I know I was supposed
to be back mid week-
(listening)
It can't be-
(listening)
That contentious shrink is meeting
me here.
(listening)
Whatever it takes to get her off my
back.
(listening)
It gives me five days to get to
know a town I never had time for. I

think the department can live
without me for five days.

(listening)

Well what are you going to do if
Doctor Schultz strong-arms me out
onto the street?

She shakes the phone.

JEANNE

Hello?

Jeanne shakes the phone again, then brings it to her ear.

JEANNE

(shaking phone, then
listening and frowning)

Shit!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Jeanne is dressed, with her car keys in hand, when someone
knocks at the door. She swings the door open and a COURIER
from the diplomatic corps hands her a leather pouch.

COURIER

(shaking package
inquisitively as he hands
it to her)

Per your request, this first
package was transferred from
storage locker 3-35A.

(then holding out
clipboard)

She signs without comment, but can't help staring when she
reads the message on his T-shirt - Couriers like it in
leather. Then he holds out a second pouch. Jeanne glances
away from the T-shirt and grabs the second pouch, which is
much heftier.

COURIER

And this is labeled as research.
(holding out clipboard)

Research?

(glancing about)

What are you negotiating a treaty
with blueberry farmers?

(smiling conspiratorially)

Think they might be a terrorist
sleeper cell? Maybe a berry bad
group?

JEANNE

(signing)

Are you not supposed to complete
your duties without comment?

The Courier shrugs and walks away.

Jeanne pushes the door closed and spreads the contents of the pouch across the freshly made bed. It consists of a single thin book, setting face down. She flips the book over, revealing a tattered high school year book.

She sits on the bed and begins leafing through. After several seconds, the CAMERA pulls in on her face, then cuts to the page she is staring at.

INT. INSERT OF YEARBOOK PAGE

On the page where Jeanne's name is shown, only the words 'No Photo' appear.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Jeanne frowns as if her photo has been stolen. Then she continues leafing through the pages. After a few seconds, a more puzzled look appears on her face. The CAMERA moves in on another page.

INT. INSERT OF YEARBOOK PAGE

A picture of two young girls with their heads together, sticking their tongues out. Underneath the photo is the caption, 'Blurry eyed students attend an all night research project.'

The CAMERA focuses on the date on front of yearbook - 1972.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

The CAMERA pulls in on Jeanne's shocked face.

JEANNE

Is that us -

(thinking)

Is that me?

(shaking head)

I never remember being so . . .

FADE TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Establishing shot of entry way to high school. Jeanne pulls one of the doors open and walks inside. She wanders the tiny hallways like spelunking a cave. The feeling is dark and sinister.

As she explores the deserted hallways, her echoing footsteps are joined by a second heavier set. When she stops to listen for the other footfalls, the hallway is quiet. She turns, but nobody is there.

When she begins walking again the pursuing footfalls are more noticeable. Jeanne quickens her pace and her stalker does likewise.

Finally, she arrives at the office, glances around and steps inside.

INT. DREARY WINDOWLESS OFFICE

The room is empty and it takes several minutes for an old HAGGARDLY CLERK to arrive.

HAGGARDLY CLERK

The office is closed today.

JEANNE

(pulling on a smile like a set of work clothes)

I am sorry, but I just need a little information.

HAGGARDLY CLERK

Do I look like the internet? I don't get paid for questions.

JEANNE

(forcing the smile to remain)

Are you implying you need money?

HAGGARDLY CLERK

(indignant)

Are you attempting to bribe me?

JEANNE

(the smile really wants to leave)

You are asking me if I want to bribe you for an answer that anyone with reasonable politeness and manners would answer without a second thought.

HAGGARDLY CLERK

Between manners and backbone - I'll
choose backbone.

JEANNE

(placing open yearbook on
counter and pointing to
picture of two girls and
nurse)

Do you know these two girls?

HAGGARDLY CLERK

(sneering)

Like eighty year old yellow pages,
my memory has faded.

JEANNE

I swear I've seen them about town.
Or maybe their daughters . . . but
that can't be-

(forcing the smile to
return)

Might you have a clue to their
whereabouts?

HAGGARDLY CLERK

(turning and walking away)

Troublemakers from the word go.

JEANNE

But where might I find them?

HAGGARDLY CLERK (O.S.)

The one's name is Ruby - a gossip
monger at the Centennial.

(shrugs at picture)

She's filled and emptied a few
grocery bags since this photo. And
I don't recall the other girl's
name.

The Haggardly Clerk disappears to other chores.

JEANNE

(asks to an empty room)

What is the Centennial?

Jeanne glances over at a small square table beside some
waiting chairs. Along with old magazines several copies of
the local newspaper glance back at her -- the Centennial.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF OFFICE

The CAMERA watches from the vantage point of a pursuer. It

pulls back when Jeanne emerges from the office.

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS OF JEANNE WALKING - DAY

A series of shots from the perspective of an onlooker shows Jeanne leaving the school, then walking through town. Several times she glances around, but sees nobody in particular. She stops at a small brick building with a sign which says, 'The Centennial'. The building is dreary and dirty, imparting an aura of a mausoleum.

She continues inside. After she disappears a fender of a brown station wagon passes the newspaper.

INT. THE CENTENNIAL

A dozen desks are covered with stacks of papers. Only one reporter occupies a desk, the big woman from the funeral, who seems engrossed in typing an article.

RUBY
(speaking, but not looking
up)
We don't accept solicitation.

JEANNE
I am looking for a - Ruby?

RUBY
(still typing)
Seems they found a whole shit-load
in Vietnam. Check the Tai-Gem
website.

JEANNE
(puzzled)
No I meant-

RUBY
(pulls paper from
typewriter)
We don't give away information.
We're a newspaper.
That'd be like a whore giving away
her goodies. Now that wouldn't make
sense, would it?

Ruby drops the article into her worn-out briefcase, then lights a cigarette. As she puffs, she eyes Jeanne like a hungry used car salesman.

RUBY
Well? This isn't a flop house

honey.

JEANNE

I am looking for Ruby.

RUBY

And I'm lookin' to make a lot more long green than I do.

JEANNE

In my profession it would be inappropriate to say that you like a 'Ruby', but . . .

(holding open yearbook)

Do you recognize these two girls?

RUBY

(wrinkling face at picture)

You can't suddenly be interested in thirty year old memories.

Before Jeanne can answer Ruby stands and tucks her briefcase under her arm.

JEANNE

Where are you going?

RUBY

(walking toward the door)

Look babe, I'm the one with the reporter's credentials.

JEANNE

Weren't you at Millie's funeral?

Ruby walks out and shuts the door.

JEANNE

Do you know me? Because you look very-

Ruby is gone. Jeanne stands with a puzzled look on her face. When Jeanne pulls back a blind to watch Ruby leave she sees a dark figure staring at the building from behind the windshield of an obscured automobile. The auto seems to back away and disappear into a shadow.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Series of shots of Jeanne in her business suit trying to catch up to Ruby, without running, which would be undignified. She repeatedly glances over her shoulder for any followers, but doesn't see any.

Finally, Ruby charges up the stairs of an old house and slams the door behind her.

As Jeanne approaches the steps, she slows. On one side is a burnt cross. On the other side several signs are strewn across the yard, as though they were posted months ago and are slowly rejoining the earth. On the signs such anecdotes as FRUITPORT - LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT, BUSH IS MY GOD, I SHALL NOT WANT, and GOD IS PRO LIFE (where someone has scribbled 'kill the bitch' across the word 'Life') witness the numerous unpopular causes that Ruby has championed.

EXT. PORCH - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Jeanne approaches the door, but appears reluctant to knock. Eventually, she knocks tentatively. Waits, then knocks more forcefully.

RUBY

(pulling door open)

Tea's on. What the hell kept you?

Ruby has changed clothes and has donned a fireman's hat and a worn sweatshirt with the logo, 'Fruitport Fire Department - Special Ops.' Jeanne doesn't ask, but furrows her eyebrows quizzically.

Jeanne steps into the dark cave-like house. As she does the brown station wagon slows to a stop behind her, then speeds away.

INT. RUBY'S LIVING ROOM

Jeanne and Ruby traipse past Ruby's three, fat, out-of-control kids, ignoring the daughter who is torturing the smallest child. The middle child, a son about eight years old, lurches along in polio-like braces to join in the fun.

INT. DEN - DARK LIKE A CAVE

Ruby pulls Jeanne into her den, then closes and locks the door behind her. CLOSE UP of pictures on wall - buildings on fire. Jeanne stares at the pictures while Ruby blathers on obliviously.

RUBY

I love motherhood. Like being God without all the hassle of parting seas and dishing out plagues. Did you ever have any rug rats?

JEANNE

(still staring at roaring
fires)

No, I have been busy . . .
overpopulation . . . responsibility
to the ecosystem . . . you know.

Ruby ignores her comments, retrieving the article (she was
typing earlier) from her briefcase. She hands it to Jeanne,
but snatches it back before she can read it.

RUBY

I call this masterpiece the 'Fiery
Sermons of Preacher Aaron.'

(pauses, then adds
enthusiastically)

Volume Two!

JEANNE

(finally looking away from
the pictures)

The local pastor from Millie's
funeral? He seems so familiar-

RUBY

Are you a closed head injury or
play too much soccer as a kid? I'm
not talkin' about the Pope.

JEANNE

(pointing to paper)

May I look at-

Before Jeanne can finish her sentence, Ruby tosses off the
fireman's hat and pulls on a jacket. Then she scoots out the
door. On the way, she grabs a purse-satchel. Jeanne pauses,
then hurries to catch up. As before, she maintains her
unhurried dignity as she follows.

EXT. SIDEWALK -DAY

Jeanne's feet move like a mechanical centipede on LSD, but
the rest of her struggles to appear calm and collected. She
closes to within ten feet of Ruby, but is unable to catch
her.

In the background several cars pass them, including a blue
'62 Chevrolet and a dull brown station wagon.

Meanwhile, Ruby pulls out her article and begins to read.

RUBY

How's this for an opening?

(reading)

The Fiery Sermons of Preacher

Aaron.

(pause)

Once again the neurotic Preacher
Aaron is abusing and misusing the
power of his pulpit to support an
armed war monger shamefully
murdering--

JEANNE

You can not accuse the Preacher of
being a war monger.

RUBY

No. The President is the monger.
The Preacher is just his neurotic
lackey.

JEANNE

You can not say that. It is . . .

RUBY

Too controversial? Honey, our
founding fathers guaranteed our
right to say controversial things.
If we don't exercise that right
soon, the burning-Bush's of the
world will trade all our freedoms
for oil futures.

(glancing over her
shoulder)

You should have read my first book-

JEANNE

I did.

RUBY

(stops mid-stride)

What?

JEANNE

(stopping before she plows
into Ruby)

I read the Fiery Sermons of
Preacher Aaron - Volume One. The
writing was actually quite good.
And your insights seemed . . .

(trying to find right
word)

. . . insightful.

RUBY

Not inspired?

JEANNE

I want to ask you about one of the
young girls in the book. The skinny
one.

RUBY

Beth?

(frowning, then resuming
walking)

Most people want to know about Loki
as she buries her pain beneath
cookies and potato chips and leads
the girls on a journey of self
destruction. Loki is interesting.

JEANNE

Loki was a wonderfully complex
character, but I would really like
to know about frail Beth?

RUBY

Complex? You mean sick. People
always mean mentally ill when they
say complex. The Pres. is complex.
(a smile forming)

Don't you like fat people? Be
careful, you may have been one in a
former life.

(smile fading)

Do you see yourself as the naive
Beth? Is that what you are worried
about?

JEANNE

I understand that some of the
events reflect artistic license,
but frankly? I don't remember much
from that period of my life. Yet, I
feel that I've met Beth before-

RUBY

(eyeing Jeanne up and
down)

Beth's not you.

JEANNE

Are you sure? The skinny little
girl who follows her more
adventurous friend further and
further into trouble. So many of
her exploits seem so familiar. Like-

RUBY

Like you were there?

JEANNE

Eerily.

Ruby continues walking without further response.

EXT. OUTSIDE DOORWAY OF CHURCH - DAY

As they approach the church, Ruby increases her pace, leaving Jeanne trailing. Ruby stomps up the steps, then pulls out the article and a staple gun from her purse.

JEANNE

What are you doing?

RUBY

(pulling trigger of staple
gun)

What's it look like? I'm exercising
my right to free speech.

JEANNE

But that is private property?

RUBY

How can it be? God owns it.

JEANNE

Do you want to spend all eternity
burning in hell?

RUBY

We know that when we die we leave
our bodies behind us. Without them,
neither fire nor ice would have any
effect.

(peering off)

And the glow and movement of fire
would be soothing. Or have you
forgotten?

JEANNE

Me? What do you mean?

RUBY

(squinting and reading her
article)

'As is his custom, Preacher Aaron
once again misused the power of his
pulpit this Sunday to pander war
and destruction.'

JEANNE

You can not say that. You were not
even there.

RUBY

'One must wonder what evil force
infests his heart that he would
send the sons and daughters in his
congregation to die for greedy oil
companies.'

JEANNE
(backing away)
I do not want to be seen with you.
You are a heretic.

As Jeanne back peddles, then turns and hurries away. Ruby glares at her.

RUBY
Run? Where will you run? Where can
you run?
(deep breath, then
whispering)
You are a child of the light.
You'll never find peace in
darkness.

I/E. - SERIES OF SHOTS OF JEANNE - EVENING

Jeanne climbs into her rental car and drives away. We see her face, then the road, then flashes of a stormy sky. A downpour obscures everything and she slows the car.

Suddenly, the grill of a blue '62 Chevy looms in her rearview mirror. The downpour lessens. The Chevy's horn BLASTS, then the car careens around her rental car.

When it is nearly past the blue Chevy cuts back, causing Jeanne to swerve off the road. As the car swerves, the Pudgy Girl hangs out the passenger's window and flips Jeanne off.

Jeanne jams on the brake peddle and the rental slides sideward, then down a gully to a stop. She sits for a few moments, trying to regain her composure, then:

JEANNE
Damn it.

Up ahead the Chevy is nearly out of sight, only the brake lights glow like a bomb in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. - COUNTRY BAR - NIGHT

Jeanne sits at the bar, staring at herself in a distorted, dirty mirror.

An old, TOOTHLESS MAN chats with a TOOTHLESS WOMAN several stools down. A young man and his loveling chalk up their cues at the pool table. Several other patrons inhabit scattered tables, deep in their own intrigues.

As Jeanne eyes her scotch-and-water, a WEATHERED COWBOY sits beside her.

WEATHERED COWBOY

Ma'am.

JEANNE

Am I looking that old?

WEATHERED COWBOY

Na Ma'am. But my ex-wife once packed two boxes of Winchesters, a case a beer and an two hundred pounds a dynamite on our ole mule. Critter got that same look you-all got.

JEANNE

(rolls eyes, then mocks his country demeanor)
If-in you-all could-a mentioned your pickup truck and NASCAR, you would just created the immaculate country-western ballad.

The Weathered Cowboy tips his beer in a toast to her compliment.

WEATHERED COWBOY

Only one reason a woman lookin' like you-all moseys into a watering hole like this-

(pause)

She's lookin' to forget somethin' bad. Usually a dude.

JEANNE

(rolling eyes toward Cowboy)

I can think of one I would love to wipe from memory.

(muttering)

Why do people try to fit everyone else into the same box they inhabit? Not everything for anyone with half a brain has to do with mating.

Cowboy stares at her as if he might explode.

WEATHERED COWBOY

(shrugs, calming)

Then it's somethin' ya done.

(squinting)

Somethin' that weren't all legal.

JEANNE

(shocked)

What do you mean?

WEATHERED COWBOY

So ya got a posse tailin' ya?

JEANNE

(talking to Cowboy as if
he isn't there)

Only one department psychological
investigator - to evaluate my
fitness for duty.

(turning and eyeballing
Cowboy)

To determine if I am sane enough to
continue exploiting the nescient
masses - like yourself.

WEATHERED COWBOY

(nods appreciatively, not
realizing or accepting
the insult)

So what's this hired gun gonna do,
lynch ya if'n he's a mind to?

JEANNE

He's a she - Gweneth Schultz. Not
Gwen, or Miss Schultz or even Ms.
And she's got my life in her frigid
hands.

(shaking head)

If I do not see what she thinks I
should see in a silly ink smear-

(pause)

If I do not answer trite and
meaningless questions as she has
been told I should answer them-

(boiling over)

Or she does not like my looks or my
choice of words or she had a fight
with her butch girlfriend or biker
boyfriend the night before-

(deep breath)

Then, on her whim, the life I know
is over.

WEATHERED COWBOY

Sorta like those no-science masses
isn't it?

JEANNE

(muttering)

Nothing like-

WEATHERED COWBOY

Sounds like one of those co-nun

drums ya hear so much about.

JEANNE

You mean that I might have to lie to keep my job?

WEATHERED COWBOY

Naw. It's a co-num-drum that you work as a conniving so-and-so for a living, but yer in a pickle about tellin' this shrink a few half truths to keep your job.

JEANNE

What do you know?

WEATHERED COWBOY

(shrugs)

Ya all seem like a book-smart woman. If'n keepin' that job is so important, the trail is pretty well marked?

JEANNE

Of course I could do that. That is what I do for a living. I spin doctor catastrophes. I polish blatant prevarications.

(shaking head)

I help the richest government on the planet exploit good, hard working people. I'm with the State Department.

(taking another deep breath)

But I do not do it in my personal life.

WEATHERED COWBOY

Dang. Then how ya ever get ta know anybody?

(shocked)

Hell, how ya ever get laid?

Jeanne's contempt at the question fades away. The intense sadness that follows says she never does.

The CAMERA pulls back through the bar room window and onto the street, where a dark figure sitting in a brown station wagon waits.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - TUESDAY MORNING

Jeanne sits by herself, picking at a scrambled egg as she reads from Ruby's book called The Fiery Sermons of Preacher Aaron. The same voluptuous Waitress approaches flaunting cleavage willing to jiggle for any additional tip.

WAITRESS

(refilling coffee cup)
Where's your husband this morning?

JEANNE

(looking up)
Husband?
(frowning as she thinks)
You mean Walter? Goodness no. He is not my husband. Just someone who had an influence on my life when I was young.
(thinking)
And seems to be hiding a great deal now-

WAITRESS

Oh! Just thought I saw him pass through-
(winking)
Well good for you.

Jeanne shakes her head, then returns to reading, pointing to passage in book.

JEANNE

Do you know where this tall brick building with no windows is? It seems so familiar?

WAITRESS

(frowning, then reaching down and flipping to the cover of the book)
I don't read that type of trash. I'm a good girl.

JEANNE

(flipping back to where she was reading)
But might you know where-

CUT TO:

I/E. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Series of shots of Jeanne driving around town searching for something.

She drives through an old subdivision, eyeing houses with

familiarity. She stares at a bungalow with a rusted and collapsed swing-set in the back. The CAMERA pulls in past the swing-set and focuses on an overgrown path behind it.

Driving on, she parks the car beside a stand of pine trees.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Hesitantly, she picks her way down the overgrown path. The path eventually empties into the parking lot of a new strip mall.

After a few moments of watching the activity in the strip mall, she turns back toward her car. However, when she does Tanis steps in front of her, blocking the path. On his head a homemade headdress is covered with feathers and bones, not to mention one broken glass duck. He seems both scary and comical.

TANIS

(stepping directly in front of her)
It's not like it used to be. Nobody uses the old paths much anymore.
(frowning)
I know you good-
(taps his head with his fist)
Noodle's scrambled so don't recollect why.

JEANNE

(stopping)
You know there are laws against preventing someone from passing.

TANIS

This law is on my side. You are the trust-passer.
(smiling)
Surprised to see that ole farm gone?

JEANNE

Farm?
(thinking)
Yes. A pretty yellow farm house. Silos. And maybe a barn.

TANIS

(looking away, teary eyed)
They tore it all down. 'Cept the shed collapsed in spring of '89 and that ole barn burned in 'bout '72. Wasn't it?

With Tanis momentarily distracted, Jeanne attempts to step around him. He recovers and blocks her path once more by holding out homemade medicine wands above and to each side of her.

TANIS

You know my aunt and uncle died
couple years back?

JEANNE

Who?

TANIS

Edward and Clarice Smeltzer owned
all this land, nearly seven acres.

JEANNE

The name . . .
(pondering)
Sounds so familiar, but I do not
remember-

TANIS

(stepping past her and
staring at strip mall)
Where do all the people come from?
They keep comin' and comin'.
(angry)
Like rats.

Jeanne is at no loss for words.

JEANNE

It is that they sometimes behave
like rats that seems more the
problem.

Close-up on Tanis's empty smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. PORCH OF RUBY'S HOUSE - DAY

Brisk KNOCK is followed by Ruby swinging the door open. This time, Ruby is dressed like a Salem witch, except her outfit is a combination of spandex and leather. Without waiting for an explanation or to be invited in, Jeanne shoots toward the study.

JEANNE

Do you have anything stronger than
tea?

Ruby pauses for a moment, then follows. After carefully

closing the door behind them, Ruby pulls a bottle of Jack Daniels from the desk drawer.

She deftly pours two triples and hands one to Jeanne.

RUBY

You see a ghost?

JEANNE

Possibly a ghoul.

(sipping drink)

Tell me about the old Smeltzer farm?

RUBY

(chugging drink then shrugs)

Used to be a lot of farms around here.

JEANNE

(retrieving a copy of Ruby's book from briefcase)

You also mentioned in your poems-
(opening to book marked section)

You talked about a windowless, brick wall that disappeared at infinity.

(pointing)

Remember the young girls take refuge in the building with the windowless, brick wall?

RUBY

(glancing away from book)

I just threw that in.

JEANNE

No. I have been there too.

RUBY

You're crazy as a loon, honey. No wonder they threw you out of the State Department.

JEANNE

(mouth open)

Who? They didn't-

(taking a deep breath)

Not yet.

RUBY

(turning away)

I don't know anything. I'm sorry. That just slipped out. Rumors. You

know?

JEANNE
(embarrassed, closing book
and grabbing briefcase)
I have wasted enough of your time.

RUBY
Wait, honey. Don't go. I've got a
big fat mouth. Everybody knows it.

Jeanne rushes toward the door, but stops when Ruby calls to her.

RUBY
You're not alone, honey. We all go
bonkers sometime. Earlier this year
I tossed two pounds of chocolates
through my boss's window.
(shrugs)
Still don't know what possessed me
to disrespect expensive cocoa.

Jeanne pulls open the door, then hesitates.

JEANNE
What did the boss say or do to
provoke such ire?

Ruby paces and considers the question for a few moments. Then she throws up her hands.

RUBY
For the life of me I don't have a
clue. Why?

JEANNE
An irrational outburst of violence-
(turning)
Never mind. You want to grab a
drink?
(glancing at unfinished
drink in Ruby's hand)
I mean out somewhere.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Jeanne and Ruby are sprawled across a bar table nursing drinks.

RUBY
. . . Mike's a preacher who beats
his wife. He married that Kelly
whats-her-name-

JEANNE

What about his brother Randy or
Ricky or Raunchy?

RUBY

(waggles eyebrows)
The hot one?

JEANNE

That is him.

RUBY

Weights 400 pounds. Even his double
chin has a double chin.

A half-dozen high school age couples converge on the bar and
order take-out alcohol.

RUBY

(to a Young Woman)
Where's the party?

YOUNG WOMAN

Don't really know. Somewhere under
some power lines.

Ruby and Jeanne stare at each other, then say in rapid
succession:

RUBY

Thompson's Pond.

JEANNE

The Pond?

EXT. HILL OVERLOOKING STAGNANT POND - NIGHT

A huge bonfire crackles and roars as dozens of teenagers
cluster in groups or make-out in sleeping bags. Jeanne and
Ruby wander around the onlookers. Then they turn and stare at
the fire.

JEANNE

This is the first thing that feels
. . .

RUBY

(staring at bubbling,
festering swamp)
Like home?

JEANNE

I did not mean that.

RUBY

Are you sure?
(stepping closer)
Feel the heat soak into your bones.
See the sparks wander toward
heaven.
(stepping closer, nearly
into fire)
Inviting - loving - pure energy.

JEANNE
(joining her)
A dancing cocoon of heat.

RUBY
A temple. A tribute to what can be
taken or given.

JEANNE
Or betrayed in an instant.

RUBY
Something that never lies.

JEANNE
And consumes with truth.

CUT TO:

EXT. BESIDE GLOWING EMBERS OF DYING FIRE - LATER

Surrounding the previously raging fire, the onlookers are as
neutered as the ashes. Young couples lay intertwined and
mostly naked. Drunks are passed out like discarded paper
cups.

Jeanne pokes at the embers with a stick while Ruby watches
the stars.

RUBY
My first time . . .
(pausing)
Was in my parents - newly divorced
mother's basement.

JEANNE
Were you alone?

RUBY
(pulling out a faded
Polaroid)
I took a picture.

JEANNE
And you still have it?
(carefully taking picture)

Well . . .
(turning photo)
It is sort-of hard to see.

RUBY
What about your first time?

JEANNE
No picture.

RUBY
Can't have any evidence.

JEANNE
(with disdain)
For my birthday father had bought
me a bicycle, a silly thing with
pink tassels, a pink seat and a
pink headlight with a little fish
behind a pink glass frame.

Ruby nods without comment.

JEANNE
I hated it. Like something-

RUBY
(probably mimicking Jeanne
when she was young)
Something for daddy's little girl-

JEANNE
I was too old- He wanted me to stay-

RUBY
Virginal?

JEANNE
Naive, I suppose.

RUBY
So your first time?

JEANNE
I rode that stupid bike until I was
sore. Jumping curbs. Smacking
trees. Trying to wear it out or
break it, but the thing was a pink
tank.

RUBY
(impatiently)
Your first time?

JEANNE
So I come home after hours on that-

RUBY
(mimicking)
Pink pussy-cycle?

JEANNE
(shrugs)
I was very warm, sweaty. And this
unexplained aching builds within me
like something wanting to explode.
(tears)
Not pink at all.

RUBY
(sultry voice)
What'd you do about it?

JEANNE
(smiling)
I used my father's gold lighter and-
(catching breath)
Set fire to that pink pussy-cycle -
with its tassels and silky pink
seat.
(holding up glass fish and
speaking in little girl
voice)
All that remains is this tiny fish.
(normal voice)
And not a spot of pink on it
anywhere.

They giggle like little girls.

CUT TO:

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS OF FIRES THE WOMEN HAVE KNOWN - NIGHT

EXT. BESIDE DEAD FIRE - EARLY MORNING

It is apparent that they have talked all night.

JEANNE
. . . or the sizzling, popping of a
family of Barbie dolls, as the fire
consumes their ample bosoms and
over-bleached hair reducing them to
a pile of drizzle.

RUBY
What about the smell of burning
gasoline, when it chews up a nosey
neighbor's storage shed, including
their pretentious John Deer riding

mower.

JEANNE

Or the shriek of terror as God
melts away human flesh leaving
sagging meat clinging to damning
bones-

Ruby focuses on Jeanne, but is unable to respond for a few
moments. Close-up on Jeanne's tortured face.

EXT. DISTANT VIEW OF SMOKE FROM FIRE WINDING TOWARD HEAVEN -
EARLY MORNING

I/E. RENTAL CAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Jeanne drives as Ruby stares out the window.

RUBY

Don't know why you need me to come
along. I need sleep.

JEANNE

I do not wish to run into that
demented Tanis by myself.

RUBY

Tanis had a traumatic accident
while a child. Never quite
recovered.

(smirking)

You used to say he was like a
cracked glass sculpture.

Jeanne tries to remember, then shrugs it off.

The rental car passes the strip mall where Jeanne met Tanis
at the end of the path. The CAMERA pulls in on the edge of
the woods.

The car slows, then turns into the mall parking lot.

JEANNE

I began thinking.

(hand over hand as turns
wheel)

If the path ended on that side of
the mall, it might pick up-

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

The rental circles behind the mall and approaches the other side. The CAMERA pulls in on another path disappearing into the woods.

JEANNE

. . . on the other side. I knew it.

RUBY

Give the girl a Cupiedoll, she's a rocket scientist.

JEANNE

(jamming foot on brake)
I only recall snippets of my past-

RUBY

Maybe you don't want more.

JEANNE

But I do remember a pudgy young girl who wasn't very nice. She tormented the people around her with her cynicism.
(accusing stare at Ruby)
Including her skinny best friend.

RUBY

Friends and enemies are never very far apart.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Jeanne leads like a master scout, letting the branches swing wildly in her wake. Ruby dodges as she follows reluctantly.

RUBY

Neither of us have shoes for this.

JEANNE

(stepping into clearing
and staring into
distance)
I knew it.

RUBY

You didn't find the new world, did you? I don't think I could go through that again.

JEANNE

Take a look!

The CAMERA pans the area, then pulls in on the back of the high school.

JEANNE

We have been here before.

RUBY

For four years of our life. This is Fruity-port high. Like Ridgemont high but without the colorful and interesting characters.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

The two of them circle the school.

RUBY

So tell me about those damning bones-

JEANNE

It was not anything.

RUBY

Sounds like something.

JEANNE

What do you want from me?

RUBY

You've hidden within a sarcophagus. Only the bones will set you free.

JEANNE

(turning toward Ruby)
His name was Abadul Al Amin, or something close to that. They had so worked us all into a state about terrorists, that when I saw him on my doorstep I panicked.

RUBY

I'm sure it was a common reaction-

JEANNE

I used to carry a taser gun - the electric stun-gun - you know, one of those hundred thousand volt electrical gadgets.

RUBY

The towel head had a weak heart?

JEANNE

The Agency sent him over to fix my
car - a busted fuel line.

(remembering)

When the spark hit him, he went off
like a Roman candle.

Ruby shakes her head and they continue walking in silence.

Jeanne eyes-up the entrance way, with a two story brick wall.

JEANNE

This is the wall you wrote about,
the one that extends forever.

RUBY

Magellan and Columbus must be
relieved you weren't around five
hundred years ago.

JEANNE

Something went on here.

RUBY

Yah, it was called puberty. You
know - the bleed and the steed?

JEANNE

Something more important.

RUBY

When you're sixteen nothing is more
important. And I suspect that when
we are sixty nothing will have had
such a profound effect on our
lives.

JEANNE

(staring at Ruby)

We are not so common.

RUBY

Nothing wrong with common, it's
inflexibility that's the crime.

Ruby tries to ignore Jeanne's burning stare.

RUBY

Look honey, this has been great
sentimental fun, but I have to grab
a shower and get to work.

JEANNE

That is fine, because I need to get
to your work too.

A perplexed Ruby furrows her eyebrows and screws up her face.

EXT. THE CENTENNIAL - AFTERNOON TO EVENING

Series of shots as the day passes and night sets in. Jeanne is pouring through the newspaper archives searching for something. Occasionally, Ruby brings her another box of dusty microfiche or old bound newspapers. Finally:

JEANNE

(standing)

I have found it.

Glancing around, Jeanne realizes that Ruby is gone, then regains her composure as if addressing an imaginary audience.

JEANNE

Crazy Tanis was correct. It was about the barn-

RUBY

(appearing from darkness)

Doctors say the fire fried a part of his brain.

(glancing at article in Jeanne's hand)

You used to be a little more compassionate. What happened?

JEANNE

I don't know. My job makes people-
(changing subject,
standing)

This article does not spark any recollections in me, but I know someone for whom it might.

CUT TO:

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE AT RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITY - WEDNESDAY MORNING

The sign on the door says Professor Walter Hightower. Inside, the walls are covered with awards and pictures memorializing science and academia, except in a corner by the coat rack a dusty code-of-arms has been made by a crossing two white gloves over a black-and-white dress cane. Jeanne and Walter are already engaged in debate.

WALTER

I don't understand what you are looking for. I thought you stayed in town to look for a dream house or relive some memories of Millie?

JEANNE

I did. It was- But come to find out, I needed to find out about myself even more. You understand that, surely?

(glancing at a picture of Walter and a skinny young girl whose face is obscured, but wears the same haircut as Ruby and she had back then - as the girls in the picture)
Now about the barn - the Smeltzer barn.

WALTER

(frowning)
I can hardly be expected to remember something so insignificant thirty years ago-
(taking picture and turning it face down)
Barns burnt down, houses burnt down. The church would call it an act of God.
A scientist would call them inadequately grounded structures.
(shaking fist, but whispering)
Personally, I'd take it as a good sign if God got off his ass and did anything.

JEANNE

(slamming newspaper article onto his desk)
A child was crippled in that fire.

WALTER

(unable to hide his knowledge of incident)
An unfortunate accident, but not one you want to go snooping into. Let the ashes return to the earth.

JEANNE

That entire period is a blur. If I am ever to see the world clearly-

WALTER

You don't want to see the world clearly. That's why we read books and watch trite movies.
(beat)
It's why man invented religion and myths. It's why we all cherish love

songs and babies.

(beat)

Pull that illusion around you like
a politician's love-

JEANNE

But not knowing is killing me.

WALTER

There are far worse ways to die.

JEANNE

What are you hiding?

WALTER

(pacing)

There are events . . . that to an
outsider appear visions of supreme
destiny. Unfortunately, the truth
is far more mundane.

(sitting)

Thirty-some years ago one such
event occurred.

JEANNE

I have smidgens of memories of a
pudgy girl - I now suspect to be
Ruby - and her obsession with fire.
But the barn-

WALTER

Yes, the barn.

(beat)

The pivotal impact of the barn fire
was not that it burnt.

JEANNE

Then what?

WALTER

A young man warned a school
employee and eventually the police
that he'd had a vision of an
upcoming fire.

JEANNE

Preacher Aaron?

(to her feet)

Yes . . . the child prodigy.

WALTER

No one would listen.

(sardonic grin)

But they listen now, don't they?

(grin fading)

Do you know he was a guest lecturer
right here at this learned

University. Him! A high school education.

JEANNE

You said he also told a school employee? Who was that?

WALTER

I don't-

JEANNE

Who?

WALTER

The nurse.

JEANNE

Millie?

WALTER

See, you've learned something about her after all.

JEANNE

What did she do?

WALTER

(smiling)

Nothing. She did nothing, but water her plants and stick bandages on scraped knees.

(shaking head)

And protect her little minions.

JEANNE

(turning up the picture that Walter turned down)

The skinny girl?

(looking closer)

But she's clearly not me. How do you and her fit into my memories?

WALTER

(glancing at watch)

I have to get to a meeting.

INT. HALLWAY OF RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITY - LATER

Series of shots of teenagers fawning, painting and studying the writings of Thomas Aquinas and others. Jeanne stares at them as she trudges out.

Crossing the faculty parking lot she passes a familiar brown station wagon and pauses for a moment, then moves on without comment.

INT. WALTER'S OFFICE AT RELIGIOUS UNIVERSITY

He stares out the window as dark storm clouds roll in.

WALTER

So the time has come for us both to
be tested.

Lightning CRACKS.

WALTER

(glaring at clouds)
May some other God have mercy on
both our souls.

I/E RENTAL CAR - LATER

Jeanne is driving the rental car, shaking her cell phone as she tries to talk on it. The phone produces a CRACKLY SOUND, which could be caused by the not-so-distant lightning or its bath earlier.

JEANNE

Hello-
(shaking phone)
Hello Doctor? Are we still on for
Friday? Hello-
(holding dead phone out at
arms length, then
dropping onto car seat)
Friday really is not good for me.

Jeanne glances at the phone and shrugs.

JEANNE

The old biddy has nothing better to
do.

Then she looks at herself in the mirror as if to say - an old biddy just like me.

I/E. RENTAL CAR EXITING FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Series of shots of Jeanne's rental car exiting the expressway and arriving back at the Holiday Inn.

Close-up on her as she shuts off the engine and ponders what to do next.

After reflection Jeanne starts the car and backs out of the

parking lot. A short while later she arrives at Ruby's house.

I/E. RENTAL CAR IN RUBY'S DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Jeanne pulls her car into Ruby's driveway and rolls down the window. Ruby's evil children are terrorizing the front yard.

JEANNE

Is your mother around?

RUBY'S SON

Who?

JEANNE

(whispering)

Well you might ask that about your father, but-

(louder)

Is Ruby home?

RUBY'S DAUGHTER

(pointing)

At church.

JEANNE

Where?

RUBY'S DAUGHTER

(pointing harder)

Church.

JEANNE

A change of heart?

EXT. RENTAL CAR PULLING INTO CHURCH PARKING LOT

Jeanne pulls her rental car beside the Cadillac parked in the 'Reserved' parking space. In the next parking space is a yellow Taurus covered with politically outrageous bumper stickers.

EXT. CHURCH

Jeanne approaches the front doors, but wanders around to the back when she hears voices. She follows the voices from open window to open window, which are above her so she can't see inside.

She continues around the back of the building until she is able to scoot up on a small rampart and peek down into a hallway and see the two 'voices' arguing inside.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY

RUBY

I can't do it. Won't!

PREACHER AARON

Conscience got a hold of you suddenly?

(frowning)

I thought you needed money for Tiny Tim's next morphine fix.

RUBY

Charlie. His name is Charlie.

PREACHER AARON

Whatever.

(sarcastically)

Well I need it for God's work. How else will his work get done? And which do you think is more important?

Before she can reply Aaron dismisses her opinion with a wave.

PREACHER AARON

I've pulled in a few favors and can get your next column published across the Midwest.

RUBY

(walking away)

I'll not be part of any subterfuge which undermines the sanctity of the press.

PREACHER AARON

Yes, yes, Mister Mike Wallace. The sanctity of the press went up in smoke years ago. You're not the BBC.

Ruby doesn't respond, but blasts out the front door.

EXT. CHURCH

As Ruby exits the front door Jeanne is waiting for her.

JEANNE

Time for a little confession?

RUBY

I don't know what you-

JEANNE

Do not lie to me!

RUBY

I . . . was checking on a sick friend.

JEANNE

A very close friend from the looks of it. But I will concede that you are both sick.

RUBY

Who are you to judge? We know the atrocities that your organization sponsors world wide. The State Department only trails the CIA in attaining the neo-Nazi award. If you have your way the entire world will hate America.

(tapping on Jeanne's chest)

Not to mention your personal terrorism. Right?

JEANNE

(pausing flabbergasted, then proceeding)

You and Aaron have been in this together all along. He lambastes you from the pulpit and you sell newspapers. Then you blast him in the press and he fills the pews.

RUBY

A symbiotic relationship?

JEANNE

More co-fungal, I suspect.

RUBY

(in Jeanne's face)

The seeds of your childhood have grown into a cancer more dangerous than Aaron or I could dream of.

JEANNE

(backing away)

I have these memories-

(frowning)

Of an heavy girl continually intimidating a skinny little friend. Was that us?

RUBY

Don't even go there.

JEANNE

Did you badger me so much that I
have blocked my entire youth from
my memory?

Ruby seethes with anger, but doesn't reply. She turns away,
then slowly turns back.

RUBY

Do you remember the night you lost
your virginity?

Jeanne shakes her head.

RUBY

I suspect that plunging into that
hot sweaty memory might reawaken
some feelings . . .
(sighing)
But I can't . . .

Ruby walks away, leaving Jeanne more lost than ever.

RUBY

(over her shoulder)
Just leave me out of your quest.
I don't answer to you anymore. And
I've had it with your inquisitions.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SUNSET

Drinking a coffee, Jeanne sits on the bed and pages through
her old yearbook. The CAMERA pulls in over her shoulder to
follow as she pans the pictures. After several more pages she
sets the coffee on the night stand and focuses on a single
page.

INT. CLOSEUP OF BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOS

First, the CAMERA pulls in on the picture of the two young
girls sticking out their tongues. Then down to another
picture of two dozen nerdy students sacked-out on the high
school auditorium stage. Obviously, the pictures were taken
at the same event.

The caption below the second picture reads 'Science Club does
their part for research.'

Still staring at the picture, Jeanne fumbles for her coffee.

JEANNE

I can not picture either Ruby or I
spending ten seconds with this
group of nerds-

Her ruminations are interrupted when her index finger alights
upon the Pudgy Girl and the Skinny Girl talking to a woman in
a nurse's uniform.

JEANNE

Millie?
(squinting)
And Ruby and me?
(realization)
Or is it those nasty girls I've
seen in that blue car? But they're
young now?

Her thumb rests under a grainy picture of the Skinny Girl.

JEANNE

How can that be?

Her eyes take in the byline below the next picture where
nerdy students are laughing with abandon. 'Students from the
Science Club proved more than a match for the Great Wally,
but everyone declared the evening a resounding success.'

JEANNE

What is a Great Wally?

CUT TO:

INT. DREARY WINDOWLESS OFFICE

Jeanne stands at the office counter while the Haggardly Clerk
plops a dusty old volume of pictures in front of her.

HAGGARDLY CLERK

I don't get paid for this you know.

JEANNE

I appreciate that you are going out
of your way-

HAGGARDLY CLERK

I'll probably strain my back and be
crippled the rest of my unpleasant
life.

JEANNE

(paging through pictures)
God works in strange ways.

HAGGARDLY CLERK

I don't suppose you'll come and

visit me in the nursing home, will you? Wait, let me guess - you'll pray for me.

JEANNE

(pulling open plastic sheet and removing a photo)

Here's one of Ruby and I . . . or is it those two young girls-
(taking a second one)
And this one with a tall man with a top hat and a tuxedo that has to be-

HAGGARDLY CLERK

The Great Wally - master hypnotist.

JEANNE

(glancing up, surprised)
You know him?

HAGGARDLY CLERK

Cable show out of GR. He's a Pollock, so he screws up a lot, but sexy as hell - a man in a uniform.

JEANNE

(holding up two pictures)
Could I get a photocopy of these?

HAGGARDLY CLERK

Just take 'em.

Jeanne is shocked by the Haggardly Clerk's sudden generosity and looks at her as if to ask 'why?'

HAGGARDLY CLERK

It'll piss someone off if they notice the pictures are missing. Others will attribute it to an act of the All Mighty, or Wally's alliance with Satanic forces.

(smiling for first time in decades)
I kinda like that.

JEANNE

(nodding tentatively)
Thanks . . . I guess.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DARK ENTRANCEWAY TO THE OFFICE OF THE GREAT WALLY

Jeanne steps tentatively inside.

JEANNE

Is anyone here?

GREAT WALLY (O.S.)

Unfortunately, an answer none of us
will know until the answer no
longer matters.

Jeanne steps into a dark den-workshop where fat old man is tied up in a contorted, pretzel-like fashion, the product of a magic trick gone bad. A silk blanket-bib covers everything but his head, fingers and the rope which binds them. In front of him on a music stand rests the instructions for the magic trick, which he stares at as he struggles vainly to release himself by force.

Wally resembles Walter, but carries another 100 pounds and is adorned by a mustache that damn well better be glued on.

JEANNE

Walter? Is that you?

GREAT WALLY

I am the Great Wally and no other.

JEANNE

(shrugging acceptance)
Do you need some help?

GREAT WALLY

And who could really help any of us
along our journey?
In fact, by the very act of
helping, the generous soul might
undermine the entire purpose of our
suffering.

Deciding that Wally is beyond help, Jeanne shrugs and pans the assortment of Machiavellian devices that line the walls and cover the floor.

JEANNE

Are these contraptions legal?

GREAT WALLY

Created for one government or
another.

(winking)
Mostly our own.

JEANNE

(shrugs again, then pulls
out her yearbook)
Were you the Great Wally from-
(holds up picture in
yearbook)

You entertained a group of teenage children during something called the 'Success Through Science Night'.

GREAT WALLY

As if success is something attained in one night. As if a hero could be created by running once into a burning building, instead of ten thousand trips into a dreary factory, a depressing office or onto a dusty stage to earn enough to put food on the table.

JEANNE

Success Through Science Night? What did you do to those children?

GREAT WALLY

Do? What did I do to those snottosed little digestive tract gas bubbles?

(shaking exposed fingers)
Why I entertained them as memorably as if they were the Queen of England or at least the virgin princess of Northern Fruitport.

JEANNE

Why?

GREAT WALLY

(pontificating)
Free commerce. The true God and master of all. I was paid to make their empty little hearts pitter patter with laughter and joy.

JEANNE

What about a post hypnotic suggestion?

GREAT WALLY

My dear lady, I entertained them until their teacher fed them milk and cookies.

JEANNE

A suggestion? While you had them entertained - hypnotized - did you bury some diabolical seed within their brains? A suggestion that would change their lives?

GREAT WALLY

(sheepishly looking away)

Well . . .

JEANNE

(shouting)

What skulduggery did you set in motion before your cohorts rewarded them with milk and cookies?

GREAT WALLY

(whispering)

Only . . .

JEANNE

Spit it out.

GREAT WALLY

(whispering)

To be hungry?

JEANNE

What?

GREAT WALLY

That teacher had bought far too many cookies.

JEANNE

Nothing about fires or the government?

Wally appears puzzled.

GREAT WALLY

Only in their bellies.

CUT TO:

I/E. RENTAL CAR - LATER

Jeanne tries to call Walter on her cell phone, but only reaches his answering machine.

WALTER (O.S. RECORDING)

Hello. You've reached the office of Walter Hightower Professor of Physical Sciences. At the tone, please leave a detailed message.

Jeanne pushes the cancel button and rings another number.

RUBY (O.S.)

Yah. If this is the Pres. you'd better rag on me quickly, I'm on the way to a Joe McCarthy looks better in comparison meeting.

JEANNE

Ruby? I need to speak with you
right away.

RUBY

And I need bulk liposuction, but we
don't always get it when we really
want it.

JEANNE

We have got to get together.

RUBY

You're out of luck honey. That
whole Joe MaCarthy thing was just a
cover. I'm on my way to a covert
operation at Preacher Aaron's
Prayers for Freedom rally.

JEANNE

I must see you!

RUBY

Try the Pope I hear he's gone cold
turkey on the choir boys and is
considering missionary work.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

The rental car charges along a dirt road. It passes a sign
which reads - Prayers for Freedom Rally.

EXT. SERIES OF SHOTS OF RALLY - NIGHT

Jeanne parks the car and walks around the assembled masses.
She spots a yellow Taurus at the outskirts of the commotion.
The car is covered with controversial bumper stickers and is
parked at the beginning of a path that leads into the hills.
Gusting wind bends tree branches until they seem to point
toward the path.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

As the wind increases, Jeanne trudges up a small hill to the
sound of chanting in the distance. When she crests the top,
she sees a dark figure darting awkwardly between trees. The
figure is dressed in army fatigues with black grease-paint on
her face. At first the person could be a terrorist, but then

the CAMERA pulls in on Ruby. Jeanne scurries after her.

JEANNE

What are you doing?

Without answering, Ruby rushes off into the woods resembling a middle-aged, physically challenged Navy Seal. Jeanne follows.

JEANNE

Ruby stop. Please.

But Ruby quickens her pace. When Jeanne catches up to her she has taken a vantage point in the hill with the crowd sprawling below. At the far end of the crowd there is a stage, with Preacher Aaron standing at a pulpit center stage.

EXT. CLOSEUP OF PREACHER AARON ON STAGE - NIGHT

Preacher Aaron addresses the crowd like a born-again Adolf Hitler. He pauses only when their appreciation for him surpasses their appreciation of God. As he waves his Bible to emphasize a point, a small red dot appears in the center of his forehead.

EXT. HILL TOP

The CAMERA pans to the hilltop showing a second red dot. The CAMERA pulls in on a laser pointer affixed to a sniper rifle that Ruby has trained on Preacher Aaron.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLOSEUP OF RUBY PEERING THROUGH SNIPER RIFLE

Jeanne catches up with Ruby but pauses as a sheet of sand and wind separates them.

JEANNE

What the blazes are you doing?

RUBY

Sunning myself on the French Riviera. When I flirted with a waiter, he slapped this evil weapon into my hands and transported me here.

JEANNE

You can not shoot Aaron. Do the two of you think this will bring him -

both of you - some warped
immortality?

RUBY

My name is Ruby, not Oswald.

JEANNE

Both were murderers.

RUBY

I'm supposed to wing him. So
technically the act would be
mayhem. Unless, of course, I miss.
Then I might be charged with
murder.

(pause)

Although philosophically the act
should just be sloppy mayhem.

JEANNE

You are out of your mind.

RUBY

At least Aaron qualifies as a real
enemy - or at least a fake real
enemy - not just some camel jockey
trying to avoid global immolation
only to face your personal one.

JEANNE

So who is the psycho-bitch here?

Ruby lowers the rifle and glares at Jeanne in silence. A
cantankerous gust of wind tugs at their hair.

JEANNE

I guess we both are.

(pause)

What happened to us? What did they
do to us at that 'Science Night'?

RUBY

Maybe it was not a place, but a
person.

JEANNE

(contorting her face in
concentration)

Do you mean Millie?

RUBY

(dropping rifle)

No, you fool, Professor Walter
Hightower.

JEANNE

How?

RUBY
(grabbing rifle and
focusing on target)
The thing he did to us - to me.

JEANNE
But why shoot Aaron?

Ruby doesn't respond, but a whirlwind covers them both with leaves and dust, causing Jeanne to flinch. Then the CRACK of a rifle's report fills the night.

FADE TO:

EXT. FRUITPORT VILLAGE - NIGHT - CLOSEUP

Jeanne walks through the village, occasionally straining to see into unlit stores. She glances up at the night sky, listens to a distant police siren, then continues walking in silence. The night is now calm.

After a while she hears the sound of heavy footfalls, but when she turns - only a cool breeze greets her.

She keeps walking. Soon, the footfalls return.

She quickens her pace.

EXT. FRUITPORT VILLAGE - DISTANT VIEW

The street is now empty. Jeanne has gone, but the sound of the heavy footfalls fills the night. Then worn dark brown shoes appear and the CAMERA pans slowly up to a tall form dressed in dark brown. The face is indiscernible.

When the tall form passes the corner shop, Jeanne steps out behind him.

CLOSEUP OF WALTER AND JEANNE

JEANNE
Professor you have some explaining
to do.

WALTER
I was just taking a night stroll-

JEANNE
A long way from home.
(pause)

But you know that is not what I am asking. What happened back in '72?

WALTER

I don't know what-

JEANNE

At your little science soiree...

(thinking)

And do you have a brother?

WALTER

(angry)

Why does everyone ask that?

(glancing toward heaven,
calmer)

Disappeared when I was young. My twin.

JEANNE

(nods)

So what did Wally put in our head?

WALTER

(biting lip)

The hypnotist?

(shrugging)

He was harmless.

JEANNE

Was there something in that milk?
Did the government do something to us?

WALTER

(pacing in circle)

No.

(pausing)

Yes.

(pausing again)

Maybe. I guess it's subject to interpretation. They used you. They used me. It's what the government does nowadays - a people of the government, by the government and for the government - that's how it is. Maybe all governments degrade to the same bureaucratic bastards. Maybe that's why we once had that Bill of Rights.

JEANNE

What happened to us? Ruby and me.

WALTER

You met some nice people. That was all.

JEANNE

And what did you get for your part
in that little introduction?

WALTER

Eternal damnation.

Jeanne stares at him, until he continues.

WALTER

My life had been about truth and
knowledge. I dreamed of attaining a
professorship, but I never asked
where.

(raising voice)

One of life's ironies . . .

(smiling)

Education with a Christian
perspective, do you know what that
means?

Jeanne shrugs.

WALTER

You can't teach honest biology
because any moron would understand
there was no need for Divine
creation.

(pause)

Forget history those idiots believe
man was created 4,000 years ago.
Never mind that we can find ten
thousand year old artifacts,
civilizations three times that age
and half-a-million year old bones.

(shaking a fist at the
sky)

True sociology would show not their
one God, but a string of gods
invented by each society to reflect
their respective hopes and fears
and simpleness. Remember Joseph
Campbell's myths?

(pacing again)

Don't even consider psychology.
Sick people are filled with the
devil.

(holding up hands like a
Halloween goblin and
rolling eyes)

Astronomy? That won't fly. Not with
the earth being the center of the
universe and all.

(shaking fist at heaven)

The earth is not the center of
anything except our own petty

intrigues.

(shaking fist like madman)
Copernicus and Galileo proved that.

(looking toward heaven)
It isn't a Christian perspective,
it's a delusional one. Teaching
warm lies instead of the colder
truth.

JEANNE

And the rest of the story? What
happened?

They stare at each other for a moment. When Jeanne doesn't
flinch, Walter hangs his head and trudges into the night.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY THURSDAY MORNING

Jeanne takes stock of the new day. Birds, cool breeze and
flowers in a vase contrast to her barren mood.

She jumps at a KNOCK at the door, then hurries to open it.
The same delivery man hands her a wrapped box. This time the
message on his T-shirt proclaims - Courier's do it with
immunity.

COURIER

You're getting a lot of packages.
You sure this is all official
government business?

Jeanne rolls her eyes and closes the door in his face. She
opens the package and unwraps a Ruger semi-automatic pistol,
which she sets on the small table. Then she lays back in bed
and stares at it. The CAMERA pulls in on a Phoenix-like bird
on the handle.

INT. CLOSEUP OF BED - MORNING

In a series of shots Jeanne tosses and turns in bed. Her eyes
snap open and pan to the small table. The table is empty;
there isn't any pistol or empty box setting there.

She sits up, grabs her cell phone and dials. In the distance
dark storm clouds charge across the sunny sky like an
invading army.

JEANNE

Ruby? This is Jeanne.

Ruby's response is unheard.

JEANNE

It is time to know the rest of the story.

Jeanne holds as Ruby responds again.

JEANNE

I will take care of the others.
(pause)
There is one appropriate place.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNKEPT CEMETERY - DUSK

Preacher Aaron picks his way past the headstones. His arm is in a sling and he carefully steps around each grave. Ominously, the sun drops behind a layer of thick clouds as if night has fallen prematurely.

RUBY (O.S.)

Watch it! One of your departed congregation might pull you to oblivion.

Preacher Aaron spins around as Ruby, Walter and Jeanne step from the bushes.

PREACHER AARON

(cringing)
What the?
(to Ruby)
You!
(glancing at sling)
I rebuke you to stay away.

RUBY

Can it. We're not foolin' anyone.
(smiling)
Looks like the gang's all here.

WALTER

Not all.
(glancing down at Millie's headstone)
Well . . . yes.

PREACHER AARON

What is the meaning of this?

RUBY

Jeanne's gonna perform a negative exorcism and resurrect the devil in all of us.

PREACHER AARON

(turning to leave)
I'll not be part of blasphemy.

Preacher Aaron turns to leave, but Tanis steps between him and freedom. In Tanis's hand is a Ruger semi-automatic pistol and he wears a trench coat and dark glasses - again straddling the line between comical and dangerous.

TANIS
(waiving the group over to
Millie's grave)
I need the truth. I burned in the
fire of '72.

PREACHER AARON
(smiling salaciously)
You have a right to retribution.

WALTER
Of course, the Christian
perspective - a burn for a burn.
(more humane tone to
Tanis)
Millie said your short term
memories were wiped clean - mushed
up-

RUBY
Is that a scientific term?

WALTER
One term - trauma.

JEANNE
We are all together - the group
from the Smeltzer barn fire. It
sounds like several of us don't
know the whole story-

PREACHER AARON
And the truth will set you free?

RUBY
You won't want to know-

TANIS
We've got a right-

JEANNE
Let us start at the beginning.
Spring of 1972. The snow melted
away, but the first warm days had
not yet turned the countryside to
green. Our leader - meaning no
offense - but all I recall is that
she was a heavy set girl-
(motioning to Ruby)

Told us to meet at the barn. For some reason I believe that the first person she saw was-

RUBY

The kid with all the answers?

JEANNE

Yes . . .
(pointing at Aaron)

Preacher Aaron shakes his head.

TANIS

(suddenly remembering)
But that was me. Back then, that was me.

Ruby, Preacher Aaron and Jeanne all shrug.

TANIS

(to Preacher Aaron)
And the next one who showed was the big mouthed kid?

Preacher Aaron glares at him.

PREACHER AARON

At least I did not lust for a fat harlot.

Ruby blushes and turns away.

TANIS

(nodding)
I didn't care that she was heavy boned.

JEANNE

The four of us had something in common?
(looking at the diverse group)
What on earth could it possibly be?

RUBY

(flicking on a three head, butane lighter)
Take a sizzling guess.

They all stare at the flame like pseudo-moths.

JEANNE

You led us by the-

RUBY

The dancing flame.

(pausing)
By that night in 1972 we had
already shared several fires.
(pointing at Aaron's glass
cross)
Each time we collected trinkets
from the ashes.

PREACHER AARON
(holding his cross)
Like skeletons - no - like scalps.

JEANNE
Trophies . . .

TANIS
We wanted one more really cool
fire. The year would soon be over.
The end of our little gang.

PREACHER AARON
I tried to dissuade you, but you
wouldn't listen.
(pausing)
And Nurse Millie listened but did
nothing. And the guilt consumed her
as surely as the flames.

RUBY
(at Aaron)
You weren't morally opposed, you
just chickened out.

WALTER
The authorities would not listen to
Aaron. Probably because he
pretended he'd dreamed about the
fire, to mask his complicity.

PREACHER AARON
No, it was so I didn't have to turn
in my-

Preacher Aaron stares down at his own feet.

JEANNE
But how does the school fit into
the night of the fire?

RUBY
I showed up late to find the barn
blazing and Jeanne wandering out in
a daze. At first I was pretty
pissed - that you all hadn't waited-
(glances around)
Then the police and fire department
arrived, so I drug Jeanne out

through the woods. When we came up to the school we saw activity and ducked inside.

WALTER

Taking cover in my little science project that had nothing to do with your personal anarchy.

JEANNE

But what did you do to us?

RUBY

(excited and digressing)
Something diabolical! Maybe they planted chemical bombs in the cookies. Bombs that would release thirty years later.

WALTER

No. Not that at all.

(smiling)

You just became part of the inventory.

Years later they recruited Jeanne to the state department where her latent cruelty and language skills could be put to good use. The same way they recruit high school bullies to become cops. Or my science nerds into NSA to spy on the world.

(shrugs)

Ruby was too soft - too humanistic. Which I suppose drew me to her-

JEANNE

An easy target?

Walter's eyes water, but he doesn't respond.

TANIS

Nobody is talking about the fire.

(unrolling shirt sleeve to reveal deformed arm)

Am I the only one who hasn't forgotten? Who did this to me?

RUBY

I can never forget-

JEANNE

And I cannot remember.

TANIS

(shaking arm at her)

But do you feel this kind of pain?

JEANNE

I don't feel anything.

WALTER

Tanis, put the gun away.

TANIS

Whoever did this has to pay.

RUBY

You already have.

TANIS

What are you saying?

JEANNE

(remembering)

Aaron backed out, but you wanted to continue.

(to Tanis)

You said it would be the coolest feeling ever. You were adamant.

RUBY

Tanis verbalized what we all felt. But in retrospect he wanted something more-

PREACHER AARON

The demon of sin burning inside.

TANIS

(waving gun spasmodically)

Shut it! I've changed my mind.

WALTER

Careful young man. You're going to shoot someone.

The storm clouds open and pelt the group with light rain.

RUBY

(to Jeanne)

Do you now recall who was our leader?

JEANNE

Why you were - you know - the plump-

RUBY

But I was skinny as a rail back then.

PREACHER AARON

That much is true. When she developed breasts-

(realizing his
indiscretion)
Not that I noticed-

JEANNE
But I'm the only other girl-
(eyes widening in
realization)
I remember always trying to diet-
(biting lip)

RUBY
(to Walter)
After you left for college your
skinny friend got involved with an
older man - a professor, then
drowned her sorrow in bags of
potato chips-
(pinching thighs)
Which traveled directly to these
tree trunks.

TANIS
But what happened to me?

Raining harder now, accompanied by the sound of distant
thunder. Walter turns toward the rumbling, squinting as if
searching for clues.

WALTER
(whispering)
It's - he's coming for me.

PREACHER AARON
(to Tanis)
I went to the barn to warn you that
the authorities were on to you.
(to Jeanne)
You two were together -
fornicating. I suppose I had a
crush on her - even though she was
fat - seeing you two . . .

JEANNE
No . . .

Thunder claps.

RUBY
When I found you-
(looking at Jeanne)
You were only half dressed - and
you don't want to guess which half.
(pause)
And even that half dressed half was
half un-

JEANNE

No . . .

A long, low rumbling shakes the earth. Walter steps backward until he nearly bumps into Aaron, with Tanis waving the gun at both of them.

WALTER

(whispering to Aaron)
He's coming for both of us.

TANIS

(oblivious, remembering
and letting go)
In the barn - our first time - with
flames all around us. That's how-
(glancing down at his
deformed arm)
The fire and you so beautiful that
neither seemed real-

PREACHER AARON

The fires of sin-

JEANNE

(remembering)
I lost Tanis in the smoke . . .

PREACHER AARON

We all lost something precious-

JEANNE

That tender bit of our soul?

Now the sky lets loose with sheets of rain, gusts of wind and explosive lightning. Darkness, like night, blankets them. Both Aaron and Walter search the heavens, while everyone else stares at the Ruger which seems to glow.

Tanis drops his gun and backs away. The CAMERA focuses on the gun, which sinks or melts into the mud.

Then a deafening blast of lightning impacts the earth where the gun and Tanis had been. Walter and Aaron dive in opposite directions, the blinding white light silhouetting them momentarily. When the flash subsides - neither Walter, nor Aaron, nor Tanis can be seen.

Jeanne stands beside Ruby until sheets of rain wipe them all from sight.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - SUNNY FRIDAY MORNING

Jeanne, dressed in her usual business suit, is packing when someone KNOCKS at her door. She opens it to see Ruby bearing

gifts of pastries, fresh coffee and dark chocolate.

JEANNE

(pausing for moment, then
throwing door open)
A little early for you to be
corrupting anyone-
(glancing at Ruby's gifts)
Although you definitely have made a
world class attempt.

RUBY

Pastries to clog your arteries.
Coffee to explode your heart. And
chocolate does double duty with a
little of both.

JEANNE

(glancing at watch)
I have to meet with my agency
shrink in half of an hour.

RUBY

We're all behind you in this?

JEANNE

In what?

RUBY

After my personal explosion - with
the chocolates - I met with a
shrink. Walter and Aaron convinced
the local D.A. that I needed
counseling.

(chuckling)
It was either that or jail time.

JEANNE

What does this have to do-

RUBY

(dismissing Jeanne with a
wave)
She was an obnoxious, pushy woman
with a mole right here on her neck-
(pointing to her own neck)
-that I couldn't quit staring at.

JEANNE

Your point?
(grabbing suitcase and
pushing out door past
Ruby)
What could the agency shrink
possibly do to me that I don't
deserve?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAKESHIFT INTERROGATION ROOM IN LOCAL HOSPITAL - MORNING

The interrogation is already in process by Dr. Gweneth Schultz who not so coincidentally resembles the DARK HAired WOMAN/apparition from Jeanne's hotel room.

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ

And how did you feel when you saw the peasant burning?

JEANNE

(looking away to hide tears)

How would anyone feel?

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ

Anyone is not here. Only you are. And if you want to keep your job, you had better be a littleless evasive.

JEANNE

You've seen my statement. He was working on my car. It was an accident. My taser gun-

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ

You never owned a taser. Never. The victim was sleeping in your garage. You poured gasoline over his body and incinerated him with a plastic lighter. Now why can't you admit that!

When Doctor Shultz turns and opens her briefcase Jeanne spots the mole on her neck. From then on, she can't take her eyes off it.

JEANNE

(fills with hatred)

Do you know how killing changes a person? I was one thing before and something quite different after.

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ

Not to mention his change into a Kosher potato chip.

JEANNE

(pausing, then calmer)

The U.N. would be justified in turning me over to the Iraqi people for punishment.

(shaking fist)
Is that what you want to hear?

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ
The government does not give a
rat's derriere about your dead
peasant. Any more than-

JEANNE
Than the other ten million sand
niggers. Is that what you'd like to
say? I was there. I see the
contempt in your eyes. Just like
the rest of us.

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ
And yet you stayed and performed
your duties adequately?

Dr. Schultz stares. Then with a sardonic smile:

DR. GWENETH SCHULTZ
(pulling out typed
document and signing it)
Your supervisor was concerned that
you are too soft - LHT they call it
- Latent Humanistic Tendencies. It
crops up sometimes in people with a
liberal education. But I believe
you are fit for duty.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM OF A NO-TELL MOTEL

Dream scene with Walter and Doctor Gweneth Schultz laughing
together while performing sex flashes through Jeanne's head.
Their faces deform into laughing human gargoyles.

INT. MAKESHIFT INTERROGATION ROOM IN LOCAL HOSPITAL

The CAMERA pulls in on Dr. Schultz waiting impatiently for
Jeanne to take the paper and sign it. The Doctor's smile
slowly fades.

FADE TO BLACK

JEANNE (O.S.)
My way lucent - on mere knowledge
of phantasms to embrace and to
subjugate.

Off screen we hear the crinkle of the paper being destroyed.

EXT. OUTSIDE LOCAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Leaving the hospital, Jeanne pulls off her suit jacket and drapes it over a garbage can.

Overhead, fast moving clouds seem to race against her. She begins unbuttoning her shirt, which the wind rips open.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER ALONG LAKE MICHIGAN COAST - LATER THAT DAY

As the fast clouds continue moving overhead, Jeanne dances along the pier - spinning, twirling and occasionally dangling over the drop off on one bare foot. The wind mirrors her spinning actions, throwing her hair about in serpentine fashion. She is dressed only in a nearly transparent summer dress, which the wind tosses lecherously.

Ruby trails behind, dodging waves smashing upon the retaining wall as she tries to catch up. In the background we hear the DRONE of a speedboat idling along the channel.

RUBY

What happened with that shrink?

Jeanne doesn't reply, but pauses momentarily as the speedboat accelerates and passes her. In it she sees the Pudgy girl and the Skinny girl. The Pudgy girl flips her off.

The speedboat accelerates abruptly and heads out on Lake Michigan. Ruby blinks several times and the boat disappears behind the waves. Then even the drone of its engines fades to nothing.

Jeanne dances to the end of the pier, then spins in a pirouette, as Ruby catches up. The crashing of the waves grows more threatening.

RUBY

The shrink. What happened with-

Jeanne laughs and continues spinning as a huge wave covers her. For a moment it appears that she has been swept away.

RUBY

Jeanne!

Then the wave subsides and Jeanne raises from a crouch as if materializing from the puddle - or a puddle of afterbirth. Her soaked dress is so nearly invisible that it appears to have been swept away. Or has it been?

RUBY

We'll drown out here.

Huge waves crash to the left and right of them causing Ruby to step back.

JEANNE

(shivering, smiling)

My ire subsided, my illusions no more, and only icy waves remain.

RUBY

(putting arm around
Jeanne)

Then let us find a warm fire.

Jeanne nods.

The CAMERA pulls away as nearly transparent reflection of Jeanne spins and spins with waves crashing around her. Then a killer wave covers the pier. Afterward, the waves and clouds move slower than real time as the CAMERA pulls back over the water - mirroring the opening shot.