SWEET NOVEMBER

by

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Based on the screenplay "Sweet November"

by

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SHOOTING DRAFT

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

OPENING CREDITS and MUSIC play as dawn breaks over the city by the bay. Sounds of intense SEXUAL EXERTION FADE UP.

2 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

In what is more workout than lovemaking, NELSON MOSS (36) thrusts vigorously into ANGELICA (32), lying spread-eagled on her back. An ALARM goes off, and on cue, Nelson climaxes. OPENING CREDITS and MUSIC FADE OUT.

Finished, Nelson hops to his feet on his way...

NELSON

That was good...

Ambivalent, Angelica watches as Nelson enters the bathroom.

NELSON

Top dog, big dog, bad dog...

3 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

Nelson showers.

NELSON

Who's the best dog? It's my dog.

4 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Towel-wrapped, Nelson keeps talking as he crosses the room.

NELSON

It's the big, bad dog.

Angelica pulls on her underwear as she watches Nelson exit.

5 INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - DAY

The penthouse is orderly and stark. Entering, Nelson grabs an incoming fax, turns on a coffeemaker and picks up a remote control. Ignoring a stunning view of the city, he closes the blinds and turns ON FIVE TELEVISIONS.
Fax in hand, Nelson speed-dials on a cell phone as he passes Angelica. Entering a walk-in closet, he dresses in a hurry.

NELSON
Number one dog, dog at the top --

ANGELICA
Slow down. We need to talk.

NELSON
Vince?

VINCE (V.O.)
(over phone)
How about those Vitagirl numbers?

NELSON
(into phone)
Yeah, looking good.
(to Angelica, fake innocent)
Talk about what?

He sees the look on her face, turns his head, rolls his eyes and mouths "us" as she says:

ANGELICA
Us.

He mouths "shit," then turns to flash her a reassuring smile, holding up a finger to wait as he finishes his call.

VINCE (V.O.)
We're T-minus 72 hours from fast food fame or oblivion. Ready to sign off on this copy?

Nelson makes an apologetic face to Angelica, uses work to avoid dealing with her, hurries into the living room.

NELSON
Almost. Meet you in twenty.
CONTINUED:

Catching a good one, he switches sets to the same channel. Braces himself as she enters, wearing undies.

NELSON
Us. Right. Hey -- isn't there some kinda limit on 'us' talks? You know, one okay, two if necessary, three, cruel and unusual.

He flashes a smile and bolts, evading her once again.

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Nelson re-enters the closet and finishes dressing, obsessed.

NELSON
Good dog, great dog...

ANGELICA
You forgot about my parents, didn't you?

He did.

NELSON
I can't make it. I'm sorry.

ANGELICA
Nelson, this is their third trip to the city. This is important to me.

NELSON
And this account is very important to me.
   (sees how hurt she is)
Come on, it's Doctor Diggety, it's practically an American institution.
   (stops)
Hey -- does that play? American institution --

ANGELICA
Stop it -- you know there are actually people who don't work 24 hours a day. They stop. Relax. Have lives.

Dressed in chic clothes, Nelson grabs his suitcase.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON
Yeah, and I'm late for mine.

He rushes out, the door slamming shut behind him.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Sleepy Madison Avenue types surround Nelson, wide awake as he talks on his cell phone.

NELSON
-- Look, I'm not sure I like the tagline anymore, it's working too hard, needs to be deadpan. I wanna play with it for a few hours --

VINCE (V.O.)
(over phone)
Cut it out, man, copy's good.
Apply the 'If it ain't broke' rule.

INT. JABE & DUNNE - DAY

The elevator opens onto an advertising agency, abuzz with activity. Nelson is met by VINCE HOLLAND (36). Walking side-by-side, both men continue talking into their phones.

NELSON
(over phone)
That rule applies to mediocrity.
We want perfection.

VINCE
(over phone)
What we want is a check, Nelson. And bonuses. And promotions. You worry too much.

NELSON
I worry because worrying about losing keeps you winning.

Suddenly aware of themselves, they pocket their phones as an OFFICE MANAGER hands Nelson an advertising award.

OFFICE MANAGER
Congrats, Nelson. You got the Ad Age for the Pelican spot.
Unimpressed, Nelson starts to hand the award to his secretary, BEATRICE (23) -- when Vince plucks it away.

VINCE
You'll hide it like all the others. Whereas I'll take it and put it where it belongs. Over my bed.

Nelson picks up a stack of trades as he blows by Beatrice's desk on the way into his office. Vince follows him in.

BEATRICE
Good morning, Mr. Moss. Vince.

Greeting her, Nelson ignores Beatrice. Vince flirts.

NELSON AND VINCE
Morning, Beatrice.

A temple of California corporate cool, the place looks like a hip playpen for a kid who never grew up.

Nelson immediately settles down to work, furiously typing new copy into his computer as Vince nervously peers over his shoulder to observe the changes, wants to distract him, change subject.

VINCE
Hey, did you hear? Edgar Price is coming out of retirement. Says everybody's ripping him off; might as well get back in the game and rip himself off.

NELSON
Edgar Price, huh? He's great.

VINCE
Remember that Mercedes spot he did... a trillion years ago?
(folds hands together as if in prayer)
Genius.

NELSON
Yeah, well maybe a trillion years from now some guy will say the same about you. If you get off your butt and work on this tag.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The door opens and their boss, RAEFORD DUNNE, pokes his head in. He is as anxious as Vince and Nelson about this account.

DUNNE
How's my dream team? Got it locked up?

NELSON
Sure, chief. Just finessing some --

VINCE
Minor details. Minor.

INT. JABE AND DUNNE - ART DEPARTMENT - DAY

Nelson and Vince are walking into an art department.

VINCE
Can't wait to show you these boards -- I mean, they came out great, perfect. The best work I've ever done -- of course with your help --

(pauses)

Client's gonna love 'em.

By now they are inside the room and Nelson is quickly surveying a set of storyboards which we don't see. He jabs a finger as he indicates each one, all business.

NELSON
Make this night.

VINCE
Nelson --

NELSON
Give me a bonfire.

VINCE
Nelson, stop --

NELSON
Make this three quarter.

(points to another board)

Nastier. Give me more cleavage, more dogs --

VINCE
Nelly -- stop, stop, stop!

(CONTINUED)
Just then, Beatrice enters the room, relieved to find Nelson there.

BEATRICE
There you are. Did you forget your one o'clock at the D.M.V.?

NELSON
Sort of. Reschedule.

BEATRICE
The deadline to renew is today.

NELSON
So let it expire.

BEATRICE
It was expired when you got the ticket. That's why you have to go.

NELSON
Beatrice, I don't have time for this. Wait till the presentation's over...

BEATRICE
If you don't renew today, they'll suspend your license, which means the next time you get pulled over, they can throw you in jail. And I bet you don't have time for that, either.

A hush falls over the room.

VINCE
Nobody beats the D.M.V., Nels. Not even you.

INT. DMV - DAY

Nelson is in hell. The "appointments" line is endless, and a BABY behind him is SCREAMING. Checking his watch, Nelson is scribbling more copy in a notebook as the BABY'S PITCH climbs HIGHER.

INT. DMV - TEST ROOM - DAY

Annoyed beyond belief, Nelson waits as a PROCTOR passes out tests to a room full of random San Franciscans.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PROCTOR
There'll be no talking, eating, or drinking. If your personal hygiene becomes a distraction, you will be asked to leave --

Running late, SARA (25), stumbles into the room. At the same time, the paper bag in her arms ruptures, spilling a motley assortment of groceries. She gets down on her hands and knees starts picking them up, reaches for a salami log under Nelson's chair...

PROCTOR
If you need to go to the bathroom, raise your hand.

SARA
Can you just pass me the Columbo...

NELSON
The...?

SARA
The salami... under your chair.

PROCTOR
You cannot take the test in the bathroom.

Nelson reaches for the salami, hands it to her.

NELSON
Here you go.

PROCTOR
If you do not come back from the bathroom, you cannot pass the test.

During this, Sara has taken a seat next to Nelson.

PROCTOR
You may begin.

INT. DMV - TEST ROOM - DAY (LATER)

Halfway through the test, Nelson is beginning to fray.

NELSON
Falling rock zone... Christ.

(CONTINUED)
Nelson's eyes wander over to Sarah's test.

NELSON
Hey.  Psst.

Sara gives him a "cut it out" look and returns to her test.

NELSON
Number nine.  True or false?

SARA
What?  You wonder why?  What?

PROCTOR
Excuse me!  Bring your test forward!

Nelson hunkers down.

SARA
Me?

PROCTOR
Yes, you.

SARA
But I was just trying to tell him to stop...

She's too ethical to rat, too annoyed to let him off the hook.

SARA
... talking to me.

PROCTOR
Bring your test forward!

Sara reluctantly approaches the Proctor, who takes her test.

PROCTOR
You may retake the test in 30 days.

SARA
What?!  30 days!  That's a long time -- that's so unfair!  I wasn't doing anything --

The immovable Proctor grimly shakes his head, points to door.  Steaming, Sara returns to her desk.  Gathering her things, she glares balefully at Nelson, who pretends not to notice.
EXT. DMV - DAY

Nelson, talking on his phone, emerges from the DMV.

NELSON
Nelson Moss for Vince. Did Rubin tweak the music?

VINCE (V.O.)
No, he said it's fine.

NELSON
Cut him. Get Johnson McDonald, give him the sample, he'll know what I want.

Just then he notices Sara sitting on the hood of his brand new Mercedes, she gives him a jaunty wave.

SARA
How'd the test go? Hope you passed.

He ignores her for a moment, something has caught his eye -- a beaten-up van with yapping dogs painted on it and the words: 'BARKING MAD DOG GROOMERS AND DAY CARE. Sanity in a dog-eat-dog world.' It is parked next to his Mercedes.

NELSON
(into phone)
Hey, Vince, what about this? 'Barking mad for Doctor Diggety. Sanity in a dog-eat-dog world.'

VINCE (V.O.)
(over phone)
Now I know you've lost your mind.

SARA
Congratulations, you can read.

She keeps sitting on his hood, staring at him.

NELSON
(to Vince)
Call you back.

He hangs up. Slowly walks over to her, not thrilled that she's sitting on his car.

NELSON
Can I help you?

SARA
Can you help me?

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Yeah.

She keeps staring, says nothing. He feels pinned by her gaze, peers around, then points to her van.

NELSON
Oh -- that must be your van.

SARA
This must be your car.

NELSON
And you can't drive? Right, right. This is how you make --

He reaches for his wallet.

NELSON
Oh, shit, right. Well, how much do you make? Doesn't look like much. I'll cover your expenses --

(reaches for money, decides against it, pulls out business card instead)

Here, call my secretary, she'll take care of it --

She takes the card, peers quizzically at it.

SARA
Is this quest for redemption coming from true remorse, or are you just worried that my sitting on your car will leave a big dent?

NELSON
The dent, I guess.

SARA
That's what I thought.

There's a flicker of recognition in her eyes, as if she has confirmed something in her own mind. He gestures to her -- get up. She doesn't budge. Annoyed, he reaches in his wallet and shoves a hundred dollar bill at her.

SARA
What are you doing?

NELSON
Buying redemption.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

SARA
(refuses money)
Oh, redemption's not for sale
today.

NELSON
Okay, I guess I'm going to hell.
Get off my car.

Stunned, she gets off his CAR as he scrambles inside and
ROARS out of the lot.

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Nelson works out at an intense pace on an treadmill as
he watches all five TV's. Other than shelves of glass
vases and ceramics, the only other decor is a fish tank
occupied by a lone fish. The MICROWAVE BEEPS, Nelson
jumps off mumbling:

NELSON
What is it? It's a hot dog. It's
a hot dog. It's a...

Opening the oven, he grabs a hot dog, nearly burns his
hand.

NELSON
It's a hot dog.
(eureka)
That's right! It's a hot dog!
It's a hot dog!

He cuts it and jabs a piece on a fork, just as the INTERCOM
BUZZES. As he speaks he stares at the hot dog on fork.

NELSON
Yeah?

MANNY (V.O.)
(over intercom)
Mr. Moss, this is Manny downstairs,
I gotta bit of a situation here. A
certain lady, she says...
(whispers,
embarrassed)
Some very strange and personal
things about you.

Nelson still stares at the hot dog on fork, transfixed.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SARA (V.O.)
(over intercom)
Give me that thing.

MANNY
(over intercom)
Miss, you can't do --

Nelson hears SCUFFLING sounds filter over the INTERCOM. Then Sara's voice wafts up, honeyed and seductive.

SARA (V.O.)
Hey, big spender, come down here.
I can't stop thinking about you.

Nelson's bewildered, and intrigued. Checks his watch, mutters:

NELSON
Ten minutes.
(presses "talk")
Okay. Be right down.

As he walks away, he takes a bite of the hot dog on fork and nearly gags before spitting it out.

INT. NELSON'S BUILDING - LOBBY - DUSK

In sweats, Nelson comes out of the elevator. Sara is busy listening to a besotted MANNY tell her his whole life story.

MANNY
-- And then my ex-wife, she say
you can't fix nothing, Manny, and
she leaves me for plumber --

Sara finally notices Nelson approaching, flashes a smile.

SARA
Look at that, Manny. My very own
Prince Charming.
(to Nelson)
I don't think I've ever met such a
royal asshole in my whole life.

Nelson stops in his tracks, staggered. She is off on a toot.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

SARA
Does your mother know you treat
women like hookers? Or did she
raise you to think being nice
means patronizing the whole
world?

MANNY
Uh-oh. I smell a problem.

Nelson grabs Sara by the arm, whisks her outside.

18

EXT. NELSON'S BUILDING - DUSK

Nelson and Sara face off in the street.

NELSON
How did you find me?

She holds up the business card he gave her.

SARA
I'm smart.

(pauses)
And I need a ride.

NELSON
This is a joke, right?

(as she shakes her
head)
You want a ride -- from me?

SARA
Yep. Face it, it's your fault I
can't drive. The least you can
do is schlep me somewhere. It's
quick, painless --

NELSON
I am not a schlepper.

Manny knocks on the glass from the inside and holds up a
handwritten sign that reads, "You want me call police?"
Nelson shakes his head. Turns back to Sara.

NELSON
Been a ball, but some of us have
to work.

SARA
Don't make me go too far.

(CONTINUED)
15 CONTINUED:

He makes a gesture, cutting her off, heads toward the entrance, Sara stops a clean-cut couple entering the building.

SARA
Maybe you can help? This man -- he's your neighbor, right -- has been standing naked in his window flashing his ass at me and I want him to stop --

NELSON
Ignore her, please.

As the flustered couple scurries inside, Sara stops a young woman on her way out.

SARA
Hi, how are you? We've got a case of vodka and a bathtub full of fudge upstairs, would you like to join us?

NELSON
Stop it or I'll call the police.

SARA
Great. Go ahead. I love the police.

NELSON
Do you have any shame at all? (pauses)
No.

19 INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

The picture of displeasure, Nelson drives. Sara checks out the luxe car, the leather, the lights on dash. Not impressed.

SARA
By the way, my name's Sara Deever. (points) Okay, get in the right lane, put your turn signal on --

NELSON
I know how to drive!

SARA
You want to take the 80 to Oakland --

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON
Oakland? You said this would be quick.

SARA
I said it would be painless, too.

Then, she flashes a warm, disarming smile, full of charm -- completely throwing him yet again.

SARA
It's so nice of you to do this for me, Nelson. Sorry if I went too far, but I really did need the ride.

EXT. OAKLAND - NIGHT

In the midst of an industrial district, the Mercedes pulls up near a nondescript building.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

Sara pulls a flaming red wig out of her bag and puts it on. Nelson is not amused.

NELSON
Ha-ha. What do you plan to do with that?

SARA
Commit a heinous crime. You'll wait, won't you?

Sara snatches the keys out of the ignition.

SARA
Of course you will.

She climbs out. Nelson bangs his head against the steering wheel.

NELSON
What am I doing?

EXT. OAKLAND - NIGHT

Sara approaches the building. She goes in. Moments later, an ALARM BLARES.
INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

The ALARM CLANGING, Nelson is frozen, completely terrified, realizing this could be far more serious than he imagined.

EXT. OAKLAND - NIGHT

Carrying lumpy sacks, Sara flees the building.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

Sara jumps in and jams the keys in the ignition.

SARA

Go! Go! Go!

Nelson is so frightened, he obeys her and FIRES UP the CAR.

EXT. OAKLAND - NIGHT

Nelson's CAR SCREECHES into motion.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

SARA

Don't you feel like Bonnie and Clyde?

NELSON

They got shot. Don't open it -- I don't wanna know! This is coercion -- entrapment!

SARA

Will you relax? They're just...

To Nelson's amazement, Sara removes two squirming Jack Russell puppies from the bag.

SARA

... some fine furry friends. (kisses puppies)

Somebody was gonna slice open your little heads and do nasty experiments on your brains, weren't they?

She lets them go as the car stops for a light. Nelson lashes out, furious.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON
Off the leather, off the leather!
(trying to compose himself)
Let me get this straight. You humiliated me, harassed and exploited me -- just so -- I could help you in some cute save-the-puppy caper? Off the leather!

SARA
Not cool enough for you? Better if we whacked a few people while we were at it?
(points to traffic light)
You can go on green in California.

27A EXT. OAKLAND STREET - NIGHT

The MERCEDES swerves and SCREECHES as Nelson is assaulted by the slobbering pups.

27B OMITTED

27C

28 EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

The puppies tumble on the ground, Sara crouched on her knees plays with them as Nelson fills his tank with gas. Down the street he sees a police car scanning the block, its searchlight raking the buildings. His eyes light up.

NELSON
Get ready to go to jail, Sara Deever.

SARA
You're not gonna tell them.

The car is coming closer, Nelson nods, excited.

NELSON
Oh yeah. Everything.

SARA
(holds her ground)
Oh no, you won't, I have a hunch about you.

(CONTINUED)
The car reaches them; as it glides past, Nelson meekly raises his hand to wave, furious that he has capitulated again.

SARA
See? I knew you weren't as hard-ball as you act.


SARA
Hey, I have an idea. Let's take them back to my place and give them names --

NELSON
Sounds like a million laughs, but I gotta work.

SARA
What kind of work?

NELSON
Advertising.

SARA
Oh, you mean you convince people they need something completely inessential and blight the landscape in the process.

NELSON
Bingo! That's me!

SARA
Is it fun? Do you enjoy it?

NELSON
People tend to enjoy what they're really good at.

SARA
So the answer is -- yes? You do. But does it make you happy?

NELSON
Everyone knows happiness is a myth, an extremely powerful myth --

Sara's laugh starts as a snicker, builds to a full-blown howl.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

SARA
-- Created by advertisers!

NELSON
Exactly.

SARA
So what else makes you miserable, besides your job?

Nelson doesn't answer.

SARA
What do you do for fun?

He doesn't answer, but she acts as if they are conversing.

SARA
I didn't think so.  No hobbies, diversions, kinky obsessions?
(as he doesn't answer)
I was afraid of that.  What about --

Nelson rams the nozzle back into the pump.

NELSON
Just get in the car.

EXT. SARA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

The Mercedes pulls up to the curb.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

SARA
Would you like to come up for a cup of cocoa?

NELSON
As scintillating as the evening's been, I'm afraid not.

Sara is undeniably sincere and sexy, and even Nelson can't help but be tempted just a little.

SARA
I'll make a deal with you.  Come up for one cup, and I'll never ask you for another ride for as long as I live.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON

No thanks.

SARA

Okay. See you tomorrow then.

Sara starts to get out, but Nelson stops her.

NELSON

Whoa, whoa, whoa -- hold on.

SARA

Is eight o'clock good? You, me, Manny the doorman, that whole thing?

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Deliberately chaotic, Sara's loft includes the fire pole from the old station and plants galore. As the puppies carouse in a pen, Sara sets two teacups on the kitchen table, where Nelson is sitting, aware of the fact that she is openly checking him out. He tries to strike a nonchalant pose.

SARA

I can help you, Nelson. I have a gift. A special ability to help men with... problems.

Thinking this is a seduction tactic, he plays along.

NELSON

I don't have problems.

SARA

That's usually the first sign.

Nelson groans as she sits down across from him, dead serious.

NELSON

Of what?

SARA

Denial. I think you work too much.

NELSON

Right. What do you know about work?

(CONTINUED)
SARA
Plenty. You admitted you do nothing else, and it doesn't make you happy. How's that for screwy logic?

NELSON
I admitted nothing. I was silent.

SARA
No special interests. No pets. You hate dogs --

NELSON
Busted! Actually, I do have a pet. A fish. Oscar.

SARA
Cold-blooded doesn't count. You're a walking case study: we've got anger, stress, repression, extreme distraction, egocentricity, and control freakism --

NELSON
Control freakism is not a word --

SARA
Look at you, you're a workaholic in such an advanced stage that all your intimacy skills have withered away to almost nothing. Left untreated, Nelson, you could become emotionally extinct.

Nelson rolls his eyes and drinks his cocoa, checking out her messy loft with a wary look, thinking who is this freak?

NELSON
Out of sheer, perverse curiosity, how does a lunatic like you help a guy like me?

SARA
You live in a box. I could open the lid, let some light in.

NELSON
Wow that's deep. I feel cured already, just hearing about it.
CONTINUED:  (2)

SARA
(ignores him)
If you want my help, it'll require a commitment on your part. You'll have to live here with me for one month, no more, no less, no work allowed.

NELSON
You don't even know me, and you're inviting me to move in with you?

Sara nods.

NELSON
How's my girlfriend supposed to feel about that?

SARA
You don't have a girlfriend. I mean, you can feel it... there's something intimate a woman leaves on a man. You don't have that.

NELSON
Her name's Angelica.

SARA
Well you know what? I feel sorry for Angelica.

NELSON
Great, I'll relay that to her when I leave. Which is right about now --

SARA
October's almost over. We can start midnight on the first of November. If you're brave enough to commit, I will devote myself entirely to you.

Nelson gets up.

NELSON
Brave enough, but not stupid enough.
(pause)
Now listen up, moonbeam. Here's how it works. No more harassment, no more rides, no more extortion.
(MORE)
CONTINUED: (3)

NELSON (CONT'D)
Next time you come to my building,
I really will call the cops.
Bye-bye.

He leaves. Frowning, Sara reflects on her failed proposal.

32

INT. JABE AND DUNNE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

At the end of a long table, Raeford Dunne sits next to BUDDY LEACH (65). Vince and agency staff fill one side of the table. Leach and the Doctor Diggety brass occupy the other. Leach's face does not betray one emotion as he listens to Nelson's presentation.

On the wall, white sheets of paper cover boards underneath. Nelson is at the top of his game, a consummate showman. He is so amped up, he's practically throwing off sparks. He holds up a board with an image on it -- a silly looking 50's style hot dog cartoon figure -- Doctor Diggety.

NELSON
This is your brand image, Mister Leach -- we polled your primary demographic and you know what eighty-nine percent said:
boring. Safe. We need to drop a bomb.
(dropping the board)
We don't want hot dogs safe.

(working up a head of steam)
What's in a hot dog? Don't tell me! I don't wanna know...

He rips down a white sheet of paper to reveal an image of a hot dog engulfed in flames: the hot dog from hell.

NELSON
They're dangerous!
(pauses)
What are we selling here? We're selling temptation -- desire -- animal instincts -- gluttony -- sin. We want to show man as he really is... a savage... he needs fire, he needs food. He hunts and gathers, what does he get?

(CONTINUED)
Rips down another sheet of what looks like a cave man cooking hot dogs on a grill, his family of savages huddled behind him.

NELSON
He gets a hot dog!
(pauses)
We're pagans, we love our rituals -- our team hits the ball out of the park, we're screaming, we're insane. What do we want?

Rips down another sheet of a crowd at baseball game pitched forward screaming like monsters, all holding hot dogs.

NELSON
We want a hot dog!
(pauses)
Let's go straight to your pre-teen demographic. Kids. The little angels. They're not angels. They're monsters. You give them a tuna sandwich. They don't want a tuna sandwich...

NELSON
They want a hot dog!

Board showing a little boy glumly holding up a tuna sandwich and an apple, lusting after the hot dog in the hands of a cute girl next to him. Nelson rushes over to another sheet.

NELSON
We need women. We've got the mothers, we need their daughters. Let's answer that age old question -- what does a woman really want? You know. I know --

NELSON
She wants a hot dog!

He is like some rabid animal, all fired up.

NELSON
We're hot blooded -- we need sex. We need a sinful, dangerous food. What is it?

NELSON
It's a hot dog! It's a hot dog!

(CONTINUED)
He goes to the last sheet and rips it down. A picture of a total babe in devil costume, all bright reds and cleavage, holding a pitchfork, a hot dog impaled on the prong. The gates of hell sizzling overhead. The words: "DOCTOR DIGGETY. IT'S A HOT DOG" at bottom. Nelson pauses for dramatic effect.

NELSON
Doctor Diggety. It's a hot dog.

There is a long pause as Nelson catches his breath and everyone in the room turns to Leach to hear his reaction.

MR. LEACH
No.

NELSON
(taken aback)
No. What do you mean?

MR. LEACH
It's not for us. You don't understand our company.

NELSON
I don't understand? What did you ask for? Edge.
(points)
This is edge.

Not even willing to deal with Nelson, Leach turns to Raeford Dunne, as he prepares to leave.

MR. LEACH
We'll be going with Baker, Bohanen.

He gestures to his team, they rise, start to leave. Nelson starts to snap.

NELSON
Excuse me. I think you're making a big mistake.

DUNNE
Nelson --

Nelson grabs a sales chart, holds it up.

NELSON
I've seen your sales. You're in trouble.
MR. LEACH
(proudly)
No. We are America's favorite hot dog, son.

He keeps moving toward the door, and Nelson finally snaps.

NELSON
Were. You're a dinosaur. You're flatlining. You're dead meat.

MR. LEACH
(spins around, furious)
You just went too far, you little punk. I'm gonna tell you what I really think of your campaign. It's cheap, tasteless crap.

NELSON
Well that's funny, 'cause so is your product.

DUNNE
Nelson, stop it --

MR. LEACH
I sell a wholesome hot dog, you prick --

NELSON
It's mystery meat!

DUNNE
Nelson, I'm warning you --

As Leach's minions hustle him out of the room, Vince and two other ad guys hold Nelson back. He shouts to Leach's departing figure.

NELSON
It's toxic waste in a tube! You're killing me! You're killing us!

INT. JABE AND DUNNE - DUNNE'S OFFICE - DAY
Dunne storms in, followed quickly by Nelson.

DUNNE
What the hell happened in there?
NELSON
I know -- can you believe that asshole --

DUNNE
I've always said you're brilliant, Nelson. A goddamn machine, but one of these days you're gonna snap, and we're all gonna burn.

NELSON
What are you talking about, burn?

DUNNE
Do you have any idea what was at stake here? How many millions of dollars we just lost? You just ran my agency's name through the gutter --

NELSON
Gutter? I'm the best thing this agency's got!

DUNNE
Do you have any idea what was at stake here? How many millions of dollars we just lost? You just ran my agency's name through the gutter --

NELSON
Gutter? I'm the best thing this company's got!

DUNNE
Confusing style for substance doesn't make you best. It makes you a wreck. You need a vacation. Now.

NELSON
Screw vacation! Give me another account!

DUNNE
Nelson, did you hear me? Take a vacation -- short or permanent, your choice! --

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Are you threatening me?
    (laughs manically)
That's hilarious. I'm two Clios
ahead of the game, Ray, you can't
afford to lose me --

DUNNE
You're fired.

There's a dead silence for a few beats.

NELSON
Say that again, I don't think I
heard you.

DUNNE
I said you're fired!

INT. JABE AND DUNNE - LOBBY - DAY
Nelson hurries through the lobby. Elevator doors open,
Vince charges out. THROUGH plate glass window, sees
Nelson outside.

VINCE
Nels! Nelson, wait!

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DUSK
Nelson tries to unlock his door, his hands are shaking so
badly he fumbles with the key, labors to breathe.

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - DUSK
The door opens and Nelson enters, instantly deflating.
He's very relieved to find Angelica emerging from the
bedroom.

NELSON
God, am I glad to see you.

ANGELICA
You are?

He notices she is carrying an overnight bag. She musters
her strength, mind made up.

(CONTINUED)
ANGELICA
No muss, no fuss. Let's try to do
this with a little dignity, shall
we?

She crosses toward the door, past him. He is shocked.

NELSON
This is not a good time for this,
Angelica.

ANGELICA
Hard to believe but it's not your
call, Nelson. I just finally
realized... I can't stay
involved with a man who doesn't
even know he's not involved.
(awkwardly)
So I guess this non-relationship
is officially a non-relationship.

All her efforts to be cool are cracking. She looks away,
pushing the corners of her eyes, trying to stop a tear.

ANGELICA
I tried to get close to you. I
did.

NELSON
(panicking)
Wait -- please -- whatever I did --
or said, I didn't mean, I'll be
better --

She knows he's lying, that's even more humiliating to
her.

NELSON
Please -- don't go.

ANGELICA
I'm not staying just because you
don't want to be alone.

She exits, leaving Nelson alone in the silent penthouse.
He approaches his display of glass and ceramics and
stares at them blankly. Then, with a sudden, violent
swipe, Nelson sends the entire collection crashing.
Someone KNOCKS on the door.

MANNY (O.S.)
Mr. Moss? You okay?

(CONTINUED)
I'm fine.

Blood seeps from a cut on Nelson's hand.

MANNY (O.S.)
You gotta delivery.

NELSON
Leave it!

MANNY (O.S.)
I'm not sure you want me do that, sir. It's from the loco lady?
The other night? She said I don't deliver it personal, she gonna --
(voice lowers)
I'm too shy to say it, Mister Moss.

NELSON
I said leave it!

Nelson wraps a towel around his hand. Opening the door, he finds a tattered box. Stamped on the lid: NOVEMBER.
The box starts to move. Horrified, Nelson lifts the lid! -- a Jack Russell puppy has a ridiculous-looking Halloween hat tied to its head -- dangling from the hat is a key.

NELSON
Manny! Manny!

Gone for the night, Manny has left a Polaroid of himself in costume on a sign that reads, "Manny Say Happy Halloweens!" Activated by Nelson's movements, an electric GOBLIN next to the sign CACKLES demonically.

NELSON
Shit!

On the phone, Nelson paces as the hyperactive PUPPY races through the apartment -- sees the fish in the tank and starts madly BARKING.
NELSON
You're a delivery service. You deliver things.
(to dog)
Stop it! Shut up!

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Not live animals, sir. Too dangerous.

NELSON
So what you're saying is, if I kill the dog, you'll take it.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Please don't kill the dog, sir.

Nelson slams the phone down and watches in horror as the BARKING PUPPY lifts a leg and pees all over the carpet.

EXT. NELSON'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Holding the box, Nelson leans over to talk to a CABBY.

NELSON
I have an unusual request. But I will pay you two hundred dollars.

CABBY
Get lost, you sick son-of-a-bitch.

As the CAB SCREECHES away, Nelson becomes unhinged. Starts howling in rage. Inside the box, the PUPPY BARKS in unison.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

CHURCH BELLS RING at the stroke of midnight as Sara packs a trunk. Seeing beyond the area from night before -- the loft includes an office cluster and a large bed. A key turns in the door. The door swings open. Nelson stands there looking like a disheveled madman. He carries the box over to Sara.

NELSON
Do me a favor. Stay out of my life. Good-bye.

She removes the puppy from the box, kisses it, then flashes one of her winning, adorable smiles.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SARA
Did you think about my offer?

NELSON
The last thing I feel like doing right now is playing the Sara Deever Mad Hatter Game.

He puts the box down and moves towards the door.

SARA
What happened to your hand?

NELSON
Nothing.

SARA
May I look at it?

NELSON
Why?

Ernie has exhausted himself, collapses on the floor.

SARA
Because I'm a vampire. I know some things about first aid.

Nelson warily allows her to examine his hand.

NELSON
What are you after? What do you want from me?

She leads him to the bathroom as he studies her suspiciously.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sara treats Nelson's hand.

SARA
So what'd you do today?

NELSON
What'd I do today?
(pauses)
I got fired.
(pauses)
They took the company car.
(pauses)
And my girlfriend left me.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
Perfect.

NELSON
Define 'perfect.'

SARA
It's November first. Our month to be together.

NELSON
You're actually serious about this, aren't you?

SARA
Very.

NELSON
You think I'm just gonna drop everything --

SARA
Sounds like you already have.

NELSON
-- Live here, and let you mess with my head for a whole month?

SARA
I wouldn't put it that way, but yeah, that's what you should do.

Sara removes her sweater, revealing a very persuasive undershirt, and then returns to working on his hand.

NELSON
So this... whatever you call it --

SARA
Help.

Sara stands and starts unbuttoning Nelson's shirt.

NELSON
What are you doing?

SARA
Taking your shirt off.

NELSON
Why?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

SARA
So you can clean up.

NELSON
Why?

Out in the open now, the sexual tension between them intensifies.

SARA
Because you smell like puppy piss.

Sara takes the shirt to the kitchen.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

Shirtless, Nelson seems bewildered, can't decide whether to wash up or get out of there -- he catches his reflection in the mirror, studies it for an answer, mutters:

NELSON
Just for the night.

He turns on the water, leans down to wash his face.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sara sprays the shirt with detergent.

She crosses the last day of October off a large wall calendar and then tears the month away, revealing November.

OMITTED

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Cleaned up, Nelson comes from the bathroom, Sara brings him the shirt. Nelson sniffs it and puts it on. They move closer.

They kiss. Channeling his desperation, Nelson lifts her onto the bed, spins her down and pulls at her clothes.

SARA
Wait, Nelson, stop... stop.

Sara pushes him back.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
What?

SARA
Look at me. Gently. Slowly.

He starts in just as aggressively, and again she stops him.

SARA
Nelson, what are you doing?

NELSON
What does it look like I'm doing?

SARA
Just take it easy. It doesn't have to be like this. We've got all night.

He stares at her for a long moment and then pulls away.

NELSON
To hell with the whole goddamn thing.

Nelson yanks on his clothes.

EXT. SARA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Pouring rain. Wearing his suit with no shirt, Nelson storms out the door. Sara follows pulling her sweater on.

SARA
Nelson, wait a second! Would you stop for one second?

He keeps going. A few pedestrians gawk, but most keep going.

Nelson pulls Sara aside.

NELSON
I have no words to describe how totally whacked you are!

SARA
What are you so pissed off about?!

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
This has been the day from hell, and the absolute last thing I need is you telling me what to do in the sack!

SARA
Please come back. I won't tell you what to do. We don't even have to do anything. Just don't go.

For a moment, Nelson's guard drops and his face betrays how weary and shattered he is by the events of the day. She slips inside the opening in the crack.

SARA
Tell me what you want me to do, Nelson, and I'll do it. Tell me.

48 INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sitting on the bed, Nelson stares intently at Sara, standing in front of him.

NELSON
Take that off.

Sara pulls her sweater over her head, revealing the same persuasive undershirt he saw earlier.

NELSON
That, too.

Sara removes her shirt. Exposed, she waits for Nelson to make the next move. Gently, he kisses her stomach. As he slowly works his way upward, a swooning Sara grows increasingly breathless.

SARA
Would you like to be my November, Nelson?

NELSON
Yes.

Finally letting go, they meet in a deep, sensuous kiss.

49 EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - DAWN

Daylight returns to the hectic city.
50 INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAY

Alone in bed, Nelson is sound asleep, jerks bolt upright screaming -- a cross-eyed cat is gnawing at his toes.

He grabs the cat by the scruff of neck, ready to hurl it, then guiltily peeks to see if Sara's around, muttering:

NELSON
Nice cat... nice kitty...

Sara's gone. Nelson abruptly drops the cat -- it streaks across the bed and barrels out to the living area where it is attacked by Ernie, the puppy. Sounds of FURRY FIGHTING ensue.

Nelson jumps out, throws on his boxers, momentarily puzzled -- where's the rest of his clothes? Grabs his cell phone and heads over to a TV set surrounded by plants and ferns. He tries to turn it on, it doesn't work. Shrugging, Nelson lowers himself to the floor and begins a practiced routine of situps as he punches a number on the phone.

51 INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

Vince winks at the CUTE CASHIER as he steps up to the front of the line.

VINCE
Double venti caffe latte and your phone number.

Vince's PHONE RINGS.

CUTE CASHIER
(ignoring the pass)
Double venti caffe latte: 3.85.

Wedging the phone between his ear and shoulder, Vince digs cash out of his wallet.

VINCE
Notorious Nelson! Holy Christ man, I been trying to call you. What the hell is going on?

INTERCUT BETWEEN Nelson and Vince.

52 INT. SARA'S LOFT - NELSON - DAY

(exercising.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Edgar Price.

VINCE
Edgar Price?

NELSON
Edgar Price.

VINCE
Edgar Price? Wha... Wha... Wha...

NELSON
Can you get us a meeting?

VINCE
You and me?

NELSON
You and me. Edgar Price's new company. Game?

VINCE
I will get us that meeting. Genuis. They stuck with me with that knob, John Headley. I'm dying.

NELSON
Gotta go.

VINCE
You're a genius, Moss! Anyone ever tell you that?!

NELSON
Call me.

Hanging up, Nelson continues to exercise...
SARA
Stop what you're doing right now!

NELSON
Why?

She reaches him, grabs the cell phone, swats him like a nanny.

SARA
Because it's the same boring thing you do every day and you can't do that with me.

NELSON
Right.
(points to TV)
What's wrong with your TV? It doesn't work --

SARA
Of course it doesn't work, it's a planter.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Right.  
(pauses)
Where are my clothes?

Sara walks away, toward the kitchen.

SARA
I gave them away.

NELSON
You what --

SARA
Don't worry, I got you these --

She throws a pair of jeans and sweatshirt at him. The insane CAT streaks past, SCREECHING. Nelson almost trips on it.

SARA
Poor Sasquatch.  Catnip overdose.

NELSON
(holds up clothes)
This is not 'helpful,' Sara.  Give me my shirt and pants back.

SARA
Clothes are clothes.  All they do is cover up a body.

NELSON
Yeah, well, it's just that this body likes to be covered in its own clothes.

Sara grabs Ernie.

SARA
Ernie, you're gonna stay with me for a while until I find you some decent parents.  
(turns back to Nelson)
When do I get to meet your parents?

He stalks toward her, eyes burning.

NELSON
My parents are dead.

Sara sets Ernie on the floor.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
I'm sorry.

NELSON
Sara, I am not amused. I want my clothes back. Now.

SARA
I told you, I gave them away. I'll never lie to you.

Too defeated to fight, Nelson throws on the jeans and sweatshirt. The jeans are about four inches too short. As he is getting dressed, CHAS (30) shambles through the door, looks exhausted.

CHAS
I slept three hours last night. Tried valerian root, melatonin...
(points to sweatshirt on Nelson)
Hey, that looks like my sweatshirt.

Chas goes straight to the coffeemaker, pours a cup, kisses Sara.

CHAS
You know what finally put me to sleep? Jimmy Cagney. Public Enemy. Violence as a tranquilizer, how twisted is that?

Nelson staggers forward, too dazed to speak.

CHAS
Hello, you must be November.

NELSON
I must be November.

SARA
His name is Nelson.

CHAS
(extends hand)
I'm Chas. Keep the sweatshirt. It looks better on you.

NELSON
Is this some communal, culty, Squeaky and Charlie type of deal?

(CONTINUED)
SWEET NOVEMBER - Rev. 4/28/00

CONTINUED: (3)

CHAS
(laughs)
Funny. Much hipper than October.
What a wanker.
(checks his watch)
Gotta go. See you around, Nelson.

And just as quickly as he entered, he exits. As the door shuts behind him, Nelson glares at Sara.

NELSON
I think I'll pull myself out of monthly rotation while I'm ahead.

INT. LOFT BUILDING - STAIRCASE - DAY

Nelson exits the loft, and Sara follows.

SARA
-- Nelson, I told you helping men is my gift.

NELSON
You didn't tell me it was a cottage industry. And who the hell was that, your pimp?

SARA
Chas lives upstairs. We look after each other.

NELSON
It doesn't seem like he needs looking after.

SARA
Everyone needs looking after, Nelson.

EXT. SARA'S BUILDING - DAY

On the street, they pass two old-guard bay area hippies in their 60s -- husband and wife AL and OSIRIS. They're unlocking the door to their bookstore, Christopher's Books, with pictures of Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti in the window.

SARA
Hey, guys, this is Nelson.

But Nelson's off, without saying a word to them. Sara barrels after him.

(Continued)
SARA
That was so rude! Al and Osiris are great! They were close personal friends of Jack Kerouac!—

NELSON
I don't care. I don't read.

Diagonally across the street, a vegetable market. The vendor, a Chinese woman, wags her finger and shouts at pictures of her family propped up on her Buddhist altar. Sara gives her a wave and continues with Nelson a few steps, where they encounter ABNER (10). He wears a red balaclava, practices balancing on one leg. Seeing Sara, Abner stops balancing and avidly follows her as if she were the Pied Piper. Nearby, a HOMELESS MAN rummages through the garbage, incongruously dressed in the chicest gear imaginable.

HOMELESS MAN
Sara, can you spare fifteen bucks?

SARA
Okay, now you're just being greedy, Bruce. I already gave you those clothes.

Nelson puts a brake on, gasps.

NELSON
Jesus -- those are my Prada pants!-- my sweater --

Petrified, Bruce takes off running.

SARA
Doesn't it feel good to give?

NELSON
No!

Nelson calls after the Homeless Man.

NELSON
Hey, hey. Give me back my pants.

ABNER
Are you November?

NELSON
Where am I?

(CONTINUED)
SARA
Nelson, this is a great kid, you've got to meet him. Abner. He wants to set a world record. What's today's project, Abner?

ABNER
Standing on one leg.
(hands Nelson watch)
Would you time me, I have to break the current record of 300 hours.

NELSON
No.

Abner does a head-to-toe on Nelson, doesn't like the attitude.

ABNER
Nice pants -- expecting a flood?

NELSON
Nice hat -- planning a bank robbery?

Bored with Nelson, Abner peels off in the other direction.

SARA
That's pathetic -- you let a ten-year-old wind you up?

NELSON
Forget him, what's the deal with you? You sleep with half the city, get the whole neighborhood involved?

SARA
Would you prefer I was a virgin?

NELSON
Considering the alternative, yes.

SARA
That tender male ego is bruised, isn't it?
(sweetly, tenderly)
I'm yours, Nelson Moss. All yours.

That sends alarms ringing in his confirmed bachelor's brain.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Look, Sara, you're great. You're a very sexy, smart, interesting, somewhat unusual woman...

She just looks at him so guilelessly, he fumbles.

NELSON
But we... ah... don't know where this is... I always think it's best to clarify issues... the beginning of... I'm not ready for... I can't be your man-man...

She starts to laugh so hard tears roll down her cheeks.

SARA
You are the most egotistical lunkhead I've ever met!
(settles down)
It's one month, Nelson. Get it?

Now he's insulted. And amazed. He's never been treated this way before. To save face, he acts tough.

NELSON
The truth is, I don't have a month. Time is money...

SARA
Okay. How long can you put your big fat lucrative career on hold to try this thing out? Wait a minute -- you're unemployed --

NELSON
(stung)
You know, the more I think about it, this 'project' of yours feels like an excuse to get laid.

That hurts. She flushes, looks away. He feels bad, didn't expect her to react this way.

NELSON
I'm sorry, I didn't think you'd...
(gentler)
I just don't understand why you're doing this, is all.

SARA
I have my reasons.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (4)

She starts to walk. He comes abreast of her, chastened.

NELSON
Still friends?

And like a brilliant emotional acrobat, she flips her mood back to lighthearted, done with consummate grace.

SARA
Only if you give me what I want.

What?

NELSON
Time.

SARA
All I can do is a day.

EXT. PACIFIC HEIGHTS SOCIETY BUILDING - DAY

Sara's Barking Mad Dog Day Care van is parked outside a ritzy building.

INT. SOCIETY LADY'S HOUSE - DAY

Nelson stands stiffly behind Sara, who gestures expansively toward a rail-thin Nancy Kissinger-style SOCIETY MATRON.

SARA
-- Nelson's helping me today. He loves dogs.

Sitting on the sofa, floor, chairs, posed like perfect little stuffed animals, are Society Lady's six beloved dogs. Immaculately groomed, heads daintily cocked, front paws folded over each other -- they are glaring coldly at Nelson. Sara pats their heads as she clips leashes on them.

SARA
And these are the best behaved doggies in the whole wide world, aren't they? So elegant, so dignified. Just like their mommy.

SOCIETY LADY (MATRON)
(with supreme false modesty)
I like to think so.
EXT. PARK - DAY

Extremely put out, Nelson walks beside Sara -- each holds three dogs on leashes as they head up a path. The dogs don't pull or tug, prance with military precision.

NELSON
Always a thrill to explore new career possibilities. How much do you charge for this?

SARA
I don't do it for the money.
(shouts to dogs)
Okay, guys, ready to be bad?

All six tails begin to wag in furious unison. Incredulous, Nelson watches Sara unclip all the dogs from leashes and swat them on the rump.

SARA
Raise some hell, fellas, and don't tell Mommy!

Suddenly, nothing short of pure canine bedlam is unleashed. The six prissy DOGS go insane -- race up the green, YIPPING and HOWLING, fighting with each other, rolling in the dirt, scrambling through mud puddles, BARKING at babies. Overjoyed, Sara runs with the pack, clapping her hands and shouting.

SARA
Bad dogs! Bad dogs! I'm so proud of you!

Nelson rolls his eyes, checks his watch. Lurches back when a wet, muddy pooch shakes all over him.

NELSON
Get away from me!

Another dog barrels up to Nelson. Desperate for a pet, the dog leaps up, licks and slobbers all over Nelson's hand.

Disgusted, Nelson yanks his hand away. Sara shouts from farther away.

SARA
Be nice to Winston -- he's insecure -- needs a lot of affection.

NELSON
I do not give affection to a hairy, dirty thing.

(CONTINUED)
Suddenly, Nelson is screaming. Winston has wrapped himself around Nelson's leg and is feverishly humping away.

NELSON
Get him off me! I'm going to kill him!

SARA
Winston! That's enough! Come here, boy!

Winston comes running to her, throws himself on the ground and lets her rub his back. Sara looks up to see Nelson storming off the green.

EXT. VAN - IN PARK - DAY

The van is parked near a hose. Nelson sits glumly in driver's seat. Outside, Sara hoses off all the filthy dogs.

INT. VAN - DAY

Nelson checks his watch again. Peers at Sara in the side mirror.

NELSON'S POV - SIDE MIRROR

She is radiant, clearly gets so much genuine joy from what she's doing, she couldn't look more beautiful.

NELSON
in van: stares, moved in spite of himself. Feels like a jerk for being so uptight. She comes to the window, breathless.

SARA
Look at them -- aren't they incredible?

The dogs are soaking wet, shivering, waiting patiently for Sara to tell them what to do next.

INT. VAN - LATER

Trying to be a good sport, Nelson awkwardly helps Sara to dry the dogs with hair driers. Winston starts to make a move toward Nelson.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Winston. Stay away. You're not my type.

Sara smiles to herself, thrilled to see he's managed to bend, just this little bit.

EXT. PARK - ICE CREAM STAND - DUSK/SUNSET

Sara is licking an ice cream cone, counting money as she waits for Nelson to make up his mind about his order. Her van is parked nearby.

SARA
Thirty bucks, not bad for a few hours work.

Nelson's tempted to say something glib, but bites his tongue. However, he can't help but register a look of pity mixed with horror at how pathetic the earnings are.

NELSON
I'll go for the lemon sorbet.

She almost chokes -- the look on her face is not unlike the one he just made -- pure pity and horror.

SARA
Tell me something. When was the last time you spent the whole day outdoors?

NELSON
I think... when my parents dragged me to Alcatraz for the day, at the age of nine.

He gets his sorbet and they start walking up the street together.

NELSON
Now you tell me something.

SARA
Anything.

NELSON
What's so enlightening about what we did today?

(MORE)
NELSON (CONT'D)
(as she peers at him, confused)
Why is letting some dogs go wild a better way to live than my way? Granted, it was mildly amusing, but I gotta tell you, my third eye didn't open.

SARA
These things take time. You don't have time.

NELSON
No, seriously, it's a question of values. Why is doing something fundamentally trivial better than living a responsible life, boring as that might seem to you?

She is silent, he presses on. His tone is gentle, slightly teasing, but there's real truth to what he says.

NELSON
And who made you the expert, the doctor, the guru? Why do you have all the answers?

Still, she is silent. He teases her.

NELSON
Come on, show me your resume.

Just then, they pass a three-sided bus stop with a big ad for "DIVINE PETS.NET -- America's favorite pet store." Sara points.

SARA
I used to own that company, Divine Pets.

Nelson cracks up, her timing as usual is brilliant.

NELSON
Uh-huh.

SARA
I did. But after a while it wasn't fun anymore. So I quit.

NELSON
Was that before or after you toured as a stand-up comedienne?

SARA
Oh, I never did that.
Nelson stands there somewhat bemused as Sara comes forward with a scarf, smiling.

**SARA**
This will be good for you...

She starts to blindfold him with the scarf.

**SARA**
... Sharpen your instincts.

He laughs, oh goody a sex game, tries to grab her.

**SARA**
Not those instincts. Okay, this is the object --
(as he grabs her again)
Stop it -- I run around so you lose track of where I am.
(as he's pushing the scarf down)
Don't do that, leave it on -- count to ten and try to find me.

She secures the blindfold and races off. He pauses for a moment, then:

**NELSON**
One two three -- I'm gonna get you! Four five six -- I know where you are! Seven eight nine ten.
(pauses)
This is really stupid.

He starts to walk, bumps into a chair, takes a few steps more, bumps into a table, a few steps more and he trips over a stool and crashes on the floor.

**NELSON**
Ow, shit!

She runs over to him, laughing.

**SARA**
Oh my God, you're really bad, you didn't even get close.

**NELSON**
(tries to rip off scarf)
This is funny?

(Continued)
She helps him remove the scarf, still laughing. Once again, his flight mechanism kicks in and he wants out. He takes a deep breath, has to say something.

NELSON
Sara, you're not gonna be upset when I leave tonight...? I told you, one day.

SARA
Yep. You told me. And you're a man of your word.

NELSON
Don't get me wrong, I appreciate what you're trying to do -- crazy as it may seem to me.

SARA
That's me. Just... crazy.
(sweetly)
What are you more afraid of? Spending two consecutive nights with a woman? Or discovering this whole thing might not be as crazy as you think?

He is flummoxed for a moment.

NELSON
Hard to say. I've definitely never met a woman like you, though.

SARA
Good.

He covertly checks the time.

NELSON
So, maybe I should just hit the road.

SARA
Stay for dinner. I have your favorite.

NELSON
You don't know my favorite.

SARA
Yes, I do.

(Continued)
NELSON
Oh, yeah?

SARA
Lean steak, no fat?

Her sweetness and sincerity get through, even to him.

SARA
Go on, stay for dinner, then you're free to go. No strings attached.

EXT. SARA'S LOFT - DECK - NIGHT

Nelson and Sara have dinner on a plant-covered deck, lit by strings of cheap lights. Ernie is begging at Nelson's feet.

SARA
Mitch was my October. He was the shyest man I ever met. We focused on confidence building.

NELSON
Was the patient cured?

SARA
My treatment was a little too effective. We had to terminate the month early.

NELSON
What about September?

SARA
There was no September.

Nelson feigns disbelief.

SARA
I'm not a weirdo about it.

NELSON
August?

SARA
Paul was so sad.

NELSON
Now he's happy?

(CONTINUED)
SARA
Now he's gay.

NELSON
Happy gay or gay gay?

SARA
Gay gay but very happy about it.

Nelson has to ask:

NELSON
And you and all these guys...

Nelson gestures suggestively.

SARA
Does it really matter?

She flashes the most beguiling smile.

NELSON
I suppose attraction has nothing to do with it.

The smile just becomes more beguiling, meaning: of course.

NELSON
Why a month?

SARA
Long enough to be meaningful.
Short enough to stay out of trouble.

NELSON
You defy every law of nature I know.

SARA
Good.

The sound of a MAN LAUGHING drifts over from another porch.

SARA
Listen... do you hear that? What a wonderful laugh.

(CONTINUED)
She cocks her ear, listening to the MAN LAUGHING. Then they hear a BABY CRYING... a BASKETBALL GAME down the street, a DRUNK WOMAN SINGING like an alley cat. A symphony of SOUNDS: lives being lived around them.

SARA
Doesn't life just... take your breath away?

Once again, he finds himself so moved by her, he is wordless. There is a long silence between them.

SARA
What's your secret dream, Nelson?

NELSON
I'm not much on that kind of thing.

SARA
Come on, everyone's got one.

He listens to the SOUNDS, and takes a leap -- lets himself open up for a moment.

NELSON
My father sold door-to-door. Vacuum cleaners, life insurance, for a while he sold plastic food. We were kind of the joke of the neighborhood. And believe me, the neighborhood was a pretty grim joke itself.

SARA
Where did you live?

NELSON
Daly City, just up the freeway...
(pause)
Anyway, after dinner every night, my dad would shut himself in the TV room and listen to 45s. Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett. For a year or so, I desperately wanted to be a singer.

SARA
You thought it would make him happy?

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
No. I thought those guys were everything he wasn't. Successful, proud, in control...

He stops himself -- feels too exposed, shocked that such a sincerely-felt statement actually came from his lips. She feels his discomfort, reaches over and takes his hand.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

SARA
I'd like to hear you sing sometime.

NELSON
That will never happen.
(wants to go; pulls back chair)
Well, time to...

SARA
I'd like you to do something else for me, before you leave tonight.

What?

NELSON
Do the dishes. I hate doing dishes.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Nelson is washing the dishes. Sara sits on the floor, letting Ernie teethe by nipping her hand the way puppies love to do.

SARA
So, what will you do when you go home?

NELSON
I don't know, I don't really map out my evenings...

SARA
I know. You'll turn on the TV. Get bored. Turn on your computer. Check out your work. Get bored. Surf the net. Get bored.
(softly)
And think of me.

She stands up and leaves the kitchen. He seems torn, debates with himself as he finishes the dishes. Turns to see Sara removing the last bit of her clothes before slipping into bed.

SARA
I'm making this as difficult as I possibly can.

Nelson stares, his determination quickly waning.
Raining. Nelson lies awake, studying Sara as rainy reflections of streetlights roll over her. Rising, he quietly dresses.

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

Raining. Nelson in his empty, sterile apartment, watching TV. Bored, he flips from channel to channel. Turns it OFF. Goes to his computer, looks at some work in progress on it. Gets bored.

SAME SCENE - LATER

Nelson surfing the net. Bored, he starts to disconnect when he thinks of something. He types in: "DIVINE PET.NET." His face slowly registers shock as the site comes up and he reads.

CLOSE ON MONITOR

Web site: Next to a picture of Sara and a blonde woman, who bears a striking resemblance to her -- the words: "SARA AND CLAIRE DEEVER, CO-FOUNDERS." The company is based out of Indianapolis, Indiana.

SAME SCENE - LATER

Nelson is typing something on his computer.

CLOSE ON TYPING

He has already written: "WATCH TV. WORK. SURF THE NET. GET BORED." And now he's typing -- "THINK OF ME."

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAWN

Bathed in sunlight, Sara sleeps under a pile of blankets. Nelson tiptoes into the loft, carrying a travel bag. As he approaches the bed, ERNIE GROWLS dementedly, ready to pounce.

Nelson points a finger, is amazed when ERNIE STOPS GROWLING, THUMPS HIS TAIL ON FLOOR, awakening Sara. Overjoyed to see Nelson, Sara beckons him. Nelson slides into bed, kisses her.

NELSON
Try to be wrong once in a while.
It would be good for my ego.
Nelson, wearing floral boxers, examines Sara's bathroom, frowning at the cast-iron tub. She is washing her face.

NELSON
Don't you have a shower? I hate sitting in dirty water.

She lifts her head from the sink, water dripping, and laughs.

The two of them are sitting in a steaming tub, she is washing his back.

SARA
See? That's not so bad, is it?
(points)
Can you grab some more soap?

Reaching up to get the soap, he tries a cupboard door, surprised to find it locked.

NELSON
What do you keep in there?
Secret, nasty toys?

She raises an eyebrow; mock mysterious face. He finds the soap on a counter, hands it to her.

NELSON
I looked up your web site last night. Your sister's pretty, looks a lot like you.

SARA
It is not my web site. Not my anything, anymore.

NELSON
Why'd you quit?

SARA
It started out small. And it got big.

NELSON
That's generally considered a good thing in business.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SARA

NELSON
No, I can't imagine you with millions and millions of dollars!--

She sighs with relief, then beams happily as Chas saunters into the bathroom with his morning cup of coffee.

CHAS
Did you switch beans or something? It tastes different.

SARA
Hazelnut. You don't like it?

CHAS
Too perfumy. Stick to classics --

Nelson is so outraged by this intrusion he slaps the water.

NELSON
Excuse me. Privacy? Heard of it?

CHAS
Hi, Nelson. Nice pecs, you must work out. Me, I don't have time. (pauses)
And you look absolutely adorable. (as she gives him a look, he stops)
Don't forget dinner's at eight, on the dressy side.

He turns and walks out the door.

NELSON
Doesn't that guy know how to make his own coffee?
(off her stern look)
I mean, what if he'd walked in just as I was... (reaches underwater)
Doing this?

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

She slaps the water with her hand.

SARA
Stop it! We have important things to do today...

INT. MUNI TRAIN - DAY

Nelson and Sara stand in a rail car crowded with commuters. As the car jostles and bodies bump up against him, Nelson squirms with discomfort.

NELSON
I still don’t see why we couldn’t take a cab?

SARA
Because I make the rules, Nelson. Rules you must submit to, utterly and completely.

NELSON
You know, if you want to be a dominatrix that badly, why don’t we just go buy you the leather and get it over with.

SARA
Kinky. Maybe even strangely arousing. But if we took a cab, we’d miss out on all this.

NELSON
Exactly.

Sara studies Nelson, stiff and impenetrable once again.

SARA
You know what this train is, Nelson?

NELSON
You mean besides a buffet of bad breath and body odor?

SARA
It’s 55 lives. All happening at once, in the exact same place, at the exact same time. Imagine how much hope and lust and fear and love are in this car, right now, at this very moment. Look around.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
I try not to.

SARA
I dare you. Look at someone, anyone. That woman by the door.

A woman in her early 40s stands near one of the doors, her head leaning against the window as she stares out at the passing city with a distant, detached expression.

SARA
What do you see?

NELSON
Female, 32-45, primary household decision maker. Watches 2.5 hours of television a day, spends 27 minutes at the grocery store, values price over brand.

Ignoring him, Sara gazes at the woman with empathy and wonder.

SARA
I think she's a mother. I think she loves her family so much it hurts. I think she'd throw herself in front of this train for them if she had to. And I think when she gets into bed at night, she makes love to her husband like he was the king of Egypt.

As Sara enjoys the fruit of her imagination, Nelson reconsiders the woman, this time seriously.

NELSON
I think she's got a dead-end job, a husband she can't remember why she married, and a kid who doesn't understand any of it.

Nelson's grim assessment rolls over Sara like a cloud, darkening her entire disposition.

SARA
Maybe. Maybe it's worse. Maybe nothing about life even makes sense to her anymore. Maybe some days she wishes she could just quit pretending and end the whole goddamn thing.

(CONTINUED)
Nelson stares, silenced by Sara's sudden bleakness.

SARA
You want to go to the dark side, Nelson? I can get there faster than you can. Believe me.

Looking away, Sara takes a deep breath and then smiles again, as irrepressible as she was just moments before.

SARA
But what for? We see the world we choose to see. And I think my first choice was a helluva lot more fun, don't you?

As the train jostles and jerks, Nelson and Sara search each other's eyes.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO DOCKS - DAY

Hurrying down the pier, Sara waves when she spots Abner waiting patiently, holding a paper bag.

SARA
There you are!

Abner approaches, removing his balaclava. He's a cute kid, just shy and awkward. Nelson wants to make up for yesterday.

NELSON
Hey, Abner, you've got a face and it's a good one, too!

Abner giggles, as Nelson's PHONE RINGS.

SARA
Cell phones are outlawed in my world.

NELSON
What can I say? The revolution has begun.

She doesn't like this. Nelson answers the phone.

VINCE (V.O.)
Call me genius, I don't mind.

NELSON
What up, Vince?
Vince gesticulates as he strides down a crowded sidewalk.

VINCE
Friday, November 17. You, me and Edgar Price.
(shouts)
Pucker your lips, we got the meeting!

Nelson steps away, sits on a nearby piling as Sara and Abner head toward the cluster of kids.

NELSON
You're genius, Vince.

VINCE (V.O.)
About time you said so... Hey, heard about Angelica. Sorry, man, but truthfully? As much as I loved her, I knew she wasn't for you.

NELSON
Did you? Funny you tell me now.

VINCE (V.O.)
Yeah, well, you know... discretion, valor... do I smell a new female friend?

Nelson watches the other kids coldly survey Abner, as if he's too soft for this event. The tough kids are showing off their remote-controlled sail boats: Most of them are simple, macho, tough -- they look like Mad Max boats.

NELSON
What makes you say that?

VINCE (V.O.)
When my man skips his usual morning check-in calls, I know there's estrogen in the air.
(pauses)
C'mon, c'mon, c'mon. Don't insult me. I have a life. Who is she?

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
You wouldn't know her.

VINCE (V.O.)
But would I like her? On a scale of nine to ten, is she --

ABNER WITH KIDS
pulls his boat out of a bag and the kids start to laugh. Abner's is a hand-made sailboat, full of whimsy and invention, an eccentric work of art.

KID #1
Oh that's really cool, not.

KID #2
What is it? Pokemon's dinghy?

The kids have gathered in a circle around Abner, they are intimidating, threatening. Becoming concerned, Sara turns to Nelson, waves him over.

NELSON ON PHONE

NELSON
Listen, I gotta run, great news on the Edgar thing --

VINCE (V.O.)
Wait, wait -- quick thumbnail -- I need a gossip fix here --

NELSON
See you on the 17th.

NEAR LAUNCH AREA

He hangs up and joins Sara and Abner as one of the BIG BROTHER ORGANIZERS tries to break the circle up.

BIG BROTHER ORGANIZER
Come on, all boats in the water?

KID #1
Except for this kid's.

The kids leer contemptuously as Abner nervously steps forward and lowers his sailboat into the water.

(CONTINUED)
KID #2
That's not a kid, that's a girl.

ABNER
(turns to Nelson)
Maybe I'll just forget about it.

NELSON
No, ignore them, Abner.

KID #1
(disdainfully)
Abner?

The kids huddled together, checking Abner out, hiss his name.

KIDS
Abner.

The Organizer comes forward, shaking his head telling the tough kids to stop. As he raises his arm holding a starter pistol, Nelson spots a techie nerd packing up a model submarine on a nearby bench.

NELSON
Hang in there. Just wait a minute.
(whispers)
Abner is a great name.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As the Organizer raises the pistol to fire, Nelson bolts over to the techie nerd.

NELSON
Wanna make a hundred bucks?

ON TECHIE NERD

Covertly slipping his remote-controlled sub into the water.

ON RACE

The remote-controlled sailboats glide in the water. Suddenly, the lead boat tacks off course. The next lead boat tacks off course and out of position.

KID #1
Hey! My boat's all screwed up!

(CONTINUED)
KID #3

What the hell --

As the techie nerd snickers, Abner's boat starts sailing in a physically impossible straight line for the finish as the rest of the flotilla has to tack back and forth.

WIDER

Abner looks up at Nelson, who winks back. As his boat passes the others, narrowly beating the last two boats to the finish, Abner grins from ear to ear.

ABNER

I guess I'm winning.

KID #1

Hold on -- that little creep is cheating!

ABNER

No, I'm not. My boat's just better.

Abner's boat nudges the end of the pond; he calmly announces:

ABNER

See? I guess I won.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Nelson and Sara stand outside Abner's little house, watching him unlock the door. Before stepping in he waves to them.

ABNER

Can we do that again? With cars, next time, maybe?

Nelson nods, Sara shakes her head. Abner closes the door, smiling. The minute he's gone, Sara turns to Nelson.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SARA
Sometimes a good idea is not a good idea, know what I mean?

They start to cross the street toward her building.

NELSON
Those kids were laughing at him.
Have you ever been laughed at?
    (pauses)
Okay, cheating is... bad, I guess.

SARA
Yeah, you're a father figure now.

NELSON
Get out of here -- father figure.
The kid just met me.

SARA
You're a man. When you don't know who your father is, you're not very picky about your role models.

She stops, stunned. A Circuit City man is standing outside her building with a big box.

SARA
What's that?

NELSON
Don't be mad, I got you a little present. A flat screen TV.

SARA
That's not a 'little present' for me, it's a 'little present' for you.
    (sweetly, but firmly, to Circuit City man)
Take it back. Better yet, you keep it. I never watch TV.

She unlocks the door and leaves Nelson stunned outside.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Carrying a bottle of wine, Nelson trudges up the steps with Sara, feeling very put out.

SARA
Stop pouting, we promised Chas Cherry we'd come.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Oh we're calling everyone by first
and last names now? I don't want
to waste my night with Chas Cherry.
I want to get naked with Sara Deever.

SARA
You have a one-track mind, Nelson
Moss. Trust me, you won't be
bored. Chas Cherry's a great cook.

INT. CHAS'S LOFT - NIGHT
Nelson sitting across from Chas, who has metamorphosed
into an extravagantly made-up, gloriously stylish
transvestite.

SARA
That was Chas. This is Cherry.

Chas extends a manicured hand, Nelson is trying his hardest
to go along with it, forcing himself to be hip, ebullient.

NELSON
Great, great, this is very -- you
know -- Pink Flamingoes -- great
outfit, and the makeup, wow.
(faltering)
Wow.

BRANDON (O.S.)
This wine is so Martha Stewart --

BRANDON enters from the kitchen with the uncorked bottle
of wine. Also fully crossed, Brandon's get-up is even
more flamboyant than Chas's.

BRANDON
In other words, perfect.

SARA
That was Brandon. This is Brandy.

NELSON
Brandy and Cherry, great. So.
Here we are... surprise!

He laughs uncomfortably, working double-time to be cool.
Chas and Brandon start to tease him, with a light touch.

CHAS
Do you think he's uncomfortable?

(CONTINUED)
BRANDON
About what?

CHAS
I don't know, maybe he doesn't
like...
(points to the
meal)
Lamb stew.
(to Nelson)
I hope you're not vegetarian,
Nelson, I forgot to ask.

BRANDON
Actually, we just presumed you
were a meat eater.

NELSON
Right, right, you presumed right.
Lamb stew, great.

He is dying, desperate to get out of there.

CHAS
Could it be the music? Maybe
classical Italian opera... just
sets you on edge...

BRANDON
You don't have anything against
Italians, do you?

NELSON
No, I love Italy! I love
Puccini! I love Michelangelo
and -- and --

He looks in the other room, sees a TV playing.

NELSON
I just want to watch a little TV.

CHAS
Oh, we understand that need,
completely.

Nelson gets up and leaves the room in a hurry. Sara,
Chas and Brandon exchange a look.

INT. LOFT - TV ROOM - NIGHT
Nelson sitting on sofa, watching a TV ad.

(CONTINUED)
CLOSE ON TV

Lycos commercial with man in kilt -- wind raising kilt up -- dog running to castle -- dropping off a package. Pair of boxer shorts for the man.

CHAS (O.S.)
I always liked this spot, but I would have remixed it, those two lines at the top get swallowed.

BACK TO SCENE

Surprised, Nelson turns around to see Chas standing behind him. Sara is next to him, rubbing her temples.

SARA
Who ate them? The dog?

CHAS
Don't be Cruella, Sara. That's one of Nelson's ads. He won Gold Pencil for it.

NELSON
(surprised)
How did you know that?

Sara exchanges an embarrassed look with Chas, shrugs.

SARA
I meant to tell you, Cherry, I'm sorry I meant Chas, works in advertising, too.

NELSON
(smirks, bored)
Really? What firm?

CHAS
Baker, Bohanen...

Nelson's smirk disappears.

NELSON
Chas... Whatley?

BRANDON
Oh look, baby's famous.

Nelson's jaw drops, he is horrified.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Oh my God, you have been that Chas... all this time?
(it registers)
Wait a minute, you didn't get the Doctor Diggety account did you?

CHAS
Nelson, does it really matter?

NELSON
Oh sure, maybe not to Cherry -- but I bet it matters to Chas. I know it matters to Nelson.

Just then, the PHONE RINGS. Sara picks it up. She is still rubbing her temples, as if there's a headache coming on.

SARA
Hello?

Nelson points an accusatory finger at Sara.

NELSON
She should have told me.
(pauses)
I mean, this is... awkward. If I'd known who you were...

CHAS
You would have been nicer to me? Thanks.

They stop talking when they see how upset Sara is as she says to the person on phone:

SARA
I said: he's busy. No I can't talk to you, either. Good-bye.

She hangs up. Glares angrily at Chas, really rubbing her temples.

SARA
Ten guesses who that was.

CHAS
Sara, it's not what you --

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (3)

SARA
How long have you been doing this behind my back? What does she want?

She sees how confused Nelson is, tries to make light as she backs out of the room.

SARA
Oh, it doesn't matter. I'm gonna go downstairs.
(to Nelson)
I have a headache. You stay.

And she hurries to the front door. Nelson looks worried, starts to go after her -- Chas shoots him a look -- let her go.

NELSON
What was that all about?

CHAS
She gets migraines.

NELSON
No, the phone call. Who was that?

CHAS
Her sister, Claire. Long story. (sees Nelson's look)
I'm not telling it.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT (LATER)

Clearly in pain, Sara locks the closet in the bathroom, comes out when she hears the DOOR OPEN. As Nelson enters, she flashes a smile.

SARA
Hey, sorry I lost it back there.

NELSON
That's okay. Gives me a little boost to know you're not perfect. (gently)
Feeling better?

SARA
Oh yeah. All gone.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Chas told me it was your sister on the phone. Why does that upset you so much?

She shrugs and heads over to the bed. Throws on the charm.

SARA
Remember the part about getting naked -- we could do that now.

NELSON
Don't dodge me.
(sits down beside her)
Talk to me. What happened?

She freezes up. Quite simply cannot tell him anything. He is really surprised, and a little hurt.

NELSON
That's not fair. You expect me to be so honest, so forthcoming...

SARA
But this is your month, not mine.

She sees how mad he's getting, leans in and kisses him.

SARA
Never go to bed angry.

Aroused by the kiss, Nelson prolongs it, unzips her dress, slips his hand inside, caresses her back. Is surprised to feel her stiffen under his hands. He backs away, studies her. He sees what she's trying to hide.

NELSON
You're not feeling well are you?
(as she gestures evasively)
Maybe we'll get naked tomorrow, tonight we'll wear P.J.s.

80

INT. SARA'S LOFT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Sara and Nelson sound asleep, arms wrapped around each other, both wearing pajamas. Hearing a KNOCK on door, ERNIE starts BARKING insanely. Pissed, Nelson lifts his head, shouting:

(CONTINUED)
ERNIE keeps BARKING. Then Nelson hears a louder KNOCK. Annoyed, he rolls out of bed and heads for the door. Opening it, Nelson finds Abner with an old trunk beside him.

ABNER
Wanna buy some junk?

NELSON
Abner, it's, uhh... a little early.

ABNER
I think I can break the record for tallest house of cards, but I gotta buy 75 decks, so I thought maybe I could sell some of my stuff.

Awake, Sara listens as Nelson waves Abner in.

NELSON
Yeah, sure... come on in.

ON NELSON AND ABNER
sitting on the living room floor as Abner pulls one colorful, homemade toy after another out of the trunk. Composed entirely of found parts, the hand puppets, figurines and other toys are wildly original. Believing Sara is still asleep, Nelson and Abner speak softly:

NELSON
Abner, what is this stuff?

ABNER
I make my own toys. It's cheaper.

Amazed, Nelson chuckles, but Abner takes it the wrong way.

ABNER
Never mind.

Abner starts to put the toys away, but Nelson stops him.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON

Whoa, whoa, wait a second.
(beat)
Why do you wanna set a world record?

ABNER

I wanna be good at something.

As Nelson studies Abner, Sara listens intently from the bed.

NELSON

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Abner shakes his head.

NELSON

Neither did I.

Abner looks up at Nelson with a new sense of connection.

NELSON

It's lonely sometimes, but you know what?
(pointing to his temple)
It makes you use your imagination. It makes you creative. You're already good at something, Abner. This stuff is incredible.

Watching now, Sara smiles, as proud as she is touched.

NELSON

Other kids just buy toys at a store. All that takes is money. This stuff is ten times cooler. Abner, you're an artist.

The affirmation sinking in, Abner smiles as he picks up a spider puppet.

ABNER

They don't do much though.

NELSON

Really?

Nelson puts his hand into a wild, red-eyed mad man puppet and brings it to life with a silly puppet voice:

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
I happen to do a lot, young man.
Why just last night, I cloned
myself and then ate me for dinner.

ABNER
(smirking)
I think I'm a little old for that.

NELSON
Oh right... of course you are.

Nelson now sees Sara is awake, and they exchange a grin.

NELSON
In that case, I'm sure you're
also too old for this...
raaaaaghh!

Nelson attacks with the mad man puppet and Abner, his kid instincts kicking in, flees.

ABNER
Aaaahhh!

As Nelson and the mad man chase Abner and his spider around the loft, ERNIE BARKS furiously. Cornering Abner, Nelson reaches out with the mad man puppet and taps Abner's spider.

NELSON
You're it.

The chase reverses.

ABNER
Raaaaaaagh!

Gaining ground on Nelson, Abner rounds a corner and runs smack into Sara.

SARA
No running in this house!
(scary alien voice)
Unless I get to play!

Sara whips Abner's one-eyed alien puppet out from behind her back and chases after its creator.

SARA
Ah-hah-hah-hah-hah!

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (4)

Fleeing, Abner soon finds himself pursued by Sara, Nelson and Ernie all at once.

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME SCENE - LATER

as the game evolves, Abner and his spider puppet prowling the loft.

Behind Abner, the mad man and the alien silently appear in doorways and above furniture, but when Abner spins around, they’re gone. Even Ernie scampers past with Abner's wire dog strapped to his back, but Abner misses it.

Finally, Abner outsmarts the grown-ups, backtracks and catches them both in the kitchen, looking the other way.

ABNER
Ahhh!

SARA
Eeewwwwh!

NELSON
Arrrrrrrhh!

Sara and Nelson flee, but someone trips, and as they collapse into a pile, Abner jumps on top, all three laughing hysterically.

OMITTED

&

81

82

83

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

In very high spirits, the three of them sit at a table outside the coffee shop. Abner and Sara share a banana split. Abner is horrified to see the waitress bring Nelson a fruit salad. Sara whispers to Abner.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

SARA
I know, don't say anything.

A Porsche pulls up to the curb, LEXY, a lingerie model in the passenger seat, checks out the street.

LEXY
The movie starts in ten minutes. Maybe we should skip it.

A MAN jumps out of the car, says:

MAN FROM CAR
Don't worry, babe, you'll get your cappuccino.

Seeing Nelson, the Man stops dead in his tracks. It is Vince. He whistles as he takes in the whole scene.

VINCE
Ooooh. Somebody went domestic.

Just then, Abner checks his watch, jumps up.

ABNER
Gotta go. Mom's home for an hour between jobs!

He runs off. Vince edges a little closer to Nelson's table, checking Sara out head to toe.

VINCE
Okay, okay. Wow. Well, I guess it all makes sense. 'Mystery Woman Unveiled' on...
(looks around)
What street is this? Where am I? I'm lost!

NELSON
Um... Sara, Vince, Vince, Sara.

Lexy calls out from the car, impatient to leave.

LEXY
Vince, the movie...

VINCE
(doing a weighing of scales)
The movie... the cappuccino... the movie... women.
CONTINUED: (2)

SARA
God, that is one of the most astute observations about female behavior I've ever heard. Are you a psychologist?

VINCE
(confused, laughs)
Funny. She's funny. Right? That's good...
(points to his car)
Meet the lovely Lexy -- my man Nelson, his woman Sara.

SARA
Hey, Lexy.

LEXY
Hi.

VINCE
See, they get along. Why don't the four of us go out together sometime, you know, do something depraved?

Just then a WAITRESS comes out and Vince stops her.

VINCE
Quick order. Cappuccino.

WAITRESS
(harassed)
Quick answer. No quick orders.

And she walks back inside the coffee shop.

VINCE
I love this place. I'm gonna come here every day. So I guess the movie wins.
(winks to Sara)
Keep you women happy, that's our job.
(heading back to car)
Don't forget, my man. The 20th. You, me, and God.
(reaches his door)
Sara -- a pleasure, and an honor.

He gets in the car, REVs the ENGINE and off they go. Nelson is embarrassed, starts doing a tap dance.

(Continued)
NELSON
He's actually a good guy. Deep down. Somewhere.

SARA
He seemed okay.

NELSON
I just mean... the glibness... kind of wears you out after a while.

SARA
Do you always talk about your friends that way?

NELSON
No. Fortunately, I don't have any friends besides Vince)
(raises his hands)
Okay, I should be ashamed of myself, I'm a lousy human being.

SARA
(pauses, doesn't indulge him)
So what is it? Some kind of boy's club, work friendship?

NELSON
I guess so. I don't examine certain details of my life too closely.

SARA
Do you trust him? Isn't that what friends are for?

Nelson shrugs, then nods, then shakes his head, then nods and shrugs again. She cracks up. He's unaware he's doing it.

SARA
Would you trust him to be there for you...

NELSON
When?

SARA
In a scary situation, let's say.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
You may have noticed -- I don't put myself in those situations.

SARA
(the sweetest smile)
Do you trust me?

Aware of what he's doing now, Nelson shrugs, shakes his head, nods. She hits him with a look.

SARA
Show me the house where you grew up.

EXT. HOUSE (OLD NEIGHBORHOOD) - DUSK

A decaying working-class neighborhood; "for sale" signs dot the front yards. Nelson's neglected old house has a "for sale" sign in front. He balks, feigning indifference.

INT. HOUSE - DUSK

She opens the front door, extends her hand to Nelson who's like a spooked horse out on the porch.

SARA
It's just a house, Nelson.

He takes a deep breath, still balking, then gives in. Holding Sara's hand, he enters and slowly wanders through the empty living room... memories, images, and sounds washing over him. He is silent for a long time, then:

NELSON
You remember blue and it turns out to be green. Maybe it turns out we were... happy once in a while.

There is a set of double doors half open, leading to a room beyond. Together they open the double doors and step inside.

INT. OLD TV ROOM - DUSK

Humming a Frank Sinatra, she guides him to the center of the room and begins to slow dance with him; after a while, he whispers in her ear.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON
Sara, I may not know a lot of things...
   (gently)
... but I do know how to slow dance. And you are terrible.
   Now, watch me, I'll teach you.

As he teaches her how to slow dance, see the look of pure gratitude on his face -- this is a big moment for him. He is crossing an irreversible line.

SERIES OF SHOTS
to show the passage of time.

INT. LOFT BATHROOM - DAY
Nelson lying in the bathtub, shakes his head. Sara is painting his toenails. He doesn't like the color.

EXT. VEGETABLE STAND - DAY
The two of them buying vegetables; the Chinese woman holds up pictures of her family to Nelson, enjoying his reaction.

INT. LOFT - NIGHT
Blindfolded, a naked Nelson gropes his way around the loft, trying to find Sara who is stripping and tossing her clothes at him, laughing.

EXT. STREET - DAY
The two of them taking another walk; CAMERA MOVES OFF of Nelson to reveal... he is walking Ernie, the puppy, on a leash.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAY
As Sara cuts her hair with a FLOWBEE, Nelson dresses in business attire. Three weeks of November are crossed off the large wall calendar. It is November 20th.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Every woman I know spends 200
dollars on a haircut. You use a
vacuum cleaner.

SARA
Quit trying to change the subject.

Visibly upset, Sara shuts OFF the SELF-GROOMING MACHINE.

SARA
You made a commitment. Our time
isn't over.

NELSON
It's one meeting.

SARA
Why is going to some pow-wow with
that slicko Vince such a big deal?

NELSON
Because it's probably the chance
of a lifetime, that's why.

SARA
Well, if it's a whole lifetime,
just postpone it for one more
week.

NELSON
Sara, when Edgar Price says he'll
meet you, you don't say, 'Wait,
how about next month?' You say,
'Thank you. I'll be there.' He's
one of the greats. Where's my
phone?

SARA
I hate it. I threw it out.

OFF Nelson's look, Sara produces his cell phone and slams
it down on the table in front of him.

SARA
What if the Great One hires you to
start tomorrow?

NELSON
I should be so unlucky. My gizmo.

Sara digs his memo recorder out of a hiding place.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
That would ruin everything -- we haven't finished! You haven't sung for me yet. You promised you would.

Nelson pours a huge coffee.

NELSON
That's a promise I know I didn't make, because that's a promise I'd never keep.

Nelson chugs the coffee and sets out to leave, so distracted he forgets to say goodbye to Sara. As Sara watches the door shut behind him, she begins to look frightened.

SARA
(to closed door)
Nelson, please don't go.

INT. POWER RESTAURANT - DAY

An innocent-looking WAITRESS delivers lunch to Nelson, Vince and EDGAR PRICE (60). Nelson is essentially taking command of the meeting, showing the same cool professionalism he exhibited when he delivered his presentation. As he talks, Edgar Price studies him carefully.

NELSON
We know a lot of guys who do this for the awards, Mr. Price, but that's not us.

Vince thoughtfully nods his head, then flashes a wicked smile.

VINCE
That doesn't mean we don't get the awards.

NELSON
But still... we're not about acclaim, hand-holding, dinners, sending prostitutes to the client...

PRICE
Prostitutes? That's new.

Sensing that Price is a hound dog, Vince cozies up.

(CONTINUED)
VINCE
You've been retired for a long time. We got stories for you.

Price's eyes light up, he laughs. Vince seems worried that Nelson is coming off as a stick in the mud.

NELSON
We're about the work. If the work is great, it speaks for itself.

Vince nervously starts to fill the silence, when Price speaks.

PRICE
That's all I need to know.
(smiles, they're in)
That, and -- married? Any kids?

VINCE
We've avoided the family thing for some time. All our lives.

PRICE
Good. Because if you're worried about 'quality of life' or paternity leave or any other new age crap, much as I like you, we can stop right now. I need to be your full-time commitment.

Nelson debates a moment, not sure he likes the tone, but he plays along, playing politic.

NELSON
I can do that.

VINCE
If only it were so easy with women.

EXT. CHINESE TEA SHOP - DAY

Chas and Sara walk toward the Chinese tea shop.

CHAS
He'll come back, even if he gets the job.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
I'm not worried about it.
(totally worried)
You really think so?

CHAS
My God, I've never seen you like this.

SARA
It's just that... we still have ten days to go... and he was doing so well.

CHAS
What's ten days when you'll boot him out in the end?

SARA
Ten days is a lifetime, Chas.
(pauses)
I should have locked him in. I should have tied him to the bed.

CHAS
Wouldn't have stopped him. I know guys like Nelson. When push comes to shove, he's only gonna do what he wants to.

SARA
That's one of my favorite things about him. It's also what scares me. It's so amazing, Chas. He was changing, right before my eyes.

CHAS
Happens to the best of us.
Now Vince is doing a little song and dance for Price.

VINCE
Just so you know, I've got a couple clients in my hip pocket, some great leads for new accounts. So we come -- fully loaded.

PRICE
You're not selling me a car, Holland, and frankly I'm not overly impressed with you anyway. (to Nelson) But your reputation precedes you, and if I have to take him to get you, I will. This is my offer. It's good as long as we're at this table.

Clearing their plates, the Waitress spills a drink. It soaks the napkin Price is writing on and pours into his lap.

WAITRESS
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

PRICE
You know... we are what we do in this world, sweetie, and you're a waitress. All that requires is that you bring the food and drink to and from the table without making a mess. That's it. So when you screw up something so incredibly simple as that... well that just doesn't say a whole helluva lot about you, does it?

Stunned, the Waitress carries the dishes to a nearby wait-station where she breaks down and cries.

VINCE
Women like that I give dumb a bad name.

ON NELSON
as he watches the Waitress cry, then turns to appraise Price, who doesn't skip a beat as he grabs a new napkin.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PRICE
They should fire her.
(pauses)
I always say -- a bad hire
strengthens the competition's
hand. A good general feeds off
his enemy.

NELSON
Actually, Sun Tzu said the last
line, in The Art of War.

VINCE
Did he? Interesting.

Price starts to rewrite the offer. Suddenly he stands as
if to leave, he's pulling a tactical maneuver to make them
nervous.

PRICE
That's right. Smart man, Nelson.

Price writes the offer on the napkin. Vince picks it up,
reads it, jaw dropping. Price grins -- loves his own
sense of drama -- extends his hand to Nelson. But Nelson
does nothing. And Vince starts to freak.

VINCE
Nels? Are you there...?

NELSON
Not interested.

PRICE
You don't like my offer?

NELSON
Mr. Price... my father was a poor
man... embarrassed by his own
life. I swore I'd never end up
like him. I thought money and
success would be the difference.
But you're rich and successful,
and I don't wanna ever end up like
you either. It's not the offer I
don't like... it's you.
INT. POWER RESTAURANT - DAY

Vince and Nelson face each other, both aware of Price on his cell phone only a few yards away. Vince is very nervous.

VINCE
Act normal, he's watching us.

Price returns, casually drops the napkin with the offer on the table. Vince picks it up, reads it, jaw dropping. Price grins -- loves his own sense of drama -- extends his hand to Nelson. But Nelson does nothing. And Vince starts to freak.

VINCE
Nels? Are you there...?

NELSON
Not interested.

PRICE
You don't like my offer?

NELSON
Mr. Price... my father was a poor man... embarrassed by his own life. I swore I'd never end up like him. I thought money and success would be the difference. But you're rich and successful, and I don't wanna ever end up like you either. It's not the offer I don't like... it's you.
Nelson loosens his tie as he exits. Vince flies out.

VINCE
Okay, what the hell was that?
You just shit in God's face, do you realize that?!

NELSON
If that's your God, you're in big trouble. The guy's not for me --

VINCE
Not for you? Edgar Price is your goddamned soul daddy!-- you're practically cloned from his D.N.A. --

NELSON
No. I am nothing like that man.
If I am: shoot me.

VINCE
Where's the gun?! Shoot me! This is my career, too, you know!
(pauses)
It's that new girl isn't it?
She's got your balls in a jar.
This is why domestic is dangerous,
Nelson, this is why we stay wild --

Nelson waves his arm as a cab passes. The cab stops.
He opens the door, feels bad for Vince.

NELSON
I'm sorry I cost you the job, Vince.

VINCE
No, no, I don't need pity. Not from the man who dive-bombed his career twice in one month.

Nelson gets into the cab.

NELSON
No. I guess you don't.

And the cab takes off.
NELSON (O.S.)
Have you ever heard of an aerides odoratum?

She looks over. Nelson is in a taxi, stuffed to the gills with flowers. He holds up an exotic purple orchid.

NELSON
It reminded me of you.

She takes the orchid, walks abreast of the cab as it slowly makes its way down the street.

SARA
You got the job, didn't you?

NELSON
Best offer anyone ever made me.

He hands her a bouquet of roses.

SARA
When do you start?

NELSON
We had a hard time agreeing on that.

(hands her tulips)
He suggested immediately.

(hands more flowers)
I suggested never.

He hands her the biggest bunch of flowers of the batch.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
He was the biggest prick I ever met, Sara.

She has reached the front of her building. Howls with delight, drops the flowers in her arms. Nelson leaps out of the cab, they kiss, flowers all around them.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sara and Nelson are holding each other, asleep in bed.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

The city sleeps.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAY

Nelson is brushing Ernie, who keeps squiggling back to try to bite him. Nelson may tolerate dogs now but he's not St. Francis of Assisi -- he fake threatens to whack Ernie with the brush, growling. Sara is poring over a slew of cookbooks checking out recipes for roast turkey.

SARA
How does vegan turkey sound?

NELSON
Vile. Come on, let's keep Ernie.

SARA
Nope. He got placed, he goes.

NELSON
But you love this little monster.

He doesn't notice that as she sets a book down, she doubles back, holding her stomach as if nauseated.

SARA
There's another one coming soon, I'll love him.

NELSON
Cold, heartless woman.

She smiles thinly, the wave of nausea passes and she resumes perusing the books. Forces herself to sound bright.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
How does turkey with Cajun oyster stuffing sound?

NELSON
Ordering sounds better.

SARA
You can't order Thanksgiving dinner, this is one time in life when it's good to be trad.

NELSON
In that case, are you inviting your family?

SARA
No. Holiday fights are a little too traditional for my taste if you know what I mean.

NELSON
What do you guys fight about?

SARA
Money, religion, sex, Sara's decisions, Sara's 'unconventional lifestyle.' They think I'm a freak.

NELSON
You are a freak.

SARA
(shrugs)
Anyway, boring subject.

The truth is she feels too shitty to talk, turns her head from him to hide another wave of nausea.

NELSON
I'm sure they miss you.

SARA
I know they do.

She slams the book shut to indicate: end of conversation.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

NELSON
You know, there's a good tradition called making up. Try it.

SARA
Some day I'll have to.

Someone KNOCKS on the door. Becoming more upset, anxious to be alone, she pleads.

SARA
Nelson, will you walk down with him, please?

NELSON
Sure. Come on, boy.

As Ernie trots off with him, Nelson opens the door, revealing a BURLY MAN.

BURLY MAN
The password is 'Mentos... Fresh and Full of Life.'

NELSON
What else?

The Man forces a smile and gives the thumbs-up sign. Nelson hands him Ernie's leash and follows them out. The moment the door shuts, Sara rushes into the bathroom.

EXT. SARA'S BUILDING - DAY

The Burly Man exits with Ernie, followed by Nelson. As the Man leads Ernie toward his van, Ernie keeps peering back at Nelson who meekly waves, genuinely sad.

ABNER (O.S.)
Why can't she keep one, for a change?

Nelson looks down to find Abner, wearing his balaclava and holding his skateboard.

NELSON
Guess she helps more this way.

The two of them stand there watching the van pull away.

ABNER
I've been thinking about something.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
You have?  Glad to hear it.

ABNER
I'm thinking: if you wanna adopt me, you can. Father-Son Day's on Monday. It would be good timing.

NELSON
I don't quite know what to say, Abner.

Sensing rejection, Abner looks away. Nearby, Al and Osiris are changing the window display in their bookstore.

NELSON
I tell you what. I can't adopt you, but I'll come to Father-Son Day if you want.

ABNER
Promise?

NELSON
Promise.

An ecstatic grin spreads across Abner's face.

ABNER
Wait till my mom hears!

As Abner runs off, Osiris comes out to check the window display, waves to Nelson.

OSIRIS
Hey, Nelson, like the new display?

NELSON
Beautiful, Osiris. Always had a soft spot for Che Guevara.

OSIRIS
How's life? How's Sara?

NELSON
Both are... (peers up at loft) Great.

(CONTINUED)
He slowly takes in all the life on the street -- sees the Chinese fruit vendor sweeping up her sidewalk, she nods to him. In a thrift store nearby, a twelve-year-old girl practices dance moves, peering at herself in a mirror. Nelson absorbs it all, feeling something he's never felt before: part of place. True contentment. Love. His eyes roam up to the billboard which was being replaced a few weeks ago. A new ad is up. It says: LIFE IS CHOICE, MAKE THE RIGHT ONE.

There is a moment, a transcendent moment. If ever you could see a person have a revelation, it would be right here, right now. He spins on his heels and runs inside.

Sara's face is wet, and her hands tremble as she forces down pills. In raw frustration, she pounds her fists on the counter. Hearing Nelson's FOOTSTEPS ON the STAIRS, she scrambles to pull herself together.

Nelson enters, shouting.

NELSON
I have an announcement to make!

He stops in the doorway to the bathroom. Sitting next to the tub, Sara drinks more water.

NELSON
What's wrong? Are you okay?

SARA
Yeah, I'm fine.

Nelson enters the bathroom and gestures toward the locked cabinet.

NELSON
What do you keep in there?

SARA
Nothing.

NELSON
Nothing usually doesn't require a lock. What's wrong?

(CONTINUED)
SARA
I'm fine. So, what's the big announcement?

NELSON
Come on, Sara, talk to me.

SARA
Am I okay? No, I'm not okay. I have a migraine. And I miss Ernie.

Sara returns to the kitchen and busies herself chopping vegetables. Nelson follows.

SARA
So, come on, what's your big announcement?

NELSON
Marry me.

SARA
Technically, shouldn't that be a question?

NELSON
Will you marry me?

SARA
Are you insane?

NELSON
Yes, I am, and you should be very proud of the work you've done. (kisses her)
I stood on the street, Sara, and I realized: This is it. Life will never be better or sweeter than this. I am happy. I'm in love. Everything just clicked for me.

SARA
That's incredibly sweet, but you don't understand...

NELSON
Yes, I do. It all makes sense: I want you, I want this life.

Nelson's CELL PHONE RINGS inside one of the kitchen cabinets. Nelson retrieves it and drops it into the water-filled sink.
NELSON
Marry me.

He pulls off his watch and drops it into the sink as well.

NELSON
Marry me, Sara.

SARA
You're forgetting something.

Sara moves to the refrigerator to gather more vegetables.

NELSON
What?

SARA
We made a deal, remember? One month. That's it.

NELSON
Did you hear what I said? I said I'm in love with you. I've never said that to anyone, ever.

SARA
Well then this is a really big breakthrough for you -- you can finally say things that you could never say before.

NELSON
Sara, I know you're not feeling well, but I gotta say... I was hoping for a different reaction.

SARA
We made an arrangement, Nelson. One month and not a day more. That was our deal.

NELSON
Screw the deal. I just asked you to spend the rest of your life with me. Doesn't that mean anything to you?

SARA
Of course it does.

Sara tries to turn away, but Nelson won't let her.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
You said you'd never lie to me.

SARA
I haven't.

NELSON
Then look at me and tell me you don't love me.

Sara's eyes fill with tears.

SARA
Please don't make me do this right now.

She heads for the bathroom.

NELSON
Do what, tell the truth?

SARA
(stopping)
This! What you want, what you need... I can't give it to you, Nelson. Any of it. Ever.

NELSON
Why not?

SARA
... because of me.

NELSON
What about you? For God's sake, Sara, please just tell me what's wrong. All I want is the truth.

SARA
I can't --

Rushing into the bathroom, Sara slams the door behind her.

NELSON
Sara?

As he tries the door, Nelson hears her becoming violently ill inside.

NELSON
(banging on the door)
Sara? Sara! Sara!

(CONTINUED)
Throwing his shoulder into the door, Nelson breaks it open and finds Sara, slumped over by the tub, with vomit covering the floor beside her.

NELSON

Jesus.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Delirious and crying, Sara fumbles to cover the vomit with a towel as Nelson bursts in.

NELSON

What the hell is going on?

He sees the key in the cabinet door, lunges toward it.

SARA

No! You can't do that! Get out!

She tries to stand up and stop him from unlocking the cabinet, but she's too weak. Yanking open the cabinet, he gapes speechlessly at over 90 bottles of prescription medicine. Sara weakly pulls herself to her feet. Gathering a last surge, she angrily rips the shelves from the cabinet, sending scores of bottles rolling around the floor.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
There. Is that enough truth for you?! Are you happy now?

Sara hurls bottle after bottle at Nelson. He stands there dumbly, lets them bounce off him.

SARA
You just couldn't leave it alone, could you?! You just had to know!

She turns to leave -- her body literally collapses and she starts to crash to the floor. Nelson grabs her, she is limp in his arms. He gently lies her down, panicking as she grows increasingly faint.

NELSON
Sara, talk to me...
(as she doesn't respond)
Please... just talk to me, tell me what's wrong, so I can help.

She closes her eyes. He is terrified, shakes her.

NELSON
Sara? Sara!

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DUSK

A bewildered Nelson sits in a curtained-off area in a busy emergency room, being grilled by a DOCTOR.

Sara is conked out on a gurney, attached to an IV drip.

DOCTOR
Do you have her medical records?

NELSON
No.

DOCTOR
Who's her doctor, so I can track them down...

NELSON
I don't know who her doctor is.

The Doctor looks at him, taking stock of this shell-shocked man.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DOCTOR
Do you have any idea what's wrong with her?

NELSON
I'm sorry, I don't know anything. I called a friend of hers, maybe he...

He peers around helplessly, sighs with relief when he sees Chas racing into the emergency room looking for him.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DUSK

While Nelson stands off by himself, feeling exiled and helpless, Chas confers with a NURSE outside Sara's hospital room. Nelson can see her in a bed, unconscious, hooked up to blinking machines and a web of IV's. Nelson slowly comes over to Chas, taps him on the shoulder.

NELSON
I'm sinking. Fast.

Chas and the Nurse exchange a look. The Nurse goes in the room to check on Sara's vitals.

CHAS
I'm sorry you had to find out this way, Nelson. She was diagnosed four years ago. It's a non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

Nelson is stunned.

CHAS
(shakes his head)
Come on, let's get a drink.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nelson and Chas share a booth. Nelson has left his drink untouched, is desperately pumping Chas for information.

NELSON
Wait a minute -- you said -- she stopped her treatments --

(astonished)
A year ago? How could she --

(CONTINUED)
CHAS
-- You're not listening, Nelson. For Christ's sake, bone marrow transplants, chemo, experimental treatments... She stopped because they didn't work. (pauses) Nothing worked.

Nelson finally takes a gulp of his drink to brace himself. Tries to be brave.

NELSON
Look, I'm no doctor... but one year unchecked...

Chas holds a clear honest gaze on Nelson

CHAS
It has spread everywhere.

Nelson inhales sharply, like someone kicked him in the stomach. He is struggling not to cry and puts so much energy into the struggle, he deflects the emotion to anger.

NELSON
God damn it. Talk about trust -- talk about honesty -- how could she get involved with me and not tell me she was sick?

Chas quietly sits there, lets him blow off steam.

NELSON
I mean, what was she thinking?

CHAS
She was thinking you'd be like all the others. Just a month.

That stops Nelson. Chas continues, his manner gentle, calm.

CHAS
You need to understand something, Nelson. Rules are how she copes. When life's out of control, people go to great lengths to invent the illusion of control. (softly) Believe me, I know.

(CONTINUED)
The rift with her family? That's what it's about, isn't it? Her rules?

(as Chas is silent)
Oh come on, Chas, I love her too, you're not betraying her.

Chas studies Nelson, nods.

CHAS
Yes. She saw what was coming, but they wouldn't let go, kept trying to run her disease. So she took off.

NELSON
And came here?

CHAS
(nods)
She told me since she couldn't live a normal life, she was gonna live an abnormal one, best way she knew how.

Nelson hangs his head, trying to collect himself.

NELSON
I don't get it, she loves life more than anyone I know, how could she just... give up?

CHAS
She's not giving up. She's making the most of what she's got left.

NELSON
But... I'm saying... she should fight it, instead of accepting...

CHAS
Fate? Why? What's so bad about acceptance, Nelson?

Suddenly, all the emotions pour through the cracks and Nelson just bursts into tears and cries like a baby.

INT. HOSPITAL - SARA'S ROOM - MORNING

Nelson steps into her room. She is awake, but drained. The strain between them is so palpable you can touch it. They're like two people spiritually exposed for the first time.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Hi. Feeling any...

SARA
(can read his mind)
You want to know why I didn't tell you, don't you?

He sits down on the chair by the bed. Nods.

SARA
This is why.

She gestures to the whole set up: the room, her in bed, him standing there looking stricken, afraid to move.

SARA
Look at us, look at you. You probably think I'll break if you touch me, I'll crumble if you say one harsh word. You measure every step, every thought...
(pauses)
That's not how I want you to be.

He leans forward, takes her hand and kisses it.

NELSON
Then I will learn to be better.

SARA
Oh God, Nelson. If anyone could, it's you.

She runs her fingers through his hair. They are silent a few beats.

SARA
Will you help me do something?

NELSON
Anything.

SARA
Get me out of this hellhole. I don't want to die here.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

Nelson holding Sara tightly, she walks like a child on eggshells, every step hurts her. They pass a NURSE.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

NELSON
She just wants to take a stroll
down the hall.

The Nurse nods and doesn't make a peep. They keep going
down the hallway, Sara's knees buckle and he quickly
lifts her up, carries her the rest of the way to the
elevator. The Nurse sees them get into the elevator.

NURSE #2
Wait! She can't leave the floor!

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Hurrying, Nelson helps Sara outside. The lights and
noise of oncoming CARS disorients her. He steps
toward the street, shouts:

NELSON
Taxi!! Hang on, baby. We'll
get you home.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAY

Chas and Brandon wait. Suddenly, the door swings open,
and Nelson enters with Sara in his arms. She is moaning,
in pain.

BRANDON
Oh, sweetie, let me take her...

Nelson precariously transfers Sara to Brandon's care.
Brandon barks an order to Chas.

BRANDON
Get the donnetal and codeine.
(to Sara)
We've got a nice hot bath for you,
baby.

Nelson watches helplessly as Brandon leads her into the
bathroom, where he and Chas remove her clothes. Nelson
is so bereft, all he can do is stand outside the bathroom
and literally bang his head against the wall.

He moves to the doorway as they are lowering Sara into
the tub. He can't help himself, has to say something.

NELSON
Listen, Sara, I know doctors,
I can call...

(CONTINUED)
Her eyes meet his, she is deeply humiliated, hisses to Chas.

SARA
Shut the door, just shut the
door! I don't want him here.
Tell him to -- go!

Nelson can't move. Chas comes out, gently pushes Nelson out, closes the bathroom door behind him.

NELSON
I can't stand by and do nothing,
just watch her... 
(can hardly
say it)
Die.

CHAS
That's why she wants you to go.

Wearing an ill-fitting coat and tie, Abner pushes through the front door. Chas immediately slips back into the bathroom and closes the door so Abner can't see.

NELSON
Hey, Abner. Today's not gonna
be a great play day.

ABNER
No, it's gonna be Father-Son
Day. Did you forget?

NELSON
Oh, God. I'm sorry, Ab, I can't.

ABNER
But you promised.

Abner looks shattered as Nelson struggles to remain poised.

NELSON
Right.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DUSK

Teacher oversees a room of FOURTH-GRADERs and their fathers.

FOURTH-GRADER
My dad takes me fishing, too, and
sometimes we go out for pizza and
he tells me about girls.

(CONTINUED)
The fathers chuckle as the boy sits. Glassy-eyed, Nelson seems only half there, but he focuses when Abner stands.

ABNER
This is Nelson. He's not my dad, but he does a lot of dad stuff, like he told me I should be myself, and it was cool to be creative. And we made up a game called Dr. Shrink that was really fun. And he taught me not to cheat. Mostly, he's my friend.

As Abner sits back down, Nelson smiles painfully.

EXT. STREET - DUSK

Nelson holds Abner's hand as they walk to Abner's house. Across the street, all the lights are blazing in Sara's loft.

ABNER
See you tomorrow?

NELSON
I don't know, Ab. I'm probably not gonna be around here tomorrow.

ABNER
How come?

NELSON
I gotta do some thinking, make a tough decision.

ABNER
She says you're not respecting her choices or something like that?

Nelson looks at him, stunned. How did he know that?

ABNER
I dunno, you always see that on TV, women complaining and stuff.

NELSON
(overwhelming)
I think you're the coolest kid I've ever met, Abner.
INT. TAXI - NIGHT
Nelson slumped in back, in a daze. Outside, tableaux of the city glide past the window: a couple kissing against a car, an ambulance careening down a street, SIRENS BLARING, a blind man gingerly heading up a sidewalk, led by a seeing-eye dog.

INT. NELSON'S APARTMENT - DAY
The penthouse is a mess. The door to the deck is open, and the curtains billow in the cold WIND. Fully-clothed, Nelson sleeps on the couch.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT
Nelson sits on a bench overlooking the bay. Unshaven and unkempt, he stares out at the water and the night.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAY
Though not up to full strength, Sara looks much better than the last time we saw her. She's pulling a tray of muffins from the oven. Chas is chopping vegetables; they're making Thanksgiving dinner.

SARA
Ouch! Shit! You bastard!

She has burned her hand, drops the tray and muffins splatter all over the floor. Chas immediately rushes over, concerned.

SARA
It's nothing, just a teeny tiny little... ouch.

Her face is red and mottled from trying not to cry.

SARA
Really, I'm fine, I'm really fine, we're going to have fun tonight. Fun is a great Thanksgiving...

(voice wobbles)

Tradition.

CHAS
Come here...

She walks over and Chas enfolds her in a big hug. She is spinning, really distraught, afraid of what she's feeling.

(CONTINUED)
SARA
He asked me to marry him.

CHAS
He's not the first.

SARA
It's the first time I wanted to say yes.

CHAS
Did you?

SARA
No. I let the whole thing go too far.

CHAS
For...

SARA
Both of us. Besides it's a moot point. He's gone.

She leans down to pick up the broken muffins strewn all over the floor.

CHAS
He'll be back.

SARA
I don't want him to come back. Look what I did to the muffins.

She's becoming unraveled, has to keep the subject changed.

SARA
Maybe I can salvage a few of these...

CHAS
You know, it's okay to break your own rules, Sara.

SARA
Where's the mix? I'll start again --

CHAS
You didn't mean to fall in love, but you did... it's okay to admit you need him.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

She stands up and throws some of the muffins into the wastebasket.

SARA
Stop it, would you?

She spins around to face him, eyes glittering.

SARA
What rule says I should put him through hell? All it will do is hurt him.

CHAS
He'll hurt no matter what.
(pauses)
Maybe you should let him decide.

SARA
My life is not his decision.

She turns her back on him, needs to compose herself.

SARA
You shouldn't keep Brandon waiting.

He nods and starts to head out, stops.

CHAS
Let yourself have some happiness, honey. You're entitled.

OMITTED

INT. LOFT - LATER

The table is set with a motley collection of mismatched plates and silver, decorated with Abner's puppets. The feast is laid out for Brandon, Chas, Abner, Al and Osiris. Al raises a glass of wine in toast.

AL
Happy we-stole-your-land-and-killed-your-people day.

Suddenly, CHRISTMAS MUSIC BLASTS and Sara bolts up as Nelson swings in through the window over the fire escape. He is dressed as Santa Claus, carries a huge pack.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Merry Christmas, Sara!

SARA
You mean, Thanksgiving.

NELSON
Not for you. You shouldn't have to wait.

Astonished and moved, all of Sara's friends make a move to leave.

CHAS
Maybe we'll grab a turkey pot pie at the coffee shop.
(pauses)
Nice to see you, Nelson.

Nelson nods, watches all of them leave, then turns back to Sara. He regards her with such tenderness, she is struck speechless. He unties his big bag.

NELSON
For you, sweet Sara, I bring the twelve gifts of Christmas.

As Nelson describes each gift, he removes it from the pack and hands it to Sara, beginning with a big salami.

NELSON
One: The famous Columbo log. The salami that started it all.
(digs out another gift -- wigs)
Two: A kaleidoscope of coiffures for the Barking Mad Pet Crusader.

He plops a wig on her head and returns to his bag.

NELSON
Three: A bullwhip for the dizzy dominatrix. So you can rule your world in style, and whip me into shape.

He cracks the whip, and Sara shrieks.

NELSON
Four: 'Sara,' a custom-made fragrance capturing that special something a woman leaves on a man.

He opens the bottle and passes it under her nose.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:  (2)

SARA
Oh, Nelson.  This is...

NELSON
... only the beginning.  Five:  Why Is Harriet So Hairy?, the definitive guide to understanding our transvestite friends.
(another gift)
Six!  Tiny Bubbles -- for those leisurely soaks we love so much.

He hands her the bottle of bubble bath, then pulls out a plastic Muni train, shakes it.

NELSON
Seven:  A hundred Muni train tokens for the the many, many great rides of your life.

He hands her the bus, then pulls out a C.D.

NELSON
Eight: A collection of music to swoon by. Which fits nicely with gift number nine...

He grabs her and spins her around the floor as he hands her some vouchers.

NELSON
Dance classes at Mildred's Academy of Dance, guaranteed to get you off my toes in a week.

He runs to the door.  Opens it.

NELSON
Ten: For the gentlelady who hates doing the dishes... a dishwasher.

SARA
Nelson, please, this is too much...

Nelson runs back to the door, reaches for a sack.

NELSON
It's not enough.  Eleven: Live in your loft, back by popular demand, I give you...

He shakes open the sack, out tumbles Ernie, the puppy.

(CONTINUED)
Continued: (3)

Ernie!

Completely overwhelmed, Sara wraps her arms around Ernie and kisses him.

And if this last gift doesn't prove how much I love you, nothing will.

Louid music kicks in as we --

Cut to:

INT. CABARET - NIGHT

On stage, Nelson, wearing a white dinner jacket and black tie, sings "Time After Time."

In the audience, Sara watches with glee as Nelson sings directly to her. Meanwhile, the diverse crowd goes wild for the rare, unabashedly heterosexual performance.

INT. SARA'S BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Sara and Nelson arrive at Sara's door.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

SARA
You were brilliant, Nelson, but
I'm afraid I'm going to lose you
to Vegas.

NELSON

Nope.

(pauses)

Never.

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sara enters and freezes. November's torn from innumerable
calendars are everywhere.

Every reachable inch of wall space and half the furniture
are covered with the month. Nelson walks up behind Sara
and wraps his arms around her.

NELSON
Look around, Sara... every month
is November... and I love you
every day.

SARA
But, Nelson... it's almost over.

Nelson spins her around to face him.

NELSON
Who told me once that we see the
world we choose to see?

(pauses)

This is our month and it never
has to end.

SARA
But you know that I'm --

Nelson kisses her lightly on the lips.

NELSON
I surrender all attempts to control
life, yours or mine. I live for
one thing: to love you. To make
you happy. To live firmly and
joyously in the moment. November
is all I know and all I ever want
to know.

(CONTINUED)
Conflicting currents of joy and sadness play across Sara's face. She kisses Nelson and hugs him with all her might.

SARA
By the way, that was three things.

INT. DMV - TEST ROOM - DAY
Sara retakes the driving test.

EXT. DMV - DAY
Sara exits waving her license, and Nelson wraps his arm around her.

NELSON
Okay, hot shot, now that you have your license, what do you wanna do?

SARA
Take a walk.

EXT. STREET - DAY
They are walking down the street, taking in all the familiar sights of the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MUNI TRAIN - DAY
The two of them licking ice cream cones as they look out the train window, talking and laughing.

OMITTED

INT. SARA'S LOFT - NIGHT
Nelson and Sara gently make love.

As the BELLS of the nearby CHURCH RING TWELVE ominous times, Sara stares at the large wall calendar. Every day of November but the last has been crossed off. Kissing Sara's neck, shoulders and breasts, Nelson doesn't see her anguished face.
INT. SARA'S LOFT - SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT (LATER)

over the course of the night: Nelson and Sara sound asleep in each other's arms.

Later, they disengage their hold, still asleep.

Later, they come back together, embrace, still sleeping.

Later, Nelson still asleep, Sara awake, reflecting.

Later, Sara studying Nelson's face in repose, she is coming to a decision.

OMITTED

INT. SARA'S LOFT - DAWN

Nelson wakes up as dawn is breaking, surprised to see Sara's not in bed with him. He peers around, sees her fully-dressed, pulling the Novembers off the wall one-by-one. Most are already piled up in her arms.

NELSON
What are you doing?

Removing the last calendar, Sara opens her trunk. Most of the gifts Nelson gave her are inside. She adds the calendars.

SARA
I thought I'd keep half. I put the other half in your bag.

Sara drapes Nelson's travel bag over his shoulder.

NELSON
Sara, stop this, please...

Sara crosses the last day of November off the large calendar. Then she tears the month off, revealing December.

SARA
It's time for you to go, Nelson.

NELSON
What are you talking about?

SARA
Our month is over.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
Haven't we been through this a hundred times before? I'm not going anywhere.

She puts on a jacket.

SARA
I made you agree to a month for a reason.

NELSON
Because you're sick? I don't care if you're sick. The only thing I care about is you.

SARA
Then that's why you should go.

NELSON
No.

SARA
You said you would stop trying to control life, yours and mine.
(firmly)
Now you have to keep your word.

She wraps a scarf around her neck, turns and heads toward the door.

NELSON
Where are you going?

SARA
Out. To give you time to leave.

Sara steps into the dawn, trying to stay calm. Suddenly breaks into a run as if she has to flee everything. Nelson careens out of the building in pursuit, practically dressing as he runs, throwing a jacket on.

NELSON
Sara! Stop it! Come on, come back!

Nelson chases Sara through the streets.

NELSON
Sara!
The park is deserted. Halfway through, Nelson catches her. They both gasp for air.

NELSON
Sara, stop it. Will you please stop this, I'm not leaving you -- I know you love me.

SARA
I do, Nelson. I've never felt anything like it. I never thought I'd have the chance and you gave that to me.

NELSON
Then why are you doing this?

SARA
Because it's starting to happen, Nelson --

NELSON
-- It doesn't --

SARA
-- If you leave now, everything we had will stay perfect forever --

NELSON
-- Sara --

SARA
-- All we have is how you'll remember me and I need that memory to be strong and alive --

NELSON
-- But I want --

SARA
-- If I know I'm remembered that way then I can face anything. Can't you see, Nelson, you're my immortality.

NELSON
I want to take care of you, Sara.

SARA
I'll be alright. I'm going home. They know I'm coming. They're ready.

(beat)
You said I come first.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
You do.

SARA
Then try and understand. I need to do this.

NELSON
It just doesn't seem...

SARA
Just like I need to know you'll go on and have the beautiful life you deserve. I want you to fall in love again someday, be a husband, have a family.

NELSON
I only want you.

SARA
You have me forever. Now let me go.

NELSON
I can't believe you've even got me considering this.
(long pause)
This is truly what you want.

SARA
Yes. It is.

NELSON
Alright, Sara, alright.

SARA
Close your eyes, this time count to twenty. Go ahead.

Nelson soaks up as much of her as he can. Then reluctantly, he closes his eyes. Sara blindfolds him with the scarf.

NELSON
... One, two, three, four, five, six --

Sara stands on her tiptoes and whispers in his ear.

SARA
I love you, Nelson Moss.

(CONTINUED)
NELSON
I love you, Sara Deever.

SARA
Remember me.

NELSON
... Seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven --

As Nelson continues counting, Sara walks to a spot twenty yards behind him and waits at the foot of a statue.

NELSON
... Twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.

Nelson steps forward. Then, turning, he walks straight toward the statue and arrives at the exact spot Sara stood just a moment before.

Slowly, he removes the scarf. Sara, of course, is gone. All around Nelson, shades of the park emerge in the dawning light.

Looking down at the scarf in his hands, Nelson smiles. At the same time, dawn breaks, piercing the park with glimmering, amber light.

Carefully wrapping the scarf twice around his neck, Nelson walks out of the park and into the street, just as a red Muni train slowly makes its way across the awakening city, its empty windows aglow in the dawn.

FADE OUT.

THE END