

THIRTY SOMETHING

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FIRST DRAFT

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**FOR EDUCATIONAL
PURPOSES ONLY**

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

A BLACK SCREEN

We HEAR two PEOPLE GIGGLING, trying to be quiet.

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

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

BEGIN TITLES OVER:

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

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

WOMAN (V.O.)
Shhh!

Silence. They're listening. Then:

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

Sound of a ZIPPER. He starts to laugh appreciatively.

QUICK CUT:

A RESTAURANT --

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOPE
 Do the terrible deed--?

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

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

HOPE
 --afraid to commit.

MICHAEL
 --afraid to commit.

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

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

MICHAEL
 Which is why I never do this.

HOPE
 Me neither.....

They eye each other -- embarrassed, interested, skeptical.

MICHAEL

So...how do you know Ellyn?

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

The two people are moving to the bed.

MAN (V.O.)

(bumps himself)

Oowwww. I'm turning on the light.

WOMAN (V.O.)

NO -- you'll wake her.

MAN (V.O.)

Then close the door--

WOMAN (V.O.)

Then how would we hear her?

(bumps herself)

Oowwww.

He starts to laugh.

QUICK CUT:

A NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

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

HOPE

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

ELLYN

That's worth something...

HOPE

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

ELLYN

But...

HOPE

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

(MORE)

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

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

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

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

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

BACK TO:

The two people can be heard getting undressed.

MAN (V.O.)
 What is this?

WOMAN (V.O.)
 What is what?

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

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

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

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

QUICK CUT:

OUTSIDE A COUNTRY CHAPEL

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

MICHAEL

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

GARY

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

MICHAEL

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

GARY

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

Michael pulls him up the steps.

MICHAEL

(soothingly)

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

HE OPENS THE DOOR

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

MICHAEL

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

Michael touches Hope's arm in passing and starts down the aisle.

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

Things are continuing.

MICHAEL(V.O.)

What's that?

HOPE (V.O.)

It's my foot, what did you think it was?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

I thought it was an animal.

HOPE (V.O.)

An animal?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

You know, like a squirrel or something, a turtle.

HOPE (V.O.)

You are so seriously deranged. Oowwww. What are you doing?

MICHAEL (V.O.)

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

HOPE (V.O.)

(after a pause)

I can feel it...

QUICK CUT:

AN EMPTY LIVING ROOM --

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

MICHAEL

Get me food.

HOPE

Get me food.

MICHAEL

Please.

HOPE

Okay, I'm getting up, uuhhhaahhh, I'm walking now, here I go. I'm entering the kitchen.

MICHAEL

Would you mind remodeling it
while you're in there?

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Did they leave a microwave?

HOPE

A very big microwave.

They continue to just lie there.

HOPE

Why do I have to go to the
bathroom?

MICHAEL

Oh, boy, get me food.

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (CREDITS CONTINUE OVER)

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

WOMAN (V.O.)

.....Ohhh. I really miss you.
Don't you kind of like this in
the dark?

MAN (V.O.)

Mmmmmnnn.

WOMAN (V.O.)

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

MAN (V.O.)

I love you.

A long silence.

WOMAN (V.O.)

We're so lucky.

QUICK CUT:

A DEMENTED-LOOKING SALESMAN

in the middle of his spiel.

SALESMAN

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

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

PAN further to discover MICHAEL, who stares in disbelief:

MICHAEL

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

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

HOPE

Hee-hee-hee-hee--

BACK TO:

BLACK SCREEN (FINAL CREDITS OVER)

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

HOPE (V.O.)

Yes, yes, ooh, yes, don't stop--

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Honey, oh God--

HOPE (V.O.)

Wait.

(he doesn't)

Waitwaitwait -- STOP.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Why are you stopping--?

(silence, then:)

Oh, no.....

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

MICHAEL (V.O.)

It's not bad yet -- she'll go
back to sleep.

HOPE (V.O.)
Right. Let's hurry.

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

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

HOPE
(kisses his head)
How silly we be.

CUT TO:

A NICE KITCHEN

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

JANE STEADMAN, aged five months...

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

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

MICHAEL
No Rice Chex--?

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

MICHAEL
I thought we had Rice Chex.

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

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

HOPE

(into the phone)

Are you kidding, I can't eat any cereal..... Because I'm so fat.

MICHAEL

You're not fat.

HOPE

(into the phone)

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

(into the phone)

I can go to the gym, it won't kill me.

MICHAEL

Go if it makes you feel better.

HOPE

(into the phone)

He says he doesn't but he does.

MICHAEL

I don't think you're fat!

HOPE

But you think I could lose some weight?

MICHAEL

(closing his eyes)

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

HOPE

(into the phone)

He thinks I'm fat.

Michael throws up his hands and goes back to the refrigerator.

MICHAEL

How would Raisin Bran taste with formula...?

CUT TO:

MICHAEL'S OFFICE

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

MICHAEL

--All right, you know what, forget it... No, just forget it.

(listens a moment)

Because it's sleazy, Mr. Teller, hasn't that occurred to you...?

No, no, you miss my point. I love their campaign, but it's their campaign. You don't rip off somebody else's campaign--

(listens again)

Mr. Teller, I don't care what their sales were afterwards, it's plagiarism!

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

MICHAEL

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

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

MICHAEL

...What? We're not allowed to have principles around here? We'll find other business, there're other accounts out there... C'mon, let's get back to work, Jeannine, shut the door on your way out...

He waits until they have gone, then takes the phone cord, wraps it around his neck, and falls across his desk.

MICHAEL

Aaaahhhggghh...

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

ELLIOT

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

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

Your kid? I have two kids.

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

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

MICHAEL

That, too.

(jumps up suddenly)

I CAN'T TAKE THIS! I'M TOO YOUNG TO RUN A BUSINESS, YOU HAVE TO BE GROWN UP TO RUN A BUSINESS.

(lies back down)

I got two hours and forty-five minutes of sleep last night.

ELLIOT
(looks at him)
You'll get used to it.

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

ELLIOT
She doesn't sleep through the
night yet?

Michael gets up and starts to pace.

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

Elliot now lies down on the desk beside Michael.

ELLIOT
Wait'll it's two kids.

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

ELLIOT
Yes.

MICHAEL
What would you have done?

ELLIOT
(thinks)
...The same thing.

CUT TO:

GUMBY PLACEMATS

OR

SNOOPY PLACEMATS

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

HOPE

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

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

CUT TO:

A RESTAURANT

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

HOPE

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

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

ELLYN

Hope. Sit.

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

WAITRESS

Can I get you something to drink?

Hope looks from the baby to the waitress.

HOPE

Uh, not right now. Thanks.

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

ELLYN

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

Hope stares at her, dumbfounded: Ellyn is tired...?

ELLYN

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

HOPE

You're kidding me.

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

ELLYN

She's okay?

(Hope nods)

She's so cute. All of a sudden Gannon thinks I'm God's gift to health planning.

HOPE

How's your stomach been?

ELLYN

(laughs)

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

HOPE

You should quit.

ELLYN

I am gonna quit.

HOPE

There are so many other things you can do.

(to the baby)

What is it, Nanie? Why don't you take the bottle?

(MORE)

HOPE (cont.)
(to Ellyn)

We're trying pre-weaning, we're trying the concept of maybe, sometimes, drinking from a bottle instead of Mommy.

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

ELLYN

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

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

HOPE

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

ELLYN

You think it's me.

HOPE

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

Amazingly, the baby is still crying.

HOPE

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

It's so embarrassing.

Ellyn shakes her head, dismisses the notion.

ELLYN

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

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

HOPE

I'm really sorry, I'm gonna have to take her home. I don't know what this is.

ELLYN
 (trying to cover annoyance)
 You don't think it'll just stop?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

MICHAEL AND HOPE'S LIVING ROOM

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

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

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

MICHAEL
 Making a play for my wife.

GARY
I am making a play for your wife.

MICHAEL
Take my wife.

GARY
I am taking your wife.

Michael kisses Hope.

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

MICHAEL
Are you staying for dinner?

GARY
Are you?

MICHAEL
Where's Jazooki?

HOPE
Asleep.

MICHAEL
Is she supposed to be asleep now?

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

MICHAEL
But won't she be awake later?

HOPE
Then we'll deal with it later.

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

MICHAEL
What do you know?

GARY
I was a baby once.

HOPE
Once?

They laugh, somehow because she said it.

GARY

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

The front door is opening.

HOPE

Just the breast, Gar'.

GARY

Ooh, don't say that word.

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

MELISSA

(to Hope)

Thank God you're here.

MICHAEL

I feel the same way.

MELISSA

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

She is heading for the kitchen.

MICHAEL

Hello, Melissa...

MELISSA

I hate you, you have a male appendage.

GARY

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

IN THE KITCHEN

Melissa is rummaging through the refrigerator. Hope catches up.

HOPE

What happened?

MELISSA

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

GARY

His mother.

MELISSA

Darlene MacKinnon.

HOPE

(mouth opening)

You introduced him to Darlene
MacKinnon.

MELISSA

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

HOPE

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

MELISSA

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

HOPE

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

MELISSA

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

HOPE

I thought you liked her.

No answer is necessary. Gary enters the kitchen and puts a
playful arm around Melissa's throat.

GARY

Know what you need? A change of venue. Let's go backpacking.

MELISSA

What a great idea...

GARY

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

HOPE

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

GARY

It wasn't so bad.

MICHAEL

No worse than the Donner party.

MELISSA

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

MICHAEL

You tried to stab him with a tent pole--

MELISSA

He deserved it, he was breaking up with me.

GARY

You were breaking up with me.

MELISSA

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

GARY

Absolutely, honey-lips.

MELISSA

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

HOPE

I don't think we can take the baby backpacking, can we?

GARY

Who said anything about the baby? Just the four of us, like before, only fun.

MICHAEL

Who would we leave her with?

HOPE

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

GARY

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

HOPE

We will.

MICHAEL

Guys, I don't know....

GARY

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

HOPE

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

Because they really are friends, Gary backs off.

GARY

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

Everyone laughs.

CUT TO:

THE BABY, IN HER CRIB

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

HOPE

(almost painful)

She's so pretty.

MICHAEL

I know.

(they watch)

What if she grows up ugly?

HOPE

I think about that too.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

(kisses him)

Thanks...

IN THE BEDROOM

Michael falls on the bed.

MICHAEL

I am so tired. So completely,
overwhelmingly, utterly, totally,
unbelievably.... Ucchhh....

(imitating his mother)

Miiiiikke... Did you do your
homework, Mike? Mike? Is your
business going bankrupt? Your
brother's business isn't going
bankrupt.

HOPE

You're not going bankrupt.

MICHAEL

You don't know what I did today.

She puts her forehead against the wall...

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

Good, I'm proud of you. Teller's
a yutz.

(on his look)

You said you don't want to
compromise, so don't.

MICHAEL

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

Hope starts to unbutton her blouse.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Why don't you talk to her about it?

HOPE

How can I talk to her about it?

Michael watches her as the blouse comes off.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Ellyn and you don't deal with each other.

HOPE

Thank you.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry.

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

MICHAEL

Let's go backpacking.

HOPE

Michael--

MICHAEL

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

She goes to get a nightgown.

HOPE

(at a loss)

What am I going to do, interview
babysitters, how do you interview
babysitters?

MICHAEL

You interview them.

He watches as she pulls the nightgown over her head.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

(quasi-casual)

So, you're tired...?

HOPE

(doing it:)

I just want to get in bed and
sink down and oohhhh.....

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

HOPE

You're not tired.

MICHAEL

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

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

HOPE

(mumbling)

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

She's asleep. He's not.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

A DINNER TABLE

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

Why...? She has two kids.

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

NANCY

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

(grabs his hand)

Ethan... ETHAN... Not so rough around your sister.

HOPE

You're kidding me.

NANCY

If you're talking about pre-school, you should have done it in utero.

(grabs him again)

ETHAN, are we going to have to have another talk about this...?

HOPE

What is this epidemic of kids lately...? And then I think, what are we getting them into anyway? Don't you just wonder what they're going to face, how the world's going to be totally different, are they going to hate us?

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

Go back to Teller and beg his forgiveness...

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

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

MICHAEL

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

Ethan KNOCKS Brittany's milk cup out of her hands. It goes

flying onto the dinner table, spewing milk in several directions, flooding Hope's plate. Nancy doesn't miss a beat, just starts cleaning it up.

NANCY

Did he spill your milk, honey?
Mommy'll get you more.

(to steve)

Honey, can you take him for a while?

ELLIOT

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

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

ETHAN

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

ETHAN

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

CUT TO:

THE CAR - LATER

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

HOPE

...It wasn't that bad.

MICHAEL

It was worse.

HOPE

Stop it.

MICHAEL

Is that us in three years...?

HOPE

(giving in)

She didn't finish one sentence
the entire night.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

What are we going to do?

MICHAEL

Exploit the downtrodden working
class. Get help. HIRE... A...
BABYSITTER.

CUT TO:

THE GREEN AND PURPLE SPIKED HAIRCUT

of a heavy-metal groupie, now lounging on Hope's sofa.

GROUPIE

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

HOPE

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

CUT TO:

HOPE'S BEDROOM - LATER

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

ELLYN

You can't just leave them standing
out there.

HOPE

Yes, I can, then they'll go away.

WE DISCOVER

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

ELLYN

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

HOPE

Too late.

(on Ellyn's look)

Meanwhile, do you remember what we used to do, do you remember what you fed little Joey Jacobs to make him sick so his parents would come home so you could go see the Who?

ELLYN

Castor Oil is not dangerous.

HOPE

(suddenly remembering)

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

(gasps)

In her parents bedroom.

ELLYN

You made out with Billy Dubin...?

HOPE

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

ELLYN

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

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

HOPE

I'll get it.

CUT TO:

A FOUR HUNDRED POUND WOMAN

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

CUT TO:

A CHAIN-SMOKING SCHIZOPHRENIC

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

CUT TO:

A FIFTY YEAR-OLD NAZI NANNY

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

CUT TO:

A FRESH-FACED, LOVELY COED

Pepsodent smile, caring eyes, great tits.

COED

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

CUT TO:

HOPE

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

HOPE

(to Ellyn)

Absolutely not. No way.

ELLYN

(stupified)

With her background, with those credentials?

HOPE

With that body?

CUT TO:

AN OUTDOOR PLAZA

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

MICHAEL

...have to do something -- why don't we advertise ourselves. Yeah, we could--

He trails off as a leggy secretary passes by.

MICHAEL

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

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

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

See, it's like this. Bunch of australopithecines out on the savannah, right?

(imitates one: grunts)

The ones who win out are the ones who can spot like a great-looking australopithecine rear end at four hundred yards. And the australopithecine girls, they're really into it, they're thinking, hey, any guy that can see me from two miles off and beat up all these other apes must be a hell of a hunter, so I think I'll wave my rear end a little, catch his attention. Two million years later, what do you got? A bunch of guys in ties and jackets supposed to be working, and what are they doing, what are you doing?

Michael is staring at yet another woman.

MICHAEL

Looking at women on the street.

ELLIOT

Exactly. That's called evolution.

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT
I don't know.

MICHAEL
What do you do?

ELLIOT
(pauses)
What does anybody do?

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

ELLIOT
Naahhh.

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

ELLIOT
Would you?

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

ELLIOT
That's the truth.

MICHAEL
So?

ELLIOT
So what?

MICHAEL
Have you?

ELLIOT
Have you?

MICHAEL
NO! HAVE YOU?

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

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

ELLIOT

Never mind.

MICHAEL

When?

(pause)

I don't believe this.

(pause)

With who? I do not believe this.

ELLIOT

It was hardly anything.

MICHAEL

NOW. Everything. Right now.

ELLIOT

It was last year, it was somebody--

(he stops)

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

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

I really don't want to talk about this.

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

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

MICHAEL

How many times?

ELLIOT

(long pause)

Six.

MICHAEL

Six occasions or six acts?

ELLIOT

Occasions.

In shock, Michael sits down on a bench.

MICHAEL

You had an affair. I don't believe it.

ELLIOT

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

He sits down next to Michael.

ELLIOT

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

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

I'm telling you it was not great. The first time we did it was the most humiliating night of my life and after that it settled into being merely horrible.

(thinks about it)

Okay, the second time was pretty great, but after that it was horrible.

MICHAEL

Does Nancy know?

ELLIOT

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

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

some shell-shocked veteran, just returned from a hideous and violent war...

MICHAEL

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

ELLIOT

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

CUT TO:

HOPE AND MICHAEL'S LIVING ROOM

As Michael comes in at the end of the day.

MICHAEL

June, I'm home.

HOPE (V.O.)

In here, Ward.

IN THE KITCHEN

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

HOPE

We're painting faces again.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

(sing-song)

How was work?

MICHAEL

I never talk about work at home.

HOPE

Stop it, what's going on?

MICHAEL

Work is wonderful, work is thrilling, I'm completely fulfilled and well-paid.

He walks out with the mail. The baby yells for more food. Or bangs the table. Or waves the spoon. Or does something, we hope.

HOPE
Who asked you?

CUT TO:

THE MOST DELICIOUS MOMENT OF THE DAY

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

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

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

CUT TO:

JANE SPLASHING IN THE BATHTUB

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

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

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

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

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

HOPE
(shaking her head)
All day...

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

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

These feelings are too strong, too overwhelming to even talk

about. She shakes her head and starts out.

MICHAEL

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

She perches on the toilet.

MICHAEL

Babysitters...?

Hope slumps against the tile.

HOPE

Can't we talk about it later?

MICHAEL

That bad...?

HOPE

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

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

CUT TO:

MICHAEL

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

IN THE LIVING ROOM

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

THE KITCHEN

looks like a grenade has exploded.

THE REFRIGERATOR

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

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Micheal sits on the arm of the sofa.

MICHAEL
Honey, are you hungry?
(pause)
Honey?

Groggily, Hope half opens her eyes.

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

MICHAEL
Yes, but... Never mind.

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

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

MICHAEL
Fine.

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

HOPE
What?

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

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

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

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

MICHAEL
I just put her to bed, I gave
her a bath, I come home from
work, what, you think I don't do
anything all day...?

HOPE

Well, what do you think I do all day. I cleaned up three times today, I just haven't cleaned up since five o'clock so it's a mess in there.

MICHAEL

Never mind. Sorry. Go to sleep.

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

Exactly.

MICHAEL

How many?

HOPE

(grudgingly)

Seven.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

By now, the tears are flowing freely. Michael is stunned by her intensity. He's realizing, perhaps for the first time,

just how strung out she really is.

MICHAEL

(moved)

She cried for an hour...?

(going to her)

What do you think it was?

HOPE

(swallowing)

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

MICHAEL

Oh, honey...

(sighs)

Why don't you just go to bed now. I'll clean up. If you get hungry later, I'll get you something.

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

(gently)

Shhh... We'll find a babysitter.

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

HOPE

I just need to sleep a little.

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

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

THE KITCHEN - MORNING

Michael is watching Sesame Street. The baby isn't; she's on the floor looking the other way, putting blocks in her mouth.

Hope looks up from the paper and smiles at her husband.

HOPE

I hope you're enjoying that.

MICHAEL

I have a crush on Maria.

The PHONE RINGS. Michael answers it.

MICHAEL

Hello..... I told you never to call me here..... When?.....
All right, I can't wait.

(covers the mouthpiece)

Gary wants to buy equipment today. Should I get sleeping bags?

(listens)

Shut up.

(to Hope)

He says now we don't need the kind that zip together anymore.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

We don't even have a babysitter yet.

MICHAEL

We will...

(looks at her)

Honey, what's the matter, do you really not want to do this...?

HOPE
 (trapped now)
 ...Get sleeping bags.

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

HOPE
 You have enough knives.

MICHAEL
 A man never has enough knives.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR

As Michael hurries out.

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

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

HOPE
 Where people eat solid food.

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

HOPE
 Okay.

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

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

He's gone. The PHONE IS RINGING.

IN THE KITCHEN AGAIN --

Hope answers it.

HOPE
 Hello--

INTERCUT -- IT'S ELLYN

ELLYN

I've been thinking all night and
I've made a decision.

HOPE

Okay...?

ELLYN

You need to go back to work.

HOPE

Oh, God. Thank you for making
my morning.

ELLYN

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

HOPE

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

ELLYN

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

HOPE

What, you want me to give her back?

ELLYN

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

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

ELLYN

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

HOPE

Shopping, there's a concept...

ELLYN

I think you should call Shilliday
again, it can't hurt. Ask him
if you can go back part time even.

HOPE

Shilliday is out of the question. He was furious enough when I got pregnant. "This job takes total dedication."

ELLYN

Then sue the bastard. That's illegal.

HOPE

Goodbye, Ellyn.

ELLYN

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

JUMP CUT: HOPE

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

JUMP CUT: HOPE

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

JUMP CUT: HOPE

In front of a mirror as she tries to put it on. It's too tight.

A DIFFERENT DRESS

goes on...

AND ANOTHER --

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

The baby starts to cry...

CUT TO:

A SPORTING GOOD STORE - DAY

As Michael and Gary look at sleeping bags.

GARY

Here we go: Minus ten degrees.

MICHAEL

Are you kidding, we'd roast in that thing.

GARY

I forgot, you carry a supplemental female heating system.

MICHAEL

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

GARY

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

MICHAEL

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

GARY

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

(Michael nods)

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

(looks at a parka)

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

MICHAEL

(shakes his head)

Same as ever.

GARY

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

He walks off, leaving Michael to stare after him.

CUT TO:

A PILE OF CAMPING EQUIPMENT

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

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

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

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

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR

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

HOPE

....that's really sweet.

NANCY

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

Michael comes through the living room.

MICHAEL

I can understand that. Hi, Deb.

NANCY

I hear you're going camping.

HOPE

Some year.

NANCY

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

MICHAEL

(grabbing Hope)

It is, isn't it?

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

No kid to get up and feed...

That shuts her up.

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

HOPE
Thanks again for the clothes.

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

HOPE
Wasn't that nice?

MICHAEL
Are they sticky?

HOPE
Stop it.

Hope starts going through the clothes.

MICHAEL
That was weird.

HOPE
What?

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

HOPE
Why is that weird?

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

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

MICHAEL
Some people are more interested
than other people.

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

MICHAEL
No, no, even among women, some
of them are more interested than
others.

HOPE
And Nancy's not interested?

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

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

HOPE
You just said she's not interested.

MICHAEL
I said I think she's not interested.

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

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

HOPE
Why do you have that look on your face?

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

HOPE
He told you something about Nancy.

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

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

MICHAEL
I told him nothing about you, stop this.

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

MICHAEL
There's nothing to tell.

HOPE

Okay... Nancy's not interested
in sex...

(nope)

Nancy's frigid.

(nope again)

Elliot is frigid.

MICHAEL

Impotent.

HOPE

Elliot is impotent?!

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

Elliot's not impotent--

MICHAEL

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

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Can we just forget this?

HOPE

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

(Michael is silent)

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

She sits down.

MICHAEL

It was one thing, and apparently
it was pretty awful.

HOPE
Good. Serves him right.

MICHAEL
Hope.

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

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

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

HOPE
Are you sure?

MICHAEL
You want me to check and make sure?

HOPE
Yes.

MICHAEL
(thinks)
I'm sure.

They look at each other.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Where Melissa is happily feeding the baby.

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

Michael and Hope sit there, exhausted, smiling.

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

CUT TO:

MICHAEL AND HOPE'S BED

Where all three of them are now snuggling, having put the baby
down for the forty-third time.

Except it's hard for Michael to exactly snuggle, since he's surrounded himself with papers and sketches from work.

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

HOPE

--Are you crazy, I love your body.

MELISSA

It's totally out of proportion.

MICHAEL

Let me see...

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

MICHAEL

Hey, hey, I'm working here.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Would you tell her how great she
looks?

MELISSA

I tell her every day. I tell her
how great her kid looks, I tell
her how great her life looks...
(listening)
Oooh, I love this song. Let's go
next door and crash this party.

MICHAEL

They're eighteen.

MELISSA

Young meat.

HOPE

(laughs)

That's no joke, the older brother
is really cute.

MELISSA

Get him over here.

(yells)

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

(back to them)

Can't you ask him to babysit or
something...?

Michael and Hope laugh.

HOPE
He's an illiterate zombie.

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

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

MICHAEL
Who is going to stay over?

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

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

MICHAEL
Who?

HOPE
(mouthing)
Not now.

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

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

HOPE
Don't go, Melissa.

MICHAEL
Go, Melissa.

As Melissa starts out, Hope jumps up, escaping Michael's grasp.

HOPE
I'll walk you to the door.

CUT TO:

THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

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

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

He doesn't say anything.

HOPE
You okay?
(no response)
You're still mad.
(no response)
I told you I would start looking
for a sitter again on Monday.
Can't we just drop this?

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

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

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

HOPE
You assumed I was working on it--

MICHAEL
Oh, come on--

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

MICHAEL
You want me to look for a sitter,
I'll look for a sitter, but
watch out, 'cause I'll find one--

HOPE

I don't want to find a sitter...?

MICHAEL

You don't want to go.

HOPE

What does that mean?

Next door, some DRUNKEN SCREAMS accompany a new song.

MICHAEL

I'm going over there.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

I just think you don't want to
go.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

We're talking about one night.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

Okay, so we won't go.

HOPE
 (after a long pause)
 Is that terrible? Do you hate me?

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

They lie there for a moment.

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

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

ON THE PORCH

He stands in his underwear, screaming.

MICHAEL
 TURN OFF THE MUSIC, HEY, TURN
 OFF THE MUSIC...!
 (laughter o.s.)
 HEY, YOU LITTLE TWERP, YOU WANT
 ME TO COME OVER THERE AND BEAT
 YOUR FACE IN...? TURN OFF THE
GODDAMNED MUSIC--

INSIDE

Crying, Hope watches her husband.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

GARY AND MELISSA

Looking directly at us.

GARY

Really?

MELISSA

It's okay...

GARY

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

MELISSA

I mean this is a tough time...

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

(swallowing it)

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

GARY

Guys, it's okay.

HOPE

It's really okay?

GARY

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

(pats their shoulders)

I understand.

MICHAEL

Gary--

MELISSA

(clipped)

Well, we're going to go now...

HOPE
Look, are people mad here?

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

HOPE
Melissa?

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

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

GARY
What's twelve years of friendship
anyway?

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

CUT TO:

SPORTING GOODS STORE

As Michael returns the sleeping bags.

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

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

WOMAN
What temperature do those go
down to--?

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

MICHAEL
I think they, uh, I think they
go down to minus ten.

WOMAN

Really? I need a warm bag, I
get so cold when I sleep.

MICHAEL

Yeah, me too.

She smiles at him and turns to the salesman.

WOMAN

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

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

OUTSIDE THE STORE

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

WOMAN

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

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

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

REALITY

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

CUT TO:

KIDS, LARGE AND SMALL

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

HOPE

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

ELLYN (V.O.)

Feels strange to be in a park
without tear gas.

Hope looks up to see Ellyn, as always, dressed in one of her
striking suits.

HOPE

Janey, look who came to see us.
How'd you find us?

(looks at her)

Is everything okay?

ELLYN

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

HOPE

Ellyn...

ELLYN

(laughs nervously)

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

HOPE

I've been thinking about that,
too.

ELLYN

I guess you're mad at me.

HOPE

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

ELLYN

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

Hope looks at her old friend.

HOPE

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

ELLYN

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

HOPE

What you thought--

ELLYN

--situation you're in and then
you don't call me for six days.

There's no turning back now:

HOPE

Ellyn, you don't understand the situation I'm in now.

(Ellyn looks at her)

I don't sleep at night, my husband is mad at me.... I'm... I'm caring for this....creature who's....of me. There's this... connection I've never felt before, with anyone. I don't know how to separate from that and I don't know if I want to. And I don't think you want to understand that.

ELLYN

I can understand that.

HOPE

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

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

ELLYN

(long pause)

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

HOPE

You saw me. You didn't see her.

ELLYN

What the hell was the present I bought her?

HOPE

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

(MORE)

HOPE (cont.)

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

Ellyn looks away, eyes tearing up.

ELLYN

I'm a part of your life too. I have prior claim. You can't just turn away from...people who care about you--

(shakes her head)

This is like in high school when you would get a boyfriend and then, oh, where's Hope.

HOPE

(gets it now)

Lynn, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

ELLYN

(crying now)

I'm not exactly ignorant of the looks.

HOPE

What looks?

ELLYN

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

HOPE

I never say that stuff.

ELLYN

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

The stand in silence.

HOPE

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

ELLYN

Who's saying that? Can't I be upset, can't we both be upset?

HOPE
 (starts to smile)
 You know I can't deal with
 conflict of any kind.

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

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

HOPE
 That sounds awful.

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

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

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

HOPE
 But I'm jealous of you--

ELLYN
 Oh, God...

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

CUT TO:

ELLIOT AND MICHAEL

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

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

MICHAEL
 ...We'll do it, we'll get it
 over with and it'll be done.

ELLIOT

By the time we get through with the campaign, nobody'll be able to tell it was a rip-off.

MICHAEL

(kicks the telephone)

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

ELLIOT

To do our thing.

(on Michael's look)

We won't always have to deal with sleazeballs like Teller. We'll deal with higher class sleazeballs.

(looks at him)

We'll come back to fight another day, but right now we have two wives, three kids, four cars, two mortgages, a payroll. And that's life, pal. You be de breadwinner now.

MICHAEL

Is that what I am...

CUT TO:

THE LIVING ROOM

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

HOPE

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

IN THE DARKENED LIVING ROOM - LATER

Hope walks in to find Michael sitting alone, staring into the shadows.

HOPE

I didn't hear you come in.

Michael just shrugs. She looks at him with concern.

HOPE

There's food. I got to the store...
(he nods, silence:)
You want to be alone.

MICHAEL

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

She comes over to him.

HOPE

You're angry about not going.

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

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

HOPE

Michael...?

MICHAEL
(finally)

I crawled back to Teller today.
I took the account.

HOPE

I don't understand...

MICHAEL
(fierce)

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

HOPE

(touches him)

Honey.... Why didn't you tell me?

MICHAEL

I tried to tell you--

HOPE

You made jokes about it--

MICHAEL

Because you don't want to hear it and I don't blame you. I'm supposed to deal with this stuff. I earn the money now.

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

MICHAEL

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

HOPE

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

Michael puts his hand over his face.

MICHAEL

(finally)

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

(MORE)

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

HOPE
 (gently)
 You can tell me.

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

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

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

HOPE
 Are you attracted to other
 women...?

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

Now she sighs.

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

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

HOPE
 Don't you think I want to be
 thin and interested in sex every
 night and exactly the way I was
 before...?
 (his silence means yes)
 I do. But I might need some
 help, that's all, you might have
 (MORE)

HOPE (cont.)
to remind me sometimes. And
it'll never be perfect, can you
accept that?

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

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

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

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

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

She rubs his head.

FADE OUT.

THE END