RITA ROCKS

by

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&

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ACT ONE

SCENE A

INT. RITA'S MINI-VAN - SOUTHFIELD, MICH. - LATE AFTERNOON
(RITA, SHANNON)

RITA PARKS IN FRONT OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. SHE'S STILL IN HER WORK CLOTHES -- KHAKIS, RUNNING SHOES AND A BLUE 'BED, BATH & BEYOND' SMOCK. RITA'S A STRAIGHT SHOOTING WIFE AND MOM WHO'S CHARISMA SHINES THROUGH HER MUNDANE WORLD OF MINI-VANS AND BULK SHOPPING. EVIDENCED BY THE MULTITUDE OF COSTCO BAGS IN THE BACK OF HER VAN. SHE CHECKS THE CAR'S CLOCK. IT READS 4:58.

RITA

Two whole minutes. Sweet.

SHE QUICKLY TAKES OUT MULTI-COLORED POST-ITS AND CATCHES UP ON COLOR CODING HER DAY-PLANNER. SUDDENLY THERE'S $\underline{\text{TAPPING}}$ ON THE WINDOW.

RITA (CONT'D)

(STARTLED) Aah!

IT'S HER DAUGHTER SHANNON, A CHUBBY NINE YEAR OLD WITH FRIZZY HAIR, STUFFED INTO HER TOO TIGHT KARATE UNIFORM. SHE HAS BOUNDLESS OPTIMISM, WITH ABSOLUTELY NO REASON TO BACK IT UP. SHANNON HOPS IN THE CAR.

SHANNON

Okay, how many have you had?

RITA

None. (OFF HER LOOK) You're not going to make me pee in a cup, are you?

SHANNON

Mom, you gotta stop drinking in the middle of the afternoon.

SHE HOLDS UP SOME EMPTY CANS OF DIET PEPSI FROM THE FLOOR OF THE CAR.

Least I'm not with the other Moms at Starbucks mainlining lattes to get through the day. Buckle up, sweetie.

SHANNON BUCKLES UP.

SHANNON

Oh. Mrs. Foner says it's your turn to be the school crossing guard Friday.

RITA

(RE: DAY-PLANNER) Friday, friday, friday, friday. Work. Maybe Marlene can manage the store for me. Oh wait, I know. I'll just ask the Nanny.

SHANNON

Uh, we don't have a Nanny.

RITA

We don't? Then who's that girl I keep bugging to clean the house?

SHANNON

(PLAYING ALONG) My stupid sister?

RITA

No wonder she won't leave when I fire her.

THEY SHARE A LAUGH AS RITA DRIVES OFF.

CUT TO:

SCENE B

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER</u> (RITA, SHANNON, HALLIE, KIP)

RITA ENTERS, JUGGLING THE COSTCO BAGS, HER HUSBAND'S DRY CLEANING AND THE CELL UNDER HER CHIN. A CUTE, SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD BOY, KIP, TALKS ON THE KITCHEN PHONE IN THE BACK PANTRY WHILE DRUMMING ON THE SHELF WITH A PENCIL. HE WEARS A MUSCLE T-SHIRT AND CONSTANTLY SHAKES HIS SHAGGY HAIR OUT OF HIS FACE. SHANNON ENTERS, PRACTICING HER KARATE MOVES.

RITA

(INTO HER CELL) ... C'mon Marlene.

I'll inventory pillow shams and work

Midnight Madness for you.

SHANNON

Hai! (KICK) Hai! (KICK) Ow!

SHE ACCIDENTALLY KICKS OVER THE PHONE BOOK STAND.

RITA

Shannon, no karate in the house. (BACK

INTO PHONE) What if I handle

Bridezillas all week?... Really?

Thanks, Mar. I owe you big time.

SHE HANGS UP AND NOTICES A FLYER ON THE BULLETIN BOARD, WHICH IS JAM PACKED WITH HER FAMILY'S ACTIVITIES.

RITA (CONT'D)

Rita, what is wrong with you? You've got the 'Re-Sod the Playground Pot Luck' Friday.

SHANNON

You know you're talking to yourself.

RITA

Am I? No, I'm not.

RITA UNPACKS THE GROCERIES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY PREPARING DINNER. SHANNON TRIES TO BALANCE IN THE KARATE KID "GRASSHOPPER" STANCE.

SHANNON

My health teacher says you're probably having menopause.

RITA

Your health teacher? When did my ovaries become "Show and Tell"?

SHANNON

Yesterday.

RITA

Well, you just tell Mrs. Lenhoff I've got a lot on my plate right now, but it's definitely not menopause.

HALLIE ENTERS. HALLIE IS A PRETTY, TERMINALLY BORED FIFTEEN AND A HALF YEAR OLD, WITH JET BLACK HAIR AND PLATINUM BLONDE BANGS. SHE WEARS BROWN CORDUROY HIP HUGGERS AND A T-SHIRT WHICH BARELY COVERS HER MIDRIFF THAT READS -- "PIST." SHE ALSO HAS A NOSE AND BELLY RING.

HALLIE

Yeah, you went through that last year when you were a raging bitch all summer.

RITA

Oh, do I hear the sweet loving voice of my good daughter? (TO HALLIE)
Would you mind boiling the peas for me?

HALLIE

Could you be anymore sexist? Just cause I'm a girl?

RITA

No. Because you're a girl who eats here and sleeps here and doesn't lift a finger to help around here.

HALLIE

You really want me to lift a finger?

KIP

(CRACKING UP) Good one.

HALLIE HEADS FOR KIP. THEY CAN'T KEEP THEIR HANDS OFF EACH OTHER.

RITA

Shannon?

RITA STICKS THE BOX IN FRONT OF SHANNON, WHO KARATE CHOPS IT OPEN. RITA TOSSES THE PEAS IN A POT OF BOILING WATER.

KIP

(INTO PHONE) Hold on, call waiting.

(PRESSES BUTTON) Yeah?... who?...

Never heard of her...

RITA STARTS SHREDDING LETTUCE FOR A SALAD. SHANNON DIGS INTO A COSTCO BAG AND PULLS OUT A PACKAGE OF CRISPY ONIONS.

RTTA

Honey, don't. The Crispy Onions are

for the casserole.

SHE TAKES THE BAG AWAY FROM SHANNON.

KIP

(INTO PHONE) Kev? Wrong number. Some

lady looking for a Rita. Loser.

Anyway, you get your car fixed yet?

RITA

Kip!

KIP

(INTO PHONE) Hold on, bro. (TO RITA)

Huh?

RITA

That call was for me.

KIP

Nuh-uh. They wanted some chick named "Rita."

RITA

I'm that chick.

KIP

You sure?

HALLIE

Rita. That's her name. Can you

believe it?

KIP

No way.

RITA

What'd you think my name was?

KIP

(SHRUGGING) I dunno. Mrs. Clements...
Hallie's Mom.

RITA

Let me get this straight. You've dated my daughter two years, used this house as your personal 7-11, and you didn't know I had a first name?

KIP

Weird, huh? (BACK INTO PHONE) Anyway Kev, you buying amps for the back seat?

RITA

(TO HALLIE) Honey, I know things are tough at his house, and I don't mind him hanging out here, but could he at least use his own phone?

SHE'S ABOUT GRAB KIP'S CELL PHONE OFF HIS BACKPACK, WHEN HALLIE LUNGES FOR IT. BUT IT'S TOO LATE. RITA'S ALREADY SEEN WHAT'S ON HIS WALLPAPER.

RITA (CONT'D)

(RE: PHONE) Oh my -- Is that you? Naked?

HALLIE

No! (BEAT) I'm in my underwear.

RITA

Hallie? How could you?

HALLIE

It's my body, I can do whatever I
want. Or aren't you Pro-Choice
anymore?

RITA

Give it up, Hal. You can't go around sending pictures like this. What if they got out?

HALLIE

I just sent it to Kip. God. And aren't you the one who taught me to be proud of my body? That my vagina was a beautiful thing?

SHANNON

Mom, she said vagina.

KIP

Dude, it's like "The View" over here.

RITA

Hallie, this is... I'm just so disappointed in you. I thought you had better judgement than this.

HALLIE

You didn't even hear my judgement before you got all judgemental.

RITA

Fine. Explain it to me then.

HALLIE

The way I see it, my body's at it's physical peak. I mean, look at me. I totally rock. But one day, let's face it, I'm gonna get all old and look like you.

THIS HITS RITA HARD.

RITA

That's it. You're grounded. For a week. And no t.v.

HALLIE

Tragic. I might miss "America's Next Top Boring Mom".

RITA

Alright, no t.v. and no... no... I'll think of something, something good, something you'll really hate me for.

HALLIE

Don't bother. I already do.

RITA

That's it. Go to your room.

HALLIE

No.

RITA

Yes.

HALLIE

No.

(THREATENING) Hallie! Now.

HALLIE NARROWS HER EYES, THEN TURNS AND STOMPS UPSTAIRS. RITA NOTICES KIP WAITING TO SEE HER NEXT MOVE.

RITA (CONT'D)

Kip, some privacy please?

KIP SHRUGS, DOWNS THE REST OF THE CRISPY ONIONS HE'S BEEN SNACKING ON AND HEADS INTO THE LIVING ROOM. RITA SIGHS AND SITS DOWN AT THE TABLE.

RITA (CONT'D)

Rita, what's happened to your life?

SHE LOCKS EYES WITH HER DAUGHTER.

RITA (CONT'D)

I'm talking to myself.

SHANNON CROSSES TO THE REFRIGERATOR AND BRINGS HER MOTHER A DIET PEPSI.

SHANNON

Just this once.

RITA'S SMILE RETURNS AS SHANNON POPS OPEN THE CAN FOR HER $\ensuremath{\mathsf{MOM}}$.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE C

INT. RITA'S BEDROOM - THREE A.M. - THAT NIGHT
(JAY, RITA)

THE ROOM IS DARK. A SHAFT OF LIGHT ILLUMINATES RITA'S HUSBAND, <u>JAY</u>, IN THEIR IKEA BED. JAY IS A HANDSOME FORMER JOCK WHO NOW SPENDS HIS DAYS WORKING 9 TO 5 IN A JACKET AND TIE. HE HAS A WARPED SENSE OF HUMOR, WHICH COMES IN HANDY IN KEEPING UP WITH HIS FAMILY OF WARPED WOMEN. JAY WAKES UP AND FEELS AROUND THE BED FOR HIS WIFE.

JAY

Rita...? (SITTING UP) Reet?

RITA (O.S.)

I still have an amazing ass, don't I?

JAY

Huh?

JAY TAKES THE CLOCK AND SQUINTS TO SEE THE TIME.

RITA (O.S.)

And my breasts. I mean, they aren't as perky, but they have personality, right?

WE PAN OVER TO SEE THE SHAFT OF LIGHT IS COMING FROM THE OPEN CLOSET DOOR. ONLY RITA'S FUZZY SLIPPERED FEET STICK OUT ALONG THE FLOOR. JAY SITS UP IN BED.

JAY

You feeling sick or something?

RITA (O.S.)

Sort of.

JAY WALKS OVER TO THE CLOSET. RITA WEARS A LARGE T-SHIRT AND SWEATS AND HAS OLD YEARBOOKS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND LETTERS SPREAD AROUND HER.

JAY

Want a Tylenol PM?

Not that kind of sick. More like sick of my life. I don't know who I am anymore. Mrs. Jay Clements? Hallie's Mom? The lady in the shapeless blue smock at Bed, Bath & Beyond?

JAY

Okay, I'm gonna need the Tylenol PM.

RITA

I'm serious, Jay. What happened to Rita? You know, "life of the party, sex, drugs, rock 'n roll, first girl to embrace the acid washed look" Rita. I wanna find her again.

JAY

And you think you'll find her in there?

RITA

No. In here.

RITA HANDS JAY ANOTHER PICTURE.

RITA (CONT'D)

And here.

RITA HANDS JAY ANOTHER PICTURE.

JAY

(RE: PICTURE) At a Fleetwood Mac concert at Pine Knob?

Look at me. Look how cool I was.

JAY

Honey, if you want to acid wash your Mommy jeans, go for it.

RITA

Not the look of my clothes. The look in my eyes. (SHE HOLDS UP A POLAROID PICTURE) I had a sparkle then. I was so free and I don't know... I thought I could do anything.

JAY

You were stoned.

RITA

(RE: PICTURE) Oh. That explains why I'm clutching two candy apples and Screaming Yellow Zonkers.

JAY SITS DOWN ON THE CLOSET FLOOR OPPOSITE HER, INTERTWINING THEIR LEGS. THEY EXHIBIT A COMFORTABLE, LOVING FAMILIARITY.

JAY

Wild guess. Did you pull out another grey hair today?

RTTA

I just want to be a little happier.

It's as simple as that.

JAY

Well, how're you gonna do that?

Wish I knew.

JAY

You open for suggestions?

JAY RUBS HIS FOOT ALONG HERS, THEN UP HER CALF TO HER KNEE.

RITA

Jay...

HIS FOOT REACHES HER THIGH.

RITA (CONT'D)

Jay, this isn't going to fix anything.

JAY

Usually does.

WITH A GLEAM IN HIS EYE, JAY REACHES UP AND PULLS THE STRING TO THE LIGHT BULB. THE ROOM GOES DARK.

RITA (V.O.)

Well, actually it hasn't... not for a

while.

THE LIGHT COMES BACK ON.

JAY

Excuse me?

RITA

Come on, when was the last time we had

sex?

JAY

Saturday.

RITA

No. You had sex Saturday.

JAY

You didn't?

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD.

JAY (CONT'D)

Then a couple weekends ago, after Owen and Audrey's barbecue. (OFF HER LOOK)

Not then either? Okay, how 'bout...

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD AGAIN.

JAY (CONT'D)

So I'm not satisfying you. That's what this is about?

RITA

No, I'm not satisfying myself. I don't seem to be enjoying anything lately. Even when we're in bed, I'm thinking about the zillion unchecked things on my 'To Do' list. (PATTING HIS FOOT) You can relax, your manhood's intact. This is about me. (LOOKING AT PICTURE) Whoever that is.

JAY TAKES THE BOX OF PICTURES AWAY FROM RITA.

JAY

I'm gonna put these back, honey. You shouldn't dwell on the past. It always looks better than it really was. I mean, Fleetwood Mac? C'mon, they sucked.

We're not having the Beatles-are-thebest-band-ever conversation now.

JAY

Go on, name one group that's sold more albums over more decades.

RITA

Goodnight. I'm going to bed.

SHE RUFFLES HIS HAIR, THEN STARTS OUT OF THE CLOSET.

JAY

That's because you know I'm right.

RITA

It's because I'm tired and I have to be up in four hours to feed the kids and supervise a shipment of Swiffers.

(LOOKING BACK AT HIM) You coming?

JAY IS LOOKING THROUGH THE BOX OF PICTURES.

RITA (CONT'D)

Jay?

JAY

I'm getting transplants.

RITA

What?

JAY

Look how much hair I had. I miss my bangs. I miss doing this.

HE FLICKS IMAGINARY BANGS.

Oh boy...

JAY

(RE: PICTURES) And check out me in these Speedos...

SHAKING HER HEAD, RITA CLIMBS IN BED AND TURNS OFF THE LIGHT.

JAY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Does our HMO cover liposuction?

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE D

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - GARAGE - NEXT DAY</u> (RITA, PATTY)

THE GARAGE IS FILLED WITH YEARS OF SUBURBAN RESIDUE. GARDEN TOOLS MIXED IN WITH SPORTS EQUIPMENT, UNFINISHED HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, DISCARDED DOLLS AND TOYS. RITA ENTERS AND DUMPS CLOTHES INTO THE WASHING MACHINE. AS SHE REACHES FOR THE DETERGENT, SOMETHING CATCHES HER EYE. PERCHED UP IN THE RAFTERS, BEHIND A GARDEN HOSE, IS AN OLD DUSTY GUITAR CASE.

RITA CLIMBS ONTO THE WASHING MACHINE AND SWATS AT THE CASE. SHE MANAGES TO KNOCK IT OUT, BUT AS IT FALLS, SHE LOSES HER BALANCE AND HAS TO GRAB A RAFTER FOR SUPPORT. AS HER LEGS REACH FOR THE WASHING MACHINE, HER FOOT HITS A BUTTON WHICH CAUSES THE GARAGE DOOR TO OPEN.

STANDING IN THE DRIVEWAY, SORTING THROUGH HER BAG OF MAIL, IS <u>PATTY MANNIX</u>, THE LOCAL POSTAL CARRIER. SHE IS A CHARISMATIC, AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN WHO CAN'T SEEM TO STAY OUT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S BUSINESS. SHE WEARS THE STANDARD UNIFORM -- BLUE SHORTS, SHIRT AND KNEE-HIGHS.

RITA

Help.

PATTY

Uh-uh. Can't get involved.

RITA

The ladder. Over there.

PATTY

Sorry. That's how I got transferred to this neighborhood. They said, 'Patty, you get too involved with people on your route.' I said, "that is a bunch of bull -- "

RITA

Hurry.

PATTY

Okay, there was one incident. But as God is my witness, I was only trying to help Mrs. G. Wilner stuff those garbage bags in the can. How was I supposed to know Mr. Wilner was in 'em?

RITA

Please! I'm going to fall!

PATTY

I'm gonna lose my pension.

PATTY QUICKLY DRAGS OVER THE LADDER AND HOLDS IT STEADY WHILE RITA CLIMBS DOWN.

RITA

(OUT OF BREATH) Thank God you came.

PATTY

So next Christmas you'll do better than that Happy Meal gift certificate?

RITA

I was trying to get my guitar. I used to play.

PATTY

You?

RITA

What do you mean "you"?

PATTY

I mean, you don't look the type.

What about me's not the type? C'mon, be brutal. I can take it.

PATTY

Don't you have any friends who can do this intervention?

RITA

Sure... well, not really. Most of my friends now are 'Mommy friends'. And my old gang? They stopped emailing somewhere between potty training and training bras.

PATTY SIGHS, PUTS HER SACK OF MAIL ON JAY'S TOOL TABLE, THEN GIVES RITA THE ONCE OVER.

PATTY

Okay, let's start with those clog slippers you ordered from Land's End...

RITA

Forget it. I can't take it.

DEJECTED, RITA SITS ON A RUSTY AB CRUNCHER.

PATTY

Now don't get all unglued, Mrs. R. Clements.

RITA

It's Rita. R-I-T-A. Why can't anybody remember that?!

PATTY

Now look what I've done. (RUMMAGING
THROUGH HER BAG) Would a free sample
of Jergens hand lotion chill you out?
RITA SHOOTS HER A LOOK.

PATTY (CONT'D)

I was being kind. I could've offered you the Nivea anti-aging serum.

PATTY SITS DOWN NEXT TO HER ON A LAWNMOWER.

PATTY (CONT'D)

You know, 'Rita', just because you don't look the type, doesn't mean you can't be the type. For instance, I happen to play a mean musical instrument myself. Organ. For Temple Beth Acheim.

RITA

You're Jewish?

PATTY

Oh no, I belong to First Baptist over on Six Mile and Dequinder.

RTTA

Why don't you play there?

PATTY

Banned from the premises. Like it's my fault I saw Reverend Campbell embracing more than just the Lord.

I better check on my laundry. Thanks for the help.

RITA RETURNS TO THE WASHER.

PATTY

Well, now that I'm off my feet, let me hear you play something.

PATTY OPENS THE JERGENS SAMPLE AND APPLIES THE LOTION TO HER ELBOWS AND KNEES.

RITA

Now? Nah, I couldn't.

PATTY

Why not? You practically killed yourself getting the damn guitar.

RITA

I'm pretty rusty. It's been a few years.

RITA PUTS THE GUITAR IN A CORNER BY THE SHOVELS AND RAKES.

PATTY

Listen, I'm not one to pry...

RITA

Yes, I can tell.

PATTY

... but you learn a lot about folks in this job, and seems to me you're on the verge of a meltdown. If I were you, I'd quit feeling sorry for myself and do something about it.

(MORE)

PATTY (CONT'D)

(RE: HAND LOTION) Whew-ee! This stuff stinks. No wonder they have to give it away.

RITA

Well, thanks again. I'll just take my mail.

PATTY

Now I know what type you are. The "all talk, no action" type.

PATTY DROPS RITA'S MAIL ON A SOLOFLEX MACHINE AND STARTS DOWN THE DRIVEWAY.

PATTY (CONT'D)

(CALLING BACK) At least Mrs. G. Wilner had enough guts to do something about her problem.

SHE EXITS. A BEAT. RITA LOOKS AT THE GUITAR CASE. SHE WALKS OVER AND OPENS IT. INSIDE, SHE FINDS HER OLD GUITAR AND DECIDES TO TRY IT ON FOR SIZE. SHE STRUMS A FEW CHORDS. OVER THE NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR'S FENCE, PATTY'S HEAD POPS UP. SHE SEES RITA AND SMILES TO HERSELF. SOMETIMES IT PAYS TO GET INVOLVED.

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE E

INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - THAT NIGHT (RITA, JAY, SHANNON, KIP, HALLIE)

RITA SETS THE TABLE BETWEEN STIRS OF TOMATO SAUCE ON THE STOVE. SHANNON WATERS HER POTATO PLANT SCIENCE PROJECT. KIP LOOKS AT A CAR MAGAZINE, WHILE DRUMMING ON THE TABLE WITH HIS SILVERWARE. JAY ENTERS IN A SHORT SLEEVE BUTTON DOWN SHIRT AND LOOSENED TIE. HE PUTS DOWN HIS BRIEFCASE AND IMMEDIATELY GETS A BEER FROM THE FRIDGE.

RITA

Hey.

JAY

Hey hon, how you feeling today?

HE KISSES HER, THEN LICKS HIS LIPS.

JAY (CONT'D)

Mmm, homemade 'sketti sauce. That's a good sign. (KISSES SHANNON) Mmm,

Reeses pieces. Not a good sign.

Remember what Dr. Maroney said.

SHANNON

He said I need to keep my blood sugar up for karate.

JAY

Karate's tomorrow, Shan.

SHANNON

But I have to practice tonight. Hai! (KICK) Hai! (KICK) Ow!

SHANNON ACCIDENTALLY KICKS THE REFRIGERATOR. A BUNCH OF KITCHEN MAGNETS FALL OFF.

Jay, can you leave work early tomorrow and pick Shannon up from karate?

RITA POURS THE SAUCE OVER THE SPAGHETTI.

SHANNON

Why can't you pick me up?

RITA

Because I'll be busy.

SHANNON

Doing what?

RITA

Doing... stuff.

RITA PLACES THE PLATTER OF SPAGHETTI ON THE TABLE.

KIP

Meatballs. Awesome.

SHANNON

But I'm 'lergic to --

RITA

Don't worry, yours are gluten-free,
Hallie's are vegan and the rest of us
get greasy ol' meat meatballs.

JAY

(TO RITA) What stuff you doing tomorrow?

RITA

Just stuff. But if you can't pick her up, I'll figure something else out.

RITA PLACES THE PILLSBURY CRESCENT ROLLS ON THE TABLE.

SHANNON

Could you pass the spaghetti?

RITA

(CALLING UPSTAIRS) HALLIE! DINNER!

HALLIE'S DOOR OPENS UPSTAIRS. A RAP CD BLARES.

HALLIE (O.S.)

HELLO! YOU SAID I'M GROUNDED!

HALLIE'S DOOR SLAMS SHUT. THE MUSIC STOPS.

RITA

WELL, I'M UNGROUNDING YOU FOR DINNER!

HALLIE'S DOOR OPENS AGAIN. THE MUSIC BLARES.

HALLIE

TOUGH! I'M GONNA STAY IN HERE AND

STARVE TO DEATH!

THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT. THE MUSIC STOPS.

RITA

Jay, remind me. Did I conceive her

with you. Or was it Satan?

SHANNON

Could you pass the spaghetti?

JAY

Can't you move your stuff to the

weekend?

RITA

All we're talking about is two hours.

Four to six. Just for myself.

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

You'd think I was asking for a year to bum around Europe. Which by the way, we were supposed to do, (LOUD, FOR EFFECT) 'TIL I GOT PREGNANT WITH AN UNGRATEFUL DAUGHTER!

SHANNON

Can someone please pass the spaghetti?

JAY

(JOKING) You're not having an affair are you?

RITA

Yes. You caught me. I'm having a hot fling with the bag boy at Krogers.

KIP

Darnell? (THUMBS UP) Way to go.

RITA

(FINALLY) I invited my friend Patty over to... play some music.

HER FAMILY LOOKS AT HER CONFUSED.

RITA (CONT'D)

That's right. You heard me. I'm gonna start playing my guitar again.

HER FAMILY CONTINUES STARING BLANKLY AT HER. A BEAT. THEY START LAUGHING.

RITA (CONT'D)

You guys think it's funny?

JAY

No, it's a great idea. Maybe we'll join you. We can be the new Partridge Family. (SINGING) "I THINK I LOVE YOU! SO WHAT AM I SO AFRAID OF..."

THEY LAUGH EVEN HARDER. MILK COMES OUT OF SHANNON'S NOSE. RITA WATCHES THEM, FEELING BELITTLED, THEN --

RITA

Do you find this funny too?

RITA PICKS UP THE PLATTER OF SPAGHETTI AND HEAVES IT AGAINST THE WALL. THE PLATE CRASHES TO THE FLOOR AND THE SPAGHETTI SLIDES DOWN THE WALL. RITA STANDS THERE, NOT BELIEVING WHAT SHE JUST DID. A BEAT. SHE TURNS AND EXITS THE ROOM. THEY'VE ALL STOPPED LAUGHING.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE A

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - GARAGE - NEXT DAY</u> (RITA, PATTY, SHANNON, OWEN, KIP, HALLIE)

THE DRYER WHIRS. RITA, IN JEANS AND FLANNEL SHIRT, TUNES HER GUITAR. PATTY, STILL IN HER POSTAL UNIFORM, SETS UP HER KEYBOARD ON AN OVERTURNED GARBAGE CAN.

RITA

... then Jay asked me if I was having

an affair. You believe that?

PATTY

Well, are you?

RITA

What!? That is the most ridiculous --

What?! I'm married.

PATTY

So, just 'cause you've had supper, doesn't mean you don't have room for dessert.

RITA

I take it you're not married.

PATTY

Twice.

RITA

And did you ever fool around?

PATTY

I'll try anything once.

Really?

PATTY

But I fooled around six times.

RITA

No, Jay and I may be in a bit of a rut, but it's a really comfortable rut. I wouldn't jeopardize everything for a cheap quickie.

RITA SEARCHES FOR A PICK IN HER GUITAR CASE.

RITA (CONT'D)

You know, "B.C.", before children, I did what I wanted, when I wanted.

Now, I'm so busy being everything to everybody, I have nothing left for myself. Well, no more. If I want to play the guitar, I'm damn well going to play the guitar.

THERE IS A "DING" FROM THE WASHING MACHINE.

RITA (CONT'D)

Right after I do a load of whites.

RITA PUTS THE GUITAR DOWN.

PATTY

Hold it, Missy!

RITA STOPS.

PATTY (CONT'D)

As my people say, the whites can help themselves. Now get back here. We only got an hour left to jam.

RITA

Jam. Yeah, I've always wanted to jam. (BEAT) How do you jam?

PATTY

Thought you said you used to play.

RITA

Well, not with other people. Mostly alone in my room. Fantasizing I was on "Saturday Night Live", performing the title track from my latest hit CD.

PATTY

Uh-huh. And what kind of songs were on this hit CD? Wait, don't tell me. Some angry white girl I-don't-fit-in-have-a-bad-haircut-can't-get-laid songs?

RITA

Well, I did go through a Sinead O'Connor period. Which was somewhere between my Stevie Nicks shawl years and my Patti Smith, stop shaving my armpits phase. PATTY

No wonder you couldn't get laid.

PATTY BEGINS TO RIFF. RITA CAUTIOUSLY JOINS IN. THEY TRY TO GROOVE TOGETHER, BUT IT'S NOT HAPPENING. THEY STOP.

RITA

(HOPEFULLY) Not bad.

PATTY RAISES AN EYEBROW.

RITA (CONT'D)

I know what's wrong. We didn't do the countdown thing.

PATTY

Then hit it, girl.

RITA

A one, two, one-two-three-four!

THEY START PLAYING AGAIN. THIS TIME A LITTLE MORE RELAXED. YOU CAN TELL RITA KNOWS HER WAY AROUND A GUITAR.

SHANNON (O.S.)

Mom! I got green! I got green!

SHANNON RUNS INTO THE GARAGE, WAVING A STRIP OF GREEN FABRIC.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

See! See!

SHANNON SHOVES THE FABRIC IN RITA'S FACE. RITA AND PATTY STOP PLAYING AGAIN.

RITA

That's great, Shan. So proud of you.

SHE HUGS SHANNON.

SHANNON

Sew it on for me, 'kay?

Sure. Later though.

SHANNON

Now.

RITA

No.

SHANNON

Why?

RITA

Because.

SHANNON

'Cause why?

FROM DOWN THE STREET WE HEAR THE $\underline{\text{ICE CREAM TRUCK}}$ $\underline{\text{APPROACHING}}$.

RITA

(FRUSTRATED) Here's a couple bucks,

sweetie. Go get a Klondike bar.

SHANNON GRABS THE MONEY, JUMPS ON HER BIKE AND RACES OFF.

SHANNON (O.S.)

HEY, WAIT UP!

RITA

(OFF PATTY'S LOOK) I know, I know.

You're thinking I'm the worst mother

ever.

PATTY

No, I'm thinking you're the worst

hostess ever. Where's my Klondike

bar?

Let's play some more, then we'll "take five". I always wanted to say that.

THE WOMEN PICK UP WHERE THEY LEFT OFF, RIFFING WITH A BLUESY, R&B BEAT. THEY SMILE AT EACH OTHER, WITH A LOOK THAT SAYS -- "WE'RE COOL." SUDDENLY, A PAIR OF WHITE SOCKS IN BROWN SANDALS CUTS THROUGH THE BUSHES OF THE ADJOINING YARD. IT'S OWEN JAKOWSKI, RITA'S GOOD NATURED, MID-THIRTIES NEIGHBOR. HE'S PURE WHITE BREAD, FROM HIS MADRAS SHORTS TO HIS EVER PRESENT DETROIT TIGER'S CAP. RITA AND PATTY STOP PLAYING AGAIN. PATTY THROWS UP HER ARMS.

OWEN

Just returning Jay's mesquite briquettes. Tell him he was spot on about that rich, smokey flavor.

HE PUTS THE BAG OF BBQ BRIQUETTES DOWN BY THE WATER HEATER.

OWEN (CONT'D)

And hate to be a party pooper, but I can hear you all the way from my house. You know, a guy likes to relax after a hard day at work.

PATTY

Should be plenty relaxed. You were canned three months ago.

OWEN

Down sized.

PATTY

(REACHING IN MAIL BAG) Here's your unemployment check. Save me the walk over.

OWEN GRABS THE CHECK FROM PATTY.

OWEN

Hey, it's not easy being a stay-at-home-Dad. At the plant, I could knock back a couple beers at lunch and still run the hydraulic press. But man, Nintendo DS with the kids takes all your concentration.

RITA

Sorry Owen, we'll try and keep it down. See ya.

OWEN DOESN'T TAKE THE HINT.

OWEN

You know what your band's missing?

RITA

Actually, we're not a band...

OWEN

An accordion. Got one in the basement the wife's been threatening to sell on Ebay.

RITA

... We're really just fooling around.

OWEN

Why don't I zip on home and get it?

OWEN STARTS OUT.

Owen. Wait. It's sweet that you wanted to join us, but we don't really need anyone else.

OWEN

(HITTING A NERVE) Oh really? And why's that? 'Cause you're not hiring right now? Or I'm too old to flip burgers? Or is it just that I'm not "Gap material"?

PATTY AND RITA EXCHANGE LOOKS. THIS GUY COULD SNAP.

RITA

You know, the accordion is kind of underrated.

PATTY

Who doesn't love a good polka?

OWEN

You guys really want me to join ya?
Right on. We're gonna rock this
'hood!

HE HOLDS UP HIS HANDS IN THE SURFER "SHAKA" SIGN AND MAKES THE SOUNDS OF AN AUDIENCE ROARING AS HE EXITS THROUGH THE BACKYARD.

PATTY

And they say we go postal.

RITA

(SIGHS) Welcome to my world.

KIP ENTERS WITH AN ARMFUL OF DIRTY CLOTHES.

PATTY

Would your world happen to have any beer in it?

RITA STARTS INSIDE.

RITA

Man, that is so rock 'n roll. We'll throw back a few, then trash the garage. (LOOKING AROUND) Oh, wait. It already is.

AS SOON AS SHE'S GONE, KIP HURRIES OUT THE GARAGE AND LOOKS UP TO A SECOND STORY WINDOW.

KIP

Yo, she's gone!

A BEAT. THEN HALLIE CLIMBS DOWN THE TRELLIS.

HALLIE

(TO KIP) Keep her occupied. I'm going to McDonald's.

KIP

I'll miss you, babe.

HALLIE KISSES KIP HARD THEN CLIMBS OVER THE FENCE.

KIP (CONT'D)

(TO PATTY) Swear you won't say nothing.

PATTY

(LOOKING UPWARD) Lord, why me? I was just getting used to this route.

CUT TO:

SCENE B

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - SECONDS LATER</u> (JAY, RITA)

JAY IS PATCHING THE WALL RITA DENTED FROM LAST NIGHT'S DINNER. RITA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO THE CUPBOARDS.

JAY

Hey.

RITA

Hey.

RITA BENDS DOWN AND SEARCHES THROUGH SOME POTS AND PANS.

JAY

So how long is this going to last?

RITA

About another half hour. We're trying to get through a whole song.

JAY

I meant us not talking.

RITA

We talked this morning.

JAY

"Move, I have to spit" isn't talking.

RITA

(TRYING TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD) I could've gotten the toothpaste all over you.

JAY

Rita, you threw a plate of food. We gotta deal with this.

RITA STANDS UP WITH THE HIDDEN SIX PACK.

RITA

You laughed at me.

JAY

I'm sorry, but I don't know what to do here. You gain a few pounds, I know how to make you feel pretty. Your Mom visits, I know to get your Xanax prescription refilled. But this...

HE SHRUGS.

RITA

Just understand me, Jay. That's all.

JAY

I understand plenty. You think my dream is to sell car insurance? I'd rather be making seven figures playing guard for the Pistons. But that's not reality. We're adults. We got a family, bills, responsibilities --

RITA PUTS HER HANDS OVER HER EARS AND TRIES TO DROWN HIM OUT WITH ${\hbox{\tt NONSENSICAL SOUNDS}}$.

JAY (CONT'D)

Rita, cut it out!

RITA

Well, stop lecturing me like I'm one of the girls.

JAY

Then stop acting like them. You can play in the garage all you want, but you can't avoid growing up.

RITA

There's a difference between growing up and giving up.

JAY

Oh great. So now I'm a loser <u>and</u> lousy in bed.

RITA

JAY!

JAY

WHAT?!

RITA

Forget it. I'm tired of this.

JAY

This conversation? Or me?

JAY JAMS THE PUTTY KNIFE IN THE WALL AND BRUSHES PAST HER. ON RITA'S EXASPERATED EXPRESSION, WE:

DISSOLVE TO:

SCENE C

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - GARAGE - A LITTLE LATER</u> (OWEN, PATTY, RITA, KIP)

OWEN IS BACK, WARMING UP ON HIS ACCORDION. HE ALSO WEARS A HARMONICA AROUND HIS NECK. PATTY JAMS WHILE KIP DOES WHEELIES ON HALLIE'S BIKE IN THE DRIVEWAY. RITA ENTERS.

OWEN

Jump in Rita, we're hittin' a groove!

PATTY TAKES ONE LOOK AT RITA'S FACE AND STOPS PLAYING.

PATTY

Owen, give her a minute. The woman just had a fight with her husband.

RITA

We weren't fighting, we were just -How'd you know we were fighting?

PATTY

I'm blessed with a gift. Some people call it a sixth sense.

KIP

We heard you from the heating vent.

PATTY

God works in mysterious ways.

RITA

Sorry, guys. Today's not going to work out. Today or any day.

RESIGNED, SHE PUTS HER GUITAR BACK IN IT'S CASE.

PATTY

That's it? You're gonna give up?

Just like that?

RITA

Yep. Just like that.

PATTY

What happened to doing something for yourself? Getting your groove back? Singing on "SNL?"

RITA

They're just dreams. Jay's right.

I'm too old to go chasing after them.

PATTY

You? Old? It's not like you have any grey hairs.

RITA CRINGES.

KIP

Yeah, most Moms just pork out and shriv up. But my buds definitely consider you a MILF.

RITA

Kip, can you go back to thinking of me
as Hallie's bitchy Mom?

PATTY

I got news for you, Rita. The quickest way to get old is to stop chasing your dreams.

OWEN

I had a dream. To be a dancer. My
Dad said it wasn't manly. What did he
know? He's not the one who has to lie
awake at night, resisting the urge to
put on a pair of tights and jete'
across the backyard like Baryshnikov.

PATTY

Something's in the water in this neighborhood.

RITA

I appreciate what you're all trying to do, but this isn't worth ending my marriage over.

PATTY

I'm not one to butt in, but your marriage is over if you're not happy. You gotta fight for what you want.

RITA

I'm sick of fighting.

PATTY

Then what about singing?

RITA

What good's that going to do?

PATTY

Only one way to find out.

PATTY NODS TO THE HEATING VENT, THEN WINKS AT RITA.

(WHEELS TURNING) You guys know any

Beatles?

KIP

Who?

PATTY

(LOOKING THROUGH HER BAG) Where's that

damn anti-aging serum?

RITA PICKS UP HER GUITAR AND STRIKES THE OPENING CHORDS OF A SONG. PATTY FOLLOWS HER LEAD. RITA STARTS SOFTLY AT FIRST, BUT HER VOICE IS FULL OF EMOTION AS SHE TURNS TO THE VENT.

RITA

(SINGING SLOWLY) "WHEN I WAS YOUNGER,

SO MUCH YOUNGER THAN TODAY. I NEVER

NEEDED ANYBODY'S HELP IN ANY WAY..."

OWEN ADDS A UNIQUE TOUCH WITH HIS ACCORDION.

RITA (CONT'D)

(SINGING) "BUT NOW THOSE DAYS ARE

GONE, I'M NOT SO SELF ASSURED. NOW I

FIND I'VE CHANGED MY MIND AND OPENED

UP THE DOOR."

KIP GRABS BARBECUE TONGS AND BANGS TO THE BEAT ON THE DRYER. THEY ACTUALLY SOUND GOOD TOGETHER. RITA BEGINS TO LOOSEN UP AND SING WITH MORE CONFIDENCE.

CUT TO:

SCENE D

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME</u> (RITA)

JAY, IN CUT OFF SWEATS AND SNEAKERS, PUTS HIS BASKETBALL ON THE TABLE AND OPENS THE FRIDGE. HE GRABS A BOTTLED WATER AND IS ABOUT TO START OUT, UNTIL HE HEARS WHAT RITA'S SINGING.

RITA (O.S.)

(MUFFLED SINGING) "HELP ME IF YOU CAN
I'M FEELING DOWN. AND I DO APPRECIATE
YOU BEING ROUND. HELP ME GET MY FEET
BACK ON THE GROUND. WON'T YOU PLEASE
PLEASE HELP ME?"

A WISTFUL LOOK COMES ACROSS HIS FACE. HE SITS DOWN TO LISTEN.

CUT TO:

SCENE E

<u>INT. CLEMENTS' HOUSE - GARAGE - A LITTLE LATER</u> (RITA, RITA/PATTY, JAY, PATTY, OWEN, KIP, HALLIE)

AS RITA GETS INTO IT, SHE PICKS UP THE TEMPO AND ROCKS TO THE BEAT. NOW IN HER SLEEVELESS TEE, SHE'S SEXY AND FREE AND GLOWING. AS THE SONG BUILDS, OWEN ADDS FLOURISHES ON THE HARMONICA. PATTY PIPES IN WITH GOSPEL BACKGROUND VOCALS. EVEN KIP GETS AMBITIOUS AND STARTS BANGING ON A COOLER, AN EMPTY SPARKLETT'S BOTTLE, A TOOLBOX, ETC. (A LA "STOMP").

RITA

(SINGING) "AND NOW MY LIFE HAS CHANGED

IN OH SO MANY WAYS. MY INDEPENDENCE

SEEMS TO -- "

RITA/PATTY

(HARMONIZING) "VANISH IN THE HAZE."

RITA

"BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN I FEEL SO

INSECURE. I KNOW THAT I JUST NEED YOU

LIKE I'VE NEVER DONE BEFORE."

JAY ENTERS. RITA, SINGING WITH EYES CLOSED, DOESN'T NOTICE HIM. BUT THE OTHERS DO. PATTY STOPS PLAYING. THEN OWEN. THEN KIP. RITA IS SO INTO THE SONG, SHE KEEPS GOING.

RITA (CONT'D)

"HELP ME IF YOU CAN I'M FEELING..."

RITA OPENS HER EYES AND SEES JAY STANDING IN THE DRIVEWAY. SHE IMMEDIATELY STOPS SINGING.

JAY

Hey.

RITA

Hey.

PATTY CLOSES DOWN HER KEYBOARDS.

PATTY

Looks like we're done for the day.

OWEN

Now? This could get good.

KIP

It's not pretty, man. Got so bad here last night, I had to have dinner at my own house.

PATTY, OWEN AND KIP START OUT.

PATTY

I was wrong about you, Rita. You not only got guts, you got soul. C'mon, guys.

THEY EXIT. RITA AND JAY STAND THERE AWKWARDLY.

JAY

I saw it.

RITA

Saw what?

JAY

The sparkle. In your eyes. Forgot how beautiful it was.

RITA'S TOUCHED.

JAY (CONT'D)

Look, if it's a couple hours you need, whatever, I'll take up the slack.

Like picking up Shannon today. I really want this to work out.

The music? Or our marriage?

JAY

Both.

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, THEN HUG.

JAY (CONT'D)

Love you, Reet.

RITA

Love ya' back.

SHE RUBS THE BACK OF HIS HEAD TENDERLY.

RITA (CONT'D)

Know what? (IN HIS EAR) You're way
hotter without bangs.

JAY

Really?

RITA

Yeah. They looked better on Dorothy Hamill.

HE LAUGHS.

JAY

So this music thing... you're pretty serious, huh?

RITA

Jay, it's not like I'm going to quit my job and run off to open for U2. We're just having fun in here.

(MORE)

RITA (CONT'D)

Like you shooting hoops with the guys.

Know what I mean?

JAY

No.

RITA

No?

JAY

Why would you want to open for U2? They're totally overrated.

SHE SMILES.

JAY (CONT'D)

So we're good?

RITA

We are. But about taking up that
slack... Can you deal with Hallie?
I've tried everything. I'm at a total
loss.

JAY

She's just pulling the same crap you did with your Mom.

RITA

Ain't karma a bitch?

JAY

I say we don't cave. She stays grounded 'til she stops mouthing off.

RITA

Mmm. Tough love. Show me more.

RITA NUZZLES HIS NECK, SEDUCTIVELY.

JAY

Reet. It's still light out.

RITA

(MISCHIEVOUSLY) Maybe it's good we

shake things up a little.

RITA HITS THE GARAGE DOOR BUTTON. BEFORE IT SHUTS, A BACKPACK FLIES OVER THE NEIGHBOR'S FENCE. THEN A LEG, THEN HALLIE, CLUTCHING A MCDONALD'S TAKE-OUT BAG IN HER TEETH. SHE LANDS ON HER FEET AND PULLS OUT A HANDFUL OF FRIES. SHE SCARFS THEM DOWN AS SHE STARTS UP THE TRELLIS.

JAY

Did you just see Hallie?

RITA

Uh-huh.

SHE BEGINS PULLING OFF JAY'S T-SHIRT.

JAY

Shouldn't we do something about it?

RITA

(MISCHIEVOUSLY) You mean like nailing

her window shut?

JAY

You didn't.

RITA

Sure did.

JAY

You are so bad.

No. Bad was signing her up to be the school crossing guard Friday.

RITA SMILES PROUDLY. SUDDENLY WE HEAR <u>BANGING ON THE UPSTAIRS WINDOW</u>.

HALLIE (O.S.)

YOU GUYS SUUUUUCK!!

RITA PUSHES JAY DOWN ON THE NORDIC TRACK. SHE STARTS KISSING HIM PASSIONATELY, AS WE:

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW