

PEARL

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - DAY

A picture-perfect summer day in the city of Boston. An immense steel and glass OFFICE BUILDING tops the skyline.

INT. BUILDING

The penthouse floor is home to Holloway Enterprises, a real-estate development company.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

ANDREW HOLLOWAY, 30, boyishly handsome, self-assured, sits at the head of the table with a handful of EXECUTIVES.

MAN

If we don't get in there soon, it's going to delay the whole project.

WOMAN

It'll put us way over budget, Andrew.

ANDREW

You're both right. But until we get the final impact statement from the EPA, there are plenty of things we can be doing to advance the project.

MAN 2

Screw the EPA. What are we gonna endanger here? Some kind of spotted worm?

ANDREW

No, actually, it's a striped frog. They sent me a picture of one. It's really quite adorable.

MAN

Is it adorable enough to hold up a \$200 million dollar development?

ANDREW

Well, I'm not sure about that.

(pause)

Pretty damn cute, though.

(looks at watch)

Time to hop on out of here.

WOMAN

Off to kiss a frog, are you?

ANDREW

As a matter of fact, I'm on my way to a very important meeting where I shall be making corporate decisions which will ensure a prosperous future for you and your family.

The woman hurries ahead of him.

WOMAN

Well, why didn't you say so? Here, let me get the door for you.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Still downtown, but on a tree-lined side-street. There's a small PARK, kids on bikes, moms with strollers.

Across the street stands a three-story Victorian "mansion", stylishly restored into the LAW OFFICES of "Paul McAlister and Associates".

INT. OFFICE

Sara Callhan, 20's, paces next to her desk, cradles a cordless.

She's young, energetic, tightly wound, tastefully attired. A natural beauty.

SARA

(on phone)

I need to know what was discussed at that meeting on the 25th. Well, maybe he just got caught with his pants down, I don't know. But that's not really our concern at the moment, am I right?

The head of the law firm, PAUL MCALISTER, 40's, strolls into her office.

SARA (CONT'D)

(on phone)

You'll get back to me by tomorrow? Opening arguments are next week. Okay. I owe you one.

She hangs up. Paul sits on the corner of her desk.

PAUL

So, how's this thing with Jack Walsh shaping up?

SARA

I'd say it's in the bag, Paul. I only wish, for the sake of this firm, that the bag was a little bigger.

PAUL

Hey, we both know it's just a little something they're throwing your way, testing the waters, see how you handle yourself. You've managed to get in with the right crowd, Sara. If Walsh likes the way you operate, this could turn into something big. For you... and the firm. Sara fills her briefcase with paperwork, closes the lid.

SARA

Oh oh. Pressure's on.

PAUL

And I know you're up to the challenge or I wouldn't have hired you.

(pause)

Maybe we should take some time after work and discuss this case. Over dinner?

SARA

Paul, I'd love to have dinner with you tonight, but I have this big 'ol rusty nail I have to drive into my head...

PAUL

Hey, they don't call me "hammerhead" for nothin'.

She grabs her jacket, heads for the door.

SARA

I knew you were a shark, Paul. Just wasn't sure about which variety.

HALLWAY

Paul follows her down the hallway.

PAUL  
Leaving so soon?

SARA  
I'll be at the library. Ton of  
reading to do tonight. Work, work,  
work.

PAUL  
Well, I wouldn't have it any other  
way. But don't strain yourself. A  
coy smile as she exits.

SARA  
Haven't pulled anything yet.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Sara cuts across the park to her car, passes two GUYS  
engrossed in a game of CHESS.

ARCHIE and VIRGIL, 50's, look a little down and out, but  
their sense of humor is in tact.

When they notice Sara, Archie stands and plays a riff on his  
harmonica. Virgil, sitting in a rusty ELECTRIC WHEELCHAIR,  
taps a rhythm with a pair of drumsticks.

ARCHIE  
Come on, counselor. Five dollars  
to name that tune.

Sara stops behind Virgil, studies the chessboard.

SARA  
Okay, I'm stumped. What is it?

ARCHIE  
That's "Bobbin' In The Sea Of  
Love", by Corky And The Floaters.  
I can't believe you missed that  
one.

Sara drops a five dollar bill on the board.

SARA  
Why do I get the feeling you're  
making these up?  
(points to chessboard)  
Hey, Virge, Queen to Bishop four,  
and you got him. Check it out.

VIRGIL

Why, thank you, for that invaluable advice, Miss Callahan. Will there be a charge for that?

SARA

I'm a lawyer. What do you think?  
(walks to her Mercedes)  
I'll put this one on your tab.

EXT. YACHT CLUB - DAY

The library was not her destination. This is the exclusive Boston Harbor Yacht Club.

She drives past the Club House, down to the water, to where ANDREW rigs a small SAILBOAT. He picks up his VIDEO CAMERA, admires Sara through the view-finder as he walks toward her.

ANDREW

C'mon, give me that sexy, hot blooded, beer-commercial-smile.

SARA

Where are you pointing that thing?  
My face is up here. Gimme that.

She pushes the camera aside, they embrace. A long kiss.

ANDREW

I see you dressed for the occasion.

SARA

I didn't have time to go home. So  
I'll change right here, if you  
don't mind.

She hands Andrew a large BEACH TOWEL to hold up in front of her, then slips out of her blouse.

SARA (CONT'D)

Don't you dare look. God will  
strike you blind.

Andrew lowers a single eyelid as he peers over the towel.

ANDREW

What the hell, I'll risk one eye.

SARA

Andrew, a gentleman would not take  
advantage of the situation.

ANDREW

You're at the Boston Harbor Yacht Club, darling. Not a gentleman in sight.

EXT. SAILBOAT - DAY

Five small sailboats meander along the race course. It's obvious that this is more of a social event than a competition. Andrew sits at the tiller, shouts commands.

ANDREW

Comin' about, three sheets to the wind! More swill for the men!

He holds out his champagne glass. Sara fills it from a soda bottle.

SARA

Easy, captain. I'm afraid all this Snapple might sink your dinghy.

ANDREW

Arrr, you saucy wench, just wait'll I get my new hook.

Another boat, crewed by a young couple, BOYD and SYLVIA FLEMING, passes in the opposite direction. A near collision.

BOYD

Ahoy, mateys. Two hands on the tiller at all times. Consult your manual.

ANDREW

We slice the swine at seven. Don't be late.

INT. DINING ROOM - SUNSET

The two couples sit at a table next to a window that overlooks the bay.

SYLVIA

I'm so glad we finally get to make your acquaintance, Sara. Andy won't shut up about you.

BOYD

(to Andrew)

And now I see why, my friend.

(to Sara)

Has he taken you home to meet the clan?

SARA

Oh yes, I've been in the Holloway cave, lived to tell about it. Other than having to submit to that tattoo, I found them to be quite normal.

ANDREW

By the way, my parents are expecting us to drop by their party on Sunday.

BOYD

Really? What's the occasion?

ANDREW

Just one of my mother's occasional parties, I suppose.

SARA

I received the invitation today, Andrew. Gold embossed, and lemon-scented.

SLYVIA

I hear that's the latest. Scratch n' sniff invites. Don't you just love it?

ANDREW

Yeah, we really have come so far.

BOYD

So now, Sara, tell us where you're from.

SARA

Well, I grew up in California...

SYLVIA

Oh, I know where that is. Isn't that where they grow oranges and have all those mudslides?

SARA

Uh huh. We're also known for our celebrity homicides.

BOYD

What's your family do there?

SARA

My father was in the oil business. He died a few years ago.

SYLVIA

Oh, I'm sorry.

BOYD

What about your mother?

SARA

Well, she's pretty involved these days with this... charity organization.

SYLVIA

Really? That's wonderful.

SARA

It keeps her travelling a lot, so I don't see her that often.

BOYD

Wish my mother had a job like that.

ANDREW

Sara doesn't like to brag on her mom, but she's pretty amazing. Practically runs a disaster relief operation, hopping around the globe, delivering food and and medicine. She's considered a Saint in certain parts of the world.

SARA

Oh, stop it, Andrew.

ANDREW

Really, Sara, you should be proud. My mom's idea of helping mankind is hiring catering companies with Latin names.

EXT. YACHT CLUB - NIGHT

Andrew and Sara walk arm in arm to her car.

ANDREW

Is that wretched job of yours going to interfere with our love-life tonight?

SARA

That wretched job pays the bills. And, yes, I have some reading to do.

They stop next to her car. Andrew takes Sara in his arms.

ANDREW

Why don't you start with reading my mind.

They kiss, then Sara places her fingers on his temples, concentrates.

SARA

All I'm picking up here are four-letter words.

(another kiss)

But I kinda like what I'm hearing.

EXT. APT. BLDG. - DAWN

A LUXURY APARTMENT HIGH-RISE. PAN upward to Sara's apartment on the 30th floor.

INT. SARA'S APT.

Sara and Andrew's clothes are strewn about the floor. Hear the SOUND of moans, gasps. But they're asleep. Andrew opens his eyes, furrows his brow. He climbs out of bed.

LIVING ROOM

Sara's roommate, VALERIE FOSTER, huffs and puffs on her cross-country-skiing machine.

She wears a GREEN FACIAL MASK, an old pair of GREEN LEOTARDS with a few rips in the leg and thigh area.

Andrew disappears, returns with his VIDEO CAMERA. He leans against the wall directly behind her, pans up and down.

ANDREW

I've got you now. The Incredible Hulk, caught on tape. Finally... proof of its existence.

Valerie wears headphones, can't hear him.

ANDREW

Inside Edition, Hard Copy... oh yeah, they'll pay a fortune for this.

She finally becomes aware of Andrew, JUMPS off the machine, runs SCREAMING into her bedroom.

SARA'S BEDROOM

Sara's half-awake when Andrew returns. He nuzzles beside her.

SARA

What's going on out there?

ANDREW

Thank God I was up. Now don't panic, but there was an alien cross-country-skiing in your living room. It came for you, but I was able to destroy it. Now you owe me. Big time.

He dives under the covers, but she quickly slides out the other side, dashes into the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sara and Andrew, half-dressed, finish a hasty breakfast.

ANDREW

Well, I'm off to rape the earth again, give birth to another mall. But I think I can squeeze you in for lunch.

SARA

No lunch. And no dinner. I have to work tonight.

ANDREW

Don't tell me you're dumping me for Jack Walsh.

Sara walks down the hallway toward her bedroom.

SARA

Afraid so. I'll see you at the party on Sunday.

Andrew follows her. He raises his arms as if to embrace the heavens, speaks like a TV evangelist.

ANDREW

Ah, Sunday, the day of miracles. And, yea, there shall be a great swelling amongst them, and they shall feast upon themselves, and know that it is good.

He passes Valerie's open door, looks inside.

ANDREW (CONT'D)

Hallelujah! And the world doth abound in beauty.

Valerie, in panties, buttoning her blouse, stands in front of her mirror. Hair done, make-up on, she looks pretty good. She gazes over and smiles.

VALERIE

Well, what do you think? Is that Nordic-Trac paying off?

ANDREW

I plead the Fifth. No, make it the Sixth. The Fifth won't cover it.

She casually reaches around, squeezes the back of her thigh.

VALERIE

Andrew, come over here for a minute. Does this feel firm to you?

ANDREW

(the preacher)

And, yea, there was temptation at every turn. And only the strong could turn away.

(throws a kiss)

See ya. Oh and, Val, you must stop seeing that Hulk woman. It's not natural. And... well, I think you can do better.

VALERIE

(winks at him)

I'm working on it.

INT. DOORWAY

Sara and Andrew, dressed for work, embrace at the front door.

ANDREW

I'm worried about that roommate of yours.

SARA

I'll bet you are.

ANDREW

Really, Sara. I think you should consider some other options.

SARA

Such as?

Andrew moves in closer, caresses her cheek.

ANDREW

Well, I think you could be living with someone who really cares about you, appreciates you, someone who has similar expectations.

SARA

Now, I'm an attorney, and I'm still confused. Were you just making me some kind of offer?

ANDREW

Yes. You and me. Live together. Cohabitate. Shack up. Whatever you want to call it.

SARA

I don't know, Andrew...

ANDREW

Just think about it. Okay?  
(she nods)  
Until Sunday, then.

He kisses her, walks toward the elevators.

SARA

You shall have me all to yourself on Sunday, my darling. I promise.

ANDREW

Hallelujah!

Sara steps back inside her apartment, closes the door. Big smile. Valerie walks into the living room, carries a suitcase.

VALERIE

Well, don't we look happy? Did he ask you to marry him?

SARA

Sort of. I think.

VALERIE

I just want you to explain why I can't end up with somebody like Andrew. Handsome, sexy and... rich.

SARA

Maybe you'll meet somebody out there on the Cape this weekend.

VALERIE

It's a company "retreat". Most of the men are married. All the good ones, anyway.

Sara opens the front door for her. Valerie heads down the hallway.

SARA

You know what they say. "When you least expect it..."

VALERIE

Remember, Sara, we're not supposed to "have it all" anymore. So leave a little something for the rest of us, huh?

Sara says good-bye, closes the door, stands there a moment, smiling. Then the phone RINGS.

Sara walks slowly toward it, still a little dreamy. But she's about to snap out of it.

SARA

Hello?

PEARL (V.O.)

Sara. It's your mother.

SARA

Mom! I wasn't expecting your call till next week. Is everything all right?

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

At the end of a hallway, Sara's mom speaks into a pay phone.

PEARL CALLAHAN is an attractive, middle-aged woman, looking rather plain at the moment with her hair pulled back, wearing a drab, gray shirt.

PEARL

It's miserable here as always, but I do have some great news.  
(lowers phone, hollers)  
Christ! What's that smell?

INTERCUT WITH SARA

SARA

What is it, mom? Tell me.

PEARL

Okay, listen. You're not gonna believe this, honey. The most fantastic thing has happened.

Sara is suddenly on edge, begins pacing like a caged animal.

SARA

Uh ... what are you talking about?

As the camera moves around Pearl, we see a few more WOMEN wearing the same gray shirts, waiting in line for the phone.

On each side of the long hallway are rooms with bars. This is no disaster-relief site. This is a PRISON!

PEARL

They're letting me out!

(no response)

Sara, did you hear me? I'm getting out of here!

SARA

Wha... what do you mean you're getting out? You have another year before they...

PEARL

I know, but they decided to let a few of us out for good behavior, and because it's so damn crowded in this...

(lowers the phone)

Hey, back off, gimme a little room here.

SARA

Mom, you're kidding, aren't you? Is this one of your jokes?

PEARL

No joke, honey. They're really letting me out. I need you to come pick me up.

SARA

Pick you up? When?

PEARL

Tomorrow.

Sara's knees go weak.

SARA  
 Tomorrow? Pick you up tomorrow...  
 and take you where?

PEARL  
 I thought I'd come up there and  
 spend a few days with you.

SARA  
 Oh, I don't know if it's a good  
 time...

PEARL  
 I've gotta get off now, sweetheart.  
 I'll be out tomorrow at noon. See  
 you then.

SARA  
 But, mom, I...

The line goes dead. Sara hangs up the phone. She just sits there. Stunned silence. Then she lets out a little whimper.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

A) A rolling highway. Sara's hair swirls as the wind rushes through the car window. She looks different. No make-up, dressed very plain.

Now we see the car. It's not the Mercedes. It's a beat up, 20-year-old, gas-guzzlin' Oldsmobile.

B) Sign on the freeway, "New York State Women's Correctional Facility". Sara stops at the prison gate, gets directions.

C) She enters the facility, speaks with a woman at a desk.

INT. PROCESSING ROOM - DAY

Sara sees her mother through a plate glass window.

A guard opens a door and Pearl walks briskly toward her daughter. She puts her hands on Sara's shoulders, looks her up and down, messes with her hair.

PEARL  
 Did you ride here in the back of a  
 pick-up? Let's do something with  
 that hair. A little eyeliner  
 wouldn't hurt either.  
 (a pause)  
 Oh, come here.

She gives Sara a big hug.

SARA  
Let's get going, mom.

PEARL  
The sooner the better.

They pass a trustee, RUBY, mopping the floor.

PEARL  
Hey, Ruby, meet my daughter, the attorney.

RUBY  
An attorney, huh? Maybe she can keep your butt outa here.

SARA  
(to herself)  
Or put it back in.

At the door, ELOISE, a hefty, female guard lets them outside.

PEARL  
Hey, Eloise, I see those rope burns are almost gone.

ELOISE  
Don't press your luck, convict.

PEARL  
Now now. Let's not get our ducktail in an uproar.

EXT. PRISON

One last jab from Eloise as they head for the parking lot.

ELOISE  
It'll be so lonely here without you, Pearl.

PEARL  
Don't worry, I'll send you some batteries. Sara shakes her head.

SARA  
I see you've made a lot of friends here, mother.

PEARL  
Well, people like me. What can I say?

They approach the Oldsmobile.

PEARL (CONT'D)

I thought you'd be drivin'  
something better than this old  
piece of junk.

SARA

Yeah, well, it's a long story.

PEARL

Just get in, honey. We'll talk on  
the way to the nearest Jack In The  
Box. I've been dreaming of this  
day for three years.

INT. CAR - DAY

Sara follows the signs to the freeway. Fast food wrappers,  
sacks, and cartons clutter Pearl's side of the front seat.

A burger in one hand, she holds an onion ring in front of  
Sara's mouth.

SARA

Will you get that disgusting thing  
out of my face.

PEARL

God, you don't know how much you  
miss this stuff until they take it  
away from you.

Sara shakes her head, lets out a sigh.

SARA

Sure is a special day for me.  
Picking up mom from the Big House.  
Swear to God, I don't wanna ever  
have to visit you in prison again.

PEARL

I prefer to call it a detention  
facility, sweetheart. I was just  
detained for a few years, that's  
all.

SARA

Yeah. Detained behind bars. I  
call it a prison.

PEARL

Geez, I'm not a criminal, Sara. I mean, not in the real sense of the word.

SARA

Embezzlement is a felony. You stole a lot of money...

PEARL

From the phone company! Christ, everybody hates the phone company! I still don't see anything so wrong...

SARA

Maybe if it was a few hundred, or a thousand. But when you get up in the six-figure-range, you're a criminal.

PEARL

Okay, maybe I got a little greedy. But the important thing is this: I would never hurt anybody. I'm a good person, and no one is going to convince me otherwise. Including you.

They're silent for a moment. Sara turns onto the freeway.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Hey... Boston's the other way.

SARA

I figured we'd go to New York. See the lights. Your first night out and all.

PEARL

Great idea. Have a few drinks, meet some men.

SARA

How about a nice dinner? Maybe a little mother-daughter talk.

PEARL

Sounds a little tame to me.

(beat)

I'm just kidding, honey. We do have a lot to talk about.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

Across the 59th Street Bridge. Big Apple skyline in the b.g. Pearl fiddles with the RADIO, finds some MOTOWN. She turns up the volume, SINGS along.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

A nice hotel, but nothing too elaborate. Sara converses with the clerk at the front desk.

Pearl stands at a window, watching the world go by. A realization hits her. She laughs out loud, raises her arms in triumph.

PEARL

Sweet Jesus in heaven, I'm out!

A few BYSTANDERS turn their heads. Pearl looks at them, speaks in a softer voice, almost melancholy, as if she can hardly believe it herself.

PEARL (CONT'D)

I'm really out.

Sara hurries over, takes Pearl by the arm.

SARA

Come on, mother. This way.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A nice restaurant but, once again, not too lavish. Pearl reaches for the bottle of wine, fills their glasses.

SARA

Have you given much thought to what you're going to do now that...

PEARL

Are you kidding me? That's all I've been doing, honey. For three years. Thinking.

SARA

And...?

PEARL

Couldn't come up with a damn thing.

SARA

Aw, mom...

PEARL

I'm joking, Sara. Come on, lighten up. Of course, I've got plans. Big plans, I might add. But we'll have plenty of time to talk about that at your place.

Sara shifts in her seat, steadies herself.

SARA

About you coming to stay with me...  
(pause)  
I'm afraid now's not a good time.

Pearl sets down her glass. An icy stare.

SARA (CONT'D)

I tried to tell you on the phone but...

PEARL

So tell me now.

SARA

Well, I...  
(pause)  
Mom, I lost my job.

Pearl's anger transforms into motherly concern.

PEARL

Oh no, honey. What happened? Did you screw up or something?

SARA

No. The firm was downsizing and they had to let some people go. And since I'm the new kid on the block...

PEARL

Aw, my poor baby. That really sucks. When did this happen?

SARA

A couple weeks ago. But what the hell, I didn't like it there anyway. And I have a friend in Pittsburgh who's arranged some interviews for me... and I'll be staying with her for awhile. Pearl's smile fades as she tries to make sense of it all.

PEARL

So what does that mean? I'm on my own here?

SARA

No, not at all. You see, I uh... I called your sister in California, and they'd be happy to have you...

PEARL

No way, Sara. Peggy and I never did get along. And that bozo she married... I've never met anybody who was so proud of the way he could fart. No, I'd rather go back to the pen.

SARA

I've already bought you a plane ticket. Just go. When I get a job and a new place, then we can spend some time together.

PEARL

(butters her bread)

Well, isn't that a fine how-do-you-do? Shuffle me off to the other side of the country...

(hands Sara the knife)

Here. Why don't you just kill me now and get it over with?

SARA

Please, mom, try to understand. This is the way it has to be for now.

Pearl grabs the bottle of wine, fills her glass.

PEARL

Okay, Sara. If that's the way it has to be. Let's not talk about it. This is my first night out, and nothing's going to stop me from having a good time.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Loud MUSIC. Crowded dance floor. They find a table, order a drink. A good-looking GUY in his 20's approaches Sara.

GUY

Hey, there. Feel like dancing?

SARA

Not right now, thanks.

He starts to walk away, but Pearl has him by the hand.

PEARL

Not so fast. I'm the dancer in the family.

She jumps up, pulls him onto the dance floor.

PEARL (CONT'D)

I hope you're insured. How old are you anyway?

Sara watches, mildly amused, as mom cuts loose.

A MAN, 40, wearing coat and tie, makes his move.

MAN

Mind if I sit down?

(he does)

Looks like your friend over there is the life of the party. Can I buy you a drink...

SARA

No, that's okay. And she's not my friend. She's my mother. We're "celebrating" tonight because she just got out of prison.

MAN

You're kidding, right?

Sara gives him a wicked stare.

SARA

No. Unfortunately, I'm not.

MAN

What was she in for?

SARA

She stabbed some guy. Looked kinda like you, as a matter of fact.

MAN

Why'd she do that?

SARA

Because he wouldn't leave me alone.

He gets the message, quickly disappears.

INT. HOTEL - NIGHT

They walk to their room, a little tipsy.

PEARL

I don't know why you had to drag me out of there. I had that guy in the palm of my hand.

SARA

Yeah, I saw where you had your hand. Do you want child abuse on your record, too?

PEARL

Okay, I admit it. I was going to abuse him. But that was no child. "Child-like" perhaps...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sara comes out of the bathroom in her nightgown, holding her PURSE.

She notices Pearl outside on the balcony. Before joining her, Sara HIDES THE PURSE underneath the bed.

BALCONY

They lean against the railing, admire the view.

SARA

Pretty sight, huh?

PEARL

You have no idea how beautiful this looks to me right now.

Sara lowers her eyes, feeling some guilt for the first time.

SARA

I'm sorry, mom. I know it's been a nightmare for you. And I haven't exactly been a fountain of sympathy...

PEARL

I don't expect that. Don't deserve it, really.

(pause)

Hey, it wasn't all bad. I did get to watch a lot of Star Trek.

(Sara smiles)

Anyway, we're starting all over now. And I realize it may take some time to earn back your respect and trust. But that's exactly what I intend to do.

(pause)

I wish your father was still alive. He'd be very proud to see how his little girl has grown up.

SARA

Yeah. Dad was the greatest, wasn't he?

(Pearl's slow to answer)

Well, if he wasn't, don't tell me. Because I have this picture of him in my mind where everything is just... perfect.

PEARL

Good. You hold on to that, Sara. And I hope you can find someone for yourself... someone who fits right in to that picture.

Sara gets back into character, mopes a little.

SARA

Yeah, me too.

PEARL

Come on. I bet you've got all those Boston boys lining up...

SARA

Not quite.

PEARL

Weren't you going out with...

SARA

Yeah, I was dating a guy for awhile. Didn't work out. Anyway, I don't have time for men right now.

PEARL

Well, when you do find the right guy, I just hope that he's rich as hell and hung like a horse.

Sara can't help but laugh.

SARA

Mom, it really is good to see you again.

PEARL

Yeah. I wish we could spend more time together. But that's okay. For now. Everything's going to work out for you, sweetheart. I just know it. You'll be back on your feet in no time.

SARA

I hope so.

PEARL

Come on, let's get some sleep. It's been a long time since I tucked you in.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

Pearl sits on the edge of the bed, pulls up the covers.

SARA

Are you going to tell me one of those nice prison stories, mom?

PEARL

Sure, honey. Once upon a time, there was a beautiful Princess who was stuck in the slammer. But then she got out, and everything was hunky-dory once again. How was that?

Pearl notices Sara's PURSE STRAP under the bed. Using her foot, she maneuvers it to within reach.

SARA

Did everybody live happily ever after?

PEARL

Well... more or less. Pretty much.

SARA

No, mom. It has to end where they live happily ever after.

Pearl reaches for the purse, conceals it when she gets up and walks toward the bathroom.

PEARL

Then "happily ever after" it is.  
Get to sleep now. See you in the  
morning. I'll just be in here,  
taking a nice hot bath.

BATHROOM

Water runs in the tub as Pearl inspects the contents of the  
purse. Nothing out of the ordinary, until she discovers...

An inside liner conceals CREDIT CARDS, CASH, a RECEIPT. She  
unfolds the receipt. It's from the Rent-A-Wreck agency.

EXT. HOTEL - MORNING

Sara hurries her mother toward their car in the hotel lot.

INT. CAR

She turns the key in the ignition. It cranks, but won't  
start.

SARA

Oh, Jesus... Come on!

PEARL

How long have you had this wreck?

SARA

A couple months. But this has  
never happened before.

PEARL

These old clunkers need a lotta  
gas. Pump it like you mean it!

Sara pumps furiously. With a loud BANG and a cloud of smoke,  
it starts.

PEARL (CONT'D)

Relax, honey. We'll make the  
plane.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The traffic's heavy. Sara taps the wheel nervously.

PEARL

You know, I did a lot of thinking  
last night, and I've decided this  
California trip might be the best  
thing. I need some time to refine  
a few of my ideas.

SARA

What ideas?

PEARL

Don't worry, Sara, they're all legal.

SARA

Like what?

PEARL

Well, I'm thinking big here, of course... like a chain of health-spas. High-class stuff. A place where rich folks can go to really get their ass pampered. Know what I mean?

SARA

Yeah, but maybe you should start small... just for the time being. Get a regular old job for awhile. A steady paycheck coming in every week.

PEARL

I've already got a name in mind. "String Of Pearls". Catchy, huh? I just need a little start-up capital, then I can franchise out, do my own TV commercials. "Follow that String Of Pearls to the end of the rainbow..."

Sara steps on the accelerator, swerves into the fast lane.

INT. AIRPORT - DAY

At the Departure Gate. Sara offers her mother some cash.

SARA

I want you to take this, mom. And don't spend it all at the track.

PEARL

Aw, that's sweet of you, honey, but I don't need it. Really. I made a fortune ironing in the joint.

SARA

Very funny. Come on, take it.

PEARL

No. You need it more than I do.  
Put it toward a new car.

A final boarding announcement. They hug.

SARA

I'll call you in a few days.

PEARL

You don't have to. I'll be fine.  
You're the one I'm worried about.  
I sure hope your luck turns around.

A kiss on the cheek. Pearl waves good-bye, disappears down the ramp.

Sara heaves a monumental sigh of relief. She walks briskly back to the terminal, her smile growing wider with every step.

Back to the boarding ramp. It appears empty, but then...

Pearl peeks around the corner, a twinkle in her eye. When she's confident her daughter has gone, she speaks to the WOMAN at the ticket counter.

PEARL

Excuse me, I'd like to trade this  
in for a ticket to Boston.

WOMAN

I'm afraid that's impossible. This  
is non-refundable.

PEARL

(with attitude)  
Oh, really?

MONTAGE

A) Through a window, we see Pearl gesturing wildly to an intimidated airline official. She'll get her way.

B) Sara's in a hurry to get home. She speeds down the highway in the smoking Olds, checking her watch. A sign says: "Boston - 50 miles".

C) Pearl bides time at the Departure Gate, eats from a giant bag of M&M's, reads a "True Detective" magazine.

D) Sara parks in front of her apartment, dashes inside.

E) Pearl arrives at the Boston airport, collects her baggage, hails a CAB.

EXT. SARA'S BLDG. - DAY

The cab stops at the entrance. Pearl gazes up at the luxury apartment building, impressed.

The doorman, WENDELL, 50's, opens her door, offers his hand.

INT. HALLWAY

Wendell and Pearl step out of the elevator on the 30th floor. He carries her bags down the hallway. Smiling and at ease, they're already old friends.

WENDELL

It's too bad you missed her. I think she said something about a party. Looked real pretty, that's for sure. She left not even an hour ago.

PEARL

Well, she wasn't expecting me.

WENDELL

(unlocks Sara's door)  
I know she'll be happy to see you.

PEARL

Let's hope so. Thank you, Wendell. You are so sweet.

WENDELL

It's been my pleasure. Now I know why I like Sara so much. If there's anything I can do for you, just ask.

As he walks away...

PEARL

You're a darling, Wendell. Remember now, tell your wife to wrap it in seaweed and elevate her legs. Always works for me.

INT. SARA'S APT.

Pearl enters, turns slowly around, taking it all in.

PEARL

Yeah, this'll do just fine.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ESTATE - DAY

Rambling country estate, manicured grounds. The party's in progress. Colorful tents, buffet tables, WAITERS scurrying about with trays of food.

A hundred or so GUESTS drink and mingle to MUSIC from a jazz quartet. Andrew notices Sara arrive. He excuses himself, goes to meet her. They embrace.

SARA

You first.

ANDREW

Okay. I thought about you every second, my darling, except for those moments when I was thinking about me. Okay, you really didn't get that much time, but I did think about you that once.

SARA

You know how to make a girl feel special.

ANDREW

Now it's your turn.

SARA

Later. Here comes your mom.

ELENOR HOLLOWAY, 60, a stately woman dripping of jewelry, hurries over to Sara and plants a kiss on her cheek.

ELENOR

Sara, I'm so glad you could make it. Andrew always looks his best with you at his side.

SARA

Thanks, Elenor. How's the party going?

ELENOR

Oh, it's the same old boring people from the best families. But this is what I live for.

SARA

Well, is there anything Andrew can do to help?

ELENOR

How sweet of you to ask. Andrew, you stay right here with this beautiful woman, who by the way, you don't deserve. I've got a party to attend to.

Elenor hurries toward the barbecue pit, concerned...

ELENOR (CONT'D)

Raoul, is that supposed to be burning?

INT. SARA'S APT. - DAY

Pearl strolls around her daughter's bedroom, examining her possessions. There's a picture of Andrew and Sara at the Yacht Club. Pearl holds it up for closer inspection.

PEARL

Mmmm. Yummy.

She opens the closet, admires the expensive wardrobe.

PEARL

Oh baby, these weren't done on no Singer.

She thumbs through the dresses, finds one that catches her eye, holds it up in front of the mirror.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ESTATE - DAY

Sara and Andrew converse with a small group which includes:

Andrew's father, MAX HOLLOWAY, 60, tall, fit, an impressive figure. JACK WALSH, 50's, medium height, thick but not quite fat.

Another MAN and WOMAN, 40's.

WOMAN

Andrew, where did you meet this lovely creature?

ANDREW

Where every man ends up sooner or later with a woman. In court.

Andrew's father elaborates.

MAX

Yeah, she sued the hell out of us. Andrew tried to cut some corners...

ANDREW

Gee thanks, dad. Just following orders, Mein Herr.

Jack Walsh pats him on the back.

JACK

Hell, if you don't get sued a couple times a year, you're not doin' it right. I've got a half-dozen pending at the moment, and Sara's handling one of them. How's it coming?

SARA

Well, it's...

ANDREW

Oh no you don't. No shop talk today. I've got a few ideas on evolution that I want to discuss with Sara over by the pond.

As Andrew leads her away...

SARA

We'll talk tomorrow, Jack, when I can bill you for the time.

JACK

(to Max)

Damn, I like that girl.

MAX

If Andrew lets this one get away, he's out of the will.

As they pass near the band, Andrew takes Sara in his arms and they dance.

ANDREW

I tried to call you yesterday. Where were you?

SARA

I was there. You know I don't answer the phone when I'm working.

INT. SARA'S APT.

As Pearl continues her inspection, she notices an INVITATION on a desk. She studies it a moment, then dials the RSVP number.

INT. HOLLOWAY KITCHEN - DAY

Lots of activity in the kitchen. In the middle of it all, Elenor struggles to communicate with a large woman speaking rapid Spanish.

ELENOR  
The dip is too hot. Mucho  
caliente. Everyone's nose is  
running. Comprende?

Amidst the clanging and commotion, the wall phone RINGS.

ELENOR  
Hello?

INTERCUT WITH PEARL

PEARL  
Hello. This is Pearl Callahan, and  
I was wondering if my daughter,  
Sara, might be there.

Elenor can barely contain herself.

ELENOR  
Sara's mother?! What a wonderful  
surprise. I'm Elenor Holloway,  
Andrew's mother. Where are you  
calling from?

PEARL  
I'm at Sara's. I just arrived...

ELENOR  
You're here? In Boston? That's  
fabulous. Sara didn't mention  
anything...

PEARL  
That's because I didn't tell her.  
I wanted it to be a surprise.

ELENOR  
What a splendid idea. Listen,  
Pearl, you get in a taxi right now  
and come out to our house. We're  
having a big party this  
afternoon... and I won't tell Sara  
you're coming.

PEARL  
Oh, I'd hate to impose...

ELENOR

Nonsense. Maxwell and I are looking forward to meeting you. Not to mention Andrew. Good heavens, I can't wait to see the look on Sara's face.

Pearl jots down the address, hangs up. The twinkle in her eye is blinding.

EXT. HOLLOWAY ESTATE - DAY

The taxi stops in front of the house. A VALET pays the driver, opens the door, offers his hand.

Pearl steps out, wearing the dress from Sara's closet. We've never seen her like this before. She looks like she belongs. She takes a moment to admire the surroundings.

PEARL

Which way to the gift shop?

VALET

The party's right through there.

PEARL

Do I have to cross a time zone?

Elenor rushes down to meet her.

ELENOR

You must be Pearl. My my, I can see where Sara gets her looks. I'm Elenor. It's a pleasure.

PEARL

The pleasure's all mine. What a lovely home.

ELENOR

Oh, it's too big and we know it. But you get used to these things. Now then, shall I get Sara so you can have a moment alone? Or should we just go out there and surprise her?

PEARL

They say a little shock is good for the system. Lead the way.

EXT. PARTY

Sara and Andrew chat with the couple we met at the Yacht Club, BOYD and SYLVIA Fleming.

Elenor comes out of the house with Pearl on her arm. Many of the guests take notice. Sara faces the other way, can't see them coming.

They stop directly behind her. Elenor is giddy with anticipation.

ELENOR

Sara. Look who's here!

Sara turns, jerks backward with a spasm.

SARA

Holy shit!

PEARL

Surprised?

SARA

Mom! What are...

Andrew cuts in...

ANDREW

Sara, is this your mom?

(takes her hand)

Hello, Mrs. Callahan, I'm Andrew Holloway.

PEARL

Andrew, we finally meet. Sara's told me so much about you. And her words don't do you justice. Andrew introduces Boyd and Sylvia.

SYLVIA

It's an honor. Andrew told us all about the life you've been leading. I'm sure you've experienced a lot of suffering, to say the least. I can't imagine going through that.

PEARL

Well, I really had no choice.

BOYD

The living conditions you've been exposed to must've been pretty rough.

PEARL

Well, it was a little, y'know,  
confining. And the food was bad.  
Crowded, noisy, just what you'd  
expect when you're in...

Sara blurts out...

SARA

Peru! Isn't that where they had  
that earthquake? Or was it a  
flood? Whatever, I'm just glad you  
made it back safely. Let's go get  
you a drink. There's so much to  
talk about.

Pearl looks at her daughter with a sly smile. She's  
beginning to understand what's going on here. Sara tries to  
lead her away. But Max, just arriving, blocks their escape.

MAX

Sara! This lovely woman must be  
your mother. Elenor told me you  
were coming. What a joy, huh,  
Sara?

SARA

Oh, yes. It's uh... overwhelming.  
Max Holloway, my mother, Pearl  
Callahan.

MAX

Pearl. The name suits you. I must  
say, we've all grown quite fond of  
your daughter.

PEARL

Well then, I guess you haven't  
known her that long.

Everyone laughs, except Sara.

ANDREW

I know where Sara gets her sense of  
humor. Of course, where you've  
been, there probably hasn't been  
much to laugh about.

Pearl nods, solemn. Then winks at Sara.

MAX

Andrew's told me a little about  
your organization. What's it  
called?

PEARL  
Well, actually, you see...

SARA  
Stop!

Heads turn toward Sara. She has to think fast.

SARA (CONT'D)  
"STOP". That's the name. Of the  
organization. It stands for...  
Save um...

Sara's stuck. Pearl leaps into the breach.

PEARL  
Save The... Oppressed People. How  
could you forget that, Sara?

ELENOR  
I like it. Very catchy.

PEARL  
Oh, it's just something I came up  
with.

ELENOR  
Well, we think it's wonderful, the  
work you do, and I hope we see a  
lot of you while you're here.

MAX  
How long will you be in Boston?

PEARL  
It's hard to say...

Sara cuts her off.

SARA  
She could be here today, gone  
tomorrow. That's the way it is in  
the Savior Biz. Wherever there's a  
disaster, you'll find my mom. Now  
come along, let's go get that  
drink.

MAX  
Just one minute. I'm the host  
here. Allow me.

Max takes command, leads Pearl away. Elenor falls in beside  
them, her voice trails off...

ELENOR

We'll have to introduce you to Kevin. He just came back from Rio. And I believe some of our caterers are from Peru. The food's real hot there, isn't it?

Sara's desperate, starts to follow them. But Andrew takes her by the arm.

ANDREW

Let her enjoy the party. You'll have plenty of time to visit.

SARA

You never know.

BOYD

We should have your mother out to the Yacht Club for dinner.

SARA

Well, like I said, she could be gone tomorrow. So I want to spend as much time with her as I can. You'll have to excuse me.

Sara turns to go. Andrew stops her again.

ANDREW

Jesus, Sara. Relax. I think she'll be safe with my...

SARA

Quit pulling on me. I'll make time for you later, Andrew. Right now I want to see my mom.

Sara turns abruptly, steps into the path of a WAITER. They collide! She FALLS to the ground. A bowl of BEAN DIP lands beside her, SPLATTERS on her dress.

SARA

Aw... dammit!

Andrew's at her side, helps her up.

ANDREW

Sara, are you alright?

SARA

No, I'm not alright. Look at this dress.

ANDREW

Let's get you inside and...

SARA

I don't need your help. Just leave me alone, please.

She stomps off toward the house, fit to be tied.

EXT. PARTY - DAY

Sara returns to the party, damp spots all over her dress. Like predator searching for prey, she stalks the grounds for Pearl. She finally spots her over by the pool, sipping a martini, and chatting with Jack Walsh.

As Sara closes in...

PEARL

...but, you know, it's the children who really suffer.

(sees Sara)

Speaking of suffering children, what happened to you?

SARA

(baby voice)

Me fall down, go boom. And I got food all over me.

PEARL

You know, I used to enjoy doing that when I was your age.

Jack points to her dress.

JACK

You've still got some bean dip back here. By the way, did that seem a little hot?

PEARL

Jack was just telling me that you're representing his company in a lawsuit.

SARA

Uh huh. And we're going to whup their ass but good, right, Jack?

JACK

I like it when you talk like that! Gotta have that killer-instinct...

Sara gets an arm around Pearl, about to drag her away.

SARA

Oh, I've got that, make no mistake.  
But right now, I'm not feeling so  
good and... Would you mind terribly  
if I had my mommie take me home?

Sara leads Pearl toward the house.

PEARL

But I just got here.

SARA

If you come quietly, no one will  
get hurt. It's my turn to tell you  
a prison story.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Sara and Pearl wait in strained silence as a valet retrieves  
her Mercedes. Pearl whistles...

PEARL

Nice car, honey. Your Oldsmobile  
must be in the shop.

Sara hurries to the driver's side, gets in. The valet opens  
the door for Pearl.

PEARL

Muchas gracias, hombre. What a  
nice looking young man you are.  
I'd guess twenty-two, twenty-  
three...

Sara reaches over, grabs Pearl by the arm, pulls her inside.